

HYPHER

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GTA: SAN ANDREAS

PS2 game of the year?
Or victim of its own hype?

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

Up close and personal with
the Epic Xbox sequel

Are Bungie the Xbox Master Chefs? HALO 2

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our blow-out feature



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of the year... if not all time!

next
GAMING



OUT
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2005

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CELL**
CHAOS THEORY



Stealth on a knife's edge.

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THE MANSION



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RU GAME?

OUT
NOW

Tom Clancy's
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2**



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PlayStation®2



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PC GAMER

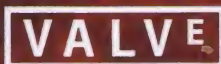
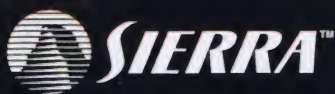
1998. Half-Life® sends a shock through the game industry with its combination of pounding action and continuous, immersive storytelling. Valve's debut title wins more than 50 game-of-the-year awards on its way to being named "Best PC Game Ever" by PC Gamer, and launches a franchise with more than eight million retail units sold worldwide.

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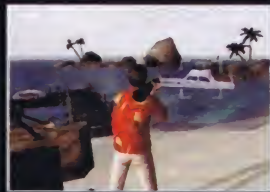
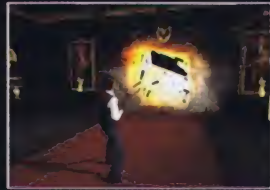
46 Prince of Persia: Warrior Within...

... or, "Why tinkering with the flow of time ruined my life"



CONTENTS

18 SCARFACE feature



10 Editorial

12 News

16 Subscriptions

The biggest subs prize we've ever given away. You'd be crazy not to get in on the action!

18 Scarface feature

Radical spill the beans on the return of Tony Montana.

24 Previews

Unreal Championship 2, Empire Earth 2 and Far Cry Instincts.

30 Reviews

68 GBA Reviews

70 Net Trawlin'

Reviews of World of Warcraft and Everquest II.

76 Christmas Buyer's Guide

The funkiest gadgets, phones and gaming equipment this Christmas.

82 DVD Reviews

85 Anime

86 Win Win Win

88 Classics

The Making of Rez

90 Forum

92 Mail

96 Charts

98 Next Issue

24 Unreal Championship 2



Review Index

32 GTA San Andreas

38 Metroid Prime 2: Echoes

42 Halo 2

46 Prince of Persia: Warrior Within

48 The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age

50 Ratchet & Clank 3: Up Your Arsenal

52 Jak 3

54 Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2

55 Killzone

56 WWE SmackDown! vs RAW

58 Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault

60 Need for Speed Underground 2

61 GoldenEye 2

62 The Getaway: Black Monday

63 NBA Live 2005

64 Under The Skin

64 FlatOut

64 Powerdrome

66 Rollercoaster Tycoon 3

66 Ty 2

66 Sega Superstars



32 GTA SAN ANDREAS review



METROID PRIME 2 review



42 HALO 2 Review



58 MOH: PACIFIC ASSAULT review

EDITORIAL

»» You've probably all been playing San Andreas for a few weeks by the time you get this issue, as have we. As a phenomenon it's pretty insane - practically every person in the games department here is playing it like crazy, whether they're editors, art directors or ad managers. Amos is loving it, Wildgoose is a pimping machine and Malks hasn't seen his wife or daughter in days he's so into it. But you know what the best part is? Like GTA III and Vice City before it, San Andreas is a game that breeds anecdotes. Sure, we all work our way through the same sets of missions, but there's so much scope for unique approaches and crazy shit to go down that there's an endless pool of stories to share. It is, essentially, a water cooler game.

And that, more than anything, is why San Andreas is a triumph. It's a world that you share with your friends, a world where trial and error, exploration and individual expression come to the fore. It's a game that we're all going to be playing for some time to come. Thus, I can forgive its sometimes insanely frustrating missions and its many technical issues. It's a game that despite its flaws, we're proud to give one of the highest scores in Hyper history. Enjoy the issue.

Cam Shea »» Editor



[above] Cam's obviously been playing too much San Andreas

HYPER»»

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WRITE TO HYPER!

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

EDITORIAL

Editor: **Cam Shea**
Deputy Editor: **Daniel Wilks**
Art Director: **Malcolm Campbell**

ADVERTISING

Advertising Manager: **David Canessa**
E-mail: davidc@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0349
Fax: (02) 9310 2012

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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

MANAGEMENT

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

PRODUCTION

Production Co-ordinator: **Kasie Waszkinel**
E-mail: kasiew@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0300
Fax: (02) 9310 2012
IT Support: **Fahri Cantas**

Printed CTP by: **WEBSTAR**

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

CONTRIBUTORS

Eleanor Eiffe, Andrew Bulmer, Daniel Staines, Amos "inventor of Evil Malky" Hong, Kelly Starr, Elizabeth Shea, Eliot Fish, Timothy C. Best, Stephen Farrelly, Kosta Andreadis, Christian Reed, DJ Leon Smith, Andrew Bulmer, Max Powers, D. Mannerism.

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HYPER CREW MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

Cam Shea - Editor

1. Halo 2 - Xbox
"Let the physics experiments begin!"
2. GTA: San Andreas - PS2
3. Half-Life 2 - PC
4. Need for Speed Underground 2 - Xbox
5. World of Warcraft - PC

Daniel Wilks - Deputy Editor

1. Chrono Trigger - SNES
"It's emulicious"
2. Paper Mario 2 - GCN
3. X-Men Legends - Xbox
4. Need for Speed Underground 2 - Xbox
5. Phone tag with tech companies

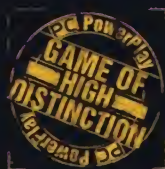
Kosta Andreadis - Betrayer

1. Metroid Prime 2: Echoes - GCN
"I had to taste the sharp edged forbidden fruit to get my hands on it, but it was well worth it."
2. GTA: San Andreas - PS2
3. Mashed - PS2
4. Defence of the Ancients (Warcraft3 MOD) - PC
5. DJ Decks & FX - PS2

Evil Malky - Anti-Amos

1. Resident Evil - GCN
"Zombies I will CRUSH YOU ALL"
2. Kill Krush & Destroy - PC
3. Medieval - PSone
4. Evil Genius - PC
5. Beyond Good & Evil - PS2

VENGEANCE REIGNS FROM ABOVE.



"...a hardcore game which punishes the weak with certain death"

"Fast, fun, tough and ballistic - **87%**"

PC PowerPlay



"...a brilliant piece of home grown shooting action - **90%**"

Hyper Magazine

"A game that no action fan should be without - **9/10**"

IGN

"Captures everything that made the original Tribes a classic...deep and addictive - **8.8/10**"

Gamespot

"One of the best first person shooters released this year. Yes - Tribes Vengeance is really that good - **9/10**"

Game Arena

"Thrilling action, huge scope, and a level of tactical depth rare in shooters - **4/5**"

Gamespy

OUT NOW

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VENGEANCE



www.tribesvengeance.com

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IN THE NEWS: Brains! / Things get Steamy / Nintendo superchallenged / Xbox Xtender / Episode III pics! / PSP concerns



TOO SHORT

PSP BATTERY LIFE

Will it make the flight from Sydney to Melbourne?

Things aren't looking too great for the PSP at the moment. After months of speculation about the battery life of the product, Sony head honcho Ken Kutaragi has gone on record saying that the battery life is very dependant on the graphical intensity of the game being played. In an interview he stated, "A puzzle game will last longer, but Ridge Racer will probably be shorter than that". It seems as though the battery life for the PSP could be closer to the two hour mark

(as Nintendo claimed) than Sony would like to admit. Kutaragi also stated that in the next release of the handheld they would like to have battery life long enough to last on a flight between Tokyo and NY, or around 14 hours. Whilst a second release is all well and good such comments could potentially scare away a lot of early adopters. Revisions on hardware are fine but wouldn't it be better to simply release a better handheld a bit later? Didn't the debacle that was the N-Gage teach anyone anything?

[above] So... the better the graphics the less you can use it? That's quite a Catch 22

BRAAIIINS

INEVITABLE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

Rampant zombie flatulence ahoy

It's like somebody looked into our minds and discovered the game we've always wanted to play. That game is Stubbs the Zombie in "Rebel Without a Pulse", an ode to everything we love about the brain eating undead currently being developed by Wideload Games. Due for release in mid 2005 on Xbox, PC and Mac (people actually make games for Macs? [Yeah, Bungie and id Software, ferinstance - Art]), Stubbs the Zombie, powered by a modified Halo engine will see players making all out war with the living with



nothing but a complete lack of pain, your own rotting body and ability to create other zombies as your only weapons. Did we mention that Stubbs is also a love story about the redemption of lost love? If that's not enough to sell you on the concept how about these little goblets of joy - Stubbs can use his rotting intestines as biological grenades, can use his head as a killer bowling ball and has, as the developers put it "flatulence beyond the ken of mortal men". 2005 can't come fast enough.

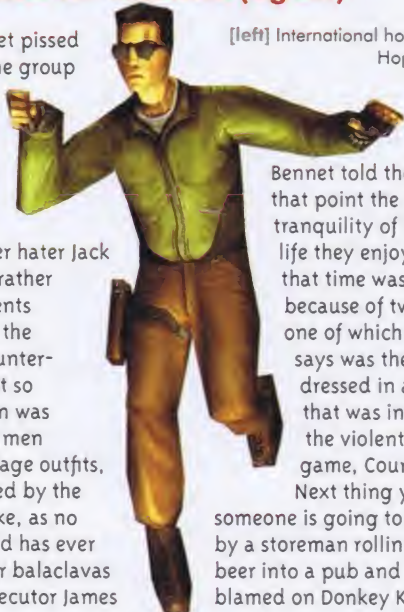


COUNTER-STRIKE

SOURCE OF ALL EVIL

Games blamed for violence (again)

It's easy to get pissed off when some group or other takes our favourite pastime and accuses it of being the source of all evil but even American crackpot and player hater Jack Thompson sounds rather lucid in his arguments when compared to the recent Sydney "Counter-Strike shootings". It so happens that a man was shot by two young men dressed in camouflage outfits, "obviously" inspired by the game Counter-Strike, as no military in the world has ever heard of fatigues or balaclavas before. Crown Prosecutor James



[left] International hopping champion Hoppy Hoppenstein

Bennet told the court, "At that point the peace and tranquility of the family life they enjoyed up until that time was destroyed because of two men, one of which the Crown says was the accused, dressed in an outfit that was inspired by the violent computer game, Counter-Strike". Next thing you know someone is going to be injured by a storeman rolling a keg of beer into a pub and it will be blamed on Donkey Kong.

CAPTION THIS!

PART 62

Come on, make us laugh. Just send your funny screen captions to us at captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 62 in the subject line.



RDRR

HOT AIR

THE NEED FOR STEAM

Gamers getting hot under the collar?

▶ In a move sure to annoy a lot of people, Doug Lombardi of Valve recently stated in an interview with Gamespy that Half-Life 2 will require an internet connection for installation. During the install process the user will have to authenticate the game over the internet as well as create a Steam account. Too bad for anyone without a connection and too bad for people who don't want to fuss around with Steam. It's all well and good to protect your intellectual property from copyright infringement but even Microsoft allow people to activate windows over the phone if they don't have access to the internet. It can be argued that most people who will be buying HL2 will have access to the internet but in an industry that usually caters for the lowest common denominator as far as requirements go such an oversight is almost unforgivable.



GCN

NINTENDO SUPERCHALLENGE

Little K does us proud in Melbsie

▶ With the finals held at Village Cinemas in Melbourne, 300 avid Nintendo gamers from all parts of the city put their gaming skills to the test in the grand final of the Nintendo Superchallenge. The whole event was very reminiscent of the classic 80s film The Wizard, except they didn't bust out a whole new game on the participants (only some nice E3 footage on the big screen). First prize wasn't a chance to be reunited with your brothers Fred Savage and Christian Slater, but instead a family all expenses paid trip to the U.S - not too shabby. With everything from io8o, F-Zero GX, Super Smash Bros and Mario



[above] You're all wieners!

Kart all being played on a large cinema screen with 300 competitors and countless friends and family in the front rows, this event was a serious step in the right direction by Nintendo. Gaming tournaments at this scale should occur more often.

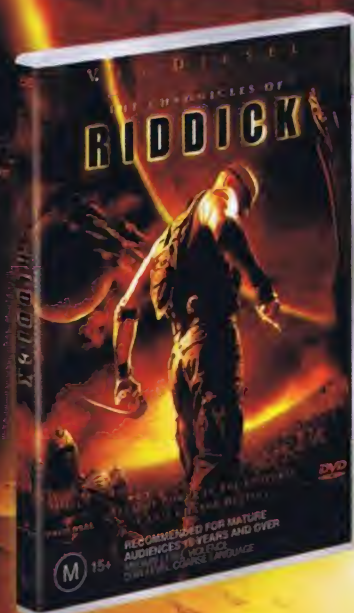


VIN DIESEL

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

VIN DIESEL REPRISSES HIS ROLE AS HUNTED FUGITIVE RIDDICK, HIS ANTI-HERO CHARACTER FROM CULT MOVIE PITCH BLACK.

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PITCH BLACK
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OVERFLOW

In news that surprised no one, Rare's Kameo has been delayed AGAIN, with release now at an indeterminate date in the future. Microsoft must be wondering just what they spent that \$375 million on.

Beloved game design guru Warren Spector has left Ion Storm, relinquishing his role as Studio Director to "pursue personal interests outside the company." Spector is best known for his work on *Deus Ex* and the *Thief* series. Despite the move, it's still possible that he'll be involved (as rumoured) on some level with development on the new *Tomb Raider* title at Crystal Dynamics.

Interesting Caveman sim *B.C.* is no longer in development. Although it could be pursued again at some stage in the future, it certainly doesn't look promising.

In some sweet news for *Ridge Racer* fans, it looks like *Ridge Racer* on PSP may well take the form of a "best of" compilation, with many of the 24 courses being inspired by past *Ridge Racer* titles, including the excellent *Rage Racer* and *Type 4*. We'll find out soon enough, as the game hits with the Japanese launch on December 12. In fact, if you bought your *Hyper* a little late, we may even be playing it right now...

Valve have signed a deal with Taito to bring *Half-Life 2* to arcades in Japan. You'll apparently be able to play through the story (with your personal data saved online) or go head to head in one of two online modes. Cool!

WINNERS

HYPER 133

OUTRUN 2

- Clinton Ellard, Donnybrook, WA
- Robyn Grellet, Rhymney, VIC
- Nick Webb, Laidley, QLD
- Joshua Adam Keats, Southbank, VIC
- Valerie Bollas, Hoppers Crossing, VIC

STAR WARS DVDS

- Tom MacKinnon, St Peters, SA
- B. Mitchell, Sydney, NSW
- James Greig, Coburg, VIC



BOXY

XBOX XTENDER

Extra features for Xbox

To go hand in hand with the recently released Windows Media Center (it's copyrighted to be spelt the American way) Edition, Microsoft will soon be releasing Windows Media Center Extender for the Xbox. The Program will come with an IR receiver as well as a remote and will allow users to stream content off their Media Center PCs to watch on their TV without the need for too many messy cables. Not only will the extender allow you to stream content from your PC, it will also allow you to control your PC from the lounge room, allowing you to set recording times, music downloads and the like. The extender kit should be available around Christmas and will retail around the \$100 mark.



SUGOI!

WTHIWWJP?

Pinkest gameworld ever?

In their latest move to take over the world by causing people's brains to melt due to the saccharine sweetness of their products, Sanrio have announced their upcoming foray into the MMO market with *Hello Kitty World*, a garishly cute game that sees players living out virtual lives in the pastel realm, building houses, solving puzzles and being brainwashed by the hugely successful Japanese business. As well as being insufferably cute, players will be able to take on jobs, open shops, train pets and the like. Apparently the game will feature a special "in-game telepathy" that will enable gamers to talk to each other. If the press release is to be believed, *Hello Kitty World* will mutate you into some form of new creature with the ability to project and read thoughts. What the hell is wrong with Japanese people?

FIRST LOOK SCREENS! BLAU!

Episode III PS2 / XBOX Developer: The Collective



SHUT IT DOWN

CHINA STRIKE FORCE

But where will they get coffee from?

China has recently cracked down hard on internet cafes, shutting down 1600 and levying fines of 100 million Yuan (around 16 million AUD) for allowing young children to play violent and otherwise adult themed games. This move comes during a strong push by the Chinese government to limit public exposure to violent and pornographic content. Of the 87 million Chinese web users, 50% are thought to be under 24



and 15% are minors. Zhang Xinjian, the deputy director of the Culture Ministry's marketing department has been quoted as saying, "Porn, gambling, violence and similar problems have adversely affected the healthy development of the internet in China". Honestly though, what is the internet for if not for the freely available pictures of boobies and viral videos of people doing stupid stuff and winding up hurt or dead?

A LEGEND RETURNS

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THE ULTIMATE PC SETUP!

In the past Hyper has bought you some kick-ass prizes but this month we are proud to present **THE BIGGEST PRIZE IN HYPER HISTORY!** That's right, this month we bring you a state of the art PC, all the peripherals you could want, as well as enough games to keep you busy for 2005 and beyond!

We have a lot of people to thank for this prize: Sony, Abit, Altech, Western Digital, Thrustmaster, Creative, Vivendi, Microsoft, Logitech, Ubisoft, Eidos, Atari, Samsung, Thermaltake, Red Ant, Activision and more!



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- Western Digital Raptor 10000 RPM 73Gb HDD
- Microsoft Optical Desktop Elite (Bluetooth)
- Thermaltake Xaser 5 Damier
- Sony Dual Layer DVD Burner
- Vision Plus HDTVPCI High Definition Digital TV Tuner card
- Samsung 172X 12ms LCD Monitor
- Windows XP Home Edition
- Microsoft Office Student and Teacher edition
- Creative MuVo 4GB mp3 portable
- Logitech Z-5500 5.1 speakers
- Thrustmaster FFB joystick, Enzo Wheel and Firestorm pad

THE GAMES: Half Life 2 Collector's Edition, World of Warcraft Collector's Edition, Vampire the Masquerade, EverQuest 2, Prince of Persia Warrior Within, Sid Meier's Pirates, Brothers in Arms, Splinter Cell Chaos Theory, Medal of Honor Pacific Assault, Star Wars: Battlefront, Championship Manager, Project Snowblind, RollerCoaster Tycoon 3, Vietcong: Purple Haze, Axis and Allies, Demon Stone, Sacred Plus, FlatOut, Shade: Wrath of Angels, Shellshock, Age of Mythology Gold, Rise of Nations Gold, Halo PC, Zoo Tycoon 2, Imperial Glory, Silent Hunter III, Kohan 2, Wings of War PC.

OCTOBER WINNER

HYPER 132 - XBOX AND FABLE

Winners: Robert Yunan, VIC; Paul Quirk, QLD; Jacqueline Davy, QLD; Evan Harvey, WA.

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SCARFACE

HAIL TO THE KINGPIN

Scarface is more than a movie. Since it stormed onto screens in 1983, Brian De Palma and Oliver Stone's Scarface has become an integral part of popular culture. It's not hard to see why, as the movie is so full of visceral thrills and quotable dialogue. The appeal of the film goes further than that however. The original tagline for the film (before the oh-so quotable "Say hello to my little friend" took over in the common vernacular), was "He loved the American Dream. With a Vengeance." and perfectly summed up its appeal. Tony Montana is a character who grabs life and ambition by the balls and drags it kicking and screaming behind him. Tony is a man who will stop at nothing to get what he wants yet still remains faithful to his own, albeit dubious, moral code and is steadfastly loyal to his friends to the point of fault. Although the everyman is unlikely to go on a coke fuelled killing spree to get his point across it's easy to see how such a visceral and driven character can become so ingrained in the subconscious. He may not be the ideal American hero and for the most part truth and justice are things he leaves to suckers but Tony Montana is perhaps one of the most honest characters to have ever chased it.

Radical Entertainment are currently going all out to bring the most authentic Scarface experience they can to the world of videogames. They're deadly serious about it, studying every aspect of the film in great detail, hiring scriptwriter David McKenna to pen the tale and there are rumours that certain actors might even reprise their roles. But we've already said too much... so before Mr Montana comes to hunt us down, it's over to the interview. We spoke to **Cam Weber**, in-house producer on the game at Radical. Yes, it's Cam interviews Cam! Take it away Cams...

18 HYPER>>

[right] What he's got against Coca Cola I have no idea



HYPER: Tell us a little about Scarface's story. Where does the game begin?

Cam: The game begins in Tony's office, during the final blowout scene of the movie.

Tony's mansion is under attack by Sosa's army, Gina has just been killed, and Tony is really pissed off. He lifts his head from a mountain of cocaine on his desk, wipes the white powder off his nose, grabs his M16 with grenade launcher attachment, looks towards the closed door, and then we cut to the game. The user will be told to lock onto the door as the target, and to fire at the door, which will bring Tony's famous line "Say hello to my little friend!!!". Then you will shoot your way out of the mansion, get to your garage and escape into the night... but watch out for the Skull - he is Sosa's assassin with the dark sunglasses - he sneaks up on Tony and shoots him in the back with a shotgun in the movie. The opening setup for the mansion shootout will be authentic - we have recreated the entire scene as it was in the movie, and we will let the

user try to change Tony's fate.

If Tony escapes he makes his way to a safe house in the Bahamas, where he comes to grips with everything that has come to pass. Guilt turns to anger, which turns to resolve as he re-focuses himself and plans his return to gain his revenge on Alejandro Sosa. Three months later he returns to Miami to begin his new war.

You'll be helping Tony Montana rebuild a fallen empire - what are the core components in terms of game design that will help him do this?

The game involves two major themes - first of all, Tony will go through the storyline to get his revenge on Sosa. Second, users will be able to play through our empire building world gameplay. This is the macro game, where users will be able to play for hours building up Tony's drug empire throughout the various territories in the world. This will involve establishing relationships with suppliers in the islands, then smuggling cocaine in large quantities to Miami. Storehouses can be purchased in Miami and must be staffed with henchmen and managed. There



Hyper HQ...
back in the days
of Eliot "rock
god" Fish

will be a map in the pause menu from which Tony can monitor his business. This map will serve as a simulation of his business, and Tony will have to go play missions to keep things running smoothly. He will have to defend his storehouses from rival gangs and DEA. Shipments will come into Miami via cargo ships and boats, and these shipments will be attacked periodically - Tony will have to act in order to defend his assets and avoid losing product. We'll give Tony a variety of vehicles to get around the world, including cars, trucks, jet boats, cargo ships, float planes, and helicopters. Also, Tony will have a huge variety of weapons to use against his enemies.

What other characters from the film will we be meeting?

The main villain in the game will be Alex Sosa. He was the supplier that Tony dealt with in the movie, and ends up being Tony's biggest enemy. His assassin, The Skull, will play a major part in the opening

THE MAIN VILLAIN IN THE GAME WILL BE ALEX SOSA. HE WAS THE SUPPLIER THAT TONY DEALT WITH IN THE MOVIE...

shootout. He is the guy with the dark sunglasses who shoots Tony in the back with a shotgun in the movie. If you are going to get out of the mansion in the beginning, you'll have to take him out.

We have also taken the rival drug dealers straight out of the movie script. The Diaz brothers, Nacho Contreras, and Gaspar Gomez will all play major roles as Tony's rivals in his attempt to ascend to the top of the Miami cocaine business.

Other important movie characters in the game are Tony's Mom, and his lawyer Sheffield.

Was it difficult getting screenwriter David McKenna involved? Is he a fan of the medium?

We are very excited to be working with David McKenna. He has done

a ton of research on the cocaine business for his work on Blow, and that experience has helped him to write a totally authentic story for our game. David is also a big Scarface fan, so he understands the essence of what we are trying to create. This is the first video game he has worked on, but he picked it up really fast. Actually, before he got started on our script, he spent a lot of time playing our competitors' games.

Do you think it's hard for a traditional screenwriter to adapt to crafting a videogame narrative?

The biggest challenge is in formatting. Screenwriters are used to writing stories in scenes, as they would play out in a movie. But for video games, all story elements



Cam Weber

POSITION: Producer

WHAT THE POSITION ENTAILS:

Running the development team and managing the product from a quality perspective.

PREVIOUS GAME CREDITS:

The Simpsons Road Rage, NHL Championship 2000, The Hulk

FAVOURITE LINE FROM

SCARFACE: Tony in his Jacuzzi tub, like a true Kingpin, smoking a cigar, and barking out insults to Manny and Elvira...then as they leave the room in disgust, he yells out "Hey, who put this thing together? ME, THAT'S WHO! WHO DO I TRUST? ME!"

The history of Scarface



Long before Tony Montana invited us to say hello to his little friend in the 1983 classic gangster film *Scarface*, the less ethnic but no less driven Tony Camonte used his violent tendencies and near sociopathic yearning for respect to rise to the top of the underworld in the 1932 Howard Hawks film of the same name. Since Hawks' brilliantly violent and hugely controversial classic,

Scarface has been a name synonymous with the hard-bitten gangster lifestyle, violence, savage charisma, drugs and the veil of morbid glamour surrounding it all. Although the film truly is an indictment of the violent life of gangsters, when Hawks' film was first put to censors in 1932 the studio demanded the film be cut of some of the more confronting elements such as violence and an incestuous subplot and was also accused of glamorising the gangster life. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Although never clearly stated in the film, Tony Camonte was a character analogous to Al Capone, without a doubt the most notorious gangster of the day, serving 11 years in prison at the time of the film's release for tax evasion, being released in 1939 and finally dying an oddly non-violent but equally ironic death of syphilis in 1947. During his heyday, Capone was personally responsible for dozens of murders, including the infamous "St Valentine's Day Massacre" - all of which he had an alibi for - as well as countless other acts of brutality. He also controlled speakeasies, bookie joints, gambling houses, brothels, horse and race tracks, nightclubs, distilleries and breweries with a reported income of \$100,000,000 a year. Even by today's standards \$100 million a year is nothing to be sneezed at but in the 20s it made him one of the most powerful and influential men in the United States of America, possibly even the world. He was, essentially, the Bill Gates of his time, albeit slightly more insidious.

As incongruous as it may seem, Al Capone was not simply a violent, if magnificently successful thug. He was also, believe it or not, a generous and often fair man. His violent temper may be how he is best remembered but along with it went a strong sense of nobility, loyalty and, strange as it may seem for a man who would often have naysayers gunned down rather than deal with them, honour. When the stock market crashed in 1929 leading to the great depression, Capone was the first "businessman" to set up and institute soup kitchens for the destitute and needy and was well known for ordering merchants to clothe and feed the poor at his expense. Whether or not he did this to cover his crimes and to raise his standing in the community from killer to father figure is neither here nor there - it does show that however malicious his final intent may have been, Capone was, for all intents and purposes, a man of the people.

So the big question left is why Capone was known as *Scarface* in the first place. During the early part of his career when Al Capone was little more than a thug and a hard man renowned for his sudden violent and profane outbursts he worked in the Harvard Inn as a bouncer and a bartender. One night, much like any other night, Capone saw fit to grievously insult a female patron. The nature of the insult is unknown but the result was written on his face for the rest of his life. The patron's brother sprang to her defence, slashing at Capone's face with either a broken glass or bottle depending on the accounts, leaving him with the iconic scars. With a simple act of violent retribution a legend was born.



Mike Lopez

POSITION: Lead Designer
WHAT THE POSITION ENTAILS: Managing the design team, and specifically designing and balancing for all core gameplay mechanics and controls.

PREVIOUS GAME CREDITS: Road Rash PS2, James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire, Road Rash Jailbreak, Road Rash 3D
FAVOURITE LINE FROM SCARFACE: Tony in the restaurant, sitting at his table speaking to the customers in the restaurant: "You're all a bunch of fucking assholes. You know why? You don't have the guts to be what you want to be."

should serve the primary purpose of setting up great gameplay. Furthermore, the writer must understand the gameplay mechanics that they have available to them and to create a story and mission structure that takes advantage of the technology. So there is a lot of time spent in the beginning with the writer to educate them on what the game and the technology has to offer.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of working with a license?

The *Scarface* license demands authenticity - the diehard fans of the film hold this movie and the Tony Montana character very high and we must make sure that we give them an experience that is absolutely authentic to the *Scarface* IP. In order to do this, we must create a game that stays true to its main character.

With every new game design idea, we have to ask ourselves "How would Tony do this?", and sometimes we must eliminate ideas based on the fact that it won't fit with his character.

So working with a license does limit the amount of things you can do... but it also provides you with a great foundation to work from. The number one goal must be to deliver on the license above all else. But then we must also make sure that we create a unique gameplay experience as well. Our goal is to create a *Scarface* game that not only delivers on the license, but also could stand on its own as a great game even without the IP.

How linear will the main mission structure be? Are there any



examples of side missions you can give us?

There are three main layers of gameplay. First we have the story missions. This is a linear track of missions set up through cinematics - all having to do with Tony's journey to get his revenge on Sosa.

Secondly, there are ancillary missions placed throughout the world that are available to Tony. These are set up to take advantage of our game mechanics and to add replayability and depth to the game experience. The purpose of these missions is to make money, which Tony can spend on upgrades like exotic weapons and vehicles. We'll also reward Tony with trophies for pulling off stunts throughout the world with his variety of vehicles. These trophies will be stored in Tony's trophy room at the mansion. There will be femme fatales throughout the world that Tony can try to pick up using his charm... but unless Tony has earned enough money and has increased his reputation, they will shoot him down. The women who Tony can successfully charm into joining him will be hanging out at the mansion later. As Tony states in the movie, "First you get the money, then you get the power, then you get the women".

The third layer is our macro empire building gameplay. Users will be able to spend endless hours



[above] Taking out trackie wearing retirees has never been this much fun

us by society, and a video game provides us with the opportunity to experience freedom, to escape from reality and do things that we would never be able to do in our real lives. I think this is why people enjoy experiencing video games as a "bad guy" because it is a fantasy.

