

JUICED ❖ PLAYBOY: THE MANSION ❖ MIDNIGHT CLUB 3

Issue 131 SEPTEMBER 2004

# HYPERS

## X-MEN LEGENDS

Wolvie Berserker action on PS2, Xbox and GameCube

## ZELDA & METROID

Nintendo talk about their new, grown-up approach to games

## DJ: DECKS & FX

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## grand theft auto

## San Andreas



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## PSI-OPS

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## SPIDER-MAN 2

Web-Slinging made easy





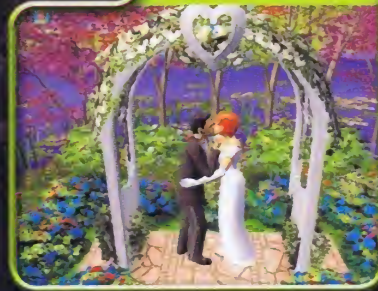
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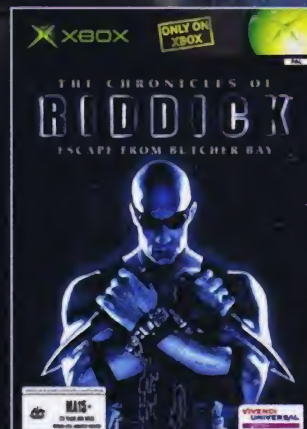
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Official Xbox Magazine



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## 14 X-MEN LEGENDS

The best game based on the X-Men so far?



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## EDITORIAL

»» The last month here at Hyper HQ has been pretty crazy, but if we had to sum up what we've been up to in three words, they'd be "Mashed and music". As you'd know if you've checked out the review section already, a little game called Mashed came into our office and into our hearts this month... and since then it's been a veritable Mashed mad-house. As Mashed mania took over, the magazine's deadline receded into the background, present only as a muted nagging at the back of our minds. People from all over the office were hanging out, waiting for someone to drop out so they could hop in. Drop out, tune in... get Mashed.

It's always nice when a game captures the enthusiasm of the entire office, as it reminds us why we came to love gaming in the first place. It also shows that as cynical as we may sometimes get about the cycle of game development and the quantity of derivative titles out there, the industry can still surprise us with an unexpected gem.

Aside from Mashed, the other thing that's been keeping me busy this month is a great piece of software for the PS2 called DJ: Decks & FX, which is essentially a mixing sim that comes with a well stocked record box. Although music "software" for console has been around for a while, it's still great to see products like this come through. Decks & FX gives people who don't have thousands of dollars to spend on professional equipment some pretty compelling music manipulation options, and features mechanics that are instantly accessible. Basically it captures a lot of the fun of mixing, while doing away with the steep learning curve. Of course, if you do have several thousands of dollars to spend on DJing equipment, we've still got you covered - just check out the hardware section.

**Cam Shea** »» Editor



[above] Some of the Hyper crew. Left to right: D-Stizzle, Amos, The Goose, C-Dawg, Super Farrelly, Lord Seafood, Moemar

# HYPER»»

## ISSUE 131

SEPTEMBER 2004

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## HYPER CREW MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

### Cam Shea - Editor

1. Mashed - PS2  
"Doom 3? San Andreas? Bah, let's play Mashed"
2. CDJ1000-MK2s and DJM-909
3. DJ: Decks & FX - PS2
4. Burnout 3 - PS2
5. Spider-Man 2 - Xbox

### David Wildgoose - Pub companion

1. Pro Evolution Soccer 3 - PS2  
"I won't stop 'til the Soccerroos lift the World Cup on 5 stars."
2. Thief: Deadly Shadows - PC
3. Mashed - PS2
4. Beyond Good & Evil - GCN
5. CurveBall - Flash

### Malcolm Campbell - Art

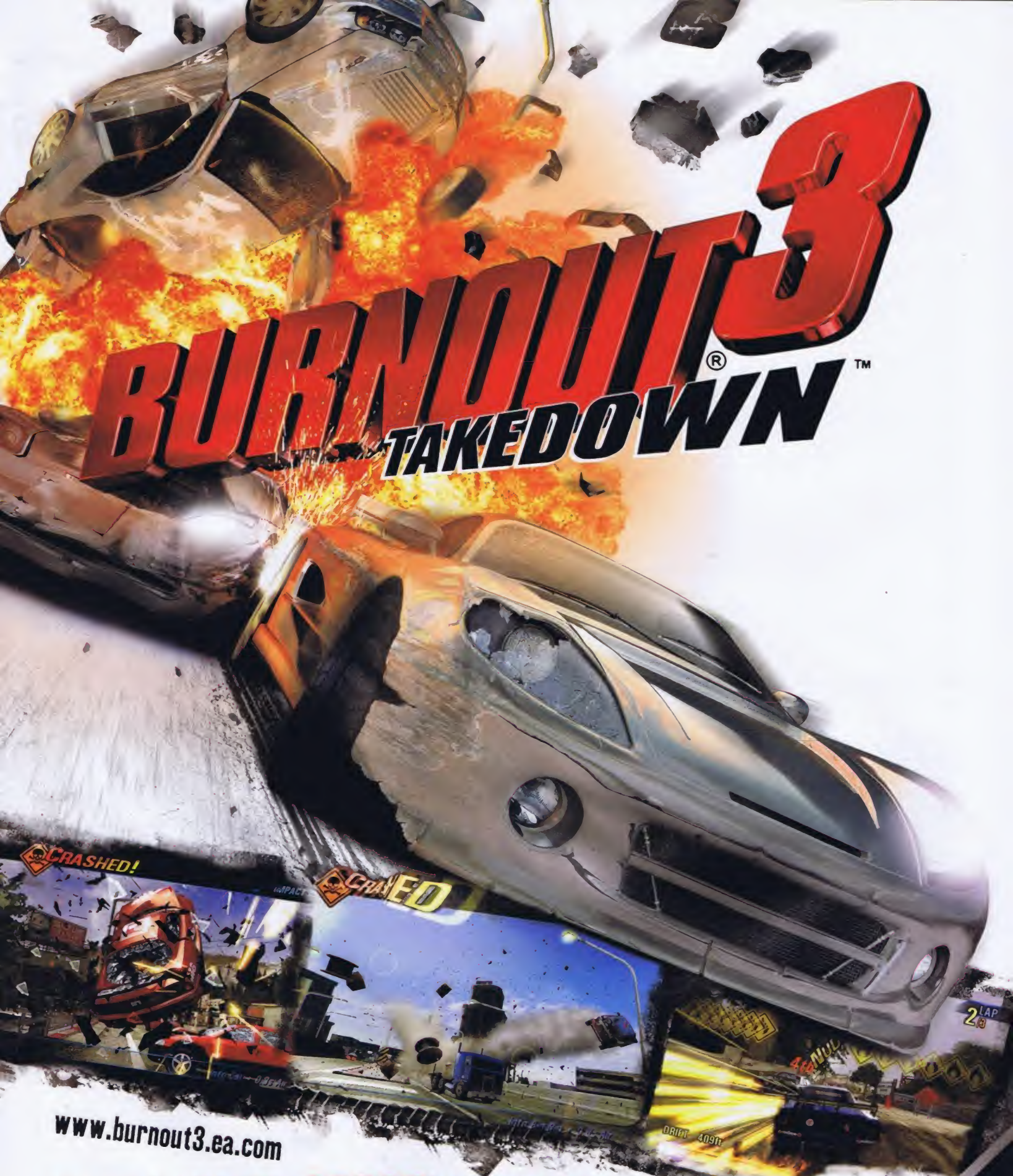
1. Mashed - PS2  
"It's good to play (Mashed) together."
2. Pro Evolution Soccer 3 - PS2
3. Street Fighter 3: Third Strike - Dreamcast
4. Snowblind demo - PS2
5. Killzone demo - PS2

### Daniel Staines - Snoop lingo consultant

1. 1. Mashed - PS2  
"Deadline? What deadline?"
2. Thief: Deadly Shadows - PC
3. KOTOR - PC
4. Paaanch tha Caaaant - Office In-Joke
5. Super Monkey Ball - GCN



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## CRASH LANDING SEPTEMBER 2004



PlayStation 2



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EG462

IN THE NEWS: Ninja Gaiden updated ■ Yetis invade PSOne ■ The Rock as the Doom Marine? ■ PlayStation 3 to be unveiled E3 2005



ONLINE

## RACING NINJA CAVEMEN

Extra content coming our way!

➤ No, this is not an announcement for a new and gimmicky game, rather a look at things to come from Xbox Live. Since its launch, Xbox Live has been far and away the most popular and successful of the online console apps, and for good reason: ease of use, a great selection of online games and excellent support. Now Xbox Live is offering even more bang for your buck in the form of extra downloadable content for the hugely popular (not to mention critically successful) games *Ninja Gaiden* and *Project Gotham 2*.

In the next couple of months we can expect to see a hefty downloadable upgrade for Tecmo's notoriously difficult slice of *Ninja* action that will significantly revamp the game. So far the patch is planned to include a significant number of new enemies, none of which have

been revealed yet apart from the majority of them will be large (essentially mini-bosses) and they will prove to be quite a challenge. There will also be a number of new bosses added to the game but the question of where is yet to be answered. Although these new enemies and bosses are being added to the game, Tecmo have been quick to point out that the patch will not contain any new levels or areas, just a reworking of the already existing stages. Three new weapons will also become available for players to wield.

More significantly, the patch will include a major improvement to the AI, designed to make them act more as rational enemies rather than automata. The best news, however, is that the upgraded version of the game (*Ninja Gaiden 1.1* essentially) will have full 360 degree camera control, a

feature that will greatly improve its playability. Bless you Tecmo.

*Project Gotham Racing 2* will also be getting a content injection soon via Xbox Live, in the form of the Long Beach Booster Pack. The patch, which should be available by the time you're reading this, will cost Xbox Live subscribers US\$6.99 and will feature a whole new city spanning eight new tracks, as well as eight new cars including the Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, Porsche 911 GT2 Clubsport and Subaru Impreza 22B STi.

Finally on the Xbox Live front it has recently been announced that *B.C. 2* (yes, that's right — there's a sequel in the works before the first *B.C.* game is even released) will be Xbox Live compatible so players from around the world will be able to pit their prehistoric tribes against each other.



[right] A caption for Long Beach: Extra Mild



The Kill-BOT Factory at work

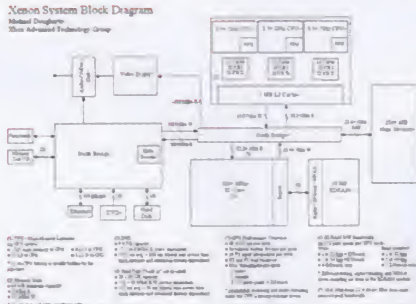
**FPS**  
**IN THE ARMY NOW**  
 When do we get our freakin' guns?

Due to the phenomenal success of America's Army, a freely downloadable first person shooter developed as a recruitment aide for the American Army (strange that), the army has gone one step further and actually set up its own games development house. More than 3 million players subscribe to America's Army so the dev team definitely has an audience for their upcoming games. The as yet unnamed studio will be headed by Jerry Heneghan, a West Point graduate and 13 year Apache Pilot veteran who worked as a producer at Red Storm Entertainment, a company best known for their Tom

Clancy based shooters. Currently the 24-man team is hard at work on America's Army: Overmatch, their eagerly anticipated commercial debut of the America's Army franchise that will be available to buy as of March next year. Although the team is officially sponsored by the army the project really didn't get off the ground until interest in the potential of games was shown by other branches of the armed services, including the navy and Secret Service so it will be interesting to see if the team continues to work solely on army based FPS games or will branch out into other forms of military sim.

**NEW BOX**  
**XBOX BACKWARDS?**  
 Just keep your old console plugged in!

Quite a bit of debate is stirring around leaked reports that the Xbox 2 may not be backwards compatible. Although Microsoft have yet to confirm or deny the reports save to say that any such speculation is futile and potentially damaging at this point, the new direction the hardware of the next generation console is taking lends credence to the claims. The change of CPU, video chipset and maybe the lack of an internal hard-drive could potentially make emulating the operating system of the Xbox very difficult, though not impossible. Naysayers are currently spouting off that not having backwards compatibility will seriously harm the Xbox but this ultimately seems unlikely as for starters buying a new console does not necessitate throwing your old consoles and games away,



[above] Looks like one of Mr Kelly's architectural masterpieces to me

and the release of a new Xbox will significantly reduce the price of the existing machine. Ultimately the question comes down to how important backwards compatibility is in the first place. On a purely consumer level it's a nice feature but as far as technological development goes the inclusion of backwards compatibility can seriously hamper the capability of a machine.



**EMU**  
**MORE CRAZY HANDHELDS**  
 Tap into America!

After being held up due to legal action being threatened due to emulation, the handheld PDA-like gaming deck, the Tapwave Zodiac has finally become available for purchase. The Tapwave features a 480x320 pixel 3.8-inch screen, an analogue thumbstick, four face buttons and triggers. Inside, the machine is powered by a 200Mhz Motorola ARM9 processor and an ATI Imageon W4200 graphics processor with 8mb of dedicated SD RAM. At the moment there are only 2 games available for the machine, Tony Hawk 4 and Duke Nukem Mobile but Tapwave expect to be releasing around 75 games within the next year including Activision's MTX: Mototrax and Street Hoops, Eidos' Tomb Raider and Atari's Neverwinter Nights - not a bad lineup for a handheld. The machine is available in two versions, a 32mb for US\$299 (AUD\$415 approx) and a 128mb for US\$399 (AUD\$550 approx). As well as being able to play games, the Tapwave features a full suite of PDA functions as well as wireless networking for games and other apps, music and video playback of all the popular formats as well as portable internet applications. Now all we have to do is convince Tapwave to send us one.

**GOLDENEYE**  
**ROGUE AGENT**



**YETI**  
**FLASH GOES COMMERICAL**  
 Killing penguins for fun and profit

It was bound to happen - after taking the internet by storm, the incredibly popular and addictive Yetisports game are about to make their debut on the PSOne courtesy of patchy producer JoWood. You read that right, the games will be coming out for PSOne, not for any of the next gen systems. The Yetisports compilation will feature Super Pingu Throw: The Wind Challenge, Ice Bear Attack, Yeti Slot Machine, Super Orca Slap and Pingu Dart and each game will feature both single and multiplayer game modes. Although the concept of buying a version of a game that is freely playable online may sound like a bit of a stretch, JoWood is obviously on to a winner - the recently released European PC version of Yetisports peaked at number 3 on the sales charts. There has been no news yet as to whether the game will be winging its way to our shores. If Yetisports takes off on console we may be seeing an influx of console versions of online flash games sometime soon. PS3 Trogdor the Burninator anyone?

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'chortle chortle fnaar fnaar'

## Bad Cop No Doughnut

DANIEL WILKS - THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS DEPUTY EDITOR



As I write this I'm standing uncomfortably, hunched over a free Internet kiosk in Sydney International Airport about to

gallivant off to yet another exotic destination, whiling away my time as a journalist in the pursuit of leisure and the next junket. At least that seems to be the opinion of many people who hear that we travel a lot at other people's expense. Let me tell you in on a little secret - London is too damn far away. So is Los Angeles for that matter, and don't get me started on North bloody Carolina. Sure we do get to travel a fair deal but it's nowhere near as glamorous as it sounds. Whist going to London for a few days, being put up in a 5 star hotel by Rockstar and being wined and dined every night I was there by the same company may sound like some people's idea of heaven, let me tell you it isn't when you look at the facts. London is about 22-24 hours flying time away depending on the winds. You have to make at least one transfer on the way with a stopover of about three hours. Then you add the wait times at the actual airport at either end getting tickets and going through customs and whatnot. Lets conservatively call that four hours each end - three for departure and one for arrival. Now add it all together and what do you have? Around 60 hours in transit for the trip. When you're only spending 48 on the ground it's a hell of a long time. I won't even start on the jetlag and how it can ruin you for days afterwards.

Travelling may seem exotic but it's not. It's just like going to work, only with a 60 hour commute.

## WINNERS

### Hyper 129

#### NINJA GAIDEN

Josh Hobbs, Kuraby, QLD  
Ben McCarthy, Happy Valley, SA  
Ashley Jones, Ellalong, NSW  
Nathan Ellerby, Whyalla Stuart, SA  
Brigette Randell, Walkley Heights, SA  
Ben Wynn, Stockton, NSW

#### DJ CONSOLE

Scott Tindall, Werribee, VIC  
S. Watson, Mosman, NSW

HELL

## THE ROCK IS DOOMED

John Woo gets serious about gaming

It looks as though professional wrestling icon cum charismatic action star The Rock may well be starring in the proposed Doom movie. Already working on his first videogame to movie conversion, Spy-Hunter, being helmed by action maestro John Woo in which he'll be playing a secret agent with a seriously tricked out car, The Rock has announced that he has been approached to star in a movie simply titled Doom, based, obviously on the hugely successful series of games. To explain his role in the film, The People's Champion simply said, "It's based on the game. Where, without giving the movie away, I play the ultimate [censored]." Wow. The ultimate

[censored]? "Yeah, it'll be great. But you don't know I'm [censored]. Without giving the movie away." Whilst it is annoying to find a censored quote it is quite easy to read between the lines and see that he's saying that he will be playing the ultimate badass - sounds just like the nameless Doom Trooper to us. The fact that such a big name has been linked to the movie gives us hope that the movie may actually be half way decent. Rocky demands seven or eight figure salaries so it's assured that the film will have quite a significant budget. The other factor that proves the film may be good is the fact that our German nemesis, Uwe Boll is in no way affiliated with the project.

COOL

## GAMES FIGHT CANCER

Time to make a wish

Unfortunately the header is a little misleading. Whilst it would be nice to announce that the playing of games can cure cancer it is unfortunately untrue. A nine year old sufferer of leukemia, Ben Duskin, used an offer by the Make-A-Wish foundation, a group that offers to fulfil the dreams of sick children to start the development of a game specifically targeted to helping young victims of cancer deal with their condition by taking their mind off the disease. The wish has been granted by Eric Johnston, a software engineer for LucasArts, a company that donated their time and money in the development of the game. The main character of the game, modelled off Ben himself rides around the various levels on a skateboard shooting mutated cells and collecting seven shields to protect against the common side effects of chemotherapy which include hair loss, nausea, weakness and fever. The game, simply titled,



### Ben's Game

[above] It's like Back to the Future 2, except heaps cooler...

Ben's Game made its debut at the University of California's San Francisco Pediatric Treatment Center and is now considered an integral part of the rehabilitation process. Simply put, Ben Duskin is one hell of a cool kid - it takes a special type of person to use what could possibly be their final wish to help other people.

## OVERFLOW

Sony have announced that the PlayStation 3 will be unveiled at E3 next year! It now looks like a 2006 release is definitely on the cards... although we'd expect the usual staggered release, with the system coming out in Japan first, followed by America, with PAL territories bringing up the rear. Think Christmas 2006 then.

Wow, Overflow is starting to feel like the MMORPG obituaries. Last issue True Fantasy Online was cancelled, and this issue it's Ultima X: Odyssey and Warhammer Online.

The Thief: Deadly Shadows bug we mentioned last issue has been addressed in a patch, so all you who want to play the game at the "Super Happy Mega Hard Family Wish Show" difficulty level can, without fear of the game switching back to normal. We're not sure what's happening on Xbox though...

Not only has Starcraft: Ghost been pushed back to a 2005 release, but Blizzard's co-developer Nihilistic has formerly ended their involvement with the project. The developer taking over from them is Swingin' Ape, best known for the solid Metal Arms: A Glitch in the System. Switching developers this far in sends off warning bells here at Hyper HQ, but everything we've seen on the game looks great, so fingers crossed.

Burnout for PSP? It's looking very likely, and we couldn't be happier!

Poor Acclaim. After losing the Burnout franchise to EA a few months ago, their woes continue as they have now lost both the Turok and MLB licenses, for alleged non payment of royalties. This could cripple their All-Star Baseball franchise but on the plus side, hopefully no more Turok games!

## STOP PRESS! FIRST SCREENS! Pro Evolution Soccer 4

PS2, PC, XBOX Developer: KCET



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# X-MEN LEGENDS



[top] Cyclops just tore off my clothes! Where is Hercules when you need him?

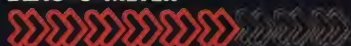
**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:** X-Men Legends redeem previous X-Men gaming travesties. Wolverine's Revenge, we're looking at you.

**AVAILABLE ON:**  
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

**DETAILS**

**CATEGORY:** Action RPG / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 / **DEVELOPER:** Raven / **AVAILABLE:** Late 2004 /

**BLAU-O-METER**



The X-Men is one of those properties that desperately deserves a great game based on it. After all, not only does it have a rich back-story and huge cast of interesting characters, but in terms of game design, there couldn't be a better license in terms of gameplay possibilities. Think about it. In the comics the X-Men are all about the team - each mutant has his or her own unique powers, but it's in concert with one another that they are most powerful. Imagine a game where you could choose your squad from a selection of the most popular X-Men and use teamwork to get through not just battles, but all manner of other scenarios. That's X-Men Legends.

**QUOTH THE RAVEN...**

Indeed, since it was announced back in February 2003, developers Raven Software have been hard at work trying to realise the full potential of the franchise. They're



Colossus, Jean Grey, Storm, Nightcrawler, Iceman, Magma and Gambit. Just think of the possibilities of

walking quite a fine line too. Legends originally started out as a turn-based Eastern style RPG, but Raven soon decided that they wanted the game to have more action and switched development towards the Action RPG genre. Thus, you still level up characters and unlock new abilities, and you still need to work together and solve puzzles, but it's all backed up by the over the top combat you would expect.

Just like the comic, it's the team dynamic that Raven have worked hardest on. Going into every mission you'll be part of a squad of four (although you can branch off as just one character if necessary), and you can choose who comes along on missions from a pool of fifteen characters. Not all of them have been unveiled at this stage, but those who are confirmed include: Wolverine, Cyclops,

teamwork in the context of environment specific puzzles. Some characters will be able to move things in the environment (Jean Grey), others will be able to burn holes through walls (Cyclops), while others can teleport up to ledges or through narrow gaps (Nightcrawler). The characters have all been chosen for their unique, yet complementary abilities, in order to drive gameplay possibilities. The possibilities really are limitless, and the specific team you choose will influence what kind of approach you take and what options are open to you during a mission.

We spoke to the game's Producer Blaine Christine to find out a little more: "Within each mission, there are specific objectives that must be accomplished. In order to complete these objectives, certain super-powers may be required. The player will have to carefully consider which

## IT'S ALL BACKED UP BY THE OVER THE TOP COMBAT YOU WOULD EXPECT

### COLOSSUS

**REAL NAME:** Piotr (Peter) Nikolaievitch Rasputin  
**GROUP AFFILIATIONS:** X-Men, Excalibur (disbanded)  
**HEIGHT:** 6'7" (armoured form), 6'4" (human form)  
**WEIGHT:** 500 lbs. (armoured form), 250 lbs. (human form)  
**HAIR:** Black  
**OTHER DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:** In armoured form Colossus' skin appears armour plated.  
**POWERS:** Colossus can transform into a living metal behemoth with



incredible strength, endurance and armour. When not an armour plated hero, Colossus has shown a great deal of talent as a poet. **NOTE:** Colossus is in love with another mutant, Kitty Pryde, otherwise known as Shadowcat.





## JEAN GREY

**REAL NAME:** Jean Grey Summers (married)  
**GROUP AFFILIATIONS:** X-Men, X-Factor (disbanded)  
**ALIASES:** Phoenix, Marvel Girl  
**HEIGHT:** 5 ft. 6 in.  
**WEIGHT:** 110 lbs.  
**EYES:** Green  
**HAIR:** Red  
**POWERS:** Vast psionic powers. Limited telepathy. Jean Grey is a mutant who possesses telekinetic abilities enabling her to levitate and manipulate living beings and inanimate objects psionically. She may also be able to wield the



Phoenix force, a virtually unlimited source of cosmic power. However, she seldom makes full use of this ability.  
**NOTE:** Jean was once cloned by Mister Sinister and the resultant woman became Scott Summer's first wife.

## CYCLOPS

**GROUP AFFILIATIONS:** X-Men, X-Factor (disbanded)  
**REAL NAME:** Scott Summers (married to Marvel Girl)  
**ALIASES:** Eric the Red, Slim (nickname)  
**HEIGHT:** 6 ft. 3 in.  
**WEIGHT:** 195 lbs.  
**EYES:** Brown (glow red)  
**HAIR:** Brown  
**OTHER DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:** Cyclops must wear ruby lenses at all times to protect others around him from his dangerous optic blasts, which he cannot otherwise control due to an injury suffered as a child.  
**POWERS:** Scott Summers can shoot



blasts of concussive force from his eyes, fight well in hand to hand combat and is a skilled military tactician.  
**NOTE:** As with many comic book characters, Cyclops has been killed and resurrected. In 2000 he was killed by Mister Sinister but brought back to life soon after.

## STORM

**REAL NAME:** Ororo Munroe  
**ALIASES:** Windrider  
**GROUP AFFILIATIONS:** X-Men, Morlocks (former)  
**HEIGHT:** 5 ft. 11 in.  
**WEIGHT:** 127 lbs.  
**EYES:** Blue  
**HAIR:** White

**OTHER POWERS:** Storm has the psychic ability to control the weather over limited areas. She can fly by creating winds strong enough to support her weight. Storm has limited immunity



to extreme heat and cold. Storm is an exceptional strategist, tactician, hand-to-hand combatant, and thief, excelling at picking locks.  
**NOTE:** Storm is claustrophobic.



[above] Juggernaut breaks into X-Men: The Mansion

X-Men are most likely to be effective in a given mission in order to succeed in their mission objectives. However, if a certain puzzle or objective is unable to be completed with a set of four characters, there is usually an Extraction Point in the vicinity where the player can swap characters to get a new team dynamic."

The player can switch between characters at any time, so if you need a specific ability in the team, you can utilise it. Mind you, it's not like your team mates are going to be standing around in a combat situation. Raven have worked hard to ensure that your mutant mates back you up without getting in your way. Thus: "Characters with long-range abilities will stand back and pelt the enemies from a distance while the brawlers get in close and mix it up with the enemy." Too often in games with squad AI your team mates are useless, so let's hope they can get the balance right.

The player will also be able to give basic directives to their allies,



whether that be to retreat, attack or to set up for a special double team move. As Blaine explains: "There are some special moves that can only be accomplished with certain characters. An example is the classic Fastball Special. Only certain X-Men have the ability to pick up other characters, so using those X-Men is the only way the player will get to pull off this famous combo."

The player can also set each team member's aggressiveness... although we really can't see Wolverine taking directions to chill out from the likes of Cyclops. Indeed, "there will be some in-game banter that reflects the team dynamics of the X-Men, so you can expect to hear Wolverine giving Cyclops a hard time during the course of an adventure."

It's not all combat and missions however: "Outside of combat, the player will get a chance to explore the X-Mansion in all its glory. This is an important aspect of the game - between missions the player gets a chance to wander about the Xavier Institute and talk to other mutants, potentially unlocking new playable characters and learning new abilities in the Danger Room."

Better still, Patrick Stewart will be reprising his role as Charles Xavier, and he'll give you the

lowdown before each mission. Good old Pat, he's always been a videogame voiceover stalwart. We're not sure who else is voicing characters, although Lou Diamond Phillips has also been confirmed.

In terms of authenticity, fans of the comic have high expectations, but fortunately so too do Raven and Marvel: "Marvel is very closely involved in every facet of the game, from inception to completion. They have been fantastic about letting us create a storyline specifically for our game and about allowing us to create some unique costumes for familiar characters that are exclusive to our game. X-Men fans will be very excited to see their favorite characters come to life like no other game before."

The game's storyline is also being handled with the utmost care. As Blaine explains: "Our story was written by a group called Man of Action (Steven Seagle, Duncan Rouleau, Joe Casey, and Joe Kelly). The whole group has worked for Marvel in the past as writers for the X-Men comics. They know the X-Men inside and out and have done a fantastic job of bringing the characters to life like no other X-Men game has before." Better still, "The story for X-Men Legends was created exclusively for

## >>> YOU CAN EXPECT TO HEAR WOLVIE GIVING CYCLOPS A HARD TIME...

## NIGHTCRAWLER

**REAL NAME:** Kurt Wagner  
**GROUP AFFILIATIONS:** X-Men, Excalibur (disbanded)  
**HEIGHT:** 5 ft. 9 in.  
**WEIGHT:** 195 lbs.  
**EYES:** Shining yellow, no visible pupils  
**HAIR:** Indigo

### OTHER DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:

Nightcrawler has only 3 fingers on each hand, and only 2 toes. He has a prehensile tail. He has pointed teeth and ears. His skin appears blue but is actually covered with thin indigo fur.

**POWERS:** Nightcrawler is a mutant with the ability to teleport (bamf) himself and anyone in contact with him over undisclosed distances. Nightcrawler is a superb natural athlete whose mutation has



endowed him with inhuman agility. He is an accomplished fencer, skilled to the point where he can fence with his prehensile tail. He appears to be able to cling to surfaces in a manner similar to Spider Man. He is difficult to see in the dark because of his dark blue skin tone, and can see in the dark.  
**NOTE:** When "bamfing", Nightcrawler leaves behind a cloud of sulfuric smoke.

## GAMBIT

**REAL NAME:** Remy LeBeau  
**GROUP AFFILIATIONS:** X-Men  
**HEIGHT:** 6'1"  
**WEIGHT:** 175 lbs.  
**HAIR:** Brown

**EYES:** Brown (sometimes red depending on the artist)

**SPECIAL POWERS:** Mutant ability to charge objects with kinetic energy and throw them with an explosive effect. Gambit is considered extremely powerful.

**OTHER ABILITIES:** Gambit is highly skilled in hand-to-hand combat, combat with weapons, and is a



former professional thief.

**NOTE:** Remy remains a wild card in the X-Men, never really showing his true colours in any situation aside from his doomed love affair with Rogue whom he pines for but cannot touch due to her mutation.





[above] Heroes in a half shell - turtle power! Oh sorry, wrong game...



the game, but fans will notice many relationships and even a few "flashback" events taken directly from the X-Men universe."

Indeed, the story concerns Alison Crestmere, better known to fans of the series as Magma. At the start of the game, however, she's just a young girl who has been targeted by the Brotherhood of Mutants. Naturally the X-Men rescue her and take her back to the X-Mansion, but it turns out she's just one target for the Brotherhood... and that they're possibly in league with the Sentinels. We won't spoil any of the story for the fans, but rest assured the Brotherhood have one hell of a master plan.

In terms of gameplay, however, it struck us as odd that the game was based around a four player team, yet you could only play the game in two player co-op. What was the reasoning behind this decision? "There are a number of reasons that we chose to stick with 2 player co-op for this game. Most importantly, this game is much more than an action game, it is a true Action RPG, which means that players spend a significant amount of time

upgrading their characters and talking to NPC's to find out more about the story. These elements do not lend themselves well to the fast paced action of a 4 player experience. Additionally, Raven has done a fantastic job of creating very diverse level layouts with many 3D elements that make navigation with multiple players tricky, to say the least. Finally, with a large number of enemies, four super-heroes, and tons of super powers, it gets tricky to keep track of which character one player is controlling on occasion, much less four!"

