

HYPHER

WIN!
BE THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN TO OWN A NINTENDO DS!



OutRun 2

OZ EXCLUSIVE XBOX REVIEW!

The sequel has been 18 years in the making – has it been worth the wait?



FULL PC REVIEW! >>> FULL PC REVIEW! >>> FULL PC REVIEW! >>>

THE SIMS 2

It's a Circle of Life thing...

\$6.95 INC GST / NZ\$8.95 INC GST



FABLE

Turning evil on Xbox never felt so good!



next GAMING

ASTRO BOY

Has Treasure made the best GBA shooter yet?

MARIO TENNIS

The best tennis game ever returns on GameCube!



S³ Silent Storm SENTINELS

The official AddOn to "Silent Storm"

The most popular turn-based strategy game of the year is now being taken to the next level.

In the AddOn to Silent Storm, Silent Storm Sentinels, veterans from World War II join forces in a secret organisation – they are called: Sentinels.

Their goal is to keep the world protected, peaceful and evenhanded in these times of postwar.



© 2004 Auran Games Pty Ltd

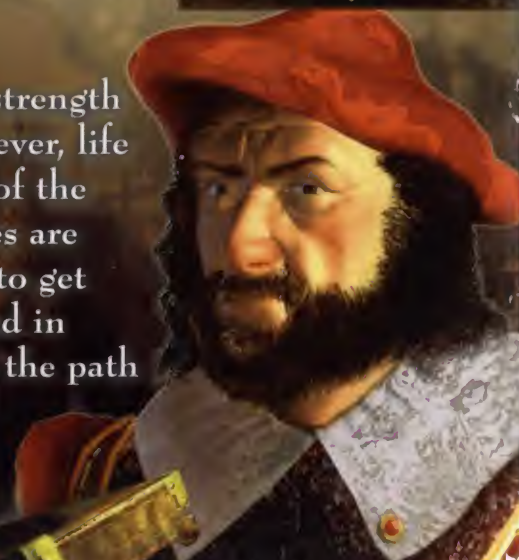
It's the year 1400. Europe sees the dawn of the...

"golden age of the new departures and the free spirit"

The late Middle Ages. Under the rule of the bourgeoisie and businessmen, more and more towns are emerging from the clutches of the aristocracy and are achieving independence, power and wealth.

New businesses are flourishing, bringing financial strength and political influence to a growing economy. However, life in the narrow, overpopulated alleyways and streets of the towns also has its downsides: epidemics and diseases are spreading, and thieves and highwaymen lie in wait to get their piece of the wealth. Now you can try your hand in these exciting times of change. Will you head down the path of an honest craftsman or a dubious priest?

It's your choice...





- A new enthralling and exciting campaign, based on the story from Silent Storm
- Numerous new operational areas (bombed cities, mines, desert landscapes and many more)
- Complete your missions successfully and collect your enemies' weapons. Exchange them for cash to equip your troops and boost their abilities
- Including new mission goals, such as infiltration of enemy buildings, destruction of enemy establishments and assassinations

Do you have what it takes to defeat the enemy... AGAIN!



The Official Website: <http://www.silentstorm-online.de/>

The Official Website: <http://www.the-guild.com/>

A new breed of real-life simulation, combining elements of economic simulation, real-time strategy and role-play in a fascinating, innovative way

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The Guild



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POPULARITY



FORTUNE



ROMANCE



M15+
SEXUAL REFERENCES

PC
GAME

The SIMS[™] 2

THEY'VE GOT ONE LIFE.
MAKE THE MOST OF IT.



Take your Sims from cradle to grave through life's biggest moments. Direct your Sims through infancy, childhood, the teen years, and adulthood. Will they strive for popularity, fortune, romance, family, or a lifelong pursuit of knowledge? Happily ever after or a shocking twist at the end, it's all in your hands.

OUT SEPTEMBER 2004.

FAMILY



KNOWLEDGE



Challenge Everything[™]

EG417

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Another GameCube classic in the making...



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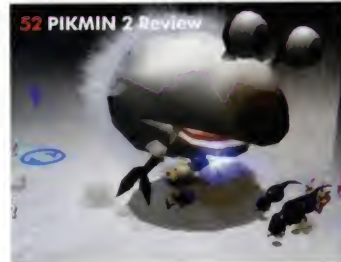
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If Hyper had a text parser interface, you'd probably have to type: "turn to page 84 and read Space Quest feature". If real life had a text parser interface, not a day would go by without us typing "put chicken in deep fryer". Mmm, that's some good fried chicken!

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EDITORIAL

>> Welcome one and all to another edition of Amos Monthly, erm sorry, Hyper Magazine. As you can see from the photo, this issue we're taking something of a combative stance. Call it a "Versus" issue if you like. The basic idea is good versus bad, masculine versus feminine, yin versus yang, herbal tea versus coffee, Master Chief versus Samus, PC versus Mac, the RIAA versus Kazaa, Rick James versus Charlie Murphy, Big Heavy Stuff versus Derrick Carter, man versus machine, VHS versus Beta, Count Olaf versus the Baudelaire orphans, real versus vurt, DS versus PSP, Iofur Raknison versus lorek Byrnison, Bill Gates versus Shiggy, and of course, Daniel versus myself. To that end, you'll find Daniel's feature on his trip to Singapore going head to head with my impressions of Hong Kong. Better still, we've shared the caption duties this month, with the express purpose of having a comedic showdown that you, the readers, get to judge. Thus, in the review section, anytime you see this 😊 icon you know I captioned the page, and any time you see this 😞 icon you know my arch nemesis Daniel "Penfold" Wilks spewed forth the caption text on screen. There's no voting system or anything, we just thought it might be fun putting my encyclopedic Simpsons captioning skills up against Daniel's seemingly bottomless reservoir of film and nerd knowledge.

Backing up this veritable treasure trove of hilarity, we've also taken the time to actually do some stuff related to games (cue the readers breathing a sigh of relief), and with some of the biggest titles of the year hitting this month, tis surely a good time to be a gamer.

Cam Shea >> Editor



[above] Cam: Have at you! Wilks: You're gonna get paaanchel!

HYPER >>

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HYPER CREW MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

Cam Shea - Editor in charge of keepin' it real

1. Paper Mario 2 - GameCube
"Well get out the Crayolas and colour me tickled pink"
2. Sims 2 - PC
3. OutRun 2 - Xbox
4. Astro Boy - GBA
5. Def Jam II - PS2

Daniel Wilks - Cam's bitch (or so he thinks).

1. Fable - Xbox
"A virtual sandbox where I can play a heroic Amos"
2. Star Ocean - PS2
3. Burnout 3 - PS2
4. The Bard's Tale - PS2
5. OutRun 2 - Xbox

Malcolm Campbell - I will crush you, Amos!

1. Rogue Leader - GCN
"The Trilogy DVDs have made me geek-out all over again."
2. Street Fighter 3: 3rd Strike - PS2 (import)
3. Pro Evolution Soccer 4 - PS2
4. Fable - Xbox
5. OutRun 2 - Xbox

The Ghost of David Wildgoose -

- Office Poltergoose
1. Ghost Valley 2 in Super Mario Kart - SNES
"It's good to play tog-ethereal"
 2. Ghostbusters - C64
 3. Ghouls 'n' Ghosts - Arcade
 4. The Haunted Cathedral in Thief - PC
 5. Grabbed by the Ghoulies - Xbox

THE DUKES OF HAZZARD

RETURN OF THE GENERAL LEE™

Out
October
2004



A GOOD OL' FASHIONED JOYRIDE!

Yeeeeeeeeeeeeehhaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!



Slide into the General Lee and blaze through the backroads of Hazzard County.



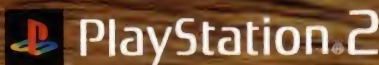
Get behind the wheel of Daisy's Roadrunner. Uncle Jesse's pick-up and Cooter's tow-truck.



Race to halt Boss Hog's latest crooked scheme and save the orphanage.

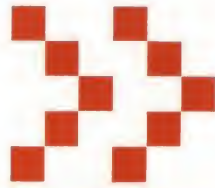


Put the pedal to the metal in two-player hot pursuit and destruction derby battles.



UBISOFT
www.ubi.com

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IN THE NEWS: Final Fantasy versus Hockey T / Net heading for a crash? / Game characters strip off / Amon Tobin tunes

MUSIC

A NIGHT IN FANTASIA

Uematsu comes to Australia!

▶▶ The biggest news to hit the Australian gaming scene in quite a while is not actually a game at all but a concert featuring the music of acclaimed Japanese composers Nobuo Uematsu and Joe Hisaishi. Not to be confused with something related to Disney, the A Night in Fantasia concert series is made up of two matinee and two night shows in Sydney's Conservatorium of Music and will feature music from the Final Fantasy franchise as well as the films from the acclaimed animation house, Studio Ghibli. For the occasion a new group called the Eminence Orchestra has been formed with the purpose of putting a new face on classical music to hopefully bring it into a younger marketplace.

Born in 1959, Nobuo Uematsu is arguably the most famous and successful video game composer of all time. The Final Fantasy franchise is still going strong and at last count had sold over 47 million units worldwide – that's a pretty damn big audience for his music. He was also named one of the great musical innovators of the century in Time Magazine's "Time 100: The Next Wave – Music" feature. Aside from classical scores, Uematsu composed and produced the theme song from Final Fantasy VIII. The song, "Eyes On Me" featured the vocal talents of HK popstar Faye Wong and went on to sell 400,000 copies as a single, eventually winning the accolade of Song of the Year (Western Music) at the 14th Annual Japan Gold Disc Awards in 1999, making it the

first song from a game ever to win the prestigious award. Uematsu will be putting in a special appearance at the Sydney shows as a guest of honour.

Joe Hisaishi started off his career as a minimalist musician but after he was noticed by Hideo Miyazaki for an image album he composed for the manga, Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind he was brought on board to compose the soundtrack of the film. The collaboration proved to be such a success that Hisaishi has become the Studio Ghibli composer, penning the unforgettable score for films such as Porco Rosso, Kiki's Delivery Service, Mononoke Hime and Spirited Away. The A Night in Fantasia concert will also showcase tunes from Hisaishi's latest collaboration with Studio Ghibli, the upcoming film Howl's Moving Castle.

Hyper will be attending the concert, and we're even going to have some time talking with the acclaimed Uematsu after the show (more on that in a later issue). If you do go to the concert keep an eye out for Hyper contributor John "Hockey Temper" Dewhurst who will be playing a vital role in the Eminence Orchestra as a percussionist. Although the concerts are only being held in Sydney, readers from other cities shouldn't have too hard a time finding a couch to crash on. Highly recommended!

Tickets and further concert information are available from: www.infinity8lue.com

eminence
Conducted by William Muzang

William Muzang - Conductor/Artistic Director
Hiroaki Yura - Conductor
Alexei Yemtsov - Pianist

Music from the Studio Ghibli films plus their upcoming Howl's Moving Castle and the Final Fantasy™ series

Exclusive Ticket Reseller
Kinokuniya
Official Partner
JAL JAPAN AIRLINES

A NIGHT IN FANTASIA 2004
Performing 4 concerts over 30th & 31st of October

Verbrugghen Hall
Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Macquarie St. Sydney

Guest of Honour
Composer of music from Final Fantasy™
Nobuo Uematsu

Tickets Available at: www.infinity8lue.com and through Kinokuniya, located in The Galleria Victoria Level 2, 500 George St Sydney

STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP

GBA SP PRICE DROP

Nintendo Australia recently announced a price drop of \$50 for the GBA SP. Want to pick one up now? It'll only cost you \$149.95! (Then again, you could always subscribe this month and get a Nintendo DS for free!)



STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP



[above] Won't someone please think of the children?

TECH

THE BIG CRASH?

It's the End of the World Wide Web as we know it

Intel's CTO, Patrick Gelsinger, a man not particularly known for doom and gloom speculation has warned that he believes that the World Wide Web is on its last legs, a fear that seems to be shared by Cisco, Hewlett Packard and AT&T. The source of the fear is the number of developing countries connecting to the web, potentially bringing with it hundreds of millions of new users, enough to choke an already nearly overloaded system. The current idea for solving the problem is to build a new network overlaid on top of the existing infrastructure

that can better monitor and direct traffic as well as fight security threats and traffic surges. Speaking of traffic FrontBridge Technologies, one of the many internet monitoring services recently released information stating that in the month of August up to 82% of all email was made up of spam. Going on rough estimates this potentially means that nearly 30% of all email sent in August contained advice on how to make your penis bigger. With information like that you've got to wonder if the internet is worth saving at all.

OLED

LIGHT UP THE FUTURE

Give us this now!

Whilst the fact that Sony have gone into mass production of OLED screens for handheld devices may not sound like that big a deal it really bodes well for display technology in the next few years. For those unfamiliar with the technology, OLEDs are semi-organic screens that emit light when hit with an electric charge. Because of their luminescent nature, OLED screens have a much wider viewing angle than conventional flat screens (normally LCD), have a faster refresh rate and do not require back-lighting, drawing a good deal less power than conventional displays. The current crop of OLED screens will only appear in small devices such as the Sony Clie, cameras, cell phones and shavers but if Sony's claim that the OLED industry looks set to turn from a multi-million dollar business into a multi-billion dollar industry it probably won't be all that long until we see the emergence of OLED televisions and monitors. In related news, Sony has recently teamed with Samsung to develop bigger and better LCD TV technology, hopefully eliminating the problems that plague current sets such as motion blur due to low response times and the high price tag.



[above] Straight from a jellyfish to your phone



ANDY

BUTTERCUP MUSIC

Speaker technology blossoming

Sometimes you have to wonder what the hell is wrong with Japanese people but others you just have to praise their obsessively strange inventors for coming up with some sublimely cool gadgets. The latest on this list of things that you don't really need but you know you want is the Ka-on, a nifty little gadget that turns flowers into speakers. Consisting of a magnetic coil and adapters to hook up with most audio devices, the Ka-on fits on the bottom of most vases (use on live plants, although never expressly mentioned on the website, is most probably detrimental to their health) and transmits vibrations up the stems of plants, using their leaves and petals as resonant surfaces. Unlike most regular speakers that are directional, the Ka-on delivers a more diffuse and omnidirectional sound, filling the room with diffuse noise. Later this year the company is also planning on releasing a hands-free telephone adapter for the Ka-on, literally allowing users to carry on two way conversations with plants.

WINNERS

HYPER 131

SONIC ADVANCE 3

FIRST PRIZE:

- Luke Sanderson, Thomlands, QLD

RUNNERS UP:

- Austin Gillard, Ballarat, VIC
- J. Staines, Upper Coomera, QLD
- Peter Correy, Manning, WA
- A. Thompson, Woodridge, QLD

MASHED

- Brok Power, Eltham, VIC
- Nick Woo, Acton, ACT
- Alastair O'Neil, Kelso, NSW
- Marlow Family, Bassendean, WA
- Steve Milich, Plympton, SA
- Marcus Eastop, Elwood, VIC

FIREFLY

- Robert Sakaluk, Yagoona West, NSW
- Jason Leony, Churchlands, WA
- Simon Erskine, Highgate, WA

SOCCER NERDS UNITE

Soccer fans have yet another management game to look forward to - Championship Manager Online. It will be a subscription only game allowing you to choose from clubs in six national leagues (France, England, Germany, Spain, Scotland and Italy), with many "worlds" operating so you'll never have the same club twice in any one play environment. It's in development by Jadestone, in conjunction with Beautiful Game Studios. www.cm-online.com.

CAPTION THIS!

PART 60

Come on, make us laugh. Just send your funny screen captions to us at captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 60 in the subject line.



woodpecker... hee hee hee... hee hee hee

Bad Cop No Doughnut

DANIEL WILKS - THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS DEPUTY EDITOR



Last time I looked at a globe I could have sworn we were part of the Asia-Pacific region. I was

never too good at geography as a student (though I can read a map and give directions very well) so correct me if I'm wrong in stating that if we are classed as part of the Asia-Pacific region then we are relatively close to Asia. If memory serves me correctly the last time I flew to an Asian country it only took 8 hours and the last time I went to London it took me just under 24. Unless I'm sorely mistaken or the victim of some time dilating conspiracy this would mean that Europe is a little further away from us than Japan. Why is it then that we are classed as Europe as far as release schedules are concerned? It can be argued that the language barrier is what puts us in that European region but the simple fact is that there are more English speakers in Asia than there are in Europe. As a matter of fact a recent study showed that there are more people learning English in China than there are English speakers in the rest of the world. At any rate, the number of bi-lingual or subtitled games released in Japan would negate this anyway. Just look at Silent Hill 4: The Room as a prime example. It's been out in Japan for months and entirely playable in English but we've only just gotten review code here. What changes had to be made? None. We just had to wait for a bloody European release. As part of Europe we seem to miss all the cool stuff and what we do get we have to wait ages for. Now imagine if you can if we were part of the Asia-Pacific region for releases - we get everything early, we get cool Jap releases, we don't get treated like second class citizens. Now that you have that image in your head have a look at the real situation, hang your head and shed a silent tear.



SEX

SILICON BOOBIES

The era of virtual "personalities" beckons

As many of you will now be aware, the October issue of Playboy will be featuring an article titled "Gaming Grows Up", in which numerous female game characters will be shown in various states of undress ranging from fully nude to attired but provocatively posed. The characters slated to appear in various states of nudity include Bloodrayne, the half-vampire heroine of the Bloodrayne games, Tara, a vampiric femme-fatale from the upcoming western/shooter Darkwatch, Luba Licious, one of the tastefully named sex toys from Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude, Mileena from the Mortal Kombat franchise and Ayane, who will be seen wearing only slightly less than her usual Dead or Alive getup. Interspersed with the images will be brief previews of some of the biggest upcoming games of this year and the next. The aim of the article is, apparently, to show that gaming

is not just for kids and that the medium as a whole has grown up. Whilst showing a number of silicon shaded boobies will undoubtedly open the eyes of a few non-gamers to the medium the fallout from the article is potentially disastrous. In recent years the only real issue that games have had to deal with in the mainstream media has been with violence, but the naked (and semi-naked) images appearing in Playboy could give aggrieved parties and other people more supposed ammunition to use in the argument that games are harmful to their children. It's not too hard to imagine ill informed parents being horrified first by the fact that games, obviously meant for children are being used to titillate and secondly by the fact that these images are obviously being used to attract their impressionable children into the sordid world of pornography. Once again they'll be missing the point.

FIRST SCREENS! BLAU!

Heavenly Sword NEXT-GEN Developer: Just Add Monsters



GOLDENEYE
ROGUE AGENT™

OVERFLOW

Beatscellaneous artist Amon Tobin is composing the score to Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory, which is great news indeed!

Full online compatibility has been confirmed for Pro Evo 4 on Xbox! Yes, you'll be able to pit your skills against players from all over the world in real-time matches, not to mention forming leagues! We should have a full review next issue!

As you've no doubt heard, Acclaim have closed up shop worldwide and filed for Chapter 7 liquidation. With assets somewhere between \$10 and \$50 million, yet debts listed at over \$100 million, the company's situation was dire. We'll keep you updated in the coming months with what's happening with their titles. Initial word is, however, that Juiced should still come out, just published through someone else.

The sequel to one of our favourite PS2 games - Ico, has been confirmed. We'll have more on it after TGS.

What with all the MMORPGs going down in flames these days (the latest? Dragon Empires), it's nice to be able to announce development of a new one! Perpetual Entertainment are working on a Star trek massively multiplayer game, and they have the rights to the entire franchise - from the original series through all the TV series' and movies. Before you get too excited though, don't expect to see this one until 2007.

Super Monkey Ball Deluxe has been confirmed for PS2 and Xbox. It will have a grand total of 300 stages - 114 from SMB, 140 from SMB2 and 46 brand spanking new ones! It will also have all 12 of the mini-games from 1 and 2. It should be out early next year and at a budget price to boot.

Check out www.halo2.com.au for lots of local Halo 2 news and other goodies. You might also find out about the midnight launches that are planned throughout the country!

Just a little apology - we listed Wario Ware on GCN's RRP as \$69.95, when it's actually \$49.95. Sorry Nintendo... please don't send Wario after us. Or worse still, Waluigi (that guy gives us the creeps).

IF YOU'RE A LOUSY GAMER YOU'LL STILL BE A LOUSY GAMER.

But at least you'll look cool.



The Portable Super LANBOY Gamer Case

- Durable anodized aluminum chassis weighs just 8.8 lbs
- 9 drive bays for maximum expandability
- 2x 120mm low-speed fans, preinstalled
- Front fan includes blue LED illumination
- Front-mounted ports: 2x USB, 2x audio
- Includes free carrying strap

As veteran gamers say, 'If you can't blind 'em with talent, blind 'em with a bright blue fan.' We understand. That's why our portable Super LANBOY case boasts an array of eye-catching features guaranteed to dazzle your jealous opponents. Like a lightweight anodized aluminum chassis. A clear side window. And two 120mm fans, including one with vibrant blue illumination. Truth is, it's got everything a gamer could possibly need. Except a healthy dose of talent.

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>> DANIEL WILKS



To different people Hell is many things. To Veterans (and fans of overwrought war movies, *Saving Private Ryan*, I'm looking in your direction) War is hell.

To Jean-Paul Sartre, French playwright, tin-pot philosopher and all round wanker, Hell is Other People. For some Chinese there is a specific Hell for every little infraction, including a personal favourite, the Hell of the Bloody Bucket where unwed mothers and women whose children are stillborn go (doesn't really seem fair does it). For others Hell is the traditional fire and brimstone pit where little guys in spandex stick oversized forks into your butt for eternity. For me hell is different. For me Hell is Singapore.

EVIL LURKS HERE

I have nothing against the people. Bear that in mind. I have never met a Singaporean I didn't get along with or like for that matter. It's the country itself that I find so unappealing. For a start there are the laws and the warning signs. Singapore has a law against everything. On the upside the entire country is painfully clean and orderly but on the downside some

of the laws are just plain silly. Up until recently it was against the law for men to have hair longer than shoulder length. I don't have a problem with that now, being all clean cut and respectable but when I first went (just after the law was repealed thank god) I had hair down to my arse. Even though my hair was now legal the grief I copped at immigration was intense. Up until this year chewing gum was against the law. Now you can get it as long as you have a prescription from your doctor.

Then you have the warning signs. Everything is warned against or prohibited. Walk out of the airport (one of the best, if not the best in the world BTW) and you'll be greeted by umpteen signs telling you that there is no skate-scooting allowed (calling for a big "doesmannerism") and by no means should you study whilst in or around the airport. Yes, study! Head from there into a public toilet (if by chance you can find one that you

don't have to pay for) and you'll probably find a sign warning you to dry your hands on the paper towels provided. Whilst these type of signs are common around the world the reason given is novel to say the least. Instead of the usual reason of sanitation, Singapore reasons that if you flick water off your hands it could make the floor slippery and someone might fall and hurt themselves. All of this is displayed in comic-book form. The entire thing has the effect of making you wonder if everything you do is against the

of life for all visitors to Singapore. No matter how sensibly you dress or how little you wear you're constantly basting in your own juices. Yes, it's as disgusting as it sounds. The air seems so thick you have to cut off a slab with a knife if you want oxygen and the humidity makes it so you can never take a truly satisfying breath. As soon as you leave your residence the heat and humidity hammer down on you, sapping all your energy, making you want to do nothing more than go back to bed. Unfortunately

>>> CHRISTIAN HELL MAY HAVE PITS OF FIRE... BUT AT LEAST IT'S A DRY HEAT

law, or at least frowned upon.

Worse than the rules, regulations and omnipresent signs is the weather. Christian Hell may have pits of fire, and pitchfork to rectum action but at least it's a dry heat. Singapore is the exact opposite. Imagine a country where the average temperature all year round is about 30-33 degrees and the humidity (when it isn't raining) hovers around 90%. Sweat is a way

sleep is just as difficult and uncomfortable, not to mention tiring as being outside is.

By now you're probably wondering what the hell I was doing Singapore in the first place if I hate it so much? The answer is simple. I was there for the Vivendi Universal Asia Pacific Games Summit, the company's annual expo of their upcoming games. Let's check 'em out shall we?

[right] Now there's a haircut you could set your watch to



F.E.A.R.

DEVELOPER: MONOLITH

>> One game stood out above all at the summit, the very aptly titled F.E.A.R. (First Encounter Assault and Recon), the latest game from Monolith that has appeared from nowhere and impressed the hell out of jaded industry veterans. Although F.E.A.R. is very obviously a horror game it is unlike anything you have seen before in the FPS field. We know you hear that a lot in previews about upcoming games, but bear with us and you'll be a true believer too. Instead of the balls to the wall visceral, demonic western style horror of games such as Doom 3, Undying and the much maligned (and quite rightly so) Blood, F.E.A.R. treads a much more Asiatic path. Before you jump to conclusions, the fact that the horror is decidedly Asian in feel does not mean the game will be filled with sweet, sweet tentacle on/in non-specific orifice action. Players take the role of a member of the F.E.A.R. squad, an elite unit trained specifically to deal with supernatural and otherworldly aggressors and naturally the game begins with the excrement hitting the proverbial cyclic air agitator.

AGITATE THIS

The section of the game displayed at the conference (presumably the first mission) sees the player in a helicopter en-route to the Armacham Technology headquarters where things have gone, to put it politely, pear shaped. As the group leader, Rowdy Better explains, a group of unidentified assailants have taken over the facility for unknown purposes. The first Delta team sent into the building was literally torn limb from limb, so naturally the F.E.A.R. team is sent in to investigate, find out what the hell went on and hopefully put a stop to it once and for all. Of course, the fact that the Delta team went in first means that the F.E.A.R. team isn't actually in a first encounter situation but that's beside the point. Anyway S.O.S.E.A.R. (Second Or Subsequent Encounter Assault and Recon) is too much of a mouthful and doesn't have a cool acronym to boot.

The action in F.E.A.R., or what we've played of it so far is, for want of a better word, intense. Whilst the approach to the controls are vintage FPS, the combination of clever level design and truly interesting AI makes it something special — at



PC



[above] This game would be cooler with more ninjas wailing on guitars...



[above] Fat cops will always be funny. Pity it's not the dad from Family Matters

least it appears that way at this early stage. In the level we played the vast majority of the enemies were of the strictly paramilitary kind, but that did not make them any less interesting than their supernatural counterparts. The enemy showed an excellent grasp of the terrain, using furniture and walls as cover, pushing objects out of the way to get better lines of fire, leaping over obstacles to get out of the way of grenades and working ably as a team to outflank the player with a mixture of fire and move tactics and covering fire. Later in the level we were introduced to a more otherworldly enemy in the form of camouflaged troops prone to spring unawares from wherever you weren't looking, leaping from the roof and otherwise making you jump out of your seat whenever they appeared (or didn't as the case may be) suddenly. These troops really showed off the impressive power of the graphics engine which can, at this stage, rival the graphical splendour of games such as Far Cry, Half Life 2 and even Doom 3. After a bit of experimentation we discovered that the nearly invisible troops could be seen more clearly through glass as they warped slightly.

The graphics engine also made combat nothing short of spectacular. The player character has the ability to slow down time for limited periods (a-la Bullet-Time), but like Max Payne 2, not just the characters slow down. Everything slows down — sounds become long and drawn out, grenade explosions ripple across the room, chips of

masonry flake off the walls and obscure vision. The effect needs to be seen to be believed.

FUNNING AROUND

After blasting our way through the demo level we were treated to a chilling cutscene, firmly placing F.E.A.R. in the style of Ringu, Ju-On, Tomie, Dark Water or any other superb Japanese ghost/horror movie. The cutscene, more than ably rendered with the game engine, showed the first three Delta team members sent into the facility. Whilst stealthily making their way through the almost deserted building (with the exception of the corpses strewn about the rooms), the team comes across a creepy little girl dressed in red, her face obscured by a mix of lank hair and unnatural shadow. The first Delta begins to hemorrhage before his arm is torn from his body by an unseen force. The other two begin to flee, one of them falling quickly to the supernatural onslaught, painting the wall with arterial spray. The final Delta, weakened from blood loss and seemingly unable to use his legs frantically drags himself down the corridor, casting about himself for a glimpse of the girl but sees no one aside from his dead comrades. The camera pans up to show the girl walking slowly across the ceiling, leaving bloody footprints in her wake. The Delta starts to convulse and the screen mercifully fades. The level is over but the palpable sense of dread stays with us for the rest of the day.





**XBOX
PC**

Men Of Valor

DEVELOPER: 2015

>> Vietnam is the hottest thing since sliced bread right now (provided the bread just came out of the oven, or was baked on the streets of Singapore). It seems as though every second developer is making (or has made) a shooter based in that Southeast Asian "police action". In Men of Valor, players take the role of a young black soldier known affectionately as "The Shepherd" by his squad mates. Through a number of levels players will have to fight the 'Cong in scenarios based on real events. At the current time Men of Valor looks to be shaping up well on Xbox but not so well on PC with twitchy controls, near invisible enemies and iffy AI. Hopefully these problems will be cleared up in time for release.



Crash Twinsanity

DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES

>> The announcement of a new Crash game isn't usually something we greet with much enthusiasm but the fact that Jordan Reichek, a producer and director who has worked on such great animated shows and Ren & Stimpy, Invader Zim and The Simpsons makes this title one hell of a lot more interesting. Turn to page 58 to see if we (or more specifically Moemar) liked it.

