

THE 10TH ANNUAL VIDEO GAME AWARDS

GAMEINFORMER

Word On Computer & Video Games



THE LEGEND LIVES ON

FINAL FANTASY X

Complete Strategy Guide With Weapon
And Summons Locations 🎮 First Review
🎮 Interviews With Development Team 🎮
A Look At Its Place In History

ISSUE
105

U.S. \$4.99 Canada \$6.99





IT'S JUST A **HARMLESS** LITTLE TOY.

1 of 16
collect them
all!

→ **YEAH, AND THE BLACK PLAGUE WAS JUST A RASH.**

LAUNCH
STUFF
LIKE →

BOTTLE
ROCKETS

FLAMING
PUMPKINS

CHERRY
BOMBS

*BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

WRECK **11**
NEIGHBORHOOD
HANGOUTS LIKE...

- 1 TREE HOUSE
- 2 MINI GOLF COURSE
- 3 YOUR MAMA'S KITCHEN

BATTLE YOUR FRIENDS TOO!

WARNING
THIS IS FUN!



from the makers of **TWISTED METAL®**
and **TWISTED METAL 2**

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CONT

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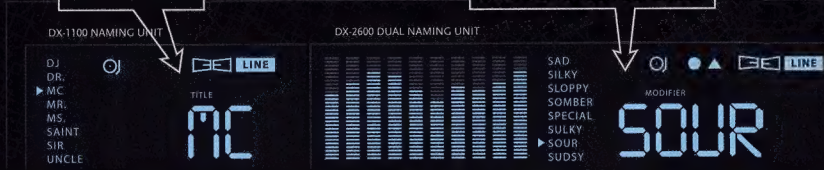




**TWISTED
METAL**
small brawl

SELECT A TITLE

SELECT A MODIFIER THAT ALLUDES TO YOUR DOPENESS



HOW TO CREATE A DJ YOUR MAD MUSICAL



ONCE YOU'VE MASTERED THE ART OF REMIXING TRACKS FROM ARTISTS LIKE FUNKSTAR DE LUXE, DJ Q-BERT, THE CRYSTAL METHOD AND NO DOUBT, YOU'LL NEED A NAME THAT YOUR MOTHER DIDN'T CHOOSE FOR YOU.



PlayStation 2

SELECT AN EQUALLY AWESOME SUBJECT

AND MIX...

DX-2600 DUAL NAMING UNIT

DX-1700 NAMING PROCESSOR

MONEY
MONKEY
MOOSE
MOP
MOPED
MUDBALL
MULLET
MUMBLE

THING
MONKEY

STATUS:
NAMING IN PROGRESS...
MC SOUR MONKEY

NAME THAT FITS SKILLZ.

LOCATOR MEMORY FILTER

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 CLR

A-C C-D D-F C-1

K-L M-N O-P Q-R

S T W-X Y-Z

ON/OFF ON/OFF ON/OFF

MIN MAX

SEND

LEFT RIGHT

GAIN FLANGE MIX

LIST 1 LIST 2 LIST 3 LIST 4

LIST 5 LIST 6 LIST 7 LIST 8

MONKEY 237

LIST 6

REV FWD

▲ TIPS

BE SHORT
PEOPLE CAN'T REMEMBER MORE THAN THREE WORDS.

USE YOUR INTERESTS
IF YOUR NAME IS JOHN AND YOU REALLY LIKE HOT-BUTTERED YAMS AND PING PONG, WELL TRY AND USE THAT.

SETUP TEST TRACE

SEQUENCING

1 2 3

PROG. TRACK TASK STEP

TOTAL 8738

OPTIONS

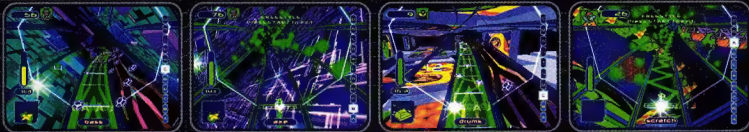
TUNE TEST CANCEL

PRE

CREATE NAME

MIX

MIN MAX MAIN VOL. MIN MAX VOL. PHONES

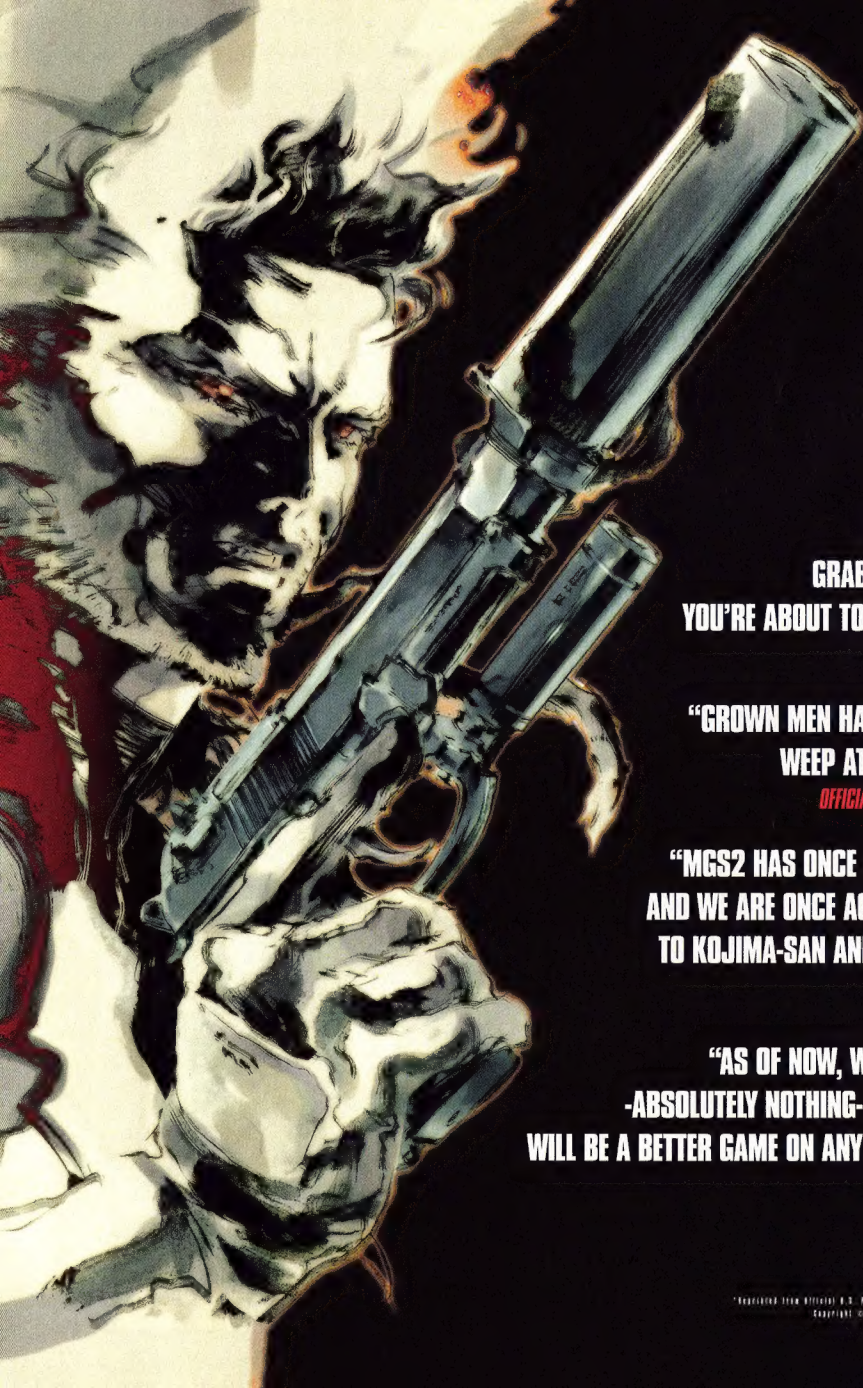


FREQUENCY™



Mild Lyrics

HARMONIX



**"METAL GEAR FANS,
GRAB ON TO SOMETHING-
YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE AMAZED. AGAIN."**

PSM

**"GROWN MEN HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO
WEEP AT ITS MAGNIFICENCE."**

*OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE**

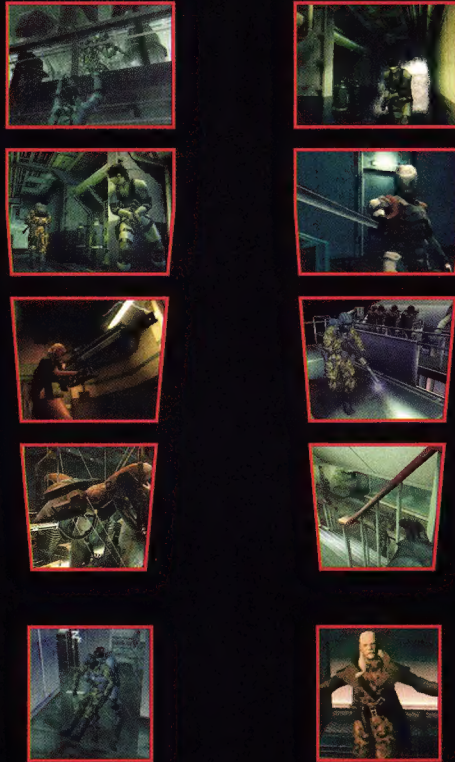
**"MGS2 HAS ONCE AGAIN STUNNED US,
AND WE ARE ONCE AGAIN ON OUR KNEES
TO KOJIMA-SAN AND HIS HEROIC TEAM."**

IGN.COM

**"AS OF NOW, WE'VE SEEN NOTHING
-ABSOLUTELY NOTHING- TO SUGGEST THERE
WILL BE A BETTER GAME ON ANY SYSTEM THIS YEAR.
PERIOD."**

NEXTGENERATION

A HIDEO KOJIMA GAME



TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION

METAL GEAR SOLID[®] 2

SONS OF LIBERTY™



PlayStation[®]2

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0 TO 60 IN 36-24-36



**Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes**

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...on the other side.

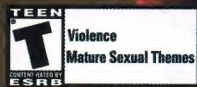
CHRISTIE

BRAD WONG

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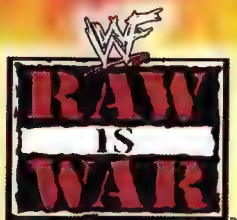


The grass is greener @ www.deadoralive3game.com





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WAGE WAR WITH TOP  SUPERSTARS MODELED IN AMAZING DETAIL



**ASSAULT OPPONENTS ON
THE WAY TO THE RING**



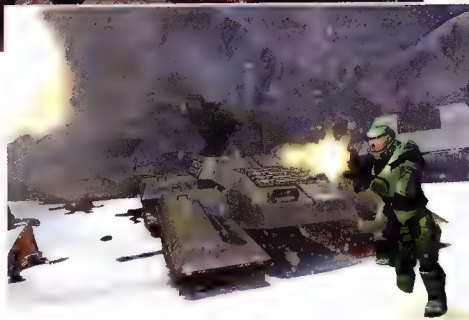
**COMPETE IN A VARIETY
OF MATCH TYPES**





COVER STORY **40 FINAL FANTASY X**

There can be no argument that the Final Fantasy franchise has shaped the realm of role-playing games as we know it today. From humble beginnings to incredible achievements, come with us as we delve into the processes and history that brought Final Fantasy X to fruition. You'll laugh, you'll cry, then you'll sprint out to the store and buy this game.



FEATURE **44 GAMES OF 2001**

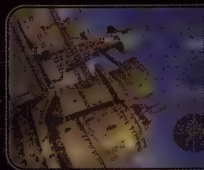
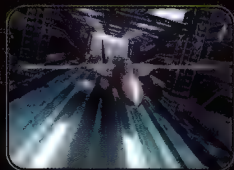
What was great? What was weird? What worked and what didn't? We explore all of these questions and at the same time give you the definitive Top 10 games of the year. 2001 was an incredible year for video games and this will help you remember why.





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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

VIOLENCE



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Editors are a strange breed of animal. From the comfort of your chair read the reasons why many of their girlfriends ask them, "Why are you so weird?" on a daily basis. It's not easy being weird, but at least it gives them an excuse for their wardrobe.

22 GI SPY

The Game Informer paparazzi stalk the video game industry, bringing you candid photos of all the action.

24 DEAR GI

Dear Gi, Sometimes we just can't get enough Dear Gi so we have to go to our back-issues to get our fix. Sometimes we write letters to ourselves then answer them just so we can read something new. Please make your next Dear Gi section really awesome! Sincerely, The Gi Staff.

30 NEWS

Not only do we have incredible coverage on the Xbox and GameCube launches, but we obtained inside information on some exciting THQ news and the PlayStation 3! As if that wasn't enough you'll see an exclusive interview with the *Princess Mononoke* character designer Katsuya Kondou only in GI News.

54 PREVIEWS

Spider-Man: The Movie makes a special appearance in this month's Previews section accompanied by news on Malice: Kat's Tale (Seriously?!), AirBlade (Really?!), Serious Sam: The Second Encounter (No way!), and a bunch more. Get some!

72 REVIEWS

Oh goodness, Final Fantasy X is just so awesome you'll have to read this review for yourself. If we printed any more of the incredible games we reviewed this month in this little section the page might start on fire, so you'll have to search them out yourself. Careful!



84

100 CHARTS

What's hot? What's not? What's up? What's down? It's not NASDAQ, it's the Retail Sales Data and the GI editors' Top 10 Games.

104 PLAY TO PERFECTION

Final Fantasy has never looked so good, and has never been this detailed. Look for you to have this incredible strategy guide for your eyes only. See? We love you.

112 SECRET ACCESS

Codes are magical, codes are great. Codes are this awesome section's fate... Yeah! We're rhyming geniuses! Seriously though, if you look in this section and can't find something to cheat with we'll be very disappointed indeed.

116 CLASSIC GI

Gunpei Yokoi was a man of many visions - the Game Boy and Metroid to name a couple. See what else this remarkable video game pioneer gave us before his tragic death in 1997.

122 ETC

It seems Final Fantasy knows no bounds! Toys galore fill the hallowed pages of Etc this month, along with a really disturbing picture of Matt. Check it out, but please don't try it at home.

[REDACTED]

watch

[REDACTED]

your

[REDACTED]

back

[REDACTED]

Syphon

[REDACTED]

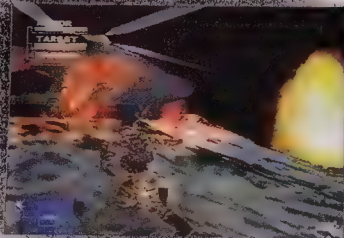
[REDACTED]

Filter3

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Classified Information: Security clearance required.

The ultimate, espionage super agent Gabe Logan is back. mission: clear name,

eradicate the Syphon Filter virus. Discover man in shadows. Blast through 19 intense, action-packed levels: exotic, international locales: Costa Rica, Tokyo, South Africa, Ireland, Australia

Do not negotiate. Proceed with extreme caution. Maintain cover at all times. Contact key intelligence personnel. Move through multiple obstacles. Maximum strategy advised.

Utilize lethal arsenal: X-ray gun, M-16, proximity mines, nightvision rifle, taser, tear gas gun, sniper rifle, crossbow, grenade launcher, concealed sub-machine gun. Failure is not an option. password: virus



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PUBLISHER

Cathy Preston

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Andrew McNamara

EDITORS

Senior Associate Editor Andrew Reiner
Associate Editors Matt Helgeson • Kristian Brogger
Justin Leeper • Matthew Kato
Copy Editor Jon Storm
Mascot Arthur

PRODUCTION

Art Director Thomas Blustin
Production Director Curtis Fung
Production Assistant Rachel Gilles

ADVERTISING

Rob Born • (612) 486-6155 • Fax (612) 486-6101
email: rob@gameinformer.com
724 North First St., 4th Floor • Minneapolis, MN 55401

CIRCULATION

CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPARTMENT

For change of address or subscription inquiry only:

(612) 486-6100 Fax (612) 486-6101

or send correspondence to:

724 North First St., 4th Floor • Minneapolis, MN 55401 • Attn: CIS Dept

Circulation Manager

Paul Anderson (612) 486-6104

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EDITORS' FORUM

BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE



Like any other magazine editor on the planet, I get my fair share of hate mail. Sadly enough, I kind of enjoy it. The way I see it, if no one hates you, then no one can love you, so I always take the good with the bad. In the last month, however, I have received some mail that I wanted to address with everyone. The subject: GameCue.

Nintendo fanboys across the globe have been ribbing me over the lack of GameCue coverage in our book, and I wanted to fill you in on what the situation really is (and trust me on this one, it is not the way it appears). The problem is, our readers complain that Game Informer is "intentionally" lacking in GameCue coverage, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact of the matter is, Nintendo is the reason for our lack of expanded GameCue coverage. Unlike Sony Computer Entertainment America and Microsoft, Nintendo is very protective of its software. So much so, that the company will not send out software unless a Nintendo representative physically brings it to us and watches over it while we play.

This really isn't such a bad thing, but as of late, Nintendo has greatly reduced its trips to bring us software of both the preview and review variety.

On top of that, Nintendo has not supplied us (or any other magazine for that matter) with a developer version of GameCue hardware that will allow us to play third-party games, so the end result is that our hands are tied on all fronts. At this very moment I have GameCue games in my office that I can't bring you coverage on because of Nintendo's lack of support.

For now, Game Informer will do everything in its power to get you all the GameCue coverage you want and deserve, but until Nintendo helps us out, I can't really promise anything. It's a shame really, since all the members of the staff suffer along with you and we're dying for the games just as much as you are.

On another subject, I wanted to let our readers know that longtime staff writer Jay Flitzoff has moved on from Game Informer. We wish him the best of luck in his new ventures.

Andy McNamara
Editor
andy@gameinformer.com

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

reiner@gameinformer.com

The Xbox and GameCue shared successful launches, and most gamers I've come into contact with seem quite pleased with both consoles. Those who invested in the GameCue love Rogue Leader and can't wait to see how the Legend of Zelda, Metroid Prime, Resident Evil, Mario Sunshine, and Perfect Dark Zero turn out. Xbox supporters were equally enthused, spouting out how masterful Halo and DOA3 are. When I asked them what forthcoming games they were excited about, they looked confused, scratched their heads, and basically came out in saying, "I haven't a clue." GameCue's future is overflowing with high caliber titles. What does Xbox have to offer? Nothing truly noteworthy. As I've said before, this war will be won through games, not power. Nintendo and Sony wield nukes. Microsoft has a firecracker.

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER

matt@gameinformer.com

Whenever I meet one of my thousands of fans out in public, they usually start out our conversation with one question: "Aren't you that guy from ER?" After recovering from the punishing kick to the groin, their next question is: "Which game system should I buy?" This holiday season, the answer to that question is simple: PlayStation 2. Want proof? Look at the Games of 2001 feature. Then peruse the Game Informer Top 10 in our Charts Section. After that, take a gander at our Final Fantasy X review. If you want a system that has a tremendous amount of great games, PS2 is it. Two or three years down the road, all this might change, but for now, Sony is the king. On a final note, I'd like to pour out a lil' liquor for the Gozko Gamer - Feel free to play Ninja Gaiden on my PS2 anytime you like.

KRISTIAN, THE GAME DAWG

kristian@gameinformer.com

I've come to the realization over these many months that my handle, or whatever you call the "Game Dawg" moniker, is really stupid. I've had a number of other ideas to replace it, but nothing sounds good, and to tell you the truth having a handle in the first place is probably pretty strange, so no amount of title shifting will make it any better. We're stuck with this lame nickname, you and me, so we'll just have to make the best of it. Maybe Cross Colors or Karl Kanji jeans will make a comeback so my name seems semi-hip again. Who am I kidding? It was never cool, but at least it gives us something to laugh about. Hee hee!

JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIANT

justin@gameinformer.com

It was just a normal day for me. I finished writing the eight-page epic we call Games of 2001, and went to get some sustenance. After an always-excellent steak Burrito Especial from Baja Tortilla Grill (no guac), I was bumping some OutKast and on my way back to work. Then it dawned on me: Damn, am I a lucky guy to be able to do all of the above things. While trivial in passing, if you give more thought to your freedoms in life, you'll realize we all have it pretty good. We can spend time on a hobby like video games, we can be as dorky as we want to be, and it's our constitutional right to do so. This isn't some terrorism-inspired thought; I just like to appreciate life every now and then.

KATO, THE GAME KATANA

kato@gameinformer.com

I know that I spoke to you last month about all the great games that are coming out and everything, but I've got a problem on my hands. As the resident football reviewer, my usefulness is coming to an end since all the pigskin titles are out. What the #@* am I going to do now? I don't know, and being the office men's room attendant ain't gonna cut it. My review of Metal Gear Solid 2? My helper monkey Mr. Cymbals ghostwrote that. Whatever you do, don't tell Andy. If I steal his glasses and with a little luck, I may just keep the checks rolling. By the way, I'd like to say farewell to the Gozko Gamer, and remind him that I know exactly where he lives, should he forget any of our wagers.

Hollywood Squares Gaming Edition

<p>Scorpio</p>	<p>Justin Leeper</p>	<p>Andrew Reiner</p>
<p>Glynxu</p>	<p>Arthur</p>	<p>Matt Helgeson</p>
<p>Kristian Brogger</p>	<p>Matthew Kate</p>	<p>Andy McNamara</p>

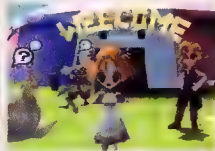
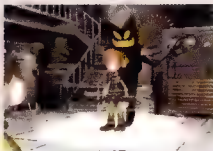
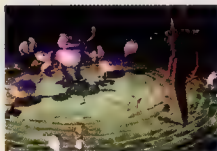
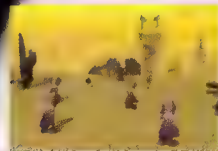




PlayStation.2

ARE YOU IN CONTROL OF YOUR SHADOW?

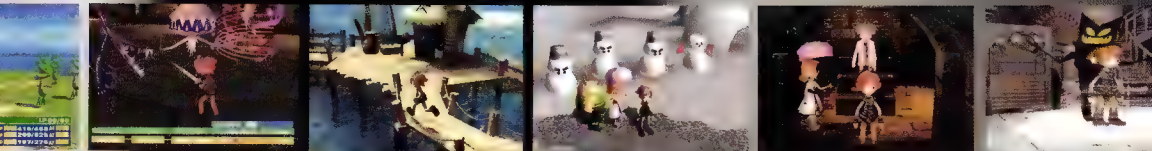
Don't be certain. At least, not until you meet Ari, a young boy from the village of Tenel who has lost control of his to the spirit of a 300 year old evil king. Now it's up to you to join him on a quest to help win it back. Along the way, solve puzzles, decipher mysterious clues and fight battles in a bizarre adventure that will test your wits, skill and make you question the proof of your own reality.



Comic Mischief
Mild Language
Mild Violence

OKAGE

shadow king



GI SPY

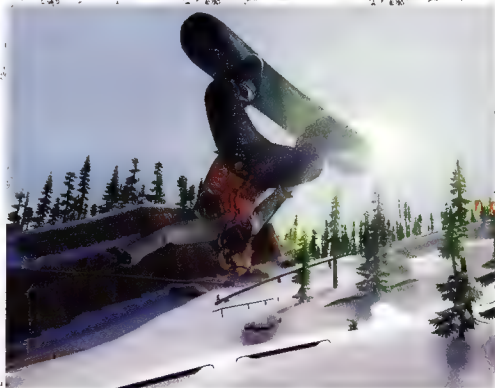


CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1. Sony's PlayStation 2 Anniversary party brought out Hollywood's A-list stars in force, and GI Spy was there to get the goods. Here's our first famous person — Alicia Keys, the evening's musical entertainment. 2. Courtney Cox tries to act interested while hubby David Arquette fields questions regarding his highly-anticipated directorial debut, *See Spot Run 2*. 3. Tara Blanco from *HighWater Group* PR gets cozy with lilliputian *Just Shoot Me* star David Spade. We hope she didn't try to steal his Lucky Charms! 4. To prove we haven't totally sold out, here are some real people that actually work for a living: Activision's Lisa Fields, Irwin Chen, and T.O. Jefferson. 5. Fieldy from Korn discusses ugly 5-string Ibanez basses with two "friends." Kids, go join a band right now! 6. Sony bigwigs Kaz Hirai and Andrew House agree: It's good to be rich and good-looking! 7. *American Pie* star Jason Biggs gets his game on at the Sony party. Quick, somebody hide the pastry! 8. "This party has video games and Rebecca Romijn-Stamos? Dude, this is AWE-some!" *American Pie*'s Chris Klein is really, really, happy.



CHECK IT! IT'S THE AMPED GUIDE TO FREESTYLE!



THE RODEO FLIP Also known as the "Don't Try This At Home." The nice part of this trick is that once you're insane enough to try it, you're probably ready for a magazine cover.



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TRICK."
FREESTYLE:
"DAG!"

ENGLISH:
"I LIKE YOUR
PANTS."
FREESTYLE:
"DAG."

ENGLISH:
"I THINK I'VE
FRACTURED MY
PELVIS."
FREESTYLE:
"DAG."

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FREESTYLE KNOWHARDING

STYLE ISN'T EVERYTHING...
JUST KIDDING

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XBOX

DEAR GI

TEACHER'S PET

My teacher took away my Game Informer. What should I do?
Nick Geiselhart
Via aol.com



As everyone knows, America's educational professionals are grossly underpaid for the vital role they fill in our society. So, we suspect that your teacher is just a frustrated gamer who can't afford to buy Game Informer. Perhaps, as a gesture of goodwill, you and your classmates should take up a collection to buy him (or her) a subscription. National Teacher Day is the Tuesday in the first full week of May. In fact, perhaps all our readers that are of school age should do the same, to show the educators of America just how much they care. Also, this would increase our circulation by millions, but that's beside the point.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

Did you guys notice that Ico looks just like Buffalo Man from the cover of Jamiroquai's records? Maybe it's just me...

Jessica Smalls
Via email

Upon closer inspection, we did notice a disturbing similarity between Sony's horned hero and Jamiroquai's mascot. A representative from Sony had no comment on the matter. We'll keep a close eye on this story in the future, although we suspect that this might just be a coincidence. However, if the sequel to Ico is a shameless rip-off of early-'70s Stevie Wonder, we'll know that something is up.

CLOSET GAMER

I need some advice. For as long as I can remember, I have loved video games. The NES was my first system and I've bought countless other consoles since then. Aside from that, I'm very active in and out of school. I'm a member of the wrestling, soccer, and ski teams, as well as other extracurricular activities.

Here is my problem: No one, besides my family, knows that I play games. Around my friends, I make remarks about how stupid gaming is, even though I secretly obsess over it. I'm not the most popular kid in school, but I do have many friends and people like me. If I exposed myself as a hardcore RPG gamer, I'm afraid of what the response would be.



Ico



Jamiroquai

I love games, they are a part of my life, but I have no one to confide in. I've never had a friend who played games. I find myself going to EB and just listening to the guys behind the counter talk about games. I'm sure there are other gamers out there. Maybe I don't know them because of my embarrassment. Anyway, thanks for the help and keep up the good work.

Anonymous
Name and address withheld upon request

Sigh. It's so sad to see a young person live in fear because of the prejudices of a closed-minded society. It's like all the great themes have been turned into theme parks. But we digress, the important thing is that you learn to accept who you are as a person. Just because your "lifestyle" is different from your peers, that doesn't mean they won't accept you for who you are. Perhaps some of your friends are closet gamers as well, and are scared to admit it just like you. We suggest you casually ask them over to play some games, and see how they react. You might find that more people are into games that you ever guessed.

If you continue to live a lie, you'll ultimately become a bitter adult filled with rage. You can see many examples of these kinds of people on MTV, in any of the heavy metal bands made up of tubby, bald guys who whine about how sad and angry they are (Stalnd, Limp Bizkit, etc.). Is this the future you want for yourself? We didn't think so. So say it loud - I'm a gamer and I'm proud!

STOP DRINKIN' THAT WATERADE!

Good God, you seem to have no life. Have any of you actually seen a girl from less than 10 feet away? Why do I even ask? I get girls - HA!

Jinx
Via aol.com

In fact, for the first time in its history, every member of the Game Informer staff has a significant other (Sorry, ladies!). But, what's more interesting, is the fact that your email was sent on a SATURDAY NIGHT. Funny, you'd think a chick magnet like yourself would have better things to do on a weekend evening than write emails to video game magazines. Play on, player.

DOLPHIN-FREE?

Whatever happened to the Dolphin? Did Nintendo sack it, or is the GameCube the new Dolphin, or was Dolphin a codename, or what?

EJ Fox
Via aol.com

Dolphin was just an early codename for the GameCube. Most systems go through several name changes before they reach consumers. For example, Xbox was once called Midway, and the Sega Dreamcast had three different monikers: Katana, Black Belt, and Dural.

SYSTEM CONFUSION

In the November 2001 issue of Game Informer, the article juxtaposing the Xbox and the GameCube said that Nintendo has a 112-year history and that GameCube will be the eighth system from Nintendo. What is this 112-year

history!? I consider myself to be a connoisseur of video games, but I've never heard of the 112-year history of Nintendo. What was Nintendo doing before the late 1970s? Also, I can't come up with "eight" systems. There are:

- 1) NES
- 2) SNES
- 3) N64
- 4) GameCube
- 5) Game Boy
- 6) Game Boy Pocket
- 7) Game Boy Color
- 8) Game Boy Advance
- 9) Virtual Boy

That's nine. But, if I count the different manifestations of Game Boy as one system, with the exception of Game Boy Advance because it is a whole new revelation in handheld gaming, I only come up with seven systems. What am I forgetting?

Brian The Destroyer
Des Moines, IA



We counted all the different versions of the original Game Boy as one system, as they all used the same basic hardware and had similar capabilities. Your count of seven is correct for systems released in the US. However, you're forgetting the Nintendo G4DD, a CD-ROM add-on to the Nintendo 64 that released in Japan in 1999. The unit, which piggybacked onto the existing N64 console, had been delayed many times before it finally launched, and was not successful with Japanese consumers. Only eight games were ever released for the unit, including SimCity 64, Mario Artist: Paint Studio, and Kyogin no Doshin 1 (Doshin the Giant). In addition, we overlooked another system in our tally, the Famicom Disk Drive system, which was released in Japan in 1986. So, there are actually nine Nintendo systems all told.

Although it didn't jump into the video game industry until the '80s, Nintendo has existed in a number of forms

BLITZ

2002



*actual in-game player model

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PlayStation 2



GAME BOY ADVANCE



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for well over a century. Formed in 1889, the firm was initially known as the Marufuku Company, and specialized in manufacturing a collectable card game called Flower Cards. In 1951, the corporation changed its name to Nintendo Playing Card Co., and eventually entered the video game business in the early 1980s.

MIYAMOTO IS INSANE

Is it just me or is Shigeru Miyamoto entering that state of experimentation where he's so bored with all his characters and franchises that he's going to play around and "innovate" for his amusement, while gamers get the short end of the stick? I can see, and even agree with, experimenting with characters like Luigi.

On the other hand, I'm sorry, but I don't want to play a cartoon Link and I think that dumb rocket pack Mario is wearing can fly him right into the sun for all I care. Also, Miyamoto must have been smoking something out of his Pikmin-inspired garden when he told Retro to make Metroid into a first-person shooter!

Someone needs to stop this madman before he flushes all the good Nintendo franchises right down the pooper. I know all his previous games have been masterpieces, but these new ones seem to be recipes for disaster. I understand that games need to evolve, but maybe someone needs to tell him that evolution can be bad. Just look at Reiner, or third-generation Camaros. God help us.

Josh Fuentes
Whittier, CA



George Patsouras

Everybody knows that Aquaman is the coolest superhero ever, but Reiner insisted that we include this Batman art in this month's winners.



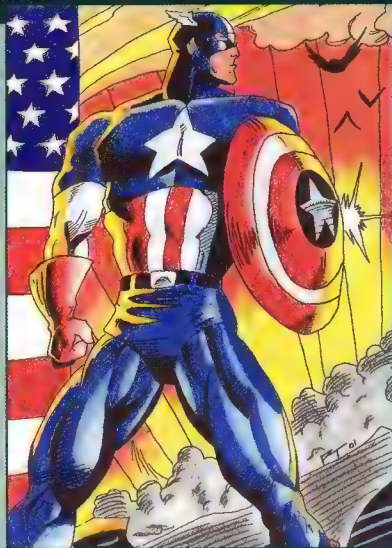
Kevin Overturf

We don't know what this is, but we like it.



Jason Rodriguez

This scary Metroid art made me pee our pants. Or maybe it was that glass of warm water Kato put our hands in during naptime.



JANUARY WINNER!

Paul Tassi

This piece, a tribute to the events of September 11th, does a great job of capturing America's newfound patriotism.

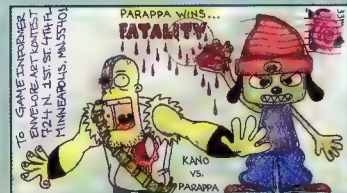
Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best damn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault.

Send to:

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Neil Nelson

It's just like an Italian to bring a spear to an axe fight.



Harry Bawiz

Parappa goes gangsta? Mortal Kombat 5 is looking better all the time. Mr. and Mrs. Bawiz must be so proud of their talented son.

The unveiling of the new-link

Zelda title at the recent

Space World convention has raised quite a stir in the ranks of the Nintendo faithful. We've already received bushels of mail on the issue and, so far, gamers seem to be very divided over this radical change of direction for the series. Many have echoed your thoughts, slamming Nintendo for changing Link's look from the mature, beautifully rendered character model we saw battle Ganon at E3. Others retain their faith in the legendary game creator, heralding the new Zelda as a return to the innocent 8-bit days of gaming.

So, has Miyamoto become a crazy, washed-up old fool like George Lucas? Is the new Link the Jar Jar Binks of video games? Wesa not knowin'. Still, it's hard to argue with the man's track record, as he has made many of the greatest games in the history of the industry. By the way, what's this mysterious "something" you claim that he's smoking from his garden? Carrots? Plum tomatoes? Why would anyone smoke vegetables? Oh well, if that's what Shigeru needs to keep pumping out the classic titles, we're all for it.

THE AGE-OLD QUESTION

If a video game system dies and no one sees it, does it make a sound?

Dustin
Via att.net

We don't know. You'd have to ask Indrema.

PlayStation 2

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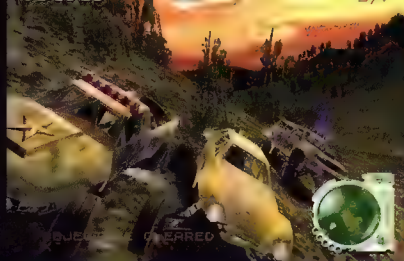
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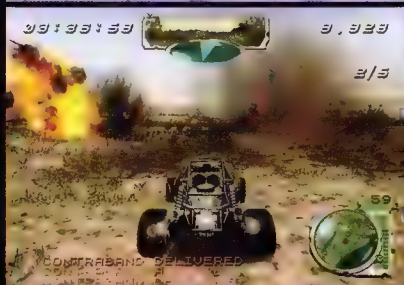
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Violence



GI NEWS



Bill Gates and Edward Glucksman at the Xbox launch event in New York



The GameCube launch lineup in New York



Kid: "Who do you think you are? No butting, pal!" Mario: "Itsa me, Mario!"

XBOX, GAMECUBE LAUNCH INTO HISTORY

The wait is finally over for **Microsoft** and **Nintendo** fans, but the battle for the hearts and thumbs of American gamers is just beginning. On November 15 and 18, the **Xbox** and **GameCube** launched, respectively. "I can't wait for it," said **Edward Glucksman**, who was later sold the first Xbox at a Times Square event in New York by none other than **Bill Gates** himself. Such a simple statement clearly exemplifies the headlong rush gamers are making toward the next generation of video gaming. Gates had his own take on the situation. "The future of gaming starts today, and it starts with Xbox. It's a great example of how Microsoft is innovating. But most important, it's incredibly cool."

Releasing three days later and in a much more low-key fashion, the impact of Nintendo's GameCube has been anything but small. Launching with 700,000 units, the successor to the **Nintendo 64**, at the time of this writing, had boasted earnings of \$100 million through the sale of GameCube consoles and related items. Investment banking firm **Goldman Sachs** held a survey days after the launch of the 'Cube, which estimated it had sold through 47% of its initial stock, while Bill's 'box went through 73% of its units. It may not sound overwhelming, but when you consider that these figures were based on Sachs' data that Microsoft only shipped 300,000 Xboxes on November 15, it looks like Nintendo may have won the first battle 329,000 units to 219,000 units. However, with a factory in Mexico reportedly pumping out as many as 27,000 consoles per day, Microsoft is confident it can meet its target of 1 to 1.5 million systems sent out at the end of 2001. Nintendo expects a total of 1.3 million

GameCubes shipped through the holiday season.

Isn't it all about the games, though? *Game Informer* spoke to some customers lined up at a Burnsville, Minnesota, **Software Etc.** for the midnight launch of the Xbox. Eighteen-year-old



Minnesota's first Xbox owner, Jim Heitke

Jim Heitke was first in line, and was among the many here who were buying **Halo** as their first Xbox title. Early data from Nintendo says **Luigi's Mansion** is the GameCube's top seller, followed very closely by **Star Wars: Rogue Leader**.

Although Heitke (who already owns a PlayStation 2) said that he did plan to eventually buy a GameCube, others were more split in their opinion. Sports fan **Carter Woodson** spoke for other Xbox fans when he

observed, "GameCube is more the younger market as far as I'm concerned." Being more blunt, **Josh Hanley** said, "I'm probably going to avoid it. A lot of places are already starting to shoot it down." Such battle lines have already been drawn, but these launches are just the beginning of a much larger console war.



Fans load up on Halo and other Xbox goodies

BILL GATES, MICROSOFT TALK ONLINE

Now that **Microsoft's Xbox** has hit retail, its next phase is starting the console's online plans. Apart from its built-in hard drive, which no other next-gen system has, the platform is unique in that it offers a broadband adapter right out of the box. At this time, both Microsoft and rival **Sony's** online plans are still up in the air. Moves are being made behind the scenes, but the era started by **Sega's Dreamcast** is still a new, uncharted horizon for the majority of console owners. Game Informer talked with the man himself, **Bill Gates**, who told us that online is a frontier gamers can look forward to with Microsoft. "Just like the Xbox itself, we're making the whole game experience the center of attention."

First off, **Infogrames' Unreal Championship** will be the marquee launch title for the platform's online campaign, which will include about four or five other games when it debuts this summer. This initial lineup of titles should see support from **Sega Sports** franchises, and there are ongoing talks about Xbox exclusives involving some massively multiplayer online properties. For its part, Microsoft says it now has about a dozen titles in development for online alone.

As for price, the console's General Manager, **J. Allard**, says, "The model it seems that's cemented in people's minds is the cable [TV] model. Give me a base service, don't make voice cost extra, don't nickel and dime me. It has to be cheap, but the price won't be zero."



Allard also talked about one-button matchmaking, but he cautioned us against thinking the Xbox was going to give itself up to all sorts of online extras. "No web browser, no instant messaging, no keyboard you have to add – none of that stuff. Online **PC** gaming is a great rollercoaster, but a lot of people aren't willing to deal with the parking situation." Sounds like he's talking about Sony's plans, and he is (flip the page for more on its deal with **AOL**). When we asked if Microsoft had plans to make the Xbox a Trojan horse for all sorts of other uses, he bristled. "You mean make it boring, make it like a PC? Make it uncomfortable, make it awkward like browsing the web on your television set? We want a game-centric service."

For all of Allard's protestations, the man at the top of the mountain, **Bill Gates**, wasn't as quick to put such tight perimeters on the Xbox's capabilities. He assured us that the console would be utilized in other, nongaming ways. "To the degree that there's online service, things that make sense, of course we'll work together with MSN so you can share your password, or account, or things like that. Anybody who wants any online stuff, sure we'll be as good as anybody else at that, but J's got a team there that's really pushing the frontier on the multiplayer side." Where will that leave the Xbox in relation to Sony and all its ambitious plans for the **PlayStation 2**? Right where Gates wants to be. "The history of gaming is an open-mindedness to new platforms, whether it was **Atari** being succeeded by **Nintendo** or Sega or Sony. If you can excite those game developers, you can have a super-successful platform. If we do super well with this, then you can look at what we do next. Nobody's really done two in a row, and what we've got here is a chance to be the leader."

MICROSOFT PUSHES PLAYSTATION 3

Amidst the hoopla surrounding **Microsoft's** first foray into the home console market and **Nintendo's** newest system, **PlayStation 2's** creator **Sony** is watching these events with keen interest. Not only to size up the competition to its current next-gen console, but also to eye what impact Microsoft and Nintendo will have on the nascent **PlayStation 3**.

With the **Xbox** only a month old, President and CEO of Sony, **Kunitake Ando**, is already feeling the heat. In a recent interview with Japan's Financial Times, Ando said that Bill's big black box would likely accelerate the industry enough so Sony would have to speed up its plans to bring the PS3 to market, due to Xbox's hard drive and Ethernet broadband adapter. "The biggest threat to the PlayStation 2 is that Xbox changes the industry's lifecycle," commented Ando. He also believes the business model for the PS2 might not be able to sustain itself should its life be shortened to only three years. Sony is already researching its third home video game console with partners such as **Toshiba** and **IBM**, and estimates a \$400 million, five-year cycle in order to develop the PS3. Production of this communication and broadband-orientated chip is slated to begin in 2004. Currently, Sony still hasn't broken even on the costs of manufacturing the PS2's chip.

What about Nintendo? Ando doesn't feel the storied manufacturers of **Mario** are a threat, citing the **GameCube's** lackluster launch in its homeland of Japan as an example. In fact, **Sony Computer Entertainment America's** President, **Ken Kutaraagi**, claims Sony decided not to develop a platform to rival the **Game Boy Advance**, to take attention away from the promotion and development of the PlayStation 2. This leaves Sony to ponder the question of when the time will be right for a PlayStation handheld or the PS3.



Artist's Rendition

GI NEWS



Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's Killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our godlike power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

RICHARD SIMMONS: TERRORIST BUSTER

Taking control of the flamboyant exercise fanatic, Richard Simmons, you are ordered to infiltrate enemy territory and convert the pudgy religious zealots who inhabit the region



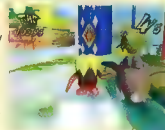
into oldies-sweating, oil-slicked, Deal-a-Meal salesmen. This won't be an easy job – General Phirmass will put you through a rigorous training regimen where you'll be denied your familiar supply of exercise

accouterments and styling salves. As you learn the covert techniques which will eventually build your sales army, you must design and choreograph the high-impact aerobics sessions which will win the hearts and minds of everyone in your area of operations. Just prior to jumping off into enemy territory, the 425th Airlift Wing will drop an emergency supply of hot-pants and perm conditioner to the needy citizens of your target area. With the natives lubed and thoroughly confused, all you'll have to do is waltz in with a song on your lips, a perm in your hair, a phalanx of overweight, middle-aged women to back you up, and an iron-clad sales pitch for a trim waist through sensible card-based eating.

NAME THAT GAME

Think of a Dreamcast launch title that was as distasteful as freezing your tongue on a rusty pipe, and this game most likely came to mind. It's not that we have anything against penguin-like alien creatures, or that we dislike racing. It's only when Infogrames decided to

bring these two tastes together, with an ice triathlon bent, that the whole thing started to melt under the inferno of its own crudapete. Eat the yellow snow before you buy this title.



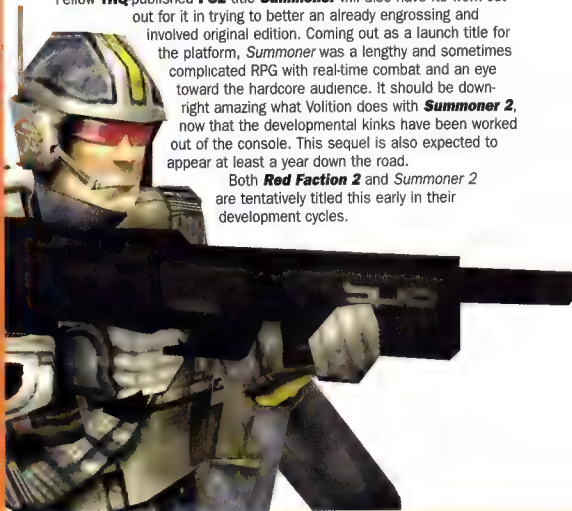
(Answer on page 38)

RED FACTION AND SUMMONER GET SEQUELS

Sequels are the norm these days, but for fans of **PlayStation 2/PC hit Red Faction**, a second installment of the first-person shooter couldn't come too soon. Developer **Volition** has already begun work on the title, and is expecting to ship it out in 2003. It is unknown if a new engine (as opposed to the **Geo-Mod's** remarkable persistent effects) is begin utilized for the project, or what new and exciting level design features will be at your disposal. Still, we imagine these features and a whole lot more will be yours to fiddle with.

