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Issue **182**

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- **Men of Valor: Vietnam** (Xbox)
- **Final Fantasy X-2** (PS2)
- **Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde** (PS2)
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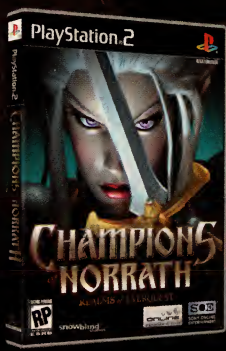
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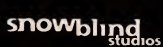


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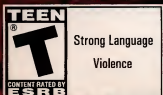


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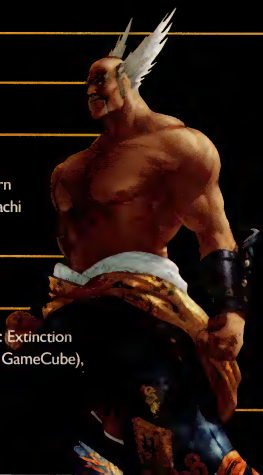
Here's how to best prepare to take up the sword. You'll learn attacks, recovers, combos, and more as Link, Spawn, and Heihachi await your challenge.



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PlayStation 2





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## What's On GAMEPRO

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### Games

Go to GamePro.com for reviews and previews of all the hottest games for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, PC, and more. Enter contests to win awesome prizes, find the latest cheats, print out strategies, and chat with a different GamePro everyday.

### This Month

- Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (PS2)
- The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (Xbox)
- Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes (GameCube)
- Half-Life 2 (PC)

### Entertainment

Check out the entertainment channel for reviews of newly released movies, comics, anime, toys, and all the latest DVDs. Be sure to check out New Comics Day every Friday.

### This Month

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- Anime—Witch Hunter Robin
- Movies—The Texas Chainsaw Massacre



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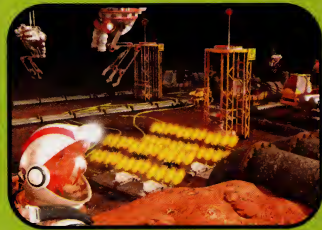
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Cartoon Violence

GAME BOY ADVANCE



PlayStation 2

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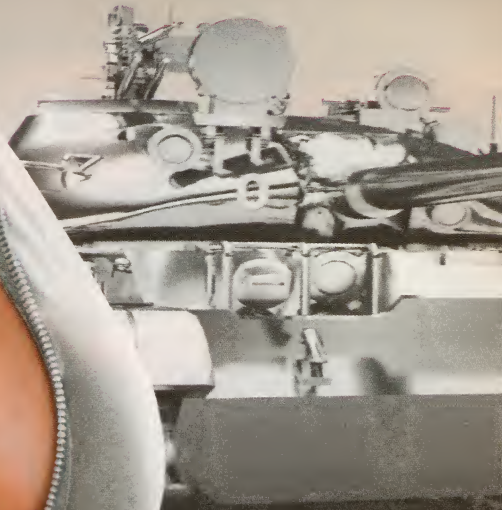


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*Shaken or Stirred?*

*Life or Death?*

*Heldi or Shannon?*



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GAMEBOY ADVANCE







# LOADING...HEAD2HEAD

## EDITOR'S LETTER

### The Year of Gaming Dangerously

Now begins that time of the year when all the grand promises made by game companies at E<sup>3</sup> must stand the light of cold, hard reality on store shelves and eventually in game systems everywhere. And this holiday shopping season has more than its fair share of intrigue.

If you strip away Tecmo's sexy, showstopping swimsuits, will you really find Ryu Hayabusa and Ninja Gaiden?

Do gamers really know Jak II?

Is EA Games smart to roll Need for Speed Underground out of the garage four months earlier than originally planned?

Did Namco choose the right cast of not-so-hidden characters for Soul Calibur II?

Can Grand Theft Auto III muscle its way onto the Xbox for Rockstar Games?

Soon all the answers to these questions (except the GTA question, which we all know is yes) and more will be revealed...by you.

But the real story this holiday season could be that game designers are in a groove, and the overall quality of all video games has risen insanely. So there are some real nuggets coming—less-hyped, some obscure—like Viewtiful Joe by Capcom, Karaoke Revolution by Konami, Space Channel 5: Special Edition by Agetec, Crimson Skies by Microsoft, NHL Hitz Pro by Midway, and Fatal Frame 2 by Tecmo.

The GamePro  
Oakland, CA  
letters@gamepro.com

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## Boy Trouble

I'm 14 and would love to know what you guys think about the female role in games.

I am a girl gamer, and I love gore and mayhem. I'm a big fan of Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance on the Xbox. I just get a little ticked off when I see games like BMX XXX and Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball. I know some boy gamers who drool over the big-busted, half-naked women in games (or in the case of BMX XXX, completely naked). I think that games like this ruin boys' respect for women and they think they can get women to do anything for them, just like in a game. Why do games do this, and what do you guys think about it? I already know what boys think about it....

► Victoria Frey—Upper Black Eddy, PA

Well, GamePro is not all guys—Miss Spell, Jen X, The Vixen, and Yo Mama are just a few of the people representing the XX chromosome on staff, and they're just as aware of the portrayal of female gamers as you are. But you've used the right word, Victoria: "boy" gamers. Mature-rated titles like BMX XXX and DOAX aren't intended for gamers younger than 17; they're designed by adults, for adults. Boys who play video games are still learning how to act around females, and a lot of social engineering goes on during teen years—you bring up a valid point about the potential danger of bad examples. But whereas you love gore and mayhem in your games, others like sexy imagery in theirs; if you allow one, you kind of have to accept the other as well, even if DOAX doesn't feature the character depth of MGS2. They work on different levels and appeal to different sensibilities, but they're both games with "adult content."

The truth is that most game developers are male, and the games you cite represent male fantasies. There are plenty of examples to prove that a game does not have to include stereotypically unrealistic images of women to be good...and BMX XXX wasn't even that (and for all the controversy, it didn't sell well, either). The best way to turn the tide is to see more women get involved in game development and lead the industry in a different direction. By the way, congratulations on your Art Attack win in the last issue!

## Soul Searching

I was recently looking through an old comic book and saw an ad for a PlayStation game called Soul Blade. The logo looked almost exactly like the logo for Soul Calibur, and it seemed to have similar, if not the same, characters. So is this the prototype for Soul Calibur, or was it never finished for the PlayStation and picked up later for the Dreamcast, or is it something else? Also, is there any chance that Square will ever remake FF7 for the PS2? The same story and all, but with improved graphics and voice-overs. I think that would really kick ass.

► Thomas Mates—Scranton, PA

Hang on, Thomas—this might get more confusing than it should. It all started with an arcade game named Soul Edge, which Namco released in 1995. It used Namco's System II board, which was essentially a specialized, arcade version of the PlayStation hardware. The next year, Namco released an upgrade, called Soul

Edge Ver. II, which contained more selectable characters and improved graphics. That upgrade was released for the PlayStation, but Namco renamed it Soul Blade for legal reasons. The coin-op version of Soul Calibur followed in 1998, and the only home version was on the Dreamcast. That actually makes Soul Calibur II the third game in the Soul series (and you'll find reviews of the home versions in this issue). Anybody who isn't confused at this point, raise your hand and explain it to the person next to you.

Meanwhile, a FF7 remake was announced by Square for the Japanese market a little over a year ago, but absolutely nothing has been said or shown about it since, and it was never announced for the U.S. market. Unfortunately, you shouldn't get your hopes up—Square's awful busy with Final Fantasies X-2, XI, XII, and Crystal Chronicles at the moment!

## Shareware, Sharehow?

In a past issue, you said that if you had an idea for a game, the best thing to do is create shareware. Is this really true? Creating a shareware game that gets any attention has to be extremely difficult, plus you probably need a lot of programming experience. Can you reinforce your statement with a list of some recent shareware games that have received widespread recognition?

► Eric Staskiewicz—Via Internet

If you're building a shareware game for widespread recognition, you will probably be disappointed. You're right when you say that building shareware is difficult,





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but by making your own game, you will gain that programming experience you mention—what better way to acquire the skills than by doing? You get to see your ideas become reality, you have complete creative control, and, yeah, you might make some money, too. But more importantly, after you build a shareware game, you have a calling card—tangible evidence that you know what goes into a game and can bring your skills to someone's development team. Since game companies do not accept unsolicited ideas, you can't just stroll in and say, "I have a great idea, please make me rich and famous." But you can say, "I had an idea, and look what I created with it; can I help create more with you?" Nobody said it was an easy path—but it is a direct one, and you don't have to walk it alone. Get together with some friends and see what you can create as an independent team.

## Score One for John

I have a question about your rating system because my brother and I have an argument about how it works. Do all the categories (Graphics, Sound, Control, Fun Factor) have separate scores, or does the Fun Factor represent an overall score, factoring in the other three? He seems to think it's the latter, while I think Fun Factor just shows how much fun it is and isn't an overall score. Please help!

► John Chamberland—Via Internet

Here's hoping you have some money on this, John—you are correct. A lot of classic arcade games like Dig Dug and Robotron 2084 aren't much in the visual department by modern standards, but players keep coming back to play them because...they're fun. Modern games are really no different—a game might not look as pretty or sophisticated as other titles on the shelves, but it could be more enjoyable to play than any of the prettiest stuff on the market. *GamePro* has always believed that the enjoyment you get from a game is more important than any of its individual parts, so Fun Factor is treated as its own individual rating, and it's not a composite score of the other numbers on the page. And besides, if it was an overall score, it would say "Overall" next to it, of course!



## No Butts About It

Man, I have got to get me one of those steering wheels you covered on page 43 of the August issue. Anything that lets me display profanities on the LED screen of a controller is all right in my book. Or is "Ass" a comment on the driver's skill?

► Weasel—Via Internet

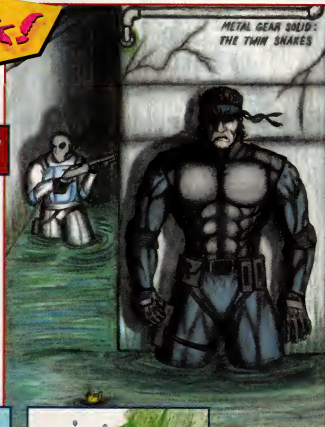
Now, now, you dirty little Weasel—those are merely digital readout numbers stating "5-5," which represents one of the JoyTech Williams F1 steering wheel's spiffier functions. As you turn the wheel, it says "6-4" and "7-3," so you can gauge the wheel's range and sensitivity, and tweak it for your own preferences accordingly. Hey, Victoria—are you reading this? Weasel may have just proven your point.



For more letters, go to [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com)!

## ART ATTACKS

Pick of the Month!

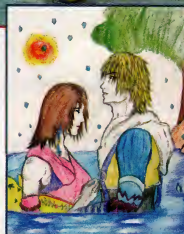


METAL GEAR SOLID: THE THIN SNAKES

S. Cuellar—East Elmhurst, NY



J. E.—British Columbia



J. Shelton—Tyngsborough, MA

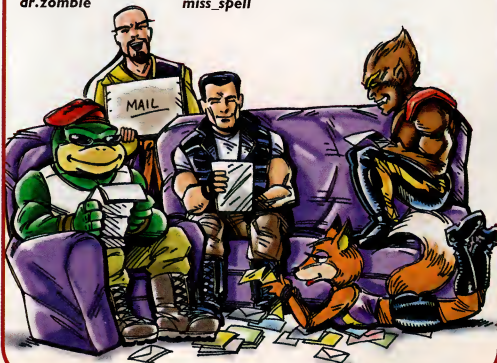
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dr.zombie	miss_spell	









# LOADING... BUYERS BEWARE

BY THE WATCH DOG



**There are some things that every PC gamer should know...and some of you don't know 'em yet. The Watch Dog knows you gotta start somewhere and says it's time to get back to basics.**

**Q** I installed Unreal Tournament 2003 on my PC, and it played fine for a few weeks, but then I noticed that the load times started getting longer. I didn't change any of the game settings or any of my computer's components. I have noticed the same thing with other games—good for a while and then they start getting slower or slightly choppy. Why does this happen, and how can I fix it?

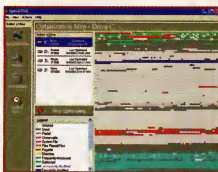
J.W. FRISBY—OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

**A** Could be any number of things, J.W.—you didn't offer much information about how your PC was set up, so we can't get into the nitty gritty. However, your problem doesn't sound like it's incapacitating, and some general maintenance might fix the problem.

First, make sure you have all the latest patches from WindowsUpdate.com. That's Microsoft's official website for patches and upgrades for all versions of Windows. Take an afternoon and let WindowsUpdate have its way with your machine, and you'll be surprised by how many little corrections are applied. WindowsUpdate can also advise you on updated drivers for your video and sound cards—sometimes a new driver will make a big difference in how your games run.

Both Windows 98 and Windows XP ship with a Disk Defragmenter utility (found in the Start menu under Programs/Accessories/System Tools), which helps reorganize stray data on your hard disk. Every time a file is accessed, for any number of reasons, Windows might not put the data back exactly where it found it. When those little bits get spread out, that can affect your performance as the hard drive scrambles all over the place to find the parts. Disk Defragmenter puts all those little bits closer together, thereby reducing load and wait times.

However, there's a better tool out there for really getting your PC's act together; Dan Elektro is our staff cheerleader for this stuff, so I asked him for the scoop. "I use Norton SystemWorks 2003 on my PC to keep it in top shape," he says. "Norton takes defraggers a few steps further with Disk Doctor, which checks your hard drive's health and makes sure there are no bad blocks that could cause you to lose data. Then Speed Disk reorganizes the data exactly how you want it, optimizing it for quick and organized access. This can be a



lengthy process the first time you use it, so I generally leave it on overnight, then run Speed Disk once a week—in fact, I have it scheduled to do that automatically. If you are running FAT drives (like most Windows 98 users), you might not notice too much fragmentation, but any gamers using the NTFS format (Windows NT and XP) will probably need to run Speed Disk fairly often. Disk Doctor and Speed Disk are just two of the things that Norton does to keep your system healthy—there are all kinds of virus protectors and system checkers that can find and fix problems you didn't even know were there!"

Dan says you can find Norton for a little more than the price of a game, maybe less if you hit a sale. At the time of this writing, there's a rebate on SystemWorks 2003, so it's down to about \$30.

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## Geek Speak The nerdy side of gaming, in plain English

By MC Squared



As games get more complex and the technical side takes more and more of the spotlight, you can get lost in the buzzwords. What are they talking about with all these fancy terms? GeekSpeak is here to explain it all away, to make sense of the technical mumbo jumbo.

**Q** Could you please tell me what bump mapping is? I need to know; it's important.

ZIDANE692002—VIA INTERNET

**A** Bump mapping is a way to make an object in a game look like it's bumpy without actually creating all those bumps out of polygons. More polygons in a game object means slower performance because it's more stuff for the computer to draw. Bump mapping is a trick to get something to look like it's super-detailed without doing all the detail work.

Think of it this way: You have a polygon—it's flat, like a blank wall in your house. It's boring and blank, so you put a texture on it. You could paint it a solid color, but you choose wallpaper with duckies on it because that's more

interesting. But it's still flat. So you upgrade your wallpaper with a fancy-looking 3D duck on it, and when you look at it across the room, it looks like the wall has halves of rubber duckies physically glued on it. The light in the room has something to do with that as does the shading around the duck. When you go over and touch it...nope...it's just wallpaper, and it's smooth to the touch. It's still flat. But it doesn't look flat, so mission accomplished. The only down side is that those duckies keep watching you, and their eyes follow you around the room. Man, that's disturbing.

But that part where the wall looks like it has ducks of spatial depth, but it's really just a trick of the light? That's bump mapping. It's used on game objects like rocks, lizard skin, asphalt, scratched metal, or anything else that the artists want to look more tactile than it actually is.



The PC game *Slave Zero* doesn't look bad without bump mapping...



...but it certainly looks dramatically better with bump mapping enabled.





# ONLINE SPORTS GOES PRO

THE SUPPORT AND FEATURES BEHIND PLAYING SPORTS GAMES ONLINE HIT THE BIG TIME THIS SEASON. HERE'S A PRESEASON SCOUTING REPORT ON THE TOP LEAGUES. BY AIR HENDRIX

IT'S A GOOD year to be a fan of sports games—you don't even have to have friends. As online play on the current round of consoles enters its second year, all the major publishers are rolling out extensive and, in some cases, innovative support aimed at one of their most ardent fan bases: sports gamers.

## EA SPORTS

It's only fair to begin with the ruling faction of sports games. Sadly, EA Sports has chosen to support only the PS2 for online play, even though most of its titles appear on all three consoles. EA's online support covers every title released after the summer of 2003, including Madden NFL 2004, NBA Live 2004, NASCAR

Thunder 2004, NHL 2004, and more—and you sign in for all of them using one EA login. Ladder tournaments organized by EA will be one of the big attractions, as will the downloadable roster updates. A rankings board will track your status in the standings across several layers of leaderboards.

On the communication side, EA's titles will support voice chat during gameplay via a USB headset (like the SOCOM one), along with USB keyboard support and an instant messenger that connects to all EA titles. You'll also be able to log on to EASports.com to see who's currently online and check the leaderboards and news. All told, though, these features amount to somewhat limited support compared to the competition.

## ESPN VIDEOGAMES

The sports-game publisher formerly known as Sega Sports grabs a leg up on EA by offering online play on both the PS2 and Xbox, although its PS2 feature set is far more extensive. For both platforms, ESPN spent a lot of time ironing out player cheats and spammers, such as seeing your opponent's play-calling or subs.

Xbox online competition consists of standard single-games matches, but things really take off on the PS2. The highlight is the ability to create and run your own leagues with one player covering all the games for one team across a full season, which can last from two to 16 weeks (in the NFL's case) and includes playoffs. Each commissioner will establish the settings, and ESPNVideogames.com offers messaging and loads of stats. In fact, the game dumps every single stat it records back to the website, which uses the info to create ESPN.com-style box scores, leaderboards, and more. Ladder tournaments are also supported, and you'll be able to manage everything from the web side, not just in-game.

Player Name	Rank	PP	PP%	PP%	PP%	PP%	PP%	PP%	PP%
1. [Player Name]	1.0	10	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2. [Player Name]	2.0	9	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
3. [Player Name]	3.0	8	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
4. [Player Name]	4.0	7	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
5. [Player Name]	5.0	6	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
6. [Player Name]	6.0	5	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
7. [Player Name]	7.0	4	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
8. [Player Name]	8.0	3	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
9. [Player Name]	9.0	2	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
10. [Player Name]	10.0	1	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

EA Sports' Madden NFL 2004 will likely be the most played sports game of the year, but some of its competitors are pushing the envelope with intriguing online innovations.

## XSN SPORTS

Microsoft's network for its own first-party sports games, XSN Sports, offers the most extensive features for online competition on the Xbox. The titles supported include NFL Fever 2004, Top Spin, NBA Inside Drive 2004, NHL Rivals 2004, Links 2004, and Amped 2. The big focus is online multiplayer cooperative play, so you'll be able to pair up against others in, for example, NHL's three-on-three pickup games or Amped 2's eight-player free rides.

Working from XSNsports.com, you'll be able to organize your own leagues and tournaments, check out your stats and your opponent's, and even track the news and scores from the real-life leagues. XSN will naturally support voice chat since it uses Xbox Live.

## MIDWAY SPORTS

For its popular mayhem-focused NHL Hitz and NFL Blitz series, Midway's taking an innovative approach to the tournament system. Unfortunately, the publisher supports online play only in its PS2 versions, but its setup creates a level playing field and fresh challenges for newbies and pros alike.

When you first log on, you become part of a play-ground league, the lowliest of the four tiers of leagues. Every two weeks, the win/loss records are evaluated, and the best players are promoted, while the poor performers are demoted. It should have the effect of giving newbies a chance to grab the spotlight even months after the game's been released, while players who have retired can be put out to pasture without clogging the standings.

## 989 SPORTS

Sony's internal sports studio hits the field with a cool feature that's an offshoot of its support for voice chat during online play: spoken commands.

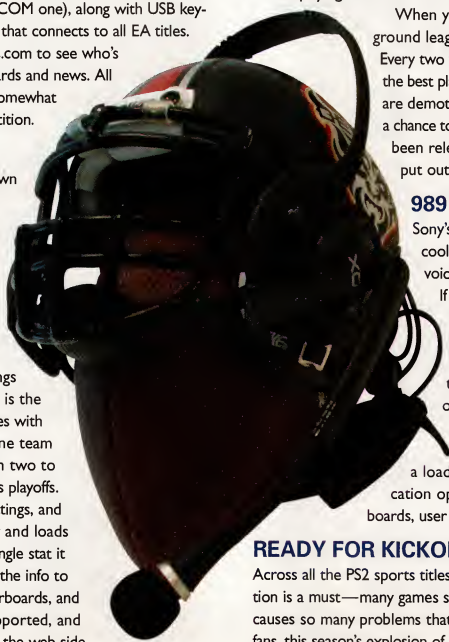
If you hold R2 while wearing a headset, you can shout out orders to shift your defensive line, call audibles, or hike the ball. As with EA, you use one universal login to access all of 989's titles, and you'll also find 64-person player-organized ladder tournaments and weekly roster updates. Via 989SportsOnline.com,

you'll be able to dive into a load of stats and communication options, including message boards, user mail, and rankings.



## READY FOR KICKOFF

Across all the PS2 sports titles, it's safe to assume that a broadband connection is a must—many games support modem-based play, but the lag factor causes so many problems that there's not much point. But for true sports fans, this season's explosion of online support makes the decision to upgrade an easy one; you won't just be able to fiddle with stats in a fantasy league—you could be the star. **B**







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# ATI TO POWER XBOX 2

NVidia must pass the graphics-chip torch to rival for Microsoft's next console

The makers of those high-caliber Radeon 3D cards powering so many gamers' PCs will also drive the next Xbox. ATI recently announced that it has struck a deal with Microsoft to "develop custom, leading-edge graphics technologies for use in future Xbox products and services." In other words, ATI will craft the graphics technology to be used for the Xbox 2 (or NextBox, or whatever it's going to be called), stealing away another piece of the 3D graphics market from NVidia. NVidia makes the custom graphics chips for the current generation of Xbox hardware as well as the recently introduced FX line of PC video cards.

The loss of Microsoft's console business is far from a death blow for NVidia by any means. A spokesman for NVidia hinted that the company wasn't necessarily all that interested in working with Microsoft again, at least on another home console venture, for any number of business reasons; the company was recently involved in a highly publicized dispute over chip costs that had NVidia producing hardware at a loss. (For more details regarding the NVidia/Microsoft Xbox alliance, read Dean Takahashi's enlightening book *Opening the Xbox*.)

ATI currently provides custom hardware for Nintendo's GameCube. An ATI spokesman said that their deal with Microsoft won't affect that in any way. ATI won't necessarily reap the benefits of its new deal until the end of 2005, when it's predicted the current console cycle will end and new hardware will be introduced.

## NEW NINTENDO CONSOLE...NEXT YEAR?

At a news conference in Japan in early July, Nintendo President Satoru Iwata made some vague but intriguing remarks about a plan to make a major product announcement next spring but offered no specifics. "We are preparing a new product

that will give a fresh surprise to consumers," Iwata said, but he would not offer details due to concerns about competitors. There is no indication as to whether the product in question is hardware, software, or peripheral, but the comment has raised some speculation about a console to replace the suddenly ailing GameCube. Nintendo reported that it had sold only 80,000 GameCube consoles worldwide in its first fiscal quarter this year. Could this mean the GameCube 2 is secretly around the corner? Perhaps, but nobody will know for sure until Nintendo comes clean in the spring.

In more concrete news, Iwata also announced three new games in development: a GameCube version of popular GBA title *Wario Ware, Inc.*, a Namco-produced *Donkey Kong* title, and a new *Zelda* game slated for the end of 2004. He also indicated that a Club Nintendo consumer loyalty program would launch in the U.S. and Japan by the end of this year. Similar to a frequent flyer miles program, Club Nintendo rewards customers

with points when new games are purchased. The points are then redeemed for game-related merchandise.



With only 80,000 GameCubes sold during Nintendo's first quarter, speculation turns to its successor.

## MORE PSP DETAILS EMERGE

At the PlayStation Meeting 2003 conference held in Tokyo, Sony President Ken Kutaragi announced more details on the PSP (PlayStation Portable), which was announced at this year's E<sup>3</sup>. The PSP's CPU is a MIPS R4000 processor—basically the same type used in the original PlayStation but running about 10 times faster at 333 MHz. There are two 32-bit cores within this processor: One, the "main" core used for games, holds 8 MB of DRAM memory, a floating-point unit, and a Vector Engine similar in concept to the PS2's internal design. The other core, which has 2 MB of RAM built in and doesn't feature the extra FPU and vector unit, is used for playing movies and music on the PSP system.

Although Kutaragi didn't reveal the PSP's external design, he confirmed that the system will have the standard circle-square-triangle-X button arrangement (now a trademark of the PlayStation line) as well as a control pad, analog stick, and L1, R1, Select, and Start buttons. The biggest surprise was the announcement that the system will come with IEEE 802.11-based wireless LAN technology as a standard feature. Apparently originally planned as an optional extra, Kutaragi said that Sony is now including it standard in the PSP due to requests from developers and the spread of hotspots and other wireless networking technology. The system can also connect to PSPs, PCs, and other appliances via IrDA infrared technology or through a USB 2.0 connection cable.

Kutaragi said that a prototype of the PSP will be shown at E<sup>3</sup> in May 2004 and that working software will be on display at the Tokyo Game Show a few months later in September. The company is still planning for a holiday 2004 launch.

### 3DO Carved Like Turkey

When 3DO announced the sale of its assets, the industry responded with a mild feeding frenzy as surviving publishers were eager to acquire and build upon the reputation and potential of some of 3DO's franchises (and franchises-to-be). Over the course of a few weeks, 3DO raised some \$4.6 million by selling off its game assets.

**Ubi Soft** now owns the *Might and Magic* and *Heroes of Might and Magic* names, having paid \$1.3 million. **Namco** has *Street Racing Syndicate* with its \$1.5 million taking home the unfinished game. **Microsoft** caught *High Heat Baseball*, which cost a fairly low \$450,000. *Jacked*, the motorcycle game that 3DO had under development, is now the property of Austrian studio **JoWooD**, which paid \$90,000 for the rights. The *Army Men* franchise is now in the hands of **Crave Entertainment**, which paid \$750,000 for the line. And interestingly, ex-3DO CEO Trip Hawkins managed to win back a few of his company's games. For \$200,000, Trip bought what 3DO lawyer Penn Ayers Butler called a "backlist" of 3DO games released before 2001, which includes *Jonny Moseley Mad Trix*.

### Nokia's Network by Sega

Nokia has acquired **Sega's SNAP** technology, according to a press release. The SNAP (Sega's Network Application Package) technology is a computer server system designed to facilitate network gaming, currently used by the PlayStation 2. The sale signals one of Sega's final moves away from the hardware business, which has been disastrous to the company's fortunes in recent years. A representative from Sega affirmed that the sale allows Sega to concentrate on software development and publishing, which includes making N-Gage games. For Nokia's part, the company intends to use the SNAP technology to fuel the N-Gage's wireless networking. The first use of the system will be in *Pathway to Glory*, but Nokia will also license SNAP out to other companies willing to make online games for the N-Gage.





*Back... in black.*



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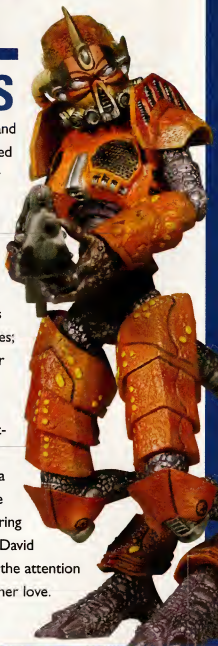


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# UNREAL ACTION FIGURES

What's seven inches tall, more flexible than you, and can kick your ass in outer space? If you answered "The Unreal Universe action figures, created by RadioActive Clown and produced by ToyCom,"

you're probably reading this for the second time because come on—nobody guesses like that. The first wave of figures based on Unreal and Unreal Tournament characters should have just shipped to stores; at \$15 a pop, they're priced for collectors but clearly gorgeous. Domina and Gorge feature 14 points of articulation, while orange-clad Damarus features a whopping 19. RadioActive Clown is run by ex-Gathering of Developers executives David Eddings and Jim Bloom, so the attention to detail is out of pure gamer love.



# HOT AT THE ARCADES

## Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines

Developed and published by Stern Pinball • Available now

When he said he'd be back, he wasn't kidding: Arriving on the heels of the recent theatrical release of *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* is Stern's pinball game offering of the same name. Designed by Williams vet Steve Ritchie (whose résumé includes *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Black Knight*, and other classic tables), T3 features spoken dialogue by Arnold Schwarzenegger and movie-themed events. For example, you can launch the ball down the barrel of the T-X's Plasma Cannon, and there's an interactive backglass where you launch a grenade at one of the T-X's many weak spots to rack up big points. An actual gun grip that "shoots" the ball into play is a cool aesthetic touch. Is it only a matter of time before the Special Gubernatorial Edition arrives?

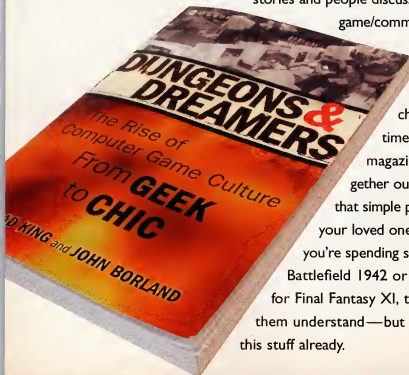


# TOME READER: BOOK REVIEWS

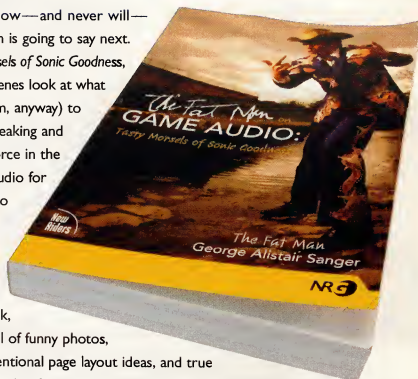
## Because batteries die

"The more friends you have, the more fun you will have," says EverQuest co-architect Bill Trost in Brad King and John Borland's *Dungeons & Dreamers: The Rise of Computer Game Culture from Geek to Chic*, and it's a neat summary of what the book's all about: games and the human communities that evolve around them. Unfortunately, it takes 200 earnest pages to express that the organic development of gamer communities is significant or worthy; to anyone who has ever enjoyed the social thrill of a LAN party, the warm camaraderie of a game of D&D, or the sense of virtual belonging with a Quake clan—not to mention an online message forum—the reaction is likely to be "Well, duh." Not that the stories and people discussed aren't interesting—

game/community architects Richard Garriott, John Carmack, and Will Wright are all included—but the chapters, which sometimes feel like independent magazine articles lashed together out of convenience, make that simple point and belabor it. If your loved ones are wondering why you're spending so much time playing *Battlefield 1942* or why you're so eager for *Final Fantasy XI*, this book may help them understand—but you probably know this stuff already.



What you don't know—and never will—is what The Fat Man is going to say next. His book, *Tasty morsels of Sonic Goodness*, is half behind-the-scenes look at what it takes (or took him, anyway) to become a groundbreaking and underappreciated force in the field of music and audio for games, half Words to Live By, and half tall Texas tale. (This math makes sense once you've read the book.) It's a thick, 500-page volume full of funny photos, refreshingly unconventional page layout ideas, and true insight, making it worth a few repeat reads. It's invaluable if you're a musician with a desire to write for games since it offers not only a decent historical perspective on where the art form has been but also where it is now and what can be done to progress it still further in the future. Even if you're not looking for work, you will gain wisdom, appreciation, and respect for the ignored art of game audio and its invisible artists. At the very least, you'll learn the enlightening concept of Good-Bad, hear some great stories about ugly cowboy suits and a mysterious one-of-a-kind guitar, and see the rare emoticon for spitting tobacco. That's worth the risk.







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## GAMEPRO Labs

### Sony EyeToy

Rating: 5.0

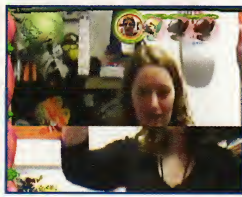
For every lame peripheral that ever existed, there is now restitution. The EyeToy is not only one of the niftiest things ever made for the PS2, but it may also qualify for the peripheral hall of fame.

The USB camera (made by Logitech for Sony) plugs in and sets up with ease; point it at yourself, and you're ready to play. The unit comes with a dozen fairly simple games, none of which need a traditional controller. You see yourself on the screen, and the PS2 overlays graphics around your head; reach out into the air around you, and you'll find you're interacting with onscreen ninjas, bubbles, UFOs, spotlights, fireworks, spinning plates, and more. Sound silly? You bet—and undeniably fun, once you get over a little shyness. Think of it as DDR but a whole lot easier and less aerobic.

The camera is fairly easily confused by busy backgrounds and low light, so you may have to experiment or even alter your room to make it work optimally—but it does work exceptionally well when you make it happy. The camera ships with only 12 games and a handful of funny filters—rainbow trails that follow your movements, a delay mode called Copycat—though the built-in microphone gives you a chance to record and leave video messages for other people in your house. What's more exciting is the potential for this camera to be used with other games—a home version of Konami's Police 911 was planned but scratched for lack of a camera, so maybe it's time to put that back into development!

Whether you're a hyperactive kid, an inebriated adult, or just someone who doesn't have any hangups about looking a little goofy to have a good time, the EyeToy will make you smile for the camera.—Dan Etkro

Price: \$49.99. Contact: Sony, 800/345-7669, playstation.com



### Best-Selling Video Game Titles: July 2003

TITLE	PLATFORM	PUBLISHER
1 NCAA Football 2004	PlayStation 2	EA Sports
2 Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	Xbox	LucasArts
3 NCAA Football 2004	Xbox	EA Sports
4 Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku II	Game Boy Advance	Atari
5 Donkey Kong Country	Game Boy Advance	Nintendo
6 Pokemon Ruby	Game Boy Advance	Nintendo
7 Grand Theft Auto III	PlayStation 2	Rockstar Games
8 Pokemon Sapphire	Game Boy Advance	Nintendo
9 Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition: Stairway to the Destined Duel	Game Boy Advance	Konami
10 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	PlayStation 2	Rockstar Games

Source: The NPD Group/NPD Entertainment

### static

... Prince of Persia... Prince of Persia... Check out this quote from Steve Lynch, ex-guitarist for Autograph, one of the 1980s rock bands whose songs appeared on the GTA:V soundtrack: "Turn Up the Radio" is on the Grand Theft Auto: Vice City video game now. I just got a check for that, thank you very much! I went out and bought a new Mercedes SL500." That's an \$80,000 car, and it came from a one-song licensing deal. Imagine what the people at Rockstar drive. • Just to throw in an impossibly uncomfortable segue, THQ's budget division ValuSoft put out the first-ever game starring the Care Bears—those obnoxious, sherbert-colored, ursine emissaries of peace, happiness, and treacle from the greeting-card industry. It's mentioned only as a warning—the holidays are coming, and some grandmothers get confused. • By the time you read this, Major Mike might have been elected Governor of California. We snuck him on the overcrowded ballot, and sure enough, nobody noticed. What other candidate can perform a 10-hit education-and-welfare-reform combo? • So 3DO's franchises have been scattered to the four corners of the Earth, and it would appear that the company is, once and for all, toast. We kinda half expected to hear that one of the buyers was Trip Hawkins' cousin Skip, who looks just like Trip except for a thick moustache and funny glasses, and that Trip and Skip would never appear in the same room at the same time...but alas, no. • Hey, here's an idea...what would happen if you put the October 2003 GamePro Action Disc (the one with the MGS3 trailer on it) into your copy of Monster Rancher 4? Something special... • A fond farewell to Fenner Fox, our multilingual vulpine pal who made the news sections of both the magazine and website shine. Soyona! • Final Fantasy XI...Final Fantasy XI...Final Fantasy XI...Final Fantasy XI...

