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122 DECEMBER '03

HYPERS

THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE RETURN OF THE KING

HELP SAVE MIDDLE-EARTH WITH YOUR PS2

RUGBY 2004

Where the Rugby World Cup is never over...

XBOX XMAS OVERDRIVE

Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge, Top Spin and Voodoo Vince reviewed, plus we go to X03!

ULTIMA X

The PC game they said they'd never make

HALO PC

The second coming or not much chop?




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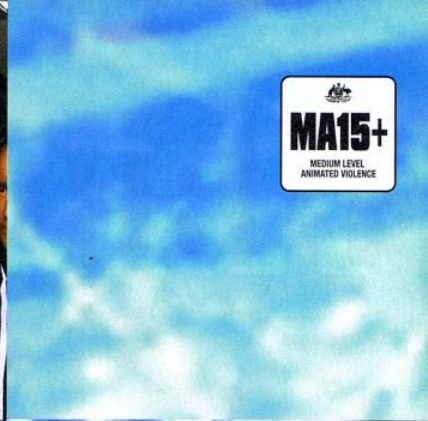
World Wrestling
Entertainment

PlayStation 2 NOVEMBER 2003

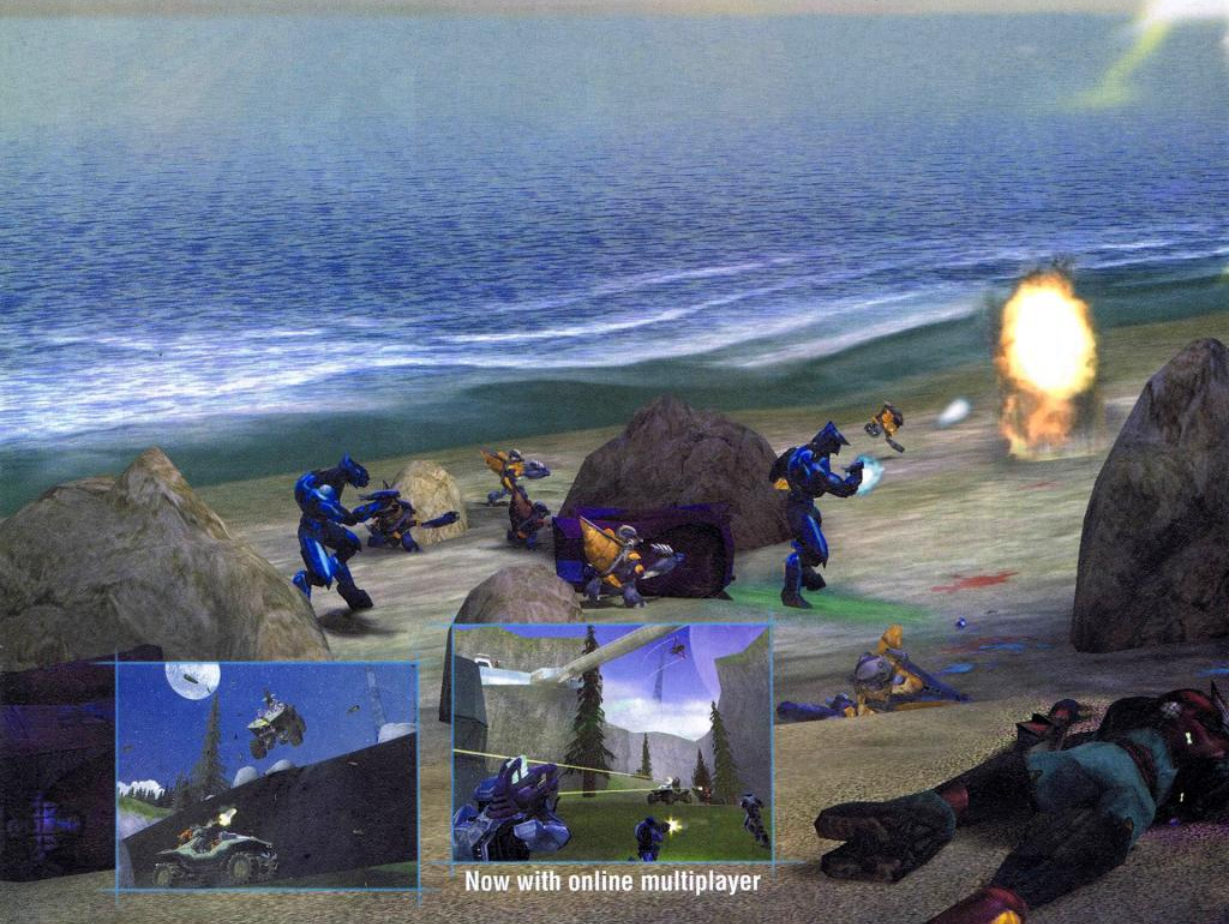


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Halo Invades



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game studios

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PC

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www.microsoft.com/Games/Halo



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Cool things to come...



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HYPER >>

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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: monique@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0300
Fax: (02) 9310 2012

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

CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Wilks, Daniel Staines, Jackson Gothe-Snape, Stephen Farrelly, Frank Dry, Brett Robinson, Kosta Andreadis, Tim Levy, Roland Flanagan, March Stepnik, General Greivous and Oranges 013.

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With Halo on PC here, Master Chief decided to visit our lovely city of Sydney. Look out for the rest of his holiday snaps throughout the issue...

EDITORIAL

>> Never has Hyper faced such a quandary. Whilst we were hard at work this issue (i.e. playing Top Spin all day), mountains of Christmas releases were pouring in the door of Hyper HQ. Before we'd finished our deadline, we virtually had all the games for the next issue sitting in an ugly stack ready to be reviewed. So what, you're asking, is the great problem we're facing? Well, usually the game of the month award is pretty clear cut. This month, we had trouble deciding between Viewtiful Joe and Crimson Skies, but most of the time there's a clear winner. Next issue, however, we're going to have to pick one Game of the Month from about six absolutely amazing games, and frankly, I don't know what we're going to do. At this stage, we could very easily have six Games of the Month, as choosing between them is like choosing between a million dollars in cash and a million dollar cheque. You're happy either way. So what will it be? You'll have to pick up the next issue of Hyper...

Eliot Fish >> Editor

THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS GOES ANIME, COMING TO DVD

->>>Start your engines, the new Speed Racer is here!

INITIAL D

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- ANIME NEWS NETWORK



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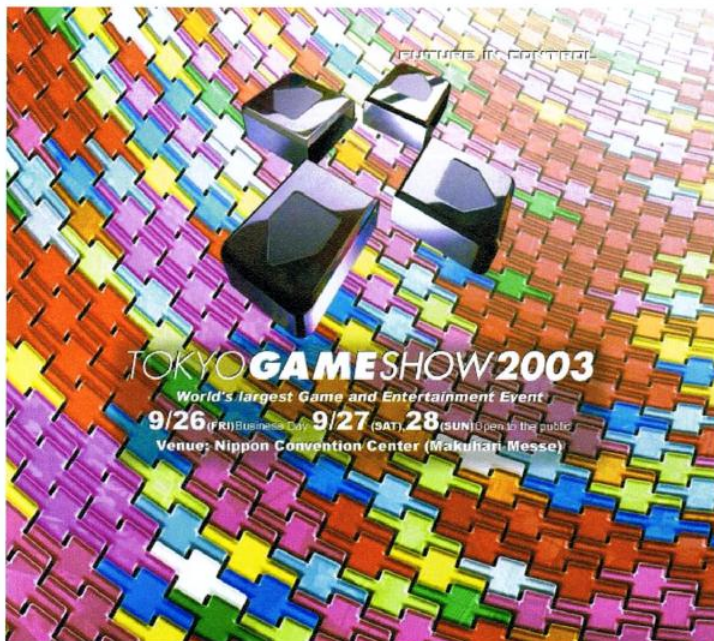


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News >>

IN THE NEWS: Tokyo Game Show ■ the Xbox Beast ■ Advent Children ■ Wireless GBA ■ Half-Life 2 leak and lots more



Armored Core: Nexus



Fatal Frame 2 (Project Zero 2)



Gran Turismo 4

EVENT!

TOKYO GAME SHOW

Makuhari Messe (Nippon Convention Centre), 26-28 September 2003

✦ Tokyo Game Show (TGS) is Japan's annual three-day game convention, and after a good showing this year (attendance and exhibitor presence was up from previous years), it's still the smaller and younger sibling of America's E3 in terms of industry importance. Although it may be considered less relevant than E3 by even Japanese companies, the big difference between the two is that E3 is industry-only, while the TGS considers its event a good opportunity to promote games to consumers and so opens its doors to the public on days two and three. The result is a more enjoyable, festive atmosphere (with plenty of Cosplay) and a higher quotient of interesting freebies and dance-offs than E3. For Hyper, the pleasure as always was getting an eyeful of some of the most bizarre game creations that will certainly not make the freaky border control out of Japan.

A NUMBER OF UPDATES

The official theme of this year's show was the cute and cumbersome "A Playful Spirit Can Change the World", and if this theme had anything to do with online games, then we shudder to think what the world may become. If there was one standout trend of the show, it was a number of online games that were mostly indistinguishable being peddled to the masses, especially MMORPGs from Chinese and Korean game companies. It's good to be an online gamer in Asia right now.

The show proper was kicked off with a keynote address by new Nintendo president Satoru Iwata, who after charting the history of game development and plugging the Famicom's (the original Japanese version of the Nintendo Entertainment System) 20th anniversary, went on to announce a wireless link device for the GBA and

a new console called the iQue. But it's not THE new next-gen console from Nintendo, rather, it's a cheaply-produced box for release in the Chinese market that'll play SNES and N64 games only (no support for 'Cube titles) with games selling around the 10 dollar mark (to combat the rampant piracy in the country). Apart from that, Nintendo had little else to do with the show.

SquareEnix had an innovative title on show at their stand, the gimmicky Dragon Quest, which detects the appropriate movements from its proprietary handheld sword controller to fell creatures on screen. There were a number of updates to existing franchises (still no further announcement on FFXII — that'll be coming late November) like FFX-2 (Last Mission), an expansion to FFXI and Front Mission 4, which were nothing new. The real news from SquareEnix came from an

off-site press conference where a sequel to Kingdom Hearts for the PS2 and a stand-alone Kingdom Hearts for the GBA were revealed. SquareEnix also announced Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children, which, much to our dismay, proved not to be a sequel (akin to FFX-2) to the groundbreaking game in the series but rather the first in a series of episodic CG movies set two years after the ending of FFVII and to be released early next year. Just go check out the small news piece on it this issue.

ABSTRACT FREAKINESS

Sony's huge stand had Grand Turismo 4 showing with the official Logitech GT4 steering wheel (900 degrees of movement!), and be prepared to be flabbergasted with what Polyphony has in store for you. Apart from that, the totally adorable and absolutely unplayable

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 50 in the subject line.

PART
50



Heh.



Kingdom Hearts 2:
looks a little
goofy to us

(to non-Japanese, at least) Mojob Ribbon mystified. The real surprise was the moody game, *Siren*, a hybrid survival horror/mystery that should give the *Silent Hill* series a run for its money in regards to abstract freakiness.

Tecmo's *Project Zero 2* looked gorgeous, and it seems much more attention has been paid to character development and story this time around. Konami's *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence* is the 3D update that had to happen (we're not counting the very sad N64 efforts) but rest assured that the original 2D game mechanics haven't been altered too much, and the game is immensely playable. Capcom's *Onimusha* series of games seemed to hit with *Onimusha 3*, but missed with *Onimusha Buraiden*, a *Powerstone / Smash Brothers* Melee influenced fighter. Ugh.

Namco had an update to its home Taiko drumming game on display (complete with miniature Taiko drums) that should prove a smash if the arcade version is anything to go by. And lastly, From Software caught the eye of Hyper with its flair-free display of some killer titles. *Armored Core: Nexus* looked hot, while the psychological horror games *Nebula: Echonight* (*Silent Hill* meets *System Shock*) and the mysterious *Kuon* (set in medieval Japan) show much promise in the freak-out stakes.

With the show over and many cans of incomprehensible soft drinks consumed from the hundreds of vending machines around, the usual caveat arises: there's no guarantee that most of what we saw will make it out of Japan. Sigh.



BUNDLED MICROSOFT RELEASE THE BEAST

Looking For A Big Xmas...

The Beast is Microsoft's Christmas bundle which includes an Xbox console and controller, an additional limited edition second controller, two games (*Midtown Madness 3* & *Brute Force*), a DVD remote control and an introductory two month Xbox Live™ trial offer. When bought as 'The Beast' Entertainment Pack,

you're looking at saving over \$200 based on the RRP of the individual products, with the Beast bundle retailing for only \$399 RRP.

It's shaping up to be quite the killer Christmas for Xbox, with *Project Gotham Racing 2*, *Top Spin*, *Amped 2*, *Crimson Skies*, *Deus Ex 2* and *Unreal 2* coming exclusive to the console, amongst others.



ALAN
Class: Warrior
Race: Barbarian

> Bashful Barbarian seeks fun loving Druid with insatiable thirst for blood*;-)

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PlayStation 2
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CABLE-FREE

WIRELESS GBA GAMING NEXT YEAR!

Nintendo laugh in the face of N-Gage

The newly announced Game Boy Communication Adapter, designed in conjunction with Motorola, will be released next year to a huge installed base of hungry GBA gamers. Allowing up to five gamers to link-up their GBAs without the need for any kind of cable, the adapter has a range of 5-10 meters (roughly similar to Bluetooth) and will initially be compatible with the new Pokémon Fire Red and Leaf Green over in Japan.

A local release has not yet been confirmed, but we suspect this is Nintendo's way of getting the jump on Sony's wireless PSP handheld, and that the GB Communication Adapter will be available worldwide before the PSP gets its claws in.

FORCE!

XBOX RUMOURS

Rogue Squadron pack?

We've been hearing some pretty interesting rumours about Xbox versions of a number of games, from Pro Evolution Soccer 3 to a very cool-sounding Rogue Squadron pack that will feature Rogue Squadron, Rogue Leader and Rebel Strike on a single Xbox DVD sometime in late 2004.

Rogue Squadron will have its graphics updated, whilst some very tasty Xbox Live features will be added for awesome multiplayer dogfights. X-Wings versus TIEs on Xbox Live? We won't hold our breath, but we're starting to believe it...

WINNERS

Hyper 120

HYPER BIRTHDAY

Mathew Robinson, NSW

POLAROID CAMERAS

Winner

Justin Mah, NSW

Runners Up

Scott Stevenson, NSW

Nic Kocher, VIC

Sharon Robertson, NSW

FIRST LOOK!

Jade Empire
Xbox Developer: Bioware Publisher: Microsoft

FIRST LOOK!

The Bard's Tale
PS2/XBOX/GCN/PC
Developer: inXile Entertainment Publisher: TBA

FIRST LOOK!



FINALLY
GAMECUBE DROPS TO \$199!

Will it generate Sales this Christmas?

After the price drop to \$99 in the United States, Nintendo enjoyed a burst of GameCube sales, by up to 400%. Locally, Nintendo Australia has brought the GameCube down to \$199 (a price we here at Hyper believe all current consoles should sell for), which might hopefully encourage a resurgence of interest in the Cube. Especially with Mario Kart: Double Dash coming out for Xmas, we just might see a healthier holiday season for Nintendo this time around. Now we're just waiting to hear on a price drop for that sexy Game Boy Advance SP...



HACKED
LEAKY SOURCE

Valve victim of hack attack

Half-Life 2 developer, Valve Software, were surprisingly taken advantage of by cyber crims, when their computers were hacked back in September. The result was the theft of Half-Life 2's Source code, all the top-secret software behind the amazing game. Gabe Newell of Valve confirmed the crime on the Half-Life 2 messageboards and called upon the gaming community to dig up some information on the perpetrators. Let's just hope this doesn't delay the release date of Half-Life 2 yet again... in the meantime, it's disaster containment time.



MATERIA
FINAL FANTASY VII: ADVENT CHILDREN

A sequel, but not a game... yet

SquareEnix recently unveiled Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children, an hour-long DVD movie sequel to the original FFXIII PlayStation RPG. Finally we know the source of all those "FFVII-2" rumours - Square were simply making this film. Due in 2004, Advent Children will continue the story of Cloud and friends two years on, and shed more light on the mysterious Sephiroth. Advent Children has been created in the ultra-realistic style of Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within, so once

you're over the fact that Cloud no longer looks like a cute blob with spiky yellow polygons, you should enjoy it quite a bit. In fact, we can't wait to see Midgar reproduced this way - it should be stunning. Now there is more speculation, however, that the idea behind producing Advent Children, was to generate interest in the FFXIII universe again for an actual sequel on the Sony PSP handheld. We swear, nothing will kill these rumours...

OVERFLOW

Deus Ex 2: Invisible War will be out on PC & Xbox in December! Local distributor, Atari, confirmed with Hyper that the Australian release was brought in line with the US release date, as opposed to Europe who still have to wait until March due to language translations. Whoo hoo!

Rez and Space Channel 5 creator, Tetsuya Mizuguchi, has left Sega to pursue other opportunities after his in-house team at Sega, United Game Artists, were absorbed by Sonic Team.

Nintendo are running a GameCube Zelda bundle overseas (which may yet come to Aussie shores) which includes the GCN console, Legend of Zelda, Legend of Zelda 2: Adventure of Link, Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask and a demo of the Wind Waker. For some strange reason, the bundle has neglected to include the best Zelda game of the lot: A Link to the Past (SNES), the third game in the series. What are Nintendo thinking?

Pop legend, Peter Gabriel, has agreed to compose the music for Ubi Soft's Uru: Ages Beyond Myst. He's written a song called "Burn You Up, Burn You Down" for starters, and is no doubt banging on some bongos as we speak.

EyeToy: Groove, the funky new dancing game coming for Sony's EyeToy cam peripheral, features a fairly impressive number of big name artists. Expect songs from Fatboy Slim, Madonna, Elvis, Jamiroquai, The Jacksons, Village People, Groove Armada and Kool & The Gang.

Halo freaks can already download a patch for the game, plus gearboxsoftware.com have a dedicated Halo server for download for those of you wanting to host your own Halo games.



CELENA
Class: Magician
Race: Erudite

>Easygoing Erudite wants athletic type to duff up big headed Elf. Gnomes need not apply:-(

You can find **CELENA** @ Temple of Quellious, Norrath.



A unique EverQuest online experience available exclusively on PlayStation 2.
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SCORE

PRO EVO ONLINE?

Konami Suss Out Xbox Live

❏ Konami's Shingo Takatsuka, producer on the Winning Eleven series in Japan (yes, the glorious game that is known as Pro Evolution Soccer here on our shores), was recently interviewed on the future of his sublime soccer game. Surprisingly, he was quite happy to let on that they have already started to look at an Xbox version of the game, primarily for online play. Will we see Pro Evo 4 on Xbox Live at the end of next year? Amazing! He did state, however, that the PlayStation 2 was still the console that they were focusing on — so expect a PS2 Pro Evo 4 before anything else.

ABANDON SHIP

LOST TOYS CLOSED

UK Developer Bites The Dust

❏ Lost Toys director, Jeremy Longley, recently confirmed that Lost Toys had ceased development on all projects and had made its entire roster of staff redundant. Lost Toys most recently published Battle Engine Aquila, and were also responsible for MoHo. That's now the fourth British developer that's had to shut its doors in the last few months; Attention To Detail (Rollcage, Sydney 2000 Olympics) being another developer that's bitten the dust recently.

POMMY

NINTENDO UK EMPLOY AUSSIE

Can He Help Turn Things Around?

❏ Nintendo Australia's director of sales and marketing, David Yarnton, has been offered the throne over in the UK. That is, he's been given the job as head of Nintendo's UK division, relinquishing his position at Nintendo Australia after eight long years there. Andy Williams, the man vacating the throne, is off to look after MGM Entertainment instead. Nintendo Europe's managing director, David Gosen, remarked that "2004 is a pivotal year for Nintendo", so let's hope Yarnton can help improve Nintendo's fortunes.

FIRST LOOK!

Spy Fiction
 Developer: Access Games Publisher: Sammy Studios

Nightshade
 Developer: Overworks Publisher: Sega

FIRST LOOK!

BIRTHDAY BLAU!

HYPER PARTY DESTROYS SUBURB

10th birthday celebrations have at you

Where there's a birthday, there's a party, and Hyper's 10th anniversary was no different. The crew put on quite a bash for the local games industry and associated "Hyper friends"; partying away until the ungodly hours getting trashed on nasty cocktails and the like.

A gaming room was naturally set-up, complete with couch and huge widescreen TV. Microsoft brought Top Spin and Project Gotham Racing along for us all to drool over, and the Hyper crew brought their well-worn copy of Pro Evolution Soccer 2 amongst other delightful gems. Music on the night was provided by Soulfly productions, a DJ event company, specialising in the funkier side of life. Eliot drank like a fish (funny, that), Cam worked the room and Malcolm just stood there looking good. We can't wait to do it again!

WHO ARE SOULFLY?

Spawned from Soulfly Productions is The SoulFly Crew or SFC. This international band of brothers play music the way it should be played: funky, uplifting and gloriously irresistible.

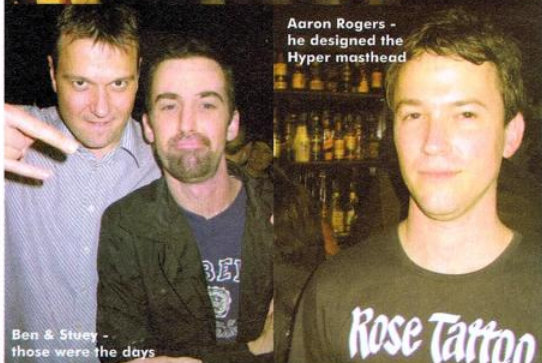
The company is owned by ex London DJ Justin McCauley aka BFJ. "I am a great fan of the filtered disco and funky house that is around at the moment but which never really went away. This form of music is more sophisticated than your average dance track without being pretentious or self-serving. The groove appeals to all and sundry and presented in the right way, delivers the buzz that everyone wants at their events." The style and sound has been developed over the past fifteen years as the SFC travelled the globe in search of those killer tracks. The funky house of Robbie Rivera, The Kings of Tomorrow and David Morales mixes sweetly with the chatting of Tenor Fly and Roughrider, while the electro of Morilla is gently caressed by the latin beats of South America.

At the moment the SFC perform as a tight unit with DJ's mixing off of one another and at any one time listeners can be met by up to five sound sources at once. The recent signing of top New Zealand DJ The Funky Monk has added another dimension to the crew.

They can be contacted through SoulFly Productions on 9576 6320.



Hyper show everyone a good time



Aaron Rogers - he designed the Hyper masthead

Bon & Stuey - those were the days



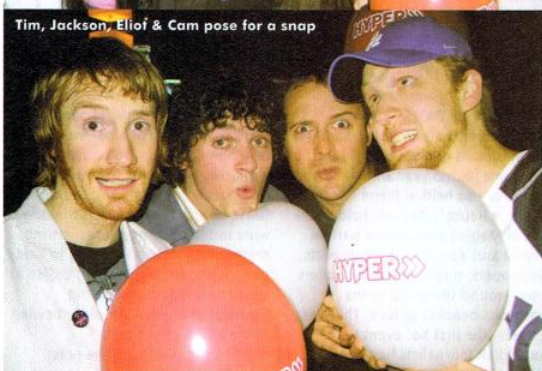
Kathy, Andy & Dan get stuck into it

Malcolm & Mark are the biz!




David, Vanessa, March, Daniel...

Sarah & Dan share some helium



Tim, Jackson, Eliot & Cam pose for a snap





BLADVOK
Class: Cleric
Race: Dwarf

> Headstrong Dwarf seeks brawny Barbarian for forays into 'Sparring Square'. Must have own sword*;-)

You can find **BLADVOK** at Sorenson's Keep, Norrath.

A unique EverQuest online experience available exclusively on PlayStation 2. www.egoa-game.com

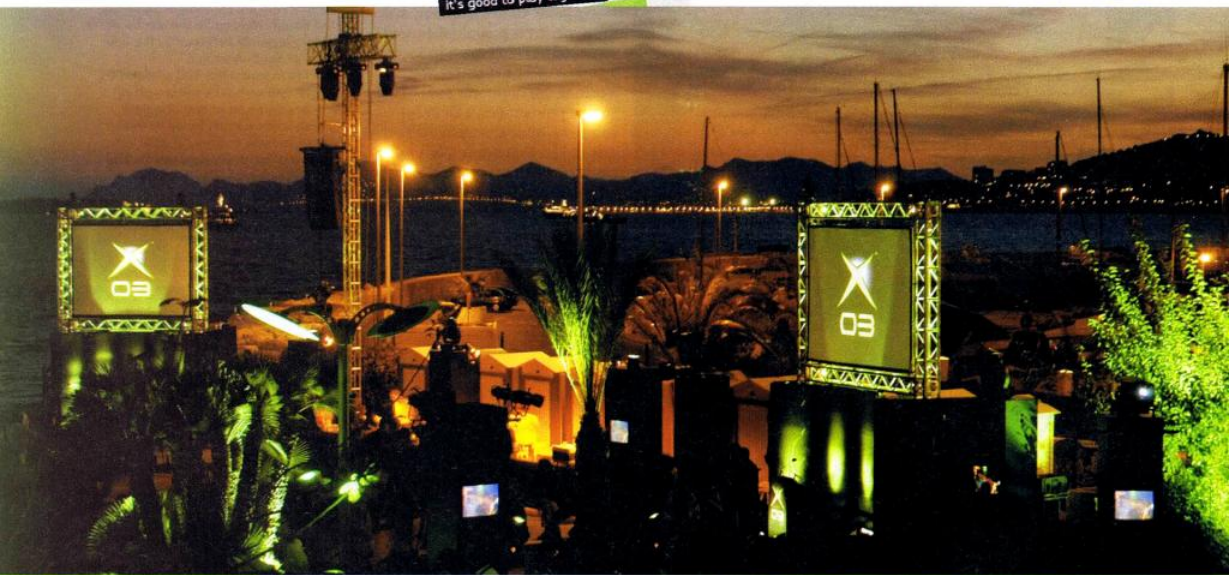



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XO3

it's good to play together

THE FUTURE OF XBOX REVEALED >>> CAM SHEA



jun-ket [jɒŋkt]
n.

1. A dessert made from flavoured milk and rennet.
2. A party, banquet, or outing.
3. A trip or tour, especially:
 - a. One taken by an official at public expense.
 - b. One taken by a person who is the guest of a business or agency seeking favour or patronage.

The life of a gaming journalist often isn't as glamorous as it's made it out to be. E3 for example, can sap your very will to live. Each year we slog it out over in LA, breathing the fetid air, sharing rooms in skanky hotels, battling the crowds while trying to stick to our insanely hectic schedules, and drinking to forget that we're in LA each and every night. Of course, interviewing developers, hanging with Shiggy and playing the latest games makes it all worthwhile, but the point is that it's not all blunts and forties. Sometimes, however, the opulence hits the fan and the humble Hyper crew get sent on trips that blur the line between holiday and work trip very nicely indeed.

The assignment sounded pretty tough. Get flown to Nice in Southern France (it's in-between Cannes and

Monaco), lounge about on the beaches, get wined and dined, enjoy the local sights (i.e. topless French women), then go along to a press conference that also happens to be on a private beach, followed by a short day of work checking out all the latest Xbox titles. Life is sweet.

THE COW IS BLUE

The Xo' events are rapidly gaining a reputation as one of the highlights of the game journo year and we can see why. Xo1 was held at Pierre Cardin's "Bubble House", Xo2 was held at the La Isla Magica amusement park in Seville and Xo3 brought journalists, developers, publishers and retailers from around the world to the gorgeous beaches of Nice. This was actually the first Xo' event that Australian journalists have been invited to, and we can tell you, if

Xo3 is anything to go by, Microsoft can put us down for next year!

Better still, while the European contingent were flown in on the day of the press conference and flown out the evening after the event, we were really given the time to enjoy it. By the time everyone else arrived, we'd spent two and a half days soaking in the sights and sounds of France: lounging at a bar on the beach in Cannes, sipping mojitos; exploring the rabbit warren of shops and streets in the old quarter of town; eating seafood and drinking wine in the bustling plazas; sitting on the stony beach listening to kids play bongo drums; sipping coffee at boardwalk cafés; and eating escargot at an obscure place nestled in the hills on the coast.