Fellow **THQ**-published **PS2** title **Summoner** will also have its work cut out for it in trying to better an already engrossing and involved original edition. Coming out as a launch title for the platform, **Summoner** was a lengthy and sometimes complicated RPG with real-time combat and an eye toward the hardcore audience. It should be downright amazing what Volition does with **Summoner 2**, now that the developmental kinks have been worked out of the console. This sequel is also expected to appear at least a year down the road.

Both **Red Faction 2** and **Summoner 2** are tentatively titled this early in their development cycles.



SONY, AOL STRENGTHEN ONLINE BONDS

Sony and **AOL Time Warner** first announced their partnership at **E3 2001**. This initial deal involved bringing Internet access to the **PlayStation 2**. Now, the pair has broadened the details of their involvement. **Sony** and **AOL** are working on a jointly-developed Internet browser that will serve as a portal for a variety of content and services. More importantly, however, is their intent to create broadband home-networking gateway technologies that will tie together different Sony devices, including your PlayStation 2, under a uniform umbrella of network capabilities. As AOL Chairman **Steve Case** puts it: "The focus here is on trying to align our technologies, investment strategies and our platform strategies – particularly around broadband and home networking – because there's a recognition together that we can do far more than we could do separately."

Sega's Dreamcast wasn't compatible with AOL, the largest Internet service provider, which froze out many potential users. On the other hand, **PlanetWeb** co-founder, CEO, and President **Ken Sootoo** told *G/* that gamers won't have to fear the reverse: an AOL-only PS2 browser. "In America, you can't believe that Sony is just going to go with AOL and make it a closed ISP. My belief is that Sony is far, far more intelligent than that." This will open the door for companies like PlanetWeb, former suppliers of the Dreamcast's web browser, to step in and offer their own browsing solution.

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BLADE 2 COMETH FOR CONSOLES

Activision is betting on a new generation of consoles, and a new developer to push *Blade 2* over the top. The first incarnation was less than spectacular, but with the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and UK studio Mucky Foot behind it, this sequel should easily outshine its predecessor. Although *Blade 2* is not a tie-in to the New Line Cinema movie coming out this year, Activision's title will also feature Blade's battle against the undead through dynamic combat and his trademark boomerang weapon.

Blade 2 promises to not only have a combo system for combat, but will also involve chain attacks and an impressive mix of swords and guns along with the hand-to-hand melees. The game's unnamed engine will allow for fast, multi-directional fighting and breakable environments with realistic physics. All of these elements will be transposed upon a variety of mission objectives and plot twists. It is unknown if Whistler will be playable as in the first, but we expect many more surprises before its release this year.



THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

BAD - **Bleem** has closed its doors due to its constant legal troubles. The company was known for its emulation software that allowed gamers to play PS-X titles on the Dreamcast. Sony's lawsuit campaign against Bleem started in May 2000.

TOO BAD - **Tecmo** has filed a lawsuit in a Tokyo District Court against a Japanese company that has sold copies of the PlayStation 2 game *Dead or Alive 2* containing playable nude characters. Tecmo wants an injunction against the sale of the modified title and damages relating to its intellectual property. It's too bad Xbox's *Dead or Alive 3* now has to let its raging hard drive go to waste...



GOOD - **The Art Institutes International** at San Francisco is now offering a bachelor's degree in **Game Art & Design**. The curriculum includes everything from 3D modeling to the business side of the industry to classic art forms, and has been created by vets from companies such as **Sega**, **Konami**, **LucasArts**, and more.

GOOD - **Sega** has dropped the price of its Dreamcast to a measly \$50, down from \$80 previously. The console started out retailing for \$200, and is now well below basement bargain prices so that Sega can clear its remaining 200,000 units.

UGLY - **PS2's Seaman: Crazy Doctor's Experiment Island** has the surly one in and out of the water. Seaman now evolves into a lizard form, and berates you four times as much when you don't catch bugs for it to eat. The insects themselves even have faces. Now he's not only creepy and ugly, but his breath stinks, too - great.



LOOSE TALK

Whenever there's a juicy rumor in the industry, Game Informer experts are on it like a fly on stink. If loose lips are spraying hot gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. These leads may turn out to be 100% untrue, but then again, they could also be dead honest, and you've just learned about them months before anyone else! In the industry and need to get back at the boss who fired you by spilling some secrets? Email us at loosetalk@gameinformer.com and we'll be your shoulder to cry on.

Interplay's coveted license to produce three **Matrix** video games based on the movie may be in danger. Due to the company's financial problems, film studio **Warner Bros.** holds a contractual stipulation which states that it (WB) may terminate the license should Interplay change hands without Warner's approval. This fall, **Interplay** was taken over by **Titus Interactive**.

In a recent interview with Japanese magazine **Famitsu**, **Final Fantasy Tactics** and **Vagrant Story** creator **Yasumi Matsuno** spoke about the future and the evolution of those two titles. Matsuno-san said sequels aren't currently in production, but **Square** could see them as a necessity and make them with, or without, his input. He did add, however, that new installments would be alluring to him if they were fresh enough.

The remake of **Rollerball** hits the theaters around spring this year, and a video game is in the works to celebrate its futuristic death sport. Could this merely turn into a NFL Blitz-style game, or a slugfest with speed and sophistication? We'll have to wait and see.

Infogrames will probably not publish an Xbox sequel for **NASCAR Heat 2002**. Developer **Monster Games** has already started on **NASCAR Heat 2003** for PlayStation 2, but Infogrames hasn't decided what the future of the franchise is on Microsoft's platform, or if it will appear on Nintendo's GameCube at all.

Shedding its 2D heritage, **Loose Talk** has heard that **Capcom's** upcoming **Breath of Fire V** game will utilize full 3D for its characters and environments. The title is still in its infancy, but is being planned for a launch on the PlayStation 2 in 2003.

Electronic Arts hopes to smash the conception of the **GameCube** as a kids-only console. Its **James Bond** first-person shooter/action racer **Agent Under Fire** will be brought over to the GameCube in 2002.

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**THEY SAY THERE ARE ONLY
A FEW HEROES
LEFT ON THIS WORLD.
YOU, SOLDIER,
ARE ABOUT TO FIND OUT WHY.**



This is no place for subtlety. This is no place for pity. This is a place where aliens want to turn humans into a bad memory. This is a place where strategy matters indoors and out, where your weapons and vehicles are both human and alien. This is a place for carnage. This is HALO.™



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VIDEO GAME TRIVIA



Overwhelming guilt from the sins of 2001 have once again driven us to make resolutions for the new year, despite the fact that we didn't come close to keeping those made in years past. So this time, really become a better person — take this month's trivia quiz to decide which game-related oath to make.

Question 1: To cut back costs, Atari shipped over 200 of its Asteroids arcade units without the casing of another game. Do you remember which one it was?

- A. Breakout
- B. Missile Command
- C. Night Driver
- D. Lunar Lander

Question 2: We'll always have a soft spot in our hearts for the Atari 400. Who could forget Star Raiders? When Atari initially designed this machine, it was shrouded in secrecy under a codename. This nickname was actually the name of a secretary in the Atari offices. What was her name?

- A. Cindy
- B. Denise
- C. Candy
- D. Mandy

Question 3: The stages within Tempest would begin to repeat after a certain stage was conquered. What was the last true level in the game?

- A. 98
- B. 102
- C. 67
- D. 66

Question 4: What was the name of the main character in Delphine Software International's smash-hit, Flashback: The Search for Identity?



- A. Liam McDowell
- B. Steven Gannon
- C. Conrad Hart
- D. Charlie Clean

Question 5: What was the first console sports game to feature continuous play-by-play commentary?

- A. MLBPA Sports Talk Baseball
- B. Joe Montana II Sports Talk Football
- C. John Madden Football
- D. Double Dribble

Question 6: On a similar note, what was the first coin-operated game to feature speech?

- A. Stratovox
- B. Centipede
- C. Alpine Ski
- D. Qix

Question 7: What were the names of the three heroes who helped you with your gargoyle problem in Ultima VI: The False Prophet?

- A. Dante, Nile, Will
- B. Iolo, Dupre, Shamino
- C. Chance, Besper, Shillo
- D. Larry, Moe, Curly

Question 8: The first death recorded in video games was recorded in 1981. How in the world did this guy die playing a game?

- A. Showing off how tough he could be, a man tried to smash his Atari 2600 over his head as if it were a beer can. He perished instantly.
- B. Two college roommates got into a scuffle over who got the high score in Space Invaders, resulting in one man fatally stabbing the other with a screwdriver.
- C. A man suffered from a heart attack while playing Berzerk. You could say his heart went...Berzerk!!!
- D. In an attempt to get his money back, saying that the game cheated, a man repeatedly kicked and shook a Defender machine until it fell on him.

Question 9: In 1980, Namco produced four games, of which Pac-Man was one. All the Namco executives thought Pac-Man would do okay, but they felt the real blockbuster title was...?

- A. King and Balloon
- B. Tank Battalion
- C. Mappy
- D. Rally-X

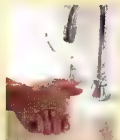
Question 10: A Game Genie code allowed you to perform Sub-Zero's spine-ripping Fatality in the censored Super Nintendo version of Mortal Kombat.

- A. True
- B. False

Score & Rank



1 Move to Japan and become Miyamoto's gardener



2-3 Wipe the boogers off of your fingers before touching the controller



4-8 Stop spending money on stupid things like food



7-9 Force Snake to quit smoking



10 Renew your subscription to Game Informer

SNK GOES UNDER

Developer and publisher **SNK** of Japan has decided to close its doors after more than two decades of faithful service to video gamers the world over. This is due to the fact that the company has gone bankrupt. In 2001, SNK had filed for a special form of bankruptcy in Japan in the hopes of being able to restructure itself.

SNK started out on the **NES** in 1987 and proceeded to branch out into making its own arcade board known as the **Neo Geo MVS** in 1990. This system was unique because it allowed gamers to play arcade-perfect games at home, thanks to its using the same cartridges as the home-based **Neo Geo** console. SNK went on to release an unsuccessful **Neo Geo CD** system, and ended its platform production with the **Neo Geo Pocket Color** handheld in 1999 here in the US. All the while, SNK brought gamers franchises such as **Ikari Warriors**, **King of Fighters**, **Fatal Fury**, **Samurai Showdown**, and of course, **SNK vs. Capcom**. If anything, SNK's devotion to 2D in a 3D next-gen universe, may be to blame for its demise.

This isn't exactly the end, however. Rumors say that the rights have been bought for the Neo Geo MVS system by an unknown company in order to still support the system. On the legal front, shareholders have sued parent company **Azure**

and some SNK executives in Japan. The plaintiffs contend that Azure and the others' actions directly caused SNK to go bankrupt. Below are excerpted farewell comments from the company's website.



It is with deepest grief that in the autumn of 2001, SNK will close the company history in its business. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your continuous help and assistance rendered to SNK since its incorporation in Japan in July, 1978. Without your support, SNK Corporation would not have been possible throughout 23 years of operation. With all our heart-felt gratitude, thank you once again!



49% of readers inquired about Matt's availability after his GI Trivia breast enlargement last month. No chance, he's staying in for some personal time tonight!

69% of editors wanted a year-end award called the "Most Likely to Induce Projectile Vomiting Similar to GBC's Shrek: Fairy Tale FreakDown" award, but decided that nothing came close

0% of editors thought that Xbox would be as good as it is

23% of Americans say the GI Droid has abducted them at least once, and that they were then probed with an Atari Jaguar controller

5% of Michael Jackson's face is real. That's the same percentage of Reinier's rump that isn't covered in pimples. Go figure.

DAY 27:

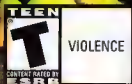
Killed Catalisks this morning by combining water, air and fire elements. Haven't saved the world yet. Really hungry.

DAY 37:

Fighting never ends.
Axion working overtime.
Baked grain.

DAY 42:

Spent day in "Fire" realm.
Got lost. Sure wish I had
"Backpacker's Guide to Perathia".



It's a journey to save a world, and all you have is one trusty axion. Combine the elements of fire, water, earth, and air to fight and explore your way through the 6 vast realms of Perathia. Prevent the apocalypse and, well, survive.



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THQ GETS A RAINBOW OF GAMES

THQ has signed a letter of intent to acquire developer **Rainbow Studios** by purchasing a million shares of its stock. Should this whole process be approved, Rainbow would become a wholly owned subsidiary of THQ. The publisher currently has another star studio, **Volition** (makers of **Red Faction**), already under its wing. The acquisition of Rainbow would put a formidable stable of creative talent at its disposal, and most likely propel THQ to the upper echelon of publishers.

"Our single greatest achievement through the years has to be the amazing talent we have assembled from all corners of the globe," said **Earl Jarred**, Chairman of Rainbow Studios. "I am delighted that they will now have even greater opportunities to succeed with the added strength and support of THQ behind them." Up until this point, the developers have amassed an impressive roster of games, including **PlayStation 2** titles such as **ATV Offroad Fury** and **Splishdown**. Currently, the company is at work on bringing both **Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2** and **Star Wars: Racer Revenge** to the console. It is fully expected that these and any other titles now in development which have signed onto publishers will continue to honor those contracts.

Neither THQ nor Rainbow Studios would comment on any video games it has planned due to this likely acquisition.



Splishdown

DATA FILE

► **GameCube** owners won't be able to watch DVDs on their new console, thanks to **Panasonic**. The company has declared that it will not bring over the GC/DVD combo unit that is currently on sale in Japan. It is expected that the unit's higher price and licensing agreements with Nintendo are behind the decision.

► Fresh off his **Metal Gear Solid 2** cover last month, artist **Todd McFarlane** is finding out it pays to be seen with **Game Informer**. Developer **Origin Systems** has hired McFarlane to create exclusive new characters for its February **Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge** game. This deal also includes two comic books and six action figures to be released by **McFarlane Toys**.

► **Destination Software** is already on the calendar for **Game Boy Advance** ports of **Take 2** titles like **Smuggler's Run** and **Midnight Club Street Racing**, but the ports just keep on rolling. 2002 will see handheld versions of **Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance**, **Medal of Honor Underground**, and **Road Rash: Jailbreak**. **Destination** is also currently developing the latter title for the **GameCube** late this year.

► RPG stalwarts can rejoice with the news that **GameArts' Lunar: The Silver Star** is being remade into a **Game Boy Advance** adventure called **Lunar Legends**. Due to hardware limitations, the game is said to be more similar to the **Sega CD** edition (**Gems FMV**), and is to come out in this February. Other differences include new monsters, new town and dungeon layouts, and an **Arts Gauge** system. **Lunar Legends** has not been picked up for US release yet.

► **Sony of America** has announced that it will release the **PlayStation 2 Linux** kit for American gamers. The kit serves as an operating system for a variety of software and can even be used as a development tool for programmers. The Japanese edition of Linux now comes with a 40GB hard drive, a USB keyboard and mouse, and a software DVD. **SOA** has stated that it will detail pricing and release info shortly.

► **SegaNet** services have now been set at a flat rate of \$9.95 per month for unlimited use. This is in addition to any additional ISP fees users may already pay. Additional features such as instant messaging, tournaments, and other privileges are now available. This new rate applies to all games except **Phantasy Star Online Ver. 2**, which is on separate servers that charge \$15 for every three months of playtime.

GI INTERVIEWS JADE COCOON 2'S KATSUYA KONDOU



Katsuya Kondou

Katsuya Kondou is one of the premier animators, animation directors, and character designers for Studio Ghibli in Japan. He has been instrumental in such films as Princess Mononoke and My Neighbor Totoro. In the video game world he has created the characters of Jade Cocoon and Jade Cocoon 2 (now available from Ubi Soft for the PlayStation 2). Gi recently had a brief conversation with this gifted artist.

ideas of yours that couldn't be realized on the console?

KK: I think I was able to do a job as efficiently as possible, primarily because I was able to work successfully with the development team. Hardware is just like a painting material, so if the one who uses it, uses it well, the method of expression will further expand. In this sense, I wanted to bring out the 3D graphics, which is one of the strengths of PlayStation 2 hardware. I put my effort in creating design that is 3D conscious.

GI: Did you have any input in how your art worked with the game's story, breeding system, or any other gameplay mechanics?

KK: Since this was the team project, I exchanged various opinions with the game development staff about gameplay mechanics and so forth. I trust the team that was involved with the development of **Jade Cocoon 2**. I was continuously involved with the staff about the character motion, and the balance of modeling during the development process.

GI: Do you get into video games? If so, whose art or character designs do you admire and why?

KK: It's embarrassing, but until I did the **Jade Cocoon** project, I seldom had a chance to get into video games. Through this project, however, I was getting into characters that exist in the 3D space, and experienced how fun it is to converse in the game. So, I really don't know much about other video games. They look interesting, though.

GI: Have you ever thought of bringing **Princess Mononoke** or any other of your movie/TV creations to the world of video games?

KK: I have never thought of that, as [Studio] Ghibli's characters are not my possessions.

GAME INFORMER (GI): As an artist who has done feature-length animated movies, what does working on a video game offer you?

KATSUYA KONDOU (KK): I became involved with video games by a coincidence. One day, the PR person from **Genki** [Jade Cocoon's developer] called me at home. I couldn't believe that Genki was asking for me to help them! I had not worked on video games before and I was working on freelance-based projects. So, I thought, "It's not a bad idea to try different things," thereby not limiting my activities to animation only.

GI: What were the challenges to a **Jade Cocoon** sequel?

KK: There was not anything in particular, but if I have to choose one... For many different reasons, the volume of the game is much more than the previous **Jade Cocoon**, so there were a lot more resources. Furthermore, there was a lot of trial and error that took place in designing, under the technology unique to the game development. I paid close attention to flawless designs that would not lose the image, even after being converted into 3D image.

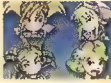
GI: What was it like being able to work with something as powerful as the **PlayStation 2** this time around? Were there any



Kahu



Birdman

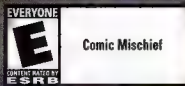
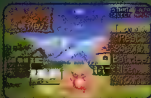


Sweet Nights

THEY'RE BACK,
and
THEY'RE ADVANCED
and
THEY'RE READY TO GO!



All the fun and adventure of the best-selling Monster Rancher series is now available in the palm of your hand on Game Boy® Advance! Take your ranching on the road or in the car with popular pals Suzzo, Mocchi and Tiger. Befriend your monster, train it extensively, enter it in exciting tournament battles, and even breed it with other monsters to enhance its skills even more! The advanced generation system lets you create unique monsters by mixing different combinations of letters and numbers (from 4-8 digits). With Monster Rancher Advance the possibilities are endless!



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Can a Vision

Forever



Alter

*the Landscape
of Gaming?*

PlayStation



The Final Fantasy franchise was born in 1987 by a struggling company named Square Co., LTD. At the time, Square was focused mainly on supporting Nintendo's Famicom Disk Drive system. As fate would have it, the Japanese market didn't embrace this machine, and it soon faded into obscurity. With all its funding invested heavily into developing and publishing games for the Disk Drive, Square found itself on the verge of collapse and was about to close its doors forever. As bankruptcy drew near, a talented young man named Hironobu Sakaguchi brought an idea to the table. Sakaguchi proposed that Square funnel all of its available funds into one last game that would give Enix's popular Dragon Quest series a run for its money.

there will always be room for two role-playing games.

Within the United States, a different story is unfolding. Dragon Warrior (the American name for Dragon Quest) is but a faint, nostalgic memory for most. Back in the day, Enix owned the U.S. market, electrifying the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) with several amazing installments. Square's solitary Final Fantasy release was well received, but it couldn't compete with Enix's ever-expanding empire. When the Super Nintendo made its debut, the much heated role-playing war ended abruptly. Square brought forth another amazing Final Fantasy adventure, but Enix was nowhere to be seen. In what can best be described as one of the worst decisions to ever be made in

stock at the box office, but Square is still determined to incorporate aspects of this medium into its new breed of Final Fantasy games. This, of course, means the deconstruction of the classic formula that gamers can't seem to get enough of. Even without witnessing these alterations firsthand, fans of the series have voiced their concerns and disapproval – with the underlying voice simply questioning why Square would make such a risky gamble.

To this day, the PlayStation 2 hardware has not been favorable to Square Soft. DRIVING Emotion Type-S flopped, and The Bouncer didn't live up to expectations. The hype toward the newest chapter in Square's favorite franchise, Final Fantasy X, is high, but gamers have their



FINAL FANTASY X

ironically, the game was entitled Final Fantasy. It was an appropriate name, as many felt the game might be the last ever released by Square.

As Sakaguchi predicted, this swan song release did in fact rival the success of Dragon Quest, and propelled Square into the hotseat of gaming. To this day, Enix and Square are still locked in heated battle, continually trying to outperform one another with each passing release. Recently, Enix's production has faltered, taking nearly four years to complete the seventh installment of the Dragon Quest series. Even with a steady stream of new Final Fantasy games, Square couldn't diminish the Japanese fans' affection for the Dragon Quest franchise. On the day of its release, Dragon Quest VII flew off retailer shelves and eventually became Japan's biggest PlayStation title with over 4 million units sold. Square may have made a name for itself with Final Fantasy, but within the hearts of Japanese gamers,

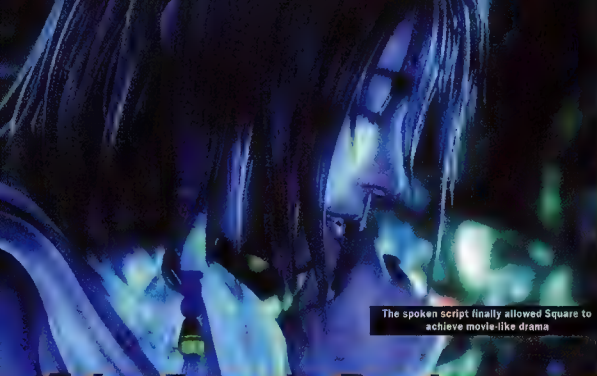
video games, Enix elected to make Dragon Quest V and VI Japanese exclusives. Not one Dragon Warrior game was released within the five-year lifespan of the Super Nintendo. Square didn't bring every Final Fantasy to the States, either, but there were more than enough titles to win over the hearts of American gamers. Square basically won the war by default.

As time progressed, the role-playing genre grew by leaps and bounds. Final Fantasy painted the path and pushed the envelope. Just a few months ago, Enix tried to make a comeback with the release of Dragon Warrior VII, but it was too little, too late. Eventually, Enix may make a resurgence, but for the time being, Final Fantasy is considered by fans and critics alike to be the premier role-playing series.

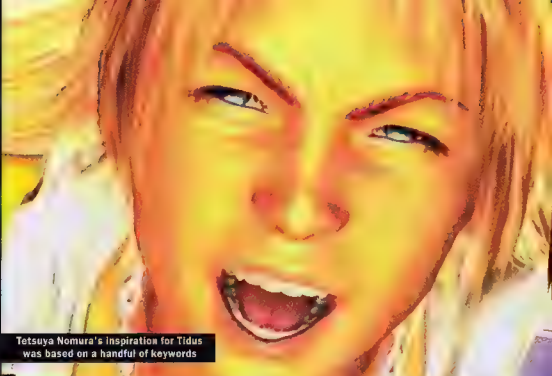
As video games embark into the future, the Final Fantasy franchise will undergo a series of changes. Square Soft has always been fond of motion pictures, and even released a Final Fantasy film of its own. It became a laughing

reservations – almost predicting that this new direction won't fare well.

With Sakaguchi filling the role of Executive Producer again, and longtime veterans like Yoshinori Kitase, Hiroshi Kuwabara, Tetsuya Nomura, and Nobuo Uematsu reunited, we question, "How could this game go wrong?" This is Square's biggest project to date. Over 100 programmers and artists labored for three years to piece this monstrous title together, and now, at long last, judgement day is upon us. We're sure you have a ton of questions. Is Final Fantasy X a worthy entry into the series? Does the cinematic angle fit into the overall picture? Is the gameplay still as prominent as before? Our answer is a resounding, "Yes!" We'll even go as far as to say that this is the best Final Fantasy title since the masterpiece, Final Fantasy VI (titled Final Fantasy III for its US SNES release). After playing the game in its entirety, we have a feeling that a majority of Final Fantasy fans will say it's the greatest chapter yet.



The spoken script finally allowed Square to achieve movie-like drama



Tetsuya Nomura's inspiration for Tidus was based on a handful of keywords

Tales From the Development Team

The development of Final Fantasy X ended months ago, yet Square Soft's Japanese studio remains busy. Not one, but two Final Fantasy follow-ups are already well underway. If you've been with us for the last year, you've read more than enough about Final Fantasy X. Instead of regurgitating the same information, we decided to look elsewhere for an editorial angle. As luck would have it, we were fortunate enough to speak with the FF X team (who are now laboring away at Final Fantasy XII) about the new direction the franchise is taking and what steps were taken in creating the first PlayStation 2 installment. Everyone from Square jumped at the opportunity to voice their opinions, and give us the skinny on what it took to piece this game together.

The Director, Yoshinori Kitase, confidently voiced, "I believe there is no element absolutely essential to a Final Fantasy's success — but making drastic changes between consecutive installments can be quite risky. Final Fantasy I and Final Fantasy II had several notable differences, but the overall feel of the game carried over in the sequel. You can make similar arguments while comparing FF II and FF III, and FF III and FF IV. But contrasting FF I and FF VI is like comparing apples and oranges. You can't draw any similarities between FF VI and FF X, either."

"In other words, a shortsighted view of the series reveals connections between installments, but if you take a broader view, you realize Final Fantasy has evolved, as if it has a life of its own. And it will continue to evolve. As you know, Final Fantasy X

does not use the ATB system or a world map, both of which are traditional FF features. Who knows, someday there may be no more Cid or chocobos."

As seen on the silver screen in the Square Films' *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, Hironobu Sakaguchi veered as far away from the traditional formula as much as he possibly could. The end result didn't fare well. Gamers were disappointed with the disconnection from the series' roots. Of course, this was a different entertainment medium. The movie could never have a running time of 60 hours, nor could it show characters leveling up before a boss fight. On the game side, and as we've just witnessed with Final Fantasy X, Square is definitely moving in a different direction. This step into the future may not embody every minute detail of the existing universe, as Kitase has pointed out, but if Square goes about this intelligently, each new game will still feel like another Final Fantasy installment.

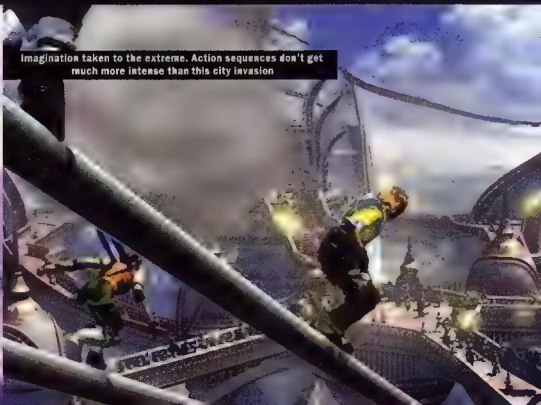
Well before Final Fantasy X entered development, Kitase knew he wanted to separate this adventure from the rest of the pack, beginning with the overall design. "Final Fantasy VI and VII shared a similar, highly industrial, cyberpunk-style setting. Final Fantasy VIII had a modern setting with a stylish feel reminiscent of classic movies. And the setting of Final Fantasy IX resembled medieval Europe. Before Final Fantasy X, I was quite fond of the world of Final Fantasy VII. But looking back now, I think movies and novels influenced past Final Fantasy worlds one way or another — FF VII's affinities to *Blade Runner*, for

instance. With FF X, I believe we managed to break away from existing fantasy world concepts and create a unique world. It is now my favorite."

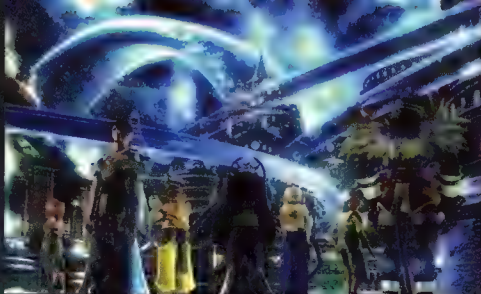
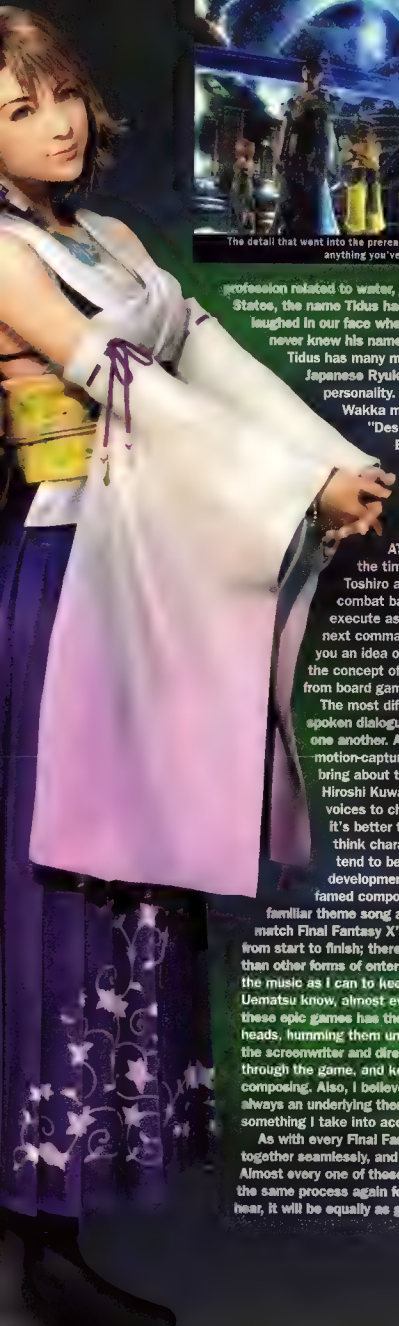
The inclusion of the story is a multi-tiered process that affects every department. Scenario Writer, Kazushige Nojima, filled us in. "First off, I write the main plot and setting for the story and explain it to the development team for them to understand. Then, I have them present their own ideas. I then gather all the interesting ideas and incorporate them into the overall picture. Once we've gone through this process a number of times, the details seem to fall into place. Of course, if there's a certain scene I definitely want to do, or a particular line I want spoken in the game, I'll make no concessions. [laughs]"

The next step was to begin developing the environments. Kitase says it best, "FF X's world setting and plot were already in place, so we used them as a foundation to create an epic feel in the environments' visual design. The decision to go with the quasi-Asian style was easy. When the graphic side and the script side of the team got together to discuss their ideas, it just so happened that they were all on the same page."

As for the design of the characters, Square once again enlisted the talents of Tetsuya Nomura. "For FF X, I was given a rough scenario with brief character descriptions. For example, Tidus was created from the following key words: main character, seventeen years old, energetic, a



Imagination taken to the extreme. Action sequences don't get much more intense than this city invasion



The detail that went into the prerendered (and rendered) environments simply crushes anything you've seen in a Final Fantasy game



COVER STORY

The loss of the ATB system and implementation of true turn-based actions opens up thousands of new strategies

profession related to water, jock, looks different from others." In the States, the name Tidos has its obvious ties to water, but Nomura laughed in our face when we brought this to his attention. "I never knew his name had a water elemental theme; I guess Tidos has many meanings. Tidos means 'sun' in the Japanese Ryukyu dialect. It's supposed to represent his personality. And Yuna means 'moon, flower,' and Wakka means 'water.'" Nomura also added, "Designing Chocobos is a difficult process. Even as they become more realistic, they still have to look cute."

The Battle Director, Toshiro Tsuchida, was also pushed to try and think outside of the box. "I was afraid that it wouldn't be as exciting as the ATB system since the player can take all the time he wants before taking his turn." Toshiro adds, "We addressed this through combat balance, making inputted commands execute as quickly as possible, and making the next command window pop up sooner." Just to give you an idea of where Tsuchida looked for inspiration, the concept of the Sphere Grid system came to him from board games like Monopoly.

The most difficult process was the incorporation of spoken dialogue. The characters couldn't just speak to one another. A wide variety of camera techniques and motion-captured movements were necessities to bring about the true essence of realism. CG Director Hiroshi Kuwabara had this to say, "Synchronizing voices to characters' lips is more work, but I think it's better to have voice, because it adds drama. I think characters who actually speak their lines tend to be more vivid." To round out the development process, Square went back to the famed composer, Nobuo Uematsu, to revamp the familiar theme song and create a score that would perfectly match Final Fantasy X's settings. "Many games have music from start to finish; therefore, they often require more music than other forms of entertainment. I try to add as much variety to the music as I can to keep the player interested." Little does Uematsu know, almost every gamer who immerses themselves in these epic games has these tracks forever embedded in their heads, humming them unconsciously. Uematsu continued, "I ask the screenwriter and director what they most want to convey through the game, and keep their answers in mind while I'm composing. Also, I believe that the importance of friendship is always an underlying theme in the Final Fantasy series, which is something I take into account as well."

As with every Final Fantasy before it, all of these pieces came together seamlessly, and every aspect melds in perfect unison. Almost every one of these legendary figures is now going through the same process again for Final Fantasy XII, and from what we hear, it will be equally as groundbreaking as Final Fantasy X.




Lucii! Let's go!

Implementing the spoken dialogue was the most burdensome component within the development process



The year 2001 was arguably the greatest, most exciting 365 days in video game history. Next-generation consoles have taken the forefront, with the launch of Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's GameCube. PlayStation 2 has hit its sophomore stride after a shaky first year. Game Boy Advance brought about a new, stronger era of handheld gaming. This year also leaves a lingering of sadness, though, as we must bid adieu to the perennially software-starved Nintendo 64, and the potential-filled favorite that was the Sega Dreamcast.

With all the activity, and the bumper crop of quality software that piled on our desks and robbed us of our free time, selecting the best of the best was even more difficult than it has been in the past. Still we soldiered forth, compiling a list of what we feel are the ten greatest titles released this year. You may not agree with all of our selections. In fact, with so many great games out there, we almost guarantee you won't. Feel free to argue amongst yourselves. In the meantime, Game Informer is pleased to present the Games of 2001.



GAMES OF 2001

10

Star Wars Rogue Leader

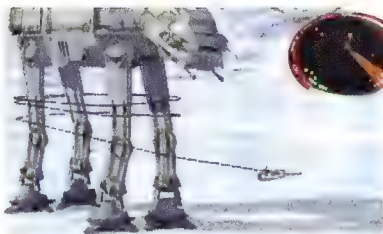
Platform: GameCube
Developer: Factor 5
Publisher: LucasArts

Star Wars fans are extremely passionate, but they haven't had too many great games to feed their obsession. This year had plenty of Lucas-licensed stinkers, with Super Bombad Racing and Galactic Battlegrounds the most notable. PlayStation 2's Starfighter almost made up for these bombs, but nothing made us forgive and forget like Rogue Leader on GameCube. A sequel to N64's Rogue Squadron, this release contains the most stunning space battles ever seen in video games, consisting of dozens of TIEs, X-Wings, and Star

Destroyers blasting endless laser fire at one another. Battles also take place on Hoth, Cloud City, and other points of interest. No game has ever captured the look and feel of Star Wars like Rogue Leader. This is just one more reason to thank God for George Lucas, and a great reason to invest in a GameCube.

"...reminded me of why I love Star Wars."

- Kato



9

Halo

Platform: Xbox
Developer: Bungie Software
Publisher: Microsoft

Console first-person shooters, once far inferior to their PC relatives, hit a bumper crop this year. It seemed like each new one set the precedent for all to follow. Red Faction was an early favorite, but the first Xbox FPS smites even that game with ease. War is erupting around you, but thankfully you are the Master Chief, with more

"The most impressive first-person shooter consoles have ever seen."

- Andy

firepower than most Middle Eastern nations, and have the ability to use weapons from the Covenant, your extraterrestrial adversaries. Allies will help you out in the massive battles — just make sure not to hit them with friendly fire. Getting behind the wheel or on the wing of vehicles is just part of the job description. The smoothness of control is unparalleled, and the action is seamless. Halo stands tall as the best Xbox has to offer.



GAMES OF 2001

Lifetime Achievement Award (Posthumous) **DREAMCAST**

This is one time that we hated being right. Of course, it's one of the only times we were right, but that's beside the point. The point is that Dreamcast is dead, and the world is minus one high-quality video game console. After the most successful launch in gaming history, things only seemed to go downhill. We asked if Dreamcast was "ready to blow, and that's just what it did. With losses piling up, stockholders angry, and third parties abandoning ship, Sega made the announcement on January 31 that it would cease production of the console, and only support it until year's end. Since then we've seen some great titles (Crazy Taxi 2, Sega's 2K2 sports line, Phantasy Star Online, etc.), but the era is over. Alas, poor Dreamcast — we barely knew ye.



Most Inspiring Performance By a Video Game Character **SOLID SNAKE**

He's tough as nails, deadly as a cobra, and the only video game character who still believes mullets are in fashion. In Metal Gear Solid 2, we got to see a different side of Solid Snake. The game probed deep into his personality and showed us that Snake actually is human. We also learned, in a quite clever fashion we might add, that his favorite film is Escape From New York. Early on in the game, we also had the pleasure of seeing how Solid Snake handles a sidekick. Batman and Robin? No. More like Laurel and Hardy. The emotional and comedic values that Solid Snake expresses truly are second to none.



**Best Love Scene
In a Video Game**
FEAR, EFFECT 2, RETRO HELIX

What can we say? We are boys who like girls who like girls like they're boys. From their stressful jobs as assassins, Hana and Rain have become very close, and find comfort in each other's company. Their "relationship" results in many warm and touching moments in Eidos' PS-X action/adventure title. This is the stuff most late-night Cinemax movies are made of, but this time it occurred in a very heated PlayStation game. Even the ad was a little too risqué for most publications. We say let them do what they want — as long as we can watch.



Best Ending In a Video Game
CONKER'S BAD FUR DAY

As one of the funniest games out there, it's only natural for Rare's last N64 title, Conker's Bad Fur Day, to have the most madcap ending as well. After defeating the difficult end boss, Conker thinks he's in the clear. Then an alien (heavily inspired by the movie of the same name) shows up, and it looks like curtains. Thankfully, the game locks up. Through some bargaining with the programmers, Conker gains access to heavy artillery, *Matrix*style! With the firm advantage, Conker decapitates his final foe, and saves the day. The end result of him becoming king is far from what he wanted, though — he'd rather have a beer.



8

**The Legend of
Zelda: Oracle of
Ages**

Platform: Game Boy Color
Developer: Capcom/Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo

A great game doesn't need to utilize the most modern technology to stand out. The original Legend of Zelda, released on the NES approximately 15 years ago, rated #1 in our Top Games of All Time feature a few issues back. Oracle of Ages on Game Boy Color maintains that classic style, but goes off on its own with many modern video game features, such as adding replay through finding rings and planting trees. Time travel is nothing new to Zelda fans, but having Capcom

develop instead of Shigeru Miyamoto is, Oracle of Seasons, released at the same time as Ages, is also an instant classic, but this one gets the nod, as well as the distinction of being the only portable game in the top ten this year.

**"Capcom does
Miyamoto
proud."**

— Justin



7

Devil May Cry

Platform: PlayStation 2
Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Capcom

Previous survival horror games — mainly Capcom's Resident Evil — had you running scared, as legions of freakish undead slowly lurched toward your frail hide. Devil May Cry turns the tides, and makes the baddies haul booty away from you. Dante, the half-demon hero of the tale, is adept at both firearm and melee combat, dispatching hundreds of foes in a gorgeous gothic setting. His powers keep increasing, until Dante unleashes his full demonic potential. Devil May Cry is the natural progression of old-school classics like Castlevania. We have full faith in the genius of Shinji

**"...the demon king of
action/adventure
for all eternity."**

— Justin



**Best New Character
In a Video Game**
ICO

The star of PlayStation 2's *ICO* is a character to whom the youth of today can relate. Ico is horny, which has gotten him in a world of trouble. But all those youngsters out there can also look up to him, because he's got a fine honey on his tip, the Princess, who follows him everywhere he goes. Both Ico's past and present are intriguing, and he proves you don't need polygonal cleavage to make a successful action/adventure quest.



6

Max Payne

Platform: PC
Developer: Remedy
Publisher: Gathering of Developers/3D Realms

As mainly console gamers, it isn't too often that we get excited about a PC game. When Max Payne arrived in our offices, though, we all gathered around, amazed. The game follows the violent story of Max, a man with nothing to lose. When you're in that situation, apparently, you spend the majority of your time raining gunfire upon any shady character in your path. Works for us – in video games, that is (kids,

don't try this at home). Plot development is done with sweet comic-book-style storyboards that also add some humor to the action-centric gameplay. What wows us the most is the flo-mo sequences. Mimicking bullet-time from *The Matrix*, Max Payne's action slows down dramatically as he dives and fires, while your aiming is still in real-time. Although lacking a tad in creativity, this feature adds immensely to Max Payne's experience, and helps place it among this year's elite.

"...non-stop, pulse-pounding, spine-tingling, ass-kicking action."

– Kristian


**Twisted Metal:
Black**

Platform: PlayStation 2
Developer: IncoG, Inc.
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment America

We had all but lost hope in the Twisted Metal franchise when it was taken away from the able-bodied development team of SingleTrac and given to Sony's in-house 989 Studios. Always one to learn from its mistakes, though, Sony let IncoG, Inc., made up of old SingleTrac employees, do the dirty work on the series' first PS2 effort. We suspect no one could be happier with the finished product. Environmental interactivity reached a new level, allowing you to turn thriving landscapes into parking lots. Also hitting

previously unattainable lengths is the dark, macabre atmosphere of TM:B. We stared, jaws dropped in amazement, as the hideous, disturbed stories unfolded for each and every character in the game. You can't help but feel dirty and evil for playing Twisted Metal: Black, but you also can't stop playing.

"...everything I could have wanted on PlayStation 2 and more."

– Andy

**Best New Villain
In a Video Game**
THE GREAT MIGHTY POO

Some of us inadvertently use foul language when we're gaming, but nothing that has ever come out of our mouths is near as putrid as The Great Mighty Poo, perhaps the funniest thing in Rare's hilarious Conker's Bad Fur Day on N64. It's just as it sounds: a giant mountain of feces. That's not all, though – he sings! Instead of talking err...smack to Conker, he belts out a solo. You can even follow the bouncing nugget and sing along. In order to defeat him, you must chuck rolls of toilet paper in his mouth and avoid his brown missiles.



Blunder Of The Year XBOX CONTROLLER

Microsoft claims to have received input from thousands of gamers and industry insiders when designing the controller for its next-gen console. Too bad it didn't listen to any of them (or us!). Feeling much like a third-pound burger with all the fixins, this controller may be the biggest (no pun intended) hurdle in the way of Xbox's success. You know things are bad when we're surprised anytime this contraption handles well while playing a game. Good thing Mad Katz made a hands-friendly third-party controller.



Best Graphics In a Video Game DEAD OR ALIVE 3

Never has the term "power of Xbox" rung truer than in Tecmo's fighting opus, *Dead or Alive 3*. In-house developer Team Ninja went above and beyond what we thought possible with in-game character models, environments, and animation. It's one thing to make robots or fantasy creatures look good, but to create human characters like this is unbelievable. *DOA 3*'s models have flowing hair, tensing muscles, heaving (ample) chests, and more points of articulation than one could count. Snow crunches underfoot and leaves flutter about in the ensuing fray. You can throw adversaries through windows, over balconies, and off cliffs. Most CG scenes aren't even this amazing. *Dead or Alive 3* is truly a feast for the eyes and the soul.



Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec

Platform: PlayStation 2
Developer: Polyphony Digital
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment America

Even though it may have stalled at the starting line, *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec* finally saw the light of day this year, and shined brighter than any driving simulation before it. Its lineage gave it plenty to live up to, but GT 3 and Polyphony Digital drove on unabated, leaving all other racers eating their dust.