There's no doubt

about it, X-Men Legends is shaping up well. So what is the game's producer most excited about? "I am excited about the new elements that X-Men Legends brings to the Action RPG genre. Playing a team of four X-Men in real time is something that every gamer must experience. With the huge range of super powers seen throughout the game, the player is constantly experiencing new, exciting things. Additionally, the AI of your teammates is super (no pun intended) cool. It's really awesome to be in control of Wolverine and see Cyclops standing back supporting you with Optic Blasts while Colossus and Storm are fighting their own individual battles nearby." Word.



## ICEMAN

**REAL NAME:** Robert "Bobby" Drake  
**GROUP AFFILIATIONS:** X-Men, X-Factor (disbanded), The New Defenders (disbanded), Champions (disbanded)

**HEIGHT:** 5 ft. 8 in.

**WEIGHT:** 145 lbs.

**EYES:** Brown

**HAIR:** Brown

**OTHER DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:** In ice form Ice-Man's entire body becomes a material that resembles transparent ice.

**POWERS:** In ice form Ice-Man has great elemental energy projection powers and inhuman endurance to subzero temperatures. In ice form his endurance and strength are substantially increased, especially the former.

**NOTE:** Originally, Iceman's powers were not as great as they are presently. It was only after the



superhuman mutant known as Emma Frost released his latent mutant potential that his elemental powers accelerated to the degree that he could actually transform his body into some kind of organic ice form. Ice-Man's elemental powers also increased greatly due to the intervention of Emma Frost. Previous to that development, Ice-Man was only able to encase himself in ice in his ice form and did not actually become living ice. His elemental powers were also relatively limited.

## WOLVERINE

**REAL NAME:** Logan, possibly James Howlett

**ALIASES:** Weapon X, Patch, Death  
**GROUP AFFILIATIONS:** X-Men, Alpha Flight, Fantastic Four (back-up roster)

**HEIGHT:** 5' 3"

**WEIGHT:** 300 lbs. (195 lbs plus skeleton)

**EYES:** Brown

**HAIR:** Dark

**POWERS:** Possesses an unbreakable skeleton reinforced with adamantium and 6 retractable adamantium claws (3 on each hand) that can cut through any substance. Adamantium is a significant advantage in that it is virtually unbreakable. Superhuman



regenerative healing factor allows Wolverine to heal from injuries nearly instantaneously. He is immune to poisons, disease, and natural fatigue.

**NOTES:** James Howlett, otherwise known as Logan/Wolverine was born in 1892. He has survived so long because the aging process has been severely retarded by his healing factor.



# Eiji

**Daniel Wilks** recently had the opportunity to interview one of the world's most legendary game designers, Nintendo's **Eiji Aonuma**...

**I** arrived late to the interview. I was out of breath and puffing like an old steam train. For the benefit of the readers I haven't transcribed my heavy breathing into the interview — it sounded creepily sexual, which may have accounted for the rather nervous countenance of the attractive, business suited Japanese translator. We started the interview with a three-minute video of the new, as yet untitled Legend of Zelda game. To say that it is impressive is an understatement. The new adult Link is a thing to behold, at one familiar and new. He is an angry looking character now but

gesticulations are charmingly wild as he points and gestures, thumps his fist on the table and flings his hands up in disbelief. We began to talk.

**HYPHER:** Our first question would have to be that traditionally Link has been a very child-like, very innocent character but from what we've seen in the video Link now seems to be much older, grimmer and a lot darker in tone. Why has this direction been taken with the franchise?

**AONUMA:** We've always talked about doing an adult Link but we've never had a chance to do it. After Ocarina of Time we did Majora's Mask and Wind Waker, all based on the concept of Link as a child. In creating a new game we thought it was important to pursue this path of creating an adult Link.

One of the major complaints about the franchise in Australia, coming from people who haven't played the games is that Zelda games look too kiddie. It's a stigma that could really be turned around with the new adult Link. Gameplay wise, how will the adult Link differ from a young Link?

When we have the child Link as the main character the gameplay always expresses him growing up and learning new skills and other abilities in the game but as an adult, Link already has certain experiences, he already has those skills as an adult. With this new adult Link we have never faced the challenge of expressing a person with all these experiences so in the new game we're going to have to think of that in the design, we're going to have to remodel the gameplay a good deal to express Link as an adult. In Ocarina of Time for example the child Link was armed with a stick and fought enemies with it but

no reason has been given for the change from a happy go lucky child to a hard boiled young adult. Doubtless we will discover more about this in the months to come.

I sat down red faced opposite Eiji Aonuma, the man behind the men behind the Zelda franchise. He is a happy looking man of indeterminate age. When he starts speaking it appears as though he has learnt all of his mannerisms from a slightly drunken but very enthusiastic Italian man. His

# Aonuma

## THE LEGEND BEHIND ZELDA

in the new game Link is already an adult so it would be strange to see him running around fighting with a stick. These are the kinds of things we have to think about when looking into how to express Link as an adult. We have to think about what he would do to fight enemies in the game.

**With the advent of a grown up Link will we be seeing the return of well-known enemies like Ganondorf or some new, grown up style threats?**

The storyline for the new game is not complete yet – we're still working on it and have to polish it a little bit but we can say that the three characters, Ganondorf, Link and Zelda are strong characters in the franchise and they're connected with the Triforce. We're having a real challenge finding ways to incorporate these characters into the game world. We're looking at ways we can use those characters, or not.

### THE NEW ADULT LINK IS A THING TO BEHOLD, AT ONCE FAMILIAR AND NEW

**On a more practical level, is there any idea of a production deadline as yet or any proposed release schedule?**

I can't really say at this point but before anything I would like to make sure the product is good. Of course the business side of the decision has to be looked into as well so I have to look at the complete picture to decide on a release date but we'll make sure that at the time of release people are still interested in this new GameCube release. Hopefully it will be in time for everybody's expectations.

**It's a new Zelda so everybody is going to be willing to wait as long as it takes. As far as developing a Zelda game, what is your favourite part of the process?**

I take many parts in the projects I work on. For example, in Ocarina of Time I designed the dungeons and many of the enemies. I worked very heavily on those areas. For Majora's Mask I worked on the storyline and the related events. In Wind Waker I came up with the storyline and had to oversee the whole process. The thing I enjoy the most is trying new things that I have never done before. I enjoy challenging myself in a new project. That's really fun. Something that Miyamoto did a long time ago was to use your sword to cut many things. You can cut a message board and it will shatter and pieces will fall in the water and you can see the ripples in the water. Things like that are very difficult and take a long time. I don't

really like doing that, it takes too much time but those things are very effective for the player, it's very effective and very fun to see those effects in a game so I'm looking at doing a lot of things like that in the new game..

**Each of the modern Zelda games have their own special gimmick – the time travel in Ocarina, three day repeat in Majora's Mask and boat/wind control in Wind Waker for example. Can you tell us what we can expect in the new Zelda?**

I can't really give details of those kind of things at the moment but sometimes these items or themes



[above] No funny caption needed here. This is going to be the BEST. GAME. EVER.

happen after the fact, after we've completed the game we look back and realise that there is that theme there. For example in Wind Waker we decided in the beginning to put Link on the boat but for that boat to move you need a wind. You need to be able to create the wind to move the craft. So sometimes we just have to wait and see. For Wind Waker the Japanese title was Kaze no Takuto which meant "tact of the wind". Sometimes it's all after the fact.

**Zelda really has become one of the two truly iconic Nintendo series along with Mario. Being such an icon in the gaming industry it must be a lot of pressure.**

I realise that Zelda has become a very big franchise but for me I just keep doing the same thing I have always done – focussing on trying to make a fun new game for gamers. I feel the pressure but at the same time I just keep doing my job. <<



**WHO IS EIJI AONUMA?** Eiji Aonuma first joined Nintendo in 1994, working on his first major title, the Japan only Super Famicom game, *Marvelous* in 1996. After working on a number of other titles, Aonuma moved to N64 development and scored a position under Miyamoto working on *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. Miyamoto was so pleased with his work he made him the lead director for *Majora's Mask*. After the success of *Majora's* and a little Shiggy love, Aonuma resumed his role as Director for *Wind Waker* and now is a group producer over all of the *Zelda* titles currently in development.

# Metroid



Hyper was lucky enough to take part in a roundtable with **RETRO STUDIOS** and **NINTENDO JAPAN** to have a chat about *Metroid Prime* and get some fresh information about *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*. What follows is an edited transcript of the roundtable.

## Yoshio

**Sakamoto:** I was an original member of the *Metroid* project when Intelligent Systems was part of NCL — Nintendo Japan — and I first became director of a *Metroid* game with the *Super Metroid* title. The series has been around since 1986 and especially in the United States it enjoys a lot of popularity and critical success. This past February we released *Zero Mission* on the GameBoy Advance and that was the sixth title in the *Metroid* series. Of course the *Metroid* series is about overcoming new challenges, creating new things and changing the game. I think we were able to implement these changes with the first GameCube title, *Metroid Prime*. It was highly creative and phenomenally successful in creating a new world. Now the biggest thing that *Metroid Prime* did over the original was bring *Metroid* into the first-person and I believe it was able to do so very successfully and open up a new world of possibilities for the franchise. I'd like to say that the success of that is what we've based *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* on. We think that this sequel will bring more and newer gameplay ideas to the forefront and we hope that you will all enjoy it.

**Kensuke Tanabe:** I'm not as famous as Mr. Sakamoto, I don't get out into the public as often so most of you probably have no idea who I am. In order to alleviate that problem I'd like to start off by introducing myself. During my term

at EAD I worked under Mr. Miyamoto about ten years ago dealing with second party developers and overseeing some of their projects. My first project as overseeing developer was *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* on the N64. Of course when Retro started working on *Metroid Prime* for the GameCube I became involved in that project as well. This time I'm working pretty much as a producer so I'm overseeing the whole project. Now of course *Metroid* is a very popular series in the US so the first title we felt a lot of pressure during the development cycle as we were hoping to make a game everyone enjoyed. Thankfully we were able to do so. With the success of *Metroid Prime* some of that pressure was relieved and of course now that we're working on *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* the pressure is back so I try my best to keep everyone at Retro studios working very hard on this project.

Now if I were going to qualify the *Metroid Prime* series, I just want to make sure everyone understands that this isn't just something we handed over and said "go do what you please with our franchise". This is a true collaboration. Not only are we working with Retro on all of the technical aspects of creating the game, we're also imparting some of the Nintendo philosophy onto Retro as well. It really is a true collaboration.

Of course working with foreign developers has made for a number of challenges — there's a difference in culture, a different way of thinking. Things that we think are a

# Prime 2: ECHOES

matter of course are maybe something that people overseas will see differently. With this Metroid Prime series I really think we have been able to show a really good collaboration between Western philosophy and Eastern philosophy which has brought us together to create something special.

When we first decided to put Metroid onto the GameCube not only were we changing a 2D game to being a 3D game we were also putting it in first person. We heard a lot of opposition to that — people saying "are you crazy? That's just wrong. You can't do that." We knew on the other hand that Retro was a company blossoming with great employees with great ability and on top of that they are really passionate Metroid fans. We felt pretty confident moving forward and luckily, due to all their hard work we created a game that was very successful, I think.

**Michael Kelbaugh:** I'm the president of Retro Studios. I manage the business affairs for Retro Studios and the daily interaction and communications with Mr. Tanabe, Mr. Otani and our friends at NCL. I've been with Nintendo for 17 years and I'm proud to be at Retro. They're a very, very talented crew. We're just ecstatic to continue to be working on such a fantastic franchise that we all grew up with.

## THE SPACE PIRATES AREN'T THE MAIN ENEMY OF THIS GAME...

One of my main aims is to make sure that Mr. Sakamoto's vision for Metroid stays consistent from product to product. It's a joy working with such a creative crew.

**Brian Walker:** I'm the senior producer here at Retro Studios. I oversee the nuts and bolts of the development of Metroid Prime 2 focusing on coordination and assimilation of assets and information back and forth between our partners in Japan and our internal development team. Ultimately I'm responsible for ensuring that everything you see in Metroid Prime 2 is of the highest

possible quality and executed to the utmost of our ability.

**Mark Pacini:** I'm the game director on Metroid Prime 2: Echoes and I was also the lead designer on the original Metroid Prime. My overall responsibility is to help guide features, story and the gameplay of Metroid, along with our friends over at SPD and relay that to the team and work with my group of designers. In Metroid Prime 2: Echoes, Samus has been called to this planet called Aether to rescue a Galactic Federation Trooper squad that has become stranded, so she's under the pretense that she's under the one contract to go in and get these guys out. But as in all interesting stories, when she gets there things are very different.

Things are not all they seem on this planet and it's not as simple as just finding these guys.

Samus finds herself in the middle of this struggle that's been going on the planet for many, many years. What ends up happening is that there was this very large, planet wide trauma that happened to this planet that actually split the planet into two. There is now a dark and a

light version of this planet and they're both struggling to be able to be actually the prominent planet. They're struggling for their very existence. So Samus finds herself in the middle of this struggle between light and dark, good and evil. Pretty much everything in the game revolves around that concept, the duality between dark and light. Samus is fighting her long time rivals the Space Pirates but the Space Pirates aren't actually the main enemy of this game. When the planet was separated into two, in dark Aether a new type of evil was created called the Ing. In the light



[above] This game is like, so Retro

world there is a very passive race called the Luminon who are actually under duress and called upon Samus for help because the Luminon and Ing have been at war for many years.

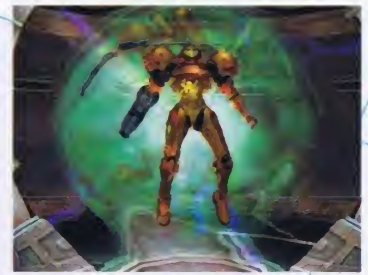
The Ing are trying to get rid of the light world, trying to destroy the light world so Samus actually has to go into the dark world, or back and forth between the dark and the light world to help actually destroy the dark world. That's the general plot as far as we are up to and it kind of leads into all of the new game mechanics and all the new things we developed for Metroid Prime 2.

The first thing that is evident is the changes we have made to the weapon system. Throughout the game Samus is actually receiving weapons and technology from the Luminons who inhabit the light world. Samus is able to use the technology that the Luminon have been using in the war against the Ing which includes items that become more powerful when they get to the dark world. These weapons include the light beam and the dark beam. What we tried to do with having the two planets and the duality there is that we wanted to





[above] I thought Evil Samus would be hotter than that...



[above] Samus is swept off her feet. By Shiggy presumably.



put that into all of the game systems we have in Metroid Prime 2: Echoes and the dark/light beam is a very good example of that. On a simple level the light beam weapon is very effective against creatures of the dark world. Conversely the dark beam is very effective against creatures of the light world. Some of the interesting features that these weapons have are the way the light beam differs from things we have done previously. We're trying to do different things with the charge feature of the weapon. The charge beam in this instance is more of a buckshot or a shotgun sort of approach to the weapon. The charge function of the dark beam is actually a glob-like liquid that will home in on creatures and entangle them, essentially freezing them. You will also notice that the beams actually take ammunition which is very different from the rest of the Metroid franchise, something we like to have as an interesting way to give players reason to switch weapons.

That duality continues not just in combat — the light beam turns things on, the dark beam turns them off, the light beam makes things grow, the dark beam makes them shrivel making them not only good for killing enemies but essential for solving puzzles. The dark world, which is only accessible through portals is a mirror opposite of the light world and is such a

horrible place that you'll even take damage just by standing in the dark world. There will be more ball puzzles and we have bought the Screw Attack over to 3D. There's a lot more action in this game than the previous Metroid Prime game but it still remains an exploration game which is the thing that made the original Metroid Prime such an interesting and fun game.

Metroid Prime 2 still remains an exploration-intensive game with the collection of items — everything that's made the Metroid series so interesting to people and so much fun. We have many things planned like very, very intensive Morphball puzzles and we're also bringing abilities like the Screw Attack into the game, as well as many new features including two new visors.

Dark Samus is sort of a mystery because you're seeing Dark Samus like Samus is seeing Dark Samus. Samus has no idea what's going on. And although Dark Samus isn't the main enemy of the game, she does encompass an interesting side story. Again it expands on the duality we are shooting for. Dark Samus has been very challenging for us simply because in the original Metroid Prime we spent a lot of time working on bosses who were five stories high. So we had to come up with a design for Dark Samus to make her just as interesting as a five-story boss even though she's just as big as Samus. I think she turned out pretty kick-arse. So again, this is just an example of some of the things we're trying differently in this game.

One of the other things that we're trying is making the environments larger — environments that have larger polygon counts and larger traversal areas for players to explore. We're using a lot of new graphic techniques, a lot of indirect texturing, especially in the Dark World. And there has been an extensive amount of time devoted to cinematics in the game because we're really trying to infuse Metroid Prime 2 with more of a cohesive story that explains what's going on.

One of the main factors in making the multiplayer element of Metroid Prime 2 was we knew we had to



make a compelling multiplayer experience while still keeping the Metroid Prime feel. We knew we had a fairly unconventional control scheme, which was a very different approach to this kind of a genre. But there are also elements like Samus' Morphball, which is very distinctive and different for this type of game and is truly a Metroid feature. We felt many of the things that could make Metroid Prime 2: Echoes'

## ❖ THE CHARGE BEAM IS MORE OF A BUCKSHOT OR SHOTGUN...

multiplayer mode unique included very interesting uses of the Morphball in multiplayer without making it a Morphball-only multiplayer game. Using the Morphball is kind of an escape mechanism. Players can easily boost away from other players, but we've also expanded upon the Boost Ball ability in this version of Metroid so that the Boost Ball can actually cause damage to other players. And items like the Power Bomb and a special pick-up called the Death Ball make the ball a powerful offensive weapon provided players have the right equipment.

You might have also seen that there are these objects called the Morphball Cannons that only the ball can enter and then be shot over very large distances. This is a feature that will also make an appearance in the single-player game, but it was specifically designed for the multiplayer experience. Those are several of the things that we tried to do with the Morphball to make the multiplayer mode in Metroid Prime 2 a distinct experience that can only be done

with Metroid. But we also have other things that make it distinctly Metroid. We have special pick ups that are randomly given to the player that enhance their abilities. One of them we're referring to as the Hacker Upgrade. We didn't feel that the Scan Visor was too useful in the multiplayer game, so came up with a pick up that automatically puts you in Scan Visor and the only thing you can do is scan other players,

but you actually upload a virus to them that will shut their suit down, or take away all of their beams, or force them into Morphball or just give them some nasty side effect.

We're also including other features like the Grapple Beam and the Spiderball as parts of our level designs. The difference from the Grapple Beam in Metroid Prime 1 is that you can now shoot while you're grappling and that was specifically put into the game for the multiplayer mode.

We've shown two game types: the standard deathmatch and a game type we're calling Bounty Mode. How Bounty Mode differs is that we're trying to create a mode where killing players isn't the highest priority. Every time you damage a player a token will come out and the object is to collect these tokens. You get points for collecting tokens instead of killing players.

**Kensuke Tanabe:** You don't have to go out and kill the other guys, you can just wander around and hide behind things, and snag the tokens when an enemy has been damaged or defeated. At the end of

the game you may not have killed anyone, but still win because you've collected the top number of coins. And if you get killed of course, you drop all of the coins you have at that point. So one way of playing would be to find the guy that looks like he's nearly on the way out and just shadow him and wait for the opportunity to run out and grab all his stuff. This creates the environment where not only the best player might win, but the sneakiest. We feel that this is one way that we have created a multiplayer mode that differs from any out there. <<

[below] Light Samus, Dark Samus, Tanned Samus, and Albino Samus fight it out



[below] Good thing Samus is a girl... or that pose would be too much information





**M15+**  
MEDIUM LEVEL  
ANIMATED VIOLENCE

**PC  
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WARHAMMER  
40,000

# DAWN OF WAR

ON THE FRONTLINES,  
THERE IS BUT ONE  
COMMANDMENT:

THOU SHALT KILL



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# Grand Theft Auto San Andreas

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 /

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Homie sim / PLAYERS: 1 /  
DEVELOPER: Rockstar North /  
AVAILABLE: October /

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**

Snoop Dizzle, 40s, blunts. And the ability to take on proteges and name them accordingly. I.e. "Lil'C-Dawg of Da Redfern Ruff Ridaz"

[anywhere] Sippin' on gin and juice. Laidback...

**BLAU-O-METER**



There are games and there are cultural icons, so accepted/reveled by our society that they become nearly household names. Doom is a cultural icon, as is Tetris, as is Tomb Raider and the Mario Bros. In recent years only one series of games has managed to rise to the absolute top of the heap and become so ingrained in popular culture due to a mix of outstanding gameplay and just enough controversy that nearly anyone with political ambitions can get offended. That series is, of course, Grand Theft Auto. The combination of freeform gameplay and controversially violent content has cemented the series in our hearts for good or bad. Now that the latest iteration of the series, GTA: San Andreas is within sight it will be interesting to see who will be offended next.

**PARACHUTE PANTS N THE HOOD**

Again Rockstar have chosen to delve into the past for their game but this time only as far back as the early to mid 90s, a time when parachute pants were only just going out of style, gangsta rap was in its heyday and films such as Colors and Boyz N the Hood were tearing up the box office and teaching middle class white people that black youth was in fact responsible for all of the

modern (Western) world's ills. Into this world steps Carl Johnson, also known as CJ, a young African American (extra political correctness added to the preview to make up for the lack that Rockstar will show) recently returned to the city of Los Santos after fleeing due to the death of his younger brother in a gang incident a few years earlier. The murder of his mother, the event that drags CJ back to Los Santos, is only the first of many personal and social disasters that befall the protagonist — as soon as he returns to the city CJ is framed for murder by two corrupt cops, his friends and former gang cronies remain angry and his former gang, the Orange Grove Families have become weak and a target for the other gangs.

Unlike the other GTA games that have graced our computers and consoles so far, San Andreas comprises not one but three cities and the roads in between — an entire state essentially, making the play area some five times bigger than seen in previous GTA games. Los Santos, the starting city is an analogue of Los Angeles, a city of great dichotomy with poor and barely educated gang members living only a stone's throw away from the rich and the famous. San Fierro is the San Andreas version of San Francisco, a smaller, denser city with steeply winding roads, strong winds and one hell of a cool breeze. Finally Las Venturas is the gambling capital of the country, a virtual den of vice and corruption. So far all we have seen has been relating to Los Santos and the gangs therein — exactly what will take place in the other two cities remains to be seen but we're more than eager to find out. What we do know is that



Although my shit is wicked, it's all about the blunts and how I lick it

to  
as



>> **ROCKSTAR  
HAVE SERIOUSLY  
BLINGED UP THE  
TRIED AND TRUE  
GTA ENGINE FOR  
SAN ANDREAS...**

Rollin' in my 5.0,  
with my ragtop down so my  
hair can blow. Maybe not

casinos will play a part of the game, though whether players can actually purchase or build casinos has yet to be confirmed or denied by Rockstar.

In fitting with the game's milieu, Rockstar have seriously blinged up the tried and true GTA engine for San Andreas. First and most importantly, even though the play area is substantially bigger than those seen in previous games, players will only have to deal with the occasional load when going indoors as all of the outdoor environments will be streamed off of the dual layer DVD. Secondly, the general look of the game has been brushed up with higher poly count characters and much improved animations. Whilst demoing the game, the Rockstar reps boasted that they had built the largest motion-capture studio on the coast specifically for San Andreas. The attention to detail really shows — in one of the early missions (perhaps the first mission of the game), CJ must jump on a BMX bike and escape from enemy gang territory. The cycling animation is at once simple and indicative of the level of detail that Rockstar have put into the look of the game. When pedaling slowly CJ's knees jut out somewhat awkwardly, much like anyone riding a bike a little too small but when he pedals furiously the magic happens. When pedaling at speed the bike leans over with every pump of CJ's legs, exactly like in real life — it's fairly safe to assume that this approach will be mirrored throughout the rest of the game. Even when standing still the character models are impressive with fully featured and expressive faces and naturalistic idle animations. A final sheen is put on the proceedings with real time reflections in mirrors and other reflective surfaces.

#### WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH THAT?

Although the details are still thin on the ground, Rockstar have announced that players will need to

eat and exercise in San Andreas to maintain health and appearance. Apparently it is entirely possible to end up with an obese CJ if you eat nothing but fast food and drive everywhere instead of eating a balanced diet and exercising. How this mechanic will actually work is still anyone's guess but the fact that appearance and weight will affect the way NPC characters react to the player definitely makes it one of the more interesting facets of the game. GTA: San Andreas will also feature an experience system that will keep track of the players' actions during play. Whether this experience system will improve CJ's skills or if it's simply a series of statistics is as yet unknown.

A new targeting system has been implemented to boost up combat and should make the game play far more smoothly. The targeting system looks highly reminiscent of those seen in Rockstar's own *Manhunt* and *Red Dead Revolver* and should allow players to easily target opponents as well as specific body parts. As shown in a number of the screens released so far, one element of the gangsta style gameplay will be the drive-by in which up to four occupants of the car can individually target opponents and let fly. It is unknown at this moment if the player can actually take part in the actual shooting but considering the tone of what we've seen so far the possibility seems quite good.

Although the size of the game may be significantly bigger and the action more in depth than previous GTA games, fans of the series can rest assured that GTA: San Andreas will contain all of those extra features that make the games really great. Although we have no idea what form the extra missions will take we have been assured in the most general terms that they will be there and ramps were visible all over the city for all of you stunt fans. Once again Rockstar will utilise the radio for extra flavour but at this stage there have been no announcements as to which artists and songs may be signed. Likewise there is no indication as to who will be providing the voice talent at this time but considering the state of the music industry at the moment it shouldn't be too hard to fill the ranks with talent. At the very least we should probably see Ice-T somewhere in the mix — if anyone defined the early 90s angry black man it was him.



#### WILD SPECULATION

More interesting than what GTA: San Andreas is, is what the game is not. Everything that Rockstar has shown about the game so far has cemented the idea in people's minds that the game is firmly rooted in the gangsta life. When we were shown preview code of the game the Rockstar reps that demoed it to us warmed us up by playing a five minute clip of some of the things that influenced them during the early stages of the game. These five minutes were filled with scenes from movies such as *Boyz n the Hood* and *Menace II Society* as well as footage culled from shows such as *Cops* and parts of gangsta rap film clips. Later we were shown some action from a few of the missions seen in the early stages of the game. These missions included escaping from the turf of a rival gang, creating a distraction in a pizza joint so your gang buddy can bust it up, driving a car during a drive-by and attending a gang meeting that goes horribly wrong. The distinct impression was that San Andreas is a game about gangs and the gangsta life.

Apparently this impression is wrong — the representatives for Rockstar pointed out at the end of the demo that the gangsta action was

only a small part of the game, leaving us to speculate wildly as to what the rest could be. Could the game be more about building up the hood and providing a safe environment for the kids? Could CJ be back on his home turf to take part in a rap battle and get out of the life once and for all? Could CJ and his friends be sent from the hood to a rich relative so they can become fresh princes and princesses? Enquiring minds want to know. Our confusion has been increased even more after seeing the box art, which also shows a number of gansta images. The lack of any other information on the game is beginning to cause speculation that the inference that there is much more to the game than gang life is little more than a hook to keep people guessing until the game is finally released. Rest assured though, if CJ turns out to be an undercover cop or some other such popular modern copout (cough "Driv3r" cough), Rockstar will receive a nasty visit from the Hyper crew and they'll find out Daniel isn't called The World's Most Dangerous Deputy Editor for the hell of it.

Whatever the case, GTA: San Andreas is only a couple of months off and if the game lives up to even half of the hype then it's going to be something very special indeed.

## A NEW TARGETING SYSTEM HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO BOOST COMBAT



Just hazarding a guess, I'd say that he's got his mind on his money and his money on his mind



This SO isn't a game about gang banging. Nah... it's about puppies and sunshine



[above] I don't need anything like that... yet

[below] He's like the ghetto version of Amos!



NOT JUST A GAME  
ABOUT GLITZ, GLAMOUR  
AND HAVING MORE  
MONEY THAN SENSE



# MIDNIGHT CLUB 3 DUB EDITION

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GBA / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Bling sim / PLAYERS: 1-  
Multi / DEVELOPER: Rockstar San  
Diego / AVAILABLE: Late 2004 /

## BLAU-O-METER



DUB culture has so far taken a little foothold in Australia and god or (whatever you believe in) willing it never will but considering the speed with which American culture sweeps in and subsumes what little we have of our own it should be on our shores very soon. What is DUB culture you ask? Simply put, DUB is the next logical step in car modification in which looks and luxury are more important than speed. Popular throughout the celebrity scene, DUB modification sees celebrities from all walks of life — sportsmen, musicians, actors and the like — hotting up their luxury rides with massive rims, intense body work, lowered or hydraulic suspension and of course the

requisite massive, ear shattering, can't possibly be good for your health sound systems. Whereas underground racing modifications are by and large affordable to the enthusiast, DUB mods are anything but, and during our research into the culture, Cam came across a set of rims worth US \$250,000. Each. At about this point you may be tuning out but rest assured that Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition is not just a game about glitz, glamour and having more money than sense. Under the trappings of the DUB culture lays what is shaping up to be one hell of a kick-arse racing game.

## A HELL OF A LOT MORE

Those familiar with the Midnight Club license will know by and large what they can expect from the next game in the series — fast cars racing neck and neck through city streets trying to beat the clock and their opponents, all the time looking for a shortcut that can put them in the lead and a good place to hit their nitrous. Whilst this is by and large true, Midnight Club 3 is all that and a hell of a lot more. One of the

complaints leveled at the earlier games was that the streets were too narrow making it all too easy to crash into walls and carom off time and time again. This time around Rockstar have created much wider tracks for each of the races allowing for crazy maneuvering, massive powerslides around corners and more chance to put pedal to the metal without fear of a corner too tight to take at anything but low gear. In fact, Midnight Club 3 contains an entire drift mode for those of you who enjoy taking corners at ridiculous angles and speeds. The arcade racer will also feature similar non-linear racing to the last game as well as a robust online racing component.

The wider streets mean that all vehicles can go faster and from what we've seen the sense of speed is truly incredible. Even without hitting the nitrous the cars fairly fly along the tracks. Speaking of nitrous, Midnight Club 3 allows bike racers to hit the after burners as well to get to truly ludicrous speeds. Bike handling has also been vastly improved — in Midnight Club 2 it was all too easy to find yourself sailing arse over tit after clipping



**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
DUB culture on the streets of Redfern



[above] Rain slicked streets - what a surprise!

something (including those deadly sticky pixels) with your ride. Not so in 3. Bikes now react more solidly with the environment so you should be able to enjoy a race without having to restart umpteen times due to being knocked off by a sheet of newspaper thrown by an errant wind.

