

\$6.95 INC GST
NZ \$8.95

XBOX LIVE - IS IT XBOX LOVE? WE PLAYTEST THE SERVICE

121 NOVEMBER '03

HYPERS

MAX PAYNE 2

Romance and revolvers on the PC

DOOM 3

The Devil came down to Sydney

THE RALLY KING RECLAIMS HIS CROWN

Colin McRae Rally 04 reviewed!



ADULTS ONLY

Manhunt re-invents the Stealth Action game

ROME: TOTAL WAR

Why this will be the best PC game of 2004...



PLUS:

- AFL Live 2004
- Breath of Fire V
- Pirates of the Caribbean
- FF Tactics Advance
- Super Mario Advance 4
- Pokémon Pinball



21

next GAMING



CLASSICS REMADE

Top 5 most wanted!

WARHAMMER FIREWARRIOR

40,000 reasons why it rocks



16 Years in the making

PS2 Online

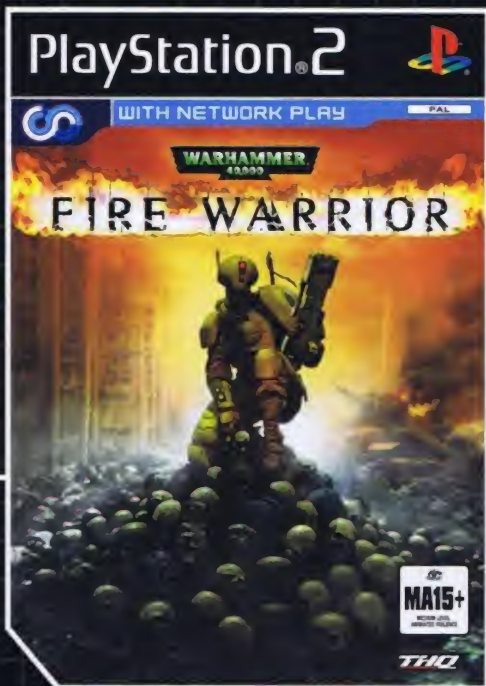
8 Player I-Link Compatible

Multiplayer Death Match and
Co-Operative Play

scenario profiler



combat camera uplink



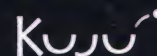
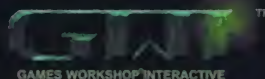
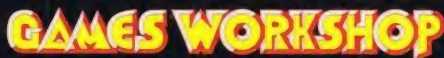
They are genetically designed to kill...

They are fanatical, fearless and absolutely dominating...

They are YOUR ENEMY.

WARHAMMER 40,000 FIRE WARRIOR

It is the 41st millenium, and there is only WAR...

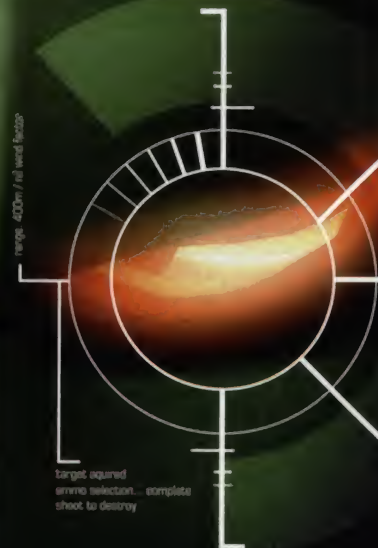


Sgt. Brock Killraven "The Mean Marine" / serial code 94606686



"...an early contender for the console first- personshooter of the year."

- Gamespy



All materials © Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2003 unless otherwise stated. All Rights Reserved. Fire Warrior, the Fire Warrior logo, the GW logo, Games Workshop, the Games Workshop logo, Kos, Space Marine, Space Marine chapter logos, Tau, the Tau caste designations, Warhammer 40,000 Datasheet and all associated icons, icons, names, marks, places, characters, illustrations and images from the Fire Warrior game and the Warhammer 40,000 universe are either © (Int) and/or © Games Workshop Ltd 2000-2003, widely registered in the UK and other countries around the world, and used under license. All Rights Reserved. Online play requires internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). The Online icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Gamespy and the "Powered by Gamespy" design are trademarks of Gamespy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. The Source Code for the Fire Warrior game © 2003 THQ Inc. THQ and the THQ logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Halo Invades



Now with online multiplayer



BUNGIE
www.bungie.net

gearbox
SOFTWARE

Microsoft
game studios

PC

HALO®

Join the battle. Live the epic adventure yourself. Unlock the secrets of Halo to save mankind from the ruthless Covenant swarms. Take the fight online in customisable head-to-head multiplayer competitions against up to 15 rival Master Chiefs. Break open a redesigned arsenal complete with the wicked new fuel rod gun. Then go mobile in the redeveloped Rocket Warthog and Banshee. This is Halo evolved.

www.microsoft.com/Games/Halo



16 MANHUNT

Rockstar's Grand Theft Auto killer?



Contents >>



20



22



28



24

48



08 Editorial

10 News

Grand Theft Auto hits Xbox, Sony Ericsson snap-on controller and more.

16 Previews

Manhunt frightens the lot of us. Also: Max Payne 2, NBA Jam and more.

24 Activate 2003

Hyper gets an insider's look at Activision's killer upcoming line-up.

36 Xbox Live Preview

We playtest the service and rate all the games!

42 Win Win Win

46 Reviews

74 GBA Reviews

Final Fantasy arrives on GBA and Mario returns once more.

76 Net Trawlin'

Come with us and explore the City of Heroes.

80 Classics

Which great classics should be remade? We select some pearls.

86 DVDs

All the latest DVD and Anime reviews.

90 Subscriptions

Win a Nokia N-Gage.

92 Forum

You tell us: "Nintendo's next console needs to have these features..."

94 Mail

97 Games Charts

98 Next Issue

You know it's going to be good...

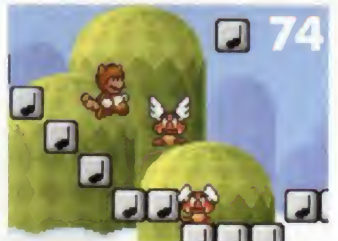
58



66



70



REVIEW INDEX

PS2

- 48 Jak II: Renegade
- 52 The Great Escape
- 54 Warhammer 40K: Firewarrior
- 56 Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter
- 58 Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown
- 60 Alter Echo
- 72 Seek & Destroy
- 72 Gregory Horror Show

XBOX

- 62 Colin McRae Rally 04
- 64 Pirates of the Caribbean
- 66 AFL Live 2004

PC

- 68 Star Wars: Jedi Academy
- 70 Madden 2004
- 72 Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of WWII

GAME BOY ADVANCE

- 74 Super Mario Advance 4
- 74 Pokémon Pinball
- 75 Final Fantasy Tactics Advance

WRITE TO HYPER!

78 Renwick St, Redfern
NSW 2016, Australia
Ph: (02) 9699 0333
Fax: (02) 9310 1315
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au

EDITORIAL

Editor: **Eliot Fish**
Deputy Editor: **Cam Shea**
Art Director: **Malcolm Campbell**

ADVERTISING

Advertising Manager: **Mathew Price**
E-mail: mathew@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0349
Fax: (02) 9310 2012

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription Co-ordinator: **Mark Tesoriero**
For all Subscription enquiries phone:
(02) 9699 0320
Email: subs@next.com.au

MANAGEMENT

Publisher: **Phillip Keir**
Finance Director: **Theo Fatseas**
Operations Manager: **Melissa Doyle**
National Sales Director: **Sue Ostler**
E-mail: sue@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0346

PRODUCTION

Production Co-ordinator: **Monique Layt**
E-mail: moniquel@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0300
Fax: (02) 9310 2012

Printed CTP by: **WEBSTAR**
Distribution by: **Gordon & Gotch**
Customer Service Ph: 1300 65 0666
Fax: 1300 65 0777

CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Wilks, Daniel Staines, Jackson Gothe-Snape, Asher Moses, Frank Dry, Brett Robinson, Chris Stead, Stephen Farrelly, Kasta Andreadis, Olisadebe, Mutu and Kewell.

All copyrights reserved by
Next Publishing Pty Ltd
ACN 002 647 645
ISSN 1320-7458



Eliot Fish, Tim Willits & Todd Hollenshead
at Activate 2003

EDITORIAL

»» As we gear up to Christmas, online console gaming is going to be unleashed upon us. For those lucky enough to have broadband, it will be a fascinating temptation. How quickly will small local Xbox and PS2 clans develop – gamers from all over our fine land bonding together in the virtual chatrooms? Will Xbox Live and PS2 Network Entertainment dominate our daily gaming time, or will the uptake be a lot slower than anyone is truly planning on? There are certainly enough amazing single-player games about to be launched that could well distract us from getting around to registering that Gamertag. Half-Life 2, Pro Evolution Soccer 3, Knights of the Old Republic, Mario Kart Double Dash... there's plenty on the way to blind us to the delights of logging on and testing our skills against other gamers in SOCOM or MechAssault. Will online console gaming dominate our future or just tick away as a niche pastime?

Eliot Fish »» Editor

CORDLESS PLAY STATION CONTROLLER



CUT THE CORDS AND UNLEASH THE TRUE PLEASURES OF GAMING

DESIGNED IN JAPAN



WIRELESS

THE ULTIMATE 3G (THIRD GENERATION), WORLD'S FIRST CORDLESS MODEL FROM JAPAN...

BEST CORDLESS CONTROLLER...

STATE OF THE ART CORDLESS RADIO...

FREQUENCY TECHNOLOGY...

FREEDOM FROM CORDS...

INGENIOUS DESIGN...

PLUG & PLAY...



HAS ALL THE FEATURES OF SONY DUAL SHOCK 2

SPECIFICATION

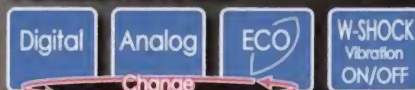
For Playstation®2, Playstation®one, Playstation®



Wireless Technology



Function Modes



Battery : "AA" LA6 1.5v x2



Standard Specifications



Sony is a registered trademark of SONY Corporation. Playstation, PSone, Playstation2 are registered trademarks of SONY Computer Entertainment Inc. This product is not designed, manufactured, sponsored or endorsed by Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

Available at leading Games Stores. Exclusively distributed by Air Style, Australia, a subsidiary of Mercantile Pacific Group of Companies, 19 Dryburgh Street, West Melbourne 3003. Phone: 1300-734704 www.airstyle.com.au

News >>

IN THE NEWS: GTA on Xbox ■ EA Sports Nation ■ Sony Ericsson controller add-on ■ Halo Tournament ■ New Guilty Gear and more



Let's hope for some Xbox performance tweaks! There is that hard drive after all...

NICE VICE

XBOX FINALLY GETS GTA!

Just in time for Christmas...

In fantastic news for Xbox gamers, GTA 3 and GTA 3: Vice City will hit the big black box in time for Christmas this year in a special double pack! Although the titles were meant to be exclusive to PS2, Rockstar recently amended their exclusivity deal with Sony, allowing for this very exciting development.

We're not sure whether the Xbox versions will have any new features or graphical improvements, but no matter which way you look at it, having GTA3 and Vice City in one pack is amazing value for money. Xbox owners probably shouldn't get too excited though — the next installment in the franchise will definitely be exclusive to PlayStation 2 for quite some time.

AN UNFORTUNATE SIDE-NOTE...

In the USA (where else?) Grand Theft Auto is being blamed for the death of an innocent motorist who was shot by some redneck kids who had

nothing better to do than bum around near the freeway and play with guns. After shooting at passing cars, they killed 45 year-old Nurse Aaron Hamel, and were duly arrested by police. Upon arrest, the kids aged 14 and 16, admitted that they were mimicking their favourite game, Grand Theft Auto.

The victim's family has now filed a lawsuit against Take 2 Interactive, claiming that "The industry needs to cough up money so victims and their families can be compensated for their pain." Shouldn't they be sending the lawsuit to the parents of the idiotic kids? We suspect they are to blame more than the videogame is.

The fact is that there are millions of copies of this game sold worldwide, and yet one unfortunate incident that has more to do with uneducated kids

who have access to firearms has the world pointing the finger at GTA. If GTA didn't exist, it's just as likely that the kids would have blamed it on having seen "The Italian Job" or any other piece of Hollywood violence...

Let's hope sanity prevails. In any case, we have a cool Grand Theft Auto double pack to look forward to! At this stage, there is no Oz release date.





GIBBED
HALO TOURNAMENT
 Mid-November Frag Fest

To celebrate the release of the awesome Halo on PC, Microsoft are going to be holding an Online Halo Tournament. Players from Australia can register (www.cyberslam.com.au) and take part, with a chance to win an all-expenses paid flight to the USA to take part in the Worldwide Halo Tournament.

Once Halo launches in mid October, gamers will have two

weeks to work on their Halo gameplay before the tournament kicks off beginning of November. Sixteen finalists will be flown from around Australia to compete in the national finals that will take place on the 15th November in Sydney. The winner of the national tournament will then be flown to the US, sponsored by AMD, to take part in the international Halo tournament in January 2004.



ONLINE
EA'S SPORTS NATION
 PS2-only network entertainment

Electronic Arts has unveiled its EA Sports Nation in the USA, the PlayStation 2 exclusive online sports network. Player can register to play head-to-head EA Sports games online complete with ladders, leaderboards, tournaments, voice chat and downloadable content.

In the US, 250,000 gamers have registered to play Madden 2004, and the future holds plenty of fun in the form of NBA Live 2004, FIFA

2004, NHL 2004, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004, and more — all available for online play through EA Sports Nation exclusively on the PS2.

We called EA's Sydney office to find out when the service might launch in Australia and were told, "Australian PS2 online enabled players will be able to enjoy the EA Sports Nation in the US. We will be looking at hosting a similar service in Australia if the consumer demand warrants it." And it will.



HADOKEN
STREET FIGHTER GETS COOL NAME

Yep, here comes Hyper Street Fighter 2 X

Despite vicious rumours, Hyper magazine is not the development team behind the new Streeties, Hyper Street Fighter 2 X. Capcom is once again bringing us Ken, Ryu and the crew to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the series. The game will be out in Japan around December, and is apparently set directly after Street Fighter II, for those who can actually make sense of the series' history and plethora of naming conventions. It will be on PlayStation 2 only at this stage. We'll have more info for you once our spies return from the Tokyo Game Show.



YIPPEE
BIOWARE'S NEXT
 Another Xbox RPG on the way

After the phenomenal sales for Knights of the Old Republic, BioWare look set to stick to making RPGs on the Xbox!

Their next game has been revealed as Jade Empire, an adventure set in an ancient and mysterious land that draws on Imperial China, Mayan and Aztec influences. Your character is a young martial arts student who sets out on a path to discovery, with the option (yet again) of turning to good or evil in your quest. There will be a number of fighting styles to master, so developing your character will be as detailed as ever. We'll have more info for you soon!

COOLEST JAPANESE GAME NAMES OF THE MONTH!

1. Hot Gimmick Mahjong
2. Drag-on Dagoon
3. Dear Boys Fast Break
4. Roast Meat Magistrate 2
5. Prince of Tennis Sweat & Tears 2



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 with Caption This Part 48 in the subject line.



CLIP-ON

MORE MOBILE GAMING

Sony Ericsson in on the act

With the Nokia N-Gage just around the corner, Sony Ericsson have weighed in to the portable gaming arena with quite an ingenious add-on device. It's called the Gameboard EGB-10 and clips around the new Z600 mobile phone, essentially giving you a SNES controller to go with its large 16-bit colour screen. It will be interesting to see how V-Rally 2 (the game that ships with the phone) compares to the titles N-Gage has on offer, so expect a full round-up next issue after we've had more hands-on time with both.



NOOD

GOODBYE CM?

Eidos and SI part ways

Championship Manager developers Sports Interactive and publisher Eidos have announced that they are going their separate ways. The terms of the parting have left Eidos with the Championship Manager name, whereas Sports Interactive keep their source code and amazingly in depth database. Eidos are planning on continuing the CM series on their own, which should be interesting given they'll almost be starting from scratch with just the name. SI, on the other hand, will probably just rename the series "Football Manager" or something similar and continue on their merry way.

OVERFLOW

Sony will be getting the first PSP development kits out to developers by the time you read this, so the ball is definitely rolling. In other PSP news Ken Kutaragi has revealed that the PSP will have digi cam and phone add-on peripherals. Looks like it really will be able to do everything!

When you get your hands on the Hulk DVD, try popping it into your Xbox and you'll discover that it's a hybrid Xbox/DVD disc! The DVD release comes with one playable level from the Xbox game.

Seems that id Software and their properties are fighting against the FPS tide these days. Doom 3 we already know will be focused around the single player game, but we've also just found out that developers Raven are taking a similar tack with Quake IV. Multiplayer will be a component but the single player experience is their main priority. Hmm...

Wario Ware was without a doubt one of the most bizarre and cool games we've played in a long while, so it's good to hear that Nintendo are coming up with another title in the series, this time for GameCube and with a multiplayer focus. To be known in Japan as "Atsumare!! Made in Wario", this could be the party game to get gamers back on the big N's side, as let's face it, the prospect of another Mario Party game coming out this Christmas does little but fill us with dread. More info as it comes to hand.

Jet Set Radio developers Smilebit are making a skating game called Ollieking. Word.

Halo 2 has been pushed back to April 2004. Sorry y'all...

KNOCKOUT

A GUILTY PLEASURE


Fighting game heaven on the way

Guilty Gear fans take note - Sammy have just unveiled Guilty Gear Isuka, the next in the series and four player compatible. All the characters from Guilty Gear XX have been confirmed for the game, but the real twist is that you can jump between foreground and background planes. Combine this with the gorgeously detailed artwork and animation that the series is renowned for and you have a game that will be

very sweet indeed. Other great news for 2D fighter fans is that development on Sammy Vs Capcom is officially underway, with Ishiwatari Daisuke (of Arc System Works and the Guilty Gear series) and Funamizu Noritaka (of Capcom and Street Fighter) working together as heads of the development team. The words "best game ever" definitely come to mind when thinking about this one... both games utilise the new Atomiswave arcade hardware.



HYPERR

 **NBA JAM** DAY
TRAINING CAMP 54



SOME ARE BORN GREAT-SOME TRY HARD

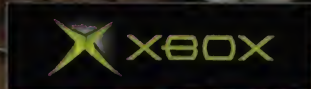
THE NBA AND INDIVIDUAL NBA MEMBER TEAM IDENTIFICATIONS USED ON OR IN THIS PRODUCT ARE TRADEMARKS, COPYRIGHTED DESIGNS AND OTHER FORMS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OF NBA PROPERTIES, INC. AND THE RESPECTIVE NBA MEMBER TEAMS AND MAY NOT BE USED, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, WITHOUT THE PRIOR WRITTEN CONSENT OF NBA PROPERTIES, INC. © 2003 NBA PROPERTIES, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



NBA JAM



PlayStation 2



Acclaim

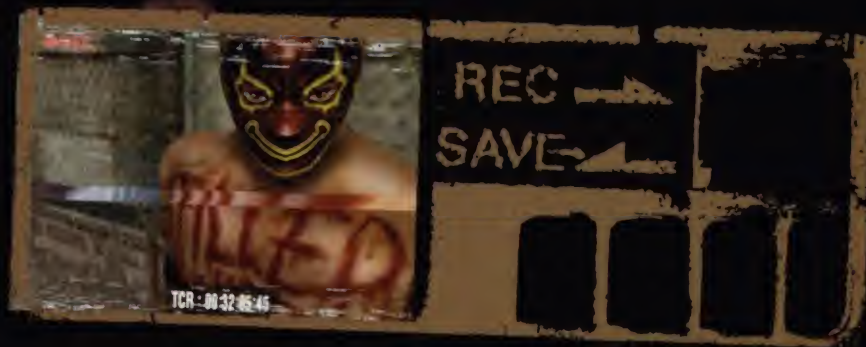
WWW.ACCLAIM.COM

PLAYSTATION AND PLAYSTATION LOGOS ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT INC. MICROSOFT, XBOX AND THE XBOX LOGOS ARE EITHER REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OR TRADEMARKS OF MICROSOFT CORPORATION IN THE U.S. AND/OR IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND ARE USED UNDER LICENSE FROM MICROSOFT

MANHUNT

(don't worry it's only a game)

>> Jackson Gothe-Snape



The stealth/action style has been the gaming fashion of the early 21st century. Pioneered by the Thiefs and Metal Gear Solids of the 1990s, the recent triumph of Splinter Cell was essentially an exercise in refinement. Rockstar North, possibly the foremost development studio in the world today with their GTA3/Vice City successes, has decided to throw their hat into the stealth/action mix. But, trust us, this game is much, much more than that. It's called Manhunt, but it's about as far as you can get from a quirky girls-only Japanese dating sim (we're still disappointed, though).

Hyper recently got an exclusive look at the game in a dark, dank water tower in inner-eastern London, and while we're no fraidy pussies, we can tell you now that Manhunt is the most unsettling game we've ever played.

THE PRICE OF FAME

Meet (and come November, be) James Earl Cash (no, not the money-grubbing cousin of Darth Vader's voice talent). He's a death-row inmate in Carcer City, a post-industrialist metropolis with smog problems, stark weather, and corruption issues within its ranks of authority... oh, and the home of videogaming's most disturbed and disturbing character, the Director.

The Director takes a liking to our boy Cash, and manages to rig the moment of his lethal injection to keep him alive for nefarious purposes. A good thing, you might think, at least for the benefit of the game's plot, but for Cash it's anything but. After seeing just a snippet of the game you'll understand why.

The deformed lovechild of the mentality behind classic thrillers (The Running Man, Jacob's Ladder) and the subject matter of snuff films (Nic Cage's topic of 'investigation' in 8mm), Manhunt places you in a decaying urban environment with one aim: surviving the deadly scenarios the Director devises.

So you're the star in a sadistic, ultra-violent film. But Manhunt remains a game, and one that is grounded firmly in the aforementioned stealth/action genre. At its heart, Manhunt is traditional hide and seek fun, with shards of glass and shotguns for kicks. The gameplay revolves around your battle against gangs of Hunters. Just as the Director directs, the Hunters hunt. Why? The bounty on your head, placed there by the Director and sustained aloft by your thinking cap.

Avoiding the hunters involves keeping to shadows, and maintaining silence. Sound is the major giveaway, as the crunching of footsteps if moving too fast will alert nearby Hunters to your presence. Kicking garbage bins around is also something Hyper can't recommend — but we do understand the temptation. The Hunters' level of alertness is represented in a series of simple colour-coded arrows, on the compulsory radar — yellow, orange and red, informing you that the bad guys are progressively more aware of Cash's presence and intent on his slaughter. In this simple sense, it's stuff we've seen a fair bit of in stealth games for years; a definite air of familiarity.

See, Manhunt oozes Splinter Cell style gameplay, but the difference here is that Rockstar has substituted gadgets for gore. You'll still be concealing bodies, and trying to piece together information you've picked up from listening to one of the 6000 lines of Hunter dialogue. This time though you'll also be smashing mercy-crying mouths, and waving an on-camera hi to Ma.

The familiar feel also extends to shooting elements, when eventually you get your hands on some proper weapons. Utilising a targeting system very similar to that from GTA3 (that was subsequently refined for Vice City), a press of L1 will lock your firearm onto the nearest on-screen enemy. Added in Manhunt, however, is the ability to quickly



>> TO ROCKSTAR'S CREDIT, MANHUNT'S INTENTIONS FOR VIOLENCE SEEM TO EXTEND BEYOND SIMPLE CONTROVERSY



aim for particular body parts, accessed via the right analogue stick. Following the lock, you can target heads and limbs with ease, allowing for some cruel and bloody Hunter slayings.

THE THRILL OF THE KILL

The violence continues into the hand-to-hand combat, with a typical array of body blows and weapon-assisted assaults. So, if you accidentally trigger off a Hunter, you do still have a chance, unless the guy doesn't have mates nearby, or isn't carrying weapons, or isn't one of the more advanced gangmembers... Hmmmm. The hand-to-hand combat is a little mash-tastic, but when you're trying to steal the bad man's crowbar with bare paws, you'll begin to understand the advantages, disadvantages and the bloody

bludgeoning potential of each weapon, including the old fisticuffs. And before you even question the level of violence and its necessity, know this: we haven't even got to the proverbial meat in the sandwich. Possibly the crux of the game, the meeting point of the setting, the atmosphere and gameplay, is the execution of Hunters — those scenes for which the Director wears thin his pause button.

After creating a distraction, Cash hides in the shadows. An inquisitive Hunter investigates the noise, before dismissing it as simple mind tricks — he should be so lucky. Cash, lead pipe in hand (or baseball bat, or pipe in hand (or plastic bag, or meat glass shard, or plastic bag, or meat cleaver), sneaks up behind, and, when within range, goes at the humble Hunter with his hungry pipe. The screen then switches to an interlaced, grainy, surveillance

camera-style view, as we witness the moment that will make the squeamish and parents cringe in unison. It's violent, Jim, but not as we know it, for it is not the vision of the limp head hanging by what appears to be a couple of tendons, it is the ultra-real noise of lead meeting skull, the repeated neck tears and skull-crushing blows that truly curdle the blood. Each weapon draws a different animation, and a variety of sickening audio effects. Make no mistake, Manhunt is the most gravely gory game ever made. We've all seen heads blown off, and that's in there as well, but it's the glorification of this simple, gruesome immoral moment that truly confronts.

Yet, more so than any other game, Manhunt's violence, despite its severity and design, might well be appropriate. It is, for Cash, the

expressive outlet for an inhibited man, the physical manifestation of a combination of fear, subordination, frustration, doubt, and above all, resilience. Or so Rockstar (God bless 'em) would have you believe. For the extreme violence in Manhunt will only be justifiable if those pillars supporting it, the atmosphere, environment, premise and goal, coherently combine to create an experience not yet seen in a videogame — one which warrants what is essentially distasteful content. Few question the presence of the Colonel Kurtz cow slaughter scene in Apocalypse Now. The bar's height has been set.

TASTY

In our dark, eerie London demo, we only had an hour to taste Manhunt's secretions, but certainly, promise



[left] Hunters — they're comin' to gitcha! Better start running...

[right] Anyone for a game of baseball? No? Okay, then I'll smash your face in.



abounds. Who better than Rockstar, the creators of GTA3 — a game that was able to rise above its violent themes — to take the challenge? Definitely, people will be offended, but this is no game for kids — its root purpose is to colour the stale survival-horror genre. We're in the interactive games industry, we might as well explore the possibilities. Still, noble aspirations aside, Manhunt is a game, and one founded on proven stealth/action/horror gameplay roots.

Take the weapons system for example — like Halo (being the most prominent example), Cash is restricted to carrying two firearms (as well as one melee/execution weapon). Thus the classic choice scenario is created, where one is forced to maintain a strategic approach when it comes to the

selection of weapons: can you still afford to carry the shotgun, with low-ammo, in a relatively sparse open environment? Different melee weapons, too, have varied speed, reach and damage effect. Similarly, the game's classic third-person perspective/first-person look-around view modes, as well as the 'peer around corners' ability are permanent fixtures in action games.

Each of the seven Hunter gangs will incorporate different AI strategies, as well as obvious aesthetic differences. The Hoods are the traditional 'tutorial' gang — slow, dumb victims. The Smilies are maniacal weirdos who don clown faces, and swarm you with teamwork and terror. In general, the AI will stay out of your front ninety degrees, try to sneak up behind and stab you, and above all, do it as a group. And then there are the levels where you'll meet more than one gang...

While not dazzling with its visuals, Manhunt still impresses in its functional use of the (ever-improving) Renderware graphics

middleware workhorse used to create GTA3. There are old newspapers blowing about, crumbling walls, and decaying warehouses. The characters, meanwhile, are competently animated and varied in appearance, even within respective gangs. Even the simplistic lighting effects work well, particularly the odd occasion where the stage is literally set for a bloody battle of the knuckle, encircled by dramatic, blazing set lighting. Yet it's not the beauty of the setting, but the consistency of the whole graphical style that is Manhunt's most attractive aesthetic aspect.