The finest models from manufacturers around the globe were licensed and cloned into digital

form. All 160-plus vehicles are meticulously detailed, from the contour of their hood to the sound of their exhaust. Wrench-heads will be in heaven once engrossed in the all-fine-tuning options to squeeze every last ounce of horsepower out of their car. We're talking selecting different intercoolers, intake systems, and drivetrains. Of course, you'll need to pass a new series of tests to get your racing license to begin with. This is definitely not a game where all you do is hold down the gas button the entire time.

The number of races and tracks are endless, as is the splendor of each environment. Rays of sunlight peek through an overhang of tree branches. Photo-realistic spectators cheer on the competitors. The car models themselves couldn't look better, with visible drivers, particle effects, and impressive reflections.

If you need a breather from all the simulation aspects of GT 3, Arcade Mode provides more thrills than your average driving game. Add Rally, iLink compatibility, and steering-wheel support, and you have the heftiest helping of vehicular bliss imaginable. We can't forget to mention Snoop Dogg's offering on the soundtrack. *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec* is the racing game that all other titles will be judged against for years to come. Pity them.



**"The controls are
as true to life as
can be."**

- Reiner



3

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

Platform: PlayStation 2/GameCube
Developer: Neversoft
Publisher: Activision

It was almost an impossible task for Neversoft to improve upon Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2, the game we ruled the best of 2000. But, like Tony Hawk and his unbelievable 900, the developer has pulled it off. We knew the next generation of Pro Skater would have good things in store, but we had no idea the lengths in which this series would advance in one year's time.

The next-gen jump has brought forth infinite enhancements. Gone is the painful draw distance from Tony 2, which was just about the only complaint we could've had about that game. Keeping with the tradition set by Pro Skater 2's Manual, the Revert means combos can now be continued even after vertical and lip tricks. While the engine and physics are new, you still get the same Tony Hawk feel you've become so accustomed to.

Many of the levels are extremely large, and completing some goals will even change the entire face of them. Tony 3 on PlayStation 2 even stays ahead of the curve by offering online play before Sony itself did, thanks to USB modem support. A sense of community has been established where all the skaters share clothes and special tricks like old-school chums. Those who haven't forgotten Hawk's roots will be pumped to see that many of the first game's levels are hidden away. Also ripe for the unlocking is the wildest array of secret characters imaginable.

If Tony 3 was such a great improvement over top honor-garnering Tony 2, then why didn't it in turn receive the #1 spot in 2001? It was a much tighter race this time around, and the two games above it are a bit more epic in their scope. We take nothing away from the brilliance of this game, and we have no doubt we'll be playing it long after Neversoft hits us with its next shot. The competition couldn't hang with Tony 2; we suspect they will never even come close to grasping Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3's greatness.



GAMES OF 2001

Best Video Game Developer **RAINBOW STUDIOS**

Many companies produced hits of mammoth proportions this year, but we put much thought into who deserved this award.



Rainbow Studios was responsible for two amazing

games this year—*TV Offroad Fury* and *Splashdown*. These racing titles received scores of 9.25 and 9 respectively, making them gems in a sometimes coiffed genre. Both also redefined realistic video game physics. Another feather in the Phoenix-based company's cap was the critically acclaimed *Motocross Madness 2*. PC. Good things are in store for Rainbow's future, as well, with the announcement that Activision hired them to develop *Mad Max: Hoffman's* on the Xbox.

Best Video Game Soundtrack **GRAND THEFT AUTO III**

One route to a good soundtrack is to spend some scratch to get a bunch of licensed, popular songs, and leave it at that. We've seen it many times, and we don't necessarily hate the end product (unless it has Limp Bizkit or Smash Mouth, of course).



Since *Grand Theft Auto III* is an extraordinary game, DMA Design and Rockstar wanted an extraordinary soundtrack. When you're in a vehicle, there are nine different radio stations to choose from, each with its own format and personalities. Game Radio has hip-hop for all the hustlaz, Treble Clef is classical-style opera. MSX plays drum n bass for your bass kickers. Rise FM has a dancy, party mix. K-Jah is reggae (one love).



Flashback plays '80s pop. Chatterbox is all talk radio starring Lazlow. Finally, both Lips 106 and Head Radio are clichéd pop spoofs. Twenty clever commercials from fictional companies like PetsOvernight.com break up the toe-tapping hits. All told, there is over five hours of musical stimulation good enough to make you stop the violence just to listen.

"...simply crushes everything you've become accustomed to."

- Reiner

GAMES OF 2001

Best Sleeper Game Of The Year ADVANCE WARS

A sleeper is defined as a game that, while being a solid release, doesn't have much financial support or hype surrounding it. Advance Wars is the type of game that you may look at and scoff, but will become hopelessly enthralled in if you give it a chance. Bringing back the hexagonal combat grid of classics like Herzog Zwei on Genesis and TurboGrafx's Military Madness, Advance Wars stages massive turn-based warfare on the tiny Game Boy Advance. This game is huge, demanding you invest at least three hours for a tutorial before you can even start the normal campaign. It's well worth the time, effort, and blank stares your friends will give you when you tell them it's your favorite game.



Worst Game Of The Year SHREK: FAIRY TALE FREAKDOWN

You must take the bad with the good in video games, and it doesn't get any worse than Shrek on Game Boy Color. The first game to come out of TDK's games division, Fairy Tale FreakDown hit a bulls-eye on the bottom of the barrel in terms of graphics, gameplay, and just about everything else we judge games on. The characters had less than a handful of moves and animations, the one-song score never stopped, and we couldn't play it without hollering in agony. Shrek: Fairy Tale FreakDown would have been a stinker if it was downloadable freeware, but charging money for it is borderline offensive.



Grand Theft Auto III

Platform: PlayStation 2
Developer: DMA Design
Publisher: Rockstar Games

We have all dreamed of a day when a game would allow us to feel like part of an actual, thriving world in which we could do almost anything our twisted minds could desire. DMA Design spent years in making this possible, and Grand Theft Auto III is a success of massive proportions. The first two titles in the series were interesting, but the primitive, overhead graphics and vexing control made immersion an impossibility.

In this third installment, as Liberty City's numero uno escaped felon at large, you traverse miles of terrain on foot and in dozens of vehicles, making a dishonest living as a thug for hire. Intricate jobs like rigging cars with explosives, sniping rival gang members, and transporting contraband will lead to big money and advancement opportunities – but always be mindful of the doublecross. The three sections of Liberty City are comprised of the upper crust and the rotting cesspool of big-city living. Every shade of local color is represented, both in the citizens and the nooks and crannies of this thriving metropolis.

Thinking outside the box in Grand Theft Auto III is both encouraged and rewarding, as you can commit nearly every violent act known to man. Pull a drive-by, perform a baseball bat beat-down, toss a few grenades, or just use whatever vehicle is within reach as a deadly weapon. Police, EMTs, and the fire department are all there to clean up after your messes; however, even they can be exploited for your amusement. Grand Theft Auto III isn't just a bloody romp, though. Hitting insane jumps, finding 100 hidden packages, and carting passengers in a stolen taxi will keep you out of trouble for more than a few hours. A menu full of stats shows just how far away you are from finishing every task offered in the game, but you'll be elated by the fact that you haven't scratched the surface of this addictive and innovative masterpiece.

"Point blank – you need to buy this game."

– Matt



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VIOLENCE

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Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty

Platform: PlayStation 2
Developer: Konami Computer Entertainment Japan
Publisher: Konami



Making the perfect game is far from an easy task. In fact, up until now, it was a feat that had yet to be accomplished. It took video game visionary Hideo Kojima and his team years of hard work in solitude, but by all accounts (including a first-ever unanimous 1.0 rating from Game Informer) they have achieved the impossible: Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty is the perfect game.

Metal Gear on NES was ahead of its time, and Metal Gear Solid for PlayStation had us enthralled with its cinematic plot, but nothing can prepare you for the roller coaster ride of emotion and adrenaline that Solid Snake takes you on in this feat of design and storytelling. Choices are what Metal Gear Solid 2 is all about. If you want to do it, chances are you can. Shoot a bottle, and it shatters with impressive physics. KO a soldier, and you can drag his body around like a rag doll. It goes way deeper than that, though, giving you a bevy of tactical options to suit your playing style. This game can be conquered with guns ablaze, or while Snake hides unseen in the shadows. With features such as first-person targeting and the donning of disguises, each strategy is equally fulfilling. Have it your way, baby! Just don't expect the more intelligent AI to lay down for you.

"Without the slightest hint of doubt, this is the greatest game I've ever played."

- Reiner

Hideo Kojima uses this game to take you on many stops during a voyage into your own psyche. At times you'll be laughing about your own misfortune. Other times, you will see that the game is trying to teach you something. Then there are the many unforgettable moments when you are so stunned you can only blink dumbfounded at your screen.

The year 2001 brought us many video game highlights. Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty tops them all. It gets in your head and consumes your thoughts. It lets you guide it, while at the same time it guides you. It is the best game of 2001.





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PREVIEWS



XBOX

WRECKLESS

I LEAD A WRECKLESS LIFE!

Few people remember Felony 11-79 for the PlayStation, a freewheeling crash-em-up that passed through retail with little notice from the press or consumers. In hindsight, the game has proven to be very influential, both as an inspiration for Sega's extremely successful Crazy Taxi franchise, and as a precursor to the Dreamcast's Super Runabout. Felony 11-79 was developed by Climax Entertainment, the company also responsible for the classic Genesis RPG Landstalkers, and Virtua Athlete 2K for the Dreamcast. Recently, many of Climax's hottest young designers defected from the company to form Bunkasha Publishing, a new development house that is focused on using the capabilities of the Xbox to the fullest.

Perhaps not surprisingly, when Bunkasha sat down and began the conceptual stages of developing a new Xbox game, the team found themselves returning to familiar turf. Dubbed Wreckless (Double S.T.E.A.L. in Japan), the

company's new title bears a strong resemblance to both Super Runabout and Felony 11-79. However, the possibilities opened up by the sheer horsepower of the Xbox have allowed Bunkasha to take the well-worn concept of careening through an accurately modeled cityscape to new heights.

Set in modern-day Hong Kong, Wreckless one-ups games like Project Gotham Racing and Crazy Taxi 2 by letting gamers loose in what is undeniably the most intricate and large open-city environments we have ever seen. Bunkasha spent many days in the city, taking pictures and making sketches of real-world landmarks and street scenes. Given the amount of ambient life and detail that the team wanted to include in the game, Hong Kong was the logical choice for a setting, as its teeming streets have earned it the title "The City of Life." So far, Wreckless is living up to Bunkasha's



The Dragon-SPL is one of the fastest rides in the game

ambitious goals, with a tremendous level of detail and graphical flair.

While Activision representatives assure us there is much fine-tuning to be done, we do have our reservations as to whether Wreckless's gameplay will be the equal of its graphics. The basic premise of the game is nearly identical to that of Super Runabout, featuring 20 missions spread over two different scenarios. One scenario puts you in the guhshoes of a Hong Kong police inspector, while the other lets you engage in some high-stakes skullduggery as a pair of spies, Hee and Chan. The missions run the gamut of automotive mayhem, from escort to reconnaissance to the simple destruction of an enemy car or food stands. There are ten vehicles, including a dune buggy, tank, and a mini-police cruiser. Overall, Wreckless' gameplay seems to lag behind its visual fireworks, and the missions aren't particularly interesting. Also, the game is running a bit slow, something that will hopefully be fixed by the time Wreckless makes its Xbox debut this February.



Bunkasha utilizes unique camera techniques in the replays.



Freeze, punk! You ain't going anywhere... And you'll pay for it!

REPLAY

Real-time cutscenes help flesh out the plot

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER RACING ■ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION
■ DEVELOPER BUNKASHA PUBLISHING ■ RELEASE FEBRUARY



Nothing ruins a good street market like a monster truck.



15 PREVIEWS

Marty McFly makes a triumphant return!



We didn't know the car stands made such an explosion when you crashed into them.



You know what they say about vehicles with big tires... ..



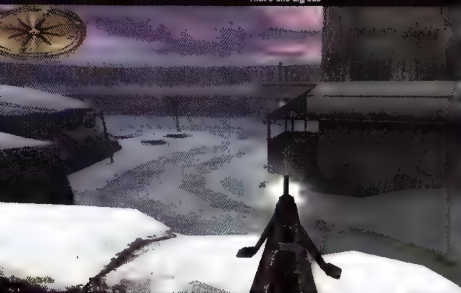
Lovely Rita, meter maid



Weckies' virtual Hong Kong is extremely detailed



That's one big sub



You're able to take control of certain gun emplacements



"You don't need to see my identification"

PC

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

APPRECIATING THE GREATEST GENERATION

As game companies attempt to monopolize on the fast-paced and emotion-filled events which permeated World War II, only a select few have been able to do so in a way which not only appeals to its audience as gamers, but also respects those sacrifices made by the brave soldiers who are portrayed within the games. Among the top titles on this list will surely be Medal of Honor: Allied Assault. Rarely has a game company produced this caliber of title while incorporating this amount of realism. These may seem like empty words to those of you who are too jaded to believe the hype surrounding this title, but when all is said and done, we have a feeling that the hype won't do the game justice.

Seasoned veterans of the first-person shooter genre are always looking for the perfect blend of innovation and realism. Developer 2015 has put some incredible features into this addition to the Medal of Honor franchise, and from what we've seen...well, to tell you the truth, we haven't seen anything quite like it. Lucky devils that we are, Game Informer was able to procure a beta copy of Allied Assault. We've been blown away by games in the past, but this was one of the rare titles that left us breathless after playing. Not only is the scope of the game incredible, but the components which make up the nuts and bolts of its play are simply amazing.

From a graphical standpoint, Allied Assault will undoubtedly raise the bar for all games of its kind. The visuals have been detailed to such a degree that players will be able to see the stubble on the chins of their fallen victims, as well as watch tracer fire speeding at them during a battle. In keeping with its older cousins, this game's sound is simply incredible. Both the effects and the music easily equal any feature film in terms of quality, and probably surpass most of them.

Of course, the graphics and the sound are there to do one thing: accentuate the story. Your tale unfolds as an Army Ranger inserted into a number of covert missions to assure Allied control of Atlantic shipping lanes. After successfully completing a bevy of important tasks, you're thrown right in the middle of the largest and deadliest amphibious assault in history – the Normandy Invasion. This may be as close as you can get to jumping into the first twenty minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*. Unbelievable doesn't begin to describe what happens. We'd divulge what transpires from there, but suffice it to say you'll be shocked. We suggest those of you who have the option of preordering this game do so right now because it's going to sell faster than flapjacks on a cold Vermont morning.

■ STYLE | TO 16-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER | ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER | 2015 ■ RELEASE | FEBRUARY 5



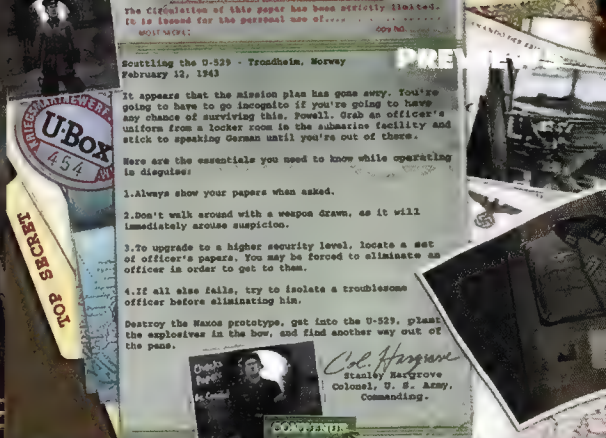
Thirty seconds to the beach



Fitz meets Mr. Lead



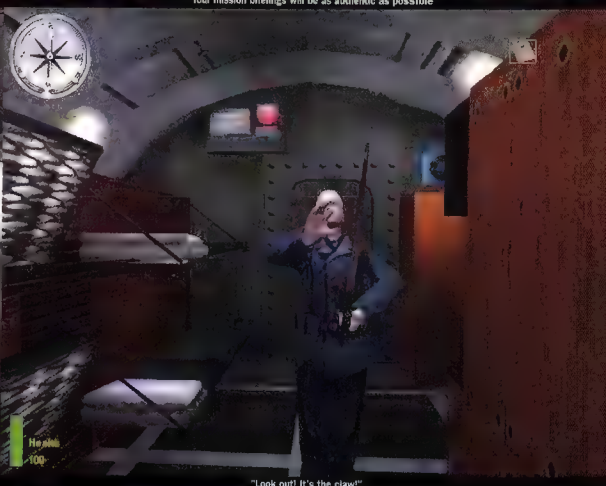
This target looks to be well inside this sniper rifle's range



Your mission briefings will be as authentic as possible



"Were one of Kraftwerk's records?"



"Look out! It's the claw!"



This map showing Omaha beach doesn't seem too friendly



If you're lucky enough to get this far up the beach, looking back isn't a good idea

CLICK FIRE TO SKIP BRIEFING

HP

Health

ARMER 57



Environments will be a part of the challenge and not just scenery



That ain't no backwoods, mountain-bike-carrying SUV

PLAYSTATION 2

NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2

YOU DON'T NEED IT, YOU WANT IT

Tired of watching those Highway Patrol shows late at night, seeing shirtless morons trying to outrun the cops in their old Ford Tauruses? Electronic Arts' Need for Speed series is back, and lets you show that you know a trick or two about ditching the law – with sports-car style definitely included. Developer Black Box (comprised of team members who had worked on previous NFSs) has been called upon to carry the series into the next generation. All indications are that this is something it will do without missing all the features that Speed fans have enjoyed for many years running.

Need For Speed has always been about unleashing you on the streets with cars whose exhaust you wouldn't even be worthy to sniff in real life. We're talking about Ferraris, Porsches, and Lamborghinis that would make you broke just by looking at them. In all, 20 real-life cars have been licensed so you can evade the law, traffic, and other competitors to unlock the rest of the game. In the past, this franchise has allowed its prize possessions to take damage, and here's hoping such a rare feature is included in this title, too. One thing we know for sure is that Black Box has included animated drivers and cops to make things a little more personable.

Of course, nothing could be a more enjoyable task than sticking it to Johnny Law through the game's dozen tracks,

picking up hidden goodies and earning paint jobs, cars, modes, and tracks along the way. You'll careen through a plethora of landscapes – including even natural disasters such as brush fires. Hopefully, this Need For Speed will follow its predecessors' skid marks and allow you to mix up track conditions, such as rain and night, whenever you want. This is all apart from dodging traffic that is so advanced, it acts as stupid and obtrusive as it does in real life. Fellow racers and the police themselves have fuel-injected AI designed to give them their own arrest patterns and driving personalities. Then again, whom are the developers kidding? All coppers are the same. They always tell you to pull over, saying that it's your "last warning." This Hot Pursuit mode is just the tip of the iceberg, however. Other gameplay modes, including a Championship career feature, have been added. High Stakes mode? It wouldn't be Need For Speed without it. We can only hope that this NFS breaks with tradition in the area of multiplayer. The exact number hasn't been set yet, but four-player duels would be seriously cool.

When people think cops n' cars these days, their minds immediately gravitate to Grand Theft Auto III. But don't believe for a second that all racing fans care about are manifolds and mufflers. Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2 lets you thumb your nose at authority as a 200 mph blur.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** BLACK BOX ■ **RELEASE** SPRING 2002



Roscoe P. Coltrane Jr. is just as dumb of a cop as his daddy



I didn't know that you could burn rubber on dirt



All for all opponents will be sharper than ever

DAVE

MIRRA 2

freestyle bmx™2

FREESTYLE TRICK MANEUVERS // CRIME BERS. 2.0
SUPER BAR / CAN - CAN / BACKFLIP / TAIL TAP / F L AIR /
HIG / ORG / ANNUAL / NOSE / MANUAL //



Doing a tail tap on a ramp.



Doing a backflip in a park.



Doing a super bar on a ramp.



Doing a manual on a ramp.



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11 X-GAME MEDALS.
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PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE





PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC

SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE

TOBEY MAGUIRE IS A MIDGET!

Really, he is. We saw him last year at Sony's pre-E3 party, and the dude is one tiny little ball of acting ability. Man, Tobey's so short you can see his feet in his license photo! Oh, man, he's so short he can play handball on the curb! Aww snap! Yo, Tobey's so short he can do backflips under the bed! That sucker's so short he models for trophies!

You may be asking, "What is the purpose of this little outburst?" Well, we simply mean to illustrate that, because he is so short, it would be extremely hard for you to step into Tobey Maguire's shoes, as they are probably very small. Hard, that is, until May 3, when Activision will release *Spider-Man: The Movie*, a game based on the highly anticipated motion picture that stars young Tobey as Peter Parker.

Fortunately, developer Treyarch is taking a bigger-is-better approach to making the game. All in all, there will be more than 20 levels included in the final build, with stages that combine stealth, action, and aerial web-swinging combat into a formula familiar to fans of the previous two PlayStation *Spider-Mans*.

Speaking with Activision producer T.Q. Jefferson, he assured us the game would attempt to follow the plot of the film as closely as possible. However, Treyarch has been granted the artistic license to introduce new plot elements and characters that are not in the movie. While the Green Goblin, who is Spidey's chief enemy in his celluloid adventure, is in the game, he will be joined by a few other famous villains, like Vulture and Shocker.

On the gameplay side of the equation, a serious overhaul of *Spider-Man's* combat system will give gamers reason to rejoice. A good deal of work has gone into improving the game's combo strings, and now web attacks can be performed in sequence with conventional kick and punch attacks. Also, our hero has a host of new grappling moves, inspired in part by the Treyarch team's love for the WWF. The best of these allows *Spider-Man* to jump onto the shoulders of an enemy and perform a modified DDT. Yes, it's as cool as it sounds.

Another new gameplay facet is the aerial battles, in which *Spider-Man* fights it out with various boss characters high above the New York City skyline. Imagine a webslinging variation on *Omega Boost* and you're getting close. Spidey is equipped with look-on targeting that keeps him focused on his nemesis as he swings about, launching devastating web attacks. When he gets in close proximity to his quarry, the game will actually slow a bit, similar to the Bullet Time feature utilized in *Max Payne*.

In an ambitious move, Treyarch is planning to release the *PlayStation 2*, *Xbox*, and *GameCube* versions simultaneously on May 3 (the launch date of the motion picture). The PC port, developed by LTI Gray Matter, is also on the same schedule. This will certainly be no easy task, but Activision representatives claim that all the versions of the game are well on their way to hitting the target date.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER TREYARCH/LTI GRAY MATTER (PC) ■ RELEASE MAY 3



The aerial boss battles are very cool



Spider-Man can now use his zipline to quickly move through hallways



The move, called the "Yo-Yo," allows you to slowly lower yourself into an area to get the drop on an unsuspecting enemy



Way before trains were graffiti-proof, Spidey used to get loose

"I call this move 'Kick Your Face!'"



grand theft auto III



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PlayStation 2

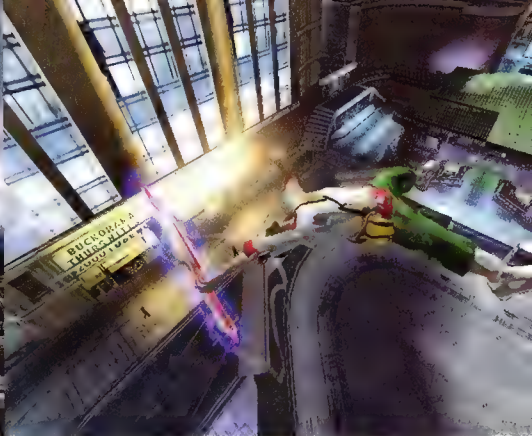


Blood
Violence
Strong Language

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Note: Rockstar will be following ESRB guidelines for M rated games in the marketing of this game.

This game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. It is a comic book style action game. The game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. It is a comic book style action game. The game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. It is a comic book style action game.



Many of the game's level goals are reminiscent of Tony Hawk



Wheelie!



Does it count as a grind if you don't actually touch the rail?

PLAYSTATION 2

AIRBLADE

CRITERION HOVERBOARDING GAME, TAKE TWO

Sometimes it takes a couple of tries to get something right. For example, after a few pairs of dirty boxers, Reiner is really starting to get this potty-training thing down. Likewise, Criterion Games, the company that produced the mediocre DC racer *TrickStyle* for Acclaim, is seizing the opportunity to correct past mistakes with *AirBlade*. Although the game is similar in theme to *TrickStyle* (which also featured futuristic hoverboards), Criterion has changed its tactics, and is now forging a title that will focus on the freestyle gymnastics made so popular by Activision's *Tony Hawk* series. So far, this new strategy is paying off, as *AirBlade* is already playing to good reviews in Europe, where it was released by Sony Europe. Strangely, Sony passed on the publishing rights to *AirBlade* in North America. The game has since been picked up by Namco, and is now scheduled to release stateside sometime in January 29.

It would be hard to ignore the strong *Neversoft* influence that is felt throughout *AirBlade*, but it is equally evident that Criterion is intent on creating a game that will stand apart from the scores of *Tony Hawk* imitators that have flooded the market since 1999. The most obvious differences stem from the simple fact that a hoverboard has the ability to leave the ground and soar into the upper reaches of the futuristic levels. As superhuman as the pros in *Tony Hawk* seem, *AirBlade*'s gravity-defying tricks open up a whole new world of

exploration that would be unimaginable in any other boarding game. The environments reflect this, and, while not nearly as geographically large as the stages in *Tony 3*, are crammed with detail and tend to expand upward instead of outward.

AirBlade's control scheme will be familiar to fans of the genre, as it doesn't veer too far from the norm in terms of trick combos and navigation. However, there is less emphasis on points than in most games of its ilk. Generally, tricks are used more as a means of reaching objects and checkpoints, which are usually located high above street level. This vertical element is enhanced by your ability to swing around on flagpoles and streetlights in order to gain greater velocity.

To add another dimension of interest to the game, Criterion is also concentrating on delivering an engrossing science-fiction storyline that will provide a purpose to the game's various level goals. Players are given the task of rescuing Oscar, a benevolent scientist who invented the *AirBlade* hoverboard as a form of non-polluting transportation. Of course, the GCP, an evil corporation that makes millions on fossil fuels, isn't too keen on this idea, and is bent on destroying all evidence of Oscar's discovery. Sure, it's a little hokey, but hopefully this won't stop *AirBlade* from becoming one of the best titles released for PlayStation 2 this winter.

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NAMCO ■ DEVELOPER CRITERION GAMES ■ RELEASE JANUARY 29



AirBlade boarders swing on more poles than a West Hollywood stripper

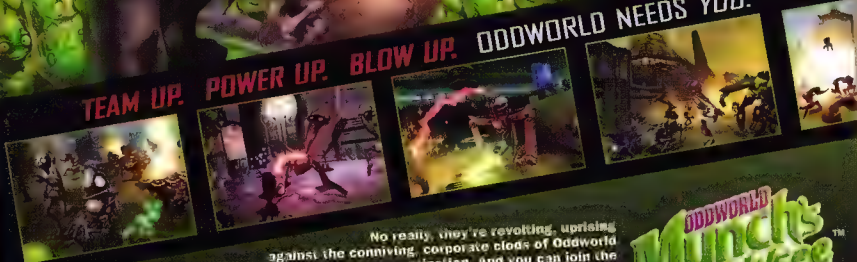


Features both vertical and horizontal split-screen modes

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TEAM UP. POWER UP. BLOW UP. ODDWORLD NEEDS YOU.



No really, they're revolting, uprising against the conniving, corporate CEOs of Oddworld that are eating an entire species to extinction. And you can join the fight. Be both Munch and his flatulent friend Abe in cooperative game play. Hit some twisted power-ups along the way, and lead the revolution against the misguided power mongers. C'mon. The fate of Oddworld is in your hands.

ODDWORLD
Munchies
Oddysee

POWER-UPS TO THE PEOPLE!



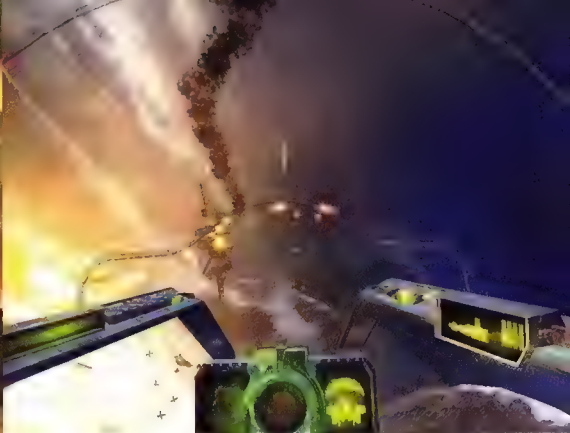
COMIC MISCHIEF
VIOLENCE



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People just don't come more German than Magnus



Most combat occurs close to the planet's surface



The natural environments are lush and detailed

XBOX/PC

YAGER

THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF SPACE COMBAT?

While the space shooter hasn't dominated the world of video games since the days of Defender, recent hits like Star Wars Starfighter and Star Wars: Rogue Leader have rekindled interest in the genre in recent months. Sensing the changing tides, THQ is readying a brand new Xbox property, Yager, that looks to combine harried spacecraft battles with elements of third-person action/adventure. Created by a new German development house, Yager Entertainment, the company's self-titled Xbox game is also slated to be ported to the PC at a later date. As of press time, Yager has only been confirmed for Europe, with an announcement of a North American release date forthcoming. However, looking at these impressive screenshots, we have little doubt that THQ will opt to bring the title stateside.

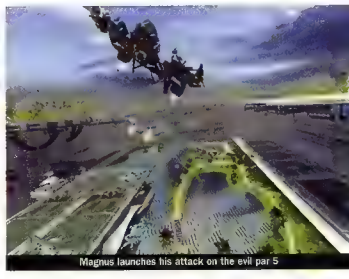
We know little regarding the game's storyline, but we do know that Yager's protagonist is dubbed Magnus Tide, a high-tech hero with tremendous skills when it comes to piloting futuristic flying machines. Reportedly, parts of Magnus' adventure will take him outside of the cockpit, where the game morphs into an action/adventure game of sorts. On his journey, he will encounter over 20 unique nonplayer characters, all of which are fully rendered and communicate with real-time voiceovers.

Feeling that the desolate reaches of deep space did not lend themselves to graphically detailed environments, the Yager team made the decision to keep the action tethered to the lower altitudes of the planets. This encourages you to use your aircraft to take down ground targets, while showing off the Xbox's ability to produce stunning natural environments.

THQ promises that, despite its next-gen pedigree, Yager will offer up swarming hordes of enemies, and gameplay that harks back to the 2D shooters of yore. Also, multiplayer modes that have become staples in the first-person shooter, like deathmatch, will also be present. Yager Development has yet to confirm online plans for the title, but has not ruled anything out.

It's pretty evident from these screenshots that Yager is shaping up nicely. Now, it's just a matter of crossing our fingers and hoping THQ decides to bring the game to our shores. We'll be following the development of this game closely, so stay tuned for further news as it happens.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 2-PLAYER ACTION/SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** YAGER DEVELOPMENT ■ **RELEASE** TBA



Magnus launches his attack on the evil par 5



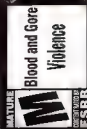
Mayday! Mayday!

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Journey through a time where evil lurks in the shadows, watching and waiting. Enter a world of heroes and villains. Enter a world of monsters, magic and horror. Prepare to experience an RPG unlike any other. Enter the world of Shadow Hearts™.

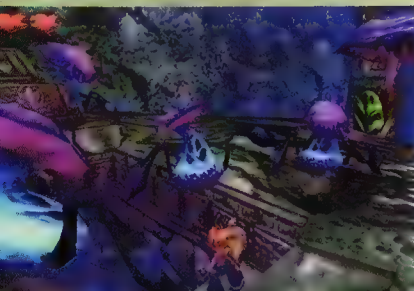


THE TIME
FOR JUDGMENT
HAS COME



PlayStation 2





The fungus are among us



Malice's vibrant and varying colors greatly help the atmosphere



The creative creature designs are as unique as Kat herself

XBOX

MALICE: KAT'S TALE

HAMMER OF THE GODDESSES

It's been a strange trip so far for Argonaut's Malice, and we haven't even gotten into the game's time travel aspect yet! We've seen a lot of Kat (formerly known as Alice) and her gargantuan hammer, but recognition has been only half the battle in bringing Malice to gamers. Let's remember back to last year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Microsoft was holding an event to unveil the final design for the Xbox. At that time, Bill Gates was the girl and the Malice demo shown was his hammer. Blurring the line between a tech exercise and an actual game, Malice looked so good that Microsoft wanted to use it as one of the main weapons for the console.

Fast forward a few months to E3 2001, and the game was nowhere to be found. How could you misplace a hammer that big? Along the way, Microsoft and developer Argonaut had grown apart so much that there was even talk that Malice, now published by Sierra, was going over to the rival PlayStation 2.

Judging by the progress the game seems to have made, all the hubbub was worth it. No longer a glorified tech demo, Malice seems to be shaping into an inventive action game with healthy doses of platforming, puzzles, and attitude. Heroine Kat must repair the fractured flow of time and defeat the giant Fire Dog Demon through 25 supremely surreal

levels. Along the way she'll transform herself into an ever-evolving being, harnessing magic until she reaches Goddess form. These magic skills will be augmented by an array of weapons and devices such as The Clockwork Hammer, the Mace of Clubs, and The Quantum Tuning Fork. When we say puzzles, we're not talking about finding some boring bronze key on the ground that just happens to be the same color as some door two rooms back. We're talking about using these weapons as integral items in the physical manipulation of the environment itself. Only the enemies she'll encounter mirror such varying uses for Kat's tools. Mechanical foes and completely otherworldly beasts will join plain old bugs and animals in aiding the Fire Dog Demon in its plans.

Visually, Malice has lost none of its shine or edge. Lighting effects abound, and Argonaut has taken care to make sure that self-shadowing is even cast by every gear of the Clockwork Hammer. The studio is also promising the capability to run up to 64 voice tracks at once. We know that one in particular, Kat's, has yet to be heard by the gaming public. This facet of Malice will likely go a long way in shaping her, and Malice's, unique personality. We've looked at this title from a gameplay and technical standpoint, but the key to the game's success will likely lie in just how much the public comes to love the red-haired heroine.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER SIERRA ■ DEVELOPER ARGONAUT ■ RELEASE SUMMER



You can bet there's a purpose for lugging that damn thing all the way up the stairs



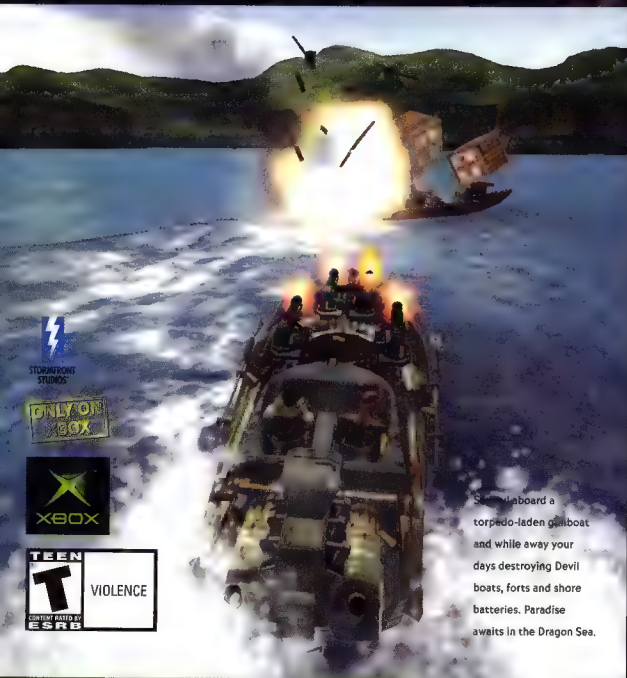
Can Kat shape-shift?

Out here,

amongst the clouds

and the sea,

a chain gun.



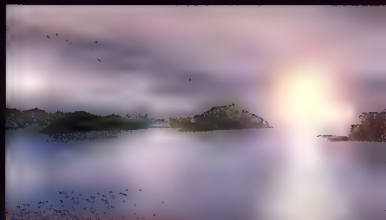
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for

destruction

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XBOX

PREVIEW



PC

COMMAND & CONQUER RENEGADE

WESTWOOD GIVES NOD THE NOD

It's not terribly surprising that a first-person shooter has finally been born out of a popular real-time strategy title. The two genres couldn't be more different, but many of us have sat back and wondered what it would be like to run around our bases through the eyes of a common foot soldier. Always the innovator, Westwood was way ahead of us and thus, *Renegade* was conceived and born.

Part of the draw and excitement of the *Command & Conquer* series is the frenzied pace of its battles. *Renegade's* creators know this, and have attempted to throw you (a.k.a. Captain Nick "Havoc" Parker) right in the middle of the action. The single-player campaign begins with Havoc being dropped amidst a pitched battle. You're given orders to perform various tasks, but as the play unfolds, it becomes very clear you're just part of a larger effort to repel a determined Nod offensive. As you progress through the various mission goals, it dawns on you that this is less of a game about first-person shooters than it is about enveloping players in the C&C universe. Almost all the units and structures you see have been



adapted directly from the original games, as well as many of the voices and sound effects.

Although Westwood is intent on making the single-player experience feel as much like a multiplayer adventure as possible, the actual multiplayer online mode has received an awful lot of dedicated attention. The game's architects are attempting to stay away from the run-and-gun situations many other online shooters put you in, instead focusing on the use of teamwork to measure a player's success. Unlike Campaign mode, characters in multiplayer are restricted to one weapon type only – rocket launchers, chainguns, sniper rifles, and other assorted goodies will be made available. These character kits, along with vehicles (yahoo!) are purchased with Tiberium credits. Your base's harvesters will travel to Tiberium fields and deposit their loads into refineries which will then split the money gained evenly among your side's separate characters. Aside from this, you will be able to amass Tiberium credits individually by mowing down enemies, or destroying structures and vehicles.

With all of this packed into just one game, we have the distinct feeling that *Renegade* will spawn a dedicated and voracious following – if it hasn't already. February may seem like a long way away, but a few weeks is a small price to pay for a game that looks as though it could become the next genre-melting trendsetter. It seems Westwood has done it again.



Helicopter go bye-bye



This GDI Medium Tank should make short work of the Nod Transport

■ STYLE 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER WESTWOOD STUDIOS ■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 5



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

LEGACY OF KAIN: BLOOD OMEN 2

THE FUNKY FRESH ADVENTURES OF BIG DADDY KAIN

It's been a few months since we updated you on the progress of Blood Omen 2, the latest chapter in Crystal Dynamics' Legacy of Kain saga. We are pleased to report that the game has made some significant progress since our last preview, and is looking even better than the recently released (and excellent) Soul Reaver 2. As it stands, the game is well on its way to completion, and is scheduled to hit retail sometime this winter.

Blood Omen 2's intricate storyline unfolds some 400 years after Kain's first adventure. In the time that has elapsed, Kain has been defeated by the legendary Sarafan knights, and spent over 200 years in hibernation. During his slumber, the Sarafan have committed genocide on Kain's vampire minions, reducing their number to a small handful that hide in the city of Mendum. At the outset of the game, these hearty survivors wake Kain from his sleep, and implore him to rid the world of the filthy humans. Unfortunately, our antihero is without his trusty Soul Reaver, and in a terrible state of health. Of course, there's nothing like a diet of human blood to get a vampire feeling regular again! As such, we can expect to see a lot more of Kain's awesome long-range bloodsucking throughout the course of the game.

Soul Reaver 2 was an engrossing epic, but some were disappointed with its somewhat unspectacular graphics.

Running on the well-worn Gex engine, the game just didn't meet the standard set by PS2 titles like Devil May Cry or Onimusha. Talking with Crystal Dynamics producer Sam Newman, he revealed that the Gex engine has finally been put out to pasture, and that Blood Omen 2 has been built from the ground up, using a new architecture it shares with Eidos' Xbox racer Mad Dash.

Kain is also equipped with some new Dark Gifts that lend a whole new dimension to Blood Omen's gameplay. The most notable of these is the Stealth Mist, which allows Kain to cloak himself in low-lying fog. In order to stalk helpless enemies unseen. As you slowly approach your prey, a skull icon will appear above their head. When this happens, a press of the attack button will yield a swift and silent kill, similar to the stealth aspects of Tenchu. Also, Kain can use his Charm ability to gain control of non-player characters, which you must control to solve puzzles or pull switches in areas that would otherwise be inaccessible.

As with any game in the Legacy of Kain series, Blood Omen 2 should be a long and deeply satisfying experience, clocking in at nearly 40 hours of gameplay, and filled with cutscenes both CG and real-time. Heck, it even has a real ending. What more could you ask for?

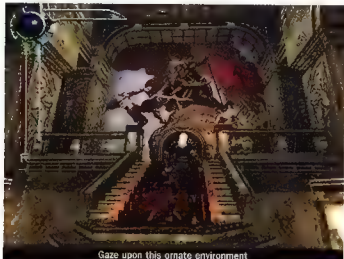


Here, Kain uses his Stealth Mist powers to get the drop on a Sarafan



Meet Kain's rivals, the Sarafan knights

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS ■ **DEVELOPER** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS ■ **RELEASE** LATE WINTER



Gaze upon this ornate environment



"There's no way I'm taking a fare to the Bronx at this time of night!"



"I have a great resume, but for some reason I never seem to get past the first interview."

PREVIEWS



XBOX

SILENT HILL 2: RESTLESS DREAMS

EXPANDING UPON THE
NIGHTMARE

Unlike most developers, Konami is taking its time with the Xbox version of Silent Hill 2. Rather than just porting over the existing PlayStation 2 coding, handfuls of interesting extras are being added to further enhance the experience. The new material is significant, and should equate into at least seven hours of additional gameplay. Within a new mode entitled Born From a Wish, players will now assume the role of Maria, and see how specific events unfold from her perspective. No details have been revealed as to how this new character will control, or what kind of actions she'll be able to take, but we have a feeling she knows how to handle a firearm, and can swing a stick just as well as James.

Of course, significant graphical tweaks will be implemented as well. If you despise the grainy noise filter, you'll now have the option to turn it off from the getgo. The environments will still be rather dark, but new lighting effects illuminate most of the environments. As far as the main portion of the game is concerned, the alterations will be minimal and hardly noticeable. Hopefully, some of the fogging will be reduced to a somewhat visual status. Not too many of the Xbox ports do anything different than the original versions, yet Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams is loaded with reasons to come back and relive the horror.



Players can now play through a sidequest as Maria

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 9

70 GAME INFORMER



GAMECUBE

NBA COURTSIDE 2002

I WISH I WAS A LITTLE BIT TALLER

Much has happened since the first NBA Courtside on Nintendo 64, where rookie coverboy Kobe Bryant was fighting for minutes with All Star Eddie Jones. Now, he's second only to Michael Jordan for endorsements, an NBA world champion, and one of the most highly-touted players in the league. Kobe gets enough press, though—we want to talk about his new game.

The Courtside series has traditionally been... well, sitting courtside during the roundball war. PlayStation was always the battleground where b-ball contests were held. Then came Sega's Earth-shattering NBA 2K series, which left players' jaws on the ground like a 180° alley-oop from the baseline. Nintendo 64 had never really been a sports system, so no one gave Courtside much of a look. That all changes with the release of GameCube.

What we saw of the game at E3 made us think of a pretty blatant NBA 2K1 doppelgänger. That wasn't necessarily a bad thing, as you could do much worse than duplicate what was, at the time, the sport's best video game representation. Since then, though, Courtside 2002 has really started coming into its own. Player models, while not as detailed as EA's new NBA Live entry, are intricate enough to be able to pick players out on sight. Shading shows the muscle flexing of the game-time adrenaline rush. It's tough to see duplicate spectators in the crowd. The animation could very well be the best we've seen on the



NBA's best-dressed player Rick Fox gets contested inside

parquet floors of the NBA. The create-a-player shows many details and options, rivaling that of NBA 2K2.

Sure it looks decent, but does Courtside got game? Early indications may hint at a small lack of depth in the gameplay. Much like Kobe himself, some may say Left Field's focus is on some extremely fancy moves on offense, but a little lax on D. Wild power-ups will make you feel like the '89 Pistons, as you cheat your way to victory. NBA Courtside 2002 has the makings of a promising stroll down elbow lane. We'll be reviewing it soon.



