

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE: A GUIDE TO ALL 120 SHINES

GAMEINFORMER

EXCLUSIVE!

DEVIL MAY CRY 2

**CAPCOM
DELVES
DEEPER
INTO
DANTE'S
INFERNO**

pg 32

Computer & Video Games

**THE SIMS
SPECTACULAR**
Four New Sims Games
Previewed pg 40

**GRAND
THEFT
AUTO:
VICE CITY**
Scandalous New
Information and
Screens pg 58

**ACCLAIM AND
MIRRA SPLIT**
The Trials and
Tribulations of
BMX XXX

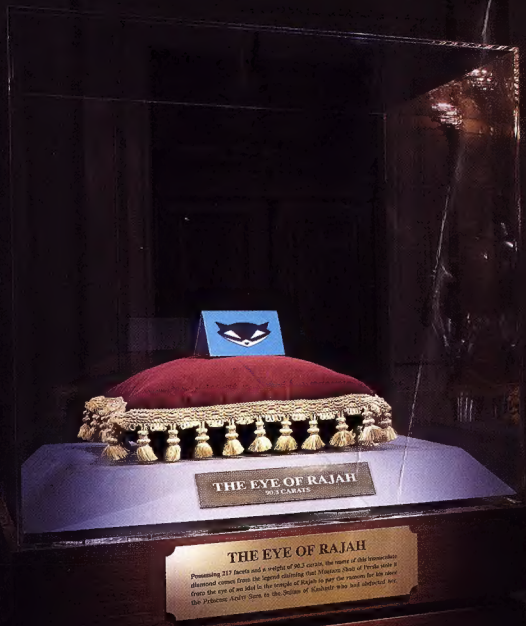
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THE EYE OF RAJAH
BY SACKER

THE EYE OF RAJAH

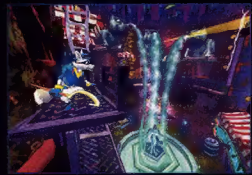
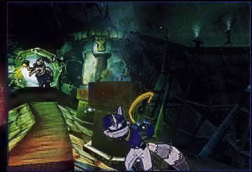
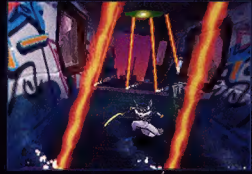
Presenting 212 items and a weight of 28.3 carats, the rarity of this gemstone is unparalleled across the legend collection that *Wrecking Crew* of *Procyon* took to drive the eye of an owl in the temple of Rajah to pay the ransom for his master, the infamous Archer Stone in the *Ballad of Washburne* and *Underfoot* war.



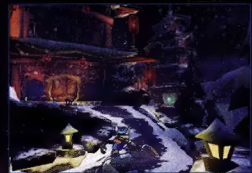
Mild Violence

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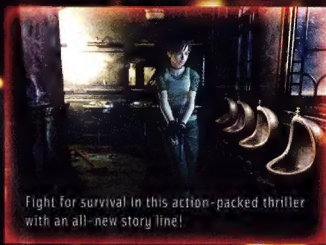


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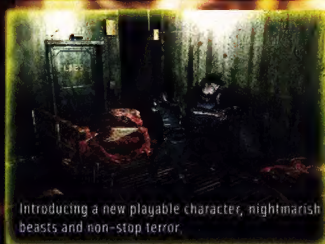
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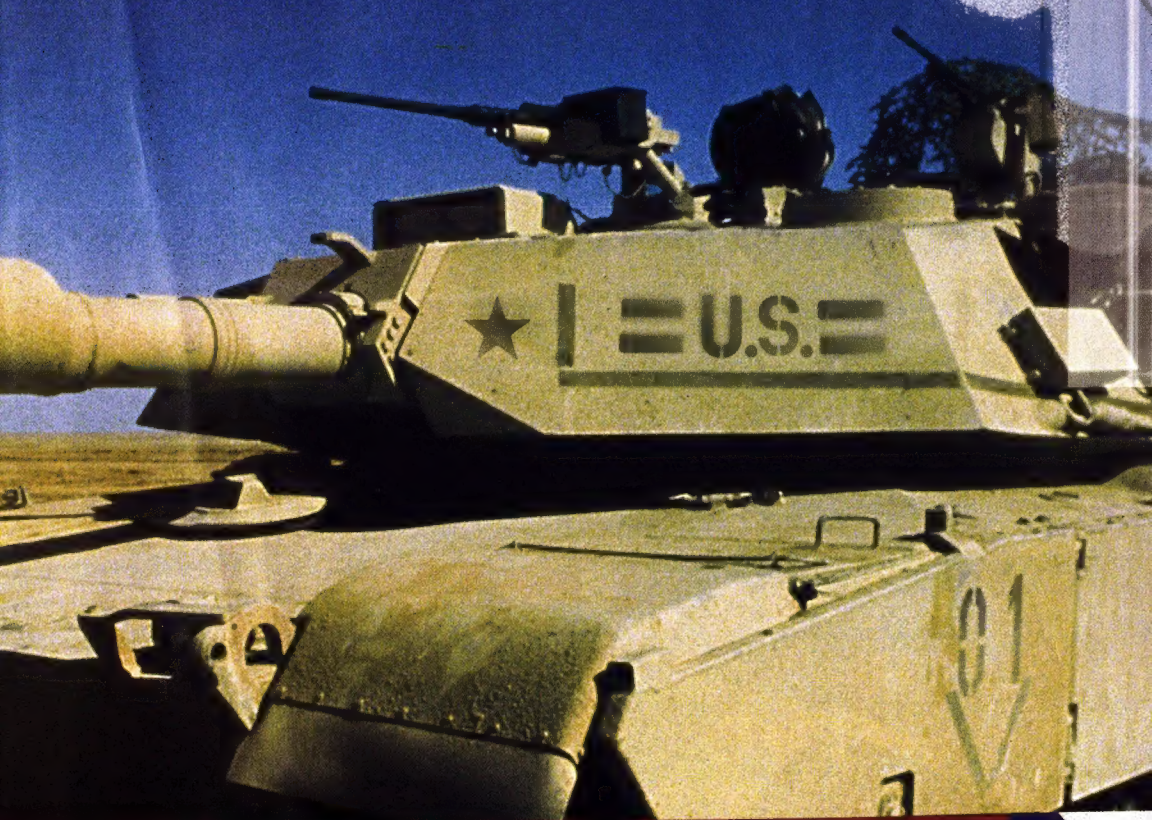
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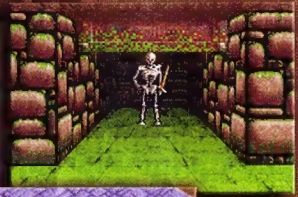


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40 THE SIMS

Simulate the world! Maxis is planning a full-out assault on the Sims franchise with expansion packs, new PC games, and a PS2 title. Moral conundrums aside, Sims rocks.



FEATURE

50 WHO'S GOT GAME?

For the first time in GI, basketball is finally getting the attention it deserves. Think about the squeaking parquet floor, monogrammed sneakers, self-indulgent slam dunks, and pressure-laden free throw attempts. Live these dreams without all that pesky working out.



COVER STORY

32 DEVIL MAY CRY 2

Apparently, Dante's been working out since last we saw him. A veritable cornucopia of new moves awaits the intrepid gamer that picks up Devil May Cry 2 in the beginning of 2003. Can't wait to know what's coming? Check out our feel on the new targeting system, controls, and graphics.



"A brilliant game" - Nintendo Power

"Looks like one of the best FPS yet. We can't wait." - PSM

"...the best-looking first-person shooter currently in development for PS2." - Gamespot.com

"...a true heir to GoldenEye ...so polished it shines." - XBOX Nation

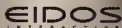
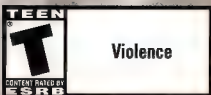
"TimeSplitters 2 is going to be awesome." - IGN.com

THE MOST ACCLAIMED GAME OF 2002

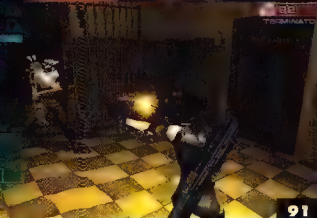
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20 DEAR G1

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74 REVIEWS

Disney and Square team up to make our Game of the Month, and it really is that good. Franchises making an appearance include: Tekken, Need for Speed, Turok, and Castlevania; while a few newbies with promise (Gungrave, Animal Crossing, and Dual Hearts) get the GI grilling. Buffy and the Terminator grace the Xbox with some cinematic brawling.

96 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.

100 PLAY TO PERFECTION

Is that Mario just trying to take a freakin' vacation? Toss a guy a bone and finish the game so he can get back to his all-inclusive beachside cabana. Play to Perfection walks you to each

and every Shine, leaving a sense of accomplishment only rivaled by that time you read *War and Peace*. Right.

108 SECRET ACCESS

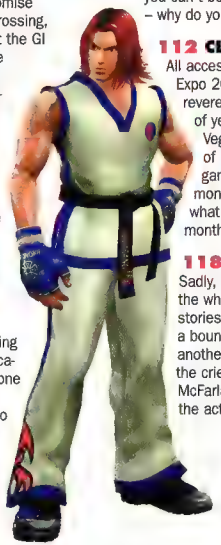
It's cheater-riffic! Don't feel guilty that you can't beat that game on your own – why do you think we're here?

112 CLASSIC G1

All access to the Classic Gaming Expo 2002, a weekend fest to revere the games and systems of yesteryear held in classy Las Vegas. An ode to Adventures of Lolo, an old-school puzzle game involving eggs, shooting monsters, and bridges. And what really happened this month in gaming?

118 ETC

Sadly, the *Video Game Bible* lacks the whimsy and multiple creation stories of the Bible, but still holds a bounty. Nintendo releases another accessory. Lucas heeds the cries of millions and McFarlane is finally challenged on the action figure front.



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PUBLISHER

Cathy Preston

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Andrew McNamara

EDITORS

Executive Editor Andrew Reiner

Senior Associate Editor Matt Heigelson

Associate Editors

Kristian Brogger • Justin Leeper • Matthew Kato • Chet Barber

Copy Editor/Contributing Writer Lisa Mason

Mascot Arthur

PRODUCTION

Art Director Thomas Blustin

Production Director Curtis Fung

Production Assistant Rachel Gilles

ADVERTISING SALES

Rob Born

(612) 486-6155 • Fax (612) 486-6101

rob@gameinformer.com

Doug Faust

(650) 728-5647 • Fax (650) 728-5648

doug@gameinformer.com

Advertising Account Executive

Any Arnold • (612) 486-6154

any@gameinformer.com

CIRCULATION

CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPARTMENT

For change of address or subscription inquiry only:

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

email: customerservice@gameinformer.com

or send correspondence to:

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

Circulation Manager

Paul Anderson (612) 486-6104

paul@gameinformer.com

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STIR UP THE BIRDS, YOU'RE DONE.

CHOOSE THE WRONG ESCAPE ROUTE, YOU'RE DONE.

THE BABOON SEES YOU, YOU'RE DONE.

HE HEARS YOU, YOU'RE DONE.

FORGET TO HIDE A BODY, YOU'RE DONE.

HE FEELS HIS HORN, YOU'RE DONE.

HE SMELLS YOU, YOU'RE DONE.

THE BEAR SQUEALS, YOU'RE DONE.

YOU SHOOT AND MISS, YOU'RE DONE.

HE DRAWS HIS SWORD, YOU'RE DONE.

HE TURNS AROUND, YOU'RE DONE.

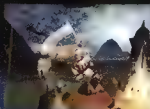
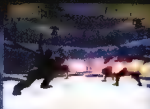
STEP ON THE LEAVES, YOU'RE DONE.

LEAVE A FOOTPRINT, YOU'RE DONE.

TAKE THEM OUT IN THE WRONG ORDER, YOU'RE DONE.

STEP ON A STICK, YOU'RE DONE.

GOOD LUCK. In combat, your first mistake is your last. A one-of-a-kind fighting system allows you to take on multiple enemies. By marking selected opponents, you select which enemies to battle, when to engage them and which weapon to use to reduce them to dust. In other words, use your brain or your body pays the price.



Violence,
Blood and Gore

EDITORS' FORUM

XBOX: THE SLEEPING GIANT?



I'd like to thank all the Xbox and GameCube fans out there who let me know on a daily basis that Game Informer is a PlayStation 2-biased magazine and that their respective systems "rule." Not only are they enlightening, they keep my email program busy. Luckily, the influx of comments such as these has brought me to this month's topic: the system wars.

Now, I'm not trying to defend PlayStation 2 – or any other system for that matter – I'm just trying to look at the industry from where I'm sitting. Contrary to the lovely comments I noted earlier, Game Informer is not pro-Sony. However, the PlayStation 2 is the most popular gaming platform available today. This is a fact – no other console manufacturer has nearly as many units in consumers' hands.

Does that mean it's the best? No. Does it mean it's the most talked about? Certainly. So, with that fact taken into consideration, let's look at what GameCube and Xbox have in store. Frankly, I have been quite impressed with Nintendo's recent resurgence. Not only has it managed to secure lots of third-party product (which it was unable to do on the N64), it has also filled the months with lots of landmark Nintendo titles as well as a couple of high-profile

exclusives. I still think Nintendo is a little "kid-centric," but it is definitely showing some signs of putting up a fight.

Things are a little different in the Microsoft camp. There is little doubt that Xbox is the most powerful console on the market. When a game is done right on the system, stand back – because it's gonna leave any and all competition in the dust. Microsoft has done an excellent job of fixing its position in the market in many areas (especially by introducing the Controller S, which rights one of my biggest complaints with the system). Unfortunately, unique and compelling software titles are few and far between for Xbox. Of course, Halo is an amazing game. If Microsoft had released a game the caliber of Halo every two months over the last year, I think the landscape of the market would be significantly different.

Looking at Microsoft's plans for next year, including titles such games as Halo 2 and Project Ego just to name a few, it looks like it will have the ammunition it needs to compete in the console wars.

Now, it's just a question of whether it's too little, too late. I certainly hope not, as I would truly love to see all systems do equally well – if for no other reason than to stop those annoying emails.

Andy

Andy McNamara
Editor
andy@gameinformer.com

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

reiner@gameinformer.com
Before you delve deeply into my incoherent ramblings about everything and nothing, do me a favor and read Justin's blurb. Is it just me, or is The Digital Deviant admitting that he's a chick? I mean, it sounds like he's goofing around, but the joke doesn't end. A sensitive guy, huh? You know what? I should have seen this coming. I was going to say something to him when he was roller-skating around the office saying "Ooops! I Did It Again" with a footloose dog in his hand, but I figured it was just a phase, or puberty finally kicking in. Pretty soon we won't have any guys working here any more. Who would have thought... Gaining really is for girls! P.S. Fabio is hot!

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER

matt@gameinformer.com
Wow – Check out our cover! Devil May Cry 2 looks almost as good as Animal Crossing. Between gearing up for another emotional Vikings football season, abusing amphetamines, and working part time as a lumberjack, I've barely had time to knit a sweater for Dick Cheney or practice my routine for the upcoming Poetry S-mn championships. By the way, don't think this new Pepsi Blue stuff – it's infected with the West Nile virus. Also, eating at Arby's can cause some men to develop large breasts. Actually, I'm lying – except for the Animal Crossing part. In closing, be informed that "here" is now spelled "here".

KRISTIAN, THE VIDEO VIKING

kristian@gameinformer.com
Since you and I have a relationship built on a solid foundation of truth and openness, I have to come clean with you: I hated the moniker, "the Game Dawg." I'm using the word here because this name – are you following me? So, instead of writing long diatribes about how I abhor my handle but "oh well," I've decided to make a clean break and start fresh. Now that I've had a couple of years to think about a new one, I think the Video Viking fits me fairly well. It might not be what you're used to, but I think we'll all get along great. At least it's a little less lame...right?

JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIANT

justin@gameinformer.com
People like to joke that men have a "lame of the month," too. Well, for me, this is absolutely true. Male PMS, thy name is deadline. While I don't get water weight gain, the combination of 16-hour days, not having time to go to the gym or wrestling practice, and lack of sleep all wreak havoc on my hormones. Whether I'm feeling jealous about Reiner and Chet snagging all the good reviews, getting mad at Kato for hanging his bow ties on my scorpion tank, or yelling at Kristian for singing "Love Shack" at the top of his lungs, I'm an emotional roller coaster. So I'm a sensitive guy; lay off, you inhuman freaks! Hold me...

KATO, THE GAME KATANA

kato@gameinformer.com
Last month, when I did the unthinkable and reviewed this year's round of football games, who would have thought that absolutely nobody would be happy with my scores? I got PR people, Madden fans, and even my brother hounding me about this or that. Well, here are a few cold, hard truths for some of you out there. 1.) I'm right – deal with it. 2.) Madden is neither a 10 nor exactly the same as last year. 3.) Anyone who thinks NFL Fever is the best football game out there is confused. Frankly, who gives a damn? Buy what you want to buy, and let's all call it a day. In the grand scheme of things, it's just a pimple on a blind man's ass anyway.

CHET, THE CHRONIC GAMER

chet@gameinformer.com
As I write this, I am gearing up for a trip to Japan to cover an event held by every fighting game fanatic's favorite company – SHORYUKEN! Big, bad boss Reiner thinks I am going there to report on Capcom's newest products, and help him gather info for our cover story...ha, ha, na, sucker! Actually, I plan to live the experience that Capcom intended when it created such greats as Alpha 3. If anyone needs me, I'll be in one of the various game centers (parcades), where you'll find me roughing up some of the stiff Japanese competition with my superior Street Fighter skills. Ganbaru Zel!

LISA, LA GAME NIKITA

lisa@gameinformer.com
We call these things blurbs. Did you know that? Dictionaries describe blurb n. as "A brief publicity notice, as on a book jacket." Therefore, Game Informer is an epic coming-of-age tale about a boy who meets a girl in a castle and needs to get away from his over-protective mother who is involved simultaneously in a government cover-up of covert actions abroad and a harrowing murder mystery. This boy was born in a log cabin that he helped his father (now deceased via car accident) build. He is coming to terms with the fact that a distant relative at one time killed a strange girl who changed their life by showing them how to live.



The overly enthusiastic editorial staff finally gets out of the office on a summer road trip. (Left to right) Kristian, Arthur, Matt, Chet, Justin, Lisa, Reiner, and Kato set off road rage and fray Andy's nerves to the breaking point, as he threatens to turn around the car and head back home

Death is my business
and business is good.



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1



2



3



7



CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 GameSpy's Raymond Padilla cools off with a taste of Kemco's Batman: Dark Tomorrow ice sculpture. We won't tell you what he did to the hors d'oeuvres. **2** Kristian demonstrates the proper technique for using a deadly disc, err, paper plate for Tron 2.0 producer Cliff Kamida and Disney Interactive marketing director Jamie Berger. Thankfully, he didn't show them the Jeff Bridges tattoo on his bum. **3** Freelancer Tom Ham investigates the golf course death of a giant inflatable lizard. **4** Midway's Wayne Cline, Dennis Roy, and Jay Boor prepare to bungee jump off Game Informer's balcony. **5** Writer Peter Suci and EA's Dana Whitney discuss the sorry state of their 401k accounts at Camp EA in San Carlos. **6** "Hey, sailor, you lookin' for a good time?" These Ozzfest lovelies are looking for some action in the PlayStation 2 tent. Yikes! **7** Former Intellivision executive/Tron: Solar Sailor programmer Keith Robinson shows off his signage at the Classic Game Expo. **8** Bill Linn brings back memories of Babe Ruth during an Infogrames-sponsored golf event at the Half Moon Bay resort.



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Bound by
family blood,
He must return
to the castle.

Tortured by
his dark fate,
He must recover
Dracula's lost relics.

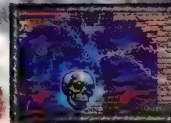
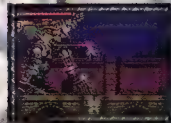
Cursed with
perilous dangers,
He must rid
terror from the land.

And amid the
depths of evil,
Solve the mystery
of a lost friend.

"A GBA Masterpiece."
Pocket Games

Castlevania®

Harmony of Dissonance



GAME BOY ADVANCE



DEAR GI

PAY TO PLAY? NO WAY!

The debut of Sony's Network Adaptor is upon us, so here's what I think about it. It's definitely got potential, and it avoided the big hang-up I had with SegaNet – no AOL support. I'm not about to pay for another ISP just to play console games.

I do think Sony's got a good thing going – no initial sign-on fees, decent third-party support, etc. Still, one thing I need to make clear to game makers is that we don't want to be milked for the rest of our lives just to play a game! If you charge us to play Final Fantasy XI or other games on a monthly basis, people aren't going to want to dabble and experiment. They simply won't start at all. Instead, charge MORE for each copy of the game (say, \$100 or so) and make all online play free, especially for games like FF XI that feature no real offline play. I would gladly have paid \$80 or so for EverQuest for my PC and then never had to pay another dime to play it. As is, I never got into it at all. I think people would be more willing to try out online stuff this way, particularly on consoles, which require shucking out \$300 every five years instead of \$100 for a new video card, like PCs.

On a console, we're all on a level playing field, and cutting out monthly fees will help us forge a difference between the PC online experience and the console online experience. It could make or break the future of online console gaming. I sure as hell don't want to get a monthly credit card statement with 100 different charges from 100 different game companies just to play their damn games online. If that's how they want to play, then I simply won't. One down, 10 million to go.

Mark Buckingham
Via aol.com

We're excited about Sony Online (and Xbox Live) as well, and – as game journalists are a notoriously miserly breed – we don't like paying for things any more than you do. You raise an interesting point about pay-to-play models turning off more casual consumers that might want to experiment with online gaming, but we'd be surprised if we didn't see a good number of games that require a monthly subscription fee in the next year. Massively multiplayer titles like EverQuest and Final Fantasy XI require a tremendous investment – in technology, servers, customer service, and maintenance – on the part of publishers, and subscription fees are really the only way to offset those costs. Your idea of charging a higher retail price at the outset is interesting, but, as in the case of EQ, people often MMORPGs over a number of years, and \$100 at the outset wouldn't be enough to keep the process of running them profitable over the long haul.

Still, although pay-to-play is definitely in our future, we do expect that this will be the exception, not the



rule. Most upcoming action games should have online multiplayer features that will not require a subscription, and most pay-to-play games offer a free month with purchase, so you'll be able to get enough gratis gaming goodness to satisfy your needs. Of course, you'll still need to pay for an ISP and – in the case of Xbox Live – a charge for network service.

CEL SHADING QUESTIONS

You guys mention cel shading a lot, like in your GameCube Zelda previews. What exactly is cel shading? If you posted it in an earlier issue, I completely missed it.

Pat Countryman
Via email

Generally, cel shading refers to a technique that developers use to create a 3D rendered character that looks like a hand-drawn animation cel. Usually, there will be black "ink" outlines drawn around the edges of the different sections of the character, and they will be filled in with simple colors. Real-time shading can be used, but it is often simplified to resemble comic book-style shadowing. Although the model is still three-dimensional, the effect is close to that of the classic cartoons of the '40s and '50s. The Legend of Zelda for GameCube utilizes an advanced form of cel shading, and doesn't exhibit much use of black outlining on its characters. Other famous examples of this technique are Jet Set Radio Future and Monster Rancher 3. A special thank you goes out to Jennifer Hachigian for answering some of our questions about the subject. For further information on cel shading, go to her excellent website, www.celshader.com.

Next month, we will be updating our Newbie Cheat Sheet to include a definition for cel shading. If our readers have any other technical terms that need to be added to the list, let Dear GI know, and we'll do our best to find the facts behind the jargon.

REINER'S GETTING HORNY RIGHT NOW

I was recently browsing through my NES games, when I looked at the cover of the game IronSword. On the cover is Fabio, the model who can't believe it's not butter!

Sean
Via aol.com

Those glistening pecs, that flowing hair, the sultry come-hither look in his eyes – who other than Fabio could make the cover of IronSword so captivating? Nobody, that's who. Certainly not you, you little geeks!



You're not as sexy as Fabio; you'd hardly be fit for the cover of a container of Shedd Spread, much less ICBINE (that's how the cool kids abbreviate I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, suckers). Inspired by Sean's letter, we posted our copy of IronSword on eBay, hoping that fellow Fabioophiles would run the bidding up into the thousands of dollars. The bidding ended at \$2.45, proving that good taste is dead in this world of ours. In sadness, we buried IronSword in a hermetically sealed time capsule, hoping that future generations will have a greater appreciation of Fabio's beauty. Sigh. For now, let's all have a gander at IronSword's captivating cover art.

SECRET ZELDA?

This is something that just crossed my mind. Maybe it can shed some light on the "Cel-da" situation we are all familiar with. The team that first started working on Zelda for the GameCube released beautiful screenshots of a fight between Link and Ganon at Space World a few years ago. This means they had already started production on this title. They probably already had a storyline as well – perhaps something along the lines of a sequel to Ocarina of Time. The quality of the graphics we saw was amazing, and amazing graphics don't come cheap. Neither do production artists and programmers. Why is it that an entire storyline and game concept were scrapped? Many have hypothesized that the screenshots and video we saw of Link and Ganon were just screens from Super Smash Bros. Melee. But, upon further investigation, the character models of SSBM and the amazing Zelda we saw do not look similar in the least. My theory is that the game was not scrapped, but hidden – hidden to be worked on and finished before the death of the GameCube.

Stony Browder
Via aol.com

We've received a lot of similar theories about the eventual return of the adult Link in recent months. On one level, it's an attractive theory, and makes enough sense that many people online have already begun to speculate about the future of the series beyond the release of next year's The Legend of Zelda for

GameCube. Unfortunately for fans that were thrilled by the promotional clip that you are referring to, there aren't any hard facts to back up these claims that the adult Link game is a reality.

According to Nintendo, that vision of Zelda was cancelled for one reason and one reason only – Shigeru Miyamoto was not happy with the game's progress up to that point and wanted to pursue another direction. Now, it's possible that he could hold that version of the game back in development for a few years, but all indications seem to point to the fact that he simply changed his mind about the game's visual look. In the world of

CLONED SHEEP JEALOUS: WANTS TO BE MORPHED

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Pull-Out Schematic

**PROFESSOR BURNITALL'S
SECRET PLAN FOR
WORLD DOMINATION!**

Why He Hates Muto-The Inside Scoop

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PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE

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Nintendo, Miyamoto gets what Miyamoto wants. As for your claims that Nintendo wouldn't have spent so much money creating that video if it wasn't serious, we don't think that holds water, either. The video you're referencing was clearly not gameplay. A company like Nintendo, with a tremendous amount of in-house talent and technology, could easily produce a short CG clip of that nature for a reasonable amount of cost and man-hours. In all reality, it was probably nothing more than an internal GameCUBE technology test. So, while it's fun to speculate about the future, "Cel-da" is the Zelda we're going to get, and we couldn't be more pleased with what we've seen of the game so far. Now, let's all just relax and get ready to enjoy *The Legend of Zelda*, which should be one of the highlights of the next few years in gaming.

READER SUMMARIZES 80% OF ALL LETTERS TO GI IN FIVE WORDS

You suck. I love you.

Chang Cheng
Via email

Good show, sir!

DEUS WHAT?

Why is Deus Ex called "Deus Ex?" It doesn't make any sense; it's Latin, and it translates to "God Out." But God out of what? It makes no sense. I demand an explanation.

Jack Soncrack
Via yahoo.com



Deus Ex is an abbreviation of "deus ex machina," a Latin phrase that literally means "god from the machine." This phrase is usually used to describe an unexpected or artificial plot device that is used to solve a convoluted or difficult problem in a play or film. For example, the sequence in *Attack of the Clones* when Yoda arrives at the coliseum to save the Jedi with a ship full of clone troopers could be considered a deus ex machina. This phrase stems from ancient Greek and Roman dramas, in which a god would be lowered onto the stage by means of a crane in order to resolve the story. The term can also be applied to any unexpected, real-life turn of events that fixes a dilemma, which is probably the meaning that inspired the titling of Deus Ex.



OCTOBER WINNER!

Rebecca Sugar

Deformed goth chicks are cool!

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:
Game Informer • Envelope Art Contest
724 North First St., 4th Floor • Mpls, MN 55401



Juan Franco
These guys are as unique as the Army Men games

Stacy Coleman
What does he do if he has to take a leak?



Charles Atkins
"If you just put a 'Kick Me' sign on my back, I'll slice you in two!"



Robby Burgess
Real men play with dollies!



Jason Rodriguez
"Snap into a Sim Jim! Oh wait...I'm not in that commercial!"

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Interactive environments bring a brutal new twist to the brawl.

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PlayStation 2



Violence



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PlayStation

PS2

TEKKEN

4

GI NEWS

HONG KONG ACTION COMING TO A PS2 NEAR YOU!

Sony has announced a new first-party game in the works for the PlayStation 2, called *Rise to Honor*. The title, which stars famous action movie star **Jet Li**, was first shown to the press at Sony's recent Gamers Day in San Francisco, and should come out in the fall of 2003.

Rise to Honor was originally conceived by Sony's **Foster City Studio** as a way to bring Hong Kong action movie-styled fighting to the PS2. Coincidentally, Jet Li, star of *The One* and *Kiss of the Dragon*, called up Sony with a desire to be involved in a video game. "When we began the concept stages for *Rise to Honor* more than three years ago, we knew we wanted it to be based on the style of a Hong Kong action movie," said Jim Wallace, Foster City Studio's associate director. "We had Jet Li posters all over the studio, and were referencing his movies for everything we had planned in the game. We were thrilled when we found out that Jet was interested in collaborating on a PlayStation 2 project, knowing that his creative input on *Rise to Honor* would help us truly realize our vision for this ambitious game."

Li was tapped to do motion-capture work for the project, and even brought with him famed fight coordinator **Corey Yuen**, who staged battles in *X-Men*, *Kiss of the Dragon*, and many others. With their suggestions and the original concept behind *Rise to Honor*, the game greatly expands upon what has previously been done in video game brawlers. Main character Kit Yun (Jet Li) has a flurry of kicks and punches, as well as fluid blocks and counters. These are crucial, since Kit will go up against multiple adversaries simultaneously. He can also run up and along walls or flip off of them to escape danger, as the bad guys don't always play fair.

Nearly everything within the environment can be used to your advantage. This includes turning tables over for cover, hitting enemies with a roast duck, and tossing chairs through windows to open up new areas. One stage we saw depicted a fight through a restaurant. Highlights included tossing a foe onto a burning stovetop, as he panicked in pain; and grabbing another assailant from behind, then dunking him headfirst into a dishwasher-filled sink. Did we mention taking on some bad bikers while they were on their motorcycles? That was pretty cool, too. Kit Hun won't tackle everything unarmed, though, and *Rise to Honor* also includes some gunplay, complete with nifty targeting and slinking against walls.

"Working with the Foster City Studio team to create a game for PlayStation 2 has been an exciting experience – very different from making a movie," said Jet Li. "The motion-capture system allows for extremely realistic movements and, in addition, we were able to use a lot of actions in the game that we can't normally put in a film. The results in the final game should provide the player with a genuine feel for action."



DAVE MIRRA DOES SPLITS, DOA'S VOLLEYBALL STAYS LOVELY SELF

Jimmy, Jane – we have something to tell you. Sometimes extreme sports games have to separate from each other, but that doesn't mean that they don't still love you very much. **Acclaim** has removed pro rider Dave Mirra's name from **Dave Mirra BMX XXX**, and renamed the game **BMX XXX**. He will instead appear in a separate title named **Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 3**.

When *Game Informer* first reported on Acclaim's potentially mature-rated vid two issues ago, the company told us that the rider's management was debating whether they should lend Dave's name to the potentially controversial product. Now it seems that both sides have mutually agreed to part ways for this particular title. Thus, Acclaim gets to make **BMX XXX** in the manner that it originally envisioned (i.e. strong language, nudity, etc.), while Mirra and the other licensed pros and equipment manufacturers don't have to take a PR hit.

Finally, we leave you this month with some brand new shots of **Tecmo's Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball**. Why? We know you're thinking, "Because they can!" – but that's not true. We wanted to show you what looks like one of the game's new goodies: the telescopic zoom lens. Where did you get your nails done? They're beauuuutiful!



BMX XXX (left top and bottom) **Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball** (above and right)



NEW FINAL FANTASY CRYSTALLIZES GAMECUBE

We never thought we'd see the day again, but come 2003, **Nintendo** fans will finally be able to gloat about an RPG again. Just a few weeks ago in Japan, **Square Soft** announced that it will be bringing four role-playing games to the **Game Boy Advance**. Along with a new chocobo game, Square piqued our interest by revealing that two of the titles would be **Final Fantasy Tactics** and **Secret of Mana**. Are these ports, remakes, or new entries to the series? Square won't tell, but our moles in Japan have dug up info that suggests that *Final Fantasy Tactics* will, in fact, be a new game. While this thread of info is more than enough to make fan boys do cartwheels for weeks, we weren't completely gushy at the knees until Square revealed that the fourth game was called **Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicle**, and it will use the connectivity between the GBA and **GameCube**. So, does this mean that it's coming to GameCube as well?

Nothing was mentioned other than this, but thankfully, a week later, Nintendo started running GameCube teaser commercials with...you guessed it, footage of the GC version of *Crystal Chronicle*.

In the five seconds that we soaked in, we really couldn't make much out, other than the fact that it looks drop-dead gorgeous and should remain true to the series' roots. As of now, we can only image that the GBA functionality will be similar to *Animal Crossing*, in the regard that it will be used primarily to enhance the console version. All of the titles mentioned are scheduled to ship to Japanese retailers in 2003, and no plans have been made for stateside translations at this time.



GameCube's *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicle*

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.

R&D

POKER NIGHT ONLINE



It never fails. Every time you want to have a quiet night of poker with the guys, something comes up – some one has to babysit, clothes need washing, etc. With *Poker Night Online*, though, you can have a testosterone-filled good time from the privacy of your own home.

Hosting a game is easy. Design your virtual basement, garage, or rec room with a variety of furniture, beer signs, and sports trophies. Everything is customizable. You can even include a sassy French maid to bring you and up to five of your friends the malt beverage of your choice! The game unfolds from your respective first-person perspective, so you can look around the room and at the other players. Webcam support will even let you see everyone's reaction to their hand, and use your best poker-face. Games range from five-card stud to Basic Guts to Jacks & Piss – you can also fashion your own creative rules. For high stakes, PayPal compatibility makes it possible for actual money to change hands. If that's too rich for your blood, you can gamble your own in-game points (software comes with 1,000 points), which are used to buy new deck styles, clothing, and even hilarious distractions like spilled drinks, smoke in the face, and elbows to your neighbor's kidneys. If you need to check on the soufflé for your wife's dinner party, beware: Your so-called friends may peek at your hand. *Poker Night Online* is the perfect way to have a boys' night out without ticking off your girlfriend!

NAME THAT GAME

Although many thought that THQ and developer Imagineer could deliver the first RPG for the Nintendo 64, this title's linear progression and dull real-time combat didn't fit the bill. Also, the game's graphics were nothing to do the N64 proud. THQ later tried to give us the pseudo-sequel *Aidyn Chronicles*, but its brand of RPG just stood for "Rarely Played Game."



(Answer on page 31)

TOP 10 ACTION FIGURES HIDDEN UNDER REINER'S DESK

- 10 A voodoo doll of Andrew McCarthy
- 9 A Dress-Me-Up Mandy Moore doll (with no clothes) on
- 8 The Krypta the Superdog statue from the issue #100 edition of *Eto*
- 7 Every *Adventure Game* ever made
- 6 G.I. Joe's Lady Jaye with a busted kung-fu grip
- 5 A statue of Mario kicking down a flagpole
- 4 Bill AOTC Collector's Club Free Tee (MOMO)
- 3 An Emmanuel Lewis powder miniature at 1:56 scale
- 2 Matt's old teddy bear (which he's been frantically looking for and can't live without)
- 1 Episode 1 Jar Jar Sinks complete with "shootout" action figure

DEVELOPER TOP 3 SHAWN ROSEN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, *RAY* (X)

- 1 *Ratchet & Clank: A Crack in Time* – PS2
- 2 *Beyond Good & Evil* – Genesis
- 3 *Grand Theft Auto III* – PS2
- 4 *Jurok: The Samurai Hunter* – N64
- 5 *Age of Empires II* – PC



READER TOP 3 STEVE GREENE INDIANA, USA

- 1 *Final Fantasy Tactics* – PS-X
- 2 *Super Mario World* – SNES
- 3 *Mortal Kombat II* – SNES
- 4 *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins* – PS-X
- 5 *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* – PS-X

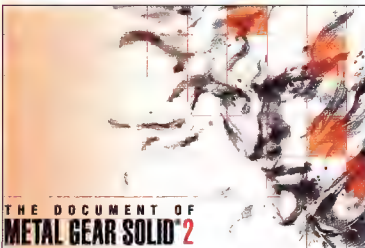


Game Informer is looking for your Top Five Action Games, PlayStation 2 our Top Five, and our 100th Anniversary. Reply to: *Game Informer*, Attn: Top Five, 724 North First St., 4th Fl., Minneapolis, MN 55401. email: topfive@gamesinformer.com (attach digital photos). Everyone that enters each month will be entered in a draw to win a GI T-Shirt. See you next month!

METAL GEAR SOLID 2 DOCUMENTED

Metal Gear creator Hideo Kojima is giving gamers almost unfettered access to his PlayStation 2 magnum opus *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, with an "interactive documentary" set to come out on September 24. This DVD about the game is entitled *The Document of Metal Gear Solid 2*, and will be split into two sections, one of which will include playable VR missions.

The "Making Of" section gives viewers everything from sketches and the game's complete script to detailed 3D models (of characters and levels) and insights into *Sons of Liberty's* making. Meanwhile, the VR Training section contains five different missions designed to get you ready for the upcoming *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance*, slated for this November. We could try to



read deep into Kojima's reasoning behind this DVD – similar to his philosophical look at video games themselves in *Metal Gear Solid 2*, but we'll just do everyone a favor by shutting up and enjoying the disc.

XBOX LIVE ROSTER, DATE SET

To celebrate the one-year anniversary of its launch, Microsoft's Xbox is fulfilling its broadband promise with the unveiling of the Xbox Live online service. On November 15, gamers can purchase the Xbox Live Starter Kit (with the Communicator headset and some as-yet-unannounced "minigame"), as well as these seven online titles: *Unreal Championship*, *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon*, *NFL 2K3*, *NBA 2K3*, *Whacked!*, *NFL Fever*, and *MechAssault*. The Xbox Live software outlook is promising, as Microsoft says that it plans to have 10 online games by the end of the upcoming holiday season, and over 50 by the end of 2003.

Game Informer spoke with David Hufford, Microsoft's PR manager, who first explained why the service is debuting later than anticipated. "We certainly wanted to launch when the games were ready, and we wanted to launch with a handful of top quality titles. We could have launched much earlier this year if we wanted to, but that was the easy way out." Hufford went on to tell us that he sees a future for the Communicator in single-player applications, like *Sony's SOCOM: US Navy SEALs*, and beyond. "Getting the installed base out there for the Communicator will open up new ideas and new forms of games that we can't even think of right now." He was also excited about third-party companies producing peripherals for Xbox Live. For more on Microsoft, Nintendo, and Sony's online plans, please read our feature in last month's issue.



Unreal Championship

Spells punishing: 26,875

Tournaments underway: 1192

Creatures attacking: 49,438

Prizes on the line: 1,000

1

Deadly strategies: Unlimited

2

MAGIC

The Gathering®

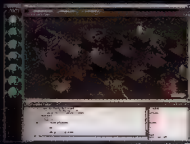
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In seconds, *Magic: The Gathering Online* lets you access over a thousand powerful creatures and spells. All different. All deadly. And every year, hundreds more are added to the arsenal.

