

RELIVE THE 25 GREATEST MOMENTS IN VIDEO GAMES

GAMEINFORMER

Final Word On Computer & Video Games

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STRATEGY GUIDE

**BLIZZARD
STORMS
THE
CONSOLE
FRONT**

**MICROSOFT
ACQUIRES RARE**
Nintendo Sells Stake In
Legendary Developer pg 27

**TOKYO GAME
SHOW REPORT**
See Japan's Hottest
New Titles

WORLD PREMIERE

**STARCRAFT
GHOST**

**OVER
65
GAMES
REVIEWED**

XBOX • PS2 • GAMECUBE

STAR OCEAN 3

Enix's Answer To Final Fantasy pg 48

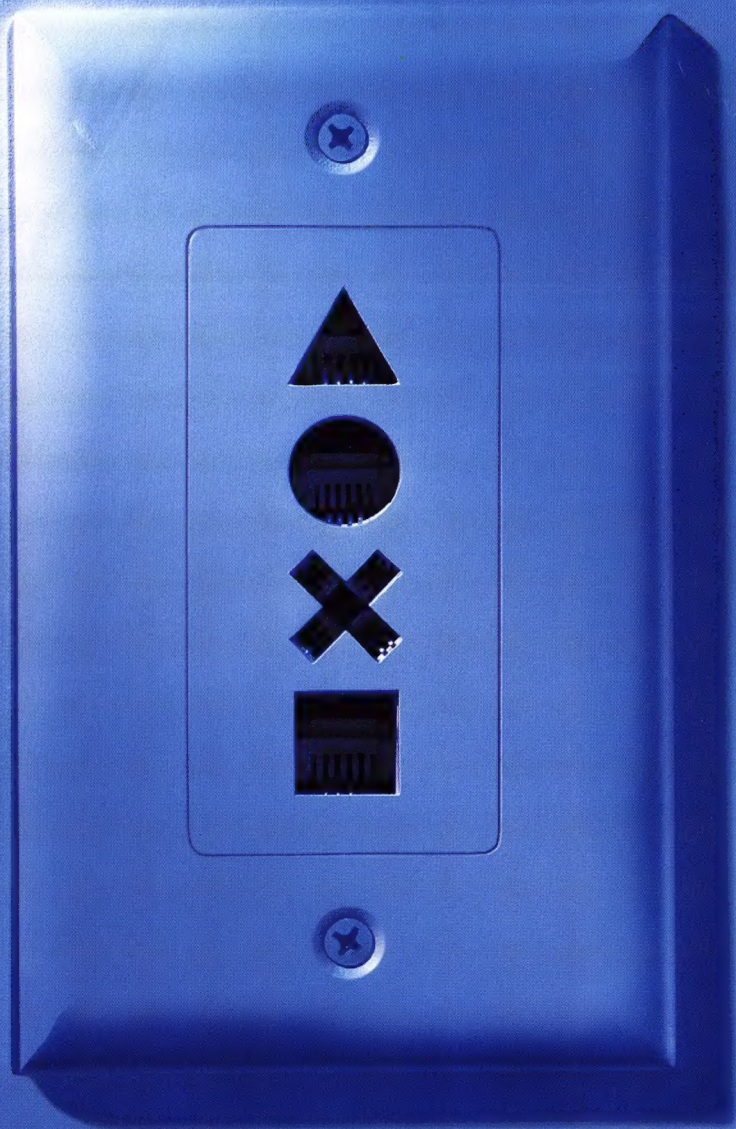


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ISSUE
115

NOVEMBER 2002



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These are just a few of the games with online features available this year:



AutoModellista



ATV Offroad Fury 2



Madden NFL 2003

WHAT YOU GET:

- The Network Adaptor, which offers both dial-up and broadband connectivity
- Mail-in offer for a FREE copy of Twisted Metal:Black ONLINE
- Start-Up Disc with playable demos of Madden NFL 2003 and Frequency*
- Video demos of Tribes Aerial Assault, ATV Offroad Fury 2 and Tony Hawk Pro Skater 4
- All this for just \$39.99 (SRP)



Tony Hawk Pro Skater 4



SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs



Frequency

WHAT YOU NEED TO CONNECT:

- PlayStation 2 (duh)
- Network Adaptor (obviously)
- Memory card (8MB for PlayStation 2) with at least 137K of space (that ain't much)
- Dial-up or broadband Internet connection (in English: such as cable modem, DSL, T1 or just a plain ol' phone line)
- Network Adaptor Start-Up Disc to create ISP settings (don't worry, it's easy)



Twisted Metal:Black ONLINE



NFL GameDay 2003



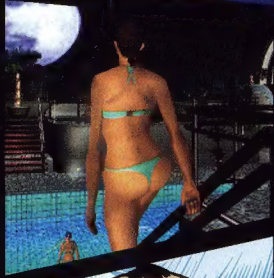
Tribes Aerial Assault

OTHER STUFF:

- The Network Adaptor works with just about any ISP subscriber, including AOL, AT&T Worldnet Service, EarthLink, SBC Yahoo! Dial and Sympatico. Check with your ISP for details.

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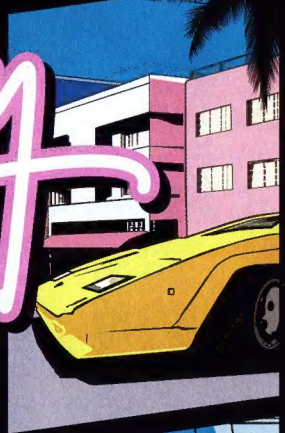
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! 怪物

4
PLAYER
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HIDDEN LOCATIONS



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てはじつの一歩は死
とされる。彼によるもの
が、最近から数した闘
か最後には、ゴジラ
ら敵軍の出現して
スカゴジラは、その
はゴジラと闘っても
たブル
は自然発火し、街の
に包まれ、東の幾度で火災
大被害、東京中心部は
大なダメージが、今、
突然の災祸の怪物が巨
怪は本格的に、昨日が
場々、本格的に、昨日が
無難、昨日が突然の災
禍、昨日が突然の災
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があるようです。現在、調査が進行中です。
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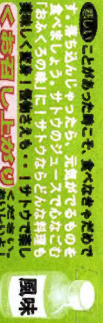


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捕は突大、中究、

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No.03

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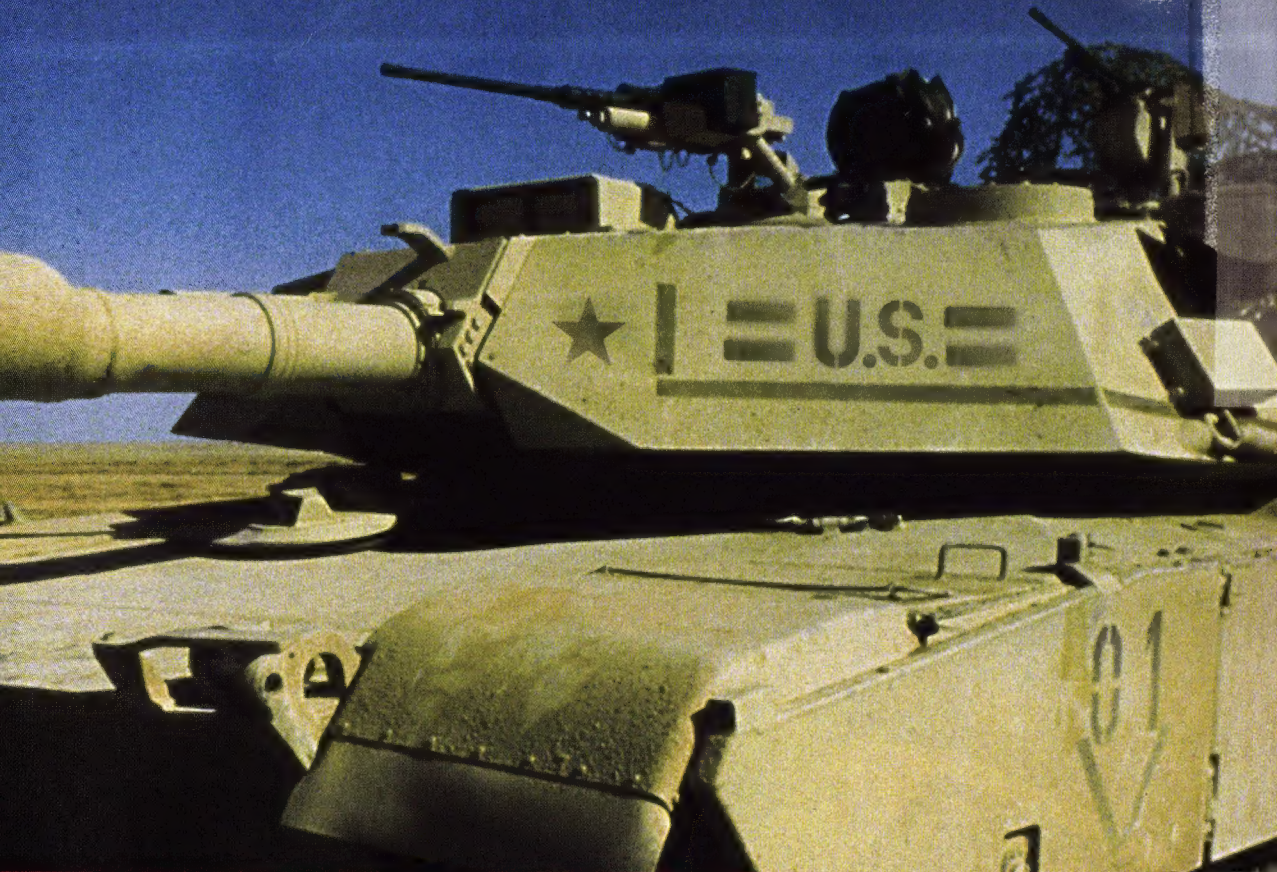
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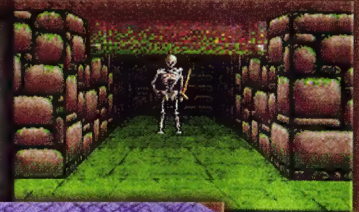


**Blood
Violence**



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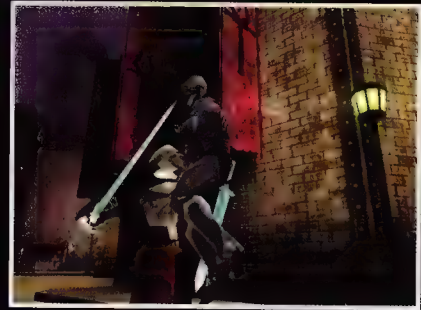


EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

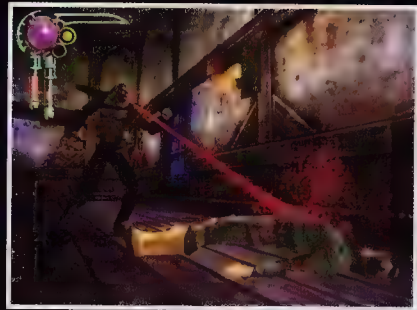




PlayStation.2



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- Kain

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COVER STORY

38 STARCRAFT: GHOST

Blizzard's reentry into the console field is being spearheaded by a Ghost. What kind of Ghost? The kind that kills you in your sleep, then dispatches the rest of your family. This new StarCraft's unique presentation will give gamers something to look forward to next year.



FEATURE

48 STAR OCEAN III: TILL THE END OF TIME

Rabid for a refreshing RPG? Star Ocean, from Japanese powerhouse Enix, promises touching stories and engaging battles – all on a budget that would make Hollywood blush.



FEATURE

60 THE 25 GREATEST MOMENTS IN VIDEO GAMES

Game Informer has done all the legwork for you. Just read our list of the 25 most revolutionary, repulsive, and goose-bump inducing moments in the history of digital entertainment. Then, revel in the glow of fond memories.



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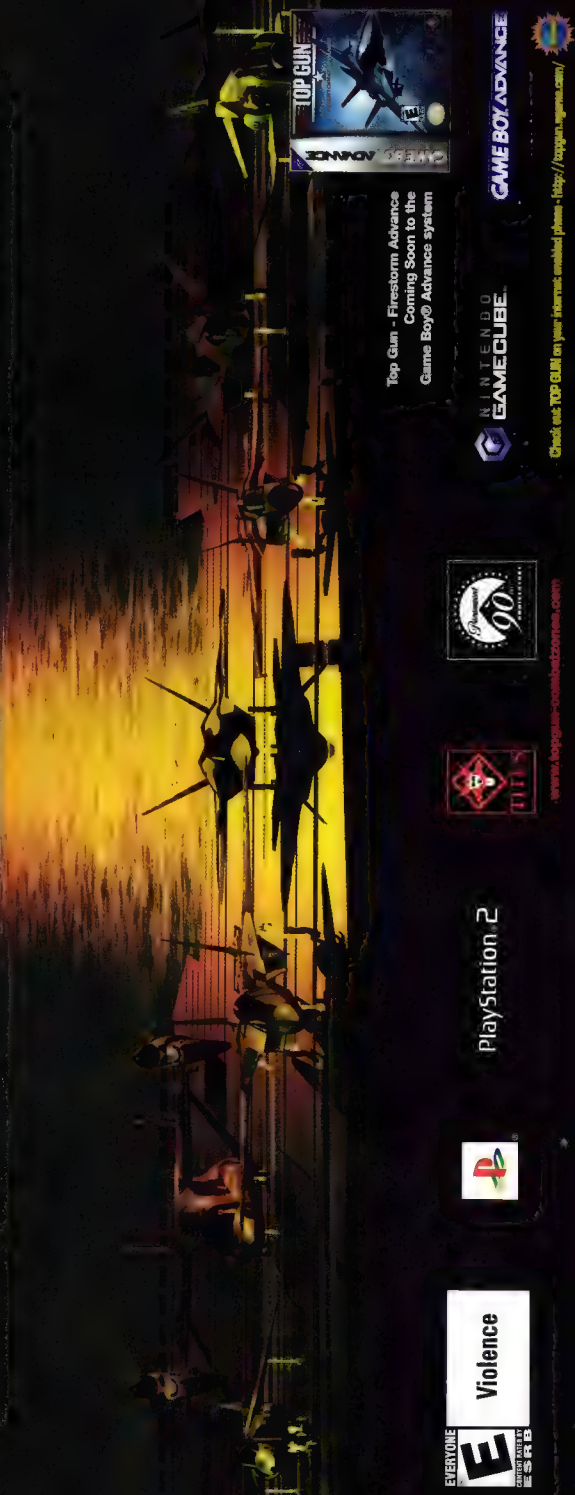
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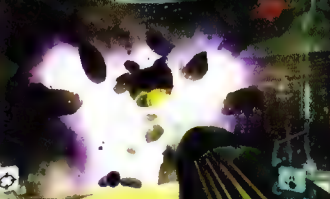
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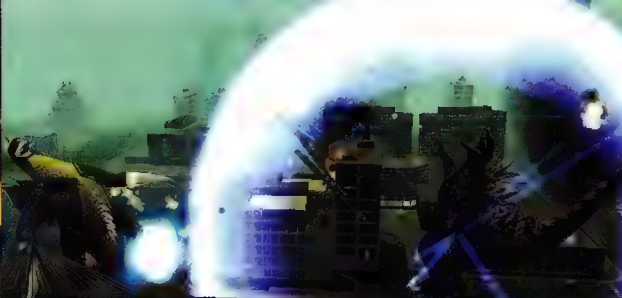
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20 GI SPY

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

22 DEAR GI

Apparently, not everyone felt so keen about the gummy-in-a-Dorito-shell concept. Reiner is now on "sabbatical". Do we let our giant, diamond-encrusted controllers get in the way of everyday life? Kristian finally gets some backup.

26 NEWS

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74 PREVIEWS

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Adventures all have pretty, new screenshots to show off.

104 REVIEWS

And in this corner, we have Game of the Month, Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus with PS2 backup from BloodRayne, Defender, and Summoner 2. GameCube throws down with Knockout Kings 2003, Star Fox Adventures, and Turok: Evolution. Waiting in the wings, Xbox shows House of the Dead III, Blinx, and ToeJam & Earl III. The pint-sized GBA offers up Yoshi's Island, the next in the Super Mario Advance series.

155 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.

158 PLAY TO PERFECTION

Star Fox leaps from his spaceship to run around like a crazed madman. Let us help you help yourself with a full walk through of the shiny, new Nintendo title. You're good enough, we think you're smart enough, and...really, we like you.

166 SECRET ACCESS

Cheat like IBM's Deep Blue in a chess match - all with Game Informer's help. Unlimited ammo? Check. Crazy free lives? Oh, yeah. Just don't tell anyone when you're doing it.

170 CLASSIC GI

The current rash of online peripherals isn't anywhere near the first time the industry's tried to get "wired". Get the timeline of abysmal failures and near successes, and learn what precedence Sony and Microsoft (hopefully) plan to beat.

176 ETC

More than anyone needs to know about Metal Gear Solid 2, but maybe they should. Sony can make you dizzy. Ninjas kill people ALL the time. Heroes in a half shell...and they're not oysters.



146



"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

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EDITORS' FORUM

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH BEING AVERAGE



As the game industry swings into the fourth quarter and the all-important holiday buying season, a deluge of new titles rain down on us here at Game Informer and retailers across the country. While every company would like to believe that its titles are the greatest thing since sliced bread, that just isn't the case. There will always be average games. But that isn't a bad thing.

I think people sometimes forget that variety is the spice of life, and that the video game industry needs to appeal to all types of gamers if it hopes to continue to grow. Take, for example, *The Thing from Vivendi Universal*. For fans of the movie this is an absolute must-have, but due to the limited fan base a license like this appeals to, the title just won't get the type of development dollars it would need to be the end-all, be-all game of the century.

Should it be made? Of course. Will it score a perfect 10? Unlikely, but you never know. There will always be titles that come out from under the radar and are so unbelievably good that they are a hit regardless of the development costs.

So, next time you see a game that scores around a seven or an eight make sure you don't write it off because it's not the highest scoring game in the issue. If its subject matter interests you, I would bet you will be more than satisfied if you purchase it. When you play each and every title that hits the streets like we do, it's easy to say this game or that game is better than this, but that doesn't mean it's not an entertaining experience. Besides, as our readers let us know on a daily basis, we aren't perfect. There will always be games you think are the "best ever" and receive a mediocre score. That's why average is there – to be a standard that we can compare the great games to.

Andy McNamara
Editor
andy@gameinformer.com

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

reiner@gameinformer.com

Animal Crossing is ruining my life. Seriously people, my addiction with this game is to the point where I'm canceling dentist appointments, calling in sick to work, and ordering my girlfriend to hang out with friends. Alas, these are but temporary solutions that only buy me a few precious hours. Don't worry, I have a few strategies concocted that should lay me up for months! Right now, I'm standing outside with my body caked in blood all in hopes of contract West Nile Virus from a mosquito. If this doesn't work, I'll just throw myself into oncoming traffic. If all goes as planned, you won't see me next month...or ever again!

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER

mat@gameinformer.com

Grand Theft Auto III has been the story of the past year. I'm sure that every company in the business is coming up with a strategy to deal with the rages wrought by this monster hit, but I, for one, hope they learn the right lessons from its success. If you think that you can replicate GTA's success by throwing a bunch of curswords, blood, and criminal plotlines at gamers, I suspect you're going to be disappointed. The real reason the game has resonated so strongly with the audience is due to the way it combines different gameplay styles, exploration, and a sense of real-life freedom. You don't necessarily have to have "adult content" to do that, or to be successful.

KRISTIAN, THE VIDEO KICKING

kristian@gameinformer.com

If elected to the presidency, I will abolish the House and the Senate, and crown myself Supreme Emperor of the United States. Under my rule, we will expand our borders in much the same way ancient Rome did – by conquering our neighbors, and annexing them. What are they gonna do about it? After absorbing Canada (which is basically filled with a bunch of US wannabes who talk funny anyway), I'll send our troops over to merry ol' England to set up some new colonies. Who wants to settle New Minneapolis (formerly London)? How about New Denver? Remember, those who donate \$1 million or more to my campaign will be awarded Earldoms and estates in France.

JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIANT

justin@gameinformer.com

BEEP This is BlurB Generator XP-5. Game Informer editor <name here> is not in the office to write something <select: poignant/witty/stupid> this month. He is in <select: Japan/therapy/jail>, but have no fear. XP-5 is set up to duplicate his personality to a tee. *TING* Rollins and GWAR are cool. I like to wrestle half-naked *ERROR* men. Mainstream things are bad. *BLIP* Even worse is <insert fellow editor here>. He <select: stinks/sucks/looks like a <select: year-old meatloaf/high-end Hoover/skinned badger dipped in acid>. See you next month. *SELFDestruct ACTIVATED*

KATO, THE GAME KATANA

kato@gameinformer.com

When I was a kid and thought about being an adult, I didn't really think of it in terms of which job I'd have, but rather, what I could do. Being able to pick not one, but two kinds of pop was an adult responsibility I looked forward to. Getting mail every day (now known as bills) was going to be an exciting prospect. Am I living the dream? Pretty much. Although lately I've been wondering if I should have been born in North Carolina (heaven forbid) so I could race stock cars, or have been taller so I could play in the NFL. Some of you may be dreaming about having my job right now, and if you're either a NASCAR driver or a pro football player, please give me a call and I think we can work something out.

CHET, THE CHRONIC GAMER

chet@gameinformer.com

I can't believe how much blabbing there is about GTA this month (and every month, for that matter). Is it me, or am I the only gamer in existence who didn't find GTA III that compelling? I mean, I can appreciate the gameplay for the GTA it does well, but sitting down for a session just does nothing for me. Executing a shock-combo in Unreal Tournament, and then watching my opponent burst into pieces; leveling my character up in *Summoner 2* to reveal cool new skills and summons, which better allow me to off enemies; and putting together a 30-hit combo in Alpha 3 and seeing my competitor's face cringe are the experiences that keep me coming back for more. I suppose it has everything to do with the type of person and gamer that I am.

LISA, LA GAME NIKITA

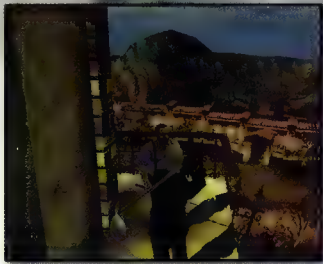
lisa@gameinformer.com

In the last month, I've been completely sucked in by a massively multiplayer online...puzzle. Really. Some may not know, but I am a total puzzle geek. This one has evolved to the point that I'm reading books on quantum physics while trying to add IP addresses together with the correct binary interpretation to see if the first letters of each author's name makes a clue. What's all this for? Some may call it a marketing stunt for a new *Myst* online game. The cool thing is that no one working on the puzzle knows who's really running it, what the end is, or the "puzz" will be. Maybe I'll suddenly be a suddenly wealthy, living on a deserted island, and sleeping in a hammock like my fortune cookie that I got at lunch today.



Center Top: Reiner's demonic possession makes him speak in tongues. 1. Wearing his racing jacket, Kato levitates while playing *NASCAR Thunder 2003*. 2. Andy witnesses Kristian using his powers of telekinesis on a GameCube controller, a GBA, and to steal Lisa's lunch money. 3. The buttons stick on Andy's controller from the blood of his stigmata. 4. After a full moon, PlayStation symbol crop circles mysteriously appear in Justin's scalp. 5. Chet stays in bed and commutes to work via astral projection. 6. Justin looks on as Matt's game is interrupted yet again by spontaneous human combustion.

Death is my business
and business is good.



HITMAN 2

SILENT ASSASSIN

OUT NOW



hitman2.com

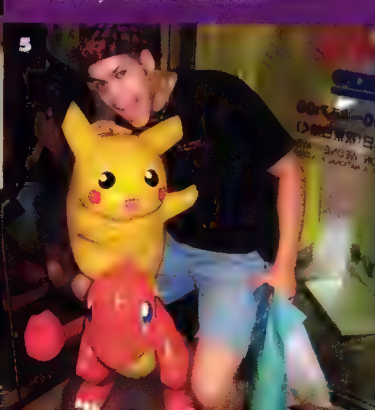
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GI SPY



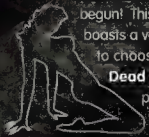
CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 Edelman's Jenny "Naughty Librarian" Maja and Xbox Live's Michael Mott take a breather from the action at the Tokyo Game Show. **2** The Blizzard/Nihilistic posse – Gil Shif, Lisa Bucek, Chris Millar, and Jacob Stevens – take a break from work on this month's cover game, StarCraft: Ghost. **3** Justin keeps it real with tri-Ace president Yoshiharu Gotanda and Enix producer Yoshinori Yamagishi. **4** Kato discusses whether Oasis' *Be Here Now* is an overlooked masterpiece, or just overblown crap with New Jersey Nets forward Kenyon Martin. **5** After being caught in the act with Pikachu and Charmander, Justin is now banned from Pokémon World for life. **6** Konami sound director Akira Yamaoka sold his soul for rock and roll, and he's got the same guitar as Steve Vai. Throw up the devil horns, people – he's earned it. **7** Bender/Helper Impact's Tammy Schachter hangs with Konami product manager Yokako Hamaguchi (left) and Contra: Shattered Soldier producer Nobuaki Nakazato (right). **8** GI's Chronic Gamer and Capcom's Matt Atwood take the Tokyo drag scene by storm with this down and dirty rendition of Ike and Tina Turner's "Proud Mary." Shake a tail feather!

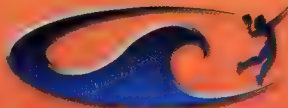


Chicks really dig the trees...

and you'll love the scenery too because the babes from the million-selling fighting game, **Dead or Alive®3** are back! This time, they're setting aside their fighting gear for some **fun-in-the-sun** swimwear and turning up the heat in **Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball™**. This is no ordinary volleyball game - this is volleyball to the extreme with **great gameplay** and **mind-blowing realism**. You'll be able to feel the sand between your toes and the gentle ocean breeze as you compete in the **most outrageous beach volleyball** game yet! Points earned on the court allow you to customize your babe off of it, with **over 100** different swimsuits and accessories to choose from. But when the day is done, the fun has just begun! This first ever **"Sports Fantasy Simulation"** boasts a variety of different **nightlife** activities to choose from. Whoever your pleasure, **Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball** promises **extreme action** and a **whole lotta satisfaction!**



DOAX



DEAD OR ALIVE
XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL



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XBOX

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RP
RATED EVERYONE
AGES 6+
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or call 1-800-771-3772
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DEAR GI

GUMMI CRUNCH: YUMMY OR YUCKY?

My friend Mike and I are huge fans of your magazine. I was reading his Game Informer, and I came across your recipe for "The Gummi Crunch". The brave souls that we are, a few friends and I took it upon ourselves to try it out. We all took a Doritos 3D and a gummy bear, and assembled the Gummi Crunch as directed. There was a three-count, at which point we popped them into our mouths. We stared. We stared some more. Then we chewed. Then we swallowed. Although I was indifferent to its unique flavor, the others were... well, not so pleased. How could you betray us, Game Informer? Next time you decide to put a recipe in your magazine, remember that you have great influence on our small, impressionable minds. As punishment for this betrayal, I demand a lifetime subscription to your magazine at no charge. Thank you. I await your reply.

Brad Bordyn
Via email

My name is Vince Foti, and I have a problem. I have been addicted to GTA III for some time now. Unfortunately, thanks to your August 2002 issue, I have not kicked the habit, but instead picked up yet another. Yes, I'm speaking of the Gummi Crunch. Try as I might, I cannot fight the cravings. But, rest assured, I do not hold you accountable. With Vice City set to launch in October and a Save-A-Lot just around the corner from my house, I see no hope for either of my ongoing struggles. Pray for me.

Vince Foti
Philadelphia, PA

While our "Sex, Lies, and Video Games" article got all the attention, the Gummi Crunch (featured on page 112 of issue 112), was equally, if not more, controversial. Like caviar and escargot, it appears that the gourmet appeal of a gummi bear wrapped in a tantalizing nacho cheese crust was too refined for some of our subscribers. After receiving several death threats from disgusted readers, Reiner, the creator of the Gummi Crunch, has gone into hiding. He is now sending us his reviews from a top-secret bunker in the jungles of Thailand. To prove his commitment to the Gummi Crunch, he is now subsisting on a diet of only Doritos 3Ds and Gummi Bears. We at Game Informer fully support Reiner's show of integrity, and look forward to his imminent return. We just hope he can lose the 200 pounds he's gained since beginning his new meal plan.



WHERE'S THE HARD DRIVE?

Thank you for a great magazine! Yours is the first I've ever subscribed to, because it's more detailed and impartial than any other I've ever read. Now, on to business. With all the hype surrounding the release of the PS2 Network Adaptor, why have we not heard anything about the PS2 Hard Drive? I can't even find anything on the web about the plans for this elusive apparition of a

device. Is Sony ever going to release one or am I going to have to wait like I waited for my Intellivision keyboard? Please help; I know you guys can find out something for me!

B. Mulligan
Via email

We contacted Sony in regards to their plans for the PS2 Hard Drive, and found the company unwilling to spill the beans on the highly publicized add-on. A representative for the company would only say that it is on track to be released sometime in the future, but would not venture a guess as to the eventual launch date. Apparently, Sony is waiting until there is a wealth of downloadable game content ready for use with the drive unit. Given that the holiday shopping season is nearly upon us, we assume that there is virtually no chance that the PS2 Hard Drive will be released in 2002. So, keep your fingers crossed that 2003 will be the Year of the Hard Drive for Sony fanatics.

GRANDMA TO VIDS: DROP DEAD!

I'm a 13-year-old gamer and I have a problem. My grandma hates video games and computers. She won't let me play a game for long. If I play too long, she lets us play just so we can't play later. When we make mistakes, she thinks it's because we were playing games. I can't convince her to just let us play. Can you help me out?

Nicholas Steffen
Via earthlink.net

This is a tough one, Nicholas. On the one hand, we sympathize with your overwhelming addiction to video games. On the other, we respect that your grandma is trying to make sure that you don't neglect the other facets of your life. We also understand that, since she probably didn't grow up with

video games, she may have some inaccurate preconceptions about the so-called "dangers" of the gaming lifestyle. So, here's our solution: Why don't you invite her to play games with you? Many older people out there enjoy video games, and, if given the chance, your grandma might become engrossed in them as well. A thoughtful, non-violent game like the Sims or Myst might be a good way to introduce her to the charms of gaming, and it could become a fun activity for you to enjoy together. Also, try to make time for some outside activities and doing your homework – especially your English homework. Seriously, you had a lot of spelling and grammatical errors in your email. We'll let you off with a C- this time, but we expect to see some improvement in your next letter. Class dismissed!

THE MYSTERY OF METAL GEAR

I'm an eleven-year-old video gamer and I have been a huge fan of the Metal Gear series. Although, I have been wondering how Solidus Snake is alive. In Metal Gear Solid, at the end of the game, Liquid Snake says that there were eight clones of Big Boss – but only Solid Snake and Liquid survived. Then, Solidus came; so is he a robot or something?

Draw Russell
Via webtv.net

Drew, come closer and we'll whisper in your ear the secret to the serpentine plotline of the Metal Gear Solid games. Closer...closer...closer...are you ready? [whispering] Here's the secret: It doesn't make any sense at all. Kojima is a nutcase. Now, just relax and have fun sneaking around and killing guards, okay?

ONWARD, KRISTIAN SOLDIERS!

First of all, I would like to say thank you for making this kick-ass video game magazine. It is my favorite magazine, and everything I find out about video games I find out from you. And second, I'd like to thank Kristian for having that name. You see, my name is also Kristian, and being a guy with that name is hard, mainly when teachers mispronounce it as "Kristin". Plus, my friends sometimes made fun of me for spelling my name with a "K", instead of the conventional "Ch". When I first got your wonderful magazine about six months ago, I was

shocked to see that there was somebody of actual importance with the same first name as me, spelling and all. I showed my friends that, and I have yet to hear another joke about my name. Thank you, Kristian.

Kristian Maiorano
Via email

I finally found someone who shares the same abnormality as I do:



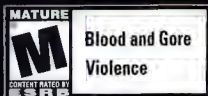


THEY SMELL BLOOD YOURS



A Savage World So Real... You'll smell the smoke of war-torn cities and burning jungles. See the flaming battlefields below from the saddle of a fully armed, high flying Pterosaur. And taste the white-hot stench of a detonated Baby Duke. Turok is back for the kill.

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GAME BOY ADVANCE



PlayStation 2

Acclaim

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ENVELOPE ART

"Christian" spelled with a "K". Those dumb people that can't read think our names are Kristin. Ha, ignorant fools. I'm moving to Minnesota about a half-hour away from you guys. I think if we joined forces, we could take over the world that has treated us so cruelly. Think of it, we could force everyone to have the Cs in their names changed to K. It will be a much better place.

Kristian Marinello
Via email

We've done our share of teasing Kristian in the past, but these letters have caused us to rethink our callous mockery. Having a differently spelled name is not an easy row to hoe, and we are gratified to see that the now-Video Viking is an inspiration to so many disenfranchised youths out there. Kristians of the world - Unite and take over!! Viva la Kristian!

HOW MUCH BANK?

I would like to get into the video game industry (who wouldn't?), and was wondering: Do you guys at GI make a lot of money? Do you walk around the office with "bling bling" around your necks? Are your water jugs filled with Cristal? Do you rock Bentleys with PS2s in them? Do they feed you? Any hint of information of your lifestyles would be nice. Also, is there any room for a graphic artist at GI?

Kim Cuartero
Magnolia, NJ



It's often been said that the lifestyles of the Game Informer staff would make Robin Leach and Puff Daddy pee-pee their Prada, if that gives you any idea of just how high on the hog we're living. If by "bling bling" you mean "collectible Jar Jar Blinks pendants", then, yes, we do rock some audacious jewelry. If by "Cristal" you mean "Crystal Light Pink Lemonade", then you could say that we are connoisseurs of the finer things in life. If by "Bentley" you mean "1991 Ford Taurus" or "1988 Nissan Pathfinder", then you are correct in assuming that our parking lot is fit for the cover of *The Robb Report*. While we would never tell you exactly how big our money stacks are, let's just say that our annual salaries are slightly less than Bill Gates', and slightly more than that of a child laborer working in an Indonesian Nike sweatshop. Saddy, we are not looking to hire a graphic artist at the moment, but would pay a graffiti artist 50 bucks to spray paint "Me llamo es Señor Poopy-Pants" on the side of Andy's house. Any takers?



Charles Hall
For once, we wouldn't mind being a teddy bear

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



Livia Stevens
If you crossed Dante with Ned Flanders, he would say this picture is "Gun-didly-rific"



NOVEMBER WINNER!

Chijuyo
"You mess with me, you mess with my whole family."



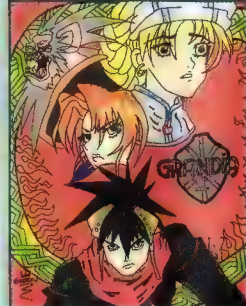
Willie Green
Write your own funny John McClane, Clint Eastwood, or Steven Seagal caption here



Brian Fisher
Armpits and crotches oh my!



Raff Contreras
Jason Priestley finally walks away from an accident



Gerson Samuel Lopez A.
They all look like they are squeezing off logs...and we're not talking Lincoln here people!



Drive 15 vehicles, including sports cars and motorcycles, in solo or multiplayer action.



Take the wheel as daredevil stunt driver Chase Corrada and build your rep in Hollywood.



Leave a path of destruction as you jump, smash and race through 16 movie scenes on 4 unique sets.

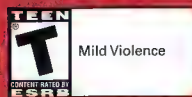
CHASE

Hollywood Stunt Driver™



*"She's Chase Corrada, starring in the game that you were looking for when you bought Stuntman."
— Next Level Gaming*

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www.bam4fun.com/chase



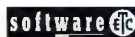
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GI NEWS

THE TALE OF TOKYO GAME SHOW 2002

Even though **Tokyo Game Show** now only happens once a year (instead of twice), it is still a premier event where companies are eager to show off their best wares. Thankfully, *Game Informer* passed Japanese customs officials and was allowed to cover the event in all its glory. A sea of eager gamers devoured all before them from top companies such as **Capcom, Konami, Square, Tecmo, Namco, and From Software**. The latter made a splash with titles not shown here such as **Shadow Tower Abyss (PlayStation 2)**, and **Otogi (Xbox)**. All four of the major platforms (including the **Game Boy Advance**) were well represented, and it looks like most of the games shown have a good chance of making it over to the States starting next year. Be sure to check out the two other sensations of the show: **Star Ocean III** and **StarCraft: Ghost** later in this issue.



Clock Tower 3

Pedophilia and other suggestions of similarly disturbing themes are already the hallmark of this PS2 Capcom title. The company fully expects to bring it to America next summer.

Hot Shots Golf Online

Besides being online, the best thing about this PS2 game is that you can't throw your clubs into the pond. Hot Shots Golf Online debuts this winter in Japan, and should make just as big a splash if it comes to America.



Armored Core 3: Silent Line

This may look like just another mech title courtesy of From Software for the PS2, but take a peek at this: a first-person view that's fully playable!



Breakdown

This summer 2003 Xbox title from Namco is already being touted as a worthy action/adventure successor to Dead to Rights.



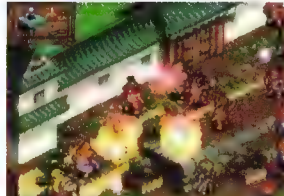
Mega Man Battle Network Transmission

Capcom isn't revealing anything about this title just yet, but it obviously feels at home graphically on the GameCube. We hope a similar freshness is inherent in the gameplay.



Virtual On-Marz

Sega last put this series on the Dreamcast with its own arcade-stick controller. Now the PlayStation 2's dual analog controller is able to do this mech title justice.



Onimusha Tactics

This series has always been of the action/adventure ilk, but a change of console scenery to the GBA has brought an altogether new realm to light, and we're not complaining.



Breaker

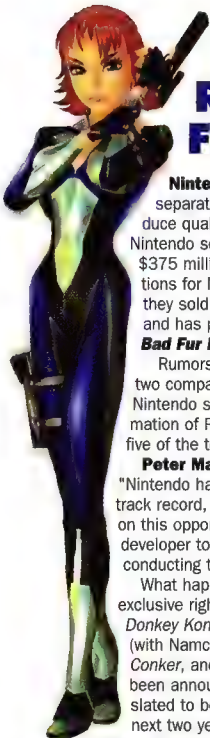
Tecmo is going online with this 2003 PS2 game, and it's bringing some inventive features with it. Quests require you to team up with others, and allow your group to execute explosive combo hits together.



Mega Man X7

Not to be outdone, the PlayStation 2 will also get its very own Mega Man — one that is a totally different product than the GameCube's.

RARE LEAVES NINTENDO FOR MICROSOFT



Nintendo and Rare, its second-party development powerhouse, have decided to go their separate ways. Microsoft, long known to be searching for another strong developer to produce quality software for its Xbox, has stepped up and acquired shares in the company. Nintendo sold its 49 percent ownership of the studio to the Seattle software giant for a whopping \$375 million. George Harrison, senior vice president of marketing and corporate communications for Nintendo of America, said of the deal, "We sold our position back to Rare and then they sold the entire company to Microsoft." Nintendo and Rare's partnership was a storied one, and has produced titles such as *Perfect Dark*, *GoldenEye 007*, *Banjo-Kazooie*, *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, and a host of *Donkey Kong* games.

Rumors of such a split ran rampant before this year's E3 convention in May, but when pressed on the topic, Nintendo denied that the two companies' working relationship would be severed. According to the console maker, "Rare accounted for only 9.5 percent of total Nintendo software revenue worldwide. In fiscal year 2002, that number declined to 1.5 percent." Microsoft countered this low estimation of Rare by pointing out that the British developer has, in fact, sold \$1 billion worth of games in the past five years, and that five of the top 20 best-selling N64 titles in North America were Rare products.

Peter MacDougall, Nintendo's executive vice president of sales and marketing, remarked on the situation, "Nintendo had the ability to continue its exclusive relationship with Rare, but in looking at the company's recent track record, it became clear that its value to the future of Nintendo would be limited. In other words, we passed on this opportunity for very good business reasons." Interestingly, the company has said it is looking for a developer to come in and fill Rare's second-party shoes in order to keep the quality titles coming. It is already conducting talks to this end.

What happens to Rare's current work as well as its old franchises? Nintendo has said that it would "retain exclusive rights for all original properties and franchises featured in games developed by Rare, including *Donkey Kong*, *Diddy Kong*, and *Star Fox*." In fact, Nintendo is currently working on a new *Star Fox* title (with Namco) and a *Donkey Kong* game. Worry not, however, as Rare originals, such as *Perfect Dark*, *Conker*, and *Banjo-Kazooie* will remain with the company. In fact, a *Perfect Dark* sequel for Xbox has already been announced, as well as the former GameCube title, *Kameo: Elements of Power* (spring 2003), which is slated to be the first Rare project published by Microsoft. Rare has promised to release five Xbox games over the next two years, spanning numerous genres.

Chris Stamper, Rare's co-founder, is enthusiastic about this new partnership. "Our mission at Rare has always been to make the industry's best games for the widest possible audience. Teaming with Microsoft gives us the best opportunity to accomplish this goal. Microsoft's dedication to game creators...and to gaming innovation made them the obvious partner to take Rare into the future."



Kameo: Elements of Power



Rare has already given Joanna Dark a new look

NEW FFX SPIN-OFF

Although *Tokyo Game Show* is always chock full of interesting odds and ends, this one is probably the strangest of 2002. Square has printed up this poster for an upcoming title called *Final Fantasy X: Another Lord*. Interestingly, the game itself was absent from the company's booth on the show floor. What exactly do we have going on here? Well, apart from Yuna doing her best Lara Croft impersonation, this looks like one of the three character-specific FFX spin-offs we've heard talk about. FFX has already seen a Japanese-only special edition, so hopefully *Another Lord* will make it over to the States.

PLAYSTATION 3 AROUND THE CORNER?

With recent news that Sony has shipped its 40 millionth PlayStation 2 console worldwide, talk is already starting regarding when its successor, PlayStation 3, will debut. Japan's newspaper Financial Times has reported that the company is planning on releasing the console in 2005.

Work on the system's microprocessor, named Cell, has been ongoing for some time now. Unlike in the PS2, Sony isn't handling its development alone – both IBM and Toshiba have been helping out. This should help in controlling the console's manufacturing costs for Sony. The newspaper contends that the platform will retail for less than \$400 and, like its predecessor, will be backwards compatible with PlayStation and PlayStation 2 games.

Interestingly, Sony itself is less focused on the PlayStation 3 than it is in the possibilities inherent in the Cell microprocessor itself. Kenichi Fukunaga, spokesperson for Sony Computer Entertainment Japan said, "We're not thinking about hardware. The ideal solution would be having an operating system installed in various home appliances that could run game programs. We've started with boxes – making boxes to do specific things. But if you have a chip this powerful, you can add functions to any box. It's reverse thinking." Such a ubiquitous use of the chip would be more in line with the multi-faceted "entertainment hub" capacity that the company has always wanted for the PlayStation 2, but has yet to realize.



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

THE OSBOURNES



Electronic Arts would be [expletive deleted] stupid not to pick up this [expletive deleted] license from MTV. Picture if you will the Sims, but instead of fictional characters, the digital family is the [expletive deleted] Osbournes. The Sims do strange things. So do the Osbournes. You can't understand

a word that the Sims say. The same goes for Ozzy...well, that's not true...there is one word in particular that stands out, but it would be [expletive deleted] bleeped out anyway! If this game is successful, EA could branch out with an expansion pack called Ozfest World Tour that follows Ozzy and Sharon on the road. During the day, you'll assume control of that [expletive deleted] Sharon and will have to litter the city with posters, do radio promotions, and drag Ozzy to in-store signings. If you do well, the auditorium will be packed to the [expletive deleted] rafters with fans. You'll be rewarded with more cash, which can be used to rent out larger venues, and decorate your mansion. It's too [expletive deleted] good to be true!

TOP 10 DISQUALIFIED ENVELOPE ART ENTRIES

- 1 Anything with a hole in it.
- 2 Readers who think trading constitutions are skills.
- 3 Anyone who doesn't list their own name.
- 4 Envelopes with a white powdery substance inside of them.
- 5 Buff, shirtless women. Images like that should be addressed to Justin personally.
- 6 Drawings that try to suck up to us by making us look way cooler than we actually are.
- 7 Prison art.
- 8 Envelope art collected in Diarrhea Digest.
- 9 Art that makes Kobe or Bruce Lee look like fun.
- 10 Anyone who uses an axe to affix the stamp.

DEVELOPER: YOKO
BRADY BELL
 PRODUCER, MENTAL BRONCO
 ALLIED ASSAULT/SPEARHEAD

- 1 Brave Thief Aung – PS2
- 2 Last Life – PC
- 3 System Shock – PC
- 4 Full Throttle – PC
- 5 Crusade II – PlayStation

READER PICK
SCUMMY NEW JERSEY

- 1 The Legend of Zelda – N64
- 2 Super Mario Stars – SNES
- 3 Earthbound – SNES
- 4 Dance Dance Revolution 5th MIX – Arcade
- 5 Street Fighter Alpha 3 – PS2

Game Informer is seeking for the best five home games. Please send your top five and a photo of yourself to:

Game Informer Magazine
 Attn: Top Five
 724 North First St., 4th Fl.
 Minneapolis, MN 55402
 e-mail: topfive@gameinformer.com
 (attach digital picture)
 Everyone that enters our contest will be entered into drawing for a GI t-shirt and a copy of our magazine.

KONAMI GOES GREEN



Don't turn the page – we're not talking about **Frogger**. No, better things are in store for Konami. It has once again signed up for the rights to the

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. What console the *Turtles* are destined for remains unknown, although the company expects a first showing to be ready for next year's **E3** in May, with product to follow in the fall of 2003. This resurgence is just one part of a resurrection for the early nineties phenomenon. A new television show and other merchandise are also being planned.

Konami's nostalgia kick doesn't end there. It also has announced that it will be making games based on the film *Godzilla X Mechagodzilla*, out shortly in Japanese theaters. If only the company could trade *Frogger* for Kermit, everything would be complete.



LIFE AFTER POKÉMON...LOST KINGDOMS 2

Although this title (also known as **Rune 2** in Japan) hasn't been announced by a publisher yet, we're praying that **Activision** will again snag the rights and bring us a sequel to perhaps the most unique RPG around. If you missed the first game, which you probably did, *Lost Kingdoms* skillfully combined elements from the action/RPG genre and those addictive card games like **Pokémon** and **Yu-Gi-Oh!** *Lost Kingdoms 2* will continue this tradition, but make some welcome enhancements, which will hopefully attract a larger crowd. **From Software**, the developer, will tweak the graphics, and make gameplay a bit faster paced. Instead of random encounters, players can now see their enemies, and actually begin a battle with an advantage; you can initiate a battle by tossing a card before the encounter actually begins. We don't have a solid release date for *Rune 2* yet, but if a US publisher does pick it up, expect to see it on **GameCube** sometime in the latter half of next year.



NAME THAT GAME

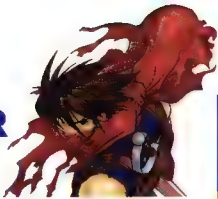


Worthless licenses helped spell the end of the first golden age of video games, and this movie-related title for the Atari 2600 was one of the culprits. The film involved flying glaives, a Cyclops, and transporting castles, but the vid included none of this. Instead, you got four measly screens, and spent an inordinate amount of time on the one pictured.

(Answer on page 34)

GI NEWS

CAPCOM ALL-STAR STUDD



Capcom has snatched the reigns from **Arika** (creators of the **EX** series), and is currently developing a 3D **Street Fighter**-style game for arcades. Dubbed **Capcom Fighting All-Stars**, this latest version in the franchise will feature 16 characters, most of which hail from previous games, but a few are new. The cast includes Haggar and Poison (**Final Fight**), Ryu, Charlie/Nash, Strider, Chun-Li, Adon (**SFA**), Alex (**SFIII**), Batsu and Akira (**Rival Schools**), and finally D.D., Rook, and Ingrid (originals).

The combat system strongly resembles **Street Fighter III**. Players can perform Aggressive Blocking, which looks quite amazing when performed by adepts. On a recent trip to Japan, we witnessed two experts Aggressive Block each other's Aggressive Blocks ten times in a row! Perhaps the most significant addition to **All-Stars** is 3D movement. Not only can players strafe left or right to avoid attacks, but they must also take notice of walls and other objects in the environment that might hinder their strategy.

Although Capcom has yet to announce whether it will bring **All-Stars** to console, the arcade unit runs on the System 246 board (essentially PS2 hardware), so you can probably expect a home conversion in the future.



MICROSOFT IN THE BUFF

Microsoft's **N.U.D.E.** (Natural Ultimate Digital Experiment) title has you nurture a robot "that has virtually no intellect" to full maturity - complete with emotions - via the **Xbox Communicator**. Of course, when we heard about this, the first thing we thought about were all the cuss words we could teach our new friend. Fully-grown female robots say the darndest things! **N.U.D.E.** is scheduled to appear in Japan in 2003.



UGLY - Does **Xbox Live** stand a chance? A study by the **US Commerce Department** found that only 10 percent of Americans use broadband - that's a lower rate than in Canada! C'mon people, this isn't hockey. There's no reason Canada should be beating us.

GOOD - Japanese Developer **Sammy** is working on a **PlayStation 2** game based on the **Akira Kurosawa** masterpiece **The Seven Samurai**. If you haven't seen the film, we highly suggest you rent it and start dreaming of what might be.

BAD - **Sega** is delaying the release of **Panzer Dragoon Orta** for the **Xbox** into next year. The team says they're working on the storyline, among other things. We can only prey that they haven't been influenced by **Reign of Fire**.

GOOD - There's some game called **Grand Theft Auto: Vice City**, which has up to 4 million copies pre-ordered already, according to some investment analyst groups. Powerful men in business suits high in skyscrapers expect the game to "do well," as they say in the biz.

GOOD - **GI's** Kato is featured as a dirt track driver and engine builder in **Infogrames' NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona**. Bring his skyrocketing fame down to earth by putting him into the wall at turn three!



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.

Acclaim's BMX XXX may be too hot for **Sony** to handle. Rumor has it that the title may have to censor the adult content with black bars (see last month's news piece) if it's to appear on the **PlayStation 2**. What's more interesting is that **Nintendo** and **Microsoft** won't restrict the game on their consoles.

Loose Talk has heard that there is a chance **Square** will not bring **Final Fantasy XI** for the **PS2** - an online-only title - to the US. The differences between networks in Japan versus America and the fact that the PS2 Hard Drive hasn't come out may be to blame. The PC edition is the most likely **FFXI** to be released.

Publisher/developer **Blizzard** is hard at work on an unnamed **PC** project. What do we know? The game will be a full sequel to an already established franchise. **StarCraft** or **WarCraft** are likely candidates.

Contrary to some previous rumors, it appears that **Sega** and first-party developer **Visual Concepts** have decided not to make any extreme sports titles in the near future.

The appearance of **Sega Rally** for the **Game Boy Advance** at **Tokyo GameShow 2002** is just the beginning. The series will make a return to a console later next year. Which system it is to appear on is currently in discussion.



BEGINNER



NOVICE



EXPERT



SILENT SCOPE 3

Silent Scope's intense sniping action returns for a 3rd round with an all-new game for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system! As the world's best snapp-shooter, provide a terrorist organization from using cloning technology for global domination. Featuring expansive levels, radical bosses, and new 3D sound technology to find and target opponents, it's time to silence the enemy threat. As a bonus, Silent Scope 3 also helps force the game may by including the hit arcade game, Silent Scope FX!



PlayStation.2



VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

This month we've composed a test that measures the lengths you'll go to maintain your loyalty to video games. Getting none of these answers correct means you're a wussy and can endure very little for your so-called hobby. However, if you manage to get all ten right, you can endure perhaps some of the worst pain imaginable for your addiction. Good luck!

QUESTION 1: The development team who actually devised the Street Fighter universe and created the original Street Fighter left Capcom to form another company. What is the name of this developer?

- A. Arika
- B. SNK
- C. Sammy
- D. Data East

QUESTION 2: The word, "otaku," is used among US gamers to describe the hardcore gaming population. But in Japanese it literally means house, which has a negative connotation when used in reference to a person. In general, it describes people who have an unhealthy obsession with indoor activities, never leaving their houses.

- A. True
- B. False
- C. We actually know nothing about the Japanese language
- D. Stop playing games and catch some rays!

QUESTION 3: What is the approximate percentage of females within the gaming population?

- A. 10%
- B. 21%
- C. 33%
- D. 43%

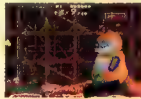
QUESTION 4: In the first weekend, Sony sold out of Network Adaptors, which actually surprised most of the GI staff. How many did it sell?

- A. 100,000
- B. 250,000
- C. 300,000
- D. 650,000

QUESTION 5: What was on the cover of the very first issue of Game Informer Magazine?

- A. Sonic the Hedgehog
- B. Super Mario Brothers 3
- C. Streets of Rage
- D. Final Fantasy II

QUESTION 6: These pictures come from a popular Japanese shooter developed by Konami that was never released in the US, for obvious reasons. Can you name it?



- A. Gradius: Sexy and Lovely
- B. Life Force: Adult Attack
- C. Sexy Parodius
- D. Beautiful TwinBee Opai

QUESTION 7: Sega's Rez was inspired by an artist and a technique he popularized called synesthesia - a sort of mixing of the senses. What was this artist's name?

- A. Claude Monet
- B. Vincent Van Gogh
- C. Pablo Picasso
- D. Wassily Kandinsky

QUESTION 8: What was the name of the developer that defiled the Contra name when it released the PS-X version called, Contra: Legacy of War? The company also developed the Ecco the Dolphin games, Three Dirty Dwarves, and Wacky Races.

- A. Probe Software
- B. Argonaut Software
- C. Appaloosa Interactive
- D. Iguana Entertainment

QUESTION 9: In 1991, one of the big hardware manufacturers planned to establish an online network - to start in our great state of Minnesota. To gain mass support for the network quickly, this company partnered with Control Data Corporation to allow system owners to play the lottery. What console was supposed to be used for this purpose?

- A. Super Nintendo
- B. Nintendo Entertainment System
- C. Sega Genesis
- D. NEC TurboGrafix 16

QUESTION 10: Approximately how many people were employed by the US video game industry as of 1999?

- A. 35,000
- B. 50,000
- C. 65,000
- D. 90,000

Score & Rank

KICK ABAN GIRLYMAN!



0-1 Buy Mario Sunshine And Ask Your Gamer Friends Why It Won't Work In Your PS2. Look Sincere



2-4 Run Around Naked At School Or Work And Claim Solid Snake To Be Your Hero



5-7 Eat Cockroaches And Say That A Game Said It Was Nutritious, And Video Games Never Lie!



8-9 Play In Pfg Feces And Yell Out How Much You Love Final Fantasy



10 Take A Swift Kick In The Gonads And Beg For More

CAPCOM'S MIKAMI BLASTS SONY/SQUARE



In a recent off-the-cuff outburst, famed **Capcom** mastermind **Shinji Mikami** (*Resident Evil*, *Dino Crisis*, *Devil May Cry*) railed against **Sony** and **Square** during an interview with a Japanese radio station. He criticized the console manufacturer for its problem-prone **PlayStation 2** and **PS-X** consoles, stating that frequent breakdowns were partly responsible for the system's good sales. He said that he himself had to buy two sets

of each because of the poor quality of the CD lens. Consumers here and abroad have experienced this problem with Sony products since before the debut of the PlayStation. Mikami even went so far as to say that the company has intentionally not corrected the problem in order to force people continually to buy the platforms - a practice known as "planned obsolescence".

Game Informer contacted Sony of America regarding Mikami's comments, but it stood by its product, saying, "The PlayStation family of products are some of the best examples of Sony's commitment to quality and excellence." As for the Resident Evil maker himself, Sony stated diplomatically, "Mikami-san from Capcom is one of the best creators that our industry has ever produced, and we highly respect his opinion." We wonder if, behind the scenes, this will have any effect on which console Capcom and Mikami turn to for future titles.

Finally, he expressed frustration that Square's *Kingdom Hearts* on the PS2 sold better than his *GameCube* remake of *RE* in Japan. He blamed this on the fact that people bought *Kingdom Hearts* because of the hype surrounding the game. One has to wonder what hype had to do with Mikami snaring *GameCube* fans with the re-release of a title that's already five years old.



99% of police in Japan have been told to be on the lookout for a suspicious amateur wrestler who may be wanted for possessing illegal substances like steroids. Where's Justin?