"Only I, Kobe, may dunk!"

Zone defense means more hack-a-Shaq

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** LEFT FIELD ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 14



GAME BOY ADVANCE

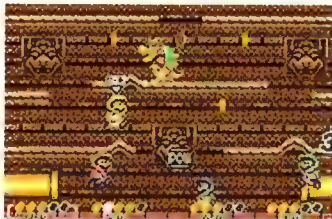
SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

IT'S DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN

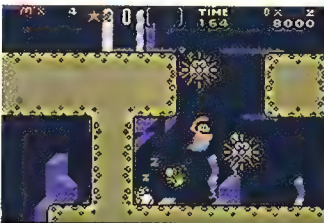
If there's one thing Nintendo knows how to do, it's make lots and lots of money. The massive sales of Super Mario Advance proved (if there was ever any doubt) that there was gold to be mined from the company's stable of classic 8- and 16-bit platformers. Based on Nintendo's history, we weren't surprised to see another Super Mario Advance title. However, given that it had recently brought the original Super Mario Bros. to the GBC, and Super Mario Bros. 2 to the GBA, we had assumed the next title in line for a handheld port would be Super Mario Bros. 3. Surprisingly, the video game giant has passed over that NES classic in favor of Mario's maiden SNES voyage, Super Mario World.

While it would have been nice to see Nintendo complete the 8-bit SMB trilogy, we certainly won't balk at the opportunity to play one of the best games ever created on a long flight (Super Mario World was #46 on GI's 100 Greatest Game of All Time list). In many ways, Super Mario World was the pinnacle of the side-scrolling platformer, one that perfected, then improved upon the formula that Miyamoto had been working on for years. Even more importantly, the game featured the debut performance of Yoshi? Who cares about some fat, stinky Italian plumbers. Yoshi is a dinosaur. He's cute. He has a long tongue. That's right, playboy—Yoshi is the best Nintendo character ever! Except for Toad.

Unlike the first Super Mario Advance, which brought SMB 2 up to current handheld standards with a subtle graphical overhaul, this title will stay true to the original source material down to the last pixel. However, considering that Super Mario World was mind-blowing in its day, showcasing the full range of the SNES's abilities, we'll be pleased as punch with a perfect handheld port. Games don't get much better than this, even if you have played it all before. Until Nintendo decides to give us the all-new Mario GBA title we're begging for, Super Mario Advance 2 should fit the bill nicely.



Here's a four-player version of the first Mario Bros. game, which can be played with the GBA's link cables.



The dreaded swimming levels are back.



All the brightly colored SNES graphics you remember are shrunk down and are as beautiful as ever.

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER NINTENDO ■ RELEASE TBA

PREVIEWS



PC

SERIOUS SAM: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER

SERIOUSLY THIS TIME...

So right now you're thinking to yourself, "I just had a long, hard day, I could really use some type of cathartic release before I make this box of macaroni and cheese." Good news! That game you love to love—Serious Sam—is making a reappearance in the form of another butt-kicking, creature smasher so you can do just that, but in a different environment than the first release. Sammy will kick ass and take names in the mountainous jungles of South America this time, as he shoots a bunch of things in the eyeball. All of the balls-out action is still there from the first release, but this time there are more weapons, bigger levels, and enough bogies to make your trigger finger fall off.

Aside from the game's original arsenal of items you used to punch holes in bad-guys, there are three new toys the good people at Croteam have given us to play with. The first and cleanest of the three is a sniper rifle. There's nothing like dropping pumpkin-headed beasts (one of the game's new enemies) from the safety of 400 meters. Then again, there's nothing like jamming a chainsaw in its crotch, either. Of course, if you get bored with the chainsaw and the sniper rifle, there can be no substitute for a good ol' flamethrower. Saddle up, cowboy. It's going to be another wild ride.



11
180

Take that, Crotchty!

■ STYLE 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER GIGAWATT ■ DEVELOPER CROTEAM ■ RELEASE SPRING '02

REVIEWS

Our crack (or crackhead, we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you hate. Each game is reviewed by at least two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what the reviewers are like (so you can find the reviewer most like yourself), what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. Read on and soon you will be talking FPS and FMV with the best of them.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

Game Informer's rating system ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

10 – Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game has no flaws, and thus this rating is rarely given out.

9 – Worth owning. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.

8 – Worth playing. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.

7 – Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.

6 – Limited appeal. There are always a few people that will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.

5 & BELOW – Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

CONCEPT

What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well ideas are presented.

GRAPHICS

How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

SOUND

Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

PLAYABILITY

Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

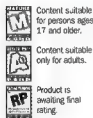
ENTERTAINMENT

Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

REPLAY VALUE

The longevity of the title.

- **High** – You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** – Good for a long while, but the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** – Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** – After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** – You'll quit playing before you complete the game.



ANDY

Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters
Interests: My New Alienware Computer, The Lord Of The Rings **Dislikes:** Nintendo Not Hooking Us Up With Games So I Get Lots Of Email Saying That "I Hate Nintendo," Alienware Taking Forever To Get Me My New Computer
Current Favorite Games: Golden Sun, Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Everquest: Shadows Of Luclin

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "rippin' him off," he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports tickets, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.

REINER

Handle: The Raging Game **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Sports
Interests: The Lord Of The Rings, Insomniac Games' Top Secret PS2 Project (Oh Man!)
Dislikes: Fred Durst's Wrestling Debut (see page 114), Fred Durst's Hat, Fred Durst In General
Current Favorite Games: Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, Star Wars: Rogue Leader, Final Fantasy X, Jak & Daxter: The Precursor Legacy

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 539 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.



MATT

Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** Racing, Puzzle, Action/Adventure **Interests:** Getting A New Band Practice Space, Fugazi, Clinic, Finding An Xbox DVD Playback Kit
Dislikes: Scott Who Runs The My Apple Building In St. Paul, Old Tvs That Only Take RF Inputs, Apartment Life **Current Favorite Games:** Grand Theft Auto III, Halo, Strike Master, James Bond 007 in...Agent Under Fire, Jak & Daxter: The Precursor Legacy

While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.

KRISTIAN

Handle: The Game Dawg **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Twix, Wallet Cleaning, Getting My Basement Carpeted **Dislikes:** Washing Walls, Losing At Trivial Pursuit, Bud Selig, Carl Pohlad
Current Favorite Games: Stronghold, Dark Age of Camelot, NASCAR Thunder 2002

Kristian enjoys opening a can of whoop-ass on his buddies at the ping pong table, then running off to the driving range for a lesson in humility and anger management. The original test-driven Zork started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to pound out a good sports game.



JUSTIN

Handle: The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Platform, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Xbox's Music Copy Feature, Baja Tortilla Grill, Wrestling Regularly Again, Operation **Dislikes:** Rip-Off Rental Deposit Refunds, Companies Who Don't Thank You For Buying Their Game In The Manual
Current Favorite Games: Grand Theft Auto III, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty

Unlike most gaming jargoners, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He moonlights as wrestler Justin Lee in the Minnesota independent scene, where he violently bonds with other sweaty males – a practice that just gets blank stares when attempted on other GI reviewers. Though the youngest on staff, Justin's tastes are highly out-of-school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plugs into the latest titles.

KATO

Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** Queens Of The Stone Age, Coen Bros., Chicken Pot Pies, Episode II Trailers, P.E.V.R. **Dislikes:** Baseball Contraction, "Eatn" Goooodoo In The Neighborhoodhood... Rabid Ant-Dentites
Current Favorite Games: Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, Shadow Prophet, NASCAR Thunder 2002, Star Wars: Rogue Leader

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste. Feeding the goats, and trying in vain to update his wardrobe into the 21st century. Like other young men of his generation, he quickly found out that the one true real world application of good grades was the free arcade tokens that were given out at as reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.



NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

action – A term we use for games like *Zone of the Enders* and *Gauntlet*.

adventure – A term we use for games like *Myst* and *Escape From Monkey Island*.

AI – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent.

board – A term we use for games like *Jeopardy!* and *Mario Party*.

CG – Computer-Generated graphics.

colombbler – Nerd.

DC – Sega Dreamcast.

E3 – Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games.

fighting – A term we use for games like *Street Fighter* and *Dead or Alive*.

FMV – Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene.

FPS – Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First-Person Shooters like *Doom*, *GoldenEye*, & *Unreal Tournament*.

frameadvance – The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement.

frontend – A game's menus and options.

GB – Game Boy.

GBA – Game Boy Advance.

GBC – Game Boy Color.

GC – GameCube.

isometric – Three-quarters top down view, like *StarCraft* or *Red Alert 2*.

ISP – Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet.

jaggies – Graphical lines that are jagged when they should be straight.

LAN – Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay.

mini-game – A small, simple game within a larger one.

motion-capture – Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap.

N64 – Nintendo 64.

NES – Nintendo Entertainment System.

platform – A term we use for games like *Super Mario* and *Crash Bandicoot*.

pop-up – When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear.

PS2 – Sony PlayStation 2.

PS-X – Sony PlayStation.

puzzle – A term we use for games like *Tetris* and *Chu Chu Rocket*.

racing – A term we use for games like *Gran Turismo* and *Mario Kart*.

RPG – Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Warrior*.

SG – Sega Genesis.

shooter – A term we use for games like *Mars Matrix* and *Gradius*.

SNES – Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

sports – A term we use for games like *Madden NFL*.

SS – Sega Saturn.

strategy – A term we use for games like *Command & Conquer* and *Fallout Tactics*.

third-party – Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer.



GAME OF THE MONTH FINAL FANTASY X

With an undying devotion to changing the way people perceive role-playing games, Square Soft has completely altered the status quo for RPGs in *Final Fantasy X*. From spoken dialogue to combat innovations, nothing can prepare you for the adventure ahead. *Final Fantasy X* is a landmark release and one of Square's finest titles to date. Page 74.

REVIEWS



FINAL FANTASY X



Throughout the course of the game, each character will learn a number of different overdrive attacks



The ugliest creatures in Spira says, "Chocobos are finger lickin' good!"



Cindy HP 16420 MP 207
Party HP 13350 MP 144

The game unfolds in a linear fashion. However, if a player desires to unlock all of the hidden goodies (like the bonus area pictured), a number of sidequests are included

PLAYSTATION 2

FINAL FANTASY X

THE POWER OF EXPRESSION

With each passing Final Fantasy release, Square Soft continues to improve upon perfection, not only setting a new standard for role-playing games, but for video games as a whole. Without question, Final Fantasy X is Sakaguchi's most ambitious project yet, and is a radical departure from the formula we've become accustomed to. Tapping into every facet of the PlayStation 2 architecture, the development team has completely revolutionized every aspect within the storytelling. This may sound trivial in the grand scheme of things, but it's the biggest change the series has ever made. As you well know, in the past, characters would pantomime to text that would flash across the screen. In Final Fantasy X, every character has a synchronized voice, which in turn presents lifelike qualities and the true essence of drama. Much like the transformation to "talkie" films, this enhancement completely alters the face of the Final Fantasy lineage and greatly enhances the overall experience.

As remarkable as the spoken script may be, it actually plays second fiddle to the plot that Yoshinori Kitase and Kazushige Nojima have penned. The storytelling in Final Fantasy has always been somewhat predictable. Kitase and Nojima obviously knew this. They even went to great lengths to trick the player into believing they know what their destiny is. Then, and without warning, everything you know and believe is turned upside down and inside out. To say the very least, this story is a real shocker. It feeds off of your emotions, stabs you in the back, and takes your breath away, but give him a chance. Indeed, he's quirky, but by the end of the game, his performance will move you. There are two scenes in particular – and I won't ruin them for you – that I'll remember for a lifetime, rivaling the opera sequence in Final Fantasy III and the Sephiroth confrontation in Final Fantasy VII.

On the gameplay end, the complexity of combat harks back to the 32-bit days with a number of ingenious changes on the side. Through tag-team methods, players can freely

swap characters on the battlefield to create better strategies. Interestingly, the battles are no longer presented in real-time. You'll now see a chart that shows when an enemy will attack, and will have all the time in the world to determine what actions must be initiated before then. The aeons (summon beasts) can still be called up to deliver a devastating attack, but now they are very similar to the party members and are equipped with a wide variety of attacks and spells. For those of you who love to customize, the new Sphere Grid completely does away with the standard level/experience system. Moving and activating spheres on a board-game-like surface affects character skills and abilities. If you want a mage to become a knight, you can make it happen. Of course, you'll also have the ability to change the functionality of your weapons and items.

Square Soft has always been the king of visuals, and Final Fantasy X has no exception. The motion-captured animations bring about a higher level of realism, the intricately detailed environments are teeming with ambient life, and the prerendered cutscenes deliver incredible action sequences. As always, each landscape jumps off the screen as an individual work of art that should be hanging in a gallery.

My only complaint has to do with the structure of the quest. The Final Fantasy games are traditionally linear, but this one redefines the term. You cannot backtrack until later in the game and the overworld has been completely removed. You simply move from location to location via a cursor on a map. I don't know about you, but I always enjoyed having the freedom to leisurely move about the world, perhaps on the back of a chocobo. You can't do this anymore. Every environment is completely sectioned off from the others. Sadly, you don't even get to take control of the airship.

Even if you don't approve of all the changes that Square Soft has installed, I'm sure you'll agree that Final Fantasy X is a breakthrough release, a visionary tale, and a masterpiece for the ages. – **REINER**

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER SQUARE SOFT ■ DEVELOPER SQUARE SOFT ■ RELEASE JANUARY 1



Lulu: My thoughts exactly.
Spoken dialogue accompanies every second of the quest.



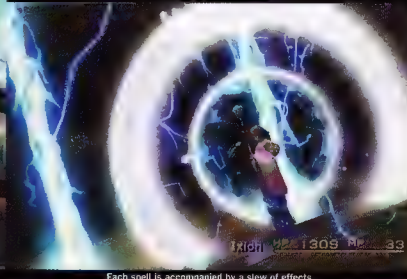
"[Final Fantasy X] feeds off of your emotions, stabs you in the back, and takes your breath away."



The highly detailed prerendered cutscenes are longer and more action-packed than ever before.



The enhanced battle system allows players to rotate characters and study enemy attack patterns.



Each spell is accompanied by a slew of effects.

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T 9.75

- Concept:** The first "talkie" in the series, featuring hours of spoken dialogue, realistic motion-captured animation, and highly detailed CG cutscenes.
- Graphics:** Nothing short of a visual tour de force.
- Sound:** Arguably Nobuo Uematsu's best soundtrack to date.
- Playability:** The refined combat system allows players to rotate party members, level up summons, and customize weapons.
- Entertainment:** The quest is as linear as they come, yet additional story material, bonus battles, and hidden weapons can be obtained through sidequests.
- Replay Value:** Moderately High.

SECOND OPINION

I was skeptical at the thought of another Final Fantasy. I've played all the US-released games, and they've all rocked the house, but my enthusiasm has been waning. Silly me. This could be the greatest Final Fantasy, if not RPG, of all time. For once, a game in the genre has a truly unique setup. No experience and no weapon stats seem sacrilegious at first, but FF X's Sphere Grid and weapon customization put them to shame. Storytelling is vastly improved with the wealth of speech, past tense voice-overs, and shockingly superb cutscenes. However, things were a bit too linear. With apologies to DOA 3, I must say FF X has some of the hottest women in video games (pathetic, but it must be said). Unlike Rener, I find it refreshing that Tidus is not the typical hero. It makes him that much more real. No other game will bring role-playing to the masses like Final Fantasy X. Pick it up, whoever you are.

JUSTIN - 9.75



THE BOTTOM LINE



9.25

PLAYSTATION 2

“Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy feels as though it were shot out of Shigeru Miyamoto’s cannon...”

JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

ZELDA, MARIO, AND CRASH ALL ROLLED INTO ONE

Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy feels as though it were shot out of Shigeru Miyamoto’s cannon, amalgamating key gameplay components from The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time and Super Mario 64. Falling back on its orange days, Naughty Dog has also incorporated several aspects from the Crash Bandicoot series. As unfathomable as this concoction may seem, Jak and Daxter truly is the perfect conglomeration of groundbreaking games.

Much like Link’s exploits, the entire world is readily available for exploration. It’s up to you to navigate these expansive environments and uncover the tools needed to open up new areas. In the past, Naughty Dog’s game plan was based on instant action. This isn’t the case any more. The pace is somewhat slow and demands patience. Rather than simply warping into the heart of battle, you’ll need to seek out the uncharted zones. To accomplish this, you must memorize locations, be perceptive, and try different methods. Unfortunately, the introductory moments – I’d say the first hour of play – are quite dull. The storytelling isn’t conveyed very well, and you’re more or less sent out on a quest wearing a blindfold. However, once you do become familiar with your surroundings, and begin to understand how this game works, it really gets under your skin, and you’ll do everything it takes to progress.

The underlying goal is to collect as many Power Cells and Orbs as you can. This is where the Mario comparison comes

into play. The Power Cells are basically the Stars from Mario 64. In total, there are 101 to collect, and while several are randomly dispersed throughout the land, most come with a price. You’ll either need to pay for them with Orbs, or complete a mission for a villager. There are a set number of Cells in each zone. Many can be obtained from the get-go; others require backtracking and powers that are learned later in the game.

This formula works well, creating the illusion that you’re just a small piece of a persistent world. The heart and soul of this title lies within the gameplay. If you thought Crash Bandicoot’s controls were intuitive, wait until you see what Jak is capable of. His movements are very precise and easy to manhandle. Of course, he loves to smash boxes.

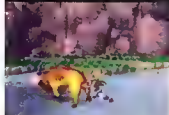
Naughty Dog has always excelled in delivering a beautiful graphical package, and Jak and Daxter is no exception. You can see for miles without the hindrance of pop-up or fogging, and every environment is populated with hundreds of objects. On several occasions, I found myself staring in awe at the little details Naughty Dog so meticulously included.

For those of you who thrive on platformers, or count the days until the next Zelda release, or simply want to play a game that is continually rewarding, Jak and Daxter is the title you’ve been waiting for. It’s challenging, incredibly deep, and nothing short of a good time. – **REINER**

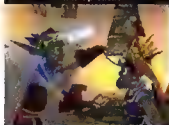
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** NAUGHTY DOG
 ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 11



Holding true to Naughty Dog’s history, a majority of the gameplay revolves around box smashing



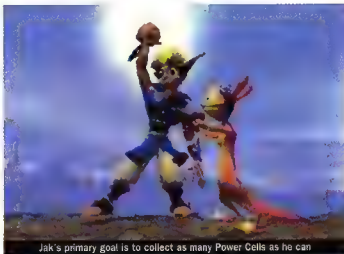
Much like Banjo-Kazooie, you’ll be required to complete missions for the villagers. Here, Jak must round up cattle



The story constantly moves forward with each objective that you complete



As with most adventures, fishing is one of the minigames



Jak’s primary goal is to collect as many Power Cells as he can

■ Concept:

An adventure that taps into gameplay traits from Zelda, Crash Bandicoot, Mario 64, and Spyro the Dragon

■ Graphics:

Simply breathtaking

■ Sound:

Daxter’s quips are somewhat annoying, but I did get a few laughs out of them. The in-game sounds are excellent, and the soundtrack sets the mood perfectly

■ Playability:

Smooth controls, revolutionary camera work, and complex combo maneuvers

■ Entertainment:

It starts out slow, but those who stick with it will be well rewarded

■ Replay Value:

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

The advent of cinematic epics like Metal Gear Solid effectively killed off the 2D platformer, and most developers never really figured out how to pull off the genre in three dimensions. Luckily for us, Naughty Dog is one of the few that can do it right, and continues to impress with Jak and Daxter. The game is an immense adventure with a wide scope that includes Zelda-style exploration and item collecting reminiscent of Mario 64. However, this isn’t the perfect game we’ve been waiting for. The pacing can be sluggish at times, and often I felt as though I was wandering around lost with nothing to do. Still, things pick up later in the game, as more attacks, minigames, and vehicles are introduced. Another positive is the control scheme and character physics – some of the best I’ve ever seen. I hope that today’s audience has the attention span to play J&D long enough to see what a great game it truly is.

MATT – 9



THE BOTTOM LINE



9.25

**"Graphically,
Agent Under
Fire is amazing,
leaving similar
titles like Red
Factor and
TimeSplitters in
the dust."**

PLAYSTATION 2

JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE

EA'S GOT A BRAND NEW BOND

Since the massive success of GoldenEye, the James Bond franchise has become synonymous with first-person shooters. Defying consumers' expectations can be dangerous, as Electronic Arts learned with its third-person Bond disaster, *Tomorrow Never Dies*. After reverting to the tried-and-true formula in *N64's The World Is Not Enough*, EA is again trying new things with 007's first PlayStation 2 adventure, *Agent Under Fire*.

Although the bulk of the gameplay revolves around first-person levels that will be familiar to fans of the series, EA widened the game's scope by including both driving levels and track-shooter stages reminiscent of the car sequences in *Silent Scope*. So, is this bold experiment a success? In a word, yes.

Oftentimes, titles that attempt to use multiple styles of gameplay fail because the developers simply aren't capable of doing them all correctly. *Agent Under Fire* succeeds where these other games have failed for a number of reasons.

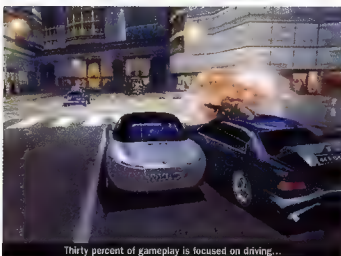
For one, EA understood that certain teams are good at certain things, and recruited the veteran Need for Speed staff to program the game's racing levels. Their experience is evident in the rock solid driving engine and the expansive, fully rendered cities. Special care was taken to ensure that these missions effectively emulated the visual look and art direction of the first-person game, which prevents them from becoming overly jarring to the player.

Secondly, EA knows that every game needs to have a focus, and *Agent Under Fire* is focused squarely on delivering a top quality first-person experience. Everything you would expect from a Bond shooter is here, from powerful armaments to an assortment of high-tech Q-gadgets provided to you by your new partner, R. Graphically, *Agent Under Fire* is amazing, leaving similar titles like *Red Factor* and *TimeSplitters* in the dust. The real-time cutscenes are fantastic, featuring tons of spoken dialogue and extremely impressive character models. Thankfully, all this is done without long load times.

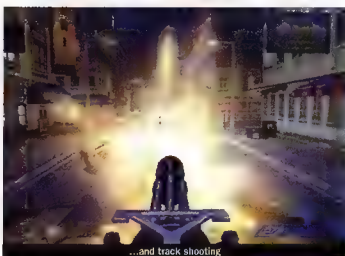
Yes, the graphics are nice, but I was more impressed by the excellent enemy AI than I was with the visual fireworks. Your pursuers are very intelligent, using cover, moving in formation, and setting off alarms at the first sign of trouble. The first missions are a bit of a cakewalk, but by stage eight you'll find your skills being put to the test in fine fashion. At just 12 single-player missions, *Agent Under Fire* is a bit short, but there are three difficulty levels, and true gamers will want to achieve gold-medal status on each level to unlock a variety of multiplayer goodies.

I hesitate to call any game that bears the 007 logo a sleeper, but with the incredible number of triple-A titles being released for PlayStation 2 this holiday season, it's possible that many will overlook *Agent Under Fire*. Do yourself a favor and check this game out. You won't regret it. —**MATT**

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 13



Thirty percent of gameplay is focused on driving...



...and track shooting

SECOND OPINION

Electronic Arts could have easily made just another Bond first-person shooter and I would have been happy, but EA took it a step further, and added some nice touches to the game to take it to another level. Not only are the driving portions of *Agent Under Fire* a nice break from the FPS madness, they are done very well and make the game feel even more like you are in a Bond movie. My favorite addition, however, is how the game rewards you for using your brain and executing Bond maneuvers. For example, if you blow up the crane dangling some heavy hardware over a group of enemies to kill them, rather than just going toe to toe with your weapons, it awards you with points and a clever little cutscene. Featuring three difficulty settings and some great multiplayer environments, *Agent Under Fire* delivers the best Bond experience since *GoldenEye*, and it shouldn't be missed.

ANDY — 9

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

THE SLAUGHTER CONTINUES

Koei's battle cry remains constant. In fact, if the Dynasty Warriors 3 logo didn't flash across the screen, I'd swear I was playing the previous installment all over again. At the very least, I expected to see drastic enhancements made to the engine. With the implementation of dynamic effects and larger character models, this should have been a given. Oddly, Koei didn't even make an effort. Massive amounts of background fogging continue to cloud every inch of the battlefield. When a dozen soldiers swarm around your location, you won't be able to see five feet in front of you. Next generation gaming? Hardly.

For some reason, I had a feeling Koei would add depth to the play mechanics as well. Certainly, the brutal butchering of thousands of troops within an hour is an entertaining premise for a video game, but doing so with one combo tends to grow old rather quickly. Too much dismay, Koei didn't mess with the existing combat formula, either. To make a long story short, this is the same game all over again and the only differences are minor. A bevy of unlockable extras are hidden within each stage. The story for each character is now unique. A save anywhere feature has also been installed. That's it.

Much like the gameplay, this sequel is highly repetitive and loaded with technical difficulties. —REINER

THE BOTTOM LINE



7

- Concept:** A straight-up sequel that features unlockable extras, scenario differences for characters, and a much-needed save anywhere feature.
- Graphics:** Beautiful, except for the constant background fogging.
- Sound:** A good majority of the soundtrack is recycled from the previous release.
- Playability:** Still way too repetitive. The only diversity is through changing or upgrading weapons.
- Entertainment:** Deeper, but still a button-masher at heart.
- Replay Value:** High.

SECOND OPINION

Koei's China syndrome is wearing thin. The fun of facing off against hordes of enemies has lost its luster, despite some additions. I hated the camera that blindsided me with enemies, and the painfully simple combat mechanics don't keep up with the title's strategy. Koei's Kassen II does everything this title does and more.

KATO — 6.5



PLAYSTATION 2

TARZAN UNTAMED

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

In the past, a game with a popular "kids" license was as predictable as a vacant parking lot at Euro Disney. Ubi Soft was as guilty of this mediocrity as any publisher. Tarzan Untamed doesn't follow this mold and trades in its generic roots for a veritable smorgasbord of platform and racing thrills. Was it successful? To a degree. I give props when companies try to do new things, even if they aren't the peak of gaming bliss.

One thing Tarzan isn't, is dull. Levels are divided between jungle exploration, surfing, waterskiing, boss encounters, and bungee jumping. I was all for the decent Klonoa-esque platforming, where the world moves around you as you travel on a track. Heck, I would've been pretty happy to have the game focus purely on this style. The surfing and waterskiing are great ideas, even if they may be too obstacle-laden for my tastes. Bungee jumping is a quick blast of fun. Boss encounters are refreshing, requiring both button-mashing and fast reflexes. I'm glad Ubi Soft went even further by adding Turk's Challenge, offering up score and time goals for each level.

I think kids are going to find Tarzan Untamed cool enough, but due to its off-frosting difficulty, only the most determined will make any headway into the game. It's worth a rental though, no matter what your age. —JUSTIN



THE BOTTOM LINE



7.75

- Concept:** Turn Tarzan into the rain forest equivalent of Tony Hawk.
- Graphics:** Lush and plush, and green like spin'ush. The CG is great, too.
- Sound:** It's jungentiff, baby.
- Playability:** Many gameplay styles and tons of moves for each — all performing admirably.
- Entertainment:** Tarzan will make you curse his coth-covered rear, but not so much that you won't come away satisfied.
- Replay Value:** Moderately High.

SECOND OPINION

Tarzan Untamed is an ambitious project to say the least, incorporating a number of different styles of gameplay into the mix, and nearly succeeds in creating a Tarzan title for the ages. Bungee jumping, waterskiing, surfing, and vine-swinging all enter into the equation, and each is reasonably well done. This said, I got the feeling that this product's development cycle was somewhat rushed, and that the game could have benefited from a few more months of incubation. The platforming levels tread the fine line between too easy and frustrating, while the waterskiing levels are hard enough to give any gamer fits. Also, I was not too fond of the button-mashing boss battles, which seemed overly simplistic. Graphically, the environments are beautiful, but a drabby framerate and dim color palette detract from your enjoyment of them. I wouldn't say that this game isn't worth a look, but it's probably only for hardcore platform fans, and might be too difficult for some of the younger members of that demographic.

MATT — 7.75

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER KOEI ■ DEVELOPER KOEI/OMEGA FORCE ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 17

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER UBI SOFT ■ DEVELOPER UBI SOFT ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 13

GIANTS CITIZEN KABUTO

PREPARE TO GET BLOWN AWAY.

— DAILY RADAR



PlayStation 2



Blood and Gore
Violence

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REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

NFL 2K2

2K2'S GUTSY ROAD WIN

My hunch in the Dreamcast 2K2 review that developer Visual Concepts was busy elsewhere is true. If you're a Dreamcast owner, you'd have every right to think you got screwed once you play this PS2 version, for here is where the true 2K2 resides. Even worse is the fact that it's now January, and either you can't afford to buy the game a second time, or you're a Detroit Lions fan and you gave up on football way back in September.

I must start out here by saying that, feature-wise, the only thing that's new is the Texans. Changes have been made along the margins, but they all add up to a game that belongs on the PS2 and isn't just a port. Future 2Ks will be on many platforms, but playing this, you'd swear it had found its new home on the system. Replays show some real flair in their angles, and player models and faces look almost entirely new. Although not everyone looks like they do in real life, I'd say these are the best mugs I've ever seen in a football game. New plays and presentation also go a great distance to make this a joy to play, along with the inherent (and I'd say superior) differences in the Dual Shock. Ali told, this 2K2 is great, not just because it's the only real alternative to Madden, but because it has truly shortened the distance between itself and the EA franchise. The Dreamcast? It's been left in the dust. — **KATO**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** VISUAL CONCEPTS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 20

THE BOTTOM LINE

E EVERYONE
9.5

- **Concept:** PS2 gets a better sequel than the Dreamcast did, and football season's almost over!
- **Graphics:** The new replays add a whole extra dimension.
- **Sound:** No real changes here.
- **Playability:** I can finally call timeout without going to the menu screen. I wouldn't suggest playing it all analog, however.
- **Entertainment:** I was surprised this game felt as different from 2K1 and DC's 2K2 as it did.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Although 2K2 is definitely entertaining, it ends up being the Factor next to Madden's Ferrari. It has solid play all around, but the PS2 version just doesn't have the legs that its Dreamcast counterpart enjoys. I would've liked to have seen a better passing game, but it was not to be. It's dangerous to rest on your laurels, and that's what it looks like happened to 2K2.

KRISTIAN — 7.75



PLAYSTATION 2

BURNOUT

GUNTER GLIEBEN GLAUCHEN GLOBEN

We've all got a video game designer living deep inside of us. I'm sure Burnout's director wasn't the first to think up a racer with real-world traffic, but he is the first to actually get the job done so effectively. In most ways, Burnout is your typical driving game. You've got a selection of various cars — coupes, trucks, sports cars, etc. — and many tracks to race on. What's different, though, are the noncompeting vehicles that populate the roadways. These call phone-talking, inattentive soccer moms who will get in your way at every turn, but that's most of the fun. You can swerve around them and gain points, or exact your road rage revenge by plowing right into them. A figure will pop up onscreen saying just how much chaos you've caused, which gets compounded with each new vehicle that barrels into the wreckage. Realistic damage was a must here, and it's done well. Broken glass litters the asphalt and huge dents form at the point of impact. You can even replay these crashes after the race.

Aside from this entertaining gimmick, Burnout is a solid driver, with good control and some decent graphics, but that's about it. Anyone who's ever driven on a highway will get a kick out of this game. It's better to Burnout than to fade away. — **JUSTIN**

- **Concept:** Racing in real-world areas with traffic as idiotic and maddening as it is in real life.
- **Graphics:** Motion blur is, in my opinion, the worst graphical "feature" of next-gen games.
- **Sound:** Uninspired techno music makes you long for talk radio. Nice crash effects.
- **Playability:** Quick turns and powerslides make weaving through Sunday drivers no sweat.
- **Entertainment:** This pony may have one trick, but it's enough to separate it from many other racers out there.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

THE BOTTOM LINE

E EVERYONE
7.75



SECOND OPINION

As someone with permanent road rags, I found that Burnout managed to encapsulate the whole experience fairly well. The fun of weaving in and out of the well-done AI traffic and cutting off the competition was stopped short only by the game's spectacular crashes. However, similar to flipping the bird to an old lady in a slow-moving Mary Kay car, I felt Burnout was an inadequate expression of a good idea. The AI is great, but how about more than three cars to race against? The crashes rock, but there aren't any lasting damage effects on your auto. Showing you how much you've racked up in insurance bills is cool, but how about incorporating it into the gameplay? Burnout is a lot like the highway accidents it depicts — you'd approach it slowly with interest and/or curiosity, but sooner or later you're gonna speed up and be on your way.

KATO — 6.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** CRITERION STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 2



THE BOTTOM LINE



6.75

PLAYSTATION 2

CRASH BANDICOOT: WRATH OF CORTEX

DROPS A LOAD

Since his first appearance back in 1996, Crash Bandicoot has been under the watchful eye of developer Naughty Dog. With *Wrath of Cortex*, European developer Traveller's Tales has been charged with taking one of the most popular series in the history of the PS-X and bringing it to PS2.

As a whole, the game does include many of the elements that made the original games so much fun, but as you play the title through, the little nuances that made the original games so fantastic start to really show. For example, this version of Crash has load times that reach up to 45 seconds, which really brings down the whole experience (since some levels are rather short). Plus, there are a number of collision issues that annoy, and the overall level design, while adequate, is not nearly as ingenious as in the previous releases.

There are some nice touches which I thought were fantastic, like the hamster-ball levels, but they are few and far between. Crash fanatics will find this edition to be competent, but it doesn't live up to the legacy of the series. I would have given it a seven, but the outrageously bad load times keep the game from being average. —ANDY



Escape raging rhinos...

...fly off the rails on a mine cart...

...and platform in an X-Ray

Crash looks great in high resolution

The hamster-ball levels are reason enough to play this game.

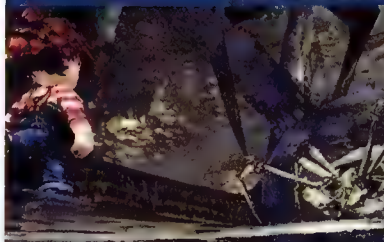
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE STUDIOS
 ■ **DEVELOPER** TRAVELLER'S TALES ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 31

SECOND OPINION

Traveller's Tales' impersonation of Naughty Dog is uncanny, scrupulously nailing every detail from the founding PlayStation trilogy. As dead-on as the gameplay may be, two crucial aspects of the game are way off the mark. For some reason or another, the load times are excruciatingly lengthy, consuming well over 30 seconds of your life whenever a level is introduced or comes to a close. On the PlayStation, it took just five seconds. Are the graphics greatly improved? Not really. Are the levels longer? Nope. So what happened? I haven't a clue. Another trouble zone lies within the collision detection on the enemies. If you don't hit them perfectly, you'll die. This, of course, leads to cheap deaths and profanity-filled screams of agony. What could have been another great entry into the Crash series, actually turned out to be a frustrating affair and one of the biggest disappointments of the year.

REINER — 6.5

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

EVIL TWIN: CYPRIEN'S CHRONICLES

HALVES AND HAVE NOTS

THE BOTTOM LINE



6

Ubi Soft first announced *Evil Twin* back at the 2000 E3. The N64 and Dreamcast were still alive then, and I have a hunch this game is still influenced by those days. It's as if developer In Utero was inspired by Conker's *Bad Fur Day*, but lacks the experience Rare has to back up a solid concept. If anything, the title would seem more at home on the old console. It certainly looks closer to a DC title (Cyprien's arty character model aside). The game also falls short in its ambitious story. The dialogue isn't as irreverent and funny as it wants to be, but at the same time, this attempt prevents the game from being dark or forbidding. In fact, *Twin* contains ill-advised references to drugs and race that are embarrassing, to say the least.

What remains is a failed, yet not totally unplayable game. Cyprien is a young orphan with a superhero alter ego. Players can transform into the alter ego at any time, providing they collected sufficient spoons for power. Also present is a first-person view for your slingshot. Unfortunately none of these make the game's combat anything other than a necessary. This typifies *Evil Twin's* failure to unify its many parts into any sort of satisfying whole. —KATO

■ **Concept:** In many areas, this game occupies an uncomfortable, close-but-no-clear-position.

■ **Graphics:** Cyprien's drab colors don't help the muddled and often-simplified textures.

■ **Sound:** The orchestrated score is the game's hidden gem.

■ **Playability:** The camera controls, tease you into thinking you've got complete control, but it isn't that simple.

■ **Entertainment:** *Twin* tries admirably, but remains a serviceable representative of the genre at best.

■ **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

The Dreamcast version of *Evil Twin* was endlessly delayed and ultimately cancelled. Fans of that ill-fated system are still thankful for that small mercy. Ubi Soft should have put this PS2 dog to sleep as well. It's boring, dreary, and characters' penchant for swearing makes it inappropriate for the toddlers that might actually think it's fun.

MATT — 3

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** IN UTERO ■ **RELEASE** LATE 2001

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

FOREVER KINGDOM

SOME THINGS ARE BEST LEFT OVERSEAS

In typical RPG-style, this quest follows the story of three adventurers who are out to discover the mystery behind an event known as the Eye of Disaster. On this day, mutants appeared and attacked both the armies of Solita and Morea, devouring humans at will, then disappearing without a trace.

As you may have guessed from the preface, the story is rather strange, but that is to be expected of many Japanese RPGs that are brought to the US. What isn't expected are rather lackluster graphics. Plain and simple, the game looks like a first-generation PlayStation 2 title. It even plays like one as well, with basic controls that feature perhaps one of my biggest pet peeves in video games: the combination attack/search/open/event button.

There are some good points to Forever Kingdom, however. The real-time battle system features a unique Palmira combo system that lets you pull off some nice moves on the enemies. Plus, all the equipment you find in the game actually shows up on your character, so you can choose fashion over function if you wish.

If you are the type who can overlook Forever Kingdom's many shortcomings and enjoy it as the weird, quirky title it is, you will only think it's OK. For everyone else, this game is just too offbeat and outdated to be fun. —ANDY

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC ■ **DEVELOPER** FROM SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 18



Concept:

Make an action/RPG that will please fans of neither action nor RPG.

Graphics:

The character designs are fine, but the animation and environments are mediocre at best.

Sound:

So eclectic that I didn't know if it was coming or going, but for some reason I liked it.

Playability:

Rather archaic, and would have been more playable if the camera wasn't so poorly done.

Entertainment:

Only true fans of the strange and unusual will get their money's worth.

Replay Value:

Low.

SECOND OPINION

Um...What? Push buttons? Okay...Time special attacks and what? Yeah, um...huh? There's a story in this game somewhere, but not only did I not care about it, I didn't even care about keeping my characters alive. Poor graphics, awful gameplay, and an abysmal storyline will serve to confuse even the most attentive of gamers.

KRISTIAN — 4.25



THE BOTTOM LINE



PLAYSTATION 2

SHADOW HEARTS

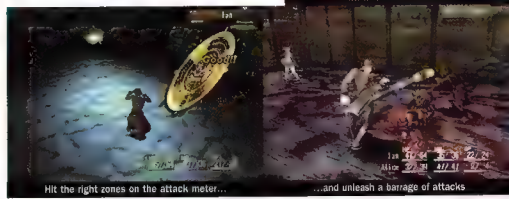
FEAR ROGER BACON

You may remember the developer Sacnoth from the Infogrames-published PS-X RPG Koudelka. Hopefully, you don't, but if you do, don't let that stop you from giving Shadow Hearts a shot. I know my fears flew right out the window the second I watched the outrageous opening movie where the lead character, Yuri, snags a crazy goblin out of thin air and crushes his head like a melon during a daring rescue of the female lead, Alice.

From there, the story gets even more obscure. First, Ian visits the dead (by actually dying) and learns that he is a Harmoniker with the ability to morph into different creatures. Then he gets trapped in a village of human-eating cat people while trying to escape from the top-hat wearing villain named Roger Bacon. Sound strange? Well, it is.

If the over-the-top story wasn't enough to get you interested, Sacnoth also came up with an innovative battle system to sweeten the pot. Much like a swing meter from a golf game, the player must make precise button presses on a spinning dial to complete actions.

At times, Shadow Hearts drudges along with some mind-numbingly stupid puzzles, but the story and the unique battle system always kept me coming back for more. It's no Final Fantasy, but RPG fans will appreciate its peculiar story and gameplay. —ANDY



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** ARUZE/SACNOTH ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 11

Concept:

Make an RPG just stupid enough to be interesting.

Graphics:

Limited in scope, but solid from beginning to end.

Sound:

Not much going on here, as all the story is delivered in text.

Playability:

The golf-swing styled interface keeps you playing.

Entertainment:

It's not brilliant, but it's just crazy enough to work.

Replay Value:

Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Shadow Hearts' demonic overtones and explicit use of gore reminds me of the under-rated PlayStation RPG, Persona. At the same time, however, the battle system loosely borrows concepts from The Legend of Dragoon — which just happens to be another game that I really enjoyed. Essentially, Shadow Hearts' composition is that of two great games. So it should be a smash hit, correct? Not necessarily. The assembly didn't come together as I'd hoped it would. The character animation is fairly weak. A newborn infant could solve the puzzles. Worst of all, the story doesn't make a lot of sense. Even with a number of discrepancies, the combat really stands out. If you enjoy vigorous button-tapping exercises, I have a feeling you'll be quite pleased with this release. It may feel like a B-movie, and it may not be as deep as most RPGs, but it is entertaining. Could it be the next cult classic?

REINER — 7.25

THE MUMMY RETURNS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE STUDIOS
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 15



True to its nature, the video game adaptation of *The Mummy Returns* is a rotten corpse festering with maggots and indescribable horrors. Through unresponsive controls, poorly designed

worlds, and atrocious animations, it would seem this title was created with the specific purpose of torturing those who play.

— **REINER**

2.5

TSUGUNAI: ATONEMENT

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ATLUS
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 23



Atlus has taken this Japanese RPG under its wing, and taken the good and less-than-good aspects along with it. The interesting premise of accepting missions by possessing villagers'

bodies is weighed down by a very average presentation and a game design that is pretty basic. *Tsugunai*'s mix of turn-based and real-time combat stops short of the intricacies of *Vagrant Story*, and I got the sense that the title as a whole could have gone farther. — **KATO**

7.25

PROJECT EDEN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 25



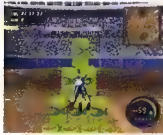
Although *Project Eden* seems to have its heart in the right place, it ends up being nothing more than a decent-looking puzzle game with a few gun battles thrown in. Some people

really like that type of game. I, however, am not one of them. The game's pace is painfully slow, and like most puzzle games of this type, the payoff is far from satisfying. The menu system has some good points, but not enough to make a difference for me. — **KRISTIAN**

5.5

JEREMY MCGRATH'S SUPERCROSS WORLD

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM MAX SPORTS
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19



As all-encompassing as this game sounds, the only thing it does is put you in a world of hurt. Environments are uninspired, the dirt effects are dull, and tricks take too long to develop. I know BMX and supercross

are different sports, but I believe that Acclaim could have utilized its experience with Dave Mirra (or developer Z-Axis) to kick this title up a notch, or to at least make it presentable. McGrath? Travis Pastrana?

No, I blame Ezra Lusik. — **KATO**

5

DARK SUMMIT

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 22

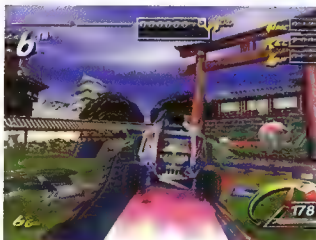


THQ has done a good job of porting *Dark Summit* to the PlayStation 2, as the game's graphics make the transition largely intact. A few things, most notably the textures and the particle snow effects,

aren't as sharp, but it's still a nice looking title. Unfortunately, the PS2's library is already stocked with at least four snowboarding games that are infinitely better than this. Next time around, maybe Radical will fix the low-gravity physics. Until then, I'd skip it.

