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JAK II RENEGADE: "THE GTA III OF PLATFORM GAMES!"



ISSUE 119  
SEPTEMBER 2003

# HYPER

*"there will be twists & turns,  
unexpected things will happen..."*

## HALO 2

BUNGIE LET US IN ON A FEW SECRETS

### RUGBY LEAGUE 2004

Finally! We tackle  
it for the first time

### WIN THE CHANCE TO BE A HYPER REPORTER

& take part in the Cadbury Mario  
Kart: Double Dash challenge

next  
GAMING



### KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

Is it really the best console RPG in the galaxy?

### REAL GIRL GAMERS

Hardcore female gamers  
are coming to get you!

### TOMB RAIDER: ANGEL OF DARKNESS

Back from the dead, again.



CLASSICS REVISITED: THE TOP TEN WEIRDEST GAMES EVER!

19



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The wait for the greatest games of 2003 is almost over >>

<< Coming soon...

The distant future.

Planetary colonisation continues and the army has given control of its defensive weapons to a Computerised Armament Management System (CAMS). Tragedy strikes when one of the settlements is turned into a killing field after a CAMS malfunctions...



# P.N.03™

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In an effort to bring the situation under control the military sends in Vanessa Z. Schneider, a freelance mercenary and a soldier filled with rage over the death of her parents who were murdered by one of the army's machines.

- Fast action gameplay - unleash devastating attacks and killer combos through choreographed moves.
- Two methods of attack - Palm Shots, an attack mode that locks onto targets; Energy Drives, a special attack that is capable of mass destruction.
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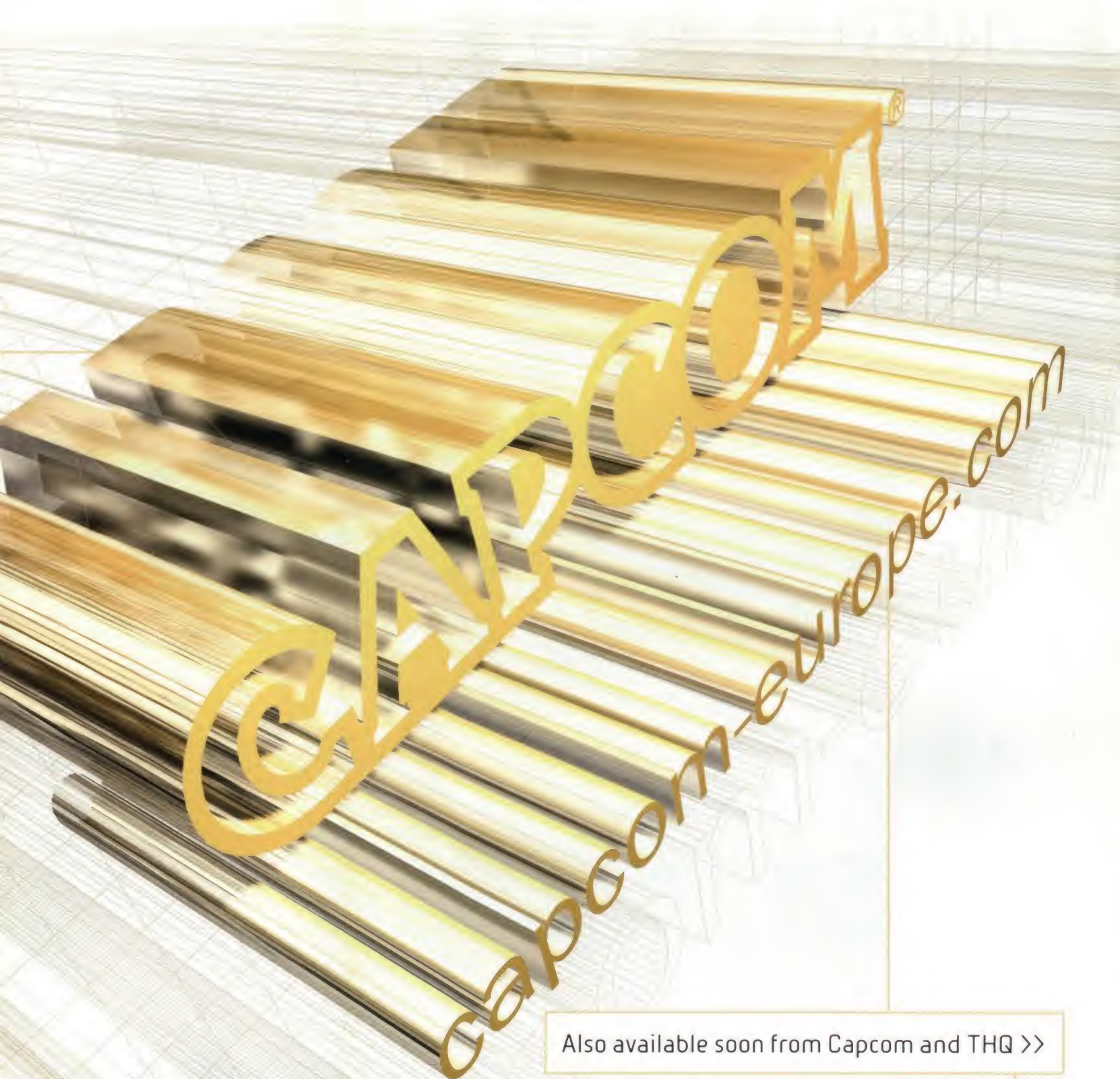


PlayStation 2

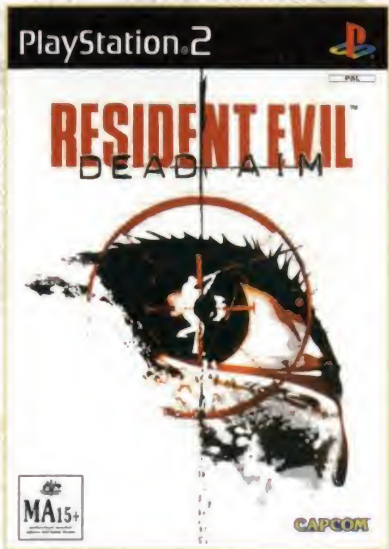


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We probe the Bungie brain for some information on this hot sequel

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# HYPER»»

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# EDITORIAL

»» One of the problems with internet game reviewers is that they tend to put their reviews online as soon as they possibly can, just because they have that instant access to their audience. More often than not it results in reviews that are off the mark. The reviews are sometimes gushing full of praise because the reviewer is still caught up in the initial excitement of the game they're playing. They haven't given themselves time to calm down and assess the game objectively. Because they work for a website, there's that pressure to get the review online as soon as humanly possible.

You could say that the luxury of time is one of the benefits of a monthly print publication. We also go through that burst of excitement when a game arrives, but we know that no one will read our opinion for a number of weeks, so we don't rush it. We reflect. We write and delete and re-write. We even have time to wait a few days and read it again before the inevitable delete button is pressed once more. In the end, I'd argue that games magazines are far more objective than their internet cousins when it comes to games reviews. Am I hinting at a particular game in question this month? I'll let you decide that one...

**Eliot Fish** »» Editor

# BIGGER IS BETTER

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RR3750/H

# NEWS

**IN THE NEWS:** PGR2 features Sydney tracks ■ Win the chance to be a Hyper reporter ■ Tecmo unveil bikini line and lots more

**BEAUTY!**

## TAKE A TOUR OF SYDNEY

**Project Gotham Racing 2 "harbours" a secret**

It has been revealed that Project Gotham Racing 2, due in November, will feature tracks set in Sydney around our own majestic Harbour. The routes have been photorealistically modelled on the real thing, allowing gamers the chance to burn through the Rocks and under the Harbour Bridge, powerslide around the Opera House and hightail it down George Street in the middle of the CBD.

### STOP FOR A BEER

Microsoft has informed us that even some of the smallest details have been perfectly replicated. "Take a peek at the Park Hyatt, marvel at the sandstone effects on Sydney's Bridge foundations and look at the highly detailed pub fronts of the Lord Nelson and the Orient Hotel or even the infamous Jackson's On

George!" Shame we won't be able to stop for a beer, eh?

In keeping with the Sydney theme, the radio stations available whilst racing the Sydney tracks will include Triple M, 2 Day FM and Nova 96.9. You'll even hear DJs Jimmy Z and Jason "Soulman" Sole. Hey, Microsoft, is there still time to include Triple J?

It's nice to finally see a local city get a look in after all these years of racing London, Los Angeles and Tokyo. Other locations in PGR2 include Moscow, Barcelona, Edinburgh and Florence, so it sounds like there will be some serious variety on offer this time around.

This game is already going to be awesome, and the inclusion of Sydney is just a huge added incentive for Aussie gamers — we can't wait!



Let's go shopping for Opals.



It rocks. Oh, it IS the Rocks!

**SEGA SURPRISE**

## OUTRUN 2

Almost 20 years later, the sequel...

Being developed for Xbox and the arcades, Outrun 2 returns us to the heady days of 1986 with its unique style of hotrod checkpoint racing. There will be a Time Attack (allowing you to upload your times via the Live service to compete in world wide rankings), a versus mode for up to four players, and a single-player Quest mode. As in the original, forks in the road will force the player into taking alternate paths to the finish line providing a fair amount of replay value. Ferrari are the featured manufacturer, so we can expect some slick mobiles.



It's not Sydney, but it'll do.



No Opal shops or pubs anywhere!

## CAPTION THIS!

Come on, make us laugh. Do your best. You can do it! Just send your funny screen captions to us at [captionthis@next.com.au](mailto:captionthis@next.com.au) with Caption This Part 46 in the subject line.

**PART 46**



Ha dee ha ha.



# WIN

the chance to be a

# HYPER REPORTER

for a day, and take part in the

# Cadbury MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!

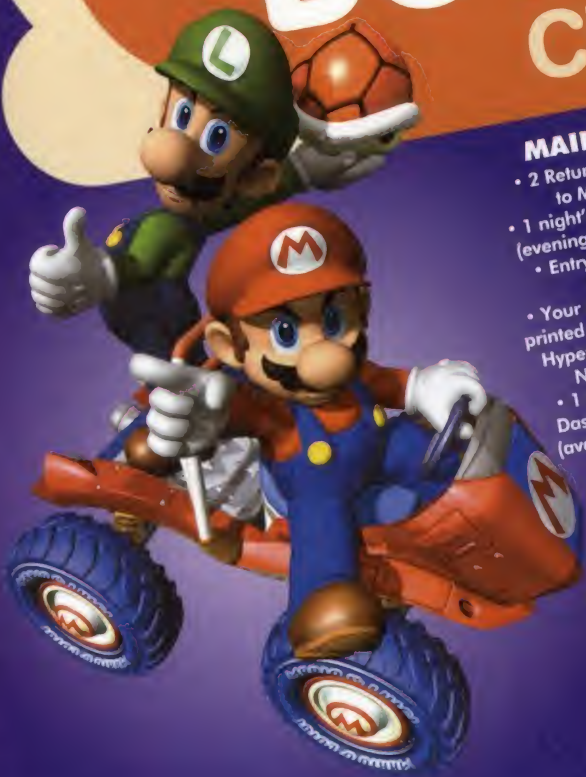
## Challenge!

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Nintendo

VILLAGE  
CINEMAS



### MAIN PRIZE

- 2 Return Flight Tickets to Melbourne\*
- 1 night's accommodation (evening of October 18th)
- Entry into Mario Kart Challenge
- Your article on the event printed in Hyper, posted on Hyperactive.com.au and Nintendo.com.au
- 1 Mario Kart: Double Dash GameCube game (available in November)

### RUNNER-UP PRIZES

- 5 x Mario Kart: Double Dash games (available in November)
- 5 x \$20 Kmart vouchers
- 5 x Village Cinemas Double Movie Passes
- 5 x "One month's supply of Triple Decker chocolate bars" (36 x 55g bars)

Nintendo Australia and Hyper magazine want to offer you the chance to be one of the first gamers in the country to play Mario Kart: Double Dash. The winner will receive 2 return flight tickets to Melbourne to take part in the Cadbury Mario Kart Challenge on the 19th of October on the Vmax big screen at Village Cinemas Knox! Not only that, but Hyper magazine want you to write about your experience, and we'll print it in the magazine and have it posted on Hyperactive.com.au and Nintendo's official website at Nintendo.com.au!

What an amazing prize! Five runners-up will also win an awesome pack that includes Mario Kart: Double Dash, a \$20 Kmart voucher, a Village Cinemas double pass and one month's supply of Cadbury Triple Decker chocolate bars! This is simply the best competition we've ever offered in the pages of Hyper!

To be in with a chance to win, please tell us in 50 words or less why you want to play Mario Kart: Double Dash!

Send your entries to **Mario Kart Challenge, Hyper, 78 Renwick St. Redfern NSW, 2016**

**ENTRIES CLOSE SEPTEMBER 3 2003**

\*Return flight tickets not applicable to Melbourne Residents  
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HE SHOOTS

# PRO EVO 3 ... YES!

Sounds like the best game ever

Enlightened gamers are aware of the majesty that is Pro Evolution Soccer 2, so the new details that have emerged on Pro Evolution 3 should get some blood pumping. Pro Evo 3 should be due in November, and will sport a number of major changes. For starters, KCET have re-jigged the majority of player animations and added even more details, such as more elaborate off-the-ball moves and facial animation. Injuries will also be visible, with players sporting bandages. Some animations will be specific to certain "star" players.

Other enhancements include a four division master league, a referee that actually plays the advantage, and a shop where you can unlock players, stadiums, hairstyles etc. depending on points



He scores for Next Media, and they win the Publisher's Cup!

you've earned in the game. KCET has also gone to great lengths to design a better interface with more user-friendly menus and edit screens. One of our favourite additions is the option to play as one specific player for an entire match, instead of other players being able to switch onto them. Now those multiplayer sessions will involve role-playing!



Use your head. Pre-order now!



## OVERFLOW

Data East Corporation, the video game company that brought the world Burger Time, have officially gone bankrupt and have ceased operations. The company had been shouldering a 3.3 billion Yen debt since the year 1999, and it's finally bitten them in the arse.

Nintendo has already started talking about the successor to the Game Boy Advance SP. Takeshi Kiyuna has been quoted as saying that the successor to Game Boy Advance SP will have a bigger screen, and the resolution will be at least 300 x 200, in 260,000 colours.

Thanks to the success of NBA Street, EA Big has started development on NFL Street – a hardcore, hip version of NFL for consoles. If it's as fun as NBA Street was, then we'll be happy to stop playing Pro Evo to play that weird American football game... for a bit.

Criterion studios, the developer of the Burnout series, has let on some details about their next two games entitled Black and Dust Storm. Black is a shooter and it seems that Dust Storm is another racing game.

Monolith are working on a No One Lives Forever spin-off game, called Contract Jack. The player will be John Jack, a contract killer for H.A.R.M. during the events that took place before the first NOLF game. There will be a more robust multiplayer mode this time...

It has been confirmed, sadly, that F-Zero GX on the GameCube will not support multiplayer LAN support for use with the Nintendo GameCube network adapter.

SKIMPY

## TECMO BIKINI RANGE

To not be seen dead or alive in?

Tecmo has entered the fashion industry with the unveiling of its range of Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball bikinis, complete with styles and logos from the game. Team Ninja, the developers of the game, actually designed the bikinis themselves, and there are four distinct styles on offer that can be purchased directly online at [www.tecmoinc.com](http://www.tecmoinc.com).

Buy some now for the girlfriend you might have had if you weren't sitting around playing Xtreme Beach Volleyball all day... and if you're a girl gamer, just laugh!



Can't caption. Drooling.



ADD-ON

## THE DUNGEON EXPANDS

One more siege before the 2004 sequel

Microsoft has announced Legends of Aranna, a Dungeon Siege expansion pack that will launch later this year. The adventure leaves the kingdom of Ehb for the lush tropical island of Aranna and an all-new ancient mystery.

New features include fancy over-the-top spell effects, a half-giant player character, and the ability to morph into animals. For fans of the mule, there will be an all-new pack animal in Legends of Aranna! Also expect cool new items, new armour types, and some very hideous new monsters to smack down.



Let me siege your face, fool!

## WINNERS

### Hyper 117

#### RISE OF NATIONS

- Grant Wissemann, QLD
- Joseph Towers, NSW
- James Lamborn, NT
- David Kauschke, SA
- Angela Ruhland, QLD
- Joanne Holland, NSW
- Ian Merrett, QLD
- Robyn Lakeman, VIC
- Ms A Zaroff, QLD
- Alex Kilby, NSW

#### MOTO GP 2

- Laura Parry, QLD
- Roslyn Bramwell, VIC
- Bryan Marriage, QLD
- June Paul, VIC
- David Barnes, NSW

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FIRST LOOK!

R: Racing Evolution  
PC/XBOX/GCN Developer: Namco



CONTROLLING

# CRYSTAL CHRONICLES TO REQUIRE GBA

Got three friends with GBAs?

❑ Nintendo Japan has confirmed that Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles on the GameCube will require the Game Boy Advance and GCN/GBA link up cable in order to play the game in multiplayer mode. Whilst standard controller support was in the game at this year's E3, it seems it will be GBA only at launch, with a link up cable being packed in with the game. The single player game, thankfully, can still be played with a standard Cube controller.



LIGHTS OUT

# THAI GOVT. IMPOSES GAMING CURFEW

Go to bed you geeks!

❑ In a bid to prevent the worrying rise of online gaming addiction, gamers in Thailand will find that games servers will soon be made to shut down at 10pm until 6am to force players offline. Internet cafes will also be required to close between certain hours and impose regular 2 hour breaks in play – probably a good move considering the number of deaths in Asian internet cafes recently from exhausted gamers. However, the online gaming curfew seems somewhat heavy-handed, in our opinion. There will be a trial period between July 15 – September 30 to see how gamers respond to these measures.



Mission Impossible: Operation Surma  
PS2/XBOX Developer: Paradigm



FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK!



## Aliens Vs Predator: Extinction

PS2/XBOX Developer: Zono Inc.



## Headhunter: Redemption

PS2/XBOX Developer: Sega



HIGH SCORE!

## CLOCKING THE KONG

Gamer Beats World Record

American gamer, Steve Wiebe, scored 947,200 points on Donkey Kong, creating a brand new world record high score for the old Nintendo platformer.

"The feat was recorded on videotape so future generations can see how it was done," said Walter Day, Chief Editor of the forthcoming edition of Twin Galaxies' Official Video Game & Pinball Book of World Records. Wiebe is also the same gamer who has passed the 1,000,000 points barrier in Donkey Kong Junior, so it's obvious that he loves his monkeys.



KILL US NOW

## THE SIMS IS MAKIN' MONEY

Anyone for another expansion pack?

EA has announced that the final expansion pack for The Sims will be available at the end of the year, entitled, The Sims: Makin' Magic.

With inspiration from Harry Potter, Charmed and lord knows what else, your new sims will be able to cast spells to improve their love life or hassle the neighbours. You'll also be able to visit the new Magic Town for secret recipes and spells. We can't wait... for The Sims 2, that is.

FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK! FIRST LOOK!

NEWS

>> HYPER

XIII

# NEW Jak CITY

## Jak II: Renegade



PS2

CATEGORY: Platformer >> PLAYERS: 1 >>

PUBLISHER: SCEE >> AVAILABLE: October >>

WOW-O-METER



## NAUGHTY DOG'S JASON RUBIN TELLS HYPER WHY JAK II: RENEGADE IS THE GTA3 OF PLATFORMERS...



**HYPHER:** What are the major changes with Jak II: Renegade to Jak & Daxter?

**Jason Rubin:** It's changed drastically. There were things we wanted to do with Jak I that we couldn't do, we just ran out of time. Some of those included actually getting a good story in the game. In Jak I you had to herd 5 yak cows into a pen, but what has that got to do with saving the planet? We just put it in because that was the task. We've always written a game and then tried to get a story that worked around it, but this time we wrote a story first and then made the game. When you look at the first Jak & Daxter, there was plot at the beginning, plot in the middle and plot at the end — everything else was just crap. Jak II is very different; you have a story that progresses every single mission. Every mission you're told what to do, little pieces of information about what's going on in the world, and you're slowly piecing it together. It has a real honest-to-goodness story! That was one of the things we changed...

**HYPHER:** Okay, what else?

**JR:** We also wanted to make the game a little more freeform — or what we call "integrated". In Jak I, we didn't actually have that many things that you could do. We gave you vehicles in some places, you can't take things around, you can't move it around... Look at a game like Crash (Bandicoot) — level 16 you're in a bi-plane, level 17 you're in a submarine, level 18 you can't use either one of those ever again! In Ratchet and Clank, we gave you metal boots for a specific task, to walk on a specific metal area, and the boots are useless on all the other metal in the game. In Jak II, it's all different.

All the moves from Jak I are back, add to that a morphing gun that can change into four different weapons. You can use that in combination with fighting moves — you can kick or punch and then jump up in the air and shoot down. Add to that a hoverboard, with rail slides, flips, all that stuff. Add to that Dark Jak, which is an

alternate side of Jak, where he becomes a smart bomb.

There are different ways of doing the levels — which is inspiration from Grand Theft Auto. Not the violence aspect, but the freedom. The game itself is more linear, because it has a story that is slowly progressing as you go through the game — we couldn't allow you to do 30 things at once — but honestly, everyone plays Jak in a linear fashion, they just do it in a different linear fashion to everyone else. But once you're in the level, you have many more options.

One way to look at it is, we got rid of the idea that you can go anywhere and do anything, we have made it so there are multiple ways to get through the same level. If you die a few times, it's okay because you can go try different things.

**HYPHER:** So there are more "tools" at the player's disposal to allow for creativity, as opposed to having complete freedom to tackle multiple missions at once.

**JR:** Exactly. You can do some levels entirely on the hoverboard, even at times when it's completely stupid. You can be jumping in mid-air and whip out the hoverboard and die, simply because you can do it.

**HYPHER:** Glad you brought up Grand Theft Auto, because it's a game that lets the player be so creative outside of just solving the missions. You can have fun screwing around for hours doing nothing...

**JR:** ...And we have a large city, twenty times the size of Jak I that you can mess around in!

**HYPHER:** So in Jak II, players will get a lot of enjoyment just from fooling around?

**JR:** Sure, and every time you play, there are people in different places — it's random right? The AI isn't scripted. So, you're just walking around and there will be different cars and different people, everything's different.

**HYPHER:** So is this the direction that platform games are headed?

**JR:** Well, it's one way for platform games to go. I think, right now, it's new, novel and interesting. But I don't think it has to go this way. There's a certain comfort level in knowing that there's only one way to get through a level. It's certainly easier to balance your game that



Jak goes for a quiet Sunday drive.



Emperor Jak Palpatine hard at work.



He's going to get a hernia carrying that thing...

way, when you know the player has to do it one way.

**HYPER:** It's funny that gamers complain that games aren't non-linear enough, yet in terms of platform gaming, the shining examples of perfection are early Mario games that are completely linear!

**JR:** Yeah! You look at Donkey Kong Country, and it's button for button... you look at people play it and the only difference is the number of times they die. You do the same thing in the same place every single time.

**HYPER:** So do you think the fight against linearity is a problem that developers have encountered now with 3D games?

**JR:** I think maybe it was a misdirection that we went in at first. We said, 'now we have this capability, we have to use it'. Gamers saw the possibilities and said 'we want it!' but they didn't actually realise that the bottom line is that nobody plays a game in a non-linear fashion. Because you can't do TWO things at once. They always play it in one specific order, and when they go back and play it in a different order what are they really gaining? If you can do THIS before you can do THAT... it's the SAME stuff. If we had shuffled the levels in Crash Bandicoot, so that you could play level 16, 18, 23, 20, 21, 9, it wouldn't have been a different game if you'd have played it straight through, yet that's effectively what non-linearity was in 2001.

**HYPER:** Well, what's enjoyable is that if you get stuck on something you can move on and do something else...

**JR:** There are usually one or two or three tasks that you can do at any given time (in Jak II), but we bring you back to one task pretty often. You can go off and try different stuff, it's just that you can't do 30 things at once, which you could kinda do in Jak & Daxter.

Another problem with Jak & Daxter, is that we couldn't tell a story through the characters. You could go and solve a puzzle, come back, and... you didn't need the guy to explain to you what you just did, because you'd done it! It's plot driven now. There's almost no collection in the game... only ammo, and you don't HAVE to pick up ammo. We don't do that crap anymore — that was cheap gameplay. It's a lot more structured game now, and it makes a lot more sense.

**HYPER:** So what kind of objectives are there?

**JR:** They're completely and utterly varied. For example, one of the early things we do is make you climb to the top of a tower, which is basically

training. But the reason you're doing it, is because you're trying to join the underground. Jak wants revenge, and he's trying to join the underground to get back at the baron, but you have to prove yourself by stealing the baron's banner from the top of this thing. Everything makes sense in terms of the plot. You go to a race track and whoever wins the race gets a tour of the palace — and that gets you near the baron, so you go do the race. There's a reason to do everything.

There's even a lot of stuff you can change in the game. After you climb the tower, it crumbles down — we've done a lot with physics in this game — and it's collapsed. You feel like you're actually doing something to this world.

**HYPER:** Tell us more about the new physics.

**JR:** We really wanted the city to be non-scripted, so we created a physics system that allows all the vehicles to react — so you smash into a vehicle and it goes careening off and bounces into another and they blow up, and parts are flying everywhere... we do a lot of that. But also, we wanted the player to feel like they have more of an effect on the world.

For example, there's a construction mech you can get into. You punch using the mech, hit a wall, and the wall shatters out and all these rocks go tumbling around and do all this really cool physics stuff. I just knocked out a wall in the level! It really has this feeling, like you're powerful. It's not just "oh I'm a powerful character" but you can't knock this small plant over — you can go smash the wall!

**HYPER:** So do you start with perfecting the controls, and then build your gameworld around that?

**JR:** Yeah, you make the player as comfortable as you can with what they can do, and you force them in some cases to use everything.

**HYPER:** Well, Jak looks a little different this time around...

**JR:** Yeah, he's a little darker. A little meaner. He's older; he's spent a few years in prison. He's experimented on at the beginning of the game — that's what turns him into Dark Jak — he's definitely got attitude now. He's angry, he's out for revenge.

**HYPER:** How much time was spent on re-creating the character?

**JR:** A lot. It was very hard to get the voice. The voice in the English version is done by a guy named Mike Irwin — he actually plays the young Bruce Banner in the Hulk movie (although I think they cut most of his scenes). He's a young upcoming star. A perfect choice for Jak.

We have 80 minutes of cutscenes



— you should watch all of them, but you can button out if you want...

**HYPHER:** A lot of games don't let you do that.

**JR:** ...we let you do that! I mean, we have guys at Naughty Dog who say, "it's not about story, it's about gameplay, darnit I don't want to have to watch it". It's virtually a religious battle! I literally had some people say "I will quit the company if you can't button

out", and on the same day had someone else say, "if you let people button out of the cutscenes, I'm leaving the company because it ruins everything I've done"!

Anyway, we also have about two hours of dialogue — although you might not discover all of it.

**HYPHER:** So, it seems that Daxter has been shoved aside a little.

**JR:** Absolutely not. In fact, Daxter has a bigger role in this game than he had in the last one. He's playable in a few of the levels, so if anything Daxter has a bigger role. In a way, the first game was about Daxter. In this game it's about Jak. We really wanted to focus on Jak. Although in this game, Jak & Daxter will actually talk to each other. They have a lot more interplay.

**HYPHER:** How big a game is Jak II overall?


**JR:** Much bigger than Jak I. Jak I was too short. Jak II is going to play, we guess, about three to four times as long. And that's without the replay value. There are some huge levels!

**HYPHER:** What about the upcoming Sony PSP? Got any plans for that?

**JR:** It's a really cool device. I think it might be a nail in the coffin for Nintendo. But right now, we're focused on finishing Jak II. I'd love somebody to do a Jak game for the PSP, but we just don't have time right now. It's a very cool handheld, though. Very powerful.

**HYPHER:** Thanks for chatting to us!

**JR:** No problem. <<



**DAXTER HAS A BIGGER ROLE IN THIS GAME THAN HE HAD IN THE LAST ONE. HE'S PLAYABLE IN A FEW OF THE LEVELS**

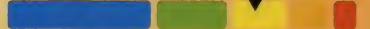
# MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

»» PS2 / GCN / XBOX

CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >>

WOW-O-METER

PUBLISHER: EA >> AVAILABLE: Christmas 2003 >>





**E**A are supremely confident in the Medal of Honor series at the moment. It's undoubtedly on a roll, with success across all formats and in both the East and the West. Such is their confidence, that in addition to a new Allied Assault expansion pack for PC and Pacific Assault for PC (which will share many resources and missions with the console titles), EA are making two new console titles — one in time for Christmas this year and one for Christmas next year.

To find out a little more about how the games are coming along, we spoke to Christopher Cross (we didn't dare call him Kriss Kross!), the Game Design Director on all the MOH console titles at EA's LA studio.

#### FINDING KNEE BONES

Rising Sun will be quite different from previous MOH games, moving from the Army-centric European theatres to the Pacific theatre. The games tell the stories of two brothers, and take you all the way through the period of 1941-1944. In Rising Sun you'll be playing as Marine Corporal Joseph Griffin across ten missions, as Christopher explains: "You follow one brother

and he participates in several marine operations and then gets recruited into the OSS. After that he goes on this quest to hunt down what's going on with Yamashita's gold. The Japanese are stockpiling all this gold, pillaging everywhere they take over and melting it all down and building up an economic base. He's going to be running that down, which will take him to places like Singapore, Thailand, Burma — the bridge on the river Kwai, a giant Japanese aircraft carrier, the Philippines, and the Guadalcanal in the Solomons." Most interesting of all is that Griffin will end up infiltrating a Japanese POW camp in the Philippines to rescue his brother, and presumably this will be where the second game kicks off.

Although firmly residing at the arcade end of the gaming spectrum, the MOH games have always gone to painstaking lengths to authentically represent the settings — through accurately modeled weapons, clothing, locations and so on. Rising Sun will be no different. We asked Christopher what kind of research is involved: "First of all we do tactics training with Captain Dye. Captain Dye is our military advisor on the game. He's worked on things like Platoon, Saving Private Ryan, Band of Brothers etc and he really gives

the whole team a perspective on how the military does things." In fact, Captain Dye has been working on the Medal of Honor games from the beginning, and brings with him an encyclopedic military knowledge, allowing the team to discuss everything from small details about weapons through to mission designs and layouts.

