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### LEISURE SUIT LARRY RETURNS

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### SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

Sam Fisher Sneaks Online – Six Pages Of Top Secret Info & Pics

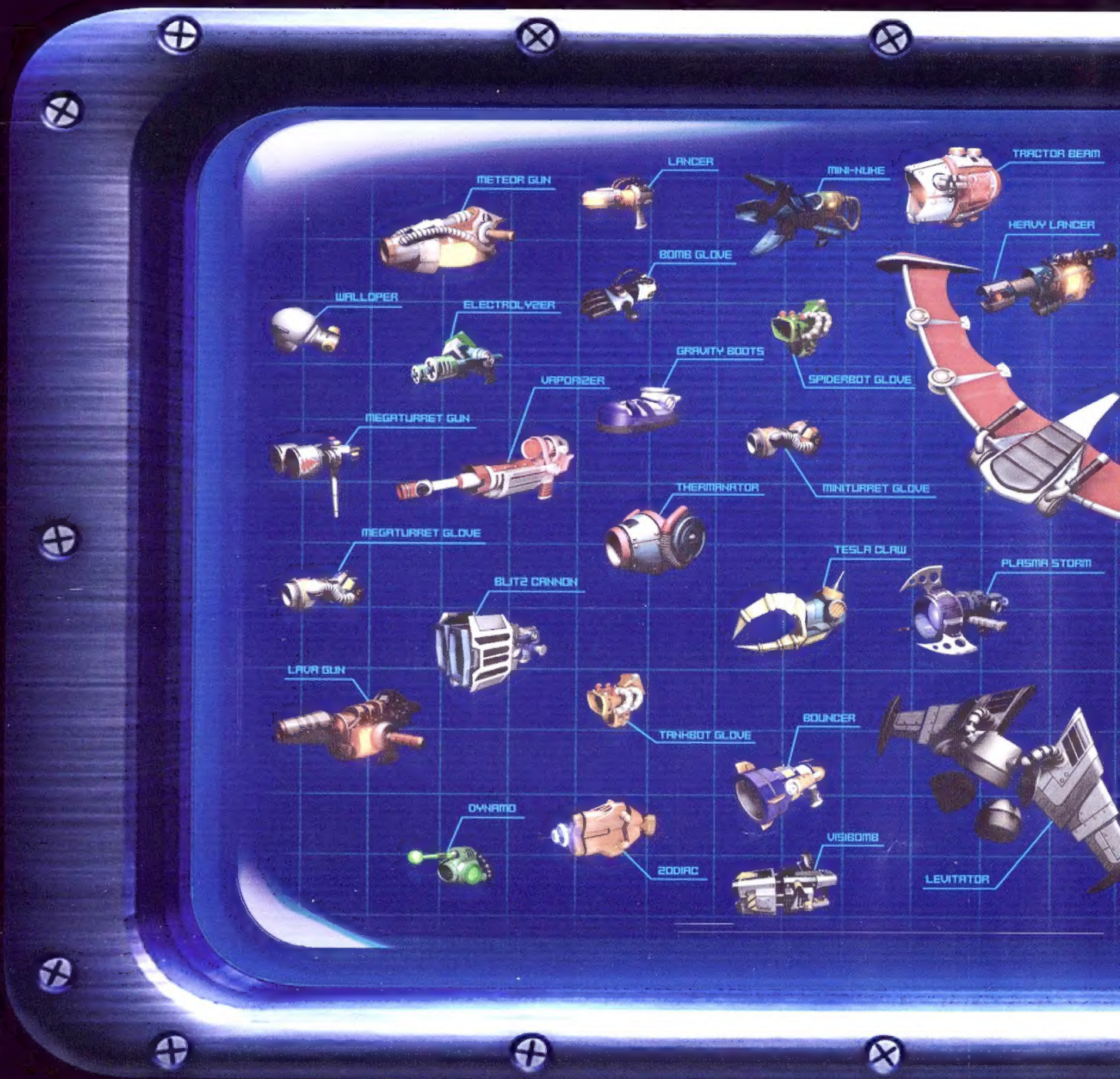


ISSUE 128 DECEMBER 2003

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DECEMBER 2003



## EENIE, MEENIE, MINEY, BOOM.

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PlayStation 2



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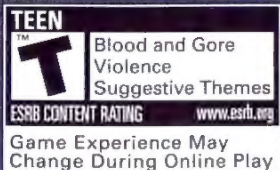
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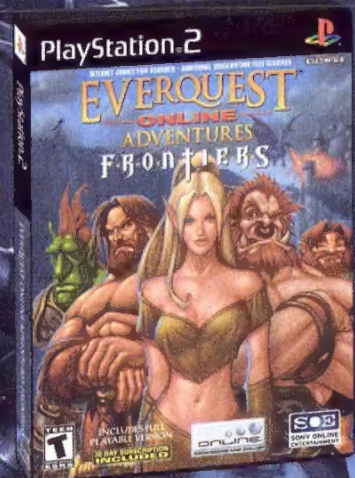
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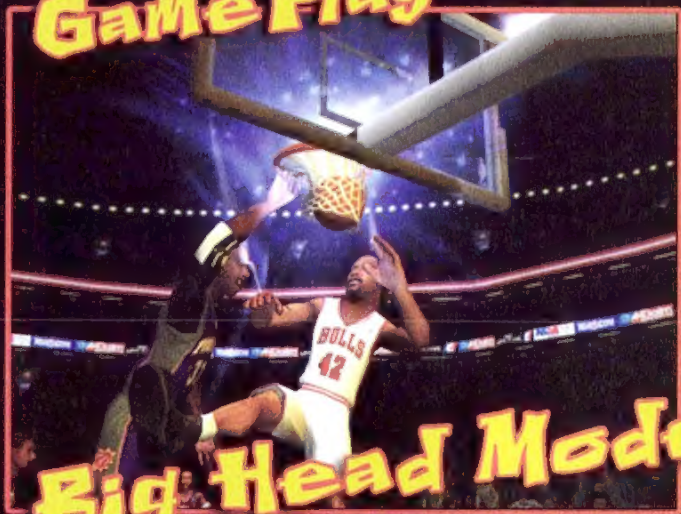
– GamePro



50 NBA Legends



3-on-3  
Game Play



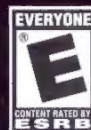
Big Head Mode

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MADSKILLIN' CROWD THRILLIN' D-U-N-K-S...

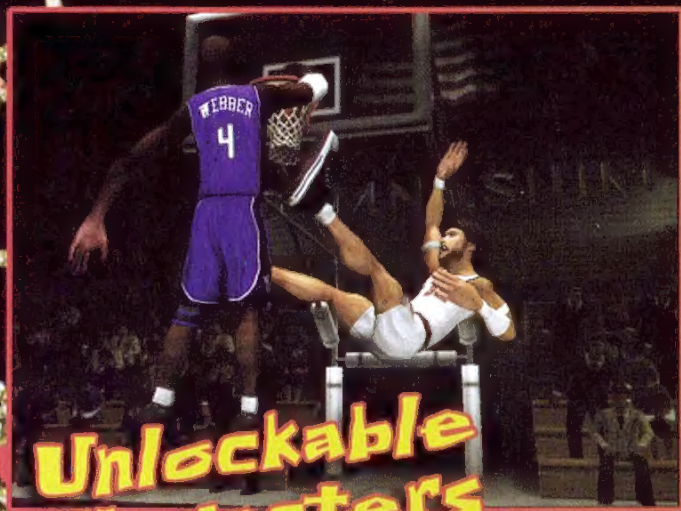
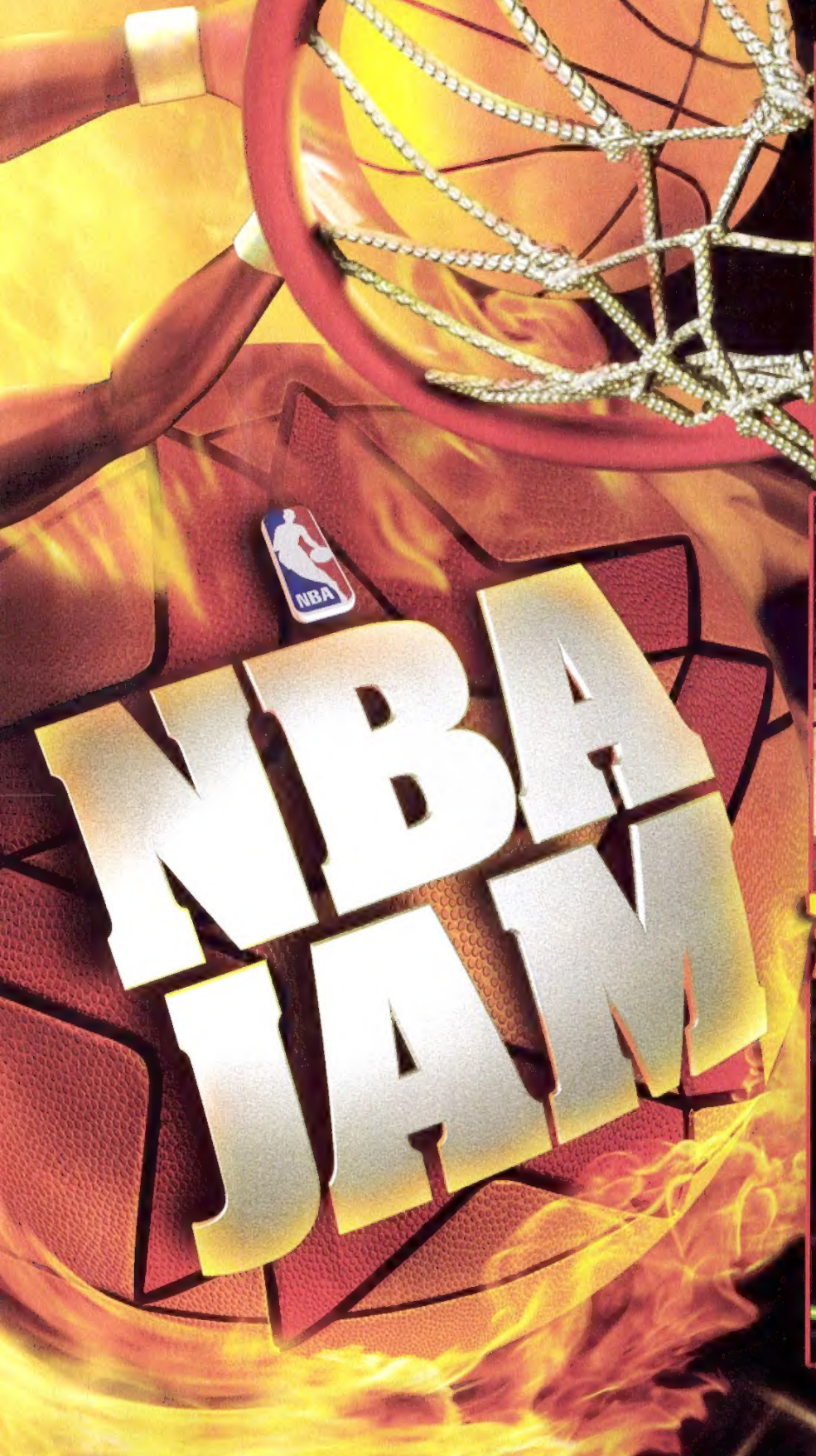
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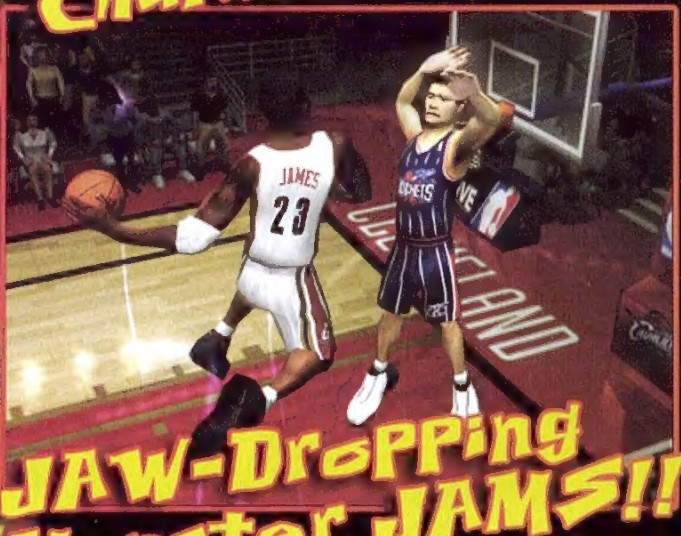


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PlayStation 2

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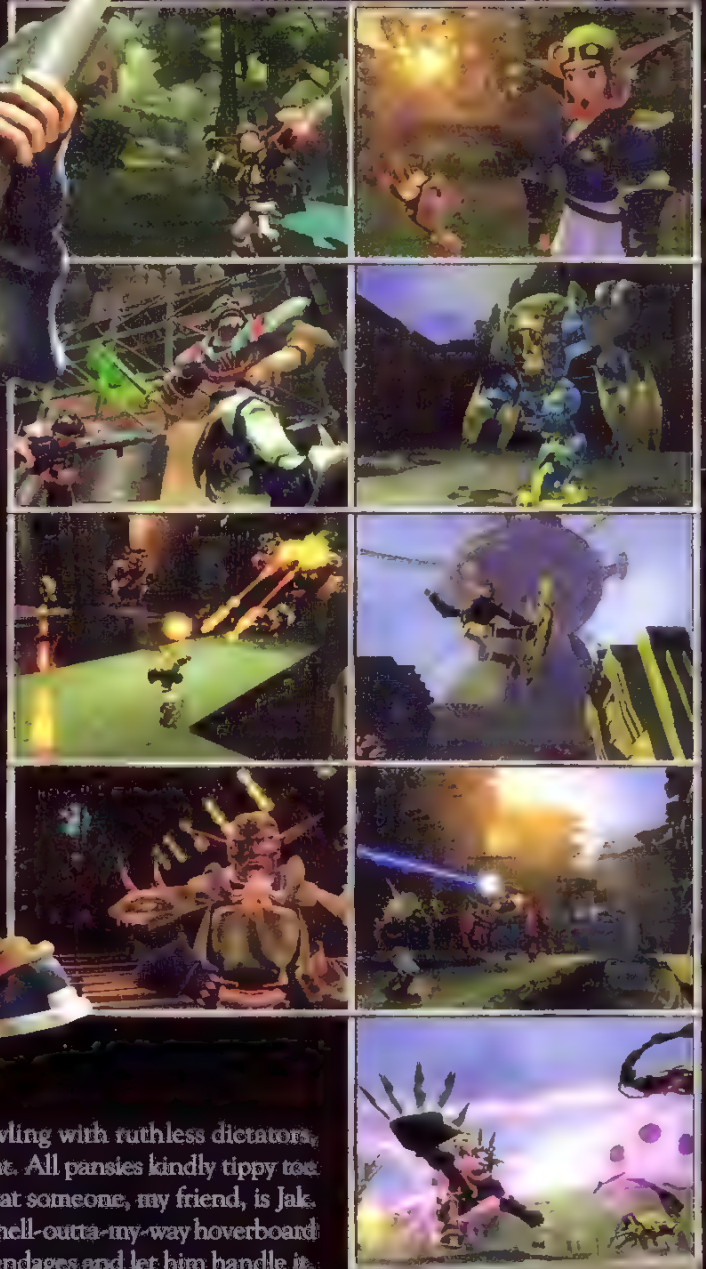
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[xbox.com/counterstrike](http://xbox.com/counterstrike)

## COVER STORY

### 34 CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR - FOR LOVE AND HONOR

We are gushing over the PC edition of *Call of Duty: Finest Hour* in this issue's "Reviews" section and blowing the doors off of its console counterpart. See what we learned in a recent visit to the team behind this promising historical FPS - now coming to a console near you.

## FEATURES



### 44 SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

In the world of stealth games and plots of intrigue, Splinter Cell is in the upper echelons of greatness. Ubisoft's upcoming edition is the first stealth/action game that goes online, and we were on hand to check out how it's coming.



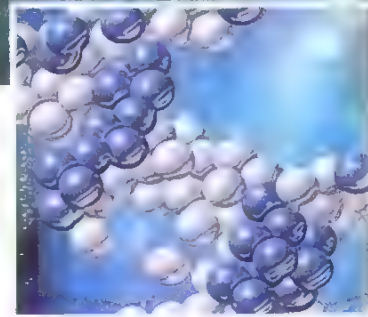
### 54 HOLIDAY BUYING GUIDE 2003

We're just going to knock your socks off with this year's epic buying guide. We've rounded up hundreds of items in every price range for nearly anyone on your shopping list (including yourself). See what we're lusting after this year.



### 66 LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE

Larry Laffer is one hell of a lovable loser made famous in the late '80s, but now his nephew is coming to the forefront in the long-awaited update to the series. Crass? Certainly. Lewd? More than likely. Loveable? Definitely.



### 76 RESIDENT EVIL: APOCALYPSE MOVIE

A new and improved strain of mutated monsters is out to make trouble with Alice in this sequel to the 2002 flick. We provide the primer course on cast, crew, and plot.

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# EDITORS' FORUM



## DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

**ANDY McNAMARA**  
andy@gameinformer.com  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This month brings about an interesting twist to the cover story. Not only are we reviewing the PC version of Call of Duty this month, but we have the world-exclusive first look at the console game follow-up in the franchise. To the extent of my knowledge, that's the first time a magazine has had the opportunity to talk about two titles this closely related in the same month.

The story behind Call of Duty on both the console and PC sides is an intriguing tale, so make sure you read the piece, as it does bring up some interesting issues to think about in today's age of game development. While publishers certainly make everything possible, this tale shows that sometimes the unknown faces behind the products, either as an individual or a group, are the engine that keeps this industry running.

Of course, that's not to say that the publishers aren't working their own magic. We all know that Electronic Arts is perhaps the most powerful company in video games today. I would even go so far as to say that it is bigger (at least in the video game industry) than Sony or Microsoft. Its size, flexibility, and deep pocket-book give it the ability to finesse or pound out (depending on how you look at it) a wide variety of successful and entertaining products.

With or without a particular team or individual, EA will continue in its leadership role in the industry. But that doesn't mean we can't root for the underdog. In the case of Spark Unlimited, it is most certainly filling that role. Whether it's EA taking developers from Ubisoft's Montreal office or Activision pouncing on Spark and Infinity Ward's availability, the players that make the industry work – the magic-makers behind the curtain – are a great asset to publisher and game player alike.

I hope you enjoy the issue as much as we enjoyed making it. You just can't help but love all the fabulous games coming out at this time of year. I know we did.

## REINER | reiner@gameinformer.com

Over the last couple of years, I've made predictions as to how the forthcoming year would shape up for the video game industry. I've actually hit the nail on the head quite a bit, so this year, I thought I'd share my visions of the future with everyone. I foresee the next Grand Theft Auto being set in a city similar to Las Vegas. The title of the game will be GTA: Sin City. Peering deeper into 2004, Microsoft will re-issue the Xbox with a sleek new design (but it will still feature the color green). Finally, Nintendo will delay the release of Metroid Prime 2 at least twice. Now, let's just sit back and see if I truly am clairvoyant or just a fool with too much time on his hands.

## MATT | matt@gameinformer.com

Another crazy month in the life of GI made even crazier by the growing community of insane gamers that are congregating at www.gameinformer.com's boards. It's been cool to see so much interest in the magazine out there in cyberspace, unfortunately it seems that video game fans can't have conversations without devolving into the same old tired system arguments. Yawn. Gee, you think GTA is overrated and PS2 sucks and Xbox rocks? My, how interesting! Especially since you're not, like, the 1,280,563th person to say that or anything. GameCUBE is a "kiddie system" and Wind Waker's graphics look like a "stupid cartoon?" Hey, get out of town! You're hilarious! What I'm saying is that I see no reason why we can't all just play the system of our choice and leave everybody else alone. There's a lot going on in games these days that's worth discussing.

## JUSTIN | justin@gameinformer.com

Ah, the irony of adulthood. When I was a kid, a game like Final Fantasy III or Secret of Mana would last me for months. I'd play them dozens of hours to completion, then I'd play again. Now that I have the money to buy any game that strikes my fancy, I rarely put more than 20 hours into any given title – some I don't play, period. One of these days, I have to put my foot down and tell myself, "That's it. No more games until you get through that fat stack you swore you were gonna play!" Who am I kidding? I'd probably just take myself out for a fancy dinner to get me to drop my defenses, then go back to my old, game-buying ways. I'm such a jerk.

## KATO | kato@gameinformer.com

It's been really cool to see a lot of the editors hanging out after work, just kicking back and enjoying each other's company. Except for me, of course. It seems that whenever people go out, I've always got some crap to do, and I can't go. Or maybe it's not my fault. Perhaps people are coming to dump dead leaves on my lawn as a secret message that I need more deodorant. Come to think of it, there are dead leaves on my lawn! It's all true! I knew something was up when Lisa said to me the other day, "How are you doing?" Well what did she mean by that?!

## LISA | lisa@gameinformer.com

Games like Ubisoft's Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time and the upcoming Leisure Suit Larry get me thinking. It's nice and nostalgic and all to see franchises that I grew up with getting some next-gen love, but, for crap's sake, it needs to be done right. Sands of Time certainly has and it looks like Leisure Suit Larry will accomplish the same goals. Maybe going from an old-school game to next-gen action is as hard as making books into movies. If that's the case, these titles could be the exception and not the rule. I hope that more developers with the passion for their franchises follow in these teams' steps.

## JEREMY | jeremy@gameinformer.com

The general public seems to have a hard time viewing video games as a legitimate art form. While TV and film are easily accepted, people seem comfortable dismissing games as mere kids' stuff, even though they require as much hard work and talent to produce. But do we actually want games to be embraced by the public at large? Think about it – if they were as accepted as movies, we would probably be seeing multiple releases, like movies on DVD, in order to cash in on their popularity. Do you really want to buy both the standard edition of Viewtiful Joe and the special edition with deleted scenes, director's commentary, and still galleries? On second thought, maybe I do.

## ADAM | adam@gameinformer.com

Hi, my name is Adam, and I have a video game problem. As those of you on the forums may know, I am the new guy here and my deal is primarily PC gaming. This goes back to my past. Back in the day, I did all of my gaming on an old Macintosh 512K (that's RAM), and later on a Macintosh Classic. As you might guess, I've been spending the majority of my teenage and adult life making up for this tragic state of affairs by logging a stupid number of hours on various consoles and my (somewhat) new PC. Coming in here is the ultimate justification for my lifestyle, so thanks to all of you for making this magazine possible.



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...not nearly as good as GTA, but

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TRUE CRIME STREETS OF LA

ARE YOU A GOOD COP OR BAD COP?

8.5

# FULL THROTTLE ADRENALINE RUSH!



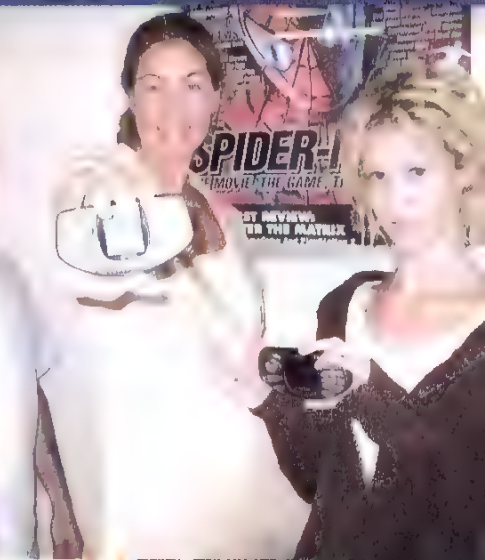
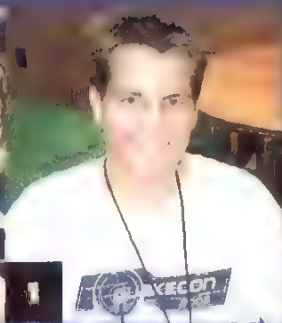
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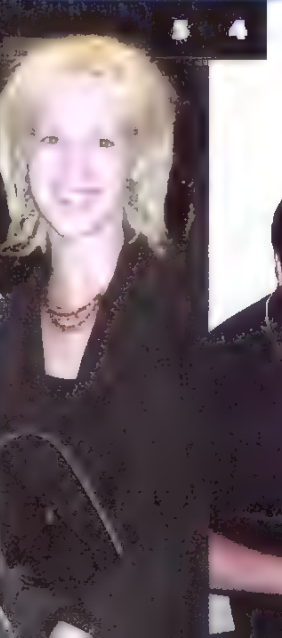
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# GI SPY



## CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 Hmm... how could a nice, clean-cut young man like EA Software's Mike Stratton get him- self mixed up in all this crazy Doom business? 2 N-Gate: Now You're Playing With Power!!! Lisa and Nova's PR powerhouses bring the newest high-knoped cell phone gaming thing on the market 3 Gameinformer.com's Billy Berghammer gets mustache-growing tips from Neversoft's head honcho Joel Jewett. Also pictured: Neversoft's head dog Logan. 4 Andre Emerson, Mike Kennedy, and Robert Zaiot from Namco's Dead to Rights II team give Game Informer a friendly reminder that we should try to be as "fun and honest" as possible in our review of the game 5 X-Play's Morgan Webb, Accelero's Matt Schlosberg, and Lisa get jiggy at the Alias party 6 GI webmeister Chris "Good Guys Don't Always Wear White" Cook and Capcom's Atsushi "I Wear Black On The Outside Because Black Is How I Feel On The Inside" make some chilling in Tokyo 7 The funny guys and get around Tokyo's best bars and off their nearly-completed mural



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# DEAR GI

## LANGUAGE IS FUN >>>

According to research at an Ellingsh... the only important thing is that the first and... do not read every letter by itself but the word as a

Timonius  
Via juno.com

Interesting, indeed. Another language study attempted to prove the theory that a bevy of monkeys in front of key-boards, given enough time, can produce the entire works of Shakespeare. The University of Michigan put 24 monkeys into computer labs for upwards of two years. While the primates did spout off some gibberish, they also produced the phrases "When next we meet," "Written troubles of the brain," and "They speak no English." They also produced a whole lotta monkey droppings. Why share this tidbit of research discovery? So that you have something work-appropriate (except for the feces part) to talk about at the office holiday party, of course. We're just here to help.



## I NEED YOU TODAY. OH, MANDY! >>>

Do you know the phone number to that girl in issue 126 who said that she loved hardcore gamers? Could I have it?  
Joe  
Via yahoo.com

I was reading last month's mag, and was wondering, could I get AMANDA's phone number.  
Some Dude  
Via Cingular Wireless

Do you guys think that you can hook me up with Amanda from issue 126? I am into video games like you don't even know. Please help this lonely sap!  
Jesse  
The Lonely Gamer

I wanted to comment on that Amanda chick that sent you the letter in the October issue. She is hot! If you could somehow get my email address to her, I would be most appreciative.  
Keep up the good work, and O'Doyle does rule!  
Steve Kress  
Via aol.com

- Reign it in there, boys! We don't have Amanda's home phone number, current address, social security number, alphabetized list of preferred floral selections, favorite movie, astrological sign, blood type, or further description of what she's looking for in a mate. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but we haven't a clue how to get in touch with the damsel. So, we accept these letters on her behalf. We're sure she's flattered and extends her thanks to the Academy, her parents, and everyone who worked on the letter with her.

## MATURITY REPLIES >>>

I just had to write a reply to Brian M, who thought 24 was "way beyond gaming prime." Trust me Grasshopper, at 24 (unless you live in a world where it is counted in dog years) you have a long way to go.  
This is going to be a mind blower - I am a 41 year "young" mommy who still hasn't reached her gaming prime. My oldest is 21, but I still spend countless hours

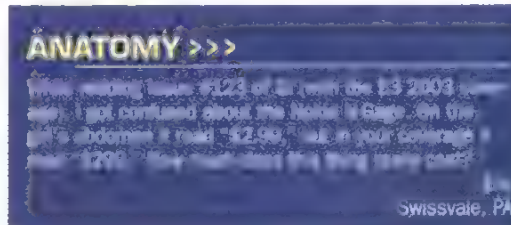
playing Final Fantasy, Devil May Cry, Quake, Doom, Zelda, and Pokémon. I remember when Pong and Tank were "phat" and when everyone thought that Missile Command and Frogger had the most kick-butt graphics around! When I buy a new game or system, I buy one for me and one for my kids.

Beyond the mid-way point? Honey, to us serious gamers \*pulls on her Peter Pan outfit\* there ain't no such animal.  
Annabele  
Via earthlink.net  
The Total Gamer Mom

As a regular GI reader, I feel compelled to respond to Brian M's letter in the October issue regarding age, attention span, and gaming. I have more than a decade over Brian M. in the crucial area of age; and speaking as someone in his mid-thirties, I say that adults can definitely still play video games.

Now that I'm older, video games are actually interesting to me, since they provide a nice escape from the thrilling things that we adults get to do, such as paying bills and sucking up to the boss at work. There's nothing better than a little quality time with Halo or Eternal Darkness after a day of yelling at customers on the phone and stabbing co-workers in the back (not that I ever do anything like that, but you know how some folks are).

Thanks a lot.  
Jeff Hall  
Blacksburg, Virginia



Here's what the scantily clad, recently-stripped, pseudo-skater girl's stomach actually read: "\$2 <belly button> 99." See, that wasn't a decimal point you were looking at, but her belly button. The N-Gage has a suggested retail price of \$299.00.

I am a 27-year-old married mother of a 4-year-old. I have PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube. Gaming is my life. I am currently beta testing a certain Sony online title and have logged more than 250 hours since mid-August (yes, I do know that that's way too much time put into a game). I don't understand how someone can just lose interest. My attention span seems to increase as I get older.

Kara  
Via bettsouth.net

- Sometimes, you readers surprise us. Based on the bounty of mail we received concerning this topic, the gaming industry has grown up from its perceived living-in-the-basement-never-dating-excessive-role-playing-tape-on-the-glasses reputation. Does that mean we have to upgrade our bodily function jokes to meet the maturity of our 30-something readers? Nah, scratch that idea - you guys come up with more naughty humor than we could ever think up on our own.

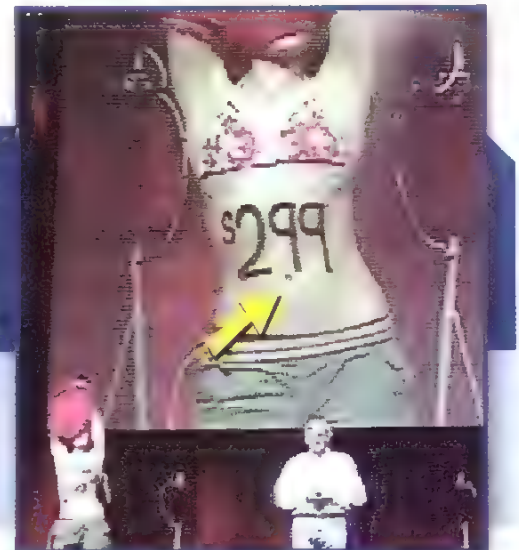
## WEBSITE >>>

I recently headed to www.gameinformer.com, and I must say, no matter how many delays have gone by, it's all worth it. The new GI.com kicks serious amounts of ass. Not only can we download movies, view up-to-date bios, and check what our favorite games got in the review section (Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 got a 10! You guys kick ass!), but there are also the forums. This section of the site is by far the best; you can chat about the mag, chat with people who love the mag, chat with the editors of the mag, chat with the editors of the mag about people who love the mag, and everything else sandwiched in-between. Mainly, what I want to say about the new site is that you guys (serious props to Billy here) have put hard labor into the site, and it all pays off.

Your slave-um, I mean, loyal follower,  
Zach

I think GI online is freaking awesome! What an overhaul! Keep up the stellar work.  
A Devoted Fan,  
Shinobi  
Via Hotmail

I love the new web site! You guys really did a good job.  
Tucker  
Via juno.com



BAPTIZED IN  
**BLOOD,**  
 A FAMILY'S  
**FRAGILE**  
**DESTINY**  
 IS BORN.



At the dawn of the second millennium, the first Belmont makes the ultimate sacrifice. And the destiny of a bloodline is decided. From the creators of Castlevania® Symphony of the Night™ and completely reinvented for its 3D debut on PlayStation®2, Castlevania® Lament of Innocence™ reveals the true origins of the vampire-hunting Belmonts and their tireless quest for Vlad Dracula. A thousand years ago, a legend was indeed born. And the dying hasn't stopped since.



"...gorgeous in 3D and plays brilliantly." - PSM

"The visuals it work here are simply magical." - PLAY

"What does it actually feel like to play? Damned fun." - EGM

**Castlevania**  
 Lament of Innocence™



PlayStation.2



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## ENVELOPE ART

▪ Thanks everyone who wrote in and to all the (good) people populating the forums. We like the site too, and are working on the few kinks still left from the launch. Also, if you're a subscriber, make sure to check out the Unlimited section each month. We put stuff like extra screenshots, full interviews (so you can get all the skinny that we couldn't fit in the magazine), movies, and a bunch of other goodies that are "too big to print." Billy and Chris put a lot of time into it each month, so make sure it's part of your visit.

### MOBILE GAMING >>>

There seems to be a renewed vigor in pursuing the ultimate handheld portable gaming experience. With products like the Nokia N-Gage, the Tapwave Zodiac, and next year's PSP from Sony, coupled with the redesigned Game Boy Advance SP, it seems the industry is focusing on producing legitimate quality portable systems capable of running blockbuster games. Forget the watered-down, no frills ports of console titles we used to get – those days are over. If you want proof of how far portable gaming has come along, look no further than *Metroid Fusion*. Most critics thought it was even better than its GameCube counterpart, which is certainly no small feat.

But, unfortunately, the gaming industry has not learned from its history. Those who are old enough to remember the Atari Lynx, the Game Gear, and more recently the Neo Geo Pocket (Metal Slug rules!), remember that those systems were technologically vastly superior to the Game Boy. Yet, they were all considered failures and none of the aforementioned systems had any staying power. More colors, bigger screens, better graphics, increased speed, and back lighting were all top of the line, but didn't help. It's going to be tough to steal Game Boy's thunder. These newcomers are up against a nearly 15-year legacy of quality portable gaming, the Nintendo name, hundreds of good games, and lots of third party support. These are certainly not small obstacles. I am all for competition in the industry, it creates better games and lower prices, I just hope these rookies know what they're doing.

Brian Miloscia  
Career Gamer  
Via email



Arthur Andrews

"I got one hand on fire and the other one is giving the peace sign"



Sean Cronin

We now know where Michael Jackson got his nose



Tony Perez  
"They're grrrrrrreat!!!"



Indra Rojas

Your eyes would bleed too if you saw Reiner naked



### DECEMBER WINNER!

George Young

He's still mad that Jar Jar got to be in two movies

Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best darn 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 1st St. N., 4th Floor • Mpls, MN 55401



Eric Nash

Later, she tried to convince him to go on the Atkins diet



Michael Smith

"Fear my stink palm!"

▪ While Sony has yet to clear up many of the mysteries surrounding its upcoming PSP (an item it bills as a high-end portable multimedia unit), the N-Gage is already out and the Zodiac is available on Tapwave's website. Certainly, the handheld gaming industry has been more a story of techno-savvy systems that, by most financial standards, failed miserably. What has yet to be seen is if consumers who now spend more money than ever on personal video gaming are willing to fork over the dough for these higher-end gadgets. We'll keep you up to date on the PSP's developments and include big releases for Nokia's and Tapwave's current endeavors; and we'll just have to, as Samuel L. Jackson states in *Jurassic Park*, "Hold onto [our collective] butts," and just see what happens.

### SELF-EXPLANATORY >>>

What's your e-mail address?

Love,  
Brakb4u  
Via EMAIL

▪ Um, see, you sent this in through email. And, like, we got it in our email. That means that, well, you have our email address already. It's funny. Like when you get an email that says, "My email doesn't work." Because, like, if it sent, then your email at least sort of works. You see? Okay, we'll stop now.



For PlayStation®2

# PLAY YOUR GAMES TO THE

# MAX

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Action Replay MAX™ is the world's most powerful game enhancer. With mind-blowing features including a slick new look and easy-to-use controls, MAX™ redefines your video gaming experience!

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**GameCube™**  
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CODE JUNKIES .COM

## HACKERS DELAY HALF-LIFE 2?

Since its grand entrance at this year's E3 event, the release date for **Half-Life 2** has been a saga in itself. Originally set at September 30, this date was switched to an ambiguous holiday one, and has been a sore spot between publisher **Vivendi Universal Games** and developer **Valve Software**. The latest intrigue is that the game has been delayed into April 2004 due to the theft of part of its source code.

Even that schedule, however, is in the air. In September, a hacker planted a spy program in Valve founder Gabe Newell's email, enabling him to steal the source code. Parts of it had been distributed online, but how much and to what extent is unknown. Shortly after the event, VU Games' president of international operations Christophe Ramboz told a French newspaper, "A third of the source code was stolen. It's serious because it forces us to delay the launch of the game by at least four months, that is to April 2004."

However, a Valve spokesperson has assured the public that the situation is still being evaluated and that no official decision has been made regarding **Half-Life 2's** release date. At the time of this writing, the saga seems stuck at status quo: Neither the publisher nor the developer can agree on exactly when the title will hit store shelves.

In happier **Half-Life 2** news, **ATI** has been announced as the preferred graphics card for the game. As part of this agreement, those who buy **ATI's Radeon 9800** or **9600 XT** cards will get the full **Half-Life 2** game for free when it ships.



## MARIO GOLF/F-ZERO TO HIT GBA

**Nintendo** is coming at you with a double dose of **Game Boy Advance** goodness. **Mario Golf: Advance Tour** picks up where **Toadstool Tour** left off, giving you a great time out on the links. In fact, the GBA title hooks up with its **GameCube** big brother and allows you to download two exclusive characters into **Toadstool Tour**.

Meanwhile, **F-Zero: Falcon Legend** offers more **SNES**-style futuristic racing for the handheld, and is based on an Japanese anime show. **Falcon Legend** will not only offer new courses and racers, but it will contain the Mute City and Big Blue locations from the original.

Both **Mario Golf: Advance Tour** and **F-Zero: Falcon Legend** have not been officially confirmed for release in America, but **Nintendo** would have to be absolutely loony not to let us get our hands on these classic franchises on GBA. The only question is when.



## PLAYSTATION 3 ON THE CLOCK?

Talk has been going on for quite some time regarding **Sony's PlayStation 3** and its ambitious **Cell** microprocessor. Recently, the company's chief technology officer, **Kenshi Manabe**, shed some more light as to the system's release. Talking at an industry event, he stated that **Sony** and its **Cell** development partners **Toshiba** and **IBM** expect to start "mass production" of the chip in the second half of 2005. Before then, however, prototypes will be worked on. This timeline could suggest that **Sony** would be ready for a launch of the **PlayStation 3** in holiday 2005 with limited release numbers, similar to the territory-specific release of the **PS2** in March 2000 in Japan. **Sony** says that it has already started installing equipment at a new plant in order to begin making the microprocessor, and plans initially to spend 200 billion yen on the chip.

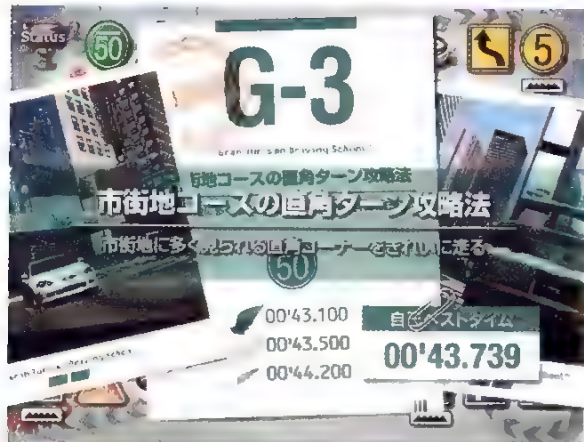
Preparing for a possible 2005 date for the **PlayStation 3**, **Brian Farrell**, CEO of developer/publisher **THQ** has stated that work has already begun on games for the future. "We still believe that the next generation will launch in 2006," he said during a conference call to discuss **THQ's** quarterly results. "That's our best guess as of today's date. But we're certainly preparing in the event that there is a 2005 launch." **Farrell** further stated that subsidiaries **Rainbow Studios** (**Splashdown**) and **Vollition** (**Red Faction**) have started designing for the **PS3** and the successor to **Microsoft's Xbox**.

## GRAN TURISMO 4'S HEAD START

At the Tokyo Motor Show **Sony Computer Entertainment** announced **Gran Turismo 4: Prologue** for release in Japan on December 4. Not only will it be priced at only 2,980 yen (\$25), the title offers a chance for gamers to get their hands on the full graphics and physics engines that will be featured in the final build of *Gran Turismo 4* when it appears sometime in 2004. More than just a demo disc, *Prologue* features five courses (including New York, Fuji Speedway, and the Grand Canyon) and a number of concept cars that have made their debut at the Tokyo Motor Show (some pictured below).

GT producer **Kazunori Yamauchi** sees this pre-release as an education course in the ways of driving *Gran Turismo* style. He believes that the series may be too daunting for novice players. Therefore, *Prologue* will feature a driving school board game for beginners, as well as some challenges for more experienced drivers.

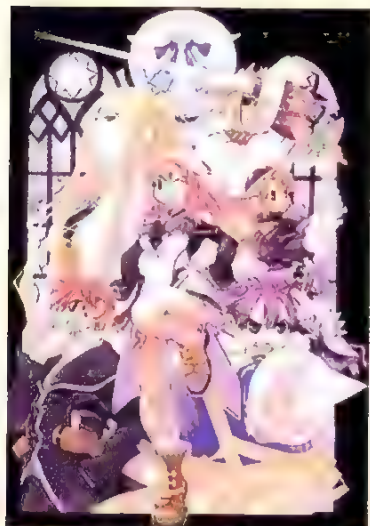
*Game Informer* contacted Sony of America, but it could not say whether or not *Gran Turismo 4: Prologue* would make it to these shores in some form or another.



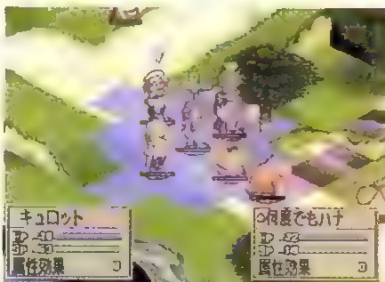
## DISGAEA MAKER RETURNS TO PS2

**Nippon Ichi**, developer of the heralded *Disgaea: Hour of Darkness*, is following up its RPG masterpiece with yet another **PlayStation 2** title – *La Pucelle: Tactics*. Bringing it to America this spring is the unknown **Mastiff Games** (who brought us Adam's favorite title – *Easter Bunny's Big Day!* on **PSone**).

The game is set in an alternate history of medieval Europe. You play as a bratty 16 year-old girl who has just passed her exorcism exams to join *La Pucelle*, a demon-hunting squad. This juxtaposition of light and dark plays out in the story, which is both cute and humorous, and yet serious and intense.



Following the RPG tactical stylings of *Disgaea*, Nippon Ichi is doing everything it can to bring a fresh take on the genre. For instance, characters can level-up after every round of battle. Also, your party can consist of up to eight members, as enemies can be converted into allies. *La Pucelle: Tactics* features up to 149 items, and with its tremendous depth and over 100 hours of gameplay, there's going to be plenty to keep you as happy as a frolicking bunny next spring.

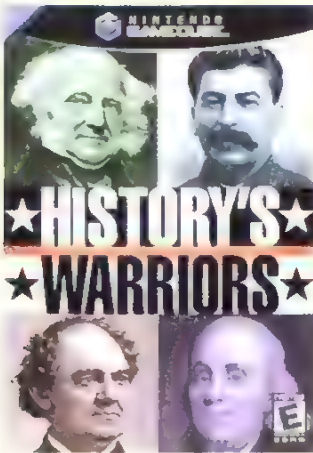


## GI NEWS



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 god-like power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

### THE NATIONAL BOARD OF EDU-TAINMENT PRESENTS: HISTORY'S WARRIORS

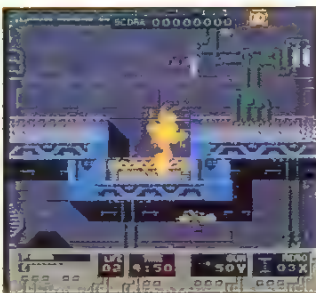


A group of concerned parents decided that video games don't include nearly enough educational content, so they formed the National Board of Edu-tainment to sponsor games that teach as they entertain. Their first release, *History's Warriors*, would answer the age-old question:

Who would win in a fight between Benjamin Franklin and a lumberjack? Filled with historical figures like Mr. Franklin, Napoleon, President Martin Van Buren, PT Barnum, Joseph Stalin, and many more, this fighting game would pit historical figures against each other in one-on-one battles to the death. Several other characters are unlockable, including less specific historical characters like the lumberjack, the ninja, the pirate, the chimney sweep, and the coal miner. But, unlike most fighting games, simply beating the other characters won't earn you rewards; in *History's Warriors*, a piece of information is displayed about the winner of each fight. After every five matches, the player is given a quiz. Correct answers are rewarded with hidden characters! With *History's Warriors*, not only can you make Betsy Ross beat Socrates to death with her sewing machine, you'll learn while doing it!



It happens all the time. You're an android borrowing your dad's car to go out on a date, only to find yourself stranded on a giant asteroid requiring you to platform your way to safety. Developer Gray Matter is well



known for working with the legendary id Software on ports of the latter's titles. Before then, however, Gray Matter dabbled in all sorts of games, including this 16-bit curio.

Answer on page 32!

## TOP 10 READERS' CHOICE HATEFUL GAME

1. *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (Activision)  
2. *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (Activision)  
3. *Call of Duty: World at War* (Activision)  
4. *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (Activision)  
5. *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* (Activision)  
6. *Call of Duty: Warzone* (Activision)  
7. *Call of Duty: Warzone 2.0* (Activision)  
8. *Call of Duty: Warzone Caldera* (Activision)  
9. *Call of Duty: Warzone Mobile* (Activision)  
10. *Call of Duty: Warzone Battlegrounds* (Activision)

FROM MCCORMACK  
Producer



FROM  
Producer



## EA/NASCAR EXCLUSIVITY OFFICIAL

Back in our May issue, *Game Informer* reported on publishers **Atari** (then known as **Infogrames**) and **Sierra** declining to renew their video game licensing agreements with **NASCAR** due to the high cost of bidding against competitor **EA Sports**. Thus, both the **NASCAR Dirt to Daytona** and **NASCAR Racing** franchises, respectively, ceased to exist. This left **EA Sports** and its **NASCAR Thunder** series the only choice for fans. Now, Electronic Arts has sealed the deal with the official signing of an exclusive NASCAR contract that runs through 2009.

This agreement not only gives EA Sports and the *Thunder* series the sole naming rights to NASCAR, but it will be the only place where you can find over 65 real drivers (like **Jeff Gordon**, **Dale Earnhardt Jr.**, etc.), 23 official tracks, and over 175 cars from both the **Winston Cup** (to be named the Nextel NASCAR Cup in 2004) and **Busch** racing series. It is not known if this deal with the organization also includes the **Craftsman Truck** series.



## GUNDAM GOES GAMECUBE?

**Nintendo** has purchased 1.28 million shares of publisher/developer **Bandai**, but denies that it has any plans to take the company over. A chunk of the shares were due to the dissolving of Bandai's relationship with **Mattel**, which held 2.06 million shares itself. "If some Bandai shareholders ask us to buy additional shares, we would consider the offer," said a Nintendo spokesperson. "But we don't have any intention of acquiring Bandai."

The larger picture of these wheeling and dealings is that Nintendo seeks to strengthen its relationship with the company, as it now stands as one of the **Mobile Suit Gundam**-makers top ten shareholders. So far *Gundam* and RPG **Dot Hack** are Bandai's biggest sellers, and have only appeared on the **PlayStation 2**. Hopefully, the pair's increasing closeness will mean more titles for the console from the company.

## VISUAL CONCEPTS TO CHANGE NAME

After renaming its successful **2K** brand of sports titles to **ESPN** for a licensing agreement, **Sega Sports** developer **Visual Concepts** is contemplating undergoing another switch. *Game Informer* has heard that the developer is considering changing its entire company name from Visual Concepts to **ESPN Videogames**.

It is not known when the deal will be finalized, but the company's new name should go into effect in time for next year's round of sports video games from the developer. Despite the closeness between **ESPN** and **Visual Concepts**, a source within the company has assured us that the Bristol, Connecticut sports media mogul won't change the way that the video game studio currently produces its critically-acclaimed titles.



# THEY SHOULD'VE JUST STAYED DEAD!

"The newly announced return of Hunter: The Reckoning, in the form of Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer, has us pretty damn excited."

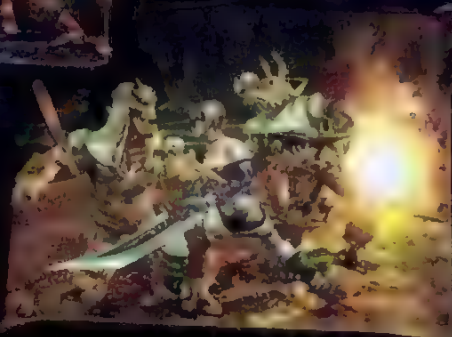
Official Xbox Magazine May, 2003

"Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer is bigger, badder, and far more insane than the previous slaughter-fest."

www.IGN.com March, 2003



Choose from 5 unique playable Hunters



Unrelenting action based on White Wolf's World of Darkness™ RPG series



Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward  
Now available on  
PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system

## HUNTER THE RECKONING REDEEMER

[www.hunterthereckoning.com/redeemer](http://www.hunterthereckoning.com/redeemer)



Blood and Gore  
Violence

## SIREN CALLS FROM SILENT HILL

*Siren* is more than a **Sony** first-party game with visual echoes of the *Fatal Frame* series. Keiichiro Toyama, a member of the original *Silent Hill* team is directing it, so the game already has quite a head start on giving us heart attacks. The **PlayStation 2** title is scheduled to release in Japan this year, and we hear that we should get ours sometime next year.

Not only can it scare you with aesthetics, *Siren* is also trying to make its mark in the gameplay department. Using the Optical Illusion system, players can not only tune into what an enemy sees through its own eyes, but you can gain control of other foes as well. This enables you to get the jump on any potentially nasty surprises.



## THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

**BAD** – When he's not the chief marketing officer for the **Phantom** console, **Burton Roberts** is busy getting kicked off of reality show *Survivor*. He was one of the first to leave the Drake Tribe at the Pearl Islands. When will the video game council speak on the console itself?



**GOOD** – **Atari/Chuck E. Cheese** founder **Nolan Bushnell** is at it again. His company **uWink** has just signed on to make games for Java and Brew-enabled mobile devices starting later this year. Cell phone gaming in a hot tub? That sounds like Nolan.

**UGLY** – **Nokia** has been warning consumers about exploding cell phones due to use of non-Nokia batteries. We can see the next **N-Gage** ad: "Explosive gaming, only on N-Gage!"

**BAD** – The families of two victims in a Virginia shooting have filed a lawsuit against **Sony, Take-Two Interactive/Rockstar Games,** and **Wal-Mart**. Two teenagers plead guilty to the crime, which they then blamed on *Grand Theft Auto III*.

**GOOD** – **George Lucas' THX** has signed an agreement with **Electronic Arts** to enforce quality standards in video and audio for the publisher's games – like it now does for films. THX not only plans to sign other companies to its program, but is also looking to work with console manufacturers on the ground level.

**GOOD** – **Ex-id Software** co-founders **John Romero** and **Tom Hall** are back at it and have signed on to lend their expertise to **Midway** for a number of upcoming games, including *Area 51* and a new rendition of *Gauntlet*.

**UGLY** – After once being **Nintendo's** big game at this year's E3, the co-developed **Namco Pac-Man Vs.** title for **GameCube** has fallen, and is worth...zero. The vid is available for free when you buy **R:Racing Evolution, I-Ninja,** or the Player's Choice re-release of *Pac-Man World 2*.

## LOOSE TALK

If loose lips are spraying hot video game gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. Got a secret to tell? Email us at [loosetalk@gameinformer.com](mailto:loosetalk@gameinformer.com) and we'll be all ears.

We gave up a pinky finger for all the dirt on **Square Enix's** new lineup last issue, but believe it or not, there's more. The publisher/developer has two online projects in mind for the **PS2**. One's code-named **Ambrosia**, and there is also a **Front Mission Online** on the docket.

Following the news that UK publisher **SCI** has acquired developer **Pivotal** (**Conflict: Desert Storm, The Great Escape**), work has already begun on a third installment of the *Conflict* series. This time, however, the setting will not be the middle east, but instead Vietnam.

Although a **GameCube** version of *Pilotwings* (driven by a **Factor 5**-developed engine) is said to be ready to go, *Loose Talk* has heard that the title might be shelved for **Nintendo's** next console.

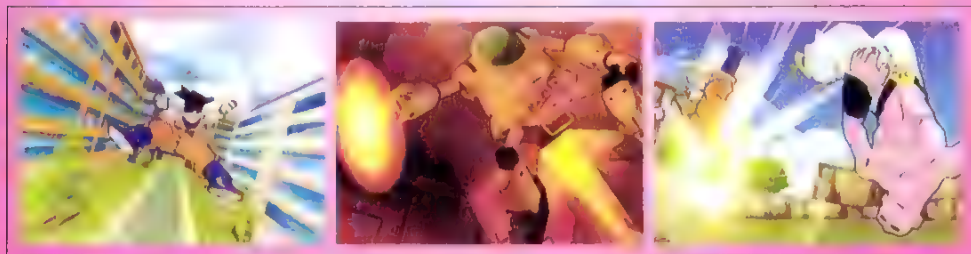
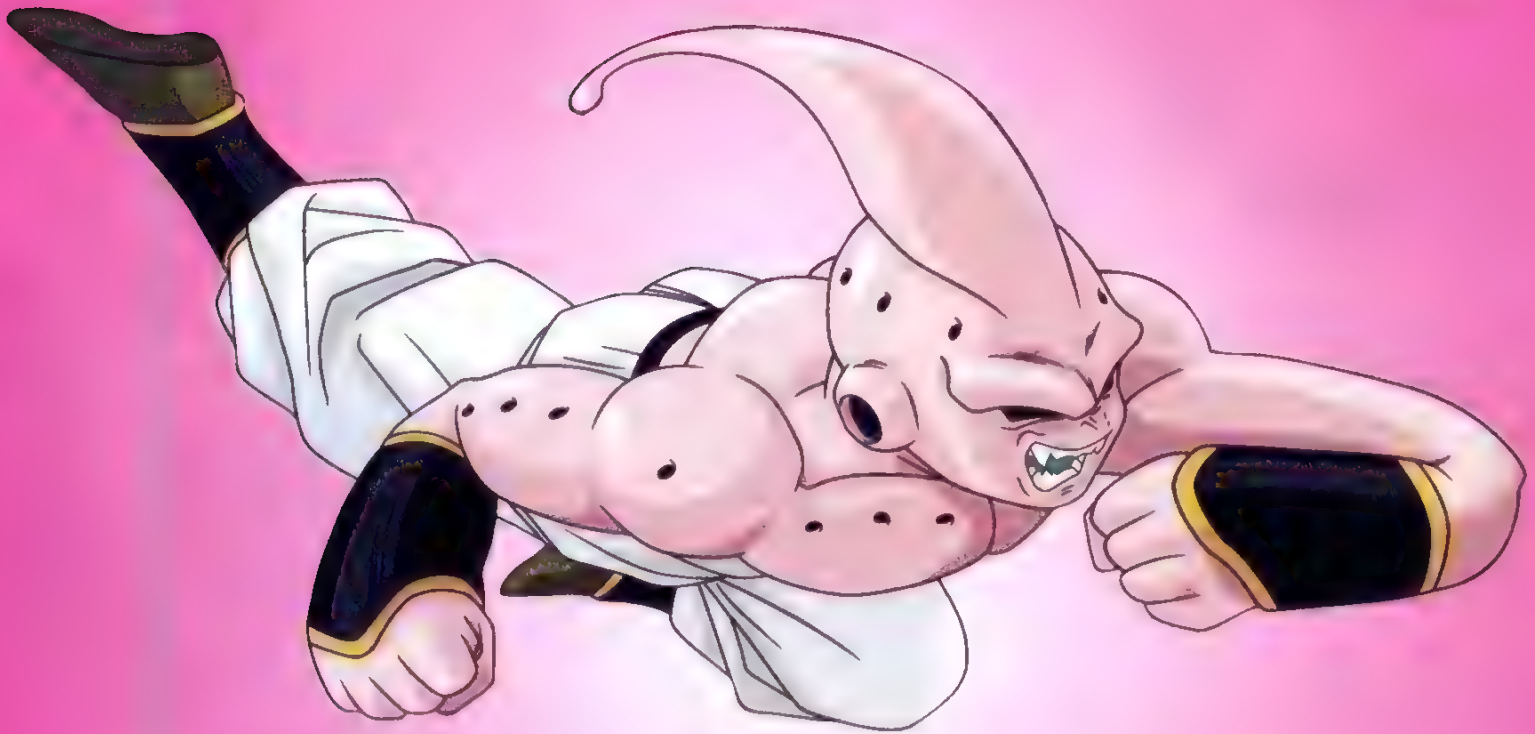
Rumor has it that **Konami** is thinking of moving its popular **Winning Eleven** soccer franchise to the **Xbox** too. Currently, it is only available on the **PlayStation 2**.

The next installment in **Sega's Shining** RPG/strategy series will apparently be called **Shining Tears**.

PRE-ORDER NOW

# Ah, the joys of evil.

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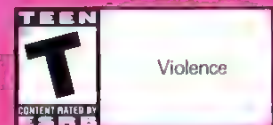


Not only has Buu™ arrived, but you can fight as any of his three evil forms. Plus there's all new graphics, new fusions, new absorptions, and Dragon World, a new single player mode that lets you create your own DBZ® adventure. If you've got a favorite character, you've got a fight.

**DRAGON BALL Z**  
**BUDOKAI 2**  
武闘会 2



PlayStation 2



TRIVIA

The video game universe is a vast one – filled with colorful characters of every size, type, and attitude. The digital beings one bonds with onscreen are a cracked mirror to one's soul. Who is your perfect video game character equivalent? Take this month's trivia quiz, check your score, and find out.

**Question 1: Founded in 1979, Activision became video gaming's first third-party publisher. It put out its first four games simultaneously. Which of the following was not one of them?**

- A. Horseshoes
- B. Dragster
- C. Fishing Derby
- D. Checkers



**Question 2: The Interplay hit, Loaded, was a violent title which launched with the PlayStation. Aside from some typical video game music, it featured songs from a cult favorite band. Who were they?**

- A. Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam
- B. My Life With the Thrill Kill Cult
- C. Pop Will Eat Itself
- D. KMFDM

**Question 3: True or False: Ocean released a Game Boy cartridge based on Dennis the Menace.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Question 4: Who is Dr. Boskonovitch?**

- A. The end boss of the PSone mech game, Krazy Ivan
- B. An unlockable character in Tekken 3
- C. The man who created FF VII's Cait Sith
- D. A Harvard doctor who deemed video games "unsafe for children of any age"

**Question 5: Nintendo's peripheral R.O.B. was more about enticing retail stores into carrying the NES than it was about being a cool gaming device. How many games were actually released that support the robot?**

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4



**Question 6: The vastly underrated Herzog Zwei, an early strategy game for the Sega Genesis, has something special about its name – besides being hard to say. What was it?**

- A. It's Latin for "over head"
- B. It was the sound Sega of America's vice president was said to make when he sneezed
- C. It's an anagram for "Ego Whizzer"
- D. Sonic creator Yu Suzuki did almost all development single-handedly

**Question 7: In Final Fantasy for the NES, your first big task is to go to the Temple of Fiends, by order of the king. Who is the boss you find and fight there?**

- A. Astos
- B. Dracghoul
- C. Dread Pirate Motoya
- D. Garland

**Question 8: The Doom series received many ports onto various systems. However, one company put out a Doom for Nintendo 64 that featured all-new levels, redone models, and tons of graphical touch-ups. Who published this game?**

- A. Acclaim
- B. Interplay
- C. Infogrames
- D. Midway



**Question 9: What NFL coach lent his name to the outrageously unrealistic football game, Pigskin Footbrawl?**

- A. Jerry Glanville
- B. Bill Parcells
- C. Mike Ditka
- D. Dan Reeves

**Question 10: In the Nintendo GameCube launch title, Luigi's Mansion, Mario's brother uses a vacuum to suck up ghostly spirits. What is this device's name?**

- A. Ecto Plunger XL
- B. Focal Extraterrestrial Antiquated Repossesser (FEAR)
- C. Ghost Guzzler
- D. Poltergeist 3000

MIZUGUCHI QUILTS SEGA



Tetsuya Mizuguchi, famed creator of both **Space Channel 5** and **Rez**, has announced his departure from **Sega** – where he has worked for 14 years. Mizuguchi plans to freelance in the industry while he sets up his own as-yet-unnamed gaming company. "I never felt confident enough to be independent until now," he said. But I had the time and opportunity to think about [it] and I felt, yes, this is the time."

There is speculation that Mizuguchi's decision was prompted by the disbanding of **United Game Artists** in an internal reorganization by the company, although he and its members were absorbed by Sega's other development studios. Whatever the reason, we eagerly await the return of Mizuguchi's unique vision. "I want to do many things, but games are still my home ground. I will continue producing games. I want to make games that are international, innovative, and sensational."

VIDEO GAMES CAN HELP OVERCOME PHOBIC FEARS

Researchers in a Quebec university have started a study that uses video games to help people with certain phobias. Using a PC and a head-mounted display, the group found that even a low-end PC can effectively simulate reality to the point where people with phobias can get significantly nervous. Besides being cruel and unusual punishment for these patients, the researchers found that this fact can be a useful tool to help those suffering from phobias. By gradually spending more time on the PC and the video game's presentation of virtual fears, patients can begin to feel more comfortable about being scared of heights, for example. The group used **Half-Life** and its spider-laden environments for arachnophobics, and **Unreal Tournament** for both acrophobics (fear of heights) and claustrophobics (small spaces).

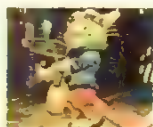
BREAKDOWN

- 33%** The amount by which the demand for action and family games has increased from last year, according to software sales charter NPG TRST
- 62%** of the voice commands Jeremy gave to his SOCOM II teammates were followed by a frustrated curse word. Syntax error, buddy
- 400%** The amount by which GameCube sales picked up once it went to \$99, according to the company
- 80%** The size that the PS2 chip has been shrunk since 1999
- 14%** The increase of Adrian Zmed sightings in the office

Score & Rank



0-1 Chubby Cherub



2-3 Blinx



4-5 Raiden



6-7 Starmen



8-9 Samus



10 Auron



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# It's fun. In a don't mess with me kind of way.

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Be Broly,<sup>™</sup> the Legendary Super Saiyan. Or be Cell,<sup>™</sup> Frieza,<sup>™</sup> Buu,<sup>™</sup> or any of 11 other Dragon Ball Z<sup>™</sup> warriors. Fight alone or play against friends in versus mode. If you've got a favorite character, you've got a fight.

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## NEW TENCHU: LADIES' NIGHT OUT

The newest *Tenchu*, debuted at the recent Tokyo Game Show, features two heroines who are more than dressed to kill. Besides the return of *Wrath of Heaven's* Ayame, *Tenchu Kurenai* will introduce Rin. The game is again being developed by K2 and published by Activision, and it also sees From Software lending a hand into its creation. *Kurenai* will not only feature a supporting cast of numerous other characters, but will highlight a new instant-kill system.

In other *Tenchu* news, Activision and TMO Software have announced a mobile phone version of *Wrath of Heaven*. This edition of the stealthy warrior will capture both locations and characters that fans have come to love from the PlayStation 2 version, and it will appear before the end of the year.



## THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM CONTINUES

It's cool to be a superhero again. Irrational Game's *Freedom Force vs. the Third Reich* continues to redefine classic comic book heroes and villains on the PC come this spring. A follow-up to the last year's title, *Third Reich*

features notable improvements including a revised graphics engine, a whole new cast of characters, and an overhauled combat system.

In a nod to the Golden Age of comics from the 1940s, this league of heroes has to travel back in time to defeat Nazi-sympathizer Blitzkrieg and his evil henchmen in a heavily stylized real-time action/strategy romp.



## DATA FILE

► **LucasArts** president **Steven Joffe** unexpectedly quit his position with the company; his successor has been named at the time of this writing. Games released under Joffe include *Star Wars: Rogue Leader* and *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, among many others.

► If you wanted to spend the holidays with the super-spy **Blitzkrieg**, then you'll have to wait. **Activision's** *Alias* game has been delayed until March for quality reasons. Please have a message at the box.

► **Interplay** has announced a distribution agreement with **Vivendi Universal Games**, and is seeking money from the publisher. However, Interplay doesn't expect the situation to delay the early 2004 releases of *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance 2* and *Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel*.

► Double the pain, but you didn't hate the driving portions of **Starky & Hutch** enough, now you can take your chances with the on-foot gameplay that's being unveiled in **Empire Interactive's** officially announced sequel.

► **Tim Hawkins** is back. The ex-**Electronic Arts** founder and **3DO** CEO unveiled **Digital Chocolate**. No, it's not what you think (what ever that is); the company will devote itself to mobile gaming.

► Work has begun by **Via Entertainment** on **State of Emergency 2: Rookstar Games**, who published the first one. It's not going to be putting this one out, so **Via** is now shopping the title around.

► The **Ultimate Games Expo** has decided to delay its inaugural event until August 20-22 of 2004. The show will take place at the **Los Angeles Convention Center**, and it's a way for the general gaming public (unlike **E3**) to get their hands on upcoming titles and compete in competitions. For more on the **Ultimate Games Expo**, head to [ugexpo.com](http://ugexpo.com).

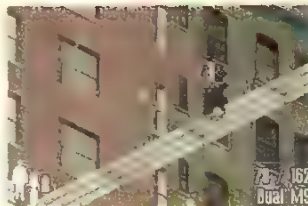
► **Narrow Six: The Athens Sword** has been delayed until early 2004 by **Ubisoft**. The company cited fan concerns for the bump. It's good to stand up, and be heard once and a while.

► **Crime** author **Robert Crais** is suing **Activision**, claiming that *True Crime: Streets of LA's* lead character **Nick Kang** too closely resembles his creation **Elvis Cole**. Crais has used Elvis in nine novels, including *LA Requiem* and *Five Fall*.

Name That Game Answer

## MURDER IS THE MAX PAYNE GAME ON GBA

Did *Max Payne 2* leave you craving more? Well, whip out your **Game Boy Advance** for some more vengeance, because **Rockstar Games** (courtesy of developers **Mobius** and **Remedy Entertainment**) is bringing *Max Payne* to the handheld in early December. Don't worry - this little devil still packs some heat. Whether it's the 12 levels, 10 weapons, or the fact that there's **Bullet Time**, Max has lost none of his punch. The game even includes graphic novel cutscenes and over 30 minutes of voiceovers to give you the full experience. And yes, it's M-rated, kids.

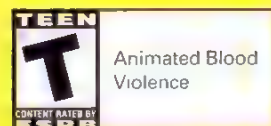


# Some run and hide. Some stand and fight. Which are you?

ATARI



Dragon Ball Z™: Budokai™ is now on Nintendo GameCube™, with exclusively enhanced game graphics. Play as any of 23 characters for awesome multiplayer brawls, from the Saiyan Saga through the Cell Games. If you've got a favorite character, you've got a fight.



PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE

# CALL OF DUTY

OF

# FINEST HOUR



FOR LOVE AND

## ★★★THE BACKDROP★★★

**B**ack in 1998, the DreamWorks Interactive office was abuzz with speculation about its upcoming PSone project, *Small Soldiers*. It seemed to have all the right pieces for a hit: ties to an upcoming theatrical release and a team dying to put together a triple-A product. On the other side of the office, another close-knit crew was quietly working on a different project. The game? *Medal of Honor*.

As it turns out, DreamWorks may have been a little off on which title it thought was destined for greatness, since one can barely be remembered and the other went on to sell millions of copies worldwide. It did so well that, three short months after the game released, Electronic Arts purchased DreamWorks Interactive (in February of 2000). But what you may not know is that this was just the beginning of the sordid tale of Spark Unlimited, a new development house that has more than a few ties to this renowned World War II series and its proud new owner.

To truly understand where Spark Unlimited comes from, you have to look back at the history of its team members. In the announcement where Activision proudly touts its three-game deal with Spark (which starts with *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*), it also drops the line that 28 members of the development team worked on the *Medal of Honor* franchise for both the console and PC. (Members of Spark quote a higher number in the lower thirties.)

The chief operating officer of Spark Unlimited and producer of *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*, Scott Langteau, is just one of many who worked on the first *Medal of Honor*. Langteau was the associate producer on the original, and producer for all of the other console titles during his tenure with DreamWorks/Electronic Arts, including the follow-ups *Underground* and *Frontline*. But he was not the only one; names like Adrian Jones, Sunil Thankamushy, David Prout, Eric Church, Ike Macoco, Johnathan Gregerson, Matt Hall and many other employees of Spark can be found sprinkled throughout the credits of all the console *Medal of Honor* games. The company also managed to land Michael Giacchino, who has won countless awards for his orchestrated *Medal of Honor* soundtracks. While he isn't an official employee for Spark, he has committed to work with the team on the *Call of Duty* franchise. »

# HONOR

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (MULTIPLAYER TBA) ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SPARK UNLIMITED ■ **RELEASE** 2ND HALF 2004



Aachen is one of the most important cities in Europe. It is an urban labyrinth engaging a task that is not only embedded in the city, the American soldiers are forced to show their skills as the troops can flank the enemy. However, since the city was so old and featured some amazing stone standard, the walls would be very hard to break off the buildings. To rectify the situation, the U.S. brought in the M12 Gun Motor Carriage, a 155mm cannon to bring down the buildings. Using this weapon at such short range was not only effective, it was downright scary. So scary, in fact, the Germans commented that the U.S. be subject to a war crimes trial afterwards since they used the weapons in such close quarters.



Now comes the big question: How can all these team members who were once a part of Electronic Arts all be out on their own? We're sure that this is a question that EA asks itself every day. It's not an unusual event to see individual key employees move from company to company. It happens all the time, and is just part of the video game industry. But to see entire teams, or large portions of them, move on at the same time is quite unusual – especially when you consider that employees of 2015, the developer behind various PC versions of the Medal of Honor series, also left en masse to start their own company. In 2015's particular case, it was to start Infinity Ward, which just completed Call of Duty on PC (also for Activision – starting to see a pattern?).

One would think it was an intended event, but Langteau promises otherwise. "There was no orchestration of a coup," explains Langteau. "No nefarious planning. There was a sense that people wanted to move on to other parts of their lives and their jobs."

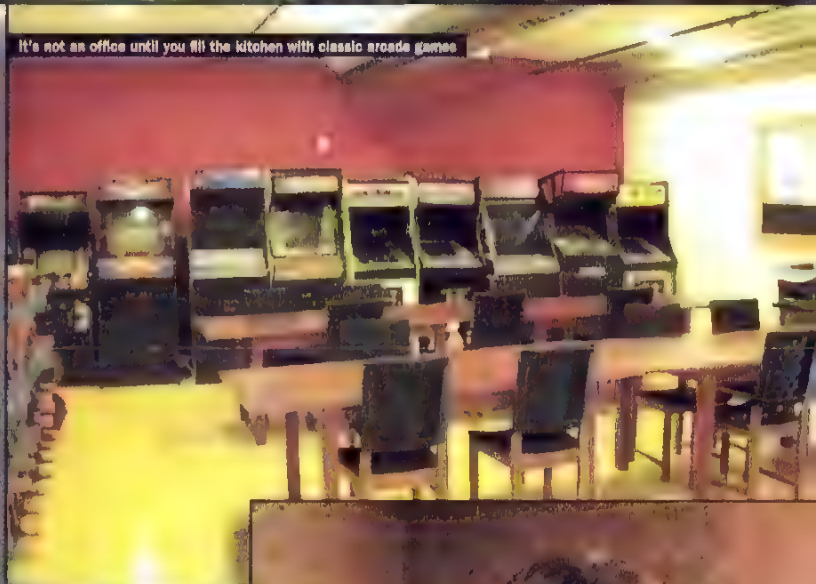
"Many of us left our previous employment before we even had a deal. Dave [Prout] and I and Adrian [Jones] were gone and were talking about if [running our own company was] even possible. None of us had ever started a business before. David [even bought] *Business Plans for Dummies* off of Amazon."

