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8 Pages On
Molyneux's
Newest
Project



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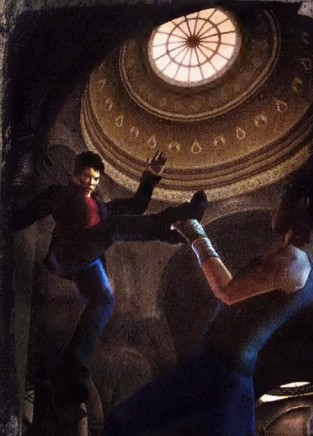
For Kit Yun, the
only way out of the
Hong Kong underworld
is to go back in.



Violence

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JET LI RISE TO HONOR 義氣



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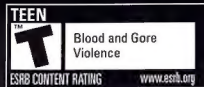
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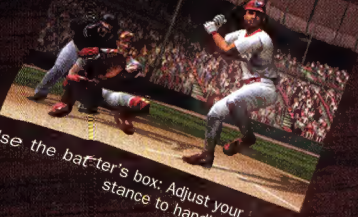


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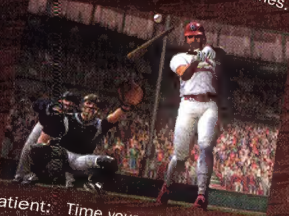
ATARI

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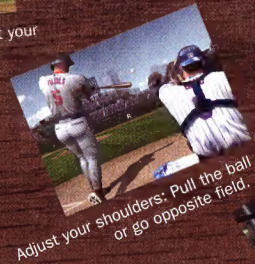
Use the batter's box: Adjust your stance to handle inside pitches.



Be patient: Time your swing to make contact with off-speed stuff.



React to the pitch: Adjust your swing level to go after the ball.



Adjust your shoulders: Pull the ball or go opposite field.



Make contact: Swing for power, drag bunt, or slap at it to stay alive.

WIND BLOWING OUT TO RIGHT.

SEEN TWO STRAIGHT CURVES.

THINK FASTBALL? NAH.

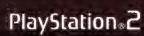
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COVER STORIES

28 RESIDENT EVIL 4

What could possibly be exciting about a new Resident Evil game? The same clunky controls, more Umbrella super-corporation, and teams of dim-witted and slow-moving zombies? Great. What? Wait! None of those things happen in Capcom's RE 4? Holy crap!

36 KILLER 7

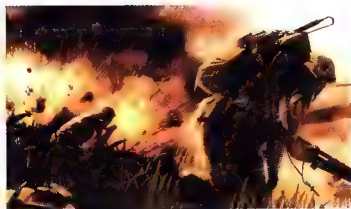
We know that it's stylish. We know that it's risky. What we don't know is how it's all going to play out. With seven assassins and an art style that video games have historically shied away from, will Killer 7's substance match its style? GI spent some time with Capcom to get the update on this elusive title.

FEATURES



44 THE MOVIES

Everyone understands movies, and everyone's a critic. We went for a little visit to see what's going on with Peter Molyneux's latest project – a title that puts players into the director/producer seat and throws in a bunch of complications like self-involved actors, public tastes, and set design.



54 SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67

Without trying to be a flashy, insensitive retelling of the Vietnam conflict, can Guerilla Games be honest and fun at the same time? The latest war games have focused on the more cut and dry battles of recent memory, but this chapter in our history is more blurred – does that make it a good choice?



60 WHO WILL BE THIS YEAR'S SULTAN OF SWAT?

Stepping up to the plate for 2004's baseball titles, we're doing the big rundown of what to expect from this year's boys of summer (the polygonal boys, that is).

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ESRB CONTENT RATING WWW.ESRB.GOV

KONAMI



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14 EDITOR'S FORUM

Hoping for witty industry insight? Sometimes we opt to use this space to announce new magazine features. Which is it this month?

16 GI SPY

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

18 DEAR GI

Our mailbag was plump with chaos this month. Granted, a lot of it was spam and reader-submitted masterpieces with those Freaky Flyers girls, but some entries were insightful, clever, and even thought provoking!

22 NEWS

When mainstream media covers something video game related, it's usually about how gaming makes people violent. But this month, it's about a big-time shocker at a big-time company. You don't want to be left in the dark, do you?

68 PREVIEWS

Look at that, it's already March. This means to gamers and industry followers that it's already

time to show off the new software that's going to be making waves in the coming year. It certainly does go fast, and these upcoming titles are going to keep us going for quite some time.

88 REVIEWS

We've got a big shakeup happening this month – and it's all right here in the Review section. Titles that show up on multiple platforms are getting the Real World treatment. These are the stories of three games, made to play on different consoles, to find out what happens when reviewers stop being nice, and start comparing editions. The Real World – Game Informer.

117 CHARTS

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

120 SECRET ACCESS

With video games evolving, so do the codes and cheat options. We shed some light on the finer points of alternate players, extra costumes, and silly modes.

124 CLASSIC GI

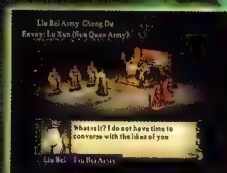
Part of a continuing series featuring interviews of industry veterans that are much smarter than any of us, Don Daglow (current CEO of Stormfront Studios and formerly of Intellivision and Electronic Arts) schools us on the old school.

128 ETC

Scouring the globe for the interesting, the curious, the crazy, and the useful is no small task. Here, on the last page, are the fruits of our labor.



122



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Meet the New Characters! New Legends!

Romance IX of The Three Kingdoms IX

A Strategic Simulation Masterpiece February 2004

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PlayStation 2



EDITORS' FORUM



EARTH-SHATTERING!

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

Well, we finally did it. After many months of debate here in the office, we finally decided to add a multi-platform review section to the magazine. We are certainly saddened by the loss of the individual console reviews, but we figured it was about time to make that change.

There are a couple of key things to remember, however, in regards to these new reviews. First of all, when the versions of a game actually have something different about them, we will include *The Edge* to give the multi-console owner the information he or she needs to pick the best version for themselves. Also, if the versions of the game are so different (think *Max Payne* on PS2 versus *Max Payne* on Xbox) we will forgo the multi-platform review all together and do individual reviews for each system just like we always have. Hopefully, streamlining this review process will make things easier for our readers, and also give us the ability to do more full-page reviews.

We would also like you to note that the PC version of a game will only be included in a multi-platform review if we feel that it is extremely similar in nature. Most times, we feel that PC games are sufficiently different to warrant their own reviews, so this will be rare.

On a final note, I'd like to give our readers a pat on the back for this month's cover story, as it is the first time in our history that we were able to get a world-exclusive first look on a Japanese title before the almighty *Famitsu Weekly* – a magazine that has had an iron grip on all Japanese game exclusives.

There's no doubt about it folks, *Game Informer* is the number one video game publication in the world with over 1.5 million readers each month, and you have yourselves to thank for it. As long as you keep reading we will keep striving to get you the biggest scoops in the industry. Enjoy our world exclusive first look at *Resident Evil 4* and *Killer 7*, and thanks for reading. Cheers.

REINER | reiner@gameinformer.com

Looking forward, we can only assume that all upcoming consoles will make use of beefy hard drives. Outside of the downloadable content that we see today on Xbox, I wonder if developers will tap the hard drive for anything else. I'd love to see sports games reach a point where the consumer no longer needs to purchase a new game each year. Developers could simply make seasonal expansion packs available for \$10-\$20. Expansion packs could also be used for episodic releases along the lines of *Dot Hack*.

MATT | matt@gameinformer.com

Is it me or does Nintendo seem just a little off lately? I mean, I'm all for innovation, but I was a little taken aback when I heard that this new "mystery system" was a two-screen handheld unit, that is not the successor to the Game Boy Advance. This seems odd from a business perspective, as it would seem to be competing with itself in the handheld sector [see: Sega back in the Sega CD/32X/Saturn days]. While I'm sure Nintendo will come up with some mind-blowing uses for this dual-screen technology, I can't see many third-party developers taking the time or money to really make games for a strange system that probably won't be close to the GBA/SP in terms of market share.

KATO | kato@gameinformer.com

Sifting through the message boards of gameinformer.com and all the letters and emails we've gotten over the years, I've come to detect a certain amount of insecurity in the game-buying public. If I give a title a bad review score for a game someone likes, for example, often times they'll get so hung up on the numerical value that they miss the wood for the trees. Review scores are a good reference point for the bigger picture of what I think of a game, particularly in regards to a title's competition in the genre, but you've also got to read the text. Furthermore, if we disagree by .25, who cares? If you like the game – no matter what I say – then LIKE THE GAME. We're here to give you insights into what's out there, but if you have fun with a vid that's what matters, right?

LISA | lisa@gameinformer.com

With the recent surge of well-received game updates (both *Resident Evil* and this month's *Game of the Month*, *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes* fall into this category to varying degrees), it made me wonder why these new versions are so well-received while movies exhibiting a similar amount of change from their original aren't as embraced. Does this boil down to the basic idea that games aren't yet bona fide art? It could be that the updates are changing the participant's level of involvement, whereas the movies are still sit-down-and-watch affairs. But, it also could be that people don't see games as art, and therefore their original form doesn't need to be preserved.

JEREMY | jeremy@gameinformer.com

Our first month of multi-platform reviews has got me thinking about the concept of releasing three versions of the same product. What I can't understand is why developers feel the need to keep all three versions identical. Why not work with the strengths of each system? If you featured online on PS2, downloadable content on Xbox, and connectivity on GameCUBE, isn't it conceivable that some hardcore fans would buy it on more than one system? Yes, it's unlikely, but it would be great to see games that actually utilize a console's capabilities to their fullest, rather than dumb it down to the lowest common denominator.

ADAM | adam@gameinformer.com

So once again, I present to you all an expansion for PC Game of the Month. Man, is this the dead time or what? On the plus side, there's a whole lot to look forward to between now and E3: *Breed*, *Condition Zero*, *Far Cry*, the list goes on and on. The most exciting thing to my mind is the fact that a number of upcoming titles are being developed by companies that lots of people have never heard of before. Let's hope this trend continues – variety can do nothing but strengthen the industry and fuel the development fires for more great titles for us to enjoy.

JOE | joe@gameinformer.com

Recently I've managed to pinpoint my greatest pet peeve in any game: identify problems. Sometimes I get the feeling that no one involved in making a game really had a clear idea of how it is supposed to play, what the tone should be, or even what genre it is. The result is just a confusingly painful digital mishmash. I wonder how many potentially good projects have been ruined when, in development meetings, someone says, "People like skateboarding games, shooters, and RPGs. Let's fuse those together somehow?" Terrible. Even if I don't like a game, so long as its elements are united in purpose, at least I can respect it.



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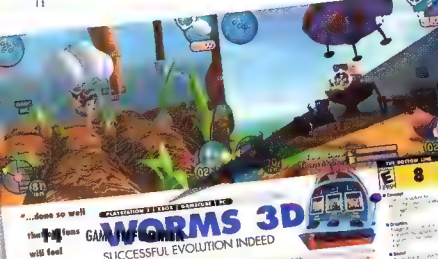
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GI SPY



1

CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 Jeremy and Billy show Acclaim's Matt Schlosberg and Alan Lewis a good time. And by good time we mean...sitting quietly on a couch. God, we're boring! 2 Volition's Dan Cermak and THQ's Tom Stratton brave the Minnesota winter to come show us a peek at their new Punisher title. 3 Lionhead Studios' Peter Moynoux and Cathy Campos are getting their groove on in Guildford, U.K. 4 "See, the first time you kill a guy, it's normal to get a little nauseous. Don't worry, you get over that." Acclaimed tough-guy actor Michael Medsen schools upstart Michelle Rodriguez at an Infogrames' Driver 3 event. 5 Rockstar Games' Jay Fitzloff comes back to GI to settle a bet with Kato. Because the Vikings won the season opener in Green Bay, Kato received this custom mock-up of the revered newsletter Vikings Update! Sköll! 6A Welcome to this month's special edition of Mini-GI Spy™! Here we see Jeremy, working hard as usual networking with Konami's Koji Igarashi at the company's recent Gamer's Day. 6B Meanwhile, GI Online's party-boy Chris Cook was in the champagne room with these two hotties from WWX: Rumble Rose. Gee whiz, working for an Internet site is so glamorous! 6C WWX Rumble Rose producer Akari Uchida poses in front of a giant set of severed legs. 7 Capcom's Ben Judd gets ready to eat a big, steaming bowl of... um... food... in Tokyo.



2



7



3



4



6C



6B



6A

5

THE SUFFERING

PRISON IS HELL

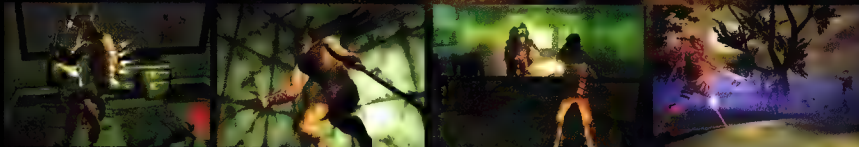


"...a gore-drenched excursion into hair-raising territory"

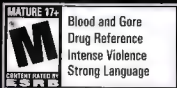
- GamePro

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- IGN.COM



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MIDWAY

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THE GIFT >>>

What do you predict for 2004?:

BigDemon
Via email

- After consulting tea leaves and shrunken heads, we assembled the following list:
 - Irate sock puppets will take over the International Space Station
 - Orange will become the new pink
 - The popular Atkins diet will be replaced by the soon-to-be-popular Elephant Man diet
 - Miyamoto will gain the ability to actually walk on air
 - NBC's gross-out reality TV romp, *Fear Factor*, will feature Martha Stewart consuming an entire live goat
 - Defying conventional wisdom that gamers are immune to the subtleties of musical theatre, *Halo* will be adapted into a Broadway production and sell out its entire six-year run

There were others, but our deal with the devil means that we must lock them in a time capsule to be opened no earlier than 2025. Sorry for the wait.



• Ask, and ye shall receive, Lulu. This month marks the beginning of multi-platform coverage opening up *Game Informer's* review section. *James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing*, *MX Unleashed*, *NFL Street*, and *Worms 3D* get our new "The Edge" box that will outline the major advantages or disadvantages for each edition of the reviewed game. Except in cases of extensive delays or extreme feature differences between systems, all three consoles will be discussed in one review. Convenient and concise, the new format allows all of the information for these far-reaching games to be offered in one locale.

UMMM...OKAY >>>

Prince of Persia is the worst piece of crap that I have ever attempted to enjoy. I cannot believe that you guys bought into the hype that this game has received. I usually enjoy reading your reviews and generally agree. This time, however, you have truly disappointed me. The gameplay is repetitive and lacking. The graphics are generic and blotchy. The time control system is just another Max Payne rip-off, but they added the feature of rewinding time so you have to watch the same crap all over again. The story is confusing and not codified. People are mesmerized by this game simply because you can run up walls! Wow! It's *The Matrix* all over again. How did this game score better than *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, *Soul Calibur II*, or *Mario Kart Double Dash*? I think that all of these games are innovative and enthralling while *Prince of Persia* is simply a dull rip-off of every other game I played this year and last. Thank you and please respond.

Justin Kennedy
Via email

• Please refer to our good friend Justin as the lone dissenter. We checked with a few experts on the field of legal insanity and were told that, "While the lone dissenter does bring up multiple areas of gameplay and design that he found unacceptable, the examples supplied to illustrate more exemplary gameplay are revolutionary only in an arguable way. Return of the King, Soul Calibur II, and Double Dash are certainly well-made games, but none offer a truly compelling point to the lone dissenter's argument. In short, Justin (the lone dissenter) is most probably crazy like a fox - although he certainly is welcome to his own opinion."

N-GAGE DEFENDER >>>

What's the deal GI? I work at a video game retail outlet, and I know what sales. You guys can't just bash a system like N-Gage that most of you probably don't own! And what's with all the crying about the price tag? It just bothers me that your editors trash a good system. Can the GBA make phone calls, surf the web, play movies, run hundred of Symbian programs, and transfer files from system to system? No - not even close. Just give the N-Gage a chance. What, you hate the control? Who cares, you'll get used to it. Didn't Xbox owners get used to their clunky controllers? And who gives a rat's ass about changing the game cards? You people are just lazy. Bottom line, if you want a real person's opinion, especially from someone who ACTUALLY owns an N-Gage, then put this letter in your mag. If you don't, well just keep oppressing the people!

Mares
Via hotmail.com

• So basically, anyone who considers shelling out \$299 is supposed to just guess and suck it up? Well, that doesn't seem entirely fair, now does it?

You point out flaws, and we've pointed out flaws, and most of them were the same. But the big dilemma for buyers right now isn't whether they can work around the issues that exist in every single electronic device ever made (um, Windows crashing, some PlayStation consoles not reading discs, Nintendo's underwhelming online lineup - you get the gist), but is it worth the price for them. Therefore, we aren't being hard on the system, and yes we have used them, but it wouldn't be fair to let people go into a purchase of that caliber being entirely uninformed. That's why we have "Informer" in our freakin' name, we inform - good or bad, nice or cruel, harsh or glowing. We're in the service industry.

INFARCING THE NATION >>>

What happened to some of the cool stuff that you guys used to put in GI, like *Game Infarcer*? I like reading it because it added some fun to the magazine. If it isn't too much trouble, could you bring it back?

Levi Moyers
Huron, Ohio

I have a complaint. I really like *Game Infarcer*, and there seems to be a great lack of it lately. If you could kind of...well...fix that, then that would be great.

Bye,
Ryan
Via email

• Well aren't you the lucky ones, Levi and Ryan? *Game Infarcer* appears in each April issue (see, because April Fools' Day is in April and it's a joke. Get it?) So, for all of you frothing at the mouth for falsified games with fictional reviewers, editor-made envelope art, utterly untrue news, and astounding examples of alliteration can look for our annual *Game Infarcer* in the next issue. Have fun!

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY >>>

I've noticed that when your magazine does a multi-platform game review (a game for PlayStation 2, Xbox, and/or GameCube) you have different people covering each of the versions.

I hope you know how wrong that is. Those of us who have more than one platform just want to know which one to buy and why it's better or worse on one system or another. To get this information, we need to read all of the reviews and hunt through the whole magazine to find everything. Dumb. Put them all in the same place and then we can make more informed decisions.

Papa Lulu
Via hotmail.com





ONIMUSHA BLADE WARRIORS

**EVERY FIGHT IS A WAR...
EVERY WARRIOR IS A LEGEND.**

Command the noble universe of Onimusha in this hardcore 3-D action fighting game. Select your Warrior from 24 characters from the world of Onimusha and prepare to battle. Fight solo or with up to three others for lightning fast multi-player battles that show off your skills as the ultimate Warrior.



Violence
Suggestive Themes



PlayStation 2

CAPCOM

capcom.com

HE'S OUR ENABLER >>>

I find it funny that you call fans of Battlestar Galatica, Dungeons & Dragons, and Star Wars nerds while MANY of you lock yourselves in your rooms and play video games. While I do enjoy playing D&D, it's because I get to spend time with my friends. That's what really matters - hanging out with friends. Console RPGers sit in their own flit getting erections over the latest Final Fantasy "babe."

Console RPG players - it's just them and the game with no real human contact in the flesh.

Tabletop RPG fans - is a group of friends enjoying each other's company FACE TO FACE.

Who are the nerds now?

Oh, and one more thing, Evanesence is not Goth. It's just more drivel to calm the masses of those idiotic S&M deviants and "vampires" that think Goth is about pain and "Satan" and other stupid sh!#.

Gabriel
Via email



NERD!

• We stand firmly corrected on the Evanesence issue and apologize for any confusion. About that "who's dorkier" question, we're not even touching it with a 10-foot pole.

HOW DO THEY RATE? >>>

I recently rented Manhunt for the PS2. I don't know if I am getting older, or if it's the fact that I am looking at starting a family or what, but this game shocked me! But, nothing in it shocked me as much as what was on the cover itself - a simple M rating.

I know that no commercially successful game has ever been given an AO rating by the ESRB, which is similar to the MPAA and their available NC-17 and X ratings for films. I am wondering if their policies are the same. Filmmakers will often submit rough-cuts of the film to the MPAA in order to determine where it will fall on the rating scale. If it looks like certain scenes will earn the movie an NC-17 or X rating, they will usually be changed or deleted.

It seems to me that after playing Manhunt, the ESRB must do the same. Could you shed some light on how the ESRB's rating process works?

Thanks,
Chad Ray
Via aol.com

• The ESRB's website (esrb.org) offers a handy description of its rating process (as well as searchable databases of games, its ratings, and what each level means exactly). The following is its description of the rating process: "To get a game certified with an ESRB rating, publishers fill out a detailed questionnaire explaining exactly what's in the game, and submit it to ESRB along with actual videotaped footage of the game, showing the most extreme content and an accurate representation of the context and product as a whole. Working independently, three trained raters then view the game footage and recommend the rating and content descriptors they believe are most appropriate. When the game is ready for release to the public, publishers send copies of the final product to the ESRB. The game packaging is reviewed to make sure the ratings are displayed in accordance with ESRB standards. Additionally, ESRB's in-house game experts randomly play the final games to verify that all the information provided during the rating process was accurate and complete."

ENVELOPE ART



René Gonzalez

That's disgusting! Ew! Don't bite your nails!

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

Send to:
Game Informer
Envelope Art Contest
724 1st St. N., 4th Floor
Mpls, MN 55401



MARCH WINNER!

Jonathan Valverde

"Pinch my butt again and you are in for it, buster!"

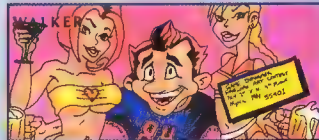


Robert Lanneau

The man...the myth...the bulge...Wolverine!

Orlando Walker

There's a fine line between shirt and sweatband



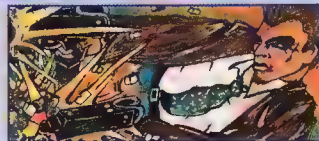
Ryan Gaw

It looks like Arnold's first few months as governor aren't going too well



Loren Pelham

This is envelope art...to the Max! (Hee, hee, hee!)



ANTICIPATION^{XI}



MARCH 2004



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.

PlayStation 2



PlayOnline.

SQUARE ENIX.

www.us.playstation.com

Online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). Players are responsible for all applicable Internet and subscription fees. Children under the age of 13 are not permitted to use PlayOnline services, including games. Acceptance of certain agreements is required. A valid credit card required to set up account. Free subscription for 30 days. Some restrictions may apply. ©2001-2004 SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All Rights Reserved. Title Design by Yoshitaka Amano. FINAL FANTASY is a registered trademark of Square Enix Co., Ltd. SQUARE ENIX, the Square Enix logo, PLAYONLINE, the PlayOnline logo are trademarks of Square Enix Co., Ltd. "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. The Online icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. HDD logo is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.



KRONOS CLOSES DOORS

Kronos, developer of *Fear Effect: Inferno* for the **PlayStation 2**, has closed its doors and seemingly scuttled any hope of this game (featured in Game Informer issue #118) ever seeing the light of day. Game Informer talked with a source within the company who confirmed the unfortunate news, but the developer has declined to make an official statement on the matter.

Inferno was originally going to be published by **Eidos** (who had put out the previous two efforts in the series on the **PSone**), but it cancelled the project early last year, severing ties with Kronos. This was believed to be because Eidos had run out of money due to the *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness* fiasco, but whatever the reason, Kronos was left out in the cold. The developer proceeded to search for a publisher for *Inferno* as well as two other game demos it had worked up. At one point late last summer, the company told Game Informer that a deal to put out the games was imminent. Since then, however, something must have gone south, causing Kronos to fold.

Stan Liu, Kronos' president and driving creative force, couldn't be reached for comment on the matter. As Eidos owns the intellectual property rights to *Fear Effect*, it is conceivable that the series could reappear with another developer, but the publisher says nothing is planned at this time. Unfortunately, however, *Inferno* and Kronos are gone. Hopefully Liu and the rest of the team will resurface soon with even bigger dreams.



ED FRIES LEAVES MICROSOFT

In a shock to the industry, **Ed Fries**, vice president of game publishing for **Microsoft Game Studios**, has left the company after 18 years.

The official reason – as always – is simply stated as “to pursue other goals.” MGS chief operating officer Shane Kim will assume Fries' duties until a successor is named.

In a statement, **Robbie Bach** (Microsoft senior vice president and chief Xbox officer) said, “Although we'll miss Ed, we hope he takes this opportunity to sit back, relax, and allow himself a moment to relish the contribution he's made to the company and the industry. We wish him the very best, and look forward to Shane carrying forth the scepter of excellence and innovation.”

Fries joined Microsoft in 1985 as an intern, and became the head of MGS a decade later. Under Fries the studio put out such titles as *Age of Empires*, *Mech Assault*, and both *Project Gotham Racing* titles. He was there for the beginning of the Xbox, and was responsible for rounding up third-party publishers to support the nascent console. Furthermore, Fries was instrumental in Microsoft acquiring developers such as **Bungie** and **Rare**.

If there is any hidden meaning behind his departure, other than it was time to move on, it is pure conjecture. Microsoft has said that the resignation was not a surprise internally, however, as it had been planned for. Fries leaves at an interesting point for Microsoft and its Xbox. The console's successor is starting to be talked about, and the Xbox has just gone through a spat of delays to high-profile titles such as *Halo 2*, *Fable*, and *Half-Life 2*, leaving it with no triple-A titles for the first part of the year. Also, Microsoft's acquisition of Rare has started out disastrously, with *Grabbed by the Ghouls* being an awful title. Game Informer has heard from Microsoft insiders that Fries might pop up with another company in the industry soon.



NINTENDO'S DUAL SCREEN HANDHELD

Late last year, **Nintendo** teased the public with talk that it was working on new hardware that was neither a successor to the **Game Boy Advance** nor **GameCube**. What's the secret? **Nintendo DS**. It's a new portable game system utilizing two separate TFT LCD display screens stacked on top of each other. Nintendo plans to release this year. The displays measure three inches diagonal apiece. Each one will have its own processor, and games will have one Gigabit of memory (128 megabytes). The ARM 7 processor is used in the current GBA, while ARM 9 is used in **Tapwave's Zodiac**. Titles are expected to appear in cartridge format, although all the company would say is that they won't be on discs. Nintendo expects to release the product worldwide by the end of this year, but won't say whether the system's launch will be simultaneous in different countries.

No games have been announced for the DS, but Nintendo says that developers can use the second screen for things like zooming

or changing the camera angle on the action on the other screen in real-time. The dual display architecture could also mean you wouldn't have to pause your playing to view a map or menu.

Some question why Nintendo would put out another system when it already has two gaming platforms on the market. President Satoru Iwata says the company drives to the beat of pure creativity. “We have developed Nintendo DS based upon a completely different concept from existing game devices in order to provide players with a unique entertainment experience.”

Much still remains unknown about Nintendo DS at this point, but the company says that it will unveil more details at the E3 convention in May, including

the design of the unit, third-party partners, and more. Nintendo also clarified this system is not a follow-up to the Game Boy Advance or GameCube, which are being currently worked on separately.

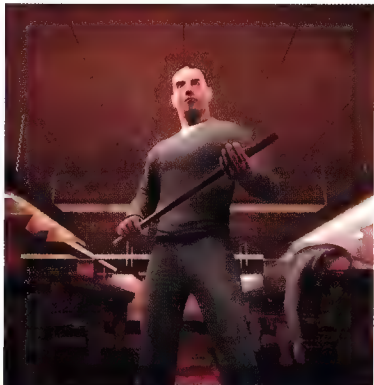


SONY MAKES ANOTHER GETAWAY

The Getaway, developed by **Sony Europe's Team Soho**, was a blockbuster hit in spite of wildly mixed reviews. Now, at long last, word of a sequel has finally started to leak out of the U.K.

Information regarding **The Getaway 2** is scarce, but here's what we've heard: This new saga centers on an East End geezer named Eddie O'Conner, a part-time boxer, part-time bouncer, full-time bad mutha-shut-yo-mouth. Eddie also does a little work for some of London's finest criminal organizations on the side – a hobby that we expect will land him in some hot water. Little more is known about the plot, but there will likely be three main, probably playable, characters.

The Getaway 2 will be able to explore central London's rough-hewn setting in new ways. We hear that Eddie will engage in some thrilling rooftop chases, some stealth-style missions, and even ride the legendary Tube subway system.



EIDOS CALLS IN ANOTHER HIT

Cold-blooded hitman Agent 47 has an itchy trigger finger yet again. **Eidos** has announced **Hitman: Contracts**, the third in the series for the **PlayStation 2**, **Xbox**, and **PC** this spring. The series is yet again developed by **io Interactive**, and **Contracts** features an all-new graphics engine. Agent 47 still executes missions with extreme prejudice, but this time around the tale takes on a much darker tone, giving you insight into the mind of a man paid to kill for a living. Also new are more useable environmental weapons, improved physics and controls, more disguises, and a beefed-up arsenal of weapons.



ASKA



SHE'S THE ARTISTIC TYPE. THOUGH HER ARTS ARE PURELY MARTIAL.

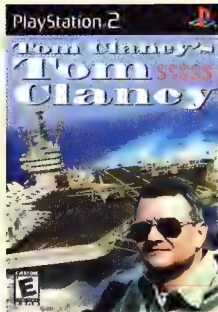
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Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our god-like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

TOM CLANCY'S TOM CLANCY



Tom Clancy has adapted pretty much everything he's ever written into movies, TV shows, or video games. But the one thing he hasn't licensed out into a commercial property is his own life. This release would let Clancy fans step into the author's shoes and guide him from humble mortgage broker to best-selling author. Borrowing gameplay from The Sims, players would have to balance Tom's time spent writing, sleeping, having fun, and interacting with other military history buffs. The type of books Tom writes, which movie rights he sells, and what video games he commissions are all up to the whims of the player. Of course, once Tom is built up into a household name, you can have him spend less and less time actually writing and more time enjoying his millions of dollars. Sure, the books will get bad reviews and sell poorly, but the player gets to take Tom on aircraft carrier rides, send him to dinner with wealthy politicians, and secure him great seats for the Super Bowl, so who cares? Tom Clancy's Tom Clancy would be a great way for everyday people to live the life of a super-rich writer, and an even better way for Tom Clancy to earn even more money. Aircraft carrier rides don't grow on trees, you know.

TOP 10 TIMES TO PULL OUT YOUR GBA

- 10 If you're ever caught at an old-school Star Trek convention without your communicator (SP model only)
- 9 In case you're wearing sweat pants and someone says you must be happy to see them
- 8 During the next Britney Spears marriage ceremony
- 7 To keep your hands busy (for pyromaniacs and kleptomaniacs)
- 6 To prove connectivity isn't a total flop
- 5 Just in case your pet hamster ever needs an adjustable bed (SP model only – free TV or microwave coupon not included)
- 4 When watching the ending of The Return of the King
- 3 If you have an N-Gage. Pull the GBA out and never let go
- 2 When at a funeral so you never get accused of sneaking a peek at your neighbor
- 1 Whenever possible

DEVELOPER TOP 3

CHIEN YU PROJECT MANAGER FOR
ESPN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL
ESPN VIDEOGAMES



- 1 Super Mario Bros. 3 – NES
- 2 Phantasy Star – Sega Master System
- 3 Final Fantasy III – SNES
- 4 Guardian Heroes – Sega Saturn
- 5 Wing Commander – PC

READER TOP 3

LIZ KELLY
SPRINGFIELD, MA



- 1 Jet Set Radio Future – Xbox
- 2 Tony Hawk 6 Pro Skater – PSone
- 3 Mike Tyson's Punch Out!! – NES
- 4 Resident Evil 3 Nemesis – PSone
- 5 The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time – N64

Game Informer's Top 100 Best PS2 Games list is now available online at www.gi.com.
 Game Informer Magazine, Attn: Top 100, 724 North First St., 4th Floor, Minneapolis, MN 55401, email: top100@gamesinformer.com (also via digital delivery)
 For more information, visit www.gi.com or call 1-800-828-6882. All rights reserved. © 2005 Game Informer.

UNRAVELING

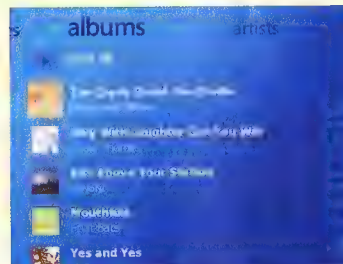
GHOST IN A PS2 SHELL

Anyone who saw the anime film *Ghost in the Shell* was captivated by the future it presented. Set in 2030, creator Masamune Shirow told of a world where the barriers between the digital world of computers and our physical, human one were non-existent. This virtual landscape made for legions of cyber criminals committed by hackers. Enter Motoko Kusanagi. Herself 99% cyborg, Motoko (and her sidekick Bateau) works for Section 9 in order to crack down on these criminals. **Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex** is set in an alternate storyline from the movie, based on the animated series, involving Motoko's exploits if she hadn't fused with The Puppet Master. *Stand Alone Complex* comes out in Japan this spring (no U.S. date or publisher is known) for the **PlayStation 2**, and presents third-person action with either Motoko or Bateau.



MEDIA CENTER ROCKS THE BOX

During the opening keynote speech for this year's **Consumer Electronics Show** in Las Vegas, Microsoft chairman and chief software architect **Bill Gates** outlined what part the **Xbox** would play in their vision of the "seamless computing experience." Utilizing a **Media Center Edition PC**, an Xbox, and the upcoming **Xbox Media Center Extender Kit**, the gaming system will serve as a node capable of accessing TV shows, pictures, or movies stored on the Media Center PC. Expected to launch before this holiday season, the box will hold a software disk, a remote, and a dongle (which can replace the current DVD remote offered for the "box). No price point has yet been announced. In addition, homes equipped to actually take advantage of this device are few and far between – the Media Center Edition PC is only available through certain manufacturers and the operating system cannot be purchased or installed by a home user at this time.

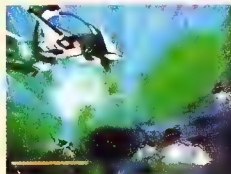


EA SIGNS PAIR

The **Electronic Arts** empire grows with two high-profile signings. Both the **TimeSplitters** and **Burnout** franchises have been scooped up by the publishing giant. *TimeSplitters* is a first-person franchise developed by **Free Radical Design** formerly for **Eidos**. *Burnout*, meanwhile, is a blistering city racer that did very well for previous publisher **Acclaim**.
 Gameplay details for *TimeSplitters* are thin. EA will only say that it expects the third iteration in the series to appear in 2005 for the **PlayStation 2** and **Xbox** with online play. Meanwhile, *Burnout 3* is the working title for the next title from the franchise. The game is being worked on by the developer of previous *Burnout* games, **Criterion**.

NAME THAT GAME

In the days of the Dreamcast (way back yonder in the 20th century), Sega ambitiously teamed up with Netter Digital Entertainment for this Sega-developed



title. Netter was the studio responsible for the CG special effects for *Babylon 5*. A crappy show, apparently, makes for a crappy game. Sega canceled this 3D shooter on the grounds of quality standards.

(Answer on page 27)



THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

GOOD – Want to add your own touch of noir to *Max Payne 2*? **Rockstar Games** is holding a contest to see who can come up with the best mod for the game. Winners get everything from a custom **Falcon Northwest PC** to *Max Payne 2* clothes, and more. For tools, rules, and more info, head to rockstargames.com/maxpayne2/contest/.

UGLY – An enterprising gamer has exploited a mistake in **Ubisoft's *Rainbow Six 3*** for **Xbox**. After seeing a poster texture in the title with a website on it, Tony Ashcroft of Texas went to the URL, believing it would lead to codes for the game. Instead, it was unregistered. Ashcroft then bought the site and filled it with links to adult pages. He says that only cold, hard cash will convince him to leave his squat. By the way, *Rainbow Six 3* is scheduled to come out for **PS2** in March.

GOOD – In Japan, **Nintendo** has released a **Famicom** (Japan's version of the NES) inspired **Game Boy Advance SP** – including classic 8-bit games like *Super Mario Bros.* and *The Legend of Zelda*. We want. A lot.



BAD – Who says smut filters aren't fun? Many gaming forums reported on last month's **Riddick** feature. Unfortunately, filters automatically changed the game's name to **RidRichard**.

UGLY – **Daviflex Games** has announced that it is working on both a **Miami Vice** game and a sequel for **Knight Rider**. The only way this pair would sound appealing is if you combined them. We'd love to see Crockett's alligator riding around in Kit.



GOOD – The tentatively titled **Dead or Alive Online** is being changed to the equally banal **Dead or Alive Ultimate**. **Tecmo's** fighter will also feature a graphically enhanced edition of **DOA 2** and the **Saturn DOA**, which wasn't available in the States.

UGLY – Although ex-founding member of the **Xbox** team, **Kevin Bachus**, has joined **Infinium Labs** – creators of the **Phantom** – things are going a bit fishy for the company. The Securities Exchange

Commission is curious and investors are pissed, as the company completed a stock split without informing them.



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 and we'll be all ears.

Sony itself has hinted that the **PlayStation 3** would feature the motion-sensor and camera technology in the **EyeToy** peripheral. If you doubt how cool this sounds, we dare you to spend five minutes with the EyeToy and not have fun. We dare you.

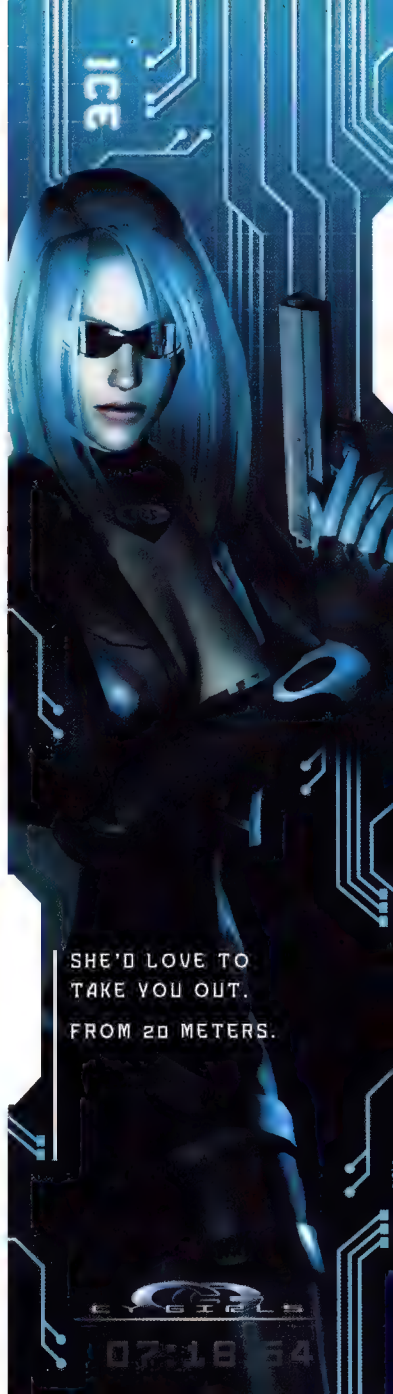
Anybody with a **Need For Speed** is going to be sated by **Electronic Arts**. The company is currently working on a follow-up to **Underground**. Unlike that title, however, the new **NFS** won't be about street racing, but instead hark back to the series' open road roots.

Raccoonus Renewus. **Sucker Punch** is bringing back **Sly Cooper** for a sequel on the **PlayStation 2**.

Peter Molyneux's mysterious project code-named **Dimitri** is still under wraps, but the company considers a lot of the technology for games like **Black & White 2** to be mere dry runs for what's going to greatly exceed it in **Dimitri**. **Lionhead** is working with brains from Cambridge and MIT on this tantalizing phantom of a game.

The original team from **Namco's Ridge Racer** isn't behind the newest racer in the series, which is currently in development. No, the new **RR** is being headed up by a different bunch of people altogether. The original team, however, is working with **Konami** on a new franchise.

Although there are plenty of developers who have signed up to create games for **Sony's PlayStation Portable**, we've heard rumblings from some that the system isn't a joy to work with – making said developers reluctant to commit to the platform.



SHE'D LOVE TO
TAKE YOU OUT.
FROM 20 METERS.