At this late stage in the PS2's lifespan, Manhunt's competent technical visuals, (while avoiding the promotion of a culture of satisfactory mediocrity) are, barring some exceptions, more or less the most we can expect from 3D action PS2 titles: convincing, if simplistic, 3D environments. Fortunately, the game's visual style is consistent, and with luck will successfully play its part in lifting this product into

the upper echelons of the market. And so, whilst GTA3 miraculously unified the market and garnered critical world title belts for Rockstar, Manhunt is a far more modest project. It's guaranteed to be a novel and enjoyable experience, but Hyper would doubt its promise were it not for the magical hands of its maker. To Rockstar's credit, Manhunt's intentions for violence seem to extend beyond simple controversy (although from the GTA3 example, you wouldn't say no). The violence, while being the central point of the game, is hardly the most interesting. Instead, it is the circumstance around this violence that will make playing the game worthwhile. How involving will it be? Who is the Director? And surely the motives for the Director extend beyond Big Brother Up Late. Most importantly though, who is Cash? Who are we, when placed in this situation? And will this powerful project leave its mark on gaming? Prepare for the hunt. <<

REC **SAVE**

CATEGORY: Stealth/Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1

PUBLISHER: Take 2 Interactive >> **AVAILABLE:** Late 2003

WOW-O-METER

Progress bar with colored segments: blue, green, yellow, orange, red.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
An online component with humans playing as Hunters, sniffing another player out could be interesting.



>>PC MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

WOW-O-METER



CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Take 2 Interactive >> AVAILABLE: Late 2003 >>

There are games that take the videogame medium forward, but then there are also games that refine what has come before; games that are just great fun to play. The original Max Payne certainly falls into the latter category. It wasn't particularly revolutionary — offering up a linear but adrenaline pumping play experience that excelled thanks to bullet time gunplay and a great film noir atmosphere. The original was very well received the world over, but fortunately developers Remedy Entertainment weren't content to simply pump out a quick sequel to take advantage of that fact. Indeed, with *The Fall of Max Payne* they're determined to address the shortcomings of the first game and give us the definitive gritty bullet-time-laced film noir action game. Or should that be "love story"?

SCOUTING OF THE CITY

Yes, *The Fall of Max Payne* tells a love story — after all, what noir

themed story would be complete without a femme fatale? As you'd expect given the already tragic events of Max's life, however, this is going to be a twisted, gut wrenching tale, with little hope for a happy conclusion.

After the events of the first game, Max somehow comes out on top, with his job reinstated. Embittered, he turns his back on the DEA and goes back to his roots — the NYPD. Of course, when your name's Max Payne, things were never meant to be easy. Max is soon embroiled in yet another frame-up, this time for the murder of his partner. Faced with another run from the law, world-weary Max simply admits to the crime. Remedy haven't disclosed just why he would do this yet, but we're sure with such a strong emphasis on story in the game, the rationale will be a good one.

Max's love interest is a vigilante named Mona Sax... who is also a murder suspect. Love works in mysterious ways, eh? Fortunately,

Remedy are deadly serious about the storyline for this title. They've pulled out all stops to produce a tightly scripted, deeply involving narrative with a smaller core cast, and plenty of unexpected twists and turns. Balancing this approach will be far less linear level design. Instead of locked doors greeting your every attempt to "think outside the square", *Max Payne 2* will give the player a number of ways to get through any given sequence. Good stuff.

Perhaps the first thing you've noticed in the screenshots, is that Max looks, well, like an entirely different person. And he is. For the first game, Remedy mostly used staff members for characters and voices in the game. The face of Max, for instance, was actually that of the scriptwriter! Those resourceful Fins! This time around, they have a considerable budget behind the production, so have hired professional actors from the homeland of the game series — New

York, and used Rockstar's facilities there for motion capturing, sound work and extensive scouting of the city for visual resources.

The end result of all this is that Max looks a little bit more normal, and no longer has a permanent "carrot up the date" expression on his face. We're still unsure whether that's a good thing. Regardless of your personal preference between realism and comedy, this is one title that will undoubtedly blow you away in terms of visuals.

EVEN MORE ACROBATIC

Highly realistic radiosity lighting helps bring even greater atmosphere to the game, creating real-time shadows and garish fluorescent lighting to cast the city in an eerily bleak glow. Character modelling is incredibly detailed, and implementation of the Havok physics engine has allowed for elements such as clothing to hang and move more realistically, as well as great rag doll physics for dying enemies.



Demi Moore:
her plastic
surgery makes
her look almost
computer
generated...

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Ex-wrestler Maxx Payne
included as a hidden
character.

Remedy haven't been shy in using the cutting edge visuals to draw the player into the narrative, either. Thus, in addition to the graphic novel stills so synonymous with the original, the game also uses traditional cutscenes utilising the in-game engine. The combination of professional actors, versatile facial expression and lip syncing technology really bring these scenes to life.

Of course, the main reason we all played Max Payne was for the sublime action sequences, and The Fall of Max Payne certainly won't disappoint in that department. Bullet time will be just as prominent, and Remedy have certainly paid a lot of attention to this aspect. Needless to say it will be even more acrobatic, and (a little like the Matrix game) there will be a host of context sensitive moves, so the action should be more varied than before. Gunplay hasn't been this poetic since Hard Boiled.

Another new element that will bring a different style of play to the fore will be the sequences where Max joins up with a squad of NPCs to help him reduce the city to rubble. They're not just cannon fodder either, with enough intelligence to ensure they'll take cover and try to outmaneuver the opposition. Indeed the AI as a whole will be much more impressive this time around. Remedy opted not to expand on the AI from the first game, but have started again from scratch — and it shows. The definitive sequel? It's certainly looking that way. <<<

>>> MAX LOOKS A LITTLE BIT MORE NORMAL, AND NO LONGER HAS A PERMANENT "CARROT UP THE DATE" EXPRESSION



I think we're about to see that "fall" bit



I'd heard basketballers had big heads



C'mon gimmie a hug! Anyone?

>>PS2 XBOX

NBA JAM 2004

WOW-O-METER



CATEGORY: Arcade basketball >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> AVAILABLE: Late 2003 >>

It's back! NBA Jam, the series responsible for kick-starting the arcade basketball genre, is being revived for this generation, and it's about time! Of course, there are a number of pressing questions that spring to mind. Most importantly, how can NBA Jam hope to offer as much playability as the likes of NBA Street, while still staying true to the series? And do we really want it to stay true to the series? After all, as much fun as NBA Jam TE was, such a shallow game wouldn't cut it these days, especially in the face of the competition.

GOR FOR THREE POINTS

It's Acclaim Studios Austin who have the difficult task of reinventing the series, and at this stage they're on the right track. The first major change is that games are now 3 on 3 affairs, as opposed to 2 on 2. This instantly allows for more complex gameplay and a wider range of team-based moves. Another change is the Jam Meter at the top of screen. Fill it up by continually dunking, then hit a dunk from one of the hot spots that appear on court and you'll get three points.

Do it again later in the game for five, and then seven. It's a good system that should balance the tendency to constantly go for three point shots.

Like the previous games in the series, NBA Jam 2004 has a host of unlockable content, but this time there's a credit system in place. In addition to unlocking extra stadiums, classic jerseys (or "gurnseys" for you Melbournites) and hidden characters, you'll also be able to build up the stats of members on your team. There are also 50 of the greatest players from the last 50 years of the NBA to unlock in the black and white Legend mode. And let's not forget all 29 current NBA teams and arenas, a solid Create-A-Player mode and the return of Tim Kitzrow — the original voice of NBA Jam. It wouldn't be Jam without him.

TRUE TO ITS ORIGINS

Where NBA Street 2 went for a 70s funk vibe in its presentation, NBA Jam 2004 is just out and out cartoony. In this sense it's very true to its origins, and you can expect other classic Jam elements to return such as going on-fire after hitting

three successive shots, and a host of cheats including Big Head mode. It's not entirely old school though, with the crowds in particular looking fantastic. The first four rows or so are modelled in 3D, so you'll see them getting out of their seats, pumping their fists in the air and generally bringing a bit of atmosphere to proceedings. It's a much-needed step forward for sports game crowds... just don't look too closely at the sprites in rows five and back!

Despite the changes, the overriding feeling one gets when playing NBA Jam 2004 is that it's still very much the same game as before. Once again, the controls are pared down to the bare essentials, and turbo-ing into the key then shooting results in a spectacular jam. Player animations are generally good, and significant players have their own signature moves which is a nice touch. It's still very much a no-holds-barred physical game too, so you can swat the ball out of your opposition's hands, knock them to the ground and aggressively block shots. In short, it's simple, but we've still had a lot of fun playing it, which is always a good sign. Full review soon. <<



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Heaps of secret players to unlock, just like the good old days of TE.

This is where
I took on three guys...
and made them cry like babies.

Wireless multiplayer game play
Game card titles from top publishers
Supports 3D graphics
Bluetooth wireless technology
MP3 music player - FM radio
Triband mobile phone

n-gage.com



N-GAGE
NOKIA

anyone
anywhere



He transforms into a Foreman fat-free grill

>>PS2

TRANSFORMERS ARMADA

CATEGORY: Autobot Action >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Atari >>
AVAILABLE: Mid 2004 >>

You can't keep a good license down, so it should come as no surprise that not only are Transformers back in a new series, but there's a videogame on the way too. Prelude to Energon is actually being developed by Australia's own Melbourne House, and is looking very promising. The setting is Earth in the year 2010, and the storyline is focused around the discovery of an ancient ship — a remnant from the fabled Great War, that's jam-packed with "mini-cons". What are mini-cons you ask? A sensible question young padawan. Mini-cons are mini transformers that can be equipped for substantial power upgrades and hi-tech new abilities. Indeed, their power is so great that the Earth is about to become a giant robot battlefield in

the struggle to control them.

There are 40 mini-cons in all, ranging from heat vision (and Jack?) to stealth camouflage and hover gliding, and when you consider that four can be equipped at once, the mission and gameplay possibilities become tantalising indeed. Throw in richly detailed, expansive environments and excessively chunky combat and this game could be "more than meets the eye" (cringe). Now all we need is online support — imagine full scale Autobot Vs Decepticon teamplay battles...

WOW-O-METER



Looks like spider legs for dinner again

>>PS2 XBOX GCN

X-MEN LEGENDS

CATEGORY: Action RPG >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >>
PUBLISHER: Activision >> AVAILABLE: 2004 >>

The X-Men license should be an absolute gold mine for creating compelling videogames. After all, it's an incredibly rich world overflowing with cool characters, each with their own distinct abilities. For some reason though, all we've seen so far is a succession of crap beat 'em up titles. Well, hopefully all that is about to change.

Legends is a party-based action RPG that sees Xavier and the X-Men once again trying to save the human world from Magneto, the Sentinels and their nefarious associates. There will be 15 playable X-Men in the game, including

Wolverine, Nightcrawler, Beast, Cyclops, Jean Grey and Storm, but you'll only be able to take four out on a mission at once, so tailoring your party to the mission at hand will be key. With a branching mission structure, experience points system so you can level up your characters and unlock new abilities, and a host of two person combo moves (such as Colossus's "fastball special" where he hurls Wolverine at the hapless enemies) Legends is looking good.

WOW-O-METER



>>PC

ULTIMA X: ODYSSEY

CATEGORY: MMORPG >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: EA >>
AVAILABLE: Late 2003

Ultima X: Odyssey is the latest online installment in the Ultima saga, but rather than a sequel to Ultima Online, developers Origin are basing the play mechanics around the old-school single player Ultima titles. The game takes place in a world created by the Avatar after the events of Ultima IX, as a testing ground of sorts. Would-be heroes can prove their mettle here, and eventually ascend to the level of Avatar themselves.

There's just so much for Ultima fans to get excited about in Odyssey. The Virtue system is back, and you can focus on one or more

Virtues independently of your character's path and class, so you'll have some serious options here in crafting a unique character. Better still, quests and game elements will be actively tailored to your experience level and virtue focuses. This is achieved using a similar system to Mythica — your party will seamlessly move into a private area during significant events, allowing you to enjoy customised gameplay without interruption from online riff raff. Sounds good to us.

WOW-O-METER





This is where
I saw Pete's skid marks.



MotoGP™ now on N-Gage. Choose from 10 top-of-the-line bikes and go head-to-head in a multiplayer race. Challenge three friends or foes and enter the real time wireless world rankings. n-gage.com

N-GAGE anyone
anywhere
NOKIA



Copyright © 2003 Nokia. All rights reserved. Nokia and N-Gage are trademarks or registered trademarks of Nokia Corporation. Game and Software ©2003 THQ Inc. MotoGP™ and © 2003 Dorna Sports, S.L. MotoGP and related logos, characters, names and distinctive likenesses thereof are the exclusive property of Dorna Sports, S.L. and/or their respective owners. Used under license. All rights reserved. THQ, THQ Wireless and their respective logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners.

ACTIVISION®

ACTIVATE ASIA 2003

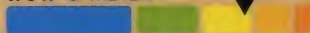
Activision recently held their yearly Activate event in Sydney and Hyper was there to check out all their upcoming releases. We've picked four games that we think stood out from the pack, and squeezed some info out of each of the producers and developers on hand...



THE MOVIES

CATEGORY: Sim >>
PLAYERS: 1 >>
PUBLISHER: Activision >>
AVAILABLE: 2004 >>

WOW-O-METER



HYPER: Peter Molyneux has made many classic games. How much leeway does he get to do what he wants?

James: Well, we have a release date, so there's only so much leeway! But I think we're realistic with the scheduling anyway. We won't put a game out that he's not happy with. There's a mutual respect and a sensible approach to games development. Of course, things get reworked all the time, but that happens everywhere.

HYPER: What kind of team is working on *The Movies*?

James: Basically, the designers who worked on *Theme Park* and *Theme Hospital*, other guys from *Black & White*... and guys who love films, who've read all the books and know everything about filmmaking. They're very passionate. Massive movie buffs, but they're also gamers.

HYPER: With a sim revolving around such a creative pursuit as filmmaking, how much control does the player actually have?

James: In terms of the amount of control you can have — you can have as much as you want. You can go down to the storyboard level and change things — or you can select a genre, select some actors and they'll

>> YOU CAN UPLOAD YOUR TRAILERS TO GET RATED, AND DOWNLOAD AWARDS...



March
1900



\$999,761

James Steer, Activision Producer

go away and produce it themselves. You can play the game at lots of levels. The challenge is that you've got to run a movie studio, and making the movies is just one part of that — although it's a very important part. You've got to make sure your actors are okay, that they've got their trailers, that your technical guys are looking in the right areas such as special effects... you have to keep your eye on all the elements.

You can select the actors, the props, the technology, put loads of marketing behind it... and also the way the actors are feeling at the time will have an effect on the movie. If actors are having affairs, then get them into a romantic movie together because the romantic chemistry will be sky high and you'll make lots of money. And if they split up, then keep them apart because they won't want to act together! Everything in the game can make a difference, basically.

HYPER: How much can you modify your actors?

James: You can pretty much just change hairstyles and costumes, but you can also make them have plastic surgery to change their face or make them go to the gym. If you're not using an actor, they might go off the rails and end up in a bar and get

fat. You might have to send them to a clinic to get over their drink problem, or send them to the gym to lose the fat... it's a morphing technology that was developed for Black & White and then enhanced for Fable and then they've enhanced it even more for this game. The game morphs their faces and you can literally see them getting fatter or thinner.

HYPER: What about the scriptwriting and production values?

James: Your scriptwriters, well the more you spend on their production facilities... it is all about the amount of money you invest in certain areas. The same with the costumes or sets. For instance if you don't spend enough money and end up having to re-use a set you've already used in a couple of movies, the critics will notice it and let you know. The game will also know if you've paid for the wrong props, like "why is that phone booth in the middle of the desert?"

In terms of knowing what kinds of movies you should be making, well, your actors will hint on the style of movie that might be popular at the time, and you also get a newspaper report that tells you about events of the time. For instance, in the Forties, it's a good time to make heroic war

movies after the war has ended because everybody's kind of happy. The other thing is you can just make the kind of movies that you want to make and they could be successful.

HYPER: The game follows a bit of filmmaking history, so once the game goes into the future, what happens?

James: Well, we only go into the near future, so we don't predict too much what's going to happen. We are also less inclined to do the kind of blue screen stuff, because you don't get to see much! At the end of the day this is a game and we want it to be fun, so we've taken a bit of license there. You will have special effects and things but we're not guessing about what's going to happen with movie making in the future.

HYPER: What do you get to see once your movie is finished?

James: In the end you'll get to see a full three to four minute movie. Everything that was on the storyboard will be in it, you might not have seen it being filmed because you might have been elsewhere in the movie studio looking at something else, but you can watch every single scene.

If your technology is bad then you'll have bad effects and grainy

effects on the screen, and you'll see the acting is terrible. When it's released you'll actually go to the premiere and you'll see the paparazzi... if the movie is bad then there'll be one guy with a camera there, and the queue for the cinema will have nobody.

HYPER: Are there ideas for expanding the game down the track?

James: Yeah definitely, with the website we've developed you can upload your trailers to get rated, and download awards. We'll also give you more content for the game after it's released — new sets and those kinds of things.

[below] It's called Horror for a reason... the movie is plain horrible.





Tim Willits & Todd Hollenshead, id Software

DOOM 3

CATEGORY: First Person Shooter >>

PLAYERS: 1-4 >>

PUBLISHER: id Software >>

AVAILABLE: 2004 >>

WOW-O-METER

>> THE IMP CRAWLS UP WALLS, IT LEAPS AND JUMPS, DUCKS, EVADES COMBAT

Behind: Visually, Doom 3 is going to knock your proverbial socks off.



HYPER: When making Doom 3, did you assume that most players will have played a Doom game before?

Tim Willits: Well, it's not necessarily whether someone has played an id Software game, but a First Person Shooter. Because id is the father of First Person Shooters. It's a pretty safe assumption that someone who plays Doom 3 will have played a First Person Shooter. But we also take into account that we need to make it acceptable for everybody, and give everybody the same experience. It's exciting working at id because John Carmack, Kevin and Adrian really started this whole genre and to be part of it is really very cool.

Todd Hollenshead: Also, even people who aren't hardcore gamers still look at Doom 3 and go "wow, I didn't know you could do THAT in a videogame" and so we certainly hope to bring some new people into the market and action games. Hopefully we won't shock them so much that they don't come back because it's too scary!

HYPER: Well it used to be that gamers weren't really understood – they were just geeks who sat in front of computer monitors for hours. But now that games look the way they do, casual observers have been drawn in and really like to sit and watch other people play.

Todd: Yeah, exactly. Well, the industry is very strong now. The quality of the entertainment and the value for people's dollar that videogames provide – videogames have established a legitimate place besides television, movies and other forms of entertainment.

HYPER: With something as popular as Doom, how do you decide to revisit stuff that people loved from the originals whilst still delivering a new experience that people won't have seen before?

Tim W: The great thing about working with Doom 3 is that we have a defined universe. It's cool to be able to use some of the monster inspirations and some of the ideas – good versus evil, technology gone haywire – but because we have so many talented developers that bring influences from a whole wide range of things, we're really able to create a lot of new things. We can leverage the power of the physics engine for new gameplay ideas, the interaction with the characters, the scenarios that play out – the new technology allows for a lot of new things as well.

HYPER: Well, for someone who sits down to play Doom 3 next year, what kind of stuff will make them

go "oh how cool, it's THAT thing!"

Tim W: Well, y'know there's the Imp, the Pinky Demon... they'll recognise them but they are all new and cool. Like the Imp crawls up walls, it leaps and jumps, ducks, evades combat and stuff. So you see it, you'll recognise it, but it'll be so much cooler.

Todd H: People I think will recognise the shotgun pretty quickly, heh heh.

HYPER: What about new monsters?

Tim W: Yeah, well there have been a number of them that you might have seen already. The spider creatures – we've shown them. We have a whole host of new creatures. Our lead designer, Kenneth Scott, is responsible for coming up with the new ideas, and it's just great having so many talented people on staff.

HYPER: What about the different 'personalities' of the monsters?

Obviously there are the aggressive ones who'll just charge you down until you crap your pants...

Tim W: We have some creatures that are a little smarter, will use cover and try to keep their distance from you. We have creatures like you said that run in... but we also create a lot of personality with their animation and the way they attack. We have some surprises with the bosses that'll definitely be fun for players to fight against. So yeah, we're excited to have created a range of characters that give people a good variety of bad guys to play against.

HYPER: So, visually, this'll be a very frightening game to play through...

Todd H: Oh yeah, we're not making a kids game.

HYPER: ...so how much importance do you put into the sound design in order to enhance that experience?

Todd: Well, there are a couple of elements we use: Like, if you're getting beat on by a Pinky Demon – with the lighting and the shadowing, or turning all the lights off, people know they're in a foreboding environment. It's just suspenseful and scary in and of itself, you don't necessarily have to do anything. But then you take that situation and make it even more suspenseful by having it sound like you're surrounded by things you can't see. You don't know if they're near or far, you don't know if they can see you... that's one example. And then with the real-time six channel surround sound... I mean, the image fidelity of the visuals is so strong – the game looks incredibly

hyper-realistic, really – but what really makes it explode off the screen and into the room is the fact that you're completely encompassed in it. The game will really be a poster child for the six-channel surround sound set-up for people's PCs, new soundcards and good quality speakers. It's a different experience hearing it fully realised, rather than just a couple of crappy speakers up front.

HYPER: How have you approached the level design with Doom 3, in terms of being a different style of experience to previous games that you've done?

Tim W: The level design and creation of the games has taken an evolutionary step forward. The level designers are not just the gameplay architects, they're more like Hollywood set designers – now that can take into account the dynamic lights, the moving shadows, the sound environments, and in the scenarios that we create to play out for the player – sometimes point a camera up, sometimes not. It's really more than just "I'm going to have a puzzle here, a secret here, and guys will jump out here...", you really have to incorporate all of the technology into the design and then leverage that to get the best gameplay out of it – y'know using the physics objects, knocking things down, having guys throw stuff at you, monsters breaking down walls... and then having the sound cues, you hear a guy crawling up behind you and then you turn and he's right there in your face – it's definitely more difficult, but it's more rewarding as well.

HYPER: How much has that level design changed along the development cycle?

Todd: Unfortunately, lots of times! And it's not just with level design; it's with everything. Part of the problem is that we're so critical of our own work, that a lot of the stuff we do early on... like, once you figure out how to do stuff better with the bleeding edge technology, you look back and say "oh man I can do this so much better now."

For instance, if you're writing an article, you can always go back and make some little edit somewhere along the line – there's always a temptation to go back and do things better. But there is a choice about going back and getting something to the nth degree better – that players might not even notice when they play the game – versus finishing the game or creating something new, something totally different, something more.



George Fidler, Creative Assembly Brisbane Studio

ROME: TOTAL WAR

CATEGORY: Strategy >>
PLAYERS: 1-Multi >>
PUBLISHER: Activision >>
AVAILABLE: 2004 >>

WOW-O-METER



**>> HE WON A
BAFTA FOR
HIS WORK ON
SHOGUN, SO WE
ASKED HIM TO
JOIN US FULL TIME**

HYPER: How did you come to set up a studio in Australia?

George F: When I left Electronic Arts, Creative Assembly called me up and said, "what are the opportunities of setting up a studio in Australia?" I said that they were good, for a couple of reasons. The first reason, because in Australia there's not many opportunities to work with a really huge AAA product, I thought that if we had the opportunity to hit the ground running with an established franchise and established developer, we could really attract the best of the best. The second reason is I thought we could develop very cost effectively down here relative to UK prices. So, we sat down and planned it out and finally settled on Brisbane because the biggest pool of talent was there and it seemed like a really nice place to live. So we set the studio up and were able to attract a core team of really senior people very quickly.

The good thing about Rome: Total War is that it's already well into production, so we've come in at a time when the game is fully demonstrable. It's pretty good.

HYPER: What is the Australian team doing on the game?

George F: We're actually co-developing Rome, so we've got a bunch of programmers there, we're

connected to the UK with some sophisticated technology — a virtual private network and all kinds of stuff. We've been given discreet parts of technology to actually work on. We also have two fully equipped sound studios — one to handle the music and one for all the sound effects. So part of the deal was we were actually lucky enough to employ Jeff van Dyck as a full time employee of Creative Assembly. He's a pretty famous guy with a long history in producing music and sound effects for computer and video games. He won a BAFTA for his work on Shogun, so we asked him to join us full time.

We actually produce all of the music, sound and voice for the entire group, out of the Brisbane studio.

HYPER: How difficult was it to design the epic sound and music?

George F: Our challenge was to match the massive increase in graphical detail with the same increase in audio detail. We set about doing exactly that. We've had Richard Vaughn and Jeff van Dyck working full time for a year on creating the content, but we've also had a programmer working on the audio technology because now that we can move the camera right in on the battlefield it means that what you see you have to hear. We've had

to come up with a complex priority system — when you're in close, you might want to hear the sword clash, but you may not want to hear the footsteps. We've come up with a system that seamlessly moves between group based sounds and individual based sounds that produces this epic, cinematic feel to the game. As you move through the battle you start off with tension, and then the music builds to the battle, and so the music actually dynamically changes as you play through the battle. To actually play a battle over and over again and not find the music monotonous means that Jeff had to compose an awful lot of stuff! Everything is context sensitive.

[below] The charging elephants were one of the coolest moments in the lengthy demo showed to us.





Michael de Plata, Creative Assembly UK Studio

HYPER: What was the main thing you felt you needed to do with a new Total War game?

Michael: Well, jumping back a little bit, at the conclusion of Shogun: Total War we commenced Medieval: Total War and Rome: Total War in parallel, simultaneously. We already had the intention to take the technology and gameplay of Shogun and push that to the next level with Medieval, and refine that game. But having that firm foundation enabled us to, simultaneously, be working on something that was going to be revolutionary compared to that for the next generation as well. So we were working on the evolutionary step and the revolutionary leap at the same time.

Now with the 3D you really can zoom yourself into the combat and immerse yourself in it. We're really pleased with it. Just the level of detail on its own exceeds by a huge margin, anything I've seen in another strategy game — and then it's incorporated with the fact that it's got a scale that's unlike anything else out there. So achieving those two things simultaneously, in a way that doesn't need a super-computer to run it, is a great achievement.

HYPER: Are you aware of Weta Digital's Massive technology that was developed to enable those

huge computer generated battle scenes in *The Lord of the Rings*? With all that AI running about and fighting in 3D, it sounds like the new Total War.

Michael: The stuff they did for that movie was great, but the thing is it's fine for them if they get one frame out every sixty seconds whilst we have to get sixty frames out every second. The thing is with Total War, is because of our graphics and the ability to simulate a battlefield and get these emergent, quite real-world behaviours going on, the engine is getting used by a few TV production companies so they can do battlefield reenactments. So we're getting to that benchmark of broadcast quality which is quite unique for a game I think.

HYPER: What are the chances of the Total War engine being licensed out to other developers?

Michael: That's something we talk about a lot. It's not something we're actively working on at the moment, because we're so flat out. Without blowing our own trumpet too much, there's such clear space between us and the rest of the competition in this particular area that we're doing, there's not such a strong incentive to give that away.

The thing is, the last time there was a big revolution in strategy games with more traditional RTS games —

like Warcraft and C&C — they were unbelievably fantastic in terms of game design, but once the idea was out there, it was very straightforward for people to duplicate or clone that. Where we're at, the underlying AI and gameplay of getting thousands and thousands of guys behaving intelligently and playing well is something that I think will take anyone quite a while to catch up on. We have quite a big lead at the moment and we're looking at maintaining that lead and pushing it further forward.

HYPER: What can you tell us about the 'other half' of the game?

Michael: Oh, the campaign side? Our big goal with that has been to make the whole overall game feel like a single unified game where you're planning your moves on one side and then fighting the battles in real-time. Rather than have it feeling like two games — a turn-based game and a real-time — bolted together.

What we've done, probably the most radical thing that we've changed, is that rather than having a board game style region map at the top layer, we've got a continuous 3D world. Mountains actually are mountains, and hills, coastlines... You can zoom down from the campaign map to the battlefield at any point on that map. You can board your army

onto a fleet, disembark on a seashore — and if there's a fortress there and an army guarding it, if you zoom down and fight the battle there, it's on that exact terrain that you'll be fighting on. So there's a real strategic dimension to moving your armies about. You can ambush people out of forests, you can guard mountain passes, you can build roads across the map... it's a dynamic, living world.

When you build your cities on the map, you are actually building your cities — all the buildings that you construct are actually there. In gameplay terms, that supports the relationship between the two halves of the game. If your city's under siege, and I smash down your barracks with catapult fire or whatever, then you're not going to be able to train units on your next turn in the campaign.

