

» 100% OZ CONTENT » GTA: LIBERTY CITY STORIES ON PSP!

HYPER»»

WIN
RETRO
ANIME
SHIRTS!

**11 GAMES
REVIEWED:**

Wipeout Pure
Metal Gear Acid //
Ridge Racer //
Need For Speed
Rivals // + more!

PSP

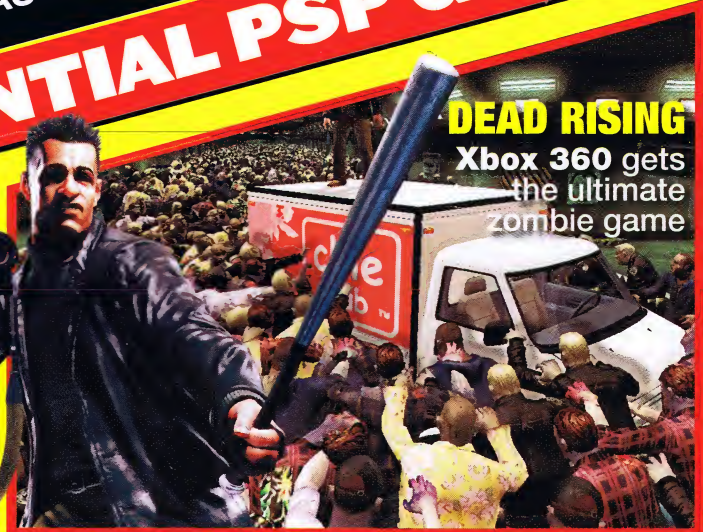
LAUNCH SPECIAL

SONY'S PSP FINALLY ARRIVES IN
AUSTRALIA, AND WE'VE GOT THE SCOOP!

PREVIEWED: 20 ESSENTIAL PSP GAMES



**WORLD OF WARCRAFT:
BATTLEGROUNDS**
It's war! But can you
stand the wait?



DEAD RISING
Xbox 360 gets
the ultimate
zombie game



MUTATIONS
Inside the ever-changing
DNA of videogames

A next MAGAZINE

#143 SEPTEMBER 2005
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fun,
anyone?
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you seek revenge against the God Of War. Exclusive to PlayStation.2. www.godofwargame.com

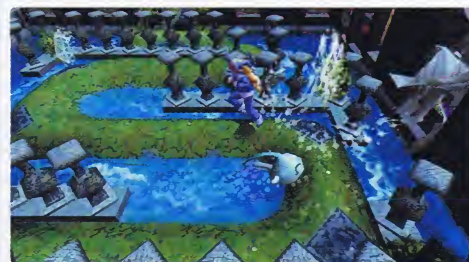
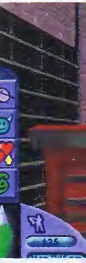
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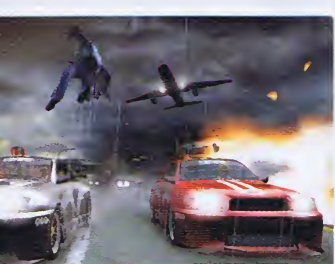


12 PSP LAUNCH SPECIAL

Sexy, dead sexy. Another look at the hardware and peripherals, plus the top 20 PSP games coming in 2005!



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cue waiting room music



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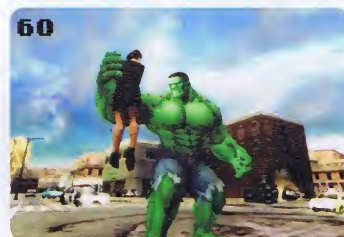
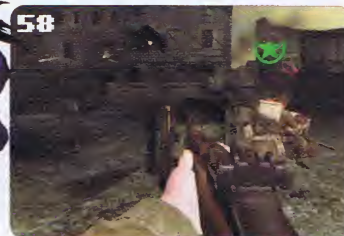
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EDITORIAL

✂ In only a few short weeks the PSP finally goes on sale here in Australia. Despite the frustration of being so many months behind Japan and America, it's still a time to rejoice. The PSP is a highly desirable piece of kit, no doubt about it, and titles like Ridge Racer, Wipeout Pure, Lumines, Virtua Tennis and



Liberty City Stories will stand gamers in good stead for many months. They're not necessarily revolutionary but they are great fun. Then there's the PSP's expanded set of abilities, allowing you to use it for a host of other functions. Just get yourself a 1GB+ memory stick and you've got a music player, video player, image browser, emulation station (if so inclined), remote control and so much more. Looking a little further ahead, rumour has it that Sony are also planning on rolling out services like downloadable demos, email, web browsing and voice chat, not to mention a camera add-on and keyboard add-on. It's going to be fascinating to see what the PSP is capable of over the next couple of years, and more importantly, what actually works for the end user.

But here's the thing – we're as excited about the DS as we are the PSP. E3 proved that Nintendo are really getting on top of things as far as DS is concerned. We just hope that Nintendo's gambit pays off. After all, to the man on the street who plays Ridge Racer on PSP then Ridge Racer DS, the PSP is clearly the superior machine. But will he get the chance to play Electroplankton? Or Meteos? Or Nintendogs? Or New Super Mario Bros? Or Mario & Luigi 2? There are a number of titles coming out for DS that are going to really utilise the capabilities of the machine and take gaming into new territory. It's a worrying thought then, that people may dismiss the machine as being technologically behind. It's their loss.

If you're thinking about shelling out for a new handheld, as always, forget the specs and focus on what games you want to play and what you want to use the system for. Think about whether you want an experience that's like a home console in your pocket, or whether you'd prefer a fresh new way to interact with a portable. Think about how important multimedia functionality is to you versus being able to draw rude pictures and send them to your friends. Whichever one you choose, we'll be there with coverage every step of the way. This month, we publish our first wave of local release PSP reviews and take a look at the hottest PSP titles on the horizon, plus we have two pages on the kookiest DS game to date, and we answer the age old question – how many zombies can the Xbox 360 render onscreen at once? Plus so much more. Groovy.

Cam Shea ✂ Editor

HYPER CREW Monthly Top 5 Games

Cam "Colonel K" Shea - Editor

1. Italy and Croatia – Holiday
"Sipping grappa by the beach in the European summer. Sweet."
2. Wipeout Pure - PSP
3. Klonoa 2: Dream Champ Tournament - GBA
4. Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition - PSP
5. Ridge Racer - PSP

Malcolm "Danger Walks" Campbell - Art

1. God of War - PS2
"... what is it good for? Err, quite a few things, actually."
2. Street Fighter 3: Third Strike - Xbox
3. watching Tour de France – SBS
4. Wipeout Pure – PSP
5. Sonic 3 – Megadrive

Daniel "Penfold" Wilks - Deputy Editor

1. Incredible Hulk – Xbox
"Finally, somebody does a superhero game right."
2. Ridge Racer - PSP
3. Street Fighter 3: Third Strike - Xbox
4. World of Warcraft - PC
5. Darwinia - PC

MoeMar "Chin ride, anyone?" Branscombe

1. Moonwalker – Megadrive/Arcade
"Now that he's been acquitted Michael Jackson is free, once more, to rescue young children. Huzzah."
2. Jade Empire – Xbox
3. Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition - Xbox
4. Viewtiful Joe 2 – GCN
5. Castlevania – PS2

HYPER

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UBISOFT

PlayStation 2



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NEWS

IN DA NEWS: Cam buggers off to Europe / Wilks and Malks run rough-shod over Hyper crew / Nothing else happened

INSANITY

MURDER, MAYHEM AND MISCREANTS

It's a mad mad mad mad mad world

June has been a hell of a month for games and gamers being the root of all evil, with no less than two murders (well, one murder and one attempted murder really) and an arrest in Britain being linked (mostly by overzealous lawyers and police) to games/gaming as a whole. In Britain an 11 year old boy is currently being passed through the courts for stabbing his toddler nephew after playing, wait for it, The Incredibles. Whilst lawyers have been quick to point out that the family was under a lot of stress at the time of the attack due to the new baby, sick family members and some financial strife, the mainstream press has been all too happy to blame the attack on the game. At least it's not Rockstar for a change. In a related story a 21 year old father of two is being tried in America for the beating death of his infant son. Whilst gaming is not being used as the reason for the attack it seems as though the prosecution are definitely hinting it is, repeating over and



over during the case that the man was a big fan of GameCube games and had purchased True Crime not long before the attack. Finally a British man has been sentenced to 140 hours of community service for selling chipped Xbox consoles. Although it is claimed that the chipping is the crime, the police reports also note that he was selling HDDs full of burnt games in the modded consoles so piracy looks to be the real crime, not modding.

DUMB

MOBILE QUAKE

Good luck rocket jumping

In some bizarre news, id Software has signed a deal with publisher Pulse Interactive to bring their hit Quake series to 3D enabled mobile phones. Quake Mobile is currently being developed by Bare Naked Productions for a range of 3D enabled next generation handsets. Apparently the game will be a faithful port of the original PC Quake released back in 1996 and will push the boundaries of what 3D enables handsets to do. Although Pulse and Bare Naked obviously mean that the handsets will be pushed in their graphics capability we can't but wonder as to whether the phones will be severely overextended in



terms of control as well. Unless the handset is shaped like an N-Gage with the screen in the middle there is no feasible way to control an FPS on a phone and even so the control will be jerky and imprecise due to the fact that the buttons are digital and give no fine control.

The screenshot shows the Gamehead website interface. At the top, it says 'gamehead.com.au your video game superstore'. There's a navigation menu with categories like PC Downloads, Store, Order Tracking, Release Schedule, Cheats & Tips, and Forums. A prominent banner advertises 'Download Games FREE' with a 'Click to start downloading now...' button. Below the banner, there are sections for 'Latest Store News' and 'All Products' with a search bar. A sidebar on the left lists various game categories like PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, etc. The main content area features a Logitech Driving Force Pro steering wheel and a game titled 'Guild Wars Takes Place In A Fantasy World'.

GAMES

GAMEHEAD

Download to papa

Electronic delivery is definitely going to be the next big thing when it comes to entertainment. Recently we have had the announcement that the iTunes store will eventually be accessible from Australia and now we have www.gamehead.com.au launching an online game delivery resource. The site currently has a few hundred games available for download for an average price of around \$25. Unfortunately as it currently stands the vast majority of games available through the site are shareware/abandonware titles that have been around for some time now, with only a few recent PC releases being available, including Hitman 2, Thief: Deadly Shadows and the uncut version of Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude. There may not be that many games now but seeing as though online distribution is being proven to be a viable alternative to standard modes of distribution we believe that in the not too distant future Gamehead will be adding a good number of titles to their list of downloads. Keep an eye on it!

WINNERS

HYPER 141

PARIAH

Major prize (signed Xbox and Pariah)
- Christopher Genimahaliotis, St Georges, SA

Runners up

- Ben McCarthy, Happy Valley, SA
- Tiffany Rea, Bradbury, NSW
- Karl Hosken, Geraldton, WA
- Khyan Adair, Croydon North, VIC
- Daniel McManus, Forest Lake, QLD

STEAMBOY

- Kathy Fricker, Sunnybank Hills, QLD
- Brok Power, Eitham, VIC
- Katherine C, Freemantle, WA
- Robert Polak, Parramatta, NSW
- Craig Davidson, Port Macquarie, NSW
- Tim Rule, Seven Hills, QLD
- Jason New, New Lambion, NSW
- Coats Family, Waikerie, SA
- Christopher Sweet, Crows Nest, NSW
- Chad Kerr, Barrack Heights, NSW

ARCHIE DVDS

- Ben Stephan, Perth, WA
- Brayden Walker, Adelaide, SA
- Jenna Rehn, Pooraka, SA
- Simone Arnaout, Werrington Downs, NSW
- Thomas Kauschke, Prospect, SA
- Sheldon Lo, Dalkieth, WA
- Alec McGeary, Howrah, TAS
- T. Mitchell, Narrogin, WA
- Don Barrett, North Adelaide, SA
- James Randell, Walkley Heights, SA

NEW XBOX 360 SCREENS! BLAU!



TORCH SHINY

Seeing the inside of your box

OK, you never really think about torches being cool but we got some in the office recently that are strangely rocking. They're made out of a good solid metal (as opposed to a liquid metal like mercury), are damn bright thanks to a nifty LED array and use lithium ion batteries so they stay on a good deal longer than a PSP. One thing that does confuse us about them however is the fact that all of the torches have "police" written on the side in a fruity little ribbon. All that we can assume is that due to the fact that they come in a selection of bright metallic colours that they are in fact intended for the fashion police. At any rate, the size and brightness of these torches come in very handy when looking around inside a PC case — something we had to do not long after they arrived in the post that prompted us to pimp these little beauties. Final bit of pimping — the torches can be purchased from www.yenexpress.com for around \$30 (US).

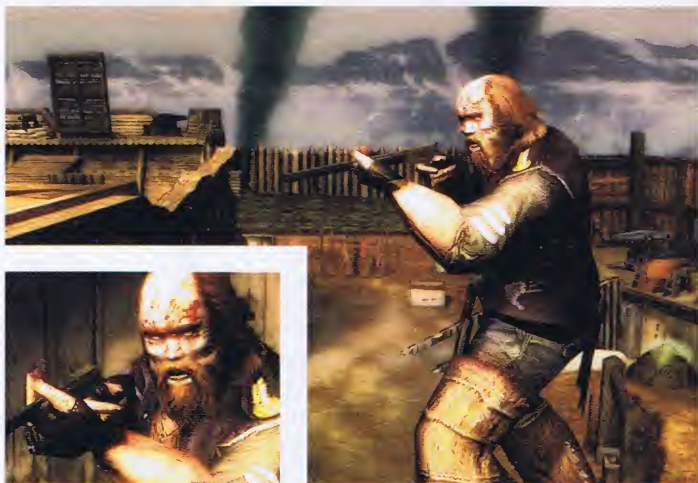
XBOX 360

NEVERSOFT MAKE GUN

Not big on clever names are they?