39% of 12,000 people polled by Gigex recently said that they were planning on buying the Xbox before the end of the year. 27% said PlayStation 2 and 17% mentioned GameCube

81% of Reiner and Kristian's friends, family, and pets are only found in Animal Crossing. The rest are all imaginary

80% of the Games of the Month have involved Chet since his arrival in issue #110

61% of people think that Sega's NFL 2K3 cover boy Brian Urlacher is about to crap his pants

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PlayStation 2



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BLIZZARD'S GBA RESURRECTION

Game Informer has been granted an exclusive first look at **Blizzard's** upcoming lineup of **Game Boy Advance** titles. Due out in quick succession, starting in the spring of next year, the company has chosen three classics from its SNES days — **The Lost Vikings**, **Blackthorne**, and **Rock & Roll Racing**.

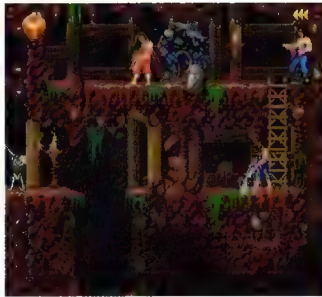
The games' producer, **Chris Millar** was also nice enough to chat with us about the titles. "As we were going back into console, we've been thinking a lot [about] where we've come from," he explained. "A lot of us really enjoyed the games we originally created for the **SNES**, and we wanted to bring those back and put those in the hands of our fans and gamers alike."

In a poll conducted among fans, *The Lost Vikings* was voted as the most-wanted title. Millar promises these games are completely faithful to their SNES counterparts. "We did investigate updating them and the music and everything, but the more we thought about it, [altering them] would probably upset the true fans."

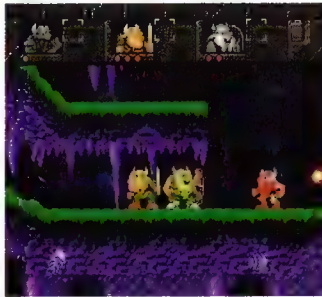
This classic trio is just the start for Blizzard's beginning on the console, although nothing concrete is in the works just yet. Millar told us that they would gauge the public's interest and go from there.



Rock & Roll Racing



Blackthorne



The Lost Vikings

THE ONLINE MARVEL UNIVERSE

Vivendi Universal has scored the **Marvel Comics** multiplayer mother lode. The company has just inked a 10-year deal with Marvel in order to make massively multiplayer online games featuring a slew of super heroes. How massive? Try picking from a roster of 4,700 Marvel characters. Vivendi plans to start pumping these babies out starting in 2005. Will there be a **Spider-Man** online game? Yep. **Incredible Hulk**? You can bet your Bruce Banner on it.

The format of the titles hasn't been decided yet, but how awesome would it be to have a *Secret Wars*-style free-for-all? Vivendi has said it will charge subscription fees to be split with Marvel, and that there will be titles spanning multiple consoles. We hope that by 2005, cross-platform play is no longer a dream with these titles. Who said Underoos were never coming back?



TRANSFORMERS' NEXT GENERATION

Game Informer knows the score. A few issues back in our *R&D* section, we called for a video game based on the **Transformers**, and now **Takara Toys** is heeding the call. The company responsible for the figures has announced that it is publishing a title based on the epic struggles of the Autobots and Decepticons in Japan next year titled **Transformers: Generation Zero**.

The game will feature Optimus Prime and Megatron, of course, but the vid's exact timeline is unknown. Interestingly, these well-known characters from the television series are known as **Generation One**. Does this mean that we'll see some action between the two factions before they came to Earth, when they were back on their home planet of Cybertron? The possibilities are limitless, and we hope the gameplay can match it. *Generation Zero* is being developed by WinkySoft, the team behind the disappointing **GameBoy Advance** title **Z.O.E.: The Fist of Mars**. Hopefully **WinkySoft** can come up with better results this time around. No platforms for this game have been announced yet.



DATA FILE

► Listen to the sweet sounds of **Vice City**. **Rockstar Games** and **Epic Records** are planning to release seven simultaneous soundtracks to coincide with the launch of **Grand Theft Auto: Vice City** on October 29. Each CD will correspond with one of the radio stations broadcast throughout the city, and will feature both songs and DJ banter from the game.

► **Mace Griffin** **Bounty Hunter** has switched publishers from **Crave** to **Black Label Games**. The **PlayStation 2**, **Xbox**, **GameCube**, and **PC** titles' release has also been pushed back into March.

► **Microsoft** is offering a free rebate to those who've purchased the Xbox and the DVD Playback Kit in the US from August 15 through November 2. Mail the coupon in, and you'll get \$30 back!

► As if the **Sims** wasn't tasty enough, **EA** has struck a deal to include **McDonald's** in the **Sims Online**. Not only will you be able to get a Big Mac to go, but you can own and operate the franchise!

► **Crave** is delaying **UFC Tapout 2** (Xbox) and **The Lost** (PS2 and Xbox) into the first quarter of next year. Word is that **The Lost's** developer, **Irrational Games**, is using the time to add some new touches since its **E3** showing last May.

► With **Ninja Gaiden** not even out yet, **Tecmo's Team Ninja** development studio is piling on the work. The publisher announced that it has begun work on the tentatively titled project **Dead or Alive Code: Cronus**. The Xbox game does not have a target release date yet. To learn more about ninjas, turn to this month's *Eto*.

► **Sega** and **Michael Crichton** are working together to develop a video game for 2004. Will it be an *ER* game? No, the title will be an original collaboration between the publisher and the writer.

► **Bethesda** is planning a **Morrowind** expansion pack for this November titled **The Elder Scrolls III: Tribunal**. The game can apparently be merged seamlessly with your existing **Morrowind** game and will take you to **Mournhold** to meet **Almalexia** and **Sotha Sil**; among the added maps, monsters, and items.

► **Acclaim** has announced that it is delaying the action/platformer **Vexx** until January of next year. The company says that they will not only give it more time to refine it, but allows the game to give some space from its competitors.

► Showing more and more, third-party versatility, the **GameCube** is set to get a part of **Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance** before the year's end. The development's being handled by **High Voltage**.



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YOU ARE BRUTUS

YOU ARE FLINT



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Violence
Blood



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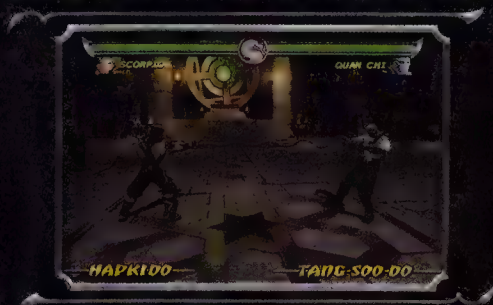


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STAR CRAFT

GHOST

THE RISE OF AN EMPIRE

Few PC games have enjoyed the success and staying power of StarCraft.

Released in 1997, the title continues to draw an audience that spans the globe. It never saw a downturn in popularity – there's an eternal perfection to StarCraft's balance and execution that draws gamers as flame draws oxygen. To be sure, many of us dabbled, or simply gave ourselves over to its charms at one time or another in the past five years. Today, there continues to be an avid online community of loyal acolytes who pray daily to the digital deity Blizzard invented through the altar of Battle.net. What is it that keeps such an enormous following addicted for so long? The answer is not in the type of people who play it. StarCraft has followers from every walk of life. Some are business people who enjoy its strategic thinking and even pace. Others are hardcore addicts who will play with anyone and everyone simply for the rush of the assault and the thrill of victory. Some are casual participants who play with their friends once a week as a means of socializing and getting away from normality, and a select few are professional players who hone their skills day and night to obliterate their opponents in the next tournament.

From this popularity, other forms of media involving StarCraft have been developed and released. Numerous novels depicting various locations and personalities from the game (and the expansion pack) have been released, taking the reader down into the heart of the action. Assorted action figures have been sold at numerous outlets, and of course the obligatory t-shirts and other items of this nature that go along with a gargantuan hit, have been circulating among loyal StarCraft citizens for years. Aside from the industry swag and static statuettes, the brain trust at Blizzard knew they wanted more from this title, and they knew they liked what the books were trying to do. "We always wanted to know what it was like on the ground with the troops," says Ghost producer Chris Millar. "You'd send a few of your Marines out to scout a location, and if they got jumped by the Zerg, well, you'd feel kind of guilty that you led these two guys to their deaths. We knew we had something special when a player would have that kind of emotional connection to a tiny sprite on their screen. We also knew that our team had created these incredible buildings and structures that you inherently wanted to explore from a unit's point of view – that's really how Ghost started."

No one would argue that Blizzard is known for PC

games. Although it started out on the console, and eventually went purely PC, Millar says, "We're all console at heart, here. Everyone's got a PlayStation 2, an Xbox, and a GameCube. We really wanted to get back into the console market. We were presented with the opportunity to make Ghost through Nihilistic, who is co-developing the project with us." With the increased manpower of another production house, Blizzard now has the ability to bring its full creative weight to bear without hindering other projects. When we asked what this relationship is like, Jacob Stevens, lead designer at Nihilistic told us, "It's really a shared effort. We [representatives from Blizzard and Nihilistic] are constantly calling each other, bouncing ideas off each other... We make a great team."

"We have thought about many different ways of taking StarCraft and evolving it," says Millar "but this idea is by far the best."

"With our previous games, you didn't really have a sense of ownership over who you were playing," says Millar, "so we chose a main character which is the Ghost operative. They were one of the coolest units in StarCraft – they had the best animations, and cool skills like cloaking, and laser-painting targets from the front. So, we knew who we wanted as our lead character, but as we got into the development, we basically had to relearn the StarCraft universe because in the PC version, a Zergling is like a five-pixel sprite. They look cool in a swarm, but we really had to go into detail about how everything looks from a third-person perspective." The powers that be took a lot of time deciding how to present their beloved universe from a grunt's-eye view. "We would have these huge arguments about scale," says Stevens. "One group of people might think an Overlord was a certain size compared to a Terran, and another would have a totally different take on it. We had a lot of input in terms of how we would ultimately recreate this world that everyone has their own preconceived notions about."

Because of this type of dedication, StarCraft: Ghost is going to be a monumental step in video games as the boundaries between PC and console gamers grow more and more faint. As the folks at Blizzard continue to shape and mold this StarCraft hybrid into the crossover phenomenon we know it will be, they're paying close attention to their core audience, as well as newcomers to the subject who are looking for the next great game. We think both will enter a state of gaming bliss when this groundbreaking work finally hits shelves. Come with us as we explore how the company you love to love is going to change the way you look at console games.





Space Marines may not be smart, but they're tough and well armed



BEHIND THE MASK

The protagonist of this epic adventure is named Nova. She is not a person you'd like to meet in a dark alley. In fact, Nova is probably not a person you'd like to meet at all. She is, for all intents and purposes, a killing machine. At a very young age, she was pulled from her normal life and thrust into the Ghost Academy for showing signs of a psionic prodigy. After 20 years of physical conditioning and techno-psychological training, she is a being of terrifying ability, and accepts any mission on any world with the diamond-pure knowledge that she will be successful – no matter the odds.

As the game begins, you (as Nova) are sent into Mar Sara, a small Terran refinery to find out the truth behind a strange new

element that has been discovered. The Zerg are on the move again, and it seems that they're interested in this element, and the psionic abilities some Terrans exhibit. Adapting these skills will give the loathsome Zerg a much-needed weapon in their fight against the Protoss – a highly evolved and technologically advanced race. To contain the Zerg onslaught and save your civilization from certain destruction, Nova will travel to numerous worlds. Among them will be the Protoss and Zerg homeworlds; and every level on every world will feature units and structures which have been painstakingly converted from the PC version of StarCraft. In true Blizzard fashion, the plot will take many dif-

ferent twists and turns, and as Chris Millar put it to us, "We can't tell you everything! There's going to be a lot more to this story that players are going to experience as they go through the levels. It's going to have that unique Blizzard story – with all of the subtle humor you've come to expect from one of our games." Although our begging and pleading for more plot-related details was met with a smile and friendly but adamant "no", we were able to delve deep into the gameplay.

StarCraft: Ghost will essentially be an action-oriented stealth title. What does that mean? Think Metal Gear Solid 2 without all of the constant sneaking around. "We played [MGS2] and loved it," says



The detail put into both the environments and the character designs is stunning



Nova looks on as a Battle Cruiser lumbers overhead



"You can't see me. You only think you can see me"

Stevens, "but we wanted a game where you could really sink your teeth into a high-intensity firefight if you wanted to, instead of having to sneak around everyone all the time." This produces a unique blend of spine-tingling suspense and over-the-top action, each taking place within mere moments of one another. During one level we witnessed, Nova was gingerly sneaking around a large installation when she came upon a number of Zerglings. She could have gone around them and saved some ammo, but in true console style, she faced them with an all-out assault. "We really wanted people to be able to interact with the environment too," interjects Millar. "Instead of walking along a hallway and climbing up a ladder, we want people to shimmy up pipes, jump along the walls, navigate tightropes – that kind of thing." Upon viewing the environments during gameplay, you'll see that they lend themselves perfectly to these character traits.

In another interesting twist, Blizzard has injected Ghost with some platform-

ing twists. Nova has been given a double-jump, which helps her navigate between moving platforms and hard-to-reach locations. When we asked about this, we found out that this wasn't the only parallel drawn from platforming titles. "Nova will collect different objects throughout levels that will give her access to upgraded ammunition and things like that," weighed in Millar. "It really increases the replay value, and it gives more depth to each level." Stevens added, "We're going to have a number of things which will drive players to succeed. Remember the stat tracking that you'd see at the end of a mission in StarCraft for the PC? We'll have something similar in Ghost."

SHE'S GOT MOVES

No tactical shooter worth its weight in silicon is without some sort of signature move – something that you pantomime countless times as you try to explain it to friends or strangers on the street, and Ghost is no exception. Situation: You find yourself carefully

making your way across a high-wire above a lone guard standing in front of a door you need to enter. There's no way to get to the far side of the wire, then down the other side without him seeing you and raising an alarm. Also, it's too high to simply jump to the platform and dispose of him with short-range fire. Instead, try this: inputting a certain button combination will make Nova grab onto the wire with her legs, and dangle upside down. At this point, take out your weapon, turn it to sniper mode, and send him to meet his maker – all without sound, or risk of injury.

Yes, that's cool; but it gets better. Not only can you perform this stunt from a wire, you can do it from almost every surface that you're able to climb. The 3D environments are so incredibly detailed that if you find a pipe in a dark corner, and feel that it would make a good sniper's nest, simply climb up and execute the same move. Nova will grip the pipe with her powerful legs, let her body dangle, then give her weapon a chance to do the talking. We saw this



performed numerous times with various objects, and each time we couldn't help but say, "Damn..."

On a more technical note, the number of different animations your character is capable of executing is currently in the neighborhood of 70, and climbing. That may not sound like much by itself, but if you take the time to think about it, your eyebrows start to raise, then your mouth starts to open, and pretty soon you're wondering how many more Blizzard will be able to coax out of this versatile and dangerous character. We witnessed all the usual somersault animations you'd expect to see during a battle where bullets are flying and brass is piling up on the floor; but we also saw swinging, sneaking, leaping, crawling, and a whole lot more that seemed to round out a perfect repertoire for someone in Nova's position. To us, anything more will be icing on the cake.

Sliding down ladders makes a mundane task quick and simple

Crouching will help you maintain a low profile





The Cloak ability is as deadly as it is beautiful



Psionic Sight allows players to peer through walls. Also notice the footprints on the ground

PSIONICALLY SPEAKING

The Ghost unit was chosen to be the lead character for this title because of its versatility and individuality. Anyone who played StarCraft on the PC knows that Ghosts are sneaky, and very, very deadly. There's simply nothing like taking a newly trained Ghost out into the field and setting her loose on an enemy base. Infantry are certainly no problem for her sniper skills, and if you're patient enough to get close to enemy structures, you become a force of one. The cloaking skill means no one can see what you're doing, and the lock-down ability allows you to freeze vital machinery – like power plants – thus seriously hampering your opponent's abilities. Then of course, you're able to paint a structure with your targeting laser and call down hell itself with a nuclear missile. All of these skills are available to you in StarCraft: Ghost, and a few more have been added that will put a smile on any would-be assassin's face.

Psi abilities are what make a Ghost one of the most feared and respected units in the SC universe. Nova is a grand master of many of these nearly magical attributes, and we were able to witness many of them in action. The most recognizable ability you'll use on nearly every mission is the cloak ability. Being powerful and deadly in a gun battle is one thing, but being able to completely avoid wasting valuable shells on pathetic Zerglings is something else. By choosing the Cloak option from your Psionic abilities list, Nova will suddenly take on the look of moving liquid. Similar to the cloaking effect the Predator used throughout those films, Nova will not completely disappear. Instead, she'll bend light around her suit, producing an eerie mirroring effect of her surroundings. Being cloaked doesn't necessarily mean you're not being detected, however. A readout in the upper left of your screen will show how much noise you're making. If you're cloaked, and you insist on running around making noise in

a room filled with combatants, you will be discovered, and fired on. With this capability in use, the careful gamer will be able to choose where and when to strike at an enemy – a choice that is often the difference between life and a loading screen.

Another Psi tool that will become a mainstay for the smart player is Psionic Sight. If you've ever played a first-person shooter, or any kind of tactical action title, you know that corners can be a dangerous proposition. Will there be an enemy lurking on the other side? Will I need to have my weapons blazing when I turn this thing, or should I chance a peek around, and hope no one sees me? All of these questions that we've asked ourselves are now a thing of the past. With Sight, Nova activates a heat-sensing ocular function that allows her to see through walls, and set up her strategy. The range isn't enormous, meaning when you turn it on, the entire level isn't going to jump out at you with every unit on every elevation. Things get fuzzy at about 15 meters, but the function is so sensitive, you're able to see the footprints of units who have recently passed through your zone glowing faintly on the floor. This opens up a virtual war chest of tactical options, as you are now able to see that guard as he makes his patrol, and decide when the perfect time would be to bump him off – all at no risk to you.

So far we've talked about advantages that will help keep you safe, but what about those of the ass-kicking variety? Hey, it's Blizzard – they're not going to let us down. Enter: Psionic Speed. For those of you who are familiar with Max Payne, we need only use two words to explain this portion of Nova's arsenal: Bullet Time. For those who are still in the dark, Speed utilizes a *Matrix*-esque effect where Nova is

able to focus to such a degree that time itself slows down, yet her own speed remains constant. For example, there will be times when Nova is severely outnumbered, and running away won't

be an option. By activating the Speed ability, all of your enemy's movements and projectiles (including your own bullets, grenades, etc.) will move at approximately a quarter of their normal



Cloaking is useful, but not always foolproof



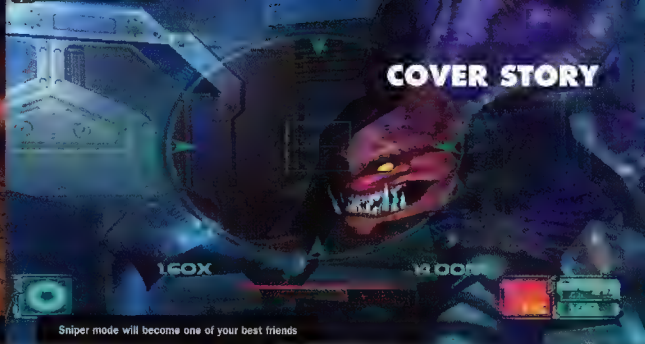
One Zergling down, one to go

The Speed capability will capture every detail of a battle





"Flame on, you crazy Zerglings!"



Sniper mode will become one of your best friends

movement rate, but Nova's pace will remain constant. This allows you to run circles around your foes, and dispatch them with the ease of a Sunday stroll.

The Psiabilities are definitely useful under most any circumstance, but they come at a price. Under your health meter in the upper-left of the screen, is a Psi meter. As you use your special powers, it will begin to deplete, which brings another strategic point to the forefront. If you rely on your powers too much, they may not be there when you need them the most. The meter will recharge with time, but not instantly – so players will have to decide if relying on their Psi too much, too early will make the rest of a level harder than it needs to be. However, as players progress through the game, their Psi

drain will slow down, allowing for the powers to be used more often at less of a penalty.

This isn't the end of the number of Psi-related advantages Nova will carry into battle with her. Indeed, this is just the beginning. "We're working on a few more," says Chris Millar, "but we're not releasing all of those details yet." Although we tried everything short of Jedi mind tricks to get even a little more info out of Blizzard on these game-defining capabilities, everyone remained very tight-lipped – in true Blizzard fashion. We do know that there will be at least two additional Psionic strengths, and possibly more. "We're shooting for five right now, but who knows...?" says Millar.

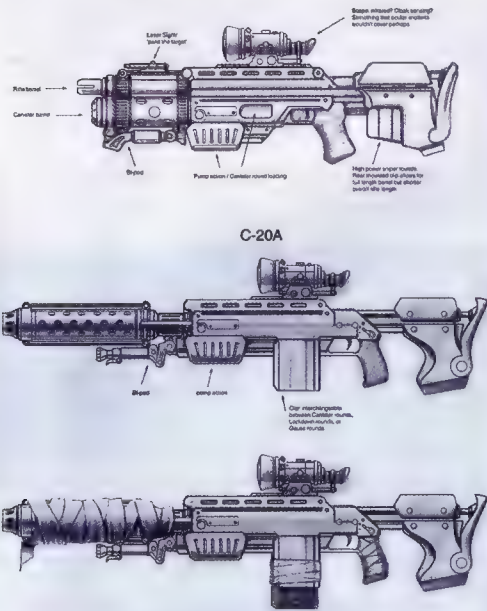
THE TOUCH, THE FEEL, OF LEAD

Aside from Nova's slippery Psi abilities, she is not to be outdone in the weapon department. Her main firearm, the Gauss Rifle, is deadly in more ways than one. Instead of constantly forcing players to access their inventory for updated guns and gadgets, Blizzard has packed Nova's gun full of features and versatility. The weapon itself will have three main functions: Sniper mode, grenade launcher, and assault rifle. For each of these categories, there will be numerous kinds of ammo and power-ups. In one instance, we entered a room containing over a dozen Zerglings. Not wanting to lose all sorts of ammo by simply shooting her way through this herd, Nova switched over to a special heat-seeking grenade round, and lobbed a couple into the middle of the room. In a matter of seconds there was nothing left but the smoking remains of insect parts. However, if she had used her Speed ability as well, you could see the grenades break open, and a number of smaller blue shrapnel rounds leap into the air. These rounds then homed in on the nearest body, delivering not only significant piercing damage, but explosive damage as well. Other grenade types, such as time-delay and bouncing rounds, will also be available if you can find them, but the heat-seeking variety is our favorite so far.

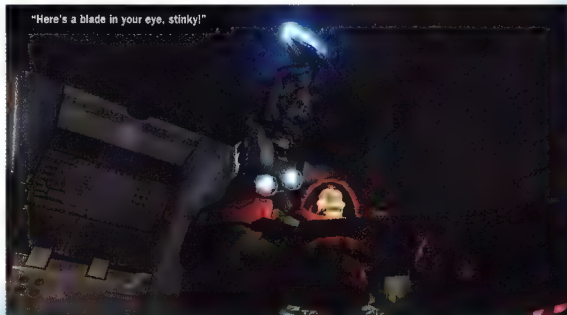
While the launcher exhibits the knockout punch Nova's Gauss Rifle can

deliver, sniper mode is as delicate and deadly as a surgeon's scalpel. Zooming in on an unsuspecting enemy from afar will tell your character a number of different things. Aside from detailing the subject's health information, you'll be given the range to the target, and whether or not it can be locked down. The lock-down ability is a carry-over from the PC days of StarCraft, allowing Ghosts to freeze a mechanical target for a specified amount of time. We saw it come in very handy as Nova froze a security camera above a doorway before passing through, to avoid detection. You're also able to use this ability on machines the size of a missile turret if you wanted to. Or, you can simply use sniper mode to cleave heads in two – it all depends on how you want to play it.

Both of these offensive options perfectly compliment the everyday feeling of the assault rifle and the flamethrower. The interface makes switching between these settings intuitive and non-committal. You won't have to worry about frantically trying to switch from your sniper rifle to a melee weapon if a few enemies who were closer than you thought decide to rush you. With the flick of a button, you're back to spitting out bullets, or making living bonfires. If the situation calls for absolute silence, or you're just feel like splitting some skulls (or exoskeletons), a nasty hand-scythe weapon is fast, efficient, and readily available. Sure, it's messy, but a Ghost has to do what a Ghost has to do.



C-20A



"Here's a blade in your eye, stinky!"



When the fighting starts, the Marines will flip down their helmet visors



A Yamato blast is never far away with a Battle Cruiser in the area

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

The development team has been working extremely hard on making StarCraft appeal to both the hardcore PC fans and a console audience who may not know anything about the unique universe Blizzard has created. Part of the process is the team's commitment to putting the player in full control of what is happening on the screen. That means if you're in the middle of a huge battle outside, and you see a Vulture sitting idle somewhere, you're able to take control of it and use it as you see fit. "Players will be piloting Siege

Tanks, Goliaths, assuming control of turrets – just about anything they can see, they'll be able to control," says Stevens. You'll also be able to radio in for call-downs. Perhaps there are Dark Templar in the region – powerful Protoss units who are naturally invisible. You'll be able to call your Comm Center to unveil them. Maybe you see an installation you want flattened. You're able to call in a Siege Tank strike, or even a Yamato blast from a Battle Cruiser, if you want. When we asked if there would be the laser painting for a nuclear blast, Stevens' eyes twinkled for a moment and said, "do you want to see one?" You're damned right we do.

What he showed us was a playable level outside the Mar Sara refinery where the Zerg were rushing the base, and Terrans were frantically trying to defend themselves. As he exited the main structure, Zerglings were everywhere. Marines were everywhere. Gun turrets were blasting into the oncoming wave of insectoid flesh, and Nova's task was to find the Zerg Overlord and bring him down. As Stevens deftly slashed his way through a virtual river

of evil (over 70 units were onscreen at once when we saw it), he calmly showed us how the lock-down feature worked by incapacitating a missile turret. He then proceeded to do a little sniping as he worked his way to the top of a ridge where we got our first look at an Overlord from the ground. This hideous, enormous, tentacle-dangling monstrosity loomed on the horizon like some kind of hot-air balloon experiment gone wrong. "Okay, here we go," he said as he laser-targeted the bloated monstrosity in front of us. "Nuclear launch detected," announced the familiar female voice. "Now we run like hell," and that's what he did. When he finally stopped, we had returned to the trenches outside the base looking back the way we came, when suddenly the screen went completely white. As it cleared, we could see a mushroom cloud rising in the distance, but this was unlike any other blast cloud we've seen in a video game. It got bigger, and bigger, and bigger still, and as it expanded both up and out, we could make out flame and particulate within its stem. Then, as the top of the cloud roiled to its pinnacle, a wave of flame came tumbling toward us, obliterating everything in its path. So much for the Overlord.

This is the kind of action that will appeal to every kind of player; no matter if you're a PC fanatic or a console owner who just wants to play something cool. The focus of StarCraft: Ghost is on the individual, not on the universe itself. This, in turn will help acclimate all comers to Ghost's unique style and philosophy.

HICKS IN SPACE

A game from Blizzard is expected to have a certain level of perfection. It's also expected to have exquisite detail and an incredible story. A tall order, but not for a company that has been kicking out title after title with these qualifications met and exceeded year after year. We had a chance to talk with some of the people who are involved in the visual presentation of the game – from the cinematics to the tiny details you see in every level.

We were guided into the office of Mark Skelton, a senior cinematic artist at Blizzard, as he was putting scuff marks on the armor of a Space Marine. "I think of these guys as hicks in space," says Skelton. The more we thought about that statement, the more it made sense. Space Marines are tough sons of guns, but they're not



The Protoss don't like being messed with

particularly smart. With Ghost you get to see this up close. The suits these units wear are incredible to look at. As a sentry unit walks around his station, you'll see his helmet visor is up, and he'll probably talk to himself. If you start shooting at him, or you alarm him, that visor will snap shut, and you'll have to dodge his bullets.

A lot of time and thought is going into this type of detail. One person we met was putting the finishing touches on a Zerg-infected base. He wasn't working on the base in general; no, he was painstakingly detailing one tentacle of one arm jutting up into the air. We talked to cinematic producer, Scott Abeyta about where his team got the inspiration for this type of thing. "Well, we like to think of ourselves more as filmmakers than gamemakers," admitted Scott. "We have a screening room where we'll show different films to get inspiration for the project. For Ghost, we of course watched all of the *Aliens* releases, but we also showed *Brazil*, *Starship Troopers*, and a bunch of other lesser-known films that help inspire us." Looking at the level concepts, it's easy to see these influences. Ambient light glows eerily in many levels, casting a sinister tinge on your surroundings, and the walls themselves seem almost alive with flashing lights and corroded metal. This is the kind of game you'll want to play in a dark room at high volume – the sense of "being there" is almost palpable.

Cutsscenes are another matter altogether. Blizzard fans have been conditioned to expect the unexpected when they reach the end of a level, and this

game will not disappoint. Ghost will feature two fully rendered cutsscenes (one at the beginning of the game, and one at the end), and numerous others that will utilize the in-game engine.

NEW PLATFORMS, SAME IDEA

The question on everyone's mind is: "Are console players going to want to play a *StarCraft* title?" To Blizzard, this is the wrong question to be asking. "We're making an awesome game here," says Millar. "The fact that it's set in the *StarCraft* universe should mean very little. At its core, Ghost is a fantastic tactical-action game that anyone will be able to enjoy – not just those who've been exposed to the subject matter before."

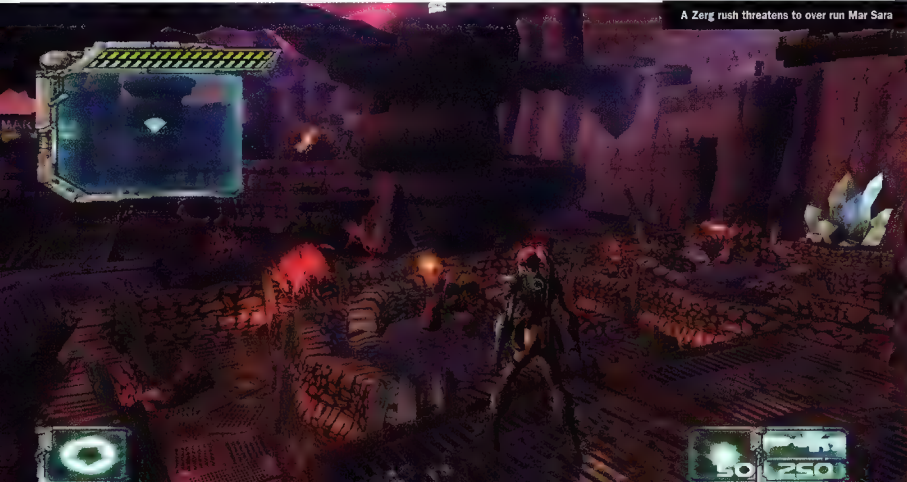
From what we've seen, we're inclined to agree with him. Ghost is a game that will appeal to a wide variety of people because of its versatility and ingenuity. The fact that it's coming out on the Xbox first is good news for Microsoft, but PlayStation 2 and GameCube versions will not be far behind.

As the video game market continues to become more and more competitive, it behooves a savvy company like Blizzard to rediscover its console roots by putting out what could very well be one

of the biggest titles of next year. Certainly, Blizzard isn't hurting financially (*WarCraft III* has enjoyed torrid sales since its July launch), but its willingness to expand its reach and scope in terms of player demographics is just smart business. With this acumen, and its simple ability to tell an enchanting story through incredible gameplay, Ghost is sure to sneak its way into gamers' homes by the legion late in 2003.



One nuke is all it takes to clear out any party



A Zerg rush threatens to over run Mar Sara





I ALONE HAVE THE FIFTH FREEDOM.

THE RIGHT TO SPY, STEAL, DESTROY AND ASSASSINATE.

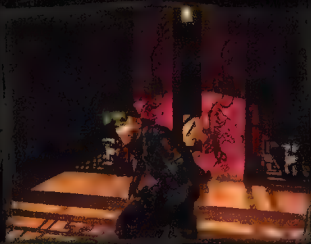
TO ENSURE THAT AMERICAN FREEDOMS ARE PROTECTED.

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I AM A SPLINTER CELL.



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The cover art for Star Ocean: Till the End of Time III features a central circular emblem with a blue and green pattern. Surrounding the emblem are several characters: a woman with long brown hair in a purple dress, a man with blue hair in a white and black outfit, a blonde girl with pigtails holding a glowing orb, a man with a stern expression, and a woman with red hair. The background is a dark space with a nebula on the right side.

STAR OCEAN

Till the End of Time™

III

**MAKING WAVES
IN THE STAGNANT
RPG SEA**

It used to be that one power-packed role-playing game would come out every six months or so. Secret of Mana begat Final Fantasy III, which begat Chrono Trigger, and so on. Now, it seems like we're reviewing multiple RPGs every month. Is this a good thing? Well, yes and no. Of course, fans of role-playing games have more choices these days. However, according to Yoshiharu Gotanda – the president of tri-Ace, developer of Star Ocean II and Valkyrie Profile – the market has become over-saturated. Given the suspect quality of many recent RPGs, we'd have a hard time arguing with that. With an epic new Star Ocean adventure, Enix and tri-Ace are positioning themselves as the genre's self-proclaimed saviors. How fitting, since it was Enix which brought forth the game that really defined the RPG here in the US (Dragon Warrior on the NES), as well as the genre's best-selling offering to date – Dragon Warrior VII, which is known as Dragon Quest in Japan.

Visions of grandeur aside, it would be easy to question how Star Ocean III: Till the End of Time will

be the game to revitalize role-playing. After all, the American market never saw the original Star Ocean, which released for the Super Famicom (Japan's SNES) back in 1996; and there aren't too many people who put its PlayStation sequel on their list of favorite games. However, we are intrigued by what we have seen thus far. The title promises to deliver the three things that every RPG connoisseur demands: an engrossing story, large environments, and innovative combat. One can't help but be impressed by the three-hour line patrons formed to play SO III's opening sequence at the Tokyo Game Show, either. If you're an RPG enthusiast, don't be shy – dive headfirst into all that is Star Ocean III: Till the End of Time. It just might be your next favorite game.

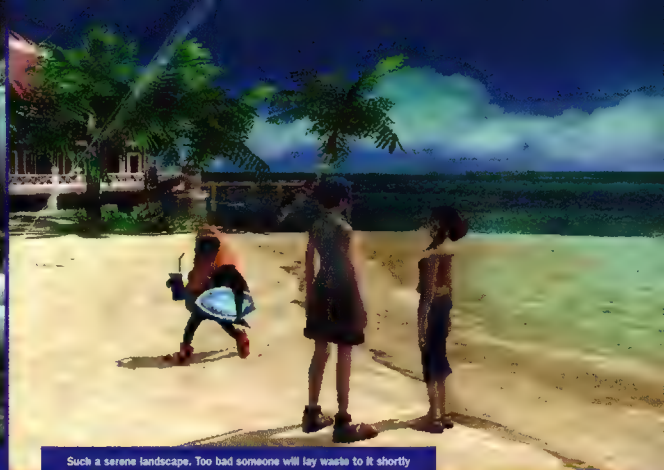
■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ENIX ■ **DEVELOPER** TRI-ACE ■ **RELEASE** 2003



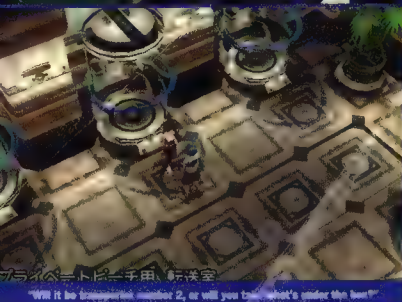


バジル
 「しかたないでヤンスよ。
 命あっての物ダネと
 いいやすからねえ。」

Seurife hangs with an odd crowd



Such a serene landscape. Too bad someone will lay waste to it shortly



"Will it be disposable member 2, or will you take member 2 under the belt?"



Heida's Fall has it, but it's not a good thing

EVERY RPG TELLS A STORY, DON'T IT

Star Ocean III takes place on a group of planets similar to the one that we reside on, but in another time, and with a whole new civilization in place. The year is 772 S.D. – that's Space Date, caveman. If you're keeping score, it's been 400 years since Star Ocean II. Man has not only explored the galaxy; he has conquered it. Three federations hold authority over all things and, much like three-year-olds, they can't share. It is a time of war. We join the characters Fate and Sophia on the resort planet of Heida – not a likely place for turmoil. However, one of the federations attacks, seemingly at random. It is even stranger for the fact that the assault was carried out by the smallest

federation of the three, and the most neutral.

Our confused heroes flee the scene, with the help of Fate's parents. Since he is the game's main character, it's not a far-out assumption to think that the raid may have something to do with him. Perhaps that's why his folks were so intent on his escape. It would seem that everyone knows a lot more about what's going on than you and your in-game alter ego, but hey, that's what RPGs are all about.

You couldn't have a game that takes place in 722 S.D. without going into orbit every now and then, right? About 60 percent of Star Ocean III occurs on the surface of the planets, and the remaining 40 percent

happens in space. As the adventure moves along on both backdrops, Fate will be presented with countless choices. While tri-Ace wouldn't say how these choices would affect gameplay, nor would it comment on the number of endings, it's always nice to feel that you play an active role in the story.

The real-time cutscenes and dialogue sequences capture the drama close up, and bring attention to the highly detailed character models. Expect around four hours of dialogue to go along with the snazzy visuals, as well as four CDs worth of music – all in one DVD. The camera pulls out during environmental



"These guys attacked us. It's not fair."

謎の兵士
 「いたぞ!!」



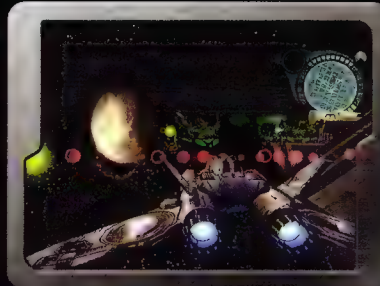
Fate and Selphie weigh their options for escape

ソフィア
 「ねえ、またゲームするの。
 ついさっきまでやってたんでしょ？」

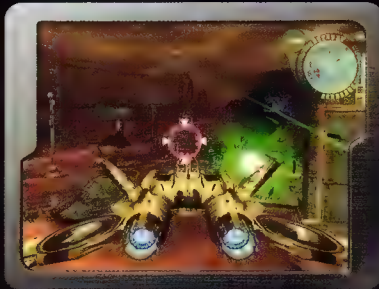
*WHAT ALIENS HAVE
NIGHTMARES ABOUT...*



screenshots from Playstation®2 computer entertainment system



screenshots from Xbox™ video game system



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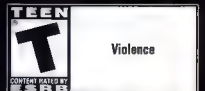
GB MIDWAY



PlayStation 2



GAME BOY ADVANCE



STAR OCEAN'S STARS

While there will only be three heroes battling in your party at a time, the list of playable characters numbers at least six. Here is a brief rundown on each of the cast members that Enix introduced to us.

NELL ZELPHER

This is one woman you don't want to mess with. She is the ninja in your party, and much of her background is shrouded in mystery. She kicks loads of booty, and that's good enough for us.

SOPHIA ESTEED

This cutie is 17, and attends a high school on Earth. She's open and caring, and plays a little sister role to her childhood friend, Fate – not to mention being the all-around sweetie of the group.

SOUFFLE ROSETTI

The youngest in a family of traveling acrobats, Souffle acts as comic relief in the story. Though her dancing ability cannot be denied, her humility could use some work.

CLIFF FITTER

Though he looks about the same age and race as Fate, Cliff is actually 36 years old and a Claustroan – a race physically superior to Terrans like Fate. If he would only act his age...

FATE LINEGOD

With a name like that, he's got to be the man. Star Ocean III's blue-haired protagonist is your typical 19-year-old, gaining an education at the Berkein Science Academy. It's a good thing that he's kept his martial arts sharp, because the destiny of the world will soon rest on his shoulders.

ROGER S. HUXLEY

A common character in anime is the child who tries his hardest to be refined like an adult. Roger takes this personality type to an extreme, with his mack-daddy style. It's like Kris Kross: The Next Generation!



"My, what big teeth you have..."



This small monster is the game's first boss

FIGHT MADE RIGHT

Many of us dread combat in RPGs. So many games feature nap-inducing battles, which consist of telling your characters to attack, then waiting to be woken up by the victory song. Conversely, Star Ocean III makes enemy encounters one of the most compelling parts of the game, without being overly complicated.

Combat is rarely random, as monsters show up on the overworld, and even your HUD map. Once the fight begins, your party and its foes are able to move around in a vast battleground. While you manually control one character, the other two can either be given commands, or just left alone to use their own AI. Of course, you can switch whose shoes you're in on the fly by using the shoulder buttons.

Normal attacks are nothing special, striking an enemy for a

modicum of damage. Major attacks up the ante, delivering multiple hits. Magic – which no good RPG can be without – can also be unleashed. Every attack executed affects your Guts meter. This is essentially your stamina bar, which goes down depending on the force exerted from your move. If the attack is blocked, it dips further. Retreat momentarily, and it will recover.

Why should you care about the Guts meter? Simple: When it's at 100 percent, you can utilize some cool tactics. These range anywhere from shielding a character, to poisoning bad guys, to refilling health. The meter love doesn't stop there, though. A Special meter lines the right side of the screen, and builds as you go. Once full, the action pauses and you're allowed to perform the game's most devastating blows. Goodbye, bad guy.

ITEM CREATION

In Star Ocean III, one can't just saunter into the nearest weapon store, plunk down gold for the most expensive sword, and begin cutting through monsters like a hot knife through butter. You have to work for your wares here. Like the last installment, this game supports a junction system. Root for raw materials,

take them to the right place, and you'll get weapons, items, and other goodies. Each rare and finite resource has different properties, and each craftsman has his or her own forte. So, while you may not be able to buy a big, bad weapon easily, the end product of the customization process will yield something far more valuable.



Roger's a wee one, but he's fearless.



Your range is the distance to your enemy. The closer you are, the easier it is to connect with melee attacks. For magic spells and projectiles, you'll want to create some space between allies and their opponents - which is easy to do since you have complete freedom of movement in the expansive combat environments.



HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON?

Here is a typical scene from a Star Ocean III battle. We have highlighted key onscreen details for you to take note of.

The radar map shows the placement of all characters in the environment. This is also active during exploration. Blue dots are allies, red are enemies, and yellow are normal NPCs. Doors show up as yellow triangles, and will lead to other maps. New areas and situations bring about different-sized maps.



The members of your party who aren't under your direct control can still hold their own in a battle. Giving them commands is simple, and allows you to focus more on the action at hand.

The blue box indicates which of the three party members is under your control. While Fate is the main character, you can switch to the other two by using the shoulder buttons.

The Guts meter monitors your stamina, and prevents button mashing. Each strike reduces it, and resting replenishes it. If the meter is full, which it is for both Fate and Cliff, that character has access to extra abilities.

The Special meter goes up throughout the course of battle, and will allow you to unleash some impressive attacks. Unfortunately, it's empty at the moment, having just been used to dispatch an enemy.



In a world of villains, a goddess reborn
struggles to fulfill a prophecy.



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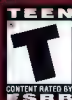
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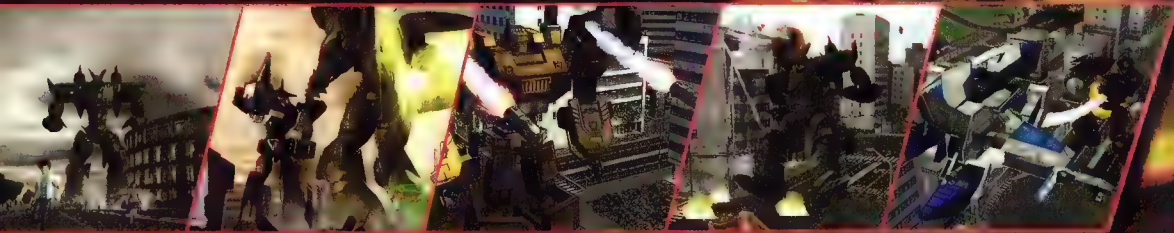


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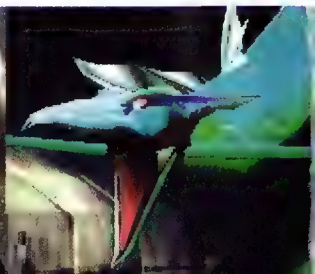
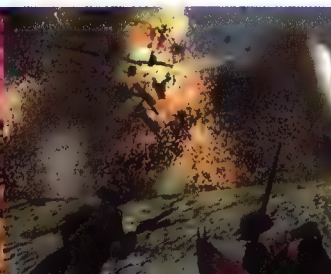


It's those special moments that make being alive such a wonderful thing. Think back and recall your first kiss, your first bicycle, the day you graduated from high school, the first time your mother caught you wearing her underwear, or your first night in a Mexican jail. It's no different for video games. Everyone reading this magazine has those games that are close to their heart; games that will remain favorites for the rest of their lives. In this article, Game Informer breaks down the moments that we feel are the most memorable in all of gaming history. It was a difficult task, and no list of this nature can ever hope to be definitive. There are thousands of games, and millions of people in this world, and we apologize if some of your favorites aren't included. This simply represents our own choices, and we understand that yours might be completely different. But, hey, we work for this magazine, and you don't.

THE 25

GREATEST MOMENTS

IN VIDEO GAMES



25 Got What It Takes To Rock The Mic Right

PaRappa lets nerdy kids flow like Jay-Z

PaRappa the Rapper

System: PlayStation • Year: 1997

"Kick, punch, chop, block". With these four simple words, a rapping Japanese dog introduced the world to the rhythm game, perhaps the last truly new genre of the last ten years. Although it never achieved mass success, PaRappa the Rapper represented an amazing opening of horizons for the use of sound in games, and was about the cutest damn thing we'd ever seen in our lives. The game was basically just a high-tech version of "Simon Says", but the infectious tunes, day-glo cartoon graphics, and oddly humorous storyline make this a game we'll remember to our dying day.

We also still have Chopmaster Onion's "Kick, punch, it's all in the mind!" refrain running through our heads. Somebody say, "Ho!"



23 Busting A Million Points In Tony Hawk 2

Made couch potatoes feel like real athletes, but they're still just fat and lazy

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

System: PlayStation • Year: 2000

At their heart, video games have always been a test of skill. From Pong to Street Fighter, games have always challenged players to develop their hand-eye coordination to the highest levels. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater took this dynamic to the next level, combining multi-tiered environments, a complex combo system, and the excitement of the real-life sport. What separated the gameplay from past combo-driven formulas was the sheer level of creativity available to the player. You could score points anywhere; it was just a matter of combining the best grind lines and tricks into one record-breaking two-minute run. Tony Hawk 2 exponentially increased the possibilities for success by adding the Manual, a move that was used to connect long series of grinds together. Once fans sunk their teeth into this technique, the game took on a life of its own, and pulling off the once-fabled million-point run was relatively easy. A million-points became the new standard of excellence, and hardcore Tony masters even began video taping their best runs to show off to their friends. We don't know where you first busted a million, but we guarantee you remember it like it was yesterday.

24 Injuring Wayne Gretzky In NHLPA 93

Mangling The Great One – it gets no better

NHLPA 93

System: Genesis, SNES

Year: 1992

Thanks to the PR-conscious sissies that run the NHL, hockey games have become a sanitized shell of their former selves, featuring none of the tooth-cracking violence that erupts in the real-life sport. This was not always so, and we have our memories of NHLPA 93 to prove it. In that 16-bit classic, you could bang it out on the boards, leaving your adversary in a bloody mess on the ice. It was a good deal; you and your friends got to settle your differences like men, while maintaining a full set of teeth. Even better, you didn't have to wear a mullet, although some of us still did. No NHL pro was a bigger target than Wayne Gretzky, who didn't have his legion of goon protectors and preferential treatment from the referees to protect him on the digital rink. Injuring The Great One was so cool; it got referenced in the '90s cult classic *Swingers*, achieving Hollywood immortality. C'mon EA, bring back the blood!



22 "Bravo, Fire At Will!"

Years of yelling at the television finally pays off

SOCOM: US Navy SEALs

System: PlayStation 2

Year: 2002

We've been cussing out AI teammates for years, and we can't believe the numbskulls finally listened. Voice-command technology had been around for years in the PC world, but Sony made it possible for console dummiess to get a piece of the action. Watching your team follow your orders during the one-player missions was a thrill, but nothing compared to when you first booted up your PS2's Network Adaptor and took SOCOM online. On the Internet,

you were free to talk to your teammates at will, planning strategy, comparing tactics, and trading delicious recipes. Basically, it's like the CB radio of the new millennium, and we couldn't be more in love with our PS2 headset. If you don't agree, why don't you meet us on SOCOM, and tell it to us straight. We'll be gentle, we promise.



21 What the @#%?*

Silicon Knights' lysergic visions warp our sense of reality

Eternal Darkness

System: GameCube • Year: 2002

Resident Evil relies on good, old-fashioned surprise to scare you, but Nintendo's *Eternal Darkness* took the alternate route, messing with your very sense of reality in the fashion of psychological thrillers like *The Others* and *Vanilla Sky*. Packed with dozens of uniquely bizarre hallucinations, *Eternal Darkness* had us looking over our shoulder, wondering if some hippie had dosed our Dr. Pepper with something funny. Damn hippies – we thought we smelled body odor and patchouli! In fact, you could be as drug-free as Nancy Reagan and still be freaked out by this mind-altering masterpiece. Memorable moments? There are almost too many to mention. Throughout your adventure, you'll walk in to a room only to find yourself on the ceiling; go to the save screen and see your files being systematically deleted; take a health power-up and watch your head explode; and so many more. If you haven't played *Eternal Darkness*, we highly recommend it. It will haunt your dreams forever.



20 If This Car's A-Rockin', Don't Come A-Knockin'

Offensive, yes, but the closest some gamers will ever come to getting laid

Grand Theft Auto III

System: PlayStation 2
Year: 2001

Funny, all that talk about Bill Clinton reminded us of this one. *Grand Theft Auto III* has been the most controversial work of art since Spinal Tap's aborted *Smell the Glove* album cover. For media critics, it was the whole offensive enchilada, filled to capacity with sexual innuendo, foul language, and excessive violence. It also happened to feature an amazing, groundbreaking sense of game design, but the critics always seemed to forget that. It's hard to pick just one moment from the hours we spent with *GTA III*, but we'll certainly never forget the first time we heard that Liberty City's streetwalkers weren't just part of the scenery. Although Rockstar downplayed the fact, word quickly spread that these ladies of the night could be coaxed into your vehicle to ply their, err, trade. After picking a fishnet-clad vixen up, you could pull into a secluded area and watch your car's suspension get put through a strenuous work out. Of course, you can't actually see inside the car, so we're just guessing that there might be some hanky panky going on. Perhaps it was just a particularly heated game of Jenga.



19 White Presidents Can Jump!

Bill Clinton bangs the boards; the hidden character craze is born

NBA Jam

System: Genesis, SNES • Year: 1994

Adored by millions and hated by Republicans, captain of prosperity and shagger of dimwitted interns, Bill Clinton is a walking enigma, one of the most charismatic and controversial presidents in recent history. He could also take it to the hoop like a mofa, thanks to the funny bunch of stoners who worked in Acclaim's sports division in the early nineties. Their masterwork, *NBA Jam*, was one of the last great arcade crazes – due in no small part to the brilliant inclusion of a cast of hidden characters, the most famous of whom were the Prez and his cabana boy, Al Gore. Who was the first to discover this ultimate Easter egg, we'll never know, but anyone who was playing games at the time has fond memories of seeing the most powerful man in the world perform a gorilla dunk as the infamous *Jam* announcer screamed, "He's on FIRE!" Later editions of *Jam* would increase its reliance on secret characters, expanding the roster to include the Beastie Boys, Sonic Youth, and even Prince Charles. Bill would remain a fan favorite, but he wasn't the only Clinton featured in *Jam*: Dr. Funkenstein himself, Parliament Funkadelic's George Clinton was also along for the ride. At least we know that one of these Clintons inhaled.



18 I Could Have Sworn We Parked The Car Here

Zelda's Lost Forest sends us on a wild goose chase

The Legend of Zelda

System: NES
Year: 1987



Over the years, Nintendo resident genius Shigeru Miyamoto has laid some pretty serious head trips on the gaming faithful, but none were more devious than the Lost Forest in the original Legend of Zelda. Walking into a cross-shaped clearing, you proceed left, only to reappear back in the place you entered the screen. Trying to maintain your grip on sanity, you attempt heading to the north, only to pop up from the south entrance.

Unless you've mistakenly stumbled into an MC Escher painting, something is clearly amiss here. Pretty soon you were banging your head against the wall, stuck in your own private lost-in-a-parking-ramp hell, or on your way to the store to

return a game you were convinced was crippled by a fatal bug. Then, a wise game store clerk leaned over and told you, "Dude, all you have to do is keep going up, left, down, and left until you get to the next screen." Slightly embarrassed, you rode home and plopped down in front of your Nintendo, realizing that this was no ordinary game.

17 Sneak, Sneak...Slice

Tenchu proves that "silent but deadly" isn't just for farts anymore

Tenchu: Stealth Assassins
System: PlayStation
Year: 1998

Everybody loves ninja, it's a proven fact. Who wouldn't love a job where you get to wear your pajamas to work everyday? Despite this universal appeal, the ninja has had a tough road to gaming greatness. Many games, most famously Tecmo's Ninja Gaiden, tried to capture the essence of the shadow warrior, but were essentially just conventional action titles with ninja trappings. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles had their mojo working for a few years in the late '80s, but an ill-advised collaboration with Vanilla Ice sunk their careers for good. Disheartened, the ninja retreated from America's pop culture, developed a drinking problem, and took work as a convenience store night manager. Luckily, in 1998, the greatest ninja game ever was created. Tenchu: Stealth Assassins, a title which captured the true essence of the ninja: the stealth kill. Rather than running in and tossing throwing stars in all directions, Tenchu's Rikimaru crept up as silent as the wind, grabbed a hapless guard from behind, and sliced his throat with expert skill. Absolutely perfect.



16 One Electric Toothbrush To Rule Them All

Cheaters use dental equipment to master button mashing

Track & Field

System: NES • Year: 1987

Some people will do anything to win. Some people are complete bastards, but that's beside the point. If you happened to be playing the NES button masher Track & Field with one of these fine folks in 1987, chances are they left you in the dust with the help of a diabolical device known as an electric toothbrush. While the rest of us practiced our timing, burst blood vessels in our foreheads, and generally mangled our fingers trying to become the ultimate digital Olympians, we still fell victim to the mechanical perfection of the almighty Braun. It was horrible, evil, and wrong, and it's a shame we didn't think of it first. American ingenuity - 1, Video games - 0.



15 Hollywood Magic Redefines The RPG

FF VII's gorgeous summon cutscenes blows our minds, make turn-based combat not boring

Final Fantasy VII

System: PlayStation • Year: 1997

You grumpy Final Fantasy old-schoolers will get your props later in this list, so let's now take time to celebrate the moment when role-playing games evolved from being an obscure geek obsession to an...obscure geek obsession with really bitchin' graphics! Summons have long been a part of the Final Fantasy universe, but before the groundbreaking FF VII, your handy little henchmen looked more like pixelated Chicken McNuggets than mythical creatures. This all

changed in 1997, when Square brought the series into the CD-ROM era, and debuted the gorgeous cutscenes that would become the hallmark of the series. It's hard to pick just one highlight, but we can't overlook the legendary Knights of the Round summon, which send a rain of fierce warriors down on your hapless target. Bring the pain!



13 Faster Is Better!



Sonic hits loop, light speed

Sonic the Hedgehog

System:
Genesis
Year: 1991

These days, we're so jaded that we aren't capable of looking at a gorgeous

racing game without spouting off some snide comment about "anti-aliasing" or "frame rate problems". Back when we weren't so damn smug, all it took to rock our world was a little rodent ripping through a series of loop de loops at unprecedented speeds. The rodent in question was Sonic the Hedgehog, who almost single-handedly fathered the Genesis boom of the early nineties, and remains Sega's mascot to this day. The title wasn't as refined as Nintendo's brilliant Super Mario World, but the frenetic gameplay was new and exciting in ways that platform gamers hadn't felt in years. Blazing through the levels, bouncing off bumpers like a warm-blooded pinball was almost enough to convince us that the Genesis' fabled "blast processing" wasn't a load of marketing crap. It was, of course, but that didn't stop Sonic from becoming one of our most cherished video game memories. If you missed them the first time around, check out Sega's recent Sonic Mega Collection for GameCube, which compiles all of the 'hog's Genesis adventures, plus a few more, on one disc.