Magic Online:
Second to none.



BRAVEST OF A TECH



MOM! COMPETITION



BEST REWARDS

Get the game free: mtgonline.com



SEGA PUTS ON THE FOIL FOR FRANCHISE

NHL 2K3, from **Sega** and developer **Visual Concepts**, will pack a little extra punch when it appears on all three major platforms this October. A Franchise mode has been added to let you GM and coach your way to the Stanley Cup. Along the way, you're sure to utilize the ability to customize your lines and also notice the tweaked puck physics and AI for the different play styles of your skaters. Finally, **NHL 2K3**'s new presentation uses Sega's **ESPN** license to the hilt.

While Sega's 2K series has ruled the rim in basketball and drawn even in football, it remains to be seen if it can catch up to rival **EA** on the ice. This year's Franchise mode will, however, definitely help it get closer to being a complete NHL title. Taking a gander at these screens, it's clear that Sega is putting out a sharp-looking game to say the least.



BAD - **Electronic Arts** will be pumping licensed music and annoying pop-up windows into all its sports titles via its **EA Trax** program. This means that **ZZ Top**'s "Sharp Dressed Man" has been taken out of **NASCAR Thunder 2003**. Billy Gibbons over **Bon Jovi** any day.

GOOD - **Sega** is bundling the **Shenmue: The Movie** DVD with **Xbox**'s November release of **Shenmue II**. The disc shows a 90-minute recap of in-game events from the first epic. The rating? It has to be PG, because we already knew that Ryo passes on Nozomi and all the good action.

BAD - In an advertising campaign for its upcoming title, **Acclaim** is paying parents to name their baby **Turok**. Mothers be warned: Turok's tomahawk may hurt a little while giving birth.

GOOD - Mario's got the biggest meatballs of them all! In a **Super Mario Sunshine** event, **Nintendo** set a **Guinness World Record** for serving up 1.5 tons of pasta. Plumber Mario reportedly didn't stick around to clean out the porto-potties afterwards.

UGLY - What do you get when former stars **Mark Hamill**, **Dean Cain**, and **Lisa Loeb** have too much time on their hands? They sign a deal with **Enix** to do voices for **PS2**'s **Grandia Xtreme**. Mark, we're still waiting for **Corvette Summer 2**.



Mark Hamill in Corvette Summer



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.

What's missing from this issue's basketball feature? A new edition of **Nintendo**'s **NBA Courtside**. We wonder if the franchise is headed for the graveyard. Could this have anything to do with the fact that Nintendo has ceased relations with **Courtside 2002** developer **Left Field**?

Microsoft is very high on its **Xbox Live** online service, and it already has some good first-party product for it. But what genre is it missing? Rumor is that the company is going to take things up a notch by bringing a massively multiplayer online RPG to broadband-land.

A little bird has told **Loose Talk** that **Capcom** is currently working on a next-gen version of the old action-platformer **Strider**. No specific console is known yet, but our money is on the **PlayStation 2**.

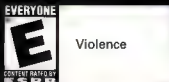
Electronic Arts is driving the lane again with **NBA Street 2**. The March 2003 title already includes an all-star NBA cast including: **Dr. J**, **Magic Johnson**, **Wilt Chamberlain**, **Larry Bird**, and more.

Here's one for under the pillow: Some production company is optioning the rights for a movie based on some video game. The film will stink, and only sully the name of an otherwise good gaming franchise.

WHAT'S FOOTBALL WITHOUT THE BLITZ?

SACK UP AND GET READY FOR THE BLITZ! BLAZING BACK ONTO THE FIELD IS NFL BLITZ 20-03, A GRIDIRON FIRESTORM OF HARD HITS, OUTRAGEOUS MOVES, FLYING TACKLES, AND THINGS USUALLY LEFT TO THE IMAGINATION. BRING SOME COURAGE AND YOUR MOUTHPIECE 'CAUSE THINGS JUST GOT SERIOUS.

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- **NEW Updated rosters, uniforms and stadiums** – including the Houston Texans.



PlayStation 2

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VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

Back in the day, would-be singers had to tirelessly practice, relentlessly tour the backwater clubs of the US, and hone their songwriting skills to become superstars. These days, our pop idols dispense with all that tedious crap, and just skip right to the good stuff: number one singles, adoring fans, high-profile romances, and drug addiction. Fox's American Idol proves that, as Woody Allen once said, "Eighty percent of success is showing up." The other 20 percent is impressing Paula Abdul. Which marginally talented hottie fits your personality? You'll have to test your skills at Video Game Trivia to find out.

Question 1: Which deceased Japanese actor was the inspiration for Onimusha 2's main character?



- A. Takashi Sorimachi
- B. Yoshihiro Amatsu
- C. Taka Michinoku
- D. Yusaku Matsuda

Question 2: Japanese publisher Square Soft made a bid at developing games in the US. What was the first title made there?

- A. Parasite Eve
- B. Secret of Evermore
- C. Einhander
- D. Final Fantasy Legend III

Question 3: NBA Jam: Tournament Edition featured a slew of celebrities that could be used in the game. Who didn't hold court in the game?

- A. Beastie Boy Mike D
- B. Public Enemy's Chuck D
- C. Heavy D
- D. Bill Clinton

Question 4: JJ and Jeff, an abysmal platformer for TurboGrafx, originally released in Japan. The names were changed and the original's fart attack was changed to a sprayscan, but little else was different. What was the game called over there?



Whatever they're called, these guys suck

- A. Stud and 4-Eyes
- B. Fart Detectives
- C. Kato and Ken
- D. Street Beaters

Question 5: Though Game Informer has always tried to give PC games a fair shake, sometimes we miss one or two. Which of the following computer classics did we not review?

- A. Master of Orion
- B. Deus Ex
- C. StarCraft
- D. Quake II

Question 6: Licenses were all the rage in the 8-bit days, and seemingly every property had a video game adaptation. Which of these Sunday comic strips had an NES game based on it, which only appeared in Japan?

- A. Family Circus
- B. Peanuts
- C. Garfield
- D. Felix the Cat

Question 7: In the Sega CD/PC graphic adventure, Willy Beamish, the main character - like most youths - has a video game system. You can even play it in the game! What is the console called?

- A. The Iliad
- B. Game Boss
- C. Segico
- D. Nintari



Willy is a gamer, but what does he play?

Question 8: Working Designs is well known for its role-playing games, and the humorous writing contained therein. For Cosmic Fantasy 2 on the TurboGrafx CD, what was the name of the spacey female character?

- A. Uranus
- B. Babette
- C. Jiggles
- D. JITT (Junk In The Trunk)

Question 9: In Kid Chameleon, Sega's 1992 platformer for the Genesis, the main character wears many hats - literally. In total, how many alter ego-inducing masks does the game have?

- A. 8
- B. 10
- C. 12
- D. 24

Question 10: While some baseball games featured real players and teams, only one let you pick your team's players from a cast of 60 ugly-looking youngsters. What was this obscure NES title?

- A. Baseball Stars
- B. Little League Baseball
- C. Sandlot Kids
- D. Dusty Diamond's All Star Softball



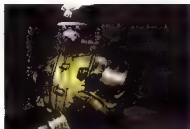
These are just a fraction of the ragtag bunch

ONLINE PLANS COME AND GO

Earlier in the year, we told you that the PC hit **Return to Castle Wolfenstein** was coming to the **Xbox** and **PlayStation 2** courtesy of **Activision** and developer **Raster Productions**. Well, we were not only telling the absolute truth, but we can now divulge some tantalizing new secrets. The game is going online with **Xbox Live** when this Wolfenstein port releases early next year.

Making full use of the service's **Communicator headset**, the game has added a new tactical component just for the Xbox. Among other multiplayer options, **Return to Castle Wolfenstein** will include squad-based and co-op modes. Thus, you'll be able to call in medics or air support via the Communicator. The title will also include a two-player split screen option for those who play without the Xbox Live service.

Meanwhile, what Activision has gained, **Eidos** has lost. The company has announced that its PlayStation 2 first-person shooter title **TimeSplitters 2** is shipping without its previously promised online element. The game, however, will not only come with traditional multiplayer support, but will also enable 16 people to participate via iLink cables.



Return to Castle Wolfenstein

The company says that the decision to drop Internet play for **TimeSplitters 2** was due to the fact that the network infrastructure just wasn't in place yet. It's worth noting that, as a third-party publisher for the PlayStation 2, Eidos, like other companies using the PS2, is having to foot its own bill if it wants online play on the console. While Sony's system is definitely the leader when it comes to its installed base, its more hands-off approach to supporting publishers' online titles is one that could produce similar headaches down the road.



TimeSplitters 2



100% of the baseball bats in the office have been confiscated to keep 100% of our computers from being accidentally whacked

3% of our readers wrote in with the urgent question: "What's better, Madden NFL 2003 or Mike Ditka Power Football?"

61% of Kingdom Hearts' players wonder when Donald's going to finally put on some pants for chrisssakes

47% of office junk is hidden away on Chet's desk. Matt's jealous

0% the chance you have of getting lucky if you start playing games online

Score & Rank



0 Ryan Starr 1-2 RJ Helton 3-4 Christina Christian 5-6 Justin Guarini 7-8 Kelly Clarkson 9-10 Tamya Gray

DATA FILE

► **Sonic** ♥ GameCube. The blue mascot's entire roster of Genesis adventures are coming to Nintendo's console this November in the *Sonic Mega Collection*.

► The next controversial frontier for the industry is...broken arms? Eidos has signed up to make titles based on the *Backyard Wrestling* video series. We'll say it now: Jumping off your roof onto a table isn't video game violence, it's just old-fashion stupidity.

► Snake bites back! Despite *Solid Snake* hijacking his name, *Escape From New York's* Snake Plissken is poised to appear in a slate of upcoming video games, anime, and comic books. Actor **Kurt Russell** has already been approached about lending his voice for these projects. At press time, no publishers have been announced for Snake's new escapades.

► The localization of developer **Monolith Soft's** *Xenosaga: Episode I* is taking a little longer than expected. What we once thought would be a fall release has been delayed until early next year by publisher **Namco**.

► In Japan, the PlayStation 2 version of *Sega's Skies of Arcadia* is being cancelled. The GameCube, however, will get a revamped edition called *Skies of Arcadia Legend*. This RPG will feature a new bounty hunter (Piaster), graphical improvements, and an expanded story.

► Short-lived console exclusivity is a sign of the times. **Koei** has announced that *Mystic Heroes* is spreading to the PlayStation 2 in December. Better yet, the game will likely feature additions such as extra characters and a bonus level.

► **Bloware**, the developer behind *Neverwinter Nights* and *Knights of the Old Republic*, has signed a first-party deal with **Microsoft** to produce two original titles. One will be an Xbox game while the other will appear on the PC.

► *Crazy Taxi* is being transformed into a movie, and *Resident Evil* will see a sequel. Rumor to bust: the events for the second RE film will be based on the game *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*.

► **Sierra's** single-player PC experiment, *Tribes Fast Attack* has been cancelled. Instead, the company plans to re-release the original *Tribes 2*, including some new maps, for a paltry ten bucks.

► More news from the big-fish-eats-minnow-front. **Rocketstar** has taken over PC developer **Barking Dog Studios** (the creators of *Global Operations* and *Homeworld: Cataclysm*) and will rename it **Rocketstar Vancouver**. As of now, the company is working on two new projects for its new master. Also, **Twisted Metal** creators **Innocent Inc.** have now been absorbed by **Sony's Santa Monica Studio**.

CONTEST

LET MADDEN NFL 2003 SAVE YOUR LIFE



We're not going to think you're a bad person if you don't already own this football masterpiece. We know, sometimes you get busy, and you can't go out and buy possibly the greatest piskin game of all time – it happens (apparently). So, Game Informer is giving you the chance to win one of five copies of Madden NFL 2003 on the PlayStation 2. Lucky winners will immediately notice the change. Friends will start talking to you once again, and may even invite you over to play. All told, life is definitely a lot better with Madden NFL 2003 than it is

without. Don't be known as "that person who doesn't play Madden" (like Chet) – enter the contest and rejoin society as soon as possible.



Grand Prize (3)

- Electronic Arts' PS2 game Madden NFL 2003
- A Special Edition Madden NFL T-shirt (Not Shown)

First Prize (2)

- Electronic Arts' PS2 game Madden NFL 2003

There Are Two Ways To Enter:

(1) Send a POSTCARD with your NAME, ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER to:

GI's Madden
724 N. FIRST ST. 4TH FLOOR
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55401

(2) Send an EMAIL with your NAME, ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER to: madden@gameinformer.com

Your name will be placed in a pool of valid entrants for a random drawing to be conducted on November 4, 2002.

GAME INFORMER'S MADDEN OFFICIAL RULES

1. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. To enter, send your name, age, address, and telephone number on a postcard to: GI's Madden, 724 First St. North, 4th Floor, Minneapolis, MN 55401. Or email your name, age, address, and telephone number to: madden@gameinformer.com. Entries must be received by November 4, 2002. One entry per person. Duplicated entries will be disqualified. Game Informer magazine (the "Sponsor") is not responsible for lost, late, misdelivered, illegible, incomplete or misdirected entries. 2. PRIZES: Three (3) grand prize winners will receive a copy of Madden NFL 2003 for the PlayStation 2 and a Madden NFL t-shirt (supplemental retail value \$70). Two (2) first prize winners will receive a copy of Madden NFL 2003 for the PlayStation 2 (supplemental retail value \$50). Sponsor reserves the right to substitute prize of equal or greater value if prize is unavailable. Prizes are non-transferable and no substitutions allowed. 3. WINNERS: Winners will be determined by random drawing of all valid entries received by the Sponsor, whose decisions are final. Drawing will be held on or about November 4, 2002. Winners shall be notified by email and/or telephone. Please allow six to eight weeks for delivery of prizes. 4. ODDS OF WINNING: The odds of winning depend on number of valid entries received. 5. ELIGIBILITY: Promotion open to residents of United States only. Return of any prize/entry notification card or undeliverable mail result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Winner may be required to sign a affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/acceptance within 14 days of receipt of forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then prize may be awarded to winner's parent or legal guardian. By acceptance of prize, winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Employees of the Sponsor, Game Informer Magazine, and its parent and affiliated companies and their families are not eligible. Neither the Sponsor nor its affiliates, subsidiaries, division or related companies are responsible for any discrepancies, errors, or omissions that winners might incur as a result of the sweepstakes or receipt of prizes. 6. RESTRICTIONS: Void where prohibited or restricted by law.

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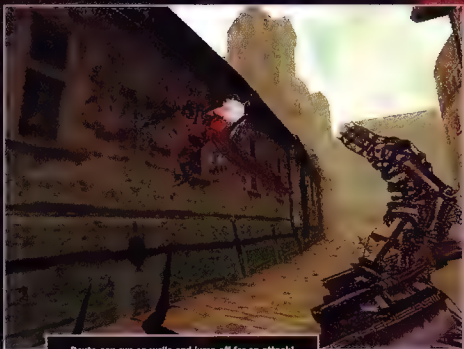


Devil May Cry 2

A black silhouette of Dante in his iconic pose, standing with one leg raised and holding his sword. The silhouette is positioned in the center, overlapping the 'M' and 'C' of the title text.

A NEW BEGINNING

Trying to expand the Resident Evil formula and elevate the series to the next level, Capcom inadvertently created an entirely new franchise – Devil May Cry. Since it sold over two million copies, the PS2-exclusive sequel, Devil May Cry 2, possesses the potential to become Capcom's most financially successful title until Resident Evil 4. Fortunately, two has always been a magic number for the company, as the second games in its most prestigious series – Street Fighter, Mega Man, and RE – have garnered the most support. So, what exactly can we expect from Devil May Cry 2? To say the least, we will receive some very significant changes, which should put a new spin to its tried-and-true formula – perhaps not as many as SFII, but certainly more than RE 2.



Dante can run on walls and jump off for an attack!



Dante simultaneously shooting at two enemies in two different directions

The main reason for this injection of new material has to do with the fact that DMC 2 is being guided by a different producer, Tsuyoshi Tanaka. He emphatically states, "What I think is cool and what [DMC producer Shinji] Kamiya thinks is cool is totally different." This should not suggest that DMC 2 will try to redefine Dante's personality and play mechanics to the point of deviating from the original's vision. Dante returns with a myriad of glorious superhuman powers: He can pummel demons with his guns, slash enemies to pieces (literally) with an oversized sword, and transform into his devil half for an extra boost of power. Still, once you watch DMC 2 in action, you'll see that the new Dante rocks in a whole different way.

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 2003

AN EXPERIENCED DEMON SLAYER

Fans will readily notice that our main protagonist looks tougher and more rugged, which Tanaka hopes will depict a more experienced devil hunter. This wiser appearance means that Capcom will endow Dante with even more outrageous, acrobatic, and refined moves, combos, and powers. Even Dante's standard sword combo looks a bit cooler. He can now run up walls, flip when he double jumps, somersault backwards in defense, perform a strafing dive, shoot upside down in the air, fire simultaneously in two directions, shoot over his back, fight for a longer period in the air, and execute an aerial kick. Within just a few seconds of gameplay, we witnessed a sequence of attacks that exemplifies Dante's new abilities. He ascends the side of a building, flips off of a wall, and

while floating upside down in the air, shoots at an enemy on the ground. Then, he finishes off the demon with a downward slash! Dante's Devil form will offer up its own deadly delights, and will play a more vital role in the overall gameplay design.

However, a few of Dante's standard maneuvers create a spectacle in and of themselves. In one case, Dante blasts an enemy in front of him with the pistol in his left hand and - at the same time - pegs a second demon behind him with his right pistol. Furthermore, while it may seem unimportant, Capcom will enhance aerial combat by allowing Dante to float longer as he combats his foes in midair. Hopefully, Tanaka will plan to include various enemies that attack in the air, and provide Dante with other specific airborne techniques to combat such foes.



Dante's new powers apparently allow him to have eyes in the back of his head

Once the player finally manages to bring an end to the confrontation and dispatch a demon, it will burst into dust and many tiny polygonal pieces. Of course, as in the first game, fighting and adventuring will yield various colored orbs (blue, green, and red), which allow Dante to learn new moves and combos, and discover new weapons. However, Tanaka does point out that the system of learning will work a little differently. He wouldn't elaborate on any further details, so we're uncertain as to what exactly he means. Perhaps red orbs earn experience points, which could be assigned to Dante's various attributes and abilities, rather than a burgeoning bank account with which to purchase techniques.



His pistols are still staples, but players can obviously upgrade



Dante begins his ascent as a defense, and starts a combo



Beautiful chunks of demon flesh - yum!



Lucia's specialty is acrobatics, so areas like these will be to her advantage

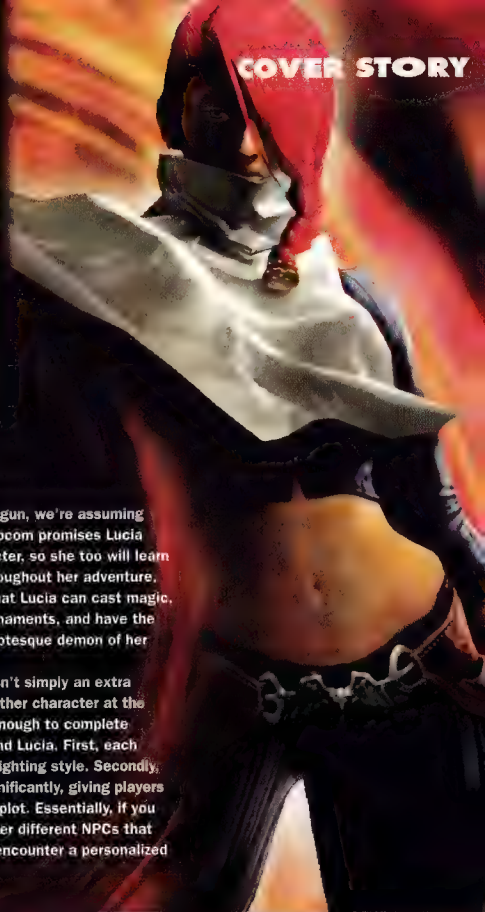
A PARTNER IN DEVILISH MAYHEM

In the previous section, you might have wondered what we meant by "male protagonist," and maybe you even skipped ahead to read this section (boo!). In any case, Tanaka states, "Many people complained in the first game because they wanted to play as Trish, and use a heroine. We agree, so we're giving the fans what they want." Indeed, as invigorating as the new and improved Dante is, Capcom and Tanaka were not satisfied simply altering his character and placing him in a different adventure. In hopes of adding a new dimension to the gameplay, Tanaka felt compelled to incorporate a heroine – not Trish, but a new character named Lucia. Her origins remain a mystery, but we do know that she plays the role of a protector against the demons, and aids in Dante's quest to return the monstrosities to hell.

Since Lucia fights with two swords of medium length, possesses various martial arts moves, and

apparently lacks any sort of gun, we're assuming she's some sort of ninja. Capcom promises Lucia will be a fully realized character, so she too will learn moves and find weapons throughout her adventure. Hopefully, this also means that Lucia can cast magic, acquire various ninja-like armaments, and have the ability to transform into a grotesque demon of her own.

Furthermore, since she isn't simply an extra "bonus" – you can choose either character at the outset – there'll be reason enough to complete the game with both Dante and Lucia. First, each character offers a different fighting style. Secondly, the storyline will change significantly, giving players a unique perspective on the plot. Essentially, if you choose Lucia, you'll encounter different NPCs that reveal new information and encounter a personalized set of scenarios.



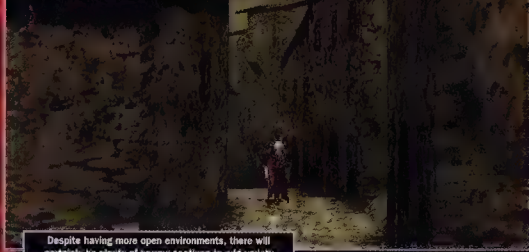
Lucia is Dante's new partner. She is the "protector"



Lucia can also learn new moves like Dante



Here is the ruins level. We'll probably see mummies and the like here

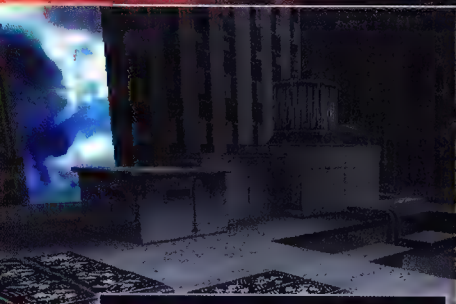


Despite having more open environments, there will certainly be plenty of narrow sections to add variety

A NEW, BIGGER ELEMENT



The town looks nice and crisp with increased resolution



This could be a city level, or just an extension of the town

Tanaka estimates that each level is nine times larger than sections from the original, and many of these feature nonlinear approaches. Naturally, this translates into more ass-kicking gameplay. Dante can thunder through the maze-like streets of a dilapidated town, and since he can ascend walls, proceed by hopping from building to building. Each route seems to offer plenty of encounters, but in order to earn a high rating, we assume that players will have to be meticulous, and search every nook and cranny.

This time, however, Tanaka hopes to eliminate the incessant backtracking often associated with puzzles and Secret Missions. Although some puzzles will remain for variety's sake, they'll be more straightforward, so as not to detract from the action. As for the Secret Missions, we're uncertain of how they'll change, but Tanaka assures us that they require a different, less tedious approach. De-emphasizing these elements has forced Tanaka and his team to devise more creative ways of enhancing the gameplay. Besides the previously mentioned additions (a new character, new moves, etc.), DMC 2 will incorporate various play mechanics, such as the

underwater first-person levels from Devil May Cry.

Much to our disappointment, Capcom currently has only two other levels running – both of which still look quite unfinished. One places Dante atop a heliport, overlooking an ocean. Due to its extremely small size, though, we presume that Dante will combat a boss here, or attempt a Secret Mission. The second location takes place inside some sort of ancient ruins. Capcom would show only a snippet of this level, but its narrow corridors and darker atmosphere made it reminiscent of the castle. Still, Capcom assures us that every mission will feature plenty of locations to explore, and more than enough types of enemies to dispatch.

Fortunately, Capcom has already accomplished many jaw-dropping graphical effects. The coolest of these visuals shows Dante running down a narrow road; the screen slightly morphs, shifting back and forth in a clockwise and counterclockwise direction. Furthermore, Capcom will increase the visual detail through a special technique that allows DMC 2 to run at twice the resolution! Needless to say, the textures and character models look crisp and sharp.



The transition from the ground to the wall is seamless!



There he is again. Behind-the-back shots look sweet


WHO'S THE BOSS?

While Capcom will only disclose information on a few of the enemies and one new boss, it promises to up the ante and offer a larger, more diverse cast. The puppet-like foes from the first game will return; but from what we watched, they form from the ground up from various parts pieced together, rather than emerging from some mysterious black hole. Capcom also revealed a few shadow creatures, like the red-eyed hounds from DMC. However, these smoky silhouettes look a bit larger and resemble apes. Although Capcom promises more bosses (both small and large, which probably corresponds to mid- and end-level bosses), only one was on display. And of course, this bad ass possesses a significant stature, and sports a sadistically enormous mouth.

Many gamers voiced complaints about the difficulty level in the original Devil May Cry. As "serious D&D players," Tanaka assures us that his team has been working hard to better balance enemy and boss AI. This means two things: Encounters will probably be managed a little easier, and items like Holy Water won't eradicate everything on-screen. To gain even more mainstream recognition, Capcom will implement a varying difficulty mechanic, as Naughty Dog did in *Jak & Daxter*. So, depending on your performance, DMC 2 will automatically adjust the AI's difficulty, which permits even those who suck to drag their devil-fighting corpse to the end!

NEW AND IMPROVED

Besides the difficulty level, many fans (including us) moaned about DMC's camera, especially during many of the boss battles, where various objects obstructed the view. In some cases, the bosses were simply too large to be viewed accurately. The camera will remain fixed (a good idea, since the micro-management of it in most third-person action titles can be tedious), but Tanaka has made it a point for each angle to provide an optimal perspective. In many of the areas, the field is more open with less obstructions, permitting Capcom to pull the camera back, which in turn allows the player to see Dante or Lucia just fine. Unfortunately, we did notice that Dante sometimes shoots off-screen, but these seem to be rare instances. We will have to wait and see how well Capcom implements this new camera. Finally, on a lesser note, some gamers also voiced complaints about button mapping. Not to worry: DMC2 will allow players to customize their own control scheme.



As you can see, the camera has improved



"Jump, evil monkey!"

These flying creatures are best dealt with using pistols, although we didn't get a chance to see them in action

This boss looks quite large, but the camera shows an optimal view

OUR TAKE

Undoubtedly, Capcom is taking significant strides to enhance Devil May Cry 2 with plenty of original content, while retaining the gameplay flair that engrossed so many of us. However, even in its early state, the game looks amazing. Given Capcom's track record with that mythical number two, we cannot wait to get our greedy paws on Dante and Lucia's ass-kicking quest for PS2 this January.



**THE EYES OF A BOY. THE SWORD OF A MASTER.
THE FIGHT OF HIS LIFE.**

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PlayStation 2



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Mild Violence
Mild Language



PlayStation 2



SIMULATION'S CODEx

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

In 1989, a game entitled *SimCity* released to much critical accord, and quickly found itself caught in a maelstrom of player accolades and exponentially increasing sales numbers. Soon, other titles based on simulated building experiences began popping up. Games like *SimEarth: The Living Planet* (1990), *SimAnt* (1991), *SimLife* (1992), *SimFarm* (1993), *SimPark* (1996), and a handful of others met with varying success as Sim mastermind Will Wright's company, Maxis, defined and redefined what could be simulated, and why it would be fun to do so.

As the years passed, only one title served to pique the curiosity of gamers the world over, release after release. *SimCity* became a part of the very fabric of American pop culture, and held onto that distinction by continuing to innovate and bedazzle its players on a consistent basis. While many Sim titles more-or-less went the way of the dodo, another franchise rose from their ashes and would change the world of PC gaming forever. The Sims is currently the bestselling PC series of all time with over 16 million units sold, and it shows no sign of slowing down. When asked what makes this genre so appealing, Will Wright told us, "I think the obvious thing is that the Sims is set in a contemporary environment. It's not a military game, it's not fantasy, it's not science fiction. If you look at most of what's on prime time television, or what's in bookstores, or what's in movies, most of them are in contemporary environments that people are very comfortable in. They can hop right in; they don't have to understand the way magic works or understand history



to really grasp the context." Sim titles have dug down to the core of how a "plug-and-play" game looks and behaves. Their ergonomic controls and broad appeal have made Maxis into a development superpower.

With the backing of its parent company, Electronic Arts, Maxis is about to mount an offensive on the video game world – the likes of which has never been seen before. In a four-pronged assault, the Sims: Unleashed, the Sims Online, *SimCity 4*, and the Sims for PlayStation 2 will all release within a few months of each other. What kind of effect will this have on the industry? We expect to see sales figures that would make Bill Gates envious. "When we were separate from Electronic Arts, we didn't have a lot of console experience," says Wright. "I think you're going to see a bit of a shift in our console strategy." The Sims for the PlayStation 2 is definitely proof positive that Wright is a man of his word.

Few other development houses have been around as long as Maxis – but maybe that's because Will Wright just plain knows how to put together a fun game. Creating two separate award-winning, multi-million copy selling genres (*SimCity* and the Sims) is no small feat. In the following pages, we blow out the upcoming Sim-related releases in a style only Game Informer can give you. Sit back, relax, and enjoy the show.





The Sims

CONSOLE COUNTDOWN

There is no denying that the Sims as a franchise is the best selling and most popular PC game of all time. Players around the globe have been enjoying it for years, but an entire section of the gaming pie has been on the outside looking in – until now. The Sims is coming to the console; and with it, a new age and genre of video games will carve out its place in the ever-changing, yet highly fickle console market. A number of people said it couldn't be done, but that's not a good phrase to use around the people at Maxis. What they've been able to create for the PlayStation 2 is a game that draws heavily upon its PC cousin, but has more than a few features that will make even the most jaded Sims veteran stand up and take notice.

"It's a whole new way to fall in love with the Sims," stresses Michael Perry, design director for the Sims PS2. "We've taken the PC version, and have completely revamped it into something never seen before." From what we've seen and heard, that couldn't be more true. We're going to take for granted that you have either played or know about the Sims, so what we're about to tell you should be enough to tickle your fancy: This version of the game will have an ending – something no other Sims title has yet incorporated. It comes through one of the game's three modes – Get A Life (the others being free-play and multiplayer). During this mode, players will begin much like they did when they played the Sims for the first time on the PC – virtually penniless and with little to no possessions. The catch is you'll be living with your mother! Through a series of challenges and goals such as getting a job, getting promoted, getting married,



or even just cleaning up your house, players will unlock new PS2-exclusive objects (the best in our opinion being a monkey butler) and assorted items in the game. As you complete these tasks, you move away from dear ol' mom and into more comfortable digs. If you play your cards right, you'll eventually move into a mansion, at which point the game ends. Of course, there's more to it than that – you'll spend hours customizing your character and your house, and even more trying to reach perfection in the stage you're in.

For those who prefer a more classical approach, the open-ended gameplay you find on the PC is also a mode for the PS2 version, and in an interesting twist, it will also be available in the two-player mode. If you spend a chunk of time perfecting your Sim on your own, then want to show him or her off to a buddy, simply take your memory card with you and play in a split-screen mode for hours on end. If that doesn't get your juices flowing, try the challenge modes where you'll gain points for completing objectives faster than your opponent. What does that



SIMPLY AMAZING

COMBINED NUMBER OF PLAYSTATION 2 CONSOLES
AND PC VERSIONS OF THE SIMS SOLD TO DATE: 38.27 MILLION
POPULATION OF POLAND: 38 MILLION

■ PLATFORM PLAYSTATION 2 ■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER MAXIS/EDGE OF REALITY ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 5



A more classic Sims perspective will be useful as your citizens grow and build.

mean? Here's an example called "Maid's Day Off". The maids in the Sims need someone to clean up after them every once in a while, so you'll both be dispatched to one of their duplexes to get the joint looking sparkly again. The player who can clean the best gets to enjoy a nice relaxing dip in a hot tub with that dirty, dirty maid. Yahoo!

Aside from the gameplay goodies, a lot of hard work and inventive thought went into making this title look as good or better than its PC counterpart. We wanted to know how the developers were going to take a PC game, and make it look fresh on the PS2. "How are we going to do it?" Michael asks. "Well, the original game is a 2D game



The interface has been flexily tuned to accommodate all players.

with a mouse-based interface. The interface for the PlayStation 2 is completely 3D, and we've used the analog sticks as your way to interact with the environments. The guys at Edge of Reality have redone every single piece of the artwork and graphics from the original game, so everything you see for the PlayStation 2 is brand new." Along with this, representatives from Maxis have made it very clear that this version of the Sims will be the easiest to pick up and play to date. A learning curve of about 15 seconds to get your bearings is typical according to the testing done so far.

The big question is whether console fans will be willing to pick up what has always been a PC game. It looks like Maxis, with the help of Edge of Reality, is bridging that gap with solid gameplay, intuitive controls, and a new look that could be better than ever. Whatever the outcome, we're confident that the Sims PS2 is a release that will hold its own in a volatile and competitive market.



Maxis' Sims 2 is a PC game, but it's been flexily tuned to accommodate all players.



Neighborhood, sweet neighborhood.



Giving gifts is just one of the interactions you'll recognize from other Sims titles.



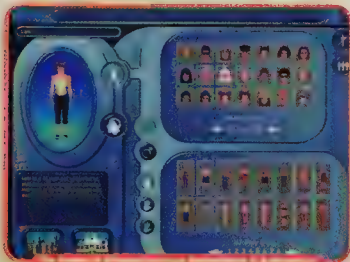
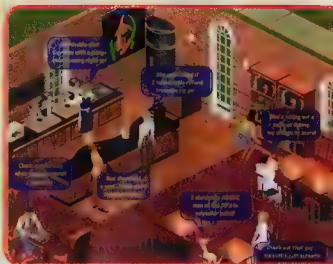
The Sims ONLINE

A NEW LIFE

Taking a game "to the next level" can mean many different things. It seems only logical that the Sims would go online, as its gameplay lends itself perfectly to a massively multiplayer environment. There has been discussion about the morality of releasing this title – some say that it will ruin people's lives. "I see these people that are EverQuest addicts," says Wright, "and I'm thinking that it would be pretty scary if this product broke up marriages. So, I've got this funny repudiation about the project in that sense." Can't people control themselves? We hope so, but imagine it: living out a simulated existence on a distant server. A life complete with friends, enemies, gossip, intrigue, triumph, failure, love, hate...It starts taking on the look of SimReality if you sit down and think about it for a while. Will certain players forsake their normal lives in favor of a simulated one? Perhaps, but from the look of this title, it may be hard for all of us to tear ourselves away and plunge into our real lives.

Game Informer had the opportunity to actually see the Sims Online in action during a closed-door meeting. The person who took us on a gameplay crash-course walked us through what made her Sim successful.

Whether it's getting roommates, starting a business, getting married or divorced, or what have you – the Sims Online will cause people to rethink what a massively multiplayer game is capable of. Some might find it frightening – and rightfully so. There's never been anything like this before, and we can't wait to be a part of it.



■ PLATFORM PC ■ STYLE MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME
■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER MAXIS ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 21

The Sims Unleashed

DOGS, CATS, AND VEGETABLES

What keeps these games popular? How about selling more units than any other PC title ever. How about the fact that the game really has no ending, and features near limitless customizability. Then there's the ravenous fan base to take into account, and of course, the inspired gameplay formula. The fact of the matter is, gamers just can't get enough of the Sims, and who is Maxis to argue? As Jonathon Knight, producer for Unleashed told us, "Maxis is a very giving company. We want to give gamers what they ask for." What's the number one thing that fans want? Pets.

The team actually wanted to incorporate pets into the first Sims release, but it was a bit too much to bite off at that point in the game's life. Having the time to concentrate on this subject has allowed the Unleashed crew to explore every facet of owning an animal – and that doesn't mean just dogs and cats. Your Sims will also be able to buy parrots, turtles, fish, or lizards that have their own interactions, but don't need to be housetrained. However, as you might have expected, dogs and cats are the most fun to own. They'll drastically influence the day-to-day activities around your house, and a slew of new interactions, NPCs, and items have been added to make Fido feel at home. You'll train your pet, teach him tricks, feed him, bathe him, and if you've trained him enough, you can put his skills to the test in a local pet show where Sims compete to impress the judges for prizes in obedience, tricks, and mood. Crazy!

The neighborhood you live in has been drastically enlarged to accommodate a plethora of new features and locations. In addition to your quaint little grouping of homes, community lots will feature parks, a new café, different shops, and a farmer's market. With this new gameplay component, Sims will be able to walk their dogs in the park, or take their cat to the café to socialize with other cat lovers – all of which brings up a new feature: Your interactions with others have been expanded to include your pets. If you're



a dog owner, and you talk to another dog owner about dogs, your friendship will grow more quickly than it would if you were talking about a subject that interested one Sim, but not the other. Are you getting giddy yet? Wait – there's more!

"This is the biggest expansion pack we've ever done," says Knight. "I think we've outdone ourselves with this one." With Unleashed, they've not only nailed the animal interaction side of the release, but have been able to incorporate other things that fans have been looking for. "Spiral staircases! People have been waiting for two-and-a-half years for these, and we've finally been able to put them in," Knight told us. In terms of objects in the game, you'll can look forward to 125 new ones, plus a new decorator set with a New Orleans French Quarter theme. This is what we've come to expect from a Sims expansion pack, but

Unleashed is delivering more than just objects and toys. Your simulated humans can now become gardeners. That's right, you'll carve out your own garden plot, travel to the market for seeds, then plant them and tend to them until you've gotten a crop that can be picked and stored in the new Pantry object. From there, you can either prepare your food into a culinary delight, or take it to the market and sell it for a bundle.

As you can see, this is an expansion pack by which all others will be measured. With new careers, NPCs (did we mention animal-control characters will only be a phone call away?), gardening, expanded environments, more objects, and pets, the Sims: Unleashed will likely keep this franchise's numbers at a stratospheric level.

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■ PLATFORM PC ■ STYLE 1-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ DEVELOPER MAXIS ■ RELEASE SEPTEMBER 21

SIMPLY AMAZING

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF SIMS EXPANSION PACKS SOLD
(INCLUDES LIVIN' LARGE, HOT DATE, HOUSE PARTY, AND VACATION) AT PRINT TIME: 9 MILLION

LENGTH OF CD JEWEL CASE: 5.5625 INCHES

DISTANCE COVERED IF EVERY JEWEL CASE SOLD HERE LAID

END TO END: 790,129 MILES

DISTANCE FROM NEW YORK CITY TO CHICAGO: 810 MILES

SIMCITY™ 4

BETTER BUILDING

No one knows how to put together a city-builder better than simulation's golden child, Maxis. With this in mind, just think of where technology was when SimCity 3000 released (1998), and where it is now. The result of this improvement in technology, as we're sure you can imagine, is nothing short of absolutely spectacular. SimCity 4 stretches the boundaries of what a video game is. When you sit back and watch an early-morning commuter rush hour begin to form as your citizens travel from their cozy neighborhoods to the bustling downtown business section, you may begin to get a feeling that you're part of something larger than you're used to – because you are. There's an entire city teeming with citizens down there – and they all depend on you for safety, happiness, health, entertainment, and guidance. How will you give those things to them? That, gentle reader, is where it gets interesting.