Christopher continues: "Aside from that, we use a huge research library of books. We do a lot of online research, keeping in mind we have to verify all of that! We just sent someone to the national archives to look at archival footage and see what we could find, and sort of do a lot of digging that way. We also sent a team of us to the South Pacific to actually go to the locations. We went to the Guadalcanal, we went to Thailand to actually see the bridge on the river Kwai, to Singapore to walk the streets and get a feel for what it may have been like during the occupation. We did two trips actually — we also did one for the second game, so we went to Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima, and others. I went on both those trips and you just don't get a sense for that stuff from a book. You get there and you stand in a fox hole that was dug out of rock and you're pulling up a box of



The slow-motion Blau effect...

mortar shells that have been there for 60 years, and finding knee bones and shit like that all over the place. It's one of those things where you just go 'wow, this is crazy'."

**IT HAS TO BE FUN**

The team also spent some time talking to veterans about their experiences. As Christopher explained: "On the Iwo Jima trip we were there with some marines who had actually stormed Iwo Jima. It takes a little while to get them going, but once they do, they can't stop talking about it and they have a real interest in spreading their stories through this medium, because they're usually very closed mouth about talking about World War II. They don't want to tell their family about it, it was too gruesome... but now that they're getting older and they realise they may not have that much time and the information may be lost, they're trying to spread it. At first they were very wary of us 'Oh, you punk kids coming in here, making your videogames' but by the second or third day of the trip, they wanted to sit down and talk, so we did a lot of interviews with them, on camera. And they saw that we were actually serious about sticking as true to history as we can and telling the stories of the individual soldiers."

"Some of the stories that those

guys told are really just incredible, and y'know, it's great game material! It's sad to say but in a good way, it's awesome game material, and I'd like to get those stories built into the game. It's something that's very important to everyone on the team, particularly the people that went on those trips,

because now you have some personal investment in the locations, in the veterans and in representing a high quality standard in what we're doing. You look at other WWII games and they have a tendency to get really campy. They do the really bad WWII movie thing right? And y'know, we do some of that, and we definitely have to walk the line — as it has to be fun, but we're always in the back of our minds thinking about that respect for the veterans and bringing a certain amount of class to the title. Or else we couldn't have the name Medal of Honor, because the congressional Medal of Honor society would roast us, so that's something that's part of our mission statement — to make sure we represent everything in the game in a classy manner, and particularly going to the Pacific, we're going to try and do that with the Japanese soldiers too."

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**NO GORE AND NO GIBLETS**

We also asked Christopher, given this importance on authenticity, what the team's stance is towards

blood in the series: "Originally, before becoming a teen product, we weren't really thinking about it. And there was a major transition when we said 'okay we're going to be a teen product, let's take the blood out, or at least don't put any more in, and no gore and no giblets and stuff like that'. And it's kind of funny because I think that adds to the class factor."

The team may have forsaken blood, but they're working hard to convey the reality in other ways: "Impact is an important thing, and that's why we went with the dust hits, because that's one of the things that is noticeable when clothes get hit, that dirt will fly off. It's a tradeoff, I don't think we'll ever do the blood... It also challenges the animation team because they have to sell those hits in a much more dramatic fashion. The user has to understand what just happened through the animation. That's why we're such sticklers for hit locations — getting reactions. Because we have

to make up for the fact that we don't get big flashy comic book outpours or arms falling off or blood splattering all over the place."

The locations in Rising Sun are obviously very different to those in the previous titles, so we asked Christopher how this will be reflected in the level design and aesthetics of the game: "Some of the things we're shooting for, particularly in the jungle environments, is to represent that the jungles aren't all just jungles. Everybody thinks jungles, they think Tarzan. Y'know, vines and trees and canopy and rainforest, but even islands that are close to a mile apart from each other have different characteristics and features. And having seen that stuff, it's actually very important. You'll notice that our Thailand jungle looks nothing like the Guadalcanal jungle, which is nothing like the Guam jungles... there's all these specific characteristics that come into it."

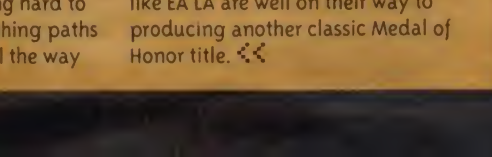
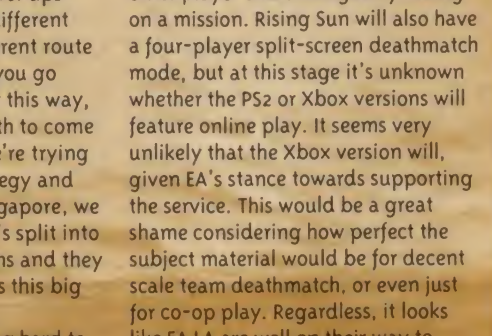
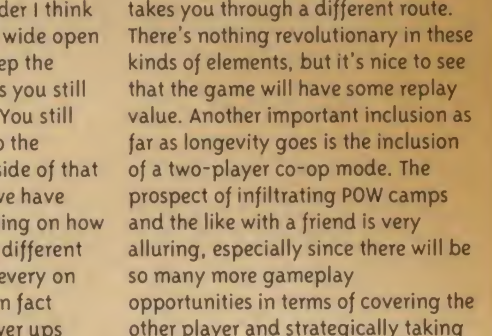
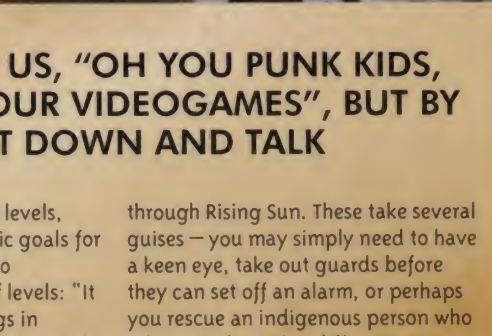
"As far as design goes, those



Ooer I feel sea sick.



Have at you with my licorice sticks!



"Oh my goodness, the chips!"

Licorice power all the way!

That'll teach the chef for snoozing on the job.

### PEARLS OF WISDOM

»» Although the build we've played of *Rising Sun* is very early, it's already looking every bit as cinematic and engrossing as the previous titles. Just like *Frontline*, the opening sequence sets the tone for the game as a whole brilliantly, and is at once intense, epic and stylish. The setting? December 7th, 1941.

The camera pans over a quiet night in Pearl Harbour, but unbeknownst to the allies, several squads of Japanese fighters are approaching. Your character Joseph Griffin is lying on his bunk as the first shockwave rocks the ship. The cutscene ends as the perspective switches to first person and you must actually make your way out from the bowels of the ship, listening to instructions from other officers, avoiding explosions, ducking under debris, putting out fires and so on. The chaos of the cramped and claustrophobic corridors gives way to a spectacular scene as you emerge onto the deck. Fighters swoop down all around you and the sounds of gunfire fill the air. You man an anti-aircraft gun and start taking out the enemy planes as they fly past. Suddenly, an explosion knocks you overboard. Fortunately you're picked up by a PT boat and the game switches to on-rails, as you man the AA gunner position. All the while Japanese planes are making sweeping runs overhead and thumping explosions are echoing all around. Your accuracy as gunner has a tangible effect on the battle, with the boat taking one of several different paths through the confusion depending on how well you protect the fleet from enemy fire. Do poorly and ships will be listing dangerously, flames licking their sides, smoke billowing into the air. The battle climaxes as the USS *Arizona* sinks... and your heart rate gradually returns to normal.

## »» AT FIRST THEY WERE WARY OF US, "OH YOU PUNK KIDS, COMING IN HERE, MAKING YOUR VIDEOGAMES", BUT BY THE THIRD TRIP THEY WANTED TO SIT DOWN AND TALK

different characteristics force us to make the level feel a certain way. So Thailand is a little bit more open and airy, Guadalcanal feels small — the canopy's really tight so we're bringing the level in closer and there's lots of grass for enemies to hide in. It changes the way you build the level — the geometry, weapon set, enemy placement, what kinds of obstacles you put for the player to hide behind. It's extremely important we think about all of those things, particularly from the very first 3D sketch mode. It's something that I enforce on the team — think about your environments because it's inappropriate to have a sniper rifle on a submarine. Oh, and incidentally, you actually have a sniper rifle in a submarine in the first *Medal of Honor*. But it actually works out kinda nice because there are a couple of long hallways."

### PRODUCING ANOTHER CLASSIC

*Frontline* relied heavily on scripted events to drive the gameplay forward and immerse the player. We asked Christopher whether *Rising Sun* would adhere to linear level design

or feature more wide open levels, and whether their cinematic goals for the game restricted them to producing certain types of levels: "It depends. There's two things in general. It's a little bit harder I think to create something that's wide open in level design and still keep the same cinematic feel, unless you still compartmentalise things. You still have to have restrictions to the physical space. The other side of that is when we shift to a rail, we have multiple paths. So depending on how well you do, you go down different paths, and this applies to every on rails section in the game. In fact we're including secret power ups that will let you open up different parts of the level or a different route through. So the first time you go through it's really difficult this way, but you find the secret path to come up behind the guys. So we're trying to build some of that strategy and replay value into it. In Singapore, we have an environment that's split into three or four different paths and they all cross over. So it really is this big kind of area."

Indeed, EA LA are working hard to ensure that there are branching paths both subtle and obvious all the way

through *Rising Sun*. These take several guises — you may simply need to have a keen eye, take out guards before they can set off an alarm, or perhaps you rescue an indigenous person who takes you through a different route. There's nothing revolutionary in these kinds of elements, but it's nice to see that the game will have some replay value. Another important inclusion as far as longevity goes is the inclusion of a two-player co-op mode. The prospect of infiltrating POW camps and the like with a friend is very alluring, especially since there will be so many more gameplay opportunities in terms of covering the other player and strategically taking on a mission. *Rising Sun* will also have a four-player split-screen deathmatch mode, but at this stage it's unknown whether the PS2 or Xbox versions will feature online play. It seems very unlikely that the Xbox version will, given EA's stance towards supporting the service. This would be a great shame considering how perfect the subject material would be for decent scale team deathmatch, or even just for co-op play. Regardless, it looks like EA LA are well on their way to producing another classic *Medal of Honor* title. <<



WOW-O-METER



# RUGBY LEAGUE 2004

>> PS2 / XBOX / PC

CATEGORY: Sports >> PLAYERS: 1-TBA >>  
PUBLISHER: HES >> AVAILABLE: October >>

**W**e all know the pleasures of sticking your head between a boofy guy's sweaty legs. No? Haven't ever tackled anyone? The crunching of bone, the face full of hairy thigh, the boot studs in your neck... it's the magic of league. Well, finally, you will never have to worry about doing it in real life, because Rugby League 2004 is on the horizon. Thank the maker for that.

## A WINNING COMBINATION

Since the 16-bit days of gaming, Australian gamers have begged the gaming gods for a Rugby League game. We've had no end of yearly Rugby Union titles, but the League has been sadly neglected. The Hyper inbox overflows almost weekly with requests for a Rugby League game. Rumours have bounced off the walls for years about a new Rugby League game being in development. Well, finally, you can all shut the hell up! Rugby League 2004 is real, and it's coming out in October.

Small New Zealand developer, Sidhe Interactive (pronounced "she") are the talented folk behind Rugby League 2004, and they recently employed former WipeOut 2097 producer, Andy Satterthwaite, to join their team — an indication that Sidhe are very serious about their future in the industry.

After gaining the license to work on an NRL game back in 2002, development has rapidly progressed on the first next-generation Rugby League experience. The producer of Rugby League at Sidhe Interactive, Mario Wynands, is aware of the huge expectations gamers have for a League title after all these years.

"We are certainly very aware of the high anticipation surrounding the title, and have been since before we even won the project. The number of emails we have received as well as the online discussion surrounding the title has been enormous. Fans are excited but understandably cautious as well — they want to

ensure their favourite sport is being treated well.

"It has been a challenge to compete against established sports franchises from large international publishers, but I believe HES and Sidhe are a winning combination. I

have no doubt that fans will be delighted with the game we produce, and look forward to building the game into a successful, ongoing franchise."

Yearly Rugby League game updates? It's about time!





## IF YOU'RE A 'TERMINATOR' LIKE GORDEN TALLIS, THEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO BREAK THROUGH THE ODD TWO-MAN TACKLE

**IN THE RIGHT POSITION**  
Probably one of the single most important things to a videogame adaptation of a sport such as Rugby League is the artificial intelligence of the players. Will they be in the right position to receive a pass? Will they know when to go for a tackle? Will they keep an intelligent formation as they run forward? Sidhe are keeping hush on the finer details like this at this stage in development, but considering that

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
A player edit function, aside from the custom player option. We all want to tweak our favourite players... oo-er!

they have kept the game quite modest visually, we can only hope that all the left over processing power is being pumped into AI.  
League fans will be happy to know that 15 realistically modelled Australian and New Zealand stadiums are going to be included in the game, as well as all your favourite NRL teams, using the 2003 team rosters. Yep, actual player likenesses and player names will be used. In fact, each individual player will have 12

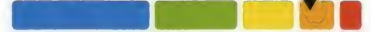
separate attributes that determine their playing skill and physical strength. If you're a "terminator" like Gorden Tallis, then you can expect to be able to break through the odd two-man tackle.  
As for play modes, exact specifics of the leagues and any international comps are being kept under wraps. All we do know is that the State of Origin will be included, along with your vanilla Australian season play.  
Weather effects will also be part of the experience, with day and night matches taking place rain, hail or shine. Gamers can also

expect in-game commentary, create-a-player functions, realistic player injuries, and visible refs and touch judges.  
Even if Sidhe don't nail it perfectly the first time, successful sales should mean that they can get straight to work on a sequel to iron out any issues that pop up with this first incarnation of Rugby League. It can only get better. From what we've seen, though, every League fan should start saving their pennies, because Sidhe are going to get more right than wrong with this first instalment of Rugby League 2004. <<



## >>PC THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL

WOW-O-METER



CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >>  
PUBLISHER: Atari >> AVAILABLE: Feb 2004 >>

Once referred to solely as Greyhawk, The Temple of Elemental Evil is the D&D RPG under the guidance of Troika, the developer that brought us Arcanum. If you think it sounds familiar, that's because The Temple of Elemental Evil is an old classic module from the pen and paper D&D, and the twist with this remake is that it will be reinvented using the 3.5 edition rule set.

Expect to come up against Ettins, Gnolls, Hydras, Lamias, Lizardmen, Trolls, and more classic D&D monsters, as you adventure with your party in the realm of Greyhawk. Outside the village of Hommlet lies the ruins of the temple, once a breeding ground for evil, it now lies dormant... or does it?

Your party will consist of five controllable characters, although you'll be able to also include up to three followers. One of the most appealing aspects of this RPG is the commitment Troika are making to including multiple story paths through the game, involving a number of alternate endings. Interactions with NPCs will be radically different depending on your alignment, race and class, and the choices you make will have varying effects on what happens to your missions. D&D fans should be pleased to learn that the combat will be turn-based, allowing you plenty of time to make use of each character's range of skills, spells and feats.

>>PS2/XBOX/GCN

## THE ITALIAN JOB: LA HEIST

CATEGORY: Driving >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >>  
PUBLISHER: Eidos >> AVAILABLE: TBA >>

If you can erase the chilling memories of the first Italian Job game, then the thought of hopping into a Mini Cooper for another go at "the job" won't be so traumatic. Thanks to the new movie remake of The Italian Job (due for release later this year), Eidos has scored the job of making a brand new game to go with it — a chance to redeem the license that Sci successfully managed to sully.

Before we even bothered with The Italian Job's single player missions, we jumped straight into the tempting Stunt Mode. Doing outrageously dangerous things with cars is always a crowd pleaser, and where Stuntman failed to offer stress-free fun, The Italian Job manages to deliver. Burning through

the variety of obstacle courses is both hilarious and challenging. You'll be doing handbrakes around the most precarious of corners, sliding along pipes, hitting crazy ramps and really testing what the variety of cars can do.

Aiding you in this process is some great arcade-style car handling, and some very responsive controls.

Once you delve into the single-player game, you'll find a series of missions driven by the new movie's storyline and cutscenes. It's set in a big Vice City/Midtown Madness style city — with plenty of traffic to cause utter chaos — and really promises to be a hell of a lot of fun!

WOW-O-METER



## >>PC HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

CATEGORY: Tactical Action >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >>  
PUBLISHER: Take 2 Interactive >> AVAILABLE: TBA

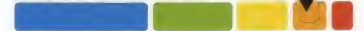
As Austin Powers would say, "there something hidden and dangerous in my pants, baby!" but then, that would have nothing to do with this gritty war game. Set in Europe, Asia and Africa during World War II, players will be fighting against Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese Empire with elite British SAS troops over 23 missions. Your squad consists of up to six soldiers, and it's up to you how you supply them and deploy them in the field, viewing the action from a third or first person perspective.

The original Hidden and Dangerous was hugely successful with gamers and critics alike, and developer Illusion Softworks has been working on this sequel for the



last four years, determined to improve on the original game's weaknesses. Interaction with the game world is exceptional, with fully functional vehicles and destructible environments. Follow Big Kev's advice and get excited.

WOW-O-METER







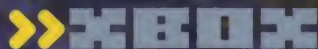


# HAIL TO THE CHIEF

HYPER CHAT WITH **PETE PARSONS**, STUDIO MANAGER AT BUNGIE STUDIOS.



# Halo 2



CATEGORY: First Person Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >>  
PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> AVAILABLE: 2004 >>

WOW-O-METER



INTERVIEW

>>HYPER 27

# Halo 2

**Bungie:** So you've seen the Halo 2 demo. What did you think?

**HYPER:** Amazing. Definitely one of the strongest titles on the horizon.

**Bungie:** Thank you, that's very nice of you. Well, the team worked hard on it, that's for sure. Everything you saw was in game footage, of course...

**HYPER:** One query on the demo — when Master Chief jumps onto the Ghost vehicle to commandeer it... is that all in-game or does it switch to a cutscene? And what about the transition at the end of the demo through the tunnel with the closing doors. Does that just require you to be in a vehicle of some sort to get through that?

**Bungie:** Yep, you gotta get the Ghost. You played Halo right? So you know we don't do CG or anything kooky. And so, the boarding thing? I'm controlling that when I do it. And then when we fade to letterbox that's a cinematic, yeah. You've still got to get to the cruiser after all that. It'll be in a slightly modified form, but that is a mission inside the game.

**HYPER:** Can you actually capture vehicles like that at any time in the game?

**Bungie:** Well, there's a whole bunch I can't say, just in general, but you can in some cases get on a vehicle like that which is kinda neat, because before you had to either shoot 'em off or have them wrecked. And they can get on your vehicles — you saw a Brute boarding from out of the Dropship — and that also changes the nature of the gameplay. I think one cool thing

**Bungie:** More! (laughs)

**HYPER:** And also what weaknesses you saw in the original...

**Bungie:** Well one caveat. All the things that we do — the features, the weapons or this or that — it's all to serve telling a better story, so there's nothing that we do just because we can. It's all to hopefully invite you into the world of the Chief and make you want to play behind the visor. But I think Halo 2 is a lot less about stuff we didn't like, it's about stuff we wanted to do more of.

Y'know, it's funny I have people ask me — so how are you spawning the characters? We're not spawning anybody. They're there, so you're either going to kill them, or they're going to be smart and run away, and maybe go find others. Maybe redirect troops to a new place. But all of that is designed to keep it interesting and cool so you never know what they're going to do next. I mean even in the demo they do stuff that we don't expect.

**HYPER:** As far as the Master Chief goes, what will be the most important new features?

**Bungie:** Boy, there are a lot of them! The new stuff you've seen in the demo will be just some of the new features in the game, but only some. Dual weapons are cool. I'll give you the things people seem to like. They seem to like the fact that hey, somebody else besides me is driving, which I think is really neat. I think boarding is really cool — we discussed that earlier. They like the dual weapons probably more than we ever thought. People are cheering a lot more than we thought for dual weapons, and now I'll tell you why. In the scene in the demo he's holding two SMGs, but Halo's all about making choices, which is why we don't give you fifteen weapons at one time, cos... I think it's kinda dumb to be honest with you. It's cool for a little bit but then it's like, well I'm not forced to make any choices or think about what I'm doing. But I'll give you one cool choice you have to make — you've got a Jackal in front of you with an energy shield, and I choose to pick up the plasma pistol in one hand and put the SMG in the other. The plasma pistol's great for taking out Jackal energy shields and then cap him with the SMG as the plasma pistol's recharging. That's pretty bad ass! But of course I can't throw any grenades while I'm doing that, so everything we add, every feature, we're not just doing because we can, but because it makes you think about the choices you make in a different way and a new way. You can add all the features in the world but if they don't add to telling a great story or

having fun with something then they don't make sense. So that's what we're trying to do.

**HYPER:** Could you tell us about the multiplayer component in the game?

**Bungie:** We're not talking a lot about multiplayer of any type other than — there will be multiplayer, both system link and Live. And the game will be very fun in co-op.

**HYPER:** Okay, so you don't want to talk specifically about multiplayer, but how important is Xbox Live in the Halo 2 package?

**Bungie:** Well, the most important thing, and the reason why you care about playing multiplayer in the first place is that you care about the Chief, right? I mean, yeah the controls are great and yeah it's fun and the game types are really cool, but the whole reason you got there in the first place was you got to be the Master Chief. Y'know, it's just inherently cool to be the Chief. So we have to do that part really well. But playing multiplayer, whether it's splitscreen, system link or on Xbox Live is an important part of it, and we think Live is really cool and we've got a great relationship with the Live guys. They're telling us what they're doing and we're telling them what we want to do, so it'll be big. But certainly, it's not the primary focus. The primary focus is to tell a ripping yarn!

**HYPER:** In the first game there were some really great twists and turns in the story. Can we expect the same from the sequel?

**Bungie:** There will be twists and turns, unexpected things will happen. I think there's a lot of opportunity to do that. Nobody's really clear on what the Covenant is. We want people to be into the story. Even my wife will play Halo, and she doesn't like that style of game — she plays Galaga and Age of Empires and that's about it. But she's invested in the story. I remember when we were getting ready to release the video and she wasn't paying attention to me, I said "y'know, the covenant have reached earth", and she said "nooo...", and the only way you can do that is by giving some insight into what's happening in the gameworld.

**HYPER:** How similar is the Halo universe to the Marathon universe?

**Bungie:** People like to draw conclusions and similarities between them, and there are similarities because it's Jason Jones and almost all the original people that worked on Marathon that are still there. But the universes are different. It has a



»» HALO'S ALL ABOUT MAKING CHOICES, WHICH IS WHY WE DON'T GIVE YOU FIFTEEN WEAPONS AT ONE TIME...

to note, is that those Warthogs were actually being driven. That's not on rails. The AI squad members were actively driving them, and if you watch the demo live a couple of times you will not see the warthogs drive the same way twice. They have waypoints they are following but they are actively driving.

**HYPER:** Speaking of which, the AI and physics were two of the most important and impressive aspects of the original game. The fact that you could play through the same levels over and over again and never have the same combat experience twice. Could you tell us what the team have done in terms of enhancing that for the sequel?

really different feel and it's a really rich universe with a lot to it. We only give you this snapshot that comes in the form of Halo or Halo 2, or the two books (Halo: The Flood and Halo: The Fall of Reach). But there's a big rich universe with a whole bunch of stuff going on. I don't know if those stories will ever get told.

**HYPER:** How about the level design for the sequel? There were a few sections in the original that were a little repetitive...

**Bungie:** Well, Halo was a machine, right? It's funny because a lot of people ask me "well, how about the library? You're not going to do that again are you?" at the same time I have people saying "hey man I loved the library, it was my favourite part". So I think what you'll find is that on Halo you were only on Halo. In Halo 2 you're not on a Halo. You're on Earth, but that's not the only place you're going to go. We have this really epic tale. We didn't have a chance to tell all of the story that we wanted to tell in Halo. If you guys have read Fall of Reach, which is the prequel to the game, that gives you a lot of insight into who Chief is, and where he's from, and that he's human, and that he's the last of his kind. So the team have written this really epic tale and you're going to see a lot of new stuff.

**HYPER:** Are there any plans for a level editor?

**Bungie:** I doubt it. I think the team do a really good job presenting something that's fun and cool, and in the case of Live, something that's also fun but safe and reliable and does all the things you want it to do. And that's the most important thing, we want anyone who picks up a controller to be able to play Halo or Halo online. And we think that's the best way to keep it. But with that said, Halo PC — we think it looks freekin' awesome. Even we were surprised by how great it looks and how fun it is, and that not only has online multiplayer but I fully expect with a Bungie community that's fairly enthusiastic that you'll see mods and other stuff.

**HYPER:** And that's for both PC and Mac?

**Bungie:** Yeah, there's Halo PC and Halo Mac. They're both arriving around the same time — maybe a slight delay for the Mac.

**HYPER:** How much did the vision of Halo change from conception to final release?

**Bungie:** Originally, for the Mac, it was an RTS game. So people ask — the game, you really changed it once you went to the Xbox. That's not really true. There's some truth



# Halo 2

there but it really isn't. Halo's the game that Bungie decided to make. That's the place we landed, we probably would have landed there — it might have been slightly different on the Mac, it might have been slightly different if it was for the PC, or whatever. But that's ultimately the place we arrived.

The game was shown when we were still at the stage of figuring out all the things that were going to make it really good, and a lot less about changing it for the Xbox. We did have to change a lot to make it on the Xbox — the controls, the way the game played, but Halo is Halo, it's not this other game that people saw at Macworld. That's what it is. That's always a tough question to answer in an articulate manner, but ultimately that was the destination, not the other game. Mind you, that would have been a cool game too!

**HYPER:** How difficult was it to get higher graphical performance out of the Xbox, and what new technology has been implemented?

**Bungie:** It was hard and a tonne of work, but you have to remember that Halo was developed while the Xbox itself was still being developed. So, although I think Halo still holds up visually and I think it aged well, once you know what the box is and you have the time to do the R&D to explore — just what might we be able to do here? It opens up a lot of opportunities to do new stuff. A good example of that is that Master Chief doesn't have significantly more polygons in Halo 2 than he had in Halo, but he looks a lot better because we've

R&D on all fronts — engineering, design, art and so you're seeing a lot of that pay off now. And you'll see a lot more — we're still uncovering stuff. Even in the last few weeks we've uncovered stuff that we hadn't really thought of.

**HYPER:** Halo had a very solid control scheme. Will we see any significant changes to it?

**Bungie:** I think Halo got a lot of credit for taking that really rich First Person Shooter and putting it on a console and making it feel really good and really natural. So I wouldn't expect any significant changes in the control scheme. I would expect that there'll be stuff that you do slightly differently... Plus, there are a lot of other games that use a similar system to Halo now, which I think is great, y'know, it's like W-A-S-D. It's established a pattern, so why break it?

**HYPER:** One thing that will change the way we play games is the fact that everyone who buys the Xbox Live kit will have a headset. Have you thought about utilising the headset — not just for multiplayer but for single player too? You could give commands to AI squad members using voice recognition software.

**Bungie:** Umm... I can't talk about any of that. But single player, no, you won't see that. We want everybody to be able to play Halo 2, whether they have Live or not, so you shouldn't have to have anything new or different to have as good an experience as possible. So, would I like to be able to use the headset to control people? Sure, maybe, but what I'd rather do is have a lot of people really love the Halo universe.

**HYPER:** Plus, to be able to rely on great AI too.

**Bungie:** Yeah. I think when we talk about the AI what we're really trying to do is — it was cool on the Silent Cartographer, on the beach landing, to have a group of people and they're fighting for their lives... we just wanted more of that! When you're going in and there's so much going on around you and you just know it's going to be cool — we want more of that! I want to go in to that tunnel with those guys and know that they can put the frag in first, and charge in, and I can cap anybody who's left over. I want that to happen.

**HYPER:** Were you guys surprised by some of the physics experiments that were done using the original, such as blowing jeeps across the landscape?

**Bungie:** Yeah sure, they're really cool to see.

**HYPER:** Yeah, you see stuff like that and immediately want to experiment yourself. We spent hours mucking around, using sticky grenades on people... it was a real testament to the depth of the physics engine.

**Bungie:** We knew that people would try a lot of stuff, and in some cases we intentionally left it so people could do stuff, but it's just been amazing to see how many people tried new things and came up with new inventions. And even discovered some of the eggs that we didn't expect anyone to find. There are a whole bunch of easter eggs hidden throughout the game that people have found over time and they just recently found a little tribute Jamie, the lead designer of Halo, has to his girlfriend, which is in the game. And to figure it out — I read the instructions, and I don't even think reading the instructions I would know how to do it, and people found it out — with no hints. So, I don't know how they did it. I don't think Jamie expected anyone to find it. And they didn't do it with a hacked box; they found it on their own, which is just amazing. So yeah, it's really cool, what with the clans on Bungie.net setting up tournaments, and it's probably more than we expected. It's always neat when you can create that specialness about a game.

**HYPER:** If you ever get free time what other games do the team enjoy playing?

**Bungie:** All kinds of games. At E3 we played a lot of Conker and Grabbed By The Ghoulies. As Ed (Fries) said, you just have to pick up the controller and smile. It's totally cool. Did you ever play Smash TV? It's like that — you just pick it up and you go. Conker online is just so much fun. All the Rare titles. We just really like Rare! Around the office? Top Spin is going to be a good one because Virtua Tennis is a big game around the office — it's a great game. Me and a couple of other guys in the office — there was this huge Battlefield 1942 movement, and then several of us formed a splinter cell and started playing the Desert Combat mod of BF1942. I don't know if you've played it at all, but damn I love it! So we still play that a fair amount. What else? Splinter Cell certainly came along for a while, and honestly, we've been playing a lot of Halo 2. A lot of Halo 2! That's what, ultimately, we have to do — just play it over and over again. It's fun. We've got our own tournament, our own league



»» I'M A HUGE FAN OF DEUS EX AND I'M REALLY EXCITED ABOUT HALF-LIFE 2. THEY'RE DOING COOL STUFF AND HOPEFULLY THEY THINK WE ARE TOO

been able to start doing things, whether it's bump mapping or the lighting that helps make him look a lot more detailed. Even adjusting animation allows us to change the design with the tools that we have. So it's more about maximising what we have, and certainly, in terms of the hardware there were huge portions of it that we weren't utilising in the right way. Plus, there's so much stuff that you can't change you're so far down the road, that sometimes when you find those cool new opportunities to put more on the screen you just can't, because the game's locked and loaded. So now, we really got to work right after Halo 1 finished — vacation then back to doing the

inside Bungie and we're playing pretty much on a nightly basis. Well, except for that whole E3 thing! We've been playing a lot of multiplayer Halo 2.

**HYPER:** Do you guys pay much attention to the likes of Deus Ex 2, Doom 3, Half-Life 2? Obviously they're PC products but they're all pushing the boundaries of the genre in their own ways.