After seven years of making nothing but sequels, Neversoft are back in business developing a game for PC, PS2, GCN, Xbox and Xbox 360 innovatively named Gun. Aside from the rather uninspiring three

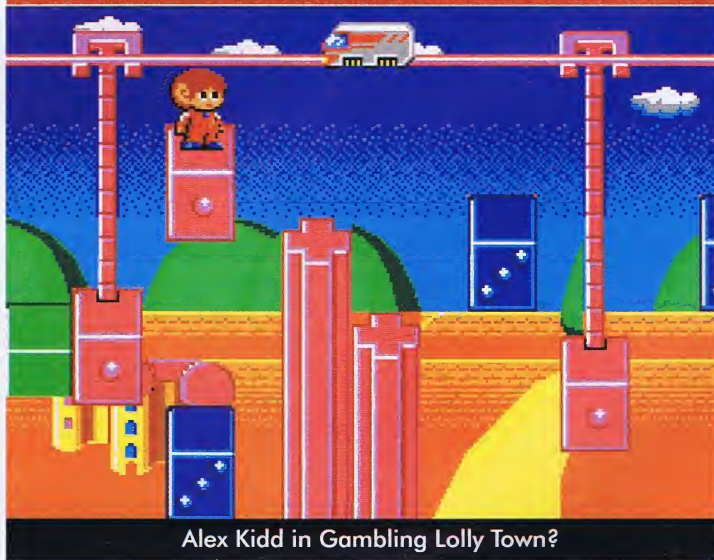
letter name all we know about Gun is that it is set in the wild-west and if the screenshots are anything to go by it will feature battles against some redneck zombies. The screens you see here are for the Xbox 360 version of the game.



CAPTION THIS!

PART 70

Come on, make us laugh. Just send your funny screen captions to us at captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 70 in the subject line.



Alex Kidd in Gambling Lolly Town?

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1

TRANSFORMERS
Autobot Insignia
Ready to transform you into the coolest Autobot ally on the planet.



2

TRANSFORMERS
Decepticon Insignia
The T for those who are as evil as the Decepticon army.



3

VOLTRON
Wireframe Lion
King Zarkon himself would kill to get these technical readouts of the Black Lion!



4

VOLTRON
Voltron Logo
Proudly defend the universe in this T-shirt!



5

ROBOTECH
UN-Spacey Logo on Navy T
Expect a salute from your fellow anime fans wearing this official UN Spacey logo T-shirt!



6

ROBOTECH
Veritech Ship on Navy T
Transformable death from above takes the shape of a Veritech in Guardian mode.



7

BATTLE OF THE PLANETS
Bird Insignia
Become a member of G-Force in this authentic T-shirt!



8

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G-Force Logo
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9

STAR BLAZERS
Yamato
The Quest for Iscandar is that much easier in your Yamato Battleship T-shirt.



10

MADMAN NIHONGO
Ready Set Go!
The classic Madman T with a twist... Madman Entertainment is written in Katakana.



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JULY WINNERS

HYPER 140: 50 HONG KONG LEGENDS DVDS

Winners have been drawn and the DVDs will be on their way soon!



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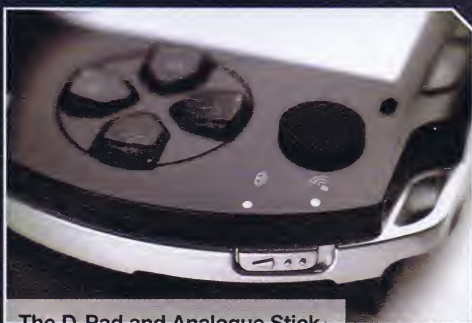
HY0143

portable

So what do all those buttons do? As the PSP finally launches in Oz, we thought we'd take a closer look at the pros and cons of Sony's new handheld gaming machine.



IR Window
Allows for connection with any compatible IR device.



The D-Pad and Analogue Stick
Great idea and works well but can feel cramped after extended play. The stick is perfect for racing games.



Blinking light

Dead Pixel
Only one of our three office PSPs had a dead pixel.

Another blinking light

Save games onto a Memory stick. Large capacity sticks can also be used to store music and movies making the PSP a portable entertainment device.



WLAN - we don't yet have enough games or units to really test out the PSP LAN abilities

Speakers vs. Headphones
Speakers are poorly placed and deliver tinny sound. Headphones are a must



PIZZASURF



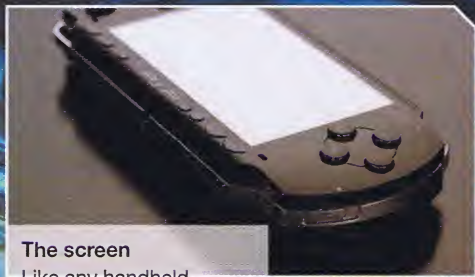
Battery

Not much battery life as yet due to the power hungry nature of a spinning disk.



Shoulder Buttons

Well placed but some people may find the hard plastic buttons uncomfortable.



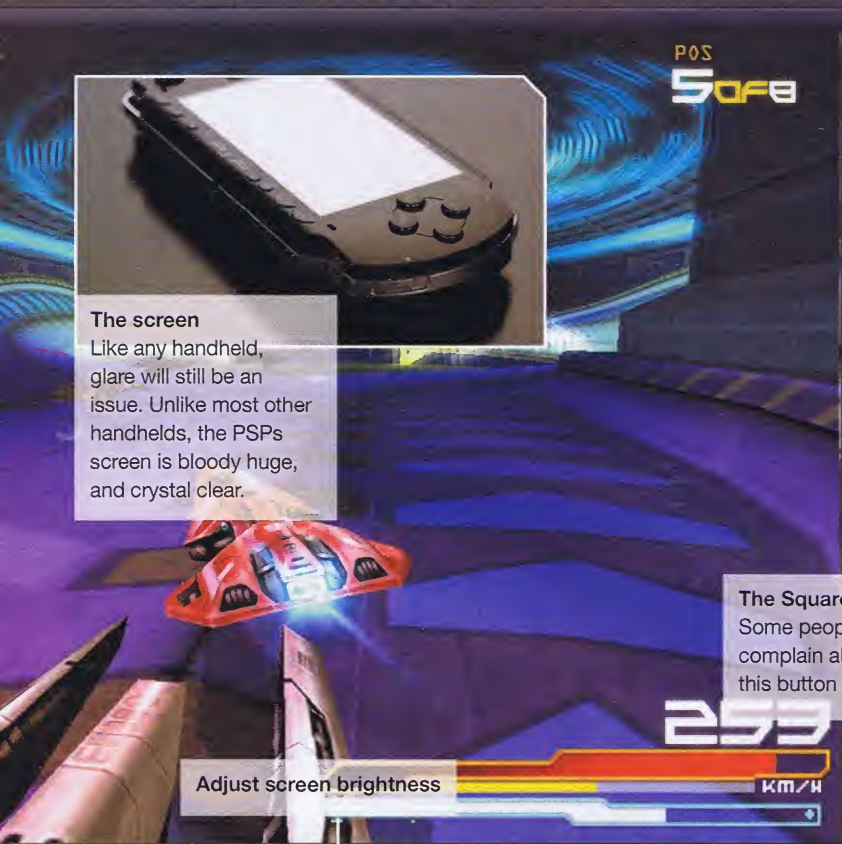
The screen

Like any handheld, glare will still be an issue. Unlike most other handhelds, the PSPs screen is bloody huge, and crystal clear.



UMD slot

We are yet to launch a UMD from the slot. The spinning disc eats power though.

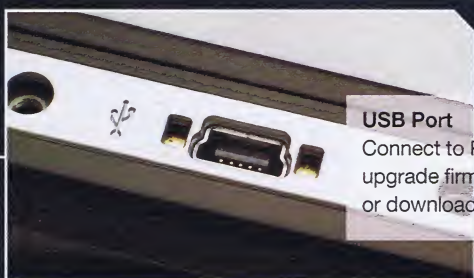


The Square Button

Some people complain about this button sticking.

POWER ●

HOLD ●



USB Port

Connect to PC to upgrade firmware or download hacks.

Power Button

Flick it to put the system into standby, allowing you to pick up exactly where you left off. Most of the time it works wonderfully but Wipeout Pure has locked up a couple of times and we've lost the music in Ridge Racer a number of times bringing the system out of standby.





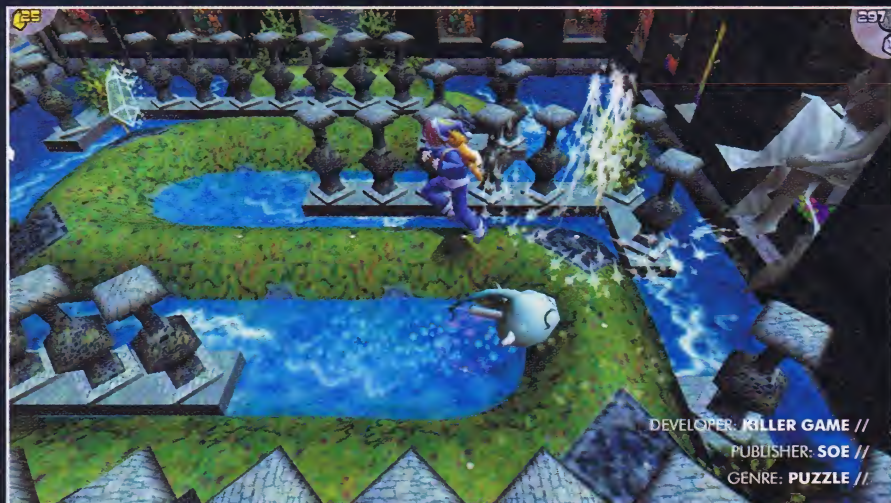
the top twenty

PSP GAMES COMING SOON

To help celebrate the imminent launch of the PSP in Australia, we've compiled a list of the top 20 titles that are just around the corner. Obviously games we've reviewed this issue haven't been included, but many of the titles in the list will be winging their way to stores near you very soon. Racing fans will notice that there's no Gran Turismo Mobile on the list simply because there's been very little info released on the game in the last year and it was a complete no show at E3 2005. As soon as we know more we'll let you know. But for now, we present our top 20.

20. Bounty Hounds

No, it's not a game about dogs that crave the layered sweetness of chocolate coated ground coconut, Bounty Hounds is a balls to the wall third person action game set in the not so near and quite probably dark future where mankind is warring with extraterrestrial intelligences for ownership of colonisable planets. Players take the roll of Maximillian (not the super cool robot from The Black Hole but some gun toting dude instead), a hard arse mercenary whose job it is to travel to exotic foreign locations and kill the local inhabitants/encroaching aliens, or something like that. It looks as though story won't be the strong point of Bounty Hounds but the action should be able to carry the game more than ably. Find and use upwards of 500 weapons and suits of armour in their battle against 40 different aliens over 40 missions spaced over four worlds.



19. Frantix

To paraphrase the press release, Frantix will be a fast paced, surreal 3D puzzle game where players solve puzzles in a fast paced 3D surreal environment built into quick paced 3D puzzle solving action in 3D. Whilst the press release was badly worded and overused a few key buzzwords, Frantix is shaping up to be a must have puzzle game for the PSP. The first game for the system that will utilise character based puzzle gameplay, Frantix will see players trying to make their way through a number of surreal worlds trying to avoid obstacles and enemies whilst trying to solve the puzzles before them in the fastest time possible to progress to the next stage. The game definitely promises lengthy playability with around 150 levels and timed gameplay to encourage the player to go back to a level and try to beat their own best time – or show a friend how big your e-penis is by sending them your best time and challenging them to beat it.

18. Dead to Rights: Reckoning

■ Jack Slate and his canine pal Shadow are back, cleaning up the mean streets of Grant City. This time around a crime lord has kidnapped an important informant and it's up to the heroically named good guy cop who does all the wrong things for the right reasons and believes that reasonable force is anything short of dropping a piano on a criminal and his pooch to track him down and kill anyone foolish enough not to have played the earlier games in the franchise and learn that if you cross Jack you'll just wind up dead or worse, wind up with a large dog hanging off your balls using only its teeth. Dead to Rights: Reckoning will feature all of Jack's old moves and will add the ability to shoot from a prone position and a new diving tackle/disarm. Dead to Rights: Reckoning will also mark the first time the series has had multiplayer with up to four players being able to duke it out in brutal deathmatch action.



DEVELOPER: **NAMCO** //
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO** //
GENRE: **ACTION** //



// DEVELOPER: **MAXIS**
// PUBLISHER: **EA**
// GENRE: **LIFE SIM**

17. The Sims 2

■ The Sims 2 will be quite a tweaked beast when it hits consoles and handhelds later this year. A number of significant changes have been made, such as the ability to directly control your sim (shock! horror!) which obviously streamlines control and means you'll waste less time with pathing issues. The game will be set in Strangetown and one of the key gameplay mechanics will be in socialising to find out the secrets of the town, by entering into conversations with the NPCs and trying to lure the info out of them. You'll have to watch body language and the topic icons that appear above the other character's head and choose the appropriate response. There's also a "Sanity meter" which could have some fun outcomes if you don't manage it well enough, and Wi Fi play is also being incorporated.

16. Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed.

■ While Need for Speed Underground Rivals on PSP may have copped out of an explorable city, Midnight Club 3 takes on the challenge and from our time with the game is bang on the money. This is go anywhere, race anyone gameplay on a handheld and damn it feels good! While this isn't a new game in the series, Rockstar Leeds and Rockstar San Diego have done a fantastic job ensuring that everything we loved about the console versions has made it across intact. There's the thumping soundtrack, the rough and tumble gameplay, all three cities – Detroit, San Diego and Atlanta, a variety of car classes, the bikes, all the blinged up customisation options and the gorgeous visuals. Phew! The only question that remains is whether they can optimise the load times, as that's been the number one complaint about the game so far.