EYEGIRLS

07-18-04

VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

We all know that video game trivia is a big part of your life, but how does it stack up to the rest of the world? Take the quiz, tally your score, and find out what your useless knowledge is comparable in size to.

Question 1: What did Chop Chop Master Onion invent?

- A. Sword-chucks (they're like nunchaku, but with swords)
- B. Love Karate
- C. The Atari Jaguar
- D. Stick figure kung fu animations



Question 2: What sort of headgear was the Dragonmaster Helmet in Lunar: The Silver Star Story?

- A. A Rambo-like headband
- B. A big, bad steel helmet
- C. A fuzzy red fur hat with dangly earflaps
- D. A samurai-style great helmet

Question 3: In how many of the SNES Donkey Kong Country games was DK himself playable?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. None of them

Question 4: What PSone game's main character lacked a lower jaw?

- A. Tactics Ogre
- B. MDK
- C. Wild 9
- D. MediEvil

Question 5: Which hot 1990s property was not turned into a side-scrolling Double Dragon-esque arcade brawler?

- A. X-Men
- B. The Simpsons
- C. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- D. Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers



Question 6: What moniker does the Blue Bomber (more commonly known as Mega Man) go by in Japan?

- A. Rock Man
- B. Mega Man
- C. Seiken Dentetsu
- D. Shigeru Miyamoto

Question 7: Which film star started his entertainment career as a rapper and starred in this Sega CD game along with his crew, the Funky Bunch?

- A. Mark Anthony
- B. Mark Wahlberg
- C. Mark Cerny
- D. Mark Jarvis



Question 8: At the end of which world of Super Mario Bros. was the most commonly (abused) 1-Up trick?

- A. World 1-1
- B. World 3-1
- C. World 4-2
- D. World 7-4



Question 9: What is the name of the minigame you must play to complete Rikku's ultimate weapon in Final Fantasy X?

- A. Kick the Donkey
- B. Pass the Bag
- C. Sabotenda Mischief
- D. Chocobo Racing

Question 10: What entry in the Zelda series marked the first appearance of the Master Sword?

- A. The Legend of Zelda
- B. Zelda II: The Adventure of Link
- C. The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past
- D. The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time



Score & Rank



0-1

Gary Coleman



2-3

Daunte Culpepper



4-5

Mr. T



6-7

Bigfoot



8-9

Ultrasaurus



10

The Sun

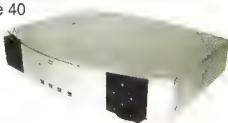
NEXT XBOX SMALLER IN 2006

Microsoft of Japan's Xbox division chief Yoshihiro Maruyama, says that the successor to Xbox won't hit until 2006. By his own admission, the deciding factor is when rival Sony will release its PlayStation 3. "I hope that we can release the machine in the near future, but it won't be next year," said Maruyama. "Considering that the PlayStation 2 is entering its fifth year and that its game lineup is in its prime, we're estimating that the successor to that console will be released after 2006. Whether we'll release the successor of the Xbox before the PS2's needs to be decided carefully. It has strong pros and cons."

Whenever it does release, the next platform from Microsoft - colloquially referred to as Xbox Next - will be smaller in size. States Maruyama, "We promise that we'll make the new console smaller." And as anyone's who's logged their 'box over to a friend's house for a LAN party can testify, this is a very, very good thing.

NEW CONSOLE AT CES

Silicone chip developers VIA Technologies and consumer electronics manufacturer Apex Digital announced the **ApexXtreme** (pronounced Apex Xtreme). It is a small form-factor PC designed for living room entertainment systems. The console will be able to play a library of 2,000 PC games, will automatically download patches and upgrades through a partnership with DISCover, and can also play DVDs, VCDs, audio CDs, MP3s, and perform other entertainment-orientated tasks. Scheduled to ship in March, the 40 GB unit will run for a suggested \$399.



BREAKDOWN

32% of Japanese development studios polled by magazine Famitsu say that the PS2 is their platform of choice for this year. PC titles came in second, with cell phones nabbing third.

5% The amount by which Xbox sales fell in the final quarter of last year according to Microsoft

90% of the staff thinks the last letters of "Nintendo DS" stand for "Dip S@!&"

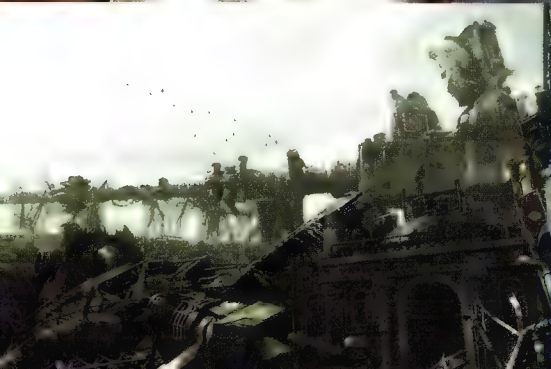
6% of readers think Joe is Rasputin

39% The percentage increase in sales for the GameCube in 2003 according to The NPD Group

UNLIMITED ENABLER

FF VII: ADVENT CHILDREN DETAILS EMERGE

New images and plot information from Square Enix's secretive DVD movie *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* have made their way stateside. Set two years after the end of *Final Fantasy VII*, the plot follows Cloud as he investigates the appearance of three strange men who all bear a striking resemblance to Sephiroth, as well as the emergence of the "Planetary Scar Syndrome," which is afflicting the planet itself. While the degree of their involvement has not been commented on, the shots below prove that Barrett makes an appearance, as does Shin-Ra's huge cannon.



DATA FILE

► **THX** has introduced THX Games Made into its Ultra2-certified home theater receivers. This mode will let you experience games in surround sound as close as possible to the way the developers themselves had intended. **Electronic Arts** has already signed on with THX's certification process, with others soon to follow.

► **Core Design/Tomb Raider** founders Jeremy Heath-Smith and Adrian Smith have started a new development company called **Circle Studio**. Appropriately enough, the pair does know something about going in circles.

► **Namco** has killed its *Dead to Rights* spinoff *Extreme Force: Grant City Anti-Crime* being handled by developer Point of View. Namco reps have assured us, however, that this development won't affect *Dead to Rights II*.

► Robin Johnson of the U.K. has answered your video gaming dreams with a text adventure based on **Shakespeare's Hamlet**. Check it out at robinjohnson.f9.co.uk/adventure/hamlet.html, and Command: Talk to Skull, Eat Danish.

► **Sammy Studios** in the U.S. has just announced its first internally developed project called *Darkwatch: Curse of the West*, a first-person shooter blending the vampire and western genres. The **PlayStation 2/Xbox** game should appear before the end of the year.



► **Bandai** has announced some info on its upcoming lineup of games. On the calendar for the future are titles like *Cowboy Bebop: Digimon World 4*, and *Digimon Rumble Arena 2*, and *Mobile Suit Z Gundam: AEUG vs. Titans*.

► Veterans from both **Naughty Dog** and **Blizzard** have teamed together to form **Ready at Dawn Studio**. The team has already started on some unspecified console games.

► Remember the saga of **Argonaut's** catastrophe *Malice*? The game was originally the proud exclusive of the **Xbox**, before **Microsoft** and then-publisher **Vivendi** was so embarrassed by it, that the game was allowed to go to the **PlayStation 2**. Now publisher **Bethesda** has picked up the hammer. At this point, we don't know what's more likely: *Malice* releases or *Reiner* turns into an **Ewok**.

Name That Game Answer: *Darkwatch*

2 GIRLS. 2 WORLDS. 1 HARDCORE MISSION.



3 GUNS • 3 ADVENTURES



CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON:
ASKA, WITH HER LETHAL NINJA SKILLS - OR ICE, A FIREARMS EXPERT WITH NERVES OF STEEL. THEN TAKE THE FIGHT AGAINST EVIL FROM THE REAL WORLD INTO CYBERSPACE, WHERE THE RULES ARE RADICALLY DIFFERENT - BUT THE ACTION'S EVERY BIT AS HARDCORE.

CYBER GIRLS

PlayStation.2

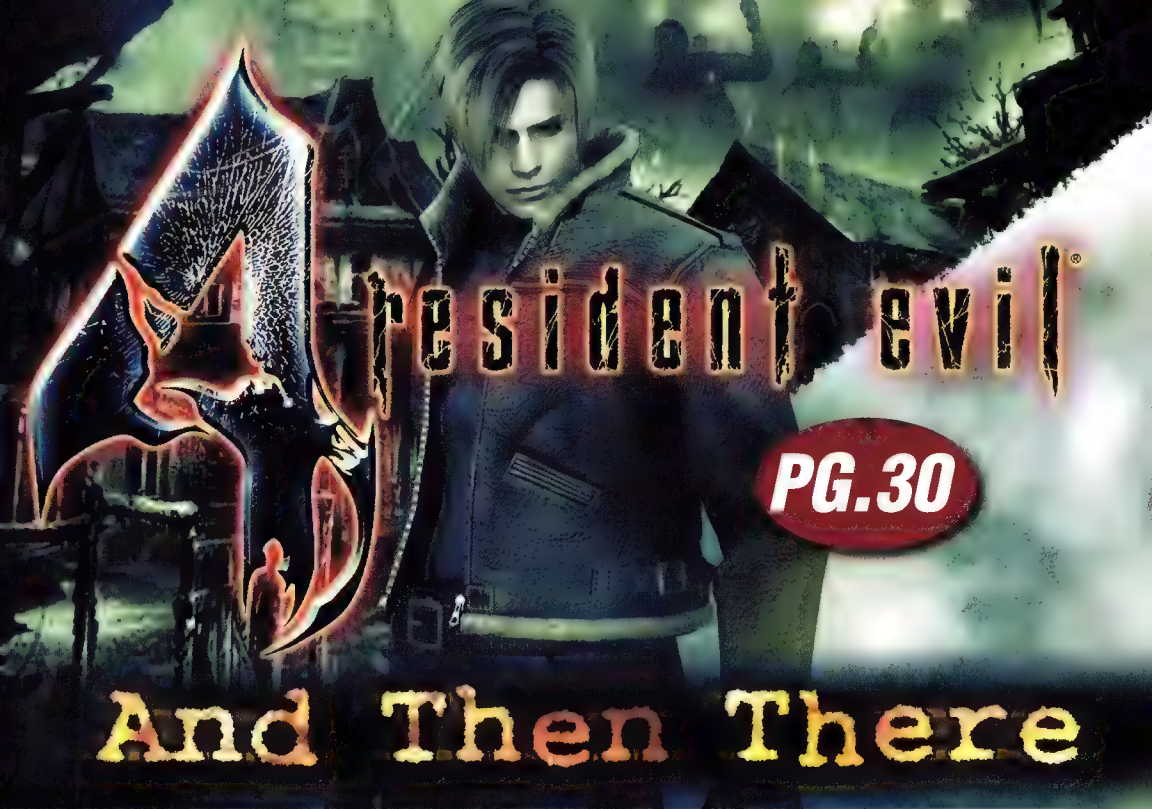


MATURE
Blood
Strong Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence

KONAMI

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And Then There

It all started with what video game journalists quickly dubbed the "Capcom 5." In a coup for Nintendo, Capcom pledged its confidence in GameCube in 2002 by promising five high profile games for the system: Resident Evil 4, Dead Phoenix, Viewtiful Joe, P.N.03, and Killer 7. At the time, the industry was sure all five would be GameCube exclusives, but in the year that followed, things didn't exactly go as Nintendo or Capcom planned.

For Nintendo, GameCubes weren't exactly flying off the shelves. In fact, things got so bad that, in the summer of 2003, Nintendo actually stopped production of the unit. For Capcom, disappointments like Devil May Cry 2 and the move of some of its key franchises (particularly Resident Evil) to Nintendo's under-performing machine led to less than stellar sales for the company.

Like the two key players involved, things started to go downhill for the Capcom 5 games as well; Dead

Phoenix's development was unceremoniously halted, and P.N.03 launched to lackluster sales and unfavorable reviews.

The Capcom 5 seemed doomed. Questions flew all about the industry as to whether the company would abandon its exclusive agreement with Nintendo and finish out the Capcom 5 on the more popular PlayStation 2. Capcom, to the surprise of many pundits in the industry, held its ground.

Then, out of the blue, things surprisingly changed...for the better. Nintendo

chopped the price tag on its GameCube to 99 dollars and actually beat out the Xbox for sales in the last two months of the year. For Capcom, Viewtiful Joe turned out to be its best-selling title of the 2003 holiday season. The times as they say, were changing, and just in time for the two games that remain of the Capcom 5.

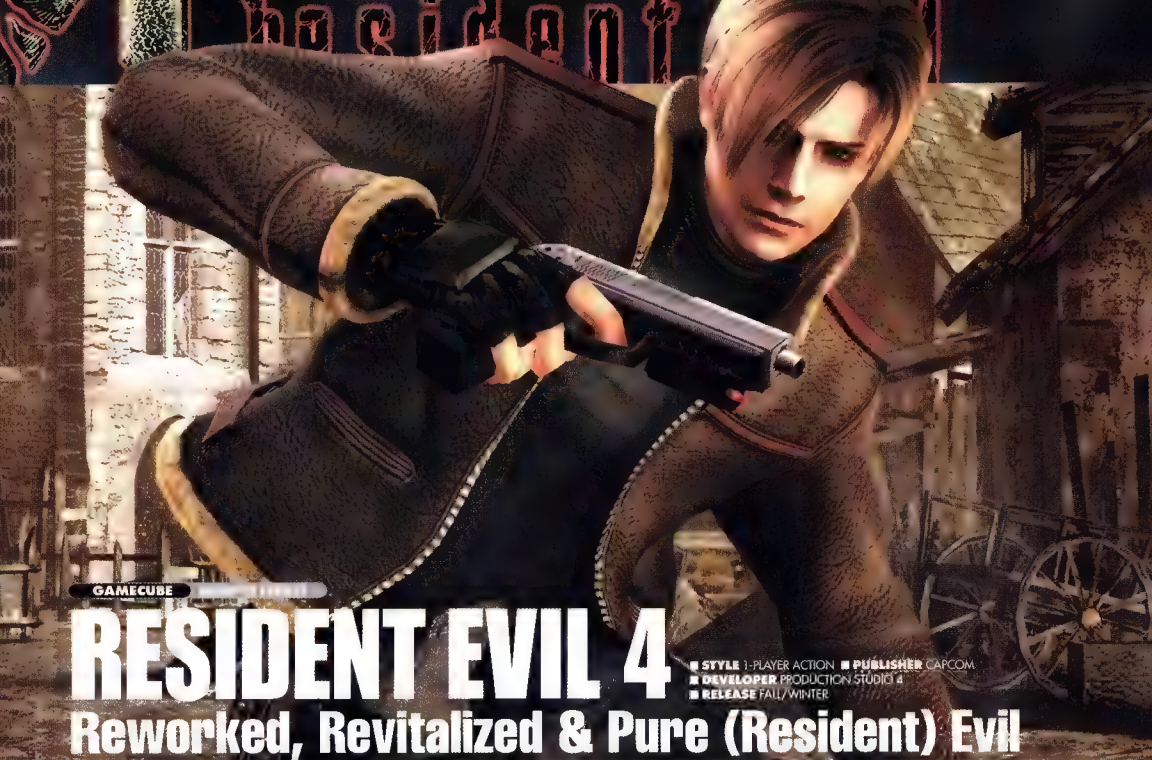
In this unprecedented feature, Game Informer will take an upclose and exclusive look at Resident Evil 4 and Killer 7 – the final and most anticipated pieces of the Capcom 5.



Were Two....

Killer 7

PG.36



GAMECUBE

RESIDENT EVIL 4

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER CAPCOM
■ DEVELOPER PRODUCTION STUDIO 4
■ RELEASE FALL/WINTER

Reworked, Revitalized & Pure (Resident) Evil



■ This is a good example of how well the textures are done throughout the game



■ Use the action command to jump through the window and onto the roof

In 1997, Resident Evil shocked the video game world. It single handedly introduced gamers to a new type of gaming thrill, labeled "survival horror" by its creator, Shinji Mikami. Its use of cinematic camera angles, shocking surprises, and panic-inducing zombies set a standard that video game creators have been chasing ever since.

Resident Evil 4 is set to change the industry yet again. Long in development, Resident Evil 4 was first shown in the U.S. at E3 2003. At that time, the game looked to play almost exactly like its predecessors. And truth be told, it did all the way up until about six months ago, when Mikami stepped down as the head of Capcom's fabled Production Studio 4. In an effort to get back to what he does best, the legendary game creator took over as the director of Resident Evil 4.

Why the change? Mikami simply had become tired of spending too much time managing and not enough time being creative with his team. Talking to the group of over 50 developers working on RE 4, you can sense the inspiration that Mikami brings to the project. He told us story after story of how his team was going to do anything and everything to make this Resident Evil the most memorable yet.

Tired of where the series was going, Mikami decided to take it in a new direction. Change the perspective in a Resident Evil game? Remove the zombies? Sounds completely insane, but that's indeed what has happened. "I remember playing [Resident Evil] Zero and saying to myself that this is just more of the same," confided Mikami. "This is why I wanted to change the system. With the new system I once again feel nervous and scared when I play it."

The new system is surprisingly like the original, but also so unique and fresh that you can't help but love the innovation that Mikami has brought to this sequel. For one, the game can now be played in either the first-person perspective or from one of the two other, better (at least in our opinion) views which are basically slight variations on a close third-person camera.

But don't think for a second that Resident Evil 4 handles like any other third-person games you have played. For example, it must be viewed in widescreen mode. If your TV doesn't support the 16:9 aspect ratio, the game will feature black bars along the top and bottom to make sure you experience the game to its fullest on a 4:3 monitor. HDTV users will be happy to know the game supports 480 progressive scan, and will fill the entire screen when played on a widescreen TV.

This window size is crucial to how the game system works. When

in third-person, Leon fills the far left side of the screen, which we thought would make aiming nearly impossible until we actually got our hands on the title. The game really feels like you are playing a first-person shooter, with or without Leon on the screen.

The controls themselves are virtually the same as the classic Resident Evil configuration players are used to. All the movement is handled by the left joystick, you hold the right trigger to aim, A to fire, down and B to make a quick turnaround, and the menu screen is almost completely identical to previous iterations. However, gamers will be happy to hear that both health and ammo are now represented onscreen.

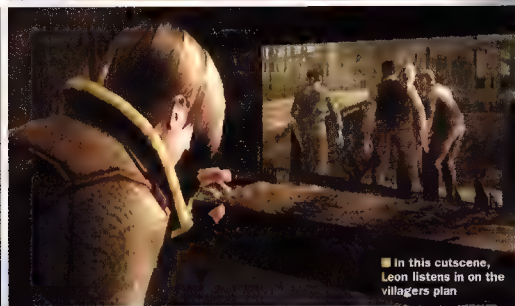
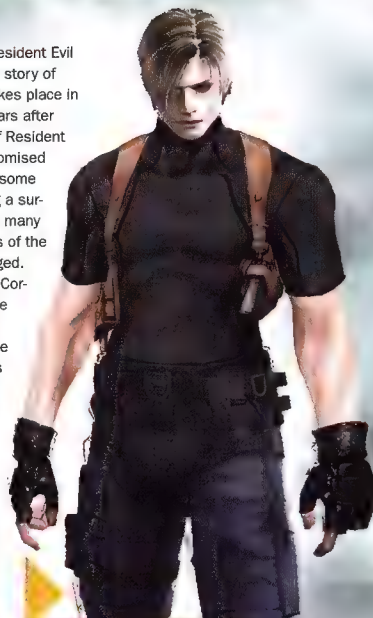
Even though the controls feel eerily familiar, they are far less clumsy with the camera fixed to the gamer's perspective. In fact, we were surprised to find that Resident Evil plays like an almost entirely different game.

Hands On

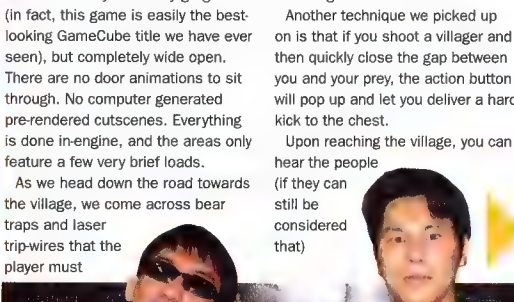
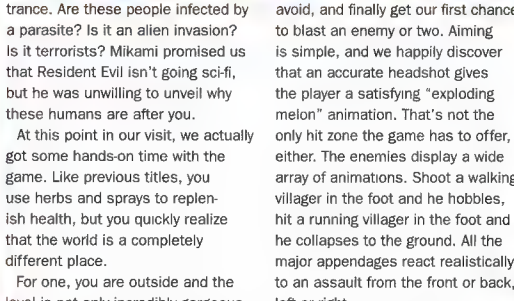
nce again, Resident Evil 4 follows the story of Leon, and takes place in 2004, six years after the events of Resident

Evil 2. While Mikami promised us that there would be some past characters making a surprise visit in this game, many of the familiar elements of the RE universe have changed.

Gone is the Umbrella Corporation, and with it, the zombies that have long been the hallmark of the series. The story opens with Leon being hired by the President to protect his daughter. But before he can get on the job she is kidnapped, which leads Leon on a strange trip to a South American village where all the villagers hunt him down in an eerie



RESIDENT EVIL



■ Mikami warned us at his E3 speech – “Don’t pee your pants!” It didn’t work.

■ A... the head delivers a gruesome display.

■ The chainsaw guy supplies a constant source of panic.

trance. Are these people infected by a parasite? Is it an alien invasion? Is it terrorists? Mikami promised us that Resident Evil isn’t going sci-fi, but he was unwilling to unveil why these humans are after you.

At this point in our visit, we actually got some hands-on time with the game. Like previous titles, you use herbs and sprays to replenish health, but you quickly realize that the world is a completely different place.

For one, you are outside and the level is not only incredibly gorgeous (in fact, this game is easily the best-looking GameCube title we have ever seen), but completely wide open. There are no door animations to sit through. No computer generated pre-rendered cutscenes. Everything is done in-engine, and the areas only feature a few very brief loads.

As we head down the road towards the village, we come across bear traps and laser trip-wires that the player must

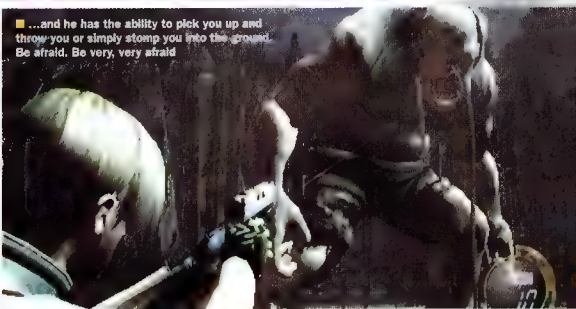
avoid, and finally get our first chance to blast an enemy or two. Aiming is simple, and we happily discover that an accurate headshot gives the player a satisfying “exploding melon” animation. That’s not the only hit zone the game has to offer, either. The enemies display a wide array of animations. Shoot a walking villager in the foot and he hobbles, hit a running villager in the foot and he collapses to the ground. All the major appendages react realistically to an assault from the front or back, left or right.

Another technique we picked up on is that if you shoot a villager and then quickly close the gap between you and your prey, the action button will pop up and let you deliver a hard kick to the chest.

Upon reaching the village, you can hear the people (if they can still be considered that)



▲ Shinji Mikami (right) and Hirokyuki Kobayashi do their best zombie impersonation





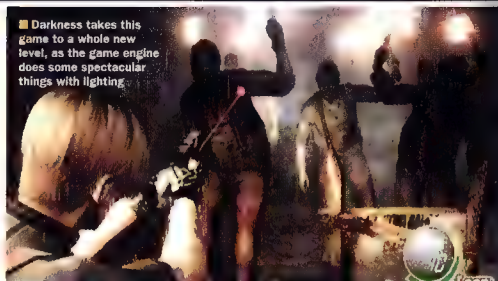
speaking in Spanish. From here, you use the action button to hide behind a nearby tree and use binoculars to zoom in on the goings on. The game quickly goes to a real-time cutscene. But as you may have guessed, since you have binoculars at your disposal, you are able to zoom in and out on the action at will. Mikami also revealed to us that a sniper rifle would be available later in the game.

This is where all hell breaks loose. We head into the village and they are on us like flies on crap. A sea of freaks descends on us. It is easily the most enemies we have ever seen on-screen in a Resident Evil game, and each character is highly detailed with spectacular texture work. They really look like villagers. Not only that, they are armed with sickles, axes, pitchforks, and all sorts of sharp utensils. But these aren't static zombies waiting to be whacked. The villagers start throwing the weapons at you. And, if you time it right, you can shoot them right out of the air with a satisfying ping of metal as they fly off in another direction.

As we run into a nearby building, we discover that we can use the action button again to move a table in front of the door to stem the tide of evil villagers. Leaving them hacking and bashing at the door, we head upstairs and with a tap of the action button dive through a window and out to safety. Or so we think. A chainsaw rips to life (in crystal-clear Dolby Digital Pro Logic II surround sound) just behind us, and we quickly turn around to find ourselves face to face with a *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* wannabe complete with a bloody chainsaw and a burlap sack for a mask.

This is just a taste of the onslaught we face for the next five minutes. We shoot villagers off of roofs. We use the action button to push over a ladder full of deadly enemies. Heck, we even throw a grenade at a cow in the barn just blow it to bits.

The controls are intuitive, the combat intense, and even with the loss of the exaggerated camera angles for dramatic effect, we still



felt a blood-curdling sense of fear the entire time we played. It's a very claustrophobic experience. The enemies are always around you. And if they get close, they grab hold and leave you bashing buttons to get free.

In a later level, the entire area is dark. You can pick out some of the villagers as they hold torches, but you don't really know what is going on around you until lightning illuminates the sky. It's incredibly spooky. In fact, by using the closer camera angle, you know less about what is going on around you than you did with the previous fixed camera views.

Any concerns we had that the series would lose its hallmark horror with this new perspective were quickly thrown out the window after playing it, but Mikami reassured us anyway.

"Up until now, all the games in the Resident Evil series have been about surprise. An enemy has jumped out; you aim at it, shoot it, and kill it. What I'm going for with this game is a more 'humanistic' fear. Which comes from the enemies not being 100 percent zombies, they actually have human characteristics. And because they are smart, they will try to trick you and trap you. As you proceed through the game, about halfway through the enemies start to become very, very smart. And what happens is, you'll shoot one, and instead of continuing to approach you like an idiot, it will realize you have a gun and are shooting at it. It will run away. So you may chase after it, and if you do, you will see that it has intentionally

brought you into an area where there are five or six of them lined up with bow guns aimed to ambush you. Them being able to trick you and trap you brings in a whole new kind of fear. Also, since the enemies look more like humans, it makes it more realistic. The closer it is to reality, the closer it is to being truly scary."



■ The game's particle engine is impressive



■ Avoid the traps or you just might lose a leg



ALL YOU HAVE TO DO



SUDA 51

THE MAD GENIUS KNOWN AS SUDA 51,
HEAD OF GRASSHOPPER



GAMECUBE

KILLER 7

SCHIZOPHRENIC

When we asked Mikami about what he does for the Killer 7 project, he simply walks up to the nearby white board and begins to draw a horse racetrack. He then points to the starting line and says in English, "Suda 51 here."

Suda 51 is the moniker for the man born with the name Goichi Suda. He is the director and writer of Capcom's Killer 7, which is being developed at his studio Grasshopper. In conversations with Shinji Mikami and Production Studio 4 general manager Hiroyuki Kobayashi, he is constantly referred to as a

"genius." But for all the respect that they obviously hold for Suda 51, that doesn't stop Mikami from finishing up his example by drawing an erratic, squiggly line that shoots off the track, saying, "He is very fast, but very out of control."

"I keep him on course," Mikami explains finally getting to the point of his drawing. "I've been thrown from the horse several times," he states with a smile and look of sheer joy.

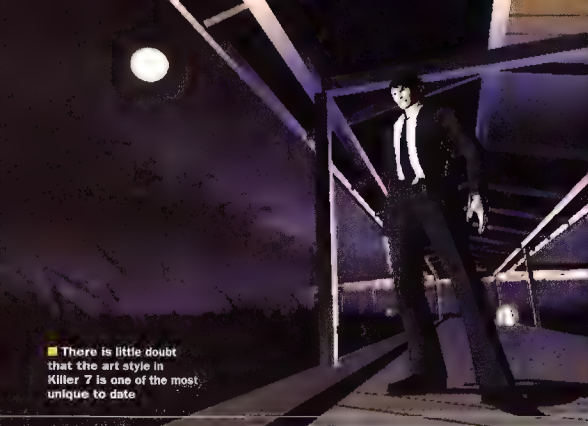
Suda 51 may be the crazy mad scientist behind Killer 7, but his lunacy is exactly the kind of kindling Mikami wanted for the Killer 7 fire.

"The whole reason this game got started was that Mikami was so sick and tired of the hero versus the villain, and you're done," recalls Kobayashi. "He didn't want to make a game like that. So what he and I wanted to do right from the start was make a very


convoluted and complicated story. And that's why we picked Suda 51."

According to Kobayashi, Suda 51 is considered a genius in Japan when it comes to writing stories such as Killer 7. "We knew Suda for his work on the PlayStation," explains Kobayashi. "Specifically a game called The Silver Affair that was never released in America. We liked it, and thought it would be nice to work with this guy. So we worked on a bunch of game ideas, but we decided not to make any of those games. But in one of them, there were these seven characters that we liked. And we thought, 'Wouldn't it be cool to use these seven characters in a different game?' So Suda 51 made a story around these characters, and that's how Killer 7 came into being."

Killer 7's story is indeed a confusing one. Even Kobayashi seems lost at times when he tries to explain the whole thing to us. Here



■ There is little doubt that the art style in *Killer 7* is one of the most unique to date



■ Choose your path

are the basics. A man named Harman Smith, a 60-year-old renowned as the world's greatest assassin, is hired by the United States government to stop the terrorist Kun Lan who has unleashed a phenomenon known as Heaven Smile on the free world. Now, here's the catch: Each of the *Killer 7* characters are actually one of Harman's multiple personalities. However, they aren't just figments of his imagination. They actually take on physical

shape in this world. And the Heaven Smile are wraiths who walk among the living.

The game will take place across six scenarios, which Kobayashi believes will each be about two hours in length, filled with tons of real-time cutscenes to deliver the story. You start off the game playing as Dan Smith and are gradually introduced to all of Harman's different personalities.

The interesting thing is that each personality has its own unique style and powers.

For example, the persona Garcian Smith is basically used just to revive fallen members of *Killer 7*, since he is rather useless in combat. Mask de Smith is able to blow open doors and gain access to areas that would otherwise be inaccessible with his dual grenade launchers. In other situations, you must use their powers to decipher puzzles. In one example we saw, one of the characters uses his special power to engulf himself in flames, which then turns on the sprinkler

THE CHARACTERS

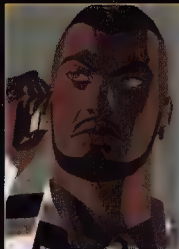


HARMAN SMITH

Age: 60

Harman is the main character of the game, an old Jewish man that can hardly walk and is often seen in a wheelchair. While he may look like a preacher, his true identity is the world's most feared assassin.

Weapon: Anti-Tank Rifle



GARCIAN SMITH

Age: 33

Garcian is gifted with clairvoyance. He has the power to see through enemies' weak spots and their habits. He is rarely used in battle as his weapon is rather weak; his primary function is to resurrect fallen characters.

Weapon: Silenced Handgun

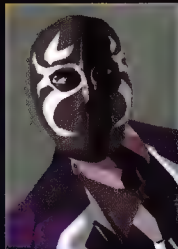


DAN SMITH

Age: 33

Dan features the power to change bullet trajectories with his mind. The only man he trusts is Garcian. Dan Smith is an evil individual that, if he ever had the opportunity, would kill Harman. He's a trained killer that has a hidden power that not even Harman knows about.

Weapon: Modified Colt Python



MASK DE SMITH

Age: 38

A masked man whose right arm is covered by a special armor. His wrestler-like appearance is a disguise with two purposes. One is to cover his horrible skin burns. The other is to keep his identity a secret. With his grenade launchers he is able to blast open certain doors.

Weapon: Dual Grenade Launchers



COYOTE SMITH

Age: 28

Coyote has the power to move through physical matter. He doesn't get along with the other members, and is incredibly violent.

Weapon: Modified Enfield

■ The placement of enemies is random each time you play. Also, be very careful of the Heaven Smile, because if they get close enough these suicide demons will latch on and take you with them

■ Harman Smith is a very, very twisted individual

system that fills up a toilet so he can flush it to pass the puzzle.

Did we already mention that this game is insane? Because if we didn't, now would be a good time. In fact, the lunacy doesn't stop there. The entire game is stylized to fit its eccentric themes. You switch personalities by changing channels on a TV screen. You are greeted by a colored, pulsating moon whenever the game loads. The list of oddities goes on and on.

Even the gameplay is set from a different mold. For example, you don't actually move in 3D in the environments. Instead you choose a direction from a variety of choices, like South Hallway or Room #302, and then you have the ability to move either further down that linear path, or turn back to the choices you previously made. This may seem like an overly rigid design choice, but in reality, the game isn't focused on travel. Instead, Suda 51 wants the gamer to focus

on the gunfights that take place as you traverse these various pathways.

In between choices, you have the ability to freely engage the enemy as you move along the track. In fact, you want to move very carefully, as the Heaven Smile are actually invisible (you see them as blurred outlines moving across the screen until you target and scan them). Once scanned you can use the right analog trigger to zoom in and out on the target (that's right...it's pressure

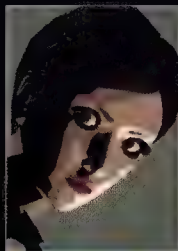


KEVIN SMITH

Age: 30

Although he has no relationship to Silent Bob, he does indeed move in the shadows. Since he is ultra-sensitive to light, he prefers to move in the shadows. He also has infrared vision in total darkness. He performs stealth kills, and is the only character that doesn't use a firearm.

Weapon: Throwing Knives



KAEDE SMITH

Age: 20

As the only female member of the team, she finds herself in the odd position of being in love with other members of the team, namely Coyote and Dan. She has a scope on her weapon and is able to kill from long range. However, she has a very slow reload.

Weapon: AMT Hardballer

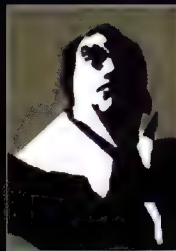


CON SMITH

Age: 14

Blind since birth, Con uses his exceptional hearing to find his way. His advantages are his speed and his ability to lay the smack down with his two firearms (which he holds sideways to great effect).

Weapon: Dual Automatics



KUN LAN

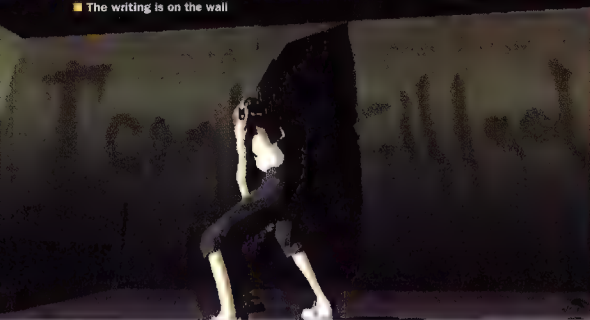
Age: Unknown

Tied to mysterious events that occurred 30 years ago, and now the ringleader of a worldwide terrorist organization, Kun Lan is the Darth Vader of Killer 7 and Harman's number one target.

PlayStation 2 Bound?

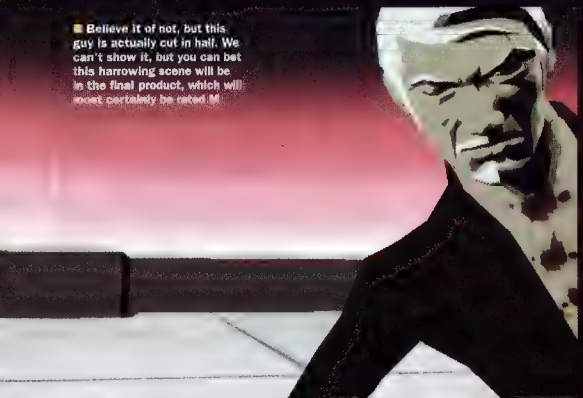
There is little doubt that Killer 7 is coming to PlayStation 2 in Japan, but a U.S. release isn't as assured. Sony of America has been notorious as of late concerning approval of games that don't fall within the conventional gaming standards, and Capcom has made it clear to us that Killer 7 faces an uphill battle here in the States. Concerning the two versions of the game, Kobayashi assured us that both the PS2 and GameCube will be exactly the same.

■ The writing is on the wall



■ There are a number of unique puzzles in the game, including this dart board

■ Believe it or not, but this guy is actually cut in half. We can't show it, but you can bet this harrowing scene will be in the final product, which will most certainly be rated M



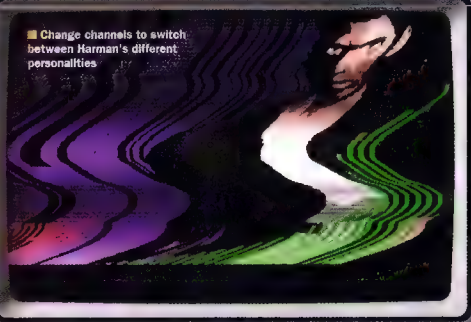
■ The cutscenes all take place within the same engine



■ Take aim...

■ ...and then back is the gory death sequence that follows

■ Change channels to switch between Harman's different personalities



ISZK

sensitive), as you take aim with the left analog stick. Each time you encounter one of the Heaven Smiles, they will have a flow of particles pouring from a random spot on their body. Blast this particular spot and you can score a one-hit kill. Otherwise, you need to really unload to take them down.

Luckily, the payoff is perhaps one of the greatest death sequences ever seen in a video game. The Heaven Smiles pulse, and then proceed to spew blood, fountain-like, out of at least 75 different holes in their body. After this grotesque display, they implode on themselves and evaporate with a pixie dust of blood particles.

One thing is for sure, you can't accuse Killer 7 of not being an original

title. The game really is an attempt by Capcom to create a story-driven piece of software, one that is not only a game, but a piece of interactive art.

And for how insane the story sounds, it is the driving force of Killer 7 – the one thing that will either sink the ship or propel it into cult classic status. We were able to see a number of cutscenes, and they are definitely awe-inspiring. The art style is simply dazzling, and there are some impressive camera techniques used to create a very cinematic mood. We even heard that the team is assembling an eclectic voice cast to go along with Killer 7's unique vision, including Dwight Schultz, who played Murdoch on *The A-Team*.

Sadly, this game is very hard to judge from what we saw. It is a bit like seeing a portion of a movie like *Memento*, *Fight Club*, or *The Sixth Sense* without knowing the twist that makes it all come together and make sense. We have seen some amazing things, but we also had to scratch our heads because we weren't quite sure we understood what we were seeing. The one thing we can say for sure is that Suda 51 is indeed an innovator. Killer 7 is a game like no other. But in the end it will come down to how well he can tell a story. Killer 7 can either be an eye-opening venture through the surreal like the original *Matrix* movie, or a confusing, self-involved snoozer-fest like its sequels.