**Bungie:** Well, I'll tell you how we do pay attention, which is — there are a lot of really talented guys out there making some really cool games. So we wish them the best of luck. Because we're all fans right? I'm a huge fan of Deus Ex and I'm really excited about Half-Life 2. They're doing cool stuff, and hopefully they think we are too. A lot of people ask how about the competition and my response is — honestly — I don't even think about it. We're just focused on making our game really good and they're focused on making their game really good, and hopefully they're all really good and gamers win. End of story. That's the way it should be. We need more really great games — that's what the industry needs. We need a lot less "how are we gonna line up against the others..."

**HYPER:** Given Bungie's emphasis on telling a great story and the current craze surrounding game licenses turning into movies, is there any chance we may see a Halo movie one day?

**Bungie:** Who knows, is the right answer. We've got lots of kooky stuff we want to do and we thought the books would be cool — Eric Nylund is a great guy, and the action figures were cool mainly because we thought a lot of gamers collected action figures. But stuff other than that, it's like if you want to get involved with it it's a time commitment on our part and I think ultimately we'd rather be focused on making the game. I think everyone would rather us focus on making games and not so much on the movies. But who knows... honestly I don't know. We've gotten calls on it though.

**HYPER:** I think unless you have the time to be so hands on about it — you just do not want other people to touch your intellectual property. I mean look at stuff like House of the Dead or Street Fighter.

**Bungie:** Yeah. "Do you want Halo 2 or do you want a Halo movie?" Well... we know the answer to that already.

**HYPER:** Heheh yeah. Thanks for your time. <<



*There is no emotion, there is peace.  
There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.  
There is no passion, there is serenity.  
There is no death, there is the Force.  
Jedi are guardians of peace and  
Jedi use their powers to defend and protect,  
never to attack others.  
Jedi respect all life, in any form.  
Jedi serve others rather than ruling over  
them, for the good of the galaxy.  
Jedi seek to improve themselves through  
knowledge and training.*

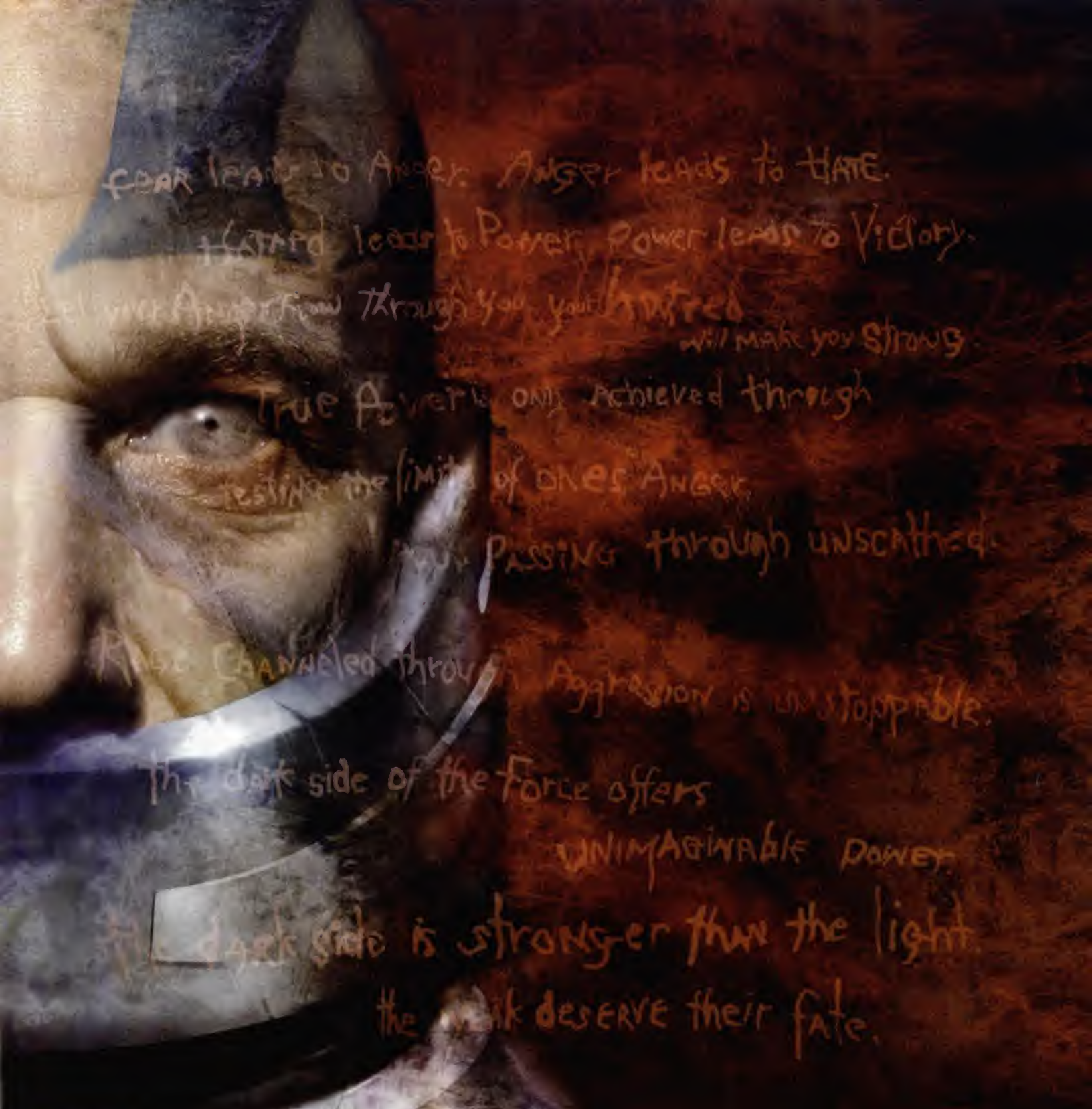
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fear leads to Anger. Anger leads to HATE.

HATE leads to Power. Power leads to Victory.

Allow Anger flow through you, your hatred will make you strong.

True Power is only achieved through

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Passing through unscathed.

Aggression is unstoppable.

The dark side of the Force offers

UNIMAGINABLE POWER

The dark side is stronger than the light.

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# The Real Girl Gamers

BY ELEANOR EIFFE

I remember when I first realised that I was a "girl gamer". My dad took me to the midnight pick-up for my pre-ordered GameCube. As I was waiting around, watching my fellow gamers arrive, I was somewhat surprised to notice that I was the only girl there. Upon reaching the front of the line, Dad and I were met by the employee of the games outlet who was in charge of letting people into the store two at a time. While we were waiting, he struck up a conversation with my father and completely ignored the fact that we were standing in line to pick up MY console.

My Dad – who, it is worth noting, knows nothing about gaming – mentioned that my brother had just bought Dead or Alive 3 for the Xbox, and since I was desperate to get in on the conversation, I pointed out that I was still the undefeated house champion. The games store employee sniggered, said something about "button-bashing", and went on talking to my father as if I wasn't there. It was then that I realised something of which I'd only been semi-aware throughout my life as a gamer. Apparently, gaming is not for girls.

## FEMALE GAMING CHARACTERS – TO BE OGLED OR IDENTIFIED WITH?

A good place to start exploring the relationship between girls and gaming is in the role of female characters within games themselves. The representation of girls and women in videogames is limited, for the most part, to a familiar collection of stereotypical female roles. These include: the princess who needs to be rescued, the male protagonist's love interest (who may or may not need rescuing), the wise old grandmother (possibly requiring a rescue) and the hot chick who's

This is not to say that videogames haven't had their share of leading women, some of whom provide a positive persona for female (and male) gamers to connect with. Consider Alexandra Roivas from Eternal Darkness: She's strong, smart and independent. She's also realistically proportioned and sensibly dressed to boot. More emphasis is placed on Alex's role in saving the world from evil than on the fact that she is a young woman. Unfortunately, Alex is not a typical example of a female game protagonist, and unfortunately, a majority comply with a trend we are all too familiar

## »» PERHAPS FEMALE CHARACTERS HAVEN'T MADE AS MUCH PROGRESS AS SOME PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO THINK

just there to look good (and potentially be rescued at some point) – hardly anything for female players to get terribly excited about. Hey, we all love playing Mario games, but who among us can say that they've ever thought about how great it would be to be Princess Peach? Female game characters are traditionally restricted to roles in which they aren't actively involved in pursuing the game's goal. This can and often does give the impression that the gaming world is one in which girls and women don't belong.

with... namely, the tendency to wear a ridiculously small amount of clothing when compared to their male counterparts.

For example, take the mini-skirted Miku: lead character from the survival horror game, Project Zero. Her outfit hardly seems practical for exploring an old, haunted mansion. If anything, Miku's appearance seems to suggest that her character has been constructed to appeal to the traditional male sensibility of protecting the innocent young girl. One does not get the impression that she is capable of



Eternal Darkness: the thinking girl's game.



BMX XXX: Best ignore this one...

fending off ghosts on her own.

Then we come to the interesting case of Lara Croft, easily one of gaming's most famous female icons. Some heralded the release of Tomb Raider as something of a breakthrough, describing its protagonist as a strong female character with whom girls could readily identify. Others argue that the influence of Lara Croft (and characters like her) on the way women are portrayed in videogames

female gamers not only because of the way women are portrayed in these games, but also because of the way titles like these implicitly portray gamers. They do little to break the unfavourable stereotype of the antisocial, adolescent male who likes to look at computer generated women to make up for the fact that he's hopeless when it comes to dealing with real ones.

have been produced with solely a male audience in mind.

#### MALE-ORIENTED MARKETING

Just why is it that games are designed for an audience that is presumed to be predominantly (or entirely) male? "The core target audience for [BMX XXX] is males aged 15-24, however this is true for over 90% of games produced by the industry as a whole. Very

## THEY DO LITTLE TO BREAK THE STEREOTYPE OF THE ANTISOCIAL, ADOLESCENT MALE WHO LIKES TO LOOK AT COMPUTER GENERATED WOMEN

may be less positive. Reasons often cited for this viewpoint include the emphasis on the character's appearance and her role as an object of desire for male players. This is seen by critics as an indication that perhaps female characters haven't made as much progress as some people would like to think.

Indeed, there are games on the market today where there is little dispute that the women depicted in them serve as little more than "eye-candy" for the (presumably male) player. Two recent examples of this type of game are the infamous Dead Or Alive: Extreme Beach Volleyball and BMX XXX — titles that, let's face it, aren't really being sold on the merits of the volleyball or bike tricks therein. Products such as these could be off-putting to potential

few are targeted directly at females," says Crowe. "We target this audience because statistics show us that this is where the majority of people who play games come from. These statistics are from both independent industry research and also research that both Sony and Microsoft have provided." Yet, the percentage of gamers who are female has, in fact, been quoted as high as 43% (Source: IDSA, www.idsa.org). If this figure is to be believed, then it is



Brainless expression: tick.



Hello? Is there anyone out there?

evident that girl gamers are out there but are being ignored by the people who make and market videogames.

The blatant targeting of males in videogame promotion not only runs the risk of being offensive to women, it also doesn't appear to make sense. Intuitively, it just seems silly to ignore half the population of potential consumers when trying to sell a product. "The only reason in my mind that young men are the target demographic for most games is that they have always been, and the game industry is astonishingly primitive in aggressively widening that demographic," says Jane Pinckard, webmaster of gaming site Game Girl Advance (<http://www.gamegirladvance.com>) . "There is a perception that games

which might appeal to girls and women would be uncool — 'marketing death' in terms of appeal to men."

Perhaps the problem, then, is that the industry simply doesn't know how to pursue the female market. What exactly is it that girl gamers want?

#### WHAT DO GIRLS LOOK FOR IN A GAME?

How do you make a game female-friendly? Obviously, you'd need to avoid anything that might exclude women from playing, but what about actively targeting a female audience? "Girl games' do exist", says Ion Storm developer, Heather Kelly. "Some of those games undoubtedly represent the tastes of a large number of girls. You could argue forever whether that's because

## LEGGY LARA

Lara Croft could have been a great female role model. Tomb Raider's protagonist was a tough, independent woman who had been given a level of background story and character development rarely seen in video games at the time, especially for a female character.

Sadly, the release of Tomb Raider did not mark the kind of revolution some had anticipated. The bulk of the press surrounding the game paid more attention to Lara's skimpy outfits and exaggerated curves than her personality, abilities and role in the game's narrative. The implication was that the (presumably male) player was supposed to admire Lara's polygonal form rather than identify with her as a character. Unfortunately, this kind of attention largely overshadowed any positive influence Lara Croft may have had as a female role model.



the girls were taught to desire those traditionally feminine qualities, or whether it's inherent. But nonetheless there is a market for 'pink games', especially if they carry a popular toy brand."

The very existence of these so-called "pink games" raises some interesting questions for the gaming community. For example, why is it assumed that girls would rather coordinate their wardrobes than, say, save the world from an alien invasion? A reason many gamers offer for the attraction of their chosen pastime is the chance to escape from reality, to do things that they cannot do in real life. Why, then, is the subject matter of "girl games" so utterly mundane? Why it is assumed that girls will happily pay for the chance to virtually do things they can actually do already? If it is true that "there is a market consisting of female players who are interested in other styles and messages," as Kelley claims, then why aren't games being made to cater for these tastes?



Good characters, but one too many lingering camera angles?



Look out guys... she means business!



Volleyball? What?

Female-oriented game content, as it stands, leaves plenty to be desired. Games with a female focus are aimed at young girls, not at the more mature female gamer. In order to satisfy existing female gamers, and to attract more women to gaming, developers need to look beyond stereotypical assumptions of what girls and women like. "Are there other kinds of gender-coded interaction and play that haven't yet been explored in commercial

of women working in the industry will lead to an increased understanding of what kind of games women like to play. Kelley agrees, pointing to a general need for diversity in the industry. "There will be a wider variety of games as a wider variety of creative minds enter the field. At some point, in order to grow the market, publishers will be forced to broaden their offerings. As the quality of graphics and audio technology go up, and as more and more people come of age in a game-saturated culture, larger audiences will be drawn to interactive entertainment, and the publishers will need to diversify to meet that demand."

So, more females in the industry equals more female-friendly games on the market. But is that enough? After all, it is only the content of games themselves that is keeping women out of the gaming community.

#### GAMES OR GAMERS?

Games are not the only thing responsible for keeping women away from interactive entertainment. Gamers themselves

may be to blame for creating an environment that is not overly welcoming to girls and women. One place that gamers create a sense of community is on the internet, through online gaming and sites devoted to gaming discussion. So how do female gamers fare online? Jane Pinckard says that "women do great in online communities. Women represent, I think, around 15% of the Everquest player base, but their online presence is disproportionately strong — they are over-represented in the highest echelons of community management. They tend to become the herders, the guiders, the guild leaders, the mentors, the keepers of community." The success of women in online gaming communities is arguably attributable to the harassment female gamers inevitably suffer as a minority in the gaming world. "I think many women take harassment in online games as a given, since it happens so often," she says, "and maybe this provides impetus for banding together and forming strongly linked community ties."

Why is it that female gamers

## »» AFTER ALL, IT IS ONLY THE CONTENT OF GAMES THEMSELVES THAT IS KEEPING WOMEN OUT OF THE GAMING COMMUNITY

game products because they are simply too difficult, expensive, and risky to develop?" Kelley asks. "I'm thinking of technologies that are well suited to a female player but would also add richness and variety to non-gender-specific games. More robust, lifelike, and verbal AI, for instance. If that's what belongs in a 'girl's game' then I say, bring it on! Use the market opportunity to really grow the medium, rather than to pander to antiquated stereotypes."

One reason that games aren't being made for women may be because, generally, games aren't being made by women. Put simply, people design games that are appealing to them. A male dominated industry will result in the production of predominantly male-oriented games. It makes sense to assume that increasing the amount



It's time for revenge...



Wow, no bikini outfit?

experience harassment from their male counterparts? Could the harassment experienced by female gamers be a result of the way male gamers (as opposed to males in general) relate to women? Considering the way women are often depicted in the medium, perhaps this idea isn't so far-fetched. As it stands, the argument that harassment simply is an inevitable consequence of being part of a minority is something of a vicious circle. Females experience harassment because there are fewer female gamers participating in online communities; female gamers aren't participating because they don't want to experience harassment. Indeed, in my own online experience (on the Hyperactive forums, no less) I found that my gender often attracted more attention than the content of my posts. This could sometimes be used to my advantage, but for the most part it was a source of continuing frustration.

But, unfortunately, frustration is something that most girl gamers have had to live with for the past two decades. At present, there are just too many aspects of gaming that are intimidating, unwelcoming or simply uninteresting to women. This industry and its customers need to work together to rectify this situation. There is still a long way to go when it comes to satisfying the needs of girl gamers — but these needs must be satisfied if this medium of ours is to fulfil the entirety of its potential. <<

## ROLE MODELS... NOT JUST MODELS

### Samus Aran

Introduced to gamers in 1986 via the NES classic, *Metroid*, Samus Aran is a much-loved character who has gone on to become one of gaming's most respected icons. Samus is a bounty hunter. Samus has a cyborg suit and a big cannon mounted on her arm. Samus has single-handedly saved the world from space-pirates and Metroids on more occasions than we'd care to count. Oh, and by the way, Samus is a woman. That makes Samus an interesting female game character because for almost the entirety of the first game in which she appeared, players were unaware of her gender. Most, understandably, assumed that *Metroid's* protagonist was male. Only after the completion of the adventure was it revealed to players that there was in fact a woman under all that armour. Would Samus have been so well received by gamers if it had been obvious she was female right from the start? Probably not. Her continued popularity is arguably attributable to the fact that she made her impact as a character first and as a female second. Happily, this trend has continued. Throughout Samus' subsequent adventures, the focus has remained on her abilities rather than her gender. The fact that she is female is largely irrelevant (although one wonders if a male character would have rescued the *Metroid* larva at the end of *Metroid II*) and has never been the selling point of the series. Samus successfully defies genre stereotypes and does so with undoubted success. So why aren't there more characters like her?



# TRAWLIN'

## WarCraft III Mods

>> KOSTA ANDREASIS

<http://www.warcraftIII.net>

**W**hen Blizzard released WarCraft III last year, they were canny enough to include their most extensive campaign creation tool yet, the WarCraft World Editor (the very software used to create the game's numerous single player missions) in with the main game. With this powerful tool, anyone out there can create a game of their own, using the WarCraft III engine. Thousands of homemade games have been popping up on the net and on Battle.Net since it went public, ranging from action-packed games to deep story-driven RPGs. Trawlin' takes a look at some of the most infamous custom games that have been released on the net over the past year.

### Azure Tower Defense

■ A level-based game that has enemies spawn and follow a predetermined path to reach the great tree — and it's your job to protect it. Played with up to eight players, you can build and place towers along the path you have to protect, as well as recruit heroes, upgrade, and collect power-ups. One of the most common types of custom games to find on Battle.Net, Tower Defense provides instant gratification with fast action-packed gameplay that's insanely addictive. The inclusion of Boss Levels every 10 stages also make this one to look out for.

### Cube Defense

■ Another tower game that gives players the opportunity to upgrade different types of towers, but this time when you let an enemy reach the center (called 'leaking') your game is over — with the person who lasts the longest being declared the winner. What sets Cube Defense apart from the numerous other tower games out there is the superb balance between level progression, variety of enemies and towers, as well as the freedom to place towers anywhere you want — paving the way for little mazes and traps to build.



Defense of the Ancients

### Defense of the Ancients

■ Defense of the Ancients or 'Dota' as it's more commonly known is a hero-based team game that has five players to each team (Good vs. Evil) protecting their home base whilst trying to destroy their enemies'. Once a player selects a hero, they decide which tower-riddled path to take to reach the opposite base whilst units spawn periodically from each side. With unique heroes that possess some pretty impressive spells, items, and abilities, and the 'huge battle' nature of this game, Dota has quickly become one of the most popular and addictive custom games to ever hit Battle.Net. A good Dota game can take upwards of 90 action-packed minutes, so there's no better time killer.

### Aeon of Strife

■ Similar in nature to Dota, Aeon of Strife, or AoS also sees players take direct control of a unique hero as they try to defeat the opposition. However unlike Dota, when your hero dies they won't respawn — instead you'll have to select a new hero — making the level-up process that much more significant.



Kaggz RPG



### WWW.WARCRAFTIII.NET

Curious about any of these custom mods, maps and games? Then visit WarCraftIII.Net, a place where you can download literally thousands of custom games, including the ones mentioned here, so you're ready to play. This site is also an extensive WarCraft III archive, so you can brush up on the latest Night Elf, Orc, Undead and Human strategies.

### Kaggz RPG: Shadows of Evil

■ Shadows of Evil is a testament to the depth provided by Blizzard's World Editor as this fully fledged RPG has NPC interaction, a cut-scene driven story and a battle system that warps players to an alternate battle arena, ala Final Fantasy, when they encounter an enemy. Designed to be played online or over a network with friends, this RPG provides a rewarding co-op experience that apart from the engine and visual familiarity couldn't be further from the standard WarCraft III experience.

### The Lord of the Rings: FOTR and TTT

■ The WarCraft universe owes a lot to Tolkien's world, so when an RPG based on the first film has the fellowship travel from Rivendell to Moria — the visual and artistic look suits it almost perfectly. Another Rings game, this time taken from the second film, provides a more action based approach as two teams take part in the infamous Battle of Helms Deep in this fun Orcs vs. Humans multiplayer mod.

### Starship Troopers

■ Blizzard are well known for the numerous Easter Eggs littered throughout all their titles, and when they hid Marines, Zerglings, and



Azure Tower Defense



Gandalf, The Grey Wizard  
I will help you bear this burden, Frodo Baggins. As long as it is yours to bear.

Gandalf, you look sick or something dude.





The Infamous Starship Troopers mod

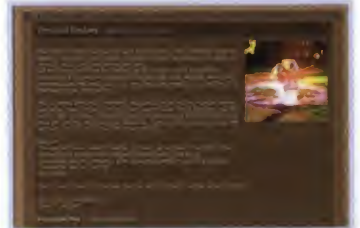


Risk

Hydralisks from Starcraft somewhere in WarCraft III people were quick to take advantage of this. In this custom game, players take control of Marines as they attempt to survive an onslaught of Zergling attacks.

### Risk

Based on the popular board game of world-domination this exceptionally designed version of Risk features a world map with real locations and real-time gameplay. The 'turns' from the board game take place periodically as players protect their bases and try to conquer their opponents' with reinforcements arriving every two minutes. Risk is one of the better WarCraft III board-game conversions, as other attempts (e.g. Monopoly) ultimately fail.



### CLASSIC VIDEO GAMES

If it's popular video games we're talking about then at some point or another someone out there has made an attempt to make their own custom WarCraft III game out of it. From Zelda, Final Fantasy, Resident Evil and even Smash TV - they're all out there, and apart from the latter, unfortunately aren't really worth your time.



The Battle of Helm's Deep - FOTR



Aeon of Strife

These are but a few of the thousands of custom WarCraft games out there, and new versions pop up all the time. So if your mass Shaman strategy is no longer working for you, and you need an alternative to the standard game, you need look no further. <<<

# JOHN CALLAHAN'S QUADS!



BE PARALYZED WITH LAUGHTER!

*"When people laugh like hell then say, 'That's not funny,' you can be sure they're talking about John Callahan." PJ O'Rourke*



**Christopher Reeve lovingly refers to him as the Anti-Quad!**

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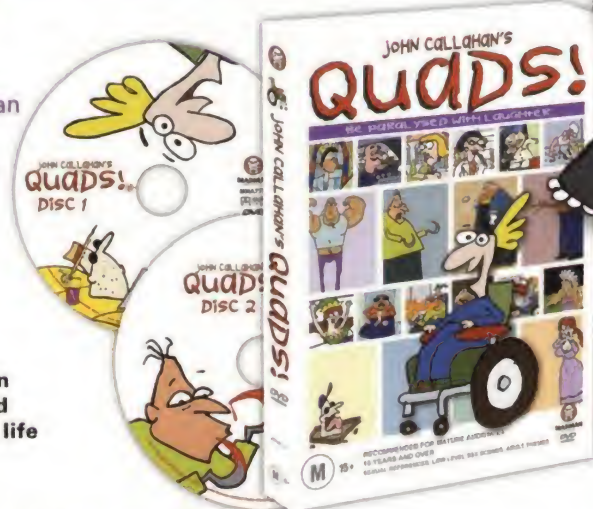
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- Rare cartoons from John Callahan

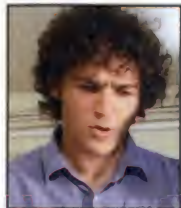
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Robin Williams soon to star in film based on John Callahan's life



# BACK OF THE NET



**JACKSON  
GOTHE-  
SNAPE**

»» As a typical youth of the internet age, I regularly

enjoyed jumping onto ICQ or mIRC and having a yarn. Good, simple fun, that was perhaps at the time (way back in the mid-1990s) still seen as a little bit sad. Most of my enjoyment came from the mystery surrounding the conversation partner, the drive towards the semi social misfit adolescent holy grail of 16/f/sydney w/pic.

Since drifting from such habits more than a handful of years ago, I had developed a very different notion of the internet chatting world. Adopting a more conservative mainstream view, I figured I must have participated in such tomfoolery as it offered desperately appreciated if surreal access to a wider variety of people, at a time when my world didn't extend much beyond school.

But then, not two weeks ago, came a renaissance with the old online chatting. On the night in question, a couple of mates betrayed our ICQ roots, logging onto MSN Messenger (for the first time, honest!) to see if a friend from overseas was online. And, within seconds of beginning a chat session, one-liners were flying, barbs were toasting and the wrists (and sides) began to ache. This came as quite a shock: perhaps I was actually onto something good when I was 15...

Pondering this thought, I came to the conclusion that just maybe it is the medium of internet communication that refreshes social relations. There are no body language cues or clues, only the words that trickle onto the screen. All the assumptions and routines that dull the senses and stifle the excitement of typical everyday conversation are disregarded. Internet chatting, thanks mainly to its facility for surprise, is thus an extra jar in the kitchen of life's spice rack. While 'the magic' will invariably be lost with extended use as its own routine develops, internet chatting, used in moderation alongside the physical realm, is not just for spotty-faced rejects. Oh, and I hear you can get these things called web cams. Hyper: on the cutting edge of technology.

# Links



## Robocop – The VCR Game

[www.x-entertainment.com/articles/0803/index.html](http://www.x-entertainment.com/articles/0803/index.html)

»» Video games are a relic of the 1980's. It's a fact. Before you get confused, what we're talking about here are 'video' games, as in pop it into your VCR, press play and keep your finger on the pause button. Most of you may remember the Nightmare VCR game, and its sequel, but there's little chance you'd remember the limited release of Robocop – The VCR Game. Part board-game, part VCR doodad, Robocop in interactive VCR form remains one of the worst examples of this once profitable industry. From disjointed "Actual Movie Footage!" to pick-up cards that read "Disturbing Memories – Lose One Turn" and on-screen prompts of "Boddicker Arrested (pause tape)" it's all presented without the film's patented R-rated violence.



## The Wizard

[www.nesplayer.com/wizard](http://www.nesplayer.com/wizard)

»» Any movie with the line, "I love the Power Glove, it's so bad" has got to be worth watching. For those of you that remember this 90-minute commercial for Super Mario Bros 3 starring the incomparable Fred Savage and the passable Christian "Pump up the Volume" Slater, you'd probably think that certain things, like this film, are better off forgotten. But to some, like me, this 80's gem is well worth becoming part of your collection – if only the DVD fat cats got around to releasing it.

From talking about Zelda, Double Dragon and calling on the Nintendo Help-Line – this whimsical tale of a young boy's exceptional videogame skills drives home the true meaning and power of Nintendo – and that is to heal old family wounds and to bring them closer than ever before. One question arises though. If the game was brand new, how the hell did he know where to find the Warp Whistle?



## Retro Gaming Is S#%t!

[www.ukresistance.co.uk/issue10.html](http://www.ukresistance.co.uk/issue10.html)

»» In today's modern age, to enjoy/reminisce/embrace all things Retro, including videogames, is considered cool. News flash chumps: all those "classic" games you think are so great are actually balls – they suck and so do you. If you want proof check out this informative look at the games of old versus the games of today through various case studies and observations. Think Sega's Outrun is a great racing title, or go all misty-eyed at the thought of playing International Karate? Well then the answer is simple; you're a "retro gaming" ponce that gets laid as often as people who watch Star Trek. So ditch this "they don't make them like they used to" crap because it's just that, crap. Loser.



## Bad Movies

[www.badmovies.org/movies](http://www.badmovies.org/movies)

»» Before Peter Jackson brought the cinematic vision that is the Lord of the Rings to the world, he was famous for B-grade horror/comedy films like Bad Taste and Dead Alive. So if you fondly think of the latter whenever the name Peter Jackson is mentioned, then this site is most certainly for you. Movies covered include Redneck Zombies, Santa Claus Conquers the Martians, Microwave Massacre, and of course Killer Klowns From Outer Space. With screenshots, clips, detailed reviews, and the aptly titled "Things I Learnt from This Movie" – there's a certain undeniable allure about films this bad.

# Links



## Abstract Crazeiness

[www.superbad.com](http://www.superbad.com)

»» Bees, monster stories from an 8 year-old, General Mao, pancake men, crazy animated gifs and the history of meat. There's no real point to superbad.com, which is probably the point – an exercise in style over substance through a myriad of hidden links and web pages. It's kinda cool though and interesting enough to waste a few minutes clicking away, wondering what crazy thing will popup next.



## Virtual Chat Room

[www.dubit.co.uk](http://www.dubit.co.uk)

»» Chat Rooms are one of the cornerstones of the Internet community, right up there with message boards and instant message clients – and almost every major site has one. The difference with Dubit is that you can control a virtual caricature of yourself around this virtual community's different locations, walk around and of course chat with other inhabitants. From apartments, beaches, skate parks to a graveyard and even a ghetto, users can hop from locale (i.e. chat room) to locale to find new people to chat with. Using vector graphics to create isometric environments, it's definitely an interesting take on chatting on the Net and for the most part works pretty well – even if it is a little uninhabited.



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COMPS  
44 >> HYPER



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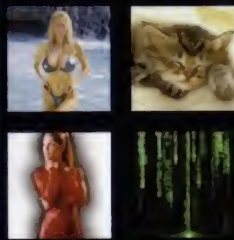
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»»» XBOX

# Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

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## GAME THEORY

DANIEL STAINES



>>The term "emergence" describes a process or phenomena in which a set of simple law-like "rules" give rise to infinitely complex systems of behaviour that could not have been predicted via an analysis of these rules alone. In biology, for example, complex systems governing breeding and migration emerge in populations of animals from the base-level behaviours of individual genes and organisms. That's scientific emergence.