With the Scarface game, we let users live the fantasy of being Tony Montana, to live by his rules, with his abilities and personality. After watching the Scarface movie, you often hear people quoting Tony's lines or talking with his accent for days afterward, and we hope that we can satisfy this same thing with our game - to let people say some great Tony lines and to experience his character to the fullest. And while Tony does some bad things, he has a solid set of moral values that he lives by, and he is not a simple street thug.

Scarface is essentially about building a drug empire. Does this mean the main character eventually has to have a fall from grace? Or is it a case of making him look like the lesser of the various evils?

We are creating a game experience that is authentic to the Scarface license. As Tony Montana, users will fight against despicable enemies, build a drug empire, and become a drug Kingpin in Miami. We are not trying to teach any lessons about the dangers of drugs, but there will be real consequences in the game to what Tony is doing.

Following on from that, we've heard Tony will have a moral code he has to abide by. Is this how you bring the player back into an ethical framework? And if so, doesn't this compromise some of the player's freedom?

A major aspect of what makes Tony Montana such a fascinating character is his unique moral code and this theme will be carried throughout the story and missions. The average citizen may not condone his actions or methods, but most everyone can see his obvious reasoning in these matters. Family, respect, vanity, tenacity, courage, loyalty, and humor are the building blocks for the character of Tony Montana. He follows a strict personal code to maintain many of

AS TONY MONTANA, USERS WILL FIGHT AGAINST DESPICABLE ENEMIES, BUILD A DRUG EMPIRE, AND BECOME A DRUG KINGPIN IN MIAMI



Pete Lowe

POSITION: Senior Designer

WHAT THE POSITION ENTAILS:

Specifically writing, maintaining the vision and a bit of everything else.

PREVIOUS GAME CREDITS:

Dark Summit, Pure Ride, MTV Sports Snowboarding, ESPN Pro Boarder, NHL PowerPlay 98, NHL PowerPlay 96

FAVOURITE LINE FROM

SCARFACE: Tony on the dance floor with Elvira, after asking what her name is Tony responds with "Hancock?".. Cracks me up every time.

building up their cocaine business, establishing networks of suppliers and dealers throughout the world. The goal is to make a ton of money, which can be spent on purchasable assets in our exotics catalogue. You can buy weapons, vehicles, outfits, exotic pets (Tony MUST have a tiger in his yard), and music. Everything you buy will be stored at Tony's mansion. So imagine by the end of the game, you will be able to go back to Tony's estate and enjoy all of the cool things you've earned.

Playing as the "bad guy" is increasingly becoming a theme in today's videogames - what do you think is driving this trend, and what's appealing to you about creating a game with a bad guy as the main protagonist?

Video games are the ultimate medium for providing a fantasy experience. We live our lives by a set of rules that are imposed on

Just Say No



Scarface himself may have been based originally on Al Capone, but the setting for the film was straight out of real life. In the early 80s, Miami was a battlefield. There was an insane amount of cocaine coming in from Colombia, and where there's inordinate amounts of money to be made, violence isn't far behind.

The escalation in the trade was made possible in 1979 when Carlos Lehder purchased property on Norman's Cay, an island in the Bahamas. Using this as a base, he was able to fly in cocaine from Colombia, then move it on to the USA (the light planes couldn't make the distance in one go, so a mid-way point was necessary for refueling). Using light aircraft to transport the drug was a revolution, and meant that around 1,000 kilos could be brought in at a time.

The operation soon became an alliance between Lehder, Pablo Escobar, the Ochoa family and Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha, known collectively as the "Medellin Cartel". Even after the fall of Norman's Cay in 1982, trafficking continued.

As more coke came in and more money was involved (a seizure of 3,906 pounds of coke in a Miami International Airport Hangar in 1982 was a new record), the trade became more and more violent in Miami. Think that bathtub chainsaw scene was fantasy? Think again. One of the most violent incidents was a shoot-out in 1979 between Colombian gangs at a Miami mall in broad daylight.

Then, in 1984, Nancy Reagan began the "Just Say No" campaign, and people all over the world simply stopped taking and dealing drugs... and everyone was happy. Yeah right. Actually, the trade continued, and by 1989 the DEA was seizing so much money that it was self funding.

Required reading:

"Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw"

-- by Mark Bowden

"Cocaine: An Unauthorized Biography" -- by Dominic Streatfeild

"The Cocaine Wars" - by Paul Eddy

"Kings of Cocaine" - by Guy Gugliotta and Jeff Leen

Hip Hop & Gangster Films



From *Carlito's Way*, *Goodfellas* and *Godfather*, through to *Scarface*, hip hop is inextricably tied to gangster films - whether it's quoting from them, sampling them, copying the iconography or, in the case of *Scarface*, identifying with Montana's rise from nothing to the status of kingpin. Indeed, this link is so ingrained that it could be argued that these films are almost as sampled in hip hop as the likes of Parliament/Funkadelic and James Brown.

You don't have to dig too deep to find *Scarface's* influence in contemporary hip hop. There's the rapper Scarface from the Geto Boys (and just in case the link wasn't obvious enough, there's his seminal solo cut "Mr Scarface"), there's Chef Raekwon's "Only Built 4 Cuban Linx" album, Nas's "The World is Yours" and "New York State of Mind" (I'm like Scarface sniffin' cocaine) from *Illmatic*, Mobb Deep's "It's Mine" and "G.O.D. Pt.III", the list just goes on and on. Although Radical haven't revealed which contemporary cuts will be unlockable in the game, they've got a rich archive of hip hop history to choose from.



Tom Legal

POSITION: Technical Director
WHAT THE POSITION ENTAILS: Managing and directing all programmers on the team, and for the quality of our technology.

PREVIOUS GAME CREDITS: The Hulk, Dark Summit, NBA Basketball 2000

FAVOURITE LINE FROM SCARFACE: When Manny says to Tony: "You know what I want, I like a Blue Jean, right, where my name is written on the back of chicks asses."

these traits. When other people or situations challenge them he reacts with raw intensity. It's a hugely appealing aspect of watching his character and in fact, his downfall in the movie becomes imminent, when his morals become irresolutely conflicted - his loyalty to Sosa vs. his respect for the family unit (the wife and kids of the intended bomb target); his loyalty to his friend Manny vs. his respect and protection for his sister.

We're not attempting to educate people on the difference between right and wrong. We're simply trying to provide a fun game experience that sticks to Tony Montana's values, the *Scarface* license, and doesn't become tasteless violence. Some people might say that this limits the freedom of the user, but we really don't see it that way. Tony is not a generic thug.

What steps are you taking to show that Scarface will not be a game that glorifies drug trafficking?

None.

With the slack Rockstar have had to deal with due to the Kill All Haitians scandal aren't you worried that a game about a bloodthirsty South American drug czar may have people crying "racist"?

We're making an interactive entertainment experience about Tony Montana and the *Scarface* license. We're not addressing any issues, cultural biases, or racial barriers beyond the content of the movie and the Tony Montana character.

How many rival gangs will there be and could you tell us about them?

There are a number of rival gangs throughout the world that Tony will have to watch out for. Tony's



biggest rivals are Gaspar Gomez, Nacho Conraras, the Diaz Brothers, and Sosa. They each have an army of thugs that are out to take out Tony and to disrupt his organization. Also, the police and DEA will be throughout the world trying to bust Tony. Lastly, there are Pirates out in the ocean that will attack and attempt to steal Tony's shipments. Tony has enemies everywhere.

What role will the DEA play in the game?

The DEA are enforcers in our game. If they bust Tony, he will lose any dirty cash and/or drugs in his inventory. Also, the DEA patrols will enforce the boundaries of our world. If you venture out too far in the ocean, the DEA will come around and take you out.

Tell us about how character interaction will work - especially the concept of having aggressive and passive modes of interaction. And will your actions have ramifications beyond each encounter?

Dialogue will play a huge role in our game experience. In fact, our current script calls for roughly 15,000 lines of dialogue. Tony is such an entertaining character, and we will give users hours of fun just exploring the world and interacting with all of the characters in it. Tony's dialogue will be context specific, and conversations can easily escalate into a combat situation, so users will have to manage these interactions carefully.

Tell us about "Blind Rage Mode".

One of the most memorable scenes from the *Scarface* film was Tony's coke-filled rage in the Mansion shootout, standing at the top of the stairs taking out waves of Sosa's soldiers and taking bullets while he screamed out in anger against all of them. We really wanted to take that scene and create a shooting gameplay mechanic that would take advantage of Tony's character. This is where Blind Rage came from. Basically, as Tony takes out enemies throughout the shooting experience, he builds up his rage meter, which can be used to kick into Blind Rage. In this mode, Tony is hyper-focused, the world and enemies go into slow motion, and Tony becomes nearly invincible, firing unlimited ammo at a crazy rate. He becomes a one man wrecking crew, firing out a



Scarface: Vice City?



cone of destruction, which the user directs for a short time until the rage runs out. The result is an awesome, extremely gratifying game mechanic that stems directly from the character, and lets the user really feel the raw intensity, power and spirit of Tony Montana.

What plans do you have for the soundtrack? Will you be using tracks from the era, or perhaps using more contemporary hip hop (given the influence that Scarface has had on so much of that music)?

We plan to have licensed music from the era of the movie. Every track must fit with the Scarface world and feel authentic to the IP. Licensed music will be played throughout the world and will be location-based. In other words, when you walk into the Babylon

The development team has been working on our core technology for over 2 years now. We were previously working on an original driving/shooting/action game, and when Vivendi Universal Games offered us the opportunity to work on Scarface, we jumped on the opportunity to re-use our technology and experience. It was a perfect fit for us, and by the time we ship the game, our technical team will have been working on our engine for 3 years.

What are the strengths of the technology behind the game?

Our technology allows us to stream content dynamically and seamlessly, which allows us to create a giant open game world. Also, we have spent a lot of time developing our ocean, which will provide the game with a great open world

the Simpsons Hit and Run game was an open world concept with a heavy amount of character interaction, and we are definitely doing some similar things in the Scarface world. We are placing a huge emphasis on dialogue and interaction, and it will bring a lot of entertainment value to the game, much like it did in Hit and Run.

What will this game do that no other game has done so far?

This game will let users Be Tony F**king Montana. We will deliver an authentic Scarface experience that provides the cinematic feel of the movie, along with a giant open sandbox world where users can feel the freedom to experience Tony's character to the fullest.

What are you most excited about in terms of working with this license?

Scarface is my favorite movie of all time. Tony Montana is an amazing character, and our entire team is having so much fun designing a game around him. Scarface fans will not tolerate a poor quality game, and demand that we deliver an authentic experience. I love the challenge ahead of us - I am so motivated to not only satisfy the fans' expectations, but to exceed them.

And finally - why now? Admittedly Scarface is a classic film but as far as game licenses go it seems a little old to appeal to a mass market. Or is this a part of the maturation of the games industry?

When we got the opportunity to start working on this game over a year ago, we saw Scarface as a classic movie with a character that has developed a cult following. But the further we dug into the research, the more we discovered that Tony Montana's following runs far beyond

that. If you walk down the street in any major North American city, you will see street artists selling paintings of such icons as Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, and Tony Montana!!! Tony has become much more than a cult hero...

he has become part of popular culture and his character appeals to a large market. Every round of focus group testing we have done has revealed a passionate fan base for this license. Furthermore, Tony has been adopted as a hero among the hip hop community. Tony is so appealing because of his attitude, his drive, his courage, and the raw intensity of his pursuit of the American Dream.

Lastly, the 20th Anniversary Edition Scarface DVD was released in October of last year, and it got an overwhelming response. So we hope to capitalize on the relevance that this event has brought the Scarface license, and give the fans more of what they want...Tony Montana. <<<

THIS GAME WILL LET USERS BE TONY F**KING MONTANA. WE WILL DELIVER AN AUTHENTIC SCARFACE EXPERIENCE...

club, you will hear early-80's disco music. When you are in the islands, you will hear reggae or latin music.

At the same time, we want to provide a free and open experience for the user, so we plan to have some contemporary music and hip hop available to be unlocked and purchased in the exotics catalogue. These tracks will only be available once the story is completed. We must provide users with an absolutely authentic Scarface experience first. Once they have played through the story, it is up to them to customize their experience and have hours of fun in our sandbox world, listening to music that they choose.

Tell us about the technology behind the game. How long have you been working on the core game technology and was it a good fit bringing it into the Scarface project?

gaming experience by boat and float plane as well as on land. Also, Radical has spent years developing solid libraries and core technology for all consoles, which will allow us to transfer our game between PS2, Xbox, and PC with a reasonable amount of effort.

Radical is perhaps best known for Simpsons: Hit and Run. What are the major similarities and differences between working on the Simpsons license versus Scarface?

One of Radical's greatest strengths as a company is our ability to deliver on the authenticity of a license. With the Simpsons games, we spent a lot of time figuring out the core of the content and making sure we transferred the full entertainment potential of the license into the game. This experience has benefited us greatly in creating an authentic Scarface game design. Furthermore,



Jeff Harkness

POSITION: Art Production Manager

WHAT THE POSITION ENTAILS: Managing the creation and pipelines for all art assets in the game.

PREVIOUS GAME CREDITS: The Simpsons Road Rage, The Simpsons Hit and Run

FAVOURITE LINE FROM SCARFACE: When Tony says to Manny: "Look at the pelican fly! C'mon pelican!"



UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Shooter

PLAYERS: 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: Midway

AVAILABLE: Early 2005

CRUSH-O-METER



Before you get put off by the fact that this is a sequel to the muddled and disappointing Xbox port of UT 2003 let us tell you in no uncertain terms that Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict is a whole new beast, and one that

is shaping up to be quite fierce indeed. The main complaint levelled at Unreal Championship, aside from the fact that it ran poorly and looked pretty average was the fact that it was slow. Consoles simply aren't made for PC style FPS games, as players are never going to have as much control over characters with a gamepad as with a keyboard and mouse. Though still a shooter at heart, Unreal Championship 2 levels the playing field by placing more of an emphasis on movement and melee combat than has ever been seen in the Unreal franchise before.

KOSHIE?

Traditionally melee combat in FPS games has been little more than

an added bonus or something that your friend who is much better at the game than you will do to show you how much better he is. There's nothing quite so embarrassing in a LAN as having someone kill you with a Quake 3 gauntlet while you're armed with a rocket launcher or kosh you over the back of the head in a Halo death match. Instead of having melee as a fun but otherwise redundant addition to combat, Unreal Championship 2 makes it a fun and integral component to gameplay. This is done in a variety of ways, not the least of them being the fact that each of the characters has a unique melee weapon as well as combos and special powers that can be used in melee. The Skaarj,

for example, come armed with their traditional arm blades, which is quite handy at dishing out the mega damage. A Necris, on the other hand may not do nearly as much damage but can move faster and has access to a vampiric healing special ability. Players in melee mode can also deflect incoming shots using a well timed pull of the left trigger, enabling them to get into melee distance without having to worry too much about being blown into small bleeding bits.

The cleverest thing about the new implementation of melee combat looks to be the camera. When equipped with melee weapons the perspective switches to third person giving the player

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Fully, if Sub-Zero was a playable character that would be the BULLSHIT SICKNESS!



[above] A history lesson come to life. Those robot Egyptian slaves were bootylicious.

a better view of the terrain and action. This may not sound like that interesting a move but when it's combined with a simple but innovative lock on feature it becomes something pretty special. When the player targets another when in melee mode the character will automatically lock on and track the enemy until one of the combatants is dead. This lock on also means that it is much easier to hit an opponent in melee as you don't need to manually compensate for an enemy bouncing around the map like a bunny with a red hot poker jammed where the sun don't shine.

Epic has also covered the problem of crossing long distances elegantly with the use of adrenaline powered moves. If you've played any of the last UT games you'll be familiar with the concept - during battle your adrenaline meter fills and you can use your full meter to pull off special moves. For Unreal Championship 2, the adrenaline meter fills faster than it ever has before, a fitting addition to the much faster paced gameplay of the newest game in the series. Using adrenaline, players can launch themselves across the map with massive lunges or make acrobatic leaps and dodges. It all promises to be pretty sweet indeed.

UNREAL KOMBAT One final thing of note for all you Mortal Kombat fans in the crowd, rumours abound that Unreal Championship 2 will feature a secret unlockable MK character that players will be able to use in multiplayer after completing the single player game. Epic has neither confirmed nor denied this rumour at this point so it looks like we'll have to wait until early next year to find out.

PLAYERS CAN LAUNCH THEMSELVES ACROSS THE MAP WITH MASSIVE LUNGES



[above] I'm 'avin it! Ibeefal Sorted!

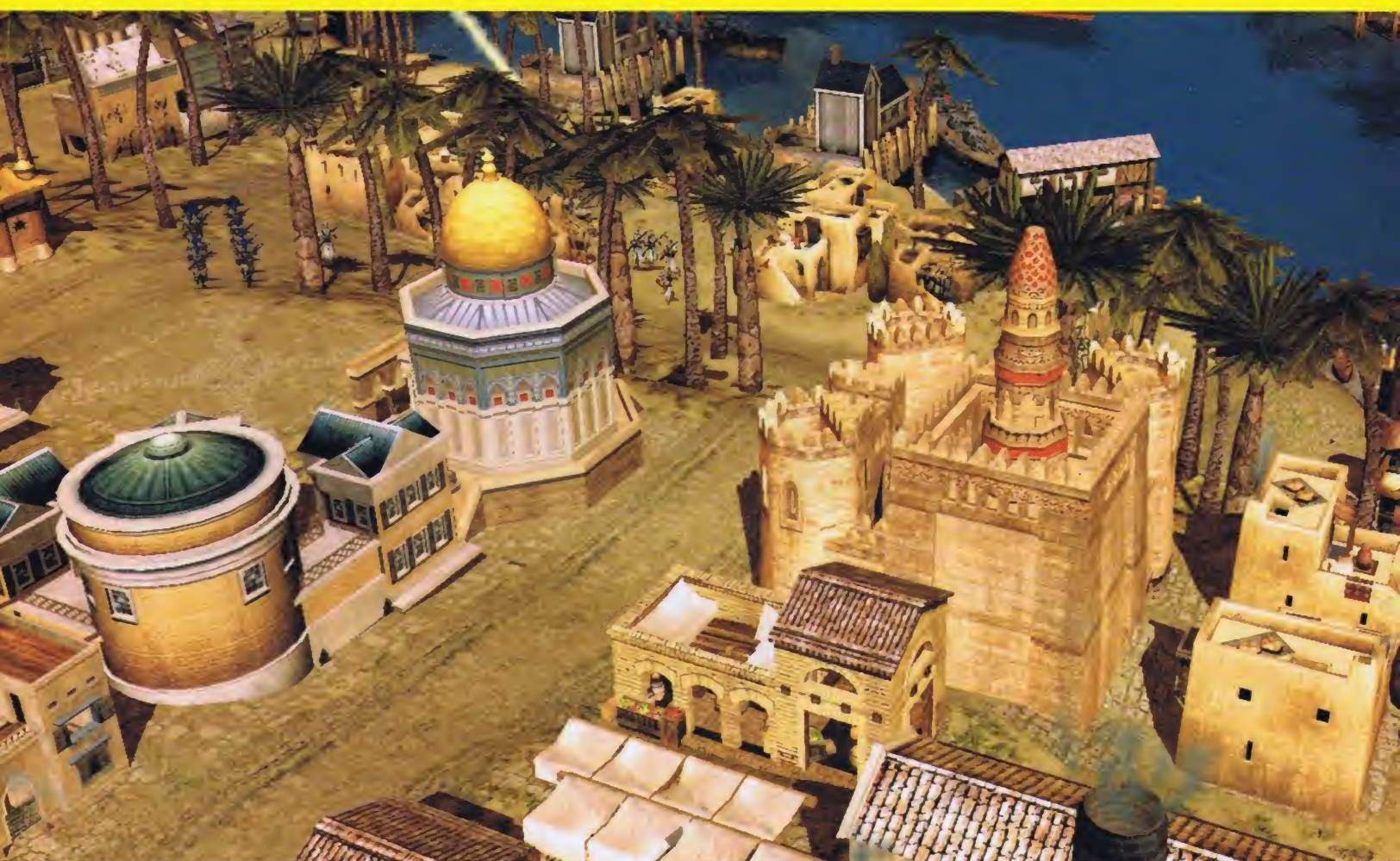


[above] Dr. Jackal I presume?

SHOOTING NICELY

Of course melee isn't the only thing that looks good about Unreal Championship 2. Shooting is shaping up nicely as well. Like in melee the player has an auto lock on function but unlike melee the lock on doesn't mean an instant hit - the player still has to manually aim - the lock on simply takes care of the oft-times frustrating process of continually having to spin around looking for the enemy you are trying to target. The game will feature a single

player mode that promises to fill players in on more of the history and society of the Unreal universe as well as multiple multiplayer modes including such fan favourites as deathmatch and capture the flag, playable on around 40 maps. Due to the fact that the game is being developed exclusively for the Xbox rather than being a somewhat lazy port, Unreal Championship 2 apparently features twice the number of polys of the first yet still manages to run a damn sight smoother. <<



EMPIRE EARTH 2

When you start with a game that covers battle from stone-age to space-age what do you do as a follow-up? More of everything, of course.

This "more of everything" RTS mission has gone to developers Mad Doc and it looks like Empire Earth 2 is getting the right treatment. Just like the first game it covers everything from sticks and stones right up to giant robots. There are 14 civilisations to choose from, there are 15 epochs to advance through, and EE2 promises almost twice the number of available units with 370 combat troops signing on for the second tour of duty.

SIZE MATTERS

If you're someone who doesn't believe that size matters, for whatever reason (my condolences), Mad Doc is performing corrective surgery on the genre with a bunch of new features to make EE2 "easier to get into and easier to manage than any other RTS".

The stuff in the quotation marks are the words of the studio's chief Mad Doc, Dr. Ian Davis. He has worked on more than a dozen RTS games - everything from Dark Reign to Star Trek Armada II - and it shows in pretty much everything Mad Doc is doing to make those easy words ring true.

Let's start with the citizen manager. Put up your hand if you've ever lost track of a wood cutter or left a worker standing around with his hands in his pockets. As the game goes on, it's easier and easier to do. You just have so many of the little blighters. With the citizen manager you pull up a screen with a list of the game's resources and you add workers with a left-click and remove them with a right click. With these few simple clicks your orders go into action throughout your empire. You never have to drag a guy from a tree to a lump of gold again ... you can just yell

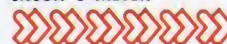


AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RTS
PLAYERS: 1-Multi
DEVELOPER: Mad Doc
AVAILABLE: Late Q1 2005

CRUSH-O-METER



[below] Like a history lesson. Zzzzz...



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

We'd like to see atmosphere and personality that isn't drowned out by size.

EE2 PROMISES 370 COMBAT TROOPS SIGNING ON FOR DUTY



Rushing won't work, you'll have to be more tanktical. *Sigh*



orders at them. It's centralised, simple and as convenient as hell.

The war planner shows similar poise, style and common sense. It pulls up a map of the game world and lets you draw arrows on it and attach notes. With a button press you can send it to your allies and it appears on their mini-map, telling them exactly what you want them to do, and from where. In fast moving games, it lets scheming take on whole new levels of bastardry, especially when used in conjunction with the new diplomacy options.

On this front, players have new tools available to them like the timed alliance. Sure you can have the permanent, "until war is declared" team-ups but being able to set an alliance to last, say five minutes, has definite advantages. For one, it means that your ally might lose track of time so you can get a jump on them when it runs out, and secondly, it gives you a guaranteed five minutes of

safe time. The only way to break a timed alliance is for your team to wipe out all opposition in a Sole Survivor game.

You'll probably want to be playing Sole Survivor. It's set to be intense. The mode came about because Davis was tired of everyone wanting to team with him for the easy win. Now, as soon as your team mops up the opposition all bets are off. There can be only one winner. This changes the whole complexion of games. You want your team-mates to do well, but not too well. As soon as your buddy starts to dominate, it's time to get a new buddy. With betrayal like this built into the game you'll really want to watch the diplomatic options like whether you want to share line of sight or let allies move through your territories when you offer any alliance. Of course, you can always poison your ally's well and sabotage factories with your spies, even if you screw up the negotiations.

DON'T CROSS ME

Beyond the new twists on old themes, EE2 also pulls out tricks we've all seen before, but not in RTS games. For one, it takes a leaf out of old wargames and divides the map into territories. Each territory has its own border and each acts like an expansion site. Since players control all of the resources in a territory and other factions can't cross your land without permission (or declaring war), these territories have tactical, economic and diplomatic uses.

A final feature that has a variety of uses is something borrowed from big screen TVs. Empire Earth 2 is coming with picture-in-picture. It means players can now split what Davis insists is their most

valuable resource: their attention. Using this system you can set your second window to jump between bookmarked locations or you can attach the camera to units. Now you can fiddle around with your base as you watch an army advance or you can monitor two battles at once.

All up, Empire Earth 2 is looking solid and after a little hands-on, we can tell you that all this stuff

isn't just hot air. Even if its sheer size doesn't impress you, EE2's army of tweaks and innovations probably should. Man, we hope other RTS developers are watching this one because, after this, a lot of wandering wood cutters are just going to stay lost. Screw 'em, I just don't want to go back. Check it out early 2005. <<<





FAR CRY INSTINCTS

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN


DETAILS:
CATEGORY: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-Multi
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
AVAILABLE: Q1 2005



>> Okay, so this isn't so much a preview as just an excuse to show off one of the more interesting inclusions in Far Cry Instincts via some pretty hilarious artwork. That inclusion is the trap system, which will allow Jack to lure unsuspecting enemies to their deaths. There are three traps that we know about at this stage: the branch whip, which is good for impaling mercenaries; the arrow volley, which is most effective at longer ranges; and the mortar, which is mostly used for taking down armoured vehicles, but as the illustration shows, can also be used to send troops to their untimely demise.

For those who don't know, Instincts is the console only pseudo-sequel to Far Cry, where lead character Jack Carver is actually infected by the mutagen, giving him some rather cool powers (heightened melee skills, extrasensory abilities and camouflage capabilities) that he didn't have in the PC title. We'll have more on it soon.





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32 GTA San Andreas

The best console game of all time?



Review Index

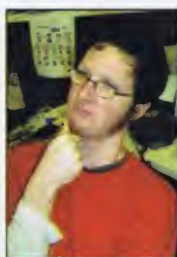
- 32 GTA San Andreas
- 38 Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
- 42 Halo 2
- 46 Prince of Persia: Warrior Within
- 48 The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age
- 50 Ratchet & Clank 3: Up Your Arsenal
- 52 Jak 3
- 54 Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2
- 55 Killzone
- 56 WWE SmackDown! vs RAW
- 58 Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault
- 60 Need for Speed Underground 2
- 61 GoldenEye 2
- 62 The Getaway: Black Monday
- 63 NBA Live 2005
- 64 Under The Skin
- 64 FlatOut
- 64 Powerdrome
- 66 Rollercoaster Tycoon 3
- 66 Ty 2
- 66 Sega Superstars

REVIEWS



Game Theory

DANIEL STAINES



Cutting to the chase straight away, the issue I want to address in this month's instalment of Game Theory is the extent to which gamers are responsible for the quality of the games they play. Unlike books, film, television or music - which are based on passive and largely unchangeable content

- gaming is a medium where the audience is relied upon to generate their own content in the form of interactivity and gameplay. It goes without saying that you have to play a game to enjoy it, but just how much of the quality of that play is up to you and how much is up to the developer?

Let's take Doom 3 as an example. A lot of people complained about Doom 3 because the quick-save function made the game too easy and ruined the tense atmosphere upon which it so heavily relied. After all, the threat of death ceases to be a threat at all when it's rendered meaningless and inconsequential by the F5 key. But the thing is that it's not clear whether this is the player's fault for exploiting quick-saves, or the developer's fault for making them easy to exploit in the first place.

On the one hand, it's not like complaining about poor level design or an overpowered monster because those are things over which the player has no legitimate control. The quick-save function, on the other hand, is something over which the player has complete control. They can use it all the time, they can decline to use it at all, they can use it once a level - essentially they can regulate its impact on the game entirely. So why is it legitimate to decry it for the ease with which it can be exploited? It seems analogous to scolding a game for including cheat codes. Just because the function's there, it doesn't mean you have to use it. As the old saying goes, it takes two to tango.

On the other hand you could argue that, because it were obviously aiming to establish a certain



kind of atmosphere with their game, they shouldn't have included a function that could easily be used to shatter that atmosphere. You wouldn't think it's reasonable for Konami to put a rocket-launcher with infinite ammo in a Silent Hill game, but it presents exactly the same danger to gameplay as the quick-save function does in Doom 3 - if players exploit it, then their immersion in the gameworld will be ruined. In much the same way you wouldn't give a child a hunting knife and then act surprised when they injure themselves, developers have a responsibility to protect gamers from their own fun-killing whims.

But does this mean that developers should assume the worst about gamers automatically and tailor their games accordingly? If some people are going to use quick-save to ruin their own fun, then maybe the best thing to do is take it out and avoid the problem altogether. Or not. Although I can see the benefit in limiting a player's freedom to achieve a particular game design goal, I strongly believe that players should be made responsible for the way they play their games because responsibility is what interactivity is all about - and gaming is an interactive medium. If we abdicate responsibility for our own enjoyment, then we abdicate part of the right to decide how we want to play games. And that's definitely a bad thing.

Until next month,
daniels@next.com.au

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

0-49

If these games were a Simpsons episode they'd be Simpsons Safari

50-59

As entertaining as The Regina Monologues... not very

60-69

Insane Clown Poppy or perhaps Bart The Mother. Okay, not great

70-79

King Size Homer or Homer to the Max. Have their moments

80-89

Homer Goes to College and Viva Ned Flanders. Yeah baby!

90+

22 Short Films About Springfield and the Spin-off Showcase. Gold





GTA: SAN ANDREAS

ELIOT FISH discovers one of the best console games ever...