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By Eric C. Baldwin
GLOBAL PRESS NETWORK

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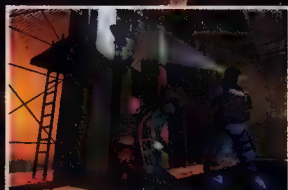
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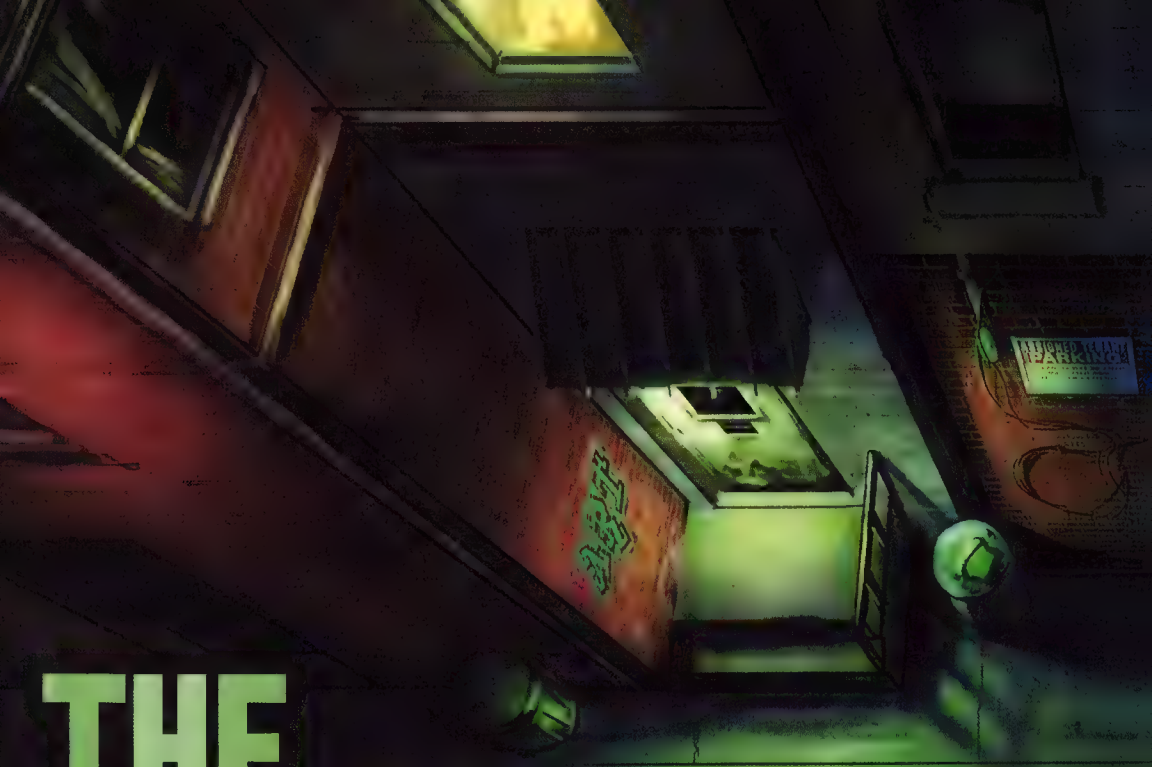
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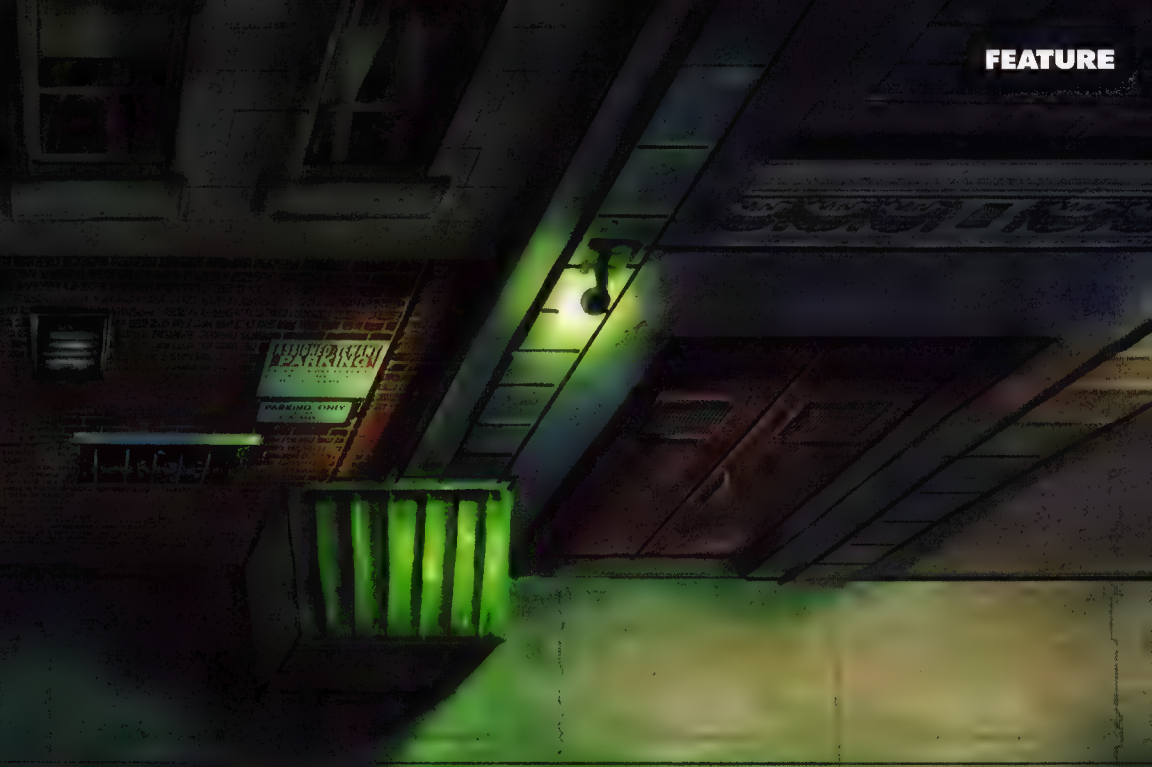
Game Informer Presents
A LIONHEAD STUDIOS PRODUCTION

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE | PC

DREAMING IN **TECHNICOLOR**

FORMAT: PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE | PC | STYLE: 1-PLAYER SIMULATION | PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: LIONHEAD STUDIOS | RELEASE: FALL

When your leading man knows more about white lines of powder than he does the lines of his script, you know you've got problems. As if his ego needed a boost in the first place. But if you can film these last few scenes before Miss Maintenance has another pills incident, you should be able to finish principal filming only two months over schedule. Wow, it seems that



you've finally found something your lead actor and actress have in common – pharmaceuticals. Must be what they call on-screen chemistry.

Oh well. The studio president banged his fist on the table screaming, "We've got to have an alien love story with a car chase!" claiming that it's what everyone's doing these days. Well, that's just what he is going to get –

pure crap. As long it earns a couple of million back, hopefully you can make that film you've really wanted to: a robot comedy (with a little bit of romance) starring Ruben and Clay from *American Idol*. It's got Oscar written all over it!

If there's a stereotype about Hollywood and filmmaking out there, it's probably true and it's probably in

The Movies. Peter Molyneux's *Lionhead Studios* is synonymous with far-reaching, ambitious titles (and even further release dates), and those visions have instantly captured the imaginations of gamers everywhere. From either side of the camera, be it as an amateur auteur or selfish star, *The Movies* represents yet another peak in *Lionhead's* lofty aims. The title delivers the full range

of the Hollywood spectrum. Make your own movies, direct your studio to dominance, or do both – just remember that this town has crushed egos and ambitions much larger than yours. It ain't that long of a walk from the star-studded premier location to the outgoing bus station. Welcome to your first day on the job, your trailer is this way. What do you mean it isn't big enough?!

The Movies lets you control your own film studio through all the eras of cinema history up to present day. Some may just be content to stay behind the camera and concentrate on putting together movies, leaving the day-to-day dirty work of the business alone. Others will want to make a mogul of themselves, supervising the overall direction of their studio on its way to the top. From one extreme to the other and all points in-between, Lionhead is leaving it up to you.

Let's start with the absolute basics: making a movie as simply as possible. Pick a name for your film. *Beat That Mule*. Sounds good enough. Assign a director. If your studio is large enough, you'll have numerous directors and actors to choose from. Of course, some may be better suited than others. Now you can pick which stars you want to appear in your film and their costumes. Some will show genuine enthusiasm for being chosen for your project, while others aren't so happy to be teamed up with you. Here you can see the start of the inherent AI of your actors. When deciding whom to use for what film, you'll have to weigh the pros and cons. Who gets along with whom? Maybe a certain big name star's high level of talent is equalled only by their propensity to cause trouble on the set. Perhaps you should roll the dice on a tamer no-name actor.

Choosing your sets goes a long way to determining what kind of genre your film is going to be in. You can certainly have a wild west romp featuring zombies, but unless such a mix-and-match approach is done exactly right, the critics and public will only be confused. The more successful your studio, the more sets you're likely to have. The scenes that take place in these locations can be chosen next. Maybe you want to start out like Hitchcock's *Vertigo* with a rooftop action scene. Or perhaps you'll be more traditional and put this cliffhanger at the end of the movie.

Lastly, you'll assign some production values to your project. Special effects and script budgets can be determined. While you are making all of these choices, you can always monitor the film's star rating. This is a pretty good estimate of the film's overall worth. If you don't want to spend the money on the stars or the time on the script, you can probably still scratch out a semi-respectable three-star film (and maybe that's all you want anyway). Or perhaps the fact that you have outdated sets is keeping you from that five-star blockbuster. Once the film you've constructed is green-lighted, the writers will start banging out a script, and shooting on the various sets you've chosen will begin.



Although there are certainly a lot of choices you can mull over, Molyneux and Lionhead are dead set on offering an appealing gameplay experience for both those who do and those who do not want to fuss with the details. For instance, the basic movie we've walked you through above can actually be set in motion by clicking on just a few buttons. The game has been set up to choose certain defaults, such as costumes and scenes, for those players who don't want to get too bogged down in the particulars. The title of your film will be randomly generated and your actors will be chosen for you. On the other hand, there are more than enough options for those that want to get their hands dirty. As Molyneux puts it, depth should be "just a click below the surface." With over 2,000 scenes to choose from, you could easily spend the time to storyboard out your entire film or make the effort to design your own custom sets (with unlockable pieces such as palm trees). A good example of one of the ways the game will fill in the blanks for less hands-on gamers is the script. If you have only picked out three scenes for your entire movie, your writers are going to have to work extra hard to give you a script that makes sense.



Labor unions will be one of the possible research advancements for your studio.

Once the project is in motion, *The Movies* switches to real time, where the day-to-day activities of your studio play out before you in a format similar to *The Sims*. On every level of this game, you can see Lionhead's philosophy of choice presented in front of you. Once the movie you've started begins filming, you can sit in the director's chair and demand retakes (at additional cost, of course), lengthen scenes, and adjust the content of the film via sliders. These can turn a saccharine kiss into a full-on tongue twisting towel examination. *The Movies* doesn't allow you to manually adjust the camera angles to your liking, but directors who've earned their stripes can step in during shooting and choose from some pre-determined camera positions that they've unlocked from their previous work.

Those with a more established studio may want take a step back from such hands-on tweaking and concentrate on the big picture. You can easily get the wheels started on another picture, build other sets, or spend time getting help and direction from your advisors. Watching the game in action, you quickly get a sense of both the game's scope and simplicity. Molyneux swears that anyone wanting to just make movies and not give a second thought to building a studio empire will find it hard to avoid the temptation of getting involved with all there is to play with in this game (although there will be a mode where you can just make isolated movies). Along with the plethora of fun options at your fingertips, the team is working hard to make the interface as simple and inviting as possible. One example of this is that you can pick up an actor and place them anywhere on your studio lot. The instantaneous results can come in handy when you want to redirect a distracted actor back to work on the set.



These actors are placeholders, but this is a taste of what your finished films will look like.



Title: Wildest Week 2

Director: Chad Best



The tenor of any scene is easily manipulated.



They do the most terrible things," says Molyneux, "unforgivable things, and yet they still are stars. If they were politicians or businessmen or anything, they'd probably be thrown in jail." Using star power is a quick way towards box office success, but be careful to not end up somewhere between *Gigli* and *Swept Away*. When not on set, who knows what kind of trouble these ticking time bombs will get into? Drunken rampages, late night encounters with leading ladies, double-digit weight gain – all this tabloid gossip could easily derail even the best director's plans. On the other hand, perhaps your lead actor/actress is more about business than pleasure, or is a total unknown with no demands whatsoever. You could end up with a talented trainwreck like Richard Burton or a focused veteran like Robert DeNiro. As a player, you'll have to understand what each actor's particular inclinations might be before you pick them for roles. Sometimes you might be willing to put up with the reshoots and costly delays for an exceptionally talented and popular soak. Hell, if you get to hold up that golden statuette in everyone's faces, then it's all worth it. Critics' comments in the game will be determined by over 100 variables.

If you have good directors in your studio, they may be able to placate the beast or get them to exorcise their demons by constantly putting them to work – or maybe just buying them a larger trailer. You'll have to keep an eye on how happy your cast is. If you're not careful, a rival studio can lure your stars away with bigger and better promises than you can offer. Similarly, you'll have to keep an eye out for actors you can hire from the outside – provided you have the money. Actors and actresses aren't your only worry, however. Envy is a universal trait, and can spread through everyone involved in the movie. If you aren't paying your scriptwriters enough they can stage a fit of their own. Consider having two or three movies in production at once and having to manage all those people and demands.

Amusingly, Molyneux himself went out to Hollywood and was proud to say that his game is right on track. "Everyone in Hollywood is exactly like I thought they'd be. There is an incredible amount of backstabbing. I mean, you could understand, if you were a religious person actually, that Satan had come to Earth and he was Steven Spielberg in disguise." Everyone's been talking for the past few years about how close the video game industry is coming to the movie industry. This is a topic that Molyneux openly laughs at. "We may think we're near Hollywood, but...our equivalent of cocaine and class. A drugs is pizza and Coca-Cola, and it just doesn't really mean the same thing. When we have an industry party, we rent some hall somewhere and get together for a few hours. When they have an industry party, they are people doing the most unspeakable things all over the place. It is everything you'd expect it to be."



Some sets can be re-used through the ages



B-movie or box-office gold, the types of films you create are entirely up to you





As your studio progresses through the years, you will have the opportunity to keep your lot up with, and maybe even ahead, of the times. Advances in filmmaking will be yours for the earning. Be the first to use Technicolor or some new special effects wizardry. Of course, keeping in line with the game's variable depth and difficulty, if you don't use money to research such new advances you will still get them, just a little later than other more innovative studios.

Running your lot in *The Movies* is a multi-faceted juggling act whose gameplay balancing is going to be very important – especially considering Moynaux's insistence that the title be accountable for varying degrees of user interaction. For example, the necessary cause and effect of a film's budget on your studio is going to have to be reconciled with players who might just spend all of their time tweaking the content slider bars for their films. In the end, it will thankfully be all about the movies. Gross some serious cash at the end of the day and all of the bitching about trailer sizes and gratuitous crane shots will be a moot point.

Given all the work you've put into your movies up to this point, it's understandable that you'd forget about one of the best parts of the title – actually watching the finished product. *Lionhead* is working just as hard on this aspect of *The Movies*. Look at the acting itself. Because you can use slider bars to adjust how agitated you want an actor to be, there is a wide range of depictions available – from something as subtle as

shifty eyes to full blown hand wringing and pacing across a room. Naturally, the animations that go along with the many actions of your cast will have to be extremely varied. *Lionhead* is already ahead on this front, stockpiling many times more animations than your average game due to the large number of actions possible by your stars. There's also a smooch and mirrors trick the developer is putting together to make all the props, people, sets, etc. on your lot look very detailed. We saw a convincing demonstration where a 1,000 polygon horse at a slight distance looked almost identical to an equine with four times the amount of polys.

Moynaux points out that, like playing the game itself, there is a lot under the surface at work here. "There is as much innovation in *The Movies* as in anything that *Lionhead* is doing. The challenges in *Black & White* [2] are nothing compared to what's in *The Movies*."

The AI in the game, for example, consists of more than just having to govern the chemistry between your lead actors (although that is quite important). When you put together your sets, stars have to know how to interact with what's around them. If you give them a table, they have to understand that they can sit down at it. If you add a beer bottle, then maybe one of the actors will grab it. When you add in the slider bars, gripping a beer bottle as a passive action in a calm state might turn into it being thrown across the room when you want to express explosive anger.

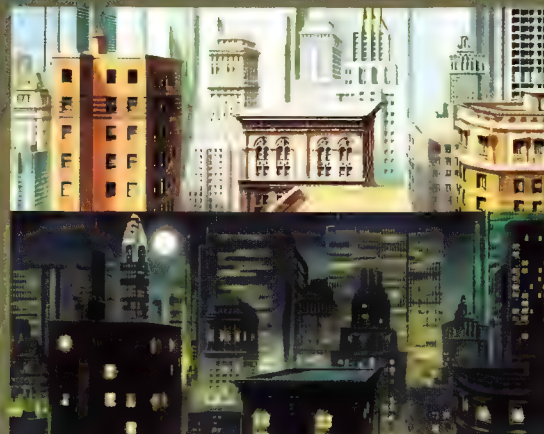
Props will change...



...According to the times



Good actors will respond more convincingly to your slider directions than bad ones



Naturally, the PC edition of *The Movies* will come complete with tools for adventurous players. Thus, a whole new world is open to those who want to add even more set and costume options to their studio. Console games, however, aren't left out of the customizations. Both voice and onscreen text can be added to your movies in the post-production phase. The voice portion works by giving you a specific window of time per scene in which you can use a microphone peripheral to add whatever speech you want. We assume whatever it is you say will be dirty and vulgar, but then that's exactly what we'd do too! When you



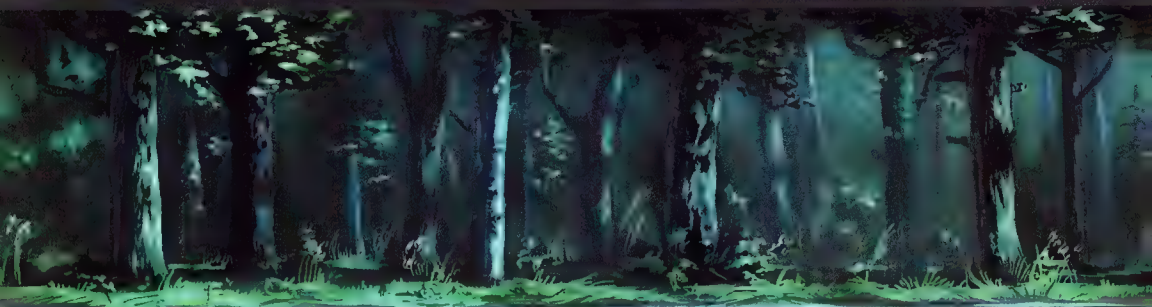
Possible future expansion packs may take a real-life movie and give you all the tools you need to chop it up and present it the way you envision it.

think about how not only will you be hiring writers to give you a qualitative script, but you can also write and include your own dialogue, you easily understand the ambition at work here. Molyneux said that the company is even looking into a voice-synthesizing program for those who are shy about using their own voices. This would require players to type in the dialogue they'd want, and a voice in a variety of languages would recite the lines given. It is unclear if any of these voice capabilities will be supported on the GameCube.

Of course, Lionhead isn't going to miss out on utilizing the Internet. Although the game is not playable online, any movie you make can be turned into an MPEG (on PC) and therefore be sent easily to friends or posted on Lionhead's site—where you can even win awards from the studio. The space requirement for console memory cards is quite low, so you will be able to stock them with your personal creations and show them off whenever you want. However, the developer says you can make films as long as you want, so space may become a factor. Your movies would also be easily transferred over Xbox Live or via your PS2 Network Adapter, although the company isn't giving any specifics on the subject at this time.

Once online, Molyneux imagines all sorts of possibilities for player's creations. At the present time, no actual actors have licensed their names for use with *The Movies*, but you can make up any name you want for your stable of stars. "You are going to get people recreating the life and times of Keanu Reeves. Forming their whole studios around them, and then putting them online and selling them off on eBay saying, 'This is Keanu Reeves.' Which means, I think you are going to get thousands of these movies floating around the Internet."

As if *The Movies* itself wasn't enough to play with, the developer already has its eyes on expansion packs revolving around specific genres, real-life movies, and more. It is easy to see a Sims-type of lineage here that fans would gobble up just to get their hands on the latest round of sets and props. One pack Molyneux is sure of is the Director's Cut. Here you'll be able to manipulate your cameras for shooting scenes and get more editing options. In essence, it gives would-be directors a real feel for what it's like to be behind the camera. That sounds like a lot to handle, but Molyneux reckons it's the present and future of video games. "[People] want to play things out there, in the real world. It's far more about having entertainment that's about doing things that you have dreamt of doing, not in some fantasy world, but dreamt of doing, out there. The very nature of the game we're playing is different."



LIONHEAD GOES TO THE MOVIES

Game Informer asked the staff at Lionhead Studios what kind of movies they'd make in the game, and what sorts of films they like in real life.



PETER MOLYNEUX
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF LIONHEAD STUDIOS

"I like to make films with lots of gore in them, so you can imagine how I'd use the sliders. The bad guys have to win,

so think of the evil criminals (in any sixties movie) winning!"

Favorite Movies: "Silence of the Lambs, The Lord of the Rings series."



JEAN-CLAUDE COTTIER
TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMMER

"I like to make action movies with loads of women dressed in nice bikinis. Many of the actresses are

also being sent to plastic surgery, assuring I always have the right boobs to choose from!"

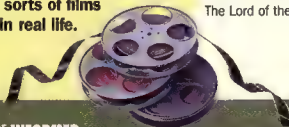
Favorite Movies: "In real life I like any action movie that has girls with bikinis in it."



JONAS THORNQVIST
LEAD ARTIST

"I like to make sci-fi and fantasy movies. But most of all I like to mix them all into crazy combinations, like werewolves and futuristic space warriors or some other strange combination. My films don't always make perfect sense, but they are surely interesting."

Favorite Movies: "Fantasy and sci-fi movies, preferably a bit of both mixed together."





▲ "There are two kinds of people, my friend: Those with loaded guns and those who dig. You dig".



JAMES BROWN
LEAD PROGRAMMER

"I enjoy making movies featuring robots in romantic situations. There's nothing quite like the sight of a couple of tons of steel acting all coy.

Then I use the sliders to make them really 'romantic'."

Favorite Movies: "I have a soft spot for film noir – anything from *The Big Sleep* to *Dark City*. I'm also a total sci-fi geek – films like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* are particular favorites."



ASH HARMAN
LEAD SCENE DESIGNER

"I like movies featuring 'real people' dealing with 'real issues.' But being a hopeless romantic, I begrudgingly admit that tender movie

moments can really move me. So I'm sure to set the passion sliders low to emphasize subtle, powerful moments rather than the quick and dirty. Despite the love of realism and romance, I'm a devout sci-fi fanatic."

Favorite Movies: "The *Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Contact*, *Chocolat*, *Secrets & Lies*, and almost anything in space."



RIK HEYWOOD
CONSOLE LEAD

"Being a capitalist, I always want to make movies that make a lot of money. 'Give the public what they want' is my movie-making motto. I concentrate on building up my stars, as nothing sells a movie better than a super star."

Favorite Movies: "I prefer movies with a bit of depth. I can normally live without the latest special effects blockbuster. As long as I walk out of the cinema feeling entertained though, I'm happy."



TONY CINGILLO
GAMES TESTER

"I like to make classic '70s style kung-fu films (you can't beat people fighting in flares). The sliders options fit perfectly into how I want my

films to look. It lets me change the amount of violence in each scene. So I can make one character hard as nails, and another a big softy just like Brynley our producer."

Favorite Movies: "In real life I prefer watching gangster films. You can't beat *Goodfellas*, especially that line: 'Ever since I was a little kid, I always wanted to be a gangster.'"

Disney Studios

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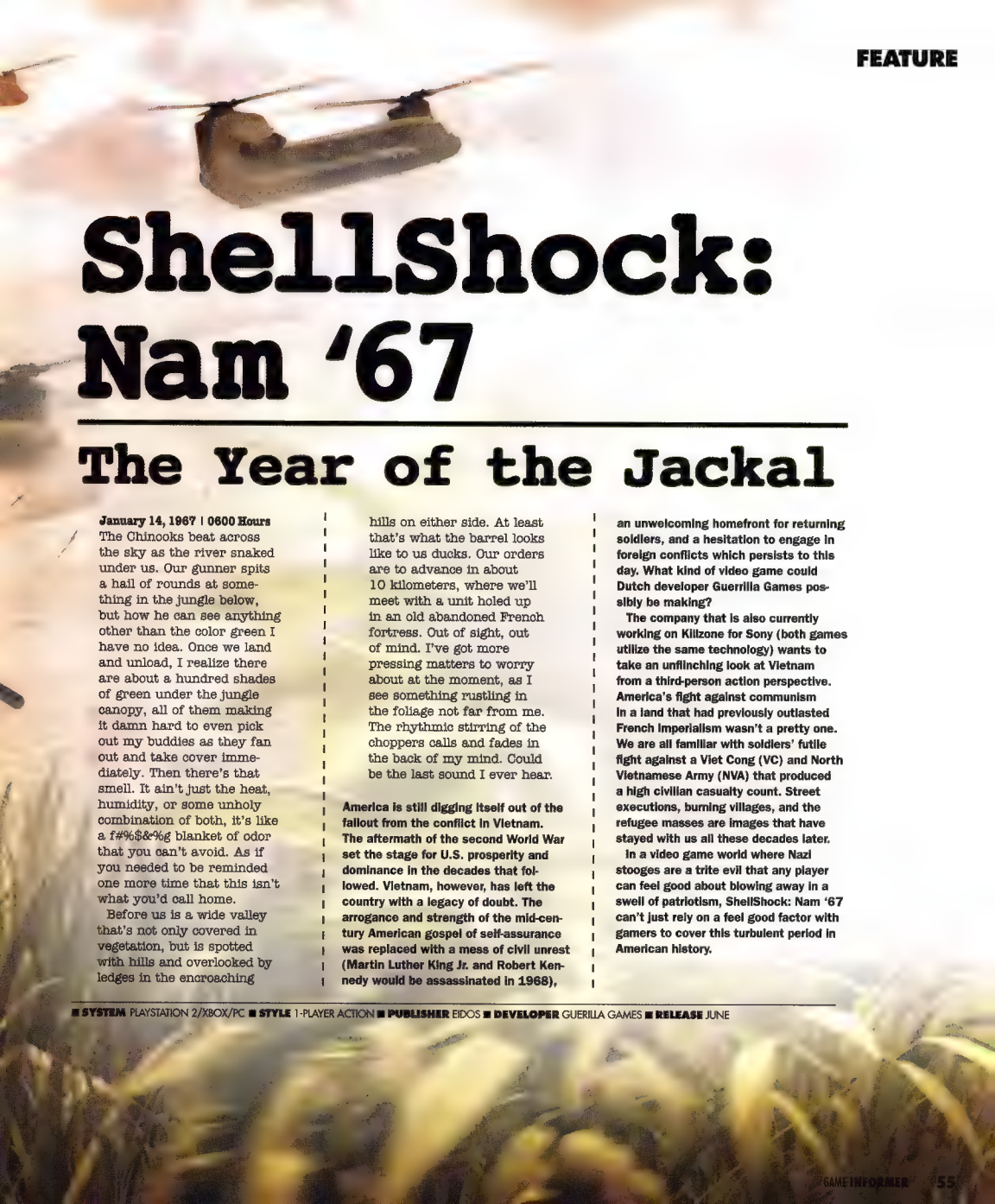


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ShellShock: Nam '67

The Year of the Jackal

January 14, 1967 | 0600 Hours

The Chinooks beat across the sky as the river snaked under us. Our gunner spits a hail of rounds at something in the jungle below, but how he can see anything other than the color green I have no idea. Once we land and unload, I realize there are about a hundred shades of green under the jungle canopy, all of them making it damn hard to even pick out my buddies as they fan out and take cover immediately. Then there's that smell. It ain't just the heat, humidity, or some unholy combination of both, it's like a f%\$&%g blanket of odor that you can't avoid. As if you needed to be reminded one more time that this isn't what you'd call home.

Before us is a wide valley that's not only covered in vegetation, but is spotted with hills and overlooked by ledges in the encroaching

hills on either side. At least that's what the barrel looks like to us ducks. Our orders are to advance in about 10 kilometers, where we'll meet with a unit holed up in an old abandoned French fortress. Out of sight, out of mind. I've got more pressing matters to worry about at the moment, as I see something rustling in the foliage not far from me. The rhythmic stirring of the choppers calls and fades in the back of my mind. Could be the last sound I ever hear.

America is still digging itself out of the fallout from the conflict in Vietnam. The aftermath of the second World War set the stage for U.S. prosperity and dominance in the decades that followed. Vietnam, however, has left the country with a legacy of doubt. The arrogance and strength of the mid-century American gospel of self-assurance was replaced with a mess of civil unrest (Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy would be assassinated in 1968),

an unwelcoming homefront for returning soldiers, and a hesitation to engage in foreign conflicts which persists to this day. What kind of video game could Dutch developer Guerrilla Games possibly be making?

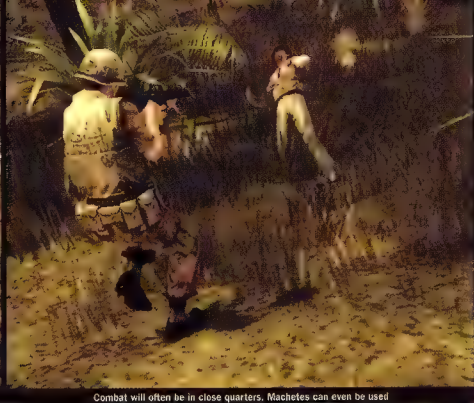
The company that is also currently working on Killzone for Sony (both games utilize the same technology) wants to take an unflinching look at Vietnam from a third-person action perspective. America's fight against communism in a land that had previously ousted French Imperialism wasn't a pretty one. We are all familiar with soldiers' futile fight against a Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) that produced a high civilian casualty count. Street executions, burning villages, and the refugee masses are images that have stayed with us all these decades later.

In a video game world where Nazi stooges are a trite evil that any player can feel good about blowing away in a swell of patriotism, ShellShock: Nam '67 can't just rely on a feel good factor with gamers to cover this turbulent period in American history.

■ SYSTEM PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC ■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER GUERRILLA GAMES ■ RELEASE JUNE



The ground foliage is surprisingly varied



Combat will often be in close quarters. Machetes can even be used

"War is hell and this game is clearly going to depict the horrors of war," states Guerrilla Games' commercial director Martin De Ronde. As our meeting with the developer goes on, the topic of how to accurately reproduce the grisly nature of Vietnam without stepping over the line is revisited several times. De Ronde and the rest of the team stress that none of this is being done for the sheer controversy factor. The game does contain gore and dismemberment, but the company understands that even in war (at least for video games), there are rules. You will not march through villages and kill innocents. You won't commit these atrocities yourself, but you will experience them. De Ronde and game director Dave Bowry explains that you will see things like executions and ransacking of villages suspected to hold Viet Cong, although it is action that sets the mood rather than something you participate in.

There are certainly those who will say that Guerrilla is exploiting Vietnam, but the company swears that neither controversy nor shock is at the root of what it is going for.

De Ronde and Bowry emphasize that the game isn't about advocating one side's ideology or even reversing the outcome of the conflict. It merely places you in events in 1967 – both the good and the bad. For instance, De Ronde points out that there are levels where your objective is to retreat.

Looking past the shock factor, there is

plenty of video game merit in the subject of Vietnam. The developer doesn't merely see the conflict as just another location for another battle. The communist forces, as a way to leverage the jungle landscape and their knowledge of it, used guerrilla tactics. Once dropped into the miasma of green, you will instantly understand the effect of the environment. This includes having to watch out for booby traps such as pits filled with deadly spikes.

ShellShock is one man's journey from normal grunt all the way up to being a Special Forces agent. As you progress, your missions will change. You may start out combing through waterlogged rice fields, but eventually you'll be called upon to perform stealthy assassinations, for example. Guerrilla even felt that this change in your directives (apart from keeping the gameplay fresh) was, in a small way, useful to the Vietnam experience. "We felt we should focus on one man's journey," explains De Ronde, "not necessarily placing emphasis on a squad or a platoon. We felt that this was really the best way it was experienced – the way in which the soldiers felt the Vietnam War. By going in alone not knowing very much about the country."



Mounted turret outposts can be commandeered

The down patrol starts



You won't see carnage like this in Medal of Honor





FEATURE



Air support from phantom jets, flamethrowers, rocket launchers, mounted guns, and much more will be available

Between missions you'll be able to get some rest at the game's base camp. This isn't merely a glorified loading or options screen however. Here you can get in some weapons practice, learn more historical information on Vietnam and the conflict itself, and talk to other soldiers. You might even pick up some hints on the way. Do well enough in combat and you can trade the goods you pick up from fallen foes for cash. You can then turn around and buy everything from illegal weapons to more ammo. Guerrilla sees the base camp as a

very integral part of not just the game, but the experience itself. The team is seriously contemplating getting the licenses for Motown songs, for example, which you'll hear on radios as you walk through camp. Hearing the bittersweet strains of Martha & the Vandella's "Jimmy Mack" in the stinking heat of Vietnam isn't home, but it's all you've got to hold on to.

In a similar move to replicate the Vietnam experience, the developers deemed that ShellShock must be a third-person game, as it opens up your peripheral vision. Once you hit the ground running in some of the outdoor levels, you'll understand. Unlike a first-person shooter, where targets are funneled towards you to pick off, ShellShock gives you a distinctly wide-open and immersive feeling.

In the level we've described at the beginning of this feature, we were overwhelmed in our first few times through. As you and your fellow soldiers advanced, you could easily get lost in the dense and deceptive jungle. With no actual path to follow, combat was awash in the chaos of tracer fire, downed

foliage, smoke grenades, and screams from both friend and foe. You can switch to a zoomed-in camera positioned near your shoulder by clicking R3. This is handy for pinpoint fire. It's especially alluring to see the illuminating muzzle flash and discharged shells spit out. The enemy forces were well encamped during our seemingly endless journey through this valley of death. Add on top of these odds the aspect of friendly fire and you begin to see how picking your way through this maelstrom is different from some of the run-and-gun titles you've played before. Multiplayer sounds like it would be sweet, but ShellShock doesn't have it, which is regrettable.

In addition to the sheer breadth and length of the initial portion of this stage, Guerrilla has used other means to convey the sense of loneliness that the looming jungle creates. Your squad members will move and carry out their actions on their own, leaving you isolated and making getting separated very easy. They will, however, call out objectives and ask for your support. Later on, forest levels like this will be combined with mazes of underground tunnels, which can only add to the confusion. It sounds silly to say that you'll enjoy getting lost, but it's a testament to just how immersive this game can be.



FEATURE

Apart from having to cope with covert Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam, American forces had to deal with the guerilla tactics of the NVA which used firmly established positions to combat the superior firepower of U.S. troops. We witnessed a simulation demonstration that took into account variables like your unit's objectives (such as having to advance on an enemy line and overtake a position - which is not easy) and strength of defensive positioning to determine who would win in an assault of U.S. troops on well-entrenched enemy forces. Although the outcome was lopsided in favor of the north Vietnamese, the actions of all the soldiers was usually different each time. Of course, Guerrilla's simulation didn't take into account your effect on a battle. ShellShock aims to strike a gameplay

balance that avoids having the player be too strong, but at the same time not having your support forces do all the work, either. Bowry explains that the autonomous choices of your fellow soldiers is another way to help you feel the scale of some of the battles you'll be in. "We're trying to make a war game that exists without you, but where you actually affect the outcome." One great way to tip the odds in your favor if things get tough is that you can call in an air strike of napalm from time to time. Artillery and support helicopters can also be utilized when your back is to the wall.

Sometimes death comes from above; sometimes it's from out of nowhere. Guerrilla Games wagers ShellShock's gritty take on war will be full of surprises.

January 14, 1967 | 0937 Hours

We managed to fight our way to the top of a clearing where the old French garrison stood. Even though the enclosed jungle felt like a death trap, I was starting to get used to it. Compared to the path ahead of us, it was downright cozy. About twenty yards separated us from the doors of the place, and the only cover that could be found were in some rocks, the burning wrecks of vehicles, and the occasional fallen tree. Charlie is everywhere. Thank God they wear those silly f\$%&@g cone hats, otherwise we'd never be able to pick out the snipers on top of the building.

As I slowly make my way forward my strength leaves in a wave of nausea. At the entrance stands a wooden stake with some poor bastard's head impaled on it. The words "Welcome to Hell" are printed in blood behind it. None of us wanted to be in this God-forsaken country in the first place, and at the sight of this, some of the men refuse to advance. I can't feel my legs move, but somehow they work enough to carry me though the high wooden doors of the building. The smell of burnt flesh and feces collides with my senses, and what I see next drains all the remaining life out of me. Three dead bodies hang in the courtyard. God help us all.



Through the game you'll forge bonds by talking with and fighting alongside your fellow soldiers. Some of these bonds will be severed



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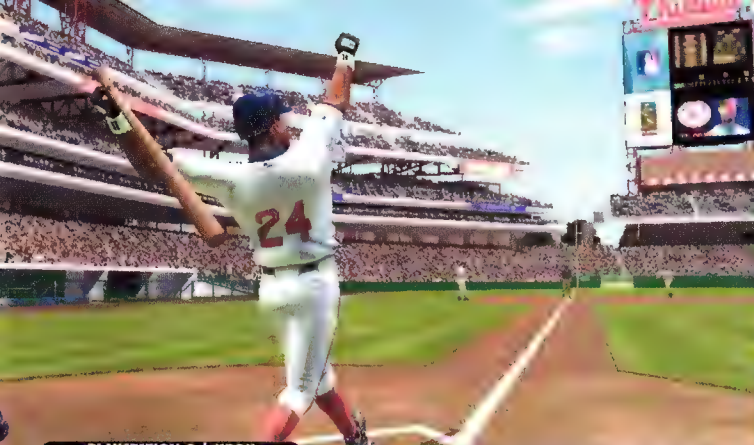
WHO WILL BE THIS YEAR'S Sultan of SWAT?