## HIDDEN CHARACTERS

### "Scrabble Rousers" Part 1



Babble: Auch 'n Amrich Doodles: Mao





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# PRINCE OF PERSIA

THE SANDS OF TIME

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UBISOFT

SEASON MODE, CHECK.

LEGENDS, CHECK.

ELIMINATION CHAMBER, CHECK.

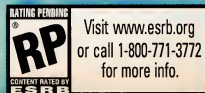
BRA & PANTY MATCH, HELL YEAH.



PlayStation 2



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# RUST PROOFING

INSOMNIAC CONTINUES ITS PURSUIT OF PLATFORMER PERFECTION IN RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO... BUT CAN THE CAT-BOT COMBO MAKE YOU INTERESTED IN PLATFORMERS AGAIN... AGAIN? BY STAR DINGO

**T**RANSPORT YOURSELF, IF you have a moment, into the not-too-distant past. The year is A.D. 2002. Consumer interest in 3D platformers is at an all-time low. Yet the number of games called "Hero and Sidekick" starring one animal glued to another animal reaches an all-time high. Into this harsh climate leaps Ratchet and Clank, a cat (?) attached to a robot—two star-crossed characters seemingly doomed from the start.

Now the year is 2003, and as the dust clears from the death of a hundred mascots, Ratchet and Clank endure, strong enough not only to survive, but also to thrive and even earn a sequel. And so Insomniac stands asking: What do we do now? Now that we've got your attention, how can we hold

on? And how much further can we push the envelope without alienating you completely?

"It's nice to see people in the industry moving away from the traditional platformer and trying to do something much more forward-thinking, trying to bring it into the new generation of younger, much more sophisticated game players," says Ted Price, president, CEO, and co-founder of Insomniac. "We do that in Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando by introducing sophisticated concepts, like character



The A.I. has been improved a lot—robots and fleshy whatzits can deal out a lot more hurt when cooperating.



growth, weapon upgrades, and lots more weapons strategy and gameplay—they want more meat in their platformer games, more variety, more challenge, and that's what we're trying to give them."

## THE INFINITE REACHES

We recently had a chance to visit Insomniac and play through the first 10 levels of Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando with Ted Price at our side to guide us through and let us fool around with some of the more sophisticated features he was referring to. You've probably heard about most of the improvements already (if you haven't, check out page 40 of the July issue of *GamePro* or visit [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com))—an RPG-ish XP-based level-up system for health and weapons, spherical worlds, and Mega-Games, formerly known as Maxi-Games, not to be confused with mini-games or mixed up with mega micro-games. There are a grand total of 18 brand-new weapons (see sidebar; "The MegaCorp Catalog"), all but two of which can be upgraded to significantly change their behavior. Each weapon can also be customized with up to three different Mods, purchased at hidden, illegal chop shops. The Acid Mod acts as poison, essentially; the Lock-On is pretty self-explanatory; and the Shock Mod causes your weapon to hit multiple targets by arcing lightning.

"Taking a further step away from the platformer genre was really important," says Price, explaining the reasoning behind the new RPG-styled hit point system. In practice, *Going Commando*'s experience scheme works as a sort of transparent self-balancer for the game's difficulty. If Ratchet dies too many times, the game self-corrects by slowly upping your max hit points. Weapons work in a sort of similar way—as you kill enemies with a weapon, its experience bar fills up. Once it's leveled up, experience is no longer accumulated, so it's wise (and natural) to switch to another weapon that's not yet fully powered. While anyone who played the original Ratchet & Clank all the way through will know instinctively how important constantly switching weapons is, the new game's weapon XP system makes sure even

newbies know that right from the start.

## NUMBER-ONE GIGAN

Crafting a sequel isn't just about coming up with new ideas—it's also about getting rid of ones that didn't work. "The only thing that we got criticized for consistently was Ratchet's personality," reveals Price. "He's got a different personality and attitude. We wanted to make him more heroic this time, without being cocky, and a little bit nicer to Clank."

Another complaint filed against the original was the repetitious nature of its "linear with branches" levels. To combat that, Insomniac's incorporating a few new world types. The spherical worlds look gorgeous—little balls of level that wrap around themselves and are basically boundless (though right now, the team is still figuring out how to prevent Ratchet's straight-aiming weapons from shooting out into space). Also new: a couple free-roaming exploration levels, including a vast desert, that play out like monster-ridden treasure hunts. *Going Commando* also offers up more Clank solo mission levels, including one in which Clank gets transformed into Giant Clank ("People



You can upgrade your ship's lasers, missiles, thrusters, and more by mining hard-to-find Raritanium. It's not easy to discover.



Radiation poisoning isn't fun. Blowing up evil spider-chainsaw-robots with the Mini-Nuke is.



Once you rescue Clank, you have all his upgrades from the original game—no forced reason to get them all again.



Lil' Clank can still guide his mini robot army—now repete with Builder and Lifter 'bots!



Linearity, meet thy nemeses! In addition to spherical worlds, Ratchet and Clank can now explore free-roaming levels like this desert.

## THE MEGACORP CATALOG

"We believe we came up with every weapon idea possible," laughs Design Director Brian Allgeier. "I don't think there's anything left." He might be right. Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando features 18 completely new weapons, all but two of which can be upgraded to behave in a whole new fashion. That adds up to a metric freakload more than the original game's weapon total. His personal favorite weapon: the Bouncer. It...well, bounces.



What was once cold solid rock becomes a stream of hot liquid death in the Lava Gun. How ironic.

Lancer	→ Heavy Lancer
Gravity Bomb	→ Mini-Nuke
Blitz Gun	→ Blitz Cannon
Chopper	→ Multi-Star
Pulse Rifle	→ Vaporizer
Lava Gun	→ Meteor Gun
Miniturret	→ Megaturret
Synthroid	→ Ultranoir
Seeker	→ HK22
Minirocket Gun	→ Megarocket Gun
Bouncer	→ Heavy Bouncer
Plasma Coll	→ Plasma Storm
Spider Bot	→ Tank Bot
Hoverbomb	→ Tetrabomb
Shield Charger	→ Tesla Barrier
Sheepinator	→ Black Sheepinator
Zodiac	→ NO UPGRADE
R.Y.N.O. II	→ NO UPGRADE



The Spider Bot turns into a miniature tank (aptly called a Tank Bot) if you use it enough.

CONTINUED ►

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love Clank," says Design Director Brian Allgeier) for a Godzilla-like rampage through a city on a spherical world.

But Ratchet & Clank's best improvement so far seems to be, ironically, its most subtle. In the original Ratchet & Clank, enemies had very limited brain-power. "A strategy that a lot of people employed in the first game was finding the flaws in the enemy's A.I. and then getting around it," says Allgeier. If you were spotted by a horde, you could run out of their "boundary" and safely be ignored; if you shot at a foe with a rocket launcher from a distance, chances are the enemy's pals would just keep on patrolling, oblivious to the fact that their friend's noggin' just got 'sploded. The enemy A.I. in Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando has been vastly improved—no more dumb friends, no more "out of bounds" safety zones. "There are more ambush setups, awareness behavior, and enemies that work with a group strategy," says Allgeier. This makes the game noticeably tougher and requires you to think about what weapon (or more likely, weapons) would be best for the situation before going in.



You can access some old Gadgetron weapons, including the Bomb Glove, Visibomb, Tesla Claw, Decoy Glove, and R.Y.N.O....assuming you kept your original saved game.



MegaCorp CEO Abercrombie Fizzwidge's mastery of the English vocabulary is particularly stendipificatious.

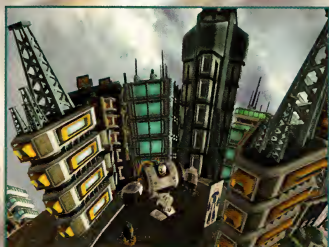
## INTERACTIVE TEMPORAL LOOP

Insomniac definitely does its best to pack in as much gameplay as possible. On the second playthrough, you'll be able to upgrade all your weapons to a bonus third level (a higher-powered variant essentially equivalent to the original's "gold" weapons), while another super-crazy BFG of a mother gun will be available for the ultra-suave. Beating the game also enables Challenge mode, which rewards you with pinball-style Bolt Multipliers for racking up crazy strings of kills. And, of course, you can expect lots of (yet undisclosed) goodies similar to the bonuses you got at the end of the original.

## CAT-BOT SYMBIOTIC OVERDRIVE

While Going Commando is definitely terraforming into an even better game than the original, it might suffer in the market simply because, superficially, nothing's really been changed—the engine is still fundamentally the same, it's still set in the same future, and the character's haven't gone through a Jak II-style style-and-attitude darkening overhaul.

"Something you may not get just by looking at a screen shot is that Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando has much more depth than what we've done in the past," says Price. "The character evolves as the game progresses. It's much more akin to an RPG than any other platformers out there. When you're going out to spend \$50, you want a game that's going to keep you occupied for a long time and that gives you lots of variety so that you don't get bored playing the same things over and over again. Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando is as long now as some of the hardcore RPGs out there. You get a lot of bang for your buck." **G**



Giant Clank goes on a Godzilla-inspired rampage on an urban spherical world.



Clank is a good accountant, but not all robots are built for math.

## METHOD DESIGN 101

At the 2002 Game Developer's Conference, 20-year industry vet and Ratchet & Clank Design Consultant Mark Cerny detailed a method (aptly titled "The Method") for designing games (masocot-driven games in particular), starting with three fundamental Cs: character, camera, and control. If you have any hope of making a successful game, Cerny says, you have all three set before you even really begin. Here's how the original Ratchet & Clank and its sequel stack up.

### SCHOOL OF METHOD DESIGN REPORT CARD

	RATCHET & CLANK	RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO
<b>CHARACTER</b>	Ratchet's wrench is a cool, interesting tool; his arsenal is wonderful; and the way Ratchet and Clank work together is quite clever. The main character, however, is an unlikable, annoying jerk constantly upstaged by his much more pleasant, lovable sidekick Clank.	No character redesign, but Ratchet is more heroic and has a new voice actor to force a psychological reset in players. Character's past attitude will forever haunt him. Loveable sidekick Clank is featured in more solo missions...good choice!
	GRADE: C+	PREDICTED GRADE: B+
<b>CAMERA</b>	The camera never gets stuck behind corners, never clips, and always gives you a great view of the beautiful scenery. Minor deduction incurred for having to manually swing it around during intense combat, sometimes resulting in untimely death.	The camera system is still more or less the same, requiring manual attention during heated battle. The necessity for this is understood, but perhaps speed of the manual adjustments could be increased?
	GRADE: A-	PREDICTED GRADE: A-
<b>CONTROL</b>	Fun and fluid, even when making tricky jumps. Minor complaints need addressing, such as the benefits of Weapon/Gadget Quick Select being negated by the fact that it doesn't stop the game's action.	Suggested tweaks have been made...bravo! Quick Select now pauses the game, and there's even a new strafe feature to help take on the game's improved A.I.
	GRADE: B+	PREDICTED GRADE: A
<b>FINAL</b>	GRADE: B+	PREDICTED GRADE: A-



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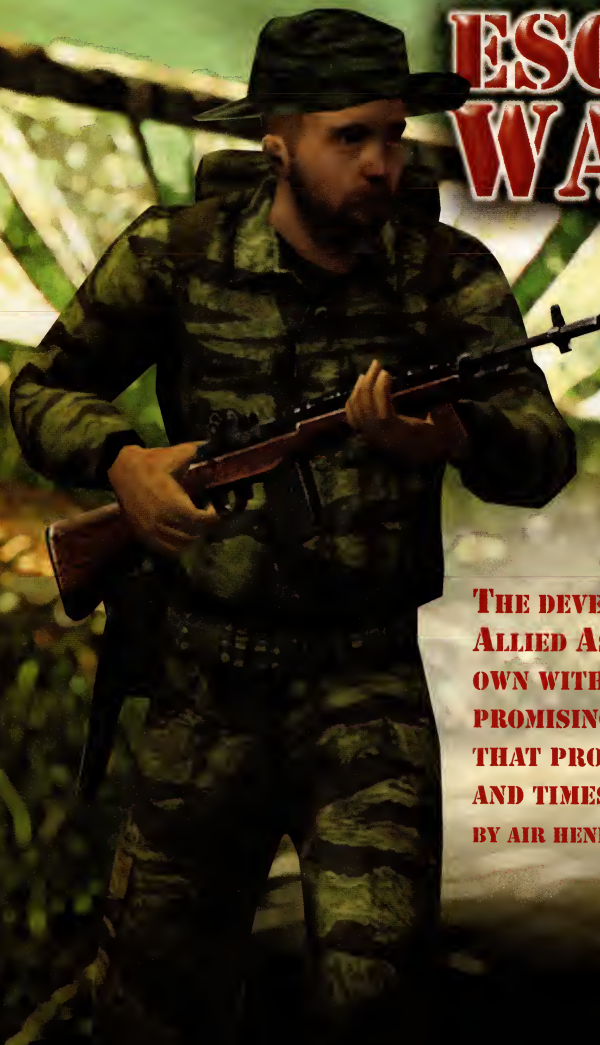
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# ESCALATING WARFARE



**THE DEVELOPERS OF MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT STRIKE OUT ON THEIR OWN WITH MEN OF VALOR: VIETNAM, A PROMISING NEW FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER THAT PROWLs THE TROUBLED TERRAIN AND TIMES OF THE VIETNAM WAR.**

**BY AIR HENDRIX**



**V**IDEO GAMES HAVEN'T yet dealt with a moment in history as brutal as the Vietnam War. World War II games certainly depict the ravages of combat, but its soldiers are remembered as heroes for a noble, clear-cut fight against an undeniably evil enemy. The Vietnam War, though, was ambiguous in many ways, and its soldiers shipped out against the backdrop of widespread protests, political chaos, and well-publicized atrocities. So making a first-person shooter set in that time—or at least, making it *right*—involves juggling more than one can of worms.

The next game by 2015, the developer of Medal of Honor: Allied Assault, delves into this era not by exploiting or revising its deplorable moments, but by zeroing in on all the GIs who simply went to do their duty and survive. That makes Men of Valor a fitting name for this new franchise, and its first tour of duty (scheduled for release on the Xbox in early 2004) is shaping up into an impressive, gripping, and innovative game.



## FULL METAL JACKET

What will be the response to crafting a game from such a controversial war? John Whitmore, director of development at 2015, is ready with a thoughtful answer.

"There's no doubt that the geopolitical circumstances are more complicated than they were in World War II. Who the aggressor was is not as clear—neither are the reasons for war—and there's room for debate about whether the U.S. should've gone or should've stayed so long," he says. "But that's not the focus of our game."

Men of Valor: Vietnam, Whitmore continues, "is about the experience of Marines in Vietnam, how they bonded with their fellow soldiers and fought to stay alive. Games are a higher art form now, like movies or novels—provided you adopt an attitude of seriousness and respect. [Setting a game in Vietnam] is definitely controversial, but it makes a great topic with lots of dramatic possibilities."

The game's story approaches this delicate subject with consideration, and thankfully, the period's racial slurs are left in the past where they belong. (Although the language in the game is, as Whitmore puts it, "salty"—we're talking Mature rating all the way here.) Race, however, does play a key role in the game because you play as Dean Shepard, a young enlistee from Oklahoma ("coincidentally," 2015's offices are in Tulsa). A star athlete, Shepard joins the Marines in April 1965 as full-scale ground operations begin. He leads a squad, and like many under his command, he's African-American.

"We wanted to touch on that experience," explains Whitmore. "It was the first time blacks and whites were integrated in combat duty. For many, it was the first time they lived together. And that's a theme of Men of Valor: black, white, rich, poor—when you go to war, everything's equalized."



When one of your squad mates falls in combat, it's actually an event in the game. A medevac is hastily arranged while others talk sadly and angrily about the loss.

## PLATOON

As squad leader, you issue commands through a simple interface. Tapping the directional pad pops up a wheel-like menu that enables you to tell your troops to take cover, lay down suppressive fire, flank left or right, sneak to you, and much more. You won't have to worry about commands if you don't want to, Whitmore says: "They're Marines. If you leave them alone, they know how to fight. But to make them fight like heroes, you have to give commands."

Over the course of the game, you battle together with fellow Marines, then later the ARVN (South Vietnamese soldiers who fought alongside Americans) and the Green Berets. Your ARVN squad mates will also touch on Men of Valor's themes and story, Whitmore relates, because they "have a different perspective on race and other issues of the war. Like asking, 'Why is the U.S. here?'"

When it comes to the game's levels, you'll undertake missions in well-known locales like Danang and Khe Sanh, facing the Viet Cong's guerilla warfare as you conduct search-and-destroy operations in Communist-held locations. You'll also have to survive Operation Starlight, the first large-scale Marine battle. You're

CONTINUED ►



"Allied Assault was more run-n-gun," says John Whitmore, 2015's director of development, "while Men of Valor is more deliberate—you need time to get your aim on target with an analog stick."



"Medal of Honor: Allied Assault focused on the war as a whole. Men of Valor: Vietnam focuses on personal experiences," says Tom Kudirka, president and CEO of 2015.



In multiplayer modes, you'll pick your class of character—rifleman, ARVN, tunnel rat, Green Beret, sniper, and more—and each will have a different skill set.



The Viet Cong troops wear camouflaging branches and leaves that make them truly tough targets to pick out in thick vegetation.



The development team explored a squad-control setup as complex as the one utilized in Rainbow Six, but decided that there's too much going on in jungle combat for the player to worry about that.



You'll command your squad via a simple pop-up wheel menu that's navigated via the directional pad.



"Nothing beats a grenade in the tunnels," says 2015's Whitmore. "It spawns fragments that bounce off corners."



Men of Valor offers two-player cooperative play via split-screen, System Link, or Xbox Live, so you'll be able to work together and employ tactics like flanking or suppressive fire.



In some rail-shooter interludes, you'll work the turret in a chopper circling overhead the enemy.



If you hold the L trigger, you'll hold your weapon to your shoulder for a precise-aim mode.





dropped in a hot landing zone, and as artillery falls everywhere, you have to take a hill packed with bunkers and tunnels, then later search out the Marine elements that went missing during the op. Eventually, Shepard draws notice from the Green Berets and volunteers to do intelligence gathering on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. As his tour of duty ends, he's posted to the city Hué, which hadn't been involved in the war yet...but is during the surprise Tet Offensive.

Men of Valor leaves no stone unturned on the multiplayer side. Two gamers will be able to play the one-player campaign cooperatively via split-screen, System Link, or Xbox Live. The game's multiplayer modes support four players over split-screen, eight over Xbox Live, and 16 over System Link. Along with Deathmatch and Team Deathmatch, you'll find an intriguing objective-based team mode derived from actual scenarios; for example, one side will play as the Viet Cong attempting to take the U.S. embassy in Saigon, while the other side will play as the defending Americans.

## WE WERE SOLDIERS

As far as gameplay goes, Men of Valor is an action-focused first-person shooter. "Stealth is a good idea when you can do it," Whitmore elaborates, "but jungle combat is intense. There's a lot of cover, a lot of places to watch for enemies, and lots of tactical decision-making."

"And the stereotype of Vietnam being all jungles is not true," adds Tom Kudirka, 2015's president and CEO, "so the game is very different from level to level." One of the design elements that 2015 is focusing on is preventing the missions from feeling too linear. The levels are fashioned so that the player is naturally directed in the right way but has lots of methods for handling an encounter. For example, if you stumble across a Viet Cong position, you can call in an air strike, snipe, use smoke, and more.

Demos of several early missions showed off some seriously impressive levels. Long sight lines make the maps feel big, and the jungle scenery is amazing. The lush vegetation looks very dense but moves gently in the wind, and camouflaged enemies are really tough to pick out.

The game's approach to health is also inventive. When you're hit, you take some immediate damage from the wound. But if you take cover and press B to bandage it, you prevent further injury. If you just let it bleed, you'll gradually lose another chunk of health. "It lets us not have health kits everywhere, and it emphasizes how valuable cover is. You can't pull the kind of fake heroics that you could in Allied Assault."

## KILLING FIELDS

Both 2015 and its publisher, Vivendi Universal Games, look at Men of Valor as a long-term franchise. "The characteristics of the gameplay and the damage model can easily carry over. We can represent conflicts from World War II to the present, and when people are tired of Vietnam, we can move on," Kudirka says. "Men of Valor 1 covers the start of the war to the Tet Offensive in 1965, and that leaves room for Men of Valor 2 to go to the second half. We'll see."

It's easy to see where his enthusiasm comes from. The game richly depicts the war and its tactics with the help of an interesting, intelligent story. The graphics, especially the foliage, are already vibrant, and the game's backed by smart control dynamics and vast multiplayer support. Re-creating the Vietnam War in a game involves tackling some thorny issues, and 2015's take on it all is reasonably thoughtful.

Men of Valor passes over some of the war's really tough moments, and for some, that will be reason to turn elsewhere. Most, though, will pencil in this one on their calendars—it looks like one hell of a game. **G**



The targeting cursor expands and contracts to indicate how accurate your fire is, and it also flashes in quarters to indicate the direction of incoming fire.



A PC version of Men of Valor will be released in late 2004, but 2015 won't be doing a straight port—the developer will use the time to expand the levels and maximize the game's performance.



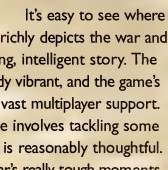
"We started researching Vietnam," says 2015's Whitmore, "and it played out in what we wanted to get at: men under fire trusting someone with their life and that responsibility for others."



Men of Valor's audio includes 3700 lines of dialogue and licensed period songs like "Eve of Destruction," "Incense & Peppermint," and "California Dreamin'."



Alertness will be the better part of valor as you'll always have to be on the lookout for booby traps left behind by the Viet Cong.



Men of Valor's lush foliage makes the jungle and forest environments feel startlingly lifelike.



In this cut-scene at the start of the level, a buddy manning the turret goes down under fire, and you have to replace him.



When faced with a Viet Cong RPG team in a church tower, it's time to call in the heavy artillery.



"The gameplay involves a lot of 'take cover and attack,'" says 2015's Kudirka. "The enemy knows you're there."



In the health meter, the dark red represents the amount of health instantly lost. The bright red represents possible bleeding damage—if you take cover and bandage the wound right away, you won't lose more. But if you ignore it, the entire red portion will eventually be lost.



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# NORRATH'S DARK ALLIANCE

SONY ONLINE TEAMS UP WITH SNOWBLIND STUDIOS TO GIVE PS2 GAMERS ANOTHER DOOR TO NORRATH. BY DUNJIN MASTER

**Y**OU MAY OR may not have heard of EverQuest or its mythical world of Norrath, but Sony Online plans to give PlayStation 2 owners another chance to get acquainted with its land of elves, dwarves, and dragons. In the interest of injecting some action into that world, Sony has enlisted Snowblind Studios, developer of the groundbreaking action/RPG Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance. The result is Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest, a game that speeds up EverQuest to a feverish pace and just might get more console gamers interested in the EQ universe.

## EQ FOR NOOBS

Champions represents a new direction for the EQ franchise (which is also branching into real-time strategy with Lords of EverQuest), so the developers have to keep both the old PC audience and the new console folks in mind. Not a problem, says Executive Producer Rich Lawrence: "We took care to make the product understandable and involving for people who had never heard about EverQuest before while at the same time providing lots of cool opportunities to see and interact with familiar surroundings or characters for folks who know about EverQuest." While the playable characters are all new to this game, EQ veterans will meet up with familiar characters like Firiona Vie, the high elf lady featured on every EverQuest box cover.

The developers didn't let EverQuest's mythos get in the way of creating a great action game, though. "We didn't adopt a philosophy of 'oh, this is how it is in EverQuest with spell XX, so it *must* be that way in Champions of Norrath,'" says Lawrence. "Instead, we worked along the lines of 'hey, the EverQuest combat system has some cool features that fall out of the area of effect spells and mobility control...maybe we can convert some of that feel over to Champions.'" Producer Rob Hill adds, "We wanted players familiar with EverQuest to feel at home while bringing in new players who may have never heard of EverQuest."

## BLINDED BY CHOICES

If you've played Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance, you probably have a good idea of how Champions plays as well. Once again, you choose from among a small selection of Level 1 characters and set out to save the world. Along the way, you stomp monsters in real time, collecting items and gaining experience as you go. Snowblind didn't stray too far from its successful formula with Champions, though there are a few pretty important tweaks that should improve on some of the shortcomings in Dark Alliance.

In Champions, you choose from five characters (each with a male and a female version) that range



Portals give you an easy way to get back to places you've already visited. It's never explained why this one's in the middle of an anthill, though....



Champions gives you a chance to set your own stats and customize your character's appearance so that your Erudite wizard doesn't look exactly like everyone else's online.



No RPG would be complete without a gigantic spider, and Champions doesn't disappoint. This one can spit a web that tethers you to itself as it pulls you closer.



Champions will ship on a dual-layer DVD (the first on the PS2) filled with items, enemies, and textures. Look how pretty this nasty giant-ant tunnel is!





Skill trees let you specialize your character, ensuring that not all wizards and warriors are exactly alike.



Heading into dark dungeons filled with goblins who want to throw bolts of ice at you—all in a day's work for a dark elf shadow knight with a flaming rusty short sword.

## CLASS ACTION

Champions of Norrath's five classes are made to complement each other. Choosing the best one for you will be one of the most important choices you'll make in the game. Here's just a taste of what the denizens of Norrath can do.



The cleric can wear heavy armor and cast spells. Her healing will also prove valuable in a multi-player game.

from the beefy barbarian warrior to the powerful Erudite wizard. Each character has its own strengths, weaknesses, and skill progression to differentiate it from the others. The dark elf shadow knight doesn't play exactly like the high elf cleric, and the Erudite wizard plays completely differently from the wood elf ranger. Snowblind has organized the skills into trees (as seen in *Diablo II*) to enable you to further specialize your character. Do you want your ranger to be a powerful archer, or should she concentrate on slashing weapons and melee fighting? The game as a whole gives you more choice as to exactly who your character is, rather than saying, "You can be a dwarf, an elf, or a human."

## MAKING A GOOD THING BETTER

There are other tweaks going into Snowblind's new engine as well. For one, you can finally zoom in the camera for a better look at the action, making it easier to time precision attacks and blocks (but harder to land ranged attacks on far-off enemies). *Champions* gives you finer control over your special attacks and spells, too, with a much more intuitive interface and the ability to equip two skills or spells at once. The biggest tweak, by far, has to be the ability to play with up to three of your friends, either via multitaip or online (via Sony's SOE GameNet service). *Champions'* classes are even made to support one another, much like they do in *EverQuest* for the PC; the cleric has healing spells to keep the warrior or shadow knight alive while they block the enemies from attacking the wizard or ranger who is pelting the baddies with ranged attacks from the back row.

Apart from those, the other cool things are the numbers: more than 45 levels divided into five Acts, thousands of items to collect, and tons of monsters—some EQ veterans and some new to the franchise—to repeatedly slaughter. If you're worried about replay value, you'll be glad to know that your character will be able to advance to Level 50 (as opposed to *Dark Alliance's* maximum of 20 levels) and fight evil in three difficulty levels. Plus, the game's dungeons and battlefields are randomized and therefore a little different each time you play. *Champions* is also quite long—more than 35 hours of gameplay the first time through, according to Hill.

## YOU ARE THE CHAMPIONS

With Sony Online's rich and beloved *EverQuest* world and Snowblind's action/RPG expertise, it's hard not to get all excited about *Champions of Norrath*. It represents two good things coming together into a whole that should prove to be more than the sum of its parts. **G**



*Champions* takes you all over the mythical world of Norrath—including this nomish lava field.



The wizard's Bolt of Frost spell not only does damage to enemies, but it also slows them down, making them much less deadly in combat.



The wood elf ranger is a whiz with a bow, but she's not a bad fighter either.



The shadow knight is a powerful fighter, but he can also devour the souls of dead enemies, conjure bolts of disease, and even summon an undead pet to fight alongside the party.



Gremlock the Foul uses an ice sword against Dunlin the Dark Elf, but Dunlin fights ice with fire. Combining components like fire beetle eyes and spider poison sacs gives weapons and armor special powers.



If the barbarian warrior is good at one thing, it's cracking skulls. He's easily the beefiest melee fighter in the game.

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# MONSTERS' BALL

DEMONS, ZOMBIES, AND GAMERS CONVERGE ON DALLAS FOR QAUECON 2003—AND ID SOFTWARE'S SURPRISE SNEAK PEEK AT DOOM 3. BY DAN ELEKTRO

**N**INE O'CLOCK IN the morning is no time to be...well, awake, frankly. But it's even less appropriate an hour to expect someone to hoist a shotgun and level it at a fellow gamer's head. Yet in the scant few hours before QuakeCon 2003 erupts, this early morning block of time is the media's first and best chance to play the multiplayer demo of id Software's upcoming first-person shooter, Doom 3.

"There is a power-up called Berserk," warns Programmer Robert Duffy before the game. "It is a good thing to have. If you see someone else get it, you should run."

"You can spot guys with the Berserk because their heads are on fire," id CEO Todd Hollenshead chimes in helpfully.

Berserk is a good word for the reaction to id's decision to give its biggest fans and supporters a very early sneak peek at Doom 3's multiplayer mode, several months before the final game's release. The debut takes place at QuakeCon, the annual, massive,

Dallas-area LAN party that now draws over 3000 people, most of whom lug their PCs and monitors from home to create an enormous, 96-hour, bring-your-own-computer game network. This year, players are competing for \$125,000 in Quake and Return to Castle Wolfenstein tournaments, showing their creativity in their PC case modifications, drinking Bawls by the case, and scoring freebies from vendor demonstrations of bleeding-edge gaming hardware.

And yet, Doom 3 overshadows it all.

## GET YOUR ASS TO MARS

"In Doom 3, we sort of pretend that Doom and Doom II didn't happen—it's a retelling of the original Doom," says Hollenshead. "You are a space Marine who is part of a security detail assigned to the Union Aerospace Corporation research facility on Mars, where they are conducting top-secret experiments. You go to Mars with your team, and pretty soon after landing, literally all Hell breaks loose—demons, zombies, and hellspawn all come after you." Armed with conventional weapons like shotguns and rocket launchers as well as futuristic favorites including plasma rifles, you'll have to stop the demons from taking over the facility, Mars, and ultimately, Earth.

For Doom 3, shy genius Programmer John Carmack—who has set the standard for PC game software technology since id's earliest releases—has created a groundbreaking new



Meet the Pinky Demon. What you don't see are his cybernetic hind quarters.



According to id, an Xbox version of Doom 3 is already in development and progressing nicely—but it won't ship at the same time as the PC edition.



Bump-mapped surfaces give even the most disgusting people, places, and things a realistic, textured look. (See GeekSpeak, this issue.)



"Everybody at the company is a fan of the original series," says Todd Hollenshead, "so Doom 3 was like the Holy Grail of gaming." More like unholy...



The plasma rifle, seen in this multiplayer game, joins the pistol, shotgun, machine gun, rocket launcher, chainsaw, and two good old-fashioned fists...as well as something called the Soulcube.



engine. "The Doom 3 technology offers real-time dynamic shadowing and lighting," says Hollenshead. "We have our own internal proprietary physics engine that we use to make the world very interactive and immersive; we have a new animation system and artificial intelligence; and we wrap all that up in a bow of six-channel surround sound."

Not that that package has been easy to wrap. "This technology is so new in every aspect that we have no one to follow and no precedent to look to," admits Doom 3's lead designer, Tim Willits. "We're blazing our own trail. There is so much we can do with the technology and so much learning we've done that, to be honest, it's taken us longer than we thought. We have all this power, all this creativity...whatever we can imagine, we can do in this engine. And that's what we're trying to push."


## FRIGHTENINGLY REAL... AND REALLY FRIGHTENING

In the single-player levels and the multiplayer game, curved surfaces are everywhere, and the dramatic lighting and distressed metal walls give the game a strong *Aliens* feel—isolated, desperate, and paranoid. There are areas of the base that the netherworld has claimed as its own, so some steel UAC corridors suddenly devolve into fiery, flesh-covered hallways of Hell. For far greater aiming accuracy, Doom 3 supports per-polygon hit detection; in one level, a Marine's suspended, inverted corpse writhes and sways with every pistol shot. These rag-doll physics apply to all other bodies in the game, too; in the single-player game, corpses remain as interactive objects.

What's more, the environment warps and changes as well. For instance, since the game takes place on Mars, a shattered outside window will create a deadly vacuum in the facility. In one single-player scenario, a huge, bull-like Pinky Demon charges at a thick steel door, bending it obscenely with every hit. (Naturally, you're on the other side of that door.) "We can have demons coming out of walls, breaking down doors, literally anywhere we want to," says Hollenshead. Enemies include spider-like Trites (look closely—they're inverted human heads with legs), skittering two-headed monsters called Maggots, and far more threatening versions of old nemeses like Imps and Revenants.

The dynamic lighting and shadows do the most to set Doom 3's mood. Some lights can be turned off or blasted out; your player casts an accurate, real-time shadow in relation to any given light source, including moving ones. It can also mess with your head—is it just a trick of the light or a demon lying in wait? It's all part of the fear factor. Players are equipped with a flashlight, which doubles as a bludgeoning weapon in tight spots.

## GROUND ZERO, TEXAS

Back on the main floor of QuakeCon, the buzz begins to build as more gamers get their first taste of Doom 3's multiplayer; now it will be a long wait until the game's 2004 release. Somewhere along the way, id Software might just revolutionize first-person shooters yet again. "John Carmack had a vision of Doom when he made it in 1992," explains Willits. "With this technology—the real-time lighting, the dynamic shadows, the bump mapping, the incredibly detailed models, the cool blood, the great gore—his nightmare vision of Doom could be a reality." 

See [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com) for more hands-on reports with Doom 3 and an exclusive interview with id Software.



"This technology is so new in every aspect that we have no one to follow and no precedent to look to," says Doom 3's lead designer, Tim Willits. "We're blazing our own trail."



Old enemies like the Revenant have been reworked to be much more terrifying, thanks to Doom 3's massive technology boost. Note the Pinky Demon gnawing away in the background.



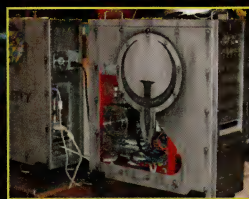
Todd Hollenshead wants Doom 3 to be "an intense, terrifying experience—we want you playing by yourself in the dark with the lights off, afraid to look under the table."



The Imp used to look like a furry brown pixel man with red eyes and no pants. Meet version 2.0.



A QuakeCon ([QuakeCon.org](http://QuakeCon.org)) is not about tournaments or hardware or companies—it's about passion.



A PC case art is the modern equivalent of the 1950s hot rod—the preferred form of creative expression through cool technology.



# Science and Fiction

**With *Advent Rising*, taleswapper Orson Scott Card helps bring to life an intergalactic saga of destruction, love, xenocide, and human potential energy.** By Star Dingo

**I**N THE GRAND galactic political order, benevolence is considered the greatest of virtues. Whenever a new race of beings is discovered, a more evolved and enlightened species may "raise" up this new race, granting them advanced technology in exchange for a thousand years of indentured servitude. A race known as the Seekers has earned a reputation as the most munificent benefactors in the universe, having raised up more species than any other—but there are legends of a race even greater, more powerful, more glorious, more radiant and wise. A race known as human beings.