14 Slower Is Better!

Matrix effects come to vids, a nation says, "Whoa"

Max Payne

System: PC
Year: 2001



The Wachowski brothers became instant Hollywood wunderkinds with their now-infamous 360-degree digital pan effects. As an industry that's always taken inspiration from the science fiction film canon, it was only a matter of time before some canny developer converted *The Matrix's* slick slow motion into a gameplay juggernaut. Gathering of Developers was the first to strike gold, making Max Payne an instant PC classic. Dubbed "Bullet Time", the trick worked brilliantly, mostly because it enhanced the "I am Superman" sensation that is the core of any good action title. Suddenly, slaying a room full of thugs wasn't an exercise in desperate gunning; it was another chance for you to show off your gymnastic killing techniques in an elegant ballet of blood. One jump, four head shots, four dead bodies – all in one dazzling motion. In Max Payne, your mouse was your brush, the bullets your paint. All that was left was to go all Jackson Pollock on their ass. Skeptics might call Bullet Time a gimmick, but it was one hell of a good one.

12 Singing Turd Teaches Us To Laugh Again

(Video Games + Opera) X Fecal Matter = The Great Mighty Poo, the greatest boss battle of all time

Conker's Bad Fur Day

System: Nintendo 64
Year: 2001

A huge, steaming pile of crap singing opera in a booming basso-profundo voice? Why didn't we think of that? Actually, it's because we're untalented hacks, something that eccentric English developers Rare could never be accused of being. Sometime in the development of its long-delayed Conker title, the company chucked its kid-friendly platforming formula, and stunned the world with the raw and randy humor of Conker's Bad Fur Day. Whether he was guzzling beer, peeing on enemies, jumping on big-breasted flowers, or unleashing a torrent of profanity that would make Martin Lawrence cover his ears, the cantankerous squirrel turned in the most hilarious performance in game history.

However, in the end, he was overshadowed by the Great Mighty Poo, the dookie with the golden voice. This battle is the stuff that video game memories are made of, combining top-notch gameplay with "Dude, you gotta see this!" shock value. As the pitched battle continued, the tempo increased, and Poo dropped jewels of scatological wisdom over an infectious melody line. Simply put, it's the s#*% – literally. We could go on and on, but we'd rather give Poo the last word: "Do you really think you'll survive in here?...Sweet corn is the only thing that makes it through my rear!" Word.



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11 "Shut up! [sniff] I've Just Got Something In My Eye [sob]"

Ico's ending tugs the heartstrings of sensitive PS2 owners

Ico
System: PlayStation 2
Year: 2001

As one of the standout games of E3 2000, we expected a lot from Ico. Still, we never thought we'd fall in love, have our hearts broken, and cry our eyes out like little schoolgirls. Go ahead – laugh it up. You're all very cool, really...that's funny stuff. In any case, Ico was a breath of fresh air upon its release in the fall of 2001, wedding its novel, sepia-toned graphics to a cinematic sensibility imbued with all the grace and economy of a silent film. As you guided your fair maiden through countless snares and pitfalls, Ico created an emotional bond between you and the Princess that few games ever achieve. Then, after so much struggle, she's taken away from you – and you know what? – It was sad, and we don't care what you macho jerks think! Screw you! Leave us alone, okay? We're going to have a nice cup of tea and read *Bridgett Jones' Diary* to cheer ourselves up.



10 BOOO-YAH!

Doom introduces gamers to the joys of the shotgun. Shooting monsters hasn't been the same since

Doom
System: PC
Year: 1992

Let's be honest, one of the big reasons we play games is to ease the frustrations we experience in our day-to-day lives. Doom, the game that put first-person shooters on the map, remains the best form of anger management ever created – and the shotgun is one of the main reasons why. Your first time with the shotgun in Doom is perhaps the most satisfying moment in all of gaming. Why hello, mister monster, did you have a problem? [Chik-chik – BOOM!] Didn't think so. Oh, I'm sorry, zombie man, is there something you'd like to share with the rest of the class? [Blagh!] Take a seat, chump. After years of running for your life, Doom's shotgun gave you the power to take out enemies in devastating buckshot blasts. Thankfully, John Carmack, the mad scientist behind Doom, understood his audience's need for mindless fun. To that end, he kept his foot on the gas, throwing dungeon after dungeon of undead cannon fodder at the player.



9 "I'm Sorry, Were You Using That Spinal Cord?"

Mortal Kombat's fatalities take gore to a new level and gamers love it; Joe Lieberman is slightly less pleased

Mortal Kombat
System: Arcade
Year: 1992

As soon as man figured out how to scrawl on a cave wall, he started drawing pictures of woolly mammoths being bludgeoned to death; so it makes perfect sense that violence has always been as fundamental to video games as the silicon microprocessor. From Computer Space on, most games have revolved around shooting people, robots, space ships, or just about anything else you could think of. Nearly all games utilize some form of violence, but in 1992, Mortal Kombat took maliciousness to a new level with its infamous Fatalities. Moralists clucked their tongues; Senators dragged game execs in front of congressional committees; while the gaming nation was still trying to scoop their jaws off from the floor, Mortal Kombat was stunning, and mastering the timing behind its deadly finishers became an obsession for arcade rats. It may have gotten the industry in a little hot water, but it was worth every bit of bad press it earned. However, we are a responsible publication, so we will end our discussion with a note of caution: Extracting people's skeletons from their bodies is bad, kids, and you should never attempt to do it outside the confines of a video game. Don't do drugs, either.



8 Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start

Fifteen years later, we still know it by heart

Contra
System: NES • Year: 1988

In the history of gaming, there are codes, and then there are legends. Contra's epochal 30-lives cheat was many people's first encounter with game codes, and, as a result, is burned into the memory of anyone who grew up in the NES era. Today, this bit of Contra trivia has even received pop culture's highest honor – it's own t-shirt. Its strange staying power is a bit of a mystery, we can only guess that its appeal is based on the same simple principle that makes pop songs so inescapable: it's short and catchy as hell. While there may have been codes before it, we sure don't remember them. For this reason, "Up, up..." is a stone classic, and we will always fondly recall the first time we used it. Cheating never felt so good.



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PREVIEWS



XBOX

SHENMUE II

A NEW DAY DAWNS

To most publishers and developers, the term "cult classic" is a hollow victory when you are actually attempting to cause a revolution in gaming. Sega's Yu Suzuki tried to do just that when he released Shenmue for the Dreamcast two years ago. What happened instead, however, was that the game's free-roaming structure instead merely left players feeling frustrated and aimless. Compounding the problem was the fact that Shenmue came late in the life of a system that was already on the way out. Given the series' history, Xbox owners should feel very fortunate that they are even getting a sequel at all. Beyond that, Shenmue II gives the console an instant credibility with hardcore gamers everywhere.

When we last left Ryo, he was leaving for Hong Kong to track down Lan Di, his father's killer. This land is foreign to Ryo and it will present some new mysteries to the player as well. Areas are much larger than the first. The city you initially land in is four to five times as big as the original's Yokosuka district! Don't panic, however, as there is a lot less

backtracking involved, due to the fact that you can now save at will. Also, time will automatically lapse forward, which not only helps keep the flow of the game going, but allows you to kill time when you want to.

You might think that Yu Suzuki would reign in his vision to accommodate his new audience, but that's not so. If anything, he has expanded your day-to-day milieu and responsibilities to an even greater degree. For starters, there's no more getting free packets of money from mother every day. Ryo must now scrape out a living on the mean streets of Hong Kong. There are three main ways to do this: pawnshops, arm wrestling, and getting a part-time job. Remember all those toys you blew money on in the original? These can now be sold for cash, while arm wrestling and getting a job involve some fun minigames. You won't just be working for a living, however—you'll also be taking what people are giving. Like in any RPG, there is a lot to be gained from talking to the townies, who will offer you valuable sidequests and information. For those craving action, Sega has promised more Quick Time Events and brawls—complete with an even larger roster of jujitsu thrills.

If you've never played the first Shenmue, is there any place for you here? We say yes, not only because there is an introductory movie covering the events in the original, but also because it is well worth your while to experience something you won't find anywhere else. Yu Suzuki has future chapters of the game already in the works. Whether the Xbox holds onto the series or damns it to cult status like the Dreamcast, is up to you. Are you ready to step into the adventure of a lifetime?

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** AM2 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 29



"Give me the coin purse old man!"



Maps help keep track of the game's larger areas.



OutRun and After Burner cabinets join Space Harrier and Hang On.



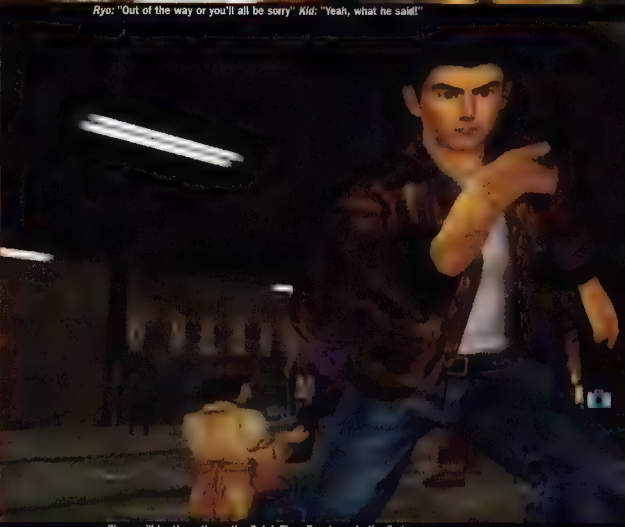
Your brother may be gone, but you'll have plenty of chances to spar



Ryo: "Out of the way or you'll all be sorry!" Kid: "Yeah, what he said!"



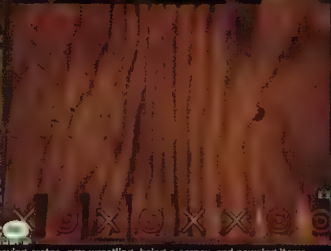
I'll see you, and then you better here all go!



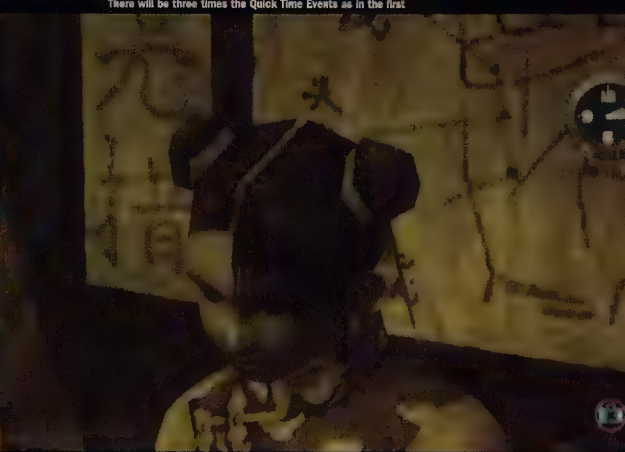
There will be three times the Quick Time Events as in the first



Earn money by (in clockwise order) moving crates, arm wrestling, being a carney, and pawning items



Different city, same damn clothes



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PLAYSTATION 2

THE GETAWAY

ONE OF THIS FALL'S NEXT YEAR'S BLOCKBUSTER GAMES

If you've been breathlessly awaiting Sony's upcoming crime saga, *The Getaway*, we're sad to report that you'll be waiting for a little longer than expected. Initially slated as a November release, the *Getaway* team has made the decision to delay the game until January of next year. Now, before you start sending nasty emails to Sony, take a little time to understand that this is actually a good thing. Why? Because this decision was made for one reason and one reason only – to give the developers the time they need to craft this title into the masterpiece that gamers are expecting.

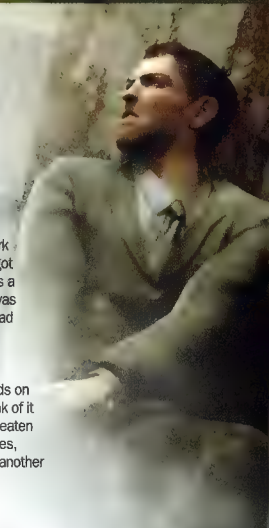
Yes, we're as anxious for *The Getaway* as you are, but let's all take a deep breath, relax, and check out these hot new screenshots. As previously reported, the game has been constructed as an interactive motion picture, and will offer gamers a glimpse into the seedy world of the East-end Cockney gangsters

that have populated such popular films as *Snatch* and *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels*. The plot, which centers around career criminal Mark Hammond and loose-cannon cop Frank Carter's separate quests to take down London mob boss Charlie Jolson, will be fleshed out through over 60 minutes of in-game cutscenes.

Much has been made of the *The Getaway*'s realistic recreation of modern-day London, and we were pleased to see that this attention-to-detail extends to the game's vehicles, which are, for the most part, actual licensed makes and models. From Audis to BMWs, you'll see a nice selection of Europe's finest automobiles, and – even better – you'll also get to turn them into a pile of mangled steel. The extensive damage is cool, and it's rare for a car company to allow their vehicles to incur that sort of beating in a game. On the combat side of the coin, things are getting

more interesting as well, especially with Sony's recent announcement that some of the missions will actually require you to work as a team with other characters. Also, we got our first picture of Mark taking a hostage as a human shield, a gameplay mechanic that was one of the highlights of Namco's recent *Dead to Rights*.

Yes, it's a drag that we have to wait until January to play *The Getaway*. Rest assured we're as anxious as you are to get our hands on this sure-to-be hit. Still, there is a plus. Think of it this way: by January, you'll have no doubt beaten *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* a half-dozen times, and, thanks to this short delay, you'll have another top-flight crime saga to sink your teeth into.



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT EUROPE ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 2003





Sometimes, it's wiser to use stealth instead of running in with guns blazing



You know it was a good party when you wake up and the house is on fire



Cars will incur heavy damage, even catching on fire



"Something tells me you're not a fully licensed proctologist."



Say, after all this is over, why don't you and I go out for a drink?



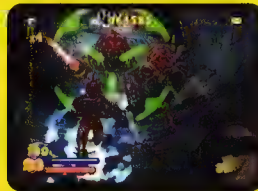
Real London, real London traffic

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on friendship...

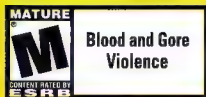
**YOU KNOW WHO
YOUR TRUE
FRIENDS ARE
WHEN EVERYONE
ELSE IS DEAD.**

Evil forces? Whatever. For you, it's just an excuse to quit holding back. Terrifying weapons, amazing levels and unbelievable power are yours to mess with. Don't play too nice, though. These enemies are so powerful, they make any you've faced before seem like naughty schoolchildren. It's time to start dishing out some serious punishment.

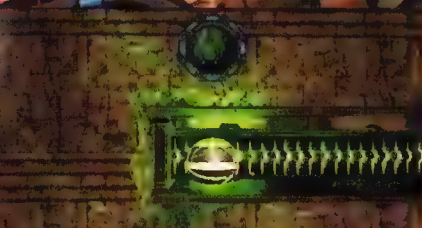
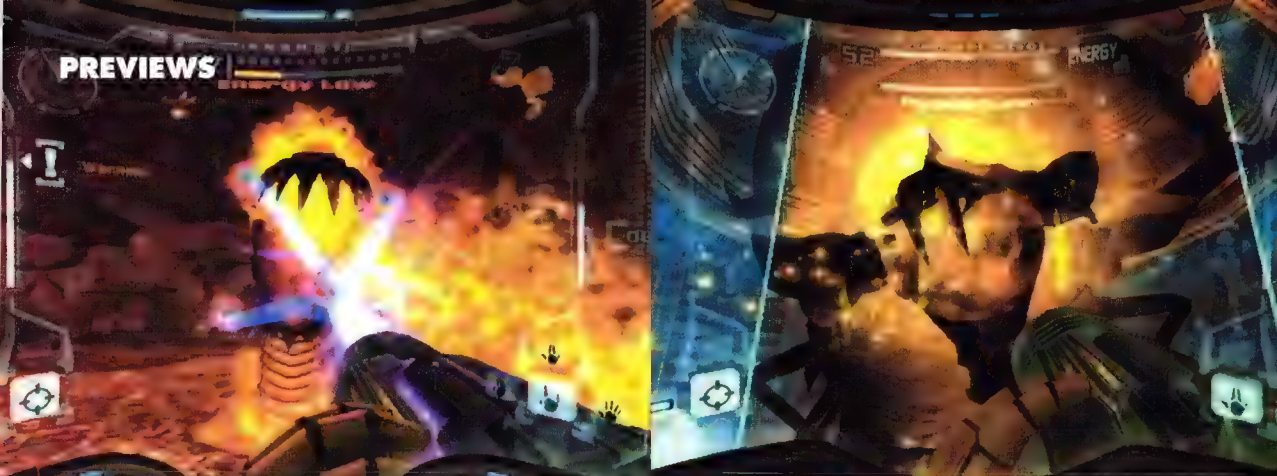




The Man. The Wisdom. The Legend. Now on XBOX.™



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Some of the Spiderball segments take place within the traditional 2D perspective



Real-time cutscenes are used for the story breaks



Here's a look at Samus rolling around in a halfpipe



GAMECUBE

METROID PRIME

FINALLY OLD-SCHOOL

After a shaky start, Nintendo's first-party software has finally kicked into high gear. Super Mario Sunshine and Star Fox Adventures lived up to the hype, and Eternal Darkness and Animal Crossing greatly exceeded all expectations. So how does Nintendo continue its hot streak? With the holiday giant Metroid Prime. As many of you may remember, we walked away from E3 disappointed with what we had seen. Not only were we upset with the new direction that the game had taken, transitioning from a side-scroller to a first-person shooter, but we were also annoyed by the play mechanics that developer Retro Studios had fashioned.

Recently, however, we were treated to another showing of the game, this time showcasing new stages that gave a glimpse of how deep this title really is. In a level named Chozo (inspired by the Chozo statues from the 2D games), it quickly became apparent that this wasn't another typical first-person shooter. This stage is vertical in design and forces players to use a double jump maneuver to leap across ice platforms. Traditionally, jumping in first-person games is a sloppy affair. At first, we were hoping that the game would pan out into third-person for these movements as it does for the Spiderball, but as hard as it may be to believe, jumping in Metroid Prime is just as easy as it is in a Mario game. Always a stickler for details, if you listen closely while performing a double jump, you can hear Samus' jump jets kick in and spit out exhaust. While this function seems to be fashioned purely for navigation purposes, it actually plays a vital role in combat as well. For certain enemies, locking on and circling may not be enough. You may need to leap through the air, aim down, and blast away as you soar over the beast's back.

The combat sequences are as explosive as can be and accompanied by stunning visual effects and gorgeous enemy animations. Keeping with the original theme of the series, the game does a nice job of blending exploration with the action. You'll still find yourself laying down Bombs in hopes of uncovering a secret passage and also using your scan visor to analyze objects within the environment. For example, at one point in Chozo, you'll need to study an ice wall to determine which weapon and what charge is required to blast through. You'll also be able to scan enemies to reveal data for your logbook, which can be accessed at any time. The functionality and detail that went into the visor is incredible. In a different stage, which appears to be some sort of space station, Samus will encounter a new adversary that emits energy pulses. When these perplexing mechanical foes get too close to your location, your visor will shut down and display TV-like static.

We were skeptical at first, and to a certain extent we're a little worried as to how linear and long this adventure is, but the gameplay is definitely heading in the right direction. If this next tidbit doesn't whet your appetite, then nothing will. During your quest, you'll run into a structure that looks like a skateboard halfpipe. If you transform into a ball, you can roll down into this area. Realistic physics allow you to move up and down the pipe, gaining more speed and height with each pass. Interestingly, if you look closely, you'll see a metal strip. If you press the R button right when you pass it, Samus will activate a magnetic pulse and cling to the strip. From this point, she can roll to the next segment of the level.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER RETRO STUDIOS ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 18



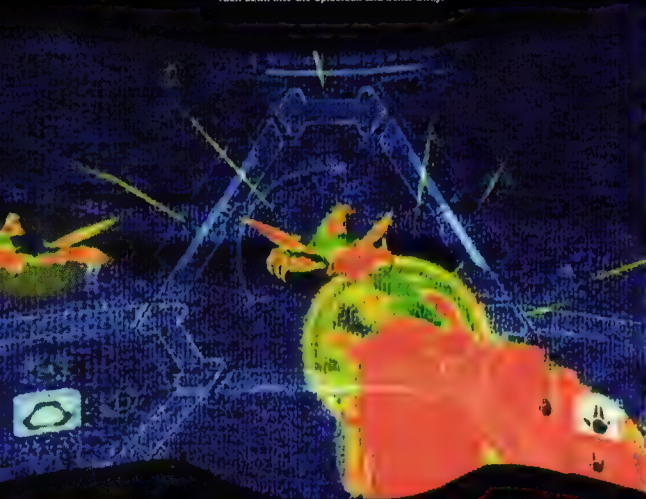
Not every boss battle is entirely organic



You'll be able to lock-on, circle, and leap over enemies



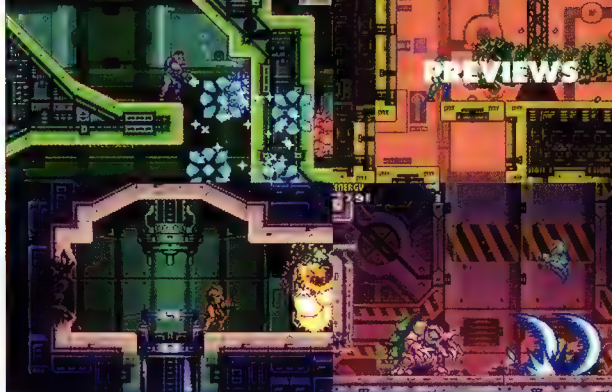
Tuok down into the Spiderball and bomb away!



If you're looking for Arnold, he's hiding in the mud



In this vertical level, you'll need to use the double jump move to navigate the platforms



PREVIEWS

GAME BOY ADVANCE

METROID FUSION

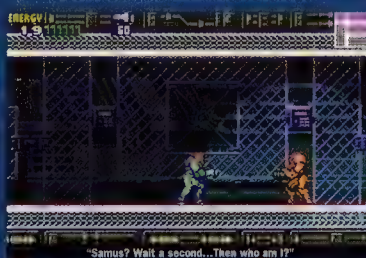
THE VIDEO GAME EVENT OF THE YEAR?

This headline is

a bold statement to make, and we're sure the Grand Theft Auto fans are laughing hysterically because of it, but if you had the chance to play Super Metroid, then you'll know exactly where our enthusiasm comes from. Based on what we've seen thus far, Metroid Fusion plays exactly like its 16-bit ancestor. Bomb your way through floors, double-jump up walls, freeze enemies to form platforms... all of these clever gameplay twists

are included and joined by new abilities and weapons. This time around, Nintendo decided to make the story an integral facet as well. The demo that we played ended with Samus deciding

into a room, only to find that it was occupied by...Samus? What in the world is going on here? Which one is the real Metroid slayer? We can't wait to find out! In addition to this several of the story breaks will be presented through cinematic cutscenes. If the convulsions haven't kicked in by now, they will on November 18, when Samus makes her overdue return to the second dimension.



"Samus? Wait a second...Then who am I?"



Oh yeah! That's right, girlfriend! Do it for me, baby...uh...uhh...[sound of grown man getting excited, rolling his eyes, and doing very naughty things]

Here's a look at the...[drool]...uhh...uhh...[sound of grown man getting really excited and collapsing on floor]

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO
 ■ DEVELOPER NINTENDO ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 18

BEFORE THE MANSION.
BEFORE THE DISASTER.
EVIL IS BORN.



RATING PENDING
RP
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or call 1-800-771-3772
for more info.

 NINTENDO
GAMECUBE™

CAPCOM
capcom.com

GET A GOOD DOSE
OF EVIL
WHEN YOU ENTER
THE ULTIMATE
SURVIVAL HORROR
SWEEPSTAKES.

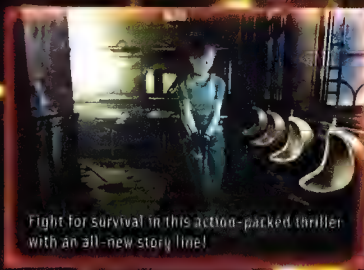
Win Nintendo GameCube™
gear, Resident Evil® games
and other prizes!

Enter at your own risk at
www.ResidentEvil.com

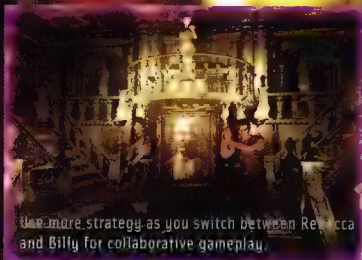
(Register online or by mail.)

See website for details.

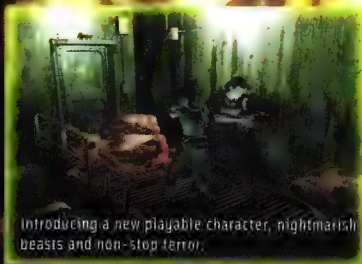
Must be 18 years or older.)



Fight for survival in this action-packed thriller
with an all-new story line!



Use more strategy as you switch between Rebecca
and Billy for collaborative gameplay.



Introducing a new playable character, nightmarish
beasts and non-stop terror.



The brand-new Zero chapter—
only on Nintendo GameCube™!

Resident Evil
Zero

PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

EVERQUEST: ONLINE ADVENTURES

THE ENDLESS JOURNEY

For years, the massively multiplayer online role-playing game EverQuest has been eating away at the lives of PC gamers across the globe. So, it was only natural that once PlayStation 2 went online, Sony would bring the game, coined "EverCrack" by its legions of followers, to its console.

EverQuest: Online Adventures is only available for play online, so a Network Adaptor is required to hook up to the servers that can support up to 5,000 players all in the same world. However, unlike its PC counterpart, the PlayStation 2 version of the game will not require a hard drive to receive updates. Any added dungeons or changes to the game after release will take place on the servers themselves, to keep things easy for the system's owners.

While we're sure many of you would love to get online and make fun of the PC gamers out there, EQOA is exclusive to the PS2, and is a prequel to the PC version of the game. In total, there will be nine races to choose from and 13 classes to play. From wizards to warriors, almost every fantasy cliché

will be covered. To make the game more console-friendly, the battle system will be faster and more tactically rich, with each monster offering different challenges to the player.

One of the more intriguing aspects of online RPGs is the interaction that takes place with all the other players on your server. You can form groups to explore dungeons and complete quests, and even join large guilds to conquer the game's bigger challenges. Online Adventures will also support a keyboard for chat if the controller shortcuts and customizable phrases aren't enough to satisfy your communication needs.

Like any RPG, the true lure of a game like this is character advancement. Each class has its own skills, and by killing monsters you can gain experience that will increase the power of your online avatar. Players will also be able to trade items with other participants and even leave messages for those that aren't online so you can hook up later to try and camp



In EverQuest Online Adventures you can travel to far-off lands and kill the inhabitants

that Great Sword of Slaughter you have been hoping to get for weeks.

Unlike most RPGs, EverQuest Online Adventures will offer literally hundreds of hours of entertainment. Depending on how many of the thousands of quests you wish to complete, you will spend nearly an endless amount of time lost in this virtual world. Luckily, Sony Online Entertainment has worked hard to make the game enjoyable for both the hardcore and the casual gamer alike.

This February, be prepared to embark on the biggest adventure of your life. EverQuest Online Adventures will be the first chance for many gamers to experience a massively multiplayer online title, and we can tell you from personal experience that you will never be the same.

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 2003



Work with other players to defeat monsters and gain experience

There will be many familiar towns and locals to seasoned EQ players, but there will also be new destinations to see and explore





I will stab you with my +12 sword of nerdiness



Evil Mr. Hugenose contemplates an impromptu romantic encounter with Gatorman



All the races have customizable faces, hair, tattoos, clothing, armor, special abilities, and attributes



PREVIEWS

世界のかわらちゃえば
いいんだ。FFあたいな。
剣と魔法の世界に。

名前くらい
いれましてやれば
いいのに!

GAME BOY ADVANCE

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

FINAL FANTASY GEEK-DOM

After too many years, Square has finally risen from its comfortable ass-groove to provide drooling FF fanatics with a sequel to the best PlayStation strategy title ever. Final Fantasy Tactics Advance will continue the series' tradition on GBA, but with a new story, setting, and gameplay features.

Players assume the role of Myu, who stumbles upon a magical book called *Final Fantasy*. When he attempts to channel its power, the book transforms his planet into the chaotic world of the Final Fantasy games. As a result, Myu and his companion Mash set out to restore their once peaceful planet, and along the way team up with Ritz – a female heroine.

The game supports five character classes (referred to as jobs): Knight, White Mage, Black Mage, Archer, and Monk. The gameplay is somehow divided into various systems. The Judgement System allows players to set the order of action during battles. The Kuran System, to which Myu and Mash belong, relies on characters receiving orders from a client. Finally, the Region Create System helps to rebuild the world.

The coolest news is that GameCubé's Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles will somehow connect with the GBA. Hopefully, this means that Crystal Chronicle will be a tactics game that allows players to use FFTA data, or vice versa.

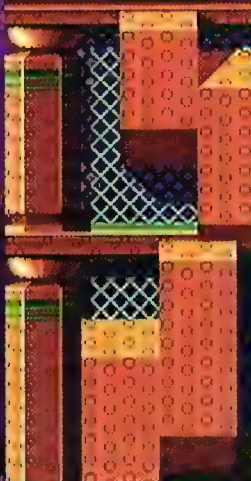
- STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER STRATEGY
- PUBLISHER SQUARE SOFT
- DEVELOPER GAME DESIGNER'S STUDIO
- RELEASE TBA



MYU

RITZ

MASH



The Bean Machine is still addictive, but tough

GAMECUBE

SONIC MEGA COLLECTION

A RODENT-RIFIC COLLECTION



Most companies design

a compilation disc of old software with one thing in mind: your money. As a result, we get too few classics, which forces us to buy the next deficient pack a few months down the road. Unlike the rest, Sonic Team will place our nostalgic feelings for a little blue rodent before the almighty dollar. This disk will include every 16-bit Sonic classic (numbering 11 total): Sonic the Hedgehog, Sonic 2, Sonic 3, Sonic and Knuckles, Sonic CD, Sonic 3D Blast, Sonic Spinball, Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine, plus three others.

While we are indeed happy to see everything on a single disc, we're elated that Sega will not forget about the less popular titles. Sonic CD perhaps reigns as the deepest game in the 16-bit franchise, since it not only offers huge levels to zip through and numerous obstacles, but also allows players to travel in time. This means that each area has three variant sections – past, present, and future! Furthermore, because it debuted on Sega CD, it features the coolest tunes in the series. Hopefully, Sega will include the Japanese and American soundtracks, since there's a dichotomy of opinion as to which one is better.

Most hardcore gamers probably remember Sonic and Knuckles for its uniqueness. It featured "lock-on technology," which allowed users to connect either Sonic 2 or 3 and play as Knuckles in

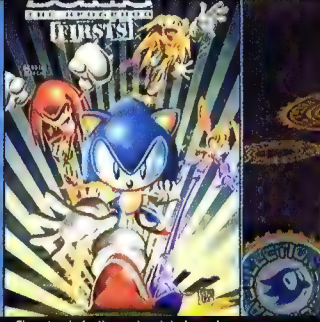
either adventure. However, we're uncertain if Knuckles will be playable in both adventures, but we assume so.

Sonic 3D Blast was forgettable, to say the least. It actually placed our hero in an isometric environment, rather than a true 3D one. To this day, the control feels awkward, and the graphics and animation still look rigid and clunky, placing Sonic out of his element more than ever – thanks for the reminder!

Sonic Spinball and Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine add some diversity to the series. Spinball is still a solid pinball game that uses Sonic as the pinball, instead of a metal sphere. Mean Bean Machine is a Tetris-style puzzle title that more resembles Puyo Puyo. The faster a player eliminates the booger-like colored objects, the more your opponent will amass.

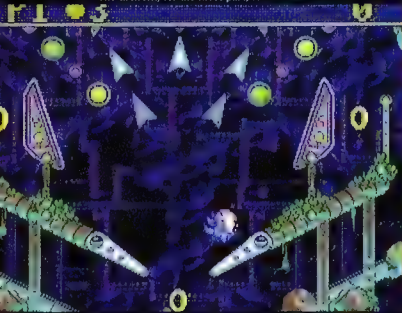
Unfortunately, Sega has yet to announce the names of the three other Sonic titles, but it confirms that all come from the 16-bit era. Maybe we'll get Knuckles Chaotix for 32X, Sonic Drift (a Genesis cart racer), Sonic Drift 2, or some from Game Gear.

While none of these games will receive any graphical enhancements, Sega will jam every cover of every Sonic related comic released, numerous pieces of art of Sonic and friends, and a myriad of special movies! With these cool extras, all of the games, and probably a few unlockable secrets, Sonic Mega Collection will be a fan's dream come true.



The artwork, for the most part, looks cool

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER SONIC TEAM ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 1



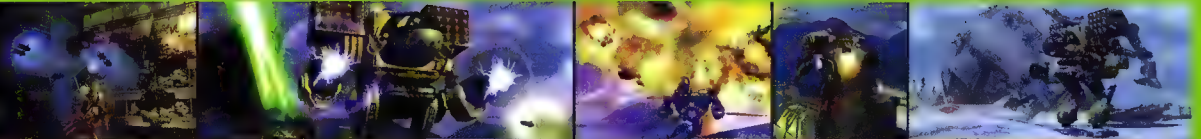
The character model of Sonic in Spinball looks goofy



Laughing out loud!



The two-player game in Sonic 2 was fun. Plus, it had increased resolution!



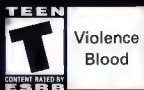
GAVE PEACE A CHANCE.

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All else has failed. The lines between good and evil have been drawn; There's you and there's everybody else. Your weapon is a 40-foot-tall walking death machine. Your mission is destruction. Tanks, helicopters, buildings, the planet itself. Welcome to war in the 31st century, where peace is one of those things you read about.



For added destruction play online with Xbox Live. Engage others on a massive scale. Download new 'Mechs, new missions, even enemies. This is epic devastation taken to a whole new level and it's only available on Xbox Live.



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XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED



Sam tracks down his target



Making people see reason can be a delicate matter



"Ooo! The Weather Channel. My favorite!"

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL

GETTING CLOSER...

If you listen very carefully, you can hear Microsoft drooling all over itself in anticipation of this game's launch. There aren't a lot of titles to get excited about when you think about the Xbox first-party lineup, so a third-party blockbuster is just what the doctor ordered; and Splinter Cell is nothing if not exciting. Gamers and industry pundits alike have been singing the praises of this title for months now, and it's just about time to see how it performs in the real world. Some titles will experience a lot of positive buzz as they go from games to launch, then fall flat when they release (cough, Azurik, cough). Splinter Cell will not suffer from this fate. Instead, we think Ubi Soft's newest darling has the chops to compete with the big boys this holiday season — no matter what it's lined up against.

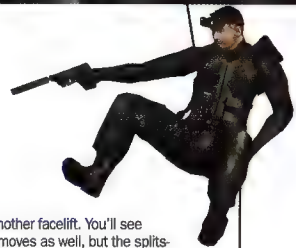
Recently, Game Informer was able to see Splinter Cell in action, and a number of things struck us as truly extraordinary. First off, the animations are simply superb. When you maneuver Sam around the screen, he displays elegant position transitions, and can show off some great moves. One involves his ability to administer death without being seen. During one mission, a guard approached a darkened hallway we were hiding in. With the flick of a few buttons, Sam performed the splits — bracing himself between the walls of the hall — then patiently waited as his victim walked nonchalantly below him. From that range, placing a slug in the top of the bad man's skull was easier than convincing Joan

Rivers she needs another facelift. You'll see other mind-blowing moves as well, but the splits-shot is our favorite so far.

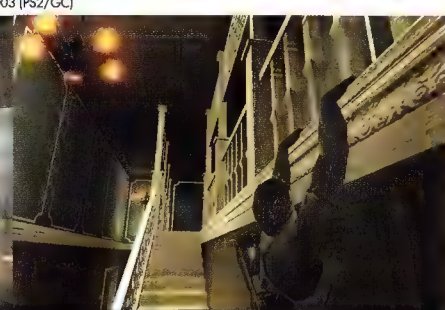
Another facet of Splinter Cell that can't be ignored is the incredible graphics Ubi Soft were able to wrangle out of the Xbox. We knew that it was capable of some incredible things — what we saw in Halo was enough to make our jaws drop — but SC is taking realism to the next level. An excellent illustration of this fact is its naturalistic representation of light. Passing near a back-lit chain link fence (or any object that obstructs light) will cast real-time shadows on Sam and the environment surrounding him. Not only that, but characters will self-shadow, meaning if Mr. Fisher is standing in front of a light source, and he puts his hand up to shade his eyes, you'll see the shadow on his face from his hand. That might not sound like much, but no other game has ever paid such close attention to detail in this regard.

Although Splinter Cell is releasing on all the major systems, Xbox's lead-time should give Microsoft a distinct edge on its competition. We're interested to see how much graphical degradation results in the PS2 and GameCUBE versions of the title, but next March is a long time to work on things. Hopefully SC will be looking superb for every platform it hits, because its play and ingenuity has few equals.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT MONTREAL STUDIOS
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12 (XBOX), DECEMBER 10 (PC), MARCH 2003 (PS2/GC)



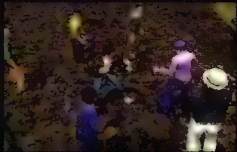
Rappelling down the sides of buildings will give you the element of surprise



"I don't take the stairs! They're for animals!"

...the man who knows who she was
...the man who knows who she was
...the man who knows who she was
...the man who knows who she was

Shenmue II



Use of Alcohol
Gambling
Violence



www.xbox.com/shenmue2



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The more points you get, the more lives you earn – and you'll need them



There are many types of enemies



Large enemies and bosses are often extremely big, taking up more than the whole screen

XBOX

SERIOUS SAM

REPRESENTIN' VIOLENCE

Xbox owners should thank Gotham Games personally for exclusively releasing one of the PC's most intense and enjoyable FPSs around to their beloved console. Serious Sam, despite its quirky appearance, is only about one thing: insane action, which many of us simply describe as "%@#\$\$ing nuts!"

In the spirit of the Doom series, Serious Sam eschews complex puzzles (except killing everything to unlock the door), intricate plots lines (you're Sam "Serious" Stone who must travel back in time to kill invading aliens), and elaborate character development (you kill alone). It's just 36 levels of non-stop violence – pure and simple. Typically, players begin a stage offing a fair number of monsters through tight corridors, only to encounter an open area that instills a feeling of safety and relief. But this type of situation is only one of Serious Sam's sort of bad jokes. Before you realize it, you're surrounded by a hoard of advancing aliens all attacking at once.

The coolest of these scenarios often involve the headless, suicide bombers. Usually, about a half-dozen will begin running towards you (so it seems), screaming to let you know they're coming. As their horrid screeches grow louder, and you suddenly notice that there are actually over 12 in number (in addition to a couple dozen other types of enemies), the anxiety sets in. You got pesky little aliens nibbling at your legs; big ones shooting rockets at your head; mad bulls trying to impale your torso with their horns; mutated flying freaks poking you with lasers; and, of

course, those bombers still trying to explode you.

Fortunately, the developers thought to offer plenty of ammo and a wide assortment of weapons. These include a chainsaw, dual revolvers, a double-barreled shotgun, a rocket launcher, a laser rifle, and bombs. Players are also encouraged to use these weapons with some technique and strategy. For instance, launching bombs or rockets into a group, or exploding a suicide bomber near numerous other enemies will destroy multiple targets, which results in a score multiplier dubbed, "Multiple Kill".

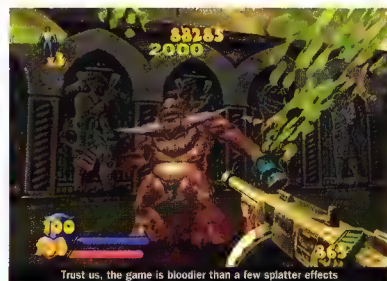
Lucky Xbox owners will receive a number of features, some of which aren't in the PC versions. Foremost, this package includes both Serious Sam and elements from its sequel, Serious Sam: The Second Encounter. The system's vaunted power also permits improved graphics. The character models will offer increased detail; the textures will look sharper and more lush; and particle effects will be numerous. Furthermore, an even larger amount of enemies will pour onto the screen at once, as if 50 weren't enough already. Finally, although it lacks Xbox Live support, up to 16 players can battle in one of the multiplayer modes through the system link.

Any FPS buff will readily admit that Serious Sam executes its action element almost flawlessly. So, if you like constant mass destruction in your action or FPS titles, this is one game that should satisfy.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** GOTHAM GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** CROTEAM ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER



The levels also offer quite a bit of variety



Trust us, the game is bloodier than a few splatter effects

"THIS GAME IS
BRUTAL FUN.
PLAY IT. LOVE IT.
LIVE IT.

—IGN.com

"ONE OF THE **BEST**
SURPRISES OF
THE **YEAR.**" —GAMEPEN

"**FAST, VIOLENT** AND THANKS
TO A **SLICK** CONTROL SCHEME,
EASY TO PICK UP."
—XENGAMERS

"...there's **NO DOUBTING** the
FUN TO BE HAD WITH SUCH
AN **INSANE** game concept."
—Gamespy



DEATHROW

UNDERGROUND TEAM COMBAT

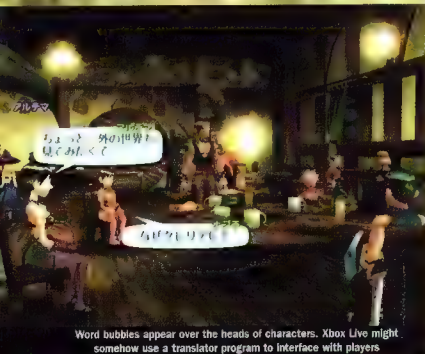


Strong Language
Use of Drugs
Violence

Win Killer prizes in the
"Serve Up the Punishment"
Sweepstakes at
<http://deathrow.ubi.com>

ROCKSTAR
ENERGY DRINK





Word bubbles appear over the heads of characters. Xbox Live might somehow use a translator program to interface with players.



The organization suggests a turn-based interface



The graphics are cel shaded, and look very rich and clean

XBOX

TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE

XBOX'S FIRST FANTASY

Microsoft will finally get its first serious dose of Japanese style RPGs, and from none other than Level Five – the creators of the hit *Dark Cloud* and its upcoming sequel for PlayStation 2. The high quality graphics alone certainly suggest that this beauty has been given plenty of TLC. So, although Microsoft has yet to confirm a US release, we can only assume that *True Fantasy* will hit our shores shortly after the Japanese debut.

True Fantasy will be a massively multiplayer online RPG like *Final Fantasy XI* and *EverQuest*. So Xbox Live will be supported, which means that players can interact with thousands of other gamers, and actually speak through the voice communicator – no tedious typing required here! However, we're currently uncertain as to whether a single player mode (as in *Phantasy Star*) will exist, and if Microsoft will require an additional fee for servers.

To captivate players in this fantasy world of strange beasts, dragons, and witches, Level Five will ensure that everyone possesses a unique identity. Players can select from numerous different classes such as knights and sorcerers, and then customize nearly every aspect of that character – from the appearance down to the fighting style.

Once you compose a character, you're then charged to seek out and create a party. Teams (they consist of about five members) must complete various tasks in the overall adventure. Unfortunately, we don't yet know how deep the level of interaction will be between other parties, or how they might affect the overall story. However, since there are a variety of mini-quests like mining, fishing, and logging, players and parties can at least trade and barter.

The combat system remains even more mysterious. In the screen shots, parties are organized in a conspicuous formation, which suggests that combat is turn-based, but these pictures also lack an elaborate set of menus – often associated with the turn-based style. This could mean two things: the game is simply incomplete, or the players conduct fighting in real-time.

The most interesting (and confirmed) tidbit of news indicates that players have various means of transportation at their disposal. Camels and dragons will be one method, while specific types of characters will possess unique conveyances. The witch, for instance, can use a broomstick to whip about. If we're lucky, Level Five will include particular battle sequences for these vehicles, thereby creating an even broader gameplay dynamic.

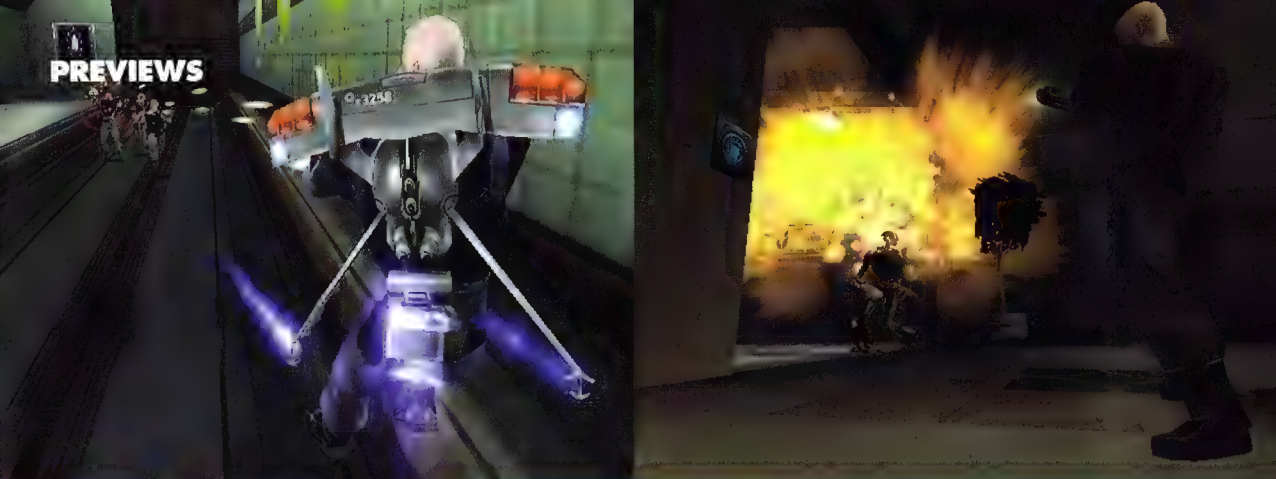
■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** LEVEL FIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** 2003



One of the side quests – mining!



The bosses we've seen look creative and quite imposing



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

MINORITY REPORT

TOM CRUISE IS A SISSY

So, we were hanging out at this really nice restaurant in Beverly Hills, and like, Tom Cruise walked in, and we were like, "Oh my gawd! It's Tom Cruise!" We were going to walk over and talk to him about how much we like his movies and stuff, but just as we were about to do it, he like ordered a Diet Coke! Like, how lame is that! What a sissy! Ah, who are we kidding! Tom Cruise would never eat in a place occupied by mere mortals! This was a pathetic attempt on our part to alter your perception of this motion picture hunk. Why? Because he's apparently too big of a star to let companies use his likeness. Thus, the main character in the *Minority Report* game, while named John Anderton, actually looks more like a John Doe.

If you are familiar with the movie, this discrepancy is a little hard to stomach. Thankfully, though, he's not a complete stiff. John actually has a lot of personality to him, and his voice should seem vaguely familiar. He's actually voiced by Clancy Brown of *Highlander* and *Starship Troopers* fame. Even with this alteration, the game follows the plot of the film, beginning with several stages with John on the Precrime unit, the escape, then the race to clear his name. Since we all know the outcome of the film already, Treyarch has included different endings that add another layer to this incredible tale. As always, the action that unfolds on the big screen doesn't exactly translate well to the video game realm. You won't see John leaping across cars, which is odd since it's the most game-like aspect of the movie,

nor will you see him battling ferocious plants. The two facets of the movie that Treyarch stuck to were the hand-to-hand combat and the jetpack.

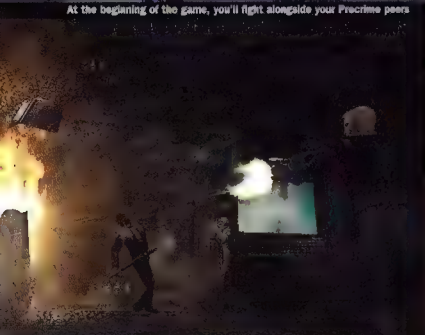
All three versions of the *Minority Report* games are actually running on the same engine that was used for the Spider-Man movie-to-game conversions. Many of the core development team is also on board. The camera system has obviously been overhauled and, for the lack of a better term, fixed. Treyarch is also introducing a fairly sophisticated ragdoll physics system. When you punch an opponent, his body will reel back realistically. When you kick somebody to the floor, you'll see their body react appropriately as the back bends and lifts into the air. You'll also be able to lock on to your opponent and execute more than 20 combo attacks. Many of these won't be available from the outset, but you will collect cash throughout the adventure that can be used on the black market to purchase new techniques. You'll also be able to wield a number of firearms, including the Electro-shock Sick Sticks and Concussion Gun.

This may sound odd, but the jetpack controls brought about memories of *Zone of the Enders* and *Armored Core*. You can hover in any direction, zoom ahead at the touch of the button, and target different enemies on the fly. Of course, you'll see the fancy Lexus cars, find yourself running from Spyderbots, and at some point in the game, trade in your eyes for a new pair.

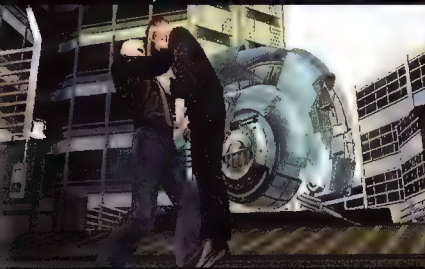
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** TREYARCH ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12



At the beginning of the game, you'll fight alongside your Precrime peers



Certain objects within the environments are destructible



Even after defeating an opponent, you can kick them on the ground, or pick them up and give them the business



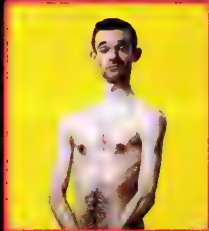
The combat is combo driven, but you can also use firearms and perform grapple maneuvers



The texturing is fairly generic, but the particle effects truly are a sight to behold

"I WAS A 99 LB. BARBARIAN"

- Gothar of Gundria



BEFORE UPGRADE



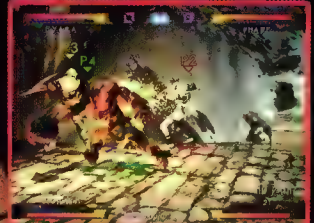
AFTER UPGRADE*

"I used to get molten lava kicked in my face.

I was a little girly man, better suited to playing with sissy baby dolls than with battle axes. But then I mastered the **UPGRADE FEATURE** in **BARBARIAN**.

Now nobody messes with me...

NOBODY!!!!"



"The 4-player mode is wicked. Now if I could just find 4 opponents I haven't already killed I would show you BARBARIAN's 8 character on-screen mayhem."



"Here I am getting Medieval on Keela. My weapon of choice is usually a tree, or a pillar, or my opponent... but you know me, everytime I can grab onto something and show off..."

SILVER

SILVER MEDAL

- PSE2 Magazine

★★★★ (out of 5)

- Maxim



www.barbarian-game.com

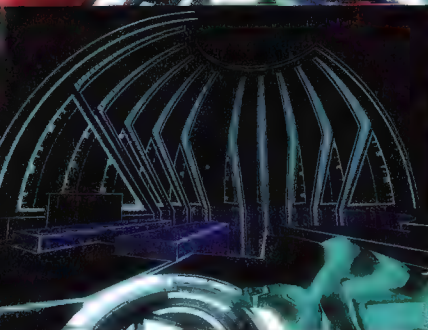
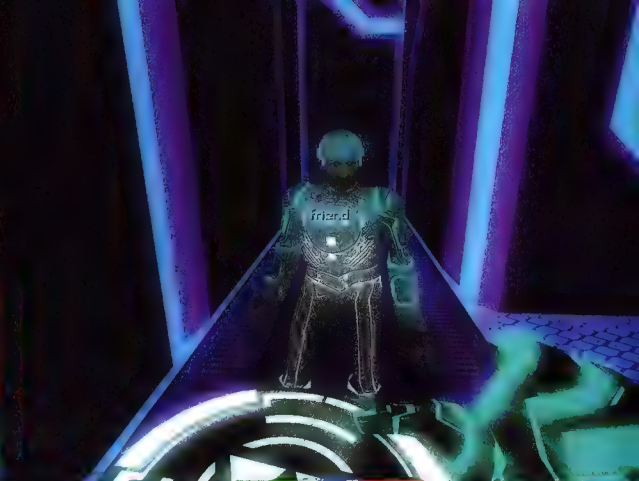
BARBARIAN is a revolutionary new game engineered to increase – and maintain – character power and ferociousness, fast! In recent head to head field tests, even mildly upgraded barbarians crushed their friends and foes without mercy. The MASSIVE 1-PLAYER QUEST mode – with 10 characters to choose from and literally hundreds of adventures to play – is the perfect training ground for customizing your barbarian, increasing strength and magic, and winning friends and influencing people with pure brute force. But wait! There's more: **BARBARIAN** also features an insane MULTIPLAYER MODE for up to 8 playable characters on screen at once, plus totally interactive environments, and best of all an exclusive ass-kicking "save-your-customized-barbarian-and-take-him-anywhere-with-you" formula!

DON'T SETTLE FOR LESSER GAMES.

DEMAND BARBARIAN TODAY.

* Your actual results may vary.
Mr. Saggy Breasts.

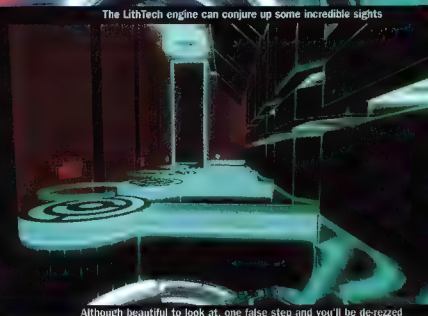




The environments have been faithfully recreated with the movie in mind



The LithTech engine can conjure up some incredible sights



Although beautiful to look at, one false step and you'll be de-rezzed

PC

TRON 2.0

I WANT HIM IN THE GAMES UNTIL HE DIES PLAYING

Twenty years can make most any movie look like a steaming pile of turd. Tron released in the summer of 1982, and had little success at the box office. Today, it's become a cult classic, and amazingly, the technological advances made to create the unique design still look good – and that's saying something about a movie that was really the first to delve into what cyberspace looks like. All of the stops are being pulled out for Tron 2.0, as Syd Mead, who was a concept designer for the film, is back redesigning units and structures for the game. Additionally, Tron wouldn't be Tron without the man himself, Bruce Boxleitner. Bruce has signed on to reprise his role as Alan Bradley – or as he's known in the ether – Tron.

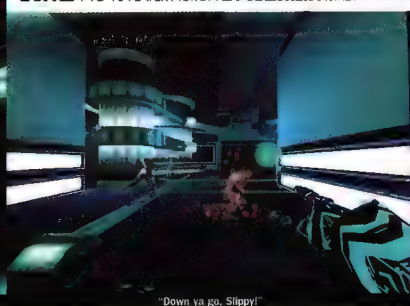
As if this isn't exciting enough, Tron 2.0 will be staying extremely close to the art direction in the film. You can tell from the screenshots that the Tron team over at Monolith has been paying careful attention to the look and feel of the Tron universe. Game Informer recently had the opportunity to see the game in action at our offices, and we were impressed to say the least. That subtle ambient glow that exudes from programs and environments is back and looking better than ever in the game, and the vehicles you know and love are back as well. Light cycles will play a large role in the title, but other units like Recognizers will take on diminished roles. The Bit, the flying trapezoid who helped programs like Clu and Flynn by answering questions with either a mechanical "yes" or "no"; has been updated to a Byte, which can offer up more of an answer than

simply a positive or negative. But, you still might be able to find a Bit here and there. Your weapons have been updated as well, as your identity disc can now morph into different forms to dispatch enemies.

The story behind this second chapter in the Tron saga revolves around Alan Bradley's son, Jet. Set 20 years after the end of the film, Alan Bradley has gone missing. His son, also a computer programmer, goes looking for him using the same digitization technology his father helped develop. During his journey, Jet will battle against a virus that is corrupting vital systems and plotting world domination. As he ferrets out the connection between his father's kidnapping and this new threat, young Bradley will travel to firewalls, PDAs, the old Encom server, the Game Grid, an Internet City Hub, and many other locations. Each will have its own unique look, but their style will hold true to the Tron theme.

When we were treated to our own private preview of assorted levels from the game, we were blown away. The scale of the environments, and even the detail on character's costumes are beautifully recreated. During a mission where Jet travels to a firewall, the full potential of what a Tron-based game is capable of came to bear. Enormous, fiery pieces of structure moved and pulsed methodically, and we were simply dwarfed in size compared to the immense environment surrounding us. After seeing this, and numerous other levels, we were sold. Bring on the spring!