This time around Rockstar have licensed over 50 vehicles from around the world including Cadillacs, Ducattis, Mercedes Benz, the powerful but ugly GMs (Hummers to you and me) and even Harley Davidson bikes. All of the vehicles in the game will be

moddable with hundreds of real after market parts that will not only effect the look of the vehicle but the handling as well. Due to the nature of the extravagant DUB culture, some of the mods will actually have detrimental effects on the speed or handling of your car. Although all of the vehicles are licensed, Rockstar has promised that they will feature full deformation on all the vehicles so you can smash them up all you like. Quite how they got the deal through is unknown but if they live up to their promise,

Midnight Club 3 will feature far and away the most deformable licensed cars seen in a game.

### NO SIGN OF BOB MARLEY THOUGH

So far we've only seen PS2 code running but considering that it's probably the weakest the game is going to look (MC3: DUB Edition is slated for PS2, Xbox and PC) then DUB Edition is shaping up to be one hell of a good looking game. Every vehicle we've seen so far has been truly impressive in detail and the after

market modifications look nothing short of spectacular. Instead of simply being skins that are placed over sections of the cam, all of the after market mods that are visible are actual polygonal models, some of which can even show real time reflections. We have no idea about the soundtrack as yet but considering the popularity of DUB modding in the hip-hop community it would be fairly safe to assume that many a hip-hop track will be played. <<



➤➤ **OBSESSION + POTENTIALLY FATAL ACCIDENTS = COOL**

# JUICED



AVAILABLE ON:

**PS2 / XBOX / GBA / PC**

DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** B-word sim / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi / **DEVELOPER:** Juiced Games / **AVAILABLE:** September /

**BLAU-O-METER**



There is a horrible double standard that exists in the modding scene around the world. On the one hand you have the computer modding world, the guys (and girls — never let us be accused of double standards) who get off souping up their PCs making them faster and sleeker than any model that comes off the production line. By and large this habit is seen as geeky to the extreme. Why is it then that when young men of dubious education hot up cars, add neons, spoilers and the like they are considered cool? Look at

the two cultures — what they do is essentially the same, taking an existing product and revving the specs up far beyond factory suggestion. Hell, even some of the accessories they use are the same; neons, high tech readouts, LEDs, extra cooling, speakers and the like. When reviewing all of the facts, Hyper can only come to a single conclusion — the tweaker scene is considered cool where the case modding scene is considered geeky (even by other, lesser geeks) due to the fact that it's kind of hard to kill yourself with a computer case. Obsession + potentially fatal accidents = cool.

**YO, IT'S ALL ABOUT R-E-S-C-E-P-T**

If you're into modding cars the next six or so months are going to be somewhat akin to heaven for you with *Need for Speed: Underground 2*, *Forza*, *Midnight Club 3* and of course *Juiced* from Acclaim making their way to consoles and PCs. With all of

the tweaker games coming out you could be forgiven for thinking that they are all going to be the same but bear with us and we think you'll agree that they can all stand on their own merits. Billed as a more realistic racer than the likes of *Underground*, *Juiced* is far more than simply a game about hurtling around street courses in dangerously overpowered prototype cars.

By far the most interesting thing we have seen in *Juiced* so far is not the racing model, which, in all honesty still needs some work as currently it is far too easy to clip one of the insurmountable gutters and pinball your way down the rest of the track trying to regain control. No, what is interesting is the crew dynamic that plays a strong part in the game and the respect structure that is built around it. Every player racer has their own crew that help them to maintain cars and later in the game can be entered into races as team competitors. As players

begin to win more races and modify their cars in especially appealing ways they gain respect with the rival crews dotted around the city, allowing the player to enter more races, bring new people into the crew, make or accept challenges with rival crews and the like. The higher the player's respect the fuller their race calendar, the more races entered the more chance there is to gain more respect. Be warned though, it is easier to lose respect with rival crews through losing races, pink slips or simply pissing them off than it is to gain it.





**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**

A game that's accessible to normal folk, as well as car freaks.



**BOOTLEGS**

Aside from straight races, Juiced will also feature a number of alternate game modes including point to point races, time trials and showoff. The final mode is especially interesting, if somewhat frustrating due to the width of the courses. Showoff mode charges the player with racking up a certain amount of points within a time limit by performing such tricks as doughnuts, 180 spins, 360 spins, bootlegger reverses, drift and the like, kind of like a more trick oriented kudos race in Project Gotham. Unfortunately as stated earlier, many of the tracks to show off on are relatively narrow, making it way too easy to wipe out and lose valuable points. Juiced will also feature significant online play with head to head races and race meets. It is unknown at the moment what role the crew will play, or indeed if it will play any role at all.

One definite thing we have noticed about Juiced in our hands on

[right] Rain slicked streets - what a surprise! The sequel.

time with the code is that players will need to know what they are doing when modifying their cars with after-market parts. Unlike any other tweaker game currently on the market (or coming up for that matter), Juiced allows players to mod their cars to such a degree that they are totally uncontrollable due to the mix of acceleration, speed and handling. There is a test drive mode available when modding the cars but at this stage you can only try parts after you have bought them making it somewhat redundant. To make matters worse, if you've over tweaked your car and damage it during the test drive you will have to pay to get it repaired.

Even so, with the right changes, Juiced is going to be a strong contender for the Bling Sim crown. Full review next issue. <<<

More neon than a kiddie-core rave



# DJ: DECKS & FX

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / PC / GBA / GC / PS

DETAILS

CATEGORY: DJ sim / PLAYERS: 1 /  
DEVELOPER: Relentless Software /  
AVAILABLE: September /

## BLAU-O-METER



Best. PS2 game. Ever. Yeah, yeah, I know I'm biased (this be Cam of course!), but this title is just an awesome piece of much overdue software. Essentially, DJ: Decks & FX puts two turntables, a four channel mixer, a basic sampler, an effects box, looping hardware and a well stocked record box in your hands and says "go nuts".

## SIMPLE BUT SEXY

Although it's a simplified version of what DJing actually is, given that the software knows the BPM of each track exactly and auto matches the BPM and will only mix in bars, as opposed to whenever the hell you want, there's

still a lot of power in your hands. Using each component is very straightforward and enables you to seamlessly layer the music in quite a complex way — without every worrying about the beats slipping out of alignment. All you need to worry about is whether combining element A with element B will sound good.

Once you've played with it for a while you'll really start to appreciate just how well thought out the system is. Here's an example of the start of a typical session. You throw on an acappella to start with, then kick in a looped beat to give it a groove. Then you mix a nice moody track in over the acappella. Thanks to the visual display of each track, you can see when the beat drops in the track you're mixing in (as well as where the vocals are), so in preparation for that you throw some serious delay on the looped beat to help build up to it then kill it when the beat drops. You move the cross fader entirely to the new track's channel, then sample (up to four bars) from the acappella still running silently on the first channel (just like DJing you cue tracks using

headphones plugged into the USB port), then loop the sample and mix it in, applying a dynamic Hi Pass Filter effect over the vocals to trip out the overall sound. Then you throw on another looped percussive sample for extra texture and choose a new track and prepare to mix it in. You do this by cutting the bass on the track playing and just mixing in the bassline of the new track, before killing the high and raising the mid on the main track while raising up the treble on the new track. And so on. Genius.

The beauty of DJ: Decks & FX is that, while restrictive in some ways, it just makes everything else so damn straightforward that anyone could do it. Having that much virtual equipment all working so effortlessly together is quite a feat. Bless you Relentless Software!

The preview build of DJ: Decks and FX we received has 66 tracks (not to mention a bunch of extra acappellas), almost exclusively in the house/tech house genre (THANK GOD - so many music intensive games try and cater to too many

people and thus have limited appeal to most). The track selection is fantastic too, and must have cost a fair penny. Some great labels are well represented, from Defected to Soulfuric. Some of my favourite tracks of the last few years are in here, including Danny Krivit's amazing remix of Soul Central's remix of the techno classic Strings of Life. What a mad track! Other stand outs include Cricco Castelli — Life is Changing, Loleatta Holloway — Dreamin (Jazz 'n' Groove club mix), Nuyorican Soul — The Nervous Track, Octave One — Blackwater (Full Instrumental Strings Mix), Shik Stylo Feat Tyree Cooper — Groove You Out Tonight (Grant Nelson and

**A  
WICKEDLY  
ENTERTAINING  
SINGLE  
PLAYER GAME**

CH1 65.4

SAMP



CH1 - DECK INFO

MARTIN SOLVEIG  
ROCKIN MUSIC

CUT MODE: MIX  
DEFAULT BPM: 128.0  
BPM DIFF: 0.0

X to STOP track

Not a single Benton track to be found in the entire box. Phew!



[above] Deadly, when I play a dope melody. Anything less than the best is a felony...



Brian Tappert Remix), and Soulsearcher - Feelin' Love (Soulsearcher Club Mix). It's obvious they're not trying to stock your virtual record box with up to date tracks, but rather tried and true classics, and a good balance between tech house, house and vocal house.

That said, the tracklisting we have isn't finalised. An earlier version of the code, for instance, had Aztec Mystic's - Knights of the Jaguar included... which, given Underground Resistance's prior history with Sony, was always going to be unlikely to make it into the final game.

PREVIEW CUE?

The only thing missing is the ability to preview tracks, acappellas and loops on the menu before you select them. Once you get to know them all it's okay, but it would be great to be able to see how the loop or track would work with what's currently playing before throwing it on the deck or activating it.

The other downside is that because this is designed for ease of use you can't do some of the more interesting tricks in a DJ's repertoire.

You can't mix on the half-beat or even on the 2, 3 or 4 beat. Thus, mixing with the same record on both decks isn't as much fun. Even so, the simplicity of using the software makes this a more than acceptable loss.

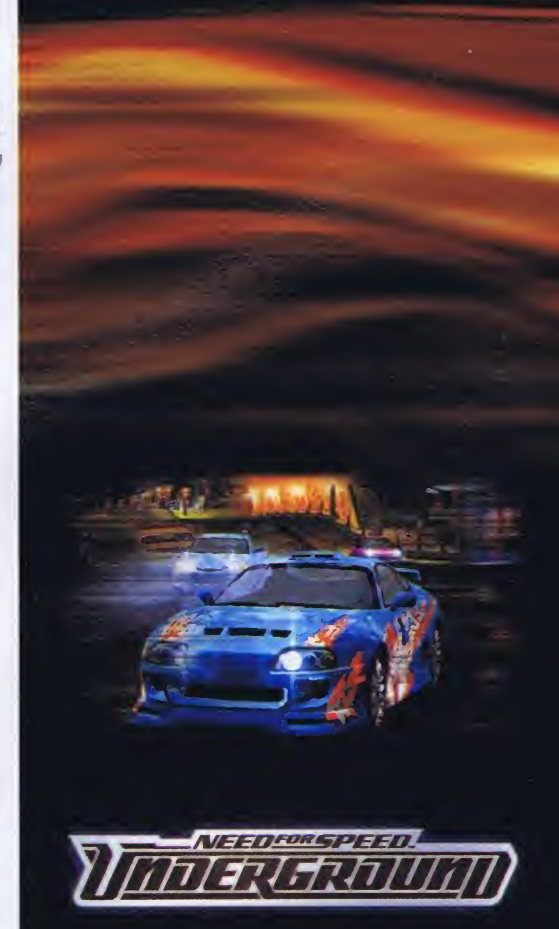
Not only is DJ: Decks & FX a wickedly entertaining single player game, but it's going to be great at parties too. You can either record a set to memory card to play back later (we saved a ten minute experimental mix and it only took up 256KB), or go into the Party mode, which has a Resident DJ. You can mix for a while, then go off to get a drink and have a chat, and when the track is close to ending the AI will pick up and mix another track in. Perfect if you want to come in and out of the software during a party. <<

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

A hip hop edition for Malky!  
And erm, a blues edition for Wilks!



# THE NO.1 RACING GAME OF 2004...



NEED FOR SPEED  
**UNDERGROUND**



SO MUCH OF THIS GAME RELIES ON BEING ABLE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

One of the cheekiest screens we've seen in a while

# PLAYBOY THE MANSION

AVAILABLE ON:  
PS2 / XBOX / PC / PC

DETAILS  
CATEGORY: Empire builder /  
PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Cyberlore  
Studios / AVAILABLE: TBA /

BLAU-O-METER



It's gratifying to see games slowly but surely growing up a little. Case in point, Playboy: The Mansion. You'd perhaps be inclined to think that a game based on Playboy would rely on the license for sales, with the actual game being a shallow attempt at digital titillation. Well, the good news is that Playboy: The Mansion has the titillation, but it also has some clever new spins on the Empire Builder/Sims genre. Plus, the developers have worked hand in hand with Playboy to ensure it represents the license appropriately.

**PLAYBIZAY: THE MANSHIZZLE**

The basic premise of the game is to build the Playboy empire, gradually growing from a small operation to one of the most profitable magazine empires in the known Universe. Not to mention going from young

dressing gown clad Hef to... erm, old dressing gown clad Hef. Yes, you play as the man himself and the game takes you through the entire history of the magazine, right from the first issue in 1953 — and all the way to the point where Daniel Wilks arrived for the E3 party. Maybe.

In terms of gameplay, perhaps the most important aspect of The Mansion is the interpersonal. So much of this game relies on being able to build relationships with other people, whether that be for business or pleasure. Getting to know playmates and celebrities and showing them a good time, for instance, is a great way to encourage them to pose for that photo shoot or agree to that interview. Thus, you'll be holding regular parties, and trying to ensure your guests have fun.

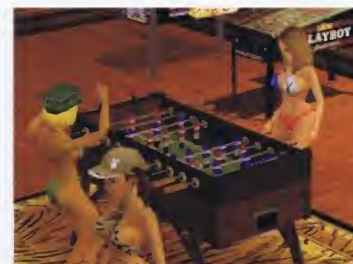
Like The Sims, you're able to bring

up information about every guest or employee at the Mansion, and thus gauge their needs and motives. Keep them happy and you're well on the way to being the ultimate playboy. Cyberlore are planning on including "hundreds" of celebrities, which should give the game plenty of replay value. Some of the celebs named so far include Jose Canseco (who we only really know from The Simpsons), Melissa Joan Hart (pretty questionable definition of "celebrity" then), Xzibit (Wilks' favourite rapper) and Carmen "not as hot as Charisma Carpenter" Electra. We have our fingers crossed that Snoo will be in there too.

You'll only have direct control over Hef in the game, but you'll have plenty of Bunnies in your employ to help ensure everyone's enjoying themselves. You'll also have other staff to help run and write the

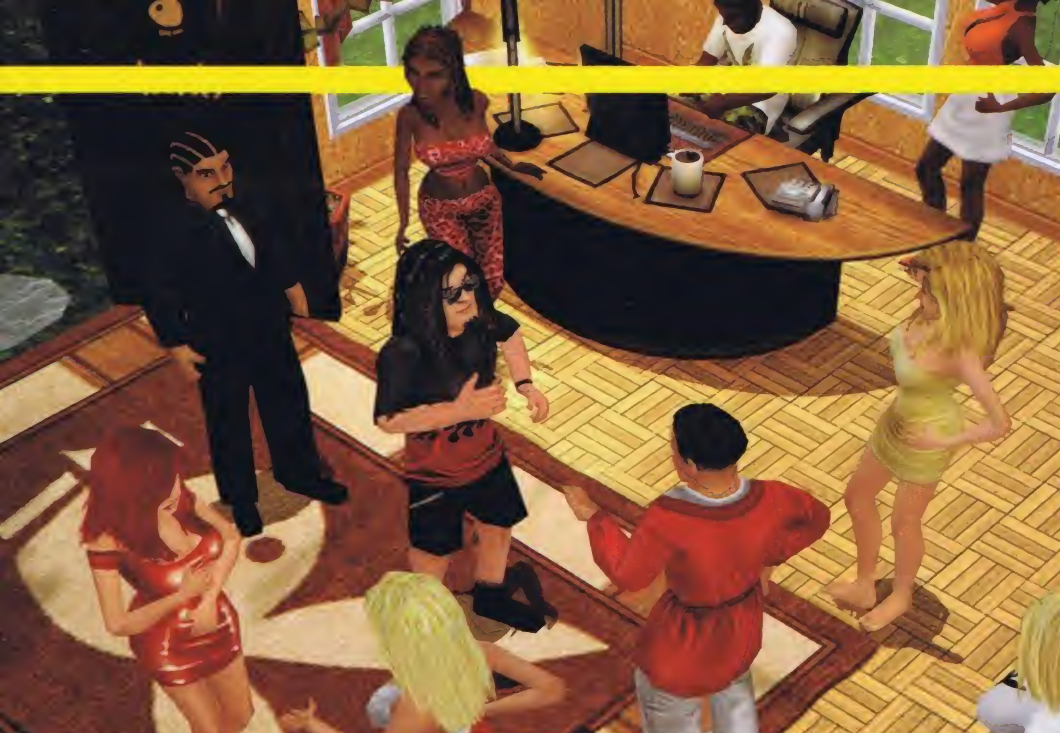
magazine. And it's the magazine that's the bottom line. If the magazine isn't successful and making money, then your lifestyle is going to be seriously cramped. On the flipside, a successful magazine means more money which means bigger parties and better guests, which flows through to better content.

Thus, the parties help generate content, but you'll also need to determine what your readers actually want to see. The way to do

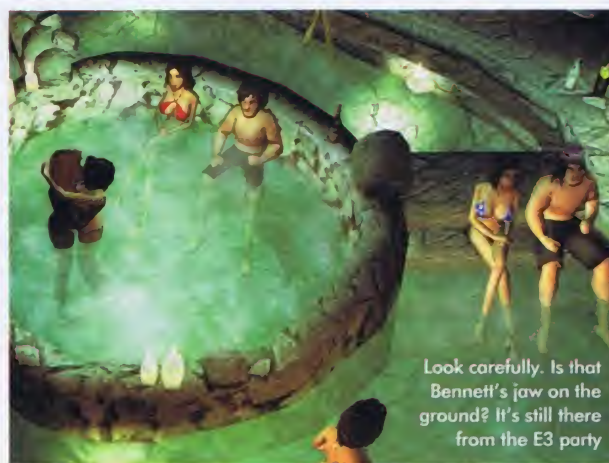




# WITH THE HOTTEST CARS...



[above] Bunnies. Is there anything they can't do? Apart from get Hef hard without Viagra that is



Look carefully. Is that Bennett's jaw on the ground? It's still there from the E3 party

this is through obtaining demographic information. And yes, that's more complex than "naked women and plenty of 'em". Let's say your readers want more articles about sports — you might hold a tennis tournament, which would give you ample opportunities to get interviews of interest to your readers. You'll also be able to send photographers and writers off site to gather relevant content.

Of course, you'll also be able to build and expand upon the mansion itself. As your fame and wealth grow, you can add luxury items to any of the play areas in the game. These include: upstairs and downstairs in the Mansion, the back lawn, the pool and grotto, the gym, the tennis court, the zoo, the game house and the garage. You'll also be able to edit textures to create that truly unique and/or gaudy look. Whatever floats your boat.

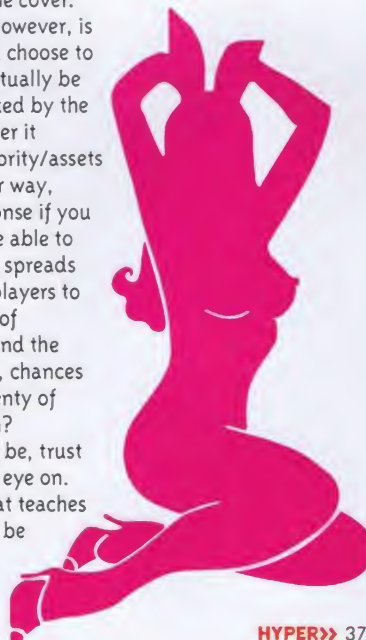
### BUILD A MIGHTY SILICON EMPIRE

But what good would a Playboy game be without conducting photo shoots for the centrefold each month? Playboy: The Mansion actually gives you heaps of scope for keeping it interesting too. Not only

can you choose which playmate (or Bunny if so inclined) you want to use (as long as you've developed enough of a rapport with her), but it's your choice where in the Mansion you want her to pose. Once the location has been chosen you'll go into the shoot itself. From a first person perspective the model will start posing and you've only got a limited number of rolls to get the shots for the spread and possibly the cover. What will be interesting, however, is whether the shots that you choose to go in the magazine will actually be dynamically liked or disliked by the reading public... or whether it depends more on the celebrity/assets of the model herself. Either way, there'll be a real live response if you so choose — players will be able to upload their covers/photo spreads online for other Mansion players to check out. Given the level of customisation available, and the many girls to choose from, chances are there's going to be plenty of variety in covers. Cool huh?

As sceptical as you may be, trust us — this is one to keep an eye on. After all, this is a game that teaches you that any problem can be solved with a great party. How very true. ✨

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
This game avoiding an RC rating in Oz!



## NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

IT WILL BE  
POSSIBLE TO  
CREATE VAST AND  
IMPRESSIVE  
COMBOS

Aren't you a bit big to  
be wearing a diaper?

# JADE EMPIRE

## AVAILABLE ON:

PS3 / XBOX 360 / PC

## DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** Action RPG / **PLAYERS:** 1  
**DEVELOPER:** Bioware / **AVAILABLE:**  
Christmas /

## BLAU-O-METER



⌘ Action RPGs are always a bit of a touchy subject — on the one hand you've got the crowd that says that if there's a heap of combat and not reams and reams of text then it's not a true RPG (you know who you are). On the other hand if you try to inject too much story then others will complain that there's not enough action. Walking the fine line between balls to the wall action and a compelling plot with branching story arcs seems to be a hard task but with Jade Empire it looks as though Bioware may have come up with the goods on both counts. It's set in a fictionalised, quasi-steampunk Asia

(mostly China but with hints of Japan and Korea), just after the nation has been unified under a single benevolent ruler who has provided the citizenry with ample water and food through his magics. Players will step into the shoes of a young secular martial artist thrust headfirst into adventure and destiny far greater than he could have imagined (isn't that always the way?), when they are called to quell some unrest in one of the outlying provinces.

### CREATING A NEW UNIVERSE

Although Jade Empire may superficially look a lot like Bioware's hugely successful and popular Knights of the Old Republic, the new game is a wholly separate beast for a number of reasons, not the least being that Empire marks the first time that Bioware have created their own universe for a game. Whilst this approach can be a big risk — the D&D and Star Wars franchises that Bioware have worked with before come with their own built in market — the creation of a whole new universe



brings with it its own rewards. Players can't gripe about how the pen and paper game is better or how a rule hasn't translated well to the game if there is nothing upon which to base the comparison. Similarly, creating a new universe allows the creators to populate it with their own characters, stories and morals instead of having to fit in with what is officially set out in canon.

Following a combat model similar to that seen in KotOR, Jade Empire will allow the player to learn multiple martial art, magic and weapon styles, each with their own moves set that can be combined on the fly to make custom combos and special

moves. The code we played had the hero fighting against a horde of weaker but seriously evil martial artists. By using the D-pad the player can hot swap between their learnt styles which will then be hot-keyed to the various face buttons on the Xbox control pad. In such a way it will be possible to create vast and impressive combos. As an added bonus some of the moves can be racked up into secret special combos earning the player more experience and far more spectacular effects, prompting players to be creative with their fighting. Combat is also now a far more visceral experience than it was in KotOR — some of the



Twos brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe

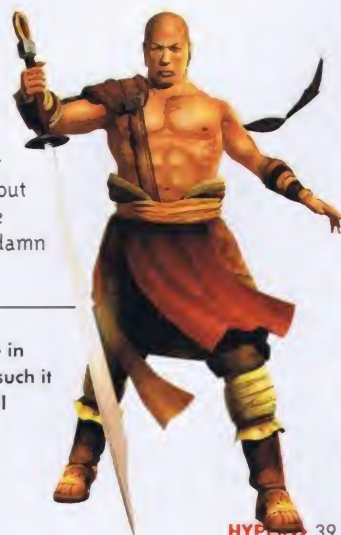
attacks demonstrated included beheading an opponent with an equipped sword, complete with massive geyser of blood, or punching an enemy so hard they literally explode into a fine red mist (with a few chunky bits for good measure). This may sound a little excessive to some of you but in the context of the films and literature the game is based on it is totally in character. As well as weapon and hand attacks, Jade Empire will also feature a number of magical styles as well as chi powers. Some of the powers demonstrated include "Fire Style" which allowed the hero to shoot balls of fire from his hands and a chi power that allowed the player to enter a bullet-time like time dilation that slowed all of the enemies while the hero still moved at normal speed.

#### BLAU STYLE?

The new graphics engine Bioware are

using will provide visuals far more lush than those seen in KotOR as it allows for more rendering paths as well as a few more graphical tricks, including a lighting outline renderer that will give characters and objects a little nimbus when backlit. Bioware have brought in martial artists from around the world so they could accurately motion capture moves from various styles. The end result is quite spectacular with the characters blazing their way through combat using spectacular, though still believable moves (aside from the magic that is). Much like KotOR, Jade Empire will feature full voice acting and lip syncing for every character in the game. As it stands Bioware have not announced who will be doing the soundtrack for the game but in keeping with the rest of the elements it should be pretty damn good indeed. <<<

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:  
Final code damn you!



HYPER 39

**AI BACKUP** Although players can have up to two followers at a time in Jade Empire the focus of the game is really on the central character. As such it appears that the followers are more AI controlled backup rather than full controllable characters. Whilst this may put off some players who would prefer a full party the AI performs well and the personalities of the secondary characters more than makes up for the lack of player control.

# ...AND THE HOTTEST UNDERGROUND RACING...



## NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

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# WinWinWin

Entries close September 15th

## Win Signed Limited Edition Sonic Art!

» Yuji Naka is a legendary figure in the games industry. This is the man, after all, who brought Sonic the Hedgehog into the world, creating not just a massive franchise, but also helping Sega get the "attitude edge" over Nintendo in the crucial 8 to 16bit turnover. Naka-san hasn't looked back since then, and as head of Sonic Team still plays a crucial role in the fortunes of Sega. We've been lucky enough to score a framed Sonic Advance 3 poster, signed by no less than Yuji Naka himself. The winner will also receive a copy of Sonic Advance 3 and a Sonic T-shirt. Four runners up will get the game and T-shirt.

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

### » What system did Sonic the Hedgehog debut on?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address, and post it to: **Sonic in the House, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

5  
PRIZES  
UP FOR  
GRABS!



## Get Mashed!

» Mashed took us by surprise this month, packing awesome Micro Machines style gameplay and a sense of fun that few other games can compete with. Simply put, if you're going to have mates around for a night of multiplayer gaming — you have to get a copy of Mashed. Thanks to our chums at Red Ant, we have six copies of the game to give away. Better still, you can choose what system you'd like it on, whether it be PS2, Xbox or PC.

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

### » Who developed Mashed?

- a) Amos
- b) Shiggy
- c) Supersonic
- d) Joey Tekken

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name, address and system of choice, and post it to: **Mash Ups, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

6  
COPIES  
UP FOR  
GRABS!



**Terms and conditions:** 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am July 27 and entries close at 6pm September 15. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am September 16 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the November issue of Hyper on sale October 6. 9) 6 winners will each receive Mashed for the system of their choice (either PS2, Xbox or PC) (RRP for Xbox and PS2 is \$79.95 and RRP for PC is \$49.95). 1 winner will receive a framed Sonic poster, a Sonic T-shirt and a copy of Sonic Advance 3 for GBA (RRP \$69.95). 4 runners-up will receive a Sonic T-shirt and a copy of Sonic Advance 3 for GBA (RRP \$69.95). Total value of competitions is approximately \$829.45. 10) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.



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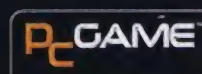
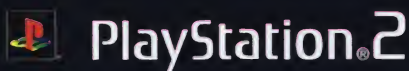
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# NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND



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# 50 MASHED

Four Player Perfection





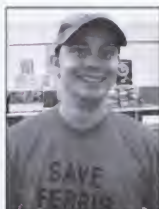
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# Reviews

## Game Theory

THIS MONTH WE'VE INVITED BENNETT RING TO DEFEND HIS LOVE OF EYE CANDY...



### "Graphics Whore"

(grfk, hōr, hr) n.

- 1) One who values advanced graphics as a key part of the gaming experience.
- 2) A prostitute who will work for pictorial representations.
- 3) Bennett Ring.

I'll be the first to admit that I'm a ho' to the graphics man. If a game doesn't look great, chances are that it won't work its way on to any of my gaming platforms. But don't confuse my love of eye candy for a belief that great graphics make for a great game. No, I've been burnt by too many good lookers to realise that graphics alone cannot carry a title. I remember a little game by the name of Incoming that came out when 3D accelerators first hit the PC. At the time it was easily the prettiest game to have ever been released, but that didn't stop it from being a wretched piece of trash due to the total lack of quality gameplay. A recent outing by our lovely Ms Croft was also one of the first games to make heavy use of advanced DirectX9 pixel shaders, but that didn't stop it sucking more than Kylie Minogue's acting in the Streetfighter movie. The point I'm trying to make is that for most gamers, great graphics are equally as important as great gameplay.

Without great graphics, however, a game is going to find it very difficult to make its mark amongst the mainstream gaming audience. At a recent meeting I had with Dr David Kirk, the chief scientist at NVIDIA, I was shown the results of a gaming survey recently held at a US college. This asked the participants what was the number one thing they looked for in a game. Third most popular was interactivity, with 15% of the respondents answering this way. Next up was excitement, or fun, with 22% of the votes. But the number one reply, at 23%, was graphics.

Yet we don't even need surveys like this to show us that gamers value, nay demand, better graphics – just take a look at your local EB store, or browse through the pages of any computer magazine. Think of all of the big name games that you're looking forward to this year, and you'll see that the vast majority have mouth-wateringly good visuals. Doom III, Half Life 2, Fable, Halo 2, Metal Gear Solid 3 -



the list goes on and on and on...

Looking at the PC graphics industry alone, more than AUS\$5 billion per year is spent on graphics chipsets. NVIDIA invested over AUS\$600 million on the design of its latest video card – simply so that it could offer the best graphics experience on the market. If graphics aren't important, why is so much money being spent on them? I can't ever recall a gaming company investing sixty million dollars, let alone six hundred million, on developing and researching gameplay mechanics for use across its gaming titles. They probably should, but they don't.

The fact is that gaming is a very visual experience, which is probably why our visually oriented species loves them. Look at our top three forms of entertainment (in the western world at least) – television, movies and gaming – and we see that they're all based in the visual realm. And yet none of them come close to the world view offered by our eyes. This is why technology plays such a key part to these three activities – TV and cinema are both moving to the digital realm, with higher resolutions and high dynamic range display devices (which more closely depict the various brightness levels of the real world). In comparison to these, gaming is very primitive in its pictorial representation of the world.

According to Dr Kirk we've still got another 20 years or so before computers will have the grunt necessary for truly photorealistic graphics. I believe that only then will graphics cease to have the importance that they have today. In the meantime let's appreciate the work of talented coders such as Carmack and Sweeney, who have revolutionised the way we look at our games, rather than dismiss their art form as being a minor part of the gaming experience.