Gideon Wyeth is a member of this mythical god-species and a man of some celebrity on a human colony planet about to be "discovered" for the first time by alien visitors. And with first contact comes the realization that there's more to being human than he ever imagined—something that frightens the most powerful race in a galaxy into committing mass slaughter of his fellow *Homo sapiens*.

So goes the story of *Advent Rising*, the ambitious brainchild of GlyphX Games' Donald and Jeremy Mustard. If it sounds more like a science-fiction epic than a game, that's the idea. It's part one of a video-game trilogy and represents the first piece in a Wachowski-ish multimedia puzzle of games, books, and potentially even films. Majesco will release the game for the Xbox (and later, the PC) in the first half of 2004.

## The enemy's gate is down.

—*Ender's Game*

To help write the story and dialog for the series, GlyphX sought Orson Scott Card. For those who haven't yet earned their Geek Badge, Card is the author of *Ender's Game*, one of the best novels about brilliant children battling evil space bugs ever written; he is one of the seven greater gods of science fiction; and heck, he even has video-game street cred, having served as dialog consultant on several LucasArts (formerly known as Lucasfilm Games) projects during its PC graphical adventure heyday—back when games like *Indiana Jones* and the *Fate of Atlantis*, *The Dig*, *Monkey Island*, and *Sam & Max* meant something.

"I liked their attitude toward what they wanted to do with the game," says Card, who met Donald and his brother, Jeremy at a book signing, and agreed to help them about 30 minutes later. "They were talking about really concentrating on having a story that amounted to something, and it wasn't just about a lot of killing and cool techno stuff."



## Know, think, choose, do.

—Ender's Shadow

The story line for Advent is already completely mapped out for the entire trilogy. Important decisions you make in part one (Save your brother? Or save your fiancé?) have resonance throughout all three games. The two words Donald Mustard says make up the heart of the game are "emotion" and "consequence"—giving players big choices and making sure they have big meanings and bigger impacts. Characters have to mean something, Mustard cites Aeri's death scene in Final Fantasy VII as one of the best moments in video-gaming history. But he also recognizes the need for balance, and Advent's story, while paramount, should never have you setting down the controller. For Mustard, "cinematic" doesn't mean Metal Gear Solid 2 or Xenosaga



with its 30 hours of 45-minute CG movies; for him, cinematic means Half-Life, which tells the story by having you live through it. Advent Rising is following suit, taking what would normally be cut-scenes and making them playable wherever plausible—rather than just showing you a scene of a space cruiser landing on a carrier, you're actually controlling it the whole time, landing it safely (if you're a decent enough pilot) or busting through the carrier's hull, mowing down a row of innocent engineers in the process. "You constantly have to balance the need to have the player understand with the need to keep the player active," says Card. "Explanation time is dead time."



By the third game in the Advent trilogy, Gideon will be able to move mountains. Literally.



Advent Rising uses a modified Unreal Warfare engine—the same engine used by Splinter Cell.



"You don't play a game to be a spectator," says Orson Scott Card; Advent Rising lets you play what most other games just let you watch. Here, Gideon has just leapt from the top of a building after outrunning a meteor explosion on the roof.



Advent Rising will give you as many play options as possible. Don't like third-person? Try first-person mode, Halo-style.

with its 30 hours of 45-minute CG movies; for him, cinematic means Half-Life, which tells the story by having you live through it. Advent Rising is following suit, taking what would normally be cut-scenes and making them playable wherever plausible—rather than just showing you a scene of a space cruiser landing on a carrier, you're actually controlling it the whole time, landing it safely (if you're a decent enough pilot) or busting through the carrier's hull, mowing down a row of innocent engineers in the process. "You constantly have to balance the need to have the player understand with the need to keep the player active," says Card. "Explanation time is dead time."

Sound theory, yes...but what about in practice?

Superficially, Advent Rising looks and plays like a third-person shooter with lots of weapons...but there's more to it than meets the eye. One of GlyphX's main goals is giving the player options: story options, control options, and character development options. While the game defaults to an Ocarina of Time—or Wind Waker-style third-person "lock-on" system (except you're wielding two weapons at once), you'll be able to switch to a first-person view and play the game more like Halo. The game will host nearly 20 different vehicles—including your standard "warthogs," enormous tanks, and what Mustard accurately describes as "the biggest drivable vehicle ever in a game." As an Xbox-and-PC-only title with a little bit of Halo soul, Advent Rising seems obvious for online multiplayer, but Majesco says that plans are still in the works. But these "plans" seem to be as ambitious as the rest of the game. "Let's just say there's a reason there's a giant vehicle that's a roving spawn point that can carry two other vehicles," says Mustard.

## Analyzing things was fine, but good reflexes could save your life.

—Ender's Shadow

Advent Rising bucks the "weapons progression" ladder (crowbar→pistol→machine gun→rocket launcher→BFG) by starting you off with most of the big guns right from the get go. Character progression instead takes shape in the strange god-powers that Gideon develops as he unlocks the recesses of his mind and discovers exactly just what makes human beings so potentially terrifying to the Seekers. In the first game, these powers take the form of a Jedi-like arsenal of tricks that include slowing down time, generating bullet-deflecting barriers (think Tetsuo's invisi-sphere from Akira), unfurling shock waves that send enemies



As Gideon's levitation powers evolve, he'll be able to hurl enemies, rip panels off walls, and eventually pick up vehicles.



"So...I can drive that thing!"



Gideon will have nearly 20 vehicles to commandeer, including reliable standbys like this "warthog"-style jeep.



When you play from a third-person perspective, Gideon locks onto targets like Link does in the 3D Zelda games.

CONTINUED ►





flying and glass shattering, and—perhaps coolest of all—having levitation powers that let you pick up enemies, vehicles, and wall panels to hurl them around with your brain.

Gideon's powers and skills grow organically depending on how much you use them—spend a lot of time shooting, and through the course of the game, you'll naturally develop into a marksman; spend a lot of time picking up trucks with your mind, and you'll eventually be dealing out telekinetic vengeance to rival Carrie White. "By the end of the third game," says Mustard, "you'll be Neo." GlyphX is banking on the availability of next-generation hardware (the Xbox 2 or logical equivalent) by the trilogy's final chapter in order to be able to fully implement the Neo factor—apparently, leveling mountains with your mind is beyond the scope of this generation's chipsets.

**At last he came to a door, with these words in glowing emeralds: THE END OF THE WORLD. He did not hesitate. He opened the door and stepped through.**

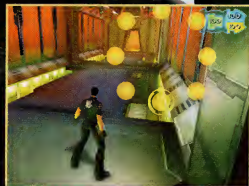
—Ender's Game

"The more I thought about it," says Mustard, "the more I realized that there really wasn't a video-game equivalent of the Star Wars trilogy." As games get more advanced, development teams get bigger, and technology tricks get passed on like digital folk tales, so the time is right for an interactive heir to the Empire. But even Mustard acknowledges that having a talent like Card on board does not necessarily instant super-game make: "Games are not film, and they never will be," he says. "Games are not books, and they never will be. They are their own art form." An art form with a unique and fundamentally human quality—an art form that can give you a choice.

**The screen went blank, and words appeared. PLAY AGAIN?**

—Ender's Game

Note: All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.



Your eight active evolutionary super powers (Push, Shield, Confuse, Heal, Speed, Roving Mind, Pull, and Energy Burst) are selectable via this ring menu. Each has a primary and "alt fire" mode.



You're not always alone. Often, you'll be fighting back-to-back (or back-to-membrane, or back-to-metallic plate) with friends.



Gideon Wyeth, hero of the Advent trilogy. He's more human than human.



Each of Gideon's hands can hold a weapon; each weapon can fire on an independent target.



The AI for the Seekers is modeled after leopards—they're fast, and they bounce off walls and pounce on you with their claws.

## Analogue Entertainment

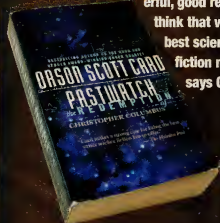
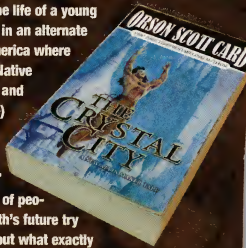
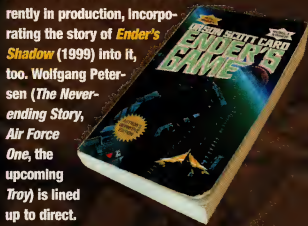
### The Tales of Orson Scott Card

What doesn't get fleshed out in the first Advent Rising game, Orson Scott Card will flesh out in a companion novel due out shortly after the game's release. In the meantime, here are some other Card books that are well worth checking out at your local library....

- *Ender's Game* (1985) and the seven books that follow are essential science-fiction reading. The next one, *Shadow of the Giant*, comes in 2004; a final novel tying all the books together is also in the works. An *Ender's Game* movie is currently in production, incorporating the story of *Ender's Shadow* (1999) into it, too. Wolfgang Petersen (*The Never-ending Story*, *Air Force One*, the upcoming *Troy*) is lined up to direct.

- *The Crystal City* (coming November 2003) is the sixth book of Card's seven-book fantasy series *Tales of Alvin Maker*. It follows the life of a young "creator" in an alternate 1800s America where folklore (Native American and otherwise) serves as the basis for magic.

- A group of people in Earth's future try to figure out what exactly went wrong with...well, just about everything. Don't be dissuaded by the title. *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* (1996) is a powerful, good read. "I think that was my best science-fiction novel," says Card.



Orson Scott Card talks about the *Ender's Game* movie, the state of video games, and more—visit [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com) to read the full interview!



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# Back in Time

*Can a revolutionary 2D platformer work its magic two decades later in the world of 3D? It's been tried and failed once before, but this Time could be different. By Tokyo Drifter*

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**C**ERTAIN GAMES ACHIEVE a level of timelessness that allows them to get ported to successive generations of hardware for a whole new audience to enjoy. The original *Prince of Persia*, released in 1989 for the PC, was such a game—it drew critical praise for its fluid animation, brain-teasing puzzles, and tense action sequences. The inevitable sequel followed four years later, but another technical breakthrough was still a long way off.

## Hard Act to Follow

How do you take something that revolutionized 2D-platform action and translate it into a creation that breaks ground in 3D? Mattel thought it had the answer in 1999, but *Prince of Persia 3D* received mixed reviews and was generally viewed as a disappointment. Now, just a scant four years later, it's back to the proverbial drawing board.

"My first reaction was a little bit cautious because *Prince of Persia 3D* had not turned out so well," says series creator Jordan Mechner. "My feeling was that a new *Prince of Persia* title would have to be absolutely groundbreaking or it would not be worth doing." Luckily for fans eager to see another revival, the new license holders, Ubi Soft, felt the same way about the project. Mechner adds, "Producer Yannis Mallat brought me to Montreal to meet his team. We sparked immediately—I found their ideas and their enthusiasm terrifically exciting, and felt that this was a project I wanted to be part of."

## A Boy and His Dagger

The story begins with the titular Prince setting out with his father on a campaign to conquer the kingdom of a neighboring Maharajah. They successfully overtake the palace with the help of the Maharajah's advisor and recover two mysterious items, the Dagger of Time and the Sands of Time. Being the trustworthy guy he is, the advisor tricks the Prince and his father into unleashing the Sands of Time, which transforms everyone into possessed creatures. Wielding the Dagger saves the Prince from transforming, but he must now find some way to reverse the effects of this cursed treasure.

It's important to note that the preceding narrative isn't laid out in one long, non-interactive cut-scene prior to the player picking up the controller. "To me, it's important to always keep in mind that we are making a game, not a movie," comments Mechner. "The cinematics should be about the same thing the game is about. What I mean by that is, don't open with a 10-minute cinematic cut-scene explaining the complicated backstory of three warring kingdoms if the actual gameplay is 'Fight and kill everyone you meet.' A simple game should have a simple story."

Still, anything involving the manipulation of time is never as simple as it seems. As much havoc as the Sands inflict, they can be used to aid the Prince in a variety of interesting ways. One of the most useful is the ability to rewind time, but other valuable



"Now how do I get Farah and myself across this broken bridge?"



The Prince can run along walls for short distances, just like a ninja.



Defeating possessed enemies refills your Sand powers.



You always have to be on the look out for useful objects, like this pole, to access certain areas.



The key to fending off multiple enemies is to constantly stay on the move.



Taller enemies won't allow you to run on top of their heads.

## Past Prince



The original *Prince of Persia* has been ported to systems too numerous to list here, but it all started on the PC back in 1989.



Its sequel, subtitled *The Shadow and the Flame*, was released in 1993 for the PC but was not as widely ported to other formats.



Mattel's 1999 attempt at bringing the Prince into 3D received mixed reviews and was generally looked at as a missed opportunity.

CONTINUED ►





feats allow the Prince to slow down enemies and speed around at the blink of an eye. Each power is discovered while progressing through a level and naturally gaining new bits of information. "The movie-like elements in Sands of Time—story line, relationships between the characters, cinematic camerawork, music, and so on—are all expressed through the gameplay itself, not just the cut-scenes," Mechner adds.

A simple yet epic tale requires a simple yet epic soundtrack, and *The Sands of Time* obliges with a fitting Middle Eastern score for the core of the tale. When the scene calls for such, orchestral-like music booms in to accentuate the action or dramatic moment.

## Ninja Ballet

"One of the biggest challenges for the team was to re-create the fluid, fast-paced gameplay that made the original so much fun to play in a wide-open, realistically rendered 3D environment," says Mechner. "We didn't want it to end up being just another third-person action/adventure that is visually beautiful but clunky and kind of laborious to play compared to the lightness that the old games had." Luckily, setting out on such a lofty goal didn't require Ubi Soft's Montreal team and Mechner to start from scratch for the technical or artistic ends. Quite a deal of programming know-how was traded with the Splinter Cell team, and a few outside titles sparked ideas as well. "I was greatly inspired by *Ico*, a real work of art that didn't get the success it deserved," says Mechner. "It had beautiful, atmospheric level design with great attention to detail and probably the most fully realized NPC sidekick character I've seen in a game." Unsurprisingly, a feisty heroine named Farah joins the Prince as an NPC for a portion of the game.

Based on extensive hands-on time with a preview version of *The Sands of Time*, it's safe to say that the fluid nature of the controls has the same impact as in the original game. The Prince moves gracefully, almost effortlessly, but controls with minimal delay. It feels like a ballet at times, which is no accident. "The team was definitely influenced by the gravity-defying stunts of Chinese action movies like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*," says Mechner. "Totally impossible, yet somehow believable." The screens on these pages show off the wide range of moves the Prince is capable of with some even coming off as ninja-like. There have been so many similar third-person adventure games, it's hard to quantify what makes the game feel different. Admits Mechner, "It's the kind of game that, to really appreciate what makes it special, you need to pick up the controller and play."

## Heir to The Throne

Anything can happen before a game gets released, but thus far *The Sands of Time* looks like it will be successful in its weighty task of reviving a classic this November. When asked what the future holds for the Prince, Mechner reveals, "Chronologically, *Sands of Time* actually takes place before Prince 1. So the future is wide open for his later adventures..."

## Full Circle



*Prince of Persia* is out not only to conquer the world of 3D, but also to try to lay claim to the 2D platformer once again. The first thing you'll notice when playing *The Sands of Time* for the Game Boy Advance is how much of the next-generation play mechanics have been re-incorporated into side-scrolling action. The Prince moves very quickly with no animation lag and learns new maneuvers as the game progresses. While the layered fighting in the home console versions has been radically altered, the nifty *Sands of Time* tricks remain intact.



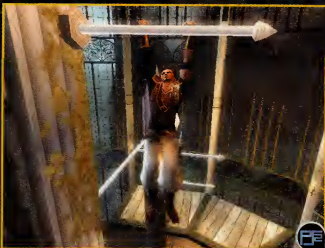
Not even a Prince can get out of box-moving duty.



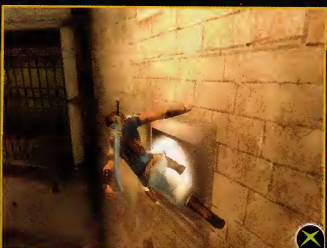
Did someone say puzzles? The Prince will have plenty to figure out.



You aren't at risk of attack while using your Dagger of Time.



Judge your surroundings carefully before swinging into the unknown, or risk an untimely end.



Triggers that open doors are often located in tricky locations.







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## 10. SANITARIUM 1998 PC

Due in no small part to their story-driven nature, some of the scariest games of all time are PC graphic adventures—not in the “Look out!” kind of way, but more in the creepy, spiders-swimming-in-your-blood kind of way. One of the most slyly sinister is called Sanitarium, a brilliant game unfortunate enough to be released when the “graphic adventure” genre was already dead and buried. In it, you play an anonymous somebody with an exaggerated case of multiple personality disorder. Each one of your really screwed-up “lives” has a similar theme—stop some secret evil from having its nefarious way with innocent lives. A mutant plant achieves symbiosis with a bunch of poor farm kids. An alien force forces a race of Cyclops into slave labor. And then there's the circus. In a horror game, the circus is never, ever fun.



## 9. DOOM II 1994 PC, Mac, GBA

Doom II was id Software's first retail game, and with one new weapon and one new enemy, it plays a bit like an expansion pack for the first game. Guess what? Nobody cared—the fans were still hungry for more of Carmack & Romero's twisted vision of demons running amuck on the moon of Phobos. The huge pixels make the game look dated now, but it's not the graphics that count—it's the sense of running for your life from hordes of Pain Elementals, scrambling for any ammo you can find, and stumbling into traps laid for you by red-eyed Imps and hulking Hell Barons. What's even scarier is playing with friends, knowing that the person hunting you is just as clever and desperate to win. (Several levels and monsters from Doom II appear in Doom: Custom PlayStation Edition and the Sega Saturn version of Doom, but neither is a complete port.)

## 8. ALONE IN THE DARK 1992 PC, Mac, 3DO

Alone in the Dark was one of the first polygonal games, and it was definitely the first entry in the genre we now call survival/horror. Drawing on H.P. Lovecraft's disturbing mythologies, players enter a haunted house in the Louisiana swamps, solving puzzles and fighting off mutants with a few weapons but mostly their wits. Lush and unsettling music (for early PC sound cards, anyway) sets the tone, and the lack of voice acting only works to its benefit—the mansion is a stark world filled with only your footsteps and unspeakable evil. While the franchise was revived with The New Nightmare, this is where the bad dreams began.

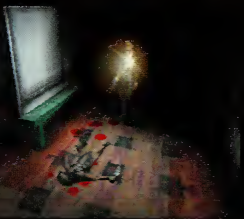


## 7. SILENT HILL 3 2003 PS2

Lovers of Japanese survival/horror games generally are divided into two camps: those who love Resident Evil and those who love Silent Hill. While Resident Evil goes more for the adrenal gland, Silent Hill plays minor-key symphonies with your sanity. The third installment in the series is a direct sequel to the first game; it involves a young girl named Heather, who fights meat dogs and indescribable whatzits in her attempt to get out of a very, very, very evil mall. And while it isn't necessarily any less scary than the first two Silent Hill games (both of which appear higher on this list), as the third in a series, it's a victim of the law of diminishing returns. Still, Lovecraft would have been proud to see so many creatures he couldn't describe.

## 6. SILENT HILL 1999 PlayStation

If you need proof that mature stories with dense 'n foggy (both visually and metaphorically) subject matter can be done on a console system, look no further than Silent Hill. The story of a man who loses his daughter to the evils of a wicked town, Silent Hill expertly juggles suspense, mystery, and the inexplicably bizarre. So what if the control scheme isn't exactly sublime? While the original game still holds up, the graphics and sound effects can't quite purvey the true depths of the disturbed vision. That problem was corrected a couple years later, however, with the release of...





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## 5. SILENT HILL 2

2001 PS2, Xbox, PC

One of the enemies in *Silent Hill 2* is a pair of legs attached to a pair of legs. Then there's this thing with a horribly disfigured rusty metal triangle head, and it drags this enormous knife around and does...er...bad stuff to the legs. Then there's this evil repressed-memory father/table that does...er...bad stuff to its daughter in Freud's bedroom. *Silent Hill 2* is one of the best, most emotionally satisfying, and most coherent (in its own incoherent way) macabre short stories ever made interactive, a playable episode of *The Twilight Zone* written by Hell Itself. An extended version of the ultimate *Silent Hill* game, subtitled *Restless Dreams*, appears on the Xbox, complete with an extra "prequel" chapter.

## 4. ETERNAL DARKNESS

2002 GameCube

Which is worse: having a huge demon bite your face off or having a demon bite your face off over and over again in a never-ending nightmare? *Eternal Darkness* went with the latter by instituting an "Insanity meter," which tracks how far off the deep end your character goes. Encountering anything spooky raises the meter, which in turn causes you to hallucinate something deviously wicked until your heart eventually explodes from the trauma. The ingenious way the game messes with your head, great voice acting, and an ironic yet bone-chilling story put *Eternal Darkness* in a class by itself.



## 3. FATAL FRAME

2002 PS2, Xbox

Most horror games give you a sizable gun or chainsaw to fend off the latest voracious zombie. *Fatal Frame* traps you in a skin-crawlingly eerie house, filled with deadly, vengeful ghosts with nothing more than a camera. That's right, a camera. You come face to desiccated face via a claustrophobic viewfinder in order to trap these apparitions on mystical film—the process is sort of like a Japanese tourist's version of *Ghostbusters*, but in hell. The controls are a bit on the rough side, but they surprisingly add to the suspense. Plus, the game is "inspired" by a true story, adding extra creepy points!

## 2. HALF-LIFE

1998 PC, PS2

Unlike the other titles on this list, *Half-Life* is not a horror game—but it's definitely one of the scariest things you'll play. Maybe it's the inherently disturbing concept of aliens attaching themselves to your face that gives *Half-Life* an edge, but the sense of isolation, chaos, lack of information, and absolutely no faith in technology all combine to make this way creepier than you'd expect a game starring a nerdy scientist to be. If you're still not sure why everyone's excited about the upcoming sequel, start here.



## 1. RESIDENT EVIL

1996 PlayStation, Saturn, PC, GameCube

Surprised? Maybe not at the rank of Shinji Mikami's masterpiece on this list, but chances are you were pretty damned surprised the first time you played the game. For all its flaws—the PlayStation original featured stilted character animation, a clunky save system, and legendarily bad voice acting—what the game got right was the sense of horror-movie pacing, mysterious conspiracy, and zombie flair (and the 2002 GameCube remake fixes all that other stuff anyway). Devious use of confined spaces, plenty of object-oriented puzzles, and excellent use of the element of surprise (when the dog crashes through the window, it's on) helped the game known as *Bio-Hazard* in Japan set the modern standard for interactive horror.





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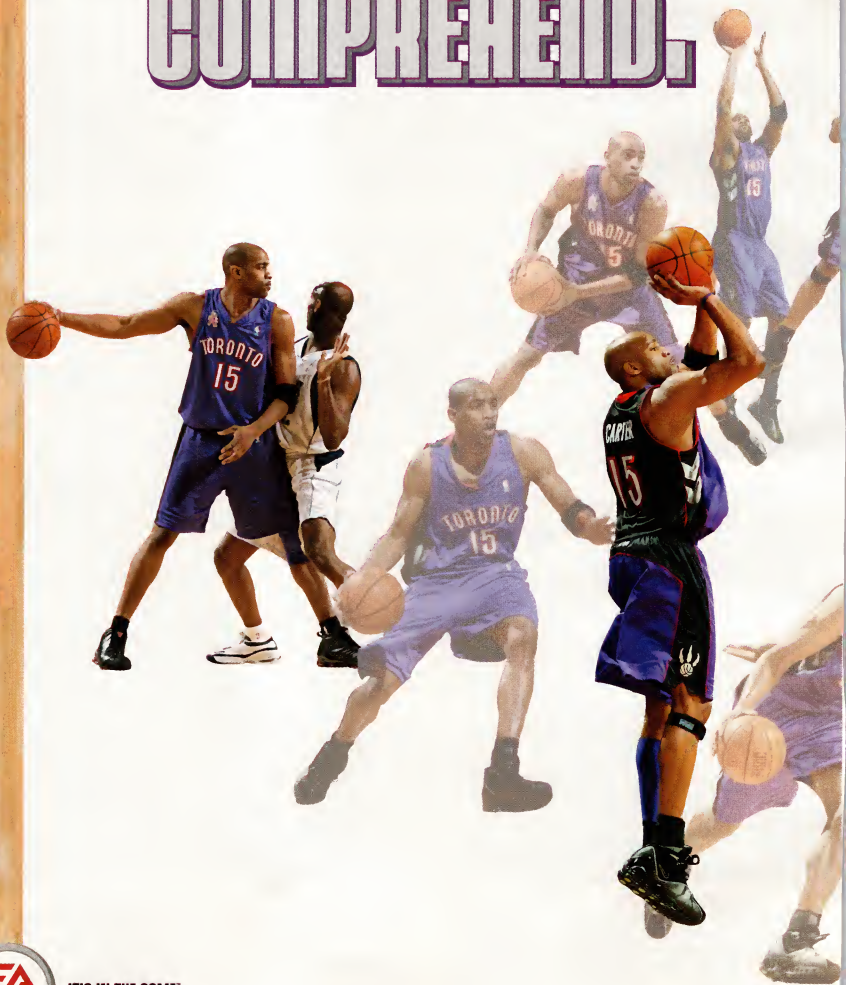


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## Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault

### Bloody Tarawa

Medal of Honor's next tour of duty on the PC looks as impressive as its first. While the acclaimed Medal of Honor: Allied Assault and its two expansion packs, Spearhead and Breakthrough, covered the European theater, Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault takes the action to the other side of the world—and it's a completely different game from the console-only Medal of Honor: Rising Sun. Say that 10 times fast....

Like Rising Sun, Pacific Assault opens at Pearl Harbor as you take on the role of a new character, Marine Private Tom Conlin. His 25 missions across seven levels will be completely different from Rising Sun's as he helps defend Henderson Field at Guadalcanal and lay siege to Tarawa Island. Other missions include rescuing American POWs and staging a raid on the tiny atoll of Makin. But the adventure all begins at boot camp, a fully interactive level that acts as the training mission and the place where you become friends with the four recurring characters that cycle in and out of Conlin's squad and story line.

While squad action is a big focus in Pacific Assault, Conlin will tackle some missions solo. Mostly, though, he'll work with a unit of six to eight fellow soldiers. A squad leader will command Conlin and the rest of the unit via hand signals that pop up in the top-right corner, telling you to halt, giving you the location of enemies, and more. The player will never be responsible for leading, just following.

### Hell on the Pacific

Promising developments on the A.I. side should also change the flow of battle. Pacific Assault does away with scripted events, and its developers say that means no battle should play the same way twice.

The enemy and your squadmates are tanked up with A.I. that provides them with tactics for advancing on a position, handling a banzai charge, and so on. As a result, battles will unfold differently every time you play, which should put an end to memorizing the enemy positions and then reloading for an easy victory.

The health system also takes an innovative approach. You'll be able to apply a bandage to do some minor healing of your character, but for serious repairs, you'll have to call for a medic. Tactics will then come into play as you must decide whether to fall back and meet the medic halfway or provide cover fire as the medic advances to you—because the doc could be taken out.

The graphics are already at the eye-popping stage. The levels feel like big, open areas on a much larger scale than those in the previous game. The lighting and environments are lush and lifelike—foliage will flutter in response to shock waves from grenades, and water will splash in response to a volley of bullets. The world just works like you'd expect it to.

Call of Duty deservedly garnered all the buzz at E<sup>3</sup> as the PC's next big WWII FPS, but while that game looks as fantastic as ever, Pacific Assault has slid nicely into place as the next next big WWII FPS.



Since the PlayStation days, the most heroic feats of the Medal of Honor franchise have taken place on the PC, and the series' latest war effort on that front will continue in dazzling fashion.



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BY AIR HENDRIX



- Developed by EA LA
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: February



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## Battlefield Vietnam

**BATTLEFIELD 1942** MADE some serious waves with its somewhat over-the-top portrayal of team-versus-team combat in World War II, and now EA plans to do it again in the steamy jungles of Vietnam. Not only does the game feature new vehicles (like the workhorse Huey helicopter and the MiG-21 fighter jet), but developer Digital Illusions has tossed in some new graphical tricks to make the whole thing look cooler, too.

Vietnam was a different sort of conflict from WWII. Battlefield Vietnam features the ability to airlift tanks and other vehicles behind enemy lines or build booby traps to help thin out enemy troops on their way to sack your base. Battlefield veterans might want to keep an eye on this one. **G**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed by Digital Illusions CE
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: Spring 2004



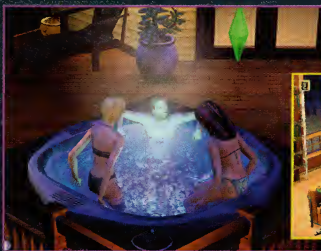
FIRST LOOK

## The Sims 2

**PERENNIAL PC TOP-10** dweller The Sims and its army of expansion packs are getting a huge upgrade for the sequel. The first thing you'll notice is the spiffier graphics, but that's not nearly everything that's new. When you create your Sims, you'll have tons of options for a total of over a majillion possible combinations, and this time, when your Sims procreate, the child will look like a

genetic mix of its parents—an important aspect of the game since your Sims now grow old and die, leaving their possessions and problems to the next

generation. The Sims are smarter and more aware, now, too—they no longer ignore it if their spouse smooches it up with someone else, and a Sim with a bad childhood could grow up lazy and fat, meaning other Sims might shun him, cutting down on his likelihood for hot-tub festivities. **G**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed by Maxis
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004



FIRST LOOK



## Evil Genius

**EVER WATCHED THE bad guy lose in a 1960s spy thriller and thought, "I could do better than that!"?** Evil Genius is your chance to prove it. Taking a cue from the classic PC favorite Dungeon Keeper, Evil Genius casts you as, well, an evil genius charged with building

your evil empire by building bases, training minions, recruiting henchmen, and taking out those blasted good guys.

You'll have to set up your empire by managing your employees and training them to master superscience and combat in order to take on annoying action heroes and government agents. Insane missions like stealing the Eiffel Tower and kidnapping pop stars will increase both your power and your notoriety as you endeavor to build the ultimate doomsday weapon in your brilliant scheme for world domination. **G**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed by Elixir Studios
- Published by Vivendi Universal Games
- Target release date: Third Quarter 2004



FIRST LOOK



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PlayStation 2



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IN A WORLD in which Knights of the Old Republic is reviving everyone's expectations for Star Wars titles, LucasArts and Raven Software bring you Jedi Academy, a Jedi Outcast follow-up that feels more like an expansion pack than a whole new game.



**PRO TIP:** These speeder-bike goons just keep coming. Your best bet is to race to the end of the level as quickly as you can—don't stop to fight them.



**PRO TIP:** Fighting Jedi enemies is tough. Use Force Speed to get the advantage on them. Force Grip will stun them for a moment, too, so you can get a free shot.

## Back to School

Jedi Academy casts you as Jaden, a young Jedi recruit who finds himself (or herself) caught up in the battle against an evil Force Cult. Unlike in Outcast, you get to choose your race, gender, and the hilt and color of your lightsaber—minor visual things that don't affect much other than the look of your character but are cool just the same for Star Wars fans.

Other than the new story and customization options, Academy features a few tweaks to the old Outcast engine. You can now ride certain animals and vehicles like a tauntaun or a speeder bike, but these never quite control well enough to be much fun. Other things like improved character animation and area lighting are less noticeable, but they help make the game look a touch better than its older brother.

Academy gives you a lot more control over how you play than Outcast did, even letting you choose the order in which you play missions, but the levels themselves are more straightforward and less puzzle-ridden than Outcast's jump-happy maps. Some levels are creative and fun, while others are just straight-line, kill-everyone missions. Even the "diplomatic" missions usually end up with you just killing 50, maybe 60 people.

## The One Who Seeks Balance

Jedi Academy won't bake your noodle or drop your jaw, but it's certainly a fine answer for those of you looking for more Jedi Knight. If you're looking for a Jedi Knight RPG, though, you'll have to play BioWare's game to get that. **G**

# STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

### Recommended System Specs

Windows 98/

ME/2000/XP

Pentium 4/

Athlon 1 GHz

256 MB RAM





1.3 GB on HD

32 MB video card



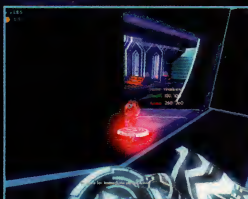
**PRO TIP:** The bowcaster is a good weapon for clearing rooms quickly. As good as it is, though, you'll toss it once your lightsaber skills evolve.

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	■ Developed by Raven Software	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>TEEN</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> <td rowspan="2">  </td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.0</td> <td>4.5</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> </table>	TEEN	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL		4.0	4.5	4.0	4.0
	TEEN		GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL						
4.0	4.5	4.0	4.0								
■ Published by LucasArts	■ \$49.99	■ First-person shooter									
■ Available now	■ 16 players										

BY DEATH-STAR DESTROYER

# TRON 2.0



**PRO TIP:** For all the technology, your best defense is often a wall. Hit and fade, using corners for cover.



**PRO TIP:** As in most other first-person shooters, head shots will take out enemies with one hit. Use Triangulate to make all weapons sniper-worthy.

IF YOU THINK Tron 2.0 is nostalgia for old-school geeks...well, it is, but it's not just that. License notwithstanding, it's an excellent first-person action/adventure in its own right.

## IN LIKE FLYNN





It took two decades for real-world computer technology to catch up to the groundbreaking visions of Disney's 1982 movie. The game picks up 20 years after the film as Jet Bradley, son of film hero Alan, gets digitized and must lead a high-resolution revolution to save the system from a corrupting virus—not to mention the evil Kernel. You're armed with a Frisbee-like disc, but you'll also acquire plenty more projectile weapons and subroutines, enabling you to upgrade your character's abilities in an unusually flexible RPG-like manner.

## RAGE INSIDE THE MACHINE

Graphically, Tron 2.0 had to be a stunner, and it is. The better your video card, the better the glow effects, which are really the key to Tron's cool visuals. The viral corruption looks like a toxic earthquake, and there are fun visual surprises around every turn. Excellent voice acting (including movie vets Bruce Boxleitner and Cindy Morgan), sound effects (the footsteps are dead-on), and Wendy Carlos-inspired music make the audio experience just as rich. Monolith is no stranger to first-person combat, so the main controls are solid and robust; however, the light cycle game, which is the core of the LAN multiplayer mode (Internet gamers fight with discs), proves frustratingly harder than it looks.