When the evening of the press conference finally arrived, we were

it's good to play together

WE ARRIVED JUST IN TIME TO WATCH A SPECTACULAR SUNSET AND LAP UP THE SET-UP, WHICH CONSISTED OF A STRETCH OF BEACH, MULTIPLE BARS, A LARGE SEATING AREA, DJ AREA, HUGE SOUND SYSTEM...

thoroughly chilled and a couple of members of the party had incredible tans going (mind you, as far as we're concerned, real gamers don't tan). We'd also adjusted to the pace of life and oddities of the local culture, having established that the purchase of cigarettes on a Sunday is virtually impossible (ask a local where you can find ciggies and they cock their head, give you a quizzical look and say, "on a Sunday?"). I'd also established that coming to France armed with only a single French phrase "la vache est bleue" ("the cow is blue"), wasn't as handy as I'd hoped. Still, confusing French people has its upsides.

THE MIRTH MICROPHONE

But now for the press conference. Everyone loaded into coaches to be driven about an hour out of Nice to an exclusive private beach club at Antibes. We arrived just in time to watch a spectacular sunset and lap up the set-up, which consisted of a stretch of beach, multiple bars, a large seating area, DJ area, huge sound system, two levels indoors filled with demo units, several long tables with food (including the largest dishes of seafood paella ever), a pig on a spit, and so on. Disappointingly, the alcohol for the evening was restricted to beer, wine and champagne, leaving some (hey Dan!) without a drink to whet their whistle. Several lecturnes were positioned throughout the area, each complemented by a huge projection screen. The actual press conference moved between these various stands.

The speakers and announcements ranged from the usual press conference ra ra fare to the slightly more significant. Eduardo Rosini, the head of Xbox Europe, kicked it all off, talking about the 50,000 Europeans who have purchased the Xbox Live starter kit (compared, mind you, to half a million in the USA) and the health of Xbox in Europe. But then he dropped a

bombshell, unveiling Microsoft's new slogan to accompany a worldwide marketing campaign and branding strategy for Xbox. Hold your breath while we say it — "it's good to play together". By the time I'd stopped laughing, they'd moved on to the next speaker, Peter Moore. Moore was in fine form, preaching the vast potential of Xbox as a convergent device and rather amusingly (given that it wasn't that long ago that he was at Sega) emphasizing that "we" built Xbox from day one to take advantage of this new world. Oh, he also cracked us up by once again commenting that "it's good to play together", and telling us that this is what gamers have been telling Microsoft. Our money is on those gamers phrasing it differently however.

Next up to the mirth-microphone was Michael Cassius, head of Xbox marketing in Europe. Could he also be about to reveal to us the benefits of playing together? We waited with baited breath. Before we could find out, however, a video showcasing upcoming Xbox titles rolled, before he once again made sure we all knew just how much fun Xbox Live is. And that message was certainly coming home as we finished our beers and peered into the game rooms that awaited us after the formalities of the press conference were over. Fortunately, our attention snapped back to the present as we were once again reminded that "it's good to play together" before the speech duties moved on to Yves Guillemot, CEO of Ubi Soft. Being the business type Guillemot was quick to remind us of the success of Ubi Soft titles and the excellent prognosis for Christmas. Kicking off "Soft-mas" is Rainbow Six 3, but the video did little to really impress us. Good thing the presentation on the following day would prove otherwise. Far more exciting, however, was what was to come next



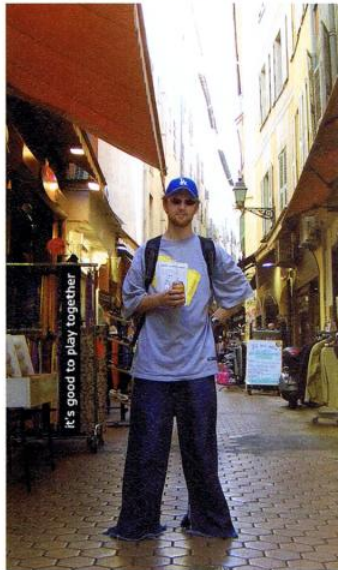
[above] Richard Hirst from Microsoft and our very own Cam Shea get ready for the barrage of games.

— the first footage of Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow. Guillemot went to lengths to point out that all the footage was multiplayer, and that this is the "first true multiplayer stealth experience". Looking good, Sam. Although Guillemot resisted the urge to use (by now) everyone's favourite catchphrase since "don't have a cow, man", he passed the mic back to someone who wouldn't let us down — Michael "play together" Cassius.

PAUSES AND STRANGE TWITCHES

In speech number two we were astounded to hear, once again, just how amazing Xbox Live is. Who would have thought? He also announced the roll-out of Xbox Live in another six European countries bringing the total to fourteen. No mention of Australia, of course, but how could we expect them to realise that a group of intrepid Aussies had traveled halfway around the world to sit on a beach and rejoice in the eternal truth that "it's good to play together"? Also announced was a new subscription model that gives gamers two months free Xbox Live service with the purchase of particular Live enabled games, as well as the option to go month to

[right, top to bottom] Gaming geeks playing together; Cam savouring the local delights; the beach.





It's good to play together

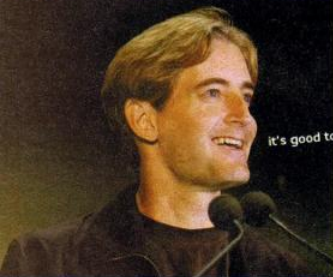
[left, top to bottom]
Massive Attack's Daddy G; the streets of Nice; Ed Fries from Microsoft telling it like it is.



It's good to play together



[above] Carn salutes the lovely ladies and ex-Hyper editor Dan Toose digs the French scene.



It's good to play together

month after your initial one year subscriptions have ended. We expect that Australians will get a similar deal soon. He also mentioned that by Christmas there'll be 50 Live enabled games on store shelves with plenty more to come.

The two games he then highlighted demonstrated both the hardcore and softcore range. From Capcom's *Steel Battalion: Line of Contact* to *Dancing Stage Unleashed*, the Live options are many. By now the audience was chomping at the bit... not for a significant announcement amidst all this "RA we love Xbox Live" talk, but for those words that bring laughter to even the steeliest of men, and he didn't disappoint. Like a comedian who knows his bit is gold, he paused, savouring the words and the adulation sure to follow before busting the bomb — "it's good to play together". Hurray! But now, surely it's time to wow the crowd with an actual announcement right?

Up next, Ed Fries, the Xbox game guru. Somehow Michael Cassius managed to avoid introducing Ed with "would you like Fries with that?", but hey, by now we'd realised that this was a one joke press conference. It wasn't long into

Ed's speech, however, that we all started wondering whether he'd be able to perform to this singular comedic vision. Without casting aspersions, let's just say that Ed seemed... a little excited. A little hepped up on goofballs. The frequent pauses and strange twitches told us that he was already in the party spirit. Go Ed! The games he "lined up" for us included Project

Gotham Racing 2, *Race Driver 2* (V8 Supercars 2 in Oz), *Grabbed by the Chouliis and Sudeki*. This was followed by new gameplay footage of *Kameo*, and it's certainly looking impressive. Very different in style to its initial incarnation, the video highlighted some of the funky new abilities of the monsters in the game and exhibited the usual Rare charm. Next up was footage of *Breakdown* from Namco (although we'd already seen it briefly at E3). It certainly looked cool though, with slick visuals, and a combination of a hand-to-hand fighting system and weapons based combat. *Rallisport Challenge 2* was announced next, which is the first racing title for the XSN Sports brand. As expected it looked stunning.

Ed's next announcement was that Epic have signed an Xbox exclusivity deal so up to the stage came Epic's Jay Wilbur. Unfortunately, a new project wasn't announced but there are titles by Epic together with Scion studios to be published by Microsoft Game Studios on the way. After Jay, we came back to Ed who called Peter Molyneux to the stand to give evidence regarding his all-singing all-dancing *Fable*. The *Fable* demo was far too brief, but during it Molyneux managed to admit to losing his first girlfriend while feeding his Wizardry addiction and told us (once again) about the grand scope of *Fable*, which allows you to play the way you want to play — from completely noble to

despicable killer (more on that further into the feature). The demo highlighted the combat mechanics in the game but unfortunately included no references to whether or not it was good to play alone or together, leaving the audience a little confused. Remember — with our attention spans we need to be told at least 14 times for it to sink in.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Coming back once more to Ed, the audience was beginning to anticipate a big climax. Surely Microsoft have something new and stunning up their sleeve to make this trip to France worthwhile? Well, maybe not, but they did have a behind the scenes look at *Halo 2* for us, complete with slivers of new footage. The team at Bungie discussed a number of aspects of game making, but also admitted that the secret to making a good game is to provide the player with 30 seconds of really fantastic gameplay that can then be stretched out to drive the entire game. Interesting... we think these guys may have been partying with Ed a little too much. After Bungie came a video presentation of *Ninja Gaiden* from Tomonobu "rockstar" Itagaki of Tecmo. What more can we say other than fans of the series are going to be very happy — this game looks gorgeous, although we're a little worried that the cinematic camera angles are a little too cinematic. Finally, the center of attention moved back to Eduardo Rosini who wrapped up proceedings with a clever twist on the theme — "and now, let's play together."

Chortle.

With the press conference out of the way, it was playtime, and Daddy G from Massive Attack launched into his DJ set. Many beers and a few games of *Top Spin* later, we were heading back to the hotel to prepare for "work" the next day.



ZERO WORD ON 0

So what was missing? Well, we were really hoping to see *Perfect Dark 0*, especially given that it was announced at X02, but it wasn't to be. Microsoft did, however, put together some great (and rather patronising) lifestyle slides to accompany the goodness of playing together, one of which we've included for your entertainment.



THE GAMES!

After heading back to the hotel at the criminally sedate time of 8am (hey, it's when the party ended!) we were up at 8am to get back into the coaches to head out to the actual event. From here on in things got a little hectic, but we'll continue on as best we can. First up, the developer unplugged sessions we attended...

FABLE/B.C.

Peter Molyneux has to be one of the most interesting developers out there and his enthusiasm is infectious. Along with a couple of the team members he took us through Fable and BC. Fable is

YOU COULD MARRY THE MAYOR'S DAUGHTER AND THEN KILL THE MAYOR TO INHERIT HIS WEALTH

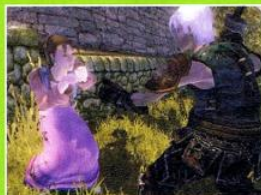
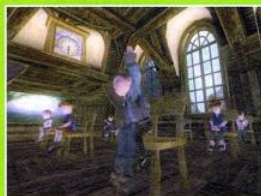
certainly looking very nice now, but it's still almost impossible to judge from such a small snapshot. It's hard not to get excited about the possibilities though. One example that Molyneux gave was taking a break from the main story to spend some time in a town. You could marry the mayor's daughter, then surreptitiously kill the mayor, so that you and the daughter inherit his wealth and control of the town. Then you could kill the daughter and it would all be yours. Can you say "mua ha ha"? This sick sense of morality isn't just left up to you either. In the demo Molyneux commented that if you spend too much time raising a family and ignoring the main quest, you may be nudged in the right direction... by a tragic accident that befalls your family! At both the press conference the night before and in the demo on the day Molyneux showed off Fable's combat system. While not looking anything out of the ordinary, the ability to switch between melee, ranged and magic attacks quickly is

cool, as is the multiplier system whereby landing chained attacks multiplies the experience points you gain from the fight. Incidentally, Big Blue Box (the developers) have had five people working for over two years on the combat alone.

Perhaps the most interesting information provided by Molyneux was in reference to Fable's multiplayer options. Up to four players can play cooperatively in split screen (and presumably system link), but only one of the four is the lead character, with the rest playing the roles of alter egos that can do many things the lead can do, but can't interact with NPCs. The twist comes with the idea that the lead character swaps between the four players. The person who next gets the lead is the one that has helped out the main character most. Thus, it's in your interest to participate, and once you become the lead you can dictate the direction of the game. Like Four Swords, this mode is cooperation and competition in one, and we can't wait to give it a test drive.

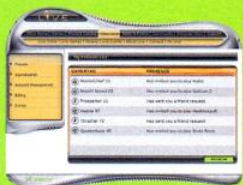
After Fable, B.C. is a little harder

[below] Role play your way in and out of trouble in Fable.





[above] Never headbutt a dinosaur. Trust us.



XBOX LIVE

Sometime in the middle of the day (it's all a blur now) we popped into a brief interview with the king of Xbox Live Cam Ferreri, who told us about some of the new innovations that have hit the service. Chief among these is Live Web, which allows you to do Xbox stuff from PC — see what friends are playing, check out leaderboards and so on, and Live Aware which are games that allow you to remain logged in to Live while playing a single player game. The advantage of this is that friends can still invite you to join their game sessions. Oh, and it also means that when playing a game — say Project Gotham Racing 2, in single player mode, you'll be able to compare your time to times of real gamers around the world and even download a ghost car of the top time to try and beat!

to warm to, but the concept certainly looks cool — building a tribe of prehistoric humans and teaching them to hunt and gather, and survive in the wilderness. The huge panoramic desert surroundings are quite stunning to see and Molyneux showed off a massive T-Rex that you can battle, with the promise of bigger and better to come. Cool.

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

Pandemic's demo of Full Spectrum Warrior was another highlight, further confirming our high opinion of this title after E3. Particularly impressive was the new fog of war, which you can toggle on and off, leaving the areas around you that are being covered by your team crystal clear, while those areas that aren't have a glassy haze. It's a very straightforward way to see where your blind spots are and to correct them. The gameplay is looking unbelievably satisfying — as much a puzzle game as anything, and the visuals are simply staggering.

RAINBOW SIX 3

Perhaps the most impressive demo of the day was Ubi Soft Montreal's Rainbow Six 3. This title is going to be even better on Xbox than it was on PC. Indeed, it's largely an all new game — the storyline is new, the campaign is new and all the missions are new. Gamers can also look forward to improved AI, soft body physics, 5.1 surround sound and amazing visuals based on the latest Unreal engine. Hurrah for taking a console port seriously!

The most impressive aspect was the voice recognition control over your squad. The game has a huge range of commands that you can give to fully coordinate the movements of your team. This makes playing much more immersive and intuitive because instead of having to bring up a menu or find a hotkey, you simply talk. Better still, the system will pick the relevant commands out of your normal sentences so you can actually speak (or swear) normally! Your teammates talk back too, further enhancing the sense of being part of a covert operation. This is the first Rainbow

Six game on Xbox, and if we were you, we'd start saving now.

THE SHOW FLOOR

In between all the interviews and developer sessions we thankfully found the time to also play some games. The Australian contingent had a quick game of Steel Battalion: Line of Contact, which wasn't quite as daunting as one might imagine. And the controller really does rock — having to flick a series of switches and power things up in the right order is just so geeky and cool.

Starcraft: Ghost looks simply amazing now too — we're really sold on this title. Nova's abilities are syncing into the gameplay nicely and

INSTEAD OF HAVING TO BRING UP A MENU OR FIND A HOTKEY, YOU SIMPLY TALK

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tried all her tricks
and didn't get anywhere.

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RACE DRIVER 2: THE ULTIMATE RACING SIMULATOR

We were fortunate enough to have a behind the scenes audience with Codemasters later in the day, and the opportunity to not only get a rundown on the next Race Driver/V8 Supercars title, but even a chance to play a very early build of it. To say we were impressed is an understatement – the boys really are going all out to deliver an extremely wide-reaching racing title here.

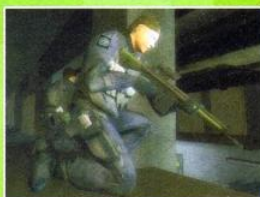
The game retains the story-driven narrative of the last title, but this time from a first person perspective, and the results are far less cringe worthy, thanks to highly detailed modeling and real personality in the characters. It's the racing that's the heart and soul of the title, however, and racing fans (no matter what breed) will not be disappointed.

The Championship screen is literally packed with the logos of the 30 types of racing events that are included in the game. These include Street Racing, Rally, Rally Cross, GT Sports Car Racing, V8 Supercars, DTM, Formula Ford, Global GT Lights, Open Wheel GP and Classic Car Racing. All these styles are wrapped up in an extensive new championship structure that includes 56 racing circuits from all over the world, including the Surfer's Paradise circuit we were able to try out... and embarrass ourselves by constantly crashing in.

Despite the breadth of racing types Codemasters are hoping to emulate, they've built an entirely solid foundation to do so. The physics model is completely new and simulates a huge range of actual world interactions including centrifugal engine forces, tire deformation when cornering and aerodynamics. Oh, and let's not forget the new deformation system (which was demonstrated by some stunningly real head on collisions), AI and graphics engine. The visuals in particular will put a smile on the face of any motorsport fan, running at 60fps with dynamic lighting, multipass texturing and realistic effects such as true motion blur and depth of field effects. Throw in Xbox Live multiplayer with up to twelve players and you have a recipe for racing heaven.



[above & top] Full Spectrum Warrior - now one of our most wanted games.



[above & right] Rainbow Six 3 - seriously impressive stuff.



using cloak (invisibility), sight (thermal vision), speed (everything else slows down but she moves normally), lock down (shuts off electronic devices such as security cameras) and call down (lets you call for air support) is great fun. By way of example, not sure how to take out that huge armoured guard? Switch to sight mode and see if a weakness comes up in his thermal pattern!

The best part is that the enemy AI is smart enough to hear your footsteps or notice discrepancies such as the security cameras suddenly going offline. Certain enemies even have scanners that can detect cloaking devices. We also thought the hacking interface is one of the better implementations of the idea thus far in a game, and the vehicle combat is looking promising.

The next step was to sneak behind the Eidos booth to see a demo of Deus Ex 2: Invisible War. Like Fable, it's very difficult to get a sense for this title from such a short viewing, but rest assured it's looking great, with a range of nano-tech augmentations and high tech gear available to the

player that really go beyond what was on offer in the original. We're talking leaping huge distances and seeing through walls here folks. Also cool is that the anti-terrorist operative you play (Alex D) can be male or female, so now everyone's happy. Except for eunuchs, perhaps. The only negative aspect at the moment is the chug-worthy frame rate, but we expect the game will be scrubbed up before release.

Nearing the end of the day things started getting even more frantic as we realised just how many more games there were on the floor to play. Pit stops were made at the back-end-elicious Rallisport Challenge 2, hands were shaken with Team 17 members at the Worms 3D stand (yes, I'm a fan-boy!), combos were ripped up in Tony Hawk Underground, FIFA 2004 got a brief work-out, if only to fill the necessary soccer quotient for the day, and finally, our Ghoulies were well and truly grabbed by Rare's new scare 'em up. For more on Rare's titles, stay tuned for an interview next issue!

After the six hours were up, we

were fatigued but wishing we had more time to keep playing! All that was left was the closing ceremony, where winners in various categories were announced. Rainbow Six 3 took Game of Show, Tecmo's Ninja Gaiden won the Technical Achievement Award and Fable won the Innovation Award. Is it over already? Ah well, X03 bites the dust, and what a great trip it was. The only disappointment? There were no French maids to test out my new French phrase and pick up line: "c'est amusement à jouer ensemble", or in English, "it's good to play together". <<<

OUR GHOULIES WERE WELL AND TRULY GRABBED BY RARE'S NEW SCARE 'EM UP

This is where
I spun out of control.

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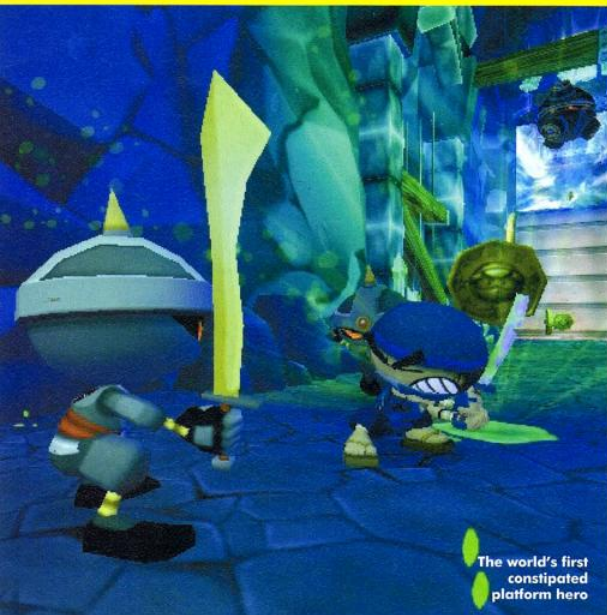
N-GAGE anyone
anywhere
NOKIA



SEGA

SONIC TEAM

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The world's first constipated platform hero

I-NINJA

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Namco/SCEE >> AVAILABLE: 2004 >>

The PS2 is certainly not deficient in quality platformers. There's Jak II and Ratchet & Clank 2 freshly baked from the Sony oven, and now I-Ninja could very well be the extra course no one expected they'd have to eat.

The beautifully realised world of sci-fi adventure meets ninja action looks to be another stunning piece of escapism from the ongoing collaboration between Namco and Sony. Of course, the game is actually being developed by Argonaut (just to make things more confusing), and features some Bomberman-esque character designs to give itself quite an original look for a PS2 platformer.

The Ninja in question apparently comes packing some "extreme attitude", so expect him to be



bursting with the one-liners and charismatic animation as you run along walls, grind rails, use your sword as a make-shift helicopter blade and more. Will I-Ninja be cool enough to set itself apart from the pack? We're thinking so.

WOW-O-METER



GROUND CONTROL 2: OPERATION EXODUS

CATEGORY: Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Vivendi >> AVAILABLE: Early 2004

The original Ground Control RTS was extremely well received when it hit the scene a few years ago, but this anticipated sequel may well have a hard time impressing to the same degree in the face of the evolved 3D strategy genre. In any case, Operation Exodus is on the verge of release and certainly looking more polished than Pierluigi Collina's head.

This is 3D strategy gaming in its most attractive form — you simply can't deny just how stunning this game's visuals are. But despite the pretty face, Ground Control 2 also

has the potential to deliver another solid few months of tactical gameplay. The game is set about 300 years after the first, with three factions fighting it out across five different terrain types. There's no resource collecting or drawn-out construction to worry about, so you'll be able to purely focus on the action and enjoy the game in all its epic glory. New features in the sequel should ensure that it's anything but more of the same.

WOW-O-METER



CONAN: THE DARK AXE

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: TDK >> AVAILABLE: 2004 >>

While we keep our fingers crossed that Arnold Schwarzenegger will give up his position as governor of California and go make King Conan instead, we can at least look to this upcoming Xbox game to get our fix of axe-swinging action.

Conan: The Dark Axe will actually be written by Jan Kantürek who has been involved in the translation of the Conan books, and will pick up after the storyline from the end of the Conan movie. Developer, Cauldron, have developed a 3D engine especially for the purpose of realising their Conan vision for a high-action third-person action

game set in huge environments rich with atmosphere. They even promise "barbaric gameplay", so what more could a Conan fan ask for? It's always a risk tackling such a cult license (which reminds us, Dredd versus Death isn't far off...) so we pray that the time is taken to develop Conan with proper respect to the license. We won't hold out for any Schwarzenegger voice acting, but if they get the Conan movie's visceral action right, we'll be happy.

WOW-O-METER



DIRECTED BY REVERED ANIME VETERAN **YOSHIKI KAWAJIRI** (THE ANIMATRIX)

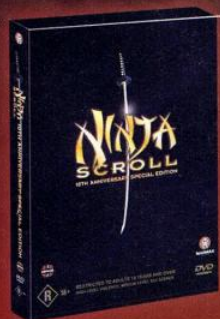
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SOME ARE BORN GREAT-SOME TRY HARD

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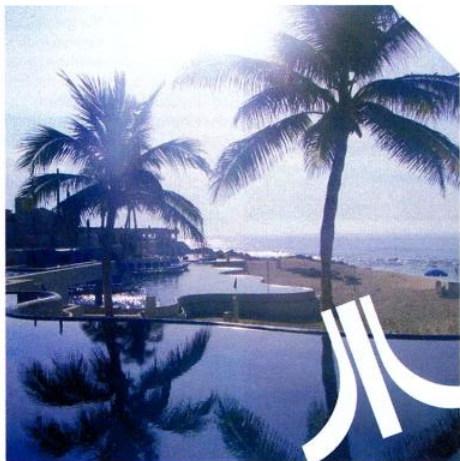
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ATARI GAMER'S DAY

>>MARCH STEPNIK

Atari holds an annual event where their developers – and the press – meet at some fabulous location to play a truckload of games. Called Gamer's Day, it's like a mini-E3 – held over three days with plenty of games and alcohol, and minus all the noise and fuss. The result is a really good look at the up and coming games from Atari's development stables. Hyper went to Mexico and this is what we saw...



(left) Some stills from the promo video

FORGOTTEN REALMS

FORMAT: PS2 DEVELOPER: Stormfront Studios / GENRE: Action/RPG / DUE: 2004

From the creators of EA's excellent *The Two Towers* slash-a-thon comes a new action adventure set in the *Dungeons & Dragons* Forgotten Realms universe – and one of the real surprises of the Atari event. And that's not only for its gorgeous graphics and classy cinematic presentation (CG movies are nicely integrated with the action).

Forgotten Realms has the player controlling a party of three – the Barbarian, Rogue and Sorcerer – with the option to swap between

each character at will. Indeed, this seems a major feature of *Forgotten Realms* – with each character's set of unique abilities, choosing the right one will be crucial at certain points of the game.

While it's not a large leap in regards to setting (D&D's universe was very much based on Tolkien's imaginations), there'll be plenty of familiar creatures and locations from *Forgotten Realms* to interact with – the demo we saw featured an assault on a Yuan Ti ritual chamber. Bring on the carnage.



(left) Are you my mother?

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS: HORDES OF THE UNDERDARK

FORMAT: PC DEVELOPER: BioWare GENRE: RPG / DUE: Xmas 2003

After passing on the reigns to Floodgate entertainment for the excellent first expansion, *Shadows of Undrentide*, BioWare are back in the developers seat for the second official extension module to *Neverwinter Nights*. And this one's really for the fans: draw, beholders and mindflayers make only a few of the 16 new creatures planned – all in response to the vocal NWN community's wish list. Add to that the fabled setting of Waterdeep, the titular Underdark and Hallister's Under Mountain dungeon (a setting with mucho random elements) and you've got your typical *Forgotten*

Realms fanboy's dream setting.

You can naturally expect a slew of new weapons and items to collect in *Hordes*, however these will be much more powerful than those found in the two previous NWN modules. This is to accommodate the maximum character level change from 20th level to 40th – accommodating *Wizards of the Coast's* new *Epic Level Rule Book*.

Of course, all of the new items, creatures and tilesets will be accessible using the Aurora toolset, and BioWare has added new tool wizards to help create shop keepers and other NPCs. Mmmm. High level D&D...



[left] I know this great weight-loss technique...

DRIVER 3

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox / **DEVELOPER:** Reflections / **GENRE:** Driving Action / **DUE:** Mid 2004

Reflections must be sick of the comparisons to the GTA series, but since they both feature stylish characters (with a penchant for "borrowing" vehicles and showing utter disregard for traffic rules, they were bound to happen. But there's one big difference: Driver has always been about recreating those spectacular Hollywood-style car chases first and an on-foot action shooter second. As such the driving engine is the superior of the two, with Reflections touting a significant leap in handling from their most recent effort — the impressive and more directly Hollywood Stuntman.

Still a fair ways off, little info has been released on Driver 3. Set over

half a dozen locations around the world, there's less visual variety in Driver 3 although each location is substantially bigger than previous Driver games, with particular attention placed on layout — not unlike the highly linked locations of GTA3. Expect plenty of shortcuts that won't be obvious upon first play.

And as in previous Reflections games, the physics engine will be entertaining in and of itself. With such detail as highly deformable vehicles (including the loss of individual parts — like hubcaps) and a weighty driving engine that loves the slide, a large part Driver 3's appeal should prove to be the ability to simply hoon about Reflections' well constructed game world.