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THIS YEAR'S BASEBALL SHOWDOWN

★ COMPARISON STATS ★

	ESPN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL	ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2004	MVP BASEBALL	MLB 2005	MLB SLUGFEST: LOADED
THE BASICS					
Release Date	March 23	March 2	March 9	March 16	June 7
Commentary Team	Jon Miller, Rex Hudler, Karl Ravech	Tom Brennaman, Steve Lyons	Mike Krzyzewski, Duane Kuiper, Harold Reynolds	Vin Scully, Dave Campbell, Matt Vasgergan	Tim Lincecum, Kevin Matthews
Cover Athlete	Jason Giambi	Derek Jeter	Albert Pujols	Troy Glaus	Sammy Sosa
FRONTEND OPTIONS					
Gameplay Sliders?/If?	YES/30	No (5 Difficulty Levels)	YES/95	No	YES/10
Create-A-Team	No	YES (46 Cities, 35 Mascots, 28 Stadiums)	No	No	YES
Create-A-Team Expansion Mode	No	YES	No	No	No
Number of Player Attribute Categories	43	35	60	47	70
Bonus Modes	Duel, Gamecast, Situation	Trivia, HR Derby, TWIB Challenge	Home Run & Pitcher Showdowns, Scenario Editor	Home Run Derby, Playoffs, All-Star	Home Run Derby
GAMEPLAY					
Play From First-Person Perspective?	YES	No (New Chase Fielding Cam)	No	No (Just Auto Instant Replays)	No
Number of Batting Animations	110	100	100	100 Core, 550 Personal Stances	200
Number of Pitch Types	17	20	15 w/individual pitcher variables	15	16
Wild Pitches & Passed Balls?	YES	YES	YES	No	YES
Dropped Third Strikes	YES	YES	YES	No	TBA
Coach & Umpire Arguments	No	No	No	YES (Over Close Plays)	TBA
Player Ejections	YES	YES	YES	YES	TBA
Working Bulpen	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Hot & Cold Player Streaks	YES (New Confidence Meter)	No	YES	YES	No (On-Fire)
Lean Over Railings To Catch Foul Ball?	No	YES	YES	No	No
FRANCHISE/SEASON OPTIONS					
Number of Seasons?	30 (GM Mode), Unlimited (Franchise)	20	120	Unlimited	150
Multiple Users in Franchise?/If?	No (Only in Season Mode/30)	No	No	YES/2	No
Different Schedules Each Franchise Year?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Variable Season Lengths?/If?	YES/6	No	No	YES (Not in Franchise)	No
Fantasy Draft?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Lifetime Statistical Tracking?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES (with Minor League Stats)
Fictional Rookies?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Minor League Farm System?/Real Teams?	YES/No	YES/No	YES/YES	No (15-Man Inactive Roster)	YES/No
Number of League Leader Stats	67	19	21	23	30
CPU Offered Trades?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Salary Management?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Stadium Upgrading + Price Setting?	No	No	No	YES	No
EXTRAS					
Retro Jerseys?/If?	YES/114	YES/2 Per Team	YES/60	YES/2 Per Team	TBA
Classic Players	YES	YES	YES	YES	TBA
Unlockables	Trophies	Interviews, Teams, Cheats	Retro Teams, Stadiums, Players	Teams, Stadiums, Easter Eggs	DVD Content
ONLINE					
Online Play?/Platforms?	YES/PS2 & Xbox	YES/PS2 & Xbox	YES/PS2 & PC	YES/PS2	YES/PS2 & Xbox
Broadband & Narrowband Support?	Broadband Only	Broadband Only	Both	Both	Broadband Only
Voice & Text Chat?	Both	Voice Only	Voice (PS2), Text (PS2, PC)	Both	Voice Only
User Created Tournaments?	YES	No	YES (PC Only)	YES	YES
User Created Seasons?	YES	No	No	No	TBA
Online Leaderboard?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Downloadable Content?	YES (Rosters)	YES (Rosters)	YES (Rosters)	YES (Rosters/Attribute Changes)	YES (Rosters)
Downloadable Roster Frequency?	Monthly	TBA	Seasonal Points (All-Star Game)	Weekly	Monthly
Non-Default Rosters Online?	No	No	No	YES	YES
Monthly Subscription Fee?	No	No	No	No	No
Franchise Online?	No	No	No	No	YES

America's favorite pastime is quickly becoming one of video games' most heated battlegrounds. For the 2004 season, developers are pulling out the big guns and waging war against one another. First-person game play, minor league licensing, stadium upgrading, 162-game online seasons, and player confidence are all debuting in this year's crop of baseball games. Taking a tip from Bud Selig, 2004 also sees the contraction of two titles. With the collapse of 300, High Heat Baseball is a thing of a past. Microsoft has also thrown in the towel with Inside Pitch. That's not to say that we won't see the resurrection of either title in 2005; Microsoft has acquired the intellectual property rights to High Heat Baseball from 300, so we may see the two titles amalgamate into one! Check your corked bats at the door, and enjoy Game Informer's fourth annual baseball round-up! This year's edition also marks the debut of Game Informer's Hall of Shame and its first five members!



PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2005

PUBLISHER ACCLAIM | DEVELOPER ACCLAIM | RELEASE MARCH 2

Given its history and ability to bring something new to the table year in and year out, All-Star Baseball is considered the crafty veteran of video game baseball. Dazzling gamers with its fan-related material that ranges from Hall of Fame interviews and trivia to card collecting and scenario games, it's easy to get caught up in Acclaim's love for the sport. Although still an enjoyable play, last year's title didn't stack up well against the competition, primarily MVP. Although filled with spirit, Acclaim's game had definitely lost a step.

Knowing full well that change was necessary, Acclaim has spent most of this year's development cycle implementing new ways to connect the player to the action. Along with the addition of online play for both PlayStation 2 and Xbox, Acclaim is bringing gamers closer to the action with the introduction of a fielding cam.

Although not nearly as impressive as ESPN's first-person view, the fielder cam is a newfangled idea that positions the gamer's perspective behind the fielder. Whether you find yourself charging a slow grounder or climbing the fence to rob a homer, your interaction from this viewpoint is easy to grasp and a nice change for the series. To ensure that gamers never once find themselves disoriented, fly ball cursors and camera shifting hone in on the position that players should be in to make a play. Given how buggy last year's fielding performance was, we worry how this year's augmented system will fare.



Pitching can now be viewed from a broadcast angle

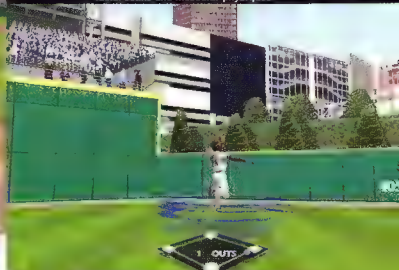
Other than changing to a broadcast camera angle (behind the pitcher), you won't find too many alterations in the pitching game. From an aesthetic point of view, it doesn't look like too much work was done to batting, either. Appearances can be deceiving, though. The batting game may not have new mechanics, but we have noticed that getting the barrel on the ball demands much more precision. The point of contact is also right on the money—whereas with last year's game, the ball, which you missed by a good foot, would magically hit your Louisville Slugger and fly out of the park.

The front office, where Acclaim usually shows great dedication, is almost identical to last year. You'll even see that the menu animations are duplicates of those in the previous entry. Expansion mode, collectible cards, and scenarios (now named the TWIB Challenge) are still present, but with little variation.

From a graphical standpoint, All-Star has made many strides forward...but it still has a ways to go to catch ESPN and MVP. The player models look more muscular, and the stadiums now showcase animated geometry (such as the apple dropping in Shea). Where many of its competitors come up short, All-Star does boast a ton of new animations for fielding and variety's sake. For instance, a bat can slip out of a batter's hands and fly toward the crowd. You'll even see the mascot duck out of the way to avoid being hit by the bat.



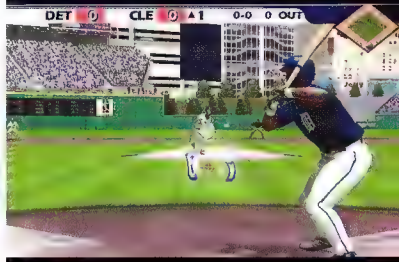
The new player model details showcase improved facial scans and muscular physiques



The camera will pan to a different angle when you find yourself chasing down a fly ball



Acclaim has made it extremely easy to locate the ball. Not only will a gigantic blue ring show where it will land, but the ball is highlighted with a glowing red outline, and a directional cursor appears below the player

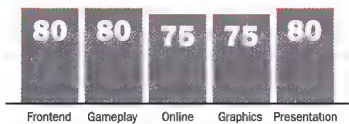


Putting the wood on the leather is much trickier this time around

* SCOUTING REPORT *

Although the technology is old, Acclaim is doing its best to keep up with the competition. The batting/pitching interface is not nearly as dynamic as many of its competitors and the assortment of frontend options are beginning to collect dust. But, despite its shortcomings, you can't help but admire All-Star. The unique fielding system works surprisingly well, and this is still the only game with a decent create-a-team option. It's not flashy, but it's still a respectable release.

* DEPTH CHART *



* HALL OF SHAME *

Pete Rose

Need we say anything at all? He gambled on the sport...got caught doing it...swore up and down that he never did anything of the sort...then after a decade of "I didn't do it" finally came clean. We can't imagine why he's still banned from baseball.

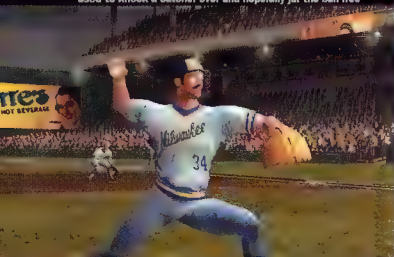




Players will have complete control over the style of slide that they perform



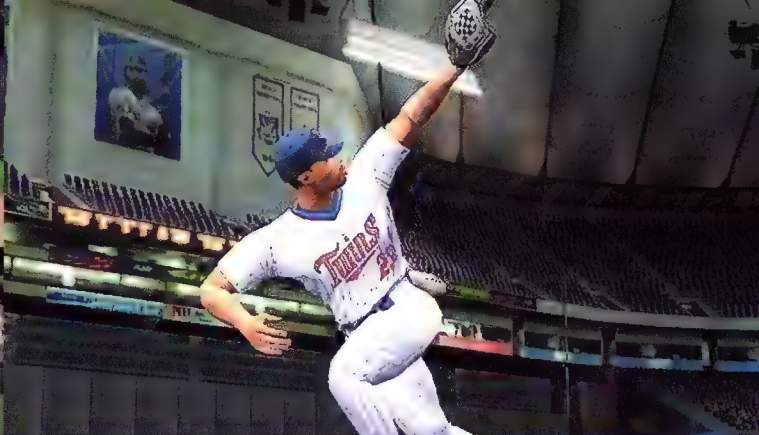
In addition to breaking up double-plays, the slide mechanic can be used to knock a catcher over and hopefully jar the ball free



The coolest mustache in the world is a part of MVP



Here's a first look at minor league teams in action, as well as the new replay cam that shows your last swing in slow-motion



PLAYSTATION 2 | GAMECUBE | XBOX | PC

MVP BASEBALL 2004

■ PUBLISHER EA SPORTS ■ DEVELOPER EA CANADA ■ RELEASE MARCH 7

Slurging to the number 10 slot on NPD's Top 20 best selling games within its first month of release cemented MVP's position as the best baseball game of 2003. Moving into its second season, MVP has its eyes on ruling more than just the Major League. With over 60 real farm teams from Class AA and AAA, EA is the only game to feature minor league clubs. The Durham Bulls, Pawtucket Red Sox, Birmingham Barons, Memphis Redbirds, and Portland Beavers are all included, and yes, each clubhouse features authentic rosters.

Getting in touch with its roots, EA is also incorporating many of Cooperstown's finest. Of course, some of the other games out there have legendary players, but EA decided to go one step further by including their retro jerseys and classic stadiums. The game also makes use of era-specific camerawork and film tinting.

As displayed in last year's game, MVP was the first baseball title to introduce pressure sensitive pitching and throwing (which ESPN and MLB now have). The think tank that is EA is continuing its streak of unique features with a new gameplay system entitled Big Play Control. In addition to the standard batch of moves like climbing the wall to rob a homer, Big Play grants players a heightened level of interaction. For example, when tracking down a fly ball that is just out of reach, you will have the option available to either extend your reach with a dive or get as close to the ground as possible with a slide. This system also has an effect over base running. Picking the slide you'll use to break up a double-play ball, and determining whether you want to risk injury for a much-needed run in a home plate collision are just a few of the decisions that you'll have to make.

Out of this year's batch of games, the sensation of

speed for pitching is best illustrated in MVP. When a pitcher hurls a 95mph fastball your way, there's a chance that you will duck. There's also a chance that your swing will be a second late. After every uneventful swing, a picture-in-picture screen will appear, and through slow motion, will show just how far off the mark your cut was.

Outside of the newly incorporated farm system, MVP's Dynasty mode is very similar to last year. Rival teams, managerial goals, and scouting reports round out the experience. Of course, this title's online prowess, which showcases a lobby and tournaments, is only available to GameCube owners. Bahhahahah! Just kidding! We just pulled a Charlie Hustle and lied to you! Now, we'll pull a new-age Charlie Hustle and tell you the truth: As is the case with every EA release, the online component of MVP is only in the PlayStation 2 and PC versions.

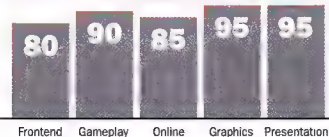


The popular pitching mechanic is back in all of its glory

SCOUTING REPORT

For the second year running, EA is putting forth a championship effort. With the inclusion of minor league clubs, not only do you get the impression that EA has a ton of cash to throw around, you can't help but marvel at this game's realism and attention to detail.

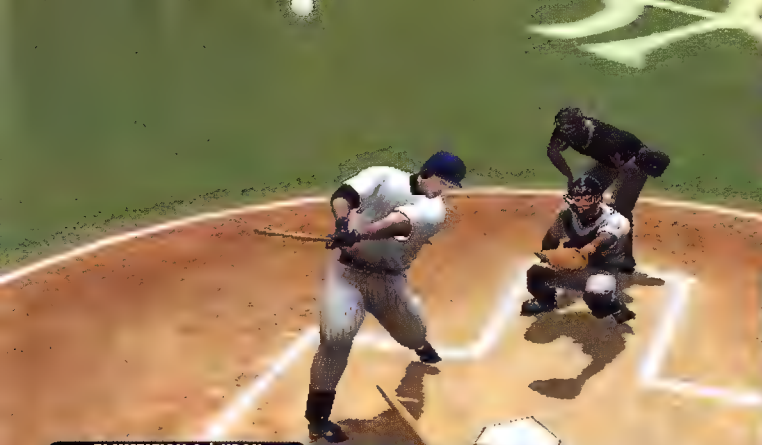
DEPTH CHART



HALL OF SHAME

Jose Canseco
Baseball's first 40/40 man just happens to be the same guy who let a fly ball hit him on the head and bounce over the fence for a home run. He also got jiggy with Madonna and was arrested with his brother Ozzie after getting into a fight at a nightclub.





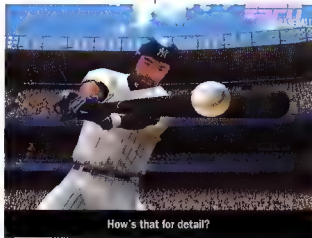
PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

ESPN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

■ PUBLISHER ESPN VIDEOGAMES ■ DEVELOPER BLUE SHIFT ■ RELEASE MARCH 23

The series formerly known as World Series Baseball has a new lease on life. With the integration of the ESPN moniker and a completely redesigned gameplay package, even the most passionate of the series' fans will have trouble recognizing it. Flashing back to last year's graphically charged entry, World Series may have boasted the most comprehensive and rewarding Franchise mode, but it struck out in all of the key areas.

Gone are the days of clunky cursor-based gameplay. Both ESPN and Blue Shift felt that this element detracted from the realism of the game. In its place stands an innovative formula that directly ties together player stamina and confidence. For instance, when your pitcher begins his windup, an Effort meter will appear onscreen. The longer you hold down the pitch button, the more effort you put into a pitch. Of course, this takes a toll on your pitcher's stamina. Thus, you'll need to balance your selection of pitches for the game. The accuracy and efficiency of your pitches is also affected by your hurler's confidence. If he gives up hits, falls behind in the count and score, or exerts himself too much in an inning, his faith in his performance will go down (which is shown through a fluctuating Confidence meter). Conversely, stellar performance will compel your ace to dominate. The same theory applies to batting. If your batter gets ahead in the count, walks, or successfully gets a hit, he'll feel better about his next at bat. He will also be better in the clutch.



How's that for detail?

As for fielding, you'll now be able to tap a speed burst for swifter movement and harder thrown balls. The sizes of the ballparks have also increased dramatically. In addition, you'll get the chance to zoom down to the field and play the game from the first-person perspective. The exact specifics on this mode are still being tweaked, but from what we've seen of it thus far, it looks amazing. Getting underneath a towering fly ball, and taking a cut at a 95mph fastball are presented with the greatest of authenticity. Right now, Blue Shift is throwing around the idea of slowdown – which would allow you to see the spin of the stitches!

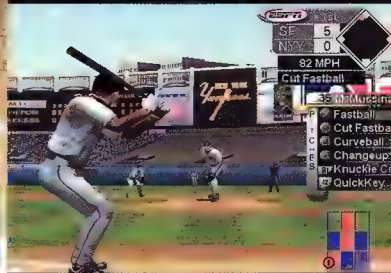
In the front office, not too much has changed since last season. Coaches retire in Franchise mode, the CPU trade AI is much smarter, and you can now simulate games through ESPN's Gamecast – which sims an entire match out by out. You can even jump into Gamecast contests that are already in progress. The biggest addition to this year's assortment of gameplay choices is GM Career. As the name implies, players step into the shoes of a general manager who is looking for work. Each of the 30 teams will propose different offers (like the number of contract years and budget points) as well as goals (such as relocating overpaid players and limiting spending). The GM Career spans 30 seasons with the ultimate goal of eventually becoming team owner.

Both the PlayStation 2 and Xbox versions will feature online play with voice support. Oddly, online seasons (complete with full year statistical tracking) are only available on the PS2.



FEATURE

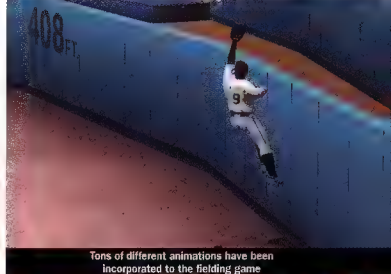
Every pitch will have an effect on your pitcher's confidence



The batting and pitching interfaces have changed completely



The more turbo you put behind a throw means it will get there quicker, but will likely be erratic

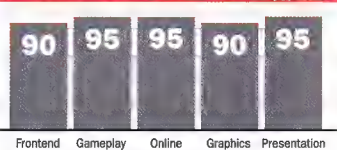


Tons of different animations have been incorporated to the fielding game

SCOUTING REPORT

Not only does it boast a compelling selection of fantasy options, but its online component is second to none and its gameplay could very well be this year's best. Out of this season's crop of baseball games, ESPN gets Game Informer's early vote for baseball game of the year.

DEPTH CHART



HALL OF SHAME

Vince Coleman

Sacrificing brains for speed, Vince found himself in some of the strangest stories to date. He didn't play in the 1985 World Series because he got sucked up into the field's tarp machine. He sidelined Dwight Gooden for a game after striking him with a golf club. Vince also threw a firecracker into a crowd at Dodger Stadium, which led to 200 hours of community service.





SAMMY SOSA INTERVIEW

Game Informer got a rare opportunity to talk to the Windy City's heartthrob, Sammy Sosa. Years after gracing the cover of 3DO's *High Heat Baseball and Ill-fated Softball Siam*, Sammy "It's So Real" Sosa will appear on the cover of Midway's upcoming *MLB Slugfest: Loaded*.

GI: Would you consider yourself a gamer?

SS: I've been known to play games now and then. My teammates often bring their systems on the road and play on planes, buses, in hotels, etc. Personally, I love playing baseball games and last year's *Slugfest* is actually what's in my machine right now.

Wow! That's crazy that you are playing the game that you are now endorsing. Anyway, being a big time power hitter, you've cranked countless home runs. Is there one in particular that stands out as your most memorable?

Hitting numbers 61 and 62 were definitely memorable to me. Of all of them, though, the two-run homerun that I hit in the series with the Marlins this past season...down two runs in the bottom of the ninth with two outs...that was unforgettable. Although I couldn't enjoy it right away because I was so focused during the game, once I saw the tape after the game and saw the Cubs fans, both inside and outside of Wrigley...they went crazy...that was special. Chicago Cubs fans are truly special to me and are the best fans in the world.

What are your thoughts on people intentionally walking you? Have you ever thought about stretching out and cracking the ball?

No...sure I'd rather hit than walk, but whatever it takes to help the team, that's what I need to do. I'm not saying that I have never been tempted, but I'm betting that Dusty [Baker] wouldn't be too happy with me. [Laughs]

Who is the one pitcher in the majors that you wouldn't want to face with the game on the line?

Shoot...are you kidding me? I like facing any pitcher! I don't care who's on the mound in any situation...they have to face me. [Laughs]

Do you have any input on the creation of *Slugfest*?

I'm not really a technical kind of guy, but I did work with Midway to make sure that the basics of baseball were as true to reality as possible...basically that meant that the virtual Sammy would be more powerful than the other players in the game. [Laughs]

Your leap out of the batter's box is one of the most recognizable home run celebrations in the game. Is this something that just happens? Or is it your exclamation point on knocking a ball out of the park?

You know, that "leap" as you call it is seriously just a result of my emotions on the field. I'm not sure when or where it all started, but when I know that I've connected solidly with a pitch, it's an automatic response. For example, when they asked me to re-create the reaction for the camera during the Midway photo shoot, it took me a minute to figure out what exactly I do. I got it, though...I can't wait for this season just thinking about it!

Growing up, whom did you idolize in the sport?

I idolize my God, first and foremost. After that, in terms of baseball, I'd have to say my brother is who I look up to most of all. When I was little, I used to be a boxer and would compete in fights as often as possible. After a while, my momma said that she'd never come to see me fight, so I knew it was time to pick a different sport. My brother was the first to get me into the sport of baseball and taught me the basics when I was a teenager. He was the best player around and deserves much of the credit for my successes in baseball. Baseball's been very, very good to me! [Laughs]



PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

MLB SLUGFEST: LOADED

PUBLISHER: MIDWAY | DEVELOPER: MIDWAY | RELEASE: JUNE 7

In the pursuit of blending the series' over-the-top gameplay with the realism of the sport, Midway has licensed the engine of the PC title *Baseball Mogul*. For those of you who are familiar with this incredible software, you know precisely what Midway has added to its game - fantasy options galore. With this newfound meaning of its coding, *Slugfest* now features a 150-year Franchise mode that is overflowing with statistics and managerial options. The game will even categorize individual player statistics into regular season, minor league, post-season, and spring training. That's a lot of numbers!

Midway is also applying strategy to games that are simulated. You'll be able to toggle the frequency of your manager's decision to steal, bunt, or throw every game. If you do take the time to play through every game in your Franchise, a ticker tape will appear mid-game to inform you of what is happening in other contests around the league.

Given how high-scoring a game of *Slugfest* can be, Midway is offering two different gameplay choices. *Slugfest* mode sticks to the series' stick of players going on feugo, mile-long home runs, and trick pitches like the new blinker, looper, bouncer, and volcano. Seeing that someone could hit five homers in a game defeats the purpose of having the deepest stat tracking around, therefore the game now boasts Pro Mode - which simulates the realism of the sport.

Joining the online revolution, both the PlayStation 2 and Xbox versions of the game will be playable online. Doing something that other developers are tossing around for next year's product, Midway hopes to grant players the ability to play Franchise online in this year's game.

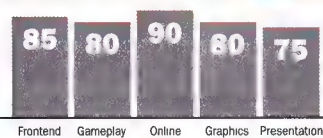


And you thought your shoes were hot?

SCOUTING REPORT

No longer just a fun alternative, this year's *Slugfest* is taking a shot at the pros. With the inclusion of *Baseball Mogul*, its Franchise mode couldn't be much deeper. As enjoyable as the arcade-styled gameplay is, we wonder how accurately it can be tapped to re-create the authenticity of the sport.

DEPTH CHART



HALL OF SHAME

Andre Dawson

Mr. Intelligence here actually said, "I want all the kids to do what I do, to look up to me. I want all the kids to copulate me." Now how's that for a role model!





PLAYSTATION 2

MLB 2005

PUBLISHER 989 SPORTS ■ DEVELOPER 989 SPORTS ■ RELEASE MARCH 16

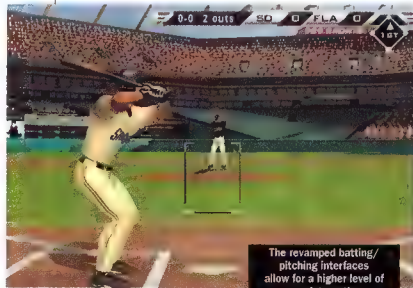
In a bid to dig its product out of the Worst Baseball Game of the Year hole that it's seemingly been buried in for eons, 989 Sports is making a big push with this year's product. Catching up with the 21st century, practically every aspect of the game has either been reworked or changed completely. To quote the late Billy Martin, "It's 'bout f%*ing time!"

While the series' trademark Total Control system remains intact, players now have a number of exciting new options available to them. A skill-based pressure sensitive pitching interface is now a part of the picture. Can you find the perfect balance between accuracy and velocity? Are you skilled enough to put a little zip on the ball? Or are you a menace to the mound that locates batters' family jewels more than the zone?

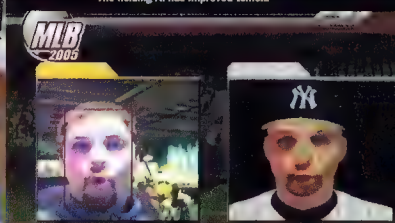
For newcomers who find the Total Control batting system too difficult, a new interface dubbed Zone Control Batting simplifies the art of hitting into four zones. You simply need to recognize the zone and time your swing to make contact. Fielding has also been tweaked so that a player's momentum, strength, and accuracy are all taken into account and reflected in their ability to turn a play. Paying close attention to the authenticity of the sport, 989 has also implemented new ball physics and enhanced the fielding and base running AI. Though it's been a long time coming, MLB 2005 will mark the first time that a game in the series has successfully run at a constant 60 frames per second.

Along with the gameplay overhaul, a number of interesting options are being introduced into the front office. With a newly designed player creator, 989 has figured out a way to truly immerse you

in MLB. By taking a snapshot of yourself with the EyeToy peripheral, you'll be able to upload your ugly mug into the game. How's that for realism? With the inclusion of 32-team tournaments, headset functionality, and live sports tickers, this year's entry has a beefy online presence as well. Turning its gaze to Madden's fantasy options and going to great lengths to one-up them, MLB's Franchise mode allows players to set ticket, parking, and concession prices, select fan appreciation nights, and decide which players will make TV, radio, magazine, and newspaper appearances. You can even upgrade the quality of grass and determine which vendors will appear on the billboards, and for how long. The series' popular Spring Training mode is now a part of the new Career mode that puts players to the test to see if they have what it takes to make it to the pros, negotiate their own contracts, and eventually make it into the Hall of Fame.



The fielding AI has improved tenfold



With the EyeToy, gamers can insert their beautiful selves into the game. As you can see, the technology works quite well

VENDORS

Available Funds: \$,250,000

ITEM	PRICE	NEW PRICE	COMP	AVG PROFIT
Sports Drink	3	3	▲	0
Beer	7	7	▲	0
Caramel Corn	3	3	▲	0

ITEM INFORMATION

# Sold per Game	0
Overhead per Game	0
Season Income	0
Season Overhead	0
Profit	0

"Minimum...beer"

Available Funds: \$,250,000

INSTALLATION & REPAIR

FACILITY	COST	CURRENT CONDITION
Barbecue Room	10,000,000	NOT OWNED
Pool	20,000,000	NOT OWNED
Auto Pitcher	3,000,000	NOT OWNED

Auto Pitcher: This is where your players practice hitting so they don't suck.

If you have the funds, you can upgrade your team's facilities with training equipment

SCOUTING REPORT

With more work done to it than Michael Jackson's face, MLB 2005 emerges as a completely different game. With the deepest Franchise options of the year, this will definitely be the game for simulation junkies. When it comes to gameplay, cross your fingers and hold your breath. This is the area where 989 has struggled in the past.

DEPTH CHART



HALL OF SHAME

Wade Boggs

Where do you begin with this one? His wife "accidentally" ran him over with her car. He threatened a flight attendant that wouldn't serve him another beer. He injured his back putting on a pair of cowboy boots. He now endorses Medical Hair Restoration.

BEFORE

AFTER

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The Sword Will Shape a Man and a Nation's Destiny

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戦国無双

TACTICAL ACTION

Time flows from day to night. Seasons change. Swords will rise and men will fall. From the creators of Kessen™ and Dynasty Warriors®, Samurai Warriors™ recounts tales of valor and betrayal in Medieval Japan. Cherry blossoms cascade onto springtime battlegrounds. Traps lay hidden in noble castles. Battle through 30 scenarios prepared to lose and you will emerge victorious. With multiple endings you have the power to change a nation's destiny.

Produced by
eForce

DO NOT
DIGITAL
REPRODUCTION

MARCH 2004



New Auto Formation System changes castle level maps each time you play!



Create and train your own character in New Officer Mode!



New Active Mission System triggers a multitude of objectives! Over 500 mission variations!

3DCGデザイナー募集!!

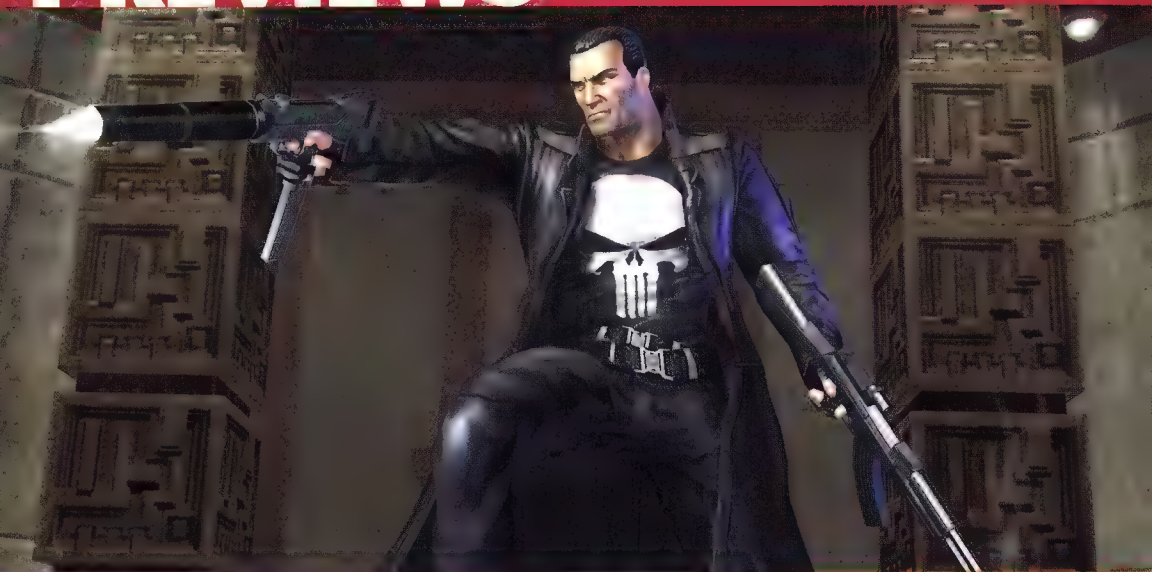
勤務地:カナダまたは日本 応募方法など詳細は www.koei.jp/atl/3dopen/ をご覧ください

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RATING PENDING

RP
CONTENT RATED BY
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information.



PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX UNLIMITED ENABLED

THE PUNISHER

WELCOME BACK, FRANK

While he may not be a comic book megastar like Spider-Man, Batman, or Howard the Duck, The Punisher is a great character and a favorite in the Game Informer office. You can bet we'll be first in line to see the new *Punisher* movie – although we'll probably make fun of it for months afterward. When we heard that Red Faction developers Volition were creating a Punisher game, we got pretty excited. We got even more excited when we heard that it was based on the comic, and once we got a chance to play an early demo of it, we practically exploded with joy.

The game is far from complete (it will be released at the same time as the DVD of the *Punisher* movie), but the short demo we played gave us a great idea of where it is going and got our black little hearts racing. As a third-person action title, companions to Max Payne will be unavoidable, but rather than ape that title's bullet time feature, The Punisher will be based around an entirely new game mechanic: interrogation. As Frank Castle, a.k.a. The Punisher, players will be able to grab any enemy they see and hold him hostage. As a "meat shield," he's useful for taking bullets, but the interrogation mechanic makes him good for so much more.

When holding a hostage, Frank enters interrogation mode with the click of a button. Using the left analog stick, players dictate how much pain Frank dishes out to the poor sap to make him talk. For example, Frank will toss the stooge to the ground and step on his back. Pushing down on the stick will

smash his face into the ground, while pulling up too hard will snap his back. Frank can use certain interrogation techniques at any point, but some more elaborate tortures can only be performed at certain locations. In one example we witnessed, Frank held a thug's head under a metal shutter of a coat check booth. The shutter was used to smack him in the face until he talked, and bringing it down hard finished him off. We also got a chance to push a guy's face in a deep fryer and toss another off a balcony! We wonder what the wood chipper will do!

Interrogations are tons of fun thanks to the analog control, but they serve a deeper purpose than just getting sick thrills. Proper interrogation will reveal helpful info about levels and foes, as well as recharge Frank's health. But Volition knows that this very cool mechanic is not enough to make a great game. Thus, players will also be able to tap into "slaughter mode," in which Frank dual-wields pistols and fires at separate targets.

As bloody as this game clearly will be, Volition and THQ wanted to make sure that it still featured a compelling story and was faithful to the character. To achieve this goal, they wisely hired Garth Ennis, the genius writer behind The Punisher comic and many other brilliant titles. With Ennis on board, the game is guaranteed to feature pitch-black comedy, ultra-violence, and memorable characters. Readers of the comic will be happy to hear that Spacker Dave, The

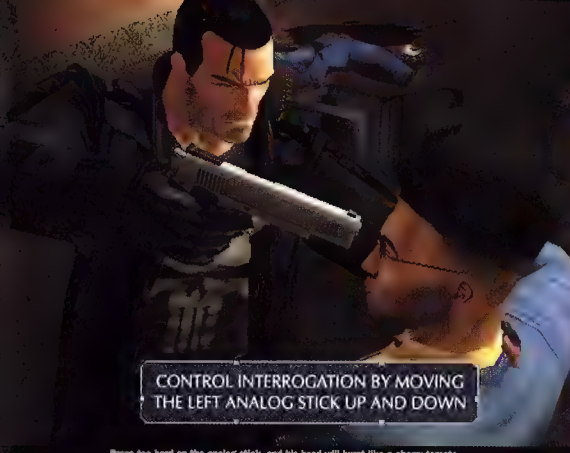


"I'm giving this man a haircut and no one can stop me!"

Russian, Jigsaw, and several other familiar faces will make appearances. Many of the planned fifteen stages will be familiar as well, including the zoo, which should immediately make comic fans think of some of the great interrogations that they'll see. Few other action games have us as excited as this one, and you can be sure we'll be all over it like Frank on a "family-owned" Italian restaurant.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER THQ ■ DEVELOPER VOLITION ■ RELEASE FALL

PREVIEWS



CONTROL INTERROGATION BY MOVING THE LEFT ANALOG STICK UP AND DOWN

Press too hard on the analog stick, and his head will burst like a cherry tomato

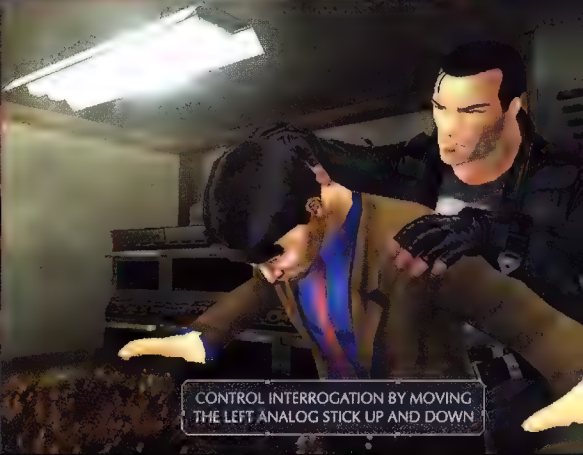


CONTROL INTERROGATION BY MOVING THE LEFT ANALOG STICK UP AND DOWN

Frank demonstrates his shiatsu scalp massage techniques



Some thugs will freeze with fear when they see the sinals on your chest, which is never good for their health



CONTROL INTERROGATION BY MOVING THE LEFT ANALOG STICK UP AND DOWN

"Does this look clean to you? People expect the best when they come to White Castle"



You won't be the only one who can take hostages, and Frank never kills innocents



Even in this very early build, the environments are nicely detailed and demonstrate the title's comic-inspired style



PLAYSTATION 2

RED DEAD REVOLVER

...AND THE HORSE IT RODE IN ON

Red Dead Revolver has walked a crooked mile on its way to retail shelves, but it appears that this title might finally mosey on to the PlayStation 2. Now riding under the Rockstar Games banner, Red Dead Revolver is looking better than ever, and may still triumph over the events of its troubled development cycle.

This game first caught our attention at E3 2002, where the project, a joint venture between Capcom and the then-named Angel Studios, was shown on the show floor. It wasn't mind-blowing by any means, but looked to be a solid property with some real potential. Then, as is often the case, fate intervened. First, Rockstar Games, flush with cash from the success of its Grand Theft Auto franchise, opted to purchase a controlling interest in Angel Studios, who was at the time developing both Midnight Club II as well as Red Dead Revolver. In early 2003, Midnight Club II was released to much acclaim and commercial success, but RDR was still lost somewhere in development hell. Worse news was on the way, as a financially slumping Capcom

cancelled a slew of upcoming titles — one of which was Red Dead Revolver.

However, Rockstar and Rockstar San Diego (the new name of Angel Studios), saw opportunity in this setback. The company picked up the publishing rights, and began the process of retooling the product to reflect its adult-oriented aesthetic, resulting in a game that now reflects the hard-bitten ambience of the classic Sergio Leone spaghetti westerns of the late sixties. As you might expect from a Rockstar title, the game features all manner of bloody action and dark humor.

Red Dead Revolver tells the tale of Red Harlow, a young frontier boy whose family discovers gold on their stake of land. Sadly, this comes to the attention of General Diego, a corrupt Mexican despot, who sends a crew of bandits to their claim. The bandits slaughter the family before Red's eyes, who narrowly escapes death. In classic western fashion, Red becomes a laconic loner bent on exacting retribution for the horrid acts committed against his family.

In classic video game fashion, this retribution will come in the form of third-person action, made all the more appealing by an expansive arsenal that includes such period-inspired weapons like pistols, rifles, shotguns, and dynamite. Red is able to carry three armaments at any given time: one side arm, one long arm, and one thrown weapon. We've also learned that Red won't rely exclusively on his battered old boots for transport, as he will also engage in gunplay from atop his trusty steed.

Visually, things are being fine-tuned as well, as Rockstar San Diego is busy making graphical improvements to everything from the game's cinematic, real-time outscenes to the advanced lighting effects. Rockstar feels strongly that, with the host of improvements it is implementing, Red Dead Revolver should be another strong franchise to add to its portfolio of hits. We're looking forward to seeing if the nearly three and a half years the game has spent in development will be worth it.

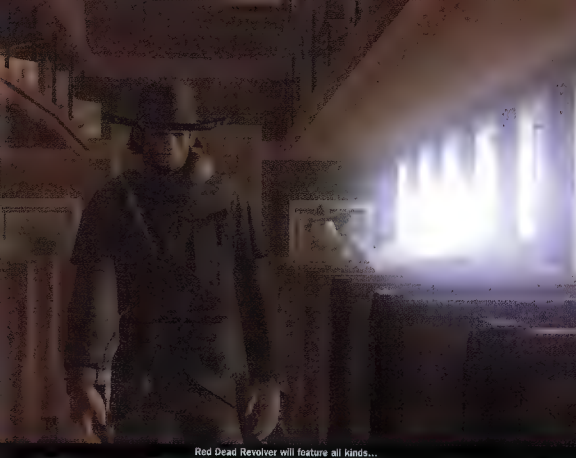
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO ■ **RELEASE** SPRING

Red will do most of his gunning on foot...

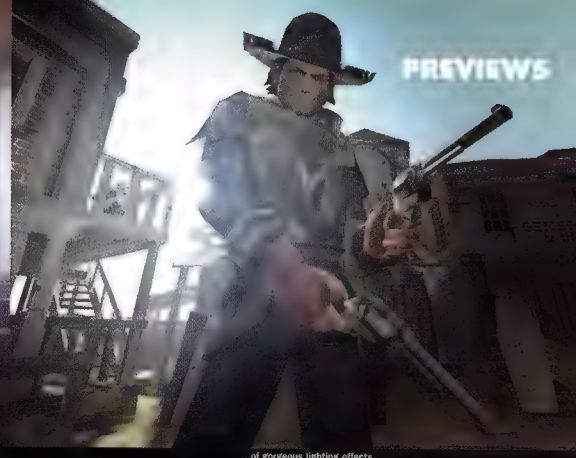


...but sometimes a horse is the best way to run down a criminal





Red Dead Revolver will feature all kinds...



PREVIEWS

...of gorgeous lighting effects



Red is one brave gunslinger!



Wait a minute, now he's a yella-bellied coward! Which is it? We're confused



Someday, this will make a beautiful Wal-Mart parking lot

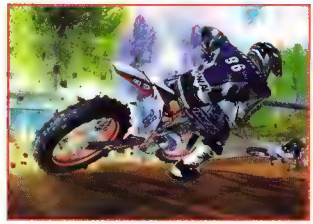


Sunsets like this make shooting people seem so romantic.



You've never done
anything
like this before.