Whether you're on a nostalgia trip or just looking for an unusual take on sci-fi gaming, Tron 2.0 is sure to show you sights you've never seen in a game before. **G**

EDITORS'  
GAMEPRO  
CHOICE

	■ Developed by Monolith	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>TEEN</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> <td rowspan="2">  </td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.0</td> <td>4.5</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>5.0</td> </tr> </table>	TEEN	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL		5.0	4.5	4.0	5.0
	TEEN		GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL						
5.0	4.5	4.0	5.0								
■ Published by Buena Vista Interactive	■ \$49.99	■ First-person shooter									
■ Available now	■ 32 players										

BY DAN ELKERTO



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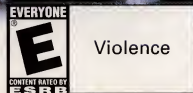
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PlayStation 2



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R



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## Dragon Ball Z: Taiketsu

NOW THAT THE Budokai series has the consoles covered for Dragon Ball Z fighting, it's time for Taiketsu to offer Game Boy Advance owners some pint-sized pugilism. Goku, Buu, Gohan, Vegeta, Android 18, Cell, and Frieza are just some of the characters that mix it up in areas like Orange Star City and Master Roshi's Island. The fighting takes to the air in Sky Battles, which are essentially risky,

last-ditch-effort tugs-of-war where the victor wins the whole match. The sounds and graphics were shaping up in the early version, but the fight mechanics felt very mash-happy and combos were hard to perform. There's still time to fix those things before Taiketsu's release, but those tweaks are definitely needed. **F**



BY BAD MARE

- Developed by WebFoot Technologies
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: October

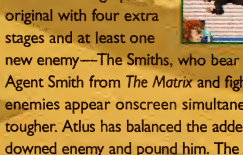


GAME BOY ADVANCE

HANDS-ON

## Double Dragon Advance

DOUBLE DRAGON, the classic side-scrolling arcade brawler and perennial NES fave, has been reincarnated as Double Dragon Advance for your Game Boy Advance. Atlus is beefing up the



BY DJ DINOBOT

- Developed and published by Atlus
- Target release date: November

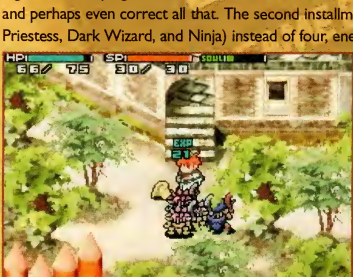


GAME BOY ADVANCE

HANDS-ON

## Shining Soul II

THE ORIGINAL SHINING SOUL was an action/RPG with a couple repetition problems and even a few more repetition problems, but Shining Soul II is hoping to correct all that and perhaps even correct all that.



The second installment of the series features eight classes (including Brawler, Priestess, Dark Wizard, and Ninja) instead of four, enemies that are placed more logically (as opposed to seemingly randomly in the original), and areas that offer more variety and better-looking backgrounds. Where the game will really shine is its multiplayer mode—as in the original, four players can link up and beat the squat fantasy hordes together...only now, you can perform Soul Magic combos, and each member will be able to wander off on his own to explore dungeons and visit towns independently. **F**

BY STAR DINGO

- Developed by Sega
- Published by Atlus
- Target release date: December



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRST LOOK





Tricky terrain. Treacherous weather. Fine-tune your car to battle obstacles and beat the elements. And with 2-player action, you'll have to watch out for the other guy.



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## Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town

NATSUME'S QUIRKY "FARM-PG" pits players against the most dreaded foe of all—daily chores! In Harvest Moon, you must till your fields, water your crops, and feed your chickens to make your farm grow and profit. The preview version was slow-paced, just like real farm life, and took a solid time investment

before things got moving. Each day is occupied with maintenance and errand running as you strive to fill your collection bin. The bin is emptied at 5 p.m. every day, and you're paid for the day's haul. You must invest your money back into seeds, livestock, and tool upgrades to keep the farm ever expanding. You can also interact with the other residents of Mineral Town in kitschy, quaint conversations. Now what would really rock the incorporation of a Boktai-style solar sensor....



BY DJ DINOBOT

- Developed by Victor Interactive Software
- Published by Natsume
- Target release date: October

GAME BOY ADVANCE

HANDS-ON

## River City Ransom EX

NEVER HAS A game presenting Japanese delinquents fighting over turf, money, and girls been this thoroughly anticipated. River City Ransom EX will be an enhanced version of the original 2D classic side-scrolling fighter. This latest incarnation will sport several ingenious enhancements like the Dynamic Story mode (which changes how the story evolves through your decisions), the ability to save your gameplay data, and the option to fashion an A.I. partner to team up with.

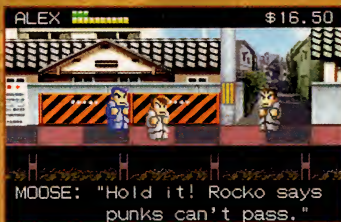
But questions arise: Will Atlus include all the Double Dragon cameos and the massive selection of items to buy from the original game? Will you be able to ask the cute girl at Merv's Burger Joint to smile for you? It's too early to tell how faithful this remake will be, and the wait will be horrendous, but judging from these screen shots, the results should be euphoric.

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BY RICE BURNER

- Developed and published by Atlus
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004

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FIRST LOOK



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## Pokémon Pinball: Ruby & Sapphire

THE GAME BOY ADVANCE version of Pokémon Pinball isn't all that different from its Game Boy Color predecessor, which is a good thing since that game was excellent. The pinball is a Pokéball, and the added task of capturing various pocket monsters augments the regular fun of hitting targets, ramps, and bumpers. You have to light up targets on the playfields (two—Ruby and Sapphire, natch) to release the creatures, then aim your ball to catch 'em all. New elements in the game include collectable coins, a Pokémart, and eggs that hatch into catchable creatures.



One of the game's nicest features is the option to save your game at any time—even during bonus games.



**PRO TIP:** Don't be afraid to nudge the playfield (L and R triggers)—a little English can save a weak shot or put an errant one right on target.

### SPEED TRAP

In the magical land of Pokéthings, life moves at a different pace. The game actually has two speeds, Slow and Normal, which both feel a bit poky when compared to Pinball of the Dead's speed. It's a forgiving game aimed at the wee ones, but despite the pace, it still proves amazingly addictive. There are tons of interactive targets on the playfield, several goals that you can achieve in any order, and bonus boss battles that help break up the action a bit. It's not just fun; it's *lots* of fun, and it's easy to control. While the colorful graphics are more or less what you'd expect from a Pokégame (though the electric fence on the Sapphire table makes for a surreal surprise), the music is best described as "Pokélounge." It's a weird mix of light jazz piano and circus orchestration that will either hypnotize you or make you want to vomit. Maybe both.

### ANIMALIA

Ultimately, if you're not a Pokéfan, this game won't change your mind, but if you don't mind the adorable monsters and the funky lounge music, there's a lot of unusually satisfying arcade gameplay here. **E**



**PRO TIP:** Want multiple HOLE letters fast? Catch an incoming ball on your cradled flipper to roll it back into the lane, then cycle through the lights as the ball rolls over the trigger.



**PRO TIP:** Pikachu will act only as a kicker if he's powered up. On both tables, make sure you hit the right ramp (and the charge spinner) twice as soon as you can.

**EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE**

BY DAN ELEKTRO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed and published by Nintendo/The Pokémon Company</li> <li>\$29.99</li> <li>Available now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pinball</li> <li>1 player</li> </ul>					
	<p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed and published by Nintendo/The Pokémon Company</li> <li>\$29.99</li> <li>Available now</li> <li>Pinball</li> <li>1 player</li> </ul> </p>						

## Mega Man Zero 2

THE MEGA MAN ZERO series is the evil experiment of the Mega Man collection—it's convoluted, it's different, it's insanely difficult. Oh yeah, and it secretly hates you.

### UPGRADE MODE

The original Mega Man Zero for the GBA was a great title nearly destroyed by a few sincerely frustrating flaws, but Mega Man Zero 2 improves on the original game in several key ways. First off, you no longer have to worry about the prospect of "permanent failure." In the original, you got three continues, and when they were gone, the game was over forever. When you screwed up a mission, you failed that mission for good. Here, while the stages are still among the most insanely difficult you'll ever play, the game no longer limits the amount of continues, and the game's mission structure is much more forgiving. Secondly, while Mega Man's staple rock-paper-scissors-kumquat-puppy weapon-gathering is still MIA, the new weapon scheme is much more interesting, clear-cut, and fun. You now have a Chain Rod, which serves as both Belmont whip and Bionic Commando grappling hook, and a Shield Boomerang, which is exactly what it sounds like.

The presentation is standard Mega Man with colorful backgrounds and neat-o boss designs, replete with familiar future songs, klaxons, and Buster sounds. The control is as tight as ever, but it can get confusing since you're allowed to freely mix and match your main and sub weapons.

### LEAD WARNING

No, this is not a game for everyone; it's very demanding and frequently frustrating, but it's a lot of fun (more fun than the original, for sure) for those who have what it takes. The game also rewards the elite more than any other game of its type—beating bosses while in a state of zen-like Mega Mannery grants you great stuff like their powers and elements, among other things. Yeah, Mega Man Zero 2 hates you...but at least this time it's not a sore loser. **E**



The Chain Rod is the coolest new weapon addition, turning Zero into a bionic commando.



**PRO TIP:** Charge up your Shield Boomerang, jump, and then throw down the boomerang to attack enemies that can't be hit from the front.



**PRO TIP:** Once you use a Cyber-Elf, it's gone forever, but don't be shy—Mega Man Zero 2 is tough, so they're vital to your success.



**PRO TIP:** Fire charged Buster Shots at the Polar Bear boss's head from the wall. When he walks toward you, use your Chain Rod on the ceiling to swing over his head.

**EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE**

BY STAR DINGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed and published by Capcom</li> <li>\$29.99</li> <li>Available October</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>1 player</li> </ul>					
	<p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed and published by Capcom</li> <li>\$29.99</li> <li>Available October</li> <li>Action</li> <li>1 player</li> </ul> </p>						



KONAMI

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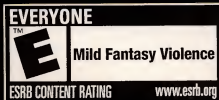
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**PRO TIP:** The boss Bruton moves in an hourglass pattern. Stand in the same spot just outside his movement range.



**PRO TIP:** Kill enemies while passengers watch to earn trust. When a passenger's heart turns green (on the status screen), he will craft items for you.

## CIMA: The Enemy



YOU ARE ARK J, a new recruit in a security escort service for people hoping to travel abroad without being kidnapped by mysterious interdimensional evil. Unfortunately, that's just what happens to the 14 train passengers you're assigned to protect in CIMA: The Enemy, an action/RPG/puzzle game that's one part Zelda and one part Pikmin.

The action/RPG basics are very familiar—travel into a set of trap-and-monster-laden dungeons, slaying monsters and collecting treasure—but CIMA throws in an interesting twist: Not only are you controlling your main hero, but you're also controlling all of the train's passengers via a waypoint-driven command system, fending off monsters as you point-and-click them to safety, often using them as switch-pushing helpers or harnessing their special talents.

The game is presented in a top-down perspective with the traditional bulb-headed anime characters and lots of clean, cartoony environments. Don't worry if you have to keep the volume down low, though: The music is simple fare, trapped between the 8-bit and 16-bit eras, and the sound effects are relegated to inappropriate bleeps and static-y swish sounds.

While CIMA's concept is indeed very cool and refreshing, interface issues frequently get in the way. When your group gets large, the point-and-click interface can be confusing, and herding the whole lot requires patience. Path-finding A.I. for the characters under your command is pretty bad, too (they get stuck on corners), and battle collision

detection is a bit off-base. Still, Natsume scores points for trying something original, even if the controls keep it from being a complete success. **F**

	Developed and published by Natsume		GRAPHICS <b>4.0</b>	SOUND <b>3.0</b>	CONTROL <b>3.0</b>	FUN FACTOR <b>3.5</b>
	\$29.99					
	Available now					
	1 player					

## Onimusha Tactics

ONIMUSHA TACTICS TAKES the dark feudal Japanese atmosphere of Onimusha and injects it into the 2D turn-based strategy genre with mixed results. As chosen hero Onimaru, you and your allies battle to stop the invading Genma demon hordes led by the Genma King, Oda Nobunaga. Onimusha Tactics has an innovative system of item generation and a character-development engine similar to that of the original Onimusha games. You relieve demon Genma of their souls, which then can be used to upgrade your equipment. You also collect Genma stones and combine them to create new items and equipment if you can find the right recipes in the game.





**PRO TIP:** Use status effect spells during the beginning of a tough battle to buff up your party early and gain a healthy experience point boost.

Despite its shortcomings, Onimusha Tactics is a solid game with an engaging story. If you're looking for a casual strategy game without the tedious character setup options, then Tactics is for you. **F**



**PRO TIP:** In Episode 9, defeat Gullikoen and leave a unit where he stood. Now, Dollkenc won't be able to respawn his brother.

Players who are unfamiliar with strategy games will find Tactics easy to play and enjoyable, but the straightforward battles and victory conditions, along with a minimal learning curve, can leave more experienced players bored. A huge drawback is that the game omits any options to customize your characters, and veteran gamers may find the game mechanics too simplistic. The presentation seems to suffer from bipolar syndrome with the engine consisting of standard cartoony role-playing graphics, which contrast with the detailed character portraits and dark story elements. The magic, special skills, and effects are well done, but they're nothing really special, and while good for a handheld game, the sound does not really do the intricate story justice.

	Developed and published by Capcom		GRAPHICS <b>3.0</b>	SOUND <b>3.0</b>	CONTROL <b>3.5</b>	FUN FACTOR <b>3.5</b>
	\$29.99					
	Available November					
	1 player					

## Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

BACK IN THE day, the heroes in a half shell kicked major urban butt in the arcades and at home. It's nice to see that the Ninja Turtles haven't changed—and, on the Game Boy Advance, haven't lost their spunk for a solid round of fighting fun.

Reminiscent of past Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles arcade games, this handheld version of the mutant heroes is a simple pick-up-and-play side-scrolling beat-em-up. Leonardo, Donatello, Michelangelo, and Raphael all have their own unique attacks on top of the normal kicks, punches, and weapon slashes. Diversifying the gameplay even more, each Turtle fights in a distinct area, broken down into a variety of stages that are all designed differently—removing any sense of repetition usually equated with this type of game.





**PRO TIP:** In Raphael's Act 4, let Casey get in the first shots with the boss, then finish up with your own combos.

Though the Turtles may have aged almost 20 years, their look is as sharp and clean as when they first jumped out of the sewers. From the crazy animated ninjitsu moves to the colorful levels, the Turtles never looked so good on a small screen. Familiar yells and the theme music help put the beat down on Shredder's henchmen, too.

The only drawback to this nostalgic experience is the lack of any multiplayer options. As everyone knows, the Turtles work best together as a team, not as individuals—unfortunately, though, this TMNT allows action only one Turtle at a time. Still, the popularity of these mutant amphibians is hard to pass up, especially if you crave instant brainless brawling for your GBA. **F**



**PRO TIP:** For a wicked combo with any of the Turtles, tap B, B, ↑, B, B.

	Developed and published by Konami		GRAPHICS <b>4.0</b>	SOUND <b>3.5</b>	CONTROL <b>4.5</b>	FUN FACTOR <b>4.0</b>
	\$29.99					
	Available October					
	1 player					



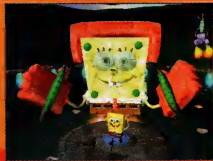
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# Need for Speed Underground

## Underground Revolution

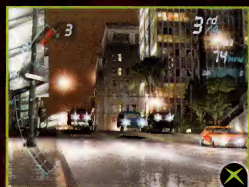
Need for Speed Underground deftly overturns its own conventions in an entirely unexpected way, changing almost everything about the series...and emerging as a far more promising game for it. Tapping the vibe that first went mainstream with *The Fast and The Furious*, NFSU discards the focus on exotic European cars, turning to the world of street racing and tuner cars. Always at night, the races are set across a sprawling, vaguely San Francisco-like city. Each event connects different streets and sections in its own way, so you'll regularly see familiar scenery but in a different order.

The events range from the awesome drag racing (one of the preview version's highlights) to drift, point-to-point, circuit, and lap knockout races as well as four-player online competitions on the PS2 only. The street-racing scene is ever present as crowds gather at the starting line, and the Underground mode captures its vibe superbly. A light story presence has you trying to make a

name in street racing by building up your ride in a series of events. Manufacturers include Toyota, Mitsubishi, Honda, Dodge, Subaru, and more, and cars can be tricked out with parts from Daz, Skunk2, Enkei, MOMO, and many others.



Like a phoenix from its ashes, *Need for Speed Underground* scorches the franchise's traditions but rises as a far more promising game as a result.



## Rave about the Lighting

NFSU's compelling visual style is a big part of its charm. Dewy, soft-focus lighting smears neon colors across the perpetually rain-glossed city at night, and the sensation of speed at the top end is so teeth-rattling and blurry-fast that you'll yelp and clutch your controller. Both effects are used a bit too liberally at times, but on the whole, the game has a distinctive, just plain cool look.

One thing that hasn't changed about this series: It's easy to drive and very accessible. The action is about high speed, not technical skill, and it's already a blast. It's a no-brainer to call NFSU one of the holiday's brightest lights—it may well end up being the year's best racing game.

BY AIR HENDRIX



- Developed by EA Black Box
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: November



PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX GAMECUBE

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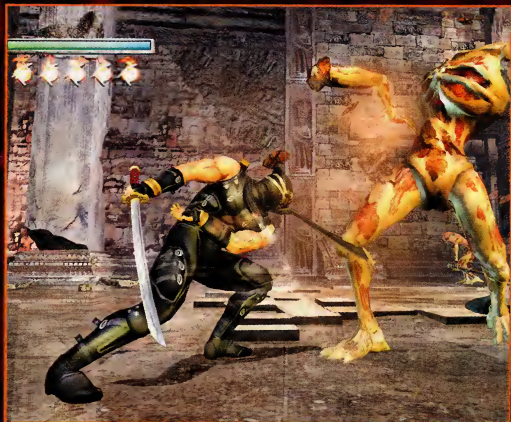
# Ninja Gaiden

## Rage of the Ninja

It was a relatively quiet summer for ninja fans, but the calm is about to end just in time for Thanksgiving. *Ninja Gaiden* revives Ryu Hayabusa, the classic robe-clad hero from the 8-bit days, exclusively for the Xbox. With his entire clan and dear loved one slain, Ryu has understandably lost his usual ninja cool. His motivation this time is pure vengeance, and there will be plenty of evildoers punished before he can rest again.

The core focus of earlier *Ninja Gaiden* games was challenging, nonstop action, and that suitably hasn't changed in this update. Developer Team Ninja's

Tomonobu Itagaki has stated that his latest creation is "95 percent action and 5 percent puzzle solving," so you won't have to decrypt countless riddles to progress through levels. What you will need, however, are good reflexes since there is only one difficulty setting.



Ryu Hayabusa is back and dealing out cold, hard retribution in *Ninja Gaiden*.

## Controlled Adrenaline

Judging from hands-on time with an early version, the enemies present formidable challenges that require the doling out of massive combos. Enemies often attack in coordinated groups that call for you to dispatch them in a strategic order. For example, one creature may hover in the air casting binding spells that hamper Ryu's movement so ground forces have an easier time attacking.

Luckily, ninjas are creative creatures. Ryu can launch combos from walls, switch to another target at lightning-quick speeds, and even juggle enemies in the air. He can also combine a wide range of attacks like mixing sword slashes with kicks or projectile weapons. Speaking of which, there are 10 primary weapons like nunchucks and a giant warhammer, and six secondary weapons like bow and arrows, and shurikens. Constant defensive maneuvering and blocking are critical if you want to continue further. This all might sound a bit overwhelming, but it was quite simple to control all of Ryu's moves and combos naturally in the early build.



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BY TOKYO DRIFTER



- Developed by Team Ninja
- Published by Tecmo
- Target release date: November



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Model photos by Jimmie S. Newberry for Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

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# Karaoke Revolution

## Vocal Forecast

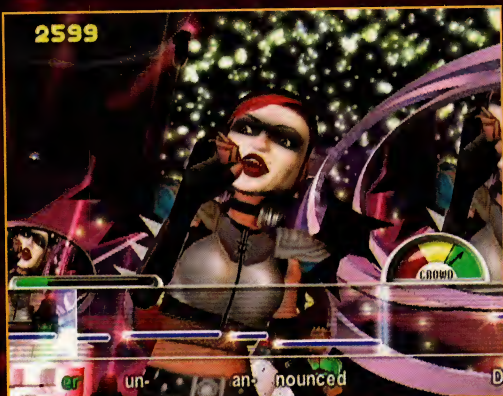
Dance Dance Revolution was aptly named—the game that made you get up off the couch and move your feet caused a sensation and expanded the boundaries of what a video game could be. Now, the music-based Bemani series charges further forward with Karaoke Revolution, which hopes to turn idle Americans into American Idols.

The setup is fairly straightforward: You are a singer, one of eight predetermined characters until you unlock some secret special guests. Therefore, you sing, starting at a friend's party, working your way up to local clubs, a TV show with lots of oval screens (hmmm), and ultimately the Enormobowl. The accuracy of your singing counts—if you match the pitch and timing of the words and notes, you'll please the crowd, earn bonus multipliers, and get the chance to play bigger venues as you move on. If you flub too many notes or can't hold them long enough, the room lets you know, and you'll be off the stage quicker than you can say Milli Vanilli. The beta version worked extremely well and recognized when voices shifted up or down an octave. If competition isn't your thing, there's a regular karaoke mode with full-screen lyrics where you can warble with your friends.

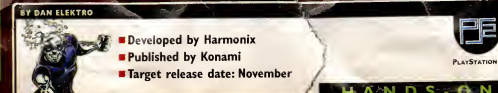
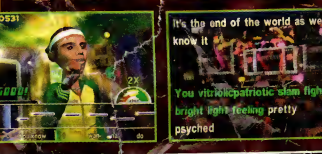
## Rock the (Headset) Mic

Naturally, this isn't a game you'll enjoy with just a gamepad; plug in any PS2 USB headset (Logitech's SOCOM gear and Dattel's TalkNet both work fine), and you're good to go. At press time, the song list was still being assembled, but the final game will ship with 35 tracks made famous by artists like Barenaked Ladies, Norah Jones, Hoobastank, REM, Avril Lavigne, Nickelback, Michelle Branch, Madonna, and even the King of Pop, Michael Jackson (though, as with real karaoke discs, they're close remakes, not the original versions). What's more, Konami has plans for expansion discs. With Harmonix (developer of Frequency and Amplitude) at the helm, Karaoke Revolution looks destined to hit all the high notes.

2599



This could be you! Konami further feeds America's rock-star fantasies with Karaoke Revolution, the singing successor to Dance Dance Revolution.



■ Developed by Harmonix  
 ■ Published by Konami  
 ■ Target release date: November

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Mild Violence



PlayStation 2

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


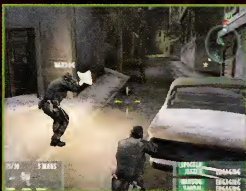
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## SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs

SET TO START their new mission in November, the U.S. Navy SEALs will once again show off their raw and focused talent on- and offline, promising even more action than in the first SOCOM game. To start, there will be 12 brand-new single-player missions that take place in the hostile environments of Albania, Algeria, Brazil, and Russia. Your equipment will be updated to include shotguns, rocket launchers, and antipersonnel mines. And as in real special operations, you can expect to team up with and take control of another country's elite military group like the British SAS and Russian Spetznas to help complete your missions.

Multiplayer gaming, however, is where Sony is really pushing SEALs operations—in fact, SOCOM is still the number-one played PlayStation 2 game online. The sequel will build on this success with added features like player and clan rankings, friend lists, spectator modes, stat listings, and an improved chat system. An early demo version of SOCOM II displayed super-fast action online and clear improvement of visual detail. If you're not already, get prepared to gladly get your feet wet with the second invasion of America's Navy SEALs. 



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed by Zipper
- Published by Sony
- Target release date: November




PLAYSTATION 2

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## Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm

UBI SOFT'S PREMIER Special Forces team, the Ghosts, has had an active and popular online mission setup on the PC and Xbox, but not on the PS2—until now. In November, Jungle Storm will move beyond the single-player objectives and wire up wannabe soldiers for frenzied multiplayer fun. A whopping 31 maps and three new multiplayer modes join the usual death-match and co-op options for an already impressive brief of what you can expect. There will also be stat tracking, ladder ranking, and voice chat capabilities.

Don't worry if you just want to be alone with the Ghosts for a bit, too. Eight Cuba missions from Island Thunder plus eight new exclusive PS2 stages that take place in Colombia will be included in the single-player mode. The controls were streamlined in an early version, and you could order your team with 160 voice commands using a headset. Even without using your own babble, directing the troops was a breeze. Taking note from the GameCubes Ghost Recon, you could easily move your team to points directly in front of you with just a press of a button, effectively removing the hassle of going to your map first. With a solid lineup of features, Jungle Storm is a special operation to watch, especially when it will be released at around the same time as Sony's SOCOM II. 



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed by Ubi Soft Paris
- Published by Ubi Soft
- Target release date: November



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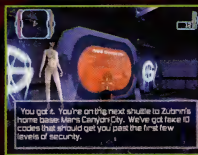


## Black9

**BLACK9'S** CONCEPT IS definitely there: You're a mercenary in a third-person action/stealth/RPG world, taking on missions for Illuminati-owned sci-fi megacorporations. You're augmented with nanotech, loaded to the gills with weapons and gadgets like jet packs, and committed to figuring out the best way around potentially sticky situations, Deus Ex-style—even if it means going in no guns blazin'. The character development options are vast, and the



game lets you grow specialized personas for the squad-based multiplayer modes. But the package isn't quite yet complete—in the latest preview build, the frame rate was still jumpy, the control stiff, and the complex behavioral A.I. problematic. Developer Taldren is trying to cram lots of cool different gameplay into Black9. Hopefully, ambition doesn't topple the Illuminati's game. **G**



BY EVIL STAR DINGO



- Developed by Taldren
- Published by Majesco
- Target release date: October



HANDS-ON



## Armed & Dangerous

**IF YOU'VE EVER** played Giants: Citizen Kabuto (out now on the PC and PS2), then stand up and pay attention: Armed & Dangerous is the newest title from the Giants guys, and so far it looks every bit the demented trip their last game was. Allegedly "based on a true story," A&D covers four mutant Scottish burglars as they use weapons like Vindaloo rocket launchers and Topsy-Turvy bombs to lay waste to as many enemies as humanly (and robotly, and molely) possible. Behind all the ribald humor lies a remarkably solid shooter: Although you couldn't control everyone in your team, the preview version was still a rocking good time, and the number of enemies onscreen at once without slowdown approached the unbelievable at times. **G**



He'll split open the blood-bare stomach and catch Levis amongst the warm and sleek.



BY FENNEC FOX



- Developed by Planet Moon Studios
- Published by LucasArts
- Target release date: December



HANDS-ON

## Voodoo Vince

**BLINX MAY NOT** have rocked the world last year, but Microsoft hasn't quite abandoned the "character-action game" genre yet. In Voodoo Vince, Vince (the guy you control) is a voodoo doll that's basically invincible—fill up his voodoo meter with the beads enemies drop, and he can launch a "voodoo attack" that roughs him up cartoon-style and does the same to all onscreen enemies. Despite this wacky premise, the preview version of Voodoo Vince was fairly tried and true platform stuff with good audiovisuals and some very original ideas. Vince's ability to withstand nearly everything comes in handy at times—at one point, Vince must destroy two sinister gas pumps by setting himself on fire on one end of the level and navigating an obstacle course before he "burns out" so he can set the station aflame. Cute. **G**



BY FENNEC FOX



- Developed by Beep Industries
- Published by Microsoft
- Target release date: September



HANDS-ON



# Grand Theft Auto III

## ROBBERY, ASSAULT, AND BATTERY

The PlayStation 2's had it good with several exclusive franchises like Grand Theft Auto. For long-starved Xbox owners, the series is at last coming to Microsoft's system this fall. Hailed as the second-best-selling game ever for the PlayStation 2 (guess what the number-one game is?), GTA III created a subgenre in the action/adventure category where in addition to accomplishing various missions and objectives, you can veer off the game's linear path and do what you want. Wanna carjack someone? Go ahead—take any vehicle. Want to take public transportation? Try the subway...you get the idea.

In GTA III, you play as a criminal who, after being betrayed by his girlfriend and sent to jail during an ill-fated heist, gets a second lease on life when he's accidentally freed from prison by a powerful crime lord. Indebted to your liberator, you embark on missions that range from assassinating top crime figures to escorting prostitutes. The game takes place in Liberty City, which is comprised of three huge areas—Portland, Stauton Island, and Shoreside Vale—where more than 60 missions are to be completed.



Long overdue, GTA III ends its exclusive PlayStation 2 reign and comes to the Xbox.



## YOU BELONG TO THE CITY

So what's new about this incarnation of GTA III? For starters, it doesn't have any of the downloadable content that Rockstar earlier promised it would. The game, however, contains some key technical enhancements: The graphics are sharper than those in the PS2 version as the visuals have been pumped up for the higher-resolution Xbox, and the game supports HDTV 16x9 720P. The soundtrack has also been improved with Dolby 5.1 surround. New customization options enable you to download your favorite tunes to the Xbox hard drive, then play them during the game on any car's radio system. GTA III will be sold in a double pack with its sequel Vice City for the Xbox in November. A PS2 double pack will also be available in October.



BY MAJOR MIKE



- Developed by Rockstar North
- Published by Rockstar Games
- Target release date: November



FIRST LOOK



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# Mission: Impossible— Operation Surma

Your Mission, Should You...

Disappearing off the radar for a year or so has worked wonders for Mission: Impossible—Operation Surma. It's emerged looking like it could be one of the top stealth-action games of the year, much like a Splinter Cell set in the IMF universe. Yup, its potential is that strong. And that said, Surma borrows more than liberally from the standard set by Splinter Cell—IMF agent and main character Ethan Hunt (who in the game looks nothing like Tom Cruise) moves with a very familiar half-crouched prow, and the game makes good use of lighting and shadows for its stealth-focused gameplay.

Yet Surma is definitely no mere Splinter Cell clone, expanding the genre's hand-to-hand combat with a sharp array of moves and adding the occasional action flourish here and there. Unlike Sam Fisher, Hunt packs much more than a clobbering elbow—he can sneak up behind enemies to snap their neck or lurk in a doorway and clothesline an unsuspecting enemy as they rush through. Of course, he can also force enemies to unlock doors at gunpoint and carry their bodies off to better hiding spots.

Surma definitely puts you behind the trigger more, too. In one level, Hunt uses a sniper rifle to provide cover as an ally emerges from a compound, mowing down a horde of enemies in the process. In another, he dons a rocket jetpack to skydive, avoiding missiles while he struggles to land in a plane.



If you're twiddling your thumbs waiting for the next Splinter Cell, Ethan Hunt and the IMF have a black-bag job you won't be able to resist.

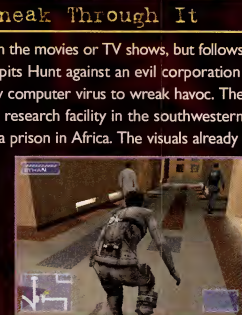


## ...Choose To Sneak Through It

Surma's story isn't based on the movies or TV shows, but follows a freshly penned tale that pits Hunt against an evil corporation that's using a powerful new computer virus to wreak havoc. The trail will take Hunt from a research facility in the southwestern U.S. to Eastern Europe to a prison in Africa. The visuals already look quite sharp, though the animations and lighting aren't likely to rival Splinter Cell's gold standard.

True to its franchise, a heavy gadget focus will spice up the action. Along with the ability to rappel in that famous spread-eagle pose, Hunt will snap pictures, manufacture face masks, use tranquilizer darts and micro cameras, and more. As long as another delay doesn't creep into the picture, Operation Surma should be one of the sneakiest hits of the holiday.

Note: All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.



BY AIR HENDRIX



- Developed by Paradigm Entertainment
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: December



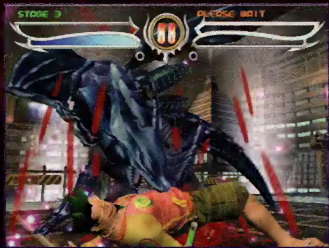
PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX

UPDATE



## Bloody Roar 4

THE LATEST INSTALLMENT of the werebeast fighting series is offering some new characters, new gameplay features, and more blood-letting than ever before—it even takes a cue from the Dead or Alive games by introducing multileveled arenas. The biggest new addition to the Bloody Roar series is a Development mode in which you can customize your fighter. During battles, you can build up a reserve of DNA Points, which are used to augment various offensive, defensive, and beast abilities; by defeating opponents, you can acquire their moves. The play-



able version of Bloody Roar 4 featured cool new characters and a broad palette of aerial moves, counters, and combos, but the controls were a bit too sluggish, and the clunky animation could use some smoothing out before the game's release. **G**

BY PONG SIFU



- Developed by Hudson Soft
- Published by Konami
- Target release date: November



PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON



## Dragon Ball Z: Budokai

IT'S THE TALE of the tape where 23 of the roughest and toughest Dragon Ball Z fighters are waiting for a chance to show off their countless attack skills in the ring. PS2 owners already know that Budokai is currently the ultimate DBZ brawler. You can duke it out with a friend in a cordial versus clash or relive dramatic moments in the engaging story mode that spans the Saiyan Saga through Cell Games. An early build of the GameCUBE Budokai played and felt much like its PS2 predecessor—combination attacks could be dished out with simple button taps, plus the visual style accurately reflected the cartoon look that fans of the show are accustomed to. Rest up for an epic Saiyan clash this October. **G**



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Zenshi Pitt

BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed by Dimps
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: October



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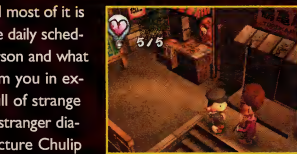
HANDS-ON

## Chulip

NATSUME HAS SNAGGED U.S. distribution rights for Chulip, an odd PlayStation 2 RPG adventure released in Japan last year by Victor Interactive that mixes a quirky Japanese backdrop with gross-out humor. As a boy who's just moved into the town of Tsurukame, you build up your street cred to impress the woman of your dreams by kissing as many of the town's inhabitants as



possible. The game runs in real time, and most of it is spent figuring out the daily schedule of each townspeople and what he or she wants from you in exchange for a kiss. Full of strange characters and even stranger dialogue, it's easy to picture Chulip becoming an underground hit among certain wacky types of gamers. **G**



BY FENNEC FOX



- Developed by Victor Interactive
- Published by Natsume
- Target release date: Fourth Quarter 2003



PLAYSTATION 2

FIRST LOOK



# Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde

Hark! The Horde Approaches...

Is it really possible to make a console RTS that isn't a nightmare tangle of controller clunk? If the recent PS2 build of *Goblin Commander* (it's also coming for the Xbox and GameCube) is any indication, the answer is most definitely yes. In this ambitious attempt at rewriting the RTS rules (see "The Battle for Real Time," page 60, July), setting waypoints and patrols is effortless, and the intuitive "one-button-per-clan" scheme requires almost no learning curve. The game's nifty method of possessing (and directly controlling) units keeps you constantly busy, and the single-player campaign makes the normally tedious RTS build-up phase a lot more fun—instead of watching some peons gather lumber for five minutes, you're smashing stuff yourself and personally hunting down roving packs of enemies with complete camera control.



Hellfire and Stonekrusher unite to capture a Stormbringer Soul Fountain in *Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde*.



The single-player campaign works you through the learning curve slowly; it picks up steam about halfway through, once you've acquired a couple clans and a couple Titans with which to play and strategize. Instant gratification comes by way of the two-player split-screen multiplayer skirmishes (sorry, no online...at least for this game), which let you start off with any three of the five clans and their Titans right from the start. Ground is gained and



lost at a furious back-and-forth pace—it can take dozens of mini-battles and tons of 10-man Goblin troops just to hold on to a piece of ground. It's likely to wind up being the game's best feature, and it feels like the successor to an old (and extremely underappreciated) Genesis game called *Herzog Zwei*.

## The Stained Ones

*Goblin Commander* may not turn out to be the most graphically impressive game ever wrought (there's still some jumpy animation, and critical optimization needs to be done), but fun games are about a lot more than pretty pictures. Its greatest potential is as an awesome two-player living-room rallying point. All the Horde has to do now is shake that damnable console RTS stigma.