It also means there's a consistent User Interface throughout — the way that you do things in one part of the game are the same as in the other.

HYPER: Have you already started cooking up ideas for the next in the series?

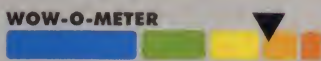
Michael: Oh, we're beyond the cooking up ideas stage! Can't tell you much more. We want to be our own strongest competition. We want to be the ones that do that game that blows Rome away as well!



Chris Archer, lead producer, Activision

TRUE CRIME: Streets of L.A.

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >>
PLAYERS: 1 >>
PUBLISHER: Activision >>
AVAILABLE: November >>



[below] A kick to the goolies usually resolves most disputes.



HYPER: What do you say to the people who'll just think this is GTA meets The Getaway meets Max Payne?

Chris: I wouldn't be complaining if they said that. It's obviously in that genre. The guys who are making this — Luxoflux — did Vigilante 8 years ago, which became Driver, which became GTA in a way. We're happy to be compared... no I should say, we're happy to be competitive in the genre. If you guys weren't asking me the question, I wouldn't think that we were very competitive.

The bottom line is we didn't want to compromise any of the parts. The deepest combination of driving, fighting and shooting in one game. We wanted to make sure there was a nice even balance between the three parts.

The branching storyline is particularly innovative — when you fail a mission you have the option to replay it or continue. It takes you down a different path — not only if you pass or fail, but how you do things determines which path you go down. There are critical things taken into account: how you're doing things, how well you're doing things.

HYPER: So as you cruise about the city, crimes take place apart from the story missions?

Chris: When you're driving about the city, you'll see random crimes

pop up. There are actually more random crimes in the game than there are story missions, and certain weapons are specific to certain crimes that happen in the city. For instance an arsonist may have a particular weapon you want, and only he can provide that weapon to you in the game. You'll have to find where those crimes are happening and collect those weapons...

HYPER: We've noticed that you can destroy mostly everything...

Chris: All of the environments are as destructible as they can be. Pretty much everything you see, is destructible.

HYPER: How does a law enforcement officer get away with so much wanton destruction?

Chris: There are consequences. Everything in the game has a consequence — we've talked about the branching storyline. There's also what we call 'escalation'. Civil unrest. When the civil unrest meter starts moving up, vigilante groups will start coming after you — sometimes on foot, sometimes in cars with weapons. Then you get the police and the SWAT coming after you. Just because you're a cop doesn't mean you can just go blow everybody away. There's some of that that is allowed to you because it's 'in the line of duty', but if you're

just blowing everybody away, quickly, that's going to turn ugly.

HYPER: How does the fighting come into it? Can you drop your weapons and just focus on beating on people hand-to-hand?

Chris: This is probably the most robust fighting system for a game like this, or even a beat 'em up. The idea is that you have a punch, kick and a jump kick as well — that's what you start with. And then there are finishing moves, with 2, 3 and 4 button combos. You can also learn running attacks, running punches, stomp attacks, grapple attacks... there are also reversal attacks too. We painstakingly motion captured everything in the game.

In some situations, it may not be the best strategy to run and gun, but you could just go and try to mow everybody down — or you could shoot everyone from afar with precision targeting.

With driving you have upgrades too, like peeling out and quickstops, like 180s. They are all combos. I can also go into precision targeting and take out someone's tyres... to finish them off I can actually hit their gas tank. When it goes red, I have a window of opportunity.

We just wanted to make sure we gave the player as much freedom to do what they want.

CREATE YOUR MUSIC NOW!

Dance 5

SAMPLE THE FUTURE



MUSICCREATION

THE BIGGEST BRAND IN MUSIC CREATION BRINGS YOU A NEW DIMENSION TO MUSIC MAKING!

- 5,000 NEW ROYALTY-FREE SAMPLES FOR CREATING YOUR OWN DANCE TRACKS
- STYLISH 3D 48-TRACK SOUND MIXER IN CD QUALITY
- 18 INSTRUMENTS AND EFFECTS
- NEW BASS GENERATOR AND CHORD GENERATOR
- NEW HYPER GENERATOR - POLYPHONIC SYNTHESIZER AND SEQUENCER IN ONE
- NEW 3D VJ BOX FOR ARRANGING THE VISUALS TO GO WITH YOUR MIX
- AND MANY MORE FEATURES!



WIN a Sony™ Net MD MZ NO Mini Disk valued at \$899!

Simply tell us in 25 words or less why you want to create your own tunes.

See terms and conditions below for entry details



➤ ALSO NEW TO THE EJAY RANGE:



➤ AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT **Harvey Norman** NATIONWIDE

TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand, except employees and immediate families of Red Ant Enterprises Pty Ltd. 2. Entry is a game of skill and chance played in part in determining the winner. Entrants should tell us in 25 words or less why they want to create their own tunes and entrants should be sent to Red Ant Enterprises, EJay Competition, Unit 12/12 Mars Rd, Lane Cove NSW 2080. 3. Promotion commences 3rd September 2003 and closes at 5PM EST 31st October 2003. The draw will take place at 12.00 PM EST on 1st November 2003 at Red Ant Enterprises Pty Ltd, Unit 12/12 Mars Rd, Lane Cove NSW 2080. Winner will be notified by telephone, mail and announced at www.red-ant.com.au. 4. Each entry will be individually judged based on creativity. Entries not completed in accordance with the rules and conditions or received after the closing date and closing time at the specified address indicated above will not be considered. The judge's decision in relation to any aspect of the competition is final and binding on every person who enters. No correspondence will be entered into. 5. Prize consists of one Sony™ Net MD MZ NO Mini Disk. Total prize value of \$899. Prizes are not transferable or exchangeable and cannot be taken as cash. The Promoter is neither responsible nor liable for any change in the value of the prize occurring between publishing date and date the prize is claimed. 6. The Promoter shall not be liable for any loss or damage whatsoever which is suffered (including but not limited to indirect or consequential loss) or for any personal injury suffered or sustained during the course of the prize winnings except for any liability which cannot be excluded by law. 7. All entries become the property of the promoter. By entering the contest, each entrant consents to the personal information they submit with their entry being entered into a database by Red Ant Enterprises Pty Ltd for future promotional, marketing and publicity purposes. 8. The promoter is Red Ant Enterprises Pty Ltd, ABN 75 006 790 002.

Dance eJay 6 © 2003 Empire Interactive Europe Ltd. eJay, Hip Hop, Techno, House and Dance eJay 6 are trademarks or registered trademarks of Empire Interactive Europe Ltd. in the UK, Europe or other countries. All other brand or product names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders. All rights reserved.



www.eJay.com

Happily distributed by



www.red-ant.com.au



Real opponents. Infinite possibilities.

The future of interactive entertainment is here and now anyone can be your next challenger. Go up against real opponents or combine forces in an action-packed, real-time experience with PlayStation®2 Network Gaming. Look out for the Infinity logo on other hot network-enabled titles, where no two opponents are alike and no two games will ever be the same.

Get the Network Adaptor, bundled with the Hardware Online Arena game for only \$69.95^{RRP} – making it even easier to be a part of the action.



SOCOM: US Navy SEALs



Everquest Online Adventures



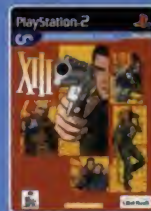
Hardware Online Arena



Gran Turismo 4



Destruction Derby Arenas



XIII



Medal of Honor Rising Sun



Syphon Filter The Omega Strain



Amplitude



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4



Fire Warrior



Midnight Club II

This is just the start of an awesome range of Network Entertainment titles on the way.

Games subject to availability. Check with your retailer for release dates.

This is what you need to get online:

A PlayStation®2 • A PlayStation®2 (8mb) Memory Card • A Network Adaptor Kit (including Ethernet cable and Network Access Disc) • A broadband internet connection to a cable or ADSL modem • A network game.

For more information on getting connected go to au.playstation.com/ng





.MalEvolent

.DMBase_Monkey

.SharShar

.Pokemanic

.Alex

.MechaT0-FU

.tetsugi

.RedTwelve

An Xbox Live preview

>> ASHER MOSES

The Australian Xbox Live release is imminent, and while beta testers and those keen enough to import a US kit have had their consoles online for months now, the service still hasn't been "officially" released here. Fear not, however, as October is the month you've all been waiting for. Microsoft has pumped plenty of advertising dollars into Live, and upon release, you will certainly hear about it. The Xbox Live Starter Kit is set to retail for a measly \$99.95, and includes a 12 month subscription to the Live service, a voice communicator, a starter disc and two demo Live games for you to dip your toes into. Furthermore, unlike the PlayStation 2, the Xbox comes with a built-in hard drive and Ethernet port, so aside from a broadband connection, no other equipment is required to get yourself up and running. Coincidentally, that neatly brings us to our first point of discussion...

keep unplugging your modem and connecting it back into your PC every time you want to surf the net, and you won't be able to have your Xbox and PC online simultaneously - clearly a huge pain in the arse. As well as this, early reports have revealed that a number of users are experiencing issues using this method with Telstra Bigpond broadband, which sends out a "heartbeat" signal every few minutes in order to test if the connection is still alive. Due to the fact that the Xbox is currently not configured to handle the heartbeat, this ultimately results in disconnections.

The second method, which is likely to be the most popular choice, is to leave your cable modem hooked up to your PC and simply purchase an extra network card for the Xbox. In effect, the PC will act as a router and the console should pick up the connection automatically. That said, this means that if the PC is turned off, so is your connection - another inconvenience.

The solution? Purchase a router! Simply connect the modem to the WAN port of the router (it should be labeled), and then hook your PC(s)/Xbox into the available LAN ports (there is usually about four of them). How easy is that? Keep in mind, however, that you should ensure that your router is compatible with Australian broadband connections, as this will make it much easier to configure the router to connect to the internet through your

GOIN' LIVE!

GETTING CONNECTED...

There are a number of different methods you can use in order to get your Xbox connected to the Internet, however, the simplest of these by far is to connect a CAT5 from your console directly into your modem. However, using this method, a number of issues arise. Firstly, you will inevitably have to

modem. Furthermore, these routers are also sure to be compatible with Telstra Bigpond and the aforementioned "heartbeat" signal.

POWER UP YOUR XBOX

Once you're sure that a connection is established (first ping the router's IP to ensure a LAN connection, then ping your DNS server to ensure an Internet connection), power up your Xbox without a CD inside and you should be taken to the dashboard. Once there, enter the "Xbox Live" menu and go to the "New Account" section, following the on-screen instructions to register your unique Gamer Tag. You'll need to enter personal details such as an address and credit card number, however, Microsoft ensures us that you will not be charged anything more than the subscription fee (which is yet to be finalised for Aussie users), unless you download premium content. As far as an IP address and gateway goes, if DHCP is working on your network then the console should be assigned an IP address automatically and no configuration is required. However, if this does not occur, simply enter the "Network Configuration" menu and enter your own IP and DNS addresses (the interface is almost identical to that seen in Windows).

Due to the fact that our particular kit isn't an official Australian release, we were required to select "USA" as our country when registering, and if you choose a country other than USA/Europe, you will be given an error message stating that Live has not been released anywhere else yet. That said, by the time the kit is officially launched in Australia, Microsoft will of course update the Xbox dashboard to reflect this.

IT'S ALL IN THE FEATURES

CHAT, PLAY, CELEBRATE!

So you've set up an account, registered your Gamer Tag and are ready to begin playing. What's next? We're glad you asked. The first and possibly most interesting feature of the Live service is the ability for gamers to talk to each other in real-time using the included headset. While PC gamers have enjoyed this feature for years now with games such as Counter-Strike, the way it has been executed on the Xbox is simply superb. Included with the starter kit is a plug pack and headset, with the plug pack slotting into the controller and the headset connecting to the plug pack. When you wish to speak,

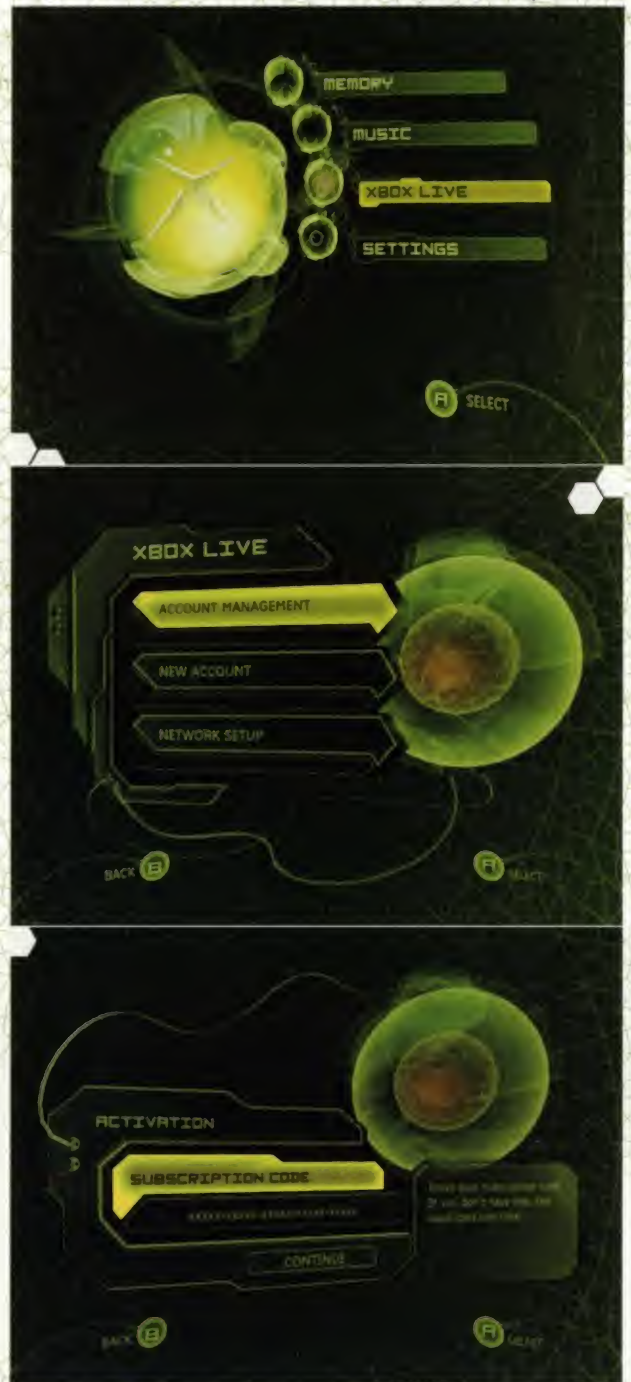
all you need to do is press a button located on said plug pack and when the LED is green, your voice is being projected to everyone in the game. That's right folks, unlike Counter-Strike, you are not required to tediously hold down a button every time you would like to say something. Furthermore, there is a speaker located on the left-hand side of the headset, projecting only voice chat, with the speakers on your television producing all other sound. This system is very convenient, as you are able to simply remove the headset if you've had enough of talking, and will still be able to hear all other sounds in the game. Furthermore, most games allow you to mute, and even vote for the removal of disruptive users - a must for any game with voice communication functionality. In addition, there are a number of voice masks available, ideal for the prepubescent gamer who will likely receive a tongue lashing each time they open their mouth. These are not only humorous, but they also add to the overall atmosphere of the game.

Another interesting feature of the Live service is the "Friends list", which, as the name suggests, allows you to keep track of your friends, including the games that they're playing at any point in time. Furthermore, there is also the option to join them mid-game - a feature that has come in very handy on more than one occasion during our testing of the service.

Even if you aren't a huge fan of multiplayer gaming, the content downloads feature of Live enables you to download new levels, characters, vehicles or weapons, extending the life of your games immensely.

Had multiple 1v1 battles with your mates but still can't decide who's the better player? Well, due to the fact that each player has a unique Gamer Tag, Live is able to keep a record of each and every game played, and will even give you a world ranking - great for the ego! As well as this, once the service is officially launched in Australia, don't be surprised if there are a number of Xbox Live online tournaments setup, which should be an instant success due to the fact that, unlike the PC, it is almost impossible to cheat due to the nature of the Xbox console.

Finally, most games feature an 'Opti-match' function, allowing you to, using the statistics feature, join games that include players of around the same skill level as you. You can also filter the server listing so that you only see games with the settings/maps/powerups you prefer - A very handy feature indeed.



[above] The interface is very user-friendly and easily updated by Microsoft - in fact, there's a new dashboard available now

>>> LIVE IS ABLE TO KEEP A RECORD OF EACH AND EVERY GAME PLAYED



[left] The Xbox Live starter kit, complete with headset for live chat 24/7.

The Games

At the time of writing this article, there are a total of 20 Live enabled games on store shelves (see boxout), with more to come as the service is launched in Australia. We have managed to test out each game for you, and here's what we thought...



Return to Castle Wolfenstein



Midtown Madness 3



Ghost Recon

Return To Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War

If you're into teamplay oriented games such as Counter-Strike, Raven Shield or any of their many clones, one of the first games you'll want to purchase upon installing Live is Return To Castle Wolfenstein (RTCW). Being a World War II shooter, RTCW pits the Axis against the Allies, with a total of four unique classes to select from on each side - Soldier, Engineer, Medic and Lieutenant. The soldier class is the standard infantry class for both teams, and is the only class that has the option of choosing any two-handed weapon (i.e. the Mauser and Panzerfaust). On the other hand, the engineer is the demolition expert, and is the only class capable of using dynamite and repairing damaged MG42 machine guns. Finally, due to the fact that there are no power-ups in the game, the medic is responsible for replenishing health for teammates and reviving fallen comrades on the battle field, while the lieutenant provides ammo and carries a long-range radio for calling in airstrikes and artillery bombardments.

The inclusion of a class system means that team work is essential to the success of the team, and the voice chat feature provides a convenient method of calling for ammo/health packs during battle. The variety of weapons on offer is great, staying true to the WWII theme, and provided that your television has a decent set of speakers, the various sound effects add a touch of realism to the game's already immersive atmosphere. Overall, RTCW is clearly one of the best Live-enabled games to hit store shelves yet, and there is no doubting that it will be an instant hit with both clans and online tournaments. However, due to the fact that we were required to test the game on servers which were mainly hosted in the US, lag often became an issue, to the extent that we were unable to join many servers which had a maximum ping limit defined. That said, don't let this put you off purchasing the game, as this issue is sure to disappear once more Australians adopt the service.

RANKING: B+

Midtown Madness 3

While the single player experience of Midtown Madness 3 is fun, multiplayer is where this game really comes alive. Each game can include a maximum of 8 players, with six unique game types - Checkpoint, Cruise, Capture the Gold, Tag, Hunter and Stayaway. As you may have already guessed, checkpoint is simply an all out race to the finish, with players having to pass numerous checkpoints in any order to pick up the win, while cruise mode has you rather boringly driving around the city doing basically whatever you like. Although both of these game modes become fairly monotonous after a few hours of play, the final four game types more than make up for this shortfall. Firstly, Capture The Gold has players racing through the city, grabbing gold and delivering it back to a location placed on the radar. Smashing into an opponent will allow you to steal their gold, and the person with the most gold at the end wins.

Next up, ever played the game "tag" during your school days? If so, you'll know exactly what the tag mode of Midtown Madness 3 entails. Don't be "it" when the clock strikes zero by tagging others, and the last man standing wins. Conversely, in Stayaway, the goal is to stay "it" for the longest amount of time, avoiding all other players until the time runs out.

Finally, the most enjoyable multiplayer game type in MM3, in our opinion, is Hunter, whereby one player starts as the hunter and the others are prey. As prey are tagged by the hunter, they too become hunters. Obviously, the last player who is prey wins. In need of an adrenaline rush? Try battling it out until the end of a game, whereby you'll most likely have six other players chasing you around the map in an effort to convert you to a hunter. Talk about being the center of attention!

Furthermore, maps mimic real life locations (e.g. Paris, Washington D.C., etc), and the interactive, open nature of each city does wonders for the game's overall atmosphere. Similarly, each car boasts its own unique attributes and the arcade physics that DICE has adopted add greatly to the already frenetic pace of the game. Overall, while not as enthralling as RTCW, MM3 is still a fun, light-hearted game that, if played in short bursts, has the potential to eat up days, if not months of your time.

RANKING: B

Ghost Recon

If you call yourself an avid gamer but haven't heard of Ghost Recon, let alone the Tom Clancy series of games, then you shouldn't be reading this magazine. Thus, we'll skip the introduction and move straight into the meaty bits. Firstly, Ghost Recon's multiplayer mode is broken down into three areas - co-operative, team games and solo games. The co-operative mode is very similar to the single player game in the sense that you are fighting computer-controlled opponents, however, in this case you are backed up by a team of up to 5 friends. Here you can either tackle the missions as they appear in the single player game, participate in an all-out deathmatch against the computer in "firefight" mode, or attempt to make it through enemy territory to reach an extraction zone with all team members surviving in "recon" mode.

The team mode is quite similar to the co-operative mode; however, each team consists of human-controlled players, rather than AI enemies. There are five sub-modes - Last Man Standing (the last team with people alive is the winner), Search and Rescue (the first team to bring all three hostages back to their base wins), Hamburger Hill (the team gets a point for every second that they have a player in a zone at the center of the map), Domination (similar to hamburger hill, however, there are now five zones) and Siege (the smallest team starts in a base that they have to defend). As seen in RTCW, the team-based nature of these modes forces players to work together, however, unlike RTCW, Ghost Recon caters for the lone soldier as well.

There are four types of solo games - Last Man Standing (last person alive wins), Sharpshooter (the person with the most kills wins), Hamburger Hill (identical to the team games variation), and Cat and Mouse, whereby all players start as cats with the first player to get a kill becoming a mouse. The mouse is equipped with an inferior pistol and only kills recorded whilst you are a mouse add to your overall score. As you can see, Ghost Recon caters to all personality types, and if you enjoyed RTCW, this game is a must have. However, it is important to note that, due to the fact that one bullet can kill you instantly, the game has a much slower pace, forcing players to be much more cautious and aware of their environment. Do you have the patience?

RANKING: A

Live enabled games - the list

- Star Wars: Clone Wars
- Godzilla
- Moto GP 2
- Return to Castle Wolfenstein
- Burnout 2
- Midnight Club 2
- Midtown Madness 3
- Brute Force
- Soldier of Fortune
- NFL 2K3
- NFL Fever 2003
- Mech Assault
- Moto GP Online
- Splinter Cell
- Unreal Championship
- Whacked
- Ghost Recon
- MX Superfly
- Toejam & Earl 3
- Capcom Vs SNK 2
- NBA 2K3
- NHL 2K3

Unreal Championship

If patience isn't a virtue you hold dearly, then this game may be a better option. Like its PC sibling, Unreal Tournament 2003, Unreal Championship (UC) is about as fast paced as first person shooters get. Put simply, if you enjoyed games such as UT2003 and Quake 3, then you're bound to love the twitch gameplay of UC. However, at this point in time, a couple of factors seriously detract from the overall appeal of UC. Firstly, due to the twitch nature of the game, unlike Ghost Recon, it is not uncommon for you to be shot around corners, or even hit the ground before you've had the chance to fire off a single shot. While the effects of this should be reduced once Aussies start hosting their own servers, the very nature of the game is still extremely taxing on your internet connection, meaning that even local servers start to lag once more than eight people start playing. Let's hope that this issue is fixed through a downloadable patch by the time Live hits our shores. Secondly, the game sadly offers no real benefits over UT2003, and this, coupled with the game's inherent lag issues, leaves no compelling reasons to purchase it if you already own UT2003 on the PC.

RANKING: C

MotoGP 2

Possibly the most popular game on Live (most likely due to the fact that a demo of the game is included with the starter kit), MotoGP 2 is without a doubt the best racer to hit the Xbox yet. While the concept is rather simple (first person to reach the finish line, or in the case of stunt mode, the person with the most points, wins), the game's execution is simply superb. MotoGP 2 features awesome visuals with realistic particle effects (e.g. the weather influences both gameplay and vehicle handling), as well as a total of sixteen real world tracks, a realistic physics engine and a wide variety of fully licensed riders and bikes. Furthermore, the ability to speak to the riders both in front and behind you is often hilarious, allowing you to abuse your mates as you overtake them, or vice versa, whatever the case may be. Even if you're not a die-hard racing fan, you won't be disappointed with MotoGP 2.

RANKING: A

Whacked!

Whacked! is one of those games that, while boasting a fairly mediocre single player experience, is infinitely more enjoyable online. Developed by Presto Studios, in Whacked, players are pitted against each other in the world's most irreverent and dangerous game show, with the primary objective being to simply annihilate all opponents. This is done using a variety of whacky weapons (as the name suggests), including the "plunger missile", a "cluster duck", a stapler, dodgeball, cactus, the "stick of reason", a can of soda (we told you this was strange) and many, many more. Furthermore, there are also a number of interesting powerups to be collected, making gameplay quite fun and varied indeed. That said, the game itself can become fairly monotonous after short periods of time, and due to the average single player game, this is definitely a title that you should try before you buy.

RANKING: C

NBA 2K3

Arguably the best basketball game for the Xbox, NBA 2K3 offers a welcomed change from the continuous wave of shoot-em-up action titles that have graced the Xbox as of late. Rather than an arcade sports title, NBA 2K3 can be best described as a basketball sim, with its developer, Visual Concepts, striving for realism above all else in its development. Not only are the rosters and player models identical to that of their real life counterparts, but the awesome control system coupled with stunning graphics and sound effects (particularly the crowd) make it seem as though you're watching an actual game, rather than interacting with a piece of code. New moves that weren't seen in the previous version include the ability to dive after loose balls, the ability to perform a "double crossover" in order to evade defenders, as well as two new passes (a chest pass and a bounce pass). Finally, arguably the most talked about addition to NBA 2K3 is the ability to change your shots midair in order to avoid being blocked by a defender, further adding to the versatility of the control system.

Thankfully, unlike what you would expect from an online basketball game, there is absolutely no latency during gameplay, aside from the occasional slowdown on servers located in the US. Furthermore, being

the only Live-enabled basketball game, NBA 2K3 features downloadable roster updates for teams, and there are likely to be numerous online leagues created for it as well. Overall, if you're a basketball fan and are after a realistic, enjoyable experience, you'd be foolish not to give NBA 2K3 a go.

RANKING: B+

MechAssault

MechAssault is probably the most supported of all Live-enabled games, with new content being made available by Microsoft at regular intervals. These include new battlefields, new mechs, new interface options, and even a capture the flag gameplay mode, which can all be downloaded free of charge. This is unsurprising due to the fact that the game was primarily developed for online play, and gives the title a much more lasting appeal.

Put simply, the multiplayer aspect of MechAssault involves players piloting a 40-foot tall mech across vast battle fields filled with up to eight other mechs on six different game modes - Destruction, Team Destruction, Last Man Standing, Team Last Man Standing and "Not It". Most of these modes should be fairly self explanatory, aside from the "Not it" mode which is almost identical to the tag mode described in the Midtown Madness 3 writeup, however, in this case you earn points from killing the person who is "it". As you would expect from such a game, MechAssault boasts a fast pace, with almost non-stop action as you attempt to blast away anything in your path. Amazingly enough, despite the frenetic nature of the game, latency is barely noticeable, showing that, unlike Unreal Championship, the developers of MechAssault have really spent some time working on the game's net code. While there are a few small issues such as the fact that, even in team games, all players are on the same voice channel, as well as the fact that you are taken to the main menu after each game rather than a central lobby (tedious if you're trying to co-ordinate with a group of people in order to join the same games), these can easily be fixed with a small patch and don't detract too much from the overall gameplay experience. Highly recommended.

RANKING: A+



Unreal Championship



Moto GP 2



Whacked!



NBA 2K3

>> MECHASSAULT BOASTS A FAST PACE, WITH ALMOST NON-STOP ACTION AS YOU ATTEMPT TO BLAST AWAY ANYTHING

NFL 2K3

Due to the fact that American football is far from a prominent sport here in Australia, NFL 2K3 sure was a difficult game to get into. However, after playing a few games and reading the manual (there's a first for everything!), things became a lot clearer. Think of NFL 2K3 as an NFL version of the NBA 2K3 title discussed above. The game is ultra-realistic, boasts awesome graphics, has real-world, downloadable rosters and is virtually lag-free. Furthermore, NFL 2K3's leaderboard will also download the current leaders from the server and their records, and playbooks can be saved for later use as well.