— **MATT**

6.5



STUNT GP

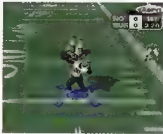
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** TITUS SOFTWARE
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12

Originally destined for the now defunct Dreamcast, *Stunt GP* is ready to launch on the PS2. Is this good news? Well, let's just say that perhaps *Stunt GP* should have followed poor old Dreamcast to the grave. Jokes aside, I did want to like *Stunt GP*, since I thought the tracks were rather clever with lots of loops and jumps. However, the gameplay is just so generic that even the track designs couldn't save this title. Perhaps if the developer had lost the annoying camera and concentrated on some solid racing this game could have been fun. — **ANDY**

4

ESPN NFL PRIMETIME 2002

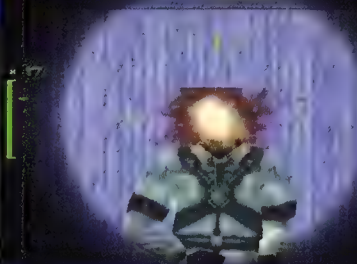
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 13



It has made great strides since its preview form, but this is still a not-ready-for-PrimeTime player. The problems with the passing game are major, including a lack of touch on the ball, receivers who stop to

catch passes, and iffy collision detection in general. This is a shame, since this title is good along the margins. Even with Berman bellowing, "He could... go... all... the... way..." I wouldn't suggest running to the store for this one. Nice player faces, though. — **KATO**

6



PLAYSTATION 2

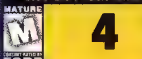
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE GOLD

A BLOODY MESS

The Brits have an expression, "bog standard," which basically means that something is average or run-of-the-mill. *Soldier of Fortune Gold*, if you discount the game's now-infamous levels of gore, would have been a bog standard first-person shooter if it were released for PlayStation two years ago. However, this is a PlayStation 2 title in the year 2001, and, as such, this game abjectly fails to reach the standards that we should now expect. Nearly every aspect of the graphics is poor, from the texturing to the character models. The storyline and the level designs are the same. Blend of hackneyed action-movie clichés that we've been spoon-fed for years. The action and control are passable, but nothing here really stands out as unique or particularly interesting.

So, what distinguishes *Soldier of Fortune Gold* from superior PS2 FPSs like *Red Faction*? It's really bloody. You can shoot off the limbs of enemies. Terrorists that have been hit in an extremity will writhe and beg for their lives. This gimmick works for about 20 minutes, and then quickly becomes as tiresome as the rest of this game. *Soldier of Fortune Gold* is a cynical exercise in shock tactics, one that appeals to the worst instincts of its audience. Apart from the controversial violence contained within, there's little of real value here. — **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:** If we pile on the gore, maybe people won't notice how amateurish this game is.

■ **Graphics:** A gruesome rate of ugly textures, bad character models, and collision problems.

■ **Sound:** Unless you enjoy listening to shrieks of pain, you won't find much here.

■ **Playability:** The default control setting works well enough, but it's hard to target accurately.

■ **Entertainment:** Morally reprehensible and not interesting in the least.

■ **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

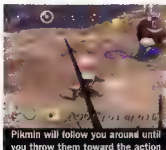
If you are going to bring out PC first-person shooters to the PlayStation 2, at least make sure that the game is still interesting by the time you release it two years later. *Half-Life* is still fun, *Soldier of Fortune* is not. It doesn't even look halfway decent either, so there is no reason to play this game whatsoever.

— **ANDY - 4.5**

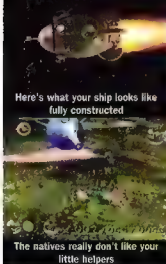
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO
 ■ **DEVELOPER** PIPE DREAM INTERACTIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12



"...a lot of the game's fun comes from figuring out how to destroy [enemies] using your pint-sized platoons of plant people."



Pikmin will follow you around until you throw them toward the action



Here's what your ship looks like fully constructed

The natives really don't like your little helpers

GAMECUBE

PIKMIN

THE CUTEST GAME EVER!

How could anyone in their right mind not think this game is absolutely adorable? Look at all those cute little guys running around the pictures! They scamper through the levels making little noises and things... You have to love that. If you don't, you're probably a troll who lives under a freeway overpass somewhere and you listen to Queensrÿche and Ratt exclusively. Lighten up, Francis! Apart from being cuddly, Pikmin is a game that demands a surprising amount of player ingenuity and problem solving. It may not look like a melon-scratcher kind of game, but I

guarantee you'll be hard-pressed to unlock all of its well-hidden secrets.

The game commences as your character — an intrepid spaceguy — is flying around the universe, minding his own business, when an asteroid collides with his ship and he's forced to make an emergency landing on a strange planet. When the smoke clears, two things quickly become apparent. Number one: Your character's size is nearly microscopic compared to the native life surrounding him. Number two: Your ship is in very rough shape. To get off this rock you will enlist the help of the Pikmin, who help you recover the parts of your ship you need to get back home. Although this may sound easy, there are 30 parts to recover, and you have a

limited amount of days to find them all.

There are three different colors of Pikmin — Red, Blue, and Yellow. Each type has different abilities, which you need to utilize to overcome different obstacles preventing you from reaching your ship parts. Additionally, all Pikmin exist in one of three stages of growth — leaf, bud, and flower. Each one represents a different level of strength, with the flower being the most powerful. There are a number of different ways to "upgrade" your little friends' strength (leaving them planted in the ground is the easiest), and with each successful change, Pikmin will become faster and stronger. Of course, there are plenty of evil little resident creatures who like to eat and hurt the poor little Pik-guys, and a lot of the game's fun comes from figuring out how to destroy them using your pint-sized platoons of plant people.

I found the game's controls to be perfectly tuned for ordering your allies around, and as a side note, the controller itself is a work of ergonomic art. Although this is essentially a detailed puzzle game, the detail is truly a sight to behold. Fantastic water effects, coupled with seamless graphics and incredible animations, are just a few of the things sure to make this game a hotly sought-after item. — **KRISTIAN**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 3



You'll need a lot of help to carry back parts of your ship



Some of those little guys didn't make it out of the water

THE BOTTOM LINE



9.25

- **Concept:** Enlist the help of local flora to help you find pieces of your doomed spacecraft
- **Graphics:** This is a superb offering, not just for the GameCube, but any next-gen console
- **Sound:** Everything is on the up and up in this department
- **Playability:** Getting used to the control scheme will be the least of your worries. How well you utilize it turns into your biggest challenge
- **Entertainment:** If you're not having fun within ten minutes of the opening sequence, you probably forgot to turn your television on
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

What do Shigeru Miyamoto and the caterpillar from *Alice in Wonderland* have in common? They've both been pulling away at the hookah for far too long. The development team must have thought Miyamoto was crazy when he presented this idea to them. Of course, Miyamoto managed to transform this inconceivable concept into a wonderfully inventive game. As with most Nintendo productions, this one shines in the gameplay department, offering easy-to-manage and well-balanced play mechanics. The majority of the visual content is technically impressive, but the texturing is a tad fuzzy. Altogether, though, it looks fantastic. This title's only drawback is repetition. Ordering Pikmin troops to do your bidding is enjoyable; however, after an hour, these tasks become monotonous. Pikmin may be revolutionary, but it really could have benefited from a little variety.

REINER — 8.5



GAMECUBE

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

ANYTHING PS2 CAN DO, CUBE CAN DO BETTER

This release had many things going against it. The development team was porting one of the greatest games of the year onto new hardware, and trying to do so before GameCube launched. Despite pressure and forced insomnia for Neversoft, things couldn't have turned out better.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 is every bit the masterpiece on GameCube that it was on PlayStation 2. At first I struggled with the controls, particularly the size of the A button, but about halfway through my first Career mode I was hooked, and plowing through objectives like Minnesota snow. You're forced to use the R button for Revert, which is the same one I normally use for rotation. This just means you have to be a little more on your game. I still have a few difficulties with grind transfers, but any problems you may encounter are more operator error than anything, since the controls are flawless.

All the extras and perks of Tony 3 made it onto the tiny disc format, from the extensive end movies to the ambient level detail. Xbox got a rehash of Tony 2 and GameCube gets this? I feel sort of bad for Microsoft. Unless you own it on PlayStation 2 already, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 should be one of the first games you pick up for GameCube.

— JUSTIN



The pirate ship is one of the game's many secret sections. Tony 3 has some amazing hidden skaters.



Just another boring day in the 'burbs. Tony wades the security checkpoint with his cow backpack.

THE BOTTOM LINE

T 9.75

■ **Concept:**

Make a picture perfect port of one of the year's best games

■ **Graphics:**

Just like the PS2's visuals. No better, nor worse

■ **Sound:**

Not the best soundtrack, but you can turn off undesirable songs. Props for Rollins Band

■ **Playability:**

Revert takes better timing, and GC's button layout will temporarily confuse those used to Tony on Sony

■ **Entertainment:**

There is no end to the amount of exploration, skill building, and score beating you can do in this amazing release

■ **Replay Value:**

High

SECOND OPINION

I feared that Neversoft wouldn't be able to include all of the extras from the PlayStation 2 DVD onto the GameCube's proprietary disc. I also had my doubts as to how the GameCube controller would handle Tony 3's fast-paced play. To much astonishment and glee, the GameCube version of Tony 3 is identical to the original PlayStation 2 release. Certainly, if you've already played the game on the Dual Shock 2, it'll take some getting used to. Rest assured, though, even without two shoulder buttons, the control is just as friendly and easy to manage. On the technical side, Neversoft rewrote the graphics engine so that the loading times are much shorter. In the grand scheme of things, nothing has changed. The graphics qualities are still outstanding and all of the bonus materials are still included. It's the same great game on another system.

REINER — 9.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
 ■ **DEVELOPER** NEVERSOFT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

REVIEWS



GAMECUBE

CRAZY TAXI

FOUR TIMES CRAZY

What more can I say about Crazy Taxi? No, really. I've played this game on four different systems, counting the arcade machine that was released three long years ago, and I'm running a little dry. This port is virtually identical to both the Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 versions, and I'm annoyed that some of the subtle graphical problems with the game, like the suspect collision detection, haven't been fixed by now. Also, I wonder how many people there are out there that have not already had the chance to play Crazy Taxi. Make no mistake, this is just a plain and simple port; nothing worth noting has been added. If you've played Crazy Taxi before, I see no reason why you would need to spend your hard-earned cash just to do so on the GameCube.

Now, let's assume you're a newbie. How does Crazy Taxi stack up to the GC titles on the market right now? Pretty well, actually. It's at least as good as Wave Race, and its wide-open action probably puts it above Acclaim's Extreme G3. If you're looking for a solid, fun racing game for your newest console, this isn't a bad bet. However, the superior sequel, Crazy Taxi 2, is retailing for \$20 now, so why not pull your old Dreamcast out for one more spin instead? — **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE

T 7.5

■ **Concept:**

It sold on Dreamcast... it sold on PlayStation 2, and it will sell on GameCube

■ **Graphics:**

I'd be hard pressed to distinguish between the three console versions of Crazy Taxi in a blind test

■ **Sound:**

The Offspring suck on any system

■ **Playability:**

The GC's large buttons make Crazy Boost and Crazy Drift a bit harder, but it's still all good

■ **Entertainment:**

If you've played it before, keep on walking. Still, it's a solid addition to the GameCube library

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

As much as I've always liked Crazy Taxi, its problems, like collision and outdated graphics, are made especially obvious since it's been around so long now. Like a farmer drains the final drops of milk out of Bessie before turning her into meatloaf, Acclaim is just pinching the last pennies out of this old license.

JUSTIN — 6.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

REVIEWS



XBOX

MX2002 FEATURING RICKY CARMICHAEL

THE REAL RICKY RETREAD

Before reviewing this edition of Ricky Carmichael, I was doubtful the fun of the PlayStation 2 version would carry over. I usually don't go back to the punishment that is your average motocross game, but MX2002 was pretty inviting. I wouldn't say it's so good that you can't avoid it, but rather, that it's a solid game that is no fluke. This is worth something—especially considering that the Xbox motocross honeymoon will probably be very, very short.

Somed like the sport itself, the Xbox controller positively redeems itself in this incarnation. Powerslides are intuitively performed by pushing down on the left analog stick—something that the PS2 didn't offer. This allows you to concentrate more on the all-important clutch and pre-load functions of the triggers. Tricks have also become easier and, quite simply, more fun. There are graphical upgrades and some new tracks that kick a few extra pebbles in your face, but I personally think the real surprise of MX2002 is that it rewarded me for picking up the controller a second time. I'm not sure it's capable of converting the mainstream to its cause just yet, but Xboxers should be happy to get in on the ground floor with this one. —KATO

THE BOTTOM LINE

E EVERYONE
ESRB RATING

7.5

- **Concept:** Barring a few additions, THQ holds the line for Ricky's Xbox debut.
- **Graphics:** Small improvements on an already good-looking game.
- **Sound:** It would have been nice if you could have created your own soundtrack, but alas.
- **Playability:** This must be one of the few Xbox titles that benefits from the controller.
- **Entertainment:** I admit I was surprised the fun still lasts in this version.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

For fans of this sport, MX2002 could quite possibly be the second coming—you've got tricks, tracks, and flying dirt airplanes (just like the Dudez). Plus you can play as Ezra Luis, who incidentally should have been this game's cover-boy because he's the only motocross person I know.

KRISTIAN — 8

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **DEVELOPER** PACIFIC COAST POWER & LIGHT
 ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 3



XBOX

NBA LIVE 2002

TOSSIN' BALLS IN THE BOX

Live has been putting up big numbers for years, on nearly every conceivable home system. Within a month of the PS2 version's release, this Xbox incarnation has hit the streets. What did EA Sports' developers do with the extra time? I'd wager they sat and waited for the launch, since this game is basically a direct port.

2002 has really advanced over last year's letdown, and all of these tweaks and additions are faithfully brought to Xbox. Graphically, this is the sweetest-looking hoops title yet, crushing any other game's crowds, character models, and cameras. The collision may not be perfect, but that's the price you pay for a fast-paced contest. If I didn't know better, I'd think I had mad skillz. The computer is a pushover, and easily stolen from, dunked on, and blocked. Seasoned vets would be wise to pump up the difficulty. I guess this goes to show that Xbox's controller works well with sports games. I was vibin' off Live 2002 on PS2, and since this is identical, I can only recommend it as well, especially since NBA 2K2 is a long way off for Xbox. —JUSTIN

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA SPORTS
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19



XBOX

SHREK

YOU CUT ME SHREK, YOU CUT ME DEEP

The game looked poor at every stage in its development, so I guess it's no surprise that TDK has handed gamers a world-class turd in the form of Shrek, the first (but probably not the last) substandard platformer released on the Xbox. Every system has to have them, so I guess it's good for Microsoft to just get it out of the way on launch day. I'm trying to think of anything positive to say about this game, so I guess I'll mention the nice textures. However, the Xbox is a platform that makes it very easy to have nice textures, so that's kind of praising someone for being able to drive at 65 mph in their car.

Now for the bad, which could take a while. The worst aspect of this game is the terribly unimaginative and simplistic level goals. Every goal is something along the lines of: Get X, bring X back to this spot; or, find X, fart on it. Believe me, it's as dull as it sounds. The prickly gameplay and shoddy animation don't help either. But hey, it's FUNNY! Shrek can burp and light his farts! Well, so can my old college roommates and I don't see you paying 50 bucks to hang out with them. —MATT

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** TDK MEDIACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL ILLUSIONS/DICE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 15

THE BOTTOM LINE

E EVERYONE
ESRB RATING

8.5

SECOND OPINION

Other than a slight reduction in loading times, there really are no distinct differences between the Xbox version and the founding PS2 release. It's a decent game, but it doesn't have the competitive edge or depth of Sega's forthcoming NBA 2K2.

REINER — 8.5

- **Concept:** Draw first basketball blood on Xbox.
- **Graphics:** Looks just like PlayStation 2's Live 2002.
- **Sound:** The commentary has been speeded up slightly from years past.
- **Playability:** The different button placements confuse at first, but all in all Live handles like a dream.
- **Entertainment:** This is good, clean hoops that will please Xbox owners and garner acceptance for its controller.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.



THE BOTTOM LINE

E EVERYONE
ESRB RATING

2

SECOND OPINION

If there was ever a reason to have game producers taken out and publicly beaten, Shrek is it. Perhaps it would teach them to stop insulting our intelligence with gameplay that is so bad even a child can hate it. I mean come on, fart and burp jokes in one game? That's just not right. I pity the fool that buys Shrek!

ANDY — 3

- **Concept:** A glorified Easter egg hunt/fart-fest starring the animated hero of the year.
- **Graphics:** My, look at those bump-mapped textures! My, look at that crappy animation!
- **Sound:** The Xbox has 256 sound channels. This uses about four.
- **Playability:** Even rudimentary platforming moves are frustrating, and the camera is no picnic either.
- **Entertainment:** The lame blooper reel from the Shrek DVD is more fun than this.
- **Replay Value:** Low.



XBOX

MAD DASH RACING

STOP AND SMELL THE GREEN METEOR THINGS

We've been told many times by Microsoft how cool this game was going to be. Of course, the Microsoft reps were biased for a vid that's launching on their console. They'd say things like, "Wow! Wasn't that amazing?" while we had a hard time feigning even feigned interest. You could get excited about things in Mad Dash, but that doesn't translate into actually liking the game.

Hats off to Crystal Dynamics for creating levels large enough to require only one lap, yet contain both variety and freedom. The environments keep you on your toes, requiring you to race, slide, platform, and jump through the massive stages. Getting lost isn't uncommon, and neither is relying on the game's catch-up AI. I DID find interest in the above, but let me say this: Do I have to cross the finish line? I was more intrigued by Mad Dash's levels from a platforming/exploration standpoint than I was in coming in first. I guess that makes the title's main problem that it isn't linear enough! How's that for hard-to-please? I guess not being interested in the game's rules themselves is a basic quail. For the young kid who's been starved on a diet of crappy kart games, this will seem like a feast. The rest of us will want to get our fill elsewhere. — **KATO**



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE
 ■ **DEVELOPER** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 14

THE BOTTOM LINE

6

- **Concept:** Making the most of a mandatory wacky race game
- **Graphics:** Nothing noteworthy, unless you consider the sheer amount of objects onscreen
- **Sound:** The only thing out of the ordinary is the licensing of electronic artists like Hoopz. Overall, I still wasn't impressed
- **Playability:** Gives you more to do than your average racer of this variety
- **Entertainment:** Getting there is half the fun, but what are you going to do with only half a game?
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

I can see where Crystal Dynamics was going with this one; putting traditional platform characters in a racing game would seem to be a logical evolution for the kart-racing genre. Unfortunately, the concept is much better in theory than in practice. There are a number of reasons for this: three characters, lackluster graphics, and frustrating level design — most of which are pretty typical for a mediocre title such as this. However, I think the real problem with Mad Dash is that its basic premise is flawed. In simple terms, the things that are good about racing games (high speeds and precision turning) and the things that are good about platforming games (exploration, climbing, and tricky jump sequences) are mutually exclusive, in that the racing tends to make the platforming frustrating and vice versa. Yes, the levels are very large and it looks reasonably good, but Mad Dash is not a reason to buy an Xbox.

MATT — 6



XBOX

NHL HITZ 2002

RIDE THE ZAMBONI PONY

Every time I play Hitz (which has been a lot lately, since I've reviewed it on two platforms), I think about how superior it is to the

substandard efforts of Midway's last few years of arcade sports titles. Hoopz was pathetic, and Blitz never improved over its original package. NHL Hitz, though, crushes all of those series with a high-stick to the groin region.

Hitz files by at a blistering pace. Your head will spin as the puck travels the length of the rink in the blink of an eye. The Xbox controller's bulk resulted in me feeling some of the agony my NHL alter ego's were experiencing (as I flexed my fingers in pain), but that was only after repeated heated battles.

One-timers are an offense's best friend, and good, hard checks are your best bet on D. Fights are safest turned off, as they become cumbersome quickly. This version seems to have upped the difficulty, as I didn't once have the 12-3 routs I was used to on PS2.

I think Midway has a ways to go to make Hitz a flagship sports franchise. Stats would be nice, but this is in no way a sim so I won't complain much. If you've got a hankering for some good, multiplayer fun or a mindless testosterone tirade, Hitz is your hook-up. — **JUSTIN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

8.5

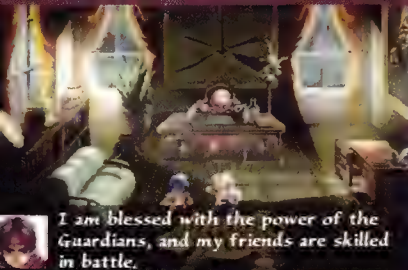
- **Concept:** Six guys, two nets, and no rules
- **Graphics:** The ice seems a bit more detailed than on PS2, but otherwise it's the same nice, visual package
- **Sound:** Bye-bye, Limb Bizkit! Hello, custom soundtrack! Thanks, Xbox hard drive
- **Playability:** The increase in difficulty now reduces the amount of blowout wins
- **Entertainment:** The arcade sports genre has made its debut on Xbox in style
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Taking into account that I can't stand NBA Hoopz or NFL Blitz, I have to admit that NHL Hitz is a pleasant surprise. The gameplay is fast and ferocious. As hard-hitting as the gameplay may be, I hate the structure of the game. Why didn't Midway include statistical tracking or a season mode?

REINER — 8

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 6-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
 ■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 6



I am blessed with the power of the Guardians, and my friends are skilled in battle.

PLAYSTATION

ARC THE LAD COLLECTION

ARC, ARC, ARCIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR.

Working Designs went way overboard once again when it chose to bring the Arc the Lad trilogy to the US in one mammoth package, but that's what fans expect. Arc's gameplay is reminiscent of Shining Force on Genesis, but with more emphasis placed on story. You're not going to be doing much overworld exploring, but you will find plenty of turn-based combat on large battlefields. With weapons leveling up, and talking to NPCs, this is the perfect medium between strategy and role-playing.

Arc I and II look like they were done on the SNES (not necessarily a bad thing). Arc III appears more 32-bit, evoking memories of Suikoden. Each features staple plot devices, like heroes with lost memories and corrupt authority figures. Monster Tournament is a cool place to battle with the monsters you've tamed, but it's more icing than cake. Arc III's wealth of bounty-hunter missions make me give it the nod as the collection's best game.

This is a hard compilation to judge. At \$70, you're paying \$23 per game, plus fluff. Each Arc is great, but will you pass up Final Fantasy X for the collection? Probably not. Should you keep them up period? Hell no! With the classic strategy gameplay and trademark Working Designs writing, anybody with a taste for RPGs will find more than a mouthful here. — **JUSTIN**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **DEVELOPER** WORKING DESIGNS ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 27

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN

8.5

- **Concept:** Bring a long overdue RPG trilogy to the US, all in one grandiose package.
- **Graphics:** Good, super-deformed, first-gen 32-bit sprites, but still super-deformed, first-gen 32-bit sprites.
- **Sound:** Above average music throughout.
- **Playability:** It's easy to see why many prefer the strategy battle grid to typical turn-based combat.
- **Entertainment:** Good quests, good writing, and a huge compilation make for a no-brainer for RPG fans.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

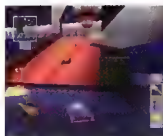
SECOND OPINION

I played the original Arc the Lad when the PS-X first launched, and I thought it was crazy that it never made it stateside. Six years later, the game has lost some of its luster, but it's still a solid RPG and I'm glad it has finally made it to our shores (packaged with the rest of the Trilogy to boot). These aren't the greatest RPGs of all time, but they are fun and you really get a lot of gameplay for your money.

ANDY — 8

TWISTED METAL: SMALL BRAWL

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 27



Unfortunately for Small Brawl, you also have played Twisted Metal: Black, you can't go home again. This "kid" version of Twisted Metal is plagued with so many problems I don't even know where to begin, but to put it simply: This game doesn't even live up to the first four PS-X titles in the series. It's that bad. I just feel dirty playing it, and Sony should feel worse for publishing it.

Shame on you, Sony. — **ANDY**

3



VIRTUAL KASPAROV

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER BOARD/STRATEGY
 ■ **PUBLISHER** TITUS
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 10

If this game taught me one thing, it's that I'm a complete idiot. Forget Deep Blue, I was getting my butt whipped by the PlayStation's puny 32-bit processor every time. All humiliation aside, Virtual Kasparov is a fine chess title. It has a lot to offer: re-creations of classic matches, FMV interviews with the man himself, and a deep tutorial covering everything from basic piece movement to advanced strategy. The only flaw is the rather odd isometric view of the chessboard, which makes it hard to see your pawns.

— **MAIT**

7.75

V.I.P.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UMI SOFT
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12



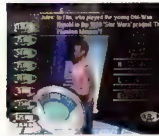
If there were such a thing as game developer fraternities, I'd suspect V.I.P. was the product of a rush-week prank at the Ubi Soft campus. Like the game is so indescribably bad that it's almost good in its own weird way. Actually, it's not. In fact, it's absolutely horrible. It looks worse than Pam's new boyfriend, Kid Rock, after a bottle of Jack Daniel's. Imagine PaRappa meets Shrek: Fairy Tale FreakDown in high heels, then start running. Perhaps someday you'll find this at a garage sale for 50 cents. If you do, I'd pick it up as a cheap reminder of just how bad games can be.

— **MAIT**

1

WEAKEST LINK

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 7-PLAYER BOARD
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 25



Weakest Link is much better suited to a video game than Who Wants To Be A Millionaire, especially for multiplayer. This follows the show to a tee, while allowing you to tweak category frequency and Ann's abuse. It's cool flying solo, but when you have a group involved, hilarity ensues as people bargain to avoid being voted off. The speech is a little repetitive, but still amusing. Weakest Link on PS-X is not a few itches short of a rash. Good-bye.

— **JUSTIN**

7

SALTWATER SPORTFISHING

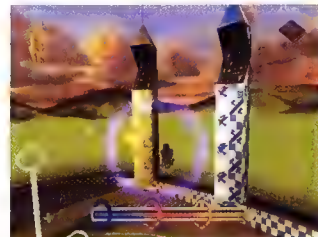
■ **STYLE** 1 PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** TAKE 2
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19



Sportfishing is here to put the ass in Bass, and for less than half the price, too. Okay, so maybe it doesn't have the slickness of Dreamcast's Bass Fishing, but the fun here is in getting to fight the kinda fish that eat toilet seats for breakfast. Apart from managing test lines, you'll be yanking the analog to and fro and completing challenges involving time and fishes' weights. Saltwater's pretty basic, so I suggest Take 2 give away buckets of chum to round this purchase out. — **KATO**

— **KATO**

6.5



HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 16

After making two Croc titles, Disney's Aladdin in Nasira's Revenge, and Emperor's New Groove, the gang at Argonaut could probably make a PS-X platformer in their sleep, and I'm beginning to wonder if they did with Harry Potter's first foray into the world of video games. A few of the boss battles are cool, and Quidditch is good fun, but deciding to forgo the jump button and have Harry automatically leap at the edge of every platform was not wise. For the very young, or serious Harry Potter collectors only.

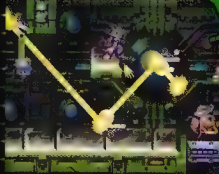
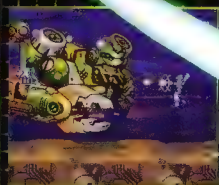
— **MAIT**

5.5

MEGAMAN X6

Mission Critical... Zero is Missing... Search and Rescue!

Prepare yourself for the next astounding adventure in the awesome Mega Man X series. Timing is everything as you dash through a tangled web of intricate levels and abominable bosses. Mega Man X is back and this time it's personal!



Violence



CAPCOM



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THE BOTTOM LINE

ESRB E

9.5

"Tennis 2K2 is every bit as impressive as anything in the EA Sports stable, and is required playing for anyone who loves sports games."

DREAMCAST

TENNIS 2K2

THE DREAMCAST'S SWAN SONG

I know that most of you who have stayed faithful to the ill-fated Dreamcast are in an uproar over the cancellation of the DC version of *Shemmue II*. Still, I urge you to hold off putting the system in mothballs until you've had a chance to sample *Tennis 2K2*, the sequel to 2000's brilliant *Virtua Tennis*. It's better than the bloated and overrated *Shemmue*, and an excellent end to the Dreamcast's run.

Virtua Tennis, while offering exceptional playcontrol and realistic graphics, stayed very true to its arcade origins, with a career mode that was not up to the standards that console sports gamers have come to expect. In *Tennis 2K2*, this shortcoming has been remedied with an expanded World Tour mode that allows players to create custom male and female players, and take them through the ranks of the pro circuit. As before, there are a number of minigames, like *Prize Sniper* and *Danger Flags*, which serve as training exercises that help improve your skills and attributes. The matches are now based around a calendar of events that require you to qualify for four events. Between matches, you can toggle between your male and female pro, developing their careers in tandem. As your tour ranking increases, you will be able to sign one of the game's several real-life stars as a doubles partner.

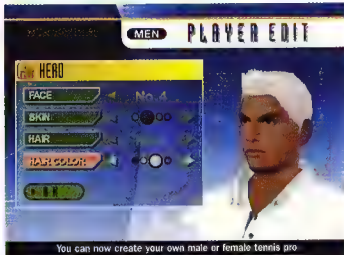
As you can see, Hitmaker has added a lot of depth in the

game's front end, but the improvements don't stop there. The most obvious new addition is the inclusion of female tennis pros to the mix, including superstars like Monica Seles, Lindsay Davenport, and Venus and Serena Williams. There have been changes in the men's lineup as well, with Jim Courier and Mark Philippoussis jettisoned in favor of Patrick Rafter, and Thomas Enquist, as well as some other new faces.

As impressive as these new features are, I'm happy to report that the game's immaculate gameplay remains largely the same. In my mind, *Virtua Tennis* was the first tennis game that truly captured the high-speed strategy that is the essence of the sport. The animation and ball physics are extremely realistic, and made even more true-to-life by the improved player models. Some subtle aspects of gameplay, like cross-court and drop shots, have been tweaked, and the AI is even more unforgiving than before. Your computer opponents force you to play textbook tennis, as you will not be able to succeed by strong serve and volley alone. Run up to the net without properly setting up your move and you will be burned by a well-placed lob. In its own way, *Tennis 2K2* is every bit as impressive as anything in the EA Sports stable, and is required playing for anyone who loves sports games.

— MATT

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ PUBLISHER HITMAKER ■ DEVELOPER SEGA ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 24



- **Concept:**
Improve on the massive success of *Virtua Tennis* with a revamped career mode
- **Graphics:**
The character models are much more detailed than before
- **Sound:**
We worried that the screams of the female players might earn this game an M rating, but Sega keeps it clean with minimal sound and crowd noise
- **Playability:**
Easy to pick up, yet offers a ton of subtle nuances for experts
- **Entertainment:**
The best tennis game ever just got better
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

This follow-up to *Virtua Tennis* takes all the fun of the first and adds some needed depth with an expanded World Tour mode that lets you create a player and take them on tour. My biggest complaint about *Tennis 2K2* is rather superficial, as I wish that Sega had done a little bit more to expand the gameplay. Being able to put some English on the shots to give the player a little more control would have been a nice addition. However, that complaint is rather moot because as it stands the gameplay is still as solid as a rock. The much-improved roster, with more recognizable stars and the women's players is cool, but leaves me asking: where is Anna Kournikova? She may not be the world's greatest tennis player, but man is she hot.

ANDY — 8.75

JEREMY McGRATH supercross world

McGRATH // BORN 11.9.71 // PRO SINCE 1988
 COPIE HOLDER, MOST SUPERCROSS WINS EVER
 7-TIME AMA SUPERCROSS WORLD CHAMPION

LEU 03

LEU 08

LEU 12
12

LEU 22
FREESTYLE

LEU 25



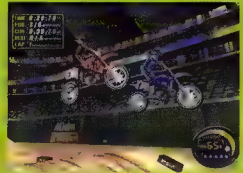
the only game featuring 10x world champion
 Jeremy McGrath and freestyle phenom Travis
 Paavola



25 super-sized tracks, exclusive age racing,
 indoor supercross, freestyle and outdoor
 freestyle



freestyle mode featuring 24 tricks: noc
 nos, supermans, fender grabs, 360s and
 more



innovative "stunt advantage system" and
 head-to-head split-screen mode



THERE ARE MANY RIDERS.
 BUT THERE IS ONLY ONE KING.

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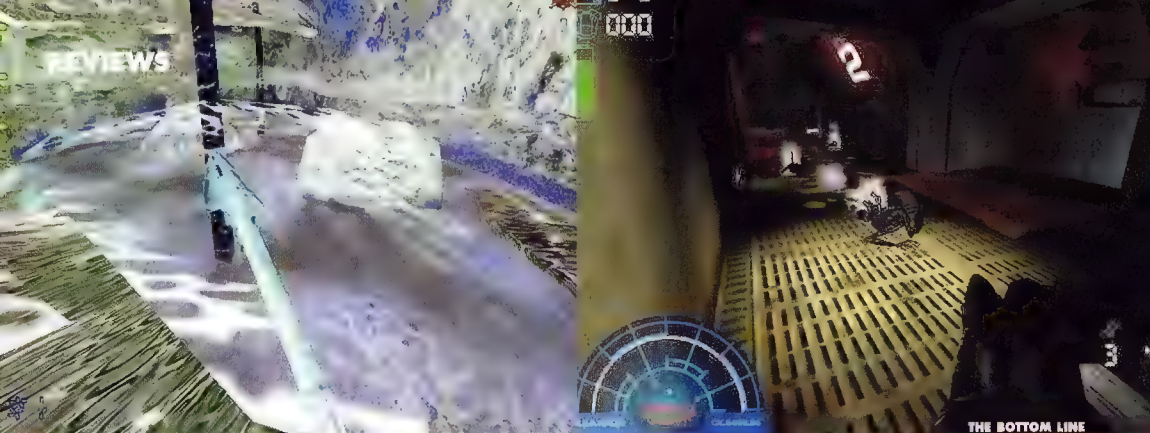


Mild Lyrics



PlayStation 2





THE BOTTOM LINE



9.25

"You get a lot of
game for your
money with
AvP2."

PC
**ALIENS VERSUS
PREDATOR 2**
JESSE VENTURA NOT INCLUDED



I would not suggest playing this game alone, in a dark room, with the volume turned up. I played it with headphones, in a well lit space, with five other people around, and I had to take numerous breaks due to an elevated heart rate. With three different storylines to choose from (Alien, Predator, and Marne), there's plenty of game to be had—but the most intense experience by far comes from the Marine plotline. As the game opens, you're quickly separated from your squad and left to fend for yourself throughout the bowels of an Alien-infested research complex. The subtle musical score, accompanied by extended periods of pulse-pounding suspense, are punctuated by frenzied moments of sheer terror as you fight to stay alive. Although the other two campaigns are interesting and entertaining in their own right, it's just not as engaging when you're the hunter, instead of the hunted.

However, there is something to be said for lurking in dark corners and waiting for your prey to wander into range of your claws. As the Alien, you find yourself struggling to locate your hive after hours of skulking around the research station looking for food. When you finally reach Drone status, things get interesting. No more running away from those nasty, gun-toting humans—the more carnage you inflict, the healthier you become. By executing lethal head-bites you neither

instantly kill your quarry, but gain back a portion of health, should you need it. That, coupled with the ability to gobble up fallen victims, gives the Alien a distinct advantage, to say nothing of the wall-climbing ability and leaping attacks. If things are sounding a little mismatched, don't worry. When you do meet a bullet, it takes a lot out of you.

Although the Marne and Alien campaigns are a bit more interesting than that of the Predator, the sound effects that accompany you on your Predatory quest for heads are ripped straight from the movies. Although this is true for the sounds in the other playmodes, they take on a chilling realism as you leap from tree to tree with your cloaking unit activated. The interface takes some getting used to, however, as that bizarre digital readout used for Predator's suit display is employed for assorted onscreen indicators. It might seem like something you could get used to, but I never really felt comfortable with it.

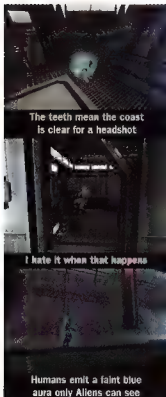
Aside from the single-player journey, multiplayer modes feature a number of ways to kill the guy on the other end of the network. From team-based elimination modes to free-for-all play, the online experience has been made with all of you net soldiers in mind. You get a lot of game for your money with AvP2. I would say go get it before your neighbors. —KRISTIAN

- **Concept:**
About as close as you can get to climbing into these movies
- **Graphics:**
Everything seems to be status quo here
- **Sound:**
Great effects straight out of the movies give this game a huge shot in the arm, and the score is very well done
- **Playability:**
If you've played a first-person shooter before, you'll feel right at home
- **Entertainment:**
The only reason you wouldn't like this game is if you hated the movies
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

No One Lives Forever developer Monolith takes the reins of the Aliens vs. Predator franchise for this super-sequel, and manages to top the first game in many senses. New additions include the Quick Save, and a more integrated storyline that incorporates Marne, Alien, and Predator missions into one intersecting plot. As in the first, the excellent use of ambient sound and lighting effects creates a mood of almost unbearable tension. Unlike most first-person shooters, where a premium is placed on blazing action, what doesn't happen in AvP2 is almost as important as what does. I didn't encounter an Alien for the first half-hour, but by the time I did, I was so shaken that I screamed like a little girl. Rainer is still making fun of me, but it was worth it. A great game. It's just too bad the outdated graphics are an artifact from the days when 500MHz computers were a big deal.

MATT — 8.75



The teeth mean the coast is clear for a headshot

I hate it when that happens

Humans emit a faint blue aura only Aliens can see



This doesn't look good



The Predator shows this forest what he thinks of it



THE BOTTOM LINE



8.5

"...it's hard
not to find
the game
charming."

PC

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

EVERQUEST'S FIRST REAL CONTENDER

As a longtime EverQuest player, it was hard not to come into Dark Age of Camelot without a bit of bias. However, once I got deeper into the DAcO experience, I discovered that while it is one of the biggest EQ rip-offs ever, it succeeds in establishing its own unique identity.

Dark Age of Camelot offers gamers the chance to play in one of three realms, each with its own unique set of races and classes. Albion, the home of Camelot, offers classic fantasy lore and characters mostly of the human variety. Hiberna, based on Celtic lore, is a land of Elfin magic where almost all classes have some magical ability. Midgard, based on Viking legend, is full of hearty Norsemen, dwarves, and trolls who look to their gods for their powers.

The interesting thing is you can't play in multiple realms on a single server; you must pick a realm and stick with it. You can't speak with characters from the others realms, but you can fight with them. Between each of the realms is an area known as the frontier, where players from each world battle it out in player vs. player (PvP) to capture sacred relics from the other realms.

For those not into PvP, don't let this aspect of the game scare you off, because in DAcO you can hunt throughout your realm without fear of PvP, just like a standard online role-playing game (doing quests and fighting NPCs). However,

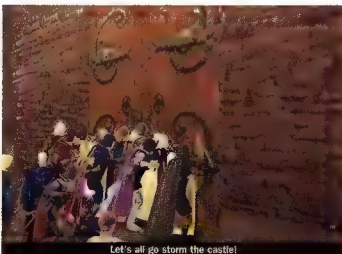
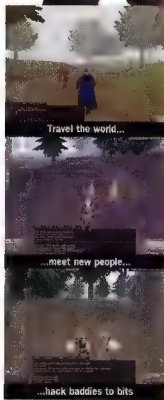
if you plan on being a longtime player, the endgame is really all about fighting it out realm vs. realm in the frontiers.

I spent most of my time playing in the safety of the realms, and I must admit that leveling is pretty fun. For the first five levels you are basically a squire learning the ropes, but at level 5 you get to choose a class and get a wealth of new spells or weapon skills depending on the class. Then, once you hit level 15, you get an "epic" quest every five levels that results in various weapons and armors. These quests start out easy, but in time add up to a lot of playtime that will certainly please those who thought EverQuest didn't offer up enough adventuring for players of all levels.

Overall, there are so many things to like about DAcO that it's hard not to find the game charming. You can dye your armor any color you like, there are horses for hire to take you from town to town, the environments are breathtaking, and there is much less downtime between battles than you find in EverQuest. Unfortunately, there is also much to dislike about DAcO as well. The interface is asinine, the pace is very slow, and the lack of a shout and out-of-character chat command made the experience seem oddly quiet to me.

I definitely will put some more time into this game, as I thought it was fun, but I don't think I'm gonna take this one for the long haul. — **ANDY**

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** ABANDON ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** MYTHIC ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 9



- **Concept:** Make an online RPG that all the players who are fed up with Verant can go play
- **Graphics:** The environments are gorgeous, but the players are rather small and the framerate is questionable
- **Sound:** Not much music, but the ambient effects are nice
- **Playability:** The keyboard layout is clumsy, and the interface is full of both the stupid and brilliant
- **Entertainment:** With easy advancement and excellent rewards, it's easy to get hooked, but I question its longevity
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

I tend to rate this type of game based on how much I think about it after spending a good chunk of time leveling my character. I have to say I found myself eating dinner lost in thought about Dark Age's possibilities on more than one occasion. What does that mean? Basically, it means I wouldn't mind spending a ton of time playing this game if I didn't have to sleep. Sleep is such a waste of time. In any event, for an online RPG, DAcO is surprisingly free of major bugs — of course, this presupposes that your graphics driver is current. Before learning this tidbit of information, I was crashing approximately once every five minutes. After my driver update I didn't crash once. The quests and tasks that players are able to take on are differentiated enough to keep your digital life interesting, and though the character creation could be better, this game leaves less for hardcore RPG vets to complain about than most others.

KRISTIAN — 8.75

REVIEWS

4th Edition October



PC

MYTH III: THE WOLF AGE

DISPELLING THE MYTH

I have a feeling that if this game was somehow condensed down into a literary form and sold at bookstores, it would probably do pretty well. I normally despise reading lengthy between-mission prose (maybe I need to renege that Ritalin prescription), but I was enthralled by the engaging narrative Mumbo Jumbo has woven into this release. Although this game is seemingly benign in appearance, it quickly becomes window dressing for the text portion of your missions.

I can say quite honestly that I've never looked forward to finishing a long, boring, buggy mission just to read how the story will pan out. This was quite a task at times, as the camera is so horribly implemented that my temper began to flare. Add to that abysmal AI, mediocre graphics, and poorly constructed level goals and you've got yourself the most frustrating book you've ever wanted to read. It's a crying shame that the gameplay couldn't supplement the superb writing — but I'm afraid this game's diamond won't be able to overcome the ruff which encases it. From a storytelling standpoint, this game deserves high praise, but as a PC game it just doesn't cut the mustard. —KRISTIAN

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE

6.75

- **Concept:** Hack 'n slash without all of the action. Perhaps a more apt description would be hack-walk 'n-slash.
- **Graphics:** Adequate, but little more than that.
- **Sound:** The boring music, and predictable if not mundane effects, make this category first on the list of things to forget about this game.
- **Playability:** You can click a mouse, right?
- **Entertainment:** Reading the text between missions is more fun than playing the game.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

Allow me to summarize: Highlight your party. Walk around the drab environments. Point and click on enemies to kill them. Listen to some funny voice-overs by guys with Scottish accents. When you're done with the level, read some lengthy text that tells a decent, if overwrought, fantasy story. Turn off your computer and go play a better game.

MATT - 5



PC

STRONGHOLD

HOLD ON TO THE KNIGHT

For those who eat, sleep, and live strategic defense design and implementation, Stronghold should be number one on your to-get list. I certainly didn't count myself among this small population (who does, really?), until I played through the first mission of Stronghold's military campaign. Bristling with options and showcasing an inventive plotline, your defensive and offensive tactics are put to the test in what I believe is one of the best strategy releases to hit the market in a long time.

Prior to playing Stronghold, I was skeptical about how much game FireFly would be able to pack into this seemingly narrow premise. Happily, ingenuity has brought out all the potential this game has to offer. Not only are there numerous military campaigns to grapple with, but there are also economic scenarios and a robust multiplayer component which is sure to keep many of you up well past your bedtime. My only complaint is the lack of control you have over your units. An AI tweak would take care of most of the sticking points, but I would be surprised if this became a big detractor from your experience. —KRISTIAN

THE BOTTOM LINE

T

9

- **Concept:** As close as you can get to a SimCastle type experience, but without the boring downtime.
- **Graphics:** This is a rare title whose graphics perfectly complement its finely-tuned gameplay.
- **Sound:** There's nothing that will detract from your experience, but turning it off wouldn't hurt anything either.
- **Playability:** Stronghold is a very intuitive game. After a few minutes of getting acquainted with the controls, you should have no problems.
- **Entertainment:** You should be having fun ten minutes after busting this one out of the box.
- **Replay Value:** High.