The piece that finally made it all happen was when Michael Giacchino hooked the group up with Craig Allen, who worked for Hensen Interactive at the time.

"Craig is the business guy. Craig knows everyone," Scott iterates. "He is the leader of this company. Craig really believed that if people were serious that they wanted to start their own company, and just wanted to move on to something else that there was a market out there for a group of this caliber."

The exodus from Electronic Arts was not without its problems, however. In fact, EA lawyers sued the group, accusing Spark Unlimited of misappropriating Medal of Honor assets including documents and code. The suit was ultimately settled out of court with Spark Unlimited denying any wrongdoing, but you can guess how these two companies feel about each other even if neither side is talking.

In the end, Spark Unlimited got what it wanted. A return, at least in spirit, to the glory days back at DreamWorks Interactive where Steven Spielberg had made a place that the artists felt at home. This simple statement from Scott sums it all up nicely: "We wanted to create a place where the people who create game content have the best avenue by where they can get their amazing work into the game. From day one that has been one of our goals. In the past, it was difficult getting those things through the pipeline and into the game the way we wanted it. Now we can."



Scott Langteau, COO of Spark Unlimited and producer of Call of Duty: Finest Hour

## ★★★★THE SETUP★★★★

**Y**ou can feel the family atmosphere pulsing through Spark Unlimited's brand spanking new offices, and the energy it creates is being pumped into Call of Duty: Finest Hour. The creation process, especially for a war game of this caliber, is quite intense, and Spark Unlimited was kind enough to share some of its secrets with us.

The game itself was born on August 5th, 2002. That's when the arduous task of picking historic events and shaping them into compelling game content began. In Spark's case, this meant not only relying on its previous knowledge acquired from five years spent producing some of the greatest World War titles ever made, but looking for guidance from real-life military consultants like Hank Kelsey (a retired Army Colonel who served in the 82nd Airborne Division in the Gulf War) -- who can advise Spark on how the game compares to real-life warfare.

But that's just the beginning of the research that the team will do in its quest to recreate the gritty perils of war. One of the most crucial aspects "is collecting good art assets," according to environment artist Stephen Ratter.

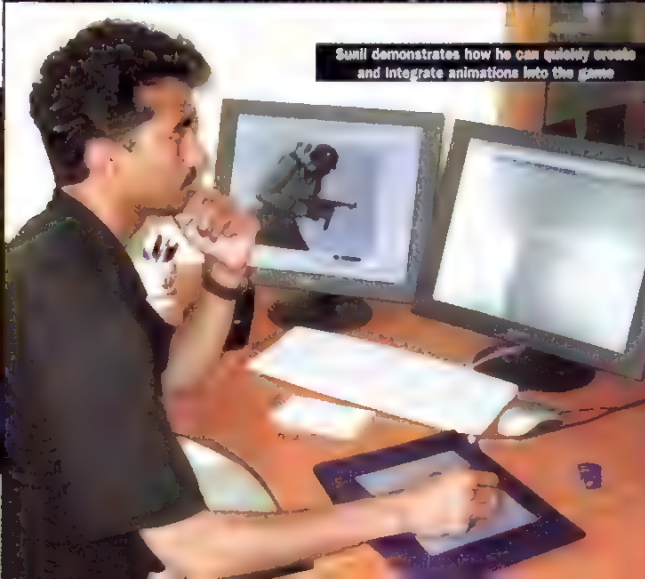
For a three-week period from September to October, he and Jerry Kowalczyk traveled to six different countries taking photos of dilapidated buildings and bullet holes all across Europe and Russia. Not only did this lead to some amazing travel stories, this data was crucial for creating the architecture and general feel of the cities and battles in Finest Hour.

The pursuit of realism doesn't end there, either. Scott Eaton, weapon modeler/artist, does extensive research into each of the game's 25 plus weapons. Reading books and examining technical manuals is just the beginning. Getting out in the field, talking to experts, taking photos, and actually firing the weapons is the real secret. This is not only important to show the correct way to hold a weapon, but how it operates. Eaton also notes that this research is especially important in "recreating each weapon's personality, from which way it pulls to how the weapon flashes when fired." As if that wasn't enough to think about already, hand movement when the weapon is reloaded is key to capturing the spirit of these all but extinct instruments of war.

During these visits to classic weapon specialists, Jack Grillo, the lead sound designer, also worked on capturing the intonation of each weapon. During a recent six-day expedition, the team spent hours firing rounds into melons, cans, planks, and even slabs of meat to grab the most genuine sound effects for bullets hitting flesh, wood, and metal possible. >>



Lead sound designer Jack Grillo at an outdoor sound stage between weapon recordings



Sunil demonstrates how he can quickly create and integrate animations into the game



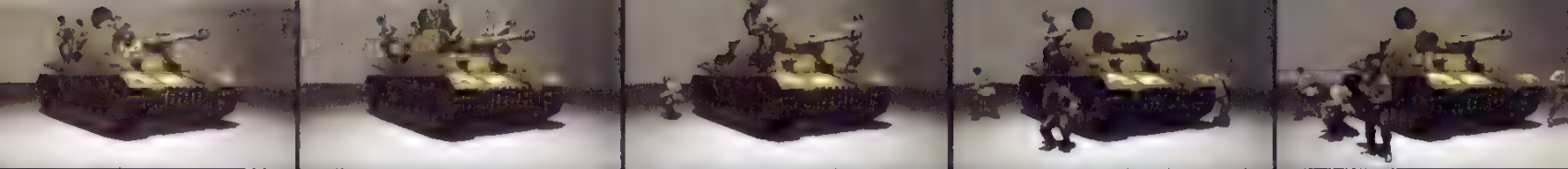
The team will fire weapons at night (like this MG42) so they can capture lighting effects



Real weapons are thoroughly photographed and then fired to recreate them in Call of Duty: Finest Hour



Yes, it's true. Melons were indeed hurt during the creation of this game



Here is an example of the animation before it's placed in game

As silly as this sounds, consulting war reenactors is also highly beneficial to the team, as they supply a variety of uniforms, sounds, and battlefield tactics the team can use to flesh out the game. In fact, the backdrop track of distant war that gives WW II titles that eerie feeling of being there are often just loops of samples taken from reenactments (with explosions added for good measure).

After all of the data is collected, the process of piecing it together begins. While art, programming, and design are certainly important elements to any game, one element in Call of Duty: Finest Hour that may be more important than any other is the animation. Certainly, gameplay always takes precedent, but Spark's animation director Sunil Thankamushy would lead you to believe otherwise.

After he and lead animator Kevin Scharff took the conversation above the level that any mere mortal would understand, slinging phrases like, "scripted

packets, alert postures, and frame management," they finally got down to the nitty-gritty of what makes Call of Duty tick. To recreate the amazing scenes that lead the player through the tragedy and triumphs of war, creating realistic and believable performances by the onscreen actors is absolutely essential. The secret to crafting these performances is to orchestrate seamless transitions from gameplay AI into scripted events, and back again.

Using proprietary tools created at Spark, the team is able to give and take both full and partial animations from characters onscreen without interfering with the overall artificial intelligence or gameplay. This allows them to move data in and out as you progress through a level so that each event, from crumbling buildings to diving Stukas, can be animated with such authenticity that the player will experience shell shock for weeks. By de-coupling the animations and giving the art team the power to import and export them into the game, Sunil is confident Call of Duty will "have more animations that any console FPS." Soldiers will have personality, and show the emotion that is needed to make the experience as compelling and involved as possible.

It's a tall order to be sure, but one that Spark Unlimited should be able to handle easily. In the time we spent with

the team, it was obvious that their credo of "empowering the people that make it all happen" was more than just a slogan. Adrian Jones, the chief technical officer, put it bluntly when he said that the main focus of his job was to "stay out of the way."

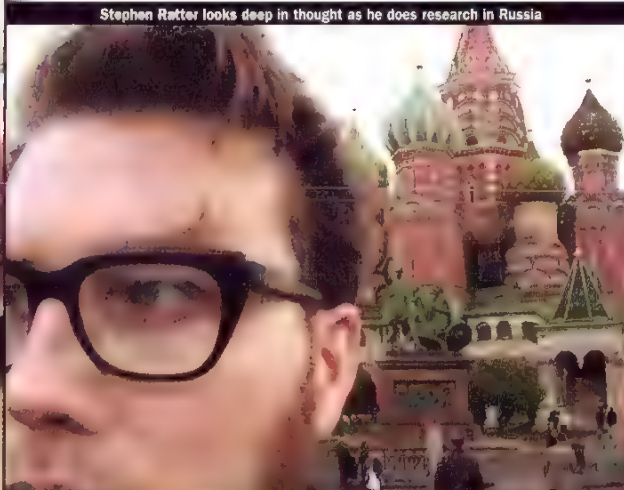
"If you had talent like that working for you, would you want to stop them from doing everything they are capable of doing?" And what they are doing is impressive.



Eric Church shows off some of the Finest Hour's amazing concept art



Stephen Ratter looks deep in thought as he does research in Russia



Reenactors are used to capture proper uniform attire. The team pays so much attention to detail that even the boots are photographed to include in the character models



Concept art and storyboards are crucial to the game-creation process





## ★★★THE PAYOFF★★★

As you would expect, Call of Duty: Finest Hour takes historical reference from World War II events which occurred between 1942 and 1945. You can get a glimpse of what Finest Hour will feel like from playing the Call Of Duty title currently available on PC, but Langteau is quick to point out that "they are different experiences."

Certainly, the games do have some common ground. For example, Finest Hour will also feature the war from three fronts. As you progress through the game's 12 different environments across its three acts, you will play as key members from the American, Russian, and British armies. However, the console product covers different portions of the war, with the Stalingrad location being the one common ground.

"Stalingrad is such a great setting, and so many good stories took place here," claims lead game designer Eric Church. "We just had to have that part in our game."

That's not the only thing that the products share. "The similarity is showing the reality of war – that no one man, no one army, no one nation won the war. It was the collective effort," explains Thaine Lyman, senior producer for Activision, who oversees both products.

While both titles are certainly gritty, the console version is most definitely heading in a different direction. Creating compelling first-person shooters is something this team has "always done really well, and we are going to do that incredibly well here," comments Langteau.

"What we haven't done before is pay attention to individual characters in such a way that the player gets to experience what it was like, for example, to be an African American tanker or a female Russian sniper."

"Centering in on the personal experiences and having them be more human [is critical to the success of Finest Hour]." In fact, the player will get a chance to experience the game from seven different vantage points as they progress through it. In an interesting twist, Finest Hour is often going to let you meet yourself before you head out to continue the battle from that viewpoint. >>

The environments of the game itself are vastly improved over games such as Medal of Honor. Not only are they quite large, they also feature some impressive architecture. At one point in the demo we saw, we were able to view the entire burning city of Stalingrad from our vantage point high in the city skyline >



You can use very basic squad tactic commands to order your fellow soldiers to breach and clear rooms >



The in-game structures are absolutely breathtaking



Peepers pound the city as you roll into Stalingrad in your Russian T-34 tank.





Each blast of your cannon is accompanied by a thunderous BOOM! The sound effects are phenomenal!



The team will attempt to save enough horsepower to fill the levels with smoke, snow, and blowing sand to further envelop the player in the experience



Like the PC version, Finest Hour will feature the ability to go prone to avoid enemy fire. For those that haven't experienced the PC edition, this feature gives the game a real sense of danger, as sticking your head out is most certainly a good way to get it blown off



After you drive your tank through the front door, it's time to take out the enemy on foot

For example, the game starts off with the player filling the role of a raw Russian recruit. But, during your experiences at Stalingrad, you will meet and help Tanya snipe her way through an army of Nazis. Soon thereafter, you take on Tanya's persona and travel back to her homeland, which has been ravaged by the German war machine. Not only does this give the player a feeling of camaraderie with the various characters in the game, it also lends drama to the story – giving the player reasons to keep playing. You aren't just killing Nazis, you are avenging the deaths of all those lost in your hometown.

One of the more interesting roles you get to play is the 761st Black Panther tank division, the first African-American Armored Unit. Not only is it great to see this lesser-known group in action and get its due for the amazing heroics it displayed in the war, you also get a chance to play the game controlling vehicles. A complete list of those that will be at your disposal throughout the game hasn't been revealed yet, but we did learn that you get to drive both tanks and armored cars, as well as ride on and fight against a wide variety of other vehicles.

Currently, when driving tanks the player experiences it from a first-person perspective, but the team is contemplating adding a third-person view. Either way, the game will definitely feature the ability to stop driving and pop up into the machine gun nest and unleash hot lead on infantry that you can't quite get a bead on with the large primary cannon.

Besides the vehicles, another major addition Finest Hour brings to the console series is the ability to control what Spark currently terms as "buddies." Basically, the buddy system enables the player to issue commands with a simple press of a single button and the AI will do the rest. Sometimes it will be to instruct fellow soldiers to breach and clear a room, other times it will issue a command to tanks fighting by your side. The team even hinted that you might be able to issue commands to attack dogs, just to give the game some variety.

Last but not least, Call of Duty: Finest Hour will feature multiplayer. Langteau is quick to point out that "it's a recent decision to add multiplayer," and that "it's now in the design phase." But we couldn't be more excited about the opportunity to take the vehicles online and blast away in multiplayer. While no specifics were given as to what extras or modes would be included, the team did state that they would customize environments specifically to maximize the experience.

As for the single-player game, all we can say is that we were more than impressed. While the title is coming to all three console platforms, the PS2 is the lead SKU – but don't let that fool you into thinking the experience will suffer for it.

Here are some excerpts from the level we saw: The first thing you want to do is imagine Giacchino's amazing soundtrack driving you on, as Grillo's sound effects pound your ears with bullets, explosions, shouts,

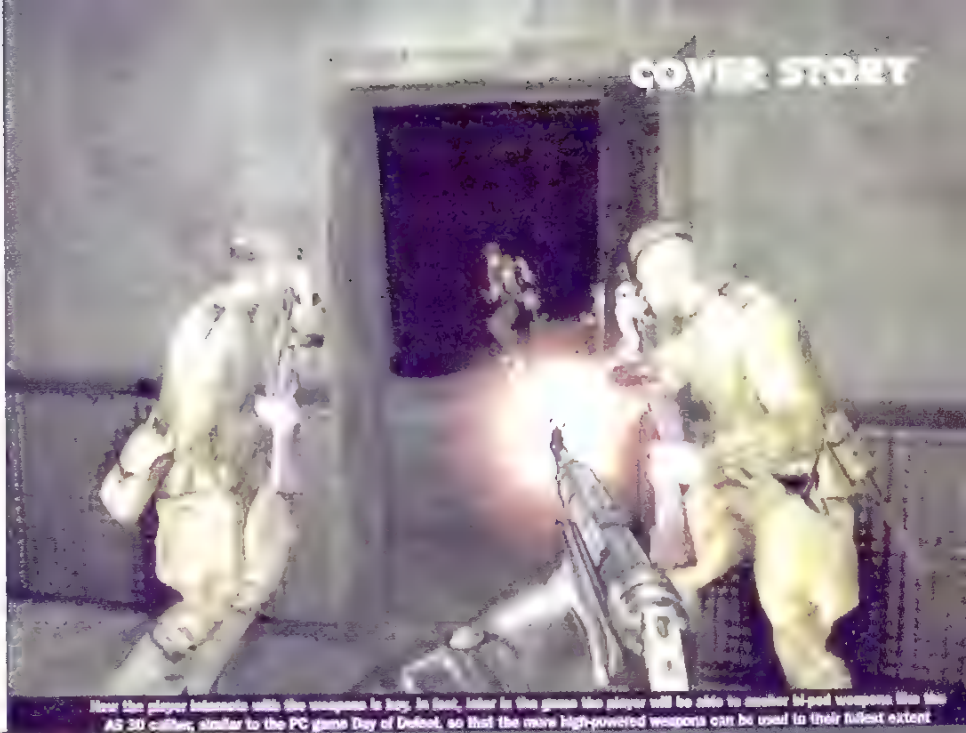
Unfortunately, you can't just hop out of the tank whenever you want, but you can hop up to the machine gun roost



and planes coming at you from all directions. You are manning a T-34 Russian tank. Trees fall to your power like snapping twigs as you roll into Red Square with troops coming at you from all sides. A statue of Lenin collapses as planes bomb you from above, making strafing run after run. You unleash the power of your tank on a nearby gun emplacement and the entire building (thanks to Sunil's amazing scripting) crumbles like it was made with playing cards. Next, you run a gauntlet of death and destruction as you work your way up and down the streets of the city, facing German tanks and literally hundreds of troops.

Towards the end of the level, you finally plunge your T-34 through the face of a building and then blast the balconies out from under the feet of the Nazis waiting within. Out of the tank and finally facing the foe on foot, you and your fellow soldiers begin the arduous task of cleaning out the building room by room. At the touch of a button your "buddies" breach and clear a room, and in time you make your way to the back of the building where you meet your contact. But all is not as it seems, as the walls around you crumble and Nazis set the screen ablaze with a flurry of bullets. You vanquish the foe and soon find yourself on the roof looking out across the burning city of Stalingrad.

It's hard to put it all into words, but there is little doubt that the team at Spark Unlimited was indeed a driving force behind the success of Medal of Honor, and has transferred its amazing talents to Call of Duty: Finest Hour. The quality of this game proves that. It's an affront to EA and this developer loves it. They say heroes rise out of adversity; if that is indeed the case, then this is Spark Unlimited's finest hour.



COVER STORY

Now the player interacts with the weapons in play. In fact, later in the game the player will be able to make 3D-printed weapons like the AS 30 caliber, similar to the PC game Day of Defeat, so that the more high-powered weapons can be used in their fullest extent.



Scripted events like tumbling statues and crumbling buildings unfold at an amazing pace.



In the final game, tanks will fill the streets, soldiers will be scrambling through the crossfire, and the sky will be filled with Stukas diving in and out of the battle.



SEASON MODE, CHECK.

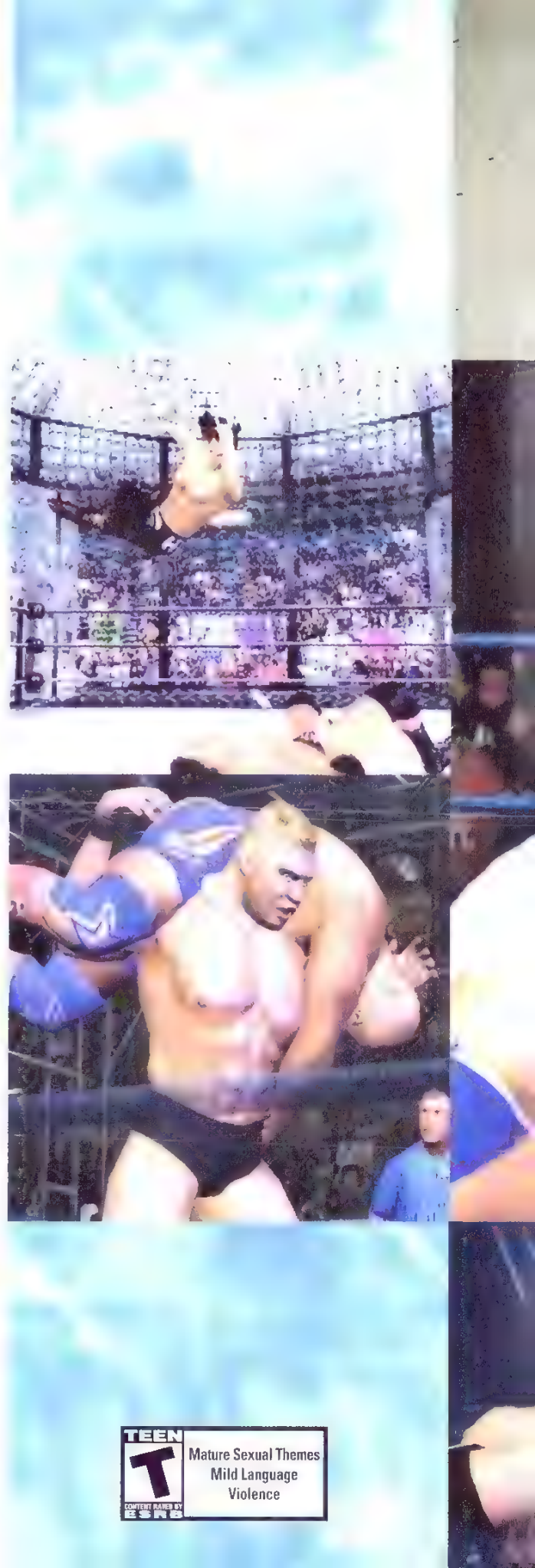
LEGENDS, CHECK.

ELIMINATION CHAMBER, CHECK.

BRA & PANTY MATCH, HELL YEAH.



PlayStation 2





# SAM FISHER



## OPENING PANDORA'S BOX

- **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE
- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA ONLINE/GC TBD)
- **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL
- **RELEASE** MARCH 1

# THIRD DEC


 Tom Clancy's

# SPLINTER CELL

## PANDORA TOMORROW

When Tom Clancy's *Splinter Cell* crept out of the shadows a year and a half ago, the gaming world changed forever. Armed with an intelligent techno-thriller plot and visuals like nothing ever seen before, *Splinter Cell* raised the stealth/action genre into the limelight and made über-cool secret agent Sam Fisher an instant video game icon. Hits on this scale tend to suffer from the dreaded "sophomore slump" when the sequel fails to make a similar impact, but developer Ubisoft Montreal is determined not to let that happen with *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*. Its game plan? Find ways to improve on a nearly perfect game and take the stealth/action genre to a place it has never been before – online.

**T**he original *Splinter Cell* garnered extensive praise for three primary reasons: the story, the visuals, and Sam himself.

Like most Tom Clancy properties, the plot was a dark, realistic tale of intrigue and deception. Specifically, *Splinter Cell* deals with corruption in the former Soviet republic of Georgia and the disappearance of a CIA agent. While the game takes place in the near future, it is firmly grounded in reality. "The *Splinter Cell* universe is a darkened mirror reflection of our own world," says scriptwriter JT Petty. To ensure the realism of the story, Ubisoft even sent Petty on a tour of the real National Security Agency to view actual NSA agents at work. At the start of *Splinter Cell*, retired agent Sam Fisher is recruited into Third Echelon, a (fictional) division of the NSA devoted to espionage and infiltration.

Details on the plot of *Pandora Tomorrow* are still classified, but a few specifics have managed to leak out of Ubisoft's heavy security. "Pandora Tomorrow is more of a 'big idea' type of game. It's a simpler plot with a richer story,"

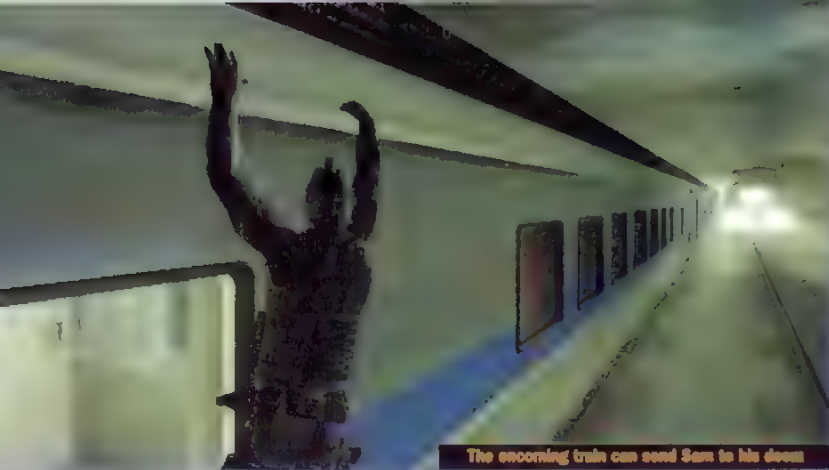
says Petty. "It has a few really strong concepts behind it. There's more dramatic potential."

Set in 2006, the sequel builds on the consequences of Sam's Georgian mission and sees him encountering a new threat: an Indonesian guerilla leader named Suhadi Sadono. Sadono leads his rebels against the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia, and promises terrorist attacks each time America attempts to move against him. This "insurance policy" leaves the U.S. military powerless against the charismatic leader, and Sam is sent in to remove him from power. The phrase "Pandora Tomorrow" figures into Sadono's evil plot, but exactly how is still a closely guarded secret. When crafting this story, Petty examined the tense geopolitical climate of our world carefully and made sure it remained truthful to the current political reality.

Sam's main weapon against his enemies has always been stealth; thanks to a brilliantly designed real-time lighting engine, Sam seamlessly merges with shadows to effectively disappear. While *Splinter Cell* looked stunning on PlayStation 2 and GameCube, the original Xbox version was easily the most

amazing. Thanks to improvements in graphical technology, *Pandora Tomorrow* will look nearly identical on every system. Not only will the sequel utilize light and shadows in the same brilliant manner as the original, but it will also offer many sights heretofore unseen in the *Splinter Cell* universe – but more on that later.

The final component of *Splinter Cell*'s popularity is the protagonist himself, Sam Fisher. Graying and surly with a somewhat off-kilter sense of humor, Sam is not the standard Hollywood spy, nor is he a typical video game hero. Of course, his atypical appeal is what struck a chord with gamers. While somewhat reserved most of the time, Petty has no problem boasting about how Sam Fisher is the most multifaceted, realistic video game character ever. In *Pandora Tomorrow*, Sam's personality and motivations will be explored in greater depth. "He's even more cynical, but he's also more passionate about the fact that he has to get the job done," says Petty. "It's like the way the world changes, the old soldier in the changing world. His quest becomes more important, but also more difficult to justify."



The oncoming train can send Sam to his doom



There are now more civilians to interact with



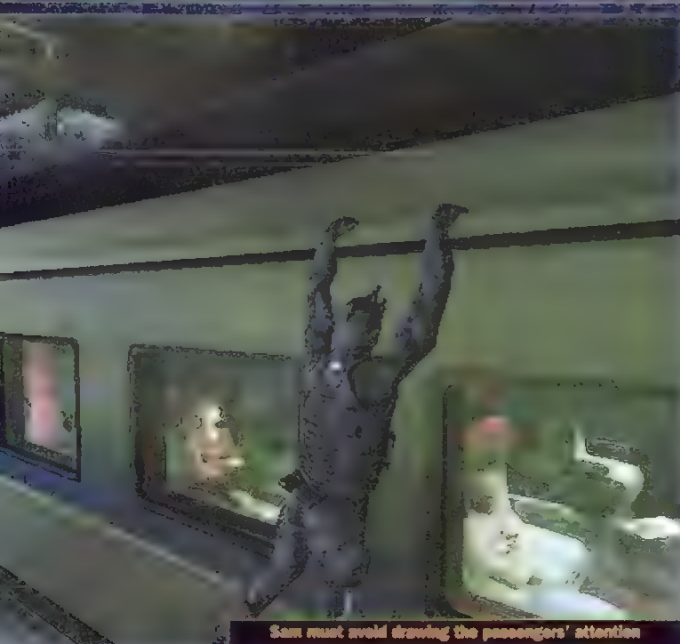
Sam has several ways to get to the front of this train...



...sneaking through the cars is just one...



...crawling underneath is another



Sam must avoid drawing the passengers' attention

**A**

lthough Splinter Cell was met with much critical acclaim (and the sales to match), both gamers and developers agreed there was room for improvement. One area that frustrated players to no end was the somewhat imprecise aiming. While Pandora Tomorrow's associate producer Julian Gerighty insists that shooting was intentionally inaccurate to add realism, a laser sight has been attached to Sam's gun to improve aim. Of course, enemy AI has improved (guards in the original title were not exactly tactical geniuses), so the new sight has a downside: as soon as one guard spots the red dot of your laser, they'll realize they are under attack. Based on how many times you alert them, they will adopt increasingly aggressive behavior. Alert a guard once, and he'll become agitated and look around nervously. Twice, he'll run back to base and put on a flak jacket. Tip him off three times,

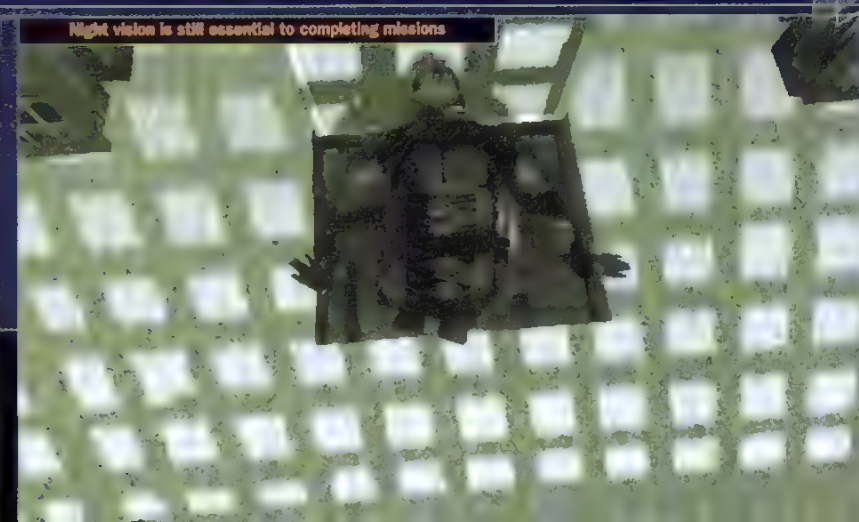
and he and his friends will don Kevlar helmets and relentlessly hunt you down.

Of course, Sam will have all of his familiar tricks at his disposal to combat his new, smarter enemies. The ever-popular split jump is back, and thanks to levels created specifically around Sam's move set, it will come into play more often. He'll also sport a new "half-split jump," where he braces himself against one wall and supports himself against the other with an outstretched leg. In this position, he can shift his weight from one leg to the other in order to reach a convenient window or ledge. Other new moves include the SWAT turn (a crouching spin to quickly cross open doors) and improved climbing skills. Sam can now jump between scaleable surfaces and seamlessly transition between vertical and horizontal objects.

Of course, half the fun of new moves is experimenting with them in different ways. Unlike the original game, which was fairly



The split jump will now be used more often



Night vision is still essential to completing missions





The grass can conceal invisible land mines

linear and offered few choices of how to complete a level, Pandora Tomorrow will feature multiple paths through each stage. The various paths are designed to accommodate different play styles and encourage experimentation. In one of the two stages presented to us, Sam was charged with the task of making it from the rear of a moving train to the front. Aggressive players can choose to go from car to car through the train, although either passengers or terrorists could become aware to his presence. While the passengers will alert the terrorists to Sam's location, the mercenaries feel no gratitude and do not think twice about using the helpful civilians as hostages or human shields.

To avoid detection, Sam can climb alongside the outside of the train, but this route has its own unique challenges. Sam must not cross windows while under an overhead light in order to avoid frightening passengers, and even has to keep an eye out for trains speeding down the opposite track, lest he get

knocked off. The final path is underneath the train; here Sam is safe from detection, but flying sparks and heavy vibrations will make it a struggle to reach his destination. Of course, if the strain of this route is too much for him, Sam can insert his fiber-optic cable through a floor grate to see if it's safe to crawl inside.

The other environment we witnessed is equally exciting – a dense Asian jungle. Wearing a dark green uniform, Sam uses vegetation for cover, rather than shadows. Even in the (very) early version shown, the tall grass and bushes easily rivaled the graphical beauty of the shadows the series is known for. Of course, the underbrush offers Sam both protection and danger; concealed randomly in the foliage are landmines detectable only through the controller's vibration function. While these new tricks and elements are certainly exciting, they definitely can't compare with Pandora Tomorrow's most revolutionary feature: the first ever online, multiplayer stealth/action experience.

Sam must use his surroundings for cover rather than shadows



As astounding as these images are, they will be even more impressive in the final version



## FEATURE



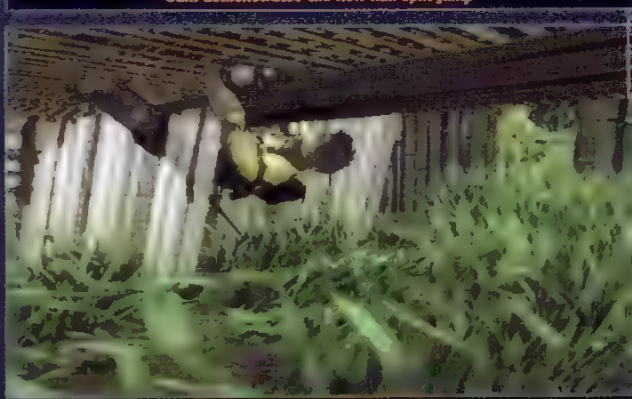
Pandora Tomorrow features more varied locations than the original



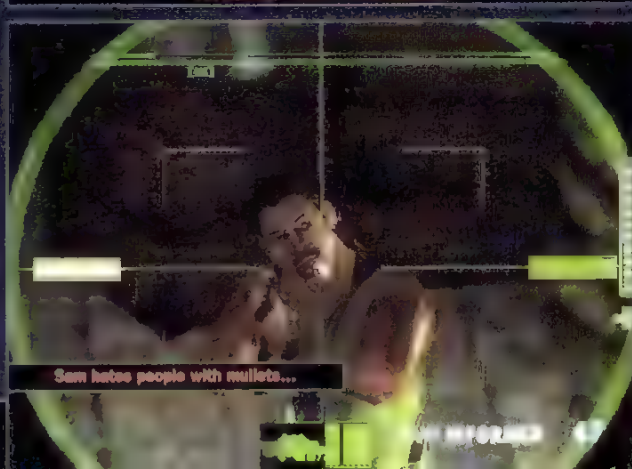
Here, Sam turns the tide in the company paintball game



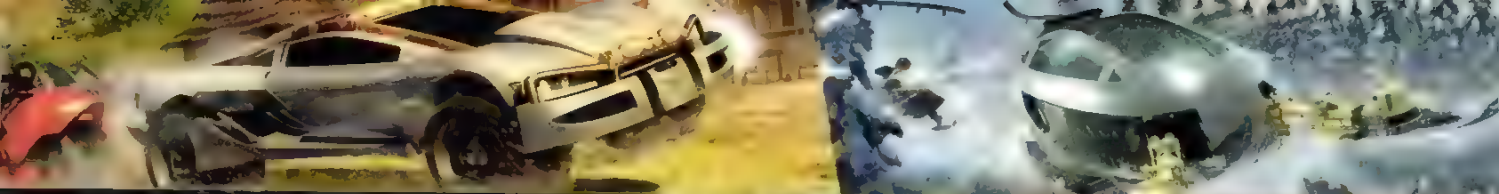
Sam demonstrates the new half-split jump



The lighting engine is still amazing



Sam hates people with mallets...



# SPY HUNTER 2

THE HUNT BEGINS AGAIN



PlayStation 2



MIDWAY

RATING PENDING

RP

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information

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## Vanessa Carlton

- ◆ Three-time Grammy-nominated A&M Recording Artist **Vanessa Carlton** performs "Dark Carnival."
- ◆ Exclusively written and recorded for *SpyHunter' 2*, the videogame.
- ◆ "Dark Carnival," vocal and instrumental version included in *SpyHunter' 2*.
- ◆ Game DVD Content also includes "Dark Carnival" performed live by Vanessa Carlton and an interview with **Vanessa Carlton**.
- ◆ *SpyHunter' 2* - Available November 21 for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Xbox video game system.



*SpyHunter' 2*  
Sneak Preview:  
[www.spyhunter2.midway.com](http://www.spyhunter2.midway.com)

◆  
for more information on Vanessa Carlton,  
check out [www.vanessacarlton.com](http://www.vanessacarlton.com)

**SPYHUNTER**  
**2**

MIDWAY



*"With huge levels, branching paths and different styles of gameplay, this isn't a half-assed sequel. It's a kicked-out and expanded new chapter of a burgeoning series."*

*- IGN*

# SPY HUNTER 2

THE HUNT BEGINS AGAIN

Coming November 21, 2003

The hunt begins at [spyhunter2.midway.com](http://spyhunter2.midway.com)



SHIFT INTO  
SOMETHING  
MORE LETHAL



Take control of the all-new and fully loaded Q-8155 Interceptor. Transform into new vehicles such as a sleek snowmobile and off-road 4x4.



Engage both new and old foes as you track through more than 15 dangerous missions across four new regions including Russia and the Swiss Alps.

Challenge the leaders of Neotra in all-new and-level boss battles with advanced new weaponry and the introduction of 11 cinematic boss fights.



Violence



PlayStation 2





The online spies are known as the Shadow Nets, and their actions help Sam achieve his goals.



Just like Sam Fisher, the Shadow Nets must move quietly or they will be heard



Mercs must check all shadows carefully in order to survive

## SNEAKING ONLINE

**A**lthough online play is quickly becoming a mandatory feature of action games, the multiplayer mode in Pandora Tomorrow is no tacked-on afterthought. The online component is specifically designed to expand upon the Splinter Cell universe. Since no secret agent can take on an army alone, the online game exists parallel to the single-player one. The agents in multiplayer represent field agents – the spies who take care of certain objectives to make Sam's mission easier.

In their quest to bring the stealth action genre online, the Ubisoft developers quickly realized that spies vs. spies simply wouldn't work. "I was asked to think of the ultimate stealth experience," said Gunther Galipot, a tall, black-clad Frenchman serving as Pandora's Tomorrow's creative director. "For me, 'ultimate' meant getting rid of the AI, getting rid of NPCs – only human players. If we wanted to have only human players, if you had two teams using the same tools, it would spoil the gameplay. What is important in stealth gameplay is that you can hide, and someone is searching for you. So, if you are using the same tools, such as night vision or thermal vision, there is no use in hiding, because everyone can see you. Then it turns into a shooting game, which was not what we wanted."

To prevent this from happening, Ubisoft settled on a simple cat-and-mouse formula. One team plays as spies, the other takes the role of mercenaries. Each team has a completely separate, yet balanced set of moves and tools. While Sam himself is not playable in multiplayer, the spies have the same move set and control. The mercenaries, on the other hand, function like characters from a different Tom Clancy franchise, Rainbow Six. Like those games, the mercenaries utilize the first-person perspective and rely on heavy weapons rather than stealth.

Playing as the mercs will by no means feel like a typical FPS title. Thanks to the singular combination of gameplay elements we witnessed, Pandora Tomorrow's online mode plays like nothing we

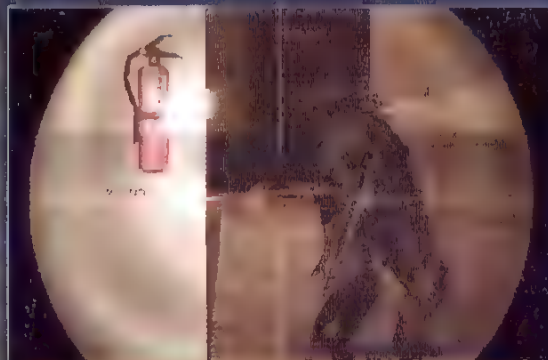
have ever seen before. "We wanted to reproduce the senses as much as possible to increase immersion. It's very hard for a player to locate a sound in a 3D environment, so we added arrows to the aiming reticule that point to where a sound is coming from," proudly explained Galipot as he demonstrated multiplayer in action.

The scenario he presented for us required two spies to break into a facility guarded by two mercs. "Everybody should feel the threat evenly. Each type of character should feel safe in certain areas. Spies feel comfortable in dark, narrow places or vertical places. The other ones feel comfortable in wide open, bright, and horizontal places," said Galipot.

Each team used creative tactics to devastate and confuse the other. The spies jumped on the heads of their enemies, causing them to black out momentarily, used electroshock devices to scramble the HUD on their high-tech goggles, and even used fire extinguishers to flash-freeze their lenses! One spy even approached an unsuspecting merc and grabbed him from behind, causing the player to lose control over his character.

The mercs, of course, had impressive tools of their own. The masks they wore were equipped with a variety of technology, such as a map, motion sensors, and even a mode which allowed them to see the electromagnetic impulses generated by the objects and people around them. They were also armed with assault rifles and motion-sensitive mines to ensure the spies would have their work cut out for them. If anything, the mercs seemed a little more powerful than the spies, but Galipot assured us they were equally balanced.

The original Splinter Cell set the bar for the stealth/action genre that many games have unsuccessfully attempted to top. Pandora Tomorrow looks like it will raise the bar even higher, and establish the blueprint for online stealth gameplay. With so much to offer, Pandora Tomorrow is certainly looking like one of the most exciting titles of 2004, and we expect it will quietly slink its way into millions of gamers' homes. Much like Sam himself, we cannot wait to go out on this new mission.



While being held by a spy, the player controlling the merc is helpless.



Both Sam and the Shadow Nets can hang from a pipe and shoot



The mercs have headlamps to spot spies in the darkness

# INTERVIEW WITH JT PETTY

You may have never heard of JT Petty, but he lives the life you want. Although not even 30, he has already made a name for himself in two of the coolest industries on Earth: film and video games. As an NYU film student, his movie *Soft for Digging* was accepted into the prestigious Sundance Film Festival and led to other directing work such as the third *Mimic* movie (*Mimic: Sentinel*) for Dimension Film. As the writer of *Splinter Cell*, its sequel, and a handful of other games, JT has brought video game storytelling to a new level. He's also just a plain cool guy, and was gracious enough to sit down with us to discuss movies, games, and government agencies.

Can you talk about your background and tell us how you got into video games?

I went to film school, and I got out and worked as a production assistant for a couple years while I was trying to finish the last film I'd made in school. I needed a day job. Ubisoft was advertising for a receptionist through NYU, so I went with resume in hand to the office. So I walked into the office for that, and they had a pile for screenwriter and a pile for receptionist. So, I threw it on the screenwriter pile, because I obviously was more interested in that.

Had Ubisoft seen your movie before hiring you? [The company hired me] largely [because of] the prose samples and the series of interviews. One of the game designers from Montreal came down and sat in the room with me, and he was like, "Okay, we'll do some role-playing. You're in a haunted house with a sword, a magic sword, and you're surrounded by goblins. What do you do?" And I was like, "I'd...uh...I'd use the sword to kill the goblins." And he'd go "Very good." We had weird conversations like that. The first game I wrote was *Batman Vengeance*, and then *Tarzan Untamed*; then I went up to Montreal, and *Splinter Cell* was the first big project I worked on.

How does writing a game differ from writing a movie?

In a game, you have to have a clear goal for the person playing it at all times. There has to be a puzzle that's being solved or a goal that's being achieved, or something that the player knows they're moving towards. For *Batman*, that meant always having a mystery, something you had to uncover. For *Splinter Cell*, that translates to mission objectives. A lot of what that meant for me is figuring out how to couch a story and a series of goals, which is almost a much older form of storytelling. I mean, if you go back to the stories of King Arthur, it's always about some form of quest.

One of the gross differences is just the amount that you have to write. There's just hundreds and hundreds of pages of dialogue and then you have to create the universe and create everything. It's

a really satisfyingly large document you come up with, but it is a whole lot of writing.

Did you create the scenarios for the online component as well?

Yeah. Well, they won't be nearly as scripted as the offline game, because it has to be replayable. If there's scripted events in the online game, like "I left my badge in the trailer car," it would drive people crazy. So, I basically set goals that are almost more like objectives than stories, and those objectives are key to the story of the offline game.

How was Sam Fisher created?

The whole process works best when it goes in two directions. With *Splinter Cell*, we said we wanted to make a third-person stealth game within the Tom Clancy universe. So I put together a whole bunch of different ideas and brought those to the game designers. Then we'd choose a direction to go, then the game designers would talk about it with me.

Was there a particular inspiration for the character?

A lot of him probably came from Dashiell Hammett books and Raymond Chandler stuff. That sort of personality. We did take a lot of time thinking about how we could make the most licensable character. It's sort of a crass thing to say, but we had to ask what makes a character last. What makes a really sympathetic character? I was reading a lot of Dashiell Hammett books at the time. Looking back at those heroes, the only thing that Phillip Marlowe or any of those people were any good at was getting beaten up. They would persevere through anything, and I liked that about them. I liked the idea of Fisher being an older soldier who had gone through a lot and was only special in the fact that he hadn't been killed yet.

What can you tell us about the new story?

It begins with a hostage crisis in Indonesia, where a guerilla group has taken a U.S. embassy hostage, and the NSA sends in Fisher because they are concerned about information inside the embassy that would be dangerous for the guerilla group to get their hands on. So again, it's about

the NSA; it's about information; it's about information security. But it's sort of couched inside of this hostage crisis setup.

You went to the real NSA for research. How close to reality is the NSA shown in *Splinter Cell*?

What they let me see was nothing. I was not inside the real NSA. I was inside the National Cryptographic Museum. My impression that I got of the NSA is that it's a bureaucracy that looks like an office building. But they were also describing an NSA to me that was from 1985. The ways they were talking about sifting through information was looking through dot matrix printouts. I just can't imagine that's how they do things anymore. And they said to me, "We don't release anything to the public until it's obsolete." So, they told me basically that they were lying to me. It's probably not as dark or as filled with flashing lights as you see in *Third Echelon*.

So you didn't see any guys in black costumes slinking through the shadows to get coffee?

[Laughs] No. But how mysterious the NSA is to most people is a big part of why we chose them. Nobody really knows what is going on with them. Nobody even knows how many people work for them. A lot of what is known about it is not officially acknowledged. *Echelon* is a good example. Anytime I would ask them about it, their hackles would get up and they'd say "We don't talk about that."

Would you like to be involved in a *Splinter Cell* movie?

I'd love to. I'd like to write and direct it.

Who would you like to see in it?

I love Ed Harris. Ed Harris in *The Abyss* days would have been great. But Ed Harris now could still pull it off. I think it would be great to see him as Sam. Somebody like him with that very calculated kind of physical presence.

So, with all of your video game and movie work, do you feel like you've got the coolest life imaginable, or are you just holed up in front of the computer all the time?

[Laughs] A little from column A, a little from column B!

**"SIMPLY GORGEOUS."**

GAME INFORMER MAGAZINE



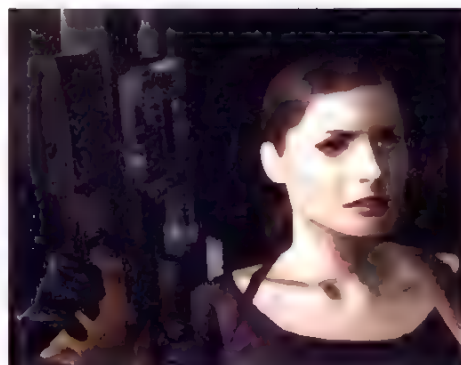
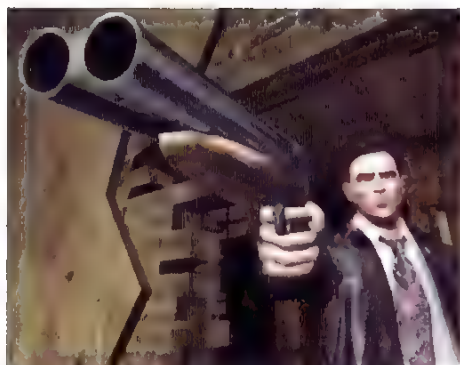
Intense Violence  
Strong Language  
Blood  
Mature Sexual Themes



# MAX PAYNE™ 2

## THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

### A FILM NOIR LOVE STORY



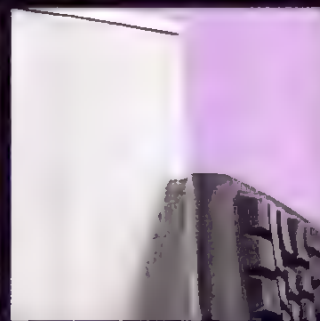
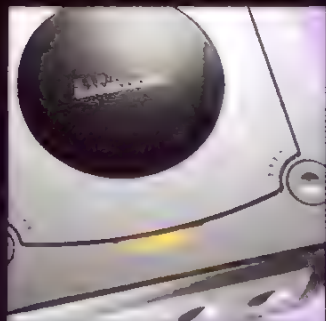
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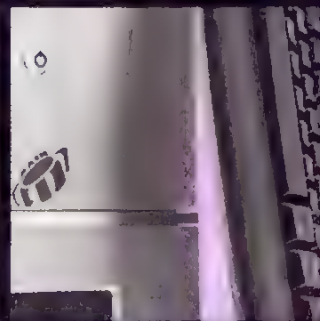
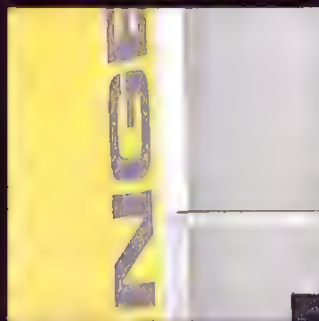


PlayStation®2





# holiday buying



# guide 2003



**W**hether you're looking for that perfect gift for a special someone or are writing up your own wish list for Saint Nick, Game Informer has scoured the far reaches of globe to compile the ultimate holiday gift guide. From new-age foods that only gamers could appreciate to the most expensive TVs that money can buy, we have every walk of gaming life covered. What do you buy for a grandson who has a Game Boy Advance? Is there clothing available for Viewtiful Joe fans?

By the time you finishing reading this feature, you should be able to complete your holiday shopping/list-making in no time flat. Our good friend Holiday Sam was even nice enough to include a tear-out checklist. Thanks, Sam! Without further ado, let your greed take over and shop until you drop!

Illustration by [unreadable] and [unreadable]. Art by [unreadable]. Images by [unreadable].

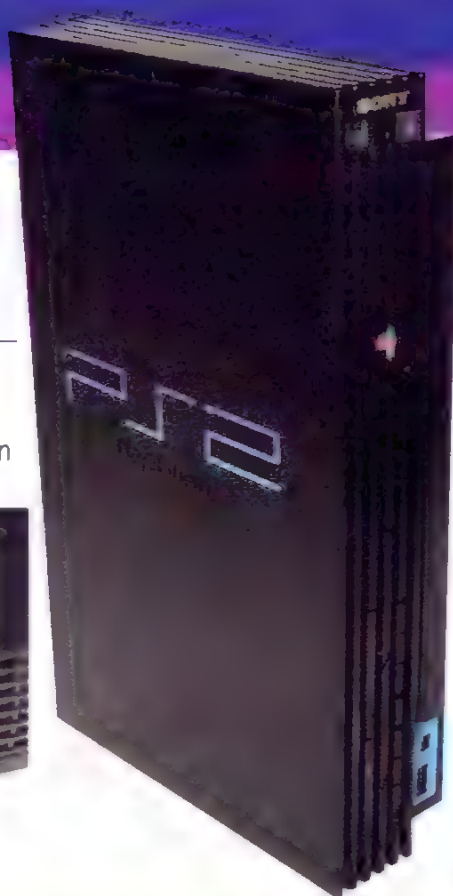
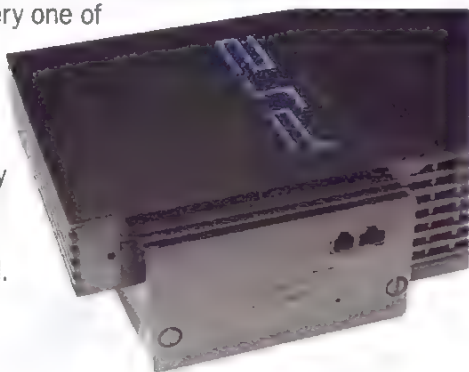


# PlayStation 2

## PlayStation 2 With Network Adaptor

\$199.99

The PlayStation 2 continues to pick up momentum. During the course of this year, its library of must-play games has more than doubled. With a healthy dose of third-party support, exclusive online play in almost every one of EA's illustrious sports games, and mighty sequels like Ratchet & Clank II, Jak II, and SOCOM II coming directly from Sony, this machine has your every playing need completely covered.



### Logitech USB Headset

\$39.99

Even if you already got a headset with SOCOM, we recommend picking up this Logitech alternative for comfort's sake. The package includes three earpad choices (leatherette, velvet, and foam), a noise-canceling microphone, and a 10-foot audio cable. It rules!

(Adam not included)

### Sony DVD Remote Control

\$14.99

As you probably know, the PS2 doubles as a DVD player. To maximize your enjoyment of this, we recommend the Sony DVD Remote Control. It works just like a standard DVD remote and doesn't have any bothersome wires.



## FEATURE

### Stocking Stuffers

#### Memory Card 2 Pack | \$39.99

You can purchase just one memory card, but we recommend picking up the two pack, especially if you're going to be playing sports games. You'll fill up that first card in no time flat!



#### Capcom Comics | Price Varies Per Issue



On a monthly basis, Dreamwave Productions is releasing *Devil May Cry*, *Maximo*, *Mega Man*, *Darkstalkers*, and *Rival Schools* comic books.

#### Shower Shock Caffeinated Soap \$6.99 a bar

As the name so aptly implies, this soap contains caffeine. Each four-ounce bar contains 12 servings with 200 milligrams of caffeine. Why drink it when you can absorb the stuff through your skin!



#### Soul Calibur II Action Figures | \$7.99



These action figures rock! The bases even link together to form a massive diorama. Nightmare's big sword is also perfect for opening bags of chips.

### EyeToy | \$49.99

Have you ever wanted to become part of a game? Well, now you can. The EyeToy is an innovative digital camera that projects the player onto the TV screen and allows them to compete in a handful of wildly entertaining minigames. You can also record video messages! It's a lot like that top secret device in *Willy Wonka*, except you don't die from using it.



### EyeMax | \$14.99

The EyeMax is the perfect companion to the EyeToy. With it, gamers can upload their EyeToy videos onto their own private webpages and can download friends' movies onto the PS2.



### RetroCON Controller | \$24.99

Having trouble with the newfangled controllers of today? The RetroCON looks and feels like an NES controller, but features all of the functionality of the Dual Shock 2. The RetroCON also features two vibration motors and illuminated buttons.



### PlayStation 2 Console Skins | \$6.99

Tired of your boring black PS2? Liven it up with a console skin. Like Skittles, they're available in a rainbow of colors like blue, white, and metallic silver.



### Maximo Boxers | \$9.99



There's a good chance that the ladies will never see what you have buried beneath your pants, but why not amuse yourself with Maximo's boxers?

### Rockstar Baseball Cap | \$20.00

You've seen the GI crew sporting this awesome flex-fitted cap. Now it's time to get your own. You'll never be cool unless you bear the mark of a rockstar.



### iType 2 Controller

\$39.99



If you're playing *EverQuest Adventures* or plan on picking up *Final Fantasy XI* in the coming months, Nyko's iType 2 controller or Logitech's Netplay controller are absolute necessities. Gone are the days of juggling separate controllers and keyboards. These little devices handle both functions admirably. The question is, do you want a keyboard that is easy to type on (the Netplay), or a controller that feels natural (the iType 2)?

### Logitech Netplay Controller

\$69.99



### Bikini Bottom Control Pad

\$19.99

Are you ready, kids? I can't hear you.... Oh! Who sits in your hand as still as can be? *SpongeBob SquarePants!* Ergonomic and yellow and smiley is he! *SpongeBob SquarePants!* If nautical gaming is something you wish.... *SpongeBob SquarePants!* Then buy this controller or sleep with the fish! *SpongeBob SquarePants!*



**Voodoo Vince Doll**

If you're a fan of the Voodoo Vince game, we're certain that you'd like to get your mitts on this amazing stuffed doll. It stands in at over one foot in height, and was given out specifically for promo purposes. The only way that you'll find one is on the black market.



**Blue Controller S | \$29.99**

Bill's big black box is in dire need of some color. This snappy blue number is the perfect thing to add a splash of brightness to your Xbox's dreary ensemble.



**Halo Warthog Toy | \$14.99**

What a bargain! For one low price, you not only get Halo's infamous Warthog, but a Master Chief figure and two mannes! We can't wait for the hours of fun we'll spend in the sandbox with this puppy!



**Xbox Golfer Style Cap | \$16.95**

Golf is all about the accessories, and video game golf is no exception. With this hat, you're ready for 18 holes of Tiger Woods, and you'll look every bit as fancy as a real-life golf pro. They're just such snazzy dressers!



**The Road Ahead by Bill Gates | \$15.95**

In this thrilling page-turner by the Microsoft founder, Mr. Gates explains his rise to success and predicts where the computer industry is headed next. Xbox fans should be especially fascinated by...hello? Is anybody out there?



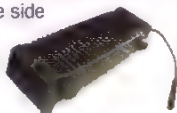
**Xbox Live 12-Month Subscription Card | \$49.99**

If you already have Xbox Live, and want to continue your service, this card will hook you up for another year for just \$49.99.



**Xbox Auto Air Cooler Fan | \$16.99**

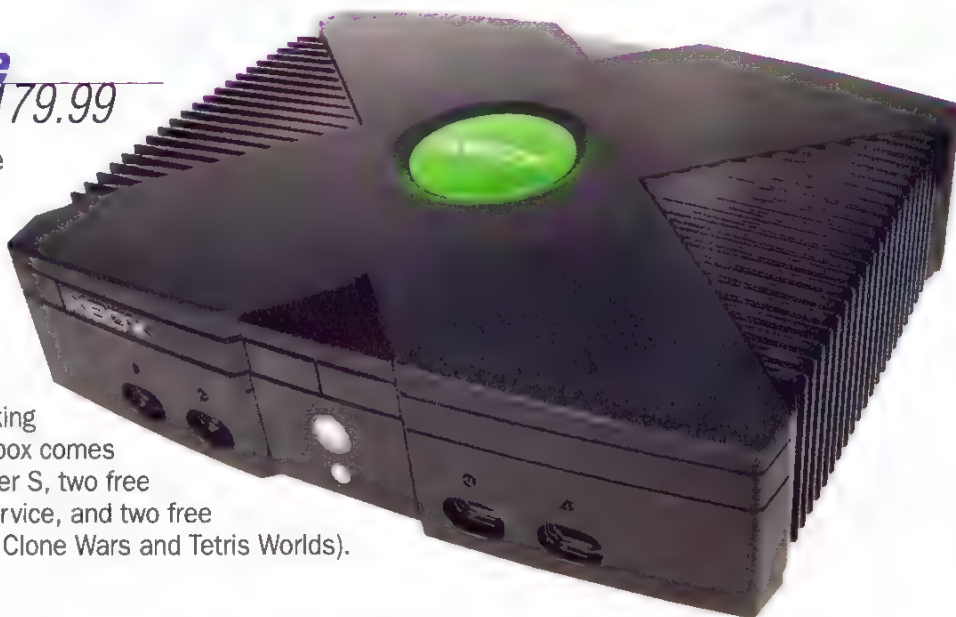
This stylish accessory goes with any Xbox, and prevents overheating and extends the life of your console. Installing in less than five minutes, it attaches to the side of the unit, just like a kicky little purse!



**Xbox Bundle**

\$179.99

Through amazing online support and a handful of fantastic titles, Microsoft really gave the competition a run for its money this year. With Fable and Halo 2 in the pipeline, this console's future is looking incredibly bright. The Xbox comes bundled with a Controller S, two free months of Xbox Live service, and two free games (Star Wars: The Clone Wars and Tetris Worlds).



**System Selector Pro**

\$99.99



If you're playing your video games on a high definition television (which you should if you have an Xbox!), Pelican's System Selector Pro allows you to connect everything at once with component video and optical audio through seven rear inputs. It even lists individual buttons for PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, DVD, and computer.

**Xbox Live Starter Kit Version 3**

\$69.99

Your Xbox already has a broadband adapter built in. To take it online, however, you'll need to pick up the Xbox Live Starter kit. This set has everything you need to get hooked up and comes with the Xbox Communicator headset, a full version of MechAssault, and 12 months of Live service.



**Music Mixer | \$39.99**

Let's get this party started! Music Mixer turns your Xbox into a karaoke machine, a media player, a photo album, and a full-fledged rave. In karaoke, players can sing along with over a dozen different tracks or tap into the digital vocal stripping technology to remove the vox from any CD. Through PC media sharing, you can transfer MP3s and digital photos to your Xbox. You can also hook up to Xbox Live to download new Karaoke tracks, visual effects, and raves.



**Xbox Wireless-G Adapter**

\$129.99

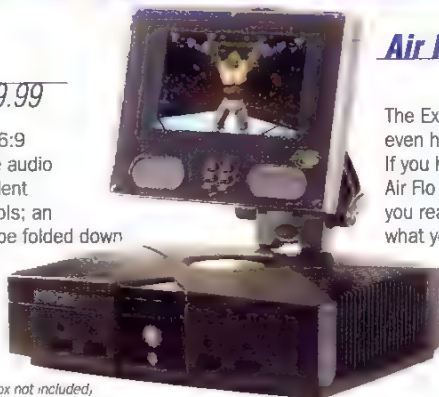
The innovative minds at Microsoft have created a way to connect your Xbox to your 802.11b or 802.11g wireless network. The Wireless-G is a bridge that converts Ethernet signals into wireless ones.



**7.0" Universal LCD Travel Display**

\$199.99

This gargantuan monitor features 16:9 aspect ratio, S-video and composite audio connections; backlighting; independent color, brightness, and volume controls; an embedded sound system; and can be folded down for easy transportation. It's not just exclusive to the Xbox, either. It also works with the PS2 and GameCube! And yes, it locks securely onto all three systems.



(Xbox not included)

**Air Flo EX**

\$24.99

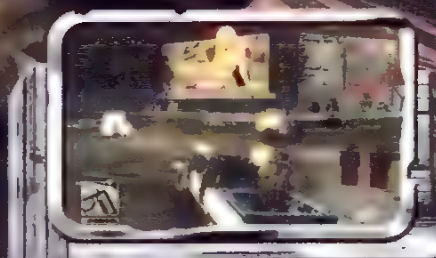
The Ex means that it blows even harder...air, that is. If you haven't used an Air Flo controller yet, you really don't know what you're missing. It

reduces the chances of getting sweaty palms - previously only treatable via Hand-Sum, the palm deodorant by Brut. The rubberized grip is also quite nice.





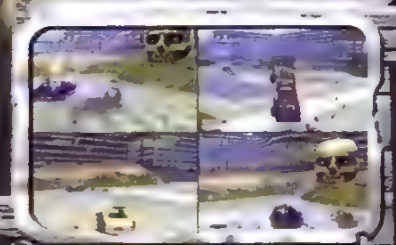
**THE APOCALYPSE WIPED OUT EVERYTHING.  
EXCEPT GANGS, GUNS, CARS  
- AND VENGEANCE.**



Drive to survive through more than 30 chaotic missions.



Control an arsenal of more than 30 vehicles and 17 potent weapons.



Take the ultimate challenge in 2-4 player deathmatch.

*"Twisted Metal: Black meets Grand Theft Auto..."*

- Electronic Gaming Monthly

*"If you're a fan of car combat... this is the only game in town."*

- GameSpy

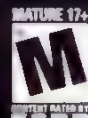
**COMING OCTOBER 2008**

# RoadKill

FIND THE SARNAGE AT ROADKILL.MIDWAY.COM



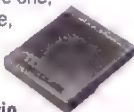
PlayStation 2



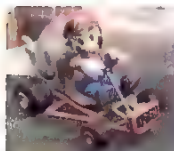
Blood and Gore  
Intense Violence  
Mature Sexual Themes  
Strong Language

**Memory Card 251 | \$19.95**

Featuring four times the memory of the Memory Card 59 for just an extra five bucks, the sleek 251 is an absolute necessity for GameCube owners. If you don't have one, consider yourself square, and not in a cool Cube way, either!



**Mario Kart Clock Radio | \$39.95**



This Mario radio alarm clock is the perfect way to get your Nintendo-lovin' butt up in the morning.

Who doesn't like waking up next to a mustachioed Italian plumber? We sure do.

**Kirby Right Back At Ya! DVD Box Set | \$29.95**



Everyone's favorite pink thing now has his own show, and this box set collects the first three DVD releases into one delicious, puffy collection. Maybe the show will finally explain what the little guy is made of. We're guessing cotton candy.

**Viewtiful Joe Laser Cel | \$10.00**

Okay, we're obsessed with Viewtiful Joe! If you're a GameCube nut, we



have a feeling that you are as well. This cell is limited to just 1,775 copies, and was given out specifically

as a promo. Again, stores won't have it, but we will sell you ours for \$10,000 if you really want it.

**Nintendo Controller T-Shirt | \$19.99**

This shirt pays homage to the controller that started it all, the original NES pad. Plus, since retro is in right now, you might even look hip wearing it! Probably not, though.



**Viewtiful Joe HMD Shirt**

Could a shirt get much cooler than this? Sure, it would be better if Jennifer

Garner was wearing it with freezing water dousing her. You'll have to excuse us now.



**GameCube \$99**

Holy cow! Is this console cheap or what?! Nintendo's practically giving this system away, which is great news for gamers! For the low sum of \$99, you're one step closer to playing some of the greatest games ever made including Metroid Prime, Animal Crossing, Super Mario Sunshine, and The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker. It comes in Indigo, Jet, and Platinum colors.

**Ultimate Arcade Joystick**

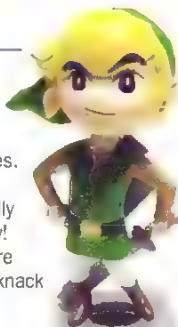
Double \$149.95, Single \$99.95

Playing Soul Calibur II is a completely different experience with these finely sculpted joysticks. The single-player stick fits nicely in your lap, and the double is a great way to make a move on that significant other you've been trying to smooch for the last seven years of your life.



**Link Bobblehead**

This amazingly detailed Link figurine was only given out for promotional purposes, so don't even bother looking for it in stores. It's quickly become the envy of every Nintendo fan. We've actually seen it fetch up to \$100 on Ebay! They're hard to come by, but there really isn't a better knickknack for a Zelda fan.



**Viewtiful Joe Bobbleheads**

\$17.95

For the collector in you, nothing looks better on a shelf than bobblehead figures of you favorite video game stars. The Viewtiful Joe bobbles sell as a set for \$17.95 on Capcom's website.



**FreeLoader | \$19.99**

Have you always wanted to play Japanese games, but didn't have the funds to pick up a Japanese unit? The FreeLoader is an inexpensive solution that allows gamers to play Japanese titles on their U.S. units. You just pop a disc into your Cube and an entirely new selection of games is at your disposal.

**Game Boy Player**

\$49.99

The Game Boy Player takes the squint out of the handheld experience and blows it up on your TV screen. The unit attaches beneath your GameCube and can play all GBA, GBC, and GB titles.



(GameCube and game not included)

**Broadband Adapter | \$34.95**

Phantasy Star is still the only online game for the GameCube, but the Broadband Adapter now has a second function, and it's not a doorstop. Games like Mario Kart: Double Dash, 1080, and Kirby's Air Ride feature LAN play through the Broadband Adapter. Welcome to 1997, Nintendo fans!



Certain death at your  
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 o'clock



**TEEN**  
**T**  
CONTENT RATED BY  
ESRB  
Suggestive Themes  
Violence

**lava studio** **Microsoft**  
game studios

**XBOX LIVE**



Buckle up because *Crimson Skies*® is a deadly ride. Play single player as an air pirate at the helm of a tricked-out 1930s warplane. Because you're fueled by revenge, anyone foolish enough to enter your airspace is an enemy. Play on Xbox Live™ to pick a dogfight with up to 15 friends and strangers. Just remember, as you enjoy sending opponents into a fiery death spiral, someone probably has you in their crosshairs. Good luck, you are cleared to rule the skies.



it's good to play together

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

©2005 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Microsoft Game Studios logo, Crimson Skies, High Road to Havoc, Lava Studio, Xbox, Xbox Live, and Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. Xbox Live services sold separately. The ratings logo is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.

**Game Boy Advance SP  
Charger Kit | \$19.99**

It may look like a semi-retarded wagon, but this handy little device will charge your SP batteries in no time flat. It also doesn't take up a lot of space!



**Super Worm Light  
\$7.99**

For all of you non-SP owners out there (what century is it?), you've met the Worm Light, now meet the

Super Worm Light! It's sleek...it's sexy...the arm can flip down...and the fluorescent bulb is as bright as the sun! Super indeed!

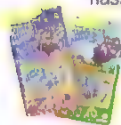
**Roll Cage | \$4.99**

If your nickname is butterfingers, or if you've already replaced your GBA five times due to wear and tear, you may want to purchase this inexpensive protective device.



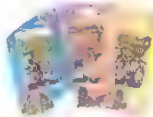
**Super Mario Advance 4 e-Reader  
Cards Series 1 & 2 | \$5.99 a pack**

Activating these cards is a serious hassle as you'll need two Game Boy Advances, a link cable, an e-Reader, a copy of the game, plus the cards. Seeing that you can unlock new levels with the cards makes it worth it, though. Each pack contains 18 cards breaking down into five levels and demos and eight power-ups.



**Animal Crossing Cards  
Series 1-4 | \$2.99 a pack**

Why run errands for the animals in your village when you can get a ton of schweg through the collectible Animal Crossing cards! New to Series 4 are the Classic Game cards which unlock full versions of old NES games!



**Sim City | \$29.99**

Compatible with most Palm OS formats (including the Zodiac), this port of Sim City is incredibly faithful to the original PC title. It looks great and plays just as well. You'll also find Billiards, Atum, Vegas VIP Casino, Backgammon, Checkers, Ricochet, Blackjack, and Shanghai included on the card.



**Game Boy  
Advance SP**

\$99.99

Now with light! The original Game Boy Advance is all but obsolete. The SP features backlighting, 10 hours of continuous play, and a nifty flip top lid that makes the unit fit into your pocket comfortably. It also boasts the largest library of games and some of the greatest titles in recent memory like Metroid Fusion, Super Mario 3, Advance Wars, and Final Fantasy Tactics Advance.



**SongPro Player | \$74.99**

Technology is crazy! The SongPro Player turns your Game Boy Advance into a digital music and multimedia player. It can play MP3 and WMA files, and also makes use of proprietary SPA music and media files so gamers can view album art and lyrics.



**Tapwave Zodiac**

\$299.99

This PDA/gaming hybrid rules the Earth! The Zodiac's operating system is simply incredible, and the power that it pumps into its games is hands down the most impressive out of any handheld gaming device. It's spendy, but worth every penny. Retail shelves will begin selling it in the spring, but if you need it for a present you can order it at tapwave.com.



**Hori GameCube Controller | 2,200 Yen**

Do the ergonomics of this controller look familiar? Without a C stick, this controller isn't compatible with most GameCube titles, but it is ideal for Game Boy Player...especially with SNES ports. Unfortunately, this amazing controller isn't available in the States yet and can only be imported from Japan.



**Game Boy Advance SP  
Pro Gamer's Kit | \$39.99**



(Game Boy Advance SP not included)

You can only purchase this mysterious silver box if you have elevated your SP gaming skills to the pro level. In addition to the shiny aluminum case, this package includes a screen lens, earphone adapter, neck strap, car adapter, screen magnifier, game FM radio, and six game cases.

**Nokia N-Gage**

\$299.99

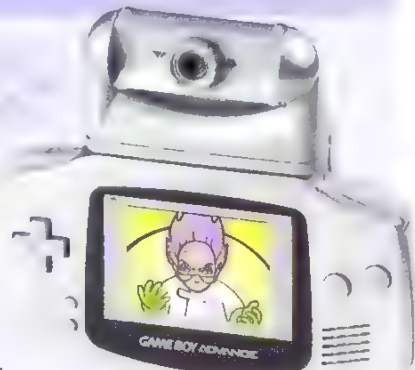
Every kid needs a big clunky cell phone that plays really expensive PSone ports. The Nokia N-Gage has every one of these areas covered. Hot properties like the original Tomb Raider, the first Tony Hawk, and the long-forgotten Pandemonium can each be purchased for roughly \$30 a piece.