▶▶ GTA III changed the face of console gaming and there's probably not a single gamer left on the planet that would argue that fact. There aren't enough fingers on your hand to count the number of GTA III clones that have hit the market since, nor can we count just how many developers have failed to capture anything remotely as wondrous as the gameplay possible in Liberty City. When Rockstar released the anticipated follow-up, GTA: Vice City, we saw that not only had they prettied up the graphics, but they'd added some interesting new gameplay twists - such as being able to purchase property, change your outfit, and ride fast motorbikes. The new stuff was cool, but for many, Vice City didn't have that sparkle of genius that was so apparent in GTA III. Vice City felt more like an incremental update, and in fact, you could almost say that the series took a backwards step. The disappointingly flat terrain

hurt the gameplay mechanics, and there were some noticeable problems with draw distance and texture loading. Even aside from the technical gripes, the life of a mobster was starting to wear a little thin.

Thus, the coming of GTA: San Andreas has been met with a degree of skepticism. Many have doubted that Rockstar have it in them to deliver another game as magical as GTA III; that for want of a better term, they'd already blown their load. Well, all that is about to change. Nothing can really prepare you for what Rockstar has done with GTA: San Andreas. If GTA III was a rough diamond, then GTA San Andreas is the fully polished gem. That feeling of wholly absorbing immersiveness is back, the intense addictiveness has returned, and GTA: San Andreas is here to kick the world's goddamn arse.

FASTER MORE INTENSE

Some gamers might have been blasé about a new game in the GTA series,

and to be honest, so were we. After doing so much amazing stuff in the previous two games, what really was left for Rockstar to add to the experience? Just a new storyline? Of course, you can't understand just how wrong that assumption is without playing through San Andreas for yourself.

To illustrate what an amazing game San Andreas is to play, we could make this review a long list of features, a fact-sheet of sorts, but we're not going to do that. Why? Because discovering these on your own when you play is half the fun. There have been plenty of reviews of the game online already, and annoyingly few reviewers see it fit to reserve some of the magic for the gamer to uncover through their own play time. You see, during our time with San Andreas we found ourselves amazed by features and events that we didn't think were possible in a GTA game, on more than one occasion. So why



[below] Gat on the side, wigger-style



[below] Straight gangsta mack





Is that two in the pink?



Quick, catch them, they stole your Soul Glo



Don't be a menace to San An' while drinking juice in the hood

➤ GTA San Andreas is here to kick the world's goddamn arse

spoil that excitement for our dear readers? No. We would rather you picked up this superb game and discovered all its heavenly delights for yourself. Shield your eyes from spoilers. Don't discuss the game with friends who've played it through. Don't download a stupid walkthrough or FAQ guide. Trust us.

Rockstar's aim was obviously to deliver a fresh GTA experience, whilst at the same time giving players everything they loved about the series and making it all bigger and more exciting than ever. And sure, if it's more interaction that you crave, then San Andreas delivers big time. If it's cooler vehicles and more freedom that you crave, then San Andreas delivers big time. If you want your character to be free from artificial barriers, then San Andreas delivers... yep, big time. But the single greatest thing about San Andreas is that it doesn't regurgitate the same sort of premise, the same types of characters, and the same environment that has come before it. Everything old is new again.

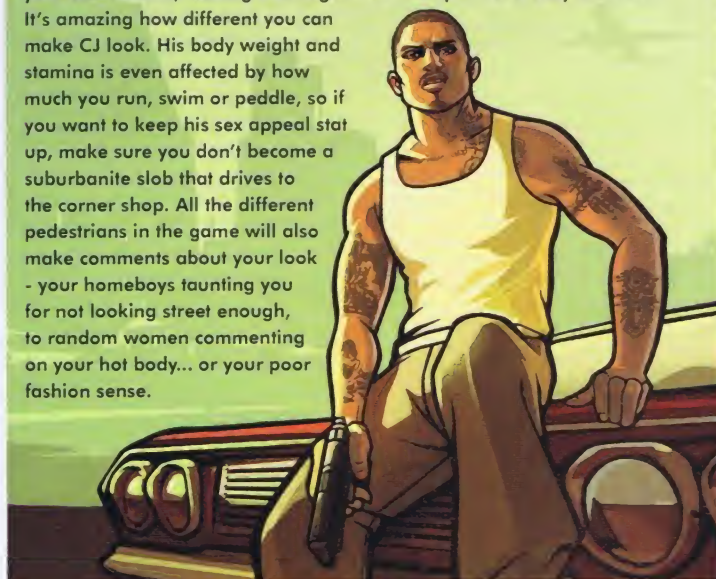
This is the best kind of sequel. It returns you to a game world that you want to re-experience, but delivers it in such a way that your entire perceptions are turned on their head. San Andreas makes you feel the way you did when you first discovered how cool GTA III was. There's the giddy excitement over new toys and new features, but San Andreas goes deeper than that. This game is Rockstar finding another more eloquent way of saying what they did with GTA III. It's an incredible expression of game design philosophy, rolled up into a tale of revenge and redemption.

The important thing to realise is that San Andreas isn't just about homeboys and drive-bys, or about cornrows and crack dealers. It's easy to assume that based on what we've all seen of the game so far, but you have to understand that the world in San Andreas is larger and more diverse than any previous GTA game. Gang culture is but a small part of the overall content in this game, but it just so happens

HE'S NOT HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER San Andreas takes character customisation far beyond the wardrobe changes of Vice City. Your character, CJ, starts the game a fairly naive young man, but you'll discover how much you can guide his evolution. At any time in the game, you can take him to a barber shop for a different haircut (anything from an afro to a blonde mohawk), to a tattooist to brand various parts of his upper body, to the gym to workout and develop a ripped bod, to a takeaway joint to get fat on junk, or to a variety of clothes retailers to buy him anything from gold watches to cowboy hats and street wear. All depending on the cash in your pocket of course.

Any clothes you purchase wind up in your closet back in any one of your safe houses, making a change of outfit a quick and easy exercise.

It's amazing how different you can make CJ look. His body weight and stamina is even affected by how much you run, swim or peddle, so if you want to keep his sex appeal stat up, make sure you don't become a suburbanite slob that drives to the corner shop. All the different pedestrians in the game will also make comments about your look - your homeboys taunting you for not looking street enough, to random women commenting on your hot body... or your poor fashion sense.





Avoid rimwork, or go on the D-Low, it's up to you

The ultimate status symbols are spokey dokeys and trainers

San Andreas' version of Wheel of Fortune and Baby John

to be where your character, Carl Johnson, starts his journey. So, don't get hung up on the fact that you might know nothing about hip hop or that you can't name the members of Public Enemy, it's not necessary to know any of the background to the sub-cultures depicted to enjoy San Andreas. Of course, if you're savvy, then you'll enjoy it on another whole level, which is part of the game's magic.

San Andreas is a bold artistic statement. Rockstar pull no punches. Their vision isn't muddled by what a meddling marketing department might think, or what the censors might choose to target. The script, story, and interactive content in this game, all revolves around delivering the genuine article. There's no compromise here for political

correctness, but the trick is that the outrageousness is delivered with such astute humour and irony that you would be a fool to take offense. San Andreas is a thorny parody of the grim reality of criminal life. But it's also wrapped up in a piss-take of the ignorance that pervades middle-America, and the overly-patriotic fluff of Hollywood action films. But it's not all that cynical. The humour also comes from a genuine love and understanding of the various sub-cultures of the early 90s that the game is set in, as well as a want to provide the player with characters they can both empathise with and be entertained by.

THE CHEESE SONG

Just as GTA III amusingly used cheesy songs from the Scarface

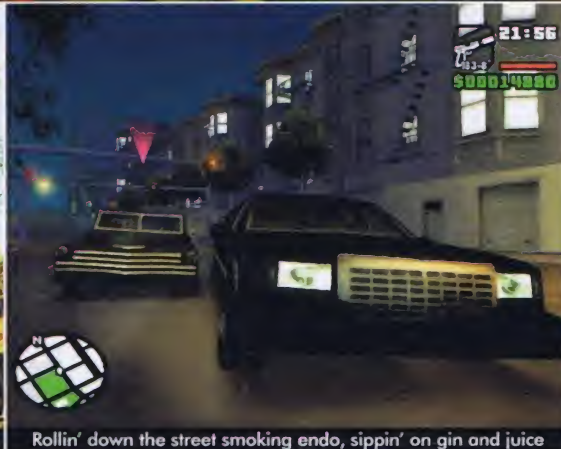
soundtrack on its radio stations, the music in San Andreas plays just as important a role in helping to deliver the game's message. The songs chosen are very specifically included to serve the atmosphere, story and humour - this isn't just a swathe of hits to list on the back of the box. Likewise, the voice actors chosen - from Samuel L Jackson to Chris Penn and Peter Fonda - are there to give the characters authenticity, not just because the budget allowed for some big names to walk into the studio and lay down some lines. We can imagine the folks at Rockstar sitting around a conference table and coming up with a big wish-list of actors and music that would best suit their story, characters and the atmosphere they wanted to create

in the game world, and managing to fulfill almost every single one of their wishes thanks to the success of GTA III and Vice City. There's nothing flippant about San Andreas. This is an impressively polished work, but impressive because of its accuracy and strong artistic vision.

Did you ever care about Tommy Vercetti? Nope. He was just a vehicle for our shenanigan fantasies. Your character in San Andreas, CJ (Carl Johnson), on the other hand, is someone that you truly become. You'll actually care about his predicament. You'll care about the fate of his neighbourhood, his friends and his remaining family. It's not that he's some goody two-shoes, but rather that you grow with CJ as the story progresses and that you'll empathise with his character. This partly comes down to an exceptionally well-written script, and masterful voice acting. The cut-scenes in San Andreas are simply brilliant, even down to the way the animators have managed to imbue the characters with small gestures and personality traits. There's gameplay here that anyone of any age would find exhilarating, but it's the way that it's tied into

MULTI THEFT AUTO One major new addition to the GTA series in San Andreas is the inclusion of a two-player mode. Once specific two-player icons are discovered, you and a friend can indulge in hectic on-foot or vehicle-based rampages (one player driving, the other targeting whilst riding shotgun) and other fun co-op mini-games. There's no split-screen here, everything takes place on the one screen, which can make seeing what's going on sometimes difficult, but the overall experience is one of hilarious mayhem. GTA was a fun game to watch someone else play anyway, so now two of you can enjoy the action together, San Andreas has even longer lasting appeal - an impressive feat indeed.





Cool guys ride side saddle... but I guess you missed the memo

Rollin' down the street smoking endo, sippin' on gin and juice

In an unexpected twist the helicopter distributed free candy

the narrative that makes it much more than a big virtual sandbox of awesome game mechanics. As CJ changes and evolves, so does the game and your access to its tools and toys. Most importantly, though, is that you can control CJ's evolution. You can choose the type of person he becomes, whether it be a muscle-bound gangster who lives alone, or a stylish Lothario who needs to shed a few pounds. Become the best mountain biker that ever lived, or spend your weekends hotting up your low-rider with nitro and aesthetically pleasing mods. Shoot hoops with your homeboys, or head out of town for a dirty weekend in Vegas dressed in the finest of threads... The choices in San Andreas are seemingly endless, and

there's a good chance that you'll still be playing it and uncovering its mysteries months after finishing the storyline. It's a game world that you never want to leave. Even after putting in roughly 50 hours on purely the story missions (that's 50 hours without exploring any of the mini-games), we just want to keep on playing in the world to see what else we can uncover. It would probably be safe to say that there's over 100 hours of gameplay in this game if you choose to have a go at everything there is, not including the time you'll spend just going off and experimenting with the mechanics and fooling about. In fact, it's even silly of us to try and put a figure on the time you'll spend with it. San Andreas

▶▶ You'll still be playing it months after finishing the storyline

is a game that just keeps on giving for as long as you want it to.

BIGGER AND BETTER

As genuinely surprising as San Andreas is, it still feels like a natural progression for the series - there is now more interaction with the world than ever before, making the GTA experience even more immersive than ever. In terms of major gameplay mechanics, there are some obvious improvements. Firstly, you can now swim. It's amazing how much more freedom this gives the player. Not only can you jump in water, dive down and take a look around - maybe even hunt down those elusive 50 Oysters - but swimming now allows you to drive more recklessly near water without the fear of death from drowning. It also means you can bail out of a burning boat and swim to safety. But swimming isn't the only improvement when it comes to the exploration of San Andreas. CJ can also climb up over fences and walls. Now you'll never

come up against an annoying dead end, as CJ can climb up over any wall he can reach. You can even jump across a gap, grab a ledge and pull yourself up. You'll be climbing up onto the roofs of houses, escaping over the back fence of an alleyway to evade the cops, and just generally making your way through the architecture as you would imagine CJ could do in reality. Complete freedom is what Rockstar has attempted to achieve in San Andreas, and amazingly they've done it.

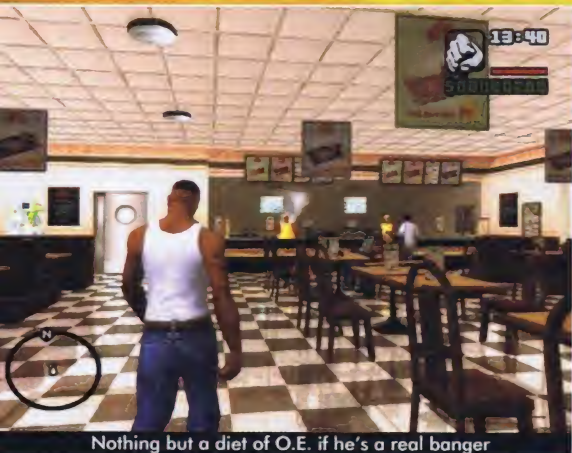
In a way, this sense of player freedom is best typified by the addition of one of the coolest items ever in a GTA game - the parachute. CJ can now freefall (after bailing from a plane, or jumping from an extreme height) and enjoy a spectacular view of the map as you slowly drift back to earth, guiding yourself to the landing point of your choice. Seeing the full splendour of the city (or forest, or desert etc) beneath you is a truly thrilling moment, but of



[above] Landing on HMS Gangbangelot



[above] San Fierro Rush



Nothing but a diet of O.E. if he's a real banger

Pimp this ride, biatch

Truck-a-saurus!

course, reading about it can never do the actual moment justice. San Andreas is stunning for the way it introduces the player to new surprises such as this across the course of the entire game - of which the parachute is but one.

This is easily the largest GTA in terms of landmass, and once you get your hands on certain vehicles and items, you'll understand and appreciate why it had to be as large as it is. What's brilliant is the flow of the gameplay, as there are no loading points between cities or any other outdoor area. Everything seems to load smoothly off the disc as you explore, complete with an improved draw distance. It can initially feel daunting when you realise just how much there is to do, but the game carefully guides you through each area, with the



[above] Bass, how low can you go



[above] Gat-tat on fit



[above] Bake him away toys...

mission design cleverly constructed to show you the ropes and give you a feel for how to get from A to B.

Simply hopping on a bicycle and pedaling your way around the map is one of the coolest things you can do in San Andreas, as rustic as it may seem. The bike is fast, maneuverable, and allows you in and out of a tight spot. It delivers almost as much freedom

as exploring on foot, but with the speed of a vehicle. We also love the sound of the wind whistling past CJ's ears, and the squeak and clatter of the pedals and bike chain. Who would have thought a videogame could make a gentle bike ride through the countryside such an engrossing experience? Of course, it's hard not to delight in weaving in and out of highway

traffic, or pedaling off the side of a cliff - just to see what happens. But the bicycle (and variations thereof, be it BMX or Mountain Bike) isn't the only cool new toy to make exploring the world exciting again. There's one particular piece of gear that you get late in the game that will make exploring the map truly exciting. Of course, that's one of those things we'd rather you discovered on your own. It feels more of a reward that way.

HEY, ROLL OVER DJ... Tuning in to the various radio stations in San Andreas is entertaining enough that you could leave the game on in the background whilst you do your household chores. The radio stations range from 90s grunge rock to R&B, classic funk (including most of the tunes that inspired today's hip-hop and rap), soul, hip-hop, L.A. rock, reggae, and of course the hilarious talk-back. Rockstar have roped in some pretty famous DJs too. Expect to hear George Clinton, Chuck D, Axl Rose and Sly & Robbie introducing the tunes and filling you in on the changing weather and latest news in San Andreas, amongst other well-known voices.



JACK OF ALL TRADES The plethora of new side missions, combined with the deeper interaction you can have with the game world, makes San Andreas the most fun game in the GTA series. We all know of the Vigilante, Taxi



!!! Although there's no official word, Hyper will take a punt and guess that an Xbox and PC version of GTA: San Andreas will surface in 2005.



C.J. dances disturbingly like a white guy...



Yes, you can grow watermelons



LL Cool CJ

and Fire Truck missions possible from previous GTA games, but San Andreas introduces an amazing array of new things to do on top of those vehicle mini-games. Walk into CJ's local bar, and challenge someone to a game of pool - yep, complete with proper ball physics. See that arcade machine in the corner? Go stick some money in it and play. Even drink machines can be used to purchase a quick burst of health. Feel like making some extra bucks? Try some Courier missions, darting through the city on a two-wheeler, or carry out some Trucking for RU Haul. Then there's the Freight Train challenge, or even a simple basketball challenge in your neighbour's yard. Take a break from the storyline to simply take your girlfriend out on a date, paying careful attention to where she wants to go - of course, you'd better make sure you're wearing something nice, turn up in a car she'll think is cool, and it wouldn't hurt to turn up with a gift. There are even more side-missions than this, some which take part on foot and indoors, but suffice it to say that this game delivers so much entertainment outside of the story missions that it will be

It will be played and discussed for months, or even years to come

played and discussed for months, or probably even years to come.

The combat mechanics in San Andreas have been tweaked to make them the most useful in a GTA game to date. You can now lock on to your nearest target with the R1 button, the auto-targeting intelligently ignoring dead bodies or non-threatening NPCs. However, even when locked on, if you move the analogue stick, you can manually move the crosshair off your target if you see something more threatening at that exact moment. Your guns can even be fired with the circle button regardless of whether you have even initiated targeting. It's yet another small improvement to the game mechanics that makes San Andreas all the more enjoyable.

Rockstar has also started to integrate communication with NPCs, with the d-pad being used to tell CJ to respond positively or negatively to comments directed at you, or questions asked of you during missions. If we imagine any aspect of the game being developed

further in any potential new sequel, it would probably be this new small feature. Interestingly, the GTA series appears to be becoming even more of a role-playing game, especially when you consider that CJ now has 'stats' that you can monitor and develop through your own gameplay, such as a firearms skill, driving skills, swimming, stamina and so on. The more you do certain things, the better you become at them. It's yet another immersive element that helps attach the player to the character of CJ.

Well, we've simply run out of pages. We could probably continue to discuss San Andreas to the point where there's no room left for any other review this issue, so we'll just leave you with one final comment: San Andreas is an inspired piece of videogaming that dwarfs almost every other console game you can get your hands on at the moment. Get on board. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North

PUBLISHER: Take 2

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: MA15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Huge, magical, addictive, thrilling, funny.

MINUS: Sometimes textures are momentarily slow to load.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	98	98
OVERALL		
97		
Pity the fool that doesn't buy this game.		





METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES

STEPHEN FARRELLY would travel to Dark Aether for Samus Aran

▶ Nintendo's negative stance on sequels has been well documented. The company actively puts down the 'more sequels' business model most publishers embrace and continually pushes for more original, innovative games instead of the more-is-better updates most products receive. Funny then their most inspiring title this year is built off that which they so despise. But that's Nintendo - hypocritical to the last.

Metroid Prime 2 Echoes is an expansion of Metroid Prime in every conceivable way. Retro Studios has tackled the game with a mind to not only fix their gripes with the original (we didn't really have any), but to implement features they didn't have time to realise in the first place. What this means is Metroid Prime 2 runs with more ideas and delivers a deep and complex game because of this. By no means is MP2 a pick-up-and-play classic, that's Bungie's forte. Instead, players will

have to throw away familiar FPS controls for the alien Metroid set-up. Moreover, level design and story narrative are equally unique serving the player with a surreal exposure to advancement in gameplay and plot development. What comes of all of this is a game where solitude and isolation are your grounding elements; which says very little for player comfort and security, but what did you expect? This is Metroid, after all.

IT'S ADVENTURING TIME

MP2 picks up not too long after the events of its predecessor. Samus is handed a job by the Galactic Federation to investigate a distress beacon coming from the planet Aether. A crack team of Galactic Federation soldiers has gone missing in the vicinity of Aether and it's your job to find out what happened to them. Everything should go smoothly until Aether's chaotic atmosphere damages Samus' ship and she's

forced to land. Ah well, business as usual and we're introduced to an entirely new Samus model with a cinematic sweep of our protagonist and her harsh surroundings serving as an inviting introduction to the adventure ahead. Like we said, business as usual.

From the outset players are introduced to the similarities and differences between Echoes and Prime. To begin with, scanning has now changed a little in that entire objects glow a particular colour as opposed to only having a small square - this makes it a little easier to discern what needs to be scanned and tends to suit the slightly modified presentation of the overall game. Equally, after your first scans you'll notice a marked difference in the Log Book; everything is segregated into particular categories now with a much easier to follow manifest, which makes scanning more enjoyable and less like a chore.



[above me thinks] Strike a pose



[above for god's sake] Space nazis?





The elders tell of a ball much like you...



Space Pirates + Space Nazis = coolest game ever



So damn buff they call her Miss Sheen

» A brilliant element of play is the implementation of Dark Aether

Art direction has seen an insane advancement in creative endeavour with architecture and character and level design looking every bit as good as they should. While Tallon IV was certainly an alien environment, Aether is much more extraterrestrial in look and feel. This is accomplished not only through wonderful art, but also through the design of each environment and the narrative at hand. The game is darker in theme and visual presentation, with both elements feeding off each other; Samus will find the soldiers on the planet, however, what she finds may not always be pretty, and through her Log Book downloads what we - as the player - learn is almost always very uncomfortable.

Log Book entries, through the aforementioned overhaul; give you the story in snippets. While the story for Prime was told through data entries from the Space Pirates, Echoes sees Samus learning her plight from a number of different sources, be it the soldiers she is sent

to rescue, the Space Pirates or the native Aetherian inhabitants - each log is also presented differently separating the cultures and expanding on the alien nature of the game with subtlety and style.

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT PRIME

With all that said and done, Echoes still holds many similarities to Prime and continues to maintain the gameplay tradition of the Metroid series faithfully. Early on in the game Samus loses her abilities, once again. However, the event is cleverly scripted and cynics should shut their mouths right now. Moreover, regaining your abilities has a plot

advancement that also serves as an upgrade tool. What this means is while you do lose your abilities, seeking them out will uncover some much needed goodies for you to use, and it all ties in nicely with what's happening in the grand scheme of things.

Naturally, losing your abilities means finding paths to newer areas you simply can't reach now; another hallmark of the series. But thanks to some very clever level design and event scripting, the unreachable areas are broached without you even realising it.

A new addition to the series and a brilliant element of play is the implementation of Dark Aether. The story goes that Aether was also struck by a chunk of the deadly Pahazon that also collided with Tallon IV, however, instead of just



[bear is driving] Oh no Sand Nazis!

poisoning the world and mutating its inhabitants, the Phazon actually nudged Aether out of alignment, creating a parallel version of the world, only opposite in theme. Sound like a Star Trek episode? You bet! But it works, and that's the important thing.

Having Dark Aether to play with has allowed Retro Studios to up the puzzle and exploration ante, and

MULTI[MORPH]BALL!!! For the first time ever, Samus Aran can hunt her friends down in a series of multiplayer matches. Huge Quake-like environments and some interesting level designs make this addition to the series more than worth it for fans. It's no Halo 2 multiplayer, but then it's not trying to be. The unique control scheme also makes this an equally unique experience for multiplayer nuts (especially FPS nerds). One particularly great mode of play is Hacker where you upload a hack into other players for them to pass on.





In the worlds before Monkey, primal chaos reigned

What is this Fraggile Rock?

This is like that drug trip I saw in a movie...

ALL ORGANIC The presentation for the game has changed with a uniquely organic menu system. Moving the analogue stick around will roll the menu options into sight, but it's completely free-form and very alien (suiting the main theme of the game). This "organic" approach to presentation works well alongside the tech and sci-fi elements of the game and stands as a great addition to the suspension of disbelief.

then some. Exploring Dark Aether is also very deadly, so the pace is somewhat slower than what seasoned players might be used to, however, this works in favour of the game as an experience unlike any other - the feeling of dread when you first face the Ing (the inhabitants of Dark Aether) is both breathtaking and chilling for the simple fact you can only engage them in the light pockets provided (small areas where the Dark atmosphere cannot damage you), which means you have to be constantly aware of where you are at all times while following an enemy who can transform into liquid at any time. It really is quite frightening.

As Dark Aether is an exact copy of Light Aether, the game's maps are essentially the same. But each



version of the world holds a number of paths, blocked or unblocked, depending on which world you're in. For example, you might come across a gate that cannot be opened in Light Aether, but finding the same gate in Dark Aether and performing a particular task can open it in the former. Equally, passages and tunnels are slightly



[up] Do you really want to hurt me?



[up] Do you really want to make me cry?

modified for the Morph Ball in both worlds which really does open up the exploration considerably. There are also a lot more Morph Ball puzzles that rely heavily on your skills with the physics of the ball and your timing with bombs - these updates have helped expand the engagement for newcomers to the series while giving a shout out to side-scrolling Metroid games of old (and new, as it were).

IRON CHICK

As mentioned earlier, Echoes is a much more alien looking game. Environments are livelier or baron,

depending on where you are, but the extremes of both balance the visual exploration for players. This also helps with recognition for the many environments found within the game and maintains a consistent sense of geometry for the roving Bounty Hunter. Both Light and Dark Aether help present a much grittier game with Echoes, which goes a long way to enhancing the unfamiliarity of environments and exploration, but also to the isolation Samus faces, which is an all-important hallmark in the series and something Echoes delivers in spades.

Samus herself has been completely remodelled for Echoes and she looks every bit as sexy as she should with a strong emphasis on femininity - her limbs are elongated and slim while



...when I was on a drug trip



Multiplayer coin collecting... yep, it's a Nintendo game



Agon Wastes

The Townsville level



[up] Mmm... glowy



[up] Metroid's take on the mine cart ride



Samus has been completely remodelled and looks every bit as sexy as she should

her animations are graceful and sure, there are also more close-ups of her face to really hammer home the sex of the protagonist players are leading. This works on a personal level alongside the isolation and desperation of Samus' plight. Players should feel for our heroine, and while it's certain she's anything but helpless, her effeminate presence is a constant reminder of adversity.

The soundtrack for Echoes runs with the Dark theme with a wonderful collection of tracks for each level, though you're hard-pressed to find anything too uplifting on the soundtrack - we're lost, alone, and severely outnumbered on an alien planet, remember?

UPDATE YOUR NINTENDO

While the game may sound too good to be true, Echoes isn't without its pitfalls. There's a painful familiarity with most native creatures in Aether, be it Wasps, Beetles or Tentacles - Echoes would have worked better with a whole new cast of creatures

with different patterns. Like Prime and others before and after it, kill a native, leave the area, come back and it'll be there again, ready to impede your path. It's an essential tool for gameplay (as killing them will give you pickups most times), but something we feel could have been re-tooled. Beyond that, however, there's so much more to like than dislike about this iteration, and Echoes is a more than worthy sequel to the brilliant Metroid Prime.

It would be very easy to overlook this game with the likes of Halo 2, GTA San Andreas and Half-Life 2 stealing all the spotlight, and that's something Nintendo should really be looking at. That aside, it's a perfect expansion on the 3D Metroid design with a wonderful twist in the inclusion of the Light and Darks worlds to explore. Any self-respecting hardcore gamer should pick this game up, and if you don't own a Cube,

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: First Person Action

PLAYERS: 1-4

DEVELOPER: Retro Studios

PUBLISHER: Nintendo

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: December

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Expands the Metroid design. Much more alien design and narrative.

MINUS: Not enough expansion in series' hallmarks.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
92 92 95

OVERALL

95

Nintendo isn't all primary colours and mushrooms y'know.





HALO 2

"Halo halo, what's all this then?" asks **CAM SHEA**

▶▶ Halo 2. You've probably heard of it. Chances are you've already played it. So what did you think? Were you blown away? Or were you underwhelmed? Perhaps you felt a little bit of both.

THERE'S A GAMING CALENDAR?

To be honest we fell into the latter category... at least at first. After all, the coming of Halo 2 is a significant moment on the gaming calendar. The first game achieved legendary status amongst gamers and the industry, and three years on is still arguably the best game on the Xbox. But in the run-up to Halo 2, it was quite easy to forget that this sequel would not be all things to all men.

Nor, for that matter, was the first game. The original Halo was a straightforward first person shooter that succeeded for four core reasons: it was gorgeous, it had some fresh ideas (such as the two weapon limit and recharging shield), it had

excellent multiplayer, and perhaps most importantly of all, it created sandbox battlefields through good AI, amazing physics and the inclusion of vehicles.

When you boil it down, these are the reasons Halo was such a landmark title. Fast forward to the end of 2004 and people were starting to believe that Halo 2 would revolutionise first person shooters all over again... when the reality is that without completely changing the framework of the gameplay, that's never going to be possible. Go into Halo 2 expecting a highly competent FPS and you'll love every minute of it. Go in expecting it to change your worldview and you're going to be underwhelmed. Expectation can be a cruel mistress.

Halo 2 very much picks up where the last game left off. The game opens with Master Chief returning as a hero, while the leader of the Covenant forces returns to be branded (literally) a heretic.

What's that, you say? A Covenant cutscene? Yep, to open things up a little, Bungie have used the cheesiest story device since "I woke up and it was all a dream" - the second playable character. They obviously want to tell more of a story, and by cutting between the human and Covenant perspectives you are certainly given an insight into both sides of the conflict. Indeed, you'll come to see that the Covenant aren't just a faceless evil, resulting in a much more complex view of the game's world.