**XBOX
PS2
GCN**



PC

Empire Earth 2

DEVELOPER: MAD DOC SOFTWARE

>> One of the best RTS games to come out in recent years is back, bigger, better and more jam-packed with features than before. After a cinematic guaranteed to send a shiver down your spine, the player is greeted with one of the most accessible examples of the genre to come along in ages. We don't have the space here to point out all of the excellent features so we'll settle for one. Resource management, long the bugbear of the genre has been brilliantly streamlined – instead of selecting units and clicking on the resources you want them to collect until they run out, players can go to the resource management screen, collect all the idle units and send them to whatever type of resource you want to collect with a simple click of the mouse. Even better, when that resource stockpile runs out the units keyed to that specific resource will simply search for the next closest stockpile and gather from that, leaving the player free to concentrate on more important (and fun) tasks.



[above] Yep, something's certainly happening...



PS2
XBOX
PC

Robots

DEVELOPER: EUROCOM

>> Based on the upcoming Fox animated movie of the same name, Robots casts the player as a robot inventor living in an entirely robotic universe. From what we've seen so far, Robots looks disappointingly close to Ratchet & Clank with level design, animations and combat looking remarkably similar. Worse yet, the main character even has an upgradable robot sidekick (a-la Clank) to help him in his journeys.



PC

Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude

DEVELOPER: HIGH VOLTAGE

>> The Larry fanboy in me wants to decry Magna Cum Laude to the high heavens but the professional in me keeps begging to give the game a second chance. After having a play of the latest game in the classic series it becomes obvious that whilst the mini-games that comprise basically all of the action of the title are superficially fun, a Larry game it ain't. Aside from the fact that Larry Laffer isn't the main character in the game, Magna Cum Laude lacks the naïve innocence of the earlier games in which the lovable loser protagonist always got his comeuppance, instead replacing it with plots that all seem to revolve around getting chicks drunk so you can nail them. It won't be coming out in Oz.

PS2
XBOX
PC

[below] Forget forward, we want a reverse cowgirl...



Tribes Vengeance

DEVELOPER: IRRATIONAL GAMES

>> I flew to Singapore this time last year to see Tribes: Vengeance and back then it was looking damn good. This time around it's looking bloody fantastic. The controls are tight, the levels are great and the new weapons that have been added are brilliant and skiing is readily accessible at the press of a button, making the latest in the critically acclaimed but relatively unpopular series the most new-player friendly to date. Still no sign of the single player portion of the game but if it's even half as good as the multiplayer action Vivendi could have yet another winner on their hands. It's getting close now people...

[below] Tribal warfare has never looked so appealing



PEACE AND LOVE IN HONG KONG

ACTIVATE ASIA 2004

>> CAM SHEA



It's often possible to tell whether an account of an experience is going to be a favourable one or not, simply by reading or listening to the first sentence.

For instance, one of my dearest friends once took a trip to Outer Mongolia, and upon her return the first words out of her mouth were: "So I lost my passport at the airport" and from that moment on I had an inkling that this would be a tale of woe. I was right. My friend had spent the last three weeks living in the airport,

looking for her passport, and had never even made it onto a plane.

Similarly, if you turn to page 14, and read the first line of Daniel Wilk's account of his trip to Singapore, which is "To different people Hell is many things" it's not hard to gather that he also was destined for a great many unpleasant experiences, whether they be a country that forbids the having of fun, or mandatory karaoke with a bunch of people that take it way too seriously.

If all these tales of travesty, however, are getting you down, then you'll be pleased to hear the first line of the account of my trip to Hong Kong, for it is: "As we prepared to land, our eyes bugged out at one of the most awe-inspiring sights of modern civilisation - Hong Kong." As you can tell, although there may indeed be minor hiccups along the way (Cathay Pacific I'm looking in your direction), it's clear from the outset that this is going to be a happy story; a tale of a junket gone right, in a world gone mad.

With the introductions out of the way, let's get on with it shall we?

As we prepared to land, our eyes bugged out at one of the most awe-inspiring sights of modern civilisation - Hong Kong. What an amazing city. Not only is the density of the city itself imposing, but even outside Kowloon and Hong Kong island there are frequent high-rise pockets, jutting out between gorgeous green riveted hills and smooth expanses of water. More often than not you'll see four to six identical skyscrapers, positioned right next to one another - a little like the ghettos in America but on a much grander scale. It makes you wonder about the notion of identity, for those living in such a faceless place.

In stark contrast, however, Hong Kong itself couldn't be more diverse - a crush of humanity clustered in and amongst a dense patchwork of skyscrapers. Hong Kong is a place of contrast, of poverty and wealth, of colonial influences and a nation striving forward, of skyscrapers and small shacks.

Indeed, this is a place where it's not uncommon to see the scaffolding around a high-rise construction site made from bamboo.

Why was I and a number of other gaming journalists and retail representatives flying into Hong Kong? For Activision's Activate Asia 2004, of course. Not only was it our opportunity to check out the latest games on Activision's release schedule, but it was a chance to enjoy a few decadent days in one of the best hotels in Hong Kong - the Intercontinental.

The Intercontinental seemed to have more staff than customers (and they had plenty of customers). There were people waiting to open the doors for you, floor staff waiting to greet you, and comedians to tell you a joke on the way to the elevator to ensure you weren't bored during the walk across the large, plush lobby and bar area. They also have a full-time team of psychics who use their skills to probe the surface of your mind (taking care not to delve down to the seedy underbelly mind you), searching for ways the hotel can better serve you. Thus, by the time I'd



Teddy Bear Kingdom - home of the Steve Mannerism

[right] The Hyper spa is nowhere near as nice as this

walked through the front doors I was being ushered to a seat at the bar, given one of the best seabreezes I've had in my life, a bowl of olives and been told that a tailor specialising in the creation of phat pants had been called and was on his way.

Once I'd dragged myself away from the bar I took a tour of my room. The tour guide pointed out that one wall was a massive floor to ceiling window showing off a spectacular view of Hong Kong Island's skyline (which is even more amazing at night when all the buildings are lit up), although it was a little hard to see at the time (I was squinting trying to keep the room's complimentary monocle from falling off my face). Other than the view there was a queen sized bed with more pillows than a decent sized harem, and a bathroom that was larger than most hotel rooms, complete with slippers and bath robe. There was no personal butler or masseuse, but as I glanced at the range of services the hotel provided it soon became apparent that if I wanted either, it was but a phone call away.

Aside from one or two other trips, opulence such as this was a very pleasant surprise. The word "opulence" as used here is taken to mean, "comfy accommodation with great views, delicious drinks and the entire absence of stinky Singapore".

Over the course of the next few days we'd be taking a ferry ride around Hong Kong harbour, taking a tram up to Victoria Peak (which has one of the best views

in the city - overlooking Hong Kong island and across to the mainland), we'd eat sushi, oysters and mussels, drink at the decidedly wanky Felix Bar, and wander around Mong Kok (best name for a place ever!) and Causeway Bay finding entire districts devoted to sneakers, cute little malls filled with figurine/toy stores, picking up great English T-shirts and checking out the arcade scene, not to mention lounging by the pool drinking Asahi and chilling in the spa, which overlooks the water and has quite the view.

It was, as they say, all good. Hong Kong is definitely a place to put on your list of must-visit locations (and if you don't have a list - start one). The rail system is a dream, and the hustle and bustle of the city (no matter what time you go out) is all encompassing.

In amongst all this caviar, limousines, bidets and biznatches there was a day and a bit of "work" too... which was another pleasant surprise, as all the titles on the horizon from Activision are looking really strong. We've omitted a couple, however, as we've reviewed Call of Duty: United Offensive this issue, and THUG 2 will be in next issue.



Rome: Total War

DEVELOPER: CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

>> Yes, it's out now, and no Activision didn't get us code in time. We'll have a full review next issue. The good news is that Rome really does do things on a new and amazing scale. Whether you're laying siege to a castle with volleys of flaming arrows, ballistae and battering rams, or trading and scheming on the world map (which is much more extensive and more like Civ now), Rome is going to be one of those games that enchants anyone who tries it.

For now I'll leave you with one of the cooler things I witnessed in the demo. You all know about the elephants right? They have the power to decimate entire armies, and watching them running through enemy ranks sending men flying is a sight to behold. Cooler still though, is the means to defeat them. Apparently elephants freak out when they hear loud high pitched noises (who doesn't?), so all you have to do is set a bunch of pigs on fire and send them in the elephants' direction to make them scatter. No, we're not kidding. And yes, this is historically accurate.

PC



X-Men Legends

DEVELOPER: RAVEN SOFTWARE

>> As those of you who read issue 131 would know, X-Men Legends is looking sweet, so there's not much we need to say. There is one piece of very gratifying news that came out of the HK Q&A though: the developers have decided to implement a four player mode! Apparently they were asked why it wasn't in there so many times that they've decided to include it. The squeaky wheel gets the grease, as they say!

XBOX
PS2
GCN

PC



Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines

DEVELOPER: TROIKA

>> Daniel Wilks might think that Singapore is hell, but for me Los Angeles is a very close second. And that's why Bloodlines rings so true. It's set in a dark, vampire infested LA, where there's no black or white - just several million shades of grey (and the odd spray of red). You play a creature of the night from one of seven clans; including the insane Malkavians with the guidance of their inner voice; the masters of subterfuge and espionage, the Nosferatu clan; and the shapeshifting loners of the Gangrel clan. Each has a rich history and complex motivations, and in the power struggles between the rival clans who to ally yourself with is entirely up to you.

Like any good RPG, there's a huge amount of scope for creating and nurturing very different characters, even within the same clan. Indeed, the game has been designed so that you can find your own solution to problems. If you have good social skills you may be able to persuade other characters to give you information, whereas if not you may be able to hack computers or shoot your way to it.

Developed by esteemed RPG development team Troika (Arcanum, Fallout) and powered by the Source engine, Bloodlines is going to be huge.



[left] *Browtouch HK Mannerism*

Doom 3

DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE, VICARIOUS VISIONS

>> Todd Hollenshead and Tim Willits from id Software were doing the Doom 3 Xbox demos, and the game is looking fantastic - the minor sacrifices that have been made to get the game running well on Xbox really won't matter. Phew! It's also going to have a two player co-op mode, which will really set it apart from the PC version. Expect a release early next year.

One amusing aspect of the presentation was that the Q&A at the end of the session was mostly comprised of a Korean journalist trying to convince them that although the worldwide release of the game (on PC) was the following day, that it was already available for download on the internet. Todd and Tim weren't impressed to say the least. If only all Koreans were as sweet as Amos.

XBOX



XBOX
PS2
PC
GCN

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events

DEVELOPER: AMAZE

>> This one is definitely aimed at the younger gamers out there, but being fans of the books we were curious to see how it was turning out. Like the film, the game is based on the first three Lemony Snicket books, and stars all three Baudelaire children, each with their own unique abilities. Violet is the inventor, so using her you'll be able to collect items from the environment and combine them into inventions to help you progress. Klaus is the researcher so presumably you'll use him to investigate what Count Olaf is up to. Sunny is the baby who likes to bite things with her four sharp teeth, so she should come in handy in combat (we'd love to see a sword fight featuring Sunny a la Miserable Mills). Truth be told, Lemony Snicket is looking a little too simplistic but should still be solid.

XBOX
PS2
GCN



Call of Duty: Finest Hour

DEVELOPER: SPARK

>> Finest Hour is being developed by Spark, and after having a chat with their CEO Craig Allen, it's clear the console Call of Duty is in good hands. Spark is comprised of ex Medal Of Honor team members, and their understanding of what makes a good WWII game is very extensive.

The game puts you in the combat boots of three different characters - an African American tank commander, a British soldier and a Russian Sniper. Their stories will be interweaved, providing continuity to the narrative, which will cover three major theatres - the Eastern Front, North Africa and Western Europe.

Finest Hour is definitely a Call of Duty game - it's all about intensity and pacing. The action never lets up, with explosions rocking all around, wave upon wave of enemies to deal with, a whole host of armoured vehicles to pilot and layer upon layer of scripted events. It's a familiar blend of arcadey gameplay and attention to authenticity in terms of the impact of the experience. It's also quite stunning visually, and considering the build we saw was on PS2, that's very good news indeed. Adding the final layer of polish to the experience, the soundtrack is from Michael Giacchino - the same guy that did the original CoD's music and has recently penned the score to The Incredibles.

XBOX
PS2
PC
GCN



Shark Tale

DEVELOPER: KNOW WONDER

>> Another licensed title, and once again, for a younger age group this one is looking pretty cool. There are lots of different styles of gameplay on offer, including a DDR mini-game that supports dance mats. The best part of the presentation, however, was when a woman from Sony Japan asked: "these dancing games - are they popular in the West?" and when the producer replied yes, she hit back with "well, in Japan they're dead, this was so three years ago". Ouch.



XBOX
PS2
PC
GCN

The Movies

DEVELOPER: LIONHEAD STUDIOS

>> To use the old cliché, playing The Movies is like being a kid in a candy store - so much to do and so many possible taste combinations to try that you just want to live there.

We'll discuss the extensive Career mode in a later issue, but what we're most excited about right now is the sandbox mode. There are somewhere in the vicinity of two thousand scenes to choose from in The Movies, and it's entirely up to you to choose the actors, what they wear and the sequence of scenes that comprise your film. Although you can't position the camera yourself or create your own scenes from scratch, you can choose the pace that a scene plays out, which expands the possibilities considerably. A drive by for instance, can range from the car speeding past and mowing a guy down in a split second, through to the car pausing next to him and pumping him full of lead for a good ten seconds before moving on. Thus, you can go for a Benny Hill pace or a slow, drawn out and dramatic option.

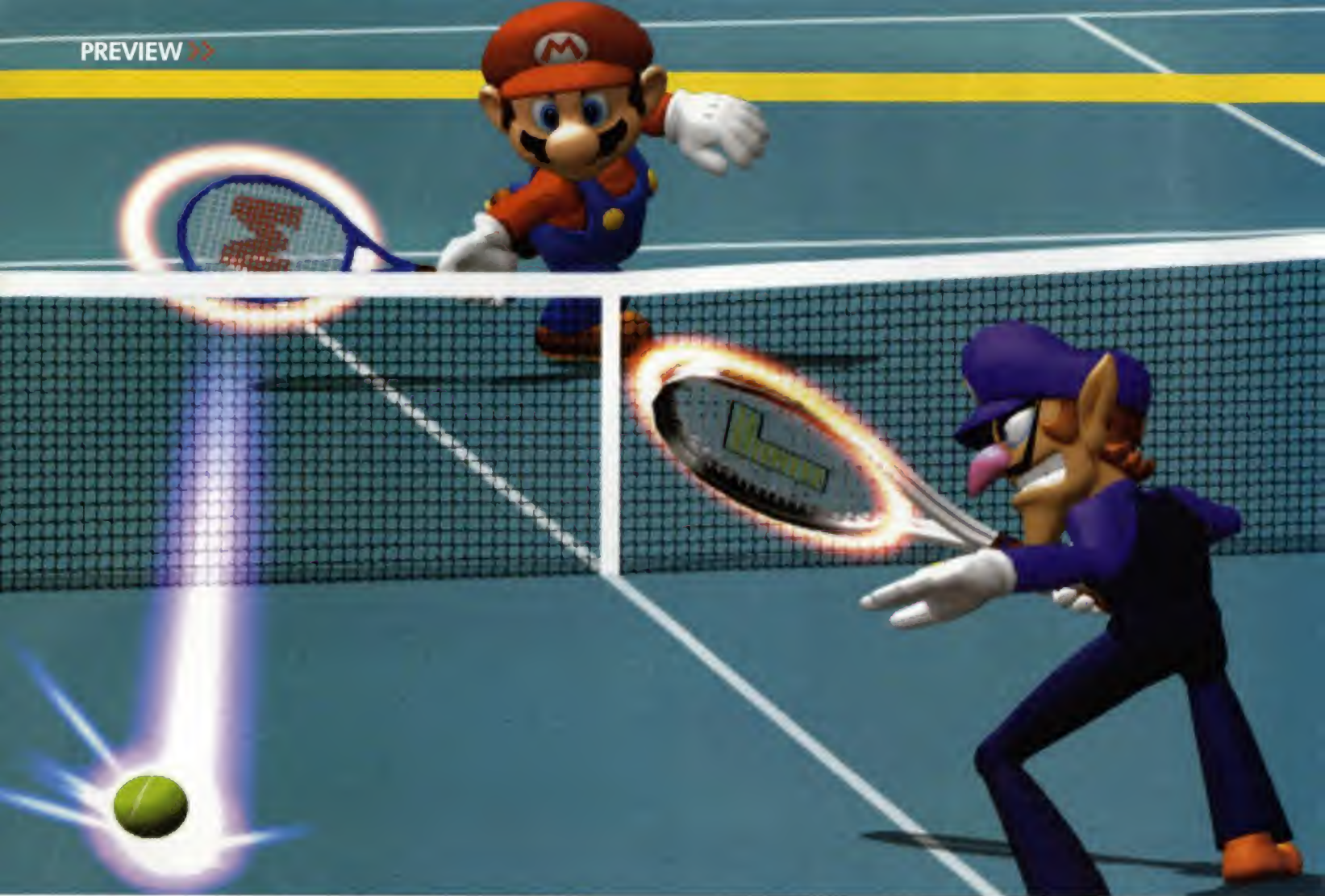
What really gives prospective Movies their own flavour, however, is that you can go in and add subtitles or, and this is the kicker, record your own dialogue and music to go with the film.

The possibilities are endless. Simply put, this is going to be the game to bring michinima to the masses. When The Movies comes out, gamers all over the world are going to be making movies and posting them online for all to see. There will even be an online money system, so if your film gets an award you'll get virtual money that you can then spend on downloadable items to insert into the game. Should be comedy gold.



[left] The bus that couldn't slow down





MARIO TENNIS

>> Mario Tennis on GameCube has been a long time coming, but the wait is almost over. The game is getting a release in the USA in November, which hopefully means we should see it by Christmas. The question on everyone's lips, of course, is how does it play? After all, if it's almost finished, why wouldn't Nintendo show it off at E3 this year? Why keep things so hush hush? We don't know the answer to that, but you can put your fears to rest because the new Mario Tennis rocks. No exclamation point needed. It has the same brand of addictive gameplay that made the original a mainstay of multiplayer gaming

sessions, but with a healthy dose of quirky humour, mini-game style missions and the lavish presentation that only a (current) next gen system can provide.

PEACH LOVES BALLS

In addition to straight-up tennis at Peach's Castle, there are a range of other courts that all throw their own gameplay twists into the mix. Take Donkey Kong's jungle court for instance. In this one, Kremlings walk along the top of the net, and if you manage to knock one off, they'll follow your opponents around the court then sink their teeth into their ankles, preventing

them from moving as quickly. The sky's the limit too, as you can have several Kremlings gnawing at an opponent's heels. It's comical, but it also adds a little extra strategy to proceedings. And will be a hoot in multiplayer too no doubt.

Then there's the Luigi's Mansion court, where ghosts are swarming around the players and trying to freak them out, as well as dropping banana peels on the court. This one also has some cool mini-games associated with it, such as a battle against around 30 boos.

But of course, you can't have a Luigi court without a Mario one, and fortunately the Mario Sunshine court



AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:
CATEGORY: Tennis
PLAYERS: 1-4
DEVELOPER: Nintendo
AVAILABLE: Late 2004

PAAANCH-O-METER



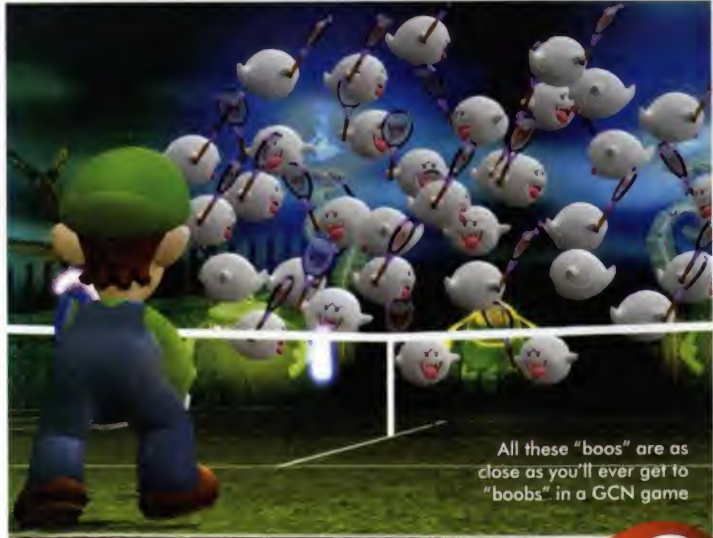
[below] Luigi gets some tail





WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
 It hasn't been confirmed but we suspect that the single player game will have an experience points system.

DK PULLS OUT AN OVER-SIZE NOVELTY BANANA AND THROWS IT BOOMERANG STYLE



All these "boos" are as close as you'll ever get to "boobs" in a GCN game

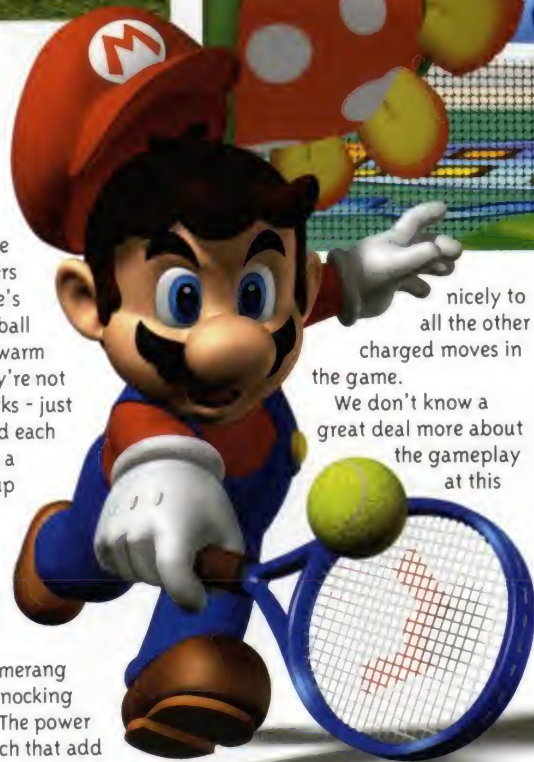


doesn't disappoint. It's set on the beach, next to the gloriously tropical water of Isle Delphino. Hazards include the ever-present brown goop from the game, but you can also use the water pack and Shine Gets come into it too. Also cool is the face off with the giant squid boss, as this time you can't simply grab his tentacles and pull - he's on the other side of the court and using each appendage to hold a tennis racquet. We also have our fingers crossed that there's a court based around Paper Mario 2, where there's an audience throwing power ups and items at the players!

SIMPLIFIED?

Although the controls seem to have been simplified a little from the original title, there is one important new addition - signature special moves for each character. Time your button press just right (as your character glows) and time will slow down as you execute a spectacular move. Donkey Kong, for instance,

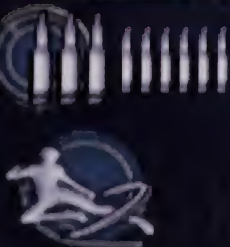
drops a barrel at the back of the court, jumps in and fires himself at the ball. Mario, on the other hand, just pulls out a massive mallet and clobbers it back. Then there's Boo, who hits the ball back amongst a swarm of mini-Boos. They're not unblockable attacks - just very powerful, and each character also has a defensive power up they can use to get balls out of their reach. DK, for instance, pulls out an over-sized novelty banana and throws it boomerang style at the ball, knocking it back into play. The power ups are a cool touch that add



nicely to all the other charged moves in the game. We don't know a great deal more about the gameplay at this

stage, but we do know that Mario Tennis is one sweet looking game. All of the character models are simply stunning - crisp, colourful and animated with lashings of personality. The environments don't let them down either. DK's court in particular is reminiscent of his course in Double Dash, with intense greenery and arching jungle canopy all around. It looks brilliant, with swathes of vivid colour in the background and crisp wooden court textures in the foreground.

Simply put, Mario Tennis is looking brilliant and we're counting down the days until we can get our hands on it. You should be too. <<<



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

The sequel to the movie. It's out in Japan, We want it now!

42.77

KUSANAGI IS CAPABLE OF LEAPS, DODGES AND FLIPS

GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action/stealth

PLAYERS: 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: Cavia Inc

AVAILABLE: Soon

AAAANCH-O-METER



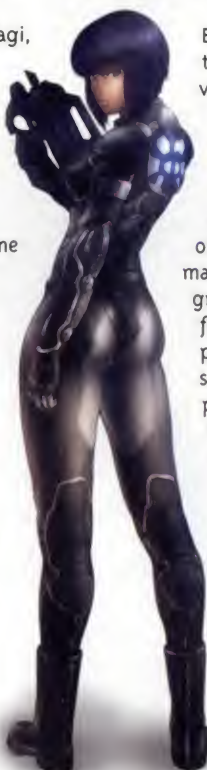
Ghost in the Shell ranks up there as not only one of the truly brilliant examples of anime out there but also as one of the best films to have been produced in the last 15 years. Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex is the second game to be based on the license and the first to be based on the series rather than the film. And it's definitely shaping up to be a very nice looking game indeed.

SWEET KUSANAGI ACTION!

Players will have the option to play one of three characters from the

series, Major Motoko Kusanagi, Batou or Tachikoma though it is unknown at this time as to whether the player will simply choose one of these characters and make their way through the 15 or so levels that comprise the game or whether different levels will be based around the different character's skills.

We have no idea at this stage as to the plot of the game but can only assume that it deals with the uber-plot brought up in the Stand Alone Complex series. Plot aside, gameplay looks to be a nice balance of balls-to-the-wall combat and stealth, kind of a like a combination of Oni and Metal Gear. Whilst we've only seen two characters in action so far, Kusanagi and



Batou, we've pleased to report that both play very differently and should really mix up the action. Batou is a very straightforward tank by the looks of things but Kusanagi on the other hand is much more maneuverable, capable of great leaps, dodges and flips. It also looks to be possible to hack into some of the enemies, presumably giving you temporary control over sundry characters.

Aside from the single player mode, Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex will feature a complete multiplayer mode that will introduce more characters from the series as well as a number of weapons not seen in the single



[above] Batou... he's no Kusanagi

player game and a multiplayer specific level. So far the only two multiplayer modes that have been announced are Deathmatch and the much more interesting sounding Battle Royale mode. Whilst we assume that Battle Royale will probably be some permutation of King of the Hill style gameplay we've kept ourselves amused by the thought that we may finally be able to live out our dreams of being trapped on an island forced to kill school students to survive.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE

A Kimba the White Lion game that isn't a platformer. Something where you get to maul Disney execs, maybe.

BLOOD WILL TELL IS BASED ON THE DORORO MANGA

BLOOD WILL TELL

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Beat 'em up

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: Sega Wow

AVAILABLE: Early 2005

PAAANCH-O-METER



Osamu Tezuka is perhaps best known as the creator of Astro Boy, but during his life he was a truly prolific artist and writer, responsible for such other classics as Black Jack, Kimba the White Lion (or, as it was known in Japan "Jungle Emperor Leo"), Dororo and many others. Blood Will Tell is based around the Dororo series, which began as a manga serialised in Weekly Shonen Sunday from 1967 to 1968, then became a TV series which aired in 1969.

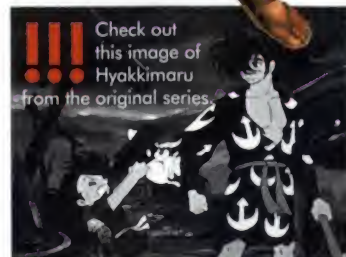
The story was set during the 1470s, a turbulent period of Japanese history, and the two main characters were a samurai named Hyakkimaru

and his friend, a young thief named Dororo. What makes Dororo so ripe for translation to a videogame is the fact that Hyakkimaru is more machine than man. The backstory deals with a man named Daigo Kagemitsu, who wishes to take over the country, and offers up 48 body parts from his unborn child to 48 demons. The child is born, stripped of his body parts and thrown into a river. Fortunately he's rescued by an inventor, given a body comprised of deadly weaponry and trained as a samurai. So one arm has a blade embedded in it, another a machine gun and his legs have bazookas. In both the original series and the game, Hyakkimaru is on a quest to defeat the 48 demons and retrieve his true body, and in doing so, become human again. This doesn't, however, mean that with each successive body part he regains that he will get less powerful. Indeed, Sega have handled it in an interesting way. The game starts in black and white for instance, and doesn't switch to colour until Hyakkimaru retrieves his eyes! In more general terms, the more human body parts he acquires, the more

refined his powers become. So as cool as it sounds having bazooka legs, an entirely human samurai truly is the ultimate warrior.

Dororo will accompany the hero on his quest, and a second player will be able to hop in and play as Dororo at any time, making the play experience somewhat dynamic. There will be more than 100 enemy types in Blood Will Tell, and both Dororo and Hyakkimaru will have their own unique abilities and skills, making teamwork essential. The coolest feature of Blood Will Tell at this stage are undoubtedly the demons (traditionally known in videogames as "bosses" of course). Although designing 48 of them is a tall order, the few we've seen so far are inventive and very cool. From a huge troll-like creature through to a multi-armed giant with tortured souls embedded in its chest, it looks like Sega are onto a winner.