**WormCam**

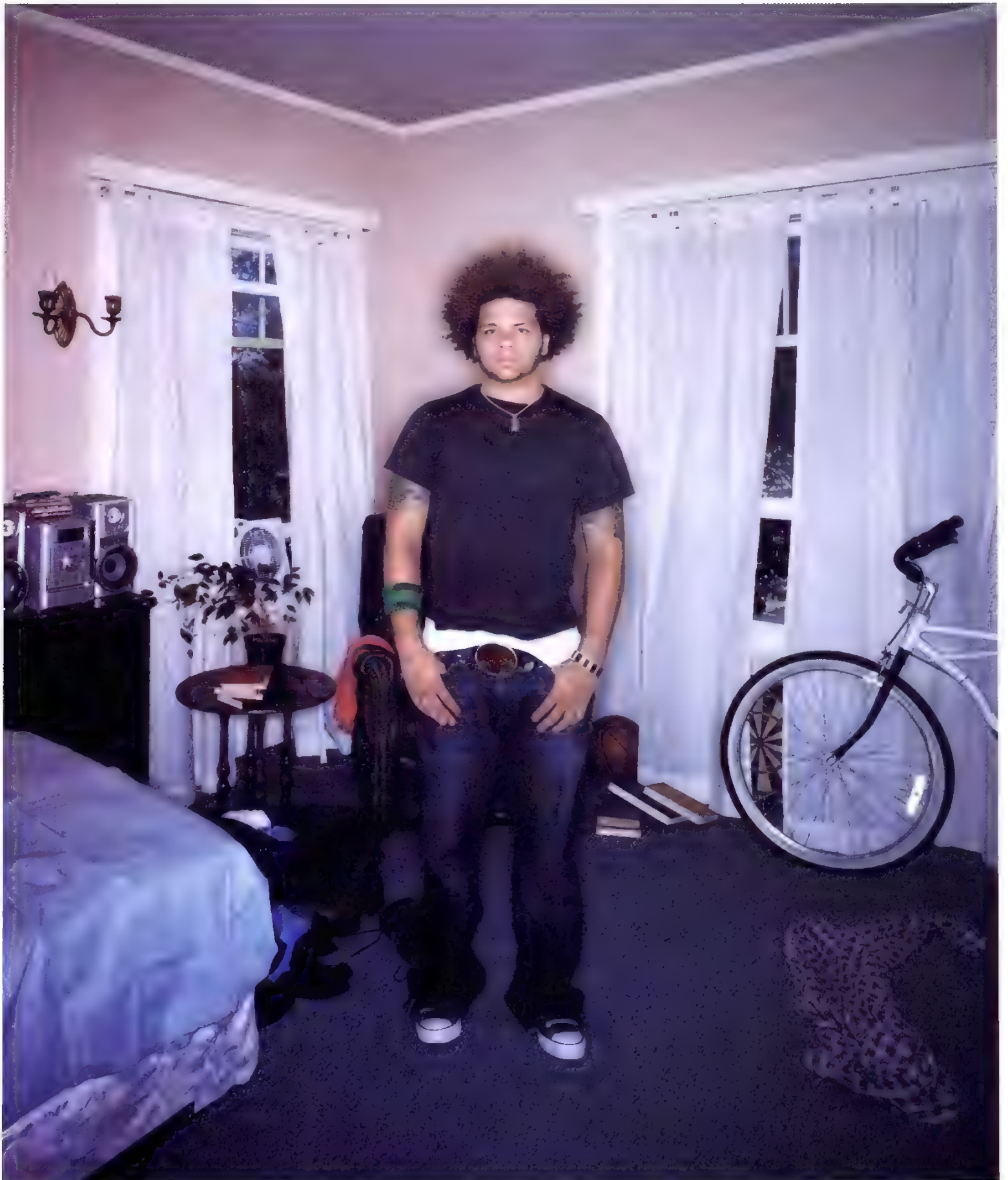
\$19.99

With this handy accessory, you can transform you Game Boy Advance into a digital camera. With the WormCam you can take up to 20 color pictures then view, store, and edit them on your GBA. The lens can rotate 180 degrees and features a removable Bright Sun Filter. You can even switch to SpyCam mode to take unattended motion-detected or time-lapse pictures. You can also upload images to a PC.



(Game Boy Advance not included)





I'm not a diva, but I play one on TV.

## FEATURE

### Stocking Stuffers

### PC



#### w00t! T-shirt | \$17.99

Your time as Dark\_Sith\_Assassin527 doesn't need to end when you go offline. Share your geekiness with the world with this spiffy tee.

#### The Red Swingline Stapler | \$19.99

Don't let Lumberg take this stapler away from you. Let him move your desk down into the storage room before you let him take your stapler.



#### Stuffed Tux | \$8.99

Tux, the official mascot for the geekiest operating system ever, Linux, is now available in this adorable plush version. Just don't let him near your Xbox; he can't be trusted.



#### Marvel Character Grills | \$10.95

Featuring characters like Daredevil, Spider Man, and Wolverine, these licensed fan covers are the perfect way to geek up your computer. For added coolness, add neon backlighting!



#### Gloomy Bear – Instinctive Edition | \$29.95

We're not really sure what this is, but it scares the hell out of us. It would look good on an office desk, though.



#### Dilbert Books | \$10.95

If you're a computer nerd (and let's face it, you are), then you love Dilbert. So why not collect his hilarious hijinks in these convenient paperback volumes? Oh, the malaise of the everyday office drone is so terribly comical.



#### Creative Labs MuVo NX | \$199.99

This tiny device serves as an MP3 player, voice recorder, and portable USB storage device. Say you have a saved game that you want to bring to a LAN party. Save it on your MuVo, head to the party, and listen to tunes while you travel!



## Maingear Hardcore

\$3,406.65 (Without Monitor)

**Processor:** AMD Athlon FX-51

**Graphics Card:** ATI Radeon 9800XT w/256MB of Video

**Cool Extras:** Dual 120GB Seagate Hard drives, Sony DW-U14A DVD+/-RW Drive, Sony 52x24x52x CD-R/RW Drive, Origami Wiring

One of the most smoking gaming machines out there, the Maingear Hardcore astounds on nearly all technical levels. But for the true geek appeal, nothing beats the fact that every Maingear Hardcore machine is coated with Glasurit Paint – the very same paint used by Porsche and Mercedes factories. With careful wording and the magic of self-delusion, you should be able to twist that fact to make yourself sound cool!

#### Civilization: The Boardgame | Eagle Games | \$59.95

In the box:

- 2 rule sets (standard, advanced)
- 784 miniatures
- 78 color Technology & Wonder cards
- Giant gameboard
- Ancient, Medieval, Gunpowder, and Modern eras



#### Age of Mythology: The Boardgame | Eagle Games | \$44.99

In the box:

- 300 miniatures
- 150 wooden resource cubes
- Giant gameboard
- Greek, Egyptian, and Norse cultures



Whether your power goes out or your computer catches a nasty virus, Eagle Games has created a way that PC players can still get their Age of Mythology and Civilization fixes. Both of these boardgames follow the rules of their digital counterparts almost to a tee. Civilization comes packaged with 784 miniatures and 78 color Technology & Wonder cards. Age comes with 300 miniatures and 150 wooden resource cubes.

#### Sharp Actius RD3D Laptop | \$3,299



This revolutionary new computer is capable of generating 3D images that don't require special glasses. Using some kind of crazy computer voodoo that we don't understand, this machine produces holographic images that pop out from the screen. Currently used for technical and medical purposes, gaming applications should utilize the technology within a year.

#### Logitech MX700 Mouse | \$69.95

The ultimate cordless gaming mouse, the Logitech MX700 is as accurate and responsive as a traditional mouse, but without the cumbersome wires. But unlike most other mice, the MX700 won't eat through batteries, as it comes with a docking station for recharging.



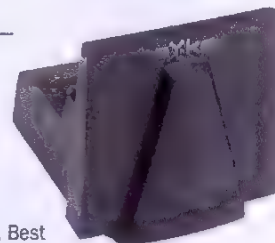
#### Princeton SENergy 751 17.4 in. Monitor | \$722.95



Featuring both analog and digital interfaces, the Princeton SENergy series offer picture adjustment options like no other monitors. Combined with its flat panel and astounding picture quality, the SENergy series stands as some of the best gaming monitors ever.

#### Nyko Wireless Net Extender | \$99.99

Cables are stupid! With Nyko's Wireless Net Extender, you'll think so too. It may look like a bookend, but it's actually a handy little device that allows for wireless connection to the Internet. It features a 100-foot range, an interference-free connection, and matched and code pairs allow for multiple extenders to be used in the same complex. Best of all, the Net Extender is compatible with the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and PC. You can basically use it for everything that goes online!



PlayStation 2



Includes



game disc

+



EyeToy USB camera



Violence

Disco Stars. One of 12 EyeToy: Play games that makes you the star. EyeToy puts you on-screen and its motion-tracking technology puts you in charge, letting your body control the action. Everyone can watch. Anyone can play. And you can be on the TV.

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.  
PLAY IN OURS.

Screen is simulated. EyeToy™: Play Game © 2003 Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. Developed by Lemnos Studios. EyeToy and EyeToy: Play are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the PS Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "Live In Your World, Play In Ours" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc.

**GamingFood**

**Spidey Snacks**

Nothing is more delicious than eating Spider-Man's head!



**Funyuns**

Mmm...styrofoam.

**The Gummi Crunch**

Get yourself a bag of Jalapeno Cheddar Doritos 3Ds, a handful of Black Forest Gummi Bears, combine and enjoy. Your tongue will dance with delight!



**White Castle Hamburgers**

When Lara Croft's latest adventure crushes your soul, eat these to end it all.

**The Fizzlewinkie**

For a truly unique sugar rush, dip a Twinkie in a glass of fresh Coke. This delectable treat actually makes your mouth tingle as you eat it!



**Top 5 DVDs**

**Indiana Jones Trilogy**

This set brings the greatest adventure movies ever to the greatest video format ever. Go get them now, or Short Round will cry.



**Equilibrium**

Forget the endless blah, blah, blahing of the *Matrix* sequels, this is one of the best sci-fi films of all time.



**The Wrong Guy**

This one never made it to theaters, but it's still a must own comedy starring Dave Foley of *Kids in the Hall* infamy.



**Cronos**

The first movie from director Guillermo Del Toro (*Blade II*, *Hellboy*), this unusual twist on a vampire story is a must-have for horror fans.



**The Tick**

While it didn't last long on TV, the live-action version of *The Tick* was sheer genius. It's some of the strangest TV you never saw.



**The Gaming Crib**



**Panasonic 50" Widescreen LCD Rear-Projection HDTV Monitor**

**\$3,299.99**

This is a monster of an LCD screen and it's surprisingly cheap. With Progressive Cinema Scan, digital velocity-modulated scan, and a motion-adaptive 3D comb filter, this TV ensures that every picture is as crisp and colorful as can be. Connections include four component inputs, a DVI interface, and two RGB inputs.



**Samsung 61" Widescreen DLP HDTV**

**\$4,999.99**

Using a revolutionary technology that features 921,600 microscopic mirrors on a panel no larger than a postage stamp, Samsung's DLP HDTV is paving a trail for the future of TV. It can display over 16.7 million color hues, and features a DVI connection and an RGB computer hook-up.

*(Stand not included)*

**Kenwood 6.1-Channel Surround Sound System**

**\$500.00**

This is a really nice, reasonably priced, and extremely noisy surround sound set. The receiver is loaded with 6.1-channel Dolby Digital EX, Dolby Pro Logic II, and 5.1-channel Dolby Digital surround sound processing. The three main channel speakers feature a 2-way, twin 4" woofer design; the matching three surround channel speakers are equipped with a 2-way design; and last but not least, the set includes an 8" subwoofer with a built-in 150-watt amplifier.



**The Barchetta by Acoustic Smart**

**\$2,000**



This leather recliner features full head support, console arms with cup holders, and acoustic material for the best possible sounds. Nothing else will ever make your butt so happy!

**42" XBR Plasma WEGA Flat Panel TV**

**\$8,999.99**

This sexy machine will cost you a fortune and will likely keep you in your house for the remainder of your life. With a floating glass panel design, vibrant colors through the LSI Plasma



*(Stand not included)*

Panel driver, and CineMotion movie technology, this plasma screen is all about bling bling.

**Soda-Club**

**\$79.99**

Why buy your own cola products when you can make your very own with the innovative Soda-Club machine! The SodaMix flavors range from Cola, Diet Cola, and Ginger Ale to exotic blends like Cranberry-Raspberry, Orange-Mango, and Apple-Peach. Each SodaMix bottle makes 12 one-liter bottles.



**Room-Darkening Cellular Shades**

**\$39.99**

Made of special fabric that blocks almost all light from entering the room, these shades will keep that HDTV glare-free for a more enjoyable gaming experience. Also recommended for vampires.



**TiVo Series 2 DVR**

**\$199.99 (40 Hours) \$299.99 (80 Hours)**

Capable of recording up to 80 hours of television broadcasts, TiVo truly is a gamer's best friend. Program TiVo to record all of your favorite shows, and you'll never have to turn off a game to catch an episode of a show. There really is a god and its name is TiVo.





# Xbox

## GAMES

- Crimson Skies
- Dead or Alive 3
- Dead to Rights
- ESPN NBA Basketball
- ESPN NFL Football
- Gladius
- Grand Theft Auto III/Vice City
- Halo
- Madden NFL 2004
- MechAssault
- Midnight Club II
- Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance
- MVP Baseball 2003

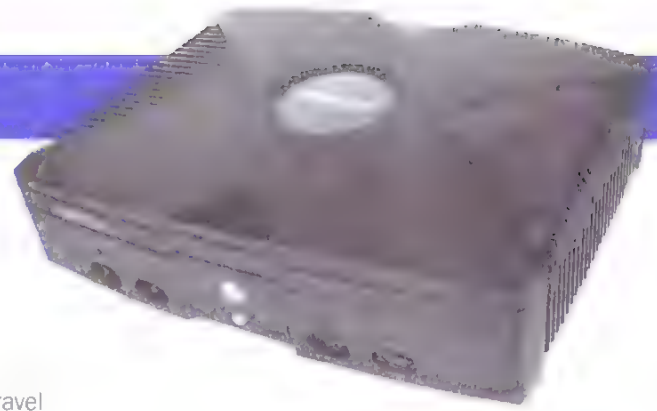
- NHL 2004
- Ninja Gaiden
- Pro Race Driver
- Project Gotham Racing
- Project Gotham Racing 2
- Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War
- Splinter Cell
- SSX 3
- Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
- Tony Hawk's Underground
- Top Spin

## RARITIES

- Aquaman
- Circus Maximus
- Crimson Seas
- Kakuto Chojin
- Steel Battalion

## ACCESSORIES

- 7.0" Universal LCD Travel Display
- Air Flo EX
- Auto Air Cooler Fan
- Controller S Blue
- DVD Remote Kit
- Music Mixer
- System Selector Pro



- Wireless-G Adapter
- Xbox Live Starter Kit 3
- Xbox Live 12-Month Subscription Card

## FILL IN YOUR OWN

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# Game Boy Advance/SP

## GAMES

- Advance Wars
- Advance Wars 2
- Breath of Fire 2
- Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow
- Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance

- Dodge Ball Advance
- Donkey Kong Country
- Double Dragon Advance
- Final Fantasy Tactics Advance
- Fire Emblem
- Fire Pro Wrestling 2
- Golden Sun
- Kirby: Nightmare in Dreamland
- Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past/4 Swords
- Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga

- Mario Kart: Super Circuit
- Metroid Fusion
- Rock 'n Roll Racing
- Street Fighter Alpha 3
- Super Mario Advance: Super Mario Bros. 2
- Super Mario Advance 2: Super Mario World
- Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island
- Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3
- Sword of Mana
- Wario Ware, Inc.

## RARITIES

- Breath of Fire
- Dokapon
- Klonoa: Empire of Dreams
- Planet of the Monsters
- Wing Commander: Prophecy

## ACCESSORIES

- Charger Kit
- e-Reader
- Pro Gamer's Kit
- Roll Cage

- SongPro Player
- Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3 e-Reader Cards
- Super Worm Light
- WormCam

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# GameCube

## GAMES

- Animal Crossing
- Eternal Darkness
- Gladius
- Ikaruga
- Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker
- Madden NFL 2004
- Mario Kart: Double Dash
- Metroid Prime
- Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance
- NBA Street Vol. 2
- Pikmin
- Resident Evil
- Resident Evil Zero
- Skies of Arcadia: Legends
- Soul Calibur II
- Splinter Cell
- StarFox Adventures

- Super Mario Sunshine
- Super Monkey Ball
- Super Monkey Ball 2
- Super Smash Bros. Melee
- SSX 3
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
- Tony Hawk's Underground
- Viewtiful Joe

## RARITIES

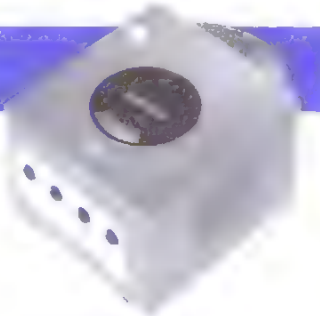
- Cubivore
- NFL Quarterback Club
- Phantasy Star Online
- Tube Slider
- Ultimate Muscle

## ACCESSORIES

- Animal Crossing Cards
- Broadband Adapter
- Freeloader
- Game Boy Player
- Memory Card 251
- Wave Bird Controller
- Ultimate Arcade Joystick

## FILL IN YOUR OWN

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# PC

## GAMES

- Age of Mythology
- Battlefield 1942
- Call of Duty
- Homeworld 2
- Icewind Dale II
- Max Payne 2
- Medal of Honor: Allied Assault
- SimCity 4
- Star Wars: Jedi Outcast
- Unreal Tournament 2003
- Warcraft III: Frozen Throne

## ACCESSORIES

- Creative Labs MuVo NX
- Logitech MX700 Mouse
- Nyko Wireless Net Extender



Princeton SEnergy 751 17.4" Monitor

## FILL IN YOUR OWN

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PlayStation 2



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LEISURE SUIT

**LARRY!**

MAGNA CUM LAUDE

*Brand's  
Eye*



# NOT YOUR FATHER'S LARRY

**I**t's not often that game developers get to cite *Porky's* and *Revenge of the Nerds* as inspirations for their game. High Voltage Software is doing just that, and it even has the full approval of its publisher, because the developer is working on an update to the storied and controversial Leisure Suit Larry license popularized in the late '80s and early '90s.

When we met with High Voltage in its Chicago office, Tom Smith, design director, had put together a handy slide show to outline their goals for the project. The Team had heard that Vivendi Universal, the then newly-minted owners of Sierra Entertainment, wanted to resurrect a few of Sierra's old licenses – including Leisure Suit Larry. Excited, High Voltage (of *Hunter: The Reckoning*) went to the publisher with a pitch. Its vision points for the game were unorthodox: The game had to be funny and sexy in, as Smith describes it, “a titillating sort of way.” The goal, and the results thus far,

aren't anywhere near pornographic. Instead, they're the sort of innocent sexuality played out in teen movies for decades. Innuendo and debauchery coupled with sly adult humor were the true aspirations for the title, along with the other basic statements High Voltage listed as ultimate goals: “Get Girls,” “Simple,” and “Weird Stuff.”

These last three points have more to do with gameplay than the look and feel of the title. The

original ideas started with *The Sims*. Smith says, “We wanted [Larry] to do stuff. *The Sims* didn't have the gameplay.” Moving toward a *Grand Theft Auto* feel, the title we saw a demo of was a mix of the aforementioned games without happiness meters, guns, or cars. So where is the connection? Well, first you need to know the main gist of *Magna Cum Laude's* (the working title) plot.

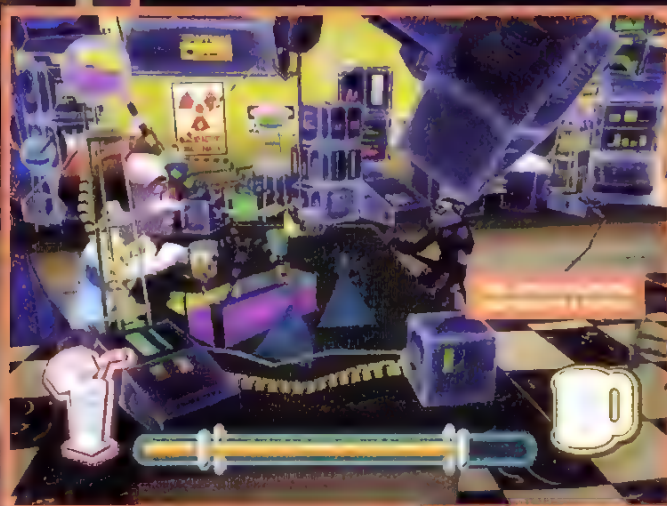
Insightfully realizing that the '70s satire which had supplied so much of the original series' humor just wouldn't be as funny anymore, they decided to pull an old cartoon

trick by bringing in a long-lost nephew that idolizes his lovable loser of an uncle. *Magna Cum Laude* follows the misadventures of Larry Laffer, student at a second-rate community college and nephew of the original series' protagonist of the same name. Larry has never been a player, but when reality-dating show *Swingles* sets up shop on campus, Larry decides that his time has come. He will be a ladies' man like none before him.

This starts our journey leading Larry through wooing and (maybe) doing a handful of lusty ladies. Actually, there are fifteen endowed coeds and

Larry has to literally navigate his way through three conversations with each, along with a handful of minigames designed to be date-like activities. In all, our fearless virgin will make a fool of himself (in the name of love) in around 25 locations, through 150 minigames, and using 90,000 words of dialogue.

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL  
■ **DEVELOPER** HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** FALL 2004





**O**

ne way that the team saw to ensure that Larry was laugh-out-loud funny was to make sure that "funny" was part of the gameplay. What High Voltage came up with is a user-controlled conversation interface. We saw the system in action and the result is something like Mad Libs meets Frogger.

Here's how it works: Larry slyly approaches a young femme fatale and, if the time is right, initiates a conversation. At this point, a multilane bar pops up along the bottom of the screen. In it is a wee player-controlled sperm that wriggles its way through a multitude of different icons. If you hit the green smiley face, for example, Larry will say something that is borderline insightful. Hitting a red icon could instigate him saying something like, "You know, there really are a lot of loose women in Atlantic City. That's not to say that your father is there for the loose women, but...." Obviously, the conversation would not be going well at this point.

During these exchanges, the camera angles will switch between Larry and his potential lady to show delivery and reaction to dialogue. Besides the more self-explanatory green smiles and red frowns, there are an untold number of other icons one can hit during chat sessions. Beer steins will boost Larry's confidence, but too many can make him an embarrassing, blubbering idiot. Certain parts of the female anatomy are also conversation markers and hitting them makes our loser ogle with an open-mouthed gape at



the selected region. Being the feminist icons that these heroines are, staring wantonly at their assets will not steer their dialogue in a favorable direction.

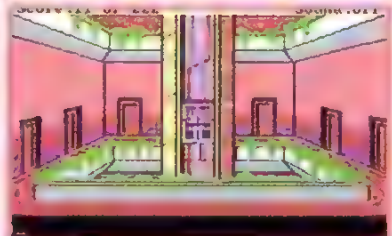
The conversation trees of potential lines needed to be painstakingly catalogued and planned to make sure they could maintain their Mad Libs qualities, but didn't become too nonsensical. A few members of the team have been tasked with the sole job of "being funny" and are around to make sure that even the positive sections of dialogue are tweaked enough to make players laugh. This is where the team's vision statements of 'funny' and 'simple' come most into play.

## LARRY'S LINEAGE

In 1987, the first Leisure Suit Larry game was released. Leisure Suit Larry is the lead of the original trilogy. Arguably featuring the most of just one year, it was the game that the software publisher Atari for Best Adventure Game of 1987 and started a genre of "adult" titles that weren't necessarily pornographic or violent - but all are certainly risqué. In his 16 years at Sierra, Lowe produced six Larry titles that so enraged Californian parents that a "Leisure Suit Larry" bill was introduced, only to thankfully die in committee. Its goal was to prohibit adult themes in video games, a struggle that each faction of the entertainment industry has fought again and again since then.

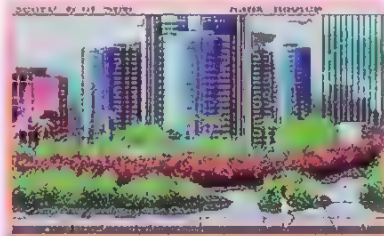
### Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards

Larry Laffer's first adventure finds a misguided man of 38 who just moved out from his parent's house trying to capture the swinging singles life. The game is based on text input for commands and requires players that want to get all of the 222 points available in the adventure to journey through a handful of seedy locales. Lefty's bar, a generic convenience store, discos, penthouses, and alleyways are all previously unheard of locations for the gameplay that is seen in this adventure.



### Leisure Suit Larry Goes Looking for Love in Several Wrong Places

Featuring the same user interface as the first Larry title, this one is notable for its introductions of the legendary Passionate Patti. Jokes about Larry's receding hairline, "social" diseases, and provocative situations all mark this entry. Larry is thrown out of the apartment he shares with Eve, his love conquest from the first game, and goes on a poignant journey of self-discovery on the U.S.S. Love Bus.



### Leisure Suit Larry 3: Passionate Patti in Pursuit of the Pulsating Pectorals

Larry 3 is the first in the series where you control someone other than Larry. After a passionate tryst with the piano bar-maven Passionate Patti, a misunderstanding leads Larry to wander into the mists of the Nontoonyt (None tonight) Island resort. You then lead Patti with the same text-driven controls of the earlier games in a quest to find Larry. If all goes well, the two lovebirds will be nestled in a quaint mountain retreat by the end of the adventure.





**W**

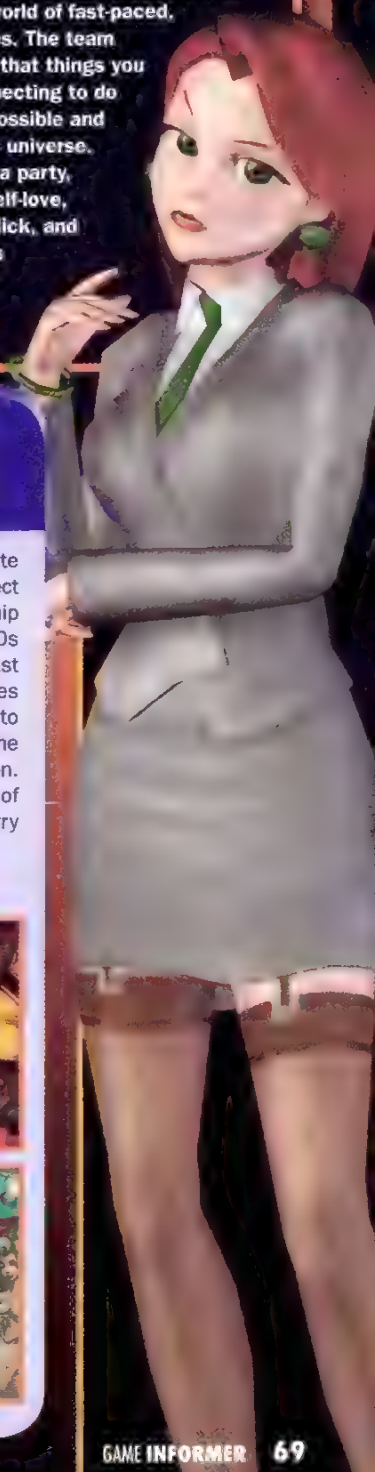
Like it's obvious that Larry's mental well-being (a Sims-like dynamic) has an effect on the success he finds with the ladies, the boy must also tool around a bevy of locations. Besides the sprawling campus complete with sorority and fraternity domiciles, the city is a wide-open sea of exploration and mischief. With a GTA feeling of needing to go to certain places to complete missions, Larry will go to his job at The Closet (a same-sex hangout) and wander over to a tribute to his dear old uncle - Lefty's Too. Gamers on the ball will remember Lefty's from the earlier entries in the Leisure Suit Larry saga both by its name and general appearance.

Also included in the nearly 25 locations is a down-on-its-luck strip club and the factory, which employs many of the city's skilled workers who are now put to work making sex toys. In each, Larry will participate in the title's many minigames. Most of these little activities play off of well-known game mechanics, like the drink

mixing sequence that works like Whack-a-Mole, so that instructions are easy to understand and controls are simple, but fun.

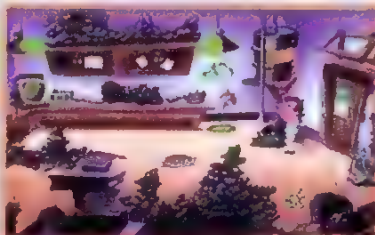
The idea of Magna Cum Laude isn't to challenge the player through blistering first-person action or elaborate platforming sequences, but to make sure that they are having a good time the whole way through. This isn't rocket science, people, it's funny dance sequences and playing quarters with a buxom country music fan through minigames and conversation.

Larry's strange side quests aren't just played out in a Wario Ware world of fast-paced, short timeframe ditties. The team wanted to make sure that things you really wouldn't be expecting to do in a video game are possible and make sense in Larry's universe. You must pass out at a party, participate in some self-love, audition for an adult flick, and entertain a prospect's school mascot fetish, among other weird plot-point activities.



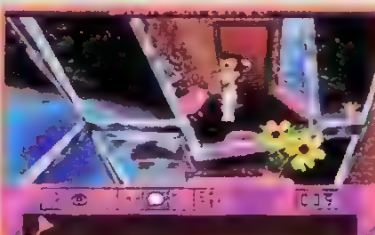
**Leisure Suit Larry 5: Passionate Patti Does a Little Undercover Work**

We aren't crazy. Despite the number five in its title, this is actually the fourth Larry game and the first to use the (at the time) new-fangled point-and-click control method. In this title, as in the last, players control both Larry and Patti through a almanac of American cities. Larry is off to bed the three finalists in the Sexiest Woman in America contest and Patti takes an gig as an undercover agent for the FBI. Perhaps Patti's undercover job explains where episode number four went?



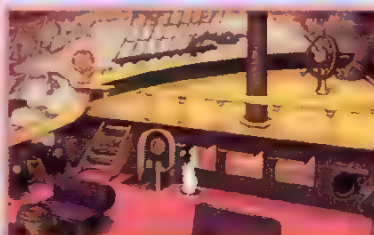
**Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up or Slip Out!**

Reveling in the suggestive themes of its predecessors, Shape Up or Slip Out! was purportedly designed to be more in line with the first Larry title. It focuses less on plot development and more on the self-proclaimed hipster getting some action from the guests at the La Costa Lotta hotel and resort. Women come to the Larry side of the fence after he helps them with a wide range of sticky situations they may be in.



**Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail!**

Like Austin Powers' unfortunate fondness for the politically incorrect conventions of swinging '60s courtship rituals, Larry's affinity for the '70s really comes into play during his last PC adventure. He mistakenly confuses himself with a sex symbol while trying to earn the affection of Captain Thygh, the commander of his love cruise vacation. In usual Leisure Suit fashion, a series of innuendo-laced activities ensue as Larry tries to catch his prey.



# Foreign Ambassadors Report Peaceful Face-to-Face Negotiations with Terrorists in Venezuela

By Michael Golden  
GLOBAL PRESS NETWORK

was relieved that the situation did not turn violent despite the heightened tensions between the two sides. As of yet, no reports are available...

Venezuela - A government official...



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# V

ery recently, High Voltage decided that its earlier art style wasn't as dynamic as it should be. To match Larry's characteristically disproportionate head size (to quote the epic *So I Married an Axe Murderer*, "that's a huge noggin! That's like a virtual planetoid. It has its own weather system!") the environments needed to have more dimension and exaggeration. Thusly, High Voltage started from scratch redesigning every area in the game.

Now its look is somewhat similar to *Tiny Toon Adventures*, with off-kilter buildings squished together in such a way that no fire code could have ever been observed. The college campus is a series of winding pathways and squares hosting locales of similar purposes. The butt-rock inspired frat house, for instance, is near the incredibly lewd fountain (based off a fictional goddess who must be with man's seed for the rest of eternity - feel free to envision your own picture of what that must be like). The Closet is probably the most stylish venue we saw, and it featured elaborate wallpaper of classical statues in all of their glory.

Larry can experience the skew of this world through a solid third-person interface by running around the town. In addition, a first-person mode is offered along with a camera view which we would presume is used for some sort of minigame, but our only demonstration of the mode was to capture a

touching Kodak moment of the illbido-laden monkey in the science lab.

Although the look of Larry is decidedly cartoonish, the team didn't want the characters' movements and voices to be unbelievable. To give a frame of reference for how many NPCs we're talking about, High Voltage employed around 75 voice actors to record the tens of thousands of dialogue lines. Right now, the plan is to have no text dialogue (outside of minigame instructions or other small player tutorials) at any point within the game. Besides Larry's main quest of getting onto the *Swingles* game show, there are a series of side missions in which the hero's help is required. The game features a love story between the Commissar and the Freak, a mission to get the lust-struck monkey to fulfill his fantasies with the lab professor by swapping brains with the simian, and making the crotchety old security guard to lighten up a bit. These subquests are fully realized in regard to plot, pacing, funny dialogue, and execution.

During our visit, we also got a chance to tool around Red Eye Studio, the motion capture company used for the 2,500 in-game animations. Chris Olsen (whose business card lists the title of "Head Honcho," they're all a bunch of jokers on this project!) showed us the Larry setup which included a trampoline to truly simulate that bouncy motion. In the game, trampolines are scattered around the campus, but we aren't entirely certain if they're just an idle pastime or part of a greater plot point.





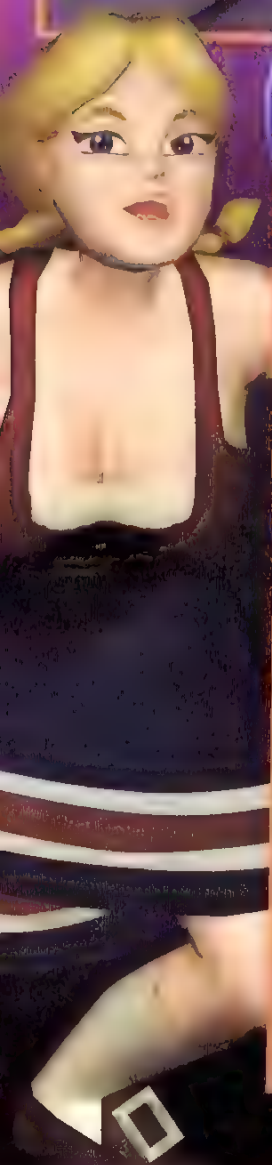
Tilly Crookshanks



Franklin



Suzi Comore



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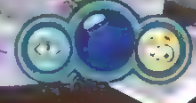
hen High Voltage first went for this project, no one was really certain how far it was supposed to go with regard to the adult content. Initially, Vivendi said to go all out, put in everything we could think of," says Smith. "We made a list of everything we could imagine having in the game and sent to [Vivendi]. We asked them to check off what was offensive and what wasn't." Game Informer has seen this list and, truth be told, some of it is downright nasty. With Vivendi's input and High Voltage's constant consciousness of theme and humor, the final product is looking to be more heartfelt and innocent than shocking and exploitive.

Older Larry games have prompted every negative player reaction from mild disgust to outright rage. Besides requesting legislation banning such content in games, many outraged parent groups have attempted boycotts and bans of the titles, and others have publicly decried anyone involved in the making of the game. Although High Voltage certainly wants to push the envelope with Magna Cum Laude, it is obvious that the goal is not to make people outright uncomfortable. Doing so would diminish the prime objective - to make the game funny from start to finish.

Still, an expected amount of controversy is bound to ensue. But with the resurgence of old fashioned coming-of-age party movies, Larry's new outing looks to fit right in (not on a scale of excellence, but a scale of theme, mind you) with *American Pie*, *Not Another Teen Movie*, and *Road Trip*, among others. Magna Cum Laude is still awaiting final approval for Xbox and PlayStation 2 versions, but gamers of a legal age can look for Larry to hit the shelves in 2004.



Beaklee Rubensentia



Todd McTaggart



# HOSTAGE RESCUE. DRUG BUST. BOMB DIFFUSION.

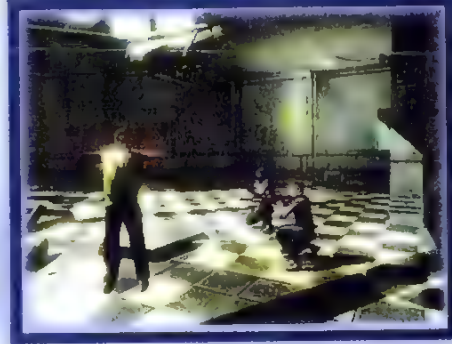
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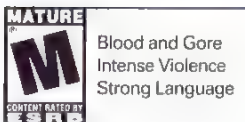
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PlayStation 2



# RESIDENT EVIL:

## A P O C A L Y P S E

### A Sneak Peek at the Second Film

**Paul W.S. Anderson** is a busy man. After making 1995's *Mortal Kombat* and 1997's *Event Horizon*, he set his sights on Raccoon City with the first *Resident Evil* movie in early 2002. Now writing and producing the sequel, Anderson is hoping to bring in more of the video games' trademark elements and recruit a crew of action specialists to bring the whole shebang together.

Leading the pack, Alexander Witt will be taking the director's chair for *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*. This is his first time as a lead director, but his resume as a man-in-charge speaks well for his abilities. Credited as second unit director of photography on such blockbusters as *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, *XXX*, *The Bourne Identity*, *Black Hawk Down*, *Twister*, *Lethal Weapon 3*, *Thelma & Louise*, and *The Hunt for Red October*, he is frequently called the best action man in Hollywood.

**A**nderson and his longtime production partner at Impact Pictures, Jeremy Bolt, are working together again to bring Capcom's horror-fest back to the screen. Since Anderson is busy in Prague starting the *Aliens vs. Predator* project, Bolt will be the main force on set every day to make sure that things are running smoothly.

Milla Jovovich is reprising her role as Alice, who ended the first movie in a mysterious lab with an interesting haircut. She walked outside to find Raccoon City a seemingly abandoned disaster area, and *Apocalypse* starts within hours of this final scene in the first movie. While Alice is beginning to investigate what has happened to her, why the city is in disarray, and what Umbrella has been up to since the incident in the Hive; Jill Valentine, certainly a recognizable name to gamers, is working out her own issues. Although not a S.T.A.R.S. member as in the game, Jill's character in the movie is a highly trained cop trying to get out of the city with her partner. Valentine is being played by Sienna Guillory, best known for her portrayals of Helen in the TV miniseries *Helen of Troy* and Emma in *The Time Machine*. Based on pictures graciously released to the general public, Valentine's costume is a nearly-exact duplication of digital Jill's clothes which, for fans of tube tops and miniskirts, is a good thing.

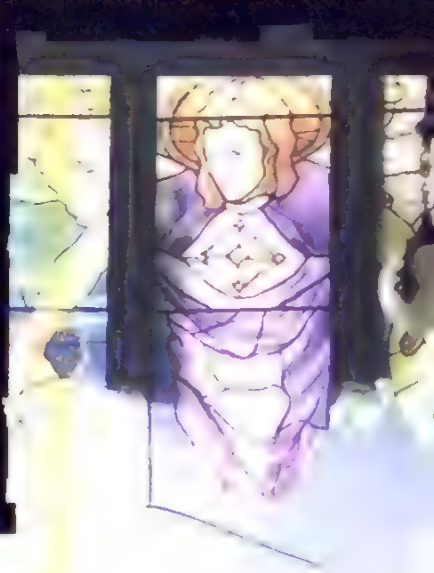
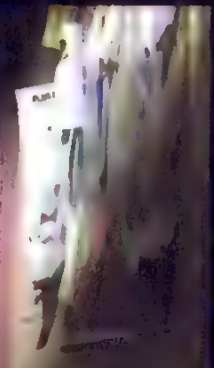
These two grrrr-power poster children will surely meet and try to take down Umbrella with epic force. Fighting against their efforts is a militia of well-armed corporate thugs, a growing legion of undead, and Umbrella's ultimate weapon – Nemesis. Hinted at in the first movie when Alice and Matt Addison are separated, Nemesis does exist in *Apocalypse*, and is a hulking mass of muscle and single-syllable grunting coupled with some mean firepower. Reportedly, he will make his presence known to the girls throughout the flick.

Other characters from *Resident Evil: Code Veronica* and *Resident Evil: Nemesis* (the games that are most referenced in *Apocalypse*) that are making appearances include the wheelchair-bound Dr. Ashford (Jared Harris), Umbrella-employed military commander Carlos Olivera (Oded Fehr of *The Mummy* flicks), and the infamous Nicholai (Zack Ward).

Little else is known about the plot specifics, but the first teaser trailer recently started running with the Screen Gems vampire/werewolf flick *Underworld*. The spot starts out like a skincare commercial. Espousing the benefits of ultra-moisturizing facial cream and its ability to rejuvenate the users' appearance, a woman is magically transformed into a fresh, young hottie...and then her skin turns sickly gray and starts cracking into an undead mess. Mixed in with the flashes from both of the movies, Umbrella Corp's new tagline is displayed, "Our business is life itself." Makes you feel all warm and fuzzy inside, doesn't it?

This teaser trailer, in addition to a spy-report style conspiracy theory website (which may or may not be run by the studio and lists producer Jeremy Bolt as a high-ranking Umbrella operative) are playing into what gamers will respond best to – references. These nods and inside jokes from the games won't stop with just the marketing campaign. Writer/producer Anderson, as a fan of Capcom's series, is integrating more game-inspired touches into *Apocalypse's* working script. One such sequence that is directly taken from the games is, well, all we're going to say is that there's a glass hallway, more than a couple of helicopters, and major ammunition – and it's being recreated shot-for-shot for the movie.

Since the first film earned around \$100 million worldwide by the time its theatrical run was finished, a sequel wasn't much of a shocker to anyone. What we're looking forward to, though, is the fact that *Apocalypse* seems to be more of a homage to the games than the first was. As long as we walk out of the theater in the fall of 2004 with the same feelings we have when playing the game, it certainly can't be bad. We'll be keeping you up to date on the movie's development and further details from our visit to the set in upcoming issues.





IN MY QUEST  
FOR REDEMPTION

NOT EVEN MY  
DEATH

I COMMAND THE FORCES OF TIME.

DECEIVED BY A TREACHEROUS VIZIER, I WAS LED TO UNLEASH THE DARK POWERS OF THE SANDS OF TIME UPON THE SULTAN'S KINGDOM. NOW, AS DARKNESS CONSUMES ALL IN ITS PATH, MY SPEED, AGILITY AND SKILL AS A WARRIOR ARE NOT ENOUGH. I MUST LEARN TO COMMAND THE SANDS TO SLOW, FREEZE, ACCELERATE, AND EVEN REVERSE TIME ITSELF. IF I FAIL TO UNDO MY FATAL MISTAKE, ALL SHALL PERISH WITH ME. MINE IS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL, NOT GLORY.

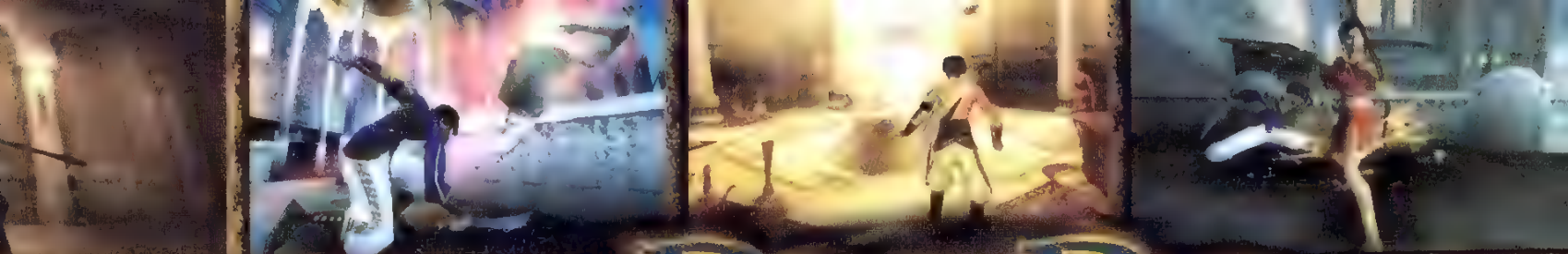


Blood  
Violence  
Suggestive Themes



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# PRINCE OF PERSIA

THE SANDS OF TIME™

CAN STOP ME

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GENRE TO THE NEXT LEVEL."

GAME INFORMER

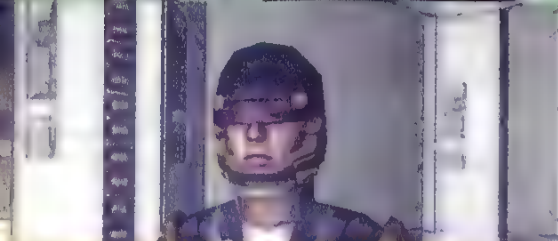


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UBISOFT

# PREVIEWS



XBOX | PC

## DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR



### CHOOSE SIDES

**Invisible War is one** of those games that seems like it will never come out. After all, our first-look preview ran in the June 2002 issue. The fact that we're chomping at the bit to play it hasn't helped matters. Answering our pleas, Eidos and Ion Storm have granted us a playable build of the Xbox version to poke around with and whet our appetites.

Your character – be it man or woman – is blessed with the ability to receive biomechanical augmentations. Because of this, you're a member of the Tarus Academy along with a handful of other gifted youths. An attack by a religious group known as The Order shatters your reality, however, and Tarus is no more. Like a bird pushed out of the nest, you're on your own.

The city of New Seattle has many hot spots and areas of interest. Upper Seattle is more posh, consisting of penthouses and night clubs. The lower area is more slummy and filled with unsavory characters. Alex D, the protagonist, has a world of possibilities as his/her feet. Will Alex join The Order, or the more militant WTO? It doesn't help that both sides are pushing for your entry and wooing you with potential lies, nor is the decision made easy by the fact that former Tarus students inhabit each side.

A wealth of side missions populate the game as well. It seems everyone needs a favor of you, and they are willing to pay handsomely for your service. Few of the prospective jobs are legal, of course. Like the original Deus Ex, there are several ways

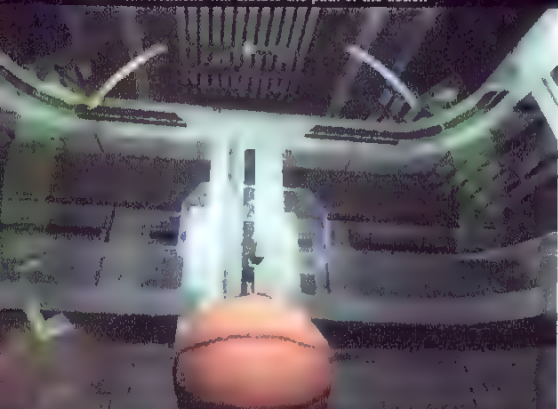
to reach your objective or complete your task. For example, golden laser beams of hot death obstruct a path. You can find another route, disable the beams with tools, or use the new physics technology to throw a barrel in the way and slink on by. Ion Storm has developed the game in such an open way that the developers themselves are constantly being amazed by new strategies. There is a good chance, however, that earning experience for things like exploration or finding hidden paths – which was a nice reward in the original – will be absent in this sequel.

Augmentations have taken a far more focused turn for Invisible War. There are five categories: arms, cranial, eye, leg, and skeletal. You can only have one of three choices in each category active at once; there are two legal mods, and one of the illegal, black market variety. So, you must choose between being able to walk silently or run fast. You can't have both, but you will be able to upgrade the choice you make.

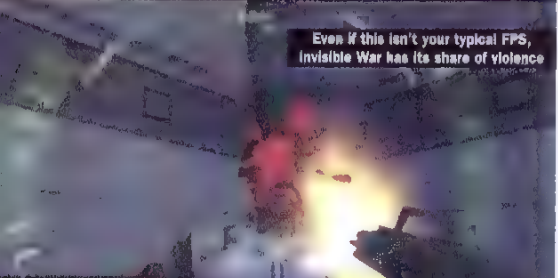
Weapon modifications are back again, so you can turn your simple pistol into a no-nonsense death cannon. Ion Storm has gotten very creative with its regular weapons, too. The Spider Bomb, when thrown, turns into a little multi-legged robot that centers in on a target, approaches it, then explodes. You can only hold so many items at once now, so you'll constantly have to juggle your inventory to keep the best weapons, medkits, etc. on hand.

We should have a review of this hotly anticipated game next issue. Can Alex keep up the high standards set by predecessor JC Denton? Stay tuned to find out.

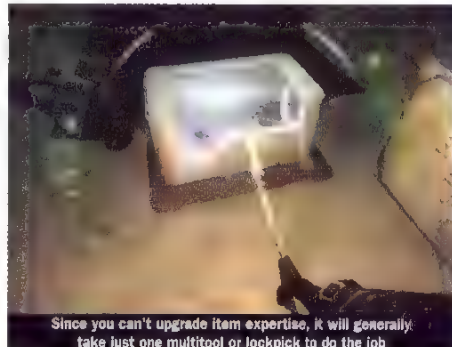
Don't be ridiculous. We can handle one Order Seeker.  
Okay, I'll get out without being seen. How 'bout you distract the terrorist while I sneak by?  
Any more pointers?  
Your conversations will dictate the path of the action



In Tarus, you can shoot some hoops before you uncover the secrets



Even if this isn't your typical FPS, Invisible War has its share of violence



Since you can't upgrade item expertise, it will generally take just one multitool or lockpick to do the job

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER ION STORM ■ RELEASE DECEMBER 3



Look out! It's got a PROBE!!!



Stealth plays a big role in your adventure



Alex D: You know an awful lot about police business.

The pop star, NO, has her own line of virtual terminate



EMP grenades, not firearms, are the preferred way to take out machines



This handsome fellow, an Omar trader, deals in black market augmentations



There are modifications so both humans and robots can't detect you

*The mission is official. Revenge is personal.*



**MATURE**  
**M**  
BLOOD  
MILD LANGUAGE  
VIOLENCE



PlayStation 2



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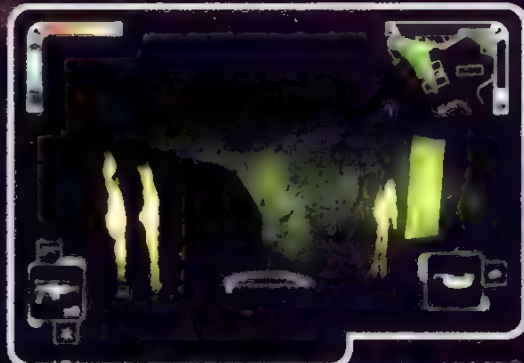




*Extensive arsenal of weapons: crossbow, throwing stars, sniper rifle, frag grenade, silenced pistol and more*



*8 action-packed missions in 8 diverse environments test your ability to survive and succeed in any situation*



*Cutting-edge spy tools, including V.I.S.E.R., flycam, thermal optical camouflage, retina scanner and adrenaline boost*



*Covert moves let you suspend from ceilings, hide in shadows or inside objects, and slide against walls to peer around corners*

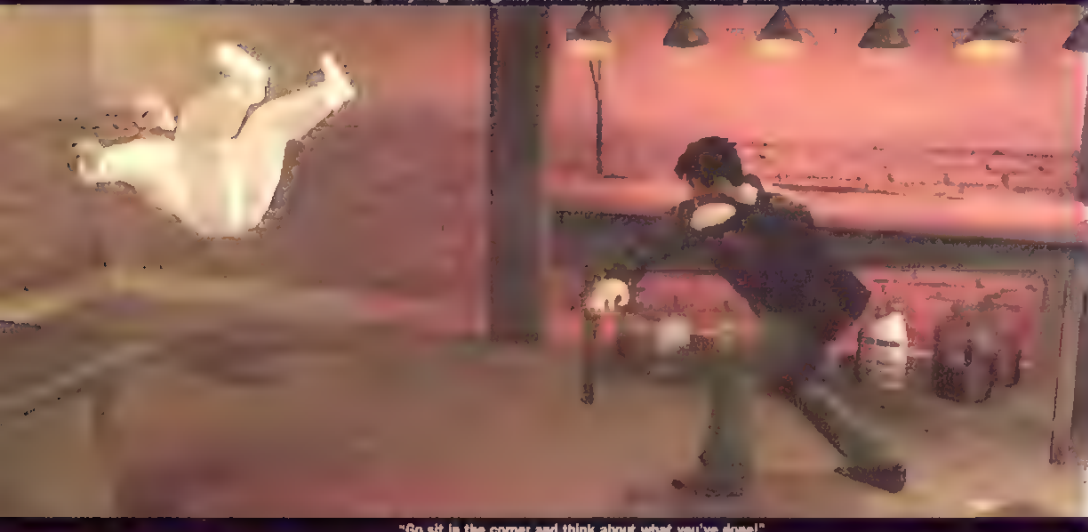
Nikki Connors lost everything when the world's most brutal terrorist organization killed her family. Now she's a member of Phoenix, a covert agency dedicated to counter-terrorism – but she also has a mission of her own: revenge. With unsurpassed skills, weapons, and tools for concealment, she's ready to settle the score.

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Take a good, long look at this character model. Then say to yourself, "This is on PS2." The level of detail in the model's face is absolutely astounding. Everything looks great, even down to the creases in his jacket and the choppliness of his hair



"Go sit in the corner and think about what you've done!"

PLAYSTATION 2

# RISE TO HONOR

## RIISING TO THE OCCASION

**Anyone want to** be an action movie star? Sony is doing everything it can to bring that feeling to the PlayStation 2 with Rise to Honor. Martial arts, gunfights, and extremely interactive environments are all part of the package.

The game features a 360-degree martial arts system to allow players to engage any and all thugs who think they have a chance against Jet Li. Not a figurative "I rock at this game like Jet Li," but the actual Jet Li. He signed on to the project for the whole deal: voiceovers, motion capture, and even creative input. Action director Cory Yuen is also part of the team, and together they hope to create the most cinematic action title yet.

The level of interaction with the surroundings looks to be unparalleled. For instance, you can jump on a hospital gurney and ride it down a hallway, blasting fools all the while. You can pick up a chair, break it over someone's head, and use a broken-off leg as a weapon; or run up walls ninja-style to gain an advantage. If that's not action-movie quality, what is?

Also included is a bona fide action plot: Kit Yun (the main character, also known as Jet Li) has to...uh...beat up a lot of guys as part of his quest to save the daughter of his late employer (an assassinated Hong Kong crime lord). Apparently, Yun's senses of duty and honor come into conflict as the story unfolds, but our money's on the plot taking a back seat to the combat.

The "damsel in distress" isn't just window dressing, though - word is that she will fight alongside you in at least a couple of scenes, and even participate in combo moves to dispense maximum pain.

Sony intends to reinvent the action genre in January when Rise to Honor is planned to ship to retail outlets.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY FOSTER CITY  
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY



Your standard punch, but executed with flair



Mmmh, dodging



"Let's see...one pair of gloves, one gas mask, and a set of eye protection comes to \$44.95. Thank you for shopping with us."



And he's got an actual shadow! Yay!

# YOU OWN



*THUG™ stars YOU as a skate punk out to make it big.*



*Do whatever it takes – run, climb, and of course, skate – to make it to the top.*



*Put your face in the game to skate as YOU.\**



GAME BOY ADVANCE



TEEN



Blood  
Mild Violence  
Strong Language  
Suggestive Themes

Game experience may change during online play.

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Star in all of the Story Mode movies alongside the pros.



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This time it's YOUR journey.  
Break the rules. Beat the odds.

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"And this is the dragon that ate all of your parents. Any questions?"



"Isn't this a heroic epic? Why do I have to go to class?"



"Um...I just don't think it's working out between us"



XBOX

# FABLE

## CLOSER TO REALITY

### Xbox's exclusive action/RPG,

Fable, is inching closer to retail shelves every day. Recently, we got our greedy little paws on some new screenshots, and thought we'd share the wealth with this follow-up to our January cover story

If you don't remember what Fable is about (and are too lazy to unearth your back issues of GI), here's a quick recap: It's an epic from developers of Dungeon Keeper, with creative assistance from gaming legend Peter Molyneux (creator of Black & White and Populous, among others).

Unlike most games of this type, character development happens organically as you progress; your skills increase with the actions you take. NPCs react to you based on the decisions you've made and the kind of life you've led. It's also graphically stunning to the point that the Xbox is the only machine with a prayer of making the designers' visions a reality. So far, this looks to be the most immersive action/RPG to date.

Okay, enough of that. You want the screenshots. Let's talk about them. As an introductory note, pay special attention to the number of different looks that the hero is sporting. All of these physical differences are the result of decisions made by the player over the course of the character's life. That's a good indication of how deep Fable is going to be in 2004 when it ships.

■ **STYLE** 1 PLAYER ACTION/ROLE PLAYING GAME  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** BIG BLUE BOX/  
 LIONHEAD STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** 2004



Warriors are apparently no stranger to magic



Wingers have their own business to attend to...



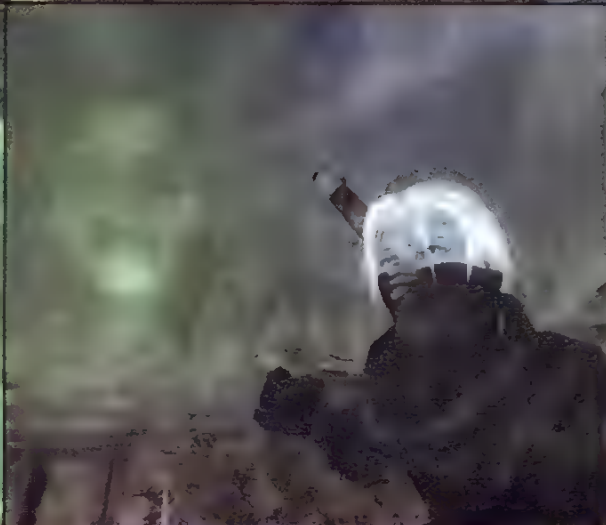
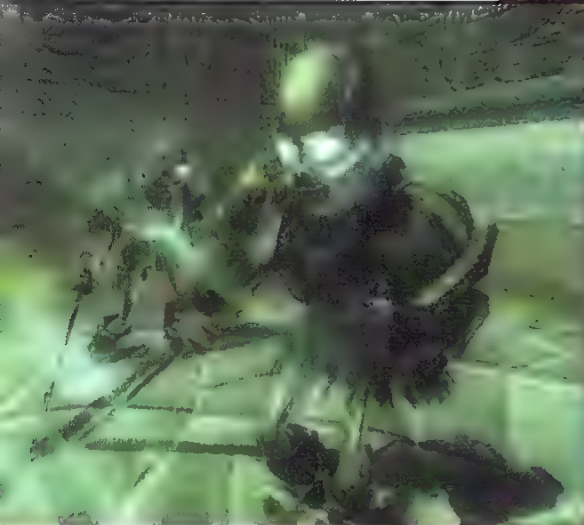
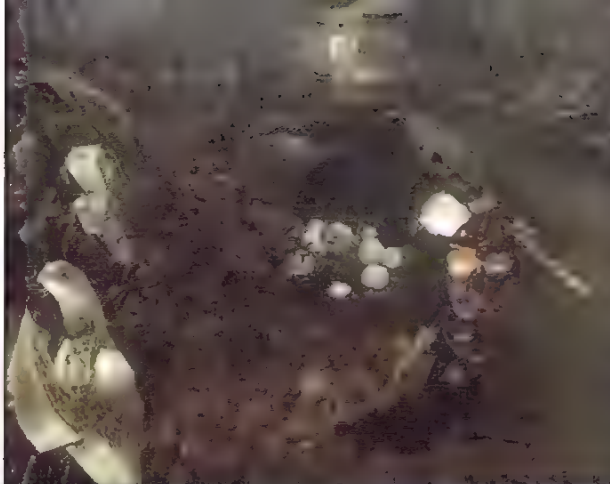
...and sometimes that business is gettin' all crunched up



"Light I don't know, I think he's a little too fixated on his sword"  
 "I know, those adventurer-hero types are all the same"

## SETTINGS TO DIE FOR

The environments are insanely detailed. The mood set by the spooky graveyard on the right is unparalleled. Observe the lighting on the hero's head and the shadow he casts. Visibility trails off in the distance as mist obscures the surrounding forest. Each individual gravestone is handcrafted – no recycled models here. To the far right, we have: Lighting. On. The. Hero. Wow! Check out the skeletons on the ground as well – the unique poses and modeling of each combined with the overall visual effect of this area is enough to give Hannibal Lecter chills.



## BAD TO THE BONE

What's an RPG without bad guys? Clearly not all of the art design time has been spent on the various looks the hero can assume. Many games would be proud to feature these skeletons as main characters, but in Fable they are just another piece of artistry for players to encounter. From their glowing eyes to their ragged clothing and stringy hair, we couldn't conceive of a more menacing visage of undead terror. The skull in the sky might be anything from a creepy effect to scare the player to the adversary of all that is good and right in the world. With Fable, we wouldn't be surprised at anything. Who knows? It could even represent a message from a necromancer NPC who's trying to help you.

## MY HOUSE, SUCKA

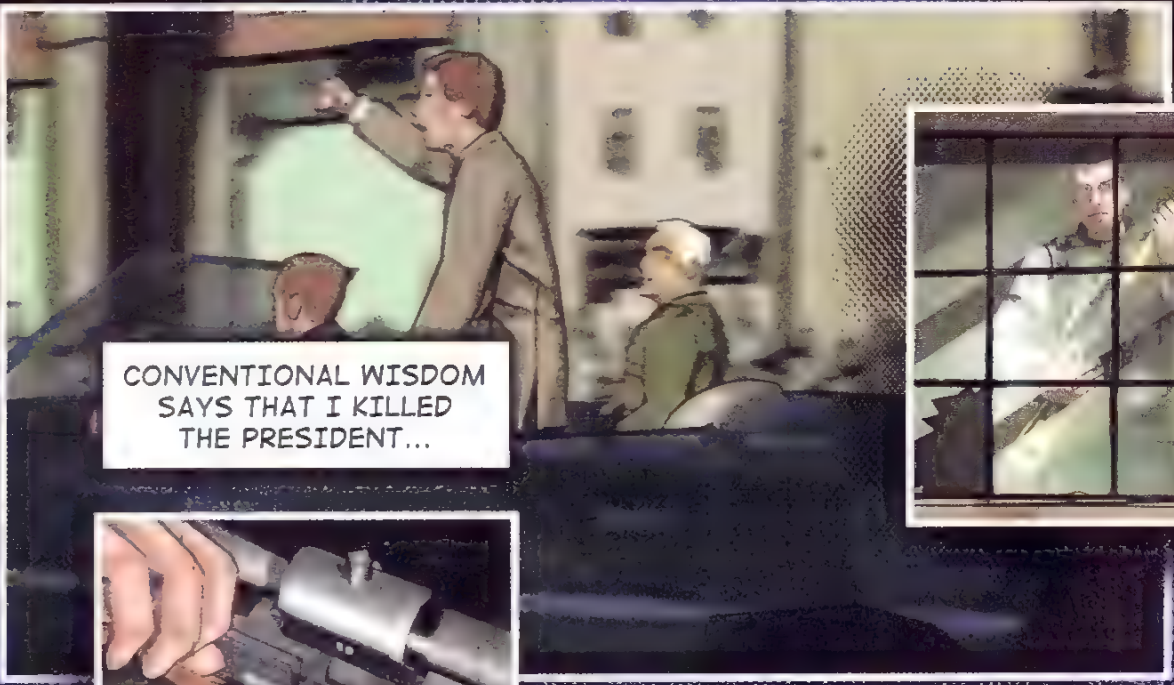
When a rock giant menaces the town, you have a couple of options for fighting it (or you can always run, of course). To the right we see a warrior with a rather large sword preparing to charge into battle. Perhaps a bit foolhardy, considering his lack of armor. To the far right is a spellcaster engaging from a somewhat safer distance. Projecting flame from one's hands will probably be useful when trying not to get pounded to bits. Of course, you can see the attention paid to detail in the town's buildings as well, in particular the fact that the furnishings of a house are actually visible through the windows. The touch of verisimilitude that this represents fills us with joy; too long have opaque windows been the norm.



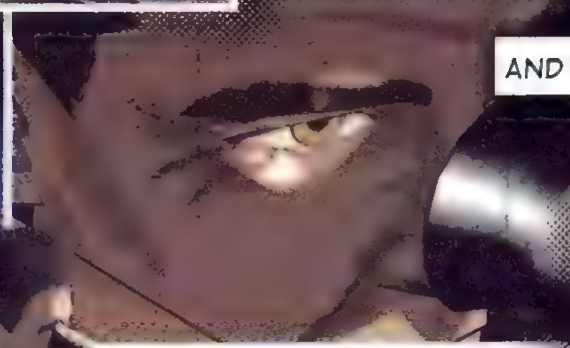
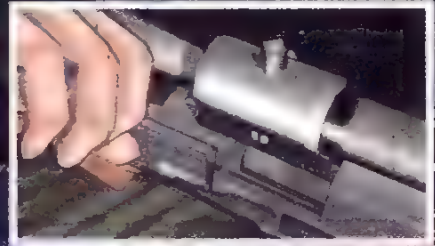
## PERSONALIZE THIS

Incredible-looking effects aside, here is a prime example of just how different two heroes can be in Fable. We have a huge warrior-type, complete with full platemail and a gigantic two-handed double-bladed axe. In contrast, there is another fighter who looks completely different. His armor seems like half plate, he's got what looks to be a longsword, and he's doing some crazy business with lightning and a blue aura. If two melee combat style characters can be this different, imagine the insane amount of customization available! Keep in mind that your character's development will occur organically, based on the decisions you make.

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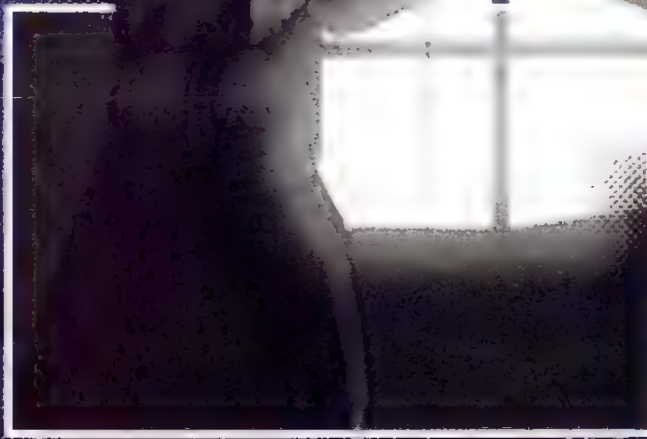
CONVENTIONAL WISDOM SAYS THAT I KILLED THE PRESIDENT...



AND FOR ALL I KNOW...



BANG!



I DID.

MATURE 17+  
M  
Blood Intense Violence

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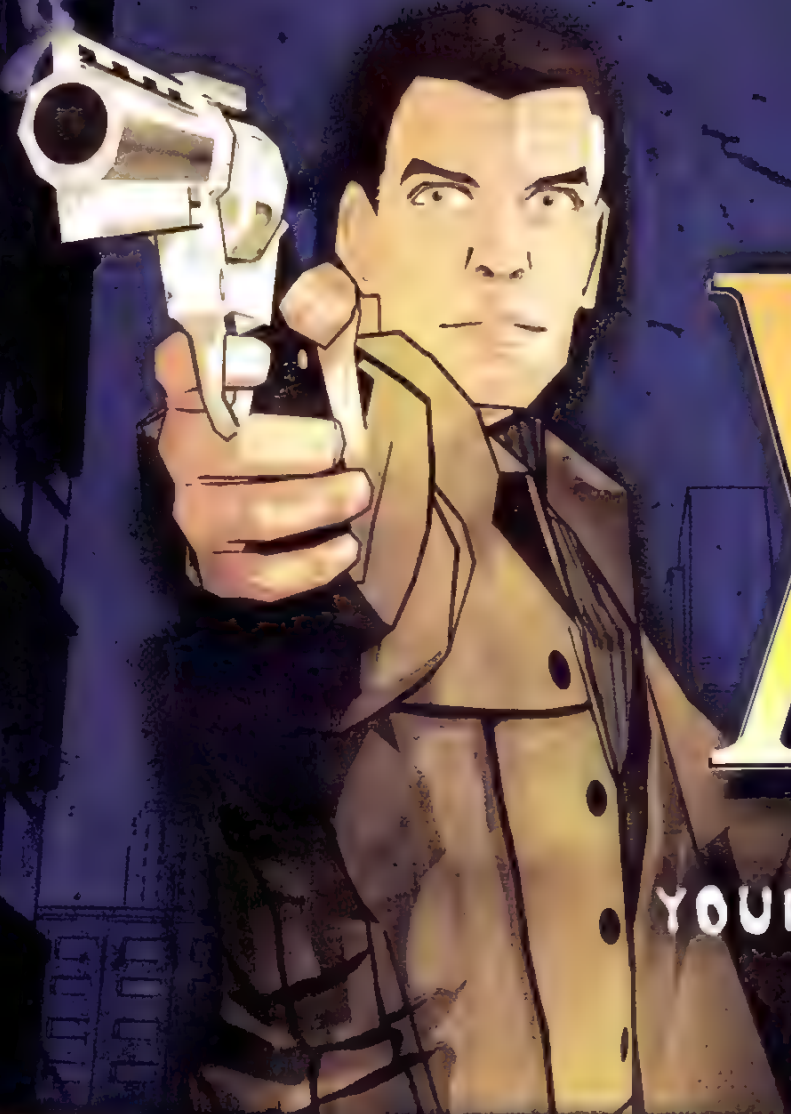
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multiplayer modes  
for every platform.



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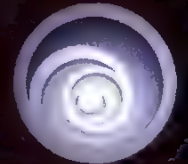


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PlayStation 2



UBISOFT

## PREVIEWS



The Italian countryside is one of the new courses



You will never own this car. Never

PLAYSTATION 2

# GRAN TURISMO 4

FAR BEYOND DRIVEN

**Remember the episode** of *The Simpsons* in which the family hits the go-kart track? Homer gleefully exclaims, "Look at me, Bart; I'm driving!" When Gran Turismo 4 hits your PlayStation 2 next year, you might be overcome with the same giddy joy Homer felt driving his fake car. Thanks to the incredible attention to detail found in GT 4, your commute to work may feel less real than this incredible driving simulation.

In order to create the best, most accurate driving game ever, developer Polyphony Digital focused on three elements: the cars, the environments, and the drivers. Of course, the cars are the central element of any racer, and Gran Turismo 4 offers more in this respect than *The Fast and The Furious* and its sequel combined. All of GT 4's 500 licensed cars were created by studying their real counterparts. Between 150 to 200 photos were taken of each vehicle, and extensive data was collected on them to insure that the digital version could complete a course within .03 seconds of the real version's time.

Speaking of courses, each of the 50 tracks was created with even more attention to detail. Also based on reality, every location was photographed up to 50,000 times! How many of these photos include a Polyphony Digital employee wearing a "Scenic Grand Canyon" or similar T-shirt is unclear. GPS systems and topographical data were also consulted for further realism. The result of all this hard work and research is some of the most photo-realistic graphics ever to appear on the PS2. Some of the amazing tracks you'll see include the Grand Canyon, New York City, the Tsukuba Circuit in Japan, and the Citi Di Ana in the Italian countryside.