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

<b>0-49</b>	<b>50-59</b>	<b>60-69</b>	<b>70-79</b>	<b>80-89</b>	<b>90+</b>
Nowhere near as good as Mashed. Not even close in fact	Embarassingly unlike Mashed. It's that simple dear friends	Next to Mashed these games might as well be turds on the street	Getting there, but Mashed still has the upper hand. Easily...	Now we're talking! This is the official "Mashed range"	This is what Mashed would get if it had more courses



## PSI-OPS: The Mindgate Conspiracy

**DANIEL WILKS** is trying to make your head explode

Games based around the manipulation of a physics engine are the way of the future. "Hang on a sec", you may be thinking at the moment, aren't all games essentially the manipulation of a physics engine? Aren't different driving games simply different iterations of driving engines? Aren't sports games by and large about ball physics? Ultimately the answer here is yes and no depending on how cynical you are but these games utilise the physics engine to facilitate core gameplay. What I'm talking about are games that use the basic

manipulation of a physics engine AS the core gameplay element. Enter PSI Ops, a game that bases much of its gameplay around the manipulation of basic physics.

### YOU DOWN WITH PSI-O-P?

In PSI Ops, players take the role of a fairly generic gravel voiced amnesiac hero (like we've never seen that before) who just happens to have locked away in his mind a plethora of psychic powers ranging from remote viewing through to pyrokinesis, the ability to start fires with your mind, much like a cute young Drew Barrymore. What does this have to do with a physics engine? One of the powers that lays in between, the first power you pick up in the game, the power of telekinesis. Although there is a plot and there are various guns in the game, PSI Ops is a game about hurling stuff around with your mind, pure and simple. Every object that can be moved by the player can be picked up and thrown. Anything with

mass, whether it be a crate (and believe us when we say there are lots of them in PSI Ops) or an enemy soldier can be picked up and turned into a weapon, a shield, hell, with a little practice you can even use various objects to levitate around levels by climbing on board and levitating it with you on top.

Whilst the controls and much of the action are very standard third person action/shooter fare, what really sets PSI Ops apart from the crowd is the superb implementation of the psychic powers. Whilst players can only utilise one power at a time, each of the powers is attributed to a button or direction on the d-pad making segueing from one power to another simple and intuitive. Testament to this approach is the fact that players can string together their own psychic combo attacks on the fly – with a little practice it's possible (and highly useful) to pick up enemy soldiers, throw them directly at yourself and catch them mid air with the mind



[above] Like a bolt out of the blue

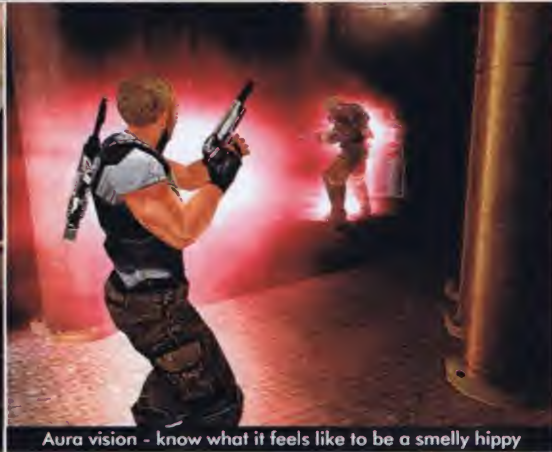


[above] Billy and the crate-a-saurus





It was love at first bite. Ho ho ho



Aura vision - know what it feels like to be a smelly hippy



Crates - nature's most miraculous creation

drain power, simultaneously killing the enemy, recharging your psychic power gauge and refilling your ammo with anything the corpse drops.

### COOL POWERS AND LAZY LEVEL DESIGN

Throughout the events of PSI Ops, players will gain access to telekinesis, mind drain, remote viewing, pyrokinesis, mind control and aura reading, each of which is integral to solving the various puzzles seen throughout the game. Unfortunately the intuitive nature of the psychic powers also lead to one of the game's major flaws — it does not allow the player to be too clever. In one of the early levels the player must escape an exploding building by racing to a landing platform near the top. Looking at the layout of the level there appears to be two possible solutions to the problem;

**UNLOCKABLES** Although the game is quite short with a total play time of around 10 hours, PSI Ops contains a wealth of unlockable missions, skins, cheats and game modes that can seriously enhance the playtime. Unfortunately there is no real multiplayer mode in the game, a disappointing omission considering that psychically fragging opponents would be an absolute hoot. All players are left with as far as multiplayer goes is a truly atrocious co-op mode in which one player controls the movement and the other controls attacks.

## ❖❖❖ Players can string together their own psychic combo attacks on the fly

fight your way through enemy filled corridors through a linear path or circumvent all the trouble by jumping on a nearby crate and levitating yourself all the way up to the platform. Although the latter may sound like a totally feasible solution to the problem, it is not. In fact, it breaks the game and it's not the only time that you'll have this very problem. There are also numerous examples of lazy level design in which an alarm will be raised and enemies will spontaneously appear in areas you have cleared or even right behind you. Enemy AI is patchy as well and you will see many instances of a

!!! Yes, this is a Midway game.  
●●● They're back baby! And it's about time...

seemingly endless production line of soldiers filing through a door straight into your line of fire until you stumble over the correct sequence of events to make it stop.

Problems with the AI aside, PSI Ops looks fantastic with some well-designed models, heaps of destructible environments and fantastic looking psychic effects. Each of the humanoid models has full ragdoll animations implemented making for some hilarious contortions as you throw them around with your mind or hit them with one of the ever-present crates or explosive barrels. ❖❖



### AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GBA / PC

### DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** Action / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 / **DEVELOPER:** Midway / **PUBLISHER:** Midway / **PRICE:** \$99.95 / **RATING:** MA15+ / **AVAILABLE:** September /

### HYPER VERDICT

**PLUS:** Telekinesis, telekinesis, telekinesis.

**MINUS:** No multiplayer, spawning enemies, short.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 80 89

OVERALL

86

Great psychic powers gloss over most of the flaws.



# SPIDER-MAN 2

**MAURICE BRANSCOMBE** gets all tingly...

**»** Spider-Man 2 is damn cool. Not just the game however, we'll get to that later, but the film itself. If you haven't already seen it - and you should have, it is arguably the best movie sequel since Empire Strikes Back, and if any movie deserves a decent videogame adaptation, this film is it. While Spider-Man 2: The Game may not be of quite the same caliber as its filmic inspiration, it's a damn site better than its predecessor, and quite possibly the finest Spider-Man game released to date.

## SPIDEY SENSE... TINGLING!

Spider-Man 2 can be most easily described as GTA, but with Spider-Man. The game has the same premise of putting the player in a large living, breathing environment and leaving them to their own devices, and when your own devices include a pair of web-shooters and super-human strength and agility, you know you're in for a good time. Much like GTA, you'll spend your time roaming the

streets (or in this case swinging from skyscrapers) picking up odd jobs here and there, and engaging in fisticuffs with the handbag-stealing scum of New York City. Spider-Man 2 really does go to a lot of trouble to make it seem as though it is a non-linear, go anywhere, do anything kind of game, and for a while it'll even have you fooled.

The truth of the matter is that while Spidey 2 always has a lot to do, and a vast environment within which to do it, it is more or less structured like a typical linear adventure game, with really one "key" mission available at any one time, which must be completed to continue the plot. Numerous other missions also appear during the game, and include such delights as delivering pizzas, saving an incompetent child's balloon, as well as (of course) busting the chops of untold quantities of evil-doers. While these missions are initially fun, you soon learn that there are maybe only ten different types of these extra missions

in total, so after the tenth time you've given a kid back his balloon, or busted the same crims, these missions start to wear a little thin. Your reward for enduring the drudgery of being a superhero however is a swag of "hero points", which are the currency of Spider-Man 2. The more you collect, the more cool things you can buy from one of the many "Spidey-stores" across Manhattan. Purchasable items include necessities like speed upgrades, right through to brand new attack maneuvers, as well as a slew of new web-slinging tricks.

While we're on the subject, web-slinging is by far the coolest feature that Spidey 2 has on offer. With the entire island of Manhattan at your disposal, and some vastly upgraded abilities, Spidey can now perform some truly exciting feats. You can jump up to twenty stories high, swing with one or two web-lines, web-rip from rooftop to rooftop, and do pretty much everything that a Spider can. It's nothing short of exhilarating.



[above] High as a kite after Mary Jane



[above] Kryten? Moe's hit the Mary Jane too





Insert yet another Planet of the Apes caption here

Just let Aunt May drop this time dude... she ain't worth it

Spins a web, any size, catches thieves just like flies

## Web-slinging is by far the coolest feature that Spidey 2 has on offer

### JUST LIKE FLIES

Spider-Man 2 does its best to walk the line between having huge environments, and having detailed characters and surroundings, but in the end the visuals do take the brunt of the trade-off. The playing area, a not-quite to scale, but huge nonetheless model of New York's Manhattan island is nothing short of massive, and you can swing from one end to the other without so much as a hint of a loading screen, slowdown, or scenery pop-up. Even when you climb to the peak of the Empire State building and look down upon the city, you can still see each building and street clearly, and even recognisable landmarks like the Manhattan Bridge, and the Statue of Liberty. The evidence of what it takes to get an environment this big running this smoothly becomes apparent when you look at the citizens of Manhattan though — who look distinctly like Kryten from the TV series Red Dwarf, complete with angular heads and blocky android-looking bodies... but minus the quips. As primitive as the NPCs and other assorted props appear in the

game though, we'd be lying if we said the trade-off wasn't worth it. The use of music in Spidey 2 is limited to random smatterings of the original film score, hardly anything extraordinary, but well executed nonetheless. The dialog has been completely rerecorded for the game and a few of the original cast members even managed to pry themselves away from their coke and strippers Hollywood lifestyle long enough to dub in a few syllables. Even with the talents of Tobey Maguire (Peter Parker / Spider-Man), Kirsten Dunst (Mary Jane) and Alfred Molina (Doc Oc) though, the dialog is for the most part pretty emotionless, and the player may occasionally get the feeling that instead of looping their lines for the hundredth time this week the actors would probably rather be somewhere else (with coke and strippers obviously). Still, when these three are lined up against the likes of

"purse snatch victim No.1123", and "annoying kid who's lost his balloon" their performances sound like pure genius purified into soundwaves.

Overall, Spider-Man 2 is a huge improvement for developers Treyarch, who have obviously put some real effort in this time around. It's far from original, but when Grand Theft Auto is the inspiration, and the end product is this enjoyable, we're willing to make concessions.

The game does still have numerous missed opportunities; it would have been nice if the flow of the game was a little less controlled, and there really should have been a larger pool of street mission types to draw from. Perhaps Treyarch will finally give us the complete Spider-Man experience when the third installment of the movie trilogy is released. Until then however, Spider-Man 2 is the probably closest thing you'll ever get to actually being the wall-crawler himself. <<

!!! Keep an ear out for Bruce "Don't call me Ash" Campbell, who provides all of the game's tutorial dialog as well as chiming in every now and then to zing the player with an equal amount of both ridicule and advice. Groovy.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 XBOX GCN PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Treyarch / PUBLISHER: Activision / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Massive free-roaming city, web-slinging, being Spider-Man.

MINUS: Repetitive missions, bad NPC models.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

84 78 86

OVERALL

85

Do whatever a spider can, go on, you know you want to.



!!! Our apologies to the printers that this issue was so late... it was all Mashed's fault!



Cheaty McCheat cheats his way to victory yet again



The single best course in the game. Hyper team rules!



You're about to get swerved

# MASHED

**CAM SHEA** gets well mashed...

If you want definitive proof that fun can't be measured in polygons or frames per second, then Mashed is it. Simply put, this is a multiplayer gaming elixir from the gods. Or, in actuality, from the game design gods that made Micro Machines 2 — Supersonic. It should come as no surprise then, that Mashed is very much the spiritual successor to Micro Machines... and anyone who played that series as religiously as we did knows that this is a very good thing. Welcome to top down 3D racing done right.

## MACRO MACHINES

From the moment you pop the disc in the drive, this game is pure, spleen burstingly addictive fun. Forget miniature cars, Mashed is set at a regular scale, but with a dynamic top down perspective that follows the action (although the camera does drop in closer when appropriate). If you can't keep up, you get eliminated, and depending on where you came in

the field of four you either gain or lose points. The race keeps restarting until someone reaches eight points and becomes the final victor. The system works well, and leads to long drawn out contests with the lead swinging back and forth. This is a game where victory is never assured — a couple of stuff ups and it will all be even again.

Mashed is brilliant with four players, but the ultimate way to play (in our humble opinion) is team play, where you're split into two teams of two. It's in this mode that the competition really heats up and strategy comes to the fore — leading to some cool tactical plays where teams started using one car to run interference and one car to get far enough in front to win. The gameplay became even deeper on our favourite course, which is comprised of two long straights and two hairpin turns, all set on ice. Tactics like deliberately missing the boost start, and breaking and sliding in front of someone to nudge them off the course emerged, resulting

in multiple hour stints on this course alone. Whether your tactics work, or whether they backfire, sending your car careening off the course, doesn't matter — you'll be laughing too hard to care. It really is that much fun.

Throw in a host of well balanced weapons and you have a game that is very easy to pick up and play, but with serious replayability to back it up. There are only a couple of problems. The camera can sometimes move in disconcerting ways, even blocking your view of the course. You also have to unlock all the courses in single player before you can use them in multi. Pretty forgivable really. Perhaps the one thing holding Mashed back from a 90%+ score, however, is that thirteen courses aren't quite enough — especially considering the simple yet functional graphics engine.

Don't let that stop you from buying it though — this is still a run, don't walk, purchase. Mashed is probably the most fun we've had with a four player game since Mario Tennis. <<



AVAILABLE ON:  
PS2 XBOX GCV PC

DETAILS  
CATEGORY: Top down racing /  
PLAYERS: 1-4 / DEVELOPER:  
Supersonic / PUBLISHER: Red Ant /  
PRICE: \$79.95 for PS2/Xbox, \$49.95 for  
PC / RATING: G / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT  
PLUS: Pick up and play, brilliant multiplayer.  
MINUS: Camera can be a little annoying.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY  
76 79 92

OVERALL  
88

The best four player game we've played in a long time.



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Laharl

Ugh...  
I can't argue with that...

## DISGAEA: Hour of Darkness

**BRETT ROBINSON** gets tactical on yo' ass

Considering this is 2004, selective game distribution should be a thing of the past (hear hear! — Malcolm), yet here we have another awesome title that came THIS close to never seeing the light of day in the PAL territories. In spite of Disgaea's remarkable sales performance in Japan and North America, some chump executives in Europe spent a good nine months braying 'Too niche!' whenever anybody broached the topic of distributing it. During those agonising months, desperate strategy fans resorted to mod chipping their PS2s in a last ditch effort to get a piece of the action, while countless others gave up hope of ever getting their hands on Nippon Ichi's latest and greatest. Fortunately, some smart cookie at EA saw fit to bestow upon our fair territory Disgaea in all its quirky, isometric glory! That person, whoever they may be, has our eternal gratitude.

### A DEMON WITH ZITS

Disgaea tells the story of adolescent demon Laharl, whose posturepedic coffin is so comfortable that when he lies down for a nap, he inadvertently sleeps for two years. When a servant finally manages to rouse him from his blissful slumber, Laharl discovers that his father, King Krichevskoy, has choked on a black pretzel and died, and Krichevskoy's disloyal vassals have ransacked the royal castle and assumed control of the Netherworld. As Prince of the Netherworld and heir to the throne, Laharl must embark on a quest to smack down those vassals and reclaim his birthright.

At a basic level there are strong similarities between Disgaea and games like Final Fantasy Tactics and Tactics Ogre (the latter being another Nippon Ichi masterpiece, which sadly never came out here). Their plots are advanced through codec-style cut scenes, there's very little in the way of exploration, and much of the action centres on

strategic turn-based battles on grid maps. In short, these games are all about developing powerful characters and tactically deploying said characters on the battlefield. Disgaea delivers more than a handful of innovations, however, and the impact of these seemingly simple new features cannot be overstated.

Firstly, there's the Geo Effect system, which makes every battle much more than a mere numbers game. Many of the tiles on the grid maps are colour coded, and scattered about each map are coloured pyramids called geo symbols which imbue the coloured panels they're sitting on with certain powers. Characters that stand on these geo panels can be rendered invulnerable, have their attack or defence stats boosted, or be subject to any number of beneficial or detrimental effects. Complicating matters further, geo symbols can be moved or destroyed, negating their powers and damaging any units standing on panels of the relevant



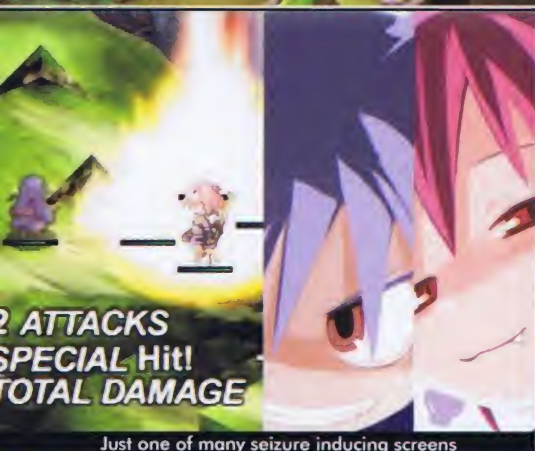
[above] Cuter than the LOTR version



[above] We heart anime succubuses... erm... succubi...

colour. This, in turn, can result in massive, incredibly destructive chain reactions that literally turn the tide of battle in seconds.

Disgaea also offers something called the Dark Assembly - the demonic equivalent of our House of Reps, minus all the Dorothy Dix questions and endless finger pointing. You can



Just one of many seizure inducing screens



Sun is shining, the weather is sweet



Just before the demon tentacles came out

petition the Dark Assembly to permit the creation of new characters, make more powerful items available for purchase, donate funds to your cause, increase particular stats of your characters, or even open portals to special worlds. Assembly members won't always support your proposals, though, and with enough 'Nay' votes your requests will be dead in the water. But in the Netherworld it's both possible and acceptable to corrupt the voting process by offering influential members bribes or by beating dissenters into submission. Resort to the latter, however, and your proposal might pass, but the cowed members will remember your treachery and vote accordingly in future.

**CAVEATS AND CUSTOMISATIONS** Finally, there's Disgaea's Item World. Every single item in the game, from the lowly ABC Gum to the almighty

## ❖ Cowed members will remember your treachery and vote accordingly in future

Yoshitsuna sword, contains a series of randomly generated levels. Your party can enter these levels, and each time you clear the enemies from a level and move on to the next one, the item's stats will be increased slightly. Furthermore, if you manage to subjugate the specialist characters within an item, they'll boost the item's powers even more. And better still, it's possible to transfer conquered specialists between items, opening up a whole spectrum of customisation opportunities. There's just one caveat: stat boosts depend on your ability to make it back from the item world alive, which is easier said than done.

!!! If you can't track down a copy of Disgaea locally, we recommend hopping online and importing it from the UK.

In essence the Item World gives you a limitless array of levels to conquer, as well as the capacity to create some astonishingly powerful items. Couple that with the fact that Disgaea offers around 40 hours of story-driven gameplay (if you don't spend time in the Item World), multiple endings, a level cap of 9999 and the capacity to 'transmigrate' your characters back to exp level 1 (while retaining up to 95% of their original abilities) – you've got a game with the kind of longterm value that makes Morrowind seem limited by comparison.

Whether or not you'll feel like capitalising on all this potential depends on the sort of gamer you are, but Disgaea is eminently rewarding regardless of how much or how little you put into it. Certainly, it isn't without its faults (the basic AI being the main one), but for sheer scope and for the wonderful humour that seems to have soaked into its every pore, Disgaea simply can't be beaten. <<

**EQUINE GENITALIA** Unlike most hardcore strategy titles, Disgaea doesn't take itself too seriously: its plot is peppered with clever one-liners and subtle digs at both the genre and gaming in general, and humorous item descriptions make scrolling through the inventory menu a surprisingly entertaining experience. Case in point, the trusty Bastard Sword which "can be used by nice guys too". And if you're sick of the kind of hackneyed unique items most games offer up, why not try a Horse Weiner on for size! Or perhaps not...

AVAILABLE ON:  
**PS2** XBOX / GCN / PC

**DETAILS**  
CATEGORY: Strategy / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Nippon Ichi / PUBLISHER: EA / PRICE: \$89.95 / RATING: M / AVAILABLE: Now (if you can find it) /

**HYPHER VERDICT**  
**PLUS:** More content than you can poke a Bahamut's Horn at!  
**MINUS:** Simplistic AI, and no PAL Japanese audio option.

VISUALS 81 SOUND 80 GAMEPLAY 89

OVERALL  
**89**

Easily the greatest game of its kind, and a massive leap forward for the genre.



# GALLEON

**JOHN DEWHURST** saw a Monkey on the Poop Deck

From the makers of the original Tomb Raider comes Galleon, an action feast that echoes some of Lara Croft's finest moments: the great gymnastics of traversing extraordinary places, the cut and thrust of hand-to-hand combat, the steady stream of life-giving mushrooms and the mania of racing the clock against high wires, cavernous jumps and slamming doors. This is an instantly recognisable genre piece, without doubt. And for that, action games and their fans should be grateful, since Galleon is a particularly strong example: beautiful, elegant and exciting.

The world of Galleon is a curious mix of the Carribean (eye patches, cannons, secret islands, trade routes and treasure) and the Far East (martial arts, katanas, mystical seals, incantations and demons). Like that middle section of Crouching Tiger where they go all Arabian with sabres on horseback, Galleon is a pirate adventure with an Eastern twist.

## THE PLUMMY CAPT. RHAMA

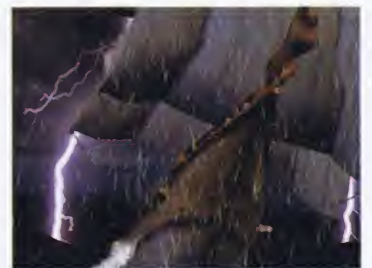
The star of the show is Captain Rhama Sabrier, a dashing Pirate-with-a-heart. He and his crew aboard the Endeavour are swords for hire across the high seas. Rhama and his men have perfectly enunciated Queen's English, a change from the Yankie accents of most games. The benevolent Doctor Areliano calls Rhama to examine a mysterious artefact — a giant deserted ship a la the Marie Celeste. This meeting reveals the intentions of a wicked foe and sets the course of Galleon — the pursuit of the stolen ship by Rhama and his comrades across many islands and treacherous channels.

The swash-buckling storyline is pacy and engaging, while the cast of characters are plausible in their familiar roles — maiden in distress, madman on the run, crotchety old timer. The adventure gives good drive to the action which falls into the well-worn path of creative exploration, hand to hand combat, basic lever-

pull puzzle solving, race the clock antics and boss battles. This has been done many times before, but rarely do you see such a loving attempt to perfect the formula. This care is first shown in the environments.

The world is brightly coloured, vibrant and drawn large. Sheer cliffs hundreds of feet from sea level, fiery pits that are perilously wide, giant contraptions that scrape the clouds. The second level in particular, is epic in proportions. A deep bay is covered and surrounded by an enormous hollow mountain riddled with winding caves, pipes, footholds and ledges. When Rhama has ventured halfway up the island, he finds the mystical Galleon suspended hundreds of feet in the air. The level continues on the outside of the mountain where a giant winching system of cogs and wheels is situated.

The world is awesome to behold. Below the waterline, beams of light flash down to illuminate sunken ships and treasures. On the cliff



[above] On the space ship lollipop...



[MIA] gingerbread men like to do hip hop

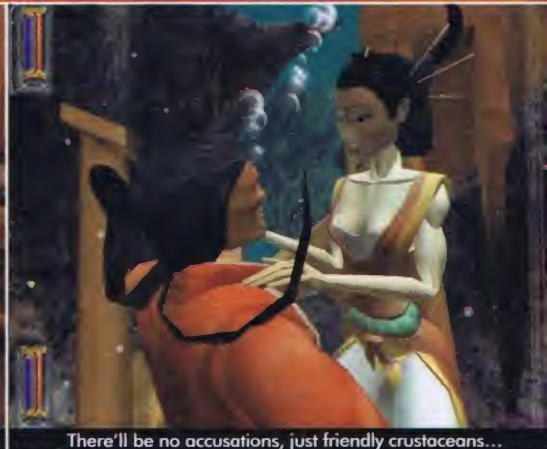




Joey Tekken taught Rhama everything he knows



Lovely jubbies...



There'll be no accusations, just friendly crustaceans...

faces, the rock walls, crates and ladders are sun-beaten and on the pinnacle of the island, the sails of the giant windmill, and the sweeping breeze are as majestic as anything you've seen in a game. In this kind of game, visuals are so important to the action and Galleon really deserved the Hollywood treatment it received.

The next most impressive feature is the way that Rhama is able to move around. Unlike some past titles where precision perfect movement was requisite for negotiating platforming jumping, Rhama is given something of a brain. The analog stick can direct him to walk or run, however if he's walking, he will not walk off platform edges. In fact, there is very little of that 3D terror that so discouraged me from games like Tomb Raider in the past. If Rhama falls off a ledge, there is ample time to attempt a saving grab, and more often than not, he'll catch himself — he's a hero after all.

Better still is the wall climbing movement featured in Galleon. By pressing and holding the right trigger, Rhama can grasp some walls and clamber up them. Well actually, he manages a full tilt sprint up most

## Below the waterline, beams of light flash down to illuminate sunken ships...

of them and until he has to change direction, maintains an astonishing pace (another nod to Crouching Tiger). The terrain becomes that much more involving seeing that Rhama takes it all at a canter rather than a trot.

In fact, the game is truly three dimensional. From Rhama's high-speed jumps across gaping holes in the path, to his majestic swan dive from great heights, to his underwater dolphin swimming stroke, the world of Galleon really moves.

### IS THERE A DOWNSIDE?

The basics are thoroughly covered in Galleon. The missions by contrast are a little less exciting. This is partly because of the inherent danger of every jump — if missed many are fatal — and also because of the sheer repetition of many portions of the game. The automatic save points are about right, maybe erring on the too frequent side. But no-one hates repeating long sections of gameplay

to get to a boss more than I do.

Combat generally is a little haphazard. Enemies seem to come in waves, delivering some biff, before the world seems stunningly oblivious to Rhama's presence. I enjoyed the combat sections, with the grapples, throws, parries and punches but it's a little formulaic. Less impressive are the boss battles which inevitably involving climbing up a great monster's back and plunging a sword into its neck. So combat as a whole is passable rather than excellent and the physical game world and exploration far outshine the fighting.

There are numerous other elements, like commanding allies, Rhama's puzzle solving "sixth sense", which draws him to secrets and action sections like the kick-arse storm. But these are the gems to be savoured without spoilers. Galleon will probably enjoy one or two repeat runs but the first time will be the best — adventure games have a built-in shelf life. Still, this is a jolly good blast of pirate shenanigans. Recommended. <math>\llcorner</math>

!!! After five long years developing Galleon it will be interesting to see what Toby Gard goes on to do next...

### AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 XBOX GCN/PC

### DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Confounding Factor / PUBLISHER: Atari / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

### HYPER VERDICT

**PLUS:** Amazing world and involving play.

**MINUS:** High repetition and passable combat.

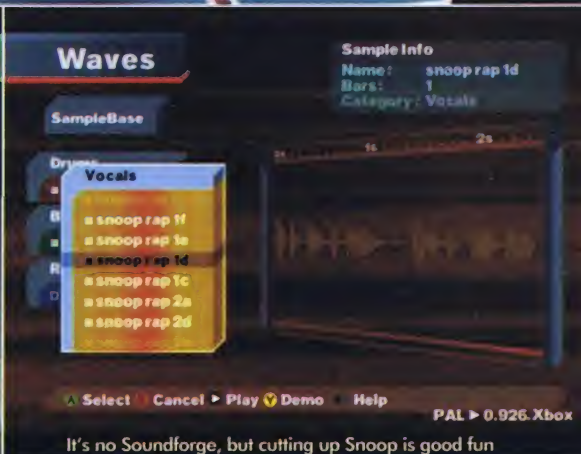
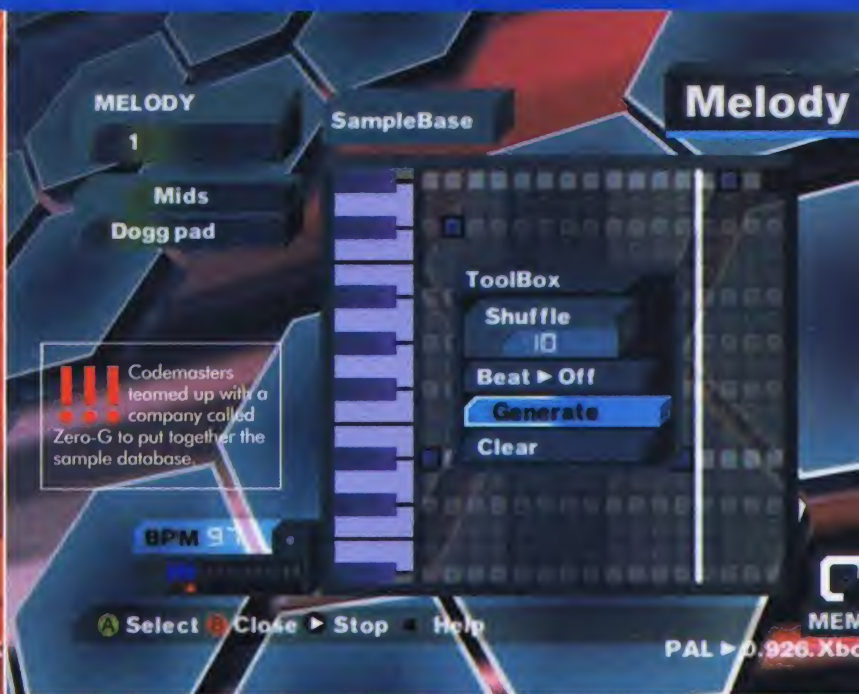
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

87 80 86

OVERALL

85

Long live Jack Sparrow!... I mean, Rhama Sabrier!



It may have Sean Paul, but at least there's no P. Diddy...

...although Diddy Kong's Conga Beats would have been cool

It's no Soundforge, but cutting up Snoop is good fun

# MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3

**LORD DAFTWAGER** wants his MTV...

MTV Music Generator 3 is a curious beast. Essentially offering up a grid-based sequencer, where you select from a database of beats, basslines, vocal snippets, rhythm sections and other "track elements", and drop them into place, one would imagine that the approach would be to give the player a "virtual sandbox" where they start from scratch and build music from the ground up. The actual approach is a little different.

## SNOOP DIZZLE MTV-IZZLE

Going into either the "Studio" or "Remix" options, you're presented with a choice of ten artists - Fabolous, Sean Paul, Snoop Dogg, OutKast, Carl Cox, The Ones, DJ Marky, Mike Koglin, Krafty Kuts and R4. One track from each artist has been deconstructed and turned into a set of samples. Go into Remix and you have the entire track in the sequencer and the freedom to take elements out, change elements and introduce new

elements. If you go straight into Studio, on the other hand, the artist you choose alters the base set of samples available. You can, of course, go into the sample database and bring in any of the other samples to use in your track, but the basic idea is for you to have a basic style and set of compatible samples from the outset.