[left] Off you go my lovesies. Go and die for the glory of ME!

ONCE UPON A KNIGHT

FORMAT: PC / **DEVELOPER:** Reality Pump Studios / **GENRE:** RTS/Action RPG / **DUE:** Xmas 2003 /

It's a fantasy RTS and it's a Diablo-style RPG, but to leave it at that would serve a major injustice to the wacky creative minds out of this Polish development studio. A firm satire of the fantasy/fairy tale genre, the one thing this game has, apart from a great sense of humour, is an interesting take on the RTS genre. OUA features plenty of support units, and although some are obvious (the cow-herder speeds up

the collection of the game's primary resource — milk), others are downright bizarre. The rolling-pin-wielding Mother-In-Law unit can chase enemy units out of buildings for capture, or ramp up production time at home base, presumably using the same method.

While the graphics look a little dated, the charm of this game is undeniable. A worthy alternative to the more serious RTS titles out there.



UNREAL 2

FORMAT: Xbox / **DEVELOPER:** Epic/Tantalus / **GENRE:** First Person Shooter / **DUE:** Xmas 2003 /

While the Xbox version naturally doesn't look as impressive next to Unreal 2 on a ninja PC, most of the graphic effects that make the PC version look so good made the transition in tact. And the Xbox offered some benefits to Tantalus (the Australian developer tasked with porting Unreal 2 to the Xbox) and Epic; less restrictive fill-rate figures mean that big explosions and weapons such as the flamethrower won't have a nasty effect on the game's framerate.

Aside from a straight port of the singleplayer game, Tantalus is working on new multiplayer game modes not seen in the PC version that'll take advantage of Xbox Live.

[left] Should be quite a blast on Xbox, actually.

TERMINATOR: WAR OF THE MACHINES

FORMAT: PC / **DEVELOPER:** Clever's Games / **GENRE:** Team-based FPS / **DUE:** Xmas 2003

Hands down some of the coolest scenes from the Terminator series are those from the future conflict between Skynet and the human resistance (called Tech Com). Well, ladies and gentlemen, this is the game that'll let you live out your future tech grim combat fantasies.

A class-based multiplayer game, this 32 player, team-based first person shooter allows you to play a variety of different roles in battle. Skynet, for example, features the T-100 but is primarily vehicle based, while the Tech Com side uses different classes of human characters. A variety of multiplayer modes will be on offer, and although the graphics do seem quite weak, this game oozes atmosphere.

There's also a single player campaign that sees you in the role of Arnie's T-100, first as a Skynet caddy and then a re-programmed terminator fighting for Tech Com.



[left] See? Look what'll happen to Californial!

DEADMAN'S HAND

FORMAT: Xbox /
DEVELOPER: Human Head Studios /
GENRE: First Person Shooter /
DUE: 2004 /

Not since Outlaws have we seen a game unashamedly set in the Wild Wild West. And this setting sets the tone beautifully: this isn't a hardcore military shooter, this is not-so-serious action shooter, Western style. Case in point — while your enemies aren't exactly sitting ducks, they're not exactly trained marines and as such pose less of a serious threat. Since we last saw Deadman's Hand, we've had a closer look at what was previously known as the "legend" meter. As you successfully take out targets, a meter fills, upon which you can unleash some pretty devastating alternative fire attacks.

[right] Got a problem with premature pistol draw?



MAGIC: THE GATHERING — THE BATTLEGROUND

FORMAT: Xbox
DEVELOPER: Secret Level
GENRE: RTS/Combat
DUE: Xmas 2003

We're about as surprised as you are: this is a real-time 3D, quasi-reflexed game based on the infamous Magic card game. And developer Secret Level might've pulled off a title that'll transcend the hardcore followers of the series. Battlegrounds features two players duking it out — not with their fists but by drawing cards to augment themselves or use against another player. The catch is, each card/ability is powered by crystals (which must be collected as you fight), and obviously the more powerful ability you use, the more crystals required.

In a totally geeky way, it looks like it may succeed in taking the rich paper/rock/scissors balance of the Magic series and translating it into something more immediate and accessible. Keep your eye out for this one.

[right] C'mon guys let's play 5 card stud instead.



[below] The forerunner to the modern crate, the old rusty dungeon chest.



DUNGEON & DRAGONS ONLINE

FORMAT: PC, TBA / DEVELOPER: Turbine Entertainment / GENRE: MMORPG /
DUE: 2005

The people behind Asheron's Call 1 and 2 are set to bring D&D to the masses in the form of a new MMORPG. While details are very scarce, we do know that it'll be using a campaign setting that is soon to be released by Wizards of the Coast. We also know that this won't be your typical MMORPG.

One of the main design problems plaguing modern MMORPGs is catering for all types of player usage patterns, in particular the casual player market.

The folks at Turbine reckon they

have a solution to the problem: a hub-based world that expands vertically more so than it does horizontally. Aside from reducing travel time, the vertical design structure will allow Turbine to offer adventures transparently and as needed. Focus will also be placed more on taking part in quests and adventures than on mundane career-building aspects, which looks to be in the true spirit of Dungeons and Dragons, and quite apart from the flock of MMORPGs out there or in development.

[right] My what a big gun you have.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

FORMAT: PC / DEVELOPER: Epic Games / GENRE: First Person Shooter / DUE: Xmas 2003

While it's not yet clear whether we'll be seeing an EA Sports-style update of this shooter every year, the UT2004 feature list is a sign of a good things to come, and a nod to the growing popularity of large scale, objective and team-based play styles.

While the superb UT2003 graphics engine has received only minor tweaks, it's the gameplay itself that has seen most attention. The big addition to the UT series is vehicles (both of the land and space variety — yep, UT2004 features dogfights in space!) as well as two new game modes — Assault and Onslaught. Assault is in fact an updated version

of the mode that featured in the original Unreal Tournament (fans noticed its omission from UT2003) but on steroids, and Onslaught should lure back the old-schoolers from the likes of Battlefield and even the subscription-based Planetside with its large-scale team based play.

And some more good news: addressing the fears that this new update will render the prolific mod community's previous work unusable, UT2003 mods will be compatible with UT2004. Not only that, but all maps and modes that shipped with UT2003 will be included with UT2004. Nice.



[left] Arnie does a little dance to get more votes.

TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2 / DEVELOPER: Atari / GENRE: Action / DUE: Xmas 2003

It would've been all too easy to botch together a sloppy title based on the film and rush it out for release to coincide with the film's launch, but T3: Rise of the Machines seems more a labour of love than most movie licenses. While it's nice that footage from the film is included (some original scenes too — the T-100 origins scene is an absolute must see for fans of the series) and that it follows the plot of the film, it's good to see the developers fleshing out the Terminator universe some. For

example, you'll get to play the Nasty Arnie in this game, fighting alongside Skynet's armoury against the human resistance before you're captured by Kate Brewster — John Connor's bride to be — and reprogrammed to be resistance friendly.

We saw the shooter bits and the fighting sections (reserved from the many bosses of the game), and if you like your action thick, fast and with just a hint of cheese, this'll be one to look out for.



[left] You would never think he's just a humble bicycle.

TRANSFORMERS ARMADA

FORMAT: PS2 / DEVELOPER: Melbourne House / GENRE: Action / DUE: Summer 2004 /

This was another surprise title at the Atari event. Set in the Armada series of the Transformers universe, the homage paid to the Zelda and Metroid style of explorative play is obvious. The game centres around the Autobots and Decepticon quest to collect Minicons — small robots that function as power-ups in the game. These represent a wide range of new or augmented abilities (like being able to slow down time, camouflage the player, fly, etc), and careful selection of these will be essential — of the three Autobots

the players can choose (Melbourne House had only Optimus Prime and Hot Shot to show at the preview), each can only carry a limited number of Minicons into a mission. Naturally, certain Minicons/abilities will open up new areas of the game as the player progresses.

This promising action also features some of the prettiest graphics on the PS2 — as well as nicely detailed textures. Melbourne House has managed to squeeze some impressive draw-distance rates, adding to the overall beauty of the sub-tropical world that this game is set on.



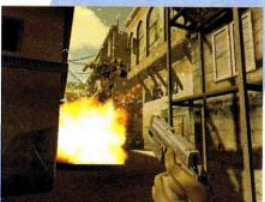
[above] Splinter Cell? Never heard of it.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: OPERATION SURMA

FORMAT: Xbox/PS2 / DEVELOPER: Melbourne House / GENRE: Action Adventure / DUE: Xmas 2003 /

The Mission Impossible series is back and this time around, it's clear that Ethan Hunt spent much of his spare time between missions playing Splinter Cell. Which is obviously a good thing — the puzzles and ideas featured in earlier iterations of this series are much better realised in Operation Surma, offering more variety and a much more polished feel than ever before.

With the task of stopping the spread of a nasty computer super virus, Ethan Hunt and team employ a wide range of gadgets throughout the adventure. And these gadgets will also be essential for certain parts of the game; the binoculars also serve as a camera (to capture incriminating evidence) and a long distance eavesdropper (discover enemy plans). Electronic lock picks, grappling devices, camera loop darts and the wasp-like remote control vehicle, to name just some of the gadgets in the game, all a play a role in a game that may not be revolutionary, but looks rock solid.



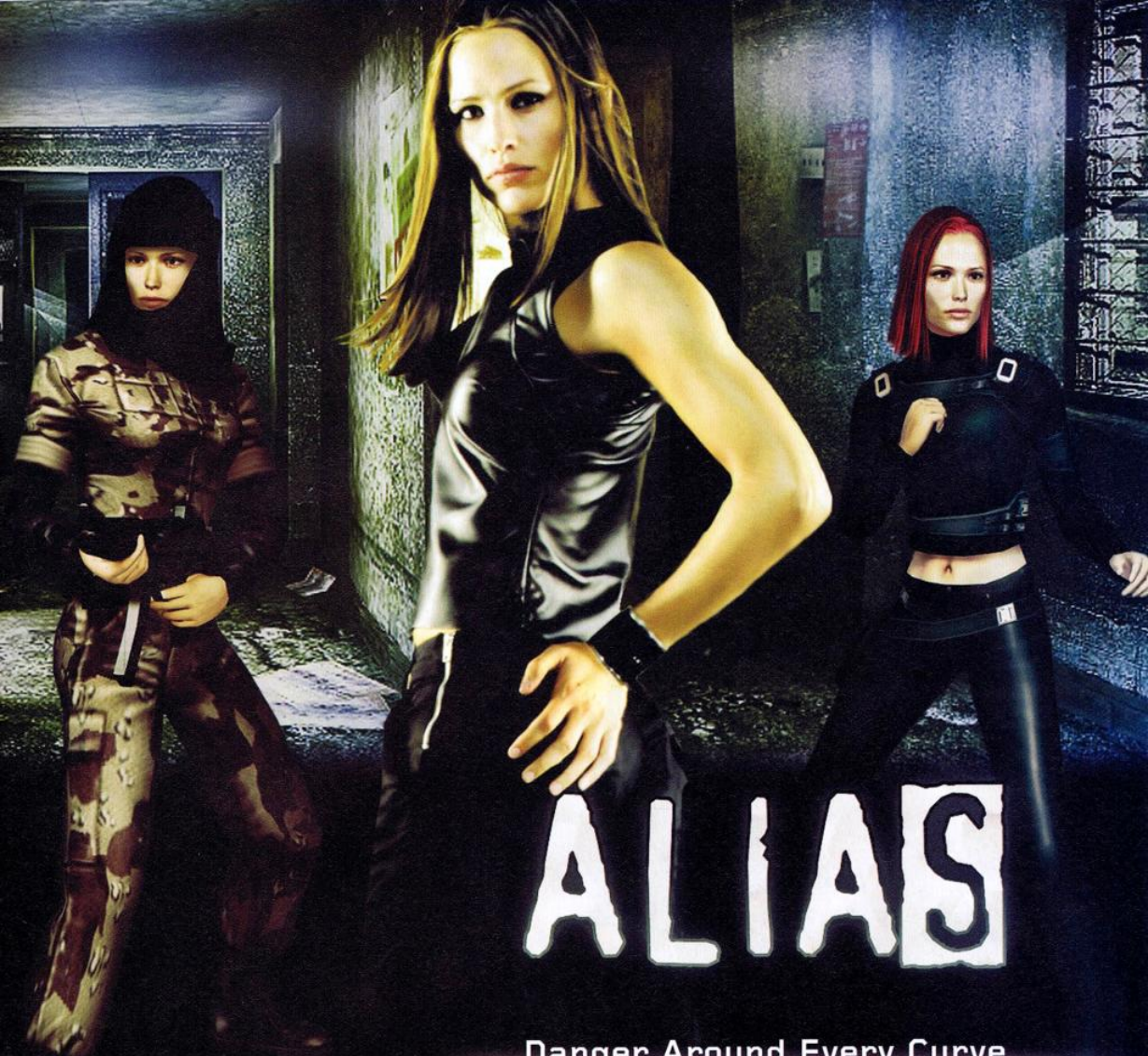
[above] "Sir, I found some Pink Mercury, will that do?"

SHADOW OPS: RED MERCURY

FORMAT: Xbox / DEVELOPER: Zombie VR Studios / GENRE: First Person Shooter / DUE: 2004 /

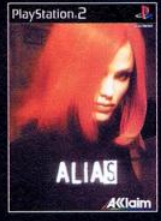
Red Mercury is a clean nuke: all the bang without the fallout. And the premise of this game is that terrorists have got their hands on some of the stuff and it's up to you to shut 'em down. This first person tactical shooter has come some ways since we last saw it at E3, with more of the cinematic production values on display (the story behind Red Mercury is being penned by Hollywood writers), and a better look at the AI of the NPCs you meet and shoot. The AI's coming along nicely, with opponents that won't make it easy for you (unless you play on easy). There'll be 12 weapons to play with in the game, with only four on the character at a time — a pistol, assault rifle, heavy weapon and grenades. Each will also have a secondary melee attack (except the grenade, of course).

With Xbox live support, this ample shooter should prove quite engaging.



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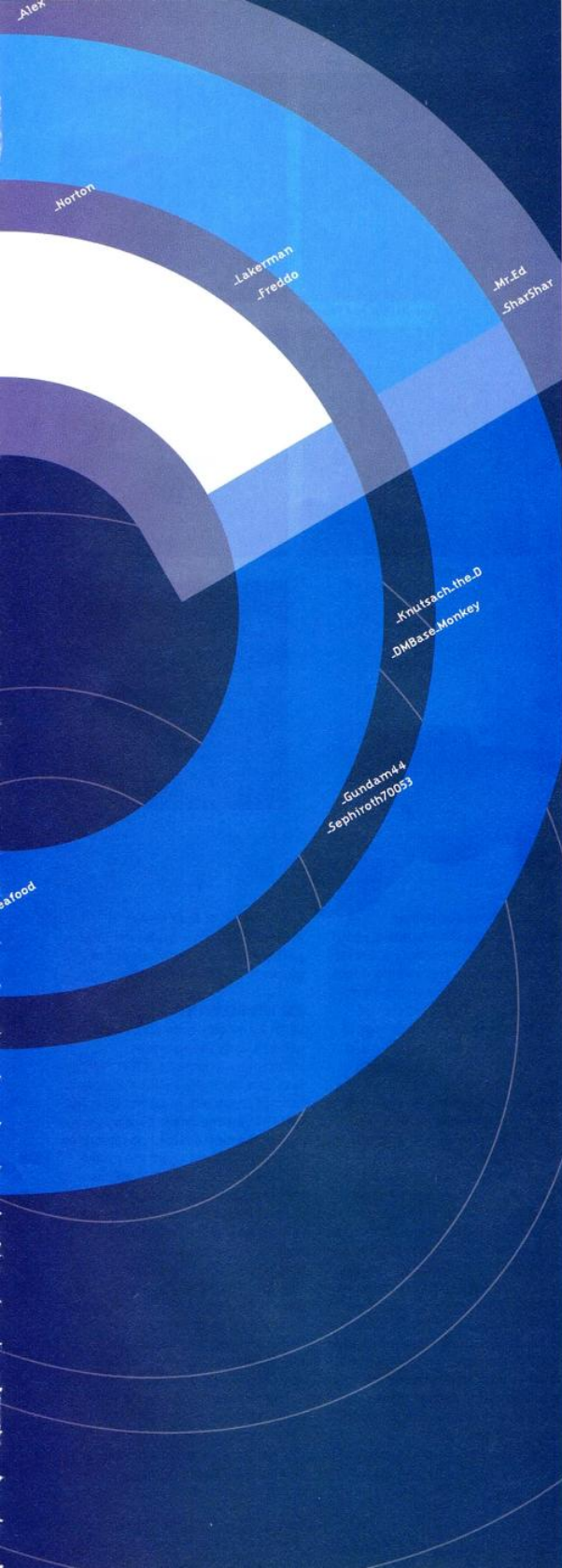
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PS2 Network Entertainment

» DANIEL WILKS

After the initial announcement of their tentative plans for PS2 online a year ago, Sony Australia has finally released their network adapter and the first of what should be a slew of online enabled games. All you need to get your PS2 playing online is an internet connection and a very affordable \$69.95, a price which buys you the network adapter, startup disk and the fun but very forgettable Hardware Online Arena, a game that's more of a tech demo of what PS2 Online can do than a stand alone title.

POP IT OFF

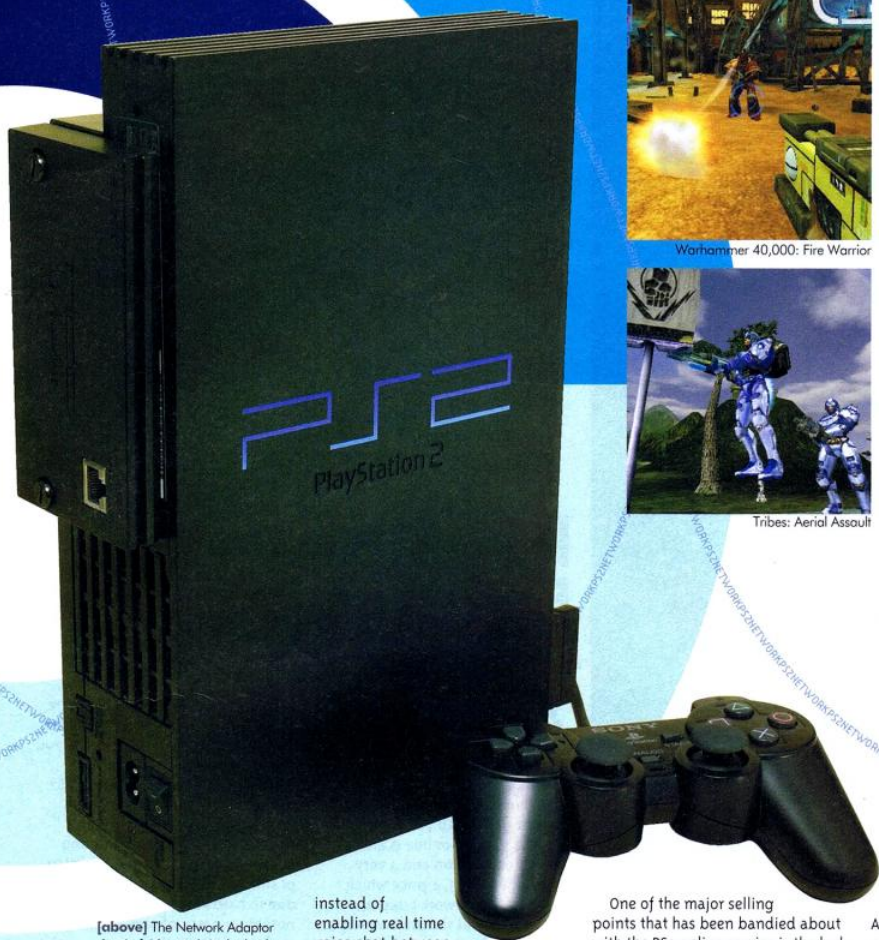
Installing the network adapter is simplicity itself — see that little removable dust cover on the back of the console with the words "expansion port" printed on it? Just pop it off and slot the adapter into the exposed port and anchor it with the supplied screws. After the adapter's installed it's simply a matter of plugging in the supplied network cable, linking it to your router or modem, booting up the access disk, entering the required information and saving the whole kit and caboodle to a memory card. Actually, come to think of it, it's not that simple of a matter at all, requiring a deft touch and a fair bit of patience the whole way. You're also going to need a broadband connection, as PS2 Network Entertainment has no 56k dial-up option. Luckily with the growing popularity of broadband and the

widening availability of ADSL there shouldn't be too much of a problem getting broadband connected if you haven't already.

Unlike the Xbox Live service, PS2 Network Entertainment does not have a central hub where online gamers can congregate, working out which games they want to play or simply chatting. This is probably due to hardware limitations, most notably the lack of any decent sized storage media in the console. Instead, all of the PS2's online games will feature their own totally independent lobby areas, making it virtually impossible to hook up with friends without prior planning. SOCOM offers a small consolation by having a Clan option in the lobby, a feature in which players can store the profiles of friends or clan mates and search for them when looking for a server. It's a small mercy considering that Xbox Live features a global friends list that allows players to search for anyone on their list in any game at any time without the need to boot up that game first, making it a breeze to hook up with a friendly face. The term "online community" is one frequently bandied about by Sony when referring to its online plans, but it's hard to have a community when there's no easy way to meet or communicate before a game.

RADIOACTIVE FREAK

Although many of the online titles will support voice communication, there seems to be one small caveat -

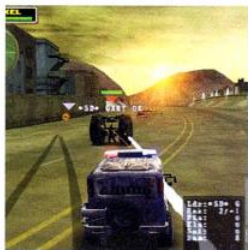


[above] The Network Adaptor slots in fairly snugly in the back.

instead of enabling real time voice chat between players, PS2 Network Entertainment looks as though it will utilise a button controlled chat system giving the player around 15 seconds of one way chat, much like a walkie-talkie. Although we've only been able to test it on SOCOM so far, setting up the voice chat looks as though it's going to be a bit of a chore, requiring the end user to manually configure game settings to enable two-way communication. Whilst it isn't that great of a problem, the necessity of configuring communication adds a layer of unnecessary complexity to a task that should be as simple as plug and play. If you don't feel like talking to the other players, the USB ports on the front of the console allow you to plug in a standard USB keyboard and communicate that way - just don't look to be communicating in real time during games or you'll have some serious trouble with the controls unless you're some kind of radioactive freak with more than the general allotment of arms.



Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior



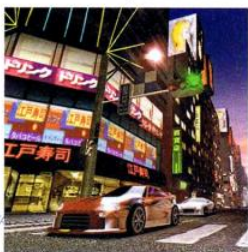
Twisted Metal Black Online



Tribes: Aerial Assault



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4



Midnight Club II

One of the major selling points that has been bandied about with the PS2 online service is the lack of a subscription fee, making it look like a more attractive choice than Xbox Live which is set to charge \$99.95 per year for the privilege of playing online. Although this is in part true, it has to be taken with a grain of salt, as the final choice of whether subscription fees will be charged is up to the publisher of each game - the group responsible for maintaining the servers upon which the games will be played. It has been strongly suggested that computer games giant EA, a company that has recently signed an online exclusivity deal with Sony, may start charging up to US\$10 per month starting early next year in America. That fee may even be per game, not a blanket fee for the EA Sports service, so if you want to play Madden 2004 and NHL 2004 online you may be hit up for subscription fees twice. At this stage there's nothing to guarantee the same won't happen here in Australia. Sony assures us that their own servers will remain free of charge (except for Everquest Online Adventures) for the

"majority" of their games in Australia, but it's what all the third parties might do with their online PS2 game that worries us at this stage.

AN INTERESTING CHOICE

So far we've only been able to test the two first party PS2 Network Entertainment games, SOCOM: Navy Seals and Hardware Online Arena, and feelings are mixed. As launch titles for Sony's foray into online gaming they are not the most compelling reasons in the world for shelling out \$70 for the network adapter, even though one of the games comes bundled with it. Out of these two initial games, Hardware Online Arena is by far the more accessible and fun, pitting players against each other in weapon-laden vehicles as they hoon their way around some rather large maps, searching all the while for weapon upgrades, extra health and another enemy to frag. It's fun, if somewhat shallow, but has decent mainstream appeal, which is more than we can say about SOCOM, a game that has a limited and very hardcore niche appeal, most notably clan gamers and realistic shooter fanatics. SOCOM online plays something like a third person version

**SOCOM ONLINE
PLAYS SOME-
THING LIKE A THIRD
PERSON VERSION OF
COUNTER-STRIKE**

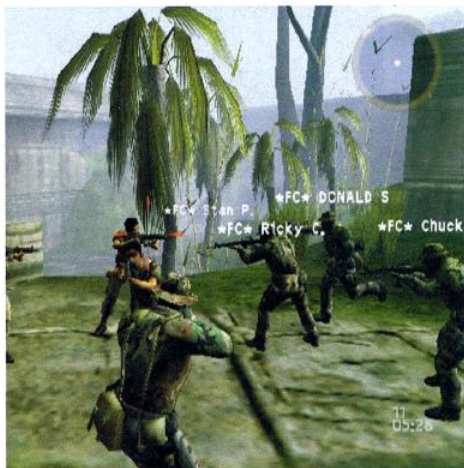
of Counter-Strike or a similar title, pitting teams of terrorists against Navy Seals over 12 online exclusive maps, but much like Counter-Strike, SOCOM online is not at all welcoming to casual players or newbies. Naturally some of you who read that last sentence will be champing at the bit waiting to get their hands on the game now, but the fact remains that it's not a game you can simply jump into and have fun — an interesting choice for the normally family-oriented Sony. Thankfully, both games played quite smoothly online with only SOCOM showing some minimal but still playable lag. Hopefully we will be better able to see the online gameplay potential of the console when the Christmas crop of online games is released (see the boxout for which games will be available).

Ultimately, the choice of whether you want to go with PS2 Network Entertainment or a rival service such as Xbox Live comes down to the games that are available for the system. Although launching with only two first party online games, the Sony online catalogue already contains a few third party titles with online components including the hugely popular Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 from Activision and the street racing game, Midnight Club II released locally by Take 2 Interactive. As can be expected, a number of online games have been planned for release around the Christmas period with titles including, Tony Hawk Underground, Tribes Aerial Assault, Medal of Honor: Rising Sun, Twisted Metal Online and Resident Evil: Outbreak, the first game in the franchise to break new ground by going online.

Hyper will continue to bring you coverage of PS2 Network Entertainment and Xbox Live as both services roll-out more features and games, so look for a regular monthly update as of next issue. <<

The Games

This was the most up-to-date list of PS2 Network Entertainment compatible games that was available at the time of going to print. Not all are yet available to buy, but most will be by Christmas. Check the individual game box to see what kind of online play it offers.



- Amplitude
- Destruction Derby: Arenas
- EverQuest Online Adventures
- FIFA Football 2004
- Gran Turismo 4
- Hardware Online: Arena
- Medal of Honor: Rising Sun
- Midnight Club II
- My Street
- Need For Speed: Underground
- RISK: Global Domination
- Sims: Bustin' Out, The
- SOCOM: U.S. Navy Seals
- SSX 3
- Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
- Tony Hawk's Underground
- Tribes: Aerial Assault
- Twisted Metal: Black Online
- Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior XIII



Everquest Online Adventures



Amplitude

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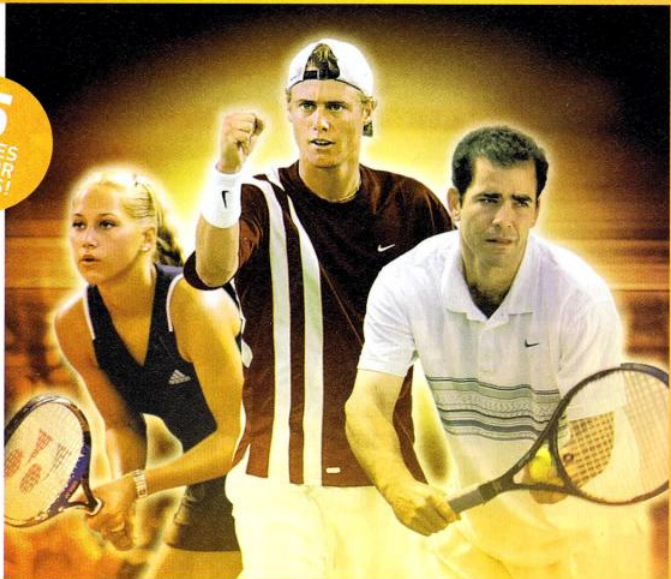
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PlayStation 2



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44 CRIMSON SKIES: High Road to Revenge

Xbox is flying high...