Let's talk about detail. No, let's talk about minute detail – because that's what SimCity is all about. It's amazing that a game with such scope could be so intimate, but thanks to the amount of personal touch you put into your city, you'll get a chill every time



Rooftop swimming pools and tennis courts attract high-class tenants



Inserting your Sims into your city will give you detailed information about what's working and what isn't in different parts of town



garbage trucks make their dawn patrols over hill and dale to collect trash from your burgeoning bedroom communities. Or you'll feel sorry for that poor Sim who you watch get mugged on the street corner, so you'll increase the police presence in that area. When you start a housing development, you'll actually see new citizens moving in with little vans and trucks as they begin to start their new life in your city. Are you starting to get the idea? This isn't the game you knew and loved four years ago. It has transformed, and there has never been anything like it.

For the first time ever, you're able to import your Sims character into another game that isn't an expansion pack. By moving your people in (up to five of them can live in your city), Sims players will get personalized feedback about what is going on in the neighborhood they live in. Example: Sally Peaches moves into a middle-income area, but it doesn't have access to a high school, and her commute to the toy factory (she'll tell you where she works) is an unbearable 50 minutes. By addressing her concerns you'll soon find that the entire area is getting better because these were problems plaguing every resident. Uh oh, Sally has been tragically killed by a volcano. Her daughter (Sally Peaches II) will continue her mother's legacy, as will Sally II's daughter, and so on until they either move away, or you stop playing.

Speaking of volcanoes, the natural disasters are bigger, better, and under your control. Sean Decker, producer for SimCity 4 related this situation to us: "Sometimes when a section of my city is rioting, I'll zap them with a few lightning bolts. That clears things out." Tornadoes, volcanoes, and a lot more that Sean couldn't divulge (he wants some things to surprise you) will make many an



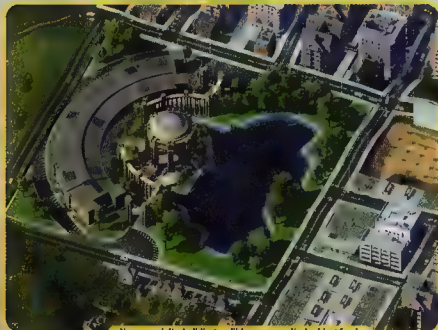
Morning rush hour has never been so much fun

SIMPLY AMAZING

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT SYSTEMS AT LEAST ONE VERSION OF SIMCITY HAS RELEASED ONE: 10

appearance, but now you'll be able to toss them down on the citizens like a Greek god. When you tire of killing off your population, and you want to simply build the best city you can, feel free to pop online and trade either customized environments, or the cities themselves with others. Maybe you feel like making a replica of the city you live in. Maxis has included a feature tentatively called SimCity USA, which is a complete database of the US's geography. You are then able to carve out a section of terrain (Sean used an example of 64 square kilometers) which encompasses your home, and basically recreate your city.

With a firm release date still in the air, Maxis has a little breathing room if it needs to do some quick fixes, but it looks like it's on track, and we should all be shut up in our PC rooms for hours on end by the holiday season.



New specialty buildings will keep your city looking fresh

■ PLATFORM PC ■ STYLE 11-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
 ■ DEVELOPER MAXIS ■ RELEASE DECEMBER 1



Both sides of these tracks look to be bad



Gala events are punctuated with searchlights by some organizations

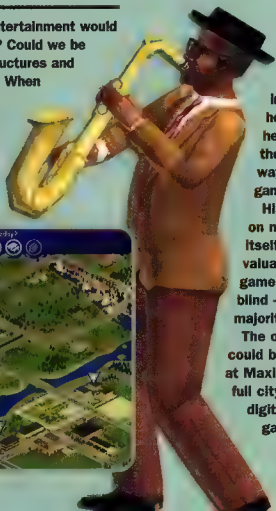


Good fire station placement will prove extremely useful in times like these

UNITED IN SIM

Ten years ago, no one could have imagined what interactive entertainment would be like today. This begs the question: How can things improve? Could we be looking at a game where people with Sims characters build structures and maintain communities in a SimCity-type environment in 2012? When asked about the role technology will play in the future of his games, Wright said, "Technical restraints seem to be falling away very rapidly. Five years ago, I would have given you a list of things I couldn't do, but now I don't see many technical restrictions. In fact, I see a lot of advancements coming in the near future based on things like applied metrics, customization, community-building strategies, distribution strategies, and things like that." What does that mean? It means hold on to you hats, kiddies – the future is definitely rosy; but for now it's a little too far away to get excited over. The good news is, the groundwork for bigger and better games is being laid with each successful title Maxis releases.

The "Sim" concept will surely change in both reach



and design, but for now, the titles that are currently ramping up for release are as impressive as what may, or may not come to pass in the future. That a company can continue to roll out product that captures both the imagination, and educate us about the world we live in is heartening. "I want a game to lead to some slightly heightened perception of the world around you; after playing the game you should be seeing the world in a slightly different way. Those are the rough guidelines for what make a great game for me," intones Will Wright.

His titles have no inherent violence in them. They don't rely on nudity or salaciousness to sell copies. The Sims brand itself is based on the idea that exploring our environment is a valuable and interesting basis for a video game. It reaches gamers of all ages, colors, creeds, and is completely gender-blind – all things that are a refreshing change from a vast majority of its competition.

The old saying goes, "The reward is in the journey." Nothing could be more true when it comes to the games from our friends at Maxis. Whether it's coaxing a small hamlet into realizing its full city-sized potential, to making friends (be them real or digital), we'll always be first in line to see where these Sim games lead us next. One thing's for sure – it's going to be one heck of a ride.



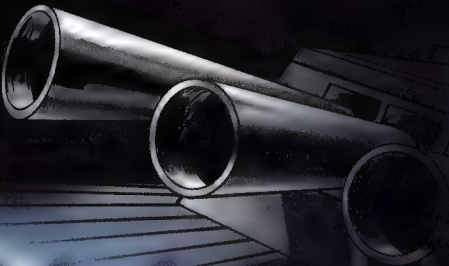
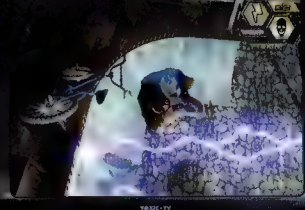
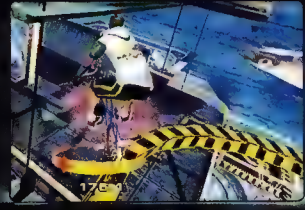
**ONLY ON
XBOX**

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

**Blood
Mild Language
Violence**

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ON AIR



Welcome to the show where ratings soar when riders die.



Toxic Grind

Ride for Your Life

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Who's Got Game?

GI Scouts This Year's Hoops Titles

The basketball game scene has mirrored the real-life NBA. Sega's 2K series is known for its suffocating defense. NBA Live shoots the lights out. Inside Drive is synonymous with fast break flash. This season, however, the lines have blurred. Each series has taken cues from what the others have done well, and look to make up ground in those categories to become a complete player. You'll be tip dunking and diving after loose balls in Konami's Starting Five. Inside Drive finally has a worthy Franchise mode. NBA 2K3 has next-gen graphics, rather than its previous Dreamcast look. Live is no longer such a pushover in difficulty. NBA ShootOut returns with something that will dazzle everyone.

Trash talking is as much an on-court staple as squeaky sneakers. Everyone wants to throw everyone else off their game. This guy has no ups. That guy has hands of stone. Someone else tosses up enough bricks to build a house. Game Informer bypasses all of this to bring you an unbiased look at which games will be in the zone for 2003, and which ones are playing with deflated balls.

While all basketball players are versatile — doing their part on both offense and defense — the league is filled with specialists and role players. If you want a fearless cutter to drive the lane, you go for 76er Allen Iverson. If you're down late in the game and need some big scores, make sure Bucks guard Ray Allen is on the court. To scoop up offensive boards and give your team a second chance, few players rival Ben Wallace.



	NBA LIVE 2003	NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2003	NBA 2K3	NBA SHOOTOUT 2003	NBA STARTING FIVE
Platform(s)	PS2, Xbox, GC, PC, PS-X	Xbox	PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCUBE	PS2 PS-X	PS2, Xbox
Franchise Mode?# Years	YES/10	YES/25	YES/30	YES/30	YES/25
Fantasy Draft?	YES	YES	YES	YES	No
Varying Player Stats in Franchise?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Fictional Rookies in Franchise?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Relining Players in Franchise?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Free Agents in Franchise?	YES	YES	YES (including international players)	YES	YES
User Stat Tracking?	YES	YES	YES	YES	No
Number of Player Stats Tracked	32	20	160+	20	22
Number of League Leader Stats Tracked	25	15	160+	22	27
Number of Player Attribute Categories	20	100	80-	25	25
CPU-Offered Trades?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Salary Cap Restrictions?	YES	YES	YES	No	YES
Trading Deadline?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
All-Star Game?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
End of Season Awards?#	YES/9	YES	YES/25+	YES/6	YES/8
Number of Polys/Character	N/A	8,000	6,100	6,000	1,900+
Number of Camera Angles	5 (adjustable)	8	5 (adjustable)	13	7 (adjustable)
Retro Jerseys?	YES	No	YES	YES	YES
Alternate Jerseys?	YES	YES	YES	No	No
Classic Players?# Teams?	YES/All-Star teams only	No	YES	YES	YES
Online Play?	YES (PS2 only)	No	YES (PS2, Xbox only)	No	No
Online Chat?	YES	No	No	No	No
Online Tournaments?	No	No	YES	No	No
Online Roster Updates?	YES	No	YES	No	No
Number of Dunks	150+	100	200+	50 (plus infinite w/Create-A-Dunk)	35
Number of Drizzle Moves	100+	10	90+	25	3
Number of Post Moves	80+	8	40+	8	10
Number of Plays Offense/Defense	138/16	30/30	110+ total	20/20	9/9
Loose-Ball Dives?	YES	No	YES	No	YES
Between-Play Crossovers?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
One-on-One Mode?	YES	YES (in Practice mode)	No	No	No
Street Courts?	YES	No	YES	YES	No
Musical Licenses	Snoop Dogg, Hot Karl, Fabolous, B Rich, Angie Martinez	Master P	Beastminds	Kool Moe Dee	N/A
Commentary Team	Don Pate, Robert Elliott, Al Murdoch, Marv Albert	Kevin Kalabro, Marques Johnson, Kevin Smith	Bob Fitzgerald, Rod Brooks, Clark Dishman	Ian Eagle and Bill Walton	Clark Kellogg and Al Albert
Cover Star	Japon Kidd	Paul Pierce	Allen Iverson	Ray Allen	Tracy McGrady
Developer	EA Canada	High Voltage	Visual Concepts	989 Sports	Konami Computer Entertainment Kasea
Publisher	Electronic Arts	Microsoft	Sega	989 Sports	Konami
Release Date	October 29	October 17	October 22	September 24	October 8



NBA Live 2003

EA Sports has been synonymous with quality, but its Live franchise has been utterly decimated by Sega's 2K series in the past few years. We all knew the company that brought you Madden wasn't going to back down from a challenge, and Live 2003 looks to be more competitive than ever.

Live has always had the right look, but its play has been inferior until now. Using the right analog stick, you can make your player execute a flurry of dribble moves that just come naturally. If you want to fake left then go right, do a quick left motion on the stick, followed by a long one to the right.

Other on-court aspects have been greatly enhanced as well. Rebounding – which has traditionally been a sore spot in digital ball – is a whole new ballgame. The EA Canada team's goal is to make sure a missed field goal attempt never touches the ground, and this seems to be the case. New blocking collision ensures you will see a hand slap the ball on a rejection. You can even block off of the backboard! To round out the experience, the stealing aspect is all the more accurate. For those of you who complained about the lackluster difficulty, all of these changes will result in a more challenging game.

The atmosphere of the NBA has never been so faithfully portrayed as in Live. The general bumping of bodies has been recreated via motion-capture session with up to four actors simultaneously. The game break cutscenes that entertained last year are even greater in number. Coaches will have conniptions on the sidelines, players will give whining babies a shoulder to cry on, and others celebrate like they won the...well, NBA Finals. It's fan-tastic!

Last season's Franchise mode was a travesty, but things are shaping up to be much better this time around. All the features you'd expect are here. Trading still looks more difficult (as in realistic) than it should be, however.

It should also be noted that Live has a soundtrack that would make most movie soundtracks jealous. EA is most definitely here to win. Surpassing Sega's 2K3 will be an uphill battle, but if anyone can do it, Live can.

■ **PLATFORM** PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE
 ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
 ■ **DEVELOPER** EA CANADA ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 29

Joe Smith skies like his more famous teammate ▼

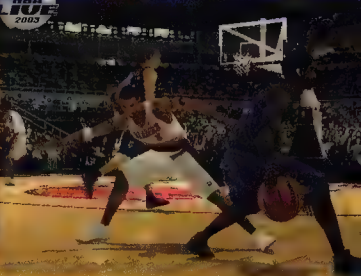


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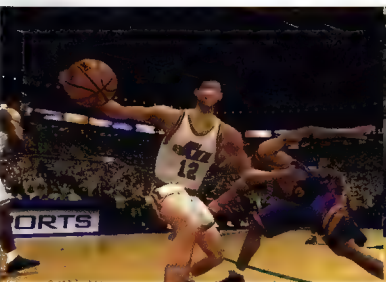
▲ Finally, Gamett looks like himself



▲ Two game cover boys face off at the key



▲ Damon hears his ankles go SNAP!



▲ Stock looks right at home in the old Jazz uniform



▲ Rafel is fittin' to get rejected



The Ref's Call:

Live is no longer playing catch-up, and 2003 will likely establish the series as a viable contender to the title. Call Sega's game the Lakers and Live the Kings. You never know how things will end up until the final game is played.

Jason Kidd New Jersey Nets

6'4" 212 lbs.
 College: California
 Years Pro: 9

Jason turned the Nets from a lottery team to Eastern Conference champions. Can he do the same with the NBA Live franchise, which lagged well behind NBA 2K2 last year? His skills are unquestioned, leading the league in triple-doubles and steals, and taking second in assists. One of the best point guards the NBA has ever seen, Kidd's main goal is making his teammates better.





▲ Horry should only be in the game for one minute. The final minute

NBA Inside Drive 2003

Some teams have a respectable season, and go out the following year with pretty much the same game plan. For a first effort, Inside Drive did well for itself, so well, in fact, that this year's version of the game is void of major overhauls.

Last year, the developers seemed more content to implement detailed stadiums rather than a comprehensive Franchise mode. Fortunately, this oversight has been corrected. Inside Drive's sparkling new franchise may be the best one around, with 25 seasons, 100 player attribute categories, and a trophy case to store all your accolades.

Although it doesn't sound terribly exciting, Practice mode is one of the most interesting additions. It basically sticks five guys on a court, and lets you have your way with them. A little creativity can spawn a game of one-on-one, 21, HORSE, or whatever else your peanut brain can come up with.

If you felt that last year's game was a tad unfulfilling, High Voltage has gone the replay route, awarding gamers for gameplay achievements. Score a quadruple-double (double figures in four of the following: points, steals, assists, blocks, and rebounds), and you may get attribute points to beef up a created player. Hit a game-winning buzzer-beater, and you could unlock a new stadium. You gotta love these additions.

Graphically, Inside Drive boasts the highest polygon count, obviously by using the power of Xbox. Jerseys wrinkle and hang even more realistically than before, and it looks as though much work was done toward duplicating the tucked-in look. On the audio side, Turner sports anchor and former NBA point guard Kenny Smith brings his laid-back style to the announcers table, joining the formidable duo of Kevin Kalabro and Marques Johnson. We would've rather seen Kenny's TBS teammate Charles Barkley instead, but The Jet will still do nicely.

Notice we haven't mentioned gameplay variations yet. That's because it's hard to find them. While we thought Inside Drive 2002 was a great first effort, it was by no means perfect, and the lack of obvious tweaks is disappointing. Inside Drive 2003 seems content to just boast the new Franchise mode, and little else.

■ **PLATFORM** XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** HIGH VOLTAGE
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 17



▲ This is indeed a detailed player model

▲ The Nuggets bench can only look on as Pierce abuses their starters



▲ Duncan doesn't always need to be dunkin'

▲ The people in the luxury boxes watch a tremendous jam



The Ref's Call:

It would appear that last year's first-generation phenom is suffering from the sophomore curse. While not overly flawed in any respect, and now made better with a good Franchise mode, Inside Drive's lack of effort for 2003 may cost it some votes come All-Star time.

Paul Pierce Boston Celtics

6'6" 230 lbs.
 College: Kansas
 Years Pro: 4

Leading the NBA in total points last year, Pierce can do whatever it takes to put the rock in the hole, be it sinking threes (40% last year), shooting free throws (81% last year), or going above the rim. After only four years in the league, Paul is already putting a few dents in the history-rich Celtics record books.



Paul Pierce



NBA 2K3

Since its first days on Dreamcast, Sega's hoops hero has been holding court as the top b-ball game.

Much like EA and its Madden franchise, Sega knows how to keep its lead, and even looks to distance itself from the rest of the pack.

In terms of gameplay, 2K2 couldn't be beat. It had the rebounding, stealing, and blocking to make everyone else jealous. This year though, it will take much more than that, as every other series seems to have figured out how to do these things right, too. Since the gameplay formula was pretty spot-on already, Visual Concepts used this year's development cycle to make minor improvements and overhaul other aspects of the title.

The passing game — which was one of 2K2's weak points — has been amazingly upgraded. For instance, contact sensitivity lets you control the power of the dish. Passes can

be faked, and you can toss the ball out of layups and even dunks. The right analog stick can be used to pinpoint your target, which will help you hit the right guy on fast breaks. Once you decide to take the rock to the hole, you can hit the shoot button again in mDair to alter your shot. You're like Mike, baby! Loose ball dives, jab steps, and icon defensive switching are just a few of the other improvements you will have while playing.

NBA 2K3 puts even more into what was the most comprehensive Franchise mode. You can place up to three players on the trading block, and fish for offers. Coaches — which now affect player growth and other factors — can be waived and traded. New real-life league exceptions and salary regulations are implemented, and must be taken into account. Hopefully, this will not overcomplicate roster management, which is what happened with last year's Live.

This year, the postseason is much more prevalent. You're able to select workouts for your players, choosing which attributes to try to improve. Also, scouting is extremely detailed, with heavier comparisons and evaluations of everyone in the league.

2K3 has the distinction of being the first in the series to be solely for next-generation systems, and it shows. The graphics are amazing, with a high polygon count (especially in the heads) and tons of animations. The new ESPN license should greatly improve the interface, as well as the menus. NBA 2K3 looks to be attempting to change the status of the series from simple champion to legend. From what we've seen thus far, that's not an unreachable goal.

■ PLATFORM PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE ■ STYLE 1 TO 6-PLAYER SPORTS ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER VISUAL CONCEPTS ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 22



▲ The new ball dive. Learn it. Live it. Love it



▲ T-Mac and Vinsanity resolve their family differences on the playground



▲ The new Hornets uniform, being modeled by Kentucky standout Jamal Mashburn



▲ Kidd sees the ball, but there's nothing he can do about it now



The Ref's Call:

NBA 2K3 has the advantage of not needing much in the way of improvement over last year. The refined gameplay makes this series even more sublime, and the off-season aspects will deliver longevity. This is easily the favorite going into this season.

Allen Iverson Philadelphia 76ers

6' 165 lbs.
College: Georgetown
Years Pro: 6

The first overall pick of the 1996 draft, Iverson has gone on to accomplish nearly every feat a basketball player can (scoring titles, MVP awards, Rookie of the Year. Everything, it seems, except winning a championship. His awareness and fearless attitude — especially for someone his size — gives the Answer a lot of qualities to admire, even if his off-court escapades are controversial.





NBA ShootOut 2003



▲ C-Webb wants a ring in the worst way

▲ Nesterovic is too close to the hoop to draw the charge on Marbury

ShootOut hasn't been much of a contender in the past few years. On PlayStation 2, it may have challenged Live for supremacy, but it has done little to dazzle on the PS2. In fact, the series didn't even release a PlayStation 2 game for the 2002 series. This season, 989 takes what could be written off as a rebuilding year, and draws some attention by doing something radically different. While every other hoops game is trying to make the most detailed Franchise mode, NBA ShootOut 2003 instead implements a Career mode.

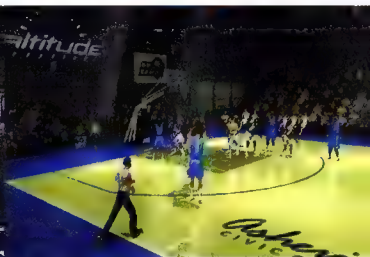
While Career mode at first just sounds like a different way to say Season or Franchise, it's actually a totally new concept for basketball titles. After building your aspiring baller, you'll have to make a name for yourself in the NBA summer league. This is the place where players young and old jockey for positions on their teams' final rosters. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there, and you control the entire team. Have your player impress the scouts, and he may be offered a 10-day contract from one or more NBA teams. If not, he may be offered a spot on one of the real NBA Development League squads, which act as a minor league.

Once fitted for your NBA uniform, you try to get accepted for the entire season. Will you give your guy the rock every time, and try to score? This could be detrimental as easily as it could be beneficial, since his attributes are weak, and nobody likes a guy with a low shooting percentage or lots of turnovers. The team's record also comes into play, so will you be selfish or do what's best for the team? The strategy involved is intriguing.

The entire ShootOut package has actually been redesigned. This includes building the engine, characters, arenas, and animation from scratch. The game's graphics and animation can now compete with any other out there. The burgeoning engine, however, has a few kinks to work out. 989 hopes Career mode will compensate for first-year jitters in most other aspects. It's got a lot of ground to make up, but coming out with an original concept like this is a good way to start.



▲ Portland summer league prospect Shamus McNanus glides in the outdoor court



▲ Where else can you play as the Asheville Attitude? Where, we ask you?



▲ The NBADL team from Greenville is called the Groove. Now can you dig it?

▲ Leaving Ray open is not a smart decision

■ PLATFORM PLAYSTATION 2 ■ STYLE 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ PUBLISHER SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
 ■ DEVELOPER 989 SPORTS ■ RELEASE SEPTEMBER 15



The Ref's Call:

Career mode will satisfy many gamers' thirst for something new and different in basketball simulations — which we're sure to see from every series next year — but ShootOut still has a ways to go before becoming a total gaming package.

Ray Allen Milwaukee Bucks

6'5" 205 lbs.
 College: Connecticut
 Years Pro: 6

Ray is one of the most prolific long distance shooters in the game. He won the three-point shootout at the 2003 All-Star game, and his 87.6% career free throw shooting puts him among the best ever from the charity stripe. He's also known for his part opposite Denzel Washington in Spike Lee's *He Got Game*. With Glenn Robinson gone from the Bucks, Ray will get a bigger chance to shine in the 2002-2003 season.





NBA Starting Five

Konami isn't regarded as a sports powerhouse by any stretch of the imagination. Aside from soccer, most attempts at football, basketball, and hockey have been met with scorn. Things changed a bit last year, when ESPN NBA 2Night 2002 turned some heads. 2Night 2001 was extremely flawed, but a tremendous amount of the complaints were rectified in the follow-up, and Game Informer said it was the "most improved series" in its review. Even though it lost the ESPN license in the off-season, Konami is determined to continue the upswing with Starting Five.

There really haven't been too many drastic changes implemented this year. Instead, Konami continues to add polish to its stable foundation. The Franchise mode was both admirable and entertaining in 2002, and returns with a few more options. Nearly every facet of a general manager's duties has been nicely reproduced.

Subtle gameplay improvements are everywhere. Rebounds can be tipped in for garbage points, and players will stretch out to save a ball from going out of bounds. Konami is introducing something called Tactics, which is an interesting twist on the typical b-ball play-calling. Rather than calling specific plays, Starting Five uses each team's style and strategies to switch up the flow of the game.

Starting Five still seems a little low rent, unfortunately—especially compared to big boys like 2K3 and Live. The commentary and music doesn't add much flair, and flashy cutscenes and eye candy are absent thus far. Furthermore, teammate AI and passing are not up to snuff yet. We want to see just as big of an improvement for 2003 as we saw for 2002, but what it looks like we'll end up with is another year of solid, if unspectacular, hoops from Konami.

■ **PLATFORM** PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT OSAKA ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 8

Big Ben shows how player faces are much more expressive this year ▼



▲ The Franchise pulls down a board with authority



▲ This is the only non-close-up shot in this feature. Enjoy it



▲ Jason Rose is the one shining star on the Bulls



▲ These two may meet in the Finals again this year, especially with Dikembe as a Net



▲ Reggie gets the job done



The Ref's Call:

Starting Five is still lagging slightly behind b-ball's MVPs. It will most likely make the playoffs this season, but only as a low seed. None of the new features will attract much attention, but Konami still has a solid hoops title on its hands.

Tracy McGrady Orlando Magic

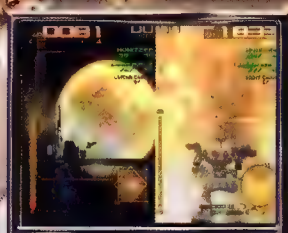
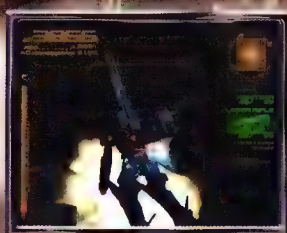
6'8" 210 lbs
College: None (Mount Zion Christian Academy High School)
Years Pro: 5

After playing second fiddle to cousin Vince Carter in chilly Toronto, McGrady really heated up once he was traded to the Magic. He was the Most Improved Player for '00-'04, so it's only appropriate he represents Konami, whose NBA 2Night 2002 was called "Most Improved Series." Ranking fourth in points-per-game last season, T-Mac is one of the league's most exciting players to watch.



Control of the Earth is Still Undecided...

Visit www.armoredcore.agetec.com



Violence

Exclusively For:

PlayStation®2



FROM SOFTWARE™

A detailed promotional image for the video game Armored Core 3. The central focus is a large, heavily armored mecha with a red and black color scheme, featuring a prominent blue glowing eye. It stands in a dark, industrial environment with other mecha parts and structures visible in the background. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows. At the bottom center, the game's title 'ARMORED CORE 3' is displayed in a stylized, metallic font with a glowing orange and red gradient. The background shows a complex of industrial buildings and machinery, suggesting a futuristic or dystopian setting.

ARMORED CORE 3

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The logo for the publisher agetec, featuring the word "agetec" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. A red swoosh underline is positioned above the letters "e" and "t".

agetec

PREVIEWS



Here's our first look at the game's new crouch move



Sound the alarm – the fire truck is back!



Hopefully, he's shooting the guy who sold him that shirt

PLAYSTATION 2

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

FLASHDANCING THROUGH OBLIVION

We knew our Grand Theft Auto: Vice City cover was going to cause a stir, but we had no idea just how big the buzz on this game was until Game Informer's September issue hit store shelves. Suddenly, we were the talk of the Internet, and every website this side of www.marthastewart.com was posting full-size scans of our article (thieves!!). Our phone was ringing off the hook, and soon we were wondering if we should hold a press conference to address the hundreds of questions that we were receiving regarding Rockstar's upcoming smash hit.

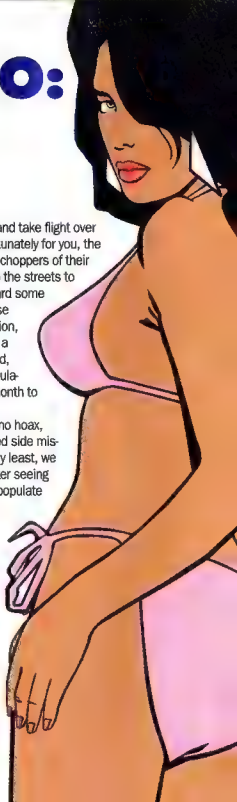
Yes, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City is looking to be an even bigger success than GTA III is, in terms of both sales and quality. After giving us a mother lode of information last month, Rockstar has been a bit coy in unveiling new details regarding the game. Still, they gave us this new batch of screenshots, and dropped some further hints about some of the wild action that will be found on the mean streets of Vice City.

While new information on Vice City is being as closely guarded as the United States' plans for bombing Iraq, we have managed to secure these jaw-dropping screenshots. So far, the addition of motorcycles to the GTA universe has been the talk of the streets, and we can now show you our first glimpse of Tommy straddling an exhaust-belching road hog. Another image that really gets our imaginations flowing is the shot of the golf cart. Pulling a drive-by on Fuzzy Zoeller seems too good to be true, but it has been confirmed that the cart is a drivable vehicle in the game. Even more mind-blowing is Rockstar's revelation that

you'll be able to charter a helicopter and take flight over the tropical waters of Vice City. Unfortunately for you, the city's SWAT teams are equipped with choppers of their own, and will use them to rappel onto the streets to stop your crime wave. We've also heard some rumors that there will be more of these "non-traditional" forms of transportation, including a bicycle that plays a role in a stealth-oriented mission. Keep in mind, Rockstar has not confirmed this speculation, so we'll have to wait until next month to find out for certain.

Of course, the fire truck you see is no hoax, and we can be sure that these beloved side missions will be back in effect. At the very least, we can use it to hose ourselves down after seeing one of the comely roller skaters that populate the beach areas of Vice City. For now, all we can do is stare and drool, but rest assured that in the coming months we'll be able to give Vice City a proper playable run-through. It's going to be huge, kiddies – so get ready for October 22, a day that will likely be a momentous occasion in video game history.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR
■ **DEVELOPER** ROCKSTAR NORTH ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 22

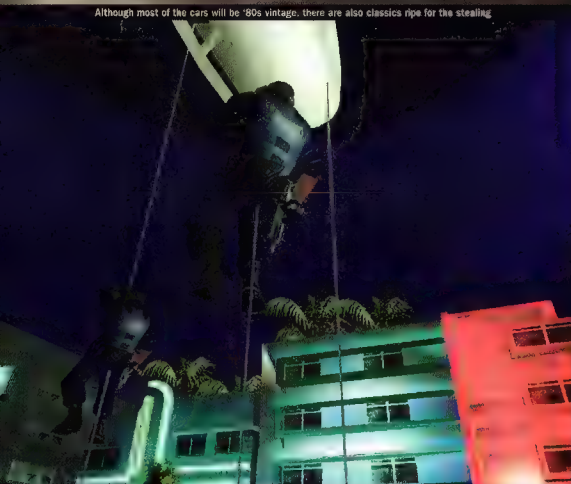




Although most of the cars will be '80s vintage, there are also classics ripe for the stealing



Cue "Bad to the Bone" and hop on your hog



In Vice City, SWAT teams can strike from the skies



"Ayo, baby, how you doin'?"



This time, you don't have to live in a craggy room off an alley!



Talk about beautiful scenery!



PLAYSTATION 2

RATCHET & CLANK

THE NEW BREED OF PLATFORMER

If someone told you that Grand Theft Auto III was directly responsible for the evolution of the action/platform genre, what would you say? Our guess is that you'd probably slap the individual across the face and strongly urge them to seek therapy. The sad truth, however, is that GTA III is, in some regard, responsible for the maturation of the platformer. The target audience for this genre has always been kids, but come this holiday season, it is the teenage gaming populace that has the bulls-eye painted on their foreheads. The reason is simple: There are more adults playing games than kids. Gaming has grown up.

Take Ratchet & Clank, for instance. From the exterior, primarily the designs of the characters, it looks like every other platformer on the market. Upon closer inspection, however, you'll see that Ratchet's holding one of the largest guns ever conceived. Big deal, you say? Think of it this way: What would your impression be if you saw Mickey Mouse running around with an M-16? Sony's target audience is 13-plus. So, we're essentially moving from a PG rating to PG-13. What does this entail exactly? From what we've seen thus far, a number of things, but mostly violence. There's some tongue-in-cheek humor, and some finely animated alien babes, but it basically boils down to the animated violence that erupts onscreen. It's not overly bloody or filled with gore, but it may be too much for a young mind to handle.

For those of us who have been gaming for years – being born and raised on the platforming genre – the platformers today are not designed for us. It's kind of like an old person wearing a diaper. It doesn't seem right; but it is, in fact, a perfect fit. With Ratchet & Clank, hardcore gamers will fall head over heels in love with the depth that Insomniac Games has labored long and hard to perfect. You'll be able to manhandle over 35 different weapons and gadgets including a flamethrower, user-guided rockets, minute helper robots, a suction cannon, and a hoverboard. It's up to the player to learn which tools work best for given situations, such as boss battles, and uncovering unexplored territory.

Platforming, of course, is in full effect as well, and is, in many ways, just as rich in variety as the weapons and gadgets. Leap from wall to wall, soar with a double jump, flip sideways; you're as acrobatic as Mary Lou Retton! As if the weapons, gadgets, and character moves weren't enough, your sidekick in crime, Clank, can also be called upon to aid in a number of ways, including hovering with helicopter blades attached to his head.

With all of these elements in place, you'll find yourself scouring every corner for a secret, saving up enough greenbacks to purchase the latest gadget, and backtracking to previous levels to see if your new powers will lead to new areas. It's a huge game, and in true Insomniac fashion, of the highest of quality as well.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
 ■ **DEVELOPER** INSOMNIAC GAMES ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12



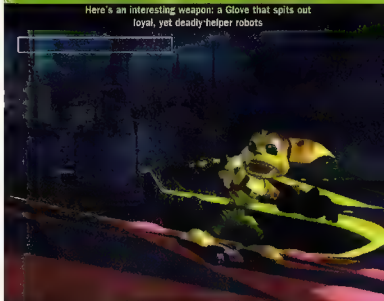
This picture isn't messed up. Ratchet will eventually wear boots that allows him to walk on any metal surface—even walls!



The game starts out easy, but the difficulty escalates with each passing level



Here's an interesting weapon: a Glove that spits out loyal, yet deadly helper robots



Later in the game, Ratchet will compete in a harrowing hoverboard race



The visuals are simply breathtaking



"Hey toots, you know what they say about the size of a guy's tail?"



At one point during the game, Ratchet and Clank have a falling out. Of course, the player will follow Clank's exploits!





XBOX

PANZER DRAGON ORTA

EYE CANDY



television since you watched *Ishtar*. As a pure shooter, Panzer Dragon Orta has no competition to worry about. Even if the Xbox library were filled with shooters, Orta would have no rival. Are you seeing those pictures? Look at that huge one on top! Tell us that doesn't look awesome. What makes it even better is the fact that this game is going to have

you glued to your seat for hours on end. Although you and your transformable dragon will fly through levels on a rail, you'll have the ability to morph your ride into three distinct forms (armor, power, and speed), and even shoot behind yourself if the situation calls for it. You'll need all the help you can get – those with lazy trigger fingers are going to be spending a lot of time surfing to the "replay level" option in the menu system.

Don't worry, there will be multiple tracks that you can take as you tool along these massive environments, and you'll be flying vertically as well as horizontally. That's awesome, but the sheer number of enemies hurtling through the air at you might cause those with health conditions to suffer an embolism. How many units can Smilebit squeeze on your screen without sacrificing the Holy Grail of 60 frames per second? A hundred? A million? A trazzillion? Okay, the last two might be a bit on the wish-list side, but from what we've seen, you won't be disappointed.

One thing that makes us go "hmm" is how the title will make up for its lack of free-range control. More enemies, bigger bosses, faster levels, and eye-watering speed are a few, but will that be enough? It has yet to be seen, but we really like the stat tracking and ranking system that shows up at the end of each level. From how many kills you have to how fast you bested bosses, this system will be the basis of bragging rights in basements (or wherever you have your system set up) all over the world. November isn't that far away – maybe you can do some deep knee-bends or something to get ready.

Little do you know it, but Sega representatives are actually living under your bed. They plug electrodes into your brain while you sleep to find out what kind of game to make next. Although they have gotten various and sundry ideas having to do with Pamela Anderson and a bottle of hand lotion, what really stuck out was the overwhelming desire of Xbox owners to play a great looking shooter. Never mind those strange chafing marks on miscellaneous parts of your body, Sega knows what you want – and by gum, you're going to get it!

Mark November 12 down on your calendars, kiddies. This is the day your Microsoft interactive entertainment platform (we like to call it "Xbox") will belch smoke from the sheer number of computations needed to throw up the most amazing visuals you've seen on your

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER SMILEBIT ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 12



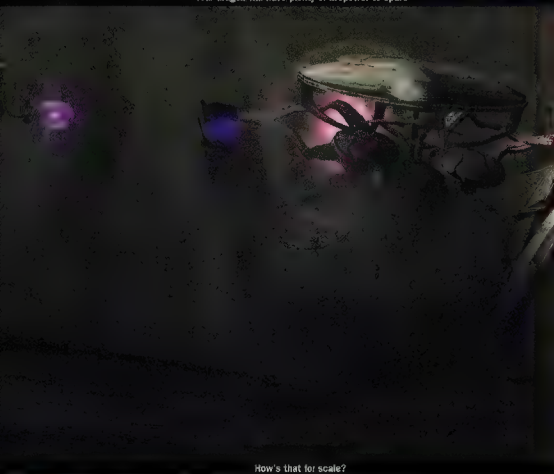
The unit models have been beautifully rendered



That guy's about to become a rocket man



Your dragon will have plenty of firepower to spare



How's that for scale?



Those big mutant flying dolphins don't look very friendly



PC/XBOX

DOOM III

GROSS! YET STRANGELY COMPELLING...

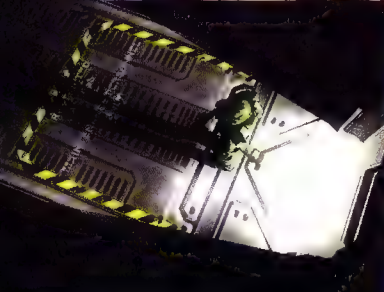
We'll admit it! This is nothing more than a shameless ploy to put more pictures of the game you already know everything about in our magazine. Or maybe you don't know everything. Sherlock. Did you know that it was recently announced by John Carmack that Doom III will head to the Xbox after the PC version releases? You *didn't*, did you? Furthermore, id representatives are saying that they're hopeful Doom III for the PC will release by the time E3 rolls around next May. We'll believe it when we see it, fellas!

Aside from the release date debate, other Doom-ish goodies have sifted their way to the surface. A lot of the technical innovations being molded into this title bear noting. First is the advent of per-polygon hit zones. This could mean that shooting a zombie (or whatever is in your sights) in the shoulder could illicit a different response than hitting him in the collarbone. Not too shabby. Another technical nugget you might be interested in is how advanced the physics will be in this title. Monsters will fall down stairs, over railings, or on top of each other as they're dispatched; and will do so with rag doll-like movement which will allow them to crumple realistically when they die. Objects in your environment will also enjoy realistic physics. For example, let's say you're in a room with a bunch of boxes sitting on shelves and a light hanging in the middle. As you start shooting at everything in sight, the boxes will fall off their shelves and skid across the floor, and the light will swing with each hit, casting real-time shadows on all surroundings. You know it's going to be awesome. Don't worry—we'll keep you updated as we hear more.



If you're this close to whatever that thing is, you probably won't live long enough to enjoy it

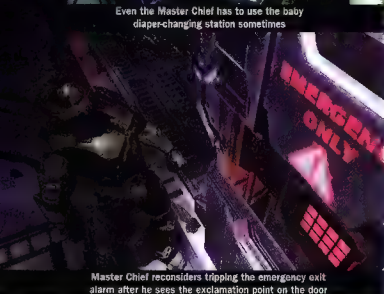
■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER ID SOFTWARE
■ RELEASE 2003



If this were multiplayer, you'd probably be dead by now.