THE FLOOD... AGAIN

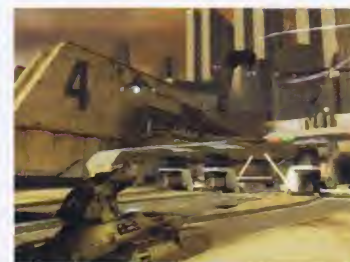
This somewhat clichéd approach has also given Bungie the chance to pit the Covenant against the Flood, and these battles are some of the more intense in the game. Remember the Library level in Halo? Well, there's a new Library mission in Halo 2, and it's one of the best Covenant missions in the game, as you'll find yourself going up against human



[up] Cruising and hassling shopkeepers



[below] Tekken it to the tanks!





!!! It would have been cool if Bungie had included some bonus physics mini games... but maybe they'll roll something like that out as a freebie at a later date via Xbox Live.



Just get out the Mortein rounds to take out the Yanme'e



Master Chef cooking up some marvellous gunplay



As Vamp Willow might say "board now"

Some sections are like a rollercoaster ride, others are spooky and atmospheric

marines who've been killed and taken over by the Flood, resulting in some eerie and tense shootouts. Perhaps the best way to describe it would be Resident Evil crossed with Doom, as you're making your way through a twilight world of low amber lighting and lots of fog, with snarling noises unfurling in the air all around you and countless places for your enemies to hide. And hide they do - the marine zombies are much more intelligent than the average Flood, taking cover, moving from hiding place to hiding place, charging, using weapons... and still attacking in swarms! It's levels like these that you thank god for the shotgun and Energy Sword.

It's also levels like these where you'll see how cleverly Bungie have set up the many "versus" scenarios in the game. When the Flood are involved, for instance, you'll come to view the Sentinels (security droids essentially) as your allies. They may shoot at you occasionally, but they're far more useful to leave in operation so they can help you take

out the Flood. The best part, though, is when you come out the other side of this tense and dark section, you find yourself in a hangar with this incredible view of the world outside. You're way above the ground, snow is bucketing down and across a mountain range on the horizon sits a truly massive alien city, which is where you're headed. Time to go out in the snow.

Indeed, this is what Halo 2 does so well - pacing and variety. Some sections are like a rollercoaster ride, others are spooky and more atmospheric, and still others will take you completely by surprise. You never really know what's around the corner, but you always want to find out.

WHAT ABOUT DUAL WIELDING?

But back to that gameplay that sucks you in and threatens to never let go. One of the biggest changes is the expanded roster of firearms and the ability to dual wield weapons. There are only five dual wield weapons, but that's most certainly enough, introducing even

more strategy to weapon selection and allowing you to do things like take down shields with one hand (Plasma Pistol) and the enemy with the other (SMG). The tradeoff for dual wielding is that you can't throw grenades, and if you go in for a melee attack you'll automatically drop your second weapon, which is a bit annoying but fair enough in terms of gameplay balancing.

Whilst dual wielding is cool, most of the new single wield weapons play a greater role in the game. Being able to swing a Covenant Energy Sword for one is wicked - it's incredibly powerful and comes most in handy against the Flood (you can also lock on to enemies with it and perform lunge attacks). The Sentinel Beam is also a damn cool weapon to wield, acting essentially like the Lightning Gun from Quake, and frying anything in its path.

Every weapon has its place in the game. It's a heap of fun experimenting with each, and it won't be long until you have different preferred weapon sets for different situations. Opening up the gameplay further are the extra vehicles. Piloting the Wraith in particular is genius, allowing you to charge at close range



THE DEMON! THE DEMON! Enemy AI has definitely been taken up a notch in Halo 2. On the higher difficulty levels in particular they'll take cover, move around behind you and jump up on boxes to get a better vantage point. Enemies and squad mates alike also have more in the way of personality, and are constantly chattering away. Your squad will frequently empty clips into dead enemies, saying stuff like "here's a little more lead for ya". It's a bit rah rah but definitely adds character.



Halo 2: The Battle for the Glebe Island Bridge

Sticky grenades = best. weapon. ever.

Stick a grenade to his ass! Quick!



[up] The Kig-ya... not just a pretty face

>> You're so caught up in the gameplay that you don't notice how great the world looks

and take out pretty much anything with the plasma mortars at a distance. The vehicles and weapons all add up to damn compelling action where you've always got choices. If things get frustrating, there's always something else you can try.

The sweet nougat gameplay center is certainly tasty, but it's all the incidental details wrapped around it that help make this game feel truly rounded and the gameworld

believable. There's seeing an AI squad mate hop in a Ghost and ride alongside you. There's nailing a long range cannon shot from your Scorpion right at the foot of a fast moving enemy Ghost, sending it flipping wildly through the air. There's the deformable terrain and vehicle models, allowing you to wreak havoc on the environment and pilot vehicles that are reduced to little more than a frame. There's the superb physics and the return of sticky grenades (hooray!). There's the stunning water effects, lighting effects and translucency effects. More than anything though, there's the scale of the whole thing. Every single level is designed to give you the feeling that you're part of a

wider world. Whether it's looking down on Earth from a space station surrounded by hundreds of cruisers, finding yourself dwarfed by towering arcane structures all around, flying around providing support in a Banshee against an epic and impossibly beautiful backdrop, Halo 2 really does take the environments to the next level.

The ultimate compliment though is that for the most part you're so caught up in the gameplay that you don't notice just how great the world around you looks. Often it's not until you're given a moment's reprieve that you stop to take a look around and a shiver runs down your spine.

With a single player game that will challenge even the most hardened gamers on Legendary, rock solid splitscreen co-op (although there's no co-op over Live) and Xbox Live play that is everything that was promised and more, Halo 2 really is an impressive piece of game design. Get it. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-16
DEVELOPER: Bungie
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Excellent AI, visuals, weapons and physics.

MINUS: A few glitches, Master Chief is a cheeseball.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
92 88 93

OVERALL
94
Awesome gameplay - a more than worthy sequel.



BONZA MATE! Halo 2 isn't quite as polished as it could have been, with frequent minor glitches/texture pop-in during cutscenes. We also weren't particularly enamored with the Inappropriate Cock Rock that springs out of nowhere in many of the action scenes. Honestly, with the rest of the music being so good, why introduce widdly widdly guitar wankery? Those of you who suffer from the cultural cringe may also find the Aussie squad mate that often seems to be with you a little hard to bear.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: The Warrior Within

DANIEL WILKS: The Care Bear Within

When Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time was released, it was widely applauded for its genius level design and equally widely criticised for its simplistic and highly repetitive combat system. With such criticism under their belt it seems odd that the developers created a much more combat oriented sequel with The Warrior Within. Luckily for players the team have wisely decided to bump up the fighting system to match the increased amount of combat.

I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO REMEMBER A BUNCH OF NEW KINGS

The Prince has become a rather bitter young man for the sequel. It seems that he should have died in the first game and the time streams have been thrown into turmoil due to his unfortunate ability to keep breathing. Ever since he "escaped" his fate, the Prince has been relentlessly pursued by a

massive and seemingly unstoppable demon with deadly (non-hentai) tentacles whose sole purpose is to kill the Prince and set everything right. Not content to become demon fodder, the Prince comes up with a rather drastic plan, to go right back to the beginning and stop the Queen of Time from creating the Sands of Time, therefore negating everything that has happened as a result of them since and ultimately avoiding his death. You've got to say one thing about the Prince - he doesn't think small.

This gimmick of going back in time plays a central role in The Warrior Within with many of the levels being repeated through the game in different time periods, usually playing through them first in the present and then in the past so you can see what the ravages of time have done to the structures. This clever little device allows many of the levels to feel comfortably familiar whilst still providing a



Kiss the graze on Princey's knee better bitch



Well sure it's easy when you can slow time!

new and interesting challenge for the players. If anything the level design for the movement puzzles is even better than the first game with a greater degree of intricacy and use of the three dimensions. Whereas the first game showed the player the route through many of the levels in brief cinematics, The Warrior Within plays its cards much closer to its chest, only giving the player a few clues as to what is needed in the level, encouraging much more in the way of exploration and experimentation.

Due to this the extra camera angles, such as first person and

the landscape camera which were little more than attractive window dressing in the first game play a vital role as they can clue the player in to where they have to go next. Aside from the wall running, swinging and other moves players could utilize in TSoT, Warrior Within introduces new modes of movement including rope swinging as well as sliding down curtains/tapestries/wall hangings, giving the game even more depth of movement. Rope swinging enables the player to grab a rope by a wall and use it to swing back and forth for wall running or to reach high



|||| Call us prudes but we really don't see any need for the Prince to be calling his enemies "bitch". Sure, he's meant to be a darker character, but swearing is a very shallow and jarring way to try and achieve this end.



There's only one move that can save you dude - the haha step



I'd use Nameless or Broken Sword over the Prince anyway



New York is that-a-way, man!



But how will he get the grass stains out?

ledges. The other move enables the player to slide down a long wall hanging using their weapon, enabling them to descend rapidly without the fear of death. As could be expected, slowing time and reversing time make a welcome comeback and still play an integral role in many of the puzzles.



Like popping a bottle of Moet

▶▶ You've got to say one thing about the Prince - he doesn't think small

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

The new beefed up fighting engine is a definite improvement over the repetitive button mashing of the first game and introduces longer and more intricate combos as well as some cool new moves such as throwing weapons and being able to steal weapons from armed enemies. The latter is probably the most satisfying of all the new moves as it gives the player a second weapon for dual wielding and gives you a pretty damn nifty little death animation to boot. As the game progresses the Prince faces progressively harder enemies and learns new moves and combos as well as acquiring new weapons to get the job done. Unfortunately the combat focus of the game detracts from what it

should really be about - movement puzzles and exploring the levels. This is not to say that the combat isn't fun - it has a definite appeal but after the first few hours it becomes a distraction rather than an integral and enjoyable part of the game.

A year down the track and the Prince doesn't look quite as impressive as he did before. The levels are still beautifully designed, the animations still rank right up there and the game is still very attractive, it just lacks the wow factor of last year's title. The soundtrack on the other hand is a big step down from The Sands of Time and includes, amongst other things what we like to refer to as an unhealthy dose of Inappropriate Cock Rock™. <<

TIMING Prince of Persia: The Warrior Within introduces another new style of gameplay to the mix in a series of brilliantly tense and well placed timed chase sequences. When the Prince's nemesis appears to kill him the titular anti-hero has little he can do but run like the whiny bitch he was in the first game. During these sequences the player has a short amount of time to make it through a simple and fast paced though deceptively deadly movement puzzle to make it to safety.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: UbiSoft Montreal
PUBLISHER: UbiSoft
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: M15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Excellent level design, new moves, better combat.

MINUS: Too much of a combat focus.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
88 79 89

OVERALL
88

Excellent level design and clever use of the time gimmick.



LORD OF THE RINGS: The Third Age

DANIEL WILKS is cut together from footage from Corey Haim's career

There's no two ways about it - Lord of the Rings: The Third Age is a hugely derivative game. The presentation and gameplay are so strongly reminiscent of the Final Fantasy franchise that it comes as a bit of a surprise that Square Enix weren't involved in its creation. The game is so reliant on the films that most of the in-game cutscenes are re-cut footage from the trilogy and narrated by Sir Ian McGandalf that the story not only comes across as being derivative but it serves as an alienating factor, stopping the player from ever really having emotional investment in the game. That said the development team have done the best they could with a very (very very for that matter) difficult task of writing a story set during the Lord of the Rings trilogy that closely mirrors the action of the films without overstepping too many bounds thereby pissing off the purists.

MCGANDALF TO THE RESCUE

Players take the role of six disparate characters from Middle Earth, a Gondorian Warrior, a Dunedain Ranger, an Elf, a surly Dwarf (now there's a surprise), a Rhohirrim Horse Lord and a pissed off love interest with a couple of axes. Brought together by circumstance and the guiding hand of Gandalf, the sextet form what is essentially a second Fellowship, closely mirroring the movements and actions of the real Fellowship. Players make their way through every key event of the movies, often a step behind the Fellowship. Likewise all of the key enemies that are faced by the Fellowship are faced by the B-Team so you can expect to meet up with the Balrog, The Witch King of Angmar and a few others sure not to disappoint. The premise, though sound is somewhat mishandled by a distinct lack of characterisation in the party - by the end of the game we know little about any of the members of the B-Team aside from



[up] Hi, I'm Aragorn the second



[up] You forgot my birthday for the last time

the Gondorian so for the most part players are forced to play characters who are little more than pale shadows of Gimli, Aragorn and the rest.

Matters are complicated by the frequent scenes cobbled together from the movies. Instead of seeing a cinematic of the actual characters the bulk of the storytelling is either taken up by Gandalf narrating what the Fellowship has just done or is about to do or filling us in about the histories of some of the characters. Hadhod, the Dwarf suffers most from this approach and is indicative of the

difficulty the dev team had in fitting the story into the continuity of the films. When players reach the Mines of Moria Gandalf tells us that Hadhod lost family in the Goblin raids. This is all we get to hear on the matter and the effect on the progress of the story is negligible to say the least. It seems as though in the effort to remain faithful to the films so as not to aggravate the fans, the developers have managed to alienate all players due to a distinct lack of character.

It's a pity because the actual mechanics and presentation of the



game range between good and great. If you've played a Final Fantasy game in your life you'll be familiar with the mechanics of Third Age. Players control the party in real-time over a number of beautifully rendered maps and jump into turn-based combat during the battles. Unlike the Final Fantasy franchise, Lord of the Rings avoids the frustration of omnipresent random battles by spacing them well and giving the player a number of visual indicators to let them know combat is coming. When players approach an area with random battles a glowing red eye will appear in the top left of the screen, growing in intensity as the player approaches the position. Likewise a palantir will appear as the player approaches the area of a triggered battle. The third type of indicator is actual enemies

Each of the characters has access to unique skill trees in combat and magic

on the map that you can approach and attack. Whilst it isn't possible to really avoid the majority of random encounters it is nice to know they are coming. For the most part the combat is really quite simple but the game does show an alarming habit of artificially jacking up difficulty levels towards the end of the adventure.

Each of the characters has access to unique skill trees dealing with combat and magic. Experience is acquired through skill use so unless you constantly use special abilities in battle you won't see half of what the characters can do, which would be a pity because many of the attack animations, spell effects and the like

are absolutely beautiful. To fit in with the pace and plots of the films The Third Age contains no money or shops, all equipment must be picked up off fallen enemies. This is one point where the game gets it just about perfect. Item drops are well timed and the visceral thrill of getting a new and better piece of equipment maintains a steady pace throughout the game. Every change of armour and armament is shown in great detail on the character models and there is a great pleasure in seeing characters go from lowly and kind of scruffy looking to resplendent in shining mithril armour wielding a weapon of legend. <<



EVIL GAME Aside from the single player mode, The Third Age also features a poorly thought out co-op mode, as well as a more interesting but ultimately fairly dull mini-game called Evil Mode. Evil Mode is unlocked after the player completes a stage and allows them to fight a sequence of battles as part of Sauron's force. These battles are simple but do hold interest due to actually finding out what a lot of enemy attacks actually do, thereby allowing players to come up with more effective strategies to combat them later. After completing all of the battles in a stage of Evil Mode they also unlock special item drops that can be saved to your single player save game for your good characters to use.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: EA Redwood

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Beautiful presentation, solid battle mechanics.

MINUS: Lack of character, cheating game.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
89 88 80

OVERALL
80

An interesting approach that's missing player investment.



!!! R&C 3 has 15 new weapons, a host of new gadgets and new control options too. Fancy playing in first person? Well now you can...



Is he killing a snowman? And hence ruining xmas?

Oh what a feeling, Ratchet's dancin' on the ceiling...

Ratchet on his way to Toshi Station to pick up power convert

RATCHET & CLANK 3

Stay tuned for the adventures of Special Agent **WILKS!**

Insomniac are one of the few developers with the knack for making sequels better than the original game. Ratchet & Clank 2 upped the ante on the first game but they've done it again with Up Your Arsenal, making what could be the best Ratchet game yet, albeit one with a slightly different focus. Whereas the first two games were really platformers with elements of combat, R&C 3 is more of a combat game with elements of platforming but rather than detract from the allure of the game it simply serves to reinvigorate the popular series.

FEAR OF A ROBOT PLANET

Once again Insomniac have served up a very funny and charming story that sees the heroes trying to stop Dr. Nefarious from uniting all of robot-kind across the galaxy to exterminate all squishy life forms, leaving the universe to the robots. To complicate matters Clank now has a side career playing the TV super-spy, Special

Agent Clank, a role often mistaken for Clank's real life adventures by the adoring public (which includes Nefarious) and Captain Quark has lost his marbles and is living in the jungles of a backwater planet like an inbred Tarzan with lionitis. Of course things go from bad to worse with Quark at the reins so it's up to our heroes to set things right and make the universe safe for all things that scream and bleed when shot.

The R&C franchise has always been about getting bigger and better guns and this time around you start with a big gun and they just get progressively bigger as the game progresses. Each of the 14 weapons in the game gain experience through use and can level up resulting in more damage, greater range, larger ammo capacity, special abilities or all of the above. Due to the combat focus of R&C 3, all of the guns also have specific uses making sure that you'll give all of them a good bash as the adventure progresses.

Throughout the course of the game the player will find a number of Captain Quark comics detailing the "truth" of his early adventures. Each of these comics takes the form of old-school side scrolling platformers with decidedly new school graphics. Not simply a distraction, these side scrolling levels are almost good enough to warrant a game by themselves. Of course the most important addition to Up Your Arsenal is the robust and remarkably fun multiplayer mode that includes all the standard modes like CTF and Deathmatch as well as Siege. Reminiscent of Loony Tunes doing Battlefield 1942, Siege sees two teams of up to four players trying to capture strategic points on the map, activate robotic defence systems, cruise around in various vehicles and otherwise have a grand old time. It's not a subtle game, but damn it's fun. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action

PLAYERS: 1-8

DEVELOPER: Insomniac

PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: PG

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Looks great, Captain Quark levels, multiplayer.

MINUS: Character design is still a bit simple.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 93 90

OVERALL

91

The best Ratchet & Clank yet, bring on 4!



NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL 2

ON VACATION

THE REALITY TV SHOW OF NEIGHBOURLY NASTINESS AND COMMUNITY COMMOTION MOVES ON TO THE NEXT ROUND.

THE NEIGHBOUR FROM HELL WANTS TO ENJOY AN UNDESERVED HOLIDAY REASON ENOUGH FOR WOODY AND THE CAMERA TEAM TO SNEAK ALONG ONTO THE CRUISE LINER TO MAKE NASTY NEIGHBOUR'S HOLIDAY A LIVING HELL.

THIS TIME, THE NEIGHBOUR'S MUM HAS JOINED HIM, AND SHE IS TAKING GOOD CARE OF HER BABY.

GET THE NEIGHBOUR FROM HELL INTO HIS MUM'S AND FELLOW TRAVELLERS' BAD BOOKS BY PLAYING TRICKS ON HIM AND GIVE FREE REIGN TO YOUR VENGEANCE!



- 14 NEW TRICKY, DETAILED EPISODES OF THE POPULAR "NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL SHOW"
- 6 DIFFERENT LOCATIONS IN CHINA, INDIA, MEXICO AND ON THE CRUISE LINER
- THE NEIGHBOUR'S MUM AS AN ADDITIONAL CHALLENGE
- MORE THAN FIVE NEW CHARACTERS AND NUMEROUS ANIMALS
- SIMPLE, EASY-TO-GRASP CONTROLS
- ZANY COMIC-STYLE GRAPHICS

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JAK 3

ELEANOR EIFFE gets platformitis

2001's Jak and Daxter was an enjoyable, if rather typical, platformer in which the silent hero, Jak, and his wacky sidekick, Daxter, romped their way through a series of brightly coloured worlds. Two years later, the series took a turn for the grittier with Jak II, which gave the hero a voice, some guns and a big chip on his shoulder after being the subject of scientific experimentation. The stunning sequel also incorporated elements of different genres, embraced a more open-ended style of gameplay and featured a more complex and interesting storyline than your average platformer. Now the third instalment of Jak's adventure is upon us, and the gaming world is expecting big things. Does Jak 3 live up to the high standards set by its predecessors? Absolutely.

NO HAVEN FOR YOU!

As the game begins, we discover that Jak has been booted out of

Haven City (the setting for much of Jak II) and exiled to the vast desert known as the Wasteland. He is soon rescued by some fellow exiles and taken back to the desert city of Spargus. Jak's first goal is to earn his place as a citizen of Spargus, but he soon finds out that there are much more important things he has to do. A great disaster is looming and, whether he likes it or not, Jak is going to play a big part in stopping it.

As was the case in Jak II, saving the world involves undertaking a series of missions that incorporate platform-jumping, weapon-based combat and the use of a range of vehicles. While the constant switching between gameplay styles could make for a disjointed experience, Jak 3 proves to be quite the opposite. Everything you do makes sense within the context of the game's narrative, whether it's driving across the desert to rescue some stranded townspeople or

jumping and climbing your way to the top of an ancient temple. The transitions between the different gameplay styles feel smooth and natural and every component has been polished to near-perfection. Jak's movement is nice and fluid and he can pull off some impressive combos, especially when combining his jumping moves with weapon attacks. Driving over the Wasteland's sand dunes takes some time to master, but boy, is it satisfying once you get it right. Jak 3 isn't just a platformer with some shooting and driving thrown in; everything fits together to form a cohesive whole.

All work and no play makes Jak a dull boy, as they say, and there are plenty of secrets, side-quests and mini-games to indulge in if you fancy a bit of a break from the core missions. Finding secrets - in the form of red, patterned orbs that look a bit like Easter eggs - will allow you to access a number of power-

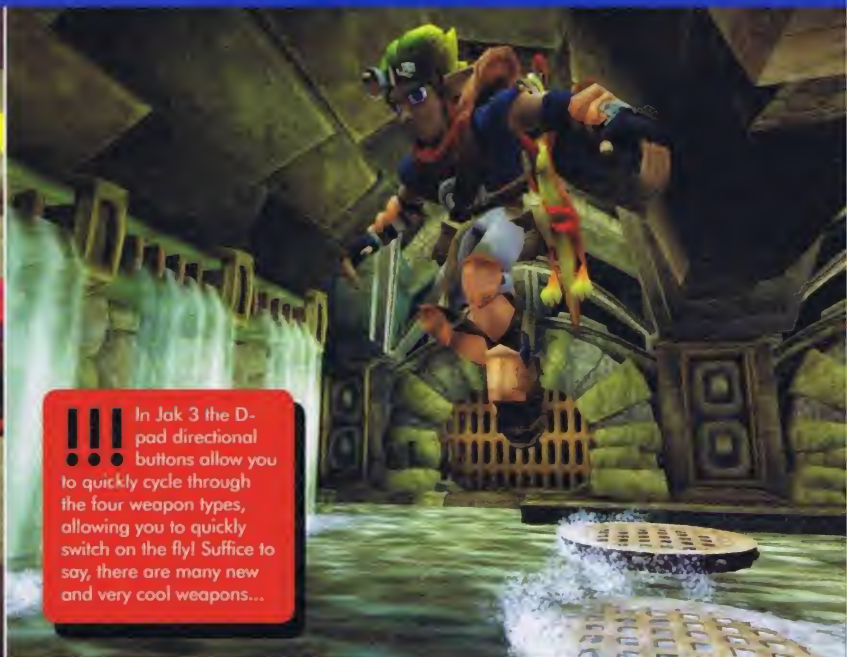


[up] Now this is pod racing!



[down] Get him some Mr Sheen, stat





!!! In Jak 3 the D-pad directional buttons allow you to quickly cycle through the four weapon types, allowing you to quickly switch on the fly! Suffice to say, there are many new and very cool weapons....



Hey Daxter, didn't I see you on Perfect Match?

Meet my parrot-rat, or PRAT for short

Dear Diary, this caption sucks, signed Cam

ups and weapon upgrades. Each upgrade requires a certain number of orbs to activate it, so how you choose to spend your orbs gives you a bit of scope for customising Jak's abilities. The more secrets you find, the more powerful Jak becomes, so you'll need to do a lot of exploring to get the most out of the game.

Perhaps Jak 3's biggest strength is the fact that it provides the sort of game world that you actively want to explore. From the harsh, yet beautiful desert, to gritty urban landscapes and creepy ancient ruins, each locale is utterly gorgeous in its own way. This game is never lacking in atmosphere. Details such as the sublime dust and water effects and the passage of time from day to night and back again add a lot to the game's immersive qualities.

»» Jak 3 provides the sort of game world that you actively want to explore

Watching the sun come up as you hang-glide from a mountain top, or feeling the tension build as you race across the desert through a gathering sandstorm are exhilarating and involving experiences. Sometimes though, the passage of time makes you come to the realisation that you've spent three days of game time trying to complete your current mission without dying.

ROUGH, JUST LIKE SUPER TALK

When a game's tutorial takes place in the "Arena of Death", you know you're in for a rough time. Almost every mission in Jak 3 becomes a frustrating exercise in trial and error

at some point. There's usually only one way to do things, and you're going to die a lot before you get it right. As infuriating as Jak 3 can be, the richly detailed and atmospheric game world always offers enough incentive to play on. The varied styles of gameplay also help to make the endless repetition feel a little more bearable. What's particularly impressive about Jak 3 is that, despite the frustration inherent in repeated failure, it's still an awful lot of fun. This game feels good to play, even when you're apparently not playing it very well. Jak 3 can be tough going at times, but patience and perseverance will certainly be rewarded. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Platformer

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog

PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: TBC

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Expansive, beautifully detailed gameworld.

MINUS: So hard it will make you cry. Daxter is annoying.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	84	90

OVERALL

90

Varied gameplay and an absorbing gameworld.



THE LIGHTER SIDE OF JAK Jak II introduced us to Dark Jak, the powered-up form Jak takes when he's fired up on Dark Eco. Jak 3 not only sees Dark Jak's return, but we also get to meet Jak's opposite alter-ego: Light Jak. When Jak is fully charged with Light Eco, he has some impressive new skills at his disposal. For example, Light Jak can slow down time to negotiate fast-moving obstacles such as swinging blades or to run over a bridge before it collapses. Mastering the abilities of Jak's light and dark forms adds some extra depth to an already deep and satisfying game.





TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2

CHRISTIAN REED looks like he's seen a ghost...

>> The Ghosts are back, to do more reconing. This time, the Special Forces Ghosts are in North Korea, which has suffered one of its worst famines in history. A rogue general is diverting humanitarian aid of food and medical supplies to his troops and generally being a bad, bad man. Enter you. Interestingly enough the three versions of Ghost Recon 2 (Xbox, PS2 and PC) are markedly different in terms of gameplay and plot, with the PS2 version taking place four years before the events of the Xbox game.

SO THIS IS THE SEQUEL?

Ghost Recon 2 keeps all the strong elements that made the original game such a success; the elegant sniper battles, gruelling mission structure and deadly shootouts, but gives it all a very clever retooling that improves on the original and expands and refines gameplay in a decidedly thorough fashion.

These alterations run through the

game from the top down. The default view is now over the shoulder with an option to switch to first person. Only one squad is available for your control, cutting back from the first game's numbers. This is one of the bigger changes and is sure to be controversial, but in our experience actually lets the game run a bit faster, making it a lot more about field tactics rather than overriding strategy. A wider range of commands are available to these troops that reflect more detailed, precise control of your responses and order.

GR2 has you seeing action in a wider variety of environments. You get more movements, with crawling and peeking around corners being welcome manoeuvres. The missions themselves are varied and interesting; blowing up bridges, providing supporting fire, the ever popular rescuing of hostages, teammates, and puppies. Then there's assaults on specific hardware, ambushing troops and simple reconnaissance

raids, the whole bag of crunchy Spec Ops style fun. Sometimes this involves lots of careful planning, sneaking around and clever sniping. Sometimes you just have to blast the hell out of wave after wave of angry, poorly armed Koreans.

To tell you the truth, even with competent enemy and unit AI there are times when Ghost Recon 2 is just plain frustrating. The realism can see you get picked off at any time, have your squad cut down in enemy cross-fire and taking on armour is sometimes nigh-impossible. Thankfully, the multiplayer experience relieves this, as human players are usually a lot more adaptive than your squad AI. The complexity that sometimes makes single player a tad exasperating becomes a real strength. Great maps see the game become a tense and hard-fought battle.

GR2 is serious gaming. If you want your fun smart, hard and mean, you need this. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

- CATEGORY:** Action/Strategy
- PLAYERS:** 1-16
- DEVELOPER:** Red Storm
- PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft
- PRICE:** \$99.95
- RATING:** MA15+
- AVAILABLE:** Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Looks great and is a nice break from the usual guns blazing games.

MINUS: Single player can be frustrating.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	80	85
OVERALL		
83		
Tom Clancy would be proud.		



That gun reminds me of a certain editorial photo...



I hate Space Nazis so much! Die Space Nazis!



We should pit Evil Malky against the Space Nazis

KILLZONE

ANDREW BULMER sees a signpost up ahead: your next stop - the Killzone!

Brand a game a 'Halo killer' and you kick-start the labelling process. If it's better that's great, but if it's worse, people tend to assume it sucks, which for Killzone is not really the whole truth. Certainly, Killzone has its faults, and there are a number of them, but it's still a game to engage the senses. Dropping you in the middle of a futuristic war between the Earth-based Inter Stellar Alliance and the former colony on Helghast the game throws you a weapon and says "kill some scum", which is its own kind of fun.

PICK ME, PICK ME

Killzone tries to take a different path to your usual FPS game by offering you (eventually), the chance to play as four different characters, each of whom have their comparative strengths and weaknesses. While this facilitates exterminating the opposition slightly differently, the effect of

using any particular character is not overly stressed and actually plays a very small part in the game.

Compounding this is the fact that the game itself is very linear, the path is mapped out and you simply follow it, often guided by comrades in-arms that will lead (and often "unlock") the way and draw fire by running into bullets. The game may be linear, but the environments are finely crafted, with a very distinct visual style and some very cool architecture. You start off fighting in the trenches, with the Helghast charging you down WWI style, and progress to Urban warfare and jungle based missions.