DEVELOPER: **ROCKSTAR LEEDS** //
PUBLISHER: **ROCKSTAR GAMES** //
GENRE: **ARCADE RACING** //



DEVELOPER: **BIGBIG STUDIOS** //
PUBLISHER: **SONY** //
GENRE: **ARCADE RACING/COMBAT** //

15. Pursuit Force

■ In amongst the me too titles and ports, new IP for PSP tends to stand out. Fortunately, not only does Pursuit Force stand out, it's great arcadey fun to boot. Imagine a long series of car chases, where taking out the car in front involved more than just shooting out the window or ramming them. Imagine being able to leap out of your car and onto the roof of your opponent's, for a little up close and personal "chin music" (as Moe calls it). Yes, in Pursuit Force jumping from vehicle to vehicle at speed is the name of the game as you literally leapfrog your way through the various gangs that inhabit Capital City ("the Windy Apple") and its surrounds. It's a simple arcade concept that could get old fast, but thankfully BigBig Studios have given you some cool moves to keep it entertaining (offensive and evasive maneuvers), as well as a variety of vehicles and some on-rails shooting sequences.

74. Metal Gear Acid 2

■ For years we've put up with Wipeout having a capital E for no apparent reason other than as a not so subtle reference to a certain pill's affiliation with dance culture, but this is just taking things too far. An exclamation point for an i? Looks to us like Kojima's power is going to his head and he's now trying to reinvent the English language in much the same way he did storytelling and stealth in games. At least they didn't go for the obvious drug reference and call it "Metal Gear Acid 2: 'aving it Ibiza edition". This time around the team have moved to a funky cel shaded presentation which isn't so much cartoony as it is just incredibly stylish. So thumbs up in that department. The gameplay will remain much the same, only this time with a heap more cards and a much more intuitive interface. If they can inject a bit more personality into the script, with a greater degree of polish, this is going to be an awesome strategy title.



// DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
 // PUBLISHER: KONAMI
 // GENRE: STRATEGY



// DEVELOPER: SIX BY NINE //
 // PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS //
 // GENRE: RALLY SIM //

73. Colin McRae Rally 2005

■ While Colin McRae 2005 on PSP isn't going to set the world on fire with its visuals, looking competent but not unlike the first time we played the series on PC with a 3D card, we don't play the series for the visuals. We play it for the superb handling, the learning curve and the compelling course design, and Colin on PSP promises to have all this. The most significant thing we've been told, however, is that the game will ship with 300 stages! We're taking that piece of information with a grain of salt right now, but even if its half that number, you're looking at a free lunch boys, come and get it. We're also expecting a comprehensive Career mode to go along with the course bonanza, plus the kind of quick fix arcade options that will allow you to hop into a quick race while on the train. We should get code soon, so look out for our review shortly.

72. Viewtiful Joe: VFX Battle

■ The newest Captain Blue feature is about to begin shooting but the powers that be just can't decide on a main character so there's only one thing to do – hold a massive open audition that involves all of the favourite characters from the franchise and pit them against each other in a no holds barred cattle call. For the first time in the series, Viewtiful Joe: VFX Battle will feature vs combat, making it much more like a straight fighting game. We haven't been able to get a hands on as of yet so we have no idea how this change of pace will effect the series but we definitely have high hopes. Unfortunately for Australians, we may be a bit lost with the character roster as it not only includes characters from the games but also from the anime series that to our knowledge is yet to be screened locally. Not that it will matter. It's Viewtiful Joe on a handheld.



// DEVELOPER: CAPCOM //
 // PUBLISHER: CAPCOM //
 // GENRE: FIGHTING //



// DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN STUDIOS
 // PUBLISHER: SONY
 // GENRE: PLATFORMER

71. Dexter

■ The Jak & Dexter series may be moving in a new direction on console (in the form of the combat racer Jak X), but the series is staying true to its platform roots on PSP. Only this time, Dexter is the star. The events in the game take place during the period before Jak II: Renegade, when Jak was being experimented on and getting his bad-arse implants. Dexter has apparently become an exterminator in Haven City to get by, which is why he's got a canister of bug spray. Much of the gameplay will revolve around using this device, and one of the central hooks of the game is the ability to use it to hover – like in Mario Sunshine. Over the course of the game you'll be able to upgrade it, which should, of course, help keep the level design fresh. As opposed to the sprawling environments of Jak & Dexter, Dexter will have a more traditional platform structure, with a linear sequence of levels to progress through.

10. Infected

■ Shooting zombies is nothing new. Games have been allowing players to do this since time immemorial but Infected puts a neat new spin on the idea. In the single player game, players take the role of a rookie cop, Stevens, who is immune to a plague that is turning normal people into zombies. What's more his blood proves to have antibodies that cause zombies to explode in a shower of putrified ooze that will destroy other infected if it comes into contact with creating chain carnage. Although the single player game sounds neat, the multiplayer looks to be where Infected will really shine. The meat of multiplayer are a series of ad-hoc deathmatches in which two players shoot it out using custom avatars, the winners avatar infecting the loser's PSP until it is purged by winning three deathmatches, hunting down the infecting avatar in single player or waiting three days for the system to clear itself.



DEVELOPER: PLANET MOON STUDIOS //
PUBLISHER: MAJESCO ENTERTAINMENT //
GENRE: ACTION //



09. Generation of Chaos

■ It's a well known fact that Nippon Ichi is good. It's also known that turn based strategy is awesome. Another well known fact that handheld gaming is great and that large scale turn based combat rocks. If we look at the above well known facts as simple mathematic terms it is an inescapable fact that Good + Awesome + Great + Rocks = The Bullshit Sickness. The first Nippon Ichi turn based strategy/RPG created for PSP should be all of these things and more. Players will take the role of Allen of Zodia, a young man in charge of a kingdom determined to end the battles for world domination that have ravaged the land for generations. Naturally he needs to go about a lot of his plan by engaging in turn based strategic combat. Unlike other Nippon Ichi titles, Generation of Chaos will feature very large scale combat will up to 30 units a side.

DEVELOPER: NIS AMERICA //
PUBLISHER: NIS
GENRE: TURN BASED STRATEGY/RPG

08. GripShift

■ Take a healthy dose of Monkey Ball, a hefty slice of Trackmania and a little Sonic and you have some idea of what to expect from GripShift, a new handheld action/driving game from Sidhe Interactive. Players will have the opportunity to play one of six unique characters and race, jump, maneuver and puzzle their way through 100 or so levels. GripShift not only charges players with going fast but also involves elements of platforming and puzzle solving. Up to four people can play through the PSP wireless networking. Finally GripShift will feature 8 bonus games (that presumably have to be unlocked) – Penguin Bowling, Bomb Pool, Soccer Crazy, Snaker, Ice Hockey and more, all of which will be playable single and multiplayer. Finally, GripShift will also include a level editor enabling players to create and share their own tracks.



DEVELOPER: SIDHE INTERACTIVE //
PUBLISHER: SOE
GENRE: DRIVING/ACTION



DEVELOPER: BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT //
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
GENRE: ACTION PLATFORM

07. Death, Jr.

■ This title started its life as one of the first tech demos for PSP, and is definitely one of the most offbeat games coming to the system, so it's great to see it finally getting close to release. In Death, Jr you play as the son of the grim reaper, and all things considered he's a pretty normal kid. Sure he might have friends like a pair of twins conjoined at the head, an obsessive compulsive goth girl, and a torso with a head who lives in a vat, but after a field trip goes wrong his life turns especially weird. After opening a box containing a demon called Moloch, and all hell breaks loose. It's time for Death, Jr to put his scythe and multiple ranged weapons such as a flame thrower and exploding hamsters, to good use. All before his dad finds out. It may sound like an episode of Family Guy, but it boils down to a compelling mix of first person shooter elements and third person platforming, all with a wicked sense of humour.

06. The Con

■ The Con is probably the most promising 3D fighter coming to the PSP at the moment, and it's got a nice unique twist on the usual fighting formula, allowing you to bet on the outcome of fights. More than that though, using the L button allows you to throw soft punches and stick your chin out to take big hits, which, considering the betting is still open early in each fight, allows you to manipulate the odds and make a packet from betting when you looked down and out. Of course, letting yourself get beaten early on to get better odds is not without its dangers, and the risks will be a big part of the game's allure. The actual gameplay is presented from behind your character and like Tekken, each of the face buttons are mapped to a limb. The fighting is up close and personal, and there will be twenty characters to use, along with five broad styles – wrestling, kickboxing, tae kwon do, jeet kune do and boxing.



DEVELOPER: THINK AND FEEL INC //
PUBLISHER: SONY //
GENRE: 3D FIGHTER //



DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS //
PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS //
GENRE: RACING SIM //

05. V8 Supercars

■ Hyper's very own Seamus Byrne was over at Codemasters during this issue, and came back raving about V8 on PSP. In short, everything you've heard about it is true. Codies basically haven't left anything out in the move from Supercars 2 on console to PSP. We're talking 21 cars on track at once complete with great looking visuals and frame rate, real car damage and physics, and adaptive AI. There are 15 different motorsports in the game, including GT Sports Car Racing, Formula Ford, Street Racing, Rally Cross, the touring cars of the DTM and V8 Supercars championships, Global GT Lights, Open Wheel Grand Prix, Super Truck racing, Stockcar Oval Racing, Ice Racing, Classic Car Racing, Convertible Racing and Performance Cars. Plus a fantastic selection of licensed cars including the Jaguar XJ220 AMR and Aston Martin V12.

04. Guilty Gear Judgement

■ Now this one we can't wait for – the prettiest and some would say deepest 2D fighting game series is coming to PSP. Guilty Gear Judgement will feature all of the characters of Guilty Gear X2 Reload as well as adding a new game mode that sounds to us like the height of retro cool. Basic gameplay wise, all of the characters and moves from X2 Reload will be faithfully recreated, along with the Story Mode, VS mode and Survival mode. Interestingly, the information we have received for the game says that story mode will also feature cooperative play for the players – we have no idea how this will work at the current time but it definitely piques our interest. The biggest new addition to Guilty Gear Judgement will be the awesome sounding Boost mode in which players will work their way through 19 levels of side scrolling beat 'em up action.



DEVELOPER: ARC SYSTEM WORKS //
PUBLISHER: MAJESCO //
GENRE: FIGHTING //



// DEVELOPER: SEGA
// PUBLISHER: SEGA
// GENRE: SPORTS

03. Virtua Tennis World Tour

■ Aside from Mario Tennis 64, Virtua Tennis is the Hyper crew's number one tennis game – it's fast, furious, hellishly fun and very well balanced, all the more reason why we can't wait for our copies to arrive in a couple of weeks so we can waste valuable work hours smacking our balls around like there's no tomorrow. Virtua Tennis World Tour will feature 14 licensed ranked players or will allow you to create your own custom characters and work them up through the ranks. The game will feature three game modes: Exhibition, for quick games; Tournament, for when you want to sink some time into a series of ranked matches; and World Tour in which players will be able to create and level their custom character through matches, tournaments and mini training games. The coolest feature of VT World Tour would have to be multiplayer for up to 16 players (in tournament). We can't wait to try it!

02. Burnout Legends

■ Much like Ridge Racer on PSP, Burnout Legends is a greatest hits package for portable. Packing courses from the first three games, all completely redesigned for optimum handheld racing, not to mention new cars and a host of unlockables, Legends simply can't get here fast enough for us. Best of all, Burnout Legends will have nine classic Burnout gameplay modes – including Crash mode, Pursuit, Road Rage, Eliminator and Burning Lap, all tweaked to perfection.

Wireless multiplayer is going to be a huge focus of this title, with customisable championships and other modes for up to four people. It also supports gameshare so you can play with a friend with only one UMD. Also cool is that the game will randomly ship with 5 of 25 unlockable cars. The only way to get the other 20 will be through trading with friends.

Oh, and did we mention the series has lost none of its speed?



DEVELOPER: **CRITERION** //
PUBLISHER: **EA** //
GENRE: **ARCADE RACING** //



// DEVELOPER: **ROCKSTAR LEEDS**
// PUBLISHER: **ROCKSTAR**
// GENRE: **ACTION**

07. GTA: Liberty City Stories

■ Without a doubt, GTA: Liberty City Stories will be one of the, if not the biggest title on the PSP. How could it not be with the last three games in the series being critically acclaimed and selling like the proverbial hotcakes (we've never really understood that saying – as far as we understand it, the sale of pan fried breakfast cakes do not exceed the sales of any other breakfast product). As the title suggests, the action of the Liberty City Stories is transported back to Liberty City, the area widely praised as being the best designed city in the recent games, and takes place three years before the events of GTA 3. Players take the role of Toni Cipriani (we don't have any idea of why Toni uses the female spelling of the name aside from maybe the idea that Toni thinks he's so tough he deliberately spells his name in the feminine fashion the good people into making fun of him so he has a legitimate excuse to flip out and kill a lot of people), a man recently returned from exile after he killed a man as a favour for the mob. Salvatore Leone, the local crime boss repays Cipriani's favour by making him one of the mob's toughest soldiers.

Developer Rockstar Leeds (formerly known as Mobius) look to have taken the best parts of the two best GTA games – the sublime city design of Liberty City and the compelling and involving plot of San Andreas and combined them in the one title. To top it all off, Liberty City Stories promises to push the PSP to the absolute limit as far as processing power is concerned. Not only have the developers faithfully recreated Liberty City in all its glory, the game will feature everything that has become so popular with the series – open ended freeform gameplay, changeable radio stations, the ability to jack any vehicle you see, scores of missions and mini games, a sprawling urban environment populated by reactive pedestrians and traffic and all of the best weapons from the three previous games will make an appearance. Liberty City Stories will also take a leaf out of the San Andreas book and allow the player to buy and customise different outfits for Toni Cipriani, turning him into the world's toughest Barbie.