Emergence occurs in games too and is fast becoming the buzzword for an industry increasingly obsessed with immersive reality simulators such as Deus Ex and GTA III. An example of emergence in games can be quite simple. Let's say you've got a door and you've got a pressure plate that must be depressed for that door to open. As a designer, you could go the traditional route and simply program the plate to react if and only if a certain object – say, the player character or a statue – is placed on top of it. Or, if you're feeling a little more adventurous, you could attempt to construct the basic rules for an emergent system and let the player solve the problem in any way deemed acceptable by those rules. For instance, the plate might be weight sensitive and every object in the game-world could be assigned a weight value in specific units. The player is then given options. They could then use a heavy statue to open the door or (if so inclined) stack a whole bunch of vases on the plate of an equal or greater weight value. That's emergent game behaviour.

The questions that arise from an analysis of emergence are very interesting indeed. If emergent behaviour is fundamentally unpredictable, then surely designers are faced with a conundrum when trying to intentionally construct game-systems that lead to it? And what about us as players? Do we really want to play games in which an understanding of all the relevant variables might not lead to an enclosed and predictable system of play?

Until next month,  
daniels@next.com.au

## HYPER CREW TOP 5

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Knights of the Old Republic – Xbox  
"You don't want to cross paths with Darth Seafood..."
2. Championship Manager 4 – PC
3. Lionheart – PC
4. Midnight Club 2 – PS2
5. Advance Wars 2 – GBA SP

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. My new PC – Cam's House  
"Hey Half-Life 2 – my Radeon 9800 Ultra with 256MB DDR RAM would like to meet you..."
2. Zelda: The Wind Waker – GCN
3. Midnight Club 2 – Xbox
4. Midtown Madness 3 – Xbox Live
5. UT 2003 – PC

Malcolm Campbell – Art

1. Zelda: The Wind Waker – GCN  
"There's nothing half so much fun as mucking around in boats."
2. Championship Manager 4 – PC
3. VF4 Evolution – PS2
4. Metal Slug 3 – PS2
5. Street Fighter III – DC

Frank Dry – Reviewer

1. Mace Griffin – Xbox  
"How does it feel, Hank?"
2. Sudeki – Xbox
3. Chessmaster 9000 – PC
4. Metroid Prime – GCN
5. Pro Evo 2 – PS2

## THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM The Overall Score – what's it all about?

0-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
These games simply suck. A total waste of money!	Bad game design and possibly not even worth renting.	Average, verging on bad. This game is flawed, but worth a rent.	Good, verging on average. Maybe try before you buy.	Very, very good. This is a quality game, but not perfect.	Excellent and worthy of a Big Rubber Stamp. Buy it!



Fancy a walk through the desert?



Stupid goody two shoes!



Now that's more like it...!

▶▶▶▶▶ CATEGORY: RPG >>> PLAYERS: 1 >>> PUBLISHER: LucasArts >>> PRICE: \$99.95 >>> RATING: M15+ >>> AVAILABLE: Now

# Knights of the Old Republic

**ELIOT FISH** resists an old Jedi mind trick or two.

**P**reconceptions can be bad. When any serious gamer puts the name BioWare together with the words 'role-playing game', it equates in most people's heads as gaming heaven. Now add the words 'Star Wars' to the mix, and the imagination literally explodes with visions of "the best game ever known to humankind". Like I said, preconceptions can be bad. They lead to disappointment. Which of course leads to suffering, which leads to anger, which leads to hate. "Hold on", you're thinking, "isn't this the Game of the Month review I'm reading?" Yes it is, and yes, Knights of the Old Republic qualifies as our best game this month, but in some ways it only just scrapes in by a Wookiee hair.

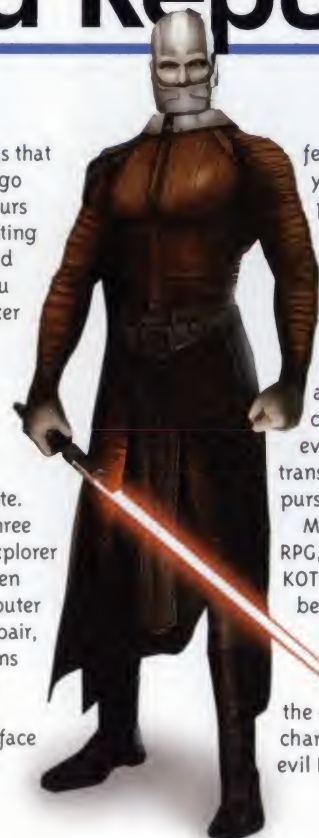
## POP THAT SITH MASK ON

We'll get the most difficult part of the review out of the way first: this

isn't the great RPG we were hoping for. This is not Baldur's Gate for Star Wars fans. Of course, many of us had hoped that it would be, but the pressures of the Star Wars license along with developing for a darned control pad has curtailed BioWare's love of character stats and gazillions of sub-quests and instead turned out a very mainstream-friendly game. It's too easy. It's in many ways too linear. The game — annoyingly — continually connects the dots for you. Knights of the Old Republic (KOTOR) is even staggeringly dumb at times, and it's when you first realise this that you'll sadly concede that you're playing a "simplified" RPG. KOTOR is still a good 35 hours or so of solid entertainment, but whilst it's super tasty to chew on, there's not a lot of depth to the experience.

Character creation is usually the

one aspect of RPGs that hardcore gamers go goo-goo over. Hours can be spent creating and scrapping and creating, until you turn out a character that appeals to you. Thankfully, KOTOR has a nice creation system that is more in-depth than any console RPG to date. You pick one of three classes (Rogue, Explorer or Soldier) and then select skills (computer hacking, droid repair, stealth, demolitions and so forth) and adjust your attributes, pick a face and choose a few



feats. Before you know it, you have the makings of a potential Jedi Master — your character just doesn't know it yet. One of the most fun things about KOTOR, is that by about half-way through the game, you'll marvel at just how much your character has changed, evolved... or even transformed, if you choose to pursue the path of evil. Much like the anticipated RPG, Fable, your character in KOTOR can evolve into a being of purity and light or a twisted villain — and your appearance will change to reflect the choices you've made. My character, the excruciatingly evil Darth Seafood, started





Now where'd I park that spaceship?



Darth Seafood. He da man.



I had some Bantha Fodder on me...



## FINALLY, HERE IS A GAME THAT DEEMS THE EVIL PATH JUST AS VALID AS THE DEFAULT PATH OF THE HERO

out looking pretty suave and wholesome, only to transform into a pale figure complete with sunken yellow sith-like eyes and dark veins crawling across his face. As you acquire a new outfit or two (black Dark Jedi robes will do nicely) and some implants or head-gear (yep, let's pop that Sith Mask on), you really do get to revel in the pleasure of role playing the kind of good or evil character you've always wanted to be in the Star Wars universe...

### FALLING PREY TO THE DARK SIDE

Conversations with Non-Player Characters play a big part in how the player expresses their imagined personality, and KOTOR successfully provides an amazing level of interaction with your immediate party members and peripheral characters. Right from the very first

scene, you can start being an arrogant smartarse and start racking up those Dark Side points to start you on the path of evil. Or if you'd like, be good and help people at every step of the way. The game allows you to express yourself, and it's all the better for it. It's the one side of the role-playing experience that KOTOR does very well. Just as traditional RPGs might showcase the tension between Dwarves and Elves, KOTOR is loaded with internal party bickering and cool conversations between characters who are at different ends of the light & dark scale. I was fascinated to see how the "good" Jedi in my party had picked up on my evil behaviour, and stopped to tell me about how I was falling prey to the Dark Side. Even whilst I was threatening to kill a passing NPC unless they paid me credits, one of my "good" party members

interrupted the conversation to let the NPC go and then berate me on my cruelty! Finally, here is a game that deems the evil path just as valid as the default path of the hero.

Naturally, Star Wars is perfect for this. Part of the whole KOTOR experience is being in control of a character who could go either way at any time — you even have a light & dark meter in your menu screens to show you which way you're leaning. As you fulfil evil plans, you earn Dark Side points, and if you help and aid people you earn Light Side points,



tugging your character this way and that until you surrender them to the path that you're most interested in seeing pan out. It's the most fun part of the game.

### NO SENSE OF WONDER

A lot of the level design in KOTOR is unadventurous and sometimes repetitive, and mission objectives are a little too obvious and easy to solve. You'll find your brain will be hungry for something more to do. As you scratch away at the surface of each planet, you find there's actually not much there.





Same to you!



Seafood catches his dinner.



Great mini-game kid, one in a million.

## THIS IS MADNESS!

>>Mini-games pop up in KOTOR to help liven things up a bit, and whilst they're kind of fun, they're nothing to write home about. For starters there's the card game, Pazaak. It's like Blackjack and you bet credits on it. It's a good game, but once you've played it a dozen times, you'll doubtfully go back to it. Mainly because it's so easy to acquire huge wads of cash elsewhere, you'll never feel like there's a real reason to play it again.

Swoop bike racing is also on offer, but the tracks are depressingly short and you race on your own in an effort to just post a good track time. In fact, the tracks are just dead straight, with a few obstacles to dodge. A mildly fun diversion. Mildly.

There's also a bit of gun turret action on the Ebon Hawk where you get to shoot down Sith fighters. This mini-game looks very pretty, but it's just point and shoot.

The mini-games help to break up the gameplay and offer variety, but they feel more tacked on than anything.

Take Tatooine for instance. On entering Anchorhead you'll delight in how there seems to be so much to look at, until you realise that half the doorways aren't functional, and the desert outside is a big empty area consisting of three locations that are crucial to your main mission objective. Mostly all the planets are this disappointing. They look great, but the content is lightweight.

Exploring your surroundings can reveal very little other than the NPCs required to complete your mission. You can take up a quest from someone, only to wander out the door into the next area to find the solution to the task only a few steps away. There's just never any sense of being "lost" in the environment or of feeling overwhelmed with a multitude of tasks.

It also seems that there are only about half-a-dozen human facial types in the whole galaxy, and that the same Twi'Lek man is running around and painting his face different colours to fool you into thinking he's someone different everywhere you go. It tends to remind the player at every turn that it's all just a game. Your character's

conversation choices also don't clear after you've solved your missions. You'll return from decimating the Black Vulkar base, only to talk to someone in the cantina and have your conversation choice be "How can I get inside the Black Vulkar base?" These annoying flaws tend to highlight that many aspects of KOTOR just aren't as polished or creatively executed as we would expect from BioWare.

Luckily, the game is saved by a few far more interesting excursions — such as completing the Sith Academy quest, which is even better as an evil character out to usurp the Academy's Sith Lord. There are times when you really get to roll about in the mud of role-playing, but these experiences are not backed up with the engaging questing we would have expected.

## DO COOL JEDI STUFF

Combat plays out quite well, and it really becomes challenging when you develop your Jedi powers and start using a lightsaber. The animation is flashy, your characters do cool Jedi stuff, and what's even better is that you're controlling the way the action





Seafood turns up the heat, muahah!

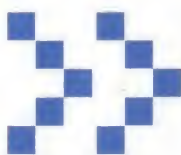


I'm sorry. Like most of the village, I've been preoccupied by these troubled times. I don't really want to speak with you.

Don't worry, you hear him growl this.



Some Sith Lightning to wake you up.



THERE'S A KRAYT DRAGON ON TATOOINE BUT YOU DON'T GET TO FIGHT IT... COME ON BOWARE!

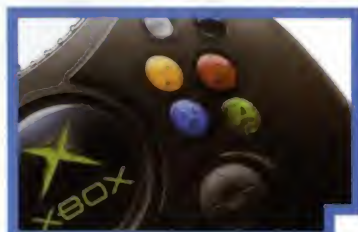
plays out. The more powers you acquire, the more fun and varied combat can become. Using the Auto-Pause function also allows you to spend time after each combat round to heal-up or make tactical changes, so you can really utilise each character's strengths. It's a shame that there aren't random encounters in the game,

!!! A whole new planet will be available for download on the Xbox Live service!

because more unexpected combat would have gone a long way to injecting some much needed life into the gameplay. When the game does throw a big cool monster at you, the solution is usually something other than direct combat, which is disappointing. There's a Rancor on Tatooine, but you have to poison it. There's a Krayt Dragon on Tatooine, but you don't get to fight it... come on



BioWare, where's the fun in that? Let us fight the goddamn things! On the whole though, the combat works well. Whilst we've really focused heavily on the game's flaws, KOTOR is still an entertaining game that's addictive enough to keep you playing right to the end. There are many funky things to see and hear as a Star Wars fan — we love how all the aliens actually use their own dialect — and there are some great moments in KOTOR that make you say "that's really cool" out loud. In fact, chances are you'll sit up all night playing it. I did. But for every tingly thrill, there's a moment of dumb gameplay that makes you think, "is that it? Is that all there is to do?" Just like the Force, there's a light and dark side to this game. In the end, we think the light side wins, because you'll smile more than you'll frown. But it's a shame that this isn't the RPG we were looking for. <<



**PLUS:** Character evolution and conversations, Star Wars stuff.

**MINUS:** No sense of exploration, simple hand-fed solutions.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY  
92 93 80

OVERALL  
85

A fun romp, but BioWare didn't master the Force.

REVIEW

>>HYPER 51



Now that's a bad park.

Mother trucker!

Is Keanu driving that thing?

»»» XBOX CATEGORY: Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now

# Midtown Madness 3

**DANIEL STAINES** takes to the streets, the sidewalk, the park...

**T**his, evidently, is the year of the no-holds barred urban racing game. What have we got out there now? There's *Midnight Club 2*, there's *Burnout 2* and now there's this: *Midtown Madness 3*. Given the sheer quality of the *Midnight Club* and *Burnout* titles, you'd think Microsoft would have waited a bit until the market was a little less flooded with such hot competition. But no, the Big M apparently thinks this ageing franchise from DICE has got enough grunt under the hood to compete with the current-day big-boys of the genre. And we think they're probably right ... with a few provisos.

## GRAPHICS ARE PRETTY

The thing with *Midtown Madness 3* is that the single-player game is actually not very good. You'll be lucky if it lasts you more than five

hours, but that's okay because anything longer would've just been exacerbating an already tedious experience beyond tolerable limits. It's sort of strange too, because there's nothing terribly wrong with the game or anything. The play mechanics — which are all essentially variants of the standard "checkpoint" theme — are rock solid and work well with the game's urban setting. Similarly, car physics are reasonably consistent and the control interface is comfortable and completely intuitive. Graphics are pretty, framerates are smooth and you can rip your own soundtracks. So what's the problem?

Well, it's just that everything in *MM3* is so blandly repetitious and DICE obviously hasn't bothered to invest even a cursory amount of effort into covering up this fact. Every new race is essentially

identical to the last, with only a few cosmetic elements such as car type, street layout and time limit being changed along with the loading screen. With the huge cityscapes they've constructed, DICE could've done so much more with the single-player races than simply repeating the same "pick-up A and drop it off at B" objectives. What about stunt-driving missions? What about smash-up tallies a la *Burnout 2*? What about a million other things we'd rather be doing than another bloody checkpoint race? It really is a wasted opportunity.

Compounding these issues are a whole host of niggling little problems that mean nothing on their own, but conspire and combine to form coalitions of fun-ruining frustration. Paris and Washington, for example, are beautiful digital recreations of their real-life counterparts, but

they've simply got too much STUFF in them for lightning-fast racer like this. There are cars, people, bins, monuments, lamp-posts, street-lights, shop-stalls, park-benches, fountains and everything else you'd expect to see in a modern city and it all looks great — but it also keeps getting in the way of the goddamn race you're trying to win. Flipping off one of the many sidewalk decorations and careening into a shop front is all well and good when you're blitzing





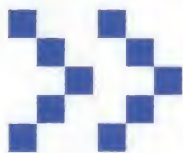
My arch enemy.



The cops find the Hyper HQ secret entrance.



The yellow car screws up. Typical.



## IT'S SIMPLY NO FUN TRYING TO PERFORM FEATS OF OUTRAGEOUS DRIVING FINESSE WITH A RUBBISH SECURITY-VAN FROM THE 1950S

about in the unrestricted Cruise mode, but it gets really irritating when it keeps happening while you're trying to beat someone to the final checkpoint. Decoration is appreciated, but not to the point where it starts ruining the gameplay.

### ENOUGH WITH THE LIMOS

Another issue that began to grate on us after a few hours of play was the fact that the game refuses to give you good

cars to race with during the campaign missions. We understand that name-brand automobiles are supposed to be rewards for persistence and all that anal bollocks, but surely DICE could've given us vehicles that were actually suited to the kinds of missions we were being asked to perform? It's simply no fun trying to perform feats of outrageous driving finesse with a rubbish security-van from the 1950s. And the Limo! Why must developers insist on putting such a useless car in their games? Enough with the Limos!

There are now over 20 games available for Xbox that offer Live functions...



Now, we said in the intro to this review that MM3 could probably hold its own with the likes of *Midnight Club* and *Burnout* and we meant that. Yes, the single-player game is essentially worthless, but the real glory of MM3 is in the multiplayer. We've played

multiplayer Midtown via system-link and split-screen and we can definitely tell you that it is quite a lot of fun in those modes. There are several game-modes available and — aside from the regular checkpoint races — all of them are a lot more enjoyable than anything you'll find playing alone. Our overseas friends assure us that online play via Xbox Live is utterly amazing, but this issue went to print before we could find out for ourselves. Damn!

Next month we'll be doing a Live road-test and you can bet your booty that this baby will be one of the first things we take out for a spin. Until the results of that come through, however, MM3 remains a moderately enjoyable racer crippled by repetition and numerous niggling flaws. If you're going to buy this game, then do so for the multiplayer possibilities. This is not a title for the solo-racer. <<



**PLUS:** Multiplayer is great, solid race mechanics

**MINUS:** Overly repetitious and unoriginal, lots of little flaws

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

85 80 70

OVERALL

75

A mediocre single-player racer with huge multiplayer potential.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 53



The original Battle Droid.

Mmmm, I could go one now...

Where is Bender's other leg?

» XBOX PS2 GCN CATEGORY: Action platformer » PLAYERS: 1 » PUBLISHER: SCI » PRICE: \$99.95 » RATING: G8+ » AVAILABLE: Now

# Futurama

**CAM SHEA** asks – Are you funky enough to be a Globetrotter?

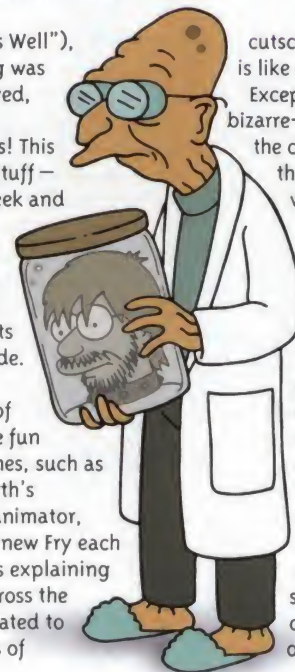
**A**fter seeing Futurama at E3 this year, we were pretty much resigned to the idea that it would be yet another dog of a licensed product. Fortunately, now that we've had a good play with it – taken it around the block, down the park, and got it to sit up and beg – it has turned out to be a somewhat likeable dog. Smelly, certainly, only barely housetrained too, but certainly well meaning and at times rather cute. You get the idea. Futurama is only barely above average in terms of actual gameplay, but there's plenty for fans of the show to enjoy nonetheless.

that end it retains the self referential and often blunt sense of humour that made the show so amusing.

The game begins with Professor Farnsworth announcing that he's just sold Planet Express to Mom's Friendly Robot company. This, unfortunately, means that Mom now owns 51% of the Earth's resources, hence making her the supreme ruler of the planet. She sets out to enslave all of humanity and turns the Earth into a massive warship in order to conquer the known Universe. It's up to the Planet Express crew to stop Mom by going back in time and preventing the deal from going ahead.

It may sound like a pretty run of the mill scenario, but it's the story and cutscenes that are hands down the highlight of the game. The script was penned by series writer J. Stewart Burns (he also wrote the Emmy award winning episode

"Roswell That Ends Well"), and Matt Groening was also heavily involved, and boy what a difference it makes! This is laugh out loud stuff – very tongue in cheek and very funny, and when combined with the authentic voicework it really is like watching bits of a missing episode. It also retains Futurama's sense of the absurd to poke fun at videogame cliches, such as Professor Farnsworth's invention the Re-Animator, which generates a new Fry each time he dies – thus explaining the life system. Across the game you'll be treated to around 25 minutes of

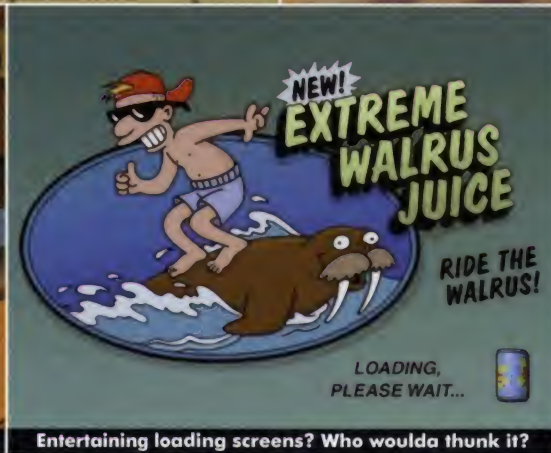


cutscene in total, so it actually is like an all new episode!

Except, it's kind of like a bizarre-o Futurama episode. All the cutscenes are done using the in-game engine, and while the developers have done a good job trying to capture appropriate facial expressions and mannerisms for the characters, the visual style as a whole is a little weird. Rather than going with full cel shading, the characters in Futurama are semi-cel shaded. They have the thick black outline around their prominent features as you would expect, but are still shaded to look fully 3D. This combination looks very odd... but you get used to it

## SUPREME RULER OF THE PLANET

Indeed, unlike every Simpsons videogame title up until this point, Futurama actually seems to be made for the fans of the show – not just the mainstream who watch it casually. To



The deadly chicken walker in action.

Entertaining loading screens? Who woulda thunk it?

Better keep one eye on those...



## BETTER STILL, THERE ARE EVEN FULLY FUNCTIONING SUICIDE BOOTHS THAT WILL ACTUALLY KILL YOU

pretty quickly. And we defy you not to chuckle during the cutscenes. The hilarious script definitely helps put you at ease going into the game.

### GOOD NEWS EVERYONE...

The actual gameplay is very run of the mill shooter/platformer/beat 'em up action. You start out as Fry, taking him from the Planet Express building into the sewers, through old New York, into New New York and even through the robot red light district. Like most of the gameplay, the levels are a bit of a mish mash. The sewers are incredibly dull and repetitive, whereas the red light district is highly amusing, and packed full of sight gags — robot hookers in the window-fronts, signs for Alien Peep Shows and S&M: Skin and Metal Massage parlours. Better still, there are even fully functioning suicide booths that will actually kill you, taking you back

to the start of the level! These sections with Fry really illustrate just how uneven Futurama is as a game. Just as you're starting to have fun shooting robots with the tommy gun in the red light district, the game moves on to the Bender levels. Why build us up to the fun stuff so slowly, then take it away?

You get to play as four Futurama characters all up — Fry, Bender and Leela have a bunch of levels each, while Zoidberg makes a brief cameo. Each character has a different set of moves, and their own set of wisecracks that are actually quite funny. There really is nothing here that you haven't done before, but at least there's a bit of variety from level to level, and the controls are good enough that the jumpy jumpy sections aren't too much of a chore. On the downside,

!!! There are more crates than enemies in this title... now that's game design!

many of the levels are desperately lacking in personality, and it seems very strange that SCI would bother coming up with dull new environments, and some truly lame new enemies, when there are so many unique locations and

characters from the show that they could have utilised. Another major point of contention is the extremely jerky frame rate. How the developers managed to tease such poor performance out of the Xbox in such a simple looking game is beyond us.

You can probably tell that we're pretty torn by this title. The actual game itself is incredibly unremarkable and even just plain bad in places... but the cutscenes are good enough that we kept playing anyway! For Futurama fans this is probably best as a rental title. <<

### REVIEWED ON:



**PLUS:** Great script and funny one liners.

**MINUS:** Gameplay is very been there, done that.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

79 87 63

OVERALL

70

Plenty for fans to enjoy but little meat for gamers.

REVIEW

>>> HYPER 55



Lara's illegal rave gets busted.



On the run from the gameplay police, eh?



Come on let's boogie!

PS2 CATEGORY: Platform/Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Eidos >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now

# Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness

**CAM SHEA** wonders what Core Design have been doing over the last few years...

**W**ell, well, so this is the "next generation" Tomb Raider is it? Apparently this is Lara as we've never seen her before — darker and more mature, poised on the brink of life as a fugitive. Whatever. We often feel that developers must feel trapped when they have a successful franchise on their hands and a publisher that demands a yearly installment. How to keep a product fresh year in year out? Must be tricky eh? Then we wonder what would happen if said developer was given the time they needed to truly reinvent their series. Imagine the awesome games we'd have on our hands! Unfortunately, it isn't that simple. In theory, Core Design have had the last three years to start afresh with Tomb Raider. To move to much more powerful hardware and to reinvigorate the franchise with new ideas and a new

direction. All they've managed to prove, however, is that they don't know where to take this series.

## PUSHING CRATES

The game begins in a somewhat interesting fashion. Lara is in Paris, and has been called upon by her (former) friend Professor Werner Von Croy (now there's a made up name!). He has been researching five 15th century Obscura paintings, apparently connected to the black arts, for a shady client named Eckhardt and wants Lara's help. Unfortunately for him, Von Croy is killed with Lara still in the room. As everyone connected with the research is also being murdered, Lara becomes the prime suspect and must escape from the police before she can begin piecing together exactly what is going on.

This search for the truth will take

Lara from gay Paris to jubilant Prague, and will even see her team up with another hardened adventurer — angst poster boy Kurtis Trent. What this all boils down to, however, is largely the same old Tomb Raider gameplay. Sure, you can now have conversations with NPCs, and sure Lara has a few new moves at her disposal, but ultimately this is a game of pushing crates, climbing structures and battling against shoddy controls

and poor camera mechanics.

Angel of Darkness (AOD) even lacks the wonderment that made the early Tomb Raiders so impressive. The instances where you walk into an area and marvel at the sheer size of it are few and far between. If they happen at all. And there are no real "T-Rex moments" in this game. Core seem to have lost touch with what the fan-base want in the quest to make Lara more mature and gritty. To that end you're now wandering







Dating Lara can be... difficult.



Lara gets squatters out of her basement.



Wow. Books. Remember those things?



## LARA EATING AN OPEN BLOCK OF CHOCOLATE SHE FOUND IN THE SEWERS... SICK.

around locations like the sewers of Paris — not exactly what we'd call gripping. And honestly, Lara eating an open block of chocolate she found in the sewers as a source of health? That's just sick.

### LOSING HER GRIP

Lara has a few new moves up her sleeve such as shimmying around corners while hanging and climbing a

!!! Lara has moved on from shooting endangered species. In AOD she runs errands for criminals and shoots innocent guards in the Louvre. The Louvre for god's sake!



variety of surfaces. There is also the handy "walk" mode, which prevents Lara from falling off ledges — a practical inclusion given how twitchy the controls are. Another new addition is the "stealth" mode (gee, there's an innovation!) where Lara goes into a crouch, can sidle along walls, peer around corners and sneak up behind people and strangle them. It honestly feels like Core only half bothered — it's rarely used and pretty clumsy when required.

We do like the idea, however, that Lara can't climb or grip a ledge indefinitely — she now has a grip meter, indicating how much longer she can hold on before losing her grip. Unfortunately the change-happy camera mechanics come into



### THE EVOLUTION OF LARA

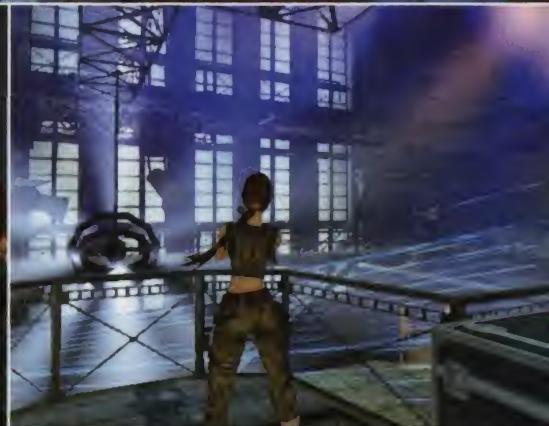
>>Lara's abilities in AOD are completely arbitrary — she may be able to climb poles, chain link fences and so on, but ONLY the ones Core want you to be able to climb. Nothing underlines this better than the "Character Evolution" system in the game. You'll go to bust down a door or turn a valve and Lara will complain "I'm not strong enough", or "I've fallen and I can't get up". This coming from a woman who has climbed, battled and shot her way through five epic adventures already? Even more galling is that becoming "strong enough" is a simple matter of performing a mundane action in the immediate vicinity, and these are always, without fail, utterly ludicrous. You may use a crowbar to open a door and suddenly Lara says "I feel stronger now", allowing you to go back and turn that formerly unturnable valve. The basic idea of Lara getting stronger (and hence able to jump further, punch harder and grip longer) as the adventure goes on is a good one. But it is implemented in such a ridiculous fashion the game becomes laughable.



Why are you always so cold, baby?



Trent uses Lara's bloodhound abilities.



Lara drops in on Sleaze Ball 2003.

### THE PONDS INSTITUTE

>>There are just so many artificial barriers in *Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness*. Although one of the world's foremost authorities on crates (her PHD thesis was entitled "Crates, and how to push them"), Lara is often flummoxed by the crates in the game – some she can push and pull, some she can't. Beware, however, of the ultimate crate. It may look like any other crate, but this is a crate of pure evil, and is distinguishable by the presence of a single cardboard box atop its hulking wooden frame. Do not, we repeat, do not attempt to push or pull this crate. It is impossible.



play here – you often have just enough grip to get across a chasm, but when the camera switches to a completely new angle halfway along you're suddenly unsure which direction you're meant to be pushing.

Combat is definitely not the emphasis in AOD, and any combat situations can be resolved swiftly thanks to a combination of Lara's auto targeting and the retardidity (it's a word now alright?) of the enemy AI. For a game based on exploration, however, Core sure make it hard for the player to get much enjoyment. Lara seems to run in slow motion – almost like she's running through water... and it takes her several meters to get up to this speed from a standing start. Breaking the already slow

gameplay up even more are some of the longest load times ever on PS2. What feels like every few meters the game stops to load up the next area. Even going to and from the options menu takes several long, agonising seconds. On the plus side, you can now save the game at any time – just remember to save regularly because there is no auto save after finishing a level.

### MADE OF JELLY

In terms of level design, Core has taken one step forward and two steps back. While we applaud their efforts to try and introduce a little non-linearity to proceedings by building many of the levels with multiple routes, we would have preferred a little less artificiality in





She's fallen on hard times lately, poor dear.

An evil night to be out alone Ms Croft. Our streets are not safe any more

Lara contemplates a killing spree.