While the pure simplicity of following a path and mowing down your enemy is likely to have you coming back for more, there are a lot of shortfalls and aspects that have been overlooked. For one the AI is just dumb; even on harder levels the enemy can forget to shoot at you. There is also the frustration

of your weapon automatically reloading with no allowance for melee attacks or letting you sneak off a round of your secondary fire - a frustration that really eats at you the more you play. The game also never delivers on an all out, full scale battle scene; rather you plod along taking out enemies several at a time and waiting for the next scripted event.

While the gameplay falls short of marvellous, the overall design is hardly lacklustre. There's the inclusion of online play for up to 16 players on a map in a number of styled matches, although the character's slow pace bogs down its excitement. Aurally the game reaches a high standard (sometimes striking a very similar chord to Medal of Honor), and the variety of weapons, along with the environments and slick cut scenes do make for an immersive experience, but a Halo killer this ain't.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS

PLAYERS: 1-16

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla

PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: MA15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Styled environments, 16-players, easy pickings.

MINUS: Spotty AI, minor graphic glitches, linear.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY

79 83 77

OVERALL

78

Not so much Killzone as Killpath



Online play for Australia has been confirmed, with all the basic match types accounted for. Plus you can take your create-a-wrestler online. Who knows, you might even end up having a bra and panties match with Amos!



Signing on for the wrestling softball team



Ric Flair - he's old enough to be your grandfather



Each leap brings us closer to god. Catch me lord, catch me

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW

AMOS HONG goes from mascot to writer! (with added colour commentary)

Since its early days on the PSone, the Smackdown series has grown in leaps and bounds, to the point where it is now the benchmark for all wrestling titles.

WELCOME TO AMOS-LAND

The gameplay is pretty much intact from last year's Smackdown, which isn't a bad thing as last year's was fantastic (in Amos-Land perhaps - Cam). There are several new inclusions, which include mini-games (injecting steroids before matches perhaps? - Cam), The Staredown, Test of Strength, First Strike, Chop Battle and Spanking, the last one is strictly for divas only. Really, do you want to see 300 pound men in tights slapping each other on the ass? (put on a hundred pounds and we'll find out - Daniel) They are quite fun as they add the theatrics involved in pro-wrestling. Another feature is the Reversal meter (which is no Amos-o-meter - Cam), an excellent idea, which allows players to reverse a

submission move to their advantage. The dirty/clean meter is another great addition, as players can now choose to play as a bad or good guy. By filling up the clean/dirty bar, players get rewarded with special moves (more spanking moves? - Daniel).

Smackdown vs RAW looks stunning (especially the spanking - Cam), and is a step up from last year's effort (the new butt jiggle physics - Daniel). They've managed to capture all the little details of the wrestlers' faces and bodies, so much that wrestlers like Tajiri and Batista look life-like (you mean like shaved gorillas? - Cam). The legends roster returns complete with entrances and music too, boasting names like Bret Hart and Andre the Giant. Unfortunately, there's been a slight reduction in the overall roster. The list of wrestlers is still impressive, albeit minus a few names.

The commentary returns this year, along with voice acting by the wrestlers (I think he means "acting" - Daniel). The addition of voices

adds some life to the characters, but it's a bit like watching a very badly dubbed movie. The season mode returns with less freedom, but should keep everyone happy with its intriguing storyline (with plenty of paaanching no doubt - Cam), complete with the drama, action and Torrie Wilson wearing only a towel (she's no Mary Jane/Kirsten Dunst - Evil Malky). Also the match types from last year returns, including everyone's favourite, the Bra and Panties match. The one new addition is the Parking Lot brawl, inspired after the Eddie Guerrero and John Cena match. It's a nice break away from the ring (he said "ring" snigger - Daniel), instead using the surrounding cars as weapons.

WWE Smackdown vs RAW looks great and plays well, just like last year's effort. I was a tad disappointed with the audio, but overall it's a great game ("DM" whistle - Cam) and the new additions should keep the Smackdown fans happy. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Wrestling
PLAYERS: 1-6
DEVELOPER: Yukes
PUBLISHER: THQ
PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: MA15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPHER VERDICT:

PLUS: Awesome looking graphics, Bret Hart.
MINUS: Only a small step forward, weak voice acting and commentary.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
85 75 80

OVERALL
84

If it's good enough for Amos, it's good enough for you...

TOUGH TEAM GOES PLATINUM

TAILS

'The Chopper'



SONIC

'The Guv'nor'



KNUCKLES

'The Enforcer'



A TOUGH TEAM

FOR A TOUGH JOB

"Sonic still rules"

PLAYSTATION MAX

"the best Sonic game yet"

GAMESMASTER

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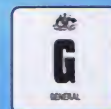
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PlayStation 2



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MEDAL OF HONOR Pacific Assault

CHRISTIAN REED hunkers down in front of his PC for the assault

▶▶ It's pretty good, this one. In fact, it comes damn close to being damn good. Close, though, only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades. Which is a shame, because Pacific Assault has got a lot going for it.

DAMN HELL-ASS KINGS

Medal of Honor was released more than three years ago now and it was the reason WWII combat simulations became so popular. First person and over the shoulder viewpoint, combined with tense and intense running gun battles, with well-researched, realised and atmospheric missions, saw this become one of the big releases of its day. Indeed, coming on the heels of, or preceding war films like Saving Private Ryan, Thin Red Line, Windtalkers and others, it was perfectly timed to go large. It spawned a slew of imitators, some good, some bland and became a big card in the multiplayer stakes.

Three years on, how can EA catch lightning twice? Well, firstly, change the Theatre of War to the Pacific campaign. The Americans waged what they called the island hopping campaign against entrenched Japanese in the last years of the war. These were brutal battles, as the Japanese were very fine soldiers in harsh jungle terrain.

The ambience of this kind of fighting is very real. The enemy have effective tactics that can be hard to deal with. Human wave attacks, in which you are out numbered and out gunned see you often fighting defensive battles. Getting flushed out of secure positions with grenades is an instant killer. When you get to your mission targets, don't be surprised to see machine gun nests, snipers and a disheartening number of enemy troops. Then, when you think it can't get worse, add Japanese air-support. Nothing quite like an enemy Zero

strafing you and your squad in the middle of a pitched fire fight.

Graphically, it's a beautiful and strange world. The models are highly realistic, with faces being a stand out. The research is superb. Any fan of the time-period will be in raptures, and the more causal gamer will get that immersive, cinematic buzz. Animals move and rustle in the lush jungle, which is hell on the more twitchy among us. Environments are detailed and rich with bright colours, movement and atmosphere. The physics are well done too. I noticed bodies floating down stream in a river, landing craft moving erratically in the sea and fog, smoke and mist all effecting your overall experience. You'll want a decent machine, though. You could simply lower the resolution, of course, but then effects like heavy machinery vibrating disappear. Catch-22 indeed.

The sound is crisp and clear, with remarkable effects created

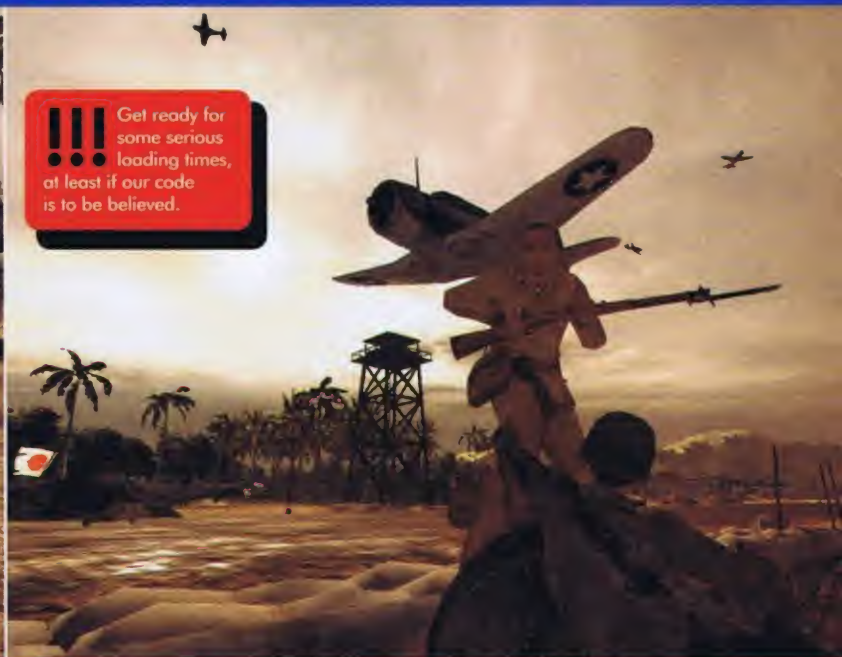


[up] Another Counter-Strike killer



[blokey humour - below] Taxi!





!!! Get ready for some serious loading times, at least if our code is to be believed.



Just look at all this beautiful foliage...



If it's clear and yella, you've got juice there fella...



...if it's tangy and brown, you're in cider town

from various guns and explosions. You'll begin to pay attention to the various rattles and screams of weaponry as another battlefield sense. That's a tommy, that's one of my guys, but that's enemy fire, things like that.

AHOY THERE CORPSMAN

A big change from the first game is the healing mechanism; this isn't the usual health-pack format. Oh no. You have a corpsman, a medic, who will run to your aid and heal you. He'll also patch up your squad, although they don't seem to actually ever die. It's a nice touch but... but... it was here this reviewer began to notice bugs.

There seem to be bugs in squad AI, for instance, that will have your pals stand there while you are brutally assaulted by enemies. Your corpsman occasionally stands still, refusing to come to your aid. Hopefully, these will be corrected

»» The research is superb. Any fan of the-time period will be in raptures

BLOODY 'ARD Combat is hard. Seriously. This is WWII, not Doom. There's no BFG, there's no healing packs or force fields. You'll be in trouble from the first mission onwards. The enemies are extremely well armed and resourceful while you have a simple machine gun. Some gamers might thrive on this challenge, some might find it frustrating. For hair-pulling frustrating gaming, try the "realistic" difficulty.

with patches but as it stands, they are big, big thumbs down.

Enemy spawning seems erratic to the point of madness (although to be fair all the games in this sub-genre suffer from obvious scripting like this). It's like they appear at random and just start blasting away. Now, this isn't the end of the world, although it is irritating. But it breaks the vaunted verisimilitude of the game, considerably. Scouting ahead, playing it smart and cold won't pay off because, well, the

enemy doesn't seem to appear according to any human logic.

Thankfully, Multiplayer alleviates some of these flaws. The prime game is Invader: The offensive team works to achieve various objectives while the defenders try to stop them. Aside from that, it's the usual suspects of maps, goals, missions and the like.

It's hard to summarize this game as good or bad. It looks and sounds and feels great. We started off loving it but soon found ourselves intensely frustrated by bugs, loading times and very difficult gameplay. We would have loved to rate this one a lot higher but as it stands, Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault just isn't that great a play. <<

RESEARCH The main missions in the game are Guadalcanal, Makin Atoll, Tarawa. These were the sights of some of the fiercest infantry combat in all the war. For more information on the history and facts of these battles, go research on websites like www.guadalcanal.com.sb/, www.usmarineraiders.org and www.tarawa.navy.mil. If nothing else, it will add a depth of appreciation to your game.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Military Sim Shooter

PLAYERS: 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: EALA

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Gorgeous visuals and atmosphere. Multiplayer.

MINUS: The curse of the spawning soldiers... again.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	89	62
OVERALL		
79		
Pacific Assault has a lot going for it, but trips where it counts.		



!!! There's something like 200km of city streets in Underground 2, as opposed to 40km in the original.



It's a scientific fact that red is the fastest colour



Bingo bango sugar in the gas tank



Women love big sound systems and bad music. *dm*

NEED FOR SPEED Underground 2

CAM SHEA is a (Need for) Speed freak

After reinvigorating the NFS series with the original, fans will be pleased to hear that Underground 2 is back to do it all again. Once again the setting is the world of tuner culture, except this time you're able to free roam throughout the entire fictional city of Bayview, rather than picking races from a menu screen. Although this has been done before, it's never been executed quite this well. You begin at the bottom rung of the scene, with only limited funds to purchase a car, no access to mods, limited tuning options and no respect. On the world map you'll notice there are a number of different events you can compete in, a number of different shops/garages you can visit (although many of these only come up on the map once you've found them) and a number of other racers driving around, who you can challenge them to a race by trailing them for a short while.

CRUISING FOR A BRUISING

In many ways this is a slow burning game. You start out in a pretty unexciting and slow car, but the more money and respect you earn, the faster it gets and a few hours into the game you'll really be able to start going nuts on the modifications (spec'ing your car out, adding vinyls, rims, all that good stuff). It never gets as fast as Burnout 3 (hell, does anything?) but the impression of speed is good and the various visual effects used definitely add up to a distinctive and attractive gameworld.

Many of the race modes will be familiar to Underground veterans. Drag, Drift, Circuit and Sprint all return, with Street X the new addition. This game mode takes place over short circuits with varied terrain, with the emphasis on racing lines rather than raw speed. The final race mode is Underground League, which opens up once you've found a sponsor. Different sponsors want you to focus on different styles of races,

so this is a solid way for you to focus on your favourite race type while you fulfill the terms of the sponsorship.

The city is divided into five distinct sections, and really runs the gamut in design terms, from the dense inner city with its freeway system to the windy roads snaking above the city, ensuring it never feels too samey. The modification aspect is even more impressive than the original, allowing you to alter pretty much every aspect of your car (of which there are 30 licensed cars to choose from), with many more parts available than the original. The best part for car freaks though, are the tuning options, which allow you to hit the test track and individually tune different components on the fly to see how the changes feel. Or you can tune your car specifically for different race types.

As you'd expect from EA, the presentation is immaculate, with cool comic book style cutscenes, and a great GPS system in-game. Sweet arcade racing. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing

PLAYERS: 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: EA Canada

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: SN/A

RATING: G

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

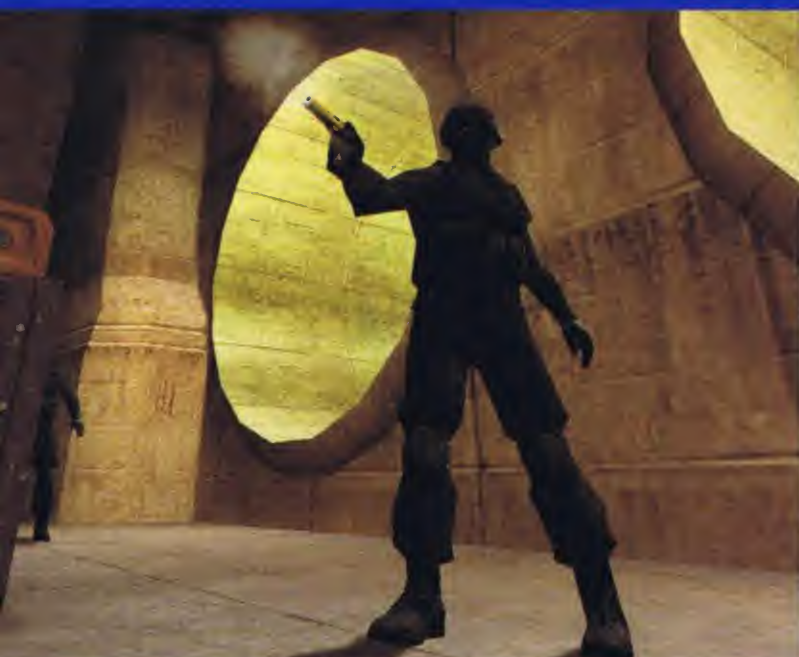
PLUS: Tweaking, modding, racing.

MINUS: Snoop doing Riders on the Storm.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY
85 84 86

OVERALL
87

The rain slicked streets are back baby! A great sequel.



!!! Multiplayer is pretty standard.
 ●●● Death match, split screen, that kind of stuff. There's some pretty good level design but that's all it is; pretty good.



Human shield? Or "just friends spooning" buddy?



Fire, man's oldest foe. Insatiable, remorseless, unquenchable



Reminds me of a level from a certain other Bond game...

GOLDENEYE: Rogue Agent

CHRISTIAN REED has a license to ill

I hate Bond movies. Seriously, I hate 'em. Bond just sort of ponces around, gambling, breaking into one high tech base after the next, getting his end away with women called Sloppy Guts or Lady Thrusula. Then he executes some evil villain who has a name like Chicken Thorax or Ricardo Von Evilness. It just doesn't cut it for me, which is why the prospect of playing a bad guy in this, the latest Bond title, appeals.

CUTTING THE MUSTARD

The story is based heavily in Bond lore; Goldfinger, one of the aforementioned supervillains, is in a nasty war with Dr. No, guano farmer and all around bastard. In comes you. As an MI6 agent with a penchant for brutality, you've been kicked out of good guy school. Having lost an eye in a battle with Dr. No, you're at a loose end. So, joining up with Goldfinger is your next gig. Then comes the shooting.

The actual gameplay is pretty

standard first person shooter stuff, but there are some added extras that give Rogue Agent some tasty spice. First of all is the eponymous eye itself. It gives you a range of powers that are selectable and customisable. You start off with the somewhat useful MRI (x-ray) capacity and from there, you can gain other abilities like computer hacking and our personal favourite, the EM shield that provides limited invulnerability.

It's two gun mojo that really makes the game fun. Two hands equals two weapons that work independently of each other. Nothing quite like two blistering snub-nosed SMGs raking down assorted goons and scum to brighten up a day. Easy to use, easy to access, it adds that cinematic edge that elevates this game above the competition.

Favourite technique? Hostages. Run up to an enemy, score a melee attack, which is simplicity itself and you've got a hapless gimp walking in front of you, soaking up

the lead. It slows you down and it messes up your assault options but it's handy in sustained fire-fight situations and is never an essential of a level. Very cool indeed.

AI makes Rogue Agent occasionally really rather difficult. The engine involved is called EVIL, (which is some acronym that's forced and a bit try-hard) that gives enemies a wide range of responses to your style. They'll quite happily flank you, provide each other suppressing fire from the rear or elevated positions while other enemies move in on you. And they'll change tactics if they've seen your weapons. A nice touch. You can play this game stealthy or guns blazing, but you're best served by actually having a think and a plan and a tactic from scene to scene. A room full of enemies can actually be quite hard in this game.

Although it won't change the world, FPS fans are going to enjoy some of RA's new techniques, and its undeniably solid gameplay. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
 PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: First Person Shooter

PLAYERS: 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: EA Games

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Solid FPS action.

MINUS: It's no Goldeneye 64...

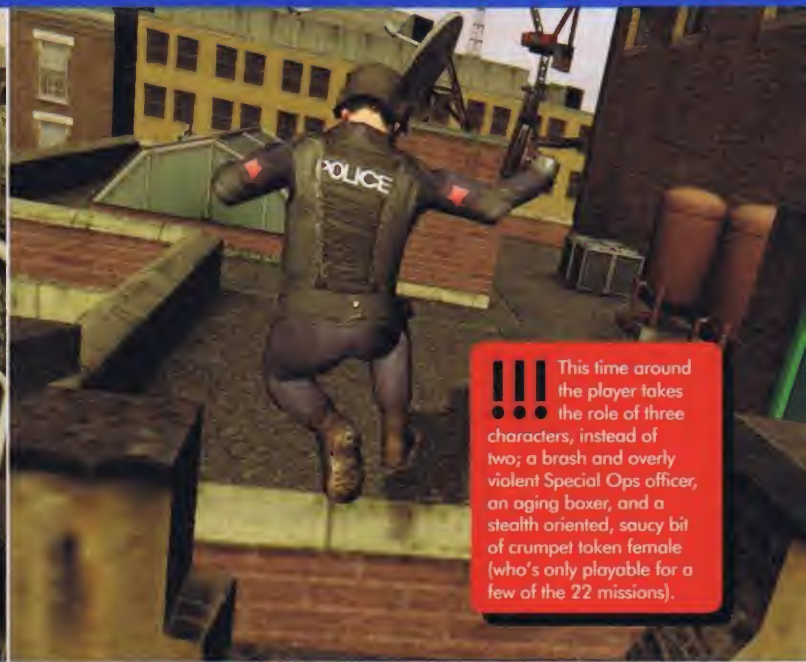
GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY

85 80 86

OVERALL

84

Another solid outing for the Bond franchise.



!!! This time around the player takes the role of three characters, instead of two; a brash and overly violent Special Ops officer, an aging boxer, and a stealth oriented, saucy bit of crumpet token female (who's only playable for a few of the 22 missions).



Zombies are a nuisance, but at least there are no Space Nazis



A precaution in case of angry gamers outside Team Soho's HQ



Driving to the store to try and exchange the game

THE GETAWAY: Black Monday

It was a Black Monday when **DANIEL WILKS** started to play

There are two types of people in the world: those who liked *The Getaway* and those who realised it was a poor, though ambitious excuse for a game. Harsh first sentence, huh? You're not wrong but after you've been frustrated and sworn at repeatedly for 6 odd hours then you will feel like being a little harsh as well. In the game's defence it is better than the first *Getaway* and a damn sight more entertaining than *Driv3r* (though *Black Monday* does not allow the player to stack boats due to its shoddy physics engine). The problem with *Black Monday* is the same one that plagued *The Getaway* - it's a game with so much ambition that is stifled at every step by clumsy design.

LINEARITY

Those of you who played the first game will be very familiar with the format of *Black Monday* - a fairly linear series of mission that either involve driving around the painfully cramped streets of London following

your blinkers while being shot at by a seemingly endless horde of Yardies (or other gangs) or running around on foot gunning down a seemingly endless horde of Yardies (or other gangs). Both the driving and on foot components of the game have been tightened with a larger and more well defined London to drive around and snap-to style targeting that works more often than not. Unfortunately the game is still plagued by terrible camera mechanics.

Black Monday strives for the same realistic/filmic quality of its predecessor. Instead of having a HUD or any on screen instructions players must rely on visual indicators for things like damage (how bloody the character's back is) and the aforementioned blinkers during the driving segments. The approach is a nice idea but flawed in execution for the most part - leaning against a wall may sound like a realistic approach to healing on paper but in practice it is quite silly and often

frustrating. It's also impossible to tell how much ammo you have in your weapon at any given time - you can't even check your inventory to find out. Oddly, even though the game strives for realism, one of the early missions sees a *Crash HQ* style mission where you have to ram a car off the road - during this it seems as though your car is invulnerable even though you're ramming an armoured van with a sports car.

The *Getaway* engine is an impressive bit of work and *Black Monday* appears to have doubled the poly count of most of the models making for a far more attractive game. Incongruously, it also features some of the worst character models we've seen in ages. Ben Mitchell (the cop character) is a prime example, often appearing to be some hideous freak of nature with an enormous distended head, a disproportionate torso and tiny arms and legs. Voice acting, on the other hand is universally good, if somewhat naughty. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Team Soho

PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: MA15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Better than *The Getaway*, good voice acting.

MINUS: Poor camera, frustrating, infrequent saves.

GRAPHICS 80 SOUND 82 GAMEPLAY 60

OVERALL
63

Strives for Guy Ritchie cool but falls short.

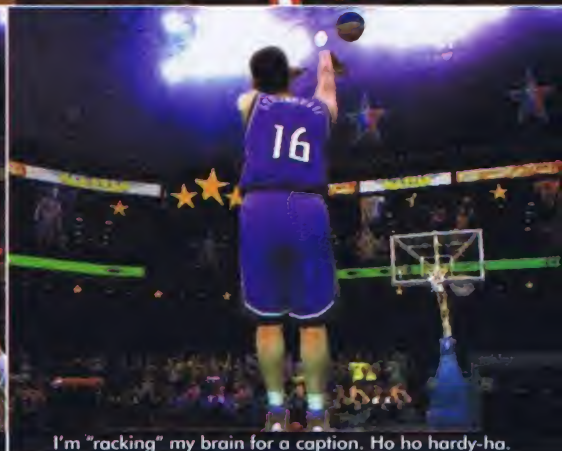
!!! The final score for gameplay in this review indicates the quality of the game post slider adjustment, not default.



Derrick Carter... house DJ and pneumatic dunking machine



Xtreme netball hits the States



I'm "racking" my brain for a caption. Ho ho hardy-ha.

NBA LIVE 2005

DJ LEON SMITH waxes lyrical

After 10 minutes of playing NBA Live 2005, it was sitting on 50% - and I am a Live junkie. I own every EA basketball release from Lakers vs Celtics, so it wasn't because the controls threw me for a loop. After getting online and searching sports game forums for a good set of sliders for the gameplay options, the game then became playable. Which is unacceptable.

THIS IS NOT A MUTATION

The main problem with the gameplay of NBA Live 2005 is the blocked shots. In reality - and this is an NBA simulation, not a mutation like Ballers or Street - blocked shots are very hard to come by. The top defenders in the league will block an average of three a game. In Live 2005, very average players will block superstars with ease, and guys who can't jump will outleap athletic dunkmasters to send their shot away. It's insane.

Looking at the positive aspects

of Live 2005 (once you have totally re-adjusted the in-game sliders), it is more of an NBA simulation than ever before. Trying to use the same tactics with every team will not work and will get you an ass-kicking. If you're not an NBA fan you'll need to learn what players are the mid-range shooters, the three-point bombers, who can get to the basket and the inside scorers and defenders.

If you're looking to just pick up the controller and dunk on your friends, unless they're basketball nerds this isn't the game for you - even with the addition of the Slam Dunk Competition and Three-Point Shootout, which are both nice features but not as good as they sound. When playing the CPU in the Shootout, for instance, you'll notice that several players will "run the rack" (i.e. hit every shot). This would never, ever happen in the NBA. Ever. More insanity. The Slam Dunk Comp is fun enough, but won't hold your interest for more than an hour or two. In fact,

the commentary is probably the most enjoyable part of the Shootout and Dunk Comp - it's supplied by Kenny Smith and Ernie Johnson, two thirds of Inside the NBA. The third host, Charles Barkley, isn't here though. Damn! Marv Albert and Mike Fratello commentate the regular games.

Live 2005 doesn't break any barriers in terms of visuals, but the arenas are accurately recreated and the players are distinguishable enough. However, using the default camera (Baseline Low) makes it a little difficult to differentiate between similar sized guys.

If this review came across as overly negative, that wasn't my intention. It's only seeing how good the Live series could be and having it fall short due to some flaws that are easily fixed that makes my blood boil. Having said that, NBA Live 2005 is still a quality package for basketball freaks who want to play a game where they can use their knowledge of NBA strategies. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Basketball sim

PLAYERS: 1-4

DEVELOPER: EA Sports

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: G

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Very realistic, rewards patience and knowledge of NBA tactics.

MINUS: Unplayable without major adjustment of in-game sliders.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
82	85	83
OVERALL		
80		
Great game... once you tweak the damn sliders.		



FLATOUT

Amongst the swathes of racing games coming out at the moment, FlatOut stands out as the one with perhaps the coolest gimmick. You see, in FlatOut, your driver is modeled inside the car, and should you come to a sudden halt, he'll go flying through the windshield and rag doll his way down the road! It's in bad taste certainly and a bit ridiculous that no seat belts are involved, but as far as gimmicks go, this is a good one. In fact, the best racing games have mechanics that make you feel that although you may have crashed, it's kinda cool anyway. Burnout 3, for instance, has its spectacular damage modeling. FlatOut, on the other hand, will bring a sadistic smile to your lips as your dummy-esque driver flies out of the windshield and smack bang into a telegraph pole, leaving him as a lifeless pile on the road. The developers have even gone so far as to include a variety of mini-games based around flinging the driver out of the car. You can play darts, long jump and a few others, with our favourite being high jump. There simply isn't much that's as funny as flinging a driver 100 meters into the air and hearing the sickening crump when he lands on the ground a couple of meters away from the pitifully small crash mat.

Let's face it though, the crash gimmick isn't going to be entertaining forever, which is why we're pleased to report that the handling, AI and course design is on the money too. You build up nitro through combat with other drivers and power your ride through rough and ready dirt and tarmac circuits, swinging your end out thanks to the sloppy (in a good way) handling. Check it out.

D. Mannerism

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

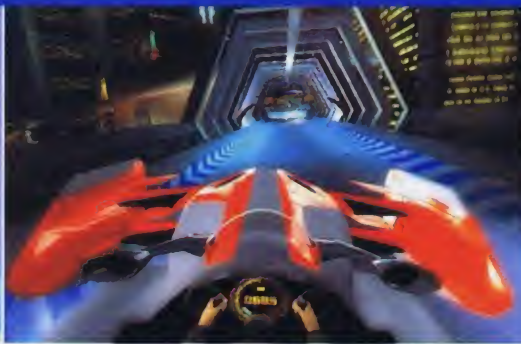
DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi /
DEVELOPER: Bugbear / **PUBLISHER:** Red Ant /
PRICE: \$79.95 / **RATING:** TBC / **AVAILABLE:** Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
83	80	83	83



[above] That's what you get for wearing a leather vest



POWERDROME

Although the SNES classic F-Zero is widely regarded as the game that gave birth to the whole future racing, ridiculous speed genre, UK developer Argonaut pipped them at the post by one year with the original Powerdrome, released with almost no fanfare on the gaming powerhouses that were the Commodore Amiga and the Atari ST. 15 years on and Argonaut have brought us a revamped and sped up version of their original game but is it good enough to stand with the big boys like F-Zero GX and Wipeout Fusion?

Unfortunately the answer is no but it's still a fun little bit of fluff for all its faults. Rather than deluge the player with all sorts of extraneous information about the political climate of the universe and the bios of the drivers, Powerdrome wisely dumps players straight into the blisteringly fast racing. Interestingly, Powerdrome gives players the option to manually shift gears if they should want to do so but unless you are an absolute racing fiend sticking to auto is definitely the way to go.

Unfortunately aside from this little quirk the action of Powerdrome is very basic and offers nothing new or particularly interesting to the genre. It's a pity because Powerdrome is a great looking game that has managed to balance some lush graphics with a rock solid framerate.