There are a variety of tools within Music Generator 3. The "SampleBase" area has the "BeatBox", where you can construct your own percussion lines, deciding on where the kick, snare, hats, cymbals, FX and so on fit in. Also present is the "Melody" tool which gives you a keyboard and a variety of sound types to try and put together a melody or bubbling acid line. There's also the "Ripper" tool, where you can sample from CDs (up to eight seconds) and crop the samples into loops to insert into your track. The final SampleBase tool is called "Waves" and allows you to view the wave files for each sample and edit them. It's a decent range of options, but at every

turn we found ourselves being constricted. The BeatBox for instance, has a relatively sparse selection of percussive samples to actually utilise, and the wave editor won't let you adjust the length of the sample. Basically, if you've used Fruity Loops, Reason or any serious PC program you're going to feel really boxed in, and the seriously counter intuitive menu system won't help either.

Other tools at your disposal include being able to apply effects to each channel. Say you want to add some distortion to the bass line, you can choose from a few different distortion effects and even bring the distortion in and out dynamically if you want. The range of effects available are very basic (pan, filter, reverb, delay, flanger, distort, reverse), but as is no doubt becoming apparent, this is not software for anyone experienced at making music. For gamers who are curious and want to muck around, however, Music Generator 3 is worth checking out. <<

AVAILABLE ON:  
**PS2 XBOX GDC/PC**

**DETAILS**  
CATEGORY: Music remixing /  
PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Mix Max /  
PUBLISHER: Codemasters /  
PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: G /  
AVAILABLE: Now /

**HYPHER VERDICT**  
**PLUS:** Good fun in some ways...

**MINUS:** But ultimately limited and a little clunky.

VISUALS **70** SOUND **83** GAMEPLAY **70**

OVERALL  
**72**

Kinda cool, but ultimately your options to do something truly creative are limited.



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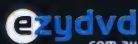
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# RICHARD BURNS RALLY

**ELIOT FISH** reckons there's nothing quite like Dick Burns.

**W** This Dick is hard. As unfortunate as that opening sentence is, there's no denying it. This is one of the toughest rally games to hit the market in a very long time indeed. Richard — or, Dick, as we like to call him — Burns Rally has literally run the Colin McRae Rally series off the road (where it now sadly appears to be crashing and burning in slow motion). There is now no longer any doubt which is the most realistic and punishing rally sim on the market. All hail the Dick.

## SMELLS LIKE BURNING

This is a comprehensive rally package. The main menu (Rally HQ, as it's referred to in-game) almost gets lost off the bottom of the screen as you peruse the various options to go to Rally School, enter a Quick Rally, start a Rally Season, hop into some Multiplayer, connect to Xbox Live, try your hand at the Richard Burns Challenge or fiddle with the obligatory Options. Where Colin McRae Rally was an empty box of matches, Dick Burns is a blowtorch to the face.

As much as you'd like to leap straight into your own rally career, playing through the Rally School very quickly becomes a necessity. This isn't the high-speed thrill of Rallisport Challenge 2, nor is it even a somewhat demanding sim such as the aforementioned Colin McRae Rally. Dick Burns is like sitting in a car for the very first time and fumbling around with the keys in the ignition, tentatively pressing your

feet on the pedals and fidgeting with the rear-view mirror. It's like someone, somehow, hot-wired a game controller into the dashboard of a real car. Yep, this is a real driving simulation, and remaining in complete control of your machine as it slides around on a variety of surfaces is something that will take practice, determination, and an understanding of real-world physics.

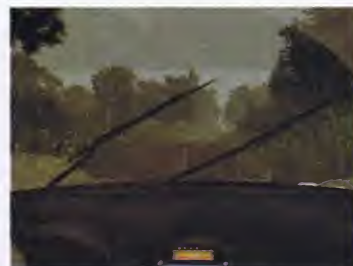
The Rally School tutorial is almost a game in itself and a fair challenge to complete, but once you do, you'll feel like you at least have some kind of fighting challenge to compete in an actual rally season. Whilst there's an option for semi-automatic racing, you should know here and now that Richard Burns Rally can only be played seriously with manual gear shifting — and the tutorial will help you get to grips with it. If you've never bothered with using manual in any other racing game, now is the time to learn, because controlling your



[above] If someone swerves you...



[above] You've got to swerve them back







Cor, Dick has a big red chopper



More challenging than the adventures of Captain Challenging...



...in the land of the Challenge monsters

vehicle at high speeds and shaving off that half-second is only possible if you learn the subtleties in gear shifting. Just thank the maker you don't have to press a button to pop the clutch in and out.

#### THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Yes, not only is this a hard rally game, but it's one that demands such a high level of concentration and determination that most casual gamers may as well turn the page and not even bother reading any further. This isn't a game to play sprawled on the couch with a beer. This isn't a game to throw on for 30 minutes for some quick entertainment after a long hard day at work. This is a game that will only reward those who are willing to devote endless days to perfecting

**THE EARS HAVE IT** Whilst you might be fooled into thinking Dick Burns Rally is so serious it only comes with an audio track of wind whistling through the rubber seals around the doors and grinding gears, the music in this game is genuinely contemporary. The in-game soundtrack is from Paul Oakenfold, Andy Hunter, Pepe Deluxe and Plump DJs. If you know who those artists are then you're no doubt rather impressed and quite chuffed that such talent should offer their services to a rally sim of all things. The rest of you can be happy with the fact that the engine sounds and environmental effects are of an exquisite standard, as are the comprehensive pace notes from Dick himself. Gotta love the Dick.

## Where McRae was an empty box of matches, Dick Burns is a blowtorch

their advanced rally driving skills. Most casual gamers will probably struggle to even keep their car on the road when throttling at speeds over 80km per hour.

However, despite its unnerving difficulty, Dick Burns Rally feels fabulous to drive and for the most part looks pretty impressive too. There are also small details here that will give rally fans a real kick, such as being penalised for hitting scrambling photographers or wildlife, or getting spectators to run onto the road and help flip

Check out Dick's official site for news on his rally adventures: [www.richardburns.com](http://www.richardburns.com)

your car over. The developer, Warthog, has also gone for a more realistic, albeit drab, overall visual style. This really is a full-on simulator, despite its presence on the humble console. There's very little glitz and glamour, and no arcade mode for those looking for a quick blast around the park. Dick Burns Rally is, however, a sumptuous feast for auto heads who can appreciate realistic car handling. Auto heads with savant-like gaming skills, that is. <<



AVAILABLE ON:  
PS2 XBOX GBA PC

#### DETAILS

CATEGORY: Driving / PLAYERS: 1-4 /  
DEVELOPER: Warthog /  
PUBLISHER: SCI Games /  
PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: G /  
AVAILABLE: Now /

#### HYPER VERDICT

**PLUS:** Stunning realism, good damage model, long shelf life.

**MINUS:** Brutally demanding, too difficult for casual gamers.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

83 89 84

OVERALL

82

The difficulty might be prohibitive, but this is an impressive sim.

FASTEST  
1.42.845  
CURRENT  
0.46.1

2/3

POSITION

5 / 17



# FORMULA ONE 2004

**MARCH STEPNIK** is a glutton for punishment...

One mistake. Just one little mistake and it's all over. One mistimed corner; the application of brakes just a second too soon or too late; too much on the steering as you try to overtake a twitchy driver — Formula One racing requires nerves of steel and superhuman skill for success and to Sony's credit, so does *Fi 2004*. But also to Sony's credit, what we have here is an *Fi* racing game that isn't simply an unforgiving beast of a racing sim like those that have come before it. *Fi 04* manages to prove that *Fi* racing can actually be a whole heap of fun.

## SIM SCHUMACHER

Yep, Formula One is back and before you say "Hey, didn't I see you around this time last year?" this version of the venerable series (the ninth, with its roots coming from *Psygnosis*) retains all of the major updates found in last year's *Formula One 2003* and adds a bunch of new features that should entice a few of the more hardcore fans back into the fold.

Naturally, the main justification for parting with your hard-earned \$99 if you're a fan of *Fi* is all the expected current liveries attached to the 04 in the title. This translates into an accurate representation of all the drivers, teams, rules and tracks of the 2004 Formula One series, including the two new courses — Bahrain and China's Shanghai.

Apart from some minor tweaking, the graphics engine remains largely untouched since last year's grand update, reflecting just how strong *Fi 03*'s visuals were. Continuing the fine tradition, there's virtually no pop-up

in *Fi 04*, the textures are crisp and smooth, and most importantly, the sense of speed is immense.

The real meat of *Fi 04* is the new career mode on offer, which will sort out the casual drivers from the hardcore ones. Registering a name, choosing a nationality, mugshot (from a selection of 30 pre-rendered [boof] heads) and helmet design sees you fit to enter the highly competitive world of Formula One racing. But don't expect to be deemed instant hot property; you're an unknown and must first prove yourself before you'll be able to mix it with the champagne-showering big-wigs. From the career mode's main menu screen you can access all manner of info screens (there's even a newspaper screen to help keep track of the main events of each week during a season), with the communication screen being the most important, at least initially. After signing on as a test driver for one of the lesser teams, it's up to you perform well and move up the ranks



[unrelated] Nice weather we're having



[some other pic] A badger wearing pants!





79 and feelin' fine



Hey that looks like our Williams F1 wheel...



...no wheely, it does! (worst. caption. ever.)

until you're competing against the Schumachers on the Sunday race. Spanning multiple seasons, this mode is far away the most comprehensive and challenging way to play *F1 04*, and is a real blast for those wanting longevity in their high octane shenanigans.

So while *F1* nuts are well catered for with *F1 04*, newcomers to the Formula One racing will need a deep reservoir of tolerance and patience. Sony has gone quite a way in making the Formula One racing model more accessible to newbs, but there's still plenty of room for improvement. For the many complaints levelled at *Gran Turismo*'s license school system, it succeeds admirably in teaching

!!! Since there's no driving school, learn the car physics and track layout in time attack, then practice arcade races with AI competitors to learn the timing of braking in to bends and turns.

## ❖❖❖ Newcomers to Formula One racing will need a deep reservoir of tolerance...

players a good collection of driving skills that translate into significantly better times on the tarmac. *F1 2004* lacks any such introduction,

suggesting that jumping into the deep end of things will quickly sort out who will sink and who will swim. There are a number of difficulty levels to select from

(Rookie, Amateur, Semi-professional, Professional), as well as a number of different types of races to get some practice in, but there's no gentle learning curve on offer here. Perhaps the best aide during a race is the use of colour-graded indicating a turn – green for gentle, yellow for medium and red for hard corners.

### INDIRECT COMPETITION

To the question of multiplayer, *F1 04* does its best to compensate for the fact that no more than two real players will be able to race at the same time. Three and four player modes are restricted to hot-seat

racing (each player takes a turn to race the lap) and time attack modes, while two players can tackle an arcade or sim version of the championship, in concurrent, split-screen mode. *F1 04* is the first in the series to support the PS2's network adapter, however not in the manner that would be expected. Going online will allow you to upload/download ghost races of the time attack game mode, offering indirect competition. It may not be as scintillating as race day with a bunch of real players, but it's a baby step in the right direction.

*Formula One 2004* is the best in the series and easily the most comprehensive. While Sony has managed to make the game more accessible, this is still a game geared towards serious GP enthusiasts. The new difficulty levels will make it easier for those who have flirted with the genre before to make a go of Formula One racing, but not by much. This is still a game of high skill that is also largely unforgiving, as you'd expect in cars of such calibre. One little mistake and the race is over. ❖❖



AVAILABLE ON:  
PS2 XBOX GCN PC

DETAILS  
CATEGORY: Racing / PLAYERS: 1-2 simultaneous, 1-4 hotseat / DEVELOPER: SCE Studio Liverpool / PUBLISHER: Sony / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: G / AVAILABLE: Now /

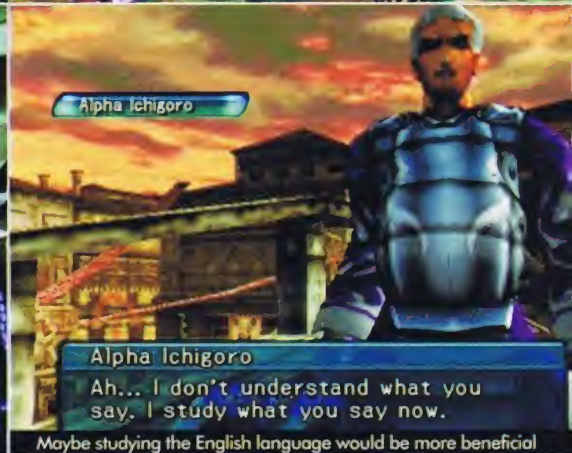
HYPER VERDICT  
PLUS: Super fast and smooth, challenging, customisation.  
MINUS: Unforgiving, poor multiplayer.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY  
82 71 85  
OVERALL  
79

A strong title, but still geared towards the serious Formula One nut.



!!! An exclusive episode of the .hack series is included with the game, you know, to flesh things out a little.



# .HACK PART 2: Mutation

**.MARCH STEPNIK** asks ".wtf?"

There's a fair bit to like about the whole .hack thing. An anime series straight outta Japan, it follows the exploits of a bunch of online roleplaying geeks — mostly from an in-game, logged-on perspective — as they attempt to unravel the mystery of why one particular player can't actually log out of the game and back into the real world, and how some players end up in a coma after spending time in "The World". Add to this a console RPG that follows chronologically from the events of this anime series and you have an interesting cross-media experiment: an anime about an MMORPG that leads into a single player RPG about an MMORPG. And it worked for one reason above all others — it proved a refreshing take on a genre that is normally laden with clichés.

**IT'S GOOD TO PLAY TOGETHER**  
That was .hack Part 1: Infection, which was reviewed in Hyper 127 — a mere 4 months ago. Part 2 (of 4) is here (not

before the first one has had the chance to hit the platinum run, either) but before we go any further one thing must be made clear: if this sort of game sounds interesting to you then move post-haste to your nearest dealer and pick up Part 1. Mutation is designed for repeat players (those who have completed Infection can transfer their character into Mutation with all items and party-mates intact), even though attempts have been made for newcomers to the series. All the email and bulletin board messages of the original — which represent two key methods of telling the story of The World — have been included in this sequel, so you can at least read up and discern that after joining the MMORPG to play with a friend, said friend falls into a real world coma and you've spent the better part of the previous game running around dungeons, leveling up, and trying to work out what the hell happened to your mate.

As a sequel, Mutation brings precious little that's new to the table. There's a new "server" (read: area) to play a higher difficulty level, the ability to race Grunties (the hippo-like beasts of The World) as well as a number of new minor side quests, and the usual augmentation of existing items and nasties to discover. Otherwise, pretty much everything else has been recycled, including the same rather clumsy camera control system. Some tweaking here to a semi-automatic system would have been very welcome indeed.

And then there's the story. It's a bit smarter than Infection, and it continues in the spirit of the series, but again is rather short. What with the re-use of the near same version of the game engine and the combined size of the first two in the series of four games, this sequel feels more like the second half of .hack Part 1. As such, virgins to .hack should rent the series and start with Infection before venturing into mutated territory. <<

AVAILABLE ON:  
**PS2** XBOX / GCN / PC

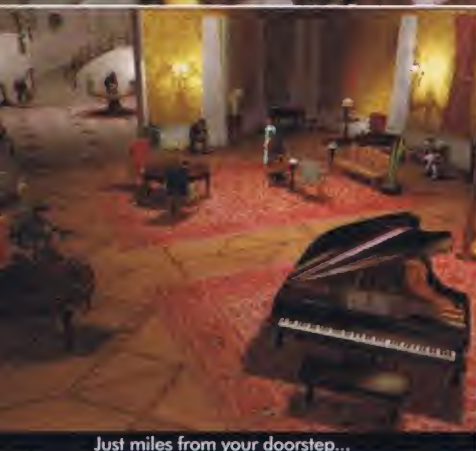
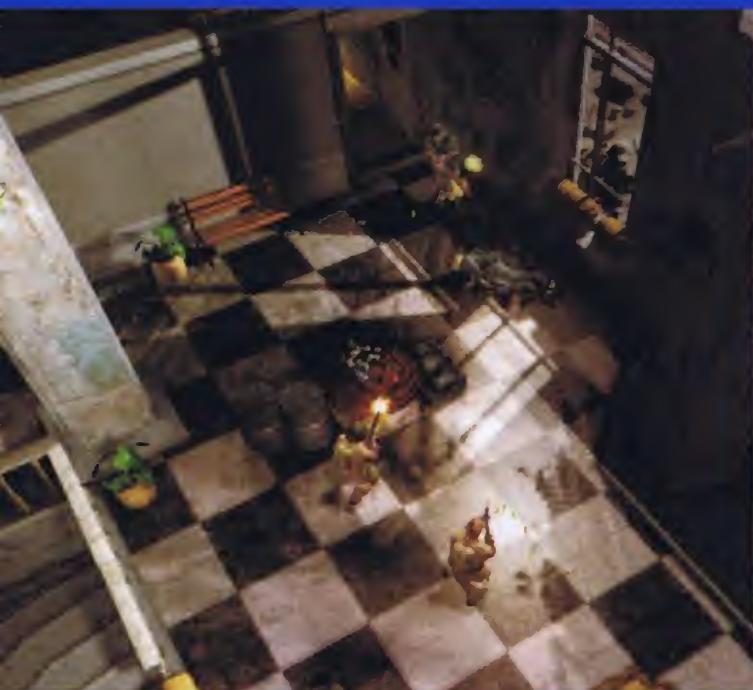
DETAILS  
CATEGORY: RPG / PLAYERS: 1 /  
DEVELOPER: Cyber Connect /  
PUBLISHER: Atari /  
PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ /  
AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT  
**PLUS:** Cool premise, funky design.  
**MINUS:** Short, bland dungeons, not easy for newbs.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY  
**80 81 70**

OVERALL  
**71**

Part two in a novel RPG series, that's trippy to boot.



Just miles from your doorstep...

...the government calls it the army...

...but a more alarmist name would be: the Kill-BOT Factory

# COMBAT ELITE: WWII Paratroopers

**STEPHEN FARRELLY** wants to stop the videogame cash machine

It's a given really — WWII games are going to continue to dominate the development list of most major publishers for the rest of our lives, or until the gaming giants start WWII to finally move on to the next big marketable horror. But whining about the overflow of games based on WWII isn't going to stop them from happening, and with Hollywood still rife on the epic idea of the "Great Battle" being told in every possible flag-waving manner, it really is going to be a while before we believe the "Game Over" screen at the end of a WWII game. So, until the trend is over, we're subject to as many different construal "Great Battles" as games companies can muster, and in keeping with their catch-up trend, Acclaim has dropped *Combat Elite: World War II Paratroopers* on us, pun intended.

**HOW DO I GET A HEAD SHOT?**  
The biggest problem with *Combat Elite* is the game's engine; Battleborn

Entertainment opted to use the *Snowblind* engine made famous by the console incarnations of the *Baldur's Gate* series in *Dark Alliance*, which unfortunately makes the game feel a little alien right from the outset. Sure, there's actual footage that sets the action up and the game comes replete with every WWII cliché this side of *Band of Brothers* — actual scenarios, gut-wrenching epic music, real locations as well as authentic weapons, vehicles and anything else you can stamp an alliance star or Nazi swastika on, but when you're dumped into the game there's just something wrong. A fixed overhead camera keeps you at a bird's perch throughout the entire game and for all the authenticity and trouble Battleborn have gone to, this disaffection keeps players from ever feeling like they're a part of the action, something that should be

paramount in the development of any game of this nature.

The game is very appealing visually and there are a lot of details that have been painstakingly crafted to maintain a high level of legitimacy, but a lack of any free camera, no ability to liberally aim and a constant reminder that you're simply 'watching' action unfold keep all of Battleborn's extensive knowledge and research from truly being enjoyed. In the end, *Combat Elite* feels like nothing more than a very long arcade experience devoid of any outreach for players.

World War II aficionados will find satiation in the amount of knowledge the game has stored, but anyone who enjoys the feeling of being a part of the action and immersed in the world of war recreated would be better off looking elsewhere for their evil crushing desires. <<

!!! One of the big pluses for *Combat Elite* is the excellent two player co-op mode. If you have a friend, it's worth checking out.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Battleborn Entertainment / PUBLISHER: Acclaim / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: TBA /

HYPER VERDICT

**PLUS:** A lot of history and authenticity for WWII nuts.

**MINUS:** The engine keeps players from being a part of the action.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

75 79 59

OVERALL

64

A game that lacks the feeling of stopping the Nazi war machine.



## JOINT OPERATIONS: Typhoon Rising

**BENNETT RING** looks for love online...

As our little bird helicopter buzzes through the valley, I look to the left and see three larger Black Hawks full of troops following in close formation. I give the order for them to orbit the target at range as I sweep in for a closer recon, my swift ride allowing me to dodge the stinger missiles. It appears that at least twenty Indonesian rebels are setting up base camp at the capture point, using a single APC for ground support. Nothing our troops and copious amounts of ammo can't handle. The Black Hawks fly into a clearing near the main bunker, all six chainguns

raining lead down upon the rebels stupid enough to remain out in the open. As they set down amidst a flurry of leaves and dust, I let rip with the twin rotary cannons adorning my agile bird. 200 rounds later and the APC has become a human BBQ.

### **BENNETT'S CHOPPER... EEW**

It's time to bring my chopper in to give the guys on the ground a hand, as clearing out the dense foliage is a job that only a grunt can do. As I move across the open ground towards the bunker, I hear the high pitched whistling that can only mean one thing. Mortar attack. Squinting upwards I see the rounds flying high through the air, before arching downwards directly above me. Too late now to flee for cover, I can only stare in amazement at how accurately they fall — obviously the enemy is using a spotter on a nearby hill to guide the rounds home. The screen fades into a blur as I'm torn to pieces by the shrapnel of a near hit.



[above] The urban jungle of South Central



[above] Bakka bakka bakka bakka



That's two minutes in a game of Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising. While the battles in BF1942 and Vietnam are large, in JO they can only be described as epic. The main reason is the player count — 150 players at a time makes for some pretty large scale battles. This game is purely multiplayer, with only a few offline missions thrown in for training. And if you're stuck without broadband, don't even bother trying to squeeze this game's data down your embarrassing 56k dial up connection.

With 150 players at a time the maps need to be big, and in JO they're frickin' huge. At sixty four square kilometers they make other online shooters feel positively claustrophobic, and the ability to scope out the bad guys at ranges of 1km makes them feel even more immense. And with a total of over thirty maps you're going to be plugging away at this game for months before you get to know them as well as your survival demands.

At times the maps actually feel a



This is the end... my only friend, the end...

...where something something something...

...umm, anyone remember what Jim Morrison actually sings?

little too big, but the inclusion of vehicles helps. More about those later. However, the biggest design element that helps to keep the battles focused is the Advance and Secure gameplay mode, which appears to be the most popular mode. A series of capture points lie between the two opposing teams (the Indonesian rebels and the US-led Joint Ops) which must be captured in order. This is a direct copy of UT2K4's

Onslaught mode. Not that we're complaining about this lack of innovation, as it works perfectly to keep the two teams in close contact. So JO has huge maps and large player numbers, but what about that other staple of online shooters, vehicles?

You'll be pleased to hear that JO includes some cool vehicles such as the US Army's new Stryker APC, not to mention the infamous Black Hawk Chopper. But apart from a beefy river cruiser, jammed bow to stern with .50 cal MGs, most of the vehicles are used for people moving rather than people mowing. This is a shame, as the Desert Combat mod for BF1942 has shown how much fun tank on tank action can be. The vehicle handling is

!!! From the mouth of Bennett: resist the urge to be a useless sniper cos you'll piss off your entire team.

## ❖ The screen fades into a blur as I'm tom to pieces by the shrapnel...

also a letdown, as they don't bounce around or slide anywhere near as much as Battlefield's.

### BYE BYE VOXELS

Novalogic's previous shooters weren't renowned for having the best graphics around

thanks to a turd of a technique known as voxels. Well, the voxels are all gone now, and this engine looks superb. It shares many similarities with FarCry — long draw distances, super slick water effects, and a cool foliage system. However, the hardware requirements are equally eye popping. Fortunately there are plenty of options to scale things back.

A very cool graphical technique is the way that players merge into the background at long range. It's

too demanding on hardware to draw grass at long range, so the game changes the players skin to match the colour of the background texture. It makes hiding in the grass a worthwhile move, unlike in Battlefield Vietnam.

This game has a lot of potential, with battles on a scale not yet seen in subscription-free online



shooters, but Novalogic appear to be doing their best to kill the game before it's even released. For some unfathomable reason, it has decided not to release a true dedicated server, which is absolutely necessary for any online game to survive (this is the free software that allows an ISP to host).

Without this feature JO is destined to act as if it has taken a round to the stomach, dying a slow and painful death. But if Novalogic get it together, it could well become the BF killer that they so obviously want it to be. <<

### AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC

### DETAILS

CATEGORY: Online shooter / PLAYERS: 1-150 / DEVELOPER: Novalogic / PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts / PRICE: \$89.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

### HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Huge battles with loads of people, sweet, sweet jungle warfare.

MINUS: High PC requirements, NO BLOODY SERVER?!

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 80 88

OVERALL

83

A great online shooter that has the potential to be No. 1



!!! Soldiers also includes some nifty multiplayer options, including a co-operative mode. So now you and a friend can both be evil together.



Tanks for flaming nothing



Tanks for the memories... of WWII that is



Being a soldier's a tankless job

# SOLDIERS: Heroes of World War II

**MAURICE BRANSCOMBE** is an unstoppable war machine

These days it seems like every third PC game released has some kind of affiliation with a major war of some sort, with WWII currently being the main perpetrator, and *Soldiers* is yet another. Putting you in charge of one of four nations (Britain, America, Russia and Germany), through more than 25 vaguely historical missions, *Soldiers* at first appears to follow the WWII game formula a little too closely, but upon further inspection this seemingly innocuous game has a lot more to offer.

## GENTLEMEN, TO EVIL!

From the outset *Soldiers* dares to go where many WWII themed games have feared to tread, by actually offering the opportunity to take the Nazi war machine by the reins and lead evil to victory. Why is this a good thing you ask? Call me unpatriotic if you will, but I can only spill the blood of so many goose-stepping, humorous moustache wearing, Ocktoberfest-attending German citizens before I get

a case of the yawns. Put simply, getting to be the bad guy for a change is the shit, and to its enduring credit *Soldiers* lets you be the baddest sons of bitches the world has ever seen.

Apart from getting to play both the axis and allies, *Soldiers'* other main draw card is that it offers the option of controlling the game via two separate methods, allowing the player to momentarily step out of the role of the commander of their army, and to instead control each of their minion's actions directly, essentially like a third-person shooter. These two interchangeable control systems both have their own strengths and weaknesses, for example, you shouldn't even try to execute a long-distance kill in commander mode, which invariably results in your selected grunt walking out of cover and into the enemy's blazing gats. Stealth kills are far more manageable when controlling in direct-control mode however, and getting to direct the action first-hand arguably makes

for a more exciting and visceral experience. The incorporation then of both control techniques certainly has its benefits, making the game play a little bit like what you would get if you left a copy of *Commandos* alone with a copy of *Cannon Fodder* with the lights dimmed and Barry White's "I'm Gonna Love You Just a Little More Baby" playing softly in the background.

*Soldiers* also does the business graphically, especially the detailed maps and the authentic vehicles. It's a real pity then that the pretty graphics are somewhat cheapened by the game's poor frame rate, which can drop to distractingly low levels, even on hardware that nearly triples the recommended specs. Equally as puzzling is why developers Best Way neglected to include a quick restart in the game, which means that each time you die you'll have to exit completely and reload it again entirely.

Regardless, *Soldiers* is a unique and challenging amalgam of two disparate genres. <<<

## AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCM / PC

## DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** RTS / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi / **DEVELOPER:** Best Way / **PUBLISHER:** Codemasters / **PRICE:** \$89.95 / **RATING:**TBC / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

## HYPER VERDICT

**PLUS:** Looks nice, challenging, being the bad guy.

**MINUS:** Frame rate problems, no mission restart.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

83 79 86

OVERALL

84

If you can still stand to play yet another WWII game, *Soldiers* is worthy.



# S<sup>2</sup>

# Silent Storm

As the conflict rages on the frontlines, you'll be leading a small multinational squad behind enemy lines to gather information and wreak havoc on your enemies while trying to thwart a mysterious new rising power whose plans are more horrific than anything the world has yet witnessed.

Silent Storm is a true 3D tactical turn-based Role-Playing-Game set against the backdrop of WWII. With fully rendered breathtaking 3D graphics including fully destructible environments, realistic weaponry and unlimited tactical possibilities.

Turn-based gaming has never looked this good!

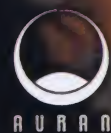


OFFICIAL WEBSITE: [www.silentstorm-online.de](http://www.silentstorm-online.de)

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

JoWood  
Productions



PC  
CD  
ROM



## ARMY MEN: Sarge's War

☞ The Army Men series. Where would our beloved industry, and indeed the world, be without them? Without this landmark franchise so many Christmas dreams would have gone unshattered, as children opened their presents to discover games that didn't actually make them cry. So many coffee mugs would have gone without the shiny drink coasters that each iteration of the series brought, and more importantly, the galaxy-swallowing vacuum that would be caused by the absence of unsold Army Men games from bargain bins around the world could well have threatened to tear the very fabric of our precious space-time continuum apart!

If you look at it that way then it must be a good thing that after the bankruptcy of its onetime owner, 3DO, that the poor souls at Take-Two Interactive decided the series deserved a second chance, and snapped up the publishing rights. The resultant game, Army Men: Sarge's War, is proof enough however that the Sergeant probably should have been left to go down with his ship. The game's bland, repetitive graphics pave the way for some truly average gameplay that would be hard pressed to satisfy even the least discerning gamer. Funnily enough though, for all of its incalculable flaws Army Men: Sarge's War actually ends up being one of the better games in the series (the intro especially is worthy of a chuckle or two). However, when the frame of reference for calling a game "better" is the other games in the Army Men series, those words soon lose all meaning. Poor.

Maurice Branscombe

### AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

### DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** Third-Person Shooter / **PLAYERS:** 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Global Star / **PUBLISHER:** Take-Two Interactive / **PRICE:** \$49.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** July /

VISUALS

58

SOUND

59

GAMEPLAY

53

OVERALL

54



Oh Sarge, when will your hi-jinks end?



## SAMURAI JACK: The Shadow of Aku

☞ Samurai Jack is a brilliant animated series of surprising depth given its flat, stylised visuals and marked lack of dialogue in many episodes, chronicling the adventures of a samurai who goes by the assumed name of Jack on a mission to destroy an evil time travelling demon named Aku.

Throughout the series Jack learns about different cultures, the nature of good and evil and the virtue of sacrifice. Unfortunately nothing aside from the stylised graphics translates into the game, Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku. Instead of a deep narrative punctuated by moments of violence we are given a trite series of levels in which Jack must do the same thing over and over again, namely fight hordes of dumb enemies and solve simple jumping puzzles. Whilst the action is fun for the most part it became quite tired fairly quickly. Add to this the lack of any real difficulty and the short play-time and you have a very forgettable experience — especially for one hundred benjamins.