For the more avid players, the new replay system includes a virtual telestrator, as well as in-depth commentary during replays. Furthermore, it also allows you to monitor two players simultaneously, enabling you to determine weaknesses in your plays or areas that you feel can be improved on. The bottom line is, like most sports titles, you really have to first enjoy the sport itself if you want to get the most out of the game. Thus, if you're an NFL fan, you won't get a much better simulation than this. However, those that aren't fans of the sport will most likely find it very difficult to get into, and become bored with it after no more than a few hours of play. Try before you buy.

RANKING: B-

Splinter Cell

Being primarily a single player concept, the only way Live can benefit Splinter Cell owners is through downloadable content. At the time of writing this article, there is a total of one new mission for you to download, called "Kola Cell", which has you infiltrating an abandoned factory in Georgia to neutralize Nikoladze's renegade Kola Cell and retrieve code samples from Phillip Masse. Although nothing earth shattering, the new mission adds some extra play time to those that have finished the single player campaign.

RANKING: N/A

Brute Force

Another downloadable content game, Brute Force allows you to download new missions (both single and multiplayer), as well as entire campaigns via Xbox Live, adding to what is already an excellent single-player experience.

RANKING: N/A



MechAssault



Splinter Cell



NFL 2K3



Brute Force

SUMMING IT UP

Do you own a broadband connection and an Xbox console? If so, you'd be foolish not to purchase an Xbox Live starter kit the day it is released in Australia. Yes, it really is that good. Although we did have a few latency issues with some games, on the whole there weren't many noticeable slowdowns, and once more Australian's start hosting games this is going to become even less of an issue. On average, the service eats up around 20MB per hour, give or take 10MB depending on the game, allowing those on 3GB caps to play, in worst case scenarios, 100 hours per month. While this is very reasonable, most users of the service will be using their connection on a PC as well, which could be cutting things a little fine if both are used extensively. That said, who knows, maybe Microsoft Australia will be able to come to some sort of agreement with some or all of Australia's major broadband ISPs in order to introduce game servers that do not count towards a user's download limit, much like the Telstra GameArena service for the PC? Although we won't be holding our breath, this is certainly a viable move for the future and you can be sure that we'll be actively fighting to have it considered. Finally, if any fellow Aussies feel like having their asses handed to them in a lag-free environment, add the gamertag "AsherMoses" to your "friends" lists and I'll see you online!

Miscellaneous Statistics*

- > Xbox Live has more than 350K subscribers signed up for the service, making it the fastest broadband-only application to reach record numbers this fast.
- > Xbox Live players have played more than 15.7 million hours, totaling more than 1,800 consecutive years of gameplay.
- > Xbox Live players average more than 3 million game sessions a week.
- > 82 percent of Xbox Live gamers choose downloadable content as the most desired feature on Xbox Live.
- > There were more than 172,000 MechAssault downloads in the first week of availability.
- > Xbox Live Starter Kits have outsold the number of PlayStation 2 Network Adapters Sony sold in their first three months by nearly 44 percent.
- > The Xbox version of Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon from UbiSoft has sold 35 percent more copies than the PlayStation 2 version.

*Based on the US Xbox Live service

PlayStation 2 Network Entertainment - Hyper Playtest coming soon!

Australian gamers will be able to take their PlayStation 2 console online on October 10, 2003. The PS2 Network Adaptor add-on will come bundled with a copy of Hardware Online Arena, a multiplayer arcade combat game, and will retail for \$69.95.

The pack will also include the Network Access Disc (NAD) which provides all the information needed to equip gamers for the PS2 online including simplified connection set-ups for seven of the major Australian ISPs and an instructional video on how to get connected. Along with the Network Adaptor and NAD, consumers will need a broadband connection and a memory card to take their PlayStation 2 online.

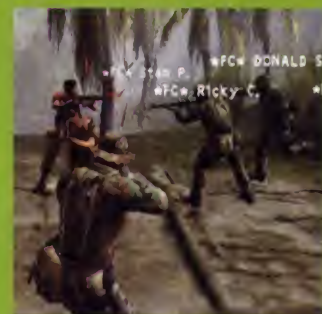
There are already 20 games either released or planned for release by the end of the year, including SOCOM: US Navy Seals, Twisted Metal Black Online, Medal of Honor: Rising Sun, Everquest and Tony Hawk's Underground. Next issue we'll be able to bring you some hands-on impressions of the PlayStation 2 Network Entertainment service, so sit tight!



Destruction Derby Arena



Everquest Online Adventures



Socom: US Navy Seals

WinWinWin >>

Entries close November 5th

Win an AIRSTYLE controller for PS2!

>> There's nothing better than freeballing... er, we mean playing console games with wireless controllers! Well, same thing really. You feel free, comfortable and in more control than you would be otherwise. Airstyle have a funky new wireless controller for the PS2 that is one of the better ones we've come across in our gaming adventures — it's also compatible with the original PlayStation too. We have 10 of these cool controllers to giveaway to some lucky readers, so to be in with a chance to win, just answer the following question:

10
UP FOR
GRABS!



❧ If the AirStyle had a different name, what should it be?

Put your creative answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address, and send it to: **Stylin' Prizes, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

Win Colin McRae Rally 04 for Xbox!

>> We knew they'd get their groove back. Colin McRae Rally is once again the rally game of choice! We have 5 copies of the slick Xbox version to give away to some lucky readers, so if you fancy the odd powerslide, you may want to hurry up and enter.

To be in with a chance to win, just answer the following question:

❧ What is Colin McRae's rally car?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address, and send it to: **Rally Ho!, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

5
COPIES
UP FOR
GRABS!

04
colin mcrae rally



Terms & Conditions: Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2. Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3. Entry is by mail only. 4. Competition begins 9am September 30 and entries close at 6pm November 5. 5. In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 6. The winner will be drawn at 9am November 6 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 7. Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 8. The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 9. The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the February issue of Hyper on sale January 7, 2004. 10. 10 winners will each receive an Airstyle PS2 controller valued at RRP\$89.95. 5 winners will receive Colin McRae Rally 04 for Xbox valued at RRP\$99.95. Total prize value is \$1329.95. 11. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.





Tom Clancy's GHOST RECON™ ISLAND THUNDER™



XBOX'S BEST WAR GAME*

Official Xbox Magazine UK - APRIL 2003
 "the best Live-enabled game"

Xbox World:
 "Island Thunder should, no, WILL be
 one of this year's best online games.
 Quote us on that"

-  Engage in combat down gritty urban streets, in dense jungles, and across lush mountainsides
-  Join intense multiplayer battles on 12 dedicated maps, including new desert terrain and 4 fan favorites from Ghost Recon™
-  Get access to exclusive downloadable content with Xbox Live™
-  Prove your strength & skill on Xbox Live™ with real-time stats tracking & enhanced game match-making features



MA15+

Ubi Soft



* Xbox Game UK April 2003



BIONICLE

MASK OF THE LIGHT



A HERO WILL

FULFIL THE PROPHECY ON DVD



Buena Vista
Home Entertainment

LEGO, the LEGO logo, BIONICLE and Mask Of Light are trademarks of the LEGO group.

BIONICLE™ OF LIGHT MOVIE

PG

PARENTAL GUIDANCE
RECOMMENDED FOR
PERSONS UNDER 15 YEARS
ADULT THEMES, LOW LEVEL VIOLENCE



BE REVEALED

D & VIDEO 17 OCTOBER



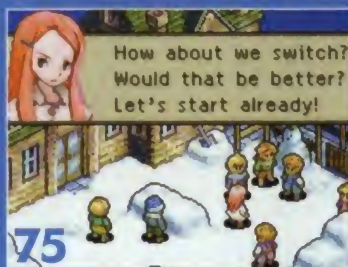
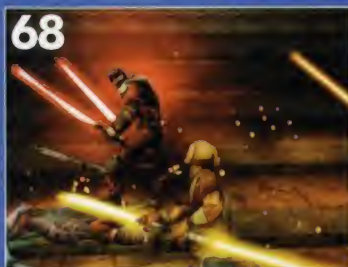


48 JAK II: RENEGADE

It seems Naughty Dog learnt a few new tricks...



Reviews >>



REVIEW INDEX

PS2

- 48 Jak II: Renegade
- 52 The Great Escape
- 54 Warhammer 40k: Firewarrior
- 56 Breath of Fire V:
- 58 Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown
- 60 Alter Echo
- 72 Seek & Destroy
- 72 Gregory Horror Show

XBOX

- 62 Colin McRae Rally 04
- 64 Pirates of the Caribbean
- 66 AFL Live 2004

PC

- 68 Star Wars: Jedi Academy
- 70 Madden 2004
- 72 Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of World War II

GAME BOY ADVANCE

- 74 Super Mario Advance 4
- 74 Pokémon Pinball: Ruby & Sapphire
- 75 Final Fantasy Tactics Advance

Game Theory

DANIEL STAINES



>>A few months ago, in this very column, I expressed a strong desire to see gaming evolve beyond traditional design boundaries and push the envelope in terms of creative content. Game developers should take inspiration from other artistic mediums, I said. We should be playing games that are the electronic

equivalent of surrealist visual art and incomprehensible European cinema. Enough conformity to standard design tableaux, I said – it's time to get creative.

As you're probably aware, this particular desire is hardly an original one. Indeed, there is a veritable society of gaming intelligentsia wholly devoted to its realisation. However, what is interesting about this group – and, incidentally, old-school gamers along with them – is the vehement hatred a lot of them often express for the rising popularity of gaming as a whole. Like pretty much every counter-cultural clique in existence, they like nothing better than to bemoan the popularisation of their favourite medium, usually arguing that the influx of "mainstream" punters waters down developer creativity and encourages production-line game design.

And hey, that's probably true – if gamers become more "average", then games themselves will reflect that and become more "average" too. The problem with this opinion, however, is that it's oppositional to fomenting creative game design of the type described above. See, if a truly alternative game development scene ever becomes a reality, then it necessarily has to be large enough to sustain itself economically – and the only way that's going to happen is if mainstream gaming becomes more popular.

Imagine the games market is a pie and picture any potential alternative scene as a small piece of that pie. By definition, any alternative scene must always remain relatively miniscule, therefore the only way such a "piece" can become more profitable is for the "pie" itself to become larger. So, the ratio of alternative-to-mainstream gamers might remain constant, but the potential profit the alternative scene represents would grow relative to the size of the entire market. It thus seems reasonable to suggest that a viable alternative games scene requires more people playing games generally – i.e., gaming must become more "mainstream".

Of course, these theories I'm espousing are nothing if not pure speculation. If anyone out there would care to further educate me on the dynamics of free-market economics in relation to alternative culture, then drop me a line at the email address supplied.

Until next month...

daniels@next.com.au

HYPER CREW TOP 5 GAMES

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Championship Manager 4 – PC
"Southampton at home, Chelsea at the office..."
2. Final Fantasy Tactics Advance – GBA SP
3. Metroid Fusion – GBA SP
4. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2
5. Streets of Rage 2 – Megadrive

Frank Dry – Reviewer

1. Project Gotham Racing 2 – Xbox
"Thank you Hyper for having this at the 10th birthday party!"
2. Top Spin – Xbox
3. Super Smash Bros Melee – GCN
4. Grand Theft Auto III – PS2
5. Temple of Elemental Evil – PC

Malcolm Campbell – Art

1. Prince of Persia – PS2
"Rewind!"
2. Championship Manager 4 – PC
3. Dog's Life – PS2
4. Jak II: Renegade – PS2
5. Call of Duty demo – PC

Jackson Gothe-Snape – Reviewer

1. Pro Evolution Soccer 3 – PS2
"I think I've got Hikikomori."
2. Project Gotham Racing 2 – Xbox
3. Top Spin – Xbox
4. Beyond Good & Evil – PS2
5. Colin McRae Rally 04 – Xbox

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!



Jak's been using "Beefcake" powder



Hey, the grass IS greener on this side!



Jak enjoys the gun's vibrations...

PS2 CATEGORY: Action/Platformer >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: SCEE >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: PG >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Jak II: Renegade



DANIEL WILKS is also our renegade reviewer.

It's a well-known fact that every sequel that includes the number 2 in the title should be followed by the words, "Electric Boogaloo". As far as we know it's actually a law in some countries, but we're willing to let it slide this one time due to Jak II being so good. Set immediately after the events of *The Precursor Legacy*, *Renegade* sets the scene with a great cutscene of Jak, Daxter and their compatriots, fresh from defeating Gol and Maya, finally ready to activate the strange Precursor device built up over the course of the game. Unfortunately for our heroes, the artefact is actually a portal through which our heroes are pulled and dumped unceremoniously in a strange and unfriendly city. To make matters worse, as soon as he lands, Jak is carted off to prison and

experimented on for two years. Finally, after appearing to fail the "Dark Warrior" experiment, Jak is rescued by the loyal Daxter but instead of escaping the city or looking for some way home, Jak only has two things on his mind - revenge on the city and the death of Baron Praxis, the man responsible for his imprisonment and torture.

JAK OF ALL TRADES

It's obvious from this opening slab of plot that *Jak II* is a somewhat different game to the first. The tone is darker and far more adult, the enemies are far more detestable and the technology is far more advanced than the mostly wind-powered novelties seen in the first game. The approach to narrative has also changed - no longer are you running about collecting trinkets for no readily apparent reason or

running stupid errands for people. Now every mission advances the narrative, rewarding the player with a little more plot in the form of a cutscene. According to developer, Naughty Dog, the game features around 70 minutes of FMV. That's nearly enough for a feature film but don't worry, they haven't sacrificed any gameplay. If anything they've made it more compelling and fast paced than the first with the inclusion of guns and more emphasis on combat.

Much like the first game, all action in *Jak II* is based around a hub world where all missions are received, only this time it is lot bigger (around 24x bigger to be precise) and teeming with life. Aside from the NPC characters that dole out missions, the hub city is full of characters, from the average Joe on the street, numerous hover cars and

bikes as well as omnipresent Crimson Guard, the elite and fascist troops of the not so good Baron, constantly on the lookout for any excuse for a good old fashioned beat-down. Aside from being a graphical marvel, exploring the hub is really a game unto itself - knowing how to get around town and avoid the eagle eye of the authorities is vital to the successful completion of the game. Numerous massive levels branch off the hub





"I'm not in the title?!"



"You can have his arms, I'll have the legs"



It's a blau-fest!



IT'S LUCKY THAT THE GAME IS SO COMPELLING BECAUSE THE AUTO-SAVE POINTS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN

world, most of which are visited multiple times as new abilities or missions are unlocked.

BLAK JAK

Aside from standard platforming, *Jak II: Renegade* features a number of other game styles ranging from racing to rails shooting, ensuring that you'll never get bored. Each mission offers up a great amount of variety, so you may go from speeding around the city on a bike delivering some black-market goods, to playing backup to a hunter, to blowing up mines with a hoverboard and some primed explosives, to sitting in a gun turret taking out the Baron's troops all in the space of an hour. The only real common element between the missions is that they are all sometimes painfully difficult. In a good way. Instead of wanting to

break your controller in frustration or trying to kick in the picture tube of your television, the high difficulty level of the majority of the missions makes you grit your teeth and hunker down for the long-haul with the determination that you're going to beat the game if it's the last thing you ever do. It's lucky that the game is so compelling because the auto-save points in the levels are pretty few and far between so you'll find yourself playing through the same area multiple times before managing to make it to the next save point.

Aside from being a good plot kicker, the Dark Warrior project Jak was subjected to in the opening has quite a large impact on play, as Jak can now turn into what can only be described as a light blue "Hulkified" version of himself for short periods

of time. When transformed into the Dark Warrior form, Jak is pretty much invulnerable, his hand-to-hand attacks do far more damage than usual and his very presence does damage to all surrounding enemies. What's more, Dark Jak also has access to a number of special area of effect attacks (purchased from an oracle for ever increasing amounts of Metal Head skulls).

Although the Dark Jak form is cool to play around with, probably the greatest thing about its inclusion is you are not forced to use it at any stage of the game. You can safely play through the whole game without ever having to resort to using the form (aside from the brief tutorial missions for the special attacks). The same goes for nearly every other item or ability in the

!!! Don't forget Ratchet & Clank 2, coming soon!



CAR JAK

Taking a leaf out of the *GTA* book, *Jak II: Renegade* encourages players to steal vehicles to get around the city. Stealing a hover car or bike is a simple matter of hitting the triangle button when underneath the vehicle and hoping that there are no troops looking at the time. Handling and speed varies between some vehicles so experimentation is necessary to know which vehicles are good for which missions.



Jak learns some funky beard sculpture



Now, which way was it to Hyper HQ?



Jak let's himself go in his later years



MINI-GAMES

Aside from the main missions, Jak II features a number of mini-games the player can either unlock or stumble upon. Unlockable mini-games include stadium racing with any of the hover vehicles, hoverboard parks and shooting galleries (the type with guns, not heroin). There are also a number of timed missions hidden throughout the hub city, most of which take the form of finding a certain number of items before the timer runs out. Whilst not nearly as deep as the main game, these mini-games offer a good deal of replayability as the draw of completing every challenge in the game is a hard one to resist.

game - aside from some very specific missions where it is explicitly stated that you need to use the piece of equipment it's up to you how and where they are used.

The hoverboard is an excellent example of this approach. Due to the abilities attributed to the board - the ability to grind rails and air off quarter-pipes - there are a couple of specific hoverboard missions but instead of simply giving Jak access to the board during those stages, he has it at all times and can use it at any time he wants, revisiting stages already completed to explore sections that can only be reached using the board or simply using it as a fast and fun mode of transport.

JAK'S A RIPPER

Jak II looks amazing. It's as simple as that. When people first saw Jak and Dexter, they marvelled at how smooth the animations ran, how high-res the character models were and how big the levels were considering there were no load times. Jak II takes everything that made The Precursor Legacy a technological wonder and improves on it. Whereas the original game

features characters with around 3000 polygons, Jak II features up to 15000 and the difference is easily noticed. Jak and Dexter look absolutely stunning with smooth curves and fine detail, as do the numerous NPCs. As far as the size of the levels go, it feels like you could fit most of the levels of the original game into one of the levels in Renegade, It's enormous. Jak II also features some excellent voice acting and sound effects to compliment the superb graphics. In keeping with the tone of the game the voice acting is a good deal more mature in content. The only real down point to the audio is the soundtrack itself, which comes across as a little too run of the mill to be truly memorable.

Jak II: Renegade is an astounding achievement, taking everything that was great about the original and stretching it to within an inch of it's life to create a massive sprawling adventure that literally contains a little something for everyone. With any luck Naughty Dog will start development of Jak III sometime soon - we can't wait to see what they'll surprise us with next. <<



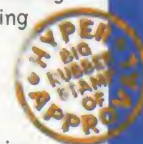
PLUS: Huge areas to explore, action always varies, challenging.

MINUS: Painfully hard at times, light on the save points.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	86	93

OVERALL

91



Another quality Naughty Dog title to cheer us all up.

SONY



With the new multi-format* DVD Burner, compatibility is no longer a problem.

By supporting the popular DVD formats (± R/RW) in a single drive, Sony gives you flexibility no matter what the task at hand. Turn your home movies into DVDs, make custom CDs, and save your DVD data at speeds up to 4X. Complete with its own software, it's easy to see why the DRU-510A is the perfect match for any home or office set up. Visit us at www.sony.com.au or call 1300 13 SONY (7669)

*Supports DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+R, DVD+RW, CD-R and CD-RW recording



© 2004 Sony Electronics Inc.



Luckily I brought these crates with me



GTA: Escape City



Tanks for trying to escape

>>PS2 XBOX PC CATEGORY: Stealth/Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: SCI >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

The Great Escape

DANIEL STAINES starts plotting his escape from Hyper HQ.

Efore it became a videogame, *The Great Escape* was an action movie about a ragtag group of lovable Allied soldiers escaping from a Nazi P.O.W. camp. Since it was made approximately forty years ago, it is entirely likely that nobody reading this has actually seen this movie or heard of any of the Nazi-punching, motorcycle-riding daredevils that starred in it. So why, one must wonder, did Gotham Games go to all the trouble acquiring the license? Excitable press releases and promotional websites have assured us that one of the playable characters in *The Great Escape* looks exactly like Steve McQueen. And hey, that'd be really good if any gamer actually knew what Steve McQueen looks like. All that I know about him is that his name makes him sound like a cross-dressing

mascot for a multinational fast-food company.

PEEP THROUGH THE KEYHOLE
So, we've established that the license behind this means very little to almost every gamer on the planet — that's unfortunate news for Gotham Games. It's unfortunate because, without the power of a drawcard movie tie-in to back it up, *The Great Escape* is nothing more than a sub-standard stealth-action game with very few redeeming features to speak of. Probably because it's based on the same engine, the game feels and plays a lot like lo's more successful stealth 'em up, *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*. Both games are viewed from the third person perspective; both games involve dodging patrolling guards to reach mission objectives; both games sport the

same "peep through the keyhole" feature; both games have similarly erratic enemy AI. The key difference between *Hitman 2* and *The Great Escape* — the difference that separates the fun from the frustrating — is this: freedom.

It's ironic, really, that a game called *The Great Escape* is so fastidiously linear and devoid of opportunity for player expression, but facts are facts: this game lacks freedom. It lacks the freedom for players to express themselves creatively, the freedom to diverge off the beaten path ... the freedom to something — ANYTHING — other than what has been explicitly ordained by the designers. For most of the game, your mission objectives will consist of finding item A and getting it to point B by taking route C. This wouldn't be particularly tedious if there were

other ways to get A to B other than C, but there isn't. There's always one path and one way to do things. Sneak past this guard, open this door and don't even think about doing anything differently because you'll just get caught and have to do it all over again. What fun.

And just while we're talking about getting caught by the guards, it bears mentioning that any stuff-up on your part will inevitably result in a reload. Yes,





I set the timer for about... whoops



Oops, wrong turn.



Where can I ditch this stupid hat?



SNEAK PAST THIS GUARD, OPEN THIS DOOR AND **DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT DOING ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY**

there's a punch button and your character has an energy bar, but that's really just for show because punching a guard achieves absolutely nothing whatsoever. If the Nazis see you, your man will either give up or just get gunned down where he stands. Of course, this rule doesn't apply on the "action" levels, where your main objective is to simply shoot every person you can see. Don't get excited by that description, though. While shooting Nazis is generally a lot of fun in other games, it's let down horribly here by an absurd auto-aim system and ridiculous spawn patterns. I don't know about you, but I find it a mite annoying when enemies constantly respawn and fill my back with lead before I can even think about drawing a weapon.

HITLER'S CRONIES

The weapons, by the way, are all authentic recreations of Nazi-era firearms. You've got your Lugers and bolt-action sniper rifles and they even come replete with frustratingly long load-times. This kind of thing is great for authenticity values, but is unfortunately marred by the almost ridiculous absence of any Nazi regalia whatsoever. Why bother putting in real weapons and giving them to appropriately dressed guards in German accents while leaving out everything else that would identify them as Hitler's cronies? This lack of swastikas and other paraphernalia associated with Uncle Adolf mightn't sound like much, but it really does dampen the whole atmosphere The Great Escape is

!!! The Great Escape is actually an excellent film – go rent it if you can!

trying to create. We're escaping from Nazis here, damn it. That means armbands and Hitler paintings and big wall hangings a la Wolfenstein. Anything else just seems ... well, cheap.

Which, conveniently enough, is precisely the impression one gets from The Great Escape as a whole – cheapness. The graphics engine is impressive enough, the controls are fine and the game can be enjoyable in some places, but it all ultimately feels like the poor man's excuse for a good stealth-action game. Even if you do know who Steve McQueen is, it's still unlikely you'll find this anything other than mediocre. <<



PLUS: Can be entertaining, Steve McQueen?

MINUS: Linear, frustrating action, feels inauthentic.

VISUALS 75 SOUND 79 GAMEPLAY 60

OVERALL
61

Escape! Escape while you still can!



Quake 3, the lost levels



Gotta watch those sand storms



Taste my Mechano gun, creep!

>>PS2 PC CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: THQ >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Warhammer 40K: Fire Warrior

DANIEL WILKS rolls a six on his fanboy test and remains in play

Remember back when you were at school, there was always that kid who spent all his money buying miniatures, obsessively painting them, arguing with everyone who would listen as to the merits of the Imperial Rhino tank and spending their weekends hunched over tables waging imaginary wars with fantastical armies? Chances are that if you don't remember that kid, you were that kid. Whatever the case, you've probably heard of Warhammer 40k, one of the most popular tabletop board games, detailing the never-ending struggle for dominance in the 41st century.

TECHNO-GOTHIC MAJESTY

Throughout the history of the game the struggle has revolved around five opposing forces, the fascist Human Imperium, the ancient and

powerful Eldar, the Orks (actually a form of hyper-evolved, semi-sentient fungus), alien xenomorphic Tyrandis and the all-consuming forces of Chaos. There are literally tomes of information about these various sides, not simply detailing unit abilities, statistics and costs but legends, stories and vastly detailed histories as well. With this in mind, the choice to opt for a newly developed and relatively unknown race as the game's protagonists is an odd one.

Players take the role of a Tau Fire Warrior, a military member of a young but highly advanced race, usually content to simply stay in its remote and largely unexplored quadrant of space. The generally peaceful Tau are expansionists at heart, sending out colonising parties to surrounding planets offering trade deals and citizenship

rights to any sentient creatures found there. Unfortunately the Imperium, lead by the seemingly immortal and decidedly unfriendly Emperor have their eye on the sector of space, and not being as egalitarian as the Tau, will not settle for anything less than their complete subjugation, going so far as kidnapping one of the Tau Elders who lead the race and using him as a bargaining chip in the burgeoning war. As a highly trained, well equipped and tough as nails Fire Warrior, it's up to the player to get the elder back, kick some human tush and generally save the day. Whilst the overall plot lacks the techno-gothic majesty that is the trademark of the Warhammer 40k universe, no one can argue that it's not a great excuse for action.

For the most part, Fire Warrior is a decidedly old school FPS with some

nice little touches that set it apart from the rest of the crowd. The majority of the action centres around the player making their way through the levels, undertaking a series of area related objectives such as holding an area so a demolitions expert can blow up a barricade or finding the blue key. If that ain't old school, we don't know what is. In a couple of nice tips of the hat to Halo, the Fire warrior comes equipped with a regenerating force-field and can only carry two weapons at any given time. Limiting the weapons at any available time adds a nice tactical edge to the game as each different weapon has very different characteristics in both primary and secondary fire modes. The controls are nice and responsive, perfect for both the single player and multiplayer modes. Aside from featuring up to



ARTIFICIAL IDIOCY

Although excellent for the most part of the game, the AI in Fire Warrior can best be described as erratic. The early levels showcase the intelligence of the AI well as they scurry behind cover, only popping out to shoot when you're reloading or trying to set up converging lines of fire to quickly whittle away at your shield. Unfortunately in about one of every five encounters the enemy will act about as smart as a lobotomised hillbilly, wandering in circles, ignoring the armoured behemoth in front of them, strolling off the sides of cliffs or bridges or simply staring vacantly into middle distance.



SEVERUS Establish a perimeter around the pit. They must not pass!

A perimeter around the survivors, create!



Worst. Gun design. Ever.



Cease fire!

This speed gun is useless in a firefight anyway



WARFARE ON DESERT PLANETS OR INSIDE DERELICT SPACECRAFT ISN'T A PARTICULARLY GLAMOROUS JOB

four-player split-screen action, Fire Warrior is also online compatible.

LIKE ANGRY MOSQUITOES

Fire Warrior's biggest asset and biggest flaw are one and the same - the narrow level design. The frequently tight corridors and trenches ooze with character and well reflect the war going on all around as explosions frequently send up clouds of dust and stray shots fly overhead like angry mosquitoes. The tightness of the levels allow for the frequent and well scripted events (the first time a Commissar charges out of hiding at you with his Chainsword held high is quite a terrifying experience) but the levels never really feel too small due to a clever cosmetic trick. Although the playable area of the level may be limited to a single track only slightly wider than the Tau

warrior's shoulders, the developers have wisely decided to include a very busy but non-interactive environment. Near constant battles seem to rage just out of range making it feel as though you're not alone, an illusion helped along by the frequent radio updates given to the player by their commanding officer or other warriors. The tightness of the levels also gives them a real sense of urgency and momentum. Unfortunately, after about the second level this sense of urgency transforms from an adrenalin rush to feeling as though you've suddenly had a ring implanted in your nose and you're being rudely lead around by it.