Reviews >>



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Game Theory

DANIEL STAINES



>> So, let's talk about licensed games. The Hulk. The Matrix. The Lord of the Rings. These are all great intellectual properties, but the games that have been made out of them so far have been mediocre at best and utter tedious tripe at worst. Why? Why do licensed games generally suck so much? Are the developers

that work on them at a creative disadvantage in terms of pure game design? Is it harder to shape a good game out of existing intellectual material than to create everything from scratch?

As always, there are two sides to this conceptual coin for us to examine. On one side, there is the argument that games are primarily driven by their underlying gameplay and that a creative designer can craft this nebulous quality into almost any aesthetic tableau you could think of. If a designer knows what constitutes a good game, then it shouldn't really matter which currently popular Marvel superhero has to be on the title-screen. After all, Mario Kart with a Dragonball Z motif would still be one of the best racers ever. While compelling gameplay might not be entirely independent of the aesthetic it's connected to, it is still largely a self-sustained entity that can work within almost any context. Would Shigeru Miyamoto make bad games if they all had to be based on obscure Japanese washing-detergent mascots?

This line of reasoning, however, has some serious shortcomings. It is often the case that a designer or development team does indeed know how to make a good game out of what they've been given but can't actually do it because of the perpetual interferences from higher-ups charged with protecting the "integrity" of the intellectual property being used. Executives who have never even played a game will often insist that particular features be added or removed and this can have negative results in a variety of areas - particularly if the designer feels these additions and subtractions are unnecessary and detrimental to the game as a whole. In a speech given on this very topic, Warren Spector made it clear that many developers working on licensed games feel demoralised by their lack of creative autonomy. It's not hard to see why so many movie-to-game cashcows feel so half-hearted.

Licensed games aren't bad all the time - Buffy, for example, was great - but they usually are and this is due to problems inherent in the endeavour itself. Good designers can theoretically overcome these difficulties, but there can be no doubt that the odds are certainly stacked against them.

Until next month,
daniels@next.com.au

HYPER CREW TOP 5 GAMES

Eliot Fish - Editor

1. Top Spin - Xbox
"Of course, Deus Ex 2 arrives here next week and then..."
2. Crimson Skies - Xbox
3. Pro Evolution Soccer 3 - PS2
4. Rebel Strike - GameCube
5. Prince of Persia - PS2

Cam Shea - Deputy Editor

1. Top Spin - Xbox
"Move over Mario Tennis, there's a new multiplayer kingpin!"
2. Prince of Persia - PS2
3. Viewtiful Joe - GameCube
4. XIII - PC
5. Rainbow Six 3 - Xbox

Malcolm Campbell - Art

1. Pro Evolution Soccer 3 - PS2
"More revolution than evolution"
2. Guilty Gear X2 - PS2
3. Viewtiful Joe - GameCube
4. Top Spin - Xbox
5. Rebel Strike - GCN

Daniel Wilks - Reviewer

1. Crimson Skies - Xbox
"Retro-tech planes with a great Elite style vibe"
2. Prince of Persia - PS2
3. System Shock 2 - PC
4. Final Fantasy Tactics - GBA
5. Greyhawk: The Temple of Elemental Evil - PC

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

0-49

These games simply suck. A total waste of money!

50-59

Bad game design and possibly not even worth renting.

60-69

Average, verging on bad. This game is flawed, but worth a rent.

70-79

Good, verging on average. Maybe try before you buy.

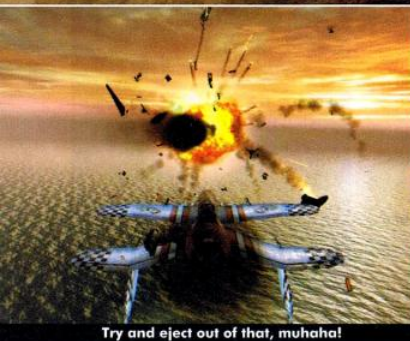
80-89

Very, very good. This is a great game, but not perfect.

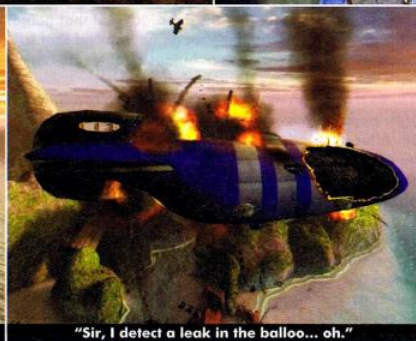
90+

Excellent and worthy of a Big Rubber Stamp. Buy it!





Try and eject out of that, muhaha!



"Sir, I detect a leak in the balloo... oh."



I hate being the flying doctor for this place!



CATEGORY: Flight Sim >> PLAYERS: 1-16 >> PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Crimson Skies



DANIEL WILKS soars like a bird but steers like a cow.

It's a really cheap pop to start a review by saying that something is a game that everyone should own, but quite frankly *Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge* is a game that everybody should own. It's a brilliant example of what a developer can do with a good idea and great imagination. Set in an alternative 1930's timeline complete with evil Germans, sky pirates, fuzzy-haired mad scientists, two-fisted dames and dashing heroes with lantern jaws and just the right amount of stubble to make them look charmingly scruffy, this is like a boy's own tale brought to vivid life.

A DRUNKEN CARD GAME

High Road to Revenge casts the player as the aforementioned lantern-jawed hero, Nathan Zachary, an elite pilot for the Fortune Hunters, a group of thrill

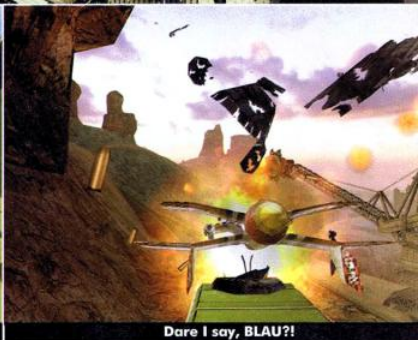
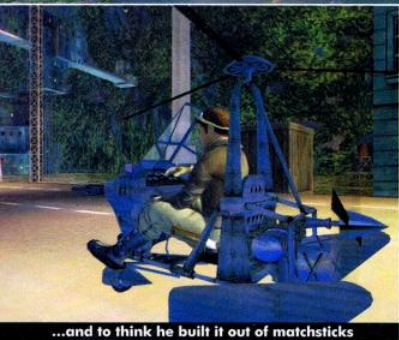
seeking mercenaries who constantly skirt the borders of what little law exists and delight in crossing the line when no one of consequence is looking. After losing the group's zeppelin base in a drunken card game, it's up to Nathan to steal back the Zepp, get a crew together and hopefully make a little money in the process. Of course it's not all fun and games for the lovable rogue as events soon turn sour with the death of his best friend, the revelation that there may be a bizarre super-weapon under construction, and every man with a plane looking to ground the Fortune Hunters permanently.

Although in essence High Road to Revenge is the sequel to the much loved but relatively unknown PC game, *Crimson Skies*, released in 2000 (itself a computer version of a well respected tabletop strategy

game of the same name), the new *Crimson Skies* for Xbox is the whole package unto itself – no knowledge of the past games is at all necessary to enjoy it. The only similarities between the two are the anachronistic setting and the wonderfully inventive planes – the rest is new. New engine, new soundtrack and new controls vastly superior to those in the original – if you played the original you know that's quite a feat as the controls for the original game were excellent. The basic controls utilise both analogue sticks, both triggers and the face buttons. The left analogue stick controls the direction of the plane and the right controls the roll whilst the triggers control primary and alternative fire. Face buttons control thrusters, air brakes and activates missions or landing options. By now you must be

thinking something along the lines of "that sounds pretty standard – what makes the controls so special?" By clicking the right analogue stick and then quickly moving both sticks, players can pull off a number of special manoeuvres ranging from barrel rolls, stalls, high G banks and quick changes of direction, all of which prove invaluable if you hope to survive for any length of time. To accurately pull off one of the special moves, you have to make sure you





...and to think he built it out of matchsticks

It won't be a "good year" for those guys

Dare I say, BLAU?!



ALL THE WHILE THE OPPOSITION DO THEIR DARNDDEST TO HAMMER THE LITTLE BUGGER OFF WITH STREAMS OF HOT LEAD

have a charged special meter or otherwise risk flying into a deadly and debilitating flat spin.

TESTS OF MARKSMANSHIP

High Road to Revenge features a number of absolutely enormous maps with settings ranging from the starting island to desert mining towns, vast cityscapes, canyons and more. Each one of the levels is absolutely massive with a truly staggering draw distance and a

number of missions that the player can undertake at their leisure by flying near any of the dollar bill icons and pressing the mission start button (default X). Missions range from simply taking out a number of enemy planes, to guarding a zeppelin delivering contraband, to saving a beleaguered train from airborne bandits. Aside from the money missions, each level of *Crimson Skies* features an optional air-race that players can compete in to get extra

cash and a few compulsory story based missions. Whilst the majority of story based missions take the form of shooting down enemy craft, there are some more skill based missions as well including tests of marksmanship using anti-aircraft guns, tests of piloting ability and the like. Although many of the missions follow a similar

format they all manage to feel fresh and the player has the ability to approach them as they see fit – if you don't feel like chasing a more agile plane around the sky all day you can always land near one of the many anti-aircraft guns positioned around most of the levels and try to take it out that



way. There is quite literally something to appeal to just about everybody – hell, there's even an optional on-rails style shooter mission in which you man the guns on a truck and try to take out a number of bandit bases.

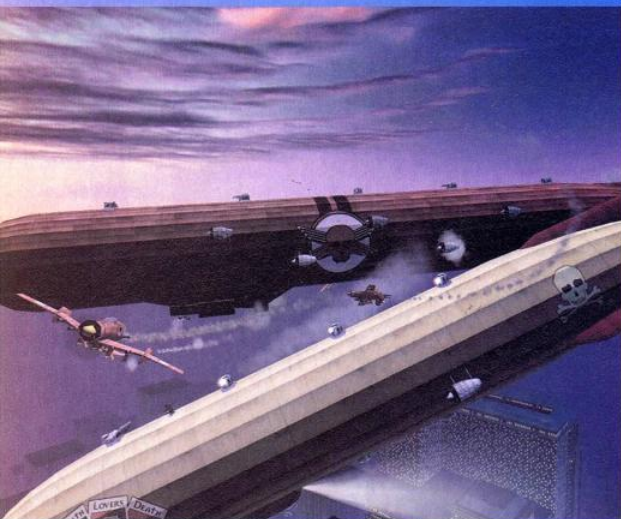
Exploration is also well rewarded, as each of the levels features a number of upgrade tokens that can be used to upgrade each of the ten-odd planes you'll find throughout the game.



SPLUT-SPLUT-SPLUT

It's a little disappointing that Microsoft has seen fit to do away with the jazzy tunes of the original *Crimson Skies* in favour of a very John Williams-esque theme but luckily the rest of the sound effects more than make up for this little oversight. Engine noises, weapons and explosions sound absolutely spot on and really bring the proceedings to life. The voice acting is wonderfully cheesy, conjuring up the likes of the Flash Gordon or Dan Dare serials.





Not the easiest way to wash your plane...



Which way is up?



"Gee, the clouds look strange today."



ROBOTIC SUPER-TANK

When is a zeppelin not a zeppelin? When it's actually the floatation device for a giant crab-like robotic super-tank. The giant crab thing is but the first of the bosses you encounter during *Crimson Skies*, but by god is it an impressive beast as it scuttles ponderously (if it is actually possible to scuttle ponderously) across the rocky landscape firing at all and sundry with its massive cannon. If you think that's cool, wait till you see what appears later in the game.

CATCH A WILD CHICKEN

If the single player campaign isn't enough to make you more than a little emotionally erect, the multiplayer component of *Crimson Skies* may float your boat (or zeppelin as the case may be). Aside from standard (and extremely fun) dogfights, *Crimson Skies* features a Team Dogfight mode, Capture the Flag, Keep Away and one of the most bizarrely brilliant sports style games to come along in a long while, dubbed Wild Chicken, this cross between football and Saturday morning cartoons sees players fighting first to catch a wild chicken on the tip of one of their wings and then try to deposit said chicken into the enemy's goal to score a point whilst all the while the opposition do their darndest to hammer the little bugger off with streams of hot lead. Keep Away sees either individuals or teams searching through the massive maps for a hidden cache of money and trying to keep it for two minutes after they've found it. Unfortunately as soon as you've found the money you become "it" as every other player starts to hunt you down. If you think

that sounds pretty good the best is yet to come, as *Crimson Skies* supports up to 16 players in multiplayer, either via link cable or through the recently released Xbox Live service.

Difficult as they are to find, *Crimson Skies* does contain a few things that are bound to frustrate all but the most dedicated and single minded of gamers. Many of the mission specific goals can be difficult and at times frustrating. One mission sees Nathan playing what is literally a game of follow the leader with the leader of the insular Navajo nation to gain access to the border. Throughout the mission Nathan must mirror every move the Navajo makes — one mistake and it's time to do it all again. Unless you have truly unnatural reflexes you'll probably find yourself having to replay this mission literally dozens of times before advancing, causing more than a little frustration. Aside from the difficulty of some of the missions the only other gripe is that I'll have to wait for a while before I get my boxed copy so I can play more. <<



PLUS: Best. Controls. Ever. Awesome multiplayer.

MINUS: Sometimes frustratingly hard.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

94 90 93

OVERALL

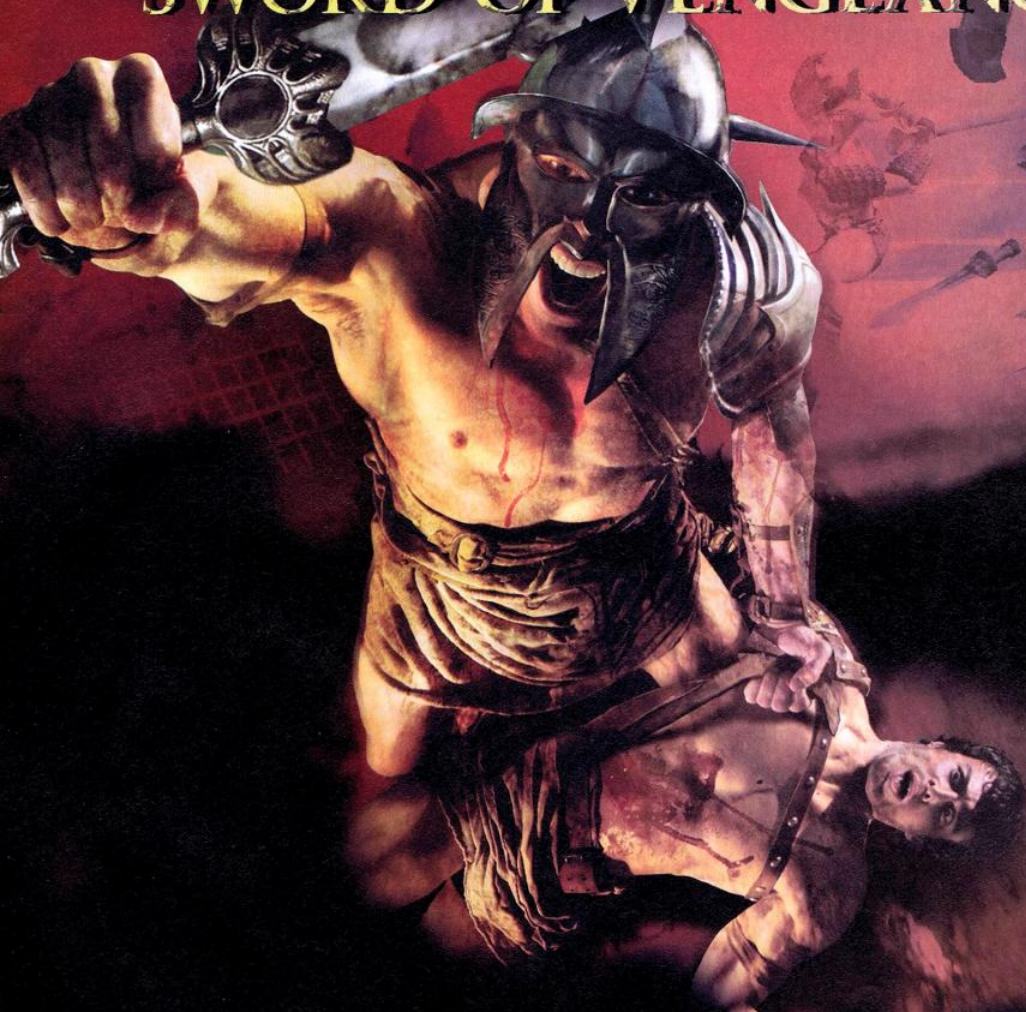
93



An absolute treat.

GLADIATOR

SWORD OF VENGEANCE



A warrior slave...
Chosen by the Gods...
Rome needs a Champion!



PlayStation 2

XBOX

PC CD-ROM

Acclaim

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Worst. Opera. House. Ever.



Leyton loses it for a second



Everyone hated playing against Superman



CATEGORY: Tennis >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Top Spin

CAM SHEA is a master when it comes to stick work...

Every system needs a great tennis game, and finally Xbox owners can proudly proclaim that they have one of the best ever made. Top Spin is a tennis fan's dream come true — amazing visuals, great gameplay and more personality than most other sports titles put together.

STICK IT TO 'EM...

Like all great tennis games, Top Spin is straightforward to pick up and play, but has amazing depth for those prepared to invest some time in the title. All the shots are here — slice, safe shot and top spin (each of which can be charged up by getting in position early), not to mention lob, drop shot and risk shot. This offers up a tremendous number of options, and as you've no doubt surmised, even lets you take risks. Hell, there's even a button for it!

What, perchance, is the risk shot? Well, it's a shot assigned to the right trigger that requires the deftest of touches to time properly. Release too early and your shot will go into the net. Too late and you'll smash it over the baseline. Time it just right, however, and you'll execute a blistering shot. At least, that's the theory. Risk shots can also be used on the serve, and they're indispensable for swinging serves out wide or like a bullet down the line. Tying into the risk shot concept is each player's "In The Zone" meter at the top of screen. Basically, the more aggressive shots you go for and land, the more the meter fills. Once it's flashing, it's a lot easier to time risk shots perfectly.

While risk shots may sound like a fantastic idea, opinion here at Hyper is divided as to how well it has been implemented. The problem is that

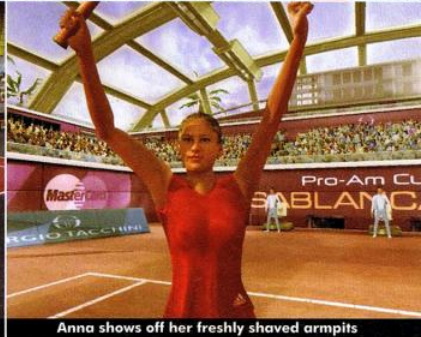
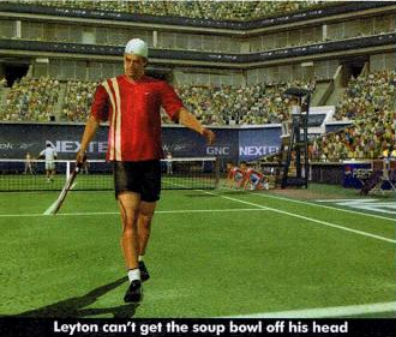
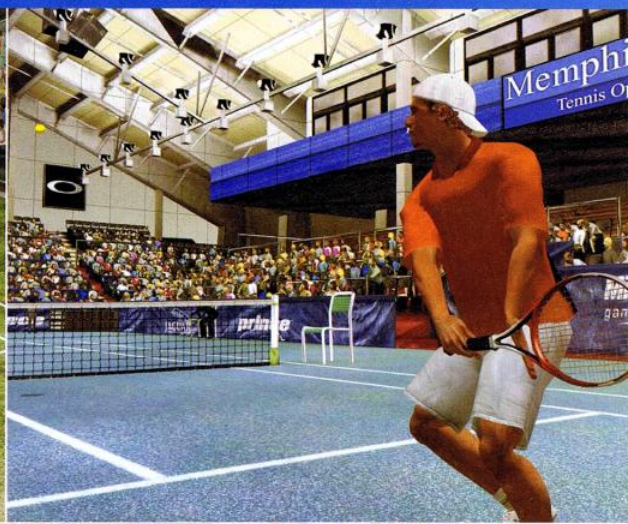
even when you position yourself perfectly and nail the timing, if you try and angle the ball at all it'll fly wide. Then again, if you don't angle the ball at all, it will usually be easy for your opposition to return, thus negating any advantage it has. Personally, I think that the "risk" should be getting the timing and anticipation right, and in the end the risk shot isn't beneficial enough to use in many situations outside of serving. Even the AI routinely blasts the ball wide when using it! The good news, however, is that whether you use the risk shot or not, the rest of the gameplay is so good that it really doesn't matter.

Play modes in Top Spin include Exhibition, Custom Tournament, Multiplayer and Career. Career mode shows great promise initially, thanks to a more dynamic structure than the likes of Virtua Tennis 2, but in

the end is quite disappointing. The player creation, however, deserves special mention because it's fantastic. Not only do you have around thirty parameters to adjust for appearance alone, including a random face generator, but the player you create is a true individual in play style too. First, you choose a natural talent in either power, defense or technical ability. Next, you have fourteen stat points for training your player in four areas — serve, forehand, backhand and volley. Great stuff. Better still, you can use your custom character in all the other game modes.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STICK...

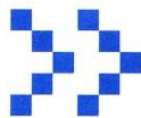
The Career mode as a whole, however, falls down in some crucial areas. The mini-games for training and sponsorship are really unimaginative, and progressing



Lleyton can't get the soup bowl off his head

"Argh I think I just broke my hip!"

Anna shows off her freshly shaved armpits



THE PLAYERS IN PARTICULAR ARE BEAUTIFULLY MODELLED AND ANIMATED, RIGHT DOWN TO SOME PLAYERS HAVING HAIRY LEGS

IT'S GOOD TO PLAY... SEPARATELY

Top Spin is an integral part of XSN Sports, and this is where much of the game's longevity will come from. XSN is an online virtual sports league that allows you to set up your own tournaments and schedules through XSNsports.com, then compete over Xbox Live. All results, standings and statistics from Xbox Live competition will be automatically updated on the site, and there'll even be a worldwide ranking system! What we're most looking forward to, however, is combining "on the couch" multiplayer fun with Live multiplayer and forming our own doubles team to take on other doubles teams! Eliot and Cam – the virtual Woodies!

!!! It would have been great to be able to choose your custom player's temperament and attitude animations. Top Spin 2 perhaps...

through the ranking system (you start out ranked 100th in the world) from Pro tournaments up to Grand Slams will only keep you entertained for so long. Especially since (unlike Virtua Tennis 2) your player is essentially fixed once you have assigned your stat points. But hey, it's pretty obvious that multiplayer is what this game was built for, and it's in this department that Top Spin rules.

Indeed, it's been a while since a multiplayer sports game (Pro Evo 2 and 3 being exceptions) has captured the attention of the office to quite the degree that Top Spin has. It's a confluence of factors really. For a start, Top Spin represents a large visual leap from competing tennis titles. The players in particular are beautifully modelled and animated,

right down to some players having hairy legs. Lleyton having his trademark leaping backhand, and a host of small details like having noticeably less traction on clay courts. There's a real flair and vitality to proceedings too, thanks to a host of trick shots and the inclusion of the "attitude buttons" where you can press the white or black buttons after each rally to trigger a reaction from your player. Whether it's glaring at your opponent or pumping your fists, it certainly adds personality to the game. Mind you, seeing "Personality Pete Sampras" getting worked up in between points reduces the reality factor a little. Capping off the eye candy is wonderfully measured gameplay that perfectly balances simulation and arcade, strategy and luck. A winning combination, and must buy for those with friends or Xbox Live. <<



PLUS: Awesome gameplay, visuals and stick-factor.

MINUS: No Agassi or Williams sisters.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 87 89

OVERALL

89

Top Spin grabs the tennis genre by the scruff of the neck.



Have you seen Nemo?



How dare you call me "old as a dinosaur"!



Vince celebrates his stash of crates



CATEGORY: Platformer >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Voodoo Vince

DANIEL WILKS likes to drive pins into his head...

Every next generation console bar the Xbox seems to have a standout proprietary platformer. The PS2 has Mario Sunshine. The PS3 has Ratchet & Clank, Jak & Daxter and a host of others. Up until now, all the Xbox had was a couple of multi-format games and the deeply flawed *Blinx*. Luckily all that is about to change with the release of *Voodoo Vince*, the first great platformer made specifically for Microsoft's console. Players take the role of Vince, a voodoo doll brought to life by some Zombie dust accidentally dropped during the abduction of his voodoo mistress Madame Charmaine by the inscrutable Kosmo the uh... Inscrutable. It's up to the little stuffed sack of Hessian to save the day.

FIND A MEAT GRINDER...

Although *Voodoo Vince* keeps many of the tropes now familiar to fans of

the platformer; double jumps, punches, a spinning attack and the butt-stomp, Vince manages to find its own niche within the genre by turning much of the action on its head and making it, for want of a better term, counter-intuitive. You see, being a voodoo doll, Vince is immune to most damage. Although water and monsters can still kill him, Vince takes no falling damage, fire damage or basically anything else you can imagine. His voodoo nature often transfers the damage onto nearby enemies. Players are introduced to the concept early in the piece as they are presented with a room full of enemies (far too many to possibly beat with punches alone). After a bit of searching, players will find a meat grinder and, after switching the power on, it's a simple matter of jumping in and being cruelly torn into thousands of

pieces to finish the level as a wave of destructive energy erupts from the eviscerated Vince, decimating all the enemies on screen.

Boss battles follow a similar formula with Vince having to discover ways in which to damage himself so he can defeat the boss. One boss may see you trying to electrocute yourself to kill a giant skeletal dinosaur where another may have you launching yourself from a great height into a pit of spikes to inflict the damage. The most inspired of the boss battles features Vince, replete with cowboy hat and hillbilly music riding a saddled rat around a rampaging statue, actively trying to be hit by boulders falling from the ceiling. It's almost guaranteed that you'll screw up all of the boss battles at least once as your lizard brain keeps telling you to avoid all of the damaging obstacles.

As well as damage caused by environmental stimulus, Vince's biggest gimmick is his special voodoo powers. Once charged up by finding enough Mardi-Gras beads, Vince can unleash a special voodoo attack that can kill all enemies on screen. Every level in the game features at least one new voodoo effect to collect so before too long you'll be seeing Vince being shot by UFOs, drinking acid, taking so many laxatives he explodes or being crushed by a falling cow, amongst dozens of other amusing effects. Whilst they never really transcend being a simple gimmick, the act of collecting all of the powers is a pleasure unto itself with the added end reward of seeing the next novel way in which Vince can off himself. Along with the Voodoo powers, each level features a number of hidden book pages that need to be



Vince has crabs, poor fella.



The quickest curse in the west.



He'd better keep his pins away from that



VINCE, REPLETE WITH COWBOY HAT AND HILLBILLY MUSIC RIDING A SADDLED RAT AROUND A RAMPAGING STATUE



BEST. BURNING. HEAD. EVER.

If there were an award for the best music in a game to denote the protagonist's head is on fire, Voodoo Vince would win hands down. One of the earlier levels sees Vince trying to kill two evil gas pumps, which naturally involves our hero setting his head on fire. The wonderfully upbeat Zydeco that plays during the cranial inferno is just one example of the excellent music on display throughout the game, running the gamut between Jazz, Blues, the aforementioned Zydeco, Bluegrass and even a little country.

collected to achieve the vaunted 100% – sure, it doesn't add too much to replayability but gives dedicated gamers something to obsess over.