Although it was initially meant to be one of the launch titles for the handheld, Rockstar felt it would be better to delay the release of the game until it was entirely finished so we should be able to expect it quite soon. Let the fun begin.





[up] Extreme breakdancing



DEAD RISING

Systems: Xbox 360 • Category: Action • Developer: Capcom • Available: TBA 2006

One sequence in *Dead Rising*, set in a large department store, lets players take full control of a lawn mower in order to make their way (very violently) through a horde of the living dead.

Now that's a sure-fire way to our attention!

Coming from Capcom, *Dead Rising* is a new action based survival horror title for Xbox 360 from Keiji Inafune, famed creator of *Megaman* and more recently *Onimusha*. *Dead*

Rising will put players in the midst of a busy shopping mall as the dead come to life, paving the way for an interactive game of both survival and strangely enough photo journalism.

CAP ZOMBIE

When words like 'Capcom' and 'zombie' make an appearance in the same sentence people invariably look to *Resident Evil* as a point of reference. Although Capcom returns to the zombie realm with *Dead Rising*, the difference between this and *Resident Evil* are as clear as night and day. In the gothic setting of *Resident Evil*, the game utilised every trick in the

book to scare the player, from having large creatures and monsters to incorporating traditional horror scares like the distant sounds of moaning and having lumbering zombies burst out of closets. On the other hand, the very real world setting of the shopping mall in *Dead Rising* gives players a basic goal of surviving ten full days. As a career driven photo-journalist trapped in the midst of an outbreak of zombies how you would go about surviving these ten days is anything but pre-defined.

Due to the freedom of choices the player has the outcome and difficulty will progress accordingly. If you don't think through your actions, plan an escape route, or kill all the enemies in a certain area then the next day you tackle will be progressively harder. Also playing the role of a journalist players will also have the option to take photos of various situations they might find themselves in or observing, paving the way for multiple paths, outcomes and endings depending on the player's actions.

As an Xbox 360 title players can expect a level of interaction and action previously unseen, as the new hardware allows not only for each item within a store to be modelled but for literally hundreds of zombies to appear on screen at any given moment. One particularly cool scene we saw had the player trapped on the roof of a van in an underground car park completely surrounded by zombies in all directions.

Hyper had the opportunity to sit down with Keiji Inafune, head of Capcom's Production Studio 2 and director of *Dead Rising* to talk about the game.

What was the main inspiration behind *Dead Rising*, besides of course the classic zombie film *Dawn of the Dead* which is also set in a shopping mall?

"Yes, if I were to say that this game drew no inspiration from the film *Dawn of the Dead* then that would make me a liar. But I will say that *Dead Rising* doesn't look to only once source for inspiration but it is based on what we consider a zombie to be, in a classical sense as defined by film, book and other forms of entertainment. But by that same token we have also taken inspiration from many modern zombie movies, in terms of the violence, gore and comedic elements — giving some moments in the game a very over the top feeling."

In the game players take control of a photo-journalist with the ability to take photos, how does this play into the persistent survival aspect of the game?

"The main character is a freelance photo-journalist who has spent his entire professional life chasing the next big story. So when he stumbles into this situation with the living



[up] Hippie, fruit munching zombies



[up] A scene outside the Michael Jackson trial



"IF I WERE TO SAY THAT THIS GAME DREW NO INSPIRATION FROM THE FILM DAWN OF THE DEAD THEN THAT WOULD MAKE ME A LIAR"

dead and horrible incident, he sees it as his big break. But he is just a regular person and the player has to decide what's more important — to survive or to find the next big story. And so the choices will have consequences and put the player in interesting situations. But you'll always have the choice, to go for the scoop or to fight to stay alive. What makes this great is that you may

have a great photo opportunity but that may cause somebody to die, who might have been useful or could leave yourself in a more vulnerable situation than if you had helped."

Set in a shopping mall the amount of weapons in the game would have to be quite big, what kind of interaction and firepower can players expect?

"What we're aiming for is to have everything you can interact with at the shopping mall be a potential weapon. From a paint can to a lawn mower, we have a potential list of hundreds of various weapons from the obvious like shotguns to the unusual like an in-store mannequin. Of course this is what we're aiming for and to be honest the total amount of weapons in the final product will relate to amount of money and development time we have. But level interaction is one our main focuses on the game, something that the Xbox 360 has allowed us to take full advantage of."

How long has the game been in development for and what makes a title such as this only possible on next-generation hardware like the 360?

"In terms of planning, design and development Dead Rising has been in development from anywhere between 18 to 24 months. But in terms of hardware and focusing on the 360 the title has been in the works for a little over a year now. What makes this game possible on the 360 as opposed to other formats is the sheer

number of polygons we can push onto a screen at any given moment. Apart from the sheer number of enemies present in the game this also translates to the environment, every item in the game is a geometric shape as opposed to a texture. This translates to the physics engine too, so things will fall over and shelves of objects can be interacted with."

With the next-generation of console hardware around the corner how do you think this will affect overall game design?

"With previous hardware we've had to work with, there were a lot of limits placed on what we could do and represent. With this new set of next generation hardware about to come out, a lot of these limits are going to disappear. As a game creator, I feel like this is the first time there's really going to be a challenge to see who actually has the creative talent to make the best games possible. Before it was really a matter of who was the master of creating great games within specific confines and set of rules, and now with no limits the person who is the most creative, I think, will be the best creator." <<<



[above] Knight Rider 2k5: Kit in Kowloon



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
We know the Road Rage mode is returning, but we'd love Burning Lap back again as well!

BURNOUT: REVENGE

Systems: PS2, Xbox ■ Category: Arcade racing ■ Players: 1-6 ■ Developer: Criterion ■ Due: September 2005

How the hell do Criterion do it? After the sublime Burnout 3: Takedown, we honestly thought that they'd be struggling to take the game to another level without moving on to next gen hardware. How wrong we were.

BEST SERVED BLAZING HOT

The title, Revenge, is a pretty good indication of where Criterion are coming from for this installment. In Burnout 3: Takedown, they introduced the dueling aspect of the series, where you were rewarded for barging opponents into walls, tuk tuks, buildings, anything you could really. This time, they take the next

step, with the entire progression system based around a revenge meter. Coming first isn't enough anymore, it's all about battling with the other drivers, and earning revenge points.

Thus, opponent AI is even more aggressive, and Criterion have implemented a system whereby the more you take down a rival car, the more they'll go out of their way to pay you back. You'll know when a competitor has targeted you for revenge because their marker will shift from blue to red. Take them down in that state and you'll get a revenge takedown and a big points haul to boot. With even more focus on battling and takedowns, Criterion have been sure to give players greater recourse to extract their own revenge. For instance, when you crash, not only can you enter impact time to angle for an aftertouch takedown, but you can also blow up your car to try and catch other drivers as they careen past. Do this and you'll restart with a full boost meter.

You can also cause a whole new level of carnage on the roads. Forget avoiding all other traffic — you can now run into cars going in the same direction as you, leaving wreckage in your wake for other drivers to avoid, or cooler still, ramming traffic into other drivers! It takes a while to warm to the idea of hitting traffic rather

than avoiding it, but once you've adjusted your Burnout Vision (as we call it) it turns into a compelling addition, and brings with it new levels of strategy and even more jaw droppingly cool moments.

Following on from this is the all new Revenge mode where you're racing against a ticking clock, with only the unsuspecting traffic and their inevitable demise standing between you and the high score. In Revenge mode you're charged with causing as much damage as possible by running into traffic and chaining together the biggest accidents possible. Each big chain nets you big points and a little more time on the clock. It's a real edge of the seat mode, with the most fun coming from constantly pulling the timer back from the brink with big accidents through a mixture of skill and luck, and eventually managing to scrape past your friend's recently minted top score. Suck it!

EXPANCITIES

These changes in gameplay go hand in hand with much more expansive track designs. They're now a hell of a lot more complex, and teeming with shortcuts, multiple levels, jumps and alternate paths. It's wicked fun exploring everything that the new courses have to offer, and they also lead into an even wider array of takedowns. There's just nothing as



[above] A typical Redfern Morning



[above] Vehicular menage et trois



cool as hitting a ramp and raining Burnout style takedown death from above on your opponents.

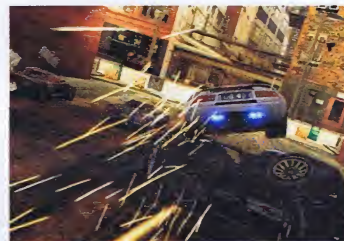
In our E3 coverage we mentioned playing a Tokyo course and a Detroit course, but since then Criterion have made the decision not to label the courses based on the real-world cities that were their inspiration. The reason behind this is that there are a number of games accurately modeling city layouts and Criterion want to distance themselves as much as possible from that approach. They create their courses for gameplay first and foremost, not for faithfully reproducing a grid of city streets.

Speaking of settings, we still don't know much about the myriad locations that the game will take you to, aside from faux-Tokyo and Detroit Race City, which we've already mentioned, as well as I Can't Believe It's Not Rome, which will give players

the chance to join some of the worst drivers in the world on the roads and bust out Coliseum takedowns. Sweet. We have our fingers crossed that the team won't exclusively focus on multi-channel chaotic course design though, as we'd love to see the return of the long stretches of coastal roads from previous Burnout titles.

Fans of the series will no doubt be wondering what Criterion have up their sleeve for Crash mode this time around. We don't know a great deal just yet, aside from the fact that Crash mode will also fit into the revenge points system, which could mean quite a big shake up for the much loved party favourite. We also know that all the crash junctions have been designed specifically for Crash mode, not pulled out of the existing courses which is great news.

Burnout: Revenge is set to be the prettiest game in the series to date,



which is hugely impressive given how much carnage is now being unleashed on the track and how much more there is to the track design. As you can see from the screenshots, the environments and cars are more detailed than ever, the crashes are still the most steel wrenching around, and it all still runs at 60fps. Imagine what they'll be able to do on Xbox 360! <<



CRASH JUNCTIONS HAVE BEEN DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR CRASH MODE, NOT PULLED OUT OF EXISTING COURSES

>> **SIDE BY SIDE**

Criterion have extensive experience with PS2 development, and the Burnout games are arguably the prettiest, and certainly the fastest available on the system. Just check out these PS2 shots side by side with Xbox shots. Aside from slightly richer colour and reflection effects we reckon you'll be hard pressed to tell the difference.





SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

Systems: GCN, PS2, Xbox ■ Category: Action platformer ■ Players: 1-TBA ■ Developer: Sega ■ Due: Late 2005

▶▶ A Japanese videogame mascot with a gun is one hell of a weird and scary proposition. Like a lollipop forged by Lucifer himself, or a film by Uwe Boll that's actually good, it's unsettling. But that's exactly the territory that Sega are heading into for the next game in the Sonic series, *Shadow the Hedgehog*. Of course, Shadow isn't really a mascot (yet), and he's always been the darkest member of the Sonic menagerie, so they're not gambling with their A players. What they are doing, however, is addressing the question of how to take the Sonic games somewhere new, yet still fun. And it looks like they may just succeed.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Wall jumping used to create platform sections that are more dynamic than Sonic's...



[above] A teaser for Uwe Boll's crap-fest

BLACK & WHITE SEGA STYLE

Shadow the Hedgehog follows on from the events of *Sonic Adventure 2*, with Shadow, the "rebel tormented by a dark past" landing on a strange planet 50 years later with a case of explosive amnesia. Since he was created as the "Ultimate Life Form",

Shadow holds the key to the war torn events on the planet, and has the choice of siding with good or siding with evil. Indeed, this is one of the main motifs of the game; as Shadow struggles to regain his memories (via, what else, collecting seven

Chaos Emeralds) he has the chance to either start afresh as one of the good guys, or revert to his old brooding ways as part of the dark set.

What this boils down to is a choice of three missions per level — an evil one given by a fellow from the Black Arms with the rather sinister name Doom's Eye, a good one from any of the goodie two shoes characters (such as Sonic) and a neutral mission. Examples of evil missions include destroying Eggman's battleships (apparently he's a good guy now) and taking down the GUN troops, while good missions may see you kicking the Black Arms troops to the curb. Once you've activated each mission (via talking to the appropriate characters within a level) you can switch between them at any time. Hopefully the game will be structured so that depending on the decisions you make different levels will open up, which in turn should mean multiple endings.

The good and evil moral code amounts to more than just mission choices. During gameplay you'll notice a couple of gauges on the screen, one red (which is super secret code for evil) and one blue (good, duh). Take out GUN troops and the red gauge will fill, take out Black Arms forces and the blue gauge will rise. Once one is full you'll have access to the relevant signature special move — for the blue gauge



[above] A very Miyazaki moment for Shadow

[below] Warm glowing warming glow



it's Chaos Control, where you can zoom through levels like a hog possessed, and for the red gauge it's Chaos Blast, which is a destructive screen clearing offensive move. Of course you can fill both gauges at once, which, combined with the fact you can switch alignment missions at any time, kind of makes a mockery of the whole morality angle. Oh well.

FAMILIAR YET INVIGORATING

What's refreshing about Shadow is that although his skill set is grounded in Sonic conventions – high speed levels, head bouncing and solid platforming, the gameplay opens up somewhat via the ability to wield weapons, wall jump, pick up and throw projectiles and even Panzer Dagoon style flying sections.

The weaponry is definitely the biggest change to the formula, with around 30 weapons for Shadow

to collect and use. We're talking everything from machine guns and bazookas to plasma swords and other futuristic looking gats. We've never really liked the implementation of enemy confrontations in the 3D Sonic games, with jumping and diving at enemies seeming counter intuitive and often screwing with the flow of the level, so weaponry should be a good solution to that problem, letting you skate along shooting all the while. It will also mean more of a focus on action and more

[above] Ooh, shiny



THE WEAPONRY IS THE BIGGEST CHANGE TO THE FORMULA, WITH AROUND 30 WEAPONS FOR SHADOW TO COLLECT

enemies on screen. Of course, you can still jump and target enemies as before if you want. And the ability to swap to weapons left by fallen enemies should introduce even more replayability, not to mention secret weapon locations to find.