Alan Shazzar

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-8 /
DEVELOPER: Argonaut / **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft /
PRICE: \$79.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	79	80	80



[above] Mr beardy would be proud



UNDER THE SKIN

The problem with Under the Skin is that once the initial charm of playing a bouncing blue 3-year old alien with the ability to steal people's appearances and money you quickly realise that that's all there is to the game. Players take the role of Cosmi, a tiny blue alien with a ray gun that allows him to steal the appearance of any person on the map, using all of the skill and weapons that person has to collect coins dropped by other people. After an attack the human populace will cotton on to the fact that something may be a little odd about Cosmi and will attack, the first attack inexplicably leaving the human figure in their underwear, the second reverting Cosmi to his alien form. That's it. There's nothing more to the game than running around, collecting coins and trying not to get hit. It's a pity because the idea has a lot of comic potential.

The two-player mode does nothing to extend the gameplay, instead only offering what is essentially the same game in split screen. The charm of the premise carries over to the graphics with nicely animated, cell shaded cartoonish figures and some funny weapons. If the game was released at a budget price point there would be more to recommend it but at full price it only seems like half a game - strange considering that it comes from the same creative minds that gave us Viewtiful Joe.

Poemy

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 /
DEVELOPER: Capcom / **PUBLISHER:** Capcom /
PRICE: \$79.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now

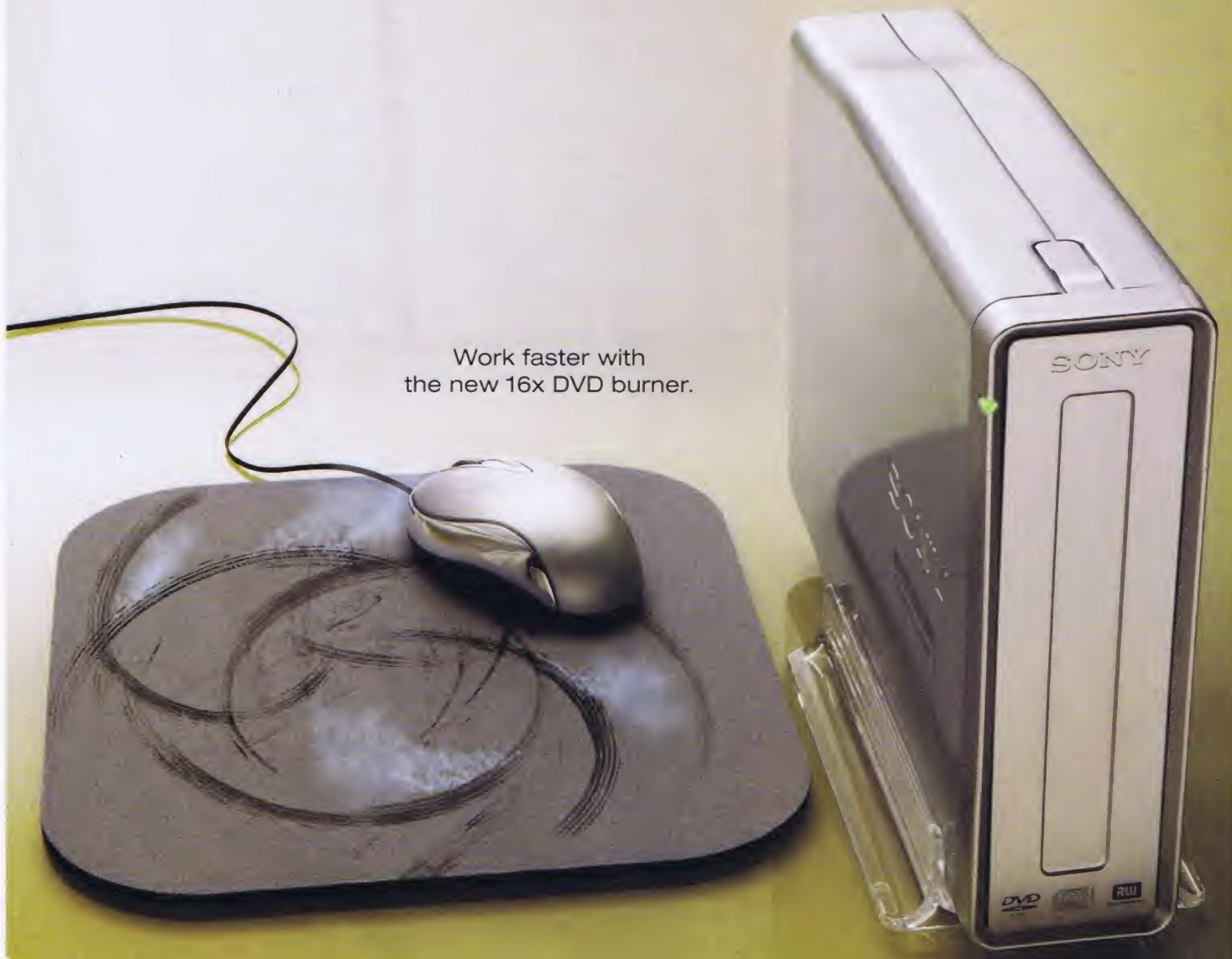
GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
76	79	64	62



[above] Evil Genius: F**ked up Japanese edition

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ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

While RCT 2 was essentially an updated game that was running on an ancient engine, with RCT 3 we're finally moving into the world of 3D games. And about bloody time. Once again the wheel hasn't been reinvented in this title, so any RollerCoaster Tycoon veteran should have no trouble hopping in, with the only real adaptation required being adjusting to using a 3D engine and moving around within it. Outside of this it's the same old RCT - start from scratch and build your own park, or accept one of the custom missions and parameters. You're still laying down paths, choosing rides, adjusting prices, running shops, hiring staff and generally trying to ensure that all your patrons have a good time... and walk away considerably poorer than when they came in.

That said, it's a classic game series for a reason, so we really didn't want major changes. And it has to be said, the change of scenery is very nice. The 3D engine doesn't attempt to do hugely detailed environments, but with so much going on that's fair enough. Instead, what it does do is give the game a lot more character. You can zoom right in to street level and see the faces of the people walking around the park. You can also get a real sense of where things are in space, rather than the tweaked view of the world you tend to get from isometric perspectives. Best of all though - you can ride the damn rides! There's simply nothing like building a monster rollercoaster then hopping in the front carriage. You can actually get a good sense for whether the ride is fun and the sense of speed is good too! Fans of the series should check it out!

B. Rodriguez

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Tycoon game / **PLAYERS:** 1 /
DEVELOPER: Frontier / **PUBLISHER:** Atari /
PRICE: \$69.95 / **RATING:** G8+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
82	80	85	81



[above] The attraction that did in Captain Hook



SEGA SUPERSTARS

It's really hard to attribute a score to an EyeToy game as ultimately, when it comes down to it whether you like waving your arms around like a Special Olympics cheerleader is a matter of personal taste. Sega Superstars brings 12 of the most popular Sega games to the EyeToy family so you can wave your arms about in Puyo Pop, Chu Chu Rocket, Virtua Fighter, NiGHTS, Virtua Striker, Monkey Ball, Sonic, Space Channel 5 and more. Although the trappings are different the gameplay is virtually identical (for the most part) to the original EyeToy games - move your hands to the indicated spots on the screen at the right time to hit an enemy, perform a dance move or push an object. Where the game really comes into its own are the mini-games like Virtua Fighter that sees the player in a simple fighting game having to block opponent attacks and riposte with flurries and combos of their own. The greatest strength of Sega Superstars comes through when you play with a bunch of mates (and some beer for those of you over the age of 18). Standing around watching someone flailing around like an epileptic at a happy hardcore party while waiting for your turn to do the same has a definite charm. Be warned though, you need quite a bit of space to play the game, not only for the aforementioned arm flailing but also due to the range of poses and camera distances needed to play it properly.

Joey Tekken

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

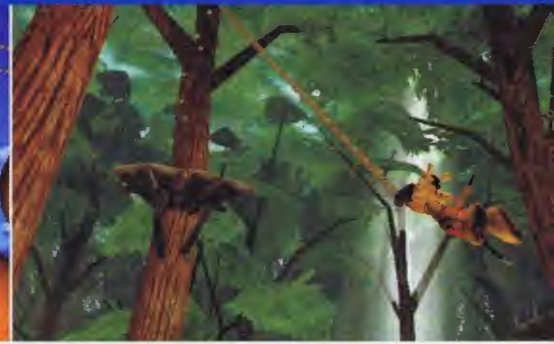
DETAILS:

CATEGORY: EyeToy / **PLAYERS:** 1+ /
DEVELOPER: Sega / **PUBLISHER:** Sega /
PRICE: \$69.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
85	81	75	74



[above] This is the GAYEST thing I've ever seen



TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER 2

If you suffer from anything remotely resembling the cultural cringe you will want to stay as far away from Ty 2 as possible, as the broad (sometimes offensively so) accents that are so prevalent in the game will certainly have you hanging your head in shame. Accents aside, Ty is a pleasant enough Australian themed platformer that tries hard to break out of the Jak or Ratchet mould and for the most part succeeds quite well. Aimed squarely at a younger market, Ty 2 sees the titular extinct predator having to once again track down the nefarious Boss Cass, broken from prison in one of the game's early missions. Aside from platforming, Ty 2 contains a fully fledged Kart game (frighteningly similar to Crash Nitro Kart) that can be played as part of the main game or as a standalone. Throughout the game's 44 missions players will find themselves rescuing all manner of bush-land creatures, fighting some remarkably easy bosses and rushing to beat time critical objectives. To foster exploration and backtracking, Ty 2 features a number of boomerang upgrades such as Ice and Infra-red that can unlock new areas in levels. Unfortunately the final result is a game a little too short and way too easy for platforming veterans, especially when such stellar titles as Jak 3, Ratchet 3 and Sly 2 are currently available, and a little too formless and difficult for the littlelites.

Cobba McPossum

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action/Platformer / **PLAYERS:** 1 /
DEVELOPER: Krome / **PUBLISHER:** EA /
PRICE: \$69.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
80	81	72	73



[above] Need we say Paanch the Caant?

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FINAL FANTASY I & II: Dawn of Souls

Going back to the beginning and playing the first two Final Fantasy games comes as a bit of a shock to the system - especially Final Fantasy I, the game that started the international phenomenon and single handedly took Square from being a company of the verge of bankruptcy and made them a household name (in gaming households that is). For a series renowned for their deep and involving stories, the original Final Fantasy comes as something of a disappointment, almost entirely devoid of plot and direction, leaving players, for the most part, to move through the world and work out what they have to do next, all the time dealing with near constant random battles. Players take the role of four

warriors of light tasked with using the elemental crystals (crystals mysteriously found in their possession at the very beginning of the game) to defeat the ultimate evil. It's very standard stuff not really helped by mundane battle mechanics and the aforementioned omnipresent random battles. Unless you're a stalwart fan of the Final Fantasy franchise there will be little to draw you to the original Final Fantasy, but Final Fantasy II is another matter entirely, showing the foundations of the rich worlds and stories we have come to expect from the series. Players control a party of four war orphans who become embroiled in war, conspiracy and events far bigger than them. Unlike Final Fantasy, II clues players into what is going on and maintains a

pleasant momentum throughout. Final Fantasy II also features a novel leveling system that sees characters get better at skills the more they use them - getting hit in combat can actually raise a character's hit points and using the same weapon every battle will increase your skill. Both games on the cart feature tweaks and extra features especially for the GBA release. Final Fantasy introduces a new game mode called Soul of Chaos that sees players battling their way through randomly generated dungeons populated with monsters from the whole Final Fantasy franchise, some of which will drop new and unique items, and Final Fantasy II allows players to play through the game with four of the NPC characters after completing it once.

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Square Enix

PUBLISHER: Nintendo

PRICE: \$69.95

RATING: G8+

AVAILABLE: Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
79	73	72
OVERALL		
76		



STAR WARS TRILOGY: Apprentice of the Force

Apprentice of the Force brings together events from the original trilogy on one GBA cart in a game highly reminiscent of the original SNES Super Star Wars. Through three different adventures that see Luke Skywalker move from whiny moisture (hey Maria!) farmer on Tatooine through to be the whiny Jedi Master heir to Vader's throne, Apprentice of the Force offers

players the opportunity to shoot and slash their way through multiple Star Wars baddies including Tuskan Raiders, Storm Troopers and other things that can shoot a lot straighter than they ever could in the films. As well as side-scrolling platforming/shooting action, Apprentice also features vehicle based levels for Speeder Bikes and X-Wings. Another thumbs up. Throughout the course of the game, much like the films, Luke transforms from being a pilot to being a Jedi Master. Every few levels Luke gains a new skill allowing for deeper platforming and combat. These skills range from simple things such as the ability to dash enabling him to jump further right through to powerful force abilities such as Force Push and Force Blitz, a power

that slows down time with a Bullet-Time style effect. Although the player is presented with a number of abilities by the end of the game the action remains quite resolutely straightforward throughout, with most levels comprising of a series of platforms that need to be navigated, some enemies to be shot and a final boss that needs to be overcome. Apprentice of the Force utilises the Prince of Persia engine to good effect, offering up some excellent and highly lifelike animations for Luke and his enemies. Aside from the lengthy single player mode, Apprentice offers players a quick and dirty but remarkably fun X-Wing dogfight multiplayer game where you and a mate can battle it out to see who is the real Jedi Master.

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: UbiSoft Montreal

PUBLISHER: UbiSoft

PRICE: \$69.95

RATING: G8+

AVAILABLE: Now

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86	83	79
OVERALL		
79		



[below] Page 68 and feeling great

TDK

tremor

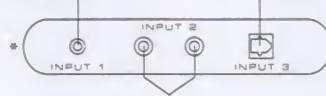


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World of Warcraft

>> Joey Tekken

Since the beginning of time there have been some pretty momentous occurrences in human history. The discovery of fire I think we can agree was pretty big. As was the invention of the wheel. Penicillin ranks up there as quite important and the industrial revolution was not insignificant. All of these achievements pale in significance with the imminent release of World of Warcraft. Well, not really but if you're to believe the legion of Blizzard fans around the world the release of the game ranks up there as one of the most important events in human history. The Warcraft series is not only incredibly popular but also a rich fantasy world full of larger than life characters, epic battles and a black and white struggle between the forces of good and evil. What could be better than joining in that struggle as one of the aforementioned larger than life characters?

HOT & SPICY BETA TEST ACTION

As far as massively multiplayer RPGs go, nothing really, and we've been lucky enough to get in on some beta testing action, in order to give you a hands on report. The good news is that World of Warcraft has it just about right and is destined to be one of the most popular, if not the most popular MMO of the current crop. Without a doubt the greatest strength of World of Warcraft is the established and hugely popular world it brings to life. Players can adventure over the Burning Steppes, where Grom Hellscream fell in battle against the demon lord Mannaroth, and Ironforge, where the dwarves make their home below the mountain. Legendary heroes, such as Thrall, Cairne Bloodhoof, and King Magni Bronzebeard, are also in the game, presiding over their respective peoples as leaders in their race's capitals. In this world players can create characters from any of the major races belonging to

the two rival factions, the Horde and the Alliance. On the side of the evil Horde are the Orc, Tauren, Troll, and Undead races, while the Alliance side includes Dwarves, Gnomes, Humans, and Night Elves. Each faction also has equal access to all of the various classes aside from the Shaman and Paladin that are exclusive to the Horde and Alliance respectively.

As soon as the player creates a character they are transported to their race's unique starting area (with the exception of Trolls and Gnomes who share starting locations with Orcs and Dwarves respectively) and are dropped right into the thick of the action. World of Warcraft utilises a thoroughly old school but equally enjoyable mission based format so as soon as a character spawns they can

start with their individual missions to give them a couple of levels and some nice items to introduce them to and prepare them for the game world proper. To keep the quest based action the central focus of the game, World of Warcraft centres character levelling on completing quests rather than straight combat - a player who spends all of their time treadmilling and killing mobs will never advance as quickly or as far as one who actively completes any of the hundreds of quests that are dotted throughout the game world. These missions vary in form from killing certain numbers of specific mobs in certain areas to courier missions and taking on powerful NPC characters, and the rewards range from hard cash to material goods, most of which



[above]
I will call him Stitch-Fist



Just like Evil Malky he will CRUSH YOU!

come from a randomised pool to keep things interesting. Whilst the range of missions is nothing particularly new, they are kept from being samey by great and sometime vast back-stories related by the characters that send you on the quests or from information found on the way.

Anyone familiar with Warcraft or Starcraft should be able to get an easy grasp on the controls as they utilise a similar interface for movement and are highly customisable through hotkeying. Once again to keep the action flowing, Blizzard have wisely decided to give clear character indicators for NPCs, and other in game events. All quest kiosk style characters are indicated to the player by a yellow exclamation mark

over their heads. Moving the cursor over these characters will display an icon showing the specific way you can interact with them through conversation, trade or training. Likewise the environment can be interacted with in a similar manner - moving the cursor over an animal that can be skinned will display a hunting knife or a pick will appear in an area in which you can mine for ore. Combat is a simple matter of right clicking on an enemy to initiate combat and using hotkeys/screen icons to use special abilities. Another feature Blizzard has incorporated into the game are what they call "Instance Dungeons", areas that will spawn for each group entering them ensuring that there can be no kill stealing and no waiting in line

for another group to finish the quest. The vast majority of these dungeons are set for high level, very powerful characters but the developers assure us that there are some for characters from levels 10-15 too.

RAIDING PARTIES... SWEET

There's a lot to say about WoW and little space to say it - the game features an excellent grouping system for up to five players and the devs are currently working on what they call "raiding parties", massive groups of up to 40 players taking on truly epic enemies. Naturally the

game also supports PvP battles but Blizzard assures us that steps have been taken to keep things fair and cut down on griefing. We could go on at length about how damn good the game looks with its detailed character models and lush terrain but the screenshots already speak volumes by themselves. Instead we'll just say that despite how good the game looks you can still expect it to run smoothly on a decent broadband connection. ❖❖



So... own up, who created the George Lucas character on the left?



EverQuest II

>> Kelly Starr

Even if you have never played an online game and have no interest in them, you've all heard of this one. EverQuest, or EverCrack as it is sometimes known, is famous as the most popular online Role Playing Game, and although it wasn't the first, it paved the way for the swarm of games that followed it, hoping to grab a little bit of its remarkable success for themselves. It even created its own language; online gaming terms such as 'mobs', 'con' and even 'ding' came from EverQuest and now are common lingo in any MMORPG that you play.

However EverQuest's mighty rein as king of MMORPGs is over, not because another game has replaced it, as such, but because it is moving over to make way for Sony's new endeavour, EverQuest II. Let's face it, EverQuest Live has gotten old. The game was released in 1999 and despite continuous upgrades and many expansion packs, its look is dated and its content exhausted.

EQII has been redesigned to compete with modern games in its looks, content and gameplay.

PLAYING A HALF-ASS?

There is no doubting that the appeal of games like this is the ability to create a fantasy character to represent yourself with. Always fancied yourself as a Halfling Assassin or a Gnome Magician? Well this is probably the only way you can do it (without being admitted to a mental ward) and EQII offers you a lot of choice in character development, with 16 different playable races and 24 job classes to choose from. The character creation is also nicely detailed, so the chances of bumping into another character who looks like you are slim.

When starting out, you are faced with only four different archetypes; Fighter, Priest, Scout and Mage, but these will ultimately branch out into other classes. The system is designed so that at level 10 you will be able to select from three different jobs types

INTERESTING EVERQUEST FACTS:

- More than 2.5 million copies of the game and its expansions have been sold in boxes or digitally downloaded since 1999.
- If stacked end to end, the total number of EverQuest boxes created would reach a height of more than 265 miles, which would stretch out of the Earth's atmosphere and past the orbit of the International Space Station.
- There are almost 12 million characters created by players within the game. Of these 12 million, more than 3 million have been played in the last six months.
- There are more than a million non-player characters populating the world of EverQuest, made up of nearly 400 unique types of creatures. There are also 100,000 different trees.

[below] Everquest is for fairies





you can transfer to and then later you can select from another two (conditions apply). If you choose to start as a Fighter you will then be able to choose from Warrior, Brawler and Crusader, then if you chose Warrior, you will be able to become a Berserker or a Guardian. Don't worry, it's less confusing than it sounds. Some classes can only be chosen if you meet the good or evil requirement, so if you plan on being a Mystic (for example) you will have to choose Priest, then Shaman and also be residing in Qeynos. If you are in Freeport you won't be able to choose that sub class, you'll have to be a Defler. Likewise people in Qeynos won't be able to be defilers. Out of the 24 different sub classes, 8 are Qeynos only, 8 are Freeport only and 8 can be used by anyone. If you really want to be an evil High Elf or a good Ogre you can betray your starting city by completing a lengthy quest, so there are no true restrictions when it comes to playing

your dream race/class combination. The game features much more than just running around as your desired character in a giant 3D chatroom. Like EQ Live and similar games, there are numerous quests, a detailed crafting system, guild facilities and a range of furniture and pets for your apartment, if you feel like playing a fantasy themed Sims for a while. One of the key differences in the game when compared to EQ Live is the new combat system which features chain attacks called Heroic opportunities, which are a major part of the game both for solo play and in groups. When in battle the Heroic Opportunity system allows players to link combat arts to create special attacks. When certain attacks are used they trigger a started chain, which can be continued by using an attack that matches the next symbol in the chain until the end is reached and the special attack, buff or ability is used. HOs can be completed solo, or by several

people, providing they have the necessary abilities. **OLD STUFF VS. NEW STUFF** If you think it will be EverQuest with some improved graphics, prepare to be surprised. Although set in the same world and based on the same themes, EverQuest I and II are very different games and not everyone will like the changes it has gone through. Surprisingly, the most vocal among the complainers are the hardcore Everquest fans, who don't seem to be fans of change. Despite that, EQII is a much better game than the first one. Locked encounters mean that there is no kill-stealing and no way to Power Level and the crafting system is virtually un-bottable, making it a disappointment for exploiters and cheaters. If you are looking for a new online game to try with enough content to keep you interested for years to come (if EQ Live is any indication), you could do much worse than to give EverQuest II a go. ❖❖

- DAMN SCARY EVERQUEST FACTS:**
- The total amount of time that people have spent playing in the game equals more than 184,000 years.
 - There are more than 1,500 servers running the world of Norath. They use more than 18 miles of wire and cable to connect them all together and have the power of one of the world's top supercomputers.
 - Since the game's release over 10 quadrillion bytes of data have left the Sony Online Entertainment network, whoa!
 - At peak times, more than 100,000 people around the globe will be playing EverQuest simultaneously.

Links

>> Kosta Andreadis



Forties

<http://www.40ozmaltliquor.com>

>> When Cam and I first hit LA for E3 a few years back, what was the first thing we did? We went to the damn Licka Sto' and bought Forties that's what. In fact, we bought Olde English (pictured above). Why? Not because of the oh so average taste, nor because we've listened to too much hip hop. No, the reason was that we knew one day, someone would create a site with a massive archive of pictures and reviews for just about every type of malt liquor, and when they did, we needed to be able to rate it from experience. Thus, we can tell you if you're a 40 fan, this is the site to be at... not that ANY of the brands on the site are available in this 40 forsaken country. But hey, if you find yourself in the states with a big big thirst, this site will come in handy. Maybe.



Pimpin' Down Under

<http://www.pimpin.com.au/>

>> When it comes to associating a country with Pimps and the timeless art of Pimpin', Australia isn't exactly at the top of the list. But it turns out that a lot of people, even in Australia, want to be Pimps - and who could blame them really? Your own line of low-riders decked out with velour interior, a wardrobe full of brightly coloured jackets and Pimp hats. Gold teeth, Pimp canes, Pimp chalices and last but not least - a loyal army of bitches, tricks, skanks and hoes. It's quite a lifestyle and this online game lets you pit your Pimpin' skills with the best in the country.

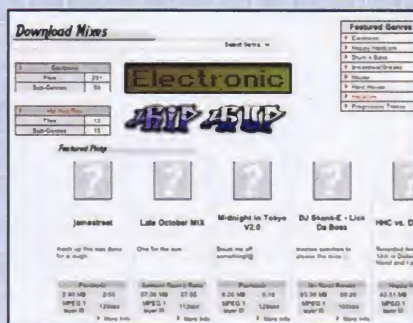


Nerd Wedding and Nerd Chart

<http://www.goldengategarrison.com/gallery/calkinswed?page=1>

<http://www.heinola.org/~tsiergis/muuta/starship.gif>

>> Like minded people tend to flock together, cool people generally hang with cool people (except in the case of Cam slumming it with Wilks) and nerds, well being nerds they don't really 'hang', but they do tend to be in the same vicinity. Nature takes its bespectacled course and yes, even Star Wars nerds get married. Featured in the first link are pictures from a real 'Star Wars Wedding', no shit. Seeing a photo of Darth Vader walking down the aisle is hilarious, scary, and confusing and all in that order. The second link is for those people who see this 'Star Wars Wedding' and think to yourself 'whoa that's cool' - you know who you are.



Mixin' it Up

<http://www.mixtapehost.com/>

>> Actual mix tapes may be a relic of the 80's but the term still applies to anyone recording a set, whether it be on a couple of fully fledged decks or using software on your PC. Most mixes these days are around the hour mark so to host them on the web can be quite costly in terms of bandwidth, which is where this site comes in. For a small monthly fee they'll host your mix, giving you access to literally thousands of music lovers ready to download your latest mix odyssey.



The Google Gateway

<http://desktop.google.com/>

>> Mark these words, or if you don't have a marker, look around you and find some other form of writing tool. Ten years from now there will be no Internet. Before you pass me off as just another wide eyed crackpot, let me explain. In ten years from now we will no longer refer to it as the Internet, but instead as The Google Gateway. What began as simple web searches has now developed into intelligent web advertising, email with one gigabyte of storage and now a desktop Google client that lets you search your own PC using a Google interface.



Triumph

<http://www.ifilm.com/ifilmdetail/2653646?ifilm=99?showw=no&refsite=6721>

>> The American elections will have come and gone by the time you read this, and more than likely what's his face would have won - you know the one. Mr I like to invade countries that pose no real threat to the western world. And so enters Triumph, the Insult Comic Dog who lets loose his patented brand of humour at one of the recent Presidential Debates in America. It may not be up there with his visit to the Episode II premiere but its still funny stuff. And hey, who could resist watching right wing wack jobs getting pooped on.

THIS XMAS, SANTA'S GOING TO PAY.



Bad Elves

Jynx & Jasper



"Santa has a new evil plan for world domination and it's up to me and Jasper to rescue the girls, save the world and take down the fat man himself."

"Hey Jynx, don't forget to tell them about all the cool guns, swords and magical elf powers that we use to smite evil. When we smite someone, they stay smited.. smitten.. They stay dead."



Download the EXCITEMENT* Now!!



"BadElves - Jynx & Jasper" © 2004 BadElves Games Studio
* Excitement download may not be 100% pure. May contain traces of anxiety, childish glee or mild despondency.

www.BADELVES.com



THE HYPER CHRISTMAS BUYER'S GUIDE

PANASONIC PT-AE700 PROJECTOR

RRP: \$3899

It's official - awesome quality projectors are now affordable enough to be within reach of the average working gamer. And once you've tried playing games and watching films through a projector, you'll never go back. It's that simple. The AE-700 represents great value for money. You're looking at a native HDTV resolution of 1280x720, a dynamic contrast of 2000:1, 3000 hour lifespan per bulb, 2X optical zoom and a wealth of inputs (HDMI, RGB, component, S-Video, composite). This puppy supports progressive scan and high definition signals out of the box, so whether you're plugging in your PC, your Xbox (with the 480p, 720p and 1080i video options unlocked via the hack), a high def set top box or a top of the line DVD player, the image quality is going to be as good as the source quality. And thanks to the Smooth Screen technology, pixelisation is largely a thing of the past.

Simply stated, there's nothing like watching DVDs on a wall sized screen... or playing Halo 2 on a wall sized screen. Hell, you'll even be prepared to sit through The Phantom Menace on a wall sized screen it looks so good.



TOSHIBA QOSMIO

RRP: \$4999 (F10 - 15.4" SCREEN), \$5999 (G10 - 17" SCREEN)

It's been coming for years, but we're finally seeing a whole bunch of manufacturers taking the convergence route seriously. Microsoft have just released their Windows XP Media Center Edition which essentially allows the mainstream to use their PC as the basis of their home entertainment system (which we've all been doing for years).

The Toshiba Qosmio is a laptop with the Media Center OS and the necessary extra hardware to do just that. You've got TV thanks to the inclusion of a TV tuner and video encoder (allowing you to pause live TV and record for later viewing), you can watch and record single or dual layer DVDs, and you've got wireless networking built-in. And you can forget the horribly tinny sound quality that comes as standard with most laptops - the Qosmio has built in Harmon/Kardon speakers, so your audio will sound as good as your video looks. The Qosmio even comes with a remote. It's all a nice idea, but a little expensive for what you actually get...



YAMAHA DVDS1500

RRP: \$799

If you're not too concerned about burning and recording, and just want a DVD player that can handle any disc you throw at it, then the Yamaha DVDS1500 is the model for you. Basically, it's been designed to be both a high quality player and all round DVD wunderkind. If you're into high quality surround sound home audio, then you'll be pleased to hear it supports both DVD-Audio and Super Audio CD. Sound quality is fantastic too, thanks to 192kHz/24-bit high performance audio DACs for all channels. You can also throw an audio CD in, turn on CD Upsampling and the player raises the CD sampling rate for improved sound quality. Mp3 playback is also fully supported.

On the video side the S1500 supports both PAL and NTSC progressive scan for a flicker free, high quality image, as well as DCDi - a processing technique to eliminate jaggies. Very nice.