Any game based on a Tezuka license shouldn't, however, rely solely on action, and if Tezuka's code of ethics and rich storytelling survive intact this will definitely be a game to check out.





WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
 Ratchet eventually working his up the weaponry food chain until he's toting a fully-blown wave motion gun

ONLINE IS A MIX BETWEEN BF 1942 AND UT 2004

RATCHET & CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL

AVAILABLE ON:
 PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:
CATEGORY: Action
PLAYERS: 1-8
DEVELOPER: Insomniac Games
AVAILABLE: November 2004

PAANCH-O-METER

[below] Too much crank leads to violence



Aside from having what could simultaneously be the best and worst name for a game ever, Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal is swiftly shaping up to be the best game the franchise has had to offer yet. This time around, instead of simply having an excellent single player mode, Up Your Arsenal will also feature a full multiplayer game with online support.

UP YOURS!

The single player game sees the heroic duo in all types of trouble, both professional and personal as they are called upon by the President to stop an evil robot mastermind by the name of Dr. Nefarious from doing something we assume is pretty evil. Aside from the two titular heroes, Up Your Arsenal features a third playable character, Quark, the world's greatest superhero, embarrassed and outcast in the first game. Even cooler than

a third playable character is the fact that the Quark levels are side scrolling beat 'em ups, perfectly complimenting his skills and style.

Judging by what we've played so far, Ratchet & Clank 3 is aiming to do everything bigger and better than what we've seen before. One of the great joys of the first two R&C games was collecting the new technology and weaponry that cropped up throughout the course of the adventure, each progressive discovery being exponentially more powerful and impressive than the last. Up Your Arsenal one ups the last two games by starting the action off with a massive gun and simply getting bigger and better from there on in. Hell, there's even one that turns enemies into sheep.

As far as online is concerned, Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal (I love writing that) can best be described as a mix of Battlefield 1942 and UT 2004, with more humour and



[above] Clank Clank You're Dead

guns that turn people into sheep. The online game will contain three game modes, the now ubiquitous Deathmatch and Capture the Flag as well as the far more interesting Siege. The Siege mode sees two teams fighting to destroy each other's bases by capturing nodes across the map making a route to the enemy base. As far as we know at this stage the multiplayer will be limited to eight players but that said, the maps we've seen so far seem to accommodate the relatively small numbers of players very well.

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Start

OVER SUBSTANCE

Andy Hunt sinks his teeth into some wafers.

You've been in that position. Something initially catches your eye, grasping your attention for a fleeting moment. You think nothing of it to begin with, but it flashes across your registry again, piquing your interest. You decide to investigate further, checking it out with a bit more detail. You read some articles about it, and it still sounds fine as many describe it as a "visual feast with enough personality to keep you satisfied". So you eventually take the plunge and invest. Before you know it, you've sat through Wolfgang Peterson's *Troy* and wondered how the ("pluck" — Ed) you ever convinced yourself that you should subject yourself to that kind of torture.

The same can be said about video games. Like never before, we have gamers been subjected to such marketing bombardment and publisher propaganda, as each publisher vies for your dollar. But, in this industry, the first casualty of war is substance.

Sometimes these are warning signs, in that the game promises features that are too good to be true. But, instead of trying to list all the promises, we are going to use the 20-20 vision of hindsight to pick out glaring instances of where the hype and graphics preceded the experience. Besides, it's more fun to decide which games



(left) Just jump on the spikes - it'll be more fun

Mortal Kombat

■ Everyone knows the amount of publicity that this game generated as a result of its "realistic" depictions of violence and gore. Tears of red arced across the screen, and meaty sounds effects provided that visceral thrill when slamming the digitised characters around the screen. And then there were the fatalities that provided the opportunity to gloat over your vanquished foe, their spine in your hand.

Debates raged over whether Mortal Kombat was superior to Street Fighter II, but the pro MK argument was paper thin at best. Yes, it was photo realistic - two dimensional, just like a real photo. The characters lacked personality, with their various mash-happy moves and stances only serving to remind you that you were in control of some toolbox actor in tights instead of a master fighting deity. The controls and animations were wooden at best, and the battles were disjointed, with no "flow". Compared to the grace of SFII, Mortal Kombat was all gore and no gameplay.



Zone of the Enders

■ Hideo Kojima's next foray into interactive entertainment generated a fair amount of hype for itself, not just because of the eyesex on offer, but also for the little MGS2 demo disc included. There was also a great amount of expectation for ZOE, due to Metal Gear Solid's successful blend of story, graphics and gameplay.

Initial playing actually yielded some satisfaction, as the controls were smooth, the graphics sublime and the story derivative but tolerable. Extended play, however, brought that little niggling voice at the back of your head, which reminded you that all wasn't good with the world. Each level had a certain, "Been there, got the T-shirt" feel. Dogfights felt repetitive, and each explosion felt empty. This repetition got weary after a while, and before you knew it, you began to dread engaging the enemy.

Which, for a shoot em up, is just tiny bit problematic.



Enter the Matrix

■ There just didn't seem to be any way this game was going to go wrong. Point the first - it was being developed by Shiny, a company headed up by industry veteran (and creator of Earthworm Jim) Dave Perry. Point the second - it was The Matrix, a license that was all about gun fights and kung fu, guys in big leather jackets and girls in tight vinyl pants, and had the duality of a gritty real world and limitless possibilities in the virtual world. Point the third - it was going to have its own storyline that told a little more of the Matrix story, with cutscenes that were filmed at the same time as the second and third films, so the production quality was going to be first class. Sounds great right? But despite all its promise, Enter the Matrix turned out to be one of the worst kinds of button mashers and was clearly unfinished, giving Driv3r a run for its money in the glitch stakes.



Fear Effect

■ Whilst the sequel garnered attention, largely due to the same sex relationship between the lead femmes (getting gamers interested in girl on girl action is like shooting fish in a barrel - Ed), the original Fear Effect was pretty soulless. The game was among the first to feature the cel-shaded visual technique that so often plagues (or graces) today's titles, providing a comic book feel. Also, the pre-rendered backgrounds took the Resident Evil formula a bit further by being animated.

But the warning signs were there early on in the game. Solutions to puzzles were contrived and blatantly obvious, being lit up by neon signs (sometimes literally). Compounding the tackiness was the try "n" die gameplay that Fear Effect promoted. Sometimes you would be presented with a situation, and if you didn't perform perfectly, you would die. Some of you may not have a problem with this, but when faced with horrendous loading times, you would soon learn that the true fear lied in having to trek through the same territory just to try the same puzzle again. Pretty, but poorly conceived.



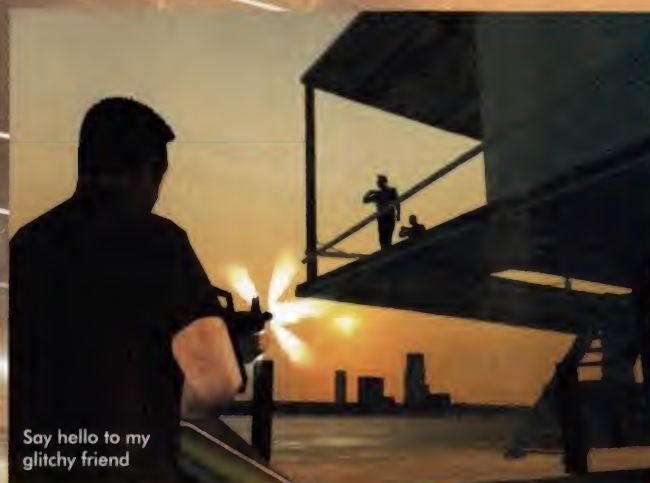
Meticulously blurry London

The Getaway

■ The Getaway was an ambitious title that hoped to offer gamers the Grand Theft Auto experience in a meticulously detailed London. Along for the ride was an in-depth, mature storyline with enough f-words to offend the Osbourne family. The realisation of London was impeccable, with gritty surrounds, dreary weather and streets bustling with potential fatality statistics.

However, players weren't afforded the level of freedom in the environment a la Grand Theft Auto. Mission failure took you straight back to the start — ie there were no little incidental side missions to divert your attention. You couldn't steal a taxi and deliver people to their destinations, or steal a Mr Whippy van to supply "ice cream".

The Getaway fell flat because of this rigid mission structure... as well as a litany of other significant problems. The control scheme was clunky, the camera terrible, there was no map, the AI was woeful, most of the cutscenes seemed to involve watching characters talk on mobile phones, and there was too much leaning against bloody walls. Let's hope the sequel fares a little better.



Say hello to my glitchy friend

Driv3r

■ Yet another attempt at recreating the successful formula found in Grand Theft Auto, yet another failure. This time, the results were (in some ways) more horrendous than the other qualifier, The Getaway.

The lead up to Driv3r's release saw the hype machine go into overdrive with a huge marketing budget kicking in and promises that this was going to be the game of the year. Maybe there was a true contender to the GTA crown. Maybe not. Driv3r fell far, far short.

This was a game so lacking in personality that from the word go you simply didn't care about the protagonist or the story. This was a game where there were rarely consequences for your actions — shoot as many people as you'd like: it doesn't matter! This was a game with some of the worst enemy AI we've seen in years. This was a game with trial and error gameplay and almost nothing outside the main mission structure to do! This was a game with indestructible picket fences for god's sake!

Most damning of all, this was a game that simply wasn't finished. Instead of frames per second the more appropriate measurement in Driv-three-RRR (as we call it) was GPS: glitches per second. All hype, no gameplay.



At least Mr Beardy doesn't keep revising it

Rebel Assault

■ Rebel Assault had an initial wow factor about it, no doubt about that. It sported gorgeous (for the time) pre-rendered backgrounds allowing you to truly immerse yourself in the world of Star Wars... for about five minutes. You see, it didn't take long at all to discover that the on rails gameplay was about as thin as the CD-ROM the game came on. It's funny how new technology comes along and impresses everyone — we momentarily drop our critical faculties and get swept up in the hype. The original Dragon's Lair also falls into this category — it looked great but "gameplay" was nothing more than rote learning.



Sonic Adventure

■ Mario's first foray into 3D territory was a ground-breaking, revolutionary experience. Needless to say, Sega had a lot of expectation riding on their mascot's wander into the 3rd dimension, and what better opportunity than on their new machine? Mouth watering screen grabs accompanied every single feature surrounding the Dreamcast, and magazines all touted, "Boy, you should see it running!!!".

And you could see that Sega really, really tried. Unfortunately the gameplay just wasn't there. Sega had tried to retain the essence of the series' 2D style, but seemed to forget that some aspects just aren't fun when in the 3rd dimension. There were the preset rollercoaster rides, but the player simply wasn't in control of any of it. When you got past the killer whales, giant levels and avalanches, you were left with a rather blasé platformer that simply didn't jump the gap.



What a complete dick. Nuff said

SSX and SSX Tricky

■ Yeah yeah, we know we're going to annoy a lot of people with the inclusion of these games, but c'mon! SSX and SSX Tricky were all style and no substance. Or, more accurately, they were all "wwooaah duuuuudde, I'm so gnarly with my white guy afro, my extreme 'tude and the fact that I'm voiced by David Arquette" with the only "substance" being the game's coked up attitude. It's not that SSX or Tricky were bad games, just that they blew everyone away through presentation and not through gameplay.



All chaff and no wheat. Or something

Black and White

■ Whenever Peter Molyneux's name is mentioned, gamers' ears prick up. This man has been responsible for many ground breaking and original titles, and when he claims that his game is going to reinvent a genre, you listen.

Black and White appeared at numerous E3s, driving the hype machine to near empty. The detail in the graphics engine was demonstrated, quite famously, by looking at a planet before zooming right in on an apple, complete with resident worm. There were claims that players will, quite simply, be allowed total freedom to play the game however they liked.

And it was true — if your definition of "freedom" was "do what you like, so long as you were a good boy". Yes, you were free, but you would only make proceedings difficult for yourself if you were to listen to that inner sadist in all of us, and be a prick. This was a game that promised so much, but only delivered partially. Disappointing.



Jet Set Radio Future

■ It's amazing that a game so garish and vibrant can be vampiric in nature. Jet Set Radio Future successfully sucked the life out of the buxom wench that was the original Jet Set (nee Grind) Radio on the Dreamcast. Well, maybe that's going too far.

The reality is that Sega turned Future around in 12 months, which gave them just enough time to put together some fantastic visuals for the beefiest console technology out there and add in some sweet garnish like grinding... but not enough to actually do something interesting with the gameplay. Instead, JSR Future was dumbed down for the masses — the time limits and police presence were taken out of the game, spraypainting was made easier and the bosses were laughably simple.

A sense of "meh" seemed to linger with JSRF; it still had the style in abundance, but it no longer had the substance.



Incoming

■ Yawn. What? Oh, yes, Incoming. Rage software would have to go down in history as the most artistic, gifted, dynamic bunch of graphical architects. Pity they couldn't design a game.

Incoming hit PCs around the same time as the Voodoo 2 graphics card came out, and the Dreamcast version came out soon after the machine's launch in Japan. And it was hard not to be wowed, as this was a damn fine looking game for the time.

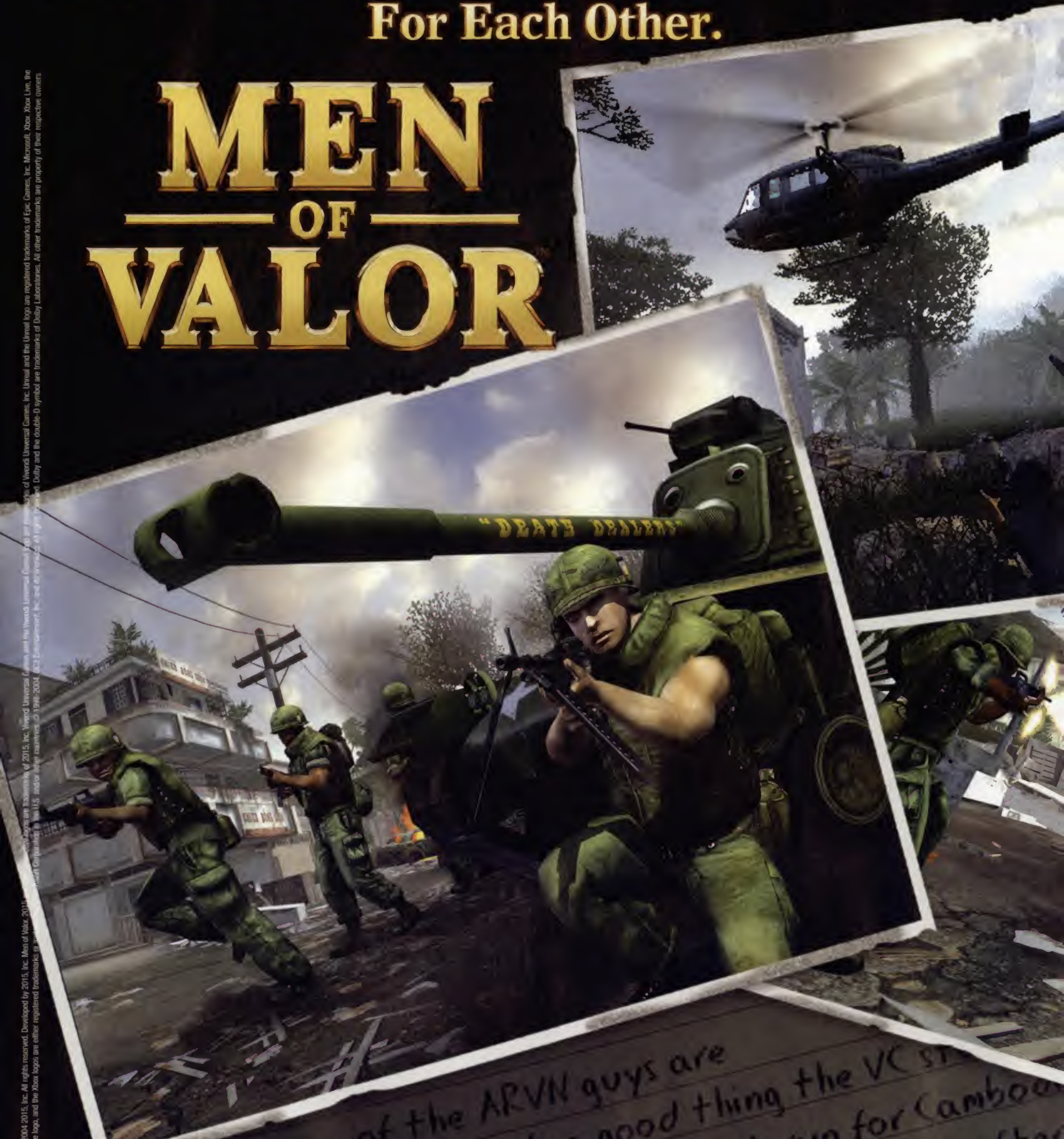
Unfortunately, Incoming was a flying shoot-em-up type thing that was about as shallow as gaming gets. Everything flowed smoothly, and the controls were responsive, but it was just oh-so-boring. Sure, there was probably some sort of plot, but you honestly didn't care. Players often found themselves just flying about the place, trying to see how much they could look at before their base was destroyed and the mission declared failed.

Incoming was just evidence as to what would happen if a game is left in the hands of dedicated and talented artists... with no game designers in sight.

They Fought For Freedom...
For Each Other.

MEN OF VALOR

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Cheap Games!

>> Penfold

Traditionally these pages are used to write about MMO games and mods and the like, but this month we thought we'd have a look at something a little different. Instead of games that are played online, this month we are delving into the sometimes sordid world of web distributed games.

Lovechess: The Greek Era

www.lovechess.nl

>> With the Olympics just over and Roy & HG reminding us just how much the ancient Greeks enjoyed a bit of illicit botchy sex we thought it was high time to have a look at what could possibly be the greatest thing ever to insult thousands of years of history. Picture this — take an average chess engine incapable of making much more than the most straightforward of moves, fill it with stone textured poser models of supposedly Greek gods and have them engage in mechanical and tedious nookie every time you take a piece. If something like this has always been a dream of yours well now you can live it out if you fork out \$16.99 too much at the site listed above.

After you've purchased a copy of Lovechess: The Greek Era you can get the hell off my planet because the only possible reason for this game to exist is for titillation's sake and if you get off on images of badly rendered poser models then you have no right to breathe the same air as I do. Buy Lovechess at your own risk. I will find out and hunt you down like a perverted little dog. In a world in which the Arxel Tribe continue to make games it comes as a bit of relief that even my nemesis won't lower themselves enough to publish and distribute Lovechess.



[above] It's still better than the new Leisure Suit Larry game...

34 HYPER>>



[above] This is the guy who'll hunt you down if you play Lovechess

Bard's Legacy: Devil Whiskey

www.devilwhiskey.com

>> At the exact opposite end of the spectrum from Lovechess lays Bard's Legacy: Devil Whiskey. It's quite fitting that in the same issue that we review the newest Bard's Tale game that we also have a look at Devil Whiskey, a game that, as the full name suggests, is something of a tribute to the original Bard's Tale games. Gameplay is essentially the same as the original Bard's Tale series and sees players putting together a party of fantasy characters and exploring/adventuring/battling evil from a first person, turn based perspective. Although the gameplay remains quite faithful to the original Bard's Tale games, Devil Whiskey contains some excellent new music as well as some great looking new art. At \$25 Devil Whiskey is not the cheapest web distribution game around but it's well worth the asking price if you're a fan of old school RPG games and have a whole bunch of hours you can sink into playing it. If you're not comfortable with downloading the game you can (for a little more) order a packaged copy of the game from the site.





[up] The only thing cooler than killing videogame nazis is using a penguin to do it

Bob Rost NES ROMS

www.bobrost.com/nes/games.php

>> Once again at the exact opposite end of the spectrum come the NES Roms created by Bob Rost, a lecturer in 8-bit game design and his students at Carnegie Mellon University. Although emulation has always been something of a touchy subject in the business of games journalism due to the copyright infringements that sometimes result, we're more than happy to throw our lot in behind Rost and his students as their work is nothing if not original.

The games are free to download (making the price by far the most appealing of the games we've looked at) and should work on most of the available NES emulators. So what can you get for free? There are currently 12 games available for download, though only four of these are particularly recommended, as the others are still in development or lack that certain something to make them into great games. The four that are recommended, however, are brilliant, with two real standouts coming in the form of "Dikki Painguin in: TKO for the Third Reich" and "Sack of Flour, Heart of Gold".

Aside from having what could possibly be the greatest name ever conceived, Dikki Painguin in: TKO for the Third Reich is also a whole heap of fun. Adhering nicely to the old platformer/side-scrolling beat 'em up formula, Dikki is without a doubt the best game about a sword-wielding penguin beating up Nazis ever.

Sack of Flour, Heart of Gold sticks more firmly to straight platforming tradition and tells the heartwarming story of a sack of flour on the run from unkind villagers who are trying to bake you to death. Unfortunately the plot against the titular Sack spans much further than he could possibly imagine and spans all of space and time, allowing the dev team to create a bunch of levels with nice ancient, alien and fantasy themes. Other downloadable games run the gamut of classic NES styles - there's a scrolling shooter, a fighting game, a couple of puzzle games and more platformers than you can poke a stick at.



[left] We can see the crossover between Sack and Black Bag now



[above] Cooler than a pack of ninjas flipping out and killing a ship full of pirates

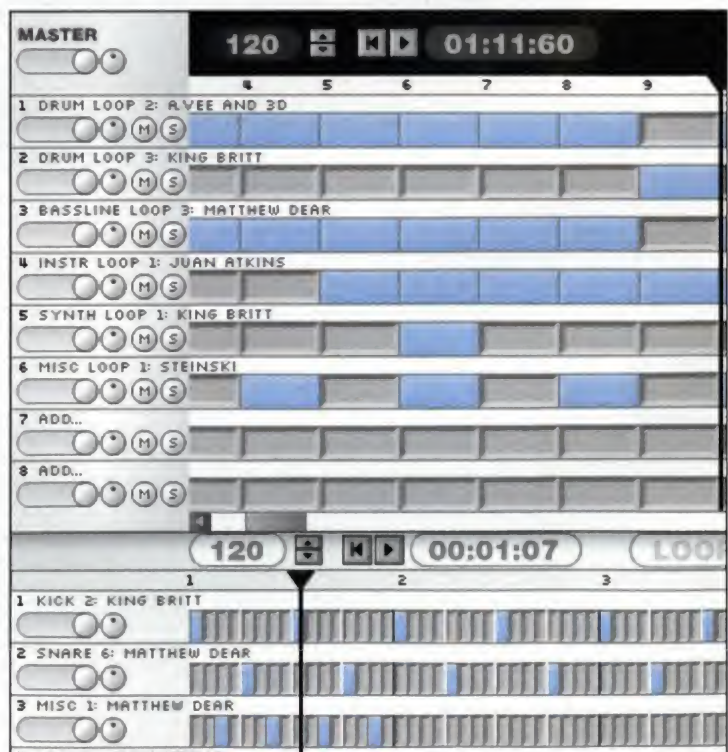
Online Sequencing

www.beaterator.com

>> Rockstar. Is there anything they can't do? Apparently not, as Beaterator is a fantastic new online sequencing program from them, blending power and usability into the one Flash package. And it's free! Okay, so it's not technically a game but this was just too good not to mention!

So what can Beaterator do? 8 track sequencing over 240 bars. The interface is extremely simple and is mostly drag, drop and click. Starting out you might want to use some of the database of professional loops supplied by the likes of Juan Atkins and King Britt, and import them into your track at the BPM of your choice. That's only the beginning mind you. You can also use the Loops Crafter to create your own beats and use a two octave keyboard to play your own rhythm lines and melodies. You can also add effects or even upload sounds and samples from your hard drive to help create a truly unique sound!

Once you're done you can save your track as an mp3 or register on the site to allow you to come back to work on it at a later date. Powerful and user friendly - just the way we like it.



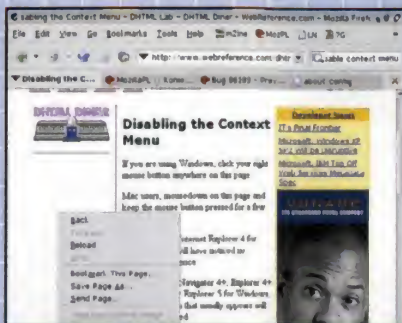
Links

>> Kosta Andreadis

**DHTML Lemmings**

<http://193.151.73.87/games/lemmings/index.html>

>> DHTML is essentially good old HTML with the addition of JavaScript and CSS, and whilst this can make a web page look and interact a hell of a lot better than standard HTML - DHTML wasn't designed to be used to code games. But then again that hasn't stopped somebody from using JavaScript to recreate the classic DOS game Lemmings. Although you can find many forms of the classic Lemmings game online, the DHTML version simply stands out as a testament to the power of nerds - that being to recode old games using unnecessarily limited languages.

**Mozilla Firefox**

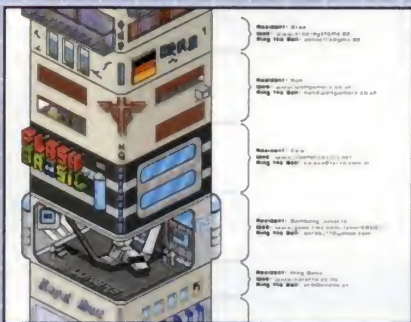
<http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/>

>> Over the past year Microsoft's Internet Explorer has become more trouble than it's worth, as the exponential increase of Spyware and Trojans began to take over viruses as the number one cause for corrupted PCs. From mysterious toolbars, embedded text hijacking, popup windows and data miners, things were beginning to get ridiculous, forcing users to run multiple Spyware cleaning tools on a daily basis. By shifting to Mozilla Firefox the problem of Spyware becomes entirely manageable and thanks to numerous extensions, themes and plug-ins acts as a safer, superior, if somewhat slower alternative to Internet Explorer.

**Paperformers**

<http://www.protoformproject.com/Paperformers/Paperformers.html>

>> Transformers have become a recurrent theme for this section of late and why wouldn't they? Transformers are cool. And by cool, we mean totally sweet. And unless you have access to a time travel machine (Note to those that do: Don't go screwing around with the past, I don't want to have to learn a bunch of new Kings), where you can travel back to the 80s and buy a bunch of affordable figurines you'd be hard pressed to have your very own palm-sized Transformer. So the only real option would be to use these 'paper-formers', fully transformable paper models of your favourite Transformers in sexy PDF format.

**World's Tallest Virtual Building**

<http://www.mrwong.de/myhouse/>

>> Add the word 'virtual' to any noun and you've got my attention, and 'building' is as good a noun as any. Predicate that with the two sweetest words in the known English language, 'World's Blankiest', where in this case it's 'World's Tallest' and you better punch this one up on your cash register, because I'm sold. And when it comes to Virtual Buildings, as much as I'd like to be, I'd be the first person to admit that I'm no expert on the matter. But you'd be hard pressed to try and prove this isn't in fact the world's tallest Virtual Building standing at a height almost four times the size of the Empire State Building in New York.

**Time Travel Fund**

<http://www.timetravelfund.com/index.html>

>> Time travel is a subject near and dear to my heart and no matter how bad it may seem there's no movie out there that isn't worth watching if it touches on the subject even in the slightest. And for those that were wondering, yes that includes Kate and Leopold, the charming romantic comedy starring Australia's own Hugh Jackman. Being a fan of time travel a site like the Time Travel Fund speaks to me in a lot of ways. All I have to do is give these people a moderate sum of money which will collect interest until the day time travel is invented, which will then pay for the good people at the Time Travel Fund to travel back to the present and take me into the future!

**Jaws in 30 Seconds with Bunnies**

<http://www.angryalien.com/0804/jawsbunnies.asp>

>> Compressing a film down to thirty seconds, whilst replacing all lead actors with bunny counterparts, is a definite recipe for success. And if you're a fan of Spielberg's classic film Jaws, Jaws in 30 Seconds is pure comedic gold. And it doesn't end with Jaws, as the main site has many more films on offer, and although they may not be as funny as the Jaws animation - with films like The Shining, Titanic and The Exorcist all getting the bunny treatment, they're definitely worth checking out.



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44 OutRun 2

Ferraris, powerslides and women. What more could you possibly want?



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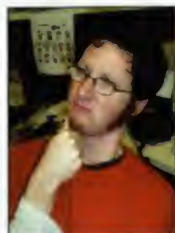
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REVIEWS



Game Theory

DANIEL STAINES



As you've probably heard by now, Playboy is doing a "Girls of Gaming" feature that will see a bevy of videogame babes drop their kits and show their bits in the name of publicity. Of course, the marketers behind the pictorial are claiming that it's a clear demonstration of the

industry's burgeoning maturity or something, but we all know that they're lying. They're using tits to sell useless junk to gullible males – a tactic that is new to neither marketing nor gaming. The only difference here is that these virtual boobies are appearing in the world's most famous men's magazine. And that's where the trouble starts.