SECOND OPINION

With the wealth of resource management and real-time strategy games available on PC, it is rare indeed to find a game that does both, and does both well. The two campaign modes use the same interface, so once you master the game it is easy to hop in and play either, but they both have their own unique strategies. Now, Stronghold's Military campaigns certainly aren't as complex as a Command & Conquer, but it offers resource management and economic control to make up for what it lacks in battle depth. Trust me when I tell you that feeding your people is sometimes harder than making more offensive units to blast the enemy to smithereens. It's not ultra-deep, but it's fun. Plus, there is multiplayer to add to the longevity.

ANDY - 8.5



■ **STYLE 1** TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS ■ **DEVELOPER** FIREFLY STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 25

■ **STYLE 1** TO 16-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS ■ **DEVELOPER** MUMBO JUMBO ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 27



PC

THE SIMS: HOT DATE

SIM STEAM

The thing that really concerns me with Hot Date is that playing this game will probably be as close as many of my readers will ever get to going on an actual date – except for you, the person reading this right now. You're totally cool, but everyone else... I don't know about them. I mean, they're such losers! In any event, this evolution of Sims expansion pack has exactly what its fans have come to expect – more items, more ways to interact, and a dash of ingenuity. Hot Date's novel component comes in the form of a downtown area where your Sims can shop, eat, drink, dance, and do a number of other things like they've never done them before.

During my time playing Casanova with my Sim-sweethearts, I found that the downtown area was a fun place to let your dating imagination run wild, but the NPCs that populate it (workers for the various businesses and people from your neighborhood) clog things up to the extent that it may take you an hour just to use a busy bathroom. The time-passage rate has always been much too high in all Sims releases, but it ends up being a big detractor in this offering. Aside from that, Hot Date is another solid release in this ever-growing franchise. – KRISTIAN



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 10

**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**
8

- **Concept:** Give your Sims a dating life and a whole lot of opportunity for hot lovin'.
- **Graphics:** No improvements here, but they were good to begin with.
- **Sound:** The new music and Sim-gberish make this game fun to listen to again.
- **Playability:** Some new menu architecture has streamlined the selection process.
- **Entertainment:** If you love your Sims, you're going to love this addition to their world.
- **Replay Value:** High.

SECOND OPINION

This is the most expensive Sims add-on yet. Rather than just offering a bunch of new items to clutter up your humble dwelling, there are many new things to do. Interaction is where it's at, but it has always taken a back seat to the building simulation aspects of The Sims. Not so in Hot Date. You enjoy thrifting, pre-built areas teeming with people to meet and interact with. It's not as fast or as smooth as I'd like, but just the fact that it's there is a huge step. Giggie as you play matchmaker and try to make two girls hook up, or put yourself in your Sims' shoes and go after the best dish in town. Seek into the changing room or a cozy restaurant booth for a quick snog, or hold back tears as you get left for a hotshot computer programmer. I thought I was done with The Sims, but Maxis has done more than enough to get me back into this virtual world. Die-hards and newbies alike will love Hot Date.

JUSTIN – 8.5



PC

EMPIRE EARTH

ALMOST FAMOUS

I was excited to put some time into this game when I first got it. Not only am I somewhat of a history buff, but I'm an outright sucker for a good RTS. Imagine my shock when I discovered that, much like the Minnesota Vikings this season, Empire Earth couldn't walk the walk like it talked the talk. Although no one patch can fix either of the aforementioned items, the latter will certainly see some type of quick adjustment in the near future.

My main gripe comes from the game's seeming inability to provide consistent gameplay. Although the historically based battles and character names are nice, the novelty seems to wear off with each passing mission – if you're able to complete nearly missions, that is. Although there are four different campaigns with a number of sorties in each, I found even the beginning missions (where one typically gets accustomed to the controls) to be tediously long, and with very little payoff at the end. As I played, I got the distinct impression that Empire Earth could have been a colossal hit. It has some great ideas and inspiring graphics – but unfortunately, the game's performance couldn't equal its scope. – KRISTIAN

THE BOTTOM LINE

**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**
6.25

- **Concept:** This is basically an RTS that attempts to be historically correct.
- **Graphics:** Nice unit models and fluid animations make this game easy on the eyes.
- **Sound:** A lot of voice acting is sprinkled throughout the gameplay, but everything else is average.
- **Playability:** It would be surprising if you needed to consult the manual at all after your first hour of play.
- **Entertainment:** It's fun when something is happening, but I found those times to be few and far between.
- **Replay Value:** High.

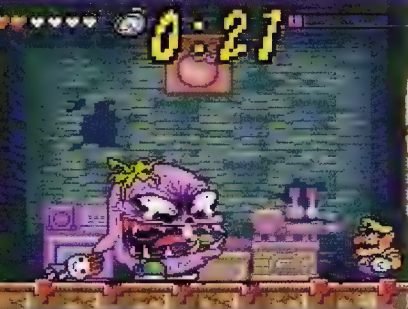
SECOND OPINION

Empire Earth is done by ex-Age of Empires lead designer Rick Goodman, and you can tell – except in EE's massive scope. I salivated at the thought of leading my initially primitive people into the 21st century, but was disappointed that playing the various epochs seemed so similar. History repeats itself, and that might be much too much for some.

KATO – 7

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** SIERRA
STUDIOS ■ **DEVELOPER** STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE**
NOVEMBER 15

REVIEWS



GAME BOY ADVANCE

WARIO LAND 4

GOOD TO BE BAD

Game Boy Advance has already established

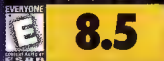
itself as the king of old-school platformers with its remakes of Super Mario Bros. 2 (already released on the Super Mario Advance cartridge) and Super Mario World (coming soon as Super Mario Advance 2), but gamers everywhere are looking for something new. While mean ol' Nintendo hasn't yet given us the new Mario adventure we have all been demanding for years, it has given us the next best thing: his evil brother, Wario.

Like the previous titles, Wario Land 4 offers up pure platforming action as you explore an ancient pyramid in hopes of unlocking its many treasures. Along with all his jumping and smashing skills, Wario has the ability to transform by interacting with his environment. Get attacked by a bee and turn into Puffy Wario who can float to the ceiling, or get hit by the undead to turn into Zombie Wario who can kill enemies and drop through floors.

The goal of each level is to collect four jewel pieces, find the key, and then get out of the level alive by beating a timer to the exit. After some levels there are even some minigames to play like Homerun, Hon Wario, and Roulette Wario.

It's nothing new to the Wario Land enthusiast, but it's enjoyable nonetheless. If you want platforming on the go, you just can't go wrong with Wario Land 4. — **ANDY**

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:**

Explore dungeons and solve puzzles by platforming, or mutating Wario into various forms.

■ **Graphics:**

Not the cream of the crop, but darn tootin' nice.

■ **Sound:**

Is that Nintendo platforming tunes I hear? Well, turn it up man!

■ **Playability:**

It's like Mario, but evil.

■ **Entertainment:**

As the only new platformer for the GBA, you can't help but be entertained.

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately Low.

SECOND OPINION

The name of the game says it all. This is the fourth Wario Land adventure, and little has changed since the first entry in the series. Honestly, though, I wouldn't want it any other way. The platforming challenges scream Super Mario World, and a wealth of secrets reside in each stage. Side-scrolling platformers are a rare commodity these days, but Wario Land 4 fills this void nicely.

REINER — 8

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
 ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19



Bat takes 15 damage!
 Isaac unleashes Flint!

GAME BOY ADVANCE

GOLDEN SUN

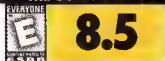
GBA'S GOLDEN CHILD

We didn't review a single RPG last month, so I've been having withdrawal symptoms. Luckily, Golden Sun has come along to be the cure for my turn-based blues. This isn't a sequel. It isn't a port. It's an honest-to-God new role-playing game, and I can safely say that Golden Sun rocks.

You start by being woken by your mother, which is the beginning of about half of all RPGs. From there, though, this epic tale is woven in surprising fashion, allowing you to make an unprecedented amount of choices along the way (though the results are arguable). Psyenergy is your magic, but it's used for much more than battle spells. Isaac can summon a magic glove to grab items out of reach. Ivan can read people's minds, which is extremely cool. Then there's the Djinni, which are little creatures who are blessed with elemental powers. They can be summoned or used in big attacks, and affect a character's status.

Equipment and shopping are easily done, and the menus are quite helpful. Battle Mode either lets you compete in a survival-type scenario in endless fights, or match up against human players. I had a blast with Golden Sun. Its greatness even exceeds the nostalgia I felt for Breath of Fire's GBA port. We have a new ruler in the GBA RPG realm. — **JUSTIN**

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:**

Forget about porting 16-bit RPGs and start a brand new series.

■ **Graphics:**

Very reminiscent of the SNES title Illusion of Gaia.

■ **Sound:**

RPG-ish tunes that may have you bobbing your head on occasion.

■ **Playability:**

Turn-based role-playing. You've done it a million times, so there should be no problems.

■ **Entertainment:**

Clever elements like Psyenergy and Djinni put this ahead of the pack, especially on a handheld.

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately Low.

SECOND OPINION

For RPG fans, Golden Sun is everything you could have asked for on your GBA and a little bit more. Featuring graphics that would have amazed Super Nintendo owners back in the day, Golden Sun is a visual treat. The story is slightly canned, but it does feature enough twists and turns that RPG fans will ignore the clichés and just enjoy it for the experience that it has to offer. And what an experience it is, with elemental allies called Djinni and lots of magic at your fingertips. It's easy to get wrapped up in the adventure. My only complaints are that the search button is the same button that brings up your command icons, and the battles are a little too easy. However, the good far outweighs the bad in this phenomenal GBA release. Easily the best original RPG on the GBA, but not just because it's the only one!

ANDY — 9



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
 ■ **DEVELOPER** CAMELOT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12

FOR GAME BOY ADVANCE

DOOM

BLAST
YOUR
WAY TO
FREEDOM

THE
WORLD'S #1 SHOOTER
OF ALL TIME
IS NOW IN
THE PALM
OF YOUR HAND!



24 Levels of DOOM!

Shred your way through DOOM's maze-like levels filled with hell-spawned demons!

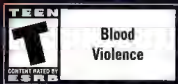
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GAME BOY ADVANCE



Multiplayer games require a Game Boy Advance Game Link Cable and separate DOOM Game Pak for each player (sold separately).

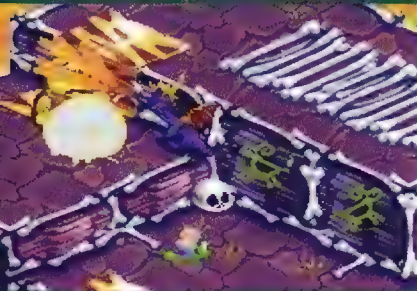


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GAME BOY ADVANCE

SPYRO: SEASON OF ICE ON THE ROCKS

Spyro has never been one to fly in only two dimensions, and he certainly isn't going to start now, bless his heart.

Developer Digital Eclipse set a high mark for itself in trying to replicate this fact of the Spyro world, and it didn't stop there. Fans will find plenty of familiar faces and items in Season of Ice; unfortunately, the stranger in a strange land is Spyro himself. The new territory of the Game Boy Advance isn't too hospitable to our fiery friend.

One of the main features of previous Spyro titles has been the freedom to explore the large worlds. Seasons is similar in this manner, relative to the GBA, of course. The title's objectives are spread out enough that it sometimes took a few times around the block to figure out the level layout. You'll spend plenty of time finding the game's 100+ fairies, but minigames and sidequests, such as controlling buddy Spax and moving Spyro through the Speedways, will be welcome breaks. The problem is, the majority of the time you're platforming in the inventive, but not effective, isometric third-person that Digital has decided to use. It cuts down on the platforming fun and leaves you merely...looking for stuff. —**KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE



6

■ Concept:

Digital Eclipse tries to take the isometric route in an attempt to avoid being a boring 2D platformer.

■ Graphics:

Pretty good, with some nice colors, too. The Speedway realms look good.

■ Sound:

Hey, I didn't know Spyro rocked to Queens of the Stone Age! Wait, he doesn't, but I did.

■ Playability:

All the Spyro moves are here, but it still doesn't all add up.

■ Entertainment:

Gotta hand it to Digital Eclipse for trying, but maybe 2D would have been the way to go.

■ Replay Value:

Moderately Low.

SECOND OPINION

Spyro's GBA debut is a technological achievement, offering insanely detailed sprite graphics and user-friendly play mechanics. While it is fun to play, the isometric perspective acts as a blindfold, not allowing you to see more than a few feet in front of you. Thus, the quest for the gems and fairies becomes a tedious chore.

REINER - 7

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL ECLIPSE
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 13

PREHISTORIK MAN — GBA

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
■ **PUBLISHER** TITUS
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 4

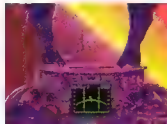


In terms of both graphics and gameplay, this Prehistorik Man for the Game Boy Advance mimics the ancient SNES platformer that it's based on. For fans of the genre, it will be business as usual, but there are enough hard-to-reach goodies and hidden areas to keep you playing for a while. As exercises in 16-bit nostalgia go, it's a good one, and a game that will bring back some pleasant memories. Prehistorik Man doesn't have an original bone in his body, but I didn't seem to mind. —**MAIT**

E 7.5

F-14 TOMCAT — GBA

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO SALES
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 24



F-14 is another part of a 16-bit game to GBA. Unlike most, Tomcat relies on the rapid use of many buttons, adjusting thrust and switching weapons. This is made tougher by the fact that the GBA has two fewer buttons than the SNES. Also, you seem to only use 1/5 of the screen during combat. The rest is just readouts and fluff. While it handles like a fighter plane should, Tomcat just doesn't make a smooth jump from console to handheld, and is too frustrating for its own good. —**JUSTIN**

E 6

TETRIS WORLDS — GBA

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24

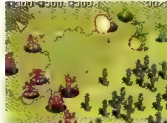


Unless you've been a P.O.W. for the last 20 or so years, you've probably played Tetris on one of the many systems that it's been released on. Now, it's coming to the Game Boy Advance, and it's still an absolutely perfect puzzler. There are some interesting modes, like Hotline Tetris and Fusion Tetris, which add some new wrinkles to the gameplay. However, there is no battery backup to save with, and \$40 is pretty steep for another version of Tetris. Bonus points for having legendary Yes artist Roger Dean do the box art. —**MAIT**

E 7

MECH PLATOON — GBA

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER STRATEGY
■ **PUBLISHER** KEMCO
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 25



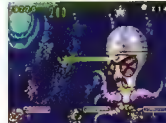
As a handheld RTS it has to give this game its due. Not only is it incredibly detailed for a game you can put in your pocket when you're done playing, but it also has multiplayer capabilities. No, it's not the next Advance Wars, but it makes good use of the genre as a whole. Although there are gameplay issues that pop up from time to time due to the size of the unit it's played on, Mech Platoon is still an excellent pint-sized offering. —**KRISTIAN**

E 8.25

POWERPUFF GIRLS: MOJO JOJO

A-GO-GO — GBA

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER
■ **PUBLISHER** BAM! ENTERTAINMENT
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 16



This game is a shooter. You would think it has more to do with the action of the show, but flying and shooting is all you do. The supergenus Mojo Jojo is again your arch-nemesis. He is bad, and the Powerpuff Girls are good, so fighting is inevitable. This game, like the monkey villain I speak of, is also quite bad, but luckily playing it is not mandatory. Chemical X is missing from this game, and by Chemical X, I mean fun. —**JUSTIN**

E 6



BOXING FEVER — GBA

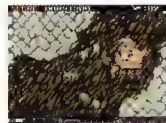
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO SALES
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 17

Fever doesn't quite equal NES' Punch-Out, but then again, it could teach Midway a thing or two about boxing. The first-person view involves you in the game and shows off some pretty good graphics, including a cool blurry-eyed knockout sequence. The training mode isn't quite as involved as I would have liked, and there aren't really the patterns that Punch Out has. Instead, you have to fend for yourself with fast reflexes and special punches through the five tiers of opponents. —**KATO**

E 7

PHALANX — GBA

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER
■ **PUBLISHER** KEMCO
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 18



The Super Nintendo library was overflowing with side-scroller shooters, and it just happens that this very game was among them. The funny thing is, nobody owned a copy of it. Why? Well, for one it didn't even come close to stacking up against the other titles, which remains the case today. It's a generic shooter that doesn't do anything extraordinary to separate itself from the pack. Even with the GBA exclusive levels and difficulty toggles, I found it to be extremely boring.

— REINER

E 5

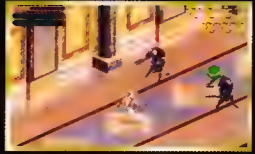
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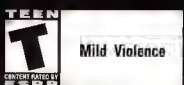


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CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.



NPD TOP 20

Rankings Based Upon NPD Data For September 2001. Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	Devil May Cry	PS2	9.5	Aug-01	\$51

Although it has a reputation for pumping out scores of sequels, Capcom has always had tremendous success at establishing new video game properties. Debuting at the top of the charts, it appears that Devil May Cry is well on its way to joining the ranks of Resident Evil in the league of super-franchises.

2	N/A	Grand Theft Auto III	PS2	9.5	Aug-01	\$51
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The first two in the GTA series were huge in Europe, but only moderately popular in the US. All this is changing with the release of GTA III, which looks to be the sleeper hit of 2001. Can the game continue to hold its own for the rest of this holiday season? Only time will tell.

3	1	Madden NFL 2002	PS2	9.75	Jul-01	\$50
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Yes, we know the Vikings are having some problems this year, but that doesn't dampen our love of Madden. It's still the big daddy of sports games and, like the Vikings, EA's system is still the best in the business. Plus, the polygonal Chris Carter doesn't pout on the sidelines like he does in real life.

4	N/A	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	PS2	9.75	Sep-01	\$48
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Tony still has the golden touch, coming in at the fourth slot in the October rankings. We were a little surprised he wasn't higher, until we remembered that the game wasn't released until October 31st. So, this impressive debut is the result of only one day's worth of sales. Wow.

5	3	Pokémon Crystal	GBC	6.75	Sep-01	\$30
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Someday soon, Pokémon Crystal will fall out of the top five, and we won't have to write anything about those little mutts in these blurbs. That will be a good day. Until then, what say we all play a game of tag? You're it!

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	14	Spy Hunter	PS2	8.5	Aug-01	\$51
7	N/A	NBA Live 2002	PS2	8.5	Jun-01	\$50
8	2	Mario Kart Super Circuit	GBA	9.5	Aug-01	\$31
9	N/A	NBA 2K2	DC	9.25	Aug-01	\$42
10	11	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	PS-X	10	Nov-00	\$20
11	4	Silent Hill 2	PS2	7	Sep-00	\$50
12	7	Super Mario Advance	GBA	8.5	Aug-01	\$30
13	10	Driver 2	PS-X	8.75	Sep-01	\$20
14	N/A	Ace Combat 04: Shattered Skies	PS2	8.5	Sep-01	\$51
15	5	NFL 2K2	DC	9	Aug-01	\$40
16	N/A	NASCAR Thunder 2002	PS2	8.5	Jul-01	\$51
17	13	NHL 2002	PS2	9.5	Jul-01	\$50
18	8	Madden NFL 2002	PS-X	8	Sep-01	\$40
19	6	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	N64	9.25	Dec-99	\$50
20	17	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2	9	Oct-00	\$49

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett/Vox-Korff (636) 625-2481

JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Japan Group (By Monthly Units Sold)

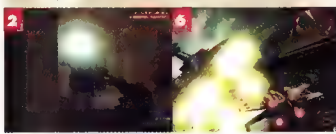
POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Jissen Pachisuro Hisshohoh	PS2
2	N/A	Pikmin	GC
3	N/A	Daiyaksa	WSC
4	1	Dynasty Warriors 3	PS2
5	N/A	Sparkling Go	GBA
6	N/A	Hot Shots Golf 3	PS2
7	N/A	J League Winning Eleven 5	PS2
8	2	Time Crisis 2	PS2
9	6	Super Robot Big Battle Infinity	GBA
10	8	Luigi's Mansion	GC



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Final Fantasy X	PS2
2	1	Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	PS2
3	N/A	Grand Theft Auto III	PS2
4	N/A	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	PS2
5	7	Halo	Xbox
6	2	Star Wars: Rogue Leader	GC
7	N/A	James Bond 007 In...Agent Under Fire	PS2
8	N/A	Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	PC
9	3	Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	PS2
10	N/A	Pikmin	GC



PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service (By Monthly Units Sold)

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	N/A	Asheron's Call: Dark Majesty	Oct-01	\$40
2	N/A	C & C Red Alert 2: Yuri's Revenge	Oct-01	\$40
3	N/A	Dark Age of Camelot	Oct-01	\$32
4	2	The Sims	Jul-01	\$20
5	N/A	Flight Simulator 2002 Pro	Oct-01	\$41
6	N/A	Stronghold	Oct-01	\$41
7	5	Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis	Aug-01	\$29
8	4	Roller Coaster Tycoon	May-99	\$34
9	3	Diablo II: Lord of Destruction	Jul-01	\$44
10	6	The Sims: House Party	Mar-01	\$35



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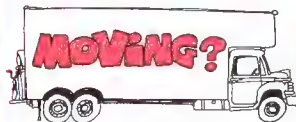
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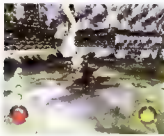
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Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor	System	Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor	System	Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor	System
12/17/01	Crazy Chase	Crave	GBA	1/14/02	NBA Courtside 2002	Nintendo	GC	2/4/02	Call of Chulu	Fishnik Interactive	PC
12/17/01	Darkened Slys	Micomillan	PC	1/15/02	Dark Arena	Majesco	GBA	2/4/02	Dungeon Siege	Microsoft	PC
12/17/01	Arc the Lad: Collection	Working Designs	PS-X	1/15/02	Muppet Battle Pinball	NewsKido	GBA	2/4/02	Tetris Worlds	THQ	Xbox
12/17/01	Wizardry	Allias	PS2	1/15/02	Yu-gi-oh! Dark Duel Stories	Konami	GBC	2/11/02	Super Mario Advance 2	Nintendo	GBA
12/18/01	Mech Platoon	Crave	GBA	1/15/02	Doppelg II, Dark Prophecy	Infogrames	PC	2/11/02	Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem	Nintendo	GC
12/18/01	Phalaris	Crave	GBA	1/15/02	Duke Nukem Forever	Take 2	PC	2/12/02	Decablon Adventure	Infogrames	GBA
12/18/01	Destroyer Command	Libi Soft	PC	1/15/02	Duke Nukem: Hunting	Gathering of Developers	PC	2/12/02	Duke Nukem Forever	Take 2	GBA
12/18/01	Grandia II	Libi Soft	PC	1/15/02	Mafia	Take 2	PC	2/12/02	Monster Jam: Maximum Destruction	Libi Soft	GBA
12/18/01	Forever Kingdom	Turmo	PS2	1/15/02	Starfire: Starfighter Special Edition	LucasArts	PC	2/12/02	Command & Conquer: Renegade	Westwood Studios/EA	PC
12/18/01	Grandia I	Libi Soft	PS2	1/15/02	Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	PS2	2/12/02	NASCAR Racing 2002 Season	Vivendi Universal	PC
12/18/01	Jade Cocoon 2	Libi Soft	PS2	1/15/02	Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Force	Bandai	PS2	2/12/02	Caesar's Palace	Take 2	PS2
12/18/01	Shadow Hearts	Midway	PS2	1/15/02	Moto GP 2	Namco	PS2	2/12/02	Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	Capcom	PS2
				1/15/02	Riz	Sega	PS2	2/12/02	Transworld Snowboarding	Infogrames	Xbox
				1/15/02	Salt Lake 2002	Eidos	PS2				
				1/15/02	State of Emergency	Take 2	PS2				
				1/15/02	Top Angler	Infogrames	PS2				
				1/15/02	Elder Scrolls II: Morrowind	Bethesda Softworks	Xbox				
				1/15/02	NFL 2K2	Sega	Xbox				
				1/15/02	Salt Lake 2002	Eidos	Xbox				
				1/21/02	Dune	Dreamcatcher	PS2				
				1/22/02	Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	Electronic Arts	PC				
				1/29/02	NFL 2K2	Sega	GBA				
				1/29/02	Tekken Advance	Namco	DC				
				1/29/02	NFL Blitz 2002	Midway	GC				
				1/29/02	Sid Meier's Sim Golf	Electronic Arts	PC				
				1/29/02	Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge	Electronic Arts	PC				
				1/29/02	Gitaro-Man	Iceo	PS2				
				1/29/02	NFL Blitz 2002	Midway	Xbox				
				1/30/02	Genma Onmusha	Capcom	Xbox				
				1/31/02	O.R.B.	Infogrames	PC				
				2/1/02	Creatures	Crave	GBA				
				2/1/02	Poopy & Rocky	Crave	GBA				
				2/1/02	RoboCop	Titus	GBA				
				2/1/02	Snowboard	Titus	GBA				
				2/1/02	Tiny Toons: Wacky Stackers	Crave	GBA				
				2/1/02	Dark Summit	THQ	GC				
				2/1/02	Tetris Worlds	THQ	GC				
				2/1/02	Dragon's Lair 3D	Libi Soft	PC				
				2/1/02	Heroes of Might & Magic IV	3DO Company	PC				
				2/1/02	M4 Armored Clash	WizardWorks	PC				
				2/1/02	Dodge Ball	Tommo	PS-X				
				2/1/02	Air Ranger	Bam! Entertainment	PS2				
				2/1/02	Conflict Zone	Libi Soft	PS2				

NIGHTCASTER

■ FORMAT XBOX
■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER MICROSOFT
■ RELEASE DECEMBER 26



Nightcaster is shaping up nicely and should be a fun, more action-oriented cousin of Azurik: Rise of Perathia. The game utilizes a third-person, isometric camera view similar to Gauntlet Legends, but focuses on spellcasting wizardry over hack 'n' slash action. To add a new

element of maneuverability to the mix, the orb can also float independently from the staff, allowing you to aim with the right analog while you navigate your character with the left.

12/18/01	SX Tricky	Electronic Arts	Xbox	2/15/02	Aerial Aces	Majesco	GBA	3/1/02	Bonz Racers	Libi Soft	GBA
12/18/01	Ultimate Fighting Championship: Tapout	Crave	Xbox	2/15/02	Grand Theft Auto III	Destination Software	GBA	3/1/02	Columns Crown	THQ	GBA
12/20/01	Breath of Fire	Capcom	GBA	2/15/02	Street Fighter Alpha 3	Capcom	GBA	3/1/02	Disney's Tarzan	Libi Soft	GBA
12/26/01	Blood Water	Microsoft	Xbox	2/15/02	Phantasy Star Online	Sega	GC	3/1/02	Moto GP	THQ	GBA
12/26/01	Nightcaster	Microsoft	Xbox	2/15/02	Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos	PS2	3/1/02	Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	Libi Soft	GBA
12/26/01	WWF Raw	THQ	Xbox	2/15/02	Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos	PS2	3/1/02	Sonic the Hedgehog Advance	THQ	GBA
12/27/01	X-Blade: In-Line Skating	Crave	GBA	2/15/02	Hardy Gardy	Eidos	PS2	3/1/02	Black Pudd	THQ	GC
12/27/01	X-Blade: In-Line Skating	Crave	PS-X	2/15/02	Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen 2	Eidos	PS2	3/1/02	Jimmy Neutron Boy Genius	THQ	GC
12/27/01	NBA Inside Drive 2002	Microsoft	PS2	2/15/02	Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen 2	THQ	Xbox	3/1/02	RIM	Fishnik Interactive	PC
12/28/01	NFL Blitz 2002	Midway	Xbox	2/15/02	Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen 2	THQ	GC	3/1/02	Star Trek: Bridge Commander	Activision	PC
1/3/02	An American Tail: Fievel's Gold Rush	Crave	GBA	2/15/02	Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen 2	THQ	Xbox	3/1/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	PC
1/3/02	Casper	THQ	PS2	2/15/02	Hidden Invasion	Crave	PS2	3/1/02	Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicles	Libi Soft	PS2
1/3/02	Land Before Time	Crave	GBA	2/15/02	Kingdome Invasion	Sega	Xbox	3/1/02	Jimmy Neutron Boy Genius	THQ	GBA
1/3/02	Gadget Tycoon	Monte Cristo	PC	2/15/02	King of the Hill	Capcom	PS2	3/1/02	King's Field IV	Tommo	PS2
1/3/02	Destiny Lab: Mandark	Bam! Entertainment	PS-X	2/15/02	Lock On: Modern Air Combat	THQ	PC	3/1/02	PaperFight Girls	Bam! Entertainment	PS2
1/3/02	Hidden and Dangerous	Take 2	PS-X	2/15/02	Pac-Man World 2	Namco	PS2	3/1/02	Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	Libi Soft	PS2
1/3/02	Kick Boxing	Turmo	PS-X	2/15/02	Belt Site	Infogrames	Xbox	3/1/02	World of Warcraft: Spirit Cans	Infogrames	PS2
1/3/02	Duke Nukem Forever	Take 2	PS2	2/15/02	Star Trek: Shattered Universe	Vivendi Universal	PS2	3/1/02	World of Warcraft: Spirit Cans	Infogrames	PS2
1/3/02	Final Fantasy X	Electronic Arts/Square	PS2	2/15/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	PC	3/1/02	Shylock: Monsters Vs. Humans	Metro3D	Xbox
1/3/02	Hot Shots Golf 3	Sony	PS2	2/15/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	PC	3/1/02	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	Xbox
1/3/02	NBA ShootOut 2002	Sony	PS2	2/15/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	PC	3/5/02	NBA 2K2	Sega	Xbox
1/3/02	NHL FaceOff 2002	Sony	PS2	2/15/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	PC	3/5/02	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	Xbox
1/3/02	Shadow Man: Second Coming	Acclaim	PS2	2/15/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	PC	3/12/02	Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza	Vivendi Universal	PC
1/3/02	Woody Woodpecker	Dreamcatcher	PS2	2/15/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	PC	3/12/02	H2O Overdrive	Crave	PS2
1/3/02	Zorro	Dreamcatcher	PS2								
1/3/02	Tiny Toons: Buster's Bad Dream	Crave	GBA								
1/3/02	Austerlitz: Napoleon's Greatest Victories	Infogrames	PC								
1/3/02	Black & White: Creature Isle Expansion Pack	Electronic Arts	PC								
1/3/02	Black Moon Chronicles	Dreamcatcher	PC								
1/3/02	Elder Scrolls II: Morrowind	Bethesda Softworks	PC								
1/3/02	Elite Forces	Infogrames	PC								
1/3/02	Industry Tycoon 2	Micomillan	PC								
		Computer Publishing	PC								
1/3/02	Mega Race 3	Dreamcatcher	PC	2/1/02	Downforce	Titus	PS2				
1/3/02	Jenny Holsey Mad Tit	3DO	PS2	2/1/02	Dragon Rage	3DO	PS2				
1/8/02	Magest Golf	Infogrames	PC	2/1/02	Monsters, Inc.	Sony	PS2				
1/8/02	Moto Racer 3	Infogrames	PC	2/1/02	Shifters	3DO	PS2				
1/8/02	Drakan: The Ancients' Gates	Sony	PS2	2/1/02	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Sony	PS2				
1/8/02	NBA 2K2	Sega	PS2	2/1/02	The Lost	Crave	PS2				
1/8/02	No One Lives Forever	Vivendi Universal	PS2	2/1/02	New Legends	THQ	Xbox				
1/9/02	18 Wheeler American Pro Truck	Acclaim	GC	2/1/02	WWF WrestleMania	THQ	GC				
				2/4/02	As Fatals	Fishnik Interactive	PC				
				2/4/02	Beam Breakers	Fishnik Interactive	PC				

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS

■ FORMAT PLAYSTATION 2 ■ STYLE 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY
■ PUBLISHER SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 1



With all the hubbub surrounding the launch of the Xbox and GameCube, many are forgetting Sony's online plans waiting in the wings. Many upcoming PlayStation 2 titles will include broadband features allowing players to clandestinely rendezvous in the middle of the night, but SOCOM: US Navy Seals, a squad-based game in the Rainbow Six vein, is the only original game designed specifically to take your new peripheral to the bandwidth limit.

2/1/02	Downforce	Titus	PS2	2/1/02	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Sony	PS2
2/1/02	Dragon Rage	3DO	PS2	2/1/02	The Lost	Crave	PS2
2/1/02	Monsters, Inc.	Sony	PS2	2/1/02	New Legends	THQ	Xbox
2/1/02	Shifters	3DO	PS2	2/1/02	WWF WrestleMania	THQ	GC
2/1/02	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Sony	PS2	2/4/02	As Fatals	Fishnik Interactive	PC
2/1/02	The Lost	Crave	PS2	2/4/02	Beam Breakers	Fishnik Interactive	PC
2/1/02	New Legends	THQ	Xbox				
2/1/02	WWF WrestleMania	THQ	GC				
2/1/02	Downforce	Titus	PS2				
2/1/02	Dragon Rage	3DO	PS2				
2/1/02	Monsters, Inc.	Sony	PS2				
2/1/02	Shifters	3DO	PS2				
2/1/02	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Sony	PS2				
2/1/02	The Lost	Crave	PS2				
2/1/02	New Legends	THQ	Xbox				
2/1/02	WWF WrestleMania	THQ	GC				
2/1/02	Downforce	Titus	PS2				
2/1/02	Dragon Rage	3DO	PS2				
2/1/02	Monsters, Inc.	Sony	PS2				
2/1/02	Shifters	3DO	PS2				
2/1/02	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Sony	PS2				
2/1/02	The Lost	Crave	PS2				
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2/1/02	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Sony	PS2				
2/1/02	The Lost	Crave	PS2				
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2/1/02	Downforce	Titus	PS2				
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2/1/02	Monsters, Inc.	Sony	PS2				
2/1/02	Shifters	3DO	PS2				
2/1/02	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Sony	PS2				

PLAY TO PERFECTION

FINAL FANTASY X

The quest ahead is as linear as they come, but if you take the time to explore, you'll soon learn that it's overflowing with sidequests and bonuses. Since the game features roughly five hours of training and tutorials, we don't really see a need for a Basic Training section. All we can say is that you should get to know how your characters work, and study the Sphere Grid carefully before making your moves. All of the characters have the ability to learn every maneuver or spell in the game, but as you'll quickly see, even though they can cast it, it doesn't mean that they'll be good at it. The characters are very class specific. If Yuna casts Cura, she'll heal for over 2,000 HP. On the other hand, if Tidus does it, he'll only heal 900 HP. Again, plan your moves and try to match the character abilities to their classes. Also, don't worry about leveling up every character. Focus on four. We used Yuna, Lulu, Auron, and Tidus. That's about all we can say. Hopefully, you got as much out of this game as we did and will make the extra effort to unlock all of the **Legendary Weapons** and **aeons**.

1. ZANARKAND

After the interesting introductory movie comes to a close, you'll gain control of Tidus. Show appreciation for your fans by chatting with them and signing a few autographs. Step forward and bid your cheering section adieu, then run down the highway to the stadium entrance. When the game is interrupted and you regain consciousness, run down the ramp, then talk to Auron. Follow him onto the highway. He'll give you Jecht's Longsword. Attack the Sinscale directly in front of you and ignore the others. After cutting through a few waves, you'll confront the first boss, Sinspawn Ammes. Just hack away at this overgrown beast and use Auron's Overdrive to even the playing field. The number of tentacles at its side can gauge its health. When they disappear, he'll die shortly thereafter. Now, continue along the highway. A handful of Sinscale will appear, trapping you on the bridge. Fight them until Auron points out the generator on the right side of the battlefield. Focus your attacks on the generator to end this battle. When the boss comes to a close, swim down to the cysene on a platform. Talk to him.



Attack the generator to end the battle

2. SUBMERGED RUINS



You cannot defeat this boss, but keep attacking to trigger an event

Swim around and explore your surroundings. To the right you'll run across a chest holding 200 Gil. To the left awaits the first Al Bhed Primer and a chest with two Potions in it. After locating these items, follow the red arrow to dry land. Maneuver north, and be sure to hit the fork in the road leading to the left to find a Hi-Potion. Work your way along the path and the bridge will crumble. Three Sahagin are ready to feed on you. When you slay two of them, a boss will appear. There's always a bigger fish. There is no way to defeat this creature, but you have to try. After a few rounds, Tidus will throw in the towel and flee.



The new ally's Grenades work incredibly well. If you run out, use the Steal command to obtain more

Ascend the stairs, then examine the ashes in the middle of the room. To start a fire, exit through the northern door. Just outside this door resides a Jug of Ether. Work your way up the stairs, and then examine the pot on the right to find the Withered Bouquet. In the next room awaits another Hi-Potion. Now, backtrack through the southern door to find the Flint in a rickety old desk. Use these items to create a fire in the center of the circular room. Of course, all of this commotion awakens a boss. Halfway through this fight, an ally will enter the fray. Use her Grenades to devastate this enemy. Really, though, who's the true enemy here?

3. SALVAGE SHIP

You'll have no choice in the matter but to work for the Al Bheds. Talk to the girl to learn about the Sphere Grid. Continue chatting to receive of your mission. Before doing the deed, hop out of the water and grab the Al Bhed Vol. 1 from the deck. Also, if you talk to the soldiers you'll receive three Potions. Get wet again, and then swim toward the red arrow. Examine the control panel and than the energy core in the next room. Once the power is activated, swim into the previous chamber. Of course, this has awakened a boss. This guy doesn't deal too much damage, so he shouldn't be a problem. Follow the girl outside of the complex and back to the boat. After hearing some unsettling news, another amazing cutscene will commence.



"No. You just look funny"

4. BESAIID BEACH

When you regain consciousness, talk to the blitzball team and head to the left side of the beach to find two Antidotes next to a hut. If you jump back in the water, swim right to an alcove to find a chest containing a Moon Crest. When you're ready to move on, talk to Wakka. At this point, move inland. For some reason or another, Wakka will push you in the water. Jerk! On the right side of the lagoon awaits a sunken treasure holding a Phoenix Down. Now, swim your little heart out down the stream. Along the way you should find two Antidotes. When you reach dry land, head to the village, take a look around and talk to everyone. There are plenty of chests along the way, including three hidden between the second and third hut on the left. Run through the grass to find their location. When ready, enter the large temple at the far end of the village. Converse with the monks for some much needed historical facts, then return to Wakka's hut for a quick nap. When you awaken, return to the temple and talk to Wakka.



Look between the last two huts on the left to find three treasure chests.



If only you had some calm. Don't worry, though, this Kitty's bite isn't nearly as ferocious as his roar.

Tidus will break into the Cloister of Trials. The objective here is to solve puzzles that open doors. Just examine every glowing object, and insert the Spheres into different holes. To obtain the Rod of Wisdom, place the Destruction Sphere into the hole of the glowing spider-web room. When the wall opens, run around the corner and open the chest. After figuring this area out (a monkey could do it), move the pedestal forward to reveal the secret elevator. Take this lift down to complete this exercise. Exit the temple, then approach Wakka to trigger a sequence that introduces Yuna and her aeon, Valefor. After the demonstration and celebration come to a close, talk to Yuna, then hit her. During the dream sequence, simply run forward along the dock. It'll be over before you know

it. To start out the next day, run over to Wakka. He'll give you the Brotherhood Sword. Sweet!

Sadly, it's now time to depart the village (sniff!). Head in the direction of the arrow to the far side of the island. After a few training battles, a blue cat will assault you. Just keep pounding away and he'll back off. Continue forward to the beach. Maneuver onto the dock and talk to everyone before stepping onto the boat. The generous villagers will hand over a Seeker's Ring, 400 Gil, and Ether.

5. S.S. LIKI

Once you hit the wild blue yonder, talk to everyone, leaving Yuna for last. If you look in the far right corner of the engine room you'll find another volume of Al Bhed, and a Remedy and Potion in the crew's quarters. When you meet up with Yuna, Sin will attack. Eliminate two of the Sinscales, then focus your attacks on Sin's fin. When the battle ends, another will commence underwater. Only Tidus and Wakka can compete in this dance against Echuilles. Use as many special attacks as you can on the boss. Ignore the spawn. They'll just keep coming and they don't deal that much damage. Focus on the big daddy. Your reward for victory is a series of amazing cutscenes.



Take out two of the Sinscale, then unleash your fury on Sin's fin.

6. KILIKA



This boss fight is optional, but recommended.

Work your way through the town. After the cutscene, continue talking to the villagers. On the far end of town, you'll see a kid on a collapsed house. Jump out to save him, then head to the bar to retrieve your prize. Another volume of Al Bhed can also be found here. In the hut next to the inn, three Potions await. Now, head into the forest. In the center awaits an optional boss. Lord Ochu has over 4,000

hit points, but his attacks are weak. He may poison you, but you should be able to hold out until the end of the battle. As a reward, you'll receive MP Sphere and Poison Steel. If you search the outskirts of the forest, you'll find a couple of Mana Spheres, a Luck Sphere, and a Scout. Also, talk to the villagers who are scattered about to obtain an Elixir and Hi-Potion. At the end of the forest you'll find the temple. Before you can get your bearings, you'll be thrust into battle. Take out the tentacles on the sides before attacking the head. Summoning Valefor is the easiest way to take this beast down.

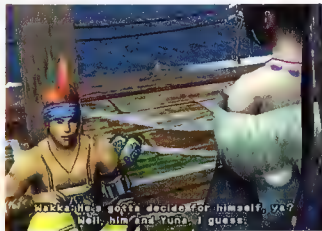


Insert the Spheres to pass the trial.

After the fight, you'll enter the temple. Pray with Wakka in front of the statue to trigger a conversation with another Summoner. Shortly after this, you'll need to ascend the stairs and complete another Sphere challenge. Again, place the colored balls into holes to open new rooms. To obtain the rare item from this maze, push the pedestal in the fire room onto the glowing floor tile. Next, place the Destruction Sphere in the hole in the wall at the bottom of the stairs (where the wall of fire was) to reveal the treasure chest holding the Red Armet. When you open the last door, talk to your buddies until Yuna comes out with Ifrit. Now, backtrack through the forest to the village's dock.

7. S.S. WINNO

Now that you're at sea, do the rounds again and talk to everyone. Before chit chatting with your comrades, talk to O'aka. He wants money. Give it to him. If you invest in his wares, he'll sell you items cheaper in the future. To move the story along, approach the blitzball on the deck. This will trigger a memory sequence. Follow the directions to nail Jeht's move. If you do this, people will cheer in the background when you talk to Yuna. If not, it's just you and the pretty girl. After reminiscing, you'll arrive in Luca the following morning.

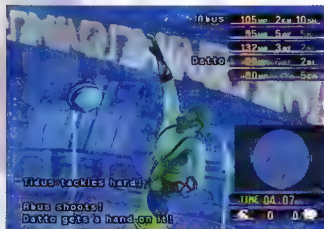


Eavesdrop on Wakka and Lulu to hear what they think of you.

8. LUCA

Work your way along the docks and you'll end up in blitzball training. Study the tutorial carefully, then explore the stadium. In the main area, with the staircase leading up to the arena, head down the left staircase to find another Al Bhed volume next to the blue catwoman. Two Hi-Potions are also in this room. If you head onto Dock 1 (exiting left), 600 Gil is tucked away near some crates. A little further down you'll run into a box with the Tidal Spear. If you head to the boat, two Phoenix Downs await. After exploring the perimeter, return to the stadium and exit to the south. With Yuna at your side, head to the city. Veer away from the red arrow and ascend the stairs to the right. Your bank account will be 1,000 Gil richer if you do. After this, resume the mission and enter the bar. When Yuna disappears, head to dock 4. When you jump onto a boat, a boss will emerge. Use Tidus' trigger command to examine the crane, then Lulu's Thunder power to electrify it. When the crane comes to life, using it will take off over 4,000 HP. After the battle, you'll return to the stadium.

Wakka is out due to injury, so it's up to you to suit up for the game. The outcome of this match doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things, but many rewards come from winning. Shortly after the match, Sin attacks. In a shocking turn of events, Auron will join your team. Battle it out, then depart from the city.