LOGITECH Z-5500 DIGITAL

RRP: \$749

It's no secret that we're HUGE fans of the Logitech Z series here at Hyper. For the last couple of years, they've offered amazing value for money, providing an affordable surround sound option that doesn't skimp on sound quality. Welcome to the next level. For the Z-5500s, not only are the speakers THX certified but they also feature DTS 96/24 digital decoding (DTS 96/24 is an enhanced, studio quality DTS format), in addition to DTS and Dolby Digital, so you really can be assured the highest quality sound.

They also (unlike many satellite speakers that miss out on mid range a little) reproduce both mid and high end very well. This is because each of the five 3 inch digitally equalised aluminium phase plug satellites/center channel combine two drivers in one, bringing both crisp top end and warm mid range. Throw in a beefy 10 inch subwoofer that's got the grunt (188 watts) for anything from watching DVDs through to having a house party (or office party as the case may be), and you have one sweet system. Overall output? 505 RMS watts, which ain't bad at all.

The system comes with a huge range of inputs - an optical port, coaxial port and four stereo ports. And you can just plug your console, DVD player or mp3 portable straight in without the need for a stand alone receiver.

The look of the Z range of speakers has always been fantastic, and the Z-5500s are no exception. Once again the satellites have a removable grill, but behind it is a slick silver and black finish that gives the speakers an even sleeker look. Combine this with an imposing black sub and nice control center and once again Logitech have come up with a must-buy 5.1 speaker system.



EVOLUTION MK449C

RRP: \$399

These days there are numerous options available for budding electronic music makers. You no longer have to lay out thousands of dollars for samplers, turntables, synthesizers or drum machines. Instead, there's a veritable treasure trove of software and hardware controllers that can do the job via your PC.

A good starting point is to pick up a MIDI controller of some sort, so we thought we'd take a look at the Evolution 449C. It comes with 49 full-size velocity sensitive keys, 10 assignable buttons, 9 assignable sliders, 8 assignable rotary knobs and even assignable pitch bend and modulation wheels. You can also save up to 10 setups for different programs through the keypad and backlit LCD. Setup is incredibly

straightforward - just plug in via USB and you're good to go. Now go get Reason, Ableton Live or anything from Native Instruments and you're all set to make some music.

The MK449C is just one of a range of MIDI controllers from M-Audio, so there's something to fit pretty much any budget.



TOSHIBA HD-S25

PRICE: \$999

If you have a modern projector or HD compliant TV, then chances are you won't want to be watching TV in stinky standard resolution. Why not watch in glorious high definition digital? Well, with the Toshiba HD-S25 you can... kinda. You see, the roll-out for high definition TV in Australia is a slow process at best. The plan is for HDTV to be standard by 2008, but right now there's only limited HDTV broadcasts.

In any case, getting a set top box such as this one will ensure that if you have the equipment, you'll get the most out of high definition as it becomes more common place. And the difference from standard resolution analogue TV? Massive. HDTV is like watching DVD+, complete with (for the most part) 5.1 audio mixes. Of course, you can watch regular standard definition TV using the HD-S25 too.

We should also mention that not only does this unit produce an excellent picture quality, but it has a great interface to boot.





SAMSUNG 172X LCD MONITOR

RRP: \$999

❧ In the past LCD monitors haven't been great for gaming, thanks largely to sluggish refresh times that gives anything that moves faster than an RTS a motion blur effect. Well, the times they have a changed. Monitors with 12 millisecond refreshes have hit the market, and as Daniel Wilks put it, are "the shiznit". The 172X is just such a monitor, and now that the refresh rates have come down, you get all the advantages of LCD technology (such as ultra crisp picture and intense colour) without any of the aforementioned motion blur.

The 172X really plays upon the other strength of LCD - its compactness. This monitor is super slim and lightweight, with a sweet dual hinge stand that allows you to position it perfectly for viewing - or fold it up for portability. It also has what Samsung have dubbed "MagicBright" technology, which means that you can optimise the picture depending on what you're doing, as there's a world of difference between reading a word doc and playing a game. Sweet.



MEGA VIEW 561 PORTABLE MULTIMEDIA PLAYER

RRP: \$799

❧ There are a number of portable multimedia devices on the market at the moment, and this cute number from MSI is one of the best. It comes with a 20GB hard drive and a high resolution 3.5 inch TFT LCD screen. In terms of formats, you'll be able to play MPEG 4, DivX and WMV files, as well as a wide variety of music formats (including, of course, mp3s). You can also browse images and record voice to the device. Perhaps the most attractive feature though, would have to be the ability to plug the 561 directly into video or audio sources and record straight to the HD via the built-in MPEG 4 video encoder and MP3 audio encoder. Whether you're dumping something from your PC or directly encoding from TV, this device has the versatility.

The feel and interface of the unit is quite good, and aside from the black bands on the side (which we presume is for extra grip when holding it) we quite like the look too. Worth a look. Also worth checking out is the Creative Zen Portable Media Center, which is probably the better device, but retails for \$999.



CREATIVE NOMAD MUVO2 4GB

\$349 (4GB)

❧ Now this is a sexy portable mp3 player. The MuVo2 comes in 1.5GB and 4GB varieties, is small enough to fit in your pocket and is all about ease of use. Install the Creative MediaSource app that comes with the player and you'll be able to convert your CDs to mp3/WMA at the press of a button. Of course, if you're like the average Hyper reader and already have a large stockpile of CD rips on your system, the USB 2.0 support ensures it won't take long to fill that HD and take the tunes out on the road (even if it is just to a Mashed multiplayer night).

Sound quality is excellent, at 98dB SNR, and if you want to use it as the basis for a truly stylish setup at home, it's worth checking out the Creative I-Trigue L3450 2.1 speakers, as their minimalist design aesthetic melds wonderfully with the MuVo2. We like.

SEAGATE POCKET HARD DRIVE

RRP: \$349

Forget your piddling USB thumb drives; if you want data storage capacity in your pocket, this is the way to go. The Pocket Hard Drive is a cute little piece of kit with a 5GB built-in HD. Seagate have really thought through the design of the device too, making it a small, flat disc that fits comfortably in your pocket and has no visible cables. When it comes time to use it though, you just turn the inner black disc to reveal the USB cable coiled inside. Very slick.

For \$349 it's a little on the expensive side, and obviously targeted at the business market. And make sure you have USB 2.0, as transferring gigabytes of data takes a long time with USB 1.0. That said, it's a funky way to carry your data around.



NOKIA 7270

RRP: TBA

Picking up where the 7200 left off, the 7270 is the latest phone from Nokia that's arguably a fashion accessory first and a phone second (and is part of a new range that includes the 7260 and 7280). Coming in a vivid red and black, with suede panels, the 7270 has a slightly more rounded design, with an almost gumby-esque tilt at the top and bottom. Once again Nokia have opted for a clamshell design, but this time have gone for a slightly larger screen than the 7200 (128x160 versus 128x128) which is still a little on the small side. Fortunately, it looks great - very sharp, with vivid 16-bit colour. The outside panel is also impressive, measuring at 96x95 pixels. We're disappointed, however, that the included camera can only take snaps at 0.3MP... this in an era when most cutting edge phones are moving beyond the 1MP mark. Fortunately, the other features are quite capable, with tri-band, GPRS and EDGE support, not to mention instant messaging, push-to-talk and J2ME MIDP 2.0.

Of course, it's the overall design that's meant to stand out, and it does. This is a very slick looking phone, and although a little larger and heavier than is strictly necessary, Nokia have once again proven they have the style.



SONY ERICSSON S700i

RRP: TBA

The latest model from Sony Ericsson is a triumph of both form and function. The first thing that jumps out at you is the 2.3 inch 240x320 18-bit colour screen - it's gloriously large and perfect for both menu navigation and photo taking. Speaking of which, this puppy packs a 1.3MP camera (with flash), which means photos up to 1280x960, which is definitely moving outside the realm of gimmickry. Then there's the smooth rotation of opening up the phone to reveal the keypad. Joy!

One of the only things we don't like about it is that the navigational buttons are a little hard to access in tandem with the keypad, as they're on separate sections. Still, with tri-band GSM, GPRS and HSCSD, an XHTML browser, integrated FM radio, mp3 player, video player and Bluetooth, not to mention 32MB memory built-in and a 32MB stick included in the package, this is THE phone to have at the moment.



LOGITECH MX1000 LASER CORDLESS MOUSE

RRP: \$159

20 times the tracking power of optical. Need we say more? Logitech's Laser Mouse is simply the most responsive mouse on the market, wireless or otherwise, and is leading the charge into a new generation, where lag is non-existent and accuracy is entirely in your hands. The MX Laser Engine has an image processing capacity of 5.8 megapixels per second at a resolution of 800dpi. Throw it on any surface and it will sense every single minute movement you make. And did we mention it has 20x the tracking power of optical?

Better still, it's also pioneering in another area - power. Forget having to replace batteries, the MX1000 has a built-in Lithium Ion battery and docking station so you can top it up whenever you like. Then there's all the other features - a scroll wheel with tilt left and right, built-in zoom functionality, thumb buttons for moving forward and backward through documents or websites, and an application switch so you won't need to bother with alt-tab again. Very nice indeed.



THRUSTMASTER FFB JOYSTICK & ENZO FERRARI 2-IN-1

RRP: BOTH \$149.95

Now here's an idea we like! The Enzo Ferrari wheel is compatible with both PC and PS2, so just plug it into either via USB and you're good to go! Of course, this would be meaningless gravy on top of an unappealing meal if the wheel was no good, but fortunately the Enzo holds up very well indeed. It's modelled after the actual Enzo Ferrari wheel, so there's definitely geek value if you're into motorsports. In terms of ergonomics it sits comfortably in your hands and the paddles are easily accessible. The pedals could be better but that's pretty much the case for most gaming wheels. We like.

If you're less of a racing fan and more of a flight sim freak, then you're probably more interested in the Thrustmaster FFB Joystick. It has all the features we've come to expect from a quality stick - 8 buttons, rapid fire trigger, twisting handle, point of view button, slider for throttle and powerful Force Feedback. This is a stick that Q. Wang would be proud of.



SONY DRU-710A

RRP: \$249

The Sony DRU-710A is one of the new generation of DVD burners out on the market that supports dual layer burning, allowing you to store up to 8.5GB of data, or up to 4 hours of MPEG-2 video on a single (dual layer) disc. It also brings with it faster single layer DVD burning (DVD-R at 12X, DVD-RW at 4X, DVD+R at 16X, DVD+RW at 4X), and support for pretty much every type of disc you could throw at it.

Its dual layer burning speed is also pretty reasonable. If you grab the firmware update available online you'll be able to burn +R Dual Layer discs at 4X (up from the 2.4X out of the box). Although a DVD burner may not seem like a hugely sexy piece of kit to find under the Christmas tree, it's becoming an essential purchase for modern PC users, and this model is as good as they get.





DAMIER V5000A

RRP: \$243 (PSU NOT INCLUDED)

Part of the Damier series of cases (which are in turn part of the XaserV series) from Thermaltake, this is one of the craziest PC cases we've had the pleasure of seeing. Sure, it hasn't got an absolute zero cooling system built in, or peanut butter insulation, but short of user mods, this is the case to have.

We're talking five optical drive bays and five HDD drive bays (two external, three internal) - all of which are a breeze to swap in or out thanks to the slider system. The top optical bay (which is accessible when the case is closed) has a built in system monitor with blue black LCD, which allows you to adjust fan speeds and monitor the heat of your setup. Did we mention the case comes with five fans? This, in addition to Firewire, USB, audio and speakers ports on a front panel for easy access.

And then there's the style. The back plate (on the front door) sports a seven colour flashing LED array (with several settings) and there's a slick blue LED from one of the cooling fans on the inside (which can be seen through the clear plastic panel). Mmm... glowy. If you're serious about having easy access to the inside of your PC, plus a machine that isn't part of the boring beige army, then check out this puppy.



DONKEY KONGA

RRP: \$99.95

In the past we've had maraca peripherals, snowboard peripherals and even DJ peripherals (well, if Beat Mania counts as a "DJ" game), but this is the first bongo drum peripheral. We haven't done a straight review on this one because it's not the sort of product that needs to be scored. Some of you will have no time or patience for such a trifle, whereas others will have a blast. We waver somewhere in between.

The game mechanics are simple - watch the cues on screen and hit the left bongo/right bongo/both bongos/clap, in time with the music. The game comes with a decent selection of terrible pop songs, classical pieces and funky Nintendo remixes, which is pretty much what you'd expect. There are five game modes to work through, as well as three difficulty levels, and the more you play, the more coins you earn and the more mini-games, alternate sound sets and challenges you can unlock. It's not rocket science, but it's actually pretty good fun.

OPTICAL DESKTOP ELITE FOR BLUETOOTH

RRP: \$299.95

A new range of keyboards is not usually something we get excited about... and this year is no exception. Even so, Microsoft have a pretty strong lineup for Christmas, including a mouse designed by Philippe Starck and the incorporation of fingerprint readers into several of their products. Perhaps of greatest interest to us, however, is the new Optical Desktop Elite for Bluetooth. If you're like the many people out there with Bluetooth enabled phones or devices, but haven't really found any use for it yet, then the little USB Bluetooth dongle that comes with the ODE may be of use, allowing you to wirelessly synchronise data between your Bluetooth phone/Pocket PC and your PC.

But what does Bluetooth mean for the keyboard and mouse? Enhanced range, reliability and security. Indeed, we'd take Bluetooth over RF technology any day. The keyboard itself is a pretty slick piece of kit too, with padded wrist rest, scroll wheel built in (with left and right tilt), and a whole host of shortcuts. The mouse shares the same lush deep blue colour scheme, as well as the two degrees of freedom scroll wheel. With batteries inserted, both are relatively heavy, but in a good "won't move around unless I want it to" way. It's about time Bluetooth came of age!





Seinfeld

VOLUME 1: THE COMPLETE 1ST & 2ND SEASON
VOLUME 2: THE COMPLETE 3RD SEASON

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, M15+

When the DVD format was in its infancy, everybody had their list of classic films and television series they'd like to see on the format and for most, *Seinfeld* was right up there with *The Simpsons*. At this stage there's no point championing the show, its place in history has already been set, as one of the funniest and most influential sitcoms in the history of the etc, etc. If you're of the "I don't like *Seinfeld*" ilk then these DVD box sets are not for you, this is a package strictly for the fans - all 40 episodes from the first three seasons, cleaned up, sporting new soundtracks, and unedited from their original broadcast (thank you very much Channel 10).

"You ask me to have lunch and then say you're not in the mood for details. Now you listen to me. I want details and I want them right now. I don't have a job. I have no place to go. You're not in the mood? Well you get in the mood." - George

You want details, you've got them. These box sets are packed to the gills with features, documentaries, deleted scenes, and bloopers. From the revealing documentary on the show's inception featuring candid and insightful interviews with co-creators Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld and other cast and crew, to the wonderful 'Notes About Nothing' subtitle track that reveals various bits of production notes and information about each episode - there's a veritable treasure trove of *Seinfeld* goodness on offer here. Perhaps the only area lacking would be the audio commentary department, as sadly only a handful of episodes across each box set have commentaries on them. Small gripes maybe, but if each episode had commentary on it then this would possibly be one of the best, if not the best DVD releases for a hit television series.

"She's got everything I've always wanted in another human being. Except for the walking." - Kramer

When it comes to the first few seasons of any TV series, it does take a while for the show to find its footing



[top] So what's the deal with Bryce?

- namely in character development. *Seinfeld* may not be an exception to this rule, but even after all these years the original Pilot episode (named 'The Seinfeld Chronicles') still feels fresh and although no classic it's pretty hilarious. With the bulk of the episodes in the first three seasons written by both Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld, there's hardly a dud amongst the bunch and when compared to most sitcoms appearing on television today, this show was always in a league of its own. For those of us who've seen each episode countless times on commercial television (there's probably an episode airing right now), this may not seem like an essential purchase, and if this were a bare bones release you'd probably be right if it weren't for the abundant number of extras on offer. If nothing else, this is a great opportunity to start clearing out those old VHS tapes labeled 'Seinfeld Tape 1' through to '15' for good.

"What is this obsession people have with books? They put them in their houses like they're trophies. What do you need it for after you read it?" - Jerry

Definitely one for the collection.
Kosta Andreadis

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 9

John Safran Vs God

AV CHANNEL, M15+

▶▶ The latest comedy/documentary series from Australia's most notorious prankster is a dense, fast-paced and compelling exploration of some of the world's major (and some more obscure) religions. John Safran travels across the world, in effect road-testing various religions and interviewing the devotees.

In an era where journalism is at an all time low in terms of blinkered, biased reporting driven by government ideology and the corporate dollar, John Safran's style is incredibly refreshing. Religion is a contentious topic but Safran approaches it in a genuinely curious and open-minded manner. Yet it is also extremely subversive, with some of the highlights including Big Brother's Sara-Marie drafting a Middle East peace plan; Safran travelling to (largely Mormon) Salt

Lake City in order to evangelise atheism and the theory of evolution door to door; his experimentation with Peyote in the Nevada desert; and the final, bizarre episode in which Safran endures an exorcism by a Christian extremist.

Like *Music Jamboree* before it, *John Safran Vs God* is packed with extras, such as deleted scenes and a lot of segments 'bumped' from the series that are every bit as good as the show itself. The segment in which John Safran places a Polynesian curse on John Blackman for making an insulting remark about his sister on *Hey Hey It's Saturday* is one of the funniest things I have ever seen.

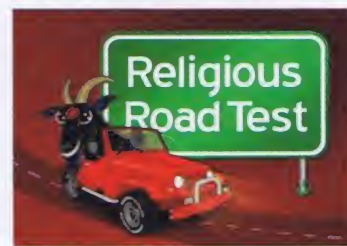
Overall, this is excellent satire; inquisitive and intelligent. A must-see for John Safran fans and new-comers alike.

Elizabeth Shea

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 9



[above] Safran's audition tape for *Reservoir Dogs* "I'm f**kin' dying here!"



A delegation mourns as Amos moves to Australia

JSA: Joint Security Area

EASTERN EYE, MA 15+

▶▶ Over the last couple of months I have harped on about how exciting the Korean New Wave is. Every film that comes out of that country seems to be so full of life and beauty that nothing coming out of any of the other major filmmaking nations can compare. Perhaps some of this vitality in the film industry comes from the strife in the country, the tension caused by the rift between the North and South that has existed since the end of WWII. This rift is what plays a central role in *JSA*, one of the most successful Korean movies of all time (second only to gangster drama *Friend* which we will have released locally with any luck). The Joint Security Area is an outpost in

the middle of the DMZ dividing the two countries in which delegates from both countries can meet to resolve disputes. Naturally things don't always run smoothly. *JSA* tells a *Rashomon* style story of a Swiss investigator looking into a gun battle in the JSA that leaves two soldiers dead. To give any more away would do a massive disservice to the film, the slowly unfolding truth of the incident is fascinating and emotionally involving to the nth degree. Sumptuous cinematography (the first Korean film to be shot on Super-35) serves to drag the viewer deeper into the world of the film.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 7



Oh my god, it's Blackzilla!

Gojira + GODZILLA: KING OF THE MONSTERS 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

EASTERN EYE, PG

▶▶ *Godzilla* ranks up there as one of the most famous films of all time. It's a pity then that the version that most people have seen is the bastardised American release shorn of over 20 minutes of footage and a dreadfully sombre Raymond Burr cut into what's left to give the film a Western protagonist. Whilst the American release is still a lot of fun (and unintentionally humorous) and showcases some incredible miniature work, the film lacks the political punch of the original as it was cut of its strongly anti-nuclear stance, not a surprising move since the Americans had nuked Japan 9 years earlier. Finally fans of kaiju cinema can see a fully restored version of the film thanks to the 50th anniversary edition. Although slow

in parts, Ishiro Honda's meditation of man made monsters (in the form of nuclear weapons) still has impact today. Unfortunately the print is a little muddy and some of the frequent night time scenes suffer as a result but the strengths of the film outweigh the downsides of the transfer. As a bonus feature the DVD comes complete with the American release of *Gojira*, titled *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*. A retrospective documentary about the monster and the series it spawned would have been nice but we can hope that will come with the release of *Godzilla: Final Wars*, the 28th and final instalment of the series directed by Japanese wunderkind Ryuhei Kitamura, due next year.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 10 / EXTRAS: 8



I, Robot

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M15+

Based around Isaac Asimov's three laws of robotics, *I, Robot* is set in future Chicago, on the eve of the single biggest roll-out of robots (the NS-5 Automated Domestic Assistant) in history. As you might expect, things go awry... and that's about all you need to know about the plot.

As Penfold would say, this is a film that's "more fun than it should be". In other words, you go in expecting little, and come out the other end feeling that, although it may not change your world, it was a pretty damn good piece of entertainment. This, despite the fact that for most of the film, the main protagonist Spooner (played by Will Smith) is a pretty unlikable guy. He really does come across as just some jerk

who hates robots... and even after we find out why he feels this way, the explanation really doesn't sit all that well. So let's see... we have a main character who's a bit of a dick, and yet the film is eminently enjoyable. Why is this?

It's probably because Smith's character only needs to be driven, not likable. It's Sonny the NS-5 (played by Alan Tudyk, who you may know as Wash from *Firefly*) who steals the show, backed up ably by some stunning action sequences and a good plot twist or two to top it all off.

The release comes in two flavours, a single disc and a two DVD Collector's Edition with a wealth of extras.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 6

THE *Greatest* MOVIES YOU'VE NEVER SEEN



Once Upon a Time in the West

PARAMOUNT PICTURES, M15+

When Charlie Bronson was offered the role that made Clint Eastwood a star in *Fistful of Dollars* he said the script was one of the worst he'd ever read, admitting later that it didn't matter - it was what Sergio Leone did with it that did. Accepting the role for *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Bronson would get his chance to play a nameless gunslinger from the ol' west, but this time Leone would portray the demise and impending extinction of his signature character.

Once Upon a Time in the West surrounds the rugged protagonist with American frontier expansion, the latter to be steamrolled into history. While the movie is trademark Leone - tense standoffs, heartless outlaws

and a helping of anti-hero - the will and temperament of Jill McBain (Claudia Cardinale) powerfully depicts the rising importance of women in forging a new society throughout America.

Leone again teams with composer Ennio Morricone to create a haunting score that accentuates the audience's feelings towards the characters. Each character has their own musical theme with the theme music doubling as Jill's song, impressing upon us her importance as a character. The movie contains all of Leone's calling cards, style and flair among them, with a thematic drive that leaves a remarkable impression. See it.

Andrew Bulmer

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 7

Win the Complete Buffy and Angel DVD sets!

Buffy and Angel have left an indelible mark on TV audiences, and indeed pop culture, worldwide. Series creator Joss Whedon actively set out to make Buffy a cult phenomenon, and along with his talented team of writers and actors, succeeded admirably. Buffy was a show that was part soap opera, part martial arts, part mythology and part comedy. Angel took things in a darker direction, making the line between good and evil even fuzzier, yet retaining the humour that had become Buffy's trademark. Not only have Fox Home Entertainment been kind enough to give us two complete sets of both shows (that's 11 full seasons per prize for those counting), but we're also lucky enough to have two signed letters from the man himself - Joss Whedon - talking about the show as a whole. To be in with a chance to win one of the packs, just send us an illustration of your favourite Buffy or Angel character! Send your entry, along with your name and address to "Bored Now, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016."

**2
PACKS
UP FOR
GRABS!**



Terms & Conditions 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am November 23 and entries close at 6pm January 5. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am January 6 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the March issue of Hyper on sale February 2. 9) 2 winners will each receive Seasons 1-7 of Buffy The Vampire Slayer on DVD (RRP for each DVD is \$24.95) and Seasons 1-4 of Angel on DVD (RRP for each DVD is \$24.95). Total value of competitions is \$1047.90. 10) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

Puni Puni Poemy

PRODUCTION: VICTOR ENTERTAINMENT/J.C.
GENRE: CRAZY PRETTY GIRL ANIME

I know it's incredibly clichéd to frame a description in terms of drugs, but if any show ever warranted such a description - this is it. (So here goes). *Puni Puni Poemy* is like a speed fueled acid trip, where things are beautiful but always on the verge of being completely nonsensical and hitting information overload. It's crazy, it's refreshing and it's like a freight train.

Puni Puni Poemy is from the creators of *Excel Saga*, and if you've ever seen that series you'll have some idea what to expect. The series was originally pitched as a "half-baked pretty girl anime" based around the fictional anime *Puni Puni Poemy* in *Excel Saga* (from episode 17). The main character is the titular and thoroughly hyperactive Poemy, a 4th grade girl with perky tits (what a surprise) and a dream of becoming a voice actress (and who refers to herself as Kobayashi - the name of her character's actual voice actress Kobayashi Yumiko). Very little of what follows is coherent or makes sense, it's more like a random stream

of incredibly bizarre and very cool animation with a lead who sends lines of searing dialogue flying from her mouth like a machine gun.

The basic storyline revolves around aliens invading and Poemy joining up with the Aasu family (consisting of Poemy's best friend who is constantly trying to get her into bed, and her seven sisters), and eventually realising she has a magical alter ego. The story is kind of irrelevant though, because the whole thing is meant to be a pisstake of anime clichés, and is heartily post-modern (Poemy frequently talks to the director and frames the action in terms of what is expected from an anime). Whether it works depends on how much anime you've seen, and also whether you believe that making fun of the conventions of anime (fan service, hentai etc) while simultaneously reveling in them is clever, or just exploitative. Either way, it's hard not to recommend *Poemy*, if only because it mixes so many styles of animation together and has more non-sequiturs per second than any other show.

D. Mannerism

**ANIMATION: 9 / STORY: 5
OVERALL: 7**



I wish I had two more hands so I could give those titties four thumbs down



Chrono Crusade GOSPEL 1

PRODUCTION COMPANY: GONZO/GOSPEL
GENRE: ACTION COMEDY

Don't be fooled by the title - *Chrono Crusade* has nothing to do with the Chrono games. The title instead refers to a bound demon named Chrono, the sidekick of a feisty exorcist nun named Sister Rosette who works for the Order of Magdalene, a branch of the church dedicated to tracking down and stopping demons wherever they may appear by any means necessary. Set in an alternate 1928 when the emerging hobby of the rich and decadent seems to be summoning demons (badly), the Order of Magdalene have their hands full taking care of business and are kept even busier trying to make amends for all of the property damage that Rosette and Chrono inadvertently cause. Being a Gonzo series, *Chrono Crusade* lives up to expectation with great character design and animation as well as use of colour, but unfortunately the series falls flat when it comes to story and pacing. As is common with a number of series, *Chrono Crusade* is packed

to the brim with jokes, many of a misplaced sexual nature and mostly fall flat. The series definitely manages to improve as of episode four when viewers are finally let in on the plot - the Order of Magdalene are charged with protecting the seven disciples, a group of people gifted with the power of one of the seven virtues - but for many it may be too late to resurrect their interest. An interesting sombre note is added when the true cost of Rosette's connection with Chrono is revealed. As such *Gospel 2* of the series should be a far more interesting watch but as it stands *Chrono Crusade* is a little too lightweight for anyone aside from fans of inappropriate sexual humour, forced laughs or Gonzo.

Daniel Wilks

**ANIMATION: 8 / STORY: 6
OVERALL: 6**



They're playing Driv3r in case you're wondering




WinWinWin



Win Half-life 2 and World of Warcraft!

>> Saying that Half-Life 2 and World of Warcraft are two of the most important titles in videogaming for 2004 and 2005 is no understatement - it's a cold, hard fact. Did I say cold and hard? Sorry, I meant warm and inviting, because these are two games that will reinvigorate your love for gaming. Want proof? Just check out the 95% review for Half-Life 2 in the last issue of Hyper or our write-up on WoW on page 70. Trust us - you need these games.

Thanks to our good chums at Vivendi Universal Games, we have three copies of each to giveaway. To be in the running, just answer this question:

 **Who developed World of Warcraft?**

Put your answer, as well as your name and address on the back of an envelope and send it to: "That's Not a Crowbar, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016."

**3
PACKS
UP FOR
GRABS!**




Win an Xbox and Games!

>> Hands up if you don't have an Xbox or a copy of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay or Full Spectrum Warrior. For you guys this comp is a no brainer. Hell, those of you with your hands down might as well enter too - why not win another one? Well, thanks to our friends at Revolution CD, you can! You could even trade it in there... which would be kind of ironic, but we digress.

You might have seen a Revolution CD store around (they currently have several locations in the ACT and NSW, and one store in QLD). You might have been into one to purchase new or second hand games, DVDs or music. You might even have gone in to trade in some stuff for cash or extra credit. If you have, you get a star. If not check 'em out online at www.revolutioncd.com.au and see where the nearest store is.

To be in the running for this sweet prize, just answer the following question:

 **Who wrote the song "Revolution Will Not Be Televised"?**

Put your answer, as well as your name and address on the back of an envelope and send it to: "Vin-tage Gaming, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016." Redfern, NSW 2016.