If university taught me anything, it's that it's very tricky to talk about gender and sexism without offending the kind of people who think that "outrage" and "intelligence" are synonymous with each other. Fortunately, I don't give a shit about offending those people so let's get right onto the potential controversy: *the Playboy pictorial is not bloody sexist*. Of course it's a silly one-dimensional marketing ploy that uses sex as a surrogate for creativity – there's no disputing that – but the thing to remember here is that marketing sex doesn't always equal sexist marketing.

The standard definition of sexism is either discrimination based on gender or the endorsement of attitudes, conditions or behaviours that promote negative gender stereotypes. I do not believe that featuring a topless Rayne – the half-vampire protagonist from *BloodRayne* – in the pages of *Playboy* fulfils either of the above conditions. It is far too simplistic to assume that marketing a product with a sexy girl is discriminatory because it delineates said product as something that can only be enjoyed by men. Firstly, this argument ignores the very obvious fact that a wide variety of products aimed at women – such as underwear, cosmetics and food – are advertised to them with sexually attractive examples of their own gender. Secondly, it assumes that people are incapable of enjoying products that are not explicitly aimed at

their particular demographic. According to this sort of logic, the advertisements for pre-mixed drinks like Stollies and Archer's Aqua Schnapps preclude people like me from enjoying them because I'm not a painfully trendy young woman with a penchant for publicly humiliating stupid men. But you know what? I'd take a girly drink over a beer any day of the week... or, as the case may be in *Hyper HQ*, every day of the week.

So, that's the discrimination angle dealt with – now let's move onto the question of gender stereotypes. The point of contention here is the age-old notion that the *Playboy* pictorial reinforces a negative stereotype of women by presenting them as objects of sexual gratification of males. Unfortunately for its proponents, however, this argument fails to take into consideration the fact that sexy is not the same as sex object. Sexuality can be a very empowering trait for both males and females. Looking at Rayne, one gets the feeling that she'd use her sexiness to lull men into a false sense of security before ripping their throats out with her bare hands. My personal impression is that she revels in her sexuality as something that gives her an advantage. Admittedly, the same can't be said for the *Leisure Suit Larry* character also featured in the pictorial, but that game's an idiotic travesty that will happily never see the light of day in this country. It is in fact the exception that proves the rule – compare the *Larry* girl to Rayne, Mileena or any of the other featured characters and you'll see why I think there's a distinction to be made between sexy and sex object.

For the record, I don't believe the *Playboy* pictorial will have a significantly negative impact on gaming's public image. All it proves is that a lot of men who play games also like to look at attractive women and that this desire is being met by the industry. A lot of people will probably think it's sad to get your jollies to computer-generated boobies, but really – are Rayne's breasts really that much faker than the ones you see on any other girl in *Playboy*?

Until next month,

daniels@next.com.au

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

0-49

The gaming equivalent of a Daniel Wilks caption... stinky

50-59

A Wilks caption revised by a monkey... slightly less stinky

60-69

Like a Wilks caption revised by a super-intelligent monkey

70-79

Revised by an entire team of super-intelligent monkeys

80-89

If the team of super-intelligent monkeys was run by Amos

90+

Who, in turn, was supervised by Shiggy Miyamoto





FABLE

DANIEL WILKS is Ultimate Evil – Amos is Ultimate Good

It's been a long time coming but Fable is finally here. Before we start the review proper a word of warning – if you're looking for a scathing attack on a game because it failed to live up to everything it has promised to be over the lengthy development cycle then you should look elsewhere. It's going to become common practice to look at any claim Peter Molyneux makes about a game from here on in with a healthy sized grain of salt as the man seems to have an imagination that gets the better of him. When Black and White was announced we were promised a game that would fully revolutionise gaming, leading to many disappointed fans when the legitimately good but genuinely flawed game eventually made it to shelves. Similarly if you look at Fable as what it was once promised to be you'll find the game a huge disappointment. If, on the other hand you look at the game on its own merits you'll find an absolute

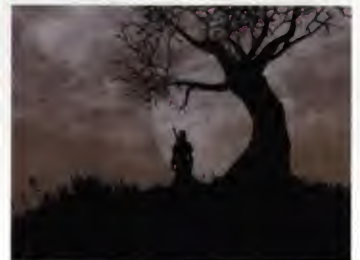
gem, rough edges and all, with the potential of becoming Microsoft's answer to the Zelda franchise.

I ATE THE SANDBOX

Calling Fable an action RPG is ultimately doing it a disservice but the basic tenets of the game are similar. The player controls their avatar from a third person perspective in a manner that should feel immediately at home with anyone who has ever played a third person game before. Gameplay is split up into two major subsets – NPC interaction and questing. The former is really where the true greatness of the game comes in. Although combat forms a major part of Fable, whether it be with hand to hand weapons, missile weapons or magic, most of it is relatively simple and repetitive. The NPC interaction has more of a virtual sandbox approach, allowing you to make friends and enemies in all of the towns you visit, buy houses and shops to either live in or

renovate and rent out, you can get married and divorced, steal, lie, rob; ultimately the way you play it is up to you. Will you be a good guy and get married, settle down with your one true love and keep her happy or will you sleep around with any hussy that shows some interest? Will you show an interest in polygamy and marry a woman in every point of call or will you remain a bachelor. It's even possible to be really evil and kill everyone in a house, buy it, do it up and rent it out to some poor survivor in town to make a nice profit in cash and deficit in alignment. Like I said, the choice is yours.

As well as simply being able to talk to NPCs the character has a range of emotes that can be accessed through the d-pad. As the renown, skills, attributes and alignment of the character change they will gain access to additional emotes allowing for more social interactions. In the beginning of the game you only have access to



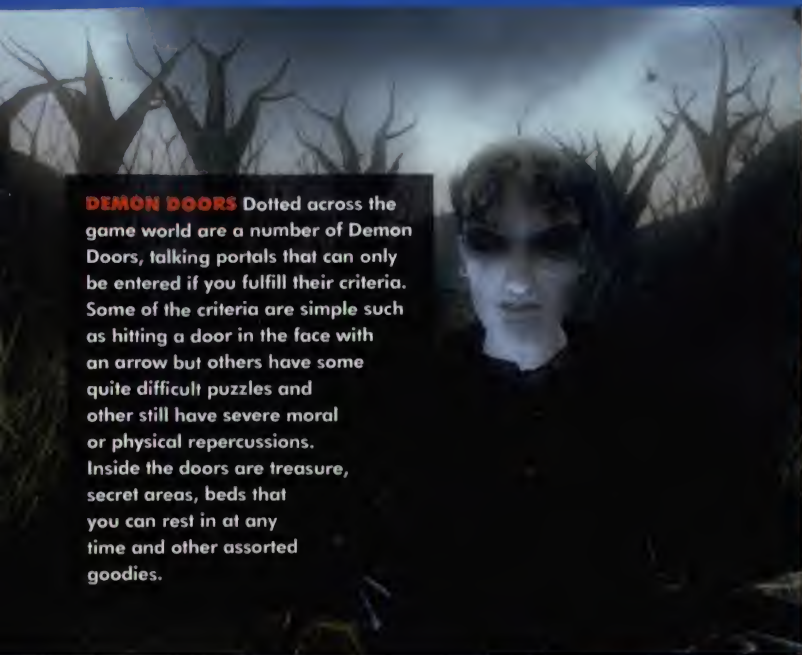
[above] Lynching is still popular in Fable



[above] Big feet mean a big...



DEMON DOORS Dotted across the game world are a number of Demon Doors, talking portals that can only be entered if you fulfill their criteria. Some of the criteria are simple such as hitting a door in the face with an arrow but others have some quite difficult puzzles and other still have severe moral or physical repercussions. Inside the doors are treasure, secret areas, beds that you can rest in at any time and other assorted goodies.



Hey, it's Hank from Dungeons and Dragons!



Hank was voiced by Willie Aimes from Charles in Charge!



He now makes a living as evangelical Bibleman!

a simple giggle, a burp and a fart (yes you read that right) but later on you gain the ability to flirt, give out blood curdling battle cries, flex your muscles in a sexy manner and all manner of other emotes. Once again how you use them is up to you but they definitely have an impact on the flow of NPC interaction.

Whilst combat initially seems a little too simple for its own good it remains fun throughout the course of the game. When using a hand to hand weapon players can lock on to a target with the left trigger, attack with X, block with Y and when powered up through a series of successful hits can unleash a powerful and unblockable attack

with B. With missile combat you can either lock on to a target with the left trigger or zoom into first person by clicking the left thumbstick. Holding down the X button draws back the bow – the longer you hold down the button the more powerful the shot. Like with many shooters a good headshot from a bow can instantly kill most human opponents. Magic utilises the right trigger as a kind of shift key – whilst the trigger is held down the face buttons are hotkeyed to three spells with the Y button used to cycle through your magic if you have learnt more than three spells. A word of warning with all three forms of combat – holding down the

Evil characters will grow horns, red eyes and even fangs!

left trigger locks onto the nearest target but in the heat of the moment it's all too easy to accidentally lock onto a nearby friendly target and dish them out some serious damage. Whilst this may not be a bad thing if you're taking an evil route, if you're looking to play as a good character you may find your alignment shifting accidentally.

All of the gameplay is held together within the framework of morality and being a hero. Players take quests from people in towns as well as from the central hub,

the hero guild to gain money, experience and renown. The higher the player's renown the more missions will be offered to them and the more NPCs will react to his presence. How a player completes the missions and reacts to all of the people he meets will change his alignment, once again affecting the way people view the character. At the extremes of alignment the player will change to look more appropriate – ultimate good characters will develop a glowing halo and be followed by a cloud of ethereal butterflies and evil characters will grow horns, red eyes and even fangs! Characters also age and change over the course of the game – eat too much and you'll get fat, get into combat and you will develop scars. Spend a lot of time in the sun and you will get a tan, spend your life in armour and wind up pale.

SENSE OF FUN

One of the nicest and most unexpected surprises of Fable is the



CHURCH For the most part the morality system in Fable works and works well but there is one thing that nearly negates the entire thing, making it way too easy to become evil or, vice-versa to atone for your evil deeds and become good again. About 1/3 of the way into the plot missions, players are given the option to travel to an evil church (or to a good church you find in a mission shortly thereafter) and cement your loyalty to the gods. Simply put, tithing money to either of the churches will quite significantly slide your alignment in the chosen direction. It's all well and good to have churches dedicated to alignment gods but when you can simply walk into a good church, pay 10 grand and be forgiven for slaughtering an entire town, after which the other citizens of Avalon will treat you in a kindly manner makes most of the moral decisions in the game seem somewhat irrelevant.



It will take you about 12 hours to get through the game without stopping to smell the roses...



At least he has a career, unlike Scott Baio.



Cupid, sick of his job, decides to stir things up a little



Should I whack fast or whack slow?



[above] Batou... he's no Kusanagi

>> The people in town will actually start calling you "Chicken Chaser"

sense of humour that permeates the game. Right from the early stages where you play the future hero/villain as a kid there is a good natured sense of fun running through nearly everything. The young stage of Fable sees you running around your home town looking for money to buy your sister a birthday present, either by doing good deeds that your father

will pay you a gold piece each for or by causing mischief and thus earning your filthy lucre. Not only can you do the normal RPG tasks of running around, talking to people and what have you, Fable lets you kick chickens around. A quick check in the menu and you can even find your best chicken kicking distance in the handy (and massive) statistics file. After kicking a few chickens the people in town will actually start calling you "Chicken Chaser" — a title that will follow you until you either do something noble (or evil) enough to warrant a new one or until you find a title vendor and buy a new title.

This kind of irreverent good natured humour is a recurrent theme throughout Fable. Listening in on conversations will often lead to some very funny moments and simply watching NPC characters interact with each other can reveal some very amusing and realistic animations. Funnier still are the reactions between multiple people in love with or married to your character. Amos, towards the end of the game was so good and so attractive that 90% of the women (and about 10% of the men) of any town he entered would instantly fall in love with him. Watching NPCs get into arguments when you flirt in the middle of a crowd is genuinely hilarious and just goes to show how well the AI has been scripted. Although it doesn't live up to the promise of "the game that would revolutionise computer roleplaying", Fable is still a brilliant piece of game design and should have any gamer hooked for quite some time. Bring on a sequel. <<

AVALON You may have noticed that there is little or no mention of the graphics and sound in Fable. Simply put it is because both of them are astounding. In fact it's doubtful that any game on the Xbox at the moment has more beautiful environments. Unfortunately the graphical trickery can lead to some slowdown when there are many characters on screen. The soundtrack is sublime, especially the opening track written by Danny Elfman. All voice acting is English accented which makes a nice change from the usual American flavoured fantasy. Each NPC has multiple phrases so it will take a few interactions before you hear repetition.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Big Blue Box/Lionhead
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: M15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Amazing visuals, incredible virtual sandbox, morality.
MINUS: Short storyline, slowdown, some missions railroad the player.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	89	85
OVERALL		
89		
Not revolutionly but still a brilliant piece of game design.		

ROCKY

L E G E N D S TM



Rocky Balboa (left) Apollo Creed (centre-left) Clubber Lang (centre-right) Ivan Drago (right).

TRAINING MAKES LEGENDS



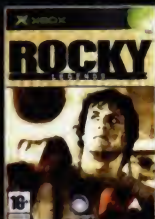
(above) Clubber pulls a special move.



(above) Drago works hard on his stamina.



Rocky Balboa (left) lands a large hook across the face of Ivan Drago (right).



PlayStation 2

www.rocky-legends.com



UBISOFT





OUTRUN 2

If **CAM SHEA** wanted to learn math he would have stayed in school...

Many of you no doubt fondly remember those sunny summer holidays when you were younger. School was over for the year and the six weeks or so ahead seemed to stretch out forever. Days melded into one another, and to kill the time you'd regularly head down to the local milk bar for an ice cold Mellow Yellow and a pack of Fags (now known as Fads). And of course, while sipping on that most 70s of beverages (even though yes, it was the 80s) you'd all gather around the arcade cabinets at the back of the bar to play some of the classics of

the day. From the feminist treatise that was Ms Pac-Man through to the intense parallax scrolling action of Out Run, these were times when games were iconic and eternal.

OUT RUN LOSES THE SPACE
Whether the original Out Run was a genuinely good game or not is irrelevant at this stage. It served its purpose in our gaming education, and served it well. But now that Sega are back with the sequel, at a time when there's a whole lot more competition in the arcade racing genre, OutRun 2 will really have to perform to stand out.

Sega have certainly made some intelligent decisions with an eye to bringing OutRun 2 to the Xbox. Rather than simply port the arcade game, they've worked with Sumo Digital to give gamers more bang for their buck. First up is the inclusion of Xbox Live racing for up to eight players, which definitely helps sort out the powersliding

men from the boys. The other big inclusion is the Mission mode, which consists of 101 challenges across the 15 courses in the game.

But of course, the foundation of it all is the Arcade mode and Heart Attack mode. As in the original, races consist of a series of branching paths, where you fight the traffic and the time limit to get to the next section. While you had a girl in the passenger seat in the original, she was pretty undemanding, but this time around if you play the Heart Attack mode, it's all about keeping her happy. So what does she like? Fast driving, long powerslides and flawless overtaking. As you race, directions will pop up on screen, such as "don't crash" or "drift more" and you've got to crank up the heart ratings during those sections. The aim is to end each race with at least an A heart rating, and if possibly a AAA super happy blowjob rating (take a look at the face icon when you have a AAA rating and



[up] I had to do awful things to pay for her



[below] Ferrari owners love white powder





It wasn't actually a Ferrari Testarossa in the original, just a look alike car. The sequel sports the full Ferrari license with cars including the Enzo Ferrari, Dino 246 GTS, 365 GTS/4 Daytona, Testarossa, 360 Spider, 288 GTO, F40 and F50.



Pass more cars and she may make a pass at you

Magical Sound Shower or Passing Breeze?

Heading down to Medieval Times for dinner

you'll see what we mean). It's a cute little mechanic, and it's this mechanic that the entire Mission mode is built around.

Across the 101 missions, you'll encounter a variety of objectives, from straightforward "come first" races against opponents, through to passing as many vehicles as possible, driving on the colour coded sections of track (which, incidentally, aren't friendly for people who are colour blind), driving over cones and taking photos while powersliding. Unfortunately, they mostly feel tacked on, rather than offering truly unique or compelling challenges.

Fortunately, the racing itself is pretty damn solid. The driving mechanics are out and out arcadey, with some of the most excessive powerslides seen in the genre

Some of the most excessive powerslides seen in the genre...

— we're talking about taking corners perpendicular to the course (so yeah, first person is kinda hard to play in). It's shallow, but undeniably cool, especially when you're powersliding all the way through a series of turns on a desert road as sand whips across it, all while managing to move in and out of the thick traffic at the same time.

UP THEN DOWN THEN UP AGAIN

As you can probably tell, we're in two minds about OutRun 2. There's nothing quite like screaming down a hill and seeing the course winding away in the distance, or being

dwarfed by massive medieval castles, or even harking back to those sunny summer days on a course featuring a gorgeous blue sky and fields of brightly coloured flowers on either side of the track. And the fact that within the Mission mode you can set the specific route you want to take, how many competitors you want to race against and whether there's traffic on the road or not, is fantastic. It allows you to enjoy this game in its most pure, arcade form.

But then there's the lackluster missions, the glitchy AI, and the fact that OutRun 2 feels positively slow next to Burnout 3. Worth a look but we were expecting a little more. <<

CHALLENGES 101 Some of the challenges in Mission mode are really poorly realised. Take, for example, the "Remember the fruity sequences" challenges where you have to remember the order that fruit shows up above the road, then go through the appropriate "fruit gates" in the correct order. It's just baffling! Also ridiculous is the "math" challenge where you have to add and subtract numbers as you go then drive through the correct final number. We seriously think the team at Sumo were running out of ideas when they came up with these ones. Either that or they wanted to add in some "edutainment!" to the game. Give us a break!



AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Arcade racing
PLAYERS: 1-8
DEVELOPER: Sega/Sumo
PUBLISHER: THQ
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Mid October

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Eight player Xbox Live, Scud Race bonus courses.

MINUS: Do the math, the fruity sequences, blatant advertising.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
85 80 83

OVERALL
84

OutRun 2 has the heritage, but not the longevity



THE SIMS 2

CAM SHEA thinks it's okay to play with a virtual dollhouse

▶▶ No matter what your opinion of the first Sims game, there's little doubt that it did what it aimed to do very well. It provided a window into a virtual world that was very easy to believe in thanks to emotive animations, charming simlish and the familiarity of it all. This was a game that reveled in our natural inclination to anthropomorphise; where it was hard to avoid projecting thoughts and emotions as driving forces for the soap opera playing out on screen. Indeed, that was the very reason so many people got so much out of it.

[below] Nice day for a white wedding



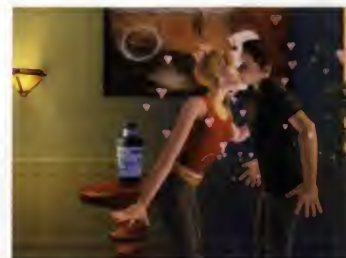
GO TO THE TOILET. AGAIN

For us, although the initial appeal was intense, we soon found ourselves becoming annoyed with the level of micro-management needed to keep sims happy, and the more we played the more the artifice behind the game became clear. With The Sims 2, Maxis have gone all out to make the internal lives of your sims much richer than before, increasing the complexity of what can happen in the game many times over.

One feature that gives sims a richer internal life and more complex motivations is the fact that significant things that happen to them are stored in memory. Thus, they have a framework of events and relations in addition to simple ratings (such as the friendship rating). Better still, you can actually go through a database of each sim's memories to see what has been included, and thus see what has contributed to them as an individual. These memories also



[above] "DM guy in graveyard hot tub"



[up] The squeaky voiced teen gets lucky





An artist's impression of Daniel Wilks as a child

Right huck, aerate! You still owe me ten more Iroquois twists

Smack dab in the middle of a good old fashioned catfight

play into the fears of your sims, so if you've been rejected by someone in the past, that may be one of their ongoing fears.

Yes, sims now have fears. They now also have wants, which are driven by another new inclusion - their overall life aspiration. Thus, in addition to setting your sim's personality (how neat, outgoing, active, playful and nice they are) by the zodiac or specifying it yourself, you also choose a guiding aspiration - whether that be Fortune, Knowledge, Family, Romance or Popularity. This represents their main focus in life, and adds another twist to their personality and the way they interact with other sims. As mentioned above, each sim's aspiration helps determine their wants. At any one

How about a lovers' hot tub perfect for "woo-hooing" (shagging) in?

time a sim has four wants on the go. They may be something simple like "gain a skill point" or "be best friends with Amosina", through to other things like "hold a great party", "see a ghost" or "kill ten sims and bury them in the backyard". Maybe not. Fulfill a want and you'll get aspiration points and a new want will be made available. Wants also change regularly, but fortunately if there's one that you really want to focus on you can lock it in.

Fulfilling aspirations also contributes to the level of the new aspiration meter, which is an indication of your sim's overall

level of life satisfaction. Have a platinum rating for instance, and your sim is very happy and will get a mood boost to boot. Conversely, if you're in the red your sim may show signs of depression. Having a high aspiration level when your sim moves to another stage in life also contributes to a longer life span.

Not only does getting aspiration points lead to a healthier and happier sim, but you can also spend the points on some very cool bonus items. How about a lovers' hot tub perfect for "woo-hooing" (shagging) in? How about a money tree? How about a cute little critter that you put on your sim's head which keeps their mood high? There are stacks of these items, and not only are they very powerful, but they can backfire spectacularly if used inappropriately!

Of course, you can ignore wants and the aspiration meter entirely if you choose, so it's a clever way for Maxis to give the game a little more structure, without making it mandatory.

BUNCH OF TOOLS There are some handy tools in The Sims 2 that make redecorating your house a breeze. First up is the eyedropper tool, which you can use to click on an item to instantly purchase the same again. Then there's the design tool, which you can use to click on an item and bring up a list of other design options available. Wow - for only 15 simoleans I can get this couch in red! You can even instantly switch to night time if you want to check that you've got enough lights in the house.

Buy mode is also really well organised this time. Not only are all buyable items sortable by function, but you can also sort them by the room they belong to. Then there's the ability to sort by collection, so you can check out all items that fit a certain design style, or create your own collections of things you think go well together.

IT'S ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

The Sims 2 also has community lots where you can go (via a taxi) to do some shopping, buy some clothes, play some games and chat to other sims. You can even buy items for these lots which won't cost you a cent. Thus, the community lots are amongst the most powerful tools at your disposal in The Sims 2.





Another thing you need to keep tabs on is your sim's fitness. If your sim is inactive and eats lots of pizza, they'll have a low fitness rating and get fat.



Wilks tries to impress the ladies... but ends up bombing



The best Florida retirement sim on the market right now

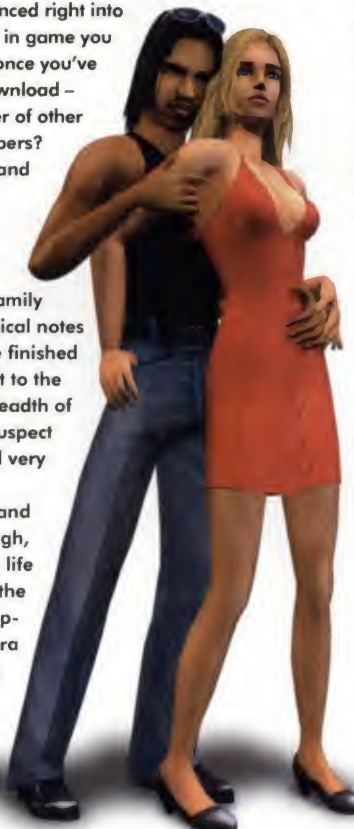


It's like the E3 Playboy Mansion party (in Benton's head)

DOWNLOAD THIS One of the things that gave the original Sims so much longevity (aside from the veritable litter of expansion packs) was the online community. Unsurprisingly, The Sims 2 is synced right into online. Anytime you see the snowflake icon in game you can click on it to connect to the online site (once you've registered) and see what's available for download – whether that be sims, houses or any number of other things. Not happy with the range of wallpapers? Click on the icon from within the build tool and download some more!

And then there's the story mode. At any time in the game you can take a snapshot of a scene, then import it into your Story, along with text. Thus, you can track your family over generations, with serious and/or comical notes about their antics and history. Once you've finished with a Story you can then upload it straight to the website from within the game. With the breadth of things that are possible in this game, we suspect there are going to be some very funny and very surprising stories online before long.

We should also add that you can record and edit video of your sims too. Best of all though, are the camera options to help bring more life to the footage. You can dynamically move the camera around using the "free cam" tab option, or assign shortcuts to particular camera locations so you can quickly jump between them at the press of a button. Filming an argument between two sims? Jump back and forth between the perspectives of each, then maybe cut to a bystander looking on.



Money does grow on plants. Dope plants



[up] Just friends spooning in the hot tub

YOU GO SQUISH NOW

The other big change in The Sims 2 is the addition of aging. Your sims now go through an entire life cycle, and eventually die of old age. Given how attached one can get to their sims, it can be heartbreaking to say goodbye, but now that you can have children, your sim household can still go on forever as you move down through generations. The six life stages are: baby, toddler, child, teenager, adult and elder. Each is characterised by different attitudes and maturity levels, and the whole concept brings a new level of freshness to the experience. That said, however, just like in real life, looking after toddlers and children eats up a lot of your time, largely preventing you from furthering

your adult sims' wants and careers. We didn't find this aspect particularly fun, but there's little doubt that it does make for a more lively and unpredictable household.

Along with all these gameplay changes is a quantum leap in the presentation. The Sims 2 is entirely 3D, sporting detailed character models, crisp environments, the ability to zoom, spin and pan the camera to find the best possible viewing angle, and the most emotive animations in a game to date. It all adds up to a much more believable world – Maxis have done a fantastic job. Of course, whether many of the mainstream audience that this game attracts will be able to run the game smoothly is another thing entirely.



!!! You can actually freeze the aging process using the in-game cheat entry window (control + shift + C) and typing in "Aging Off" and hitting enter. When you want it back on just type "Aging On".



Getting ready for the KISS tribute band audition

See caption re: Benton's head

Sweet maiden of the spit, grant now my boon



[up] Avril or Amos - who's more nekkid?



[above] Everyone knows it's Amos!

Just like in real life looking after toddlers and children eats up a lot of your time

We should also mention that we did encounter a couple of glitches in the retail version of the game, namely furniture that got stuck as "being used" when no sim was using it, thus preventing us from being able to clear it away or for

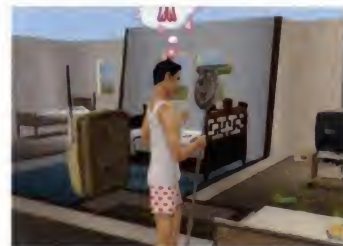
any sim in the household to use it. Let's hope Maxis address such issues in a patch in the near future.

VERY VERY DEEP

The Sims 2 represents a huge leap for the series in presentation, but a much more subtle leap in terms of gameplay. The well of this game is certainly deep, but on the surface many of the same flaws as the original still remain. You sims aren't as autonomous as one may hope (they'll barely look after themselves if left to their own devices) so you'll still have to do a lot of potty training and time maximisation, and there are still some pathing issues (you have to be very careful in laying out your house because weird bottlenecks can be created very easily). Dig a little deeper, however, and you'll discover a deep and rewarding game with enough substance to keep you occupied for a very long time indeed. <<



Your flesh mother used to bring me pudding



MOP WIFE One of the most appealing aspects of The Sims and its sequel is that you can play and play and play and still keep seeing your sims doing new things. Take our sim Amos for instance - after his wife Avril died he went a little kooky and turned a mop into a surrogate wife. Poor little fella.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Sim
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Maxis
PUBLISHER: EA
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: M15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: So many facets, so much depth, so well designed.

MINUS: Still lots of queuing required, one or two glitches.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	89	91

OVERALL
91
The Sims 2 is a subtle but significant improvement.





THE BARD'S TALE

DANIEL WILKS is a surly bastard

▶▶ The Bard's Tale series has come a long way since the heady days of faux 3D first person perspective, turn-based roleplaying. Now instead of the decidedly old school and deadly serious Bard's Tale series we have The Bard's Tale, a 3D action RPG reminiscent of Dark Alliance and Champions of Norrath.

BARDY GOOD SHOW OLD BEAN

It may sound a bit cruel to say that the voice acting and scripting of The Bard's Tale make the rest of the game look fairly poor but nevertheless it is the truth. Whilst the gameplay remains quite firmly mired in the conventions of third person hack and slash the voice acting and script are very fresh post *Scream* genre lampooning brilliance. Cary Elwes, better known as the Dread Pirate Wesley in *The Princess Bride* is simply perfect as the arrogant, lazy and snarky Bard. Every line he delivers borders on

perfection and, more often than not will actually have you laughing out loud. Whilst not a "true" roleplaying game in the sense that the character is set and there are no branching conversation trees, *The Bard's Tale* manages to keep NPC interaction fun by offering two ways to respond in conversation. Whenever a dialogue option is available the player is presented two options – in a friendly manner and in a surly way. Whilst the surly responses are more satisfying for the most part as the script is so biting, balancing between the two is the best way of proceeding. Never fear though – the nice option is often a far more subtle dig at the NPC you are talking to so you'll find yourself laughing just as often as not.