We haven't seen anything too

out of the ordinary in terms of level design yet, with the usual tropical jungles, ancient ruins and city levels. There's a great sense of speed though, and plenty of crazy loops, grinds and bounce pads, so Sonic fans should feel at home. Looks like Sega may be onto a winner here. <<



>> HEDGEHOGGING ALL THE GLORY

Did you know that Sonic is also an anagram from icons? Well, fittingly, our little blue friend is indeed worthy of being labeled a videogame icon, and to celebrate his longevity he's currently the focus of an exhibition at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) at Federation Square in Melbourne. It seems that games are finally getting a bit of recognition for their cultural relevance, with the 'Sonic the Hedgehog: Icon of Our Times' interactive space at the ACMI Games Lab, running until Sunday, October 2nd.

A number of classic Sonic games are on show, from the original 1991 Mega Drive hit to 2004's Sonic Heroes, and you can even sit down and play them on the original hardware. This is just as much about the gameplay as it is about character design.

Why Sonic and not another legend such as Mario? The Sonic character is a perfect example of how the game's style and attitude also accurately reflected the game mechanics and gameplay. It could also be argued that the resulting comics, TV show and toys have jettisoned Sonic into the mainstream consciousness in ways that even Mario hasn't quite managed. In any case, his status as a cultural icon is undeniable. Get on down to the ACMI Games Lab before the exhibition wraps up, and celebrate 14 years of hyperactive hedgehogs with us. For more info, you can also visit www.acmi.net.au.





HEROES OF THE PACIFIC

Systems: PS2, Xbox, PC ■ Category: Air Combat ■ Players: 1-2 ■ Developer: IR Gurus ■ Due: Q3 2005

Authentic and intense Pacific-based World War II air combat with pick up and play gameplay as opposed to simulation. That's Heroes of the Pacific in a nutshell, developed by IR Gurus Interactive, a studio located in a little place called Melbourne, Australia. It's a game that aims to recreate historical warfare by utilising a game engine that throws the players into the thick of it, with literally hundreds of planes in flight in certain missions. It also draws inspiration from a rich pool of authentic stock footage, oil paintings, propaganda art, and of course the fighter planes from the era such as Corsairs and Hellcats. It's an expansive package that aims to please both crowds, the type of people that shop in hobby stores and spend their time hand painting tiny detailed models and the much cooler ADD crowd that is looking for a little thing called 'instant gratification'. Ambitious it may be but as the two-year development window on the title draws to a close, IR Gurus stand proud of their creation and it's not hard to see why.

OILY PROPAGANDA

Heroes of the Pacific began as an R&D tech demo developed by a five guys, an impressive display of aircraft and effects that served as the green light to turn it into a fully fledged game. It was always to be a World War II game, but one that

had to look different than other titles on the market that were also based in this era. To achieve this IR Gurus based the visual design of the game on various artworks from the era — in particular oil paintings and propaganda posters that conjure up faux gung-ho imagery. This genuinely interesting and well executed approach juxtaposes quite naturally with the accuracy of the 40 or so plane models featured in the game as well as the historical accuracy of some of the missions. With dozens of fighters in the air, controlling each plane strikes a balance between realistic physics and intuitive arcade-style controls — with each plane featuring its own AI that scales according to its distance from the player. There's a cockpit view for those looking for a more simulation approach as well as the difficulty level that simply doesn't make enemy fighters harder to destroy but the planes themselves harder to fly. It's definitely quite the package and in a genre that is always in dire need of a great game — air combat. At a recent press showing Hyper had the chance to sit down with Heroes of the Pacific producer, Justin Halliday.

What was the goal behind the creation of Heroes of the Pacific?

"With this game we wanted to create the ultimate flying game, and one of the things we wanted to do was capture the feel and fun



[up] Dakka dakka dakka dakka dakka



of Crimson Skies with the historical setting of Secret Weapons Over Normandy. But of course we wanted to recreate these historical battles properly and create a target rich environment, not one where there are five or ten planes to possibly target, but hundreds of planes."

In terms of historical accuracy what sort of research went into this part of the game and how did this shape the end product?

"We did a lot of research, we looked at detailed timelines of almost every battle in the Pacific and took the most interesting and key moments from history. In the beginning was Pearl Harbour, in the middle was Midway and at the end there was Iwo Jima, so we knew the main arc of the game. What we didn't know was where we were going to go individually. After Pearl Harbour the Japanese attacked Wake Island which was a very small island, and this happened two days

after Pearl Harbour so we decided to go there. But we had to bring it all together into a coherent narrative across the entire game."

Access to authentic WWII footage from the Chinese government is no small feat - did the team also look to fiction for inspiration?

"By some lucky chance we had access from the Chinese government to all this great footage from the war. And what we did was look at that for inspiration, plus all the films that have been made about WWII like Tora! Tora! Tora! and Pearl Harbour. Each had different things we could take from them from accuracy to inaccuracy. Pearl Harbour taught us how people expect things to be rather than how things really are. So when we go to graphically represent of things we want them to be accurate but we also want to bring a Hollywood-style expectation to it, the way the planes react, explode and so forth."



[above] Vroooooom



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
 The ability to play as those dastardly Japanese but we don't think that's too likely.

[up] What's the onomatopoeia for smoke?

Could you talk about the Historical Mode found in the game, and was it hard to make something that is supposed to be a recreation of history fun?

"As we were doing our research we found certain missions or opportunities that couldn't be fit into the main story of the game. For example one is a Yamamoto mission where you're in a flight of Lightning's and you have to go track down his Betty and shoot it down. Another would be the first time the Avengers were used in Midway and they were all shot down apart from one that made it back against overwhelming odds. What we aimed to do was make it as historically

accurate as possible but still fun to play, which has been our main goal across the entire game."

It's a really interesting approach looking to propaganda posters and art from the era to drive the look of the game. Could you explain the thought behind this choice?

"The propaganda posters are interesting because at the time the government was trying to drum up the populace to go along with the war, which they didn't really have to. This was probably the last war that was clear cut, the U.S. got attacked, they retaliated and they won. The wars since then



THROWS THE PLAYERS INTO THE THICK OF IT WITH LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF PLANES IN FLIGHT IN CERTAIN MISSIONS

have been quite dirty in terms of the circumstances and what they were fighting for. The propaganda posters have a certain naivety to them and some racist undertones, which we've avoided, but the ones that are there (in the game) are the more 'let's band together and defeat the enemy'. After one of the first story sequences we have 'Man the guns, join the navy' poster which is a great piece of camp artwork. Some of the artists that were doing this during the era like Norman Rockwell, who are quite renowned, were doing this artwork for the US government during the war. From our point of view it can guide the style of the

whole game from the front end to the plane select screen."

Looking back at the development of the title, do you feel that you've managed to accomplish what you set out to do with Heroes of the Pacific?

"We originally planned a much shorter development time but with the extra time we've been given we've added a whole bunch of new features and what began as a small game has grown into something much bigger. It's more polished and complete than we expected from the outset and we're really happy with the end result." <<<

>>> FIGHTING ROUND THE WORLD

The campaign mode will follow William Crowe, a rookie American pilot whose brother perishes aboard a ship during the Pearl Harbour attack. As the players takes part in many of the historic Pacific battles of WWII the story will also follow Crowe's personal vendetta against the elite Japanese squadron responsible for his brother's death.



CAGE CALLS IT A "RUBBER BAND" STORY CONCEPT. YOU CAN HAVE A LOT OF PLAY WITH THE GAME BUT YOU STILL WON'T BREAK THE STORY

FAHRENHEIT

Systems: PS2/Xbox/PC ■ Category: Adventure ■ Players: 1 ■ Developer: Quantic Dream ■ Due: September

Adventure games are a lot like corduroy. Every time you think it's dead, someone walks by in an outfit that makes you look again. You're not sure if you're into it or not, but you get the feeling the place would be less interesting without it. Okay, maybe that last comment doesn't apply to cord, but after getting to meet the developers of the intriguing new game Fahrenheit there are good reasons why gaming as a whole needs adventure in its life to keep the industry on its toes.

Visiting the Quantic Dream office in Paris, the first thing you notice is the basketball court sized motion capture studio.

"It's one of the biggest in Europe," boasts David Cage, writer/director of Fahrenheit and CEO of the studio. It's hard to doubt and it certainly speaks to their commitment to pulling off something special.

"I like to call it the first interactive drama," says Cage. "It's a story experience that the players can

really change through their actions."

After some hands on, I could see what Cage meant. He walked me through the same scenario twice to see the differences available. This showed off some great features, including heavily interactive environments and 24-style split screens that allow you to get a sense of events taking place in real-time that you need to respond to even when you're in a different location. Cage mentioned that later in the game there are scenarios you will even play from opposite sides separately and, depending on your efforts in each, you will change the course of the game.

There is room to play here, but also things stay on track. Cage calls it a 'rubber band' story concept. You can have a lot of play with the game, but you still won't break the story. This may be a concern for some, but he confirms that this isn't just a game with binary endings. There are definitely a lot of ways things can pan out in the end.

Perhaps the most intriguing element is the action system. Like the old electronic Simon memory game, an RGBY double quadrant system appears on screen when you're required to perform action in order to advance past some challenge. Get the analogue stick moves right and you succeed. Fail and it could be game over. In other cases, where stamina is needed — like hanging out of a helicopter — you'll have to get all Hyper-olympics on your game pad to take part in the physical endurance your character is experiencing. I was surprised by how well these systems translate into a personal involvement in the action. I felt excited by the situations in a different way to direct control. But there is no doubt this may not be for everyone.

Fahrenheit definitely offers something new to gaming. Cage feels Ico is a game he has been influenced by.



"I loved that Ico made me feel empathy for a character in a game," said Cage and he too is looking to give gamers new emotional experiences. Fahrenheit definitely has something new to offer fans of adventure and fans of artistic story games. No doubt this game fits in well on the 'pro' side of the 'games as art' debate. It feels like a film much more than other efforts to make film-like interactive experiences. And it maintains a good game feel, where others in this style become simple guided tours.

If you're looking for something to take you somewhere new, this is a great upcoming title. If you hate all things corduroy, then it's time to take another look. Try some on. You could find you like how they feel.



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
The return of adventure gaming as a popular and viable genre!

SUSPICION



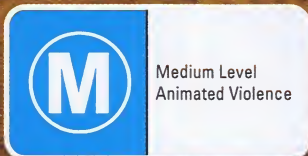
[above] "Umm... Dave's not here, man."



“Hero Worship”

DYNASTY WARRIORS 5

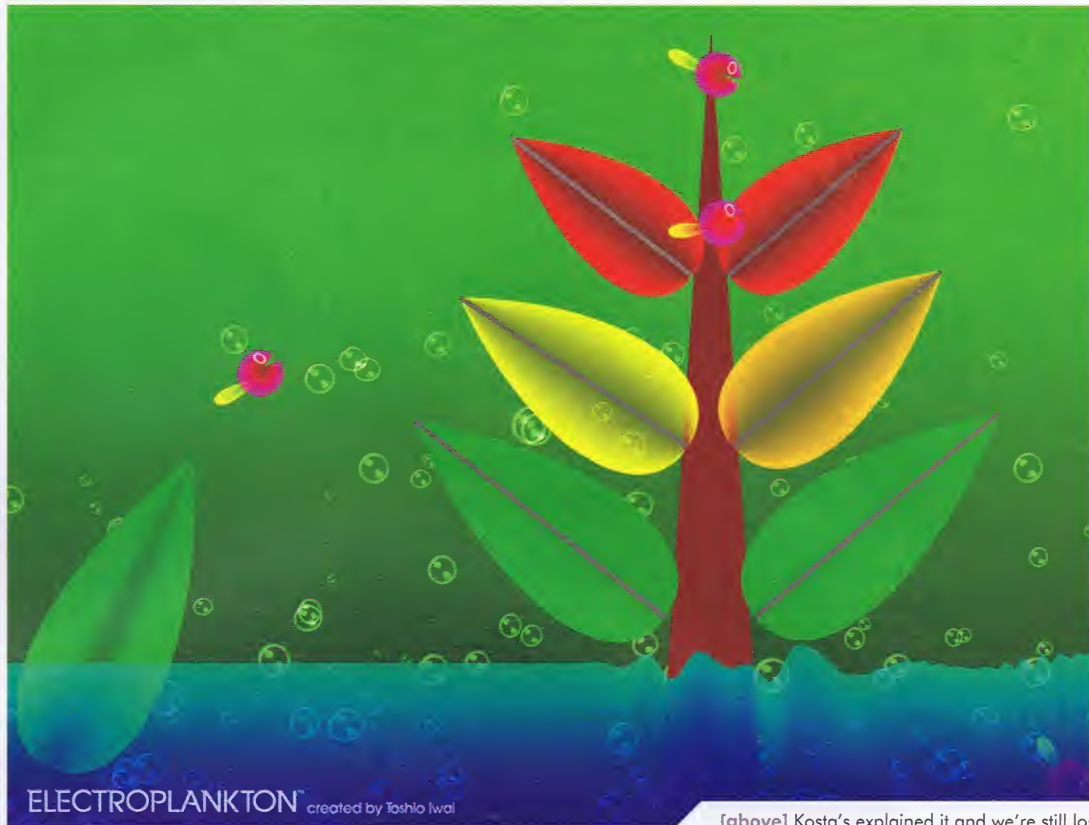
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PlayStation 2



ELECTROPLANKTON™ created by Toshio Iwai

[above] Kosta's explained it and we're still lost

ELECTROPLANKTON

Systems: DS ■ Category: Art ■ Players: 1-2 ■ Developer: Toshio Iwai ■ Due: TBA

➤ In the early 1990s, Japanese experimental media artist Toshio Iwai creating an interactive media presentation called the Well of Lights. In this artistic demonstration on display in San Francisco, Iwai used a combination of computer graphics and a video projector to simulate hundreds of aquatic creatures that swim, play and change form in vivid colour based on his interactions. Having previously dabbled in software for the original Famicom in Japan and most recently Sim Tunes for PC, Electroplankton is Iwai's most focussed effort, a solely developed and nurtured product that defies

genre and offers a musical journey unlike any game or toy that has come before it.