Exclusive PS2  
Hands-On Preview



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed and published by Jaleco
- Target release date: November



HANDS-ON



## Harry Potter Quidditch World Cup

IT SOUNDS LIKE the perfect match: a rich, fully-realized-on-paper fantasy sport, already known and beloved by millions of fans, created for game consoles by the publisher of hits like SSX and NBA Street. It's so obvious a union, of course, that it took EA three years before realizing, hey, Quidditch World Cup is the game that Harry Potter fans really, really want.

HPQWC takes place between the second and third novels, and features characters like Oliver Wood, Cho Chang, Cedric Diggory, and even Bulgarian sensation Viktor Krum. Better still, the game introduces one of J.K. Rowling's heretofore-unseen characters: Edgar Clogs, a Gryffindor poltergeist who doesn't want to leave his glory days on the Quidditch pitch. Play starts at Hogwarts but soon moves on to international matches.

Success earns Quidditch cards, which can be used to unlock faster brooms (including the Nimbus 2001 and Firebolt), extra teams, and new arenas.

The pre-alpha versions on all three platforms felt fast and fun—very action-oriented and not at all like a sports simulation. (Unfortunately, the screens here are in-engine but not representative of the actual gameplay viewing angles—blame it on the lawyers.) The game could use a defensive move (there's no way to block someone stealing the quaffle), but the gorgeous visuals, brisk pace, and hassle-free controls will likely give Potter fans just what they've always wanted: the thrill of playing Quidditch.



BY DAN ELEKTR0



- Developed by EA UK
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: October



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## SpyHunter 2

YOU CAN'T ARGUE with success—especially for a franchise that's, oh, 20 years old. Originally an arcade game in 1983, Spy Hunter was successfully remade for next-generation consoles two years ago. The sequel adds a host of new options to the mission-based driving engine. For starters, the G-6155 Interceptor has been upgraded to the G-8155 model that can morph into a snowmobile and a 4x4 offroader. The play scheme has been changed, too, as you take on giant bosses and occasionally go from behind the wheel to behind the turret of a high-powered machine gun and other weapons of mass destruction.

SpyHunter 2's 16 missions take wannabe agents across the globe to such locales as Russia and Asia. For multiplayer action, there are several death-match arenas and even a two-player co-op mode. In PS2 playable form (the game is also coming to the Xbox and GameCube), SH2's lightning-fast visuals were an excellent accompaniment to the game's awesome explosions and sturdy driving physics. Although it needs some fine-tuning, SpyHunter 2 is shaping up to be one fine ride. **G**



BY MAJOR MIKE



- Developed and published by Midway
- Target release date: November



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## Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge

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FINALLY, THE LONG-AWAITED Crimson Skies is preparing to take off into the fearsome blue yonder with guns blazing. Originally planned to be released last year, this flight adventure instead was delayed so that brand-new gameplay features could be implemented. As a result, pilots can now take part in wild dogfights on Xbox Live with games like head-to-head fighting and Capture the Flag. While the single-player mode offers a

different story arc from that of the PC version, High Road to Revenge still contains immersive gameplay, including the ability to fly 10 aerial beasts and take control of gun turrets on boats, zeppelins, and other radically designed transports at any time.

The pick-up-and-play gameplay already felt solid and worked extremely well in a live demo. After an easy tutorial, you were immediately thrust into high-flying battles where there were multiple ways to complete objectives. The game also featured an intuitive control scheme and displayed an amazing amount of visual detail with hardly any slowdown. If Microsoft stays on track, Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge could be the best airfare deal this October. **G**



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed and published by Microsoft
- Target release date: October



UPDATE



# DECISIONS, DECISIONS... WHICH DEMON-KILLER WILL YOU BE?



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PlayStation 2



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PlayStation 2



# NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

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## Medal of Honor: Rising Sun

**MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN** has come a long way since its less-than-thunderous showing at E3. The playable pre-



view versions shone with the series' trademark of captivating environments and an action-packed stream of combat over the course of 10 missions ranging from Pearl Harbor to the Philippines, Guadalcanal, and more. Vets will recognize that the core gameplay is changing little, though Rising Sun supplies many cool refinements, including excellent little touches like dedicating a button to throwing grenades. Branching paths provide alternate routes rather than just the lone linear corridor the series is known for, but Rising Sun's gameplay will still likely just be multilinear, not open-ended.

The best improvement this time out is the extensive and impressive multiplayer support. The previews' two-player split-screen cooperative action was absolutely a blast, and the PlayStation 2 edition will support online deathmatches, while all versions will support four-player split-screen deathmatches. However, for a game that was less than three months from its ship date, many aspects seemed a bit raw, so don't be too surprised if it gets delayed. If it does, the good news is that it should be worth the wait—Rising Sun is starting to play like the kind of soldier that racks up the medals. **G**



BY AIR HENDRIX



- Developed by EA LA
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: November



HANDS-ON

## Magic: The Gathering—Battlegrounds

**MAGIC: THE GATHERING** addiction is a serious matter. For 10 years, gamers have been pouring their life savings into the granddaddy of all collectable card games. Atari's Magic: The Gathering—Battlegrounds is a bit like a nicotine patch for Magic addicts: It removes all the spending of lawn-mowing money and combing through musty boxes of cards, but retains all the strategy and coolness of the card game. At least, in theory.

The preview version of Battlegrounds showed off a game of quick thinking and strategy in which you must know what spells

you have and how to combine them to pull off various feats. For example, a Defiant Elf is a weak creature, but its Trample ability enables it to keep attacking if it still has damage left to do. Cast Giant Growth on it, and you get a powerful creature capable of some real damage. A thorough Quest mode (essentially a massive tutorial for every individual spell in the game) teaches you how to play and unlocks all the spells. It's up to you to use them well.

The early preview version of Battlegrounds didn't look fantastic, but the action was involving enough that it didn't matter so much. It's an original game in a world of sequels, and it already does a lot to bring Magic to life on the Xbox. **G**



BY DUNJIN MASTER



- Developed by Secret Level
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: November



HANDS-ON



## Beyblade: Super Tournament Battle

ADDING TO THE wildly successful spin-top toy craze, the Beyblade phenomenon is about to rip through the GameCube. A preview of the game already showed-



An amazing collision of two forces!!



Get him, Dranzer!

ready showed the same fierce and captivating competition you'd find in real tournaments. You can customize your spinning mechanism with a long list of accessories and add-ons that affect your spins, attacks, and stability. During gameplay, you can unleash ferocious combo attacks using Bit Beasts, super-powered creatures that hit opponents with multiple poundings. And fans of the TV series will immediately recognize characters like Tyson, Kai, and other energized Bladebreakers. A variety of stadiums, including the dangerous magnetic arena, will test your bravery and tactical spin know-how, too. **G**

BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed by Takara
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: November



HANDS-ON

## The Fast and The Furious

GENKI IS NO stranger to street-racing games, and the development team behind the unique and acclaimed Tokyo Xtreme Racer series is bringing its impressive credentials to The Fast and The Furious. Based on the film franchise of the same name, the story-based racer will take you through over 80 missions in which you'll earn cash to customize your ride. You'll also build a reputation, which will help you join clubs, unlock missions, and gain alliances with other players. Over 25 licensed cars and motorcycles will be yours to terrorize the streets of Los Angeles with in drag, street, and closed-circuit contests. Genki promises to provide not only a solid racing experience, but also a faithful re-creation of the street-racing subculture. **G**

Note: All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.



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BY PONG SIFU



- Developed by Genki
- Published by Vivendi Universal Games
- Target release date: Fourth Quarter 2003



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## StarCraft: Ghost

AFTER LONG MONTHS of staring longingly at screen shots, *GamePro* finally got a look at a playable build of *StarCraft: Ghost*, Blizzard Entertainment's upcoming stealth-action juggernaut. While Nova (the game's heroine) doesn't have all the crazy (and often unused) moves you might find in Tom Clancy's *Splinter Cell*, she does have a few more tricks up her sleeve. With but a flick of the Xbox controller's directional pad, you can activate Nova's speed to run circles around enemies, turn on her stealth to sneak invisibly around them, or use her sight to find weak spots in powerful enemies' defenses. While Nova is a great shot with her rifle, she can also take down enemies unaware with her psychic smackdown powers and drag them off where they'll never be seen again.

The early version of *Ghost* looked pretty well polished, and everything Blizzard showed only whetted the appetite for more. It was a little platformer for a stealth-

action game, but Nova's powers worked well, and seeing the *StarCraft* universe in close-up was a real treat. Keep it up, Blizzard, and you could really have a stealth hit on your hands. **G**



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BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed and published by Blizzard Entertainment
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004



HANDS-ON



## Amped 2

AMPED 2 IS gearing up to redefine freestyling on the snow. In this follow-up to Amped's critically acclaimed first run, Microsoft is putting even more emphasis on realism. Players can now attack the mountain in a variety of ways rather than following a set of rules—just like how the pros do it. You can ride with aggression, pulling off super crazy spins and combos, or stay smooth and aim for perfectly timed tweaks and slow air rotations. Whatever your style, though, you still

need to impress the press, who can make or break your rise to snowboarding stardom.

The ride so far, however, is a bit bumpy. In a demo of the game, maneuvering around the already realistic-looking environments was still difficult. Boarders felt slow and unresponsive, and the new "butter" system, which enables you to link tricks together by using nose and tail manuals, still needed to be fixed. If Microsoft can smooth out these kinks, Amped 2 could be a worthy sequel and a solid ride on the powdery slopes. **G**



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed and published by Microsoft
- Target release date: November



HANDS-ON



## Unreal II: The Awakening

IF YOU'RE TIRED OF the Sam Fishers and Rainbow Sixes of the mundane world, and long for the halcyon alien-shooting days of Halo, Unreal II may be the game for you. In The Awakening, you're a veteran space lawman whose task is to keep ancient artifacts out of the hands of alien forces. While the controls are being tweaked from the PC version in order to accommodate the Xbox controller, Atari's also spending a lot of time upgrading the multiplayer aspects of the game.

Split-screen cooperative mode will enable players to go through the story with a friend, and the game will also take full advantage of Xbox Live with an all-new class-based, team-oriented multiplayer mode. Team Fortress using the Unreal engine, anyone? **G**



BY DOM EX MACHINA



- Developed by Epic Games
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: Winter 2003

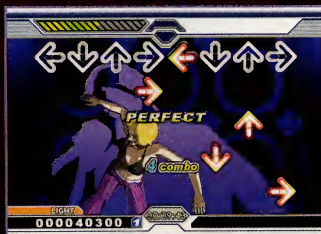


FIRST LOOK

## Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix

THE RHYTHM IS going to get you...online! Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix is not only the first in the beloved series to debut on the Xbox, but it's also the first to enable head-to-head online competition. The DDR formula of timing your footsteps to corresponding onscreen arrows to a music beat is unchanged in

DDR Ultramix. Footloose gamers with Xbox Live service can also access downloadable content and post their high scores for the world to see. The offline list of modes includes Edit, Workout, and Challenge—the sole new addition to this version. Edit allows you to customize how you play, Workout helps you keep track of how many calories you burn, and Challenge sets out specific goals that must be accomplished. **G**



BY TOKYO DRIFTER



- Developed and published by Konami
- Target release date: November



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XBOX Metro3D

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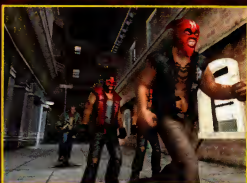
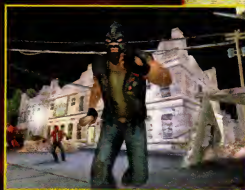
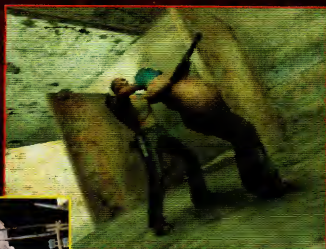
## Manhunt

ALTHOUGH IT SHARES the same developer as Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Manhunt is jaw-droppingly different from Rockstar's free-roaming crime adventure in key disturbing ways. In Manhunt, you play as James Earl Cash, a condemned man whose execution is stopped short by a mysterious figure known as the Director. In a lawless society of rundown buildings and squalor, Cash's savior has placed a price on the recently spared man. However, there's a catch: Cash can earn his freedom by being filmed stealthily taking out



his pursuers (mostly gang members) in nasty, violent ways—in short, become the star of the Director's sick snuff films.

Manhunt emphasizes stealth over brute force as you are forced to kill enemies with weapons that range from a plastic bag to a shard of glass. As you progress through each "mission," your inventory of weapons radically expands to include baseball bats and pump-action shotguns. Based on early preview assets, Manhunt's somber visual scheme is a perfect complement to the game's theme. One of the most striking visual effects occurs when Cash goes in for a kill: When he's successful, the perspective takes the point of view of the video camera—akin to something out of the unsettling, repugnant movie *8mm*. Manhunt is sure to turn a lot of heads when it hits store shelves this fall. **F**



BY MAJOR MIKE



- Developed by Rockstar North
- Published by Rockstar Games
- Target release date: Fall 2003



PLAYSTATION 2

FIRST LOOK

## Grabbed by the Ghoulies

COOPER'S GIRLFRIEND HAS been kidnapped, held by a host of pirates, skeletons, and evil ninja imps in Ghoulhaven Hall. As

the enraged boyfriend, you must save her by using punches, kicks, and your favorite weapon: a gun that fires soda cans. Welcome to Grabbed by the Ghoulies, developer Rare's first offering for the Xbox since the company was bought by Microsoft.

Created by the Donkey Kong Country team, Grabbed by the Ghoulies seeks to reinvent the three-dimensional brawler by being easy to pick up and play but also rewarding to gamers who spend the time to strategize. Weapons ranging from a pile of hamburgers to a pool table can be picked up everywhere, helping you pummel the entertaining hordes of baddies that inhabit the mansion. Amusing power-ups also litter the house, including ones that produce tiny clones of your character.

Additionally, you can unlock mini-game challenges, which are quick, fun fixes lasting no more than a minute or two. Ghoulies' sense of fun and pun-tastic humor gives this title a fresh edge—look for its ghostly debut in October. **F**



BY MISS SPELL



- Developed by Rare
- Published by Microsoft
- Target release date: October



XBOX

FIRST LOOK



## Driver 3

THE DRIVER SERIES is one of the PlayStation hits that's been slow to migrate to Sony's new console, but its engines are beginning to idle as developer Reflections revs up for an April release next year. Once again, you'll go undercover as Tanner, infiltrating a gang of car thieves that's shipping high-performance rides over to Europe by becoming their wheelman for a variety of action-packed driving missions. Your stomping grounds will be the cities of Miami, Istanbul, and Nice, which are rendered in exacting detail that includes 150 miles of



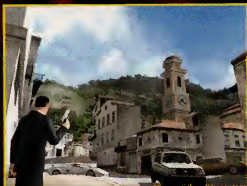
roads and 30,000 buildings. So they're big.

As in Driver 2, Tanner can still carjack other rides, but he also now carries a gun or two, and his battles on foot will be like his battles on the road: no subtlety required, just lots of liberally dispersed lead or a liberally deployed lead foot.



The game won't support multiplayer or online action, but Reflections indicated that the missions will have a more open-ended feel, enabling you to take several approaches to solving objectives rather than just one linear path. For those of you scarred by Stuntman's staggering difficulty, the good news on Driver 3 is that Reflections is well aware of the issue, and it's designing its next game to start out easier and ratchet up the challenge more smoothly and gradually. That's music to the ears. **B**

Note: All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.



BY AIR HENDRIX



- Developed by Reflections
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: April



FIRST LOOK

## Secret Weapons Over Normandy

IF AIR-COMBAT GAMES have lost their luster for you, Secret Weapons Over Normandy will rekindle the flame or perhaps even draw you in for the first time. In a dazzling preview version, the game already shined with gorgeous graphics and absorbing gameplay that's accessible for pilots of all skill levels. This WWII airplane-combat game plays more like a first-person shooter than a flight sim (in a good way) as you take on the role of American pilot James Chase, who joins a secret RAF squadron and flies missions over Europe, Africa, the Pacific theater, and more.

An ingenious targeting system lets you lock the camera on your target while you bring your plane around, putting an end to the tedious, circling pursuit of offscreen targeting cursors. The planes are very easy to fly, and the action is fast, furious, and impressively varied—sometimes you'll even man anti-aircraft guns. In one mission, you bomb some docked ships and aircraft hangars, open up an airfield for the French Resistance, and tackle waves of bombers

and fighters—but you decide when and how to attack what. The missions have an open-ended, action-packed, and highly playable feel that's really exciting. Pencil in Secret Weapons as one of this holiday's must-play games. **B**



BY AIR HENDRIX



- Developed by Totally Games
- Published by LucasArts
- Target release date: November



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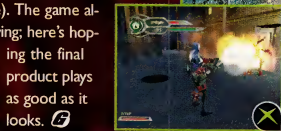
## Spawn

**COULD IT BE?** After no less than three lackluster efforts (on the SNES, PlayStation, and Dreamcast), fans of Todd McFarlane's comic-book



antihero Spawn might actually get a *good game!* Namco's third-person action/adventure, which loosely spans the first 99 issues of the comic series, features the grim-n-gritty urban atmosphere fans want and no small amount of gore. Spawn's sentient chains will automatically snatch up power-ups and ammo—or you can direct them to grab enemies and tear them asunder. The chains can also be used as grappling hooks, propelling you over buildings and walls—and into secret areas containing comic-book covers.

Spawn can also fight with necroplasm attacks, including the Shinobi-like Hell Dash, but he's no stranger to really, really big conventional weaponry either. The missile launcher is a thing of excessive beauty, and for *Soul Calibur II* fans, Spawn will have his massive axe, Agony, at his command at all times. In fact, the *Soul Calibur II* team is helping buff up the hand-to-hand combat on the Xbox, PlayStation 2, and GameCube versions (GameCube screens weren't available at press time). The game already looks improved from its E3 showing; here's hopping the final product plays as good as it looks.



BY DAN ELEKTRO

- Developed and published by Namco
- Target release date: December

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX GAMECUBE

**FIRST LOOK**

## R-Type Final

**THE LAST R-TYPE** game to hit U.S. shores was *R-Type Δ* for the PlayStation in 1999, but old timers will remember *R-Type* as one of the first—and most difficult—shooters ever created. *R-Type Final* is the first PlayStation 2 offering, and it features the traditional side-scrolling, old-school trademark play mechanics that made the series popular among fans of the genre.



As a lone space ship battling the evil Bydo empire, you'll collect power-ups, blast enemies, and destroy bosses. Although the gameplay is two-dimensional, the polygonal graphics give the impression of three-dimensional space. Enemies attack from all directions, and you often must navigate narrow passageways—frequently under heavy fire.



However, *Final* adds some excellent replay value as you can unlock 100 different spaceships by repeatedly playing the game. You can also customize your ship's color and secondary weapons, and there's an extensive art gallery of rendered and hand-drawn images that can also be unlocked. The early preview version of the game featured clever level designs, jarring special effects, and, at times, controller-throwing difficulty—in short, everything you'd expect from an *R-Type* game.



BY MAJOR MIKE

- Developed by Irem
- Published by Eidos
- Target release date: November

PLAYSTATION 2

**HANDS-ON**

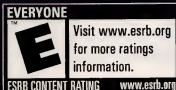


THE THRILL OF SINGING  
MEETS THE AGONY OF DEFEAT.

# Karaoke Revolution

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PlayStation 2

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## Transformers Armada

THERE'S DEFINITELY "more than meets the eye" to these early yet sweet-looking screens of Transformers Armada. Transformer fans have been waiting a long time for a game that plays true to the core of the hit cartoon and toy line: unadulterated action with robots that transform into everyday man-made objects.

In Armada, you play as an Autobot of your choice and battle the ever-malicious Decepticons in the classic good-versus-evil story line. But in the year 2010, the war for supremacy between the two mech conglomerates has reached a new level of destructiveness.

The long dormant Mini-cons have been rediscovered, and the race to collect all of them can mean the end of the entire war with just one side standing. These Mini-cons enhance fighting abilities such as giving you heat vision or camouflage. You can explore the 3D environments for these power-ups on foot or transform into a vehicle for a faster pace—either way, you can count on meeting up with Decepticons for plenty of metal-crushing fights. 



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed by Melbourne House
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: Summer 2004




FIRST LOOK

## Shadow Ops: Red Mercury

WHEN A RUSSIAN double agent reveals the existence of Red Mercury, a substance that can be used to make nuclear devices the size of a backpack, the NSA is forced to dip into its pool of elite secret agents to keep the world safe from impending destruction. Shadow Ops: Red Mercury will

provide a wide variety of first-person action with 20 missions ranging from hostage rescue to demolition and VIP bodyguard duty—all for the sake of keeping Red Mercury out of the wrong hands. Xbox Live multiplayer will expand the game further, allowing up to 16 players to participate in tried and true game-play modes, such as VIP escort/assassination, Capture the Flag, and Plant the Bomb.

Zombie Studios is using the Unreal engine to bring Shadow Ops to life with motion-captured animation and photo-realistic faces from real special forces

teams to make the game feel as realistic as possible. Hollywood sound studio Soundelux has been enlisted to take the game to a higher level of sound quality and design. In a market overcrowded by special forces action games, can Shadow Ops carve out its own niche? 



BY DON EX MACHINA



- Developed by Zombie Studios
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: Summer 2004



FIRST LOOK



## Legacy of Kain: Defiance

PERPETUAL RIVALS Kain and Raziel continue their blood-sucking and soul-devouring quests for answers in this gothic offering from Crystal Dynamics. The fifth installment in the Legacy of Kain series has cannibalized several elements that made its predecessors so much fun. Instantly apparent in Defiance is an improved battle system called "Intelligent Combat Toggle," a feature that auto-locks on to enemies for precise strikes. Other improvements include a new air-juggle technique for pummeling the blood and/or souls from wayward Serafan and telekinetic push/pull abilities designed to impale opponents on sharp objects. Defiance's plot will be ripe with demonic intrigue as conveyed by the familiar and gifted vocal talent of previous games. And while still only in beta form, both the PS2 and Xbox versions displayed awesome graphics and tight gameplay. **F**



BY STRAFE HARU



- Developed by Crystal Dynamics
- Published by Eidos Interactive
- Target release date: November



HANDS-ON

## Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly

THE CREEPINENESS OF Fatal Frame 2 already could be felt in an early build as guiding the main characters,

twin sisters Mayo and Mio, through a dilapidated village full of vengeful apparitions sent

chills down the spine. At the game's completion, Tecmo hopes this sequel

to its popular horror/survival title will once again appeal to the player's ghostly imagination. The unique gameplay featuring the use of a camera to ward off the paranormal is still the, er... focus, but rest assured there will be more chilling visuals and creepier sound effects to play with your cowardly senses this time. Multiple endings and a variety of side adventures should breathe only more life into this sure-to-be death-defying experience. **F**



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed and published by Tecmo
- Target release date: November



HANDS-ON



Welcome to Middle-earth.  
The journey begins this fall.



OFFICIAL GAME

BASED ON THE LITERARY WORKS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN

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Blood Violence

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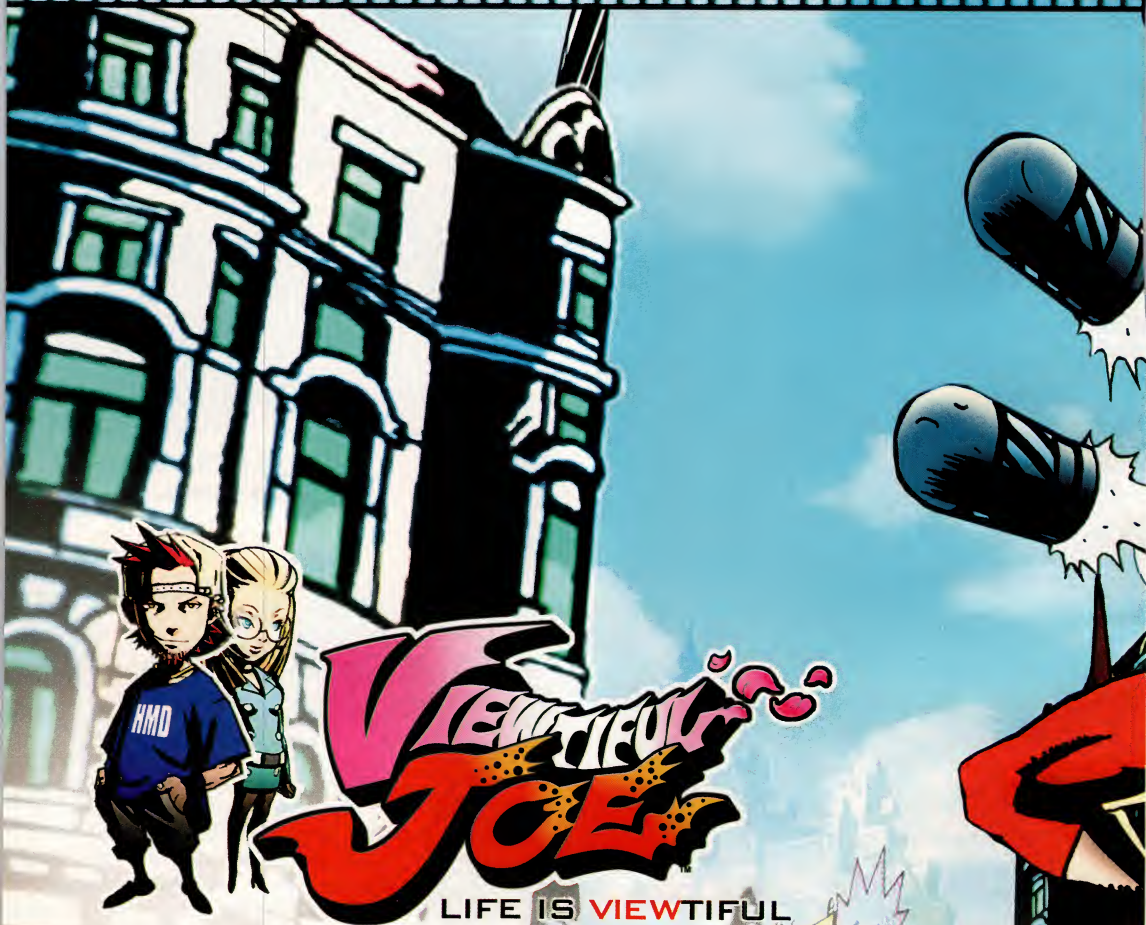
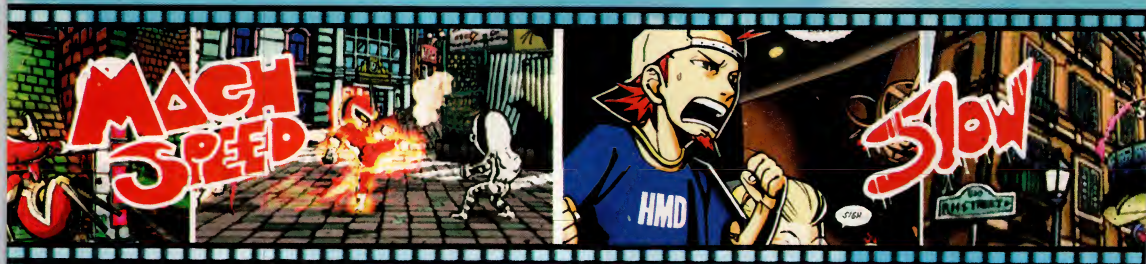
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OFFICIAL GAME  
BASED ON THE LITERARY WORKS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN

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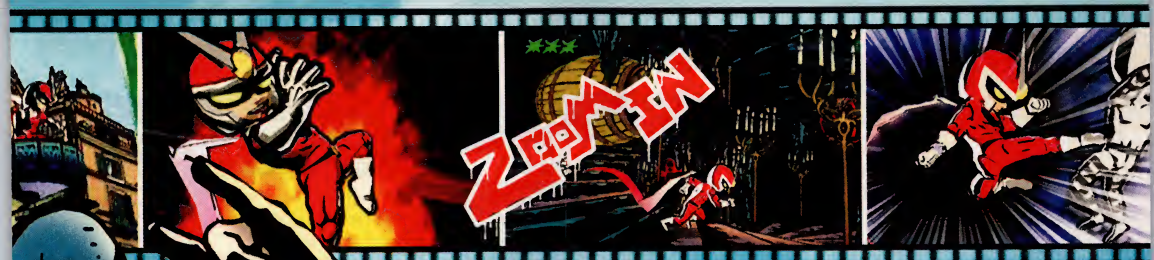
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# PlaySmart

Maximize your video-gaming fun! Make the right purchasing choices by knowing exactly what kind of content is inside each game.

## The ESRB Ratings Guide

The interactive electronic entertainment industry utilizes a voluntary rating system developed by an independent organization—the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)—so consumers know what to expect before buying a video or PC game. The following is a quick key to the most common ratings; for a complete description, check out the ESRB's website at [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) or call 800/771-3772 for more information.

**EVERYONE (E)** Titles rated Everyone (E) have content suitable for persons ages six and older. These titles will appeal to people of many ages and tastes. They may contain minimal violence, comic mischief, or crude language.

**TEEN (T)** Games rated Teen (T) are suitable for ages 13 and up. These games could have violent content, strong language, and/or suggestive themes.

**MATURE (M)** Games rated Mature (M) are appropriate for older gamers, generally 17 and up. Mature-rated games may contain more intense depictions of violence, stronger language, and, on rare occasions, sexual themes.

**RATING PENDING (RP)** The Rating Pending (RP) icon may appear in early reviews of soon-to-be-released products. Look for the actual ESRB rating icon on the game's package, check the ESRB's website, or call its toll-free phone number for updated rating information.

## WHERE TO FIND THE ESRB RATING

GamePro understands that parents care about the content of the video games their children play. That's why every review printed in our magazine and posted on our website lists the ESRB rating. Below, we've circled this rating in a sample review box to help readers locate it throughout GamePro.



Note: Previews do not carry an ESRB rating as games are often not rated until they're ready for review and purchase.

### Dino Crisis 3

By Capcom

In this survival/horror game, you fight against mutated prehistoric beasts in a gigantic spaceship. There's blood aplenty to be spilled as damage is inflicted on your characters and the dinosaurs, and the rendered cinematic scenes also vividly depict a fair amount of carnage.



### Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel

By Vivendi Universal Games

Set in a grim post-apocalyptic future, Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel features violent combat against a host of mutants, raiders, and radioactive-mutated horrors. There's blood and gore galore in the world of Fallout as you and your gang keep the peace with a variety of exotic firepower.



### Grand Theft Auto III

By Rockstar Games

Grand Theft Auto III is definitely geared toward adult gamers with a car-jacking theme and a wide variety of weapons to use in your "profession." The game also has a fair share of blood, gore, and colorful dialogue that's oriented more toward older gamers as almost anything goes while you strive to be a "model" employee in the car-theft world.



### Hunter: The Reckoning—Redeemer

By Vivendi Universal Games

Chock full of blood, graphic violence, and minor profanity, Hunter: The Reckoning—Redeemer is definitely not for younger gamers. Some of the game's monsters may be unsettling, and characters make sushi out of cherished childhood friends like cute teddy bears and Santa Claus.



### RoadKill

By Midway

Games don't get much more vulgar than RoadKill. The list of adult-oriented content is extremely long here with lots of bloody violence, scantily clad females, and the coarsest language you can imagine. The post-apocalyptic plot involving a killer disease is likely to be scary as well, but anyone who's young enough to have nightmares from such imagery should steer completely clear anyway.



### Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix

By Activision

Based on the mercenary magazine of the same name, the Soldier of Fortune series is known for serious gore (unless you choose to turn it off, expect lots of blood and plenty of dismemberment). You can target specific limbs and shoot guns out of enemies' hands, among other things. The weapons are realistic, and so is the violence.



Note: Some box art may not display final ESRB ratings.

## ESRB RATINGS FOR ALL GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

Dino Crisis 3	M	Starsky & Hutch	T
Hunter: The Reckoning—Redeemer	M	Viewtiful Joe	T
RoadKill	M	WWE WrestleMania XIX	T
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	T	DDRMAX2 Dance Dance Revolution	E
Dungeons & Dragons Heroes	T	Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure	E
Dynasty Tactics 2	T	ESPN NHL Hockey 2K4	E
Dynasty Warriors 4	T	Mega Man X7	E
Freedom Fighters	T	NFL Blitz Pro	E
Jak II	T	NFL GameDay 2004	E
Soul Calibur II	T	NHL 2004	E
Space Channel 5: Special Edition	T	NHL Hitz Pro	E



# 侵食汚染 hack Part 3 OUTBREAK™

In the 3rd chapter of the .hack saga, "The World" continues to deteriorate as the virus spreads out of control, and crosses the increasingly transient line separating "The World" and reality. As Kite, you must battle your way through "The World" before it implodes. In fact, you're faced with the possibility that this virus might be unstoppable.

Luckily for us, the .hack series is a simulated MMORPG, so at least the virus can't spread to this world!

publisher Bandai//developer Cyber Connect 2  
genre Simulated MMORPG//release date Fall 2003

In OUTBREAK, you'll fight your way through contaminated servers and eliminate enemies. The plot thickens, and the story draws you in further as you try to uncover the cause of this debilitating virus and rescue your friend Orca, who's still in a coma.

I love part 3 and am addicted to the completely original gaming experience that .hack offers. I enjoyed part 1, and became addicted with part 2.



The battles and story grew intensified, and the cast grew to include online/offline players. Moreover, the simulation of playing an online game

**A great story and addictive gameplay.**



**Encounter characters from the animated TV series.**

deepened with emails and news items that drew me further into "The World".

This series keeps getting better and better, plus you also get a new episode of the original video animation of ".hack//LUMINALITY" in the same box.

Bring on .hack 4! Keep your eye on [www.dothack.com](http://www.dothack.com) for more details.

-Orca, Web News, Altimit.

**Abrasive False Tragedy**



**.hack//SIGN**

As seen on  
**CARTOON NETWORK**

PlayStation 2





## JAK II

WHAT WAS ONCE a colorful, happy platformer is now a dark, depressing cartoon variant of *Blade Runner* in an animated Star Wars world. What appears at first glance to be a random mish-mash of a million different games is actually one of the most cohesive, creative game worlds ever constructed. Do not dare underestimate Jak II—first impressions can be most deceiving.

### THE DARK TOWER

Name a successful game, you can spot it living inside Jak II: Ratchet & Clank, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, Mario, Rainbow Six, Panzer Dragoon, Banjo-Kazooie, Final Fantasy VII, The Legend of Zelda... they're all there, somewhere, tied together in the underground sewer network of Jak's dirty city. But this is hardly a criticism—it's actually Jak II's biggest strength. It uses "3D platformer" as a loose foundation for a towering monument to a million great gameplay ideas. Naughty Dog, it would seem, has been paying attention the last couple of years.

Strangely enough, the game Naughty Dog seems to have been paying most attention to is Grand Theft Auto III as evidenced by Jak II's enormous living city, a vast hub world connecting the more traditional "platformer" missions, filled with different vehicles to steal, police alerts to trigger, bonus missions to find, and innocents to run over—and, yes, kill. While there's still plenty of trick jumping to be done, the game takes a key step away from its roots by offering a huge variety of missions—squad jobs, gun-intensive hunts, hover-contraption races, and intense chases through crowded city streets.

### BLACK CITY LIGHTS

The game is unreally gorgeous. The city itself is detailed to a level of sheer absurdity such that random fruit carts realistically spill their wares when you crash into them with a hoverbike. Opening a door to the world outside the walled-in city inspires awe every time. The voice acting is wonderful; the sound effects are tuned like a feature film; and the music is a cinematic symphony to perfectly complement the fully realized narrative—these are characters to love, villains to hate, and motivations to question.