For the first time in a Gran Turismo title, humans will actually make a noticeable appearance. Convertibles will feature visible drivers and grandstands will be populated with fully-animated crowds. But most notably human will be the computer-controlled drivers. Whereas the past games in the series have featured less than impressive AI, GT 4's AI drivers are based on real-life racers. Your opponents will now react much more naturally to your actions and make for more challenging races.

In case this total racing package wasn't already enticing enough, online play will also be supported! While details on this mode are still scarce, six-player races are confirmed and races will utilize the same courses from the single-player version. Rumor has it that downloadable content may even be offered to make things more exciting, thanks to the new PS2 hard drive. Playing against real human opponents is the only thing that could make this racing experience any more realistic. In fact, we hear the cars are so accurate that, just like our real-life rides, they're filled with unpaid parking tickets and smell like stale french fries!

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 6-PLAYER VIA ONLINE OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY  
COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** POLYPHONY DIGITAL ■ **RELEASE** 2004



PLAYSTATION 2

# SPY FICTION

BRINGING ACTION TO THE STEALTH GENRE

**The stealth/action** genre is getting crowded these days with the success of titles like Splinter Cell and Metal Gear Solid. Now Sammy is sneaking into the fray with its own effort: *Spy Fiction*. The company promises that its title will bring new elements and gameplay flow to the genre – it purportedly has no interest in making a simple clone of the big boys. In fact, the primary focus for *Spy Fiction* is action. Fluid gunfights and twitch-worthy control were down pat before the stealth facet was even added. The idea is that *Spy Fiction* is as good at action as games like *Medal of Honor*, while having a strongly incorporated stealth aspect to diversify gameplay.

Graphically, *Spy Fiction* is amazing. We saw a demo at the Tokyo Game Show, and it blows other PS2 titles completely out of the water. As a third-person game, a lot of design time naturally was spent on the main characters, and they look awesome. Not only the protagonists, but their gadgets are eye-popping as well – we're sure that the visuals will include some spiffy effects for the many different toys that will be used. These gadgets have abilities as esoteric as identity-stealing and Spider-Man-like wall climbing, making this title even more unique. Furthermore, these particular super-spies have access to nine different firearms during

the game for when it's time to take out the trash.

Also promised are a fair number of minigames. The concept is to take scenes that are traditionally completely scripted and out of the player's control and make them interactive. For instance, you'll actually play the parachuting-into-the-base intro to a level, and instead of watching the character rappel down the side of a building, you'll have to guide him/her down.

We say "him/her" for a reason – there are two playable heroes: one male, one female. The story will also be partially player-driven, with the choices you make determining the outcomes of certain elements. Going through the quest multiple times with both characters will be necessary to unlock everything and see all of the divergent plotlines, giving *Spy Fiction* extra replay value that the genre severely lacks. Over the projected 15 hours of time needed to beat *Spy Fiction*, players will be treated to a number of plot twists, turns, and betrayals which were inspired by classic spy movies; many of the core development team are huge movie fans.

It sounds impressive, and we'll know for sure just how sweet *Spy Fiction* is in the spring when it comes Stateside.

■ **STYLE 1** PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SAMMY STUDIOS ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCESS GAMES ■ **RELEASE** SPRING



...Easily switch from stealth...



...to bone-crushing action



One of the so-called minigames...



...has you playing Tom Cruise...



...as Peter Pan

# UNLEASH YOUR

"The best *Legacy of Kain*  
installment yet"

- Gamespy

"This game will own your soul.  
It already has ours"

- IGN



Blood and Gore  
Intense Violence



PlayStation 2



eidos

# VENGEANCE

SLAUGHTER MERCILESSLY.



Utilize Kain's telekinetic abilities to hurl large objects, impale them on sharp objects, or throw them off ledges.



Engage in thrilling combo moves using physical agility, telekinesis, and the formidable Reaver blade to destroy hordes of human, and undead foes.



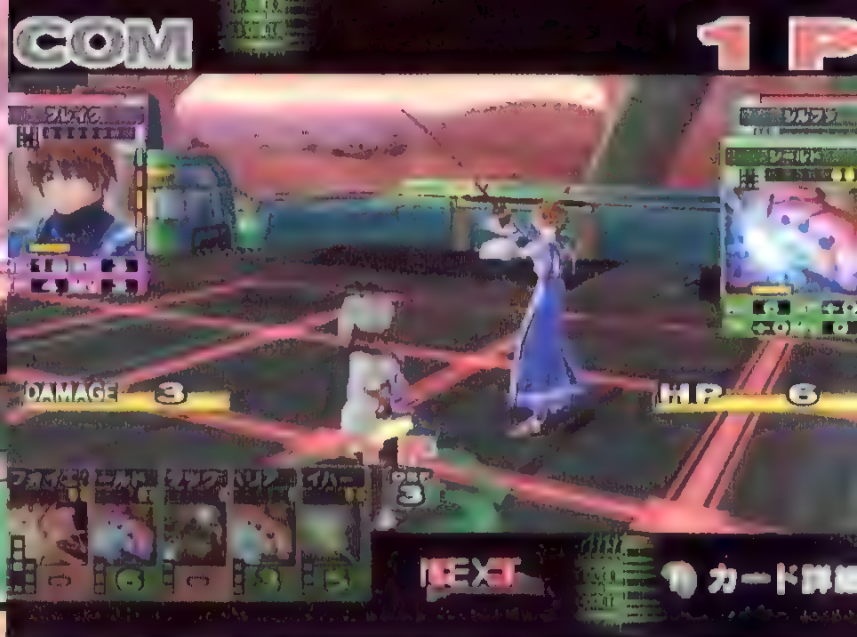
As Kain or Raziel, feed your dark hunger by sucking the blood and devouring the souls of enemies to survive.

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COMING NOVEMBER 2003

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GAMECUBE UNLIMITED ENABLER

# PHANTASY STAR ONLINE VOL. 3: C.A.R.D. REVOLUTION

PHANTASY STAR F.O.R.E.V.E.R.

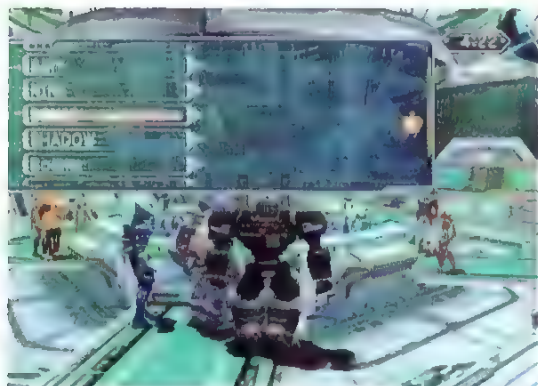
**Online turn-based strategy** for the GameCube may not be quite the front-page story as, for instance, stealth/action for Xbox, but Sonic Team is working on putting Phantasy Star Online into this very niche. Players will engage in battle as either the Hunters (good guys) or Arks (bad guys) on or offline with decks that they design themselves. Yes, decks. As in cards.

The gameplay has changed directions and now offers cards to enhance combatants' abilities. They come in Action and Assist flavors (possibly more); it's up to the players to combine these with tactical positioning of their characters to make a tasty mix of total annihilation for their enemies. If these elements blend as well as we hope they will, the result should be an addicting mix of card collecting and traditional RPG character evolution.

The online experience of PSO continues to grow. Users of PSO Vol. 3 will be able to chat with players of the previous two episodes in the lobby, allowing them to pick their companions and enemies in battle to some extent. True to form, the events of C.A.R.D. Revolution will continue the story arc where it left off in PSO Episode 2.

A solid turn-based title would certainly be welcome on the GameCube, and Sonic Team could very well be the one to bring it to us early next year.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER STRATEGY/RPG (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONIC TEAM ■ **RELEASE** 1ST QUARTER



An online tournament mode fits perfectly with this style of game, and should increase the replay value and competition factor a hundredfold. We tried to count how many titles could desperately have used this mode and gave up after about 500.



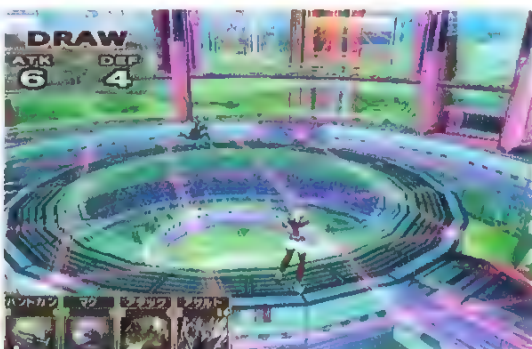
Not quite anime cutscenes, but these are not without their own unique charm. Fans of comic books and things Japanese will appreciate these manga style interludes, which give the story told in C.A.R.D. Revolution a unique flavor.



It wouldn't be Phantasy Star without beautiful elf chicks with swords that put Cloud's to shame. Seriously, though, it seems that players will be able to use cards to pump up their characters with items like this sword. Character models and special effects seem to be shaping up nicely.



Speaking of special effects, this plant appears to be summoned by another card, with a suitably dramatic explosion to accompany it. Imagine how nice it would've been to be able to plop a huge creature in the middle of the field in Final Fantasy Tactics Advance...

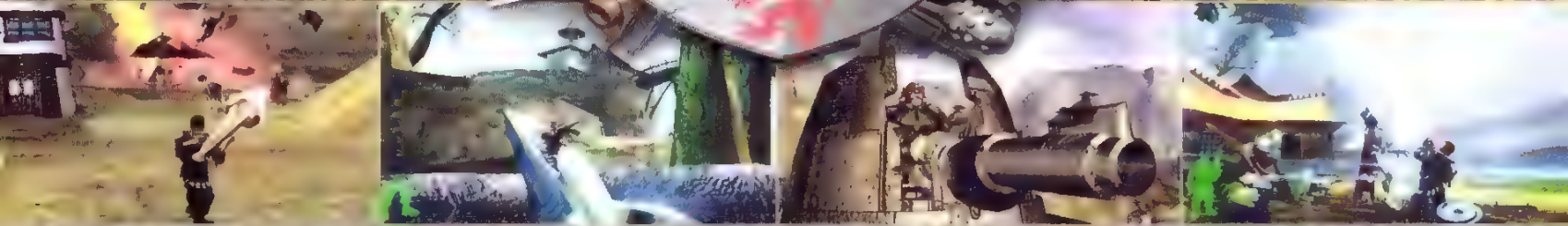


or to fight in a space arena above the treetops? Sonic Team clearly spent a lot of time on the environments, and it shows. If this is typical of PSO Vol. 3, it will be quite possibly the prettiest strategy/RPG to ever hit consoles.

# THERE'S NO KILL LIKE OVERKILL.



## ARMED AND DANGEROUS



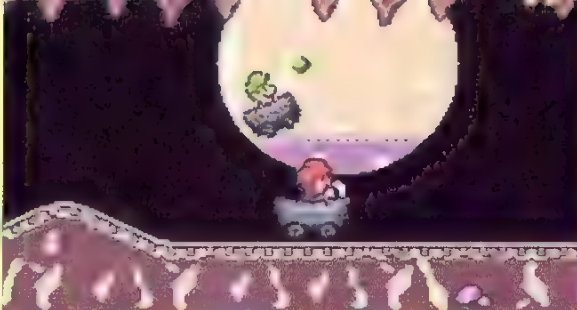
Meet the Lionhearts. A snack-talking rag-tag band of rebels bound on an impossible quest. With an arsenal of outrageous weapons, they're destined for victory in 12,000 bullets or less. If they can make it through an army of psychotic robots and wall-smashing Goliaths, they just might save the world...if they don't burn it down first.

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"Eeeyah ha ha ha ha!"



GAME BOY ADVANCE

# MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA



## BROTHERS GONNA WORK IT OUT

...in which Master **Mario** and Master **Luigi** attack together!

Mario and Luigi learn Bros. Attacks...



...which are great for boss battles



Luigi takes out his frustration about all his brother's fame

**Poor Luigi. No matter** how hard he works, he just can't seem to match the acclaim of his brother Mario. Sure, he finally got a solo game when the GameCube launched, but Luigi's Mansion was quickly overshadowed by Super Mario Sunshine. He must have gotten tired of his big bro hogging the limelight, because for the first time in Nintendo history, the two plumbers are co-headlining with the release of Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga. Of course, Mario's name is still first...

This exciting new title for the Game Boy Advance takes a page from the popular N64 title Paper Mario (Page? Paper? Get it? Thanks a lot folks, we're here all week) by combining role-playing elements into an action title. The plumbers gain experience from battling enemies, which increases their strength, hit points, and more. They are even given a "stache" rating, presumably an indication of how nice their mustaches are. This is but one example of the slightly odd sense of humor found in Superstar Saga. Never before has a Mario title referred to Luigi as "Mr. Green-guy" or included dialogue such as "I am the mustard of your doom!"

This title's plot also ventures into new territory for the Italian heroes' games. Mario and Luigi actually find themselves aligned with their arch nemesis Bowser as they face a new shared enemy: the evil wizard Cackletta from

the Beanbean Kingdom. She has stolen Princess Peach's voice and replaced it with explosives! Bowser realizes that he cannot kidnap her as is, and enlists the Mario Bros. to battle Cackletta so he can resume his own evil plot.

As Mario and Luigi quest through the unfamiliar Beanbean Kingdom, they must work in tandem to defeat enemies and overcome obstacles. Players guide both characters at once, with one button controlling each character. Each plumber has different abilities: Mario's spin jump can be used to cross long gaps, while Luigi's high jump can reach tall platforms. Of course, cooperation between the two is also essential to combat. When the duo encounters a creature on the map, turn-based combat is initiated. Both characters use the traditional jump attack, but they can also team up for more powerful "Bros. Attacks." By timing button presses, Mario will boost Luigi into the air for a devastating dive bomb. Combat also uses one button per character and is fast-paced, simple, and fun.

The Mario games have taken chances before, but Superstar Saga might be the most unusual game yet for the pair of plumbers. But thanks to its gorgeous graphics and simple, addictive gameplay, it is bound to become a hit. Who knows? Maybe this title will finally get Luigi out from his brother's shadow and make him a star in his own right.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER ALPHADREAM ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 17



Combat features familiar foes...



...and many new ones as well



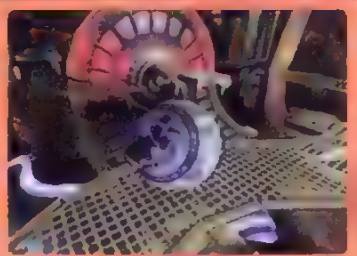
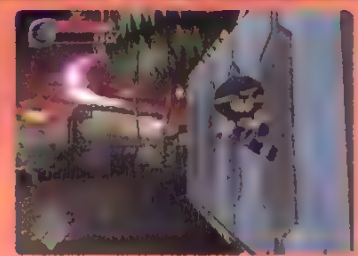
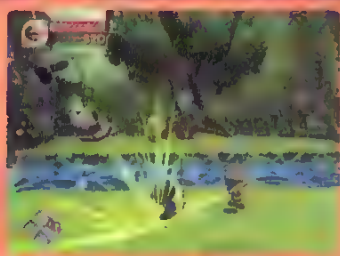
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Violence



PlayStation 2



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"Dad, I can explain everything. Really!"



No, he's not the new Ninja Turtles bad guy



Odds, schmoods

PLAYSTATION 2

# BLOOD WILL TELL

...AND HOW!

**Samurai are cool.** Cybernetic samurai who have had their flesh replaced with weapons are somewhat disturbing, but really cool. An action title by Sega in-house developer WOW featuring two-player co-op and starring said samurai sounds really, really cool.

Blood Will Tell is based on a classic Japanese manga (comic book) and chronicles the story of Hyakkimaru, the samurai we were talking about before. He is on a quest to simply live a normal life, though the modifications to his body make that a bit difficult. As you might guess, the whole "flesh replaced with weapons" concept promises to be an interesting twist on standard brawler gameplay. So far we've heard the words "swords," "missiles," and "bazooka" concerning Hyakkimaru's arsenal, which makes our thumbs twitch in anticipation. No longer will players be limited to weapons found on the ground or off of fallen enemies – the entire body of the main character will provide an implement of destruction for every occasion.

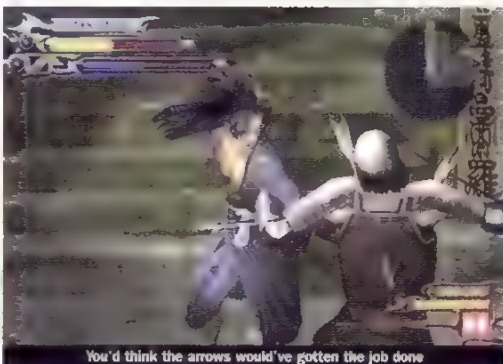
Though Hyakkimaru may not have much in the way of humanity, he does have a friend. Named Dororo, she is his companion throughout the quest, and will offer help, guidance, and someone to guard his back against enemies. And she's not even an NPC – in single-player, gamers will be able to switch between the two comrades,

while in co-op mode she will be controlled by the second player. Puzzles and fighting will both reportedly require the use of each character in certain situations, making for an interesting dynamic. This likely means Blood Will Tell will be a bit deeper than the usual "kill stuff" game flow of the genre. Details of Dororo's combat abilities are unknown, but we assume she must be pretty tough to keep up with Hyakkimaru's bad self.

We've all had to suffer through terrible license-based games (anyone remember E.T.?), but Blood Will Tell seems to be of a different sort. Because it was inspired by manga instead of film, there is less definition in the existing material regarding animation, movements, and setting. Everyone knows that letting the development team get their creativity on tends to result in a far better product than having some studio executive reviewing and stamping approval on everything. Sega seems to be doing things right with Blood Will Tell, which gives us a warm fuzzy feeling deep inside.

We can't stress how much the brawler genre will benefit should this title turn out to be as awesome as it looks: action a la Lord of the Rings, exploration and puzzles like Legacy of Kain, and a hero as bad ass as Solid Snake. Blood Will Tell will be able to speak for itself early next year.

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER WOW ENTERTAINMENT ■ RELEASE 1ST QUARTER



You'd think the arrows would've gotten the job done

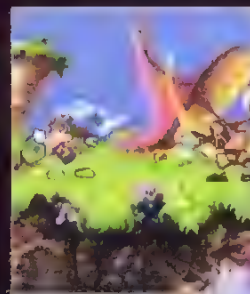
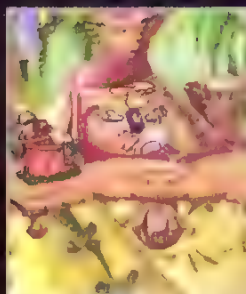
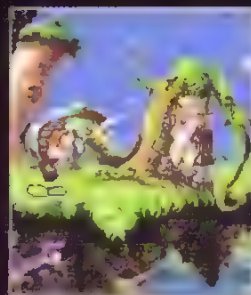


"I've got a bad feeling about this..."

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PLAYSTATION 2

# ONIMUSHA BLADE WARRIORS

FAMILY FIGHTING

**Bridging the lengthy gap** between Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny and the upcoming Onimusha 3 is Onimusha Blade Warriors – a four-player melee game. Based on the Onimusha 3 engine and allowing players to mix characters from the first two games, Blade Warriors is shaping up to be a fast-paced fighting free-for-all.

The title will feature a single-player mode where gamers can level-up their chosen characters. This solo section has three parts: Samanosuke's life after the original game ends, the Onimusha 2 chapter highlighting Jubei's continuing story, and the Genma chapter in which players take the role of Marcellus and attempt to destroy all of the human beings.

Despite its dark plotlines and brutal action, the gameplay is simple and intuitive enough to encourage the whole family to play along. Mom, dad, brother, and sister can test their mettle in Blade Warriors' real draw – the four-player battles offering 20 available characters from the first two Onimusha titles and a handsome collection of locations.

While the levels are presented in a 2D style, the areas offer multiple levels of play that gamers can access with a double-tap of the D-pad. The mansion arena, for instance, has rooftop and garden level action. Hmmm, 2D action in areas with multiple levels? Some of you may already be making the Super Smash Bros. connection. The similarities don't end there – the game will also offer an expected amount of environmental destruction and items that can be picked up during matches, like hammers and fans. Four-player battles, as in the inspiration game, are wonderfully hectic and the brawling is augmented with a classic Onimusha ability – energy absorption. Warriors can suck the orbs from other fighters to increase their magic ability, execute special moves, and heal among other rumored actions.

Certainly, the wait for Onimusha 3 is long, but Blade Warriors looks to be more than just filler. We're hoping for a game that will stand alone in the multiplayer fighting genre. Look for it early next year.

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER CAPCOM ■ DEVELOPER CAPCOM ■ RELEASE FEBRUARY



With two players, the camera highlights up-close action



Special moves can be executed with the help of orbs

Genma and humans are playable characters

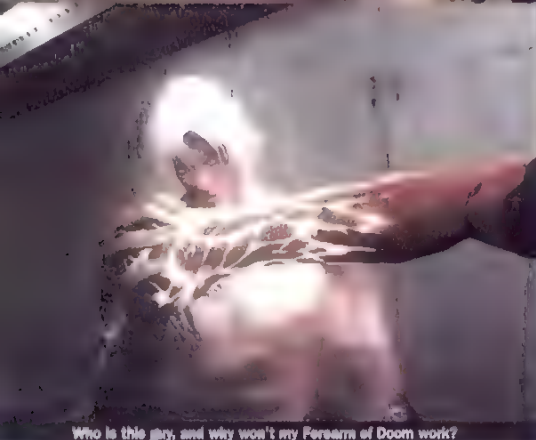


The environments offer lots of variety



Four-player action is more than intense





Who is this guy, and why won't my *Fearnam of Doom* work?



It's a bit late for introductions



やられた! 助けてくれ!

Blood spatters let you know when you get hit

XBOX

# BREAKDOWN

## NOT JUST A SHOOTER

**Capping bad guys** with your firearm of choice is pretty run-of-the-mill for the first-person genre. Namco aims to take things one step further with *Breakdown*, a title being billed as a "first-person action/fighter." We showed you a first look back in our July issue, but some new info and impressions came our way and we felt it best to let you in on them.

The creators of *Soul Calibur* and *Tekken* are bringing the first-person experience closer to players through expanding the focus of the game to include extensive melee combat. The play feels much more in-your-face than smacking Nazis with the butt of a rifle in *Medal of Honor* or decking aliens in *Halo*. One word: combos. Several different hand-to-hand moves are available to players, and can be strung together into a number of combo sequences to beat your enemies down with. These maneuvers are accompanied by cool-sounding effects and visceral animations to really lend an immersive feel to the fighting.

In addition to guns, fists, and the reliable old size 12, superhero-

like powers are part of your arsenal. Seemingly based around the glowing forearm which appears to be the title's trademark, the protagonist's abilities should add another level of depth to the action.

Another distinguishing feature of *Breakdown* is the animations that have been put in for everything you do. For instance, where in previous titles the player will walk over a health power-up and simply gain some life back, *Breakdown* will have you

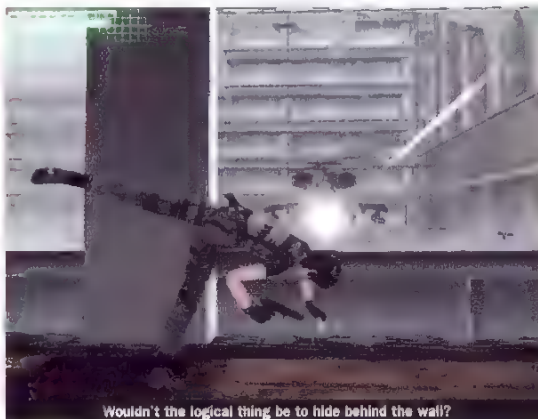
search a fallen body, come up with a candy bar, peel the wrapper off, and eat it bite by bite. This extends to everything - pushing buttons, turning keys, getting punched in the face, etc. Combined with the detailed combat system, this immerses gamers into the *Breakdown* experience to a greater degree than any title to date. After seeing it in action, we can't wait to really dig into this title. Coming early next year, we fervently hope *Breakdown* lives up to our expectations.



### KICK, PUNCH, IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

Duran, the hero of *Breakdown*, doesn't just use his martial arts to save ammo. We're sure that in some cases fists will be more effective than a 9mm. And, of course, there's this glowing forearm you can see here. What exactly it does, why Duran has it, and how it'll impact strategy are all unknown, but from these shots our money is on some major glow-assisted butt-kicking going down.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NAMCO ■ DEVELOPER NAMCO ■ RELEASE 1ST QUARTER



Wouldn't the logical thing be to hide behind the wall?



For all the talk about hand-to-hand fighting, shooting guys is as fun as ever



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PLAYSTATION 2

## MAXIMO VS. THE ARMY OF ZIN

### FUN IN YOUR UNDERWEAR

**A lot of you complain** about the lack of old-school action aesthetics in today's games. Then, a great little title like Maximo comes out and nobody pays it any mind! Of course, Maximo's lackluster sales might have also had something to do with Capcom's ill-fated decision to release the game to rental outlets before it hit store shelves, but that's no excuse.

Luckily, the Maximo team has been granted another crack at it, and is intent on making myriad improvements to the original's already potent gameplay. Most importantly, the stern difficulty level has been eased back a bit — just slightly, however, as this is still a very challenging game. A lot of this comes as a result of the over 30 combat moves Maximo now has at his disposal, many of which can be modified on the fly with the d-pad. Some new weapons are also in store, including a huge

hammer that can flatten foes with impunity. Also, you will be able to collect enough souls to transform yourself into the Grim Reaper himself, and lay waste to enemies for a limited amount of time. Even better, you'll now be able to save more often and benefit from many more checkpoints during levels.

Of course, we can also expect Max to sport his famous armor, and — more importantly — the beloved boxer shorts that hark back to the days of Ghosts 'n Goblins. This time, however, some of these sexy undergarments actually have functionality in the game. Capcom let us know about two special boxer power-ups: the self-explanatory "Treasure Seeker" and the potentially mind-blowing "Boxers of Burning Vigor." While Capcom won't say what "Burning Vigor" is, let's just hope it's not something that Maximo picked up on shore leave in Thailand! Ouch!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY



Many of the enemies display a strange, mechanical look



You'll be able to transform into Grim at a few junctures



Don't argue with a naked guy holding a big hammer!



Maximo's move set is even more dynamic this time around

# GET STOKED!

"Forget Counter-Strike. Gauntlet is still the best multi-player game ever!"

Simon Monk  
Editor In Chief  
Stuff Magazine

## MIDWAY ARCADE CLASSICS

OVER 20  
ARCADE  
CLASSICS!

PLAYSTATION 2  
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Blood and Gore  
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As always, Siphon Filter provides a great balance of action, stealth, and strategy



The graphics are leagues above the PSone games, featuring reflective surfaces...



...and particle effects like burning bodies

PLAYSTATION 2

# SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

## MUTATING MULTIPLAYER MADNESS

**Thus far in** the current console cycle, Sony's Siphon Filter series (one of the highlights of its PSone-era output) has been missing in action. In the meantime, a whole new crop of special ops contenders, including Splinter Cell and Freedom Fighters, has been making names for themselves with action-minded gamers. While this might seem like a mistake on Sony's part, in actuality Gabe and company have been biding their time in hopes of making strides towards true innovation.

If you've read any of our previous coverage of the game, you'll know where that innovation lies: online multiplayer. What's more, it's not the deathmatching you might expect. Rather, you and up to three of your closest friends can join forces to tackle the levels from the single-player missions as a team. As you might expect, this drastically changes the dynamics of the game.

Most obviously, developer Sony Bend has constructed the levels so that certain areas will only be accessible by teams of people. For example, in single player, your path may be blocked by a subway car. In co-op, you can have your partner boost you up on the car, then turn around and give them a hand so you can both proceed. This team dynamic will let you access new areas and alternate routes, which means that completing the same level as part of a team will be an entirely different experience than tackling it solo.

Teamwork will be important to managing your arsenal

of weapons as well, as each character can now keep only four weapons on their person (three firearms and one other type, such as grenades and the like). Because you and your squad members will each be playing as created characters with unique strengths and abilities, it will be important to put the right gun in the right hands. If you're a sniper, you don't want to be carrying a huge machine gun, so it might be wise to drop it and let a burlier teammate come pick it up. To coordinate strategic decisions like this, you'll be able to chat via the SOCOM voice communicator or issue quick directives with the controller's d-pad.

Though gunplay is always central to the Siphon Filter experience, you'll also have some new hand-to-hand moves to get out of a tight spot. These include an apparently NFL inspired shoulder block and the ubiquitous neck snap. Crunch! In addition to these, you'll be gunning with more finesse than ever thanks to the color coded targeting system, which now specifies limbs and how deadly the force of the shot will be (red being a fatal headshot, yellow for wounding, and green for high possibility of kill).

As you can tell, Siphon Filter: The Omega Strain is definitely taking a different approach to the traditional covert action of the series. This is certainly a risk for Sony, but one that could result in another breakout online hit the likes of SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA BROADBAND) ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY BEND ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY



When the color-coded targeting doesn't get the job done...



...a quick neck-snap should do the trick

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## PREVIEWS



XBOX

# DEAD OR ALIVE ONLINE

NO LONGER SO POINTY

Since online play has now been a reality for some time, people who aren't sports fans or FPS nuts are asking one question: Where are the fighting games? Tecmo and its libertalented in-house developer, Team Ninja, have the cure for your online brawling blues.

DOA Online is two games in one. The first is the original, which was in arcades, on PSone and a Japan-exclusive on Saturn. It's been touched up immensely, and has such a high resolution, it's almost silly. Silly, we tell you! Also included is Dead or Alive 2 - a great game in its own right. However, it now has all the graphical brilliance of the system-seller we like to call DOA 3.

What new tricks and treats will Team Ninja roll out for us here? We can tell you there will be never-before-seen costumes for DOA 2. Other details, like if tag will be included or if the headset is supported, will have to be answered at a later date. As long as it plays like the series always has and works seamlessly online, we won't complain - and we're sure most of you feel the same way.



DOA 3's resolution is so high, you can see the pump on Tina's boobs

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER TECMO  
 ■ DEVELOPER TEAM NINJA ■ RELEASE JANUARY



GAMECUBE

# DONKEY KONGA

## BANGIN' WITH BANANAS



In the land of Japan, where music games reign supreme, Namco recently brought its popular arcade taiko drum simulator to PlayStation 2. The beat goes on, because Donkey Konga is hitting GameCubes in the land of the big red dot on the twelfth of December.

Namco and Nintendo are fast becoming best friends. First, it was a connectivity-laden Pac-Man for GameCube. Then, Link beat back all comers in Soul Calibur II. Let us not forget the time Nintendo kept a bully from harassing poor Namco on the school playground during recess. Now, Nintendo staple Donkey Kong takes his prized barrels, stacks two together, and smacks a mean conga in a Namco-developed GameCube title.

The premise is simple, and follows normal rhythm game protocol. When an icon gets to a certain part of the screen, beat the drum. One color

onscreen requires you to hit the right half of the conga, and the other is for smacking the left. However, there's also a symbol which requires you to clap. You can do this yourself, or get a buddy to help you so you can concentrate on the drumming.

Plenty of jungle ambience is thrown in, so DK and his little pal Diddy feel right at home. Other Donkey Kong Country co-stars will pop their heads in on occasion as well through some sweet cutscenes. If nothing else, these are sure to get you jonesing for a real Donkey Kong platformer on the GameCube.

The game will retail for around \$60, with one drum included. Extra drums will be available for about \$30. It's not a given that this game will make it to our shores, but look on the bright side - Sega gave us Samba De Amigo on Dreamcast, so anything can happen.



This kid is excited about this game, and you should be, too



The blue-ish icons are for clapping

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER NAMCO  
 ■ RELEASE DECEMBER 12 IN JAPAN, TBA IN U.S



PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE | GAME BOY ADVANCE

# THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

NAUGHTY

**The Sims has always** been a digital outpouring of deviant human behavior, but in the series' first console entries, the action was tame to say the least. That family-friendly content seems to be getting chucked out of the window with the upcoming release of *The Sims: Bustin' Out*. That's not to say certain family dynamics don't come into play, though.

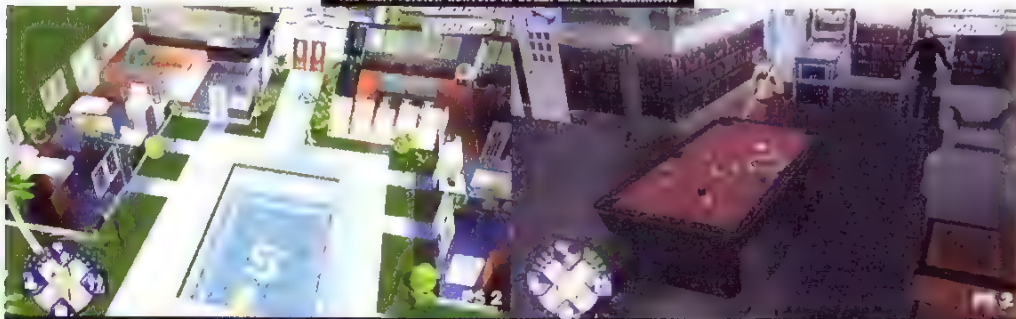
We got to spend some time with a preview build of the game and want to share what our day was like. We became world class sex symbols. Then, we got into a catfight that progressed into naked hot-tubbin' action (girl on girl, natch), switched our career paths to a more gangster bent, had a baby, spent the night in a haunted mansion, and donated \$20,000 to outfit the local nudist colony with a new hot springs tub. Keep in mind, though, we had some tricks to help out. For you at home,

these events will take much longer than a day.

The career options, social interaction, and shopping aren't the only areas that are seeing improvements. The graphics are looking sweeter than ever, the stereo and TV options offer more variety, the goals are funnier and more challenging, and you even need to procure various modes of transportation.

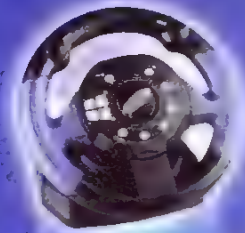
We tried to take the bus to a movie premiere and were warned that a hottie of our caliber shouldn't be hitching a ride on municipal mass transit. Nice!

We also fiddled around with the GBA version, and were quite pleasantly surprised. The famed connectivity with the GameCube edition wasn't available for testing, but the standalone game looks like it will manage the complexity of *The Sims* quite nicely. We're ready for a whole new Sim-verse on nearly every gaming platform. Are you?



■ STYLE 1-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER MAXIS ■ RELEASE DECEMBER 16

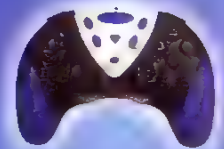
Maximize  
Your PlayStation 2



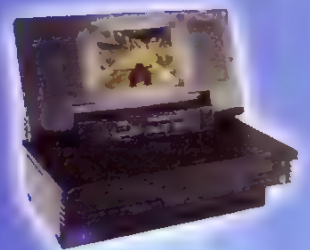
Satisfy Your Needs



Expand Your Horizons



Wireless Connections



Optimize Your Game

Maximum  
Gaming



intel.com

## PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

# GROWLANSER GENERATIONS

RPG INCUBATION

If the RPG market were a kennel, then Working Designs would be the dog-lover who takes home the new pup of the litter, raises it lovingly for years, and then brings it to the show. And the world of GROWLANSER is a colorful and well-developed world of full-time, professional developers who have spent years of their lives perfecting the art of the RPG. Growlanser: Generations is Working Designs' most polished and ambitious work to date. It's a part of the Growlanser series, which has been a mainstay of the RPG market since the late PS2 years. Growlanser: The Legend of Justice and Growlanser II: The Two Princesses - The Archaic Kingdoms were the series' most polished packages.

The latest news indicates Generations will come out next March. However, knowing (and loving) Working Designs as we do, the likelihood of that projection coming to fruition on time is slim. We're talking lottery odds here, people. Still, now you know about it, and you can wait for it intently like we are.



"They may have kicked us out of The Bear's Tusk, but never fear. We can go drink at The Unicorn's Horn down the street!"

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
- **PUBLISHER** WORKING DESIGNS
- **DEVELOPER** CAREER SOFT
- **RELEASE** MARCH



PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX

# RED NINJA

TOO MUCH ACTION FOR ONE MAN TO HANDLE

**Female ninjas** are all the rage these days. Shinobi got dissed for a female replacement [see Nightshade preview, last issue *Ed.*], and now a new girl is coming onto the scene.

In *Red Ninja*, players assume the role of Kurenai, a woman whose father was brutally murdered before her eyes in a clan war in 16th century Japan. Kurenai, fueled by hatred for her father's killers, is adopted into a clan and (you guessed it) taught the arts of the ninja. The twist is that she primarily uses the Tetsugen, a unique wire weapon.

The Tetsugen changes its functionality based on the length and strength of the wire as well as any end attachments that may be affixed to it, theoretically making for a greater variety of weaponry than is typically available in ninja games. Of course, Kurenai can use old favorites like the blowgun, smoke bombs, and even rockets. Additionally, she can dislocate her own joints, Houdini style, to escape prisons and other tight spots.

Finally, Vivendi informs us that players are able to "use your womanly wiles to entice and distract your enemies." What those exact wiles are is unknown, but we expect them to live up to the game's projected Mature rating.

The game's massive environments and storyline were developed by Shinsuke Sato, an acclaimed Japanese writer/director. As well as having made a number of widely popular feature films, he worked on *Tekken 4* and *Dynasty Warriors 4*, both of which had excellent settings. Hopefully the expertise he brings to the project will result in truly epic levels to explore and conquer.

Tranji Studio was created by Japanese developers Opus (UFC for PSone) and New Corporation (Victorious Boxers) specifically to make stealth/action games. The focus this new entity is bringing to *Red Ninja* promises to make it a landmark title when it reaches gamers in late 2004.



Tetsugen in action

The weaker sex, indeed!



Who needs a periscope when you've got a third-person camera?

The traditional ninja art of ledge-hanging

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
- **DEVELOPER** TRANJI STUDIO
- **RELEASE** FALL 2004



PLAYSTATION 2

## TRANSFORMERS ARMADA: PRELUDE TO ENERCON

### FANBOYS, START YOUR DROOLING

**While the** *Transformers Armada* television show has received mixed reviews from fans, the new game based on the series is sure to make those same appreciators wet themselves in excitement. Featuring some of the most gorgeous graphics the PS2 has ever produced and three playable Autobots (Hot Shot, Red Alert, and, naturally, Optimus Prime), *Prelude to Energon* is a Transformers fan's ultimate dream.

The plots of both the show and the game involves a Pokémon-esque search for tiny robots called Mini-cons, which endow Transformers with additional abilities. After banning the robots from their home planet because of the destruction they cause, the Transformers discover a stash of Mini-cons on Earth. The Autobots set out to find the tiny terrors before the Decepticons do.

The search for the Mini-cons takes place all over the planet, including the Amazon, Alaska, the Pacific, and

even heads off-world to places like Cybertron. Each of the Autobots has different abilities and gains more by equipping Mini-cons. Selecting the right character and Mini-cons for each stage adds strategy to the gameplay and opens new areas for exploration. The heroic Transformers will need all of the firepower they can get when they face off with Decepticon bosses like Megatron, Starscream, Tidal Wave, and even the planet-sized Unicron (who, unlike the Transformers movie, is not voiced by the equally large Orson Welles).

With a host of unlockable abilities, expansive stages to explore, and killer graphics, *Prelude to Energon* is looking like one of the PS2's most exciting new action titles. Plus, it has the freakin' Transformers in it! Shape-shifting cars are the coolest. We transformed our cars into scrap metal when we tried to make them fight. You can avoid the same fate by simply picking up this killer game.



Hot Shot is one of the playable Autobots



The environments are breathtaking

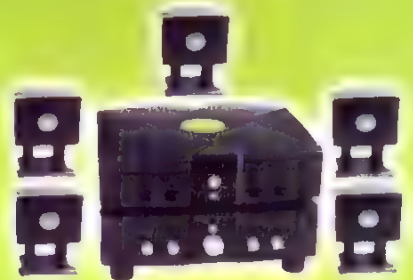
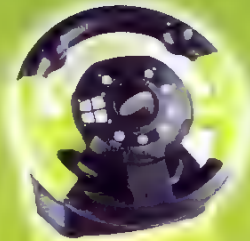


Even giant robots enjoy nature walks



Here, Hot Shot unloads on BUMBLEBEE for being such a wuss

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■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ATARI ■ DEVELOPER MELBORNE HOUSE ■ RELEASE MAY

# PHOTOPHILE

PLAYSTATION 2

## HYPER STREET FIGHTER II



Mega Man isn't the only one with a 18th birthday - Street Fighter II is reaching that milestone as well. To celebrate, Capcom is making Hyper Street Fighter II for PS2 - a compilation of all things Street Fighter. The glory days of watching your AI-controlled opponents walk right into the hundred-hand slap are back at last! With every version of every character (original, championship edition, turbo, etc.) to choose from and a gallery mode to chart the evolution of SF II, Hyper should satisfy even the most rabid of fans. Though no U.S. release date has been announced, it will ship in Japan in December.

PLAYSTATION 2

## GUNGRAVE: OVERDOSE



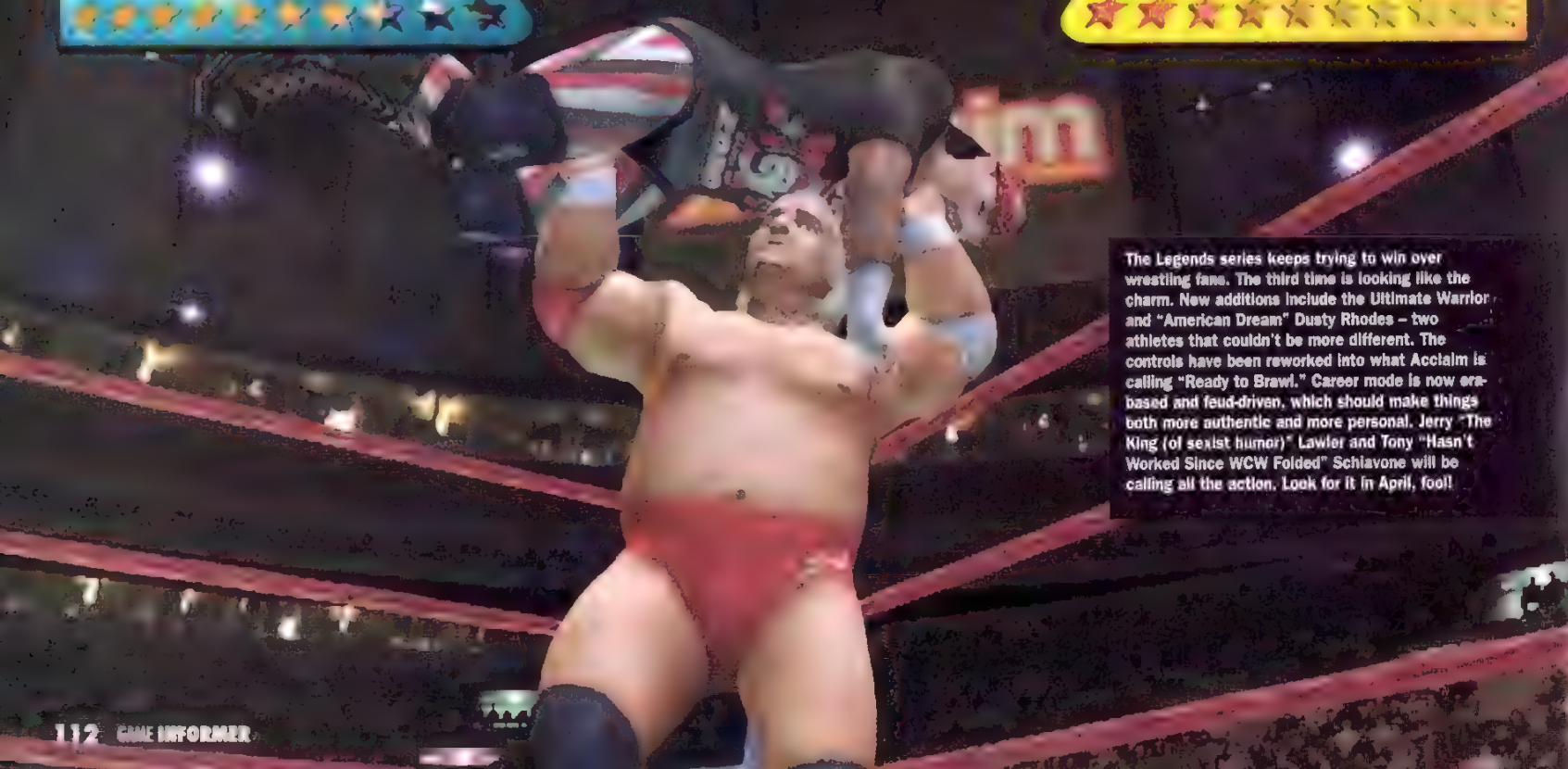
The original Gungrave left many fans craving more, and Sega's giving it to them in this sequel. Featuring a reanimated corpse on a quest to...ah...blow stuff up, Gungrave: Overdose has guns. Lots of them. Big guns, small guns, coffins full of guns, everything you could want. No longer are you limited to blowing up enemies - now you can take out any sinister looking walls or other environmental objects that look at you funny. Bigger and better is the plan - bigger stages, better graphics, you get the idea. As it's scheduled for a fall 2003 release in Japan, we can hope that gamers will be able to take back control of everyone's favorite undead killing machine sometime in 2004.

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

## LEGENDS OF WRESTLING: SHOWDOWN



Dusty



The Legends series keeps trying to win over wrestling fans. The third time is looking like the charm. New additions include the Ultimate Warrior and "American Dream" Dusty Rhodes - two athletes that couldn't be more different. The controls have been reworked into what Acclaim is calling "Ready to Brawl." Career mode is now era-based and feud-driven, which should make things both more authentic and more personal. Jerry "The King (of sexist humor)" Lawler and Tony "Hasn't Worked Since WCW Folded" Schiavone will be calling all the action. Look for it in April, fool!



PLAYSTATION 2

# GALLOP RACER 7



Horsing racing games are huge in Japan, but don't sell too well over here. We place the blame firmly on your shoulders. Yeah, you. Did you buy Gallop Racer 2003 after we told you how dang-blasted cool it is? Well, Tecmo keeps pumping them out overseas. While there's no word on a U.S. release, we suggest you do your part by going out and picking up the last game now. Only then will we forgive you. But until then...we have no readers.

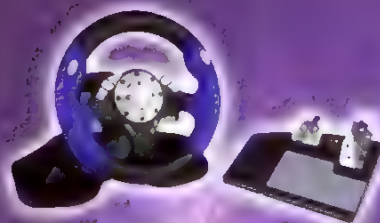
PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

# PLAGUE OF DARKNESS



In this forthcoming action title from Namco and Widescreen Games, players take command of a Knight of the Order (which Order we don't know - apparently *The Order*) on a quest to rid medieval Europe of a horrible, demonic plague. Along the way you will encounter zombies and other nasties who are evidently all about the plague and don't want it stopped. The setting looks rather dark, so get ready to bring the light of the Order (maybe it's an Order of Light? Who knows) to these dreadful domains of demonic denizens sometime around June.

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# REVIEWS



**Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time**  
pg. 122



**Mario Kart: Double Dash**  
pg. 162



## ANDY

**Handle:** The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** New Cars, Watching The Yankees Lose **Dislikes:** Tutorials, That Little Pause When A DVD Changes Layers (Why Are There No Video Buffers To Stop This?) **Current Favorite Games:** Need For Speed: Underground, Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando, Top Spin, Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time, SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs, Call Of Duty, Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne

*Now retired from the rock scene, Andy spends endless hours, cooped, in his home office, enjoying the benefits of high definition television and surround sound far away from those swain things he has often heard referred to as people. A longtime fan of Metrod, 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:** The Mystery Of Jandek, Wasting Away In Puerto Vallarta, Looking For Lost Shakers Of Salt, The Indiana Jones Box Set, Robert Heinlein **Dislikes:** Star Wars Fan Boys Who Can't Face Reality (Except For Reiner), Guitar Center, Rock Clubs That Look Like Chipotle Inside, Message Board Hooligans **Current Favorite Games:** Jak II, Project Gotham Racing 2, Need For Speed: Underground, Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne, Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando

*While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games, might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrape 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.*



## KATO

**Handle:** The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Racing, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** Edinburgh, Lost Sides By Doves, Steve Bartman (The Guy's Got Initiative He Sees What He Wants And He Takes It) **Dislikes:** People With No Concept Of Personal Space (See Rude People), Online Players With Itchy Replay Fingers **Current Favorite Games:** Geometry Wars, Project Gotham Racing 2, The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King Empires: Dawn Of The Modern World

*When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying to 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 equanimity.*



## JEREMY

**Handle:** Gamezil **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Survival Horror, Action/Adventure, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Urban Vinyl, Trading Live Concert Recordings, Taking On The Unfathomable Pit Of Horror That Is My Hall Closet **Dislikes:** Discrimination, Over-Hyped Films Like Kill Bill And The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Remake, Cat Medical Emergencies **Current Favorite Games:** Voodoo Vince, Need For Speed Underground, Secret Weapons Over Normandy, Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow

*Obsessed with anything on a shiny silver disc, Jeremy fanatically collects video games, music, and movies. When not buying bigger media storage systems, he's filling his mind with useless trivia. Jeremy likes to write silly books about stores and comics that no one ever reads. Although he will never be able to stop himself from buying new games, Jeremy firmly believes the best system of all time was the Super Nintendo.*



## REINER

**Handle:** The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** The Tick DVD Collection (Best Dialogue Ever!), The New Villain In Star Wars: Episode III, Armies Of Middle-Earth Toys, The Upcoming Man-Thing Film **Dislikes:** Tom Cruise As A Samurai, Animated DVD Menus, Thinking About How Justin Bruised His Ass, Sponge Cake **Current Favorite Games:** SSX 3, Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne, Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando, Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time, Final Fantasy X 2, True Crime: Streets Of LA

*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 679 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his nine years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible: Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in them. Thus far, Reiner has appeared in Dragon Force, Alundra, and Perfect Dark. He will also be featured as a playable character in two forthcoming releases.*



## JUSTIN

**Handle:** The Digital Dewant **Expertise:** Action/Sports, Action/Adventure, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** My Remodeled Gym, Must mayostardayonnaise (See Mr. Show), School Of Rock, Learning New Fighting Styles, Indian Food, Ready To Drink Shakes, Outkast **Dislikes:** Lump Buzkit, Uncle Kracker, Severely Bruising My Ass **Current Favorite Games:** Tony Hawk's Underground, Mario Kart: Double Dash, WWE SmackDown: Here Comes The Pain, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004, Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness

*Unlike most gaming jaborins, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He's a former GWAAR slave and moonlights as wrestler Justin "Violent" Lee in the Minnesota independent scene, where he volentely 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.*



## LISA

**Handle:** La Game Nikita **Expertise:** Puzzle, RPGs, Action/Platform, Horror **Interests:** Transmetropolitan, Captain Marvel, Indiana Jones Box Set, My So-Called Life Box Set, Bubble Baths (Honestly, And I Don't Even Care If It's Cheesy) **Dislikes:** Not Being Able To Find The Hackers Soundtrack In Stores, Floors That Need A Good Swiffering **Current Favorite Games:** Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time, SSX 3, Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly, UrU, Ages Beyond Myst, Dr. Mario, Voodoo Vince, Need For Speed: Underground

*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 draw out boss battles since age 8. She has been known to wax philosophically about why jiggy-puff is desperately under-appreciated and wish that some "big" games were more fun, even if that means less pretty.*



## ADAM

**Handle:** The Alpha Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, First-Person Shooters, Fighting **Interests:** Edupoetic Entertainmant, The Sopranos, Futurama, Sports Games That Minnesota Teams Win **Dislikes:** Getting My Butt Shot Off By Other Media Guys In Call Of Duty Internet Forums, Text That Can't Be Skipped, Highway 394 **Current Favorite Games:** The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King (All Of Them), Call Of Duty, Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness, Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne

*Though he's the PC guy at work, Adam spends just as much time playing old-school consoles as than anything else. Recently having reached the escape velocity necessary to leave his parents' basement, he tends to spend his free time enjoying not being told to get a job or take out the garbage. That, or crafting elaborate plans to create the "most powerful party/character, strategy" in whatever game is sucking his life away at the moment. Interesting side note: Adam is one of the warring minority of (male) GI staff without delicately shaped facial hair.*

Our crack (or crackhead) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you'll hate. Most games are reviewed by 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 we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbie can understand our advanced video game largon. It is important to note that the Game of the Month is determined only by the main review score, not an average of the two opinions.

## 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.

<b>10</b>	Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game is virtually flawless, and thus this rating is rarely given out.
<b>9</b>	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.
<b>8</b>	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.
<b>7</b>	Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.
<b>6</b>	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 paying it will be yearning for something more.
<b>5</b> below	Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

### CONCEPT

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

### GRAPHICS

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

### SOUND

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

### PLAYABILITY

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

### ENTERTAINMENT

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

### REPLAY VALUE

The longevity of the title.

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



Content suitable for persons ages 3 and older.



Content suitable for persons ages 6 and older.



Content suitable for persons ages 13 and older.



Content suitable for persons ages 17 and older.



Content suitable only for adults.



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 drods you are looking for!

**1080i** - A resolution on specification used for HDTV. 1080 stands for resolution of 1920x1080 pixels. The "i" means that the video is being interlaced.

**480p** - Progressive scanning, the "p" (progressive), creates a picture signal with double the scan lines of a conventional interlaced picture, 480i (interlaced), to create a noticeably sharper image. The 480p image offers higher picture resolution and eliminates virtually all motion artifacts in a 640x480 pixel resolution setting.

**720p** - A resolution on specification used for HDTV. 720p stands for resolution of 1280x720 pixels. The "p" means that the video is in progressive format.

**action** - A term we use for games like *Zone of the Enders* and *Gunpoint*.

**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.

**cel shading** - A technique used to create 3D rendered objects that resemble hand-drawn animation cels.

**CG** - Computer Generated graphics.

**corruptdataphobia** - A fear of having corrupt memory card saves. Symptoms include obsessive game saving.

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

**fighting** - A term we use for games like *Street Fighter* and *Devo 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*, and *Unreal Tournament*.

**frame rate** - The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement.

**front-end** - A game's menus and options.

**GBA** - Game Boy Advance.

**GBC** - Game Boy Color.

**GC** - GameCube.

**HDTV** - High Definition Television.

**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.

**minigame** - 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** - Pinpoint 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.

**particle effects** - Things like smoke or sparks created in real time.

**PKer** - Payor Killer. This is a person who thrives on killing newbie or vulnerable characters in MMORPGs or shooting their teammates in games like *Counter Strike*.

**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.

**PSone** - Sony PlayStation.

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

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

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

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

**SNES** - Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

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

**strategy** - A term we use for games like *Command & Conquer* and *Falout Tactics*.

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

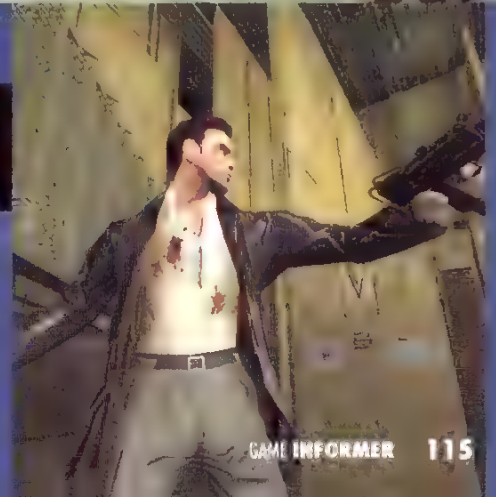


## GAME OF THE MONTH RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

Sequels don't come much bigger or better than *Going Commando*. With twice as many weapons, a quest that is roughly 150 percent larger, secrets and unlockables tucked around almost every corner, and graphics that will leave you nothing short of flabbergasted; developer Insomniac Games has pulled out all of the stops. Who would have thought that a rodent and a battery-operated robot could come together and become the most explosive duo in gaming? pg. 118

## PG GAME OF THE MONTH MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

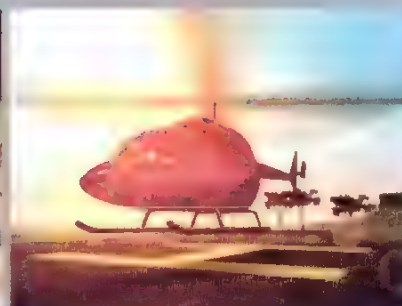
Max Payne is back, and this time he's got a lot more to say. In *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne*, the former cop is back in the city, and he's got a lot more to say. In *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne*, the former cop is back in the city, and he's got a lot more to say. In *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne*, the former cop is back in the city, and he's got a lot more to say.



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# Grand Theft Auto Auto

double  
Pack

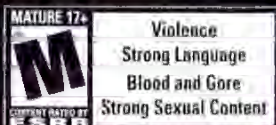
Grand Theft Auto III & Grand Theft Auto *Vice City*



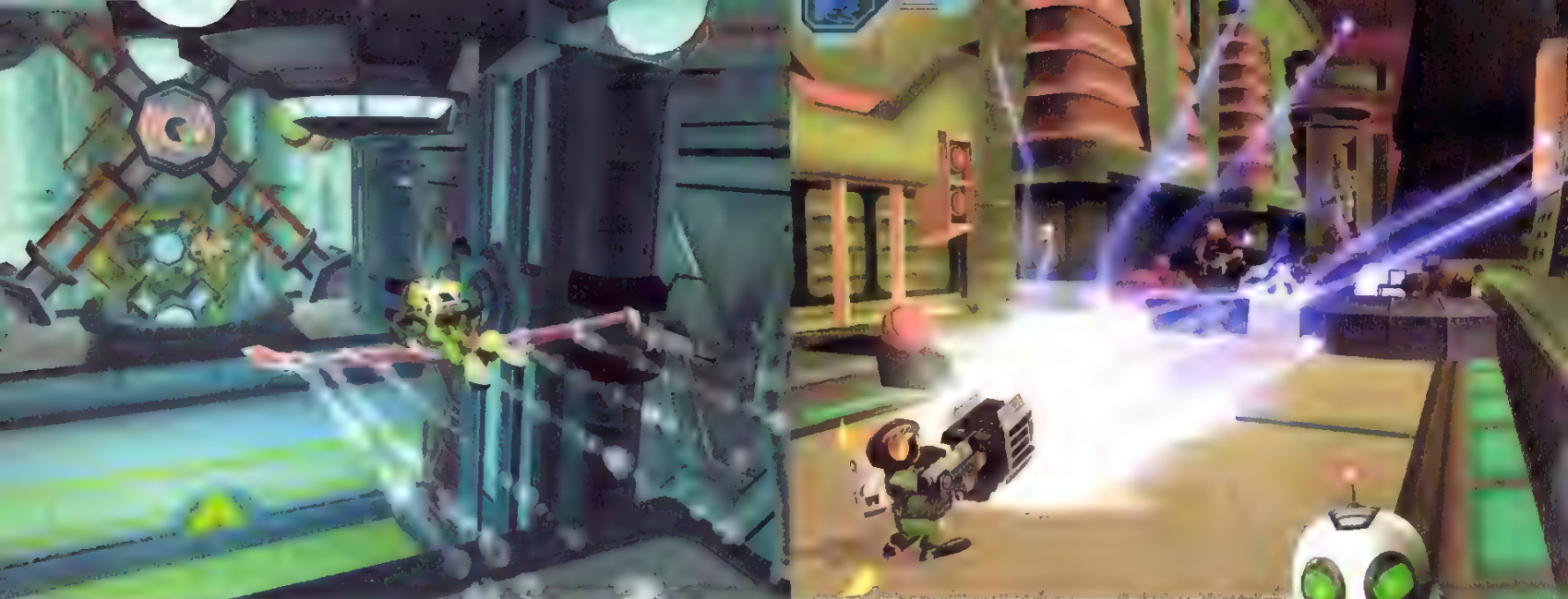
"GRAND THEFT AUTO III IS A NATIONAL OBSESSION,  
ITS SEQUEL BORDERS ON SOMETHING MORE: ART."  
TIME MAGAZINE

[WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/GRANDTHEFTAUTO](http://WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/GRANDTHEFTAUTO)

VERSION BY



Note: Rockstar will be following ESRB guidelines for M-rated games in the marketing of this game. This game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. It is a cruel representation of gangster activity and the glory, culture and lifestyle of the underworld. No identification or likeness to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events is intended or should be inferred. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events is coincidental. The names and publishers of the videogames are not in any way endorsed, condoned or approved by the level of behavior.



Throughout the course of the adventure you can purchase and unlock new costumes for Ratchet.



The space combat sequences are challenging, but not nearly as entertaining as the remainder of the game



Insomniac does a good job of changing up the action with minigames

PLAYSTATION 2

# RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

THE BIGGER THE BETTER



I knew I was in for a treat when the logo of the game exploded. Nothing says quality better than a big ball of fire right out of the gate. Hot off of the heels of the first entry in the series, *Going Commando* hits the ground running and blazes a trail of brilliance through innovative weapon play, edge-of-your-seat challenges, jaw-dropping visuals, and a quest that is roughly 150 percent larger than before.

In the original game, you could fly through half the adventure before the difficulty really kicked into high gear. In this follow-up, your skills are put to the test from the moment you pick up the controller and press Start. Along with the quintessential platforming exercises, the firearm-based combat has received a significant boost in difficulty. Enemies react realistically to situations, grow in strength as the game unfolds, and are capable of blowing a hole in your furry exterior before you knew what hit you. Throughout every second of play, you'll find yourself formulating battle strategies and figuring out which weapons work best on certain enemy types. Gone are the days of lazily running through a stage with nothing but your trusty wrench.

Developer Insomniac Games has also integrated role-playing elements into the mix. Experience points are gained from every foe that Ratchet and his trusty metal companion slay. When enough experience is accumulated, additional health is awarded. At the beginning of the quest, you start with four health units. By the end of the game, you could earn up to 80. That's a ton of HP!

Interestingly, weapons gain experience too, and will upgrade in power and functionality as they are powered up. In total, your arsenal can consist of over 40 unique

weapons and gadgets. All of the munitions are very creative and a serious blast to manhandle. I'll even go as far as saying that the weaponry from the first game look like measly pellet guns by comparison.

With more firepower than a small third-world nation, the complexity of combat is explosive and frenzied. To make dodging incoming blasts a little easier, Ratchet now has the ability to strafe.

To change things up and give gamers' nerves a break, Insomniac has gone out of its way to include as much variety as possible. Maxigames can be found around almost every corner. You can compete in hoverbike races, win bolts in gladiator-styled arena battles, and rip the cosmos a new one in harrowing space battles. I lost more hours than I care to admit in the arenas, and I enjoyed the speeds that the racing delivered. However, the space combat really got on my nerves. I like the idea behind it, but the controls and overall feel of these segments don't match the high level of quality that the remainder of the game emits.

Outside of this small complaint, *Going Commando* truly is worth every cent. It's an enthralling game that is impossible to put down. The story is a real side-splitter (I laughed out loud on countless occasions), the graphical details will leave you speechless, and the gameplay really couldn't be more rewarding.

As you work your way through this remarkable release, you'll stumble upon a bevy of unlockable content – including hidden costumes and bonus modes that are just as polished and addictive as the main game. Sequels really don't get much better than this. – REINER

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** INSOMNIAC GAMES ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11



# GAME OF THE MONTH

## RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

### THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
**T**  
MILD LANGUAGE  
ESRB

**9.5**

**"Sequels really don't get much better than this."**



■ **Concept:**

The quest is 150 percent larger, twice as challenging, and loaded to the max with amazing weapons and explosive action.

■ **Graphics:**

The eye of detail, attributed to the environments and character models really is unheard of. Every inch of this title is a work of art.

■ **Sound:**

A catchy, upbeat soundtrack and hilarious spoken dialogue.

■ **Playability:**

Tougher and more dynamic in every way. The new weapons rock, and the enemies are even smarter.

■ **Entertainment:**

A better game all around with replay stemming in the form of tons of noteworthy unlockables.

■ **Replay Value:**

High

### SECOND OPINION

I thoroughly enjoyed the original R&C, and was ready to just repeat more of the same and be happy as a clam. Lucky for us, Insomniac wasn't screwing around, and really stepped up to the plate with not only more content, but the best and most compelling content the company has put out to date. The levels and puzzles are ingenious, and I just love how all the RPG experience elements enhanced the game. It forced me to use all the weapons, and also kill each and every bad guy. Scrumptious! I definitely hate the flight levels, as the radar is completely worthless, but every other maxigame is fantastic. Even better, after you beat the game, the challenge mode is actually...well, challenging. The bosses are much more difficult, and you basically can't unload lead fast enough. I loved playing this game once, but it is even better the second time, and there aren't many games that you can say that about.

—ANDY — 9.5



One of the more difficult weapons to acquire is Clank's antenna tear.



Giant Clank is playable on several of the sphere worlds.



The intense rail slide sequences make a return.



Almost all of the weapons can be upgraded and show cosmetic changes.

LOS ANGELES



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ACTIVISION

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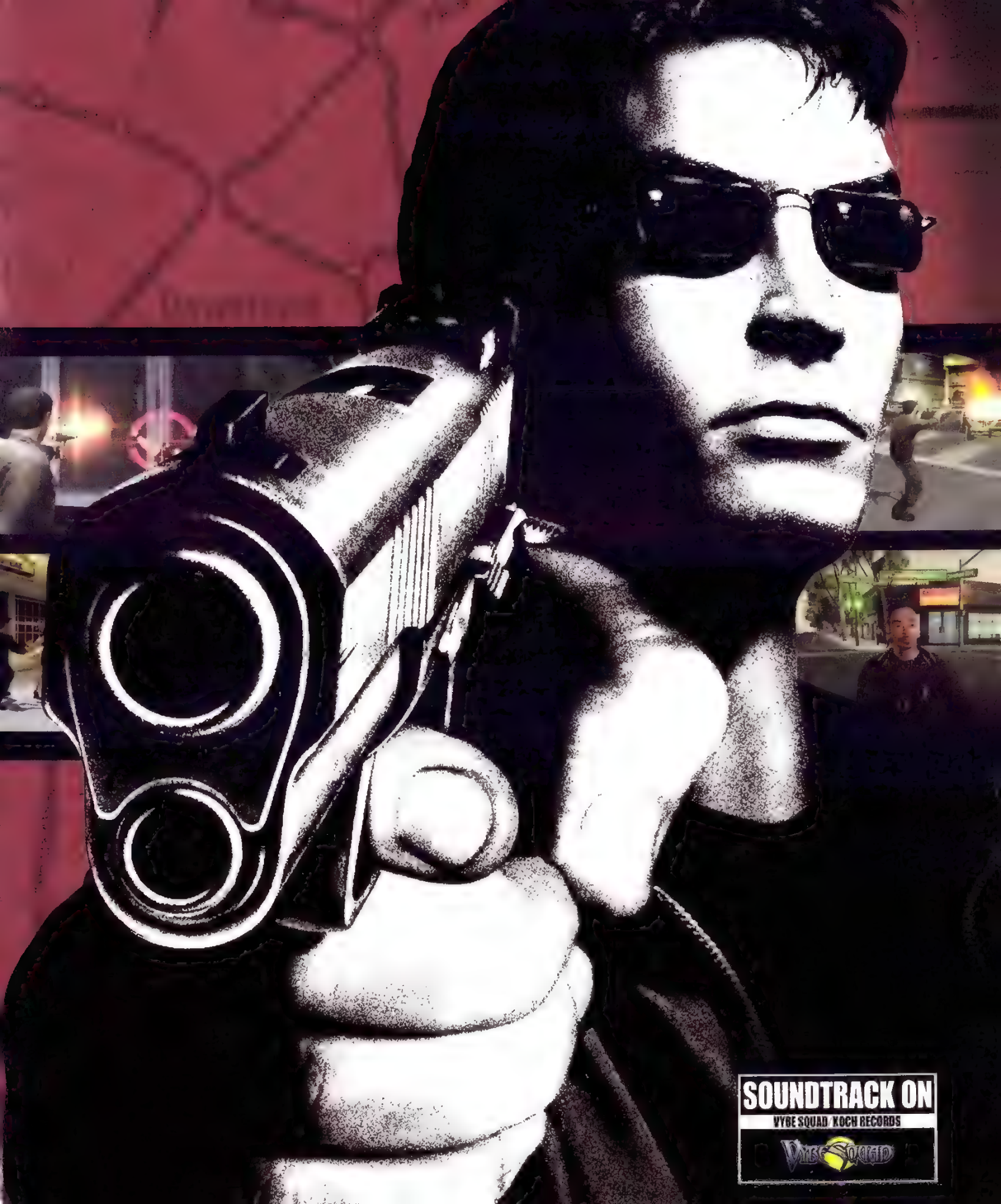
PlayStation 2



**MATURE 17+**  
**M**  
 CONTENT RATED BY  
**ESRB**  
 Blood and Gore  
 Mature Sexual Themes  
 Strong Language  
 Violence

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\*Nintendo GameCUBE game contains fewer songs.





**SOUNDTRACK ON**

VYBE SQUAD / KOCH RECORDS

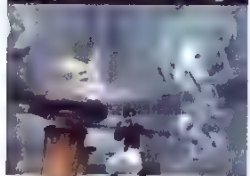




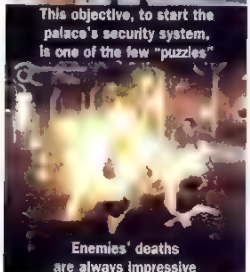
"...it actually inspired me to get to the next level more than an easier action title would have."



The palace environment is huge



This objective, to start the palace's security system, is one of the few "puzzles"



Enemies' deaths are always impressive

PLAYSTATION 2

# PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

PRETTY, FRUSTRATING, AND FUN

**W**ith *The Sands of Time*, Ubisoft is hoping for the ultimate old-school update – a marker for other companies looking to resurrect old franchises. I think it has done the job perfectly, but that includes some of the faults that Jordan Mechner's original creations also had. For me, the PoP games were frustrating beyond belief – but I was always compelled to continue in the journey. *The Sands of Time* plays the same way for me. Going through the platforming sections is an act of precise execution, and some of the combat-oriented rooms required a massive amount of retries on my part. I don't mean to say that this level of difficulty is bad, because it actually inspired me to get to the next level more than an easier action title would have.

Another thing getting me going past each room is the story and dialogue between the Prince and Farah. Their love/hate relationship plays out with sarcastic, funny banter and surprisingly good voice acting.

As in the original game (which you can play as an unlockable feature in this version), the Prince moves from room to room in a booby-trapped palace. After completing a room by defeating all of the enemies harbored within, the Sands of Time collect into a column that the Prince must

get to. Jumping into the glittering tube prompts a sand vision that shows you the key points of the next stage and, sometimes, a plot hint. When you enter a room, a flyby will illustrate the path and goal for the area. This is really, really annoying in the beginning, when everything is pretty self-explanatory; but the farther you go, the more you need this information to navigate the palace's brilliantly executed platforming obstacles. Jumping, swinging, and wall-running are so enjoyable that I would put these levels at the top of my "favorite platforming exercises" list.

The combat system makes a similar evolution to the platforming aspects of the title. In the first few battles, I was a little bored and afraid that this would be my move set for the rest of the game. Truly, this is not the case. Ubisoft managed, even by only using a few buttons, to develop a combat system that is deep and strategic. In later areas, the number of enemies you need to battle increases dramatically and occasionally feels a little cheap, but the satisfaction of outsmarting these sand creatures is really an asset for the title.