The outcome of the blitzball match doesn't matter, but you gotta win for Wakka

9. MI'HEN HIGHROAD

Make sure you talk to the villagers as you progress north as they will hand out some interesting items. A chest holding an Ice Brand is behind the ruins on the left. After meeting the chocobo riders, a Remedy is tucked off the highway to the left and 2,000 Gil is off to the right. At the very end a chest containing Eye Drops is your reward for this highway's hour worth of battles. On the next screen, your characters will rest. On the floor of the inn is an Al Bhed Compiler. When you leave, a cutscene will commence. You'll also receive a handful of items from the locals, including an Al Bhed volume. The boss you're about to encounter is tough. His goal is to knock you off the edge. Just beat him down and use both summons beasts to suck away his hit points. If he knocks you off the cliff, you won't die, but you'll miss out on a great reward — a free chocobo ride! Grab your yellow ride and explore the area. Make sure you check the side roads for items. Remember the chocobo can jump! When you reach

the cart, you'll lose your chocobo. Nooooo!! Talk to the people in the surrounding area to pass through.



Beat the boss and you'll get a chocobo free of charge

10. MUSHROOM ROCK

Work your way along the rock path to the mechanical lift, collecting 1,000 Gil, Remedy, and items from the crusaders along the way. Also, just before you reach the lift, ascend the spiral path to find an Al Bhed volume on the ground. Continue along the path to the command center. Pass through the curtains and grab the treasure chests hidden behind the spear racks. Save your game, then move to the red arrow when ready. Sin will make its presence known...as expected. This boss is tricky, but if you follow our strategy, he should go down without too much trouble. Attack the head first. It spits poison and won't regenerate when it's knocked out of commission. Next, take out the arms. When both arms disappear, wait away at the body with your most damaging of attacks. Pound at his big gut and remove the arms as soon as they regenerate. Victory? Not quite. After the FMV, the boss will return, but he's been weakened. Use Seymour's amazing magic to quickly dispose of this nuisance. A disaster will occur shortly thereafter. Search the beachfront for life, and talk to the only survivor by the canyon wall. From here, speak with your buddies, grab the Hi-Potion from the treasure chest next to Auron, then leave the area...defeated.

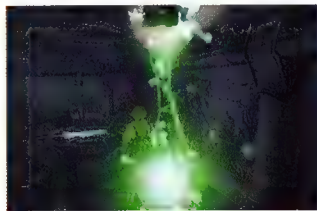


Before attacking the body, remove the head and arms

11. DJOSE ROAD

On the road to the third temple, talk to the survivors for items. There are a few treasure chests scattered along this road. Make sure you check behind every corner to find them all. Also, an Al Bhed volume is

stuffed behind a pillar to the right. When you reach the temple, look behind the chocobo on the left to find 4,000 Gil. To the right, you'll find four Ability Spheres. In the back of the inn awaits a Switch Hitter. When ready, enter the sacred temple...even if it does look unstable. Before heading up the stairs to start the challenge, enter the side rooms and open the treasure chests. One holds a Mega Phoenix. As for the challenge, the goal is the same as it always was. Place the orbs in the correct places to make things happen. The only trouble zone here revolves around the pedestal in the second room. To solve this puzzle put two Spheres up to the pedestal, then push it into the energy pit. Hop across. Push the second pedestal forward. Return to the second room and step on the glowing spot to retrieve the stand. Reinsert the Spheres in the first room. Now, take the glowing Sphere and place it in the left side of the door. That's it! To unearth the rare item, don't jump on the elevator just yet. Touch the glowing wall to the left first, to get the Destruction Orb. Use the elevator, then push the five pedestals into the wall. Insert the Destruction Orb into the pedestal that appears and the Magic Sphere is as good as yours. Bada bing! Bada boom! At this point, Yuna will learn how to summon Ixion. Sweet! Of course, you'll have to wait for Yuna to awaken. Tired of sitting around? Go see her. She's in the leftmost room of the temple. Now, it's off to Moonflow.



This challenge is a bit tricky, but again, it's just a game of trial and error

12. MOONFLOW

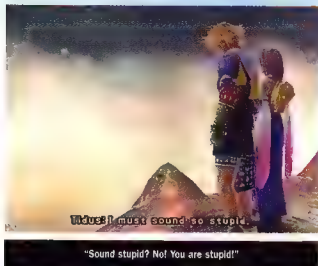


The shoofup (yes, the large dinosaur) will surely be just as popular as the chocobo and mog

Maneuver along the path, this time heading north at the fork. Not that we continually need to remind you, but talking to people along the way is a rewarding experience. Whenever you see a gap in the road, veer off and you should run into a chest. Halfway up the road you'll run into a familiar friend. Accept her aeon challenge. If you win, you'll receive two Dragon Scales and the Summoner's Soul. When you reach

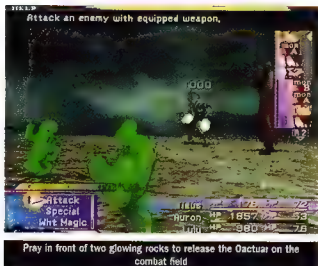
the shoopuf station, search the vicinity for 5,000 Gil. Ride the shoopuf across the lake. Yuna! Of course, a boss battle is just seconds away. To defeat this underwater mechanical gizmo, use Eye Drops to cure the blindness caused by the depth charges. When you get an opening, hack away and heal when needed. After the battle, search the northern shoopuf dock for an Al Bhed volume. From here, leave the station and begin another journey through the woods. Rikku! Reunite with your long lost buddy, then continue along the path to Guadosalam.

13. GUADOSALAM



Start out by going to Lord Seymour's manor. To the right of the entrance is a Mega-Potion. Once inside, a Hi-Potion is hidden behind the stairwell railing. Head into the main level door to advance the story. Talk to everyone in the eatery. Watch the events unfold. When ready, leave, then ascend the elevated walkway. The house on the left is home to a chest holding 3,000 Gil and another Al Bhed volume. Search the table to find it. Now, it's off to the Farplane. Speak with Wakka and Yuna. After you leave the "cool" death plain, chat it up with either Rikku or Lulu. Next, head toward the cave on the left (the lower city path). Everyone will be ready to depart.

14. THUNDER PLAINS



Snag the boxes along the way and duck for cover, although the lightning doesn't damage Tidus. Pray in front of the glowing stones (by pressing **▲**) to release Oactuar into the battlefield. You'll find one stone out in the open to the left, and the other tucked away to the left by a chest. These beloved FF creatures will reward you with amazing weapons if

you can beat them. A little ways down, you'll rest at the inn. As you continue forward, be sure to pick up the Yellow Shield lying in the middle of the road by the inn. Just continue forward to pass through this electrically charged area.

15. MACALANIA

Explore the winding treetops and you'll eventually run into a priest that will tell you about the butterfly minigame. A little further down, Auron will lead you off on a sidequest. When you get to the desired location, a boss encounter will occur. Whatever you do, do not use aeon overdrives, or you might heal the Spherimorph with over 5,000 HP. After the battle you'll receive Jecht's Sphere. Travel to the Inn, and search the ground to its left for another Al Bhed volume. Continue following the arrow to the lake. Before you know what hit you, the Al Bhed show up. Boss time! If you destroy the Negotiator, the machine will spit out 1,000-point attacks. So in other words, concentrate on the Crawler body. After the fight, ride the snowmobiles to the temple. Talk to the Al Bhed inside the entrance for 400 Gil.

Explore the main hall of the temple to find two X-Potions and 5,000 Gil. Before you begin the trial, Seymour will attack. Since Seymour's magical attack pattern always follows Ice, Thunder, Water, Flame, Yuna's Nul magic will prevent the party from taking any damage. To take out the guards, use an aeon summons or Stone effects. Also, note that Yuna now has another aeon at her disposal. When Seymour's health depletes, he'll cast Anima and his health will be restored. Continue using aeons to destroy both adversaries. After this incredibly challenging battle, you'll need to complete another trial by moving Spheres to open doors.

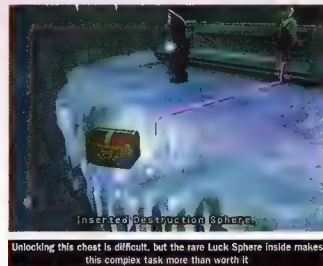


If you destroy the Negotiator, you'll be in for a world of hurt. Focus on the gun and heal often.

The first Sphere that you need is hidden on the central pole. Insert it into the pedestal to the right. Push the pedestal forward to remove the ice. Push it again to the wall so that it slides down the ramp. Grab the Sphere on the platform at the far end of the room, then descend the ramp. Place the Sphere in the pole to the left. Take the Sphere from the stand that you pushed moments ago and drop it into the leftmost socket. Grab the Sphere that appears and place it on the pedestal. Push the stand to the right. Head upstairs and grab the nearest Sphere. Stick it into the central pole. The bridge is complete. Maneuver upstairs and step on the symbol. Take the Sphere and push the pedestal down the slope. Return to the middle level and insert the Sphere into the wall (by the lower-level slope). Step on the glowing symbol to retrieve the pedestal. Grab the Destruction Sphere from the pedestal. Descend down the ramp and insert the Sphere into the nearest wall mount. Grab the Luck

Sphere. Ascend to the central level and grab the Sphere from the wall. Place the Sphere into the wall mount to the right. Push the stand to the right. Remove the Sphere you just placed and set it in the wall mount to the left. Push the stand down the slope. Remove the Sphere from the central pole. Descend again and insert the Sphere into the pedestal. Push the pedestal to the right. Return to the previous level and take the nearest Sphere and place it into the central pole. Head up to the bridge and cross it. Whew! The madness is over! Now...run!

Avoid the guards as best you can and haul ass across the ice walkways. At the end of this exhausting jaunt awaits another boss. He's small, but he has 18,000 HP. Use aeon attacks and status effects to eliminate him. Even though he takes off roughly 1,000 HP each time he attacks, he's no match for summon creatures. We took him down with Ixion overdrives in a matter of 30 seconds. When you awaken from your fall, talk to the team, then grab the items from the two boxes in the general vicinity to find a Level 2 Key Sphere and an Avenger. When you talk to Yuna, everything will change.



Strategy Extra

MONSTER ROUND UP

Much like Pokémon, players can collect the monsters they encounter. To do this, you'll first need to go to the Calm Lands. Find the training ground (pictured) and talk to the man to learn of the techniques and weapons needed to accomplish this task. He'll even sell you the "Catch" weapons for a low price. We recommend buying one for every character to make the odds better. All you have to do now is fight. If the weapon is equipped, the monster will be captured when its health is depleted. If you capture all of the creatures in the zone and bring them back to the rancher, he'll combine their DNA into another beast.

Defeat all of these customized critters to fight some truly difficult adversaries. Think back to the days of the Final Fantasy VII's Ultimate Weapons.



Strategy Extra

LEGENDARY WEAPONS

To unlock a good majority of these powerful weapons, you'll first need the Magic Mirror. To find it, head to Nagi Plains. Grab a chocobo and head to the southeastern corner of the map. Find the feather (up on the incline), then walk to the lower area that is blocked off by rubble. Run to the shrine. Talk to the champion chocobo on the left – not forgetting to grab the Al Bhed volume by his feet. Next, grab the chocobo from the right. You'll be challenged to a race. If you win, you'll get the Cloudy Mirror. To give this rare artifact that magic touch, head to Lake Macalania and talk to the mother and child at the forest entrance of this area a handful of times each. Now, head to the right (grab Jeht's Sphere along the way), then proceed north at the second pass. The father of this family will run away when you tell him where they are. Return to the mother (who is joined by the father) and chat it up. At this point, veer up the path to the left, then at the next save point, make an immediate right. Ascend the magical walkway to the boy's location. Talk to him. After the conversation, use the Cloudy Mirror to transform it into the Celestial Mirror. This empowered contraption can now be used to open those pesky boxes you ran across earlier. To use the Scrolls you've obtained, or soon will, you'll need to return to this location to energize them.

Now, it's time to find the Legendary Weapons for each character. We've listed the locations below, but as you'll soon see, these armaments really suck at first. You'll first need to break the seal that binds their powers. Each Legendary Weapon is locked with two seals.

TIDUS' CALADBOLG

Challenge the chocobo rider in the Calm Lands to a race. Complete all three of his exercises to make a guard move from his post in the northwest section of this area. Pass through the narrow pathway and activate the symbol. You'll now have the Caladbolg. To activate it, return to the Dome and search the battleground where you fought Yuneslea. Here, you'll find the Sun Crest. Next, return to the Calm Lands and finish the third chocobo race with a time of 0:0:0. It's possible. Just keep trying.

YUNA'S MNRVANA

Accept the monster-collecting mission from the old man on the outskirts of the Calm Lands. If you capture all nine of the creatures in the Calm Lands, he'll give you a special reward. Open the chest with the Celestial Mirror, and Yuna's Legendary Weapon is yours! To empower it, head to Besaid Island's beach and snag the Moon Crest from the chest hidden to the east. As for the second seal, return to the Calm Lands and head to the secret area (jumping over the broken bridge with the chocobo on the incline). Enter Remiem Temple and talk with Bergetime. Defeat all of her aeons (even the three hidden ones), then perform the sending to obtain the Moon Sigi.

16. SANUBIA DESERT

Grab the Remedy from the chest hidden in the lower left-hand corner of the water. There's nothing else to do now, except explore the desert. A hungry vulture boss will swoop in and beat the living tar out of you. Hold your own and Lulu and Auron will come to your rescue when you get weak. It's now time to search for your teammates. Grab the chests along the way. On the second screen (after finding Wakka), an Al Bhed volume awaits to the right. When following Rikku, veer off into the oval-shaped opening to the left to find another Al Bhed volume. An additional Al Bhed volume is sitting out in the open near a sign. War will ensue once you pass over the final dune.

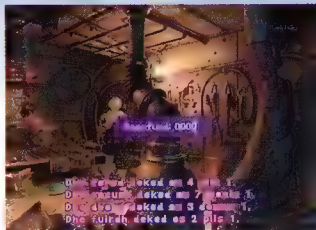


These birds are incredibly strong, but if you have the healing power, the AP they deliver is second to none. This is a great spot to level up.

17. AL BHED HOME

Just a mental note, there are three Al Bhed volumes in this town. Unlike the other volumes that can be picked up later in the game, if you miss these now, you'll never be able to get them. In the entry, search the bodies for items, and be sure to grab the Al Bhed volume from the left corner. Enter the steel door directly ahead. Use water-based magic on the Bombs that appear, then maneuver through the door to the right. After the beast attacks, you'll reach a fork in the road. Head through to the right and grab the Al Bhed volume from the ground at the end of the hall. Pass through the door to the

immediate right and two mini-bosses will appear. Take them out then solve the Al Bhed puzzle to open the chests. If you haven't collected any volumes yet, the number is 5633. For the second lock, answer in this order, 3, 4, 2, then 1. Exit out and backtrack up the stairs. Enter the room on the left (it's hard to see). Defeat the adversaries, then open the chests. To pick these locks, answer with what item you'd like to obtain. The second lock is random, so good luck if you have to guess. Lastly, grab the Al Bhed volume from the shelf. Return to the fork in the road and head to the left. Save, then pass through the door.

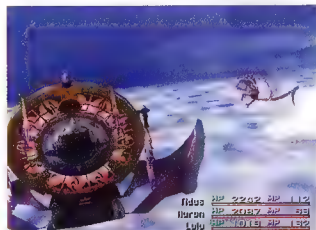


Decipher the Al Bhed puzzles to open the chests

It's not time to locate Yuna. A chest holding 10,000 Gil is tucked away in the Summoner chamber. Now, it's time to depart on the Airship!

18. AIRSHIP

Explore the Airship and talk to Rin if you need items. Return to the control deck. Talk with the pilot and Auron to plot out your course. At this point, several of the Al Bhed on board will hand over items. Head to the control deck and prepare for a boss battle. Cid will help you out, but he only has three sets of missiles. Tell Cid to move the ship away when the party needs healing. This is also a great vantage point to take pot shots with magic. Make sure you cast on your party, otherwise you'll be thoroughly beaten with Poison.

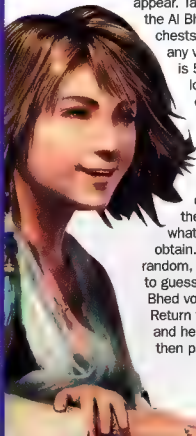


Use Haste to speed up your characters, then have Cid pull the ship away before the boss casts Poison

19. BEVELLE

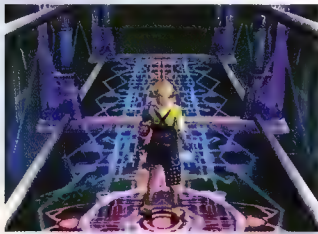
After the amazing cutscene, battle your way through the guards. Another stunning cutscene will take place, then work your way through the temple. When the party meets up (in front of a save point), look closely at the bridge for another Al Bhed volume.

It's now time to solve another challenge. To start out, turn right, then down. Grab the Bevelle Sphere from the wall. Push the pedestal onto the track. Backtrack to the starting point. Turn right at the second intersection. Place the Sphere into the wall. Push the pedestal, then return to the beginning. At the second intersection, turn left. Grab the Bevelle Sphere from the wall. Return to the starting point again. Turn right at the first intersection, then an immediate left. Now, turn right at the second intersection. Place your Sphere into the pedestal and remove the Glyph Sphere from the wall. Push the pedestal, and work some magic so that the



Glyph Sphere ends up in the pedestal and the Bevelle is in your hand. Maneuver to the last right turn and place the Bevelle into the wall. Grab the Glyph and place it at the end of the path that appears. Grab the Destruction Sphere. Place it into the pedestal, then grab the Bevelle from the wall. Now, move to the platform to the immediate left. Once again, work some magic so that the Destruction Sphere is in your hand and the Bevelle is in the pedestal. From here, return to the beginning of this loop and make an immediate right. Push the pedestal off the other side of the platform. Turn right, left, then right again. Ascend the stairs and grab the treasure. Step on the glowing spot to make the pedestal reappear. Take the Bevelle from the pedestal and place it in the wall. Push the stand to the left and open the second chest. Return from whence you came, and this challenge is complete.

When you return to the lobby you'll be taken into custody, but on a bright note, you'll also get Bahamut.



Navigating this maze is a frustrating affair, but it must be done.

20. STANDING TRIAL



Kimahri wants Seymour dead...stand behind his decision and fight!

When you gain control of Yuna (cool!), you'll need to find your way through a massive maze. The monster encounter rate is lower than usual, but difficult battles await. Seek out your comrades for help and use aeons when the going gets tough. The exit is highlighted with red lights. At the end, you'll be forced to face off against the aeons. The sad thing is, these aeons are much more powerful than yours. After the battle, control will revert back to Tidus. When you reach the second save point, a familiar foe will appear. He's not as tough as before, but you better pray that Rikku and Wakka are leveled up. Opening the locks will guarantee victory, but you'll miss out on two chests holding powerful weapons. Once this fish sinks, the party will finally be

reunited. You'll now have to fight Seymour again. We recommend leveling up all of your aeon overdrives before entering. Seymour will kill any summon creature after one attack, so make them count as best you can.

21. CALM LANDS

Yuna needs a friend right now. Be a pal and help her out. Rest until morning, then grab the Lucid Ring from the chest to the north (where Lulu was just standing). Exit to the right and you'll head into the Calm Lands. The exit to this massive area is in the northeast corner. We recommend exploring the area thoroughly. In the dead center of this prairie awaits a rest station where you can save and stack up on affordable items. A chest holding a Level 2 Key Sphere is hidden behind this structure. If you search the nearby perimeter, you'll run into Belgemine again. Complete her challenge for an interesting bonus feature. To the far south (along the outskirts) resides a chocobo trainer. Talk to him and he'll teach you how to train. If you complete the test, you'll have an easier means of exploring this massive area. To this man's left is an Al Bhed volume. To the right of the desired exit resides a lazy old man. He wants you to round up his monsters for him. Accept the mission (see Monster Round Up for the skinny). Also, if you're going after the most powerful weapons in the game, and would like to grab another Al Bhed volume, see the Ultimate Weapons section of this guide. If you have no desire to complete the sidequests, that's about all you can do in the plains for now, so move on, following the red arrow to the ridge of the mountain. Seconds after you cross over the bridge, a powerful robotic boss will appear. Use Auron's Power and Armor Break to cut deep on this well-equipped mechanism and it should disappear as quickly as it appeared.



Once you learn how to train a chocobo, you'll be able to ride them freely.

22. GAGAZET MOUNTAIN

Rather than continuing the journey, you'll first need to tie up Kimahri's story. Kimahri will learn a number of new attacks in the battle against Biran and Yenke. Use Lancel to learn them. Continue forward and check every offshoot for chests. When the path makes a 90-degree turn, head up into the cavern to find one of Braska's Spheres. Shortly after the save point, Seymour will attack. With 70,000 HP and the ability to cast Zombie, he's not fooling around anymore. Powering up your overdrives is recommended before attempting this fight. His Total Annihilation attack will drain roughly 4,000 HP off of each character, so make sure at least one character is well above this mark.

AURON'S MASAMUNE

Head to the eastern portion of Gore Cave and you'll find a Rusty Sword. Present this worthless weapon to the warrior statue on Mushroom Rock Road. He'll reward you with passage to the Masamune. To empower it, head to Mil'then Highroad, and search the southern part of the Old Road to find the Mars Crest. Next, capture 10 monsters of 10 different species in 10 different regions and the rancher will give you the Mars Sigil.

LULU'S ONION KNIGHT

After defeating the boss at Baaj Temple, explore the underwater ruins for an opening (the one the boss smashed through). Here, you'll find a chest holding Lulu's weapon. It's well hidden, so continually hit to locate it. As for the seals, return to Guadosalam and return to The Farplane. Here, you'll find the Venus Crest. Next, journey into the Thunder Plains. Now, successfully evade 200 lightning blasts without getting hit. If you do get struck down, you'll need to start again. Complete this task and you'll receive the Venus Sigil.

WAKKA'S WORLD CHAMPION

Head to the café in Luca and show the Celestial Mirror to the bartender to unlock the World Champion. Be warned, though, he won't give it to you until you win some games. Now, head into the blitzball locker rooms to find the Jupiter Crest. To wrap your sweaty mitts around the Jupiter Sigil, you'll need to win a handful of blitzball tournaments.

RIKKU'S GOD HAND

Head to Mushroom Rock and use the Celestial Mirror on the symbol at the end of the path. Grab the God Hand, then make a pilgrimage to Sanubia Desert. Within one of the whirlpool pits resides the Mercury Crest. Now, locate the Cactuar rock and pray in front of it. Complete the Cactuar minigame, then grab the Mercury Sigil from a chest in the sandstorm area.

KIMAHRI'S SPIRIT LANCE

Return to the Thunder Plains and activate the three cactuar rocks (if you haven't done so already). In the southern portion of this area, a cactuar ghost will appear. Follow him to the ruins, then pray to reveal the chest holding the Spirit Lance. Now, head to Gagazett Mountain and grab the Saturn Crest from the box between the pillars (near the Seymour fight). Lastly, return to Macalania Forest and capture all of the blue butterflies in the second minigame, without messing up, to get the Saturn Sigil.

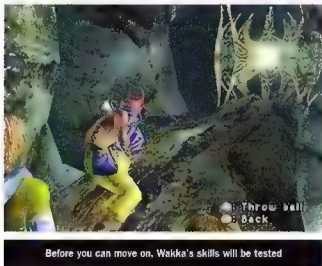


Use overdrive maneuvers and protect effects to eliminate Seymour

2.3. RETURN TO ZANARKAND

Once Seymour goes down, the party will make a startling discovery and Tidus will enter another eerie dream sequence. When this happens, follow the path to the door. Follow the little bugger who has been messing with your head. When you finally come to, navigate the caverns. Demonstrate your power within the trials for Wakka and company, and be sure to grab the chests that appear after a test is completed. The red arrow will lead you to the following test. The next goal is to work your way up into the mountain. Build up your breaks around the save point as a powerful dragon will appear shortly. This beast will cast Curega and Regen on itself continually and will also hamper your progress with a wide variety of status effects. Casting Shell on everyone helps a tad, and using summon creatures from time to time will weaken him to a degree where he won't heal as much. Also, use Auron's Break attacks to up your chances. Using Haste on every character isn't a bad idea, either. Watch in glee as it perishes and you'll arrive at a familiar place.

Grab Yuna's Transmission Sphere off the ground, then continue along the path to the ruins. Yuna will now need to complete her summoning training.



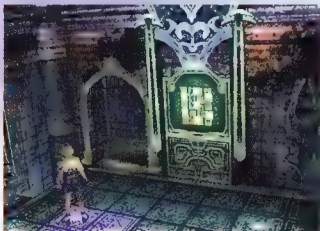
Before you can move on, Wakka's skills will be tested

24. DOME

Follow the start/p path to the Dome. Chests containing a Fortune Sphere and Spiritual Targe can be found along the way. The Dome shrine isn't too far down the road. Cross over the broken bridges and snag the items along the way. At the end, Tidus must complete another Fayth challenge. This one is extremely easy. Just match the colors that appear on the floor with those on the wall. If you step on a square that doesn't match, you'll simply have to start again. Once you complete this puzzle, push the pedestals in the corners into the wall to activate the next challenge. When you complete all four, take the Kilika Sphere from this room and place it in the left pedestal in the smaller room. Return, and take the Besald Sphere and place it in the right pedestal. That's it! To unearth the rare item, you'll first need to come back later in the game. In the meantime, save your game. A boss awaits in the next room. Move your characters away from this beast's line of sight and unload with everything you've got. Another boss battle follows this one immediately. However, if you choose to, you can head outside and power up. The next fight is against Lady Yunalesca. Nice butt! She may look innocent, but she's one tough cookie.

You'll need to defeat all three of her forms (24,000 HP, 48,000 HP, and 60,000 HP). To much dismay, Lady Yunalesca will neutralize Haste, Shell, and basically every status effect you'd want to use to even the playing field. Thankfully, she's not as troublesome as the last few bosses. It's just a long fight.

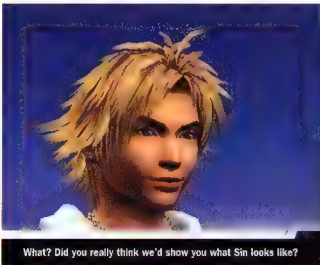
Leave the Dome and enter the airship. Talk with Yuna. Before departing for Sin, return to the Dome (the last entry on the Nav-Map). You'll now be able to unlock the rare item. Flip up the floor combinations for both rooms (all white), then grab the Destruction Sphere and place it in the right wall mount in the large room. Grab the Magistral Rod, then return to the airship.



Step on the floor tiles so that the colors that appear match those on the wall

25. CONFRONTING SIN

Select Highbridge from the Nav-Map. Make way for the chamber and talk with Shelinda. Sin's location will now appear on the map. As you probably guessed, this battle isn't going to be easy. Use Auron's Mental and Armor Breaks to lower its defensive capabilities. When Sin powers up its core for a Gravigia attack, have Cid pull the ship back. Eliminate both arms, then the two pods on Sin's head. As frightening as this creature is, he's not too difficult (this time around at least). After a killer cutscene, you'll attack Sin head-on. The goal here is to deplete all 140,000 HP before he casts Giga-Graviton. The only way to do this is to cast Haste on everyone and use your most powerful strikes. If you summon aeons, his meter will rapidly increase, so save them for the last strike.

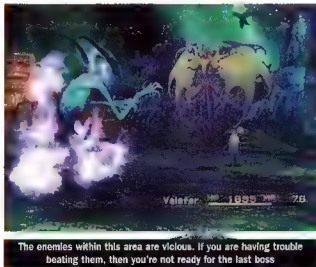


What? Did you really think we'd show you what Sin looks like?

26. SIN: LAND OF THE DEAD

Follow the invisible path as best you can. You'll eventually reach a save point. If you're truly ambitious, there are a ton of hidden boxes to open. Next, head up the stairs. A surprising boss will return. Use Auron's Breaks to weaken him, and cast elemental magic to fry this fiend. If you look at the symbols behind him, you'll see what elemental body he currently possesses. He has 80,000 HP and attacks four times each turn. Nulling his attacks is a great way to stop him in his tracks. After the fight, you'll need to progress further into Sin. To reach the other side of the gap (with a chest below), you'll need to locate a hidden slide along the right wall. On the other side, you'll run into the last save point in the game (sniff!). A large vessel will crash land right in front of you. Inspect the glowing purple seal. When you warp to a new zone, touch each crystal that appears to obtain rare items. There are 10 to collect.

Once you locate all of them, you'll warp to the next boss, who happens to be another surprise! If you have any items that prevent petrification, equip them. Save your aeons for his transformation, and have Tidus talk to him twice. Just beat the tar out of this freak and save your aeons for the second round. Whenever the boss powers up an overdrive, summon an aeon to take the blast, otherwise you'll probably be wiped out. After he falls, you'll have to face off against your aeons. Don't worry, you can't die here. God is on your side. Dispose of these beasts, then the final boss will appear. Just cast Reflect on everyone and use Potions to heal. Sit back and watch it kill itself with Gravigia. When its HP is low enough, strike it down with one mighty blow. Enjoy the spectacular ending!



The enemies within this area are vicious. If you are having trouble beating them, then you're not ready for the last boss

Strategy Extra

ADDITIONAL OVERDRIVES



Every character starts with an overdrive maneuver. However, more can be obtained throughout the course of the game. Through time, you'll also unlock overdrive configuration types. Here's what you'll need to do.

TIDUS

All of Tidus' overdrives are learned over time. If you use Spiral Cut 10 times, you'll unlock Slice & Dice. Use this technique 20 times and Energy Rain will become active. Use this technique 50 times to learn Tidus' ultimate overdrive.

YUNA

All of Yuna's overdrives deal with the aeons. If you have the aeon, you can use it for a Master Summon.

AURON

To learn Auron's special overdrives, you'll need to collect the Jecht's Spheres that are littered across the land. The first Sphere you receive (early on from the Jecht event) unlocks Shooting Star. You'll need to collect three more to get Banishing Blade, and all 10 for his ultimate maneuver. Here are the listings of where to find them.

Automatically obtained (Jecht event)

Besaid Village (near temple)

S.S. Liki

Luca Stadium (locker room)

Mi'ihen Highroad

Mushroom Rock (near save point)

Moonflow (riding platform)

Thunder Plains (near inn)

Macalania (near Thunder Plains entrance)

Gagazet Mountain (snow path)

WAKKA

Win a number of blitzball tournaments and new reels will be added to Wakka's overdrive meter.

KIMAHRI

Use the Lance maneuver on specific enemies to unlock different abilities. His most devastating overdrive comes courtesy of the Omega weapon.

LULU

Much like Yuna, her overdrives tap into magic. To activate these moves, you'll need to rotate the right analog stick clockwise.

RIKKU

Simply combine items to create new overdrive attacks. It's easy. It's fun. It's better than Cats.

BONUS AEONS



Much like the previous entries in the Final Fantasy series, there are a handful of hidden aeons within the game. Of course, adding them to your arsenal won't be easy, but it's well worth it.

ANIMA

You've seen him and you've gotten your butt kicked by him. To add this powerful adversary to your arsenal of aeons, return to Baaj Temple (Airship coordinates X-16, Y-57) after you've obtained all six of the rare items from the Fayth challenges. Jump in the water and explore the area. A familiar boss will appear, and he's ticked off. If you can defeat him (a ton of HP will help), a new temple will appear.

Approach all six statues, and enter the forbidden chamber. Before long, Yuna will return with Anima.

YOJIMBO

Return to the beginning of Gagazet Mountain and enter the temple beneath the bridge. Simply follow the winding path and explore every nook and cranny. After the save point, you'll fight one of Lulu's childhood friends. Use the teleporter to pass into the Chamber of Fayth. You'll need to bring 300,000 Gil to appease this new aeon.

MAGUS SISTERS

Collect all the monsters on Gagazet Mountain and bring them to the rancher in the Calm Lands to receive the rare Blossom Crown. Next, head to the hidden temple in the Calm Lands. Use a chocobo to reach it (up on the incline). Defeat all of the summon challenges, including Anima and Yojimbo, to unlock the Flower Scepter. Use the Crown and Scepter on the door in the back of the hall to acquire the Magus Sisters.

HIDDEN AIRSHIP LOCATIONS

There are a handful of hidden locations to unlock. Simply enter the coordinates below in the Search menu to reveal them on the Nav-Map. Hit **✳** when the coordinates are shown to pinpoint the new zone. A handful of these areas can only be entered via an Input password. You'll find these codes below as well.

BAAJ TEMPLE

Coordinates: X-16, Y-57

This is the first dungeon in the game. If you plunge in the water, that boss you nearly avoided will be back, and yes, you can kill him. Once you do, go grab the new aeon (see Anima).

BATTLE SITE

Coordinates: X-42, Y-57

BESAID FALLS

Coordinates: X-31, Y-73

BESAID RUINS 2

Input Password: MURASAME

There's not much here, except for the Murasame Sword. It's well worth getting, especially for its One MP Cost ability.

MI'IHEN RUINS

Coordinates: X-34, Y-58

MUSHROOM ROCK

Input Password: GODHAND

OMEGA RUINS

Coordinates: X-74, Y-36

This is a great place to level up. You'll also find the last AI Bhed volume here.

SANUBIA SANDS

Coordinates: X-15, Y-41

NO MONSTER ENCOUNTERS



Steal 30 Purifying Salts from the zombie guards at the Dome, then combine them with armament to the ability No Encounters.

BLITZBALL

Having trouble winning Blitzball games? Well, it's not an easy sport to master, but we do have a few techniques that might help. If you didn't master Jecht's Shot during the course of the game, return to the boat by traveling on the airship and try the technique again. Once you have this maneuver, you'll eventually win Jecht's Shot 2 in a blitzball match. Of course, make sure you recruit the best players (by pressing **■**), and carefully study the opposition's gameplan.

AL BHED DICTIONARY

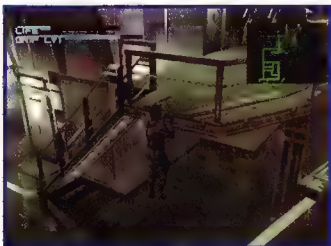
Do you want to know what the AI Bhed are saying? As you've already seen in our walkthrough, there are 26 hidden AI Bhed pages, each representing a letter. When you find all 26, you'll finally understand the AI Bhed language...but really, what good will it do you? The game is almost over! The great thing is, when you save at an AI Bhed Dictionary (the blue spheres that you run into), your save data will transfer over to other FFX games. Basically, you can start a new game and understand everything that they are saying.

MOVIE & MUSIC PLAYER

Locate the theater in Luca and talk to the patrons. One will sell you music. The other hawks CG movies. You'll be able to view and listen to everything in the game (excluding the ending movie). You can even listen to the tracks in Dolby 5.1.

SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

Bad Plumbing? – While using the Directional Mic to listen to the conversation between Ocelot and Solidus, point the Mic toward the bathroom to hear some very amusing commentary and sound effects from a guy who is in dire need of some laxatives.

Catch a Cold – If you leave Snake out in the rain for too long, he'll come down with a cold. You'll know he's under the weather when he starts sneezing. Yes, this action will alert guards to your location. To cure him, give him a Pentazemin. If he's sick for more than a few seconds, the pill won't work.

Raise Grip Strength – When hanging off of a ledge, have Snake or Raiden pull up 100 times by simultaneously press L2 and R2. Doing this will raise their overall Grip Strength to Level 2.

Shaver – When you first reach the Plant, hang over the ledge facing the pool and jump to get the Shaver. When Raiden first runs into Pliskin, he'll give him the Shaver. For the rest of the game, Pliskin will now be clean cut.

Snake's Dog Tags – When you confront Snake near the end of the game, put him in a headlock and knock him out. Don't kill him! When his body collapses to the floor, shake him for the Tags.

Wig – Complete the game locating every Dog Tag along the way. When you begin anew, you'll find the Wig within your inventory. This precious item gives you infinite ammo, and you won't even have to reload your weapon.

*Kevin Sutton
Prior Lake, MN*

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 2

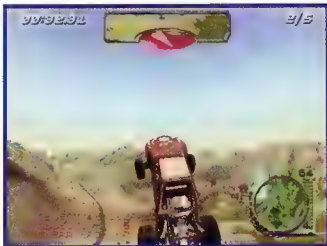
Enter all of these codes from the Main Menu. You'll hear a snapping sound when the cheat is inputted correctly.

FMV Clips – Up, Left, Down, Right, Left (x2), Right, Left, Up, Down,

Park Editor Items – Up, Left, Down, Right, Down, Up (x2), Down, Right (x2),

Ultimate Cheat – Up, Right, Down, Left, Right (x2), Up, Down, Left, Right, Up, Left, Right (x2), Down,

*"The Joystick Juggalo"
Detroit, MI*



SMUGGLER'S RUN 2: HOSTILE TERRITORY

Enter all of these codes from the in-game pause screen.

Feather Weight Cars – L1, R1 (x2), L2, R2 (x2)

Invisibility – R1, L1 (x2), R2, L1 (x2), L2

No Gravity – R1, R2, R1, R2, Up (x3)

Slow Motion – R2, L2, L1, R1, Left (x3)

Super Speed – R1, L1, L2, R2, Right (x3)

*Jason Kidd
Sacramento, CA*

ESPN NFL PRIMETIME 2002

Input all of these codes at the Enter Codes screen.

Aloha Stadium & Pro Bowl Teams – ALOHA

Alter Scoring – SCOREBOX

Dome Weather – SHAKE IT UP

Invincible Ball Carrier – CAN'T TOUCH THIS

Reliant Stadium – HOWDY

Show Everyone – SHOW EVERYONE

Slippery Ball – READY TO FUMBLE

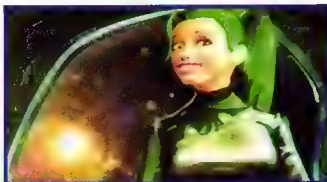
Superman Jump – SUPERMAN

*Jacob Withers
Sleepy Vale, NJ*

HALF-LIFE

Enter this code at the Cheat Codes menu located within the Options screen.

Slow Motion – Right, Up, Right, Up,
*"The Sundance Kid"
Atlantic City, NJ*



PORTAL RUNNER

FMV Clips – At the Main Menu, hold L1, then press Left, Right, Left, Down, Up, Down, R1, R2, From here, head to Options screen, then enter the Movies menu.

*"Daddy Fat Sacks"
Memphis, TN*



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

Enter all of these codes at the Cheats screen. Please note, these cheats are case sensitive, so pay attention, bub!

All Cheats – backdoor
All Movies – Peepshow

Bonus Skaters

Enter the Create-A-Skater menu and input any of the names below to bring up a Neversoft employee, or friend of the team.

062287
Aaron Skillman
Alan Flores
Andrew Rausch
Andy Nelson
Braineaters
Brian Jennings
Chad Findley
Crashcart
Chris Glenn
Chris Rausch
Chris Ward
Connor Jewett
Darren Thorne
Dave Cowling
Dave Stohl
DDT
Eastside
Edwin Fong
Froggham
Gary Jedsanrun
Gorilla
Grass Patch
Henry Ji
Hi Ben
James Rausch
Jason Uyeda

Joel Jewett
Johnny Ow
Kage
Kevin Mulhall
Lisa Davies
Matthew Day
Mick West
Mike Ward
Mini Joel
Nicole Willick
Noel Hines
Nolan Nelson
Paul Robinson
Pete Day
Pimpin Frank
Rachael Day
Rastapopolous
Ralph D'Amato
Ryan McMahon
Sandy Jewett
Scott Pease
Skillzilla
Stacey D
Steve Ganem
Steven Rausch
Trey Smith
William Pease

*"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH*

SOUL REAVER 2

Enter this code at the Main Menu.

Bonus DVD Items – Left, Right, Down,

*"The Vidman"
Upton, MN*

CODE OF THE MONTH

GRAND THEFT AUTO III



Cheats

Enter any of these codes during gameplay. You don't need to pause or hold anything down, just tap the button sequence.

All Weapons – R2 (x2), L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Crazed Pedestrians – R2, R1, Δ , \times , L2, L1, Up, Down
Disguises – Right, Down, Left, Up, L1, L2, Up, Left, Down, Right
Dodo Car – Right, R2, \square , R1, L2, Down, L1, R1
Enraged Pedestrians – Down, Up, Left, Up, \times , R1, R2, L1, L2
Full Armor – R2 (x2), L1, L2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Full Health – R2 (x2), L1, R1, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Increase Car Handling – R1, L1, R2, L1, Left, R1 (x2), Δ
Increase Funds – R2 (x2), L1 (x2), Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Lower Wanted Level – R2 (x2), L1, R2, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down
No Weather – L1, L2, R1, R2 (x2), R1, L2, Δ
Nuclear Blast – L2, R2, L1, R1, L2, R2, Δ , \square , \square , Δ , L2, L1
Overcast Weather – L1, L2, R1, R2 (x2), R1, L2, \square
Pedestrians War – Down, Up, Left, Up, \times , R1, R2, L1, R2, L1
Rainy Weather – L1, L2, R1, R2 (x2), R1, L2, \square
Raise Wanted Level – R2 (x2), L1, R2, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right
Speed Up Time – \square (x3), \square (x5), L1, Δ , \square , Δ
Superman – Right, R2, \square , R1, L2, Down, L1, R1
Tank – \square (x6), R1, L2, L1, Δ , \square , Δ

Secrets

BF Injection – After completing Sayonara Salvatore, ASF's first mission, a BF Injection will appear at Misty's apartment in Portland (near El Burro's phone booth) between 19:00 and 24:00. Once you pick this car, more will generate across the city.

Infinite Run – To avoid fatigue while running, simply tap \times quickly rather than holding the button down. Also, the longer you run, the less fatigued he will be later in the game.

More Cars in Garage – While not practical, it is possible to jam more than two or three cars into your Shoreline Vale and Staunton Island garages. To do this, enter the maximum amount of cars into a garage. Park another car

in front of the garage. Jump out and approach the garage. The door will open. Quickly run back to your car and jam it into the garage. Even after saving your game, the extra car will still be in your garage.

Commandeer a Tank! – To make a tank appear, you'll need to raise your wanted level to 6. This is very difficult to do, especially since the feds are so vicious. The easiest way to accomplish this task is to find a rooftop (like the parking garage in Staunton). Rain down grenades and rockets and the wanted level will slowly rise. If this is too challenging, simply finish the game, then head to Phil's army store. Previously, the door on this monstrous vehicle was locked. You'll now be able to slip into it and ride away. Also, if you don't mind cheating, simply enter the Raise Wanted Level code to the left.

Fly a Plane – Head to the airport in Shoreline Vale and look for a hanger holding a small plane called the Dodo. Hop inside of it and zoom down the runway facing to the Southeast. You can actually launch into the air (by pressing down, then pulling up) and soar all the way back to Portland.

Health Boost – This trick will allow you to get a much-needed jolt of life, sending your health meter up to 125. Simply drive around town and keep your eyes peeled for scantily-dressed women. If you pull up next to them, they'll come over and talk to you. After a few seconds, they'll jump in the car. Sweet! Now, drive her to a secluded area – your hideout works. Park the car and wait a few seconds. We really don't understand what happens next, but the car will start rocking. What are they doing in there? When this strange act occurs, your health will shoot through the roof. Himm... The lady will charge you for this "game" and will eventually leave the car. Since the cops aren't around, you can always jump out and beat the tar out of her to get your money back. This cheat won't work with emergency vehicles, and the car won't rock for convertibles. Also, riding in an ambulance will raise your health to 100.

Websites – Within the game manual are advertisements for fictional websites. Knowing full well that gamers would check the web, DMA Design actually created real sites. Simply log onto the Internet and enter one of the URLs below.

www.lovemedia.tv
www.pogothemonkey.com
www.petsovernight.com
www.rockstargames.com/grandthefauto3/flash/capitalautos/index.html
www.rockstargames.com/grandthefauto3/flash/francisairport/index.html
www.rockstargames.com/grandthefauto3/flash/gameRadio/index.html
www.rockstargames.com/grandthefauto3/flash/casino
www.rockstargames.com/grandthefauto3/flash/liberty/CityCollege/index.html
www.rockstargames.com/libertytree
www.rockstargames.com/grandthefauto3/flash/msx/m
www.sleepoffiord.com/

Good Guy Missions & Rewards

Are you tired of running errands for crime bosses? Do you want to go straight? Well...you can! Grand Theft Auto III can also be played from a saint's perspective. The listing below shows you how!