### CRIME AND ABSOLUTION

Now and then, Jak II suffers somewhat from Wind Waker syndrome (a.k.a. lots of backtracking through the ocean...er, city). Some may be put off by just how often of "platformin' Jak has to race and drive. Others still may hurl their controllers in frustration at a couple particularly evil missions. But this is the kind of game that you'll easily forgive for its sins. You curse and swear, and say, "This game sucks!"...but then you triumph, smile, and eagerly check your mission list to see what task is gonna make you lose your next night's sleep. Now *that's* a game. **B**



Jak II may be the first "platformer" that lets you go on an innocent-slaughtering rampage through city streets.



The Baron's palace view gives you an idea of how huge Jak II's city really is—you can actually explore everything down below.



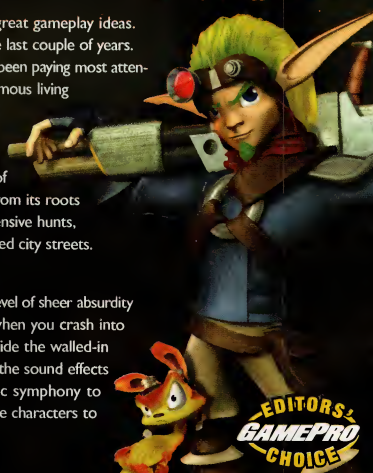
**PRO TIP:** There are tons of Orbs hidden below the surface of the Haven Forest lake. Use your hoverboard to scan the area.



**PRO TIP:** If you want to lay low, fly high with the other vehicles, but be warned...crashing into a Krimzon Guard ship will trigger an alarm.



**PRO TIP:** This dual-body vehicle is the best balance of durability and speed—jack one to make it through the tougher driving missions.



### GRAPHICS 5.0

The crowded, living city gives way to breathtaking outdoor worlds outside its walls. The character animation is unparalleled. The only way Naughty Dog could have gotten this much performance out of the PlayStation 2 is evil voodoo magic.

### SOUND 5.0

A sweeping score, carefully balanced sound levels, and tons and tons of commanding voice acting bring Jak II's world to convincing life. It feels like a playable feature film.

### CONTROL 4.5

All of Jak's original moves return, plus a few more, and they're just as fluid as before. Minor probs: city driving can be a drag if you're in a hurry, some missions are frustrating, and it turns out Jak's new dark powers are kinda gimmicky.

### FUN FACTOR 5.0

If you played and liked Jak & Daxter...well, that really has nothing to do with Jak II. A platformer only by heritage, Naughty Dog's latest is an enormously entertaining, surprisingly dark, and enduring shrine to what makes games fun.



**PRO TIP:** Press Kick (○) and then R1 with any laser-sighted weapon (such as the Vulkan) to perform a deadly combo that hits multiple foes.



**PRO TIP:** Find five Orbs, go into the Secrets menu, and turn off Jak's goatee.



- Developed by Naughty Dog
- Published by Sony
- \$49.99
- Available October
- Adventure
- I player

ESRB T	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
	5.0	5.0	4.5	5.0





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THE PLAYSTATION 2 is blessed with several high-quality fighting games, but Soul Calibur II easily jumps to the top of the heap with its deep and balanced gameplay.

GET MORE  
www.gamepro.com  
ONLINE

## THE IRON SWORD...

It's been a long time coming, but the follow-up to Soul Blade on the PlayStation and Soul Calibur on the Dreamcast has finally arrived. Soul Calibur II's



**PRO TIP:** Some weapons have a much longer range than you'd expect, so take advantage of them.

gameplay is the real attraction, and the PlayStation 2 has the best standard controller to take advantage of the action. The game supports the analog stick for its eight-way movement, but it's far easier to use the directional pad to execute exact maneuvers. The large cast of characters ensures that you'll find at least a few who catch your fancy.

The audio in the series has always been epic, and Soul Calibur II's orchestral score doesn't disappoint. The English voice acting is just okay, so the option to hear the original Japanese dialogue with translated subtitles is a fantastic bonus. However, there is no way to remove the subtitles.

## ...MEETS IRON FIST

Granted, the PlayStation 2's exclusive character, Heihachi, isn't as glamorous as Link for the GameCube or Spawn on the Xbox, but that doesn't mean you should dismiss the sneaky old coot. His character model is far more detailed than it was in Tekken 4, and his new moves offer a logical progression of what fans are familiar with.

Soul Calibur II is a must-have for all fighting-game fans, but its easy-going control is also ideal for the casual gamer who just wants to get a bit of aggression out and look good doing it.



**PRO TIP:** Many of Heihachi's combos from the Tekken series still work in Soul Calibur II.

# SOUL CALIBUR II

EDITORS' CHOICE



**PRO TIP:** Berserker is the most powerful of the three new characters.



Lizardman and Assassin are two of the three new characters available in the U.S. version.



BY TOKYO DRIFTER

Developed and published by Namco  
\$49.99  
Available now

Fighting  
2 players



# FREEDOM FIGHTERS

WHAT IF THE Soviet Union won the Cold War and invaded the United States? Freedom Fighters says Americans would resist as rag-tag revolutionaries—and it would be a hell of a lot of fun.

## Super Mario, Take Note

You take up the cause as Chris, a New York plumber who gets caught in the wrong place at the wrong time and suddenly finds himself at the heart of the American resistance movement. While you lead by example—you'll have plenty of chances to mow down those Commie bastards yourself with shotguns, sniper rifles, and Molotov cocktails—you can also recruit and direct fellow rebels. Effective leadership earns charisma points and more followers, which only helps the resistance.

The simple squad commands (attacking, scouting, and regrouping) don't interfere with your personal heroic ass-kicking, but you'll quickly learn the value of sending others forth to die at your command—er, "delegating." Juggling weapons, health packs, precision targeting duties, and squad commands feels tricky at first, but the interface proves its worth over time. Aiming a kicking assault rifle is an art, missions take a few frustrating tries to complete, and action gamers used to running and gunning will find that slow, steady, and strategic strikes work best; if that's not your speed, this ain't your game.



**PRO TIP:** At the start of the Brooklyn hotel siege, take the alley to the right and climb in the window, then use the tank for cover.



"I would rather die on my feet than continue to live on my knees."—Zappata



**PRO TIP:** Explosive barrels can be used to your advantage—or the enemy's. Be aware of their placement (or remove them) before placing your troops nearby.



**PRO TIP:** Seek out the high ground—rooftops, containers, windows—and direct your troops while providing cover and triggering explosions.

## Pride of the Yankees

Strong voice acting and sound effects (listen for the subtle heavy breathing when running), and a patriotic score set a believable mood, while the dark, detailed, war-torn streets of New York City are almost too tangible for comfort. Neither a mindless blastfest nor too strategic for its own good, Freedom Fighters' unique take on squad action—unlike Communism—works on paper and in practice.



BY DAN ILENKO

Developed by Io Interactive  
Published by EA Games  
\$49.99  
Available now

Action/strategy  
4 players

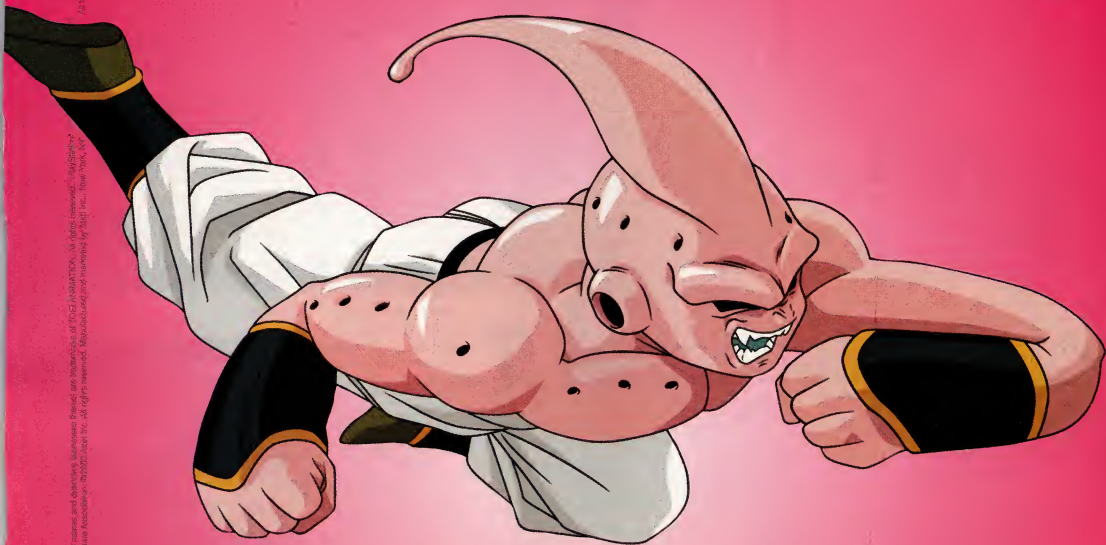




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**DRAGON BALL Z**  
**BUDOKAI 2**  
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PlayStation.2



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# DDRMAX2

Dance Dance Revolution

USUALLY, THE ONLY differences between Dance Dance Revolution games are the remixes of what's been heard before. Not so with DDRMAX2, which features a bunch of small changes that start to justify its appearance on a technical powerhouse platform like the PlayStation 2.

## LET'S GROOVE TONIGHT

DDRMAX2 looks and plays more like its arcade counterparts than the first MAX did. Whereas some songs had to be omitted for legal reasons in the past, DDRMAX2 includes dance remixes of songs like "Heaven" and K.C. and the Sunshine Band's original version of "Get Down Tonight." There are over 65 tracks in all, some of which are exclusive to this version and over two dozen of which must be unlocked. The animations that run behind the arrows are even more psychedelic and distracting, but now there are some full-motion videos to divert your concentration. Some tracks even change tempo midsong; the icons might slide by at half-speed or stop altogether during a song's breakdown. At least it's always with the beat, and it's nice to see the game evolve a little bit.



**PRO TIP:** Pink arrows fall between beats. You'll have to step double-time to get them in. For long, green freeze arrows, just stay put!



**PRO TIP:** Ignore the beginner mode's example of keeping one foot on center square. For the best flow, step and stay on arrows until you need to move again.



**PRO TIP:** If you're shopping for a new DDR dance mat, you'll find that the metal or foam-core pads are usually worth the money. Check redoctane.com.

## EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE



Full-motion videos play behind certain tracks, including "The Whistle Song (Blow My Whistle Baby)" and Kylie Minogue's "Love at First Sight."

## VIVA LA...

DDRMAX2 is the DDR that players know and love, but slightly flashier. Fans won't be disappointed.

	■ Developed by KCET	■ Dance/rhythm	
	■ Published by Konami	■ 2 players	
	■ \$39.99		
	■ Available now		

ESRB: E	GRAPHICS: 4.0	SOUND: 4.5	CONTROL: 4.5	FUN FACTOR: 4.5
---------	---------------	------------	--------------	-----------------

# RoadKill

BIG GUNS, ARMORED cars, gang warfare, dirty words—RoadKill has everything a politician could ever want in a negative example of video games. Of course, that doesn't mean it's not wicked fun for car-combat maniacs who already have their driver's license in real life.

## GRAND THEFT GAMEPLAY

Playing RoadKill is like driving through Stephen King's *The Stand*. A killer plague has decimated the country, leaving chaos and martial law in its wake. Gunfire erupts every few blocks, and gangs openly engage in vehicular warfare. If you want to survive, you'll load your guns and then gun the engine. Completing missions increases your status as a gangland hero and brings you closer to Paradise City.

RoadKill is as mature as it gets—players experience gushing blood, revealing outfits, and three swear words before they even start driving. It also steals liberally from Grand Theft Auto: switchable rock/1980s/rap/talk radio stations with licensed music, a garage for vehicle storage, killing sprees, crass humor (the character dialogue is funny but 100 percent adults-only), pick-up races, and huge city levels with plenty of nooks and crannies. Even the "RIOT" meter acts like GTA's wanted rating. Not that it's a bad thing, but the "inspiration" is a little too obvious.

## HELL ON WHEELS

Detailed textures and a fast frame rate let you savor the disturbing damage, and the precise controls never fail. And although RoadKill lacks a little polish in presentation (you'll switch between driver and gunner positions without warning), the fast action and pleasing carnage make it worth checking out for the intended, over-18 audience.



**PRO TIP:** In target-shooting sequences like *Suldd*, keep a finger hovering over L1 for quick reticle movement.



**PRO TIP:** If enemy gangs make surviving Uncle Woody's cargo delivery too difficult, buy an Armor I upgrade.



**PRO TIP:** When your car is airborne, use the left analog stick to tilt the car forward or back for a perfect landing.



**PRO TIP:** Feeling lucky? Follow tornadoes to pick up tons of salvage parts for big cash.

	■ Developed by Terminal Reality	
	■ Published by Midway	
	■ Car combat	
	■ 4 players	

ESRB: M	GRAPHICS: 4.0	SOUND: 4.5	CONTROL: 5.0	FUN FACTOR: 4.0
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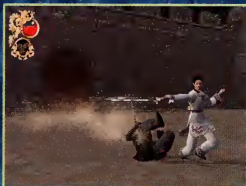
## Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

ANG LEE's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a beautiful, lyrical, soulful film...and the game is exactly the opposite: a subpar brawler with all the hallmarks of a poor action game.

Following the film's plot, gamers play as all four main characters (Jen, Lo, Li Mu Bai, and Shu Lien), battling enemies with martial arts moves while jumping around on rooftops. You'll often spot limbs and objects poking through solid surfaces, but you'll almost never see your opponent properly framed—the camera angles are simply dreadful and rarely offer a decent view of the combat (or even the immediate surroundings). It's nice that the character dialogue is in Chinese and subtitled in English (authentic to the film's origins), but bad guys beat like terminally ill sheep, and there's only one or two sound files for each action. Uncomfortable controls (Jump is on R1? Action is on L3?) feel counterintuitive (at least they can be reconfigured), and the special moves system consists of little more than pressing every button on the controller in a slightly different pattern. That's almost as annoying as the old-school inclusion of continues, which increases the frustration factor, not the challenge.

The movie offered so much style and grace, but even with its nifty floating moves and wall jumps, the game is ultimately yang to the film's yin—a total opposite in almost every embarrassing regard. Chalk up another victim of the licensed-movie-game curse and skip this toothless Tiger. **C**

Also on the Xbox



**PRO TIP:** The best way to defeat Shu in the courtyard is to roll away from her attacks (R1) and counterattack, then fade and repeat.



**PRO TIP:** Jen's first two meetings with Li Mu Bai are easily passed—just button-mash on L1 to “combo block.”

	■ Developed by Genki/Light Weight									
	■ Published by Ubi Soft									
	■ \$39.99									
	■ Available now									
	■ Action	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ESRB</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> </tr> <tr> <td>T</td> <td>2.5</td> <td>2.0</td> <td>2.0</td> </tr> </table>	ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	T	2.5	2.0	2.0
ESRB	GRAPHICS		SOUND	CONTROL						
T	2.5		2.0	2.0						
	■ 1 player									
BY DAN ELEKTRO										



**Space Channel 5 Part 2 builds on the original by pitting you against rivals in crazy karaoke and band battles.**

## Space Channel 5: Special Edition

AS CURRENT MARKET forces give publishers little incentive to gamble on unproven formulas, it's hard to find that rare breed of game designed out of a truly unique vision and honest love for the craft. So let's do little dances and pin medals on the kids at Agetec for releasing *Space Channel 5 Part 2* and for porting the original Dreamcast cult fave in one value-priced two-disc set—easily the best bargain this side of VF4 Evo.

Both games marry PaRappa-style gameplay with contagiously catchy numbers and psychedelically kitschy sci-fi art direction to deliver a cosmic message of peace and love. The plot: Aliens have hypnotized your friends into dancing uncontrollably. As intergalactic newshound and friend of schoolchildren across the galaxy, Ulala, you rescue the somnambulating booty movers by mimicking the onscreen movements of singing 'bots and hip-thrusting martians while zapping them with ray guns in time with the game's grooves. Simple. Yet these Simon Says-inspired musical extravaganzas hurl you into frenzied bop blitzkriegs and karaoke battle royales that demand mathematically precise reflexes, flawless memorization, and a sense of rhythm as you constantly adapt to abrupt tempo and time signature shifts, and measure changes.

Even if you've already played *Space Channel 5, Special Edition* is worth the nickel. The Dreamcast version's unresponsive controls have been tightened, and the progressive sequel offers a wider array of musical styles, more intricate control mechanics, wilder camerawork, and a two-player mode. And at 30 bucks, it's the choicest of choice. **C**



**PRO TIP:** Sometimes voice commands are difficult to understand, but if you watch your opponents' positions and movements very carefully, you'll do okay.

	■ Developed by United Game Artists									
	■ Published by Agetec									
	■ \$29.99									
	■ Available October									
	■ Music/rhythm	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ESRB</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> </tr> <tr> <td>T</td> <td>4.5</td> <td>4.5</td> <td>4.5</td> </tr> </table>	ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	T	4.5	4.5	4.5
ESRB	GRAPHICS		SOUND	CONTROL						
T	4.5		4.5	4.5						
	■ 2 players									
BY PONG SIFU										

## Mega Man X7

IN A FAILED attempt to go next-generation with the next-generation robo-hero, Capcom unfortunately has turned its latest Mega Man game, *Mega Man X7*, into a mega disappointment.

In this latest tale of 22<sup>nd</sup>-Century battles, you take control of the baby blue wonder and his mechanically inclined friends in a side-scrolling adventure set in a colorful 3D world. The run-n-gun action stays true to the Man's roots—while it may seem like you're hopping around in large, three-dimensional levels, almost all of the action is still completely linear in traditional side-scrolling fashion. Though this in and of itself is not a setback, the unlimited cheap shots directed at you by the unruly enemies are nothing short of annoying and frustrating. Even a new feature that lets you switch between two characters at any time during gameplay can't keep adversaries from repeatedly hitting below the metal belt with unavoidable and inconsistent blows.



**PRO TIP:** Build up your normal attack first to help defeat the end bosses.

The cheapness continues in other gameplay areas. A huge amount of slowdown, even when there's little going on, detracts from the overall simple shooting-n-slashing frenzy. A sloppy targeting system and the inability to strafe make the controls more of a pain than painless, while a dull soundtrack completes a mediocre audio package. If it weren't for the name, X7 would be at the bottom of the rental pile. For Mega Man fans, however, this latest foray with the blue man group has a nostalgia factor that might make it worth a night's rental—just don't expect an exhilarating ride from start to finish. **C**



**PRO TIP:** Use Zero during heavy firefights—he can use his saber to easily deflect projectiles back to their source.

	■ Developed and published by Capcom									
	■ \$39.99									
	■ Available October									
	■ Action									
	■ 1 player	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ESRB</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>3.0</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> </table>	ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	E	4.0	3.0	3.0
ESRB	GRAPHICS		SOUND	CONTROL						
E	4.0		3.0	3.0						
BY FOUR EYED DRAGON										



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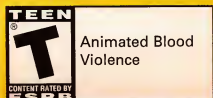
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ONE OF CAPCOM's best spinoffs from the Resident Evil series is *Dino Crisis*, a survival/horror game that pits you against a host of prehistoric beasts. While the first two *Dino* games were rock-solid action titles, *Dino Crisis 3* takes the franchise into the future and outer space... for a close encounter of the worst kind.

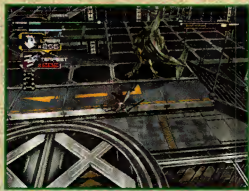
## WALKING IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS

*Dino Crisis 3* takes place 500 years in the future as a long-lost space freighter suddenly reappears after a lengthy absence. As a member of a team sent to investigate the seemingly vacant ship, you scoot down hallways with your jetpack and earn currency to buy better weapons. Technically, the visuals are ultra-sharp and remarkably clean, and the audio effects do a decent job of punctuating the onscreen action... but this *Dino* doesn't have a compelling *Crisis*. Well-rendered mutated dinosaurs walk out of walls without any rhyme or reason, and the constant backtracking through the giant ship becomes repetitive.

Yet *DC3*'s biggest problem is the visuals—not the look but the presentation. Camera angles constantly change perspective—often times during platform jumps—and you're forced to suddenly change direction on the controller. The other problem is that several rooms on the ship look the same, making it incredibly difficult to get your bearings... it's also annoying during *dino* battles as you'll frequently get struck by offscreen predators. The built-in map isn't much help, either, as pinpointing your relative location on the massive 3D map is an arduous process.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

*Dino Crisis 3* had the potential to truly take the franchise to the next level, but the awkward camera angles spoil the fun. The *Dino Crisis* series should have stayed in the jungle. **G**



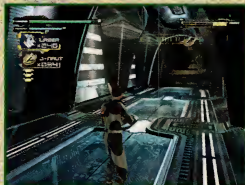
**PRO TIP:** The Laser is the best standard weapon to equip—it can kill tough dinosaurs with two blasts.



**PRO TIP:** When you enter a big room, launch a *Tempest* or *Juggernaut*: If the projectile flies off-screen and doesn't return to your backpack, then you aren't alone.

# DINO CRISIS

# 3



One of *Dino Crisis 3*'s biggest problems: constantly changing and awkward camera angles.



**PRO TIP:** Any crates or panels that flash red can be destroyed with a charged shot.

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Developed and published by Capcom  
\$49.99  
Available now  
Action/adventure  
1 player

ESRB M	4.5	4.0	3.5	2.5
GRA	CON	CON	CON	CON



DO YOU WANT the version of *Soul Calibur II* with the fastest load times, the exclusive anti-hero Spawn, and a slight edge in graphics? If you answered yes, head immediately to the big black box with the "X" on it.

## GORGEOUS SOUL

When a game gets released on multiple platforms, Microsoft's machine is usually the big winner in terms of graphics. *Soul Calibur II* doesn't visually push the Xbox as hard as some other fighting games made especially for the system, but the top-notch character designs and support of high-end displays easily bridge any gap.

The directional pad on the original Xbox controller is ill-suited for *Soul Calibur II*, but the now-standard Controller S handles the job well. The silky-smooth gameplay, along with the deceptively deep fighting system, keeps you playing through the lengthy Weapons Master mode and endless hours against your friends. The fantastic soundtrack gives the onscreen action a larger-than-life feel, and there are two dialogue languages to choose from to suit all tastes.

# SOUL CALIBUR II



**PRO TIP:** Watch out for the tell-tale weapon trail to help prepare for a counterattack against your opponent.



**PRO TIP:** Timely side-stepping can help you avoid hard thrusts like this.



**PRO TIP:** Ivy has several tricky ground traps with her sword/whip.



**PRO TIP:** Spawn's projectile attacks are good for catching rising opponents off-guard.

## SPAWN OF EVIL

Considering that the game is populated by the likes of Voldo, Nightmare, and Astaroth, Todd McFarlane's brooding comic-book creation, Spawn, sort of fits just fine in an odd way. Spawn's struggles with the forces of good and evil in the comic actually make him the best fit, story wise, of the exclusive console characters. His powerful strikes and air-based attacks also make him an extremely tough character to beat.

Even if the Xbox was up to its ears in great fighting games (and in case you were wondering, it's not), *Soul Calibur II* would still be a top choice. **G**

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Developed and published by Namco  
\$49.99  
Available now  
Fighting  
2 players

ESRB T	5.0	5.0	4.5	5.0
GRA	CON	CON	CON	CON

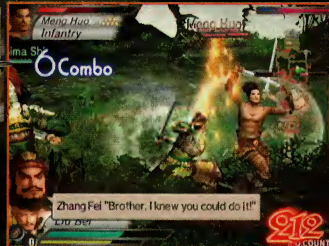








DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 places players in the thick of the epic warfare surrounding the Three Kingdoms period of Chinese history. The franchise has come to epitomize the term hack-n-slash, and this port of the PS2 title offers up plenty more of the same.



**PRO TIP:** Use combo and dash attacks to take out Nanman soldiers.

### MASS ACUPUNCTURE

Players start by choosing to control either the Wei, Wu, or Shu army. From then on, you have the ability to play as any general in your chosen alliance. The battles are fierce and massive in scale with an incredible number of highly detailed soldiers appearing onscreen at any given time. Though a straight port of the



**PRO TIP:** If a powerful enemy is unleashing a harsh combo on you, use your Musou attack to interrupt it.



**PRO TIP:** Find and equip valuable elemental orbs to add extra damage to your attacks.

PS2 game, the Xbox version results in fewer slowdowns during those moments of mob-throbbing fervor thanks to its powerful hardware. The audio has been upgraded for 5.1 surround sound, but typically the loud, annoying music drowns out the better sound effects. A precious few stages contain distinctly Asian music, which is much more appropriate and effective.

### CHINESE THUMB TRAP

An edit mode enables players to create their own characters, who can ally themselves with any of the three kingdoms (edit mode can also be used to customize your bodyguards). Gameplay feels like taking a weed-whacker to a field of tall grass; at times, you can strike dozens of enemies with a single Musou attack. Issues with the repetitive combo controls and wonky horseback riding persist from previous versions of the game, though the simplicity of the controls makes Dynasty Warriors 4 easily accessible to novices. Veterans, however, may crave a slightly more sophisticated combat system like the one in EA's *The Two Towers*. Only the most fanatical of players will find even a fraction of the hidden power-ups due to the lengthy levels and obscure item placement. In spite of its flaws, Dynasty Warriors remains inexplicably fun to play, a sort of mind-numbing guilty pleasure that has carved out a huge fan base for itself.



**PRO TIP:** Gate Captains always drop health power-ups when killed and are an easy fight.

	Developed by Omega Force		GRAPHICS 4.0	SOUND 3.0	CONTROL 3.5		FUN FACTOR 4.0
	Published by Koei						

# RoadKill

THE CAR COMBAT genre has been around for a while, but things have evolved from the days of Rock 'n Roll Racing. Appearing in the aftermath of *Twisted Metal*, *RoadKill* has personality and gigantic cities ripe for exploration and diversion...along with some of the most brutal car combat in recent memory.



**PRO TIP:** Find two warring gangs, let them fight it out, and then grab the leftover salvage.

### THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

*RoadKill* is set in a post-apocalyptic Paradise City, where most of mankind has fallen victim to a deadly disease called "the rot"—everyone except for the most repugnant street slime, it seems. Survivors fight over the giant geography in crudely constructed vehicles (for some strange reason, El Caminos are in big supply)—it's what *The Road Warrior* would be like if it fought in the suburbs.

As one of the survivors, you complete several missions across three gigantic cities. Yet the big hooks in *RoadKill* are the extra missions and free-roaming landscape. You can spend days exploring the city and committing random acts of mayhem. Mini-games are cleverly constructed and range from protecting your rig from suicide bombers to winning races to striking pedestrians and dragging them on the front of your car...and then there are occasional tornadoes and other acts of nature to shake things up.

### ONE OF THE LIVING

*RoadKill*'s fine graphics do an excellent job of depicting the various cities, and there's no shortage of explosions and carnage. The colorful audio track also adds atmosphere and comes complete with profanity-riddled dialogue. Sure, it's vulgar and violent in a Grand Theft kind of way, but if you played *Twisted Metal: Black* until the wheels fell off, give *RoadKill* a spin.



**PRO TIP:** You can find a Health icon in front of the Four Star Resort in Lava Falls.



**PRO TIP:** To reach icons perched on rooftops, look for ramps near the building and use them in conjunction with Nitrous to launch yourself onto the top of the building.



**PRO TIP:** Keep an eye out for pedestrians packing weapons.

	Developed by Terminal Reality		GRAPHICS 4.5	SOUND 4.5	CONTROL 4.0		FUN FACTOR 4.0
	Published by Midway						



# HUNTER: THE RECKONING REDEEMER

GUN-TOTING, SWORD-SWINGING, SPELL-CASTING monster stalkers wage a genocidal campaign against zombies, werewolves, projectile-vomiting teddy bears, and a satanic Santa Claus in this relentless and violence-laden sequel to *Hunter: The Reckoning*. Like its prequel, this top-down shooter/slasher was designed as a four-player game, and as such, it kills. Playing with three other people is a frantic blast, and you'll find that the different characters balance out each others' strengths and weaknesses well. Go solo, and you may



**PROTIP:** Kill Santa to cancel Christmas.



**PROTIP:** The harder you strike monsters, the more conviction and health spheres they'll drop.

find the hunt wan and repetitive despite crossed-over RPG conventions (upgradable spells and weapons) that lurk underneath the simplistic structure. Redeemer keeps the accelerated momentum going, though, and when over two dozen monsters swarm the screen to gang up on you, it extends itself past most hack-n-slash fare into a chaotic horror holocaust fueled by blisteringly fast riffs of sword slices, flying limbs, shotgun blasts, and geysers of arterial spray.

## BENEATH THE REMAINS

If you liked last year's *Hunter: The Reckoning* enough to flip for the sequel, you'll be treated to differences like a new story line, a quicker pace, new weapons, downloadable content, and new playable characters, including unlockable monsters. The thumbstick-centric control scheme is identical to the first game's, and while pulling the right trigger to fire ranged weapons feels natural, using it to pull off quick, combo-intensive melee attacks is a bit more difficult.





**PROTIP:** Switch between weapons and spells often to improve your Range, Melee, and Edge attacks.



"Angel of Death, Monarch to the kingdom of the dead. Infamous butcher, Angel of Death."

## MORBID VISIONS

Redeemer's graphics and sound design are mixed bags. Slick, detailed visuals are marred by inane camera work, and while the creature, explosion, and limb-whacking sound effects are all bofo, developer High Voltage should have jettisoned the dance beats and synthetic guitar strains and gotten Slayer to do the soundtrack instead. A fun if empty ride here, kids.

 BY PONG SIU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed by High Voltage Software</li> <li>Published by Vivendi Universal Games</li> <li>\$49.99</li> <li>Available October</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>4 players</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ESRB</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> <td>FUN FACTOR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>3.0</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>3.5</td> </tr> </table>	ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR	M	3.0	3.5	4.0	3.5
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M	3.0	3.5	4.0	3.5									
													

A 1970s TELEVISION show about two cops who broke all the rules to get the job done and their car, *The Striped Tomato*, is the inspiration for this driver/shooter from the same people who brought you *Big Mutha Truckers* and *The Great Escape*. Boasting a TV-style presentation, *Starsky & Hutch* is made up of 19 mission-based "episodes," spread throughout three "seasons," that consist

# STARSKY & HUTCH

of catching bank robbers, apprehending busloads of escaped convicts, escorting witnesses, and hanging out with Huggy Bear, a pimp with common sense and a heart of gold. Shooting traffic lights, crates, and icons earns you power-ups, better weapons, and Viewer Ratings points that keep a television audience watching the show...but be careful: If your Viewer Ratings fall to zero, the show is cancelled, and your audience watches *The White Shadow* instead.



Playing *Starsky & Hutch* alone with a controller is for the birds; if you have the right gear, the two-player mode is the only way to go.



**PROTIP:** It's okay to run into police cars—just be careful not to shoot them.

## The Return of The Striped Tomato

Though the single-player mode is a drag, *Starsky & Hutch* features a great two-player mode that fuses aspects of *Driver* with *Time Crisis* by having one player ("You be Starsky!") drive using a steering wheel peripheral and the other player ("I'll be Hutch!") shoot with a light-gun. It makes for great co-op gameplay, and clearly this is what the game's developers had in mind when designing it. Jaggy visuals look as if done on the cheap, and though fans of the show will enjoy the 1970s funk score and constant banter between the titular characters, most will probably find the voice acting and music irritating.





**PROTIP:** If you're playing in single-player mode, wait until the targeting reticule turns red before firing. You'll cause more damage that way.



**PROTIP:** Getting shot will cause you to lose a lot of Viewer Rating points, so always make it a priority to take out gunmen whenever they appear.

## Scream, Huggy Bear, Scream!

Budgeted at \$20, *Starsky & Hutch* is worth the coin only if you already have a wheel, a light-gun, and a friend. Otherwise, there are too many alternatives to warrant kicking down for it.

 BY PONG SIU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed by Minds Eye Productions</li> <li>Published by Gotham Games/Empire Interactive</li> <li>\$19.99</li> <li>Available now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driving/shooting</li> <li>2 players</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ESRB</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> <td>FUN FACTOR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>T</td> <td>2.0</td> <td>3.0</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> </table>	ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR	T	2.0	3.0	3.5	3.0
	ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR								
T	2.0	3.0	3.5	3.0									
													



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PlayStation 2



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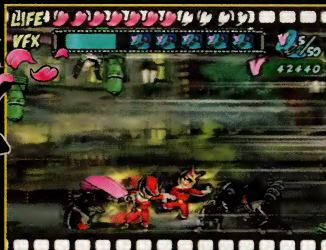
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**P**OST-PUBESCENT FILM GEEK becomes Kamen Rider-esque superhero and enters science-fiction movie to rescue shanghai'd lady from fire-breathing lion god in Capcom's ambitious roller-coaster ride helmed by the same team behind Devil May Cry and Steel Battalion. At its heart, Viewtiful Joe is a retro-flavored remix of both the beat-em-up and the platformer; and each genre's trappings are present and accounted for: imaginative levels to traverse, waves of mean mutants and powerful bosses to fight, coins to collect, and hidden power-ups to be discovered. However, Capcom has taken these tried and true formulas and catapulted them head first into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by infusing its creation with spell-bindingly gorgeous art direction, relentlessly manic energy, and unique gameplay mechanics, effectively redefining the 2D side-scroller and sculpting it into a lean, mean, beautiful machine.

## VIEWTIFUL JOE



Don't be intimidated—despite the game's feverish pace, controlling Joe is a lot easier than it looks.

### HENSHIN A GO-GO

What distinguishes Viewtiful Joe's gameplay from that of just about any game before it are the super powers you acquire when entering the movie world—abilities that let you manipulate the pace of time. Slow it down, and you can dodge attacks, do more damage to enemies, and deflect bullets and rockets; speed it up, and you can let loose rapid-fire assaults of punches and kicks.

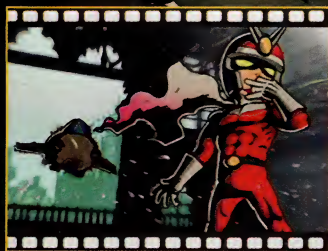
You can also zoom in on the action to execute spinning attacks and strike heroic poses that damage multiple enemies at once. Foes require different methods of attack, and when faced with a half dozen of them, you'll need to develop hairline-precise reflexes and achieve a Zen-like mastery of balancing the constant acceleration and deceleration of time.

### VIEWTIFUL DREAMER

The developers have also brilliantly applied these time-warping effects to the surroundings so that slowing down or accelerating time affects the physics of the environment; this feature becomes instrumental when solving puzzles. Bending time enables you to access previously unreachable platforms by slowing down the propellers that keep them aloft; it also allows drops of water to accumulate enough mass to extinguish flames and ignites bombs by speeding up the air around you until it literally combusts. The challenges are presented in such a way that you'll have to continually invent new ways to use your powers to progress.

### MAY HERONESS BE WITH YOU

A powerful effort, Viewtiful Joe's only flaws are its typically threadbare adolescent fantasy plot and short duration. These minor gripes are ground to dust by its strengths, and Viewtiful Joe's visionary extrapolation of old-school gameplay proves that it's not about what you do, but how you do it.



A superhero like Viewtiful Joe needs a super ride.



**PRO TIP:** When riding the bus, slow down so its thrusters will create more force, enabling you to clear the ravine filled with poison water underneath.



**PRO TIP:** You have to work against time in the train level. Concentrate not on beating enemies but on acquiring keys, so you can keep advancing.