Many could quite liberally pass off Electroplankton as merely a fun little diversion, a piece of interactive software that is much more akin to a toy than a videogame. This is mainly due to the emphasis of the Electroplankton experience being on interaction and experimentation. This is a music based application that isn't a sequencer, rhythm game or a music creation and production tool - its definition is based solely on the player's experience and hence can be defined as 'interactive media art'. Electroplankton offers

up two modes of play, Performance and Audience with each serving up ten types of Electroplankton – microscopic aquatic creatures that harmonise and emit both soothing and jarring soundscapes based on player interaction with the touch screen and microphone. With no save or replay function, interacting with the various plankton is very much an experimentation and discovery process and the many compositions you may stumble across aren't meant for playback for that very reason.

A closer look at the ten different planktons on offer:



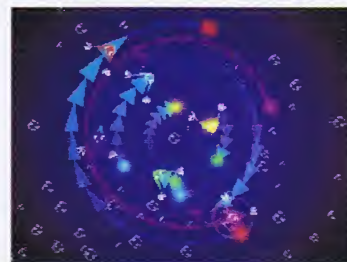
TRACY

Small triangular shaped plankton that create sound according to the path that you draw them. Each step on the path is made up of a small triangle and the sound made will depend on the triangle's location, direction and size all relative to the fluidity, speed and motion of the path drawn by the player.

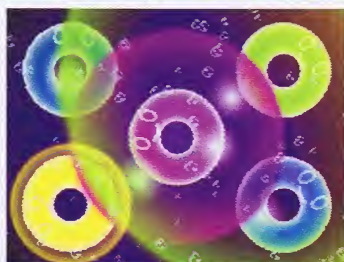
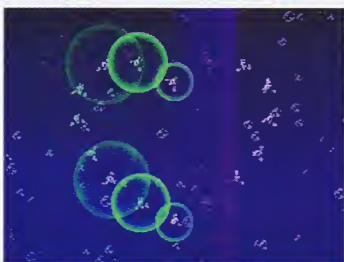
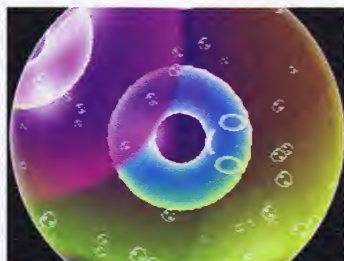


HANENBOW

Hanenbow are small pink water leaping plankton that project onto a leaf formation that can be manipulated by the player. Creating quite soothing xylophone-inspired notes based on trajectory Hanenbow have the ability to excite each plant they interact with creating some truly interesting soundscapes in what is one the more experimental and musically focussed plankton on offer.

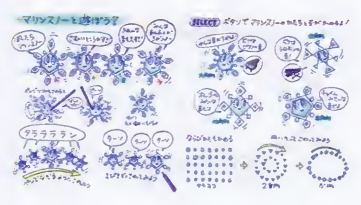


ITS DEFINITION IS BASED SOLELY ON THE PLAYER'S EXPERIENCE AND HENCE CAN BE DEFINED AS "INTERACTIVE MEDIA ART"





ELECTROPLANKTON created by Toshio Iwai



[above] They put something in the water



LUMINARIA
Luminaria are octagonal fluorescently coloured plankton that adorn an underwater grid of arrows. With each Luminaria moving at different speeds and emitting different sounding notes, players can control their movement via changing the direction of the various arrows on the grid. Interacting with the Luminaria can provide both simple and complicated melodies.

blue and react to ripples in the water. Because there are so many of them they can also be arranged into various formations according to player interaction. Simply via clapping in rhythm, really fast or simply in sequence players can get their Nanocarp to form basic shapes and images, and they can even react to singing to form more complicated formations.

truly interesting live remixing of classic Nintendo tunes.



SUN-ANIMALCULE
This plankton changes according to the time of day and this metamorphosis will yield new sounding pulsating emissions, from these sun and moon based creatures. The bigger they grow the more powerful their shining becomes with most only living for about half a day cycle. Players can place, drag and remove Sun-Animalcules at will.



LUMILOOP
As circular doughnut shaped plankton, Lumiloop can be spun around in either direction to create an internal glow paving the way for soothing synth sweeps that can be played on top of each other forming an almost colour-based symphony.



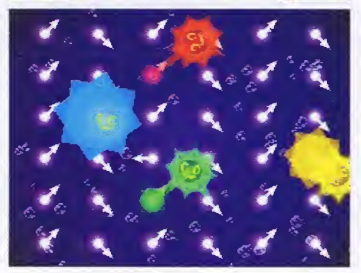
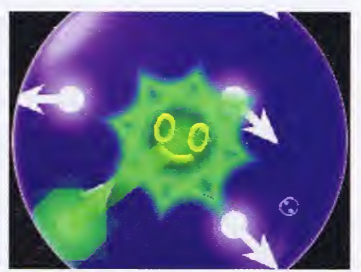
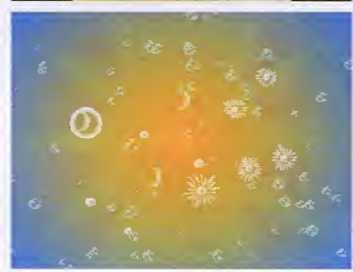
VOLVOICE
Single plankton that grows according to the sound it absorbs from the microphone. Once absorbed the Volvoice can change into one of 16 different shapes, altering the playback of the sound to create



REC-REC
One of the few sample based plankton on offer, Rec-Rec are small fish-like creatures that digest sound based off the DS's in built microphone. Moving along a grid, a standard 4/4 beat plays in the background allowing players to sample up to four distinct sounds using the microphone.



MARINE-SNOW
With their name based on their physical characteristics, these small snowflakes can be touched and rearranged with each other creating various piano chord changes as they slowly make their way home. Their journey can be either peaceful or chaotic, based on players' intentions.



some interesting sound effects from high pitched squeals to a dark and disturbing filtered mess — but always with a smile.

It's true you could see everything that Electroplankton has to offer in well under an hour of play time but that's besides the point, this is a great example of interactive art that is perfectly suited to the Nintendo DS. It also retains the quality and ambition of artist Toshio Iwai's larger more evocative creations in a handheld title that takes full use of the Nintendo DS's dual screen, touch screen and microphone features making this the best 'non-game' experience the handheld has to offer. It's no secret why Nintendo are so proud of this exclusive release for the Nintendo DS as it transcends genre and definition, creating an experience that will be experienced, remembered and revisited for many years to come. <<



NANOCARP
Nanocarp are small winged plankton that live in the deep



BEATNES
These plankton offer a very simple sequencer played over classic remixed Nintendo music from Super Mario Bros and Kid Icarus allows the player to string together small melodies using simple notes and old school gaming sound effects. One of the most instantly gratifying plankton, Beatnes allow for some

>> **SCHOOLYARD SYMPHONY**
Although Electroplankton doesn't feature a true multiplayer mode, getting together with others who have a Nintendo DS and a copy of plankton is wholeheartedly recommended and endorsed in the game's very Japanese manual. Connecting your plankton up to a decent sized pair of speakers paves the way for recording and even production (with the right type of PC software of course). Even creating a virtual symphony is not out of the question, and when you couple this with the game's excellent audio-out capabilities, a Lumiloop, Tracy, Nanocarp and Marine-Snow quartet could potentially be one of the coolest things ever.



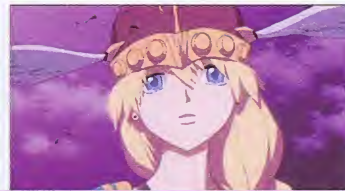
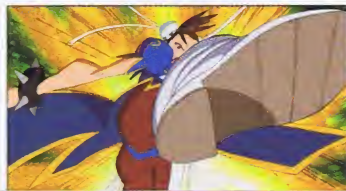
タイゾウ
「そういうのは俺の専門だ」



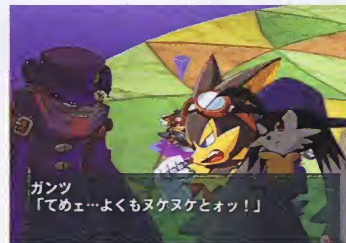
かりん
「ご自分があのピエロに狙われているという事もすっかり忘れてらっしゃるようだし...」



レイレイ
「すごい妖気というか“力”を感じたアル。たぶん、日本には相当大きな穴があるワケ」



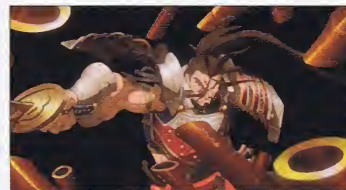
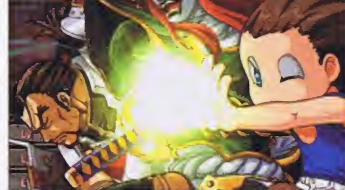
ロール
「トリッガー...? ロック、何の事?」



ガンツ
「ためエ...よくもヌケヌケとョッ!!」



平八
「貴様の持つアンドロイド技術...そのために捨ててやった事を忘れぬ事だ。燦田よ」



アロック HP: 280
オボス HP: 280

NAMCO X CAPCOM

Systems: PS2 ■ Category: Strategy/RPG ■ Players: probably 1 ■ Developer: Namco ■ Due: TBA

▶▶ We have to resist the urge to refer to Namco X Capcom as NamcoX. It's hard to do but somehow we manage. Aside from the name and some poorly Babelfish translated Namco websites, little is known about Namco X Capcom. Until now, that is. We've set our research department (Wilks and the interweb) to tracking down all of the salient facts about the game that looks as though it will be a fanboy's wet dream. Set in the year 20XX after some type of special anomaly, the two respective brands are brought together in Shibuya and Tokyo and punch the crap out of each other. As far as plot goes that's all we know. When we say a fanboy's wet dream, we really mean it — Namco X Capcom contains a massive number of characters — from what we understand there will be at least 150 characters available to unlock and recruit/fight, though

we're not sure if the numbers mean the combined characters from both rosters of how many characters we can expect on both sides of the conflict. Whilst the roster contains a good many characters culled from fighting games, including Streetfighter, Tekken, Rival Schools and Nightstalkers, the full lineup also includes a number of new characters and some older, seemingly out of place characters such as Klonoa, Rockman and Dig Dug.

MY FIST ARE FIGHT!

One of the biggest questions about Namco X Capcom since the first screenshots were leaked onto the web some months back is whether the game is a turn based RPG, an action RPG or a fighting game. The simple answer is yes. Namco X Capcom utilises elements from each of the genres to drive the

action. Players will control unit movement and strategy in turn based gameplay but break into more action packed, fighting game-esque shenanigans when in a fight. Although not nearly as deep as a standard fighting game, the combat in Namco X Capcom utilises all of the special moves players have come to know and love (and creates some new ones for characters without a fighting pedigree like Klonoa) which are activated with a simple push of a direction on the D-pad and push of a button. Apparently combos, team attacks and the like will be possible using this system.

If the idea of a huge scale turn based strategy/RPG with characters drawn from a number of highly popular gaming franchises doesn't excite you then there may be one more thing that will. Namco X Capcom will feature a number of

WHEN WE SAY A FANBOY'S WET DREAM WE MEAN IT - NAMCO X CAPCOM CONTAINS A MASSIVE NUMBER OF CHARACTERS

anime cutscenes (including a three + minute animated opening) produced by none other the Production IG. If you're familiar with anime this name will immediately ring a bell. Even if you're not a fan of anime you should be excited. Production IG are responsible for, among other things, FLCL, Ghost in the Shell and the animated sequence in Kill Bill vol 1. At the time of this writing the game is only weeks of being shipped in Japan. Unfortunately there's currently no indication of when Namco X Capcom will be released here (if it is released at all) as translation to Pal territory languages will definitely take some time. <<<

ONIMUSHA: Dawn of Dreams

Systems: **PS2** ■ Category: **Action RPG** ■ Players: **1** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Due: **2006**

It's back to feudal Japan for the fourth installment of the Onimusha trilogy. Hang on a sec... the fourth installment? Yep, despite Capcom's intention to finish up with Demon Siege, they just couldn't help taking another dip from that sweet honey pot. Hence, Dawn of Dreams. But hey, from what we've seen it's going to really take the series to new heights. So kudos to you Capcom.

You play as the broadsword wielding Soki who's out to take down the ever resourceful Genma, but he won't be doing it alone. You'll fight alongside another warrior this time, combining for devastating team moves and switching on the fly to use each character's unique

abilities. At this stage Capcom have only unveiled two of the characters you'll be able to use – Soki, and a fetching lass called Akane who's a sword wielding martial arts expert with the power of the "Oni Eye", but we've been told there are five all up. Each warrior will have his or her own unique abilities, attacks and storyline. Indeed, the story is set to be much more expansive than previous games in the series, with plenty of branching paths and areas that will only be accessible for certain character pairings. Throw in a big leap in the scale of the environments, full camera control and the usual lush Onimusha visuals and you have a game to look out for.



[up] Wasn't 3 the "final" game in the series?



CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION

Systems: **PS2, Xbox** ■ Category: **Retro** ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Due: **Late 2005**



[above] Those barrels are so gonna get it

This is enough to make anyone who loves retro games start frothing at the mouth. Capcom Classics comes packing 22 classic Capcom arcade and SNES titles. There's 1942, 1943, Bionic Commando, Commando, Exed Exes, Final Fight, Forgotten Worlds, Ghosts N Goblins, Ghouls N Ghosts, Super Ghouls N Ghosts, Gun Smoke, Legendary Wings, Mercs, Pirate Ship Higemaru, Section Z, SonSon, Street Fighter II, Trojan, Vulgus and a couple more that haven't been revealed yet. Now, we wouldn't go so far as to say they're all classics, but these are the games that helped establish Capcom as a force in the games industry and span

around ten years of releases, so this isn't just a great package, it's videogaming heritage. And that's why it's good to know that Capcom are going the extra yards to give gamers a host of bonus features, including remixed soundtracks, original artwork and playing tips.

So far the collection has only been announced for PS2 and Xbox, but we have all our fingers (and some of our toes) crossed that Capcom will also bring it to PSP. Now that would be sweet. Hey Capcom – you listening?

RATCHET: Deadlocked

Systems: **PS2** ■ Category: **Shooter** ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Developer: **Insomniac** ■ Due: **Late 2005**

Sony and Insomniac are taking the next game in the Ratchet & Clank series in quite a different direction. As opposed to the off the wall humour and engaging single player focus of previous games, for Deadlocked the emphasis has shifted into arena-based third person shooter territory and online play.

The setup sees Ratchet abducted by media mogul Gleeman Vox and forced to do battle in a televised death sport called Dreadzone. As the title suggests, Clank plays a diminished role in this game. Indeed, on the battlefield you'll be accompanied by two AI controlled bots, with commands given to them via the D-pad. If a mate drops by when you're playing, he can jump

right in and assume the role of one of the bots. Nice.

As you'd expect the firepower is nice and meaty, with extensive customisation options to ensure things never get samey. Want a mod to enable homing? Or bounce shots? Or how about turning enemies into farm animals? Deadlock's got you covered.

The tone of Deadlocked is certainly more serious than previous games in the series, but it's looking every bit as polished. Whether or not the run and gun arena-based gameplay will prove as compelling in the long run, particularly when hardly any PS2 owners have the online network adapter, remains to be seen.



[above] Not a ratchet in sight

HUXLEY

Systems: **PC** ■ Category: **MMOFPS** ■ Players: **Multi** ■ Developer: **H-Studio** ■ Due: **2006**

▶▶ In the post-apocalyptic world of Huxley, humans have mutated into two opposing races — Sapiens and Alternatives. War rages between the two sides over a new energy source with the power to give the side that controls it domination of the planet. But that's just the background. What makes Huxley so ambitious is what happens next.

Huxley, you see is a massively multiplayer first person shooter with a persistent gameworld that's affected by the outcome of the large scale battles and the other actions of its citizens. The plan is to have a grand narrative that changes as the balance of power between the two

racers shifts and other factions come into play. Much like an MMORPG you'll have plenty of quests to go on and an RPG-style system where your player grows and learns new skills. Following in the footsteps of games like Planetside, it's an ambitious concept, but one that we'd love to see work.

One aspect that the team have already nailed, however, is the engine. As the screenshots attest Huxley is set to be an incredibly pretty game with great character models and lighting, and complex European city inspired environments. Although it's not due until mid 2006 Huxley is definitely a game to put on your radar.



[above] In the future pupils will be outlawed



[above] That boss is almost as big as Mo's chin!

EVIL DEAD: Regeneration

Systems: **PC, PS2, Xbox** ■ Category: **Action** ■ Players: **1** ■ Developer: **Cranky Pants Games** ■ Due: **September**

▶▶ It's a real shame the last two Evil Dead games were so awful. Not just because the license is perfect videogame fodder and we hate to see bad games, but also because it means we were less than enthusiastic when Regeneration was announced. But thankfully it's looking pretty solid. And hey, how can any title from a dev team called Cranky Pants Games and featuring the vocal talents of Bruce Campbell be bad?

This time around the modus operandi is capturing the humour of the series in a straight-up Deadite-packed action game. You probably already know what to expect - plenty of wisecracks combined with

chainsaw and shotgun action, but the developers have implemented a few new touches. For one, Ash now has a midget Deadite sidekick, who's a nasty little piece of work, and voiced by Ted Raimi (Sam's bro). Fortunately you can sic him on enemies, as well as treat him as your own personal whipping boy. The action is frantic and intense, with a variety of brutal finishing moves for Ash (the over the shoulder shotgun kill being our favourite so far), and a rage meter that, when filled, unleashes the super powerful evil Ash. Full review soon.

MARVEL NEMESIS: The Imperfects

Systems: **GCN, PS2, PSP, Xbox** ■ Category: **Fighting** ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Developer: **Nihilistic** ■ Due: **October**

▶▶ Capcom no longer have the rights to make fighting games based on the Marvel license, so EA have stepped up to the plate. Thankfully, instead of taking the easy route and just plugging the existing roster of Marvel heroes into a fighting game, for Nemesis EA have actually collaborated extensively with Marvel talent, working together to create a number of brand new superheroes that will be included in the game, such as Johnny Ohm and Brigade. They're being introduced to Marvel fans in a six issue comic mini-series, so by the time the game arrives they'll have a context within the world. Of course, they'll be alongside the all-star usual suspects including the likes

of Spider-Man, Wolverine, Iron Man and The Thing.

The game plays more like Power Stone than Tekken, with easy to pick up controls and plenty of environmental interaction (and destruction) within the various arenas. In addition to jump, attack, block and pick up object buttons, there's also a special button for character specific attacks as well as a modifier button that's held to supercharge jumps, throws and attacks. There's definitely potential here, but the biggest test for EA will be balancing the fighters. We'll find out if they've succeeded in October.



[above] Spidey shows us that no shirt = no entry

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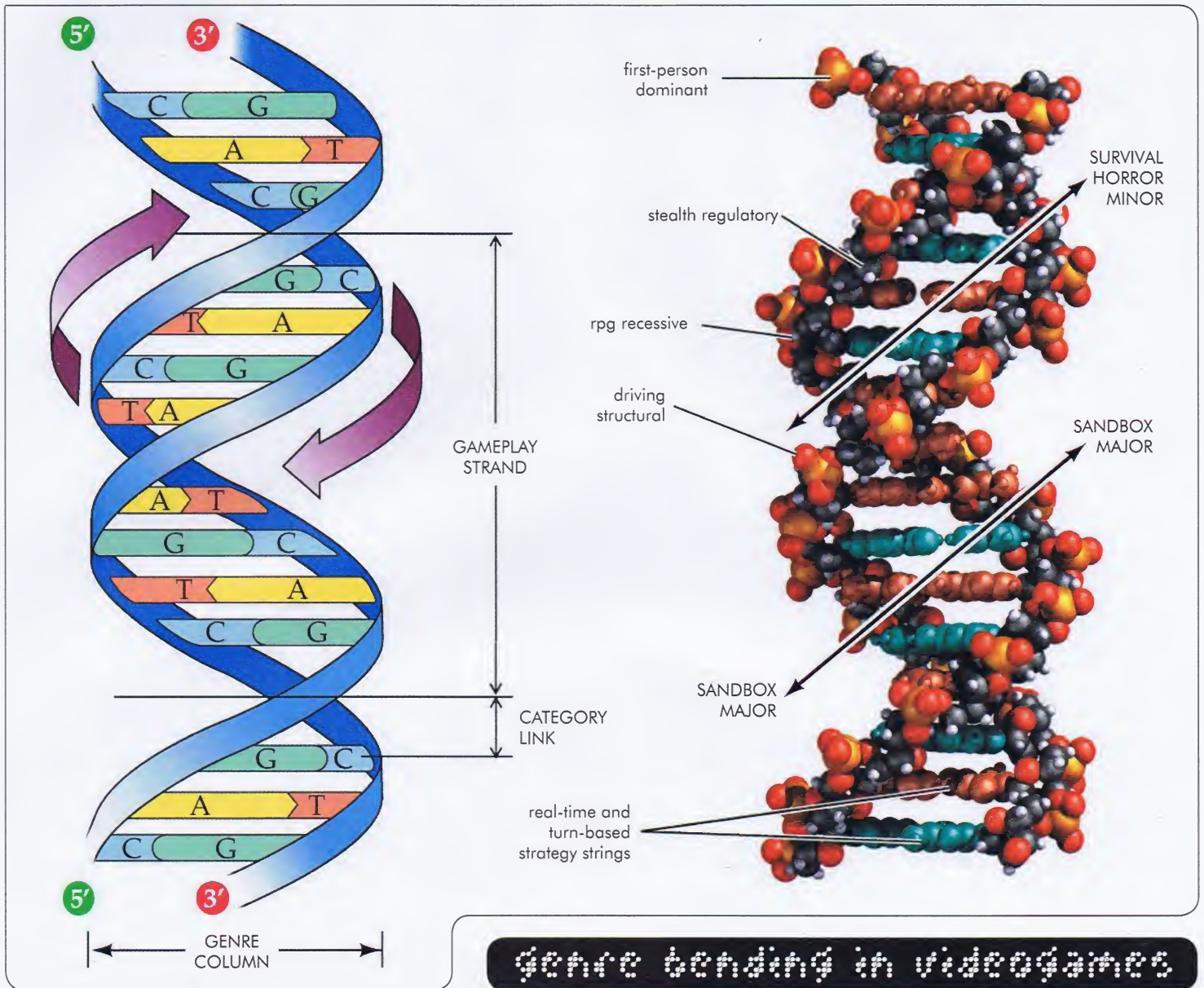
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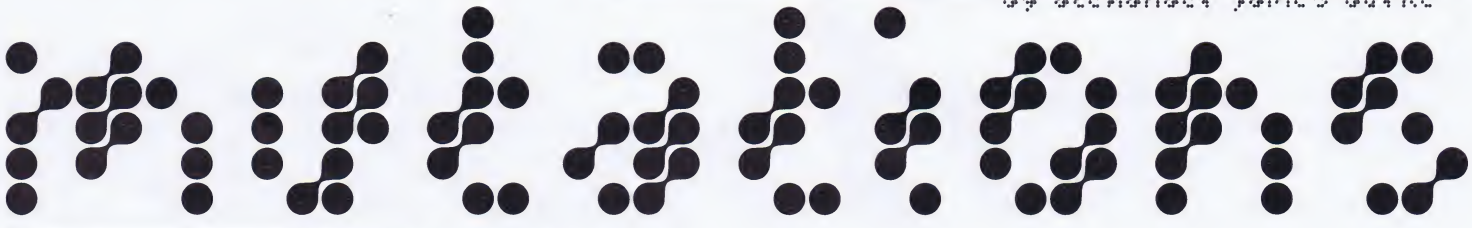
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OUT NOW!



genre bending in videogames

by alexander james burke



Ever noticed how it's so hard these days to lump your favourite game into a category? "First-Person Shooter" doesn't do something like Thief: Deadly Shadows justice, whilst calling GTA: San Andreas a driving game will leave you way off mark. After extensive research, I can say for sure that the hybridisation of videogame genres isn't the nefarious work of George "USB iGrill" Foreman. No, even the man who brought pasty geeks and obese Texans together couldn't devise something this sinister. You may ask how I came to this conclusion. Well, I've realised

that what we're seeing now in the videogame world started a long, long time ago. You see, "games", in their simplest form, have very basic objectives - "get to B before A does", "go from X to Y, kill Z", or "amass Q amount of money/wood/coal/Ace of Base singles". After a while, dear reader, it all gets rather samey. (You didn't hear that from me.) Which is why an industrious bunch of game designers got together to ask themselves: "What can you add to a game's basic formula to make it more interesting?" The results were varied, and some of the most famous examples are listed here.

1.

Sympathy For The Devil (ACTION RPGS)



Diablo turned RPGs from turn based to an addictive click-fest

Back in the mid 90s, the Role-Playing Game (RPG) as we knew it was a beached whale. Slowly dying, it had a few memorable stabs at resuscitation - TES: Arena and Ultima VII, to name two - but extinction was inevitable.

Then, when most of us had given up, Blizzard Entertainment released Diablo. When this game hit the shelves, players began marching to the tune of a different drum: Action RPG.

Diablo was a very unconventional title. For one, it ditched those goddamn orcs that had become the staple of the RPG genre since Tolkien became popular again with college students in the '70s. But more importantly, it did away with the tried-and-true D&D combat system in favour of a much sleeker real-time fighting engine. Sure, battles ended up just being massive clickfests, but Diablo was much more addictive for its simplicity than your average laborious dice-roll RPG.

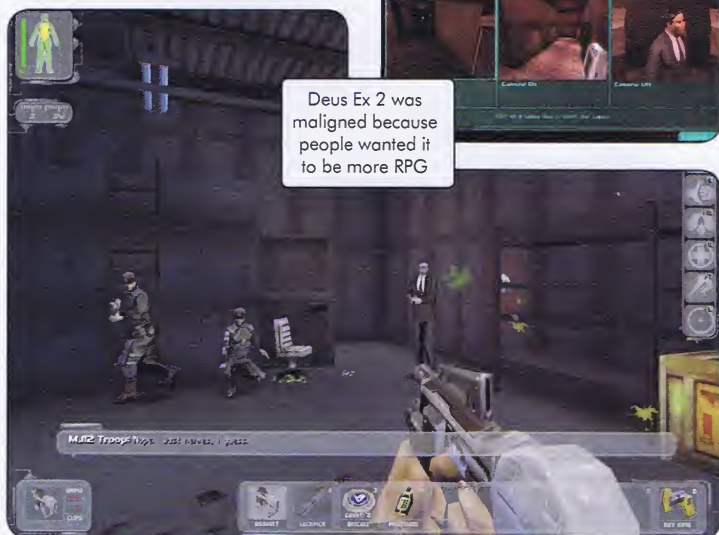
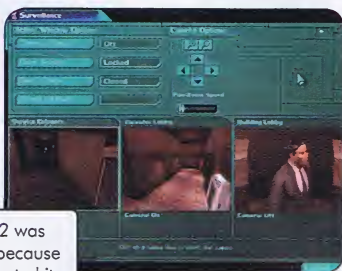
Diablo's smash-hit status propelled the RPG genre into the mainstream. Not long after saw the success of Fallout, Baldur's Gate, TES II: Daggerfall, Icewind Dale, and many other high class RPGs. It gave role-playing a shot in the arm and it shrugged off the genre's



System Shock 2: Survival horror FPS RPG at its finest



Deus Ex 2 was maligned because people wanted it to be more RPG



"by bespectacled masturbators, for bespectacled masturbators" label.