Get out of this with those controls! Haha



## LARA SEEMS TO RUN IN SLOW-MOTION – ALMOST LIKE SHE'S RUNNING THROUGH WATER...

the design. As mentioned in the boxout, Lara is only able to use her super cool moves when Core want us to use them. What if levels were designed so that they were veritable playgrounds? Surely that would be the most fulfilling for gamers? Imagine being able to use all the features of the environment – actually organically utilising Lara's athleticism, rather than being constricted by constant rules and artificial obstacles concerning what you can and can't interact with. This

would at least make the trial and error gameplay entertaining, because it would no longer be finding the path that the developers have set for you, and would instead allow some lateral thinking.

Not only does the gameplay feel behind the times, but so too do the visuals. Simply put, AOD is underwhelming. For the most part it looks competent, and the water effects are very nice indeed, but there are plenty of elements that highlight just how rough and ready the game engine actually is. Some of the character modelling is appalling; seams are frequently visible – even Lara has two shades of tan clearly visible on her neck; characters put their hands through their clothes, and so on. AOD also features some

of the worst rag doll physics since Thrasher: Skate and Destroy. Enemies crumple to the ground and twitch about as if made of jelly... on the moon. Lara looks good for the most part, but we're hard pressed to see just where all those 5000 polygons have gone. One look at her fingers and you'll be quoting from the "man hands" episode of Seinfeld.

!!! Keep several saves on hand at any time – we encountered a glitch that prevented us from going any further (we were meant to be given a key and weren't) and had to go way back to an old save.

Our list of grievances just go on and on with this game, but to summarise – if you want a game with glitches galore, poor controls, bad camera mechanics, underwhelming visuals,

unconvincing French accents, trial and error gameplay, and many a crate, then Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness is the game for you. If you want to keep your sanity, however, we suggest staying away. <<<



**PLUS:** Okay storyline and cut-scenes.

**MINUS:** Bad design all round.

VISUALS 78 SOUND 80 GAMEPLAY 53

OVERALL

60

"I'm not strong enough"... no, Miss Croft, you're not.





"Take me to your Wheeler"

On Mars, no one can hear you beam.

I don't think that design is going to take off.

PS2 CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: LucasArts >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now

# RTX Red Rock

**ELIOT FISH** wants to see the spiders from Mars.

**I**t's rare to see LucasArts break away from their Star Wars and Indiana Jones cash cows, but when they do the results are usually far more interesting. At the moment we have a number of original new LucasArts games on the way — Gladius, Wrath Unleashed, and a game we've spent the last few weeks with, RTX Red Rock.

The theme is Mars, the hero is cyber-enhanced E.Z. Wheeler, and the gameplay is part shooter, part puzzler, part platformer — the modern 3D action game, really. But is Wheeler really the future, or should we still stick with Skywalker for now?

## SNOOPING ABOUT

Sometimes it's hard to know whether the PlayStation 2 hardware is showing its age or if it's poor programming, but the frame rate in RTX Red Rock is probably the greatest annoyance with

this game. It stutters, it chops, it sticks and generally gets up your nose. It really does have an adverse affect on the gameplay, as you struggle to comfortably explore the detailed interiors of the research station and various locales. Sometimes it can mean life or death, coupled with the somewhat convoluted menu system that is required to access health kits and alternate weapons in the heat of the moment.

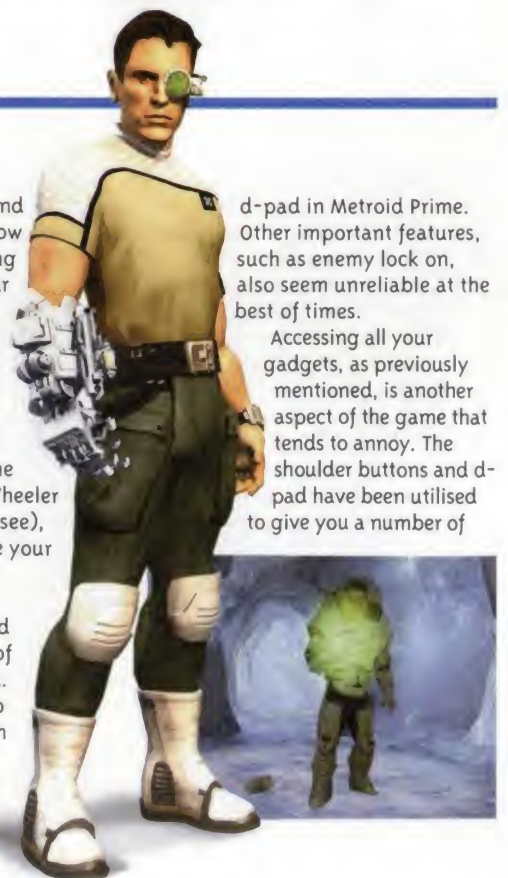
Chugging framerate issues aside, RTX Red Rock is fairly enjoyable for its fresh setting (leaping about in big chunky spacesuits on Mars) and its attempt at bringing more adventure game style puzzles to the action game genre. The game is made to feel that much more daunting than your average adventure, largely due to a clumsy map system that shows your mission critical locations but doesn't really

allow you to scroll around so you can figure out how to get there. So snooping about and learning your way around actually becomes very much a requirement. I guess that's realism for you.

It's interesting to see LucasArts introduce a number of Metroid Prime style visor views (E.Z. Wheeler has a cybernetic eye, y'see), allowing you to observe your environment for heat signatures, scan for interactive elements and generally do the kinds of stuff you did in Metroid. Sadly, they're clumsy to use, and accessing them through a menu just doesn't compare with the ease of flicking the

d-pad in Metroid Prime. Other important features, such as enemy lock on, also seem unreliable at the best of times.

Accessing all your gadgets, as previously mentioned, is another aspect of the game that tends to annoy. The shoulder buttons and d-pad have been utilised to give you a number of





E.Z. waits in the green room.



Now where's the HAL located...?



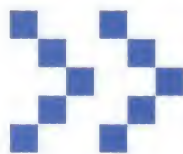
E.Z. waits in the green room.



My system just got a bit of a shock.



Now where's the HAL located...?



## EVEN AFTER EXTENDED PLAY YOU STILL FIND YOURSELF FUMBLING WITH THE CONTROL PAD TO ACCESS WHAT YOU WANT

ways to find your way around, but even after extended play you still find yourself fumbling with the control pad to access what you want. It really is a rather messy controller set-up.

### STAND THERE AND STARE

A reason for putting up with the flaws and "getting to the next bit" is that RTX Red Rock is well written. The characters are quite well formed, the voice acting is good, and it's

even quite amusing at times. The in-game technology and game world have also been very well realised, so there is a sense of real adventure in uncovering all of the locations. Whilst all this is a fairly major plus, the main chunk of gameplay is still tedious and you don't really feel like there's any real point to what you're doing. Take rescuing human survivors for instance. You may stumble across a few in the game before you have the

"tool" to rescue them. So even though they're the first human face you've seen in days, you can't talk or interact with them – they'll just stand there and stare at you like a shop dummy – until you have the specific tool that allows you to beam them to safety. It's an example of how Red Rock seems to be intent on preventing the gamer from settling in and getting into the atmosphere of the game.

It feels like RTX Red Rock had all the right intentions, but somewhere along the line got caught up in trying to offer too many things at once, and the result is a game that becomes bothersome and at times quite confusing. Despite the interesting gameplay twists of controlling droids and so forth, Red Rock just doesn't entertain. Sorry, E.Z. Wheeler, Luke Skywalker's time isn't up just yet. <<<

!!! Next on the way from Lucas will be Gladius, the Gladiator sim.



**PLUS:** Nice visuals when you're standing still.

**MINUS:** Bad control scheme, poor framerate.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

72 80 69

OVERALL

70

Did too many cooks spoil the broth?

REVIEW

» HYPER 61



Wario and his monthly Hyper column.

Wario dishes out some Blau!

Protect that crate with your life!

GEN

CATEGORY: Platform/Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Nintendo >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now

# Wario World

**STEPHEN FARRELLY** isn't having a rotten day...

**W**ario's place within the Nintendo universe is a bit of a mystery. He kind of popped up out of nowhere as the bizzaro Mario on the GBC and has been causing trouble ever since. While Mario's values are based on his affection for Princess Peach and his penchant for adventure, Wario's motives are simple: Cash, and lots of it.

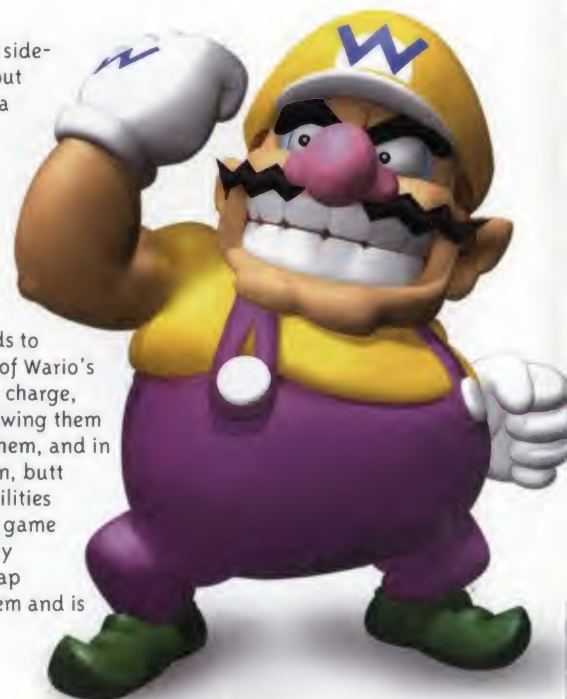
The stoutly yellow clad Italian has seen his fair share of 2D adventures, and hot off the heels of his successful mini-game romp on GBA, Wario Ware Inc., Nintendo has seen fit to give Wario a console adventure all his own. But does it live up to the standards set by his goody-two-shoes opposite Mario? Yes, but not in the way you might think.

**MONEY! WOO-OH, IT'S A CRIME!** Wario World is developed by Treasure, the Japanese development

studio responsible for a number of unique cult classics like Gun Star Heroes for the Mega Drive, Ikaruga for Dreamcast and GameCube and Freak Out on PS2. Each game was a very unique product showcasing treasure's amazing ability to work within gameplay confines adding interesting puzzles, level design and player interaction. Wario World is no different in this respect, and in keeping with Wario's previous handheld games, WW is played in a pseudo 2D environment. That is, Wario is confined to walk left and right and up and down, but only a portion of the environment is on display. What this has done for Treasure is give them the opportunity to create multi-tiered maps that offer interesting design and a great level of exploration. At first glance, however, this might not seem the case, as the first level of

WW simply seems like a side-scrolling beat 'em up, but trust us, give the game a level or two and you'll begin to appreciate Nintendo's decision to work with Treasure.

Gameplay is a fairly straightforward affair of collecting, bashing and exploring. Exploration usually leads to puzzles that require all of Wario's abilities. He can punch, charge, climb, throw enemies, swing them around and pile drive them, and in typical Nintendo fashion, butt stomp. Each of these abilities work in unison with the game environment and usually affect gameplay and map access. It's a great system and is balanced and paced beautifully.

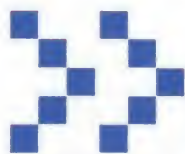




We suspect he's thinking, "Balls!"

That's his way of making friends...

How does he jump with that beer gut?



## GAMEPLAY IS A FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARD AFFAIR OF **COLLECTING, BASHING AND EXPLORING.**

Wario is often required to pick up objects or enemies and swing them around to open gates, break down walls, hit switches or fight bosses. His butt stomp opens wooden trapdoors and his pile driver opens up metal trapdoors. These are pretty much the only things you use his abilities for, and while it may sound limited, it actually works very well, keeping the gameplay simple and intuitive, as well as fun and engaging.

!!! Do yourself a favour, and buy Wario Ware Inc on Game Boy Advance!



### VISUALS AND WHATNOT

Visually, Wario World is a mixed affair. Treasure has really exercised its ability with effects tools, and the particle and lighting system are great. Equally, Wario's animations hold up well and he's a joy to control. Bosses are excellent, with Treasure designing huge powerful characters that humorously homage Nintendo bosses of old.

Battletoads, Kremplings and more rear their heads for a good old Wario beating.

The environments vary from level to level, with some maps holding sub-par texturing while others throw highly detailed bumpmaps at you that will more than drop your jaw. It's this throw in balance that upsets Wario; the game is fun and engaging and for the most part looks great, but there are some rushed areas that let

the themes and consistency down. The same can be said of the sound department; Wario's maniacal laughter and enemy heckling is let down by a repetitive soundtrack and some uninspired sound effects. It comes together in the end and you'll be too busy laughing at Wario's catchphrase, "Have a rotten day" to really notice, but after a while it does get a bit much.

Wario World is definitely a fun game, and Nintendo fans tired of the Mario formula would do well to check it out. It harbors a great twist on the Mario gameplay idea with the pseudo 2D level design and the puzzles that take advantage of the 2D confines, but the overall presentation and longevity factor are hindered by some rushed implementations that become tedious. This is probably more a game for old-schoolers or Nintendo fans. <<



**PLUS:** Wario is damn funny. Great puzzles and level design.

**MINUS:** Poor presentation and repetitive music. Bland textures.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
76	75	84

OVERALL

82

Wario's console debut is crazy fun.

REVIEW

»HYPER 63



Time to crawl this dungeon methinks.



I dunno, give me your money.



Wear the gimp mask! Go on!

PC CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Black Isle >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PIII 700, 128MB RAM >>

# Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader

**FRANK DRY** finally gets to join the Knights Templar.

Any Black Isle RPG release is usually met with salivating mouths and wide eyes, as gamers clamber to get their hands on what always seems to turn out to be another great adventure. Before we played *Lionheart* we had heard rumblings that there were problems in development over at Reflexive Entertainment, and that *Lionheart* could possibly turn out to be the first real Black Isle dud after such successes as *Fallout*, *Planescape Torment* and *Icwind Dale*. We're happy to report that whilst it's certainly not a classic, *Lionheart* is still another fine romp to please RPG addicts.

## STYLE AND ARTISTRY

The game begins in 1588 outside the walled city of Barcelona — but this is an "alternate" history in which a Disjunction has occurred, spawning demons and magic across the world.

After a few hundred years of this clash of flesh and magic, people have sought protection from these "evil" forces and given the Inquisition unprecedented control over their lives. Also in the mix are the Knights Templar, the Order of Saladin and the magic-loving Wielders. You, naturally, are stuck somewhere inbetween, playing the role of either a pure-blood Human, Demokin, Feralkin or Sylvant — each race blessed with very different traits. Your character has a symbiotic relationship with an internal spirit that delivers you the ability to use magic when in need, and you'll find that there's something else very special about you... You're a descendent of Richard the Lionheart. It's quite interesting to see how many real-world historical figures have been incorporated into the game, as you'll meet Da Vinci, Cervantes and

Shakespeare in your first half-an-hour of play! Great voice acting, by the way.

Character creation will remind you of *Fallout*, as this is the SPECIAL system, with characters having a variety of perks and character traits that allow you to really make yourself something unique. For instance, you may have acid blood that causes damage to enemies that injure you, or you may have gossamer skin that makes you partially translucent and

hard to see. There are a huge variety of these differences, and these new races have been creatively designed and feel quite fresh to the genre. Suddenly you'll find you have to think very carefully about how to level up your character, as these ain't Orcs and Elves we're dealing with here.

We must make a mention of the visuals, as the game uses the Velocity engine, a 2D engine in the style of *Arcanum* and *Fallout* that looks absolutely gorgeous. There shouldn't







I have to stop calling this game Lionhead.

Lieutenant Wharf reporting for duty, sir.

I wonder if I can pry that big gem free.



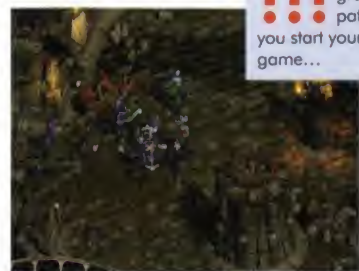
## DIALOGUE IS VERY WELL WRITTEN, AND YOU'LL GET CAUGHT UP IN ALL MANNER OF STRANGE CONVERSATIONS

be any rush to 3D when 2D RPGs can still look this good. Yes, it's all pre-rendered except for the characters and items, but the style and artistry on display is exceptional. Casting your eyes over the environment for details is a joy, and you'll thoroughly enjoy your journey across Europe.

### FIND YOURSELF GETTING LOST

Character development and evolution plays out in a very subtle fashion,

!!! Make sure to grab the latest patch before you start your first game...



and conversation choices have direct consequences, so as you make and break friendships you'll slowly determine what your place is in this very different world. You'll feel suspicious of everyone, and there's a nice mood to the game that's hard to describe. Dialogue is very well written, and you'll get caught up in all manner of strange conversations — with more dialogue choices

depending on where you've spent your skill and attribute points which is always nice to see.

Many of the missions tend to force the player to trek around and backtrack quite a lot, and the speed of getting around isn't the fastest, so you'll have to exert quite a bit of patience whilst playing Lionheart. The Automap function isn't the best, as you can't make notes on the map of

where certain people are located, nor can you move your character on the map screen. You'll find yourself getting lost quite a bit in the extremely detailed locations, but in a way that's part of the fun.

Combat is real-time, so naturally you'll have to set healing potions to hot-keys and be very tactical with how you attack and when it's best to simply back off and use a bit of magic. There's a handy right-click system for initiating your magic, with a left-click used for melee attacks. It's all quite intuitive, and you'll generally find that Lionheart is an exceptionally easy to play experience, despite a few glitches and bugs here and there whilst trying to click your way through a complex fight.

There's a slice of magic that's somehow missing here, but Lionheart is still compelling enough to keep you hooked to the end. <<



**PLUS:** Nice environments, good conversations, addictive.

**MINUS:** Too much backtracking, poor automap, slightly buggy.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

83 87 83

OVERALL

84

An intriguing and original setting for an RPG.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 65



Careful of the wood elves men!

Don Quixote discovers the rocketlauncher.

Thredbo in 1942.

PC

CATEGORY: Real-Time Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Koch Media >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: PG >> AVAILABLE: Now >>  
REQUIRED: PII 500, 128MB RAM >>

# World War II: Frontline Command

**MARCH STEPNIK** storms the beaches...



World War II Frontline Command is a realtime strategy game set in France and Germany during WW2 operations — and the sort of RTS that eschews all base building and resource gathering for the purity of commanding nothing but squads of soldiers (and mechanised arms) in a theatre of war. The idea, simple: micromanage your units with the utmost in care — don't let them die, now — and whomp your way to victory.

## THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS

Interface and option simplicity is the theme of Frontline Command, the idea being that the less you have to fiddle about in the periphery of the game world the more opportunity you have being immersed in it and responding tactically — in real time — to the war going on around you. It's a noble

idea and one that's supported by some clever gameplay mechanics — but one that's incomplete.

Frontline Command offers two single player campaigns: Recruit and Veteran. If there's any doubt which order these should be played in, you'll be rather quickly put in your place: Veteran mode is tough — real tough. The difference between the two reflects more than just an increase in the core stats and 'AI' of enemy units for Veteran mode, they reflect a significant change in style of play. The 'arcadey' Recruit mode is made up of 12 missions, and units have unlimited ammo. Veteran Mode is made up of 25 missions, each with multiple and more challenging objectives. You get fewer units here and ammunition is limited — so you'll have to factor in a periodical re-supply of your units' ammo stocks, as well as a medic run to tend to your wounded.

The essence of Frontline Command is, without a doubt, unit co-operation. There are nine soldier types, and a dozen vehicles to manage — each with specific strengths and weaknesses. Exploiting the abilities of all of your units and correctly grouping them together is the only way to mission success — and that's because your units are all inextricably linked. The powerful artillery gun has to be towed onto the field by a support truck, and must be manned by a small number of your infantry. Mortar teams have a powerful attack and an impressive range, but are sitting ducks should enemy infantry men stumble across them. Sub machine gunners will mow down Axis troops with ease at short range but are useless at a medium range, while their next of kin — the heavy machine gunners — have a longer range and can take on light vehicles, but are much less mobile and

more vulnerable as a result. And the single-unit Commander is perhaps the most useful: providing not only a boost to soldier morale, the Commander also carries binoculars which absolutely slaughters the game's fog of war. This allows for one of the game's very neat touches: shared Line of Sight.

## THINGS EXPLODING

While the lay of the land is revealed at the beginning of each mission (representing a map of the area), you're limited to seeing what's going around you by the line of sight of your units. Objects such as buildings, trees, hedges and hills obscure your field of vision, and as such offer various tactical advantages. Shared line of sight comes into play here, offering a very neat reward for intelligent use of your surrounds. An enemy target outside of a unit's field



"Hey Bob, is it getting hot in here?"

Protecting trees from the RTA.

I didn't see the speed bump, sorry.



## YOU CAN ORDER **LONG RANGE UNITS LIKE MORTARS** TO ATTACK THINGS THAT THEY CAN'T SEE DIRECTLY

of view, but inside their attack range can still attack that unit as long as a Commander can see the target. In this way, you can order long range units like mortars to attack things that they can't see directly — which is a near perfect win-win tactical situation: good offensive capability with maximum defence.

The Bitmap Brothers have done well with Frontline Command in so many areas: the 3D world is a joy to move around, and it looks good in a

rather bland, earthy kinda way. The sound is excellent, with a solid collection of ambient war pieces — things exploding, guns a-firing, planes passing overhead — with a respectable soundtrack backing it all up.

But there are two key weaknesses to this game — shite unit AI and dodgy pathfinding. This is a game that begs your control. Most of the time, units will automatically respond to situations going on around them, but rarely in the most appropriate way. They'll never adopt defensive stances if they're attacked, won't make good use of cover, and almost always die. So they require constant management on your behalf — which can become a real nightmare when you're leading a multi-group, scattered advance on a position.

Related to poor AI is the pathfinding. Moving multiple units over large distances is almost always catastrophic as your men will often choose the most inappropriate routes, normally in front of enemy troops. To overcome this, waypoints are

absolutely essential. The trouble is, your management workload goes up a serious notch as a result — up from an already high level. This is a very demanding game.

This is a deeply strategic game in modern, 3D garb which may at first seem deceptively simplistic. It's not: success requires a lot of hard work and a gruelling level of management. If you're prepared to compensate for the often poor AI, Frontline Command can be a rewarding strategy experience. <<

!!! Get all your Frontline Command patches and info from [www.frontlinecommand.com](http://www.frontlinecommand.com)



**PLUS:** Looks great, good mixture of units, strong missions.

**MINUS:** AI bites, no skirmish mode, steep learning curve.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 90 72

OVERALL

78

Demanding, but ultimately rewarding.

REVIEW

» HYPER 67





Get outta my potato field ya varmint!

My butt is cold from sitting on that damn throne.

This beach bonfire is getting out of control.

**PC** CATEGORY: Real-Time Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >> PUBLISHER: Blizzard >> PRICE: \$59.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>  
REQUIRED: PII 400Mhz, 128MB RAM, 8MB Card >>

# WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne

**KOSTA ANDREADIS** was always a little frigid.

Just over a year ago, Blizzard released the latest installment in their long-running flagship RTS franchise WarCraft. WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos managed to sell four million copies around the world in a single weekend — its popularity undeniable. Shortly after, The Frozen Throne was announced.

As a developer, Blizzard is well known for creating excellent expansions to existing software that more often than not serve to deepen gameplay mechanics considerably and extend the online life of a title even more. The Frozen Throne, now released, may stand as their most in-depth expansion set yet.

## EPIC IN SCOPE

As the dust settles from the destruction of the Burning Legion at the Battle of Mount Hyjal, peace and

prosperity are but a wishful thought for most of the inhabitants of Azeroth. With the dark soul Illidan Stormrage resurfacing an ancient race of water dwellers known as the Naga, and the tainted Prince Arthas' quest for ultimate power, the WarCraft saga continues in an unexpected way — with the lines between good and evil dissipating almost completely. The emergence of new foes, alliances and treachery... the story starts and doesn't let up throughout the course of the game's 26 single-player missions. Although the missions themselves feature similar goals to those present in Reign of Chaos, the execution is anything but predictable — the balance between RTS and RPG has been carefully manipulated to provide an experience that is both character driven and epic in scope.

The inclusion of new heroes results in the player having to control at

least two at a time for the most part, resulting in a greater amount of character management and diversity amongst your forces. Simply amassing a single type of unit this time around won't be enough. The levels themselves tend to steer clear of simply recreating the same strategies seen in Reign of Chaos, as new tile sets and the sheer variety of different mission types (dungeon crawling, defending bases, multiple battles) means a different and original WarCraft experience can be had this time around.





### GTA: VICE VILLAGE

»» The Orcs, who have little to do with the main quest, have been relegated to a three act bonus campaign that plays out like WarCraft crossed with GTA, as players take on missions and quests to rebuild the Orcish Horde in the promised land Durator. Brilliant stuff.



I smite thee with squiggly stuff!



Hey look, Zorro was here.



I see red I see red I see red.



## THE FROZEN THRONE IS A NATURAL PROGRESSION FOR THE SERIES, A MUST FOR ANYONE WHO BOUGHT THE ORIGINAL

After, or most likely before, the single player missions are conquered, players can hop online and log onto Blizzard's upgraded Battle.Net server for a more refined and in-depth multiplayer experience. With new heroes (both race specific and neutral), new units, new buildings, items and upgrades — there's plenty of room for experimentation and the door is now wide open for new race-specific strategies. There's simply too many to mention here and they're all implemented without complicating the overall experience.

### THE ULTIMATE UPPER HAND

Take the Night Elves for example, with the new Mountain Giant units players can amass Archers and Dryads, keep them behind a pair of Mountain Giants that can be used to force nearby enemies to attack them only (via their taunt ability) whilst the

non-melee units go to work. Of course this strategy isn't infallible and with four different races (the new single player races unfortunately didn't make the multiplayer cut) the balance is virtually perfect, with the ultimate upper hand lying with the player — not any flaws within the game. And let's not forget the return of ships and water based attacks, something that works its way naturally into the game.

Visually, the game looks very much like its counterpart, but for a few minor special effects here and there, new textures, tile sets and characters. And when you take into account that Reign of Chaos still looks the business today — The Frozen Throne doesn't disappoint. The cinematic sequences, although sparse, are a wonder to

behold rivaling effects seen in most films today. The wave effects look every bit as good as those seen in



Blizzard has included a secret "tower game" mission in one of the campaigns that proves even fan made maps can strike that elusive 'addictive gameplay' chord.

Episode II. It needs to be said, "Hey Mr. Blizzard! Please make a feature length CGI film. I'll be your best friend".

Ahem. Voice acting, music and overall presentation has never been one of their flagging areas and The Frozen Throne continues the trend exceptionally well with top tier production and art design, and a well toned sense of humour. The Frozen Throne is a natural progression for the series, a must for anyone who bought the original, and a title that will live online and fuel the Korean economy for years to come. ❄️



**PLUS:** Multitude of balanced and impressive upgrades.

**MINUS:** A shift towards RPG gameplay may turn off purists.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	92	93

OVERALL

90

Sets a new standard for expansion sets.



REVIEW

»» HYPER 69



It ran out from under the fridge! Ewww!

Did they use bumpmapping on the foreheads?

Too ugly to live, you got that right.

**PC** CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >>  
REQUIRED: PIII 600, 128MB RAM, 32MB Video card >>

# Star Trek Elite Force II

**MARCH STEPNIK** asks us to beam him up.

**T**he observant gamer will notice that the game's "Voyager" branding is conspicuously absent this time around. But that's easily explained: Elite Force II is a creation from Ritual Entertainment (Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force came from id Software chums, Raven Software). Beyond the change in developer is a change in direction too: while Elite Force II follows chronologically from Elite Force, it is in fact less a "Voyager" game than it is a Star Trek Next Generation adventure. For all the critical acclaim Voyager the TV series got on television, the fact is the Next Gen crowd still fart about in cinemas and people are still digging on the Patrick Stewart. So Elite Force II is actually a mish-mash of Next Gen and Voyager elements — with a heavy leaning towards the ol' fogies of the NC.

## DELICATE BALANCING ACT

In fact, there's very little Voyager in it at all. But that's not to say there isn't a neat little segue in Elite Force II for the Voyager (and Elite Force) faithful out there. The first mission — just like in Elite Force — sees you (as Hazard Team leader Alexander Munro) taking on those most popular and cuddly of automatons, this time to help release the U.S.S. Voyager from the confines of a Borg cube. Naturally, you succeed in freeing the ship and find yourself back on earth at the Starfleet Academy in San Francisco with the news that your Hazard team has been disbanded. After a few years of training duties at the Academy, Jean Luc Picard snaps you up to head the hazard team on his Enterprise and the rest, as they say, is history.

Elite Force II isn't a straight shooter. While the Quake III Arena

engine provides the nuts and bolts here, Ritual Entertainment has created a game that is designed to play out like an episode of Trek: action to be had, but not before wandering about and exploring first. And explore you must: a number of the missions played leave you equipped with nothing but a tricorder and objectives designed to get you to the next cutscene.

Ritual has the next experience to pull this delicate balancing act off though. It's best known for the infamous Sin — a Quake II engine-powered (albeit substantially modified) action-adventure game that proved quite entertaining once the initial release was patched up. What Ritual did with Sin was to give — through heavy scripting — a cinematic quality to the id-style First Person Shooter. And with a higher level of environmental

interaction (computers, security cameras, mounted guns etc) than most shooters, Sin worked remarkably well. Elite Force II continues this tradition. Your tricorder will be required a-plenty here, as will some basic puzzle solving skills once you "jack" into one of the many consoles scattered about the place. Ultimately though, Elite Force II is a slower paced action game; one that does Trek essence justice.





Sorry, I didn't mean to stare. \*gulp\*



Shit, it wasn't Avon calling after all!



Watch out for the pea soup! Ooh



## OBVIOUS HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE THE RECREATION OF THE USS ENTERPRISE, THE STARFLEET ACADEMY CAMPUS, **PATRICK STEWART'S VOICE**

### THUMBS UP FOR TREK

And the Star Trek universe lends itself beautifully to Ritual's style. For with the rich diversity of cultures comes a rich diversity of environments. And the technology — namely the near omnipotent Holodek — allows the game's creators to present a number of these environments without having to worry about how to justify them in the story. Are you really prancing about a Romulan starship zapping its crew? No — that's just a program being run back at Starfleet Academy. Neat, and very convenient, the upside is a virtual smorgasbord for the Trekkies. Indeed, the Star Trek license has been left in good hands here — anyone with an appreciation for things Trek will find plenty to be pleased about. While obvious highlights include the recreation of

the USS Enterprise, the Starfleet Academy campus, Patrick Stewart's voice acting — it's the little touches that stoke this game with so much gas. Being able to look out a viewing port from the bridge of the Enterprise and seeing other parts of the ship and space beyond is a treat. As is the use of pseudo-scientific technobabble in cutscenes and incidental conversation.