■ **STYLE 1** TO 16-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** DISNEY INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** MONOLITH ■ **RELEASE** SPRING 2003



"Down ya go, Slippy!"

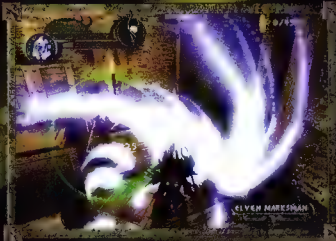
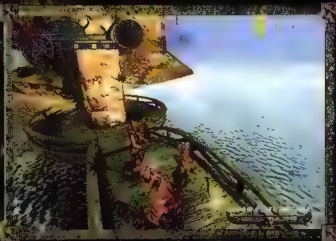


This Recognizer looks to be modified somehow



THERE ARE PLACES
EVEN TORCHLIGHT
DOESN'T DARE TO GO.

Will you?



ENGLAVE

WWW.ENGLAVEGAME.COM

Shadows aren't places to hide, but places to fear. Once they see, they force combat as the noble knight, evil henchman, or any one of 30 other characters, each wielding a devastating range of barbaric, medieval style weapons. And with over 100 intensely graphic, suspenseful levels, just making it around the next door doesn't guarantee you'll make it a step further.



PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

FIGHTER MAKER 2

VIRTUA FIGHTER 101

This is a fighting game fan's dream come true: build your own fighting game from the ground up. Well, not exactly. Although players don't actually get to construct a fighting engine, or design moves and characters with complete freedom; the developer has left the building process fairly open-ended, with more than enough content to keep the experience interesting for a while.

You will be able to select from over 600 pre-designed moves, throws, and combos, which incorporate six different fighting styles, including karate, jeet kyun do, tai chi, vale tudo, pro wrestling, and freestyle. You can then tweak these moves to create some zany-looking techniques. To inject a little personality, players are able to customize their character's appearance. With over 260 separate body parts and clothing, the amount of variation seems limitless. What's even more impressive, those lucky owners of the original Fighter Maker for PS-X can actually download another 800 moves for use in this sequel!

Once the building process is complete, players can proceed to Test Mode and pit the fighter against one of the other pre-made characters already included. Or, if you happen to have friends, you can try out your creation with a buddy in versus mode.



Outside of all the customization, the game itself doesn't look half bad

■ **STYLE** | OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACETEC
 ■ **DEVELOPER** ENTERBRAIN ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 29



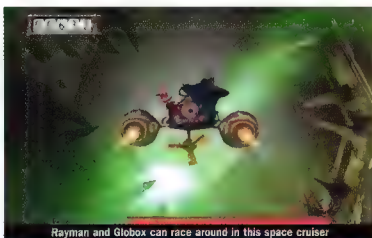
PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

RAYMAN: HOODLUM HAVOC

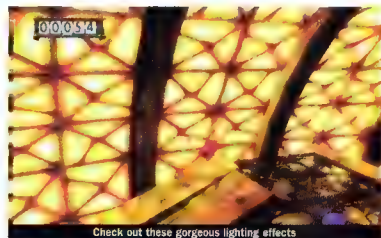
RAYMAN'S FRENCH TWIST

It's never been a commercial success on par with the Marios and Crash Bandicoots of the world, but Rayman has always managed to connect with its cult following, delivering strange, whimsical adventures and bizarre characters. Thankfully, the games have also served up enough meat-and-potatoes platforming action to satisfy fans of the genre as a whole. This time around, Rayman is being developed without the guidance of series creator Michel Ansel, who is hard at work at his highly anticipated (and top secret) Project BG&E for PlayStation 2. While the Rayman guru's attention is elsewhere, Hoodlum Havoc has fallen under the wing of another veteran Ubi Soft team, who are dead set on implementing some new and exciting modes of gameplay, while staying true to the traditions of the franchise.

A recent preview build of Rayman: Hoodlum Havoc showed us a game that raises the bar in terms of both graphics and variety. Visually, there are a lot of nice particle and lighting effects to showcase the power of all three next-generation consoles. On the gameplay side, we saw some innovative sequences, including a level in which Globox and Ray piloted a spaceship through precarious passages, a track-shooting showdown, and even a psychedelic stage where Rayman surfs through a morphing background on bars similar in look to Frequency. Rayman also has a handful of new powers, like a grappling hook arm attachment and a metal suit that features spiked fists for smashing doors and obstacles. All told, Rayman: Hoodlum Havoc is looking quite interesting, to say the least.



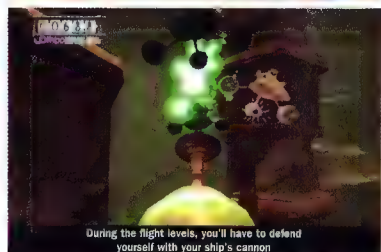
Rayman and Globox can race around in this space cruiser



Check out these gorgeous lighting effects



Rayman's surfing through a bad acid trip



During the night levels, you'll have to defend yourself with your ship's cannon

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT ■ **RELEASE** EARLY 2003

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PLAYSTATION 2 / XBOX / GAMECUBE

BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW

LIFE AFTER ADAM WEST

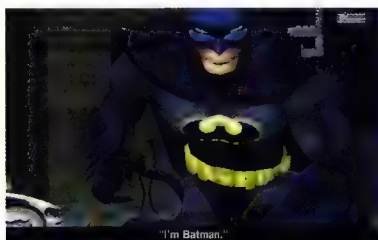
Batman is arguably the most popular super hero that has ever walked the earth with a tormented soul. So, why hasn't he had a good video game since the Sega Genesis? This quandary confuses even the Caped Crusader himself – and he's a millionaire, and rich people are smarter than us. Kemco has put together an all-star team to ensure that Dark Tomorrow makes for a happy November on all three consoles.

A better writing pair than the one Kemco assembled does not exist. You think we jest? Try Batman writer Scott Peterson and Kenji Terada, the man behind Final Fantasy I, II, and III. Bang! These two take their knowledge of the man behind the cowl and compelling video games, respectively, and weave a tale of seemingly random events that tie together into a devious plot.

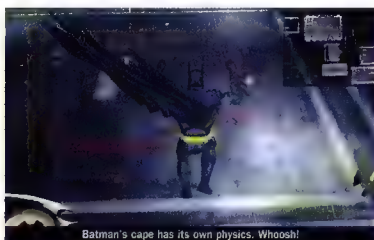
Kemco maxed out three of Bruce Wayne's credit cards – including his Player's Club – to bring you an arsenal worthy of the Dark Knight. Batman's utility belt is loaded to the bursting point (much like Adam West's spandex ensemble in the old TV show) with night vision goggles, the Bat Cable, Batcuffs, smoke bombs, Batarangs, and the mysterious universal tool. We're sure all this stuff will come in handy because, if you remember correctly, Batman has no super powers!

The detective behind the cape shows up often in Dark Tomorrow, as stealth plays a major role in the gameplay. You'll be tailing enemies, peaking around corners, and hugging walls. Maybe Batman's secret identity is Solid Snake! An action/adventure game wouldn't be complete without some action, and the fighting engine in Dark Tomorrow is loaded with combos to take out the dozens of bosses and their hired goons. Killer Croc, the Ventriloquist, Poison Ivy, and Scarface are just a few of the villains you'll tangle with.

If everything goes according to Kemco's master plan, Batman: Dark Tomorrow will be the crowning achievement in the Dark Knight's gaming résumé. If not, it couldn't be any worse than Acclaim's Batman & Robin from 1997.



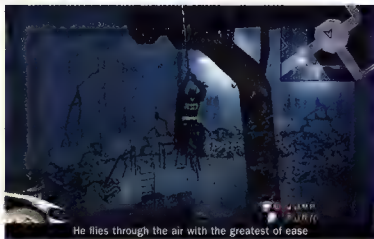
"I'm Batman."



Batman's cape has its own physics. Whoosh!



"Someone call for an extermin-OH!"



He flies through the air with the greatest of ease

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER KEMCO ■ DEVELOPER KEMCO ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 5

PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

DISASTER REPORT

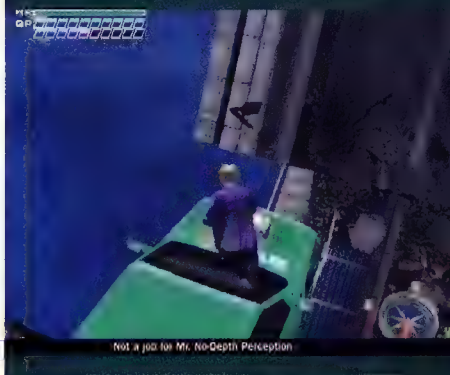
BECOME THE MASTER OF DISASTER

Hope you've been watching *Worst-Case Scenario*, because you'll have to think on your feet during Disaster Report. Zombies? Been there, done that. Gangsters? What a bunch of blow hards. Can you survive an earthquake?

Disaster Report was originally released in Japan under the name Zettai Zetsumai Toshi, and now it's been picked up by Agatec. Capital City is a man-made island off the coast of Japan that has been hit with an earthquake. Like the island itself, however, you soon discover that these problems are actually man-made themselves.

Moving away from the search-and-destroy pattern of most action games, you are a newspaper reporter – someone who survives by their brains rather than brawn. In true *MacGyver* fashion, found items will be built up into more useful ones (like rafts or torches) as you attempt to find your way off the island. Helping others to safety will be similar to *ico*, where you have to manage people like a mother duckie. Meanwhile you'll fight dehydration, Black Ops soldiers, and aftershocks. You can defeat the latter with a move called Ride-It-Out, although it is unknown just what gameplay mechanics lie behind this earthquake-survival maneuver.

Promising large maps filled with almost endless exploration, and a good mix of puzzles, action, and ingenuity, Disaster Report is a careful mix of many genres. Think you can survive it?



Not a jolt for Mr. No-Depth Perception

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER AGATEC ■ DEVELOPER IREM ■ RELEASE JANUARY 3

PREVIEWS



GAMECUBE

SWINGERZ GOLF

BOYS (AND GIRLS) KEEP SWINGING

As we don't have a solid release date for the GameCube sequel to Mario Golf, Nintendo owners with a jones for over-the-top links action should keep an eye out for Swingerz Golf, a port of the Japanese title created by Telenet Japan for Eidos' import-only Fresh Games label. The game features a host of intriguing and unlikely golf pros, including an alien, a Harley dude, and a sumo wrestler. Despite its childish look, the game actually features a lot of depth, numerous modes, and some unusual charm power-ups that can be added to your player's profile. Some of these include the Power Glove, which makes your shots stronger, a Sun Charm, that wards away rainy weather, and the Driver Killer, a device that puts some extra heat on your tee-off.

The courses themselves are pretty realistic, as are the play mechanics, which are an interesting blend of the traditional three-click style and the analog swing favored by some recent golf titles. Still, we've never seen a ninja caddie (named Kaede) at our country club. Actually, we haven't seen anything at our country club since we got kicked out, but that's another story for another day. Let's just say that America's prudish culture isn't quite ready for a bottomless male golfing tournament.



Your caddie will offer up useful advice

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** FRESH GAMES/EIDOS ■ **DEVELOPER** TELINET JAPAN
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 16



PC

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

GODS AND MONSTERS

The *Age of Empires* series is arguably one of the best real-time strategy lines ever created. As Microsoft watched Westwood Studios and Blizzard ramp up and release their own excellent RTS sequels, the company that good ol' Bill started is preparing to annihilate the competition.

Age of Mythology will feature not only incredibly detailed gameplay – it will also dazzle players with fully rendered 3D environments, and nearly endless options of how you play and with whom. Through one of three ancient races, (the Greeks, Norse, and Egyptians) gamers will battle and build their civilizations into greatness. After picking a major god at the game's onset, one will be able to choose between two minor gods as the civilizations pass through four major eras: Archaic, Classical, Heroic, and Mythic. By choosing these deities, your culture will be given assorted advantages in terms of mythological creatures available to be summoned to your aide, heroes you can call on to lead your armies, or assorted economic or cultural advances. Along with all of this comes the resource gathering and structure building that you remember, so don't think you'll be able to raise an army without having to feed them.

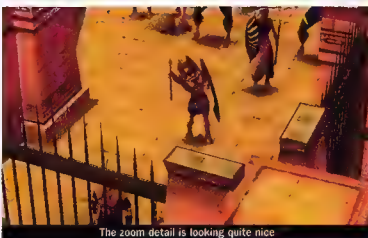
This game looks incredible, and its online capabilities will certainly put smiles on many a face. Stay tuned to Game Informer for an in-depth review very soon.



Nothing heats up a winter day like a fire-breathing dragon



If you look closely you can see orcas swimming in the depths



The zoom detail is looking quite nice



"What if we build a large wooden badger...?"

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 12-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** ENSEMBLE STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 31

PREY ON THE DEAD...

OR THE DEAD
WILL PREY ON YOU.



Fight zombies, vampires and ghouls on your own as one of 4 unique Hunters, or battle cooperatively with up to 4 players on a single screen.



Attack 20 types of creatures in swarms of up to 30 at once using 20 melee, ranged and spell weapons—from swords to axes and flamethrowers.



Slay in brutal single- and multi-player action through 23 huge environments, including a prison, gothic church, cemetery and torture chamber.

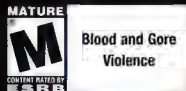
Screenshots taken from Xbox™ video game system gameplay.

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REVIEWS

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



THE SCORING SYSTEM

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

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

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

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

7 – Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen 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:** McDonald's Plates, Football, Desktop Toys, Online Games, Nacho Cheese Macaroni **Dislikes:** Renholder, Missing QoTSA And Trail Of The Dead Concerts, Spam, Doug Brien **Current Favorite Games:** Sly Cooper And The Thievius Raccoonus, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4, Battlefield 1942, Burnout 2

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "ripping" him off, he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports 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:** First-Person Shooters, Puzzle, Action/Adventure, Action/Sports **Interests:** Recording, Cooking, Seeing If Splinter Cell Lives Up To The Hype, Waiting For Vice City, The Beck/Framing Lips Tour **Dislikes:** Field Goals, Extra Points, The Nagging Feeling That Ronnie James Dio Is Cooler Than Ozzy, Big Ass Holiday Issues **Current Favorite Games:** Sly Cooper And The Thievius Raccoonus, Mafia, Pro Race Driver

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:** Going To Japan, The Warriors, Mexican (And Pseudo-Mexican) Food, Dave Brookie Experience **Dislikes:** Guacamole, Sour Cream, Water Chestnuts, Paint Fumes **Current Favorite Games:** Super Monkey Ball 2, NBA 2K3, Pro Race Driver, Star Fox Adventures, Um Jammer Lammy

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



CHET

Handle: The Chronic Gamer **Expertise:** Fighting, Action, RPG, FPS, Shooter, Platform, Simulation **Interests:** Japan, Japanese, Buddhist Thought, UT Clans **Dislikes:** War, George W. Bush **Current Favorite Games:** Street Fighter II Turbo, Unreal Tournament 2003, Summoner 2, Dynasty Tactics

Chet 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, Dark Knights, or relaxing with one of his consoles, he's hopefully 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:** DC Hero Chic, Animal Crossing E-Cards, Watching The Minnesota Vikings Lose (Worst Team Ever!), Your Mom **Dislikes:** Professional Athletes Doing Viagra Commercials (Now There's A Role Model!), Coworkers Who Won't Accept The Fact That Their Football Team Sucks **Current Favorite Games:** Splinter Cell, Animal Crossing, Metroid Fusion

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 603 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.



KRISTIAN

Handle: The Video Viking **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** The USA Party, Gary Anderson, My Town In Animal Crossing (Wagzer), Indian Summers, The Color Green **Dislikes:** Reiner's Town In Animal Crossing (Nimble), Getting High From Paint Fumes At My Desk, My Cat's Claws **Current Favorite Games:** Madden NFL 2003 (Xbox), Animal Crossing, Icewind 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 started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to spend out a good sports game.



KATO

Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Racing, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** The Sopranos, Ryan Newman's First Points Win, Being In NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona, The Epiphone Dot **Dislikes:** Point After Attempts, Paul McCartney And His Trophy Wife, Hippies, Goths **Current Favorite Games:** NASCAR: Dirt To Daytona, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003, Kingdom Hearts, Animal Crossing

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:** Concerts In The Next Month, Cyan's New Mudpie, D'ni Restoration, Big Bracelets, Kalamata Olives **Dislikes:** Reactionary Politics, Nickels, Falling Asleep On The Couch And Waking Up At An Odd Time **Current Favorite Games:** Animal Crossing, Mudpie, Splinter Cell

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 subjecting her friends to 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 pretty.



Content suitable for persons ages 3 and older.



Content suitable for persons ages 6 and older.



Content suitable for persons ages 13 and older.



Product is awaiting final rating.

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

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

- action** – A term we use for games like *Zone of the Enders* and *Gauntlet*
- adventure** – A term we use for games like *Myst* and *Escape From Monkey Island*
- AI** – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent
- board** – A term we use for games like *Jeopardy!* and *Mario Party*
- bump-mapping** – A technique where varying light effects simulate depth on textures
- Burr-AH!** – Sound made when you get so excited, you just can't hide it
- cel-shading** – A technique used to create 3D rendered objects that resemble hand-drawn animation cels
- 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*
- framerate** – 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 distant, suddenly appear
- PS2** – Sony PlayStation 2
- PS-X** – Sony PlayStation
- particle effects** – Things like smoke or sparks created in real-time
- PKer** – 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

REVIEWS

SLY COOPER

and the
Thievis Raccoonus

GAME OF THE MONTH SLY COOPER AND THE THIEVIUS RACCOONUS

No matter how cutting-edge games become, there will always be room for the classic action/platformer. Sucker Punch's *Sly Cooper and the Thievis Raccoonus* delivers all the fun you could want and more. Featuring five worlds filled with unique mini-games, tons of stealthy moves to unlock, and some of the best cel-shaded graphics the PlayStation 2 has to offer, you can't go wrong with this Raccoonus' debut-nicus. Page 108.





WE ARE
 THE NATION'S CHOSEN FEW.
 WE ARE SWIFT, SILENT, AND INVISIBLE.
 WE WILL NOT FAIL OUR COUNTRY.
 WE WILL NOT FAIL EACH OTHER.
 WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER.
 WE FIGHT, SO THAT PEACE MAY REIGN.
 WE ARE THE GHOSTS.



SQUAD-BASED BATTLEFIELD COMBAT

Command the Ghosts, an elite band of specially-trained Green Berets, in a deadly, realistic campaign waged on the war-torn battlefields of Tomorrow's Headlines. Use cutting-edge gear and guns to lay waste to the enemy, or your multiplayer opponents. A total battlefield experience that only Tom Clancy and the makers of Rainbow Six can deliver.



Blood and Gore
 Violence



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PlayStation 2

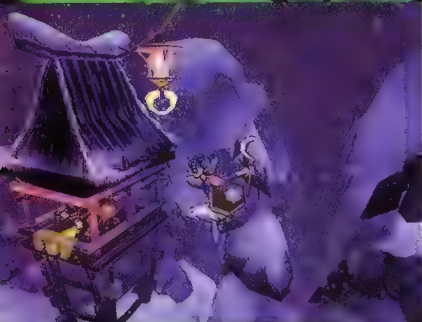


GAME OF THE YEAR
NOW FOR NEXT-GENERATION CONSOLES

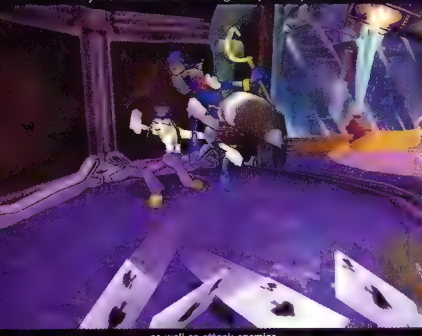
★ Tom Clancy's

**GHOST
RECON**™

www.ghostrecon.com



Sly uses his hookstaff to swing from place to place...



...as well as attack enemies



Defeating each boss unlocks a new power like this one where you can land, ninja-style, on super small platforms with a touch of the button

PLAYSTATION 2

SLY COOPER AND THE THIEVIUS RACCOONUS

IT STOLE OUR HEARTS

One of my biggest complaints about the progression of action/platformers has been that the constant onslaught of action – the highlight of the great 2D platformers – has become less and less prevalent with each console evolution. Sure, games like *Jak & Daxter* still deliver some fantastic gameplay, but the hip thing for developers nowadays is to create a huge 3D world that places an emphasis on exploration, while meting out the action in spurts.

Which brings me to *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus*, a game that borrows a page from the glory days of *Crash Bandicoot*, and delivers a gameplay experience that sticks to its guns and keeps the action constant by minimizing the exploration element.

The goal of *Sly Cooper* is to recover his family's heirloom, the *Thievius Raccoonus*, which was stolen from his father by the *Fiendish Five* when he was just a lad. Sly, along with his pals *Bentley* and *Murray*, must recover the *Thievius Raccoonus* from the clutches of the nefarious criminal organization by tracking them down and defeating them at their hideouts located all over the globe.

In total, *Sly Cooper* has over 30 levels, but that number can be a little deceiving because you encounter a myriad of minigames throughout your quest. These unique levels help keep Sly from growing stale, and add to its old-school heritage. Drive a race car as *Murray* over *Super Sprint*-like track designs, uncover lost data as *Bentley* in an *Asteroids*-esque shooter, or protect *Murray* in a gun game-styled first-person shooter mode. That's just the tip of the iceberg, since there are also areas where Sly controls a gunship and blasts his way through the level, or drives a swamp buggy to collect piranhas in order to re-light extinguished torches.

That's not the end of all the unique things Sly can do either. In most levels, there are clues hidden throughout the environment. If Sly collects them all, *Bentley* can crack the safe's combination and unlock moves, powers, and other special goodies. Some moves, like the *ninja* technique that allows you to land on tiny platforms, are unlocked by defeating bosses; but there are lots of other moves Sly can learn by finding clues. With these hidden

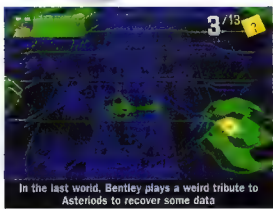
tactics, Sly can slow down or speed up time, drop hat mines, create decoy dopelgangers, make himself completely invisible, roll into a ball, and even dive attack enemies.

There also some handy utilities that he can unlock, like blueprints to the levels that help you find all the hidden secrets, water safety techniques that let Sly fall in the drink without losing a life, and even information that gives profiles on enemies.

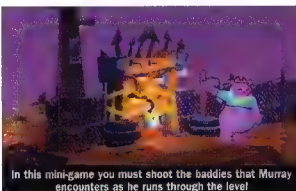
Using Sly's moves all depends on the situation. Luckily, blue auras appear on different objects that let him know he needs to use one of his super-stealth thief moves; so, even for all the abilities, the gameplay is very simple to control. One of my favorite scenes is one in which Sly gets chased by a giant dragon. In this sequence, you must complete a series of hook swings from branch to branch, run nimbly along a series of tiny planks, then slide down a huge rail to escape. All of this is done with but a couple of simple button presses. It's quite impressive and a load of fun.

Production wise, this game is extremely well done, with gorgeous levels that feature tons of lighting and particle effects. I even liked the tones, which fit perfectly with Sly's cartoon world and his *Robin Hood* mentality. There were times when I experienced some slow down due to all the action on the screen, but it never really detracted from the experience.

I will admit, *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus* might possibly be the worst name for a game in a long time, but don't let that stop you from giving this PS2 gem a shot. It borrows all the right things from the old-school 2D platformers, but still has the flash and grandeur of today's 3D environments to keep the technophile in you happy. —ANDY



In the last world, Bentley plays a weird tribute to *Asteroids* to recover some data



In this mini-game you must shoot the buddies that *Murray* encounters as he runs through the level

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** SUCKER PUNCH ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10



GAME OF THE MONTH SLY COOPER AND THE THEVIEUS RACCOONS

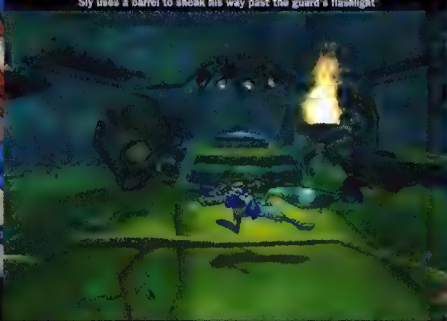


The Fab Three - Sly, Bentley, and Murray - discuss Thievius activities as they listen to Side B of Led Zepplin IV

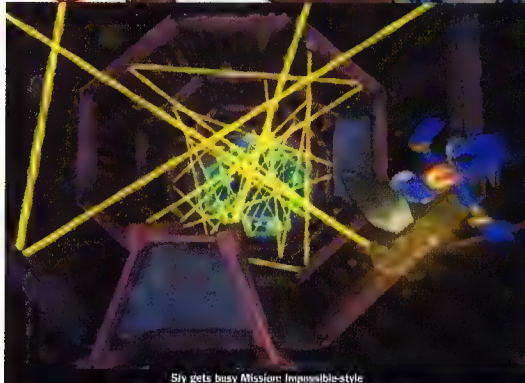
"...a game that borrows a page from the glory days of Crash Bandicoot and delivers a gameplay experience that sticks to its guns and keeps the action constant..."



Sly uses a barrel to sneak his way past the guard's flashlight



You must use the shadows if you want to travel undetected



Sly gets busy Mission: Impossible-style



Sly uses fireworks to cap the enemy

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
9.25

- **Concept:** Raccoon requires razor-sharp reflexes to rescue a relic
- **Graphics:** Sly's cel-shaded world is both beautiful and deadly
- **Sound:** Perfect tunes and sound effects for a sneaky platformer
- **Playability:** Lightning-quick gameplay with lots of unique gameplay elements
- **Entertainment:** Easily one of the most enjoyable platformers on the PS2
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Sly Cooper is certainly one of the most inventive games of this ilk I've played in awhile, fusing traditional run n' jump action with challenging stealth sequences, a variety of minigames inspired by classic '80s arcade classics, and some great boss battles. Utilizing a blend of cel-shaded and conventional 3D graphics, it's also among the best-looking platformers for any next-generation system. Sucker Punch also solved many of the frustrating problems that arise in platforming in a 3D environment by utilizing the circle button to automatically lock Sly onto a tricky sequence of jumps, a mechanic that makes this game feel more like a 2D side-scroller. There's a lot of variety here, maybe to a fault, as some of the more suspect minigames detract from the experience. Overall, though, it's a smashing success for Sony and Sucker Punch.

MATT - 9.25



In the end, the most important lesson is that you should always be prepared to do what it takes to get the job done. It's not always easy, but it's worth it. You'll be surprised at how much you can achieve when you put your mind to it. And remember, the only way to succeed is to never give up. You'll be surprised at how much you can achieve when you put your mind to it. And remember, the only way to succeed is to never give up.

I ❤️ heal berries

My parents went to FLEGATA and all I got was this stupid T-shirt!



WILD ARMS 3

PlayStation 2

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD. PLAY IN OURS.

WILD ARMS 3

Clive has an "explosive" personality

Healbers can only be found or grown.

Gallows it all wet.

Don't forget to reload your weapon

See everything with R or L!

Booming hard to reach switches.

Upgrade your arms.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org
or call 1-800-771-3772
for more info.

00:00:00 BEST
1/2 LAP
1/2 LAP

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POS 12/13



PLAYSTATION 2

PRO RACE DRIVER

RACING'S NEW FRONTIER

"Racing games
this good
are almost
nonexistent."

Normally, I could give a damn about the average racing game. My copy of Gran Turismo 3 has gathered more dust than Mark Linn-Baker's (Larry from *Perfect Strangers*) telephone. However, Pro Race Driver had me hopelessly captivated, and there was something about it that prevented me from putting it down. What was it? Well, let's take an objective look at things and see if we can figure that out...together.

First, let me introduce you to Ryan McKane. His daddy was a great racer, as was his older brother. Now, he's trying to avoid the shadow cast from the elder McKane by striking out on his own. With the help of an expert crew chief, Ryan's the hottest free agent on wheels. Other hot things include his temper and the assorted women that he tries to pick up.

You, as Ryan, get offers from various race teams and sponsors. They even offer incentives to do things like beat a rival team or win a certain amount of races. Essentially, you want to win both for Ryan and his employers. Between your time behind the wheel, Ryan will interact with a slew of characters, in the form of entertaining cutscenes. This all adds up to races meaning something and motivating me to keep winning for more than just money to buy another ride. As a little extra, miscellaneous champions will call up and challenge you to a little one-on-one, with their cars as the prize if you win.

The racing itself is top notch. The intensity you feel around every turn is exhilarating. You'll actually be using both your handbrake and regular brakes with regularity. A red arrow at the bottom of the screen shows where the opponent is behind you, so you can keep him eating your dust. Each car feels decidedly different. Tweaking them would've been a nightmare if your mechanic homie wasn't dishing out advice. The opposing drivers all have their own attitudes, too. Your teammates will pull to the side for you to pass. Other guys will bang your rear so hard, you'll think you're incarcerated. The courses offer lots of variety, from the NASCAR left-turning Bristol, to the narrow Formula One-style confines of Vancouver.

There isn't much courtesy in Pro Race Driver. Feel free to beat the hell out of your car, and everyone else's for that matter. These vehicles take some beautiful damage. We're talking swinging doors, dangling bumpers, and shattered windshields. You can even flip someone's ride if you're feeling particularly brutal. The debris will stay on the track for you to look at with nostalgia on the following lap.

Racing games are by no means a rare commodity in video games, but racing games this good are almost nonexistent. Pro Race Driver grabs you by your beaded seat cushion and won't let go. It's deep, intense, refreshing, and won't lose value the moment you drive it off the lot. —JUSTIN

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ PUBLISHER CODEMASTERS ■ DEVELOPER CODEMASTERS ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 12



"No, this isn't a NASCAR game, Kato. Quit drooling on me."



The pit crew is more concerned with the tires than the missing door

"You and me." "One-on-one? You're crazy."



"Baby, turn down those brights, cuz you are blinding me!"



You won't win many races this way

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 9.25
BEST

- **Concept:**
An epic racing game where you actually care enough to keep on carrr'n'
- **Graphics:**
If you don't mind some pop-up, the game looks gravy. Especially nice cutscenes
- **Sound:**
All sorts of ambient sounds, from tire squeals to "Sweet Home Alabama"
- **Playability:**
The flawless control will have you becoming one with the car
- **Entertainment:**
This is my favorite true racing game — perhaps of all time. It may also be yours
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

I love racing games to death, but most of them have all the personality of a dead turtle. Pro Race Driver remedies this by adding a story, casting the player as Ryan McKane, a brash young car jockey attempting to race his way to the top. The cutscenes tell a story of tragedy, rivalry, romance, and revenge, and it makes Pro Race Driver a more personal, compelling experience than most driving titles. It's also comprehensive and technically rock-solid, throwing you into a wide variety of events and vehicles. You'll race on hair-raising city tracks, traditional European outdoor courses, and even NASCAR ovals, competing for tournament points and press glory. The car models are lovely, but don't let that stop you from enjoying the awesome vehicle damage, which sends fenders and bumpers flying to the pavement. Whether you're tackling a prestigious TOCA circuit, or competing in a high stakes after-hours challenge with a rival, your skills will be pushed to the limit by the aggressive AI opponents. All told, Pro Race Driver is a real step forward for the racing genre.

MATT — 9.25



EVERYONE
E
ESRB

7

THE BOTTOM LINE

PLAYSTATION 2

SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS

WITH A FISTFUL OF KRYPTONITE

...Sheffield tried too much and didn't focus enough on the gameplay necessities."

While most gamers will probably dismiss the Shadow of Apokolips as another uninspired and poorly executed comic book to video game translation, it should be noted that this is the closest any developer has successfully come to bridging the gap between the Man of Steel's hand-drawn exploits and his pixelated adventures. Since the game draws its inspiration directly from the animated series, developer Sheffield House already had the groundwork in place. Not only did the show provide detailed blueprints of the world; it delivered a unique art style and showcased exactly how Superman should be animated.

From the expansive Metropolis skylines to the darkly toned cel-shaded graphics, Sheffield House followed the lead of the animated series and nailed the essence that is uniquely its own. On top of this, Superman's movements look fantastic – his flying animations deliver the true sensation of speed and also capture the feeling that you really are changing altitudes. If you look closely, you'll also see the littlest of details are in place, including the arm tuck under the chest and outstretched fist. To round out the experience and make it as familiar as can be for fans of the show, all of the dialogue in the game features voice acting by the original cast. Given the fact that there's more than 40 minutes of out-of-game cinematics, this is an impressive statistic.

So, Sheffield House accurately recreated the show within the video game world, but the question remains: What kind of gameplay presence does it offer? In comparison to other products on the market, it comes up short, way short. But it is, without the slightest hint of doubt, the best Superman game ever conceived. Is that saying much? Not exactly, but this time around, you can definitely see potential. The flying segments are expertly designed and are easily the best thing that the game package has to offer. The hand-to-hand combat is loaded with options; yet at the same time, fidgety, clunky, and unresponsive. For example, you are the strongest man on earth, but lifting a box is a chore, and you continually get your butt kicked by robotic minions. I do give merits for the variety that was included in the missions, but at the same time, it should be noted that Sheffield tried too much and didn't focus enough on the gameplay necessities.

I enjoyed the button mashing segments, but the stealth and rescue components really did nothing for me. So in a sense, it's fun to fly around the city and rapidly press X, but the rest of the game is kind of a loss. I will recommend that fans stomach the disappointing material to see the story (it's quite good), but everyone else should approach it with the utmost of caution.

— REINER

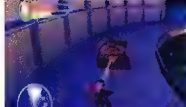
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** INFOGRAMES SHEFFIELD HOUSE ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24



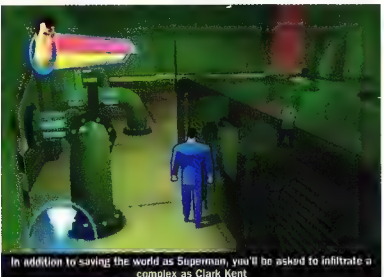
"Hey, Lois! Kick me in the Jimmy!"



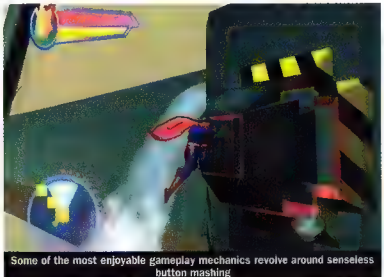
The flying segments are as smooth as can be



Superman's x-ray vision, ice breath, and heat vision are included and used extensively



In addition to saving the world as Superman, you'll be asked to infiltrate a complex as Clark Kent



Some of the most enjoyable gameplay mechanics revolve around senseless button mashing

SECOND OPINION

Superman: Shadow of Apokolips isn't the horrible disaster that Titus' N64 title was, but it is far from being the masterpiece that the icon's long-suffering fans deserve. To its credit, the cel-shaded graphics and the expertly rendered cutscenes do manage to do justice to the look of the classic comic series. However, the gameplay and level designs leave much to be desired. I did enjoy the fact that Superman has his full arsenal of superhuman abilities at his disposal, including x-ray vision, heat vision, and a chilling breath blast. Still, combat is extremely clunky, and too many functions are assigned to the X button, which became problematic when confronting multiple enemies. The fighting is at least solidly mediocre, something which cannot be said for the stealth and button mashing sequences. In total, Apokolips isn't abunehokrap, but it's very, very average.

MATT - 7

WNW POLL: WHY CLONE WHEN YOU CAN MORPH?

WORLD NEWS

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NOVEMBER 2002

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RATING PENDING

RP

CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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THE BOTTOM LINE

PLAYSTATION 2

TRIBES: AERIAL ASSAULT

FRAGGLE ROCK

"Tribes is the perfect game to get connected with other blood-hungry PS2 owners across the nation."

Here's a game I like to call "situational." If you really want to open up your Network Adaptor and see what she'll do, Tribes is the perfect game to get connected with other blood-hungry PS2 owners across the nation. On the other hand, if you're only in the market for a fun FPS to play for a while, I'd keep looking. See? It depends on where you're coming from. Tribes: Aerial Assault doesn't hold a candle to the likes of Medal of Honor: Frontline or Red Faction, but then again, it doesn't try to. This is a title that is effectively attempting to bridge the gap between console FPS gamers and their PC counterparts. From what I've seen of games like SOCOM, and now Tribes, the future is looking very, very rosey for game companies and the gamers like you and me who ultimately support them.

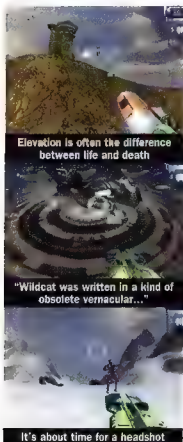
Simply put, the single-player experience in this game is not enough to give me pause. We've all seen the frantically paced shoot-stuff releases, and to tell you the truth, they're quite boring. Tribes looks great, and the controls are decent, but the action in the single player mode is dull. You jump up, shoot, then come back down. Sometimes you shoot on the ground. Maybe you get in a vehicle. That's a bit of an exaggeration, but the point is, the levels begin to melt together because what's happening onscreen changes only slightly with each successful mission completion. That could be argued for any FPS, but Tribes seems to suffer more than most. Since the missions blend together,

the plot becomes boring and trite – then I quit and tried my hand in the multiplayer side of things.

Here is where this title's bread and butter lays. Sixteen-player online deathmatch is truly a sight to behold, and you should probably think about keeping anyone prone to seizures or heart palpitations out of the room because things move real fast. There are an insane number of ways you can play (team deathmatch being my favorite), and lag is reasonable enough where you won't be putting your foot through your television. Multiplayer is also the mode where the environments and vehicles really shine. A well-trained group of players behind the controls of a bomber in a mountainous map can lay down death the likes of which you have never seen. Because of this, a number of different strategies pop up, and what was once simply a big map with a few players becomes an exercise in technical superiority and team strategy. The 16-player component is only available to broadband subscribers, and dial-up players will be sorely disappointed with the lag they experience. Plus, they'll only be able to play with a handful of people.

If you love games like Quake or Unreal Championship, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend Tribes to you. Even if you just want a fun FPS to tinker around with online because you can, this a great way to go. On the other hand, don't get into it thinking you're going to experience the next big story-driven gun-toting gaming experience. Look before you leap, people. – KRISTIAN

■ STYLE 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER SIERRA ■ DEVELOPER INEVITABLE STUDIOS ■ RELEASE SEPTEMBER 27



Elevation is often the difference between life and death

"Wildcat was written in a kind of obsolete vernacular..."

It's about time for a headshot



Vehicles are nice, but they make big targets



A carefully timed jump will put you on top of this structure

TEEN
T
RATED
FOR
MILD
CONTENT

8

- **Concept:**
A first-person shooter taking place on all axis, and featuring a robust multiplayer component
- **Graphics:**
Not good or bad. You'll see things you like and things you don't
- **Sound:**
The taunts are funny, but there's very little here that warrants listening to
- **Playability:**
Console controls don't work with FPSs very well, but this scheme is passable
- **Entertainment:**
If you buy this game, you're getting a lot for your money
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

Here's hopping at you, kid. *Aerial Assault* takes an interesting angle on the typical online deathmatch. The standard-issue jetpack makes for trickier targets, as well as increased mobility – sort of like those Rascal scooters that old people fool around on. It definitely adds another dimension, and expands on the constant jumping tactic most FPS freaks use anyway. Aside from this aspect, Tribes is a solid title. Hunters – where you collect flags from dead enemies – is my favorite mode. While I'm not the most experienced network sniper, Tribes allows hosts to set a bevy of customizable parameters for prospective predators. I like respawning with a full arsenal each time – and not just because I die a lot. The bots put up a good fight on their own, but nothing beats knowing you just cut some real-life geek's game short. This is a good intro to online FPS, but I'd say take the plunge on SOCOM first, due to the headset and team structure.

JUSTIN – 8

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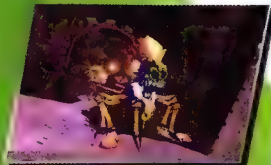
"Before I got my
Splizz Gun, my studio
apartment was way too
cramped. Not anymore!
Now I just morph with the
first spider I see, spin a
web in the corner, kick back
with a bowl of bugs and watch
the tube. Thanks, Dr. Muto. Your
fiendish gadgets rock!"

Doug Morris, Modesto, CA

To squeak
through the
tightest spots,
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It **DICES**
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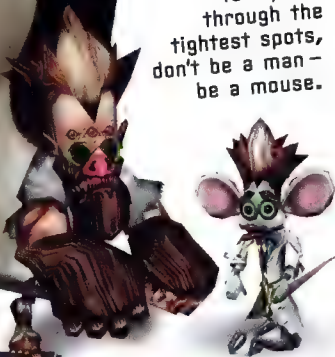
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Rent-a-Cops, vicious "Charks,"
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rival, Professor Burnitall



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RATINGS PENDING

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Fall 2002

Coming Soon

Coming Soon

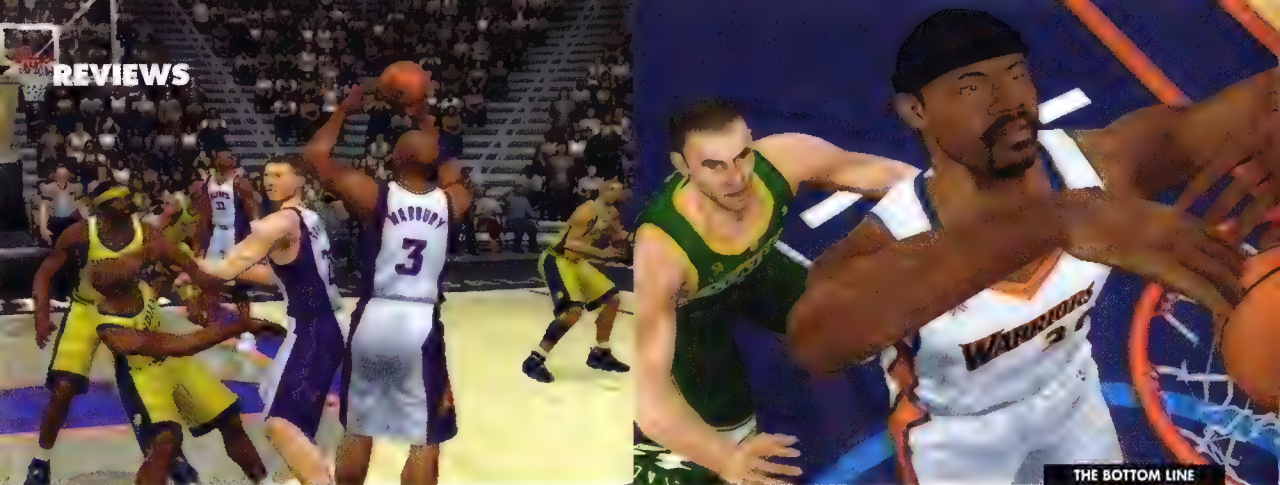


PlayStation 2



GAME BOY ADVANCE

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PLAYSTATION 2

NBA 2K3

SEGA SEES A LEGACY

"Accuracy reigns over adrenaline, and NBA 2K is the king of video hoops yet again."

Sega's NBA 2K series has been my favorite for a number of years now, and I'm sure most hoops aficionados agree. While the race was a bit closer this year, accuracy reigns over adrenaline, and NBA 2K is the king of video hoops yet again.

I love the new little details that have been included in 2K3. Each one adds up to more strategy. There are bobbled catches, fake passing, and my favorite: midair shot altering. A few previous features have been improved, like jumping in the passing lane for the pick, more post moves, and easier alley-oops. Off the court, I like the ESPN presentation, replay saving, and the slider bars – which let you adjust home court advantage for nearly every gameplay aspect.

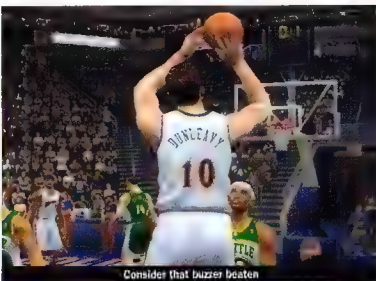
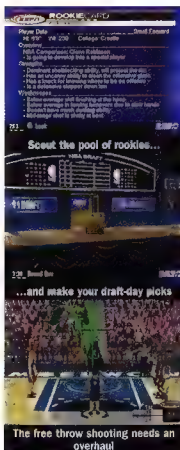
When I play a Franchise mode, I fully plan to spend time making deals and checking stats than doing crossovers and blocking shots. That's what makes it so cool. This year's Franchise expands upon the off-season, capturing the excitement of the draft and the meticulous scouting leading up to it. For every player in the draft pool, you can see a few key positives and negatives, as well as which active NBA player they most resemble. For four weeks, you can bring in prospects for a workout, and get more info on them. It doesn't give ratings – not even when you're in the draft – which forces you to be that much more scrutinizing to make sure you don't waste

a pick. A mock draft helps a bit. Other noteworthy Franchise aspects include coach signings, loads of year-end awards, a trading block, an interest gauge during trade talks, and simulated quarter length adjustments. 'Tis a beautiful thing.

You want beef? Passing is still a pain. Even with the new analog stick function, my point guard sometimes tosses to a teammate literally on the other side of the court from where I intended to dish. Many passes are far too lazy, and easily intercepted. I'm on my knees here, begging Visual Concepts to do something to keep me from having to change both timeouts and substitutions to manual every single game. I want to control every aspect of my team, the least of which being who I bring onto the court and when. The game's speed has taken a hit – presumably because of the update in graphics. This is slower than 2K2, and looks like molasses compared to this year's Live. However, it didn't detract from the gameplay, and lends itself better to strategy and realism. Unlike every other game out there, 2K3 gives nothing free.

I was truly surprised at the new things 2K3 threw my way. Fix the passing and copy Live's analog ballhandling moves, and you've got the perfect game. There is easily enough here to warrant a purchase, no matter how many seasons you've gone through in 2K2. – **JUSTIN**

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER VISUAL CONCEPTS ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 8



THE BOTTOM LINE
E 9.25
 EVERYONE
 GAMES

- **Concept:**
Continue building on the best series to ever sport an afro
- **Graphics:**
Tremendous player models, which all move perfectly on the court
- **Sound:**
The commentary – especially on replays – shows some improvement. The familiar ESPN themes will have you humming along
- **Playability:**
Aside from passing, the control is picture perfect
- **Entertainment:**
The expanded Franchise and little intricacies give you even more reason to hoop it up
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

From the fantasy options to the basics of gameplay, NBA 2K3 is this year's most fundamentally sound basketball title. Overall, it hasn't changed too terribly much. The speed of the game is a little slower than before and not nearly as nimble as this year's Live, but it brings about authenticity and allows for more dynamic plays to be constructed. The collision between players has been fine-tuned to the point to show accurate bumping in the paint and midair crashes that result with a player having to alter the angle of his shot. A new passing system has been introduced as well, but it's a little difficult to grasp. Sega also reworked the Franchise mode so that the rookie drafting and trading options are as deep and true to the sport as can be. In my opinion, this is still the basketball game to beat for simulation and gameplay purposes.

REINER – 9.25



PLAYSTATION 2

NBA LIVE 2003

THE CROWD PLEASER

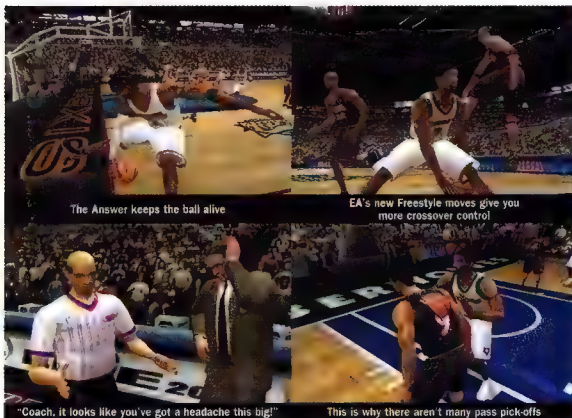
This is not last year's Live. It barely resembles it. Is that a good thing? I think so. Live 2003 takes a different angle on hoops, coming off more caffeinated and carefree than the staunchly realistic 2K3. Which one is better is really a matter of taste.

This game moves at light speed. Players streak down the court as if you're watching in fast-forward. The big draw for 2003 is the Freestyle control. Using the right analog stick, you can break the opposing guard's ankles, spin around a defender in the post, reach out for the steal, and do a bunch of other moves that really expand the gameplay. It may be the biggest advancement in a hoops title this year.

Freestyle almost gives you too much of an advantage, as Live is still way too easy. You can drive at will, and the opponent's AI isn't the best. Thankfully, blocks and rebounds are worlds better than in the past, so you won't just be napping on D. Another clever move, which will come in handy in multiplayer, is holding circle to take the charge. Nothing's funnier than getting in the way of your turbo-boosting opponent and causing a turnover.

Franchise mode has some cool features, but remains a few steps behind 2K3's. The rookie scouting isn't as good, there are fewer awards, and an odd amount of your players will refuse to resign on your team. Still, it will give you hours of entertainment.

Live 2003 is a game for those who don't mind sacrificing some realism for a more exciting experience. You can pick it up and compete without a PhD in hoopology. I prefer 2K3, but I also anticipate busting out Live often this season. — **JUSTIN**



The Answer keeps the ball alive

EA's new Freestyle moves give you more crossover control

"Coach, it looks like you've got a headache this big!"

This is why there aren't many pass pick-offs

■ **STYLE 1** TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS
 ■ **DEVELOPER** EA CANADA ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 15

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 8.75

- **Concept:** Blend sim elements with adrenaline-fueled hoops
- **Graphics:** Slightly cartoony, which lends itself to expressiveness. Great work on the cutscenes
- **Sound:** Snoop, Busta, and a veritable who's who of hip-hop. I'm not liking the commentary team, though
- **Playability:** Freestyle control is the next evolution of sports games, believe you me
- **Entertainment:** It doesn't have the realism or depth of 2K3, but it's still one heck of a game!
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

With Sega focusing on realism, EA went with the stance of fast paced hot-dogging. While it does make use of the NBA rules, this is still an arcade game at heart where driving the lane greatly outweighs the need to manufacture a play. EA overhauled every inch of this game, and it does look fantastic. The player movements are as lifelike as can be, the dramatic camera angles put you into the action, and the out-of-play sequences are rather amusing, but a tad repetitive. EA has always excelled in the fantasy options department, but I can honestly say that 2K3 absolutely stomps all over this game with its Franchise mode and stylistic front-end. From every angle, Live is a distant second behind 2K3. However, if you are looking for a game that doesn't take itself so seriously and is all about big-time slams and run-and-gun basketball, this is the game to get.

REINER — 8.5

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

NBA SHOOTOUT 2003

PUTS YOU IN THE GAME, BUT IS THAT A GOOD THING?

When you're in last-place with insurmountable odds, you have to do something different. This season, 989 comes at us, with a mode almost interesting enough to make ShootOut enjoyable, despite the numerous faults.

Career mode is where it's at. As stated last issue, you take a created player from the summer league to his maximum potential. Work up from a 10-day contract with an NBA team, or go ghetto on a development league squad. You play as normal, but obviously have more stock in your home-grown baller than his temporary teammates. His fate is in your hands, dude.

Getting your start-to-be to the top isn't that hard, as ShootOut's gameplay is very rudimentary. My tactic was the pump-fake and drive, which got my boy Jif Choozy around 50 points per game. Switching on defense — especially if one guy gets burned — is impossible. The refs are morons, calling charges at random, steals are too prevalent, rebounding is too hard, and your teammates will often loiter out of bounds. Post-basket close-ups usually result in your player running under the other team's basket, by the time you regain control.

I dug schooling the competition with my untalented alter ego, but ShootOut is full of more holes than Swiss cheese. Rent it for something different, or wait until next year, when every game will have a Career mode. — **JUSTIN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 6.75

- **Concept:** In a new basketball twist you're the star
- **Graphics:** All-around nice look, with nice models and refs that actually do work
- **Sound:** I have a love/hate relationship with Bill Walton. The rest of the audio will suffice
- **Playability:** Career mode, not gameplay was the obvious focal point. There are many control flaws here
- **Entertainment:** It's definitely different, but one mode does not a good game make
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

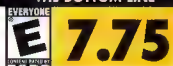
From a conceptual basis, ShootOut is this year's most dynamic basketball game. Creating a player and trying to make the NBA is a great idea. That is, until you actually start playing. As has been the case for several years now, ShootOut's gameplay trails behind the competition and is loaded with bugs and glitches.

REINER — 6.25

■ **STYLE 1** TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY
 COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** 989
 SPORTS ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24



THE BOTTOM LINE



PLAYSTATION 2

NHL 2003

SKATING ON THIN ICE

With each passing installment, the NHL series has made significant strides forward. For this year's release, however, EA decided to experiment with the tried and true gameplay formula and has also implemented a variety of newfangled concepts. Some of the ideas sound great on paper, and are things that we've dreamed of for eons, but rather than sweeping us off of our feet, the new material is either detrimental to the gameplay experience or lacking in execution.

The biggest change that you'll run into, which should definitely be in the game, is dynamic deke controls. This system allows players to manually control their hot-dog antics. As I had hoped, this aspect is brought to life through a sophisticated control schematic that taps directly into both analog sticks. Along with having the ability to simply move your stick in any direction, EA also included eight programmed maneuvers that can be triggered by entering a sequence on the sticks. For example, if you press the right analog stick right/down then left, your skater will perform a one-handed deke moving the puck behind his skates. It looks fantastic and will likely freeze the goalie, but here's the thing—the analog control is incredibly sensitive and a real hassle to manhandle. As you well know, you really don't have a lot of time to shoot, especially on the higher difficulty settings. This is another variable that you have

to deal with, but the chances of being successful with it are not in your favor. Like I said, the concept is sound, it just needs a viable solution. I actually gave up on this gameplay aspect and just ended up using the triangle button, which performs a random deke unassisted.

To make matters worse, EA also decided to give players an advantage. I wasn't too keen on the momentum meter from the previous games, but I'd gladly take it back in exchange for the new Game Breaker meter. When you perform a number of moves successfully or score goals, the Game Breaker meter will fill up. When it reaches the max, it will prompt players to hit L2. By doing so, the screen will darken, a spotlight will fall on your player, and the game will slow down ever so slightly. The catch is, your team actually moves faster than the opposition, which gives you an unfair advantage to score.

Thankfully, this option can be turned off, but if you choose to play this way, which is the closest you'll come to an accurate simulation, you've basically eliminated all of the new material. The only differences at this point are a new graphics engine (which delivers subtle enhancements), tweaked camera angles (all for the worse, I might add), the ability to one-time on a loose puck, new goalie animations, and authentic sound effects. It's a little different, but if you dissect every little detail, it's actually a step down from last year's release. —REINER

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ PUBLISHER EA SPORTS ■ DEVELOPER ELECTRONIC ARTS CANADA ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 1

“...a step down from last year's release.”



The Game Story presentation has been enhanced



The licensed soundtrack kicks in during breakaways



If you can figure out the funky control scheme, the deke moves will add another layer to gameplay



The new camera angles are not as easy to comprehend. Do we really need to see the crowd? What about the action in front of the net? Lame!



The Game Breaker meter delivers interesting effects. A spotlight? Slow motion? Really? In hockey?

- **Concept:**
A rebuilding year, but most of the changes that were made hurt the franchise
- **Graphics:**
EA wrote new graphics and animation engines for this version, but again, the character models don't look as sharp, and the animation is a tad clunky
- **Sound:**
With authentic on-ice sounds, the ambience is better than ever. On the other hand, will somebody please shoot the announcers?!
- **Playability:**
Deke moves and tons of flashy stuff that has nothing to do with hockey
- **Entertainment:**
Is it possible to get last year's game with updated rosters?
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

I don't know if I understand EA's decision to go back to the drawing board for this franchise. "Old time hockey" is all I want. Last year's edition wasn't perfect, but 2003 isn't an upgrade. Personally, I don't think that the hits are as big, and this takes away from the sport's casual draw. EA has tried to up the drama quotient, but other areas need work first. Franchise mode is basic, and the players look like they've been beat with the ugly stick. The advanced dekes are admirable, but they actually might be easier to pull off in real life. NHL 2003 obviously tries hard to puff up its chest for the sport, but it simply falls short. Although the game is still enjoyable (the goalie saves are cool), I don't think the addition of Game Breakers are enough to warrant a purchase. This brings to mind two damning words for any sports game: roster update.

KATO — 7.75

HE FORGOT TO RESERVE HIS GAME.