**PRO TIP:** When Gran Bruce charges you, hide behind a mine. If it becomes lodged in his jaws, slow down time and then punch it to give out good hurt.



**PRO TIP:** Slow down time, crouch, and then punch the missiles to send them up into the air. Then pass underneath them at Mach speed while they're aloft.

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### GRAPHICS 5.0

A dynamic amalgamation of pseudo 2D graphics, artwork, and visual effects ripped out of a Japanese comic, along with amazingly fluid animation, result in an aesthetic treat unlike any seen before.

### SOUND 5.0

Energetically throbbing music combined with deliciously hammy voice acting and explosive sound effects propel the action and the story flawlessly.

### CONTROL 5.0

There are tons of wild abilities you need to learn, but cracker-jack controls are logically mapped out and super responsive, making the effort one of joy rather than frustration.

### FUN FACTOR 5.0

Viewtiful Joe is immediate, extremely challenging, and grows progressively deeper as you advance. It is frantic, exhilarating, and addictive. In short, it is a classic and everything a game should be.

EDITORS' **GAMEPRO** CHOICE



Developed and published by Capcom  
\$39.99  
Available October  
Action  
1 player







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AFTER BEING SHOWN up by THQ's other WWE titles and by EA's Aki-fueled Def Jam Vendetta, WrestleMania returns with a new grappling system, a highly polished new look, and an original single-player story mode. But is it enough?

# WRESTLEMANIA XIX

## REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

While WrestleMania XIX (19, for the Roman-numerically challenged) got a big graphical fluff-up, its biggest boast is its new reversal system, which makes every strike and grapple a bit more of a gamble. Essentially, you have to press L to reverse grapples or R to reverse strikes, and the game's smooth animation and forgiving timing make it easy to tell the difference. The system rewards experts for their patience by giving them the ability to dictate a match, but it's not so finicky and difficult that newbies would find it frustrating.



**PRO TIP:** Drag your opponent into your corner as much as possible during tag-team matches to avoid interference from their teammate.



**PRO TIP:** Sometimes, you'll have the choke to block grapples or strikes. Keep track of which attacks your opponent likes to throw and err toward those.

Outside of the reversals, however, XIX seems like just another poor attempt to top Aki's classic N64 grappling system, which it did so well in Def Jam Vendetta. Wrestlers seem slow, running in a chosen direction can be difficult, and newbies will find themselves doing the same move over and over with little reason to try any others.

## THE SINS OF THE PREQUEL

Controls aside, XIX is a pretty good attempt at making up for the sins of X8. The game looks truly great with wrestlers who bear almost eerie resemblances to the real people and a smooth animation system that almost perfectly hides clipping mistakes. By skillfully using visual flash and flair, Yuke's hides the simple arenas and dull environmental textures, which you'll really notice only in the Revenge levels. Speaking of which, XIX's story mode, called Revenge, features you in a coup attempt by Stephanie MacMahon. While beating up construction workers and wrecking cars are cool, replacing the traditional season mode with this mission-based half-game seems like an odd decision.

It's a noble attempt, and with a few exceptions, XIX succeeds in washing away the stigma of its predecessor. Here's hoping WrestleMania XX is even better. **G**



**PRO TIP:** You can get a weapon at any time by pressing X when you're standing next to the ring. Don't use them in a match, though, unless there's a no-disqualification rule.



XIX is easily one of the best-looking WWE games to date, relying on graphical flair to gloss over the GameCube's visual limits.



**PRO TIP:** An Irish Whip toward the ropes will send your opponent out of the ring. If they hang on to the apron, tap B to kick them off.

GET MORE  
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- Developed by Yuke's
- Published by THQ
- \$49.99
- Available now
- Wrestling
- 4 players



GRAPHICS  
4.5

SOUND  
3.0

CONTROL  
4.0

FUN FACTOR  
4.0



**PRO TIP:** Four-legged creatures are tough to maneuver, but you don't have to steer while rail sliding.

## Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure

DISNEY'S EXTREME SKATE ADVENTURE is a lightweight Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 clone populated by licensed characters. Think *Toy Story 2*, *The Lion King*, and *Tarzan* remade into skateparks. Players complete missions to unlock new costumes and locations in each of the above-mentioned theme worlds. A robust skater builder enables players to create unique human characters. Created characters can skate in any of the worlds and in their own cityscape called "Olliewood."

The gameplay has been notably simplified for a younger audience. Trick combos are a cinch, and the old Tony Hawk strategy of milking hand plants for *beau-coup* points is alive and well. The controller's main flaw appears while turning right or left. At times, it feels like cutting a swath through waist-deep gravy. The graphics faithfully re-create the Disney originals, but serious clipping issues occur—in several places the board vanishes into the environment! Characters' appendages are also prone to disappearing into solid objects. The audio score suffers because of unpalatable pop music (as a matter of personal taste). The two-player offerings (Horse, King of the Hill, and Score Challenge) prove more enjoyable than the single-player mode and add much-needed spontaneity.

Thanks to Neversoft's Tony Hawk 4 engine, there is goodness to be had. Easy tricks provide immediate gratification with a shallow learning curve, but there's little depth. As such, Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure is a good rental, but make sure you try it before you cough up the 40 bucks to buy it. **F**

Also on the PlayStation 2 and Xbox



**PRO TIP:** Hit any direction and the trick button to add easy combo points to your score.



- Developed by Toys for Bob
- Published by Activision
- \$39.95
- Available now
- Skateboarding
- 2 players



GRAPHICS  
3.0

SOUND  
2.0

CONTROL  
3.5

FUN FACTOR  
3.5



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# FATAL FRAME II

## CRIMSON BUTTERFLY



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PlayStation 2

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**PRO TIP:** Link's moves have slight delays, so watch out for quick foes.

THE GAMECUBE VERSION OF Soul Calibur II has the most star power, but the real star is the insanely fun fighting system that will satisfy both novices and experts alike.

### SLICE AND DICE

The good news for GameCube owners is that Soul Calibur II looks and sounds fantastic.

On the visual side, progressive scan support means crisp 480p resolution for TVs that support it and characters rich with vibrant colors. The audio is also impressive with clear dialogue and a grand orchestral soundtrack.

The bad news is that the GameCube controller is not ideal for fighting games, and this holds true for Soul Calibur II. The directional pad is too small, the rings on the analog stick irritate your finger with extended play, and the spacing of the buttons causes unintentional presses. It doesn't destroy the experience, but it's something you have to get used to.

However, once you overcome the controller, Soul Calibur II's winning combination of fluid gameplay and a well-thought-out fighting system is all the reward you'll need to play for months on end.

### A LINK IN TIME

The GameCube exclusive character, Link, from The Legend of Zelda series, is perhaps the coolest guest crossover ever. His fighting style is very similar to that of some existing characters, like Sophitia, but his ranged weapons add quite a few twists to the mix. Of the three console-exclusive characters, Link requires the most finesse to stay competitive but not so much that younger players will get frustrated.

The less-than-ideal controller aside, Link and Soul Calibur II are a combo that GameCube owners are going to want to super size—big time. **G**



**PRO TIP:** Seung Mina's kicks play important parts in combo possibilities.



**PRO TIP:** Astaroth's nonweapon moves are ideal for fast strikes.



**PRO TIP:** Ring Out's are a great way to bail yourself out of a losing fight.



BY TOKYO DRIFTER

- Developed and published by Namco
- \$49.99
- Available now
- Fighting
- 2 players



OH, THOSE CRAZY Soviets. In an alternate reality in which they won the Cold War, they've gone and invaded the United States. New York City is now under Soviet control—Soviet tanks roll through the streets, Russian flags fly over the post offices, and a Soviet newscaster broadcasts propaganda on television. As you might expect, it falls to a lowly plumber to save the country, organize a rebellion, and eject the Russians back across the Bering Strait.



### The Price of Freedom...

The GameCube version of Freedom Fighters is every bit as fun as the other versions, but its few shortcomings—slowdown during intense battles and tinny sound, among them—make the Xbox version a more attractive buy. The sound seems compressed and less crisp than the other versions'. The control layout, seemingly a scrambled version of the Xbox/PlayStation 2 layout (thanks to the lack of extra shoulder buttons and the ability to press the analog sticks like buttons), feels a bit awkward at first but quickly becomes second nature, and commanding a squad almost seems easier with the GameCube controller since the "Fall back!" order is mapped to the largest button. The only real difficulty lies in quickly accessing the inventory menu; pressing the analog sticks to equip your weapons is easier than hitting the Z button to do the same.

### ...Is about \$49.99

At its heart, Freedom Fighters is a strong title no matter what platform it's on, and while you might wish you had a little more precise control over your squad, the game's mix of action, tactics, and a tense invasion story line is just as gripping here as it is elsewhere. GameCube owners shouldn't miss this version of a great sleeper-hit action title. **G**



**PRO TIP:** Fences and grates provide a little cover. If you can, shoot from stairwells and behind fences.



**PRO TIP:** You get Charisma for fulfilling objectives. You'll do most of them anyway, but there are some tasks hidden away for you to find.



**PRO TIP:** For huge battles, it helps to get a higher vantage point, where you can snipe enemies and more easily direct your troops.



**PRO TIP:** To get around enemy fortifications, park your squad out front and sneak around to flank the bad guys from the side.



BY D-PAD DESTROYER

- Developed by io Interactive
- Published by EA Games
- \$49.99
- Available now
- Action/strategy
- 4 players







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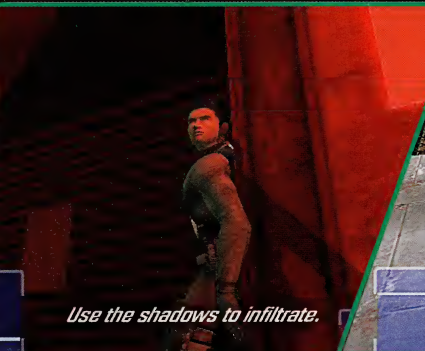
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look like **an excellent game.***

*And there can never be enough stealth gaming"*

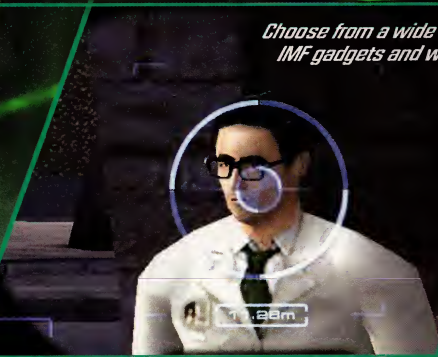
*— Official Xbox Magazine, August 2003*




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*"The range of moves seems to be matched only by the number of gadgets  
and weapons in his **formidable arsenal.**"*

*— GameSpot, May 2003*

*"We're very excited."*

*— Game Informer, August 2003*

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PlayStation.2



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## ESPN NHL Hockey 2K4

**I**N RECENT SEASONS, Sega's 2K series swept to the forefront as the "game to get" for hockey purists. Along with a freshly minted name, this year's edition comes with some fun mini-games, sharper graphics, and an impressive use of the ESPN license. But at its core, ESPN NHL Hockey 2K4 still remains focused on what it has delivered so beautifully over the past few years: challenging, highly realistic action.

### Do You Play Hockey?

ESPN NHL isn't really for casual hockey gamers. It's geared toward players who have the sport mastered and deploy that knowledge to score...so not surprisingly, it's a tough game. Banging the puck down any open lane to the net will not light the lamp—you have to know how to set up a shot and when to take it. If you do, the game's deep authenticity is immensely rewarding. If you don't, it can be frustratingly hard.

The most noticeable change in this edition is how the ESPN presence is felt everywhere without being cloying. The menus, scores, and stats are all presented in the trademark ESPN style, and best of all, Bill Clement and Gary Thorne call the action. With two of the most famous voices in hockey commentating, every game feels big, and they do their job well with lively, well-varied remarks.

The game also takes a step toward the more mainstream by re-creating the All-Star Skills Competition as mini-games. User profiles are tracked in the Skybox, which, much like the Crib in its NFL counterpart, displays all your stats, unlockables, trophies, and more in a luxury suite.

Alongside the usual modes and features, the series' Franchise mode continues to be one of the best. It has a glossier interface than last season's, but you still mainly focus on haggling player contracts and developing a pool of talent in the minors. It's fun and deep without getting wrapped up in the RPG-like contortions of EA's Dynasty mode.

### Well, I Play Air Hockey, Ball Hockey...

Another high point of this series is that it's the only one to support online play on both the Xbox and PS2. The catch is that there's no GameCube version, and unlike ESPN's NFL and



**PROTIP:** If your goalie's going to pass the puck instead of covering up, be sure to tap the Drop Puck button first, or it will get intercepted.



**PROTIP:** Learn to alternately use and release the speed burst while stick-handling to fake out defenders and leave them in your wake.

NBA games, the online play is limited to mere single-game matches or mini-games. Beyond that, you'd be hard-pressed to spot any differences between the nearly identical PS2 and Xbox versions.

The feel of this game will also be appealing to experienced hockey gamers—the only downside is that its line-change and strategy menus should be easier to employ. Once the action's underway, however, ESPN NHL is old school all the way in its approach to passing and skating, but it offers the most extensive array of moves, and everything just handles butter-smooth. For sheer playability, its controls rule.

On the graphics side, ESPN NHL supplies a solid upgrade, though it won't leave you dazzled. The player faces are pretty close to the real thing, though at times their movements seem a bit stiff and robotic.

### ...Hockey All the Time. Fake Shots!

When the whistle blows, the rink has three solid teams from which to choose. ESPN NHL will score biggest with hardcore fans who dig its technical feel and realism, even though EA's new passing and skating schemes are one of the year's coolest innovations. Hitz is its polar opposite, focusing on the joy of hockey's rougher side and scoring goals hand over fist, while EA's game nicely occupies the middle ground. But if you're passionate and knowledgeable about the sport, ESPN NHL is a first-round pick you won't regret making.



**PROTIP:** Using the Protect Puck move is crucial to maneuvering in your opponent's end of the rink—you'll lose the puck in a heartbeat if you don't.



**PROTIP:** If you're behind on a breakout, use a diving poke check to take one last stab at breaking up the play.



**PROTIP:** When you're pinned against the board in your zone, throw elbows until you break free or the whistle is blown—it's safer than risking a turnover.



**PROTIP:** In the Puck Control competition, lay off the speed burst in tight corners, but use it on the smallest straightaways.



Developed by Visual Concepts/Kush Games  
Published by ESPN Videogames

\$49.99  
Available now  
Hockey  
4 players

EDITORS	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	VALUE
4.0	5.0	4.5	4.0	4.0

EDITORS	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	VALUE
4.0	5.0	4.5	4.0	4.0

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# NHL 2004

**A**FTER SEVERAL SPUTTERING, rocky seasons, EA Sports overhauled its hockey series with solid results, and NHL 2004 benefits rippingly from a new development team and a new focus. Some of its ideas are brilliant innovations, some are wisely appropriated standards, and some just flop—but the overall result is fun, action-oriented, authentic hockey with a few troubling flaws.

## Sharpened Skates

Fans of the series will recognize that this edition represents a fresh start right from the drop of the puck. Everything about how the action controls and plays feels different, mostly in a good way. The innovative approach to skating and passing breaks clever new ground. Passes no longer rubber-band automatically between players—instead, the puck flies in the direction you aim with the analog joystick. It sounds simple and it is (especially with help of crafty tuning implemented since the preview version), but it really opens up what you can do with the puck. The best part is how players are smart enough to extend their stick to their physical limits to collect passes.

When skating, if you release the joystick, your player stops in a spray of ice, rather than drifting forward, which makes for nimble maneuvering. And instead of strategy-intensive play-calling, quick taps of the directional pad let you increase or decrease your offensive and defensive intensity. Even the fighting improves with a system that's oriented around the tugging and clutching of real-life tussles.



**PROTIP:** You can't rely only on checking for defense—mix in the hook from behind and the pin against the boards.



**PROTIP:** To pass through traffic, you have to use the saucer pass—regular ones get intercepted.



**PROTIP:** If you get a two-goal lead, use the directional pad to scale back your offense and pump up the D.



**PROTIP:** Never let opponents linger in your crease—line up a check and paste them.



**PROTIP:** If your opponent is buzzing around your net, it's a great time to opt into a fight.



**PROTIP:** Adjust ticket prices every day to maximize profit versus attendance—more revenue earns you more upgrades.

## Patched-Up Pads

The new checking system, however, is the game's biggest flaw. You use the right analog stick to aim the hit or tap a button to do it automatically. Unfortunately, the whole process has a spastic feel and a jerky look. Checks connect unreliably at best, which hampers a key element of the game. Switching between players also feels a bit finicky at times, occasionally not allowing you to control the player in the thick of the action.

An array of tuning sliders lets you fiddle with all of these elements, and between that and a little practice, these issues can be worked around. Overall, the game is much more authentic than it used to be: Teammates play their positions more intelligently (even setting up for power-plays), the puck collides with what it should, players pin each other along the boards, and so on.

## Tightly Taped Sticks

The roster of features performs strongly. An intriguing Dynasty mode puts you in the GM's shoes as you set ticket prices, practice lengths, and player contracts while amassing points that let you upgrade everything from the team bus to the legal staff. It's very dense and challenging in an RPG-like way, but it should appeal to fantasy-league enthusiasts. The more accessible Season mode strips away the GM's duties, and you can also dive into some of the top European leagues.

When comparing the three versions head-to-head, the PS2 edition gets the nod largely because it alone supports online play. The only other differences are minor graphical flourishes: The Xbox game looks best by a hair, while the GameCube version is the least lovely by a smidgen.

Visually, NHL 2004 is the prettiest hockey game this season. The player faces aren't the best, but the fluid animations, bright colors, and rich details win the beauty pageant. The audio isn't nearly as strong, though. While the on-ice sounds, such as coaches bellowing for line changes, are cool, the two-man commentary is forced and lifeless.

The playing field is pretty level for hockey games this season, so it's a matter of finding the flavor that suits your taste. NHL 2004 hits a nice middle ground between realism and action. The ESPN game controls more smoothly, but its technical, realistic gameplay is far more demanding, while Hitz is all about mayhem. If you were a fan of this series before it went south in recent times, you'll be thrilled with this return to form. **G**



- Developed by EA Black Box
- Published by EA Sports
- \$49.99
- Available now
- Hockey
- 4 players

Platform	Graphics	Sound	Control	Fun Factor
EA Sports	4.5	3.5	4.0	4.0
Xbox	4.5	3.5	4.0	4.0
GameCube	4.5	3.5	4.0	4.0

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# NHL Hitz Pro

BY ADDING THE "Pro" at the end of the name, Midway's trying to tell you that its famously over-the-top series is taking the sport much more seriously—but not too seriously. When you play NHL Hitz Pro, that actually makes sense. The feel of parody is gone; rather than being a wild action game based on hockey, this year's edition is a hockey game with some wild action.

## He Shootz!

NHL Hitz Pro may be switching to five-on-five action with (optional) offsides and two-line passes, but it still lives up to its middle name with gameplay that revolves around the fine art of checking. Defense is all about sending your opponent cartwheeling through the air, and while it's definitely downplayed in comparison with previous years', your bloodlust won't be left hanging.

Scoring is much easier than it is in EA's and ESPN's games, and that all adds up to action-packed, excitingly fun hockey. The game is still firmly rooted in the sport, and it feels like you're playing something pretty close to hockey, rather



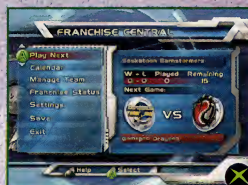
**PROTIP:** On offense, spin moves are the best way to slip past an opponent who's trying to paste you.



**PROTIP:** When you're stuck chasing the puck carrier, the hook move is your best bet.



**PROTIP:** In pond hockey, no rules apply, so check your opponent's goal whenever he covers up the puck.



Hitz's cool Franchise mode lets you battle to earn a berth in the NHL for the team of no-names that you created.

than an outlandish cartoon version of it. Hitz even has the most realistic yet exciting approach to face-offs of any game this season. Overall, Midway did a good job of making the game a bit more serious and authentic without losing the style and edge that has made this series so popular in recent years.

Hitz Franchise mode is definitely unique in a good way. You create a fantasy team from scratch by selecting from a slew of pre-made logos and names, then staffing the roster. After 10 wins against other such teams, you're promoted to the bottom tier of the NHL to begin battling for the Cup. The game provides a good selection of crazy power-ups and entertaining mini-games, including the fantastic pond hockey.

## He Checkz!

When separating the three versions of Hitz, the PS2 version rises to the top because it's the only one that supports online play. Midway has a great set-up for its online sports titles this year. When you first sign on, you start out in the bottom of four leagues. Every two weeks, the top players are bumped up to the next league, and the poor performers get booted downstairs. This approach gives even latecomers a chance to shine in the standings. Aside from that, three versions are pretty identical beyond some very minor differences in their graphical style.

In general, the controls work smoothly, offering all the usual moves without the layers of complexity that other games include. The visuals are good and effective without being stunners, though the audio is a real treat. The two-man commentary featuring Tim Kitzrow and Harry Tienowitz is hilarious, while the bone-crunching sound effects pump up the action.

## He Scorez!

It's a tight three-way race on the hockey front this season, and the only real downside to Hitz is what its fans will actually appreciate: its heavily arcade-style approach. If you like your hockey more serious, EA's game falls halfway between Hitz and the technical, highly realistic ESPN game. If "serious" is the last thing you associate with hockey games, you'll have a blast hammering out checks on Hitz' rink—especially since Midway's rolled back the price a notch.



**PROTIP:** On defense, use checks to break up the play every time you're not trailing behind the puck carrier.



**PROTIP:** On face-offs, don't hammer the button to win the draw, just tap it once right after the ref releases it.

Developed by Next Level  
Published by Midway  
\$39.99  
Available now

Hockey  
4 players

Platform	Graphics	Sound	Control	Fun Factor
PS2	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.0
Xbox	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.0
Game Boy Advance	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.0

BY AIR MENDIZ



This is where  
I came back to life.



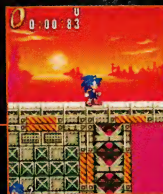
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## NFL Blitz Pro

NFL BLITZ IS turning pro... Blitz Pro, that is. Midway's embarked on a mission to inject more realism into the game, a move guaranteed to invoke more head-scratching than a Head & Shoulders commercial.



**PROTIP:** When a play ends, immediately press **O** and hit **X** to put some extracurricular hits on opposing players.



**PROTIP:** On defense, the dive (press **□**) covers an exaggerated distance, turning your defender into a human guided missile. Practice your accuracy, though; it's easy to miss a tackle, too.



**PROTIP:** On defense, consider playing as a deep safety. The viewing angle enables you to roam around downfield and still keep an eye on the pass rush.

### Blitz Fitz

But the transition is pretty smooth. NFL Blitz Pro fields 11-on-11 football with 10 yards per first down just like the real thing, and every NFL team even has its own offensive and defensive playbooks. Blitz fans may start to get a little teary-eyed when they discover Franchise mode, create-a-player, and real weather conditions. This game looks like good ole Blitz and sounds like good ole Blitz, but it almost plays like a different game. Of course, the operative word is "almost."

Plays start out looking like a stripped-down, streamlined version of standard football, but then a defender will body slam your running back or coldcock your quarterback. Guys are pumping fists, striking poses, and prancing around. Your running back's racking up yardage with his legs on fire, and your QB's slinging missiles with the Human Torch's arm. Yep, now you're doing the Blitz.

### Turning Pro





On-the-field antics aren't the only throwback. Gameplay has the familiar Blitz feel with players moving at a relaxed pace until you hit the burst button or make a diving tackle. The spare controls don't employ every possible button or stick move like most football games, either.

The game's graphics are bright, colorful, and definitely in line with traditional Blitz style. The player models look sharp, but you won't recognize your favorites without a scorecard. The outrageous animations are the stars of the visual show, and with 22 players, they're busting out all over the field. Blitz Pro's sounds definitely rate high on the personality scale. That's because the announcers constantly goof on the game and each other. It's sometimes funny, sometimes silly, and always fun.

NFL Blitz Pro tiptoes down the sidelines between full-fledged sim style and outrageous action. This ain't your daddy's Blitz—or even your big brother's—but the Blitz tradition lives on in the crowded football field. **E**  
Also on the Xbox and GameCube



**PROTIP:** When you need to complete a pass for critical yardage, throw to your team's Impact Player. The odds of making the catch are in his favor.

	Developed and published by Midway Sports				
	\$39.99	Football			
	Available now	4 players			
					

## NFL GameDay 2004

NFL GAMEDAY TAKES another big stride along the comeback trail. The 2004 edition will even trade punches with heavyweights Madden NFL 2004 and ESPN NFL Football 2K4 in some categories. Additionally, GameDay is making a run at the online arena with some impressive features, including downloadable updated rosters, live sports scores, real-time weather conditions, and player-to-player chat. In fact, a USB headset enables you to call 50 voice-recognition commands—this feature is a little more interesting than practical, but it's cool nonetheless.

The controls in general reveal diligent off-season work. The playbooks have a more sophisticated, tri-windowed design similar to other games, and the diagrams (though generic) are easier to follow than before. On offense, GameDay has topnotch presnap looks that enable you to scan the defense and quickly display a play diagram. Player movement controls sport a nice pressure-sensitive touch, but the gameplay stills feels a tad slow.

The visuals overall are good but uneven. Player models look great, and there are some slick, lifelike individual animations. However, the animation still feels robotic with player groups duplicating stances and moving in unison a little too much. Sometimes after a tackle, for instance, the offensive player and the tackling defender perform a ballet, picking themselves off the ground with the exact same movement.








Watch out for GameDay. This is a team on the rise that may even score big with some gamers this season. **E**



**PROTIP:** Learn to step up into the pocket to avoid the rush.



**PROTIP:** When passing downfield, try to hit receivers early in their patterns. A.I. defenders are particularly good at knocking the ball loose after a catch.

	Developed by Red Zone Interactive				
	Published by 989 Sports				
	\$39.99	Football			
Available now		4 players			
					



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2K4  
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## Top Spin

**MICROSOFT'S TURN** on the tennis court could result in a Grand Slam event. In fact, in early sets with *Top Spin*, the game played much like a young, enthusiastic, up-and-coming hotshot. The players were animated with realism, and doubles matches were hard to stop playing. And though the game needs more training in spots like button response and ball control, *Top Spin* is certainly on its way to becoming a high-ranking tennis pro.



To help *Top Spin's* rise to stardom, Microsoft is investing in a hard-hitting lineup of both on- and offline features. For starters, the game will be part of XSN, Microsoft's answer to an all-inclusive online sports league where you can set up matches and track statistics. Other highlights in the game will include a strong roster of 16 real-life pros, including male and female players like Hewitt, Sampras, Kournikova, and Hingis; the ability to perform all of the tricky racquet shots like topspin, slice, and drop shot with just a single button press; and the option to create and train your own player. Don't be surprised if *Top Spin* is the top seed this November. **G**



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BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed by PAM
- Published by Microsoft
- Target release date: November



HANDS-ON

## NBA Inside Drive 2004

**NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2004** marks the third outing for the Xbox-exclusive franchise that has found trouble gaining ground on the likes of EA Sports and ESPN Videogames (formerly Sega Sports). Microsoft's planned a number of enhancements in the hopes of improving its chances this year, including revamped teammate and opponent A.I., offensive and defensive gameplay updates, and character models with more personal touches like specific tattoos and hairstyles. The most noticeable character model tweak is new cover athlete Shaquille O'Neal. The dominant center's participation is not just for marquee value, but is also intended to flesh out the new Power Post Play feature, which is designed to give the big men in the league all the tools they normally have at their command.



*Inside Drive's* greatest asset may turn out to be its inclusion in the XSN Sports line, which means support is assured for advance online leagues, custom tournaments, and stat tracking. The

early preview version didn't have these features enabled for testing yet, but scrimmages against the computer and human opponents reveal play-mechanic tweaks with varying degrees of success. The overall speed of the game is the same as last year, but updated animations give the proceedings a different feel. **G**



BY TOKYO DRIFTER



- Developed by High Voltage Software
- Published by Microsoft
- Target release date: October



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TEEN  
**T**  
CONTENT RATED BY  
ESRB

Violence

PC  
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SOFTWARE



PlayStation 2



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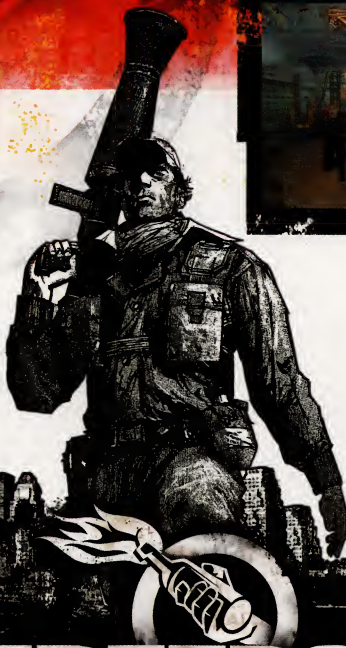


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PlayStation.2



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FOR MOST GAMERS, the words "turn-based, grid-system strategy" either cause them to recoil into the deepest region of their "happy place" or inspire a charge into glorious battle. Dynasty

# Dynasty Tactics 2

Tactics 2 is easily one of the stars of this strategy genre niche.

### Tactical Advantages

For those of you now preparing to charge into glorious battle, the basic scenario recounts that period of revolution in ancient China that followed the fall of the Han dynasty. This could be interpreted as Koei's insidious way of issuing another variation of its Romance of the Three Kingdoms games without actually using that title, but Tactics 2 is an excellent follow-up to the original Dynasty Tactics. It offers twice the number of military maneuvers for conquering warlords as they command armies across grid-laced Chinese terrain. It also features an upgrade to the game's tactics linking system that now enables you to set up sequentially linked attacks, a combat combo on a massive scale.

### Romantic Interludes

The controls perform flawlessly, but they aren't really pressured to do much. Deliberate, multitiduous button pressing is all that's required to plan and orchestrate battles since the "action" takes place primarily in your mind.

Just the same, you get a pretty good show. The static visuals are portrait-perfect, and when you do launch a tactical attack, like Rockslides or Fire Attack, you're treated to a first-rate, fierce cinema. The Dolby Pro Logic II surround sound pumps out melodious, symphonic music that won't rock your adrenaline meter but sounds great.

Dynasty Tactics 2 is a first-rate challenge for anyone with a mind for military strategy. You have to read the manual to master this game, but at least you don't have to read *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. **B**



And thus, to thwart Cao Cao's ambition and restore power to the Han Dynasty.

Despite some amazing-looking graphics, Dynasty Tactics 2 puts a premium on strategy.



**PRO TIP:** For unit-versus-unit fighting, consider using Tactics, such as Raid, that enable you to cut through several enemy units at once.



**PRO TIP:** Sending a spy into town enables you to see enemy troop numbers and skills during battle, but it can also reduce an enemy army's size if your spy persuades their officers to join you.

BY BROTHER BUZZ

- Developed and published by Koei
- \$49.99
- Available now
- Strategy/RPG
- 2 players

ESRB TEEN	GRAPHICS 4.0	SOUND 4.0	CONTROL 4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.0
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THE FIRST OF the upcoming crop of action/RPGs bearing the indelible mark of Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance, Dungeons & Dragons Heroes delves a little deeper into the tabletop game it's based on to provide an experience with more variety and more adventure than Snowblind's genre-busting hit.



**PRO TIP:** To defeat Kaedin, use the Death gem throughout most of the fight. Switch gems only when he equips the Death gem himself—and be sure to switch back when he changes again.

### ROCKS FALL, EVERYONE DIES

At first glance, Dungeons & Dragons Heroes looks almost exactly like the other games in the genre—your characters run around, hack up enemies, smash barrels, and cart tons of loot back to town to trade in for ever better equipment. Heroes improves on its competitors by introducing the fully controllable camera, the cleric and rogue (and the special abilities of both), and the idea of an "ancestral" weapon, one which gains in power as you find "soul shards" throughout the game.

Heroes continues Dark Alliance's legacy of great graphics and fast action, and it boasts a musical soundtrack strong enough to make up for repetitive combat effects and slightly weak voice acting. The game's controls fly fast and fun, and the system for mapping special moves to different buttons becomes second nature in no time. Zooming in the camera gives you a better view of combat and enables you to better time blocks and attacks, and an aiming system lets you precisely land those big-boom spells.

### 2020 WAYS TO DIE

Yeah, there's not much other than hacking and slashing here, but it's fast and fun, and for four players. Heroes takes a look at what Dungeons & Dragons is all about, strips out everything else, and makes sure you have fun with what's left. **B**



**PRO TIP:** Hitting a foe's shield counts as a hit for charged moves, and most finishers ignore shields. Keep bashing away, and you'll get through.



**PRO TIP:** To beat the Frost Worm, use fire spells and attacks, and be patient. Find a corner near one of his holes and wait for him to pop up nearby.

BY DUNJIN MASTER

- Developed and published by Atari
- \$49.99
- Available October
- Action/RPG
- 4 players

ESRB TEEN	GRAPHICS 4.5	SOUND 4.5	CONTROL 5.0	FUN FACTOR 5.0
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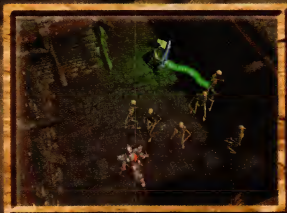
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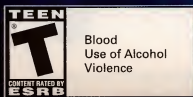
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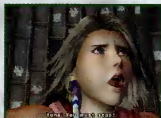
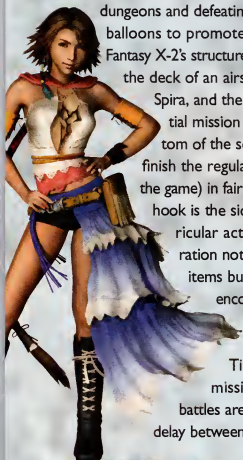
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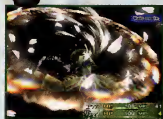
# Final Fantasy X-2

## The First Final Fantasy Sequel

Final Fantasy X-2 picks up a bit after the events of Final Fantasy X as Yuna teams up with Rikku and newcomer Paine. Dubbed the Gullwings, their mission is to find several spheres tucked away in various areas of Spira. Activities range from exploring dungeons and defeating bosses to handing out balloons to promote a rock concert. Final Fantasy X-2's structure is mission-based. From the deck of an airship, you travel around Spira, and the difficulty of each potential mission is displayed at the bottom of the screen. Although you can finish the regular missions (and hence the game) in fairly short order, X-2's real hook is the side quests and extracurricular activities. Thorough exploration not only yields hard-to-find items but also results in nostalgic encounters with familiar faces from FFX. FFX-2 also brings back the Active Time Battle (something missing from FFX), where battles are ongoing and there's no delay between exchanging blows.



Yuna, Paine, and Rikku take on one of Spira's many bosses in Final Fantasy X-2, the first real sequel in the history of the series.



## Clothes Call

X-2's biggest change over its predecessor is the Garment Grids. As you progress through the game, the trio collects various spheres that enable the girls to cast different spells. The number of Ability Points won after a fight depends on what dress a character is wearing. During battle, you can change costumes on the fly, and there's a new combo system where consecutive hits delivered to a single target inflict massive damage. The menus are intuitive and easy to use (as they were in FFX), and you can skip all the talky scenes with the touch of a button. Interspersed within the action are various high-quality CG sequences, which have become a trademark of Final Fantasy games. Speaking of trademarks, the frequent bonding and posing—more than a coincidental homage to *Charlie's Angels*—are too excessive. Despite the overly cute cut-scenes and somewhat goofy dialogue, Final Fantasy X-2 has the makings of another immersive and addictive Fantasy.