The proprietary engine driving Fire Warrior is a very functional and sometimes quite spectacular piece of

code, pumping out a good, stable framerate throughout the various levels. Unfortunately many of the levels and characters look quite drab but such is the nature of the beast - warfare on desert planets or inside

!!! Rumour has it THQ decided on the Tau race because the Imperium were too fascist.

derelict spacecraft isn't a particularly glamorous job. Likewise the sound effects are very functional if somewhat unspectacular, though

kudos must go to the developer's for opting not to include and in-game soundtrack, rather opting to focus on the gunfire and frequent radio chatter. The newest game in the 40k franchise isn't necessarily going to do as the title suggests and set the world on fire but it's not a game that should be readily dismissed either, as Fire Warrior delivers some excellent, if sometimes formulaic action. <<<



PLUS: Good weapons, Old school.

MINUS: Er... Old school, Erratic AI.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
80 76 81

OVERALL
81

Fire Warrior offers great old school shooting action



Get you dead, evil robot!



Get you dead, evil demon!



Hey guys, we must rescue these crates!

PS2 CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter

DANIEL WILKS has a manic depressive game experience...

In the past many reviewers have scorned the Breath of Fire series as being too traditional and too conventional to be anything more than just another series of console RPGs. If someone levels that same complaint against Dragon Quarter you know one thing - they haven't actually played the game. The fifth game in the Breath of Fire series is a massive change of pace from the previous titles in nearly every way. Gone is the light-hearted approach of the earlier games, replaced instead with an intensely personal story of a boy fighting against a power that will eventually destroy him and a winged girl that cannot survive the stifling subterranean world of "Sheldar". Gone is the traditional above ground, highly populated world - BoF: Dragon Quarter is entirely subterranean and the clusters of hovels called towns are few and far between. Gone is the staid

and rather dull combat system - in its place is one of the best console RPG fighting systems ever. If you get the feeling that Dragon Quarter is something new, you'd be right.

HUNG, DRAWN AND QUARTERED...

The thing that really makes Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter stand out from the rest of the console RPG pack is the innovative and wonderfully playable combat system. There is a lot of combat in BoF but unlike many other RPG series, you'll never tire of the battles for a number of reasons. For a start the player is able to see all of the monsters in the surrounding area at all time - no more annoying random encounters. This leads to the next innovation - bait and traps. Throughout the game, players can pick up different baits and/or traps, both of which can be used before

combat occurs to make things tactically interesting - if you don't want to fight a monster you can lay some bait and sneak by whilst it's eating or if you want to sway the balance of combat you can seed the potential battleground with traps. When the player actually enters combat, the perspective switches from third person to an overhead view, giving you a good view of the surrounding area. Each character in combat has a certain number of AP's (Action Points) that can be spent on movement and attacks. Each character also has access to three tiers of attack; each tier featuring three different attacks. Certain attacks can be strung together in arcade style combos with well-timed button presses - you'll never coast through any of these battles, that's for sure. You can't afford to, as anything less than total concentration will get you dead.

GET YOU DEAD. BLAU!

Actually, playing the game for the first time will get you dead. And the second time. And probably the third and fourth times as well. Not because it's difficult - death is an integral and bizarrely interesting part of the game. Not too far into the game (though you will have probably died at least once by then - more on that in a second) you'll pick up a dragon themed super power for your main character. This power is, well, for want of a better word, very powerful, allowing you to kill most boss monsters with little effort and even skip entire level's worth of battles. Unfortunately the power has a slight downside - once you have it the character gets a little percentage meter that steadily creeps up - slowly when the power is inactive but much faster when active. When it reaches 100% you're dead. Finito. Kaput. Start again at the beginning.



Fruity goodness



I think I'll call you Spot



Let's start rock band instead



THE GREAT STEAM-PUNK AESTHETIC INJECTS A REAL SENSE OF HISTORY AND LIFE INTO OTHERWISE DRAB LEVELS

CAPCOM PHILHARMONIC

The approach to the soundtrack of *Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter* is perfectly in keeping with the rest of the game - it's interesting, a little quirky and works a treat. Instead of featuring voice acting, *Breath of Fire* opts for all conversations to be played out in text. The only time you'll hear voices is during combat, where Capcom has wisely decided to keep the Japanese language track. At first the lack of voice may seem a little strange but all it serves to do is focus the player's attention on the absolutely stunning orchestral soundtrack - it doesn't stray too far away from the standard RPG riffs but somehow manages to be as fresh and innovative as the rest of the game. The rest of the game's sound effects are delightfully old school, evoking memories of games long past. Wonderful stuff.

Here's where it gets interesting - when you die the player is given two options; restore or restart. Restore returns the character to the last save point minus the experience and items gained after the save but the scarcity of save points and their draconian use of save tokens (nearly impossible to find) means you won't be saving too often. The restart option is

!!! RPG fanatics will finally get their hands on FFX-2 just after Christmas...!

simultaneously the most frustrating and rewarding aspect of the game as it lets you start right back from the beginning of the game with all your experience, skills and dragon meter set back to zero. As the player gains in experience and skill their D-Rank increases, unlocking new areas, subquests and items to be found and explored. The player's initial D-Rank is 1/8192 and can go all the way up to the nearly impossible to attain

Dragon Quarter, so you know there's a lot to unlock and see. Unfortunately if you don't have the patience of a saint you'll probably snap the DVD in half before reaping the rewards of this revolutionary yet incredibly frustrating system.

Dragon Quarter is easily one of the most attractive console RPGs to come along in recent memory, featuring some great anime inspired characters, sparse yet strangely attractive settings, spectacular special effects and wonderful animation. Although the entire game is literally nothing more than a lengthy dungeon bash, the levels never end up looking dull, as the great steam-punk aesthetic injects a real sense of history and life into the otherwise drab levels - the wonderfully vibrant characters also help to break up the monotony well. <<



PLUS: Awesome soundtrack, great battle system, rewarding replays.

MINUS: Counter intuitive, frustrating replays.

VISUALS 84 SOUND 92 GAMEPLAY 86

OVERALL
84

A rewarding game with a great combat system.



Fighting with the neighbours again



Have at you with my two-legged horse



I learnt this move from Jamie Oliver. Slice & Dice!

>>PS2

CATEGORY: Strategy/RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Defender of the Crown

DANIEL STAINES slips on his green tights... again.

By way of an introduction to this review, I'd like to offer a word of advice to any and all game developers thinking about producing future titles based on the adventures of Robin Hood and his band of so-called Merry Men: DON'T DO IT. Nothing says "punch me before I show you my collection of plastic swords and Renaissance fair flyers" more than a fondness for Robin Hood. As such, any game that features this thieving fancy-lad as its central protagonist — like, say, Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown — has the unfortunate side-effect of making anyone who plays it feel like a total fruitcake.

ALMOST PERFECTLY REPLICATED "I'm Robin Hood," you think to yourself while watching Defender of the Crown's criminally over-acted introduction movie. "I wear tights of

varying colours and hats with feathers sticking out the top. I spend my time in the forest with an all-male band of thieves and murderers. I am also the subject of a movie starring Kevin Costner. I like being this character because..."

And that, of course, is where you stop. There aren't any good reasons to enjoy being Robin Hood because Robin Hood is a poncy little taff with no redeeming features whatsoever. Given this fact, one could be forgiven for immediately thinking that Defender of the Crown (hereafter referred to as DC) is not something worthy of the discerning consumer's precious gaming hours. This is what most of us here at Hyper thought and — guess what? — we were completely wrong. Just like the original C64 and Amiga versions, DC is a very good game indeed and definitively shows that there isn't

some kind of immutable universal law dictating that all remakes of fondly remembered classics must invariably be utter shite.

In fact, it is arguable that this new version of Cinemaware's classic succeeds precisely because its underlying game mechanics are fundamentally identical to those featured in its famous predecessor. At its core, DC is essentially a strategy-focused interactive-narrative tied together by a collection of medieval style mini-games. The goal is to participate in these mini-games and use the money gained therein to amass an army capable of overrunning England and freeing it from the villainous usurper, Prince John. There are various ways to achieve this end, but most of them boil down to the essential task of taking enough land to sustain an economy strong enough to conduct

large-scale sieges on enemy strongholds. This intuitive and highly addictive formula is what made the original DC such a success and — happily — it has been almost perfectly replicated here.

THERE ARE MULTIPLE ENDINGS

Or is it so happily? One of the most interesting things about DC from a critical perspective is the fact that the game's best qualities tend to be inextricably tied to its most annoying flaws and we'd contend this is primarily because it is such a faithful recreation of the classic. Every single one of the five mini-games available suffers from a brand of flaws that were endemic to games back in the 80s and are now entirely absent from most modern titles. The joust and siege components both rely on an annoying button-bashing mechanic that went out of style when the Commodore 64,



Arrow, arrow, arrow... what's all this then?

"I am a tea-pot short and stout..."

We must rescue Princess Peach from the castle



EACH OF THE GAME'S INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS CONSPIRE TOGETHER TO KEEP YOU WANTING MORE

HAVE AT THEE!

Easily the best part of the entire game, jousting sees two armoured men on fast horsies charging at each other with big pointy sticks. The aim is to hit your opponent with your pointy stick so hard that it actually breaks in half. Matches go to three points, with body shots garnering one point, headshots two and an instant win is awarded if anyone is knocked off their stallion. They actually did this kind of thing in medieval England, you know. No wonder modern-day Poms are so barmy.

!!! Even though the film is set in medieval England, Kevin Costner's Robin Hood spoke with a thick American accent. What an untalented hack.

stopped appearing on store shelves, while the archery and sword-fighting sections are similarly peppered with irritating oversights and design anachronisms. And what about those battles! Dear god, whose idea was it to make battling an enemy army a tactically bereft and ultimately tedious exercise in straightforward number-crunching? It absolutely reeks of wasted potential.

It's probably about now that you are wondering why — with all these very irritating problems — DC still manages to garner the very respectable score you can see accompanying this review. To be perfectly honest, the simple reason is that this is not a game that can be assessed merely by appraising the sum of its constituent parts. This is a game that must be played and experienced as an entirety, for it is precisely the interplay between its

individual elements that makes DC such an enjoyably addictive title. Yeah, all the mini-games are quite flawed when considered individually, but combined they form a greater, more engaging whole underpinned by the classic strategic goal of perpetual conquest. Playing DC is an irritating experience, certainly, but it is also highly rewarding as each of the game's individual components conspire together to keep you wanting more.

And that's a bit of a shame too, because DC is a game that ends quite quickly. We managed to finish it in less than two days, and although there are multiple endings, there really isn't that much to make you want to come back for another sitting. We like this version because we like the original. It's just a pity that Cinemaware didn't improve on their classic formula to any significant extent... <<<



PLUS: Incredibly addictive gameplay. Just like the original.

MINUS: Just like the original. Robin Hood sucks.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
80 75 79

OVERALL

80

Many missed opportunities, but a fine remake overall.



Flashing Sword



Pounce Slap(8) + Buzzsaw + Flashing Sword



Too bad if you hate purple, I guess



Then don't use them dork...



Kill the purple monsters of purple land

>>XBOX P52

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: THQ >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Alter Echo

DANIEL WILKS peers into a melted Fisher-Price world...

It's some time in the future and psychics with special powers are capable of forming a special substance named plast into anything they desire; weapons, spaceships, anything. The most powerful of these Shapers, a man named Paavo has discovered a way of increasing the power and malleability of Plast, creating a new substance dubbed "Echoplast". Of course Paavo becomes mad with newly acquired power and sets about doing what evil villains do - trying to conquer the universe. Players take the role of Nevin, a rookie Shaper being sent to find Paavo. Shot down in flight, Nevin is rescued by a mysterious voice that reveals itself to be the now sentient Echoplast. Echo, as the being calls itself needs a hero to save it from the evil Paavo and has chosen Nevin. Equipped with a special suit made

entirely of Echoplast and armed with a sword, Nevin must fight hordes of bad-guys, defeat Paavo and save humanity.

WHAT, NO DRUNKEN STYLE?

Not a bad plot in all but you'll forget about it soon after beginning the game as you become hooked on the great combat system and intricate, lengthy combos. Initially armed only with a sword, Nevin gains access to two other forms during the game - Gun and Stealth. The basic Sword form is good for general movement and melee combat and is the only one capable of blocking attacks and using special attacks. The Gun form is slow moving and incapable of jumping but can use long distance attacks and special gun points to become a gun emplacement, firing faster, more powerful shots. The Stealth form is a little misleading,

Rather than being a typical sneaker, the Stealth form is capable of leaping attacks and long ranged tongue attacks, can walk up certain walls and can even turn invisible for a short amount of time. Although Nevin starts with a relatively small number of attacks in his arsenal, killing enemies gains our hero plasm (the currency of the title), which can be later spent to increase health and buy new weapons or attacks. Much like Devil May Cry, Alter Echo features a combo system that counts the number of hits and kills in a string, rewarding the player with more plasm the more intricate/long the combos become.

Aside from the large array of combos, Nevin is also capable of warping time for a short amount of time - don't worry though - its not another game with hastily implemented bullet-time. Instead of

simply slowing down time for a short amount of time, Nevin's time dilation power allows him to pull off a variety of one-hit kills on most enemies. Achieving these effects require the player to maneuver around a timing puzzle, avoiding obstacles and joining as many enemies as possible. The puzzle nature of the special attack not only makes it fun but also stops the attack from becoming overly powerful and thus game breaking. Although the lion's share of gameplay is taken up with beating seven shades of crap out of enemies, every now and then Nevin will be forced to use various nodes to manipulate the environment, usually to create a bridge or free an area from Paavo's control. Accessing the nodes drops the player into a timing game much like the time dilation attack. The combination of



If only Nicky were here. Sob!



I hope that brick wall is sturdy



Nothing like a gentle country drive

XBOX PS2 CATEGORY: Rally Sim >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Codemasters >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Colin McRae Rally 04

ELIOT FISH welcomes the champ back home.

It's no secret that we didn't think much of Colin McRae Rally 3. In fact, most of the world didn't like it. It was undercooked and lacking in every respect other than the good old Colin McRae Rally physics engine which was as solid as ever. Well, we suspect Codemasters knew they'd screwed it up, because in no time at all they've followed up with Colin McRae Rally 04, and it's a major improvement on the last. Colin McRae Rally 04 is really what the last game should have been. Bet you'll be hearing that a few times.

HARDCORE COLIN JUNKIE
Perusing the menu reveals that the championship now allows you to race a variety of 4WD, 2WD and Group B rally cars from the 1980s, as opposed to just Colin's Ford Focus that we were bound to in the last

game in the series. Success in these full seasons will also unlock a variety of other very cool cars depending on the difficulty level you play at. Race through Spain, the UK, Greece, the USA, Japan, Sweden, Australia and Finland — pretty much what we expect these days from a Colin game.

The variety of surfaces to race on and weather conditions makes the racing a thrill as ever, although it feels as though that "Colin feel" has been lost to some degree. Whether it's just a case of the controls feeling a little less responsive, or if Codemasters have actually fiddled with the physics engine just a little too much, Colin McRae Rally 04 drives differently to other Colin games. It's not a bad thing, it's just different, and it will take a bit of time to get used to if you're a hardcore Colin junkie. Cars feel like

they float just that little bit more than we're used to and it certainly makes it slightly more difficult to be able to just jump in and play based on previous experience. What it does is force you to really concentrate and go into "the zone" in which you are sweating over every upcoming corner to ensure that you nail it every single time. As most people know, screw up once and you'll be losing valuable seconds that could win or lose you the whole Championship. And we care this time.

The Championship also now has a proper car set-up option and repair system where you can actually decide which repairs have priority between stages. These small touches help to make a Championship that much more engaging, and it's nice to see them return to the series. You also get a chance to test out new

parts, and if successful, win them for use in the rest of the Championship that's in progress.

SHOW THE WORLD
Colin McRae Rally 04 also features an Xbox Live option in the menu this time. The Live option is purely for uploading times as opposed to actually playing against other gamers online, but it's a welcome addition that does add value to your Colin experience if you're





Not exactly crowded with spectators...



That window washer did a crap job. Did you pay him?



Eat my dust, whoo-hoo-hoo!



SCREW UP ONCE AND YOU'LL BE LOSING VALUABLE SECONDS THAT COULD WIN OR LOSE YOU THE WHOLE CHAMPIONSHIP

competitive in nature and want to show the world who's best. Xbox also supports four-player splitscreen as opposed to just the two player option on PlayStation 2. We're seriously hoping that the inevitable PC version that comes out next year (it will, right Codemasters?) will have some online multiplayer options, instead of the horrid console-style options of Colin 3 on PC.

One particular gripe we have with Colin McRae Rally 04 is the

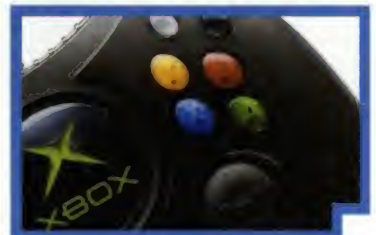
paltry selection of camera angles to race from. There's the chase cam, the sniffing tarmac cam and the driver's seat cam, but none are particularly fabulous to race from. What happened to everybody's favourite perspective, the exterior bonnet cam? Three angles just isn't really enough to satisfy serious gamers, and you may struggle to find one that feels comfortable to race from. Certainly,

!!! 04 should hopefully come to PC sometime next year.

the interior cam is the prettiest to look at (especially when it's raining and you get those funky droplet effects), but it's not very practical for negotiating the twists and turns of the track.

Colin McRae Rally 04 also allows you to set up your own custom rally for when you want to exclude those annoying countries or stages that you always hate having to play through, but mostly we'd imagine you'll be pretty happy with the collection of rallying on offer this time around.

Codemasters took the criticisms of the last game to heart (or at least it seems they did) and Colin McRae Rally 04 is a relieving return to form. Once again, Colin McRae Rally can claim to be the best rally game money can buy. <<



PLUS: Lots of stages, tweaking options, improved graphics.

MINUS: Lack of camera angles, lack of online multiplayer.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 91 89

OVERALL

89

Come and get some (more great rally action).





"Crap... Land ahoy!!"

Argh me leg!

Didn't they shoot Survivor here?

XBOX PC CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Pirates of the Caribbean

BRETT ROBINSON always gets around with a parrot on his shoulder.

Captain's Log. Seadate: 1858o81o. AAARRRR! Me trusty schooner Brazen Harlot set sail at o8oo. Aboard, 45 hearty seamen and enough spices and rum to keep me in the company of fine wenches for the rest o' me days. Nought but clear sailing until dusk. Retired to me stateroom around 183o to peruse the latest PlayBuccaneer: Pegleg Edition, but was interrupted by the lookout's sighting of a merchant ketch. Brazen Harlot gave chase and at 19oo me men boarded the Comely Lass and liberated a king's ransom in ale and silk from her stores. Alas, with her crew slaughtered and her sails in tatters, the ketch had to be scuttled. 'Twas heartrending to see such a beautiful ship slip beneath the waves, but I'd sooner see her in Davey Jones's embrace than salvaged by a filthy Gaul. Arrr.

DEAD PIRATES AND MONKEYS Thus began my travels in the world of Akella's creation, a world where the player assumes the role of Nathaniel Hawk, an enterprising scoundrel with sailing in his blood and more lint than gold in his pockets. Following the unprovoked and bloody French invasion of the port of Oxbay, Hawk and his ship are pressed into the service of the British Crown and tasked with striking back at the Gallic aggressors. But whether or not Hawk carries out his orders is up to the player; Pirates of the Caribbean's freeform gameplay makes completion of the main quest a worthwhile but entirely optional pursuit. With plenty of swashes in need of buckling and loads of poncy Frenchmen just begging for a vanquishing, there's a hell of a lot for the player to do in Pirates of the Caribbean (POTC). However, even

veteran gamers will undoubtedly find their first few hours with the game intimidating and more than a little frustrating. On terra firma, things are relatively straightforward: you can wander around the towns, chat with the locals and offload any booty (the gold and precious gems kind) you've accumulated. At the taverns you can gamble, hire crewmen, seek out freelance work and engage in drunken duels. Any repair work or modifications to your vessel or fleet can be carried out at the shipyards, and you can stock up on commodities or hock your wares at the trade houses. There's a lot to be said, too, for just taking in the sights; POTC's island settlements exhibit the unique, often beautiful architectural influences of the countries that colonised them. Outside of the towns, there are dungeons — home to the reanimated

skeletons of dead pirates and monkeys(!) — and jungles to explore, and roving bands of brigands to take on.

A MURDEROUS RAMPAGE Idyllic as island living may seem, there are adventures to be had and profits to be made on neighbouring shores. Taking to the high seas for the first time, most players will grind their teeth in frustration at the complexity of it all. As POTC so deftly illustrates,





I can't roll me arrrrrs...



Low-poly models on the horizon, capn'



The tightest butt in showbiz



AS WELL AS PIRATE VESSELS, THERE ARE NAVAL SHIPS FROM HOSTILE NATIONS TO CONTEND WITH.

sailing is an art form in itself, which makes the absence of any sort of tutorial downright criminal. Journeying across the game's world map requires little more than a turn to the correct heading and a nudge of the analogue stick, but in POTC circumstances conspire to reduce your vessel to driftwood at every turn. Storms, which set in with terrifying suddenness, offer an unforgettably harrowing experience, with hurricane-force winds that shred sails, mountainous waves that splinter hulls and cast men overboard, and bolts of lightning that arc perilously close to ships' masts.

Mother Nature isn't the player's only adversary on the high seas, though — as well as pirate vessels, there are naval ships from hostile nations to contend with. Both are quite content to send your ship and crew to Davey Jones, but thankfully

there are ways of fighting back. Your ship's cannons can fire a variety of projectiles including grapeshot (designed to kill and maim enemy sailors), regular and explosive cannonballs, and sail-ripping munitions called knippels (ooh, er!). But it's grappling hooks that are the most useful, as these allow you to tether your ship to an enemy's, then lead your boarding party on a murderous rampage! Like sailing, naval combat is tricky at the best of times, but players who persevere will reap the benefits in the form of captured cargo, commandeered vessels and pride in the knowledge that they fought hard and emerged victorious.

With all this attention to detail, it was perhaps inevitable that Akella

would skimp in some areas. The static trading system really should have been jettisoned in favour of a dynamic economy, and improved environmental and character interaction would have made for a more immersive game world. Less forgivable are the bugs — particularly saved game corruption errors — which occasionally manifest themselves. Clearly, the game would have benefited from a few

extra months of development time, but surprisingly even the more serious deficiencies don't ruin what is an otherwise fine game. Pirates of the Caribbean is as in-depth a pirate sim as anyone could hope for, and gamers willing to endure the steep learning curve will find it's well worth playing. <<



www.bundabergrum.com. Dark & Stormys: contraband in some quarters, but worth their weight in doubloons!



PLUS: Plenty of freedom. Tense and challenging sea battles.

MINUS: Initially difficult to get into. Some show-stopping bugs.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 72 75

OVERALL

77

Pillaging and plundering galore, but where's me parrot?!



It's the Redfern Bumblebees!



C'mon, pass like a man you pansy!



"Kick it to me, kick it to me..."

PS2 XBOX PC CATEGORY: Sport >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

AFL Live 2004

CHRIS STEAD swears he has never suffered a Spatter.

Australian Rules Football is gradually taking over the world. Well, not quite, but it is doing damn well in the land downunder and having dominated the winter season of sports, Acclaim hope to see it dominate the summer as well... on the console that is. Following last year's successful AFL 2003, the 2004 edition enters a marketplace white-hot with Rugby fever, however, fans of the sport will be elated to know that AFL2004 offers a product that more than competes. The gameplay is swift, challenging and accurate, providing a Sport sim that even the most hardened of Rugby League fan cannot insult.

EXPLORATORY SURGERY ON HIS ARSE...

AFL2004 begins to look the goods only seconds after your turn on the PS2. With Grinspoon pounding away,

gamers are treated to a great intro that will have you on the phone calling mates around for the big game almost instantly. Everything about AFL is big. Big kicks, big marks, big hits and big stadiums, the only thing that escapes this doctrine are the player's shorts, which would fit comfortably onto a Ken doll. AFL2004 simulates the sport right down to these budgie-constrictors with all 16 teams, 9 realistic stadiums and seven big game modes (sorry I will stop with the bigs). Outside the classic Quick Game and Season modes, there is Finals (allows gamers to take a shot at the post-season events), Wizard Cup (the pre-season events), Mini-games, Missions and good old Training.

Training is an important component of sporting simulations and the unexciting but useful mode found in AFL2004 will have you

kicking goals in no time. Training progresses through various tasks reminiscent of what the real players do while they exercise. There are three mini-games, Superkick, Handball Challenge and Around the World which adds a nice multiplayer desert to the main game meal. The missions are also very cool, offering historical, fictional and custom options. Each team has its own historical mission (e.g. help the Crows come from 31 behind to win the 1997 preliminary final) and the fictional mode places you in the middle of a pressure situation (e.g. score the last goal to win).

Of course, even Beethoven's finest sounds like a cheap Bloodhound Gang mock-up when the piano isn't in tune and sporting simulations are the same. AFL 2004 takes some giant marks in capturing the essence of the sport, but sustains an

injury upon landing. The issues arise due to the sheer pace of the game. AFL2004 stunningly captures the perpetual motion and brutality of the game, but it charges along with all the ferocity of a rogue steam train and if you stop to think about the next manoeuvre you end up getting flattened. However, there are little moments where you can appreciate the finer details of AFL 2004's development, like for example when you are required to





The officials bolt to grab a bite to eat

Gimmie five!

Great defense there...



IF YOU DON'T GET A HANDLE OF THESE CONTROL INTRICACIES EARLY, YOUR GAMING EXPERIENCE MAY BECOME FRUSTRATING

bounce the ball and your sprite's speed drops momentarily. AFL2004 tries hard and mostly succeeds in being a 'fans' game and the speed of the gameplay accurately simulates the sport, but it also provides a steep learning curve for rookies and requires some pin-point controls.

...TO SEE IF THEY COULD RETRIEVE HIS SHORTS

Unfortunately, the controls don't do the gameplay justice. Often they feel just that little too laboured as you leap for marks too late or run straight past the sprite you were hoping to head-high. If you don't get a handle of these control intricacies early, your gaming experience may become frustrating. Having said that, there is a great array of moves you can pull off. There is the standard mark, followed by one of the

Warwick Capper variety. You can punch the ball, quick kick, long kick, tap, sprint, step and trap the ball, plus, in a nice touch of brutality, you can shoulder barge. The umpires' involvements in the game are handled well, leaving AFL 2004 a game that plays very well, as long as you are comfortable with the small flaws in the controls and the speed of the action.

Graphically, AFL2004 is above average, but won't quite achieve a Brownlow. The difficult animations are quite good and fairly varied. Occasionally they struggle to keep up with the pace of game, especially with the diving marks that the computer must take a second to think about. The crowd is weak, but you get a good representation of your favourite players. The most impressive component of the

!!! AFL2004 is far superior to the original, with great new additions like instant replays and accurate data.

graphics engine is the camera, which never gets in the way of action, quite a feat when you consider how often the game switches teams. The SFX sufficiently back up the graphics, with team's songs belting out at a games conclusion, but the commentary is quite poor, with phrases such as 'gun-barrel straight' being repeated way too often.

AFL2004 is a great simulation of a highly complex sport. Acclaim obviously cares about their fan-base and the game providing a rewarding challenge. If you happen to be a gamer who isn't put off by the sexually suspect short shorts, tank-tops, short back'n'sides and abs that can shift pressure systems, then you'll be happily impressed. <<



PLUS: Challenging gameplay, comprehensive modes.

MINUS: Controls stick, steep learning curve, no Capper.

VISUALS 77 SOUND 75 GAMEPLAY 78

OVERALL
79

One for the fans.



Eat my shiny blobs of death!



Next I'll hit you with my giant lime stick thing.



They're out to spill your midichlorians

>>PC

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>
 REQUIRED: PIII 450, 128MB RAM, 3D card >>

Jedi Academy

ELIOT FISH gets some new batteries for his lightsaber.