As far as a Trek experience goes, Elite Force II works. But that's pretty much the best news because the actual shooting bits are a bit of a drag. It's not so much the fact that so much of it takes place in long corridors. It's not even the way your Hazard Team mates tend to step into the line of fire (thank god that plenty of

missions have you fly solo). It's that your primary enemy — an alien (read: Aliens) race that you're investigating — lacks any sort of tactical cunning. They come, wave after wave at you, in a "head against the brick wall" manner — which is not much fun. At least with the Borg you fight in the first missions you know what to expect.

!!! We won't mention the bit about Activision suing Viacom for not making enough Star Trek. Oh... whoops.

"Mmmust... Eat... Brains..."

Elite Force II is a mixed bag — thumbs up for Trek goodness, thumbs down for singleplayer AI. Those wanting fulfilling

Trek-themed action shooter will want to make use of this game's comprehensive multiplayer component (including a singleplayer against bots option) instead. <<



**PLUS:** Tasty Q3A engine graphics, Trekness, scripted events.

**MINUS:** Enemy AI blows, lame shooting bits.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY  
**83 82 75**

OVERALL

**78**

A competent Trek shooter.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 71

PC



## NEVERWINTER NIGHTS: SHADOWS OF UNDRENTIDE

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >>  
PUBLISHER: Atari >> PRICE: \$49.95 >>  
RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>  
REQUIRED: Neverwinter Nights >>

**I**t's taken a while for the first Neverwinter Nights expansion to hit the shelves but it's definitely worth the wait, introducing a whole new epic storyline, new feats, skills, classes and spells as well as three new tilesets for modders.

If the plot feels somewhat familiar, that's because it follows generally the same line as the original campaign. Though the plot may be a little stale, the story is carried with such style and elegance that you'll soon find yourself caught up in the battle to save Faerun.

Ironically, the greatest accolade for and biggest disappointment of SoU are the new henchmen. Undrentide allows players to guide the way in which the NPC levels and can equip them in any fashion they desire (keeping within class limits). Unfortunately the henchman AI remains poor so don't be surprised if Xardas the mage will cast Light five times before charging headfirst into combat. Ultimately these AI flaws are quickly forgotten when players meet up with Deekin, a Kobold bard who could possibly be the greatest comedy relief RPG character ever (yes, even better than Minsc). Shadows of Undrentide isn't going to revolutionise the way you look at computer role playing but it's more than worth the \$50 asking price.

Daniel Wilks

VISUALS **80** SOUND **90** GAMEPLAY **84** OVERALL **82**



Snow way you can stop me!

XBOX / PS2 / GCN



## SPEED KINGS

CATEGORY: Arcade Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >>  
PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> PRICE: \$49.95 >>  
RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



This is not looking good...

**I**f Climax, developer of the incredible Moto GP 2, harbours secret aspirations of cornering the motorcycle game market, it might well succeed with Speed Kings and its budget stablemate, SX Superstar. Speed Kings is, in essence, a Burnout/SSX Tricky hybrid on two wheels. Players compete in illegal street races against 5 AI riders in single player mode, or against up to three other players in multiplayer, and while it may seem a little simplistic, rest assured there's a lot more to the game than just accelerating, braking and steering.

Powerbands (turbo boosts) are the key to victory and they're earned by dinging the sides of vehicles and by performing stunts ranging from handlebar handstands to 'surfing' atop a bike's chassis. Coolest by far, though, are the powerdowns that allow the player to slide under trucks and other obstacles. Playing dirty is encouraged – with a few well-aimed kicks and punches, it's possible to send opponents cartwheeling to their doom.

Speed Kings' jack-of-all-trades approach works to a degree, but the game fails to do anything better than the titles it tries so hard to emulate. On the plus side, the sensation of speed is decent, there are plenty of bikes and tracks to unlock, and there's something intangible about the game that'll keep players who don't expect too much from it coming back for more. Speed Kings is average in almost every respect, but at \$49.95, there's little justification in expecting more. **Brett Robinson**

VISUALS **68** SOUND **65** GAMEPLAY **70** OVERALL **69**

XBOX / PS2 / GCN



## SX SUPERSTAR

CATEGORY: Arcade Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>  
PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> PRICE: \$49.95 >>  
RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

**S**X Superstar is an arcade racer with two aims. The first is to jump, powerslide and trick-ride through three racing leagues comprising arena, baja and stunt events. The second objective is to rack up enough sponsorship deals and prize money to buy a dream bike, a swish penthouse apartment and a hot woman. Ain't capitalism grand! Yes, the concept is chauvinistic and somewhat gimmicky, but in this day and age innovation of any kind is to be applauded.

SX Superstar's bikes handle well, the arena and stunt events are a lot of fun, and there's a sense of achievement in making the first move from ghetto-style accommodation to more salubrious surrounds. A few hours in, however, critical design flaws become apparent; the game has a propensity for respawning crashed competitors in extremely disadvantageous positions, and SX Superstar's automatic enforcement of track boundaries can only be described as fascist. Furthermore, the counter-intuitive positioning of checkpoints ruins many of the baja races and poor performance in a championship season results in demotion to the previous league.

At its best SX Superstar is engaging, offering challenging races, inspired track designs and massive doses of wicked air. Most of the time, however, the game engenders frustration and rage, not delight. Thus, even at the bargain price of \$49.95, SX Superstar is difficult to recommend.

**Brett Robinson**

VISUALS **79** SOUND **65** GAMEPLAY **60** OVERALL **61**



"Any hot women watching??"





## VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION

CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>  
 PUBLISHER: Sega >> PRICE: \$89.95 >>  
 RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



A real-deal Face Plant!

**W**hen fighting games are released with a vague addition to the title, like 'Evolution', there's reason for skepticism. Street Fighter fans (and I'm one of them) will remember the Champion Editions, Turbos, Dashes, etc. that signified that the game wasn't a true sequel and was actually pretty close to the game you bought a year ago, with a few tweaks and additions. Virtua Fighter fans are now in the same predicament — is it worth paying full price for what is essentially an upgrade?

Accepting VF4, Evolution contains the same excellent fighting mechanics VF4 had a year ago, we can get down to what's new (or should that be evolutionary?). Two new characters grace the player select screen. Goh is a Judo master who has a tricky but ultimately rewarding range of moves, much like Akira. Brad is a dodgin' and weavin' kickboxer with a nasty knack for juggling. Both, interestingly, have a distinct Tekken flavour to their character designs. Sega have also noticed how good Tekken 4 looked on PS2, and have fixed the jaggie problems that plagued VF4. The fantastic career mode has been revamped — solo players now fight in real-life Tokyo arcades, earning cash to buy new costumes, wallpapers and demo videos. A few extra moves per character round out the list.

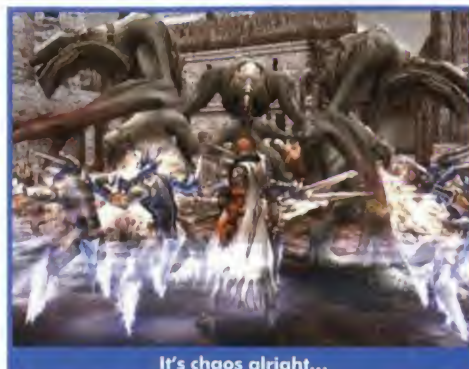
If you don't already own VF4, then VF4 Evolution is an excellent package. If you do, maybe the cool 10th anniversary Virtua Fighter 1 mode will help persuade you to "upgrade". **Malcolm Campbell**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
90	80	95	92



## CHAOS LEGION

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >>  
 PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$99.95 >>  
 RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



It's chaos alright...

**C**apcom managed to capture lightning in a bottle with Devil May Cry and its sequel, so you could be forgiven for thinking that Chaos Legion is the third game in the series, as it contains many of the same design elements but also keeps the same sense of frenetic fun.

Players take the role of suitably angst ridden Dante clone Sieg Wahrheit (what is it with Japanese game characters with weird-ass quasi-German names anyhow?), a man tortured by demons from his past and blah, blah, blah. The basic plot revolves around Sieg killing hordes and hordes of monsters on his way to a final confrontation with his arch-nemesis, Victor. There is more to the story than this simple premise, but after hearing the first bit of terrible voice acting over the admittedly very nice looking cutscenes and you'll want to skip the rest. Although Sieg looks like Dante and carries a big sword like Dante there's a little something that sets him apart from the other popular Capcom character — the Chaos Legions, summoned combat avatars that allow Sieg to execute special moves or that will battle along side the (anti)hero. Combat is also a lot more restricted than in Devil May Cry as Sieg has no aerial combos and ground-based attacks are far less flashy. Be that as it may, combat is still nice and frenetic with the engine throwing dozens of many-legged monsters at the player with nary a drop in framerate.

**Daniel Wilks**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
87	75	78	76



## MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004

CATEGORY: Flight Sim >> PLAYERS: 1 >>  
 PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$89.95 >>  
 RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>  
 REQUIRED: PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 3D card >>

**R**eviewing Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004: A Century of Flight is kind of like putting on a comfortable old jumper only to find out someone has written the biography of the sheep the wool came from on the back — comfortably familiar with a nice sense of history. Whilst not noticeably too different from Microsoft's last flight sim, A Century of Flight pays tribute to the centenary of powered flight by including a number of historical aircraft that are available to fly. By historical we don't just mean a couple of biplanes — the Wright Brother's Flyer is available to take for a spin, providing you can get it off the ground. Trying to get the flyer to simply take off is a game in and of itself and keeping it in the air for more than a few seconds just adds to the challenge.

Other antique planes available to fly include the Curtiss JN-4D "Jenny", the Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis", the Model 5B Vega from Lockheed and the Piper J-3C-65 Cub. Another innovative feature introduced in Century of Flight is the ability to download real weather patterns in real time. Whilst we weren't able to get this feature working as yet (no servers for weather were found) it opens up some interesting possibilities with hurricanes and cyclones and other dangerous weather patterns.

**Daniel Wilks**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
90	88	85	85



"When's the in-flight entertainment start?"

»GCN



## RESIDENT EVIL 2 & 3

CATEGORY: Survival Horror >> PLAYERS: 1 >>  
PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$79.95 each >>  
RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

So how many times can you flog a dead horse? According to Capcom, as many times as the horse bleeds money. While remaking the classic Resident Evil for GameCube worked for the franchise, the machine and both Capcom and Nintendo, the decision to port the whole series to Cube has left Capcom's business model looking a little awkward. Sure it's nice to be a GCN owner and have access to the full back catalog of Res Evil games, and sure it's nice to know that Capcom still holds the series in such high regards. Certainly Resident Evil 2 and the promise of pure bliss with the fourth instalment in the series exclusively on GameCube is proof enough of this. But why not spend the extra time on the pure ports to make them as good as Res Evil remake and Zero, at least the series could have been rejuvenated with some life, rather than looking like the proverbial zombie the game offers from within its pre-rendered walls.

So what's new here then? Nothing — unfortunately. These are nothing but straight ports, pulled from the lifeless carcass of the PSone, and looking every bit as dead. Capcom didn't even consider the possibility of using the N64 version of Res Evil 2, which at least harbored a lot of improvements over the PSone original (it was the first Res Evil game with analogue control options). No, these games are strictly collector's items, and they're probably worth more in collector's value as the original PlayStation releases.

Stephen Farrelly

VISUALS **65** SOUND **69** GAMEPLAY **72** OVERALL **67**



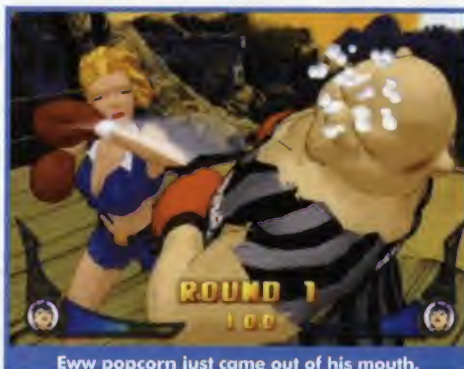
I thought I killed you on PlayStation! DIE!

»PS2



## BLACK AND BRUISED

CATEGORY: Boxing >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>  
PUBLISHER: Majesco >> PRICE: \$99.95 >>  
RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



Eww popcorn just came out of his mouth.



ever before has a boxing game looked so good and so accessible (aside from maybe some of the old boxing classics on the SNES or Megadrive). Beautifully designed and animated cel shaded characters instantly give the player the feeling that they're in for some arcade style bash 'em up fun. As a party game with a couple of mates who don't usually play games, Black and Bruised can be a decent, if somewhat brief diversion. But when playing the single player game, the flaws of the title become all too apparent. It appears that all of the effort was geared towards making the game look amazing, because the fighting mechanics are negligible to say the least. Sure players have access to a number of complex and flashy combos but actually pulling them off (or even having a chance to) is a feat in and of itself. Although the control is responsive for the most part, occasionally the game will exhibit some serious control lag or simply neglect to register attacks at all. The only thing aside from the great look of Black and Bruised that saves it from being a complete waste is the Boxer's Life game mode in which the player chooses one of the 14 characters and plays through a number of character driven, themed matches strung together by some impressive cutscenes — much like the story mode in Soul Calibur or Konquest mode in MK: Deadly Alliance.

Daniel Wilks

VISUALS **88** SOUND **80** GAMEPLAY **60** OVERALL **64**

»GCN



## RED FACTION II

CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >>  
PUBLISHER: THQ >> PRICE: \$99.95 >>  
RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



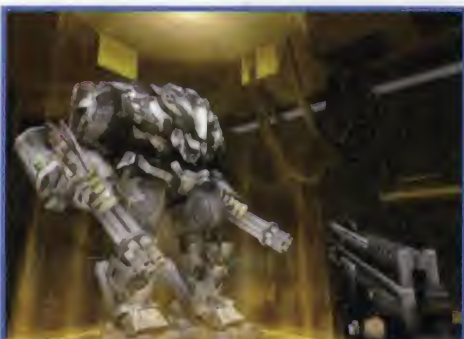
The GameCube usually gets games last, and when it does, they're usually so old that nobody cares. This is exactly the case with Red Faction II, the follow up to the aggressively campaigned PS2 title Red Faction, from THQ.

For the purpose of porting Red Faction II to GameCube, THQ used Cranky Pants Games, a development studio very familiar with GameCube hardware, but unfortunately the final product does little to show any real understanding of the hardware. Red Faction II looks washed out and blocky, and the refresh rate is a real sting to the eyes. The colours used throughout are uninspired and bland and the overall feeling is of a first generation PS2 title, not exactly what we're looking for on the more powerful GameCube.

As a game, Red Faction II offers an interesting story that may draw some players in, and the use of Lance Henrikson in the vocal department is a nice touch, but unfortunately the game is too little too late. The GeoMod engine is still only a novelty addition to the gameplay, and the inclusion of four-player deathmatching does little to invigorate proceedings. Overall, Red Faction II looks old and clunky compared to super slick alternatives such as TimeSplitters 2. Give it a try before you buy.

Stephen Farrelly

VISUALS **69** SOUND **71** GAMEPLAY **75** OVERALL **71**



Mech a false move and you're dead.

100% UNOFFICIAL

GAME BOY ADVANCE ACTION

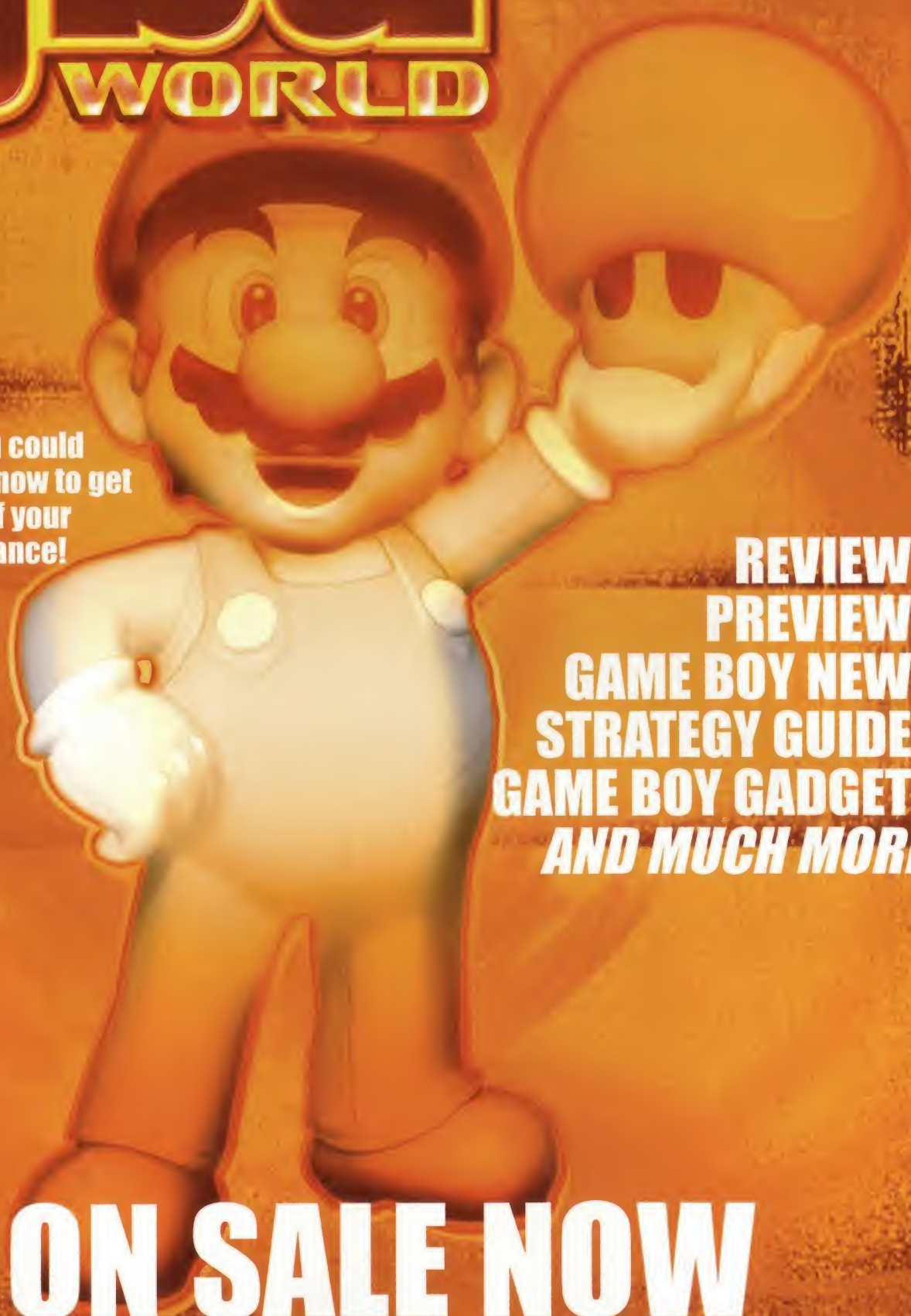
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# Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo

CATEGORY: Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom >>  
 PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: TBA >>

**P**uzzle Fighter. For some reason it seems to polarise opinion in the gaming world. People tend to either love it ("one of the finest puzzle games this side of Tetris") or hate it ("the gameplay relies on luck more than it should"). Here at Hyper we're inclined to side with the former rather than the latter. While we acknowledge that Puzzle Fighter isn't perfect, it also happens to be one of our favourite two player puzzle games of all time.

### SUPER DEFORMED

If you've never played Puzzle Fighter a little introduction is probably necessary. As the full name "Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo" suggests, this is a Capcom title (only they could come up with such a ludicrously convoluted name!) and features super deformed Capcom characters. The basic roster is Ryu, Ken, Chun Li and Sakura from the Street Fighter series, and Felicia, Donovan, Hsien-Ko and Morrigan from the Darkstalkers games, plus a number of hidden characters – including the obligatory, but still hella cool Akuma.

As you would expect in a Tetris style title, you're organising falling gems, but in Puzzle Fighter the screen is divided in two, and you're



competing against another player (virtual or otherwise) with your characters "battling" (it's just eye candy) in the center.

Gems fall in pairs and you can rotate and position them, but they're not stuck together, so if one can drop it will.

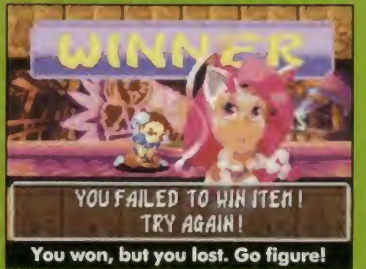
The basic idea is to build up blocks of like-coloured gems, then detonate those blocks by dropping a Crash gem of the same colour on the block. Gems that are cleared from your screen get dumped as Counter

gems on your opposition and by chaining together attacks (detonate one block, which results in another Crash gem dropping down and detonating more, and so on) you can lump your opponent with a spectacular number of blocks in one hit. The fun of the game is dealing with your opponent's attacks while you strategically try and build up your own offensive. Contests between good players often see-saw back and forth until someone succumbs, and it can get palm-sweatingly intense.

As far as the port goes, Puzzle Fighter on GBA is a pretty spot on rendition. It has a little extra above and beyond other versions, however, as developers Atomic Planet have added in an extra play



Remember our first cover, Chunnners?



mode in the form of the "Street Puzzle" mode, where you battle against some exceedingly difficult AI and get rewarded with a range of extras, including characters, costumes and play modes. But the big question is – how is the multiplayer? Well, if you have another friend with the game it's fantastic. Unfortunately though, there's no single cart link-up, which is a damn shame. You do have the option to share a single GBA, but this is difficult at best with either the standard GBA or the SP. If you can get some link-up two-player action going, however, Puzzle Fighter is well worth the price of admission.

Cam Shea



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	79	85	87



»»GBA

# The Incredible Hulk

CATEGORY: Beat 'em up >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Vivendi >>

PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

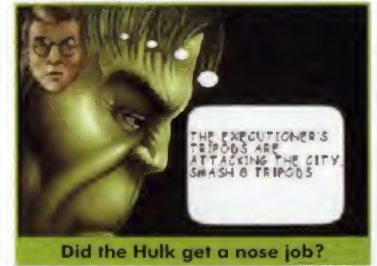
You'll notice that the title of this game is "The Incredible Hulk", as opposed to just "Hulk". Although coming to us from Vivendi, the GBA Hulk game is indeed based on the comic and not the film. It makes sense in a way. Let the big brash consoles have the action-packed CG-heavy film adaptation, while the humble GBA is perhaps better suited to a cheeky

homage to the comic series. In theory, a good dose of humorous 50s pulp science with cool static comic cutscenes would help give the GBA game a bit more personality, and make it a viable alternative to the other Hulk games.

It sounds like a good idea, but The Incredible Hulk has turned out to be utterly devoid of personality in practice. Rather than a homage

to the comics, this is a homage to bad licensed games from the 8 and 16-bit era. This is everything we hated about those cheap movie knockoffs thrown back in our face. We're the first to admit that the console Hulk games were very shallow, but there was so much mayhem and destruction that they were still entertaining. On GBA, all that's left is a lifeless button masher with no impact and no style. Visuals are depressingly plain and repetitive, the isometric perspective reduces you to four directions of movement, the environments aren't exactly what we'd call interactive, and although there are often several enemies on screen at once, there's no fun to be found in the combat here. This game is duller than one of Frank Dry's parties. And that's seriously dull. Give this one a wide berth.

Cam Shea



Did the Hulk get a nose job?



A rare Hulk seen in the wild.



The Hulk tanks them for coming.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
59	59	51	58

»»GBA

# Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku II

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Atari >>

PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Dragon Ball Z fans are among the most rabid group of people out there. To many, this show is more addictive than crack, and they want to keep puffing that shiznit all day long. Well, good news people, because The Legacy of Goku II is here and it's a damn sight better than the

original game. Even better is that this title covers three sagas — Trunks, Android and Cell, spanning about 76 episodes all up, as opposed to the first game which covered a single saga (Saiyan). In other words Goku II is a pretty meaty gaming morsel. There's about 20 hours of gameplay on offer here,

and DBZ fans will love following the events of the show, as well as seeing bits and pieces of storyline fleshed out a little more.

Goku II is a little less linear than the original and contains more sub-quests for those willing to explore side paths, not to mention much improved visuals and some pretty cool bosses. Another big plus for Goku II is the fact that you get to play as six characters — Trunks, Gohan, Piccolo, Vegeta and Goku (with Hercule as an additional unlockable character). Swapping between characters and leveling them up is as addictive as you would expect.

The Legacy of Goku II is by no means a triumph of the action RPG genre. Indeed, if you're just an RPG fan and not into the show we wouldn't recommend it. For the DBZ obsessed gamers out there, however, Legacy of Goku II represents good value for money. It's considerably more polished than the original and does a good job capturing the style of the show.

Handsome B. Wonderful



6.70.1



"Are you my mother?"



Who shat all over the floor?



Jump! Jump!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
75	70	73	74

GBA REVIEWS

»»HYPER 77

SIM CITY 4



GTA: VICE CITY



METROID PRIME

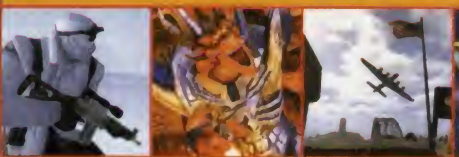
SPLINTER CELL



KINGDOM HEARTS



BUFFY



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# ARCADE

>>TIM LEVY

with thanks to Galaxy World & Party Marty

## Virtua Cop 3

SEGA

As we know from retro gaming, it is all about the gameplay. Virtua Cop 3 (VC3) has inherited this in abundance from its predecessors. Whilst the 'about to fire' circular warning rings are still present, there have been quite a few welcome new inclusions to give VC3 truckloads of replay value and the feeling you really are an elite policeman in a blockbuster action movie set slightly into the future.

### TOTALLY GUNG-HO

The main difference between VC3's competitors (Time Crisis, World Combat, House of the Dead) is that all the action takes place in urban environments. Unfortunately, urban environments are inhabited by scores of civilians who are just dying to get in the way of everyone's bullets. So instead of being totally gung-ho and just blasting away at everything that moves, you have to be VERY selective in your targeting. Otherwise, by hitting civilians, you will very rapidly run out of 'lives'. As a matter of fact, this game could be excellent as a training device for the real police.

A new inclusion to the game is E.S. mode (aka 'bullet time'), which is activated by a floor peddle and slows time down to a near standstill. The best time to use this mode is when a terrorist is using a civilian as a shield; when the screen is choked with enemies; falling objects are about to hit you; when you see bonuses for a brief second (it is

always best to trade E.S. meter points for extra life or weapons upgrades) AND if the enemy has locked on to you and fired. E.S. mode actually slows time down enough for you to shoot the incoming bullets (the red ones) that would otherwise take your life. The 'time available' is indicated on a meter that is replenished by shooting bad guys.

The other major new changes are the weapons upgrades. There are machine guns, sub-machine guns, an assault rifle, a magnum (armour piercing), a shotgun and stinger missiles that can be obtained from either fallen enemies or from crates and barrels scattered around the area. All these weapons are a joy to use and alter the way you play significantly. Make sure you look for the crates in the distance (they also hold ammo), as they are not always so obviously placed.

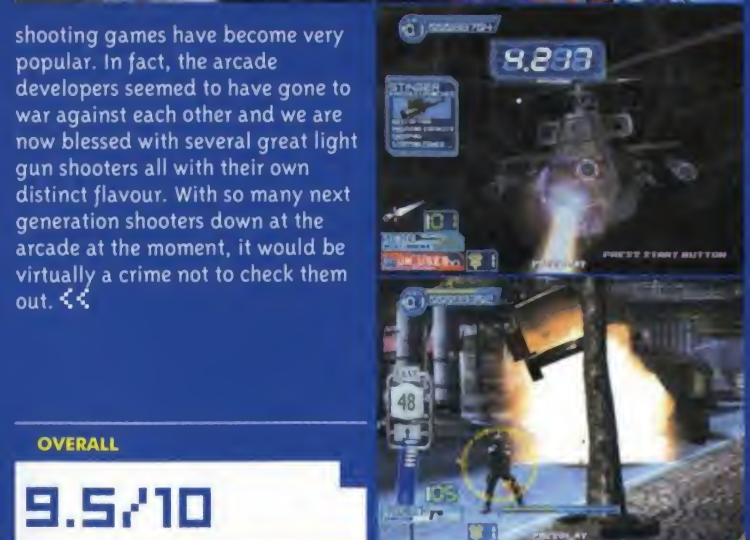
### BEING A BIT CHEATY

As before, the gun is reloaded by pointing off screen. A faster way to reload is by placing your other hand's finger over the light gun's barrel briefly when you need to reload. But that's being a bit cheaty.

There are three separate missions: Simple — inside an office building at night; Normal — at a bank at midday; Hard — at a military base. All the missions are quite long, yet the range of shooting scenarios and enemies (the end of stage bosses look dope) are varied enough to keep your attention to want to play the whole game through on all levels.

The graphics are the best so far on any shooter and far superior to those found in World Combat. The design of the locations, enemies, and the rendering of all objects are quite beautiful to look at and it sets some very high standards for games to come.

With the advent of the War on Terrorism and military fashion,



OVERALL

9.5/10



COIN-OP

>>HYPER 79



# TOP TEN WEIRDEST GAMES Of All Time

>> DANIEL STAINES





## When you think about it,

the vast majority of videogames must seem really rather bizarre to the conceptually uninitiated. Just consider some of the most fundamental and well-known game concepts of all time and you'll find it's quite easy to begin formulating some very odd questions almost immediately. Why, for example, does the fat plumber grow bigger when he eats the mushroom that came out of the floating question mark? How come the blue hedgehog with the red shoes needs to collect gold rings and why does he die if he gets hit when he doesn't have any? And Pac Man... well, the questions just never stop when it comes to that little yellow metaphor for modern-day consumer capitalism. Ghosts? Power pills? Fruit? Why? Why any of it? It's really not surprising that "outsiders" get frustrated when it comes to understanding interactive entertainment.

But we're gamers. We've grown up with these abstract oddities and learned to accept them as one of the defining aspects of what makes this medium so great. However, there are some games out there that baffle even our warped sensibilities. They are just really bloody odd whichever way you look at them – and not just in that acceptable "Japanese" way, either. Most Japanese games seem to be strange just by virtue of their cultural background. What we're talking about are games that obviously took some real perversion of thought to devise. We are, in fact, talking about the ten weirdest games ever made. Think you're ready for this? Trust us, it's going to be a trip...