Even the Master Chief has to use the baby diaper-changing station sometimes.



Master Chief reconsiders tripping the emergency exit alarm after he sees the exclamation point on the door.

XBOX

HALO 2

MASTER BLASTER

You really couldn't have started a console off better than with Halo. It was not only "launch title" good, it was a great game that any system would have liked to have in its library for all time. Although first-person shooters have been a staple on the PC for years, Halo had Xbox owners acting like their game was the one and only FPS you should be playing – it was that amazing.

Halo 2 won't hit the stores until Christmas 2003 (which means that you are certainly getting a lump of coal this year), but developer Bungie's recent teaser trailer gave us our first look at the title. After being assured that this footage was created from the title's new graphics engine, we were reintroduced to the man simply known as The Master Chief. With the familiar voice of Cortana once again echoing through his helmet, we see him preparing for his most dangerous mission yet. Covenant forces were defeated at Halo, but are not about to let up on Humankind. Against the intentions of the Cole Protocol, the UNSC's worst fears have come true: The Covenant have found Earth. After arming himself in the ship's hanger, the Master Chief opens the hatch and prepares to deploy. Below, he can see Covenant strikes impacting magnificently on the Earth's surface. Without a thought, Chief jumps out with nothing but his armor suit and joins the fray...

Apart from the fact that there are double the number of vehicles, a load of new weapons to trigger, and some non-

Covenant enemies to frag, Bungie has upped the stakes in the one area where many thought it just couldn't get any better: graphics. "We're doing dynamic lighting and shadows, per-pixel everything, rendering gigantic, lush environments..." says engineer Chris Butcher. "The graphical features we're using are so advanced we don't even have buzzwords for them yet."

And now the question you've been dying to ask: What about multiplayer? Halo 2 will be compatible with Xbox Live, and is promising to revolutionize the online FPS – a genre that people still can't get enough of. The title's designers have already fleshed out scenes of massive warfare involving multiple vehicles and large troop deployments. Of course, with Xbox Live, you'll get Communicator amenities like squad orders and voice chat.

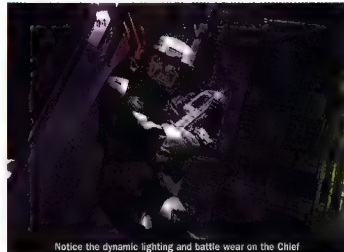
Could things get much better? Actually, yes. As excited as we are to resume our killing ways, we hope that Bungie will finish off later levels, instead of the repeated environments that marred the first Halo. Also, it would be nice not to look like a drunken monkey while driving the Warthog. Well, as they say, you've got to leave something for the sequel.

We know that hype for a game like this is always going to be huge, but consider this: The hubbub before Halo released was just as big, and it didn't disappoint. With over a year before it comes out, we have all the confidence in the world that Bungie will meet and exceed our expectations.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (16-PLAYER VIA LAN, ONLINE TBA) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** BUNGIE STUDIOS
 ■ **RELEASE** WINTER 2003



Take the one with the clip of whoop ass



Notice the dynamic lighting and battle wear on the Chief

namco
1999-2001




Ninjas: **BAD**


Ninjas with guns: **BAD ASS**



Better reload often! Swarms of demons and powerful bosses.



Three intense modes of play to keep those guns blazing.



Insanely fast Guncon™2 blasting action.

GUNCON™2



You're part of the action with the fast and accurate Guncon™2.

Demon scum this fast require something with a little more pop. So ditch the sword. Dump the stars. And grab hold of the Guncon™2 — official Demon-Slayer of bad ass Ninjas everywhere.



Blood
Violence

PlayStation 2

Ninja
NINJA ASSAULT™
ASSAULT

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PlayStation 2

PlayStation 2



In addition to the existing list of tricks, hundreds of new moves have been created



"Like... take a picture of my butt, dude."



Getting tired? Lay down and relax in an online street luge competition

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4

TRICKED OUT TO THE MAX

After three chart-topping installments, we couldn't help but question this series' staying power. Does Tony Hawk have what it takes to join the hallowed ranks of John Madden as a yearly updated video game establishment? As we soon learned, with Neversoft at the helm, this franchise will continue to soar. Within just a year of development time, the dedicated staff at Neversoft has completely rewritten the graphics engine, reworked the Career mode, tweaked the physics, designed a handful of minigames, implemented new online plans, and included more depth than we ever thought possible. Even more amazing yet, Neversoft has done this for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube versions of the game. All three will ship on time, and all three will light up your boob tubes with a sports car-like polish.

This fourth installment can be viewed as a rebirth of sorts. The gameplay is just as explosive as it always was, and your skills from the previous games will transfer over without a hitch, but the overall structure of the game has been drastically overhauled. The Career mode is now designed in an expansive manner, taking just as long to conquer once as it would take to beat Tony Hawk 3 with every character. The stages are no longer timed, either. Much like Grand Theft Auto III, you can tool around and explore at your own pace. All of the objectives that you must seek out and complete are tied to the denizens of the given environment. Converse with them, and they'll ask you to take care of business. These goals

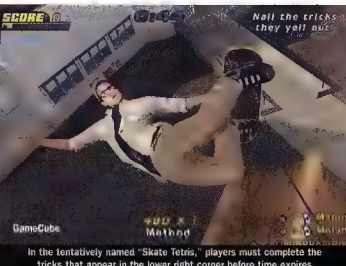
include the traditional staples like SKATE and scoring, but mostly consist of new feats like racing, COMBO, and a slew of minigames like tennis and basketball. A lot of variety has been added, and in such, you never know what is going to happen next. You may find yourself laying down flat on your board and racing through gates as if you were on a street luge.

If you felt that the objectives in the previous Tony Hawk games were a little easy, you'll probably find yourself eating your words when you play Tony 4. Neversoft has recognized the lackluster difficulty and has created pro challenges for hardcore gamers. This is great news indeed, but you may want to stock up on extra controllers before attempting these harrowing goals. Every move (even the new Spine Transfer move) is called upon frequently in these challenges.

For the artists out there who revel within the Park Editor, you'll now have the ability to create Career mode-like stages, complete with user-set objectives like high scores, combo completions, and hidden tapes. Rumor has it that you may be able to use these parks for online competitions. Neversoft has yet to reveal its entire online plan — including which console(s) it will utilize — but we hear that it's overflowing with new modes and is expected to support up to five players.

It sounds incredible, and we can't wait to see how it turns out in the end. From what we can tell, Tony 4 should be the best in the series. We'll find out in a couple of months. It should be a feast for the senses.

■ STYLE 1 TO 5-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER NEVERSOFT ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 5



In the tentatively named "Skate Tetris," players must complete the tricks that appear in the lower right corner before time expires



All of the characters in the game feature voices. The professional skaters are actually voiced by their real-life counterparts

COMING 10.22.02

grand theft auto *vice city*



PlayStation 2

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PC

UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING

AN INTENSE DOSE OF UNREALITY

Most gamers are perhaps more familiar with Unreal Tournament and its impending sequel, Unreal Tournament 2003, but these are the multiplayer-only components in the scope of the entire Unreal universe. Unreal II is the sequel to Unreal – the single-player FPS adventure that started everything.

The story remains connected to the existing Unreal world, but introduces an original plot and cast; only the Skaarj (a deadly race of predators) will return. Players take on the role of a 24th-Century Terran Marshal, who must maintain order in a sector of space that humans slowly begin to colonize. When someone discovers that seven planets in the area each house an ancient artifact, five alien races converge to fight for possession of these antiques. You and your team of three must acquire them before the warring factions do.

The quest will consist of 35 levels within 13 missions. Fortunately, Legend is spending considerable time ensuring that each area presents enough unique situations to make gameplay interesting throughout. The missions will range from typical heart-thumping free-for-alls and escorting objectives to command based squad fights. Each level will take place in different environments; some will be indoor and outdoor scenarios, and one will actually put you inside a large, living organism!

The myriad weapons should further make for an eclectic gaming experience. Unlike Unreal, which featured only sci-fi inspired alien weapons, players will receive a set of human guns such as a shotgun, machine gun, and rocket launcher; as well as a new alien arsenal. The most interesting of these is a parasite-based pistol that drains the life of an enemy when it connects. And of course, each weapon comes with primary and secondary modes of fire.

Although we previously stated that Unreal II is single-player, Legend has taken strides to include a deep online component. It plans to devote 20 maps to multiplayer, which are all versions from settings encountered throughout the adventure. We know of at least three game modes: Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, and a unique class-based competition. In this latter mode, teams of three classes (light, medium, and heavy) are organized by a commander. The commander must then distribute weapons to the team based on how many artifacts the team maintains and the team's power supply – sounds cool!

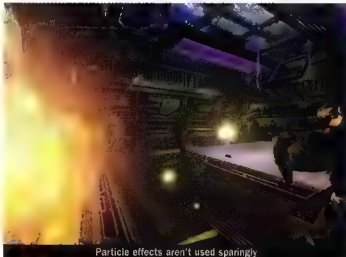
Unfortunately, since Unreal II releases after 2K3, the multiplayer aspect may go overlooked. But who cares, as long as the single-player experience fulfills its promise.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (ONLINE TBA) ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAVES ■ **DEVELOPER** LEGEND ENTERTAINMENT

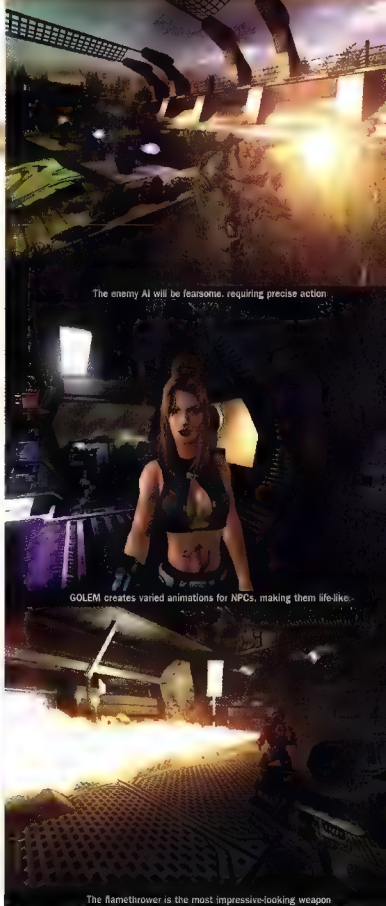
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19



There will be a whole host of enemies with varying attack methods.



Particle effects aren't used sparingly.



The enemy AI will be fearsome, requiring precise action.

GOLEM creates varied animations for NPCs, making them life-like.

The flamethrower is the most impressive-looking weapon.

PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS HEROES

GAUNTLET FOR GEEKS

Dice rollers, listen long and listen hard. Your beloved pen and paper RPG is transforming into the ultimate video game experience. No longer will you be forced to sit around your mom's dining room table with a bunch of your nerdy nerd friends. With *Dungeons & Dragons Heroes*, imagination is a thing of the past. All of the Third Edition rules are included, among them Character Building from the *Player's Handbook* and creatures drawn directly from the *Monster Manual*. The gameplay is stylized in the *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* vein, but with four-player support. Your dorky pals can jump in at any point during play, and you can even transfer your character statistics between households. You'll see more magic than you did in *Baldur's Gate*, as well as fighter, wizard, cleric, and rogue classes. All of this loserific play will be available early next year for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube.



Up to four players can journey together

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** INFOGRAMES HUNT VALLEY
■ **RELEASE** FIRST QUARTER 2003

70 GAME INFORMER



PLAYSTATION 2

WAR OF THE MONSTERS

PLEASING TASTE, SOME MONSTERISM

Silly humans try to stop you, and get stuck to the bottom of your foot like chewed gum on a sidewalk. You are not privy to their rules and morals – you're a monster! You can do whatever you damn well please! This is the spirit that embodies *War of the Monsters*.

IncoG Inc. – the company behind the blockbuster hit *Twisted Metal: Black* – is using its combat instincts to craft *War of the Monsters* into another hard-hitting release. The beastly cast is composed of 10 different 100-foot-tall freaks of nature (that's 1,000 feet of scales, hair, and fangs), who are dropped into picturesque environments that exist only to be reduced to rubble. This means everything – and we mean everything – can be destroyed. Hurl a Cadillac like a dart, or chomp on hapless pedestrians like KFC Popcorn Chicken. Who's going to stop you? Nobody, except perhaps one of the other monstrosities pitted against you.

War of the Monsters doesn't want to be another mindless brawler. Instead, it utilizes a few time-tested fighting game moves, such as counters, combos, and even air recoveries. Collectable tokens, which you can exchange for all sorts of goodies, help to increase *WotM's* replay value.

The vibe is a humorous one, with a decidedly 1950s and 1960s retro movie monster feel. This shows up predominantly in the black-and-white cutscenes. In real-time, each character is a feast for the eyes, sporting its own unique animations and skeletons. *War of the Monsters* rings in the New Year with style. We may never be the same.



Spare the bus, spoil the mantis

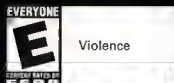
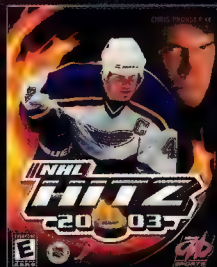
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** INCOG INC.
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 2003



WHAT'S HOCKEY WITHOUT HITZ?

FIRE AND ICE JUST TOOK ON A WHOLE NEW MEANING. ENTER NHL HITZ 20-03, THE EXCLUSIVE ADRENALINE-STYLE HOCKEY VIDEOGAME TO COMBINE REAL NHL TEAMS AND PLAYERS MIXED UP IN AN INFERNO OF BLISTERING HOCKEY ACTION. THIS YEAR'S HITZ TURNS IT UP A NOTCH WITH A TON OF NEW FEATURES AND ALL THE GLASS-SHATTERING AGGRESSIVE ACTION YOU'VE COME TO LOVE. WHO KNEW THE ICE COULD GET SO HOT?

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PlayStation 2

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PREVIEWS



XBOX

DEATHROW

DAZ AND KURUPT NOT INCLUDED

Despite our greatest hopes, this game isn't about trying to escape from a one-sided Suge Knight record contract. No, don't buy Deathrow if you're expecting to see '64 Impalas, creased khakis, Glock nines, and Chuck Taylors. Instead, the combatants in Deathrow duke it out with their fists and feet, sport quasi-futuristic armor suits, and fight to the death in a unique bloodsport that Ubi Soft terms a combination of "fighting and rugby" — as if there was a difference.

In keeping with the deadly sports theme, you'll actually earn money by winning matches, allowing you to improve your team's attributes and even recruit high-profile free agents from other squads. Teamwork will play a big role during gameplay as well, as many of the best finishing moves will be "Team KOs," which allow you and a comrade to perform bone-crunching co-op combos. From these screens, you can see that all this bloodletting should look quite amazing; and, from what we hear, will sound even better as the one thing that Deathrow shares in common with its West Coast counterparts is a severe case of potty mouth.



"You know Ist must see drop or gangster robes. 'Avant!' — The German branch of the Bloods invade Deathrow"

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SOUTHEND INTERACTIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 15



XBOX

PLAYSTATION 2 / XBOX / GAMECUBE

DEFENDER

THE OFFENDER



In what may be the next big trend in action games, Midway is resurrecting its classic arcade hit on next-generation consoles. Defender is coming back in an all-new 3D environment, but still serves a heaping helping of action. Game Informer recently had a lengthy hands-on with Defender at a Midway event in Las Vegas, and the game seems to be coming along beautifully.

You'll instantly recognize the feel of the game as you soar around various and sundry environments in increasingly sophisticated spacecraft. The story is basically window dressing to the action (save the humans from the aliens), but there's so much action, you'll probably care less. While you're getting used to your favorite ship, you'll notice that the camera uses a familiar chase angle that we've all come to know so well, and the upgrades and mission objectives are fairly by the book. What may be surprising is how the objectives and upgrades affect your mission. By hovering over colonists, you'll pick them up and drop them off in a safe zone. If that zone happens to have a factory, the colonists may go in and a few moments later a tank will roll out. Now you're able to pick up that tank and drop it in a strategic location to battle the enemies coming in. Not bad, eh? Stay tuned for more info as we get it.



XBOX

How's that for a huge environment?



PLAYSTATION 2

Each ship will have unique abilities and stats



"Die, you four-legged freak!"



PLAYSTATION 2

An intuitive targeting system will help you score more kills

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 4



PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE

NASCAR DIRT TO DAYTONA

RACE THE TRUCK!

Developer Monster Games prides itself on the physics model for its vehicles – and rightly so. Who could forget the mayhem caused by those wipeouts of careening cars in NASCAR Heat (the franchise has now been renamed)? Or the myriad garage settings that would make a fully-grown mechanic get loose in his shorts? As deep as last year's Heat was in the technical department, it was sadly lacking in career options. The remedy this year? Race the truck. Dale Jarrett doesn't drive the UPS truck with Muppets strapped to the hood, but you will be able to participate in the Craftsman Truck Series (and others) as part of an overhauled career mode.

Your jumpsuit-weann', RV-livin' life starts out in the dirt track circuit, where you must scratch out a living by accumulating sponsors and prize money to build your car up. This even boils down to comparing the effectiveness of parts and choosing where the Señor Taco logo goes. From here, you'll go on to the modified cars which ride similar to very, very fast go-carts. Master these and you can get behind the trucks and then later proceed to the more famous stock cars. These last two career phases allow you to take on a crew chief and other employees to form that winning team. Best of all, you will keep a full schedule of the previous circuits, letting you make money at your old stomping grounds.

Despite this game's new career depth, Monster hasn't forgotten its mantra of realistic handling. Each type of ride you race has its own characteristics. Imagine going from the modified cars to the stable downforce of the trucks. Also underlining the experience is the return of the celebrated Beat the Heat mode, phenomenal road textures, and other visual effects that have been Monster's mark on the sport. Can it steal EA's Thunder? Maybe.



Looks like all the makings of a yellow flag. Notice the new (and optional) draft meter at the bottom left

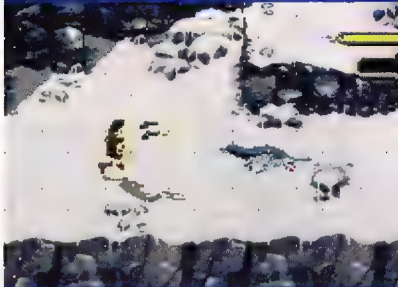
Dirt racing has its own dynamics to master (and no pit stops)

Four-player is new and fairly hot

Robby Gordon applies some wicked downforce to Kurt Busch's car

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** MONSTER GAMES ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12

PREVIEWS



GAME BOY ADVANCE

TOMB RAIDER: THE PROPHECY

THE NEW BOOB TUBE

How did the French company

Ubi Soft end up with Tomb Raider? Maybe like Jerry Lewis absurdly achieving genius status over in that country, the French are more willing to embrace the things that we don't want. But wait – this Tomb Raider's different, you say? Well, only in that, unlike previous handheld efforts, which were, decidedly 2D side-scrolling affairs, Prophecy lets Lara move more freely in 3D. Thus, her debut on the system is able to bring out more of her moves and the flavor of the series.

Game Informer got its hands on an early version of the title, and it did take us back to the old days. Okay, so maybe the only things that are really challenging to Lara right now are lots of wolves and falls from high ledges, but the game never really was about combat anyway. Instead, you'll flip and pant your way through sometimes large and complex maps of platforms, with switches the one telltale sign of progress. Also mimicking the original is the sparse use of sound and music to further emphasize dramatic moments.

With the E3 showing of Tomb Raider on PlayStation 2, a disappointment, perhaps fans will wax nostalgic for Prophecy's look back. Interestingly enough, the title itself even occasionally makes fun of its old gameplay formulas. Who's the joke on?



Lara splits the crack....

...and sits on top

The 3D space means more room for fighting

Giving the dog a bone

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT MILAN ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12

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, and 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 10 to 1, 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 every thing 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 who 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.



ANDY

Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** Queens Of The Stone Age, Vacations, Pantera Band, His Dark Materials **Dislikes:** Report Camping, Bad Taecwondo From Taco Bell, Parking Downtown, Getting My Car Washed **Current Favorite Games:** Sly Cooper And The Thievius Raccoonus, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4, Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2, Halo

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 Metrodroid, 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 titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.



MATT

Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters, Puzzle, Action/Adventure, Action/Sports **Interests:** Queens Of The Stone Age, Kristan's Swiss Army Knife Key Chain, Sonic Youth, The Jaz-O Vs. Jay-Z Battle **Dislikes:** "Am I Not Turtley Enough For The Turtle Club? Turtle, Turtle!" Being Consumed With Hatred For Steve Spurrier **Current Favorite Games:** Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4, Mario Sunshine, Super Monkey Ball 2, Eternal Darkness

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.



JUSTIN

Handle: The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Sports, Action/Adventure, Fighting, RPG **Interests:** Baking Up, Road Trips, Shortcake, Buying Games Under \$20 (See Below) And Not Playing Them, Beastie Boys **Dislikes:** Headphones, Weapons Of Mass Destruction, Missing Workouts Due To Travel/Deadline, Renner's Get Arms **Current Favorite Games:** Zone Of The Enders, Giants: Citizen Kabuto, Maximo, Frequency, Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

Unlike most gaming jargonists, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He's a former GWRP slave and moonlighting 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. Justin's gaming tastes are highly old school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plays into the latest titles.



CHEY

Handle: The Chronic Gamer **Expertise:** Fighting, Action, RPG, FPS, Shooter, Platform, Simulation **Interests:** Beauty, Game Centers, Buddhist Thought, Japan, Preacher Dislikes: Subs That Give You Diarrhea For Three Days **Current Favorite Games:** Street Fighter II, SFF Turbo, SFA3, X-Men Vs Street Fighter, Marvel Vs Capcom 2, Capcom Vs SNK 2

Chey considers gaming to be a lifestyle, which means that he spends a ridiculous amount of time with his games. When he's not in an intense session with his UT clan, *Inlane Assassinz*, or relaxing with one of his consoles, he's hopelessly seeking out arcades where fighting games still rule. Although he places all other activities at a distant second, he realizes the importance of society. Unfortunately, mimicking the motions for *Dragon Punches* and *Fireballs* only confuses and scares most people.



REINER

Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Cathy Preston (The Sweetest Person In The World), John Woodhouse (He's Like A Father To Me), Kiss Kissing, Bonus Checks **Dislikes:** The Gay Who Sits Next To Me, The Loser Who Drank My Coke, The Moron Who Deleted My Monkey Ball 2 Save, **Current Favorite Games:** Kingdom Hearts, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4, Super Mario Sunshine

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 506 times. A fan of all game types, re-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 *NG4* release, *Perfect Dark*.



KRISTIAN

Handle: The Video Viking **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Static Electricity, Mozart's *Requiem*, Golf, Being A Member Of Public Television **Dislikes:** Leaky Windshields, The Bloodstains On Justin's Chair **From The Ache On His Back Bursting** **Current Favorite Games:** Madden NFL 2003 (Ibex), Medieval: Total War, Isewind Dale II

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 text-driven *Zork* returned 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.



KATO

Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Action/Adventure, Racing, Action/Platform **Interests:** "The First Of The Gang To Die", Sanford And Son DVD, Dusty In Memphis **Dislikes:** Contract Holdups, Buying Fullscreen DVDs By Mistake, Lambrettas That Break Down After You Get Them **Current Favorite Games:** Madden NFL 2003, NASCAR Thunder 2003, Robotech: Battletary

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.



LISA

Handle: La Game Nikita **Expertise:** Puzzle, RPGs, Action/Platform **Interests:** They Might Be Giants, The Downfall Of Ticketmaster, DVD Storage Solutions, Hoek, He-Man Action Figures, Rice Cookers **Dislikes:** Lisa Happ, Lisa Votoes **Dislikes For The Month** **Current Favorite Games:** Animal Crossing, Tetris, Super Mario Sunshine, Final Fantasy X (X Gan)

Barring a brief and ill advised "I want to be popular, so I'll stop playing games" phase in late junior high, Lisa has been basking her friends drawn out boss battles since she was 8. She has been known to wax philosophically about why *Jiggly Puff* is desperately under-appreciated and wish that some "big" games were more fun, even if that means less prey.

CONCEPT

What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are re-imagined.

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. Do 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.



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).

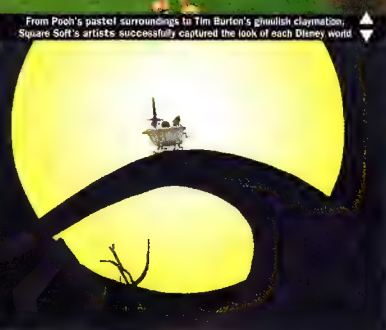
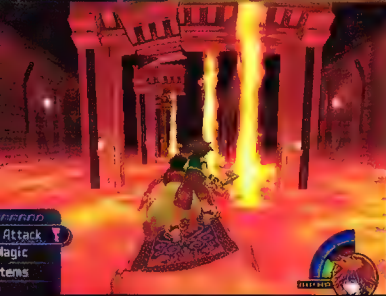
- action** – A term we use for games like Zone of the Enders and Gauntlet
- adventure** – A term we use for games like Myst and Escape From Monkey Island
- AI** – Artificial intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent
- board** – A term we use for games like Jeopardy! and Mario Party
- bump-mapping** – A technique where varying light effects simulate depth on textures
- CG** – Computer-Generated graphics
- 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
- frame-rate** – The Frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement
- frontend** – A game's menus and options
- 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 mocap
- motion blur** – Phantom frames follow an object to give the impression of realistic speed
- N64** – Nintendo 64
- NES** – Nintendo Entertainment System
- NPC** – Non-Player Character. Those people and creatures you see wandering around in games that are not being controlled by actual humans
- platform** – A term we use for games like Super Mario and Crash Bandicoot
- pop-up** – When onscreen objects, usually content, suddenly appear
- PS2** – Sony PlayStation 2
- PS-X** – Sony PlayStation
- particle effects** – Things like smoke or sparks created in real-time
- Piker** – Player Killer. This is a person who thrives on killing newbie or vulnerable characters in MMORPGs or shooting their teammates in games like Counter-Strike
- 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
- shooter** – A term we use for games like Mars Matrix and Gradus
- SNES** – Super Nintendo Entertainment System
- sports** – A term we use for games like Madden NFL
- 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
- Whorm** – **Churk!** – Noise heard when Game Informer editors attempt to do math

KINGDOM HEARTS

GAME OF THE MONTH KINGDOM HEARTS

"Kingdom Hearts? That game is for kids!" Au contraire, monfrère! Kingdom Hearts is just as harrowing and complicated as the Final Fantasy games. Even though the backdrop is set within the Disney universe, your time within it is spent customizing characters, summoning creatures, and building your very own airship. We didn't know what to expect, either, but in the end, we were completely blown away by Kingdom Hearts' fascinating storytelling, unique nature, and addictive gameplay. Welcome to a new era for RPGs! Page 76





PLAYSTATION 2

KINGDOM HEARTS

DISNEY IS HIP TO BE SQUARE

I had my doubts at first, but the wedlock between Disney's animation heritage and Square Soft's video game myths has produced a palpable hit. Whether or not you bask in its brilliance will be based solely on your discernment of the subject matter. Will Final Fantasy enthusiasts be able to accept—let alone comprehend—a heated duel between Final Fantasy VII's battle-hardened Cloud and Disney's tanky knucklehead Goofy? I have a feeling that this unique fusion may hit a little too close to home for most, and may even be viewed as a complete and utter mockery of everything role-playing fanatics hold sacred. At the same time, however, a person with a different perspective on the matter may in fact view these very complaints as groundbreaking accomplishments. In such, Kingdom Hearts' fate truly is in the eye of the beholder.

If you are willing to venture forth into this obscure world, I have a feeling that you'll find Kingdom Hearts to be just as irresistible as the Final Fantasy games. The first hook comes quickly. Given the age of the characters, the story may initially come across as childish, but rest assured that, as the plot unfolds, you'll find yourself completely engaged by the conflicts that erupt. Two people seek the affection of another. What lengths will they go to grasp it? Just as you begin to explore this avenue, everything as you know it is flipped upside down and radically changed. At this point, the game basically becomes a race for survival and companionship. All of this happens within the first hour. From here on out, Kingdom Hearts is a white-knuckle, roller coaster ride without relent.

Much like Final Fantasy X, the story breaks are accompanied by spoken dialogue. Square even went out of its way to assemble an all-star cast, including Haley Joel Osment (*The Sixth Sense*, *A.I.*) as the main character, Sora. I was a little disappointed to see that only half of the content in the game is actually voiced. It feels a tad awkward at times, especially when it transitions from a voiced segment, to just pantomiming the

text, then spoken dialogue again. I was surprised, however, with how smoothly the plot moves between scenes. This is especially impressive when you take into account that you continually warp from one familiar Disney world to the next. The wordsmiths at Square did a phenomenal job blending these elements together. It would be unfair of me to tell you where the journey will take you, and who exactly you will meet, but I will say that almost every Disney character (obscure or not) does make a cameo at some point.

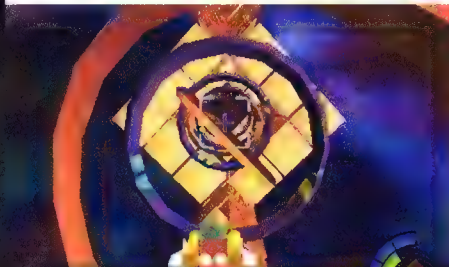
To complement the finely crafted story, Square Soft has concocted a luxurious gameplay package that ditches the traditional turn-based formula for straight-up action. The battles that unfold are as beautiful as they are intense, and as difficult as they are easy to manhandle. You'll need to master combo strings, leap across platforms, and look-on and circle for specific attack zones. Breaking the stigma that this is a kid's game, the attribute system is terribly complex. If you're not exchanging AP for new spells and moves, you'll be spending a significant amount of time building and customizing your very own arship.

If this wasn't enough, some of the puzzles, boss fights, and side quests will also have you scratching your head and cursing the gaming gods as you search feverishly for a solution and a means to victory.

Kingdom Hearts is less about a gimmick, and more about unleashing a journey unlike anything that you've ever seen before. Through razor-sharp gameplay, incredible depth, and awe-inspiring originality, Kingdom Hearts truly does deserve the highest of accolades. You just have to be comfortable with the concept to reap the benefits.

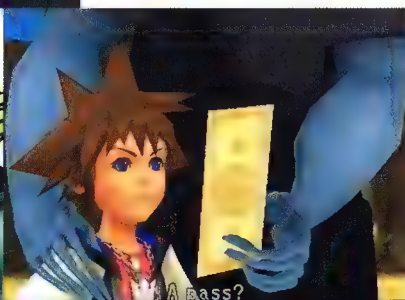
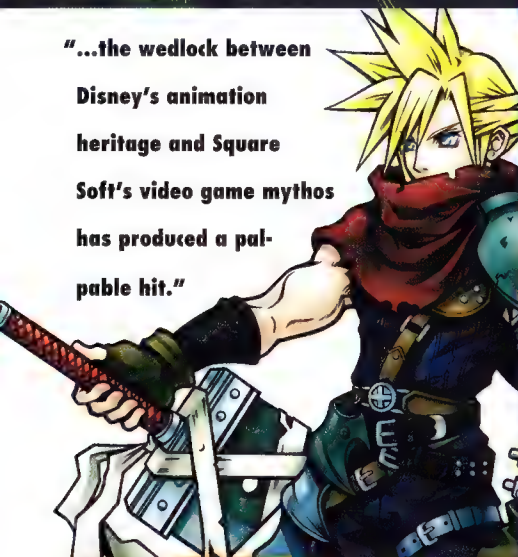


—REINER



Although lacking in graphical details, the Star Fox-like shooting stages are very entertaining, especially when you can build and customize your very own ship!

"...the wedlock between Disney's animation heritage and Square Soft's video game mythos has produced a palpable hit."



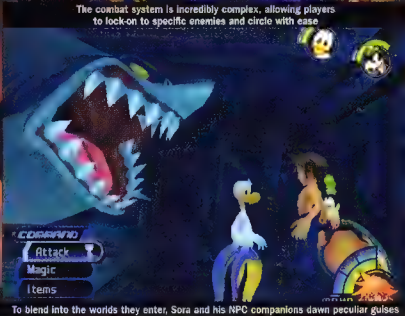
Hayley Joel "I see dead people" Demant is the voice of Sora



The combat system is incredibly complex, allowing players to lock-on to specific enemies and circle with ease



All of the enemy and boss encounters tie into the theme of the respective world and movie



To blend into the worlds they enter, Sora and his NPC companions don peculiar disguises

THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERYONE
E 9.5

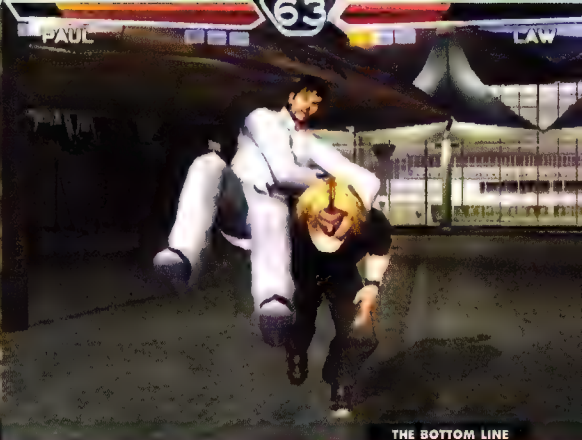
- **Concept:**
The magical world of Disney collides with Square Soft's legacy in an unforgettable action/RPG
- **Graphics:**
The intricacies of each world are accurately captured, and the character animation is just as impressive as it was in Final Fantasy X
- **Sound:**
An all-star cast of voice actors and mesmerizing Square Soft melodies
- **Playability:**
Engaging battles... responsive combat mechanics... surprisingly deep character customization
- **Entertainment:**
The quest is thoroughly amusing in itself, but once you throw in side quests and mirmagines, forget about it! You're hooked!
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION
Kingdom Hearts beautifully blends the dark worlds of Square and the eclectic, happy Disney universe in one seamless adventure that will captivate until the end. Fortunately, while the concept allows for everyone to enjoy the semi-dark story, Kingdom Hearts will challenge the most adept of gamers, especially on Expert mode. Each battle presents a challenge where death can, and does occur. Once you grow accustomed to the Zelda-inspired combat system, fighting becomes second nature, which is actually KH's coolest feature. Combat oozes with technique, myriad spells and special abilities, and a long list of allies to employ (Goofy, Donald, Tazran, Peter Pan, Aladdin, etc.). I do have a few minor gripes (the spaceship minigame can be tedious, and a few puzzles seem too abstract), but they definitely don't ruin the experience.

CHET - 9.5



MARDUK
REVIEWS



LAW

"...this latest edition has not broken [my heart], although my hopes for what it should've been were slightly disappointed."



▲ Some old faces, and a new one. The bald guy is Marduk.

PLAYSTATION 2

TEKKEN 4

THE 3D FIGHTING LIFE

Oh Tekken, thou hast bestowed upon me the gayest of gaming glee. Without your existence, I may never have understood the true fight in 3D. After your germination, you blossomed into Tekken 2 and 3, showing us a Zen-like state of gaming bliss! Although your Tag feature should've been free, it halted the horrors of Tekken starvation. Now your age has begun to show at number four, but your beauty I still adore.

I know I'm no Shakespeare, but as one of the pioneers of 3D fighting, Tekken maintains a special place in my heart. Fortunately, this latest edition has not broken it, although my hopes for what it should've been were slightly disappointed. Basically, Tekken 4 follows the tradition of the series quite faithfully. So, anyone even mildly familiar with any of the games will feel perfectly comfortable, especially with the old characters; they play almost exactly the same, except for the two or three techniques added to their arsenal. The new cast members are few this time around, but appropriately enhance the experience by offering unique fighting styles.

The only significant changes to combat that may cause disorientation are the ability to move in 3D, and the addition of enclosed, interactive backgrounds. Now, pressing up or down causes your character to move to their left

or right, rather than jump or duck. This ultimately allows players to parry enemy attacks more effectively.

The interactive backgrounds, while cosmetically cool, actually alter the Tekken experience more than initially suspected. For example, if you knock an enemy into a pipe on the wall, the pipe will burst, and more damage will be dealt. Furthermore, you can continue your combo more extensively since a wall will prevent your opponent from immediately falling. On the receiving end, this situation sometimes feels "cheap," but it nevertheless adds a new dimension to the combat, and appropriately forces you to work with or around the environments so that they become a strategic advantage.

As much as I love this enhanced fighting system, Tekken 4 is lacking in a few other areas. Mainly, the single-player experience is quite shallow, and certainly a step behind other titles in the genre - Alpha 3 has World Tour, Soul Calibur offers Mission mode, and VF4 features Kumite. T4's Story and Force modes are completely lame in comparison. If Namco truly wants to satisfy its fans, then it will give us something like KUMITE, and (please, please, please) online playability! - **CHET**

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER NAMCO ■ DEVELOPER NAMCO ■ RELEASE SEPTEMBER 24



Force mode is the same as before.



There are a ton of obstacles in the environments.

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEKKEN 4
9

■ **Concept:**

Throw a few new characters to some of the same old ones into interactive 3D environments

■ **Graphics:**

Definitely beyond VF4's, but still not on par with DOA3

■ **Sound:**

The music is decent and has some variety, but it's nothing special overall

■ **Playability:**

It's pretty much the same interface: nice and tight. But, since characters can move in 3D, the feeling is slightly different

■ **Entertainment:**

There are plenty of modes to play, which offer plenty of fun, but the single-player experience is shallow without something similar to VF4's Kumite

■ **Replay Value:**

High

SECOND OPINION

I'm a long-time fan of the Tekken series, and it really saddens me to see this edition offer so little innovation. Sure, the fighting is still fast and the graphics and levels are much improved; but other than the little baby steps forward in gameplay, some new characters, and better movies, this game really doesn't offer much over Tekken 3. Now, I will admit that it is very well done, but after playing Virtua Fighter 4 and experiencing all the wonderful and inventive things it did, Tekken 4 just seems stale in comparison. Will this game please fans of the series? Yes. Will it remind you of a game you played four years ago? Yes. Do we deserve more? Yes. I think this is still one of the top fighting series of all time, but I really expect Namco to try harder to move the series forward.

ANDY - 8

SMASHING!

The last thing to go through your mind will be your ass.

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III POINT OF IMPACT



HEART RACING. POLICE SIRENS FLASHING BEHIND YOU. HANDS CLENCHING THE WHEEL AS YOU MANEUVER THROUGH THE MOST REALISTIC TRAFFIC SCENARIOS EVER DEVELOPED. EYES WATERING AS YOU WITNESS THE MOST REALISTIC AND HORRIFIC CRASHES EVER SEEN IN A GAME. MUSCLES TENSING AS YOU TRY TO MAINTAIN CONTROL THROUGH 30 OPEN ROAD STAGES. YOU'VE PICKED YOUR CAR FROM AN AUTOMOTIVE ARSENAL OF 14 ALL-NEW VEHICLES. HOPEFULLY, CAR AND DRIVER WILL SURVIVE THE POINT OF IMPACT. OR THE LAST THING TO GO THROUGH YOUR MIND WILL BE YOUR ASS.



PlayStation 2





PLAYSTATION 2

NEED FOR SPEED HOT PURSUIT 2

BE SMOKEY OR THE BANDIT

"Others, like myself, will instantly fall in love with the intense adrenaline rush of the chase..."