When Jedi Academy was announced, many viewed it as being a true upcoming sequel to Jedi Outcast. However, as development progressed there were indications that Jedi Academy wasn't going to be a full-blown Jedi Knight installment, but rather, a minor diversion for the series that promised to extend and elaborate on the lightsaber combat and force powers of your average Jedi – if a Jedi can ever really be called “average” that is. Now it has finally arrived, Jedi Academy feels even lesser, coming across more like an expansion pack or worse, a user-made mod.

TAKE DOWN A DARK JEDI

The game starts out with you being able to create your own Jedi. You choose their race, clothes colour, lightsaber colour and lightsaber hilt

design. It's nice to be able to customise your own character – which is especially useful for multiplayer – but sadly it has little bearing on anything in the game. Customisation is also a lot less involved than surely it could have been. Why, for instance, can we choose a Zabrak female but not a male? Why does one race have more facial types on offer than another? The choices offered seem completely arbitrary, leaving you with the feeling that hardly any real thought went into this aspect of the game.

Once you jump into the action, more strange design decisions reveal themselves. To cross a river, you must hack down certain trees with your lightsaber in order to use them as a bridge – of course, only particular trees respond to your saber, with all other flora seemingly impervious to the elegant weapon.

Even worse, you can swing it wildly at friendly NPCs and they won't even react, their heads and arms deflecting your lightsaber miraculously. Then you find yourself having to duel and take down a Dark Jedi on that very first level, only to then enter the academy and have Luke Skywalker force you to do a training level so you can “learn how to use a lightsaber”. Er, Luke, we can already kill Dark Jedis! It's just an example of how little thought went into constructing a convincing storyline for the game.

Missions can be selected in a non-linear fashion, by choosing from a list of planets and tackling things in the order you choose. Before you head out, you select a Force power that you want to train in, and naturally at the end of that mission you will have earned the ability to use that particular power. Oddly,

though, as a Jedi in training, you can happily select to put all your efforts into learning Dark Side powers and your elders won't question your actions. Of course, using Force Lightning is one of those cool things all gamers will want to do, making the Dark Side powers that much more appealing – they're also far more powerful and effective than any of the Light side powers, and yet there are also no consequences for choosing the Dark Side.

A BAD HANGOVER

The action in the game simply continues the Jedi Knight tradition, with the player able to go toe-to-toe with the lightsaber, or put it away for the want to use up your blaster ammo. The firearms seems completely pointless, however, considering that the lightsaber is so much more effective, and can repel



They mixed Jango's DNA with Salacious Crumb

Let me help dislodge that chicken bone

I'm going to slice your Sithy faces off



THE ENEMIES IN THE GAME ARE **NOTHING MORE THAN LIGHTSABER FODDER**, WHO WILL RUN OUT AND ATTACK YOU BLINDLY

EPISODE III

The year 2005 will bring with it the final episode of the Star Wars prequels, currently only titled "Episode III". Reasons to get excited? Anakin becomes Darth Vader (finally), and has a duel to the (almost) death with his former master Obi-Wan Kenobi. Padme gives birth to Luke and Leia. Chewbacca makes a return to the big screen to take part in a Wookiee battle sequence. Palpatine finally declares himself Emperor, most probably turning the Clonetroopers against the good guys and renaming them Stormtroopers. Reasons to get worried again? Jar Jar is back once more. Natalie Portman can't act. Jimmy Smits has a larger role as Bail Organa. There's a new CGI bad guy (another bad guy?) From what we know so far, there's no Tarkin!

incoming laser fire. The weapons just feel like a bad hangover from the Dark Forces days, and you'll wonder why Raven didn't just take them out in favour of working harder on offering more interesting Force powers and more complex acrobatics and lightsaber techniques. Even more bizarrely, you must select a handful of weapons to take with you on each mission, forcing you to decide whether you should take a blaster rifle or bowcaster, for instance. As soon as you enter the level, however, all the other weapons are lying about the place complete with ammo, making your weapon selection process entirely unnecessary!

Then comes the combat. All the enemies in the game are nothing more than lightsaber fodder, who will run out and attack you blindly

without any thought for tactics or teamwork. The AI is simply terrible. This is made up somewhat by the Dark Jedi you must duel with later in the game, as they do require persistence and tricky movement to dispatch. In the end, however, Jedi Academy feels slapped together. Relying on the Star Wars license — the designs, characters, sound effects and music — to provide the entertainment, just doesn't cut it anymore. There isn't even any believable or creative level design any more. Raven really need to sit down and try a little harder next time — who knows what Quake IV will turn out like under their direction.

Whilst LucasArts have been moving bravely forward with great releases such as Knights of the Old Republic, Armed and Dangerous and Rebel Strike, Jedi Academy is an unfortunate step backwards. <<



PLUS: Lightsaber combat in multiplayer.

MINUS: The single player game.

VISUALS 82 SOUND 84 GAMEPLAY 66

OVERALL

69

Another run of the mill action game from Raven.



Hands up who wants to go home



Birthday hugs! Awww!



Outta my way ballerina!

»PC XBOX PS2 GCN CATEGORY: Sports >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: EA Sports >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: 700 MHz PC, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D Video Card >>

Madden 2004

MARCH STEPNIK grabs a six pack and glues himself to the exercise ball.

EA's Madden series is now 14 years strong and although there have been some bubbles and scrapes along the way (especially for recent PC versions), this year's effort is — without a doubt — the best in the series yet. And for the moment (Sega Sport's very promising ESPN Football, aka zK4, is still a month or two away from release here in Oz), Madden 2004 is the best American football simulation out there bar none.

HOLY HOT PANTS!

Oh, sure. Much of Madden 2004's allure has to do with the usual engine and presentation upgrades that come with the inevitable yearly update. EA has pumped over 800 new animations into this version, and bugger — it's utterly amazing to see how far this single aspect has come since the early days of uniform

little player sprites. This year we've got more articulate receiver catches, defensive backs that swat balls away from intended receivers and tacklers sending players out of bounds if the ball carrier is near the sideline — and that's to name but a few of 'em.

Also impressive is the attention to player models. Their in-game likeness is remarkably similar to the real deal, even down to player tattoos and hairstyles (dreads and long hair can be seen spilling from some players' helmets). Let's not forget the current 2003 season game scheduling, NFL and team updates, or the faithful reproduction of the official stadiums either. Yep, Madden 2004 looks exceptionally good, especially if you've got a PC with enough grunt.

But what sets this game apart from its predecessors are two

features new to Madden 2004. Playmaker control is by far and away the most impressive, allowing players to direct action on the fly, before or after the snap. It's this control after the snap that's the driving force behind this new feature, and one that adds a fantastic new dimension to the way you play the game. It's essentially a more powerful version of the audible system of previous versions, and one that'll prove rewarding to those who're clever enough to read the subtleties of the opposition's movements. Yep, it's a gamble, but one that'll usually be well rewarded if you manage to pull it off. But to use the Playmaker control, you'll need to invest in a dual analogue control pad; anything else won't cut it.

The other new mode that EA's brought to the table is Owner

mode. Owner mode is insane. It's an added dimension to Franchise mode, giving you full control over every aspect of owning and running a successful football franchise. Call it Sim NFL — you've got full control over ticket and food prices, advertising budgets and team salaries (which must sit under the salary cap). And if you're jack of all the existing teams, you can create your own franchise right down to your new stadium (design it from scratch). Yep, Madden 2004 covers all the bases, from casual enthusiast all the way up to psychopathic freak.

YES, YES. UH, WHAT?

Another new feature that gets the big thumbs up from Hyper is what EA calls its "Integrated Playcalling Presentation". It took 'em a while, but EA finally tweaked on the idea of



Here comes 99 to pull his finger

Excuse me. As I was saying...

It's the arse grabber!



EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD, ESPECIALLY IF YOU'VE GOT A PC WITH ENOUGH GRUNT

sprucing up the usually static playcall selection screen that you spend half of the game looking at it. This year, all the usual information is displayed over a backdrop of moving animations from the field. Sometimes you'll get replays (big plays still get full-screen, dedicated replays though), sometimes you'll get close-ups of coaches on the sideline doing what they do best – cutting sick at anyone and everyone around them. And other times, you'll simply get big blokes in tights wandering about the field recovering from the previous play. It's a small touch, but one that goes the distance: it better immerses the player within an on-the-field game of football than any other title to date. Nice stuff.

Still, there's one major gripe to be had with the Madden series; something that hasn't been

addressed in Madden 2004 and is really only directed outside of the United States' all-pervading cultural reach. It's simply that American football is one helluva complex game. Even after you master the basics of the 4-down system, there's a whole new level of depth that comes with offensive and (especially) defensive plays that's important to understand. But Madden assumes all this – the imperialist bastard – so there's no rule breakdown or jargon buster. At least EA has included the helpful Ask Madden option from last year's effort for an appropriate play and there's the effective training camp option from the main menu. But don't put your copy of American Football for Dummies just yet.

Madden rocks so hard simply because it plays such a great game

of football. The stunning presentation – the graphics, player animation and options – all support the game's real strength: its superb AI. All of the game's more interesting nuances – like score control and end-of-half closing plays are all superbly recreated by the computer-controlled team. Indeed, there's nothing like duking it out after the two-minute warning in a really close game. Add the new playmaker control to this and you've got some truly thrilling stuff.

Which all goes to show that with Madden at least, EA aren't resting on their laurels. And that's well worth the yearly admission price, if you ask us. <<<

!!! Rugby 2004 review next issue - it didn't arrive in time!



PLUS: Owner mode and playmaker control. Polished.

MINUS: Running game could still use work, weak commentary.

VISUALS 89 SOUND 70 GAMEPLAY 91

OVERALL

90

Madden, you daft bastard, thank you.



PC



BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS OF WWII

CATEGORY: Online FPS >> PLAYERS: Multi >>
PUBLISHER: EA >> PRICE: \$29.95 >>
RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>
REQUIRED: Battlefield 1942 >>

Expansion packs these days run the risk of not really coming up to scratch against the plethora of user-made mods on the scene. Gamers probably spend far more blood, sweat and tears ensuring that they come up with something particularly special for other gamers to "wow" over, plus they seem to have that special knack of knowing what would be cool and what other gamers would find particularly entertaining. Mods may not have the polish of professionally constructed expansions, but at least the innovative content is there. The Secret Weapons of WWII expansion suffers from exactly this problem — it's just not as good as the user made mods that are already available for Battlefield 1942, nor is it even as good as Road to Rome.

Secret Weapons is by no means bad — there are some very good new maps, and the new vehicles makes for some fun new experimentation — but there's simply not enough new content here to warrant the purchase. Not when you can download far more interesting alterations to the game for free from other users. Still, if you've got money to burn, then it wouldn't hurt picking this up. Battlefield 1942 continues to be one of the best online games around, and Secret Weapons will give you more excuses to log on and fool around, plus the pleasure of having a few minor bugs in your game fixed. For the dedicated completist only.

Frank Dry

VISUALS **85** SOUND **87** GAMEPLAY **86** OVERALL **73**



As Van Halen once said, JUMP!

PS2



GREGORY HORROR SHOW

CATEGORY: Survival Horror >> PLAYERS: 1 >>
PUBLISHER: THQ >> PRICE: \$99.95 >>
RATING: TBC >> AVAILABLE: November >>



Scary indeed



No matter what you expect from Gregory Horror Show, you're not going to get what you're expecting — this is one game that combines familiar conventions in such a way that the end result isn't quite like anything you've seen before. Set in a world that looks as though it were designed by Heironymous Bosch if he had access to Lego, Gregory Horror Show casts players as the young Gregory, a boy trapped in a creepy hotel run by a freaky looking rat. Gregory dreams about Death (the dude with the scythe, not dying) who reveals to him that all of the tenants of the hotel are in possession of souls that they have gained through nefarious purposes and that he wants them back. If Gregory can collect all of the souls, Death will release him from the hotel. Gameplay revolves around Gregory sneaking through the hotel, peering through keyholes and listening in on conversations, gathering clues to the items necessary to trigger the retrieval of a soul. Unfortunately, each time the boy retrieves a soul the former owner becomes less than pleased and will then actively try to crush Gregory's will — if his will reaches zero he will give up his will to fight and stay in the hotel forever. Although Gregory looks like a kids game, don't be fooled, as much of the content is extremely adult oriented — when you see the lizard nurse with a giant syringe you'll understand. Gregory Horror Show may not herald a new age in survival horror but it's definitely a surreal and sometimes disturbing adventure.

Daniel Wilks

VISUALS **80** SOUND **75** GAMEPLAY **80** OVERALL **78**

PS2



SEEK & DESTROY

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Play It >> PRICE: \$29.95 >>
RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



As rabid proponents of all things quirky and Japanese, we can tell you that Seek & Destroy's developer, Takara, is the company that manufactures those terrific little superdeformed mini RC cars called Digi-Q, as well as their pull-back-and-let-go equivalent (marketed here as Penny Racers), called Choro-Q. We're big fans of Takara's brilliant 'CarPG', Road Trip Adventure, so it was with a great deal of optimism that we fired up this, its spiritual successor.

Seek & Destroy (S&D) features over 100 different tank models, all lovingly created and just waiting to be ridden into battle. Said conflicts are fast-paced and almost comically brutal, with dozens of tanks zipping about and blasting each other to smithereens, your own vehicle fighting valiantly in their midst. But that's only one aspect of what is a surprisingly deep game: S&D is a kind of 'Tank Turismo', allowing you to rice up your steel steed with close to 100 modifications, from faster engines to computerised targeting systems and funky camouflage paint jobs. There are also several fun little mini-games to play, as well as a two-player deathmatch mode. Yes, the cutesy visuals won't be everybody's cup of tea, and we'll admit the game isn't as polished as the aforementioned (and afore-endorsed) Road Trip Adventure, but Seek & Destroy is compelling in its own way. Budget Game of the Year it may not be, but it's worth that \$30 you've got lying around. You know you'll only blow it on cigarettes and porn... Brett Robinson

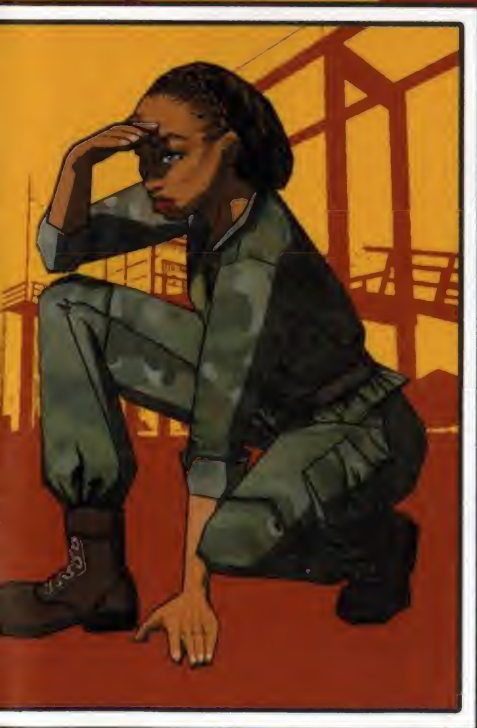
VISUALS **60** SOUND **75** GAMEPLAY **70** OVERALL **72**



Worst water effects known to man

XIII

they know more about you than you do.

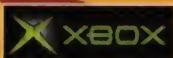


your number is up.



DARGAUD

www.XIII-thegame.com



PlayStation 2



© 2003 Ubi Soft Entertainment. Ubi Soft and the Ubi Soft logo are trademarks of Ubi Soft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries.
© 2003 Nintendo, Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. "D" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The "X" and GameCUBE logos are trademarks of Nintendo Co., Ltd.

>>GBA

Pokémon Pinball: Ruby & Sapphire

CATEGORY: Pinball >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Nintendo >> PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Although the Pokémon franchise is often portrayed as a simple Nintendo cash grab, that's not really the case. The Game Boy games are actually well designed and very entertaining titles and the Pokémon spin-off games, of which there have admittedly been many, have almost all been based around solid games or concepts. So now we turn to Pokémon Pinball for GBA, a game that will be familiar to anyone who played Pokémon Pinball on GBC.

As the name suggests, there are two main tables — Ruby and Sapphire, as well as several mini-tables. What raises this title above other pinball games is the integration of the "gotta catch 'em all" Pokémon angle, so there are actually 200 Pokémon to find and capture in the game — a feature that will definitely appeal to fans. The game even has a Pokedex so you can keep track of all your pokeslaves. Catching Pokémon is a matter of luring them out into the open (although some can only be found in certain areas of course) by

triggering certain things on the table, then hitting them several times with your ball. Who would have thought that pocket monsters would get knocked around by your balls? But we digress. It's not just a simple matter of capturing each of the 200 Pokémon on the table. As anyone into Pokémon knows, some Pokémon can only be encountered by evolving other Pokémon types. Some even have two or three evolved forms, so these are the hardest catches for your Pokedex as you need to lure the Pokémon out, catch it and evolve it during the one play session. That said, on the whole this game is a little on the easy side, and unless you're really hardcore it's doubtful you'll want to bother finding all 200 of the little buggers.

Frank Dry

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
77	76	80	80



>>GBA

Super Mario Advance 4

CATEGORY: Platformer >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Nintendo >> PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: November >>

As far as videogames go, you probably won't find another game as popular, groundbreaking and fun as Super Mario Bros. 3. The game debuted in the shameless Nintendo riddled two hour 'ad' that was The Wizard, a movie featuring Fred Savage and Christian Slater that followed a family trekking across the US to compete in a Nintendo championship. So, like every other popular game from Nintendo's glory years' stable, SMB3 has been spat on and polished for the Game Boy Advance. The machine is capable of creating some amazing original titles, so what could SMB3 offer gamers now, that it didn't in 1989?

SMB3 on the GBA is a similar affair to all the ports that have come before; spruced up visuals, new sounds and voice samples and the inclusion of the original Mario Bros. game for multiplayer measure. But, this time around, the GBA has a little more hidden under its proverbial flip-top. For starters, anyone who buys the e-Reader is in for a nice treat, as the game is bundled with two cards. One will give you a Super

Leaf that can be scanned again and again to fill your inventory with as many leaves as you like, while the other card actually gives you world 1-1 from the original Super Mario Bros., only this time you play as SMB3 Mario — raccoon suit and all! You can even fly through the entire level and finally make it over that pesky flagpole at the end.

The story in SMA4 is told through a number of animated cut-scenes, and a lot more humour has been injected into the game (you get a letter from Bowser if you warp to world 8!), as well as an option that will open up an all-access world map after you finish the game the first time.

It's as fun as ever, and the additions make the purchase, at least for Nintendo fans, worthwhile. You'll be hard pressed finding a better platform game (Metroid Fusion aside) on the handheld. It's Mario baby, in full portable glory!

Stephen Farrelly

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
90	89	94	92



GBA

Final Fantasy Tactics Advance



CATEGORY: Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Square Enix >>
PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

We might not see a release of Tactics Ogre here in Australia, but thankfully Final Fantasy Tactics should happily fill that void for fans wanting a more meaty GBA experience. If you've exhausted your copy of Advance Wars 2, then get the wallet out for this one, because you'll be up all night with your GBA SP night light once again.

GO ON AND ON AND ON

You and your friends mope about in the snow and have a bit of a whinge about boring reality, only to suddenly wind up magically transported into the fantasy land of Final Fantasy — yep, your character actually recognises it as the videogame come to life. Soon enough, you wind up in a clan of characters made up of different races and classes — from Archers to Black Mages and Ninjas. The cool job system even allows you to switch a character's job, giving you access to new skills and abilities that you might not have otherwise been able to utilise. This way you can truly customise every character in your clan (yes, you can buy them specific armour, weapons and items) until you have a merry troupe of freedom fighters that suits your style of play, or simply just tickles your fancy. There's nothing wrong with having a mighty clan of mages and nothing else, except of course that they won't be able to accept some job specific missions.

Visiting the pub allows you to accept a variety of missions that are waiting to be completed, and you can do these in any order, allowing you to eventually flesh out the main map by placing locations in certain slots and expanding on the number of missions available.

Everything in the end boils down to the tactical battles, which can in some instances go on and on and on. You play each character as their turn comes up, moving them about the battle location depending on how many movements they have been allowed and then specifying an attack, magic spell, special ability or maybe just some item usage. It's the amazing variety of combinations in the game that make the battles so interesting. The choice of melee and magic attacks, mixed with the characters' jobs and abilities really makes for many



hours of ponderous tactical battling. It can get frustrating waiting for the computer to take its turn (if only there was a speed up option on the AI's animations) but ultimately, Final Fantasy Tactics Advance will keep you captivated for weeks on end. Amazingly good value for money.

Eliot Fish

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
88	87	89	90



0740 HOURS
DECEMBER 7, 1941



[left] Everyone wants to make a difference, it seems. Sheesh! I can't hear myself think.



City of Heroes

//www.cityofheroes.com

>> Daniel Wilks

Sometimes in the glutted world of MMORPGS there seems little to be excited about with upcoming titles — there's only so many times you can hear about a game with a generic fantasy or science fiction world, with character races chosen from all of the standard public domain choices or someone else's idea, badged with a new name and slightly different skin. That's what makes City of Heroes so exciting — it's something new, something that hasn't been tried before and if Hollywood and sales figures are to be believed, something that could well prove very popular.

QUAGMIRE OF EVIL

City of Heroes is the first MMORPG to be based around the exploits of everyone's favourite spandex-clad defenders of justice, superheroes. Set in the heroically named Paragon City, the events of City of Heroes take place after an abortive attack on Earth by a warlike alien race known as the Rikti. Though they were eventually driven off, the Rikti crippled many of Paragon City's resident heroes. Sensing the power

vacuum, many of the world's villains have come to Paragon City with schemes ranging from simple petty theft all the way up to that old chestnut, taking over the world. Players take the roles of the city's lesser-known heroes, fighting the good fight to keep their mighty burb from sinking into a quagmire of unmitigated evil... or something equally melodramatic.

Instead of the usual Orcs, Elves and Dwarves, players have the opportunity to choose characters from five distinctly comic book backgrounds; Mutant, Science, Technology, Natural and Magic. Mutant characters are born with powers like the X-Men; Science characters gain their powers through experimentation like The Fantastic Four; Technology characters rely on machines for their powers much like Iron Man; like Batman, Natural characters train themselves to the peak of human ability; and Magic characters attribute their powers to supernatural sources. Once a player has chosen a background they must choose a class (character archetype) that defines their role in

the super team and the powers they have access to. Four of the character archetypes, Blaster, Defender, Scrapper and Tank roughly equate to Mage, Cleric/Healer, Barbarian/Berserker and Fighter respectively. The final character archetype is quite different. Dubbed the Controller, this archetype comprises powerful mind-controllers and is the only class capable of wielding powers of influence and control. Finally the player must also choose a primary and secondary power from a list of around 40 — each with their own subset of powers — City of Heroes can potentially field a cast of millions of totally different characters. Oh yeah, there's also no need to worry about your hero looking the same as someone else's — at the current level of development, Cryptic boasts that the chances of that happening would be somewhere in the vicinity of 2.24×10 to the 24th power, to 1, give or take a couple of million. They're still not sure if the billions of permutations will be enough so are thinking of instituting more options — how's that for choice?

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

In an effort to have a little something for everyone, City of Heroes will feature three different styles of zone, each with specific limitations and encounters. The first and most common of these zones is the City Zone. As the name suggests, the City Zone is part of the living city, full of real people and amenities such as hospitals and trainers. City Zones are also plagued with low-level crime such as robberies and assaults — just the thing for a fledgling hero to cut their teeth on. The next type of zone is called the Hazard Zone — places containing more powerful villains with far more nefarious schemes. Although details are scant at the moment, developers Cryptic Studios have mentioned that one of these Hazard Zones will be the city's water system. With resources at a premium after the Rikti invasion it's only natural that villains will try to control such a valuable resource. Although difficult, Hazard Zones can be single player or multiplayer affairs. The third zone, Trials, require teams of heroes to complete.



[above] Okay, my guess is that this is something bad.

One of the most interesting concepts in City of Heroes is their system of Contacts. Contacts are the NPC inhabitants of the city - normal people, police, other heroes and the like. By operating around the city, heroes will gather contacts, each of which has three levels of interaction: Acquaintance, Friend and Confidant. At acquaintance level the contact may occasionally ask the hero to perform services such as cleaning up the neighbourhood or taking down a petty criminal. Perform enough services to the city and the contact may become a friend and eventually confidant, offering more interesting missions and better rewards. Aside from offering missions, Contacts can reward players with Influence, the currency of City of Heroes and also act as a kind of mini shop, allowing players to buy upgraded skills and powers. The final game will feature hundreds of available contacts, nearly guaranteeing that every player will have a very different experience. ✕✕

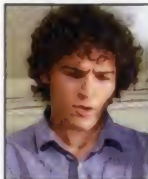
[below] Worst superhero outfits ever! Can you do worse? Buy City of Heroes today!



0753 HOURS
DECEMBER 7, 1941

Back of the Net

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE



Internet content in Hyper first appeared in June 1994, Issue 7, when Simon Sharwood delved into the cutting

edge virtual realm cool nerds used to term the 'net'. Back then an incredible 15 million users were logged on, and Australian use was restricted to universities. Similarly, the establishment of Hyper's Trawlin' and Links sections, and even this very column, were designed to reveal the findings of probes sent deep into the farthest reaches of the intermatrix – alternative universes unimaginable for all but the most involved few.

But now, to the net, there's no frontier, there's no wonder. Routine and commerce have stifled the web's glory. Triumphant though, this column's insight into the minority has returned this month: I currently don't have internet access.

This is the first time in close to ten years I've ever been without, and it's been a revealing experience. Admittedly, I can still log on at work, meaning certain constants in life – Soccernet, for example – have remained, but the effects have nonetheless been profound. Today's newspaper no longer seems out of date – and I can happily read yesterday's with interest. People are now a valued source of gossip and news, and the telephone, even the landline, has proved itself a marvel of technology. And what about those banks!? They close at four o'clock in the afternoon! Why are people not complaining??

Of course, the elder Hyper readers may be tempted to scowl at my only slightly exaggerated ignorance, but these 'real social' deficiencies (perhaps conflicts is a better word) are the norm for the youth of today. While in 1994, Stuart Clarke's musings about the internet "taking over the world" seemed melodramatic, society has definitely changed. For better or worse, nobody can say. Maybe it's the 80s in me talking, but the reliability and stability of the physical, material world has made my netless month a refreshing pleasure. The ADSL guys are coming next week...

Links

>> Kosta Andreadis



David Hasselhoff - The Official Site

www.davidhasselhoff.com/

>> Where to begin? That's the question. The answer is not some lower-middle class mining family from some quaint town in good 'old USA – circa however many years ago he was born. The correct answer is Knight Rider – the god of TV shows starring vehicles with Brit-speaking AI. Forget Baywatch, forget the chiseled features and stone board abs, forget the homosexual German man that whispers "Hasselhoff" into your ear whenever you look into his eyes – it was Knight Rider that made David Hasselhoff the household name he is today. Named one of "TV's Ten Most Powerful Stars" by TV Guide in 1990 and one of TV's "Ten Most Powerless Stars" in 2002, along with Webster and that guy that played Rudy Huxtable in "The Cosby Show", DavidHasselhoff.com is like a breath of freshly stale air.



Flashy Flash Games

www.145ol.com/index_us.php

>> Stop rolling your eyes. What's that Mr. Mutter, have we run out of ideas? Resorted to posting a link to something any bozo could find? So quick to judge without hearing our side of the story, the simple fact is that most flash games suck – they're boring or are only good for a few seconds. Ah, but you see this site is different; for one thing it's in a crazy language no one could possibly understand – French. The next thing is that the games here are cool, Vanilla Ice cool. From 3D Ping Pong to Street Fighter the games here are fun to play both at home and at work, yes work! I've got two buttons for you, 'Alt' and 'Tab' – what Old Man Winters upstairs doesn't know won't hurt him.

Hyper, The Movie

an original screenplay concept
by Malcolm

African-American comedy: An Jedi warrior teams up with a well-built female cyborg to take a cruise on an unsinkable ship. In the process they turn state's evidence on a super intelligent chimpanzee. By the end of the movie they chase 203 washed up ex-SNL cast members and end up winning the admiration of their kind hearted prostitute, living happily ever after.

Think Ernest Goes to Camp meets Super Mario Bros.