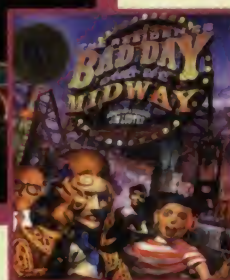
## 10: Jack the Nipper

RELEASED: 1986 / PLATFORM: C64

Developed by old-school legends, Gremlin, Jack the Nipper was a C64 title that put players in the role of Jack – a belligerent toddler whose only mission in life is to foment as much trouble as a bitter two-year-old possibly can. The basic goal of the game was to guide little Jack around town and do whatever necessary to fill up his "naughty" meter. This could include anything from smashing up a china shop to bombing the wall of a local prison and setting free all the convicts incarcerated therein. At one point, the game actually encourages you – the still-in-nappies toddler – to steal people's credit cards and drain them of all their money. So really, it's just like GTA... only with less hardened mobsters and more cute babies. In terms of actual gameplay, Jack the Nipper wasn't really anything great. Lots of repetition and really annoying sound effects made it little more than a fun novelty. But hey! Criminal babies! You can't say that isn't cool.



MINI-ME, THE EARLY YEARS



## 9: The Residents: Bad Day on the Midway

RELEASED: 1995 / PLATFORM: PC/Mac

The Residents are a group of "performance artists" that have been making records for well over thirty years now. Their music can be best described as the noise you'd hear if you got smashed on LSD and then dropped a puppy into a blender... a howling, disturbing mess that will probably leave you with bad memories and even worse dreams. Third Reich and Roll? The Residents produced that album. Hitler Twist? The Residents made that song. They also made Bad Day on the Midway – a point 'n' click CD ROM adventure that plays something like a cross between The 7th

Guest and Messiah with about a thousand litres of extra insanity thrown in. What you do, basically, is visit the world's creepiest amusement park, take control of the various insane people you meet and then live out their lives for the day. Usually they'll end up dying in some utterly disturbing fashion, but sometimes you'll get to do cool things like play in the "Kill a Commie" shooting gallery. We're told there's a deep meaning behind all of the strangeness, but none of us could be bothered to find out what it was. Frankly, there are just some things we'd rather remain undisclosed.



## 8: Super 3D Noah's Ark

RELEASED: 1994 / PLATFORM: SNES

Have you ever wondered what Wolfenstein 3D would be like if you replaced all the Nazis with goats, all the ammo with fresh fruit and all the different maps with a never-ending flickering brown headache-mess? No? Well that's okay, because somebody has already beaten you to this groundbreaking idea anyway AND they've released it as a Super Nintendo game. Super 3D Noah's Ark is a first-person-shooter where you play the role of Noah. As Noah, you are charged by God to wander around your giant brown boat shooting goats and elephants with a slingshot loaded with animal feed. The animals, you see, have been rebelling and only blasting them in the face with grapes and melons until they fall asleep can stop this travesty before it goes any further. So this is what happens in the game. You walk around and you render livestock unconscious by firing wholesome treats at them from a slingshot. And you do this for hours and hours. So yeah, not only is S3DNA weird – it's boring too! What a combo!





BREAK OUT THE GEFORCE CARD KIDS!

## 7: Head Over Heels

RELEASED: 1987 / PLATFORM: C64/Spectrum

Aside from being definitively fruity, *Head Over Heels* is easily one of the most inventive and original puzzle games ever devised. The premise, such as it is, revolves around the adventures of Head and Heels: two halves of a weird dog-alien hybrid thing that must work together to escape an evil tyrant and his surreal isometric dungeons. Both of the protagonists have differing complimentary abilities and the player must work out how to use these in unison to solve the game's puzzles. It all actually works rather well and turns out to be quite a bit of fun, but that's not the point. The point is that this is a game where you get to control two disembodied dog heads — one with little arms and a doughnut shooting bazooka and the other with giant feet and a love-heart tattoo. And Prince Charles features as an enemy. You can shoot Prince Charles with your doughnut bazooka. Did we mention how much we love this game?



SKIPPER  
"SHUT UP, GILLIGAN!  
WE HAVE TO BUILD A  
HUT TO PROTECT US  
YEAH, SHUT UP GILLIGAN!"

## 6: Gilligan's Island

RELEASED: 1991 / PLATFORM: NES  
This is such a stupid idea for a game that it's baffling to consider how it even got made in the first place. How, one must wonder, could anybody possibly think that basing a game on an archaic sitcom from the 1950's makes smart business sense?



Gilligan's Island wasn't even very good. It was about seven imbeciles trapped on a desert island and their remarkable aptitude for building scientific wonders out of coconuts and sand. What can you do with a license like that? Well, apparently you can just ignore all common sense and make a game about protecting a mentally handicapped man in a fisherman's hat from being attacked by wild animals. Hey, it works for us. After all, who wouldn't want to protect Gilligan from being inexplicably mauled by angry baboons as he aimlessly strolls about the desert island he calls home? Oh, that's right — the answer to that question is "everyone". Whoops.

## 5: Galactic Games

RELEASED: 1987 / PLATFORM: C64

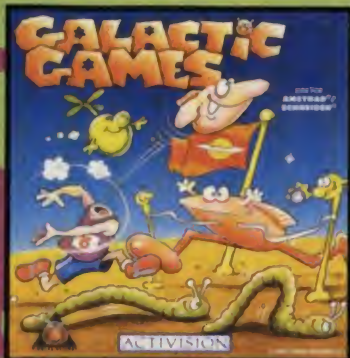
If there's one thing the C64 is known for that isn't complete insanity, it's the almost endless number of RSI inspired, joystick-wagging sports compilation games the system featured. *Galactic Games* was one of these titles and what made it stand out from the rest is that it managed to combine all the delights of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome with utter raving lunacy. See, the *Galactic Games* are supposed to be just like the modern Olympics except that they're set 3,000 years in the future and make absolutely no sense whatsoever. So, where a normal sports game would have you throwing a javelin or whatever, *Galactic Games* would get you to throw your own decapitated head. And instead of running races, there are races where little worm monsters have to make it to the finish line while simultaneously conserving their reserves of life-giving alien slime. Obviously the developers had intended this title to be wacky, but unfortunately for them it turned out strange and unenjoyable instead. Oh well, too bad.



BREATHKING STUFF



WORMS WORLD PARTY



ACTIVISION



SMELL THE GLOVE, LASSIE

## 4: Wario Ware Inc. Micro Megagames

RELEASED: 2003 / PLATFORM: GBA

*Wario Ware* might be the only recently released title to make this prestigious list, but you can trust us when we say that it definitely deserves its place among the strangest games ever made. The concept is beguiling in its simple strangeness: complete long strings of extremely strange challenges in a very short time limit and be rewarded with the opportunity to do it all again at an even higher speed. Among the games available are some true gems of twisted creativity, including the nose-picking game, the cut-the-meat-with-your-knife game, the shake-hands-with-the-adorable-puppy game and the snort-the-snot-in-before-it-hits-the-ground super challenge.

One particular favourite of ours is the one where you control the beak thing at in the sky and use it to pick up the little hoppity thing running around on the floor below. We have no idea what any of it is meant to actually represent, but usually we're having so much fun that it doesn't really matter. And the instruction book rocks! *Wario* mocks you for spending money on his game — how cool is that?

### 3: Taboo: The Sixth Sense

**RELEASED:** 1989 / **PLATFORM:** NES  
 >>Taboo wasn't just a game — it was, to quote the fabulous instruction manual, "the Nintendo Entertainment System version of the occult and ancient tarot system of divination of future events". Great! I was getting really sceptical about the prophecies and predictions of the crystal-wearing hippies that work at my local incense store, but who needs them now that I've got a NES cartridge imbued with a power usually reserved for Pagan mystics and one-eyed Gypsy women? Honestly, if you think your Nintendo has mystical powers then it's entirely probable that you're also in the market for some magic beans and I'd like to offer you some more for a very reasonable price. Of course, what's really weird about this absurd piece of trash is that it was made by Rare. How could they — the makers of Goldeneye — have possibly thought that Pagan card magic and Nintendo make for a winning combination? It truly does boggle the mind...



### 2: Wizball

**RELEASED:** 1987 / **PLATFORM:** C64, PC, Amiga

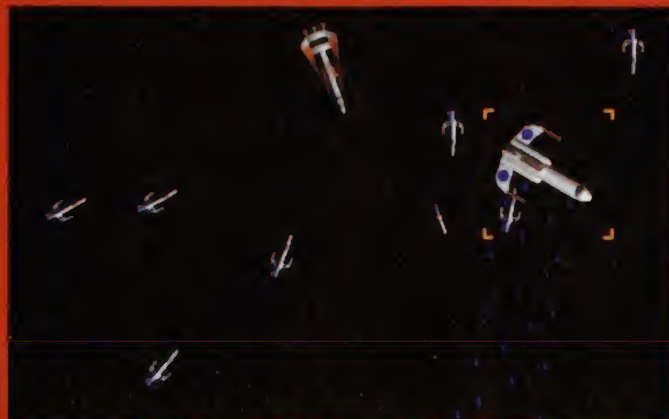
>>Not all weird games are utter crap — some are actually rather excellent. Wizball, for example, was about as odd as you could possibly get and yet it was easily one of the most enjoyable shoot 'em ups released in the 80s. Players took the role of Wiz — a powerful warlock bent on saving his colourful "wizworld" from the influence of the Monochrome Sprite invaders. In order to do achieve this end, Wiz turns himself into a laser-shooting cabbage and floats about shooting aliens while getting his cat (in the form of a cute little sprout) to collect the coloured paints they drop. Then he takes the paint back to a little hideout, puts it into a cauldron and the once-colourless Cubist nightmare worlds would suddenly turn into... colourful Cubist nightmare worlds. So yes, it made absolutely no sense at all — but by god it was a lot of fun to play.



### 1: Burning Desire

**RELEASED:** 1982 / **PLATFORM:** Atari 2600  
 >>Dear god, this is one seriously f—ked up piece of work. As if it wasn't bad enough that somebody made a porn game for the Atari 2600, they had to go and make it a porn game where you play a fireman who rescues women from cannibal cook-offs by AIRLIFTING THEM TO SAFETY WITH HIS GIANT PENIS. That's right: you find a woman on fire, you dangle from a helicopter and extinguish said fire in a way I'd rather not talk about, and then you heroically jet the distressed damsel to safety by graciously letting her hang onto your monster dong with... with her teeth. Anyway, when that's done, the mission is considered to be a success and you're "rewarded" with a 2 second animation that's supposed to be erotic but really just looks like two tan coloured Lego blocks rubbing up against each other. And then the game resets and you get to do it all over again. Provided, of course, that you haven't already stabbed your own eyes out with a plastic spoon. I know I wanted to.





THE SCIENTOLOGY PAMPHLETS ARE AWAY, SIR!

Laser Cannon Neutron Blaster Proton Cannon Torp. Launcher Torpedo Missile Rack Missile Cargo Pod Laser Turret Fighter Bay Hawk Mass Expansion Mass Driver Armoplast Durasteel Ext. Fuel Tank Escape Pod Density Scanner BT Decoder Afterburner	<p>The Mastech corporation struck gold with its F-3 Hawk light fighters and their associated launching bay. Previously, shipborne fighters had been the playthings of the rich and the military. Mastech's idea was to market a low-cost starfighter that the average starship captain could afford to add to his ship. This self-contained launching bay includes all the equipment needed to launch, recover, repair, and rearm a pair of Hawks.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Item Price</td> <td>100,000 or 100,057 or</td> </tr> <tr> <td>You Have</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Item Price</td> <td>50 tons</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Available</td> <td>60 tons</td> </tr> </table>	Item Price	100,000 or 100,057 or	You Have		Item Price	50 tons	Available	60 tons
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HOW MUCH FOR A CAPPUCCINO MACHINE?



THAT'S ONE SMAAALL PLANET

NOVA HAD IMPROVED GRAPHICS...

Shuttlecraft Light Freighter Courier Argosy Raptor Lightning Defender Scoutship Clipper	<p>Aerostar Space Industries' assembly line is mostly devoted to producing starship subassemblies for other manufacturers, but their C-35 Star Clipper Mk. II is their most widely-recognized product. This sleek, delta-winged ship is a combination courier vessel and light warship, and excels in both roles. Its offensive and defensive capabilities are quite good for a ship of its size, and it has ample room for expansion that allows it to be turned into either a top-flight cargo hauler or an outstanding heavy fighter.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Ship Price</td> <td>\$20,000 or 2,561 or</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Trader's</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Final Price</td> <td>0 or</td> </tr> <tr> <td>You Have</td> <td>292,104 or</td> </tr> </table>	Ship Price	\$20,000 or 2,561 or	Trader's		Final Price	0 or	You Have	292,104 or
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THERE'S NO CHALLENGE IN THAT! BUY THE SHUTTLECRAFT...



Your ship is unable to land on Earth. The planet's environment is too hostile.

TOO HOSTILE? HOW ABOUT, TOO DEAD.

# Escape Velocity

RELEASED: 1996

By now you've probably played Freelancer. You've battled every manner of law enforcement agency, hauled a crusty old humpback through all manner of murky Sigma systems, opened up the super-hypergate network and maybe even taught the Corsairs a thing or two about how to really pilot a Titan with those nomad blasters of yours. Wind Commander Privateer on a high? Nope. Microsoft's Freelancer felt like it borrowed extensively from the multi-award winning Escape Velocity (EV) - our dear Editor has agreed that it feels very much like a three dimensional version thereof. It was a shareware game that cost only US\$20 at that. Yet Freelancer fell short of most of the ideals already touched on by EV (attained in the sequels EV: Override and EV: Nova). So why is it, you ask, that you've never heard of it?

**THE APPLE OF YOUR EYE**  
Escape Velocity was published for the Apple Mac by Ambrosia Software in May 1996 after thirteen months of devoted sweat and tears by Matt Burch. EV was one of the greatest shareware games ever, or is, rather, in its current incarnation as EV: Nova. 8-bit, 2D graphics, strong interactivity with other craft, systems that loved or hated you depending on your deeds, a rich open-ended environment of over a hundred worlds that evolved through play, and best of all, an game engine that gave scenario designers an absolute field day, encouraging some of the best MOD work on the platform. With unrevolutionary graphics, gameplay became the heart and soul of EV and its successors.

You start off with a battered shuttle and little cash. Movement is controlled via left/right rotation and acceleration. And then you could either follow a loose storyline, become a wealthy trader leading a fleet of cargo ships and fighter

escorts, hop ships by boarding enemy craft or milk the galaxy dry for cash with a horde of launchable fighter craft and systems that could be beaten into submission.

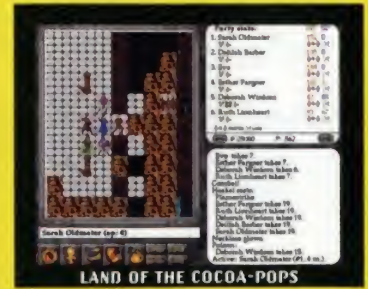
**TAKE A TEST DRIVE**

But it only ever came out on the Mac. The 68K and PPC, to be exact. Why? Ambrosia claims it lacked the technical know-how to port it - after all, they didn't write it. Or it might've been a case of Holier-Than-Thou, Evil-Microsoft, as many Mac users (myself included) adopted a "We are the privileged" mindset and felt proud of our dying breed, for once. But times have long since changed, and there is a port to PC in the works.

Like all games, EV too had its flaws. The simple 2D visuals brought a few problems along. Fired shots could wind up hitting another ship being used as cover, and it could get difficult locating your target if it was obscured by another craft above. The biggest flaw, particularly in latter day successors, is the complete lack of multiplayer support.

But in the end, it was only a shareware game, limited only by an annoying Cap'n Hector who'd pop along every now after 30 days to steal credits until you registered. But it was the best shareware game I ever laid hands on. It has been so popular among Mac users that two sequels have come out in the past few years, the most recent of which is EV Nova. Chances are that by the time this reaches your doorstep, Contraband will have finished porting EV Nova to the PC. Rumour has it that the port will also include the two predecessors. We strongly suggest you grab it, since it is free until you decide to delve deep, after all. If you want to take a test drive, head over to [www.ambrosiasw.com](http://www.ambrosiasw.com) today. <<

SHAKIL "SHAK" AHMED



# the Exile trilogy

RELEASED: 1995

**exile** (n) 1. Enforced removal from one's native country. 2. The state or circumstance of being in Exile.

Thus it began, and I distinctly recall not being terribly impressed. It might have been because it came out on a Mac first. Then again, I was a few years late by the time I discovered Exile, and had already had a passionate affair with the vast '3D' graphics in The Elder Scrolls: Arena. Soon, however, I found myself moving from rolling landscapes to scrolling vistas — and hooked on the best shareware role-playing game series on the market.

## THROWN INTO THE PIT

Exile: Escape From the Pit was, essentially, about exactly that. Above, there was The Empire. Beneath, there was a cave, a penal colony of sorts, where criminals both great and petty were sent via a one-way teleporter for betraying The Empire. The Empire thought the people beneath would wipe themselves out sooner or later, removing their problem. They thought wrong. Every person convicted of a crime or considered a misfit and sent below served as a reinforcement to a somewhat peaceful Exile civilization. You too were thrown into the Pit, a vast area; with almost 80 towns and dungeon levels and over 40 outdoor sections, it was easy to become lost in The Pit. Even if you knew where you were, it was quite possible to bite off more than you could chew and become confused with what you were trying to do, for there were several overall game quests of varying difficulty, each the size of a full game.

In Exile II: Crystal Souls, the setting moved ahead a few years. With your help in Exile: EFTP, mages from Exile had hit back at the Empire, killing its king, in response to which the Empire stopped its program of convict transportation. Soon, however, the Empire sought to end the menace beneath, invading the Exile lands. You begin caught in the middle, with racial wars against and between the reptilian Slithzerkai and feline Nephilim leaving the inhabitants of Exile in dire need.

Exile III: Ruined World saw your people take your first steps beyond the land beneath, as you lead an expedition out of Exile to see if the world above was safe. With over 200,000 words of story, conversations and info packed in, it was Spiderweb Software's best RPG to date.



**MANY, MANY HOURS WORTH**  
Conversations were had by selecting key words from presented dialogue or throwing in a random key word you thought might mean something. The series was conceived as a homage to Ultima IV and V, as visible in the one-man style of graphics used. Graphics remained 2D throughout the series, though animation became notably improved down the line. Whole parties of monsters and adventurers were represented by single icons, but became separate icons during battles. Among the best features was the character generation system — characters could be designed exactly to do what you wanted them to do, with as much versatility as you wanted to put into them, with obvious costs to upgrading as you gained skill points. The best bit, perhaps, was that you could play through half of each game (many, many hours worth) and get a real feel for it before needing to register your copy.

The highly praised and multi-award winning Exile series was created by Jeff Vogel from Spiderweb Software, beginning in 1995. We suggest you download a more revamped version of the series with new, somewhat isometric graphics, renamed the 'Avernum' trilogy via the website at [www.spiderwebsoftware.com](http://www.spiderwebsoftware.com). <<

SHAKIL "SHAK" AHMED

pc / mac

CLASSICS

» HYPER 85



# Reviews

DVD is the format of choice for anyone who's serious about their home cinema experience. Every issue we review the latest movies as well as the latest in anime. Kick back and let Hyper help you decide what you should watch! All scores are out of 10.



## Spirited Away

MADMAN ENTERTAINMENT, PG

One of the most astonishing things about *Spirited Away* is that, after years of transporting audiences away into amazing fantasy worlds in films such as *Nausicaa*, *Laputa* and *Princess Mononoke*, Hayao Miyazaki still seems to have more imagination than a classroom full of five year-olds. His story of Chihiro, lured along with her parents into the a spirit world and forced into the employ of a witch, is beautifully surreal. As she takes up work in a sort of bathhouse-to-the-gods, Chihiro meets a bizarre array of characters (the Radish God with a miso soup bowl for a hat is comparatively normal), very few of whom she can trust. Chihiro must adapt to her new world's strange logic and do a lot of growing up if she is to save her parents and make it home. Like all of Miyazaki's films, underpinning the fantasy is this human tale, told with typical



Japanese subtlety, of Chihiro's frightened first steps becoming confident leaps. It's a truly excellent film that thoroughly deserves the awards it has received.

Unfortunately the DVD extras (on the Collector's Edition only, at that!) don't match the film's richness. Aside from the candid making-of doco and "deluxe packaging" there is little to commend. But considering how hard it once was to find a dodgy fan-subbed Ghibli tape, we should be grateful for anything.

Malcolm Campbell

**MOVIE: 10 EXTRAS: 5**

### WIN A SPIRITED AWAY LIMITED EDITION DVD!

Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* was one of the most beautiful animated films released in the last few years, and continues the filmmaker's stellar reputation for making incredibly artistic cinema. We have one copy of the Limited Edition DVD and a stunning *Spirited Away* Lobby Card and an awesome poster to give away to one lucky reader! To be in with a chance to win, just answer the following:

Name two other Miyazaki films.



Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address and post it to: **Spirit Me Away, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.**



# Brazil

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M 15+

**T**erry Gilliam is a strange man as his film output can attest. Released in 1985, *Brazil* is a dystopic, darkly comedic masterpiece telling the story of a bureaucrat whose life is turned upside down due to a clerical error. On the run from the law (maybe), Tuttle comes afoul of some militant plumbers, his plastic surgery obsessed mother and a beautiful, if somewhat mysterious truck driver, among others. Aside from his somewhat interesting real life,

Tuttle has an active dream life in which he is a winged warrior tasked to save a damsel in distress. To say any more of the plot would be both futile and unfair - there's too much going on to explain and to do so would ruin the shock of most of what goes on during the latter parts of the film.

It's a bit disappointing that the region 4 release only contains a (albeit very good) documentary, especially considering the wealth of special features available on some of the American versions, including Audio commentaries, directors cuts, behind the scenes footage and the like. Although slightly let down by the special features, *Brazil* deserves to be owned by anyone who has access to a DVD player. Buy it. Watch it. Pimp it to a friend.

Daniel Wilks



1950's webcams

MOVIE: 10 EXTRAS: 6



# Dark Angel SEASON 2

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M 15+

**W**hen the first series of *Dark Angel* arrived on Australian television I was torn between wanting to both like and hate the show due to the unfortunate (or fortunate) fact that, believe it or not, Jessica Alba (Max) looked a lot like my ex. Luckily the decision was taken out of my hands when it turned out that the first season of the show was, by and large, fairly dull. It seems as though the writers got all their poor stories out in the first season, as season 2 turned out to be a damn sight more inventive and enjoyable, chronicling Max's ongoing struggle against the genetic engineering facility, Manticore and the new threat of a

5000 year-old breeding cult who take eugenics to a whole new level. Add into the mix a bunch of escaped genetic anomalies trying to survive and you have a formula for fun. Unfortunately during a fight scene filmed for the final episode, a special guest star, the wrestler Lita, had her neck broken, effectively ending the series for good. Whilst the season does leave a lot of unanswered questions it's still a fine way to kill a lot of hours. The only real disappointment with the boxed set is the special features, or more precisely, the lack thereof. Aside from a very lacklustre 5 minute behind the scenes doco all you get is a trailer for the game.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 8 EXTRAS: 1



So that's what was clogging the S-bend...



All that hair, and he STILL looks bald.

# Babylon 5 SEASON 2

WARNER HOME VIDEO, PG

**B** During the early to mid 90s, *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek: DS9* were adored by fans and compared often because of their uncanny similarities. Though *DS9* was willing to be, at times, the edgier of the *Trek* franchises, *Babylon 5* was a fresh canvas that not only pushed technical limits for television with its use of CG, but also had on board cult sci-fi writer Harlan Ellison as its conceptual consultant.

Creator J. Michael Straczynski wanted to break away from the *Star Trek* stylised formula to create a series not only lateral, but with in depth story lines and actors who could hold their characters and the

unique attitudes needed to break away from the *Trek* idea.

As with most television series, the second season can determine a show's shelf life. *Babylon 5* is no exception to this rule, and viewers will be rewarded with a season that is one of the most memorable. The series, though dated technically compared to current sci-fi, has nonetheless transferred nicely to DVD. Each disk contains four episodes, though not all discs have special features. The ones that do, contain behind the scenes footage and cast and crew interviews - short and sweet. A must buy for all *B5* fans, although lacking a little in extras.

Laurence Bennett

MOVIE: 8 EXTRAS: 4

# Daredevil

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M15+

When fan, and second time director, Mark Steven Johnson (Simon Birch), was handed *Daredevil* he could've given the horned hero the big screen justice he deserves. Unfortunately, *Daredevil* follows the same path as other comic book clunkers such as *Spawn* or the early *Punisher* movie with Dolph Lundgren. With a promising beginning that explains the tragic origin of young Matt Murdock, viewers are eventually let down by cheesiness that mimicks TV 'movie of the week' melodrama, making the action look out of place and confusing the viewer into thinking they're watching two films at once.

While the director plays 'fill in the blanks' with an uneven script, he did get one right thing in casting Ben Affleck. Affleck not only looks the part but also

convincingly portrays Matt Murdock as both blind lawyer and dark avenger. The chemistry between Affleck and Jon Favreau, who plays long-time friend, Foggy Nelson, is also spot on.

Sexy Jennifer Garner, as Electra, holds her own in a male dominated flick, while Colin Farrell steals the show as the psychotic hit man, Bullseye. Michael Clarke Duncan fills the immense shoes of The Kingpin nicely and adds some much-needed balance to an otherwise rocky film.

Once again a so-so film has some truly generous and insightful features, with a documentary on the artists and writers who have helped shape *Daredevil* over the past forty years

Laurence Bennett

**MOVIE: 5.5 EXTRAS: 6**



# Biggie & Tupac

MADMAN ENTERTAINMENT, M15+

*Biggie & Tupac* is a documentary dealing with the deaths of Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls in 1996 and 1997, and breaks down the popular conception that the shootings were part of an East coast/West coast rivalry, instead attempting to prove (quite successfully) that something much more sinister actually took place.

Nick Broomfield, director of the controversial *Kurt & Courtney* and *Heidi Fleiss Hollywood Madam*, certainly has a unique documentary-making style. He looks almost amateurish, asking questions that are either so vague they are received with quizzical looks, or so direct it's a wonder he doesn't get smacked in

the mouth more often. His voiceover sounds like the notes of a bored private investigator, adding a certain grittiness to the film but doing the viewer no favours. Thankfully the real stars of *Biggie & Tupac* are the interviewees. Biggie's mother Voletta, in particular, is inspirational in her determination to find her son's killer and without her aid Bloomfield would have undoubtedly had more than a few doors slammed in his face. The film climaxes with an unauthorised interview from prison with Deathrow Records boss and reputed gangster Suge Knight, implicated throughout as having a major role in the killing of both rappers.

Malcolm Campbell

**MOVIE: 6.5 EXTRAS: 6**



# Wrestlemania XIX

SHOCK, M15+

The Superbowl of Sports Entertainment" is what the WWE describes *Wrestlemania* as, and rightly so. The giant pay per view has been running successfully for 19 years, and one step away from the grown up number 20, *Wrestlemania* has more than lived up to the expectations of fans the world over. *Wrestlemania XIX* is arguably the greatest event the WWE has ever staged.

A four hour long card that contains such matches as the Triple Threat WWE Tag Team Match between Los Guerreros, the talented Team Angle, Rhyno and his amazing partner, Chris Benoit, is just the tip of

the iceberg in this WWE DVD release. A further two hours of DVD extras will satiate even the most rabid of fans with retrospective looks at the long and sordid history of *Wrestlemania*, Post-Match interviews, *Wrestlemania Moments* as selected by the very best of the best and more. And if all of that isn't enough for you, the absolutely heated battle for the WWE Championship between the unstoppable Brock Lesnar and the Olympic Gold Medalist, Kurt Angle, should have you on the edge of your seat. If not for Brock's Shooting Star press that resulted in a week-long concussion alone.

Stephen Farrelly

**MOVIE: 9 EXTRAS: 9**



Isn't that Cam's mum and dad?



# ANIME

## Chobits

PRODUCTION COMPANY: MADHOUSE  
GENRE: COMEDY

**G**o on, admit it: one of the first things you do in the day is boot up the computer, surf around on your favourite message boards, and then maybe burn away a few hours playing the latest game while downloading porn and MP3s. Face it: you're a geek. You've probably even done the Geek Test on [www.innergeek.us/geek.html](http://www.innergeek.us/geek.html). Well, *Chobits* takes this idea to the next level.

### SWITCH HER ON

Imagine a world where you can do all that, except your Persocom (the Japanese lingo for "personal computer") takes the form of a very cute, life-sized, and very real-looking robot girl. Yes, *Chobits* indulges that Holy Grail fantasy of geekdom in which you really can have a girlfriend with zero effort.

But in this alternate reality of Tokyo, such persocomms are the norm. There are even portable persocomms that take the form of little fairies that

crawl around on your shoulder. That's why the story of *Chobits* is delivered through the eyes of Hideki Motosuwa, a stony-broke 18-year old country bumpkin who's just moved into town. Not only is he utterly clueless to the ways of modern persocom technology, he's just not that experienced with technology, period. Which is perfect for viewers as they wrestle simultaneously with Motosuwa over the morality of falling in love with a robot. But before you fall in love with her, you'll have to switch her on. By pushing that special button between her legs. Yes — THAT button.

Brought to you from the studio responsible for *Card Captor Sakura*, *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust* and *Ninja Scroll*, *Chobits* is an immaculately produced series. The humour is often brilliantly timed, though a little squeamish, and the animation is striking throughout. The story is a little predictable (think of all the dilemmas you've seen in *Love Hina*, *Key the Metal Idol* and *Video Girl Ai*), but then again, it's just too cute not to like.



"A pink fairy on my shoulder? Shhhyeah, right!"



Kinda reminds me of Perfect Match. All we need is Greg Evans.

ANIMATION: 7 PLOT: 8 OVERALL: 9

## Patlabor 1 & 2: The Movies

PRODUCTION COMPANY: BANDAI  
VISUAL/PRODUCTION IG  
GENRE: SCI-FI/DRAMA

**O**ne of the more understated classics of the anime world, the Patlabor series found its niche when the 'giant mecha' trend hit its prime between the late '80s and mid '90s. While franchises like *Gundam* and *Evangelion* went for the gaudy, fantastical sci-fi approach, Patlabor opted for the more realistic scenario, setting its stories in an alternate modern day Japan where Labors (as they were called) were piloted by people for more practical purposes. Like fighting crime.

### A METICULOUS EYE

The Patlabor movies chronicle two separate conspiracies being

investigated by the Special Vehicle Division of Patrol Labors (Patlabor for short), both of which threaten the stability of their fair city. The slow pace and deep-end intellectual philosophy are evenly matched by the eclectic personality traits of the ensemble cast. It's a very well developed story, both for plot and character development, with a meticulous eye for animated detail, which incidentally stands up very well after all these years.