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REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

SUMMONER 2

A QUALITY SUMMONS

Holy crap! I never would've thought that Volition could've transformed *Summoner* (a mediocre title) into something verging on stellar. As it stands, *Summoner 2* easily reigns as the best dungeon crawler on the PlayStation 2, and one of the most engrossing RPGs around.

The sheer amount of gameplay variety is *S2*'s particular strong point. Throughout your adventure as Maia, the heroine and leader of your kingdom, you must maintain your land's happiness, stand as a judge to settle disputes and happenings, complete various bonus objectives, and, of course, explore huge dungeons.

The exploration component is complimented by a deep combat system. Players can team up with two other allies who possess solid AI, and learn numerous spells, combat techniques, and monster summons. Volition even included scenarios that split your team up, allowing you to exploit and enjoy each character's particular style.

Fortunately, the game's most significant flaw is the graphics, which aren't necessarily bad; they simply look a little bland and generic. Nevertheless, this slight gripe, and few other minor problems, don't detract from *Summoner 2*'s overall fun.

—CHET

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **DEVELOPER** VOLITION ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 23

THE BOTTOM LINE



9

■ **Concept:**

A dungeon crawler with plenty of gameplay variety

■ **Graphics:**

The models and environments look a little bland, but the framerate is fine

■ **Sound:**

The sound effects are cool and the music is appropriate and sometimes catchy

■ **Playability:**

The controls are intuitive and executing various commands often presents no problems

■ **Entertainment:**

I had a wonderful time ruling my kingdom, summoning various monsters, and slashing away at hordes of enemies

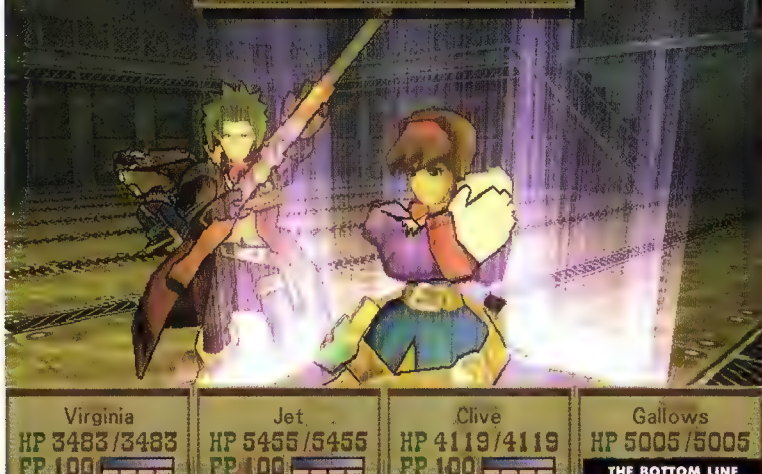
■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Summoner 2 is the surprise hit of the year and best dungeon crawler since *Yggdril Story*. The visual presentation isn't up to Square Soft standards, but the gameplay far exceeds anything that I ever expected to see in a console RPG. A sound investment.

REINER - 9



PLAYSTATION 2

WILD ARMS 3

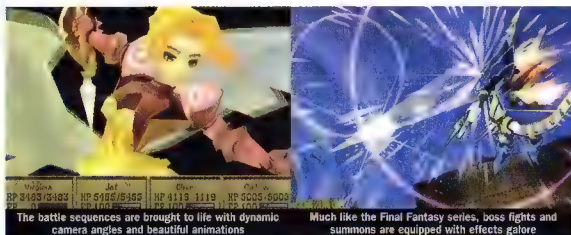
PUNK ROCK WILD WEST

I'm glad that I stuck with *Wild Arms* through the credits. Don't think I'm any kind of slacker, as they are about three or four hours into the whole "adventure". My time spent pre-credit? Mind numbing at best.

It could have been so different with just a little editing. The big problem is that you play every main character's prologue at about an hour each. Okay. Fine. Except that, within that hour, you're in one location, encountering one kind of foe with one kind of attack and completing one kind of puzzle. Had the intros been cut together, this whole process could have been a lot less mundane. These pacing problems carry through the game.

But, on to the highlights after the credits — the style of *Wild Arms 3* is definitely unique. While I don't remember anyone in John Wayne movies sporting a green mohawk, I'm sure it could have happened. Each of the areas, creatures, and characters have a distinct and clean look. The sound, on the other hand, makes me cower in a corner, trying to find a warm place.

The combat system looks nice, but the random "we're going to run around after I hit you but before you hit me" action seems silly. On a good note, relying on interesting, zoom-to-action shots helps keep even the prolific random attacks seem somewhat interesting. —LISA



Virginia HP 3483/3483 Jet HP 5455/5455 Clive HP 4113/4119 Gallows HP 5005/5005

The battle sequences are brought to life with dynamic camera angles and beautiful animations

Much like the *Final Fantasy* series, boss fights and summons are equipped with effects galore



"Which one of you will I eat first?"

With the wild west theme, you'll experience a wide variety of different gameplay styles

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** MEDIAVISION ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 8



■ **Concept:**

RPG in an old American West sort of setting. Traditional save-the-world-by-following-the-elder-traditions... blah-de-blah-blah

■ **Graphics:**

Cel-shaded, hyper-colored, and dynamic. Clear characters, settings, and monsters

■ **Sound:**

Find good CDs. Fast

■ **Playability:**

After the first four hours, the story picks up remarkably. I wish the battle controls could have been streamlined a bit

■ **Entertainment:**

After the credits, you may just start to care about these people

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

MediaVision, the developer of the original *Arms*, is back, and that's not all you'll recognize here. *Wild Arms 3* may have a vibrant new look courtesy of the PlayStation 2, but fans of the series won't be disappointed by what's within. Whether it's the converging story lines of the main characters (there are now four that make up your party), or the *Zelda*-esque dungeon exploration, the old gang's all there. Which brings up my one large frustration with the title: I wish the overland exploration system was changed. You basically have to wander around pressing the square button and hoping that you find the town you're looking for. I bet bums with metal detectors have better luck at this sort of thing than I did — at least they're on the beach! Sony has delivered another solid RPG, but needs to invest in pure innovation if this series is ever to compete with the likes of *Square*.

KATO - 8

JUSTICE LEAGUE

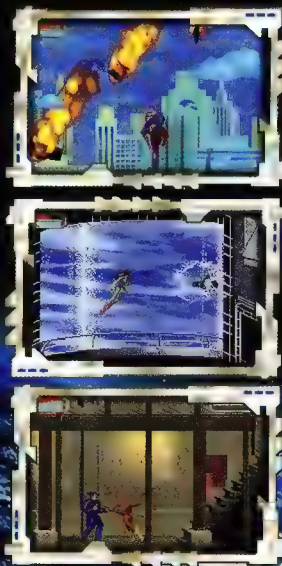
INJUSTICE FOR ALL

gdb MIDWAY



JUSTICE LEAGUE COMES TO THE GAME BOY ADVANCE

When global catastrophe strikes and the world is in peril, the call goes out for the *Justice League*, the greatest super heroes of all time. Fighting for truth, justice and freedom, *Superman*, *Batman*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *Hawkgirl* and *Martian Manhunter* have banded together to fight for the common good against the *Injustice League* in an all-new action adventure title for the Game Boy Advance. Featuring 12 levels of non-stop action, gamers will overcome dangerous obstacles, an onslaught of villains and discover power-ups on the path to victory!



GAME PREVIEW AT:

WWW.JUSTICELEAGUE.MIDWAY.COM



GAME BOY ADVANCE

EVERYONE



Violence

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REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

NO LETTING UP ON THE GAS

Admit that that original Burnout rubbed me the wrong way. Yes, the crashes were spectacular, but I felt I was getting played like a cheap guitar — there was little else to the title. While this sequel is definitely still about finding all of your cars crumple zones, overall the game seems more complete than the first.

Hats off to Criterion and its new Renderware graphics engine (which you'll also see in Grand Theft Auto: Vice City) for making these streets sing. The original Burnout wasn't a homey title, but the road textures and the lack of anti-aliasing problems almost had me believing this was an Xbox title at times. And then there's the speed. There's a lot going down onscreen at a fast pace when you burn through a busy intersection laying down rubber and smoke through all the traffic.

Not only is the title's Championship mode more traditionally structured, but it's fun to run races against unlockable cars or to perform Need for Speed-esque cop missions. Although I'd still love for race crashes to be incorporated more into some sort of monetary system, Burnout 2 gives this aspect its own mode, simply titled Crash. Here, you win medals based on the mayhem you cause by plowing into oncoming vehicles at full speed.

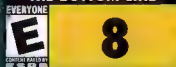
This sequel has fleshed itself out, even if it still has small problems like collision detection and the cheap catch-up AI. Burnout 2 marks the beginning of a franchise that should only get better. By the way, isn't *Point of Impact* a Jean-Claude Van Damme movie?

KATO

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **DEVELOPER** CRITERION GAMES ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 1

124 GAME INFORMER

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:** Acclaim expands the game into more than just a demo of cool crashes — don't worry though, they're still very much there.

■ **Graphics:** The new Renderware engine does an awesome job with Xbox-like road textures and no anti-aliasing problems. This makes the game a little bland, however.

■ **Sound:** The cacophony of steel and rubber is music to accident lawyers' ears.

■ **Playability:** Even with drift, the driving mechanics are simplistic.

■ **Entertainment:** Burnout 2's plays to the same emotions as the first and wins big.

■ **Replay Value:** Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

Burnout 2 is far from genius, but it does continue on with what the first one did right, and does it better. Driving through traffic is just a blast, especially since this sequel is faster and looks amazing. It's no Gran Turismo, but I highly recommend you take this game for a spin.

ANDY — 8.5



PLAYSTATION 2

THE THING

THE BLOODIEST THING AROUND

When a publisher sends us a review title after its public release, we usually get apprehensive. Companies often do this to sell as many copies as possible before its game receives any negative press. Fortunately, in this case, that assumption isn't true, as *The Thing* is far from shovel-ware. Inspired by the movie, *The Thing* manages to pack plenty of solid gameplay, with more than a few horrific scenes. Players will find a huge arsenal at their disposal, each with its own particular advantage, depending on the situation. I simply love encountering a room full of aliens, setting up a wall of fire to keep them at bay, and then, in a sadistic spree, proceed to splatter each one with my shotgun!

The Thing indeed focuses more on action, but adds a unique twist by including team-based tactics. Throughout, players can command allies who can aid in puzzles, heal the party, or simply help kill. But since aliens can unknowingly infect humans, you must maintain your party's trust, as well as watch each team member for possible infection.

Unfortunately, *The Thing* suffers from a few flaws. The camera sometimes feels slow and tedious, especially during intense fights; and the enemy AI and overall balance can be inconsistent. Besides these two main faults, the other problems don't seriously detract from the experience. Unless you despised the movie, or hate ultra-violent games, *The Thing* is a wonderful way to spend a weekend.

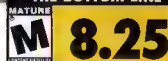
—CHET



The only way to take down large aliens is by setting them on fire

Defeating the bosses can be bizarre

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:** A solid Survival Horror title that uses *The Thing* license only for inspiration.

■ **Graphics:** The graphics are decent with decent looking character models. Too bad the animation looks awkward.

■ **Sound:** Cool atmospheric music, and awesome sound effects. The voice acting is also excellent.

■ **Playability:** I've never been a fan of games that use one stick to control the character and camera, but you got used to it.

■ **Entertainment:** This is a fairly scary title with a few flaws. Still, if you have the patience, *The Thing* will easily eat up a weekend.

■ **Replay Value:** Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

As a long-time fan of the movie, I really enjoyed the locations and atmosphere of the game. They give the feeling that you're exploring the epilogue of the film. *The Thing* is far from perfect, however. My biggest complaint is the targeting system. Team members move in the line of fire constantly, and more often than not, I just let loose blasting away rather than making controlled and adequately aimed fire. This problem aside, the game really is quite spooky and the story is very well executed. Especially the team components that convey the feeling that these guys are your partners, but you never can quite trust them 'cause at any moment they could mutate into some blood-thirsty, three-headed freak. Fans of the film will certainly get a kick out of this title, but don't expect to be blown away by its technology.

ANDY — 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE
■ **DEVELOPER** BLACK LABEL GAMES ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 20

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



グランディア エクストリーム

GRANDIA XTREME

HIS DESTINY WILL BE WRITTEN IN BLOOD.

Get ready to come to blows with over 130 types of enemies hell-bent on making mincemeat out of you and your party. Traverse 8 wild elemental lands while discovering the depths of the newly tuned Grandia combat and magic systems and tackling the most brutal Grandia yet. It's not called Xtreme for nothing.



TEEN
T
Mild Violence
Mild Language


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PlayStation 2



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REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

GRANDIA XTREME

XTREME G ZERO

I'm not sure why this game is named "Xtreme." There isn't a whole lot about it that could be construed as even vaguely crazy. This Grandia incarnation didn't strike me as incredibly wonderful. I liked the battle system, and the magic scheme was much more robust than I expected, but in the end this game came off as little more than an RPG that tried to be epic, but fell short.

When I think of Final Fantasy X, I think of an incredible story, lush graphics, cinema-quality music, and an excellent script. These are all things lacking in Xtreme, but it isn't really fair to compare it to FFX. That would be like comparing a kazoo to a violin—both are interesting in their own realms, but you play a kazoo for fun. A violin, on the other hand, becomes a part of your life after you spend a lot of time with it. I think Enix wanted to produce a title that people could get into quickly, while providing some gameplay depth along the way. Mission accomplished, Enix. This is a great game for people who might want to play a few hours of something fun on the weekend, then not have to think about it during the week; or for someone new to the genre—the rest of us have been there, done that.

—KRISTIAN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** ENIX
 ■ **DEVELOPER** GAME ARTS ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T 7.5
 GOOD GAME

■ **Concept:**

A very-Japanese RPG in need of a good plot.

■ **Graphics:**

I liked the pastel color palette, but the textures could definitely use some work.

■ **Sound:**

If you can stomach the happy-fun-time music for more than 20 minutes, you'll be impressed.

■ **Playability:**

There's a lot going on in the inventory/magic system for this game. It might take you a while to get used to.

■ **Entertainment:**

RPG freaks need not apply.

■ **Replay Value:**

Low.

SECOND OPINION

I don't understand exactly why it's extreme, but outside of this apparent marketing play, most RPG fans will uncover a decent game. The combat system is the element that will keep you glued. Unfortunately, an awful camera, bad dialogue, and some spelling and grammar mistakes detract from the experience.

CHEY — 7.75



PLAYSTATION 2

DEFENDER

ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH, DEAR GAMERS

So here it is; a classic arcade remake that stays true to the formula that put it on the map, and actually manages to be fun. Everything has been updated for the PS2 version (of course), but that frantic play and enemy-ridden environments are back in full effect. While I did notice that the physics and damage are rather hit or miss (running directly into a building doesn't phase your craft), I couldn't care less. I just wanted to plug as many aliens as I could in as short a time as possible.

Defender's real strength comes through in its willingness to be a shooter in a market full of mediocre hybrids. Sure, you have some plot that drives you from mission to mission, but it (and the rendered cutscenes) does nothing to hinder your experience. There are very few games out now which achieve this level of action with hooks like unlockable craft, upgradable weaponry and a nice graphical package. Plus, it's Defender, man! Even some of the sounds are the same from the original game. On the down side, it is a pure shooter, which means you can't play it for a long period of time and not get burned out. Worth checking out, though.

—KRISTIAN

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ■ MIDWAY **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 4

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T 7.75
 GOOD GAME

■ **Concept:**

Fly around in assorted spacecraft and shoot aliens by the barrelful.

■ **Graphics:**

What you'd expect from a PS2 game nowadays — excellence.

■ **Sound:**

Interesting for about 15 minutes, then it's time to find the mute button on the remote.

■ **Playability:**

It was made to be a plug-and-play title, and that's exactly what it is.

■ **Entertainment:**

Mindless fun — everyone needs that from time to time.

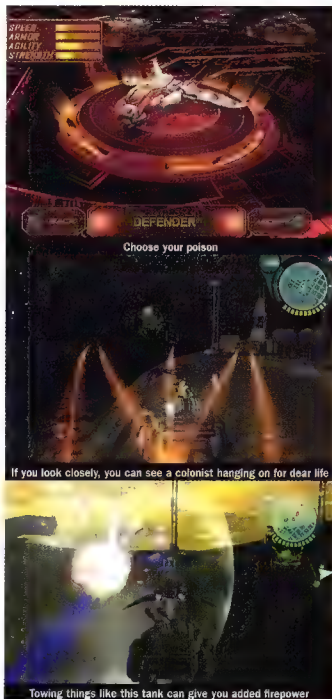
■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

The best analogy I can make is to label this game as *Colony Wars* with a Defender twist. So, in a sense, it captures the gameplay dynamics of two of the best console space simulators. What this comment entails exactly is precise combat, smooth flying sequences, and the unique twist of being able to pick up and transport troops and vehicles. Altogether, the gameplay is expertly crafted and loaded to the hilt with evasive maneuvers and varied armaments. In addition to the classic Defender-styled ship, you will be able to pilot different craft (all with drastic attribute alterations), and can also upgrade new weapons and upgrade the existing arsenal. I had my reservations at first, but Midway came through and successfully revamped another classic lense. First Spy Hunter, now Defender. What's next?

REINER — 8.25



If you look closely, you can see a colonist hanging on for dear life

Towing things like this tank can give you added firepower



PLAYSTATION 2

NHL HITZ 2003

ABSOLUTELY ON FIRE

With last year's inaugural release, Midway set out to create another smash-mouth arcade game to run alongside NFL Blitz. With this year's follow-up, the goal was to add depth to the experience. For those of you who banged on Midway's door and demanded an 82-game season complete with stat tracking, fantasy draft, trade logic, and end-of-year awards; stop your crying, it's all here. Midway even went out of its way to include an innovative Franchise mode, which allows you to create a team and strive for world domination against countless fictional opponents. It sounds goofy, but once you see it, I'm sure that you'll agree that this is a stroke of gaming genius on Midway's behalf.

The improvements to the gameplay are minimal in comparison, but they really do stand out. The goalie logic is finally on par with EA's game. Players can drop and block shots. You'll also be able to trigger Fire manually. It may not be an accurate portrayal of NHL, but it blows away EA's game with little effort. — **REINER**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** BLACKBOX
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 16

SECOND OPINION

I'm impressed. Midway, known for beating a dead sport, has improved an already great game — especially for single players. Franchise mode's progression, team-building, and unlockables are more than I could've hoped for. The color commentator is useless and I still hate the fights; but the new particle effects, on-fire toggling, and increased difficulty are quite welcome. If you don't hate sports, you'll love Hitz.

JUSTIN — 8.75

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E **8.75**

- **Concept:** Midway gives its hard-hitting hockey series an edge with franchise mode, a complete season, stat tracking, and refined gameplay
- **Graphics:** Subtle improvements, including goalies flopping after loose pucks and larger crowds (from 360 to 4,665)
- **Sound:** The annoying Jam announcer still has a job
- **Playability:** Tight gameplay with a new defensive block move, manual Fire control, and improved goalie logic
- **Entertainment:** Overflowing with reasons to keep playing
- **Replay Value:** High



PLAYSTATION 2

BLADE II

THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE WEIRD HAIRCUT

The first Blade, released for PlayStation, paled in comparison to the flick, but its sequel pulls almost even with its celluloid brother. Too bad it's due more to the deteriorating quality of the movies than the improvement of the games. Blade II is much better than the original, to be sure. Unfortunately, it's much better than a game that totally sucked, which makes it just another average, and unremarkable, third-person action title.

There are some bright points. I like being able to upgrade my arsenal by spending points at the outset of each level. There are some cool fatalities that show Blade dispatching his foes with wicked style. However, these bright spots don't make up for the dull "corridor and room" level designs, the unreliable targeting, and the fact that this Blade II achieves its difficulty solely by throwing hordes of random enemies at you, which effectively ruins the pacing. Also, the analog fighting control is nice for combating multiple foes, but ultimately it's just not that deep or compelling — something that could be said of the game as a whole. — **MATT**

SECOND OPINION

The grotesque finishing moves and unique multi-opponent analog fighting system give this game a ferocious bite, but all of its momentum is abruptly halted by mundane level designs, repetitive missions, and obnoxious combat. Interesting at times, but ultimately shallow.

REINER — 6

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M **6**

- **Concept:** America's favorite supernatural bad mutha-shutty-mouth battles vampires
- **Graphics:** It looks nearly as good as the Xbox version, but Blade's cool leather trench coat is missing
- **Sound:** Blade's pretty much mute, except for a handful of repetitive catch phrases.
- **Playability:** The fighting engine is paper thin, but everything works well enough
- **Entertainment:** A nice arsenal of weapons and some cool fatalities can't make up for the general mediocrity
- **Replay Value:** Low

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** MUCKY FOOT
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 4



PLAYSTATION 2

BLOODRAYNE

AN OCCULT CLASSIC

BloodRayne reminds me of an obscure PlayStation title called Rising Zan. While the gameplay is similar (use guns and blades to explore 3D environments), and the characters are oddly familiar (he was half-samurai, half-cowboy and she is half-vampire, half-human), the common thread that binds them is that they both are entertaining games that are technologically hindered.

Like Rising Zan before it, BloodRayne's combat and graphics engine are somewhat archaic. When BloodRayne breaks into an attack she is as fidgety as Bart Simpson on a Slurpee rush. I couldn't tell what I was hitting, or where I was hitting it, but it didn't matter because for some

unexplainable reason, there is enjoyment in it. Plus, if you get tired of watching her twitch, Blood can also mount her opponents and suck the life-giving juice from them until they lay lifeless on the ground. Many times this move is easier to use than actually attacking your enemies, but once again, there is some strange joy to be derived from it.

The story actually isn't that bad, but that won't be what will keep you playing to the end — it's constant slicing and dicing of the enemies in Blood's cliché and gore-filled world. BloodRayne could easily have scored low, but I enjoyed myself way too much to knock it for its mediocre graphics and execution. — **ANDY**

For all the things that are just plain weird about BloodRayne, it works somehow.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO
 ■ **DEVELOPER** TERMINAL REALITY ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 31

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M **8**

- **Concept:** Imagine that Kain and Lara had a daughter, and she kicked more ass than both of them.
- **Graphics:** The textures are only okay, the animation borders on horrible, but the overall effect is good.
- **Sound:** I haven't heard lines this dry since Arnold in *Commando*, although I enjoyed the music.
- **Playability:** The control is clumsy but the game doesn't punish you for its deficiencies.
- **Entertainment:** For all the things that are just plain weird about BloodRayne, it works somehow.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low.

SECOND OPINION

In a world filled with survival horror games where you're constantly running for your life and hoping to God a zombie doesn't eat your brains, BloodRayne casts you in the role of the hunter, instead of the hunted. I liked it, and the gore matched the hilarity of the gameplay. Too bad the graphics and animations weren't better.

KRISTIAN — 8



PLAYSTATION 2

NASCAR: DIRT TO DAYTONA

THE GARAGE OF YOUR DREAMS

It's an amazing time to be a NASCAR fan. Not only do two rival series – Dirt to Daytona and Electronic Arts' NASCAR Thunder 2003 – step up with their best efforts, but they take two completely different directions in doing so. Developer Monster Games has blown out virtually every aspect of its product to deliver a full package of goodies.

With Dirt and Thunder's feature set looking so similar, what's the difference? The Career mode's progression of cars (including the Craftsman Truck series) is a brilliant idea that provides a lifetime of racing. This makes the title less of a NASCAR game and more a racing role-player where you have to pay your dues to make it to the top – just like the pros. Each racing series helps you become a better driver as you learn about the nuances of driving and tracks. For example, racing a road course in your modified car versus a stock car will teach you a lot. Graphically, Dirt beats Thunder, even if this title has some problems with draw distance. Also, I was disappointed that the damage model didn't penalize you as much for bad good aerodynamics.

I was prepared to say that Dirt to Daytona was inches better than its rival, due to the sheer scope of Career Mode. Then it blew a tire – this title doesn't include tracks at Indianapolis, Chicagoland, and Pocono, and multiplayer has a paltry number of cars. EA's got the money, but Monster's tanks are still awfully deep. –KATO

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 8.75

■ **Concept:** NASCAR Heat 2 has been renamed, and that's just the beginning of the changes.

■ **Graphics:** It lacks the shadow play of Thunder, but the cars are crisp and the textures are Xbox-caliber!

■ **Sound:** Stock cars could sound better and the spoiler is late in calling wickets.

■ **Playability:** Nobody gives you more car options than Monster. From easy handling to hardcore simulation, it's all there.

■ **Entertainment:** This title spoils you with gameplay, depth, and some seriously intense racing.

■ **Replay Value:** Moderately High

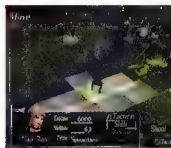
SECOND OPINION

Monster Games has blown out its effort from last year with a beautifully detailed game that keeps you interested, but a few little things were missing from this title. The lack of a mini-map for the track is a complete travesty, the draw distance is weak, and there are only 10 cars racing during multiplayer! For these reasons I'll give Thunder the nod, but Dirt is about .05 seconds behind the leader.

KRISTIAN - 8.5

DYNASTY TACTICS

■ **STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER STRATEGY**
■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10

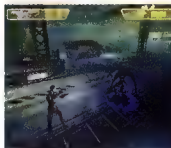


Tactics offers solid play mechanics, and plenty of items and characters to discover, everything else is fairly typical. My only major complaint has to do with the maps; many are simply uninspired, and lack variety. –CHET

T 8

RUN LIKE HELL

■ **STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION**
■ **PUBLISHER** INTERPLAY
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 8

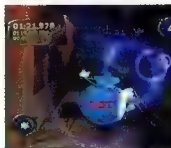


Aside from the fact that this game could use a more distinctive moniker, there's a lot of fun to be had here. With a good mix of puzzle elements and frantic action, RLIH is a solid buy now that you've beat Code: Veronica for the 185th time. The cutscenes look good, and surprisingly, the voice acting is some of the best I've heard lately – especially the main character. Look out for the crappy camera while you're trying to maneuver around corners or in tight spaces, though. –KRISTIAN

M 8

RAYMAN ARENA

■ **STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION**
■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24

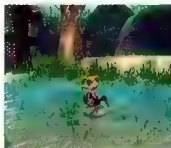


I've always loved Rayman – maybe it's the lack of anatomy connecting his torso and appendages – but he just didn't do much for me in Arena. Although the formula is one that I'm prone to loving (nutty racing and multi-player combat), I just couldn't get into the bland fighting half of the game. The foot-racing portion seems like it should be more painful than Turbo Tax 2002 PlayStation 2 edition, but it really is pretty okay. –LISA

E 6.5

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

■ **STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM**
■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 8



Oh Ty, who will always be confused with Taz, who is immortalized in questionable tattoo art across the Midwest. Oh Ty, why are you in such an unfortunate game? When I say unfortunate, I am only talking of one thing – lack of innovation. Ty the Tasmanian Tiger looks pretty; and has good controls, a decent plot, and respectable music. Sadly, the platforming aspects have all been done before, and that will keep little Ty a sliver away from greatness. –LISA

E 7.75

SHOX

■ **STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING**
■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 1



What is this, National Mediocre Game month? I feel like I've given out more sevens than a junior high gymnastics judge this issue. Shox, the latest in EA Big's ongoing extreme racing saga, falls flat in comparison to sister titles like SSX Tricky or Frenkstyle. It's basically an arcade rally game, but the physics are so over-the-top and the steering so loose that the races are essentially one big power slide. Fun for a while, but ultimately tiresome. –MATT

E 7.25

SILENT SCOPE EX

■ **STYLE 1 PLAYER SHOOTER**
■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 15



Konami once again keeps this game close to its arcade roots, something that is made literally true by the inclusion of Silent Scope EX. This gives you two titles in one. It may sound like just more missions, but I noticed that EX and SS3 felt distinct from one another. However, Scope's strict need for patience and a steady hand is the same no matter which you play. You could argue that evolution is needed in the series, but I have a feeling that you'll have to pry this game out of fans' cold, dead hands first. Good, but a multiplayer mode would have been nice. –KATO

M 7.75

FERRARI F355 CHALLENGE

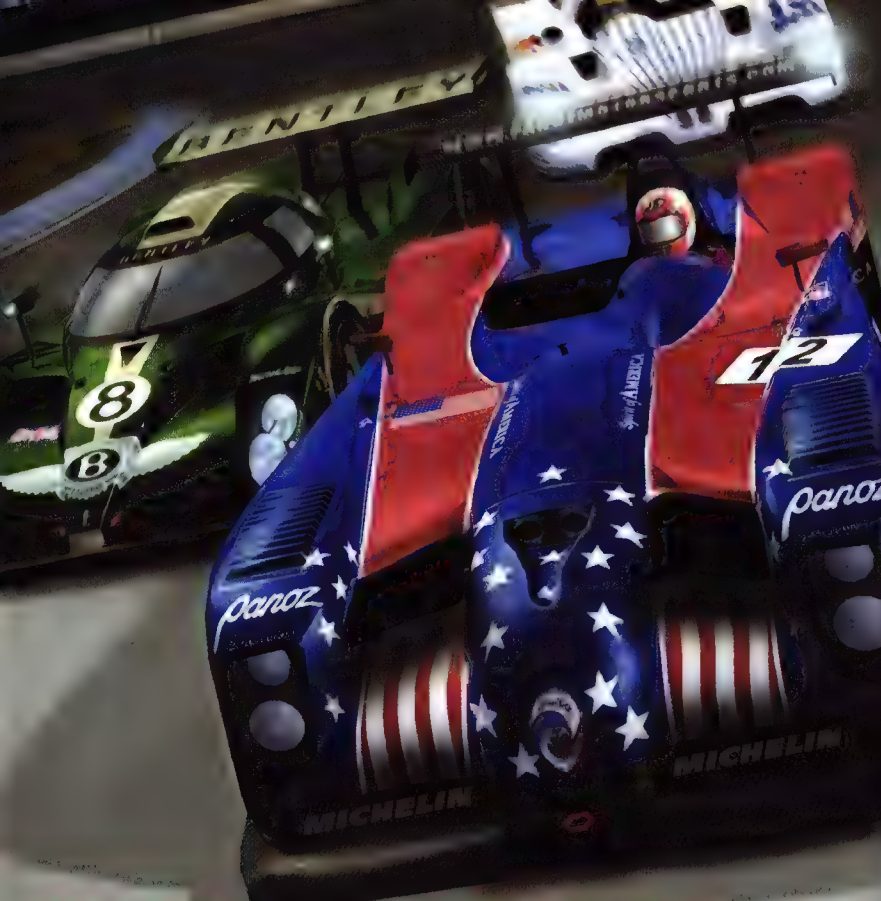
■ **STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING**
■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24



Call me jealous, but nothing screams midlife crisis (albeit a wealthy one) like some guy owning a Ferrari. Of course, nothing says, "This is the closest a dark like me will ever get to owning one" like playing F355. The game's steep learning curve will have sim-heads in heaven, but may be a little too tough for most. This realism drops off, however, because you skate over the surface of the road instead of hugging it, and there's little sense of speed. Worse yet, this is very similar to the edition on the Dreamcast. Oh wait, the number of cameras has doubled to two! I take it all back! Only Enzo Ferrari himself and those looking for a relatively affordable midlife crisis reliever need apply. –KATO

E 7

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



Make sure the road is the only place
you leave skid marks.

TOTAL IMMERSION RACING



Strap in for all out white-knuckle racing as you grip the wheel in the most realistic circuit-based racing experience ever. Choose from over 10 authentic tracks from around the world and licensed cars such as the BMW V12 LMR, the Panoz LMP-1, the Bentley EXP Speed 8 and more. Receive real-time strategic advice from your pit crew. And try not to build a grudge with the other racers, because with TIR's unique AI capabilities, they will remember. With dynamic, life-like crashes and road blurring speed, try to end up in the winner's circle instead of the wall.



PlayStation 2



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"Rare has always made quality games, and with Zelda as its muse, Star Fox Adventures is no exception."

GAMECUBE

STAR FOX ADVENTURES

RARE'S PREHISTORIC LINK

Within just seconds of play, one thought came to mind: *Zelda*. The more I played, the more emphasis was weighed onto this comparison, and I eventually came to the conclusion that this was the closest that I've seen a game come to mimicking another. Through and through, *Star Fox Adventures* is a carbon copy of the Nintendo 64 classic, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. The screen morphs into a letterbox format when an enemy is engaged. Your character automatically jumps when he reaches the end of a platform.

If you happen to fall off of a ledge, you can perform a roll maneuver and prevent damage. You'll need to backtrack to previous lands and dungeons with newly acquired items to unlock different areas. You'll even see Link-inspired animations that will make you rub your eyes and do a double take. With Shigeru Miyamoto on board as producer, I'm not surprised that he tried to recreate his success with *Zelda*, but I am taken aback by how closely he modeled this project after his beloved franchise.

While the gameplay screams *Zelda* at the highest of pitches, Rare's trademark game design is also readily apparent. For instance, repetition is a necessity throughout every inch of this quest. In *Zelda*, you may find yourself completing the same puzzle two or three times

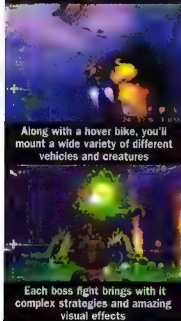
for the entire game. In *Star Fox*, and thanks in part to Rare, you may find yourself doing the same thing 100 times. Most developers don't do this, and it seems like a major perk, but this is actually where the game suffers. To make matters worse, some of the tasks and puzzles can be construed as unnecessary busywork. In such, I never thought I'd hear myself complaining about having something to do in a game, but I often found myself saying things like, "Oh great. There's another wall to bomb. That makes 20 in the last hour and a half." It's a strange situation, but you really do feel like you have too much work piled onto your shoulders.

On the plus side, another shining Rare quality runs rampant throughout this adventure: variety and tons of it. At any given time, you may find yourself spelunking through a cave *Zelda*-style, then seconds later racing at breakneck speeds down a mountain slope on a hover bike, interacting with your virtual pet dinosaur companion, or taking to the skies in a traditional *Star Fox* shooter stage. I have a feeling that you'll agree that the *Test of Fear* is one of the coolest gameplay components around. I don't want to ruin it for you, but it got my blood pumping and my senses going every which way. I'm sure that it'll leave you speechless, but better yet, wondering, "Why couldn't this be one of the gameplay elements that was repeated a billion times?"

The content may not be varied enough, but you'll never find yourself saying, "I wish it had more to offer." Rare has always made quality games, and with *Zelda* as its muse, *Star Fox Adventures* is no exception. The only fault that it has is that it tries too hard to win your affection. —REINER

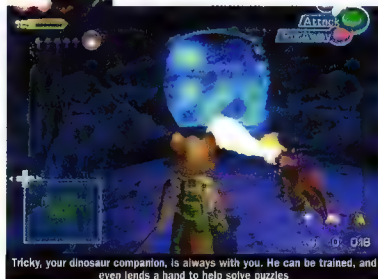
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** RAREWARE
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30

Much like *Zelda*, you'll obtain different items and powers that can be used to unearth new routes and dungeons



Along with a hover bike, you'll mount a wide variety of different vehicles and creatures

Each boss fight brings with it complex strategies and amazing visual effects



Tricky, your dinosaur companion, is always with you. He can be trained, and even lends a hand to help solve puzzles



In traveling to different locations, players will be treated to several traditional *Star Fox* shooter stages

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 8.75

- **Concept:** Rareware does its best *Zelda* impersonation, but... brace yourselves...may have loaded the game down with too much content (gasps!)
- **Graphics:** Effects that would make an Xbox blush and worlds that would make Leonardo da Vinci weep
- **Sound:** Did Nintendo license Elton John's score from *The Lion King*? What is this circle of life crap?
- **Playability:** See *Zelda*: *Ocarina of Time* manual
- **Entertainment:** It's a long game with tons, and I mean tons of challenges to complete
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Rare has a formula it has perfected over the years, and that blueprint makes a seamless transition to next-gen gaming — and the action/adventure genre — with *Star Fox Adventures*. The story moves along at a swift pace, and the extremely *Zelda*-esque gameplay is deep and evolving. Fox finds (and buys) new items, staff abilities, and commands for his lovable sidekick, Tricky. Fox's PDA is a clever way to display maps and other useful info onscreen. There are plenty of breaks in gameplay, like riding a mammoth, firing a cannon, and scaled-down space battles that resemble the early *Star Fox* games. Visually, it's hard to believe this project was originally intended for the N64. The environments are beautiful, and the characters are dazzling. If I have one complaint, it's that you're forced to digress from your mission with some asinine tasks. Still, that's the nature of the Rare beat.

JUSTIN — 9.25



THE BOTTOM LINE



8

GAMECUBE

"...Godzilla's
multiplayer
presence is
gargantuan."

GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE

100-STORIES OF VIDEO GAME CHEESE

My excitement for this product stems from two different areas. On the one hand, it rekindles the spirit of the highly underrated Neo Geo series King of the Monsters. From the overall design to the delivery of the fighting mechanics, the two products are more or less indistinguishable. The best part of the game, however, is how Pipeworks Studios incorporated the license. Yes, this is yet another game with gigantic lizards wreaking havoc on human civilizations, but unlike the other Godzilla video game incarnations that have hit the market, this one pays homage to the classic Japanese films. Not only do the monsters look like people wearing rubber suits, all of the original sound effects are in place, and the story is as outrageous as can be. With all of these components in place, Destroy All Monsters Melee is the first Godzilla game that captures all the beauty and comedic value of the license.

You'll certainly find yourself rolling over in laughter as the mutated titans clash onscreen and lay waste to the most populated cities across the globe, but you may also think that the gameplay is a laughing matter—actually, you may be completely turned off by it. There really isn't much to the fighting system. Each creature has an assortment of unique abilities, and every creature can pick up objects within the environment.

So in a sense, if you are playing as Godzilla, you can perform a three-hit punch combo, spray the opposition with your energy breath, lift up a 10-story building and hurl it your adversary's head. There are a few more moves, but this example pretty much sums up what you'll be doing throughout the entire game. It relies more on the player's ability to construct strategic combinations, rather than rattling off a thousand different moves. In such, some of you may feel that Godzilla's simplistic nature is a downright travesty. However, others may praise it delivering a straightforward gameplay package that focuses on a player's ability to study the battlefield and create advantageous striking opportunities.

This gameplay design actually works quite well, especially for the rip-roaring four-player melees. This may sound absurd, but Godzilla's multiplayer presence is gargantuan. If you get sick and tired of beating each other senseless, you can always take out your aggression in Destruction mode—a timed match to see which player can destroy the most of a city. If your buddies are out on dates, the single player game isn't that bad, either. The difficulty level is vicious and there are plenty of arenas and monsters to unlock.

Godzilla may not be the deepest game in the world, and it may lack variety, but it's one heck of a party game and a highly amusing feast for the eyes. —REINER

■ Concept:

A tastefully done Godzilla brawler

■ Graphics:

Incredible amounts of destruction displayed realistically with dust clouds and particle effects

■ Sound:

Hilarious sound effects extracted from the Japanese films

■ Playability:

As simplistic as can be, but in a strange roundabout way, very strategic as well

■ Entertainment:

The multiplayer aspect never grows old, and there's plenty of secrets to unlock in the single player game

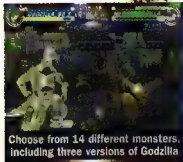
■ Replay Value:

High

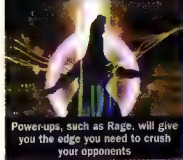
SECOND OPINION

There is little doubt that *Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee* is completely and utterly silly, but there is also no denying it is an incredible amount of fun. In fact, I would go so far as to say this is the most exciting wrestling/fighting game since *WCW Revenge* on Nintendo 64—it's that entertaining. I will admit that you can win a fair amount of matches just by pounding on the buttons, but you soon learn there is some technique to the game (albeit not a lot). The single player experience isn't terrible, but this game's true charm comes in the form of multiplayer where up to four players can beat the living monster out of each other. If you are an old school fan of *King of Monsters* for Neo Geo or just a big fan of sitting around with friends talking smack and pounding on each other, there is no better game out there for you than *Godzilla*.

ANDY—8



Choose from 14 different monsters, including three versions of Godzilla



Power-ups, such as Rage, will give you the edge you need to crush your opponents



Each monster is equipped with unique moves, throws, and special attacks

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER ATARI ■ DEVELOPER PIPEWORKS STUDIOS ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 29

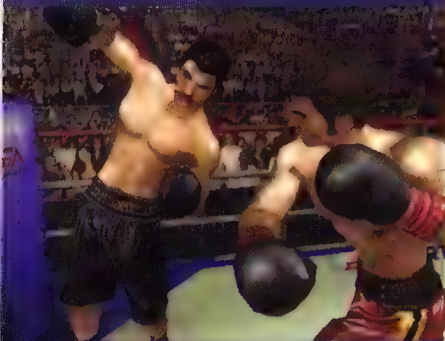


The four-player matches are incredibly addictive



If you choose to, you can destroy an entire city

REVIEWS



GAMECUBE

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2003

THE WILL MUST BE STRONGER THAN THE SKILL

Knockout Kings 2003 on GameCube is an odd one. Call it half a sequel to Knockout Kings 2002, which released on PS2 and Xbox earlier this year. It's got something old, something new, something borrowed, and a lot of things black and blue.

The new thing is Slugfest mode. It takes a few cues from Ready 2 Rumble, with an arcade feel. Landing a flurry of blows makes your opponent super vulnerable. Also, doing what the crowd shouts out or what shows up on the screen will yield good results. It's not too much fun, sadly. Maybe next year.

The career mode has received some long-overdue improvements. I like the setup much better, and it seems like you fight a more varied schedule of opponents. It's a tough to put my finger on it, but this was just better than 2002. Now all I need is a better boxer creator and punch stats.

The aspects remaining unchanged are graphics and gameplay. The putrid knockdown replays still roast my weenie. Why does my opponent react to a body shot, even though I broke his jaw? Why did my hand go through the guy's body?

If you haven't played a boxing game in awhile, by all means check this out. However, if you have 2002, wait until EA finally gives the people something truly new. — **JUSTIN**

THE BOTTOM LINE



7.5

■ **Concept:**

A new mode and some marginal improvements over the game released earlier this year.

■ **Graphics:**

These are sure some shiny guys. Replays still need cleaning up.

■ **Sound:**

I'm getting hooked on this EA Trax soundtrack gimmick. The game is too fast for commentary to come off well, though.

■ **Playability:**

The GameCube controller lends itself well to the sport of (Don) Kings.

■ **Entertainment:**

A fun lil' puncher. Don't bother if you have 2002, though, as this isn't a true sequel.

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Although it's marketed as the 2003 model, let's call it Knockout Kings 2002 1/2. Some minor additions, like the Slugfest mode, are the only new things offered. Still, Knockout Kings is still a great, comprehensive boxing title, even if it's a few months late. It's fun, but this series needs an injection of fresh blood for next year's model.

MATT - 8



Ottoman PaleWark 3-Limbs

GAMECUBE

CUBIVORE

BLOCKS MAKING WHOOPIE

Being part of the "unique" game library transferred from Japan will give Cubivore major bonus points in some circles, but Cubivore isn't really an odd duck in the world of crazy imports.

Like Seaman, this game takes great liberties with the biological forms of our known world. The basic gameplay catalyst is that bad cubes have invaded your homeland and, while they recklessly consume the present inhabitants, the wilderness goes away. Your job (through copious amounts of hunting, eating, and copulating) is to grow strong enough to kill the big, bad über-cube – or mate with the perfect cube and make a six-sided version of The Chosen One.

Although I understand the stylistic choice of making everything out of blocks, I feel like that's no excuse for sub-par textures and an overall bland look. Picasso did a lot with cubes, and so could this game. Sadly, the camera clearly got the short stick in the bunch, as it is completely unmanageable, unresponsive, and counter-intuitive.

Albeit lackluster in some categories, I give Cubivore high marks for creativity in plot, gameplay, and bad lyrical references during cut scenes. Also, the sound is surprising, subtle, and feels just right for the game. Thank God. — **LISA**



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** ATLUS SOFTWARE ■ **DEVELOPER** ATLUS SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 1

THE BOTTOM LINE



7.5

■ **Concept:**

You're a cube animal that eats other cube animals. Hence, the -vore part of the title.

■ **Graphics:**

Well, you're a cube. Everyone else is a cube. Still, that's no excuse in my book.

■ **Sound:**

Besides the overall quirky-ness of the game, this is the only part that's truly exemplary.

■ **Playability:**

The camera is really pretty awful, and I don't think that it was a stylistic choice.

■ **Entertainment:**

The amusement factor wears off quicker than it should.

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I don't particularly dislike Cubivore, despite some of its more glaring flaws. The camera is often times difficult to manage, especially during fights and while passing through narrow sections, but you can grow accustomed to it. Secondly, although I recognize that it's part of the game's design, the graphics look very bland and blocky, even by standards set a generation ago. Perhaps if Cubivore used real animals, or at least offered nice textures and detailed environments, this wouldn't have been a gripe. Nevertheless, having the ability to morph into numerous creatures, watching your animal-cube evolve, and being presented with myriad tasks, adds enough variety to keep gameplay interesting. Even though Cubivore doesn't do anything special, I'm certain that a few gamers will appreciate its strange sense of humor and extreme quirkiness.

CHET - 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 8



GAMECUBE

NHL HITZ 2003

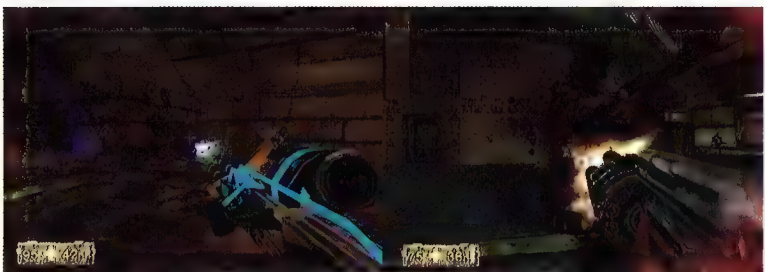
THE NHL: NOW 62% MULLET FREE!

Hockey isn't about rules. Who needs 'em? The only people who should be called for icing are those who make cakes. Thus Hitz was born, and there was much rejoicing. We gamers finally had fast-paced, hard-hitting hockey without all the messy dental costs. Now, Midway gives us a little more depth to go with the frenzied action.

I had two main complaints with last year's Hitz. First off, one-timers were unstoppable. You could score at will by making a pass and then shooting as soon as the other player had control. This gripe has been remedied for 2003. Point totals are now lower, since there are no real money shots. For my next beef, I thought the Franchise mode - while fun - was seriously lacking. Midway scores again, piling on the goodies like a Subway sandwich artist. With a bunch of team names and logos, attribute-enhancing equipment, free agents trying to join up with you, and Tony Hawk-style objectives, this is single-player heaven.

Other tiny adjustments include a new defensive block move and user-toggled "on fire" status. There is room for improvement as stats are still lacking, the fighting still sucks, and I'd like to see more varied hitting; but NHL Hitz 2003 definitely belongs in your gaming lineup. - **JUSTIN**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 16



GAMECUBE

TUROK: EVOLUTION

MASSIVELY SINGLE-PLAYER KILLING

Any game that allows me to represent mass violence scores a few kudos points. Turok is an FPS that executes its killing component fairly well. Players will encounter numerous weapons with two modes of fire each, copious amounts of ammo and health, and myriad targets with sometimes intelligent AI routines, which keeps combat interesting.

If the developers concentrated on refining the action and devising even more creative ways to destroy, I would've loved Turok. However, in a clear attempt to inject variety, they forced a few other gameplay elements that only detract from the experience. The pterodactyl scenario is most out-of-place!

Furthermore, many gamers will easily dismiss Turok because it begins quite slowly; but enduring the initial levels will reveal a cathartic shooter that packs enough challenge. Turok's other flaws affect gameplay minimally, and are hardly worth mentioning. If you like the series, or crave an FPS on console, Turok is worth renting - just don't expect an engrossing experience, and try to enjoy it merely for the violent action. - **CHET**

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

SECOND OPINION

I'd rather play this than EA's NHL 2003, and no, I haven't taken a puck to the head. It's got a sweet Franchise mode, loads of moves, big hits, and even minigames. Hose head heaven!

KATO - 8.25

THE BOTTOM LINE

T 8.75

- **Concept:** Sharpen the skates for a real Midway sports sequel
- **Graphics:** Better detail in the faces this time around, and a few nifty particles
- **Sound:** More grunting and groaning than Dan Aykroyd trying to fit into his old *Blues Brothers* costume. Subpar soundtrack
- **Playability:** A few new moves give your fingers more to do
- **Entertainment:** More difficult one-timers and an expanded Franchise mode give me a toothless grin
- **Replay Value:** High

REVIEWS

2ND



GAMECUBE

RAYMAN ARENA RACIN' RAYMAN

The cynical game journalist devil on my left shoulder says, "Mad Dash means Crash Bash - folk! These crazy Franchises are ruining the Rayman franchise with a bunch of party game crap!! It might look nice, but it's as boring and stinky as a turd in a sock!! Racing on foot sucks ostrich booty!" The hopeful, loving angel on my right responds, "Hey Mr. Crabby Pants, give this game a chance! The battle modes are a little on the dull side, but the racing levels are full of cool alternate routes, hidden shortcuts, and switches that change the landscape on the fly. The track designs alone are reason enough to play this game!"

Who's right? Well, it turns out that they both are. The environments are undeniably slick, and the variety of different paths to choose from elevates this game well above the dreck that was Mad Dash. However, there is just something fundamentally unsatisfying about racing without a vehicle. I can't say much for the slight Battle Modes either, which aren't compelling enough to hold your interest unless you're playing with friends. Despite these gripes, I like the Rayman universe, and this is a decent addition to the series. - **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE

E 7

- **Concept:** Get platforming chocolate in the racing game peanut butter
- **Graphics:** Captures the lush look of Rayman 2 nicely, but the frame rate could be better
- **Sound:** Some of the tunes have a retro 16-bit feel, others fall in line with the series' familiar twinkly ambience
- **Playability:** I would have liked a little more responsiveness, but the controls are generally solid
- **Entertainment:** More fun than a sharp stick in the eye...or Mad Dash Racing
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Unlike the PS2 version, which could only be described as "adequate", Rayman Arena seems much more appropriate on the GameCube. The gameplay is the same, but the controls feel more intuitive and less jerky. Graphically, it looks good on both systems but suffers from brief bouts of slowdown.

LISA - 7

THE BOTTOM LINE

M 7.75

- **Concept:** An FPS with modern weapons set in a pseudo-prehistoric environment
- **Graphics:** The frame rate is nice and quick, but the textures look a tad blocky and bland
- **Sound:** The sound effects are cool, but the music gets very annoying
- **Playability:** The control is solid for a console FPS, but sniper mode is imprecise
- **Entertainment:** A lot of killing with gruesome effects, but far from deep
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24



GAMECUBE

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003

NO OLD BOYS' CLUB(HOUSE)

You know golf is still a stuffy old-guys' sport when the only colors out on the green are those blaring from Jesper's pants. Do you know what I mean? It's fitting that EA would pick Tiger Woods as its star, as the company is THE establishment when it comes to sports games – and you know that Tiger's not going to rock the boat. To the game's credit, however, this isn't just a bunch of pro players and courses. Scenarios, minigames, and all manner of unlockables are available. On the whole, however, these extras aren't as addictive as in EA's Madden. Still, I applaud the effort.

The familiar analog swing may be frustrating at first, but it allows a very comfortable, intuitive range of power and control – which is different from some of the golf-via-math you get in titles like Hot Shots. Some of you will like that a lot of the helpers can be taken off. Imagine yourself being hardcore enough to putt on the green totally blind.

Is Tiger Woods just a game for old guys in their starched, whitey-white slacks? No. EA has started down a road that sits directly between being boring and being goofy – creating a golfing tradition we can all get on board with, starting now. – **KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE **E** **8**

- **Concept:** 2003 tries to let everyone into the clubhouse with its well-rounded golf game.
- **Graphics:** EA does all it can to highlight golfers' faces through dramatic replays, etc.
- **Sound:** There's nothing like a nice, polite golf crowd to get you going.
- **Playability:** Like them or loath them, aids can be turned off.
- **Entertainment:** Tiger straddles the line between being hip and boring, but it's still a solid title.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

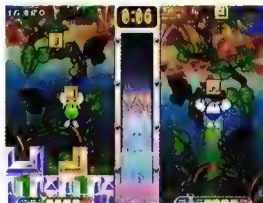
SECOND OPINION

This marks the first time I ever enjoyed analog swinging in a golf game. Tiger looks faboo, and lets you earn money and extras. The minigames are crap, but at least EA tried. It has Swingers – a blatant Hot Shots clone – to compete with, and lacks a bit in the personality department, but I can still see PGA 2003 being a dorm and rec room favorite.

JUSTIN – 7.75

EGG MANIA

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE
- **PUBLISHER** KEMCO
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10



Egg Mania initially looks like Tetris, but actually requires players to build a stable set of blocks to reach the top, rather than eliminate them. If you construct a sloppy tower ridden with holes, your blocks will fall apart. Although Egg Mania features some interesting modes, and offers a fairly enjoyable 2-player match-up, I just didn't find myself very addicted to this game. Puzzle freaks might love this title, but for everyone else, I recommend ZooCube. – **CHET**

E **7.75**

WHIRL TOUR

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
- **PUBLISHER** CRAVE
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

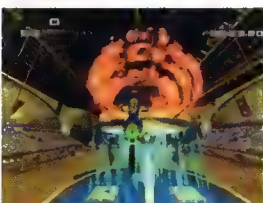


Crave continues milking the kiddie extreme sport of scooting. Whirl Tour tries valiantly to compete with the big boys, but it's stuck in the little brother role. Unlockable areas, pedestrians, and interactive environments are all here. Gimmicks like bosses and one-on-one races add originality, but the level designs are sometimes blatant rip-offs of other games. Also, going slow is too difficult. It's a thumbs-up for the tots, but nobody in their teens or up would choose this over Tony Hawk or Aggressive Inline. – **JUSTIN**

E **7.5**

BIG AIR FREESTYLE

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
- **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMS
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 12

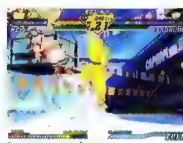


EA Big's Freestyle was good enough to convince me that the motocross genre wasn't a colossal waste of time. Now, Big Air Freestyle is making me think I was right before. As generic as its name, the game bears a strong resemblance to MX Rider, a similar title developed by Paradigm and published by Infogrames last year. As a racer, it's decent; as a freestyle trick game, it sucks. Put the two together, and you've got another game destined for the discount rack. – **MATT**

T **6**

CAPCOM VS. SNK 2 EO

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING
- **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24



I'm a little conflicted as to how to score this game. It includes everything offered in the PS2 version, but features an odd control scheme. Because the GC controller isn't conducive to fighters, players can execute moves with the C-Stick! This certainly gives newbies a chance to compete, but purists like myself will readily notice the weaknesses of this method. If you only own a GameCube and need a Street Fighter title, I suggest buying an adapter that allows you to connect a PS2 controller. – **CHET**

T **7.5**

TOP GUN: COMBAT ZONES

- **STYLE** 1 PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** TITUS SOFTWARE
- **RELEASE** AUGUST 30

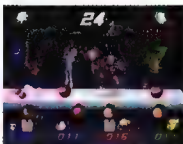


The unlockable planes are nice, but Combat Zones offers nothing in the way of play commitment – it's as easy to put down as it is to pick up. I didn't really feel compelled to unlock the extra aircraft, and the graphics were poor enough that I didn't get excited about what was happening on the screen. There were some nice explosions, but so what? Rent this if you're too intrigued to stay away. – **KRISTIAN**

T **6.75**

PAC-MAN FEVER

- **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER
- **PUBLISHER** NAMCO
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 3



Like "Pac-Man Fever", the long-forgotten hit single by Buckner and Garcia, the party-game Pac-Man Fever will quickly be overshadowed and fade into obscurity. Its big problem? The minigames are only half fun. What I mean is that half are fun and half make me want to cry. I will give bonus points for game variety, decent graphics, and an interesting selection of characters. On the GameCube, the Fever will always be broken with Mario Party. – **LISA**

E **7.25**

NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2

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



What's not to love? Okay, I found a few things, but they're so nit-picky and minor and just, well, beside the point that they aren't going to garner much space in this little review. The point is that you drive fast cars that you'll never be able to afford, try to avoid getting busted, and finish some fairly uninteresting missions. The graphics are great and the only deterrents are some questionable physics and the idea that a cop could catch me in my Opal. – **LISA**

E **7.5**



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"If you can accept Blinx for what it is – and isn't – you might just find that it offers an enjoyable, and slightly addictive gaming experience."