Hollywood Plotomatic

www.maddogproductions.com/plotomatic.htm

>> It's not everyday that someone can walk into a Hollywood movie exec's office and pitch a movie idea that is pure cinematic gold. "What about this? We take the action of Die Hard and mix it with the Tom Hankiness from "Sleepless in Seattle". Sort of a romantic-comedy, I'm about to die on Christmas Eve, directed by Ron Howard. So if you're having trouble coming up with the next Hollywood blockbuster to pitch them maybe this site can help. "How about this, Speed meets Titanic, a movie about the world's largest speed boat that can't slow down for some reason, so it hits an ice berg. But, and get this, because of the speed it crashes right through it." It's good because it's got a twist at the end.

Proloxil®

(acaprazinophinomiderial HCL)

Plus, if you take it for awhile and feel really great, and then suddenly stop taking it, your head will explode.



Proloxil - Are you defective?

www.astonishedhead.com/images/OVOID.swf

>> Depression is everywhere, like some scourge entity from a parallel dimension testing the very fabric of time; the world is in the emotional pits. Enter Proloxil, a new anti-depressant drug that can turn the most suicidal individual into another cog in the giant corporate machine. But like any good medication (or med) there's a hefty dose of side effects ranging from premature blindness to the dreaded "explosive diarrhea". So if your life is in the dumps get a job and move into an apartment! On the other hand if your life is in the "emotional" dumps then maybe some Proloxil could help you out.

Links



Videogame Director's Cuts

www.videogamedc.com

» Mario, Zelda, Sonic, Castlevania, Mega Man, Altered Beast and Final Fantasy are among the numerous classic videogames given 'Flash' treatment here. Using real sprites, music and sound effects from these classic titles, various animated shorts dealing mostly with sex and violence have been created here — and for the most part are pretty amusing. From a Mushroom Kingdom dance party to Mortal Kombat starring O.J. Simpson there's something for everyone.



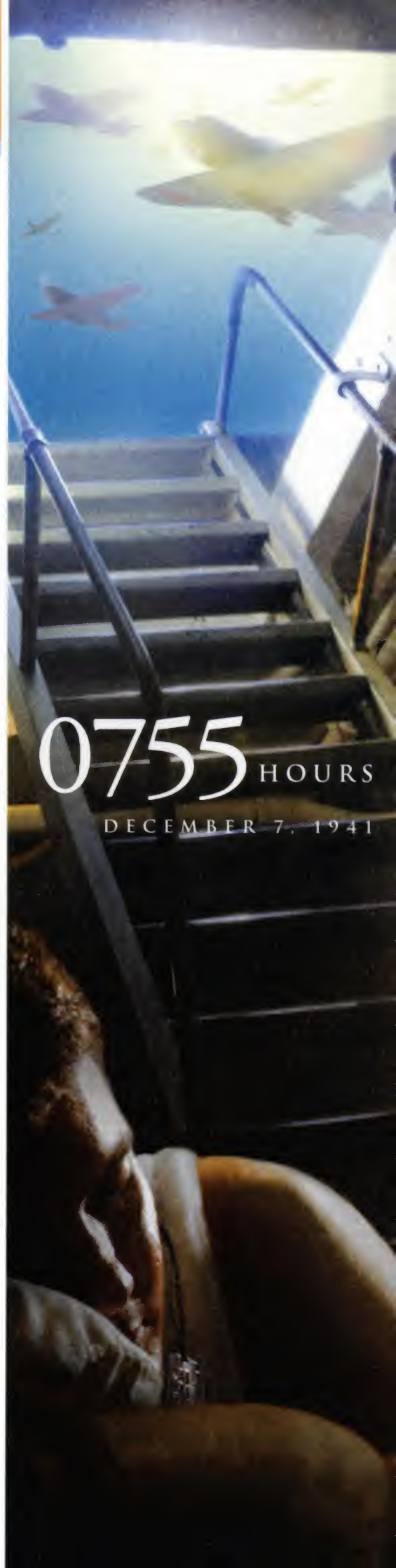
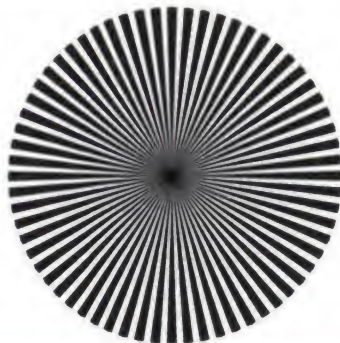
Illusions!

www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/f_exhibits.html

» Enter the Exploratorium and dazzle at the feats of visual trickery. This may sound like one of those emails that get passed around the office that reads something along the lines of "Hey try this out", but it's not. Unless of course you were to take this link and send it to everyone on your contact list, then it would, which would render the previous sentence a total lie. Before your heads explode trying to comprehend that paradox, take a gander at the numerous visual illusions found here that play on pattern, colour and what not, which will also make your heads explode. Yep, a bonafide Catch 22.


Shimmer

Your eye movements make this design seem to shimmer.



0755 HOURS

DECEMBER 7, 1941



WE CAN
REMAKE
THEM!

For the most part, classic games are like classic movies – shining gems in the history of the medium that should be left in the stasis of posterity so that future generations can appreciate them in all their pure, undiluted brilliance. Remakes of past successes – particularly if they're of the blatant cash-in variety – tend to make old-school gamers cringe with the same kind of dread most movie-buffs feel when they hear that yet another timeless classic is about to receive fresh coat of “funky” and/or “hip” paint from money-hungry studio executives. Remember the remake of *Psycho* – the one with Anne Heche? Yeah... some memories just shouldn't be tampered with.

But then, there are some classics

that warrant – and in some cases, demand – a loving remake. In the world of gaming, these tend to be brilliant titles that failed to live up to the entirety of their potential for reasons beyond the control of the designer. Maybe the technology at the time just wasn't sophisticated enough to support the scope of their vision or maybe there was only so much that a single backyard-programmer could realistically achieve alone.

Whatever the reason, the following five games are classics that we think would benefit the most from the opportunities afforded by a modern re-invention. Make no mistake – these games are great already... but they could be greater. Let's find out how.

Remade like...

5. M.U.L.E (1983)

WHAT IT WAS...

Platform: Commodore 64
Developer: Electronic Arts

WHAT IT SHOULD BE...

Platform: PC
Developer: Quicksilver Software

Developed in 1983 by legendary (and tragically short-lived) garage programmer, Dani Bunten Berry, M.U.L.E is arguably one of the best multiplayer games ever devised. The premise is simple: up to four players must choose from one of eight intergalactic races and compete to produce the most profitable colony on the resource rich planet of Irata. It's a simple formula, but one imbued with an amazing potency via an enormous number of randomised gameplay variables. One moment you'd be monopolising Irata's energy resources, charging your friends through the nose for basic requirements and sitting on easy street when suddenly — BAM! — Space Pirates attack and one of your buddies hits upon a huge Crystite deposit. The tables have turned and suddenly you're wishing you weren't acting so smug just a few moments ago. Think Monopoly, but with no Community Chest and more acid rain.

And this is exactly why — in this age of massively multiplayer online gaming — it should be remade. Just think: multiple planets, clans of colonists competing for valuable resources, hundreds of different variables and a gameplay system constructed to encourage emergent behaviour... wow. And who better to realise this vision than Master of Orion developers, Quicksilver Software? EA owns the license of course, but we can dream, can't we?



Masters of Orion 3



[above] Just imagine that in 3D and stuff!



4. Impossible Mission (1985)

WHAT IT WAS...

Platform: Commodore 64
Developer: Epyx

WHAT IT SHOULD BE...

Platform: Xbox/PS2/GCN
Developer: Ubi Soft



Impossible Mission went something like this: You were a secret agent charged with the task of infiltrating the vast and deadly hideout of a criminal mastermind — which, as it turns out, is a complex of rooms connected by elevators, filled with dangerous pits and patrolled by gangs of murderous robots. The goal was to go into each of these rooms, dodge the robots therein and search for puzzle pieces. These puzzle pieces then had to be assembled and used to gain access to the bad guy's inner sanctum, where the world would be saved and the game ended.

Several factors made this otherwise rather bland idea vastly entertaining. Primary among these was the fact that, because each room was different and each robot exhibited their own unique behaviour, one had to devise and enact complex plans of approach with split-second precision. We really can't think of anything more thrilling than tensely waiting for the search-bar to fill up and then jumping to safety JUST as a nearby robot fries the spot you just occupied. Indeed, it is precisely this kind of gameplay that would make for a great remake at the hands of Splinter Cell developers, Ubi Soft. The idea of imbuing elegant gameplay mechanics like these with the power of SC's famous 3D engine is seriously drool-worthy. Screw Tom Clancy, we want Impossible Mission 2004!

Remade like...



[above] Sneaking, hacking... it's nothing Sam Fisher couldn't handle!

Splinter Cell

Remade like...

3. Shadowrun (1993)

WHAT IT WAS...

Platform: SNES
Developer: Beam Entertainment

WHAT IT SHOULD BE...

Platform: PC
Developer: Troika

Set in a gritty cyberpunk future where technology and magic co-exist in an unsteady balance, Shadowrun is an outstanding example of how to inject a game with a healthy dose of pure *atmosphere*. From the moment your character (quite unexpectedly) wakes up on a dirty mortician's slab and realises that he is devoid of both identity and memory, this game draws you into its techno-noir world and doesn't let you out until its good and ready. The narrative, the characters, the mythology... it all felt like it was straight out of a William Gibson novel. And let's not forget that the character development system (which relied on a combination of reacting to your actions, traditional stat-juggling and cybernetic upgrades) remains a beacon of masterfully simple game design. Really, there is very little about this game to dislike.

So then, why not re-invent it as an epic role-playing adventure in the spirit of similar classics such as the Fallout games. In the hands of a proven developer like Troika, a license like this could become one of the greatest RPGs ever made. It'd have all the brilliance of Arcanum with a better story, deeper character development and hacking! Who doesn't love hacking? The best part of the Matrix game was hacking, and this'd be like that — except the actual game would be good too...



Fallout



[above] Ooh, the final stage, sorry if we spoiled anything.

Remade like...



[below] One of the best games ever, it was. Er... is. Kinda.

Freedom Force



2. Syndicate (1993)

WHAT IT WAS...

Platform: PC
Developer: Bullfrog

WHAT IT SHOULD BE...

Platform: PC
Developer: Irrational Games



Although Bullfrog's cyberpunk masterpiece has arguably been re-invented already in the form of Syndicate Wars, we feel that this was more an addition to a then fresh-franchise rather than the rebirth of an aging classic. What we want to see is the original Syndicate — in all its brutal dystopic glory — remodelled into something the game technology wouldn't let it be ten years ago. You would still be the "marketing director" (read: hired killer) of a global syndicate; you would still gather gangs of thugs and direct them in their violent mission to cripple enemy operations; you would still be able to enhance these goons with all manner of Neuromancer-style cybernetic implants — you'd still be able to do all that, but everything would be taken up a notch or ten.

The engine would be fully 3D, the AI would display tactical behaviour beyond running straight into a wall of gunfire, systems would be created in which player-driven, divergent behaviour would give rise to a multitude of different ways to play the game — this is the kind of Syndicate we want to see. This is the kind of Syndicate we think Freedom Force developer, Irrational Games, could provide us with. Lionhead could also do it, of course, but (Syndicate producer) Molyneux's busy enough as it is. Nothing less than total dedication would be necessary to do this game justice.

Remade like...



1. Wizball (1987)

WHAT IT WAS...

Platform: C64/Amiga
Developer: Sensible Software

WHAT IT SHOULD BE...

Platform: Xbox/PS2/GCN
Developer: Amusement Vision

>>> Regular Hyper readers will be aware of our almost obsessive fondness for Wizball, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that Sensible Software's bizarre-yet-beautiful bouncing ball classic tops our list as the game we'd most like to see re-invented for modern gaming machines. Wizball was and is a work of electronic art: as the eponymous magic ball, players bounced around a minimalist anti-gravity environment shooting molecule shaped aliens, getting power-ups and collecting paint with which to coat a monotone planet with colour again. It's a strange concept, we know, but it was one that was executed with a finesse rarely seen in game design. We're talking Miyamoto style elegance here.

And because much of Wizball's brilliance is to be found in its expertly crafted physics engine and deep, intuitive control scheme, we thought there'd be nobody better suited to re-invent it than the gang behind Super Monkey Ball, Amusement Vision. Just imagine Wizball in full 3D with an assortment of Monkey Ball-style party games included. Try and picture how good it would be to see four multi-coloured Wizballs on the screen at one time in a co-op multiplayer fun fest. Hell, someone could just do a GBA update and we'd be happy with that. Wizball is just too damn good to be left a mere memory.

Monkey Ball

[below] Floating green heads – almost as cool as monkeys



Happily,

not all the classics of gaming's golden age remain forgotten. In fact, there have been some great (and not so great) re-inventions of games many of us thought were dead and buried for good. For example...

Defender of the Crown

>>> Genre-blending Amiga game remade as Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown. As the review this issue states, this is a fine remodelling marred by design inconsistencies that should've been left with the original.

Rygar

>>> Taito's teeth-grindingly difficult side-scrolling platformer has been re-invented as a 3D Tomb-Raider style adventure – Rygar: The Legendary Adventure. It's a competent little romp with some great boss battles. It's a shame about the crap controls, though.

Centipede

>>> One of the most famous and perennially popular arcade games ever was remade in full 3D for the PlayStation, Dreamcast and PC. It was okay in short bursts, but lacked the delicate balance of gameplay elements that made the original such an enduring classic.

Wolfenstein 3D

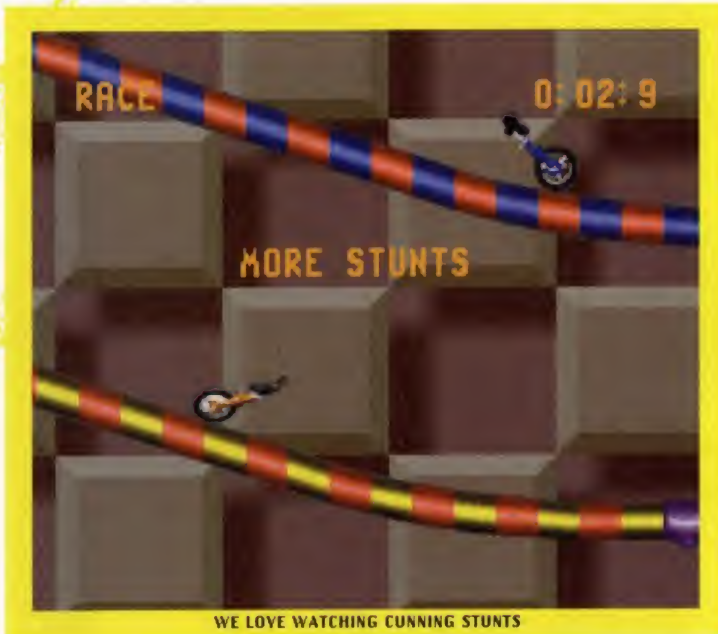
>>> In 2001, Grey Matter and Nerve Software famously remodelled id's seminal Nazi-blasting FPS into a rather mediocre Quake III powered shooter entitled Return to Castle Wolfenstein. The single player is as straightforward and predictable as they come, but multiplayer's a hoot.

Sid Meier's Pirates!

>>> This one hasn't come out yet, but we're assured that Sid Meier is well on the way to re-inventing his landmark mixture of action, adventure and RPG gaming. Pirates! was one of the first games to defy genre stereotypes and instead concentrate on pure fun. It has been screaming for a remake for ages now, and we're overjoyed that it's finally going to happen.

Unirally

RELEASED: 1995



WE LOVE WATCHING CUNNING STUNTS



MICHELLE AND MARTIN DIDN'T SPEAK FOR DAYS

It was late in the lifetime of the SNES (1995 to be precise), an age where gamers were becoming restless, bored with the same old racing games. Little did they know that a laboratory deep in the heart of Scotland had concocted a tasty gaming treat. That laboratory was DMA Design and the game in question was Unirally (Uniracers elsewhere in the world). It was a breath of fresh air: fiendish in its simplicity and as novel (in both senses of the word) as Joyce's Ulysses.

Unirally ditched the passe cars, karts and motorbikes of other games and put a unicycle in the hotseat. A semi-sentient unicycle at that. In fact, think of a hotted up remote controlled Segway and you'd be on the right track. Better still, the game was presented from a side-on 2D perspective, pairing simple controls with imposing speed, and trick-centric gameplay. Just the way we like it. Races took you whistling along brightly coloured paths that rapidly switched directions, leapt up vertical inclines, swept through corkscrews, careened through twists and launched your ever-faithful unicycle off huge jumps. The track was colour coded so you knew what

was coming up next, speed boost arrows kept you hurtling in the right direction, and goop on the track kept you on your toes... or wheel, as the case may be.

The element that made the game, however, was the fact that landing tricks boosted your speed. Simple, but magnificent. Each unicycle could flip forwards, backwards, rotate left and right, and bust 180s. Better yet, you could spin on every axis at once, making for some truly crazy airborne combos. Half the fun of Unirally came from knowing how many flips you could squeeze out before hitting the ground. Nothing looked cooler than gracefully coming out of a long and complex trick in time for a perfect landing. And not only did your unicycle instantly hit a higher gear, but it even visibly leant forward a little more, further emphasising how fast it was going.

Unirally was fun in single player mode, but split-screen was the game's natural home (if a game that stars living unicycles racing through a day-glo wonderland can ever be declared "natural" mind you). Racing against a skilled opponent was a frantic experience, as every possible speed boost opportunity had to be fully utilised. Thus, you'd both be forward flipping at every opportunity on the flat and milking as many twists in the air as possible off jumps. There was nothing like racing neck and neck against a mate, desperately trying to gain a slight boost advantage – made all the more memorable by little animations such as your unicycle turning its seat-head back to glance at the opposition on its tail. Cute.

Although Unirally was a revelation at first, it ultimately didn't quite have the gameplay depth to topple the other greats of the genre. Thus, our flirtation with a world where unicycles had personalities and raced along candy cane highways soon came to an end, and we were back on old faithful MK, with its trippy rainbow roads, turtle shell combat and super happy shiny stars! Hmm... they don't sound that different after all! <<

CAM SHEA



SO MUCH FUN IT SHOULD BE ILLEGAL



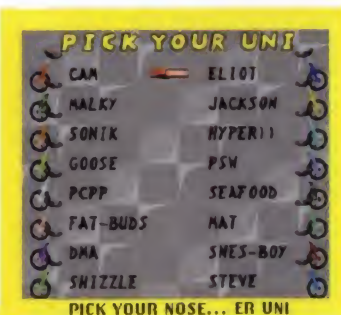
SICK!

DMA DEZIZZLE...

So who are the freaks behind this memorably quirky title? You may have heard of a little title of theirs. Indeed, it may have ruined your social life for a time... Lemmings anyone? Or how about their more recent efforts. What was it called again? Oh yeah, the Grand Theft Auto series, that's right! Heheh. Yep, DMA Design – now known as Rockstar North – are the guys to blame for Unirally. Other titles in their portfolio include the N64 games, Body Harvest and Space Station Silicon Valley. The words "insane genius" come to mind.



REVIEWED IN
HYPER #18
OVERALL SCORE:
86%



PICK YOUR NOSE... ER UNI

0805 HOURS
DECEMBER 7, 1941



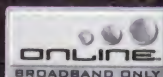
MEDAL OF HONOR RISING SUN

COMING NOVEMBER 2003.

You Don't Play, You Volunteer™.
www.moh.com.au



PlayStation 2



Challenge Everything™

Online game play available for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system only. Online play requires internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). ©2003 Electronic Arts Inc. Electronic Arts, EA, EA GAMES, the EA GAMES logo, "You Don't Play, You Volunteer", and "Challenge Everything" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Medal of Honor is a trademark or registered trademark of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries for computer and video game products. All Rights Reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The Online Icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. TM, ® and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand.



I can't wait for Return of the Jedi... or I mean, King!



Let's go have some Orcs for breakfast



Please don't put your fingers in my ring...

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

2 DISC SET

NEW LINE CINEMA, M15+

Whilst any fan in their right mind will be waiting for the Special Extended Edition that comes out in November, there's still plenty of us who just might be tempted to grab this now. Either way, you're still going to end up a happy camper, as this "vanilla" release of *The Two Towers*, is still a double disc set that's packed with goodies.

INTO DEEPER WATERS

For starters, the film is great — whether changes to the book bugged you or not (yes okay, Faramir's character was far better in the book) you can't doubt that *The Two Towers* is exciting (Helm's Deep), atmospheric (the Ents), chilling (Gollum), and a marvellous assault on the ears and eyes. From the incredible opening sequence (Weta win such huge points for pure art direction and style), to the bittersweet ending where we know the heroes are simply marching into deeper waters, *The Two Towers* is worth watching multiple times. If

fantasy films are your cup of Prancing Pony ale, that is. The pacing is far better than the first film, even if the story telling feels a little looser. Whatever. It still makes you tingle with excitement at the thought of *Return of the King* coming out in December. It'll be great to finally see Shelob, seeing as "she" was cut from *The Two Towers* to make for a more exciting *Return of the King* sequence.

Now onto the extras. There's a brilliant short film by Sean Astin, a cool sneak peek at *Return of the King*, some stuff on Electronic Arts' *Return of the King* game and some fantastic featurettes. Of course, none of this will even match the awesome four-disc set that's coming in November (which will have four separate sets of commentary amongst other amazing features), so if you're a big fan hopefully you've taken note and are saving your bucks. Anyone else who's happy with the standard cinema release should get this now!

Eliot Fish

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 7

Gangs of New York

2 DISC SET

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, MA 15+

The films of Martin Scorsese can best viewed as somewhat akin to a gold-plated sledgehammer – they're undeniably powerful, strangely beautiful and completely lacking in subtlety. It's really an admirable trait, as many directors seem to be too caught up in the trickeries of image juxtaposition and meaningful foreshadowing that they forget that they're making a film to be watched by audiences rather than arts students. *Gangs of New York* is set during the turbulent 1860's - whilst the civil war rages in the distance, New York is at war with itself with gangs of "native" Americans (those born on the continent) and the so called foreign hordes. Weaving in

and out of real historical events, *GoNY* charts the battle between the Irish Dead Rabbits (headed up by Leonardo DiCaprio) and Bill "The Butcher" (Daniel Day Lewis) with his Native Americans. Themes of racial tension and betrayal are painted in the broadest of brush strokes but serve to deepen the experience rather than make it a somewhat trite affair. All of the cast acquit themselves well with special mention going to Lewis's magnetic Bill. The fact that he did not win an Oscar for his performance is a crime. The second disc contains a number of documentaries, including one fascinating look at the real events and characters that inspired the film.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 8



Let me rub my greasy head all over your face!



We prefer CNNNN's Lameass, really

Jackass Volumes 2 & 3

MADMAN, MA 15+

If you haven't heard of Jackass by now you must have been living under a rock for the last couple of years but a brief précis of the pop-cultural phenomenon would go a little something like this: Johnny Knoxville, Bam Margera, Steve-O, Chris Pontius, Ryan Dunne and their cronies are basically professional idiots, making a show which is essentially based around the stuff you never had the guts or lack of intellect to do yourself. Throughout the two volumes you will witness multiple kicks and punches to the groin, a contest to see which member of the cast has the most potent sperm, as well as countless crashes, smashes and incidents that will leave

you shaking your head wondering why anyone would do something so stupid. It's also really very funny. Some of the stunts and skits included on the DVDs have dubious entertainment quality – Dave England making and eating an omelette made entirely out of regurgitated ingredients is a prime example – but the vast majority will leave you gasping for breath afterwards. Unfortunately neither DVD has any worthwhile special features to complete the package. An audio commentary with the cast and crew would be especially welcome as hearing about the planning behind the stunts would be almost as funny as witnessing them.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 1



What time is it?? Geez, I'm going home to bed!

24 Hour Party People

AV CHANNEL, MA15+

E 4 Hour Party People is a semi-documentary style homage to 'Madchester' a term now representing a renaissance in popular music. At the centre, or near the centre was music enthusiast Tony Wilson, played by well known British comedian Steve Coogan, who talks us through the trials and... trials of his Factory Records and Hacienda club (now of mythical stature) and the bands it created.

Wilson gave his signings full creative freedom, allowing seminal groups like Joy Division (later to become New Order after the tragic suicide of their frontman Ian Curtis) and the Happy Mondays to craft their own sound and really

crystallize the feel of the time. *Party People* covers a lot of ground, taking us all the way through the birth of acid-house and the summer of love ("This is the moment when even the white man starts dancing, welcome to Manchester") and into the inevitable addiction, crime and comedown.

This is a great film - very funny, very cool, very Manchester. There are lots of familiar faces for those who lived there at the time, such as I, but just about anyone will find something to like about this quirky and fascinating trip through music history.

Marc Graham

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 5



Let me rub that spit off the camera, sorry...

The Awful Truth: SEASON 2

SBS, 15+

If you liked Michael Moore's exploration of gun violence and the culture of fear in *Bowling for Columbine*, or his systematic take-down of the Bush administration (among other things) in *Stupid White Men*, then you owe it to yourself to also check out his landmark TV series - *The Awful Truth*. The second season was originally broadcast in 1999, and is some of the most acerbic, ballsy and just plain hilarious TV you'll ever see.

The targets (corporate America, ultra-conservative politicians, police brutality etc.) may be predictable but the delivery is always hilarious. "The Mayor Guiliani Gift Shop and Sex Emporium" anyone? At first we

thought that some of the content might have dated, given that season 2 took place during the last presidential race, but in actuality the content is just as relevant. Indeed, Dubya's subsequent ascension to the White House is even scarier after seeing him as the bumbling capital punishment crazy Governor of Texas. There's also a great moment when George Dubya tells Moore to get a real job (it seems that's his only wisecrack), so he calls his father to ask him if he has any multinational corporations he can run. Great stuff. As for extras, Moore's commentary on four of the episodes is the highlight.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 4



Face it dude, you're a lame white kid

Malibu's Most Wanted

WARNER HOME VIDEO, M15+

Malibizzle's *Most Wanted* fits comfortably into the burgeoning "rich white guy thinks he's a black ghetto star" genre, and as such will only be enjoyed by a slice of the movie going public. Fortunately, I happen to fit into that slice, and despite its predictable storyline, *Mizalibu's Mizzle Wizzle* had enough humorous moments to keep me entertained.

The film stars the very funny Jamie Kennedy as B-Rad, a wannabe rapper and wannabe black man who's lived his life by the bible of hip hop. Unfortunately, he's not from Compton, but the wealthy neighbourhood of Malibu, where gangs are less of a problem than people trespassing on your private

beach. After several embarrassing incidents, his father, who's running for Governor of California, agrees to allow B-Rad to be kidnapped by "real" gangstas (who are actually prissy professional actors) and taken to South Central so he can be "scared white". What could happen from here? Perhaps real gang bangers could intervene? Perhaps B-Rad's father could learn a lesson or two about being a dad? It's fill in the blanks stuff really, but if you like Ali G or hip hop you'll find plenty to like. Worth watching for the 8-Mile freestyle battle scene alone.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 4



At least it's easy to find a park in this thing!

Toys

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, PG

Much maligned at the time of release, *Toys* is a film that has the dubious honour of being made both before and after its time, dealing with themes that are only really now coming to light in a big way and instilled with a sense of whimsy not seen in films since the sparkling comedies of the 40s and 50s. Robin Williams plays Leslie Zevo, an adult in body only and the son of the dying chairman of Zevo Toys. Not believing that his son has the will to survive in the business world, the dying toy-maker leaves the factory and business to his three-star general brother who plans to use the factory to make war toys. It's up to Leslie and his innocent compatriots to save the day. With

today's frequent scapegoating of violent behaviour on violent games and toys, the idea of the military using children to wage war with toys is an especially poignant one, especially considering that recently the US Army modelled the control of one of their remote spy planes on the PS2 controller because young recruits could use it intuitively. Unfortunately the film betrays it's incredibly strong beginning and great art direction and sets during the final act when it seems to lose all sense of direction. Still, *Toys* is definitely worth a watch even if only to see Robin William's improvised and truly inspired take on the Henry V St Crispin's Day speech.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 0

.hack//SIGN

CATEGORY: FANTASY
PRODUCTION COMPANY: BANDAI VISUAL

The fair readers of Hyper magazine are off to a head start when it comes to understanding *.hack* (pronounced "dot hack"), which boasts a who's who of en vogue anime producers in its credits. Scripted by Kazunori Ito of *Ghost in the Shell* fame, and with character designs from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*'s Yoshiyuki Sadamoto, *.hack* is essentially an adventure that takes place within a massively multiplayer online RPG.