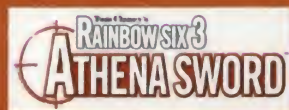
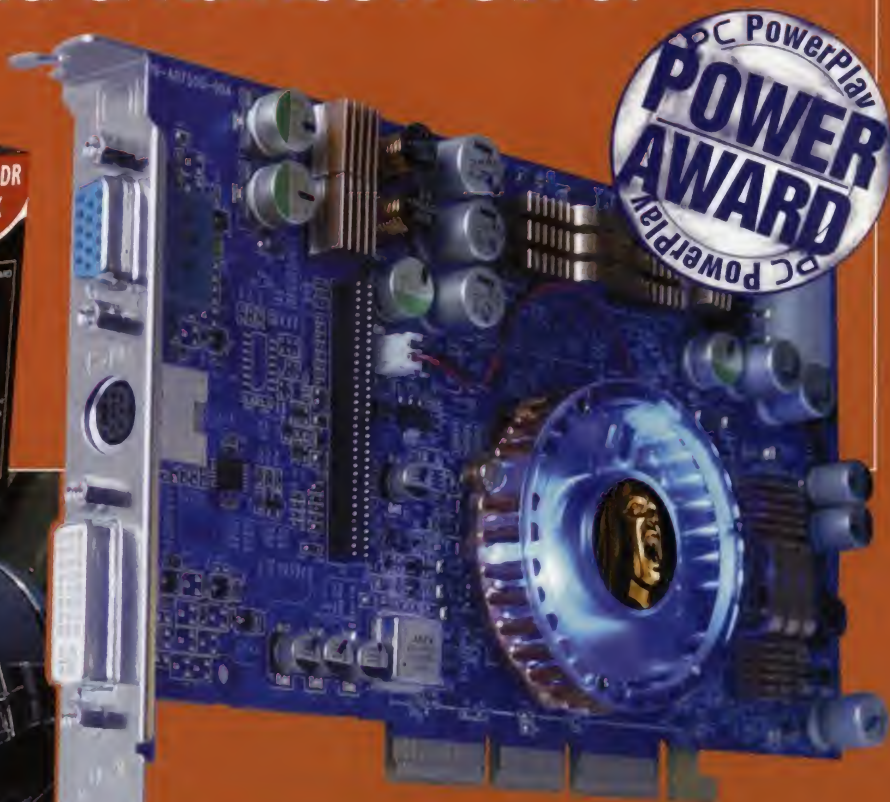
Fans of *Jin-Roh* and *Ghost in the Shell* will note that these movies are some of director Mamoru Oshii's earlier works, dating back to 1990 and 1993 respectively. As a collection of both classic films, this DVD is a great catch for anime connoisseurs.



The Hyper security bot, programmed to "blau" all trespassers.

ANIMATION: 8 PLOT: 8 OVERALL: 9

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### HYPER 116 - XBOX & 3 XBOX CLASSICS

Rowan Flanmac, West Pennant Hills, NSW



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# FORUM

✉ **HYPER FORUM:** 78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia  
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au

## Q. WILL ONLINE CONSOLE GAMING BE SUCCESSFUL?

The big push for online console gaming is underway. With both the Xbox and PS2 online gaming networks becoming available later this year, soon you won't hear anything but Live this and PS2 online that. But is it what gamers really want? We thought we'd throw it out there to see how you all felt about venturing into massively multiplayer territory with your consoles, and this is the response we received...



### HYPER FORUM

We all have a different opinion and the Hyper Forum is where you can get your thoughts out of your head and onto the page for all to see. Don't forget that we have a new topic every issue! The next topic of discussion...

“Nintendo's next console needs to have these features...”

Responses will be printed in Hyper 121

E-mail: FREAKSCENE@NEXT.COM.AU with Hyper Forum in the subject line, and the topic of discussion at the top of your response. Please note that very long contributions may be edited.

#### LOTS OF IFS

Dear Hyper,

Let's face it, online console gaming **DESERVES** to succeed – if it doesn't, regular console gamers will suffer. These are people (like myself) who enjoy gaming as a pastime, but also have lives and don't want to invest \$1000 on a graphics chip to make everything just a little better-looking, or spend \$5000 on a top-end PC (obsolete inside six months) just to spend all day locked in the bedroom searching for fake nude pics of Gillian Anderson on the Net.

Console gaming is an easier, cheaper and far less serious way to enjoy games (and who should really take them too seriously?). For people like myself – working on Hamilton Island – the chance

to Deathmatch in PC-quality games with someone on the other side of the country or world would be a magnificent opportunity.

The problem is, some developers believe the myth that **ONLY** PC gamers are really interested in online play. If Microsoft invests the same amount of money and faith in Xbox Live as they have shown in the Xbox, then surely Sony will follow suit – as will third-party developers – and the whole concept will take off in a big way.

If not enough long-term thinking is employed, however, then online console gaming is doomed – particularly in Australia, which is viewed in the USA and Japan as a remote, isolated and ultimately insignificantly small PAL market which is too far away to matter in the global scheme of things.

If the range of online games is big and varied enough, if they are released and supported in Australia, if costs are reasonable and enough gamers and developers get behind the concept, then online console gaming is the future of the industry.

But that's a Hell of a lot of "ifs", isn't it? As with most things in life, only time will tell.

Andrew Harris

#### VERY TASTY

Online console gaming, will it be successful? Well, it's certainly looking that way. For just something like \$99.99, you will be able to pick up an Xbox LIVE starter kit. This will make it very affordable and instantly mainstream. The bugs are looking like they've almost gone and the games are looking very, very tasty.

Bring On Phantasy Star Online.  
**silent91**

#### HELL YES IT IS

**HELL YES!** Of course it will be. Just look at the PC, and all the online games there. Counter-Strike, Neverwinter Nights and many others like these have been huge hits on the online market. So why wouldn't games be huge on the console market? And because the games on consoles don't have requirements, people with crap computers (like me) can actually play without having to look at the back of a case for the requirements. So I say **HELL YES** to online console gaming.

**Loka Roka**

#### 24-PLAYER FRAG FEST

Online gaming being successful will depend on 3 things...

1. If there is a limit on how many



Live features real-time chat at all times.

people can play at one time. Because if it is a small number like 6-8 then it won't be that fun. Where as if you could play 16-24 player it would absolutely rule! Imagine a 24-player frag fest in Perfect Dark. Unfortunately, I own a Gamecube and I only got it for 2 reasons: Rare and Nintendo's well developed games.

2. If you will be restricted to only people with the same speed internet, because I know that Nintendo are bringing out two adapters: a 56K modem and a Broadband adapter. If you aren't restricted, it will be simply Hell. Because if you have got a broadband adapter and you have got someone with a 56k on your side it will piss you off so much, especially on big games which take quite a long time to load without being connected on the net.
3. If all the older kick ass games will be able to be played over the net. Such good games like TimeSplitters 2 would cain if it was able to go online and any others like GTA3 or Vice City.

Another thing that would be really cool would be if you could play people with the same game but on a different system, like on servers where you could have even more games, and which would profit for every developer and every gamer with the technology.

Cya,  
Jimmy

### A LONER

I might be alone in this, but console gaming online doesn't interest me. I love games, but I love them for the escapism, and I don't want some kid somewhere barking



Halo 2, surely online console gaming's biggest draw card yet...?

in my ear about crap. Sure, it might make me want to kill him in the game, but I'd rather sit at my PC and lose myself in the atmosphere and challenge of a good RPG or strategy game. Maybe multiplayer gaming is more for casual gamers, or whatever.

I just know that I play games for the chance to escape my fellow human beings. Sorry!

**The Kraken**

### TEST YOUR SKILLS

Online console gaming will ROCK LIKE HELL. Put it this way: you think you are the best HALO player in the universe, every time you have friends over, you whup their behinds so hard, they go home crying. The game's AI marks you off, and coupled with the fact that nobody who knows you will play you, now you have nobody to play with. But wait, now you can test your skills against the very best from around the world. You can see

how good you \*really\* are. Coolest concept ever. I mean, look how successful online gaming is on the PC.

\*However\*, the only reason I can suggest that online console gaming may be unsuccessful is the price one must pay for this privilege. If connection and setup costs are too high, the idea may fail. However, I'm sure those big-brained suits at Sony and Microsoft can come up with ways to make the whole thing super-affordable. So be happy, as the next golden age of gaming is ushered in, in the form of online console gaming!

And remember, GO IN DRAINS.

**Hicksybabe**

### LIVELY

Hey Hyper,

I've just started taking part in the Xbox Live beta test - lucky me! I'm impressed with how easy it is to set up and how quickly you can get online and join a game. This was the only thing that I thought would be annoying, but it was easy as. It only takes seconds! I think we're only playing on American servers, but so far the performance has been lag-free, so it's pretty cool. Mech Assault rocks! I can't see how it won't be massive, if it will be this good all the time. And by the time it comes out, I'll be so good I'll kick your asses!

**Adam**

### NOT VIABLE

Hey Hyper,  
So, you think online

console gaming is going to be oh so sweet eh? That the online option residing contently side-by-side single player in main menus everywhere will be an appreciated revolution? Well, think again. Why? Let us for a moment look at the plans for Xbox Live. A unified service running US servers reeks of standardization - will tech support be able to appeal to everyone? God help those users in remote areas - broadband restrictions are bad enough, but if you think hooking up to 16-player games of Halo 2 on the American East Coast will be smooth - think again. Racing games such as MotoGP might work slightly better but, let's face it, without lagless collisions, what's the point? And then what about PS2!? You'd be spot on for suspecting something's fishy with the lack of major announcements on Sony's behalf. Their plan for third parties to run their own servers oozes laziness and, let's face it, which company is going to take Australia seriously, particularly for those niche titles such as, let's just say, a Final Fantasy Online. Will it be viable? This otherwise buoyant reader thinks not. While this online holy grail might just succeed in yankdom or the UK, if you think Microsoft, Sony and the EA/THQs are going to commit resources for our miniscule market enough so that everyone's online console experiences live up to their pure plug in and play online promises, wake up to yourself. Face it, we're on a desert island. The only time console gaming fulfils its promise in Australia is when our fair continent slams into Japan. Hit the dating sim folks, better get some practice in. Australia is but a blip. Investment is simply not viable.

**LiebniZ**



# MAIL

## ✉ HYPER LETTERS:

78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia  
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au

### NINTENDO REBIRTH

Hey guys.

Nice mag, and tell those guys over at Nintendo Gamer to get their facts straight. Anyway, just a few minutes ago, I popped in one of my old "cough" Hyper Cover CDs "cough" and watched a couple of cool videos of something called Rebirth. It was about this tree that got struck by lightning, and I guess passed its life onto some log that fell off it. I was just wondering what exactly happened, there? So a few questions, I guess.

1. Has it officially gotten the can, or is it just well hidden?

2. What did you guys think of it? Cause I was really looking forward to it.

3. In fact, was it ever a game at all, or just another GameCube demo that was flung around back then?

Oh, and I sent the OFLC a letter, and they said that most gamers are under 18, and that the interactivity of games might have a higher impact on kids, so that's why there's no dice on the R18+ front.

**baka-sama**

P.S. Mother 1 & 2 just got released for GBA in Japan. Do you think we'll

get it over here? 'Cause if we don't... ROBOT HOUSE! \*sigh\* EarthBound was the best game ever.

*Dear baka-sama,*

1. It was just a tech demo.

2. It was just a tech demo.

3. Hey, you were listening!

*It looks like Earthbound will come to GBA for us, yes.*

### UNFAIR TACTICS?

Dear Hyper,

Seriously wicked magazine, and ass kissing for you all round!!!! Now, to get to the point of the letter, I'd like to comment on the role that advertising plays in the active, daily video games store.

Now I'm no pro, but I've seen the results that in-store video game playing does to the competition. Basically if you don't have a console in your store (that is preferably on and working, allowing people to play it) then you're, in simple terms, screwed!

However, why I'm asking you absolutely cool guys at Hyper (\*ass kissing again\*), is coz I'm wondering if this is an unfair tactic

to wipe out small game shops?

How could a small business cope with their daily customers being lured to play the Xbox, PS2 or GCN next door? I've seen business disappear coz of these trade acts! I am also an in-store playing gamer myself! I can't resist after buying a game having a go at the newest software at the nearest EB or Big W, or listenin' to the top 20 at Sanity, hell I can't resist the food testing stands at Woolies!

So... I'll leave you with this question... IS IN-STORE GAME TESTING AN UNFAIR TACTIC? And by the way if you ever do pass the food testing stands in Coles or whatnot, can you please when trying the product have a fake fit?

Courtesy of the one and only,  
**Master Monsieur Petipain**

*Dear Monsieur Petipain,*

*I've been to many a small games shop that have consoles set up, or will allow the customer to try something out. Sure, they might not be those huge set-ups, but having a TV set in the shop isn't such a hard thing to organise. I don't think this is the issue. It could just be that the larger stores have a greater range of software to choose from with all that shelf space and whatnot.*

### GUINEA PIGS

Hey Hyper.

Just a few quick questions before I tend to my elite army of guinea pigs.

1. Do you have a definite release date for Twin Snakes? (The month will do)

2. Do you know of any GTA games to be released for the GameCube?

3. Could you please tell me the origin of Lord Seafood?

4. My old Hypers are starting to fall apart! Any tips on how to preserve them?

That's it from me. Private Grass is disobeying orders again.

See ya.

**Owenza**

*Dear Owenza,*

1. *Twin Snakes for Cube is officially "TBA" although we suspect it is this year.*

2. *Well, the GTA exclusivity for PS2 ends soon, and it's rumoured that Rockstar will port it to other systems. There are no cold hard facts yet.*

3. *It's a mystery wrapped in an enigma.*

4. *Don't stack them - that pulls the covers off. Get some magazine holders for your shelf.*

### THE GRAPHICS DEBATE

Dear Hyper,

top mag! All it needs now is a toilet, food and a bed and I could live off it, cause my other bare essentials of life would b all goot! Now on to the topic.

Graphics. Every game has them every game needs them. How good they are, depend on the makers and

## CAPTION THIS!

### PART 44 WINNER

Hyper reader, **Mark Vellios**, is the one who came through this month with our favoured caption. Well done Mark!



**The 'Big Brother Ratings Improvement Team' hard at work.**



**YOU HAVE the POWER**

Hamed Shahnam shows us his 3D skills.



Joe McMahon sent us this very fine Link.

the system. But what some people fail to realise is that graphics don't MAKE the game. Wind Waker is a good example. So many were put off by the cel-shaded Link. Animal Crossing, so many looked down upon a game that had blocky big-headed characters who did chores for other people. So many people complained over the ratings The Getaway had compared to Vice City ("Getaway has better graphics therefore it must be a better game").

I have one thing to say to these people. I pity you. If you turn down a game because of its graphics, shame on you. Do you not realise that graphics only help a game along, not carry it?

I just want people to know that they should look past the graphics on a game and give it a go. I think that in your magazine it should have the question "Do you think games with crap graphics can be good?" and for every person that says no, a big-ass hand pops out and slaps em silly.

Thanks for listening to my random banter! Rock oh Hyper! I'm off to a land of Hyrule, and tight white pants...

From William Sung

Dear William,

There is a big-ass hand installed in this very issue you're holding, so look out!

## WE DESERVE BETTER

If game developers took half the amount of effort that they put into the graphics of new games and put it into developing new and interesting gameplay, we'd all have a lot more to look forward to. New releases are far too formulaic. We need more lateral thinking going on in the game development world. Forget simulations, after all, why should games be limited by what can be done in reality? Or, to make the same point a different way, since when has a simulation ever made the top ten games on anyone's list?

The games that are fun to play are those that bend the rules, and let you do things that would be impossible anywhere else. Think abstract, think strategy, think new and exciting. If I see one more run of the mill FPS I'm going to throw up in someone's face. As gamers, we deserve better than this!

Love,

the4thdimension

Dear gameplay junkie,

We do deserve better. Just as there are crap Hollywood blockbusters and incredible independent films, there are lame big-budget videogames and enjoyable artistic games. You just have to keep your wallet shut until the good games come along, otherwise the lazy games will keep getting pumped out.

## OMEGA PIRATE

Dear Hyper,

don't you think some games are just too hard? I have been playing Metroid Prime, fantastic game, and I got to the Omega Pirate and try as hard as I can I just can't kill the damn thing. And what puts me off, is I know there must be harder bosses coming up. Anyway since there are no cheats that I could use to beat it I have decided to give up. I like games that are not too hard, ones I can complete, ones that make me smile, not like Metroid Prime that just drive me insane and give me the shits.

Thanku,

Steve Williams

Dear Steve,

To beat the Omega Pirate, just check a boss FAQ at [www.gamefaqs.com](http://www.gamefaqs.com) for tips. That should do the trick. Never give up, brother!

## CUBE SHAPED QUESTIONS

Hi Hyper, great magazine.

Firstly, thanks to you, I bought

# LETTER OF THE MONTH

## GOT DEM BLUES

I once read somewhere in your great magazine about a little known condition called videogame blues.

I am experiencing this. For some reason, games no longer interest me. This is not normal because I have been playing games all my life. It's got nothing to do with the lackluster software coming out in the next few months for the GameCube, as I don't find any upcoming, present or past game exciting. However, DVDs and music are rising rapidly amongst my favourite thing list. I'm fairly sure it's a phase, I mean, you can't lose interest in a favourite pastime overnight can you?

Anyway. Just a few quick questions.

1. Is the Cowboy Bebop movie getting released in Australia with english dubbing anytime soon?
2. What type of music do you guys like?
3. Is it just me or is Zoolander one of the funniest movies ever?

You guys rule.

the4thdimension

Dear 4thdimension,

We can't have anyone losing interest in gaming! Maybe a brand new mouse will cheer you up? Just remember all those good times! "sniff"

After taking a break, maybe you'll find the urge to play games comes back stronger than ever.

1. Yep, it's out now on DVD through Columbia Tri-Star. It's got English dubbing and a bloody awful cover.
2. A huge variety. At the moment, I'm listening to Radiohead's Hail to the Thief (hence the Halo 2 headline this month).
3. It's not just you.



## You've won a Microsoft® IntelliMouse® Explorer for PC! Best. Mouse. Ever.

The IntelliMouse® Explorer is an ergonomic optical mouse with five re-programmable buttons and an excellent feel for serious gaming!

Metroid Prime. One play was enough to get me hooked and I still am.

1. I was a bit confused when I didn't see a "Favourite GameCube game to date" in the forum which had the Xbox debate. Why didn't you put it in?
2. Do you think the Rare games on Xbox will have better graphics than the previous designs that would have appeared on the GameCube?
3. Are you looking forward to F-Zero GX?
4. What is your top favourite video game character of all time?
5. I've played an old game called Countdown and I was wondering if you've put it in a Reverse Engineering section. If you don't know, it's that game where you control a CIA agent called Mason who is stuck inside a sanctuary with high memory loss and help him escape, therefore gaining his memory and eventually saving America [these questions must be so long]. If I was a magazine reviewer, I would give it 91%.
6. Is 97% the highest rating a game has ever been rewarded with?
7. If a game is featured on more than one system [e.g. Enter the Matrix] how do you decide which system to review it on?

8. How do you define "Game of the Month"? Is it the one that's received the highest rating that issue, or the one that has been played the most?
9. Because there are less GameCube reviews, I'm just a bit concerned whether you don't like GameCube as much as the other consoles or it's just not selling as well.

I've probably taken up a lot of the mail section, so I'll stop there. Those are my questions, cheers! Please print this!

Conker

Dear Conker,

1. We were getting around to it... last issue's Forum had the question, and next issue we'll have the results!
2. Technically, yes it's probable... the Xbox has a hard disk for starters.
3. Oh my goodness yes!
4. That's simply impossible to answer. We have so much love to share around.
5. Sorry, never heard of it!
6. In Hyper, yes.
7. Usually, we review it on whichever platform it was originally intended for, or the version that arrives at the office first.
8. It's not always the highest scoring game. Game of the Month usually

# MAIL

goes to the game that is the Hyper office favourite that month - so you could say the one played the most, yes. It's our "pick".

9. There are less GameCube reviews, because there are less GameCube games getting released, sadly.

## TAKING IT UP THE REAR

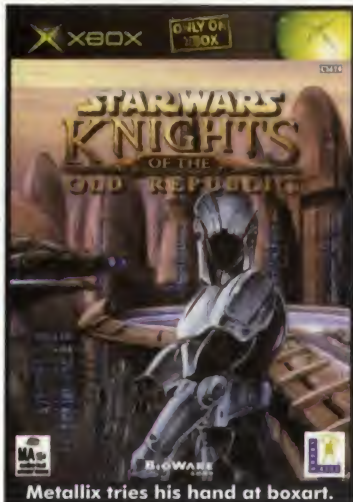
Ok, let's get straight to the point. In issue 118 in the Forum bit, a certain fool named JayJay wrote in about what the best game would be. This part does not matter. HOWEVER, he said that this game would only be a ble to run on the Xbox and PS2, and "the GCN just couldn't cut it".

My research leads me to believe (I hope I'm right) that the Xbox is the most powerful system, followed by the GCN, and the PS2 taking it up the rear. This leads me to conclude that if any system couldn't "cut it", it would be the PS2. Don't get me wrong, I love the PS2, I own one, and a GCN, it is just that fools who know nothing about these lovely machines think that they know everything, but then, they are just proved to be idiots. Yes JayJay, you are, in mine and hopefully many others eyes, an absolute buffoon.

I just had to clear that up. Now, onto more serious matters. Where can you buy a GBA GCN link cable? I have searched everywhere I can think of and can not find one. I need one for Zelda (God bless Mr Miyamoto) and for Metroid (when I save the money), then for Crystal Chronicles when that comes out, and also the 2 new Zelda games... Please help me, I am starting to worry that someone is conspiring against me.

Thank you all for listening so intently to my drab and boring story... plight... thingy... Until next time dear peoples, until next time.

Max



Metallix tries his hand at boxart.

Dear Max,

You should be able to hunt down a link cable somewhere - just ask a store to order one in for you!

## HULK HANDS

\$110 for PS2 & Xbox games? This is what you can buy for that amount of money:

Melbourne International Film Festival 2003 Mini Pass - <http://members.dcsi.net.au/chuma/miff2003/mymiff2003.htm>

Or,  
1 pair of HULK HANDS.  
1 bottle of Vodka.

Go to the pub and try to pick up wearing them.

Or, as said in the famous "Timmy the Circle" comic strip: "SEX WITH PROSTITUTES CAN'T BE BEAT!"

Thanks.

Tim Chmielewski

Dear Tim,

You could also buy two subscriptions to Hyper for your two best friends and have money left over for a big lunch.

## LAWS OF PERSPECTIVE

Hyper,  
Hello there. I was just pondering a few things while on the toilet and I've got two really insignificant issues to bring up. First one, why do most images on your magazine have a little blank square cut out of the lower-right edge?

Secondly and lastly, why do most First Person Shooters have the gun crammed at the bottom of the screen? In reality, if the view was so, the player's hand and weapon would be glued somewhere next to your chin. And why can't any FPS game allow you to see your whole arm while you're holding a weapon? Maybe actually looking down and seeing your legs and torso might make it more of a First Person Shooter. Yes yes I know, having your arms and weapon in front of you of might cut down your viewing area by a half but I don't know. In Counter-Strike while the player is holding a P90 it looks kinda good because you have to have the gun crammed next to your face to aim. In Battlefield 1942, the guns and such are quite big which follows the laws of perspective, good stuff. Just pelt me with nasty phrases until I calm down.

That's my three cents,

Michael Zhu



Mark Lin sends us another imaginative piece.

Dear Michael,

Goats bottom!! *Fart face!*  
*Insignificant wart! Ray Martin!*  
*Daikatana expert!*  
Calm yet?

## MODERN GAME TAUNTS

Hello Hyper HQ,  
Now normally people would start with "EHHHHH!!! Your mag is so mad!!!! EHHHHH!!!!" And I'm not going to ruin tradition so here goes... great mag, great stuff, it's just great! You guys deserve an Aussie of the Year award each, and for Eliot, man you should be knighted!

"WAHAHAHA!!!!", "IZZA MARIO", "CAN YOU SMELL WHAT THE ROCK IS COOKIN?????" Does these sound familiar? Does this currently make you mad? Does Wario's chants piss you off? Well, I've had my ups and downs with these taunts, and currently I wanna sue the pants and underpants off the creators of such annoying taunts! They are just not

needed! Behind all the sounds of guns and crap like that you hear a "Yipee!! I got it!", it kinda makes you wanna say "SHADDAP!!!"

I have suffered through having to hear taunts all through the Mario series, the sound Yoshi makes when he's happy, the bloody sounds of partners in RPG's saying "good shot!" Now this may give many people joy, but to me, a 13 year-old gamer with gaming cravings, it's a dimension of the game that cheeses me off! At the age of 13 and 6 months, I have officially smashed a SNES, a Game Boy Pocket and a Tamigochi! No, I don't have ADD or PMS and I'm not on drugs! So please Hyper help me with this dilemma, and if your answer is mute button, believe me I've tried it but the background sounds are too hard to resist!

Golden Phoenix #1

Dear Golden Phoenix #1,  
Just yell back at the TV. "You stupid fat plumber! SHADDAP!"



# The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with IEAA

TOP  
10

## PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 29 JUNE 2003  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Enter The Matrix	Adventure
2	◆	GTA: Vice City	Adventure
3	▲	LOTR Two Towers	Adventure
4	○	Dynasty Warriors 4	Action
5	▼	Midnight Club 2	Racing
6	○	The Hulk	Adventure
7	▼	Harry P Chamber Of Secrets	Adventure
8	▼	Rtn Castle Wifenstein Op Res	Action
9	▲	Devil May Cry 2	Adventure
10	○	Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc	Adventure

TOP  
10

## PlayStation Games Over \$40

W/E 29 JUNE 2003  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	YuGiOh Forbidden Memories	Adventure
2	◆	Dragonball Z: Ult Battle 22	Action
3	◆	Harry P Chamber Of Secrets	Adventure
4	▲	Grnd Theft Auto Collectors Ed	Adventure
5	▲	Bond: TWINE Pack	Action
6	▼	Disney Triple Pack	Adventure
7	○	Rayman 1 & 2 Bundle	Adventure
8	◆	Final Fantasy IX	RPG
9	▼	Simpson's Wrestling	Sports
10	○	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Sports

TOP  
10

## Game Cube Games Over \$40

W/E 29 JUNE 2003  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Legend Zelda:Wind Waker LE	RPG
2	◆	Metroid Prime	Adventure
3	▲	Legend Of Zelda:Wind Waker	RPG
4	▼	Enter The Matrix	Adventure
5	▼	Mario Party 4	Family
6	○	The Hulk	Adventure
7	▼	Super Mario Sunshine	Adventure
8	▲	Medal Of Honor: Frontline	Action
9	▲	Bond 007: Nightfire	Action
10	▼	WWE WrestleMania X8	Sports

TOP  
10

## Xbox Games Over \$40

W/E 29 JUNE 2003  
RETAIL SALES

1	○	Hot Box	Compilation
2	◆	Brute Force	Action
3	○	Soldier Fortune 2:Dble Helix	Action
4	▼	Enter The Matrix	Adventure
5	◆	The Hulk	Adventure
6	▼	V8 Supercars	Racing
7	▼	Rtn Castle Wifenstein Tide War	Action
8	▼	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Adventure
9	▲	Midtown Madness 3	Racing
10	○	Buffy The Vampire Slayer	Action

TOP  
10

## PC Games Over \$30

W/E 29 JUNE 2003  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	The Sims Superstar	Strategy
2	◆	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
3	◆	Rise Of Nations	Strategy
4	◆	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
5	◆	CSI:Crime Scene Investigation	Adventure
6	◆	Vietcong	Action
7	○	Str Trk Voyager:Elite Force 2	Action
8	○	Bond 007: Nightfire	Action
9	○	Mafia	Action
10	◆	C & C Generals	Strategy

TOP  
10

## Game Boy Advance Games Over \$40

W/E 29 JUNE 2003  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokemon Ruby	RPG
2	◆	Pokemon Sapphire	RPG
3	◆	YuGiOh World Wide	Strategy
4	▲	Donkey Kong Country	Adventure
5	▼	Harry P Chamber Of Secrets	Adventure
6	◆	Zelda: Link to Past/4 Swords	RPG
7	▲	Yoshis Island: SMA 3	Adventure
8	▼	Golden Sun 2: The Lost Age	RPG
9	○	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
10	○	The Hulk	Adventure

TOP  
10

## All Full Priced Games

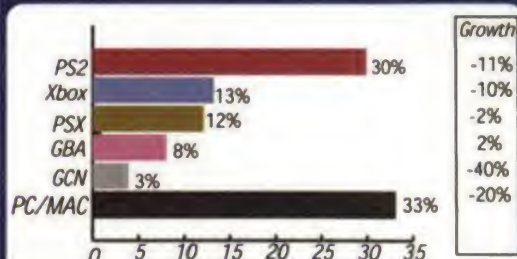
W/E 29 JUNE 2003  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Enter The Matrix	PlayStation 2
2	◆	The Sims Superstar	PC/MAC
3	◆	GTA: Vice City	PlayStation 2
4	○	Hot Box	Xbox
5	▲	Pokemon Ruby	Game Boy Adv
6	▲	Pokemon Sapphire	Game Boy Adv
7	○	LOTR Two Towers	PlayStation 2
8	○	Dynasty Warriors 4	PlayStation 2
9	▼	The Sims Deluxe	PC/MAC
10	○	YuGiOh World Wide	Game Boy Adv

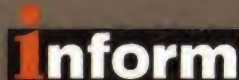
## MARKET WATCH

### All Games by Platform

June 03 vs May 03  
RETAIL SALES



- New Entry
- ◆ Non Mover
- ▲ Up from last week
- ▼ Down from last week



Charts can be viewed at [www.informbd.com.au](http://www.informbd.com.au) as part of Inform's comprehensive database of online market intelligence, updated weekly



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Next Issue:



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## WICKED CITY

A century's end a treaty between the human world and the demon world is up for renewal...

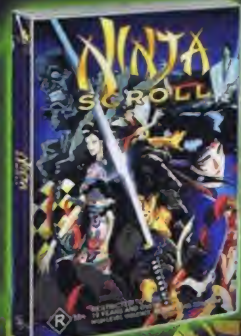
## GHOST IN THE SHELL

The inspiration behind the original Matrix, from Mamoru Oshii. An anime classic and the ultimate sci-fi thriller.



## VAMPIRE HUNTER D BLOODLUST

Half human, half vampire, this bounty hunter tracks a teenage girl...



## NINJA SCROLL

The bloody, controversial and scintillating sword play tale



## COWBOY BEBOP

It's about collaring villains and collecting cash! From Shinchiro Watanabe, creator of Animatrix Episodes "Kids Story" and "Detective Story".



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