PLUMMETING TO YOUR DOOM

Whilst there's no doubt that Voodoo Vince is a great game there are a few annoying flaws that have the definite potential to get on your nerves. For some reason the developers have implemented a double jump that is only possible at the very apex of the first jump, making jumping across long gaps an exercise in split second timing – a millisecond off and you'll be plummeting to your doom. The textures can also cause a problem, as it is sometimes difficult to tell what is actually a ledge and what is a fatal drop into the abyss. A little differentiation between ledges you can stand on and ones that are

simply part of the scenery would have been nice.

Aside from the aforementioned texture issues, Voodoo Vince is a gorgeous looking game, with Vince himself being the real standout. The levels, all set around the Big Easy really evoke the feeling of New Orleans and Mardi Gras whilst retaining a real Tim Burton-esque vibe – if you've seen *Nightmare Before Christmas* you've got a good idea of the architecture. Monster design is great but towards the end of the game you may find yourself wishing for a little more variety. Vince himself is a beautifully realised creation with his enormous misshapen head, mismatched eyes and roughly woven skin. His voice acting is wonderfully dry, nicely offsetting the pompous Madame Charmaine and Kosmo, who sounds eerily like the acne faced teenager from *The Simpsons*. <<<



PLUS: Excellent music, great puzzles.

MINUS: Iffy double-jump, some texture problems.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 93 88

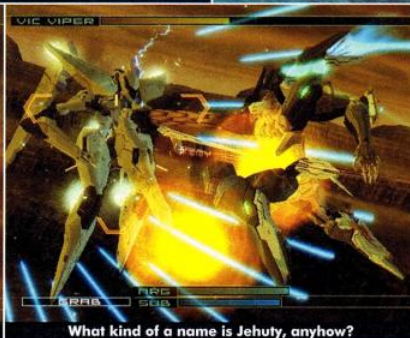
OVERALL

89

Finally the Xbox has a platformer to rave about.



Like a giant slice of orange. Or something.



What kind of a name is Jehuty, anyhow?



There's a game in there somewhere...

>>> PS2 CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Atari >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Z.O.E.: The 2nd Runner

BRETT ROBINSON is once more in the zone...

With its inspired mech designs, intense but repetitive gameplay and graphics that were nothing short of amazing, the first *Zone of the Enders* (ZOE) game was in many ways a typical Hideo Kojima production. Considering how short the game was, ZOE fared surprisingly well in the retail sector, though even the least cynical among us might speculate that this was largely due to the inclusion of the bonus *Metal Gear Solid 2* demo disc. Whatever the reasons for ZOE's commercial success, this time around there's no such disc to entice punters; thus *Zone of the Enders: The Second Runner* (ZOE2) will have to compete on its own merits.

HANDLES LIKE A DREAM

ZOE2's plot is more substantial than its predecessor's, and whilst the dialogue is a little shaky, the anime-style cut

scenes make up for this, being better suited to the overall style of the game than the pre-rendered sequences of the original were.

An already impressive piece of military hardware, Jehuty receives a significant boost to its firepower in ZOE2, and for the most part it handles like a dream. Jehuty retains its ability to shred opponents with its energy blade, blast multiple enemies with swarming lasers and — best of all — hurl adversaries into walls and each other. In addition, Jehuty can now generate massive orbs of destructive energy and can utilise a host of secondary weapons, which become available over the course of the game. With dozens upon dozens of bad guys to take care of at any one time, combat becomes a lightning-fast ballet of mechanical carnage punctuated by

some of the most impressive weapon and particle effects we've ever seen.

A FEW EXTRA HOURS

PAL gamers score a special edition of the game, with three new missions, as well as two new polygon models for Jehuty and two new difficulty modes.

Design and difficulty-wise, a number of levels and boss encounters have been tweaked, and the attributes of the Orbital Frames in the two-player VS mode have been adjusted to level the playing field. As a result of these modifications, ZOE2 is now more balanced, and players should get a few extra hours out of it.

There's only one serious criticism that can be levelled at ZOE2 — it's very short. If you can excuse this flaw, then you'll find that *The 2nd Runner* is more than just a pretty face. <<<



David Lucas (of *Cowboy Bebop* fame) provides the voice-over for Dingo.



PLUS: Finely honed action and unbeatable graphics.

MINUS: Limited longterm value and stilted dialogue.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

94 77 82

OVERALL

78

Beautiful and intense, but over way too soon.

Like exploring?

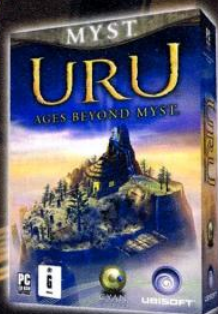


URU



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Discover *Myst*® 4: *URU*™ Ages Beyond *Myst*®

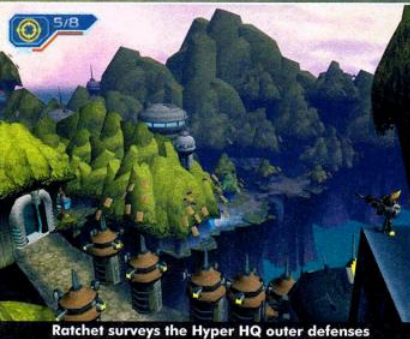


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Ratchet surveys the Hyper HQ outer defenses

Even kids love gibbs.

Teaching kids pyromania, cool!

PS2

CATEGORY: Platform >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: SCEE >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: PG >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Ratchet & Clank 2

DANIEL STAINES is always clanking about the office...

After spending just over a week with it, I can confidently say that Ratchet & Clank 2 is nothing less than a refreshing breath of fresh air for gamers everywhere. It's a platform game. It's a platform game that, you know, is really fun to play and... that's about it. The graphics aren't that flash, there are no extra features to speak of and none of the characters are voiced by your favourite washed-up celebrities. It won't remind you of GTA and it doesn't feature boobies anywhere. It's just a good, simple and incredibly well designed game that offers nothing more than fifteen hours or so of wholesome enjoyment. Ratchet & Clank 2 (hereafter referred to as RC2) is a PURE gaming experience. Incidentally, it is also one of the most accessible and enjoyable PS2 titles released this year. Coincidence perhaps?

YOU'RE THE RODENT GUY

We don't think so. RC2 is a good game because the integrity of its design is flawless. Every single part of the gameworld is identified and easily understood in terms of its functionality. You're the rodent guy with the wrench and the hero. The little robot guy on your back is the sidekick. That big green guy with the gun over there is your enemy. You use the hero to kill the enemy to get rewards with which to buy more weapons to make killing other enemies easier. You jump on some platforms, you get some health and you fight some bosses. Sometimes you'll get gadgets and they can manipulate one type of thing in the environment and only one type of thing, so you'll always know when it's possible to use them. Do you see what I'm talking about here? Simple gameplay elements that naturally

come together to form an instantly accessible yet wonderfully complex whole — that's RC2 in a nutshell right there.

For example, let's take a look at one of the gadgets: the Tractor Beam. As you'd expect, the main purpose of this little doohickey is to latch onto and move about particular items in the gameworld: namely, anything marked with an easily distinguishable cohesive disc. To begin with, this gadget's functionality is restricted to fairly menial tasks such as moving crates and dragging platforms. However, the simplicity of these activities serves to familiarise you with how the beam can be used to manipulate the environment and thus prepares you for the more creative and entertaining applications that follow — such as flinging an appropriately marked

robot onto a security platform and slingshotting bombs into power arrays. In this sense, the Tractor Beam is indicative of RC2's entire design philosophy. Insomniac has built a game upon a set of simple components and let the interactions between these individual parts give rise to a gameworld that is both rich and accessible in its complexity. Put simply, it's clever game design at its finest.

UPGRADE YOUR FAVOURITE GUN

Oh yes, it also happens to be addictive game design at its finest as well. Using a rudimentary set of RPG mechanics (including HP level-ups, weapon upgrades and spendable currency), Insomniac have imbued RC2 with some of the most relentlessly riveting gameplay we've come across in a platformer. The simple fact of the matter is that



Smallest nuke ever.



Ratchet spreads the love, or is that death?



Hey, they stole that weapon from Krull!



YOU CANNOT TURN THIS LITTLE GEM OFF WITHOUT WANTING TO IMMEDIATELY PLAY IT SOME MORE



MINI-GAMES!

Roughly speaking, there are approximately a hojillion mini-games to play around with in Ratchet & Clank 2. There's arena based gladiatorial combat, speeder-bike racing, hacking and – best of all – MECH COMBAT! What other platform game gives you control of a towering robot of doom and lets you smash the living hell out of a space-age moon city? That's right – none. We love you, Ratchet and Clank!

you cannot turn this little gem off without wanting to immediately play it some more. You want to get to the next level; you want to upgrade your favourite gun; you want to get enough money to buy that new weapon you've been after; there are only a few more enemies left to kill until your health goes up another notch; what was that about a new gadget... AIEEEE! There's so much to do and all of it seems just within your grasp at any one moment. If it weren't for the fact that death sometimes results in a bit of repetitious backtracking, it's unlikely that I would've stopped playing the damn thing long enough to write this glowing review.

And yes, for those of you still wondering, this is most definitely a

!!! If you can't decide, then Jak II is the better of the two games...

glowing review. In fact, it's glowing so much that writing it is beginning to hurt my eyes. We love RC2. It's fun, it's accessible, it's complex, it's addictive... it's pretty much everything you could want from a 3D platform game and then some. Of course, there are some downsides: the previously mentioned backtracking, the

unfunny humour, the fairly tedious spaceship mini-game that looks like it was lifted straight out of Kingdom Hearts... but hey, they're just a blip in comparison to the hours of solid entertainment on offer here. RC2 is pure gaming excellence and it can be enjoyed by just about everyone. Don't do yourself the disservice of passing it up. <<<



PLUS: Accessible and clever design, incredibly addictive.

MINUS: Poor humour, backtracking, spaceship mini-game.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

85 85 90

OVERALL

90

A platformer that nobody should miss.





Ice Ice Baby



Xtreme screenshot caption



Now THAT's a tyre blowout!

>>PS2 XBOX

CATEGORY: Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

XGRA

STEPHEN FARRELLY is our one and only Xtreme reviewer...

For the uninitiated, the Xtreme-0 series is Acclaim's answer to F-Zero and WipEout, only with motorbikes. The idea is the same, with you riding a series of futuristic tracks that loop, dip, twist and bend in all directions. The challenge and thrill of racing the long tracks is definitely something racing fans should look forward to, but each iteration of the series has somehow managed to mess something up.

DESTROYING PROBLEM RIDERS

Acclaim Cheltenham has attempted to deliver a deep and fulfilling race experience in the wake of F-Zero GX, but they have unfortunately fallen short, instead delivering a shallow superfluous gaming experience that draws nothing from the games it attempts to emulate. XGRA is a frills-a-plenty racing experience

that will only interest fans of the series, and even then, leave a bitter taste in some people's mouths.

To stay with the pack, XGRA offers a storyline that is presented in a pseudo television narrative, which, for all intents and purposes, is a great idea. However, the end result is a little annoying as the suspension of disbelief is lost in this approach, and the storyline offers little.

You can now pick a team and race with them for the duration of the story, and doing so will serve up a number of missions and objectives for you to complete. These directions range from beating rivals and destroying problem riders, to taking out signs and finishing circuits. These secondary objectives fail to deepen the gameplay experience, and instead end up as tiresome diversions to the racing. A sorely missed option is the ability to buy

bikes and parts, replaced instead with a reward system.

TURN SHARPER, SIT LOWER

Complete objectives and win races to receive new bikes at specific points in the game, removing the much-loved freedom of options that were found in XG3. However, there is a workshop where you can tweak your bike to turn sharper, sit lower or become lighter or heavier, but it's a small consolation.

The dull and uninspired background visuals do little to add any excitement to the races, especially after seeing the amazing backgrounds in F-Zero GX. XGRA just looks old and tired. The game models are fairly blocky and the overall sensation of 'the future' is really lacking.

XGRA is definitely a bottom of the field racing experience. <<



PLUS: Some nice ideas...

MINUS: Everything just plays, looks and sounds bland.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

71 69 67

OVERALL

65

A series that seems to get worse with each instalment.

POKÉMON 4EVER



The
All-New
Full-Length
Movie

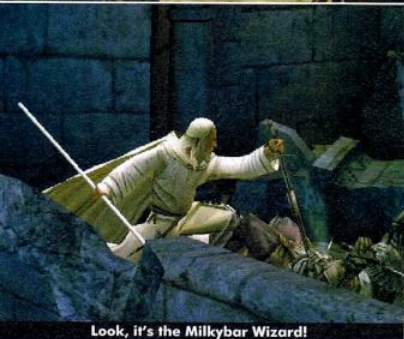
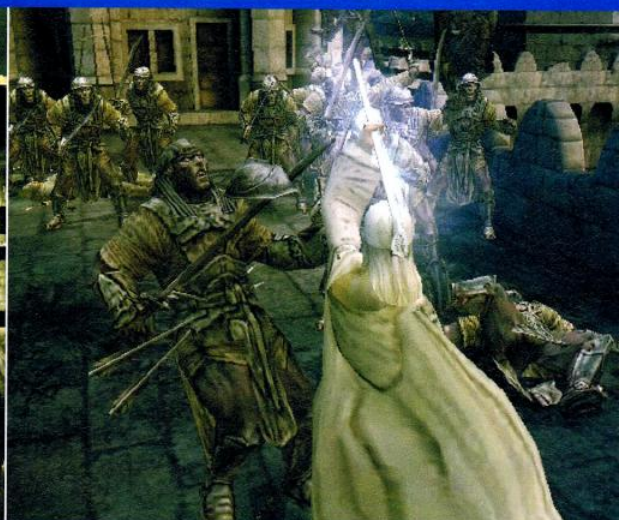


4EVER YOURS

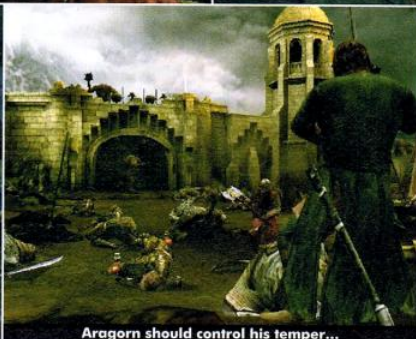
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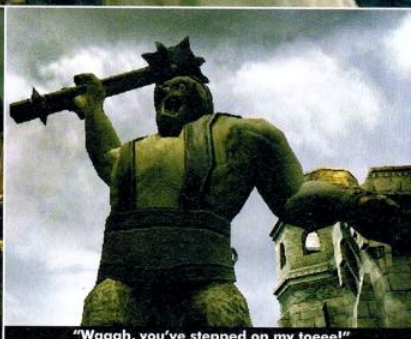




Look, it's the Milkybar Wizard!



Aragorn should control his temper...



"Waaah, you've stepped on my toeeee!"

>>PS2 XBOX GCN PC CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Return of the King

ELIOT FISH is sad to see this great trilogy reach an end.

The fellowship is back again for one final adventure.

Return of the King rounds off the trilogy at the cinemas this Christmas, and this second *Lord of the Rings* game from EA's Redwood studio (no Stormfront this time around) brings us the grand finale of this epic Tolkien adventure without spoiling the upcoming film toooo much. Beginning with the huge battle of Helm's Deep from the end of *The Two Towers*, and finishing off with the crucial Crack of Doom scene from the end of *Return of the King*, this is another exceptional package for Rings fans.

CRISP AND DETAILED

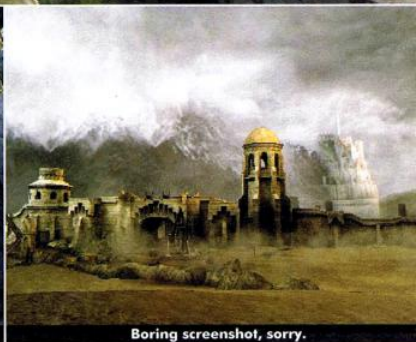
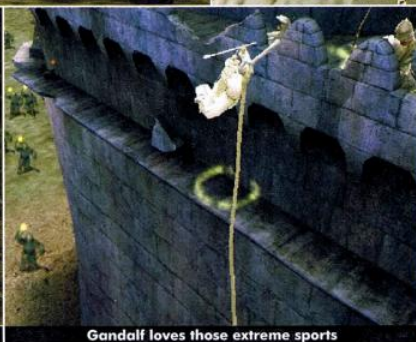
Return of the King is certainly a far more lavish and fleshed out game than *The Two Towers* was. For starters, there are more playable characters - eight, in fact. At first,

you can only choose between the characters that were actually present in those particular scenes in the film, such as Frodo and Sam in Shelob's Lair, but eventually you can unlock a pretty decent cast of characters to play as when you return to play particular levels over again. And play levels over again you will.

There's also the Co-op mode that allows two players to work their way through the game together, banding together to vanquish the plethora of evil foes that want to do away with our human, elf, hobbit and dwarf companions. This can be saved in a separate slot so as to not disrupt your single-player game - if you complete the game 100% in both modes, we assume it'll unlock something cool. Because it just makes sense. But we haven't tested it. Okay?!

The first thing you'll notice with *Return of the King*, is that there's even more between level DVD footage from the films than *The Two Towers* game offered. They bridge the levels nicely, although it's a mish-mash of *Fellowship of the Ring*, *Two Towers* and *Return of the King* footage. But the extended cutscenes kind of reflect the general attitude the studio had making this follow-up game, which was to pack it full of content for fans. There are unlockable interviews with the cast (even though it's just gushing praise for the game), amazing concept art from the film (very nice) and game, eight playable characters (which is almost double the previous game), and an exceptional level of detail that *Rings* fans will most certainly appreciate. This is a visual feast if ever there was one.

The game looks absolutely stunning on all platforms, with the PS2 being the weakest of the lot visually, but not by much. It still looks bloody nice for the PS2, but on Xbox for instance, the environments and characters look that much more crisp and detailed with no problematic drop in framerate. And talk about cinematic... whilst *Return of the King* is a highly scripted game experience (as the *Two Towers* game was), it's thrilling and fun to take part in. The architecture looks authentic, the animation in all the characters is excellent, and all the voice acting is once again supplied by the true cast from the film - which makes a big difference to the quality of the dialogue and cutscenes. Better yet, thanks to some much more intricate level design, *Return of the King* is a far more



This should get rid of a few wrinkles

Gandalf loves those extreme sports

Boring screenshot, sorry.



RETURN OF THE KING IS A FAR MORE ENGAGING AND CHALLENGING EXPERIENCE THAN TWO TOWERS WAS

engaging and challenging experience than Two Towers was.

MORE THAN MASHING

It would be fair to admit that when it comes down to it, Return of the King is a pretty simplistic action game, as was The Two Towers. It's fairly basic button-mashing combat, and many of the levels play the same way regardless of the setting. However, a lot of the entertainment comes more from the spectacle and accurate recreation of the amazing set-piece battles from the film. It makes the game exciting to play, even though you're not doing much more than using a few simple sword combos to mow down hordes of Orcs or hammering enemies from afar with your range attack. There are also more "action" moves where you can affect the flow of the action

with a specific event, such as manning a catapult, firing huge flaming spears, or pushing a giant broken bell down a flight of stairs to crush some nasty pursuers. The added points of action such as this help to give the levels a bit more excitement and an extra layer of gameplay other than just hammering the swing attack button. In fact, there are times when you'll start to feel rather overwhelmed. These truly are some pretty impressive set-piece battles. You've not seen anything quite as epic as this on a console before.

Some gamers found the Two Towers game too easy and as a result found it too short, but they shouldn't have too much to complain about this time. Return of the King may not be a hugely long

game, but it's far more interesting than Two Towers, and it's also a lot more difficult this time around, requiring you to replay some missions many times in order to figure out the best way to defeat it.

Do beware that if you didn't like Two Towers, you'll doubtfully fall head over heels for Return of the King. But there are many reasons why you should love it.

The presentation is absolutely jaw-dropping, and the mission and level design is far more ambitious and impressive this time around. Overall, it really is a much better game than the Two Towers was. We had quite a crowd gathering about the TV here in the office whilst we were playing, and the general consensus was "coool".

It's hard not to love it. <<<

!!! Don't let the end of the game fool you - there's more to it in the movie than that...



PLUS: Amazing visuals, lots of unlockables, challenging.

MINUS: Simple action, sometimes confusing objectives.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

93 90 84

OVERALL

88

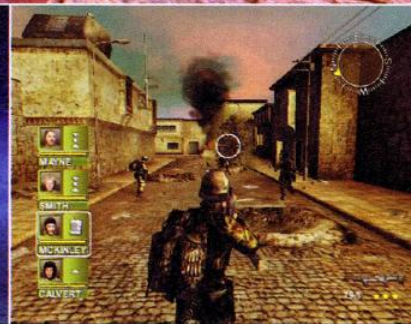
A gloriously good Lord of the Rings experience.



In the name of the USA, yeeehaa!



One less non-American in the world, yeeehaa!



Let's build a McDonalds here, yeeehaa!

>>> PS2 XBOX GCN PC CATEGORY: Squad-based Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Atari >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Conflict Desert Storm 2

BRETT ROBINSON doesn't want to go back.

Conflict Desert Storm 2: Back to Baghdad is not set during the current conflict in Iraq, but instead sees the original game's four protagonists doing their thang in the latter stages of the first Gulf War. Understandably, some gamers might scratch their heads over this, until they realise how 'exciting' missions with the sole objective of uncovering weapons of mass destruction would be. Half-jokes aside, Conflict Desert Storm 2 (CDS2) gives you the choice of leading either an SAS or Delta Force team into battle. Yes, you too can be part of George Sr's crusade to smack down the Iraqis for taking America's oi...er, for invading the sovereign nation of Kuwait.

ROLL WHEN PRONE

The composition of your team is typical of squad-based shooters,

with a leader, a heavy weapons guy, a sniper and a recon specialist. Each operative has a preferred weapon type and an area of expertise — be it comms, explosives, vehicle repairs or healing — and over the course of the game their combat effectiveness increases. In terms of new features, CDS2 allows squad members to roll when prone and to peek around corners, and there are some tasty new weapons to play with, among them phosphorus grenades (really nasty!) and smoke grenades (actually quite useful). The game's graphics have also been tweaked a little, and more importantly, the game's AI is a dramatic improvement on that of its predecessor.

CDS2 offers a total of ten missions, which might seem like a meagre offering, but they're all tough and lengthy, and there are plenty of

secondary objectives to complete. Taking a covert approach is often the sensible thing to do, but there's much more fun to be had when things are completely FUBAR. With base security on maximum alert, the klaxons wailing and the bullets flying, adrenaline flows faster than spilled enemy blood. Night battles in particular offer a sensory experience second to none, with spotlights cutting through the darkness, tracer rounds illuminating the trajectories of .50 calibre machinegun bullets and your operatives' night vision goggles flaring in response to muzzle flashes and explosions. War is hell in the real world, but in CDS2 it's electrifying to say the least.

In the midst of all this chaos, your team-mates carry out their orders with a satisfying degree of efficiency and professionalism,

thanks in no small part to the significantly revamped AI system. Admittedly, they make the occasional mistake, but these guys are a quartet of prodigies compared to the trained chimps you fight alongside in SOCOM: US Navy SEALs. CDS2's enemy AI has also been given a boost, and while your adversaries are still cannon fodder to an extent, they're clever enough to attack from cover wherever possible and lob grenades when your squad is bunched together or entrenched. Thankfully, the omniscient bad guy problem that plagued the original CDS has been addressed — now enemies only spot threats within their simulated cones of vision.

SANDSTORM AND SMOKE

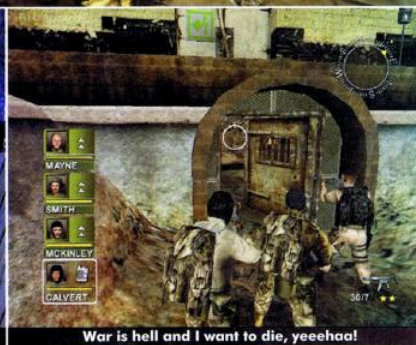
Graphically speaking, CDS2 is a bit of a letdown, with less than impressive textures, primitive



Have at you, yeeehaa!



I want to go home to mom, yeeehaa!



War is hell and I want to die, yeeehaa!



THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE **TAKING ON A MAIN BATTLE TANK** WITH NOUGHT BUT A HANDFUL OF C4

TO AIM OR AUTO-AIM, THAT IS THE QUESTION. CDS2's auto-aim feature has a more significant effect on your play experience than you might anticipate. With the auto-aim enabled, Rambo-style tactics are a whole lot more viable, and plenty of gamers will appreciate being able to concentrate solely on filling the bad guys with hot lead. Conversely, with CDS2's auto-aim disabled, combat is much more gruelling and every exchange of fire brings with it a sense of gritty realism. And while the game's overall difficulty increases dramatically with the auto-aim off, so too does the satisfaction derived from completing a mission. Choose your aiming mode wisely, because your decision will determine just how much enjoyment you get out of the game.

character models and movement animations that just aren't up to scratch. These problems are offset to an extent by the terrific sandstorm and smoke effects, as well as the uniformly excellent sound effects, but to be honest we expected more from Pivotal Games' latest effort. Equally disappointing (and rather perplexing) is the game's lack of online multiplayer support, which won't do it any favours sales-wise now that Xbox and PS2 networks are accessible in this country. When a game seems so perfectly suited to online play, downloadable content is poor consolation, though it has to be said that split-screen cooperative play is a blast, and we were mightily impressed with the consistency of the framerate in this mode.

!!! Don't waste any anti-tank rockets you might find. Trust us on this.

For all its failings, CDS2 still manages to impress – fanging around in a 4WD bristling with machineguns and grenade launchers is an experience in itself, and there's nothing quite like taking on a main battle tank with nought but a handful of C4! There's visceral satisfaction to be had, too, in sneaking up on a dozing sentry and slipping a knife blade between his ribs, and it's practically impossible to keep a straight face when your mate has just rolled sideways off an embankment and into a nest of landmines. For fans of the genre and series newcomers alike, Conflict: Desert Storm II has a lot to offer, as long as you don't expect perfection. If you loved the original CDS, then you'd be a fool to pass this one up. <<



PLUS: Atmospheric, tough, and great fun with mates.

MINUS: Sub-par visuals and no online multiplayer.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
74 83 80

OVERALL
79

Noisy, dusty, cordite-encrusted fun.



Argh! Mugged for my shoes again!



The pre-show human pyramid entertainment



Just wait until you get the nude cheat

PS2 CATEGORY: Sports >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: EA >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Rugby 2004

ROLAND FLANAGAN loves a good maul...

EA Sports, after a successful romp with EA Sports Rugby have granted gamers another chance to lead their favourite teams (go Ireland!) to World Cup Glory. Complete with current team rosters, a new graphics engine and an audience hungry for victory, surely Rugby 2004 is the answer to our prayers?

LEGS GIVING WAY

Perhaps not. Rugby 2004 is a hit and miss title that tries to cram as much of the glitz and beefcakery of the modern game into a crash course of tackling, running and kicking. That's not to say the game is not enjoyable, far from it in fact, as this is one of the best two player sports titles around. Everything just feels incomplete, be it the repetitive commentary or the sluggish pace of the game.

What is essentially a fast paced game is transformed into a test of

patience. At every breakdown of play, the ball can only be picked up by the halfback, even if he was the tackled player. This is a shame as the original provided a refreshing fast paced alternative.

Featuring in-game strategies that would make Madden blush, Rugby comes brimming with plays to suit every style of play. Want to do a cut out pass with a winger charging up on the inside? Have players dummy for the hit-ups and spread the ball out wide? All these can be achieved thanks to a neatly designed selection menu and easily executed plays. Finally – a chance to lead the Warratahs to a much deserved Super 12 Championship. This leads to Rugby's biggest selling point. All Super 12 teams, Tri Nations and European League teams make an appearance, making this the most complete Rugby game to date.

CRISP GRUNTS

Sound and commentary can make or break a sports title, and Rugby delivers with crisp grunts and a crowd to boot. Although the commentary gets repetitive quickly, nothing beats hearing "and he's off" eight times, one for each pass. Then again... knowing you played "really well" is a compliment worth losing for!

Various gameplay glitches can lead to countless cases of severe head injury, be it from a player getting ankle tapped only to speed over the dead ball line, or forwards preferring to wait patiently to get pummelled instead of cleaning up the ball. These are but a few of the numerous glitches which severely plague Rugby.