On the up side, Samurai Jack does feature a fun combo system that requires the player to hit certain button combinations before the attack is actually made, making for some frantic but fun button mashing action.

Daniel Wilks

### AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

### DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** Action / **PLAYERS:** 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Adrenium Games / **PUBLISHER:** SEGA / **PRICE:** \$99.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

VISUALS

71

SOUND

78

GAMEPLAY

62

OVERALL

63



Killer bees on the swarm



## SHADOW OPS: Red Mercury

☞ Yo. Tron see a few good ideas behind Shadow Ops but it's obvious from the get-go that none o' dem have got the skizzy to pay tha bizzle. The first obvious feature you come across is that the game has obviously modeled itself more along the lines of Hollywood war films than actual events, so the action is firmly rooted in a run and gun tradition of throwing hordes of playa haterz at the playa throughout a number of linear-ass levels.

But yo, a few things stop the run and gun philosophy from fully working, namely the fact that the playa simply moves too slow and the relative lack of available ammunition for any of the guns, meaning that the playa has to spend mo' time hunting around for ammo or hiding in the hope that one of the brain dead squad AI takes out an enemy with ammunition on them.

Further pain is added with the over reliance on scripted sequences. Although it looks like the developers have designed some of the levels for a stealthy approach, most of the playa hater enemies won't even show they skinny asses until you have reached a designated position, making it all but impossible to pick off enemies by leaning around corners and shit. To make matters worse some of these spawned jive ass suckaz will appear behind you — even if you're standing in a corner.

Remember, as Tron say "clickedy clack, it's all about the roll o' the dice". And this game ain't got the luck.

Tron

### AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

### DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** FPS / **PLAYERS:** 1-8 / **DEVELOPER:** Zombie / **PUBLISHER:** Atari / **PRICE:** \$99.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

VISUALS

77

SOUND

80

GAMEPLAY

58

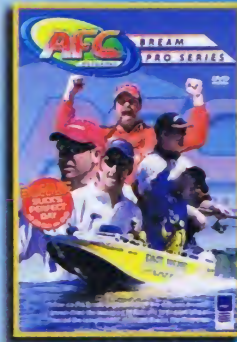
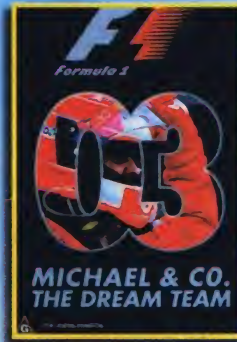
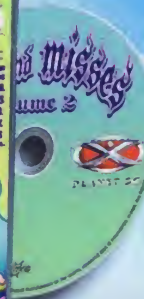
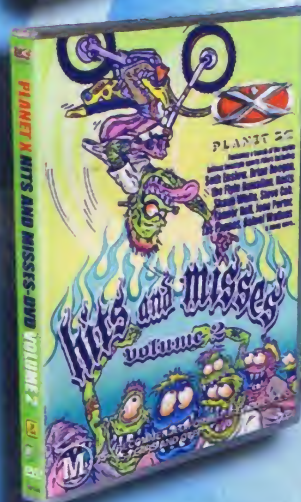
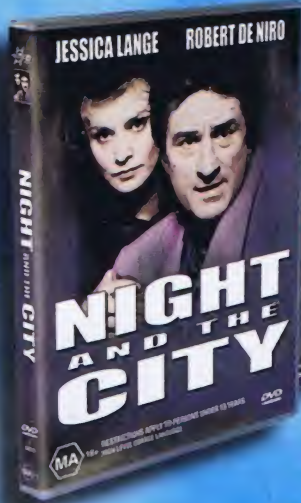
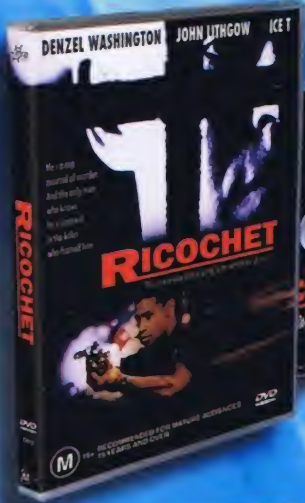
OVERALL

60



So average even blind fire can't save it

# A DVD FOR EVERY KIND OF DAD THIS FATHER'S DAY!



Available at all leading DVD outlets from 4th August 2004!



# VIRTUAL HAIRSTYLE 5.0

"A review in the medium of budget priced PC software"



**1** Stop the presses! We have our cover for the month! Check it out guys, this will make you glad you're working in the games industry! Drum roll please! \*the lights dim and Cam's voice booms throughout the office\* Since the dawn of time, man has wondered if it was possible to distill the essence of a Ricki Lake makeover into software form. Well the long search is over - Virtual Hairstyle 5.0 has arrived!



Amos: why cavemen painted on walls.



Daniel Staines: Game Theory expert? Or Gay Theory? You be the judge



Malky - destined to be either a pirate or a Days of Our Lives character. How do I know? VH told me so!

**2** Let's face it. None of you guys are exactly what I'd call "lookers". With the notable exception of Amos of course. This is your chance to find a new style, a new look, a new outlook on life. You'd be amazed at the difference a kicky beret or a little lippy can make! Not that I would know. Let's see how everyone turned out...



The K-Man is a straight up P.I.M.P. At least after a Virtual Hairstyle makeover he is



Bennett: He can "ring" our bell anytime...



When too much Amos is barely enough, we present: PUBE BOY!



**3** Okay, the next one is going to require a bit of a trip. Off we go, up the East Coast, to a little place called Townsville to see if we can't makeover Mr Stephen Farrelly.



\*Note to Steve: we promise this is the last joke about you being from Townsville. From now on we'll be concentrating on ripping on Bennett for being from Perth!



**4** Okay, so you guys might be thinking this software isn't quite as dynamic as we led you to believe. But take a trip back in time with us, if you will, to an era before Virtual Hairstyle even existed. Would Daniel Wilks look good with long blonde luxurious hair? A rough Paint Shop approximation would be as close as we'd get to knowing. What a primitive time.

**6** Plus, consider what a difference having this technology available for game characters could make. I hardly think an Imp in Doom would be very concerned with attacking you if it was too busy admiring its new hairstyle in the mirror. But by the same token, how would Gordon Freeman go about saving the world if he was weighed down by a funky new doo and nice necklace. We may never know. Or more accurately, we will.

# G-DAWWG

*Northside 'til I Die*



**5** And hey, you can't fault a company with a commitment to bringing BLING to the people. Here's what happened when we ran Cam through a beta version of the Virtual Hairstyle: Dub Edition expansion pack! Blau!



**7** Although Virtual Hairstyle is like the Amos of PC software – the very pinnacle of human endeavour, there are creatures for whom such sterling software would serve no purpose. That's right, this photo of Tim Levy has not been edited in any way. Bravo Tim! And bravo Virtual Hairstyle 5.0.

# SHINING FORCE: Resurrection of the Dark Dragon

In the GBA tradition of "tactics" franchise updates, Shining Force comes from the MegaDrive crypt of 16bit classics as a renovated game replete with all that's needed to maintain today's "advance" consistency as well as classic flair. Based on the MegaDrive title Shining Force: The Legacy of Great Intention, Resurrection of the Dark Dragon introduces players to a young hero with no memory. Skilled with a sword yet despised by the knights of the kingdom of Rune, our amnesiac protagonist earns his respect when he is the only one left (along with a motley crüe of Rune misfits) who can save the castle and, indeed, the kingdom of Rune.

## SWALLOW THE DARK DRAGON

There's a lot of text to swallow in Resurrection of the Dark Dragon, but it's somewhat worth it for the sake of wanting to fight for something. The environments, while full of life, are lacking in explorative value giving the game a very linear feeling and a need for something greater than just "going through the motions" is definitely what a lot of players will seek. To this end, the game can be an immediate turn off; the animations and presentation aren't even close to games like Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, Tactics Ogre or Fire Emblem. Equally, the story is an absolute Eastern RPG cliché, presenting itself as more boring than camp or geekily appealing — it really becomes an unruly task to hear the same sort of NPC banter you'd expect from an NES game. But, putting up with the game's immediate shortcomings pays off in the end if you're looking for a game beyond the aforementioned gems to tide you over until the next big RPG.

Resurrection of the Dark Dragon isn't a bad game perse, it's just old-hat instead of old-school. The battle system initially comes off as second rate to the title's peers, although closer inspection does reveal a relatively deep and rewarding system worth learning the ins and outs of — but you have to have patience. Essentially, characters have a battle map and a set number of movement squares based on class, terrain and HP. Moving characters to face the opposition can result in direct combat, while other



Narsha Narsha Narsha! A Very Shining Sequel...

characters can be moved just out of counter range to perform projectile attacks that range from spears and bows to all kinds of magic. The key to winning these battles is absolute team management — that is, understanding the individual traits and gifts of each character, utilising the right items at the right time and generally keeping an eye on things.

## SPRITES MOVE MORE THAN THAT, RIGHT?

The game's visual stylings aren't anything to get too excited about either. Aged sprites programmed with no more than three or four overall animations make it hard to fall in love the game's characters or even become interested in their plight. The music though, is great with an uplifting score full of quirky numbers that will keep things a little more interesting. After your first few battles things will begin to liven up and the story does take something of a backseat to levelling up, recruiting new characters and finding treasures and it's in these aspects of play Shining Force, well... shines. It does deliver the RPG gameplay staples well, and as mentioned earlier, the game is a good fill-in until that next big thing comes along.

Resurrection of the Dark Dragon won't change your life, but it's like a good TV commercial when you're watching an awesome show — you don't hate that it's there, but the show will always win in the end.

Stephen Farrelly



## DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** RPG / **PLAYERS:** 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Amusement Vision / **PUBLISHER:** Sega / **PRICE:** \$69.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
62	80	76	71



# CRASH BANDICOOT: Fusion

For years we have pondered the age old question of what happens to video game incarnations when they reach the end of their life span. Some, such as Mario and Zelda undergo transformations to stay in touch with the current generation of gaming theory, some end up in a landfill and some, in fact most, are shafted to a Game Boy and slapped with a moniker or trendy buzz word - this time it's 'fusion'.

## BUZZ WORDS

What is 'Fusion' you ask? Well Vivendi have taken Crash Bandicoot and Spyro and transplanted them into each other's worlds. Ripto and Neo Cortex, the arch enemies of Spyro and Crash respectively have teamed up and hope to rule the land together. The only way to stop them is through mundane platforming, lacklustre mini-games and lots of collecting...

Vicarious Visions have put together a nice collection of animations, for Crash but really that's about it. You make your way through levels collecting Wumpa fruit which allows you access to mini-game areas in order to collect crystals, which is the overall goal of the game.



Crash Fusion makes use of the GBA link cable and you can have up to four players bashing it out in mediocre multiplayer mayhem. Aside from that Crash is as weak as a watered down light beer. Plonking him into a different environment may have done wonders for the character if they had not opted for a ridiculously simple, outdated and worn out 2D platform format.

Andrew Bulmer

## DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** Platformer / **PLAYERS:** 1-4 / **DEVELOPER:** Vicarious Visions / **PUBLISHER:** Vivendi Universal / **PRICE:** \$69.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
60	40	50	55



Someone's about to get PAANCHED. Paanch him back and it'll be ON!



And the Crash jumped over the moon



You're a god damn fairy Crash

# SPYRO: Fusion

So you've just read a review of Crash: Fusion and are thinking that its other half will be just as lame. Well stop right there because Spyro: Fusion is one of the most innovative and entertaining games on the GBA... Psyche! In reality Spyro has everything in common with Crash, the same platforming style of play where you collect items in order to collect more items, and similarly you engage in dozens of different mini-games where you are given unlimited attempts to reach the stated goal.

## UNLIMITED ATTEMPTS

It's somewhat perplexing that they have given a Dragon and a Bandicoot virtually the exact same play mechanics and what we have in the end (and I can speak for both Crash and Spyro in this instance given that they are so familiar in design), is a collection of mini-games linked to together by very indifferent platforming. It is possible the platform elements could have been bearable but the mini-games are very simplistic and will only find an audience with a younger crowd.

Spyro may not feature the greatest game design but the animations are



nicely done: incinerate a sheep with your fire breath and it will be instantly engulfed in a fireball leaving the eyes blinking before the burned carcass slumps to the ground in a pile of ash. Spyro also features the same link up capabilities as Crash Fusion. However, if you link a mediocre game to a mediocre game all you have is two mediocre games linked together.

Andrew Bulmer

## DETAILS

**CATEGORY:** Platform / **PLAYERS:** 1-4 / **DEVELOPER:** Vicarious Visions / **PUBLISHER:** Vivendi Universal / **PRICE:** \$69.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
60	40	55	60



The Contrabulous Fusetrapion of Professor Spyratio Hufnagel



Come here and feel my horn Spyro



Whееее! Bored now...



[right] Bigger the above pics, why not do a second Tim caption by jove? Oops no room



[above] Tim AKA LT Smash  
(ymra eht nio)

## Ranger Mission SAMMY

>> Tim Levy

While most "real" jobs don't even give you a decent 1% chance of dying at work, (perhaps you could foolishly die by being electrocuted after falling ass first through the office photocopier) the job of being a U.S. Army Ranger is almost a near guarantee you'll soon be hanging in heaven with God, Allah, Yoda or any deity of your choice in this crazy Al-Qaeda and Coke sponsored day and age.

### SKIVVIES SUCK

To give us "civvies" an idea of what a "turn of the millennium" Ranger (no — not Walker Texas Ranger—there are no bar brawls in this game) is faced with, the game has 20 missions divided into 4 stages which are located in the Desert, Tundra, Jungle or City.

Ranger Mission is different to the traditional shooters in several ways. For a start you are given 3 lives per game, but you only lose one if you fail to clear a mission as opposed to

being shot. There are five types of missions to clear: shoot enemies in the assigned order; defeat enemies at the "SHOOT" timing; reach objective within the time limit; hit a specific number of enemies; destroy the "giant" weapon (tank etc).

None of these missions are a piece of cake to complete. In some missions you will have to shoot 45 enemy terrorists from a moving vehicle and only 50 pop up, and some for barely a second. In the missions where you HAVE to shoot them in a particular order, it is frustrating as you can see enemy 2 and 3 and then 1 pops up for a millisecond. In another mission you have to shoot intercontinental ballistic missiles with your own unguided missiles.

But the coolest thing about Ranger Mission is that, unlike the Time Crisis and Virtua Cop series, Ranger Mission gives us shooter fans what we have wanted all along, which is a huge arsenal including machine guns, sniper rifles, rocket launchers,

shot guns, assault rifles, sub machine guns and grenades. Instead of picking up weapons by shooting creates or via dead enemies, you are allocated one weapon per mission. So in one mission you could be lobbing grenades in anticipation of bad guys exiting doors and walking into the fiery explosion, while in another you could be a helicopter door gunner, or be on foot infiltrating an office building with your fully auto sub machine gun.

### FROM THE MAKERS OF GIANT DOCTOR BAGHEAD

There is only one real disappointment with this game, which is that if you are on the fifth and final mission of one of the stages and you decide to "continue", after completing that fifth mission, the game does not progress to the next stage. It will only show you your stats for that stage. Bummer.

While developer Sammy may not be renowned for its hit titles in the



arcade world, it IS a big cheese in Japan's huge Pachinko industry. It is so big that it has just bought / merged with Sega in a deal valued at \$2.8 billion. So expect to see more titles (albeit under the Sega banner) in the near future from this little known company as they attempt to keep us arcade fans enthralled with fresh innovative products - or to quote Sammy's Anglicized Japanese website (this obviously sounds MUCH cooler in Japanese) "New winds always blow from Sammy." Nice! <<<

SCORE: 8/10



# MEDAL OF HONOR

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[www.moh.com.au](http://www.moh.com.au)



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## Making Something Unreal

[//www.unrealtournament.com/ut2003/contest.php](http://www.unrealtournament.com/ut2003/contest.php)

 Over the years the mod community has proved time and time again that you don't need to create an engine from scratch to realise your dream game. Using freely available tools and existing engines from titles like Quake, Unreal and Half-Life, aspiring developers and enthusiasts around the world are able to flex their creative and technical muscles for the world to see. From classic modifications like Aliens for Doom to the most famous mod of all – Counter Strike for Half-Life, mods have become an integral part of the PC FPS genre. The frenetic fast-paced action of Unreal Tournament is no stranger to mods and now thanks to a cross-promotion with NVIDIA up to \$1,000,000 in prizes are up for grabs for the best mods out there. With categories such as best shooter, best non-shooter, best map, best real-time movie, and best game-type – here's a closer look at some of the finalists.

**>> Kosta Andreadis**



### UnWheel

[//unwheel.beyondunreal.com/](http://unwheel.beyondunreal.com/)

■ UnWheel, a driving modification for Unreal Tournament 2003/4 uses the existing game and Karma physics engine to create an impressive racing game with multiple car types, models and game modes. From standard lap-based racing, to free-roaming modes like CTF and King of the Hill, UnWheel is an impressive example of using an existing game engine to create something very different. Controls are kept simple and thanks to the physics engine used they handle remarkably well across the well designed and varied tracks.

### Deathball

[//www.deathball.net/](http://www.deathball.net/)

■ Here's a mod that falls under the non-shooter category, although it still retains the first-person perspective. Called Deathball, this mod aims to blend the first-person shooter style of gameplay with sports like Soccer, Rugby, and that futuristic sport Johnny Rico plays in Starship Troopers. Deathball is a commendable effort in game modification and undeniable proof that a first-person soccer game could work. Deathball is definitely fun to play online and with a heavy focus on team-based play here's hoping the first-person sport concept continues to evolve.



Air Buccaneers

### Air Buccaneers

[//ludocraft.oulu.fi/airbuccaneers](http://ludocraft.oulu.fi/airbuccaneers)

■ This is one mod that features an original concept - hot-air balloon fights. Using cannons, mines and other non-space age weapons players take to the skies in this multiplayer centric game. With impressive artwork, models and textures Air Buccaneers is one of the more original mods submitted and a great change of pace to the countless Counter-Strike and WWII mods flooding the scene today. As it's still in Beta the game is still a little on the buggy side but with a host of game modes and maps already available there are still plenty of reasons to take to the skies in your very own hot-air balloon.



Air Buccaneers

## Infection

[//www.planetunreal.com/infection/](http://www.planetunreal.com/infection/)

■ This FPS mod turns the basic elements of the survival horror genre – zombies, a creepy atmosphere, multiple weapons and a small town setting into a solid little shooter. Featuring some well executed cinematic sequences, character models and weapons – Infection is a drastic departure from the fast paced frag fest that is usually associated with the Unreal Tournament engine. Featuring plenty of blood, moody music and sprawling fog this is one of the few single-player mods submitted into the competition, but with only a handful of levels available is over a little too quickly.



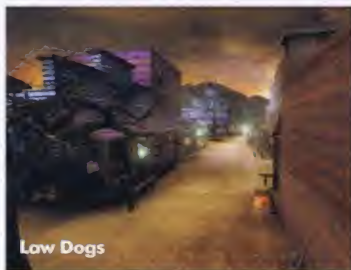
## The Showdown (film)

[//acceleratedpictures.com/](http://acceleratedpictures.com/)

■ Possibly one of the most overlooked categories in this competition would be 'Real-Time Movie', where the name of the game is Machinima – the unique blend of filmmaking that involves game development. One of the finalists in this phase of the competition, dubbed "The Showdown" uses in-game models, animation and environments from Unreal Tournament to create a western-style standoff between three soldiers. Although the animation is somewhat crude, this serves as a good example for both the pros and cons of Machinima in general.

## Freeze Match (Game-Type)

■ Possibly one of the simplest types of mods to create but never the less relies on the ability to create something fun and new. With standard deathmatch, capture the flag and king of the hill already a staple part of multiplayer shooters – freeze match offers a slight difference to the tried and true team-based deathmatch gameplay. When killed, a player doesn't die, but instead remains frozen – leaving it up to a teammate to un-freeze them. Simple? Yes. Fun? You bet.



## Law Dogs

[//dynamic6.gamespy.com/~lawdogs/usmarshals/index.php](http://dynamic6.gamespy.com/~lawdogs/usmarshals/index.php)

■ This western styled multiplayer mod provides players the opportunity to don their six shooters and take part in some old-fashioned gun battles. With unique character models, weapons and environments this mod blends the fast paced gameplay of Unreal Tournament with the old west. Pitting Marshals against Outlaws the objectives are reminiscent of Counter Strike as the Marshals defend the town whilst the Outlaws rob and loot. Although quite a lot of fun and an impressive achievement overall, the characters seem to move a little too quickly for this type of genre, making it more of a UT styled run-and-jump affair than an old fashioned shoot-out.



## Red Orchestra

[//redorchestramod.gameservers.net](http://redorchestramod.gameservers.net)

■ Red Orchestra serves as one of the more epic mod undertakings on display, with multiple designers, coders, and artists across the globe all contributing. Set during the Second World War, Red Orchestra focuses on the conflict between Soviet and Nazi forces. Featuring realistic weapons, vehicles, environments and physics, Red Orchestra has all the hallmarks of an intense standalone war-based shooter along the lines of Medal of Honor, Call of Duty and Battlefield 1941.



## Links

»» Kosta Andreadis



### HomeScreen

[www.homescreen.com.au](http://www.homescreen.com.au)

»» The world of movie rentals is in a transition period right now, with a whole host of online rental services popping up to compete with the traditional bricks and mortar approach. HomeScreen is one of them, and after trialing the service (the first month is free) we're very impressed. Basically, you choose a monthly fee, which entitles you to have between two and five DVDs out at a time. Select a list of titles you want to rent online (from around 10,000) and as you finish with each DVD you pop it in the reply paid envelope and send it back to be replaced with a new one. There are no late fees, so the number of DVDs you get sent a month is entirely up to you.



### Peter Pan

<http://www.pixyland.org/peterpan/>

»» Outside of the land of fiction, Peter Pan, the famous fairy tale about a boy who never grew up, always seems to bring the freaks out of the woodworks. First Michael Jackson, now this guy comes onto the scene – and if the decision on who was more like Peter Pan rested on who wore green tights and pranced around like a fruit cake on crack this guy would win – hands down. Sometimes one has to wonder if individuality and freedom of expression are all they're cracked up to be, because if this is the outcome I think its time to reanimate Stalin's corpse for Communism 2: Zombie Stalin and the Bloody Return of the Red Menace.



### Breakin' Transformers

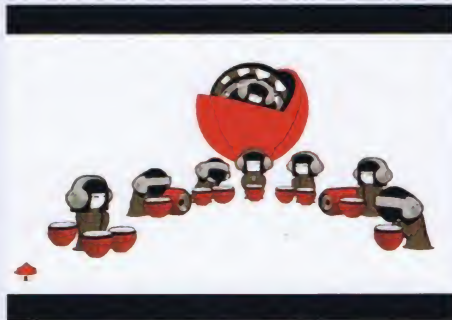
<http://triadfrog.home.comcast.net>

»» There are a lot of things in this world that are indisputably cool, two examples would be Transformers and break dancing. Well thanks to the magic of fusion (i.e. the merging of two things cool) someone has done the world a great service and combined these very two examples of 'cool' into a short piece we like to call 'Breakdancing Transformers'. Although they may have been built for other purposes, like stopping the Decepticons, Transformers still find the time to unwind and even partake in a dance-off or two. And thanks to their transforming abilities they can even bust out moves that Turbo from the hit movie Breakin' would love to have in his arsenal.

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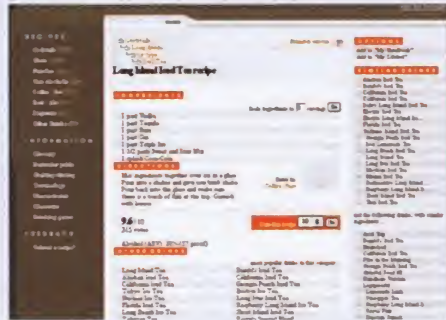
**OPTUSnet**  
BROADBAND





**Tokyo Plastic**  
<http://www.tokyoplastic.com>

>> Animation on the web has come a long way over the course of a few short years – mostly thanks to Macromedia Flash. Tokyo Plastic, an interactive Flash website that features some award winning animation is an impressive example of how powerful these tools can be. What may at one stage cost in the tens of thousands to produce, can now be created with software packages that'll only set you back a few hundred dollars. Which in the end leaves it all up to talent and ability, and as we're pretty much fresh out of both at the moment, let's move on shall we?



**Drink Mixer**  
<http://www.drinks.mixer.com>

>> What'll it be? A scotch and coke you say. Don't you know that's one of the most ordinary and craptastic beverages in existence? What are you, a noob or something? Oh I see, so you're new to this whole drinking game thing – well no need to worry too much because salvation is at hand! Yes, you too can be on your way to becoming an alcoholic beverage connoisseur like me. Lesson one – know your measurements! We can't stress that enough people, knowing the ingredients is only half the job. Lesson two – fruits are your friend! Leave the coke and lemonade to the kids. Lesson three – visit this site for thousands of cocktail recipes.



**Mr. Bling**  
<http://www.mrbling.com/>

>> It's the question that drives us Neo – are you a stone cold pimp or a busta-ass punk? If you answered the latter then yo ass needs to drop by and visit Mr. Bling so you can get your mouth decked out 24k of custom bling, like Hyper's resident mack daddy – C-Dawg. Jewelry doesn't end with your neck, fingers, toes, and ears fool – them's teeth are there for more than biting into your food or your bitch's fine ass. And ain't nuttin' like a pimp cup to round things out. Word.

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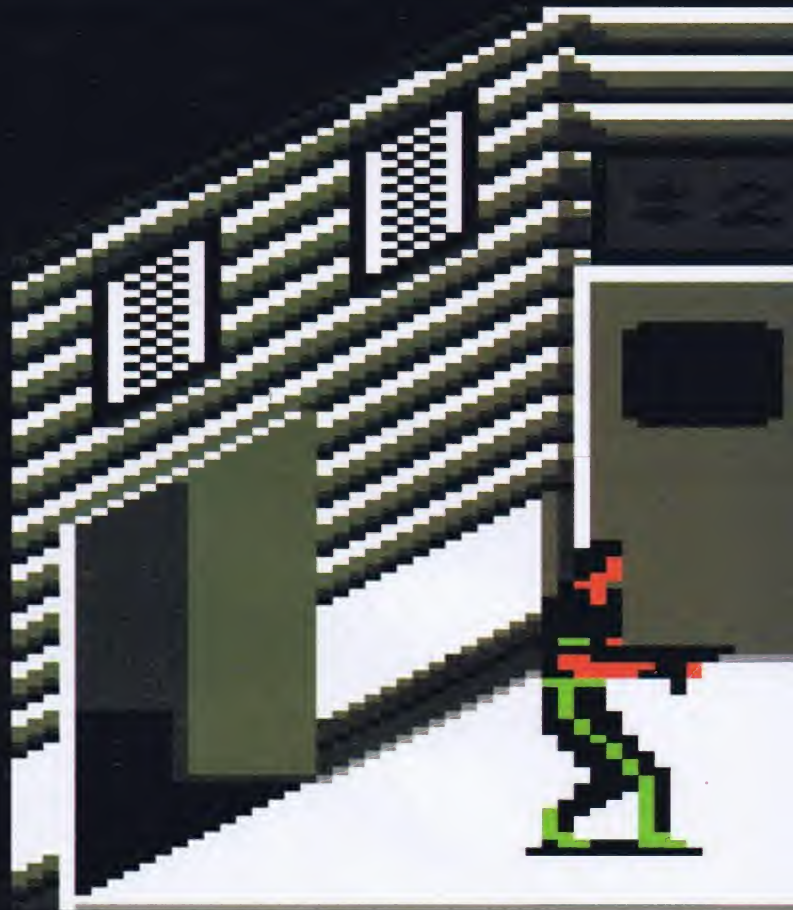
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# PROJECT: FIRESTART

DEVELOPED BY: DYNAMIX / PUBLISHED BY: EA

»» ANDY HUNT SHEDS LIGHT ON A LITTLE KNOWN C64 CLASSIC...

» You kids and your fangled new technology. Geez, the only way you can properly scare yourselves silly is by playing one of these "survival horror" game thingies, each with their own unique warning to gamers of their explicit scenes of violence and gore. Pfft. Back in our day, we didn't need flesh eating zombies, atmospheric lighting effects and disturbing musical scores to make us wet our pants. All we needed back then were berserk aliens, 8 colour palettes and tinny sound effects to initiate our incontinence problems. Nowadays, we use Depends™.

**RESIDENT DARKNESS HILL**  
Many people today applaud Capcom for their creation of a totally new genre, the Survival Horror. But, depend™ing on your own personal

definition, the survival horror genre was already alive. Either it wasn't that well known, or many simply define it as an Action/Adventure, but Dynamix's Project: Firestart (PF) for the Commodore 64, was keeping the local drycleaner in business well before the Resident Evils, Eternal Darknesses and Silent Hills began stalking the earth. This little gem of a title was quietly responsible for scaring the bejesus, bemaury and bejoseph out of kids who had never ever witnessed red pixels on their screens before.

You arrive on space station Prometheus with orders to investigate its sudden loss of transmission, and also to find some explanation for the eerie shadow you witnessed in the opening cut scene. After docking, you worked your way

down to the airlock, only to be greeted by a mutilated body, its dismembered arm and the word "Danger" ominously smeared in blood on the floor.

As you explored the space station further, you would see grotesque reminders of the violence that had taken place. There were even more body parts strewn about the halls, like clothes across a messy teenager's bedroom floor and red splatters painted on the walls, indicating that some behemoth had easily crushed the skulls of the station crew.

But PF was not all blood and gore. Players had free roam of the multi-levelled space station Prometheus (even with its own arcade parlour), and required them to explore the empty metal tracts and piece together the clues as to what exactly happened.

Of course, there was the whole matter of dealing with the nasties that had managed to infest the surrounds, and also deducing their origins.

Gameplay switched between the side scrolling 2D variety when traversing the hallways, and into a sort of pseudo-3D isometric view when you entered a room of import. Being able to deeply (at the time) explore the environment provided more depth and intrigue to the floating tomb that was Prometheus.

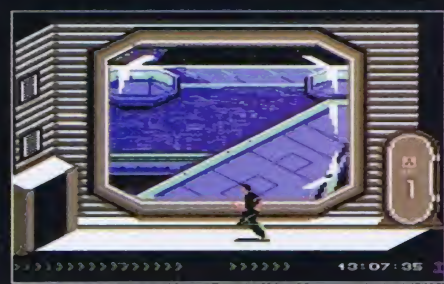
Atmosphere. Project: Firestart had it in shovel loads. Well, considering the limitations of the technology on the ol' Commodore 64, you'd be surprised at how big a shovel Dynamix used with this game. Imagine standing in a deadly silent hallway, your near empty gun as your only companion. Suddenly the lights turn off. Is it



Project: Firestart



(Right) He's a firestarter, twisted firestarter



because of the self-destruct system that you initiated? Or something more sinister? Suddenly you hear the familiar, but still unnerving shriek of one of the monsters. Hurriedly, you press the button for the elevator, hoping it will arrive quickly to take you down to the escape pods. Waiting, waiting...