Back in the early nineties, the Need For Speed franchise was best known for its realistic recreation of cars and its commitment to simulating realistic driving experiences. Through the years, the series has shifted to an arcade approach for racing, and that new mentality is best represented in its Hot Pursuit editions.

Featuring licenses of the world's fastest and most exotic cars, Hot Pursuit 2, like its predecessor, gives automobile enthusiasts a chance to take these out-of-reach super cars onto everyday, traffic-filled roads to see what they can do. Of course, what would speeding down the road in the latest Ferrari be if you didn't have the fuzz breathing down your rearview mirror?

That's the basic premise of Hot Pursuit 2, but the game is much deeper than that. Essentially two games in one, it has both a Hot Pursuit and a World Racing mode. The latter is all about flat-out racing against a player or computer opponent. It's a pretty decent driving experience and will fill up your time, but it's nothing compared to the furious and out-of-control racing of Hot Pursuit mode.

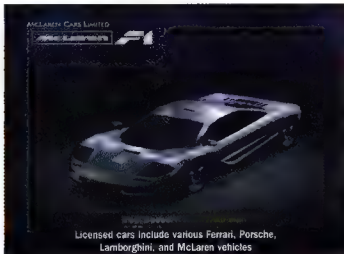
The main focus of both options is an event tree, which offers 30-plus challenges that give the player the opportunity to drive different cars and complete various timed-courses

runs. The big difference being that in Hot Pursuit, Smokey is on your tail and this leads to some insane pile-ups. Much like Grand Theft Auto, as the cops continue to pursue, you are awarded stars that increase your "wanted" status. As you rise in rank, the police become more intent on busting you by setting up road blocks, spike strips, and even calling in a helicopter that will drop exploding barrels in your path or fire missiles at you if you have evaded them for too long.

None of the races in the event tree are really much different from each other, which wasn't much of a disappointment for me, as I really enjoyed evading the police. In total, there are 49 cars and 20 track variations that can be unlocked by working your way through both modes. So if you can handle just dodging the fuzz all day long, there is plenty to do and discover.

Some people will think the game is too shallow, and I don't know that I can necessarily disagree with them. Others, like myself, will instantly fall in love with the intense adrenaline rush of the chase, and be able to play this game all day and night. I think if you give Hot Pursuit 2 a chance, you'll agree with me. Plus, it's better to get busted in a game driving a Lamborghini Diablo than having to fork out real cash when you get pulled over going 90 in your Ford Fiesta. — **ANDY**

■ **STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING** ■ **PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS** ■ **DEVELOPER BLACK BOX** ■ **RELEASE SEPTEMBER 23**



THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERYONE **E** **8.75**
PS2 XBOX

- **Concept:**
Beat the heat or race the street with a who's who of high-tech autos
- **Graphics:**
Not the prettiest racer ever, but it features lots of environment effects and the game just hauls ass
- **Sound:**
I can't believe there is a Rush song on here and it's not "Red Barchetta"
- **Playability:**
Tight and easy controls make the game a breeze to pick up and play
- **Entertainment:**
The Hot Pursuit races are intense and out of control, while the World Racing ones are kind of drab
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

It's got to be hard to be a racing game developer these days. Either you spend the time and money to go toe-to-toe with the 500-pound gorilla that is Gran Turismo, or you have to come up with a novel twist on the traditional formula, à la Driver or Stuntman. To its credit, Hot Pursuit 2 does neither, striking the delicate balance between realistic and arcade racing that made Ridge Racer so popular a few years ago. Actually, Hot Pursuit 2 does throw a few new curveballs into the mix, like a "heat" branching event tree, some completely useless and gimmicky camera tricks, and a mode which allows you to pull over speeders as a cop. Graphically, it's great, save for a few jaggies, and the control feels just right — which, at the end of the day, is all you can ask for in a game like this. Overall, it's a fun and invigorating ride, one that driving fans are going to love. One more thing — the soundtrack is horrid, so break out the Discman.

MATT — 8.75

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HALF-VAMPIRE,

AND ONLY
HALF-DONE
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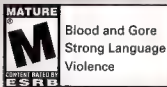


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PlayStation 2



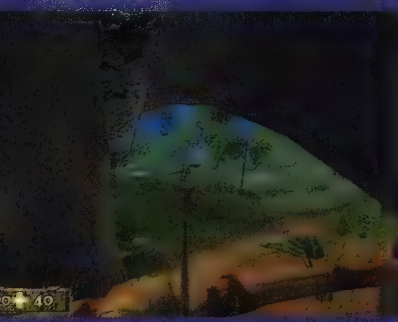
MARVEL

ACTIVISION

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activation.com

PlayStation 2, computer entertainment system and Xbox™ video game system screenshots shown.



PLAYSTATION 2

TUROK: EVOLUTION

ARE WE NOT MEN? T-E-V-O

There are many, many things to like about Turok: Evolution. When you first fire it up, the most obvious is that its graphics and speed are truly impressive, especially when you consider the plethora of plant and indigenous animals in every level. Exploring the worlds is also a treat, but this is where the game starts to see problems.

For one, the secret to a good first-person shooter is that the player can become one with the control so that targeting becomes almost second nature. Unfortunately, Turok's control, although fast, is not smooth and makes aiming difficult. Turn on auto targeting and the game doesn't assist you, but lets you hit enemies without the gun even coming close to its mark. Luckily, the sniping control is better, but overall this area of the game left me disappointed.

Evolution also introduces various flying levels to break up the action. These levels could certainly have been better, but they aren't bad. The multiplayer options on the other hand are fantastic and one of the better areas of this title. Sadly, the PS2 version only supports two players.

In the end, I am disappointed with Evolution since I enjoy many aspects of the game, but the lackluster play control cannot be denied. It's worth playing, but the title is just above average when it could have been one of the great ones. — **ANDY**

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M
7.5

- **Concept:**
Return Turok to his former FPS glory by adding non-environments.
- **Graphics:**
The models are hit and miss, but the number of plants and indigenous life onscreen are impressive.
- **Sound:**
Not a ton of music, but the sound effects are solid.
- **Playability:**
The exploration and sniping portions of the game are top notch, but the targeting overall is lacking.
- **Entertainment:**
There is plenty of game here, but the play control is sub-par.
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

This game has little to no redeeming value. The ambient life is nice, if a little forced, but what the hell is this with the walkie-talkies and flying around on the back of some wild shooting pterodactyl? The graphics are poor, and the game play is simply abysmal. Turok is a perfect example as to why reading Game Informer is so important — it's a stinker. Save your money for something else.

KRISTIAN - 5

■ **STYLE 1** OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM STUDIOS AUSTIN ■
RELEASE SEPTEMBER 1



PLAYSTATION 2

NASCAR THUNDER 2003

BOOGITY, BOOGITY, BOOGITY!

THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERETT
E
9

Electronic Arts signaled its commitment to the sport last year by assigning famed Madden NFL developer Tiburon to NASCAR Thunder. By looking at all the changes, 2003 tears up 2002 like Kleenex at a snort party, and is clearly the way Thunder's supposed to be.

The game's new engine redefines the cars' handling. It's a lot easier to get yourself in a helping helping of trouble — and it's way more fun. If you're getting into people all afternoon (or vice versa) and your hood's all messed up, sure, you'll now be able to skip all those yellow flag laps, but your car will handle like the piece of junk it is. Even if you're not a bonehead, the AI often is (with more aggression), and this year it will cause its own pile-ups in front of you, with cars getting into spins easier. Unfortunately, choppiness and a lagging sense of speed undermine some of the new visual effects.

Off the track, the game is a revelation. Cut corners on your pit crew and someone will fumble a tire at exactly the wrong moment. Your job is to keep the perfect line. Do so with help from your favorite driver and even Richard "The King" Petty himself. Beating the Heat-esque scenario challenges (with intros from the drivers) can also be used to stay sharp. Meanwhile, your builders will be busy keeping your different chassis, engines, and R&D projects in order.

People say NASCAR's just left turns, but they should play Thunder to get a glimpse of all the teamwork that's involved on race day (now including more options for your car). Play Thunder and contemplate this question: How bad have you got it? — **KATO**



The revamped AI now causes its own crashes in front of you

This Talladega road course is one of seven fantasy tracks

Shadows play on cars and tracks much more predominately than before

The trophy girl finds out that a deodorant company isn't one of Ryan Newman's sponsors

- **Concept:**
An in-depth Career mode, real-life race recreations, and a new engine make this a much better Thunder
- **Graphics:**
Skipped frames of animation and overall jaggedness overshadows some nice textures and other goodies
- **Sound:**
It's been revamped, and it's amazing. Having the MRN guys is gold
- **Playability:**
Handling and damage is more realistic and challenging
- **Entertainment:**
Added depth will keep your thumbs numb for some time
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I wish other EA games had made the same strides from last year as this one has. The number of options and different play modes are incredible, and the driving feel has made undeniable improvements. I did see some slowdown and other graphical hitches that are probably due to the PlayStation 2's lack of processing power, but I didn't really care about that as I was racing four-wide around turn two at Talladega. The license testing section is particularly nice, as it will familiarize you with most of the tracks, and some of the top drivers give their two cents on how to handle a particular turn, or when to floor it on which straightaway. The reason I count myself as a casual NASCAR fan is due to last year's title, but this year's might turn my blood to oil once and for all. If you're a hardcore motorhead, I expect you to throw this magazine in the air and have Thunder purchased by the time it hits the ground.

KRISTIAN - 9.25

■ **STYLE 1** TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA TIBURON ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 23



PLAYSTATION 2

DUAL HEARTS

TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS ONE

There's nothing like the bond between a boy and his fat, four-legged friend. While *Dual Hearts*' two protagonists aren't especially fond of each other, they tolerate one another's shortcomings to further their own personal agendas. The relationship between you and this game should be a less conflicted one.

Dual Hearts is a burgeoning *Zelda*-style franchise. Like Link's epic tales, your human character attaches a variety of weapons and items to the controller's face buttons. There are remote mines, element-absorbing cards, and a few swords and spears. Your peppy, portly quadruped also ends up with a vast arsenal of moves, such as flying, swimming, and slamming his butt on the concrete.

The level structure, however, could be described as Mario meets Castlevania. Each NPC's dream makes up one level, but you won't fully be able to explore and conquer it until much farther into your quest. The backtracking is nice, and never gets to the point of being tedious. The camera and targeting, however, don't work quite so well.

You won't see a lot of publicity for *Dual Hearts*—much like every other Atlus-published title—but give it a look. It's similar to buying an independent record instead of some MTV-bandwagon mainstream album. Though not the most refined package, *Dual Hearts* has just about everything you're looking for in an action/adventure game. —JUSTIN

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

E

8.5

- Concept:** A captivating buddy game with a snotty treasure hunter and a bunny/pig hybrid.
- Graphics:** Basic action/adventure fare. The overworld scenes are much more attractive than the dungeon ones.
- Sound:** The music is a strange but not unappealing blend, ranging from SNES to symphony.
- Playability:** I don't like that X both investigates and jumps, but the button-assigned tasks will be familiar to *Zelda* fans.
- Entertainment:** A good, fun game that won't draw much fanfare, but deserves your attention.
- Replay Value:** Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

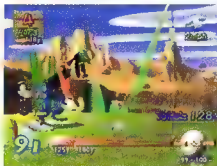
This game is an excellent marriage of more than a few ideas and, for the most part, they all hold up. I loved the story and the merging of the real and dream worlds, but I admit I was lost at times. Between the platforming, plethora of weapons, RPG elements, and the sheer exuberance of it all, this is one title that truly has something for (almost) everyone.

KATO — 8.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** ATLUS
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10

DISNEY GOLF

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 4



This is a great attempt at duplicating *Hot Shots 3* in a slightly more kid-friendly form. It's got even more ambient life and a similar reward system, but the physics, audio, and accuracy are lacking. Also, *Hot Shots* has a pretty general appeal in the first place, so *Disney Golf* definitely really cater to a different demographic. It's simply not a quality title, but with all *Hot Shots 3* does, it's tough to think of a niche for this to fit in. —JUSTIN

E

7.75

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: FEDERATION VS. ZEON

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** BANDAI
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10



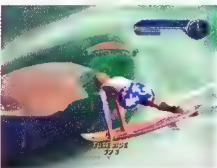
This is certainly the best *Gundam* title for the PS2 so far. It's graphically robust, and not only offers you a choice between *Federation* or *Zeon* Campaign paths, but also space and underwater locales. Unfortunately, the game's arcade origins are evident in the short individual missions, easy gameplay curve, and small battle areas. With more anime and a concerted effort, Bandai could really open this series up and make it a triple A franchise. —KATO

T

8

KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION 02
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17



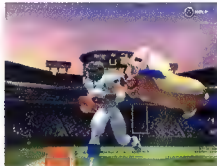
Treyarch did a few things right with *Kelly Slater* — an awesome chill-out soundtrack that blends traditional surf guitar, jazzy house, and world music; a workable gameplay mechanic for riding inside the tube; and the cool documentary footage that introduces you to new beaches and gives some insight into the surfing lifestyle. Ironically, it's those cool FMVs that point out the ultimate flaw of video surfing. Over clips of outrageous waves, Slater will say something like this: "Puerto El Loco San Diablo is crazy; riding down those 50 footers over shallow coral is incredibly dangerous. I've seen guys get their arms chopped off on a reef before. It's such a rush." The problem is that I'm not in the ocean; I'm sitting on my couch, and — if I die — I just start over. This game is certainly playable, but without the adrenaline charge of actual surfing, it feels like I'm playing one endless *Tony Hawk* level. —MATT

E

7

NFL BLITZ 2003

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 12



It's fitting to have Michael Strahan on the cover of this year's *Blitz*. Having Brett Favre lay down for the sack record last year was a fraud, and *Blitz 2003* isn't really an update from 2002. I admit, the create-a-player is cool (and the only new feature), but this iteration merely treads water in a sea of its own football futility. I suggest *Midway* go back to the drawing board and mix realism with its brutal attitude, similar to what it did with *RedCard Soccer*. Here's the bright side: If Strahan and the Giants repeat their performance from last year, I think they can count themselves as lucky. —KATO

E

5.25

THE TERMINATOR: DAWN OF FATE

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAAMES
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17



Here's another highly respected, licensed product that had the potential to thrive in the gaming world, but didn't receive the development treatment that it truly deserved. To cut to the chase, *Dawn of Fate* wallows in mediocrity. The reason why, though, is a tad peculiar. With the best in lock-on technology, a powerful assortment of weapons, and a healthy dosage of mission objectives, the gameplay is definitely there. Unfortunately, with all of these guns firing direct hits, the game feels fractured, almost as though *Paradigm Entertainment* was working on two separate products then crammed them together at the last second. The gameplay mechanics are decent, but as you feverishly attempt to blow the living hell out of everything that moves, you have to fend off the annoying stationary tracking cameras, buggy NPC AI, and obnoxious story lines. It sounds intriguing, but once you start playing, you'll see that it's a bad mix. —REINER

M

6

MYST III: EXILE

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER PUZZLE
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17



Offering cheap extras (trailers and a quiz) to claim "bonus features" shouldn't be enough to lure existing owners of *Myst III: Exile* — which came out on PC and Mac over a year ago. For those of you that haven't touched the saga in a while, *Myst III* on PS2 is still a good weekend excursion of hair-pulling puzzling. The framerate suffers in the conversion, but the solid puzzles and great soundtrack stay true to the computer release. —LISA

E

7.5

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10/02

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PLAYSTATION 2

GUNGRAVE

SEGA'S PALE RIDER

Inspired by the popular Japanese *Trigun* manga series, *Gungrave* uses cel shaded graphics to capture the dramatic, stylish look of a graphic novel in full 3D. Simply put, *Gungrave* is the coolest, most badass new character I've seen in a game since Devil May Cry's Dante, and I hope to see more of him in the future. Hopefully next time he'll be in a game that lives up to the promise of its premise.

There are a few things I like about *Gungrave's* gameplay; primarily the Demolition Shot attacks, which lay waste to your enemies with deadly force and supremely cool animations. It's too bad that this game is all frosting and no cake. The flaws in the camera and targeting system, frequent bouts of framerate chug, and the snail's pace at which your character moves drag this would-be hit down into the ranks of the mediocre. There will be some that come to love *Gungrave* for its cool vibe and sharp look, but I am not one of them. Next time, Smilebit should concentrate on enhancing its lead character's acrobatic abilities, something that would add a great deal of excitement to *Gungrave's* oftentimes repetitive gameplay. — **MATT**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SMILEBIT, RED
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 22

SECOND OPINION

Gungrave has a great art style and lead character. The gameplay itself, however, does little for me. It's not a total failure, but will most likely only appeal to anime freaks. Would've made a good arcade game.

JUSTIN — 6.5

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:**
A gritty, anime-inspired third-person shooter done in a cel-shaded, graphic novel style

■ **Graphics:**
In terms of art direction, this is as good as it gets. Technically, there are problems

■ **Sound:**
It would have been nice if they had re-recorded the dialogue in English

■ **Playability:**
The Demolition Shot moves are great, but *Gungrave* is just too damn clumsy for my taste

■ **Entertainment:**
Don't be fooled by the awesome graphics

■ **Replay Value:**
Moderately Low



PLAYSTATION 2

DINO STALKER

DINO CRISIS OF IDENTITY?

What's going on with Capcom recently? First *Onimusha 2* pulls the rug out from under us, and now this? Don't get me wrong — *Dino Stalker* makes some strides in the genre, but it seems like the company didn't finish the job. You think that by letting you move through environments (as opposed to being ushered along a rail), the game's going to give you more freedom, but then this is taken away by a level timer. This is a shame, since areas are destructible and are replete with weapons and objects to find (why can't you stockpile secondary weapons?). Sure you can gain extra time, but *Dino Stalker* seems to pull you in the opposite directions of making haste and encouraging exploration. Hmmmm...Nuts 'n gum — together at last!

For those looking for traditional shooter kicks, you'll find them here and more. *Stalkers* sometimes frantic pace can make you want to go join the NRA and become its poster child. Capcom shakes things up nicely, but just missed a golden opportunity. — **KATO**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17

SECOND OPINION

I was intrigued by the idea of using a gun peripheral within a fully controllable first-person setting, but as expected, successfully mastering this unique functionality takes a Herculean effort. The game in and of itself is enjoyable, but in a surprising twist, the true adversary isn't the dinosaurs, but rather the control.

REINER — 6.5

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:**
You think it's going to be an FPS, but then Capcom changes its mind

■ **Graphics:**
Is it the spurting blood that makes this Mature?

■ **Sound:**
I go bang, they go boom

■ **Playability:**
Using the controller (and not the Guncon) is like fighting dinos with a sling and stones

■ **Entertainment:**
Not quite a huge leap in the genre, but it just saves off extinction

■ **Replay Value:**
Moderately Low



PLAYSTATION 2

LEGAIA 2: DUEL SAGA

HAVE YOUR QUEST AND FIGHT IT, TOO

Most RPGs view combat as an afterthought, a way to gain

experience. Games like the first *Legalia* and *Xenogears* proved that fighting could be fun, with interesting combo moves, and special attacks to unlock. Amen, says I. *Legalia 2* does this as well, and the battles are easily the best part of an otherwise middle of the road RPG.

It'll waste as little space as possible talking about the story: You're a young man who was found with amnesia 10 years ago. Need I say more? Good. This cookie-cutter tale does bring about some

interesting characters, at least, with evolved super-humans and basic good neighbors.

The battles are everything here. When you start, you get three blocks for attacks. Each one is filled with a direction. Certain combinations bring forth Art attacks, which are both visually appealing and heavy damage-dealing. It's a hot experimenting with your

buttons, especially when your block number increases. While every other aspect isn't terrible (the graphics, inventory, and item combining are cool), *Legalia 2* lacks the scope of a *Final Fantasy X*, the personality of an *Okage*, or the replay of a *Suikoden*. It's just your typical RPG, but with some compelling combat. That's enough to hold my attention for a while, but not enough to captivate me. — **JUSTIN**

■ **Concept:**
Make an RPG where you actually want to fight

■ **Style** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 1

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:**
Make an RPG where you actually want to fight

■ **Graphics:**
Characters and magic attacks look good, backgrounds and overworld environments don't

■ **Sound:**
At least it's quiet enough so you can sing something good to yourself

■ **Playability:**
Hitting various directions to get new attacks is a blast, and most other gameplay aspects work well

■ **Entertainment:**
Combat rocks, but it's really the only huge selling point. Even it can get tiresome

■ **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

As the first game showed us, *Legalia* is successful in its delivery of combat, but falls on all other fronts. With wooden personalities and a story that moves like molasses, it's not a matter of following the plot, but staying awake as you try to do so. Decent, but you'll need to be cracked out on caffeine to get through its story progression.

REINER — 7



GAMECUBE

MYSTIC HEROES

A NEW BREED OF HEROES

I'm going to dispel your early perception of Mystic Heroes as simply the GameCube-friendly version of Dynasty Warriors 3 right off the bat. When you can sic a flame spell on an unsuspecting foe, and he merely shrugs it off by getting up and coming at you, while he's still on fire, that tells me that Koei is just as serious about giving me the straight action dope.

The game's cartoonish, RPG-esque characters are the signal for some nice changes from the dry crackler that is Koei's traditional adherence to Chinese history. Take the boss battles, for example. A tiger, huge bears, and more fantastic baddies await after you make your way to the end of a stage. Getting there requires a similar strategy as in Dynasty Warriors—you have to pace yourself and not let your allies get swamped. This is rewarding and frustrating, because if you don't do your job, your friends could retreat and leave you holding the bag with nothing but enemies breathing down your neck. Also worth keeping in mind are the revamped level designs that feature some nice close-quarters fighting and overall ingenuity in their layout.

Koei is making small strides in improving its frantic scum fighters. Mystic's rune system is a welcome addition, and the title's break from its Dynasty Warriors inspiration is something I want to see expanded upon. They say that history is written by winners, and I think Koei should seize this opportunity to change its future. **KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE

T **7.75**

- **Concept:** Dynasty Warriors for kids? No. The graphics are just a refreshing vehicle for a different take on Koei's normal battle royale.
- **Graphics:** Shows much more detail and flair than other titles from the developer.
- **Sound:** A good mix of combat and characters' personalities.
- **Playability:** Although there is an assortment of magic and moves, Koei needs a new combo system.
- **Entertainment:** I found it more engaging and exciting than its inspiration, Dynasty Warriors 3.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Mystic Heroes is in the right place at the right time on GameCube. The frantic fighting and creative spell-casting are highly addictive, and the difficulty is where I'd want it to be. Protecting your frailty-cut allies will definitely keep you on your toes. The wealth of modes and extras is leing on an already tasty cake. Mystic Heroes easily surpassed the Guardians and State of Emergencies of the world with ease. For button-mashing thrills alone or with buds, this game will be your hero.

JUSTIN - 8

■ **STYLE** 1- TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI ■ **DEVELOPER** KOEI ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30



GAMECUBE

ANIMAL CROSSING

LIFE, OR SOMETHING LIKE IT

Animal Crossing doesn't sound like it should be any fun. At E3, I grilled the poor Nintendo lackey, "So you live? You work? Just wander around and go to fishing tournaments?" "Yes," he said. I clearly had not played the game...and he clearly had.

You pay off your mortgage, pick up some furniture, go fishing, gather pears, dig up a cornucopia of items, and sell your goods for fun and profit. That's the brunt of the game, but I can't stress enough that it is fun. The world of Animal Crossing features a 24-hour clock, a host of neighbors, wardrobe selections, and scheduled events (like fishing tournaments, meteor showers, and your birthday party).

With a few handy Nintendo accessories (a GBA, its link cable, and the new-fangled card reader profiled in Eto this month), Animal Crossing opens up even more. Full ports of classic NES games like Excitebike can be transferred to your trusty Game Boy Advance and played without a cartridge. The card reader can also bring new clothes, furniture, and customizable melodies to your tiny town.

Your neighbors react realistically to your every move. For example, Bessie would make fun of me mercilessly for not showing up to visit until evening (she prefers a morning chat to get the day going). You can certainly keep everyone up past 3 a.m., but don't

expect a lot of town activity early the next morning...they're all sleeping because you pestered them "til the wee hours of the night.

Sadly, this game will suffer for two reasons: The graphics are less than mind-blowing (but fit the style, feel, and intent of the game), and most will see it as a niche title. It's like a simple Sims...but it's a lot of fun, I swear. — **LISA**



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 16

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVENT RATING

E **9.5**

- **Concept:** Live, Work, Pay debt. Enjoy simple life.
- **Graphics:** Cartoonish and simplistic by design. Good colors, round-headed friends, and great progression of daylight.
- **Sound:** The world noises are useful and (sometimes) funny. Everyone talks like the Peanuts' teacher.
- **Playability:** The "keycard" is a little screwy, but it's not sure you need to eschew elaborate combo moves.
- **Entertainment:** Strangely, bizarrely, shockingly way more fun than it sounds. Honest.
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Animal Crossing is an amazing piece of software. I'd call it a great game, but I'm not sure it is a "game." There aren't any rules, and I'm not sure if there is any way to win. An easy comparison would be the Sims, or perhaps Harvest Moon without the drudgery of farm work, but somehow this title transcends its influences and achieves a feel all its own. In typical Nintendo fashion, it's filled with secrets, a whimsical sense of humor, and sharply drawn characters. I can't quite describe why you're going to be captivated by doing the menial tasks of your character's daily life, but you will be. Put it this way: At one point, I had to choose between going to Home Depot to buy paint (in my real life), and making an aerobics class (in Animal Crossing). The fact that I actually experienced a moment of indecision is a testament to this title's uniquely addictive charms.

MATT - 9



GAMECUBE

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2

HARDER THAN CHINESE ARITHMETIC

As a huge fan of the first game, I really wanted to love Super Monkey Ball 2. God knows I tried. I can't say that this is a bad game; I can say I will probably never play it again in my life. The first SMB was hard, but this follow-up raises the difficulty level to a daunting degree, shattering the fine balance its predecessor struck between being challenging and frustrating. It's a shame, because, in many ways, Super Monkey Ball 2 is a better game. The minigames, one of the best things about this series, have been enhanced with six new contests, including the brilliant Monkey Baseball, a new favorite of mine. In addition, the Story Mode includes some of the most oddly humorous and engaging dialogue I've seen in a game for quite some time. Though it's still not a graphical masterpiece, the backgrounds have received a major facelift, and are lushly appointed with some nice animated detailing.

So, why am I scoring Super Monkey Ball 2 lower than the first? Frustration—plain and simple. While some of you will definitely have fun with this, you're also going to experience some serious anger management problems. It's not only harder, it's that the levels seem to have been designed to reward blind luck more than careful planning. Often, your best course of action is just taking a fast run at the level and hoping you hit the timing right. It will be worth the effort to unlock the minigames, but too often Super Monkey Ball 2 starts to feel like work—hard work. —**MATT**



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** AMUSEMENT VISION
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 26

EVERETT
E 7.75

- **Concept:**
An incredibly difficult sequel to last year's GameCube cult classic
- **Graphics:**
The characters seem largely the same, but the backgrounds are vastly improved
- **Sound:**
Never the game's strong suit, the forgettable score is largely an afterthought. Still, the outscene dialogue is priceless
- **Playability:**
The control is as solid as ever, but some of these levels are so exasperatingly hard it won't do you much good
- **Entertainment:**
It's still addictive, but SMB2 is slightly less fun than a barrel of monkeys
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Super Monkey Ball 2 is fun in that ripping out your hair, punching your sibling, contemplating suicide sort of way. This time around, the developers went to great lengths to concoct ingenious puzzles, courses, and ways to irritate and challenge the player. If you dabbled with the original title, the gameplay hasn't changed a bit, but the difficulty level has escalated. Thankfully though, if the game is kicking your ass up and down (which it will), you can always take a break within 12 different minigames. Altogether, and as the precursor was, Super Monkey Ball 2 is a well-rounded game that is instantly addictive and deep enough to keep you hooked. Much like Tetris or any other puzzle game for that matter, this is the kind of game that you will continually pick up and play whether it is for multiplayer or single gaming sessions.

REINER - 8

REVIEWS

GAMECUBE

4X4 EVO 2

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER



If this game had decent collision—or any semblance of decent collision—it would be much more fun. I don't remember the Dreamcast version being like this, so I'm not sure why the development team on such a great game has overlooked such a huge segment of gameplay. Aside from that, 4x4 Evo 2 is still a fun little racer. The GameCube doesn't have a lot of good titles of this ilk, so if you're into offroading, go for it. —**KRISTIAN**

E 8

GAMECUBE

NASCAR THUNDER 2003

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 1



It takes a lot to build that winning team come race day, but it looks like Thunder's more than managed to do it. If there's a weak link, however, it's that the title shows some of the same visual twitches

seen in the PlayStation 2 edition. Interesting. The GameCube never got last year's Thunder, but don't fret over it. I suggest you heartily plow into the game's wealth of career options, lose yourself in the Lightning Challenges, and laugh all the way to victory lane. —**KATO**

E 9

GAMECUBE

THE SCORPION KING: RISE OF THE AKKADIAN

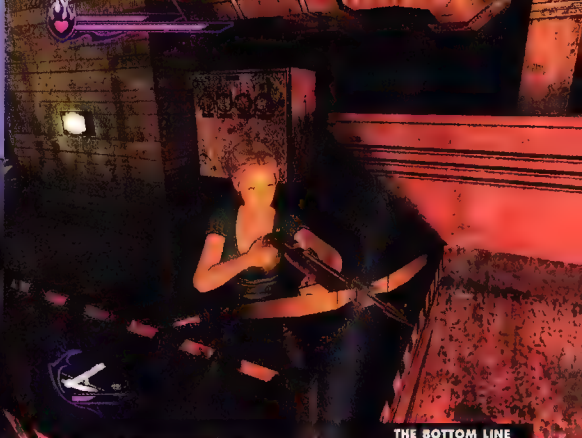
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10



It's a good thing video game companies don't just slap a license on a crappy game nowadays just to make a quick buck, and are all about making good quality product. That fact

couldn't be more true in Universal Interactive's The Scorpion King, based on the blockbuster film starring the Rock. Wait a second... this is a license. Oh yeah... and this game sucks rocks, too (no pun intended). I guess I was wrong, companies do still pull this classic video game bait and switch, and should be burned at the stake accordingly. Avoid this stinker at all costs. —**ANDY**

E 3



"...it's just plain awesome to kick the head off a zombie and watch it thrash away on the floor."



XBOX

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

HAVE STAKE, WILL SLAY

I've never really been into this show. It's a little too girly for me, but on those odd occasions when I happen to flip by, I'll stop and enjoy things for a few minutes. The game, however, is a treatise on how to make a high-octane button masher with enough plot to keep things interesting from mission to mission. I have a very small knowledge base about the Buffy universe, but that didn't hinder me from enjoying myself in the least.

The biggest and most attractive part of this game is the excellent combat system. Although there is a way to get through a bunch of the missions by simply flailing your fingers on the button pad, it will take a long time to do; and more importantly, it won't be much fun. Through a number of button-combos, Buffy comes to life with flying kicks, twirling punches, and impressive throws. Along with the kick/punch combo of the regular sort, the Collective has given players more oomph in the form of Slayer Power; which the Buff-ster uses to perform more intricate and deadly combos on her supernatural adversaries. With the correct timing, what was once just a one-two punch becomes a bone-rattling juggernaut of a thrust which, if landed, will send your adversary careening into the distance.

Okay, so attacking people (or things that used to be people) is fun, but your blocking abilities are lackluster. You'll

find that a lot of your attacks are blocked, but when it comes time to go on the defensive, Buffy is at a serious disadvantage. Sometimes using the targeting button will help fend off a few blows, but other than that, you're better off going all-out with a healthy combo than trying to play the *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* punch/block game. Another notable gameplay element is the difficulty throughout the levels. Typically, games will start out easy, then become more and more challenging as the story progresses. The opposite is the case with this title — when you start, you're going to have your hands full. I played on Normal difficulty, but if you're prone to temper tantrums, you may want to think about swallowing your pride and starting on Easy.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that this is the best brawler released for the Xbox so far. It's got a great storyline, a mountain of voice talent from the cast of the TV show, and it's just plain awesome to kick the head off a zombie and watch it thrash away on the floor. I can't recommend this title enough for any Xbox owner who has a hankerin' for some good old-fashioned butt-whopin'. Lord knows, this console needs a shot in the arm with some solid third-party titles. Well, here it is. Be the cool kid and buy it before your nerdy neighbor does. — KRISTIAN



"I have a stake in your well-being. HAHAAHAHAHAHAI!"



"Super Soakers are like so 1992."

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:**
A beat-em-up with lots of attitude and a great combat system
- **Graphics:**
The texturing is nice, but the character models are particularly impressive
- **Sound:**
Buff-ites will be thrilled with the number of stars from the show who've put down tracks for the game
- **Playability:**
Easy as pushing buttons repeatedly
- **Entertainment:**
Even if you've never watched the show, this is an awesome game
- **Replay Value:**
Low

SECOND OPINION

Many people underestimated the Buffy TV show at first, then became captivated by its humor, characters, and action. I think the video game adaptation mirrors this pattern. I expected a run-of-the-mill beat-em-up, but got something much more charismatic. It's obvious the show's writers had a hand in the game dialogue, and the cast is all here, lending their voices and sweet character models (though I wish Willow looked more like her real, hostile self). Another thing that is easily underestimated is Buffy's frustration factor. Having to stake your adversaries adds a whole new strategy element, but also ups the difficulty. Whenever two ghouls are attacking at once, you're in for a world of hurt. I can see many casual gamers who love the show giving up prematurely, due to Buffy being a toughie. It is, however, a great pick for braver fans and more determined gamers.

JUSTIN — 8.25

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER FOX INTERACTIVE ■ DEVELOPER THE COLLECTIVE ■ RELEASE AUGUST 19



THE BOTTOM LINE



8.5

"...blistering
combat that's
wrapped in an
almost flawless
presentation"

PLAYSTATION 2

ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

BAD ASS MOTHER FOKKER

I admit I would have liked to have spent my childhood afternoons bullying kids, setting things on fire, and doing other things to help me become popular later in life. Instead I was in front of the TV watching *Robotech* (hey, at least it's better than luge lessons). What did it get me? A weakness for ace women pilots with green hair from outer space. You see, I was always more of a Miriya fan than that of the fickle princess Minmei, but I digress. Whether or not you're with me on the whole "Miriya vs. Minmer" debate, *Robotech: Battlecry* will offer you more than enough fodder for many good memories of your own.

Regardless of my ramblings, the primary goal of this title is not to just give hardcore fans a Grand Cannon in their shorts. Through a multitude of missions (numbering near 50) and some pretty hairy firefights, *Battlecry* will easily endear itself to anybody's trigger finger. As Zentraedi Battlepods stomp through cities, you'll frantically flip through your fighter's different forms, turn and release devastating salvos of missiles (multi-targeting rocks!), and watch errant fire destroy buildings in a cacophony of smoke, glass, and debris.

Cel shading may be old news, but the game's developer has imbued the graphics with some depth, such as billowing clouds of smoke and rich explosions. Even with missile streamers filling the screen, you won't notice any slowdown.

Overall, however, some of the dogfights in space don't convey that feeling of speed like *Rogue Leader* did. But unlike a lot of non-movie *Star Wars* stuff, I found it very easy to enjoy the plot turns not within the regular story timeline.

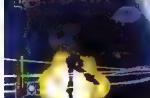
Interestingly enough, the game's one weakness is also its strength. Switching between Battloid, Fighter, and Guardian modes isn't just a gimmick; it's often a necessity. Transforming into a Battloid (your mecha form) in order to turn and lay down fire at enemies before switching into a normal fighter can save your butt. Certain situations will also demand different forms. Sometimes you'll change so you can use a sniper rifle or to rescue allies similar to how Rick saved Minmei during their first meeting. Unfortunately, the title's camera lags a little, and it isn't fixed to your weapon lock-on. Thus, it's as if you are forced to change into Battloid mode just to help you reset your bearings.

Although I wish TDK would have included actual footage from the show (and not art and anime stills from a different artist), this game hits the mark when it comes to stirring those *Robotech* feelings – just like the theme song strikes those familiar, dramatic notes. Of course, while *Battlecry* can satiate the Zentraedi in me with some blistering combat that's wrapped in an almost flawless presentation, it can't beat out the green-haired alien warrior in the memories of my mind. – KATO

■ STYLE | OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER TDK MEDIALIVE ■ DEVELOPER VICIOUS CYCLE ■ RELEASE SEPTEMBER 23



The building is right about to implode in a dramatic cloud



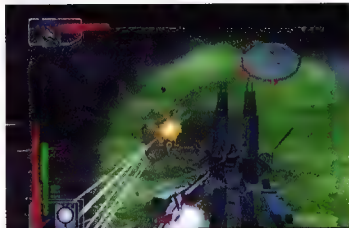
"That one just about singed the shorts and curlies!"



Learn to manage all of your Ventrach's forms



Looks like that boob in sector 7G is napping at the nuclear power plant again



Pimp Bot 3000 envelops the city in an impenetrable cloud of Brit cologne

■ Concept:

TDK populates geek staples like mechs and anime through this game's wicked action

■ Graphics:

There is surprising depth to the cel shading, although the lack of actual anime clips is disappointing

■ Sound:

Everything is just as you remembered it – even down to the real voice actors

■ Playability:

Not perfect, but excitingly challenging in its use of the Ventrach's three forms

■ Entertainment:

Just a trip down memory lane or a fancy license? You'll like it for its hard nosed dogfights

■ Replay Value:

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

There is something inherently cool about big transforming robots with gigantic guns. While games of this ilk have been around for years, few on the console platforms have captured the essence quite like *Robotech: Battlecry*. Sadly, the game doesn't feature many clips from the show, but it does offer up some stills and its hobby, but entertaining story helps tie all the levels together. The stages themselves aren't really groundbreaking, but they do offer up a lot of mecha-blasting fun. Switching between the various modes on your Ventrach fighter is a treat, and each mode offers different play elements to keep things interesting. If you have any inclination towards big robots or the *Robotech* series in particular, you really can't go wrong with *Battlecry*. It's not the best game I've ever played, but it does enough stuff right to make it worth a purchase.

ANDY – 8.25



XBOX

TUROK: EVOLUTION

COMBAT DE-EVOLVED

I was hoping that I would walk away boasting, "Halo, who?", but I actually found myself thinking, "Maybe I should just play Halo instead?" Before you flip the page and write Turok off completely, it did come close to greatness, and Acclaim's efforts are commendable, but the execution of gameplay has mixed results.

Early on, Acclaim flexes its muscles with breathtaking visuals that deliver the sensation that you really have entered a prehistoric world, indigenous life crawls out of every nook and cranny, huge dinosaurs quench their thirst at a watering hole, and the foliage blows realistically in the wind. The surreal sensation doesn't last long, however. After the first stage comes to a close, players are thrust into a horribly frustrating flying segment. Believe me when I say that you'll pray for the moment when your feet are grounded again.

When you finally do return to the first-person aspect, the game doesn't kick back into gear. True to form, Turok's play is still as intense as ever, and the weapons and enemy deaths are as outrageous as can be, but the overall balance is way off the mark. The endless trail of med kits reflects this. Targeting is also terribly inconsistent and the AI is loaded with faults. Evolution is a decent game, but unfortunately, it has just as many lows as it does highs. —REINER

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:** Acclaim's Son of Stone makes a valiant return, but doesn't have enough firepower to make an impact.

■ **Graphics:** The texturing is a tad disappointing, but I was amazed by how heavily populated the levels were. Some of the efforts are at aught to behold as well.

■ **Sound:** Desert ambience and a kicking tribal soundtrack.