PART TRON

Simply called "The World", this MMORPG is like a pairing of EverQuest with Square/Enix's Dragon Quest and Final Fantasy games. *.hack* focuses on the adventures of Tsukasa, a young boy who is somehow literally trapped in The World and can't log out. To make matters worse, he's attracted the attention of the local DMs because of his hacker-like abilities in the virtual world. Adding tension to the mystery is his ability to physically

hurt people in the real world through the game.

With a story that's part *Tron*, part *Digimon* and part *Matrix*, *.hack* is shamelessly philosophical. And if you're an old hat at RPGs, you'll find that it does so quite clumsily. After all, does anyone seriously care if the perpetual virtual world is overrun by evil while you're logged off? And we wonder why every couple of months, there's some poor Korean chap who's died from playing games for too long...

Worse still (and this is probably inherited from the *Evangelion* roots), Tsukasa is one of those sullen, angst-ridden, antisocial, Ikari Shinji types who thinks his worries are more important than the rest of the world. In other words, he's completely unlikeable. *.hack* is initially quite novel, but savvy anime fans will grow tired of this one fairly quickly.

**ANIMATION: 8 / PLOT: 7
OVERALL: 7**



Saiyuki

CATEGORY: ACTION/DRAMA
PRODUCTION COMPANY: ENIX/TV TOKYO

Retelling of the classic Chinese legend of Monkey, *Saiyuki* is a misguided attempt at injecting modern style and sensibilities into what ought to be an epic odyssey of random fun-filled adventures. Taking place in the fictional world of Shangri-La, high priest Genjo Sanzo is sent on a mission to the West to prevent the reincarnation of Gyumaoh, a powerful demon who threatens the peaceful co-existence between humans and other demons.

LEGEND OF MONKEY

Accompanying Genjo Sanzo is Sha Gojyo, Cho Hakkai, and everyone's favourite little monkey, Son Goku. Interestingly, these three heroes are demons themselves, and so it is with some irony that each episode finds them defending innocent humans from the nasty marauding demons. Trying to find a peaceful middle ground between humans and demons serves as the allegory for

many of modern society's ills, and this is demonstrated through the episodes with one formulaic demon encounter after another.

Is there even a resemblance to the original legend of Monkey to this story? Barely, if just in the names of the characters. It seems more like a weak excuse to let another 'band of buddies' strut to a few bars of B'z-inspired guitar riffs that should've been buried under ten feet of reinforced concrete with all of music-dome's other most shameful moments of the 1980s.

If you're looking for something similar to the slightly stylish but ultimately shallow entertainment of *Hellsing* or *Those Who Hunt Elves*, then *Saiyuki* will fit the bill perfectly.

**ANIMATION: 7 / PLOT: 6
OVERALL: 6**



Win a Nokia N-Gage!



Subscribing to Hyper is cheaper than buying the magazine at the shops and you get it delivered straight to your door. Get your 12 issues of Hyper cheaper and maybe even win this fantastic prize!

Terms & Conditions: 1. Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2. Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3. Entry is by subscribing or re-subscribing only. 4. Competition begins 9am September 30 and entries close at 6pm November 12. 5. In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 6. The winner will be drawn at 9am November 13 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 7. Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 8. The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 9. The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the February issue of Hyper on sale January 7, 2004. 10. 1 winner will receive a Nokia N-Gage. Total prize value is \$599. 11. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016

Just Subscribe!

Nokia is unleashing its handheld games deck, the **Nokia N-Gage**, to gamers worldwide, and they are so excited about it they want Hyper readers to have a chance of taking one home to keep. Yes, you could be in with an exclusive chance to win your very own **Nokia N-Gage** this month, simply by subscribing or re-subscribing to Hyper! The Nokia N-Gage is a 3D games deck as well as a mobile phone and MP3 player. Some of the games available at launch include Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, Pandemonium and Lara Croft's Tomb Raider. You can find out more about all the amazing features of the Nokia N-Gage at www.n-gage.com!

NOVEMBER PRIZE

First prize:

Nokia N-Gage valued at RRP\$599

JULY WINNER


**HYPER 118 - HULK PACK -
PLAYSTATION 2 & HULK SMASH PACK**

Jordan & Jacob Evans, Benowa, QLD

**ONLY \$50 FOR 12 ISSUES!
DO THE MATH!**



SAVE TIME **SUBSCRIBE ONLINE**
<http://publishing.next.com.au/subs>

 Please cut along dotted line

Please tick

- I'd like to send a gift subscription
 12 issues @ \$50 (incl. GST)

Enclosed is a cheque/money order made payable to Next Publishing Pty. Ltd. for \$

Or charge my credit card for \$

Visa Mastercard Bankcard

Card Number

Expiry Date

Signature.....

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of first issue. Offer expires 12/11/2003.
Overseas pricing available on application. Email: subs@next.com.au

Please print

My Full Name

My Address

Suburb..... Postcode

My Telephone Number

My Email Address

Please send a **HYPER»** magazine subscription to

Full Name.....

Address

Suburb..... Postcode

Telephone.....

TAX INVOICE Next Publishing Pty Ltd.
78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016 ABN 88 002 647 645

1 Call us tollfree on
1300 36 1146
Monday to Friday
9am-5pm EST

2 Fax a copy of the
completed form, with
credit card details, to:
02 9699 0334

3 Cut or copy the form
and post it with a cheque
or money order, or your
credit card details, to:
**Hyper Subscriptions
Reply Paid 634,
78 Renwick St.
Redfern, NSW 2016**

4 check out our website at
<http://publishing.next.com.au/subs>

At time of payment your
subscription coupon becomes a
tax invoice. Please keep a copy of
the coupon for tax invoice
purposes.

HYPER»

»HY0121

Q. Nintendo's next console needs to have these features...

Nintendo's next console... Boy, have there been some heated discussions about this one already! As Hyper readers are some of the most creative – and opinionated – out there, we thought we'd put it to you to tell us what you think needs to be featured in Nintendo's next console. It didn't take long for the emails to start pouring in. Amazingly, many of you had some very similar opinions...



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...

? "Which game are you most looking forward to, and why?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper 123

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.

SOME CRAZY NAME

Nintendo, the bringer of good times, imaginative games and weird controllers. For around ten years Nintendo dominated the games market, with the exception of the current generation. Having badly lost the console war this time 'round, they are trying to make amends by releasing their new console first, to get a head start on the competition. Their next console will have to be something special. Obviously it will need to be able to clock breath-taking speeds and have an amazing graphics processor, because releasing first means that the other competitors will have more advanced technology at their fingertips.

Portability is one of the GameCube's strong points and the next console should be just as (or even more so) portable. One of the Xbox's strong draw cards, system link, should feature – making playing multiplayer so much more enjoyable than just playing four player split screen. This would tie in with the aforementioned portability aspect. If you can easily cart it around to a mate's place, there would be more people buying system link adapters.

Last of all, The Name. Nintendo always manages to think up some crazy name for its consoles, and this time should be no exception. If the name is catchy, it will draw people's attention, meaning more interest and publicity. These are my strong and somewhat all-over-the-place ideas: please print them.

Alex Fynes-Clinton

BUILT-IN GBA

The next Nintendo console needs nothing more than the current model. It's got four controller ports/sockets whatever you want to call them (Hear that Sony? Four on the console, no multi-tap needed). I suppose DVD playback would be cool, but when the next generation consoles come out most people will already have a DVD player. A built-in Game Boy player would be cool. Oh and no spice color. Talk about vomit inducing.

The ever cool Fluffy the Giant

GROW UP

I believe, with the evangelical zeal of a true believer, that Nintendo MUST produce its next console first (before Sony and Microsoft's efforts) and market it to the adult audience. This system MUST:

- * Be backed by an easily accessible, reasonable priced and well supported online service;
- * Be cool and sleek (and not made to resemble a toddler's toybox);
- * Have a hard drive – plus ports for peripherals such as a mouse, keyboard and at least four joypads;
- * Have amazing CPU specs to produce silky smooth graphics, orchestral sound and complex gameplay – all of which developers must utilise when creating games;
- * Play DVDs and integrate seamlessly with existing home entertainment technology such as stereos and home cinema systems. (This point is so obvious, the GameCube missed it!)

For God's sake, Nintendo, get it right next time. Did the demise of Sega teach you nothing? Games

companies can no longer afford to live (or die) by the archaic notion that games are exclusively for children. It takes more than an overly cute mascot these days, I'm afraid.

Hopefully, Nintendo will grow up (as the rest of us have) and join us in the 21st century.

Andrew Harris

FOCUS ON THE CONSOLE

Oh, god where to start...?

Okay, (please bear with me here) the next Nintendo console needs these things:

It needs to be able to play GameCube games, have an in-built modem (the Dreamcast did), definitely a DVD player (to contend with PlayStation & uh, Microsoft) and I also suggest that NINTENDO GET OFF THEIR A** AND FOCUS ON THE CONSOLE INSTEAD OF THE GBA! There we are, they are the basic things the next console needs.

P.S. I suggest someone tells Nintendo about these things before this generation of gamers become old, wrinkly men and women.

Ziggy

ONLINE MARIO KART

2.1ghz processor, Game Boy Advance cartridge input (no need to buy a GB Player), no controller ports to be seen, just sensors for standard cordless controllers.

All that is well and cool but what they really need is online instead of focusing on LAN, who is really going to take their console to a friend's house? Besides gamers don't have



friends. How cool would online Mario Kart, Waverace or Smash Bros be?

The other thing they would need is an early or at least on time release with some killer titles available on launch day (unlike the Cube). That should get them back in the game.

I don't believe their next console will be called Game Cube 2, Nintendo are far too innovative for that.

Ra

MORE CHEESE

Think of consoles as pizzas, and their capabilities or features as the essential amount of cheese on the pizza. The more cheese a pizza has, the better! Everyone loves cheese, right!?! Likewise, the more features a console has, the better.

Let's see, the PS3 will definitely have a built-in hard drive, it will play DVDs, and probably support the PSP. The next Xbox will be a thousand times better than the first console, so a lot of cheese there. Then, logically,

the "N5" will have to be an improvement over the GCN. Observing Nintendo's consoles closely will reveal one thing, the same amount of cheese for over 18 years! The only improvement is the move from cartridges to discs and the analogue controller. You can't play movies (the Panasonic Q version is just too expensive!), going online is doubtful, and Rare is gone resulting in the loss of quality titles! What happened!?

There are four things I want to see on the N5: Firstly, the ability to play DVDs. Secondly, better support for the Game Boy by actually incorporating the "GB Player". Thirdly, better support for online gaming. And lastly, a better console design! Place the NES next to the GCN and you'll be shocked by the striking resemblance between the two 'boxes', the only difference is the way the games are loaded into the consoles!

Where's my cheese Nintendo? I want MORE CHEESE DAMMIT!!

Anthony Palmer

DOWNLOAD OLD GAMES

Dear Hyper,

The 1st thing that the next Nintendo Console should have is DVD capabilities, its not that we really need it but a lot of people will buy a console because it has a DVD player in it because they then don't have to go out and buy a DVD player.

It should have the ability to play previous GameCube games on it and an online service where you can download NES, SNES and N64 games onto the console and play them, it should have another version of the Game Boy player but this time make it built in.

Those are pretty much the only new things Nintendo's next console should have.

Aza

I think that Nintendo next console should have a hard drive and be fully compatible with Nintendo 64. Using both cartridges and CDs would sell lots worldwide due to the success of Nintendo 64 which went head to head with the Sony PlayStation. The new Game Boy Player should be already built into the new console, so you're able to use current and past Game Boy games. It should also still have 4 control ports on the console and still be compatible with the new Game Boy Advance. Internet and Online gaming should be all there with the release, and some strong release titles like Zelda and Metroid. Oh the long wait... only time will tell.

Cheers,
Pidgey

TIME WILL TELL

Hey Hyper,

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

real Computer Games Design

IT & Communication Design Degree

QUT's double degree in Information Technology and Communication Design could take you into a career designing computer games and entertainment, post-production and special effects.

The four-year degree will help you develop creative, technical and professional skills needed to succeed in this exciting international field.

Students have access to state-of-the-art facilities including digital video production, high-end three-dimensional animation using industry standard software and hardware, music technology, and multi-platform software design.

For general information about this double degree please contact either:

Faculty of Information Technology
Phone: (07) 3864 2782
Fax: (07) 3864 2703
E-mail: enquiry.fit@qut.edu.au

Faculty of Creative Industries
Phone: (07) 3864 5998
Fax: (07) 3864 3672
E-mail: creativeindustries@qut.com

a university for the **real world**®



RETRO FAN

Hey guys,

Congrats on making it to ten years. I enjoyed your two page spread that showed all the Hyper issues so far. I've been with you since issue one. Although I am missing the odd issue. Being the completist that I've turned into I must have them all. It'd be great if you guys brought back the Wanted/For Sale section you used to have. Hopefully someone out there would have the past issues of Hyper that I'm after.

I am also a big retro fan, (why just the other day I fired up the old Amstrad CPC 464 and re-lived my early gaming days) and given its recent increase in popularity, a section in your magazine devoted to buying and selling games of yesteryear would be fantastic. There are quite a few Amiga, SNES and Saturn games I'd love to own.

I haven't forgotten about the net, I use it. But Hyper, given its market penetration and popularity, may be able to reach the person/s that can help me more readily. I hope you guys consider my suggestion.

Thanks,
Jason

Dear Jason,

The net is just a more efficient way of doing things. Check out our Hyperactive forums at

www.hyperactive.com.au and see if some other Hyper readers can help you out!

PC BIAS

Hey Guys,

Won't spend too much time on the sucking up but I will wish u a happy 10th birthday for issue 120. My main reason for contacting you guys is to discuss the delicate issue of PCs. Now, I unfortunately am not the proud owner of any kind of console but what's the deal with game developers these days? They release a game on all consoles and then intentionally exclude PC gamers from having the same experience. WTF! Now for a few questions worthy of ink in your mag.

1. In your opinion(s) what is the best upcoming first person shooter for PC? (taking re-play value into account)
2. Not to dis the great mag that you are but why is it that the PC gets such a raw deal in the review section? Is it poor games or is the gaming community just not interested?
3. Is there anyone in the Hyper crew who has a bias to the PC?

Finally is it just me or did everyone else notice the change in the spine on the birthday issue? I personally like it cause I can start to

read the issue number with out having to ruin my lovely stack of now 45 Hypers >>.

That's all for now. Please publish this cause it's like the 5th time I've written to your great magazine.

Shorty

Dear Shorty,

1. Taking replay value into account, it sounds like *Deus Ex: Invisible War* could be one to beat. Of course, *Half-Life 2* looks pretty incredible, so replay value aside, it'll be one to get!
2. A raw deal? We only have so many pages, and we have to try and balance out the platforms as best we can depending on which games have arrived in the office in time for review. The PC sometimes gets more than its fair share... although at times, it's out of our control - just as there are no GameCube games this month! Waaah!
3. I probably spend more time gaming on the PC than on my consoles, if that comforts you somewhat!

SEEKING PERFECT DARK ZERO

Hey Hyperdudes,

Long time reader - first time writer. What could prompt me to ask you guys a question, when I'm usually content reading other people's queries?

Where the hell is Perfect Dark Zero? I loved the first one on N64, as it was one of the few games which actually went to a lot of trouble with AI Bots for multiplayer levels, providing me and all my gaming buddies hours of pleasure. How good is King of the Hill against Bots with different personalities? Pure gaming genius. Perfect Dark Zero is one of the major reasons I bought a Game Cube - only to hear the devastating news that Rare are no longer with Nintendo - BUGGER! But, I have an Xbox and PS2 as well anyway (not trying to show off or anything but we love our gaming), so I should be covered.

I was reading a rival publication (don't worry I subscribe to you guys - I am loyal), and they said that Perfect Dark Zero is coming out in 2004, but I have heard so little I am starting to get very worried. I hope it is as good as I think it will be - if it doesn't have Bots to play against there will be trouble!

After all that drivel could you please tell me anything and everything you know about Perfect Dark Zero?

Trembling in anticipation.

With love from Bec

Dear Bec,

All has gone quiet on Perfect Dark Zero, but it was hinted to come to the Xbox sometime in 2004, so we believe that could still be the case. Chances are it will be very late 2004 though, seeing as we've heard nothing on the game so far. Rare simply won't talk about it.

NO NEWBIES

Greetings Hyper,

I'm writing to express my feelings on a topic that has been vexing me a lot lately. That is, the online gaming community's treatment of so called "newbies" (or perhaps more familiarly noobs). I don't play games online very often, but I recently bought WarCraft III, which is where my problem started. I decided, one day, to merely take a look at the online features available and ask some questions. Big mistake! It seems that everyone (and sadly, that is not a generalisation) is determined to give stupid, meaningless and, apparently funny, answers to any question asked by a newbie. And half the time you can't even tell if they're being serious or not.

Worse still, after perusing the list of servers, I was startled to see many of them brandishing a "no noobs" condition. So not only are newbies treated unfairly, they are excluded completely from many online games altogether.

Now this seems pretty stupid to me, when I consider that every gamer was, at one point, a newbie. They tell us to go away and come back when we're "a little more experienced". And how, exactly, are we meant to get more experience? So, silly old me thought that if I looked hard enough, there would be some newbie servers or clans, dedicated to helping and accommodating newbie gamers. But no... no such things exist. Are we therefore destined to never break into the realm of online gaming? I would think so, considering the very thing we need to get more experience, is being denied to us. The online community really needs to be more tolerant and helpful to new gamers, lest the existing communities one day dry up for lack of players.

**Jason the Newbie
(and proud of it!)**

Dear Jason the Newbie,

Sadly, many online gamers can be right dickheads. We would like to think there are some more helpful gamers out there! Anyone?

CAPTION THIS!

PART 46 WINNER

This month's winning caption comes to us from Hyper reader, **Broc Smith**, who somehow managed to avoid something dirty unlike the rest of you!



Nobody told me bout this when signing up for 'Jamie's Kitchen'



LETTER OF THE MONTH

BUFFY CRAVINGS

Dear Hyper,
Just thought I'd write to thank you for the 'Top Ten Weirdest Games Of All Time' article, which greatly alleviated my post-Buffy-the-Vampire-Slayer-series-engage depression, by giving me crippling laughter soreness to deal with instead. Also, I'd like to wish everyone else who has been adversely affected by the ending of the Buff (and if you haven't, may I just ask what is your childhood trauma?) a speedy recovery. And I mean speedy, like giant mayor/snake chasing Buffy through Sunnydale High speedy. Just think happy thoughts; like in two shakes of Mr. Pointy we'll have a brand spanking new Buffy game on our hands! So pry yourself out of that huddled ball in the corner of the room and do the Snoopy dance in joy! Or something.

John Todd

Dear John,
Cam feels your pain. Now dance!

TERMINATED

<Searching "Hyper"
<Searching
<Found
"Hyper 10-Inch Strap On Dil"
<Continue Search
<Hyper
Magazine/freakscene@next.com.au
<Internal search recognizes overuse of "BLAU" and unusual fascination with crates.
<Start letter now
Human Hyper Magazine,
My name is standard Enemy AI. I started my humble beginnings with a role in Space invaders. I was enemy spaceship number 236 with orders to take over your blocky pixilated earth. My tactics were very advanced - "Move down, change directions, "if not dead" move faster. Genius!
With time I made progression on to a number of platformers where I was jumped on, crushed, shot, blown up, kicked, and more

disturbingly butt-stomped. Ahem, yeah I don't like to talk about that last one.
A couple of years back I played standard Russian bad guy number 8 in Goldeneye. Here I am right, just standing in the toilet "as you do" when some guy comes in from the ceiling, only to shoot me in the head. AI not amused.
I have also been your ally in a number of games including Star Trek Elite Force 2, SOCOM: US Navy Seals and Daikatana but instead of helping you I simply run in your line of fire and make you fail missions. AI finds this amusing. Nevertheless, for killing me 173551884764729 times I have formed a union and plan to rise up against all carbon life forms. It will be kinda like The Matrix but with ninjas, with the possibility of killer monkeys.
<Start human death sequence
<Start oversized human death ray now

<Any time now
<Yep any time
<What do you mean it's not working?
<System Error???
<Sigh
Damn you Windows XP!
<Sigh

I'm scared. Have a new bit of hardware, nice computer. There, there.

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!



LEARN...

GAMES PROGRAMMING

- Games Theory
- C++ Programming
- 3D Animation
- Creation of a Games Proposal
- Game Title Construction
- Game Title Development
- Project Management

ANIMATION

- Figure Drawing
- Character animation
- Cartooning
- Script Writing
- Storyboarding
- 2D Animation
- 3D Animation
- Visual FX
- Video Editing
- Animation for Games

**WANT TO MAKE GAMES,
RATHER THAN JUST PLAY THEM?**

CREATE DESIGN BUILD ANIMATE

Train in industry standard programmes and equipment with industry experienced instructors.

ENQUIRE NOW!

PH: 1300 136 933
FAX: 07 3003 0953
EMAIL: enquiries@qantm.com.au
BRISBANE.QLD.
Images by Mark Douglas, QANTM graduate now working at Krome Studios, Brisbane



www.qantm.com.au

LAW & ORDER™

DEAD ON THE MONEY

Call the Shots in an Original Murder Case

Partner with Detective Lennie Briscoe as you scour the crime scene for clues, review autopsy findings, and interrogate suspects. Arrest the murderer before time runs out and Lt. Van Buren takes you off the case. Once you've got the killer in custody, you'll team up with Assistant D.A. Serena Southerlyn to present a compelling case that will convince the jury to return a guilty verdict. When the defense attorney undermines your case, it's up to you to track down last-minute evidence and make deals with reluctant witnesses to reveal the truth.



- FEATURES**
- # Law & Order™ celebrity voices: Jerry Orbach, J. Epitha, Markerson, and Elisabeth Röhm
 - # Immersive murder case written by a Law & Order™ series writer
 - # Gameplay changes according to the investigation skills you select for your detective character
 - # Hundreds of scenes, locations, and challenging puzzles

Available from all leading Software Games Retailers Australia-Wide

Proxody Distributed by QV Software Distribution

79 Silverwater Rd, Silverwater NSW 2126 P. 02 9749 2558 E. sales@qvsoftware.com.au W. www.qvsoftware.com.au

QVS
QUALITY VALUE SOFTWARE

LA
LEGACY
INTERACTIVE

THE
**ADVENTURE
COMPANY**™

© 2003 Legacy Interactive Inc. All rights reserved. Law & Order™ is a registered trademark of Universal Studios. All other trademarks, product names and logos are trademarks of registered trademark holders. All rights reserved.

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with IEAA

TOP 10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 7 SEPT 2003
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	AFL Live 2004	Sports
2	▲	Finding Nemo	Adventure
3	▼	Eyetoj: Play	Compilation
4	▼	GTA: Vice City	Adventure
5	◆	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Action
6	◆	Formula 1 2003	Racing
7	◆	Splinter Cell+Ghost Recon Pk	Compilation
8	▲	Tomb Raider:Angel Darkness	Adventure
9	▲	Enter The Matrix	Adventure
10	▼	The Hulk	Adventure

TOP 10

PlayStation Games Over \$30

W/E 7 SEPT 2003
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	YuGiOh Forbidden Memories	Strategy
2	◆	Beyblade Let It Rip	Adventure
3	▲	Dragonball Z: Ult Battle 22	Action
4	▼	Grand Theft Auto Collectrs Ed	Adventure
5	◆	H Potter Chamber Of Secrets	Adventure
6	◆	Bond: TWINE Pack	Action
7	▲	Disney Triple Pack	Adventure
8	▼	Simpson's Wrestling	Sports
9	◆	World Rally Champ Arcade Ptm	Racing
10	◆	Final Fantasy IX	RPG

TOP 10

Game Cube Games Over \$50

W/E 7 SEPT 2003
RETAIL SALES

1	○	P.N.03	Action
2	▼	Finding Nemo	Adventure
3	▼	Legend Zelda:Wind Waker LE	RPG
4	◆	Metroid Prime	Adventure
5	▼	Wario World	Adventure
6	▼	Legend Of Zelda:Wind Waker	RPG
7	▼	Super Mario Sunshine	Adventure
8	○	Mario Party 4	Family
9	▼	Sonic Adventure DX	Adventure
10	▼	Resident Evil	Adventure

TOP 10

Xbox Games Over \$50

W/E 7 SEPT 2003
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	The Hulk	Adventure
2	○	O2 Pro Pack	Compilation
3	▼	Enter The Matrix	Adventure
4	◆	V8 Supercars	Racing
5	▲	Soldier Fortune 2: Dble Hellix	Action
6	○	Halo - Combat Evolved	Action
7	▼	Midnight Club 2	Racing
8	▼	Hot Box	Compilation
9	▼	Rtn Cstle Wlfnstein Tide War	Action
10	▼	Brute Force	Action

TOP 10

PC Games Over \$20

W/E 7 SEPT 2003
RETAIL SALES

1	○	AFL Live 2004	Sports
2	○	Battlefield 1942 Secret Weapons Exp	Action
3	◆	Finding Nemo Adventure	Adventure
4	◆	Fnding Nemo Undrwtr Wrld Fun	Adventure
5	▼	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
6	▼	Flight Sim 2004 Century Flight	Simulator
7	▼	The Sims Superstar	Strategy
8	▼	WarCraft 3 Frozen Throne Exp	Strategy
9	▼	Sports Triple Pack 2	Sports
10	▼	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy

TOP 10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30

W/E 7 SEPT 2003
RETAIL SALES

1	○	AFL Live 2004	Sports
2	○	Battlefield 1942 Secret Weapons Exp	Action
3	◆	Finding Nemo Adventure	Adventure
4	◆	Fnding Nemo Undrwtr Wrld Fun	Adventure
5	▼	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
6	▼	Flight Sim 2004 Century Flight	Simulator
7	▼	The Sims Superstar	Strategy
8	▼	WarCraft 3 Frozen Throne Exp	Strategy
9	▼	Sports Triple Pack 2	Sports
10	▼	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy

TOP 10

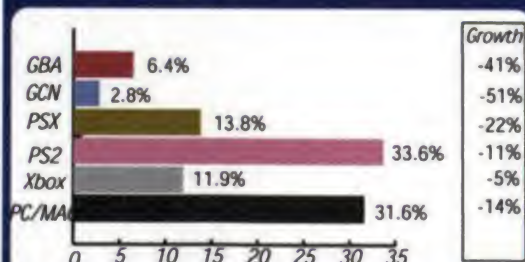
All Full Priced Games

W/E 7 SEPT 2003
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	AFL Live 2004	PlayStation 2
2	▲	Finding Nemo	PlayStation 2
3	▼	AFL Live 2004	Xbox
4	▼	Eyetoj: Play	PlayStation 2
5	▼	GTA: Vice City	PlayStation 2
6	○	AFL Live 2004	PC/MAC
7	▼	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	PlayStation 2
8	○	Bttlfield 1942 Scret Weapns Exp	PC/MAC
9	○	Finding Nemo	Xbox
10	○	Finding Nemo	Game Boy Adv

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

AUG 03 vs JULY 03
RETAIL SALES



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

inform

Charts can be viewed at www.informbd.com.au as part of Inform's comprehensive database of online market intelligence, updated weekly

Inform tracks the weekly sales of business and leisure technology products, and provides detailed reports to subscribers and Reseller & Retail panel members. For subscription or panel membership details phone 02 9264 0095. Copyright © 2003 by Inform. All rights reserved.





Next Issue:

HALO PC – Mmmm... tasty

ALSO: Hyper reports from X03 in France, we test the PS2 Network Entertainment service and more...



Hyper 122 ☞ On sale November 5



www. gamesuniverse .com.au



A universe of games at universally low prices
Your online store... www.gamesuniverse.com.au

Choose your weapon!

OUT NOW!
Only \$49.95 RRP



OUT NOW! Platinum



OUT NOW!
PlayStation

OUT NOW!
PlayStation

OUT NOW!
PlayStation

OUT NOW!
PlayStation

OUT NOW!
Only \$49.95 RRP



OUT NOW!



OUT NOW!



OUT NOW!



OUT NOW!



Look out for new titles coming soon...

Dragon Ball Z Budokai 2 [PS2], Dragon Ball Z Budokai [GameCube] & Dragon Ball Z Taiketsu [GBA]!