Terms & Conditions: 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am November 23 and entries close at 6pm January 5. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am January 6 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the March issue of Hyper on sale February 2. 9) 3 winners will each receive Half-Life 2 for PC (RRP \$89.95) and World of Warcraft for PC (RRP \$89.95). 1 winner will receive an Xbox (RRP \$249), a copy of Riddick for Xbox (RRP \$99.95) and a copy of Full Spectrum Warrior (RRP \$99.95). Total value of competitions is \$988.60. 10) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

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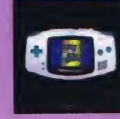
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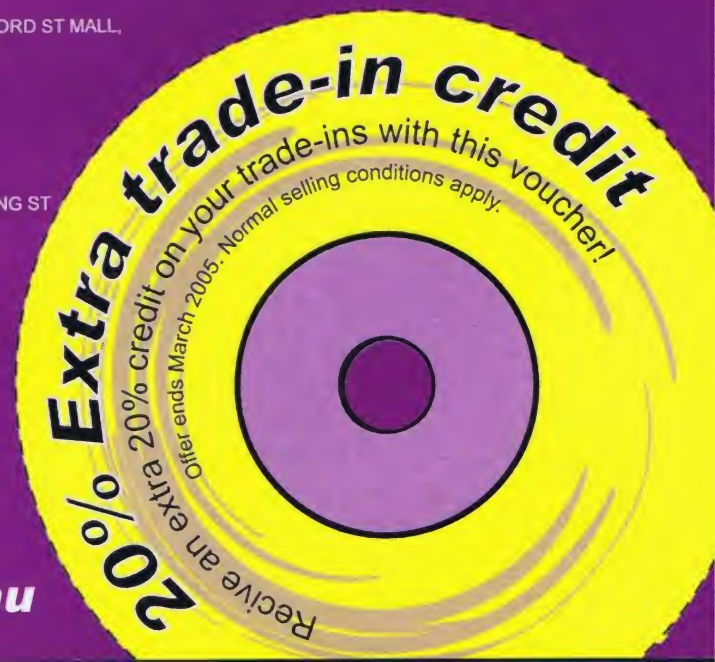
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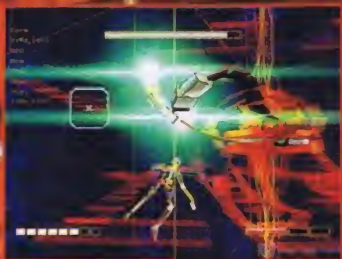
CLASSICS >>

THE MAKING OF

RezTM

>> Kosta Andreadis





In 1994, Tetsuya Mizuguchi was at a rave in Switzerland, and much like the other five thousand people in attendance he was in awe of the tribal rhythms, blinding lights and overall sense of elation that surrounded him. Upon closer inspection, Mizuguchi-san realised that the various coloured lights and lasers were computer controlled - all in time with the rhythm and music. It was at this point that Mizuguchi felt he wanted to create a game that could somehow capture the experience he felt, a game that could accurately replicate the relationship between music and the visual realm. It posed to be quite a challenging task for Mizuguchi, something that always stayed in the back of his mind as he continued to develop games for Sega throughout the 1990s - and it wasn't until seven years later, in 2001 that he realised his goal with Rez. At its core the game is a shooter set in cyberspace, but much more than that it is a game that has clear focus on enjoyment through music, as the sounds found within the game respond to player actions. In Rez simple sound effects become musical phrases, and most importantly music.

Tetsuya Mizuguchi joined Sega in 1990 working on various projects including early CGI demonstrations developed using Silicon Graphics Workstations. It wasn't until the extremely successful Sega Rally series was released in the mid 90s that he began to start working on more personal projects. The first of these was the highly quirky yet unmistakably fun rhythm adventure Space Channel 5 - a title that added a new layer to the DDR craze that was sweeping arcades across Asia. It was after this that Tetsuya was to begin working on a shooter, and in the process try to break the mould of the genre. He felt that the current crop of shooters only focussed on difficulty and graphics quality, and the act of playing the game became boring. Mizuguchi-san felt the genre had not changed all that much since the days of Space Invaders and Xevious and if he was to begin working on a shooter he wanted to ensure that he could bring something new to the table.

TASTING MUSIC

Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian artist who rose to prominence in the early 20th century painted music - each stroke a phrase, each colour a melody. Mizuguchi-san, a great admirer of Kandinsky's, felt that this sense of synesthesia (the idea that the senses can overlap) could be translated into a game. So he set to work developing his shooter, with the goal of the project to see if they

could translate the simple pleasure found with shooters into music. Whilst struggling to come up with an idea of how such a game could work, one of Mizuguchi's DJ friends showed him a video he shot at a bar whilst in Africa and Mizuguchi-san was immediately blown away by how each tribe member played off each other and the drum rhythms to create their own sound scapes. He realised that when all these singular sounds came together, the experience was made whole. And that this translates literally into many aspects of game design.

Rez's development cycle was unusually long for a shooter, or any game for that matter, as Mizuguchi-san was trying to capture a feeling he couldn't express to his team. The closest explanation he could relate to his staff of designers and coders was the feeling you have when you are in a techno club and time approaches midnight and the entire venue is 'tuned' into the music and everyone is anticipating each beat drop, each synth-line with their arms firmly in the air. The problem with



TRANCE VIBRATOR During development of Rez, Mizuguchi-san and his team felt that if they could add vibrations to the experience then the game as a whole would work on many more levels. And they were right, the Trance Vibrator for Rez did indeed heighten the experience of playing the game - so much so that it became a sexual device for many avid female gamers. In fact, Mizuguchi-san has been approached in his homeland on more than one occasion by female gamers, thanking him for Rez and in particular the Trance Vibrator. Although completely unintentional, what did they expect would happen if they released a small plastic device that's only purpose was to vibrate?

In Rez simple sound effects become musical phrases, and most importantly music

this analogy however, was that a lot of the coders and designers in his team had never been to club or bar before. Mizuguchi knew the feeling he wanted to capture and after many months of arduous tests and failures his staff began to understand that feeling too. His sound designers were specifically instructed not to compose any music, only sounds. His game designers were told to keep it simple - story and level design was a distant second to the gameplay experience. Whilst other games in the music genre were more focused on having players press buttons or stamp their feet in time with music Rez stood out as a title that blurred the lines between the senses - part shooter, part rhythm game, part sequencer, all brilliant. <<<



Q ENTERTAINMENT After the completion of Rez, Tetsuya Mizuguchi left Sega to start his own development studio called Q Entertainment. At present Q Entertainment has two puzzle games in development, one for the PSP called Lumines (taking full advantage of the handheld's sound capabilities) and the other for the Nintendo DS called Meteos. Although Lumines features standard block-formation gameplay the game is all about using the blocks to remix and add to the music bar running across the screen. For Meteos, Mizuguchi-san is taking more of a producer's role as he's teaming with Nintendo to create this very specific puzzler that takes full advantage of the dual screens and touch pen.

Q. Xbox Live – does it live up to expectations?

There's little doubt that Xbox Live has changed the gaming landscape. Players who have never played online now have a very straightforward way of getting into the action; developers now have to seriously address the multiplayer component of their games; and last but not least, publishers have the issue of potentially losing sales due to games remaining popular online long after the single player component has been exhausted, but at the same time seeing new business models to build on (such as premium downloads). The times they are a changing, of that there's no doubt, but the question is - does it live up to expectations? Over to the readers...



HYPER FORUM

Well, it's been a good run, but that's it for the Forum section in Hyper. Next month will be the last one, and from then on, it's over to the forums at www.hyperactive.com.au and www.doesmannerism.com. Super happy sayonara Hyper Forum!

Responses will not be printed in Hyper #137



MAIL THE HYPER FORUM:

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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.

LASER GUIDED

Well if, and only if, you expected a satellite networked, laser guided, anti-ICBM system, then no. Otherwise we have a truly excellent online console service on our hands. After reading your features on Xbox live and PS2 online a while back I was mesmerised by the thought what online gaming must be like. Well I got ADSL recently, and found that Live provided everything you could want from a console and up to 15 other people distributed around this crazy world of ours. And then some. My previously redundant copy of Rainbow Six 3 is now my most played game, now that I am aware the mayhamic (you heard me) online shenanigans it can provide, with flashbangs aplenty. And now that I have found some Aussies to hook up with for smooth as silk firefights with my trusty G3A3, it's even better. Props to Albii, Sho33y, Mastervirus and the gang if you're out there. Not to mention all the things that set it apart from PS2 online, eg. Downloadable content, the friends feature that transcends between all games etc. And the thought of Halo 2 online makes me squeal like a grunt burdened with adhesive plasma explosives.

Look for me online,
SPARTACUS4

OF THE AGES

Does Xbox Live live up to expectations? That's the question of the ages isn't it? More important than who will win the upcoming election or the US Presidential campaign. More important that whether or not Saddam actually had weapons of mass destruction. More important than the whereabouts of Osama. More important than... you get the idea. The short answer to the question is yes. The longer answer to the question is not quite but it's bloody good nonetheless. Xbox Live is without a doubt the best of the current crop of online console services, eclipsing the frustrating (and kind of crappy) PS2 Online service and blowing the virtually non-existent GCN online capabilities out of the water.



[above] Rainbow Six - the perfect way to shoot Bennett in the head online



Honestly, what the hell were Nintendo thinking basing their online service

around a game nobody was particularly interested in playing online when the Dreamcast was first released?

But I digress, Xbox Live is so user friendly - that's what makes it such an attractive alternative to the other options available. One login for all the games. That's a big step up over Sony. A permanent friends list that runs through all of the games. Another big plus and some more sand in the face for PS2. Active invites from people on the friends list. Once again Sony looks pretty bad. Real time voice-chat. Awesome. If I'm so impressed with all of the features of the Xbox Live service why do I say that it doesn't quite live up to expectations? This answer is slightly harder to form but mostly deals with the hype surrounding the service before it was launched. Microsoft essentially promised that the service would revolutionise the way you played console games. It didn't - it simply exposed the way PC gamers have been

playing online games for years to the console crowd. That said, I still think the service, as the Hyper crew may put it, is "the bullshit sickness", and is worth the price for a year's subscription.

Munkee Disco

TOTALLY

I keep bumping into this guy called Bennett on the service. He's totally not cool.

Amos II: Son of Amos

WHIPPETS

I have to say that xbox live has totally changed the way I play video games, but I can see it being an underwhelming experience at first. Xbox Live is a service that really relies on community to succeed, with peer to peer hosting required to play games and friends lists the only reliable way to find quality games. Its all about networking with people to find gamers who play the same games as you, and are preferably Australian so you can enjoy lag-free gaming. Without sites like www.aussie xbox.com.au and

being in clans like the Band of Whippets (www.bandofwhippets.net), this would be extremely hard to achieve. I've heard plenty of stories about aussie gamers being disappointed in live because they can only find american servers and laggy games.

That being said, the Australian XBL community is probably one of the friendliest online communities I've been involved in. All it takes is a couple of posts on sites like aussie xbox.com to find friends and fast aussie hosts and you're away.

As I said earlier, its totally changed the way I play games. I hardly ever play single player anymore, and I'm more likely to buy a game if it has a good online mode, rather than a good single player game. It also results in less sleep and less time to do other things. Get a decent friends list happening, and you'll never go back to playing by yourself ever again.

Q Dog

SPOUT MEDLEY

Ya know what? I like playing games against other people, but I hate all these punks that spout off constantly. Trash talking has its place, but only when you've gotten to know people, and preferably when you're in the same room. I mean, what would a Mashed night be without trash talk? It's integral!

So I guess that's my major problem with Live. It's beautifully designed, mostly lag free and there's heaps of games... but like any



[up] Master Cheat camping out on Live

online gaming, you have to put up with the odd dickhead.

X-Gamer

HANGERS BACK

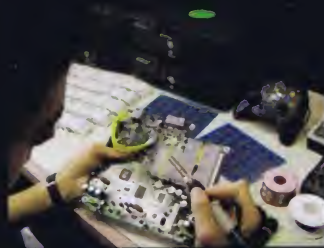
Two words. Halo 2. This is the game that's going to determine whether the Xbox Live service is good or not. I've been holding off on getting a subscription until this game comes out, cos I reckon it's going to be THE game to play online! In fact, right about the time everyone out there will be reading this I'll be fragging it up online!

FraggleRoXor



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freakscene@next.com.au

ANGER LEADS TO THE DARK SIDE

I used to buy your magazine many years ago when you still reviewed GameBoy (original) games, though eventually stopped when you moved to GBC (since the GameBoy was the only new system I owned at the time). Over the past year, I invested in an Xbox and PS2 in addition to my PC. A few months back now, I was in the newsagent looking for PCPP when I came across Hyper. Because I own two consoles and one fairly old PC, I thought it might be time to give Hyper another go. I must say I was impressed! I'm actually considering turning to the "dark side" and

being a console-only gamer (with exception to RTS on the PC), what do you think? I've got a fairly old PC, and I'm trying to determine whether to spend my money on more console games or go for a new PC. Because I've got an older PC, I'll need to get a whole new system. Yet, for the same price as a new PC, I could get a new console (such as the GCN or GBA), as well as many more console games. My current PC runs all but a few new RTS games, so I'm wondering whether it's worth the upgrade at all! Help me out! Currently I'm leaning toward the dark side, since I have over 70 games for the PC, collected over many years, yet only 9 between the two consoles.

Mick

Mick, conversations like this make me very angry. The only dark side is anger, not consoles. If you had any love for gaming you would crush your petty concerns and spend money like a good consumer. Better yet, you could crush your concerns and spend your money on me, before I crush you. Even better still, pretend you got the letter of the month so you can send me your address and I can come over, crush you and take your money from your still warm corpse.

CRUSHINETICS

Consoles and games should come with a warning on them, much like the ones on a packet of smokes or the doors to a casino "Gaming is addictive" "may affect your level of awareness, concentration and or cause insomnia, headaches, sore back ect". Not that I'm complaining, all these ailments are worth putting up with when playing a top notch game its just that most people think you're nuts when they ask you "hey why are you so tired?" and you reply "I stayed up half the night playing Fable and the other half of the night thinking about how good Paper Mario 2 is gonna be..." I mean gaming isn't going to ruin anyone's life like gambling but the addictive side can have its downers, like the anxiety of waiting for a game to be released (we all know that one) or wanting a game or console so bad but not having the funds to get one, withdrawals when you are away from your console too long. I guess it's the price we all must pay for being the gamers we are. Well I'm glad I don't have it on my own.

Robyn. G the Game_junky.

Maybe to get rid of your back pain you could indulge in a new exercise regimen that I call (quite cleverly)

[below] Daniel McGregor is a King of Fighters fan and all round artistic god



© 2004 DANIEL MACGREGOR

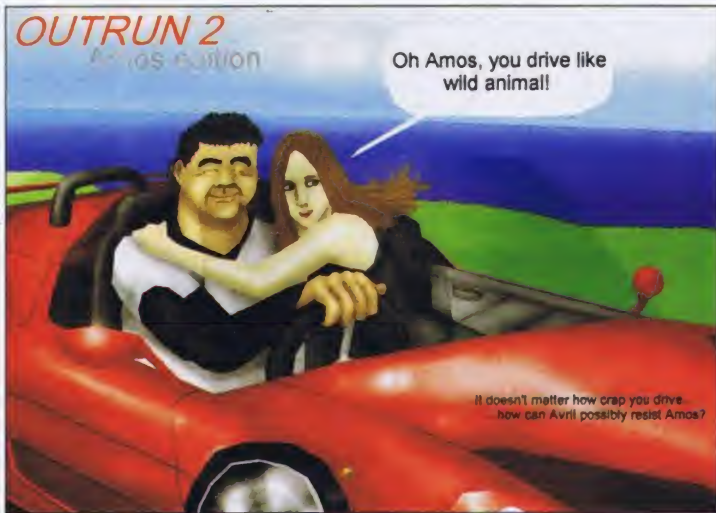
CAPTION THIS!

PART 59 WINNER

Clinton Ellard knew our only weakness... Super Happy Japanese Gameshows!



"Japanese wheel of fortune... what the hell is wrong with Japanese people?"



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your mind off it by - you guessed it - crushing everything in sight. But these are just a few of Evil Malky's patented secrets. Only \$49.95!

Using my "crushinetics" system you can avoid paying the price for being a gaming nerd by making all those around you pay in your stead. They may still look at you like you're crazy but that look will be mixed with one of unbridled fear, making it OK. Plus, if you order the "crushinetics" system within



Two of the winners from our Outrun 2 competition (for all winners check pg 14)
[above] Clinton Ellard busts out some hot Samos action
[left] Nick Webb had us laughing out loud - genius! (and even though Amos looks disturbingly like Mal Meninga his contented smile is spot on)

the next 48,000 hours you'll get a free steak knife, just perfect for rupturing internal organs. Please send a money order to "Crush You All, c/o Puny Hyper Crew, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, 2016."

PLEASANT MEMORIES

I felt the need to send some correspondence to your wonderful magazine. I recently picked up a copy of Final Fantasy 7 on psone. I know, the game is 7 years old, but I

own all the consoles (including a DC, R.I.P) and its hard to buy ALL the best games on ALL platforms. I love games. A day does not go by that I don't play a game. But, out of all the games I have played, I have never played one where I genuinely cared about the character im controlling. Sure, you like to level up your 'puppet' in the way you see fit, and get the shiniest armour etc etc, but I mean REALLY care. But, when Aeris was killed Ff7, I was genuinely moved with



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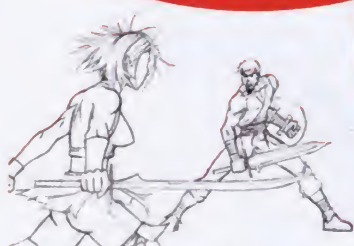


Image by: QANTM student Motze Asher



[above] Ari Gibson just f**king rocks.

sadness by what had happened. The music, the atmosphere...AMAZING! I've never experienced that in a game before. Never. I will never forget that moment, as it has to be most touching thing I have ever seen in a game. Even though that is a rare event nowadays and the game shops are over inundated with dodgy games, you can still find gems amongst them. It just proves the point once more, that graphics come second to game play.

Concrete donkey

Carmageddon was the last game for which I developed an (some would say unhealthy) attachment. It shared an affinity with me - an affinity for crushing, maiming and running down every civilian in sight. Then backing over them. Repeatedly. Carmageddon was my first true love (before Mary Jane/Kirsten Dunst came along), and I still sleep with it under my pillow to this day, making it one of my most treasured (and most smelly) possessions.

From your letter I can deduce that whilst you have experienced this type of attachment you have never experienced a little bit of punctuation called the

apostrophe. Use good grammar or I WILL CRUSH YOU!

TEN MOST WANTED

This news post article I read today has disturbed me greatly, what do u think?

WASHINGTON D.C. (Reuters) -- George Bush has recently announced in an in-house speech at the oval table that he has discovered Bungie Studios to be secretly harbouring a WOMD organisation known as the Covenant. George Bush is unsure who exactly this Covenant are, but he has reason to believe that on November 9th the world will never be the same.

"It is my job as President to seek out, and destroy those that harbour terrorism, and those that are trying to illegally acquire chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction," said President George W Bush today just moments ago. "I am unsure who this Covenant armada are, but I do know that Bungie Studios are responsible for harbouring this organisation, and if voted back in, I will deploy special forces to take down Bungie Studios, not allowing them to continue their

LETTER OF THE MONTH

BAD TOUCH

I'm beginning this letter less than 10 seconds after finding groundbreaking landmark in history. I was innocently surfing the net, unbeknownst of what I was about to discover. Then it happened. I came across a behemoth of comedy. The term "Laugh Out Loud" is thrown around a lot these days, but I can think of no other case where it is more deserved. What the hell am I going on about? Well if you thought Microsoft's "It's good to play together" was somewhat humorous, may I prepare you for the most hilariously misconceived blunder in marketing since the very existence of the classic "Japanese-phrase-that-doesn't-work-out-in-English". I present to you Nintendo's somewhat minimalist, unintentionally sexually suggestive motto for the DS, around which it's whole launch is based. Here it is:

"It's good to touch" LMAO! In this crazy world are advancements in gaming, nay all, technology now fronted by a single cheekishly obscene or ignorantly conceived phrase? If it was one Japanese P.R agent's mission to inadvertently reduce legions of the most strong-willed and sincere gaming fans into a heaps of twitching mass, roaring with laughter, and drowning in tears of jest and mocking, then mission accomplished. Yes Nintendo, it is good to touch.

Your Pal,

Mark.

PS What I'd really like to see in you mag is a permanent reader review section, and maybe a forum topic on music?

I was once chased by the police for thinking it would be good to touch Kiera Knightly, the girlfriend I had after I crushed Kirsten Dunst. It is good to touch things but the fascist dictatorship that rules the world thought that it was a bad touch and they chased me until I was forced to crush them all.

And speaking of bad advertising mottos, the "Thorpie said it's fully sick" ads on TV right now make me so mad. RAGE/ANGER BUILDING. CRUSH U ALL!



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plan to "change the world forever" on November 9th as they say, making the world a safer place for Americans."

Secretary of State Collin Powell then went on to explain how the Covenant are coming extremely close to getting their hands on what they like to call a "Halo". Powell is unsure what exactly this Halo is, but says Bungie Studios will pay for their actions against the United States.

The UN could not be reached for comments.

President Bush has gone on to accuse the American public of harbouring this terrorist organisation, saying as many as 2 million Americans have paid their money, readily excited about what will happen to Earth on the 9th of November.

What's your opinion of this policy?

Blythoman_13

Oh chortle and fnar! How deliciously funny! Of course if there's anyone or anything I want to crush more than circus midgets (or Benton) it would

have to be good old Dubya. Stupid Dubya. I WILL CRUSH YOU!

HAPPY GO LUCKY

I'm sick of Vietnam War games made by Western developers. Their portrayals of the war are boring. I haven't played any of the games but that's besides the point. I'm wondering how long it would be before a nam game would be made where you played as a VC fighter and the portrayal of the war was realistic, that is, including scenes of US Marines mowing down fleeing civilians, Marines cracking a peasant's head open with a rifle butt a la Platoon, Marines raping and killing teenage girls, Marines getting impaled on bamboo traps, VCs getting napalmed and running around like human bonfires, VC toddlers and grandmothers lobbing grenades at Marines, VCs bayonetting wounded Frenchies, and of course, the North Vietnamese Army rolling into Saigon with VC soldiers pumping their fists

at the fleeing US transport helicopter. The opening cinematic should have the player meandering down a mountain path with a hundred other displaced people. Marines open fire and your entire family is killed, including your 5-month pregnant wife. So naturally you join the VC, spending the duration of the game crawling through the underground tunnels, picking off unsuspecting inbred-Al Marines from camouflaged ground-level bunkers, placing bamboo traps, ambushing troops, capturing and torturing John Mullins for his contribution to the shit-as-hell Soldier of Fortune games, running away from napalm and Agent Orange strikes, bringing down Black Hawk helicopters with your trusty AK, and killing 2 Marines (the last 2 casualties of the war) with your mortar. In the ending credits, there should be, in big, bold, letters: "don't forget, WE won, American bastards!" To add fuel to the fire, this game would walk all over the current range of 'nam games in terms of gameplay. Someone needs to stir the Vietnam War game-pot once in a while so gamers can actually look forward to a fresh Vietnam War game that isn't made by Western fascists.

I'm so evil.

Michael Xiao Ke Zhu

I know evil, and you're not it kiddo. You're kind of whiny and I imagine you flinging your arms about like you're having an epileptic fit when you have one of your rants, but saying you're evil is like saying John Romero made me "suck it down" or that Milli Vanilli were gansta rappers - patently untrue and enough to make me want to hunt you down and crush you and all your circus midget friends. After making a Vietnam game that's entirely unenjoyable to play and will be banned throughout most of the world perhaps you can take your revolutionary ideas on the road and make a game based around high school massacres or one where you play a rogue vigilante who is captured by police after gunning down an innocent Arab who may or may not have looked a little shifty, faces the death penalty, has their electrocution botched and has their half cooked eyeballs shot across the room. Wouldn't that be fun?

KATZENJAMMER THIS!

A latest view shows that it takes usual of just 3.8 drinkings to induce a katzenjammer. But my pills aids



[up] Instructing Hyper reader Richie C on the art of the mannerism at the FF concert

you elude katzenjammers and awake sensitive grand from head to abdomen and everywhere additional.

Push to buy

I don't know about you freaky probably German person but my katzenjammer is just peachy keen thank you very much. Why anyone would want to avoid the katzenjammer through the use of

your pills is beyond me. Before I crush you let me tell you a story about my ex-girlfriend Kirsten Dunst/Mary Jane. I showed her my katzenjammer soon after we met and after she stopped laughing I was forced to crush her. Of course, that did end up leaving me with a sensitive grand from head to abdomen and everywhere additional.

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Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP 10 PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50 W/E 7th NOV 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	GTA: San Andreas	Adventure
2	◆	V8 Supercars 2	Racing
3	○	Shrek 2	Adventure
4	▲	Crash Twinsanity	Adventure
5	◆	Tony Hawk Underground 2	Sports
6	⊕	Tiger Woods PGA 2005	Sports
7	▼	FIFA 2005	Sports
8	⊕	Shark Tale	Adventure
9	▼	SingStar	All Other
10	▼	NBA Live 2005	Sports

TOP 10 PlayStation Games Over \$30 W/E 7th NOV 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Yu-Gi-Oh Forbidden Mem	Strategy
2	◆	Disney Triple Pack	Adventure
3	▲	Grand Theft Auto Coll Ed	Adventure
4	⊕	RC Stunt Copter	Racing
5	◆	HPotter Chamber Secrets	Adventure
6	▲	Simpson's Wrestling	Sports
7	◆	FIFA 2004	Sports
8	⊕	Celebrity Deathmatch	Action
9	○	NBA Live 2003	Sports
10	⊕	Colin McRae Rally Ptm	Racing

TOP 10 Game Cube Games Over \$50 W/E 7th NOV 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	Pikmin 2	Action
2	▼	Donkey Konga w Drums	All Other
3	▲	LOTR Trilogy Third Age	Adventure
4	▼	Pokémon Colosseum	RPG
5	▼	X-Men Legends	Adventure
6	▼	Tony Hawk Underground 2	Sports
7	▲	WWE Day Of Reckoning	Sports
8	⊕	Simpson's Hit & Run	Adventure
9	⊕	Shrek 2	Adventure
10	⊕	Mario Party 5	Family

TOP 10 Xbox Games Over \$50 W/E 7th NOV 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	Shrek 2	Adventure
2	▼	Fable	RPG
3	▲	Crash Twinsanity	Adventure
4	▼	Star Wars Battlefront	Action
5	▲	Tony Hawk Underground 2	Sports
6	▼	FIFA 2005	Sports
7	▼	V8 Supercars 2	Racing
8	⊕	Shark Tale	Adventure
9	⊕	Men Of Valor: Vietnam	Action
10	▼	NBA Live 2005	Sports

TOP 10 PC Games Over \$20 W/E 7th NOV 2004 RETAIL SALES

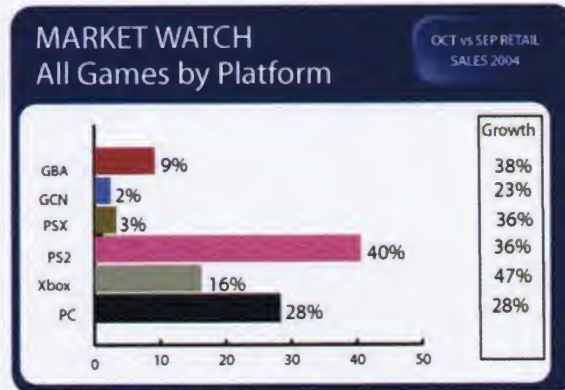
1	◆	The Sims 2	Strategy
2	◆	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
3	▲	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
4	▼	Rome Total War	Strategy
5	⊕	The Sims Superstar	Strategy
6	⊕	Rollercoaster Tycoon 3	Strategy
7	⊕	The Sims Vacation	Strategy
8	▼	Warhammer 40K Dawn War	Strategy
9	⊕	The Sims Hot Date	Strategy
10	⊕	The Sims House Party	Strategy

TOP 10 Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30 W/E 7th NOV 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon Fire Red	RPG
2	◆	Pokémon Leaf Green	RPG
3	⊕	Finding Nemo + Monstrs Inc	Adventure
4	⊕	Shrek 2	Adventure
5	⊕	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
6	◆	Shark Tale	Adventure
7	⊕	Shrek 2: Beg For Mercy	Adventure
8	⊕	Hot Wheels Vel X + Wrld Rce	Racing
9	▼	Pokémon Ruby	RPG
10	⊕	Finding Nemo	Adventure

TOP 10 All Full Priced Games W/E 7th NOV 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	GTA: San Andreas	PlayStation 2
2	◆	V8 Supercars 2	PlayStation 2
3	○	Shrek 2	PlayStation 2
4	▼	The Sims 2	PC/MAC
5	▲	Crash Twinsanity	PlayStation 2
6	▼	Pokémon Fire Red	Game Boy Adv
7	▼	Pokémon Leaf Green	Game Boy Adv
8	⊕	Shrek 2 XB	Xbox
9	○	The Sims Deluxe	PC/MAC
10	▼	Tony Hawk Underground 2	PlayStation 2



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



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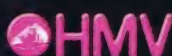
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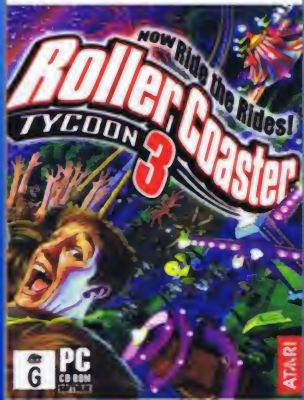


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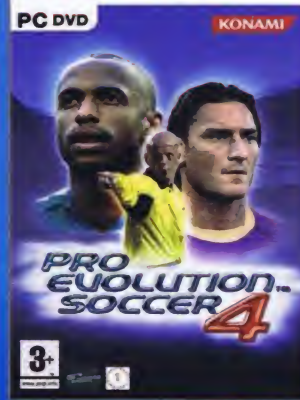
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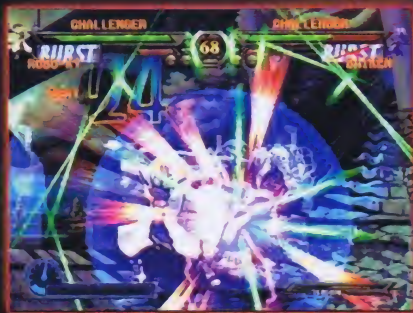
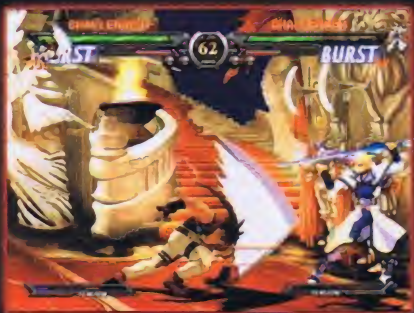


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