Script wise, *The Bard's Tale* plays with the conventions of the RPG in a sometimes merciless but always funny manner. The Bard is at all times fully aware of the

conventions of fantasy quests and often goes out of his way to avoid them. In an early stage of the game *The Bard* (he has no other name) must fight his way up a tower to defeat a guardian at the very top. In the level's opening cutscene the guardian appears at the bottom level of the tower to tell *The Bard* to turn back, that he will inevitably die – you know the story. Then he disappears, leaving *The Bard* to bitch about the fact that the boss was just there and couldn't they have gotten the battle out of the way on the spot without having to go through all of the unnecessary climbing and fighting.

Unfortunately the post-modern approach doesn't extend through to the gameplay – instead of allowing the player to make their way around the conventions of the genre as *The Bard* is so want to do, it forces players to trudge their way up through the tower of



[above] Insert lame Wilks caption here



[above] dear diary, I suck. Signed Wilks





Next up, Bard's Tale II: The Revenge of Cacophonix



Stupid Cam captioned the facing page...



...But it's OK. I don't mind...



...I know where he sleeps.

fact it forces you to do this four times during the game, leaving you feeling much like the titular character – kind of surly and pissed off at conventions. The action of the game for the most part is very standard button mashing hack and slash with the only real difference in combat being that blocks have to be timed instead of simply being impenetrable. As The Bard gains levels he gains access to more combat skills but for the most part this comes as too little too late – the first three or four hours of the game are bog standard button mashing with no particularly interesting skills and are frustratingly hard to boot. Whilst it's good for a game to require some commitment to get the best out of it, having to go through a

Unfortunately the post-modern approach doesn't extend to the gameplay

frustratingly hard slog for hours on end before things get interesting is a bit much to say the least. For a game that story wise has a good natured go at the conventions of computer RPGs it is disappointing that the gameplay itself is rigidly defined by the conventions it so eagerly wishes to satirise.

SUMMON SOME F(R)IENDS

Unlike *Norrath* or *Dark Alliance*, *The Bard's Tale* contains no multiplayer component but instead allows the player to summon up henchmen who will follow the player and use their skills to help them until they are either killed or banished. In

keeping with the rest of the game, most of the summoned minions have their own voice acting and unique personalities making for some amusing situations with infighting between summoned creatures or special vendettas they have against certain types of enemy. As is becoming standard for third-person fantasy games, *The Bard's Tale* uses the *Dark Alliance* engine and does so to good effect. Even though the game is resolutely 3-D it takes a far more top down perspective than the other games utilising the same engine, allowing the developers to show an impressive sense of scale. <<

A CHORUS LINE Throughout *The Bard's Tale* you will hear a number of songs. Depending on whether you like show-tunes you may find them very amusing, or not as the case may be. Regardless the songs are very well written and funny, especially a certain song sung by a group of drunks on stage referencing a mishap in one of *The Bard's* early adventures. Unfortunately there is one song (or variations thereof) that you will hear again and again throughout the course of the game. Whilst it's quite amusing the first time you hear it, once you've heard the 6th variation on the theme you'll begin to agree that it really is "bad luck to be you", prophecy or not.



AVAILABLE ON: PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: inXile entertainment
PUBLISHER: THQ
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: M15+
AVAILABLE: October 22

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Great sense of humour, excellent voice acting, *You Got Served*.
MINUS: Frustrating beginning, dull side quests, cheating game.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
86 94 79

OVERALL
83

A hack'n'slash game that makes fun of hack'n'slash games.



PIKMIN 2

JOEY TEKKEN taught his Pikmin to ha-ha-step

It doesn't matter how cute this game is; it's bloody good fun to play. If you enjoyed *Pikmin*, *Pikmin 2* is pretty much a no-brainer — the sequel tops its predecessor in almost every way, but those who broke their controller in two at the frustration of the time-sensitive first game will no doubt need a little more coaxing. Don't worry, Hyper has the low-down (no doubt!) on just what's so good about freaky sentient flowers waiting to perform your every whim.

JUNK IS VALUABLE

Those familiar with the first game will know the narrative that drove the game's harsh time-limit. Our unsuspecting hero, Captain Olimar, crash landed on a planet we were to presume was Earth where he discovered curious little creatures known as Pikmin. Olimar learns he can control the planet's natives and enlists their aid in piecing together his crashed ship (the wonderfully

named "Dolphin"). However, he only has 30 days of breathable air (oxygen is poisonous, you see) which means he must utilise the varying skills of each type of Pikmin to put the Dolphin back together before he suffers a terrible fate.

This time-limit proved very frustrating given the puzzle intensive gameplay, and equally made the game's overall play-length short for the more hardcore players. Thankfully, *Pikmin 2* is entirely based around taking your time to not only explore your lush surroundings, but to also learn and experiment with the new abilities of off-shoot natives from the original three Pikmin (blue, red and yellow), but more on that in a minute.

The story for *Pikmin 2* is as quirky as you'd want and befitting the sequel to a tea. Events pick up where the last game left off with Olimar landing on his home planet in glorious FMV. Upon his arrival, our Pikmin pimp learns the

company he worked for, Hocotate Freight, has gone bankrupt and even the ship Olimar worked so hard to piece together has been repossessed — all that's left is a dishevelled hunk of space junk, Olimar's boss and a new employee, Louie (who, inadvertently broke the company on his last mission).

Louie, however, discovers that a piece of junk brought back with Olimar from the Pikmin planet, a bottle cap that falls out of the Dolphin as it's carried away, is worth a hunk of Pokos (the currency on Olimar's home planet) and Hocotate's owner is sparked with an idea — what if Louie and Olimar go back to the Pikmin planet to gather more of this valuable junk, then he can repay his debt and the company will be saved. Thus your adventure begins.

TWO FOR A TANGO

From the outset, everything is familiar; the camera works the same, control is the same, picking



[above] Cocaine's a hell of a drug!



[above] Shiggy hates snowmen





Pacman's giant albino evil twin



Audrey 2 sure gets around these days



Super happy tiny spacemen love the herb

and planting Pikmin is the same and the game still looks as lush as ever, though the fundamental differences are presented to players immediately; there are now two characters to control, making for greater item, character and Pikmin management, as well as a lack of any time limit (besides the day/night system). Beyond these two major additions, subtle trimmings include dungeon type sections in every area you visit (they're basically holes in the ground and can be up to five or six floors deep - each one is also randomly generated), the areas themselves are bigger and offer greater exploratory value which works in with the 'more is better' motif as there are loads of trinkets to uncover for your boss and the salvation of the company.

Any enemy that consumes a white Pikmin will quickly die from poisoning

The other changes in gameplay are the Pikmin updates. As well as the traditional Pikmin, those being blue (water), red (fire), and yellow (bombs), players will come across a couple of variations. Purple Pikmin, for example, are made from five or six regular Pikmin after they're thrown into a particular type of flower. These little guys are actually very heavy and make up a large amount of mass in a few amount of Pikmin, however, they're also slower and therefore more at risk. White Pikmin on the other hand (made the same way as purple), are small, fast and poisonous. So, what they lack in strength, they

make up for in infectious character - any enemy that consumes a white Pikmin will quickly die from poisoning. Obviously there are new dangers and puzzles to deal with based on the new types of Pikmin you discover and there are other Pikmin variations we haven't told you about, but we don't want to spoil it for you.

Pikmin 2 outdoes the original in every conceivable way: it's more fun to play, much more rewarding in exploration (the "junk" you discover can and will include pieces of Nintendo memorabilia, move over Super Smash Bros. Melee), the challenge is higher but the pace allows for thoughtfulness and tact. The presentation is slick and fun to watch, while the two-player multiplayer is as infectious as they come. If you enjoyed the first game, pick this one up. If you like RTS games, pick up Pikmin 2. Hell, if you own a GameCube, there isn't a whole lot more in this field, so pick this game up. I guess what we're trying to say is... get it! <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:
CATEGORY: RTS/Puzzle
PLAYERS: 1-2
DEVELOPER: EAD
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G8+
AVAILABLE: October

HYPER VERDICT:
PLUS: No time-limit, two characters to control, more varieties of Pikmin.
MINUS: Not enough options in the Gallery, no four-player multiplayer.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
89 85 92

OVERALL
89

Everything the first Pikmin should have been.

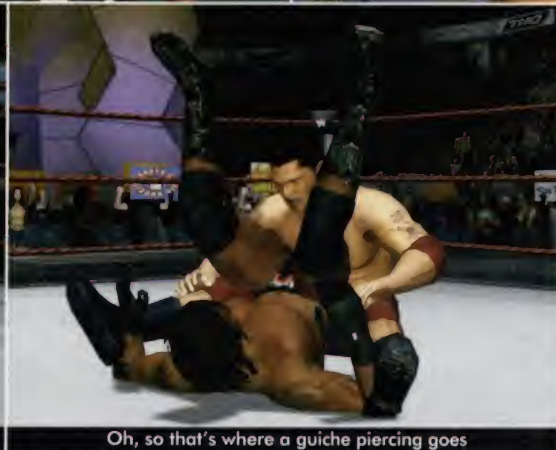




!!! Heavy strikes are less often countered, so set up opponents early to walk into them.



When Chiropractors attack



Oh, so that's where a guiche piercing goes



Hey fatty I've got a film for ya "A Fridge Too Far"!

WWE: Day of Reckoning

ANDREW BULMER discovers that wrestling isn't all roses and buttercups

With Create-a-Superstar, plenty of match types, heaps of wrestlers, and a story mode, Day of Reckoning appears to have it all. Most wrestling fans will want to get their hands dirty with the story mode first, which can only be traversed with your own superstar creation. The story starts off strong with a lecture about having to pay your dues and work your way through dark matches and Heat to get a WWE contract. Do that and you choose to take your wrestler to Raw or Smackdown! but be sure to savour that choice as it will be the only one you make.

The story mode is a single arc, each match is basically a mission; lose and you repeat it, as for taking creative control of your character, forget it, the story is mapped out, your job is to play through it. Lucky then that the story mode is actually engaging, featuring trademark double crosses, beat downs and character turns. Win matches and

you gain experience needed to upgrade an array of player stats.

A.I. (ARTIFICIAL INCOMPETENCE)

Day of Reckoning's mechanics follow the familiar line of wrestling games where different buttons in combination with a direction will elicit particular moves. That's all been fine and dandy for a while. The frustration sets in with the counter system, which requires one shoulder button to counter grapples and the other to counter strikes, which is all well and good for our friend Negrodamus, but us regular folk are left to guess which to try and counter, kind of like gambling but when you lose you are left bloodied on the ground. Okay, so it's exactly like gambling.

The most frustrating component of the game, however, is the AI, which will see tag team matches quickly become a handicap match as your "partner" stands ringside and does sweet bugger all. Every

time you go for a pin or submission maneuver your opponent's partner will jump in to break it up, but perish the thought that your own partner should step in to stop him.

If one were to cease being jaded about the tag team difficulties long enough, you would notice a decent playing experience. Yes the game is bereft of commentary and carries a simplistic story mode, but it's an engaging story mode, which had this monkey hooked for one. There are some nice touches, such as particular moves that will bust open your opponent, and of course there is the bra and panties match, for those either very desperate, or so stupid that they have not yet realised that you can download porn from the internet. More than a polished release of a previous title, the efforts to make improvements are noticeable, with a lot less clipping and tight controls, it's really only the AI that leaves you wondering what could have been. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Wrestling

PLAYERS: 1-4

DEVELOPER: Yuke's

PUBLISHER: THQ

PRICE: \$79.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Engaging story mode, simple controls, easy to win.

MINUS: Some lame AI, no commentary, linear story.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
77	82	84
OVERALL		
78		
A step forward, but a small one.		

Challenge foes, Conquer worlds, Phone your friends.



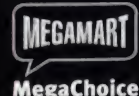
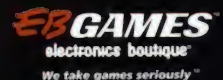
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NBA BALLERS

TONY MONTANA gets jiggy with it

Most sports have their own culture associated with them. Footy has the "beer and blokes" culture, golf has the "rich white people in bad pants" culture, and soccer has the "nose candy" culture. However, the marriage of basketball and hip-hop is clearly the strongest bond between sport and culture. While a handful of games have dipped into the hip-hop and hoops pool, none have gone as deep as Midway's NBA Ballers. Come on, any time you're forced just to buy not just platinum pieces but also Cadillac Escalades, South Beach cribs and even your own posse, you know that you've just entered Blingville.

NOW ENTERING BLINGVILLE

The overall concept of NBA Ballers borrows heavily from both NBA Street and Street Hoops, but with a few tweaks. The most noticeable is that you don't have any teammates — it's strictly one-on-one streetball action. Even though you may think

this takes away from an important aspect of gameplay — teamwork — you would be mistaken. More on that later.

If you want to get the most out of Ballers, then you need to focus on the Rags To Riches game mode. This is where you create a 'baller from scratch and try to take him up through various tournaments against both unknown streetballers and world-famous NBA 'ballers, acquiring money, skills and hoiez along the way. When you're just starting out you're bling-less, wearing only a pair of jeans and a t-shirt (a Midway shirt no less), then the more games you win, the more blinged-out you become. You also start off with a very limited number of streetball moves, but the more you win the more moves you can purchase.

Of course, as NBA Ballers is set in the world of streetball, it's not just about winning but winning with style. If you're just laying it up and

taking jumpshots, you're not going to earn the props of the fans or the game's host, MC Supernatural (who also provides a few tracks for the soundtrack, including a full-length music video that introduces you to the game). If NBA Ballers was a player it'd be more Allen Iverson than Larry Bird, that's for sure.

The name of the game is breaking ankles and stealing girlfriends, so the more crossover dribbles and 360-degree dunks, the better. Performing these moves is very simple — the right analog stick controls all your streetball moves, but it also depletes your turbo. Also, if you try to do too many crossovers with a taller, more uncoordinated player (like the character I created, a self-portrait), you'll fall over and not look too cool for the laydeez on the sideline.

As mentioned earlier, it's purely one-on-one, no one there to bail you out. Although you don't have teammates, that doesn't mean



[a mosquito] I believe you can fly!



[above] Go Carl, it's your birthday...





!!! Take note of the \$69.95 RRP - all the bling you can eat for a ghetto friendly price...



Hoopy frood tickles the twine for two



Shout outs to my dog food homies. Canned or dry we never die



Thankfully neither of these guys are John Stockton

you can't pass the ball. The only difference is you're now passing the ball to a friend on the sidelines (remember, this is streetball, so there are certain liberties taken with the rules). Your homie can then give it straight back to you for a simple give-and-go play, or he can toss it high for a high-risk alley-oop.

You can also pass the ball off a few other objects. The first is the backboard, which always makes for spectacular highlights, and the second is your opponent's face, which makes for both spectacular highlights and a week's worth of bragging rights.

BLING BLING If you're not sure what all this "bling bling" talk means, here's a quick guide.

Bling

Not Bling



Homies on the sidelines standing in front of their chromed-out trucks

If you can string together several crossovers, face passes and alley-oops, you'll notice that your "House" meter will gradually begin to fill up. Once you've fully juiced it up, you'll then be able to "Bring Down the House", which doesn't mean you'll star in a Queen Latifah movie, it means you'll tear down the backboard, giving you an instant win.

A variation of the standard streetball rules apply here, and they're first to 11, win by two, loser's outs, best of three rounds. However, every now and then you'll be thrown a curveball and given a different task you need to perform to win the game, such as holding your opponent below six points or an untimed game where the first person to Bring Down the House wins.

MACKIN' THA HOEZ

While the term "streetball" usually conjures up images of gritty outdoor courts, most of the courts you'll play on here are all class. They're set in the private homes of NBA stars, so you'll be playing in Kevin Garnett's

backyard, Allen Iverson's recording studio, or on Scottie Pippen's yacht. The environments look spectacular, complete with homies on the sidelines standing in front of their chromed-out trucks, mackin' tha hoez. The players also look amazing, with every NBA player easily identifiable. Some of the skin textures are a little scary though, but overall the likenesses are as close to real-life as you've seen in a videogame.

While the gameplay and graphics are very slick, there are still a few problems with NBA Ballers. The first is that John Stockton is in the game - he's slow, white and can't dunk. Get him out of there. The second is that while on defence you can take a charge (this is where if the guy with the ball runs straight into you, it's an offensive foul). There are no charges in streetball. The third is that John Stockton is in the game.

NBA Ballers will not hold your interest for months like an NBA Live or ESPN-style title would, but for a NBA/streetball fix it will keep you entertained for hours on end. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Arcade basketball
PLAYERS: 1-2
DEVELOPER: Midway
PUBLISHER: Midway
PRICE: \$69.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Mid October

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Easy to perform crossovers and dunks, looks amazing.

MINUS: Can become repetitive, John Stockton.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 85 89

OVERALL

88

Would have scored in the 90s if there was no John Stockton.



CRASH TWINSANITY

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE discovers he has an evil twin

▶▶ The nineties were kind to Crash Bandicoot. Despite an obvious lack of originality, having little talent and despite being quite possibly the most derivative main character ever to be brainstormed by a dev team, this unassuming Bandicoot went from the virtual anonymity of posing for the wrappers of Furry Friends chocolates to international superstardom. At the height of his fame the marketable marsupial was the public face of Sony's PlayStation console, and had won the hearts of tykes the world over with a torrent of platform games and their innumerable spin-offs. Times change, and the Crash franchise has been steadily losing steam since leaving the hands of series creators Naughty Dog. The promising new installment, *Crash Twinsanity*, will satisfy those looking for more of the same, but whether or not it can set the series back on the high road is another thing entirely...

CRATEST. GAME. EVER.

The game's title of 'Twinsanity' is owed to a newly crafted pair of antagonists; two super-deformed budgerigars that are intent on soiling Crash's island home and extracting his nemeses, Dr. Neo Cortex, fleshy brain from his skull. Funnily enough both of these maniacal birds bear a striking resemblance to Ozmodiar, the tiny green space alien that only Homer can see... but anyway, with these new enemies threatening both of their livelihoods Crash and Cortex momentarily ignore their differences and join forces to defeat the twins. This rather hackneyed Saturday morning cartoon plot device creates what is unquestionably *Twinsanity*'s most refreshing gameplay feature. After joining forces with Cortex, Crash can take advantage of their new union by grabbing hold of him with a spin attack, and while the two are joined Crash can wield his former rival as a weapon, spinning him

around to kill enemies, throwing him into them and even using his skull as a mallet to beat down foes and other assorted obstacles. When not using the handy mad scientist as a meat-club Crash must drag him around by the hand in a fashion that's similar to the system used to lead Yorda in the 2002's *ICO*.

Accompanying one change for the better is another step in the right direction for the series. Previous Crash outings have been linear experiences, with Crash only able to wander either straight ahead into the screen, or sideways in a sort of 2-and-a-half-D kind of way. With *Twinsanity*, developer Traveller's Tales have implemented fully explorable three-dimensional levels, finally bringing Crash Bandicoot up to speed with where the rest of the industry has been since *Super Mario 64* in 1996. Crash hasn't completely abandoned the old level style however, and a lot of the action still takes place in caves and corridors



[above] "I just saw Benton naked!"



[above] "So did I...YUMMY!"





"Ride me. Ride me like a Tijuana pony!"



At the beach you can often get a little head



"I'm cured. I mean, OUCH!"

with only one way to run, but it's a promising start nonetheless.

Apart from these two minor changes it really is business as usual for this fifth rendition of Crash Bandicoot, and just as in the four previous games you'll spend the majority of your time offing the abominably cute residents of "N. sanity" island, avoiding bottomless pits, collecting more apples than any Bandicoot could hope to eat in a lifetime, and most importantly frolicking in, bouncing on and breaking open the very building blocks, the DNA if you will, of the videogaming industry; crates. Whilst on the subject of crates, it should be noted that Crash Twinsanity is almost certainly the most formidable contender to the throne of 'crate' game ever made. You want wooden crates? Metal crates? Power-up crates? Crates that save your game? Crates that explode and kill you? You name the crate and Crash Twinsanity has it in preposterous abundance. The 'time-to-crate' alone must surely be record-breaking, as the very instant that the game starts you are confronted by no less than nineteen crates in plain view, directly in front of you.

❧ You name the crate and Twinsanity has it in preposterous abundance

MILK SQUIRTING FROM NOSTRILS

The Crash series has always had an air of humour about it, this time around though Traveller's Tales have made attempts to finally stop gamers laughing at Crash Bandicoot, and start them laughing with him. Jordan Reichek, a man of some renown was recruited to pen the funny stuff, and with his previous credits including such animated delights as Ren and Stimpy (sans-John K.) and the pilot episode of Invader Zim you'd be expecting some gags of milk-squirting-from-nostrils proportions. However, while Twinsanity definitely has the appearance and feel of an old Looney Toons cartoon, complete with double-takes and fistfights that look like a ball of cloud, the humour rarely escalates above the realm of these cartoons made in the 1950s, a real disappointment coming from a brain capable of such twisted genius. Let's put it this way, put a copy of Crash Twinsanity and a copy of your local newspaper's

funny pages in the squared circle and I know who I'd put my money on. As far as funny goes, Crash is no Marmaduke.

Overall Crash Twinsanity is by no means a poor game. It is a competently produced, quite highly polished title capable of being an entertaining, fun and even humorous gaming experience for a willing player. Where this game loses out is its unoriginality. Crash Bandicoot has proved itself, sequel after sequel, as a formulaic mishmash of platform game clichés and ideas rampantly pillaged from other, better, Nintendo and Sega games. Never having been an innovative series to begin with, Crash Twinsanity breaks so little new ground as to render playing it a monotonous exercise in repetition for all but the most dedicated Crash fans or absolute beginners. Put simply, you've seen everything Crash Bandicoot has to offer before, and it wasn't that impressive the first time around. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Platform
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Traveller's Tales
PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal
PRICE: \$69.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Late October

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: The crate lover's game of games!
MINUS: You've seen and played it all before.





STAR OCEAN: Till the End of Time

DANIEL WILKS is a whiny blue-haired swordsman

▶▶ I'm a huge fan of the RPG. Outside of work it's basically the only genre I play for leisure. No matter how strong my love of the genre there has always been one thing that has bothered me — why is it that in nearly every Jap RPG the main character wields a sword bigger than his head rather than something sensible, like one of those stupidly powerful plasma guns that every second enemy thug seems to be armed with? Whilst Star Ocean follows suit by having the hero as a swordsman it is the first game that has given a good excuse as to why he does so. Faye Leingod (subtle bit of naming, huh?), a whiny but otherwise pretty smart college student finds himself in the middle of an alien attack of which he is unwittingly the main target. In short order his parents are taken prisoner and he is forced to blast off in an escape pod. After crash landing on a planet called Vanguard III with a tech level somewhere around Earth's

middle-ages, Faye equips himself with a sword so as not to break the UP3 convention of non-interference (I told you there was a reason) and sets off to find out who the aliens who first attack are, rescue his parents and ultimately find out why his improbable name is so apt.

COMPELLING COMBAT

Far and away the strongest factor of Star Ocean is its brilliant, intuitive and fast paced real-time combat system. During any given combat players can have up to three characters on screen, two of whom can be set to various levels of combat AI and a third directly controlled by the player. At any time in combat the player can switch between characters with the R1 button so as to gain access to special skills and the like. Whilst this doesn't sound particularly revolutionary, the rest of the combat and character development (which plays a major role in combat) is.

When leveling up, characters gain new skills and attack powers which can be hotkeyed to either one of the attack buttons, X and O. Each of these buttons has two ranges, close and long, allowing the player to access up to four different attack skills per character. The more powerful the skill the more combat points it uses to learn so characters are always limited in what combinations they can use, adding a nice sense of balance to the game.

Combat points are also utilised to learn up to two secondary skills, such as All Common Attack Symbols (allowing the character so equipped to cast basic combat magic) or First Aid. Whilst this creativity with the combat system is great, what makes it truly sublime is the "rage" meter. Each attack made by the character uses some of the meter stopping players from simply mashing the X and O buttons continuously. Standing still for a second allows the meter to regenerate. When at



[above] "So, how about it?"



[above] "Give her one for me, whinger"





!!! The first shipment of Star Ocean in Oz will come with a bonus DVD with interviews, music tracks, concept art and CG art. Better get in quick!



HP 3330
MP 945
FURY 50%

HP 4050
MP 567
FURY 81%

HP 4050
MP 567
FURY 81%



Blue haired whiny boy, fan service party shot chick...



Gay leatherboy looking bodyguard...



What the hell is wrong with Japanese people?

100% the meter allows the character to do an automatic block of a basic attack and triggers an "Aura". Depending on the aura the character has learnt it may trigger an enemy stun, an automatic riposte, healing or any other number of effects. The balance between active fighting and wary resting is brilliantly done and ensures that the near constant combat is never dull.

SUPERB MONSTERS

Star Ocean: Till the End of Time contains around 40 hours of gameplay making for a rather immersive experience. If that's not enough the game also contains an astounding amount of unlockable content ranging from new outfits for characters, extra characters to add to the party, cinematics and more.

»» The game also contains an astounding amount of unlockable content

Whilst not an ugly game, Star Ocean still looks a generation behind when compared to other Japanese RPGs such as the Final Fantasy series. That said, whilst the characters look a little drab and the frequent cutscenes have a habit of going on for far too long (there's only so many significant glances and shots of character walking into frame that you can take before pulling your hair out) the lighting and particle effects as well as the monster design is universally superb. Whilst the spell effects aren't as flashy as, say, the summons of the Final Fantasy franchise they still look brilliant and add that necessary bit of glamour to the proceedings. On a

slightly related side note, keep an eye out for the small witch-like monsters that look like Orko from the Sheera cartoon. Killing the little bastards is very satisfying.

As is becoming the standard with Japanese RPGs, Star Ocean features a rather brilliant orchestral soundtrack marred by strange, anachronistic and annoying bursts of inappropriate cock-rock. When will those wacky Japanese learn? Wailing guitars aside, Star Ocean also features some decent voice acting and a nicely self-referential sense of humour that manages to lampoon much of the subject matter that the rest of the game fervently clings to. <<

INVENTION Star Ocean contains a fully fledged invention system that, whilst not as insanely fun as Dark Chronicle (taking photos of items and trying to combine them) adds a good deal of depth to the game. After becoming a member of the Inventors Guild (about 10 hours into the game), players can access any of the workshops around the game world. There are a number of different classifications of items to invent from Smithing (weapons and armour) to Crafting (items) to Cooking (food obviously) and Writing (skill books and literature). Every one of the playable characters has stats in each of the invention areas and other NPC inventors can be hired to bolster your ranks. Once an item is invented the player receives one or more copies of that item (depending on the amount paid to invent it and whether the item is unique) and eventually it will appear in shops for sale. Strangely it appears as though the player makes no money from the sale of items they have invented, instead the inventions bolster their ranking in the guild, presumably unlocking some content later on in the game.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: Square-Enix

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Amazing combat system, nice sense of humour, good particle effects.

MINUS: Cock-rock, meandering story, too many cutscenes.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	86	89
OVERALL		
86		
Immersive Jap RPG styling with incredible combat.		



!!! Multiplayer wise there's three new modes – Tank Battle, CTF and Domination, and eight new maps.



This guy's a tactical goddamn genius



Watch out - he's "borderline" psychotic. Ho ho



Join the army they said, it's a man's life they said

CALL OF DUTY: United Offensive

Shooting stuff is what **CAM SHEA** does best.

United Offensive could perhaps best be described as an exaggerated imitation of Call of Duty. Developers Gray Matter certainly seem to know what made Call of Duty a good game in the first place, but it could be argued that with the expansion pack they've delivered too much of a good thing. What we mean is that United Offensive is even more scripted and even more linear, sometimes jarringly so.

SQUAD MATES WITH RUBBER BULLETS

There's no doubt that, like the original, United Offensive can be spectacular; you often find yourself caught up in huge battles where you feel completely overwhelmed by the scale of events around you. That said, the veil of illusion that creates a believable gameworld is very thin, and with even a cursory examination can be drawn aside with ease. Thus, you'll soon tire of the endless

waves of AI that continue to spawn until you've done the specific thing that's required to trigger the next sequence of events. You'll tire of having to follow orders to the letter, with instant death often lurking if you so much as stray a few meters off the game's intended path. You'll tire of the combination of invincible squad mates (until they're scripted to die of course) and average AI which results in comical situations where a member of your squad and an enemy soldier will be standing a couple of meters apart but seem oblivious to one another. It's also punishingly difficult, but in an F5/F9, cheating game kind of way.

But you know what? This is still great fun if you treat it as an arcadey experience, and it's still worth your time – especially if you liked Call of Duty. There's a huge variety of mission settings, from defending a house from hundreds of enemy soldiers and countless tanks in The Battle of the Bulge through to the

on-rails mission above Holland, where you're in an RAF Flying Fortress, and madly arming the various gunner positions as wave upon wave of German aircraft swoop in. This mission in particular is a nice diversion from the usual CoD fare and with the new particle system in place looks stunning to boot.