■ **Playability:** The targeting system is really loose, and the enemy AI really bugs.

■ **Entertainment:** The multiplayer experience is quite grand, and the quest is enjoyable, but it's also a headache.

■ **Replay Value:** High.

SECOND OPINION

At some point in the development of this game, someone should have seriously questioned the decision to mix those horrible flying levels into what could have been a first-tier FPS. Perhaps then Acclaim could have fixed some of the other problems with Turok, the most notable being the erratic targeting. There is some compelling first-person action here, but you're going to need a lot of patience to get to it.

MATT — 7.5

■ **STYLE** 1 | TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM STUDIOS AUSTIN ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 1



XBOX

SEGA GT 2002

WHAT DOES THE GT STAND FOR?

Gran Turismo doesn't have the patent on the concept of unlocking and upgrading cars. After all, it isn't nearly as mysterious a formula as the secret ingredients in Coke—even if it's just about as addicting. SEGA GT 2002 makes attempts to differentiate itself from Sony's ride, but it is instead SEGA's strong rendition of the tried and true that makes this title stand out.

Last year's sweet car-building mode is gone, and 2002's vintage car racing isn't a solid enough replacement. While you initially sweat it when racing the mundane 70's Celica (used in your folks' first date), there's no opponent AI boost when you race later with the 'Vette Stingray (where thoughts of you were conceived). This takes the challenge out of things. It is instead the old earning and spending money that keeps you coming back. Event races fatten your wallet and offer curveballs like drag racing and survival mode—challenges of all-corners. In a nice twist, any damage you incur must be paid out of your earnings.

The tracks play to the cars' improved handling and physics by offering plenty of turns. These make using your brakes almost as important as in an F1 title. Just as cool is that the game gives you a good feel of how beneficial your car's upgrades are. However, the sometimes-simplistic collision with other cars is an overall weakness.

It may sound like damning faint praise, but I consider this title a pretty good SEGA rendition of Gran Turismo 3. If you interpret that as "GT3 for Xbox," well then that actually sounds like a great idea. —KATO

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:** With the Xbox, the series is able to make a serious challenge to Sony's Gran Turismo franchise.

■ **Graphics:** There are some nice reflections, but the Xbox can do more.

■ **Sound:** If you can identify rides by their whine, you need to get out of the garage and get your own oil changed more often.

■ **Playability:** Cars' control and physics have improved, and courses demand some fine tune.

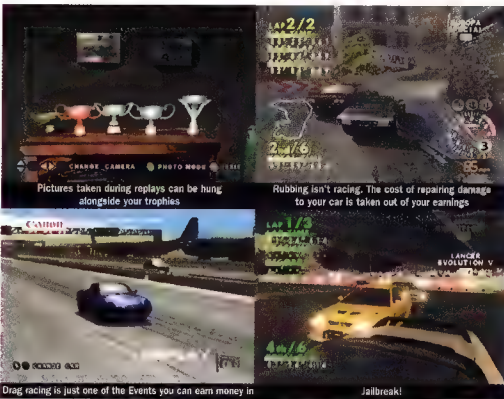
■ **Entertainment:** Doesn't have the long legs of Turismo, but recommended nonetheless.

■ **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

SECOND OPINION

On paper, SEGA GT 2002 seems to have it all: realistic physics, responsive and subtle control, a nice stable of cars, and a long and deep career mode. So, why aren't I blown away? Chalk it up to stiffer competition. On the Dreamcast, the original SEGA GT stood alone as the only comprehensive race that system had. A console generation later, it has to compete with the likes of Project Gotham Racing and Gran Turismo 3. In terms of gameplay, SEGA GT 2002 can hold its own, but graphically it's a little drab. Given that it had a year to surpass those previously mentioned hits, it should look considerably better—but it doesn't. Although the car models are nice, the background environments and lighting are nothing special. Still, it's packed with a ton of depth, making this one of the best Xbox races to date.

MATT — 8.5



■ **STYLE** 1 | OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** WOV ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 3



XBOX

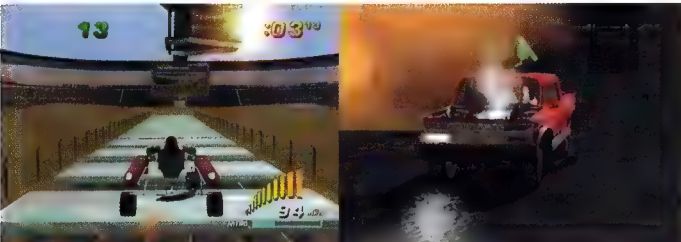
THE TERMINATOR: DAWN OF FATE

USE THE SCHWARZENEGGER, CONNOR

I have a sinking feeling that this could have been a fun little game, but whoever was put in charge of the camera system has ruined the experience completely. Any time you use a fixed camera in a game, you have to make sure players don't get disoriented when it switches to a new location. During Dawn of Fate, I would get so turned around, I found myself back at the beginning of a level instead of pressing on to the next sections. This problem exacerbates many others—the targeting system chiefly among them. Many times you'll find yourself firing at something you can't see, but which your targeting system has locked on to. That's not entirely bad, but it's really easy to waste ammo shooting at something that isn't actually there.

When you're not battling the game's shortcomings, this title is pretty entertaining. The plot kept me involved with why I was going here or doing that, and the action was amusing, if this game used the same sort of camera Max Payne used, I would have been much happier. What a shame. — KRISTIAN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17



XBOX

CHASE: HOLLYWOOD STUNT DRIVER

DUST, WIND, DUDE

Yet again, the Xbox is playing catch-up to the PS2. Cheap knockoffs rarely work unless you're talking about kitty litter or batteries. Stuntman for the PlayStation 2 was fresh, exciting, and frustrating at times; but it was fun, and you were compelled to keep playing. Chase strikes me as a thrown together hodgepodge of dismal level design, poor physics, and minimal attention to detail. What ends up being the trait that more or less saves this game from sucking completely is the free-range trick levels and the stunt challenges.

Although these modes have nothing to do with career play, different levels of each are unlocked as you accumulate reputation points throughout your profession. Whether it was trying to jump over 14 buses, or just busting the craziest tricks I could come up with, I had more fun away from my career than I did in it. The addition of a trick button that allows you to control your vehicle in the air is another feature I was glad to see, as it helped me pull off bigger stunts more often. However, trick buttons can't pull Chase out of mediocrity. — KRISTIAN

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** BAM ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** IMAGINE ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24

SECOND OPINION

While not an utter failure, it's a waste of a fine license. Infogrames executed the action element fairly well, but failed to iron out some serious flaws. The control, camera, and enemy AI are pathetic.

CHET - 6

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:** Battle a terrible camera system and SkyNet at the same time

■ **Graphics:** I wasn't shocked by anything, but nothing really turned me off, either

■ **Sound:** A good amount of voice acting, but the effects were awful

■ **Playability:** Control problems and camera difficulty drag this game down

■ **Entertainment:** The story is good, but the technical problems are too large to ignore

■ **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

Chase is a quirky little racer with an abundance of variety. The gameplay is not nearly as challenging as Wreckless or Stuntman, but I have a feeling that this is the aspect many of you will appreciate. It's easy to get into and entertaining at a relaxed pace. Not bad.

REINER - 7

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:** A stunt game for the Xbox that almost works, but comes up short

■ **Graphics:** Nice explosions, but other environmental details are quite blocky

■ **Sound:** There's nothing here that wasn't done better three years ago

■ **Playability:** If you're able to grasp the idea of steering, you should have no problems

■ **Entertainment:** The dryness of the career mode is made up for by the free-drive segments

■ **Replay Value:** Moderate

XBOX

KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17



This is not Tony Hawk on water, and I couldn't be happier about it. Where the Pro BMX series blatantly exploited Hawk's success, Slater is content to be a more low-key action/sports

alternative. This is a game to chill out with, and just too around on a wave. Nothing's overly complex, but there is still a skill to hanging 128 (bits). Pro Surfer has a lot to unlock. It's visually appealing; and the music, voice-overs, and FMV all add to the atmosphere. I can die it. — JUSTIN



XBOX

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30



Like a parent trying to spoil an otherwise ignored child, here comes Koei with DW 3 almost a year after debuting on the PlayStation 2. It's a small gesture, given that the title's gameplay is limited,

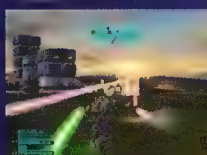
albeit spectacular, in its mauling. Still, while Xbox owners may frown at the fog and bad draw distance, they'll never have to know the slowdown during the special Musou Attacks from the PS2 edition. It's a hand-me-down with holes, but one that may still keep action fans warm at night. — KATO



XBOX

GUN METAL

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 9



Not being a mech aficionado, it takes a lot more than big robots with guns to turn my crank. Unfortunately, Gun Metal doesn't offer up anything that hasn't been done better numerous

times before. Like the Transformers, your mech can either duke it out on foot, or turn itself into a plane. Too bad: neither incarnation controls very well. Sure, a mech add-on might have some fun with this one, but I look at it this way: Armored Core has been perfecting its gameplay formula for years. MechAssault is graphically astounding and online. Robotech has the hot license and nifty cel-shaded look. Where does this leave Gun Metal? Nowhere, I'm afraid. — MATT





Attacks Malarite High Priest
 Attacks Malarite High Priest
 Attacks Malarite High Priest
 Col: Attacks Kragg
 Item: Takes 5 fire damage from Malarite High Priest
 and Cal: Attacks Finalo
 (UI): Takes 6 fire damage from Malarite High Priest



PC

ICEWIND DALE II

BETTER THAN EVER

"This is the best role-playing engine that has ever been invented"

I'm not ashamed to tell you that I hate writing this review because it means I can't play the game anymore without getting in trouble...hey everyone! What's that behind you (scamper-scamper, click-click-click-click)? I guess what you really have to ask yourself is how much of your life you want to lose when you pick this one up at your local cracknoui — er, I mean video game retailer. You can basically say sayonara to about 80 hours if you burn through things without getting into the side quests; if you're a real RPG gamer, you'll have no problem logging 200+ hours. Sound good? You're damn right it does.

At the onset of the game, you'll notice that you get to roll an entire party of characters, not just one. Of course, you have the option of rolling only one, or two, or however many you want, up to six — but customizing your own adventuring company is just too awesome to pass up. Since this is a Black Isle game, the devil is in the details. You choose everything about your character from class to hair color, and after three hours fiddling around with different kits and things like that, one begins to realize that the game hasn't even freaking started yet and it's a blast.

Okay, so the game begins, and you're probably wondering if it's as good as what you've enjoyed previously. Egads, you bet your sweet bippy it is. The Infinity engine, which fueled the Baldur's series as well as this Icewind epoch, is looking

better than ever. I hope it's never shelved — did you hear that, Interplay? This is the best role-playing engine that has ever been invented. The Neverwinter Nights engine was versatile, but the interface was so clunky, and the graphics so dated that it really detracted from the gameplay. I love the isometric camera that Infinity uses, the interface is absolutely inspired, and the inventory system is second to none. Plus, it's all been updated, so issuing commands and swapping equipment just got a whole lot easier.

I think it goes without saying that the storyline and the writing in this title are still on par with any fantasy novel, so why didn't I give this game a perfect score? Well, there were little things that bothered me. There are still movement bugs (I'm pressing on the door because I want you to go inside the building, not mill around the entrance), and the AI of characters and enemies can be quite suspect. Also, it's hard to see how much experience you're getting for completing quests. I like reading, "Quest complete. Party gains 15,000 experience." Instead, all you see is "Quest complete." You can go into a character page and figure out how much you earned, but where's the fun in that? Don't worry about it too much — these things might irk you for a couple of seconds, but what it comes down to is this: Icewind Dale II has legs from here to Christmas. The RPG market just got a lot more interesting, folks. — KRISTIAN



STYLE | 1 TO 6-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER INTERPLAY ■ DEVELOPER BLACK ISLE ■ RELEASE AUGUST 27



Interior environments are as lush as any outdoor area



One of the best parts of any D&D title — character generation

THE BOTTOM LINE
 T
 EEN
 9.5

- **Concept:** This is one of the best RPGs ever released for the PC. That it uses D&O rules makes it all the better
- **Graphics:** Beautiful environments, great spell effects, sweet cutscenes, and awesome character models all add up to a visual feast
- **Sound:** The orchestral portions of the score are excellent and the battle effects are as good as ever
- **Playability:** Hopefully, you've either played one of the Baldur's titles, or the previous Icewind Dale. If not, there's a bit of a learning curve
- **Entertainment:** I played this game until I was afraid I was developing carpal tunnel
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION
 There is little doubt that the Icewind Dale and Baldur's Gate series are among the best RPGs ever created on the PC, but I think the time has come for this engine to see a graphical upgrade. After playing games like Dungeon Siege, Neverwinter Nights, and Warcraft III, the animation and level of detail in this series seems suspect. Luckily, the game takes off like a rocket, instantly getting the player in the action, and it doesn't stop anytime soon. The story, as you would expect, is top notch and had me anxious to delve deeper and complete every side quest. If you are looking for an RPG that will keep you playing until the wee hours of the morning, Icewind Dale II is most definitely your medicine. It just lacks the graphical punch to elevate the score to the top of the PC must-buy list.
 ANDY — 8.75



THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
ESRB
9.25

PC
**MEDIEVAL:
TOTAL WAR**
TOTAL IMMERSION

What kind of gamer are you? Do you like your titles to have fast and furious action, or do you like to be able to sit back and think about things for a while? If you're a little from column A, and a little from column B, this game is a



fantastic choice. Basically what you're dealing with is a game that takes you through medieval history, but gives you the pen to rewrite its course of events by putting you in command of the swords which carved them.

This is a strategy game — there's no denying that. I spent huge amounts of time setting up my armies to do what I wanted, then maneuvered them into battle on the field. Now, when I say "armies," I mean exactly that. It's not like some games where one unit will actually represent a battalion of soldiers. Total War allows upwards of 10,000 individual units to do battle on the same field at the same time — and each has its own AI. The scope is magnificent, and like Shogun: Total War, conflict has rarely taken on this type of epic feeling for me. I would have liked to see a bit more attention paid to the bunching effect that happens when two armies clash for the first time, but it has gotten a bit better since Shogun. In any event, you can bet your sweet A that I'll be playing this one at home. — **KRISTIAN**



Even more detail has been added to an already teeming overview map



"Have fun storming the castle!"

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** CREATIVE ASSEMBLY ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 9



REVIEWS

PC

**ALIENS VERSUS
PREDATOR 2:
PRIMAL HUNT**
IS MICHAEL HERE?

The AVP2 line will always hold a place in my heart. Not just because it's an excellent first-person shooter that took two licenses and melded them perfectly together, but also because this is the game that made Matt scream like a small child being subjected to a Mel Tormé concert. This iteration is good enough to make Matt holler with delight, but the action seems to have been turned up to a frantic pace.

No longer will you walk through levels of the game without seeing your enemies. If you're not mowing things down within the first couple of minutes the opening cutscene finishes, you're either slow, or very, very careful. Once you begin combat in earnest, everything happens quite quickly, and the environments you're in feel much more claustrophobic for some reason. I would have liked more new weapons and armor to play with, but I was more or less happy with what I got. What this all boils down to is the feeling that yes, this is a good expansion, but it seems like it was a bit more thrown together than I would have liked.

For those who can't get enough of this game, you will not be disappointed. More of anything is nice for a fanatic, and you'll have your hands full for a while to be sure. The rest of us will enjoy it, but still, remember our first AVP2 experience as being the best. — **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE
MATURE
M
ESRB
8

■ **Concept:** More of everything you liked to do in the parent game, but faster.
■ **Graphics:** I was hoping for a bit more, but what I got was great!
■ **Sound:** This game has some good effects and a ton of creepy ambient sounds that will keep your heart rate up.

■ **Playability:** It's a FPS — if you're familiar with this genre, you'll have no problems.
■ **Entertainment:** I liked it, but it didn't have the gumption I was expecting.
■ **Replay Value:** High.

SECOND OPINION

A quintessential expansion pack — diehards will love it; everyone else will shrug. I was disappointed in the single-player Corporate missions, which were much too fast paced to be scary. The real thrill for AvP vets will be the ability to play as a Predator, a wicked new hybrid race. Good, but not essential.

MATT — 7.5

SECOND OPINION

The graphics may not glisten like gold, but unlike most games, you can't scream at a company for hiring colorblind artists. There's actually a good reason why Medieval comes up short in the visual presentation. In battle, if your army is one thousand strong, there will be one thousand soldiers on screen. Granted, the troop details are little more than a pixelated arrangement, but every body is accounted for and driven by individual AI routines. When you look at it from this perspective, it's quite the spectacle. As for the gameplay, it is strategic, but rather than overwhelming gamers with the micromanaging of every little detail, Medieval sticks to the basics. Because of this, the balancing is tight on the money, the AI is razor sharp, and every conquest comes down to the sheer skill of the players. Call it a Middle Age Shogun if you will, but its gameplay is a league of its own.

REINER — 8.5

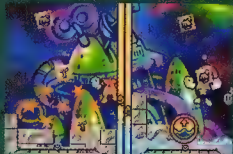
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SIERRA
■ **DEVELOPER** MONMOUTH ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 18

REVIEWS

GAME BOY ADVANCE

EGG MANIA

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE
- **PUBLISHER** KEMCO
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17



At first glance, I wrote Egg Mania off as just another uninspired Tetris knock-off. I'm happy to report that I was wrong, as the game breathes new life into the old formula with some platform-

inspired madness. Basically, your character must build his way back up to the top of each level by catching and placing various shaped blocks on top of each other before the CPU player on the other side of the screen. Unlike Tetris, you don't have to fill each line, but if your structure has too many holes, it will collapse. Things get even more interesting when the game starts doling out falling obstacles, cool power-ups, and attacks that you can fling at your opponent. — **MATT**

E 8

GAME BOY ADVANCE

XXX

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
- **RELEASE** AUGUST 5



I can respect the movie for wanting to be nothing more than an action-packed good time, but I can't condone this lackluster title. XXX is about as soulless as the faceless

Activision suit the signed off on its feast of mundane side-scrolling. Don't expect the three motorcycle tracks to make things interesting, because you'll only find a paltry Road Rash imitation instead. I don't blame Vin Diesel — he did his job perfectly in the movie. No, I blame Activision for using his likeness in a manner that is offensive to gamers and the term "action" in general. — **KATO**

E 3

GAME BOY ADVANCE

DUKE NUKEM

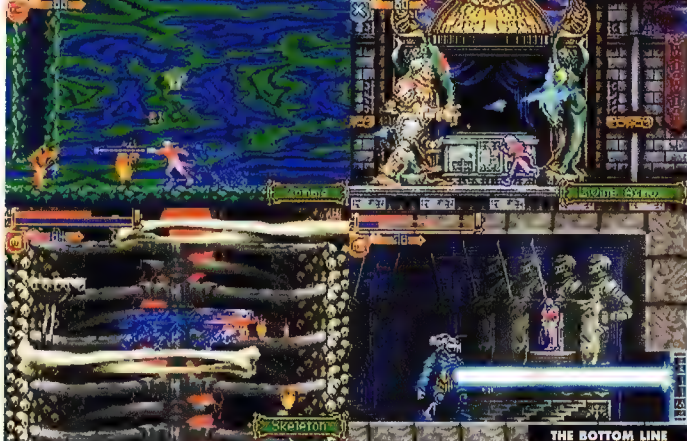
- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** TAKE2 INTERACTIVE
- **RELEASE** AUGUST 14



Obviously, first-person shooters on the Game Boy Advance aren't the smoothest thing you've ever seen, but developer Torus Games did an amazing job of capturing Duke

Nukem on Nintendo's pocket wonder. Not only does Duke Nukem Advance keep all of the attitude that made its console and PC counterparts famous, it manages to salvage most of the action as well. It's a pint-size Duke, but it certainly has his best FPS yet on GBA. — **ANDY**

T 8.5



GAME BOY ADVANCE

CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE

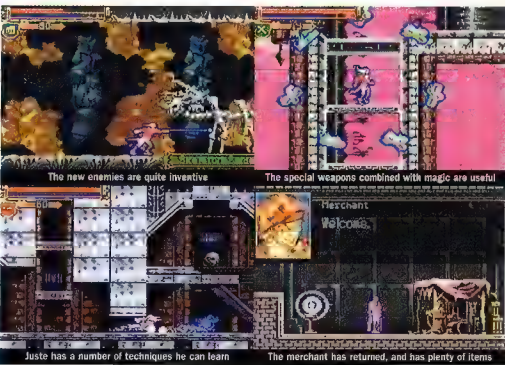
A PORTABLE SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

Harmony of Dissonance appeared on my screen, and the months of anticipation overtook my self-control, resulting in an orgasmic outburst of excitement. Perhaps you cannot sympathize here, so my reaction may seem strange; but I must admit: I love Castlevania. Thank goodness the newest edition does not disappoint.

As you may know, Konami closely based gameplay on that of Symphony of the Night. So, while the action component plays a significant role, the RPG and exploration elements are nearly as important. Players will be able to find or purchase various items, weapons, and magic, as well as level-up Juste — our Belmont protagonist. And of course, since this is basically a portable SOTN, we get some familiar enemies and bosses, and an inverted castle!

Fortunately, Harmony possesses a few original elements. For example, Juste can dash forward and backward, combine magic with secondary weapons to create special attacks, and enhance his whip with special attachments. Most of these additions affect combat, making it more interesting.

Unfortunately, these changes didn't affect the series' difficulty level. Just like SOTN, Harmony features some extremely easy boss battles. While the experience is still engrossing overall, I almost always felt underwhelmed after a boss encounter. Nevertheless, Harmony isn't a title any GBA owner should miss. — **CHET**



- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER** KONAMI
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17

THE BOTTOM LINE


TEN
8 **9.5**

- **Concept:** Essentially a flawless reproduction of PS-X's Symphony of the Night for GBA
- **Graphics:** They are some of the best visuals for GBA, plus it is much easier to see than Circle of the Moon
- **Sound:** I like the tunes; they suit the game well, but the quality is only fair
- **Playability:** No problems here, and with the ability to jet forward, things move quickly
- **Entertainment:** Konami did an amazing job making this version one of the best games in the series
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Aside from Metroid, Castlevania is my favorite 2D action series. PS-X Symphony of the Night was a masterpiece, and I loved Circle of the Moon on GBA. Harmony of Dissonance takes some of their best aspects and crafts another phenomenal release. First off, it's much easier to see on the GBA screen than the last title. Even with the clearer look, the intricacy of both the enemies and environments has been increased. The shoulder button front and back dashing technique is remarkable, both for combat and faster navigation. The spell cards, relics, equipment, and leveling-up carry on Castlevania's tradition of deep RPG elements that enhance strategy and exploration. The series' nonlinear style continues to blow away any of the run-to-the-right action/platform games out there. My only gripe has to do with the bosses, which are too easy to obliterate. Harmony of Dissonance is yet another dose of amazing 2D artistry. Don't pass it up.

JUSTIN — 9.25



ZERO IN ON THE MOST IN-YOUR-FACE MEGA-MAN GAME EVER!



Join Mega Man's pal Zero – reloid from the Mega Man X series – in his first action adventure for the Game Boy® Advance video game system. The mission: conquer your adversaries and help an exiled scientist discover the source of a new reloid energy. Fail and risk ultimate defeat. Are you ready to face the most challenging Mega Man game yet?

MEGAMAN ZERO

TM

EVERYONE



Violence

CAPCOM
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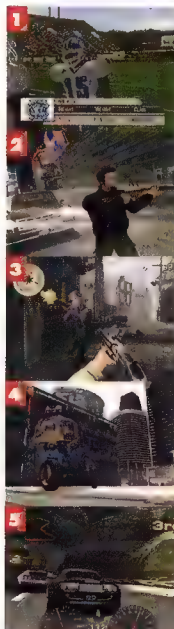
GAME BOY ADVANCE

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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

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For July 2002
Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	NCAA Football 2003	PS2	N/A	Jul-02	\$50

While most gamers get their gridiron kicks in the virtual NFL, college ball has a strong following as well, demonstrated by NCAA 2003's heatseeker debut at number one. Still, we expect its reign on top to be a short one, especially when Madden and NFL 2K3 hit the charts next month, although NCAA will likely remain the game of choice in frat houses across the country.

2	2	Grand Theft Auto III	PS2	9.5	Oct-02	\$49
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We haven't seen a game hold court this long since the heyday of Pokémon. At its current rate of sale, GTA III is well on its way to becoming the best selling game of all time. In related news, Rockstar Games announced that the company is buying every employee a set of platinum, diamond-encrusted false teeth. Bling bling!

3	1	Medal of Honor: Frontline	PS2	9	May-02	\$50
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Instead of wasting their lives listening to Nelly, watching the *Anna Nicole Smith Show*, and playing video games, your grandparents spent their youth fighting the Nazis in Europe. Yeah, people born after 1930 pretty much suck, but you can get a taste of what it's like to be a member of the Greatest Generation in Medal of Honor: Frontline, EA's FPS masterpiece. It's as close as you're going to get – you damn hippie!

4	15	Stuntman	PS2	9.5	Jun-02	\$47
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We were perplexed when Stuntman debuted at a disappointing number 15 on the charts last month, but it appears that word-of-mouth (and some cool TV spots) are starting to get the message out to the PS2 public. Will Stuntman hang around for the long haul? It's tough to say, as many people may be put off by the game's difficulty. However, we expect that there are enough Lee Majors fans out there to keep this selling for ages.

5	3	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2	9	Jul-01	\$21
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It's still pretty much the best damn racing game ever made, and now that it's a paltry \$20, it's no surprise that GT 3 just keeps selling and selling. Think of it as the Energizer Bunny of video games. Heck, it was locking down the Top Five when these other games were just a twinkle in the programmer's eye! And don't think that GT 3 doesn't know that it was one of you young whippersnappers that egged its house Tuesday night! GTA III, we're talking to you!

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	N/A	MLB Slugfest 2003	PS2	7.75	Jun-02	\$51
7	4	Dragonball Z: The Legacy of Goku	GBA	7.5	May-02	\$31
8	9	Super Mario Advance 2	GBA	9.5	Feb-02	\$30
9	19	Yu Gi Oh!: Dark Duel Stories	GBC	5.5	Mar-02	\$30
10	10	Halo	Xbox	9.5	Nov-01	\$48
11	N/A	NCAA Football 2003	Xbox	N/A	Jul-02	\$50
12	12	Yu Gi Oh!: Forbidden Memories	PS-X	5.5	Mar-02	\$31
13	13	Midnight Club: Street Racing	PS2	7.5	Oct-00	\$20
14	5	Spider-Man: The Movie	PS2	7.75	Apr-02	\$50
15	N/A	Digimon World 3	PS-X	N/A	Jun-02	\$21
16	16	ATV Offroad Fury	PS2	8.5	Feb-01	\$21
17	N/A	Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	PS2	9.25	Aug-01	\$20
18	17	Super Smash Bros. Melee	GC	9.25	Dec-01	\$50
19	18	Sonic Advance	GBA	8.5	Feb-02	\$40
20	N/A	Spider-Man	PS-X	8.25	Aug-00	\$20

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barwell/Vicki Korff (516) 825-2811

JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game 2002
Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Mobile Suit Gundam: War Diary	PS2
2	N/A	Super Robot Big Battle R	GBA
3	N/A	Super Mario Sunshine	GC
4	N/A	Power Pro Baseball 9	PS2
5	N/A	My Summer Vacation 2	PS2
6	N/A	Jojo's Bizarre Adventure Volume 5	PS2
7	N/A	Kamaitachi No Yoru 2	PS2
8	N/A	Ape Escape 2	PS2
9	N/A	Sulkoden III	PS2
10	N/A	Custom Robo GX	GBA



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Kingdom Hearts	PS2
2	4	Madden NFL 2003	PS2
3	1	Super Mario Sunshine	GC
4	2	SOCOM: US Navy SEALS	PS2
5	N/A	Animal Crossing	GC
6	6	Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos	PC
7	7	Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem	GC
8	8	NFL 2K3	Xbox
9	3	Dead to Rights	Xbox
10	N/A	Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	PS2



PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service. Source: Game 2002 (516) 825-2811

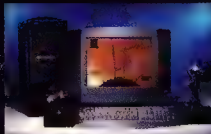
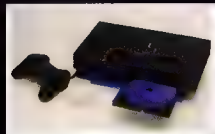
POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	1	Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos	Jun-02	\$59
2	2	Neverwinter Nights	Jun-02	\$44
3	3	The Sims: Vacation	Mar-02	\$29
4	5	The Sims	Feb-00	\$44
5	4	Grand Theft Auto III	May-02	\$42
6	8	Backyard Baseball 2003	Jun-02	\$45
7	N/A	Zoo Tycoon	Oct-01	\$76
8	6	Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	Jan-02	\$19
9	N/A	The Sims: Hot Date	Nov-01	\$49
10	N/A	The Sims: Livin' Large	Sep-00	\$47



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Mystery Word Grid

	H									M Y S T E R Y
		E								
	P	I	N	C	H	W				W O R D
		R								
	S									

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCHW PRESSK BLASTA WRECKD
 BREAKZ PUNCHS SPRAYC TURBOV
 STOMPT STANDR PRESSE DREAMO
 CRUSHI SCOREH SLANTL CHASEP

MYSTERY WORD CLUE

WORD RULERS HAVE IT AND IN THIS CONTEST YOU HAVE IT

Yes!

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CLIP AND MAIL

Verifiable retail value of the prize packages as follows: Media Rig Contest package \$7,012.00 core components shown, bonus options \$3,449.00, cash options \$1,250.00, Computer Contest package \$2,500.00 for computer, bonus options \$2,337.00, cash options \$1,250.00, Video Game Contest \$700.00 for systems shown, \$3,549.00 bonus options, \$1,250.00 cash options.

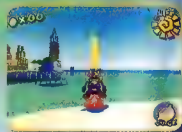
PLAY TO PERFECTION



After plenty of arduous hours, we have a complete guide for all of our loyal readers. Plus, we've included some of the secrets and a list of tips related to the Shines and Blue Coins. Enjoy!

TIPS: BLUE COINS AND SHINES

- In order to obtain every Shine, you must obtain every Blue Coin, and then trade them for Shines inside the structure that takes you to Ricco Harbor.
- Whenever you see a red M, X, or O symbol, spray it for a Blue Coin.
- In the hub, NPCs will often request that you perform tasks, such as gathering fruit. Do them for a Blue Coin.
- There are a total of 240 Blue Coins: Normal levels contain 30, the hub has 20, and Corona houses 10.
- There are 120 Shines: Normal levels have 11 each, Delfino Plaza has 40, Delfino Airstrip has two, and Corona has one.
- Get 100 Gold Coins to receive a Shine. This applies to every area except Delfino Airstrip.
- Some levels have butterflies with a color. The blue ones yield a Blue Coin if you eat them with Yoshi.



- Each level features a Blue Bird. Squirt it three times for a Blue Coin.
- When trading in Blue Coins, you receive credit for Shines in Delfino Plaza.
- Some Blue Coins can only be obtained in certain episodes.

- Return to the platforming objectives after completing them to collect Red Coins and get a Shine!
- In most levels, there's a bee's nest. With Yoshi, eat the three bees in front of the bee's hive. Spray the hive to knock it down. Now, eat all of these bees for a Blue Coin.
- After you get 40 Shines, talk to the Yellow NPC at the beginning of some of the levels; he'll give you Sunglasses! Beat the game and he'll give you a tropical shirt.

DELFINO PLAZA

SHINES

1. Go to the warp entrance behind the lighthouse. Slide down from the middle blue piece. When you reach the ramps, hold left when you launch off. At the end, instead of trying to land on the super thin platform, hover to the last platform.
2. Get the Rocket Nozzle and shoot up to the platform of the large, dirty Shine in the middle of town. Wash it off.
3. Get the Rocket Nozzle and head left. The first house will have a tower on it. In front of the tower on the house's roof is an egg. Rocket up to this dirty bell and clean it. Fall down to your right and you'll see a sewer hatch ahead. On either side of the hatch, there are houses. Jump to the roof on your left, and there's another hatch. Go down and proceed to the Shine. Across from this first tower, you'll find another tower with a dirty bell. Clean it, too.

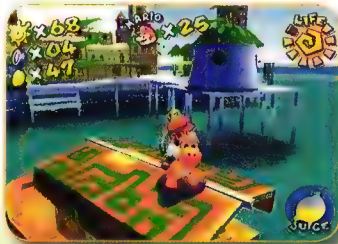


4. Go towards the sewer you took to get Shine three. Jump on the box to the top of this structure. On the right, you'll see a non-player character (NPC) next to a rooster

weather vane. Talk to the NPC and he'll launch you to a Shine!



5. Under the archway where the ship passes, you'll find a hole. Jump into it. No matter what, you'll always be forced to the right. To get the first Coin, butt-slam as soon as you start moving right. The Red Coin on the far right may cause trouble, too. Instead, using the chute as you did previously, run straight up the slanted platform in the back. When you get to the opening with the Coin, jump and hover to it.



6. With Yoshi, go to the Noki Bay warp. A ship will pass by. Board it. Use the three ships until you reach the island with the stranded NPC. On the last boat, there'll be a yellow bird floating on the water; spray it. When you get to the island, eat the bird.
7. Do the same thing as in Shine six, but this time go down the Sewer. At the beginning, get to the right a tad, and you'll obtain the first two Coins easily. For the third, you need to move the leaf to the left some. For the fourth, move left a little more. For the fifth, start moving to the right as fast as you can after grabbing the fourth Coin. For the sixth Coin, continue right. For the seventh, if you proceed right a little, you should pass right under it. When you jump, the leaf won't move too much, so you'll land safely. Now, start propelling yourself to the platform. If you miss any Coins, your objective should be to get the extra life and start over. Also, if you're careful, you can actually walk back to the beginning on the edge. The leaf will respawn!



8. At the beginning to the left, there are shutters blocking a Shine. Get the Turbo Nozzle and bust through to get it.
9. Go to the tower that's guarded by two watchmen. Again, bust through the doors. In this area, just freakin' hit the button, and let Mario fly. At the top of the large hill, jump and you should hit the last platform.
10. Enter the house near the large Shine in the center of town. Bash all of the crates in 30 seconds.

11. Enter the house of boxes again to complete another challenge and get another Shine. The Hover Nozzle works best here.



12. Go on top of the lighthouse and Rocket jump. At the peak, butt-slam.

13. On the cliff next to the cannon that shoots you to Pinna Park, there's a warp. Get the Rocket Nozzle to reach it. First, put out the idiot NPC on fire. Second, spray the red bird. Third, get the easy Coin resting on a platform. Fourth, kill the four enemies. Finally, pull the camera back, and you'll see a hole with an odd object in it. Jump in and butt-slam. Look in first-person to see the Red Coin.

14. Get 100 Gold Coins. If you travel to Delfino Airport, you shouldn't have a problem.

TOUCH BLUE COINS



- Extinguish the NPC on fire.
- Get Yoshi. Across from the character that launches you to Shine four is a yellow growth. Shoot juice at it. On the roof of the houses behind the lighthouse is more of the yellow growth, which conceals a Blue Coin.
- To the right of where you began, a structure has a Blue Coin imprisoned. Go around back and hover into the opening.
- The Blue Bird is on the houses close to where the NPC throws you for Shine four. Also, there's another bird on the roof of the house in the beginning that has a pineapple stuck in its chimney warp.
- Be sure to search the sewers for a few Blue Coins.

SECRETS

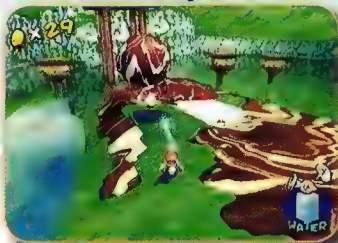
- On the beach near the NPC that provides sunglasses, spray water to find a hidden sewer.
- After obtaining 35 Shines, defeat Shadow Mario to get Yoshi. Also note that you must bring the type of fruit specified by a Yoshi egg to get him.



BIANCO HILLS

Episodes

Road to the Big Windmill

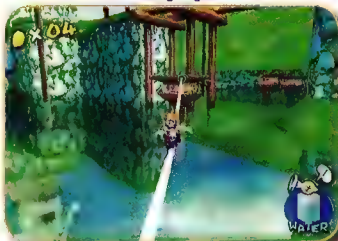


Go to the little windmill on the East side of town beyond the stream. Use it to get over the wall. Now, follow the path of sludge to the source, where you'll see the sludge balls emerging. Dispose of the boss as you did before.

Down with Petey Piranha

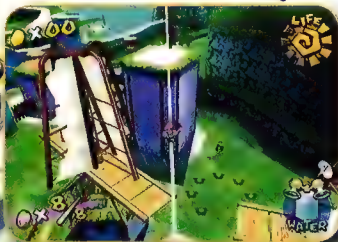
Follow the path to the big windmill. Get on the revolving platforms. Jump to the roof. When its mouth opens, shoot water into it, and then execute the butt-slam on his bellybutton. Do this three times.

The Hillside Cave Mystery (Platforming Objective 1)



To get there, use the platforms over the water, which are connected by rope. If you haven't already figured it out, the spin jump technique helps here. Simply move the analog stick in a quick circle and jump. This platforming objective is relatively easy – just take your time, and the patterns will be readily discernable.

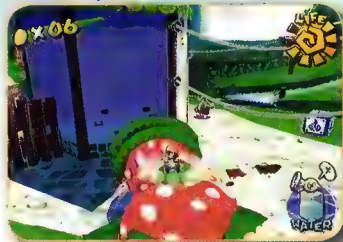
Red Coins of Windmill Village



There are three on the wall, which divides the east and west portions of the town. The rest you can find on the

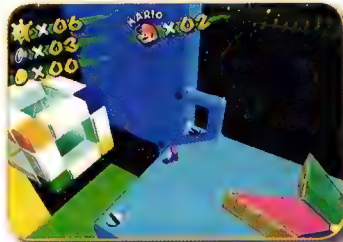
roofs in the west part of town. One you might have trouble obtaining has to do with the triangular windmills. Simply shoot water to maneuver the platforms so that you can reach the Red Coin. There is one on the northern most building. To get the Shine, traverse the rope leading up from the northern-most building.

Petey Piranha Strikes Back



Get on the northern-most building, and walk on the rope leading to the cliff edge at the north. At the top, let one of those little creatures stick itself to your nozzle. Fill it with water and shoot it at Petey through the opening in the fence. Go down to the main part of town. You must shoot water at Petey to knock him out of the air. Once on the ground, you'll have to dodge his tornado attack (fairly easy). Fill Petey's stomach with water and butt-slam.

The Secret of the Dirty Lake (Platforming Objective 2)



Go to the eastern part of town. Now proceed to the wall at the south past the stream. Get on top of the narrow wall and follow it to the series of platforms. At the end, you'll see a red box. Jump on it for the Rocket Nozzle. Now proceed up the path towards the big windmill. In the back you'll see a cave; enter it. The first part should be easy to understand. For the second, jump towards the blue wall on the right, and then jump off of it to the platform across the gap. Be careful of the cubes, as they rotate. Simply make sure that you're on the top piece before it turns 90 degrees. Also note that you need not jump over the edges of the cubes.

Shadow Mario on the Loose

This objective is much easier than the first one. The quickest way to dispose of him here, and in most cases, is simply using the belly slide (jump and press B). This will propel you ahead of him, and allow you to attack him more easily.