A brief cut scene appears, showing that this is no ordinary, run-of-the-mill monster, but instead it's the chief, white, über-monster.

Sweat dripping from your brow, you stand your ground and let fly with whatever ammunition you have left. You continue firing your laser, but the monster surges onward, unperturbed. Where is that damn elevator? The monster is getting closer and closer, so close you can almost feel its breath on your face.

Finally, your defiance cracks and you flee, running like heck for the nearest door. Your mind is ticking — surely you can outrun this thing in the corridors, as previous monsters had been slow, meandering sloths. Nope, this is the über-monster that runs just as fast as you, and hands out death as quick as a shady blackjack dealer with tarot cards. You try to enter a room, but aren't fast enough.

Death approaches swiftly. You are treated to a brief, but serene scene showing your body face down, battered and torn. Time to try again — there are no saves, weakling.

**NOBODY CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM, "REMAKE THIS!"**

The sound effects were fairly limited, especially considering the standards that you young, Depends™less

whippersnickers have these days. Sounds were provided for your laser fire and the odd blips, blops and chirps from computers. Music was simplistic and only featured during the odd cut scene. But the lack of any sound and music served to only accentuate the Event Horizon-esque atmosphere. The interminable silence unnerved you. Your ears strained for any sounds to provide you with a hint of what was coming. You were on tenterhooks when nothing was around, and then a psychotic mess of trigger-happy self-preservation the moment that you thought you heard something out of the ordinary. Fantastic stuff, for 1989.

PF also contained multiple endings, depend™ing on how well you performed on your mission. Needless to say, you had to fulfil all


of your objectives in order to get the "you li'l ripper, happy ending" result, which required you to fully explore the space station, find any possible survivors (one a beautiful woman, natch), and then escaping before the Prometheus was blown to kingdom come and going. This kind of open-endedness was quite advanced for a C64 game of circa 1989, and the visceral violence and gore pushed the boundaries of what could be contained in a videogame.

Considering that survival horror games are now dime a dozen, with only a few out there that haven't become stale, Project: Firestart absolutely screams for a makeover. If done well, it could stand out from the rest of the wannabes and give this visionary title the recognition that it so richly deserves. <<

# PIONEER DJM-909

RRP \$2499

[www.pioneeraus.com.au](http://www.pioneeraus.com.au)

 What with DJ: Decks and FX on PS2 and Hercules' DJ Console for PC, we've been really getting into the DJing side of things recently at Hyper, so we figured - why not test some seriously top end equipment while we're at it? With that in mind, we got in touch with Pioneer and borrowed a CDJ1000MK2 (reviewed on the following page) and DJM-909 mixer. Life at Hyper's hard, no doubt about it.

From the moment we got the DJM-909 "battle mixer" out of the box we knew we were in for a treat. This beast is built like a tank and has an imposing list of features. The first thing that really jumps out at you with the 909 is the large LCD touch screen for the onboard effects unit. The system has two banks (one for each channel of course) of 50 effects. You can assign your favourite nine effects

for easy access, using the three hotkeys to bring up three effects onscreen at a time.

All the effects are easily customised, allowing you to choose which registers you want effects to be applicable for, and also the timing on each effect. Only want the low pass filter swirling around the mid and treble and looping in and out every two bars? No problem. It's so seamless because the mixer has a built in BPM counter to keep the timing of effects in sync with the tune playing. There's also a "tap" button so that you can manually enter in the BPM if you want to do something a little different.

The effects are divided into "Beat" effects and "Fader" effects. Fader effects allow you to modify the effect by assigning one of the channel faders or the cross fader to

the effect. Thus, you can use the fader to change the pitch of the track using the Pitch Adjust effect, or to gradually bring an effect in, or better still to drop the tune and leave the effect. Reverb has never been this much fun.

The touch screen makes switching effects and parameters on the fly a piece of cake, allowing you to truly get experimental, and having it all built into the mixer just simplifies things further, making this feature rich mixer truly portable. The DJM-909 even comes with an output for a pedal, which could potentially give DJs even more options (although we didn't have a pedal to test this out for ourselves).

Beyond the effects unit, the 909 is a great piece of equipment, with all the functionality you'd expect. The feel of the unit is incredibly solid too - we can imagine getting

a few years worth of solid use out of this (if we didn't have to give it back!). There's plenty of customisable options too, such as the double fader control, which allows you to adjust the way the cross fader works for each channel separately. You can see what this means too, thanks to the display on the LCD screen.

Apparently the Scratch Perverts worked with Pioneer to help make the 909 one of the most advanced two channel mixers out there, and it certainly lives up to expectations. This is not just a mixer for hip hop DJs though - we put it through its paces in a house and techno context and it performed beautifully, with fantastic sound quality and performance. Of course, all this quality and durability comes at a cost - around \$2500. Better start saving.

**Cam Shea**



[right] Call me twisted, but that's one sexy mixer







# PIONEER CDJ-1000MK2 DIGITAL VINYL TURNTABLE

RRP \$2299

[www.pioneeraus.com.au](http://www.pioneeraus.com.au)

The CDJ-1000 has been the industry standard CD mixing deck for several years now, thanks to great vinyl emulation, great design and great build and sound quality. MK2 builds on the strengths of the original, introducing a number of subtle changes.

Indeed, at first glance, the decks seem exactly the same (we used a MK1 and MK2 hooked up to the DJM-909 for the purposes of the test), aside from the silver rim on the jog dial. Testing out the jog dial, however, it was immediately evident that it felt a little lighter and a little smoother to use, making scratching feel even more like vinyl. The display and lights on the MK2 are also a little

brighter, making for better visibility in a club environment.

Just like the MK1, the jog dial can be adjusted to respond and pick up exactly as you'd like. It doesn't take long to get a feel for, and once you do, all the basics of DJing are very intuitive indeed. You can throw into tracks just as you would on vinyl turntables and you'll soon forget that the platter doesn't actually spin. This is because you can switch between vinyl emulation (where touching the platter and moving it will stop and manipulate the music) and CDJ mode, which is used for speeding up and slowing down the track that is playing, in order to sync it in with the other channel.

So what are the advantages over mixing with vinyl? Instant reverse, a looping utility and being able to store three cue points at any one time. Thus you can do some really creative stuff and even use the cue points a little like a sampler, taking you instantly to a hook, vocal line, break or whatever.

The MK2 comes with a 16MB MMC card, which can store your cue and loop points as well as wave data (which is the visual indication of peaks and troughs in the track that allow you to get a feel for what's coming up) for hundreds of CDs. Pop a disc in and the relevant information will instantly be recalled.

Other cool functions include Master tempo, which lets you adjust the tempo of the music while keeping the pitch the same, Loop In and Out adjust for your loops (so you can get the timing perfect), full digital out, CD text display, and a wider tempo range (the MK2 now takes the range up to +/-100%) – not to mention even finer tempo adjustment.

It's disappointing that the CDJ-1000MK2 doesn't support mp3s, but we guess that until digital decks get a large screen to make navigation through the many mp3 tracks you can store on a CD (or better still a hard drive), it just wouldn't be practical anyway.

So much fun it should be illegal.  
**Cam Shea**



# WILLIAMS F1 TEAM RACING WHEEL

RRP \$99.95 for PS2, \$109.95 for XBOX  
AVAILABLE FOR PS2 & XBOX

It wasn't that long ago that many third party wheels for console were very flimsy devices indeed. It often felt like the steering mechanic was controlled by a single internal elastic band that could snap at any time. Thank god those days are over. The Williams F1 wheel is, simply put, fantastic. It has a heavy duty build that demands to be taken seriously, and the best wheel "feel" that we've come across on console, including a great snap back to center. Adding to its status is the fact that it's modeled on the racing wheel used in the Williams F1 BMW FW23 racing car, making for an

authentic, if somewhat ugly product.

The wheel has four in-built sensitivity settings, allowing you to adjust the steering range to taste. Although the D-pad and some of buttons aren't as accessible as we'd like, in the context of racing, everything is quite within reach – including the paddles underneath the wheel and the fantastic up/down gear shift (pity it's on the wrong side). The pedals are also better than average, with decent range of movement – although it's

easy to get the cables caught up under the pedals. Like most wheels these days the Williams F1 comes with adjustable leg support so that it doesn't slide about on your lap.

Although this wheel has been available since the beginning of the year, there's a force feedback PS2 version on the way that will retail for \$139.95, and will have both vibrate and force feedback functionality for all games that offer these features, such as GT4 Prologue. Whichever version you buy, you can be guaranteed one of the best console wheel experiences out there.

Cam Shea



[above] Five by Five B




Fortunately he's not wearing Aeon Flux-style clothes



## Chronicles of Riddick: Dark Fury

UNIVERSAL, M 15+

 Who ever would have thought that a low budget sci-fi thriller like *Pitch Black* could have parlayed its success into becoming a multi-million dollar franchise? Not us, that's for sure. *Chronicles of Riddick: Dark Fury* is a half-hour animated feature that acts as a bridge between *Pitch Black* and the upcoming *Chronicles of Riddick* movie, charting some of the events that happen in the five years between the two films and going some of the way to explaining the changing relationships between Imam, Jack and, of course, Riddick.

After escaping the planet, the survivors (Jack, Imam and Riddick) are captured by a ship of mercenary

bounty hunters led by the artistically inclined Chillingsworth, showing the titular anti-hero the true nature of evil. Whilst the animation itself is short and the plot is a little thin on the ground, *Dark Fury* serves its purpose admirably and will keep the viewer enthralled throughout the running time with a mixture of excellent action, voice acting and animation. Directed by Peter Chung, the genius behind the sadly departed *Aeon Flux* series, *Dark Fury* fairly screams along and proves that western style 2D animation isn't dead, just in dire need of a new stylistic direction.

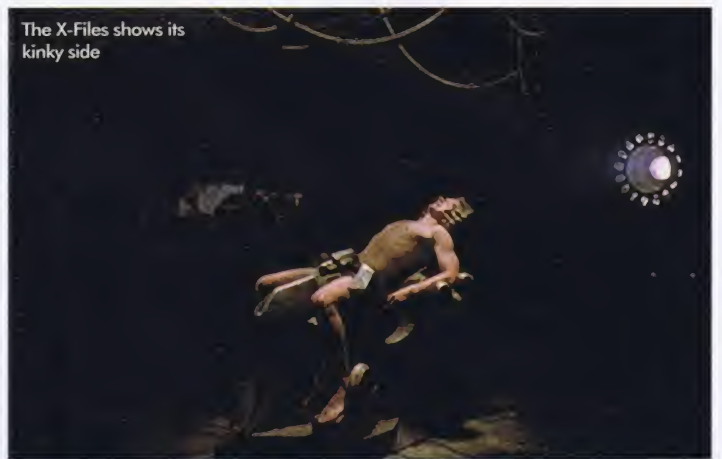
**Daniel Wilks**

**MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 8**




Fast and ruthless "service". It's on!

The X-Files shows its kinky side



## The X-Files SEASON 8

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, MA15+

 Let's face it, if you're considering purchasing Season 8 of a TV show, consider yourself a fan of that show. And I'll be honest with you - I pretty much gave up on *The X-Files* shortly after the movie. There are only so many science-fiction cock teases one can sit through without getting a piece of the action. The eighth season of *The X-Files* marked the beginning of the post-Duchovny years of the show (although he does appear in a few episodes) otherwise known as the "Hey look, the T1000 is in *The X-Files*" era. To some, having the most recognisable *X-Files* character MIA for the good part of a season may sound like a death-knell but the end result is somewhat surprisingly good, fresh

even. Chris Carter (i.e. the dude who invented alien conspiracies) and his producers were wise to make Doggett (played by the T1000) the anti-Mulder, a God-fearing ass kicking FBI agent. And with new characters the writers were able to create some of the best episodes the series had seen in a long while, such as the time-traveling "Redrum" and the fantastic double episode finale with its many well executed twists.

However there still are a few too many filler episodes, and by the end, even though solid the show began to feel a little tired. Season 8 comes with a comprehensive set of extras, but sadly still no sign of a 5.1 surround mix.

**Kosta Andreadis**

**MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 7**

# Billabong Odyssey

WARNER BROS., TBC

☞ If you were like us and tried to get along to see *Billabong Odyssey* on the big screen, only to find that it had finished after a paltry week or two, then you'll be glad that it's coming out on DVD. The sad fact, though, is that this is made for big screen viewing, and unless you have a projector, much of the impact is going to be lost. Oh well.

So just what is *Billabong Odyssey* about? It's about the quest to find the biggest waves on the planet, where cost is no object. Thus, a crew of big wave specialists (from the up and comers through to legends like Mike Parsons and Ken Bradshaw) travel the globe, using high tech means to find the big swells.

Over the course of the documentary you'll see some amazing surfing footage, get an insight into the techniques involved

in towing in on big waves and see a glimpse of the future of extreme sports on water.

It's the opening scene, however, that is the money shot. Starting focused quite tight on Mike Parsons letting go of the tow-line, you simply won't believe how far the camera continues to reveal wave as it pans back. Amazing.

Like much extended footage of extreme sports, the wow factor does reduce the more you see, but for us, the tingle down the spine in that opening shot made *Billabong Odyssey* more than worth watching.

**Lord Daftwager**

**MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 2**



Point Break 2: The Revenge of the Dead Presidents



The untimely demise of Bullwinkle

# The Big Bounce

WARNER BROS., PG

☞ *The Big Bounce* is based on the novel by Elmore Leonard, and is a remake of the 1969 version, with Owen Wilson playing a small time petty thief (Jack Ryan) with lustful desires for Nancy (Sara Foster), the mistress of wealthy Hawaii businessmen Ray Richie (Gary Sines). The beautiful blonde of course has a plan to steal money off her current squeeze with the help of her new man, and her partner in crime has some of the know how.

The cast includes Morgan Freeman and Charlie Sheen, and reminds me of Macarthy in *Weekend at Bernie's* (that's not necessarily a good thing of course), with characters and plot bumbling over each other. As with any great heist film, there are the

inevitable double crosses and love triangles, which ultimately don't do justice to the source material and the film's potential. Mind you, it's all a matter of perspective. If you're suckers for anything Owen Wilson's involved in (like we are), you'll forgive this film its failings and enjoy it for its maximum Wilson exposure.

Extras include the featurette *The Big Bounce: A Con in the Making*, as well as *Surfing the Pipeline* and *Wicked Waves*.

**Celia Hobart**

**MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 3**



Didn't want to be a tough guy! Want to be a dancer!

# Family Guy SEASON 2

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M15+

☞ As I said in my Season 1 review, *Family Guy* is the ultimate post modern animated sitcom. It packs more references to films, sitcoms, commercials and general pop culture than almost any other program to date. It's also wickedly subversive, pushing the envelope of what's acceptable viewing on television, thanks to a memorable cast of characters, off the wall writing and some very clever gags. This is classic stuff, and you'd be crazy to miss it.

This compilation has 15 episodes, but all is not perfect in *Family Guy* town. When you buy this compilation, you'll notice on the cover that a big deal is made about this being "Uncut, Un-PC". Well,

we're here to tell you that this is a lie. The episode "Road to Rhode Island" is missing an Osama Bin Laden airport security gag from the originally aired version. Yes, that's right, this scene has been CUT to make the episode more PC. How dare they decide for us what is or isn't appropriate? Surely that's the whole point of the show — pushing boundaries. It's even more insulting considering that DVD is a COLLECTOR'S FORMAT. I can download an UNEDITED version of this episode online for free, yet I can't pay for that on DVD. RIDICULOUS. Oh, and once again the local release is missing the episode commentaries and special features that come with the American release. Sigh.

**Cam Shea**

**MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 0**

The way of the Fist also seem to be the way of fashion faux pas



## Double the Fist VOLUME 1

ABC DVD, M 15+

Take an episode of *Jackass*, *Shitscared* and any given extreme sports show ruled more by extreme personality than extreme talent and filter it through a liberal dose of *Pizza Live* and surrealist comedy and you have an idea of the genius of *Double the Fist*. Steve Foxx, Rod Foxx, Mephisto and the Womp are the stars of the show, designed to show the normal pathetic viewer how to become tougher, how to live by the Fist.

The DVD showcases the first four episodes of the guerilla ABC comedy program in which the Fist team take on abseiling, undoubtedly the weakest sport in the universe as it takes all the excitement out of throwing yourself off a cliff, kidnap three weak members of society in order to toughen them up through a

series of events, compete in the Fistathlon and finally star in their own reality TV show, Fear Factory.

Utilising a mix of slapstick comedy, deliberately cheap CGI effects and some superb comic timing, *Double the Fist* is a truly hilarious couple of hours. Perhaps even funnier than the actual show are the features that include deleted scenes (too weak for TV), a test to see if you are weak, a dada-esque photo gallery and a truly funny (and informative) making of. Support Australian talent. Prove you are Fist worthy.

**Daniel Wilks**

**MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 8**



Angry Kid takes the piss - literally



Boo hoo why hasn't Demi called me?

## Angry Kid SEASON 1 & 2

AV CHANNEL, M15+

Now this shit is weird. *Angry Kid* is a series of short animations from the Aardman Studios that utilises a real actor for the titular kid, with an animated face. Imagine it. Stop motion animation is painstaking enough as it is, without forcing a real live human in there to pose too! It's no wonder each episode is so short - the guy behind the mask must be going nuts having to hold his position and change it minutely for every frame. In fact, in the making of featurette, it's revealed that he's actually the third angry kid... one of the previous guys left after he threw up in the mask. The overall effect of the animation style is very unsettling, and hence quite cool,

especially when they start pushing it even further, putting angry kid on a bike or introducing his life size fully animated sister.

The title *Angry Kid*, sadly, is a bit of a misnomer. A more appropriate name would be "Dumb-ass Kid". This isn't a criticism, mind you, just an observation. Each episode generally has angry kid doing something stupid; sticking a finger somewhere it probably shouldn't go, excreting a substance of some description, or annoying members of his family. Sounds great right? Well, in terms of laughs, there are definitely more misses than hits, but as a rental this one is worth checking out.

**Clarissa Frayne**

**MOVIE: 5 / EXTRAS: 4**

## The Butterfly Effect

WARNER BROS, MA15+

Is there any truth to the concept of the "Butterfly Effect" and Chaos Theory? Well I'm a firm believer now, after watching Ashton Kutcher come from obscurity, start shagging Demi Moore and then landing the lead in this film. Ah Chaos!

*The Butterfly Effect* surrounds the life of Evan Treborn (Kutcher) who is plagued with blackouts throughout his childhood. They take place during traumatic and terrifying events that leave Evan mystified and his childhood friends numb. Encouraged to keep a journal in childhood to cope with the blackouts, adult Evan discovers that reading his journals transports him back into the physical body that

experienced these events. Evan now understands he is in a position to change the events that climaxed into the shattered lives of his three closest friends Kayleigh (Amy Smart), Lenny (Elden Henson) and Tommy (William Lee Scott). But therein lies the point of *The Butterfly Effect*; the more you mess around with aspects of the past, the more alien and potentially horrific the outcome.

The concepts behind the film are dealt with in a fairly heavy handed manner and are accompanied by mediocre acting (by Kutcher in particular) and less than flamboyant dialogue. Even so, it's fairly well executed and is actually entertaining all the way through.

**Rebecca Izard**

**MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 6**

# The Best & Second Best of the D Generation

ROADSHOW, M 15+

Welcome to eighties sketch comedy, Aussie style. What we have here is three hours of comedy from the legendary D Generation. The DVD contains the compilations *The Best of the D Generation* and *Degenocide*, as well as half an hour of extras, including footage from uni revues, the singles they released (remember Five in a Row?) and more, entitled *The Bottom Drawer*.

To say that the material has aged well would be a lie... it hasn't. Champagne sketch comedy this (unfortunately) is not. Instead, this is a dated collection of average skits from a time when Australian sketch comedy was developing, and before many of the members of the D Generation found their stride. Considering the comedy gold that

many of these people went on to forge, it's hard not to be a little disappointed.

That said, there are still some classic moments, like the beached dogs, Thunderbirds skits or *Degenocide* (the crew's dubbing of the cop show *Homocide*), but there's also a fair dose of appalling eighties fashion and just plain unfunny material. This is very much what was later referred to as "undergraduate humour" on *The Late Show*.

Since there's three hours of material on a single DVD, there's little in the way of extras. Spreading it over two discs with commentary would have been much better, especially since many of us own the VCR releases of these compilations.

Cam Shea

**MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 0**



The Thunderbird mannerism



## THE *Greatest* MOVIES YOU'VE NEVER SEEN



These guys hate John Edwards almost as much as we do. What a douche

PART 4:

### Penn & Teller: Bullshit!

SHOWTIME (IMPORT), MA 15+

Due to a strange quirk in the American legal system, calling someone a charlatan or fraud can open you up to litigation whereas calling a person a bullshit artist, even on national TV, is seen as totally above board and litigation free. Although better known as stage magicians, the team of the enormous, talkative and in your face Penn and silent, massively talented Teller have turned their hand to the pursuit of the truth, much in the tradition of the late great Harry Houdini, a man who spent the latter years of his life debunking fraudulent mediums and other hoaxes.

In the aptly named show, the magic duo debunks a number of closely held beliefs and frauds ranging from spirit mediums such as TV's John Edwards, through to bottled water, alien abduction, new age therapy and even penis enlargement pills. Each of the 13 episodes tackles a different topic with the same type of humour and outrage that makes for a truly entertaining watch. The third disc of the set contains a host of special features including an interesting interview with the world's leading skeptic James Randi and some very funny outtakes.

Daniel Wilks

**MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 7**



A bucket of sulfuric acid will NEVER not be funny!

## Aardman Classics

MADMAN, PG

By now most people will have heard of the Aardman animations team, responsible for *Chicken Run*, *Creature Comforts* and the massively popular *Wallace and Grommit* shorts. As the name suggests, *Aardman Classics* presents a collection of 24 of their pre-Wallace works. If you're a fan of animation then you owe it to yourself to grab a copy of *Aardman Classics* as a huge range of clever and innovative stop motion techniques are showcased, but otherwise it's more of a hire than a buy as the quality of the shorts ranges wildly. Whilst there are some truly hilarious shorts such as the twisted children's show antics of *Pib & Pog*, the creationist *Adam* and

Tim Burton-esque *Not Without my Handbag*, the majority of the shorts are simply too patchy to keep attention for more than one viewing. Although the *Conversation* series in which the animators simply recorded real conversations and later animated them are clever, the fact that you are simply listening to a normal conversation quickly loses its charm. More interesting is the behind the scenes commentary that is available for a number of the shorts.

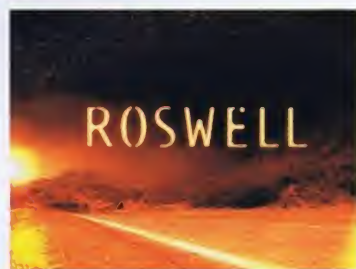
As an example of fine animation, *Aardman Classics* is just that but as a truly entertaining experience you'll want to see multiple times it falls a little flat.

Daniel Wilks

**MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 5**



There are two types of college student: jocks and nerds



## Roswell SEASON 1

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M 15+

With an expanding field of teenage dramas surrounding the antics of middle class white suburbia, it was perhaps inevitable that a good-looking group of aliens would eventually invade our TV screens. In *Roswell* we find a series that is seemingly the by-product of a collision between *The X-Files* and *Party of Five*—the story intermittently focusing on finding the truth and exploring ones feelings of teenage love and angst.

The premise for *Roswell* takes the myth of an alien crash in New Mexico, throws in some young aliens that were found years after the crash, and picks up their lives at the sparkling age of sixteen. The mystery about where they are from and how they got to Earth are the enticements to keep watching. That

being said, the focus is, from the outset, more about the relationship between the alien teens and their human conspirators in secrecy.

Like most teenage dramas there is a noticeable period of establishment for acting ability and scripting, with the scripting of early episodes noticeably guilty of teenage script idiocy. With characters talking about secrets aloud in public, and the trailer park's resident alien sporting a designer haircut, *Roswell* definitely has a shaky start.

With some commentary and docos thrown in it's a reasonable package for fans while others will find the awkward dialogue a little too uninspired.

**Andrew Bulmer**

**MOVIE: 5 / EXTRAS: 6**

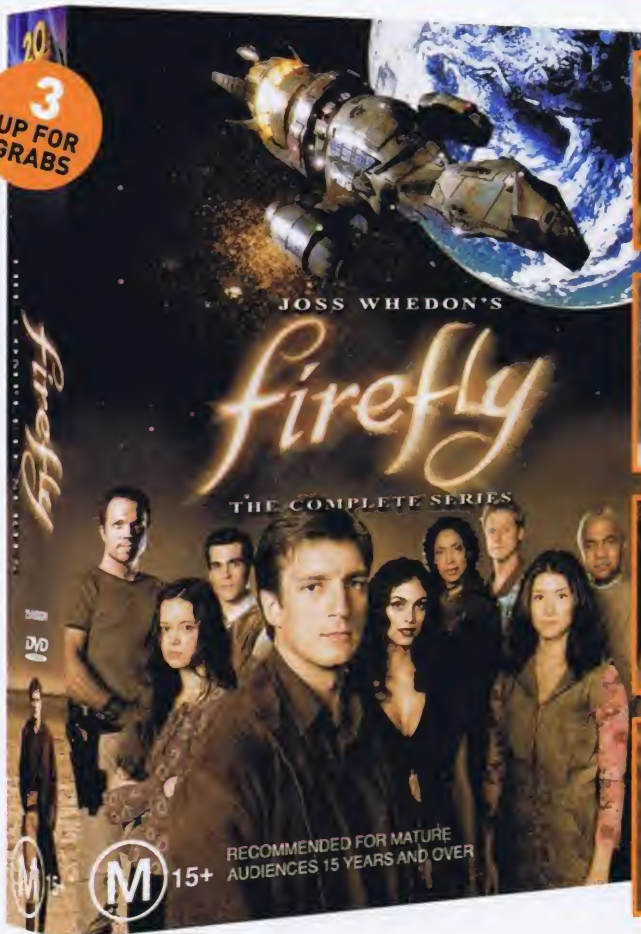
## Win Firefly: The Complete Series!

*Firefly* was the series that Joss Whedon (of *Buffy* and *Angel* fame) always wanted to make. The setting was very much sci-fi meets the Wild West, and it quickly gained cult status, thanks to its rich world and characters, and Joss' uncanny ability to create such a large ensemble cast (nine characters), all of whom seem vital. The fact that it was snatched away from us without finishing its first season was criminal (although thankfully there's a film in development), but *Firefly* still stands up as some of the best television of the last few years — as you'd know if you read our important review a few issues ago.

The good news is that *Firefly* is getting a local release, and Fox Home Entertainment have been kind enough to furnish us with three box sets to give away. To be in with the chance to win one of the four disc sets, just answer the following question:

Name one of the actors in *Firefly* that has also appeared in *Angel*.

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to: **Just Jossing, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016.**



**Terms & Conditions:** 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am July 27 and entries close at 6pm September 15. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am September 16 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the August issue of Hyper on sale July 7. 9) 3 winners will each receive Firefly: The Complete Series on DVD (RRP \$57.25). Total prize value is \$171.75. 10) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.



## Sakura Wars: The Movie

PRODUCTION COMPANY: PRODUCTION I.G  
GENRE: SCI FI/FANTASY

There is one problem inherent with making a film based on a series that far too many creative teams fall prey to — the fact that not everyone who will watch the film has seen the entirety of the series the film is based on, thus may not be familiar with all of the characters and concepts contained within. In short, *Sakura Wars: The Movie* suffers greatly as a result.

The Imperial Fighting Troop, a group of highly trained mecha pilots are tasked with the job of defending Tokyo against demons but when an insidious American company, Douglas-Stewart joins the fight with much more powerful mecha the girls are put on indefinite standby status. Without having seen the series upon which the film is based viewers are left completely at a loss as to what is going on from the very first frame in which we see the girls (who later prove to be the mecha piloting badasses of the piece) dressed in ridiculous outfits putting on a saccharine musical number. We are never really given a reason for the

girls being showgirls as well as elite mecha pilots but then again we never really discover anything else about the characters either.

It's a pity that the script comes across as so lazy, as the very concept of women in giant robots fighting demons is unoriginal but cool and the production design is nothing short of gorgeous with a nice combination of traditional and CG animation. If you're a fan of the *Sakura Wars* series you may get a lot out of *Sakura Wars: The Movie* but otherwise the experience will probably prove to be attractive but somewhat alienating and generally shallow.

Daniel Wilks

ANIMATION: 9 / PLOT: 6  
OVERALL: 6



[above] Don't mech her angry, whatever you do



## Yu Yu Hakusho : Ghost files - YUSUKE LOST, YUSUKE FOUND.

PRODUCTION COMPANY: FUNIMATION PRODUCTIONS  
GENRE: ACTION/FANTASY

I was quick to dismiss *Yu Yu Hakusho* as a repeat of all that had gone before it, only to realise that the ideas raised through design and story pre dated many of the series that I would count as crucial to all anime enthusiasts. In fact at the ripe old age of 12 *Yu Yu Hakusho* has been strengthened by the series that pay homage to its innovation. Easily recognisable are snippets of *Ina Yusha*, *Excel Saga* and *.hack//SIGN*.

A lighter program, *Yu Yu Hakusho* is easily engaging with a broad range of characters more engrossing for their flaws than their strengths — alcoholic mum, loyal bully, lovestruck student. Each episode focuses on one character, taking time to introduce them to the audience. The story is continuous, but fits in nicely with an episodic format.

*Yu Yu Hakusho* tells the story of Yusuke Urameshi, the biggest bully in town, who becomes road kill in order to save a small boy's life. His sacrifice catches even the spirit world (Reikai) unprepared. Given

the opportunity to survive Yusuke is reluctant until he views the sadness his passing causes to family and friends. Once returned to his body the payment for his life is to hunt down rogue demons and other escapees from the Underworld. Yusuke becomes the Living world's (Ningenkai) Spirit detective.

While highly original for its time the plot twists are too simplistic for an audience that has grown with complex animation as part of their daily viewing. Released in 1992, *The Simpsons* were in their fourth season, Hayao Miyazaki had released the feature length greats *Porco Rosso* and *Kiki's Delivery Service*, with TV series' such as *Tenchi Muyo*, *Bubblegum Crash* and *Gundam* screening throughout Japan.

Sadly I couldn't shake that 'made for TV' feeling and without ad breaks to distract my attention the series moved slowly. With each episode exploring only one idea I bored quickly, not even attempting to reach the conclusion of the 112 episodes.

Vanessa Morgan

ANIMATION: 7 / PLOT: 4  
OVERALL: 6

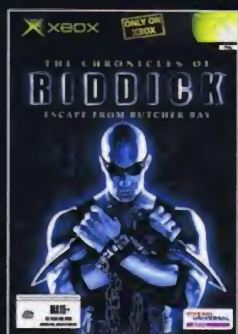


[above] You've been selling my panties in vending machines?