I can't recommend this title enough for its difficulty, beauty (which is downright stunning), exceptional level design, and elaborate move set. It's a wonderfully good time. – **LISA**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 4



Platforming is more fun than any game in recent memory



The combat is surprisingly deep

THE BOTTOM LINE

9.5

- **Concept:** Resurrect the Prince of Persia license and do the 3D gameplay correctly
- **Graphics:** Simply stunning. I think that this is what the Prince games were always supposed to look like
- **Sound:** Really great voice work and a soundtrack that manages to be in the forefront, but not at all annoying
- **Playability:** Easy, intuitive controls that also allow for deep combat and platforming
- **Entertainment:** Frustrating as can be, but you always want to keep going
- **Replay Value:** High

## SECOND OPINION

*The Sands of Time* starts off like a rocket. Graphically, the game is simply gorgeous and the gameplay is a perfect mix of all the things that made the original *Tomb Raider*, and later *ICO*, the great games that they are. Even the combat, which I found to be rather shallow at first, comes into its own in time. From vaulting off walls to reversing time to save myself from a poor jump or move, Prince rocks like few games do. Unfortunately, the honeymoon comes to an end eventually. Near the conclusion of the adventure, the combat becomes monotonous when you have to fight 20 or 30 guys in a row just to get to the next puzzle. In the end, its drawbacks don't ruin an otherwise outstanding game, but its short length and repetitive gameplay will turn off some. As a long-time Prince of Persia fan, I really enjoyed it, but its balance may ultimately could have been a candidate for game of the year.

**ANDY – 9.25**



PLAYSTATION 2

# SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALS

## SOCOM'S SECOND INNING

No matter what we critics say about it, SOCOM II is a title that is going to divide gamers in half and cause angry forum arguments like few before. What is it about this title that could make gamers fight like sci-fi nerds about the merits of the *Star Wars* prequels? Well, while it is an incredibly solid game, it's one that people have played before. Rather than call it SOCOM II, it could easily be retitled "More SOCOM."

Yes, there certainly are new features that were absent from the original – there are two new voice commands, improved graphics, and several new online components. While these are all well and good, if SOCOM were a PC game, these new features would be part of an expansion pack or even a patch. Basically, at its core, SOCOM II is a rehash of the original. Now, while some gamers will feel cheated by the lack of new content, an equal amount will embrace it – it may just be More SOCOM, but SOCOM was damn good to begin with.

SOCOM II is especially damn good online. New features include air strikes (which are far less useful or impressive than you'd think), and several new game types. The best of these are the Breach games, which require the SEALs to penetrate a terrorist fortress. Playing as a terrorist and waiting for their arrival, nervously scanning an area far too large to effectively protect, is a nerve-racking blast. Those

who play SOCOM for the online component will absolutely need its sequel; featuring 12 new maps as well as all 10 from the original, SOCOM II offers far more online fun than the first.

However, the single-player mode is nowhere near as successful. The AI is plagued with the same inconsistencies as the original, and the voice command is still a bit spotty. After playing some of the knockoffs which followed in SOCOM's wake, I was disappointed to see that SOCOM II's voice command felt inferior to several of the series' imitators. More often than not, the wrong element of my fire team would carry out my orders, leading to both irritation and botched missions. The solo play especially felt like a SOCOM expansion pack, and many stages seemed simply uninspired.

Despite my complaints, SOCOM II is a solid game with a lot to offer. While not outstanding, the graphics are quite good – character models and foliage are hugely improved from the original. The online game is spectacular, and the voice-acting adds a lot more personality to your squad mates. The original SOCOM was a milestone game which influenced the action genre immensely. It's a little sad to see its sequel display so little innovation, but as they say: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. – JEREMY

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16 PLAYERS VIA BROADBAND OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** ZIPPER INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 4

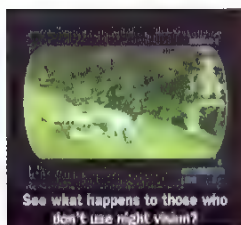


Most multiplayer maps feature turrets or other defenses



The story takes you through many different settings

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."



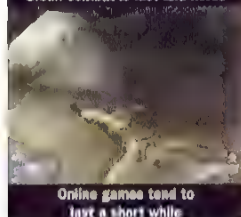
See what happens to those who don't use night vision?



The foliage offers invaluable cover



Urban combat is fast and fierce



Online games tend to last a short while

THE BOTTOM LINE

**M** 9

- **Concept:** Everyone's favorite squad based, voice controlled shooter is back with more of the action you crave
- **Graphics:** Not ceably improved from the original, but just short of truly impressive
- **Sound:** As sound is such a big part of the series, nothing has been skimped on in this aspect
- **Playability:** Other than a couple additional commands, nothing has changed at all from the first installment
- **Entertainment:** SOCOM's reign as the PS2's top online game won't be ending anytime soon
- **Replay Value:** High

### SECOND OPINION

Both online and off, very little has changed between the original SOCOM and this sequel. Rather than revamping the way that the game plays, Zipper Interactive turned its focus towards visual improvement and more dynamic map designs. The environments are dense with detail, and loaded to the hilt with choke points and zones that encourage team strategy. Zipper has also done everything it can to blanket the use of cheat peripherals. If all goes as planned, tournaments will finally be decided by player skill and not by the guy who just happens to have a GameShark. Of course, new weapons and game modes are included in the mix. The celebratory dances do a nice job of adding insult to injury. Furthermore, there's nothing funnier than watching an entire platoon get waxed by an unexpected airstrike. It may lean closer to an expansion pack than full-fledged sequel, but it's a better game for the wear and still the best online title for PS2.

REINER – 9.25

**"ENVIRONMENTS AS INTERACTIVE AS A LEVEL OF TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER"** - PLAYBOY

...UELIOS

KITANA

Open ended comb... your opponents in... with grappling... weapons and a... aerial...

Every... has a... Every... has a... how bad of a...

**"JACKASS MEETS THE SQUARED CIRCLE IN AMERICA'S BACKYARD"**  
OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

There... slams, power bombs... a few of the... devastating moves at... disposal when you take... of your... arsenal!!!

... get your... sensitive arsenal, and put yourself in the game...

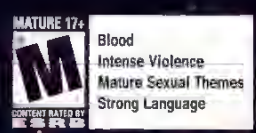
**"STEP OUT OF THE RING AND INTO THE FUTURE OF WRESTLING"**

- HIT PARADER MAGAZINE

**BYWGAME.COM**



PlayStation 2



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"FROM ROOFTOPS TO ESCALATORS, NOTHING IS OFF LIMITS." - FHM

# BACKYARD

## WRESTLING

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

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Features over 40 songs from:

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**"Underground blows the doors off other racers. It gets my vote for racing game of the year, easy."**

PLAYSTATION 2

# NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

YOU'LL DRIVE A HYUNDAI AND LOVE IT

**E**ven after playing this game for basically 20 hours straight, I have no idea what the story behind Underground is supposed to be. Sure, there are cutscenes. And yeah, you can get your ride on the cover of various tuner magazines as you climb the street racing ranks, but as far as something that ties it all together; it certainly isn't the story.

That's not to say there isn't something that drives you to keep playing. In fact, I found the tuning and tweaking aspects of your hooptie to be incredibly addicting. Perhaps even more so than the driving. There are just so many things you can do to customize your vehicle. The genius behind this title is that even if you lose a race, you are always collecting style points for drifts, drafting, jumps and shortcuts. So basically, at the end of every race you unlock something to either add to your ride or a new car altogether.

The amount of customization you can put into your auto is simply breathtaking. Ground effects, engine tune-ups, nitrous boosts, decals, vinyl sets, turbo kits, tires...the list goes on and on. I quickly found myself tinkering with my vehicle after almost every race. While the engine upgrades are an easy choice, picking the look of your car is an engrossing experience. Paint jobs and wheels are where I spent most of my time, but once you really get hooked, you can choose from literally hundreds of decals that gives the game thousands of

different combinations so no two rides look alike.

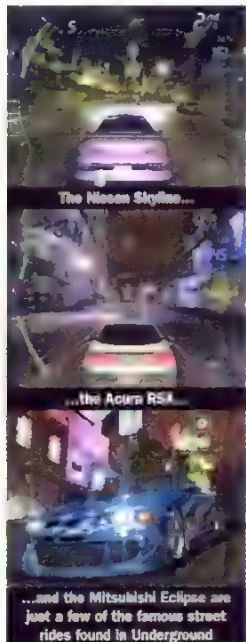
This is especially handy if you take the Underground experience online, where checking out the other players' rides and showing off yours is almost as fun as the racing itself. Which reminds me, I should probably talk about that, too.

Underground offers four different types of games: drift, drag, sprint, and circuit. The circuit and sprint racing is pretty standard. In fact, I would even go as far as to say that I enjoyed Midnight Club II's racing just a little bit better. But Underground has something Club doesn't, and that's the drift and drag modes, which I found to be incredible. First of all, drag racing isn't just about putting the pedal down. The game requires you to hit specific shift points to accelerate. Plus, there is traffic, and wise use of nitrous is key to victory. This is easily the best video game drag racing ever. And I mean that.

The other impressive mode is drift. When I first started playing the game, I thought all the vehicles drove about the same. Then this mode came along. Mastering the art of driving sideways is no easy task. Not only is it immensely entertaining, it really shows off how well EA did on Underground's physics engine.

With online play, a great assortment of well-known tuner cars, a killer soundtrack, and some addictive gameplay, Need For Speed: Underground blows the doors off other racers. It gets my vote for racing game of the year, easy. — **ANDY**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 2-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA CANADA  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 23



## THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERETT  
**E**  
 9.5

9.5

- **Concept:** Hit the streets with 20 fully customizable rides from a wide-variety of manufacturers
- **Graphics:** Three times during this review, I was asked if I was playing the Xbox version; they're that good
- **Sound:** The rap side of the soundtrack is "crunkta.war." The driving rock music could have been better
- **Playability:** With on-the-fly difficulty settings, this game is easy to pick up and play through
- **Entertainment:** Creating your own hooptie is amazingly addicting. Oh yeah, and the racing is fun, too
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

## SECOND OPINION

You're going to read reviews of Underground that say something like, "Wow, they've made a game that is just as exciting as real-life street racing." Well, I once had the opportunity to ride in a drag race with a street racer, and I have to tell you: The drag races in this game are more thrilling than the real thing. Never before has a title captured a sense of speed like this one does. At times, it's almost overwhelming (especially on the PS2, which features way too much jaggedness and shimmer). It doesn't have the exploration and depth of Midnight Club II, but tweaking your ride with real manufacturer aftermarket parts and hurtling down city streets at insane speeds is absolutely addicting. Heck, even the drag racing is pretty fun! This isn't really aimed at hardcore sim fans, but arcade-racing junkies won't have a better time this year. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go unlock some ugly new decals for my ride.

**MATT - 9**

**THE THRILL OF SINGING  
MEETS THE AGONY OF DEFEAT.**

# Karaoke Revolution

When it comes to singing, you may already be a winner. Find out with the first karaoke video game that actually judges your vocal talents. Karaoke Revolution™ turns you into a star and your PlayStation 2 into an interactive karaoke machine, complete with scoring, training and a built-in audience.

Sing along with 35 hit songs, including chart-toppers popularized by Michelle Branch, R.E.M., Avril Lavigne, Nickelback, Barenaked Ladies and more. It's the ultimate party game with multiplayer for up to 8 of your friends, so step up to the mic and discover how well you carry a tune. And just how much fun agony can be.



EVERYONE

**E**

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for more ratings  
information.

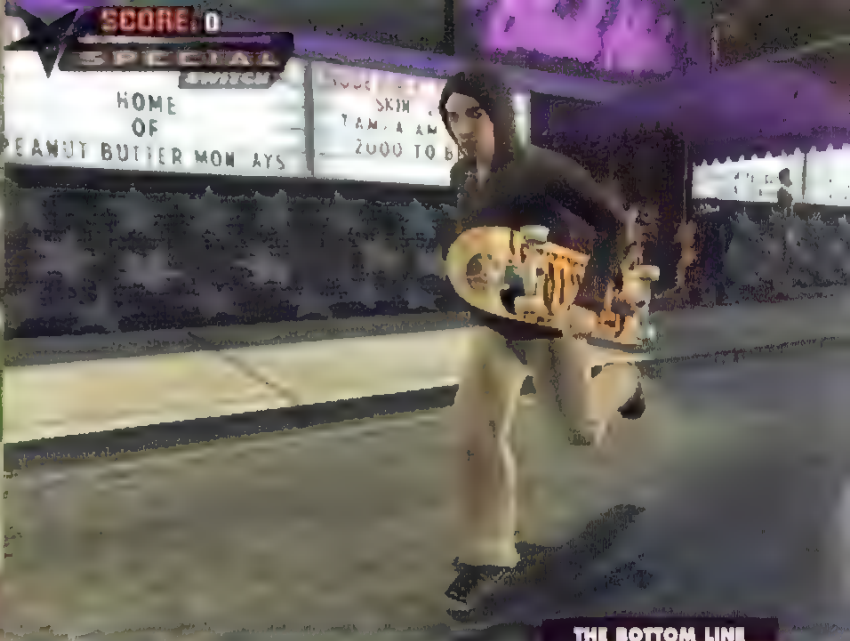
ESRB CONTENT RATING [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)



PlayStation 2

**KONAMI**

[www.konami.com/usa](http://www.konami.com/usa)



**"How can you argue with all the value contained in this disc?"**

PLAYSTATION 2

# TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

## IN HAWK WE TRUST

The Pro Skater series can be broken up into two halves: THPS 1-3, and post-Tony 4. In the former, you had relatively small levels with a set time limit to accomplish as many goals as possible. The latter, which THUG is the second installment of, makes larger levels where you have to seek out goals – which are undertaken one at a time. While I prefer the old-school Pro Skater philosophy, Underground is a step up from Tony 4 and breaks new ground in many areas.

For the first time, a story element is present. To me, it serves to make some of the less-entertaining goals tolerable, because there's a reason for doing them. I like being the star, especially with the ingenious face-mapping technology. While it's not RPG-quality material, the plot does have a few twists and turns. Like the Dude's rug in *The Big Lebowski*, the story really ties the game together.

Many titles tend to try to emulate Grand Theft Auto. Who can blame them, as that series has sold nearly as many copies as Michael Jackson's *Thriller*? THUG's major new gameplay additions are traveling on your own two feet or at the wheel of a vehicle. On-foot activities cleverly extend combos and open up exploration. You're able to reach high elevations with ease, even if it's too Tomb Raider-esque. I don't see much need for driving, though, as vehicles feel like an area rug with a roller skate underneath.

Goals follow the same formula as Tony 4 (which means

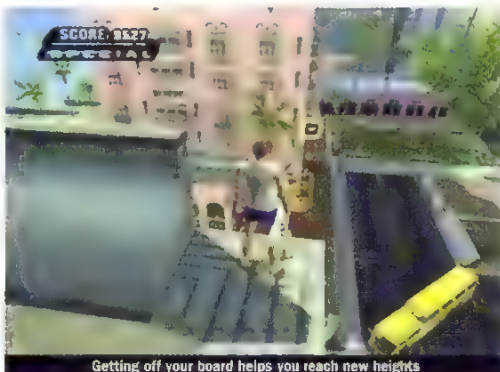
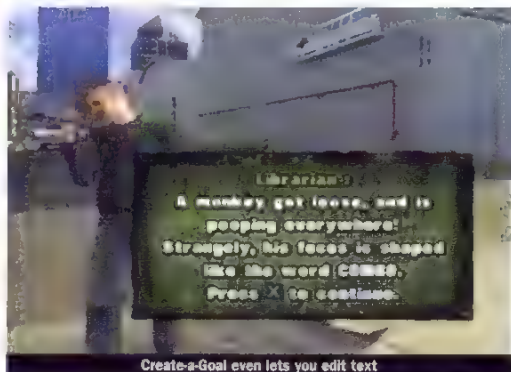
some are tedious), but this time you have different Career difficulty levels to choose from. People who can revert and manual in their sleep are advised to pick Expert right off. Earning attribute enhancements has changed for the better, and encourages tooling around. Pull off three manuals in a combo to improve your manual skill, or hold a grind for five seconds to increase your grind ability. This is much cooler than Tony 4's awarding of attribute points after missions, and is even better than Aggressive Inline's experience system.

My most enjoyable moments in THUG come from seeking out great lines and beating my scores. The stages are the best collection of any Tony game, and show Neversoft's level design brilliance. Online play, a PS2 exclusive, also brings many thrills. The new Firefight introduces a battle aspect; but I prefer simpler modes like Graffiti and Trick Attack.

You have to admire the customization options in Underground. Goals, tricks, parks, and even (eventually) boards can be created. Each one is intuitive and user friendly. I especially like making tricks, which lets you use virtually any animation in the game.

THUG tries to be all things to all gamers. I think it succeeds, though I still long for the Tony 3 days of beating the game in an hour with each character. But, how can you argue with all the value contained in this disc? Some say less is more, but Underground proves having a whole hell of a lot is pretty good, too. — JUSTIN

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** NEVERSOFT  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 27



THE BOTTOM LINE

**T** 9.25

- **Concept:** Make the pro skaters into the supporting cast for a skate story all about you
- **Graphics:** Great detail and long draw distance. Markedly improved over THPS 4
- **Sound:** Dozens of songs. Not all are hits, but that's what playlists are for
- **Playability:** Driving and walking aren't nearly as polished as the skating; but then again, nothing is
- **Entertainment:** Too many lame goals, but the story compensates. Plus, there are a million ways to have fun in this game
- **Replay Value:** High

### SECOND OPINION

Underground is the greatest Tony Hawk game to date, but at the same time, it's also the most disappointing. Holding true to the progress that the series has made thus far, it continues to grow in size. Career mode now features a cinematic story; battles have been introduced to online play; and the park creator is so complex that gamers can basically build their very own level from scratch. As infinitely rewarding as the experience has become, the Career mode has deteriorated significantly. Almost every objective has you playing the role of a gopher that must complete ridiculous errands for people. You'll even find yourself cleaning up piles of leaves on a leaf blower and sneaking past Russian guards on foot. The gameplay is better than ever, but Neversoft is beginning to lose focus on what gamers like about this series. It's not about variety; it's about skating.

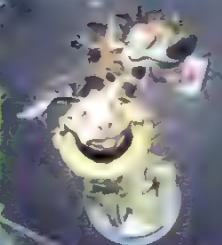
REINER — 9.25



# Bust it UP!

## CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Faring for ball or fast with a rabbit? In these 20+ weapon levels, you will be forever subjected to a lot of twisted animal testing. Shacked together, these tools have the destructive Redmond as a weapon and had the escape from an evil lab.



- Farming Fur Ball
- Bunny Grinder
- Radioactive Rabbit

### BUNNY CANNON



- Bunny Fuse
- Hare-sicle
- Electro Static Rabbit
- Hungry Bunny
- Hare Clog

### HELIUM BUNNY

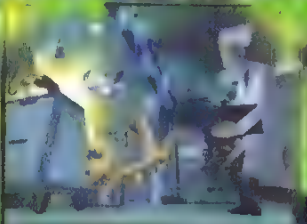


- Tug-O-Rabbit
- 10 Ton Bunny
- Bunny Cannon
- Helium Bunny

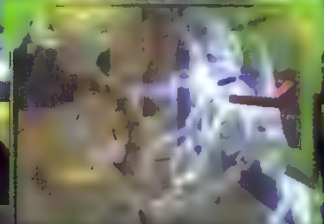


### HYPER HARE

- Hyper Hare
- Stuffed Rabbit
- Chocolate Bunny



Demolish everything from security cameras to test equipment.



Dip Redmond in toxic waste to poison enemies, electro-charge him to zap attackers and more!



Knock out the evil lab staff with loads of combo attacks.

# Whiplash

NOVEMBER 2003!  
WhiplashGame.com



PlayStation 2



**RATING PENDING**

**RP**

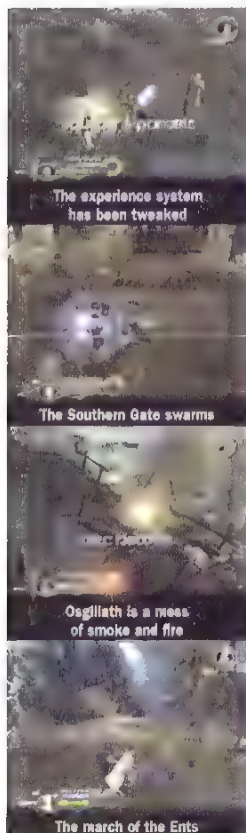
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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"...it still remains a blueprint for movie video games."



PLAYSTATION 2

## THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

### A JOURNEY CONTINUES

If the first Lord of the Rings game from Electronic Arts was helped a lot by the utilization of footage from the first and second movies, then the attempt with this sequel is to let the gameplay itself grow. Of course, Peter Jackson's cooperation in using film footage is very much still here – as is the priceless voice contributions for the actors. In Return of the King, we see a game that attempts to add some layers to its brawler basics. All of the thrilling swordplay from the first is still here, but the additions almost expose the fact that perhaps more work was needed on the game's foundation itself.

Don't get me wrong, fans who are chomping at the bit to experience the final chapter in Jackson's film trilogy will find a sweet catharsis as they hack and hew orc bone through Pelennor Fields, and traverse the Paths of the Dead and all those locations in the book they've only dreamed of until now. What's new for Return of the King are elements away from combat itself. More is asked of you than just swinging your sword. Interacting with environments is often required to continue your journey. Also, the introduction of playable hobbits means a different approach to combat is required. Since you obviously can't take on a whole army of orcs as Sam (although the little bugger's got the heart for it), stealth and resourcefulness is needed. The latter comes into play when you tip over conveniently-placed vats of molten lava onto enemies below you.

Unfortunately, between having to avoid fights as a hobbit and the interactive elements (which are pretty basic), you are often taken away from the combat that you want to experience so much. Add a camera that's too clever (what's the use of a new graphics engine and character models when the view is from so far away?), and sometimes I got the feeling that I was working harder only to have less fun than in Two Towers. Of course, with more characters, their branching paths, and regular and online co-op play, you are supposed to play through this title several times. However, it doesn't solve the problem of being short like the first title – it's just more repetitious.

The changes to ROTK are what we'd expect. If EA had only refined the gameplay from Two Towers, we would have felt cheated. Ironically, this is what I wished – at a minimum – had happened, when you consider the bothersome AI for your companions, the fact that the fighting sometimes shows its age, and the aforementioned slight problems with the new elements. Return of the King offers some amazing visual effects and locations that will blow your mind, and it still remains a blueprint for movie video games. The criticisms I have were often overshadowed by the black stain of orc blood and the grandeur of Tolkien's vision come to life with the help of Peter Jackson, but my euphoria has been tempered from Two Towers. – KATO

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION (2-PLAYER VIA ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 3



"I smote my enemy to ruin, litznitch!"



The visual effects are stunning at every turn

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
T

8.25

- **Concept:**  
A valiant attempt to stretch the brawler genre farther
- **Graphics:**  
The grand splendor of this game's visuals match the movie itself
- **Sound:**  
Ian McKellen's original narrative voiceover as Gandalf is rich and magnificent
- **Playability:**  
The interactive environments and companion AI actually make this a less smooth experience
- **Entertainment:**  
This is a visual and content feast for fans, but the gameplay starts to wear
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderately High

### SECOND OPINION

With the films coming out so soon after one another, EA certainly didn't have time to create a brand new experience for its Return of the King game. That's okay, though, because the development team did a fine job of fixing what little was wrong with The Two Towers for its sequel. More characters, a better upgrade system, and a three-branch quest go a long way to improving gameplay. Two-player is great; with the colored triangles over each player's character you won't lose track of where you are in the chaos of battle. Also, giving two "respawns" per team per level keeps the difficulty at a reasonable level – if you failed whenever someone died, it'd be impossible. Speaking of difficulty, Return of the King features a much better curve; the challenges seem to progress more evenly. Overall, ROTK is a worthy successor to one of the best brawler titles of this console generation.

ADAM – 8.75

REC

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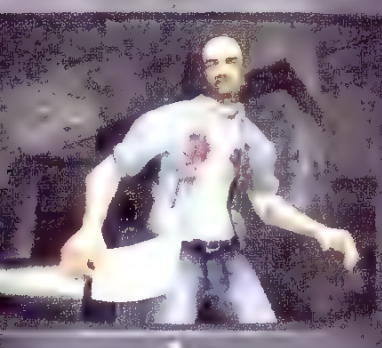
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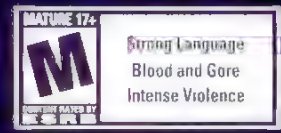
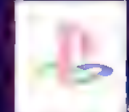
# MANHUNT

REC  
SAVE

THE FINAL CUT



[WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MANHUNT](http://WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MANHUNT)



PlayStation 2



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"...a respectable follow-up, but it doesn't come close to rekindling the magic of the original."



PLAYSTATION 2

# FINAL FANTASY X-2

## THE SEARCH FOR ANSWERS

The ending of Final Fantasy X tugged at my emotions like no game or movie ever has. As I wiped away the tears during the dramatic conclusion, I crossed my fingers and prayed that by the time the credits rolled, everything would turn out okay for Tidus and Yuna. Rather than ending on a happy note, the last few seconds of footage brought about more questions than closure. Leaving gamers guessing and concocting their own conclusions is a great way to finish, but never before has there been such an emotional bond with characters in a game. Square really needed to give fans more. That's exactly what Final Fantasy X-2 is here for.

FF X-2 brings gamers back into the world of Spira, and does a phenomenal job of illustrating what has happened in the two years since the original game's finale. You'll see what has become of your supporting cast's lives as well as how the world has changed since the destruction of Sin. The quest itself is tailor-made for people who played all the way through the last game. From the moment you start, the goal is to find out whether or not Tidus is still alive. It's a great hook that will surely keep you playing up until the very end.

As intriguing as the premise may be, the tone of the FF X-2 feels completely different and often times veers off on strange tangents where musical numbers take center stage. Another major change is that your entire party is testosterone-free and consists of just three women. The

majority of the game plays off of the female perspective and gives you a first-hand look at the emotional struggles in Yuna's life. You already saw Spira through one set of eyes. Now, you'll see it from another. It's very interesting in this regard.

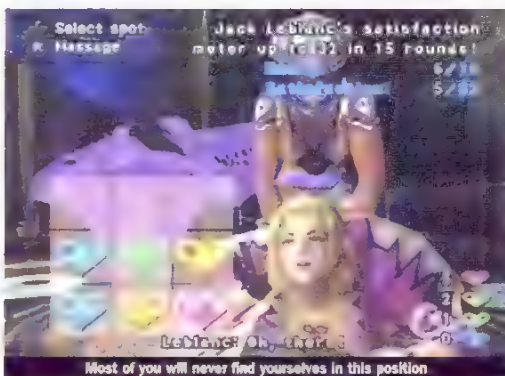
Always one to innovate, Square Enix has increased the speed of combat and introduced a brilliant multi-character combo system. With these additions in place, you can now fly through random enemy encounters in no time flat.

You can also switch character classes mid-battle with the new Garment system. To say the least, this is the strangest addition ever incorporated into a Final Fantasy title. To change classes, the game actually shows your characters getting undressed and slipping into different outfits that reflect their newfound abilities. This system brings an unprecedented level of strategy to the table, but also comes dangerously close to ruining the entire game. Is this Final Fantasy or Let's Dress Up Barbie?

From a visual point of view, the vistas are just as breathtaking as before, yet disappointing in the fact that a good portion of the environments and monsters are recycled. I can definitely see why Square did it, but the mystique that comes with unfamiliarity is definitely missing.

All told, X-2 is a respectable follow-up, but it doesn't come close to rekindling the magic of original. **REINER**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE ENIX ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE ENIX ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



Most of you will never find yourselves in this position



Battles unfold at a much quicker pace

THE BOTTOM LINE  
**T 8.75**

- **Concept:** The first true sequel in the series seen through the eyes of three spunky ladies
- **Graphics:** Amazingly detailed, but much of it is recycled from the original game
- **Sound:** All of the voice actors from the original game are back, but the fun-driven soundtrack seems more fitting for a *Shaft* movie
- **Playability:** The increase in battle speed is fantastic, but changing clothes to alter character classes is a tad bizarre
- **Entertainment:** Loaded with shocking plot twists, side quests, and classic Final Fantasy goodness
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

### SECOND OPINION

From beginning to end, FFX was a masterpiece – simply the best RPG I have ever played. When X-2 was announced, I got more than a little giddy with excitement. For better or worse, X-2 is a weird amalgam of old and new. The graphics and environments are all too familiar at times, but fresh enough to make a fan of the series excited to revisit past glories. The gameplay, however, is completely redone, with a fast-paced active battle system that I actually found pretty enjoyable; but that excitement is offset by a garment system that I found to be mediocre at best. I will admit I liked checking out the ladies in all their fancy clothes, but in time the system becomes just an excuse to see Rikku getting all Christina Aguilera "Dirty." As a fan of the series, I love this addition to the universe, but it's not the true sequel I was hoping for.

**ANDY – 8.75**

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**PAUL OAKENFOLD**  
**IAN VAN DAHL**  
**FEAT. MARSHA**  
**WHO DA FUNK**  
**MASAI**

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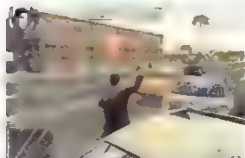


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"...not nearly as good as GTA, but entertaining nonetheless."



By firing a warning shot into the air, the culprits may give up and let you cuff them



The real-time cutscenes are some of the best to date



Running over civilians will give you Bad Cop points



This kung fu master does society a favor and eliminates Kang's chances of reproducing

PLAYSTATION 2

# TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

ARE YOU A GOOD COP OR BAD COP?



**T** rue Crime is the first game to come along and truly give the Grand Theft Auto series a run for its money. I'll even go as far as to say that the sheer size and scope of this project simply dwarfs anything that Rockstar has delivered thus far.

Not only does it boast an open-ended gameplay design set within the sprawling streets of Los Angeles, True Crime grants players the freedom to uphold the law as an virtuous cop, or go *Bad Lieutenant* and terrorize the city of angels.

At any point during the quest, you'll have the chance to accept missions that are broadcast over your police scanner at random times. These assignments have nothing to do with the greater story arc, but appear often and greatly affect the growth of your character. You'll find yourself fielding every day occurrences along the lines of domestic disputes and public drunkenness. You'll also be thrust into do-or-die scenarios like gang warfare and child abductions.

The way that you interact with these affairs determines how you'll progress throughout the game. If you go in with guns ablaze or simply try to run people over with your vehicle, you'll receive Bad Cop points. However, if you go in and flash your badge or fire some warning shots into the air, there's a good chance that you can reach a peaceful resolution that will reward you with Good Cop points. It's choices like these that really give this title a unique appeal.

As brilliant as the premise may be, a number of roadblocks hold True Crime back from achieving greatness. With high-speed car chases, fighting game-like martial arts sequences, frenzied run and gun shootouts, and stealth, the game has amazing variety. Unfortunately, none of these individual components feel particularly polished. The fighting is a strategy-free button-mashing mess; the gun targeting system is incredibly difficult to manipulate; the cars don't feel like they are tied to the ground; and your character's general movements are erratic.

The cinematics are another gray area. The detail that went into the real-time outscenes screams Hollywood production. The list of voice actors is also better than most movies, with Christopher Walken, Gary Oldman, and Ron Perlman to name a few. Even with that talent, the game is void of a likeable protagonist. Nick Kang is quite easily the most annoying new character in video games. He spits out some of the worst one-liners known to man. Case in point, when I pick up a health power-up, I don't want to hear my character say, "Even my jock itch is cured."

If you go into True Crime knowing that the gameplay won't blow your mind, I have a feeling that you'll appreciate the freedom that this game has to offer. It's not nearly as good as GTA, but entertaining nonetheless. — REINER

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER LUXOFUX ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 4



The effects accompanying explosions are unique and impressive



Every object in the interior environments can be destroyed

THE BOTTOM LINE



8.5

- **Concept:** What if Grand Theft Auto was seen through the eyes of a good/bad cop?
- **Graphics:** Almost every object in the environments is destructible. The detail in the character models and vehicular damage is also impressive
- **Sound:** Great voice acting by Hollywood's finest, and a diverse and fully licensed score
- **Playability:** Abundant in-game play styles, yet lacking in polish
- **Entertainment:** A similar play to GTA with replay stemming from the ability to be good or evil
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

True Crime can't seem to decide if it wants to be a brawler, a shooter, or a stealth/action game. This lack of focus takes its toll; the controls are loose (especially when on foot) and cheap mission failures abound. First-person targeting is particularly bad — you can't move at all, and it's nigh-impossible to hit your target before you get gunned down. Despite these flaws, I had a lot of fun with this title. Style is written all over True Crime, and it does an exceptional job of putting you in Nick Kang's shoes on his quest to find out why his father disappeared. The upgrades you can get by passing tests, the Good Cop/Bad Cop system, and optional Street Crimes are all strokes of genius. The music is great, and Nick is brimming with (frequently irritating) attitude. The scope of this title is huge, and though it fails at some things, there's still a lot of great gameplay to be had.

ADAM — 8

# CARE FOR A GAME OF SIMON SAYS?

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ABSOLUTELY DREADFUL!



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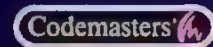
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PlayStation 2



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PLAYSTATION 2

# MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

LOST AT SEA

"...does nothing to move the genre forward or distinguish itself."

**W**hile I appreciate the Medal of Honor franchise and what it's done for first-person gaming, I came away from this latest installment feeling disappointed. Obviously, the PS2 can't keep up with the big bad Box and modern PCs as far as graphics go, but the developers did what they could.

The biggest problem I have with Rising Sun is the shooting-gallery feel of the levels. Enemy AI is painfully unrealistic – my foes would consistently take 4-5 seconds between shots with a pistol when I was right next to them. I simply can't conceive that a soldier, who is fighting for his life, would wait for his enemy to get his bearings before gunning him down. It seems really artificial and takes away from the sense of frantically struggling for survival that was so present in previous titles.

A lot of the time, I felt like I was being herded toward my objective rather than seeking it out on my own. There are some alternate paths to take, but they ended up getting me lost more often than not. Add to this the scripted nature of enemy spawns (they often wait to appear until you've taken over the mounted gun, at which point they charge forward to their doom), and you've got a serious lack of the realism that was the hallmark of other MoH titles.

I would like to think that clipping problems (like guns poking through doors to shoot me) are a thing of the past, but they're prevalent in Rising Sun. Immortal NPCs (I saw my ally take upwards of fifteen bayonets to the face and live) detract from the experience and remind you that you're playing a game. Environmental interaction is a joke – if you do enough damage to certain boxes they blow up, but that's about it.

In its defense, there are a number of cool things about Rising Sun. The ambience created by each area is very well done, from the shelled-out remains of a town to the jungles of the Philippines. Bonus goals are a nice way to add some depth to the level design. The weapons, as always, look and behave like the real thing. Every aspect of the sound comes together in a way that very few titles have been able to accomplish, but which MoH has always excelled at.

Overall, however, I just never became really engaged in Rising Sun. It's a decent enough way to get your World War II on, but does nothing to move the genre forward or distinguish itself from other FPS games. If you're a MoH junkie or just need a new shooter, go ahead and pick this up, but I'd advise playing through Frontline again instead. – **ADAM**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 4-PLAYER ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA LOS ANGELES  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11



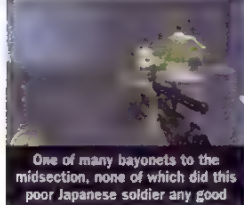
Environments set the mood pretty well



Meet the immortal sergeant and Private Cannon Fodder



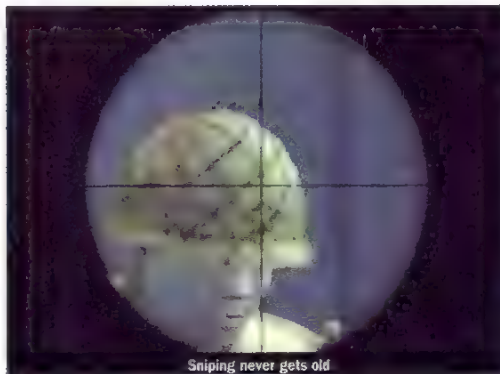
Old war footage is still the story medium of choice



One of many bayonets to the midsection, none of which did this poor Japanese soldier any good



Fish in a barrel, anyone?



Sniping never gets old

THE BOTTOM LINE  
**T** 7.75

- **Concept:** Bring MoH halfway around the globe to the Pacific theater. Don't change anything but the setting
- **Graphics:** Obviously inferior to the other versions, but not terrible. Animations are nice
- **Sound:** Perfect as usual. Great effects, dramatic score
- **Playability:** It takes some time to find the correct analog sensitivity, but once you do, it's gravy
- **Entertainment:** If you just can't get enough MoH, go nuts. Otherwise, it's nothing special
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

## SECOND OPINION

A searingly visceral game, Rising Sun gives gamers a firsthand look at the sheer intensity and ugliness of World War II with overpowering sequences and unforgettable imagery. In delivering this accurate depiction, EA has railroaded the interactivity that players have with the game. It's a very scripted and often track-driven experience. There are moments where the game lets loose and shows signs of its former glory, but most of the stages feel like someone is holding your hand and leading you along to the next event. It's a fun game to play, especially when going through the Campaign with a friend, but it's really lost its edge on the gameplay front. Without a doubt, Rising Sun is a visually stimulating experience, but it focuses more on wowing players with mind-blowing sequences than it does with gameplay. It's an experience that everyone should take in. Just don't expect to have a very big hand in it.

REINER – 8.25



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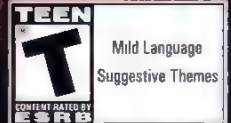
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*From the developers of Ridge Racer™*



PlayStation 2



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"...emulates the ruthless aggression of WWE better than anything before."

PLAYSTATION 2

# WWE SMACKDOWN: HERE COMES THE PAIN

THE NEW WWE CHAMPION!

**H**ow long have I been riding this series and its out-of-date engine? Long enough to see things improve, evidently. Here Comes The Pain brings some much-needed advancement to the franchise and easily asserts itself as the king of the wrestling game ring.

I'd be lying if I said this title controls as well as the AKI-developed classics (No Mercy, WrestleMania 2000). However, major advancements make this a much more playable game. Holding up, down, left, or right when grappling gives you a unique move set comprised of four moves. Previously, you only had one set (not including stuns). Also, the shoulder buttons do the countering, and square is multi-purpose (leaving the ring, picking up a weapon, etc.). Tag matches and targeting have been made user-friendly, even with the added options. Hallelujah!

A chart shows which parts of you and your opponent are hurting, sort of like a car diagram in a race game. You're advised to pick a body part and stick with it. Submission moves have a meter attached, which gives more meaning to them. The selling (reactions to attacks) could still use work, but I like the move toward a more scientific approach.

Season mode continues its winning streak. There is separation in the two brands, and storylines give you a reason behind most of your matches. You can play one of two ways. In the first, your character uses pre-determined attributes. Or, you can choose to build him/her up from jobber status. Either way, you'll be gaining experience and

Superstar points from match results and backstage events. Your monetary winnings also come into play for unlocking things in the ShopZone.

The Season rosters can be heavily customized, since you have control over which brand each wrestler is in, what the stables are, and heel/face allegiance. Good guys obviously get points different ways than bad guys, but there's plenty of drama either way. I have issue with the balancing a bit, since it seems like the larger guys are far too tough against cruiserweights. I can't forget to mention the old-school Legends included.

I have to put SmackDown's create-a-wrestler below Raw 2 and WM XIX. The costume options are too tacky, and there are far too many noses and eyebrows to wade through. I like where create-an-animation is going, but the developers should look closely at Tony Hawk Underground's create-a-trick - which is perfectly done. A similar create-a-move shouldn't be that hard to pull off.

Gimmick match fans will be in heaven here - as will perverts, thanks to the Bra & Panties match. Other spectacles include Elimination Champion and 3 Stages of Hell matches (two out of three falls, each with its own stipulation).

Here Comes The Pain will be the answer to a lot of wrestling fans' pleas. It emulates the ruthless aggression of WWE better than anything before. If you've been holding your breath for a truly great wrestling game on the current consoles, you can breathe easy once again. - JUSTIN

THE BOTTOM LINE



8.5

- **Concept:** Live up to the full potential of the WWE
- **Graphics:** Nice spectra highlighting on the costumes. The 3D crowd portions look a little sparse
- **Sound:** Hilarious crowd chants. Still very few Superstar voices
- **Playability:** Four times the grapple moves. The control is still easy, but is now a lot more diverse, too
- **Entertainment:** Many new match types, two ways to play Season, and more moves makes this the best WWE game in a long time
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

SmackDown's gameplay isn't nearly as refined as it is in WrestleMania XIX, and its Career mode doesn't have the level of interaction featured in Raw 2. As a whole, however, it's this year's most complete wrestling game. The action is still a little rough around the edges and the collision is off at times, but it does play better than past efforts. Having more than four grapple choices really opens things up, and showing body damage and how close someone is to tapping out alters the way that you go about a match. Yuke's also did a great job of mimicking the storylines from the WWE, and feuds actually have some heat to them. You won't find more gimmick matches in any other game, either. Simply put, the Bra & Panties match is a real eye opener. SmackDown may not be at the top of its game, but it definitely has it where it counts.

REINER - 8

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER THQ ■ DEVELOPER YUKE'S ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 27



Dragon takes a 619, and we have a feeling a West Coast Pop is forthcoming



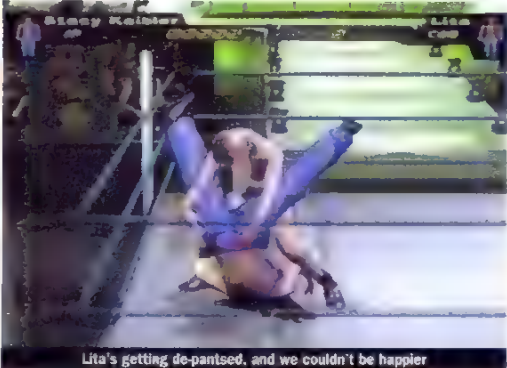
This game did the impossible - making Stephanie McMahon look attractive!



This gets Chavo suspended...



...which leaves Eddie open for a beatdown



Lita's getting de-pantsed, and we couldn't be happier



The dreaded Elimination Chamber, in all its macabre-ness

KONAMI

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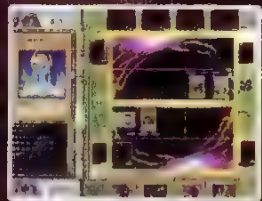
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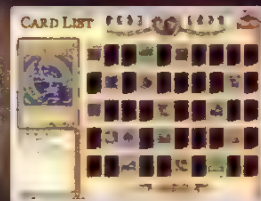


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PLAYSTATION 2

# XIII

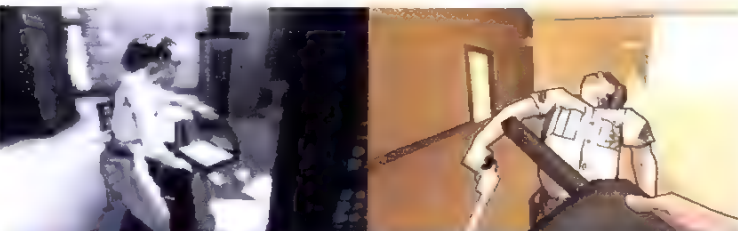
## THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE

**T**his is one stylish game. From the enigmatic beginning onward, I was totally caught up in the slick, ultra-cool world of espionage and intrigue that XIII creates. Yes, the plot is totally derivative of *The Bourne Identity*, but you might as well rip off a classic if you're going to steal. The music, which features some leading Bay Area deejays, also contributes greatly to the overall vibe. However, notice that I said "stylish" not "great." There's a difference.

To aid its spectacular visual artistry, XIII also tries to provide a unique gameplay package, to mixed results. Hardcore PC players have always complained about the aiming and control of console shooters, and here I'm inclined to agree with them. For whatever reason, I could never tweak my aiming to the point where it felt totally second nature. Every 15 minutes or so, I would go into the pause menu and adjust the sensitivity again in hopes of finding the sweet spot, but to no avail.

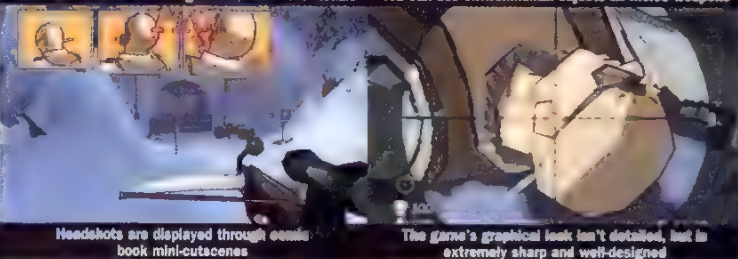
To the development team's credit, they really tried to make XIII a diverse experience. As you attempt to unravel the mystery as to why you're being framed for the murder of a politician, you'll sometimes be forced to forgo the use of weapons, relying on your wits and stealth. In these stages, environmental objects like chairs and ashtrays can be used as melee weapons, forcing you to sneak up behind your quarry and deliver a crushing blow when an icon appears. Unfortunately, this part of the package is also subject to weird inconsistencies, and is often more frustrating than fun. The enemy AI, which ranges everywhere between the level of Corfy from *Life Goes On* to that of Prof. Xavier from *X-Men*, doesn't help matters much. However, getting to take hostages and moving dead bodies is definitely cool — something I hope more FPSs emulate.

In all, I am glad that I played XIII, but came away longing for the great game that this could have been, rather than the merely adequate game that it is. — **MATT**



Flashbacks are shown through eerie, dreamlike visuals

You can use environmental objects as melee weapons



Headshots are displayed through comic-book mini-cutscenes

The game's graphical look isn't detailed, but is extremely sharp and well-designed

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 6-PLAYER VIA BROADBAND) ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11



- **Concept:**  
A stylish FPS using uber-trendy cel-shaded graphics
- **Graphics:**  
This isn't the greatest engine in the world, but the unique look is amazing
- **Sound:**  
Excellent hipster faux-jazzy, space-age-bachelor-pad tunes
- **Playability:**  
The auto-aim isn't the best, and neither is the regular aiming
- **Entertainment:**  
A cool story and sharp visuals don't a top-flight FPS make
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderate

### SECOND OPINION

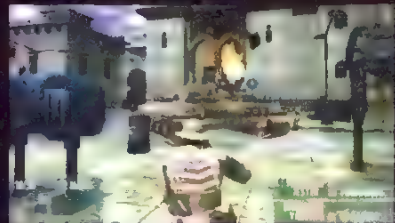
I view XIII as a cel-shaded *TimeSplitters 2*. It's a first-person shooter that utilizes stealth and other traditionally third-person elements. Your scope-laden crossbow gets more use than your shotgun or assault rifle. Many missions fail you if you're spotted, and checkpoints are sparsely placed. This difficulty curve tries to compensate for some questionable AI. I don't know about you, but if a foot-long railroad spike shot my helmet off, I'd haul ass — not stand there picking it. Celebrity voice actors add nothing to the experience, and cel shading is no excuse for crummy lighting and muddy textures. The game does a good job of blending action/adventure with FPS, and there's plenty to interact with. Its picture-in-picture style is unique and very appealing. However, no amount of artistic originality will make up for XIII's gameplay flaws and lame levels.

**JUSTIN — 7.5**

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**"This game places an emphasis on the adventure portions of the action/adventure genre."**

PLAYSTATION 2

# BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TRIP IT'S BEEN

**F**rom the outset, you'll be a bit thrown by the general weirdness taking place in *Beyond Good & Evil*. We start with Jade, the main character, meditating on an idyllic cliff. Suddenly, hell starts raining down from the sky, and the world is thrown into chaos. From there, the characters and plotline only get stranger, introducing a cast of characters that includes Uncle Pey'J, a porcine mechanic; and Secundo, an apparently "flamboyant" Hispanic hologram. The plot is revealed slowly, as you discover clues that link the Alpha Section (the supposed defenders of Hillys) to the nefarious DomZ invaders. It's nicely structured, and would have been more surprising had I not just played through an almost identical storyline in *Jak II* last month.

The gameplay is an equally disparate mix of elements. For one, this is not a platformer: Jade will jump automatically in context-specific situations, so don't go in expecting the next *Ratchet & Clank*. In actuality, the game really revolves around Jade's career as a reporter for an underground revolutionary newspaper. During stealth missions, you'll have to snap photographs of illicit government activities to expose the plot at hand. Also, you can sell pictures of animals to a science center for extra cash. This unique Pokémon Snap action actually makes for some novel moments, as you struggle to take a quick pic in the middle of a boss battle, because you just know that shot will be worth big bucks.

You travel between the various locations you are investigating by hovercraft, which controls much better than the irritating vehicles in *Jak II*. There are a few races as well, but they aren't really terribly exciting or noteworthy other than the fact that they serve as another way of getting pearls, BG&E's collectable doodad of choice. The combat engine is also fairly ho-hum, using only simple button presses and analog stick moves—which results in pretty animations, but not many thrills. I do like some of the co-op attacks you perform with other characters, and later you get a disc shooter, but it's clear that this game places an emphasis on the adventure portions of the action/adventure genre. Really, the only time I felt totally engaged in the action was during a few gripping stealth sequences and in the boss battles.

Maybe that's why I didn't like *Beyond Good & Evil* as much as I hoped. Too often this would-be epic bogs down in tiresome box and switch puzzles or leaves you searching for the pearl you need to unlock the next area. It's definitely a compelling place to explore, and the visual look is breathtaking, but too often I felt a pang of boredom creeping into the serene dreamworld that Ubisoft had created. It seems fresh at first glance, but in essence it's just a novel way of packaging gameplay that I've seen too many times before. — **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE



8

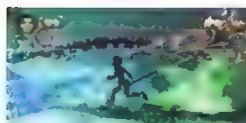
- **Concept:** A strange journey into the Rayman creator Michel Ansel's imagination
- **Graphics:** Very beautiful, both in terms of art direction and graphics technology
- **Sound:** Music is used sparingly, but the score is very quirky and at times haunting
- **Playability:** The game's weakness: So much is attempted, little is as good as it should be
- **Entertainment:** For a game that I have some serious issues with, I was oddly compelled to keep playing
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

BG&E seems destined to become a cult classic title. While it features a truly engaging storyline and fantastic graphics, it may simply be too weird for many gamers. But for a select few, this title is a must-have. The plot may be one of the most complex and mature stories ever told in the video game medium. While government conspiracies aren't rare in games, seldom are they treated with such seriousness and depth. Jade and her friend Pey'J are strangely compelling characters, although it does take a while to get emotionally invested in them. Once you do, however, this title is hard to put down—though many gamers will never make it to this point. Graphically, BG&E also impresses. The vast world of Hillys is rendered with incredible care and realism. Although still great looking, the PS2 port doesn't come close to the Xbox or GameCube versions. But don't let that keep you from one of the most intriguing stories of the year.

JEREMY — 8

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER UBISOFT ■ DEVELOPER UBISOFT ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 11



Some of the boss characters are quite striking in design



Much of the game focuses on stealth gameplay



As a journalist for the revolution, you'll take pictures of illicit government activities



Much like *Jak II*, you use a hovercraft to travel between levels



Jade runs with a strange posse. Oink!



PLAYSTATION 2

# SPACE CHANNEL 5: SPECIAL EDITION

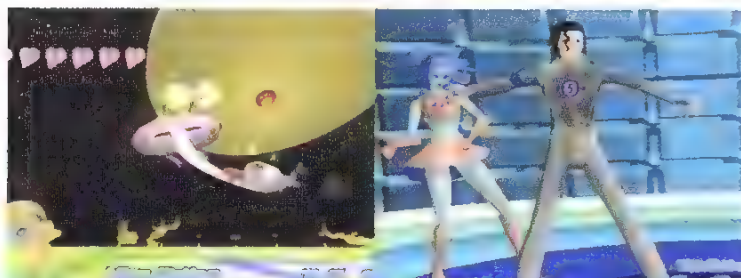
RHYTHM GAMERS' DEE-LITE

**S**pace Channel 5 was one of my favorite Dreamcast games. While it's not very long, it oozes style and good-natured fun. Main character Ulala is a loveable protagonist, and the gameplay is entertaining. Unlike PS2 incarnations of other Sega hits like Crazy Taxi and 18-Wheeler, this is far from a by-the-books port, and is coming out of the starting gate priced to sell.

This Special Edition actually contains all of Space Channel 5 Part 2 – a first in this country! It takes the musical Simon Says of the first game, and gives you the chance to sing and play instruments. These things just require you to hit “down” to activate, but they’re still a nice deviation. Enemies will sing to you, then do a few actions, which is a real test for your timing. Part 2 is also about twice as long and is a little more difficult. Secrets hidden in the game will keep you playing this sequel multiple times, too.

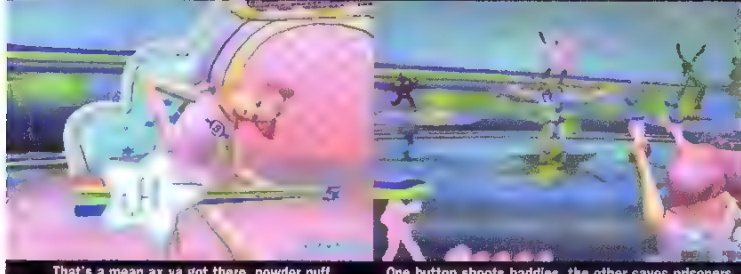
This has always been a game to play in a group, since it’s almost as fun to watch. Thus, it’s cool to be able to play the co-op of Part 2. One player does the direction presses, while the other hits buttons.

It doesn’t matter whether you’ve beaten the Dreamcast Space Channel 5 a million times or if you’ve never once uttered a “Left, Right, Chu Chu!” Special Edition is a great package crammed with more value and personality than most rhythm games. – JUSTIN



The original SC 5 is still packed with thrills

That’s Space Michael voiced by – you guessed it – Michael Jackson



That’s a mean ax ya got there, powder puff

One button shoots baddies, the other saves prisoners

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER AGETEC ■ DEVELOPER UNITED GAME ARTISTS/SEGA ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 18

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T 8.25

- **Concept:** Bring Space Channel 5 to the PS2 masses, and throw in the previously Japan exclusive sequel for free
- **Graphics:** The first shows how superior PS2 technology is to Dreamcast. Part 2 looks better
- **Sound:** Great music and voice acting, though sometimes the tunes take a back seat
- **Playability:** Simple as pie and smooth as silk
- **Entertainment:** Two games in one. Even if they take a combined three hours to beat, with the extras and replay it’s a value-packed offering
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

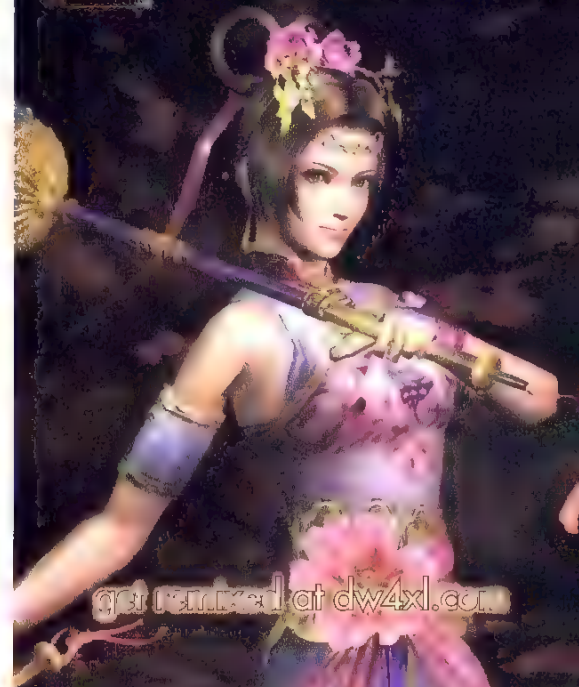
## SECOND OPINION

Pardon my French, but this is one hell of a friggin’ deal. For just 20 clams, this compilation includes the original Dreamcast game (which is downright brilliant), plus the sequel that was never released in the States. Granted, neither title is very long, but they’re both incredibly entertaining and stand as two of the best rhythm-action games around. I really like how the difficulty level ramps up in Part 2. It also has an injection of variety with singing and instruments, and can be played cooperatively with a friend. Overall, Part 2 isn’t as memorable as the first entry, but it’s still an absolute riot to play, and Michael Jackson is even more flamboyant than before. If you haven’t played Space Channel 5 before, it has the style of the cult classic film *Barbarella* and the memorization-based play of *Simon Says*. It’s unlike anything you’ve seen and couldn’t be priced any lower.

REINER – 8



PlayStation 2



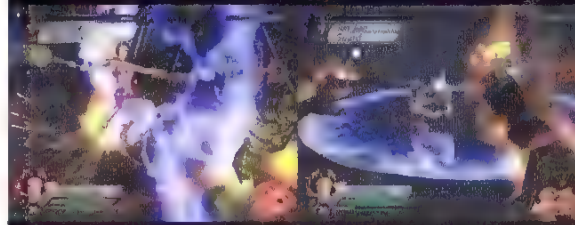
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# Xtreme Legends

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**"The graphics are fantastic and simply smoke the traditionally animated cutscenes – which look drab and lifeless in comparison."**



PLAYSTATION 2

# TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

**A**s someone who grew up with the Ninja Turtles, I am happy to see them make a comeback. Not only did I dig the show and the toys, I was a big fan of their side-scrolling beat-em-up video games as well. This new TMNT adventure is a welcome throwback to the brawlers of old, but also retains all the flaws of the genre.

This latest Turtle title plays out like several episodes from the new series, offering up plot in animated sequences between levels. Although it's hard for an old-school Turtles fan like myself to get into the new look and voices of the characters, these sequences do lend it a decent ongoing plot; something severely lacking in most brawlers. They also earn this game the strange distinction of being the only title I can name with in-game graphics that look better than the cutscenes. Herein lies this title's greatest strength: The character models are perfect, the animation is flawless, and the colorful backgrounds are impressive. In other words, the graphics are fantastic and simply smoke the traditionally animated cutscenes – which look drab and lifeless in comparison.

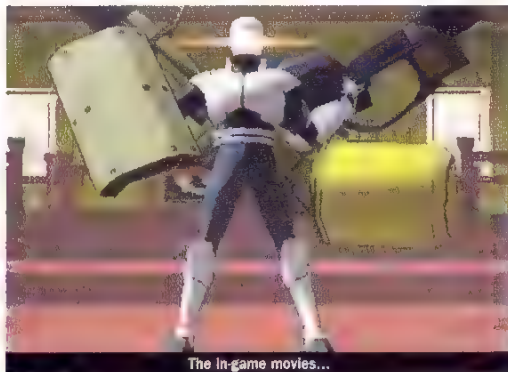
Nearly as impressive as the graphics are the combat controls. While quite simple, the control scheme is incredibly easy to learn and still offers a wide variety of attacks and acrobatic maneuvers. Sadly, fighting gets repetitive in spite

of the solid interface. There simply aren't enough different enemy types to keep things fresh. Aside from boss battles, you'll only find yourself encountering a handful of different enemies. Even though you will learn a couple new attacks over the course of the game, you'll still be unleashing them on the same old goons.

Also problematic is the camera. While usually pretty solid in single-player mode, it does occasionally present an unhelpful angle, which cannot be adjusted. This problem is even more prevalent in co-op play, as the camera tends to stall when players move in opposite directions. Coupled with continues that are shared between the two players, I found myself preferring to play alone. Having a partner in my battle with the Foot Clan actually made the game more difficult.

Although I've slammed this title on many fronts, I want to end things on a more positive note. This game is one of the better next-generation brawlers that there is, which simply demonstrates the limitations of the genre. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is fun, looks amazing, and will certainly appeal to their main fan base. But, like the plastic bins of original Turtles figures forgotten in the back of your closet, don't expect to come back to this title often after you've had your fun with it. — JEREMY

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT STUDIOS  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 21



THE BOTTOM LINE  
**E** 7.75

- **Concept:** Everyone's favorite Reagan-era mutants return in a classic button-mashing adventure
- **Graphics:** Colorful, superbly animated characters make this title nearly more fun to watch than to play
- **Sound:** Hearing the same one-liners over and over isn't at all annoying. Really. I mean it
- **Playability:** Both simple and incredibly intuitive, as any good brawler should be
- **Entertainment:** Like its gaming ancestors, TMNT is fast, fun, and forgettable
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

## SECOND OPINION

As a person who dived away most of his trust fund on the Turtles arcade game, I can honestly say that nothing excites me more than the prospect of a new TMNT beat-em-up. Konami definitely nailed the look of the cartoon series, and there's no denying the beauty of the cel-shaded graphics. As we all know, however, looks only go so far in this industry. The combat engine is a dilapidated mess that lacks both intensity and style. The game forces players to use the same moves and combos throughout the majority of the quest. The pacing is really slow as well, and it doesn't have nearly enough enemy types. You never find yourself suffocating under a sea of foes. You usually only have to battle a handful of thugs at a time, which makes for a fairly boring experience... especially for two players. What a bummer. I was really looking forward to this one.

REINER — 6.75





PLAYSTATION 2

## MONSTER RANCHER 4

SAME DNA, NEW FEATURES

**H**olding true to its heritage, Monster Rancher 4 is a wildly addictive game that is capable of sucking away your life in no time flat. I kid you not – once you develop a bond with your adorable little monster, you might as well just cancel your dinner plans, tell your significant other that it just isn't working out, call in to work sick, and clear your calendar for a month.

As irresistible as this title may be, it hasn't made too many strides forward since the last installment. Tecmo opened up the design, but neglected to alter to the core gameplay mechanics. For the first time in the series, players have physical control over their trainer. In such, you can finally run across your ranch and interact with your monster. At first, I thought that the implementation of an onscreen character would redefine the very nature of the game. It actually hasn't changed a bit. The only control that you have over your trainer is his general movement. He's basically nothing more than a highly detailed cursor that gets you from point A to B.

I will say this, though – the freedom of movement does wonders for the exploration component. Tecmo has redesigned this aspect of the game four times now, and I think it has finally nailed it. The zones that you can traverse are formatted much like a typical RPG dungeon. Enemy encounters, randomly placed treasure chests, and multiple floors are all part of the picture.

The biggest change in Monster Rancher 4 is the ability to train three monsters simultaneously. This element really speeds up the process of raising the battle ranks, but also makes training a multitasking nightmare. It's executed in the same fashion as it always was, but now you'll have to make sure that you feed, praise, and train your monsters on a regular basis. As you can probably imagine, this aspect is now a little hectic and drawn out to the point where it becomes tedious.

The combat system and interaction between you and your monsters hasn't been altered in the slightest...and that's where you spend most of your time. This is where the game really needed an injection of something new, but unfortunately, it's still the same song and dance.

That's not a bad thing, mind you; but if you've already played through one or more of these titles, it's starting to feel a little too familiar. —REINER



Players can now design the layout of their ranch

You'll need to purchase training equipment for your monsters

Exploration has received major enhancements and now resembles the dungeons in role-playing games. Again, data from CDs and DVDs can be used for monster creation. Certain discs will give you rare critters.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2 PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** TECMO ■ **DEVELOPER** TECMO  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28

### THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE  
**E**  
 USK 10  
 IARC 3

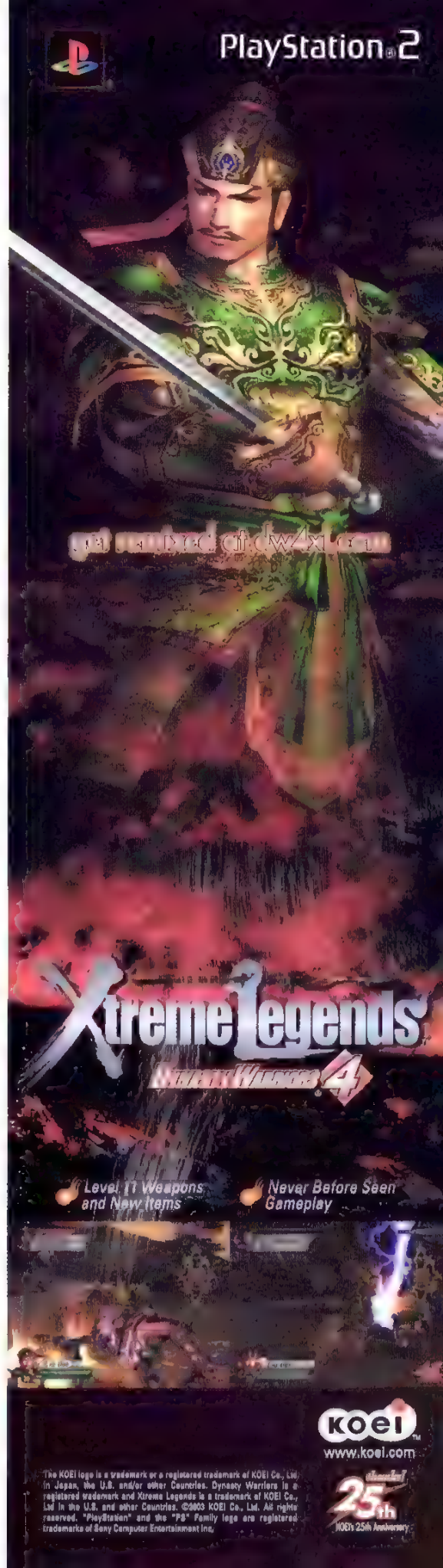
**8.25**

- **Concept:**  
Create, train, breed, and battle monsters
- **Graphics:**  
The best looking entry yet, but it still needs more creature designs. Seeing the same creature with color differences is lame
- **Sound:**  
No spoken dialogue and repetitive music...but you just gotta love the squeaky monster noises
- **Playability:**  
Same as it ever was, but being able to train three monsters at once speeds up the progress that players make
- **Entertainment:**  
An experience similar to raising a family pet...only you teach them how to kill
- **Replay Value:**  
High

### SECOND OPINION

The Monster Rancher franchise holds a fond place in many gamers' hearts. It's a quirky Japanese creature-raising sim that throws in dungeon exploration and fighting to keep people interested, but the best part has always been raising your monster of choice. The option to use other "disk stones" (aka DVDs, CDs, and/or games) is still alive and kicking, and the results from these source materials is still delightfully unpredictable. Grudgingly though, I feel that calling the same character model in a different color a new monster is cheap. On the plus side, the updated ranch features and improved exploration really do make this worth picking up for the majority of players – especially because many of the things you love the most are unchanged, if not greatly improved.

LISA – 8



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# REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

## KILL SWITCH DUCK AND COVER

Sometimes, it just takes a little something different to make an enjoyable game. Kill Switch won't blow your doors off, but it will hide behind said doors, peek around, and blast you with a relatively good time for a few hours.

This is an FPS hidden in third-person clothing. The reason for the perspective shift is to take advantage of a clever cover mechanic. You'll need to duck behind objects and around corners while picking off enemy soldiers. Fire blindly, or stick your neck out a bit for more accurate blasts. The odds are against you, despite a wealth of guns and explosives, but luckily there's always a couch or overturned table or crate to hide behind. Winback, a little-known title for N64 and later PS2, did something similar, but Kill Switch has a better blend of frantic action and meticulous killing. Unfortunately, the control falters when enemies are within five feet of you.

The story is an odd one which I liken to an eye-*Robocop*. Its progression, however, is slower than molasses in the summer. The voiceovers don't help matters. Kill Switch's hiding gimmick lasts longer than I thought it would, but your enjoyment is still finite—especially with nothing else to do once you've worked through it. I'll say it's about \$20 worth of cool, though a rental may give you your fill as well. —JUSTIN

**THE BOTTOM LINE**  
TEEN **T** 7

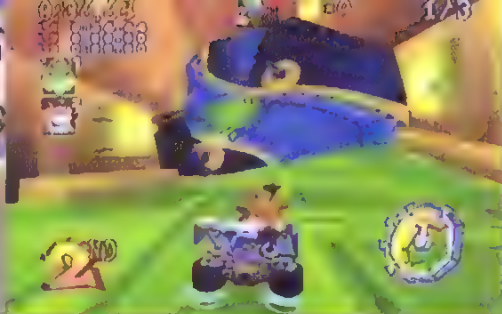
- **Concept:** Duck, duck, shoot, shoot.
- **Graphics:** While the environments aren't staggeringly brilliant in a game like this they don't need to be.
- **Sound:** Due to the story, it was hard to tell which voice was representing which character.
- **Playability:** The controls work well for picking off baddies from 20 feet, but are kind of iffy up close.
- **Entertainment:** A typical action game with a neat gimmick. There are worse games that put a gun in your hand.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate.

**SECOND OPINION**

The real travesty here is that this game could have been cool. The "take cover" move on which the game is built is really slick, and will probably be copied several times. Too bad the enemy AI is completely worthless—I actually hit a guy in the shoulder with a grenade and he didn't move. Not only that, but the graphics are the worst I've ever seen. This one is a total letdown.

**JEREMY - 5.75**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO  
■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28



PLAYSTATION 2

## CRASH NITRO KART

LIFE IN THE SLOW LANE

Recently, I've been seeing the phrase "meh" pop up on the Internet. Usually it's used to express a lack of interest or ambivalence towards something. For example, you might say, "I'm kinda 'meh' about the new Brendan Fraser movie." I only bring this up because "meh" perfectly sums up my feelings about Crash Nitro Kart. It's certainly a competent rehash of Crash Team Racing, but it's probably one of the least exciting racing titles I've played recently. Most of this is due to the game's slow pace and its failure to really expand on a gameplay formula Naughty Dog perfected years ago.

On the plus side, I did like some of the track designs (there's even a track editor), and it's still fun to hit the old powerslide move. Also, it's cool that the races can be tackled by either the Cortex or Crash teams of characters. However, at this point, the Crash Bandicoot franchise has pretty much given up competing with the big-time character action games and seems content to deliver the same-old, same-old to its diehard fan base. —MATT

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 8-PLAYERS VIA SYSTEM LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL ■ **DEVELOPER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

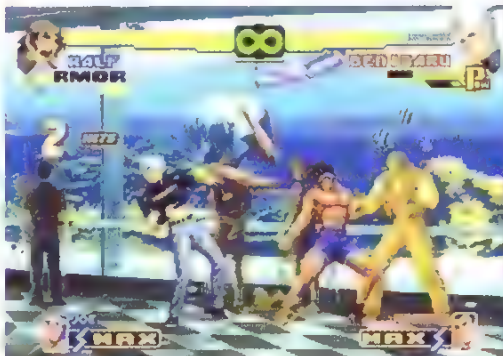
**SECOND OPINION**

Wait a second...didn't I already play this game on the PSone four years ago? Yep. I'm pretty sure I did. In more ways than I can possibly list, Nitro Kart is identical to CTR. Because of this, it's still a fun game to play. The powerslide mechanic is as brilliant now as it was back in the day. The track editor, although somewhat shallow, adds to the longevity. It's good, but severely dated.

**REINER - 7.25**

**THE BOTTOM LINE**  
EVERYONE **E** 7

- **Concept:** A redux of Naughty Dog's underrated PSone gem, Crash Team Racing.
- **Graphics:** Clean as a whistle, boring as a stump.
- **Sound:** Not as great as the old Crash scores, but close.
- **Playability:** I like that the new meters added for the powerslide, but that's about the extent of the innovations here.
- **Entertainment:** Crash really needs to step up his game if he expects to compete with Mario Kart: Double Dash.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low.



PLAYSTATION 2

## KING OF FIGHTERS 2000/2001

KING EMERITUS SNK VII

I like to think that by now everyone knows whether or not they like 2D fighters. There's a pretty clear-cut schism between those who are all about the franchises of yore like this one and those who prefer the next-gen 3D titles like Soul Calibur. King of Fighters isn't going to change that.

This release is a bit of a twist on standard 2D fare. "Strikers" (guys that come in just for a hit or two) are part of your team, and spice up the combat a bit. Multiple strikers (in 2001) can really extend the comboing frenzy. The flow of a round is nice; there wasn't much cheap "kick 'em when they're down" action going on, but it's really tough to break up a combo once it gets going.

King of Fighters has everything we expect: command menus, lots and lots of characters, silky control, and combos galore. If you've been craving a good old-school fighter, this will scratch that itch. It won't inspire anyone to forsake Virtua Fighter or Tekken, but for fans who don't already own this on Dreamcast, it's a boon. —ADAM

**SECOND OPINION**

While it hasn't aged all that well visually (the 2001 character models are infested with jaggies), this KOF package is a great deal for fighter fans. With two titles included, you get a lot for your money, and the team battles set it apart from other classic fighters. Fans of 2D will find much to love here.