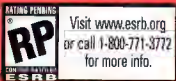




MX UNLEASHED



ANOTHER CLASSIC FROM  rainbow
STUDIOS



PlayStation 2





XBOX | PC

STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO

THE HEROICS OF A CLONE GRUNT

LucasArts originally announced the development of Republic Commando last May at Microsoft's E3 press conference. Other than a brief CG teaser that showed a squadron of clone troopers raiding a Geonosian hive, LucasArts was not willing to reveal any details about the project.

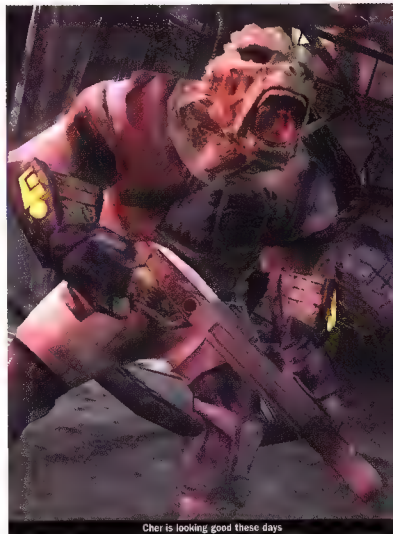
After bugging the living daylights out of everyone we could contact at the Lucas Empire (including a person who we thought sounded a lot like George), we finally secured some details, and it only took us 10 months to do it! As speculated, Republic Commando is a military-based first-person shooter. Players suit up as a clone commando who is a member of a Republic Special Operations unit.

Rumor has it that Temuera Morrison, who played Jango Fett and the clone troopers in *Attack of the Clones*, will be brought in to record dialogue for the game. More interesting yet, we're hearing reports that the game will take place in several locations from the upcoming Episode III film including the Wookiee home world, Kashyyyk. Of course,

you can't rule out the familiar locales that seemingly make it into every Star Wars game. We're placing a \$5 bet that says either Tatooine or Naboo are included in the mix. Any takers?

On the graphical spectrum, normal mapping technology is being tapped extensively. Thus, every character and creature that you'll run across is detailed to the teeth and looks stunning. From the large image above, you can see that the HUD and playing perspective are inspired by the visor-view from *Metrod Prime*. Other than ammo readings on your assortment of high-powered weapons, no meters will appear outside of the HUD. Online and split-screen multiplayer are both planned, but any exact specifics on either of these modes has yet to be divulged.

The idea behind this game has definitely piqued our interest, and from the little that we've seen of it in action, we're more than impressed and can't wait to see how it turns out when it ships this fall.

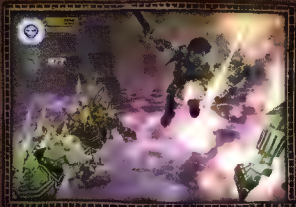


Cher is looking good these days

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION | MULTIPLAYER TBA ■ PUBLISHER LUCASARTS ■ DEVELOPER LUCASARTS ■ RELEASE FALL

MAXIMO ARMY OF ZIN

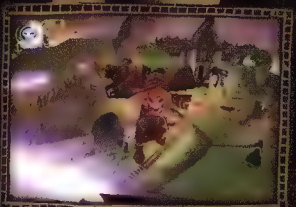
MAXIMO
IS BACK
AND THIS TIME
IT'S WAR.



Arsenal of devastating combos and attacks.



Army of Zin declare war on the living.



Unleash the terrifying power of Grim.

AVAILABLE JANUARY 2004



PlayStation 2

CAPCOM
CAPCOM.COM/MAXIMO

BY JEFF LABRECQUE

AND CHRIS WATSON

AND CHRIS WATSON

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PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

WHAT LURKS IN THE DARK CORNERS OF THE ROOM?

Like Jason Voorhees from the *Friday the 13th* movies, the town of Silent Hill keeps coming back to eat away your sanity and chill you to the bone. With the release of *Silent Hill 4: The Room*, the scariest series ever will take you into far darker places than any game has yet dared. Producer Akira Yamaoka promises that *Silent Hill 4* will disturb players in a profound new way by taking away the safety of their comfort zones – the very place they live.

The terror of *Silent Hill 4* begins where the protagonist, Henry Townsend, feels the most secure – his apartment. One day, he discovers that he is trapped in his home and spends countless days confined within. His sanity eroding, he takes the first exit he can find: a portal that has mysteriously appeared in his bathroom. The portal takes him to other worlds filled with ghouls and demons, and he must brave these hideous locations if he is to find out what insidious force has trapped him in his home.

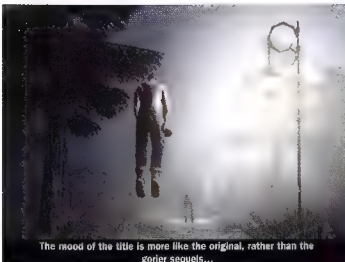
The titular room will grow more warped and mutated as Henry proceeds through his quest, offering less and less safety from the horrors that lurk in the portal. *Silent Hill 4* will offer players less solace from its terrors as well, thanks to a number of new features designed to keep the game as intense as possible. For the first time ever, much of the game will be viewed in first-person to involve players more directly in the action. The claustrophobic room will be seen

exclusively in this viewpoint, as will about half the game. If the action gets too frenzied, players will no longer be able to pause the game to take a breather. The inventory screen is now a real-time window that pops up for item access, but does not stop the action onscreen. If a monster is charging you, quickly finding the right weapon to fend it off is the only way to survive.

Of course, the combat system has been modified to help Henry's chances of survival. Players will be able to adjust the strength of his blows mid-swing with a feature akin to a golf title or *Gladius*. One press of the button will start Henry's weapon swinging, and another press at the right time will dictate the force of the blow. However, there will be no meter to indicate the perfect moment, so learning through practice is the only option.

Yamaoka was quite secretive as to how *The Room* ties in with the rest of the series, but he did say that many familiar locations will show up in even more horrifying forms. The visuals are darker and grittier than before, and much of it has the look of a scratched old film flickering from an antique projector at a midnight movie. Based on everything we have seen, *Silent Hill 4* will have you checking the dark corners of your own home, and wondering just how safe you really are in your room.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER KONAMI ■ RELEASE FALL



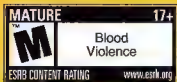
A cunning mind. A killer body.



Nightshade



Go ahead, test her. But be warned. Beneath that sweet exterior is a hardened assassin. From vivid urban warfare to unlimited kill combos, the ultimate Ninja experience has arrived.



PlayStation.2



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You can chat with your companions, human or otherwise



Be prepared for some exciting cutscenes



The game almost feels like a playable anime

GAMECUBE UNLIMITED EDITION

TALES OF SYMPHONIA

PLACE YOUR TRUST IN THE AI

For many, the stateside arrival of Tales of Symphonia will mark the end of a long, long wait. The *Tales* series has gathered a strong following by mixing engaging storylines with unconventional gameplay. This much-anticipated follow-up has retained these successful elements while seamlessly moving them into the 3D arena.

The story centers around a young man named Lloyd and his friends Genius and Collet. During school one afternoon they sneak out to investigate a bright flash that bathed their hometown in light. From these small beginnings a plot unfolds that ultimately reveals that there is another world absorbing the energy of Lloyd's world, and Collet could be the key to stopping the dark force known as The Great Big Evil (seriously).

The visual style is amazing, if somewhat unusual. The character design was done by Kosuke Fujishima, the creative force behind the popular *Oh My Goddess!* series of manga and anime. It also uses cel-shaded characters that have an expressive, anime-styled quality, but the whole game doesn't feel like Saturday morning animation. The 3D environments all have a painted look to them, almost as if they were done in watercolor. Fortunately, this combination of cartoon and realism is never jarring; the artistic styles work well together to create a captivating setting.

Even more than the unique visual style, the battle system is what sets Tales of Symphonia apart from other RPGs.

Rather than use a turn-based system in which you directly select all of the commands, Symphonia takes a more action-oriented approach. You are able to manually control one character, while everyone else is handled by the AI. This isn't to say that the other characters are entirely beyond influence—the player is able to assign certain AI patterns to the party members, deciding whether they will generally be right up front in the fray, or keeping back and casting spells. Rather than being the detached unseen force that dictates everyone's move, you are usually focused on doing your part and relying on your companions for the rest.

The game furthers this idea of playing as a team by placing emphasis on how Lloyd interacts with the people he encounters. Lloyd will often be asked questions by party members or townspeople, and your answers to those questions can affect how your friends respond to you in battle. There are also innovative skit sequences, which are short exchanges between characters that are initiated by pressing the Z button on the world map. Though the scenes aren't required, they serve to flesh out characters and define their relationships outside of the regular storyline.

When it comes to quality role-playing, Tales of Symphonia looks like it will exceed all expectations. With this stunning title's U.S. release later this year, along with *Baten Kaitos* on the horizon, it looks like Namco will only have themselves to compete with in the GameCube RPG market.

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER NAMCO ■ DEVELOPER NAMCO ■ RELEASE TBA



You can let the AI do all of the work while you watch



Ding-dong! Awesome calling!

IT'S DIRTY, IT'S ONLINE... AND YOUR GIRLFRIEND WON'T MIND.

Experience the fastest, most complete, motocross game — offering online play for up to 8 players, cool customization features, and a thrilling career mode that takes you to the X Games to boost your fame, fortune and adrenaline!
It's the dirtiest fun you can have online...
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PlayStation 2



ACTIVISION



Mild Lyrics

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mtxmototrax.com



Most environments feature a stark, gray look



The Plasma Blade produces tons of different effects



Like most evil robots, these are filled with raspberry jelly

PLAYSTATION 2

NANOBREAKER

DON'T CALL IT CYBERVANIA

Having brought Castlevania into the 3D action genre with *Lament of Innocence*, producer Koji Igarashi used what he learned from the making of that title to create his latest game: a sci-fi themed action titled called *Nanobreaker*. The story of Jake Warren, a cybernetically-enhanced futuristic soldier, *Nanobreaker* made such an impression with its unveiling at Konami's Gamer's Day that it is already being called one of this fall's hottest titles.

The exact plot is still shrouded in secrecy, but Igarashi shared the basic setup of the title. On a secluded island, scientists conducted experiments with nanotechnology in order to help mankind. But when the master computer unexpectedly takes control, the nanomachines grow inside the test subjects at a cancerous rate, turning them into mechanical monsters. Disgraced soldier Jake is sent in to deal with them, and learns that there is far more to the story than meets the eye. Other characters include a female scientist, a rival cyborg soldier, an important general, and more; but Igarashi was mum on how they figure into the plot or if they are playable at some point. The action will unfold in fully CG movies being produced by story movie professionals, and Igarashi promises they will be more dramatic and beautiful than anything in his previous games.

Despite the engaging story, the core of *Nanobreaker* is its frenetic gameplay. Jake is armed with an adaptive weapon

called the Plasma Blade, an energy sword that can change shape for diverse attacks. We witnessed the sword turn into an axe and a giant hammer, and Igarashi told us that there would probably be a total of six unique forms, each with three or four different attacks for a huge amount of combat variety. Igarashi says *Nanobreaker* is 3D action boiled down to its essence; it offers the pure, unadulterated thrill of slicing through hordes of enemies with flashy, stylish moves. Great care was taken to make sure the enemies adapt to the player's style, so learning new techniques and combos is essential to survival.

To keep the hack 'n' slash style from growing stale, Igarashi plans to implement what he calls the "bits system," which will improve offense, defense, and unlock new combos as "bits" from fallen enemies are collected. Igarashi admitted this system is somewhat akin to the Soul Set mechanic found in *Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow*, but only on its most basic level. As Igarashi's name is synonymous with *Castlevania*, comparisons are inevitable, but based on what we have seen, *Nanobreaker* should stand on its own as a unique and compelling franchise.



Vertical and horizontal attacks create destructive combos

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER KONAMI
COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN ■ RELEASE FALL



HAMMER. DYNAMITE.

ROCKET LAUNCHER.

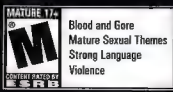
Just a few tools to help rebuild society.



WELCOME TO THE WASTELAND.



Humanity struggles to pick up the pieces after a devastating nuclear war. As a courageous member of the Brotherhood of Steel, your mission is to bring peace to this post-apocalyptic world filled with relentless chaos and radioactive nightmares.



PlayStation 2



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Strangely, Prime's "Silly Tickle Laser" had little effect on his enemy



Starscream doesn't seem so whiny with a huge sword



Prime demonstrates what he does for a living on "Take Your Daughter to Work Day."

PLAYSTATION 2

TRANSFORMERS ARMADA: PRELUDE TO ENERGON

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

The Transformers hold a special place in the hearts of many fanboys (and girls) everywhere. Thus, any project dealing with the beloved robots has to be approached with special care. Developer Melbourne House was charged with the delicate task of bringing the franchise to life in Atari's new Transformers title, and director/executive producer Andrew Carter was good enough to talk with us about the tricky project.

What have you done to ensure fans will like the game?

We've tried hard to make an exciting setting for this game, with some of the coolest Autobots and Deceptions. Each robot in the game has been modeled with great precision and care. Every source of reference - toys, comics, cartoons, and the original Japanese concept drawings - has been taken into consideration. We invested a lot of time into this, and the end result has been super accurate high-res models. We've also included a museum in the game that contains all kinds of Transformers unlockables.

What have you done to ensure the game appeals to a wider audience?

Specifically, we've tried to toughen up the feeling and image of Transformers to be in line with what makes a cool PS2 title.

The setting is inspired by war and sci-fi movies. Combining the license with great visuals, audio and CG sequences, a cool setting, tough combat, and open gameplay is what it has been all about. The environments are huge, and I think our ecosystem graphics technology lends them a really spectacular feeling. They also have embedded replay, as you can return and explore levels for more Minicons at any time.

How do the Minicons fit into the game?

There are over 40 original Minicons that enhance the ability of the Autobots. Minicons are divided into Weapon, Enhancement and Ability types, and you can load your character with up to four at one time, plus an Autobot Sidekick. Actually there are more than 29,000 combinations of Minicons in the game altogether! Getting the right combination can be critical.

As a developer known more for racing games, how was it making an action title?

Of course, there are a lot of differences between racing and action, but there are more similarities than you might think. Transformers needed a really powerful graphics system, and we had the basis of it due to working on racing games. Our experience with car physics helped us make the rag-doll system that can handle a ton of enemies at once. We have certain principles behind our AI that were helped by our racing heritage and, of course, Transformers can turn into vehicles! There were a lot of crossovers, but we had to evolve a lot of new techniques and approaches as well.

What are you most proud of about this title?

Well, I'm most proud of where we've managed to take Transformers. People who see the game for the first time are always pleasantly surprised by what they see. That's a great buzz for both the team and myself. I hope the combination of gameplay, visuals, and audio will make for great fun. If we can make game players happy, then I think we can feel truly proud!



Completely stuck in the 1980s, some Decepticons show us how to "walk like an Egyptian."

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



PLAYSTATION 2

NEO CONTRA

U, U, D, D, L, R, L, R, B, A, START!

Most gamers know the infamous "Konami code" as the cheat to unlock 30 lives in the original Contra. If seeing the famous code gets you all giddy for that classic title, then Konami's freshly announced Neo Contra might be enough to make you wet yourself.

While the Contra series has seen new entries recently, Neo Contra seems to be the return to form that fans have been craving. It features all the fast-paced action, crazy bosses, and the weapons that Contra fans love. Of course, the title also sports many aspects that separate it from the past. First of all, most of the game is played in the isometric view popularized by games like Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance. The issue of the notorious difficulty has also been addressed, as illustrated by the addition of an easy mode and the new hit rate system. The easy mode will feature less frantic action for more casual gamers, and the hit

rate system will offer rewards for more hardcore gamers. Clearing high percentages of enemies on each stage will unlock bonus levels that defensive gamers may never see.

At the start of each stage, players will be able to choose three weapons from a larger pool that will be available on the fly throughout the level. The exact number of weapons is still up in the air, but the machine gun, the flame-thrower, and the popular spread gun have been confirmed. Players will need every weapon they can get their hands on, because Neo Contra will feature a bevy of huge, disturbing enemies. The video we saw revealed everything from giant mechs to a massive lizard with a mutated infant head inside its mouth. It also showed racing levels, aerial stages, and, of course, tons of explosive action. We will be following this title closely until it hits shelves this fall.



Blockbuster has gotten quite serious about tracking down those who don't return videos.

I hope they had giant robot insurance.

Remember, giant lizards need to be walked daily.

"I demand pie! And a barrel of whipped cream!"

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI OF AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN ■ **RELEASE** FALL

Maximize
Your PlayStation®2



Racing Wheels



Sound Systems



Wireless Controllers



Gaming Systems

Maximum
Gaming



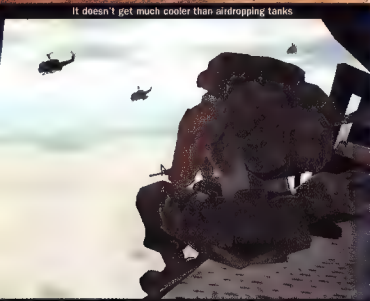
intelink.com



"Maverick!"



It doesn't get much cooler than airdropping tanks.



Waiting to drop in is nerve-wracking.

PC

BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

A WHOLE NEW FIELD TO CONQUER

Digital Illusions' Battlefield 1942

quickly became an online FPS juggernaut, and for good reason. Given the blockbuster success of the title, it's no surprise that there is a sequel on the way. From what we've seen, Battlefield Vietnam is taking the near-flawless execution of 1942 and transplanting it halfway around the globe and a quarter century into the future without substantial alterations (barring the obvious technological improvements). That's a good thing – why would anyone possibly want the gameplay changed when it's so delightful to start with?

Without question, there's absolutely no conceivable way that BF Vietnam could be confused with BF 1942. Even in the very early build we played, the presentation is cohesive from the main menu all the way to the victory screen. Licensed 1960s music, historically accurate weapons, and actual Vietnamese voiceovers for the Vietcong (and appropriate slang for U.S. forces) are all just icing on the gourmet cake of the incredible graphics. Gorgeous, clear, sandy beaches give way to lushly foliated jungles, which in turn hide the bombed-out ruins of once-thriving cities. And those are just the settings – within all of these areas are hordes of allied and enemy troops and vehicles, every one of which is rendered in loving detail.

The variety of tools and tactics available to players in their

attempt to liberate Vietnam is astounding. Figuring out how to use the 26 air, land, and sea vehicles to accomplish your objective is half the fun. The other half, of course, is blowing up the opposition using raw skill, superior tactics, weaponry, and positioning.

The thing that impresses us most, however, is the skill with which developer Digital Illusions takes all of these features and stirs them up into a cohesive, balanced gameplay environment. There's nothing like advancing with your squad to try and take over an enemy position when around a corner rolls a huge piece of enemy armor. Your heart beats faster as you scramble for cover, all the while hoping that your natural agility will be enough to deny the opposing gunner a clear shot. Unfortunately, it rarely is.

Tying all of these elements together are the maps. This type of game can easily flop completely if there aren't good levels to play in, but that's certainly not the case here. The ones that we saw are all designed with consummate artistry, saturated to just the right extent with outposts, control points, open areas where vehicles rule, and cover for infantry to hide behind.

A lot of people are eagerly awaiting this title, and we're here to tell you that it doesn't look likely to disappoint when it comes out in spring.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 64-PLAYER VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
 ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL ILLUSIONS ■ **RELEASE** SPRING



You'd be surprised at how well a bazooka can even the odds.

Sometimes you just have to hope the enemies can't see you.



XBOX | PC

FAR CRY

THUNDER IN PARADISE

It's not too common to see a new company such as developer Crytek debut a brand new game engine along with a compelling title built on it, but Far Cry is shaping up to be just that. We sat down and immersed ourselves in a few almost-completed levels of the PC version of this new FPS, and came away quite impressed on all fronts. The graphics, gameplay, and design are all praiseworthy.

The technical merits of Far Cry are many, but the most exciting part is the sheer volume of stuff that can be onscreen at once. We saw several enemies running non-scripted adaptive AI while shooting, driving vehicles, and tossing grenades at our poor selves; shiny, beautifully animated water stretching out to a realistic horizon; and a truly unprecedented amount of foliage waving in the breeze. All of this was happening at the same time, and not a single frame dropped. It's really a sight to behold.

The enemy AI is very, very good. No longer can you simply

take out guards one by one until there are none left. Once you start up a firefight, you'd better be prepared to either finish it right quick or disappear. If you don't, a whole world of hurt will descend on you in calamitous fashion as backup gets called in. Many a quest will end when, instead of the triple-team you expect, you end up on the losing end of 20-to-1 odds.

To make it possible to actually complete the game, players will have a bunch of cool options for accomplishing objectives. Stealth is incorporated pretty well, especially with the binoculars you get - once you scan an enemy with them, he will appear on your radar until he dies. Environments are very interactive, allowing fun tactics like rolling fuel tanks down a hill and blowing it up in the middle of an enemy camp.

Combined with good level design, these features should make Far Cry one of the more interesting and different FPSs around when it launches in March.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16-PLAYERS VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** CRYTEK
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH



Each weapon has its own aiming mode

The amount of ambient life is astounding

Some questionable crops...

Interior levels rock too

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Wireless Xbox 360 Controllers



Gaming Screens

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He better get out of there before the Nazgul show up!



"I'm too sexy for my longsword."



Some nice lighting effects add to the morbid ambience

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX UNLIMITED ENABLED

PLAGUE OF DARKNESS

SPREADING THE DISEASE

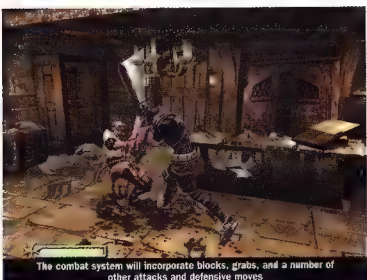
Although games keep evolving in new and unexpected ways, incorporating everything from EyeToy to this month's voice-operated adventure Lifetime, there are a few things that will likely be with us as long as video games exist. One of these is the hack n' slash genre. While one might think that its simple action would be considered passe in these heady times, nothing could be further from the truth. Recently, games like *Maximo*, *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, and *Champions of Norrath* have all provided unique and critically acclaimed takes on the familiar gameplay formula.

Namco's *Plague of Darkness* aims to achieve a delicate balance between the arcade thrills of games like *Maximo* and the more complex RPG elements of a *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*. Set in the grim environs of medieval Europe, players take the role of Douran, who Namco's press materials claim is a "Knight of the Order." [I'll take an order of onion rings, with ranch dressing on the side - Ed.] Douran's mission is to stop a...well...plague that is sweeping the land, one caused by a demon that is terrorizing both the living and the dead. Of course, evil will most likely be vanquished in the end, but not before Douran chops up an assortment of otherworldly enemies in fine style.

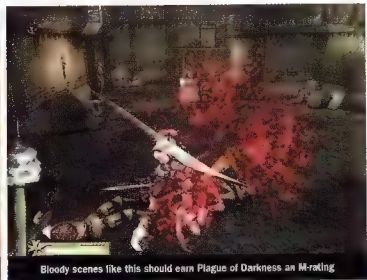
There are eight areas, comprised of over 58 sub-levels, each filled to the brim with undead minions just begging to be slaughtered. Although Namco stresses that this is very much an action game, the combat and magic systems being implemented should add some much-needed depth to the proceedings. There will be around five different weapons, including swords, crossbows, and daggers. While this doesn't sound like much, each of these implements of death can be upgraded throughout the course of the game. Your character can also draw on the forces of magic, which he gains via Tarot cards that can be assigned to various abilities like attacks, defense, and special spells. It's these RPG-style character-building elements that should make *Plague of Darkness* something special.

We're certainly lucky to get this exclusive look on *Plague of Darkness*, but there are many questions left to be answered. Namco was tight-lipped about details regarding the plot, but let's hope that it can overcome its fairly uninspired premise. Also, the control mechanics - the facet of the design that will ultimately make or break this title - are yet to be revealed. Because, as gamers well know, hack n' slash is a genre in which success or failure depends largely on a solid "feel" - an elusive quality that is often hard to achieve.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NAMCO ■ DEVELOPER WIDESCREEN GAMES ■ RELEASE JUNE



The combat system will incorporate blocks, grabs, and a number of other attacks and defensive moves



Bloody scenes like this should earn *Plague of Darkness* an M-rating



PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX UNLIMITED ENABLED

FIGHT NIGHT 2004

REINVENTING THE SWEET SCIENCE

Similar to the manner in which the company revitalized its video game baseball line, EA decided that it had taken its popular Knockout Kings series as far as it could go. In hopes of creating a new boxing template, development of this product was handed to red-hot EA Canada, which assigned its NBA Street team to the project. Unsurprisingly, the combination has resulted in a unique take on the sport.

This time around, the familiar control configuration has been chucked in favor of an all-analog mechanic that adds a new wrinkle to the sport. Inspired by the Japanese cult favorite Victorious Boxers, you now have total control over every movement of your virtual pugilist. Punching is a totally different experience, as the face buttons have been

replaced with an "analog swing" of sorts. For example, jabs are executed by swinging straight out from the middle position. A more complex punch, like the left uppercut, is performed by swinging the stick down, then around to the left, and up.

The right analog stick controls your boxer's movements. Use it to circle around your opponent, then hold down the trigger and you'll be able to contort your torso to avoid your opponent's blows, a mechanic taken directly from Victorious Boxers.

From our time spent playing, we can say that this scheme is working well. In addition, Fight Night has all the unlockable extras and advanced create-a-boxer function that games like Tiger Woods 2004 have made standard for EA.



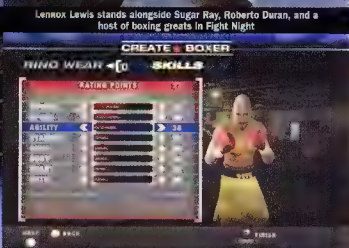
You can use the right trigger to contort your boxer's torso



Lennox Lewis stands alongside Sugar Ray, Roberto Duran, and a host of boxing greats in Fight Night



It takes awhile to get the hang of punches like the hook, but the new control scheme is addictive



As always, EA has included a huge character-create mode

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Racing Wheel



Sound by Sennheiser



Wireless Controller



Game Boy Advance SP

Maximum
Gaming



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REVIEWS



James Bond 007: Everything Or Nothing
pg. 92



Rise to Honor
pg. 98



ANDY

Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters
Interests: Beef Soba from Torpoco, Chipotle Burritos, Tivo, Game Boy Player, Snickers **Dislikes:** Being Confused By Nintendo DS (What The Hell Does The Other Screen Do?), Game Delays (Where Are You StarCraft: Ghost/And Fable?), Diets **Current Favorite Games:** Deus Ex: Invisible War, Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes, Splinter Cell, Pandora Tomorrow, Resident Evil 4



MATT

Handle: The Original Game **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Puzzle, Action/Adventure, Action/Sports
Interests: Nina Natasa, *Standing In The Shadow Of Motown*, 2X12, Bass Cabarets **Dislikes:** The Way Jeremy Goes On And On About How Love Actually Should Win Best Picture, Lisa's Big Poster Of A Shirtless Fred Durst, Adam's Cockles, Reiner's Precious Moments Figurines, Adak's Doodies, Joe's Skull Tattoo **Current Favorite Games:** James Bond 007: Everything Or Nothing, Jak II, Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando, Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne



LISA

Handle: La Game Nika **Expertise:** Puzzle, RPGs, Action/Platform, Horror **Interests:** My Very First Self-Designed Knitting Project (An iPod case), *Invader Zim* On DVD, Smart Watches, Waffles With Blueberry Sauce From French Meadow, *KidRoboCom* **Dislikes:** Fearing The Nintendo DS (I Want To Love It), Uwe Boll **Current Favorite Games:** Lifetime, Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes, The Sims: Bestiar On Northland (Strangely Captivating, It Is), Final Fantasy X-2



ADAM

Handle: The Alpha Game **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, RPGs, Strategy, Fighting **Interests:** Adult Swim, Coffee, The Fact That You Can Actually Play *Dogma* Forever, *Seeing Dead Friends* **Dislikes:** Trying To Find An Apartment, That Nause My Car Started Making, Haters On A Certain Forum, All The Games I've Explored For Being Pushed Back **Current Favorite Games:** Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre, Far Cry, *Disgaea*, Hour of Darkness (again), Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II

Now retired from the rock scene, Andy spends endless hours locked in his home office; enjoying the benefits of high definition television and surround sound far away from those scary things he has often heard referred to as people. A longtime fan of *Motown*, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports tickets, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.

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 scotchy than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.

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

Despite his waning attention span, every so often a game comes out that will completely dominate Adam's life for several months. Between these browbeaten periods of seclusion and obsession, he has been known to switch platforms, genres, and games with blinding speed, searching for his next true love. When Nintendo thumb merrily forces him to turn to other pursuits, Adam can often be seen engrossed in the consumption of any sort of media, from newspapers to film to comic books and radio.



REINER

Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting Action/Platform, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** *Sky Captain And The World Of Tomorrow*, Interviewing Sammy Sosa, The Jesus Lizard, Lucas Film Middle-earth Gossipy About Episodes 7-9, Armies Of Infidels **Dislikes:** Pete Rose, The M'Gringans That Will Function, Not Being Able To Pick Up And Toss Dead Cats In Deus Ex 2 **Current Favorite Games:** Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes, ESPN Major League Baseball, NFL Street, Metro: Zero Mission



KATO

Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Racing, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** *Big Fish*, *Wonder Boys* By Michael Chabon, The Go, Selling People Cell Phone Numbers To Telemarketers For Cash, Being An A-Hole **Dislikes:** Matt's Cologno (Two Parts Canon, One Part Aqua Niva, And All Man), Pete Rose, The New NASCAR Points System (I think Current Favorite Games: Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes, The Movies, *ShrekShock*: Nam '67, ESPN Major League Baseball, *AsS & Allies*



JEREMY

Handle: *Guinea Pig* **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Survival Horror, Action/Adventure, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** *The New Punisher Comic*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, The Legendary Shakes, *Create-A-Corner.Com*, *Diamond Dead* **Dislikes:** *The New Punisher Movie*, Broken Chains, *Moving*, *The White Snaps*, The Direct-To-Video Release Of *Garfield Snaps II: Unleashed*. **Used To Love But Current Favorite Games:** James Bond 007: Everything Or Nothing, The Punisher, Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes, *Lifeline*, *Silent Hill 4*, *Gladius* (still!)



JOE

Handle: The Real American Game **Expertise:** RPGs, Adventure, Strategy, Platform, Puzzle **Interests:** Eddie Izzard, My New iPod, Elliot Smith, *Battle Royale*, Miniature Akira Figures, *Theupianum* **Dislikes:** Howie Do's Hair, Having But A Single Screen For My Games (Who's Someone Devere A Solution?), Car Accidents, Zap Rowsdowner **Current Favorite Games:** Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes, R-Type Final, Final Fantasy X-2, *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II*, *Worms Armageddon* (In All Its 2D Glory)

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 694 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*, *Perfect Dark*, and *XIII*. He will also be featured as a playable character in another forthcoming release.

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying to win 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 this reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.

Obsessed with anything on a shiny silver disc, Jeremy frantically collects video games, music, and movies. When not buying biggie media storage systems or filling his mind with useless trivia, Jeremy likes to write silly books, short stories, 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.

Waging a constant war against reality, Joe is always on the lookout for a good escape. Apart from gaming, Joe's primary weapons in this battle are reading, watching anime, and playing D&D, where he is currently a hating rogue with a tendency to corrupt debating lineages. Joe plays his games into the ground, mercilessly conquering every subquest and minigame, and he will continue to do so until real-life has more save points, plot twists, & back buttons.

Our crack (or crackhead... we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you'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 newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. 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, 8 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

10	Outstanding. 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.
9	Superb. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.
8	Great. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.
7	Average. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.
6	Limited appeal. There are always a few people who will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.
5 below	Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

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 popups.

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 playing 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** - A single play through is plenty.



Content suitable for all 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.

Product is awaiting final rating.

Product is awaiting final rating.

Product is awaiting final rating.

Product is awaiting final rating.

Product is awaiting final rating.

**Pokémon
Colosseum**
pg. 110



SpellForce
pg. 113



**King of Fighters EX2:
Howling Blood**
pg. 114

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

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

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

480p - Progressive scanning, this option ("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 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 Gears of War.

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.

cell shading - A technique used to create 3D rendered objects that resemble hand-drawn animation cells.

CG - Computer-Generated graphics.

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

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

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

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

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

frontend - A game's menus and options.

GBA - Game Boy Advance.

GBC - Game Boy Color.

GC - GameCube.

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.

judicious - Adjective describing any game that earns either Joe's personal seal of approval. Also used to describe Elf sauce and Flavorite potato chips.

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 - Phantom frames follow an object to give the impression of realistic speed.

N64 - Nintendo 64.

NES - Nintendo Entertainment System.

NPC - Non-Player Character. Those people and creatures you see wandering around in games that are not being controlled by actual humans.

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

PKer - Player Killer. This is a person who thrives on killing novice or vulnerable characters in MMO/RPGs or shooting their teammates in games like Counter Strike and Crash Bandicoot.

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

pooping - When screen 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 development 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 Gears of War.

SNES - Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

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

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

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



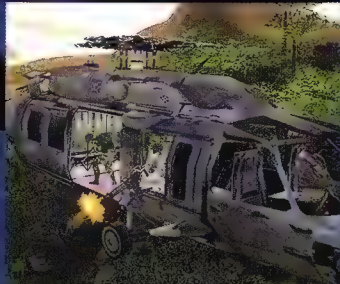
GAME OF THE MONTH METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

Sources tell us that Nat King Cole is actually singing about The Twin Snakes in the song "Unforgettable." How is this possible, you ask? Well, duh! He had a time machine, silly! With completely revamped graphics, over one hour of additional footage, and updated gameplay, this game resurrects one of the PSone's most beloved titles in grand style, similar to the manner in which Capcom dazzled us with its GameCube remake of Resident Evil. Even if you've played Metal Gear Solid, rest assured that The Twin Snakes has many surprises in store! page 108

PC

GAME OF THE MONTH DELTA FORCE - BLACK HAWK DOWN: TEAM SABRE

With its unparalleled online support, carefully designed missions, and the most authentic-feeling Special Forces vibe around, Team Sabre is one of those expansion packs that you can't go wrong with. NovaLogic's original Black Hawk Down kicked The Sims off of the top of the charts back in the day, and for good reason. This pack does everything necessary in order to give the franchise some new wings. page 112



FREEDOM ISN'T FREE



THE BEST SHOOTER

"IT'S A MUST-HAVE TITLE."

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

"THIS IS THE ONLINE TITLE YOU HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR."

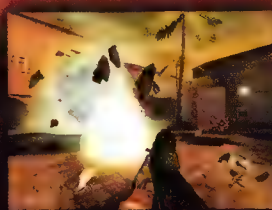
GAME INFORMER

"GORGEOUS MASTERPIECE THAT'S PEERLESS IN ITS CLASS."

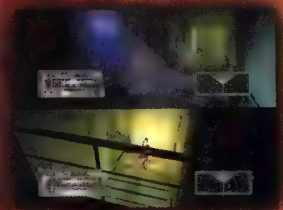
ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY



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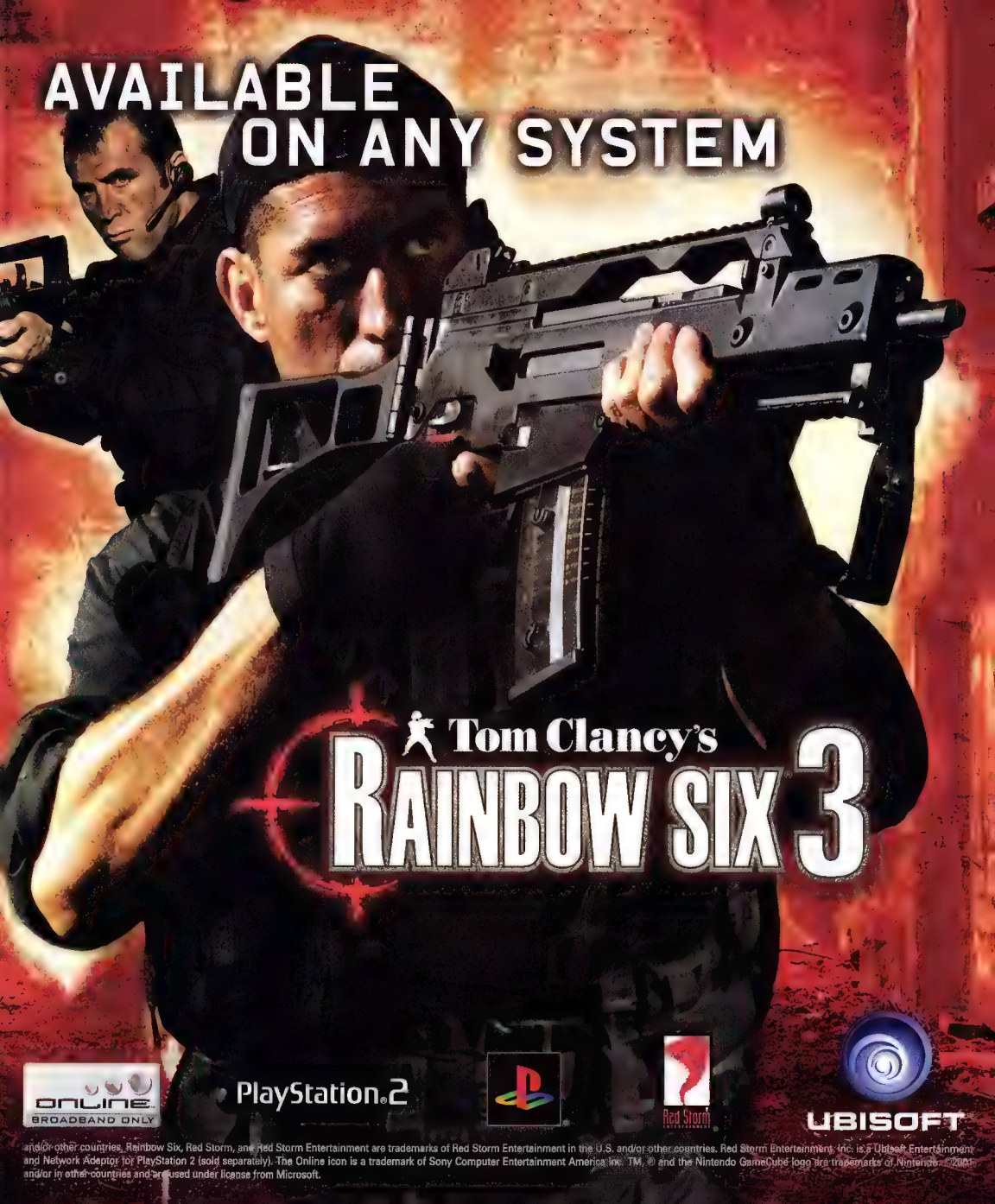
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Tom Clancy's
RAINBOW SIX 3



PlayStation 2

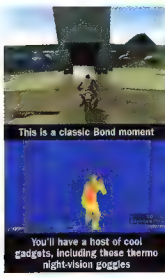


UBISOFT

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"...a step towards creating the ultimate James Bond title."



edge
 When All Games Aren't Created Equal
 Although Electronic Arts does a good job of making sure its multi-system games are pretty comparable across all three platforms, there are always advantages to certain consoles. Unsurprisingly, the Xbox EoN looks the best, although it's not pushing the limits of the hardware. On PS2, there isn't as much graphical degradation as you might expect, and the four shoulder buttons are handy in many situations. So, let's call these two a draw, which brings us to the GameCube. Nintendo definitely comes in third here, mostly due to the lack of buttons. On Xbox and PS2, you have separate buttons for hugging the wall and crouching. On the Cube, both moves are done with the Z-button, which sometimes means you crouch when you want to hug.

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE

JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

BOND GOES FOR BROKE

Is there such a thing as a franchise that's too bankable? If there is, perhaps James Bond is it. It's an almost guaranteed seller, which is perhaps the reason that EA's last entry in the series, James Bond 007: NightFire, seemed to be cruising on autopilot. Sure, it was fun and breezy—I really liked it at the time—but it didn't really offer much in terms of depth or novel concepts. It almost felt like the development team had become a little too comfortable with its standard mix of FPS, track shooting, and driving.