XBOX

BLINX: THE TIME SWEEPER

EXCITING PAWS ALMOST PREVAIL

Initially, many gamers will certainly associate Blinx with the platformer genre. After all, the main character is a cute kitty that jumps on things and destroys equally cute enemies. However, upon completing a few levels, you'll quickly realize that Blinx is more of an action/puzzle title, and has more in common with games such as *The Lost Vikings* and *Luigi's Mansion*.

To its credit, Blinx does a fantastic job of creating a sense of excitement through urgency. Players are allotted 10 minutes in each level, and must destroy every enemy, solve puzzles, and reach the portal before the time expires. Although the idea is very simple, some of the enemies and puzzles do present a fair challenge (especially in later areas), and the time warp techniques enhance the thinking component.

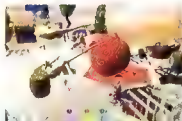
The time manipulation element of the gameplay works much like a video recorder. For example, players must rewind (travelling back in time) to replace broken structures, like a bridge that needs to be crossed. You can also record Blinx doing a specific action, which essentially gives you two Blinxes so that you may complete a puzzle. The fast forward lets you move through an area faster; and finally, Pause allows you to freeze everything onscreen except Blinx.

Fortunately, these techniques are more than a gimmick, since certain sections require players to implement them effectively.

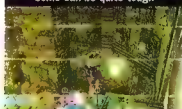
On the downside, Blinx can become frustrating – often to the point of being annoying. Mainly, some stages require much practice to achieve an understanding of them, which wouldn't be a particular problem if it didn't entail restarting the level incessantly.

Other glaring flaws include the title's length and simplicity. Diligent gamers will have no problem offing Blinx in a day or so. Even though Artoon threw in a few secrets, they don't make the adventure any more compelling. The length, however, is less to the gameplay's detriment than its simplicity. About halfway through, the addictive quality of trying to complete each task with precision starts to lose its luster. Simply put, the basic pattern of killing everything while executing a few cool time warps gets old.

If you can accept Blinx for what it is – and isn't – you might just find that it offers an enjoyable, and slightly addictive gaming experience. However, don't expect the thrills to last very long. Whether you finish it quickly, or tire of the routine, it just doesn't have the depth or drawing power to keep you hooked. – **CHET**



The bosses look cute, but some can be quite tough



If you get hit, and you have life, the game rewinds, displaying a VCR tracking effect



There aren't really any vehicles, but riding balloons is fun



The graphics, as you can see, are crisp and lush



He bears a slight resemblance to Heathcliff, no?

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
ESRB
RATED
FOR
EVERYONE

7.75

■ Concept:

An action game with puzzles and the ability to manipulate time

■ Graphics:

They are, of course, typical of a game exclusive to Xbox

■ Sound:

The fast-paced music is appropriate, but it still sounds a little generic

■ Playability:

The control and camera are solid and present problems only rarely

■ Entertainment:

Blinx is addictive and fun for a little while, but its simplicity and length bring it down a bit

■ Replay Value:

Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

For someone who has direct influence on the space-time continuum, Blinx sure moves slowly...reallyyyy slowwwwwly. Although the music is frantic, Blinx runs with the raging speed of my old '88 Jetta, and the imposed 10-minute limit in each level makes you search constantly for a turbo or run button. The gameplay isn't taught through a standard tutorial mode or level, but as the player encounters something they need to know about. This is a problem for pacing, and is complicated by the fact that Blinx has a...difficult health system.

Although I do give credit to the fact that every time I died, Blinx sure did look pretty. While I have respect for games that don't dumb down to player's abilities, the lack of information coupled with frequent deaths makes it more of a game of retrying levels than one of puzzle solving or platforming skills.

LISA – 7

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER MICROSOFT ■ DEVELOPER ARTOON ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 8



THE BOTTOM LINE



6

XBOX

TOEJAM & EARL III: MISSION TO EARTH

FUNKY, BUT NOT FRESH

"...it's almost embarrassing how behind the times this series has fallen."

Nothing can stop the relentless onslaught of time. Every single person reading this will someday grow old and die – and there is nothing that you can do about it. I'm not trying to be morbid (well, maybe a little bit), but ToeJam & Earl III really illustrated to me how drastically time changes our perceptions of things. I, like many of you, have fond memories of playing the first ToeJam & Earl on the Sega Genesis back in 1991. Back then, it was a unique, irreverent twist on the "character action genre, fusing novel gameplay with a rap and funk-influenced sense of humor. Remember, this is before games like Gex and Conker's Bad Fur Day made "irreverent comedy" just another boring video game cliché.

So, now TJ&E are back, along with a new partner, Latisha, to retrieve the legendary 12 Albums of Funk and save Earth from the forces of the evil villain Anti-Funk. As before, the crew spits out "hip urban slang" and demonstrates their rapping "skills" throughout several in-game cutscenes. Their material doesn't appear to have been updated much since 1991, so the closest you'll get to hip-hop "flava" circa 2002 is the odd "bling bling" or Master P reference. Cutting edge, it's not. To be frank, it's almost embarrassing how behind the times this series has fallen. It's kind of like watching old episodes of *In Living Color* or *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. I half-expected to see an ad for Cross Colors clothing or an MC Hammer cameo.

Unfortunately, the gameplay isn't capable of taking up the slack for the now-stale humor. Basically, each world is a hub split off into simple stages in which you must collect various trinkets and perform some routine tasks. Most of these are either A) getting a certain item or B) "Funkafying" people by kicking or shooting them with your notes from your boom box. A few cool power-ups, like the Icarus Wings or Spring Shoes, make things a little more interesting, but it's pretty much an elaborate party game at heart. The developers have added some rhythm elements to the mix, but they are not enough to save the game from its own tedium.

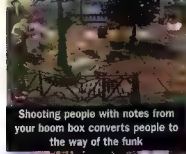
Apparently, the levels are randomly generated, so each time you play it, the stage will be different. This is a neat idea, but leaving level design up to chance also means that you have to implement very simplistic and arbitrary goals. I'm sorry, but collecting X amount of widgets is not enough to interest me in this day and age. In theory, it has infinite replay value, but I seriously doubt you're going to want to finish TJ&E multiple times.

I can't say this is a horrible game – if you are psyched to play more of the ToeJam & Earl that you remember you'll probably love this. I, on the other hand, feel that some franchises stand the test of time and some don't. In my opinion, ToeJam & Earl falls into the latter category. – **MAIT**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** T&E PRODUCTIONS/VISUAL CONCEPTS
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 23



The Icarus Wings provide some of TJ&E's best moments



Shooting people with notes from your boom box converts people to the way of the funk



In the "hood", they call this "graffiti." kids



These stereotypical soul sisters sing humorous gospel music to you between levels. It's as funny as *Sister Act 2*



Here, Latisha gets her groove on in one of the game's rhythm sequences

SECOND OPINION

Like many gamers that survived the 16-bit era, I have fond memories of titles that were born on the Sega Genesis, and ToeJam & Earl was most certainly one that has stuck with me. However, I believe my affection for the characters has clouded the fact that the series was never really that good. Sadly, I think the same can be said for ToeJam & Earl in the new millennium. Sure, it features all the new bells and whistles of Xbox, and even a now femme fatale accomplice, but the game never connects with me. I don't think the characters are that funny, and the story line is just an excuse to use the word "funk" in as many places as possible to be hip. I will admit I chuckled from time to time, but more often than not I dreaded the cutscenes and the voiceovers. There are some fun levels in here, but most I found to be fairly unexciting. You can't get much more average than TJ&E III.

ANDY – 6.75



THE BOTTOM LINE



6.5

XBOX

"...you'll soon discover that there's too little sustenance to provide even a satisfying portion of gameplay."

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD III

A BLOODY SHALLOW ABODE

First impressions can often be beneficial, since they allow one to see something in a fresh state of mind and gain a greater sense of objectivity. But, at the same time, they can be simple, shallow observations. Upon first glance, *House of the Dead III* will amaze you with its clean graphics, gruesome violence, horribly detailed monster designs, and cool extras.

But after spending a mere 30 minutes to complete the adventure, you'll soon discover that there's too little sustenance to provide a satisfying portion of gameplay. First, the difficulty level, even on the hardest setting, is somewhat easy, which is actually uncharacteristic of the series. Furthermore, although the stages incorporate different routes, they are too few in number, end rather quickly, and lack variety. Also, *HOD III* would benefit from more items and weapons and a significantly larger cast of enemies and bosses — you'll encounter only four bosses throughout the whole gory blood-fest. Finally, I like that Sega attempts to include a plot with some character development, but as you might already suspect, it sucks hard.

On a more positive note, the control is superb, even if you only have access to an Xbox pad. The shotgun (your main

weapon now) can spread across and pass through multiple targets; plus, when you deplete your rounds of ammo, your gun will automatically reload! However, these apparent enhancements could also be seen as flaws, which aid in making the challenge inadequate.

Perhaps the highlight of *HOD III* isn't the game itself, but rather some of the extra features. At the start, players can access a movie that provides behind-the-scenes footage of the upcoming flick. Fortunately, you'll be able to watch around 15 minutes of interviews and actual movie clips. Unfortunately, it almost ruins the film by revealing too many seemingly important scenes.

What's more, after beating *HOD III* once, you can unlock the Dreamcast version of *HOD 2*. Although it's just a port, gamers really couldn't ask a developer for a more worthy bonus.

If you've been dying for a lightgun game for your Xbox, you might find *HOD III* fun for a short period, but ultimately, you'll be disappointed with the overall inadequacy of the gameplay. I recommend this title only to serious fans of the series, and those of you who might have missed out on *HOD 2*. — **CHET**

Concept:

A standard light gun game much like its predecessors

Graphics:

Clean and crisp. The effects look gruesome and spectacular

Sound:

The music and sound do a good job of getting you into the game

Playability:

Even using the controller, I had few problems targeting zombies and other enemies

Entertainment:

Although it comes packed with extras (like the entire *HOD 2* game), *HOD III* still feels too short. In fact, I think it's easier and shorter than 2

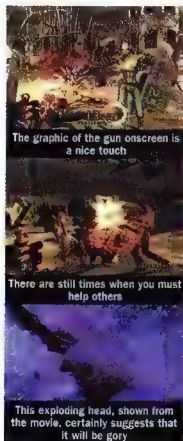
Replay Value:

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Which will happen first. Zombies file a class-action lawsuit against video game companies for defamation of character, or we demand more from developers than this. The series started in arcades, and the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Problem: The experience you get is short and limited, and it is hardly worth your money, and maybe not even your time. You'll beat it like a rented mule; and not even the inclusion of *House of the Dead 2* and movie excerpts can save this game. In fact, if you've played 2, you'll realize that this new game automatically reloads for you — making things even easier. The only positive thing I can say is that the body-specific hit zones are a blast (bad pun intended). However, I suggest you turn the other cheek and find a different outlet for your zombie rage.

KATO — 6



The graphic of the gun onscreen is a nice touch

There are still times when you must help others

This exploding head, shown from the movie, certainly suggests that it will be gory

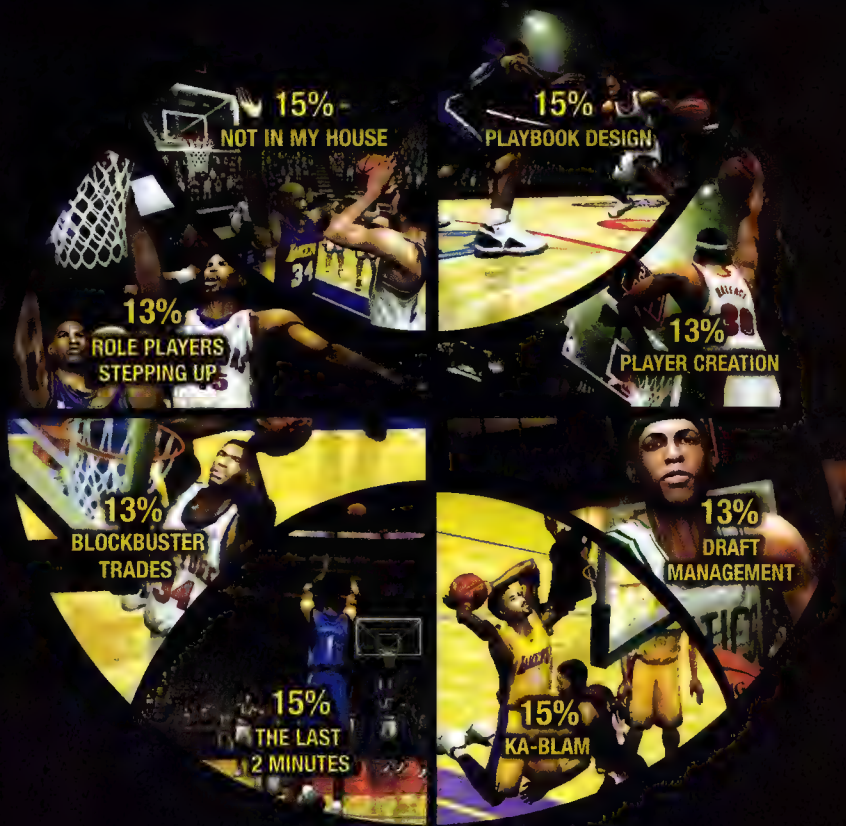
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 2-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 29



Some enemies have cool attacks, like launching innocent people at you



The damage enemies take looks gruesome enough



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REVIEWS

XBOX

ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

METAL MACHINE MUSIC

TDK has scored a real winner with this game in particular, as well as the Robotech franchise in general. Battlecry does a good job in straddling that delicate line between pleasing fans and indoctrinating others into the fold. It's a "come for the streaming missiles; stay to hear Lisa Hayes" kind of thing.

Although the camera can be frustrating, this title does well in getting you into the groove. It won't take long before you're switching in and out of the Veritech's different forms like you were changing your underwear (you do that, don't you?). Speaking of which, Battlecry puts up some sweet cel-shaded effects to get your juices flowing. Discharged shells, multi-targeting rockets, and many, many onscreen enemies are all part of the fun.

We all laugh at the wild philosophical ramblings of Konami's Hideki Kojima, but that's what's missing from this title. Robotech, like a lot of anime projects turned video games, hits the high points (like navigating through dense cityscapes in Guardian mode while alternately blasting enemies and buildings into dust), but leaves out some of the larger messages that take the show beyond the realm of cartoon robots. Battlecry gives you some blistering combat, but the franchise could truly explode if it tapped into the series' rich subtleties. — **KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
8.5

Concept: Sorry Kristian, but Robotech is way cooler than Transformers. There's no Hurtle the Love Bug (Bumblebee)—just pure action.

Graphics: Just as alluring as on the other consoles.

Sound: Even with the voice talent signed, I miss the TV show's narrator.

Playability: Hitting the artificial ceilings on levels makes you transform into Battloid mode. Most annoying.

Entertainment: It comes out with guns blazing, but in the future, I'd like to see more from the actual show.

Replay Value: Moderately High.

SECOND OPINION

Fans will hail Battlecry supreme; after all, this is probably the best video game incarnation of Robotech yet. But for the rest, Robotech is an intensely robust shooter that packs plenty of action, and enough variety to keep you hooked. And whether or not you're familiar with the anime, most will certainly appreciate the detailed cutscenes and interesting story. My only serious gripe concerns a few cheap bosses, a sometimes-lazy targeting system, and slightly sensitive controls.

CHET—8.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** TDK MEDIACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** VICIOUS CYCLE ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 23

140 GAME INFORMER



XBOX

QUANTUM REDSHIFT

FUTURISTIC RACER #1,456

Incredible visuals flashed across the screen, but instead of sitting motionless with my mouth gaping, I yawned, slapped my cheek to stay awake, then daydreamed about a racing game that was actually fun to play. If I had to pinpoint exactly where this game went wrong, I'd have to say that developer Curly Monsters spent too much time designing the worlds and vehicles and not enough on ensuring that the gameplay was intense and well-rounded. The vehicular physics accurately produce the sensation that you are hovering over the ground, and the track designs are loaded with big drops, hairpin turns, and varied terrain. The racing itself is decent, but when the game says that you are flying across the track at 300 mph, it feels like you're actually putting along in a golf cart at 20 mph, we've got a serious problem on our hands. I may be exaggerating a tad, but the sensation of speed is not expressed very well at all, especially when you stack it up against RalliSport Challenge and Project Gotham Racing. Toss in a lackluster weapons system, uninteresting character stories, and a barely passable selection of modes, and Quantum Redshift really does come up short on all fronts.

I hate to say it, but the best parts of this game are the vehicle designs and environmental details. The rest of it really did nothing for me. Yes, it could be compared to the Wipeout series, but only from the design standpoint. The gameplay doesn't even come close to touching it. — **REINER**



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS ■ **DEVELOPER** CURLY MONSTERS ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 17

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
ESRB

6

- **Concept:** Another generic futuristic racing game that looks fantastic and sounds amazing, but blindsides you with boring gameplay and puts you to sleep.
- **Graphics:** Very detailed. It most looks like an Xbox technology demo. Hmmmm?
- **Sound:** Rockin' techno beats by Junkie XL.
- **Playability:** Slow speeds...dull weapons...lame gameplay.
- **Entertainment:** A ho-hum racing experience that will only win over the hearts of those of you who have never played a futuristic racing game before.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

SECOND OPINION

I'm "The Guy Who Didn't Like Wipeout Fusion," but bear me out. Without Wipeout's sense of speed, playing Redshift is like being a lab rat in a maze. Find your way forward and get the cheese (power-ups). It should, because I bet there are Xbox marketing guys who fully expect you to gobble up this tech demo like it was Blood Wake 2. Oops, that's a game already! Just about the only thing scarier than this is that I think some of the characters populating the game's hokey story sport camel toes. Ouch! What is good about this title? Races only last two laps. Oh, and the graphics are nice. With little innovation in an already stale genre, I'm here to tell Microsoft that a year after the console's release, it's going to take a lot more than pretty graphics to cut it in this world.

KATO—6



XBOX

BLADE II

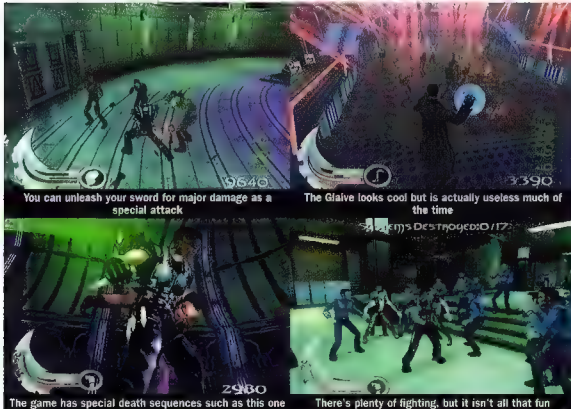
A DULL, DULL BLADE

I had high hopes for Blade's second venture into video games after I witnessed a demo that displayed Blade splattering vampires into gooey chunks with his shotgun. Unfortunately, this shallow effect stands as the game's most engrossing feature.

Blade simply lacks refinement in a number of areas, with the level design being the foremost culprit. Players will encounter plenty of uninspired stages full of repetitive and bland textures, which makes navigation difficult at times. Furthermore, it seems like the developer simply added enemies at random, throwing off any balance the game might have had. Maybe I could've excused this flaw if the combat didn't wear thin after the first stage.

Blade's arsenal is limited and fairly useless overall. Players will indeed wield cool weapons like the Glaive and Shotgun, but the Glaive rarely works well, and the Shotgun is actually less useful than the pistol. Ultimately, this means you're forced into the mundane melee combat.

It seems like Activision started on the right track with this license by focusing on the innovative analog fighting element, and offering some cool-looking moves. However, with more than a few fundamental problems, Blade II still falls short of being acceptable. — CHET



You can unleash your sword for major damage as a special attack.

The Glaive looks cool but is actually useless much of the time.

The game has special death sequences such as this one.

There's plenty of fighting, but it isn't all that fun.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** MUCKY FOOT
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 3

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M

6

- **Concept:** Complete uninteresting objectives and kill stupid vampires along the way.
- **Graphics:** The graphics are average at best, although there are cool effects.
- **Sound:** The music is nothing special, and Blade's one-liners are limited and lame.
- **Playability:** The control is a bit sticky, and camera movement feels too slow.
- **Entertainment:** Once you see some of the cool death scenes, this title's entertainment value plummets faster than Enron stock.
- **Replay Value:** Low.



The shotgun is fun, and quite messy.

SECOND OPINION

Blade II definitely represents a step in the right direction for the series, and easily bests the horribly bad Blade we saw on the PlayStation. On a basic level, it manages to deliver a third-person action experience that fans (and I mean big fans) of the movie might find to be worth a purchase. However, there are still significant flaws in the formula. The levels are poorly designed and tedious, and the developers seem to just throw enemies at the player willy nilly, without much regard to how it will affect the difficulty balance. The analog fighting control is unique, but shallow and not terribly effective against multiple opponents. Also, the coolest weapon in the game, the Glaive (a ninja star-like projectile that decapitates victims) is slow to power-up and very difficult to use in close quarters. Finally, hardcore Blade freaks will be disappointed to learn that the game does not tie in with the plot of the second film. On second thought, maybe that's a good thing.

MATT — 6



XBOX

NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2

SPEED THRILLS

There was a time, before Gran Turismo, when racing games were free from competing in an endless game of "Who's got the biggest garage?" Back then, all people demanded were some well-designed tracks, a nice selection of sports cars, and solid-feeling control.

Games didn't have to have their physics calculated down to the last drag coefficient, and they didn't need to make sure they had the original paint colors available for the 1984 Honda Civic. Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2 is a throwback to those days, and is a refreshing alternative to the time-consuming and oftentimes grueling technical driving of Sega GT, Gran Turismo 3 and the like. The Championship mode (and the Hot Pursuit mode) are mapped out like a branching tournament bracket, meaning that there are multiple ways to complete the game, a facet which adds a good deal of replay value to the proceedings. Sure, Need for Speed doesn't feature as many cars as the big boys, but I don't necessarily need a wide selection of economy hatchbacks from the mid-'80s to have a good time. Just give me a Lotus, a nice course to drive on, and some challenging AI competition, and I'm straight. Hot Pursuit 2 delivers all this and more, and will be the ticket for Xbox fans looking for a good racer. — MATT

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E

8.5

- **Concept:** A balls-out, throttle-down race that captures the best of arcade and realistic racing.
- **Graphics:** The Xbox can blow the doors off the PS2, so why doesn't this look better?
- **Sound:** Bush and a new Rush song are the highlights. Repeat: Bush and a new Rush song are the highlights.
- **Playability:** Nice control is light and power slides are abundant.
- **Entertainment:** It's not brain surgery, but it's good fun nonetheless.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

SECOND OPINION

Time to make the donuts. No wonder the Dunkin' Donuts guy never sleeps — this game's crawling with cops. Which is a good thing, because the fuzz and Need's sense of speed are what kept me playing. However, many of the modes are the same rat race in disguise. In typical EA fashion though, it knows how to strike that threshold of fun that's hard to shake. Alert: Matt is actually a Rush nerd.

KATO — 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 2

REVIEWS



XBOX

NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2003

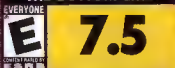
MEET THE NEW BALL, SAME AS THE OLD BALL

Inside Drive 2002 was a nice foundation for what could have been a thriving hoops franchise. It was a little thin, but played well. A year later, the series has packed on a couple off-season pounds, and gets left in the dust.

I'll start with what works. The create-a-player has a wealth of intangibles, and the progression in Season mode is right on. I liked the achievements, which reward you for good performances. Also, the announcers really mix well together, and the banter is the best I've heard for a 2003 game. There are options to dictate how well steals, blocks, and the like work. The general flow of gameplay seems on par with where it should be. This is minor, but I like how the ball kisses the glass on bank-shots.

With that out of the way, I can do some venting. Stealing in here is like taking candy from a baby. I was consistently shooting too high of a percentage from the field. Where are all the dunks? I didn't see a fraction of the 100 promised. The graphics, which looked iffy last year, do nothing for me now. Live has Freestyle Control, and 2K3 has new moves. What does Inside Drive have? Um, analog switching? I really don't know. The play seems like the same as last year, which puts it far behind the all-stars in the genre. Welcome to Popomore Curseville. Population: this game. — **JUSTIN**

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ Concept:

It sold okay last year. Let's do it again!

■ Graphics:

What was once at the peak is now inferior. Models are expressionless, and just don't look right.

■ Sound:

The best commentary team in hoops games, especially with the addition of Kenny Smith!

■ Playability:

I still say Xbox's controller is ideal for basketball, but there aren't any new moves here.

■ Entertainment:

Not as flashy as Live, but as realistic as 2K3. Inside Drive has to work a little harder next year.

■ Replay Value:

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

When you stack up Inside Drive against the other basketball games released this year, it almost feels like as though you've stepped into a time machine and traveled a few years into the past. The play is smooth, but it's generations behind where we're at today. The defensive AI doesn't know how to stop a drive, and the fantasy options are almost nonexistent.

REINER — 7

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** HIGH VOLTAGE ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 15



XBOX

NHL 2003

DROPPING THE PUCK

Electronic Arts rarely puts a bad foot forward, but unfortunately, this game has hardly any forward movement at all. I can respect overhauling the graphics engine in an effort to improve, but I wish the year had been spent in other areas. Still, players look better than they ever have, and the goalies garner some nice animations.

Things fall apart, however, as the game tries too hard to stretch into bold territory while neglecting some basics. The Game Breaker special shots are, frankly, corny; and the Dynamic Dekes are just too hard to control. Not only that, but I don't understand why they are only available to certain players. If you have the skill to pull one off in the first place, your guy — even if he's some jug head from Moose Jaw — should damn well do one. How about a tutorial or practice mode? Finally, the interaction between the players needs a lot of refinement, and I was disappointed that there was virtually no action along the boards whatsoever.

I have a feeling that EA thought that the changes made for this year were going to blow people away. I hate to say it, but it has instead made a hockey title that isn't as intense and which doesn't deliver the smash-mouth action of the sport. — **KATO**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA CANADA ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 1

SECOND OPINION

Rebuilt from the ground up, but not nearly as polished as last year's release. The new graphics engine, deke moves, and Game Breaker meter feel rushed and slapped onto the game.

REINER — 7.75

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ Concept:

EA attempts to overhaul what should have been simply improved

■ Graphics:

Players are getting better and the texture tearing is now absent

■ Sound:

The hilarious commentary continues

■ Playability:

The idea of Dynamic Dekes is cool, but they're hard to execute

■ Entertainment:

A lack of good times isn't hurt the baseline of good times

■ Replay Value:

High



XBOX

COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE

COMMANDOZE

The PC version of this game was difficult, but ultimately a good time. There were enough hot keys and shortcuts that it made the process of maneuvering around the gameplay system palatable, and thus, players were able to enjoy the story. The Xbox simply does not lend itself to a game like this. There are too many things to worry about, and not enough buttons on the controller to adequately compensate for the downsizing of the control scheme. What this does is make even the simple event of moving around an environment terribly tedious and frustrating. Xbox owners are willing to endure a bit of a learning curve, but this is asking too much. I played Commandos 2 on PC extensively, and even I had a hard time adapting.

Story-wise, the game is interesting, but the difficulty of the missions themselves will probably serve as a massive barrier for the gamers who want to find out what happens next. I was ready to pull out my short-and-curries after loading and reloading the first mission seven times in a row, and at that point most people will probably turn off the game and see what's on TV. — **KRISTIAN**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** PYRO STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 30

SECOND OPINION

Commandos, as a series, has been one that I like to hear stories about rather than play, because cool scenarios can unfold that I don't have the patience for. If the minutia of this game doesn't drive you crazy, you'll love Commandos 2. I do not.

ANDY — 5

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ Concept:

Methodically move your soldiers into different positions to outwit and kill the enemy

■ Graphics:

A fairly decent reproduction of the PC version

■ Sound:

The only reason to have the volume activated at all is for the outscenes

■ Playability:

It's not really a learning curve, it's more of a learning mountain

■ Entertainment:

Console gamers may not be able to stomach this type of game

■ Replay Value:

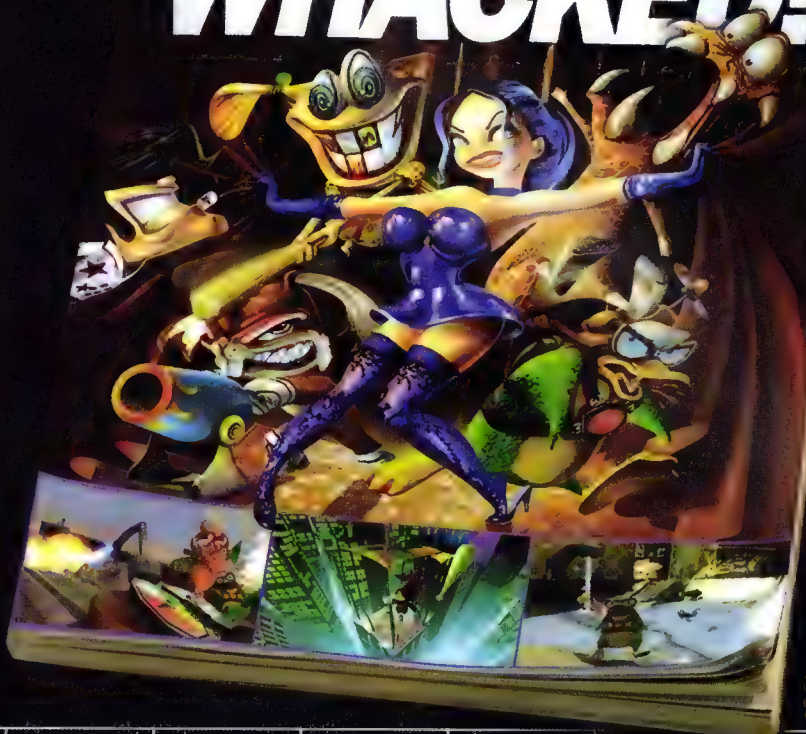
Low

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TU
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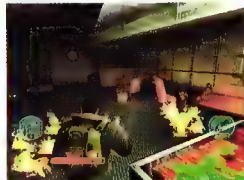
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THE THING

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST



Obviously, the PS2 and Xbox versions are almost exactly the same. However, I prefer the Xbox control scheme a little more (assuming you have a Controller S), and the textures appear a tad sharper. Unfortunately, this version stutters more during gameplay – especially when you turn the game camera. Although this minor flaw doesn't ruin the entire experience, I did find it annoying during some enemy encounters. – **CHET**

M 8.25

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** GOTHAM GAMES
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30



If I could score games on good intentions, Conflict: Desert Storm would fare much better. As it stands, this is nothing more than a mediocre attempt to emulate games like Ghost Recon, and to a lesser extent, Halo. Both of the aforementioned titles make this one look like a bad tech demo, and Conflict does little to extract itself from that hole. While the multiplayer modes are nice; poor targeting, underwhelming graphics, and erratic movement make this game a mere blip on the radar. – **KRISTIAN**

M 6

PRISONER OF WAR

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY
 ■ **PUBLISHER** CODEMASTERS
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 26



The camera is extremely clunky, but this game charmed me more than I thought it would. As a POW in Nazi Germany, it's your task to escape from various Stalags, What this means is being very quiet and very sneaky – and there's virtually no violence in this title. No slitting throats, no bashing in of skulls...you must outwit your German captors to accomplish various missions set by friends and fellow inmates. I had fun with it, but at the same time I had no problem putting it down when things got slow. A good buy if you can find it cheap. – **KRISTIAN**

T 7

BARBARIAN

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** TITUS SOFTWARE
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPT 17



It seems more than a little insulting to call Barbarian a hybrid of fighters and RPG-style games, as its RPG elements consist solely of a storyline (already done in Tekken) and the opportunity to up certain character values (strength, life, magic, etc.) after each successful match. While the graphics are nice and the character models diverse, the controls are clunky and their combo timing lacks logic (insert barb on Xbox controller here). – **LISA**

T 7.25

NASCAR THUNDER 2003

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 23



Last year's Thunder was a great game, but 2003 leaves it in its dust. The racing is tighter, the options endless, and the presentation is top notch (other than the soundtrack which could perhaps be the worst I have ever heard). Thunder 2003 does feature even more driver assist AIs, but in most cases, like the auto-brake when riding in someone's draft, it is helpful to the gameplay. I'll be interested to see if Infogrames' Dirt 2003 can keep up with Thunder as it really is a complete package. – **ANDY**

E 9

NHL HITZ 2003

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 16



You can spend your hard-earned cash on EA's NHL 2003 and find yourself developing a nervous tick as you try to master the new deke moves – or, you can do the smart thing and pick up NHL Hitz 2003 instead. I know, it's not a full-on simulation, but it does have a complete season with stat tracking and the best gameplay around. Without question, Hitz is the deepest and fastest game on the market. In addition to the season, you can also look forward to a World Tour-esque Franchise mode, tons of new secret teams, and improved goalie AI. – **REINER**

E 8.75



XBOX

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

AUSTRALIAN FOR "DULL"

Ty the Tasmanian Tiger EA's latest attempt to crack the platformer market, is about the best definition of average that I could ever imagine. There's nothing really wrong with this game, per se, but there's sure not a whole lot right with it, either. You're Ty, who, as you may have gathered from the title, is a tiger from the Australian state of Tasmania. Ty is the adventuring sort, and trots around the countryside, meeting cute animals that talk in funny Australian dialects while collecting various cogs, jewels, and widgets to complete missions. Sound familiar? Unless you've been locked in a basement for, say, the last seven or eight years, Ty will probably feel a little derivative.

It's not a complete loss, however. Graphically, it's pretty darn good, save for the slightly erratic camera. I also enjoyed the different types of boomerang powers that you earn throughout the game. I just wish the level designs and missions were compelling enough to make me want to keep playing. With the release of Super Mario Sunshine, Sly Cooper, and the imminent Ratchet & Clank, a new era of platformers is upon us, and, unfortunately, Ty the Tasmanian Tiger just doesn't have what it takes to compete in the big leagues. – **MATT**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORMER ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** KROME STUDIOS
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 21

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E

6.5

■ **Concept:**
 A cute animal runs around a 3D environment, collecting things

■ **Graphics:**
 Crisp and bright, with some nice ambient life in the underwater stages

■ **Sound:**
 I guess this twinkly crap is supposed to be "Australian", but how about some AC/DC instead?

■ **Playability:**
 Boredom's the only thing that will keep you from progressing further

■ **Entertainment:**
 A top of the line platformer for 1996, too bad it's 2002

■ **Replay Value:**
 Moderately

SECOND OPINION

Ty the Tasmanian Tiger is essentially a next generation Awesome Possum. Much like the 16-bit game of mention, there really is nothing redeeming about this release. The gameplay lacks innovation, the challenges are two-dimensional in scope, and the character looks more like a college football mascot than the hero of a game.

REINER - 5.5



PC

MAFIA

A MADE GAME

When I started playing this game, I thought, "Okay, this is kind of like GTA III." Then I started getting into it, and I thought, "Holy crap! This is a lot like GTA III. Awesome!" There's no shame in taking a proven gameplay formula and changing it a little bit to fit a scheme of your own. In Mafia's case, this idea has been virtually perfected. I've rarely seen this level of detail and precision breathed into a game. From the living city in which you reside, to the incredibly realistic vehicles, this title has the heart and soul of a blockbuster.

Set in a vibrant 1930s world, Mafia takes you back to a time where prohibition rules, and the cars top out at about 60 mph. The story unfolds like the gangland classic *Donnie Brasco*, as your character, Tommy Angelo, begins spilling his guts to an Irish cop in a local diner. During this retelling, you're transported back to the highlights of Tommy's career in crime. As most of us have fantasized about living out a life involving tuxedos, hidden pistols, backrooms, and a dinner table where "business" is never discussed, Mafia is an excellent alternative to the genuine article, where becoming some large cellmate's wet-nurse is a very real possibility.

In keeping with the GTA III vibe, this title will have you driving from one end of a huge city to the other to perform various duties, but everything looks and feels much more real. The cars take accurate damage (cops will shoot out your

tires if you get in a chase), and look incredible while doing it. The character models also excel in the visual department with some of the most amazingly detailed faces I've ever seen. Unfortunately, the clothes and hands attached to these people are blocky and drab, but I doubt you'll mind that much. While you progress through missions and gain Don Saliere's trust, you'll adventure through the entire city of Lost Heaven. The nine boroughs pulse with life, and you'll soon find that you're just one person in a huge city. During one mission, I was running through the back alleys of Little Italy, and while I sprinted under laundry lines dipping from the weight of the clothes hanging from them, people lounging on their fire escapes watched me as I ran for my life. There's always something new to see or try in Mafia – the mark of any excellent game.

Another mark of a title that stands above the rest is the writing. Whoever decided to spend some cash on a good script for Mafia should be canonized; I was completely engrossed by the plot and the cutscenes. I never once had one of those sphincter-clenching "Oh, c'mon" moments like I did yesterday as I watched *Orange County*. This game does suffer from some control difficulties while in and out of vehicles, but I'm guessing that you'll be too enthralled with the experience to care. Do yourself a favor and pick this game up before it sells out – because it most definitely will. — KRISTIAN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS ■ **DEVELOPER** ILLUSION SOFTWARES
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 27



THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
 17+

9.25

- **Concept:** Grand Theft Auto III set in the '30's, but with a few major twists
- **Graphics:** The city, the ambient life, and the texturing are all absolutely beautiful
- **Sound:** Lots of everything you'd expect from a blockbuster title – voice acting, environmental effects, and great ballistic noise
- **Playability:** The only way you're going to have trouble is if you're a complete newbie to PC games
- **Entertainment:** Hard to turn off, and even harder to stay away from
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Mafia doesn't just take a page from the Grand Theft Auto III playbook – it takes the whole damn thing! It's a clone, yes, but in this case that is not a bad thing. In fact, Mafia does improve on the PC version of GTA in a number of ways. It looks better; the environment is even larger and more detailed than Liberty City; and the out-of-the-car action is more compelling. The story, told through a series of flashbacks, is excellent, and gives the game a feel closer to *The Road to Perdition* than the campy, satirical GTA III. However, I do have a few reservations about the game. One is the fact that it unfolds in an essentially linear fashion, which means that you don't really have any free time to explore the city. Secondly, cars from the 1930s are slow and crappy. I know this is historically accurate, but knowing that doesn't make 45 mph car chases any more fun. These minor gripes aside, Mafia is the closest any game has come to capturing the GTA mojo.

MATT – 9.25

"...this title has the heart and soul of a blockbuster"

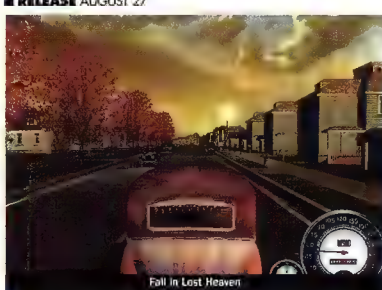


"I hate you, taxi!"



The environments are huge and teeming with life

A well-aimed tommy gun has undeniable results

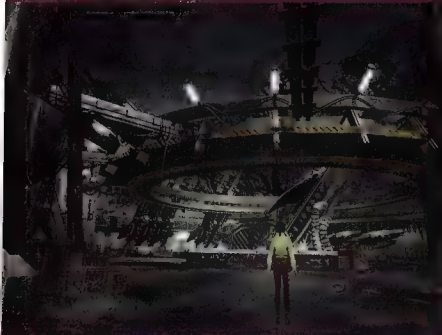


Fall in Lost Heaven



This person's bed-wetting has taken a turn for the worse

REVIEWS



PC

SYBERIA

SLOW ON THE UPTAKE

This is a very bizarre game. The story revolves around an American lawyer who is sent over to buy an ailing toy company in the Alps (think Ricola) on behalf of a wealthy corporation. So, the owner of this company dies and, long story short, you're stuck trying to track down this semi-retarded guy who everyone thought was dead, but is actually the heir to this company. Without his say so, there can be no sale. The company itself revolves around the manufacture of wind-up toys and automata, so there's an interesting backdrop of creepy machines and old metalworking throughout the game. Okay, here's where it gets weird: The long-lost heir is actually obsessed with woolly mammoths, and has found some island where they still survive. You need to track down this island and get him to sell the factory.

That's fair enough—but travelling on an old wind-up train to try to reach this place and having to either constantly repair the train or fix the robotic conductor got really old really fast. Other games of this ilk drew the player along because the puzzles were interesting, and seemed to relate to the story. Syberia's seem to exist simply as filler. Example: Why do I need to spend an hour getting a @\$%ing ticket for the robot-conductor/engineer who knows I'm the only one on the train? —KRISTIAN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROIDS
 ■ **DEVELOPER** MICROIDS ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 9



PC

CULTURES 2: GATES OF ASGARD

KARTÖFLUÆXLAVEIKI



Cultures 2 is not for those of you who either have, or exhibit signs of having ADD. Things take off at a snail's pace during the first mission, and don't really pick up until an hour into the second. That's not always bad, but having to wait for two and a half hours to see a little progress is a bit excessive. Once there, however, Cultures 2 takes on a unique charisma with its addictive city-building elements, and compelling strategic components.

The game essentially follows the memoirs of Bjarni, a young Viking warrior as he sets out to fulfill his destiny. From the shores of Greenland (where the last game ended), you'll be travelling back to Europe to find and kill a huge serpent that could bring down humanity. As you travel with a band of countrymen from one location to another, you'll set up bases and interact with the local populous. The economic and social side of the game is excellent—I wanted to grow my city into a thriving money-maker, but the pace of the missions tended to be grudgingly slow. There's no shame in buying Cultures 2, just make sure you don't spend over \$30. Oh, and that headline up there? It's the Icelandic word for potato wart. —KRISTIAN



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** JOWOOD PRODUCTIONS ■ **DEVELOPER** FUNATICS DEVELOPMENT ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 26

THE BOTTOM LINE



7.75

- **Concept:**
A city-builder RTS hybrid served up on a Viking-based canvas
- **Graphics:**
Vivid coloring and a quirky art direction keep this one looking fresh
- **Sound:**
The Swedish-chef sounding unit acknowledgements are enough to make you chuckle for hours
- **Playability:**
I found it a touch difficult acclimating myself to these controls
- **Entertainment:**
It's hard not to get hooked as you help your little Viking buddies build a self-sufficient city
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

Unlike many other god titles, Cultures 2 puts players in the shoes of a protagonist who must adventure through an overall plot. Although this element is integral, and actually quite interesting, in order to support the main character players are required to micromanage various town activities and people. While this culture-building component is indeed detailed enough to spend numerous hours with, it just doesn't feel quite as user-friendly, deep, or as organized as similar games like Rise of the Middle Kingdom. Fortunately, C2's combination of adventuring and simulation, along with its unique graphics and pleasant music help it stand out from the rest. Fans familiar with the genre will certainly find C2 to be a rock-solid experience, but others would be better off checking out Rise.

CHET — 8

THE BOTTOM LINE



6.75

- **Concept:**
It's third-person, never. Puzzles fans rejoice.
- **Graphics:**
For a game that has very little animation during play, I was expecting a lot more. The cutscenes are quite pretty, however.
- **Sound:**
Nice score, adequate ambient noise, and passable voice acting.
- **Playability:**
You can operate a mouse, right?
- **Entertainment:**
Only those who got into the Myst series will enjoy playing this.
- **Replay Value:**
Low.

SECOND OPINION

I don't see much that's new here, but I applaud Syberia for its style. It fits nicely into the genre and it kind of crept me out. The one objection I had is that many of the puzzles are of the fail-if-you-succeed variety. This, combined with the slow pace, makes the title something like the automata it contains.

KATO — 7



PC

SPRING BREAK

I'M, LIKE, SO DRUNK!

Above is the mating call of the great North American Frat Boy (lascivious assgrabberton). Since *Spring Break* (both the game and the real thing) is all about getting drunk and laid, we thought it bared mentioning. The game itself includes a bit more than just making sure your guests have plenty of liquid courage, as I did get a kick out of putting up different buildings, and increasing my income and hotel ratings.

Spring Break is great on the details front as well. I was able to click on any of my guests and find out exactly what they liked about my resort, and what they didn't. Unfortunately, I simply got bored of the missions after a while. Deep Red dangles a carrot in front of you through most of the game with the promise of more buildings and attractions as you progress through the scenarios, but I had a hard time caring about that. Aside from that, and the graphical drawbacks, *Spring Break* is a fun little simulation title that gets naughty every once in a while. This game exhibits some obvious Tropic influences, but *Spring Break* ultimately failed to keep me enthralled the same way that classic title did. Sure, watching coeds drink themselves silly, then throw up on my beach is funny, but it isn't funny for long. — **KRISTIAN**



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 Description: []
 Price: []
 Status: []

Staff Control
 Name: []
 Position: []
 Salary: []
 Status: []

Players have detailed control over their employees

See if you can find the naked statues in this picture

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** DEEP RED
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T

7.5

■ **Concept:**

Get your customers drunk, and put in enough toilets for them to puke in

■ **Graphics:**

Pretty boring all told. The structures looked decent, though

■ **Sound:**

Turn it off immediately — there's no reason to subject your ears to that kind of abuse

■ **Playability:**

It might take you a few minutes to right yourself, but after you've got the basics it's smooth sailing

■ **Entertainment:**

I had fun, but I didn't have any problem moving on to something else

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I was expecting something along the lines of *Girls Gone Wild*, but rather than titillating my fancy, I was greeted by a crude gameplay package that pales in comparison to the other sim games on the market. Sure, I found myself giggling at the wet t-shirt contests, and the drunks who would puke on the beach and pick fights with one another, but these sequences are few and far between and hidden within a heap of mindless gameplay. Don't get me wrong, this is a fantastic idea for a game, but instead of focusing so heavily on the management and construction, Deep Red should have keyed in on the chaos and naughty nature of the game. I know I sound like an insensitive pig, but if you purchase a game called *Spring Break*, you're not buying it for its amazing gameplay, but rather the content involved.

REINER — 7

PC

CELTIC KINGS: RAGE OF WAR

ANOTHER ONE FOR THE BIN

I'm sure this game sounded great when the developers were figuring out how to piece it together. You've got a little history, a little role-playing, a lot of fighting and not a lot of waiting. That sounds good to me, but *Celtic Kings* came up a little short on the gameplay side of things. My major gripe stems from the fact that I just didn't give a damn about the story. I was simply blowing through the missions — I didn't care who lived or died, but I should have. Any good strategy game will get you hooked to the point where you really care about its main characters.

Celtic Kings does have some nice environmental and structural graphics, but that can't pull this game's foot out of the bargain bin grave. There are a few interesting features (unit grouping by health or experience was nice), so I wouldn't feel too bad if you picked it up for like \$20 somewhere. Basically, you can keep playing Battle.net *WarCraft* without that nagging feeling that you're missing out on something. I'll let you know if you need to break out that enormous leather-lined brick you use as a filing cabinet (your wallet) any time soon, Mr. Costanza. — **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E

7

■ **Concept:**

Take units from here to there and fight things, check TV listings for next *Simpsons* episode

■ **Graphics:**

Not bad for this type of game, but don't expect *WarCraft III*

■ **Sound:**

Turn off your speakers the second your first mission begins — you'll be better off listening to your own tunes.

■ **Playability:**

A few hotkey oddities will take some getting used to

■ **Entertainment:**

If you're in the market for an RTS, and you don't have a lot of cash, hopefully you can get this cheap

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I didn't find this game to be particularly awful, although I wish I had more control over individual units than I was granted. Ultimately, *Celtic Kings* just doesn't offer RTS fans anything particularly attractive, especially when other products like *WarCraft III* make it look a generation or two behind.

CHET — 7

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** STRATEGY FIRST ■ **DEVELOPER** HAEMMONT MULTIMEDIA
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 30

REVIEWS

GAME BOY ADVANCE

DRIVER 2 ADVANCE

- **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
- **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMMES
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 11



While not a port, this title gives you all the feel of the PlayStation sequel—except there are no curved roads. Tanner can roam the large maps on foot, the AI can be harsh, and you perform the same types of missions (of which there are many). However, the camera can stink if you're pinned alongside a building. The fact that the game is pretty seamlessly transferred, however, may mean that this series' brand of driving/action is fairly simplistic nowadays. Still, this was born to be on the GBA. — **KATO**

E 7.75

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SUPER GHOULS N' GHOSTS

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24



The GBA has become the land of many half-assed ports. Fortunately, the SNES version of the Ghouls N' Ghosts is by far the best, and this is a faithful reproduction with some welcome enhancements and improvements. Mainly, players now have the option to save after completing a level, which means you don't have to play through the game twice in one sitting. Also, Capcom eliminated the annoying slowdown that plagued the original, and many other early SNES carts. — **CHET**

E 8.5

GAME BOY ADVANCE

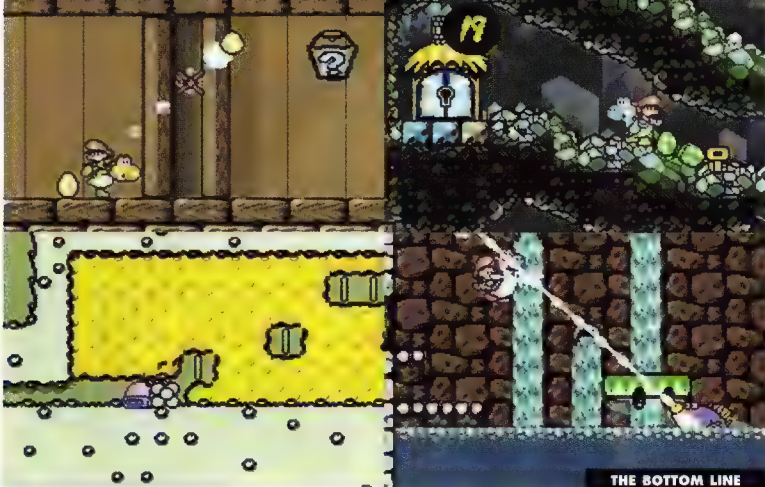
LEGO BIONICLE: MATORAN ADVENTURES

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
- **PUBLISHER** LEGO/ELECTRONIC ARTS
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 14



The kids today love their Lego Bionicle toys, and now the world-famous block company is rewarding fans with a surprisingly tight little GBA game for their trouble. In concept, it's similar to the old SNES title The Lost Vikings, allowing you to switch between multiple playable characters to solve various platforming puzzles. Each Bionicle dude (I think that's the technical term) has his own strengths, weaknesses, and means of attack, all of which come into play at various points in the game. As good a non-Nintendo GBA platformer as I've seen in some time. — **MATT**

E 7.75



GAME BOY ADVANCE

YOSHI'S ISLAND: SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 3

STRADDLE THE LIZARD AND RIDE

The Super Mario Advance series started off with a bang by sporting Super Mario 2, a forgotten classic in my opinion, and had a fantastic follow-up that featured perhaps the greatest 2D Mario game of all time with Super Mario World. This third installment however, kind of threw me off, as I would have imagined that Super Mario 3—without a doubt one of Miyamoto's masterpieces—would have been the best choice. Instead, we get Yoshi's Island, certainly a SNES classic, but not nearly the caliber of Super Mario 3.

That said, Yoshi's Island is a unique adventure that puts the player in control of Yoshi rather than Mario throughout most of the quest. The twist being that the Yoshis must take baby Mario to Bowser's castle to save his kidnapped brother. This offers up some interesting play mechanics as you don't have a health bar, but must rescue baby Mario if he gets knocked off your back before a timer runs out. Along the way there are also many different forms the Yoshis can take to tackle different areas, as well as fruit that the Yoshis can eat to get different powers.

While this isn't the new Mario adventure I am still waiting for on the Game Boy Advance, it is one heck of a platformer. I kind of forgot most of it since I played it way back in 1995, so the whole game was pretty fresh and definitely entertaining. — **ANDY**



- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM (UP TO 2-PLAYER VIA LINK CABLE)
- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 23

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E

8.75

- **Concept:** Use your Yoshi skills to make your way to Bowser's castle
- **Graphics:** Miyamoto's crazy Crayola color palette works even on the GBA
- **Sound:** WAH-WAH-WAH-WAH-WAH!
- **Playability:** It's a Mario game, what do you think?
- **Entertainment:** Kind of a forgettable adventure, but fun nonetheless
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

This is the first game in the Mario Advance series that I don't know like "the back of me hand," and I still don't consider it a true Mario game. Still, Yoshi's Island is definitely a fine piece of platforming. While Yoshi doesn't quite have the wealth of moves that Mario did in Super Mario World, there are infinite gameplay styles—not to mention minigames—which you can eat up along your way. Exploration is more prevalent, and the levels are expertly designed. As annoying as the sobbing Baby Mario is, I still found myself freaking out whenever I had to rescue him. Yoshi's Island's graphics and sound are top notch, and the game's artistic style has maintained its originality over the seven years since the SNES version came out. It's funny to see little glimpses of polygons throughout. GBA is proving itself to be a platformer's paradise, and Yoshi's Island is another utopia.

JUSTIN — 9.25

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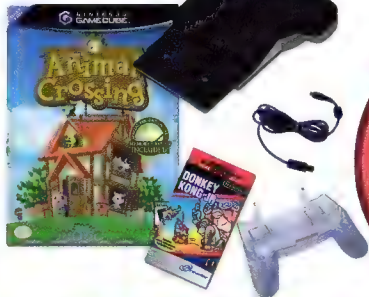
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* Controllers may vary by manufacturer and design

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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 August 2002
Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	Madden NFL 2003	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	\$50
2	N/A	Super Mario Sunshine	GC	9.75	Aug-02	\$49
3	N/A	SOCOM: US Navy SEALs	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	\$60
4	1	NCAA Football 2003	PS2	N/A	Jul-02	\$50
5	N/A	Madden NFL 2003	Xbox	9.5	Aug-02	\$50

Even in the face of stiff competition from its big brother, NCAA Football has proven to be surprisingly resilient, staking its claim to fourth position in this month's digital horsace. Are gamers turning away from the pampered pros in favor of collegiate gridiron warriors? Probably not. We think NCAA's torrid sales are due to Lions fans buying it for the exclusive Joey Harrington cover art.

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	2	Grand Theft Auto III	PS2	9.5	Oct-01	\$50
7	9	Yu-Gi-Oh! Dark Duel Stories	GBC	5.5	Mar-02	\$30
8	N/A	Dead to Rights	Xbox	9.25	Aug-02	\$51
9	5	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2	9	Jul-01	\$21
10	3	Medal of Honor: Frontline	PS2	9	May-02	\$50
11	8	Super Mario Advance 2	GBA	9.5	Feb-02	\$29
12	N/A	Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	PS2	8.75	Aug-02	\$48
13	7	Dragonball Z: The Legacy of Goku	GBA	7.5	May-02	\$31
14	N/A	NFL 2K3	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	\$50
15	N/A	Street Hoops	PS2	5.5	Aug-02	\$51
16	12	Yu-Gi-Oh! Forbidden Memories	PSX	5.5	Mar-02	\$31
17	4	Stuntman	PS2	9.5	Jun-02	\$48
18	N/A	NFL 2K3	Xbox	9.5	Aug-02	\$50
19	N/A	NBA Street	PS2	N/A	Jun-01	\$22
20	10	Halo	Xbox	9.5	Nov-02	\$48

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett-VonKorff (516) 625-2481

Source: Game Japan
Based On Monthly Units Sold

JAPAN TOP 10

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Dynasty Warriors 2: Adventures	PS2
2	N/A	Project Minerva	PS2
3	N/A	Auto Modellista	PS2
4	3	Super Mario Sunshine	GC
5	5	My Summer Vacation 2	PS2
6	4	Power Pro Baseball 9	PS2
7	1	Mobile Suit Gundam: War Diary	PS2
8	8	Ape Escape 2	PS2
9	N/A	Groove Adventure Rare	PS-X
10	N/A	Ever17: The Out of Infinity	GBA



The Staff's Favorite Picks

GAME INFORMER TOP 10

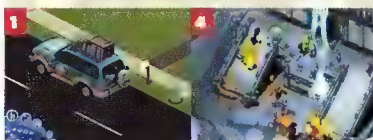
POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	PS2
2	5	Animal Crossing	GC
3	1	Kingdom Hearts	PS2
4	N/A	Mafia	PC
5	4	SOCOM: US Navy SEALs	PS2
6	3	Super Mario Sunshine	GC
7	N/A	Pro Race Driver	PS2
8	N/A	Star Fox Adventures	GC
9	2	Madden NFL 2003	PS2
10	N/A	NASCAR Thunder 2003	Xbox



Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment
Source: Nielsen Entertainment/ESG (526) 625-6183

PC TOP 10

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	3	The Sims: Vacation	Mar-02	\$59
2	1	Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos	Jun-02	\$44
3	4	The Sims	Feb-00	\$29
4	N/A	Icewind Dale II	Feb-00	\$44
5	6	Backyard Baseball 2003	Jun-02	\$42
6	N/A	Mafia	Aug-02	\$45
7	N/A	Medieval: Total War	Aug-02	\$76
8	N/A	Roller Coaster Tycoon	May-99	\$19
9	N/A	Madden NFL 2003	Aug-02	\$49
10	8	Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	Jan-02	\$47



NEW RELEASES

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
PLAYSTATION 2		
11/12/02	Activision Anthology	Activision
11/12/02	ATV Offroad Fury 2	Sony
11/15/02	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Konami
11/15/02	BattleBalls THQ	THQ
10/15/02	BloodRayne	Majesco
11/19/02	BMX XXX	Acclaim
11/12/02	Cabela's Big Game Hunter	Activision
10/15/02	Conflict Zone	Ubisoft
10/29/02	Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami
11/15/02	Dance Dance Revolution: Max	Konami
11/26/02	Dead to Rights	Namco
11/4/02	Defender	Midway
11/15/02	Disney's Treasure Planet	Electronic Arts
10/29/02	Disney's Pixar: Out of the Shadows	Ubisoft
11/12/02	Disney's Treasure Planet	Sony
11/11/02	Dr. Muto	Midway

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
 ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19

Unlike previous installments, Core will break Angel of Darkness' adventure into three gameplay-conscious sections, which is held together by one comprehensive plot. The first features Lara in various European cities such as Paris and Prague. She's summoned to Paris to aid her old mentor, Von Croy, only to find that he's been murdered, and she's being framed for it.