**JEREMY - 7.75**

**THE BOTTOM LINE**  
TEEN **T** 7.75

- **Concept:** Perform a nice act of fan service by bringing the seventh and eighth King of Fighters titles to the PS2.
- **Graphics:** Character sprites are good, but everything shows its age.
- **Sound:** If you own a CD player, put it to good use while playing this.
- **Playability:** Control is tight and responsive. Never once did I fling my gamepad in disgust.
- **Entertainment:** If 2D fighters are your thing, it's great. If they're not, you won't be converted.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** SNK ■ **DEVELOPER** SNK  
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

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**T**  
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CONTENT RATED BY  
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PlayStation 2



## REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

# BACKYARD WRESTLING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

BACKYARD GAME DEVELOPMENT

I'll put my personal feelings on backyard wrestling – the spectacle – aside and say that this is a great idea for a game. However, I can't put my personal feelings on crappy games aside enough to recommend Don't Try This At Home to anyone but people who think that getting thumbtacks stuck in your ass and scalp are a fun way to spend a Saturday.

Rather than using grapples and holds to wear down opponents, the focus here is using the environment to your advantage – whipping people into things or picking up objects and tossing or swinging them at your hapless foe. For example, you can throw people into the hanging cow in the slaughterhouse, explode the gas pumps at the truck stop, or chuck stools around in the strip club. The environmental interaction is unparalleled.

What's also unparalleled, however, is how sloppy Backyard Wrestling is. The collision is so bad, you just feel ashamed for the game sometimes. The AI is extremely cheap, and takes all the fun out of the cool levels. Why can't I dodge objects the computer wrestler throws at me? Really, the only way to play this is through multiplayer, taking turns throwing each other into and off of things. Even then, the load time is excruciating, and there's no easy versus mode to save time. Playing this game hurts almost as much as a barbed-wire baseball bat to the temple. **JUSTIN**

**THE BOTTOM LINE**  
MATURE  
**M** 5.5

- Concept:** Backyard Wrestling is a great idea, but it's a video game form.
- Graphics:** The levels look great, and the character models aren't too bad.
- Sound:** Lots of ICP and other psychopathic artists.
- Playability:** It's over the top, but it's fun with a good controller.
- Entertainment:** Discovering the environmental interactions is the most – and likely only – fun you'll have with this game.
- Replay Value:** Moderately High.

### SECOND OPINION

And here I thought the backyard was just a place for Spot to piddle. Paradox Development did capture the brutality and trailer park mentality of backyard wrestling, but that's about all this game has to offer. The gameplay engine is mechanically flawed and focuses too heavily on throwing objects and environment interaction. The name of the game says it all...don't play this at home.

**REINER - 5**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2 PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS ■ **DEVELOPER** PARADOX ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 7

148 GAME INFORMER



PLAYSTATION 2

# SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

R.A.F. – RATIONED AIR FORCE

With a significant library of World War II games already released to its left and the fact that developer Totally Games gave us the stoned X Wing title on the PC on its right, Secret Weapons has a thin line to tread. While it largely succeeds in being a game that keeps you coming back for more, it doesn't come out unscathed.

The fly-boy missions won't take you by surprise in the least, but the game does an excellent job setting the stage for you. Not only does it utilize the musical score of Michael Giacchino, but it uses historical footage and a strong narrator. The effect is a rousing mood that is rivaled only by Medal of Honor itself. The dogfights themselves, however, can be less dramatic. The main problem is the snail's pace of your craft (of which there is a wide selection – including some prototypes). Moreover, I never really got that frenzied I'm-going-to-die-at-any-moment-because-there's-so-much-action feeling like you'd encounter if you actually were at the Battle of Britain or Midway. This is an unfortunate failing since Secret Weapons really tries to immerse you in the experience through gameplay sounds and overall attention to detail, and the combat is otherwise worth it.

The flight-sim genre itself is hard to make your mark in. Although this game is well rounded enough to at least give you an enjoyable experience, it fails to grab you by the stick with enough G-forces to set the seat of your pants on fire. **KATO**



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2 PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** TOTALLY GAMES ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
**T**  
CONTENT RATED BY  
ESRB

7.5

### Concept:

Relive the many battles of WW II (real and otherwise) in a slow, but engaging fighter combat title

### Graphics:

You will really get a kick out of using the replay and camera functions

### Sound:

Using Medal of Honor's Michael Giacchino for the score is a nice touch

### Playability:

I like the attention played to each plane, but the sensation of speed is terrible

### Entertainment:

Not as defining as the developer's other flyer – X-wing for the PC – but entertaining nevertheless

### Replay Value:

Moderate

### SECOND OPINION

There's something inherently satisfying about shooting Nazis – it feels good to pretend that one person could have done something to help end WW II a little sooner. I think that's a big part of why I like this title so much. It does a good job of making the player feel like they're a war hero, but maintains the massive feeling of the war. The difficulty was just right – it was never too easy to complete a mission, but never frustrating either. As I am not much of a flight sim junkie, I appreciate how well the control scheme balances realism with the arcade shooter feel. I also found myself honestly interested in the characters. Despite the fact that he's just a voice, I really cared when Trevor got shot down. Secret Weapons Over Normandy deserves special praise for being one of the few flight simulators which might draw new fans into its special-interest genre.

**JEREMY - 8.25**



PLAYSTATION 2

## CULDCEPT

### MONOPOLY ON CRACK

Is it Monopoly, or is it Magic: The Gathering? Actually, Culdcept is neither; it combines the best elements of both into an incredibly addicting strategy game.

Players move around a board, landing on spaces that can either be claimed (if neutral), fought over (if hostile), or leveled up (if friendly). Creature cards engage in battle, and can be enhanced through the use of item cards. Spell cards are used outside of combat, and have a great variety of effects.

Players have complete control over the composition of the deck they use in play, creating another level of strategy to the game. New cards are added after every defeated opponent in single-player, which keeps things interesting. There are a number of different boards, each with a unique layout of spaces. All of these facets of gameplay work together phenomenally well, creating a surprisingly deep strategic experience.

Culdcept is one of the best turn-based titles to ever come to consoles. I highly recommend that you invest in it if you have any affection for the genre. — **ADAM**

### SECOND OPINION

After playing Culdcept, combining Monopoly with Magic seems like it was meant to be. Matches are fun and require a great deal of strategic thinking. However, play seems tipped in the favor of the AI opponents. They seem to always get the card or the dice roll they need. Strategy game fans will have a good time; others may be scared away by the challenge.

**JEREMY - 7.5**

### THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
T  
CONTENT RATED BY  
ESRB

8

- **Concept:** Cross Monopoly with Magic: The Gathering and put it on the PS2
- **Graphics:** Nothing to get too excited about, but they get the job done
- **Sound:** Obviously not the focus of this title. Put on a CD, turn on the radio, do something
- **Playability:** Groovy control, no irritating menus or anything
- **Entertainment:** Monopoly and M-TG are fun by themselves, together they're an absolute not
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** NEC INTERCHANNEL  
■ **DEVELOPER** OMIYASOFT ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 1



PLAYSTATION 2

## TIME CRISIS 3

### THE OTHER GUN CONTROL

Time Crisis has always been the premiere gun game franchise. Its "take cover" approach lends strategy to throwing lead. Time Crisis 3's new choice of weaponry is yet another thing to bake your noodle while you take aim, yet doesn't distract you from your mission: busting caps.

The four weapons – handgun, shotgun, machinegun, and grenade launcher – can be switched by aiming off the screen and firing, and each carries its own ammo supply. Switching them to tackle various situations is a great new element. Sniping is available in some areas, as well.

This game has plenty of damage to cause. The environments have many parts to blow up – from watermelons at a fruit stand to silos filled with flammable chemicals. However, it doesn't approach the levels of interactivity you'd hope for in this day and age. It's a visual improvement over TC 2, but some blood would be nice.

I like the game's added depth, but I expected a little more creativity. Despite the quality of the GunCon 2, it's still difficult shooting at the edges of the screen. However, Time Crisis 3 is the best ointment for an itchy trigger finger. — **JUSTIN**

### SECOND OPINION

Here's the deal – this game isn't about variety, stunning graphical prowess, or insightful dialogue. This is about shooting lots of bad guys in a short period of time. Those of you who don't remember what arcades used to be like can get a little bit of that feeling from Time Crisis 3 – and that's a good thing.

**LISA - 7.5**

### THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
T  
CONTENT RATED BY  
ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:** Pick from four weapons, find some cover, and go shoot happy
- **Graphics:** It looks good for a game where you spend half the time staring at walls and rocks
- **Sound:** Japan needs good English-speaking voice actors! Send help
- **Playability:** As long as it's not at the edge of the screen, if you shoot at it, you'll definitely hit it
- **Entertainment:** As much fun as you can have squeezing a trigger. Get a friend for maximum enjoyment
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO  
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 21



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## REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

# BLOODY ROAR 4

## FINALLY GETTING SOME BITE

I've always considered Bloody Roar a B-team fighter, so I was quite surprised to find myself really enjoying this installment. While I won't put it with VF 4 or Soul Calibur II, it does enough to dish out a good time.

Career mode is the biggest – and best – new addition, and basically quadrupled the amount of time I maintained my interest. It's like Final Fantasy X's Sphere Grid, but you move around the board by beating opponents. You rack up DNA points, which you can spend on equipping the abilities you pick up along the way. Every fighter needs something like this, and it's good to see Bloody Roar deliver.

The gameplay is still a little shallow for me, but it's far from horrible. Things like breakthrough environments and sweet blocking animations don't quite make up for only having two attack buttons in human form (three in beast form), but I guess that means your little brother or sister can play along.

While the models and backgrounds aren't up to snuff with other fighters, detail has been bumped up. You'll see a whole lot of blood, visible breath in cold stages, and splashing water. Unfortunately, these effects can cause slowdown. Bloody Roar 4 isn't a serious contender yet, but at least the series is showing forward momentum. – JUSTIN

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

TEEN **T**

**7.5**

- Concept:** Konami decides to add some depth to an underachieving series.
- Graphics:** Bland environments and unimpressive character models. However, plenty of plasma for the bloodthirsty and solid particle effects.
- Sound:** Typical Japanese fighter music. Electric guitar has rarely sounded more synthesized.
- Playability:** Good for beginners, shallow for veterans.
- Entertainment:** Career mode will have you playing happily to the band, despite a lengthy list of issues.
- Replay Value:** Moderate.

### SECOND OPINION

With the latest batch of high-quality fighters on the market, Bloody Roar 4 just doesn't stack up. The bland environments, simplistic controls, and cheesy butt-rock anthems are nothing but checks in the minus column. The career mode is new and somewhat interesting, yet doesn't redeem the package.

LISA – 6

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** HUDSON SOFT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

## PLAYSTATION 2 QUICKIES

### SWAT: GLOBAL STRIKE TEAM

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 3



On the Xbox, this title was a decent, if unexceptional, squad-based shooter with voice command – the only game of its type on that system. On the PS2, SWAT goes head-to-head with the almighty SOCOM, and loses that battle hands down. SWAT's missions lack variety and the story is weak. However, it is a decent title in many respects: Controls are solid, graphics are passable, and the upgradable weapons are a nice touch. But the bottom line is that there's nothing here that wasn't already done in SOCOM, and done better. – JEREMY

M 7

### VIRTUAL-ON MARZ

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA OF AMERICA  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 14



There's a reason this series has fallen from grace in recent years. The animations are cool, but if warriors of the future had this control scheme for a giant robot, they'd be better off with squirt guns. The single-player missions are so boring that I looked forward to the bland voice acting and terrible story in between scenarios. Avoid this game like you would a laser beam to the head. – ADAM

T 5

### ESPN COLLEGE HOOPS

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA ONLINE)  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA SPORTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11



Sega Sports is on a roll this year. While lacking in polish compared to ESPN NBA (rebounding and passing aren't as tight), College Hoops gives you so many ways to play. You've got two Legacy modes, one where you're a coach working his way through the ranks; Rivalry mode; and slam dunk contests. A list of goals wins you money to use in the Campus Store to unlock mascot teams, fantasy courts, and lots more. From the commentary to the cutscenes to the chants, this game breathes the college ball experience. B-ball fanatics will be playing this one well into March. – JUSTIN

E 8.25

### MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (DEPENDENT ON GAME)  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 17



I don't even need to write a review, this one writes itself. All these games: 720 Degrees, Blaster, Bubbles, Defender, Defender II, Gauntlet, Joust, Joust 2, Klax, Marble Madness, Paperboy, Rampage, Smash TV, Sinistar, Satan's Hollow, Robotron; 2084, RoadBlasters, Rampart, Splat!, Spy Hunter, Super Sprint, Root Beer Tapper, 'Toobin', and Vindicators – for twenty bucks. Buy it. – ANDY

E 9

### SUPER TRUCKS RACING

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** XS GAMES  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 15



Hmm...I didn't know there was such a thing as Super Trucks racing, but a little Internet research did confirm that, yes, there is a motorsports circuit that revolves around souped-up big rigs. Interestingly, this title was developed by MTV Music Generator creators Jester Interactive, who prove to have a pretty solid feel for the racing genre. It's also a fairly good-looking game, considering its \$19.99 price point. However, semi tractors are – by nature – pretty slow and hard to control, so don't expect many high-speed thrills out of this one. Also, get ready to crash into some rails – a lot of rails. – MATT

E 6.75

### NBA SHOOTOUT 2004

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS (2-PLAYER VIA ONLINE)  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28



I'm impressed. What was a one-trick pony last season is now a noned and well-playing title. I like how every player does what they should on the court. Your centers and lower forwards will get their blocks and boards, and your guards end up with the assists. This sounds elementary, but it doesn't always work out in many games. Blocks, rebounds, and steals are where I think they should be. Career mode is still a blast, unlocking the 50 Greatest is cleverly done, and 989's online community is blazing trails. While a perennial bronze medal winner on PS2, this year's ShootOut has officially got game. – JUSTIN

E 8

### DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: XTREME LEGENDS

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11



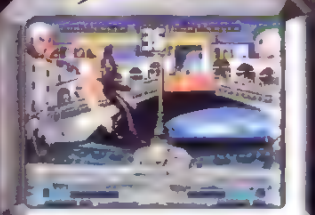
While you don't have to be Nostradamus to predict that the title's average gameplay hasn't changed one iota, Koei is offering a slightly different structure with this DW addition. The new Legend, Challenge, and Xtreme modes offer more scenarios for each character. This helps to keep things fresh, even if the beat 'em up routine is the same. It's hard to argue with a game that prices itself at around \$20 (but online would be sweet). However, when you consider that you could cash that twenty in for 2,000 pennies, and then make like a bandit for a gumball machine, it's a toss up. 2,000 pieces of gum; that's got to be someone's idea of heaven. – KATO

T 7



THE KING OF FIGHTERS

THE KING OF FIGHTERS 2001



episode 6

# THE KING OF FIGHTERS

episode 7

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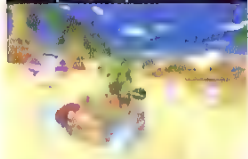
One battle arena takes place atop a giant GameCube



"Why did the Goomba cross the road?" "To get Scott Ballo's autograph!"



Baby Mario's Chain Chomp special weapon owns all



When there's a blue flame behind your kart, you're fittin' to get a speed burst

GAMECUBE

# MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH

MORE THAN A DASH OF BRILLIANCE

Every Mario Kart release has been a hotly anticipated event. I'll go out on a limb and say I've liked this series more than the Mario platformer series in the past 10 years (remakes not included). They've never disappointed with elevating the imitator-filled genre, and providing some of the best vehicle-based thrills in all of video games.

You've probably heard all about the dual-rider formula in Double Dash. Well, believe the hype, because it really does make things much deeper. For example, you can hold two weapons at once if you play your cards right (making sure the backseat driver has his/her hands empty when you hit an item box). Like a Revert in Tony Hawk, this just adds one more thing for you to think of when you're rocketing down the track.

This new mechanic also marks the first time a racing game has featured a co-op mode. It's a blast to work together during Grand Prix contests. Tossing objects isn't all that's in the job description for the back-seat driver, as this player needs to activate powerslides and can punch nearby karts. Mario Kart's multiplayer has always been a huge attraction, and this element takes things up another notch, making it easily the racer of choice for party people. Allowing LAN compatibility proves Nintendo does in fact know what century this is. The new Battle modes are nice, though I think their courses should've been larger.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/RACING (UP TO 16-PLAYER VIA LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO  
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 17



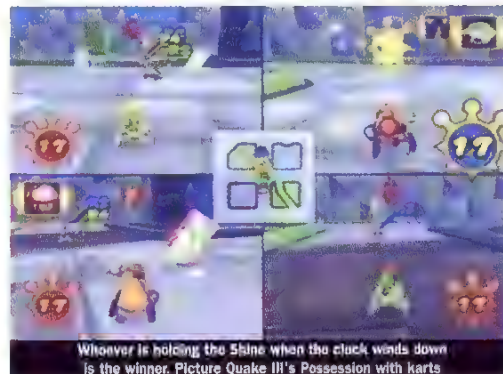
The Bob-Omb stages of Battle mode play like a deathmatch



Using the technology boost afforded by the GameCube, Nintendo really outdid itself on level design. You can uncover more shortcuts than ever, and the tracks are just stunning. Many Mario universe cast members make cameos, like Shyguys figure skating or Delfino citizens cheering you onto the winner's circle. My favorite course is DK Island, where you get shot out of a barrel cannon to the top of a mountain, and then go speeding down its steep decline.

Selecting your character from the list of 16 isn't quite as critical as it was in the past, but is still important. Each one falls in one of three size categories, and in turn the game has three vehicle sizes. Draft Bowser into your stable, and you'll need a big kart. If you go with Baby Mario and Baby Luigi, you'll get a tiny vehicle. Every driver has his or her own special power-up, too. Diddy Kong drops a huge banana peel, Luigi fires a spreading green fireball, and Peach makes a heart-shaped shield that surrounds the kart.

Nintendo can do no wrong with this series. While I wish another single-player mode would've been added (a career, perhaps?), Double Dash raises the character-based racing bar yet again. It's also the must-have GameCube title this holiday season. Don't be left eating the dust of the millions of other Nintendo faithful who will be dashing to pick this up on November 17. — JUSTIN



Whoever is holding the Shine when the clock winds down is the winner. Picture Quake III's Possession with karts

THE BOTTOM LINE



9.25

- **Concept:** Two drivers are better than one
- **Graphics:** The definition of vibrant and colorful. You'll be running apps just to check out the amazing tracks
- **Sound:** The music is simple, yes; but you'll be humming it in short order. Voices get repetitive quickly
- **Playability:** Having two characters per kart really opens up the strategy. You'll master the control before your first lap is over
- **Entertainment:** The dream of a GameCube Mario Kart is realized, and it's as masterful as we had all hoped
- **Replay Value:** High

## SECOND OPINION

Much like the reports on Elvis, the talk that Double Dash was going to leave Mario Kart for dead were greatly exaggerated. It is true that the addition of two players on the kart changed the dynamic of the game slightly, but once you dig into Double Dash it delivers all that we know and love about the series plus a little bit more. That plus, in my book, is a big one. Giving the player control of two different characters is pretty cool in single-player, but add a friend on the back of your kart in multiplayer and it opens the game up like never before. Screaming at/with your teammate is what Double Dash is all about, and playing the game as either gunner or driver is surprisingly fun. I don't think I'll ever get to experience 16-player LAN, but I know it would be a blast. Heck, this game is a treat with just two.

ANDY — 9



who are you?



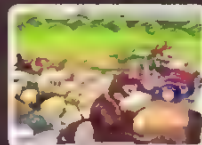
The race is on in Mario Kart: Double Dash!! Now with two characters per kart—one drives, the other throws stuff. Switch back and forth to mix it up and double the mayhem. Only for Nintendo GameCube.



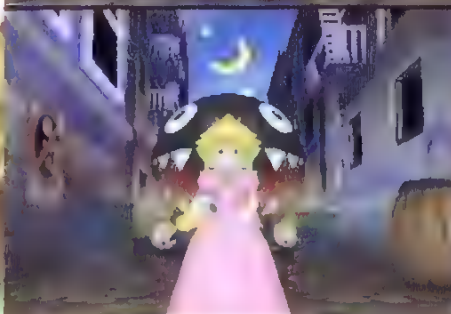
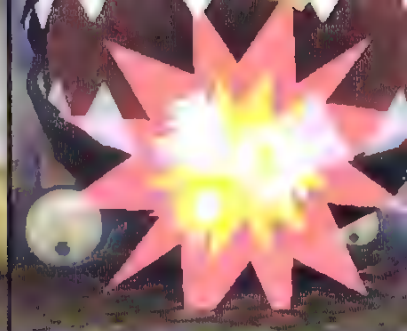
DC DOLBY  
SURROUND  
PRO LOGIC II

EVERYONE  
**E** Mild Cartoon Violence  
CONTENT RATED BY  
ESRB

**MARIO KART**  
*Double Dash!!*



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**"The only laughs come from knowing your friends are suffering the same punishment."**



GAMECUBE

# MARIO PARTY 5

JUST SAY NO

**W**e all have those undesirable yet mandatory moments in our lives. Actors have to sit in the makeup chair for an hour before a shoot. Plumbers have to plunge clogged toilets. Politicians have to deal with other politicians. As a video game journalist, my cross to bear is having to play Mario Party sequel after Mario Party sequel. At least this time, I get to try to warn you against doing the same thing. Don't play this game.

Even at its most basic level, Mario Party is flawed. Yes, you play minigames against the other players. However, the reward for winning or consequence for losing is nil. If I win, I get a handful of coins. If I lose, someone else gets those coins. The thing is, coins as a whole don't mean a darn thing in the game – it's stars that you're really after. Strange then that 90% of the game deals with coins changing hands, and stars are treated as an afterthought. Of course, I spent 90% of my time with Mario Party 5 riddled with thoughts that I need a raise for having to play this clump of dung. Again, don't play this game.

At least some of the minigames, even without any motivation to win them, are passable. It's doubtlessly harder to make quick gaming scenarios for multiple users than it is to craft single-player thrills like Wario Ware's. Many are unimaginative, and you'll be repeating a few of them even if you only play through once, but they are by far the best part of this title. I think the most creativity went into those games where it's one player against everyone else.

If this series became Mario Mingame – without any of the slow, tedious, painful board game elements – it wouldn't be quite as rancid, though it would still stink. But, as is, you shouldn't play this game.

Any semblance of strategy will eventually fail you – sooner rather than later. Basically, the rules are rubbish. This is because there are so many variables that alter the course of the game at the drop of a hat. Coins get redistributed, the star moves to another part of the board, and any power-ups you may collect are easily swiped from your hands. Of course, the best strategy is to not play this game.

Like Pavlov's dogs, I may have become subconsciously ingrained to wince every time I play Mario Party. However, I need only see the looks of abject horror on the faces of any newbies playing the game with me (i.e. Jeremy and Adam) for the first time to know this is universal. The only laughs come from knowing your friends are suffering the same punishment as you are. They have to see the same save screen after every turn. They have to deal with the homestretch taking even longer than the early portion of the game. They're cursing this to anyone within earshot, just like you.

Don't play this game. Seriously. Maybe then, Nintendo will get the message, and this scourge of software will disappear from existence once and for all. You make all the difference. You vote with your wallet. Just say no to Mario Party. Thank you. – **JUSTIN**

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER BOARD ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER HUDSON SOFT ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 10



THE BOTTOM LINE



2

- **Concept:**  
Once again, enough people bought the last Mario Party for Nintendo to justify a sequel. Thanks a lot, geniuses!
- **Graphics:**  
It's a board game. What do you want?
- **Sound:**  
The audio is the razor blade atop a toxic waste "cake"
- **Playability:**  
Nothing is overly complicated, control-wise. If you can hold a controller, you can play the minigames
- **Entertainment:**  
There is no entertainment here, only pain. Lots and lots of pain
- **Replay Value:**  
Low

SECOND OPINION

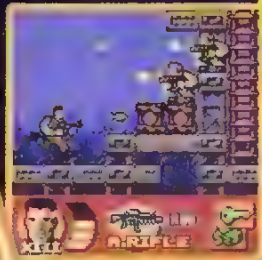
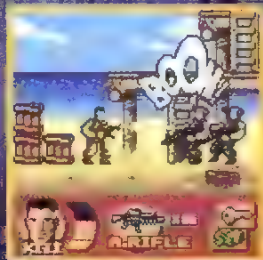
**How bad is Mario Party 5?**  
Well, spending just a measly hour with this miserable, cancer-of-the-brain-inducing game is like going naked hot-tubbing with Rush Limbaugh as your parents cheer you on and snap photos. I didn't think that it was humanly possible for this series to get any worse than it was, but this entry walled on my mentionables until they were well past black and blue. The board game aspect remains void of strategy and is even slower in pace than before. Yet again, luck outweighs the need to be skillful. You could win every minigame and collect the most coins but still end up in last place. To make matters worse, the majority of minigames are just flat out stupid. I only encountered three or four that I would even consider remotely entertaining. Altogether, it's just painful to play. If I had this game as a kid, I would have done a lot more homework.

REINER – 2

thirteen

# XIII

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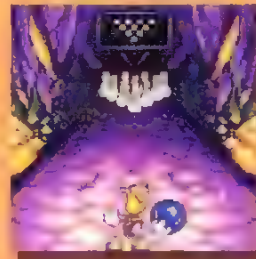
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# gameloft

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## REVIEWS



GAMECUBE

# THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

HAIL TO THE KING, BABY!

**P**laying this title makes me want to watch the movie; the epic battles from the films are so faithfully recreated in the gameplay that it makes me salivate for more Tolkien goodness. I was amazed at how perfectly this title captured the gritty intensity of Helm's Deep and the other conflicts, and I truly felt like I was but one warrior in a sea of combat.

This title is absolutely stuffed with content. Much like the films, there's nearly too much to summarize neatly. Being able to tackle the different storylines in any order is nice, and it's a treat to see footage from the upcoming movie. The graphics, sound, and level design all astound, and the special features are like gravy on this already-fantastic feast. If I have one complaint (note that I said IF I have a complaint), it's that it may be a tad difficult for casual gamers. There are several levels which I had to play several times in order to beat. Oh, and the boss battles are a little formulaic, so I guess I have two complaints. Still, for fans of the movies, books, or action games in general, this one is a must-have. — JEREMY

THE BOTTOM LINE  
TEEN T 8.25

- **Concept:** Hack and slash your way through the third movie in the greatest series of all time.
- **Graphics:** If you told me the movies' special effects team animated this game, I'd believe you.
- **Sound:** Much like the graphics, the sound feels like it's lifted straight from the film.
- **Playability:** The combat feels a little simple at first, but unlocking combos opens it up and adds variety.
- **Entertainment:** It's the perfect way to get excited for the upcoming movie.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

### SECOND OPINION

Visually, this game is a masterpiece. Even with only an okay camera, the locations and their high level of detail put some movies to shame. The gameplay isn't as varied as EA would have you think, and the branching paths still make it a short title, but when you're in the kill zone, there's nothing but a smile on your face.

KATO - 8

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA REDWOOD SHORES  
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 6



GAMECUBE

# BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

BEYOND THE NORM

**T**here's far more to this game than I have room to discuss, and that's initially confusing. With no real introduction, this title thrust me into the unfamiliar world of Hyllis, a planet in the midst of a war with an alien species. I was completely in the dark about the planet and the characters, including my own. But the more I played, the more I learned about the story and was drawn into the strange world.

This complex plot unfolds almost entirely through character interaction; traditional cutscenes are all but nonexistent. Dialogue and story elements are integrated completely into gameplay, creating a smooth experience unlike any other game I have ever seen. Imagine playing an epic RPG that never pauses to load a cinema scene and you'll get the idea.

Every moment of Beyond Good and Evil looks as good as a traditional RPG cutscene. Thanks to its flexible graphics engine, environmental effects are staggering and character animations are amazing. So why didn't it score higher? Well, gameplay might be a tad simplistic for some people — combat exclusively involves the A button. More importantly, this game is just plain weird. That's never a bad thing, but it took me a long time to figure out my feelings about this title. I'm sure many people will feel the same way, so I can't say it's the right game for everyone. But it is, without a doubt, one of the most unique. — JEREMY

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T

8

- **Concept:** A Zelda-esque adventure with evil aliens, conspiracies, photography, and a pig man.
- **Graphics:** Although stylized, these are some of the most amazing graphics on any system.
- **Sound:** The song in the Akuda bar might be my favorite video game score ever.
- **Playability:** With its simple interface, anyone with at least one thumb can play like a master.
- **Entertainment:** The involving story will keep you coming back, despite the initial weirdness.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate.



You must take photos of all the strange creatures you see

Stealth is a large part of the gameplay



Your hovercraft is a big help...

...as is your "uncle" Pey!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT  
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

### SECOND OPINION

This title lies somewhere between the action and adventure genres. It has a huge emphasis on story and taking in the game at your own pace; but it also requires you to find somewhat random items, fight bad guys, drive a hovercraft, explore with stealth, and solve some elementary puzzles. There is also a Pokémon Snap-like element, which is a lot more fun than it sounds. The GameCube edition has markedly better control in nearly every play type, but suffers from more jaggies than its Xbox sibling. That being said, the graphics are stunning on any system and the environments of Hyllis are interesting and unique. Many will look elsewhere for deeper gameplay, as most aspects are pretty simplistic, but the story and characters are compelling enough to ensure more than a few will be rabid fans.

LISA - 8

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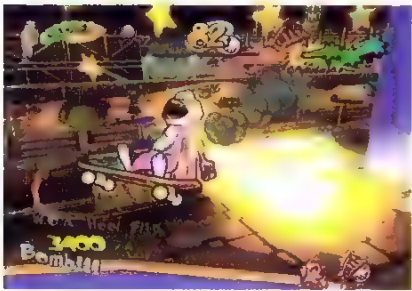


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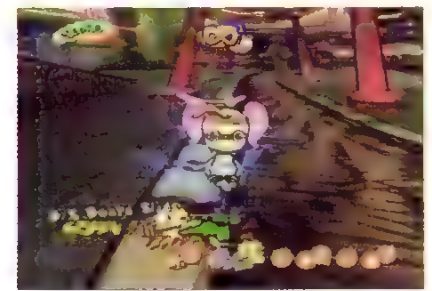
*"Go! Go! Hypergrind is fast, fun, kooky, and it looks great."*  
- IGN.com



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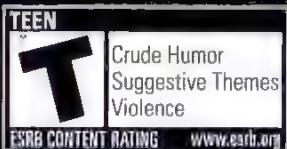
Powerful graphics engine allows for real-time character deformation. The wacky, cel-shaded skateboarders can be subjected to numerous humiliations, such as being set on fire, flattened and covered in cocoa!

*"...your ticket to many nights of great gaming."*  
- NintendoInsider.com

*"...absolutely insane..."*  
- GamesAreFun.com



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## REVIEWS



GAMECUBE

# KIRBY AIR RIDE

## PINK LIGHTNING

**K**irby Air Ride has a control scheme as simple as I've seen since the Atari 2600. Here it is: You steer with the left analog stick, and the A button does everything else. As dull as this sounds, HAL has managed to do some cool things within this spartan design aesthetic, in the tradition of Kirby, you can swallow various power-ups and spit out enemies by pressing A; as well as use A to hit turbo pads and do a dash move by holding — you guessed it — A to build Kirby's energy. This dash move actually results in some cool gameplay, as you can use it to slow down, then slingshot yourself around corners. However, I think that many will wish they had a few more options in the way of control.

The game does feature a variety of modes, from straight-up racing to some top-down view tracks to a minigame reminiscent of Monkey Target from Super Monkey Ball. As you might expect, Kirby Air Ride puts a premium on unlockables and multiplayer. Unfortunately, there's just not enough here for me to recommend this game as a purchase. It's neat, but after a couple of hours you won't really feel the need to keep playing. Also, I question Nintendo's timing in releasing this game, as it comes out just a few weeks before the unquestionably superior Mario Kart: Double Dash. — **MATT**



- **Concept:**  
A simplistic, fun favor
- **Graphics:**  
As usual, Kirby's colorful and cute
- **Sound:**  
Yep, it's cute
- **Playability:**  
The one-bit dash move is easy to grasp, maybe too easy. I do like the cool power-ups
- **Entertainment:**  
Like Kirby himself, this game has a certain charm, but I don't expect to be blown away
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderate

### SECOND OPINION

Nintendo has become so obsessed with its "games for everyone" philosophy that the net it has cast is so wide it's off the mark. The courses are inspired, the powers cool, and the unlockables never-ending; but the gameplay itself runs out of gas. With multiplayer fun as Kirby's clear focus, this game is going to leave a lot of people out in the cold.

**KATO — 6.75**



GAMECUBE

# BOMBERMAN

## JETTERS

BOMBS AWAY

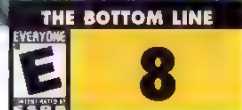
**B**omberman is a good time. Always has been, and as far as I'm concerned it always will be. Jetters doesn't exactly break any new ground for the series, but it doesn't mess anything up, either.

The single-player mode is average, with a fairly linear progression through a not-very-detailed cartoony 3D world. It's fun, what with the unique Bomberman dynamic applied to a Mario-like quest; it's just not the focus of this title.

Multiplayer is where Jetters explodes into a frenzy of destruction that will keep you entertained for hours on end. There are a number of variations on the classic straight-up bomb-filled craziness that put Bomberman on the map. Rockets, searchlights, different sizes of maps — all enhance the replay value immeasurably.

For once, it really is nonstop action; even after you die in the arena you hang out along the borders and drop (you guessed it) bombs on whoever's still standing. This keeps the luckless players occupied while waiting for their chance to get back in the ring. I can't stress enough how chaotic and frenetic four-player matches are — you really have to play it to understand.

Once again, the GameCube gets a great party game disguised as a mostly single-player title. Pick it up if you need to blow up your friends. — **ADAM**



- **Concept:**  
Extend the Bomberman series without getting too creative
- **Graphics:**  
Cool cel-shaded character models; the quest world is kind of blah
- **Sound:**  
Cutesy music and voice-overs to get you in the mood for blowing stuff up
- **Playability:**  
It's Bomberman — there are pretty much two buttons
- **Entertainment:**  
If you haven't played Bomberman, this is a good way to get into it. If you have, you'll enjoy the new multiplayer modes
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderately High

### SECOND OPINION

I'm going to lay it out straight for you boys and girls — Bomberman has always been fun. Bomberman Jetters on the 'Cube is a lot of fun, but it certainly isn't a revolution in the world of wee peoples throwing bombs. If you haven't picked up any titles in this series for a while, check it out. You now get to switch characters on the fly in adventure mode and the multiplayer allows up to four players on one GameCube. With graphics that will overwhelm most players, a soundtrack that's "quirky" during its best parts, and an adventure mode that won't rock anyone's socks; players are going to have fun, but I'm not going to go so far as calling the title "essential." The multiplayer (this game's real draw) is definitely worth the cost of admission for this quirky Japanese ditty.

**LISA — 7.25**



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO SALES ■ **DEVELOPER** HUDSON SOFT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** HAL LABORATORIES ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 13



## MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11



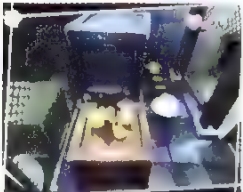
Despite the new locations and some of the strategic and even slight gameplay changes this brings, I'm not convinced that this isn't an expansion pack. Some of the dynamic explosion effects (put to good use) are

tempered by the graphics' overall failings. Draw distance can be a problem, and this version just doesn't look that sharp. Add on to this poor AI (although the inclination to more hand-to-hand combat by your foes is cool) and collision, and this soldier is definitely marching in place. — **KATO**

**T** 7.5

## DISNEY'S HIDE AND SNEAK

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PUZZLE  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



There's a golden truth in family-friendly kid software: Just because it's for a tyke doesn't mean that it can be crap. People of all ages respond to entertainment designed for kids if it is done well, like the Harry Potter books or Muppets movies. This game, sadly enough, does not possess that level of quality. It's a series of rooms where either Mickey or Minnie needs to find a key and unlock the door on the other side. The environments are bland, the characters have no dialogue, and the puzzles are illogical. — **LISA**

**E** 3.5

## NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 17



Starting out with a "knowing is half the battle" message, Need for Speed: Underground hopes to make you like street racing so much on your TV that you'll never, ever do it in a real car. I think

it may have reached that goal. The customizable cars are (as expected) crazy cool, the tracks are easy to learn but offer lots of variation, the level of difficulty is both customizable and has an excellent learning curve, and the bevy of race types will keep people enthralled for hours. — **LISA**

**E** 9

## NBA LIVE 2004

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 14



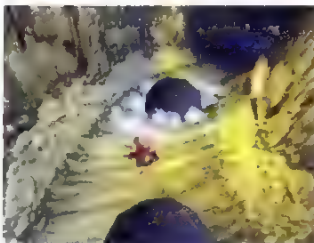
The bad news is there is only one GameCube NBA sim out there. The good news is Live is straight bangin'. It's a little too bangin', actually, since the collision makes it extremely hard to get in the paint, but that's part of

Live's efforts to become a more serious game. Casual fans may struggle a bit, but most b-ball veterans will embrace the new changes — more blocks, defensive swarming, and off court outscenes — and find their little slice of hoops heaven. — **JUSTIN**

**E** 8.25

## SPIRIT & SPELLS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** DREAMCATCHER  
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 24



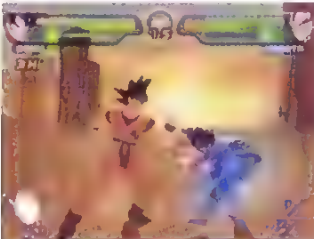
Sometime in the future, you will see this game in a cutout bin for a dollar. You will be tempted to buy it. Then you will remember this review, and walk on by. You

will think, "Gee, Matt Heigeson from Game Informer, you just saved me a dollar. I'm going to go buy a Sprite! You're the best!" It's the least I could do, friend, to warn you off of this game that features level design that would have been sub-par 15 years ago, terrible graphics, and wretched control. Seriously, I hope this was a high school computer class project or something. Yes, it is cool that your character can transform into different characters, but each one is completely and utterly dull, as is everything else in this title. — **MATT**

**E** 2

## DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2 PLAYER FIGHTING  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28



Before the Goku worshipers out there declare that I should be tossed into the pits of hell for my absurdly low score, let it be known that I truly believe that

Budokai is a 9+ for Dragon Ball Z fans. With over 20 familiar characters and story segments laced between each match, this game is successful in capturing the flavor of the show. It also boasts an incredibly deep skill editor and a ton of unlockables. On the flip side of the coin, if you don't lust after balls of dragons, you'll see nothing more than a mediocre fighter with a really confusing plot and characters in dire need of haircuts. — **REINER**

**E** 7.25

## BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** BRISCKET  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 14



Not even the work of comic book great Jim Lee can save Sin Tzu from being a total loss. Okay, the graphics are fairly sharp, but that's about all this title has to offer. On any

system the combat stinks, but on the 'Cube, it's absolutely horrid. The controller simply wasn't designed for this type of game, and this game simply wasn't designed to be played at all. One-button combos don't give the player the feeling that they're a dark avenger of the night. There's a lot of embarrassing stuff in Batman's long history; and this game is right up there with Adam West and the last two movies. — **JEREMY**

**T** 5



GAMECUBE

# GO! GO! HYPERGRIND

A TWO-FACED WIENER COVERED IN POOP

**A**lthough I'm sure some of you probably think that headline is supposed to be autobiographical, I can assure you it's not. Developed with help from SPUMCO, an animation company made up of several of the creative types behind *Ren & Stimpy*, the same sick sense of humor and twisted art style is evident throughout this game. As such, it's really less about skateboarding than it is about inflicting comical damage on the outrageous character of your choice.

You, as a woon auditioning for a new show, compete against other creatures to prove you can give the audience the most bang for their buck. Mostly, this means linking sets of "Reactions," a.k.a. devices throughout the levels that squash, torch, and mangle your boarder in various sadistic ways.

In the end, *Go Go HyperGrind* doesn't quite live up to its potential, mostly due to very mechanical control and a shallow trick system. Also, a few of the modes (in particular *Battle*) are just plain annoying. After you've mastered all of the Reaction chains in a level it can begin to grow dull, as the core boarding mechanics aren't really compelling on their own. However, everyone should play this game at least once, if only for an afternoon rental. — **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE

**T** 7.75

■ **Concept:** Bizarro, masochistic humor collides with skateboarding in a strange cartoon world.

■ **Graphics:** Yes, it's got nice graphics, but it's also got style and imagination.

■ **Sound:** Surrealistic music you may not find elsewhere, but it's from the *Joie* and the *Busycrats* soundtrack (that's a compliment, by the way).

■ **Playability:** Nothing special here, but more about linking together stunts than boarding.

■ **Entertainment:** The gameplay pales in comparison with the rest, but it's still a good time.

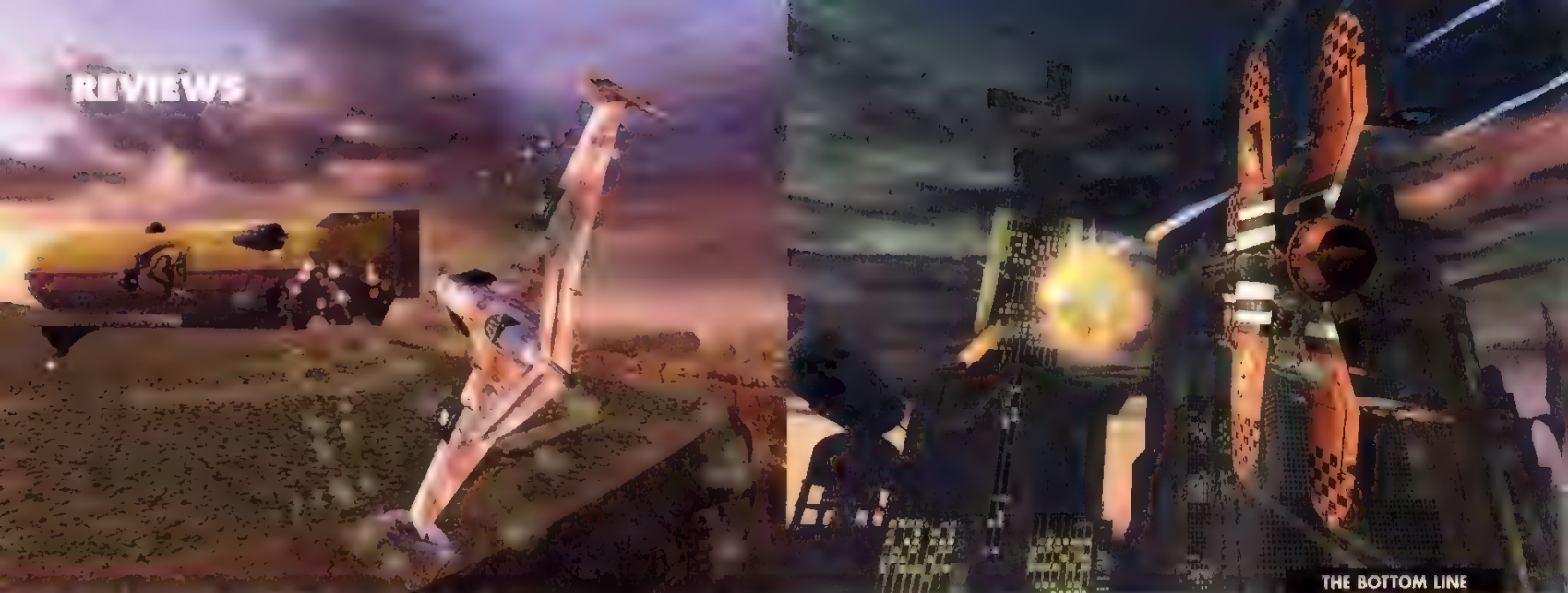
■ **Replay Value:** Moderate.

## SECOND OPINION

This game has a zany, appealing look to it, and the gameplay is just as faboo. While I'm not a fan of the one-on-one modes; the courses, gimmicks, and gameplay are all worthy of praise. The character design is some of the best I've seen, and this definitely has that trademark Japanese obscurity/insanity. The Johnson Brothers alone are worth the price of admission.

**JUSTIN - 8.5**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** TEAM POPONCHI/SPUMCO  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 15



“...earns its wings as a game that is an absolute riot to play.”



The selection of playable craft is quite varied



“Wow...What a beautiful sunset. Wanna make out?”



Through an excellent targeting system, picking off fighters is a cinch



Each world closes with a battle against a gigantic mechanized boss

XBOX UNLIMITED ENABLED

# CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

FIRE IN THE SKY

The development of *Crimson Skies* was loaded with turbulence and a near record-setting number of delays. Yet, despite the hardship that Microsoft endured in getting this product to retail shelves, the game has come together brilliantly and emerges as one of its most notable first-party efforts.

Set in an alternate 1930s where land-based transportation was never fully realized, players assume the role of Nathan Zachary, an airborne gun for hire who will accept missions if the price is right. Flying high in a warplane that is armed to the teeth, you'll find yourself combating a squadron of heavily armed zeppelins, racing through rings, flying escort to a speeding train, and scouring the landscape for hidden tokens that can be used to upgrade your birds.

Unlike most games of this ilk, it won't take a 100-page flight manual to understand the control scheme. While the physics and sensation of flight prove to be incredibly realistic, the gameplay design veers away from true simulation and hones in on the intensity of an arcade shooter. You won't find yourself lining up the perfect trajectory of your shots, or circling enemy bogeys just to get them in your sights. The game is designed for non-stop action. As such, you'll mow down countless

enemies in no time flat. The skirmishes that unfold are lightning quick and very much in your face at all times.

Microsoft's flight sim also excels in producing a high level of variance in its challenges. Along with the different mission types, gamers can change their strategies on the fly. Rather than confronting a group of bogeys in a fighter, you can land, hop out of your plane, and man a stationary turret on a base.

The single-player campaign is a rip-roaring good time as is, but Xbox Live is where this title shines the brightest. Using the headset to coordinate attacks with your wingmen is a truly amazing experience. The battles that unfold are just as intense and rife with skill.

This title also preys on your senses with incredible sound effects and some of the most detailed visuals around. Mid-air explosions shower flaming wings and spinning propellers to the ground; pilots eject and parachute to safety; and the sound of a bogey screaming past your six is too cool to accurately describe.

Rising high above the likes of *Ace Combat* and *Airforce Delta Storm*, *Crimson Skies* earns its wings as a game that is an absolute riot to play. It's a console flight simulator with a serious bite. —REINER

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE OR SYSTEM LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** FASA STUDIO/MICROSOFT ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 21

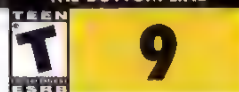


The explosions give MechAssault a run for its money



Players can hop out of their planes and mount stationary turrets

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:** A high-flying, arcade-style shooter with a heavy focus on mission variety and multiplayer
- **Graphics:** Detailed and explosive. The smoke effects, vibrancy of mid-air blasts, and touches of realism in the landscapes are truly impressive
- **Sound:** Your wingmen give away too many clues as to how to defeat specific foes, but the vehicle sounds are top-notch
- **Playability:** The controls are simple, yet perfect for the action at hand
- **Entertainment:** A rip-roaring good time with endlessly enjoyable Xbox Live support
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I had more fun with *Crimson Skies* than I've had with any console flight sim since *Rogue Leader*. The control works surprisingly well for a gamepad; flips and loops are easier than ever before. The graphics are as pretty as we expect out of the big box, and the music makes for good enough background noise. Where *Crimson Skies* really excels, though, is in the gameplay and level design. Each stage is composed of several missions with no menus to break them up, and every task is unique. At the end of each stage, an impressive boss impedes your progress. Flying around and shooting stuff is fluid and natural, making for a solid experience. Multiplayer is a blast too and – between split-screen, Live support, and the system link – you should be able to find some way to get your dogfight on. The variable difficulty makes this title worth it for flight sim junkies and casual pilots alike.

ADAM – 9

*Back... in black.*



# NINJA GAIDEN

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XBOX UNLIMITED ENABLED

# PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

## THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

To say that the Project Gotham series is the Xbox's best looking racer is to overlook a few other key factors in its success. While still retaining and improving upon its vaunted good looks, PGR 2 is yet another hit for the console because of that one quality that most games in the genre can't capture: it leaves you constantly craving your next challenge.

On the face of it, this sequel is largely untouched. Earning Kudos through good driving and the great-looking environments are its pillars. However, this isn't just a case of adding more cars. The key is in the title's excellent pacing. Because you can earn Kudos in almost every segment of the game, PGR 2 is largely freed from merely being about rehashing the same races just for cash. This and the choosable difficulty levels allow you to progress at your own pace and perform a variety of tasks to get the Kudos you seek. You can tackle cone courses in the Arcade mode or stick to the Kudos World Series and earn them overtaking cars or marshalling your top speed to make it past the Speed Camera. Even Xbox Live is all-inclusive. Instead of just being a multiplayer component, those hooked up to it while playing single-player can see the record times and ghost cars of other online players who have gone before them.

The racing itself is stimulating as well. The automobiles (including classics and even SUVs) show a good adherence to the delicate principles of acceleration, braking, and drift, and also have distinct differences in the way they handle and feel.

Between this and the gorgeous scenery, it's like a sensory overload as you brake and scream around a tight corner in a dangerous mix of adrenaline and gasoline. Shadows are impressive (especially when you get nervous as an opponent's headlights creep up and shine on your car), and go so far as to cast themselves on the rear seats of your ride.

Whereas the soul of Gran Turismo is about the cars themselves, PGR 2 is all about tearing up the courses and getting paid handsomely in Kudos to do it — "stylish driving" as the game says. Consider this important point: Bizarre Creations' racer is well balanced for maximum pleasure. Beyond the variable difficulty levels, learning to string together combos can be a delicate task. And yet, the game doesn't get too strict about enforcing every brush with the wall or scrape with another car. However, for the future, I hope that the next PGR has an option where you can accrue performance-altering damage to back up the already impressive visual effects. Furthermore, adding upgradeable parts into the game's balancing would offer a great amount of depth to a title that already has my knuckles three shades past white.

Project Gotham Racing 2 doesn't blow open any revolutionary doors to the racing genre. However, it has reached the obvious but not always obtainable goal of not only demanding my skill on the track, but my constant interest as well. You'll want to give it your full attention. — KATO

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE OR SYSTEM LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** BIZARRE CREATIONS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



SUVs and cone courses — rollover city!



This car is a download exclusive



Damage doesn't keep you grounded

The garage is filled with secrets



Master the drift and keep your Kudos combo going



The picturesque backgrounds are equaled only by the convoluted courses

### THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE  
**E**  
 ESRB

**8.75**

#### ■ **Concept:**

A tweak to the Kudos system and adding online has made this series even more wide open and fun

#### ■ **Graphics:**

The great attention to detail is evident just about everywhere you look in this game

#### ■ **Sound:**

The language-specific radio stations around the world are a nice touch to the banal soundtrack

#### ■ **Playability:**

You really get a feel for the handling among the cars, and the difficulty levels give something for everyone

#### ■ **Entertainment:**

A fun title whose race-to-unlock formula never gets old

#### ■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

### SECOND OPINION

This is a damn fine racing game. Bizarre Creations has outdone itself with Project Gotham Racing 2, a title that can easily hang with the heavyweights on any system. I've always loved the Kudos system, which rewards you for good driving, not just placing high through sloppy technique. That's still here, and nearly everything else has been improved. The selection of cars, while not in the league of Gran Turismo, is well chosen and diverse. The driving engine is dead-on, perfectly balancing the divergent needs of arcade accessibility and depth of control. In addition, I really like the difficulty balancing. Each event can be tried one of five levels, from novice to expert. Believe me when I say it's a completely different experience depending on which you choose. This is nice, because it allows lesser drivers to advance and have fun (without getting stuck on hoops like in GT) while giving pros a stiff challenge. Although it lacks the over-the-top theatrics of Midnight Club II or Need for Speed: Underground, this is an excellent straight-up racing game for fans of the genre.

MATT — 9

# SEGA GT Online

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**"If you love Tony Hawk games, you'll have a blast with this one"**

XBOX

# TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

IS PROGRESS A GOOD THING?

**G**ive Neversoft's crew credit: They never settle. Each edition of the Tony Hawk series has added new things to the already-awesome formula, and Underground is no exception. Expanding on Tony 4's wide-open worlds, this game is molded as a skateboarding action/adventure—one that lets you take an aspiring skater from the streets of Jersey to the heights of skateboarding fame. It's quite a journey. Along the way, you'll cross paths with skating legends like Stacy Peralta and Tony Hawk, get betrayed by your best friend, and even be thrown in a Russian jail!

There's also a load of new gameplay. On the plus side, you can now get off your board mid-combo, jump back on, and keep your string going (although you are limited in the amount of time you can be on foot). Basically, this is going to mean that top Tony players (not me!) are going to be able to essentially combo indefinitely. As innovations go, it's definitely above the spine transfer, and only a little behind the revert and manual.

Unfortunately, Neversoft didn't stop there. Some other new features, specifically the vehicles and on-foot platforming sequences, add something else that the Tony series has never seen before: bad gameplay. Seriously, this might be the worst driving engine I've ever witnessed. Your control on foot is no better. While, in theory, this was done to add some variety to the mix, I found that it did nothing more than frustrate and distract me from the pure, exhilarating experience that the skating provides.

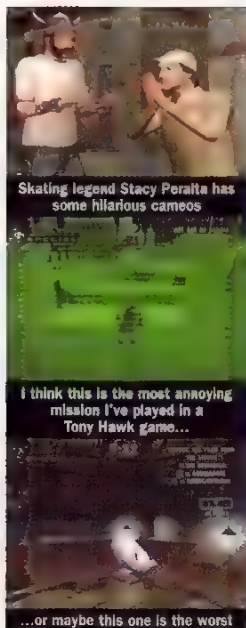
I also have the same gripes about the career mode progression that I had about Tony 4. Although the curve has been leveled out a bit, you still face oddly matched objectives. For example, on one stage, you might have to get 50,000 points in a minute (easy), then have to turn around and do an insane combo string. The result was—unlike in Tony 1-3 where the games did a perfect job of training you as you went along—by the time I reached the last few levels with my team of pros, I wasn't really ready for the challenge. Also, while I like being able to use the pause menu to skip between goals, it did discourage me from really exploring the environments and looking for cool lines.

Now I know this may sound pretty negative, so let me emphasize: If you love Tony Hawk games, you'll have a blast with this one. The Vancouver Slam Jam course is one of the best ever in the series, and the new control tweaks improve on what is a genius gameplay engine. Also, the new "Create-a-Trick" mode is endlessly amusing.

However, I miss the intensity of the original trilogy, which forced you to explore and pull daring maneuvers against the clock. Yes, the new story-driven model is amusing, but there's far too much chaff amongst the wheat, in the form of gimmicky, pointless missions; dreadful driving; and repetitive "fetch me five of these" goals. It's a great game, but one that would benefit from a "back-to-the-basics" approach next time around.

—MATT

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA SYSTEM LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** NEVERSOFT  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 27



**THE BOTTOM LINE**  
**E** 8.75

- **Concept:** A story-driven skate adventure taking you from the streets to the big time
- **Graphics:** It's still a great engine, but it hasn't really improved much over Tony 4
- **Sound:** My favorite Tony soundtrack in a long time—excellent songs!
- **Playability:** On a skateboard—perfection; off a skateboard—poor
- **Entertainment:** As much as I don't like some of the new additions, it's still a solid purchase
- **Replay Value:** High

**SECOND OPINION**

Underground is both brilliant and stupid at the same time. The skating, as before, is fantastic. The playcontrol is right-on, and I absolutely adore just tooling around, especially with the new moves and enhancements this edition brings. However, the single-player game has really hit rock bottom in my opinion. The story mode is just plain stupid, and the goals have reached such an asinine level that I barely even want to play the game (which is saying a lot since I really do LOVE this series). Neversoft needs to drop all this driving a car BS and platform-like goals, and bring this game back to its roots. I want to skate and I want to be challenged. Sure, in time, the game becomes more interesting, but going through six hours of stupid goals and annoying story for a pay-off isn't what I'm looking for. THUG is fun for just hitting lines, and I will buy it for that, but the rest of the experience is marred, and no online play for Xbox is ridiculous.

**ANDY — 8.5**



Let the transformation begin.

# 獣戦士

## BLOODY ROAR 4

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the original beast brawler is back  
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than ever. You're in for a brutal,  
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has new characters, deadlier  
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Show no mercy as you claw  
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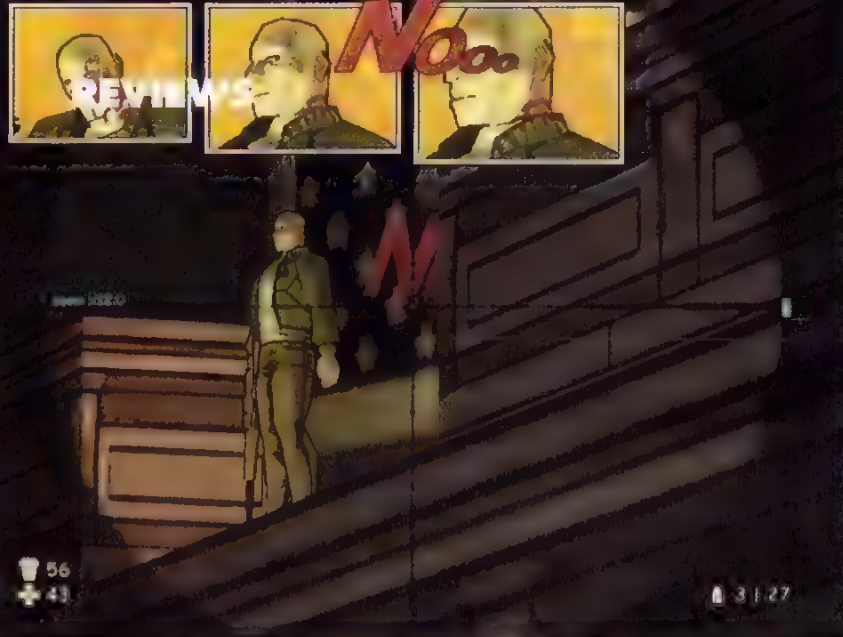
**MATURE** 17+  
**M** Blood Violence  
ESRB CONTENT RATING [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)

 **HUDSON**



PlayStation 2

**KONAMI**



**"While XIII has style in spades, gameplay is nowhere near as groundbreaking."**

XBOX

## XIII STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE

Anyone remember the movie *The Cell*? No? It came out a couple years ago, starred J. Lo, and looked good. Really good – the movie contained some of the coolest, most stylish visuals in several years. Unfortunately, it sucked in just about every other way. The plot was seriously underdeveloped, and the acting...well, let's just say that J.Lo was in it and leave it at that. XIII is much like *The Cell*: it's definitely visually amazing, but disappoints in almost every other department.

Anyone familiar with comics or spy thrillers will instantly recognize the plot: It involves a secret agent with incredible skills, but no memory of who he is. As the amnesiac titular character, you may or may not have killed the president, but the mysterious forces chasing you are convinced that you did. The few people on your side are equally ambiguous and may or may not have ulterior motives.

While the plot may sound familiar, the visuals are undoubtedly unique. The cel-shaded characters instantly recall the mood of comic books, and various techniques enhance this feeling. Events like headshots trigger a small series of comic panels to appear at the top of the screen to highlight the action, and important items are highlighted by a rectangular comic border. Although the backgrounds tend to look too oversimplified, this title is easily one of the most colorful, vibrant shooters ever.

While XIII has style in spades, gameplay is nowhere near as groundbreaking. Although the control scheme is

pretty standard for a console FPS, aiming is painfully slow and makes hitting an enemy at a distance a tricky affair. The AI is similarly spotty;

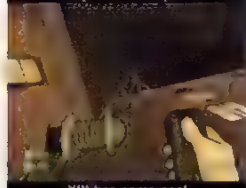
some guards seem nearly blind and deaf, while others seem to have a psychic ability to locate you. Unfortunately, the latter type always seems to appear when some degree of stealth is involved. Missions like these tend to take several attempts to pass, while others can be completed in your sleep, making for a severely uneven difficulty level.

Like most FPS titles, XIII also includes multiplayer for when you grow weary of the story mode. While the Xbox version includes Live support, XIII is unlikely to find much of an online following. Levels are small and cramped, and your character moves about as quickly as Ned Flanders' Geo. Compared to other popular multiplayer shooters, XIII feels slow and uninspired. Much like Ms. Lopez herself, XIII is definitely pretty, but ultimately shallow and certainly nothing we haven't seen before. – JEREMY

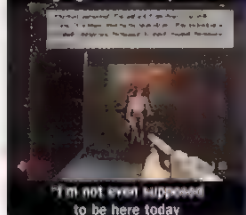
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE) ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL  
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28



Flashback scenes expand on the plot



XIII has some cool gadgets at his disposal



"I'm not even supposed to be here today"



Don't do it! It's a trick!



Obviously, XIII is not a big fan of rent-a-cops

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE

7

■ **Concept:**

A hyper-stylized FPS based on a little-known comic about an amnesiac secret agent who may or may not be a killer

■ **Graphics:**

While the character models are uniquely cool, backgrounds tend to look a little simple and dull

■ **Sound:**

As XIII, David Duchovny sounds like he's under the influence of heavy cold medication

■ **Playability:**

Aiming is definitely on the sluggish side, and jumping is an absolute nightmare

■ **Entertainment:**

While visually stimulating, everything else about this title falls just a little bit short

■ **Replay Value:**

Low

SECOND OPINION

Ambition and style can only take you so far. Ubisoft pumped everything it could into this sluggish FPS – talented and well-known voice actors, a soundtrack that (at least) justified its own CD, nice cel-shaded characters, and a sometimes-intriguing plot. The problems with XIII are more along the lines of gameplay. Unlike the blistering action of other console FPSs out there [cough, Halo, cough], XIII's pace begs for stealthy and thoughtful progression through levels. The problem is that, despite your best efforts, many areas can't be completed without detection. Killing a guard (by any method) alerts the others to your presence, prompting a gun battle that you have neither the ammo nor health to finish with much grace. It's this unfortunate combination of slow gameplay and required runnin' and gunnin' that makes XIII an FPS that doesn't deliver the action or excitement that it should.

LISA – 6.75



# GLADIATOR

## SWORD OF VENGEANCE



### NOTHING LESS THAN TO THE DEATH

IN THE ARENA, WARRIORS WILL CLASH. BLOOD WILL BE SPILLED. CHAMPIONS WILL BE MADE. IN AN ANCIENT EMPIRE, EVIL WILL ALTER THE STRANDS OF FATE, AND THE GODS WILL SEEK VENGEANCE. NOT EVEN DEATH CAN STOP A TRUE HERO. FEATURING NEW AND EXCLUSIVE DEATH MOVES. THE END IS SEVERE.

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PlayStation 2



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**"Rising Sun seems content to merely maintain the status quo."**

XBOX

# MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

## TO THE EAST, MY BROTHER

I always look forward to the new Medal of Honor, and not just because the series is one of the true blue-chippers on the FPS market. The thing that separates MOH from the pack for me is the fact that I always feel like I'm getting a little taste of what it must have been like to live through the events of World War II. In many ways, the franchise's story and heavily researched historical elements have been more of a draw for me than gameplay.

One question that will definitely motivate many to buy this game is: Can EA possibly top the stunning D-Day opening sequence that was featured in Medal of Honor: Allied Assault and Frontline? Sadly, although Pearl Harbor is certainly dramatic (and allows for some truly amazing depictions of huge ships exploding and slowly sinking into the drink), it's just not as gripping a gameplay experience. Where D-Day thrust you into a beehive of frenzied combat, Pearl Harbor just straps you to a boat and forces you to play Duck Hunt with kamikaze pilots. Where last time you felt like you had to find your way through the madness, this time it's just segments of track shooting shuffling you from cutscene to cutscene.

Thankfully, the following levels put the focus where it should be: frantic FPS action set in a diverse variety of locales in the Pacific ranging from the jungles of the Philippines to the back alleys of Singapore and the ancient temples of Burma. These lush environments are a major improvement over the too-linear

levels in Frontline. There are often alternate paths to your goal, and many extras are hidden in secret areas. Also, you won't be doing many of the missions solo, as you often have NPCs around to help you on your quest to be reunited with your lost brother. While they aren't exactly super soldiers, the AI has been improved to the point where they are assets in battle.

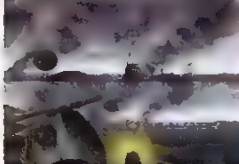
From a technological standpoint, Rising Sun seems content to merely maintain the status quo. For all of the visual splendor, this game is still lacking in some areas. The texturing is simply atrocious at times, and I saw more collision than should be expected from such a profitable franchise. Also, there were times when I clearly had a headshot on an enemy, but kept shooting away to no effect.

That said, completing the single-player missions is definitely an invigorating adventure. I just wish it were a little longer. I'd say that most players will complete this in between 10 to 12 hours. Perhaps its brevity would have been offset by a dramatic end sequence, but I was displeased to discover that Rising Sun concludes with an anti-climatic "cliffhanger" that leaves many major plot points up in the air. Of course, you can always tackle them again with the slick two-player co-op mode or enjoy a little four-player action. It's too bad online is only available on the PS2. This is still a good buy for MOH fans, but it's fallen from the ranks of the elite. — MATT

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11



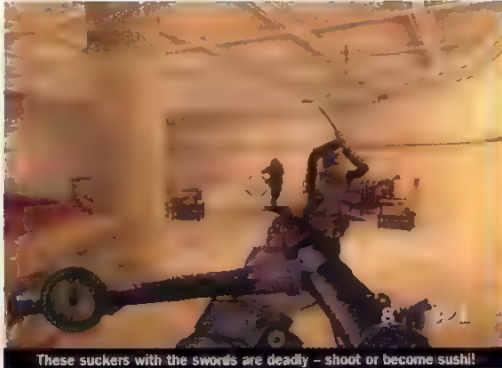
There are many track-shooting sequences – this one puts you atop an elephant!



Two-player co-op features some modified missions



Often, you'll run through levels with a CPU-controlled ally



These suckers with the swords are deadly – shoot or become sushii!



You'll explore some exotic locales like this Buddhist temple

TEEN T 7.75

- **Concept:** EA's WW II epic tackles the Pacific Theater with grand style, lesser execution
- **Graphics:** The character models and animations are great, as are the improved explosive effects. However, the texturing is pretty poor at times
- **Sound:** The best in the business – brilliant ambient sound and an inspiring score
- **Playability:** As a by-the-book FPS, Rising Sun performs decently, but has too many problems to be considered triple-A
- **Entertainment:** It's hard not to get caught up in the period drama. It's a shame it's not a bit longer
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Though it looks noticeably smoother than its cousins on the PS2 and GameCube, Rising Sun on the Xbox suffers from the same lack of innovation. Enemy AI is awful – guards would often not notice me at all after I had shot them, or would stare at me for a couple of seconds before opening fire. Collision seems a bit off at times, and the track-shooting levels are irritating. Beyond these flaws, there are still some good times to be had – wandering through the trackless jungles of the Pacific islands on a stormy night surrounded by hidden enemies is pretty cool. Two-player co-op is interesting too, as there are a number of differences that bring out the co-op dynamic. The MOH team's strengths – namely environmental ambience and sound – continue to come through for them, but Rising Sun just doesn't have the same kick-you-in-the-face feel as Frontline.

ADAM – 7.75

(Wait 'til you see the one left in your pants.)



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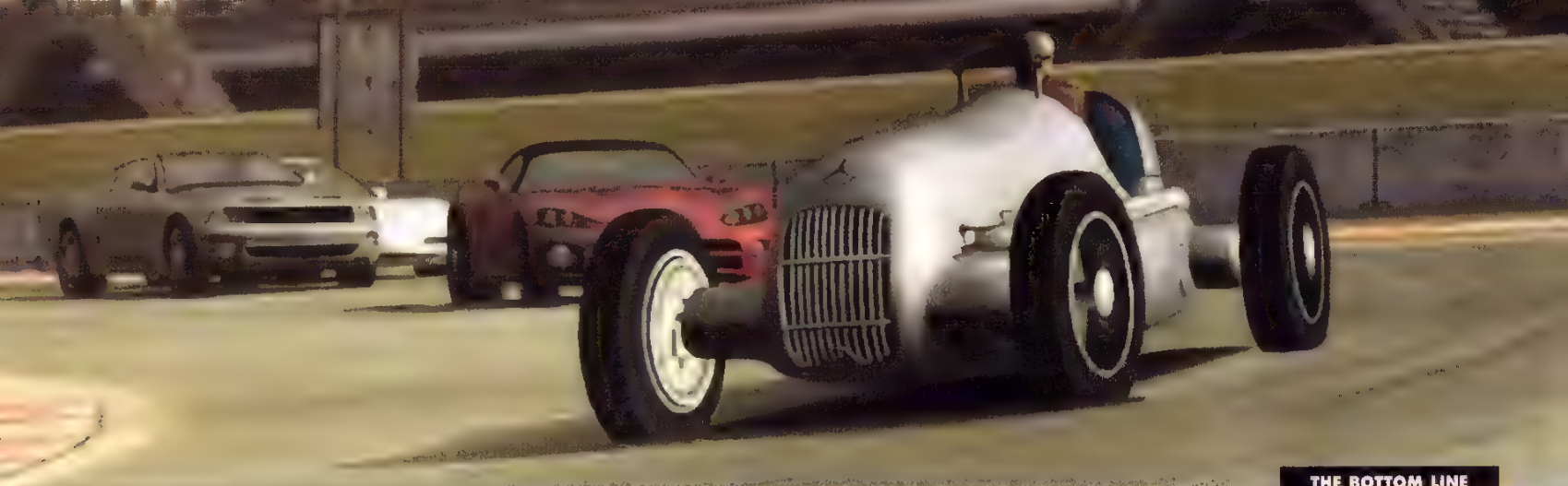
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"With each release this series keeps losing more and more ground"

XBOX

# SEGA GT ONLINE

## THAT USED-CAR SMELL

The last time we were talking about Sega GT, it was being given away free via an Xbox bundle. That's usually not a good sign for a title ("We can't possibly sell all of these!"). So, now that the game is effectively being re-released, the questions stands: Is it worth paying money for this second time around? Just as this franchise lives in the shadows of Sony's Gran Turismo, this newest Sega GT has its own demons to contend with – particularly time.

Of course, this isn't exactly the same game that released last fall, hence the different title. Online play involves downloadables (cars, parts, etc.), and the trading of parts ups the fun ante a bit. Also new to this game are four-player split-screen play and the Gathering mode. While the former makes my shoulders want to shrug, the latter is pretty cool. Here, you go through three different types of skill tests (through multiple rounds) in order to unlock cars. One has you hitting a cone course, while another asks that you cross as many checkpoint gates as you can before time expires. If you don't tackle this mode, you'll never be able to purchase the Mercedes-Benz W25 Silver Arrow, for example, during your career. It's a nice diversionary stick-and-carrot routine that gives you a break from the title's normal stick-and-carrot routine.

What these upgrades don't address, however, is the fact that the game's graphics would make even a blind man

gag. Is this an Xbox game? I guess the one comfort you can hold on to is that from last year to now, they haven't gotten any worse – and boy, are we thankful for that! Instead, this title appeals to those who like to slowly build up their collection of parts and cars like a stamp collector. While I love having to constantly upgrade my car to stay ahead of the pack and come in first, I wish these types of racing games would give me more ways to earn cash. When the courses are as recycled as they are here, I don't dig having to go back and race old tracks strictly for the money. Diversifying the ways to earn scratch is a simple way to keep games like Sega GT Online from feeling like a soulless peanut hunt. I'm also not thrilled about repeating races when you have such primitive collision fields with the other cars – although having to pay for damage repairs is sweet.