United Offensive as a whole is very much the gaming equivalent of a gorgeous, but ditsy girl in a short skirt. She's very appealing and fun to be with, but at the end of the day you're not going to have particularly deep conversations. <<



AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS

PLAYERS: 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: Gray Matter

PUBLISHER: Activision

PRICE: \$69.95

RATING: MA15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Visuals, varied missions, best clouds ever.

MINUS: Not all that long, incredibly scripted.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 90 75

OVERALL

80

More CoD than CoD ever was. It's Call of Duty: Extreme!

GAME, SET, MURDER

LAW & ORDER



She's beautiful, athletic, rich...and she's dead. Elena Kusarova was tennis' beautiful "It Girl" – that is, until she was found dead on the locker room floor the day before the start of the U.S. Open. The 18-year-old tennis prodigy had been developing into...

RELEASE DATE:
OUT NOW



JOIN THE CAST OF ER

The Game based on
the hit TV series



No sleep in 36 hours, and you lay down for a well-deserved rest. Then the call comes in; a freeway pile-up with multiple victims. Ambulance is 5 minutes out. Welcome to the life and death drama of Chicago's Country General Hospital!

RELEASE DATE:
IN STORE LATE OCTOBER 2004



www.mindscape.net.au





CODENAME: PANZERS Phase 1

KOSTA ANDREADIS turns out to be an RTS nerd...

Another month goes by and another game set during World War II gets released, a fact that most gamers have come to accept and a situation that when mentioned has almost become a cliché onto itself. To some this may seem like a deterrent, it's almost gotten to the point where our generation may know more about WWII military hardware and combat than our parents. But to others the idea of another game set during this era, namely an RTS, is still enough to get them excited. Apart from the historical accuracy of its vehicles, troop divisions and various armaments, Panzers succeeds because it works on two levels - as a strategy game and one that's heavily action-oriented.

YOU BLOUSE WEARING PANZER!

Panzers falls under the real-time strategy (RTS) genre, but it isn't a traditional RTS per se - there aren't

any barracks or command centres where you can recruit troops and vehicles, and no resources to gather. Instead you'll have a finite number of units to command per map (mission), with varying objectives to complete all sharing something in common - plenty of enemy conflict. Broken up into three campaigns, the single player aspect lets players take control of units from all sides of the political stratosphere, the misunderstood Germans, the socialist (aka "people's people") Russians and the fascist two-timing Allied (American and British) forces. With over thirty varied missions to play ranging from the standard "stop all oncoming forces" to those that include search-and-destroy exercises, kidnapping enemy soldiers and capturing vital strategic landmarks - the single player aspect of Panzers is definitely well rounded. Even though it may feature a character driven story, one that attempts to tie all the missions together with a more personalised

approach, the somewhat spotty script and inconsistent voice acting (German troops with American accents) all take back seat to what works so well - the execution and intensity of battle.

Panzers does focus quite a bit on strategy but it's definitely a game that one could just pick up and play, the learning curve is thankfully very gradual. Initial reactions will be like that of most strategy titles, click on the troops, arrange their formation (tanks in the front, artillery in the back), and engage the enemy. Units (apart from those pre-deployed) are bought before each mission begins using prestige points. Prestige points are acquired throughout the game, and the number of points you earn pretty much relies on how well you've completed the previous mission in terms of unit-loss, objectives met and efficiency. And with a vast array of unit types from all sizes of tanks (including the various incarnations



[above] There's always a fjord or inlet...



[above] American foreign policy today

of the titular Panzers), artillery units, riflemen, machine-gunners, medics, repair vehicles and many more - it becomes quite a surprise when you realise how much refinement and micromanagement you have over your company.

With no ability to amass units, experience steps in, as combat



!!! Panzers has 50 authentic and fully controllable vehicles, from motorcycles to cannons.



"Let's have a caption competition" says Cam



Then he makes me caption the bloody WWII RTS



He's gonna get such a paaanch

units gain experience after each encounter with can lead to a higher ranking which of course leads to more health, damage etc for that unit. Riflemen, and any other ground troops for that matter, which are broken up into squads, can also be fitted with all types of equipment from grenades, binoculars, and even dinghies – which can all play a part in the complete success of any mission. Whereas a lesser general would storm a heavily guarded bridge with tanks and artillery, a more experienced combat veteran would also send troops across the river and teach the enemy a lesson in the element of surprise.

MIEN FUHRER LOVES THIS GAME

It's the realistic interaction with your surrounding environment that makes the Panzers' experience that much more fulfilling. See a townhouse in the distance? You can raze it to rubble with your artillery, call in an air strike, or use your ground troops to enter it and use it for cover. You can take your tanks and units via the road to reach your destination or take a short cut through the woods – your tanks will

➤➤ See a townhouse in the distance? You can raze it to rubble with your artillery

make short work of any tree stump, powerlines or fences found within the game. As casually inserted into the previous sentence - yes you can call in air strikes in Panzers. One of the cooler aspects of the title, and depending on the mission, players can call in bombers to lay buildings to waste, reinforcements in the form of paratroopers, and recon planes to explore parts of the map hidden under the fog of war. Like most strategy titles the fog of war plays an important role in what can be seen or can't be seen for that matter, but in Panzers this has been taken to the next level with sound – you may not be able to see your enemy but if they make a big enough sound (i.e. tanks and trucks) your units can estimate their position with icons appearing on the screen.

Panzers is stunning in another area, namely the graphics. Players get to choose between zooming in on an intense and personal gun battle between two infantry squads or zoom out and take a god like perspective as a town gets

destroyed in the heat of tank and artillery warfare. With high-polygon models, detailed textures, realistic physics, animation and an almost entirely destructible terrain, the engine more than complements the action oriented gameplay - it is at times jaw-dropping and a great achievement. Add to this a great surround sound experience with bass heavy explosions and gunfire and you have a title that excels in its presentation as well as interaction.

Even though Panzers is yet another game set during the last "great war", getting to play general of your very own company of troops, vehicles, artillery and tanks in such spectacular fashion is reason enough to get excited. On top of this the title features a rock solid multiplayer aspect that is as intense as the single player campaign, literally, as players can co-operatively play the numerous missions found within the game. Bring on Phase Two. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

- CATEGORY:** RTS
- PLAYERS:** 1-Multi
- DEVELOPER:** Stormregion
- PUBLISHER:** CDV
- PRICE:** \$TBA
- RATING:** M15+
- AVAILABLE:** Now

HYPER VERDICT:

- PLUS:** Wicked single player and co-op, lush visuals.
- MINUS:** Hey, it's another RTS and it's set you know when.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	83	90
OVERALL		
90		
A fun, deeply involving and intimate strategy game.		





EVIL GENIUS

DANIEL WILKS has a death-trap with your name on it

>> You'll be hard pressed to find a person in the world (who isn't a reincarnation of Ghandi, Mother Theresa or any of the previous Dalai Lamas) who hasn't, at some stage in their lives fantasised about grandiose plans for taking over the world. It's a natural human trait to want to crush all opposition under your malevolent heel and the only people who see something wrong with holding the world in the grip of terror with progressively more diabolical plans for conquest are dirty hippies and, of course, Communists. Finally a game has come along that allows the player to live out all of their

illicit world domination fantasies but unfortunately after playing Evil Genius, Hyper has come to the conclusion that taking over the world is just too much work, none of which is ultimately very much fun.

MORE SINISTER

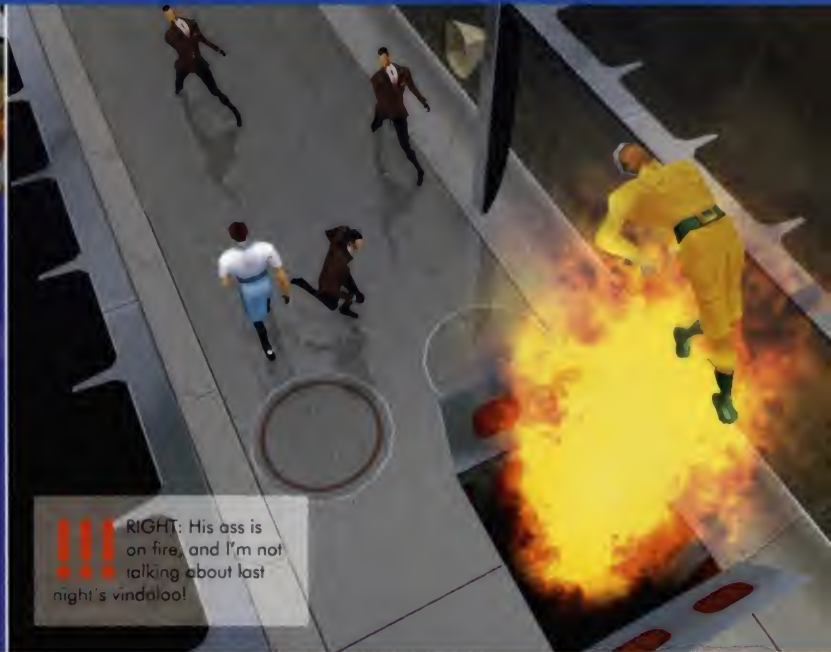
In Evil Genius, the latest game from visionary (though somewhat slipshod) developer Elixir Studios, players take the role of one of three evil masterminds; Maximillian, a sociopathic midget with a monocle, Alexis, the obligatory femme fatale and Shen Yu, an inscrutable oriental gentleman with a penchant for robes and a gem fixed to his forehead, presumably to make him look more sinister. Once the mastermind has been chosen it's up to the player to build a lair, protect it and set about taking over the world by sending minions out to different countries to plunder their gold reserves or commit other crimes known as "Acts of Infamy" that serve to increase

your knowledge base but also the mastermind's notoriety. There are numerous different rooms needed for a base to successfully work — you need barracks for your men, a control room so you can send your minions around the world to do your bidding, a security room so you can arm your minions, as well as interrogate captured skilled enemies (see boxout), mess halls, infirmaries...you get the picture.

Sending your minions around the world on the world map is one of the most important aspects of the game as it is the only way to gain money (by stealing it from other countries) as well as being the only way to increase notoriety (allowing the player to recruit more henchmen and partake in more grandiose crimes). Stealing is simply facilitated by sending a couple of minions to a country and telling them to steal. A counter in the bottom left of the screen shows how much they will steal every 60 seconds. Although



the player doesn't need to do any other micro-management to keep the minions busy pilfering cash it is worthwhile to go back and check on them every couple of minutes as enemy agents may try to kill them. For some reason Elixir has chosen to omit any facility to fight off these enemy agents. Worse yet there isn't even any indicator shown on the main building screen if any of your minions have been killed — you



!!! RIGHT: His ass is on fire, and I'm not talking about last night's vindaloo!



Fermented urine makes for heady prison wine



One of Wilks' ingenious traps. Did I say ingenious? I meant lame.



Mrs Doubtfire goes under cover. Die you old bag

simply get shown how long ago they died next time you log into the world screen. Acts of Infamy are similarly easy to control and equally as frustrating. Each act requires a set number of a set type of minion to complete. Once you have all the required minions in a region you can start the act, the timer runs down and you either win or lose, something that often seems to be a totally arbitrary decision.

THE PUNISHER

Fans of the Dungeon Keeper series will find this approach very familiar but unfortunately there is one slight difference between Evil Genius and its earlier fantasy based counterpart – Evil Genius just isn't very fun. Even on the easiest setting it is punishingly hard, forcing the player to build the base in the order it dictates rather than the manner

➤ Sending your minions around the world is one of the most important aspects

in which you see fit, often causing you to run out of money and power before you get anywhere. Worse yet is the haphazard way in which new rooms and pieces of equipment for you to build – don't be surprised if half your base burns down before you have access to fire extinguisher technology. Come on now; if you can control a world-wide empire of evil surely you can work out how to put out a few fires. Likewise by the time you gain access to a power generator you'll most likely have had to live through numerous frustrating blackouts first.

Minion AI is, for want of a better word, woeful. More often than not they will take no notice of an enemy standing right next to them

destroying a valuable piece of equipment, even when said enemy has been marked for death with a kill tag. Enemy AI on the other hand is inhumanly skilled. Although Evil Genius allows the player to build deep and complex death traps to defend your base, don't be surprised if they serve absolutely no purpose whatsoever. Although simple agents may stumble into one occasionally, other agents have the ability to come in through trap doors, totally negating any usefulness. It's a pity that the gameplay of Evil Genius is so lackluster – the look of the game is brilliant, nicely playing on 60s spy film riffs whilst simultaneously showing off some great texture work and animations. <<

SPECIALISED MINIONS Although the player only starts off with simple worker minions there are a number of other minions that can be recruited later on in the game. Unfortunately, like the rest of the game, recruiting said extra troops is more than a little frustrating. To build a skilled minion the player first needs to capture a skilled agent of the type you want the minion to become (capture maids to make valets, guards to make guards, techs to make techs and the like). Once this agent has been interrogated the minion doing the interrogating becomes the new minion type. Then the player must build a training room with specific equipment for that minion type. You will then be able to train other minions of that type. Be warned – if all of your skilled minions of one type should die on a mission you can't simply train more – you need to go out and capture another skilled agent and go through the interrogation process again... and again... and again.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Tycoon Sim

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Elixir Studios

PUBLISHER: Sierra

PRICE: \$69.95

RATING: G

AVAILABLE: October 14

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Nice humour, looks good, soundtrack.

MINUS: Too much busy work, terrible minion AI, not particularly fun.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY

86 84 56

OVERALL

62

Who would have thought that being evil was so frustrating?



KOHAN II: Kings of War

▶▶ The "two" in the title, represented by conjoined I's, means that there must have been an original Kohan. A short visit to Google solidifies this claim — the original Kohan, was released in 2001 to some pretty solid critical acclaim. Kohan is a game about combat set in a fantasy world of magic and wizardry and the nerds who control them (in the real world). Now there's a pull quote I'd like to see on the box when this gets a local release.

But asides aside Kohan II is quite an involving RTS when given the chance, and if you're a fan of the fantasy genre (see: your Magic the Gathering collection) the interesting and combat driven mechanics found within the game are definitely worth checking out. In fact a lot of the cumbersome micromanagement found in most "epic" strategy titles has been given the flick by Kohan, with more focus put on the actual combat. With a pretty extensive and varied single player campaign and numerous scenario and multiplayer maps available, Kohan II is nothing to sneeze at — and if you're a fan of the genre, this is one of the better low-profile releases of recent times. But alas, this is a byte sized review and the best way to sum it up would be to pitch its premise much like I would many of the un-produced screenplays I've written over the years — "It's like Age of Empires meets Civilization who dated Warcraft who in turn had unprotected, but nevertheless enjoyable, sex with a little friend of mine called Fun, the Innovative Whore."

KOSTA ANDREADIS

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RTS / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi
DEVELOPER: Timegate Studios / **PUBLISHER:** Take 2
PRICE: \$89.95 / **RATING:** TBA / **AVAILABLE:** Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
70	85	80	78



[Ralph quote] "Soo... you like stuff?"



SILENT HILL 4: The Room

▶▶ It's hardly revolutionary, but if you're after more of the eerie, atmospheric, spine-chilling goodness that the series is renowned for, The Room is just what Dr Satan ordered.

As the name suggests, a large part of the game takes place in an apartment. How exciting, you mutter in your sleep. Yet it's this juxtaposition of the sane world against the other twisted dimensions, which soon open up via the apartment, that makes this game so disturbing. Over time even the apartment changes into a darker form, becoming a dingier, dirtier version of itself. Thanks to the portals which open in the room, you'll be able to jet set to darker dimensions, which use the traditional third person camera perspective that is the norm for Silent Hill. A first person view is used while you're in your abode, which helps to immerse you in its claustrophobic confines.

The Room is a little more action oriented than its predecessors, but there are still the typical fetch puzzles. A major pain with these is the new inventory limit, which limits you to a certain number of items while the rest must be stored in a chest at your apartment. It's a feature that has long been tired in the Resident Evil series, so why drag it into SH?

Silent Hill has always been about spectacular yet disturbing imagery, and The Room is no exception. There's something so inherently wrong about the various creatures and scenes that you encounter, which when combined with the eerie sound effects can't help but create a game dripping with atmosphere. Chilling.

BENNETT RING

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action Adventure / **PLAYERS:** 1
DEVELOPER: Konami / **PUBLISHER:** Atari
PRICE: \$99.95 / **RATING:** MA / **AVAILABLE:** Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
88	90	85	85



[silent caption]



TERMINATOR 3: The Redemption

▶▶ The title, Terminator 3: The Redemption is just about the most honest name for a game we've ever seen, aside from the brutally honest CTU Marine Sharpshooter 2: So Shit We Won't Send You A Review Copy, as it almost redeems what could possibly be the worst series of movie license games ever. Before The Redemption came along the only real worthwhile thing to come from the license has been the brilliant and criminally underplayed Terminator: Future Shock.

Instead of sticking to one genre, Redemption opts instead to integrate elements of third-person shooting, rails shooting, hand to hand combat and driving into a unified game aesthetic that, whilst not always successful, manages to keep your attention throughout the game's admittedly short play time. Throughout the missions you'll be tasked with bringing down Skynet command craft, destroying hordes of killbots and hunter killers as well as all of the robotic enemies you've come to know and loathe over the course of the films. The major problem that stops Redemption from being a truly great game is the fact that it's so bloody hard for the most part and punishes players for anything less than absolute perfection. In every mission it's more a case of remembering the sequence of scripted events or finding the perfect driving line rather than actual good play that will get you through. Still, for \$50 it's hard to complain too much.

Interestingly enough, even though the game features a new Terminator (not the one trained by John Connor in T2) he still busts out anachronistic and out of character tough guy one liners.

DANIEL WALKER

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action / **PLAYERS:** 1-2
DEVELOPER: Paradigm / **PUBLISHER:** Atari
PRICE: \$49.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
84	79	72	73



[Arnie quote] "Don't bother my friend. He's dead tired"

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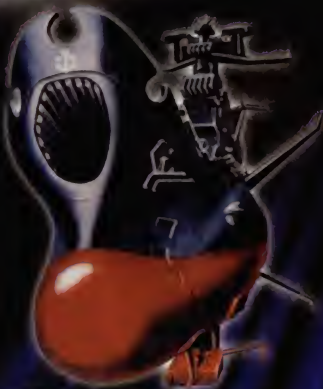


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ROBOTECH - MACROSS SAGA BOXSETS!



ASTRO BOY: Omega Factor (IMPORT)

➤ If ever there was a character ideally suited to the peculiar world of 2D side scrolling shooters, it's Astro Boy. He runs, jumps, punches and shoots. He can fly, he has friends and he's an icon. Sega has created a traditional action game similar to Metal Slug, only with our favourite little Mickey Mouse look-alike and thankfully it's a perfect example of how Less is More in videogames.

EH MOUSE, SAY CHEESE

Astro Boy presents only two basic play styles, side scrolling hand-to-hand action (like Metal Slug) and the flying twitch shooter (like R-Type). Most of the game is in the first style, where Astroboy will have to contend with various goons and robots falling from the skies and running in from all directions to crush him.

In his "Metal Slug mode", Astro has six attacks with which to deliver justice. There are three regular attacks: punch, kick and the finger laser; and three EX powers: Arm Cannon, (the infamous Bum) Machine Gun and the EX Dash. Astro can also use his jets to dodge enemies' attacks. Like a dodge move, Astro Boy is invincible while using his Jet Dash. This dodge move becomes increasingly important in

combat tactics, especially during boss battles.

The movement in battle is very simple, but responsive and intuitive. Like the legendary Street Fighter, the simple jump-in attack into a combo is straight forward but satisfying nonetheless. Astro's EX abilities can be used to end combos and while Astro has powerful attacks, the need to get out of the way of fire is constant.

In "R-Type mode", Astro can use all his EX powers and the Jet Dash but he has only the finger laser to attack enemies with. The precision manoeuvring that Astro must use to negotiate the geometric shapes of enemy fire adds a new flavour to the constant waves of enemy units. The combination of many enemies on-screen, their different movement patterns and firepower makes Astro Boy fast and intense.

The Omega Factor of the title is Astro's evolutionary powers. As Astro meets more people through his journey, he can boost his abilities in health, combat, sensors and jets among others. This is a nice idea in giving a feeling of growth but more importantly there is a super twist towards the end that I won't spoil... but there is an innovative concept of "replay" in this game.

SCORE WITH ASTRO!

Perhaps the ultimate old school replay element is included as well – all the damage inflicted is rewarded with a score. As you improve your combo abilities, you can increase score multipliers and push your scores ever higher. This is certainly out of fashion at the moment but it's a nice touch for such a conventional action game.

The artwork in Astro Boy: Omega Factor is stylish with great colour and movement, good animation and at the same time, good clarity in play. The range of characters that you encounter is impressive and showcasing the artwork of Tezuka as a secret element is really clever, since the art is so stunning. Also really impressive are the cutscene comic style cels, with Astro looking more like a Disney character than ever before.

While we see many ports of very complex games (six button fighters, anyone?), the GBA does a simpler style of game much better. While Astro Boy is seemingly simple, it is one of the tightest, most exciting games around. Astro Boy joins the cast of essential titles for GBA.

John Dewhurst



[above] Swim my pretties, swim!



[above] Astro and his new flame...

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action / **PLAYERS:** 1

DEVELOPER: Treasure

PUBLISHER: Sega

PRICE: \$TBA / **RATING:** TBA

AVAILABLE: TBA

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY

91 80 94

OVERALL

93



TDK

tremor

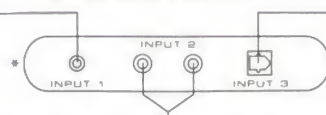


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GPU SHOWDOWN -

NVIDIA GEFORCE 6 SERIES - 6800 GT AND 6800ULTRA

RRP: \$750 (GT) - \$1000 (ULTRA)

For a few years now the GeForce series of graphics cards from NVIDIA have been well known for being some of the most powerful cards for PC game enthusiasts. That was of course until ATI released their well publicised Radeon 9800 series of graphics cards onto the market, and at its time of release NVIDIA were already heavily pushing their GeForce FX series (the 5th) of cards, noticeably inferior to ATI's product and a serious misstep for NVIDIA. Now with their GeForce 6 series of cards, in particular the 6800 GT and the 6800 Ultra, NVIDIA look to reclaim some of the limelight recently stolen by ATI's Radeon series.

With 16 pipelines, 256MB of high speed DDR 3 memory and full support of Direct X 9.0 shader models (up to and including 3.0) the tech specs alone for the card are enough to make any graphics whore weak at the knees. The most notable inclusion would be the support for Shader Model 3.0 as opposed to ATI's X800 series, which supports only 2.0. This is a pretty big coup for NVIDIA, especially when you consider that 3.0 features an almost exponential increase in shader length, resulting in more complex lighting and shadowing that when utilised correctly can provide amazingly realistic visuals. And although game engines have yet to make use of this new model, Shader Model 3.0 support for existing games such as Far Cry are expected to be released in the coming months via downloadable patches.

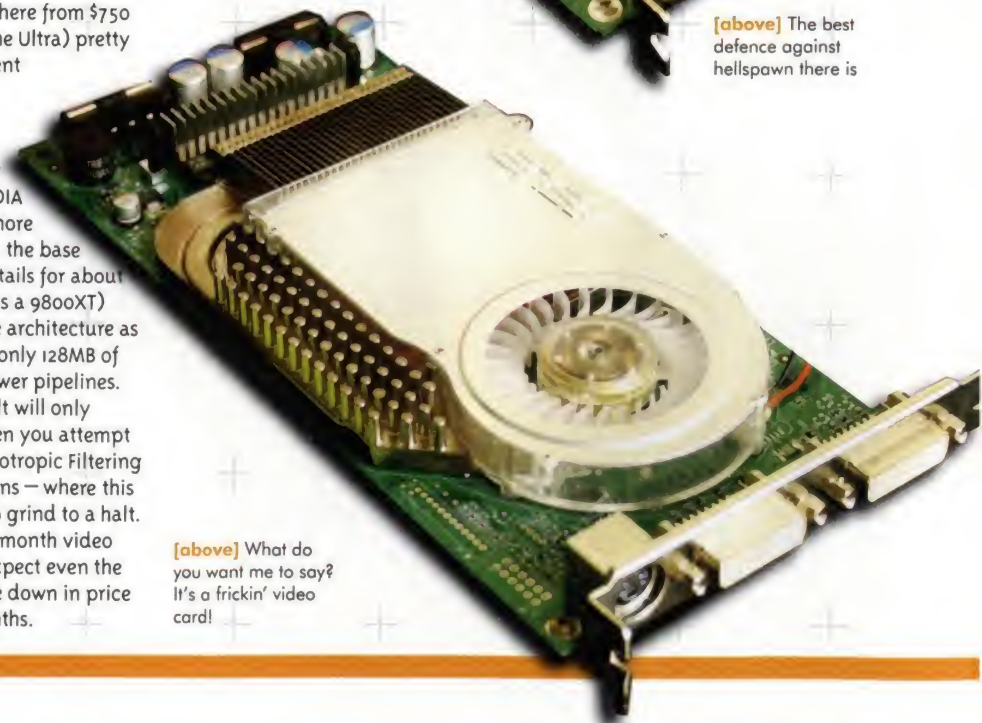
Recently released to much fanfare, Doom III was never meant to be run on high resolutions with advances effects and details due to the engine's remarkable

use of complex shadowing and lighting techniques. So when the first benchmarks came out it was quite surprising to see the 6800 GT and Ultra outperforming the previous generation's winner, the Radeon 9800XT, with an almost three-fold speed increase across the board. Even compared to ATI's current X800 series Doom III performance is unquestionably better on NVIDIA's cards, a matter ATI is looking to rectify with a new version of Catalyst. Using OpenGL the Doom III engine will no doubt become a staple engine for developers in the near future and it's safe to say that the 6800 series of cards will have no trouble rendering the breathtaking visuals it is capable of.

The only set back of course is the hefty price tag (anywhere from \$750 for a GT to \$1000 for the Ultra) pretty much the only deterrent when considering to buy this card - and if you can afford one, we can definitely recommend one. NVIDIA have also released a more price friendly version, the base 6800 model (which retails for about \$550, the same price as a 9800XT) that features the same architecture as the GT and Ultra with only 128MB of DDR 3 memory and fewer pipelines. The performance result will only become apparent when you attempt to run 4X AA and Anisotropic Filtering at the higher resolutions - where this cheaper card seems to grind to a halt. But hey, given the six month video card cycle, you can expect even the top end cards to come down in price over the next few months.



[above] The best defence against hellspawn there is



[above] What do you want me to say? It's a frickin' video card!

NVIDIA vs. ATI

» Kosta Andreadis

ATI RADEON X800 SERIES — X800 PRO AND X800 XT PLATINUM

RRP: \$700 (PRO) - \$1000 (XT)



[above] Benton gets turned on by these you know... weirdo



[above] More Benton pron. Ooh baby...

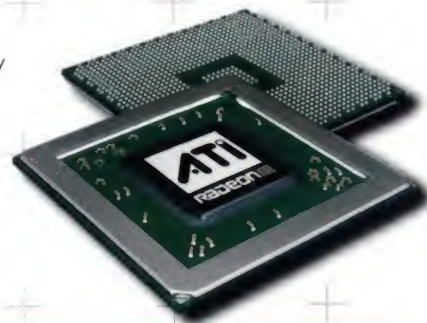
The next generation Radeon has arrived, and it couldn't have had a tougher act to follow — with the 9800 XT dominating the performance board last generation. Much like the NVIDIA cards the higher end ATI cards come in two types the Pro edition and the XT Platinum with the most obvious difference being that in price (about \$700 for the Pro and \$1000 for the XT). Once again a hefty sum, but for those of you with the money this is once again a recommended purchase — if only to run Half Life 2 and its source engine at ungodly speeds and resolutions.

One again the specs read out is almost identical, with 16 pipelines, 256MB of DDR 3 memory, 0.13 micron technology and improved shader model support (only up to 2.0 unlike the 6800's support for 3.0). Although boasting quite similar specification ATI's card builds upon the 9800 series' anti-aliasing technology which was quite possibly the first real card to use the technology to any great effect. As such the X800 series performs remarkably well with AA turned on — a feat that can't be said for the 6800 card which doesn't seem to handle AA as well as its ATI counterpart in terms of overall performance, even though the difference may be small.

Engine-wise the X800 series, unless you opt for the XT Platinum does not seem to like the Doom III engine all that much, which is unsurprising. NVIDIA's cards have always had the edge in terms of overall OpenGL

performance in the past but the difference between the 6800 GT and X800 Pro is remarkable with the GT easily outdoing the Pro not only in Doom III but in Far Cry, UT 2004, and many other current games. But that of course will change once Valve release Half Life 2, the game that makes full use of their outstanding Source Engine — one that ATI has invested heavily in. This means that Half Life 2 will no doubt run much better on ATI's X800 series, the only question being — by how much? We doubt the results will be as drastic as Doom III's as already the 6800 GT and Ultra have performed only slightly below the X800 Pro and XT in Counter-Strike Source benchmarks.

Overall both cards deliver amazing results with all the current crop of titles on the market, so you could easily find yourself playing Unreal Tournament 2004 at 1600 x 1200 with 4x AA and 8x Anisotropic Filtering at a rock solid frame rate. In the end the edge goes slightly to NVIDIA as its support for Shader Model 3.0 and love for the Doom III engine make it a card slightly better geared for the future — with games yet to be released like S.T.A.L.K.E.R., Unreal 3 and Splinter Cell 3 all supporting Shader Model 3.0.