The Red Coins of the Lake

First, get the Rocket Nozzle. Get the Coin in the lake, and then the one on the rope connecting the platforms in the lake. There's another on land, on the wire just connecting the platforms before the Rocket Nozzle. There's one other Red Coin on a wire that connects the platform from mainland to the platform with the Red Rocket. Now, traverse the path to the big windmill. After crossing the bridge, you'll encounter a vertical column of coins, which is made conspicuous by the shadow. Shoot straight up under

them, and you'll hit a wire. The rest of the Red Coins are on these various wires. Eventually, you'll reach a third tier of ropes. Go to the highest platform here, which is to the right if you're facing the windmill. To the right, you'll see a platform a little higher up. Begin to charge the Rocket Nozzle and jump towards the platform; you should just make it. Pull the camera back and you'll see a Red Coin in the middle of the wire.

BONUS SHINES

Platforming Objective 1

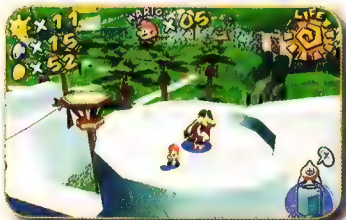
Sacrifice a life to find the location of each Red Coin. The three tough ones are on stars to the left and the right of the main section. In your second run, practice reaching the spots where the Red Coins were located.

Platforming Objective 2

At the first colored cube, simply jump from it and cross the gap with the aid of your normal Thruster Pack.

Collect 100 Yellow Coins.

TOUCH BLUE COINS



- Go to the top of the windmill after beating the boss; kill the enemy.
- From that northern-most building, take the rope going up towards the south. A blue bird will be there.
- In Episode eight, hug the wall on the right from where you begin. Just before the stream, use the Rocket Nozzle to jump high and slightly to the right. On top of a small tower, there is a friendly NPC covered in sludge. Clean him for a Blue Coin. Return and clean him to get an Extra Life.
- Go to the house next to the Rocket Nozzle in the west part of town. You'll notice there is a balcony; spray the floor in the left one.
- On the east side, there's an enemy on the platforms next to the Rocket Nozzle box. Kill it.
- On the west side, go far west next to the circle of flowers and the dam. With the Rocket Nozzle, jump high. There's a Blue Coin on the side of the mountain.
- On the east side, get on top of the tree closest to the water wheel. Spray the top.
- Go towards the big windmill. Behind it is a tall grassy pillar. Get on it and spray the top.
- Go to the area where you saw Pety in Pety Piranha Strikes Back. Use the clouds to reach the platform. Spray the top.
- Face the NPC on the tower at the beginning who gives you a Blue Coin. Look behind him and you'll see a pedestal with a small windmill on it. Get in front of it, and spray it until a Blue Coin appears.

SECRETS

- In the west side during Red Coins of Windmill village, there's a flying creature dropping sludge. Spray it thoroughly for an extra life.
- In the Platforming Objectives, butt-slam the nails for goodies.
- Shoot the bells with water for an Extra Life.

DELFINO AIRSTRIP

Note: Speak with the NPC next to the boat that is behind the Ricco Harbor structure. He'll take you here.

SHINES



- Go behind and to the right of the fountain to get the Water Pack. Defeat the rainbow-colored enemy to get a Shine.
- Hit the red button to find the Coins. You should easily get these with the Propulsion Nozzle. The last one (a sneaky one) is inside the tower.

RICCO HARBOUR

Episodes

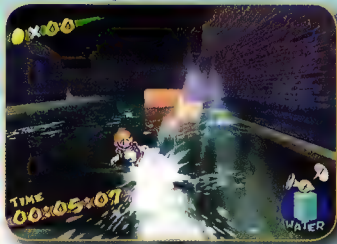
Gooper Blooper Breaks Out



Go to the far end (the arrow points you in the right direction). When you reach the boxes with the tentacle hanging out, grab the tentacle and pull it. First, pull them all off — one by one. Now wash the sludge from its face. Finally, pull the cork on its nose. Do it once more and you're done!

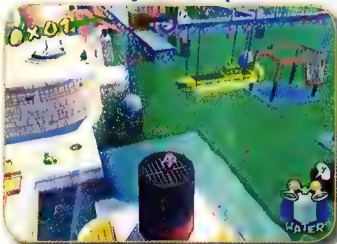


Blooper Surfing Safari



Turn right and go to the dock; there are logs in the water leading the way. Jump on a Blooper and follow the flags around to the sewer entrance. Enter it. This is a race against time, so you have to learn the level. We recommend the purple Blooper; it's the fastest, but has the worst control.

The Caged Shine Sprite



Instead of following the arrows, go to the large ship right in front of you. Get on top of its chimney and jump to the blue narrow platform in front. Once here, a candy-cane-looking pole will be right behind you. Grab on to the pole and take it across to the gate. Go through the two gates to the platform, and hang a left. Go all the way to the end and get the Rocket Nozzle. Use the trampolines to reach the top of the center piece that has the Shine.

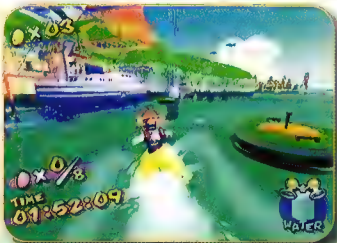
The Secret of Ricco Tower

Enter the tower and get ready for a Platforming Objective. Again, this one isn't too hard — just know that your feet kind of stick to the surfaces, as with the rotating cubes.

Gooper Blooper Returns

First get the Rocket Nozzle, and then head to the platform to the north to fight Gooper Blooper. Simply dispose of it as you did before. However, when it spins, stand in place and do a regular single jump as the tentacles pass by.

Red Coins on the Water



Go with the yellow Blooper. Follow the line of coins and you should get them easily, except for perhaps the last three. The third to last one you will need to jump for; the second to last is under a platform between four pillars; and the last Red Coin is between the two small boats in the beginning on the left. Also, be aware that you can't dismount, so before you jump for joy, return to the beginning and jump onto the dock to get the Shine.

Shadow Mario Revisited

This will take place up on the rafters, so be careful and patient. Your Hover Nozzle will suffice. Notice that he simply runs in a big circle.

Yoshi's Fruit Adventure



First, get Yoshi. Now go to the edge with the arrows pointing to the left. Spray the fish and they'll turn into platforms. Jump on quickly. Get to the second highest platform, spray the fish and get on. From here, spin jump with Yoshi. If you hold down the jump button, you should just reach the platform.

BONUS SHINES

•Platforming Objective

Go to the Secret of Ricco Tower and complete the Red Coin Objective; it's easy enough.

•Go to the second episode and re-enter the race. Beat it in under 40 seconds to receive a Shine.

•Collect 100 Coins.

Touch Blue Coins



•In the beginning, turn left. Get on the roof of the three small houses. Up here, you'll find an M.

•Return to the area of the Caged Shine Sprite. Kill the enemy to get a Blue Coin.

•You'll notice an X on Ricco Tower and one on a building near where you fought the first boss. Use the Turbo Nozzle to get them.

•Go to the steel platform over the water (the one above the location of the NPC that throws you). There's a Rocket Nozzle on this platform. Over the edge, along the pillar, you can find a Blue Coin.

•Eat the spiders with Yoshi.

SECRETS

- Swimming under the sludge in the water – if you happen to fall in – will prevent Mario from taking damage.

GELATO BEACH

Episodes

Dune Buds and Sand Castles



•Platforming Objective

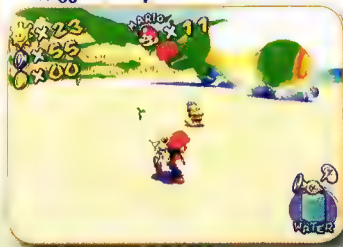
You'll see little plants sticking out of the ground. Spray the one that's a couple to the left of where you start; a castle will emerge. Go under the archway of the castle for a Platforming Objective. Don't worry about the blocks at the end. If you get to an orange stable one, the sand blocks will re-appear.

Mirror Madness! Tilt, Slam, Bam!



Get on top of the mirrors and spray the enemies until they're off balance (standing on one leg). Quickly go towards the opposite side and butt-slam the mirror to send it flying.

Wiggler Ahoy! Full Steam Ahead!



Get near one of the tiny plants the boss passes by just before the boss gets near the plant, spray it with water

until it erupts. Once the boss is down, get on its belly. Butt-slam the section that the arrow points to.

The Sand Bird is Born

Go to the top of the level by going south. At the top, jump slide down the hill to the canvas top. Jump into the hole in the tower. For this objective, you simply need to be quick. Get all of the coins ASAP. Now the bird will flip. Get near its center and walk up to the narrow, perpendicular side. It will flip again, so slowly walk to the bird's topside again. Jump on the tower that the bird passes on its left to get the last Red Coin and the Shine.

Il Piantissimo's Sand Sprint



Run straight ahead. Just after the sand line meets the grass line, start jumping. The third hop should take you right over the first small wall. For the second, start jumping just after the grass turns to sand again. At the peak, hover to the ledge. Halfway up the stairs, turn left and jump up the hill. When you fall on the other side back onto the stairs, head up to the left. Touch the white pole and you win!

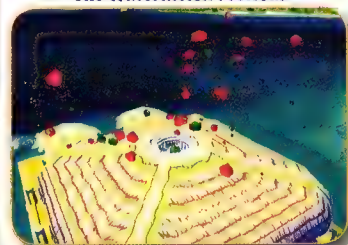
Red Coins in Coral Reef

To the left of the beginning, there's a house on the water and some coral off behind it. Search the coral for the Red Coins. Watch out for the large fish swimming around; it can damage you.

It's Shadow Mario! After Him!

Hopefully, you know what to do at this point: belly slide and spray.

The Watermelon Festival



Go to the top of the level. Get the melon and push it into the house with the deck in front of the coral reef. Be careful, though; if the melon touches an enemy or water, it explodes, and you must start over.

BONUS SHINES

•Return to the Dune Buds and Sand Castles Platforming Objective and get the Red Coins.

•From the beginning, spray the plant that creates a staircase going down into the sand. There will be coins here. If you spray the wall behind the coins, a Shine will begin to form. Once you form it completely, you get a Shine.

•Collect 100 Coins.

Tough Blue Coins



- Spray and jump on the odd red bird-like creature.
- In Sand Bird is Born, there are four Blue Coins on clouds. Don't worry about killing yourself. If you wait on a cloud, the bird will return.
- Look under the deck of the house in front of the coral reef.
- There's an island with a swing out in the ocean. Get on the swing, and use the Spray Cannon to push it back. Also, at the top of the tree, you'll find a Blue Coin.
- Go to the top area where you get the large Watermelon. On top of the tall pole in this area is a Blue Coin. Use the Rocket Nozzle to get to it easily. Note: The blue bird is also in this area.
- Get to the pole where you received the previous Blue Coin. Follow the wire all the way across to the west side. Here, you'll encounter the tallest point of the level, which also features a Blue Coin. Use the Hover Nozzle to reach the top.
- Go to the dock, and turn right. Go up the hill where the grass meets the sand, and look behind the platform.
- Check the open ocean in the beginning for a few Blue Coins.
- Go to the area in front of the contestants at the Watermelon Festival. In front of them is a plant. Spray the area around the plant. When you form a Shine, you'll get a Blue Coin. Do the same for the area where the sandcastle appeared, and the area to the right of the surfboards.
- Drop a Banana in the blender at the top of the hut on the water.
- Get Yoshi in Red Coins in the Coral Reef and spray the yellow growth by the hut.



SECRETS

- Spray the register inside the building to the east on the beach for an Extra Life.
- The annoying duck creatures can be killed: knock them out with water in the vicinity of a plant. Now, spray the plant to make it erupt.

PINNA PARK

Episodes

Mecha Bowser Appears

Follow Shadow Mario. While on the roller coaster car, you'll pick up rockets to shoot Bowser with. However, he'll shoot bullets at you, which you can destroy with a rocket or spray. You'll know they're coming by the increasing sound they make. When you cross Bowser's face, he will shoot fire. Merely extinguish his flame with water until you pass.

The Cannon Conundrum
(Platforming Objective 1)



At the start, a beaver will be shooting a cannon. Go to him. When you get close, he'll cover into his turret. Walk away a little and he'll fling Ba-Bombs at you. Shoot them with water, pick them up, and launch them at the turret. Enter the hole and complete the platforming task. Destroy the boxes for an extra life. Jump on the trampolines, and the rest should be cake. The belly slide technique works well here.

Red Coins of the Pirate Ship



Follow the arrows to the pirate ship. The first Coins are obtained by swinging on the pirate ships. The difficult ones are few. First, there will be one under the fence just past the pirate ships. Spray the enemies under you and butt-slam them. Butt-Slam the gate to hang onto the bottom side. Once you obtain the Coin, proceed ahead. Kick the gates open and get to the top. Get on top of the fence that resembles a path heading up. Spray the enemies and slowly and carefully get close to them while they're stunned; butt-slam when you're next to them! If you're facing the boats at the beginning, the last Coin is to the left, way up.

The Wilted Sunflowers

Spray the eggs until a turtle appears. When it jumps, get out of the way. When it flips, butt-slam it. Do this for each one.

The Runaway Ferris Wheel



Simply proceed up the path towards the Ferris wheel. Jump past it to the stable platform with the turtle. Go around the back of this structure and you'll see a hole with a rope under it. Use the rope to jump and grab the fence. Kick the sleeping turtle off! Now get on top of one of the cars to reach the Shine.

The Yoshi-Go-Round's Secret
(Platforming Objective 2)



Follow the path to the right, going up the mountain. Just after you pass the first hill, there will be a platform with an NPC and a Yoshi Egg. Get it and eat a Pineapple. Go to the empty spot on the Yoshi-Go-Round.

Shadow Mario in the Park

As if we need to repeat the goal here, just spray the freak down and pray that he doesn't run.

Roller Coaster Balloons



Go up to the entrance of the rollercoaster to get instructions for the minigame. Simply complete this objective to get the last official Shine for this area. Don't waste a single rocket. As soon as you get one, shoot it at a balloon. Also, there are certain angles that allow you to hit more than one at one time; this is key.

BONUS SHINES

• **Platforming Objective 1**

Just grab the ones at the beginning on the disappearing platforms. Then go get the two ahead. At the end, use the belly-slide technique to get the last Red Coin quickly.

• **Platforming Objective 2**

Only two Coins are in the area at the beginning where the blocks are moving; the rest are on the orange structure. Also, try to get both extra lives before attempting this objective: At the very least, even if you die a lot, you'll build up your inventory of lives.

- Collect 100 Coins.



TOUGH BLUE COINS



- Up by the roller coaster entrance, you can find the blue bird.
- Go to the merry-go-round ride across from the Yoshi-Go-Round. Get in the middle and spray the shells.
- In the beginning, there are baskets covering Blue Coins. Go to the Cannon Conundrum mission. Wait for the enemy to shoot a purple bullet at you and then stand by the basket. It will blow it up. There are six of these.



SECRETS

- Since you get coins for destroying bullets in Cannon Conundrum, this episode is good for completing the Coin objective, or gaining extra lives.



Note: To get here, stand in the center of the ray of light by all of your friends. Look into the sun.

Uncork the Waterfall

Simply scale the wall, washing the paint off of the side to reveal platforms. It is a long way up, so try to conserve your water for revealing platforms. When you get near the top, use the waterwheel to get up the platform.

The Boss of Tricky Ruins



After talking with Grandpa, head back to the trampoline platform on the water. Use it to reach the platform above. From here, spray the painting. Get the Blue Coin, and make your way around to the right. First, head left and get the Blue Coin in the window. Spray the painting in this area on the right wall. Jump over to the platform and you'll see a Blue Coin. Fall down to the bottom. Go in the little archway and make your way into the door up on the left. You'll eventually emerge and find another door, which will take you to a higher platform. To the right over the cliff will be a bunch of paintings. You'll find a couple of Blue Coins. Go to the right now, past the hole you originally emerged

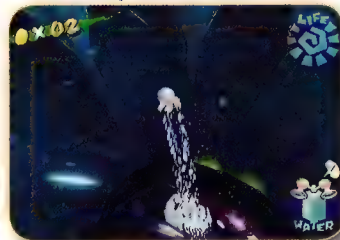
from, up to the platform. Spray the painting. Go up to find another Blue Coin. Keep going around, and go all the way to the top to defeat a familiar boss. Before you get the Shine, spray the artifacts in the wall. There are two more Blue Coins.

Red Coins in a Bottle



Simply collect the Red Coins around the tank. If you run low on air, collect some Gold Coins.

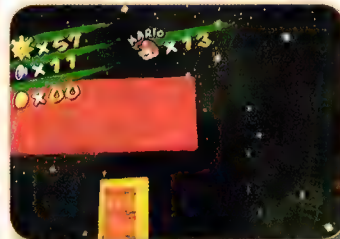
Eely-Mouth Dentist



Make your way to the top, and dive into the waterfall. Fall to the bottom until you're above the eel's head. When it opens its mouth, spray your water onto its teeth. Spray until all of them are done. When the eel starts sucking, don't let go of the spray button. Also, if you hit the purple bubbles, they'll turn into air.

El Plantissimo's Surf Swim

This race is a joke. You should have no problems beating him if you use the platforms to get to the flag instead of swimming.

The Shellfish Secret
(Platforming Objective)

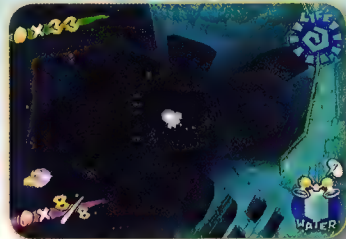
Make your way up to the shell and enter it. This one will be quite tough. Be careful when climbing up to the top in the beginning; when you reach the top, you may just jump right over the edge! When you get to the wooden pole, don't climb all the way to the top. Jump from near the top to the platform. When you get to the one with a piece of glass outlined in green on the left, don't bash in the nails. Get

on the one furthest from the platform, face the screen, and do a backflip to the platform. You should just make it.

Hold It. Shadow Mario!

You're lame if you don't get this objective by now.

The Red Coin Fish



Simply collect the Red Coins when the Coins form a fish. Collect Yellow Coins for health when it disperses. After you finish here, it's a good time to complete some tasks in Defino Plaza.

BONUS SHINES

- **Platforming Objective**
Make sure that you don't miss the Coin at the top of the slanted red structure with the arrows on it.
- **Yellow Bird**
Go to the highest part on the west side; you reach it by getting suddenly shot up to it from a tunnel in the cliff. Get on the tree and spray the yellow bird.
- 100 Gold Coins

TOUGH BLUE COINS



- Use the trampoline to get to the platform across from the painting in the beginning. Climb up. Once you get to the grassy area, go to the left if you're facing the mountain. Look on the face of the mountain to the left and you'll see the painting that is just below Mario. Go to it and spray it. Once the wall goes back, jump and climb up, and there will be a hidden door on the left. Go into it and spray the paintings on the other side.
- Again, go up to the first grassy area. Go to the right, up the next platform and spray the painting. Jump up it, stop, and get into the left-most indentation in the wall just above you. From here, hop out (making sure you don't hit your head), and hover to Mario's right around the mountain. You'll see an indentation in the wall.
- Next to the previous Blue Coin, there's another indentation with a Blue Coin. If you're good, you can get to it from the indentation housing the Blue Coin you just got. Otherwise, you can climb up to the series of platforms above on the left, and hover over.
- From the beginning, turn right and head up to the right side of the level. Scale the wall and use the blue

trampoline to reach the platform above, where you'll find a Rocket Nozzle. Use it and shoot yourself up to find a Blue Coin.

- Go up to the first water wheel. Jump to the holes in the mountain's wall, and hang and shimmy across. Go all the way to your left and jump on the sides of the wall. At the top is a Blue Coin.
- Go to the top, where you met the old man. Go to that ledge, fall and quickly hover. Under this ledge is an indentation which houses a Blue Coin.
- Return to the secret area in episode eight. At the top of four pillars there are four Blue Coins.
- Shimmy along the small crease in the wall (the lower one). When you get to the mysterious hole that looks like a doorway, turn around. Spray the area to Mario's left to reveal a Blue Coin!



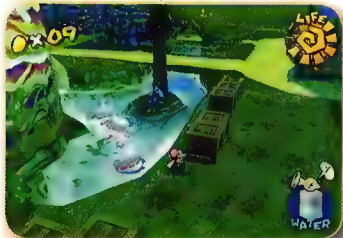
SECRETS

- Under Grandpa in Eely-Mouth's Dentist, you'll find an extra life. Wet the ice cube.

PIANTA VILLAGE

Episodes

Chain Chomplets Unchained

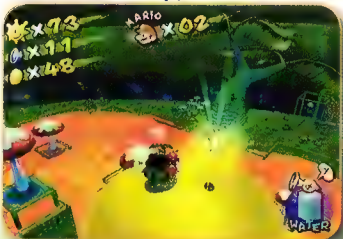


Just hose them down and direct them towards the small water hole in the middle of the level. Cool them off near the water hole, grab their tails, and pull – launching them into the hole.

El Pinatissimo's Crazy Climb

Just go straight ahead (using the belly-slide) and run up the large tree near the hot spring. When you get to the white wall at the end, make sure you clear it on the second or third jump in succession so that you don't waste time. Do this episode twice.

The Goopy Inferno



Go around the outskirts of the town to the right. You'll encounter an NPC that says, "This should lead you to the

mayor." Go down the hole next to him. When you get to the vertical fence piece, get on and punch it with B. When it stops, get off quickly before it falls. Proceed to the swing. From the swing jump to the mushrooms. Jump to the fence here. You'll eventually hit a horizontal gate. Go through it. Just follow the tiny clean sections up to the tall structure with the mayor. Wash him off.

Chain Chomps Bath

First cool it down, and then set it free. Follow it when it's angry, let it travel close to the location of the hot spring in the north. When it's close, spray it, and pull it into the water.

The Village Underside (Platforming Objective 1)



Get Yoshi and fall over the side near the bridge onto a mushroom platform. Hop these until you come to the yellow growth that is between two extra lives. Go down the tube. Talk to the second NPC from his back-left to get the Extra Life. Keep in mind they throw behind themselves, so face the direction you would like to go when speaking with one. For the last part, position yourself near the middle of the crease, where the two blocks come together. When the NPC is directly in the middle too, talk with him.

Piantas Needed



Wash all of them off. The last one is behind the platform to the right of the hot spring area. Also, talk with each NPC you wash off, as they give Blue Coins! Speak with the NPC at the beginning.

Shadow Mario Runs Wild

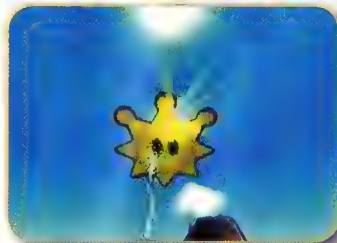
Just clean up as much slop as possible to avoid taking damage as you spray him.



Red Coins and the Fluff Festival

At the end of the bridge, fall to the left. After a split second, activate your hover nozzle, land on the horizontal platform, and proceed down it. There's a Red Coin. Get up top. In the grass near the big tree on the west side of the level, there's a Red Coin. Immediately after crossing the bridge, turn left. Go up the big tree. On the leaf above the bridge, you'll find a Red Coin. In the bottom of the hot spring in the north part of town is a Red Coin. Behind the big palm tree near the hot spring is a Red Coin. Look under the fruit tree. Bash the group of boxes on the east side of town. Go to the large palm tree where you finished your race. Get on its biggest leaf. Jump to the even taller tree. Jump on the platform. Get on the leaf pointing west. Go to its end and get on the fluff that comes by. This fluff will take you to the Shine.

BONUS SHINES

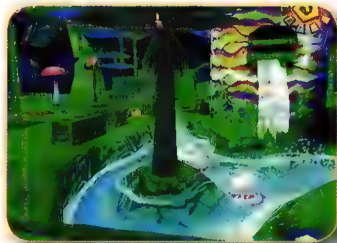


Platforming Objective

Just be sure that you can line up the throws quickly. They'll probably kill you or waste the most time. Also, at the end, on the platforms to the right and left, there are no Red Coins.

- Go to the highest platform (where you got the last Red Coin). Look at the sun, and spray it. Under you on a piece of the tree rests a Rocket Nozzle.
- Collect 100 Coins.

Touch Blue Coins



- Spray the hole in the tree near the original water hole.
- In the Platforming Objective, get Yoshi and do the bee thing.
- In the Goopy Inferno, when you get the Hover Nozzle, go to the ground towards the south. Clear away the area between the two shorter mushrooms, and you'll see a large M.
- In the Goopy Inferno, put out the NPC on fire on the east side.



SECRETS

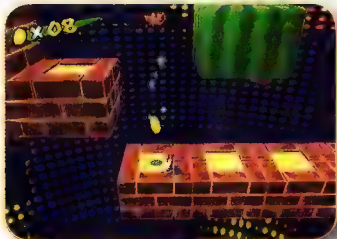
- If you're lost, be sure to talk with the NPCs here; they give good hints...usually.

SIRENA BEACH

Episodes

The Manta Storm

Clear all of the present sludge to find your two Blue Coins. Now, go up the platform and speak with the mayor. When the Manta comes, spray it. Keep spraying the smaller ones until they start to attack. At that point, hover around dousing the enemies as they come. Be sure that when you land after hovering, there's a clear spot. Things get messy very quick.

The Hotel Lobby's Secret
(Platforming Objective 1)

Spray the pink ghosts and climb to the third level. Go into the statue of the ghost's mouth. For the first set of gaps, which has enemies in between, you must spin jump. When you get to the sand blocks, the left path is a little easier. The gaps are longer, but it is easier to manage the camera.

Mysterious Hotel Delfino



Go to the third floor and enter the open door. Jump on the bed and go through the hole in the ceiling. You'll find a Blue Coin up here. Go to the first floor and enter the women's bathroom. Jump into the ceiling of the last stall. Now go into the men's bathroom and do the same. Spray the painting and go through it when an image of a ghost appears. In the next room there'll be a wooden closet. Shoot each piece until it forms a ghost. Use them as platforms to reach the next level. Spray the shelf. Spray the poster and enter the room. Go back to the previous room and spray the floor in the corner near the shelves and windows. Close to where the Blue Coin appears, you'll find a trap door, which houses a Pineapple. Bust the boxes. Get your Yoshi and go into the ceiling from the open room on the third floor. You can eat the ghosts now! If you eat them where you found Pineapple, you'll get a Blue Coin. Spin jump with Yoshi to get back up to the area above the ceiling. You'll eventually make your way around to a weak floor tile in the top. Bust through it for the Shine!

The Secret of Casino Delfino
(Platforming Objective 2)

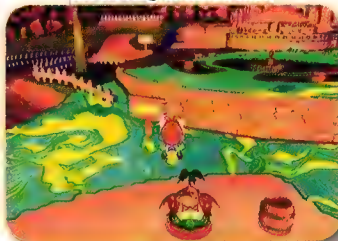
The casino is located in between the front desk and the men's bathroom. On the two slot machines, get triple sevens. Now head to the wall of question marks. Spray them until they form a Shine.

King Boo Down Below



Butt-slam the purple on the roulette wheel. Throw a pepper in its mouth, and while it's moving its tongue about, throw a piece of fruit at its head. Do this three times.

Scrubbing Sirena Beach



To do this quickly, throw the water barrels to clear as much of the sludge as possible. You don't need to clean absolutely everything, but close to it. Start on the bottom and work your way up and around. Make sure you clean the NPCs you rescued to get Blue Coins.

Shadow Mario Checks In

You know what to do here.

Red Coins in Hotel

This one is pretty easy too, but there's one place you might have trouble finding. Go to the location of the Pineapples. Your last one will probably be here.

BONUS SHINES

Platforming Objective 1

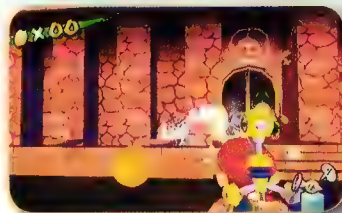
Spray the first three enemies and then kill them to get an extra life. The only coin that may be tough to find is the one under the ice. It's on the bottom platform that has a series of Watermelons on top.

Platforming Objective 2

This one doesn't feature any hard-to-find coins; it is just a matter of getting the timing down, which is fairly quick.

Collect 100 Coins.

TOUCH BLUE COINS

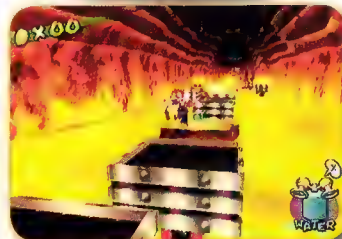


- Go to the top of the center pillar of the hotel and then do a spin jump into the light.
- Spray the candles in front of the hotel.
- Outside in the back right corner of the level is a circular flower patch. Spray it.
- Choose the Secret of Casino Delfino and head into the room where you found Pineapple. Destroy the boxes.
- On the third floor in the room with the glass tile, there's a mirror. Spray it completely.
- Spray the lamp that is outside and to the left of the bathing area on the third floor.
- Swim out to the southwest part of the ocean.

SECRETS

- Spray the light in the elevator after getting to the casino.
- While getting 100 Gold Coins, spray out the torches outside.

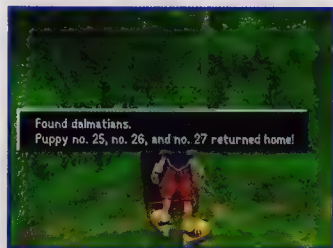
CORONA MOUNTAIN



The first part should be easy enough. When you hover over a platform of fire, make sure your H2O puts it out before you land. Maneuver the ship to the end carefully, getting the Blue Coins if you can. Blast up to the Black Cloud – easy enough. To beat him, simply get on one of the five ends and rocket up. At the peak of the jump, butt-slam! Do this for all of them.

SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2



KINGDOM HEARTS

Need a little help reuniting the canine family? Below you'll find a detailed breakdown of all 99 Dalmatian locations.

- 1-3** – (Traverse Town District 3) Look behind the magic shop. You'll need Glide to get them.
- 4-6** – (Traverse Town District 2) Use the Trinity move behind the Item Shop.
- 7-9** – (Traverse Town District 1) You'll find them tucked away in a chest (Item Forge).
- 10-12** – Locate the stairs heading up within Traverse Town Sewers. You'll find the box nearby.
- 13-15** – (Wonderland) Head into the Queen's Courtyard and open the red chest near the ceiling exit.
- 16-18** – (Wonderland) Enter the forest and locate the blue chest in the treetops.
- 19-21** – (Wonderland) Using the high exit from the Forest, Glide to the chest in the Mad Hatter's Tea Party.
- 22-24** – (Olympus Coliseum) At the entrance, locate and activate the Trinity mark.
- 25-27** – (Deep Jungle) When you reach the River, jump across the hippos, then look for a chest near a climbing vine.
- 28-30** – (Deep Jungle) Pass into the High Jungle and look for your puppy prize near the tree branches.
- 31-33** – (Deep Jungle) In the Jungle Nest, activate the Trinity mark near the exit.
- 34-36** – (Deep Jungle) Head to the Camp and activate the Trinity mark near the entrance.
- 37-39** – (Agrabah) Pass into the second market and you'll find the chest in Aladdin's home.
- 40-42** – (Halloween Town) You'll find it hidden within the Pumpkin Patch.
- 43-45** – (Neverland) Fly to the Big Ben area and look for the puppies behind your starting location.
- 46-48** – (Agrabah) Pass into the fourth Market square and use the high jump move to snag it.
- 49-51** – (Agrabah) Enter the Magic Cave and Glide to the pedestal that holds it.
- 52-54** – (Agrabah) With Aladdin in your party, activate the crystal in the treasure room.
- 55-57** – (Monstro) In the third area, you'll find it near the upper exit to the sixth area.
- 58-60** – (Wonderland) Return to the Queen's Courtyard via the pot in the Dining Room.
- 61-63** – (Hollow Bastion) Complete every challenge, then return to the Lab to recover the puppies.
- 64-66** – (Halloween Town) Access the doors next to the

platform in the Pumpkin Patch to reach the Crypt and the chest.

67-69 – (Halloween Town) Look underneath the stairs of one of the houses.

70-72 – (Halloween Town) The chest is hidden in the large pumpkin stature. You'll need to jump and Glide to get it.

73-75 – (Monstro) In the Mouth, look for the red chest when the water level changes.

76-78 – (Monstro) Scale the uppermost platforms in the third area, then jump and Glide to the chest.

79-81 – (Monstro) In the second area, look for the chest on the barrel in the high area near the exit to the third area.

82-84 – (Neverland) Head inside the ship, then fly into the middle of the room next to the brig.

85-87 – (Neverland) Activate the Trinity mark inside the ship.

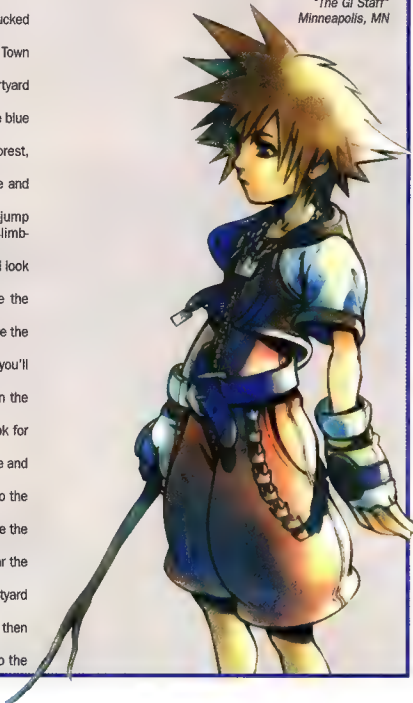
88-90 – (Neverland) On the bed in the Captain's Quarters.

91-93 – (Hollow Bastion) Near the falls along the water.

94-96 – (Hollow Bastion) Outside of the castle, open the emblem door, then jump on the moving elevator.

97-99 – (Hollow Bastion) Use Graviga to get the floating chest outside of the castle.

*"The GI Staff"
Minneapolis, MN*



THE MARK OF KRI

Enter all of these codes at the Press Start screen. You'll hear Rau's Combo sound when the cheats are entered correctly. From here, head into the game and see the sage to activate the cheat functions.

Arena AI Off – X, O (x3), X, □ (x3), X, O, □ X
Full Health – X (x4), □ (x4), O (x4)
Invincibility – □ X, O, □ X, O, □ X, O, □ X, O, □ X
Tougher Enemies – X, O, □ (x2), X, □ (x2), X, O (x2), X
Unlimited Arrows – X, O, □ (x2), X, □ (x2), X, □ (x2), X
Weaker Opponents – X, O (x2), □ X, □ (x2), O

*Jack Storm
Dirtybabybutt City, AZ*



SKY GUNNER

Enter this code at the Title Screen to unlock variable or uniform framerate options. You'll hear a sound when the cheat function is activated. Next, head to the Configuration menu and select Processing to find the new framerate options.

Lock Framerate – Up, Δ, Left, O, Down, X, Right, □
*Cecil Cooper
Milwaukee, WI*



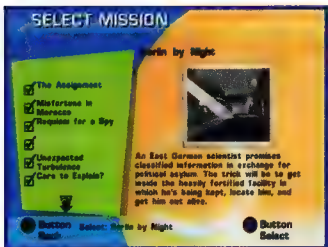
GRAVITY GAMES BIKE: STREET, VERT, DIRT

Enter all of these secrets at the Cheat Codes screen. Unfortunately, there are no codes that actually make the game fun. On the bright side, though, entering these codes may be the most enjoyable aspect of the game. Who's lookin' out for ya?

All Bikes – PIKARIDE

Andre Eillison's FMV – ANDFMV
Angus Sigmund – SIGMAN
Bird Brains – FLYAWAY
Bobby Bones – BONEGUY
Dennis McCoy's FMV – DMCFMV
Dennis McCoy's Stats – DMCMAN
Fuzzy Hall's FMV – FUZFMV
Gravity Games Dirt Level – MUDPUDE
Gravity Games Street Level – PAVEMENT
Jamie Bestwick's FMV – JAMFMV
Mat Berringer's FMV – MATFMV
Max Rider Stats – MAXSTATS
Mount Magma Level – VOLCANO
Museum District Competition – ARTCMOP
Museum District Level – ARTRIDER
Oil Refinery Level – OILSPILL
Pierce – BADGIRL
Ramp Granny – OLDLADY
Reuel Erikson's FMV – REUFMV
Train Depot Level – CHODCHOO
Unlock Everything – LOTACRAP

Tommy Jacobson
Vendella, ID



NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

Level Select – At the Main Menu, highlight the Load Game icon. Now, hold L3 and R3, then press X to bring up the Select Mission menu.

"GI Droid"
(location unknown – last seen marking his territory on the Alamo)



MEN IN BLACK II: ALIEN ESCAPE

Enter all of these codes at the Press Start screen. When a cheat is entered correctly, the screen will flash.

Agent Data – Up, Down, O, R2, Left, L2, Right, X, R2, □ Up, R1
Alien Data – □ L1, O, L2, Down, △, R1, Right, X, Left, R2, △
All Weapons – Up, Down, X, □ R1, △(x2), Left, O, L1 (x2), Right
Boss Mode – R1, △, Down (x2), X, L2, Left, □ Right, △, R2, L1
Full Area Effect – Left, X, △, Up, X, Down, □ L2, Left, R2
Full Beam – Left, O, △, Right, L1, □ Left, R1 (x2), △
Full Bolt – Left, Right, Up, Down, L1, O, △, R2, Left, Down, □(x2)
Full Horned – Right, Up, □ L1, Left (x2), L1, Left, O Left
Full Spread – L2, R1, O, L2, Down, Up, L1, Right, Left, X
Invincibility – Right, X, R1, △, Up, L2, X, Left, L1, O, X, R2
Level Select – R2, △, Left, O, □ L2, Left, Up, X, Down, L2, □
Making Of – O, R2, L2, O, △, Down, □ X, Right, L1, X, Up
No Power-Ups – Down, Up, X, □ Down, Up, X, □ L1, L2, □ O
Training Missions – □ Up, L2, Left, △, X, R2, O, Right, R1, □ O

John Island
New York, NY

ARMORED CORE 3

Acquire Emblems – In Arena mode, select a defeated opponent, then simultaneously press Start and Select while viewing the defeated AC. You'll hear a sound confirming that the emblem has been secured.

First Person View – First load an Armored Core 3 save from a memory card that has either Armored Core 2 or Armored Core 2: Another Age data on it. From here, at any point during play, hit the Start button to pause, then simultaneously press L1, R2, X, □, and right.

"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH

HIDDEN INVASION

Enter all of these codes at the Title Screen.

Big Heads – Left (x2), Up (x2), Right (x2), Down (x2)
Dancing Environments – Rotate the directional pad clockwise four times.
Easy Mode – Up, Down (x2), Up, Left (x2), Up, Right (x2), Up (x3)

Marcus Williams
Greenboro, AL



CRAZY TAXI 3: HIGH ROLLER

Enter all of these codes at the Character Selection screen.

Expert Mode – Hold the White and Black buttons, then tap A.

No Arrows – Hold the White button and press A.

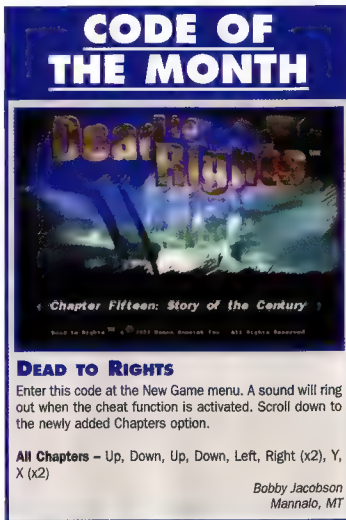
No Destination Mark – Hold the Black button and press A.
Carl Messleford
Houston, TX

ENCLAVE

Dark Campaign – Begin a new game, enter a name for saving, then when the Episode Selection screen appears, press X, Y (x2), X (x2), Y, X, Y. The screen will flash when the code is entered correctly, and Dark Campaign will be unlocked.