We'll have the final verdict in the next issue of *GamePro*.

BY MAJOR MIKE



- Developed by Square Enix
- Published by Square Enix U.S.A.
- Target release date: November




PlayStation 2

HANDS-ON



# Final Fantasy XI

FANS OF FINAL FANTASY know the games differ immensely from one another, and FFXI is following suit. Online RPGs produce a community of role-players that ultimately enriches the experience for all who play, as is the case with FFXI. This online-only chapter drops players into one of three countries (based on their choice of nations) in which they can seek their fortune by accepting quests from local governments and townsfolk while taking in the beautifully rendered pastoral landscape pervading Vana'Diel.

Several new features adorn this title, not the least of which is the persistent world in which your characters dwell and socialize with other avatars in the interest of creating a formidable party. A Mission/Quest system guides newbies and veterans to earn currency (the ubiquitous Gil) and experience points (the RPG staple for character development) by accomplishing goals at their leisure. The new real-time combat system (as opposed to the traditional turn-based combat) is invigorating, inviting gamers to actually dodge for dramatic effect and delivering an energizing sense of urgency. Even in the early beta version, it's clear that Square Enix has cast its hat into the MMORPG ring with fervor and artistry. 



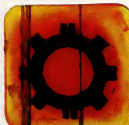
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BY STRAFE MARU

- Developed by Square Enix
- Published by Sony
- Target release date: January

 PLAYSTATION 2



## Morrowind Game of the Year Edition

IF YOU'RE AN Xbox-owning Morrowind fan, you've probably been gazing jealously at those damn PC folks, who've been enjoying Morrowind expansion packs for months. Don't worry, though; Bethesda has packed all the PC version's expansions into one Xbox goldmine and called it Morrowind Game of the Year Edition.

The early playable, which was still in need of a few tweaks, included most of the interface improvements (like the enemy

health meter) from the expansions as well as all the adventure of Tribunal and the werewolf action of Bloodmoon. While there were no tweaks to the fighting system, there were tons of new enemies to fight (like goblins, wolves, and bears), items to discover, and quests to complete. **F**



BY DUNJIN MASTER



- Developed and published by Bethesda Softworks
- Target release date: October



HANDS-ON

## Culdcept

CULDCCEPT IS AN odd little board game/RPG hybrid that combines Yu-Gi-Oh and Monopoly. With your deck of 50 cards, you and up to three opponents battle for territory on a set of twisty game maps. Whoever reaches the Mana goal first wins. You claim a square by placing a card on it; if someone else lands on that card, he can either pay the Mana toll or try to fight for control of the square with one of his own cards. Win or lose, you receive a bunch of new cards with which to improve your deck after the game ends.



The preview version went out of its way to be simple for beginners, and the story mode gradually introduced game strategy without being the slightest bit confusing. **F**

BY FENEC FOX



- Developed by Oniya Soft
- Published by NEC Interchannel
- Target release date: October



HANDS-ON

## Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel

DESPITE ITS RPG roots, Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel is a third-person shooter that takes place in a post-apocalyptic world where humans are attempting to recolonize their planet from hideously mutated radioactive creatures. Your character is trying to gain membership into The Brotherhood of Steel, a vigilante group trying to restore world order.

Brotherhood of Steel's engine is modeled after Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance's, and Interplay is tweaking the controls and visuals for a faster-paced, smoother game. Improvements include target cycling, on-the-fly weapon swapping, and the ability to manufacture bombs and mines—adding a strategic edge as you lay traps for unsuspecting enemies. With 50-plus missions, multiplayer features, and a massive variety of weapons, Brotherhood of Steel is looking solid. **F**



BY RICE BURNER



- Developed and published by Interplay
- Target release date: October

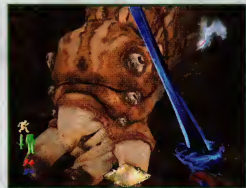


FIRST LOOK



## Arx Fatalis


RELEASED FOR THE PC last year, Arx Fatalis was Arkane Studios' homage to Ultima Underworld and the golden-oldie days of computer RPGs. Though well reviewed, it was overshadowed by Morrowind and Neverwinter Nights in a terrific year for the genre. Now, the Xbox



port faces a similar threat.

The preview build of Arx Fatalis is a mixed bag and in need of significant sound and graphics work before the October release. The keyboard full of commands once available to PC gamers just doesn't fit nicely into the unwieldy Xbox controller, and this creates some frantic, frustrating



moments of surfing through menus within menus. Still, the sophisticated interactivity that enables players to create their own potions, forge and repair weapons, and even bake an apple pie demonstrates unique potential. Also interesting is the spell-casting system, where rune combinations create magic effects. But with heavy-hitters Fable and Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance 2 coming to the Xbox, Arx Fatalis will be up against stiff competition. 



BY DJ DINOBOT



- Developed by Arkane Studios
- Published by DreamCatcher Interactive
- Target release date: October



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BY TOKYO DRIFTER



## BASICS

### MOVEMENT AND DISTANCE

The most important gameplay element you'll first notice is the eight-way run. Moving on a 3D plane is not that new to fighting games, but few titles integrate it into competitive play as well as Soul Calibur II. Moving around not only gets you out of the way of certain attacks, but also takes advantage of defensive blind spots. Maneuvering around (referred to as eight-way movement in SCII) also helps avoid walls that players can get slammed into or ledges that spell instant death. All your fancy footwork won't mean much if you dance too closely to the foe, so be mindful of the opponent's reach and any moves that allow that gap to close faster than you can react.



Just barely out of striking range



Cervantes demonstrating eight-way movement



Watch out for that ledge!

## OFFENSE

Here are the top three things to be mindful of when starting to get serious about winning.

### RUNNING ATTACK



With all the eight-way movement, it's easy to incorporate the running attack into your arsenal. The most effective is the sliding kick, achieved by tapping K while running. Unless your enemy is trained to mostly block low, a sliding kick has a high probability of connecting. It's best to save it for opportune instances, such as when your opponent is next to a ledge.

### UNBLOCKABLES



These moves are easy to spot because there's a charge time delay and the resulting blow explodes with devastating flames. Each character has a few with different striking distances, so try to find one that covers a lot of ground but is a relatively safe distance from your opponent. A good time to use such a move is when a foe has just been knocked down and hasn't immediately recovered to his feet.

### COMBO STARTER



Each character has some attack that lifts an opponent into the air for a combo. The move is almost always tap (K B), but a few have additional ones, like Link's Rocket Stab, tap (↑ B). Experiment to create your own favored air juggles, but keep in mind that they won't always land the same way.

*Note: Please see the following section, "Defense," for more information.*

## CONTROLLER LEGEND

### PLAYSTATION 2

- A = Horizontal Attack
- △ B = Vertical Attack
- K = Kick
- × G = Guard
- ( ) = Execute commands in parenthesis simultaneously

### XBOX

- [X] A = Horizontal Attack
- [Y] B = Vertical Attack
- [B] K = Kick
- [A] G = Guard
- ( ) = Execute commands in parenthesis simultaneously

### GAMECUBE

- [A] A = Horizontal Attack
- [Y] B = Vertical Attack
- [X] K = Kick
- [B] G = Guard
- ( ) = Execute commands in parenthesis simultaneously

\* = Designates an attack that may not connect 100 percent of the time.

## DEFENSE

As the saying goes, a good defense is a good offense, so prepare to react to your opponent accordingly!

### AIR RECOVER



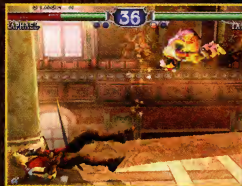
Landing on the floor after getting hit hurts and leaves you vulnerable to a myriad of ground attacks. To recover in the air, tap G at almost any point after you're knocked into the sky. Be aware that this can backfire and cause you to get juggled even more, so time your recovery well.

### WALL RECOVER



Getting knocked into a wall is big, big trouble because it keeps you close to the player who's juggling you senseless. A tap of the G button once again lets you recover to either side of the wall and puts you back in action.

### AIR SHIFT



Without a doubt, the most important defensive move to use and abuse is the Air Shift. Normally, your character is helpless once knocked into the air, but Soul Calibur II allows you to shift your weight in the air to avoid getting caught up in lengthy combos. To do this, simply press in the direction you'd like to shift toward (ideally away from a ledge). Due to this nifty move, the combos on the following pages can be altered drastically, depending on the skill of your foe. For the most part, all moves described should land regardless of the other player's actions, but exceptions are noted where applicable.





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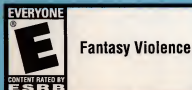
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**CONSOLE-EXCLUSIVE CHARACTERS**

It's great that you can play Soul Calibur II no matter what platform you own but not so great since you must have all three consoles to play as the following characters. Check out the following combo and moves guides to get the most out of your character.

# HEIHACHI

The Tekken series is rich with air-juggle combos, so it's no surprise that this old master retains more than his share in Soul Calibur II.

**FIVE-HIT COMBO**

This one is short, but each hit is guaranteed to land as long as you don't start the air juggle too early.



Tap ↙, (↙ B) Tap B Tap A Tap A Tap B

**NINE-HIT COMBO**

The last three kicks require precision timing to legally count as a combo, and any air recovery would negate the chances of a continuous string. The second-to-last kick will hit only if the opponent tries to shift out of the way; otherwise, it's usually an eight-hit combo.



Tap →, (→ A) Tap (↙ B) Tap B Tap A Tap A Tap B Motion ← ↓ ↙ K Tap K\* Tap K

**TEN-HIT COMBO #1**

The timing for this 10-hit combo is quite tricky and requires you to start it before Heihachi finishes his Soul Charge animation. Take a look at the point where the screenshot below is taken during the Soul Charge—that's the exact moment he should begin with the first kick strike. You must start the kick strike motion a bit before that however, but just know that he's not going to combo if he didn't start it at that frame of animation.



Tap (A B K) Tap (↙ K) Tap B Tap A Tap K Tap K Tap B Tap K Tap B Tap A Tap K

**TEN-HIT COMBO #2**

The same note about interrupting the Soul Charge applies to this combo. The big difference here is the last dashing uppercut will miss the enemy if they don't attempt to shift out of the way.



Tap (A B K) Tap (↙ K) Tap B Tap A Tap K Tap K Tap B Tap K Tap B Tap A Tap B\*

**TEN-HIT COMBO #3**

Just to clear the air, all three of these 10-hit combos are available only during a Soul Charge—it's a Soul-Charge specific move and not executable at any other time. Also, this is actually a nine-hit combo, but it's still called a 10-hit combo in the game.



Tap (A B K) Tap (↙ K) Tap B Tap A Tap K Tap B Tap B Tap B Tap B Tap B





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# SPAWN

Spawn has a good combination of raw power and stylish moves. His ability to hang in the air for short periods of time really adds a new strategic element.

## LEVITATION

A first for the series, Spawn can levitate for brief periods in the air. While it's great for a quick escape, the best use is to confuse the enemy with a mix of air and ground attacks. Just because you're in the air doesn't mean you have to strike. Still, the safest option is the Retribution Overdrive, which is performed by tapping K while levitating. Spawn drills downward with his feet and can connect for a maximum of five hits and inflict a fair amount of damage. Certain strikes can overpower Retribution, so be cautious as to whom you use it against.



Tap (B K) to levitate high in the air to set up an attack or as an escape.



Tap K while levitating to drill down with your feet.



The unblockable Sigil of Hellspawn is performed by holding B.

## FOUR-HIT COMBO

The beauty about this combo is that the last hit can either add to the string or start a brand-new one. If the opponent recovers from the first string, the last attack can flip him over your head, allowing you to add in at least two more hits. This is also a way to fight when your back is to a ledge since a completed combo gets you a good deal away from falling off, but there's a chance you can fling your foe into oblivion.



Tap (↙ B)



Tap (← K)



Tap K



Tap →, (→ B)



Tap (↙ B)



Tap A



Tap (→ A)



Tap B



Tap B

## SIX-HIT COMBO

A combo doesn't have to be ultra fancy, and this one sure isn't. It gets the job done, is fairly long, and exacts a good deal of damage.



Tap (↙ B)



Tap (← K)



Tap K



Tap (← A)



Tap B



Tap B

## EIGHT-HIT COMBO

To be fair, this move throws in four cheap hits at the end to rack up the combo count. The damage might not reflect the amount of hits landed, but it looks pretty cool and can rattle a foe into making another mistake.



Tap (↙ B)



Tap (← K)



Tap K



Tap (→ A)

Tap B for four hits



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# LINK

© The hero of Hyrule doesn't have lengthy combos, but Link does have plenty of nifty moves that can keep his foes off balance.

## CYCLONE ATTACK



A great move if you're close enough and can charge it up a bit, the Cyclone Attack is best busted out when an opponent is stunned. Simply tap (↑ A) for the standard version, and charge A longer for more power. It lifts your hapless target high into the air, but you can't recover fast enough to start juggling them, so its overall usefulness is limited.

## SWORD PLANT



Link has the quickest special ground strike of any character with his Sword Plant. You execute it by tapping (↓ B) when your opponent is lying on the ground. The great thing about it is that the enemy doesn't have to be on the floor to use it, and you can utilize it as a distance-closing move. It can also disrupt opponents who are trying to get up but aren't fully on their feet yet.

## FOUR-HIT COMBO

Link has plenty of two- and three-hit combos, but this four-hit combo is about as good as it gets where long strings are concerned.



Tap (↑ B)

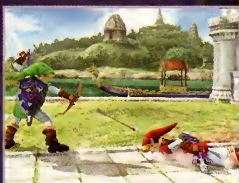
## BOW AND ARROW



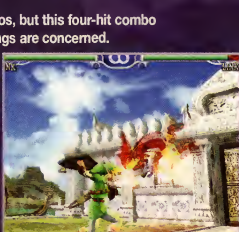
The key to good arrow use is movement. Move around and point that sucker menacingly enough to force your opponent into a hasty move. You can quickly cancel out of holding the bow and switch to a normal attack. Of course, you'll have to fire the thing every once in a while to keep him honest. To get into bow stance, tap (A B), then tap B again when you want to release the bow. Hold down A to charge up for an unblockable arrow strike.



For maximum intimidation, tap (↘ B) to shoot an arrow at the other player's feet. Do it enough, and he won't know if he should start moving around, block low, or rush into an attack. You can also tap (↗ B) to shoot an arrow high, but that's really good only against players who jump a lot. It would be perfect against Spawn's levitation, but he ain't in the GameCube version.



The third way to utilize the arrow is to use the low shot, tap (↘ B), to hit opponents lying on the floor. It's not easy to land, but it's more of a stylish way of telling your foe they need to get off the ground quicker.



Tap A

## BOMB



Both the bomb and the boomerang aren't as useful as the bow and arrow, but two things that give the former an edge are the ability to make an unblockable attack and the irresistible "cool" factor. To get into bomb stance, tap (B K), then tap K to throw the bomb.



A successful hit blasts your adversary sky high and is just too much fun. Add in the bomb's timing fuse, which can blow up if it's held too long, and you have a tool that injects some extra spice into a match.



Performing this unblockable is hazardous to the holder but worth it if you pull it off. Tap (B K) to get into the bomb stance, then tap K at the last possible moment before it explodes in your hand. If you listen carefully, a high-pitched sound clues you in to the proper release opportunity.



Tap B

## BOOMERANG



The boomerang is the least of Link's weapons. To get into boomerang stance, tap (A K) and then tap A to launch it. It's effective enough when you hit something, but miss, and you're wide open for some serious damage. There are two ways it comes in handy: one is to set traps for players trying to get up, and the other is to throw the boomerang to the left or right with either ↑ or (↓ A) to cut the enemy off from approaching you from the side. The former is more effective since the boomerang hovers over them and there's a chance they might rise up right into to it. That may sound easy to avoid, but in the heat of combat, it's easy to lose track of the tiny boomerang. G





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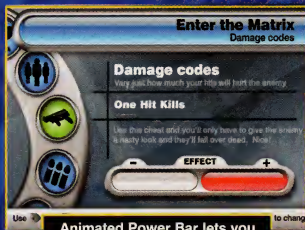
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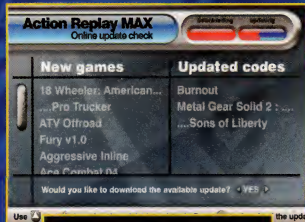
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## ALIENS VS. PREDATOR: EXTINCTION



### Cheat Menu



Pause the game and then press **RI, RI, LI, RI, LI, LI, RI, LI, RI, RI, LI, RI, LI, RI, LI**. While still in the pause menu, select Options and then choose Cheats. If you entered the code correctly, various cheats, such as Enable All Levels and Player Invulnerable, will be available.

Curtis Wong—San Diego, CA

## OUTLAW VOLLEYBALL



### Big Head Mode, Unlock All Characters, and More



During gameplay, press and hold **L**, and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

**Big Breast Mode:** Press **B, Up, Up, B, Y**.

**Big Head Mode:** Press **B, A, B, Y**.

**Unlock All Characters:** Select Exhibition Mode, and at the character select screen, press and hold **L**, and then press **Left, White, Right, White**. If you entered the code correctly, all characters will become available.

## DEF JAM VENDETTA



### Unlock Stages



At the main menu, select Battle Mode, and at the Choose Stage screen, simultaneously press and hold **L, R**, and **Z**, and then enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding stages. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

**Bounty Club:** Press **A, Y, Y, X, X**.

**Def Jam:** Press **X, A, Y, A, B**.

**Def Jam Vendetta:** Press **B, X, X, A, Y, Y**.

**Dragon House:** Press **B, A, Y, A, X**.

**Face Club After Hours:** Press **Y, A, Y, Y, X**.

**Grimeyville:** Press **Y, Y, Y, A, Y**.

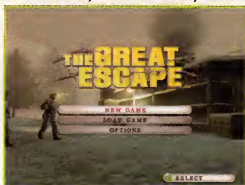
**Junkyard:** Press **A, Y, Y, A, B**.

**Warehouse:** Press **A, A, Y, A, Y**.

## THE GREAT ESCAPE



### All Movies, Select Level, and Unlimited Ammunition



At the main menu, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the Select Level option will appear at the main menu, or the unlocked movies will automatically play.

**All Movies:** Press **L, L, Y, X, X, R, R, Y, Y, X, L, R**.

**Select Level:** Press **Y, R, Y, X, Y, R, X, L, X, X, X, Y**.

**Unlimited Ammunition:** Pause the game and then press **Y, X, L, R, L, R, X, Y, L, Y, Y, R**. If done correctly, your ammunition will automatically replenish when it's depleted.



## DEF JAM VENDETTA



### Unlock Stages



At the main menu, select Battle Mode, and at the Choose Stage screen, simultaneously press and hold **L1, R1, L2, and R2**, and then enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding stages. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

**Bounty Club:** Press X, □, □, ○, ○.

**Club Luda:** Press ○, △, □, X, □.

**Def Jam:** Press ○, X, □, X, △.

**Def Jam Vendetta:** Press △, ○, X, □, □.

**Dragon House:** Press △, X, □, X, ○.

**Face Club After Hours:** Press □, X, □, □, ○.

**Grimeville:** Press □, □, □, X, □.

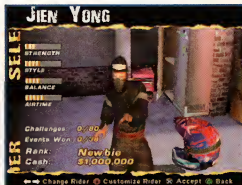
**Junkyard:** Press X, □, □, X, △.

**Warehouse:** Press X, X, □, X, □.

## FREESTYLE METAL X



### All Songs, All Videos, and More



At the main menu, choose Options, and at the Options screen, select Cheats. At the Enter Cheat screen, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a click.

Note: Passwords are case-sensitive.

- \$1 Million:** sugardaddy
- All Bike Parts:** garageking
- All Levels and Events:** universe
- All Outfits:** johnnye
- All Posters and Photo Slots:** seall
- All Riders and Bikes:** dudemaster
- All Songs:** hearall
- All Special Stunt Slots:** fleximan
- All Videos:** watchall

## MIDNIGHT CLUB II



### All Cars Unlocked and Unlock Extra Stat



At the main menu, highlight "Options Mode," highlight "Option: Controller," and then press **Left** to scroll over to Option: Cheat Code. Select Option: Cheat Code, and at the Option: Enter Cheat Code screen, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, it will disappear when you select Accept on the keypad.

Note: Passwords are case-sensitive.

- All Cars Unlocked:** hotwired
- Unlock Extra Stat:** bigbrother

## SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX



### God Mode

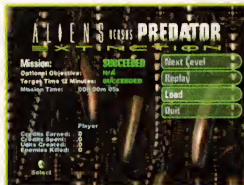
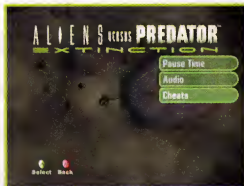


During gameplay, press and hold the **Left Thumbstick**, and then press **B, A, Y, X**. If you entered the code correctly, a message will appear and you'll be invulnerable.

## ALIENS VS. PREDATOR: EXTINCTION



### Cheat Menu



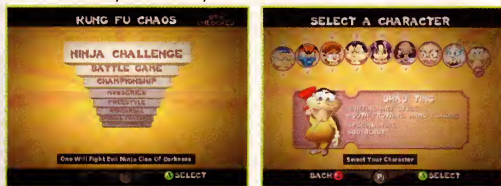
Pause the game and then press **R, R, L, R, L, L, R, L, R, R, L, R, L, L, R, L, L**. While still in the pause menu, select Options and then choose Cheats. If you entered the code correctly, various cheats will be available.





## KUNG FU CHAOS

All Characters, All Levels, and More



At the main menu, press and hold the Left Thumbstick, then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a crowd will cheer.

**All Character Bios:** Press B, Left, A, Right, B, Down, Right, A, White, Left.

**All Characters:** Press B, A, White, Down, Y, B, A, Left, Left, A, Down.

**All Cheats:** Press Left, Up, X, Up, Right, Y, Left, A, Right, Down.

**All Costumes:** Press B, A, Down, B, A, B, Y.

**All Island Scenes:** Press B, A, Y, Start, A, White, A, Y.

**All Levels:** Press Left, A, Down, Y, Right, A, Down, A, Right.

**Championship Mode:** Press Start, Left, A, Y, Down, A, Y.

**Miniseries Mode:** Press Start, Left, Y, Start, Up, B, Up, Right, B.

**Unlock Candi Roll:** Press Left, A, Down, Y, Start, Down, A, Y.

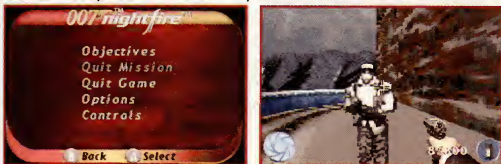
**Unlock Captain Won:** Press Left, A, Right, Down, Y, B, Up, Down.

**Unlock Everything:** Press A, Left, Left, B, Right, A, White, Left.

**Unlock Shao Ting:** Press White, A, Left, Right, Up, Start, B, A, Left, Down, Y.

## JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

500 Bullets, Unlock All Levels, and More



Pause the game and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

**500 Bullets:** Press R, Left, L, Right, Up, Select, Right.

**High Pitched Voices:** Press R, Left, L, Right, Up, Select, L.

**Invincibility:** Press R, Left, L, Right, Up, Select, Left.

**Unlock All Levels:** Press R, Left, L, Right, Up, Select, R.

## SUMMER HEAT BEACH VOLLEYBALL

All Swimsuits, Nails Mode, and More



At the main menu, press  $\square$  to bring up the Options screen. At the Select Option Menu screen, choose Game Settings, and at the Game Settings screen, select Cheats. At the Enter Cheat Code screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a voice will confirm the code entry.

Note: A "." designates a blank space.

All Accessories:	WERIT
All Characters:	PEEPS
All Difficulties:	CHAMP
All Extras at Beach House:	MYPAD
All Locations:	80DAY
All Mini-Games:	MAJOR
All Swimsuits:	GREED
All Trailers:	GAMON
All Videos:	MUSAK
Coconut Ball:	MILKY
High Gravity:	ZIPPY
High Voices:	MOUSE
Low Gravity:	SPACE
Low Voices:	HORSE
Nails Mode:	NAILS
Nerd Ball:	GOLEM
No Arrows:	WHINE
Spinning Heads:	EXOSZ
Sun Ball:	HOT_1

## CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

Cheat Menu



At the main menu, press Left, Left, Right, Right, Up, Up, Down, Down, X, X, Y, Y. Select Options, and if you entered the code correctly, the Cheat option will be available. Select it to access the unlocked cheats.





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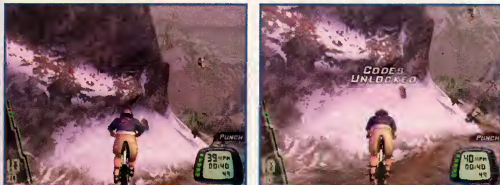
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## DOWNHILL DOMINATION

Anti Gravity, Energy Restore, and More



During gameplay, press Up, Δ, Down, ×, Left, O, Right, □. If you entered the code correctly, a message will appear onscreen. Enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will immediately take effect.

**\$5000:** Press Right, Up, Up, O, O, □.

**Adrenaline Boost:** Press Down, Left, Left, Right.

**Anti Gravity:** Press Down, Δ, □, □, Up.

**Combat Free:** Press Left, □, O, □, Left.

**Combat Upgrade:** Press Up, Down, Left, Left, Right.

**Energy Restore:** Press Down, Right, Right, Left, Left.

**Mega Flip:** Press Right, Up, Up, Right, Right, □.

**Stoke Trick Meter:** Press Down, Left, Left, Right, Right.

**Super Bounce:** Press Left, □, ×, Up, Δ.

**Super Bunny Hop:** Press Up, ×, Left, □, Up.

**Upgrade to Bottle:** Press Down, Right, Right, Left, Left.

## THE POWERPUFF GIRLS: RELISH RAMPAGE

30 Percent Health Boost, 100 Percent Health Boost, And Extra Chemical X Bottle



During gameplay, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will immediately take effect.

**30 Percent Health Boost:** Press L1, L2, L1, □, R2, R1, R2.

**100 Percent Health Boost:** Press L2, R1, R2, L1, ×, Δ, O, □, R2, L1, L2, R1.

**Extra Chemical X Bottle:** Press ×, ×, O, ×, O, L1, L1, ×, ×, O, ×, O, L1, L1.



## NAVAL OPS: WARSHIP GUNNER

\$999,999,999



At the Dock screen, press Left, Left, Right, Right, L2, R2, R1, L1, □, Δ. If you entered the code correctly, you'll receive \$999,999,999.

## RTX: RED ROCK

Easy Mode, Unlock All Levels, and More



At the Main Menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, choose Codes. At the Codes screen, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will take effect when you start a game.

**Difficult Mode:** Press Down, Up, Up, Up, Up, Up, Up, Up, Up, Down.

**Easy Mode:** Press Up, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Up.

**More Items:** Press Right, Right, Right, Right, Right, Left, Left, Left, Up, Up.

**More Special Features:** Press Left, Down, Up, Left, Right, Up, Down, Left, Right, Down.

**Normal Mode:** Press Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down.

**Old Soul Super Weapons:** Press Right, Up, Down, Down, Up, Right, Right, Up, Down, Down.

**Progressive Scan Mode:** Press Right, Up, Right, Right, Up, Right, Right, Right, Up, Right.



**Unlock All Levels:** During gameplay, pause the game. At the pause screen, choose Options and then select Codes. Press Down, Left, Left, Down, Left, Down, Right, Down, Left, Down. Return to the pause menu, select Change Level, and all levels will be available.





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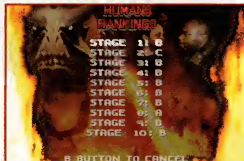
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## REIGN OF FIRE

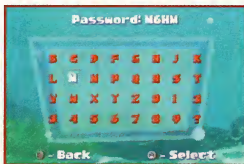
### Level Select



At the Main Menu, select Password, and enter 9XL7GSB78 as a password. If you entered the code correctly, you'll receive a confirming message.

## FINDING NEMO

### Level Passwords



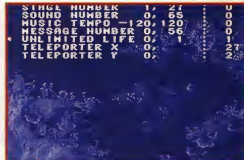
At the main menu, select Password, and at the Password screen, enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding levels. If you entered the password correctly, the unlocked level will be available at the Select Level screen and all images will be available in View Gallery.

Level 2:	HZ51
Level 3:	ZZ51
Level 4:	8061
Level 5:	QHP1
Level 6:	8BP1
Level 7:	73P1
Level 8:	8MN2
Level 9:	1TS2
Level Select and Gallery Images:	M6HM



## SEGA SMASH PACK

### Level Passwords for Ecco the Dolphin And Sonic Spinball



#### Ecco the Dolphin

**Cheat Menu:** During gameplay, press Left or Right to position Ecco so that he faces the screen, and then pause the game. Press Right, B, R, B, R, Down, R, Up. If done correctly, a cheat menu will appear.

**Level Select:** At the Level Password screen, enter the following passwords to unlock these levels. If you entered the password correctly, you'll automatically go to that level.

City of Forever:	NWBVCXGW
City of Forever 2:	?STNTPFY
Cold Water:	YC-?CXGQ
Dark Water:	VFCRKTGK
Deep City:	GZPTFXG-
Deep Water:	KSWKXGV
Hard Water:	RFPCXGV
Ice Zone:	,YNTCXGS
Island Zone:	HSXPBXGX
Jurassic Beach:	TKGTGTGQ
The Lagoon:	RK1VVHCC
The Last Fight:	DLHSTQPT
The Library:	NX:KFXGJ
The Marble Sea:	R,GGFXGY
Open Ocean:	W-QBCXG-
Open Ocean 2:	TS-K,WGC
Origin Beach:	LR:LG TG
Pteranodon Pond:	F?TXGTGF
Ridge Water:	RTGCXGB
The Stomach:	DBBXVQPK
Trilobite Circle:	X-WQGTGT
The Tube:	BV?:!QPY
The Vents:	XPRMMZBD
Undercaves:	HYNCSRDQ
Welcome to the Machine:	BTWJVQP,

#### Sonic Spinball

**Level Select:** At the main menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, choose Enter Codes. Press L, Down, R, Down, A, Down, L, R, Up, L, A, Up, R, A, Up, and then press and hold the following buttons to unlock the corresponding level. While holding the button, press Start to return to the main menu, and press Start again to go to the unlocked level.

**Level 2:** Press L.

**Level 3:** Press R.

**Level 4:** Press A.

**View Credits:** At the main menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, press A, Up, R, Up, L, Up, A, R, Down, A, L, Down, R, L, Down. If done correctly, the credits will appear.



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**In commemoration of the launch of FINAL FANTASY® XI, show us your best drawings of the FINAL FANTASY XI universe: characters, monsters, cities—whatever!**

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All art becomes the property of GamePro magazine. All submissions must be original artwork. For official rules and regulations, please see page 195.

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- SELECTION:** All eligible entries received will be classified by age (on the date of entry) into the following groups; thirteen (13) to seventeen (17), and eighteen (18) and older. A total of six (6) Winners will be selected from all eligible entries received. There will be one (1) Grand Prize Winner, one (1) First Prize Winner, and one (1) Second Prize Winner from each age group. Francis Mac, the Senior Vice President and Director of Editorial and Creative Services for IDG Entertainment, will select the six (6) Winners on or about January 21, 2004. Entries will be judged on originality and creativity. Sponsors' and judges' decisions are final and binding in all matters. Winners will be notified by mail. Winners may not substitute, assign, or transfer prize or redeem prize for cash. Sponsors reserve right to substitute prize with prize of equal or greater value if advertised prize becomes unavailable.
- PRIZES:** The following prizes (with corresponding estimated retail values) will be awarded: Two Grand Contest Winners will receive the following: one copy of FINAL FANTASY® XI for Windows® (\$50), one NVIDIA GeForce FX 5900 Ultra graphics card (\$500), one FINAL FANTASY® XI for Windows® official strategy guide (\$20), one FINAL FANTASY® XI poster (\$5), and a one-year subscription to GamePro magazine (\$24.95). Two First Prize Contest Winners will receive the following: one copy of FINAL FANTASY® XI for Windows® (\$50), one NVIDIA GeForce FX 5600 Ultra graphics card (\$250), one FINAL FANTASY® XI poster (\$5), and a one-year subscription to GamePro magazine (\$24.95). Two Second Prize Contest Winners will receive the following: one copy of FINAL FANTASY® XI for Windows® (\$50). Total ERV of prizes is \$1,959.80. Prize won by a minor may be awarded to parent/legal guardian.
- ELIGIBILITY:** Contest is subject to all U.S. federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and is void where prohibited, taxed, or restricted by law. Contest is open to legal residents age 13 or older of the contiguous 48 United States and

Canada, except for Arizona, Quebec, and Puerto Rico. Employees of Sponsors and their affiliates, subsidiaries, distributors, retailers, and anyone involved with the design, production, execution, or distribution of Sponsors' products or related promotional materials and their families are not eligible. Canadian residents, in order to be eligible to win, must first correctly answer a time-limited, skill-testing question administered by telephone.

**7. GENERAL:** Prize Winners (and Winner's parent/legal guardian, if a Winner is a minor) will be required to sign and return an affidavit of eligibility and liability release, and where lawful, a publicity release within 14 days of notification or prize will be forfeited and awarded to alternate Winner. By entering this Contest, you expressly agree that all of the results and proceeds of the Contest entry are and shall be, from the inception of creation, a "work made for hire" for IDG Entertainment, Inc. "IDG." You further acknowledge, certify, and agree that IDG shall be deemed the author and/or exclusive owner throughout the world of any and all rights in, and to the entry and underlying composition embodied therein, and any renewal or extension of rights in connection therewith, and of any and all other rights thereto. In the event that the services rendered in connection with the entry are not deemed to be "work made for hire," then the rights therein shall be deemed irrevocably transferred to IDG by virtue of this agreement. You will, upon request, execute, acknowledge, and deliver to IDG such additional documents as IDG Entertainment may deem necessary to evidence and effectuate IDG's rights hereunder. If prize notification or prize is returned as non-deliverable, prize will be forfeited and an alternate Winner selected. Neither the Sponsor nor any of its agencies are responsible for lost, illegible entries. Persons found tampering with or abusing any aspect of this Contest, as solely determined by the Sponsors, will be disqualified. If disqualified for any tampering or abuses, Sponsors reserve the right to terminate entrant's eligibility to participate in Contest. Winner (and Winner's parent/legal guardian, if Winner is a minor) by acceptance of prize (a) agrees that Sponsors and their affiliate companies, parents, subsidiaries, advertising and promotion agencies, and all of their respective officers, directors, employees, representatives, and agents will have no liability whatsoever for, and shall be held harmless by Winner against, any liability for any injuries, losses, or damages of any kind to persons, including death or property resulting in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, from acceptance, possession, misuse, or use of the prize or participation in this Contest or participation in any Contest related activity, and (b) except where legally prohibited, grants permission for Sponsors and those acting under their authority to use his/her name, photograph, voice, and/or likeness for advertising and/or publicity purposes without additional compensation. All federal, state, and local taxes, registration fees, and/or other costs associated with winning the prize are the sole responsibility of the Winner. Sponsors shall not be responsible for any such taxes, fees, and costs. All decisions of Sponsors on all matters relating to this promotion are final. Unclaimed prizes will not be awarded. If an individual Winner does not claim his or her prize by February 28, 2004, the prize will be forfeited back to the supplier. Prizes cannot be claimed after the Contest has been completed.

For names of Winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for receipt by February 15, 2004 to: FINAL FANTASY® XI Art Attack Contest, P.O. Box 23040, Oakland, CA 94623-0040.

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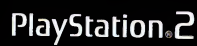
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