All in all, this is a good distraction for those who are eagerly ensconced in World Cup action. It's just a shame that so much potential was wasted. <<



PLUS: Rabid rugby fans will lap it up...

MINUS: But it won't be long until the weaknesses shine through.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

71 76 63

OVERALL

69

Another rugby game, another "so near and yet so far"...

Use the streets of Florence to show your friends
the true meaning of art.



Microsoft
game studios

Let the world know how good you look. Project Gotham Racing™ 2 is the next level in racing. Take on anyone, anywhere on the Xbox Live™ service and show them what you've got. PGR™ 2 is as much about looking good as driving fast and with the cars you have to choose from, you have no excuse. Featuring the Enzo Ferrari and over 100 of the world's most desirable cars in which to take chances, earn Kudos points and climb up the rankings. Tear up the streets of over a hundred courses in 10 realistic international cities including Sydney, Chicago, Barcelona, Yokohama and Moscow. With PGR™ 2, winning never looked so good.



it's good to play together

www.xbox.com/pgr2



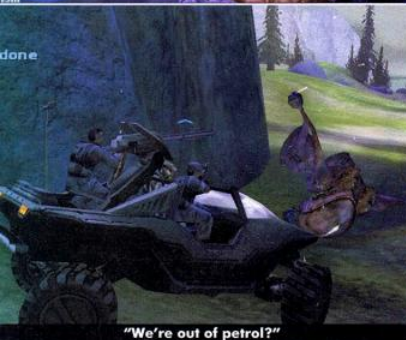
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Picked up a plasma grenade



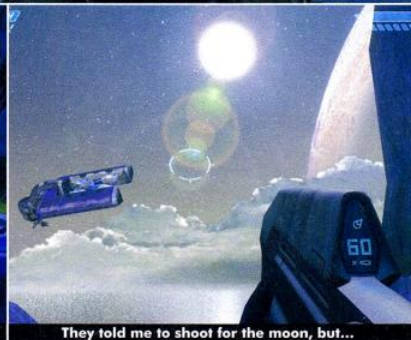
PASSENGER



"We're out of petrol?"



He has a phobia of needles...



They told me to shoot for the moon, but...

>>> PC CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-16 >> PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>
 MINIMUM REQUIRED: PIII 733, 128 MB RAM, 32 MB T&L video-card >>

Halo: Combat Evolved

DANIEL STAINES probes the alien ring again.

This was always going to be a tough one to review. It's Halo, right? You know it: it's THE definitive Xbox game. It's the title that made Bill's box worth buying on launch-day, even if it did cost \$650 and didn't come with a free DVD remote like it probably should've. Halo... well, we don't think it would be an exaggeration to call this game the best console shooter ever made. Yet here it is on the PC and — contrary to what a lot of us expected — it just doesn't feel right. There's something missing and it's more than the feeling of comfortable familiarity one often finds absent in a port like this. The simple fact of the matter is that Halo just isn't as impressive on the PC as it was on the Xbox.

BLACK AND WHITE TV

It's hard to pinpoint exactly why this is the case. Ultimately, we think

it has a lot to do with the fact that Halo is a game designed for a console and Gearbox simply hasn't done enough to make this squarepeg fit comfortably into the round-hole of the PC platform.

Superficially, there's nothing wrong with it. The new textures are great, mouse-look makes aiming a lot easier and all the gameplay elements that made the original so bloody good are all intact. There's no denying that it's still an excellent game and quite enjoyable to play — but the mechanics feel wrong. The relatively slow pace that felt so natural on the Xbox suddenly becomes frustratingly sluggish; the extra look speed afforded by a mouse is too fast for the weapons to keep up with and you can't help but notice that a lot of the stuff that looked good on a TV appears lifeless and unimpressive in the more

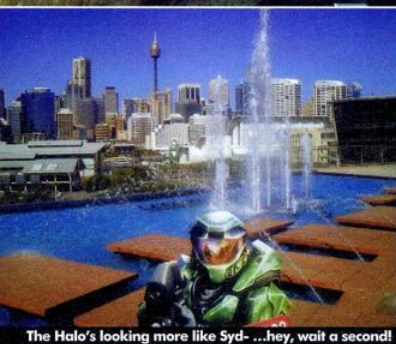
compact confines of a monitor. Even the wicked beach-landing opening of "The Silent Cartographer" mission failed to elicit any favourable response and we LOVE that scene.

In a way, it's very much like setting up a dinky black-and-white TV to watch Terminator 2 or any other big budget, special effects laden Hollywood blockbuster you'd care to name. The movie's all good and the content's exactly the same as it ever was, but the medium through which it is being presented is simply unsuited to the task. And if you're thinking this is just because we're all too used to the Xbox version, you're wrong: given to a greenhorn friend, Halo on the PC elicited exactly the same complaints we've listed above. The incongruity isn't just an illusion visible through rose-coloured glasses. It's real and it's probably going to show up

regardless of whether you've played the Xbox version or not.

ROBUST MULTIPLAYER ROMP

Wait a second, though — don't get all mopey and depressed yet. Halo on the PC may suffer from problems that are evidently intrinsic to its very existence, but it's still a really fudging good game. The enemy AI is still some of the best we've seen in a FPS, the limitation of carrying just two weapons at a time is still an ingenious and clever gameplay dynamic and plasma grenades still stick to those little Covenant bastards just like they always have. With the exception of Half-Life and its imminent sequel, you'd be very hard pressed to find another PC game with better set-piece battles than this one. And, as you'd probably expect, the multiplayer modes benefit immeasurably from



The Halo's looking more like Syd- ...hey, wait a second!



Blue blood! He must have been royalty.



They really are little green men



THERE'S DEFINITELY A LOT MORE FLEXIBILITY IN SETTING UP A PARTICULAR TYPE OF MULTIPLAYER GAME

MODDER'S PARADISE

If there's one thing that the PC version of Halo definitely has over its Xbox counterpart, it's Sapien – the as-yet unreleased editor that will let end-users create their own content using the Halo engine. Halo mods, man! Can you imagine what kind of awesome stuff could be created with that kind of power? No official release date has been set yet, but we want this NOW. The potential – in both single and multiplayer – is limitless.



Internet connectivity and extended LAN flexibility. Although a TV adds something indefinably special to the experience as a whole, there's definitely something to be said for having your own monitor during multiplayer. And really, it's this new multiplayer that is PC Halo's biggest drawcard.

There's definitely a lot more flexibility in setting up a particular type of multiplayer game, with literally dozens of different options available for the tweaking. There are also a bunch of new maps, as well as the old Xbox ones. The only faults we can think of are the lack of co-op and the rather uninspired new content. Rocket Warthog = Warthog + Rocket Launcher? Maybe something a bit more creative would have made this feel even more fresh.

!!! Get your Halo patch now! www.gearboxsoftware.com is the place.

In the marketing spiel on their website, Gearbox claims to have made Halo "cooler" by "taking full advantage of all the benefits offered by the PC platform". The only thing is they didn't do that – they couldn't do that. Not without significantly changing the very nature of the game itself. Halo is still a well-constructed game, but the single player doesn't stand up very well against other PC games. Or more importantly, Gearbox have failed to make Halo more of a PC game with this conversion. We'd certainly recommend purchasing it if you can't play the original or are after a robust multiplayer romp, but don't go in expecting a single-player experience that compares favourably to that offered by the Xbox. <<



PLUS: Still a great game, fabulous multiplayer, plasma grenades!

MINUS: Mechanics unsuited to the PC, slim on new content.

VISUALS 90 SOUND 85 GAMEPLAY 85

OVERALL

85

Halo fails to take full advantage of the PC platform.



There's a party at the castle. Boom boom.



Blah blah blah... let's just kill stuff.



An amateur of all trades.

PC CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Atari >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Temple of Elemental Evil

ELIOT FISH forces his poor halfling to be a barbarian.

There have been a number of CRPGs over the years that have borrowed from D&D, along with a number of officially licensed games, but there's generally always something that could have been done better. Temple of Elemental Evil, based on the classic D&D module, emphasised and excited D&D fans because finally a developer seem to want to "recreate" D&D authentically. Troika are the folk behind this attempt, and they very nearly got there.

ALL ABOUT THE COMBAT

The Temple of Elemental Evil (TOEE) module is basically a big dungeon crawl, and the game is very much a D&D combat simulator. The heart of TOEE is the enjoyment you get from working your way through the temple and testing your party against the plethora of classic D&D

monsters. If you're looking for cool character interaction, a decent story, good voice-acting, exploration and a believable fantasy world to play in, then you're going to be disappointed. This is all about the combat, the skills, the feats and the implementation of those good old 3.5 D&D rules. Thankfully, Troika have ensured that the combat is marvellous. They really have done an exceptionally great job with the character creation, levelling up, and the deep, deep strategic combat. If that's what you live and breathe for in an RPG, then you're going to love every minute of this game.

BAD CASE OF THE BUGS

A large proportion of gamers will, however, probably get bored of the

combat about halfway through the game — and the reason for this is that the game is devoid of much else to keep you entertained. There's very

little else to do other than go and fight. NPC interaction can be quite fun if you have one character who is a master of diplomacy, gather information and bluff, but the script and voice-acting

is mostly sub-par and so many of the NPC quests are nothing more than running from point A to point B and picking through conversation trees.

TOEE also suffers from a bad case of the bugs. There should be a patch out by the time you read this, but still... If we were scoring the combat alone, then TOEE would score highly indeed. But taking everything into consideration, it's a rather tarnished experience. <<

!!! Rumour has it that publisher Atari forced Troika to remove many of the "evil" gameplay paths from the game, which might explain a few things...



PLUS: Really involving combat, fun character creation.

MINUS: Bugs, and little other than combat to keep you playing.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 87 79

OVERALL

77

Hardcore D&D fans will love the combat complexity.

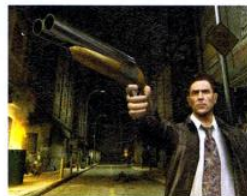
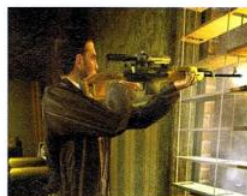
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REMEDY™


MA15+


R



>>>GCN CATEGORY: Side-scrolling beat 'em up >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Viewtiful Joe

STEPHEN FARRELLY thinks life is Viewtiful...

Viewtiful Joe is a throwback to the gaming standards of old; it's challenging, cute, kooky in story and colourful in character – in short, it's fun. Viewtiful Joe isn't just another niche quirky Japanese title we've fallen for; it's a rare and unique breed of game that blurs the line between marketable product and work of art. It's as stunningly simple as it is deep, and it's as deviously challenging as it is fun – Viewtiful Joe is something not to be missed, and Hyper is going to tell you why.

HEN SHIN-A GO-GO, BABY!

So you thought you knew every superhero there is to know... well, you better think again. Viewtiful Joe introduces us to our very likely and willing hero, Joe; a cinema-going, girlfriend avoiding, cool-as-hell guy. He's trying to watch a classic

action movie with his favourite big-screen hero, Captain Blue, but his girlfriend, Sylvia, has her own ideas. She wants to make out and get lucky (it's uncanny how close this game is to my own life), and will do all she can to achieve her goal. That is, until the characters on the silver screen come alive and Sylvia is kidnapped, then it's suddenly up to you to enter the world of the movies to meet your action hero and become the new bearer of hero-dom, Viewtiful Joe.

Playing as Joe (who isn't your typical reluctant hero, he wants it all) is just so rewarding. Performing his stylish moves, taking on countless foes, learning new attacks and upgrading your abilities is excellent fun. Moving left to right and up and down has never felt so enjoyable; the limitations in gameplay making what you can achieve all the more rewarding. Joe

learns a multitude of dazzling moves and each one adds more depth to the game's reward system, which is the ultimate reason to play. Performing combos of learned abilities is so much fun it's criminal, and the ease at which they can be performed and strung together is as tight and spot-on as it should be.

The pace at which you play the game is set perfectly, and you'll fall victim to Team Viewtiful's methodical learning curve which is gradual and seamless. You won't even realise the change in enemy difficulty until you're in the thick of it, but when you do, it's a real big-up to know your abilities are good enough to take on the baddest of the bad. Throughout the seven episodes on hand, Joe will learn a number of amazing attacks and evades, and with each use of these abilities he'll earn "Viewtiful Points"

which can in turn be used as currency to buy even more stylish moves and upgrades – it's a balanced system that works very well. Viewtiful Points can be multiplied through the number of enemies Joe can have targeted at once, the trick here though, is that Joe can only target as long as his "VFX" meter is charged. The VFX meter, or Viewtiful Effects meter, is what's used to slow things down, speed them up, zoom in and





SLOWING THINGS DOWN IS ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS YOU'LL LEARN, AND DOING SO WILL HELP YOU GAIN MORE AND MORE POINTS

basically kick ass. Slowing things down is one of the first things you'll learn, and doing so will help you gain more and more points to become more powerful. Moreover, in keeping with the movie motif, Joe can collect film canisters to extend the life of his VFX meter so as to keep the action slow or fast for as long as possible — the longer you can target and smash enemies, the more multiples you can get,

which means more points which means more abilities and upgrades.

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Viewtiful Joe's art design has to be some of the most original we've ever seen. The comic flair shines majestically through the movie-inspired world of Viewtiful Joe — and both themes feed off of each other.

It's the colourful and idiosyncratic art design of Joe that gives this game the humorous flair it could never live without, and the

dialogue, surprisingly for Capcom, is absolutely gold. Press pause at certain points in the game and a voice beams over "Let's take a break", or "I just wanna know, is it number one, or number two?", listen closely in the thick of the action and you'll hear Joe bad-mouth his

enemies Peter Parker style, and the game's bosses, especially Hulk Davison, are an absolute pisser. It really is a shining example of using all the right elements to make a product fun and exciting.

There's a ton of replay value in Viewtiful Joe, as you will receive ratings after every 'level' of the game, from Viewtiful and Awesome, to Baad and Crappy. Going back to retry the levels and score as high as possible is definitely a bonus, and thanks to the fun-factor, an absolute must. Viewtiful Joe is the perfect blend of every ingredient needed to make a videogame work, and its exclusivity to GameCube is something Nintendo should champion. Viewtiful Joe is a no-brainer for your GameCube collection, so do yourself a favour and put on some red tights today. <<

!!! We're currently praying for a Viewtiful Joe Game Boy Advance title.



PLUS: Amazing art style, fun and rewarding gameplay ideas.

MINUS: Quirkiness could initially turn some people away.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

91 90 94

OVERALL

93



A new hero is born, and his name is Viewtiful Joe!

>> XBOX



OTOGI: THE MYTH OF DEMONS

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

Like its tautological title, *Otagi: The Myth of Demons* is great, just so long as you don't look too deep or expect too much. Set in feudal Japan, players take the role of an undead Samurai charged with ridding the world of the demons that currently plague it. How does a Samurai go about ridding the world of demons? By whacking them with a sword (or other bladed weapon - they're not prejudiced). That's it. Although the back of the box claims that there are deep RPG elements to *Otagi*, all they really boil down to is a cursory level-up system that effects what you can buy and an inventory system that allows you to equip different weapons, magic and accessories. These are great features to be sure but a deep RPG element it is not. Instead what we have are 25+ levels of great looking and sounding demon hacking action that saves itself from being too repetitive by featuring a cornucopia of enemies, some interesting level design and numerous unlockable weapons and items. The action may be about as deep as a puddle but right from the beginning it's obvious that *Otagi* is a game based much more on style than substance. Each mission features high poly-count, fantastically designed and animated characters fighting it out in massive destructible worlds as traditional Japanese shimesan music plays in the background. Don't be surprised if *Otagi* takes you in - it's a beautiful game and certainly addictive and replayable. Just don't go looking for any depth to the plot or action because you'll only wind up disappointed.

Daniel Wilks

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
91	80	74	79



It all comes down to the blau in the end.

>> XBOX / PS2



NBA JAM 2004

CATEGORY: Sports >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> PRICE: \$69.95 >>
 RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



Now, that's worth a replay...

The granddaddy of 3-on-3 basketball is back again nearly a decade since the release of the first game in the series. Back in the day, *NBA Jam* was something of a revelation, breaking new ground in the field of fast paced sports and thrilling a number of fans. Well, the tried and true gameplay of the series remains but you can't help but feel like you've trod the ground countless times before. Players choose a team, pick the three players they want to play and then duke it out in frenetic three on three action complete with gratuitous body shots, ridiculous dunks, replays, people on fire, special moves and a commentary consisting of a bunch of middle aged white guys trying desperately hard to be young black guys. All in all it's a pretty good formula for success. Unfortunately there are some problems with the camera that can really kill the action - namely the camera focussing on one side of the court and not actually showing any of the teams playing. Although infrequent it really can help the other team rack up points, because unlike puny human players, the AI doesn't need to be able to see to play. Through exhibition games and tournaments, players can earn points to create their own players and unlock dozens of extras including extra arenas, outfits and special cheats.

Daniel Wilks

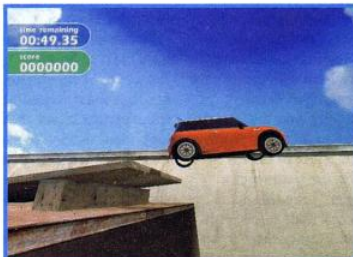
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	75	75	71

>> PS2 / XBOX / GCN



THE ITALIAN JOB: LA HEIST

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: Atari >> PRICE: \$99.95 >>
 RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



It doesn't get any more exciting than this!

The Italian Job: LA Heist comes courtesy of Climax, the illustrious UK-based developer of *Moto GP 2*. Thus it was with somewhat heightened expectations that we fired this up. Boy, were we in for a dose of disappointment!

The aim of the game is to drive several different vehicles through a variety of timed sprints to various locations, with the occasional police chase or race thrown in. It's a tried and tested formula that suffers from a number of serious flaws. Critically, the radar you use to navigate through the game's cities is next to useless, forcing you to run through each of the game's sub-missions at least once just to fix the location of the objective in your mind. Worse still, if you stuff up a sub-mission, you'll have to go back and complete all the previous ones before you'll get another shot at it. By the fifth, sixth or even tenth time through a mission, you'll be ready to snap the game disc in two.

Very rarely, if ever, will the game get your pulse racing, but the blatant product placement and shameless in-game advertising will doubtless set your blood boiling. Conveniently enough, the brightly coloured billboards stand in marked contrast to the rather dull environmental textures. It's almost as if the game was developed solely as a showcase for the brands in question, so omnipresent are the signs. Climax, we expected better from you. Brett Robinson

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
63	56	55	57

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UBISOFT

>>GBA

Pirates of the Caribbean

CATEGORY: Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: TDK >> PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Pirates of the Caribbean GBA-style is pretty much the complete opposite of Johnny Depp's Captain Jack Sparrow character from the film. It lacks personality, is utterly predictable, and you tire of it very quickly. But then, that's not surprising considering this game shares little more than a title in common with said film. It's almost as if the development team had no access to the script or any assets from the film as this is one generic game filled with generic characters. Indeed, they could have called this "Pugwash of the Caribbean" and it would have made about as much sense.

The actual game consists of two distinct brands of gameplay — land lubbing and sea faring. Aaarrr me mates. Land lubbing sees Sparrow running around locales collecting coins, looking for treasure (they're based in Japan actually guys) and "dueling" with British soldiers. Sea faring sees you sailing the seven seas (on a boat that you "bought" after finding some treasure — we kid you not) sinking merchant vessels

and the like. It's all strung together by still frame cutscenes and some of the worst pirate dialogue ever. Oh, and kudos to the dev team for building an entire soundtrack around a jaunty remix of "It's a pirate's life for me". A masterstroke.

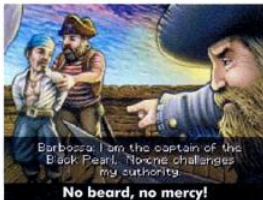
By way of comparison, Pirates of the Caribbean is almost as exciting as another recent GBA title "Pirates of the Internet", where you play a twelve year-old American girl being pursued across the digital seas by the RIAA for trading songs on Kazaa. The game ends rather abruptly, however, when the RIAA settle so as to avoid (more) negative press. In any case, our point is that the "pirate" you play in this game is about as much of a pirate as the aforementioned twelve year-old girl. Wow, an entire review and not one "sea-man" joke! Hyper's all grown up...

Cam "C-Man" Shea

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
69	68	55	59



This game is giving me the ships.


 Barbaros! I am the captain of the Black Pearl. "None challenges my authority!"
No beard, no mercy!


Clink Clank arrrrrr!

>>GBA

Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure

CATEGORY: EXTREME gaming >> PLAYERS: 1-Xtreme >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: Extremely affordable >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Extremely soon >>

Now this is a hard one to review. Not hard in the sense of whether it's good or bad, but in the sense of "will any Hyper readers actually care whether it's any good or not?" If you've persisted this far into the review then we'll assume that you're either expecting some comedy gold from yours truly (based upon our well documented hatred for games with a variation on "extreme" in the title), or perhaps have a younger sibling who needs a Christmas present.

While those in the former category will turn the page disappointed (no humour for you — bad reader!), those in the latter category will be pleased to hear that Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure (DESA) is quite a solid game. It is, after all, made by Vicarious Visions, and running on the Tony 4 GBA engine. As you'd expect, DESA is very much Tony Hawk-lite. The gameplay has been greatly simplified, so there's only one context sensitive trick button and landing tricks is a whole lot more forgiving.

That said, the intended audience probably won't care that there aren't many tricks (although there are some imaginative and well animated flat-land moves) and will be content exploring the Disney inspired worlds. To that end, there are two layouts for Toy Story, The Lion King and Tarzan respectively, each populated by characters from the world who'll give you missions. Gameplay is as bog standard as it comes for this genre — collect that... oh, and while you're at it — collect some of this too! It's all a little dull really, but at least you're frequently rewarded with new areas of levels opening up. One for the kiddies... and EXTREME senior citizens.

Cam Shea

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
70	65	65	69


 Howdy Slide 20
I've got myself a woody.

 Pride Slide
Gay Pride in da house!


Extreme elephants

Medal of Honor: Infiltrator

CATEGORY: Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: EA >>
 PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: TBA >> AVAILABLE: December >>

After last year's disappointing Medal of Honor: Underground on GBA, EA have gone back to the drawing board. Where Underground attempted to capture the early spirit of the MOH series in a traditional FPS, Infiltrator brews up a delicious gaming cocktail that's both arcadey and old school. Imagine taking the classic Commando, sprucing it up with a pinch of Metal Slug, then garnishing with levels from Operation Wolf. Welcome to Infiltrator.

MOW DOWN ENEMIES

Infiltrator is broken up into two styles of play. Around a third of the levels are Operation Wolf style efforts, where you're moving a cross hair to mow down enemies as they pop up on screen. These are good fun, but let down a little by a lack of interactivity in the surroundings (is it too much to ask to reduce the buildings to rubble?) and an annoyingly imprecise cross hair. We think a Cabal rip-off would have worked better, as having your character moving and dodging on screen would have opened up more strategy and replayability.

The rest of the game is made up of top-down Commando-inspired levels, and they're a real treat. Each map is intricately detailed, (somewhat) sprawling, and filled with numerous ways to eviscerate your foes, whether it be through manning gun turrets or commandeering tanks. You start each mission with a machine gun and stock of grenades and are restricted to carrying two forms of weaponry throughout the game. Fortunately, there are regular supply depots in which you can swap to other combinations, such as pistol and bazooka, or rifle and dynamite - necessary for crowd clearing and blowing open wooden gates respectively. It's a no nonsense approach that keeps the focus firmly on the action and the environment.

Developers HotGen Studios have done a great job walking the line between old school nostalgia and current day gaming reality. By that we mean that Infiltrator may be a throwback to the days of Commando, but it sure as hell isn't as simplistic. You now have a (much needed) life bar, the ability to strafe, and multiple objectives in



Almost Advance Wars like in appearance.

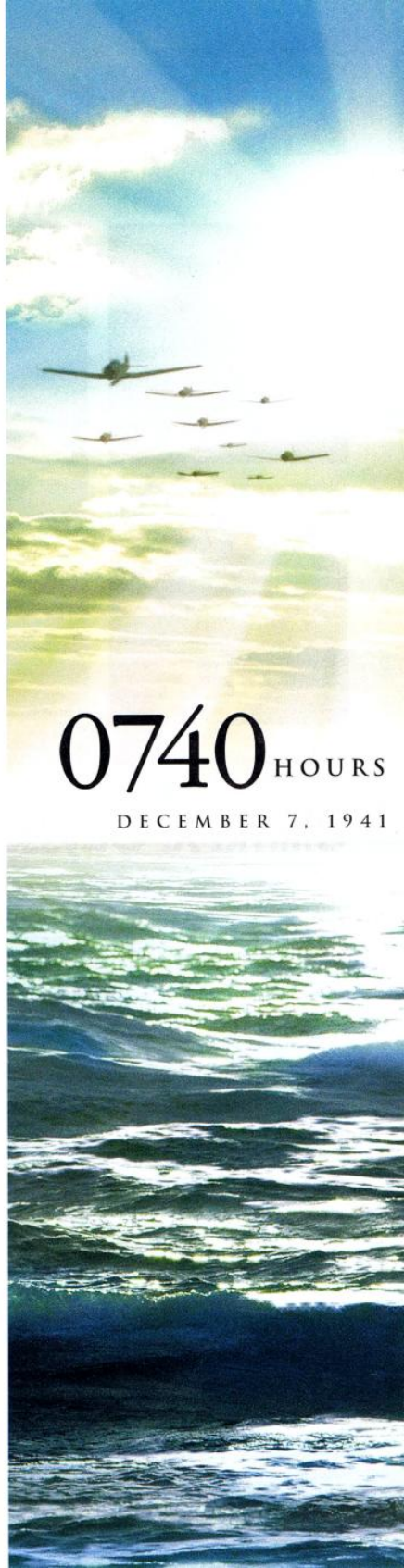


Die Nazi scum!

each mission. Sure, these objectives are all based around shooting stuff (high ranking soldiers, blowing up fuel tanks and munitions, destroying aircraft), finding stuff (documents from a downed plane, enemy plans), and surviving stuff (infiltrating enemy bases and escaping) but the execution is wonderful. One stage may be all out action, while the next is more stealth 'em up, where you must evade enemy patrols and search lights or the alarm will be raised. The variety in terrain is also impressive, taking you across three theatres of war and ranging from superbly detailed towns to jungles and deserts. The attention to detail also extends to the animations, gunfire, explosions and sound effects. A lovingly put together game. We like.

Cam Shea

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	86	80	85



0740 HOURS

DECEMBER 7, 1941



[top] Man, where'd I find such ugly friends?
"So, er... what's up guys??"



Ultima X: Odyssey

//uxo.ea.com

>> Daniel Wilks

Nearly seven years ago, a little company called Origin Systems released a game that would change the face of our hobby as we know it - Ultima Online. Sure there had been other massively multiplayer games before but none had so successfully combined a graphical interface with adventurous, combat oriented gameplay in such a way that it would begin to rocket the burgeoning genre to the heights it has reached today. Now, so many years later, Origin is hoping to follow-up their success with the announcement of Ultima X: Odyssey, their latest foray into the world of massively multiplayer role-playing games.

FIGHT AT THE AVATAR'S SIDE

Odyssey is in no way a sequel to Ultima Online, but rather, a harkening back to the roots of the series with the introduction of an intriguing new system Origin has cleverly dubbed the Odyssey Adventure System (OAS). Aside from making quests and random missions more dynamic, flowing more like a traditional RPG rather

than an automated quest dispenser as seen in many an MMORPG, the OAS will also re-introduce some gaming concepts that were responsible for making the Ultima franchise so popular in the first place, most notable amongst these being the Virtue system. Much like the single player game, players must strive to prove they are virtuous creatures so as to ascend. As the name suggests, Ultima X: Odyssey is set some time after Ultima IX, after the Avatar has ascended. The basic premise of the game is that the Avatar in all his wisdom, has created an entire world to test heroes to see if they are worthy to continue the struggle between good and evil, with those that are deemed worthy ascending to fight at the Avatar's side.