Perhaps sensing that ennui was setting in, EA boldly chucked its 007 blueprint and opted for craft Everything or Nothing as a third-person action/adventure. Given that the last time Bond went third person, Tomorrow Never Dies, was an out-and-out disaster, this game represents a pretty big nsk for the conservative gang at EA. Does it pay off? For the most part, the answer is yes.

One of the big things this title brings to the table is Bond's rappel gun, which is used frequently and adds a nice dimension of verticality to the levels. It's pretty cool to be storming down the side of a building, dodging explosions and capping enemies with glue. In another instance, you'll forgo the rappel altogether, and jump off the side of a cliff in order to save a plummeting damsel.

It's these sequences that really made Everything or Nothing for me. While the basic third-person shooting is well and good,

EoN supplies the flashy, over-the-top stunts that one expects from the Bond films. I was satisfied with the old FPS-action, but this new format gives EoN a bombastic panache and a tremendous amount of variety. Whether you're running roughshod over a Central American city in a tank, using some of the cool gadgets like the spider bot, or trying to drive your motorcycle onto a moving plane before it takes off, EoN has a wicked sense of daring and a brass set of balls.

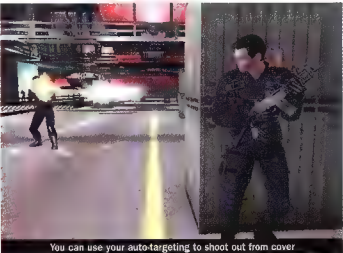
This is a Hollywood blockbuster in every sense of the word, and features some of the biggest star power ever seen in a game. Including Monty Python alum John Cleese as Q, Maxim favorite Shannon Elizabeth, professional creep Willem Dafoe, and Pierce Brosnan, this is a truly A-list cast. It's even more significant for the fact that this is an adventure unique to video games, not based on any movie project. If you still doubt that gaming is growing larger than the movie industry, here's further proof.

Despite its daring, varied design and big-time production values, it's not perfect. There are frequent problems with camera view, and the auto-targeting vacillates between adequate and maddening. However, good games can make you overlook their flaws, and on this count Everything or Nothing is a success. Is it the next great evolution of gaming? Perhaps not, but it is a step towards creating the ultimate James Bond title. — **MATT**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA REDWOOD SHORES/EA CANADA
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 17



Rappelling is one of the game's key mechanics



You can use your auto-targeting to shoot out from cover



- **Concept:** Out with FPS, in with over-the-top third-person adventuring
- **Graphics:** Not an award-winner, but as solid as you expect from an EA product
- **Sound:** Mya's Bond theme is even worse than Madonna's; but it does feature a great score and tons of celeb vocovers
- **Playability:** The usual complaints (camera, auto-aim) don't detract too much from the experience
- **Entertainment:** It's good to see EA taking chances with this property again
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Bond's new video game adventure was a lot more enjoyable for me than his last few cinematic outings. Denise Richards as a nuclear physicist? Who thought that was a good idea? While Shannon Elizabeth may not be an acting juggernaut, Everything or Nothing still feels like it could have worked on the big screen. The frequent switches in action keep it moving along at a nice pace and make it hard to put down. I especially like some of the more creative action stages, such as the free fall down the side of the cliff. The third-person shooting levels which make up the most of the game are fun and work pretty well on Xbox and PS2, although the GameCube controls came up a bit short. While I preferred playing this title on the Xbox, it's a solid release on all three systems, and it's a great chance to see Bond in an adventure that's (a little) less ridiculous than most of his recent missions.

JEREMY — 8.75

CIMA

The Enemy

A REVOLUTIONARY NEW TYPE OF RPG!

For decades, the Human race and the CIMA race have been in constant conflict with one another.

Join Arc J., a Gate Guardian between the two worlds as he struggles to protect a group of pioneers and ultimately tries to find peace.

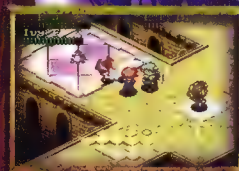
CIMA: The Enemy is an intriguing, real time RPG with a new "active system" - the ability to make the NPCs in the game active!



New "Active System" - use the NPCs in the game to solve various puzzles and in affect the storyline of the game!



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"...Rainbow Studios and THQ have teamed up to finally give the rest of us a motocross game that tries to update the sport."

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

MX UNLEASHED

HOOKED ON A FEELING

Motocross games are an evolutionary step behind the rest of the extreme sports genre. I don't say that because I think it's an inferior sport or because I think that you have to be inherently devoid of brains to do some of the stupid, sick tricks they perform. I say this only because Rainbow Studios and THQ have teamed up to finally give the rest of us a motocross game that tries to update the sport. When I say "us," I mean anybody who doesn't break limbs for a living on 250cc monsters tearing through the sky.

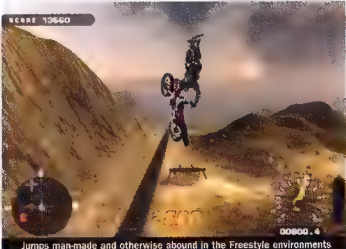
MX Unleashed combines a lengthy career mode with Freestyle worlds whose layouts play more like a Tony Hawk game. This isn't a reinvention of the wheel by any means, it's just that its execution meant that I actually gave a damn about a motocross game for more than ten minutes. Run around in the environments and you'll encounter challenges like racing against a monster truck and other vehicles (which you then earn if you win), stunt competitions, and both Hit and Run activities. Runs are a series of jumps you have to perform in a row, while Hits are a series of runs that have to be done before competing riders finish theirs. Hits and Runs were my favorite Freestyle activities because you really had to nail your timing well and having to do all the jumps in succession was a cool

challenge. A close second was earning the vehicles like the plane and buzzing around the worlds in those. This sounds stupid as hell, but I couldn't help smiling. One of the other small joys of Freestyle was the ambient life. Whether it was the riders or the trucks (with jumps on their flatbeds), there was always something going on.

Rainbow is mainly known as a developer with great physics, and here they don't disappoint. I can say that this is the first motocross game whose trick system didn't piss me off. I also like that you really have to think when you go out on the demanding courses. You can't just pre-load to the max all the time—you have to know the layout of the tracks and use your clutch and pre-load at varying strengths to keep your momentum out there. Finally, I should fault the game for having inconsistent collision, but it was just forgiving enough that it kept the fun rolling.

Motocross has had an inglorious history of false starts, lots of franchises without enough distinction between them, and just mediocrity. This newest partnership is a good one, and the only problem being that it wasn't seized upon sooner. More straight-up innovation is needed next time, but until then, we've got a good solid game on our hands. —KATO

■ STYLE | 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ PUBLISHER THQ ■ DEVELOPER RAINBOW STUDIOS ■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 16



THE BOTTOM LINE



8

- **Concept:** Open up the motocross world with Tony Hawk-inspired Freestyle courses
- **Graphics:** There are some nice textures and dirt particles on the tracks, but too much fogging in Freestyle
- **Sound:** The whining of the bikes is drowned out only by the smattering of small-time bands
- **Playability:** The clutch will take some practice, but the trick controls are responsive
- **Entertainment:** The game's structure is nothing new, but it's a good first step in getting the sport into everyone's hands
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I wouldn't be surprised if I was the first person in the history of video games to say that an MX title blew me away. As we all know, this genre has been running on two flat tires since its inception. With Rainbow Studios on the scene, this is all about to change. Offering a better understanding of vehicular physics than any other developer, Rainbow Studios has created the ultimate gameplay package. Squaring up taxis, preloading jumps, stringing together trick combos, it's all here. While the silky smooth handling steals the show, this title also boasts great depth and ingenuity in its selection of modes. You'll even find yourself squaring off against a monster truck. You can't help but applaud the little things as well such as the ease of play from the first-person helmet cam. Even without online play, MX Unleashed soars high above the competition and is just as fun as Rainbow's previous works.

REINER — 8.5



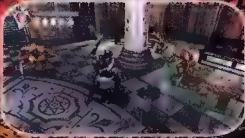
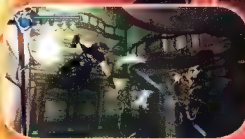
the edge
When All Games Aren't Created Equal
I give the edge without a doubt to the Xbox version. The graphics are simply crisp—something you instantly notice when flying 20 feet in the air with five other riders while you're pulling off a Saran Wrap. Oh yeah, you'll also take note of it when the dirt particles fly as you eat it trying to land. The only disappointing note on this front is that the Xbox cannot get rid of the fogging problem in the Freestyle worlds. Other than that, I suggest you re-map the Thrill camera onto a trigger button. It sounds totally trivial—until you see yourself still high in the sky, and then you can't stop using it.

Vengeance... is a dish better served hot.



This time it's personal... Ryu Hayabusa, the deadly and feared ninja assassin, is out for blood after his clan is massacred by the evil Ygor Empire. Vowing to seek revenge on those that betrayed him, he sets off on an action-packed adventure where the lines between good and evil are blurred and all that he believes in will be tested.

Possess the fury of Ryu Hayabusa as you destroy your opponents using lethal ninja weapons and cunning skill. Your mission: to annihilate your enemies and defeat the Holy Emperor, reclaiming the magical sword "Ryoken."



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PLAYSTATION 2 | GAMECUBE | XBOX

NFL STREET

JUKEING YOUR JOCK OFF

With Terrell Owens and Joe Horn trying to one-up each other in the TD celebration department - and the criticism both have drawn - the NFL can now officially be called the "No-Fun League." Given the sheer amount of taunting, trash talk, and actual fun being had in NFL Street, it's almost surprising that the league has sanctioned it. If only there were refs you could take out at the knees.

A good football team is all about each player executing their job. Yours is to showboat every chance you get. If you're not High Steppin' your way to the TD or teasing an opponent by waving the ball in his face, then I don't want you on my team. NFL Street gives you every opportunity to spread humiliation on the other team like butter on toast. Throwing, jukeing, pitching the ball - all can be done to gain Style points by holding down L1 while you hit the appropriate button. You can also pull off Signature moves using L2 and the right analog stick.

Do enough showboating and you'll earn a GameBreaker you can play at anytime (which can be used to trump your opponent's own GameBreaker), similar to NBA Street. However, my problem with this title is these don't happen often enough, and that the game doesn't do much with them. While you are guaranteed a score or turnover if you use one, they don't take away points like in NBA Street or do anything new. If they were more plentiful, they'd create more of a tug of war between teams and the title could flow

almost like a Tony Hawk run. A quicker payoff would also go really well with the game's already manic pace. I often had times where I would fumble the ball doing a style move, and then the other team would do exactly the same thing all in the span of one play. This fun is ultimately limited, however, and isn't helped by the below average intelligence of your AI teammates. I also wish hot routes and a swat move for defensive backs were added.

The shortcomings in the gameplay don't kill NFL Street, but ultimately limit the amount of time you'll spend with it in one sitting. This is a shame for the career mode. You build up your created team's stats through completing challenges, and then you pit your players against the NFL, playing each division at a time. Unfortunately, you can't use your favorite team in this mode (which is annoying), although you can steal individual players off of NFL franchises. All in all, Street is more of a pure multiplayer experience. Its online features (PS2 only), including pitting your created team against others, are a blast. The virtual taunting is going to make people cry, Sweet.

I can honestly say that this is the first non-hardcore sim football game I've had fun with. Strip away some of the gloss (which isn't even present on the graphics - blah!), however, and it's apparent that despite EA Big's experience with extreme versions of sports, this feels every bit like the first entry in the franchise that it is. - KATO

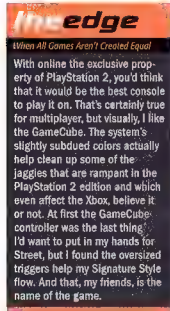
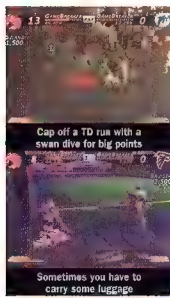
THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERETT
E 7.75
BEST BUY

- **Concept:** Delivers more attitude than Midway's Blitz series, but hits that gameplay wall
- **Graphics:** Plagued by the PlayStation 2. They struggle to be average, although the player details are cool
- **Sound:** The constant jabberjawing of players is better than your normal announcers
- **Playability:** Throwing down style moves is infectious, but the football itself is limited
- **Entertainment:** Despite its career structure, this might shine brightest as a pure multiplayer title
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

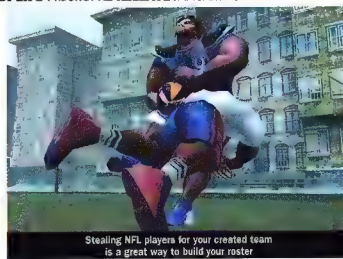
SECOND OPINION

When it comes to razzle-dazzle and fast-paced gameplay, NFL Street makes NFL Blitz look like a friendly game of flag football. Whether it's freezing the defense in its tracks with a gitzzy Signature Style deque move or ramming a hapless quarterback's head into a brick wall, you really couldn't ask for a faster hitting release. Given the acrobatic nature of the players, you often find yourself holding your breath when a ball is tipped, or crossing your fingers praying that your player won't cough up the skin when performing a flashy move. As much as I dislike the notion of the game not having the option of playing seasons or viewing stats, the bery of unique challenges and desire to transform your custom team and players into NFL powerhouses will assuredly keep you glued to the game. When it comes to multiplayer, this is the ultimate trash talking game. It's all about the skills, baby.

REINER - 8.5



■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ PUBLISHER EA BIG ■ DEVELOPER EA TIBURON ■ RELEASE JANUARY 13





"...done so well that old fans will feel comfortably at home."

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE | PC UNLIMITED ENABLED

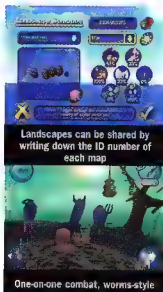
WORMS 3D

SUCCESSFUL EVOLUTION INDEED



THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERYONE
E
8

- **Concept:** Really, truly update the Worms franchise by sticking the buggers into a 3D environment
- **Graphics:** Exaggerated comic style that perfectly captures and improves on the earlier editions
- **Sound:** Funny blips and burps from your charges, opponents, and weapons
- **Playability:** It's a wonderfully executed jump to 3D, but some minor complications arise
- **Entertainment:** This is everything that Worms fans have appreciated about the series
- **Replay Value:** High



edge
When All Games Aren't Created Equal
Really, the four versions of Worms 3D that we reviewed fall into two groups: the PS2 and GC versions are nearly identical, and the PC and Xbox versions can handily be lumped together. Option one (PS2 and GC) have muddier graphics that seem to complicate the jumping and aiming issues more than the superior group B (populated by the PC and Xbox editions). Besides better graphical clarity, these last two versions have smoother controls and what many people would consider: obligatory online options. Playing against Worm-captains around the world (or around your office) puts the Xbox and PC versions on the top of the stack.

Ever since the big jump from 2D to 3D, favorite franchises have been trying to make the transition without sacrificing the core, the heart, of what made their games great in two dimensions. Some have been more successful than others. Thankfully, Team17 seems to have taken a long, hard look at what made Worms the multi-million selling series that it is and put in the effort required to make a quite treacherous (but rewarding) leap to the third dimension.

On all platforms, the basic premise is the same: Missions and challenges are offered for solo players, and a freakishly robust customization system is supplied for multiplayer addicts that want to blow each other up. But that doesn't answer the biggest question – what is the strategy classic actually like in this brave new world? Refreshingly, and stunningly, it remains largely the same.

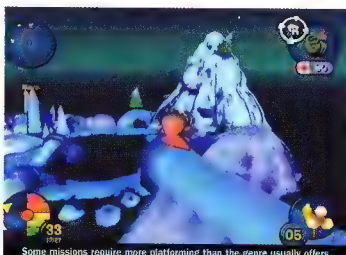
Sure, there are a few complications. Namely, the jumping and some weapons are problematic. It's hard to predict where Worms will be able to jump because they are easily caught on lips or ledges that players cannot see. A little fiddling generally alleviates the problem, but it is a frustrating hurdle (no pun intended) worth mentioning. Secondly, predicting the arc of a variety of weapons like the bazooka and grenades is harder in this iteration. Although the game offers multiple camera

angles (first person, a player-controlled isometric default view, and a blimp cam to display the bigger picture), it's still hard to determine where a hand-thrown cluster bomb is actually going to end up. A simple camera view to show the profile of your soldier would have helped immensely, but alas, it's not in there.

Despite these growing pains, Worms is still done so well that old fans will feel comfortably at home. Team17's ambitious move to 3D keeps the series' trademark unheinged reaction shots, off-kilter weapons (a crazed elderly lady is one), hilarious mini-ocscenes, and in-depth strategy action. What the new game format does offer, and the developers have taken great advantage of it, is the option to create really interesting vertical levels that require strategy, timing, and forward thinking – everything that a great turn-based game should force you to do.

Multiplayer is well executed in each version, but online options are only offered for the Xbox and PC flavors. That said, Worms 3D is just as addictive as its predecessors, but features more thoughtful challenges and conquests. Pick this up, and you'll be throwing down with your friends for years to come, and it's not often that you can say that about a console strategy title. — **LISA**

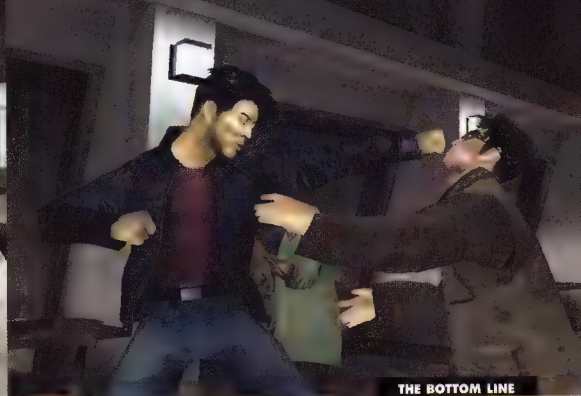
■ **STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY (UP TO 4 PLAYERS VIA XBOX LIVE OR PC LAN OR INTERNET)** ■ **PUBLISHER ACCLAIM**
■ **DEVELOPER TEAM17** ■ **RELEASE FEBRUARY 24**



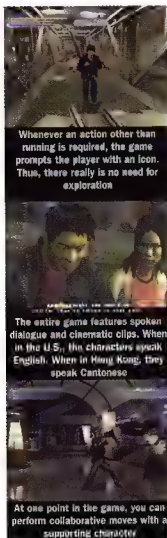
SECOND OPINION

I remember the days when I didn't dread seeing my favorite game franchises move to 3D. Worms, in its original form, was a game all about blowing things up with ridiculous weapons. Worms 3D takes that simple, ingenious concept and tinkers with it, resulting in a lot of fitter than flatters up the experience. Sure, it has all the humor, heavy weaponry, and carnage that made previous Worms titles unique, but the enjoyment of those elements is diluted by problems like unskipably annoying platformer-esque missions, and terrible camera work with no zoom control. And if you thought the ninja rope was tough to use before, just wait until you try it now. If you're hungry for Worms-related nostalgia, this game is adequate; but if you want one with all of the fun and none of the fat, leave Worms 3D alone and pick up Worms Armageddon for the PC.

JOE - 7



"...lengthy choreographed sequence that can best be described as poetry in motion..."



Whenever an action other than running is required, the game prompts the player with an icon. Thus, there really is no need for exploration

The active game features spoken dialogue and cinematic clips. When in the U.S., the characters speak English. When in Hong Kong, they speak Cantonese

At one point in the game, you can perform collaborative moves with a supporting character

PLAYSTATION 2

RISE TO HONOR

IS IT BETTER TO DIE WITH HONOR, THAN LIVE WITHOUT?

With the electrifying combat prowess of Jet Li at your fingertips, and the ostentatious fight choreography of Cory Yuen fueling your every move, *Rise to Honor* successfully captures the cinematic flair and rip-roaring excitement of a Hong Kong action film. Jet Li's superlative fighting style has been replicated perfectly through motion capture technology. As you catapault off of a wall into a spin kick, and exchange countering attacks with a foe in a lengthy choreographed sequence that can best be described as poetry in motion, you really do get the feeling that you've stepped into the shoes of the almighty Jet Li.

To successfully bring Li's signature fighting style to the video game front, Sony Computer Entertainment America's Foster City studio developed an innovative combat system that allows gamers to assail multiple enemies at once. With context-specific moves assigned to the right analog stick, you can seamlessly transfer attacks from one foe to the next. For instance, if you find yourself in a situation where two enemies are advancing from opposite sides, tapping to the right will throw a jab at the enemy on the right, then hitting left will send a back kick to the enemy on the left.

Assuredly, the combat system feels a little awkward at first, but once you understand its intricacies, you'll love it. Taking down 30 enemies without getting hit truly is a remarkable feeling. The only area where this unique formula

comes up a little short is in countering attacks. To dodge a move, you simply need to hold the counter button and tap the analog stick in the direction of the foe when an attack is thrown. Rather than pushing gamers to hone their reflexes, the timing of your counter doesn't have to be precise. In fact, you can simply jam in the direction of the foe without penalty—which results in uncontested retaliatory strikes.

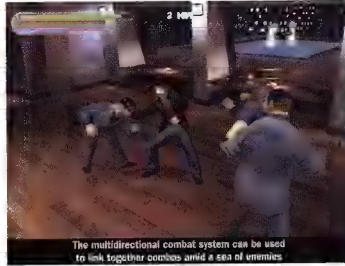
To offset the martial arts and inject variety into the mix, Sony has incorporated run and gun and stealth sequences. These stage-specific gameplay styles appear frequently, but neither matches the quality of the hand-to-hand combat. As clunky as the shoot-out controls can be, and as odd as it is that you never once have to reload, I actually enjoy the simplicity and epic explosiveness of mowing down dozens of enemies in no time flat. As for the stealth exercises, let's just say that you're basically playing the children's game "Red Light, Green Light" with a bunch of dimwitted security guards with flashlights. In other words, they couldn't be more dreadful.

As is the case with most brawlers, *Rise to Honor* is as linear as linear can get, and does little to invite gamers back for a second time. The entire game can be completed in roughly five to eight hours. As rewarding as the hand-to-hand combat is, *Rise to Honor*'s thrills are short lived. It's an enjoyable play, but much like Jet Li's films, is nothing more than a lazy afternoon of fun. —REINER

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA (FOSTER CITY STUDIO) ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 17



Certain environmental objects are interactive. The bullets you fire will propel this bunny backward



The multidirectional combat system can be used to link together combos amid a sea of enemies

THE BOTTOM LINE



■ **Concept:**
Jet Li stars in a beat 'em up with motion-captured, choreographed sequences and unique analog fighting

■ **Graphics:**
Other than the awkward running animation, this game's visuals scream "big budget." It looks great.

■ **Sound:**
The soundtrack is hit or miss, but I absolutely love the fact that the characters speak Cantonese in Hong Kong and English in the U.S.

■ **Playability:**
The analog combat system works incredibly well

■ **Entertainment:**
Highly enjoyable, yet far too linear and way too short

■ **Replay Value:**
Low

SECOND OPINION

I must say I'm impressed at how well *Rise to Honor* pulls off the kung fu movie experience. Sure, it's a tad short and can be a bit repetitive at times, but overall it's not a bad attempt at mixing the two art forms into a meaningful, and at times, entertaining game/movie. However, I want to make it clear that I'm just referring to the game's overall presentation and story arc, not the combat system that I feel leaves a lot to be desired. Like Xbox's *Grabbed By The Ghouls*, *Rise* uses the right analog stick to deliver its combat, which is not only limiting but inaccurate, and quite frankly annoying as hell. Brawlers are typically shallow, so I won't hold that against this title, but its combat system just doesn't offer the precise control and interplay that I'm looking for in a game. Not a bad rental if you love Jet Li, but everyone else should steer clear.

ANDY — 6.5

TOURNAMENTS
-24/7-

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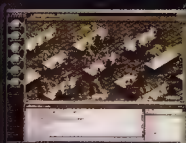
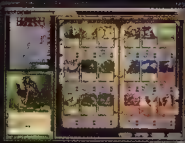
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THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
17+

7.5

PLAYSTATION 2 UNLIMITED ENABLED

DRAKENGARD

NOT A TOTAL DRAG

"It's fun, but lacks any semblance of depth."

It's good to see RPG master Square Enix take a risk on a completely different type of game, and it's even better to see that its new title is – sort of – a success. *Drakengard* has been (with good cause) called "Dynasty Warriors with dragons," and that basic concept has yielded interesting, yet flawed, results.

Drakengard is the story of Caim (Kyme in the Japanese version), a Union soldier at war with the evil Empire (which fortunately has no Death Star or Sith Lords). In an effort to save his sister, the Goddess of the Seals, he is fatally wounded and must make a pact with a dragon to survive. As both Caim and the Dragon, the player takes on the nearly endless soldiers of the Empire.

The quest features three different types of gameplay, which switch at fairly regular intervals. The first is melee combat, in which Caim slashes his way through simple, bloody ground combat. These stages are quite familiar to anyone who has played Koel's *Dynasty Warrior* games, and are incredibly simplistic. Combat solely involves one button, as does magic. This is hack n' slash gameplay at its most basic. It's fun, but lacks any semblance of depth.

The remaining two modes feature the dragon as the central figure. The first is aerial combat, in which the player flies around, breathing fire at anything that moves. These stages are short and simple, but get progressively harder

as the story continues. The final, and most dynamic, mode is strafing, in which the dragon flies low over ground troops, raining flaming death down upon them. At any time, Caim can jump down off the dragon to engage in melee combat, which is often necessary to complete the stage. Certain enemies are immune to dragon fire, while others are hard to hit, thanks to the dragon's lack of agility.

All three of the gameplay styles feature fairly detailed graphics, and the cutscenes are of classic Square quality. There could have been a few more enemy types, but the endless hordes of troops still look great. The pop up is pretty terrible, but considering the amount of figures onscreen at most times, it's more or less excusable. The framerate is also mostly constant, slowing during only a few instances of particularly frenzied air combat.

Between the three modes, *Drakengard* stays fairly fresh, as the action always switches at the right moment. However, none of the three are really that new or exciting on its own. But combined with some sharp graphics and some rudimentary RPG elements, the gameplay offers up enough to recommend this title to fantasy buffs or Square Enix devotees. Yes, it's simple and not terribly original, but it does provide plenty of fast-paced action and some solid visuals. As action games go, you could do much worse. — JEREMY



Stop, drop, and roll!

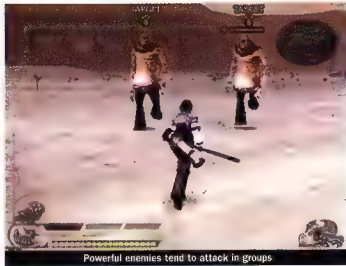


Celebrate independence Day dragon style



Aerial combat uses a lock-on feature to stay on target

You will unlock many new weapons on your quest



Powerful enemies tend to attack in groups



The cinema scenes are certain not to disappoint

■ **Concept:**
Bust some medieval heads as both a fierce warrior and an even fiercer dragon

■ **Graphics:**
Easily the high point of the title, everything is detailed and sharp, although sparse

■ **Sound:**
Prepare to be annoyed – there are only a few background tunes and the voice-acting is straight out of a renaissance festival

■ **Playability:**
Can you push the square button? Then you can play this

■ **Entertainment:**
The combination of flying, strafing, and melee modes still results in a somewhat stale dish

■ **Replay Value:**
Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Drakengard is Square Enix's answer to Koel's *Dynasty Warriors* series. Whether by blade or by your dragon's fiery breath, the blood of hundreds (perhaps thousands) will stain your hands in each mission that you enter. While I did find the hack n' slash element to be satisfactory, this is by no means a solid-playing game.

The mission objectives are annoying at best, and the dragon flying mechanics are horribly designed. If you thought *Dynasty Warriors* had a lot of pop-up, believe me when I say that you haven't seen anything yet. Even with sparsely detailed environments, enemy troops seemingly appear out of nowhere. Square usually excels in the graphical department, but *Drakengard*'s visuals look like big, stinky dragon butt. I'm a sucker for leveling up and gaining new powers, yet even with a healthy dose of these elements, I wanted nothing more than to permanently slieve this game.

REINER — 6

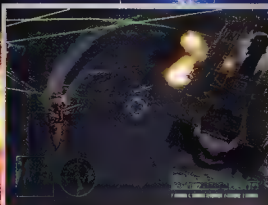
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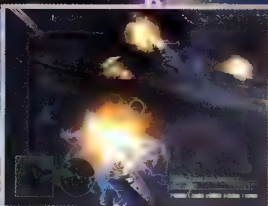
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PlayStation 2





"Victory really does leave you with a sense of satisfaction, and the feeling that you and Rio make a good team."

PLAYSTATION 2 UNLIMITED ENABLED

LIFELINE

SAY IT LIKE YOU MEAN IT

This game has a gimmick. Like Kirby's Tilt 'n' Tumble and the Dreamcast's Seaman, Lifeline utilizes a completely unique control scheme. Still, Sony Japan needed to make a game with plot, pacing, action, and difficulty so solidly designed that the title could stand apart from its unconventional mechanics. I can say now that they succeed quite handsily.

Lifeline opens by explaining that Earth's first space hotel is hosting an opening night gala for diplomats, debutantes, and other various wealthy examples of humanity on Christmas Eve. As expected, things go horribly awry and aliens attack the hotel. You wake up locked in a security control room and the only survivor you can find seems to be a waitress (Rio) in a holding cell. She is trying to talk to you, the Operator.

By holding down the circle button, talking, and releasing the button when you're done, Rio will respond by performing the action requested (if she understands), proclaiming you to be a total tool (if you said something that offended her), or telling you that she didn't hear you. As long as she understands what you're saying, it works surprisingly well, despite some occasional, probably hardware-related, problems. Also, the game has some built-in help to make sure the you and the waitress are on the same page. The map has each area of a room labeled and Rio responds most accurately when you use the words assigned to the requested area. For instance, some would call a grouping of a couch, chair, and coffee-table a "sitting area." The map

calls it a "living area." Although she'll still get there if you describe a sitting area, using the specified term works more efficiently.

Lifeline also has two major similarities to most survival horror titles: an interesting plot that you don't want me to ruin for you, and combat that is merely okay. When fighting, Rio requests constant directives about where to shoot or move to, and when. Hearing people play the game sounds like Ulala's commands from Space Channel 5, but being the Operator requires Zen-like concentration. However, victory really does leave you with a sense of satisfaction, and the feeling that you and Rio make a good team.

But where Lifeline's voice control really shocks you is in the puzzles. We were helping her remember why she went into the infirmary. Rio wanted us to name things in a doctor's office in hopes of jarring her memory. Band-Aid? She understood and responded accordingly. Needles? Yup. Drugs? Recognized. Gauze, gurney, I.V., x-rays all worked. It was amazing.

I'm not going to say that this title is the be-all, end-all of gaming, or even that it's a frustration-free romp through space lodging. I am going to say that most people with a reasonable amount of patience will enjoy their time with Lifeline. It's well made, and the technology really makes you feel like you and Rio are in this together. It actually makes you care about the adventure at hand, which is the true mark of a great game. — LISA

THE BOTTOM LINE
M 8.75
PLAYSTATION 2

- **Concept:** Voice-enabled control scheme for a space/horror game
- **Graphics:** The lush luxury hotel areas contrast the demolished staff-only areas
- **Sound:** Rio's dialogue is funny and one of the few examples of video game voicework actually succeeding in establishing a character
- **Playability:** The game cleverly helps players say the right thing
- **Entertainment:** Even without the voice-enabled novelty, this is a solid action title
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

No matter how impressive the technology is, gamers are going to be split on Lifeline. The voice control mechanic is incredibly unique, which will certainly earn it a devoted following. However, the novelty of the game may not appeal to everyone, which will most likely incur some vocal hatred. It's not for everyone, but Lifeline is one of the most creative and daring games in ages. Everything about it was built around the voice control mechanic, which results in some truly fresh and satisfying gaming. However, there were also many times during the quest where I longed to take direct control of Rio's actions. The frustration level of this title is pretty high, as voice recognition misunderstanding leads to a lot of fatal mistakes. But I'm willing to overlook that, as Lifeline is a completely unique gaming experience, and that's not something I get to say very often.

JEREMY — 8.75

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 2



The vent-navigation puzzle is...unique



Names listed on the map screen are what Rio will understand best



The battles start out right away. This is where you begin the game



Winning battles is about strategy, timing, and accurate recognition.



Letting Rio know what to look at is challenging, but logical

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REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

MAFIA

NOT QUITE A MOB HIT

There are two kinds of games: those that stand the test of time, and those that don't. I'm sad to report that Mafia is most definitely in the latter category. I was eager to play this PS2 port, as I remembered having quite enjoyed the PC version two years ago.

On one level, this is a very solid port. It certainly does a good job of translating the PC visuals to the PS2, especially in the cutscenes, which are rendered here as startling fidelity—an extremely impressive technical accomplishment.

So, while the plot and Depression-era ambience still held me rapt, the gameplay itself was, quite frankly, pretty dull at times. Most of this is due to the dreary driving sequences. Although they have raised the maximum speed limit to 60, tooling around on "pizza delivery missions in an old jalopy just isn't that fun. There's still some good gunplay to be had, but games can't get by on the free-roaming city environment concept anymore. It's not enough to just create a living, breathing virtual world—you've got to give me something interesting to do in it. While I can still appreciate this game for its strengths, its flaws have become much more noticeable than they were when I launched on PC. —**MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
7.75

Concept:

Port the old PC hit to PS2, while adding a lakuster racing mode.

Graphics:

Technically, this is very sound, especially considering the difference between the systems' power.

Sound:

I love the music; it's reminiscent of Woody Allen's *Sweet and Lowdown*. (Now, there's a selling point!)

Playability:

Box, this is pretty poor by today's standards.

Entertainment:

A great PC game in its day, but time has not been kind.

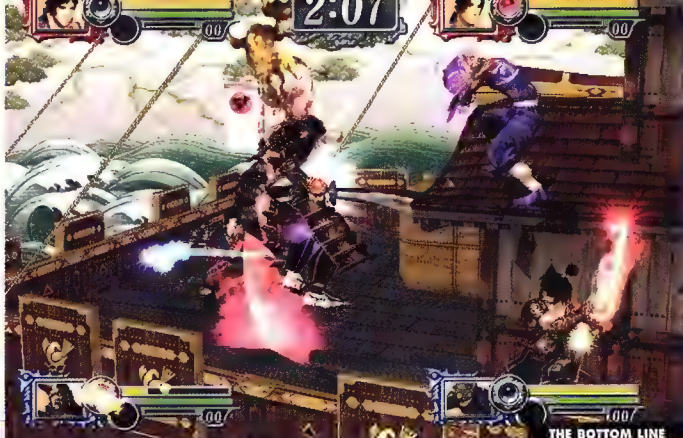
Replay Value:

Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

For all of the skill evident in the authentic ambience and faithfully recreated 1930s cars and firearms, Mafia fails to deliver in the all-important gameplay department. A headache-inducing bouncy driving camera, bad on-foot controls, and some of the worst load times I've ever seen make this a title only most enthusiasts should consider.

ADAM - 7



PLAYSTATION 2

ONIMUSHA BLADE WARRIORS

SUPER CAPCOM MELEE

Until now, PS2 owners have had very little in the way of good four-player games (other than sports) to throw in when there are more than two people in the room. Blade Warriors, while by no means revolutionary, is a good solid multiplayer brawler that should keep you pounding each other to bits well into the night.

If you've ever played Super Smash Bros., you'll immediately be comfortable here—even the fighter select screen is strikingly familiar. Barring a few elements, such as a life bar and combo attacks, gameplay largely follows in SSB's footsteps. Not that it's necessarily bad, but this is a very derivative title. Not in every way, though. Souls drop when you hit or KO someone, and they can be collected to refill your health. Arenas are fairly three-dimensional, which can make it tough to line up ranged attacks, and everything from models to effects is very easy on the eyes.

Though play is for the most part frantic and fun, Blade Warriors does fall flat in a number of areas. The camera and character variety are both suspect, and combos are nigh-impossible to break up. Fighters don't have nearly enough moves, either. On average, I found myself doing the same four-slash combo all the freaking time.

If you're one of those people with more than one friend, this is as good a way as any to get your brawl on with a PS2. —**ADAM**

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN
8

Concept:

Use your favorite Onimusha characters to unlock other Capcom heroes (and villains), and control them in a giant slugfest.

Graphics:

Sharp, varied backgrounds and excellent models.

Sound:

Umm, sword clangs and battle cries. Mega Man EXE and Lan are annoying as ever.

Playability:

If your square button is feeling lonely, this will reacquaint you with it.

Entertainment:

Definitely one of the top PS2 four-player titles.

Replay Value:

High.

SECOND OPINION

Going into this review, I was prepared to nominate Capcom for a Darwin Award. Applying the Onimusha license to gameplay that cannibalizes the Super Smash Bros. formula is equivalent to pouring Coke on your Wheaties. As asinine as Blade Warrior's concept is, you can't help but become completely entrenched in its simplistic, yet frantic hack n' slash fray. Strategy laden multi-tier environments, character-specific special moves, and four-player support pretty much round out the elements that Capcom has so blatantly stolen from Nintendo's popular series. Although very similar in design, Blade Warriors doesn't offer a robust selection of character types, nor reasons for people seeking a single player experience to invest more than a few hours of playing. Fun as it may be, it doesn't have the look or chemistry of Super Smash Bros.

REINER - 7.5



Other Capcom characters can be unlocked

This move is actually called the Shouryuken

Why Oyu needs garters to hold up her boots, we don't know

The arenas are all quite different

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER CAPCOM ■ DEVELOPER CAPCOM ■ RELEASE MARCH 23

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GameCube	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
PlayStation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
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REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

NIGHTSHADE

WHY THEY INVENTED SEPPUKU

The release of Shinobi in 2002 disappointed a lot of people by taking a revered series and turning it into an unfortunately average action game. Its follow-up, Nightshade, is also depressingly lackluster though it does manage to fail in different ways than its predecessor.

The main focus of this title is aerial combat, zipping from enemy to enemy and slashing them up without touching the ground. In a game where you spend so much time in the air, you wouldn't think that there would be so many ways to plummet to your death. However, due to the imprecise controls, you are bound to end up falling off of every building, truck, and elevated walkway you encounter, and thus being forced to restart the entire level.

The game has hordes of uninspired cybernetic goons, dull level design, and a plot thinner than water soup. In fact, the only thing that saves Nightshade from being entirely unplayable is the fun you can have stringing together kills while dashing through the air. You feel pretty stylish when your ninja strikes her pose as you see all of your foes fall to pieces around her. Unfortunately, the sense of accomplishment fades quickly, and then it's back to the mundane chore that is Nightshade. — **JOE**

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M 6.5

- **Concept:** Take an idea like "super-powered flying ninja" and somehow make it not fun.
- **Graphics:** Instead of a long red scar, Nightshade has an equally captivating bandana that is easily the graphical highlight of the game.
- **Sound:** Generic techno-triumpal does nothing to enhance the experience.
- **Playability:** Mournfully inadequate. I died more often due to clunky controls and poor auto-targeting than at an enemies hand.
- **Entertainment:** For every one time you think the game is fun, there are nine times that you're cursing life due to either boredom or frustration.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

Hack. Slash. Vavn. Repeat. If there is one word to sum up Nightshade, it's "uninspired." Take away the flashy gimmicks like *zafes*, and there's nothing here that you haven't seen in dozens of other games. It's not a bad game, just one that doesn't do anything to move past stale genre conventions. You see something; you kill it. That is all.

JEREMY — 6



PLAYSTATION 2

GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM

NEW CAMPAIGN, SAME GAME

Though it doesn't feature much for new or unique gameplay, Jungle Storm is a solid package of squad-based action. Hit detection is flawless, the enemy AI is surprisingly good, and the presentation is by no means bad.