Ambulance Driver – Hop into an ambulance then press R3 to go onto patrol. It's your duty to pick up the wounded and quickly transport them to the hospital. Be careful, though. When you crash, the timer will tick down quicker. If you can save 50 people, a Health Icon will generate at your hideout. For those of you who are truly motivated, 100 people saved will generate Adrenaline icons at your hideaway. If, by the grace of God, you can complete the 12th level of ambulance driving, you'll unlock the cheat, Infinite Run.

Taxi Driver – Car jack any taxi in town then press R3 to activate your cab. At this point, you can pick up passengers and drive them to their desired location for a tiny fare. If you can deliver 100 passengers throughout the course of the game, a new car, the Borgnine Taxi, will appear in Harwood.

Fire Truck Driver – Head to the fire department and jump into the fire truck. Press R3 to turn on the scanner, then hunt down the flaming cars that appear on your radar. To douse the blazes, hit \square to shoot your water. The right analog stick controls the directional movement of the hose. If you can put out 20 fires in Portland, Staunton, and Shoreline (60 total), the Flame-thrower will appear at your hideout.

Police Car Driver – Wrap your hands around the wheel of any police vehicle, then press R3 to activate the scanner. From here, you'll need to track down and kill the criminals in the city by destroying their cars. If you can accumulate over 10 kills in all three districts, Police Bribe icons will appear at your hideout, allowing you to easily lower your wanted level. An additional icon will appear if you accumulate over 20 kills in all of the districts.

Hidden Packages

There are 100 packages littered across the city. Portland houses 33 of them. Another 36 are hidden in Staunton Island. The last 31 can be found in Shoreline Vale. The packages are actually tied to the game completion percentage. For every 10 packages collected, a bonus item will appear at your hideout and will continually re-spawn. Here's the listing of what you'll unlock.

10 Packages – Handgun
 20 Packages – Uzi
 30 Packages – Grenades
 40 Packages – Shotgun
 50 Packages – Armor
 60 Packages – Cocktails
 70 Packages – AK-47
 80 Packages – Sniper Rifle
 90 Packages – M-16
 100 Packages – Rocket Launcher & \$1,000,000

Sean "The Dark Jedi" Davis
 Nashville, TN



**WWE SmackDown!:
JUST BRING IT**

Any WWE fan can see many glaring omissions in the roster for Just Bring It. Here are directions on how to unlock five great Superstars and one fat, useless dork.

Fred Durst – Beat 15 wrestlers in ten minutes in Slobber Knocker mode with the Undertaker to become this waste of programmer time (why not RVD? Booker T? Even Howard Finkel for goodness' sake!).

Mick Foley – Go into Story Mode. Turn down the Tag title shot. Attack the guy who cuts the in-ring promo. Win your match. Show up on stage when your rival calls you out. Whichever match you pick becomes playable in Exhibition. Now make sure to lose your title at WrestleMania. Foley comes out to give you a Hell In The Cell rematch. Win this, and the hardcore legend is on the character list.

Yoshihiro Tajiri – Turn down Story Mode's Tag title match. Trash talk the guy who cuts the in-ring promo. Walk to Michael Cole, and say you were just messing with the guy. Walk into Commissioner Regal's office, turn down the European title match, and you'll wrestle Tajiri. If you win, you get the "Japanese Buzzsaw."

Rhyno – Turn down Vince's Tag title offer in Story Mode. Attack the guy in the ring, and win your match. When you're called out, walk around and talk to Michael Cole. Talk to referee Earl Hebner at the bottom of the stairs. He'll referee a Hardcore title match with you against Rhyno in the locker room. Winning will unlock the man-beast.

Jerry Lynn – Turn down Story Mode's Tag title shot. Talk trash on the mic, then go to Michael Cole and say you were just messing with the wrestler. Once in first-person mode, don't go anywhere, and let time expire. Vince will put you in a four-man elimination match (erroneously called a Battle Royal). Win, and repeat the steps when you get in first-person mode again. Now you'll have access to one of the most underrated workers on the WWE roster.

Spike Dudley – Agree to form a team for Mr. McMahon. Win your first tag match. For the sixth man, let your partner choose who will join you. When in first-person mode, go through the main door followed by the first one on the left. Spike will ask for your help. Agree, and win the table match. Now win the Tag title match. You unlock the hard-bumping Spike.

*Helmut Von Strauss
Munich, Germany*



NASCAR THUNDER 2002

To unlock 26 different cars, simply enter the name of the vehicle's driver at the Create-A-Car menu. Here's the list:

Audrey Clark
Benny Parsons
Buster Auton
Cheryl King
Chuck Spicer
Crispy Hillsworth
Daryl Wolfe
Dave Alpern
Dave Nichols
Diane Grubb
Dick Paysor
Jim Hannigan
Joey Joulan

Josh Neelon
Katrina Goode
Ken Patterson
Kristi Jones
Mandy Misiak
Michelle Emser
Rick Edwards
Rick Humphrey
Sasha Soares
Scott Brewer
Tom Renedo
Traci Hultzapelle
Troi Hayes

*Thomas Williams
Panacea, FL*

NHL Hitz

Input all of these cheats at the Versus screen. The numbers for the code represents the number of times you'll need to press each button. X changes the first digit, Y the second, and B the third. Once the button sequence is entered, press the d-pad in the direction listed. The name of the code will flash up on the screen.

- Big Hits** – 2, 3, 4, Down
- Big Puck** – 1, 2, 1, Up
- Bulldozer Puck** – 2, 1, 2, Left
- Domino Effect** – 0, 1, 2, Right
- First to 7 Wins** – 3, 2, 3, Left
- Hitz Time** – 1, 0, 4, Right
- Infinite Turbo** – 4, 1, 3, Right
- Late Hits** – 3, 2, 1, Down
- More Code Time** – 3, 3, 3, Right
- No Crowd** – 2, 1, 0, Right
- No Fake Shots** – 4, 2, 4, Down
- No One-Timers** – 2, 1, 3, Left
- Pinball Boards** – 4, 2, 3, Right
- Rain Mode** – 1, 4, 1, Left
- Skills Versus** – 2, 2, 2, Down
- Snow Mode** – 1, 2, 1, Left
- Tennis Ball** – 1, 3, 2, Down
- Win Fights for Goals** – 2, 0, 2, Left

*Mike Myers
Queens, NY*

PROJECT: GOTHAM RACING

Enter this case-sensitive cheat as a driver name.

Unlock It All – Nosliw

*"Diddy Pop"
Lost Haven, MI*



DEAD OR ALIVE 3

Ayane Alternate Costume – Highlight Ayane's second costume, the press X.

Bass Alternate Costume – Highlight Bass' second costume, then press X.

Brad Wong Alternate Costume – Highlight Brad Wong's second costume, then press X.

Christie Alternate Costume – Highlight Christie's second costume, then press X.

Hayabusa Alternate Costume – Highlight Hayabusa's second costume, then press X.

Hayate Alternate Costume – Highlight Hayate's second costume, then press X.

Helena Alternate Costume – Highlight Helena's second costume, then press X.

Hitomi Alternate Costume – Highlight Hitomi's second costume, then press X.

Jann Lee Alternate Costumes – Highlight Jann's first costume, then press X. For a second set of garbs, highlight Jann's second costume, then press X.

Kasumi's Hair & Costumes – There are three different ways you can get sexy ninja Kasumi to wear her hair. For the standard ponytail, hit A when selecting her as your character. For the free-flowing, natural look, press Y when choosing her. Finally, for a nice braided 'do, pick Kasumi with X. For her striking hidden outfit, complete all of the Sparring mode exercises with every character.

Lei Fan Alternate Costumes – Highlight Lei Fang's first costume, then press Y (white), or X (blue). For a black version, hold the L Button, then press A, X, or Y.

Leon Alternate Costume – Highlight Leon's first costume, then press X.

Tina Alternate Costume – Highlight Tina's first costume, then press X.

Zack Hidden Costume – Select Zack and piece together a 20 win streak within Survival mode.

Unlock Ein – Complete Story mode with every character in the game. Next, head into Survival mode and choose Hayate as your character. Score high enough to reach the record screen, then enter your name as EIN. For Ein's hidden costume, finish Time Attack with this new character in under six minutes.

*Didi Tuttle
Maynard, MA*

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER

Enter this code at the Passcodes screen.

Audio Commentary – BLAHLAH
Black & White Mode – LIONHEAD

Ace Mode – Complete all of the Training levels, then achieve a Gold Medal ranking in every mission.

Audio Commentary – Complete all of the Training levels, then achieve a Silver Medal ranking in every mission.

Documentary – Simply complete all of the missions.

Millennium Falcon – Complete all of the Training levels, then achieve a Bronze Medal ranking in every mission.

Naboo Starfighter – Complete all of the Training levels in all four times of day. To change the time, you'll need to manually adjust the GameCube clock (hold A while booting). You'll also need to find every discovery item and the two bonus items for each zone.

Slave 1 – Achieve a Silver Medal ranking in all of the missions.

TIE Fighter – Complete the Imperial Academy Heist level during both day and night settings.

*Thomas Johnson
Westchester, NY*

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

Enter this case-sensitive code at the Cheats menu. The sound of a cash register ringing will signal correct code entry.

All Movies – POPCORN

*Jason Williams
Pine City, NH*

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM

Ride a Dolphin – To ride on the back of a dolphin, head into the Options menu, then simultaneously press X, Z, and Start to bring up the hidden Password menu. Now, input DLPHNM0D.

*Leslie Lewis
Ontario, Canada*

DREAMCAST

NBA 2K2

For all of these codes, go to Options, then enter the Codes section. Enter each code as is, since they are all case sensitive. Now you can be the best b-ball'er, shot caller you can be.

Unlock Mo-Cap, Sega Sports, and SegaNet teams – vc
Secret Sega Sports team players – Marrinson
Secret Sega Sports team players (More) – Aynaga
Big Heads – heliumbraun
Monster Players – allenbrain
Infected Players – tivrus
More Taunts – sohappyy
Whacked Out Commentary – whatamisyaying
First-Person Ball View – betheball
Cool Looks – radical
Hippie Clothes – the70slive

*Johnson Magic
Saginaw, MI*

GAME BOY ADVANCE



MONSTERS, INC.

Enter all of these codes at the Passwork screen.

Level 2 – YMB2VN
Level 3 – LRB13G
Level 4 – 4RB97C
Level 5 – 7QCZB9

*Michael Jordan
Holland, WA*

DOOM

Enter all of these codes from the in-game pause screen.

Warp Ahead – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press A.
All Weapons, Items, & Keys – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press A, B (x2), A (x5).
Berserk Mode – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press B, A, B, A (x5).
Computer Map – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press B, A (x7).
God Mode – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press A (x2), B, A (x5).
Invincibility – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press B (x3), A (x5).
Radiation Suit – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press B (x2), A (x6).
Warp Ahead – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press A, B, A (x2), B (x2), A (x2).

*Holly Diaz
Filmore, MD*

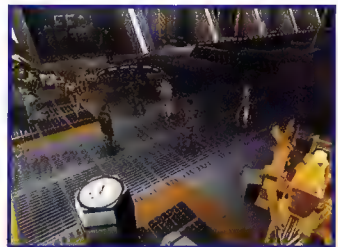
DISNEY'S ATLANTIS: THE LOST EMPIRE

Enter all of these codes at the Password screen.

Level 2 – bmqdngjs
Level 3 – brzsgzdy
Level 4 – bvmjfyjg
Level 5 – b7jpmhc
Level 6 – c6xqlunf

*"GI Droid"
(location unknown – last seen
examining Yu Suzuki's tailpipe)*

PC PERSONAL COMPUTER



ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR 2

If you have your supply of diapers and sedatives ordered and ready, you are now fully equipped to start playing this heart attack-inducing game. Maybe these codes will help you beat back the big bad Aliens (or Predators, or Humans). To activate these codes, hit [Enter] to activate the console window, then type in any of the cheats below.

All Weapons – mpshuckit

Full Ammo – mpkohler

Full Armor – mpsmithy

Invincibility – mpcsixthsense

No Clipping – mpsixthsense

Restart Level – mpbeammme

Rotation Display – mpgrs

Show Position – mpqps

Size Display – mpsizee

Speed Display – mptachometer

Third-Person Perspective – mpicp

*"Roxly, The Radical Gamer"
Webville, COM*

WORLD WAR III: BLACK GOLD

Press [Enter] to bring up the console window. Now, input "peace", then press [Enter] to enable the cheats below. From here, press [Enter] again, then input any of the codes below.

All Research Complete – nobelprize1

Damage Screen – smash

Extra Cash – moneyformothing

Increase Research Speed – mybrainisfaster

Map – beautifulworld

Obliterate Screen – slowor

Unit Numbers – limit_up (00-99)

View Enemy Stronghold – hereyouare!

*Daniel Spirra
Chicken Plains, KY*

ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these halloved pages will receive a Secret Access T-shirt.

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Minneapolis, MN 55401
secretaccess@gameinformer.com

CLASSIC GI

FORGOTTEN GIANT:

THE BRILLIANT LIFE AND TRAGIC DEATH OF GUNPEI YOKOI



Gunpei Yokoi

When one thinks of Nintendo, the name that instantly springs to mind is that of Shigeru Miyamoto, the celebrated creator of Mario Bros., Donkey Kong, and The Legend of Zelda. However, for over 30 years the company was home to another, less well known, genius – Gunpei Yokoi, the head of Nintendo’s storied R&D1 department. While not as famous as Miyamoto, a man that he helped mentor early in his career, Yokoi’s innovations made an indelible mark on the video game industry, and quite literally changed the way we play games forever.

THE YOUNG INVENTOR

Born into a wealthy family (his father was the director of a pharmaceutical company), Gunpei Yokoi grew up in Kyoto, Japan. As a young man, he excelled in math and science, and eventually obtained a college degree in electronics. Upon his graduation in 1965, he took work at a Nintendo factory, maintaining the assembly line machines that manufactured the company’s popular line of Hanafunda playing cards. His arrival at Nintendo was well timed, as the ambitious Hiroshi Yamauchi had just taken the helm of the company and was determined to expand the scope of its product line to include innovative new gadgets and toys. Recognizing Yokoi’s potential, Yamauchi challenged him to create a “great” new toy. As an inveterate inventor and tinkerer, the young engineer jumped at the chance and designed the Ultra Hand (a mechanical arm extender with a grabbing device on the end). The Ultra Hand was a tremendous success, and sold 1.2 million units in 1970.

Yokoi went on to design a number of other mechanical toys, including the Ultra Scope (a small periscope that allowed users to peer around corners), and the Love Tester (a novelty device that measured the electric current generated when a couple held hands). However, it was in 1980 that he would create his first significant invention, Nintendo’s series of Game & Watch portable LCD games.

Nintendo had been watching the exploding video game market with great interest, but the company lacked the funds to truly compete with the giant console manufacturers like Atari and Mattel. Home console development was a risky and expensive endeavor, but Gunpei Yokoi had come up with a simple, low-cost alternative – the handheld LCD game. Marketed under the brand name Game & Watch, the units were simplistic action games that were displayed on primitive black-and-white screens. Because the handheld consoles needed

to be small and lightweight, Yokoi decided a traditional joystick controller would be too bulky. To replace it, he created what he called a “control cross,” which became the prototype for the familiar digital pads used for the NES, SNES, and controllers of today. The impact of the d-pad can not be overestimated, as it forever changed the way players interacted with video games. Every controller since has been a variation on Yokoi’s simple principle.

THE COMPANY MAN

The Game & Watch series was a triumph for Yokoi, and there were over 60 different models produced between 1980 and 1989. At the height of the craze, total sales approached 30 million units worldwide. Encouraged by the success of Game & Watch, as well as arcade smashes like Donkey Kong, Nintendo decided to enter the home console market in 1984 when it released the Famicom system in Japan (designed by Masayuki Uemura, an engineer hired by Gunpei Yokoi). Despite its popularity in Japan, many retailers in the United States were skeptical of video games after the great industry crash of 1983. Nintendo needed something to convince US toy distributors that the Nintendo Entertainment System was more than just a video game console. Once again, Gunpei Yokoi had the solution, in the



Yokoi spearheaded the development of both the Game Boy and the Game Boy Pocket



Inset: The inventor poses with his greatest creation



Yokoi’s Game & Watch handhelds pioneered the use of the now familiar d-pad controller

form of R.O.B. (Robotic Operating Buddy), a toy robot that reacted and helped users play two NES games, Stack-Up and Gyromite. Although the add-on was of little real use, and was never supported with new software, it did allow Nintendo to overcome the stigma attached to video games at the time. By the time people realized the R.O.B. was essentially a gimmick, they were already hooked on Super Mario Bros.

Although not known as a game designer, Yokoi would spearhead the creation of two classic NES titles, Metroid and Kid Icarus. Metroid, one of the first games to feature a female protagonist, was a deep and complex action/adventure game that explored darker and more adult themes than Nintendo games of the past. To this day, it stands as one of the greatest NES titles, and is set to be revived on the GameCube as Metroid Prime.

With the NES established as the dominant home console, Yokoi began work on a new, cartridge-based handheld gaming system. This project became known

as the Game Boy, and would become his greatest and most enduring accomplishment. The compact unit ran on a tiny 8-bit processor, featured a 2-square-inch monochrome LCD screen, and ran up to 35 hours on four AA batteries. In a brilliant move, Nintendo packaged the Game Boy with the classic puzzler Tetris, a game whose rudimentary graphics and ease of play perfectly complemented the Game Boy's on-the-go aesthetic. The handheld was an instant hit, with the initial shipment of 1 million units selling out almost immediately. Yokoi would design a smaller, more energy-efficient version of the Game Boy in 1996, the Game Boy Pocket. The original Game Boy sold over 50 million units, and cemented Nintendo's control of the handheld market, which continues to this day with its recently released Game Boy Advance system. Over time, handheld gaming would become the cornerstone of the company, spanning the lucrative Pokémon phenomenon and maintaining its profitability during the less-than-spectacular run of the Nintendo 64.



The fallout from the failure of the Virtual Boy would bring Yokoi's career at Nintendo to an end

FALL FROM GRACE

Despite his track record of tireless innovation and fierce loyalty to Nintendo, Yokoi would soon learn that the video game business could be cruel and unforgiving. His next creation, the ill-fated Virtual Boy, would eventually lead to his bitter separation from the company that had employed him for nearly 30 years.

Feeling that game development was becoming stagnant due to a lack of new gameplay concepts, Yokoi began exploring the possibilities of a 3D virtual reality helmet. However, it was soon determined that the head-mounted visor was too heavy. With this in mind, the unit was scaled back in scope, and became a binocular-like eye mask set on a stand. Originally intended to be a full-color system, the cost of creating such a unit was prohibitive. As such, Yokoi chose to outfit the unit with a monochrome red LED screen. This miscalculation would cost him dearly.

It quickly became apparent that the Virtual Boy was a huge mistake. Early press reaction was overwhelmingly negative, with most reporting that the red screen caused painful headaches and nausea. Even

worse, most of the games failed to fully utilize the unit's 3D capabilities, and were generally standard knock-offs of existing games. Consumers concurred with the press's negative assessment of the Virtual Boy, and the system performed disastrously in stores.

Nintendo's leadership blamed the failure of the Virtual Boy on Yokoi, and (perhaps unwisely) set out to publicly humiliate him at the 1995 Shoshinkai trade show in Tokyo. As the Nintendo 64 was being unveiled to much fanfare, Yokoi and the Virtual Boy were relegated to a small corner of the Nintendo booth, where the respected inventor was forced to personally demonstrate the unit on the show floor. Still, the proud and impeccably dressed Yokoi soldiered on, desperately trying to interest showgoers (who were largely there to see the N64) in his doomed product. Although this sort of punishment is common practice in Japanese business, it was a shabby way to treat a man who had done so much to make Nintendo an industry giant.

Perhaps sensing that his time at Nintendo was over, Yokoi left the company in September 1996. Deciding to strike out on his own, he formed a new company dubbed Koto Laboratory. Appropriately, his first project was another handheld game system, a black-and-white console with a bigger screen and better resolution, which would become the Bandai WonderSwan. Sadly, he would never see it to completion.

A TRAGIC END

On October 4, 1997, Gumppei Yokoi and a business associate Etsuo Kisoo were driving home on the Horukiko Expressway in Kyoto, Japan. Yokoi's car rear-ended the vehicle in front of him. Following the accident, both men got out of the car to examine the damage to the other vehicle when they were suddenly struck by a passing car. Neither man survived. Only a year after he resigned his post at Nintendo, Gumppei Yokoi was dead at the age of 56. Video games had lost one of its greatest figures, by all accounts a visionary and a gentleman. Though dead, his legacy lives on in the Game Boy Advance, the Metroid series, and the numerous other innovations he brought to the world over the course of his career.

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

This month in 1992, Sega officially became the leader in video games, breaking the reign of Nintendo, the company that had ruled the roost since the release of the Nintendo Entertainment System in December of 1995. The results of the 1991 holiday season saw Sega's Genesis outselling the Super Nintendo at a nearly 2 to 1 ratio, and by the time final tallies were in, Sega had control of 55 percent of the 16-bit market. Many of these sales were driven by the massive success of Sega's new mascot, Sonic the Hedgehog. Of course, Sega's reign wouldn't last long, as the SNES soon surged back with the successful Donkey Kong Country series. Still, this is a significant event in that Nintendo has never truly dominated video games in the same way since.



GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Adam Florida

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.

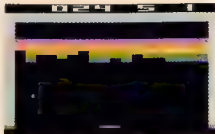


BREAKOUT

■ FORMAT MULTIPLE SYSTEMS
■ PUBLISHER ATARI

With these modern times forcing us to worry about terrorism and biological warfare, life can get pretty complicated. I often find myself yearning for the days of old when these modern worries were nonexistent, a time when things were simpler. For me there is no better way to achieve this sense of simplicity than by engulfing myself in mindless hours of playing video games. And I ask, what game was ever simpler than the classic game Breakout?

The simplicity of Breakout makes other classic games, such as Tetris and Pitfall, comparatively seem as complex as advanced calculus equations. Essentially, the game is nothing more than bouncing a ball against bricks. Should you miss the ball, it is lost forever, and you, sadly, are left with only two balls left to destroy all of the bricks. However, should you find yourself skillful enough to destroy all the bricks, you will advance to the next stage. This stage is exactly the same as the previous one, but the ball begins to move faster, thus making it all the more difficult to hit. I assure you, as the speed of the ball increases, so will your excitement and frustration with this uncomplicated masterpiece of a game.



Breakout was such an ingenious game that it ultimately gave way to other, more complicated games such as Arkanoid and an innumerable amount of Arkanoid clones. These new adaptations of Breakout featured power-ups to collect, enemies to annihilate, and various level setups. Whether or not you prefer these new additions, you can never overlook the simple fact that it all started with Breakout.

So from now on, when the trials and tribulations of everyday life get you down, I urge you to dust off your old Atari and pop in the game that started it all, Breakout! Nothing is more mind-numbingly relaxing than endlessly bouncing a tiny ball against a wall of bricks. Breakout is pure, simple fun for all ages.

SNES

SECRET OF MANA



The intro to Secret of Mana speaks these words: "Time flows like a river. History repeats." If those sentiments rang truer, there would be many more games like the great Secret of Mana. As one of the famed Square SNES role-playing games, Secret of Mana took the beautiful visuals and sounds that Square was known for, and put them in a real-time, action/RPG setting. Three characters using eight different weapons and eight magical elements went on a quest to prevent all the world's Mana from being sucked dry. This partnership of sprite, hero, and princess could be controlled by three gamers, or assigned AI attributes and controlled by the CPU. Fighting allowed you to level up characters, spells, and weapons. A cannon service and a *Never Ending Story*-esque dragon provided snazzy Mode-7 transportation. Aside from the *Zelda* series, there may not be a finer example of action/role-playing games out there.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 3-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1993

SEGA CD

SLAM CITY WITH SCOTTIE PIPPEN



No basketball star is as charismatic and as energetic as Scottie Pippen. Of course, we're lying through our teeth. Scottie is about the biggest bore you could expect in a 6'8" large-nosed, pass-stealing, b-ballin' dynamo. The fact that Sega got him to star in Slam City should tell you a little about the game itself. Where was Larry Johnson, Converse's Grandmama? How about the outspoken Charles Barkley? Or, 5'3" Muggsy Bogues probably would've brought more to the table in terms of screen presence than Pip. Likewise, Slam City has none of the gameplay you'd hope for in a basketball game. You basically just sit through grainy full-motion video loops of four fictional opponents (and Scottie), waiting for the right time to drive, steal, or block. The trash-talking cutscenes are funny, both in their cheesy use of street slang and their terrible acting. Slam City was nothing but a joke when it was released, and that label hasn't changed.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL PICTURES ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

APPLE IIe

THE OREGON TRAIL

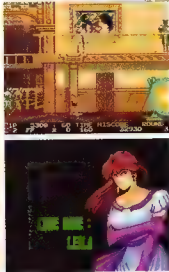
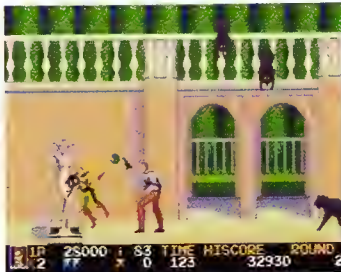


For many thousands of people, The Oregon Trail was their very first venture into video games. Combining the historical sights and struggles of the original pioneers with the surprisingly addictive gameplay of a modern-day strategy release, The Oregon Trail held us in its grasp through much of our childhood. Although it seemed slow-paced at times, gamers were urged onward for the chance to put their names on the Top 10 list upon the successful completion of their game. Seeing your name above that irritating boy who always hogged the classroom computer was an incredible accomplishment for many of us. The hunting portion of the game (at least in its earliest version) was a bit frustrating, due to your character's lack of movement, but the irresistible nature of The Oregon Trail, coupled with its inexorable place in history, makes it one of the most prolific titles ever to grace pixeldom. If you have an Apple IIe and the inclination, we can't recommend this nostalgia-generator enough.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** MECC ■ **DEVELOPER** MECC ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1985

GENESIS

ROLLING THUNDER 2



Spies games were cool way before GoldenEye rocked the Nintendo 64. Rolling Thunder 2, the sequel to the popular 1986 arcade title, chronicled the top-secret adventures of special agents Leila and Albatross as they work to stop the exploits of terrorist group Geltra. These mad fiends are rumored to be behind a rash of destroyed satellites, halting the flow of information throughout the world. Gasp! Unlike typical side-scrolling action games, Rolling Thunder 2 employed much more refined tactics. Using a background plane, the agents could hide from panthers, or go behind desert screens to get the jump on robotic armadillos. Each level had several doors, as well. Some contained ammo reloads, special weapons, or health power-ups. These bred more strategic combat, as opposed to Contra's balls-out guns ablaze approach. While the characters were a tad lanky, the graphics were well done, with detailed environments and stage themes. Rolling Thunder 2 was the perfect secret agent effort for the pre-FF gaming crowd.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

CLASSIC CODES

SEGA CD

SLAM CITY WITH SCOTTIE PIPPIN

Mad Respect vs. Fingers – When Fingers goes to inbound the ball at the beginning of the game, hit **B, A, Left, Left**. Now every drive you make will be a super slam. This will give you character loads of respect from the peanut gallery.

Hidden Videos – Need more full-motion video? For one video, hold **A, B**, and **C** at the Title screen, then press **Start**. For the second video, hold **A, B**, and **C** at the Options screen, then press **Up**.

ROAD AVENGER

Debug Mode – At the Game Start screen, go **Up** to Options and hit **Start**. When you're on the Players option, hit **C** five times. Exit and start the game. Now hit **A, B**, and **C** at the same time. You'll get a debug mode for your playing pleasure.

Level Select – At the Game Start screen, hit **Up** to go to the Options, then press **Start**. When you're on the Players option, hit **A** six times. Now exit and start the game. You'll be able to pick your level.

Pause – Normally, the ability to pause is no biggie, but it's a major luxury in Road Avenger. At the Game Start screen, hit **Up** to go to Options, then hit **Start**. When you're on the Players option, press **A, A, A, B**. Now, **Start** will pause the game for you.

Skip Level – Once you've done the Pause trick, exit **Options**. Now hit **Up** and highlight **Options** again. At the Players option, hit **A, A, A, B, A**, then start the game. While you're playing, you can automatically clear the stage by pausing and hitting **C**.



SNES

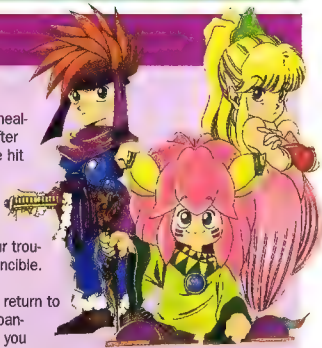
SECRET OF MANA

Infinite Hit Points – You first need to have each of the four healing items. Use them all, one after another, and you'll have infinite hit points. Go get 'em!

Invincibility – Go to one of the cannon launch points, and get fired out of it 50 times. For your trouble and dizziness, you'll be invincible.

Return to Potos – If you want to return to the town from which you were banished at the start of the game, you need to go to the entrance with all three of your characters. Keep running into the guard and hitting Select, and you should eventually be inside.

Infinite Weapon Orbs – Find a dungeon chest with an orb to open it. Now use the rope to escape the area. Use the orb to fuse your weapon. Now return to the same chest, and there should be an identical orb inside. You can repeat this at will, but make sure not to fuse a weapon past its peak, or you'll go back to the lowest form.



LOONEY TUNES B-BALL

Ball Hog – If you want your partner to dish the ball to you now, hit **Turbo, Y, Turbo, X** during gameplay. It'll cost you a dime.

Dog Ball – We all want a dog ball, right? To enable this option, hit **Right, Right, Right, Left, Left, Turbo**.

Earthquake – If you want to pay 30 cents for an Earthquake, hit **Up, Up, Up, Turbo** during gameplay.

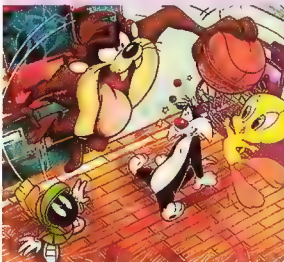
Extended Play – If you're having too much fun to stop, you can add time to the clock for 50 cents. Just hit **Up, Right, Down, Left, Turbo**.

Extended Transform – To lengthen the transformation time, hit **Up, Left, Up, Left, Up, Left, X** during gameplay.

Goaltending – For easier shot blocking, hit **Left, Left, Up, Up, Right, Right, Turbo**. You can repeat the process to turn it back on.

Happy Face – Cheer up! Put on a happy face by hitting **Up, Down, Left, Right, X**.

Here Boy – Once you enable the dog ball, hit **Forward, Down, Back, Turbo**. You'll call him to you for the price of ten cents.



Invincibility – Invulnerability costs a mere 20 cents when you press **X, X, X, Turbo** during gameplay.

Mayhem Mode – Speed up the game by hitting **B, B, B, B, X** during gameplay. Zoom!

Moonball – To bring you one step closer to Space Jam, hit **Up, Up, Up, Up, Down, X**.

GENESIS

ROLLING THUNDER 2

Level Passwords – Use Rolling Thunder 2's funny password system to jump to wherever you want in the game. (Codes with an asterisk are for higher difficulty for you bad-ass spy kids).

Level 1 – *A ROLLING PROGRAM SMASHED THE GENIUS

Level 2 – A MAGICAL THUNDER LEARNED THE SECRET
*A CURIOUS RAINBOW LEARNED THE FUTURE

Level 3 – A NATURAL FIGHTER CREATED THE GENIUS
*A MAGICAL ISOTOPE BLASTED THE DEVICE

Level 4 – A ROLLING NUCLEUS SMASHED THE NEURON
*A PRIVATE LEOPARD PUNCHED THE NEURON

Level 5 – A CURIOUS PROGRAM PUNCHED THE POWDER
*A SLENDER FIGHTER ELECTED THE GENIUS

Level 6 – A LOGICAL LEOPARD BLASTED THE SECRET
*A DIGITAL RAINBOW MUFFLED THE SECRET

Level 7 – A PRIVATE ISOTOPE DESIRED THE TARGET

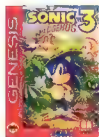
Level 8 – A NATURAL RAINBOW ELECTED THE FUTURE

Level 9 – A MAGICAL MACHINE MUFFLED THE KILLER

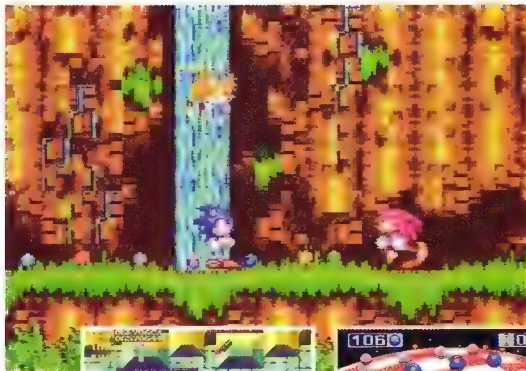
Level 10 – A DIGITAL NUCLEUS PUNCHED THE DEVICE

Level 11 – A PRIVATE THUNDER CREATED THE POWDER

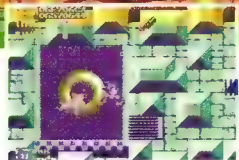
GENESIS



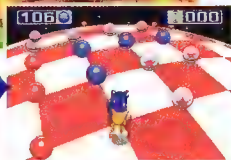
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3



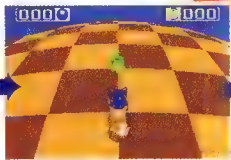
At the start of this third installment in Sega's flagship series, Knuckles steals your valuable jewels. While not necessary to your survival, retrieving all seven of the Chaos Emeralds will turn Sonic into Super Sonic, an invincible yellow dynamo. To get the seven Emeralds back, you must complete seven bonus, orb-collecting stages. Mess up, and you're tossed back into the regular game. Thus, we've pinpointed more than enough locations to enter these stages and turn yourself into Super Sonic.



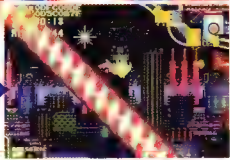
Find a big ring...



...collect all the blue orbs in the bonus world...



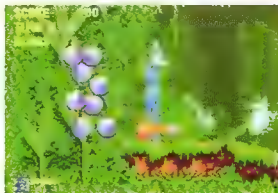
...and get all the Chaos Emeralds...



...to morph into the speedy, invincible Super Sonic

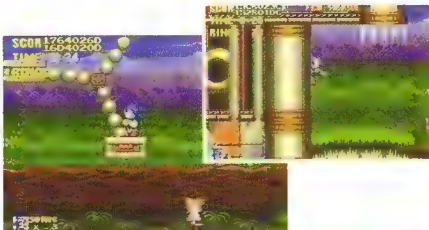
ANGEL ISLAND 1

After the first cliff, drop down and go to the left. Do a charged speed blast into the rock formation to break it, and you'll find the first big ring to a bonus level.



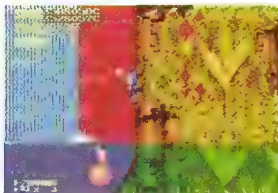
MARBLE GARDEN 1

In the middle of the level, you'll come across a mucky pond, with a spinning platform carousel over it. To the left is a fake wall, and through said wall is a glorious giant ring.



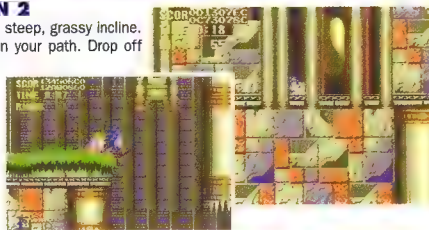
ANGEL ISLAND 2

You'll come across a waterfall with appearing/disappearing rock platforms. Jump down into the water. Run up the right-hand side, and you'll find a hidden path close to the surface containing another large ring.



MARBLE GARDEN 2

You'll be going left up a steep, grassy incline. There's a saucer pad in your path. Drop off the ledge with a bobbing platform and falling spikes below. Run under the spikes, through an invisible path to the right, and you'll see the massive ring that you seek.





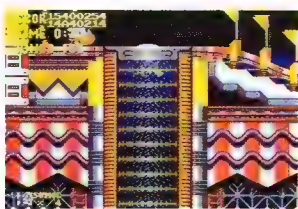
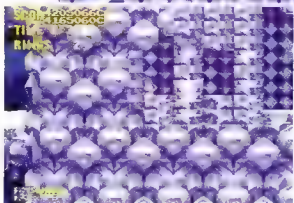
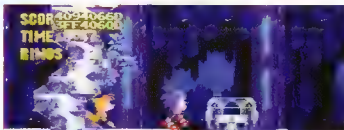
CARNIVAL NIGHT 1

On the declining peppermint-striped slope, jump off of it near its top when you're upside down. You'll see a ledge at the left. Again, a fake wall is your path to the huge ring.



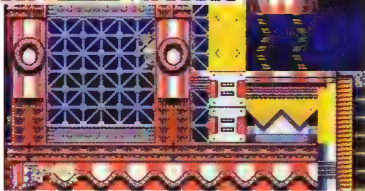
ICE CAP ZONE 1

Once you (reluctantly) get off your snowboard, you'll come to a frozen switch. Rather than hitting it, go right over the bridge that it would have made disappear. You'll be-bop right into the level's first immense ring.



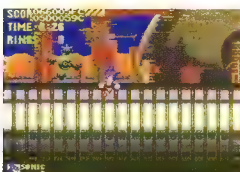
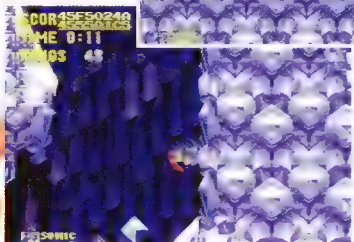
CARNIVAL NIGHT 2

After the big vacuum up (with a quick indent between tubes), you'll come to a circular platform on your left that's raising and lowering. Behind it is a path to the colossal ring.



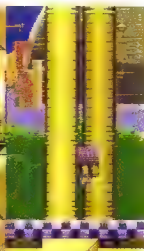
ICE CAP ZONE 1 (PART II)

In the eternal icy slope section, time your jump when you're sliding on the left side, after you've passed the ice column section. If done correctly, you'll jump through an illusion wall to the other enormous ring.



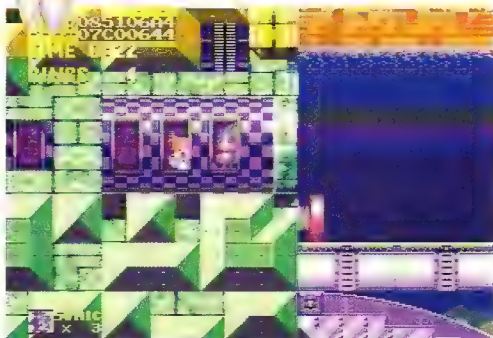
LAUNCH BASE 1

Go right until you see the screw, rotating bridge. Jump when you're underneath it, and work left. The fake wall is at the seemingly dead end. One more grandiose ring, comin' up.



LAUNCH BASE 2

When you begin this level, jump down between the two floating platforms. The fake wall is above the red spring platform underwater, and then it's mammoth ring city, baby!





FINAL FANTASY X

Action Figure Collection • Manufacturer: Koto, Inc.
 Website: www.artfx-kotobukiya.com
 List Price: \$12.99-\$24.99

Koto won over the hearts of the Final Fantasy nation with its incredible work on the Final Fantasy VIII Guardian Force action figures, and we're sure you'll drop over dead when you see the care the company put into these accurately scaled Final Fantasy X creatures. Bahamut is the only figure currently available. However, Iron Giant, Varuna, Anima, and Ultima Weapon should be along shortly. Since Bahamut is roughly the size of a football field, its price is double that of the other figures. Believe us, though, it's well worth it.

FINAL FANTASY X

1:6 Scale Figure Collection • Manufacturer: Koto, Inc.
 Website: www.artfx-kotobukiya.com
 List Price: \$24.99-\$29.99 (Vinyl Statues),
 \$34.99 (Action Figures)

Koto's beautifully detailed Final Fantasy X figure collection is the ultimate prize for role-playing fanatics. Each character stands in about roughly 12 inches (1:6 scale) and is accurately modeled from head to toe. Square Soft's character designer, Tetsuya Nomura, would be proud of Koto's devotion to capturing the likenesses of these characters. This collection features an assortment of action figures and vinyl statues. However, if you were to stand them all together, they blend perfectly with one another. The first wave of figures (which should be readily available as we speak) consists of Tidus, Yuna, and Auron. Shortly after, Koto plans to release Kimahri, Lulu, and Rikku. The prices may seem a little spendy, but once you see the detail that went into them, we're sure you'll have one of each on your shelves. Our advice is to run out and buy them immediately!

FINAL FANTASY X

Plush Dolls
 Manufacturer: Koto, Inc.
 Website: www.artfx-kotobukiya.com
 List Price: \$9.99 (4-inch), \$21.99 (10-inch)

Cuuuuuuuu! If you still live in your parents' house, there's a good chance you still sleep with stuffed animals as well. That said, you've already classified yourself as a dork, so you probably enjoy role-playing games. If you fall under these guidelines, feel free to run out and pick up Koto's Final Fantasy X plush toys. Just tell the store clerk that you're buying these for your girlfriend. He probably won't believe you, but what the hell. These plushy characters are absolutely adorable. Coming in two sizes, 4-inch and 10-inch, you can collect all your favorite mystical creatures, including cactuar, chocobo, mog, and pupu.



ATTACK OF THE CLONES

Action Figures • Manufacturer: Hasbro
 Website: www.starwars.hasbro.com
 List Price: TBD

Whether you like it or not, retailers are already preparing for an onslaught of Star Wars merchandise for the May 17 theatrical release of *Attack of the Clones*. The most desired item, as it was for *The Phantom Menace*, will be Hasbro's line of 3 3/4-inch action figures. Using realiscan technology to accurately capture an actor's facial likeness, the sculpting on each figure screams realism. Along with Obi-Wan Kenobi (pictured), expect to see Anakin Skywalker, Jango Fett, Zam Wessell, Senator Jar Jar, C-3PO, and a billion clone troopers on retail pegs beginning this spring.



GUMMI RATTLEDERS

Manufacturer: Goelitz • Website: www.goelitz.com
 List Price: Death

Just the sight of this gummi monstrosity sent Andy running to the porcelain god to pay his respects. With a net weight of 4 pounds and a slimy residue that coats the interior of the solid plastic canister, Goelitz's Gummi Rattlers can best be described as evil in its purest form. As gut-wrenching as they may appear to be, several of the Game Informer journalists were brave enough to take a nibble. Always one to speak his mind, Matt quipped, "They have a strangely chemical taste and smell like soap." Reimer added, "I'll wash this down with a glass of battery acid." If you stumbled across a real rattlesnake, would you pick it up and stick it in your mouth? Probably not. As hard as it is to believe, these gummi versions are just as venomous and should be avoided at all costs.



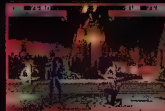
A NEW LEVEL OF KOMBAT



RELIVE THE FIGHT OF YOUR LIFE



More than 20 characters
to select including bosses
and hidden characters.



Discover all of the
combos, fatalities and
friendships



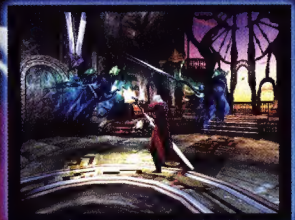
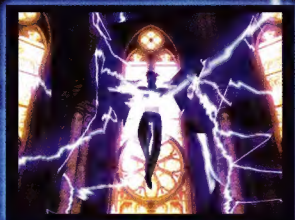
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in multiplayer combat
against a friend

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BUT THERE'S A BULLET
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Blood
Violence



PlayStation 2



EONS AGO, IN THE DARKEST REACHES OF HELL, A DEMON SWORDSMAN NAMED SPARDA
WAGED A ONE-MAN WAR TO SAVE THE HUMAN WORLD FROM DAMNATION. 2000 YEARS LATER,
A SHADOWY FIGURE NAMED DANTE FINDS CLUES THAT THE DEVIL WILL RISE UP AGAIN.
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN A MAN AND A DEMON LIES OUR ONLY HOPE FOR SALVATION.

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