SHARP GX15

RRP: \$349

Although we love our high end phones here at Hyper, the reality is that they're expensive beasts. Want to buy one outright and you're looking a close to a grand. Fortunately, as technology matures, it becomes more affordable, and what were once top end features start appearing on low to mid range phones. The Sharp GX15 is a good example of a phone that's affordable, but also has a decent list of features.

Our first impression of it was — wow, it's the Sony Ericsson T610 with a silver sheen and rounded edges. And indeed, the two phones do have a lot in common. They've both got large but low resolution screens, they're both nice and compact, and they both have number pads with tiny little buttons that take a

lot of getting used to. Fortunately, the interface is more intuitive and user friendly than the T610, and the integration with Vodafone Live! (it's exclusive to the service) is very straightforward, allowing you to quickly connect and download a variety of content and information (although we're still waiting for the day that games and ringtones will actually be worth downloading), as well as easily sending images and messages to friends. It also has a very reasonable D-pad style navigation pad and is nice and light.

As you'd expect, the GX15 has an integrated camera, not to mention tri-band coverage, and GPRS and WAP. Also cool for a more affordable phone, it has Bluetooth, which is bound to come in handy one of these days. Trust us. <<

[right] Holy moley it's a white Janet Jackson! (minus nipple display though)



SHARP GX30

RRP: \$899

You may recall that many an issue ago we were really impressed by Sharp's GX20 phone. It was a great clamshell model with an amazing high resolution screen. Well, the successor to that model is out and we're just as impressed. Once again it's a Vodafone Live! exclusive phone, so signing up to the service is the only way you're going to get it in Australia. But hey, if it's good enough for David Beckham to be paid a fortune to advertise, then it should be good enough for us right?

To be honest, the GX30 is only really an incremental improvement over the GX20, but we're already very fond of the GX20 so that's not a bad thing. Perhaps the most notable change is the 1 megapixel digital camera, which may not sound that significant but it actually takes the photos up into the realm of usability, as opposed to the 640x480 rubbish most phone manufacturers have been content with until recently. So yes, it'll still be fun to send Warne-

inspired lude pics from the pub to all your friends late at night, but if you go somewhere cool you'll also be able to take a pic that actually shows that... rather than a mess of pixels. Better still, there's a macro switch on the side of the phone so you can switch between a close focus and a long range one. The GX30 also sports video capture and playback, mp3 playback and comes with an external 8MB SD card for a little extra storage.

By far the best thing about this phone however, just as it was with the GX20, is the screen. Many phones have decent sized screens, but they're still blurry and low resolution. Not so the GX30 — this screen is incredibly "sharp" (pun intended) and makes the handset feel that much sexier as a result.

Combine this with a very satisfying click when you open it, great navigation buttons and a slick overall design and you have a winner... although we would have liked it if the number pad buttons weren't quite as flat. <<

[left] Who's that on screen? It's not Amos so who cares



3

RRP: DEPENDS ON THE HANDSET

▶ This month both Cam and myself were sent a 3 Phone for the express purpose of having a look at the first multiplayer game title available on the service, Badlands. After playing it for less than a minute we quickly realised that whilst the rest of the phone service ranges between good and downright excellent, Badlands itself is, not to mince words, crap. After logging into one of the servers, players choose one of a number of differently equipped tanks and shoot it out in real time. As a concept the game sounds fine. Unfortunately the experience of playing it is a totally different matter. Due to the nature and size of the phone's controls the player must simultaneously drive and shoot with one hand, a feat which poses a slight problem when you consider that the average hand only has one thumb, necessitating the player stop steering to shoot. There is a great deal of potential in multiplayer phone based games but Badlands is not it.

It's quite a pity that the game is such a turd because the rest of the services that we tested were uniformly very good. Reception on the 3 service is absolutely second to none. It's common on mobile services to hear a little hiss or static on the line – such is the

nature of the beast. Reception on 3 is beautifully clear, so much so that you'll be hard pressed to tell the difference between the mobile service and a land line. We did have some problems with the multimedia messaging functions of the phones but that is more likely due to the review phones we were using and the review plans we were on rather than the service itself. Aside from multimedia messaging, crap games and excellent voice reception, the 3 network features tons of downloadable content as well as some handy online features including access to maps and entertainment guides, current events, up to the minute headlines (with requisite downloadable video) and, if you go for that type of thing,

horoscopes. Whilst it may not be a cheap service and definitely isn't for anyone aside from those to whom a very expensive mobile is a valuable status symbol, it is a great example of the type of service we should be able to expect as the standard in the years coming. All we need now is for someone to create some decent games for the format. <<



[above] That's more like it! Everyone knows it's Amos!





Two guys sitting for two hours - riveting

Infernal Affairs

EASTERN EYE, M15+

There may be a rule out there (and if there isn't there should be) that states that if a movie can be sold on premise alone, in one sentence, it's worth seeing. *Infernal Affairs*, a fantastic thriller that became both a critical and commercial success in its homeland of Hong Kong definitely has a great setup. Two men on four sides of the law, an undercover cop trying to infiltrate a top triad gang and a cop working for the triads trying to undermine a police investigation. A great premise that paves the way for great drama, action and plenty of intrigue; it's no wonder Hollywood have snapped this little gem up for a remake (with Brad Pitt set to star).

This is a Hong Kong blockbuster

of an entirely different breed, with no sign of the over-the-top action that has become associated with most films from the region. The less said about the plot the better, but thankfully *Infernal Affairs* doesn't coast by on its cool concept alone as the whole production is definitely top tier – from acting to cinematography to pacing this is a thoroughly involving viewing experience and another top notch release from Eastern Eye. Sporting a great transfer, soundtrack and numerous extras including an interesting if brief alternate 'mainland' China ending, this is definitely one to look out for.

Kosta Andreadis

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 7



Roger Ramjet

MADMAN ENTERTAINMENT, G

For a series that first screened almost forty years ago, *Roger Ramjet* is still bloody funny. Much like *The Simpsons*, *Roger Ramjet* combines satiric wit with zany stupidity, delivered with impeccable comic timing by a cast of fantastic voice actors. The animation usually takes a back seat to the writing, although there are few things funnier than watching Roger drop a Proton Energy Pill and proceed to punch the bad guys in the armpit and ankle, accompanied by the onomatopoeic Biff! Blam! Hurt!

There's eleven hours of classic comedy included on this 4 disc set. For those that never caught an episode jammed between shows on afternoon ABC programming, each

five minute episode typically sees Roger protecting the Earth/America/Lompoc in his own bumbling style from nefarious villains like Noodles Romanoff or the Solenoid Robots, with the aid of his trusty sidekicks, Yank, Doodle, Dan and Dee. Thankfully, clever DVD authoring has minimised the frequency of the headache-inducing theme tune, but the show was never designed to be watched in large chunks and loses its impact after four or so continuous episodes. Bonus material is limited to the nutty anecdotal commentary of Roger's voice actor, Gary Owens (who also voiced Space Ghost), but for the bargain price of 40 bucks who's complaining?

Malcolm Campbell

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 2

Sanjuro

EASTERN EYE, PG

After the success of *Yojimbo*, Kurosawa almost immediately began work on its sequel, *Sanjuro*, with long time collaborator Toshiro Mifune. As a sequel *Sanjuro* is much like its predecessor *Yojimbo*, this time with the focus on comedy, an aspect that was present in *Yojimbo* that is brought to the fore with *Sanjuro*. That's not to say the action is slapstick - it isn't, the humour simply makes this a far less serious film than its predecessor and consequently one that is a lot more "fun".

If you are a fan of *Yojimbo* and bought the recent Region 4 release then *Sanjuro* will be a no-brainer as it's the perfect counterpart to the satirical and edgy *Yojimbo*. The premise is quite similar if

somewhat simplified as we find Sanjuro (Mifune) yet again being enlisted to clean up a corrupt town, this time by group of young men. The character of Sanjuro, the master swordsman, is a great cinematic creation and it was great to see both Kurosawa and Mifune take another stab at it - literally, as the end result provides one of the best cinematic showdowns ever put on film, one that has a great 'shock' moment and one that has since been mimicked on more than one occasion.

This is the first time the title has been available in its original widescreen format in Australia and another in a long line of Kurosawa releases from Eastern Eye.

Kosta Andreadis

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 2



[above] Even in feudal Japan they hated Mormons arriving on their doorstep



It's MAYHEM MAYHEM MAYHEM!

Highwaymen

ROADSHOW, M 15+

Highwaymen is something of a guilty pleasure, a film so bad for the most part it manages to be really quite a lot of fun. One need only look at the track record of the screenwriter to know what type of story you're in for. Hans Bauer's sterling past work includes such screen greats as *Anaconda* and *Komodo*, two of the best examples of how not to write a film about giant reptiles rampaging through the jungle killing people. In Bauer's defence, he did write a scene in which J-Lo was eaten by a giant phallic creature so he's not all bad in Hyper's book.

Past sins aside, *Highwaymen* treads a path most of us have seen before in *Mad Max*, director

Harmon's own *The Hitcher* and myriad other car films. Jim Caviezel (better known for playing some Son of God dude in the Jesus Chainsaw Massacre) plays a man bent on revenge after his wife is killed in a hit and run by a motorised serial killer. There's not much more to the plot than that. Caviezel drives a lot, Rhona Mitra plays a dull but attractive damsel in distress and Colm Fiore chews up scenery as the killer. The real stars of the show are the cars and cinematography but ultimately reinforce the fact that you've seen it all before.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 1



Happy Tree Friends: FIRST BLOOD

ROADSHOW, MA15+

Chances are you've already seen one or more of the *Happy Tree Friends* animations. Originally produced for the internet, these short but sweet animations soon became a phenomenon and it's not hard to see why. They all revolve around a menagerie of insufferably cute and happy animals being killed in creative and thoroughly gruesome ways. The animation and look is very stylised and cool, the theme tune gets stuck in your head, and the voice acting is classic.

Not only is *Happy Tree Friends* now on SBS, but the first (of several) DVDs is here. *First Blood* has 14

episodes, with commentaries and animatics for each, a few interactive tamagotchi style mini-games, as well as sketches and a few other extras. Considering the wealth of animations available at the site (www.happytreefriends.com) this release is really for the obsessive fans out there. The special features aren't really that compelling (although the commentary is pretty funny), and this isn't the sort of cartoon you can watch episode after episode of... or that you'll go back to all that often. That said, *Happy Tree Friends* is pretty addictive in its own sick and unwholesome way.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 4



[above] What's wrong with this picture? He's still playing a PlayStation 1



Spun

MRA ENTERTAINMENT, R

» *Spun* is a black comedy that follows a number of meth heads over several bingeing sleepless days. There's Ross (Jason Schwartzman), the dropout speed freak (goes without saying in this film actually) who just wants to get "spun", but ends up being a driver for The Cook (Mickey Rourke). There's The Cook's stripper girlfriend Nikki (Brittany Murphy), the local dealer Spider Mike (John Leguizamo) and his girlfriend (Mena Suvari), and two (you guessed it) speed freak cops (Peter Stormare and Alexis Arquette) that are such exaggerated parodies that it's not hard to see they're the main source of comic relief in the piece.

It's a pretty stereotypical vision of speed fueled mayhem, with quick cuts, sped up footage, altered sound perception and conversations that seem meaningful but aren't

really even conversations. Director Jonas Akerlund's background is music videos and it shows — *Spun* is deliberately over the top, and revels in its abhorrent characters, its trailer trash lifestyle and its griminess. It's not without its charm, however, especially the frequent slips into hallucinatory animation, and Rourke's performance as The Cook, which is played with weary charisma. Although painting a disturbing and unrelentingly ugly picture of methamphetamine addiction, *Spun* simultaneously makes anti-heroes of the cast... but that's better than patronising the audience I guess.

Well worth watching, but be warned — this film has an R rating for a reason. Best not to let younger siblings near this one.

Serafina Pekkala

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 1



Hunting the deadliest prey of all... man



The boring watching Jack sleep" episode

Taking Lives DIRECTOR'S CUT

ROADSHOW, MA 15+

» Whether or not the director's cut of *Taking Lives* is better than the cinematic cut is debatable, as the original cut of the film is so lightweight and forgettable that it's difficult to notice any real changes to the flow of the film. A guilty pleasure at best, *Taking Lives* treads a rather familiar psychological thriller path. Angelina Jolie plays a driven (and maybe psychic) FBI profiler Illeana Scott, sent to Montreal to help with a series of grizzly killings. Illeana quickly theorises that the killer is assuming the lives of his victims, hence the double meaning of the not so subtle title.

The most striking thing about *Taking Lives* is the calibre of

actor in it. Aside from Jolie, Ethan Hawke, Keifer Sutherland, Gena Rowlands, Olivier Martinez and the sorely unappreciated Tcheky Karyo work their collective arses off in an ultimately futile attempt to be better than the rather pedestrian and silly script.

As well as the apparently gorier and sexier director's cut of the film the DVD contains some genuinely amusing outtakes as well as a bunch of rather pretentious and self serving featurettes on the making of the film.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 6

24 SEASON 3 (7 DISC BOXSET)

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, MA 15+

» Keifer Sutherland's Jack Bauer is still the hardest man on TV but in the third season of *24* he finally shows himself to be ultimately quite human as well. The plot of the third season is simultaneously the most far fetched and the most topical — a rogue agent is planning a massive terrorist attack against the United States as retribution for its cultural imperialism and elitist approach to world affairs. Naturally it's up to Bauer and his fellow CTU agents to find the men responsible, stop them and make American soil once again safe for elitist cultural imperialism.

Aside from the fact that the series is played out in real time the real genius of *24* is the ability of the

writers to maintain the tension throughout the entire run of 24 episodes by upping the ante every hour yet still managing to have some very personal and character driven moments interspersed with the action. Ironically the series suffers a little bit on DVD as each hour-long episode only actually runs for around 43 minutes, effectively killing the real time premise.

As well as the 24 episodes, the box set contains around 40 deleted scenes, numerous episode commentaries and three good, albeit light weight featurettes on the making of the series.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 7

Kiki's Delivery Service

PRODUCTION: STUDIO GHIBLI
GENRE: COMEDY/DRAMA

Hayao Miyazaki creates the type of film that throws critics into enigmatic clichés such as amazing delightful and up-lifting, and while a compliment to his style and technique these words do little to capture the experience of completing a journey with the master of Japanese Animation.

Kiki's Delivery Service, one of the simplest and sweetest of Miyazaki's feature films, deals with the perils of growing through adolescence. At 13 years of age all witches leave home on their brooms with a black cat companion to find a new home in which to carry out their one-year apprenticeship. Kiki commences her journey unprepared but after overcoming a few bad starts finds friendship, a home and a business that uses her unique talent - flying. *Kiki's Delivery Service* is born.

It is fair to say that while Disney overloads children's film with obnoxious high pitched squealing, busy primary coloured animation and has-been popstars singing

abhorrent love songs, Miyazaki's world is simple. His use of detailed hand-drawn images puts computer animation to shame while creating a fluid world free of the unpleasantness of contemporary culture. Here is a refreshingly different world without product placement, U.S indoctrination and recycled themes.

While most anime benefits from being seen in Japanese with original soundtrack and subtitles this may be impractical when viewed by children but for an older audience the subtle music perpetuates the flow of the film with some scenes feeling drawn out when dubbed in English.

Don't let the simple story put you off, *Kiki's Delivery Service* is never boring, the personality of the characters are captured in each movement, projecting warmth and humour which transcends the need for a complicated story.

Vanessa Morgan

ANIMATION: 9 / STORY: 8
OVERALL: 9



Check out this cat's ugly mug

Tokyo Godfathers

PRODUCTION: MADHOUSE
GENRE: DRAMA

Tokyo Godfathers is one of those rare and wonderful anime treats that manages to at once pay great tribute to the art of animation whilst simultaneously transcending the medium and becoming a truly great film in its own right. Roughly based on the 1948 western film *3 Godfathers* by genre great John Ford, *Tokyo Godfathers* tells the heartwarming and sometimes harrowing story of three homeless Japanese, an alcoholic named Gin, Hana a drag queen and Miyuki, a young teenage girl. The mismatched trio have formed a defacto family of sorts, eking out a semi comfortable life on the streets. One xmas, whilst scrounging through a graveyard for edible offerings left for the dead the family are alerted by a cry and find an abandoned baby. Whilst Hana, the drag queen initially wants to keep the baby for himself the three soon agree that it would be best to find the child's parents, to give the parents a piece of their minds for abandoning the baby and also to give their wandering lives some meaning.

The baby serves as the central macguffin of the film, a kind of practical angel who steers the three main characters, through a series of improbable coincidences into finding the remaining strength and goodness in themselves, eventually offering them the greatest gift they could ever want, redemption. Each of the homeless characters has their own story to tell and throughout the course of the film the audience is given a glimpse into their world and the reasons for their homelessness. Directed by the great Satoshi Kon, *Godfathers* treads the line between slapstick comedy and overbearing pathos with ingenuity. Although the plot may use improbable situations the audience is never left wanting for warmly human situations and gentle social commentary. The subject matter may seem more suited to live action filmmaking but after seeing it you will understand why animation is perfect - no country in the world would allow a film company to put a baby in these kinds of situations.

Daniel Wilks

ANIMATION: 9 / STORY: 8
OVERALL: 9



Benchpressing a car ain't easy

WinWinWin



Win OutRun 2 on Xbox!

>> Outrun 2 picks up where the original left off, serving up a three course gaming banquet of powerslides, speed and romance. Well, perhaps not romance, since the girl in the passenger seat seems to want to slap you silly more often than giving you some loving, but you get the idea. What we're trying to say is — Outrun 2 has the old school arcade racing mojo in abundance, and when paired with some serious eye candy you have a pretty sweet game. Come get some!

**5
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✦ To be in with a chance to win, just send us some artwork of what you think the girl in the passenger seat should look like!

The five most impressive and/or funny entries will win. Try not to make it too smutty though. Put your art in an envelope along with your name and address, and post it to: **Wheely hot, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.**



Win the Star Wars Trilogy on DVD and Star Wars: Battlefront!

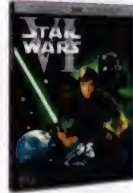
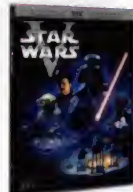
>> For many of us, Star Wars represents far more than just three films filled with lightsabers, cool space battles, furry midgets and effeminate robots. Instead, they're an iconic symbol of our childhood, a direct pathway to rose coloured nostalgia. The release of the trilogy is easily one of the biggest DVD events of the year, and to celebrate, our friends at Fox Home Entertainment have given us three box sets to give away. But wait, there's more! EA have also chipped in with three copies of Star Wars: Battlefront on either PS2, Xbox or PC, giving you the chance to get online and mix it up with other gamers in a virtual recreation of some of the most epic battles of the Star Wars Universe.

**3
PACKS
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To be in with a chance to win, just answer the following:

✦ Name the two most famous droids from the Star Wars films

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



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MILLA JOVOVICH

My name is Alice
and I remember everything.



Alice Miller, played by Milla Jovovich, is the central figure of the poster. She is shown from the waist up, wearing her signature tactical gear, including a mesh top and a utility belt. She is holding a handgun in her right hand. The background is a dark, blue-tinted cityscape with a large, glowing circular interface or map overlaid on it. The overall mood is dark and action-oriented.

RESIDENT EVIL: Apocalypse

M

15+
RECOMMENDED FOR MATURE
AUDIENCES 15 YEARS AND OLDER
MEDIUM LEVEL VIOLENCE
MEDIUM LEVEL COARSE LANGUAGE

SCREENPLAY BY DAVID BECKER / IMPACT CREATIONS INC. / CONSTANTIN FILM (UK) LIMITED / CONSTANTIN FILM (UK) LIMITED / DAVID BECKER / IMPACT CREATIONS INC. / MILLA JOVOVICH / DEBRA VILLARY / VITO THOR / THOMAS KRITZSCHMANN
WITH JASON MERRICK AND MARY ELLEN PATRICK / RESIDENT EVIL: APOCALYPSE / DIRECTED BY JEFF BOHRN / PRODUCED BY MARY ELLEN PATRICK / PAUL TERPANI / AUSTIN WILSON / CHRISTIAN SEHARDT / DEBRA ROBERTS C.O.P.
MUSIC BY JONATHAN YOUNG / RESIDENT EVIL: APOCALYPSE / MUSIC BY JONATHAN YOUNG / SAMUEL HAHA / ROBERT KULTER / VICTOR HAHA / JEREMY BOLT / PAUL W.S. ANDERSON / BEN CARLSON / PAUL W.S. ANDERSON / ALEXANDER WITZ

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He came... FROM ANDROMEDA!

>> Maurice Branscombe



THE WORLD'S FOREMOST EXPERT ON SNOUTS, MOHAWKS, AND SPOCK EARS; GUY FROM ANDROMEDA *MARK CROWE* SPILLS THE BUCKAZOIDS ON THE SECRETS BEHIND ROGER WILCO AND THE SPACE QUEST SERIES...



» It was the 1980s, *Dexy's Midnight Runners* were burning up the music charts and had a long and illustrious career ahead of them, *Rocky III* had taught us that Mr. T wasn't quite the "toughest man in the world" as he would so self-assuredly claim a mere two years later in the film of the same name, and the biggest thing in computer games was the graphic adventure. For this brief moment in the industry's history games that needed mental dexterity rather than lightning quick reflexes, and required at least a rudimentary knowledge of the written word, were at the very peak of gaming's technological evolution, and Mark Crowe and Scott Murphy's *Space Quest* series were unquestionably one of the finest examples of the graphic adventure genre. It was with great anticipation then, for Hyper to

sit down with the original guy from Andromeda, Mark Crowe, to chat about Roger Wilco and nearly two decades of *Space Quest* history over a Monolith Fillet-O-Orat Burger and a jumbo sloppy-slurper...

THE SIERRA ENCOUNTER

Sierra Online Systems, a small but talented company, had been working hard since 1979 to establish an enviable reputation, and had thus far succeeded. At the time Sierra was arguably already the leading adventure game developer in the world, having crafted the first ever adventure game with graphics in 1980 (*Mystery House* for the Apple II), and published the first ever game on an IBM PC (*Adventure in Serenia*) two years later. 1982 was also the year that a young artist named Mark Crowe unassumingly wandered into

Sierra's path not yet knowing the future that awaited him.

"My parents, who lived in the Sierra foothills, told me about an article in the local paper about this small company called Sierra Online Systems that made computer games" recalls Mark of his first encounter with Sierra. "[At the time] I was working for a company in Fresno, CA. called California Labels as a graphic artist designing labels for food and beverage products... It was very boring work."

"I got curious and decided to check them out," says Crowe, "I dropped by their modest offices without an appointment to leave a resume and ended up talking with the head art director. After showing my portfolio, they offered me a job on the spot."



[above] Farting turned out to be a mistake

For Mark however, landing the job was the easy part, the hard part was actually figuring out what the heck Sierra were making, and what were the strange beige boxes they were using to make them with.

"I had never heard of Sierra Online," admits Crowe, "I had never even heard of a personal computer before I walked into their offices and laid eyes on an Apple III!" he recalls, "I remember my first week

We were feeding off each other's enthusiasm - a creative synergy.

of working there because I got to bring home an Apple to get familiar with their games. I was instantly addicted - playing text adventures and arcade games till the wee hours every night."

Mark didn't jump directly into the game development side of things, instead spending a great deal of his early time at Sierra working as a paste-up artist and illustrator in Sierra's game documentation department, long before the days of desktop publishing. It wasn't long though before Sierra management took notice of Mark's creative talents.

"The first game I worked on was *Kings Quest 2*," recalls Crowe, "I was tapped to learn how to use the sprite animation tools. The very first thing I ever animated on a computer was the jumping fish in KQ2. From that point I was promoted into the game development side of the business."

From the humble beginnings of a single fish Mark Crowe would go on to work on some of the company's most memorable adventure games of the early 1980s. He created all the graphics for Al Lowe's original *Leisure Suit Larry* game, directed an episode of the popular *Police Quest* series and worked on numerous Sierra/Disney collaborations including *The Black Cauldron*, *Mickey's Space Adventure*, *Donald Duck's Playground*, and *Winnie the Pooh*. Mark's greatest adventure however, was yet to come...

CALL OF THE TERROR BEAST

In 1986, Mark Crowe's latest project *The Black Cauldron* had just been released, and it was while working on this game that the first seeds of what would soon become the *Space Quest* series were planted.

"Scott [Murphy] and I were both working on the Black Cauldron project with Al Lowe," remembers

Mark, "That is where we got to know each other and began talking about designing our own games."

Both Mark and Scott were more than a little tired of working on "sword and sorcery" themed games (of which the likes of the *Kings Quest* series were Sierra's main livelihood), and the more they worked together the more they discovered that they had much in common; both shared an interest in classic science-fiction and both had a twisted sense of humour.

"The concept just sort of evolved as we batted the idea around," recalls Mark, remembering how the *Space Quest* series came to be. "I got inspired enough to create the graphics for 2 spaceship hallway interior scenes in my spare time and showed them to Scott. He got excited and programmed them to work in his spare time. We were feeding off each other's enthusiasm - a creative synergy."

After completing what would later become the first four rooms of *Space Quest 1: The Sarien Encounter*, Mark and Scott showed their efforts to Sierra's CEO and cofounder Ken Williams, and he liked what he saw, commissioning the game immediately. When the final product rolled onto shelves later that year, his decision paid off. Big-time.

Running on 1986's cutting edge IBM PC technology, a blindingly fast 4Mhz processor and a near-colossal 246 Kilobytes of RAM, *Space Quest 1: The Sarien Encounter* was a fantastic feat of both graphical and game design ingenuity. Utilising a text parser interface, *SQL*, and indeed the

following two *Space Quest* games, would accept commands in the form of the player typing their actions in two word sentences. For example; if you wanted to blow your Labion terror beast whistle, attracting a slaver, furred, flesh eating creature, or if you wanted to consume a deadly poison-gas-



[above] The revised SW cantina scene

filled spore, you'd simply type in "BLOW WHISTLE" or "EAT SPORE" respectively. The parser always resulted in much hilarity and frustration, as you'd both laugh at the many gags that would be impossible to produce with any other kind of interface, and at the same time damn the arbitrariness of many of the combinations of words. With knowledge of the English language in tow the player had to guide the accidental hero of the series, bumbling space janitor Roger Wilco, through the tribulations of an alien raid on his spaceship, a crash-landing on a strange planet, and an eventual counter-attack on the aliens' own headquarters. Upon release the

game immediately became a hit, filling a much-neglected corner of the medieval/fantasy saturated adventure market.

"I honestly do not know exactly how well we did in regards to numbers sold," says Crowe, "The series certainly put some gum money in our pockets, which was nice, but the success of the series really didn't sink in until we began hearing from the many, many people who played and loved the games and were compelled to write and thank us. That was priceless!"

TWO GUYS IN TROUBLE

Part of the reason so many gamers were putting pen to paper and mailing their admiration to Mark and Scott is that the two hadn't merely signed their names to the





me to Ulence Flats

project and sent it out into the world; they had instead developed a rather unusual, but undeniably fascinating and hilarious gimmick.

"We were wrapping-up development on SQ1 and had to think about how we wanted to be represented on the box as the authors." Remembers Mark, "We really didn't take the whole idea of promoting ourselves as software authors seriously and thought it would be fun to come-up with alter egos that were in keeping with the zany nature of the game... It was all very last minute. I went to a Halloween costume store to look for anything we could use to make some cheesy alien getups. We bought these red Mohawks, rubber Spock ears and punk visor sunglasses. Next came the noses. I dabbled in creating monster makeup

prosthetics as a hobby and sculpted a pair of rubber snouts. Viola! We had our costumes. The 2 of us raced up to Yosemite Valley armed with a tripod and snapped a picture of us pointing up at Half-Dome (Sierra's emblem)." Mark continues, "The name "Two Guys from Andromeda" was a take-off of a pizza chain; "Two Guys Pizza"...We got a much needed chuckle out of the whole thing and figured that would be the end of it. Boy were we wrong. Ha!"

The Two Guys from Andromeda quickly became gaming icons, and with each successive *Space Quest* sequel their status also climbed, arguably peaking with 1989's *Space Quest III: The Pirates of Pestulon*, where Mark and Scott actually coded themselves into the game. The player, as Roger Wilco was quested with the challenge of rescuing the two guys





from an evil game developer called Scumsoft, who had plans to work them like slaves churning out insipid arcade games.

"It's funny but I've never given this much thought until recently." Admits Crowe, "The whole "two guys" gag seemed like a very inside joke that only loyal SQ gamers would appreciate. It's amazing to me that we got away with making them such major characters within the SQ3 storyline. Looking back, that was very risky for Sierra... Little did we realize how this would propel us to "Genius Game Designer" status in the minds of impressionable young adventure gamers. Ha! It certainly helped put us on the map within the game development community."

THE TIME RIPPERS

The greatest Roger Wilco adventure was yet to come however, and in 1991 what Mark Crowe describes as his "one true masterpiece", *Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers*, was released.