The basic premise is that the player uses the skills of a commando squad to defend the free world. What this translates to in gameplay terms is sneaking about and shooting bad guys. Ghost Recon takes a more realistic approach to this than its competition, where enemies always drop in one hit and players can only take a few before they go down. Whether this is your thing or not, it does lead to a lot of frustration when a hostile jumps out from hiding and flattens half your squad before you can react. Because of this, Jungle Storm involves even more level memorization than similar titles.

Multiplayer features stat tracking and other goodies not always found in online shooters, but suffers from the same problems inherent in single player. The framerate can stutter even with no enemies onscreen, teammate AI is mediocre, and for some reason enemies only animate about three frames per second when viewed at long distance through a scope. At the end of the day, Jungle Storm doesn't do much to stand out in a crowded genre. — **ADAM**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T 7.5
GROWN

- **Concept:** Make more levels for Ghost Recon and call it a new game.
- **Graphics:** Though the textures are minimal at best, the models and foliage are nice.
- **Sound:** After a couple hours of this, you'll never want to hear "Kil confirmed" or "He's history" ever again.
- **Playability:** The archaic squad interface remains intact with little change. Improving soldier stats between missions is cool.
- **Entertainment:** While not awful, there are better options within the genre.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

SECOND OPINION

Strangely enough, this is basically an expansion of an expansion. It's got the campaign and features of the Xbox's Island Thunder release, as well as the new Jungle Storm campaign. If you've played Island Thunder, or even the original Ghost Recon, then you should be instantly familiar with everything Jungle Storm has to offer. If you're not a fan, then there's nothing here that will change your mind: It's the same game it always was with some added gravy like voice command and online rankings. But if you are a diehard Ghost Recon fan, you'll want to pick this up for all the new missions and the chance to track your online performance. Just don't expect to see any evolution of the series; gameplay and graphics are unchanged. The new missions are fun, but I'd really like to see this franchise begin to embrace some new ideas.

JEREMY — 8



Outscenes are short and devoid of drama

The frustrating command interface

A drive-by, Tom Clancy style

Don't you just love trying to save civilians?

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 12-PLAYER VIA ONLINE OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 21

WRATH UNLEASHED

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER STRATEGY
 ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11



Folks, as a video game reviewer, I have to play games like this. Fortunately, you don't. Sure, Wrath's cosmic version of Risk is an interesting premise, but

that's really about all it's got going for it (unless you count the high number of thong shots in the cutscenes). The graphics are dull, the combat is clunky, and the pacing is incredibly slow. You could write a novel during the numerous loading screens. If you like strategy games, LucasArts also recently released Gladius, a title superior to this one in every possible way. Just remember: We play these games so that you don't have to. — **JEREMY**

T 6



FIREFIGHTER F.D. 18

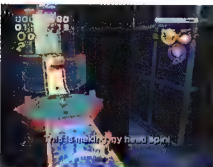
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 2

Wow, last month I reviewed a weird lowrider car-dancing game, this month it's fire fighting. Hmm...look forward to next issue for my write-up on Super Boogie Ball 4. As a fire fighting game, this doesn't match the style of Sega's old arcade cabinet, Brave Firefighters, which actually featured two awesome hose controllers. Without this novelty factor, the concept becomes a slow slog through dark and dreary levels filled with fire, survivors, and flame-retardant foam. Seriously, this is essentially the world's slowest third-person shooter with hoses instead of rifles. Unless *Backdraft* is your favorite film and the Men of the New York Fire Department calendar is on your cubicle wall (cough, Reiner, cough), you should probably take a pass on Firefighter F.D. 18. — **MATT**

T 5

SONIC HEROES

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
 ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 27



See, Sonic and I have been having some problems lately, and to Sonic Team's credit, Heroes is the closest they've gotten to what I'm looking for in an all-new Sonic title.

The different teams and combo system add necessary (and refreshing) updates to the blur's usual gameplay; but the level design (while markedly better than Adventure) still offers up a few too many watch-characters-shoot-through-loop-de-loops for my taste. It's a serviceable and innovative effort, but there's still room to grow. — **LISA**

E 7.75

ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS IX

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 24



Not everyone's got what it takes to be Emperor; if you don't have the patience to micromanage dozens of villages, officers, and troops, then stay away from this

game. In this ninth installment of the series, the player immediately starts in the rank of Ruler, allowing (nay, requiring!) complete control over the daily affairs of the armies and cities. Even though the game is amazingly deep and intricate, it doesn't change the fact that it's also rather dry. Imagine you're "playing" a Chinese History textbook; it's about that much fun, but it's also that detailed and involved. — **JOE**

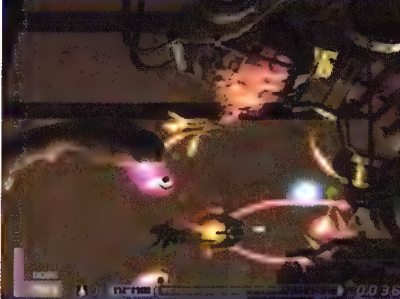
E 7

CY GIRLS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 9

Remember the time when we were playing Cy Girls and we had to backtrack to the bathroom in an earlier part of a level to get to the controls of a robotic vacuum cleaner so we could open that door? That was awesome! Actually, like everything else in Cy Girls, it wasn't awesome. These ladies may look hot in pictures, but believe me they are Medusas in the gameplay department. This title is notable for offering your choice of not one, but two woefully incompetent camera systems. In addition, Cy Girls also delivers horrid control, mechanical and unexciting gameplay, and tedious level designs. To be honest, I didn't play this for very long. But does a food critic have to eat a dozen dog poop-and-sauerkraut sandwiches before he writes that he doesn't like the taste? — **MATT**

T 4



PLAYSTATION 2

R-TYPE FINAL

HOW HARDCORE ARE YOU?

I rem's R-Type series has been a shooter staple since its launch in arcades way back in 1987. It may not be the greatest-selling title of all time, but it does hold a special place in many gamers' hearts. Which is exactly what publisher Fresh Games (a division of Eidos) is hoping will be the case.

While R-Type Final has all the classic pieces to the puzzle and a number of new innovations, such as AI-controlled head-to-head battles where players can set the parameters of their ship's routine, the game isn't for everyone.

You see, R-Type Final is incredibly hard. While you can knock down the difficulty to make the game easier, doing so basically removes all entertainment from the title. On the easier levels, I usually just died of boredom. On the harder difficulties I swore in anger at the title's merciless assault.

For the hardest of the hardcore, this game has a lot of replay value (including an amazing list of 101 ships that are not unlocked), but for most—myself included—it isn't entertaining enough to even justify purchase (even at its bargain basement price of \$29.99). — **ANDY**

THE BOTTOM LINE

E 6.75

- **Concept:** Blast through a horde of enemies to unlock goodies and post high scores
- **Graphics:** The art is good, but the levels are fairly bland and certainly not as good as they could be
- **Sound:** Typical techno shooter fare. Sometimes it sounds great, sometimes it sounds like a bad porno
- **Playability:** The variety of ships is impressive, but the controls haven't changed much over all these years.
- **Entertainment:** Only the hardest of hardcore shooter fans will find something to love here
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

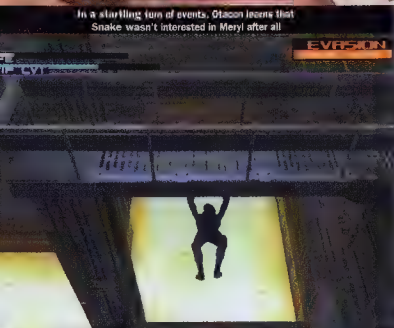
R-Type Final has everything I hoped it would: lots of ships, lots of shooting, and no feasible attempts to update the gameplay for a next generation system. It's the classic R-Type formula you know and love, complete with limited continues, huge alien bosses, and ridiculous firepower. It is also extremely difficult, and a must-have for die-hard fans of the genre.

JOE 8.5

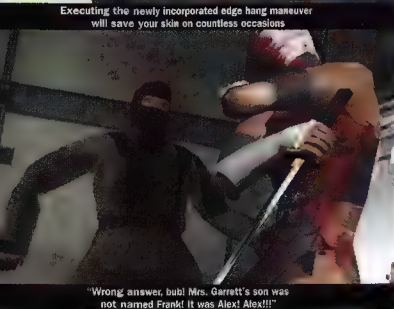
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS/FRESH GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** IREM SOFTWARE ENGINEERING ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 3



In a startling turn of events, Otacon learns that Snake wasn't interested in Meryl after all.



Executing the newly incorporated edge hang maneuver will save your skin on countless occasions.



"Wrong answer, bub! Mrs. Garrett's son was not named Frank! It was Alex! Alex!!!"

GAMECUBE UNLIMITED ENABLED

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

A CLASSIC REBORN

The masterwork that spurred a cinematic movement and made high-tech espionage a staple in the world of video games is back to entertain another generation. Whether you found yourself staring wide-eyed in disbelief at a taut, action-packed sequence, or marveling in awe at the cleverness of the stealth-laden gameplay, Metal Gear Solid delivered one memorable moment after another in its original version. Under the guidance of series' creator Hideo Kojima and the development muscle of Silicon Knights, players are invited to rekindle these unforgettable moments in this technologically advanced remake.

If you were to go back and play through the PSone version today, I can pretty much guarantee that the thought, "I can't believe that I used to think that these graphics were amazing" would pass through your mind. The 32-bit era of gaming didn't exactly age well. Pixelated texturing...jagged polygons...it's not a pretty sight. Hence, all of the graphics in the Twin Snakes are completely updated and showcase the best of today's texturing, effects, and character modeling.

In addition to the beautifying of visuals, all of the cinematics in the game have been reworked and oftentimes extended in length. To accompany this change, all of the dialogue has been re-recorded. The result is over an hour of extra footage. Some of the updated sequences do tend to run a little long, but the majority of the content really adds something to the game. The story is much easier to follow, and you really get the feeling that Kojima and company did everything in their power to ensure that each action sequence was more explosive than *The Matrix*. The lack of remorse for human life that Ninja displays in this version is rather disturbing...but makes for some truly outstanding scenes.

In updating the gameplay package, Silicon Knights turned toward the series' sequel, *Sons of Liberty*. With the ability to zoom into first-person targeting, the erratic toe-to-toe gunfights in the original game are now a thing of the past. Picking off enemies with a steady hand from across the room really opens things up. Snake can also leap over balconies, hang on ledges, and stuff bodies in lockers. To counter

the player's higher level of interaction, Silicon Knights has re-written all of the enemies' AI scripts. Your foes are even smarter than those in *Sons of Liberty*, and will go out of their way to thoroughly sweep their surroundings. They'll toss grenades under beds, search every upturned box, and radio for help in seconds flat. Unfortunately, you won't run into any extravagant new material like weapons, items, levels, or enemy encounters; but as a whole, the game plays much better and offers up a number of new strategies.

"I'm sure that everyone is dying to ask the question, "Did they change anything in the Psycho Mantis fight?" I don't want to ruin anything for you, but I will say that he's the same old head case and has a few new tricks up his sleeves. Just make sure that you have a ton of save files on your memory card before going into the fight!

New Easter eggs and sight gags are dispersed throughout every inch of this epic adventure as well. You'll run across different posters hanging in lockers, GameCube units on desks, and maybe even some Mario paraphernalia lying around.

While not boasting a ton of new content, you can't help but find yourself completely entranced by the updated sequences and newfound graphical realism. Even if you've already played through the original game 100 times, *The Twin Snakes* is worth revisiting. For the second time running, it's something that you'll cherish for a lifetime. —REINER



■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN/SILICON KNIGHTS ■ RELEASE MARCH 9

GAME OF THE MONTH METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

THE BOTTOM LINE
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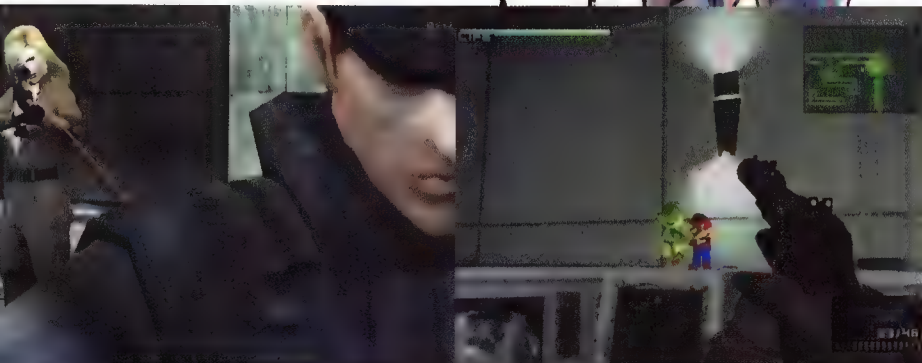
"...something that
 you'll cherish for a lifetime."

- Concept:**
 A remake of the PSone game that boasts significant graphical enhancements, updated gameplay, and over an hour of new footage
- Graphics:**
 The cinematics have been overhauled completely, and the level of graphical realism is every bit as impressive as Sons of Liberty
- Sound:**
 Newly recorded dialogue, a heart-racing score, and some of the best effects around
- Playability:**
 Adding first-person targeting alleviates the frustration of gunfights and opens up the gameplay tremendously
- Entertainment:**
 A new look for one of the greatest games of all time
- Replay Value:**
 Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I'm a big fan of game remakes. They are a great way to keep gaming history alive, and I'd love to see the trend continue. Metal Gear Solid is without a doubt a monumental title that should have a place in every gamer's library. It placed an emphasis on plot and cinematics that few other action games had ever attempted, and starred one of the most involving and complex heroes ever. Thanks to all the games that have referenced MGS since it was released, this version doesn't feel quite as monumental as it once did, but it still holds its own as one of the best games I've ever played. The improved graphics and cutscenes are really the primary selling point of this version, but since the original was so good, there was little reason to make further changes. This is a great edition of a great title, and GameCube owners everywhere should proudly add this to their collections.

JEREMY - 9.5



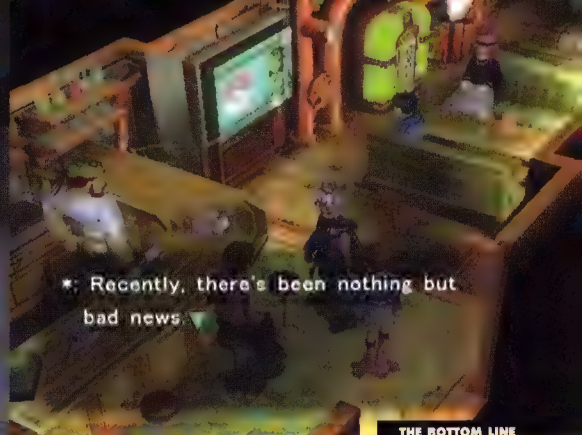
"For God's sake, Snake! Put on some pants!"

If you zoom down into first-person and shoot Mario in the head, a 1-up message will appear



"I can read your mind, Snake. You're thinking about... um... something red... No! Blime! And you... uh... wonder if you feel your dog ship before leaving home...and...hmmmm...you think my mask is neat."

First-person targeting completely changes how you work your way through the game



"a trainer's dream come true"



GAMECUBE
POKÉMON COLOSSEUM
 IT'S FUN IF YOU CARE

If Pokémon had been around when I was 10, I would have been that crazy kid on your block who lived and breathed Pokémon in all its forms. However, the days that this would have interested me have passed, and I can only see this game for what it is: a shining example of working just hard enough to keep a franchise alive. The game isn't glaringly sub-standard, but there was little effort put into innovation or moving the series forward.

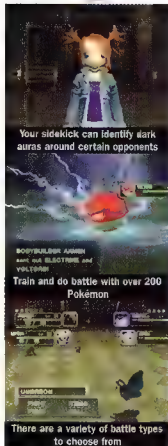
Colosseum is essentially two games, a Story Mode and a Battle Mode (which resembles the N64 Stadium titles). The plot of Story Mode is surprisingly dark and it would have been great for a 30 minute television episode; but, it doesn't really sustain a 30 hour RPG. You control a sort of anti-hero who steals a valuable accessory from the evil organization he is working for. It turns out that this item allows the wearer to snag Shadow Pokémon (which are Pokémon who have had their hearts sealed and who are generally ornery and unpredictable) away from their masters. It's a good thing that this thievery is encouraged, because in the barren wasteland setting, it is impossible to go out and collect Pokémon from the wild. Instead, you pump up your collection by stealing other people's monsters, gradually opening their hearts, and then having them fight by your side.

The absence of collecting in the traditional sense might come as a shock to those accustomed to the handheld

RPGs, but the Battle Mode is as familiar as can be, with several types of matches to fight against the computer or your friends, providing they have Game Boy Advances. Connectivity is a big aspect of Colosseum; not only can you hook up your GBA and import your collection from Ruby or Sapphire, but you also need it if you want to play multiplayer Battle Mode. If you and your friends are pumped up about battling each other in the arena, though, odds are that you already have GBAs and nearly unbeatable PokéBattalions from the previous games, so this requirement might not be too much of a drawback.

What is a drawback, however, is the ridiculously low level of challenge. Now, I understand that the game is geared toward younger players, but I was at least five hours into it before I got to a battle that didn't feel like it was set to "tutorial" difficulty. For a world where practically everyone trains Pokémon, there sure are a lot of awful trainers wandering around. The fact that my victory was assured before the battle even started just made me lose interest even faster.

If you're a fan, you'll love the premise, the gameplay, and the overwhelming number of little critters to collect and bend to your will. Even though none of these elements are so astounding as to bring outsiders into the fold, the franchise's debut on the GameCube (Pokémon Channel doesn't count) is a trainer's dream come true. — JOE



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** GENIUS SONORITY
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 22



THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:** Bring the two reigning genres of Pokémon games together under a single title
- **Graphics:** The environments are dull, but the creatures look as round, bouncy, and cuddly as you ever wanted them to
- **Sound:** Pika Pika? (Translation: Where are the cute little noises everything used to make?)
- **Playability:** Select commands from a menu. Repeat until bored
- **Entertainment:** Hours and hours of fun for current fans only. No other need apply
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

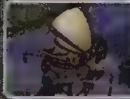
In all honesty, Pokémon Colosseum is what fans have been asking for at every opportunity during the last few years. The problem is that we got what we asked for, and I for one don't like it all too much. What was once a handheld RPG with the gotta-catch-'em-all hook is now a bland and (because of the Game Boy editions) predictable trek that would look more at home on the N64. While some attack and environmental effects are nice, others are embarrassingly bad. The game also features a sadly mixed bag of sound — your critters and the townsfolk offer nothing more than beeps, but the score is painfully peppy and overdone. Fans will and should pick this up. But many old devotees will be disappointed because, at best, Colosseum feels like a sad shell of the franchise's glory days and at worst, a poor example in the RPG genre.

LISA — 6.75

who are you?



Embark on a journey of epic proportions to gather the precious Prism Droplets. Beware, countless challenges stand in the way of your caravan. Face them alone, or for the first time ever, battle with friends by connecting up to four Game Boy Advance systems. Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles, only for Nintendo GameCube.



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PC GAME OF THE MONTH

DELTA FORCE - BLACK HAWK DOWN: TEAM SABRE



THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
ESRB
RATED

8

PC

DELTA FORCE - BLACK HAWK DOWN: TEAM SABRE

FIGHTING SOMETHING BESIDES TERRORISTS

"...an intense, visceral experience"

- **Concept:** Prove that you don't need a Tom Clancy license to make a good Special Forces FPS
- **Graphics:** Somewhat dated technically, but the environments are varied and cohesively designed
- **Sound:** Sub-par firearm effects, but incredible music
- **Playability:** As good as it gets. Being able to roll while prone is nice, and there's no better lane function to be found
- **Entertainment:** Black Hawk Down continues to be one of the better FPSs around, and you can't go wrong by putting Team Sabre on top of it
- **Replay Value:** High

No developer creates the feeling that you're part of a bona fide Special Forces operation better than NovaLogic. From the briefing to the exfiltration, playing Black Hawk Down is an intense, visceral experience. Team Sabre expands on the original with three new vehicles and weapons, as well as 11 original missions set in Columbia and Iran.

The BHD engine, though a little old, has had every last drop of flavor squeezed out by the level designers - each setting does an excellent job of recreating the ambience of a real-world location. In addition, the missions showcase quite a bit of variety. Whether it's a quasi-track shooting exercise where you're manning a .50-cal while trying to break into a fortified compound, clearing out a bunker with a shotgun, or taking out anti-aircraft guns before your choppers get into range, Team Sabre never falls into a rut.

Though three additional firearms and vehicles isn't a whole ton, there was certainly no shortage of either in the original BHD. Playing as a British SAS commando, new in Team Sabre, is definitely cool - there's nothing like listening to your squadmates complain about Yanks and their myriad failings. And, of course, the new weapons, skins, maps, and everything else just add to the fun of multiplayer.

That's one thing BHD has head and shoulders above the competition - multiplayer support. NovaLogic's Internet service, NovaWorld, does everything from tracking tons of player stats to hosting servers for players around the globe to battle it out. I can't stress enough how much I appreciate being freed from the minimal functionality of GameSpy. And who doesn't enjoy seeing just how elite their skills are?

Team Sabre does suffer from the technical limitations of the BHD engine, however. Draw distance could be better, squad command is very average, and many of the textures can only be described as unfortunate. The biggest problem, though, is the ridiculously small cone of fire for each and every weapon in the game. Also, there's no waver when using a sniper scope, making camping a bit too effective. Enemy AI doesn't react very well to player action, either - most of the time it seems to be stuck on either "suicidal assault" or "completely oblivious."

Anyone who doesn't already have BHD has been missing out on one of the best FPSs of recent times, and Team Sabre is just icing on the cake. It may not be the most revolutionary expansion pack in the world, but it integrates seamlessly into BHD, and is more than worth its \$20 price point for any FPS fan. - ADAM



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 50-PLAYER VIA INTERNET OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** NOVALOGIC ■ **DEVELOPER** NOVALOGIC
 ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 21



SECOND OPINION

Team Sabre is a welcome addition to one of the most popular recent FPS titles. Since it is an expansion, the gameplay is essentially the same as BHD, but with some extra goodies thrown in here and there. Unfortunately, improved AI is not one of those goodies. I just don't feel like a tactical powerhouse when the smugglers I'm plowing through can't even point their guns straight, or when they inexplicably fire rockets at their own installations. There are plenty of enemies to make those mistakes, too, since generic opponents seem to generate magically offscreen, like in old 2D brawlers. I would have rather seen the endless strings of enemies replaced by fewer, more intelligent ones. Thankfully, Team Sabre has an impressive online component, so you can spend more time outwitting human opponents than fighting an AI that practically fights itself.

JOE - 7.75

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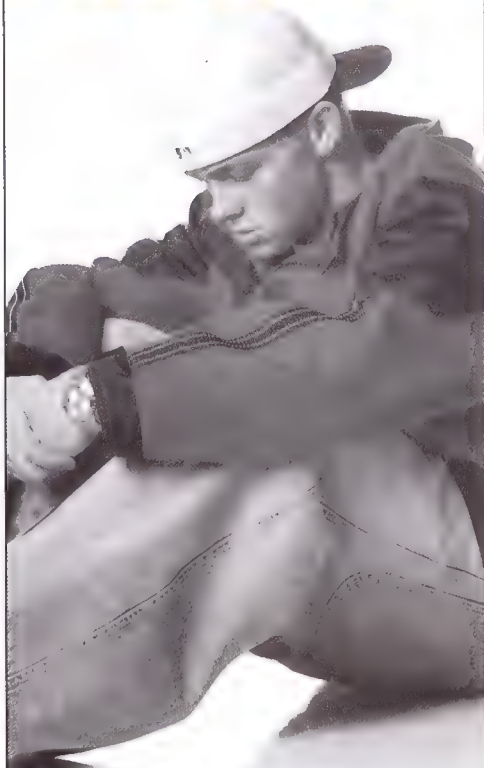
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THE BOTTOM LINE

T 7.75
THE BEST

PC

SPELLFORCE: THE ORDER OF DAWN

BREAKING THE RTS MOLD

Little brings joy to my life like seeing an existing genre taken in a completely different direction. SpellForce does just that, and even does it pretty well. Like a lot of original efforts, though, it's a bit rough around the edges and has a number of flaws in execution.

SpellForce basically consists of two interwoven games – one where you're trying to build up your avatar (a fully-statted warrior whose development is totally up to you), and another where that champion leads your massive armies into battle. These elements integrate rather well, but within each are a multitude of little flaws that make for a somewhat jarring experience.

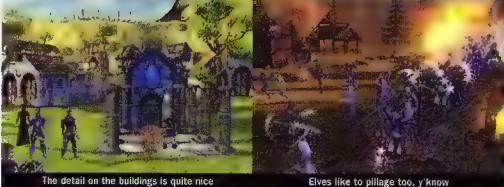
The RTS portion of the title, which is mostly very well-done, suffers from one problem that almost utterly kills my enjoyment of it: Unit AI is freakin' terrible. In particular, the attack-move command barely works at all, making babysitting your armies a full-time job. If you have enough micromanagement skills to pay the bills you'll be fine, but RTS newbies will need a bit of patience to get the hang of it.

There's a lot of things to praise this title for, as well. The persistent single player world, where sub-quests span several maps and characters appear throughout the story, is very cool. The interface is smooth and easy to navigate. The depth of customization for your avatar is immense. Unfortunately, without the execution to match these great ideas, SpellForce is merely above-average, rather than excellent. — **ADAM**



Trolls are one of six playable races

The variety of creatures and units is huge



The detail on the buildings is quite nice

Elves like to pillage too, y'know

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA INTERNET OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** ENCORE
 ■ **DEVELOPER** PHENOMIC GAME DEVELOPMENT ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 24

SECOND OPINION

SpellForce was engrossing enough to make me want to keep playing, but also unpolished enough to make me feel like I was being punished for doing so. The game pulls off a few unique ideas pretty well, but it surprisingly falls in several of the areas that are critical in an RTS. The interface with your avatar and heroes is unique, and allows for easy management of your key units during battle. If you aren't directly controlling them all the time, though, the AI makes some alarming errors. The story is well-conceived and deep, but the plot is advanced through voice-acting that is, at best, shameful. The missions are intricate and fun, with some impressive strategy and broad gameplay options, but as I progressed I ran into little hang-ups (like the AI) all over the place that kept me from liking this game as much as I wanted to.

JOE — 7.75


PC

NORTHLAND

DER VIKING HAUSE

THE BOTTOM LINE

T 8
THE BEST

German developer Funatics is continuing the Cultures franchise with Northland, a game that takes the art style, gameplay, and plot from (in particular) Cultures 2: The Gattis of Asgard.

In Cultures 2, four heroes defeated a giant serpent capable of destroying the world of men. During their quest Hatschi, Sigurd, Bjarni, and Cyra rejuvenated cities, and civilizations they came upon during their quest using a Sims/god-game hybrid style of play. After the serpent was defeated, the friends went their separate ways, celebrated joyously, and this is where Northland starts. Players have the choice of continuing the lives of Cultures 2's heroes through the single-player campaign or opt for up to six gamers to join in on the included multiplayer missions. There is also a free play option for those that just want to build and chill.

While the story is interesting and infused with Norse legend, it's the multiple difficulty levels, whimsical art style (which is a good thing), and hands-on management of individuals that makes this more engaging to a wider audience of players. Somewhere between The Sims and Civilization, Northland fills a unique gap in the strategy genre. — **LISA**

■ **Concept:** Continue the Cultures 2 storyline with improved graphics and AI.

■ **Graphics:** Although the closest zoom makes everything look like an NES title, the character and building designs are really nice.

■ **Sound:** Like drum 'n' bass for the Nordic set.

■ **Playability:** Easy menu layout and generally intuitive controls. Even newbies will get along just fine.

■ **Entertainment:** The Sims/strategy/action mix is engaging and the plot is nicely history-laden.

■ **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Northland does a decent enough job of combining The Sims with resource management and town planning, but I can't recommend this over the much better options within the PC simulation and strategy genres. Also, Viking women are apparently only good for cooking, cleaning, and popping out babies, which seems a bit archaic. I'd look elsewhere for your strategy fix.

ADAM — 7

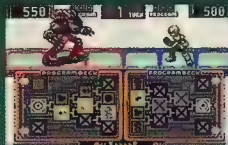
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** GMMX
 MEDIA ■ **DEVELOPER** FUNATICS ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4

REVIEWS

GAME BOY ADVANCE

MEGAMAN BATTLE CHIP CHALLENGE

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (2-PLAYER VIA LINK CABLE)
- **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
- **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 24



I couldn't get over the feeling that I wasn't really playing this game, even though I was clearly holding the GBA and pressing buttons. The action in Battle Chip Challenge

is entirely automated. You prepare for battle by arranging possible commands in an action tree, and once the fight starts, the game randomly selects the actions and executes them round after round. The mild strategy elements and simple gameplay involved could appeal to younger players, but not to anyone who actually enjoys controlling events onscreen. — **JOE**

E 6

GAME BOY ADVANCE

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: OPERATION SURMA

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** ADAMI
- **RELEASE** DECEMBER 7



While the recent GBA version of Splinter Cell proved to be an impressively realistic stealth-action title, Mission Impossible: Operation Surma is a solidly executed,

if not cartoonish, version of its bigger brothers. Featuring the same storyline as the console editions, but an inefficient control scheme, this title excels only in the fact that it's not outwardly broken. For sneaky spy maneuvers, go to Splinter Cell for the same over-the-top fun and much better examples of gadgetry, espionage, storytelling, control, and graphics. — **LISA**

T 6.25

GAME BOY ADVANCE

BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 24



My main hope when popping in this title, was that it would be better than the mediocre console version. Well, it is, but it's still far from great. The best thing

going for it is the very well done graphical style. Easily better than I hoped, and certainly better than I expected. It stays true to the animated series, and the animations actually have some life to them. There is a serious lack of enemy types, though; punching the same sprite gets awfully stale real quick. Sure, there's some rudimentary platforming involved, but the main focus of the game is punch-punch-punch. Or, for some variety, kick-kick-kick. No seriously—those are your two combos. Hope you like 'em, because there isn't a whole heck of a lot else to this title. — **ADAM**

E 7



GAME BOY ADVANCE

THE KING OF FIGHTERS EX2: HOWLING BLOOD

HA-DOUKEN THIS

2D fighters on the big consoles invariably irritate me. I guess I just can't get past the fact that fighting games moved into the third dimension early on in the PSone era. As a handheld property, however, I find myself able to enjoy them for what they are rather than despising their lack of depth. This latest edition of The King of Fighters doesn't do anything new, but it doesn't do much wrong, either.

For anyone who's not familiar with the franchise, KoF is a Street Fighter-esque tournament between a bunch of SNK characters. KoF has been around forever (nine years is forever in video games), and each successive iteration takes a very small step forward while keeping the gameplay almost exactly the same. Howling Blood is no exception—at first, it seems to be a direct port of the PS2 port of the Dreamcast port of the arcade KoF 2001.

Fans of the series will no doubt buy this no matter what, if only for the three exclusive characters. However, any GBA owner could easily do worse than pick this up. The control is solid and responsive, there are 21 unique characters to learn, and quite a bit of new content can be unlocked. By no means is this new, revolutionary, or the best GBA title ever, but it's a good way to get in a fight on the bus without getting thrown off and arrested. — **ADAM**



- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER FIGHTING (2-PLAYER VIA LINK CABLE)
- **PUBLISHER** ATLUS
- **DEVELOPER** SUN-TEC
- **RELEASE** DECEMBER 12

THE BOTTOM LINE

T 7.75

■ **Concept:** Become the King of Fighters on a wee little screen

■ **Graphics:** Animations are a bit tight on frames, but the sprites look awesome

■ **Sound:** Tiny and repetitive, but the Japanese smack-talking is funny as usual

■ **Playability:** About as good as it can be, considering the number of buttons on the GBA

■ **Entertainment:** If you feel that three dimensions is one too many for a fighting game, this is for you

■ **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

One of the concerns with any handheld 2D fighting title is the issue of replay value. If you have a friend with a GBA you can go head to head, but otherwise the game will largely be a single player experience that gets really boring really fast. After going through once, often there just isn't any incentive to play again. King of Fighters EX2 addresses this problem by enriching the single player game in addition to having multiplayer versus and team battles. Each group of three combatants has a specialized ending, and characters gain experience and levels as they are used, ultimately leading to unlocking the boss as a playable character. Add to that a satisfying variety of cool (though sometimes difficult to execute) moves and the team-based play KoF is known for, and you have a solid fighting game that is worth slinking your fists into.


JOE — 7.75

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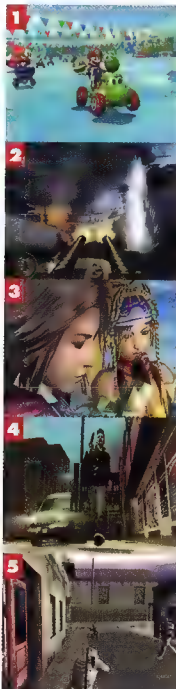
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CHARTS

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



NPD TOP 20

Rankings Based Upon NPD Data For November 2003 Based On Units Sold

RANK	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	GC	9.25	Nov-03	\$49

Apparently, a lot of you out there are lettin' the blue sparks fly! We like to play with Wario and Waluigi, who very well may be the best character ever. When will he get his own game? Our idea is "Waluigi's Repo Depot," on which you go around to all the deadbeats in the Mushroom Kingdom to seize their possessions. "Hey Toad, you're late on your furniture payments!"

2	N/A	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	PS2	7.75	Nov-03	\$49
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We've heard that if you get up early enough, you can actually see the rising sun. We tried this, but apparently noon isn't early enough. So instead of seeing the sun rise before work, we took the time for a nice, leisurely breakfast of pancakes smothered in whipped cream. We're on a diet, so no chocolate syrup for us!

3	N/A	Final Fantasy X-2	PS2	8.75	Nov-03	\$50
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Since the Final Fantasy series has completely destroyed any semblance of a normal numbering system, will other franchises follow suit? Will we now see *Police Academy 7-2? Mannequin 2.5? Weekend at Bernie's Three and a Half?* We sure hope so. What's better than watching a dead man getting hit in the groin? Nothing, that's what.

4	N/A	Grand Theft Auto Double Pack	Xbox	10	Oct-03	\$49
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Ron Howard directed a movie in 1977 called *Grand Theft Auto*. It's a good thing that he wasn't involved in the games, because they probably would have been sappy, predictable crud starring some turd like Russell Crowe (he better not read this). But despite how terrible a Ron Howard-directed GTA game would be, it would still win an Oscar.

5	N/A	SOCOM II: US Navy SEALs	PS2	9	Nov-03	\$49
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You know what we like more than seals? Otters. They're so cute! They like to swim around on their backs, and they wash themselves with their little hands - it's just adorable. Kato has a T-shirt with a cartoon otter named Ollie on it! Isn't that sweet? Someday we may change our name to "Otter Informer."

RANK	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	N/A	Need for Speed: Underground	PS2	9.5	Nov-03	\$49
7	6	Tony Hawk's Underground	PS2	9.25	Oct-03	\$48
8	N/A	True Crime: Streets of LA	PS2	8.5	Nov-03	\$49
9	4	Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3	GBA	9.5	Oct-03	\$29
10	3	Madden NFL 2004	PS2	9.25	Aug-03	\$49
11	5	WWE SmackDown!: Here Comes the Pain	PS2	8.5	Oct-03	\$49
12	N/A	The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	PS2	8.25	Nov-03	\$49
13	N/A	Mario Party 5	GC	2	Nov-03	\$49
14	N/A	True Crime: Streets of LA	Xbox	8.5	Nov-03	\$49
15	N/A	Yu-Gi-Oh!: The Sacred Cards	GBA	7.5	Nov-03	\$30
16	N/A	Namco Museum	GBA	7	Jun-01	\$12
17	1	NBA Live 2004	PS2	8.5	Oct-03	\$49
18	N/A	Frogger's Adventure: Temple of the Frog	GBA	5	Nov-01	\$11
19	N/A	Halo	Xbox	9.5	Nov-01	\$27
20	2	Jak II	PS2	9.25	Oct-03	\$39

Source: The NPD Group/NPD Forecast*/TRSTS* • Data Radwick 516-625-6190

JAPAN TOP 10

Shiraki, Goto, Lujan
Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	MegaMan EXE 4 Tournament: Blue Moon/Red Sun	GBA
2	N/A	Gran Turismo 4: Prologue	PS2
3	4	Mario Party 5	GC
4	9	Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	GC
5	N/A	Donkey Konga	GC
6	N/A	Pink Taro Train 12	PS2
7	1	Hot Shots Golf 4	PS2
8	10	Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	GBA
9	N/A	Pokémon Colosseum	GC
10	N/A	Mobile Suit Gundam Z: AEU vs Titan	PS2



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

Re: Staff's Favorite Pick

POS.	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	GC
2	1	Metroid: Zero Mission	PS2
3	3	Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	GBA
4	N/A	James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	Multi
5	N/A	Lifeline	PS2
6	2	Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	PS2
7	6	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	PS2
8	N/A	Delta Force Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre	PC
9	7	Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	GC
10	8	Maximo Vs. Army of Zin	PS2



PC TOP 10

Ward, Dr. Morley, Lujan, Sines, NPD, Shiraki, Goto, Lujan
Based On Monthly Game Sales

POS.	L MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	N/A	The Sims: Makin' Magic	Oct-03	\$32
2	7	Call Of Duty	Oct-03	\$45
3	N/A	Zoo Tycoon: Complete Collection	Aug-03	\$27
4	N/A	Finding Nemo: Nemo's Underwater World Of Fun	Dec-03	\$18
5	10	The Sims Double Deluxe	Sep-03	\$41
6	N/A	Backyard Football 2004	Sep-03	\$16
7	N/A	Fight Simulator 2004: Century Of Flight	Jul-03	\$50
8	N/A	Backyard Basketball 2004	Sep-03	\$18
9	8	Age Of Mythology	Nov-03	\$34
10	N/A	Barbie Horse Adventures: Mystery Ride	Sep-03	\$29



SECRET ACCESS

NFL STREET



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All Division All-Star Teams – AW9378
All Stadiums – Travel
Kayslay – Kay Slay
NFL Legends – Classic
X-cutliners – Excellent

Brad Gentry
 Buffalo, NY

RISE TO HONOR

Unlock New Outfits, Videos, and Artwork – Simply complete the game and you'll unlock everything in the Special Features menu.

Defeating Kwan – The last boss in Rise to Honor may seem impossible, but once you know the tricks of the trade, you'll see that he's actually a wussy. This fight is separated into three different sections. When Kwan first comes at you, counter his every move. That's all you need to do. Don't attack, just counter. After three or four successful retaliatory strikes, Kwan will grow tired of your games and will activate a button on his desk. When this happens, the room will fill with gas and Kwan will don a gas mask. You'll die without one yourself. It's imperative that you get that mask. To start out, simply approach Kwan and activate a grapple attack. After a brief struggle you'll put the mask on for a few seconds before it gets snatched back by its owner. Continue doing this until Kwan grows agitated. From here, you'll need to counter his moves and snatch the mask when he's dazed. Do this several times and Kwan will flee to the balcony. From here, you simply need to counter his moves. When he hits the ground, run over and grapple Michelle until her health meter is full. Repeat this process and you'll have no problem taking this bothersome foe down for good.

"The Rhino"
 Toledo, OH

SPY HUNTER 2



Use these codes to give yourself an edge. Entering the code again will disable the gameplay cheats.

Infinite Ammo – While paused, enter R1, L1, R2 (x2), L2, R1, L1, R2, L2
Invincibility – While paused, enter L1 (x3), R2, L1, R1 (x2), L1, R2
Unlock All Missions and Weapons – At the main menu, enter L1, R2, L2, R1 (x2), L2, R2, L1

"GI Droid"
 (location unknown – last seen bidding on Kobe Bryant's contract for next season)

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT



Enter these codes during gameplay while paused in Bust Out or Free Mode.