Yes, it has beaten Gran Turismo to the online punch, but with graphics like these – which isn't the only category it loses to Sony's GT in – I'd rather wait for GT 4 any day of the week. Not only that, but even fellow console mates like Project Gotham Racing 2 are surpassing it with ease. With each release, this series keeps losing more and more ground. Perhaps what it needs to do is to try and hone a unique element such as the original's letting you create a car from the ground up. Otherwise, it's round and round we go again. – KATO

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 12-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE) ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** WOW ENTERTAINMENT  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



Your ass looks big in this



Four-player split-screen has been added



The new Gathering mode puts you through different tasks...



...for the privilege of unlocking more cars



"Let's ditch these losers and make our own scene, baby"



Sometimes you get what you pay for with used parts

**THE BOTTOM LINE**  
**E 7.75**

- **Concept:** Sega GT inches towards becoming the game it should have been when it first released over a year ago
- **Graphics:** Who switched out the Xbox for a PS2 game with crappy graphics?
- **Sound:** The custom soundtracks are still an ace in the hole for the console
- **Playability:** Having to pay for damage is nice, but the collision and AI have their faults
- **Entertainment:** It does a good job of having you race for that little piece of cheese, but it's still a piece of cheese
- **Replay Value:** High

**SECOND OPINION**

This "version 1.5" sequel to Sega GT 2002 seeks to bring the series online with Xbox Live. In the process, the company has given the franchise a quick overhaul, adding some new modes in hopes of bringing a greater depth to the experience. I do like the vintage car races, some of which are cleverly presented in a look that emulates grainy, sepia-toned film. Also, Gathering Mode lets you compete in timed challenges that emphasize the more technical aspects of races to unlock cars in the main career portion of the game. For all its strengths, however, this isn't exactly a reinvention of the old racing wheel. The Xbox Live functionality certainly lengthens the legs of this game. Sega GT Online is a solid racer to the core, but with sexy new sequels like Need for Speed: Underground and Project Gotham Racing 2 also on the way, I think many Xbox gamers will take a pass on this one.

**MATT - 8.5**

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## REVIEWS



XBOX

# NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2004

NOTHING BUT (INTER)NET

In my Inside Drive 2003 review, I said the series had pocketed on a few pounds in the off-season. If that was the case, 2004 spent a year surfing the web with a bag of Chili's Cheese Fritos close at hand. Internet is the focus, and I admit XSN has a lot going for it. However, the game just slips further and further into mediocrity. I'd rather play ESPN with a few less options than this heap. My main problem deals with how players seem to drop 70 IQ points when you're not controlling them. They all just kind of stand around, both on offense and defense. Seeing point guards hang in the backcourt like they're Patrick Ewing during fast breaks is the norm. I could nit-pick till the cows come home - it's hard to intentionally foul, the baseline out of bounds is too close to the three-point line, simulating games takes too long, fantasy draft is badly implemented, etc. It seems like the more Inside Drives that Microsoft puts out, the more problems I have with the series.

On the positive tip, I still love the commentary. It's quick in both wit and reaction time. The default camera angle is perhaps the best in hoops games, too. I'm amazed by player faces, but I'm appalled that the courtside sections behind the baskets only have two rows of chairs. Not that I fault the low attendance figure; I don't want to see any more of this game, either. **JUSTIN**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** HIGH VOLTAGE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE  
**E**  
ESRB

**6.5**

■ **Concept:**

This should've been called Inside Drive 2003: Online Edition.

■ **Graphics:**

I just don't like the way it plays. Models are poor, movement is slow, and never will I mount a successful offense again.

■ **Sound:**

Tremendous commentary is always. The music is a nice touch.

■ **Playability:**

Lacking in moves on defense. Freestyle and noMotion both do a nice job inside.

■ **Entertainment:**

I can think of no reason to play this game over EA's Live or Sega's ESPN.

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderate.

### SECOND OPINION

Out of this year's hoops titles, Inside Drive has the best camerawork, online options, and...well...it pretty much gets its ass handed to it in every other category. Rather than improving with the years, the gameplay has become arthritic with age and shows holes in gameplay and teammate AI.

**REINER - 6**



XBOX

# NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

GOTTA FEED THE NEED

Racing games are like Kryptonite for me. They seem to suck away all my gaming ability until mere scraps of talent remain, leaving me as helpless as a soft, downy kitten. Need For Speed: Underground crushed me like a squirrel on the interstate (wow, I'm all about metaphors today!), but I had a great time as it did.

While racing is my personal weak spot, most driving fans will find the challenge level to be just right. The ability to change the difficulty before a race is a nice touch, and absolutely essential for lamewads like me. I was really impressed with the lifelike aggression of the AI drivers; they tended to get a little cranky when I ran them into walls and retaliate. More impressive still are the graphics and sensation of speed. The lighting engine lends the sprawling city an incredibly realistic look. At high speeds, the backgrounds begin to blur slightly, enhancing the already-significant sense of speed. Barreling down a busy street at 120 mph made my heart race and palms sweat.

Almost as much fun as the actual races is the customization of your vehicles. You'll spend nearly as much time picking out vinyl tears for your car doors as you will racing. Of course, since tricking out your car earns you style points, there's a reason to spend so much time decorating.

As one who drives a Toyota and has never been interested in cars, I had a great time with this game. Those who enjoy racing will be in gearhead heaven. - **JEREMY**



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** EA GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** EA CANADA ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE  
**E**  
ESRB

**9.25**

■ **Concept:**

Be like Paul Walker and join the world of illegal street racing.

■ **Graphics:**

Shiny and beautiful - just like Paul Walker!

■ **Sound:**

I hate every single song on the soundtrack, but it feels right for the game. The car sounds are awesome.

■ **Playability:**

It'll make you feel like you could take on Paul Walker himself, which of course you can't. He's Paul Walker!

■ **Entertainment:**

Fast, furious, and fun, just like...oh, never mind. You get the joke by now.

■ **Replay Value:**

High.

### SECOND OPINION

It is such a shame that the Xbox version doesn't support online play like the PS2 version, because Need For Speed: Underground kicks it like few others. Despite that one major problem, this version of Need For Speed is just as gorgeous and engrossing as any other, if not more so. In total, there are over a 100 different races for you to defeat, and if you are looking for a way to prolong the experience, playing the game on the most difficult level actually is pretty challenging (even if most races are lost by running into traffic). Add the great single-player experience and the car modifying options, and Underground really packs a punch (even without online play). Customizing your car is almost a game in itself. I seriously spent hour after hour just checking out different combinations of paints, decals, and vinyl. If you love racing or just cars in general, you absolutely, positively must check out Underground.

**ANDY - 9.25**



XBOX

## THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

### THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

**W**ithout Stormfront Studios at the development helm, I was wary of the direction that this sequel would take. Given the high quality of *The Two Towers*, it seemed improbable that a new creative team faced with an incredibly short development cycle could recreate the experience verbatim. Despite the odds, EA Redwood Shores has done just this.

*Return of the King* plays, looks, and feels exactly like its precursor. Yet again, actual footage from the film dissolves seamlessly into gameplay; the combat system forces players to switch between weak and strong attacks for different enemy types; and experience points can be cashed in for new moves and combos. Redwood has also one-upped the previous title with the introduction of cooperative play. Slaying countless orcs with someone at your side is an exhilarating sensation that really captures the essence of the film. Much like the competition between Gimli and Legolas in the film, players can put their skills to the test and see who can achieve the highest body count.

Adding replay to the mix, *Return of the King* has twice as many playable characters and multiple level branches. I really got a kick out of playing as the hobbits, and tapping into Gandalf's true potential makes for some explosive gameplay segments.

The level designs once again reach a perfect medium between nonstop action and cinematic punch. Each level unfolds with brilliant camerawork, scripted sequences, and spoken dialogue from the original cast. I've never felt like I've been a part of a movie to the degree of *Return of the King*. I know this sounds cheesy, but it really does feel like you're controlling the actors on screen.

The only area where the game comes up a little short is in the design of the boss battles. They last forever and force players to repeat the same strategies. On the big screen, Shelob is frightening. In the game, she's a nerve-racking waste of time.

For fans of the books and silver screen adaptations, this game has everything that you could ever want. Conversely, even if you don't look up to J.R.R. Tolkien as a literary god, *Return of the King* is one hell of a play. — REINER



We ain't saying nothin', but there's more to Sam and Frodo's relationship than meets the eye

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** EA GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** EA REDWOOD SHORES ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 6

## THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
T

8.25

- **Concept:** New developer, same great cinematic gameplay — now with co-op!
- **Graphics:** Entirely drool-worthy. The character models look fantastic, scripted events unfold with every step you take, and the camera work is true to the film
- **Sound:** A gripping score and spoken dialogue by the film's cast
- **Playability:** Brilliantly delivered hack 'n slash with tons of combos
- **Entertainment:** Worth going back to again and again for both single and multiplayer
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

## SECOND OPINION

Much like an angry dwarf messing up some orc ass with a giant battleaxe, this game rocks. Not only are the combat controls nice and tight, but the massive skirmishes perfectly capture the chaotic nature of the film's enormous battles. I was very impressed with just how much stuff could happen on screen without any slowdown. Taking on dozens of Uruk-hai single-handedly while flaming cannonballs explode around you is quite a sight to behold. The cooperative mode is also a lot of fun, and unlike some games, having a partner doesn't change the difficulty much. Even with a second warm body, the fights never lose the feeling that you're just barely holding back a massive enemy force. This game hits hard from the very beginning, which may be too much for some, but overall, *Return of the King* is an essential action title. It completely lives up to the high standard set by the awesome films.

JEREMY — 8.5



XBOX

## MAGIC: THE GATHERING - BATTLEGROUNDS

### ALL SMOKE AND MIRRORS

**L**ike a good portion of you, I got tangled up in the Magic card game and tapped more mana than I care to admit. When I heard that developer Secret Level was planning on converting the Magic ruleset into a real-time setting, I only saw impending doom. For the most part, I was right.

I will say, however, that Secret Level did succeed to a certain extent. Gathering mana, summoning monsters, and unleashing sorcery are all part of the mix and are executed on the fly. Since the action hits you like a ton of bricks at an incredibly rapid pace, every aspect of the card game has been simplified. With only a few commands at your fingertips, the action has an arcade-like feel to it and doesn't embody the essence of the highly strategic card game.

Although it doesn't have that Magic feel, it is a moderately entertaining original game. Each bout brings with it a high level of intensity and intelligent CPU opponents. Magic fans will likely scoff in disgust, but if you're in the market for a game that plays like a fighter but has a little more depth, you may want to give this a whirl. — REINER

## THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
T

6.5

- **Concept:** An interesting, but ultimately disappointing attempt to adapt the Magic: The Gathering card game to a real-time combat system
- **Graphics:** Both the characters and environments are lacking in detail, which is especially surprising given how ambitious the play field is
- **Sound:** The ominous voices, soundtrack, and ambient effects fit the subject matter perfectly
- **Playability:** The real-time combat system is nice, but you really don't have a lot to play with. Thus, the strategies are fairly two-dimensional
- **Entertainment:** It shows promise, but it's not nearly as good as the real thing
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

## SECOND OPINION

*Battlegrounds* translates M:TG to a real-time framework fairly well, but the limited number of spells per deck cheapens the strategy way too much. Single-player is banal to the point of being idiotic, but multiplayer is pretty good. This is a mixed bag, but you're more likely to pull out a lump of coal than a piece of candy.

ADAM — 6.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION (2-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE) ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** SECRET LEVEL ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

## REVIEWS

XBOX

### ROBIN HOOD: DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28

Talking about the console-specific merits of this Robin Hood is useless, not only because there aren't any, but also due to the fact that

there is little in the gameplay that can't be done by a freakin' Commodore 64! While the first-person jousts are nice, due to the iffy collision on these action sequences (such as bow and arrow raids), I'd rather see this turned into a PC-esque real-time strategy instead of this ineffective collection of elements. — **KATO**



TEEN  
**6.75**

XBOX

### NHL RIVALS 2004

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE)  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



Microsoft's upstart hockey franchise plays the role of the typical expansion team. It shows potential, but ultimately disappoints. The biggest problem with Rivals is that it doesn't feel like you're

skating on ice. No matter how much momentum your players have behind them, they can always cut on a dime, deke to the sides, and circle back. In all honesty, it doesn't even feel like hockey. The idea of defined player roles is as sound as can be, and the goalie animations are certainly impressive, but both ESPN and NHL absolutely destroy this title on the gameplay front. It's like comparing the pros to the pee-wee leagues. The same goes for fantasy options. There isn't a franchise mode, customization options are scarce, and you can only play through one season. — **REINER**

E  
**5.75**

XBOX

### BACKYARD WRESTLING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 17

This game could've really used another year in development. The idea is viable, with crazy-interactive environments and tons of violence. However, it's borderline unplayable due to terrible collision and sloppy mechanics. If



viewed as a spectacle rather than a game, you may get enough enjoyment out of Backyard Wrestling to fill a coffee cup. It's as amateurish as the "athletes" in the video series. Juggalos only need apply. — **JUSTIN**

M  
**5.5**



THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
**T**  
 ESRB

**8**

XBOX

## BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

### SLOW BURN

Ubisoft's *Beyond Good & Evil* is truly a rare breed that didn't set its hook into me right away. You play as Jade, a broke orphanage matron who takes a sketchy job to pay the electric bill. Jade and her pig-person father figure venture down into an abandoned mine shaft to take some wildlife photography for a suspicious, broad-shouldered man. Completing this photojournalistic task, though, is really a test. By successfully finishing the mission, you are invited to join a sort of anti-establishment guerilla group out to prove that the government of Hylis isn't being entirely truthful. It's an engrossing plot that really kicks in after the first few missions.

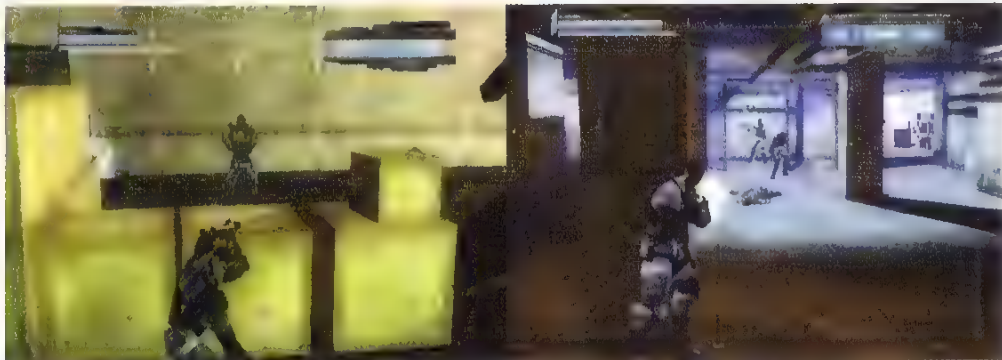
To complete the reporting tasks assigned by this underground newspaper, Jade is going to use a bevy of action/platform game skills: vehicle based combat and racing, stealth exploration, puzzle solving, and fighting. All of these activities are at least serviceable, but by the same token, all are simplistic in execution. Unfortunately, Jade's running is extremely floaty and her hovercraft has a better turning radius than she does. In addition, I wanted to be able to stop a combo string and start working on a new enemy. A lot of people will look elsewhere for gameplay depth, but what BG&E sacrifices in control complexity, it makes up for in story and pacing. — **LISA**

#### SECOND OPINION

*Beyond Good & Evil* isn't in the top rung when it comes down to nuts-and-bolts gameplay, but the strange storyline, awe-inspiring vistas, and the unique "photojournalist" mechanics make this a game that casts a bewitching spell all its own.

**MATT - 8**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 17



XBOX

## KILL SWITCH

### DEATH BUTTON

This entire game thrives off of a gameplay gimmick. Rather than going toe to toe with an enemy or sneaking up behind them and slitting their throat, Namco suggests that you find an object to hide behind and dispatch any hostiles by either blindly firing or peeking your head out and taking quick shots. Naturally, your accuracy increases when you expose your head, but so do the chances of an enemy planting one right between your eyes. It's a wonderful play mechanic that leads to some amazing firefights and action sequences.

As innovative as it may be, Namco didn't back this gameplay up with any substance. The entire game revolves around ducking behind flipped tables and peering around corners. After a few levels, the thrills that *Kill Switch* delivers become quite monotonous. Tie this together with a faceless hero and a stupid plot, and there really is no driving force behind this title. — **REINER**

#### SECOND OPINION

Shooting bad guys is fun — in video games, I mean — and *Kill Switch* gives you lots of ways to do it. The Xbox version looks worlds better, and seems to control more intuitively, than its PS2 counterpart. It's just different enough to be worth a look for FPS and action fans. You may make the switch.

**JUSTIN - 7.5**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28

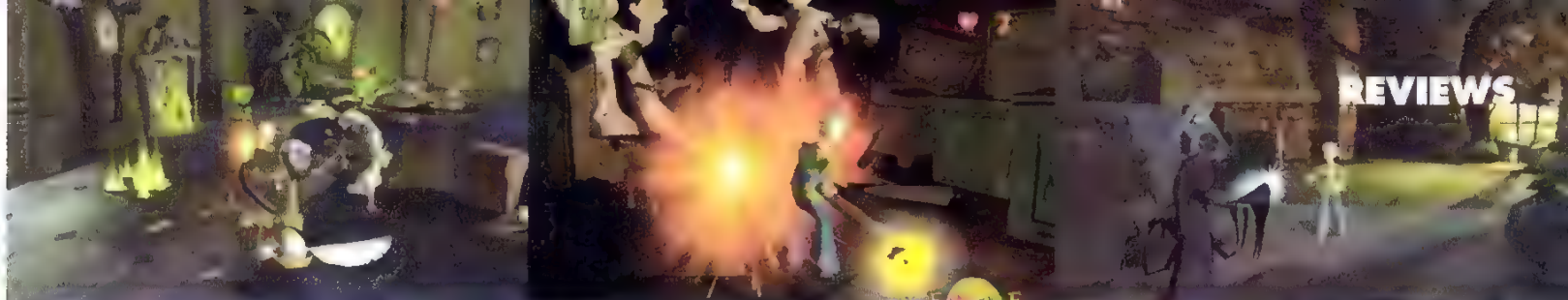
THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
**T**  
 ESRB

**7.5**

- **Concept:** Take nonstop action and apply hide-and-seek to the mix to create a uniquely satisfying experience
- **Graphics:** Fairly average for a game of this ilk, but the effects, texturing, and lighting blow away the PS2 version
- **Sound:** The score does a great job of creating tension. Unfortunately, the voice actors are way too over the top
- **Playability:** Find cover, take a peek, shoot. Repeat until the credits roll
- **Entertainment:** The gameplay is fun, but it gets old quickly
- **Replay Value:** Moderate





XBOX

# GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES

KICKED IN THE GHOULIES

**H**ow could this happen? How could Rare, creator of some of the most beloved games of all time, put out...this? My theory is that someone in its office got really messed up on cough syrup and read all one million *Goosebumps* books in a row. That's the only way I could see someone thinking this lame comedy-horror title was a good idea.

*Ghoulies* is something of a rarity: It's an incredibly well-made terrible game. Usually, titles that score this low are filled with bugs and other technical problems, but not this one. Everything from the dual analog combat to the cel-shaded graphics is executed perfectly. However, *Ghoulies* is broken on a conceptual level. It's far too cartoonish and cutesy for adult gamers, but it's much too difficult for most kids. At the start, it's a cakewalk; by the third chapter, it becomes frustratingly hard—not so much that it's impossible, just enough that you'll hate playing it. It's filled with bizarre double entendre jokes that sound vaguely dirty to adult ears, but characters like protagonist Cooper and his girlfriend are far too obnoxious and lame to appeal to older gamers. The various challenges intended to mix things up and add difficulty only serve to make things more annoying. In the end, *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* is simply one of the stupidest, most disappointing games of all time. — JEREMY

■ **STYLE** 1 PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** RARE  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 21

SECOND OPINION

Let's play the "I Would Rather" game. I would rather swim through three-quarters of a mile of raw sewage than play *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* ever again. Besides the inappropriate, unfunny, innuendo-laced humor, the insipid story line and one-dimensional characters; and passe, boring, art style; there isn't much left besides numbingly repetitive combat. The idea of having no user input into which moves your character executes and only having a say in the direction of the attack would be great for an awesome, quality kids title. Instead, you have an adult level of difficulty coupled with poorly conceived challenges like, "Kill all of the lrrps. You can kill the skeletons as well, but you don't have to. You must kill all of those lrrps, though." Yeah, that's fun.

LISA — 4.25

THE BOTTOM LINE



4.5

- **Concept:** Guide a dork in a stupid sweater through a house filled with "funny" monsters
- **Graphics:** Amazing if you think about it—here's a really boring visual style perfectly executed
- **Sound:** Danny Elfman does video games now?
- **Playability:** The dual analog stick control works perfectly, but it's still annoying
- **Entertainment:** *Ghoulies* has the perfect mix of features to appeal to absolutely no one
- **Replay Value:** Low



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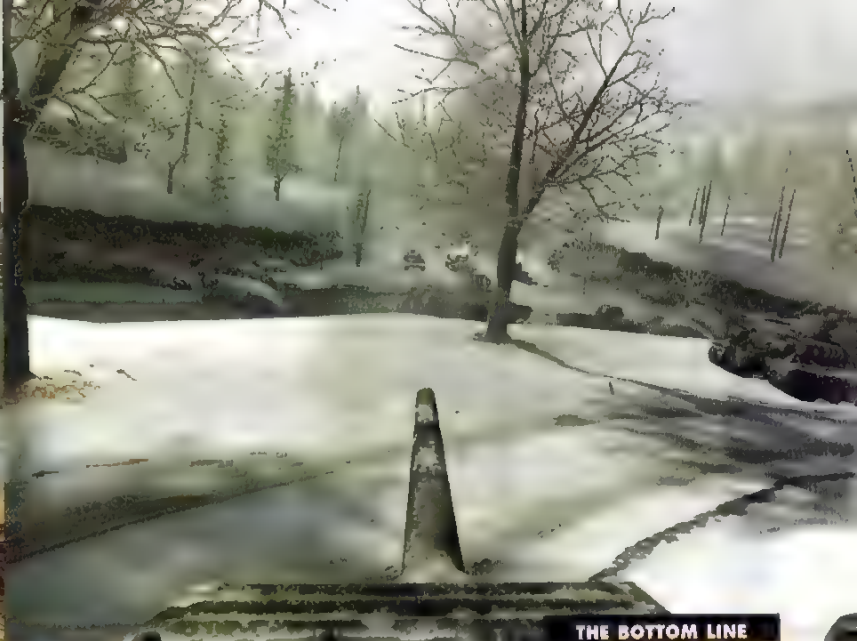
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**ON DVD  
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**"Overall, Call of Duty is a fantastic title."**

PC

# CALL OF DUTY

KILLING NAZIS FROM THREE FRONTS



**W**ithout a doubt, World War II is the most popular war of all time. Now, I know war is never really something people love, especially those that lived through it, but there is something certainly romantic about this particular world war. Whether it was how easy it was to tell the good from the bad or perhaps the simple fact that we won, World War II has many great stories of triumph and heroes.

While we Americans would love to believe that we won the war on our own, that is simply not the case. It was won by the loss of many lives from many different countries. This is the spirit that Call of Duty wants to capture. Throughout the single-player experience, the player gets to feel what it was like to be an American, British, and Russian soldier.

Created by Infinity Ward, whose roster is filled with members of developer 2015 – the creators of the PC hit Medal of Honor: Allied Assault – you can guess how intense this game is, and how well it holds to historic details.

Every second of every level is a thrill ride of explosions and Nazi death that had me loving every moment. The scripted sequences just have to be seen to be believed. They are like the amazing D-Day level in Allied Assault, except on a much bigger scale. My personal favorite was Stalingrad. Not only does it offer some great action, it lets you sit back, snipe down officers, and eventually drive a tank.

My only complaint about the overall single-player game is that the story and the levels really don't mesh. Sure, the last level lets all three fronts come together as you make a final assault on Berlin, but that's about the only connection between the three campaigns. Personally, I would have liked to see a little bit more story, but then again, who wants story when you have all the wonderful gunplay?

Ultimately, Call of Duty is all about the multiplayer experience, which is grand indeed. Besides the standard Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, and Retrieval (which is basically capture the flag), Call of Duty also offers two other interesting modes.

Search and Destroy lets teams of players try to either destroy or defend different objectives for points. Meanwhile, Behind Enemy Lines offers an interesting twist. A small team of Allied soldiers are vastly outnumbered by Axis forces. As an Allied player you score points for kills, while every Axis player on the map wants to kill you. The catch is, if you die, the Axis player who scores the kill takes over your spot, and you join the Axis throng. Pretty fun.

Overall, Call of Duty is a fantastic title. For war game fans, you can't help but enjoy the rush the single-player campaign offers, and revel in the multiplayer mayhem. I would have liked more depth to the single-player experience and a little bit more story, but that's nitpicking really. – **ANDY**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 32-PLAYER VIA ONLINE OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** INFINITY WARD  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 29

When the bullets start flying, go prone to avoid getting your head blown off

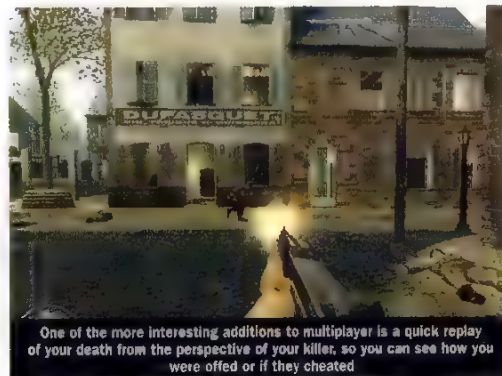


Multiplayer is the schiznit

Nazis lie in wait around every corner



"Man down! Man down! Cover me."



One of the more interesting additions to multiplayer is a quick replay of your death from the perspective of your killer, so you can see how you were offed or if they cheated

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:**  
Fight through some of the most intense moments of WW II
- **Graphics:**  
Half-Life 2 this game is not, but it is still gorgeous to look at
- **Sound:**  
The soundtrack and effects simply rock. Turn it up and you will feel like you are there
- **Playability:**  
Overall it's pretty standard first-person fair
- **Entertainment:**  
The single-player experience can be completed in about 10 hours, but the online play will keep you playing for months
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderately High

**SECOND OPINION**

Whereas many FPS games have a clear development focus on either single- or multiplayer, Call of Duty excels at both. The single-player campaign is a work of art, and there is a wealth of maps and modes to diversify LAN or online play. Perhaps even eclipsing these achievements, however, are the gameplay mechanics which push Call of Duty to the front of the pack. Mastering the crouching and prone positions is integral to your success – not only do they shrink the profile you present to enemy fire, your accuracy improves. In many cases greatly. The number of historically-accurate weapons is immense. Soldiers can only carry two weapons (plus sidearm and grenades) at a time, and the larger your weapon, the slower you move. The depth of strategy this adds to gameplay is immeasurable, and makes Call of Duty an experience not to be missed. If there are any flaws in this title, I haven't found them yet.

**ADAM – 9.5**

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ATARI

TEEN  
T  
CONTENT RATED BY  
ESRB

Fantasy Violence

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"Halo PC is just a fantastic console game that is late to the PC party."

PC  
**HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED**

MULTIPLAYER APPROVED

There is little doubt that Halo's place in video game history is set. The real question is whether you want to buy it on PC or not. Finding that answer is actually pretty easy.

Did you play through the single-player mode on Xbox? If you answered no, then what the hell is wrong with you? Halo's solo experience really is outstanding. In fact, the first three levels are a stunning showcase of the spectacular artificial intelligence and level design that Bungie put into this game. After Truth and Reconciliation, it slows down quite a bit and becomes rather repetitive as far as level design is concerned, but it is still a blast – a definite must-play in the world of video games.

If you have played the single-player campaign before, then the questions become a little trickier. Do you still play multiplayer on Xbox? Did you even play the multiplayer game at all? If you managed to miss out on the experience or still enjoy it on Xbox, then Halo on PC offers up some fresh improvements. Through GameSpy networks, it supports 16-player online play with six new maps (19 total), a new flamethrower weapon,

as well as the ability to use Banshees and the new rocket launcher Warthog. Nice additions to say the least.

It is also quite nice to be able to play the game without the annoying split-screen that was featured on the Xbox. My one real complaint with multiplayer on PC at the moment is that many of the spawn points were poorly planned, and campers can make it a rather frustrating experience. Also, compared to other multiplayer games on the PC, Halo seems a little shallow.

At the end of the day, Halo is truly a great game, but when I fired it up again, I quickly found that I was either a) quite skilled because I had played the game before on Xbox, or b) it was just easier to blast through with a mouse and keyboard. I'm leaning toward the latter, which is the main reason why I'm not giving the game a higher score. In the history books, Halo definitely is a standout, but Halo PC is just a little late to a market that really excels at first-person shooters.

Hardcore fans will enjoy Halo PC as another release of their favorite game, and first-time players will revel in the story and action that the single-player experience offers, but for everyone else Halo is just a fantastic console game that is late to the PC party. – ANDY

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16-PLAYER VIA ONLINE OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT  
■ **DEVELOPER** GEARBOX SOFTWARE/BUNGIE ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30



THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE  
ESRB

8.75

■ **Concept:**

Pray that improving the multiplayer and giving the player base creation tools will bring back the millions who have already played it

■ **Graphics:**

Pumped up on your PC, Halo has never looked so good

■ **Sound:**

The soundtrack, voiceovers, and sound effects are simply top-notch

■ **Playability:**

The gameplay is exactly the same, but obviously much easier now that the player is armed with mouse and keyboard

■ **Entertainment:**

If you played this on Xbox, an enhanced online multiplayer is all this version offers

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Everyone knows that Halo on the Xbox is an incredible game. On the PC it's beyond incredible. Playing it with the wonderfully precise control that comes with being on PC is like having the deity of your choice shine down everlasting love and happiness directly into your soul. The only gripes I have are small ones: GameSpy Arcade is the only service available for online play, and I find it to be sorely lacking in functionality after being spoiled rotten by Blizzard's Battle.net and Ensemble's ESO. Also, the engine doesn't seem to be very efficient. Even on our loaded-to-the-gills machine, I had to turn some graphics options down to get a stable framerate. It still looked awesome, but it's the principle of the thing. Other than that, Halo PC is nigh-perfect. There is no reason to not own this title if you've already sunk your bucks into a decent graphics card.

ADAM – 9



Driving the Warthog is always a good time, but using Banshees in multiplayer is even better



The flamethrower is just one of the new treats players will find in multiplayer



GAME OF THE MONTH  
MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

PC

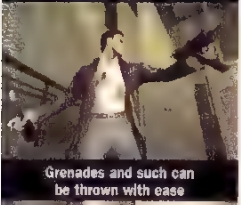
"...so polished,  
it positively  
shines."



Bullet Time puts a cool sepia-tone filter over everything



Note the boxes flying out of the explosion



Grenades and such can be thrown with ease



Ooh! Right where it hurts

PC

# MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

## SAME OLD MAX, LOTS MORE PAYNE

The original Max Payne was a revolution in gaming back in 2001. It was a whole different take on the action genre – it felt much more like a film than other titles. The now-famous Bullet Time innovation was integrated perfectly, and made insane stunts entirely possible (if not easy) to pull off. Max Payne 2 plays almost exactly the same as the original, but it feels like the development team took everything that wasn't completely awesome in the first game, shot it in the face, and smoothed over the holes with buttery goodness.

Max Payne 2 is so polished, it positively shines. Rather than breaking what made the first one so excellent, Remedy simply tightened up every aspect of play and wrapped a new plot around it. Animations are the most noticeable thing; they are spectacularly well done. Enemies react realistically to getting shot or blown up, blood splatters are grimly accurate, and objects get knocked over and destroyed in vivid detail. Collision is almost perfect as well – I can count on one hand the number of times I noticed an error over the course of the entire game.

Blowing away fools is just as fun as it was two years ago. This is one area where the collision engine really shines: Diving over, under, or onto objects is almost too awesome.

Bullet Time is even cooler – the more bad guys you kill in quick succession, the slower time gets. The hourglass meter of Bullet Time now refills slowly on its own as well, meaning you don't have to hoard it in case of an ambush.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the brevity of the main mode, every stage is handcrafted and packed with variety. Between providing covering fire from the rooftops, frantically escaping an exploding building, or playing a different character, Max Payne 2 never falls into a rut. Don't worry, there's enough of the usual "cap everyone between you and X" mixed in to satisfy.

The presentation of the story is basically the same as before, but it feels faster and more interactive. Downtimes between action sequences are short and usually interesting. Everything about the setting comes together to provide a cohesive ambience for Max's dark world.

The only gripes I have with it are that the camera will occasionally get backed into a wall when Max is diving alongside it, the quest is a bit short, and there's no multiplayer. Beating the game unlocks some new modes, but nothing incredibly cool. Other than that, Max Payne 2 delivers in every way possible. – ADAM

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ DEVELOPER REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT ■ RELEASE OCTOBER 12



Action never takes a back seat to extended dreaming



Yes, you actually have an ally here

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE  
ESRB

9.25

- **Concept:**  
Kill legions of bad guys in as cinematic a fashion as possible
- **Graphics:**  
With all the options turned on, it's one of the best-looking games I've ever seen
- **Sound:**  
Awesome 3D effects and a beautifully orchestrated score really put you in Max's place
- **Playability:**  
Grenades have their own button! Yay! But the camera can be annoying once in a while
- **Entertainment:**  
If you have any interest in either movies or video games, play this as soon as you're able
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderate

### SECOND OPINION

After scoring big with the original Max Payne, Remedy Entertainment took a long time off to craft this highly anticipated sequel and came back with a game that is...virtually identical to its predecessor. Well, I shouldn't say "identical," as Max Payne has received a remarkable graphical facelift. What was once a merely passable presentation is now among the best the PC has to offer in terms of texturing and particle effects. I'm sure there are going to be those that decry Max Payne 2's "stick-with-what-works" formula, but honestly I don't know if I'd want this series to try to become a deeper gaming experience. At its heart, this is a shooting gallery – the world's coolest, most stylish, and addictive shooting gallery. As before, the hardboiled saga is delivered with almost ludicrous tough-guy dialogue. More of the same? Certainly, But I won't complain about seconds when the dish is this tasty.

MATT – 9



PC

# MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT: BREAKTHROUGH

THE ASSAULT ISN'T OVER YET

**D**espite the fact that the Allied Assault engine is starting to feel its age, developer TKO put together an excellent expansion. The opening scene lives up to its MoH predecessors, putting you in the middle of a sandstorm in Arabia. Visibility is only about 10 meters, and you're supposed to punch a hole in about 200 meters of Nazi fortifications. Oh, and all of your allies tend to die in about the first 30 seconds.

Be warned: The difficulty level targets experts. It took me a good hour or so to complete the first segment of the first mission on Normal. The quality of level design doesn't degrade as you progress through the campaign. Every stage has something new and interesting going on. Most players (barring you bastards that keep me from playing FPS online by killing me too damn fast) can expect a good 15 hours or so of gameplay. And then you can move on to Hard difficulty, if you like pain.

Also, there's a ton of online options. All of the modes from Allied Assault are available, as well as a new Liberation game type, where killed players respawn as POWs and have to be freed by their allies.

If you have Allied Assault, buy this now. If you don't, buy MoH: AA and then buy Breakthrough. — ADAM

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 32-PLAYER VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** TKO SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 23

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

**T** **9**

TEEN

- **Concept:** Push the old MoH engine to the limit for one last season of Battlefield-style combat.
- **Graphics:** Same as Allied Assault, though utilized what it had to the fullest. Each mission has a variety of terrain.
- **Sound:** Perfect. Nice 3D effects and an excellent combat atmosphere.
- **Playability:** Fully customizable to suit.
- **Entertainment:** Killing Nazis never gets old and Breakthrough is the way to do it.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

**SECOND OPINION**

Breakthrough brings great single-player campaigns with some sweet deathmatch maps. The graphics are slightly dated, but everything else is solid. With the foundation of one of the best FPS games of all time, I couldn't ask for much more. It's a good deal longer than Spearhead, thankfully. Just don't expect Battlefield-style multiplayer, and you should be happy with a purchase.

**JUSTIN — 8.5**



PC

# COMMAND & CONQUER GENERALS ZERO HOUR

NEW WORLD ORDER

**Z**ero Hour, the first expansion in the Command & Conquer Generals series, offers up a slew of new ways for the armchair general to get his military fix. Not only are there 15 new missions across the three single-player campaigns, there is a new Generals Challenge mode that gives the player the chance to play with nine stylized generals.

Not only are there new challenges, there is a wide array of new units, upgrades, structures, and general powers across the three factions. From the China's ECM Tank to the GLA's Combat Cycle, the new units add some nice variety to the already potent arsenals found in the original. On the upgrade front, my personal favorites are getting the "Worker Shoes" upgrades for the GLA to increase production and the U.S. Bunker Buster upgrade. Not only are they fun in game, but they run the fine line of good taste. EA certainly isn't afraid to embrace the recent war and exploit elements you see broadcast on CNN. While I have no personal stance on the "war," it's nice to see titles try to be relevant to today's issues.

Of course, the best part of any Command & Conquer game is taking it online and seeing how you match up with players from around the world. This is where Zero Hour really shines. You can use the standard game and features for your online sorties with all the new units, structures, etc. Or, you can use the nine new Generals from the Challenge mode I spoke of earlier. The great thing about this feature is that each general not only has his own set of advantages and disadvantages, but that there are structures, units, upgrades, and General powers that are unique to them. This really changes the strategies you want to use for each given conflict. Plus, it just gives the online experience more variety (which is always a welcome addition).

Zero Hour is a great expansion to an already solid game. — ANDY



Bombs away!!!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA ONLINE OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 23

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

**T** **8.75**

TEEN

- **Concept:** Feed the C&C Generals flames with a rather robust expansion pack
- **Graphics:** Tweaked and ever-so-slightly upgraded
- **Sound:** You can't help but love the bad one-liners
- **Playability:** It's a real-time strategy game; what do you think it plays like?
- **Entertainment:** The single-player experience isn't bad, but the multiplayer and world builder is where it is at
- **Replay Value:** High

**SECOND OPINION**

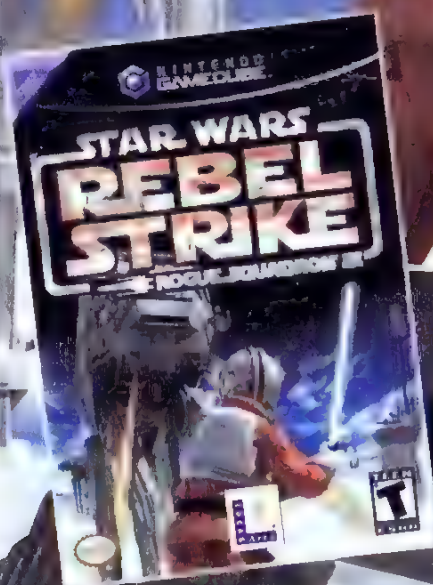
Zero Hour is about what you'd expect: more stuff (e.g. units, upgrades, etc.). A whole bunch of new single-player missions and campaigns (including a Generals Challenge mode where you can win medals based on performance) are in Zero Hour as well, and will definitely be nice for those who don't spend the majority of their time online. The campaigns are interesting, with well-designed scenarios to play through and a overarching storyline to link them together, but I've got one big beef. When you restart a scenario, you are forced to watch the entire three to five-minute intro sequence again, which can't be fast-forwarded at all. Beyond these improvements, however, the gameplay hasn't changed at all. For people who like C&C Generals, you can't go wrong here. If Generals doesn't do it for you, Zero Hour won't do anything to bring you into the fold.

**ADAM — 8**

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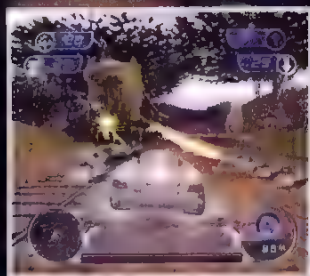
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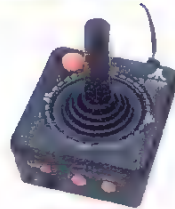


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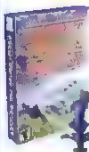
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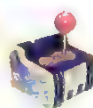


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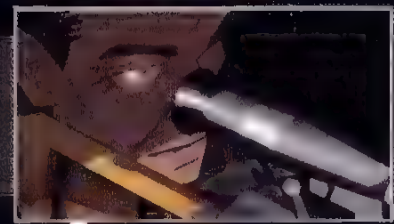
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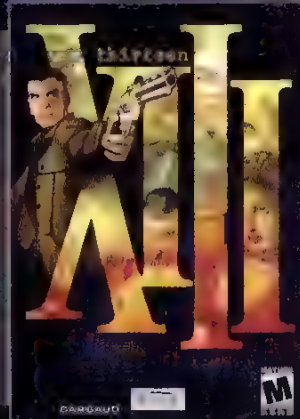


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PC

# SPACE COLONY

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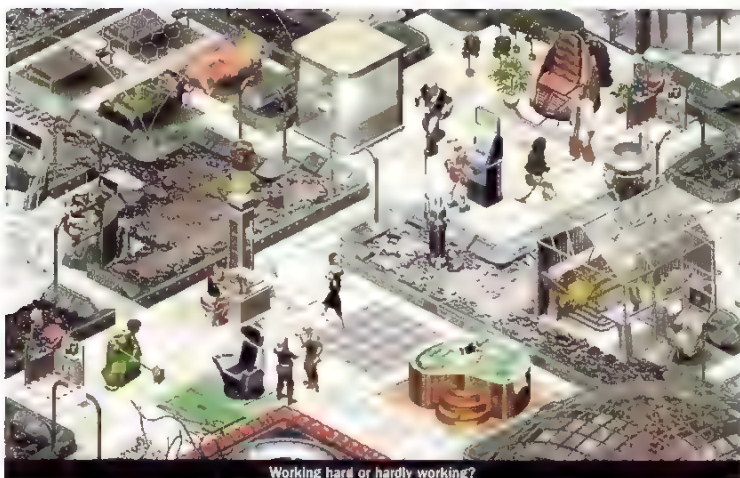
**B**uilding a colony in space isn't really even the primary goal of Space Colony. It sort of builds itself; the mission of the player is to keep the colonists productive. You have to tell your characters what to do; and you construct the facilities that they work, live, and play in. The colonists, however, do the actual labor.

The main problem I found was that this type of game needs to tread a fine line between player control and AI, and I don't feel that Space Colony does it all that well. I was frequently either bored or overwhelmed. Additionally, in larger scenarios, you have so many colonists that it becomes difficult to keep tabs on all of them, which resulted in me feeling dissociated with what was going on.

That being said, this title does one thing extremely well: presenting characters that have actual personalities. The hapless colonists are the main attraction at the Space Colony. In fact, I found myself more engrossed in watching the characters rather than creating a functioning colony. I felt actual empathy for the poor buggers, and trying to help them out kept me playing more than anything else. In the end, Space Colony fails at being a colony simulation and succeeds at being a personality sim. — **ADAM**



Better than your parents' basement



Working hard or hardly working?

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
**T**

7

■ **Concept:**  
Make dysfunctional Sims build a colony before they kill each other

■ **Graphics:**  
Lots and lots of animations for the 20 characters; everything else is a bit choppy

■ **Sound:**  
The sporadic music will make your feet tap, and you'll miss it when it cuts out

■ **Playability:**  
Every control panel you could want is there, if you dig through the menus to find it

■ **Entertainment:**  
The characters themselves eclipse the actual gameplay

■ **Replay Value:**  
Moderately High

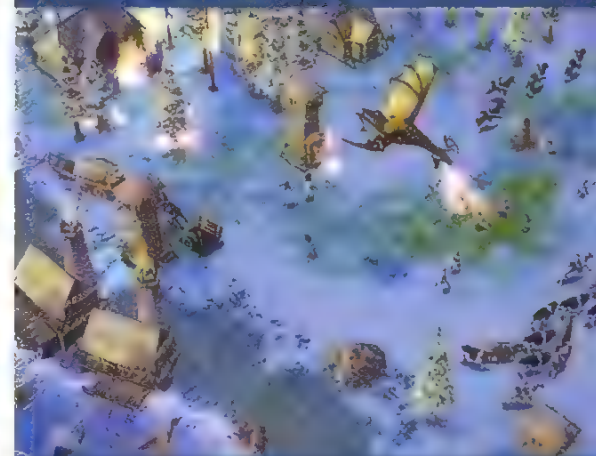
## SECOND OPINION

A Sims ripoff is a Sims ripoff, even if you set it in space and add candy-coated RTS elements. The basic concept of running a space colony and making sure its inhabitants are happy is solid enough, but the execution leaves a lot to be desired. There are almost too many things to have your colonists do; differentiating between the various types of ore and plants is simply a pain. The fact that a selected character stays selected until cancelled is a bit irritating as well — I found myself issuing commands I didn't intend to because I clicked on the wrong guy five minutes earlier. The nearly offensive stereotypes that are the colonists earn no points in my book either. Whiny and stupid, babysitting them is anything but fun. If the real Sims ever releases a "Sims in Space" expansion pack, I'm sure it'll capture the magic that this game is so sorely missing.

**JEREMY - 6**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** GATHERING ■ **DEVELOPER** FIREFLY STUDIOS  
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 14

## REVIEWS



PC

# AGE OF MYTHOLOGY: THE TITANS

FAVORED BY THE GODS

**A**ge of Mythology is one of the best RTS titles ever released, and The Titans is the kind of expansion that pushes the original game to the limit.

The new Atlantean culture is a welcome addition to the fray. Their two specific powers — upgrading units to heroes and using their god powers multiple times — are extremely useful, and make Atlantis worth playing even if you've already spent 500 hours on AoM.

The Titans units themselves are awesome. They cost about as much as a Wonder to build, are a bit more impressive to see in action, and practically guarantee victory — it's almost impossible to kill one without a Titan of your own. Another addition veterans will love is the Repeat button for unit queuing, which keeps your troop buildings pumping out units as long as you've got the resources.

The new single-player campaign is a blast, but pales in comparison to online play — the matching service is even better now, featuring friends lists, faster matchmaking, and more game options.

If you have a single strategic bone in your body, you are cheating yourself if you haven't played AoM yet. It follows, then, that this improvement upon the original is something any strategy gamer shouldn't be without. — **ADAM**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
**T**

9

■ **Concept:**  
Enlarge Age of Mythology to titanic proportions

■ **Graphics:**  
As good as ever. New units and god powers look awesome.

■ **Sound:**  
Excellent, except for some repetitive voiceovers.

■ **Playability:**  
You can't ask for better control. Shortcuts for everything.

■ **Entertainment:**  
What's better than harnessing the powers of the gods to crush your enemies?

■ **Replay Value:**  
High

## SECOND OPINION

Expanding upon the brilliance of the original game would take a Herculean effort, yet Ensemble Studios delivered in a big way. Titans ushers in gameplay depth through an amazing new campaign, towering Titan units, and the powerful Atlantean culture. It looks just as nice, plays even better, and emerges as one of the best expansion packs that money can buy.

**REINER - 9**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY (UP TO 12-PLAYER VIA ONLINE)  
■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS ■ **DEVELOPER** ENSEMBLE STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30

## REVIEWS



PC

# EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD

NOT JUST ANOTHER  
WARCRAFT CLONE

**A**s I installed *Empires*, I was fully prepared to suffer through another cheap knockoff of *Warcraft III* and/or *Age of Mythology*. To my surprise, this is actually a good knockoff. The game takes place on a grandiose scale and traverses four epochs, much like *AoM*, from Medieval to World War II. This gives it a distinctive flavor, and one which I enjoyed quite thoroughly.

*Empires* does a number of things very well, including formation settings for unit groups, unique traits for each civilization, and an awesome map generator. That's right, you can set up random maps with extremely deep customization options. In addition, there are currently two variants to gameplay—Action and Empire Builder, each of which tweaks the rules and greatly influences the flow of play. Multiplayer is an incredibly diverse experience, and offers something quite different from the big boys.

Single-player is somewhat unimpressive, but that's okay. If more than five percent of the RTS crowd plays primarily single-player, I'm the Queen of England. *Empires* manages to be in the same league as the two RTS giants, and that's no mean feat. Definitely worth your time if you dig the genre. —ADAM

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA ONLINE)  
■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 21

THE BOTTOM LINE  
TEEN  
**T** 8.25

■ **Concept:**  
Bust into the real-time strategy fray with a somewhat new take on the genre.

■ **Graphics:**  
Nothing we haven't seen before, but they get the job done.

■ **Sound:**  
Explosions sound cool. Voiceovers get old.

■ **Playability:**  
All the controls you could possibly need or want. Having full control of the camera is awesome.

■ **Entertainment:**  
A well-done, different entry in the genre is always fun. Multiplayer rocks the house and has a ranking ladder to keep you going.

■ **Replay Value:**  
High.

### SECOND OPINION

*Empires* distinguishes itself not only by its inventive distinctions among its factions, but through the Empire Builder and Action modes. The first is more traditional, while the other is more like a sequence of scenarios; forging the typical collect, build, and attack cycle. *Empires*'s is worth looking into, even if not groundbreaking.

KATO — 8



PC

# URU: AGES BEYOND MYST

I CAN SEE MYSELF

**I**n the name of journalistic integrity, I have to come clean about one thing: I love *Myst*. I love all of the games, I've read the novels, I even have a vague recollection of when D'ni holidays occur on our calendar. I am truly a *Myst* dork. On the other hand, I'm also a video game reviewer, and I've taken off the fanboy (fangirl?) glasses to be fair.

*Uru: Ages Beyond Myst* is, without a doubt in my mind, the most beautiful PC game on the market. As expected with a Cyan game, the environments are detailed, unique, beautiful, and logical. In addition, the sound offers ambience and puzzle clues.

Although I'm loathe to do it, here comes one whopper of a cliché: If you like *Myst* games, you'll love *Uru*. But, if you hate the mere thought of exploration being a main goal of any video game title, this will make you squirm like a little girl at a stockholder's meeting.

Really, the greatest thing about *Uru* is that Cyan has successfully updated the adventure genre with onscreen characters, customizable avatars, and (most of all) online play. Come game launch, players can go through the single-player mission out of the box and then sign up for an MMO experience featuring biweekly updates and a continuing plot through the online missions. Adventure fans will pee a little with delight and others might find themselves pleasantly surprised. It's awesome. Honestly. —LISA



The ages offer lots of variety in scope and appearance

Uru's Garden Age has variable weather conditions

The Neighborhood is where online players will meet en masse

The game looks just as good online as it does in single-player mode

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■  
■ **DEVELOPER** CYAN ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 14

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE  
**E**

8.25

- **Concept:**  
Continue the *Myst* saga while truly evolving the adventure genre
- **Graphics:**  
Although a bold statement, I'm going to say that this is the most gorgeous PC game I've ever seen
- **Sound:**  
Different scores for each world and the trademark *Myst* musical puzzles and cues
- **Playability:**  
FPS-like controls are a little hard to get used to, but once you get them, they're solid
- **Entertainment:**  
Subtle storytelling and little guidance will make some players crazy
- **Replay Value:**  
High

### SECOND OPINION

There's really no easy way to review a *Myst* game; by this point, you know if you're a fan or not. *Uru: Ages Beyond Myst* isn't going to earn the series many new fans, but diehard *Myst* players are going to be in logic-puzzle heaven. *Uru* is easily one of the prettiest games I've ever seen, but it's also one of the slowest. Exploring beautiful yet lifeless areas is a great alternative to violent games, but the puzzles will make your brain work harder than any other title out there. There's a lot of shuffling through journals and such, and these activities are absolutely essential to solving *Uru*'s riddles. I found myself tweaking my character's appearance quite often, simply because it was a nice reprieve from frustrating (yet fair) brain teasers. Maybe I'm not smart enough for *Uru*, but all the armchair Sherlock Holmes out there should dig it.

JEREMY — 7.75





THE BOTTOM LINE

PC

# REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

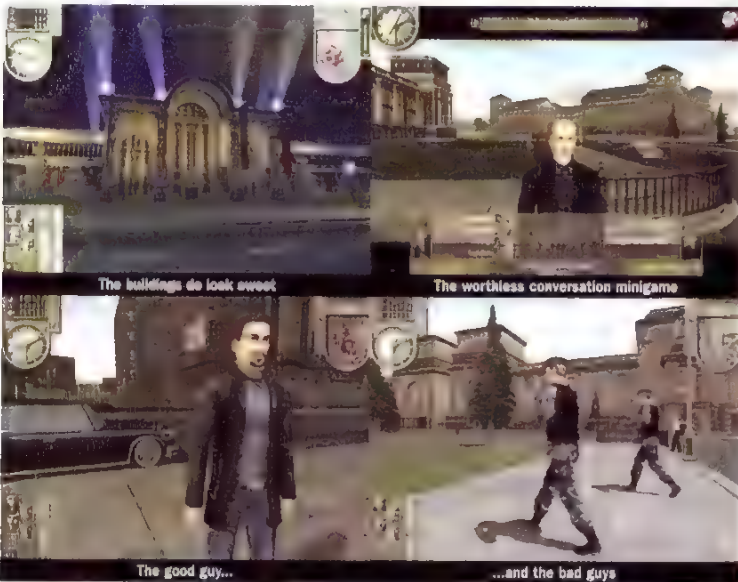
AS DRY AS ACTUAL POLITICS

I was pumped to play Republic. Nothing could be dearer to my heart than orchestrating a revolution against an evil regime. Additionally, the number of factors that affect the outcomes of your actions stagger me. Using poster campaigns, rallies, and character assassination to claw my way to the top seemed a reality.

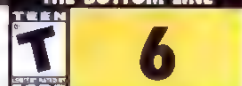
Unfortunately, the gameplay does little to draw the player in. Though you have access to a nicely detailed 3D Rooftop view, it is completely impractical to use. To accomplish anything, you have to spend most of your time in a view similar to a map of downtown, and about as entertaining.

This title is real-time, but it's turn-based at heart. Nothing happens except in Time Blocks. The only thing this accomplishes is to frustrate the player - either making them do way too much in the time they have, or enforcing a waiting period before the next turn...er, Time Block starts. Furthermore, the actions your characters take are not shown at all except through the Focus Camera option, which does nothing except treat you to some bad pathfinding and stilted animations.

True, there are a number of excellent concepts in Republic. It just seems that the team spent a lot more time coming up with ideas for the game than they did executing them properly. - ADAM



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELIXIR STUDIOS  
 ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 26



- **Concept:**  
Run a revolutionary political party in a huge, fully realized city
- **Graphics:**  
The scenery is nice, but the character animations are awful
- **Sound:**  
Well-orchestrated music (but not enough of it) punctuated by unemotional, gibberish voiceovers
- **Playability:**  
Perfect to horrid, depending on which screen you're in and what you're trying to accomplish
- **Entertainment:**  
Fun at first, the gameplay quickly becomes boring and repetitive
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderately Low

## SECOND OPINION

Republic: The Revolution and I aren't what you would call the best of friends. You see, Republic thinks I really give a crap about rallying the people of someplace I can't even pronounce into following my new rule of government. Not only that, but the game tortures me with such thrilling gameplay devices as gathering information, spreading dis-information, and putting up posters. Vippée, let the party begin. I'm being a little overly harsh here, but the game really is pretty tedious for little to no pay off - especially since it starts off at an insanely slow pace. In fact, taking the multiple choice personality test at the beginning of the game was about the high point of my experience. People looking to start their own new order that are willing to put in lots of time into Republic's less than exciting political maneuvers may find some value here. I think I'll leave the uprising to others, and just sit on my butt and play fun video games like I do in real life.

ANDY - 5

PC

## UFO: AFTERMATH

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** CENEGA PUBLISHING  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 15



UFO: Aftermath is one of those games that tries to blend genres and succeeds for the most part. Play flows from a global strategy map (with all the research & development we

know and love) to a real-time tactical map. You even have elite soldiers that level up and have individual stats. The only flaw is the difficulty curve - it's steeper than trying to jump into Counter Strike online play as an FPS newbie. - ADAM

T 8.25



PC

## SIMCITY 4: RUSH HOUR

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 27

The expanded building sets, structures, and transportation options are perfect additions that will make you scratch your head and wonder why they weren't in the original game. On the contrary, being able to manually take control of vehicles to complete missions is more of a distraction than anything. And it's not a very good one. In such, Rush Hour is a mixed bag. It adds some important elements to the game, but also has a ton of junk that really has nothing to do with the city building experience. - REINER

E 7.5

PC

## THE SIMS: MAKIN' MAGIC

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28



Seemingly timed to coincide with Halloween, this latest Sims expansion pack is more than just a nodover to Sims 2. Makin' Magic allows your Sims to participate in all sorts of witchy

debauchery like meddling with neighbors' lives through the use of love spells, the ability to charm snakes for fun and profit, and building options that include the new Haunted House. It's a ghoulishly good time for existing Sims fans. - LISA

T 7.75



**"Be prepared to sit through some boring tutorials, restart often, and cry like a little girl when you lose a key member of your party."**

**GAME BOY ADVANCE**

# FIRE EMBLEM

A JAPANESE CLASSIC COMES STATESIDE

**T**here is no denying that I have been waiting for years (almost a decade) for Fire Emblem to come to the States. Created by Intelligent Systems, the same developer that gave us the wonderful Advance Wars 1 & 2, Fire Emblem is a series that has its roots on the Super Famicom, but this edition is a remake of the 2001 Japanese Game Boy Advance release.

As you would expect, Fire Emblem offers some great strategic play. The biggest problem with it, however, may be the fact that it takes close to four hours to get past all the training exercises and get to the meat of the 22 chapters found in the single-player game.

In fact, it almost speaks to you like you are a complete moron. Now, I realize that strategic role-playing games like this one require a certain amount of hand holding, but I feel the genre has been around long enough that companies no longer need to treat us like children when explaining the game.

For example, in one scene it literally says, "Wil is an archer, he uses a bow to fight." Well, no \$%&\$! You mean, he can only attack from long range, and can't use short-range attacks? Unbelievable! I know myself and others were annoyed by this in Advance Wars 2, but this level of drivel is getting out of hand. I'm all for tutorials, but I'm going to make a plea that all future Fire Emblem releases place them into its own mode for those interested in learning the basics, so experienced players can quickly get to the heart of the game. You can press Start to go past many of the training portions, but you also miss many of the story elements which are one of this game's high points.

That complaint aside, Fire Emblem does a wonderful job of introducing some interesting new features to the genre. Overall, Fire Emblem has more RPG elements than a game like Advance Wars (even though they do share many similar tactics), since the characters can level up in both hit points and statistics as they advance in the quest.

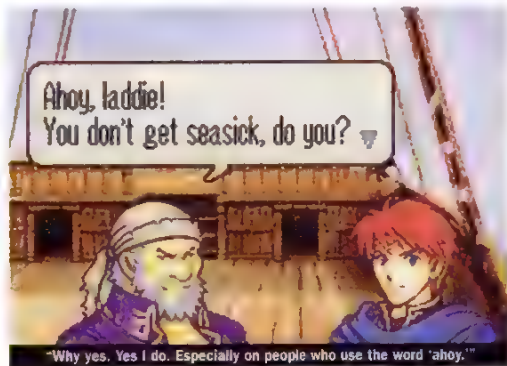
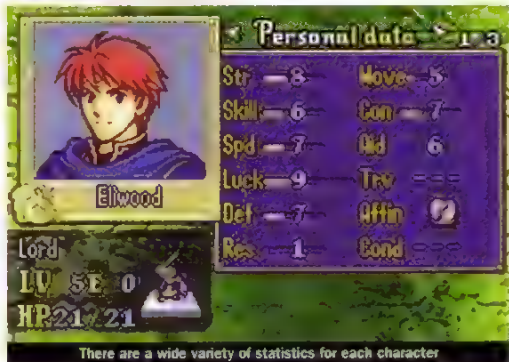
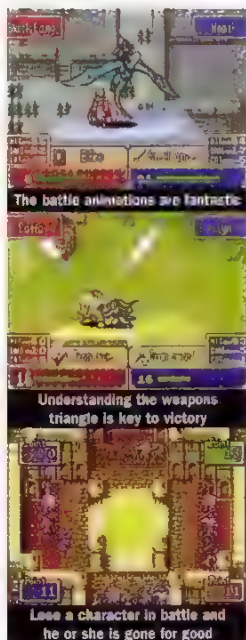
It's also very RPG-like in that its battle system uses a weapons triangle, which is basically a version of scissors, rock, paper. Swords best axes; axes best lances; and lances best swords — much like the water-beats-fire elemental structure found in most RPGs.

The most interesting twist that Fire Emblem brings, however, is that any member of your party that dies during battle is gone for good. This element alone puts some serious pressure on you as the tactician to think ahead and make wise use of your resources. It also gives completists like myself heart attacks.

In fact, this area of the game bothered me more than it entertained me. Every time I would screw up and someone would die, I would restart. Not that I was losing, but that I just couldn't stand to lose any characters. Unfortunately, many times it is in your overall best interest to sacrifice characters to gain new ones or pass certain difficult portions of the quest — something I have a hard time doing.

Fire Emblem is a great strategy/RPG, but personally I prefer the fodder found in a game like Advance Wars or the ability to revive characters like in Final Fantasy Tactics Advance. Don't get me wrong: Fire Emblem is good, but be prepared to sit through some boring tutorials, restart often, and cry like a little girl when you lose a key member of your party. — **ANDY**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY/RPG (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 3



- **Concept:**  
Finally bring the long-running Japanese franchise to the U.S.
- **Graphics:**  
The graphics and animation are simple, but eloquent
- **Sound:**  
The tunes are epic, but quickly become tired (insert iPod comment here)
- **Playability:**  
Intelligent Systems made Advance Wars 1 & 2 — need we say more?
- **Entertainment:**  
The four hours of tutorial/gameplay at the beginning are painful, but from there on out it's brilliant
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderately High

**SECOND OPINION**

If you're a fan of the Advance Wars series, you'll love Fire Emblem. With a rock-paper-scissors-like weapons triangle and different terrain having an effect on attacks and movement, the game reeks of Nintendo's war simulator. In fact, so many similarities can be drawn between the two products that I'm surprised Nintendo didn't call it Advance Wars: The Medieval Age. In all honesty, though, I wouldn't have it any other way. There really is no better compliment than to be compared to one of the best handheld series of all time. Fire Emblem truly is every bit as good. I often found myself resetting the game to master stages just so I wouldn't lose a soldier. You see, when a character dies, they won't come back...ever. This is particularly distressing since you become emotionally attached to them. All told, it's a remarkable game. Don't miss it!

**REINER - 9**



GAME BOY ADVANCE

## PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

OUR PRINCE IS IN ANOTHER CASTLE

There's a lot to like about Sands of Time for GBA. The puzzles are well-done, and Ubisoft has thrown in a huge number of ways for the Prince to interact with his environment. You'll shimmy along ledges, swing around on horizontal posts, and cling to the lips of platforms for dear life.

The "rewind" power the Prince gets from the Sands of Time is cool, and more abilities are unlocked as you go through the quest. Using them is rarely necessary to advance, but they can really help in getting through difficult bits. The problem is that magic power is somewhat tough to get back, so you have to be conservative with it.

Unfortunately, the combat is dreadful. All you can do is swing your sword, which has a minuscule range. Fortunately, actually fighting bad guys makes up a very small portion of the game; the vast majority involves simply getting from point A to point B.

A fair amount of time is spent switching between Farah (the Sultan's daughter) and the Prince. It's a decent mechanic for the most part; there are certain things only one or the other can do. The only problem is that too often you have to get both of them through a room, and it gets rather tedious to do everything twice.

The difficulty in Prince of Persia titles has always been extreme, and Sands of Time is no exception. The game plays almost exactly like the Apple II original, albeit with

many improvements, and the frustration involved is just as high. It wouldn't be as bad if checkpoints weren't so infrequent, but they only come along every third or fourth room, which translates to 10-20 minutes of play. If you're prone to throwing things, you might want to play it on the GBA Player to avoid launching it out the window. **ADAM**



The Prince considered a career as an acrobat...



...or a lion tamer...

...but his dad said he had "responsibilities"

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 14

THE BOTTOM LINE

**T** 8.25

■ **Concept:**  
Port the new console version over to GBA for an old-school style adventure

■ **Graphics:**  
Easily the best I've ever seen on the GBA. Very fluid animations for everything and cool-looking cutscenes

■ **Sound:**  
Two twenty-second looping music tracks and irritating effects

■ **Playability:**  
Nothing to complain about, but collisions seem a bit off at times

■ **Entertainment:**  
If you can keep from throwing your GBA through a wall in frustration, it's awesome

■ **Replay Value:**  
Moderate

### SECOND OPINION

I came into this review expecting the GBA version of Prince of Persia to be a complete refresh of the original from back in the day, so I was pleasantly surprised to see that Ubisoft went out of its way to not only create some more interesting gameplay, but to tie itself in with the console version. Sure, this iteration's story and gameplay aren't as sharp as its console big brother, but it is a challenging experience. Not too challenging, however, which I think is the fine line that platform games of this ilk have to be wary of. All told, Prince on GBA looks great and delivers some solid trap-avoiding fun. Be warned, however, that this game is not for everyone. Younger gamers might find the rooms full of traps and trials to be a bit much, and more seasoned players will find the adventure more routine than fun. I personally found the challenge level to be about right for gaming on the go.

ANDY - 8.25

GAME BOY ADVANCE

## CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON

MOVIE PHYSICS AREN'T ALWAYS COOL

With the head and shoulders above its console brethren, Crouching Tiger on the GBA is still a mediocre effort. This is unfortunate with the variety of enemy types, levels, and moves that this has, it could've been really great.

There are only two things holding it back, but they're pretty major. First is the floaty physics; I understand that the whole low-gravity thing was awesome in the film, but it ends up feeling just wrong in this game.

Secondly, the one special attack at your disposal seems almost completely random as far as whether it works or not. It's a simple Hadou-ken (you know it, mon) - a button combo I've pulled off successfully a million times - yet I can only get it to function about 30% of the time. Frustrating at the least - especially when you consider that it's a very cool attack that spices up combat quite a bit.

As it stands, this title is a decent attempt at bringing something new to the old Rush 'N Attack formula. For the most part it succeeds, but anyone who remembers that ancient NES game will agree that it needs more than CTHD does to make it great. - ADAM

THE BOTTOM LINE

**T** 7

■ **Concept:**  
What better way to simulate Double Dragon than with the Crouching Tiger?

■ **Graphics:**  
Spotty. The graphics are good, but the floaty physics and the lack of a double jump are a bit disappointing.

■ **Sound:**  
This actually provides a nice justification for Nintendo's decision not to put a headphone jack on the SP. It's that good.

■ **Playability:**  
Special moves are a bit inconsistent and everything feels a bit floaty.

■ **Entertainment:**  
Certainly not a bad game to run around and chop up some bad guys.

■ **Replay Value:**  
Moderately Low.

### SECOND OPINION

While by no means exceptional, Crouching Tiger is a solid, yet forgettable action title in the vein of typical SNES side-scrollers. It tries a few new things, hits its target as often as it misses, and emerges as a passable action game. It may be small praise, but it's easily superior to the crappy console version.

JEREMY - 7.25

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT CHINA ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 9

## REVIEWS



GAME BOY ADVANCE

# CIMA: THE ENEMY

## PATIENCE REWARDED

**C**IMA: The Enemy is not without its faults, but it's also not without its charms. Foremost in the title's plus column is the story which revolves around Ark J, a Gate Guardian whose chosen profession is the protection of everyday humans against CIMA. CIMA are aliens that look something like suburban punks (think Punky Boredom) and use humanity's hope to survive.

Ark J is escorting a group of 12 pioneers to their new homes when the entire lot is sucked into a CIMA dungeon. The group is separated and Ark J must find them each in a different locale. As he picks up survivors, he takes advantage of their skills to find treasure, make potions, manufacture mines, etc. This ability to command and utilize what would normally be NPCs is unique and provides much of the strategy as you lead them from safe room to safe room.

After a few hours, you'll have the extensive menu system down pat and be able to deftly escort your charges around corners by plotting multiple movement points through the large maps. The problems with CIMA are few, but worth noting. The combat collision is certainly questionable, and the boss battles are markedly harder than the dungeon crawling. This game is not for the impatient, but is worth the purchase for portable RPG fans. — LISA

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** NATSLIME  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** NEVERLAND COMPANY  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 3



- **Concept:** Pack an innovative 30-hour RPG onto the GBA.
- **Graphics:** The extensive menu screens and small army of onscreen characters are a mess and easy to recognize.
- **Sound:** A certainly respectable score, but nothing I'd listen to on a regular basis.
- **Playability:** The instruction booklet will be necessary at the start, but the menus soon become second nature.
- **Entertainment:** In the vein of a handheld Osprey, Hour of Darkness — long and involved, but worth the time.
- **Replay Value:** High.

**SECOND OPINION**

Cima is like Zima — a refreshing idea that ends up disappointing. Defending citizens and giving them orders to direct them to safety is clever. However, allies get caught in corners and are useless in battle, fights have horrible collision, and boss encounters are highly frustrating. This could've been a classic, but is mired in problems to the point where I can't recommend it. It's sad, really.

**JUSTIN — 6.5**



GAME BOY ADVANCE

# DRAGON BALL Z TAIKETSU

## DRAGON BORE Z

**A**s this is the first Dragon Ball Z fighting game on the Game Boy Advance, fans of the series are going to buy it no matter what I say. To them I say go ahead, you'll probably like it. It has all your favorite characters, unlockable DBZ stuff, and all that jazz.

But will this title appeal to those who aren't already DBZ fans? Probably not. Playing this game reminded me of an old Game Boy title I had: Fist of the North Star. A simplistic anime-based fighter, that game wasn't great, but there were few choices for fighters on the original Game Boy. Taiketsu has exactly the same feel to it with better graphics. Yet, playing this title, it felt like little had changed in handheld fighters in the last 13 years. That's not to say that Taiketsu is a horrible game, just one with little innovation. Sure, it has super moves and unlockables that older games didn't, but those extras don't change the fact that the core gameplay is as familiar as the Game Boy itself. For DBZ fans, this is your only choice for a handheld fighter; for all others, there are many more out there. — JEREMY

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER FIGHTING (2-PLAYER VIA LINK CABLE) ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** WEBFOOT GAMES ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



GAME BOY ADVANCE

# THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

## REBUILDING THE TWO TOWERS

**R**eturn of the King utilizes the same basic engine as its precursor The Two Towers, but polishes up and fixes a lot of the things that made that title sub-par. In contrast to its predecessor's three playable heroes, ROTK features eight — all of which have their own skill sets and feel quite different to play. The variety of abilities available to each character not only fits their role in Lord of the Rings, but goes a long way towards relieving the monotonous combat that plagues the genre. The quests players embark upon vary from hero to hero as well, giving ROTK some much-needed replay value.

The other major upgrade from The Two Towers is the addition of an arrow (now onscreen at all times) which tells the player where to go. It's easy to get lost without an autopilot feature, but the guide arrow helps a lot.

ROTK is hardly a brand-new experience, but does enough to make it worth checking out. If you like Tolkien and have a GBA, Return of the King is a no-brainer. — ADAM

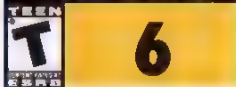
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG (2-PLAYER VIA LINK CABLE) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 3

SECOND OPINION

This tries to make up for its shortness by demanding you play through with all the characters. Not so fast. With the bad AI and simple gameplay, what makes you think that will happen?

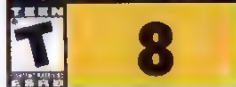
**KATO — 6.5**

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:** Play as your favorite characters and hit your least favorite in the face.
- **Graphics:** While characters are identifiable, they're also fairly blurry and backgrounds don't impress.
- **Sound:** Umm...it had it, I'm sure of that.
- **Playability:** While the basic controls are simple, super moves are a chore to execute.
- **Entertainment:** For DBZ fans with GBAs, this title will make them say OMG LOL.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate.