10/29/02	Evolution Skateboarding	Konami
11/5/02	FIFA 2003	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Fighter Master	Konami
11/19/02	Frogger Beyond	Konami
10/29/02	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar
11/15/02	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
11/18/02	Haven: Call of the King	Midway
11/4/02	Hot Wheels Velocity X	THQ
11/15/02	James Bond 007: Nightfire	Electronic Arts
11/19/02	James Cameron's Dark Angel	Vivendi Universal
10/29/02	JetX20	Sony
10/22/02	Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim
11/12/02	Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The	Electronic Arts
10/22/02	Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings, The	Vivendi Universal
11/19/02	Malice	Vivendi Universal
11/25/02	March Madness	Capcom
11/12/02	Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom
11/12/02	Minority Report	Activision
11/22/02	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway
10/15/02	NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	Infragistics
10/15/02	NBA Live 2003	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	NCAA Football 2003	Sony
11/12/02	NHL 2K3	Sega
11/5/02	NHL FaceOff 2003	Sony
10/29/02	Ninja Assault	Namco
11/22/02	Pro Race Driver	Infragistics
11/12/02	Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision
11/5/02	Ratchet & Clank	Sony
10/22/02	Red Faction: Guerrilla	THQ
10/22/02	Reign of Fire	Bam Entertainment
11/5/02	Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix
11/12/02	Rocky	Ubisoft
10/30/02	Rugrats: The Legendary Adventure	Infragistics
11/1/02	Rugrats: The Legendary Adventure	Techno
11/12/02	Shinobi	Sega
10/22/02	Sho	Electronic Arts
11/19/02	Shrek: Super Party	THQ
10/21/02	Simmons Skateboarding	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Sims, The	Electronic Arts
11/6/02	SpongeBob SquarePants: P.F.D.	THQ
11/5/02	Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	Vivendi Universal
11/12/02	Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	Lucas Arts
10/29/02	Stuntman II	Konami
11/5/02	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft
11/12/02	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubisoft
11/19/02	Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	Eidos
10/28/02	Total Immersion Racing	Activision
11/12/02	Unreal II: The Age of Darkness	Vivendi Universal
11/5/02	Whiteout	Konami
10/19/02	Wild Arms 3	Sony
11/22/02	Woodruff and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
11/11/02	WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth	THQ
10/15/02	X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision
11/5/02	Zapper	Infragistics

11/12/02	Evolution Skateboarding	Konami
11/5/02	FIFA 2003	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Fighter Master	Konami
11/19/02	Frogger Beyond	Konami
10/29/02	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar
11/15/02	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
11/18/02	Haven: Call of the King	Midway
11/4/02	Hot Wheels Velocity X	THQ
11/15/02	James Bond 007: Nightfire	Electronic Arts
11/19/02	James Cameron's Dark Angel	Vivendi Universal
10/29/02	JetX20	Sony
10/22/02	Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim
11/12/02	Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The	Electronic Arts
10/22/02	Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings, The	Vivendi Universal
11/19/02	Malice	Vivendi Universal
11/25/02	March Madness	Capcom
11/12/02	Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom
11/12/02	Minority Report	Activision
11/22/02	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway
10/15/02	NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	Infragistics
10/15/02	NBA Live 2003	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	NCAA Football 2003	Sony
11/12/02	NHL 2K3	Sega
11/5/02	NHL FaceOff 2003	Sony
10/29/02	Ninja Assault	Namco
11/22/02	Pro Race Driver	Infragistics
11/12/02	Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision
11/5/02	Ratchet & Clank	Sony
10/22/02	Red Faction: Guerrilla	THQ
10/22/02	Reign of Fire	Bam Entertainment
11/5/02	Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix
11/12/02	Rocky	Ubisoft
10/30/02	Rugrats: The Legendary Adventure	Infragistics
11/1/02	Rugrats: The Legendary Adventure	Techno
11/12/02	Shinobi	Sega
10/22/02	Sho	Electronic Arts
11/19/02	Shrek: Super Party	THQ
10/21/02	Simmons Skateboarding	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Sims, The	Electronic Arts
11/6/02	SpongeBob SquarePants: P.F.D.	THQ
11/5/02	Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	Vivendi Universal
11/12/02	Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	Lucas Arts
10/29/02	Stuntman II	Konami
11/5/02	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft
11/12/02	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubisoft
11/19/02	Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	Eidos
10/28/02	Total Immersion Racing	Activision
11/12/02	Unreal II: The Age of Darkness	Vivendi Universal
11/5/02	Whiteout	Konami
10/19/02	Wild Arms 3	Sony
11/22/02	Woodruff and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
11/11/02	WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth	THQ
10/15/02	X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision
11/5/02	Zapper	Infragistics

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
PLAYSTATION 2		
11/12/02	Disney's Treasure Planet	Sony
11/12/02	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar
11/15/02	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
10/15/02	NBA Live 2003	Electronic Arts
10/15/02	Shrek: Treasure Hunt	THQ
10/15/02	Shrek: Treasure Hunt	THQ
10/15/02	Shrek: Treasure Hunt	THQ
10/29/02	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision
GAMECUBE		
11/19/02	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Vivendi Universal
11/5/02	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Konami
11/16/02	BattleBalls	THQ
11/12/02	BloodRayne	Majesco
11/19/02	BMX XXX	Acclaim
11/1/02	Cubovers	Atari
11/12/02	Darkened Sky	Vivendi Universal

11/26/02	Dead to Rights	Namco
11/4/02	Defender	Midway
11/18/02	Die Hard: Battle for Los Angeles	Vivendi Universal
11/5/02	Disney's Pixar: Out of the Shadows	Ubisoft
10/15/02	Dragon's Lair 3D	Evcore Software
10/29/02	Evolution Skateboarding	Konami
11/12/02	Evolution Wars	Ubisoft
11/5/02	FIFA 2003	Electronic Arts
11/19/02	Frogger Beyond	Konami
11/12/02	Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	Infragistics
11/5/02	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
11/14/02	Hot Wheels Velocity X	THQ
11/18/02	Hunter: The Reckoning	Vivendi Universal
11/12/02	James Bond 007: Nightfire	Electronic Arts
10/22/02	Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim
10/21/02	Marlo Party 4	Nintendo
11/12/02	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Men in Black II	Infragistics
11/18/02	Metroid Prime	Nintendo
11/12/02	Minority Report	Activision
11/22/02	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway
11/12/02	NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	Infragistics
10/15/02	NBA Live 2003	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	NHL 2K3	Sega
10/29/02	Outlaw Golf	Vivendi Universal
10/29/02	Phantasy Star Online Episodes I & II	Sega
11/12/02	Pro Race Driver	Infragistics
11/12/02	Resident Evil 0	Capcom
11/12/02	Rocky	THQ
11/5/02	Shrek: Extra Large Toy	THQ
11/12/02	Sonic Mega Collection	Sega
11/5/02	Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	Vivendi Universal
11/25/02	Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	Lucas Arts
11/19/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	Lucas Arts
10/28/02	Star Wars: The Clone Wars	Lucas Arts
10/15/02	Swing Golf	Eidos
11/12/02	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	Electronic Arts
10/15/02	TimeSplitters 2	Eidos
11/18/02	Tom Clancy's Sum of All Fears	Ubisoft
10/29/02	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision
10/24/02	Top Gun: Combat Zones	Titus
10/21/02	Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	Electronic Arts
10/15/02	X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision
11/5/02	Zapper	Infragistics

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
XBOX		
11/19/02	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Vivendi Universal
11/5/02	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Konami
11/12/02	BloodRayne	Majesco
11/19/02	BMX XXX	Acclaim
11/12/02	Crimson Sins: High Road to Revenge	Microsoft
11/12/02	Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Teamo
10/22/02	Deathrow	Ubisoft
11/4/02	Defender	Midway
11/18/02	Dr. Muto	Midway
11/12/02	Dragon's Lair 3D	Ubisoft
11/5/02	Falcon: The Legend	THQ
10/29/02	FIFA 2003	Electronic Arts
11/18/02	Fireblade	Midway
11/5/02	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
10/21/02	House of the Dead II	Electronic Arts
11/18/02	James Bond 007: Nightfire	Electronic Arts
11/19/02	James Cameron's Dark Angel	Vivendi Universal
11/12/02	Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim
11/12/02	Malice	Vivendi Universal
11/12/02	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Electronic Arts
11/5/02	Metrol Solid 2: Substance	Konami
11/12/02	Minority Report	Activision

WWE SMACKDOWN: SHUT YOUR MOUTH

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 6-PLAYER FIGHTING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



This game is full of backstage shenanigans and promo madness. Brand extension is illustrated through a World Wrestling draft. More impressive, though, is the way the game played. While using the standard, rather simplistic control scheme of SmackDowns past, Shut Your Mouth flows smoother and captures the subtle nuances of each Superstar.

11/22/02	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway
11/19/02	MX Superfly	THQ
10/22/02	NBA Inside Drive 2003	Microsoft
10/15/02	NBA Live 2003	Electronic Arts
10/29/02	NBA Starting Five	Konami
11/12/02	NHL 2K3	Sega
11/12/02	Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision
11/12/02	Reign of Fire	Bam Entertainment
11/12/02	Rocky	Ubisoft
10/29/02	Sea Blade	Vivendi Universal
11/12/02	Sekou Sam	Tea 2
10/29/02	Shenmue II	Microsoft
11/19/02	Shrek: Super Party	THQ
10/22/02	Sneakers	THQ
11/12/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	Lucas Arts
11/19/02	Steel Battalion	Capcom
11/3/02	Superman: The Man of Steel	Infragistics
11/4/02	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	Electronic Arts
10/22/02	ToeJam & Earl III: Mission to Earth	Sega
11/5/02	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft
11/12/02	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubisoft
10/28/02	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision
10/15/02	Transworld Snow	Infragistics

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
10/15/02	Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	Electronic Arts
10/29/02	Unreal Championship	Infragistics
10/22/02	Whacked!	Microsoft
11/5/02	Whiteout	Konami
10/15/02	X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision
11/12/02	Zapper	Infragistics

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
PC		
10/31/02	Age of Mythology	Microsoft
11/14/02	Asheron's Call 2	Microsoft
11/18/02	Arx Fatalis	Midway Interactive
11/5/02	Crusader Kings	Strategy First
10/29/02	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Electronic Arts
11/18/02	Dragon's Lair 3D	Ubisoft
10/25/02	Dragon's Lair: The Time Warp	Ubisoft
11/5/02	Elder Scrolls II: Morrowind	Bethesda Softworks
10/21/02	EverQuest: The Planes of Power	Sony
11/4/02	EverQuest: Gold Edition	Sony

RALLY FUSION: RACE OF CHAMPIONS

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



Rally Fusion isn't just about laying off the accelerator; it's about managing that careful balance between speed and sliding. If this isn't enough to keep you wise-eyed and caffeinated, avalanches, chickens, and other distractions will occasionally jump out at you. Finally, Fusion comes with both a detailed damage model and some environments that equal those in Xbox's RallySport. By bringing the arcade and sim sides of rally racing together, Activision will have to do a good job balancing to keep all types of gamers happy.

10/29/02	RFA Soccer 2003	Electronic Arts
11/5/02	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
10/21/02	Iron Storm	Dreamcatcher
11/18/02	James Bond 007: Nightfire	Electronic Arts
10/29/02	Legs Over Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
10/22/02	Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The	Vivendi Universal
11/25/02	Masters of Orion III	MicroSoft
11/17/02	Match Warrar 4: Mercenaries	Vivendi Universal
11/18/02	Medal of Honor: Allied Assault Expansion Pack	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	NASCAR Thunder 2003	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	NBA Live 2003	Electronic Arts
11/26/02	Practitioners	Eidos
11/19/02	Project G2: Coast Strike	Activision
11/12/02	Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory	Activision
10/15/02	Rollercoaster Tycoon II	Beverly
11/18/02	Sim City 4	Electronic Arts
11/18/02	Star Trek: Star Fleet Command 3	Activision
11/5/02	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	Electronic Arts
11/12/02	Tom Raider: The Angel of Darkness	Eidos
11/5/02	Total Immersion Racing	Viv

PLAY TO PERFECTION

STARFOX ADVENTURES



PROLOGUE: KRAZOA PALACE

The journey begins through the eyes of Krystal. Rather than letting you get your bearings, you'll be thrust into an airborne battle pitting you and your winged companion against a living vessel. Although it appears that damage can be taken, you can't die here, so throw caution to the wind and fire away at the dragonheads and propeller. You'll eventually land and be asked to complete training exercises on the deck of the ship, and within Krazoa Palace. Just listen to the tutorial to learn what to do next, and you'll eventually confront the first Krazoa Spirit. Complete the Test of Observation, and the Spirit will merge with your body. To release it, talk to the sick

triceratops, then ride the platform behind it up to the next level. Make another quick right and extract the spirit. Just then, however, the most unfortunate of things happens.

CHAPTER 1: JOURNEY TO DINOSAUR PLANET

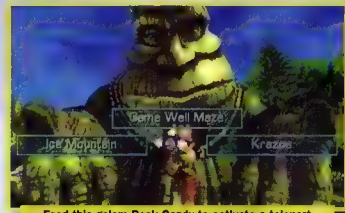
After a fairly cheesy cutscene with the Star Fox team, which seems to be accompanied by the power ballad from *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*, you'll be asked to travel to Dinosaur Planet. Before you can land on the surface, you'll first need to remove the



Plant Bomb Spores into the soil, then use your Flame power on the Bomb Plant that grows to destroy this wall

force field. To do so, completing a traditional Star Fox shooter stage is a must. Just blast away and fly through the golden rings. Of course, if you hit the shoulder buttons, you'll perform the patented shield roll. Killer!

You'll land the Arwing in ThornTall Hollow. Your mission is to find the Queen EarthWalker. Before you can do so, you'll need to complete a number of side quests. The first thing that you should do is grab the Staff from the flower patch in front of the temple. Approach the temple and a handful of baddies will engage you in battle. Use different combos (by pressing the analog stick in different directions while hitting A) to decimate these foes. This feat will open a grate behind the well. Head to this location and use your Staff to lift the rock to reveal a hidden cavern. Drop down and leap across the pool of water to obtain the Fire Blaster staff upgrade. Use your newfound energy to open the



Feed this golem Rock Candy to activate a teleport

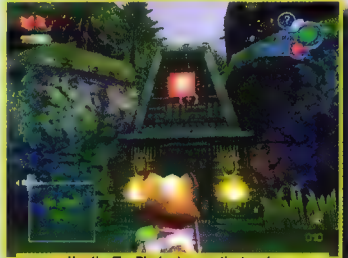
door. Now, backtrack to the temple. Once again, use the fire magic to activate the switch above the door. After talking with the Queen, you'll learn that you must go to Ice Mountain.

Before departing, use your Staff to lift up large rocks bearing a green ring. Doing this will release slumbering Scarabs—the currency in this game. When you collect 10, head across the river to the store (the civilized structure with a door) and purchase Maps and the Rock Candy from the storekeeper. Just as a mental note, you'll be able to barter with this sleazy merchant. Go for three or four Scarabs for each map. Of course you'll need to have as many Scarabs as the original price before a deal can be cut.

To move on, you'll first need to use your Flame power on the Bomb Plants to unleash Bomb Spores. Snag as many as you can, then head up onto the



Use the barrels to progress through Krazoa Palace



Use the Fire Blaster to open the temple door and find the Queen EarthWalker

ledge to the left of the waterfall and plant a Spore in the soil. Before conversing with the large rock dude, run around the pond to another circle of soil. Blow it open to find two Fuel Cells. At this point, if you feel like backtracking a few steps, you'll find additional soil spots on a ledge near the temple, and hidden at the foot of the waterfall. Both areas lead to additional Fuel Cells. When you're ready to move on, give the Rock Candy to the rock beast with a Fat Bastard-like voice and a *NeverEnding Story*-esque appearance. In thanks, he'll activate a teleporter leading to the Game Well Maze, Krazoa, and Ice Mountain.

HELPFUL TIP!

Search under stones (by rapidly pressing A near the green marking) to unearth Scarabs.

CHAPTER 2: ICE MOUNTAIN

Before you can get any work done, you'll see two dinosaurs do their best LAPD impersonations on a hapless little Triceratops pup. To exact revenge, grab the barrel from the ledge to the left and throw it at the boxes in front of the cannon. Combat the warriors, then use your Fire magic on the door switch. Rather than solving the child abuse matter verbally or well...with your fists, this conflict will be solved through a daring hover bike race across the mountain terrain. If you look closely at the environment during the cutscene leading up to this event, you'll see a Fuel Cell tucked in a corner. There's actually two here. Make a note to return to get them, then enjoy the high-speed pursuit down the mountain.



Hug the corners and knock one of the opponents out of the race to ensure an easy victory

To beat these freaks, we recommend destroying one of the opponents – which can be accomplished by ramming your bike into his at least four times. Keep to the sides of the other opponent, as they both drop bombs, then take the lead. From here, cut every corner as tight as you can to win the race. If you lose, never fear, you'll simply start again.

CHAPTER 3: SNOWHORN WASTES

After an amazing cutscene, you'll plummet into the water and run headlong into your new mate (friend, that is). With Tricky at your side, run around the corner to the Blue GrubTub Fungus. Feed the Fungus to Tricky, then have him dig in the dirt and sit on the switch near the campfire to open the gate. Now pass into the cave and activate the switch to raise



Have Tricky dig in the dirt and sit on the switch to open the gate

the lava platforms. Backtrack to this newly opened road and hop across. Shortly after this, you'll find a crack in the wall without a soil spot under it. How do you open it? Tell Tricky to "Find" and he'll dig his way through the wall to the other side. From here, crawl through and work your way along the path to the lake. After a battle or two, have Tricky dig in the dirt to the right to find the Alpine Root. Bring this item to the nearby mammoth and he'll give you the Small Scarab Bag in exchange. The mammoth will



Move the ice block under this ledge to get the Fuel Cells

then ask for a second root, which can be found in the soil near a fallen tree on the outskirts of the lake. If you dig near another tree, you'll find a secret passage (see Staff Energy Meter on page 163).

After digesting the second Root, the mammoth will freeze a chunk of ice that you can move to get the Fuel Cells from the ledge. The block's primary purpose, however, is to gain access to a new area. Look for the torches on a ledge and push the block there. Hop up and descend the slope. You'll come to a fork in the road with water to the left and another slope to the right. Take the right exit, but hug the left-hand wall as you do so. You'll run into a switch,



If you look closely at the wall near the mammoths, you'll find a hole Tricky can dig through

which activates a ledge on the left path that will allow you to reach two Fuel Cells. Grab them, then backtrack and descend the slope to the right. Once you reach solid ground, talk to the mammoth tucked away in the inlet to the left. If you explore the area, you'll also find a Bafomdad hidden in the soil. As you work your way to the other side of the stage, hug the left wall and look for a crack near a torch. Have Tricky dig through to reach a hidden Fuel Cell and another Bafomdad (you'll have to come back later to get it).

At this point, there really is nothing else to do. Pay the gate guard 25 Scarabs to return to ThornTail Hollow. Unfortunately, you'll need to complete an annoying little puzzle before you can reach it. When you reach the water, have Tricky stand on the button, then it's up to you to climb up the rock and activate the water flow switch. Swim along the water to the exit.

HELPFUL TIP!

Always bring along a handful of Fungi, as you never know how hungry Tricky will get. The more work he does, the faster he becomes starved.

CHAPTER 4: THORNTAIL HOLLOW

Upon arriving back in ThornTail, Tricky will run off after his mother. Go see the Queen, and pay your respects as well. She's still held up in the temple. After a cutscene, head for the Hollow and purchase the Bafomdad Holder from the shop. If you take the time to explore the Hollow for places where Tricky can dig, you'll unearth a handful of Bafomdads, which you'll now be able to carry. We'd also recommend picking up the Firefly Lantern, Hi-Def Display, and Tricky's Ball at this point in the game as they'll come in handy very soon.



The entrance to the well is blocked, but once again, Tricky will get you through

The next place you'll need to explore is the well. As you've probably found out, the well entrance is blocked...but not for Tricky. Have him dig his way through. You'll now have access to the underground caverns. Descend the ladder, then pass through to the damp clearing. Plant a Bomb Spore on the tiny island to reveal a cave leading to the Staff Rocket Boost upgrade. Upon returning to the clearing, you can check out your new move fairly easily. Locate the Fuel Cells on a ledge, then break the box below them to reveal the recommended launch pad. Fly up and snag the goods! As you'll quickly see, there's a switch in the water that won't stay depressed long enough for you to get through the gate that opens.



Push the block that falls from the bridge onto the pesky switch

Backtrack into the previous area (the entrance) and use the Rocket Boost to launch up to a new route. Plant a Bomb Spore, then detonate the plant that grows to drop a block into the clearing. Push it onto the switch.

Now, chat with the dinosaur in the next room. If you didn't purchase the Firefly Lantern from the shop yet, you'll have to do so now. With it in hand, plant a Bomb Spore in the soil near the dino, then blow a path to the dark tunnels. Immediately after descending the ladder, you'll find one of the White



Bring six White Grubtub Fungi to heal the poisoned Queen

Grubtub Fungi that you need stashed next to a large mushroom. Head deeper into the dungeon to a pool of water with fireflies dancing above the surface. Capture as many as you desire, then veer to the left a few steps and descend into the darkness. Grab the second Fungus, then look closely on the ground near the pillar for a soil spot. Plant a Spore, then detonate it to lower the pillar a few feet. Head back up to the main level, then maneuver back toward the entrance. Veer to the left and plant another Spore in the dark area to find a hidden area housing the third Fungus. Backtrack across the hall and use the Rocket Boost to grab some fireflies and the fourth Fungus. Hop across the gap that you cleverly created, and grab the last two Fungi. It's now time to return to the Hollow and heal the Queen. In return,



The only time you'll need to attack is when the enemy engages the mammoth. Otherwise, focus on getting the Woods!

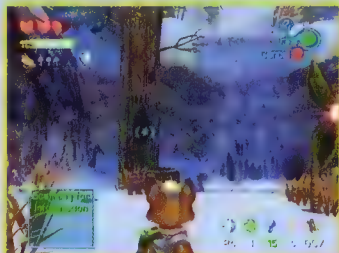
she will hand you the Sharpclaw Prison Key. Since you did gain a new power, you may want to take a second to explore the area for hidden goodies before departing.

HELPFUL TIP!

If you have the Rocket ability and find yourself short a few bucks in the Hollow's shop, head to the back of the map room. Look around the left corner for a launch pad leading to jugs holding Scarabs!

CHAPTER 5: SNOWHORN WASTES

Backtrack to the Wastes via the sewers (the waterway you used moments ago). Repeat the same procedure to change the flow, but hold up halfway through your swim. If you look closely at the center structure in the water, you'll see a launch pad. Use it to reach a new ledge. From here, use Fire to activate the switch and open a door holding two Fuel Cells. At the end of your jaunt, insert the Prison Key into the lock across from the guard. Ascend the hill to the left and talk to the mammoth trapped beneath the ice. Rather than combating the enemy forces, quickly run over and whack the tree to drop Frost Weeds. Tell Tricky to fetch them. After three are collected, the mammoth will break free and the chaos will end.



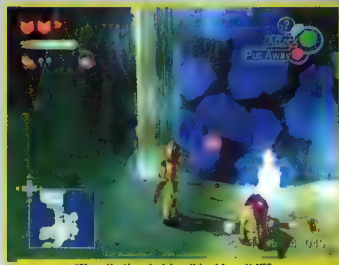
If you shoot the ghoulish living in this tree, it will fall over and create a path to several Fuel Cells

Before leaving again, head down to the river and veer to the left. Shoot the ghoulish in the tree to create a path to well hidden Fuel Cells. Also, enter the cave across the river and have Tricky dig up another Bofomdad. It's now time to return to the Hollow.

CHAPTER 6: DARKICE MINES

Simply run over to your Arwing. If you collected enough Fuel Cells, you'll be able to blast off to the DarkIce Mines. If not, head into the store and buy what you need. Once in Orbit, select the Mine as your destination. This, of course, will lead to another traditional Star Fox stage. As was the case last time, this brief level is a cakewalk.

After landing, work your way along the lava path to the snow camp. Have Tricky dig through the snow on the structure to the left, then battle the foes and grab the Shackle Key from the chest. Return outside and use it on the mammoth. She will hand over the Bridge Cog. Head a little deeper into the area and you'll run into a river. Drop down into the water and swim behind the waterfall. Insert the Cog to form the bridge. Return from whence ye came, and cross over. Around the bend, you'll run into another



"Now that's what I call bad breath!!!"

brutal act of violence. Save the mammoth and he will encourage Tricky to use a new ability. Head back toward the beginning of this level (not quite to the lava) and have Tricky melt the ice on the structure, then ignite the logs and ice inside the cave to reveal the first Alpine Root (dig to get it).

From here, head back toward the famished mammoth and drop down onto the path with the boulders. Work your way to the right, then look on the left wall for a sheet of ice that Tricky can melt. Inside awaits the second Alpine Root. Feed the mammoth and jump on his back as he requested. Smash through the gates, and then hop off. Head back toward the gates and have Tricky melt the ice on the cave. Ascend the ladder and use the Rocket Boost to launch up to the narrow wooden platforms. Carefully jump across to the cannon. Use this powerful tool to eliminate the approaching army. Also, shoot the wooden panel with an X on it. Now, drop down and gather the Cogs from beneath the cannon, and inside the house. Venture into the area that was once blocked by a wooden panel. Ascend the path to the left and have Tricky remove the ice. Grab the Cog and head back to the cave next to the gates. Place the Cogs and throw the switch.



Ride the mammoth through the blizzard

Pass over the bridge and have Tricky dig you a path. In this room, shoot the switch on the wall, then have Tricky light all four ends of the furnace before time expires. To make this task much easier, hotkey Tricky's Fire command. Pass through the newly opened door and make the blind leap. Have Tricky thaw out the Dinosaur Horn. At this point, backtrack to the area where you found the third Cog. Use the Horn on the ground to summon a mammoth. Ride him across the tundra and have him smash the door near the riding platform. Work your way through the cave to the hover bike. Ride it across the terrain to the mine entrance. Carefully navigate the conveyer belt to the exit on the right. Continue right through

the mine to the launch platform. Fly up to the alcove and crawl through the duct. Avoid the rolling boulder then look on the left wall a little ways down for a switch. Blast it with fire, then grab the SharpClaw Prison Cell Key.

Head back to the main floor and pass the spinning fire blades to reach the cells. Free Tricky. Return through the fire to the main area. Destroy the required number of enemies to open the door, then have Tricky melt the ice on the passage. Grab the second Prison Cell Key and use it to free the mammoth. After she goes on a rampage, have Tricky open a new path to the ice cave. Approach the water, look toward the ceiling, and use your Flame shot to knock down the stalactites. Hop across the path that appears and activate the switch. Return around the corner and use your Rocket power to reach the floating ice chunks. Jump across them to the cave and push the block into the water. Climb down to reach the second mine.



Carry this barrel up the slope and past the bounding barrels

Run along the conveyer to the mammoth's location. After a conversation, proceed deeper into the mine. Climb the centralized ladder. This next part is incredibly frustrating. Grab the barrel, then carry it up the winding path and past the bouncing boulders. When you reach the top, drop the boulder on the icon on the second walkway. Ascend the second ladder and work your way around the pillar to the switch. Activate it to retrieve the barrel. Carry it past the fire to the long bridge and toss it at the seam on the wall. Hit the switch to form the bridge on the previous level. Cross over to reach a switch that activates another bridge. Mount the cannon and blow away the X's on the pillars. Return to the previous level and cross over the lava to reach a teleporter to the first boss.

BOSS: GALDON



Lock-on and launch a Fire shot when his chest opens

This fight may seem difficult at first, but you should be able to fly through it. First, have Tricky free Galdon from his slumber by breathing fire on him. When the

battle begins, circle around to his tail and wail away. He'll reel in pain, then swallow you. Beat the living tar out of the uvula, and you'll be spit out. Now, lock onto his location and avoid his blasts. When his stomach opens, launch a Fire shot (locked-on) into his gut. Do this three times and he'll eat you again. Hit the uvula again to free yourself as well as the first SpellStone. Now, sit back and enjoy the most gruesome of death scenes. Return to the Hollow.

CHAPTER 7: MOON MOUNTAIN PASS

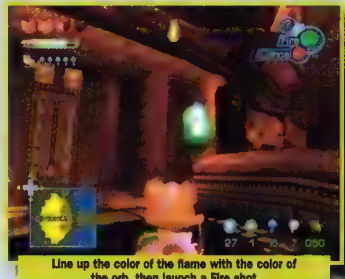
In the Hollow, approach the burning tree near the shop and whack it with your Staff. Now, chase after the debris and hit it with your Staff to reveal the Fire Weed. Collect three of them, then place them in the torches that burnt out. Have Tricky ignite them. One torch is on a ledge near the temple. Another is in the general vicinity of the rock creature. The final one can be found on a path leading to Cape Claw (activate the switch on the ledge to the left to open the gate). In exchange for lighting them, you'll receive the Moon Pass Key as a reward. From here, head behind the well to the Moon Mountain Pass.



Float across the steam as quickly as you can

Plant a Bomb Spore to pass through, then float through the steam to the other side. Dodge the boulders on the hill, then insert the Key into the door. Before heading any further, turn to the left and ascend into the fort. Eliminate the guards to remove the seal from the door leading to Volcano Force Point.

CHAPTER 8: VOLCANIC FORCE POINT



Line up the color of the flame with the color of the orb, then launch a Fire shot

Pass into the structure, and time your jump across the platforms. When you reach a hole with a flame, wait until the fire resides, then drop through it. Cross the bridge and locate the launch platform. Fly up to the ledge and activate the switch on the right.

Ascend the conveyer and veer left through the gate. Continue deeper, using the bricks to climb up to a large room holding a glowing floor piece. Place the SpellStone into the floor to open the gate. To open the next door, stand on the edge of the bridge so that the flames on the corner line up with the orbs to the left and right of the door. Wait until the fire color changes to that of the orb, then launch a Fire shot through the flame and onto the orb. Now, place the SpellStone into the door. Defeat the enemies to remove the seal.



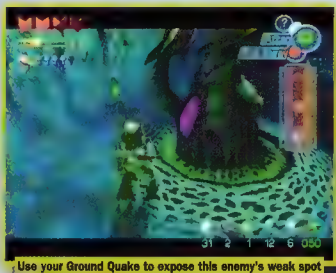
Take advantage of the enemies while they are down

In the next room, have Tricky ignite the grates and two platforms will appear. Climb the ladder and work your way across the harrowing ledges to the cave to get the Ice Blast. Use your new power on the red flames at the base of the statues near the platforms that Tricky released to remove the floor grate from the elevator. Use it to reach the core of the Volcanic Force Point. Insert the SpellStone to activate the first of three doors. Pass through the door (it's the one tucked away behind the flame) and use the teleporter. Ascend the ladders and ice the flames to remove the lock. Access the door and combat the enemy forces. Leap across the fire, then have Tricky breathe fire into the grating to the right of the door. Navigate the cave to the teleporter. Place the SpellStone into the central structure to complete the mission. Leave the temple.

When you reach the Moon Mountain Pass again, the Krazaa will plead for your help. Before you can defeat the creature that appears, enter the cave and drop into the hole to get the Ground Quake magic. Use this magic to spin the creature. When he shows his sore spot, nail it with your Staff. After two hits, he'll drop the Moonseed. Plant it into the ground and have Tricky heat it up. Climb up the vine to



reach another extension of Moon Mountain. Destroy the beasts to get additional seeds. Be thorough in your searching as you'll be able to obtain several Bafomdad. To move on, ascend to the top tier and enter a cave to the left. Plant a Bomb Sprout to blow away the wall. In this new area, have Tricky dig along the outskirts to unearth meteors. Place the meteors on top of the gas vents to remove the large boulder from the path. You'll know you placed them correctly when you can no longer pick them up. Pass by the rock, then plant a Seed, and then another, to reach the teleporter.



Use your Ground Quake to expose this enemy's weak spot

Once inside the temple, douse Ice onto the flame blocking the bricks, then look up to the ceiling for a switch to raise the water level. Next, navigate the narrow path to the gate, then hit another ceiling switch to move on. At long last, you've reached the second Spirit. This time around, the challenge is the Test of Combat. Defeat all of the enemies in the allotted time to get the Krazoa Spirit. It's now time to drop it off at the Palace. To get back to the Hollow, you'll have to take a different route as the boulder has fallen. Just run straight to the barrel and swirling mists. Grab the barrel and toss it across the mist to the platform. Repeat this process and toss it into the wall. From here, it's a straight shot to the Hollow. Grab some firefiles, then teleport to Krazoa.

CHAPTER 9: KRAZOA PALACE



Going to get a cure for that nasty case of pink eye, we hope

Eliminate the enemies to open the door, but before heading in, activate a firefly and grab the barrel from behind the pillars. Carry it up the slope and over to the crack in the wall. Shoot the switch on the wall, then carry the barrel to the next wall. Do the line-up-the-fire-to-the-orbs trick again, then blast the turret. Backtrack and snag the barrel to set on the switch. Ride the elevator up to the second level. Float in the wind up to the top floor of the chamber. From here, use the side chutes to reach the roof. Approach Krystal,

then release the Spirit. After this, you'll warp back to the Hollow where you'll receive the Medium Scarab Bag. It's now time to head to Cape Claw.

CHAPTER 10: CAPE CLAW

First, collect 60 Scarabs. Navigate the path to the talking golden scarab, and hand over your loot. Navigate the courtyard maze to a ladder. Drop down not just this ladder, but a series of them to find a handful of Fuel Cells. Next, work your way up to the second highest level and ascend a different ladder to reach a path leading to the Cape. Work your way along the path to the waterfall. Shoot the switch to release the bridge. Cross over and continue to the left. Hop into the water and swim to the beach. Destroy the box to find a soil spot holding Gold. You'll find another in the soil near the guard. From here, pay the guard the Scarabs, then talk to the dino. If you're facing him, the other two Gold bars are on the sand to the immediate left. Simply dig to get the first, then have Tricky flame the briar and dig in the puddle for the fourth. Return the booty and he will release a ladder for you.



Move all of the blocks back into place quickly or the gas will get you

Use this ladder to activate a switch. Leap to the gate that opened then complete the block puzzle before time runs out to open the prison cell. It's now time to return to the Hollow.

CHAPTER 11: CLOUDRUNNER FORTRESS

Hop into the Arwing (if you have enough Fuel Cells), then launch into orbit. Complete the shooter stage and you'll touch down on a gorgeous landscape. Navigate the path on the right. Descend down to the water and hop across the boxes to a switch. Step on it to trigger a minigame. Run as quickly as you can through the rings to release a switch that will open the gates. Maneuver into the new area and ascend the spiral path to a ladder. Drop down and hit the switch to open the gate. Access this new entrance and you'll run into Scales.

Before you can do anything, you'll be taken hostage. Push the block out of your cell and head to the right, through a cave and into a large holding area. Don't grab your Staff yet. First, run around the corner and drop down the ladder. Grab the bomb and drop it on the vent. Now, step on the switch. The bomb will float up and blow through the ceiling, allowing Slippy to drop a disguise for you. Now, return around the corner and talk to the guard. He'll ask you to take over. Snag the Staff. Release all of the prisoners by throwing the switches on the



Don the disguise to avoid being spotted

wall. One of them will hand you the Power Room Key. Follow the limping dino to a ceiling switch. Blast it to open the door. Ascend the bricks on the walls of the shaft, avoiding the spotlights. In the courtyard, the same theory applies (however, you can wear the disguise to go by undetected). Dodge the sentries then ascend the central platform. Press the central switch, then ascend the large stack of barrels to reach the gate that opened. Inside, you'll find the Light Gem.

Drop down and press the left switch. Run over near the gate that opened and look for a switch on top of a large crate. It'll drop the ladder that leads to the gate and another Light Gem. Activate the third switch to get the final Light Gem. The exit near the large crate stack will lead to the generator room. Place the Key in the lock to open the door, then insert the Gems into the slots to turn on the air. Head back toward the entrance of the courtyard and talk to the dino you just saved. From here, use the air ducts to reach the outer rim of the castle. Use the disguise to open the gate. When you reach the new area, eliminate all of the guards to open the gate. Turn on the disguise and grab the barrel. Bring it around the corner and set it on the icon. Climb the ladder, then step on the switch to retrieve the barrel. Pick it up, run around the corner to the right, and toss it at the wooden planks.



Simply smash into all of the opponents to get the SpellStone

Head inside and the floor will cave in. Step on the switch to send down the ladders, then talk to the bird in the cage. Hop across the barrels to the left and hit the switch. Activate the switch on the other side as well. With the doors open, go grab another bomb and toss it into the pillar below the cage. The bird will give you the CloudRunner Flute. Grab the four birds (the game will lead you to them) and bring them back to their mother. From here, head to the door that just opened (out in the area where you found two birds and down the ladder to the right). Work your

way through the golden passages to the vent. Flip the airflow down, then head back out and grab a bomb. Drop it into the air, then quickly head to its location. Turn on a firefly and bring the bomb to the crack in the wall. Descend the ladder. Around the next corner awaits a hover bike race. Ram all of the opponents to get the second SpellStone. At this point, the only thing to do is head back to Cape Claw.

CHAPTER 12: OCEAN FORCE POINT

Head down to the beach and save the LightFoot that is being beaten. After a strange scene, he will toss you the Fire Gem. Now, ascend the ladder that the dino dropped. Use your disguise to enter the door. Have Tricky stand on the switch, then swim over and activate the one on the wall to stop the waterfall. Pass through the gap that appears and take the second Fire Gem from the statue. After the water drains, enter the room and place the Gems in the statues. Lower the pillar with the switch, then have Slippy stand on it as you send it back up. Have him breathe fire to uncover the second eye and open the door. Pass through and work your way up to the gate. Turn around and shoot the switch to raise the water level. Run around the path and melt the briar to reveal a block. Push it into the water, then shoot the switch to lower the level. Push the block onto the switch.



Shoot the pillar between the colored flames

Run up the ramp and into the gorgeous new area. Ascend the ladders on the right of the temple. Place the SpellStone in the slot to open the gate. Step on the switch to light up the path that you must take (it's a mirror image actually). Have Tricky stay so you can turn back and see the pattern. In the next area, swim around the corner to the left and ascend the central platform with several arms. Navigate the narrow paths, then throw the switches. Now, swim to the green flame and shoot Fire through it to activate the teleporter. Warp over, then head through the water-filled rooms to the water level switch. Throw it and drop to the floor. Hit both switches and push the block into the back of the central pillar. Hop up and run over the water level switch. Toss it to reach the newly opened area. Have Tricky breathe fire into the gate to start a switch game. The goal here is to hit the wall switches so that the statues pour water onto the torches below. When this feat is accomplished, the door will open.

In the next room, you'll need to move the labeled pillar by shooting it. Simply hit it numerous times so that it slides between the flames. After this, use the launch pad to reach the next level. Run through

the halls to the room with the central teleporter. Complete the colored fire trick for a bridge. Warp to the temple and insert the SpellStone into the pillar. It's now time to traverse back to the Hollow.

CHAPTER 13: LIGHTFOOT VILLAGE

Before you can get back, you'll be ambushed. There really is no trick to the fire minigame. Just time your button presses correctly and it'll end in moments. When the coast is clear, you'll find yourself in the heart of LightFoot. Locate the King and complete the Test of Strength minigame that he proposes. To complete the tracking test, Tricky must first dig up the Wooden Block Carvings from the soil spots spread out across the villages. Insert the pieces into the central structure (near the totem you were tied to). When all of the pieces are installed, head to the king and complete the challenge. He'll open up the entry to the shrine.



Behold! The amazing Test of Fear!

Jump up on the box of crates with a switch on top. Stand on the switch and shoot Fire at the totem when the picture is directly in front of you. The goal is to make them all match. When you do this, the gate will open. Head in, and step on the warp. Destroy the box in the next room and launch up to the second story. Work your way through the floor switch puzzles to the third Spirit who will offer the Test of Fear. Just keep the bar in the green (good luck!) to get the Spirit. It's now time to depart for the Krazoa Palace again. While it would be nice to drop off the Spirit on the roof again, you'll actually have to take a different route. Thankfully, it's easy to reach. Just head up to the third floor into the vent room and use the disguise to enter the door leading to the release chamber. Afterwards, you'll warp back to the Hollow.

CHAPTER 14: WALLED CITY

Before wandering away from the golem, turn around and help the dinosaur in distress. To do this, just keep the demonic creatures away from the eggs. When the timer expires, the mother will open a secret chamber for you that leads to the Portal Device power. Now, go visit Tricky's mother. Open the portal behind her to release the gate. Return to the Arwing and take to space for another heart-pounding flying stage. Once it's completed, you'll land on Walled's surface. Head over the bridge to the left and activate the switch near the first t-rex using the Ground Quake move. Quickly run up the slope of the temple and work your way around and up to the second level. Take a right and enter the panel that moved. Trek through the underground

Staff Energy Meter

In most of the stages, there's a chance that Fox may stumble upon a Staff Upgrade that expands the size of his magic meter. Here's where to find them...

SnowHorn Wastes

Trek to the vicinity of the first mammoth you encountered. Have Tricky search in the dirt near a fallen tree to reveal a secret entrance leading to the first Staff Upgrade.

ThornTail Hollow

After obtaining the Staff Rocket Boost, search near ThornTail Hollow's shop for a launch platform. Use it to reach the roof. Now, plant a Bomb Spore near the wall and blow it away to reach a cavern. Lastly, use your Fire to activate the four switches. Drop into the hole that appears for the second power-up.

Cape Claw

With the Portal Device, return to Cape Claw and open the portal door. Mount the cannon and launch a ball into the base of the rock structure behind the dinosaur that demanded gold. If you hit it square on, it will explode, exposing a hidden hole and the final power-up.

tunnel, then have Tricky light the grating to complete the puzzle.

If you run around the temple, you'll find the second part of this riddle. Do the same thing you did before, and a secret entrance will be revealed. Move toward the water to find this route. Inside you'll run into the King. Exit and walk over the wooden bridge. Head to the right and have Tricky ignite the briar on the plateau wall. Climb up, plant a Root, and detonate the plant to reveal a hole leading to the Super Ground Quake power. Return to the surface. From here, look closely at the trunks of the trees with horned dinos standing next to them for Fire switches. Activate all four of them and a magical ring will appear in the water. Hop in and complete the timed ring game to get the Silver Redeye Tooth.

It's now time to confront the t-rex clan. Use your Super Ground Quake to knock them down, then grab the barrels (near the Ground Quake switches) and toss them at the downed beasts. When all of them are knocked off, the seal will be removed from the gate. Inside awaits the Gold Redeye Tooth. Bring them to the King's quarters and plant them in the statues to reveal a secret entrance to...well...what we affectionately like to call Godzilla's lair.



Swim through the rings to get the Tooth

Cheat Tokens

If you spend a lot of time with your head up your foxhole, you probably won't find any secrets in this game. On the other hand, if you scour the levels, you'll find a fair share of hidden goodies, primarily Cheat Tokens!!! Once you obtain one of these rare treasures (each one comes with a 20 Scarab price), you'll need to bring it to the Game Maze (via the ThornTail Hollow golem's teleport). Navigate the maze – it's a cinch – then drop the Token into the well. What do they do exactly? Well, we wouldn't spoil that for you now, would we?

ThornTail Hollow Shop

You'll find the well holding the first Cheat Token behind the shopkeeper.

Ice Mountain

After stepping off of the teleporter, run in a straight line forward past the cannon and to a crack on the wall. Plant a Bomb Spore, then blow away the rock to find the second Token.

SnowHorn Wastes

After saving the mammoth that is trapped beneath ice, head down to the river. Hop onto the floating ice chunk and ride it to the right continuing to the well.

Moon Mountain Pass

After you plug up the vents to remove the boulder (on the second part of Moon Mountain), and find yourself ascending the canyon wall, plant a Seed on a wall to the left (just below the teleporter), and you'll run into a well with the fourth Token.

Ocean Force Point

After receiving the Portal power, head to Ocean Force Point. Work your way through the temple to the electric floor switch puzzle. Complete it and go forward. When you find yourself with water on both sides, turn to the right and use the Portal power on the door in the alcove to find the Token.

BOSS: REDEYE'S LAIR

Avoid this freak of nature and hit the wall switches to raise the gate blocking access to the bombs. Snag a bomb, then carry it onto one of the glowing floor switches halfway through the overgrown t-rex's roar. If you time your actions right, the t-rex will plummet to the ground. Toss the bomb at his head and repeat until he dies. At the end of this exercise, you'll receive the third SpellStone. Now, it's time to head back home.



Timing is crucial here. You want the RedEye to step into the electrical charges

CHAPTER 15: VOLCANO FORCE POINT

The first order of business is to drop off the stone at Volcano Force Point (Moon Mountain). This dungeon is basically the same, but the disguise ability can be used to grab two more Fuel Cells. Just place the Stone where it needs to go and then drop down to the lava and cross the platforms to reach the door it triggers. Use the elevator, ascend the ladder, then douse the blue, green, red, then yellow flames (in this order) to open the door. Kill the enemies, then have Tricky stand on the switch. Take the ladder up. Douse the flame, then throw the switch. In the next room, repeat the same procedure only adding the colored Fire element to the equation. Step on the teleporter and drop the SpellStone off at the temple. It's now time to return to the Hollow, little guppy.



Insert the Stone to seal off the volcano

CHAPTER 16: SNOWHORN WASTES

Upon arrival you'll find the Hollow under attack. Save all of the dinos by shooting the winged beasts with Fire. As a reward the dinos will give you the Large Scarab Bag. Head to the shop and purchase the SnowHorn Artifact. Now, bring this expensive gift to the gray-haired mammoth up on the hill in SnowHorn Wastes. Have Tricky melt the ice barrier behind the mammoth, then head down to the river and



Blow the Horn to open the gate

use Fire on the ghoul in the tree to form a bridge. Blow the Horn on the pad to activate a minigame. Once completed, the gate in the new area will open, revealing a teleport.

Warp over and climb up the ladder. Destroy the winged creatures, then carry the barrel and toss it into the wall. Backtrack and snag another barrel, setting it on the icon. Now, throw the switch numerous times as the barrel floats by so that it doesn't catch fire. Next, toss it over the ledge with the flames into the wall (it can be done). In the next room awaits the fourth Spirit. Complete the Test of Strength to get the Spirit. Bring it to Krazoa Palace and head into the wind room once more. On the second floor you'll find a Portal door that leads to the Spirit release.

CHAPTER 17: DRAGON ROCK

You'll warp back to the Hollow. Track down the mute ThornTail near the well and he'll open the final gate. Now, board the Arwing and launch to Dragon Rock. The first order of business here is to head to the left and ascend the ladder (complete with flame-throwers). Grab the barrel around the bend and bring it back to the icon. Hit the switch to bring the robot, then ascend the ladder and step on the switches when the barrel floats by. Toss it at the wooden wall to gain entrance. Avoid the spinning flames and throw the switch to release the captive from the cell across the level. Jaunt over to this location. Talk to the critter and jump on his back. Run around the entire level and hunt down all four green electrical cracks and bust them up. After this, shoot down the flying gizmos to open the fortress gate. Use the launch pad behind the dino, then talk to him. Now, shoot the switches on his shackles as quickly as you can to free him.



The barrel challenges are frustrating beyond belief, but they must be done

In a rush, the dino will suggest that you ride on his back across the plains. Sweet! Shoot down any fighters that emerge from the central station and the dino will drop you off in front of a new area. Destroy all three creatures to release the seal on the door.



Shoot the waves of fighters that appear

Step on the switch to activate the barrel crane, then shoot the flames on the silos to allow safe passage. Hop up on the first silo, and toss the barrel across the vent when the flames die down. Now, carry it to the wall and blow away the planks. Hit the switch to move the birdcage, then drop down and have Tricky breathe on the grate to break the rope. You'll run into an old friend who will grant you access to Dragon Rock's skies. This sequence is exactly like the track shooting minigame you just completed. The only difference is that you'll now need to shoot the target on the towers as well. Afterwards, your winged buddy will drop you off at the boss' hangout.

BOSS: DRAKOR

Wow! Another track shooting battle. Just blast away as fast as you can, and hit the switches on the wall to stop the flames when you pass by. Also, blast his mines and heat-seeking missiles. If you run low on health, keep your eyes peeled for boxes hidden across the level. After victory is achieved, Drakor will cough up the final SpellStone.



Just blast away and look in the corners for health power-ups

CHAPTER 18: OCEAN FORCE POINT

With the Stone in hand, head back to the Ocean Force Point Temple and follow the same path you took before. After completing the floor puzzle and teleporting, work your way through the rooms past the large double doors. When you reach a moveable block, push it to the right and jump up onto the ledge, throw the switch, then leap to the ledge (with the plant). Use your disguise to open another door with a switch. Hit it to raise the water level and gain access to the next room.

In here, you'll need to complete another annoying shooting minigame. This time around, the statues must dump water onto their listed colors...all within the given amount of time. This feat will open up another



The statues must dump their water on the matching torch color

aggravating box moving puzzle. Complete this brain exercise in the same fashion as you did before, to uncover a launch pad. Use it to reach the walkway. Wind through the tunnels to the flame that changes color. Time your shot to form a bridge. Warp over to the temple and place the SpellStone into the pillar. Now, sit back and enjoy the cutscene. As if we have to say it, get your butt back to the Hollow.

CHAPTER 19: WALLED CITY

Fly to Walled City and talk to the King to learn of a hidden temple. Now, head through the gate that opens. You'll run into a complex block moving game. To complete it, push the blocks onto the icons, noting that you'll get another push after you slide an inactive block into an active block. That's the trick to this puzzle. From here, progress deeper and ascend the elevator on the shrine. Stand, looking through the circle, until the light hits it to open the temple door. Solve the block puzzle to open the gate. Use the Ground Quake to activate the maze game. Just fly through it using your powers to reach the Portal door. Behind it awaits a tricky spinning wheel shooting segment. The order to shoot them in is left, top, right. When all of the targets are lit up, you'll get the Sun Stone.

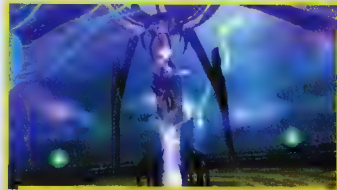
At this point, back out to the main area and trek directly across the level to the blue gate. Repeat the same process you did before to enter the temple. Throw the switch, then time your movement across the falling rocks past the moving gates. Use the Ground Quake move to reveal the invisible maze. Find the exit to reach another Portal door followed by a shooting exercise with the same solution as before. Your reward is the Moon Stone. Bring both artifacts to the underground location where you originally brought the teeth. The entrance to the fifth Spirit is at long last revealed. Warp to the temple. Complete



Complete the trials to get the Stones

the simplistic wind puzzles to reach the Spirit who proposes the Test of Knowledge. Just place the items in the holes for the zones that you originally found them. They'll light up when placed in the appropriate holes. When you get the Spirit, depart (in more ways than one) and head to Krazoa Palace.

CHAPTER 20: KRAZOA PALACE



All of the Spirits are reunited

For the first time, Fox will fly directly to Krazoa Palace. Why didn't you do this before! Anyway, drop into the large room with the airshafts, and descend just one floor. Access the door with the red flames to release the Spirit. Doing this will remove the gates from the rooftop teleporter. Head there to observe a startling change in the plot. Out of nowhere, you'll receive the final Spirit. Release it on the rooftop pad to reveal the true evil behind this sinister plot!



We know what Andross looks like and you don't! He ha!!

BOSS: A BLAST FROM THE PAST!

What? Yes, this is the boss from the previous two Star Fox games. If you played either of these, you'll have an advantage over the boss. Start out by blowing away the eyes and crystal on the head of the mask. When it flips over to Andross, shoot the targets on his hands, the rocks from his mouth, then quickly spin (the shoulder buttons) to avoid being sucked in. When you destroy both forms twice, Andross' hands will disappear.

Shoot the ships that emerge from his head, then grab the bomb that your dear old friend drops. When he starts to suck you in again, launch the bomb. This will expose his brain. Just fire away to take him out for good.

SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

KINGDOM HEARTS

Last month, we revealed all of the Dalmatian puppy locations. After investing another 50 hours into the game, we've unlocked a handful of different goodies that will surely tickle your fancy. Enjoy!



MISSING PAGES

A good way into the game, Cid will give you a book to bring to Merlin. Oddly, it is missing a few pages. When Merlin sets it on the nightstand, examine it. You'll soon see that the book is actually a portal to Winnie the Pooh's land. Talk to Pooh, and examine his house, then leave the Hollow and seek out the missing pages. These documents will actually open up different worlds and minigames within Pooh's world. You'll also need to unlock and complete these sections to reap other benefits in the game, primarily the hidden ending. Here's where you'll find the five pages.

Traverse Town: District 2 – You won't be able to snag this one right away. You'll first have to retrieve at least 50 Dalmatian puppies. When you do, go see the dogs to get your reward.

Agrabah – With Aladdin as one of your sidekicks, enter the Cave Mouth and drop down into the Dark Chamber (the area filled with water). Have Aladdin's little buddy examine the statues holding pink eggs. One will lower a platform leading to a chest holding the Torn Page. At this point, if you bring the page back to the book, you'll open up a side quest at the Hunny Tree. If you complete the tasks presented to you, you'll win the Naturopark. Bring this to the Fairy Godmother to add the Bambi summon to your arsenal.

Monstro – After talking with Geppetto, you'll have to follow Pinocchio through the Monstro's chambers. In the sixth one, keep your eyes peeled and you'll find a chest that you can leap to. Inside is the torn page.

Halloween Town – When you reach the Doctor's Research Laboratory, search the bookcase for the Torn Page.

Atlantica – After locating Triton's Throne, and talking with the sacred one, swim to the Undersea Gorge. Ariel will point toward her hidden grotto. Enter it to find the Torn Page.

POWERFUL WEAPONS

There are a ton of amazing different weapons in this game, and not just for Sora, either. Below is a listing of just a few of the most impressive armaments in the game.

DONALD

Dream Rod – Unlock all of the magic spells in the game, then talk to Merlin.

Lord Fortune – Unlock all of the summon creatures then talk to the Fairy Godmother.

Save the Queen – Complete the Hades Cup without any sidekicks.

Violetta – Activate the white Trinity mark in the entrance of the Coliseum.

GOOFT

Genji Shield – Defeat Yuffie in the Hades Tournament.

Hercules Shield – Complete the Hercules Tournament.

Save the King – Complete the Hades Tournament in Time Attack mode.

SORA

Divine Rose – Lock the Bastion Hollow Keyhole, then talk to Belle in the Library.

Lionheart – Defeat Leon and Cloud in the Hades Tournament.

Metal Chocobo – Defeat Cloud in the Hercules Tournament.

Oathkeeper – After visiting Hollow Bastion for the first time, talk to your friend in the Secret Waterway.

Oblivion – Search Hollow Bastion's Grand Hall during your second visit.

Ultima Weapon – Visit the Moogles in Traverse Town and have them make it for you.

TRINITY MOVES

If you've been using the Trinity moves, you probably know that they lead to some interesting secrets in each zone. Listed below are the means to getting all of the Trinity move colors.

Blue – You'll get this one automatically when you defeat the Heartless in Traverse Town at the beginning of the game.

Red – Lock all of the Keyholes in the first four worlds.