Players will have their chance to build characters from one of six races with their choice of a number of classes including all of the fantasy favourites: magic users, clerics, barbarians and thieves. Aside from the fairly standard Human, Elf and Orc races, Ultima X introduces some intriguing new ethnicities to the mix with the

Pixies, Gargoyles, both of which are similar to their mythological counterparts, and the Phoda, a race of anthropomorphic, trouble prone rodents. Although the normal levelling up rules will apply to characters in Odyssey, the addition of the Virtues puts a uniquely Ultima style pin on proceedings. You see, it's actually possible for a player to ascend to Avatar status by levelling up one of their Virtues to the max. When the player ascends, the character becomes unplayable and instead the player is rewarded with being allowed to create a disciple - a special character with bonus traits based on the Virtue the original character ascended through. It's actually possible for that character to ascend as well, allowing for the creation of a new disciple with even more bonuses.

FINAL BLOW TO THE BIG BAD

One of the most interesting features in the new Ultima is the way in which quests are both issued and carried out. The Odyssey Adventure System has been created in such a way that every player will have a different experience, as missions

that will be offered to them vary depending on class and Virtue - a fighter who believes in justice will be offered different quests to a healer who is Compassionate. Also, instead of having to find a tavern or similar area to ask for quests, Odyssey will take the novel approach of having NPC (and sometimes monster) characters approaching the player with quests. Even though this change is only fairly cosmetic it could prove to be one of the defining aspects of the game when it is released, as one of the most frequent complaints about the MMORPG genre is that the games generally feel more like an EXP





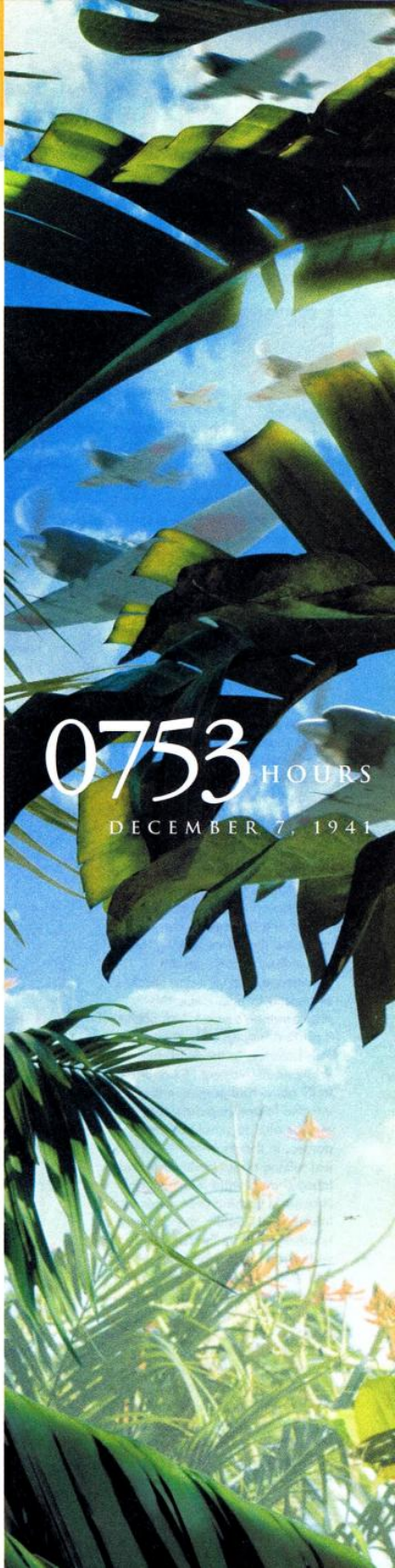
[above] I think my legs have rusted.

treadmill rather than a multiplayer version of your favourite RPG.

Without a doubt the most frustrating thing about the genre as a whole (aside from having a dodgy internet connection) is sometimes having to put up with other "expletive deleted" players who either try and cut themselves in on the action by springing in at the last moment and laying in the final blow to the big bad you've spent the last hour battling tooth and nail, thereby gaining all the EXP and loot you nearly died for, or having to wait in line for a quest specific item or monster to respawn/unlock after some other group has been through before you. By and large it's the nature of the beast but it's still bloody frustrating. Ultima X: Odyssey looks set to do away with these grievances as it will spawn a new mini-realm seamlessly for every quest, ensuring that players can go about their business at their own pace without having to worry about PK or having to wait through excessive respawn times. Now we'll just have to extend our virtue of patience in the wait for more tasty information. <<<



[below] Practise your virtues whilst killing, maiming, slaying, brutalising, torturing.



0753 HOURS
DECEMBER 7, 1941

Back of the Net

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE



If you've ever tried to find solid console gaming information or like-minded console gamers on the internet, you'll know that such a

search can prove unproductive. Even a simple fansite is hard to come by for all but the most popular of PS2, Cube or Xbox games. I'd like to see an end to this: the trials of the lonely console gamer. Fortunately, there is hope. It comes in the form of the online console revolution. We have the power, now all we need is some good software.

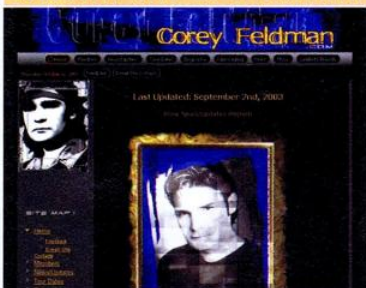
To solve this long-running crisis, PS2 online and Xbox Live must encourage communication within the systems' frontends so gamers may chat about any game they choose – multiplayer or not. I've loved games in the past, but loved them alone – where were my Transworld Surf brothers...? See, I've also loved games in the past, and had people to share my joy with them. Final Fantasy X for example: Eliot, Malcolm and myself all marched through the game at the same time, sharing our experiences in a daily office coffee break over a period of a few weeks last year. It validated the game playing, and was indeed a multi-person experience, even if it was strictly a single-player title. Heck, this phenomenon's power was such that it pushed me, an adventure/RPG non-believer, to the finish [almost]. While Xbox Live and PS2 online will unify our actual gaming experience into the future, hopefully they will also be able to simply connect gamers in the short-term. I'm not just talking about buddy lists and lobby chats, I want international structured gaming chat zones and information. Ideally, devices such as headsets and the EyeToy will enable widespread accessibility for webcam and videoconferencing software – a perfect opportunity to bring together like-minded individuals, and establish centres of gaming debate.

Let's take advantage of this online console technology – games use should go hand in hand with communication. Where do we draw the line? Will this mean PC and console (and even telecommunication) convergence? Maybe we could discuss it on Xbox Live.

Links

>> Kosta Andreadis

CELEBRITY SITE OF THE MONTH



Corey Feldman

www.coreyfeldman.com

>>> Some actors make the fabled transition from child star to adult thespian, some don't. Corey didn't, he didn't even come close. Some official websites provide solid information with slick visuals and presentation, some don't. Corey's doesn't, it doesn't even come close. When a section entitled "Celebrity Friends" features pictures of Corey with the likes of Paul McCartney and Hugh Hefner, somehow one has to question the validity of these so-called "friendships". If you're a Goonie at heart then you'd best steer clear from this Meatballs 4 travesty. So Stand By Me as we Dream a Little Dream for this Lost Boy who seriously needs a decent website, one that wasn't designed by some shmo from The Burbs who probably isn't even Licensed to Drive.



Game Booklets

www.replacementdocs.com

>>> Gaming documentation, i.e. the little booklets you find in the box/case, are an institution upon themselves. Epileptic warnings, instructions on how to turn on your console, play controls, story and character bios, artwork, and some well placed humour – booklets are sweet as. Reproducing them in whole ain't exactly legal but thanks to this site you'll find, in PDF form, hundreds of booklets to games for the Atari 2600, PC, NES, SNES and Amiga. From Space Quest III to Dungeon Siege to Bart vs. the Space Mutants – it's finally time to invest in a new colour ink cartridge.



The Global Network of Dreams

www.gnod.net

>>> The global network of the what now? Oh you mean type in a book, band, film or website and you'll generate a cool interactive map of similar things I'd like. Right, let's test this out then. One of my favourite films has got to be Bad Boys II – even though it just came out, I loved the little directorial touches of having things blow up in the background when the characters were talking during the 'serious bits'. According to this map doodad there's a high probability I'd like the film Predator, which I do. Hmm, it also says I'd like The Waterboy but last I checked that film doesn't have any explosions at all or the presence of Will Smith.



Be a Rock Star

www.createbands.com

>>> For those of you not enlightened, Eliot Fish is magazine editor by day, rock star by mid-evening. Yep, he plays some sort of instrument for a band whose name I can't remember. As such he likes to think he's better than the rest of us. By us I mean people who treat hotel rooms with respect, people whose idea of 'doin' a line' means a trip to Coles, people who believe that orgies are merely a thing of myth. Create-A-Band can change all that, as it's a site that lets you create your very own band and sound in the matter of clicks. Now my life long dream of creating the funk-rap-salsa quartet "The Kostarican Experience" is but one step closer.

Links

Xbox Live

www.xbox.com/en-au/live/default

☞ Checked this out lately? Now that Xbox Live has gone live, the Xbox team are continually updating the site with the latest up to date info – including helpful guides on setting up friends lists, downloading content and more. One of the promised features is an online hub for Xbox Live so you can see what games your friends are playing from your PC or Mac, and know when to run to your Xbox and join in on the fun. There are also plenty of FAQs to trawl through if you're having trouble getting your connection up and running okay.



Semiconductor Physics with Britney

britneyspears.ac/lasers.htm

☞ You may not like her music, but millions of people (mostly dyslexic) do. Britney Spears may seem like a dumb pop star whose cruising on a career built on FX-editing and pitch-shifting with Pro Tools, but little is made of her status within the scientific community. The field in question is Semiconductor Physics, a field of study that involves electrons, lasers, junctions and radiative recombination – a field of study that Britney is at the forefront of. In fact, the song "Baby, One More Time" refers to the time Britney discovered the "stimulated emission process is the reverse of the absorption process in the lower states of photon energy".

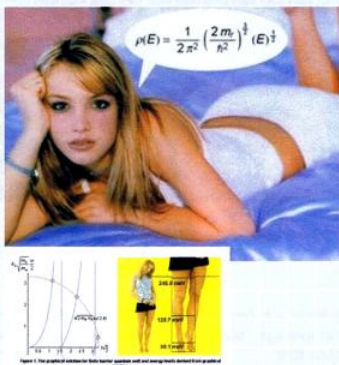


Figure 1: The carrier concentration in the conduction and valence bands versus energy for a semiconductor.

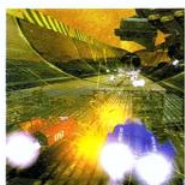
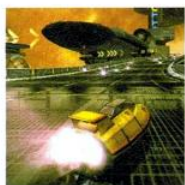
It runs on what?

www.theaircar.com

☞ A car that runs on air, compressed and contained. With a max speed of 110km/h and negligible harmful emissions – this could very well be the car of the future. But deep down, I don't see this getting mass produced anytime soon. With no oil, petroleum, or other corrupting natural resource running our vehicles we'd have no real reason to arm, invade, then re-arm small countries. Unless of course the peacekeepers of the west can find a way to harvest the air inside the lungs of third-world children then yeah, I can see the 'Air Car' happening. That is of course once all the oil in the world has run dry.



0755 HOURS
DECEMBER 7, 1941



[above] F-Zero GX on GameCube
[right] The future of facial hair... er, we mean racing games.



F-Zero AX SEGA

Real world motor sport simulations are all well and good, but for the arcade inclined, there's nothing quite like barrel rolling through looping canyon courses, blazing along upside down while miles above the surface of a planet, or flying off a 30 meter drop before boosting up to 1500kph when you hit the ground. Arcade fans — your salvation is nigh, as F-Zero AX has hit arcades.

TRULY INTIMIDATING

Set in the late 26th Century, the F-Zero competition was founded by gambling addicted ex-traders, and every year 30 eccentric entrants come from across the galaxy to compete in this test of machine, nerves and sheer driving skill. Sega have done a fine job at creating a complete F-Zero world, and with 15 cars to choose from (all different from the 30 in the home version) and the ability to customise your own vehicle (and save the information onto either a GameCube

memory card or proprietary F-Zero card) this isn't your average "play and forget it" arcade title.

A large part of the thrill of AX is found in the wild course designs and the fact that you're racing in a field of 30 competitors, but it's the boost system that will make you come back to this game again and again. And since your energy meter diminishes with each boost or accident, you're always running the risk of using up all your energy too early and destroying your craft. But without the ruthless use of the boost, you won't win, so getting to know the tracks and the placement of the day-glo energy replenishment 'strips' (like a futuristic pit stop) is something you'll have to factor into each race.

Speed is definitely the order of the day in F-Zero AX. In fact, there's very little else out there that can compete with it. For the maximum sensation of speed, use the Daytona-esque view changing system to switch to windscreen

view. Although the more distant viewpoint gives you a better view of the track meandering in the distance, it's in first person that AX's speed becomes truly intimidating.

On top of just going for sheer speed, you also do battle with the other cars by doing various spin and bumping attacks which take time to master. On the expert tracks it is possible to bump other cars off the courses when going over jumps or into right angled walls.

PLENTY OF COINS

Originally debuting in 1990 as a launch title for the Super Nintendo (and a precursor to Mario Kart), F-Zero set the standard for anti-gravity racing games, and with this latest addition to the series, it looks like it's not going to relinquish the reins so easily. Not only is the racing gripping and intense, but the ability to transfer data between home and arcade has turned out to be much more than just a gimmick.

>> Tim Levy



[above] It's just like Magic The Gathering... not.

As we mentioned in our GX review, kicking ass in the arcade version unlocks courses for the home version, and you can build your own customised racer at home, save it onto a memory card, and then duel it out at the local arcade. Great stuff. All this, plus one of the best arcade cabinets around — hydraulic motion, air break foot pedals, and a steering wheel controlling the vehicle's horizontal and vertical axis, all help make F-Zero AX a must play for all racing fans. Just make sure you bring plenty of coins.

SCORE: **9/10**

0805 HOURS
DECEMBER 7, 1941



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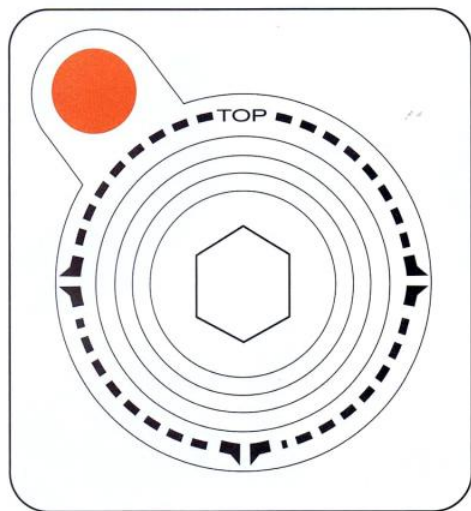


PlayStation 2



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 logo 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.



the weird ones

>>FRANK DRY

Most old videogames are pretty straightforward.

You shoot, you dodge... and maybe, if you're lucky, there's an option to jump. However, back in those early days of console gaming there were a few ambitious Atari 2600 games that really attempted to offer more than just your brain-numbing shoot up or racing test. Sadly, these brave projects were mostly doomed to obscurity or failure. Were they truly crap and/or confusing, or were they just the result of creative game designers trying desperately to break a few new boundaries? Could it be these games were simply "ahead of their time"?

Thanks to the simplistic 2600 hardware, the graphics in most of these old titles was the main problem, and looking at them now, it can be like trying to decipher a message from outer space. But in any case, we present you with the top 5 Atari 2600 games that remain "special" to this day.

80 HYPER>>

©1982 ATARI

One of the blocky blocks is Indy and another is a rock. Can you tell the difference?

5. Raiders of the Lost Ark

Publisher: Atari
Year: 1982

>> Anyone who remembers playing Raiders of the Lost Ark on the 2600 will testify that it was a seriously engaging game — if only because it was so confusing as to what to do next, that you became determined to beat it. It was basically a puzzle game, with a few minor action elements, and some pretty terrible graphics. Few people in the world probably ever figured out how to finish it.

As Indy, you had to use specific items on each screen in a specific place to allow you to move onto the next and get closer to discovering the Ark. It was a pretty baffling game to figure out — you had to walk off screens from certain directions or face certain death, and use items such as a grenade, parachute and hourglass at certain points in the game in order to unlock what comes next. You even had to spend coins in a market place to buy items such as the shovel — but beware the dirty thieves who'll steal your stuff and make you start the game again! Amazingly you had to use both joysticks — one to control Indy, and the other to manage your inventory. Clearly, this was a game that tried to capture the adventuring spirit of Raiders of the Lost Ark. Sadly, they probably needed to wait until game machines were capable of executing their grand game designs. A cool idea, but playing it on the 2600 was like translating hieroglyphics!



Poor E.T. stuck in a hole. Then they filled it up with dirt and buried him 5 million times.

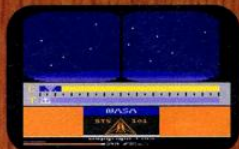
4. E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial

Publisher: Atari
Year: 1982



>> Okay, we all know the story... E.T., the Atari 2600 game, was such a dismal failure that millions of the cartridges ended up as landfill. However, despite being an awfully dull game to play at the time, the fact remains that the developer was attempting to make some kind of primitive adventure game — a genre that was almost non-existent on the Atari 2600, and they deserve some credit for at least trying!

Being a peaceful little botanist, it makes sense that E.T. couldn't zoom around the screen blasting policemen with laserbeams from out of his mouth (although maybe that would have sold better), so the idea was that you had to collect parts of a telephone in order to "phone home" and get off the planet Earth. It required you to explore the various screens as E.T., and fall down holes in the ground to look for the phone parts. However, you also had to avoid the FBI and the scientists who were keen to do an alien autopsy on your wrinkly butt. The whole game was spent running away from things, and levitating out of deep holes. Yeah, E.T. sucks, but it was just made at the wrong time in gaming history — now the world loves adventure games, and we actually have machines that are able to make them interesting.



A pretty cool game really. If you don't have a life, that is.

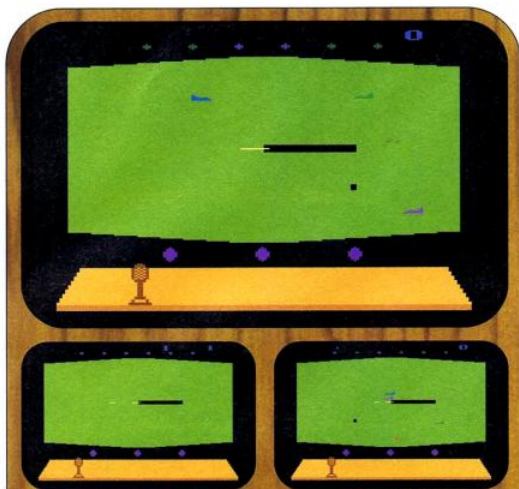
3. Space Shuttle: A Journey Into Space

Publisher: Activision
Year: 1983

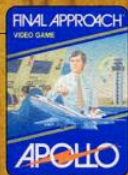


>> What could be more interesting than piloting a Space Shuttle into orbit and then returning it to Earth? Well, unfortunately, almost every other Atari game that was available at the time that Space Shuttle was released. This "exciting" game required you to adjust trajectories and altitudes, open cargo bay doors (yes, go on, press that button!), and dock with a satellite (designed to frustrate you by moving erratically), and then pilot the shuttle back to Earth. This wasn't so much a game, but NASA training software.

It was an incredibly complex Atari 2600 game for the time, and the astounding thing is that Activision managed to make it satisfying if you were interested enough to figure out how to play it. It was basically a forerunner to the full-blown flight simulators that we're familiar with today, yet accomplished with that good old single joystick, and an overlay for the 2600's switches so they could be used in the game for other commands. The game even came with a whopping 30-page manual! Very few people on the planet probably had the patience to endure this shuttle simulation, but it's quite amazing that the developer even attempted this on the Atari 2600. NASA were even consulted (well, it says so on the box, anyhow) to ensure that it played as "realistically" as possible. Truly visionary!



This is a videogame.
No, really!



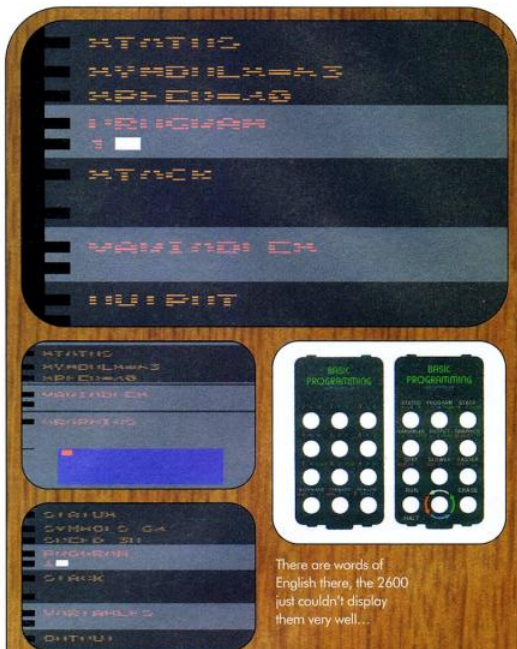
2. Final Approach

Publisher: Apollo
Year: 1982

>> Okay, there WAS something more interesting than piloting a Space Shuttle into orbit — being an Air Traffic Controller! If the simulation of being inside aircraft doesn't interest you, then how about a game about directing those aircraft in to land. Yep, Apollo thought that the hair-raising pursuit of those men and women sitting at computer screens looking at radar blips was a great idea for an Atari 2600 game, so they went and made Final Approach.

The game consisted of two parts — there was the "radar" screen where you had to direct planes towards the runway and make sure they don't pile-up on each other, and then the "runway" screen where you actually guided the plane in to a safe landing. Now just repeat this process until you're ready to bash your head into the Atari's faux wood panels.

We get the feeling that if Apollo made this game today, they might actually be able to come up with something pretty engaging and realistic, but back in 1982 they really should have shelved this one and made a shoot-'em up instead. Well, it looked interesting on paper we're sure.



There are words of English there, the 2600 just couldn't display them very well...

1. Basic Programming

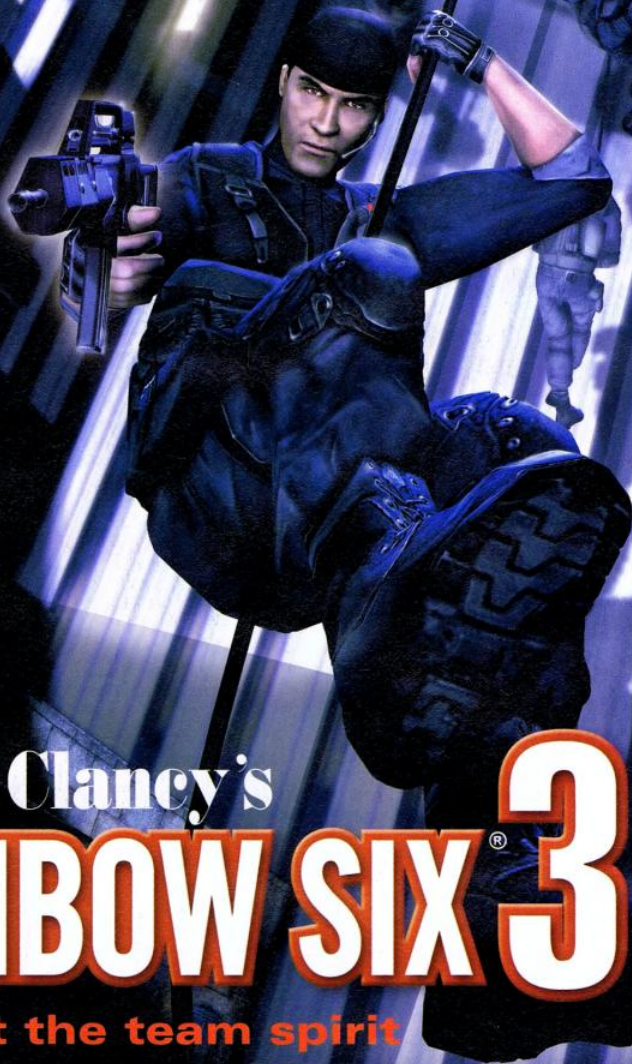
Publisher: Atari
Year: 1979



>> Who would have thought the Atari 2600 could bring you the delights of basic programming in the comfort of your own living room! Just imagine sitting back with a cold one and programming the Atari 2600 to move a small coloured square around the TV screen! The stupid thing was that you could only program up to about 60 characters, making your "programs" amazingly crap and useless. About the best you could do was get the Atari 2600 to display your name. Annoyingly, you even had to purchase the Atari keypads to use with this one, otherwise there would be no way to input any of the "code", and I can't think of another single game that made use of them.

Surely those smart games developers knew that this one was way before its time — the Atari 2600 barely had the ability to even draw the characters you were typing on the screen let alone act as a capable programming platform! We'll put this one down to excited geeks wanting to share their computer love with the rest of us. Thankfully, these days we can use a laptop instead of an Atari 2600. Was it pure novelty, or just too ambitious for the platform? Both.

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>> Yes, you can believe your eyes. Thanks to GameTraders, Hyper is giving you the chance this month to win a Super Nintendo with controller and three games – the platforming treat this is Donkey Kong Country, the genius that is Super Mario World and the full-blown action of Mortal Kombat 3!

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

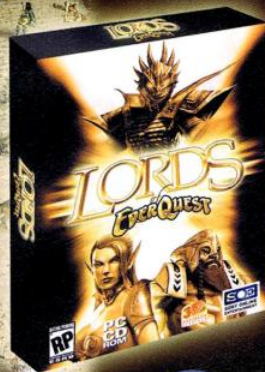
Name the developer that made Donkey Kong Country.

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



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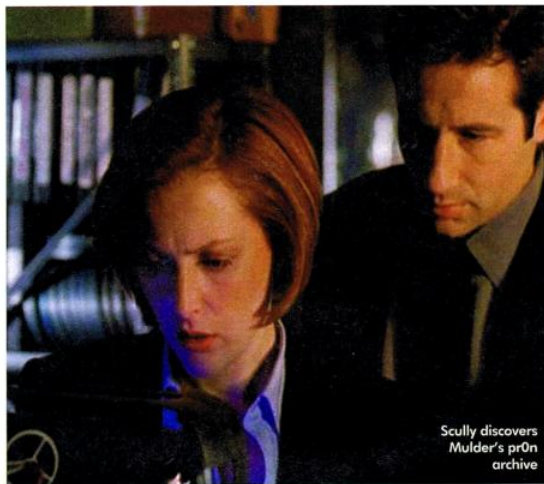


"Lords Of EverQuest wants WarCraft III's head on a plate."

- PC Powerplay October 2003



UBISOFT™



Scully discovers Mulder's pr0n archive

The X-Files SEASON 7



FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M15+

Unless you've been keeping up with the ongoing plot, a lot of what goes on in this seventh season box-set of *The X-Files* will mean very little to you. Many of the episodes either deal with the labyrinthine master plot developed over the years, or reintroduce obscure characters from episodes shown seasons before.

Luckily the season also contains a number of stand-alone episodes, some of which are absolutely brilliant, including one involving a stage magician who's head mysteriously falls off after performing a trick and another entirely filmed as though it were an episode of the venerable reality TV show, *Cops*. Each of the six

disks in the set comes packed with special features including a number of episode audio commentaries, deleted and alternate scenes – more than enough to keep an *X-Files* fan busy for quite a long while.

Be warned though, if you didn't manage to catch the show whilst it was on free-to-air TV and are now collecting it on DVD, season seven of the show is really beginning to show its spots, feeling like it's rather desperately grasping at straws during some of the episodes – seven years is a long time to keep up a high standard of quality plots.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 8



Depressed? Just change your last name, dude.

Igby Goes Down

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, MA 15+

It is said that for every great evil there is a great good – so it comes as a huge relief that into a world once ravaged by the terror that was Macaulay Culkin comes Kieran Culkin, the star, focus and lynch-pin of *Igby Goes Down*. Igby is one of those all too rare characters that truly embodies the spirit of the film – in this case the wounds left by a family exploding.