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:** Update The Two Towers engine and cash in on LOTR fever.
- **Graphics:** Awesome sprites and animations, blah backgrounds.
- **Sound:** Surprisingly good renditions of the movie score, but the effects get old fairly quickly.
- **Playability:** The default control scheme for skills is a bit wonky, but not bad.
- **Entertainment:** Definitely the best top-down action/RPG on this platform.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.



GAME BOY ADVANCE

## TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

TONY IN A BOX

**B**oy, I hated the first half-hour I spent with this game. After playing Tony Hawk on a consistent basis for the last five years, I was suddenly forced to spend time "unlocking" such basic moves as kickflips and Indys. I guess it's supposed to be a tutorial, but give me a break. Why should I have to jump through hoops and complete goals just to get back to the basic move set I've been using since the inception of the series?

Once I got past the grunt-work, I did warm up to Underground – a little. It's cool that Vicarious Visions tried to incorporate the huge scope of the console versions into a portable package – even if some elements (like the character-create mode) are a little wasted on such a small screen. Also, it's still impressive how well the classic control is implemented with fewer buttons, and that the new off-board comboing is included. However, as I said when I reviewed Tony 4 on GBA, I'm very tired of the isometric view and Resident Evil-style turning, and this didn't do much to bring me back into the fold. – **MATT**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS (2-PLAYER VIA LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** VICARIOUS VISIONS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 27



GAME BOY ADVANCE

## HARVEST MOON: FRIENDS OF MINERAL TOWN

FARMING ON THE GO

If the words "agriculture" and "John Deere" make you feel all funny inside, you may want to give Harvest Moon a shot. This game hones in on the farmer's lifestyle to such a degree that it often feels like a full-time job. You'll find yourself hoeing dirt, planting seeds, tending to livestock, raising cattle, chopping wood, breaking rocks, and – when you have some free time – courting women and building relations with villagers.

As you can probably imagine, gameplay can be tedious, but the title does a good job of changing things up and adding new elements to the mix. This incarnation of the cult classic series is actually set in the same world as the PSone game Back to Nature. It features the same characters and settings, plus all of the gameplay bells and whistles. It will also be compatible via connectivity with the upcoming GC game A Wonderful Life. It's easily the best-playing handheld version to date, but again, the content will likely be too dull for most gamers. If it sounds enticing, there's a good chance that you'll fall in love with this title. – **REINER**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NATSUME ■ **DEVELOPER** NATSUME  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

## SECOND OPINION

I couldn't be more fed up with isometric action/sports games if they were pickles and I had to eat the whole jar, brine and all. THUG's premise works for the GBA crowd, but its off-limits areas and shoddy control (especially for a Tony Hawk game) irritate me like a sliver in my butt cheek.

JUSTIN – 5.75

## THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE  
**E**

7.5

- **Concept:** Continue the franchise's story-oriented bent on the GBA
- **Graphics:** Still impressive, but this engine is pretty much maxed out
- **Sound:** A significant step down from past iterations
- **Playability:** It's got everything: the off board comboing, revert, manuals, etc
- **Entertainment:** Solid, except for the torpid pacing in the beginning
- **Replay Value:** High

GAME BOY ADVANCE

## JUSTICE LEAGUE CHRONICLES

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY  
 ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 27



As a comic book fan, I can't say I'm disappointed to find out that Justice League Chronicles is as useless as a second appendix? Why are the characters so bland and why, for the love of Jack Kirby, does Superman look like Jay Leno? I may never know the answers to these questions, but I do know that I'll be staying far, far away from this game. – **JEREMY**

streaming down my face like a lost child. Why are the comic book games such a hard? Why are the controls so floppy; why is combat so weak? Why is my hero character as useless as a second appendix? Why are the characters so bland and why, for the love of Jack Kirby, does Superman look like Jay Leno? I may never know the answers to these questions, but I do know that I'll be staying far, far away from this game. – **JEREMY**

EVERYONE  
**E** 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE

## BLACKTHORNE

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** BLIZZARD  
 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 14

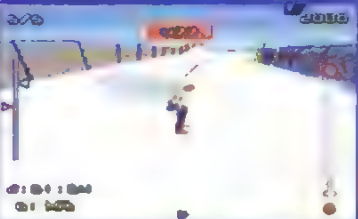
When I first dove into the game, I was a little bit of a violent edge to puzzle-oriented games like Prince of Persia and Flashback. Not only can you blast enemies with infinite shotgun fire, but you can turn those same blasts on the hapless human prisoners. Special weapons like player-controlled flying mines and rolling grenades are necessary to work through the game's many puzzles. There aren't many thinking-man's action games like this on the GBA. – **JUSTIN**

TEEN  
**T** 8

GAME BOY ADVANCE

## SSX 3

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** EA GIG  
 ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 4



Says my friend, "I've never seen a snowboarder do a good job of it." I must have known that the GBA has a hard time handling SSX 3's blazing boarding action.

In hell of handling SSX 3's blazing boarding action, they plowed ahead and tried to duplicate it on poorly underpowered hardware. The result is a game that runs through a knee-deep slush puddle of subpar fun. If it weren't for GameCUBE connectivity and multiplatform support, I'd give it a C-: Who gives a crap? – **MATT**

EVERYONE  
**E** 4

# CHARTS

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



## NPD TOP 20

Rankings Based Upon NPD Data For July 2008 Based On Units Sold

RANK	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	<b>Madden NFL 2004</b>	PS2	9.25	Aug-03	\$49

What if Mike Ditka built a time machine, went back to the Genesis days, and made sure Madden's games never came out? Everyone would be forced to play Mike Ditka Power Football 2004 right now. Pestilence would reign over the land. People would be starved... for good digital pigskin action. Please, vote YES on the "Keep Ditka Away From Science" Ordinance. The past, present, and future depend on it.

2	N/A	<b>Madden NFL 2004</b>	Xbox	9	Aug-03	\$49
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Have you heard about the EA Sports curse? Many stars who grace the covers of EA's games go on to have terrible or injury-riddled seasons. No example is better than Michael Vick this year. He hasn't been doing much scrambling on that busted wheel of his. In fact, as of this writing, he's barely able to jog on the treadmill. Just remember this slogan, athletes: EA Sports - you'll come up lame.

3	N/A	<b>Soul Calibur II</b>	GC	8.75	Aug-03	\$50
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Who would've thought a pointy-eared kid in tights could hold his own against history's greatest fighters? That Link is a bad mutha - shut yo' mouth - and his appearance in the GameCube SC II has made it the top seller out of the three versions. Of course, you heard it here first with our reviews. For our next psychic feat, we predict you will disagree with a review in this issue. Taa-daa!

4	N/A	<b>Soul Calibur II</b>	Xbox	8.5	Aug-03	\$49
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"You feel that sting, Spawn? That's pride messin' with you. Screw pride." That's what Marcellus Wallace told the Xbox-exclusive character so he would take a dive to Link in the battle of Soul Calibur II ports. Of course, the man from Hell could've gone against Mr. Wallace's orders and destroyed the elf, but he probably would've spent the rest of eternity known as "The Gimp."

5	N/A	<b>Silent Hill 3</b>	PS2	8.25	Aug-03	\$46
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Games can scare you more than movies, with their ability to put you in the shoes of the main character. Silent Hill 3 may be the most frightening game yet, while also being among the most vile and disgusting. Imagine being brutally mauled by a werewolf who then pees in the wound or waking up to find a zombie licking your face. Yeah, it's like that.

RANK	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	1	<b>NCAA Football 2004</b>	PS2	8.75	Jul-03	\$50
7	N/A	<b>Soul Calibur II</b>	PS2	8.5	Aug-03	\$50
8	N/A	<b>Ghost Recon Island Thunder</b>	Xbox	8.25	Aug-03	\$40
9	2	<b>Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic</b>	Xbox	9.5	Jul-03	\$50
10	7	<b>Grand Theft Auto III</b>	PS2	9.5	Oct-01	\$17
11	12	<b>Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour</b>	GC	8	Jul-03	\$50
12	N/A	<b>Madden NFL 2004</b>	GC	9	Aug-03	\$49
13	6	<b>Pokémon Ruby</b>	GBA	7.25	Mar-03	\$32
14	10	<b>Grand Theft Auto: Vice City</b>	PS2	10	Oct-02	\$39
15	N/A	<b>F-Zero GX</b>	GC	8.25	Aug-03	\$50
16	8	<b>Pokémon Sapphire</b>	GBA	7.25	Mar-03	\$33
17	5	<b>Donkey Kong Country</b>	GBA	9	Jun-03	\$30
18	N/A	<b>Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild</b>	PS2	9.25	Aug-03	\$40
19	4	<b>Dragon Ball Z: Legacy of Goku II</b>	GBA	7.5	Jun-03	\$30
20	N/A	<b>Virtua Fighter 4: EVO</b>	PS2	9	Aug-03	\$20

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

## JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Japan Based On Monthly Units Sold

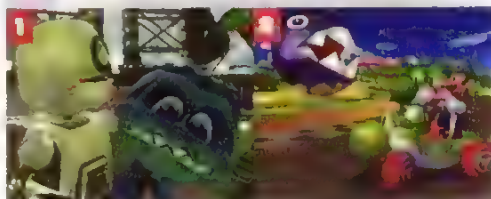
POS	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	<b>Tengai Makyo II: Manji Maru</b>	PS2
2	N/A	<b>Shin Sangoku Musou 3</b>	PS2
3	N/A	<b>Grand Theft Auto III</b>	PS2
4	N/A	<b>King Camel</b>	PS2
5	1	<b>Gundam: Meguriai Uchuu</b>	PS2
6	N/A	<b>Drakengard</b>	PS2
7	2	<b>Legend of Starfi</b>	GBA
8	N/A	<b>Energy Airforce: AlmStrike!</b>	PS2
9	3	<b>Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour</b>	GC
10	6	<b>World Soccer Winning Eleven 7</b>	PS2



## GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	<b>Ratchet &amp; Clank: Going Commando</b>	PS2
2	N/A	<b>Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time</b>	PS2
3	N/A	<b>Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne</b>	PC
4	N/A	<b>Need for Speed: Underground</b>	Multi
5	1	<b>SSX 3</b>	Multi
6	N/A	<b>Tony Hawk's Underground</b>	Multi
7	2	<b>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</b>	Multi
8	N/A	<b>Mario Kart: Double Dash</b>	GC
9	N/A	<b>SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs</b>	PS2
10	6	<b>Jak II</b>	PS2



## PC TOP 10

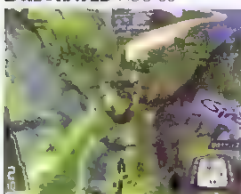
Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service. Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

POS	L MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	N/A	<b>Star Wars: Jedi Academy</b>	Sep-03	\$48
2	N/A	<b>Command &amp; Conquer Generals: Zero Hour</b>	Sep-03	\$28
3	N/A	<b>Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of WW II</b>	Sep-03	\$27
4	N/A	<b>Halo: Combat Evolved</b>	Sep-03	\$38
5	N/A	<b>EverQuest: Lost Dungeons of Norrath</b>	Sep-03	\$29
6	N/A	<b>Medal of Honor: Allied Assault - Breakthrough</b>	Sep-03	\$26
7	1	<b>Flight Simulator 2004: Century of Flight</b>	Jul-03	\$52
8	N/A	<b>Battlefield 1942</b>	Sep-02	\$41
9	5	<b>The Sims Deluxe</b>	Sep-02	\$40
10	N/A	<b>Temple of Elemental Evil</b>	Sep-03	\$49



# DOWNHILL DOMINATION

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4 PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **REVIEWED** AUG 03



The game's speed is flat out intense and puts many futuristic racers to shame. These stages are massive -- the largest I think I've ever seen in a racing game. Not only are they long, but there's a lot of room for lateral movement and plenty of alternate paths. They also really take advantage of their locations. I could barely see during the Siberian snowstorm, and I had to avoid lava in the Hawaii level. City streets, waterfalls, and dark caverns also show up. At the end of the race, you're awarded cash based on your tricking. Fans of both racers and extreme games will likely put Downhill Domination at the top of the gaming pile. — **JUSTIN**

**T 8.25**

## PLAYSTATION 2

Abr. Edo: Combat Academy	6.75	May-03
Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	6.75	Aug-03
A Star Baseball 2004	8	Apr-03
Alter Echo	8	Sep-03
Amplitude	8.75	May-03
Age of Scape 2	7.5	Jul-03
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	8.75	Jul-03
A to Z Modest	8	Jun-03
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	5	Nov-03
Big Mutha Truckerz	7.5	May-03
Black & Bruised	7.5	Mar-03
Bombastic	8	Sep-03
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	8	Mar-03
Brill Light Marhans		
Zoom or Doom!	5	Oct-03
Callisto's Bay: Game Hunter		Mar-03
Calliopeana		
Lamentation: Innocence	8	Nov-03
Chaos Legion	8.5	Jun-03
Chopper: Crisis Shield	6.5	May-03
Clock Tower 3	8.5	May-03
Coin McRae Rally 3	8.75	May-03
Conflict: Desert Storm II		
Back to Baghdad	7.75	Nov-03
Crouching Tiger: Hidden Dragon	6	Oct-03
Dark Cloud 2	9.25	Mar-03
DDR Max 2	7	Oct-03
Def Jam Fight for NY	8.5	Apr-03
Def Jam Fight for NY 2	7	Mar-03
Def Jam Fight for NY 3	7	Mar-03
Disney Extreme Skate Adventure	7.75	Oct-03
Dot Hack Vol. 1: Injection	8.75	Mar-03
Dot Hack Vol. 2: Mutation	7.5	Sep-03
Dot Hack Vol. 3: Outbreak	7.5	Sep-03
Downhill Domination	8.25	Aug-03
Dynasty Warriors 4	7.5	Oct-03
Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires of the Sky	7	Apr-03
EJay Cutthroat	7	Aug-03
Empire of the Maya	8	Jul-03
ESPN NBA Basketball	9.5	Nov-03
ESPN NHL Hockey	8.5	Oct-03
EverQuest 2	8.75	Mar-03
EverQuest 2: A Faithful of Boomstick	7.75	Jun-03
F1 Career Championship	7	Aug-03
FIFA Soccer 2004	8.5	Nov-03
Finding Nemo	6.5	Jul-03
Fishermen's Challenge	7	Mar-03
Freaky Flyers	8	Oct-03
Freedom Fighters	8	Oct-03
Freestyle Master	7	Aug-03
Funniest Home Videos	5.25	Sep-03
Funniest Home Videos 2	5	Jul-03
Galaxy Rangers: The New Frontier	8	May-03
Galaxy Rangers: The New Frontier 2	7.5	Nov-03
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	7.5	May-03
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories	7.5	Mar-03
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	7.5	Nov-03
High Heat 2004		Apr-03
Hulk: The End of the Line	5.5	Jul-03
Hulk: The End of the Line 2	6.25	Sep-03
Hypersonic Extreme	7.25	Mar-03
Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom	8.5	Nov-03
K-11: World of Fighting	6.5	Apr-03
King of the Hill: The Rival	7.5	Nov-03
King of the Hill: The Rival 2	6	Nov-03

## GAMECUBE

Adventure: Battle for Alantis	2	Oct-03
Army Men: Sarge's War	6	May-03
ATV: Quad Power Racing	8	Mar-03
Batman: Dark Tomorrow	6.75	May-03
Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg	7	Oct-03
Black & Bruised	7.5	Mar-03
BMX XXX	7	Feb-03
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	8.5	May-03
Charlie's Angels	2	Sep-03
Conflict: Desert Storm	6	May-03
Def Jam Fight for NY	8.75	Apr-03
Disney Extreme Skate Adventure	8	Oct-03
Disney Sports Football	6.75	Mar-03
Disney Sports Soccer	8	Feb-03
Disney's Party	2.5	Nov-03
Disney's PK: Out of the Shadows	4.75	Mar-03
Dragon Kingdom: The Legend of the Dragon	7.5	Feb-03
Empire of the Maya	8	Jul-03
ESPN Soccer 2004	8.75	Nov-03
ESPN NHL Hockey	8.75	Oct-03
F-Zero GX	8.25	Sep-03
Funniest Home Videos	7	Mar-03
Funniest Home Videos 2	7	Mar-03
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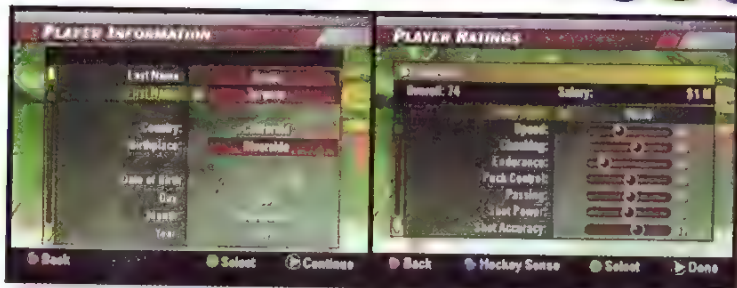
Rockwell	6.5	Oct-03
Rogue Ops	3.5	May-03
Rogue Ops	7.5	Nov-03
Roller Coaster Tycoon	7	Jun-03
Roller Coaster Tycoon 2	8	May-03
Samurai Warriors	8.5	Oct-03
Sims: The Sims	8.75	Apr-03
Sims: The Sims 2		
Sims: The Sims 2: Pets		
Sims: The Sims 2: Open House		
Sims: The Sims 2: Vacation		
Sims: The Sims 2: FreeTime		
Sims: The Sims 2: Seasons		
Sims: The Sims 2: University		
Sims: The Sims 2: Castaway		
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Sims: The Sims 2: Castaway		
Sims: The Sims 2: Apartment Life		
Sims: The Sims 2: Bon Voyage		
Sims: The Sims 2: Nightlife		
Sims: The Sims 2: Glamour Life		





# SECRET ACCESS

## NHL 2004



Input the following names in the Create-A-Player screen to set the player's appearance and attributes to their real-life counterparts.

### The Band Alien Ant Farm

Terence Corso  
Mike Cosgrove  
Dryden Mitchell  
Tye Zamora

### The Band Gob

Theo Gobzinakis  
Gabe Metal  
Gob Stomper  
Tom Whacker  
Pat Wolfman  
Craig Would

### EA Development Team

Rory Armes  
Dean Richards  
Pin Tang  
Dave Warfield

Michael Moore  
Jacksonville, FL

## XIII



We unearthed a bunch of secret areas full of weapons, armor, and the like. Now you can experience the thrill of discovery without the tedium of exploration!



In the second area (by the hole in the wall), go through the first room and take a left in the room where the floor just crashed open. Go down and you will find a bulletproof vest in the trash.

### ROOFS

After the sniper scene, go down to the first roof area. On your left, you will find a small upper roof with an emergency staircase. Take it to the upper stage. Enter the room and open the locker to find a full medkit, a bulletproof vest, and a gun.

### EMERALD BASE ROOF

In the left area, search in the different hangars (some of them are open) for weapons and ammo.

### CABLE-CAR STATION

Enter the station. In the left room, you can see a trap behind the stairs. Go outside and downstairs to the cable-car area. Go down and around the pillar. Take the ladder and jump on the small landing to spring the trap. At the end of this corridor, you will discover another secret file. Take the ladder to go out by the first trap.

### PLAIN ROCK

When you follow the two guards at the beginning of the level, there's a group of jail cells on your right (with madmen inside). After you escape from the shower room, go back to these cells. At the end of the corridor, open the door to enter a small store room. You will find a medkit and a secret file inside.

### DOC JOHANSSON

After the long corridor, you enter the Incinerator room. Press the red button to open the incinerator. You will find a full medkit inside.

### CANYON

At the entrance of the ancient city there's a strange square in the wall. Destroy it to find two full medkits and some ammo.

### SUBMARINE BASE

In the last huge storeroom, use your grappling hook to access the upper platform to avoid enemies and find some weapons and ammo.

### DOCK 33

In the first storehouse, use your grappling hook to get onto the containers. Jump from one to another (sometimes using your grappling hook) to finally get to the Bazooka atop the last container on the left.

John Linnell  
Baltimore, MD

## DISNEY'S EXTREME SKATE ADVENTURE



Who wants to complete goals to unlock stuff when you can just enter passwords to accomplish the same thing? Put these in on the Cheat menu (under Options) to unlock cool video montages for the movies.

Lion King – savannah

Tarzan – nugget

Toy Story – marin

Jasper Mereel  
Charlotte, NC

## INDYCAR SERIES



Enter your name as either of the following to skip past all the bothersome racing and such normally required to get the goods.

All Trading Cards – aLLcARDS

Automatic Pole Position In The Indy 500 – pOLE

Marian Gaborik  
Czech Republic

## 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.

Send To:  
**Secret Access**  
Game Informer Magazine  
724 North First Street, 4th Floor  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
secretaccess@gameinformer.com

## NASCAR THUNDER 2004



Hey, do you need a disgustingly ugly Thunder Plate? Sure you do! Here's how to get the goofiest of them all. Clawing your eyes out afterwards is optional, and not necessary to enable the code.

**Cameos Thunder Plate** – Enter the driver's name on the Create-A-Car screen as Seymore Cameos (case sensitive) to get the Cameos Thunder Plate.

"Robot The Robot"  
via email

## CODE OF THE MONTH

### TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004



Enter these case-sensitive passwords in the (gasp!) password menu to make all of this crazy business available. Provided you don't type them wrong, Tiger will say, "Oh yeah!"

**Ace Andrews** – ACEINTHEHOLE  
**Cedric The Entertainer** – CEDDYBEAR  
**Dominic "The Don" Donatello** – DISCOCKING  
**Downtown Brown** – DTBROWN  
**Edwin "Pops" Masterson** – EDDIE  
**Erica Ice** – ICYONE  
**Every Course** – ALLTHETRACKS  
**Every Golfer** – CANYOUPICKONE  
**Every Golfer And Course** – THEKITCHENSINK

**Hamish "Mulligan" McGregor** – DWILBY  
**Moa "Big Mo" Ta'a Vatu** – ERUPTION  
**Solita Lopez** – SHORTGAME  
**Sunday Tiger** – 4REDSHIRTS  
**Takeharu "Tsunami" Moto** – EMERALDCHAMP  
**Target World Challenge** – SHERWOODTARGET  
**Val Summers** – BEVERLYHILLS  
**"Yosh" Tanigawa** – THENEWLEFTY

Hershell Gordon Lewis  
 Red Water Gulch, IL

## TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Not only can you unlock stuff by beating the game, you can get festive with some special headgear for the Turtles!

**Challenge Mode** – Clear Story Mode with all four turtles.  
**Holiday Headgear** – Make your system date either December 24 or 25 to give your Turtle of choice some Santa gear.  
**Pumpkin On Your Head** – Make your system date October 31 for a pumpkin head.

**Secret of Gembu** – Clear the third Dojo stage with all four turtles to unlock this.

### EXTRA CHARACTERS FOR VS. MODE

Doing the following will allow you to use these characters in Vs. Mode:

**Casey Jones** – Beat Stage 1 with Raphael  
**Evil Turtlebot** – Beat Stage 3 with any turtle  
**Hun** – Beat Stage 6 with Michaelangelo  
**Oroku Saki** – Beat Saki with any turtle  
**Shredder** – Beat Shredder with any turtle  
**Splinter** – Beat Dojo Stage 3 with Leonardo  
**Yoshi Hamato** – Beat Challenge Mode with any turtle

Nancy Kerrigan  
 Phoenix, AZ

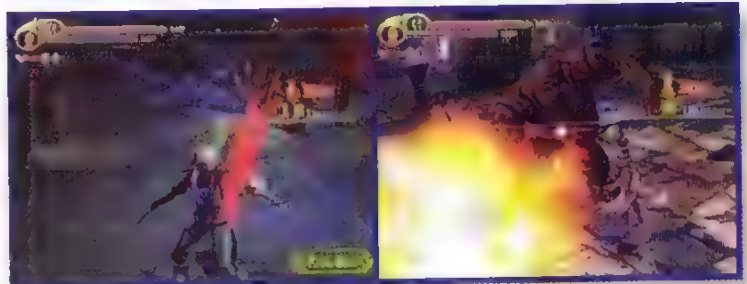
## BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU

Press these buttons in order while holding down all four triggers on the title screen.

**All Bonuses** – Down, Up, Down, Up, Left, Right, Left, Right  
**All Upgrades** – Up (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Down (x2)  
**Dark Knight Difficulty** – Down, Left, Right, Up (x2), Right, Left, Down  
**Infinite Health** – Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Left, Down, Right  
**Unlimited Combo Meter** – Left, Right, Up, Down, Right, Left, Down, Up

Jeff Planter  
 Atlanta, GA

## CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE



Much like in the last few Castlevania games, beating the game and entering a different name allows you to access new modes and characters. Here's the dilly.

**Boss Rush Mode** – Beat the game and save. Boss Rush Mode, a timed run against every boss in order, will be available for that character from the stage select room.

**Crazy Mode** – Beat the game with Leon and save. Start a new game with the name @CRAZY. This game will be in Crazy Mode, which is much harder.

**Play As Joachim** – Beat the game with Leon and save. Start a new game with the name @JOACHIM. You will play that game as Joachim, who can't use weapons, armor, or recovery items.

**Pumpkin Game** – Beat the game with Joachim and save. Start a new game with the name @PUMPKIN. You will start with all skills, the Vampire Killer, and increased stats. You can't, however, use any subweapons other than the one you start with.

Pauly Shore  
 Bismarck, ND

## FREEDOM FIGHTERS

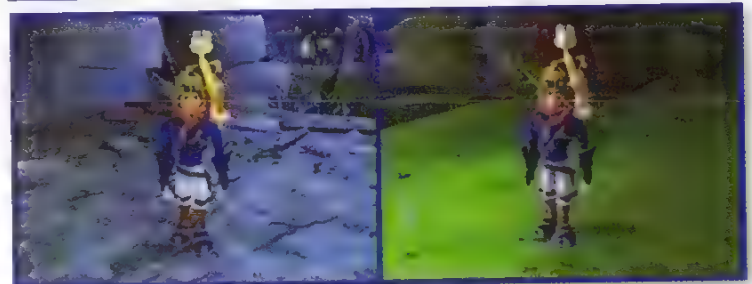
Enter these button sequences during gameplay to enable the cheats. A console message will notify you if you do it correctly.

**Change Spawn Point** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, X$ , Up  
**Fast Forward** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \circ$ , Down  
**Heavy Machine Gun** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \Delta$ , Down  
**Infinite Ammo** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, X$ , Right  
**Invisibility** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \circ$ , Left  
**Max Charisma** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, X$ , Down

**Nail Gun** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, X$ , Left  
**Ragdolls** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \square$ , Up  
**Rocket Launcher** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \Delta$ , Left  
**Shotgun** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \circ$ , Up  
**Slo-Mo** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \circ$ , Right  
**SMG** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \Delta$ , Up  
**Sniper Rifle** –  $\Delta, X, \square, \circ, \Delta$ , Right

Bobby Kielty  
 Toronto, Canada

## JAK II



Collect Precursor Orbs to unlock these options in the Secrets menu.

**Big Head Mode** – 30 Orbs  
**Hero Mode** – 200 Orbs  
**Invulnerability** – 175 Orbs  
**Level Select** – 145 Orbs  
**Mirror World** – 15 Orbs  
**Peace Maker Gun Course** – 105 Orbs  
**Reverse Races** – 135 Orbs  
**Scrap Book 1** – 55 Orbs  
**Scene Player Act 1** – 65 Orbs

**Scene Player Act 2** – 95 Orbs  
**Scene Player Act 3** – 125 Orbs  
**Scrap Book 2** – 85 Orbs  
**Scrap Book 3** – 115 Orbs  
**Small Head Mode** – 45 Orbs  
**Toggle Jak's Goatee** – 5 Orbs  
**Unlimited Ammo** – 155 Orbs  
**Unlimited Dark Jak** – 165 Orbs  
**Vulcan Fury Course** – 75 Orbs

Dash Rendar  
 The Island of Misfit Toys

## CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE



Enter any of these codes during gameplay. You will hear an appropriate sound effect if the code is entered correctly.

**All Planes** – Y, X, B, Y, Black  
**Bling! Bling! (\$5000)** – A, Y, A, Y, Black  
**Extra Damage** – B, X, A, B, Black

**Invincibility** – Y, A, X, B, Black  
**Ultra Hard Difficulty** – X, B, A, X, Black  
**Upgrade Tokens** – X, B, X, B, Black

Bill Roper  
 Kalamazoo, MI

## NBA JAM

Everybody knows the good old Midway loading screen cheat menu. These are a few of the button sequences for NBA Jam. The name of the cheat will come up on the screen if you don't screw up.

**Challenge Mode** – X, A, B, Up  
**Child's Play** – X, A, B, Left

**Tournament Mode** – X, A, B, Down

Anthony Soprano  
 Newark, NJ

## DUNGEONS & DRAGONS HEROES



Hold the L trigger, then press the Y and A buttons at the same time to access the cheat menu. Input these codes to get pumped up. Note that you can keep hitting "Accept" to get more and more goodies.

### ATTRIBUTES, EXPERIENCE, AND GOLD

**10 Constitution Points** – N STINE  
**10 Dexterity Points** – ZXEO53  
**10,000 Experience Points** – DSP633  
**500,000 Gold** – KNE637

### POTIONS, WANDS, AND OTHER ITEMS (TEN EACH)

**Antivenom Potions** – SPINRAD  
**Berserk Brew** – THOMAS  
**Flery Oil** – EHOFF  
**Fire Bombs** – WEBER  
**Fire Flasks** – BROPHY  
**Flash Freeze** – ESKO  
**Globe Potions** – WRIGHT  
**Healing Potions (Large)** – THOMPSON  
**Holy Water** – CRAWLEY  
**Insect Plague** – DERISO  
**Rods of Destruction** – AUSTIN  
**Rods of Miracles** – JARMAN

**Rods of Missiles** – MILLER  
**Thrown Axes of Ruin** – ROMANO  
**Thrown Daggers** – MOREL  
**Thrown Daggers of Stunning** – BELL  
**Thrown Halcyon Hammers** – PRASAD  
**Thrown Viper Axes** – FRAZIER  
**Thunderstones** – ELSON  
**Tomes of Lessons** – PAQUIN  
**Tomes of the Apprentice** – BILGER  
**Tomes of the Master** – SPANBURG  
**Tomes of the Teacher** – MEFFORD  
**Will Potions (Medium)** – LU  
**Will Potions (Large)** – GEE

### MISCELLANEOUS

**Credits** – CREDITS  
**Disable Cheats** – UNBUFF  
**Invincibility** – PELOR  
**Nightmare Difficulty** – MPS LABS  
**Unlimited MW** – OBADHAI

Drizzt Do'Urdan  
 Calcutta, India

## FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Enter these button sequences during gameplay to enable the cheats. A console message will notify you if you do it correctly.

**Change Spawn Point** – Y, A, X, B, A, Up  
**Fast Forward** – Y, A, X, B, B, Down  
**Heavy Machine Gun** – Y, A, X, B, Y, Down  
**Infinite Ammo** – Y, A, X, B, A, Right  
**Invisibility** – Y, A, X, B, B, Left  
**Max Charisma** – Y, A, X, B, A, Down  
**Nail Gun** – Y, A, X, B, A, Left

**Ragdolls** – Y, A, X, B, X, Up  
**Rocket Launcher** – Y, A, X, B, Y, Left  
**Shotgun** – Y, A, X, B, B, Up  
**Sio-Mo** – Y, A, X, B, B, Right  
**SMG** – Y, A, X, B, Y, Up  
**Sniper Rifle** – Y, A, X, B, Y, Right

Quincy Wilson  
 Houston, TX

## PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2



If you want to take a break from racing for Kudos, head to your garage for this not-so-relaxing Robotron: 2084-like minigame. If you are hooked up to Xbox Live, Geometry Wars keeps track of the high scores worldwide.

**Geometry Wars Arcade Game** – Go to your garage and switch to Walk mode. Proceed to the back wall where you see the arcade cabinet. When you're in front of it, push A to begin. The game's directions will appear when you begin.

Ben Rouner  
 Missoula, MT

## ANIMAL CROSSING

Go talk to Tom Nook and tell him you've got a code. Then (guess what!) enter one of the codes for the item you choose.

### ? Block

vi9GES@sTRJhAA  
 sh09cb#9UaKHL4

### Aloe

MupersmashbdoS  
 SupersmashbroS

### Amazing Painting

ebucddbklRgnLg  
 BiMBdbichCmqi3

### Arwing

I7r45678912345  
 E2345678912345

### Balloon Fight

CbDahLBdaDh98d  
 9ub8ExzZKwu7Zl

### Baseball

1n5%N%8JUjE5fj  
 lEcGr4%ync5eUp

### Basic Painting

ebucddbklRgnLg  
 BiMBdbichCmqi3

### Bench

cU3jlm@hdI6Aip  
 zJfAEajAcBZXim

### Block Flooring

666abcdn66efgH  
 DyGabcd6B6efgH

### Brick Block

ArVriaAnUrarah  
 Spurling1re5&2

### Coin

Ai9GES@sTRJsYz  
 sh09cb39UaKHL4

### Dainty Painting

ekri%ma9iom5ro  
 Finomariomaro

### Kiddle Bed

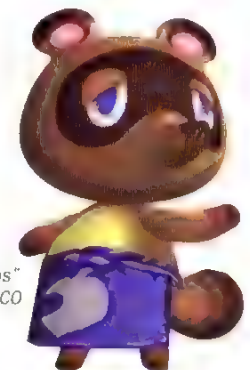
SupermanobroS  
 AnimAICaOssing

### Kiddle Bureau

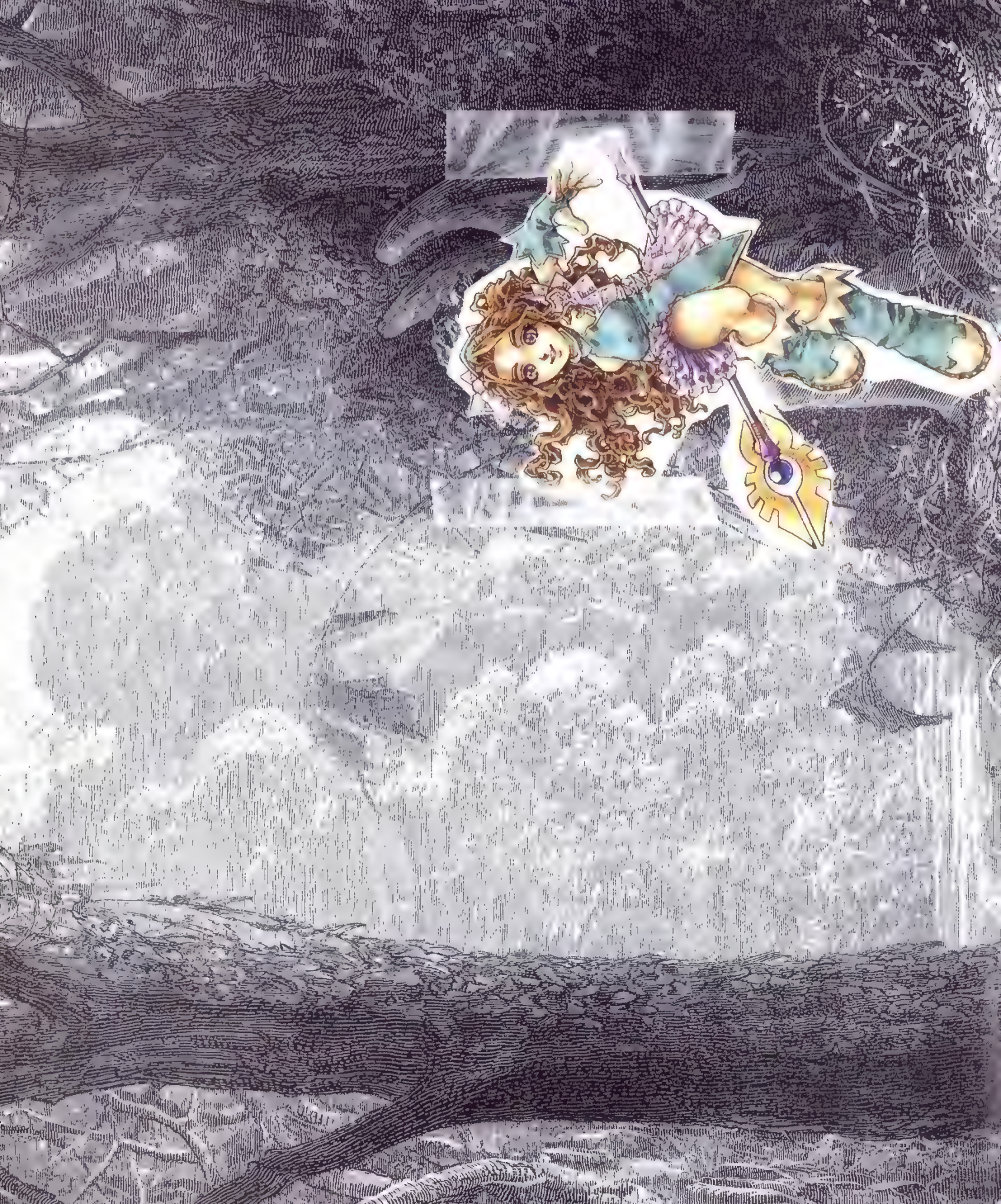
MeeCAKafmeatdY  
 LsatloafmeatdY

### Kiddle Chair

9#S8UItoK6850  
 h%LOskwcRCmqi3

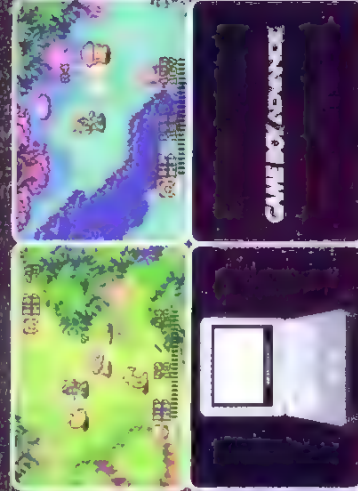
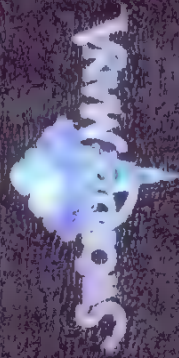


"Lord de Seis"  
 Denver, CO



who are you?

A gladiator hungry for revenge. A young girl haunted by the ghosts of her past. Together, the two must unite and race to protect the Mana Tree from those who would turn its awesome powers to dark ends. Choose your hero, uncover the secret of the Mana Tree and save the ancient wellspring of all life in the epic Sword of Mana.



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## F-ZERO GX



We found another Special Custom Machine that you can enable by putting the specified parts together on the Custom Machine screen.

**Fantasia** – Liberty Manta (D), Scud Viper (C), Triple-Z (A), 1360 kg

Uma Thurman  
Okinawa, Japan

## FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Enter these button sequences during gameplay to enable the cheats. A console message will notify you if you do it correctly.

**Change Spawn Point** – Y, A, B, X, A, Right  
**Fast Forward** – Y, A, B, X, X, Down  
**Heavy Machine Gun** – Y, A, B, X, Y, Down  
**Infinite Ammo** – Y, A, B, X, A, Right  
**Invisiblity** – Y, A, B, X, X, Left  
**Max Charisma** – Y, A, B, X, A, Down  
**Nail Gun** – Y, A, B, X, A, Left

**Ragdolls** – Y, A, B, X, B, Right  
**Rocket Launcher** – Y, A, B, X, Y, Left  
**Shotgun** – Y, A, B, X, X, Right  
**Slo-Mo** – Y, A, B, X, X, Right  
**SMG** – Y, A, B, X, Y, Right  
**Sniper Rifle** – Y, A, B, X, Y, Right

Johnny Sax  
New York, NY

## MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR

Hold down Z when you press the Start button at the title screen. This allows you to select the S Tournaments menu. In there, you'll find the Hole In One Contest and Password Tournaments. We've decided to let you in on the passwords.

**PASSWORD TOURNAMENTS**

- Bowser Badlands Tour** – 9L3L9KHR
- Bowser Jr.'s Jumbo Tourney** – 2GPL67PN
- Camp Hyrule Tournament** – OEKW5G7U
- Hollywood Video Tour** – BJGQBULZ
- Peach's Castle Grounds Course** – ELBUT3PX
- Super Mario Open** – GGAA241
- Target Tour Tournament** – CEUPXJ1

**Gratuitous Violence Towards Pikmin** – If your ball lands in the yellow flowers on the Peach Invitational, you can see and hear small Pikmin flying out.

"GI Droid"  
(location unknown – last seen hacking his Xbox)

## SONIC ADVANCE

Remember how cool it was, back in the day on the Genesis, to have Tails following you around? Now you can do it on the GBA, too.

**Have Tails Follow You Around** – At the character select screen, do the following in order: Highlight Sonic and press Up. Highlight Tails and press Down. Highlight Knuckles and press the L button. Highlight Amy and press the R button. Select Sonic. You will hear a confirmation tone if you did this properly.

George Posada  
San Mateo, CA

## MAX PAYNE 2

To use these cheats, you first have to enable the developer console. Run the game with the -developer switch to start Max Payne 2 (i.e. Create a shortcut: "C:\Program Files\Rockstar Games\Max Payne 2\MaxPayne2.exe" -developer). With that done, press the tilde [~] key to enter the console during gameplay. Enter these cheats there.

**All Weapons** – getallweapons  
**Beretta & 1000 ammo** – getberetta  
**Big Jump** – jump10  
**Bigger Jump** – jump20  
**Biggest Jump** – jump30  
**Colt Commando & 1000 Ammo** – getcoltcommando  
**Desert Eagle & 1000 Ammo** – getdeserteagle  
**Disable God Mode** – mortal  
**Display Framerate** – showfps  
**Dragunov & 1000 Ammo** – getdragunov  
**God Mode** – god  
**God Mode, All Weapons, Infinite Ammo** – coder  
**Health** – gethealth  
**Ingram & 1000 Ammo** – getingram  
**Kalashnikov & 1000 Ammo** – getkalashnikov  
**Molotovs** – getmolotov  
**MP5 & 1000 Ammo** – getmp5  
**Painkillers** – getpainkillers  
**Pump-Action Shotgun & 1000 Ammo** – getpumpshotgun  
**Sawed-Off Shotgun** – getsawedshotgun  
**Sniper Rifle & 1000 Ammo** – getsniper  
**Striker & 1000 Ammo** – getstriker

Alex Trevalyan  
Baton Rouge, LA

## AGE OF MYTHOLOGY: THE TITANS

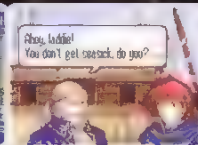
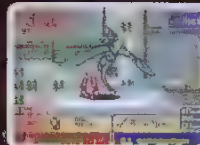
Press Enter during gameplay to bring up the message window. Type in the cheat and press Enter again to enable it.

**1000 Food** – JUNK FOOD NIGHT  
**1000 Gold** – ATM OF EREBUS  
**1000 Wood** – TROJAN HORSE FOR SALE  
**Campaign Heroes** – ISIS HEAR MY PLEA  
**Chicken-Meteor God Power** – BAWK BAWK BOOM  
**Elemental God Powers** – WRATH OF THE GODS  
**Flying Hippo** – WUV WOO  
**Fork Boy** – TINES OF POWER  
**Free Titan** – TITANOMACHY  
**Get Random God Powers** – PANDORAS BOX  
**Goats A-Plenty God Power** – GOATUNHEIM  
**Hide Map** – UNCERTAINTY AND DOUBT  
**Laser Bear** – O CANADA  
**Max Favor** – MOUNT OLYMPUS  
**Monkeys Everywhere** – I WANT TEH MONKEYS!!!!1  
**Next Scenario** – CHANNEL SURFING  
**Nighttime** – IN DARKEST NIGHT  
**Red Water** – RED TIDE  
**Reveal Map** – LAY OF THE LAND  
**Show Animals** – SET ASCENDANT  
**Slower Units** – CONSIDER THE INTERNET  
**Speed Build** – L33T SUPA H4XOR  
**Use God Power Again** – DIVINE INTERVENTION  
**Walking Berry Bushes God Power** – FEAR THE FORAGE  
**Win Game** – THRILL OF VICTORY

Brendan Frasier  
Lincoln, NE

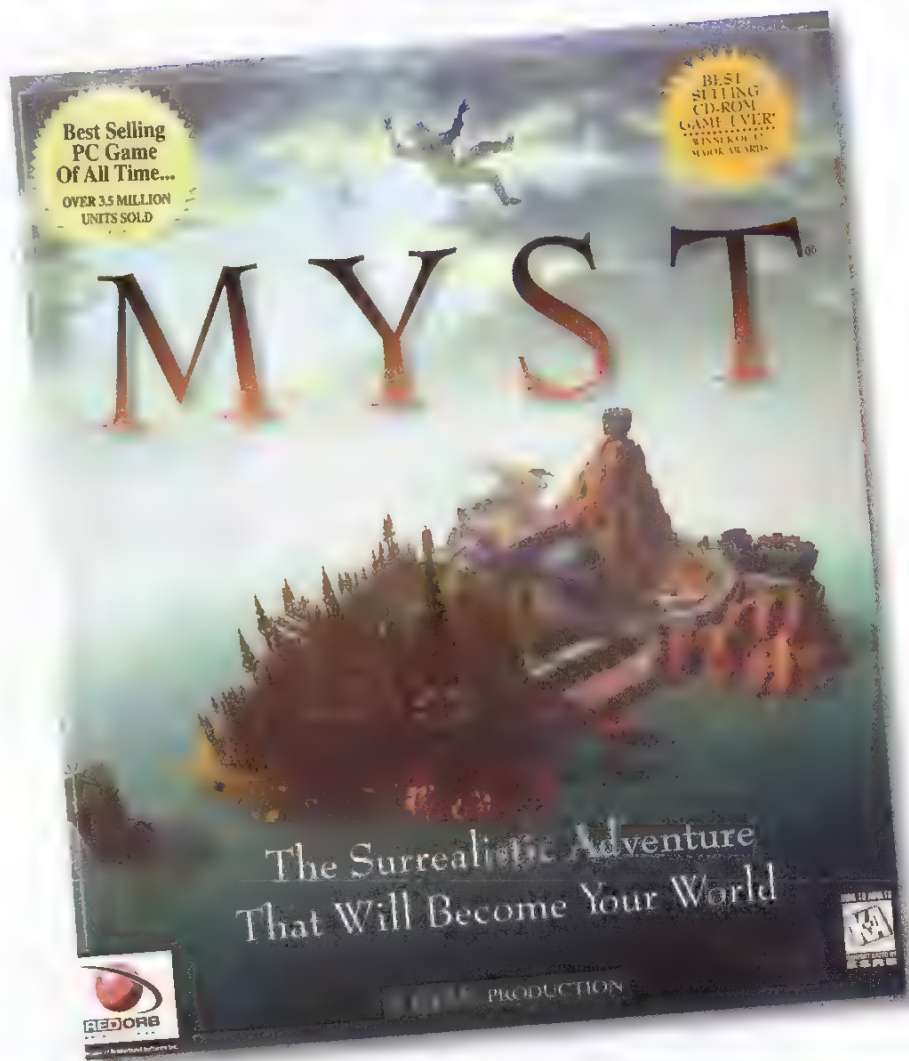
who are you?

Strengthen your Mages, Berserkers and Knights in battle across Eliebe. Build your army. Plan your strategy. But trust no one in Fire Emblem. Only for Game Boy Advance.



UNLIMITED EXAMPLES

## MAKING A PLACE WITH A PURPOSE



**M**entioning the *Myst* franchise always elicits a strong response. Fast-paced action fans recoil in horror, declaring it a boring scourge on the face of gaming. Adventure fans swoon at the memories they hold of the first time they played the point-and-click classic. Admirer or not, few can make any assertion that the game isn't important. It's arguably the first title to require sound for puzzle solving, it features an involved storyline that has spawned books and a possible Sci-Fi channel mini-series, and showcases graphics realistic enough (for the era) that the game's legions of fans willingly suspended disbelief for the time they spent in its universe.

While the making of *Myst*'s sequels involved teams of experienced artists and technicians; the story of the original entry in the series is one of "business meetings" in a garage between brothers and friends, driving discs to fellow employees' homes to share new bits of the game, and the struggle of young programmers to make a real place with a real purpose.

Rand Miller, CEO of Cyan Worlds and co-creator of the *Myst* series, started fiddling with computers in junior high school. He would sneak into the computer lab of the local university and steal passwords from trash bins to get computer access and play games as often as possible. His senior year in high school, Miller won second place in a national student computer fair with a game called *Swarms*. Based on the book *The Swarm*, you had to defend America from a cloud of killer bees. "It printed out a little map, and this was all incredibly archaic, but it was fun," recalls Miller.

Temporarily shelving the idea of making his hobby into a full-time vocation, Miller got a job as a programmer at a bank in Texas. It was during this time, in the late '80s, that the Macintosh and its Hypercard software were released. Seeing a lack of children's games in the market, Rand (who had kids of his own) suggested to his brother Robyn that they make an interactive storybook for kids that could run on Macintosh. "He started working on the artwork for that and never got off the first page," says Miller.

That game was called *The Manhole*, and after shopping it around at Macintosh trade shows, the brothers' game was picked up and published in 1988. Their publisher was so pleased with its reception that it requested another children's game. *Cosmic Osmo*, a cartoony trip through the universe, was released in 1989. It was during this time that

### GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME | BY KIM RENEE

Every month one of *Game Informer's* readers picks his or her personal choice for *Greatest Game Of All Time*.



#### SKIES OF ARCADIA

■ **FORMAT** DREAMCAST  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA

*Skies of Arcadia* is brilliant because not only can you battle on land and inside dungeons, but also in the skies, which makes the game even more interesting. What's more, the combat takes place inside different types of ships that each have their own strengths and weaknesses and get you through different parts of the world. So what kind of RPG is about flying ships and fighting in the sky? Well, the main characters in *Skies of Arcadia* are Blue Rogues air pirates who are basically

the "Robin Hood" of the skies. Their purpose is to sail around the world seeking treasures to help stop destruction of the world. The main character Vyse and his childhood friend Aika both cruise around seeking justice for the people, until they stumble across a girl from a place they've never heard of or seen.

As you play along on the first disc of this game, right away you'll love, hate, or love to hate each character. Sega developer Overworks did a fine job at making each



the brothers decided that they could make games full-time.

Despite their success with children's software, Rand and Robyn always felt that they wanted to do something for an adult audience – something that would have the same inherent quality, the same sense of immersion in a different world, and (most importantly) a purpose. While working on Cosmic Osmo, the team had a few other adult-oriented proposals on the table, but it wasn't until a Japanese company approached them and requested a grown-up version of Osmo for CD-based consoles that they even started to think about Myst. Technical limitations required that the game be broken up into definitive sections, which they started to refer to as ages, and were laid out as small islands. The natural next question was, "Who made the things on the island, and why?"

Myst presented a more in-depth story than gamers were used to. The tale played out family tragedies, corruption, deceit, and punishment; and that's saying nothing of the fictional D'ni history. Since then, the saga begun in Myst has spawned three novels, a yearly gathering of fans and believers, art books, countless websites translating D'ni text and speech, and holidays celebrated by fans around the world. It's like Star Wars in that what is told to people in the mass-marketed, commercial releases is less than a tenth of the history and events that have been created in their universe.

Despite the complexity of the tale they were telling, Miller says that the story and the game grew from each other. "It's a process...that's hard to describe. It iterates itself. You draw a little and a little bit of story comes out of it. Then, the story helps you evolve the place a little more and the more you draw, it helps the story. It feeds on itself."

The mechanism used to travel between ages, the books written by D'ni people, was a decision that needed to be made early on. A previous, aborted Cyan project had characters jumping through pictures in a gallery to access levels (think Super Mario 64), and early plans for Myst involved video screens of some sort. After making the decision to use books, the entire system came into place. The player would move between areas through linking books that showed a picture of their destination. The destructibility of books instigated the final plot point – destroying a book severs the link to its age,

character's facial expressions vibrant, and an intriguing storyline will make you want more. Even though the story may not be over the top, it has its great moments, like how each party that joins Vyse and his crew has a unique personality along with their own special moves. During their adventures, the different places they travel to seem to parallel various parts of the real world.

The elements of an RPG in Skies of Arcadia are definitely there: Learning magic, leveling up, upgrading weap-

making the entire world inaccessible.

While deciding on these initial rules for the game's structure and premise, Robyn and Rand hired a handful of people to help with the game. Chris Brandkamp, who functions as Cyan's internal critic and environmental sound designer, is still with the company and now handles its business affairs. Chuck Carter helped Robyn with the art direction. Bonnie McDowall and Ryan Miller (the third Miller brother) were production assistants. Finally, Richard Watson was hired as a programmer and is still with Cyan as the resident D'ni historian.



**The original Myst team (from left to right): Rich Watson, Chris Brandkamp, Bonnie McDowell, Robyn Miller, Rand Miller, Chuck Carter, and Ryan Miller**

Working from their homes, the "company meetings" would take place in Chris Brandkamp's garage. To show off new chunks of the game, a carpool system that Brandkamp liked to refer to as "car-net" spontaneously developed where one member would physically take disks to another's house. The new code would travel by car from house to house until everyone had seen it.

Working on a few Macintosh Quadras and using Strata rendering software, along with the now-defunct Apple Hypercard application, the team got as close to their goals as possible. "It was an interesting phenomenon of the people who played Myst, how they filled in the blanks. We get people commenting all of the time about how they loved going to Myst island and the clouds were moving and the water was rippling. You don't want to be rude, but there were no clouds and the water didn't ripple," observes Miller. Although the original version of Myst didn't feature much for animation, it was the

ons and garments, and some great orchestrated scores are all included. You'll laugh at some parts, you may even cry, but you'll definitely enjoy this game. I thought it was cool how you can recruit a slew of crewmembers on your ship and, with them, you can use a Special Attack that will be very effective on those tougher bosses.

# Game & Design Development

## DEGREE PROGRAM



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story, art style, puzzle design, and sound effects that made the game so captivating to such a large demographic.

The surprising moral dilemma presented at the end of the game appealed to a wider audience than the brothers had expected. "Our idea for Myst was to build a place that felt like you were there." Originally envisioned as something that people their own age (20s and 30s) would understand and appreciate, the entire team was shocked when people much older and younger than the target audience played the game.

In hindsight, there have been many theories as to why Myst had such a large appeal. Some say that people were just sick of dying in games, others enjoyed that the entire point of the title was exploring. What the brothers always wanted to do was create "something that was more than just a game – we would like to imbue it with more of a message." They wanted to appeal to people like themselves, people who walk out of certain movies and

are proud that they noticed something that wasn't shoved down viewer's throats. "I think that subtlety in gaming is uncommon. I think that gamers gloss over [the story] because they're so used to being

fed drivel," says Miller. In that spirit, a goal for Myst was always to deliver plot and puzzle information in the same speech or journal entry.

After two years of development and getting as close as possible to the title's lofty ambitions, the game would be released in 1993 and go on to, along with its sequel Riven, sell over 12 million copies. Until Will Wright's juggernaut The Sims showed up, Myst was the best-selling franchise in PC gaming history and continues its story through the upcoming Uru: Ages Beyond Myst, which we review on page 182.



These scenes and concept art are from Riven, Myst's sequel



Chris Brandkamp's garage (aka Cyan headquarters)



3:00 PM  
DEC 7, 1982

## THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

At 3:04pm Eastern Standard Time on December 7, 1982, Atari announced that sales of its VCS system did not meet predicted levels. Its parent company, Warner Communications, then saw its stock plummet 32% in one day. This initial fallout started the great console crash of 1983 that closed hundreds of development houses and nearly decimated the video game industry in the United States.

NES

# MC KIDS



**B**eware, Happy Mealers. Ronald McDonald's magic bag is missing. Apparently, that nasty Hamburglar took it. Maybe that's natural progression: He steals Ronald's "bag," then gets the munchies and needs some burgers. It's up to pals Mick and Mack to help out the big clown. Despite being a blatant McDonald's advertisement, MC Kids is a high-quality platformer. The level designs are large and full of secrets. Jumping on enemy heads is a no-no, so your only offensive maneuver is to pick up blocks scattered around the stages and toss them. Surprisingly, the difficulty is much higher than a Mario or Kirby title – some jumps and puzzles are downright tricky. Who would've thought it'd be so hard to get to a conversation with that walking gumdrop, Grimace? How embarrassing – yet still fulfilling. Mick and Mack also grew up a bit to star in the Genesis title, Global Gladiators. For gamers looking for refreshing platform thrills on the NES, MC Kids is all that and an order of fries.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1992

SNES

# LEMMINGS

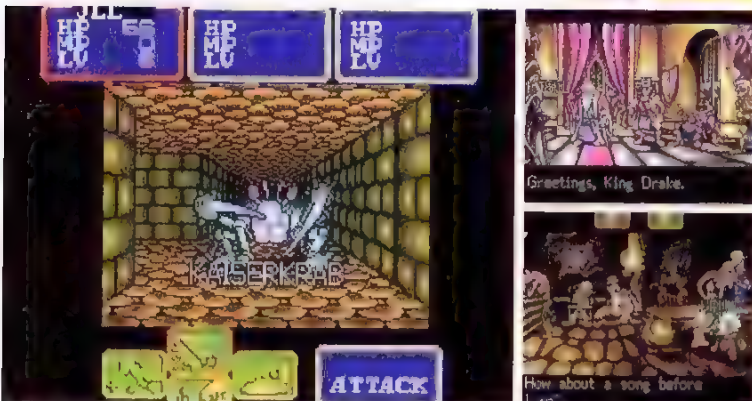


**E**very console at the time received its own version of The Lemmings, but it was still quite the sleeper. The idea is simple but clever: Order a bunch of mindless little creatures around in order to get enough of them to the goal so you can move on to the next level. This is accomplished through assigning Lemmings with specific abilities. These include Blockers, who keep others from going a certain way; Diggers, who use pickaxes to burrow diagonally into most surfaces; and Climbers, who can scale vertical walls with ease. The game can be paused at any time to contemplate your strategy without pressure. On the opposite side of the spectrum, however, there isn't a way to speed up the action once you have everything laid out perfectly. Still, Lemmings is an original, classic puzzle game worth picking up no matter which platform it's on. The hours will melt away like ice cubes on a furnace as you play all-powerful deity to the green-haired, helpless critters.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE ■ **PUBLISHER** SUNSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** PSYGNOSIS ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

GENESIS

# SHINING IN THE DARKNESS

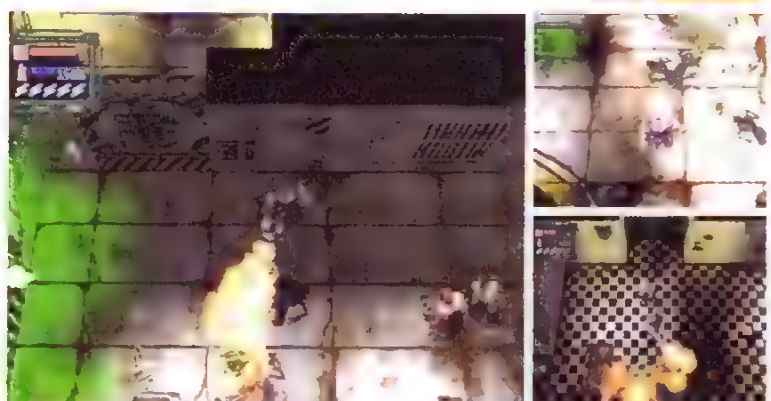


**L**ook up "console dungeon crawler" in a (rhetorical) dictionary, and you'd likely find a picture of this game. You see, there was a time when blindly working your way through a labyrinth, fighting enemies that pop up every few steps was the basis for an RPG. Shining gives you three sections on a map: the king's castle, the town, and the dungeon. With the princess gone, you go to the castle to get and relay info. The town is where you buy equipment, save, and sleep. The dungeon, however, is where you spend the vast majority of your time. It's a first-person corridor setting, where you roam around until a monster decides to show itself. The game then changes to a Phantasy Star-like view, which consists of you facing your foes and swinging at each other until one side is decimated. Sound fun? Not really. The formula, despite some colorful creatures and decent music, gets old very quickly – especially with all the backtracking required to level-up enough to take on the bosses. Be glad those days are behind us.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** CLIMAX ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

PSONE

# LOADED



**T**rying new things is a given when the next generation of hardware comes out. After all, you've got all these new, shiny techniques that you've never been able to use before. Of course, not all of that advancement is used for good. Take Loaded – a top-down bloodfest that launched with the PlayStation console. Picture the early Grand Theft Auto games without missions or cars, and you've got a good idea of how lame this game is. Mowing down repetitive, stupid sprites may have been sweet back in '96 – especially in two-player – but we've come to expect a lot more from our action games in this day and age. The puzzles consist of killing a guy with the right colored keycard to move on. Loaded lacks direction and motivation. This is a perfect example of a title not standing up to the test of time. The sequel came out in short succession, but by then we had already tired of this gratuitous, ugly series. This game is a load, alright...of crap.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INTERPLAY ■ **DEVELOPER** GREMLIN INTERACTIVE ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1996

## IT'S HAPPY BUNNY MINTS

- > **Manufacturer:** Jim Benton/Boston America Corp
- > **Website:** [jimbenton.com](http://jimbenton.com)
- > **List Price:** \$5.50

Bunnies are cute, especially when they're evil. Happy Bunny is apparently the most evil little rabbit there is, and along with T-shirts, air fresheners, and other assorted doodads,

he's got his own line of refreshing peppermint treats! Each of the three unique tins features a drawing of the adorable little bugger, as well as a charming quote like, "Please enjoy a mint. Since your breath smells like butt," or "Would you like to suck on a mint? Since you already suck all the time." There's nothing in the world that we like better than a mean rabbit - except possibly a sarcastic octopus.



## ARMY OF DARKNESS 10TH ANNIVERSARY ASH STATUE

- > **Manufacturer:** Diamond Select Toys
- > **Website:** [diamondselecttoys.com](http://diamondselecttoys.com)
- > **List Price:** \$199.99

Army of Darkness may just be our favorite movie ever, thanks in no small part to its "hero" Ash. Few other cinematic characters are as arrogant, cowardly, or thick-headed; but few are as beloved either. We believe it's because he's everything we want to be. Think about it: He's a loud stupid jerk, but he still gets to fight zombies and make out with hot girls. Plus, he has a chainsaw hand! How cool is that? If we had chainsaw hands, we'd use them to shave, slice pizza, turn our cars into convertibles.... On second thought, maybe it's best that we don't have chainsaw hands. So, we'll have to settle for this bitchin' Ash statue. Featuring Ash, Sheila, skeletons, mini-Ashes, and of course the infamous chainsaw, this statue is like all the great parts of the movie condensed into one! Except for when he's riding the shopping cart at the end. That kills us. We're gonna go watch it right now!



## VIDEO GAME MUSIC MIXTAPE #8

- > **Manufacturer:** No Sides Records > **Website:** [nosides.com](http://nosides.com)
- > **List Price:** \$12.98

Ever notice how popular old video game music is these days? How many people do you know who have the theme song from an old Nintendo game as their cell phone ring tone?



No Sides records realized the allure of cheesy old-school bleeps and bloops, and released this various artists compilation. All but one artist on this CD recorded their song solely with old 8-bit video game equipment, ranging from the Atari 2600 to the Game Boy, and even the Speak & Spell. The tracks range from experimental noise to danceable electro-funk, and there's even a saucy number about robots thrown in for good measure. For fans of gaming and electronic music, these sounds of yesteryear are the essential listening of today.

## SOUL CALIBUR II UNIVERSAL ARCADE STICK

- > **Manufacturer:** Nuby Technology
- > **Website:** [nubytch.com](http://nubytch.com)
- > **List Price:** \$39.99

The debate over which version of Soul Calibur II is the best has divided fans, but this joystick is something they can all agree on. Designed specifically for the game, this joystick works with all three systems and features programmable buttons, rumble, and a spiffy-keen Soul Calibur decal! It is also great for other fighting games, especially on the GameCube - the tiny d-pad on Nintendo's controller has never been great for fighters. But since it features a separate plug for each system, we

wonder if you could theoretically use this one controller to play all three versions at once. Then you'd really know which of the three exclusive characters would come out on top!



## ADRENALIN STICK

- > **Manufacturer:** Saitek > **Website:** [saitek.com](http://saitek.com)
- > **List Price:** \$39.95

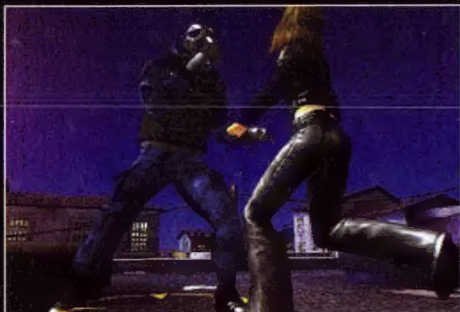
As the first flight stick for the Xbox, the Adrenalin Stick has a lot of cool things going for it. It features eight buttons and a rapid-fire trigger, an eight-way hat switch, vibration functions, and 3D rudder twist for a more realistic flight simulation experience. It can even be used right or left-handed. Our favorite thing about this joystick?

It was designed specifically for the new Microsoft flight sim Crimson Skies. This makes it the second Xbox controller made specifically for one game. If this trend continues, more games for Xbox will come packaged with their own peripherals. We vote for a cooking game with a bowl-and-spoon controller that lets you simulate mixing batter. Why would we want that, you ask? We just love baking.



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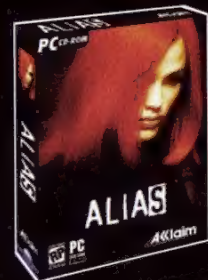
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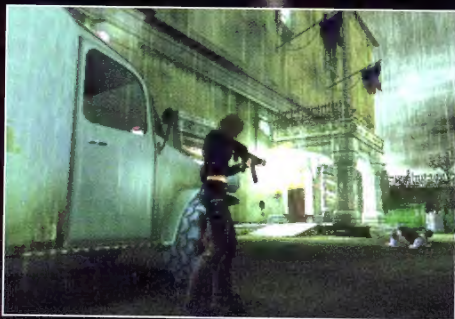
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# STEALTH BOMBSHELL



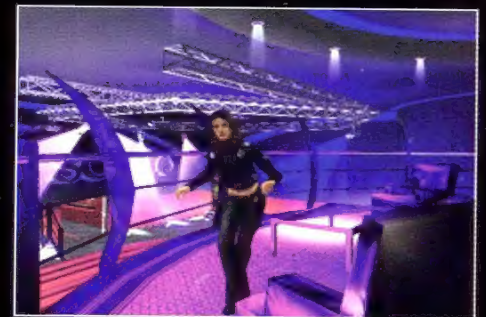
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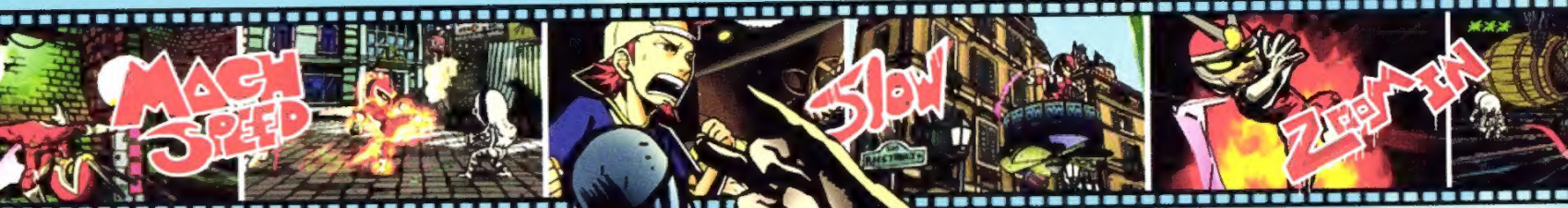
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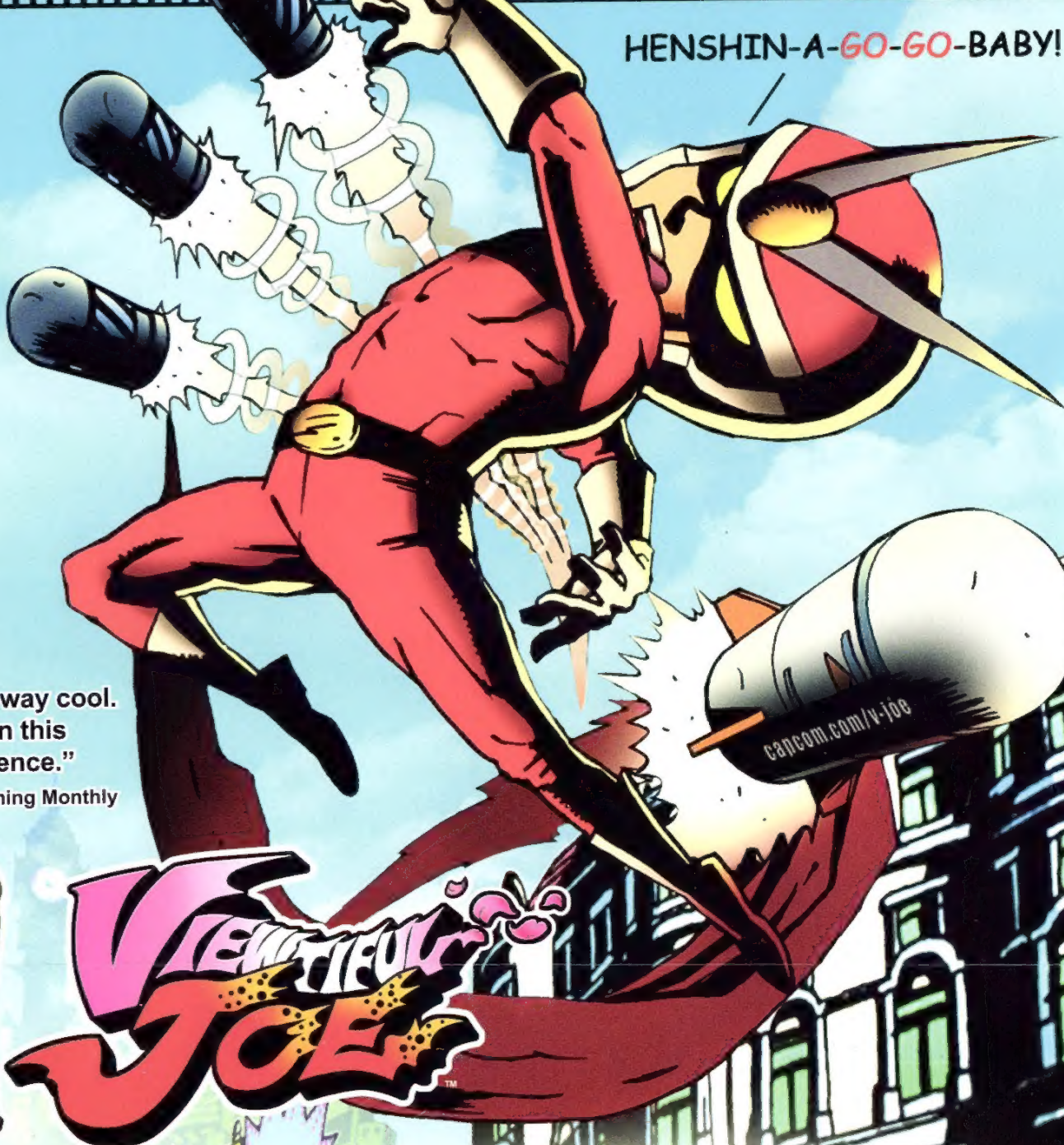
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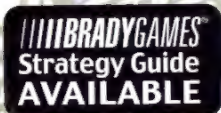
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