God Mode & Complete Mission – During gameplay, pause the game, then press X, Y, X (x2), Y (x2), X, Y, X (x2), Y (x2).

Billy Bob Thornton
Toneadeaf County, AK



DEAD TO RIGHTS

Enter this code at the New Game menu. A sound will ring out when the cheat function is activated. Scroll down to the newly added Chapters option.

All Chapters – Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right (x2), Y, X (x2)

Bobby Jacobson
Mannalo, MT



NFL FEVER 2003

Enter all of these team and stadium codes as User Names. Note: These cheats are case-sensitive.

- '85 Bears Team – Sausage
- '89 49ers Team – Empire
- Commandos Stadium – Barracks
- Cross Team – Crykie
- DaRulas Team – Tut
- Eruption Team – Lava
- Pansies Stadium – Flowery

Additional Hidden Stadiums – To unlock three more stadiums, simply complete the required number of seasons within Dynasty mode.

- Pyramid Stadium – 5 Seasons
- Samurai Stadium – 10 Seasons
- Tumbleweed Stadium – 15 Seasons

Dennis Green
Worstcoachever Valley, IL



GUN METAL

Complete Mission – At any time during gameplay, press Left Analog, White (x2), Back (not Black), Right Analog, White. A sound and menu will be presented upon correct code entry.

Goofy Mission Briefing – At the Armory Screen (for missions 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 14), press L Button (x2), R Button (x2), Left Analog, Right Analog. A sound will confirm correct code entry.

Switch Music – At any menu within the front end, press Left Analog (x2), Right Analog (x2), L Button, R Button. A sound will confirm correct code entry.

Unlock Everything – At the Mission Selection screen, press Left Analog, Black Button, R Button, Right Analog, White, L Button. A sound will confirm correct code entry.
Carl Sanders
Washington, DC



BEACH SPIKERS

Enter all of these codes at the Password screen.

- Daytona Costumes (107-108) – DAYTONA
- Fighting Vipers Costumes (109-110) – VIPERS
- Phantasy Star Online Costumes (114-115) – PHANTAZ
- Sega Costumes (116-117) – OHTORII
- Space Channel 5 Costumes (111-113) – ARAKATA
- Virtua Cop Costumes (105-106) – JUSTICE

"Long" Dong Anderson
Bigtrouser Village, ND



SMUGGLER'S RUN: WARZONES

Enter this code at the in-game pause screen. A sound will ring out when the code is entered correctly.

- Unlimited Countermeasures – Y (x3), X (x2), Z (x2)

Kyle Bell
Sarasota, FL

CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE

After completing the game at least once, input these codes at the Name Entry screen.

- Harder Game – HARDGAME
- No Magic – NO MAGIC
- Play as Maxim – MAXIM

Erica Rose
Crystal Plains, UT

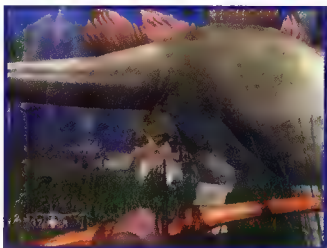


AGGRESSIVE INLINE

To enter all of these codes, head to the Cheats menu within the Options screen. When the cheat function is activated, the cheat menu will disappear.

- All Hidden Characters – ↓, → (x2), ↓, ←, ↓, ←, ↓, → (x3)
- All Keys – SKELETON
- Invincibility – KHUFU
- Juice Regeneration – ← (x2), → (x2), ←, →, ↓, ↑ (x2), ↓, AI
- Juice Maxed – BAKABAKA
- Level Select – ↑ (x2), ↓ (x2), ←, →, ←, →, BABA
- Low Gravity Wallrides – ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ABABS
- Perfect Grinds – BIGUPYASELF
- Perfect Handplants – JUSTIN BAILEY
- Perfect Manuals – QUEZDONTSLLEEP
- Super Spin – ← (x4), → (x4), ←, →, ←, →, ↑

Tom Jefferson
Indianapolis, IN



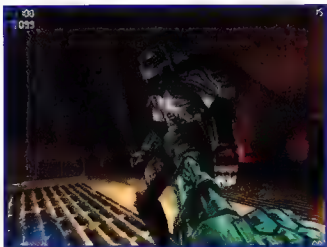
TUROK: EVOLUTION

Enter all of these codes at the Cheats menu.

- All Levels – sellout
- All Weapons – texas
- Invincibility – emerpus
- Invisiblity – slwlegh
- Unlimited Ammo – madman

Dino Feces – How realistic are the prehistoric worlds in Turok? Well, if you approach a stegosaurus from the rear, it'll drop a load on your face. That's right, you'll scare the stuffing out of it. Gross!

Ted Valentine
Orange County, CA

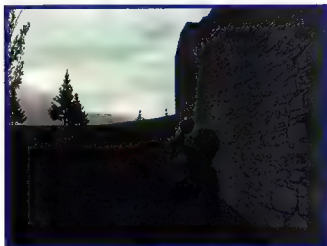


ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2: PRIMAL HUNT

Press [Enter] during gameplay to bring up the console window. From here, type in any of the codes below, then press [Enter] again to activate the corresponding function. Note: A space must be entered between <cheat> and the remaining portion of the code.

All Weapons & Ammo - <cheat> mpschuckit
Change Character Type - <cheat> mpmorph <character type>
Full Armor - <cheat> mpsmithy
Invincibility - <cheat> mpcanhurtme
Level Select - <cheat> mpxfiles
Maximum Ammo - <cheat> mpkohler
No Clipping - <cheat> mpsixthsense
Set Health - <cheat> mpdoctordoctor <number>
Teleport to Start - <cheat> mpbeamme
Third-Person Perspective - <cheat> mpicu
Unlimited Ammo - <cheat> mpbunker

Herman Moore
Hersheyfield, NJ



OPERATION FLASHPOINT: RESISTANCE

Hold [Left Shift] and tap [Keypad -] at the screen indicated for each code. Next, release the keys and type in the following code to activate the function.

All Missions (Main Menu) - campaign
End Current Mission (Gameplay) - endmission
God Mode (Any Screen) - iwillbethrone
Saves Game (Gameplay) - savegame
Show Elevations (Main Menu) - topography

Michael Hall
Los Angeles, CA

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

MADDEN NFL 2003

Master Code (Must Be On) -
 OE3C7DF21853E59E
 EE8D463EBCED556A
 9999 Madden Tokens -
 C1D86E86BCA9C292 (Only works with on the first pro-
 file created that is NOT loaded from a memory card)
 1st Down -
 OE479578BCA99A80
 FE460C7EBCA99B84 (Press L3)
 4th Down -
 OE479578BCA99A7E
 FE460C7EBCA99B87 (Press R3)
 More Time -
 OE479578BCA99681
 DE460DAABCA99CAF (Select + L1)



NFL 2K3

Master Code (Must Be On) -
 OE3C7DF21853E59E
 EE8E9FAABCBBEAOA
 Score 0 (Away) -
 CE1EC0BABC99B83
 Score 50 (Away) -
 CE1EC0BABC99BB5
 Score 0 (Home) -
 CE1EC0AEBCA99B83
 Score 50 (Home) -
 CE1EC0AEBCA99BB5
 Infinite Play Time -
 DE1EC026FEC2788E
 Infinite Time Outs (Away) -
 CE1EC046BCA99B86
 Infinite Time Outs (Home) -
 CE1EC0AABCA99B86

NFL GameDay 2003

Away Win -
 OE48ED38BCA99082
 CE4704C6BCA99B83
 OE48ED38BCA99082
 CE4704CEBCA99B85 (Press R1 + R2)
 Home Win -
 OE48ED38BCA99582
 CE4704C6BCA99B85
 OE48ED38BCA99582
 CE4704CEBCA99B83 (Press L1 + L2)
 Infinite Creation Points -
 CE583D04BCA99BFB

THE MARK OF KR

Master Code (Must Be On) -
 OE3C7DF21853E59E
 EEA5CF26BCDF4372
 All Challenges Complete -
 DE416E2ABCA99B84
 DE416E3EBCA99B84
 DE416E02BCA99B84
 DE416E68BCA99B84
 DE416EADBCA99B84

Frozen AI -
 DE82ADAEBF899B8B
 DE82ADAABCA99B83

Infinite Arrows -
 DE86BA5EBF899B8B
 DE86BA5ABCA99B83

Infinite Health -
 DE413BC6BCA99B84

Turbo Mode -
 DE413E26FC75674D
 DE413E22FE4C728D
 DE413E36FE619CE8

Walk Through Walls -
 01EE1544BCA99281
 DE85CF06BF899B8B
 01EE1544BCA99281
 DE85CF02BCA99B83 (Press Select + L1)

MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2

Master Code (Must Be On) -
 OE3C7DF21853E59E
 EEA5B106BCE348FA

All Songs -
 DE71201ABCA99B84
 DE712026BCA99B84
 DE712022BCA99B84
 DE71202EBCA99B84
 DE71202ABCA99B84
 DE712036BCA99B84
 DE712032BCA99B84 (Under Media Play List)

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 hal-
 lowed pages will receive a Secret Access t-shirt.

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CLASSIC GI

CLASSIC GAMING EXPO 2002

Although video games have grown to be one of the largest and most profitable entertainment mediums in the world, it's important for us to note that this was not always so. Gamers of today, raised in the PlayStation era, have grown accustomed to an industry driven by huge, blockbuster titles, and even bigger multinational corporations. It's strange to think that a mere quarter-century ago, video games were by and large the province of a small, eccentric group of Southern California computer enthusiasts (the first hackers) who, often working alone, created the early classics in video games for early console manufacturers like Atari and Intellivision.

Those days are long gone, and the free-spirited entrepreneurial atmosphere of the early '80s have been replaced by big business, market-testing, and over-hyped licensed product. Still, for two days each August, at the Plaza Hotel in Las Vegas, a devoted and growing group of classic game enthusiasts gather for what is fast becoming an institution in the retro gaming community — The Classic Gaming Expo.

In the museum section of the show, attendees got a look at some rare and valuable items, including this Axlon Andy Robot (a post-Atari project of Nolan Bushnell's), an Intellivision keyboard peripheral, and the Miral, a mystery Atari prototype console



Game Informer was on the scene at CGE 2002, and is happy to report that — at least for a weekend — everything old is new again in the world of video games.

As interest in classic games grow, so does the CGE, and this year more than 1,200 gamers from around the world descended on Las Vegas to share in the fun. According to event organizer and *Digital Press* editor-in-chief Joe Santulli, CGE 2002 was a great success. "There's no question this was our best show ever," commented Santulli. "I think that there was more overall diversity at the show. We always try to divide it up into different areas. There's the museum, there're the keynote speakers, there're the vendors, there're the arcade machines, and there're the live acts, and there're the

bands. In past years, one or two of those things were strong. This year, I think all those were major features. Just having [Atari co-founder and Pong programmer] Al Alcorn and [Adventure creator] Warren Robinett was amazing — their keynote speeches blew everybody away. The museum itself was three times bigger than it had ever been before, in terms of how many items were in it. Some of the quality items, like the Color Vectrex, were things that are just one of a kind."

Walking through the convention hall, one couldn't help but be taken aback by the wealth of treasures available to the fortunate gamers who purchased a weekend pass for the event. The main room was taken up mostly by vendors, who had scores of highly collectible artifacts for sale, including hard-to-find sealed box copies of *Custer's Revenge* (a very controversial Atari



Vendors experienced brisk sales over the two days of the show. Many were peddling some never-before-released games



2600 game by Mystique), Double Dragon for the Atari Lynx, and Masters of the Universe: Power of He-Man for Intellivision. This bounty was not limited to games alone; collectible trinkets like cardboard counter standees for Atari classics like Missile Command and Centipede, Space Invaders t-shirts, and many other items were also readily available.

Even more exciting was a slate of newly released games for long-dead systems. Despite its reputation as a retro show, there were actually over 20 games that were released for the first time at CGE 2002. Most of these were pressings of '80s-era carts that never made it to retail — most notably, Super Pac-Man (a 5200 modification of the classic arcade game that features some innovative mazes); Crack'ed (the long-lost Atari 2600 version of the 7800 hit, complete with reproduced original box art); and Cube Quest (a previously unreleased Vectrex cartridge). In addition,



After the first day of the show, the swap meet and auction was a beehive of commerce

there were several "homebrew" games for sale, like a new version of Berzerk modified to include the original arcade voice effects; and Jack Sprite vs. The Crimson Ghost, a new Philips CD-i title (!) that blends FMV and platforming.

If you were a serious game collector, there was a staggering number of ways to blow your cash, and, from what we observed, sales were strong throughout both days of the show. One collector we spoke to spent over \$1,200 in the first day alone. Things were even more heated after the show closed on Saturday, during the swap meet and auction. The bidding was definitely too rich for our blood, as heated competition erupted over numerous extremely rare items.

Even more gaming holy grails were held in the museum section of the show, although none were for sale. Nearly double the size of last year's, the room was literally packed with rare artifacts, many of which were one-of-a-kind hardware prototypes. Highlights included a Columbia Home Arcade (an Atari 2600 clone that was available only to members of the popular record club), an Atari 2700 (a prototype console with wireless controllers), and the only known version of an Atari "mystery system" called the Mirai, dating from sometime in the late '80s.

While it was gratifying to see so many historical treasures, the real experience of CGE lies in the keynote addresses, where the pioneers of the early days tell the stories behind the machines. Over the two days of the show, history-minded attendees were treated to a virtual "Who's Who" of classic gaming. From Dragon's Lair artist Don Bluth to *Electronic Games* magazine founders Bill Kunkel, Arnie Katz, and Joyce Worley to roundtable discussion with several Intellivision and Atari programmers, there was something for everybody at CGE. Each address was followed by a spirited Q&A session, in which the knowledgeable audience could pick the minds of the masters.



Many obscure arcade units, like the cult laser disc classic *Cliffhanger*, were on display and open for free play at the show

In terms of attendance and content, Al Acorn's appearance at CGE will no doubt be remembered years from now by those who were there. As both the creator of Pong and a mentor to many of the young Atari programmers, the first arcade cabinet to establish video games as a popular pursuit, Acorn's influence can not be overstated.

Gregarious and talkative, Acorn dazzled the crowd with many enlightening and humorous anecdotes about legendary industry figures like Nolan Bushnell, Steve Jobs, and Steve Wozniak.

Of course, CGE wasn't all about serious discussion; this year's noontime concerts provided showgoers with some top-flight musical treats as well. Most notable was the Minibosses, a four-piece rock band that performs dynamic version of classic NES theme music like Castlevania and Metroid. For dance music fans, New York mixmaster DJ Tony Fox melded classic game tunes into a progressive techno tapestry throughout the show. Other performers included 8-Bit Weapon and Intellivision vet and renowned game composer George "The Fatman" Sanger and his band Team Fat performing surf/rockably renditions of some of his most famous works, including the Intellivision classic Thin Ice.

All in all, the Classic Game Expo is fast becoming one of the most cherished events in all of gaming. Far removed from the glitz and hype of E3, CGE is a refreshingly low-key and personal experience, one that is, above all else, motivated by a real love and appreciation for games. Where else can one get into

a discussion about homebrew developing with some of the original masterminds behind Atari? Where else can you see the creator of Pong enjoying a game of pinball? Certainly not at most industry trade shows. If you've never been to CGE, and have any interest in the classic gaming scene, we highly suggest that you mark next year's show on your calendar. The organizers are already working hard on making sure that CGE 2003 will be the best ever.



Pong creator Al Acorn's keynote address was one of the highlights of CGE 2002

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

Pack #1 London 1969. A few years later, developer DMA Design – now called Rockstar North – took the franchise into the third dimension, and onto the PlayStation 2, where Grand Theft Auto III would become one of the best selling games of all time.

This month in 1997, Grand Theft Auto was released for the PC. The game, although hampered by anachronistic, top-down graphics that looked akin to a 16-bit era game, won a strong cult following in Europe based on its innovative, open-ended mission structure and adult-oriented content. It was later ported to the PlayStation, and spawned another, somewhat less successful 2D incarnation, Grand Theft Auto 2, and a mission pack, Grand Theft Auto: Mission



GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Al Backfel

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.



ADVENTURES OF LOLO

- FORMAT: NES
- PUBLISHER: HAL LABORATORY

Sometimes you get tired of a steady diet of shooting games. There are times when you want to give your sore thumb a rest, and you need something less intense and more cerebral. The Adventures of Lolo falls into this category. It is one of the best collections of logic puzzles around. Don't be fooled by the cartoon-like graphics. This is no kiddie game, even though it might be educational. There have been two sequels, each harder than the last. So, I recommend starting with the original.

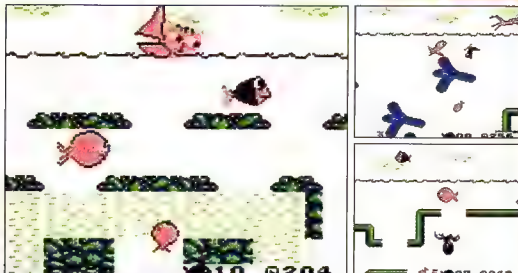
The objective is to get the screen character Lolo (or Lola, if you prefer) to the exit door to finish the screen and move on to the next level. Once you sit down and try a new puzzle, it becomes hopelessly addictive. Each one is an obstacle course shown from an overhead perspective. The outdoor scenery may contain fire-breathing dragons, Medusa heads, or other hazards – all of which are fatal. If you make even one mistake by not using the available resources properly, you may as well give up, re-analyze the situation, and try again. Thankfully, there are passwords available if you want to return later.

Lolo can destroy most enemies or change them into an egg. The egg is very useful. It can be used as a blocking device to stop an enemy from firing at you. It can be used as a raft to get across rivers. Once you see the direction that a river flows, you can hop on and off the egg before it disappears. There are also hidden power-ups. There is the bridge that can be used for river crossings. There might be a hammer, to get rid of a strategically placed boulder. The trickiest levels require that you destroy a monster and block its reappearance so that it pops up in a more convenient location. There is a deep sense of satisfaction derived by finding a solution. You realize that it really wasn't all that difficult and wonder why it took so long.



GAME BOY

FISH DUDE

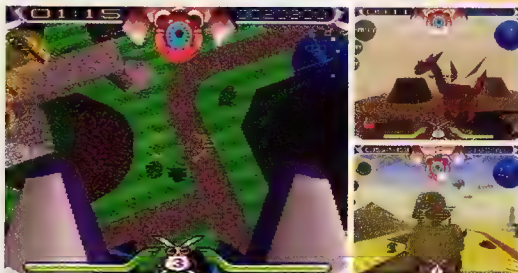


Fish Dude's simple premise is a slight twist on the gameplay concepts of old. As a hungry halibut, you are duty-bound to gobble any goldfish smaller than you. The tables can quickly turn, however, as a bigger bass is always on your tail. Other things are out to fry your fins, including seagulls, boat-riding cats, and some imposing octopi. There's a set amount of hors d'oeuvres to chomp in each level, before you can move on. Fish Dude's size will grow as you progress as well. The graphics are cutesy and plain, and the sound effects—as in most Game Boy titles—do more harm than good. The free-floating environments are nice in their lack of restrictions, but at its heart Fish Dude is still very similar to the Pac-Mans and Asteroids of the gaming world. However, the gameplay is not nearly as addictive as those titles. Maybe it's because of the lack of nostalgia, but whatever the reason, Fish Dude's just not a very fun time. As they say: There's always a bigger fish. In the portable gaming realm, in fact, there are quite a few.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SOFEL ■ **DEVELOPER** SOFEL
 ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

PLAYSTATION

JUMPING FLASH

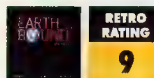


Revolutionary is a word tossed around quite often. From the game's description, you wouldn't think Jumping Flash was anywhere near worthy of that adjective. A robotic rabbit must traverse colorful worlds, destroying bad guys to rid the land of the evil Baron Aloha. Here's the kicker, though: This platformer takes place in first-person. Coming out on the PlayStation's launch day, Jumping Flash definitely gave gamers something new and exciting. Your bunny bot can fire weapons, and double-jump high in the air. The environments are varied, and feature tons of platforming elements. There were even bosses to blast. As a first-generation title, Jumping Flash is not without its flaws. There is no strafing ability, and the difficulty is a tad too easy. Also, your main goal is collecting carrots, which isn't all that exciting. Of course, the graphics are quite dated by today's standards. Despite these defects, Jumping Flash is still entertaining nowadays. If nothing else, it's a great footnote in 3D gaming history.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995

NES

EARTHBOUND ZERO



A cult classic, the SNES RPG Earthbound mixed role-playing elements with a witty, juvenile story taking place in the modern world. Approximately seven years before, though, Nintendo had plans to release the first part of the Earthbound saga on the NES in the United States. For whatever reason—most likely the poor sales of RPGs in that era—the project was scrapped. Game Informer, however, was able to secure a playable of this cancelled title. Starting as a young boy, your house is taken over by a poltergeist. After killing a lamp and your sister's doll, you embark on a journey to get to the bottom of things. It turns out the entire world is having a surplus of odd happenings. Resembling Pokémon's overworld, the main characters will battle with plastic bats instead of swords, and use French fries to refill health instead of potions. The combat is first-person and turn based, à la Dragon Warrior. If this would've been many gamers' first experience into the RPG fray, the genre may not have such a geeky stereotype attached to it. It's a shame it never saw release.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
 ■ **YEAR RELEASED** CANCELLED

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

R-TYPE



The 1980s brought forth a wealth of shooters. Japan ate them up, and American arcades were full of them as well. R-Type remains one of the all-time classics, and this Master System port was nothing short of amazing. The action was frantic, featuring a multitude of cleverly designed enemies onscreen at once, moving without the slightest slowdown. This port's graphics rivaled the version found on the much more powerful TurboGrafx, with detailed sprites and trippy backgrounds. The gameplay was challenging, highlighted by a charged beam blast that went through multiple targets and an invincible bot that could affix itself to either the front or back of your ship. Level design was creative, and the bosses were brilliant—one is a massive ship that takes up about three screens! As an interesting bit of trivia, Nintendo published R-Type in arcades, but didn't touch the best-selling franchise again after that. R-Type's legacy lives on in a PS-X collection called R-Types, which also features the sequel, R-Type II.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** IREM
 ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1988



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PlayStation 2



Comic Mischief
Violence

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SUPER NINTENDO

SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV

<p>Stage 2</p>	<p>Stage 3</p>	<p>Stage 4</p>	<p>Stage 5</p>	<p>Stage 6</p>	<p>Stage 7</p>
<p>LEVEL PASSWORDS Using Chet as your name, input the following for each stage.</p>	<p>Stage 8</p>	<p>Stage 9</p>	<p>Stage A</p>	<p>Stage B</p>	<p>Dracula</p>

STAGE SECRETS AND TIPS

Stage 1 OUTER WALL

Difficult Parts

1. You'll encounter some Medusa Heads for the first time. Watch out when jumping on the brown logs, as they are trap doors.

Secrets



1. In the third screen under the first Skeleton, whip the wall to reveal a Chicken Leg.

2. On the fifth screen, under the ledge just before the first Skeleton, there's a hidden item.

Boss

Skeleton Rider

Stay on the platform, whipping or dodging the horse's projectiles while attacking the head. When the horse is destroyed, the rider will attack. Just whip it out of its sword's range. When the skeleton does a diving attack, move towards his previous direction to avoid damage.

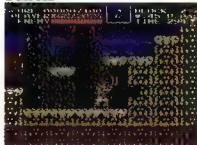
Stage 2 GRAVEYARD

Difficult Parts

1. You'll encounter spiked floors in the first section of the level. Be careful; if you hit them, you die instantly.

2. In the third and fourth sections, you'll be in a waterway. Look for spikes in the water and on pillars, which blend in well.

Secrets



1. In the second section just under the first Skeleton you'll encounter a destructible wall.

Boss

Medusa

Duck to avoid being turned to stone. Simply whip her quickly over and over, trying to strike as many snakes as you can. You might get hit a few times, but it won't kill you.

Stage 3 CAVERNS

Difficult Parts

1. You'll encounter Water Lizards in the third section; hit them if they emerge from the water, otherwise just move along. Be careful of the first platform you encounter. Boxes will drop in front of you. Wait for all of them to fall before proceeding. Also, take note of the disappearing platforms.

2. In the sixth screen, you'll encounter Dragon Skeletons. On the tiny platform next to a Whip Ring, you'll see a Dragon Skeleton above you and a Spiked Ball on the platform next to you. Stand on the tiny platform, kill the Dragon Skeleton, and then

proceed. Be careful on these platforms, since you die if you fall. To ensure your safety, watch for Ravens, and kill any enemies that appear above you.

Secrets



1. In the first screen, you'll encounter some stone platforms. Fall down and to the left. You'll run into some Dragon Heads. Behind them, destroy the stone cylinders to reveal a secret area.

Boss

Twin Dragons

Just stand on the middle platform, launching secondary weapons (Axes hopefully) and slashing at their heads as they pass by. One dragon will spit out a stream of fire, which shouldn't hit you at all. The other will shoot fireballs, which can be dodged easily. If one comes at you, whip it good.

Stage 4 THE BOWELS

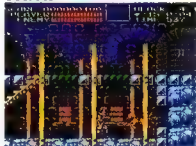
Difficult Parts

1. When you walk upstairs to the second screen, you'll encounter three green trap door platforms. Hit the candle first, and quickly jump from platform to platform. You'll encounter three tricky parts with these trap doors. Just be quick on the jump. Also, watch for the Wall Skeletons suddenly appearing.

2. After the Mid-Boss, you'll come to a room covered in spikes. Climb the stairs and quickly latch onto the Gold Bat Ring and hang. When the first platform is perpendicular to your body, jump onto it and kill the Medusa Heads. Quickly latch on to the ring again. The screen will rotate 90 degrees, and a platform will appear. Jump to it. Next you'll be in a cool-looking room; just keep moving forward.

3. The next section contains platforms moving vertically. Mostly, you must avoid being smashed here. So, once you go, don't stop for anything. To get to the boss, you'll encounter large rectangular platforms; pass these, and there will be a series of rooms. Some contain goodies, but nothing that is necessary. The boss is past the three purple spike platforms.

Secrets



1. At the beginning of the level, walk under the stairs. The wall that the enemy emerges from is breakable.

Bosses Giant Skull

Just trade off hitting his head and whipping upwards to hit the falling debris. Ideally, you should get in the left corner of the screen, attract the skull, and whip up at his head. Here, you'll be able to whip him and the falling debris at the same time.

Rockman

Just keep whipping him as quickly as you can. If he gets too close, jump on the platforms and over him. Every so often, he will cause blocks to fall, in which case you need to dodge them.

Stage 5 OUTSIDE CASTLE ENTRANCE

This section is very easy, lacks secrets, and has no boss.

Stage 6 THE CASTLE ENTRANCE

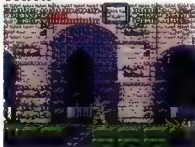
Difficult Parts

1. The second section can be tough. When the chandelier is furthest away, and just as it's about to swing towards you, jump on. In general, jump from platform to platform as the chandeliers swing towards you to the right, except when you're jumping to a stable platform. Jump to a stable platform as it stops, or as it's about to stop moving left.

2. In the same section as the first two secrets, you'll encounter platforms with spikes on them—they are the same as the trap doors, so just be quick on the jump.

3. In the fourth section, be aware that the single block platforms break away. Also, after the last one, you'll land on stable ground, but beware of the Skeleton.

Secrets



1. After the second chandelier falls from the ceiling in the third section, whip downwards at the first block in the next section of the hollowed floor. This reveals a staircase.

2. In the same area as the previous secret, you'll come to a raised platform with an Axe Knight on top. Under him on the left side, you can break the stone pillar.

3. In the sixth screen, you'll go up some stairs and encounter the Hand and Sword Skeleton team. Go to the right and destroy the wall.

4. At the end of the seventh screen, where you encounter the Ghost Couple for the first time, the wall to the right of the first platform is destructible.

5. Right after the next screen after Secret 4, the first Candle contains a Chicken Leg. You can keep going back downstairs and then return if your energy is low. The Candle and Chicken Leg will respawn.

Boss
Evil Ghost Couple

They're actually a little tough. Start by jumping to the top platform. Jump down, hit them a few times, and then leap to the top of the other platform. When you fall, hit them a few more times. Repeat this process until they're dead.

Stage 7
LIBRARY

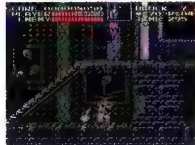
Difficult Parts

1. Watch out for enemies as you descend, and kill those Possessed Books ASAP.

2. In the third screen, there will be platforming with books. Simply watch their pattern for a second, while keeping an eye on the Blood Skeletons, and you should be okay.

3. In the third section, you'll come to a low ceiling covered with spikes. Duck and walk to avoid death.

Secrets



1. In the fourth screen (the first section after the library), destroy the pillar under the first set of stairs.

2. In the fifth screen, you'll emerge from stairs. Go to the pillar immediately to the right and destroy it.

Boss
Giant Knight

Stand on one of the elevated ledges and attack it from there.

You'll want to keep him kind of close, since he won't throw his axe if you're near. If he does, you must go to the lower part and duck. Otherwise, just jump his flame and keep attacking him.

Stage 8
DUNGEON

Difficult Parts

1. In the second screen, you'll encounter two spike pulleys. They're slow enough to walk under, so as soon as the first one is half way up, jump and walk under them. Also, watch for the spikes that fall immediately after this section.

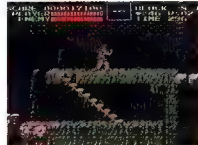
2. In the third screen, be careful not to fall anywhere, as you're likely to hit spikes. Also, the second vertical spike mechanism might be tough to pass. Wait for it to fall, and then jump to the ledge on the left.

3. On the fourth screen, you'll come to a pendulum spike apparatus. Forget the items and just jump on its top safely. When you jump off, watch out for the hole in the pillar in the background. A Wall Skeleton will appear.

4. On the fourth screen, you'll come to a low ceiling with moving spikes. As long as you duck and walk, you can't get hit.

5. The disappearing bridge is tough. Watch it a little to understand the pattern, but you'll notice that the pattern will change up about every 10 seconds, so don't wait too long.

Secrets



1. In the second section, after you defeat the two Dragon Skeletons, there will be some Dragon Heads. The pillar behind them can be destroyed.

Boss
Frankenstein

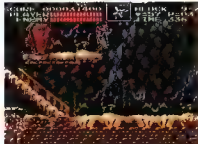
Just whip him as he approaches slowly. You may take hits, but if you have full energy, you can defeat him. When he gets too close, get on the highest platform, and jump over him.

Stage 9
TREASURE ROOM

Difficult Parts

1. You'll come to a part with its floor covered with spikes. Don't wait for the blocks to fall completely, or you can't pass the last part. Go as soon as the first blocks fall in front of you. If you can't pass the last part, ascend the previous stairs to start it over.

Secrets



1. There are a couple of areas with Golden Bat Rings to swing on. Be sure to keep an eye out for these, since they will often lead to goodies that are useful.

2. After you pass the first difficult part, you'll come to a coffin that is on a raised platform. Next to it is one of those sucking holes. Get sucked in to find a secret area!

Boss
Gold Bat

Whip it, dodging its quick, rushing attack every so often. You know it's about to attack when it stops; just run in the opposite direction. The second part is easy, too – whip the bats, but avoid the gold that emanates from them, which can damage you.

Stage A
CLOCK TOWER

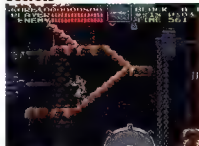
Difficult Parts

1. You'll encounter a large, rotating wheel with spikes just above it. Jump on it and duck immediately. Quickly jump off at the end.

2. In the next screen, keep an eye out for loose cogs rolling around. Proceed slowly in this area.

3. When going up the vertical lift, if you get hit by anything while holding on with your whip, you'll fall.

Secrets



1. As if you didn't already know, it is useful to note that if you press up and right or left when jumping to a staircase, you'll actually land on the staircase. A useful tip on this level.

Boss
Mummy

Stand in front of it and whip it. If it shoots any projectiles at you, press and hold the whip button. Hold the whip up to block any attacks.

Stage B
CHAMBER BASE

Difficult Parts

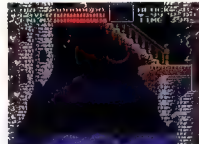
1. You'll come to a bridge, which starts to fall as soon as you step on it. Keep moving forward and don't worry too much about the items. You can stop on the pillars, which won't fall, and kill bats if you like, though.

2. In the next area, you'll encounter a series of stairs and a circular blade at the bottom. As soon as you ascend, the blade will slowly follow, so quickly hurry to the top.

3. When you get to the section with diagonally moving platforms, keep jumping to the left, watching for the spikes above. As soon as you see the stairs on the upper left part of the screen, make your way towards them. Jump on to the platform and climb them.

4. You'll come to the last set of stairs. You have to jump these platforms very quickly, since the spikes on the ceiling are close.

Secrets



1. At the base of Dracula's chamber, jump off to the left, and you'll land on an invisible platform. Walk to the end for a treat. On your way back, notice

that there are stairs, so just press up and to the right. At the top of the stairs, jump to the right.

Bosses
Bird Fossil

Just crouch and slash this boss. When it jumps, run towards it and it will fall on your previous position. Before it lands, duck and slash again. When it loses the spear, attack from the platforms so it can't rush you. When it jumps, run to the other platform.

Flying Demon

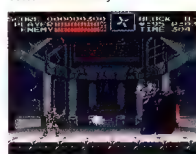
Slash him, moving around as much as possible. When he dives down, quickly jump to a platform, dodge the spikes, and wait for his fireballs to pass. In his second form, just slash him. Run out of the way when he stops to avoid getting hit by fireballs. Let your whip dangle in front of you to avoid taking damage by any blazing balls.

Reaper

Stand in the middle of the room and slash Death as it flies by. Otherwise, just hold your whip out, dangling and blocking the blades. When Death lands, immediately begin your assault. When the large blade gets close to you as it comes back to Death, jump it. The other large blade attack will pass right over your head.

Dracula

At the beginning, throw a few stars at his head, and let your whip dangle in front to block the fireballs. Sometimes he'll throw a smaller, quicker fireball; hit it. Although it shoots out various projectiles, it will reward you with Chicken Leg. His third attack consists of faces of fire. Simply whip them, and get out of the way, since they crash to the ground. For Drac's last set of attacks, continue to hit him while getting in between the bolts of electricity.



ETC

VIDEO GAME BIBLE: 1985-2002

Manufacturer: Sumo-Kabuki Press
Website: www.videogamebible.com
List Price: \$30

The name of this book speaks volumes. Before you get the wrong idea, let us assure you that you won't be reading about Jesus getting the high score in Pac-Man, or about God asking Shigeru Miyamoto to sacrifice his firstborn. What you will get are listings for every game that hit the market between 1985 and 2002. All of them are sorted into systems and feature a brief description. We still can't believe how much content was crammed into this 384-page monster. In the future, Sumo-Kabuki Press also plans to release additional *Video Game Bible* compilations covering every angle including console games from 1972 to 1984, handheld, and even Japan.



UNREAL ACTION FIGURES

Manufacturer: RadioActive Clown
Website: www.radioactiveclown.com • **List Price:** TBA
Partnered with Epic Games, toy manufacturer RadioActive Clown has announced plans to create a line of action figures based on upcoming games Unreal Tournament 2003 and Unreal Championship. Famed sculptor Steve Kiwus (Spider-Man, The Lord of the Rings) is overseeing the designs of all of the figures. As you can see, the prototype of Damarus looks exactly like its game counterpart. All of the figures, which are slated to ship this holiday season, will come packaged with signature weapons such as the Translocator and Flak Cannon. As of now, the only other figures that have been announced are Janice Albring, WMR-0333, and Prometheus Georgian Pithras.



BOSE FREESTYLE SPEAKER SYSTEM

Manufacturer: Bose
Website: www.bose.com
List Price: \$499

If you are a stuck-up rich kid who has more money than the entire population of Rhode Island, we've found a way to blow an easy 500 smackers. Bose is finally recognizing that gamers exist and has developed a speaker system that taps into the potential of today's consoles - primarily the Dolby digital 5.1 surround sound for

Xbox. The sound that these speakers generate is deafening, but it's not true surround sound. It just simulates it through the two compact speakers. If you're thinking about purchasing this unit, we recommend getting a hands-on a trial before forking over your cash. All Bose stores will be demonstrating the power of the Freestyle system through an Xbox. Check it out.



SONGPRO GBA MP3 PLAYER

Manufacturer: SongPro
Website: www.songpro.com
List Price: \$99

Once used for gaming, the Game Boy Advance can now play MP3, WMA, WAV, and AAC files thanks to the innovative SongPro peripheral. Using a 32-bit ARM-7 Cirrus Logic processor, the music hits you with crystal clarity. With a USB connection you'll be able to download existing music libraries from a PC or Mac. With removable storage and to 512

megabytes, which is roughly 10 hours worth of music. The SongPro even offers visual displays including lyrics, storybooks, and album covers. You may look like a moron walking down the street with a GBA attached to your belt, but the SongPro is just as good as any MP3 player, and best of all, it's affordable.



E-READER

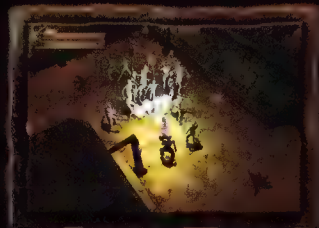
Manufacturer: Nintendo • **Website:** www.nintendo.com • **List Price:** \$44.95

We never thought we'd hear someone say, "I'll trade you my Bulbasaur rookie card for your autographed Barry Bonds rookie," but we have a feeling that we will. As hard as it may be to believe, Nintendo is releasing video games on paper. On September 16, you'll be able to buy wax packs of video game trading cards. To access the data embedded on each one, you'll need to purchase the e-Reader peripheral for the Game Boy Advance. By swiping the card through the Reader, data will appear on the GBA screen. This data could very well be a playable NES game. Other applications may enhance select GameCube and Game Boy Advance titles. For instance, the e-Reader already works with Animal Crossing and you can even run out and purchase Animal Crossing packs of cards. In addition to this, Wizards of the Coast is releasing packs of Pokémon-e-cards that can also be used as a stand-alone trading card game. Packs of Game & Watch cards (the old Nintendo LCD games) should be available as well. On this same day, card versions of the classic NES games Excitebike, Balloon Fight, Pinball, Tennis, and Donkey Kong Jr. will be obtainable for \$4.95 apiece. With a list price of \$44.95, the e-Reader is quite spendy, especially when you take into account how limited its functionality is at the moment. But then again, we wouldn't be surprised if Nintendo rolled out the e-Reader red carpet for Zelda or a new Mario game.

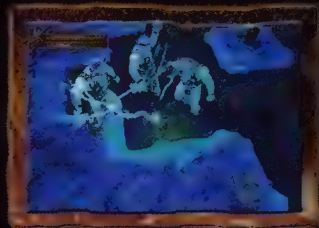


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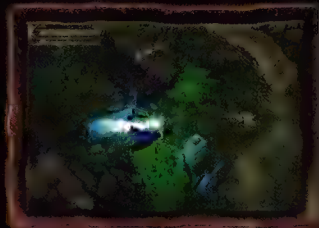
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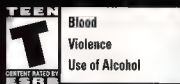
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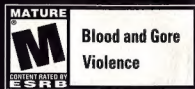




[THEY SMELL



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PlayStation 2

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PlayStation 2

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