Green – Lock the Keyhole in Agrabah.

Yellow – Defeat Hercules in the Coliseum Tournament.

White – Defeat Riku for the first time in Hollow Bastion.

TRAVERSE TOWN POSTCARDS

In total, there are 10 different Postcards to unearth in Traverse Town. When you find one, drop it into the mailbox in district one to get a free item. Below is a listing of the postcard locations and items received after mailing.

1 – Simply climb up onto the rooftop of the Accessory Shop. (Cottage)

2 – Smack the fan in Donald's nephews' Item Shop. (Mythril Shard)



3 – Activate the blue Trinity by the Item Shop. (Mega Potion)

4 – Use your Key to open the safe behind the Accessory shop. (Mega Ether)

5 – Leap from the banister onto the awning of the shoe store. (Mythril)

6 – Lock the Keyhole, then view the wall in the Item Workshop. (Elixir)

7 & 8 – Locate the severed wires in District 3 and cast Thunder on them. You'll hear a sound when the Thunder hits. Next, head into the Gizmo Shop and ascend to the top of the gearboxes. Step on all three switches, then view the clock on the wall (while still inside the Shop). (Mega Elixir & Orichalcum)

9 – Lock the Keyhole, then climb to the bell tower and hop across the rooftops to the window entrance to District 3. Head inside. (Defense +)

10 – Complete Monstro, then enter Geppetto's shop. Check the pots on the shelf. (Power +)

US EXCLUSIVES

As many of you know, Square Soft added four boss battles to the US version of Kingdom Hearts. One of these fights just happens to be against the Final Fantasy VII's Sephiroth!

Ice Titan – Complete the Hades Cup to unlock the Gold Match.

Kurt Zisa – Lock the Hollow Bastion Keyhole, then return to Agrabah and head into Aladdin's house. Talk to the carpet.

Phantom – Lock the Hollow Bastion Keyhole, then return to Neverland and head into the Clock Tower.

Sephiroth – Lock the Hollow Bastion Keyhole, then return to the Coliseum and fight in the Platinum Tournament.

SECOND ENDING

And you thought the first ending was cool? To get another glimpse at the end of the game, finish it again after finding all 99 Dalmatian puppies, locking all of the Keyholes (including Hundred Aker Wood), and winning the Hades Cup.

*"The GI Staff"
Minneapolis, MN*





STREET HOOPS

Enter all of these codes at the Cheats menu.

- Black Ball – R2 (x2), ○, L2
- Block Party – R1, ○, L2, R2
- Clown Uniforms – □, L1, □, ○
- Cowboy Uniforms – ○, R2 (x2), R1
- Faster Clock – ○ (x3), □ (x3), L1, L2
- Kung Fu Uniforms – ○ (x2), □, L1
- Normal Ball – R1, □ (x2), L1
- Perfect Field Goals – ○ (x3), □ (x3), R1, R2
- Pimp Uniforms – R1, □, ○, L2
- Power Game – R2, ○, L2, ○
- Red, White, & Blue Ball – ○, R2, □, R2
- Santa Uniforms – R2, L2, R2, L2
- Shot Release Text – L1 (x2), R1 (x2), ○ (x2), □ (x2)
- Tuxedo Uniforms – L2 (x2), ○, □

*"Daddy Fat Sacks"
Memphis, TN*



SOCOM: US NAVY SEALs

Hidden Headset Commands – Your teammates won't recognize most of the dialogue that you bark out, however, there are a few secret phrases that will help you greatly. Unfortunately, there isn't a command along the lines of "Bravo Remove Head From Ass!"

"Bravo Defuse Bomb" – Point your crosshairs at a bomb and say, "Bravo Defuse Bomb."

"Bravo Open Door" – Point your crosshairs at a door and say, "Bravo Open Door."

"Bravo Breech, Bang, Clear" – Point your crosshairs into a room and say, "Breech, Bang, Clear" to have your team throw grenades inside.

"Team Low Profile" – At any point, say, "Team Low Profile" and they will go into stealth mode.

*Howard Cross
Pittsburgh, PA*



MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2

Enter all of these codes at the Press Start screen. You'll hear a sound when a code is entered correctly.

- All Music – L1, Left (x2), Right (x3), × (x2)
- Big Foot – △, Right, Up, Right, Up, □
- Big Foot FMV – R1, Up, Down, Left, × (x3), R1
- BMX Costume – ○, △, Left, Right, Left, ○
- Boston (Road Trip) – □, Up, Down (x2), Up, □
- Chicago (Road Trip) – □, Up, △, Up, △, □
- Cory Nastazio FMV – R1, □, ○ (x2), □ (x3), R1
- Day Smith – △, Up, Down, Up, Down, □
- Day Smith FMV – R1, ○, Left (x2), □, Right (x2), R1
- Elvis Costume – ○, L1 (x2), Up (x2)
- Joe Kowalski FMV – R1, Up, ×, △, Down, R1
- Kevin Robinson FMV – R1, ×, △, Down, Up, R1
- Las Vegas (Road Trip) – □, R1, Left, L1, Right, □
- Level Select (Free Ride) – □, Right (x2), △, Down, □
- Los Angeles (Road Trip) – □, Left, △ (x2), Left, □
- Mat Hoffman FMV – R1, Left, ○, Left, ○, Left, R1
- Mike Escamilla FMV – R1, ○, × (x2), ○, × (x2), R1
- Nate Wessel FMV – R1, Down, △, ○, Down, △, ○, R1
- New Orleans (Road Trip) – □, Down, Right, Up, Left, □
- Portland (Road Trip) – □, × (x2), △ (x2), □
- Rick Thorne FMV – R1, L1, Right, R1, Left, R1
- Ruben Alcantara FMV – R1, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right, R1
- Seth Kimbrough FMV – R1, Up (x2), ○ (x3), R1
- Simon Tabron FMV – R1, L1 (x2), R1, L1 (x2), R1
- The Mime – △, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left
- Tiki Battle Mode – L1 (x2), Down, R1, ×, L1
- Vanessa – △, Down, Left (x2), Down, □
- Volcano – △, Up (x2), ×, Up (x2), ×

*Michael Myzippazdown
Little Wood, IL*

BLADE II

Enter all of these codes at the Main Menu. When a code is entered correctly, a message will appear onscreen.

- All Missions – Hold L1, then tap Down, Up, Left (x2), ○, Right, Down, □
- All Weapons – Hold L1, then tap □, ○, Down, Left, ○ (x2), △
- Daywalker Difficulty – Hold L1, then tap Left, ○, Up, Down, □, ○, ×

*"GI Droid"
(location unknown – last seen throwing
peanuts at Brett Favre's eyes)*



PRISONER OF WAR

Enter all of these codes at the Passwords screen.

- All Secrets – FARLEYMYDOG
- All Core Events – CORETIMES
- All Daily Events – ALLTIMES
- Alter Guard Awareness – QUINCY
- Alter Guard Size – MUFFIN
- Default Chapters – DEFAULTM
- Defiance – FATTY
- First-Person Perspective – BOSTON
- Game Displays – DT
- In-Game Save Toggle – TOGSAVECAN
- Overhead View – FOXY
- Unlimited Cash/Rocks – DINO

*"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH*

CODE OF THE MONTH



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

Arena Mode – At the Main Menu, head into the Extras screen and hit Y (x2), White, Black (x2), Y (x5), White, and then Black. Up to four players can compete in this hidden mode.

Character Glitch – After entering the Arena Mode code, hop into any of the arenas, then quickly exit the arena. Oddly, Arenas 1-4 will no longer appear on the menu. From here, hit B to return to the Main Menu. Now, start a new game or load a saved file. At this point, stand next to any character (including enemies) and press Start on controller 2-4 to take control of them. It's quite fun!

*Nancy Ireland
Houston, TX*



STREET HOOPS

Enter all of these codes at the Cheats menu.

- Clown Uniforms** – X, L Button, X, Y
- Cowboy Uniforms** – Y, White (x2), R Button
- Elvis Uniforms** – Y, Black, White, Black (x2), White, L Button, Black
- Kung Fu Uniforms** – Y (x2), X, L Button
- Normal Ball** – R Button, X (x2), L Button
- Pimp Uniforms** – R Button, X, Y, Black
- Santa Uniforms** – White, Black, White, Black
- Theft Mode** – R Button, X (x3), R Button, Black, Y, White
- Tuxedo Uniforms** – Black (x2), Y, X

"Daddy Fat Sacks"
Memphis, TN

TOTALED!

Enter all of these codes as the game loads from the Mission screen (with the bio in the lower right-hand corner). When entered correctly, a message will appear in the lower left-hand corner of the screen. Also, if you randomly press buttons during this loading sequence, you may stumble upon another code that is not listed! Good hunting!

- Master Code** – Up, Down, Left, Right, A
- Disable AI** – Left (x2), A
- Jumping Car** – Y, Left, Right, A
- No Nitros** – Right, Left (x2), A
- Opponents Target You** – Down, Up, A
- Unlimited Nitros** – Right, Left, A

Calista Flockheart
Foodspoincity, VA



BLADE II

Enter all of these codes at the Main Menu. When a code is entered correctly, a message will appear onscreen.

- All Missions** – Hold the L Button, then tap Down, Up, Left (x2), B, Right, Down, X.
- All Weapons** – Hold the L Button, then tap X, B, Down, Left, B (x2), Y.
- Daywalker Difficulty** – Hold the L Button, then tap Left, B, Up, Down, X, B, A.

"GI Droid, Jr."
(location known! – He's at your house showing your significant other the wonders of steel piping!)

FREESTYLE

Input all of these cheats at the Enter Codes menu within the Options screen.

- Brian Deegan's Dominator Bike** – WHOZASKN
- Brian Deegan's Heavy Metal Bike** – HEDBANGR
- Brian Deegan's Muscle Bound Costume** – RIPPED
- Clifford Adoptante** – COOLDUDE
- Clifford Adoptante's Gone Tiki Bike** – SUPDUDE
- Clifford Adoptante's Hang Loose Bike** – STOKED
- Clifford Adoptante's Island Spirit Bike** – GOFLOBRO
- Clifford Adoptante's Tankin' It Costume** – NOSLEEVE
- Clifford Adoptante's Tiki Costume** – WINGS
- Greg Albertyn** – GIMEGREG
- Greg Albertyn's Champion Bike** – NUMBER1
- Greg Albertyn's National Pride Bike** – PATRIOT
- Greg Albertyn's Sharp Dresser Costume** – ILOOKGUD
- Greg Albertyn's Star Rider Costume** – COMET
- Greg Albertyn's The King Bike** – ALLSHOOK
- Infinite Freekout** – ALLFREEK
- Jessica Patterson** – BLONDIE
- Jessica Patterson's Charged Up Bike** – LIGHTNIN
- Jessica Patterson's Hoodie Style Costume** – NOT2GRLY
- Jessica Patterson's Racer Girl Bike** – TONBOY
- Jessica Patterson's Speedy Bike** – HEKACCOL
- Jessica Patterson's Warming Up Costume** – LAYERS
- Leeann Tweeden's Fun Lovin' Costume** – THINKPINK
- Leeann Tweeden's Hot Stuff Bike** – OVENMITT
- Leeann Tweeden's Red Hot Costume** – SPICY
- Leeann Tweeden's Seducer Bike** – GOODLOOK
- Leeann Tweeden's Trendsetter Bike** – STYLIN
- Mike Jones** – TOUGHGUY
- Mike Jones' Beater Bike** – KICKBUTT
- Mike Jones' Blue Collar Costume** – BABYBLUE
- Mike Jones' Lil' Demon Bike** – HORNS
- Mike Jones' Flushed Bike** – PLUNGER
- Mike Jones' High Roller Costume** – BOXCARS
- Mike Metzger's All Tatted Up Costume** – BODYART
- Mike Metzger's Bloodshot Bike** – EYEDROPS
- Mike Metzger's Ecco MX Costume** – HELLOOOO
- Mike Metzger's Rhino Rage Bike** – SEVENTWO
- Mike Metzger's Rock of Ages Bike** – BRRRRRAP
- Mulisha Man Bike** – WHATEVER
- Stefy Bau's 211 Bike** – TWONEONE
- Stefy Bau's Amore Bike** – HEREIAM
- Stefy Bau's Disco Tech Bike** – SPARKLES
- Stefy Bau's Playing Jax Costume** – KIDSGAME
- Stefy Bau's UFO Racer Costume** – INVASION

"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH



BRUCE LEE: QUEST OF THE DRAGON

Enter this code at the Press Start screen. There won't be any indication that the code is active after being entered. So, when you feel confident with the sequence you entered, head to the Main Menu to find the goods.

- Bruce Challenges** – X, Y, X, Y, X, X, X, Y, Y, Left Analog Stick, Right Analog Stick

Doug Doug
Alpena, MI



THE THING

Hidden Television Commercial – If you hang out at the Main Menu for a minute or so, an extended version of the television commercial will play.

Ultimate Persuasion – When one of your teammates' trust in you is down and dips into the orange, he probably won't do anything that you ask. If you really need him to do something for you, switch to first-person mode and aim a gun at his head for a few seconds. At this point, he'll do whatever you want.

Doc in Second Boss Fight – When confronting the second boss (the large Thing), it is possible to have the doctor with you for this fight. To do this, have the doctor walk over to the large garage door. Tell him not to follow you any longer. Now, push him as close as you can to the door. Just before you flip the switch, ask him to follow you again. Now as quickly as you can, flip the switch. If you do this correctly (it may take a couple of tries to get the spacing between the doc and the door down), you can use the doctor to heal you during the fight.

Whitley to the Rescue – Pick up the Stun Grenades and Blood Test Kit from the back of the third boss room. Also, snag the Grenade Launcher from the save room near the boss room. With these tools in hand, backtrack to the weapons lab, and ascend through the air vent and over to the mine elevator. Use it to reach the surface, and don't step forward. If you do, you'll trigger a sequence and you won't be able to complete the trick. So with caution, veer to the left. Equip the Stun Grenades and Grenade Launcher. Switch to the first-person view and aim up at the corridor that is parallel with the last metal wall panel. Fire a Grenade, then walk forward as quickly as you can. This will trigger a sequence, but Whitley won't run off this time. From here, quickly get in front of him and use the Blood Test Kit to heal him. His trust will now be high enough that he'll follow orders. Hand him a weapon and have him follow you.

Steven Newman
Denver, CO

GAME BOY ADVANCE

TUROK: EVOLUTION

Enter all of these codes at the Password screen.

- Level 1-2** – K8T87 NL46K 6TK8
- Level 1-3** – K8T87 NL46K T7R3
- Level 1-4** – K8T87 NL46K 4V2T
- Level 2-1** – K8T87 NL46K 7NR1
- Level 2-2** – K8977 N5408 VR0S
- Level 2-3** – K8T77 NL42R 2T74
- Level 2-4** – K8T77 NL42R 39KV
- Level 3-1** – K8T77 NL42R KV41
- Level 3-2** – 55987 L5452 V052
- Level 3-3** – 5K987 V5452 3678
- Level 3-4** – 5K987 V5452 LV15
- Level 4-1** – 5K987 V5452 3K21
- Level 4-2** – 5K987 V5452 9V2L
- Level 4-3** – K9887 V2457 TV7L
- Level 4-4** – K9887 V2457 58TV
- Level 5-1** – K9887 V2457 K69L
- Level 5-2** – K9887 V2457 759T
- Level 5-3** – KL987 NT465 364V
- Level 5-4** – KL987 NT465 TK8N

Gavin Powell
Bellfield, IN



ANIMAL CROSSING

Here's a brief listing of some of the most important secrets in Animal Crossing. If you can collect all of the Golden items, you'll surely be the talk of the town and the envy of your friends. What do you need to do? Read on to find out!

Golden Axe – No, it's not the classic Genesis game. To get this rare item, head over to the wishing well every day for the next 15 days. If the well dubs your town Great on all of the days, you'll get the Axe from the well's spirit. To reach a Great rating, you'll need to avoid littering, produce the right mix of trees for each acre, plant tons of flowers, and pull out all of the weeds in town.

Golden Fishing Rod – This one is a little easier to get. Just catch all 40 fish species and the mayor will hand over the rod. He'll also give you a nice little gift for the roof of your house!

Golden Net – Much like the Rod, catch all 40 species of bugs to get the Golden Net.

Golden Shovel – First, buy an extra shovel. Find a glowing spot on the ground and dig out the moneybag. Now, bury the shovel in this spot. A little sprout will pop out of the ground. If the land is pure, a golden tree will eventually grow. Of course, it'll drop the Golden Shovel.

Money Rocks – Every day a random rock in your village will transform into a money-giving machine. Simply walk around town and hit every rock with your shovel. If the rock turns red for a brief second, whack it again as quickly as you can. It'll spit out a bag with 100 Bells. Smash it again and again until you hear the familiar Mario 1-Up sound effect. At this point, you should have received a bag that holds 1,000 Bells.

Mr. Resetti – To meet a hidden (and annoying) character, hit the Reset button. When you bring up your game again, an angry mole named Mr. Resetti will pop up and give you a talkin' to. If you keep hitting reset, his complaints will grow in size, and you'll even be asked to apologize.

NES Games – As you may or may not know, 19 different NES games are hidden in Animal Crossing. The games you get are completely random, but there are ways to get them all. For instance, if you are the first person to play Animal Crossing with the memory card that comes with the game, you'll receive a present from Nintendo in the mail that has a game or two on it. Also, enter the monthly lottery at the store every month and collect as many tickets as you can. The reward is random, but every once and a while it is an NES game. Of course, you'll get a game on your birthday, and if you lend your shovel to a villager in town, they may dig up a game. Bribe them with fruit to get it.

Secret Songs – There are three songs that won't appear in the game unless they are requested. Simply ask to hear "I Love You", "K.K. Song", and "Two Days Ago."

Kenny Rogers
Watertown, KY



TUROK: EVOLUTION

Enter all of these codes at the Cheats menu.

- Master Code** – fmrnf
- All Weapons** – texas
- Big Head Mode** – heid
- Demo Mode & Minigame** – hunter
- Invincibility** – emerusp
- Invisibility** – sliewgh
- Level Select** – sellout
- Unlimited Ammo** – madman
- Zoo Mode** – zoo

"The Vidman"
Uptown, MN



MADDEN NFL 2003

Alternate Commentary – If you set the internal system clock of your console to Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's, the commentators will say something different at the beginning of the next game you play.

Easy Mini-Camp Gold – Are the Mini Camp medal challenges kicking your butt? We have a solution that should give you the winning edge. Here's what you need to do. Create a new player with maxed out attributes (a 99 rating) for the team and position of the drill that is giving you problems. For instance, Daunte Culpepper is the quarterback for a passing drill. If you swap the created player for Culpepper as the starting quarterback on the Vikings, the created player will take his place in the drill. Thus making it a lot easier. You can use this technique for every drill!

Easy Madden Card Tokens – This trick isn't as rewarding as it was in last year's Madden, but it will help significantly. Start out by selecting the Bengals roster. Scroll through all of the defensive positions, setting the speed attribute for every player to 0. Now, choose the Two-Minute Drill as your game mode. Select the Bengals as the defense and the Vikings as the offense. Change the difficulty to All Madden. The Bengals won't be able to catch any of your players, especially Randy Moss.

Dan McGwire
Seattle, WA



PS2 **PLAYSTATION 2**

ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY

These Game Shark codes will change the appearance of the main character. To do so, you'll need to program the codes listed below into your Game Shark peripheral. Next, start a new game (removing any memory cards as these codes have a tendency to erase them). Now, when the game loads between scenes or screens, hold the button combination that is listed for each character to morph into their form.

- 70's Jubei –
OE4191BEBCA99802
D1611766BDA1B003
OE4191BEBCA99802
D16117622BBA99D83 (Hold Left + R2)

- Ekel –
OE4191BEBCA99202
D1611762BDA03383
OE4191BEBCA99202
D161176222B09B88 (Hold Left + R1)

- Elvis Jubei –
OE4191BEBCA99842
D1611766BDA1B003
OE4191BEBCA99842
D1611762BBA99C83 (Hold Down + R2)

- Oyu –
OE4191BEBCA99862
D1611766BDA03383
OE4191BEBCA99862
D161176222B09B85 (Hold Right + R2)

- Kotaro –
OE4191BEBCA99272
D1611762BDA03383
OE4191BEBCA99272
D161176222B09B86 (Hold Up + R1)

- Magoichi –
OE4191BEBCA99242
D1611762BDA03383
OE4191BEBCA99242
D161176222B09B87 (Hold Down + R1)

- Shin Onimusha –
OE4191BEBCA99082
D1611766BDA1B003
OE4191BEBCA99082
D16117622BBA89B84 (Hold R1 + R2)

- Skimpy Oyu –
OE4191BEBCA99262
D1611766BDA03383
OE4191BEBCA99262
D161176222B09C85 (Right + R1)

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 hallowed pages will receive a Secret Access t-shirt.

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724 North First Street, 4th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55401
secretaccess@gameinformer.com

CLASSIC

OLD SCHOOL ONLINE

EARLY ATTEMPTS AT NETWORK CONSOLE GAMING

With the release of Sony's PlayStation 2 Network Adaptor and the imminent launch of Microsoft's ambitious Xbox Live online service, Internet gaming is the number one topic of debate for console gamers the world over. These new initiatives are exciting, to be sure, but by no means represent the first time that console manufacturers have tried to bring their wares to the public over phone or cable lines. In fact, the history of the industry is dotted with attempts to connect console owners to a large network. Some have been moderate successes; most have been disastrous commercial failures. In 2002, people are betting that the console market is the online revolution that has driven PC the past few years. However, history suggests that getting gamers to turn over a few dollars for network thrills may be pull off than anyone at Sony or Microsoft have guessed.

Atari and General Instrument jointly created the PlayCable system. This union led to the PlayCable Adapter, a device that allowed operators to transmit games over a TV signal wire. The PlayCable service could download games onto their Intellivision units. The adapter was plugged into the Master Module slot and hooked up directly to the Intellivision was turned on, and menus appeared, showing which game was available. The object code for each game was broadcast and when approximately 10 seconds to download the game into memory.

PlayCable had been discontinued. The adapter was attributed to a number of things. The Adapter didn't have the storage capacity to download larger (8K and up) games. Furthermore, cable was finally taking off and most operators didn't want to take up precious bandwidth for downloadable software. As with most inventions, PlayCable didn't disappear before inspiring someone else.

In the same year, a company by the name of Control Video Corporation released a similar product called GameLine Master Module for the Atari VCS. The Master Module – a silver box that connected to the cartridge slot – allowed Atari VCS

owners to download games for a dollar a pop. Much like today's modems, you had to insert a phone line into the back of the Module. Before you could get started, you had to call to enroll and obtain personal identification numbers for every person within the household. Through a 1,200 bits-per-second download/50 bits-per-second upload connection, the games were extracted from a centralized computer library stored at a Vienna, VA location. The games would then remain on the system until it was turned off. Every member who held a PIN number received unlimited free play on his or her birthday.

The GameLine and PlayCable systems represent two of the earliest attempts to bring console gamers online



Considering that computer modems of this speed cost roughly \$700 at the time, and the Master Module only retailed for \$70, it seemed like a bargain, especially since the system offered a library of 71 games. The system worked well, but Control Video failed in signing big third-party names like Atari, Activision, and Parker Brothers. To make matters worse, the industry was caving in on itself and appeared to be on the way out. The GameLine made its public debut in the same quarter when Atari announced a \$1 billion dollar loss. Players who were paying \$1.00 for a gaming session could just run out to their store and by the very same game, or a better product for that matter, for around the same price. Rumor has it that Control Video trashed over 40,000 modems into a dumpster behind its Vienna headquarters and blew over \$12 million, leaving the company with just \$40,000 in its coffers. Wisely, Control Video changed its name to Quantum Computer Services, which later

transformed into the now-monolithic America Online (AOL), the largest Internet service provider in the world.

As time went on, other video game manufacturers tried their hands at the online gaming experience, with decidedly mixed results. Nintendo actually released a modem for the Famicom (as the NES was called in Japan), and ran a successful network that allowed users to get stock quotes, check their bank balances, as well as compete in online two-player gaming. In 1989, the company, in partnership with financial giant Fidelity Investments, proposed creating the NES Network; a service for the US that would be similar to its Japanese counterpart. Unfortunately, after Fidelity failed to create the software necessary to allow NES owners to access the system, Nintendo shelved the project altogether. This defeat was a sign of things to come for the company, which to this day has not produced a viable Internet strategy.

With this setback, network gaming went underground for a few years, only to resurface in the 16-bit era, which would see some of the greatest strides forward in console online play – many of which anticipated those that Sega, Sony, and Microsoft's have made in recent years. Today, the focus of the two major players' plans revolve around the multiplayer experience, but in the early nineties most companies were looking into ways to use modems to deliver games into the home. In 1992, a trio of companies presented three unique ways of beaming vids straight to the televisions of consumers. Baton Technologies offered the TelePlay, which utilized a modem unit and cartridges for use with the SNES and Genesis. The system would allow users to play one-on-one via phone lines, and would also work with a downloadable cartridge for purchasing games online. Another new competitor, the Games Channel (essentially similar to modern-day pay-per-view television outlets) planned to let players "rent" a game for 72 hours by dialing a toll-free phone number. The final, and most creative, system was the Interactive Network, which ingeniously used a radio broadcast to stream games into its Control Unit, a device with a built-in screen and keyboard. After buying the unit for \$200, a monthly fee was charged to subscribers. Sadly, none of these companies met with much success, and the Games Channel and TelePlay were never commercially released. The Interactive

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Chad Reker

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.



NIGHTS INTO DREAMS

■ FORMAT SATURN
■ PUBLISHER SEGA

If I had to choose one game among the thousands that have been made over the years to be my favorite, the choice would be easy. It would have to be NIGHTS. This Yuji Naka creation stands as his finest behind Sonic, for many reasons.

Gameplay-wise, you play as NIGHTS, an aerial acrobat of sorts who lives in the dream world of Nightopia. Throughout the game, you fly around the world spinning and looping through rings, defeating enemies, and collecting blue orbs on a two-dimensional track that weaves in and out of 3D space. The playability proves to be quite dreamy and addicting, and NIGHTS was the first game to feature this 2D track-based element, which is similar in concept to the upcoming Contra for PlayStation 2.

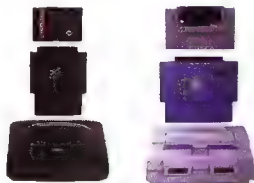
Graphically and sonically, NIGHTS excels as well. The colorful visuals convincingly convey a sense of being in a dream world. The sound effects and music perfectly complement the graphics, and feature an interactive soundtrack. Depending on the overall emotions of the Nightopians, the music will change accordingly, becoming more upbeat or slowing down.

NIGHTS also contributed to the video game industry in other ways. The analog control pad developed for NIGHTS was the precursor to the Dreamcast controller, and the game's A-Life (similar to virtual pets) system was modified, improved, and used in Sonic Adventure 2. NIGHTS is so subtly great and original, it's just...magic.

However, lately I have become more disgruntled with the fact that there has been no true sequel to NIGHTS (Christmas NIGHTS and GBA NIGHTS notwithstanding). As mentioned earlier, Sonic Team's best non-Sonic game is just so great and original. It absolutely deserves a sequel! And I know for a fact that many fans including myself have requested a NIGHTS 2 for years. How much longer will the public be deprived?

Network was briefly in service in the San Francisco area, but quickly disappeared.

The early nineties saw two more players in this burgeoning field, ones that were more successful than past attempts: The Sega Channel and the XBand. In 1993, Sega revealed the Sega Channel; a cable service based on Intellivision's PlayCable blueprint. After buying a decoder unit and shelling out a monthly fee, players would have access to over 50 top Sega games. Although it wasn't released until 1995, the Sega Channel was moderately popular, reaching over 100,000 gamers at its peak. However, Sega's financial woes, and its internal focus on the Saturn, finally drove the service off the air in June of 1998.



Until the Dreamcast's SegaNet, the XBand was the most successful console online system ever released

Even better was the XBand, a watermark in console online history, which stands as the

first really successful console modem. The Genesis-compatible Xband modem was first released during the holiday season of 1994 (and later for the SNES), and worked surprisingly well, given the level of technology involved. Players could duel it out over the phone lines, and even send each other emails via an awkward onscreen keyboard. Users found it a bit slow in terms of connection speed, but once you were online the experience was suitable even for fast-paced fighters like Mortal Kombat. Later on, after its own Edge 16 modem project (a collaboration with AT&T) had been scrapped, Sega would merge it's Sega Channel adaptor to the Xband, which allowed a handful of its most popular games to be played head-to-head with the modem unit. It was pretty impressive, and in some ways even more complex and comprehensive than Xbox Live or PlayStation 2 Online.

This brief heyday was fleeting however, and the rest of the decade would see a variety of companies chasing online dreams down a series of unprofitable dead

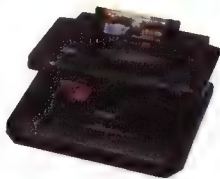
ends. Atari brought out a modem add-on for the Jaguar called the Cat Box, which worked, but ultimately proved to be as popular as the system it was created for. That is to say, not very. In Japan, Nintendo tried an inventive approach with the Satellaview, a SNES peripheral that used satellite signals to broadcast games into a special unit that attached beneath the console. Users could access games from 4 to 7 p.m. every day. The first title for the system was a graphical update of The Legend of Zelda, which went on in 1995. Amazingly, the Satellaview network would endure until June of 2000, and was supported by new content until 1999.

Sega – by far the company that has done the most to make online console gaming what it is today – would try again with the Saturn Net Link. That system's troubled life has

been well documented, so we'll turn our attention to what is still the greatest single achievement in its field: SegaNet. Reeling from the ultra-successful onslaught of the PlayStation 2, Sega pinned its hopes for the outmatched Dreamcast console on its online campaign. Since the system already had a built-in 56k modem, all Sega had to do was convince people to put up the \$21.95 monthly service fee. To twist their arms, Sega offered newbies

hefty rebates for signing up, and SegaNet quickly became a favorite of hardcore gamers across America.

Whether it was sports (NFL 2K1), first-person shooters (Quake III Arena), or role-playing (Phantasy Star Online), all genres were covered, and the system worked very well. Unfortunately, it proved to be too little, too late for the cash-poor company, which soon killed the Dreamcast and became a software only publisher. Still, Sega's many contributions to the evolution of online console gaming should not be forgotten, and its accomplishments and innovations live on in the current and upcoming Sony and Microsoft networks.



The Edge-16 modem, a joint venture between Sega and AT&T, never really got off the ground

Special thanks to Leonard Herman for the use of the GameLine Master Module and PlayCable Adaptor images, as well as his encyclopedic knowledge of game history. Check out his excellent reference book, *Phoenix: The Fall & Rise of Videogames*, at www.rolentpress.com

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

The Neo Geo was amazing for its day, but its exorbitant price point, coupled with the fact that game cartridges sold for \$199, all but doomed the system to failure. Today, Neo Geo units and games are highly collectable.

SNK's Video Multi-System units (which gave the gamer a choice of five different games) had been a hit with arcade operators, due to the ease with which the system's relatively inexpensive cartridges could be swapped in and out. Heartened by success, the company decided to release a home version of the Neo Geo, which retailed at a whopping \$399 for the basic Silver model, and \$599 for the Gold deluxe edition, which had two controllers and came packed with a cartridge.



SUPER NINTENDO

SEA QUEST DSV



RETRO RATING
3.5



Serious gamers often consider the Super Nintendo to be the epitome of 2D gaming, but some may have forgotten just how many shabby titles appeared on this 2D powerhouse, especially those that sported a movie or TV license. Don't worry; Sea Quest emerges in these pages of classic gaming to remind us of the reality of the SNES era, rather than the ideal. To its credit, DSV combines various gameplay mechanics, and a few different types of missions, which suggests that the developers tried to cultivate its idea in the right direction. Unfortunately, poor execution plagues almost every promising concept. From the clunky control to the confusing missions and sea vehicles, most players will immediately pop the cart from their SNES, barking at its serious lack of playability. So, if you've yet to introduce the SNES's dark side to your collection, try picking up Sea Quest (it's probably cheap). At the very least, it will give you some perspective the next time you're dogging current games in favor of the "glory days" of 2D.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MALIBU GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** SCULPTURED SOFTWARE INC ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

SEGA GENESIS

HARD DRIVIN'



RETRO RATING
6.5



Until Hard Drivin' hit arcades, the only place you heard about polygons was in Math class. This innovative racer was the first one to feature true 3D in both courses and cars. It attempted to be a simulation, and at the time was quite impressive. Scaling things down for the Genesis, though, produce a different story. The game moved at a very sluggish pace, and the frame rate was horrendously low. It featured two tracks in one environment – a regular speed track, and a wacky stunt course. You could basically carve your own path, but only for 10 seconds – the amount of time you had to get back on track. The stunt course, since nobody cares about just going fast, contained some perilous jumps and even a loop. Mess up and crash, and you were treated to a replay of what went wrong – the only time the view switched out of first-person. Complete a lap, however, and you'd be challenged by an AI racer. Hard Drivin' is definitely a bit of gaming history, but this console version belongs in memories and books, rather than being played on your TV.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** TENGEN ■ **DEVELOPER** STERLING SILVER SOFTWARE ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

SEGA GENESIS

HAUNTING STARRING POLTERGUY



RETRO RATING
7.5



Coming up with refreshing game ideas isn't all that easy. Taking some inspiration from the 1988 motion picture, Beetlejuice, EA's "all-star" development team, which had people behind such games as Paperboy, Rampart, and 720°, brought the gaming world Haunting. Whereas Beetlejuice was more bad than good, Haunting has the living playing antagonists, and high top fade-sporting ghoul, Polterguy, as the hero. He possesses the various items lying around the Sardinis' house, in hopes of scaring them away. These scenes include disappearing toilets, attacking groceries, and bleeding fish tanks. Scare tactics aren't free, though. Polterguy only has so much ectoplasm to power his tricks. Once the Ecto level dips to a certain point, you must warp to a Dungeon level to collect more Ecto. Haunting is a fun title for a certain point, but after seeing all the goofy horror scenes, there isn't much else to do. It should be noted that the isometric perspective used in Haunting was borrowed in another EA game, The Sims.

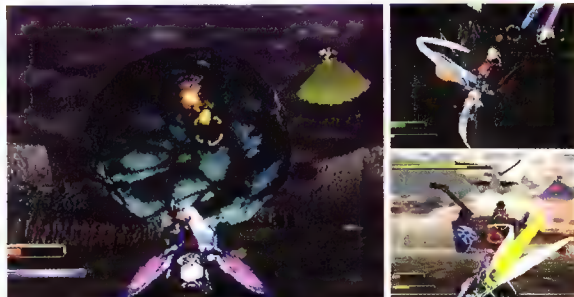
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT GROUP ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1993

SATURN

PANZER DRAGON II ZWEI



RETRO RATING
8



Kudos to Team Andromeda for imagining such a creative concept, and then fostering it into a wonderful series of games. The shooting component remains as intense as ever, the music is artfully composed, and the story and fictional language (it's a combination of German, Japanese, and Latin!) wonderfully enhance the overall presentation. However, Panzer's faults seem more glaring than they once were. Blame it on age, we suppose. The abrupt perspective changes disorient on some levels, maneuvering to dodge fire feels impractical, and the game is way too short – many hardcore gamers can probably finish it in just under an hour! The ability to download your save, and use your dragon in Panzer Dragoon Saga is perhaps the game's coolest feature; but to do this, you need to achieve 100% on every stage! Unfortunately, the head of Team Andromeda passed away, causing its break-up. Let's hope that Sega's Smilebit (Orta's developer) can do justice to this series and resurrect this under-appreciated franchise.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** TEAM ANDROMEDA ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1998

PLAYSTATION

MEDAL OF HONOR

Enter all of these codes into the Enigma Machine (code entry screen).

- American Movie Mode** – SPRECHEN
- Bismark Dog** – WOOFWOOF
- Captain Dye Mode** – CAPTAINDYE
(enter this code before starting a new game)
- Cheat Mode** – URLINGAMEBE
- Col. Muller** – BIGFATMAN
- Gallery of Picts** – DWIGALLERY
- Gunther** – GUNTHER
- Infinite Ammo** – BADCOPSHOW
- Invincibility** – MOSTMEDALS
- Making of Level 1** – INVASION
- Making of Level 2** – BIGGRETA
- Making of Level 3** – DASBOOT
- Making of Level 4** – STUKA
- Making of Level 5** – KOMET
- Making of Level 6** – TWSIXTWO
- Making of Level 7** – MISSLEAGUE
- Making of Level 8** – VICTORYDAY
- Mission 1 Complete** – RETTUNG
- Mission 2 Complete** – ZERSTOREN

- Mission 3 Complete** – BOOTSINKT
- Mission 4 Complete** – SENFGAS
- Mission 5 Complete** – SCHWERES
- Mission 6 Complete** – SICHERUNG
- Mission 7 Complete** – EINSICKERN
- Mission 8 Complete** – GESAMTHEIT
- Noah** – BEACHBALL
- Otto** – HERRZOMBIE
- Pict of Adrian** – AJRULES
- Pict of Dev Team** – DWIMOHTTEAM
- Pict of Lynn** – COOLCHICK
- Rapid Fire** – ICOSIDODEC
- Reflecting Shots** – GOBLUE
- Special Power-Ups** – DENNISMODE
- Velociraptor** – SPSIELBERG
- Werner Von Braun** – ROCKETMAN
- William Shakespeare** – PAYBACK
- Winston Churchill** – FINESTHOUR
- Wireframe Mode** – TRACERON
- Wolfgang** – HOODUP



CRASH TEAM RACING

Enter all of these codes at the Main Menu.

Note: The hidden characters are only selectable in Verses, Arcade, Time Trial, and Battle modes.

- Bonus Tracks** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Right (x2), Left, Δ, Right, Down (x2).
- Display Turbo Counter** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Δ, Down (x2), ○, Up.
- Increased Turbo Effects** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Δ, Right (x2), ○, Left.
- Infinite Masks** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Left, Δ, Right, Left, ○, Right, Down (x2).
- Infinite Wumpa Fruit** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Down, Right (x2), Down (x2).
- Invisibility** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Up (x2), Down, Right (x2), Up.
- Invisible Pick-Up** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Down, Left, Right, Up, Down, Right.
- Play as Komodo Joe** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Down, ○, Left (x2), Δ, Right, Down.
- Play as N. Tropy** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Down, Left, Right, Up, Down, Right (x2).

- Play as Papu Papu** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Left, Δ, Right, Down, Right, ○, Left (x2), Down.
- Play as Penta Penguin** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Down, Right, Δ, Down, Left, Δ, Up.
- Play as Pinstripe** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Left, Right, Δ, Down, Right, Down.
- Play as Ripper Roo** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Right, ○ (x2), Down, Up, Down, Right.
- Scrapbook** – Hold L1 and R1 then press Up (x2), Down, Right (x2), Left, Right, Δ, Right.



GENESIS

SPATTERHOUSE 2

Enter all of these codes at the Password screen.

- Level 2** – EDK-NAI-ZOL-LDL
- Level 3** – IDO-GEN-IAL-LDL
- Level 4** – ADE-XOE-ZOL-OME
- Level 5** – EFH-VEI-RAG-ORD
- Level 6** – ADE-NAI-WRA-LKA
- Level 7** – EFH-XOE-IAL-LDL
- Level 8** – EDK-VEHAL-LDL



MUTANT LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Enter these codes at the Password screen to bring the listed teams to the Mutant Bowl.

- Darkstar Dragons** – FMK3XYSL1Q
- Deathskin Razors** – 1CK111111H
- Icebay Bashers** – 2CK111111D
- Killer Konvikts** – HGK111111J
- Midway Monsters** – 3CK111111F
- Misfit Demons** – JH1111111G
- Psycho Slashers** – GMK111111D
- Rad Rockers** – 5CK111111M
- Road Warriors** – BDK111111J
- Screaming Evils** – KKK111111L
- Sixty Whiners** – CBK111111J
- Slaycity Slayers** – LJK111111M
- Terminator Troz** – MLK111111J
- Turbo Techies** – NMK111111Q
- Vile Vulgars** – 4CK111111L
- War Siammers** – DCK1111112

NINTENDO 64

TUROK 3: SHADOW OF OBLIVION

Simply enter the Secrets menu and input any of the codes below. After you enter a code, you'll need to activate it before entering the game.

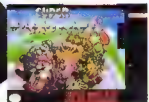


- All Keys** – Lizard, Dragonfly, Bull, Bear, Wolf, Eagle
- All Weapons** – Owl, Bear, Owl, Beetle, Hawk, Owl
- Big Head Mode** – Cougar, Wolf, Snake, Rabbit, Lizard, Coyote
- Big Limbs** – Lizard, Lizard, Dragonfly, Horse, Lizard, Coyote
- Credits** – Elk, Elk, Elk, Elk, Elk, Elk
- Deathmatch Mannequins** – Snake, Bull, Snake, Frog, Bear, Elk, Full Pause
- Full Pause** – Rabbit, Owl, Lizard, Elk, Fish, Rabbit
- Gaspng Mode** – Dragonfly, Bull, Rabbit, Fish, Eagle, Raven
- Gouraud Mode** – Lizard, Fish, Beetle, Fish, Wolf, Dragonfly
- Headless Mode** – Lizard, Elk, Eagle, Owl, Fish, Horse
- Invincibility** – Raven, Fish, Eagle, Bear, Lizard, Rabbit
- Menu Madness** – Rabbit, Owl, Horse, Beetle, Bear, Bear
- Pen & Ink Mode** – Jaguar, Horse, Elk, Fish, Jaguar, Hawk
- Small Characters** – Frog, Frog, Fish, Beetle, Wolf, Cougar
- Stick Characters** – Horse, Eagle, Snake, Cougar, Insect, Fish
- Warp Level 1** – Frog, Elk, Horse, Dragonfly, Wolf, Rabbit
- Warp Level 2** – Owl, Owl, Horse, Elk, Elk, Elk
- Warp Level 3** – Owl, Rabbit, Bear, Beetle, Frog, Cougar
- Warp Level 4** – Bear, Horse, Raven, Eagle, Horse, Coyote
- Warp Level 5** – Bear, Dragonfly, Horse, Bear, Frog, Elk

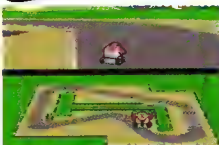


SUPER NINTENDO

SUPER MARIO KART



Mushroom Cup



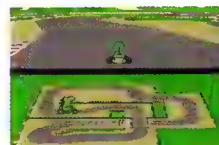
Mario Circuit 1:

This track is fairly straightforward. If you stick your slides, and stay out of the sand, you should be fine.



Ghost Valley 1:

Here's a track meant for speed. Find a good line, and pour on the gas if you can. Notice that little peninsula sticking out from the right side? If you get a feather from the question blocks, hold onto it until you can see that piece of track coming up in front of you. Drive straight towards it, and just before you fall off into the abyss below, activate your feather. You'll jump safely onto the outcropping, and gain some serious time. Watch out when you're coming out of it, though. If you have too much speed, you'll fall off the edge as you're attempting to turn back onto the main drag.



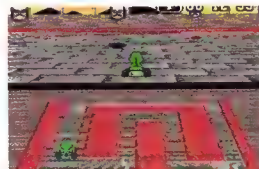
Mario Circuit 2:

In our opinion, this is the best course in the game. There's a lot of opportunity for strategy with the Zipper/jump combination at the end. With a carefully placed shell or peel on the Zippers, you can wreak havoc on your competition. If you're lucky, the character behind you will slam into your trap right before they hit the jump. More likely than not, they won't have the speed to make it over the track (even with the Zippers) and they'll crash into the barrier, thereby forcing them to repeat that section of track. If you've laid your hands on a mushroom, wait for the straightaway leading to the super-jump, then use it when you're three-quarters of the way to the arrows. The combined speed of your Mushroom and the Zippers will catapult you high into the air. If you pull left enough, you should be able to land on the track PAST the finish line.



Donut Plains 1:

This is quite a slippery course. Utilizing the shoulder button/stabilization technique will serve you well here. Be careful of the mud on the inside of the last corner – it's easy to lose control in that stuff.



Bowser Castle 1:

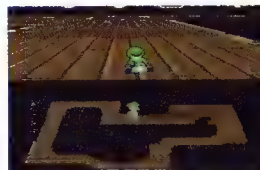
The best way to finish first on this track is to hit the acceleration arrows (called Zippers) that are on the inside of the track immediately after the second corner. Doing this will give you a nice cushion of space to fend off the other racers, while at the same time drastically reducing your overall time. Just steer clear of the Thwomps and watch out for the slippery section on the last corner.

Flower Cup



Choco Island 1:

There's a lot of mud on this baby. Stay off the rough dirt at the edges of the track, and stay to the inside on all of the curves. Be careful not to lose control while you're power sliding.



Ghost Valley 2:

Watch out for the slippery section on the big corner in the upper right on the map. This could send you into the wall if you're not careful. When you're rounding the last corner towards the finish line, stay to the inside – there's a Zipper in front of a jump that can help you make up a lot of time.

Donut Plains 2:

The layout of Donut Plains 2 makes it very difficult to win without a good understanding of the power slide. If you use it well, you should have a great chance of tacking on nine more points to your score. If you hit a Gopher, hop quickly a number of times (either of the shoulder buttons will do) to send him flying.

- When going around turns, don't always hold down the gas. If you find yourself sliding a lot, let off the accelerator for a moment, then lay it on. You'll find you have much better control in tight corners.

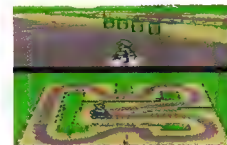
Advanced Maneuvers:

- Mastering the super start will be a formidable weapon when you start racing in the higher engine classes. To accomplish this task, start pressing the gas right as the first tone of the starting countdown is finishing. If you time it right, your Kart will be catapulted forward like you just used a mushroom.



Bowser Castle 2:

There are two forks in the road on Bowser Castle 2. The first one signals that you can go either left or straight. The left-hand turn is a dead end, so continue on, take a couple of lefts, and you'll see another fork. Don't follow the left arrow; instead, take the second left then stick to the left side of the track. Don't pay any attention to the turns you'll pass on your right – they'll just slow you down.



Mario Circuit 3:

This is a tough, tough course. If you get a Mushroom, save it until you get to the bottom of the track, then use it to blast through the hole in the barrier that causes the track to turn. This way you won't get slowed down by the curve, and you'll speed right over the sand. On the straightaway leading to the finish line, make a concerted effort to hit the Zipper – you'll need to use every advantage to finish first.



- Utilizing the power slide is a difficult, but rewarding skill if you can perform it correctly. To begin a power slide, hit the corresponding shoulder button to the direction of your turn. For example, if you're going into a left turn, press L. You'll now find yourself sliding across the track. To regain control quickly, press the opposite shoulder button when you're coming out of the corner. For improved control, hold the first shoulder button down until you're ready to come out of your slide, then quickly switch to the opposite button to regain normal driving control. This will make you slide faster, so you'll need to be more accurate with your timing.

- As you're zipping around the different tracks, you're bound to run into some of the barriers placed throughout the environments. This can be a big slow-down if you've got a good head of steam going. If you're close to getting around your query, but you're not going to make it, press one of the shoulder buttons the instant before you hit. This will make your Kart hop, and you'll retain a majority of your momentum while at the same time effectively bouncing off the obstacle with a minimum of lost time.
- Banana Peels and Green Shells both have secondary functions. By pressing up and A, you can launch a Peel ahead

of you; conversely, pressing down and A with a Green Shell will lay it behind you like a Banana Peel. This won't work with Red Shells, however.

Battle Mode Hints:

- Use the Princess or Yoshi for any battle course. Their fast acceleration will help a lot if you need to stop and start quickly.
- Use shells and peels for offense and defense. If you know your opponent is behind you with a Red Shell and you have a Banana Peel or Green Shell, maneuver to a straightaway and wait for him to launch his attack. As soon as he does, lay down your object while continu-

ing on straight. His shell will run into your roadblock, and you'll escape without a scratch!

- Use Ghosts sparingly. If you see your opponent has a Mushroom, wait for him to use it and pick up something more useful for you, like a Red Shell or a Star before snatching it away from him.
- Learn to watch your enemy's screen to ascertain his position on the course. This will make offense and defense much easier.

Star Cup



Koopa Beach 1:

Pour on the speed and hop right before you hit the surf after the beach sections. Stay out of the deep water and you should be fine.



Choco Island 2:

Avoid the rough dirt on the sides of the track as much as possible – this will slow you down severely if you're careless. As far as the huge mud puddle goes, just plow through it and try not to turn too much.



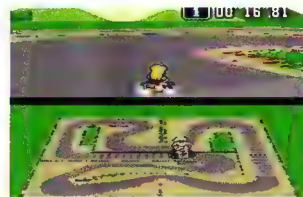
Vanilla Lake 1:

Using the obstacle-hop maneuver we told you about in the Advanced Maneuvers section will serve you well here. There's a lot of ice blocks to impede your progress, so be watchful of where you drive.



Bowser Castle 3:

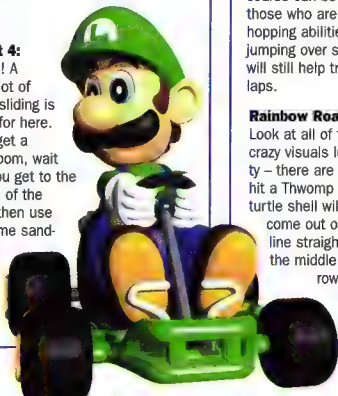
Watch out for the Thwomps on the narrow straightaway after the jumping section! If you have a feather, save it for this – getting crushed is a huge time killer. Other than that, you just need to stay out of the lava and use your power-ups wisely to ensure a good placement.



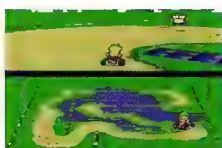
Mario Circuit 4:

Boring!! A whole lot of power sliding is called for here. If you get a Mushroom, wait until you get to the bottom of the track, then use the same sand-

skipping move you used in Mario Circuit 3. You'll probably do a lot of bumping throughout this race, so make sure to have a good supply of coins on hand.

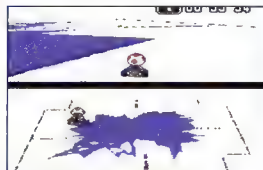


Special Cup



Donut Plains 3:

Welcome to the Special Cup! You've had to prove your driving skills to get this far, and now you'll put them all to exhaustive use. Donut Plains 3 is arguably the hardest course in this game. In the second bridge section you'll have to use a well-timed hop to make it over the gap. If you choose a smaller Kart driver like the Princess or Toad, it would be wise to stay away from everyone while going over the bridges – with no wall to hold you, one bump could send you right into the drink.

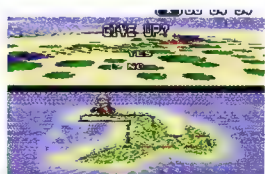


Vanilla Lake 2:

The broken ice on the bottom left of this course can be used as a shortcut for those who are very confident in their hopping abilities. For those who aren't, jumping over smaller sections of water will still help trim some time off your laps.

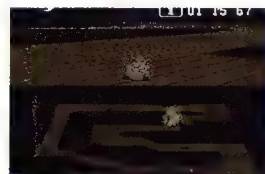
Rainbow Road:

Look at all of the pretty colors! Don't let the crazy visuals lull you into a false sense of security – there are no walls on this course, and if you hit a Thwomp it'll spin you out just like hitting a turtle shell will. Try staying to the outside as you come out of the last turn before the starting-line straightaway. This will ensure you don't hit the Thwomps that come down in the middle of the course. Also, try not to bump your opponents if you're on a narrow section – more likely than not you'll find yourself exploring the inky blackness. The course isn't particularly hard, but the super-Thwomps and the no-wall feature will certainly keep you on your toes.



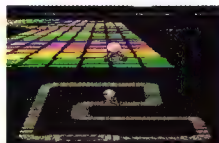
Koopa Beach 2:

As with the other Beach courses, you'll need to use some accurate driving to stay out of Lakitu's clutches. In the section pot-hole with deep water, don't worry about trying to find a sneaky path, just head straight for the small island in the middle, pick up your power-up, then proceed straight to the other side. No funny stuff!



Ghost Valley 3:

Watch for the Zippers, and avoid the holes. You should be able to get a good head of steam going if you're able to avoid falling off the edge and hitting banana peels and the like. Coins are very important on this track, so gobble them up when you can.



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Manufacturer: Playmates • **Website:** www.figures.com • **List Price:** TBA

Although the franchise seemingly died in lieu of crappier Saturday morning and afternoon cartoons, Playmates and Fox plan on resurrecting our green heroes beginning sometime in February of next year. Fox will start the green blitzkrieg with a new cartoon, while Playmates will introduce its line of mutated turtles starting in the spring, which will be followed by an edgy CG movie to be directed by John Woo. The first batch of action figures will include the turtles (Leonardo, Donatello, Michaelangelo, and Raphael), Splinter, April, Shredder, and a Foot Soldier. The second batch will appear in the summer and feature new versions of the Turtles, plus Casey Jones, Foot Elite, Triceraton, Mutant, and a few vehicles. Each figure will be fully articulated, and stand between five and six inches tall. Furthermore, Konami has announced that it plans to continue its illustrious line of TMNT games. Like in the Super Nintendo days, let's pray that we get a few quality action titles, and a sequel to Tournament Fighter. Heroes in a half shell – Turtle Power!



THE OFFICIAL NINJA WEBPAGE

Manufacturer: Robert, The Mysterious Ninja
Website: www.realultimatepower.net

List Price: Your Pinky Finger

Justin once proclaimed himself "the closest thing to a ninja in this office." If you believe real ninjas actually still exist, and you're like our Justin – who takes the art of ninjitsu seriously – please do not check this website out; you'll only get offended and angry. However, if you find those cheesy American movies with the word "ninja" in the title silly, yet entertaining, then you'll probably get a kick out of this site. It not only covers everything from the history of the ninja to facts and gear, but they offer ninja scholarships and even a diverse community! Just to give you a little taste of what this website is like, one of the nominally official facts about ninja states, "The purpose of the ninja is to flip out and kill people...these guys are so crazy and awesome that they flip out ALL the time. I heard that there was this ninja who was eating at a diner. And when some dude dropped a spoon the ninja killed the whole town," and "my friend Mark said that he saw a ninja totally uppercute some kid just because the kid opened a window."

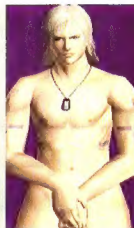


Well, if video games have ever taught us anything, and since they never lie, we are inclined to believe this statement.

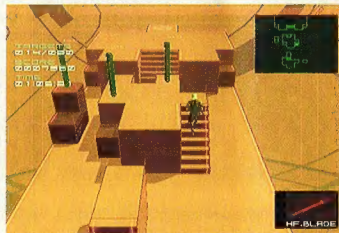
THE DOCUMENT OF METAL GEAR SOLID 2

Manufacturer: Konami • **Website:** www.konami.com
List Price: TBA

Konami will give all of its MGS 2 crackheads (like GI's Chet) almost everything they need to know about the making of Metal Gear Solid 2. Foremost, addicts will be able to tinker around with the 3D models of every character that appears in the game. This includes adding handcuffs, smokes, and sunglasses to heroes like Snake, or simply gazing at Raiden's naked body as he annoyingly covers himself! All of the backgrounds, various machines and vehicles, polygon demos, numerous pieces of art, and toys can also be viewed. This visual presentation (especially Raiden) will certainly keep your eyes glued to your television for a while. Once you've had your fill, there are reams of written material to take in; such as the script, facts about the creators and their roles, a timeline of the game's three year development cycle, and technological information on the PS2 and game.



Despite all of these wonderful special features, the coolest one of all has to be the addition of five VR missions. Although they're nothing too elaborate, players can at least get a taste of what's to come in Substance. If you're already getting the shakes in anticipation, calm down – by the time you read this, this documentary will be out for PS2, Xbox, and PC!



PLAYSTATION 2 VIRTUAL REALITY UNIT

Manufacturer: Sony • **Website:** www.us.playstation.com • **List Price:** \$500

Although we have very little information regarding this VR headset, we certainly have high hopes, despite its hefty price and the fact that every so-called virtual reality machine for the consumer has mostly sucked. Apparently, the unit isn't simply a small LCD screen placed directly in front of your eyes, causing horrible eye strain, but it actually detects the player's head movement and alters the camera perspective accordingly! Furthermore, Sony indicates that it already has some developers designing software that will take full advantage of the VR's capabilities. Unfortunately, Sony has not provided an official name yet, and will not sell it in stores.

If you wish to snag one, it debuts on September 26 and you can only purchase it at Sony's official website.



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[HTTP://NOLF2.SIERRA.COM](http://nolf2.sierra.com)



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