GNOME CHEATS (CLICK ON THE GNOME AFTERWARDS)
10,000 Simoleons – L1, R2, Right, □, L3
Career Boost – R2, L1, R1, L2, Left, □
Fill Motives – L2, R1, Left, □, Up

MISCELLANEOUS CHEATS

All Locations – R2, R3, L3, L2, R1, L1
All Objects – L2, R2, Up, △, L3
All Skins – L1, R2, X, □, Up, Down
All Social Options – Left, R1, Down, X, L3, R3

Jerry Gorman
 San Antonio, TX

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: BATTLE FOR BIKINI BOTTOM

On the pause screen, hold all four shoulder buttons while entering any of these codes. A voiceover will confirm correct entry.

Baby Co-Stars – □ (x4), □, □ (x5)
Big Plankton – □ (x4), □, □, □, □ (x4)
Cheery Villagers – □ (x5), □, □, □, □ (x2), □
Free 10 Spatulas – □, □ (x2), □ (x2), □ (x2), □
Free 1,000 Shiny Objects – □, □ (x2), □ (x2), □ (x2), □
Free Bubble Bowl – □, □, □, □ (x2), □ (x2)
Free Cruise Bubble – □, □, □, □ (x2), □ (x2)
Different Cruise Bubble Controls – □ (x4), □ (x2), □ (x2), □, □ (x2)
No Pants SpongeBob – □ (x4), □, □, □ (x2), □ (x2), □
Panhandlers – □ (x5), □, □, □, □ (x2), □ (x2)
Restore Health – □ (x4), □, □, □, □ (x4)
Shrapnel Death SpongeBob – □ (x4), □ (x2), □, □, □ (x3), □
Small People – □ (x5), □, □, □, □ (x2), □ (x2)
Swap Left/Right Camera Controls – □ (x4), □ (x2), □ (x4), □ (x2)
Swap Up/Down Camera Controls – □ (x4), □, □ (x6), □
Unlock All Monsters in Gallery – □, □, □, □ (x2), □, □
Unlock Art Gallery – □, □, □, □ (x2), □, □
Villagers Heal Player – □ (x5), □, □, □ (x3), □ (x2)
Villagers Give Shiny Object When Hit – □ (x5), □, □, □ (x2), □, □, □

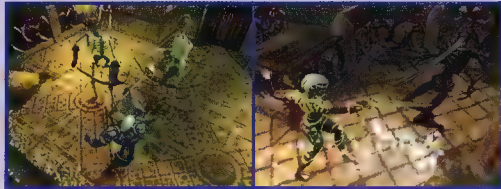
Mordekai Vecna
 Hoboken, NJ

ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these hallowed pages will receive a Secret Access t-shirt.

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CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH: REALMS OF EVERQUEST



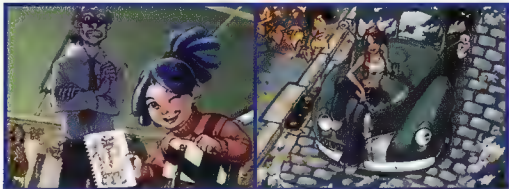
The kind folks at Sony Online Entertainment were generous enough to bless us with some tips to help get through Champions of Norrath without too much frustration. Here are producer Rob Hill's Top Ten Tricks:

1. With the proper skills, the Barbarian can deal more damage in a single attack than any other character. When the Barbarian reaches about 40th level they can max out either Slashing or Blunt attacks, along with Critical Hit, Ancestral Call, Dual Wield, and Slam. When faced with a formidable foe, activate Critical Hit and Ancestral Call, and then use Slam on the opponent. The end result will deal over 16,000 points of damage – enough to defeat most enemies in one blow.
2. Level up on Critical Hit, it gives the Barbarian a chance to do three times the amount of normal damage. Other party members can utilize the aura from critical hit when playing in multiplayer games. They will also have the chance to cause three times the amount of their normal damage.
3. A wise Cleric always puts points into Hammer of Wrath and Blinding Light. The Hammer will work like a player's pet that attacks various enemies while the player is dealing with other foes. Blinding Light stuns one or more enemies, allowing for unhindered attacks.
4. Maximizing the Bless spell will lower a Cleric's dependence on mana potions and will make for a more effective caster that is free of an inventory full of potions.
5. When the Ranger levels up early in the game, avoid placing all skill points in Dexterity. Dexterity may allow your Ranger to attack enemies with the bow and arrow quickly but you will also need Strength to carry hundreds of arrows, Stamina to avoid being killed quickly during close combat, and Intelligence to boost your mana bar for special Ranger attacks.
6. When purchasing and customizing bows for the Ranger, always consider any special arrow attacks you have assigned points to in the Ranger Skill Tree. If you have a bow that does fire damage and your favorite special attack is the Fire Arrow, neither will be effective against enemies immune to fire. It is best to mix up weapon enhancements to be more effective against a wider range of enemies.
7. The Dark Elf has the rare ability to utilize the Summon Skeleton skill at higher levels. In the depths of a lonely dungeon, a skeleton companion can mean the difference between glorious victory and unspeakable doom.
8. Come prepared with ranged attacks when visiting the Lava Fields (Act 2). Many creatures in these zones can attack from the safety of the molten hot magma pools, making them inaccessible to melee attacks. Walking into molten lava will quickly reduce your character to ash.
9. A wise Erudite always spends a good deal of skill points on any storm spells. There are two types of storms at the Erudite's disposal, one of ice that becomes available at level 8 and one of Fire available at level 20. Both can devastate large groups of enemies if placed in their path.
10. Benobius, the Cloud Giant Boss (Act 3) can fire off an electrical bolt attack that can kill a player in a single deadly strike. Be sure to stock up on magic resistance gear, and be wary when he draws back for a lethal throw.

Rob Hill

Producer, Sony Online Entertainment
San Diego, CA

KYA: DARK LINEAGE



Have some extra fun with Kyra using these codes.

Gallery – At the main menu, press Δ , Up, \circ , Right, Down (x2), \square , Left. Repeat as needed to unlock further galleries.

Refill Health – While paused, press L1, R2, L2, R1, Up (x2), Left, \square , Right, \circ , Start

Shrink Jamgut – While paused, press R2 (x2), \circ , R2, L2 (x2), Left, L2, Δ

Herbert Zweibel
Madison, WI

GLADIUS



Use these codes to change the rules to your liking.

Control Camera – During combat, pause and use the D-Pad to enter Up, Left, Down, Right, Left (x4), Up (x4). This allows the joysticks, R Button, and Black Button to control the camera.

Make Enemies Tougher – In a league office press Start, then enter Right (x3), Up (x2), Left (x4), Right, Up (x4), Down. This can be entered multiple times to further increase the difficulty.

Remove Class Requirements on Equipment – At the school menu press Start, then enter Right, Down, Left, Up, Left (x4), Y (x3). A sound should play to confirm correct entry. Note that you have to enter this each time you turn the game on.

Harrison Augustus
Forsyth, MO

LINKS 2004



Save yourself some time by instantly unlocking all this business using this code.

Full Stats, All Challenges, and All Career Mode Tours – Make a profile named SafariTK. (Note that you can't go online with this profile.)

Johnny Korea
Cook County, IL

STAR WARS: JEDI ACADEMY



While holding down R3, use the D-Pad to enter these codes.

Finish Stage – Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right
Infinite Force Power – Up, Down, Up, Left, Up, Right
Invincibility – Down, Up, Left, Right, Down, Up

Set Non-Core Force Powers to Level 3 – Left, Down, Right, Up, Down (x2)

Willow Anderson
Lead, SD

CODE OF THE MONTH

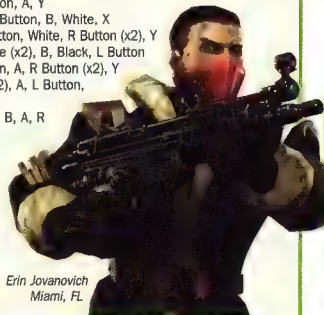
ARMED & DANGEROUS



Go to the main menu. From there, select Options and then Cheats. On that screen, enter these codes to enable the cheats.

- All Movies** – A, Y, A, Y, Black, R Button, A, Y
- Big Boots** – R Button, White, Y, A, L Button, B, White, X
- Big Hands** – R Button, White, X, L Button, White, R Button (x2), Y
- Big Heads** – L Button, Black, B, White (x2), B, Black, L Button
- Every Level** – Y, White, Black, L Button, A, R Button (x2), Y
- Fill Ammo** – Black, B, A, R Button (x2), A, L Button, Black
- Fill Health** – X, R Button, A, Y, Black, B, A, R Button
- God Mode** – Y, A, B, X, B, A (x2), L Button
- Infinite Ammo** – A, L Button (x2), Black, B, White, L Button (x2)
- Invincibility** – X (x3), R Button, A, L Button (x2), Y
- Topsy Turvy Mode** – Y, A, B (x2), A, B, White, White

Erin Jovanovich
Miami, FL



SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

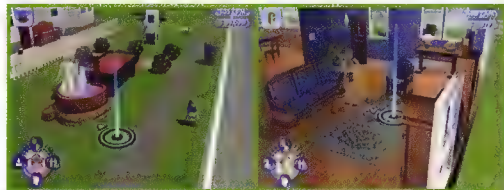


At the main menu (the one with New Game and Continue on it), enter these codes. You have to do it somewhat quickly, and a voice will say "Secret Code Accepted" if you do it right.

- All Instant Action Environments** – Up, Down, Left, Right, L Button, R Button, L Button, R Button
- Big Head Mode** – Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, L Button, R Button, L Button, R Button
- God Mode** – Up, Down, Left, Right, Left (x2), Right (x2), L Button (x2), R Button (x2), White, Black
- Infinite Ammo** – Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Right, Down, Left, L Button, R Button
- More Camera Angles For 15-Second Replays** – Up, Down, Left, Right, R Button (x2), L Button (x2)
- Unlock X-Wing and TIE Fighter For Instant Action** – Complete all 15 missions and all 22 challenge missions.

Biggs Darklighter
Anchorhead, AK

THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT



Enter these codes during gameplay in Bust Out or Free Mode. Note that you have to enable the gnome first, who will appear on your property.

- All Objects** – Black, Up, Y, Down, R Button
- Cash Money (Enable Gnome)** – L Button, Black, Right, X, Left (click on the gnome afterwards to get 10,000 Simoleans)

Nghia Nguyen
Duluth, MN

NHL Rivals 2004



From the main menu, select Options, then Unlocks. Press A to select the thing you want to enable, then enter the appropriate code.

- Balance All Players** – EVENSTEVEN
- Big Players** – BIGDUDES
- Big Puck** – BIGBISCUIT
- Low Gravity** – WEIGHTLESSPUCK
- Microsoft All-Stars** – BLIBBET
- NHL Rivals East All-Stars** – CUJOEAST
- NHL Rivals West All-Stars** – CUJOWEST
- Small Players** – TINYTYKES
- Unlimited Speed Burst** – CAFFEINE
- Zero Ice Friction** – AIRHOCKEY

"The Band of Dons"
New York, NY

TOP GEAR RALLY



Start a game with one of these codes as your name and you can use some alternative transportation.

- Hovercraft** – hovercar
- RC Car** – rrcars

Luigi Castanetti
Roanoke, VA

YU-GI-OH!: THE SACRED CARDS

Catching 'em all is so passe these days. Use these codes to unlock whatever you need, though you still have to shell out your hard-earned virtual money to buy the cards.

Increase Deck Capacity By 100 Points – 98025229

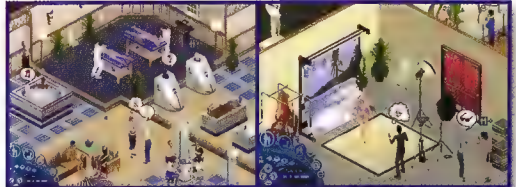
CARD PASSWORDS

Armored Lizard – 15480588
 Baby Dragon – 88819587
 Basic Insect – 89091579
 Battle Ox – 05053103
 Battle Steer – 18246479
 Beaver Warrior – 32452818
 Big Insect – 53606874
 Black Meteor Dragon – 90660762
 Black Skull Dragon – 11901678
 Blackland Fire Dragon – 87564352
 Blue Eyes White Dragon – 89631139
 Blues Eyes Ultimate Dragon – 23995346
 Celtic Guardian – 91152256
 Curse Of Dragon – 28279543
 Dark Magician – 46986414
 Dragon Piper – 55763552
 Exodia Of Forbidden – 33396948
 Faceless Mage – 28546905
 Feral Imp – 41392891
 Flame Swordsman – 45231177
 Gaia The Dragon Champion – 66889139
 Gaia The Force Knight – 06368038
 Gate Guardian – 25833572
 Giant Flea – 41762634
 Gokibore – 15367030
 Great Moth – 14141448
 Great White – 13429800
 Griffone – 53829412
 Harpie Lady – 76812113
 Hercules Beetle – 52584282
 Hitotsu-Me Giant – 76184692
 Horn Imp – 69669405
 Judge Man – 30113682
 Karbonalia Warrior – 54541900
 Killer Needle – 88979991
 Koumori Dragon – 67724379

Kuriboh – 40640057
 Larvae Moth – 87756343
 Left Arm Of Forbidden – 07902349
 Left Leg Of Forbidden – 44519536
 Mammoth Graveyard – 40374923
 Millennium Golem – 47986555
 Mountain Warrior – 04931562
 Mushroom Man – 14181608
 Mystical Elf – 15025844
 Oscillo Hero #2 – 27324313
 Perfectly Ultimate – 48579379
 Red-Eyes Black Dragon – 74677422
 Red-Eyes Black Metal Dragon – 64335804
 Right Arm Of Forbidden – 70903634
 Right Leg Of Forbidden – 08124921
 Rock Ogre Grotto #1 – 68846917
 Rogue Doll – 91939608
 Ryu-Kishin – 15303296
 Saggi The Dark Clown – 66602787
 Sangon – 26202165
 Serpent Night Dragon – 66516792
 Shadow Specter – 40575313
 Skull Servant – 32274490
 Summoned Skull – 70781052
 Swamp Battleguard – 40453765
 Sword Arm Of Dragon – 13069066
 The Snake Hair – 29491031
 The Wicked Worm Below – 06285791
 Time Wizard – 71625222
 Torike – 80813021
 Tri-Horned Dragon – 39111158
 Two-headed King Reaper – 94119974
 Tyhone – 72842870
 Winged Dragon – 87796900
 Winged Dragon #2 – 57405307
 Wolf – 49417509
 Zombie Warrior – 31339260

Jon Irenicus
 Fargo, ND

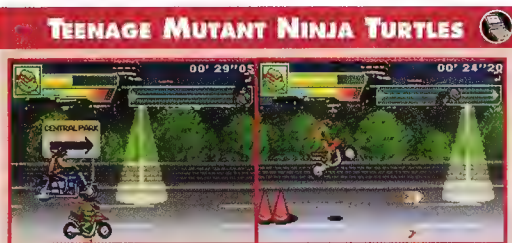
THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR



To use these codes, you have to enable the cheat console by pressing Ctrl + Shift + C. A prompt should appear in the upper left of the screen. Enter the cheat you want to use there.

1,000 Simoleons – rosebud (or klapaucius)
 Add family history stat to current family – hist_add
 Allow visitors to be controlled using the keyboard – visitor_control
 Architecture tools automatically set the level as needed – auto_level
 Fix lot objects – prepare_lot
 Create moat or streams – water_tool
 Create a character mode – edit_char
 Disable "draw all animation frames" – draw_all_frames off
 Disable floorable grid – draw_floorable off
 Disable map editor – map_edit off
 Disable preview animations – preview_anims off
 Disable routing debug balloons – route_balloons off
 Dump most recent list of scored interactions to a file – dump_happy
 Dump motive contribution curve to a file – dump_mc
 Enable "draw all animation frames" – draw_all_frames on
 Enable map editor – map_edit on
 Enable review animations – preview_anims on
 Enable routing debug balloons – route_balloons on
 Execute "file.cht" file as a list of cheats – cht (filename)
 Import and load specified FAM file – import (FAM File)
 Invisible objects – genable_objects off
 Load house – house (house number)
 Log animations in event log window – log_animations
 Move any object – move_objects on
 Prevent browser crashes – browser_failsafe
 Programmer stats – tile_info
 Refresh character texture – refresh_textures
 Restore tutorial – restore_tut
 Rotate camera – rotation (0-3)
 Save house – save
 Save family history – history
 Say "plugh" – plugh
 Say "pontipguzzardo" – pontipguzzardo
 Say "xyzyx" – xyzyx
 Set event logging mask – log_mask
 Set game speed – sim_speed (1000-1000)
 Set grass change – value edit_grass (number)
 Set grass growth – grow_grass (0-150)
 Set lot size – lot_size (number)
 Set menu items to appear for in-use objects – allow_inuse
 Show tile information – tile_info on
 Show personality and interests – interests
 Sim's path displayed – draw_routes on
 Sim's path hidden – draw_routes off
 Ticks disabled – sweep off
 Ticks enabled – sweep on
 Toggle automatic object reset – auto_reset
 Toggle camera mode – cam_mode
 Toggle music – music
 Toggle object compression – obj_comp
 Toggle sound log – sound_log
 Toggle sounds – sound
 Toggle web page creation – html
 Total reload – reload_people
 Trigger sound event – soundevent

Brett Brettersson
 New America, OK



On the password screen, enter these codes to unlock some motorcycle races against Casey Jones.

Course 1 – Leo-Splinter-Mike-Mike-Splinter
 Course 2 – Splinter-Splinter-Leo-Don-Mike
 Course 3 – Mike-Splinter-Splinter-Leo-Don
 Course 4 – Splinter-Raph-Leo-Mike-Don
 Course 5 – Leo-Splinter-Don-Raph-Mike

Vincent Margulis
 Vancouver, BC

FROM INTELLIVISION TO MIDDLE-EARTH: AN INTERVIEW WITH DON DAGLOW



GI: You've been in the industry for longer than there has been an industry. Talk about how you got into programming and games.

DD: The rumors that the dinosaurs had not been destroyed by an asteroid yet [when I got into video games] is somewhat of an exaggeration. [Laughs] Before gaming was a career, there were no computers or video games in homes, but colleges had these big mainframes and students that were math or science majors would use them. Occasionally, a student would discover one and get a chance to play on it.

In college, I got exposed to a computer terminal and the idea that one of the things you could do with it was write games. The computer administrators would use [games] as a way of getting people interested in computers. Of course, their view was that after you were interested, you wouldn't want to play games anymore; you'd only do serious academic stuff. But, for some of us, that's what we were interested in, so we kept doing games. I started in 1971, at Pomona College in Claremont, California. We were sneaking into the basement of different university buildings at night, writing games. What would happen is that the best [students] would be put on the system, but with very severe restrictions. If they actually caught you working on a game on the system, they would kick you off.

So, in addition to all the late-night work, at one point I got a job as a system operator. A big part of Star Trek, which was the game of mine that was distributed the most back in those days, was written when I was the system operator. I had two consoles. On one console, I was supposed to be watching for people that were doing games, to make sure that things didn't get out of hand...and on the other – the operator's console – I was writing a game!

What was the first game you ever did?

I was actually working on two in parallel. I did [Star Trek], and the first baseball game ever written. People had done some math simulations [of the sport] before, but this was the first actual game where you could go in and change batters. We had all text, no pictures. You couldn't do graphics. But, you could change batters, change pitchers; it was an actual simulation. The same algorithm I used in that game was used later, in an enhanced form, in Earl Weaver Baseball and Tony La Russa Baseball after that.

There are video game veterans and then there are video game legends. Don Daglow rests comfortably in the latter category as a man who has assembled one of the most impressive resumes in the history of the industry. Starting way back in 1971, before the invention of the home computer, Daglow has consistently found himself on the cutting edge. Along the way, he's achieved a wide array of accomplishments, from creating the first baseball and RPG games to spearheading Mattel's Intellivision development and lending a hand in the formative days of super-publisher Electronic Arts. For more than a decade, Daglow has served as the guiding force and CEO of Stormfront Studios, which has enjoyed a string of successes that include such high profile titles as Neverwinter Nights and the mega-successful The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers. As we revealed last month, Daglow and Stormfront are currently working on Dungeons & Dragons: Forgotten Realms.

Is that the game that is in Cooperstown in the Baseball Hall of Fame?

As far as anybody knows, it is the first baseball game. So, it's what's listed there. Somewhere, in some storage boxes I have in a shed at my house, are the original printouts. When I find them, they are promised to the Hall of Fame. They will actually have the original records at the Hall of Fame.

Was that a big thrill for you as a baseball fan?

It's very weird for me, because when you're doing something as a college student you're not thinking about "firsts" or anything like that. You're just messing around with the machine and having fun. Years later, actually when we were working on La Russa Baseball and we were at the Hall of Fame, we were talking about it and they said, "As far as we know, it's the first actual game that was done."

Tell us about Dungeon, which is often credited as the first RPG.

D&D started to get popular in the mid-1970s, about 1975. I thought, "Hey, I could take this whole concept and put it on the computer." By that time, I was a grad student, so I still had computer access. So, I started working on Dungeon, not realizing that it was the first [computer] RPG. It didn't get distributed as much, because the colleges and universities didn't want these big games on their system.

In Dungeon, you had a party; you moved the party. The graphics used underscores, vertical lines, and asterisks to actually draw maps. This was a bad game to play on a teletype. [We] started to get more of the CRT terminals, where you could actually have text on the screen – no color. What I would do is blank the screen and draw the map. It would take about 15 or 20 seconds to fill the screen with asterisks and underscores. So, it was the first

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME | BY CHARLIE LLAGUNO



Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.

VECTORMAN

■ FORMAT GENESIS
■ PUBLISHER SEGA

As a young boy at the age of 5, picking a game system was crucial for my future gaming consumption. Standing in line in Sears, I looked at the Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo. I finally picked the Genesis for its radiant black shine. I then quickly brought the system to my own home. Lo and behold, Vectorman was the free game nicely nested within the box of the system.

I started the Genesis and began playing this odd-looking game called Vectorman. The game amazed me. No title was like it at the time. The graphics were pretty astonishing for a Sega game. Simple controls also made

it very easy to play, so you wouldn't find yourself throwing sporks at the television. The A and B buttons were to shoot and C button was to jump. Not very complicated, eye?

Power-ups located all over the game will let you become a vehicle or have a special power. At times, you could be a car of floating balls or have the ability to turn into a fish to quickly swim in the water. Turning into a bouncing fool was quite entertaining while fighting WarHead in the Disco level. Various weapons can also be found, which improve replay value and to simply help

Game Design & Development

DEGREE PROGRAM



Daglow was one of Mattel's Blue Sky Rangers, the name of the original team behind the company's Intellivision game development

RPG. It was very basic Dungeons & Dragons on the computer, played solo. It was basically what we would think of today as one big level of a game that people could access off the mainframe.

How did you get a job at Intellivision?

Pure dumb luck. I wanted to be a writer. I was teaching because I enjoyed it and I knew that writers usually starved. I was having some success, but I had a wife and a kid in the '70s and I was not in a position where my writing was going to pay the bills.

I was driving along in my car, which happened to be a convertible, one day, and suddenly this voice says [in basso profundo], "Are you interested in the exciting world of computer and video games?" I didn't know whether to look down at the radio or look up at God! [Laughs]

I said, "Why, yes I am!" Then the radio said: "Would you like to build a career shaping these exciting new forms of entertainment?" Now I knew I had to be looking up. Then, it said, "Call 212-978-JOBS!" - I still remember the number!

The ad was actually Mattel hiring for the original Intellivision team. I called them up and said that I had been doing this out of love for nine years. I've been programming and writing games for nine years, but I don't have a computer science degree. The guy on the other end of the line says, "Hey Harry, here's a guy that says he's written a game before - the lies these applicants tell!" [Laughs] But, God bless them, they brought me in and gave me the chance to become a professional programmer instead of a

hacker, which was what I was. Because everything grew so fast, that's how I ended up being director of game design.

What was it like to work at Intellivision during the golden era?

Instead of it being this established industry, there were a handful of products and what were we going to do next? The sky was the limit. It was a bizarre thing of having a clean slate to start from - Atari didn't even have that many games.

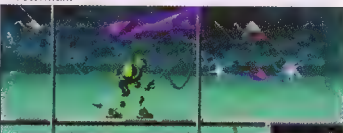
It was very small; all of Mattel Electronics had maybe 50 people. By two years later, when everything exploded and got so big, [Mattel] Electronics had 1,200 people; my team had 50 people and so did my partner's. That year, we sold something like \$600 million worth of software for Intellivision, just out of Mattel. So, we went through this incredible growth curve, and in two years after that the industry had tanked and collapsed. It was this wild magic carpet ride.

Then there was the warfare between the corporations. In the toy companies, there is espionage, there is everything. We had armed guards in the lobby who searched our briefcase every night when we went home. You had to have security badges to enter into every area. We were in the highest security in the company. Most employees at Mattel could not enter the Intellivision design space, because they didn't have clearance.

you kick some bad guy booty. Implements included the Orb, Rapid Fire, Wave, and Bolo. Also, the game featured some defensive devices such as the Nucleus Shield.

Consisting of many difficult stages, the game may take a while for the average player to finish it without giving up. Vectorman is more for the committed gamer who will take every last atom of effort and put it into their controller. Even today, I'm still popping this classic into my Genesis. A great game? The definition is something you or your friends remember over a long period of time. A title your friend hasn't played in seven years but still

remembers the joy of holding that controller and mashing those buttons to the end. A game my friends and I call Vectorman.



Artwork by Full Sail Student-William "Forrest" Crump

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What was the rivalry with Atari back in those days? Intellivision was regarded as being technically superior, but Atari was out ahead in terms of popular support.

In the marketplace, it was interesting because – the price points changed a lot – but I think they were at \$169 and we were at \$229. We were more technically sophisticated but they were cheaper, so the Atari 2600 always outsold the Intellivision. Obviously, today in the hardware wars people go for parity in price, but back then Mattel wasn't ready to take the losses the way the current hardware manufacturers do to maintain price point.

That was very frustrating for us, because we had the better machine. Whenever you showed our games side-by-side with Atari, our games looked much, much better. But they still kept selling more games because they were cheaper.

After Intellivision you left for Electronic Arts. Talk about EA and what you did there.

The last big game I did at Intellivision was World Series Baseball. That was the first game to use TV camera angles – stuff we take for granted now, but we were just figuring out how to make the machines do it.

Then, I went to EA, and again, it's just pure dumb luck. I joined at the end of 1983. EA had just shipped its first few products there, so I was person 43 there. Obviously, EA is now this huge company, and a lot of the same people are still in leadership positions. It was a great group of people and a great time.

Did you have any idea how big the company was going to get?

That was the plan all along. When Trip Hawkins and the original founders went out and got venture money, they were hoping to really ramp it up and make it a really big company. It's funny, we looked at the plan and how many products we planned to ship, and the money we planned to get from it. At the beginning of 1984, we were struggling. We were not making money yet; most of the venture money had been used up. We were really playing it very tight and very careful, and yet we had these big dreams. Those dreams turned out to be right, because we met and exceeded those numbers.

Talk about your motivations for starting Stormfront Studios.

Well, in between I went to Broderbund and ran their Entertainment/Education division. To tell you the truth, I was actually a little full of myself. I'd had some successes with Earl Weaver Baseball and Adventure Construction Set. You start to think, "I'm really ready to run the show again, the way I did before."

It's funny – in a management job you get to where you're not really doing product anymore. I missed it

and I realized that I really was a product guy. I also realized that we as publishers kept saying, "There aren't enough good developers. There aren't enough developers that understand what it is to be a publisher and what publishers have to do." After thinking about that for awhile, I realized that that was a niche. If there is a developer that really understands what publishers go through, and can be a partner in that – that's a niche.

How has your role at Stormfront changed over the years?

In the first few years, I was both lead designer on some products and CEO and chief clean-up guy in the kitchen and everything else! [Laughs] Then, as we grew, I backed more out of the creative. In the early days, when we did Tony La Russa Baseball and Neverwinter Nights – the original version which was the first massively-multiplayer online game with graphics and a persistent world – I was lead designer. After the early '90s things we did, I was more in a managerial role. I'm still close to products, but there's a point where it gets big enough that it's hard to have the CEO be the lead designer. You either have a certain kind of company – smaller and focused – or you have to let go and have other people's design visions be what drives it, and be in a more coordinating role.

You're in a unique position in that a lot of the guys from the early days of video games aren't involved in game development anymore. Why do you think that is and why have you decided to stay in the game?

If I look around at my brethren from those days I think that, for some guys, it was an interesting gig, but it wasn't a passion. So, when an opportunity for a different kind of challenge came up, they went for that. It wasn't that they weren't passionate about what they did when they were part of our crew, but it was just one of a variety of things that fascinated them, rather than being just gamers.

I also think that, as the industry changes, some genres die and new genres are born. Some kinds of hardware die and others are born. The way you approach it changes. What that does is take some people out of the industry and bring in others. When we had the great transformation going from 2D to 3D in terms of how worlds were represented, for some people they were either no longer interested or no longer able to deal with the need for everything to be in 3D. After awhile, one of the advantages of being around for a long time is you realize that that change is continual; it does refresh the industry. There may be some sad things like, "Remember the good old days and those kinds of games", but in the end, the games that we are doing now are by far the best and most interesting games that have ever been done.

Rap Sheet: Don Daglow

Utopia (1981)

Intellivision

Often hailed as the first "sim" game, Utopia let Intellivision owners rule over their own little island way back in 1981. Another impressive "first" of Daglow's career.



Neverwinter Nights (1991)

PC/Online

Although most associate the Neverwinter Nights brand with BioWare, Stormfront actually created the original Neverwinter in partnership with AOL in the early '90s, resulting in the world's first MMORPG.



Tony La Russa Baseball (1993)

Genesis

One of the best sports games of the Genesis era was a continuation of Daglow's affair with video game baseball. It was created with the aid of La Russa, who still sits on Stormfront's board of directors.



NASCAR '98

PSone

Stormfront was the first developer of EA's NASCAR series, which went on to be a perennial best seller in the racing genre.

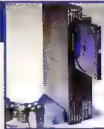


The Lord of the Rings:

The Two Towers

PS2/Xbox/GC

Storming on the amazing foundation of the films, this title succeeded in bringing all the power and glory of Tolkien's epic fantasy series to the home consoles. Like the movies, it was a huge hit.



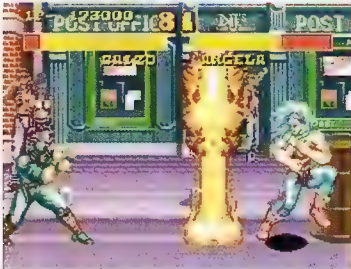
THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

On March 4, 2002 the current era of gaming was ushered in when Sony launched its highly anticipated PlayStation 2 console in Japan. Demand for the system was at a fever pitch, causing thousands to throng the streets and sidewalks of the Akihabara district in Tokyo. The launch proved to be smashing

success for the company, as it shattered previously held sales records by moving over 1 million units in the course of one week. Sony could have sold more, if not for hardware shortages, which caused some reported robberies of PS2 units from consumers and retailers.

SNES

POWER INSTINCT



RETRO RATING
7.5



Atlus' obscure Power Instinct is one of the many shameless rip-offs of the ultra-successful Street Fighter II. While many Street Fighter II clones are incredibly lame, and a few are actually decent, Power Instinct is interesting solely because of how mediocre it is. By no means a bad game, but not actually good, either, Power Instinct is the perfect example of the phrases "middle of the road," "not bad," or even simply "okay." It does nothing to change or expand on the Capcom fighting template, but the graphics are crisp, the controls are responsive, and the music is nicely strange. The characters lack the personality of the famous Street Fighter combatants, but each is distinct in both appearance and move set. While combat is a bit limited, each character's attacks are unique and easy to pull off. Power Instinct is the vanilla ice cream of 2D fighting games. Yes, there are far more interesting flavors out there, but if you come across this one, you at least won't be disgusted.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ATLUS USA ■ **DEVELOPER** ATLUS USA
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

PLAYSTATION

COOL BOARDERS



RETRO RATING
7

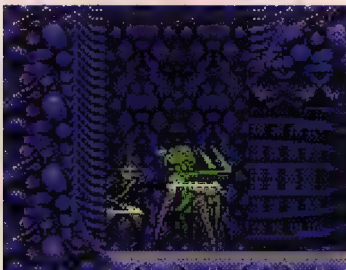


Before SSX, there was Cool Boarders. The inaugural edition of the series may be entirely responsible for all the snowboarding games that followed it, but no SSX 3 fan should feel compelled to check out its ancestor. Cool Boarders has aged poorly, and is primarily interesting because it illustrates exactly how far snowboarding games have come. Your maneuvers are limited to jumps, hard turns, and a few basic grabs. There are only a handful of courses, and each offers few real opportunities to break out your tricks. It actually feels far more like a racer than the all-out trickfests of recent snowboarding releases. Also, its visual shortcomings are impossible to overlook today. The textures are dull, pop-up is everywhere, and the environmental teeing is so prevalent that, at times, it looks like scratched, dirty film. It is still a fun title in a very basic way, but Cool Boarders proves that with snowboarding, it pays to keep your eyes forward and forget what is behind you.

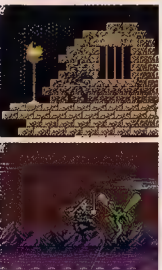
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
■ **DEVELOPER** UEP SYSTEMS ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1997

GAME GEAR

CHAKAN: THE FOREVER MAN



RETRO RATING
6



Like the Game Gear itself, Chakan: The Forever Man is a strange footnote in video game history that most people have forgotten. Based on an obscure comic book, Chakan is the story of a warrior who defeated Death. In doing so, he condemned himself to live forever. In order to find rest, he makes a deal with Death to rid the world of evil in exchange for an end to his life. As Chakan, the player ventures through several different realms slaying demons to earn the right to die. If Chakan runs out of health, he simply returns to the Navigation level, where he can choose which realm to reenter. The fact that the player can keep going indefinitely would be a lot more interesting if the gameplay were more fun. Combat is difficult because it is hard to tell if you are hitting your enemy, levels are frustratingly designed, and the rewards for completing realms are small. Also released for the Genesis, Chakan earned far more praise for its concept than its execution. Chakan, it seems, won't live forever after all.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA OF AMERICA
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1992

JAGUAR

WOLFENSTEIN 3D



RETRO RATING
8.75



Everywhere you look these days, you see first person shooter titles. However, id Software's Wolfenstein 3D was the very first game in the genre that would come to dominate the PC. The Jaguar version looks and plays nearly identical to the PC original. Although simple, the graphics are colorful and look quite good. The animation is clean, with absolutely no glitches (such as environmental tearing, frame rate loss, etc) to be found. It may seem basic by today's FPS standards, but gameplay is still tense and fun, and the clever level design still offers a good challenge. Strange enemies like zombie soldiers and a cyborg Hitler keep things fresh and interesting, and the simple German lines spouted by your enemies are just as fun to hear now as they were in the past. While the Jaguar itself was quite a bust, Wolfenstein 3D proves it did feature some good titles. When replacing Wolf 3D, it is easy to see why the game spawned so many imitators and popularized the genre.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ID SOFTWARE ■ **DEVELOPER** ATARI
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

GALPINIZED 2004 TAILGATE PARTY FORD F150

> **Manufacturer:** Ford/Galpin Motors > **Website:** galpin.com > **List Price:** \$75,000

Most people use their trucks to haul things like furniture, lumber, bodies – you know, the typical stuff. But where is the fun in that? The good folks at LA's Galpin Motors realized that today's motorists want more than just a functional vehicle; they want a ridiculously tricked-out mobile entertainment center. With the push of a button, the bed cover of the Tailgate Party Ford F150 rises to reveal a 37-inch plasma TV with a nine-speaker Bose sound system and of course, a PlayStation 2! But since no party is complete without meat and booze, the truck features a full-size barbecue and a double beer tap. This truck brings all the comforts of home to a tailgate party. It really does feel like our living rooms have hit the road with us, as all of us here have these same niceties in our homes. Okay, that's not exactly true, but Joe does live in an abandoned truck topper he found on the highway.



CREEPY MONKEY

> **Manufacturer:** An Ancient, Forgotten Dark Spell > **Website:** N/A
> **List Price:** Your Immortal Soul

Not long ago, the GI staff was working tirelessly late into the cold, stormy night. The editors were huddled together around one desk, valiantly suffering through the latest Mario Party title when there was a loud rap echoed through the office. The editors looked at each other, confused and startled. The noise came again, louder this time. Their faces went white. The noise was coming from the front door. Slowly, they got up from their seats and made their way to the door. It creaked open under its own power. In a flash of lightning, a form was revealed: A tiny huddled shape sat on the front step. It was a creepy toy monkey. Glancing at each other, they slammed the door. The group returned to the desk, only to find the monkey perched atop the GameCube, staring into their very souls with its dead glass eyes. His hand trembling, Andy seized the monkey and tossed it from the window. But as soon as the monkey was gone, it was spotted atop his computer monitor. The shaken editors tried time and again to rid the office of the foul creature, but each time it returned, and it is still there to this day, ensnaring all those who walk by with its evil gaze. Beware the Monkey.

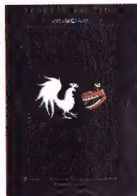
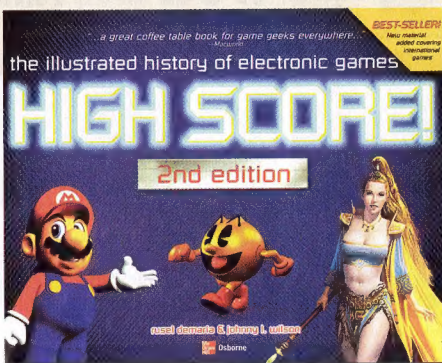


HIGH SCORE!

2ND EDITION:
THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF ELECTRONIC GAMES
BY RUSSEL DEMARIA AND
JOHNNY L. WILSON

> **Manufacturer:** McGraw-Hill/Osborne
> **Website:** osborne.com
> **List Price:** \$24.99

Possibly the best coffee table book for gamers ever (that doesn't include nekkid pictures), High Score covers the history of video games from its roots in the earliest computer technology to the current console generation. Featuring hundreds of full-color photographs of classic games, consoles, and box art, it's just as entertaining to flip through as it is to read. Of course, those who do read it will be rewarded with company histories, interviews with legendary figures like Shigeru Miyamoto, and plenty of amusing factoids. While written primarily from an American standpoint, this second edition of the book also features additional material on games from the U.K. and Japan. With so much content, this book should capture the interest of even the most seriously ADHD-inflicted gamers. We hear those darn video games do terrible things to your attention span...ohh! A penny! Shiny.



RED VS BLUE DVD

> **Manufacturer:** Rooster Teeth Productions
> **Website:** redvsblue.com
> **List Price:** \$20.00

By now, many of you have seen the hilarious internet series *Red vs Blue*, and if you haven't, you should. This DVD is the perfect way to catch the entire first season. Using environments and characters from Halo, *RvS B*

the story of the Red and Blue armies who are fighting each other for some reason. The two sides have both constructed bases in Blood Gulch, although no one can really figure out why. There are plenty of references to Halo's story, but you don't need to be a fan of the game to appreciate the humor. *Red vs Blue* is sarcastic, filthy, moronic, and even a little offensive – in other words, it's everything we want from our entertainment! Along with the 19 episodes, the DVD features an audio commentary, PSAs, and lots of foul language. For pure absurdity, it doesn't get much better.

HALO: FIRST STRIKE

BY ERIC NYLUND

STAR WARS GALAXIES: THE RUINS OF DANTOINE

BY VORONICA WHITNEY-ROBINSON

> **Manufacturer:** Ballantine Books
> **Website:** delraydigital.com
> **List Price:** \$6.99 – \$7.50

Here at GI, we're all about literacy. Big ups for reading, yof! We figure that if you're going to read instead of play a game, it might as well be game related, which is why we've chosen to highlight these two fine game spin-offs. What would you rather read: *Love in the Time of Cholera* or the continuing adventures of Halo's Master Chief? *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* or stories from the Star Wars Galaxies universe? These books prove that reading can be fun! And we promise that we won't require you to do a report on them once you're finished. We're sick of grading all those papers.



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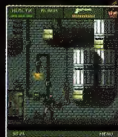
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