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- 1 x Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance 2 (Xbox)
- 1 x Ground Control 2 (PC)
- 1 x Counter-Strike Condition Zero (PC)
- 1 x Lords of the Realm 3 (PC)
- 1 x Vin Diesel standee



### 5 Runners-up will receive:

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# HYPER»

# »HY0131

# Q. What is the worst game you've played, and why?

The history of videogames is littered with crap-tastic titles, and like refuse accumulating on the roadside, they're both stinky and unsightly. At one time or another, we've all fallen victim to wasting our money on a game so bad that it boils the blood in our veins and turns our usually carefree hearts to stone. That sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach that accompanies the realisation of money blown leaves a scar that can only be healed by the cathartic process of bitching about it. So, who are the contenders for the title of: "Worst. Game. Ever."



## HYPER FORUM

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

**?** "Which console was better - SNES or Megadrive, and why?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper #133



### MAIL THE HYPER FORUM:

78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia  
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.

### LAST SON OF CRAPTON

Sonic established rings in gaming. The collecting of rings was a joyous act that was enjoyed by all. For years, rings were an exciting item in any videogame, one that filled people's hearts with joy and enriched their souls.

But then, Superman 64 came along. With Lex Luthor encouraging players to "solve his maze", Superman was forced to fly through a series of rings, in what could be described as the single worst moment in the history of videogames. And the rest of the game wasn't any better. Flying around in the thickest fog ever, beating up dipshit enemies and saving cars from said enemies by - incredibly - picking them up and flying them really high into the air, rated a -3 on the Fun-o-meter. And then there were more rings. Truly, Superman 64 is the single worst game anyone has ever made.

Jickle

### POKE-THIS

What a difficult question. Sure I could name dozens that I didn't like, but the worst? This is what I would've thought to myself a mere month and a half ago. But a game has come into my possession since then, a game so horrendous that it should not be talked about.

But for the purpose of this question, I will talk about it; Pokemon Channel on Gamecube.

It is essentially a budget-priced kid's game where you guide Pikachu around the 4 different (yet dull) environments searching for meaningless objects and watch

shorts from the equally bad Pokemon Anime show.

Now don't get me wrong, I love Pokemon and am aware of its target audience. But this is more or less a point and click style adventure devoid of the exploration, involvement, charm, humour and character from the Pokemon franchise. Even my 5 year old brother tired of it after half an hour and reverted to Smash Bros. Melee.

This 4 hour "game" was purchased as a cheap solution to obtaining the Zelda Promo disc, now that it is barcode-less I've no way of trading it in and it must forever rot in my collection.

At the time of writing this you guys had yet to review it, so you have my permission to be as cruel as you need to... pull no punches guys!

DJ\_Ryz

### SHATTERED DREAM(CATCHERS)

"opens issue 129" "reads magazine to hyper forum" "instantly jumps online, opens MSN, and starts typing" oh crap. I remember it now. Over two years ago in San Francisco I found I had about \$10 left over so whilst looking through a store I found a game I had faint memories of hearing about a few more years back. The game was Beyond Atlantis II by the Adventurer Company and Dreamcatcher and as soon as I got home I installed the game and started playing. Holy crap! Imagine some of the most horrible character design ever, pre rendered backdrops worse than Myst and the worlds most f\*cking annoying

dolphin that speaks to you mixed up with the most horrible puzzles ever and you basically have Beyond Atlantis II. Within about 5 hours I finished it, put it back in its box, installed Syberia, and never ever looked at it again. Ever. Heck, if it hadn't been for your forum thingy I probably would have left it alone in my cupboard forever. Instead I took it out and sold it to some store for \$40. woot

Murray the really eeeeeeevil talking skull

### DAVE'S NOT HERE MAN!

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2.  
Mix the following Ingredients:  
2 Cups Superman 64 graphics engine  
1 Cup of dodgy collision detection with inexplicable clipping on rails, walls and ramps  
1 Tbs of unresponsive slap-happy controls  
12 cup of mind-numbing repetitive music  
15 Tsp of low polygon characters  
1 pinch of salt  
4 Cups of boring, head-ache inducing, simian-designed objectives  
1500 tricks motion captured by Pinocchio  
1 hand-full of steaming monkey poo  
Stir, then port to all current consoles with a \$100 price tag.

Concrete Donkey

### MORE PROOF THAT RUSSIA IS EVIL

Wow, crap games... so hard to pick just one... but for arguments sake, I will recall an atrocity known as Tetris 2. Tetris 2 was a puzzle game

which was purchased on the assumption that "if it's called Tetris, it must be good!" It tried to combine two puzzling classics - Tetris and Dr. Mario - and wasn't as good as either one. It contained Tetris blocks of differing colours, and you had to destroy coloured balls by matching up the colours.

The first problem was the confusing gameplay. When one ball was destroyed, other balls of the same colour would sometimes disappear, as if they'd had enough and decided to go home early. Also, when you destroyed more than one ball in a combo, the next block would fall super quick and almost ALWAYS stuff you up, partly because the controls were the most unresponsive I've ever experienced in a game.

Unlike Tetris Blast, Tetris 2's "new" pieces were awful and impractical. Then there were only 4 game modes- Normal was boring as Hell, Puzzle could be completed in less than half an hour, 1P Vs COMP was terrible due to inconsistencies and severe cheating (it wasn't uncommon for 3 pieces in a row to fall super quick when the CPU was losing) and 1P Vs 2P was a complete

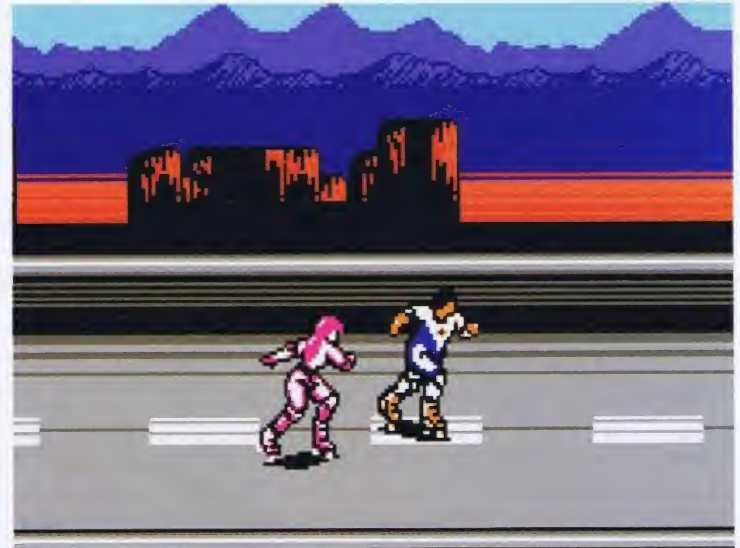
[above] This looks almost as bad as Skitchin'

waste of time because I'm probably the only person in Australia whose household contains a copy of Tetris 2. The only saving grace was the catchy and varied music, but you don't sit through an hour of Big Brother just to "hear the music", do you? Overall, it was a crap game that didn't deserve the Tetris name.

Mr M

**HEALTH WARNING: KIDS DON'T TRY THIS GAME AT HOME.**

'Roller Games was a piece of crap' I can't believe this game didn't feature in your spot for worst games ever issue (84) Made in the retro 90's and subject to scoring a big fat minus 2.5 out of ten it's no wonder this game didn't translate from NES to SNES. It just went on the list of fad, fat and pieces of crap that left Nintendo in a spin, not to mention that fat tub of lard that we had to



use in-order to play this game (referring to the in-game character) who look's like a big fat afro wielding maniac in a 70's retro sweat suit. Eewww flab! Unlike Atari's E.T. falling N trapped down a pit hole had never been more funnier. When the hole's as big as Kilimanjaro and yet he still gets caught in the middle of no return 'that's embarrassing'. This game is so crap that even Tim Levy refused a

multi-million offer to star in it's film production as a side kick to fatman. [sic. We have no idea what this means either. Aside from one added capitalisation the post remains the same as when we received it. We have done so under the assumption that the true stinkyness of the game has caused irreparable brain damage to Mougi and destroyed his ability to make a coherent sentence.]

Mougi 04

# GAME CONSOLE REPAIRS - UPGRADES

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**ABC** If you want your letter to be published in the letters section could you please try to make sure that it is intelligible? The occasional spelling mistake is fine (god knows we're guilty of them ourselves) but having to spend 20 minutes correcting spelling, punctuation and sentence structure is a little extreme. Just one more quick note, the ellipsis (...) is one of the most overused bits of archaic punctuation in letters and also a personal favourite of the Hyper crew (along with the hyphen and M-dash) so don't abuse it by using more than three dots. We have not edited this month's letters section to show what we usually receive. Fortunately this month's contributions are not as bad as they usually are (making for a somewhat bad example) but you get the point.

**1337**

Ok may I start off by saying, what in the hell. I play games alot, especially online (xbox live and pc). Although it sh!ts me to no end when i get killed and some 10 year old screams "I roxored your boxors" or "I owned joo" or "I am 1337!!!" ..... No, you are not elite, i dont see you running around the school yards screaming that! Why you may ask, because they would get the crap beaten out of them. Most of these people usually only talk about stats and how they vs. this "noob" in Counter strike and "rocked his jocks all the way down to his socks." Yes thank you for the disturbing image. They also camp alot to use to their advantage, so when you spend 5 minutes looking for them and fail, you end up committing suicide to just end the madness, then they brag about how they won. These are the same people who like using the sniper rifle and short range and sniping with pistols, so in the rare chance that they kill the person, they can go around telling the story about how they "ownzored teh noob." I

end my rant with a question, i used to pre-order hyper magazine, then i went to the newsagency one day and saw that they get a free magazine tacked on the end, i hardly see that fair, the pre-order's should... Any way im out

**Sutto**

*OK Sutto, we think we get your point but your final question is actually a statement, not a question at all. Anyway, the bagged Hyper is only an occasional promo, not every issue and subscribers save money and get the magazine delivered to their door instead of having to go to the newsagent. We think this is probably more of a reward than the occasional free copy of a magazine that you might not actually want.*

**G'DAY MANNERISM**

Dear Hyper,

I have just written this letter to follow up on Kaiser Wilhiem II's letter in issue 129. I totally agree! Australians deserve some recognition, I mean WW1 & WW2 pretty much



[above] Daniel MacGregor sent us this wicked piece. The only thing missing? The Ha Ha step

**CAPTION THIS!**

**PART 56 WINNER**

**Mr M.** wins yet again with one of many sterling entries:



**Hyper's Guide To Phallic Symbols: Part 293**

shaped the image of us as Australians for years and still now we still are stereotyped as laid back and easy people. Our mannerism is still 'g'day mate' and so on. I'm not saying this is a bad thing, heck its something to be proud of but when game developers go ahead and total disregarded our pride and heritage it ticks me off. Although you said games are focused at the market you want. But I'm sure the British wouldn't take offence to putting an Australian flag in Tobruk for bf1942. I mean wouldn't that be cool, fighting as AUSTRALIANS for AUSTRALIANS with AUSTRALIANS, it would make you proud, well not proud of playing the actual game but 'experiencing' something that shaped Australia as we know it, (o and do suicide missions in the jeep). I highly doubt, in fact I'm certain this wouldn't in anyway reduce sales of bf1942 and maybe if anything it would bolster the sales because now it says 'play as the British, American and AUSTRALIAN armies in unique campaigns' (or something like that) would broaden its market and hey if they really

wanted to acknowledge countries why not chuck in New Zealand and Canada! Yea that'll be the day. I'm coming to the conclusion that game developers are lazy and don't care for countries involvements throughout modern history.

Thanks for your time  
**Skitzza**

*Whilst it would be cool to play Australians in BF1942 all that would be is a skin rather than a real mission. To have a truly Australian mission you would have to theme it around one of the military campaigns in which we were the major force. Once again we think this would be supremely cool but the majority of these events were quite separate from the culture that is the main markets of games in the West, America. Yes there is a good deal of laziness involved in this - the Australian devotion to WWI and WWII is just as stirring (if not moreso) as that of any other nation, as a reading of any of the history books will tell you. Unfortunately much of the game developing world*

is very introspective as far as history goes, only interested in their contributions to the development of the modern world.

## REALLY (CHRONO) CROSS

Dear Hyper,

I've been looking thru some old issues, and I've noticed that there seems to be a big problem with R.P.G.'s getting released in Australia. Now I understand that the developers may not get much dosh for selling them here, but we've missed out on some classics, such as Chrono Cross, Xenogears & Xenosaga, to name the best. Maybe you should bring back the import review for such great games. Just some advice to readers, the only way you'll experience these gems is to get import copies, and it's well worth it. And now my wait continues for Xenosaga Episode III. One question, do you think a sequel to Chrono Cross is in the works at all?

Keep up the good work,  
**MaximusCebulus**

A lot of the problem with getting many of the console RPGs out here is the fact that many distributors simply don't see the cost effectiveness of translating the title to a variety of languages for the PAL release. Yes, that's right, because we're lumped in with Europe and the multitude of languages that games in the region need to have included there, we miss out. We're also viewed as somewhat of a lesser priority by some of the head offices so until that changes I can't see things changing too much. As far as Chrono Cross sequels go, we haven't heard anything but we'll keep an ear to the ground.

## FEELING BLUE

Hello Hyper People!

My Amazing Blau Discovery!

I just found out that Blau means Blue in German. No idea how you pronounce it, but I was just wondering if you knew that, and if that's where you got it from!? Weird eh? All this time you have been saying Blue... Right now someone is probably walking around with that "Blau" t-shirt not realising that he/she is wearing a t-shirt that says Blue on it... pretty pointless letter you think? Ok here is some questions that hopefully you can answer :P

- 1) What do you actually think of the DS?
- 2) Whats a possibly of a release date/month/year for a new Game boy?
- 3) Why are Electronics Boutique people such idiots?

Please print!

-Patrick M

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### PNOOB U R SUXOR!!!LOL!!!

Dear Hyper,

let me start by saying what a good magazine you put out, its nice to see a completely unbiased gaming magazine out there. Anyway, a couple of weeks ago I was looking for something to play, and started up the Warcraft 3 expansion. I used to play it online but was more into the custom gaming area of Bnet. The first game I joined my and my ally were pretty inexperienced and took a pounding. While watching the last of my base being bashed to crap by the enemy units I told my opponent that he had done well and all that it was a good game he then said back to me "NAH IT WAZ CRAP, UR A STOOPID NOOB AND U SUX" i mean come on!, i congratulated him! the next game i joined, the first thing my ally did was make his peasants rush to my base and hack my own workers to peices! i mean come on!, what has online gaming come to, i know its pretty unfair to base everything that goes on in online gaming on a couple of bnet games but still, is this what has become of online gaming?, are

we confined to assholes who play to win, not to have fun?

Angus W.

*We know what you mean dude. It's one thing to sit around on the couch playing multiplayer with mates and indulging in a bit of smack talk and underhanded tactics (including calling into account a person's lack of physical stature - isn't that right Benton) but online and with strangers it's a different thing. The anonymity of online gaming seems to bring out the worst in people, causing them to think cheating is OK and insults are a way of life. When did we forget that gaming is fun in and of itself, not just the winning part?*



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Consider it printed. Yes we knew that blau means blue, but BLAU! means so much more as you well know.

- 1) Sex in a double screen format.
- 2) Early next year is the proposed local release for the DS
- 3) Just because. Although one of the Super Farrelly Brothers works at an EB here in Sydney... and he's a P.I.M.P.

## BUS FAIR

Hey there, I just wanted to say something about Vice City. In Vice, you can actually hijack a bus and then pick up passengers and earn money for it. When I found that out, I told my friends and they didn't know either. So I was just wondering if you guys knew. Or maybe me and my friends are just a bunch of dumbasses. Probably. And just a couple of questions(come on you knew that part was coming)

1. Is there any possibility of BF 1942 being brought to Xbox?(please oh please)
2. Who developed the mannerism?
3. You get asked this a lot, but is there any chance of the cover disc coming back?

Anyways, cya later.

P.S. Keep up the awesome mag.  
From Nick

1. It's doubtful as currently Xbox live can't handle the amount of players needed for BF1942.
2. C-Dawg, K-Man and the Goose - go to [www.doesmannerism.com](http://www.doesmannerism.com) for more information.
3. The magic eight-ball says the likelihood is doubtful.

## CHEVY TO THE LEVY

Dear Hyper-dudes,

I am writing in response to a letter published in Hyper #130 by Herbert Tekken. I have long been a Tim Levy fan and also subscribe to Levy-Love. I am so glad that Herbert has said what I, and I am sure many fans of your mag have been too shy to come out and say. Tim Levy carries Hyper. Please change the title of the magazine to Levy for the next issue or if this presents a problem I will settle for a double page poster of the man in all his wacky glory.

Sincerely yours,  
**Lenny Tessio**

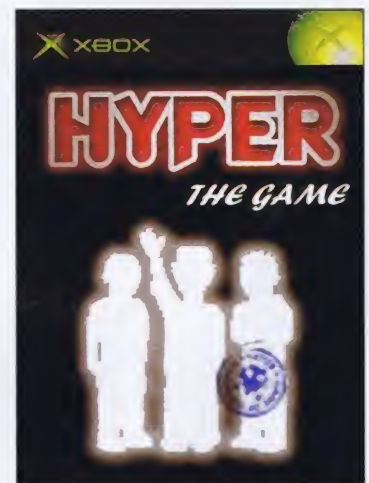
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[below] Jacob Evans foresees a Hyper game not called Blau!

*happy to oblige you with his sexy lanky wackiness. Long live the Levy.*

## A REQUEST

Yo Hyper crew,

I read yo magazine every month, but I still don't feel like I know some of your writers that well. Maybe you should do bios on the crew. Or is that a "does mannerism" worthy idea?

**Bo jangles**

Hey Bo,  
We see your "bios" and raise you  
an "employee of the month"

## WHERE'S THE CUBE?

Hey Hyperboles,

After looking at your excellent article on the current situation of gaming in Australia I couldn't believe that the little purple sliver in the pie actually represented GameCube in Australia. What on Earth has gone wrong? Why are Aussies so blind to the magnificent gaming that can only be found on the Cube?

As you mentioned, there are a number of reasons for GameCube's Australian failure, but I'd like to point one out in particular: the RETAILERS. Yes, the EBs, Targets, K-Marts, all the stores that sell our beloved games. I have a big problem with their marketing techniques. GameCube is not doing well here, anyone could see that. So what do the retailers do? Shove the Cube merchandise as far out of sight as possible and try to ignore it, perhaps hoping that it will go away.

Whenever I pass by Target stores, I see piles of Xbox and PS2 boxes out the front of the store, advertising how cheap they are. Not a Cube in sight, apart from the fact that Nintendo's machine is cheaper than both of the others.

Looking in advertising material, one finds the same thing. In a Big W brochure recently, "Prisoner of Azkaban" was shown as the new game on PS2, Xbox and GameBoy Advance. It's as if the GameCube version doesn't even exist!

How do retailers think they are going to sell product if they themselves don't have faith in it? The PS2 and Xbox are doing fine; they will sell themselves. Retailers should be making an effort to bring the GameCube back up to level, not concentrating their forces on the already-established machines.

As for the gamers reading this, what's your excuse? If you haven't got a Cube yet, it's YOU who is missing out. I own all consoles, and the Cube is easily my favourite. I hate to see it suffer in this backwards country. Do yourself a favour. Get a GameCube.

**Pete J.**

Hey Pete,

Unfortunately it's not that simple. It's not like the retailers are biased against selling the GameCube, it's that they're in the business of selling product and making money. Devoting shelf space to the GameCube won't instantly mean it will sell better. Sure, it wouldn't hurt, but it's

# Employee of the Month

**NAME:** Kosta Andreadis  
**NICKNAME:** K-Man, Cairns Kosta  
**POSITION:** Some Guy/Mannerism Scholar  
**BEGAN WRITING FOR HYPER:** The year of Our Lord, 2002  
**MOST FAMOUS FOR:** Co-creating the mannerism and hopefully soon 'splitting the atom' whatever that may be  
**GAME OF THE MOMENT:** Zelda: Four Swords (GCN)  
**FAVOURITE MOVIE:** A tie between The Ten Commandments and The Paris Hilton Sex Tape  
**FAVOURITE BOOK:** Celebrity Nudes  
**LIKES:** Dancing, Eating, Playing Videogames, Watching Movies - all whilst dissing Bryce long distance (he's in Japan you know).  
**DISLIKES:** Bryce and, ah, no that's it.



*Nintendo who are responsible for getting their console into the public's consciousness through concerted marketing campaigns and more "must-have" games. It's up to Nintendo to get the retailers on board to support their product. Unfortunately that just hasn't happened. The fact that less and less games are coming out on the system, and that many consumers want the added functionality of a DVD player and online options doesn't help either. We love the Cube too, but it's unlikely that its fortunes are going to turn around in this country.*

## DK MANNERISM!

Dear Hyper,

I don't know if you have noticed, but in Super Smash Bro. Melee for GCN, Donkey Kongs taunt is a mannerism! True! You should check if you haven't noticed before.

**From Matthew Heilbronn (yes, it's my real name)**

ps. What did you think of the game? I think it's one of the best fighters available but it may just be me. (being a Nintendo follower and such) And do you know if there is another one being made?  
pps. Your mag rules!

Mr Heilbronn

*There's nothing cooler than a reader who's out there spotting mannerisms! Good work. Oh, and we agree - it's a wicked game. No word on another sequel yet though.*

## THE HERO-LESS CITY

I am at this moment, quite disappointed with my local video game distributor. Why are they so mindlessly boxed in by what everyone else says is good? I know it's got something to do with making money and junk, but their timid nature is exactly the thing that prevents them from becoming a great supplier. Classic example: I went in the other week, money burning a hole in my pocket and looking to invest \$100 and a good portion of my time on City of Heroes. The damn salesguy hadn't even heard of it. And then I read that there are other gamers such as myself in the same dilemma over this game. What is it about the greatness of this game that scares stockists? They're preventing myself and my fellow g33ks of living out the ultimate g33k fantasy, becoming a super-hero. I will, of course, purchase this game from gamesuniverse.com.au right away, but it's just something I shouldn't have to do. For shame....

**Jeremy**

Hey Jeremy

*Let's face it - most games retailers aren't there for the passionate gamers. They're there for the mainstream. The type of people (like Amos, bless him), who walk into their local store with no clear idea of what they want to buy, and walk out five minutes later with a copy of Driv3r, or worse still, Cricket 2004. In this case, however, the reason you couldn't get a copy is because City of Heroes has no official*

*Australian distributor, hence it's not on the radar of most retail stores. We got our copy through Games Universe, who have taken it upon themselves to make sure it's available for Aussies, and we suggest that everyone else who wants a copy does the same.*

*It is a little crazy that this title hasn't been picked up locally, but often distributors aren't willing to take a chance on an unknown. Just look at Disgaea - it's critically acclaimed, yet EA only brought a few hundred copies into the country. They wouldn't even give us a review copy - we had to buy our own in order to review it!*

## CRAZY KARAOKE DISC

Howdy Hyper

Did you guys hear about the stuff up with the PCPP disc where one of the CDs was some crazy Indonesian Karaoke video? How funny is that?

**Bob Sagat**

*Of course we heard about it! We work in the same area as those guys (or perhaps we should say - they come into our area to play Mashed every day!) and have a drink together after work most days. Amos was not happy, we can tell you (it wasn't his fault of course). In our minds that disc is going to become a collector's item... but the most valuable of all will be my signed edition, with Amos' loving inscription pledging his allegiance to Hyper and stating: "if only sugar were as sweet as you". Awwww.*



# The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

**TOP 10**

## PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 4 JULY 2004  
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Driv3r	Racing
2	▼	SingStar	All Other
3	⊕	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
4	▼	Grand Theft Auto 3 Ptm	Adventure
5	◆	Ratchet & Clank 2	Adventure
6	▼	Need 4 Speed: Undrgrnd	Racing
7	▲	Jak 2: Renegade	Adventure
8	◆	Shrek 2	Adventure
9	▼	Harry Potter: Azkaban	Adventure
10	⊕	Ratchet & Clank Ptm	Adventure

**TOP 10**

## PlayStation Games Over \$30

W/E 4 JULY 2004  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Simpson's Wrestling	Sports
2	◆	H Potter Chamber Secrts	Adventure
3	◆	Beyblade Let It Rip	Adventure
4	▲	FIFA 2004	Sports
5	▲	Grand Theft Auto Coll Ed	Adventure
6	▼	Yu-Gi-Oh Forbiddn Mems	Strategy
7	⊕	Army Men Op Meltdwn	Strategy
8	▼	Disney Triple Pack	Adventure
9	▼	NBA Live 2003	Sports
10	⊕	NBA Live 2002 Gold	Sports

**TOP 10**

## Game Cube Games Over \$50

W/E 4 JULY 2004  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon Colosseum	RPG
2	⊕	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
3	▼	Shrek 2	Adventure
4	▼	Mario Kart Double Dash	Racing
5	◆	Soul Calibur 2	Action
6	⊕	Harvest Moon Wndrfl Life	Simulator
7	◆	Final Fan Crystal Chron	RPG
8	▼	Mario Party 5	Family
9	▼	Simpson's Hit & Run	Adventure
10	▼	FIFA 2004	Sports

**TOP 10**

## Xbox Games Over \$50

W/E 4 JULY 2004  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Driv3r	Racing
2	⊕	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
3	◆	Full Spectrum Warrior	Strategy
4	▼	Shrek 2	Adventure
5	▲	GTA Twin Pack	Adventure
6	▼	TC Splinter Cell Pandora	Adventure
8	▼	Simpson's Hit & Run	Adventure
7	◆	V8 Supercars 2	Racing
9	⊕	Top Spin	Sports
10	⊕	Tony Hawk Underground	Sports

**TOP 10**

## PC Games Over \$20

W/E 4 JULY 2004  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
2	▲	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
3	▲	The Sims Superstar	Strategy
4	▼	Sim City 3000 Unlmted Clsc	Strategy
5	▼	Harry Potter: Azkaban	Adventure
6	▼	Shrek 2 Activity Centre	Family
7	⊕	The Sims Makin' Magic	Strategy
8	⊕	C & C Generals	Strategy
9	⊕	The Sims Vacation	Strategy
10	▼	Neverwinter Nights	RPG

**TOP 10**

## Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30

W/E 4 JULY 2004  
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Pokémon Sapphire	RPG
2	▼	Shrek 2	Adventure
3	▼	Pokémon Ruby	RPG
4	◆	Harry Potter: Azkaban	Adventure
5	⊕	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
6	▼	Sonic Advance 3	Adventure
7	▼	Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Action
8	▼	Donkey Kong Country 2	Adventure
9	⊕	Pokémon Pinball R & S	Action
10	▼	Yu-Gi-Oh World Ch 2004	Strategy

**TOP 10**

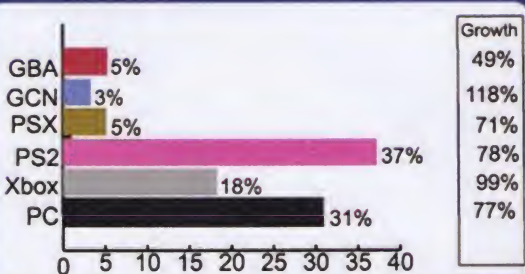
## All Full Priced Games

W/E 4 JULY 2004  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Driv3r	PlayStation 2
2	⊕	Spider-Man 2	PlayStation 2
3	▼	Pokémon Colosseum	GameCube
4	▼	Shrek 2	PlayStation 2
5	▼	Driv3r	Xbox
6	▲	The Sims Deluxe	PC/MAC
7	⊕	Spider-Man 2	Xbox
8	▼	SingStar	PlayStation 2
9	▲	Full Spectrum Warrior	Xbox
10	▼	Harry Potter: Azkaban	PlayStation 2

## MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

MAY vs JUN  
RETAIL SALES



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



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




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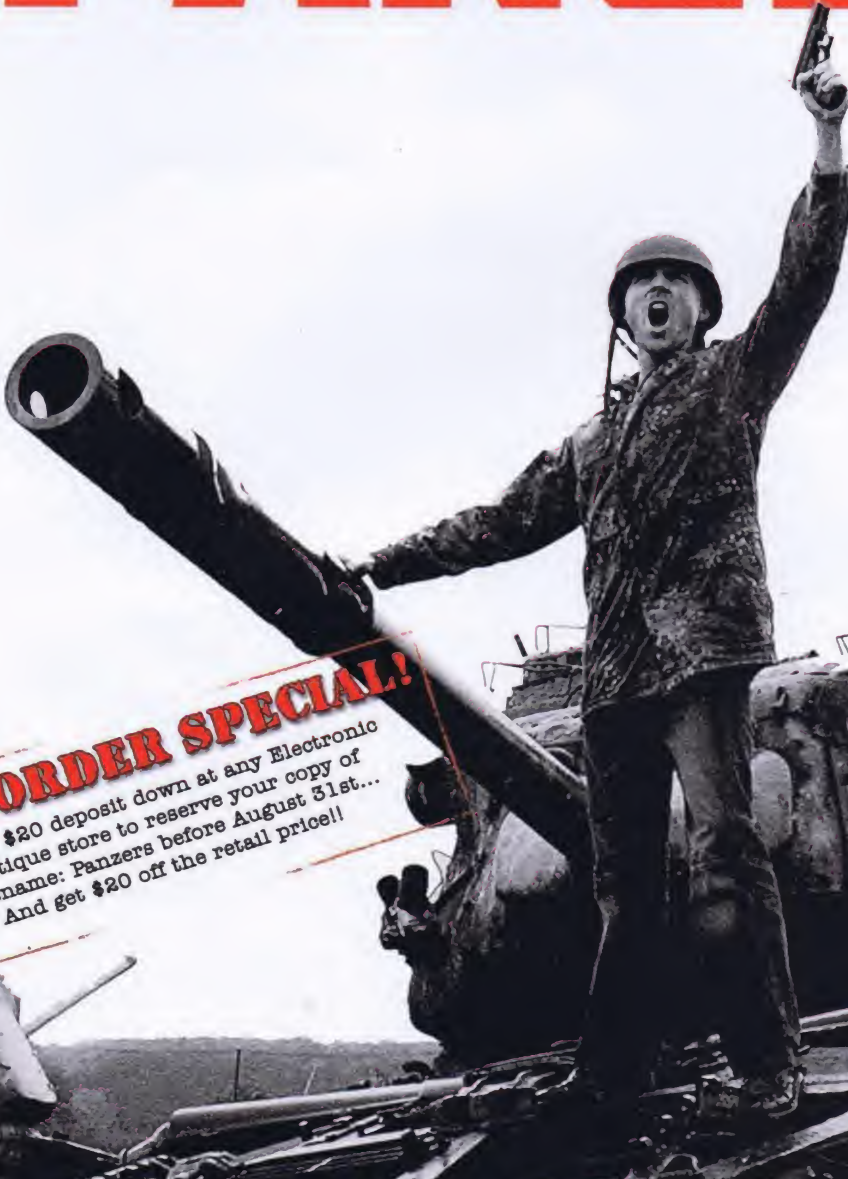
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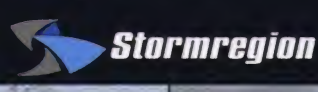
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