"When Ken told us we were going to do a SQ4, we were fresh out of ideas." Remembers Mark, "I felt we'd taken it as far as we could and had nowhere else for Roger Wilco to go. [At first] the only thing that kept me excited about the project was that it would be done in glorious VGA graphics..."

The game did feature beautiful hand-painted backgrounds, video-captured animation, plenty of cinematics, and the dialogue was fully voiced by a perfectly selected



cast, including a particularly humorous narration by Gary Owens, the voice of the 1960s variety comedy show *Laugh-In*. SQ4 was also the first in the series to abandon the text-parser for the increasingly more popular "point-and-click" interface, and while Mark Crowe may have initially had reservations about whether or not Roger Wilco could be taken any further, as the project took shape it was obvious that SQ4 was going to be something very special indeed.

"[We had the] idea of revisiting old *Space Quest* games and intermingling their original, retro graphics with the new VGA look." remembers Mark, "The idea of time tripping through previous, and future, *Space Quest* games evolved

from that. The whole concept came gushing forth after weeks of creative dry heaving. Wow! How's that for a visual!"

With this idea in their minds Crowe and Murphy crafted an adventure in which the player time-traveled from sequel-to-sequel, through all of Roger Wilco's adventures, both past, present and future, in an attempt to escape the clutches of the "sequel police". To hilarious effect, when travelling backwards through time, Roger would retain his cutting-edge (at the time) VGA appearance, however the backgrounds and other characters would look just as they did all those years ago, in magnificent 16-coloured EGA graphics. The blocky, pixelated



characters of Roger's past would even ridicule his new "fancy-pants" appearance at any given opportunity.

"In my humble opinion it is the craziest of Roger's adventures," says Mark, "We had a great team of artists and programmers that were fun to work with and the end result was something we were all very proud of."

As fate would have it however, SQ4 would end up being the final *Space Quest* game that both Scott Murphy and Mark Crowe would work on together.

"There was no falling out," asserts Mark, "Like with any team that works so closely together for long stretches, they have to take a breather. Scott and I always worked on separate projects in between *Space Quest* games, and after SQ4 an opportunity to move to beautiful Eugene, Oregon presented itself. Dynamix (a newly acquired division of Sierra) extended an offer to come work with them... So [I] jumped at the chance. My main motivation for going to work for Dynamix was to work on Simulations, which is what I was into playing at the time. So, after starting there, they came to me and said; "Guess what?! Sierra wants you to do SQ5 here at Dynamix!"

SEE YOU ON THE CHRONOSTREAM

After completing production of SQ5: *The Next Mutation*, and after almost a decade of toiling away on the *Space Quest* series, Mark Crowe decided it was time to hang up his Andromedan garb. Settling into a new design position at developer Dynamix (which has since disbanded), Mark would go on to develop the popular giant-mech-sim, *MetalTech: Earthseige* and its sequel, among others.

The 1996 release of the sixth *Space Quest* game, SQ6: *The Spinal Frontier*, while guy from Andromeda Scott Murphy would eventually return to work on the title, it barely registered a blip on Mark's radar, and in fact he admits that he hasn't really ever played *Space Quest 6*.

"When SQ6 came out I was deep in development on 2 other projects and simply had zero spare time to play other games." Recalls Mark, "But I was curious and did start to play it. It just kept getting pushed to the back burner and I eventually lost interest. I can't deny that a *Space Quest* burnout probably had something to do with it though."

Today Mark is a leading designer at the Eugene, Oregon-based development house Pipeworks Software, who are at the time of writing working feverishly away



on the sequel to their successful Gamecube and Xbox smash-em-up *Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee*, otherwise known as *God: DAMM* (best. acronym. ever.).

"It's great to be making console games," comments Mark, "You don't have all the compatibility nightmares that plague PC development... It's been very different from anything I've done in the past, which keeps it fun for me."

With the exception of the in-development (and terrible looking) *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude*, these days Sierra seem comfortable to adopt an "ignore it and it will go away" attitude toward their glorious adventure gaming past, and even the most optimistic

Quest episode, and perhaps even to reunite with fellow Andromedan Scott Murphy.

"I would seriously consider it," says Crowe, "The last time I spoke with Scott we discussed that possibility. There was a big fan-based campaign to get Sierra to publish a new *Space Quest* a few years ago, and that got us both thinking about it... but we both got involved with other projects or interests, and the notion withered." recalls Crowe, "I cannot completely rule out the possibility that we might join forces sometime in the future though. I am certainly open to it. Either on a new *Space Quest* or a new concept."

Whatever the future holds, the

We might join forces sometime in the future...

gamer would have to concede that the odds are stacked against the likelihood of a new *Space Quest* adventure materialising anytime in the near future. Over the years numerous promising *Space Quest VII* projects have been announced, and a few have even made it into full-scale production, but all thus far have met with the same fate, ultimately being kyboshed by Sierra management. With so many cancellations and false starts the future of Roger Wilco seems as shaky as ever, but as unsure as it is, Mark Crowe admits that if the opportunity arose he wouldn't mind once again donning his red Mohawk, snout, dark shades and Spock ears to take the lead on a new *Space*

fact remains that Mark Crowe and Scott Murphy's *Space Quest* series has already left an indelible mark on video gaming history. The adventures of Roger Wilco, the most blundering space janitor the universe has, and perhaps ever will see, are some of the funniest, most referential and ultimately influential adventure games ever conceived. For that Mark Crowe, Hyper salutes you! See you on the chronostream time-jockey... <<

The Two Guys from Andromeda go on to create the *Space Quest* series of adventure games reaping fame and fortune. They grow fat on their success and soon become burnt out and begin a drunken tailspin into obscurity.



LABORERS 'R' US With the sheer volume of sci-fi parodies and pop-culture references flying around in Mark Crowe and Scott Murphy's *Space Quest* series, it was only a matter of time before someone took offence. In one particularly famous case the big chain store Toys'R'Us sent their lawyers to knock on Sierra's door after having played *Space Quest: The Sarien Encounter*. The retailer didn't much appreciate a sequence in the game that depicted a shady second-hand robot dealer vending his wares out of a similarly named store "Droids'R'Us". "We were slapped with a cease and desist," recalls Crowe, "which resulted in the removal of [the sequence from] the game."

After the legal action all future print runs of SQ1 contained the slightly tweaked, and now entirely legal "Droids'B'Us". Not only that but Crowe and Murphy's creative reigns were tightened, at least a little.

"From that point on, Sierra's lawyers were taking more interest in what went into our games," recalls Crowe, "We put the Energizer Bunny into SQ: IV and were certain it would get axed. But, instead of mandating that we cut it, Sierra got in touch with the Eveready company and they were actually cool about us using it..."

"The industry as a whole was just beginning to become a blip on corporate lawyer's screens in regards to copyright infringement. We were just doing our part to push the envelope."

Q. Which console was better – SNES or Megadrive, and why?

One of the greatest debates that raged back in the days of eight and sixteen bit consoles was who was better – Nintendo or Sega. Whilst we've had to douse the flames of argument in this magazine many a time, proclaiming that it's the games, not the systems, that matter, the reality is that most of us have a leaning one way or another. Let's pour a little petrol on the bonfire...



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...

? "Xbox Live - does it live up to expectations?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper #135



MAIL THE HYPER FORUM:

POSTAL:

78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia

EMAIL:

freak@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.

THE LITTLE GREY BOX THAT COULD

Aaargh! What a tough question.

I own both machines, they both had their ups and downs. The Megadrive was sleek and shiny and had Sonic. The SNES was bulky yet dependable and had Mario. I remember the joy I felt when I was given the Megadrive for xmas and I also remember wanting a Super Nintendo, and the months I spent saving my pocket money to buy one. But if both consoles were dangling off a cliff and I only had time to save one of them, I guess I'd save the SNES. It's controller was comfy and had 6 buttons (unlike the Megadrive's 3 button joypad, later to be replaced by a 6 button one). The SNES could display more colours than the Megadrive and who could forget the wave of excitement sweeping over geeks when the first screenshots of Donkey Kong Country were released. To this day the SNES is still alive in the world. Its spirit lives on through every game converted to the GBA, through every Cash Converter's display window trying to sell them and through the minds of the fans, remembering the joy that the little grey box could provide.

Stevo.

IS THE FENCE COMFORTABLE?

The answer to your question would depend on who you would ask. The die-hard Sega fans would think that the Mega Drive is better, while the Nintendo followers would think the same with the SNES. It also depends on which game system they had during that era. In this writer's opinion, and for a person who has experienced both gaming consoles, it is a tie. The SNES may have its lions share of premium games and had better graphics abilities (standalone of course without any add-ons) but it came in second in the console race. On the other hand, the fully expanded Mega Drive system (with Mega CD and 32X attached, and

other peripherals like a lightgun and mouse) was powerful yet was not as graceful as the SNES. Both were 16 bit systems, and yet they had their own advantages and disadvantages. In all these factors have caused them to balance each other out. In short, both systems are equal in both power and popularity. The answer to the question "Which console was better - SNES or Mega Drive?", a draw, because both were great systems for their time, not to mention that half the gamers out there were Sega fans and the other half, Nintendo fans. So it obviously is a tie after all.

Craig Davidson

SUPER SONIC

Hey Hyper Dudes and ah... Dudessess'ss or however you spell it. So for the Forum this month I noticed the question was which system was better and we all know this is a hard decision so lets recap and think of some of the great games firstly the Sega had great's such as Sonic, Sonic and Tails, Sonic and Knuckles and many more variations but the snes had a variety of Mario games as well. To greats Sonic and Mario I wonder why no one ever made a combo game of them? i.e.

Sonic V.S Mario or even Sonic V.S Bowser. Next RPG's well snes win's this hands down the best RPG's ever are on Snes such as Chrono Trigger, Final Fantasy 1-6, Equinox, Paladin's Quest 1 and 2 and many more Sega rarely had an RPG and when they did it was only ever reasonable with few exemptions so I point to Snes scores Snes 1 Sega 0. Next we have roge games such as ToeJam and Earl which is very possibly the greatest game of all time and just thinking of TJ and E has made me want to play it again so I'll award that one to Sega scores 1 all. Then what about games that where on both systems such as Romance of the three kingdoms and Shadow runner I personally think both of these played better on Sega so that's 2 Sega and 1 snes overall these two machines are very close but I think Sega just pops out ahead of the still great Snes system and if you will I have some gaming memories to catch up on time to dust off the old machines and test them first hand.

bye guys.

signed That Funny Guy



[above] Chrono Trigger and the infamous cougar attack scene

WHO ASKED ANYTHING ABOUT DREAMCAST?

I owned a Megadrive and thought it was the bomb; that is until I played Mario Kart on a friends SNES. I never ended up getting a SNES though I made certain my next console was a Nintendo 64 with Mario Kart 64 being my first game. I then played Super Mario World on GBA, how had I missed out on all this 16 bit gaming greatness. I still loved and played my Megadrive a lot but at the end of the day I think Nintendo's first party titles made it the better console. Note: Playing six-button fighting games, ie Street fighter, on the Megadrive 2 control pad (6 buttons like S F arcade) was far superior. Using shoulder buttons for heavy attacks is awkward and just plain wrong (yes I'm also looking at you Dreamcast).

Captain Darklance

I NAME THIS MONSTER NINTENDOR!

Wow, what a tough question. It takes me back to the golden era of consoles when the schoolyard, and

gaming magazines, would be full of slanging matches debating this very topic. I, being a loyal Nintendo fan, purchased a SNES and was most excited to get it home. Super Mario World was everything it promised and more and other great titles soon followed with the likes of Zelda, Metroid, Castlevania, Sword of Mana and Chrono Cross. But eventually I had to purchase a Megadrive as it had better quality shoot-em ups and more RPG's than the SNES (which had mostly action/rpg's, whatever that means). I craved the more old skool RPG to feed my addiction. But to answer the question we need only look to one of the greatest games of the past century, Street Fighter II. On the Megadrive the characters looked chunky and the speech, if we can call it that, was terrible. Turn to the SNES and the graphics were smooth, the game played faster and the speech was excellent. I therefore have to wrap up this punishing clash of the titans with the SNES coming out the victor in what was a hotly contested, but very close battle. Long live the Big N !!!

Mr Sinister



[above] Sonic 2: wouldn't it be nice if the scenery was Cadbury? Oh wait it is!



[left] Streeties is just like Top Gun - homoerotic undertones in every frame



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MAIL HYPER!

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This month we're lucky enough to secure the services of a very special guest to answer our mail. Yes, it's the Ghost of David Wildgoose. He's been hanging around the offices, chipping in with ethereal comments since the very early days of Hyper, so who better to assist us?

[above] Marcus Bastia is a comedy genius, which makes him more attractive to girls

FLASH AAH!

After watching footage of gunfights in that Russian school, I realised that the muzzle flashes (light emitted from firing a projectile) were almost non-existent (they actually look like smoke). Yet, action games like to make them big spectacular clouds. Just look at Counterstrike, Max Payne and Call of Duty. Blood from bullet impacts in games also tend to exaggerate reality. Why is this the case? I don't know so feel free to pelt me with lard for submitting a half-baked point of discussion.

Michael Xiao Ke Zhu

The Ghost of David Wildgoose Says: The lack of muzzle flash seen in the Russian siege is due to the fact that most modern rifles have built in flash suppressors designed to cut down on the amount of light emitted making it harder for the enemy to pinpoint your position. Handguns on the other hand do not have integral flash suppressors. Neither did weapons in WWII. Anyway, would you rather look at nothing or something explode?

GTA UNCUT

Something's been bothering me in

the world of games lately. I have been keenly reading updates of Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas as they come to hand. It's shaping up to be the best game ever, by the looks of it. But for all the hype, all the excitement of the possibilities it will bring to the table by deepening your involvement in the criminal underworld, a serious question will undoubtedly raise its ugly head... WILL WE GET TO PLAY IT UNCUT? Or will it even be released, for that matter? The WA government recently proposed a bill that would ban Rockstar's latest game Manhunt if it were to pass. A series of biased articles in our daily paper has not helped matters. If it were to be banned, it would set a dangerous precedent for all future violent games, especially GTA:SA. I really don't want to have to import it from the UK when I should be able to walk to the shop and buy it, just because our State and Federal nanny (read:facist) governments tell me, an ADULT, what I can and can't play. I could bring up many other points on why this is bullshit, but in the pages of Hyper I'd only be preaching to the converted. So gamers, write in to your State government and tell them what you

CAPTION THIS!

PART 58 WINNER

Jacob Paint busted this rather lengthy, but rather funny one out!



The nerds at Microsoft finally managed to open a bunny black hole

LETTER OF THE MONTH

COME IN AND SEE THE GOOD GOOD GOOD GUYS

Hi guys.

I just have to ask one question: Whatever happened to the notion of the "good guy"? Video gaming always used to be about playing the hero. Rescue the damsel, slay the dragon (or turtle-dragon) and fight for justice. Nowadays, it seems that gaming "anti-heroes" are becoming the norm. Obviously, the "Grand Theft Auto" series would be a prime example, but I'm going to look elsewhere. Look at what happened to poor Jak from "Jak & Daxter." He went from being a noble justice-fighter to an evil revenge-seeker. And for that reason alone, I have ignored the sequel. I don't want to play as the baddie. This cheap attempt to "attitude up" the series has certainly failed on me, and I'm sure I'm not alone. I've also seen some screens and footage from the new "Prince of Persia" game. The same principle applies. The Prince is now a revenge-seeking warrior who takes pleasure in slicing his opponents in half or lopping their heads off. Is it wrong that I do NOT take pleasure in doing these things, even in the virtual world? I loved the first game, but if anything, I've been turned off the sequel by what I've seen - a desperate attempt to appeal to the more "mainstream" by making the game darker and more violent. These are just a couple of examples of the growing trend of antagonists that seem to be taking over the video gaming world, but enough is enough. I say BRING BACK THE GOOD GUYS!

P. Jenkins.

The Ghost of David Wildgoose Says:

This is quite a hard one to answer. Being a ghost myself I am often saddled with a bad (or even evil) reputation, but in reality I'm much more akin to Casper the friendly ghost, only a little more laconic. The fact of the matter may be that it's not that good guys don't exist anymore, it's that the perception of what makes a hero, or good guy is changing to fit the current climate. The world is no longer as black and white as it used to seem making for more flawed and driven main characters. Darker characters also offer a greater depth in the writing as pure heroes are often one-dimensional - they are good and that's the end of the matter. Flawed heroes are far more likely to have an interesting back-story and relationship with the villain.

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[above] Yet another golden Ari Gibson effort. Bless you my (non-literal) son

think. Let's get GTA:SA out here the way Rockstar wants us to see it.

Thank you.

Ben Helliwell

The Ghost of David Wildgoose Says: Not knowing what's actually in the game aside from broad details makes it hard to judge whether the game will be censored or not when it is released here later this year. Whilst we agree with the right to govern ourselves there is a question that must be raised. When GTA 3 was censored people kicked up a stink that they were no longer able to beat up hookers. Did that actually take anything away from the game (aside from the aforementioned hooker beatdowns)? Don't get yourself worked up about it yet - wait until it is either announced or released. Too much stress can lead to an early grave. Just look at me...

ALMOST 20 QUESTIONS

I'll start off by saying, great mag, been getting them since i was

about 7. i have to say I agree with the Letter of the Month, by Angus. W about how all of the not so nice people on battle net aren't really so nice, but in defence battle net is quite alot of fun if you ignore all of the little s**ts who want to ruin it for the rest of us, but its not just those people then there's the "Pros" who cant be "Bothered" even talking to peons, i mean cmon EVERYONE started off as a peon on battle net, ALSO just because someones a peon doesnt mean they're not good, see i know alot of good players who spend more of their time playing custom games, and cant be bothered playing melee, but does that make them crap, NO IT BLOODY DOESNT!!! also i was talking to a friend of mine who got this special issue of some sort, that said that hyper started off as a internet magazine os some sort, is this true and if it is can i still pretend it isn't Daniel Wilks your not alone in preferring the "Sports Angle" of the UT series, in fact thats one of the things that makes the games better

i reckon, since theres no "it is your destiny to save the world" or some s**t like that its all about bloody no strings attached gun fights which is so much more fun

now for a "couple" of questions

- 1) does anyone there know when Dawn of War is being released
- 2) is there going to be an open Beta anytime soon
- 3) does anyone have an actual release date for World of Warcraft yet?
- 4) whats the monthly cost for WOW going to be?
- 5) would Amos mind if i claimed him as my own personal deity
- 6) is the gamecube worth



[left] Ari Gibson with another gem. What a surprise!

buying for more than metroid, res evil and zelda?

7) have any of you played like a Beta copy of Halo2, and if so is it worth the wait?

8) have any of you been to weeb-stuff?

9) are any of you playing on battle net?

10) what did you give morrowind and its expansions?

11) would any of you like to give me a free copy of operation flashpoint or doom3?

Michael Newland

The Ghost of David Wildgoose Says: Staying on this mortal coil takes a great deal of energy so I'll have to keep my answers brief.

1) Very soon. If not now.

2) Not that we know

3) No

4) TBA

5) Hell no. It is how it should be. Plus, I can confirm that Amos is as close to God as you'll find on this plane or any other.

6) Yes, for Wave Race, Rogue Leader, Mario Sunshine, Monkey Ball, Eternal Darkness, Super Smash Bros Melee and, of course, Luigi's Mansion because it's all about ghosts, like me.

7) Yes and hell yes in that order.

8) Who did the what now?

9) Nope, not right now.

10) A good swift kick in the pants.

11) We would but we don't have any copies of either. Time to sell a kidney to finance your next game buying expedition. I can also put you in touch with an otherworldly chap with horns who's in the market for fresh souls.

AMOS BOUGHT THE ALBUM

Guy Sebastian's album is really pretty sweet. He's a really talented



[above] Master Chief proposes...

singer and really good-looking.

Now that I've got your attention and simultaneously made myself feel quite sick & dirty I have some questions

1. Was the Full Spectrum Warrior score of 87% a mutual office decision? Personally I thought it was the suckiest game that ever sucked. It just plain sucked. DOA Beach Volleyball would have been a more accurate depiction of true military combat.

2. Have any of you guys actually watched the new House Of The Dead movie? I've been awaiting that movie ever since I watched the preview on House Of The Dead

3. Nothing beats German directed B-Grade horror, except for German directed B-Grade horror with topless scenes

3. Any of you guys purchased one of those model Warthog jeeps from Electronic Boutique? I discovered that it's extremely hard to justify spending \$30.00 on a toy to your girlfriend.

4. What kind of office pranks have occurred at the Hyper Office? My personal favorite is the "see how warped you can get your co-workers monitor screen" prank. Although changing someone's auto correct settings always leads to hilarity.

5. What kind of sickness can I fake on the 9th of November 2004 to take the day off work?

6. Why do you think the defence force has been advertising in your magazine? It's scary to think of your current readers with high-powered automatic weaponry.

You can run but you can't glide,
The Spiceweasel

The Ghost of David Wildgoose Says:

1) Considering that FSW was developed with the help of the American Army and based on an Army training tool we'd say that it's probably a fairly good descriptor of squad based tactics. DOA was about boobies. It comes down to what style of game you want to play. Note to self - explore the impact of boobies on small unit tactics.

2) Uwe Boll is the Devil. There is a special seat in hell reserved just for him.

3) Spend the \$30 on your girl and get some sweet lovin' instead. Think of the Warthog while your inflagrante delicto.

4) We don't prank. We're far too professional for that. That said, being undead you can literally get away with murder.

5) Death. Just call them, put on a high pitched warbly Cartman-esque voice and go "I am the ghost of



[above] Mark Withington sent us a picture of a girl with clothes on. Phew!

Spiceweasel... I hate you guys and I'm not coming in to work today".

6) Because they have money and we like taking it. And with more people being killed I can have more ghostly friends...sob.

OH DEAR LORD THE DISAPPOINTMENT...

I was full of praise, pumping people left right and centre... The return of the greatest arcade racer on console, and what happens... We get some sort of Destruction Derby rip off, a good one with playability, but not enough to warrant the extreme praise it's getting. Yeah it's quick, yeah it's got good on-line support, but I pumped 100+ hours into Burnout 2, and I don't think I'll get of half that with 3. I mean split screen it looks terrible, like a PS1 game almost, the extra time spent creating the ultimate Burnout 2 version on Xbox OBVIOUSLY payed off... You can't see shapely polygons till you've already hit them... I mean what the hell is with missing features.... Gee, let's have 2 player mode but TAKE OUT THE EXTERNAL MUSIC option?!?!?!... REAL clever morons, oh and let's

not have any lap records, highest crash value per track or other high scoring methods. Let's take out all the simple, intuitive and just plain logical support for multiplayer on the one box (can't see the map of the course when selecting a race?!?!?! Arghh). I'm not going to play a pretend racing game on-line, that's what FPS and RTS games are for. It just turns into a slammathon'. Not long term entertainment in my opinion. A house full of mid twenty year olds waiting for a new instalment of a great racing game, one of the best even, and what happens? We all want to play Mashed instead. Nowhere near as good looking or as featured but playability till the cows come home. Fair enough the takedown element is fun, but where's the racing? Where's the scything your way through quick traffic? I think they should have left crashing and racing separate. On-line support is great, it's needed, but don't forger the games roots.

Thanks for your time.

Roger O

The Ghost of David Wildgoose says: I may be dead but I'm not dead

inside and your criticism of Burnout 3 hurts. We believe that Burnout 3 is a legitimately brilliant game but instead of trying to convince you of the fact I'm simply going to sing a song from the Simpsons but add your name to it:

Can you name the car with four-wheel-drive?

Smells like a steak and seats thirty-five!

Roger O! Roger O!

Well, it goes real slow with the hammer down.

It's a country-fried truck endorsed by a clown.

Roger O! Roger O!

Twelve yards long and two lanes wide,

Sixty five tons of American pride!

Roger O! Roger O!

Top of the line in utility sports!

Unexplained fires are a matter for the courts.

Roger O! Roger O!

She blinds everybody with her super-high beam.

She a squirrel-squishin', deer-smackin' drivin' machine!

Roger O! Roger O!

HYPERETTES,

Since this is a versus issue, it got me to thinking, what would be the ultimate superhero showdown? Would it be Superman versus Batman? Alien versus Predator? Or perhaps Homer versus Cartman? No, it would be Amos versus Master Chief! If only there was some way we could see what that would look like!

But then again, there's the old smelly hippy adage "make love, not war", which led me down a ponderous path where I wondered what the perfect game character match would be. Mario and Peach? Doubtful. Luigi and Waluigi? Closer. But nah, I reckon that Master Chief and Samus is the ultimate game character pairing. Imagine what their kids would be like. They'd have the cleanliness of a dog and the loyalty of a cat!

Big Boi



The Ghost of David Wildgoose Says: For me the ultimate pairing would be Luigi and his vacuum cleaner... but hey, I'm sick like that. As for your ideas, see the included happy snaps!

[above] I thought Amos' nickname was Wiggles?!

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TOP 10 PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50 W/E 12 SEPT 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Athens 2004	Sports
2	○	ShellShock Nam 67	Action
3	▲	SingStar	All Other
4	○	GTA: Vice City Ptm	Adventure
5	○	Crash Nitro Kart	Racing
6	▼	Driv3r	Racing
7	◆	Shrek 2	Adventure
8	▲	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
9	▼	Fight Night	Sports
10	▼	Americas 10 Most Wanted	Action

TOP 10 PlayStation Games Over \$30 W/E 12 SEPT 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Sports Superbike	Racing
2	◆	Simpson's Wrestling	Sports
3	○	HPotter Chamber Secrets	Adventure
4	▲	Grand Theft Auto Coll Ed	Adventure
5	▲	Yu-Gi-Oh Forbidden Mem	Strategy
6	▼	Disney Triple Pack	Adventure
8	▼	Bratz Dolls	All Other
7	▲	Beyblade Let It Rip	Adventure
9	▼	FIFA 2004	Sports
10	▼	NBA Live 2003	Sports

TOP 10 Game Cube Games Over \$50 W/E 12 SEPT 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon Colosseum	RPG
2	▲	Mario Kart Double Dash	Racing
3	▲	Mario Party 5	Family
4	▲	Zelda: Wind Waker	RPG
5	▲	Final Fan Crystal Chron	RPG
6	▼	Simpson's Hit & Run	Adventure
7	▲	Mario Golf Toadstool Tour	Sports
8	▼	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
9	▲	Shrek 2	Adventure
10	○	Animal Crossing	Strategy

TOP 10 Xbox Games Over \$50 W/E 12 SEPT 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Burnout 3	Racing
2	○	ShellShock Nam 67	Action
3	○	Conflict Vietnam	Action
4	▼	V8 Supercars 2	Racing
5	▼	Driv3r	Racing
6	▲	Shrek 2	Adventure
7	○	Crash Nitro Kart	Racing
8	▼	GTA Twin Pack	Adventure
9	▼	Sudeki	RPG
10	○	Spider-Man 2	Adventure

TOP 10 PC Games Over \$20 W/E 12 SEPT 2004 RETAIL SALES

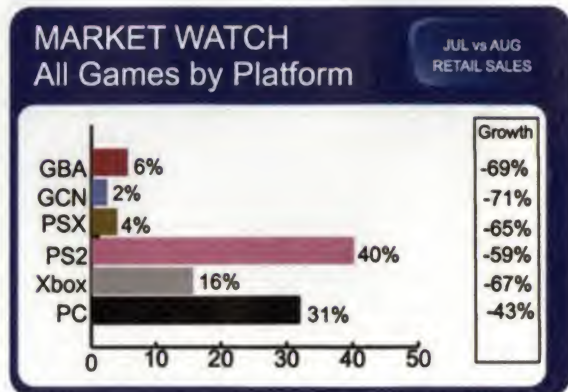
1	▲	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
2	▼	Doom 3	Action
3	◆	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
4	◆	The Sims Superstar	Strategy
5	▲	The Sims Vacation	Strategy
6	▲	The Sims Hot Date	Strategy
7	○	The Sims House Party	Strategy
8	◆	The Sims Makin' Magic	Strategy
9	○	Cat In The Hat	Adventure
10	▼	Rise Of Nations	Strategy

TOP 10 Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30 W/E 12 SEPT 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon Ruby	RPG
2	◆	Pokémon Sapphire	RPG
3	◆	Simpson's Road Rage	Racing
4	○	Banjo Kazooie	Adventure
5	○	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
6	▲	Crash Bandicoot Fusion	Adventure
7	▼	Shrek 2	Adventure
8	◆	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
9	○	Lizzie Mcguire: On The Go	Adventure
10	◆	Spyro Fusion	Adventure

TOP 10 All Full Priced Games W/E 12 SEPT 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Athens 2004	PlayStation 2
2	▲	Burnout 3	Xbox
3	▲	The Sims Deluxe	PC/MAC
4	○	ShellShock Nam 67	PlayStation 2
5	▲	SingStar	PlayStation 2
6	▼	Doom 3	PC/MAC
7	○	The Sims Unleashed	PC/MAC
8	▲	Pokémon Ruby	GBA
9	○	ShellShock Nam 67	Xbox
10	○	GTA: Vice City Ptm	PlayStation 2



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



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