Jason "Igby" Slocumb Jr. is the youngest son of melodramatic matriarch Mimi (Susan Sarandon), favourite of his institutionalised father (Bill Pullman) and something that you find wedged between your toes after a day of playing sports to his older brother (Ryan Phillippe). After being kicked out of every school he's ever

attended and escaping from military school, Igby goes on the lam, finding along the way that life sucks, people are horrible and sex can make things a lot better, all the while hiding behind an ever more complex shield of lies, half truths, caustic cynicism and a grifter's gift for words. Although the ground has been trodden countless times before, writer/director Burr Steers manages to keep the whole thing fresh through a combination of blisteringly good dialogue, quirky performances and a cast that is absolutely perfect – an achievement even more impressive when you consider it's his first foray into film.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 10 / EXTRAS: 7



Only a drunkard would give this a thumbs up...

The Simpsons: RISKY BUSINESS

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, PG

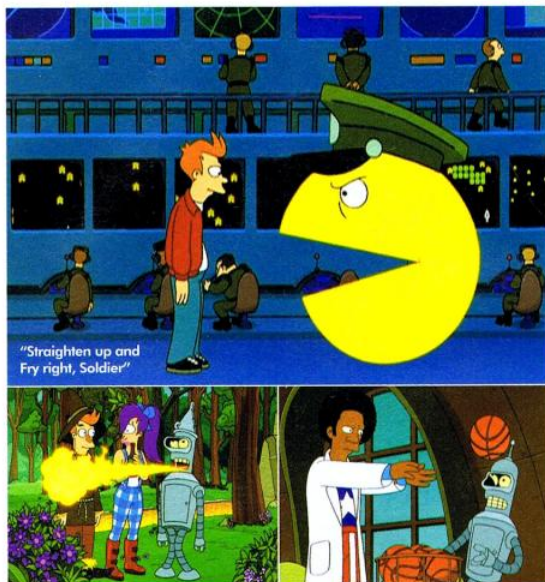
Ey the time you read this, the Season 3 box set of *The Simpsons* will be out (full review next issue). Our advice? Get the box set and ignore this sorry little compilation. "Risky Business" represents a pointless purchase – a grab-bag of only four episodes tied together by a thin premise. The episodes are: Marge Gets a Job (Season 4); Deep Space Homer (Season 5); Homer the Smithers (Season 7); and Realty Bites (Season 9). The homer-centric episodes are, unsurprisingly, the most entertaining, but you'd know that already, having no doubt seen each episode countless times already.

Where the box sets have episode commentaries and a smattering of

interesting extras, Risky Business has nothing except for the hastily cobbled together four minute sequence "Chief Wiggum's Finest Moments". Give us a break! The image quality is rather patchy across the episodes too. Admittedly, this release isn't aimed at hardcore *Simpsons* fans, but there's nothing here for casual fans that can't be found on TV each and every night.

Cam "inanimate carbon rod" Shea

MOVIE: 4 / EXTRAS: 1



Futurama SEASON 3



FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, PG

Why oh why did *Futurama* have to be cancelled? Watching Season 3 just confirms that this program is in elite animated company. Like *The Simpsons*, one of *Futurama*'s main strengths is its ability to be wacky and irreverent one moment, then very human and touching the next. Also, like *The Simpsons*, even the bad *Futurama* episodes (of which Season 3 has quite a few) have enough funny moments to make them worth watching.

Season 3 contains some classic episodes, including *Parasites Lost* (where Fry's body and brain are fined tuned by parasitic worms); *Insane in the Membrane* (where Fry and Bender are sent to a robot asylum); *Time Keeps on Slipping* (guest starring the Harlem Globetrotters); *Anthology of Interest II* (where Bender becomes human

and the world becomes more like a videogame); and of course, who could forget the award winning *Roswell That Ends Well* (where it's revealed that Fry is in fact his own grandfather).

As a compilation, *Futurama* Season 3 is as lovingly put together as the show itself. The animated menus present a slick front end, every episode has commentary from a host of people — producers, writers, directors, voice talent, computer graphics directors etc., and each disc also has a host of deleted scenes, storyboards, animatics and more. Get it.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 7

Win a limited edition Alien poster!

PLUS WE HAVE 10 ALIEN PRIZE PACKS FOR RUNNERS-UP!

Alien: The Director's Cut – in cinemas November 13

GENRE: Sci-fi / CAST: Tom Skerrit, Sigourney Weaver, Veronica Cartwright, Harry Dean Stanton, John Hurt, Ian Holm. / DIRECTOR: Ridley Scott / RATING: M15+

VALUED AT \$500!

>>> On the scariest day of the year, Twentieth Century Fox re-releases the scariest film ever made: Ridley Scott's "Director's Cut" of the science fiction/ horror classic, *Alien*. For this newly-restored special edition, Scott has re-edited the film, incorporating new footage never before seen in theatres. *Alien* has been hailed by critics and audiences worldwide as a seminal work of the genre.

The Hyper crew recommends you get out of the house and go down to your local cinema to see this classic on the big screen, pronto. You won't get another chance!

To celebrate *Alien: The Director's Cut*, 20th Century Fox and Hyper would like to give you the chance to win an amazing limited edition *Alien* poster valued at \$500! We also have 10 cool runners-up packs to giveaway including an *Alien* t-shirt, Face Hugger, Dart Set, *Alien* pen, and *Alien* lenticular card.

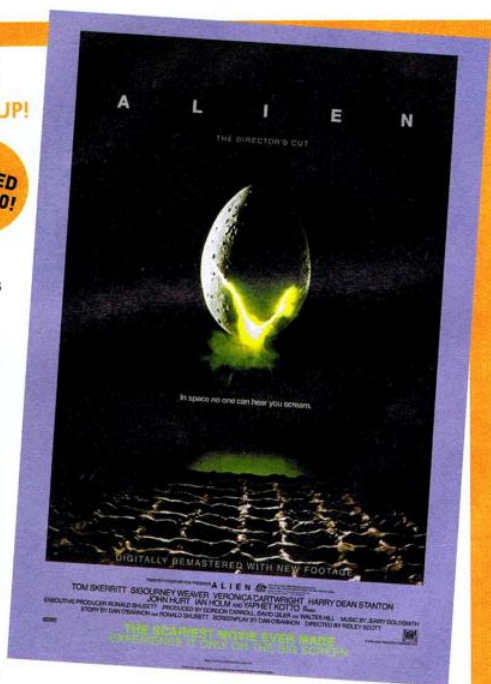
To be in with a chance to win, just answer the following question:

Name all the Alien films.

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



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who are you?



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Escaflowne

PRODUCTION COMPANY: BANDAI VISUAL
GENRE: SCI-FI, DRAMA

If *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is to the anime industry what Kylie Minogue is to Australian music, then *Escaflowne* is Karl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. The former is absurdly formulaic, disposable, but so novel that we just can't get it out of our heads; the latter is a powerful epic that carves deep, unforgettable memories into one's mind. *Escaflowne* was originally released too soon after the *Evangelion* phenomenon, and was therefore overlooked by the mass market. Until now, that is. Word of mouth has spread slowly, and *Escaflowne* is finally available locally.

CRUMBLE AT THE BOOT

Escaflowne tells the adventures of Hitomi Kanzaki, who is magically transported to the world of Gaea where Earth sits in its orbit and is known as the Mystic Moon. Befriended by Van Fanel, a young prince from a kingdom of dragon slayers, Hitomi's tour of this alternate medieval fantasy world is

cut short by a series of horrific attacks. One by one, Gaea's cities crumble at the boot of the industrialized Zaibach Empire, whose invisible guymelefs (mechs) hunt for a dragon of prophecy, the guymelef known as Escaflowne, piloted by Van Fanel. Driven by grief, fear, honour, nobility and revenge, the pair flee from one kingdom to the next, finding like-minded allies who must ultimately confront the Zaibach threat.

Escaflowne is a triumphant 26-episode marathon that subtly works in its themes of fate and the nature of cause and effect, with not one episode looking as though the budget's about to fall out from under it as *Evangelion* did. With an astounding story and designs by Kawamori Shoji (*Macross Plus*) and a haunting, Gregorian score by Yoko Kanno (*Cowboy Bebop*, *Macross Plus*), this is a series that you simply cannot afford to miss.

ANIMATION: 9 / PLOT: 8
OVERALL: 10



Giving a new meaning to EyeToy.

Voices of a Distant Star

PRODUCTION COMPANY: COMIX WAVE
GENRE: SCI-FI, DRAMA

In the anime world, giant robots fighting aliens who threaten the survival of the human race are as common as fruitly go-karting games in the pages of *Hyper*. But when you hear that one of them was written, directed and produced by one man sitting at his computer, it gives reason for pause — especially when it looks as good as *Voices of a Distant Star*.

LONG DISTANCE LOVE

When the Earth is attacked by an alien race, 15-year old schoolgirl, Mikako, is selected to be one of the elite mecha pilots to fight at the front lines. She leaves behind her boyfriend, Noboru, whom she maintains communications with through SMS messages on her mobile phone. However, each leap through light years of hyperspace travel accelerates the passage of time; and as Noboru comes naturally into old age, Mikako remains forever young. It is a heartbreaking tale of long

distance love as the two remain true to each other.

Being an independent production, *Voices of a Distant Star* understandably lasts only 30 minutes. It's probably better that way, since any further extrapolation of the concept would bear an uncanny resemblance to the classic *Gunbuster*. Still, *Voices of a Distant Star* is surprisingly well animated and scripted, and it's a poignant reminder of just how shallow the cookie-cutter productions of other more well funded and resourced studios can be; and that future directions are often found with independent productions.

ANIMATION: 7 / PLOT: 6
OVERALL: 7



I know school can be boring, but...

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HYPER

»HY0122

Q. What is your favourite PC game to date, and why?

We've found out what's worshipped on console, and this month we delve into the sometimes frightening minds of our readers for more opinions on what's loved and adored on the humble PC. There were some stunningly good choices this month, and we thank the maker that Half-Life 2 didn't release on time or this would have been a very boring section this issue... It was refreshing to find that the PC gamers out there weren't quite as predictable in taste.

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...

? "The first video game I ever played was..."

Responses will be printed in Hyper #124

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.

SOMETHING SENTIMENTAL

That's a toughie of a question – ranking up there with the meaning of life.

I'm going to stick my head out for the public guillotining I'll probably get for this but I'd have to say that my favourite PC game to date would be... the original Eye of the Beholder. Why? Maybe it was a sign of the time when I was playing it, but EotB was great for atmosphere and challenge. Trying to remember the layout of the tunnels whilst frantically backing away from or side-stepping fireball-hurling Hell Hounds, lumbering Iron Golems, patrolling Dark Elves and the rays of a pissed-off Beholder was the source of much frenzied brain activity and key-tapping.

Sure modern games like Baldur's Gate II, Half-Life, Warcraft III, Medal of Honour and others blow EotB away for graphics, sound, "gameplay", story and re-playability, but there's something sentimental about the classic that is Eye of the Beholder.

Ronnie

COMPLETELY MESMERISING

Dear Hyper,

I'm a long time reader, first time write-inner. I think we all know in our hearts what our favourite PC game is. It's one that forms a little smile in the corner of our mouths each time we enter into a game's untamed virtual universe that captivates and moves our sometimes-unemotional lives. It

creates a trickle of hope and overwhelming ecstasy that almost can't be found any other way. For me, this can only be achieved with a Sim City 2000 experience. Still, after almost a decade and 115 beguiling Hyper issues, Sim City 2000 still succeeds in one fundamental area. Completely mesmerising me as a gamer. I have the right not only to be entertained and satisfied with my game, but also let myself choose how I play it. Sim City 2000 achieves both criteria superbly. I can create my city my way. I could visit the Byelomorje Dam in the opening scene of Goldeneye or cause an act of God by destroying downtown Sim Town. It's up to me and I like it! Although, Medal of Honour Allied Assault was pretty good.

Keep at it Hyper.

GCC

ONLY ONE REAL CHOICE

My favorite PC game? There is only one real choice to this, Starcraft! I'm a big fan of strategies; I've played many types of strategy games, from Age of Empires to Rise of Nations, and Starcraft is still at the top of my 'greatest strategies' list. Sure critics may say it isn't as complex as SW: Galactic Battlegrounds or that it isn't 3D like Warcraft III, but what it lacks in those fields, it makes up for in gameplay and storyline. The storyline in the campaign is killer (who could have guessed that Kerrigan would end up controlling it all?) and the gameplay is so good I find myself going back, even just after quitting! It has some serious replay value: I mean who wouldn't want to storm a

Terran Base with a horde of zerglings? Or ambush a fleet of battlecruisers with the Protoss' ability to stop time? This game will defiantly be with me even after all the other strategies have become obsolete and boring. Well there's my two cents, keep up the good work Hyper!

Greateri

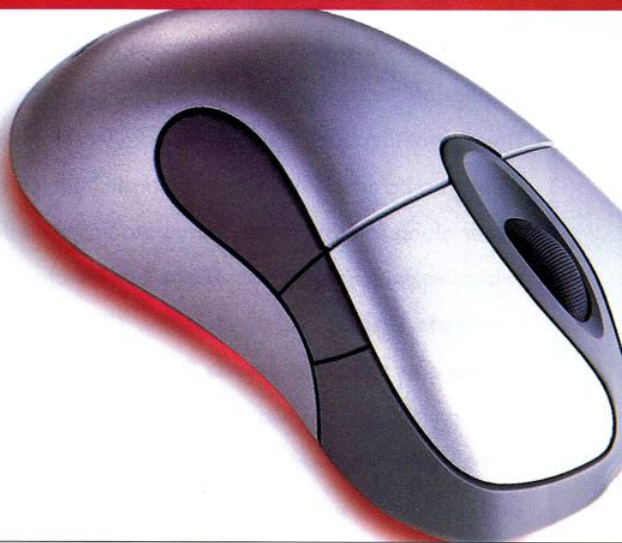
EASILY THE BEST

Far out! The best PC Game, there's so many to choose, but the Worms Series was easily the best. Especially, Worms World Party. It's such an addictive game that can run smoothly on any computer, and its gameplay is simply addictive and fun. No other game has a unique variety of weapons, such as the uzi, flamethrower and then the strange ones such as sheep to a herd of Mad Cows. A great PC Game.

ENTEE

MINDBLOWING STUFF

Are you completely insane?! What sort of a question is that?! The answer definitely is Morrowind! Come now, this is the pinnacle (so far) of RPG games! I mean, if a game like this gets you looking for your own house in Balmora (the Council Club for instance) to store all of your items that you've cleaned out from caves and Daedric Shrines (Daedric Claymore's anyone?), how real is that?! For me, this is my alternate world. In my mongrel life, I'm a bakery assistant, but in Morrowind, I'm the Archmage of the Mages Guild and the Archmagister of House Telvanni! I've got status and power!





I'm the most powerful Breton Mage that ever lived! Ha! Ha! Whoops. See how I got carried away? Another bonus is that Bethesda have been churning brilliant expansion packs (Tribunal, Bloodmoon, and hopefully more), the world of Morrowind keeps getting bigger and better. I bought Morrowind in early 2002 and still haven't finished it and I'm still currently playing it! This game has brilliant gameplay and graphics! Morrowind is the only game for me! But what if Bethesda made Morrowind online or something? Totally mindblowing stuff if it ever happens! Morrowind rules!

Andrew Orr

EXPERIENCE ITS MAGIC

I am a nostalgic person, and I really like the old compared with the new. This includes games. While many people like to play games like Half Life or Unreal Tournament, blasting each other to kingdom come, I am

more interested with classic games. This leads me to my favorite computer game to date, "Stunts".

It is a stunt-racing simulator that allows you to drive on outrageous courses and perform dangerous feats in the safety of your home. Many people would not know about this game. It was made in 1990, but what they missed or are missing is something brilliant. The game sports 3D computer graphics that do not require the latest in Geforce technology. In fact when I first played this game, it ran on an old 386 without any problems. Also while many games today come with level editors, Stunts actually had a very versatile course editor in it. You could design not just the road and stunts, but you can alter the terrain and add scenery. Not to mention that you can save recordings of your races, and play them from different angles. Now all those were firsts for their time.

Luckily for those who want to play the game you can find it on the

Internet, and can easily play on a modern day PC. In fact there are several websites that are dedicated to Stunts. So go on, download it, play it, and experience its magic.

Craig Davidson

SCREAMING PROFANITIES

Writing about your favourite game is easy; it's deciding which game is your favourite that is hard. There are so many great games out there. From the original Sim City to Myst and Age of Empires to Half-Life, besides how do you judge the best game? On its graphics? The gameplay? Or the storyline?

In the end I decided that I didn't really care what I was playing so long as there was someone to play against and enjoy the game with. I found that the best part was screaming profanities when your opponent captures your scud storm seconds before it is ready for launch, winning

the game by hacking your friend to pieces with a crowbar or working as a team to hold that objective for just long enough. Therefore the essence of a good game, for me, is the good memories attached to it. On that basis my favourite game is Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear.

My best friend and I spent quite a large portion of our lives clearing out terrorists from the buildings of Rogue Spear at top speed and then gloating over our huge kill lists. The interesting thing was that this game was never made to be 'sped through', quite the contrary in fact, as a single player game one of the best parts was planning how to carry out each mission. However when you forced the maximum amount of terrorists into the map and used one of the cool guns off the internet you could just run around mowing them down with your double Uzi's or FN-P90.

Regards,

Ben

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ALL THIS NONSENSE

Dear Mr Fish and Gang,

After ten years of gaming, do you ever lie in bed at night and ask yourself:

- (1) Why are there crates there?
- (2) Why are there guns conveniently laid strewn around this here train station?
- (3) How in the blue hell can I jump this high, or fall this far without dying?

Indeed, what is the meaning of all this nonsense? The harmful negligibility of reality is at stake! Just yesterday I climbed the roof to get a tennis ball down. I was playing outside because Mario Sunshine was giving me head-spins. Anyway my dad told me I needed some fresh air. I lost the ball next, and once I was up on the roof, I shunned the ladder. I said, hell, if Mario can jump down that far without hurting himself, why can't I? So I did it and I cracked my ankle. FREAKOUT! I got the Aussie-Hobble bonus; my fat gut probably helped. Man, video games have screwed with my mind! Bring me back to reality and tell me what it all means!

Slobby

Dear Slobby,

Snap out of it son! Stop this letter-writing frivolity and go back to playing games like a good monkey.

A WONDERFUL DREAM

Hya Hyperians,

I had a wonderful dream two nights ago that I need to share. In this dream I went down to my nearest newsagent and purchased the latest issue of Hyper. Inside, its pages were replete with stories that made my heart swell: Nintendo announced that it would be illegal to snidely declare its new console "poofy" or "kiddy". Duke Nukem Forever was released and was actually good. Newbies around the world were getting their questions answered politely. Game Boy Advance owners were offered a good will replacement GBA-SP for recognition of buyer loyalty. And last, but gloriously not least, an overabundance of 'sticky stuff' resulted in extra globules for all who purchased Hyper! Well, needless to say, I woke up and none of these aforementioned things came true, but I did get a brand new issue of Hyper, which is always a good cure for unfulfilled ruminations.

Just a few questions:

1. Am I the only one who is sick of GBA remakes? Are there any plans for an

original Mario platform game for GBA?

2. Why won't the Xbox play burnt CDs? Coz all you have to do if you want to be a pirate (ahoy there) is to borrow the album off a mate and rip it directly to the Box.

3. Is it healthy to play Morrowind for 12 hours and then horde all of the ubiquitous forks, herbs, plates and bottles from around your house? You know, just for that next trip to see the mudcrab!

Keep up the good work,

Dylan Burns

Dear Dylan,

Are you taking those "sleeping pills" again?

1. Now that they've pretty much run out of old Mario games, chances are we will get something new. The GBA has a pretty solid future.
2. Do I really need to answer this?
3. I'm not sure if it's healthy to actually still be playing Morrowind! Go buy yourself a new game.

BLAU!

Dear HYPERDUDES,

1. Where could I get my hands on Vagrant Story and for how much? UK Playstation magazine says it's rare.

2. Is Eliot, by any chance, English? I kinda realised at the fact that not many foreigners could care about Sutherland (no offence to any fans) and some of the expressions used and actually giving football its real name.

3. Is Grand Theft Auto 2 Collectors Edition any good?

4. Have you ever realised that BLAU is actually blue in German?

5. Was it true that you lot went onto Cheeze TV? Jeez I wish I'd have seen that.

6. What's the deal with FIFA 2003 on PSX? With Manchester City I'm on a 60-something match winning streak.

7. How the Hell can you guys get so damn funny shite out month after month.

Oh well. Hope ya get this and print it. Live on. Peace out and KEEP CAPTIONING!!

PJ_17

Dear PJ_17,

1. Try Ebay. I imagine it would be a little hard to find. Top game.
2. Nope, I'm a born and bred Aussie. Anyway, it's not Sutherland - it's Southampton. Go Saints!
3. If you're into the old 2D top-down style, it's an okay waste of time... there are better games to buy, though.
4. In German, depending on the



OUR SHIGSY SURE DOES GET AROUND ON HIS DAY OFF!



[top] Mark Withington sends us a great one.
[left] Chris Nixon has a Shiggy nightmare.
[above] Deku Scrub mixes and matches.

CAPTION THIS!

PART 47 WINNER

This month, **Martin McDermott** brings home the winning caption, so how about a round of applause... clapclapclapclap.



"Ohh yeah! That's the spot... you chiropractors work wonders"



context, "Blau" can also mean drunk or pixelated. True!

5. Yep, we sure did. Actually, they came here to Hyper HQ.

6. It's an arcade game. If you want a proper Football sim, go and buy Pro Evolution Soccer 3 - you'll thank us later.

7. We're just naturally stupid.

GETTING A BONER

Dear Hyper,

Xbox cheerleaders at NRL grand final!! I was about to get a humongous GAMING BONER but then Meatloaf came out...

Cheers,

Steven

P.S. Great 10th birthday issue.

Dear Steven,

Thank god you didn't get one, otherwise I'm sure you would have told us aaaa! about it. Ewww.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

IS THIS FOR YOUR BOYFRIEND?

Dear Hyper,

I am a 24 year-old female, yes I have a full time job (quite a respectable one!!). I am an avid gamer, in fact just last night I sat up till iam thrashing my partner on Soul Calibur 2 (Xbox). Now holding all the current time attack and arcade mode number one positions on Soul Calibur, something started to puzzle me. Is it the fact that I have considerably smaller hands thus allowing me to mash the game pad faster than the speed of light? That's what my partner said. Is what I'm doing wrong? Am I weird? Is this not a normal practice for females? I live for the release of new games and when I step into certain software stores and ask for release dates of games such as Soul Calibur, Alien vs. Predator etc. I am asked quite

shrewdly, "is this for your boyfriend?" Or "do you know what platform you want it on?" when it's quite obvious that I am standing in the Xbox section!

Not meaning to harp but what the f@#! I need my questions answered! Now I know the fact that not every woman likes Evil Dead Army of Darkness either... but I'm willing to admit that. Why are girls still being treated like the inferior sex in the gamer's world? I used to manage a software store a few years ago and it was like this then. Can we not advance? Gaming has. I'm still loving the Day of the Tentacle though!

Hyper please make them understand... don't let them continue to offer us a \$5 note and say "shake it baby" (Duke Nukem asks).

Thanking you,

Vanessa

Dear Vanessa,

The more gaming girls the merrier! Don't worry, you're not alone. We know lots of girls who are hardcore gamers. Here's a mouse to help you continue to humiliate your boyfriend at games.

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TOP 10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 5 OCT 2003
RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Rugby 2004 Sports
- 2 ○ Eyetoy: Play Compilation
- 3 ▲ Conflict Desert Strm 2 Baghdad Action
- 4 ▼ GTA: Vice City Adventure
- 5 ▼ AFL Live 2004 Sports
- 6 ▲ SOCOM: US Navy Seals Action
- 7 ▼ Finding Nemo Adventure
- 8 ▲ Tiger Woods PGA 2004 Sports
- 9 ▼ Warhammer 40K Fire Warrior Action
- 10 ○ Grand Theft Auto 3 Ptm Adventure

TOP 10

PlayStation Games Over \$30

W/E 5 OCT 2003
RETAIL SALES

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

TOP 10

Game Cube Games Over \$50

W/E 5 OCT 2003
RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Soul Calibur 2 Action
- ◆ Super Mario Sunshine Adventure
- 3 ▲ Starfox Adventures Adventure
- 4 ▼ WWE WrestleMania X9 Sports
- 5 ◆ Finding Nemo Adventure
- 6 ◆ Legend Zelda:Wind Waker LE RPG
- 7 ◆ Metroid Prime Adventure
- 8 ▲ Legend Of Zelda: Wind Waker RPG
- 9 ○ Mario Party 4 Family
- 10 ▼ Disny Extreme Skteboard Adv Sports

TOP 10

Xbox Games Over \$50

W/E 5 OCT 2003
RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Str Wrs Knights Old Republic RPG
- 2 ▲ Xbox Live Shooter Pack Action
- 3 ▲ Conflict Desert Strm 2 Baghdad Action
- 4 ○ WWE Ruthless Aggression Sports
- 5 ▼ Soul Calibur 2 Action
- 6 ▼ Finding Nemo Adventure
- 7 ▲ Colin McRae Rally 4 Racing
- 8 ▼ AFL Live 2004 Sports
- 9 ▼ Tiger Woods PGA 2004 Sports
- 10 ◆ The Hulk Adventure

TOP 10

PC Games Over \$20

W/E 5 OCT 2003
RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ C & C Generals Zero Hour Exp Strategy
- 2 ▲ The Sims Deluxe Strategy
- 3 ▲ The Sims Superstar Strategy
- 4 ▼ Finding Nemo Adventure Adventure
- 5 ▼ Star Wars Jedi Knight Acdmy Adventure
- 6 ▼ Nemo Underwaetr Wrid Fun Adventure
- 7 ○ Medal Honor Brkthrough Exp Action
- 8 ▲ WarCraft 3 Frozen Throne Exp Strategy
- 9 ○ Battlefield 1942 Reload Pack Action
- 10 ○ The Sims Unleashed Strategy

TOP 10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30

W/E 5 OCT 2003
RETAIL SALES

- 1 ▲ Final Fantasy Tactics RPG
- 2 ▲ Pokemon Ruby RPG
- 3 ▲ Pokemon Sapphire RPG
- 4 ▼ Finding Nemo Adventure
- 5 ◆ Dragonball Z:Legacy Goku 2 Action
- 6 ◆ YuGiOh World Wide Strategy
- 7 ▲ Pokemon Pinball R & S Action
- 8 ◆ Pirates Of The Caribbean RPG
- 9 ▼ Donkey Kong Country Adventure
- 10 ○ Bionicle: The Game (Lego) Adventure

TOP 10

All Full Priced Games

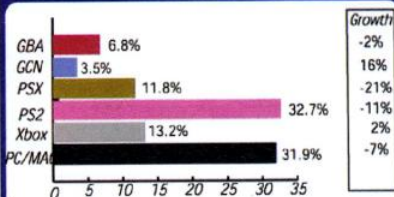
W/E 5 OCT 2003
RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Rugby 2004 PlayStation 2
- 2 ○ Eyetoy: Play PlayStation 2
- 3 ○ C & C Generals Zero Hour Exp PC/MAC
- 4 ▲ Conflict Desert Strm 2 Baghdad PlayStation 2
- 5 ▼ Str Wrs Knights Old Republic Xbox
- 6 ▲ Soul Calibur 2 GameCube
- 7 ▼ GTA: Vice City PlayStation 2
- 8 ▼ AFL Live 2004 PlayStation 2
- 9 ○ SOCOM: US Navy Seals PlayStation 2
- 10 ▼ Finding Nemo PlayStation 2

MARKET WATCH

All Games by Platform

SEPT 03 - IN AUG 03
RETAIL SALES



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

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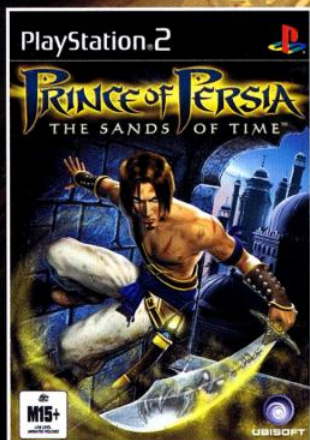
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