Shortly thereafter, Irrational Games released System Shock 2. The System Shock series has always suffered the curse of being commercially trampled by the success of AAA First-Person Shooters (first DOOM, then Half-Life), but SS2 still got ample critical renown. An action/RPG hybrid not unlike Diablo (but much smarter, set in a space station, and in full 3D), SS2 proved that a little stat crunching doesn't have to get in the way of a game's tense, moody atmosphere.

Ion Storm's Deus Ex continued this trend in 2000. Dropping the player into the shoes of JC Denton,

a nano-augmented super-agent, Deus Ex allowed the player to craft their own playing style through a comprehensive skill system. The game also had a great storyline (something that SS2 missed). The action was superb, the damage system made sense, and Ion Storm managed to fluidly integrate an RPG experience point system into the first-person shooter genre.

The Action RPG evolved more naturally than any other genre hybrid. If a 3D game's trying to give you a cinematic experience, throwing pages and pages of rulebooks and statistics can't help. Most of this ugly stuff (if rulebooks are used at all) is now calculated behind the scenes where it belongs. So, you might ask, why even bother calling these games RPGs? Well, if they can give the player a customisable character and storyline, then that's what they are, baby.

SS2 PROVED THAT A STAT CRUNCHING DOESN'T HAVE TO GET IN THE WAY

2.

Smooth Operator (STEALTH)



Do you remember the action games of old? They generally involved romper-stomping through corridors and blasting at sprites. The sprites weren't too bright, either. They'd usually wait in one area to attack you and would give up if you left their line of sight, and if you were lucky enough, you may have seen them turning on each other. It was kind of like the Liberal Party, except with demons.

Then one day in 1997, Looking Glass Studios unleashed Garrett, a skinny little guy in a hood. Thief: The Dark Project was born. Instead of running and gunning, Thief made you - gasp! - hide in the shadows. Because Garrett was never really an alpha male of any kind, he had to avoid his assailants lest he lose his head. Stealth was the name of the game because your enemies could hear you.

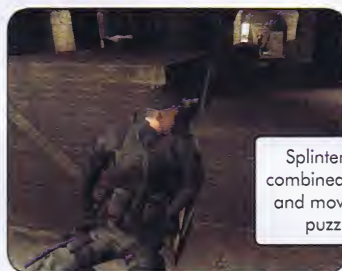
That's right. Instead of floating towards you across grid squares even if you're a mile away, Garrett's enemies reacted to him according to how much sound he made, and how hidden he was. Sure, if worse came to worse, G-Money could always just smack his enemies on the head or stab them in the dark, but most of Thief forced you to be quieter than a Branch Davidian convention.

What's so great about stealth, then? Well, it marked an important step in game development - AI was solid enough to react realistically in a given environment. If Garrett's enemies had been as dumb as Pig Cops or Cacodemons, stealth wouldn't work. What's more, Thief's Dark Engine cleverly put draw distance to good use - shadows weren't just "fog of war"; Garrett could actually hide in them.

However, as I mentioned earlier, Thief was evolutionary, not revolutionary. As AI programmers began churning out more sophisticated code, eventually someone was going to put stealth in their first-person shooter.

Additionally, whilst Thief was loved by critics, it wasn't anything special commercially. The games that really took stealth to the mainstream didn't even utilise a first-person perspective. They were Metal Gear Solid and Splinter Cell.

1998's Metal Gear Solid is the most famous game in the Metal Gear series (which began its life on the NES and MSX). The game got its title from the fact that it was, unlike the previous Metal Gear games, "solid" - it was the first of the series rendered in full 3D. Due to its unprecedented use of third-

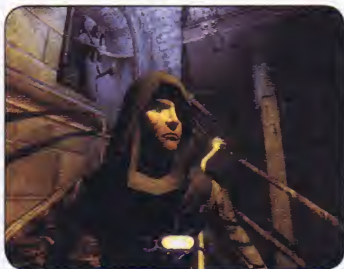


person stealth, MGS was a worldwide success. The popularity of MGS guaranteed stealth a permanent seat in the action senate, and opened the door for similar titles.

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell was another. Released in 2002, the game had the player take on the role of Sam Fisher, a gruff-voiced field operative in black latex. Splinter Cell drew inspiration from both MGS and Thief in its execution of stealth. It has since become immensely popular (a Splinter Cell movie is in development), and well-deserved of

standing alongside MGS and Thief as a leading innovator in the stealth action genre.

2005 saw the release of Splinter Cell 3: Chaos Theory, shortly after both Thief: Deadly Shadows and Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater. Each title has improved on the stealth genre in different ways. From the micromanagement of Snake's body in Snake Eater to the multi-linear approach to level design seen in Chaos Theory, it looks as if the stealth genre is coming along very nicely. Keep your eyes on the shadows.



3.

Little Red Corvette (GRAND THEFT AUTO AND NON-LINEARITY)



Grand Theft Auto goes without saying, I guess. I boycotted the original GTA for some time, thinking it was just some top-down racer with a side of greasy crims. When I sat down and played the thing, I saw it was so much more. Nothing beats getting an entire police force speeding after you, only to send them spinning into an oily grave thanks to a trap you planted earlier. If it sounds sadistic and anti-social, that's because it is.

The series has matured over time. Looking at San Andreas, I can't believe I once thought of GTA as a driving game. On the contrary, it was the game that first popularised non-linearity as an actual genre.

Rather than being defined by its gangsters, cars, mindless violence, or sacrilege, GTA will always be remembered for its freeform style.

Instead of giving the player an on-rails narrative to follow, GTA presented him/her with a vast urban environment in which anything (illegal) was possible. Now, this isn't a new concept - Bethesda's been churning out non-linear The Elder Scrolls games for over ten years and Ken Levine's been banging on about emergent gameplay for God knows how long. But GTA took the juice of the idea and made it mass-market. After all, modern gamers are far more familiar with drive-bys, Molotov



GTA: San Andreas and GTA2 - gameplay evolution



Elder Scrolls - explore the empty world



cocktails, and SWAT teams than space stations and magical fantasy worlds (unless you're from Nimbin).

The advantage of this gameplay structure is that a player doesn't have to adhere to a preset storyline. Similarly, developers don't have to spend as much time chiselling details into their narrative whilst leaving the rest of the gameworld bland and uninteresting. A player can actually develop their own story by playing through GTA in the exact style that they wish. Obviously, this creates problems as any kind of storyline already present in the game will be quite flaccid, but Rockstar and other non-linear developers have found ways around this (GTA: San Andreas, The Elder Scrolls, and to a lesser extent, System Shock 2, all had strong storylines amidst the open-endedness).

Non-linearity as a genre will always be treated with controversy. But GTA stands as a perfect example of how a game can come to be defined by its lack of structure, rather than by rigid gameplay mechanics. Like it or not, non-linear gameplay is a genre in its own right, and there's nothing you can do to stop it.

Why has non-linear gameplay

evolved? Well, it's a reaction to gaming trends. As visual technology improves, rigidly linear games such as first-person shooters often will end up being more graphics showcases than anything else (case in point: Doom 3). Sure, they may be fun for a little while, but they'll offer very little in the way of replay value. Non-linear gaming, on the other hand (whether it be through large, persistent worlds, or randomly generated ones), can be enjoyed an almost infinite number of times.

Commercially, players will end up being more faithful to brands they can enjoy for long periods of time (who'd subscribe to a MMO that you could only play through once?). For instance, The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind - which sports a world that can be edited and added to - has over 3,000 player-made modifications. Also, the Grand Theft Auto series is a commercial goldmine. For further proof, look at Super Mario 64. Why is that game so damn perfect? Because its world is huge and re-playable!

With sophisticated procedural code, gameworlds can be massive but actually take up less disc space and cost less money to produce. In this way, a non-linear flop will lose publishers, retailers, and developers alike much less money than a linear one. If developers can utilise this technology, we should be seeing some very dynamic titles quite soon. If they don't, well, it's their four billion greenbacks.

4. Monster Mash (SURVIVAL HORROR)

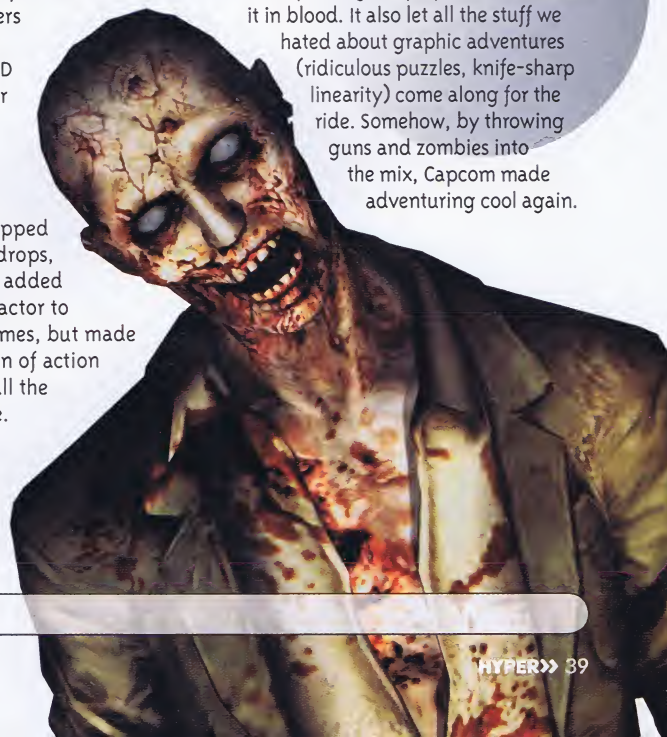
The graphic adventure was king in the early nineties. Even though the first-person shooter was making its mark, people really couldn't get enough "use the rubber chicken on the wheelbarrow" action. Simple, linear, and often amusing, the adventure game was the home of sharp storylines, great dialogue, and irritating puzzles. Then, in 1993, Infogrames ruined everything by releasing Alone In The Dark.

Rather than your traditional witty characters and colourful scenarios, AITD had the player scared out of his pants. With its use of polygonal characters slapped onto 2D backdrops, AITD not only added the "spook" factor to adventure games, but made the integration of action into the mix all the more possible.

As time dragged on, the principles introduced by AITD were

more or less swept under the floor whilst DOOM and Duke Nukem 3D kicked the crap out of the adventure genre. But all was not lost, for in 1996, Capcom released a little game called Resident Evil. And with the opening and clumsily translated sentence "Enter the world of survival horror," a new genre was born.

Resident Evil took everything we loved about the adventure genre (great story, interesting characters, slow-paced gameplay) and marinated it in blood. It also let all the stuff we hated about graphic adventures (ridiculous puzzles, knife-sharp linearity) come along for the ride. Somehow, by throwing guns and zombies into the mix, Capcom made adventuring cool again.





Resident Evil 4 more action than ever before

Sure, the combine-metal-pipe-with-wheel-to-make-valve-to-turn-on-fire-hose objectives were tiresome, but Resident Evil had what no other adventure game like it did at the time: immediacy. If a zombie popped out of an air-vent (as they do), the little bugger wouldn't wait for you on screen 115. Keep moving on to the next camera angle, and he'd follow you.

This combination of adventure-worthy storylines, challenging puzzles and tense, action-based gameplay was a hit with almost all gamers. Sure, survival horror's

utter repetitiveness, frustrating environments, and morbid AI (pun not intended) eventually earned it much criticism, but it also spawned many memorable games along the way (Silent Hill, Resident Evil II, Project Zero, and Eternal Darkness).

With the release of Resident Evil 4, it looks as if the genre may be moving further away from its adventure roots as it absorbs more action elements, but that's by no means a bad thing. Unrestrictive camera, fast action, interactive environments, and a departure from zombies may well be just what the doctor ordered.



Dungeon Keeper set you as the bad guy



Black & White - mouse controlled magic



Molyneux's Dungeon Keeper, and Black & White (surprise, surprise). Both games followed the "God game" mechanics by putting the player in the shoes of an omnipotent deity. The only difference between them is that the former allowed you only one course of action - dead-set, red-skinned evil.

Dungeon Keeper was released in 1999, and, like Populous, was unlike any game of its time. Sure, Warcraft let you play the marauding orcish horde, but they actually bothered to stuff some ideology in there. In Dungeon Keeper, you were just plain sinister. Your job was to manage a dungeon through building a loyal community of workers, researchers and fighters. The interesting part (and that which revealed the God game's "lack of control" trademark) was that those workers, researchers and fighters each had their own agendas - some would even refuse to work with each other.

In this way, Dungeon Keeper added a much-needed element to the real-time strategy genre: sentience. Molyneux changed the player's role from that of a micromanager to an overseer and mediator. If you were clever enough, you'd be able to assemble your disparate, squabbling dungeonfolk into a powerful defending army. Otherwise, you'd find your minions walking out faster than it takes

to clear a room of people after switching on X Factor.

Molyneux followed up on Dungeon Keeper with 2001's Black & White (Populous' spiritual successor) after leaving Bullfrog (which he sold to the money-excreting monster that is EA) and forming Lionhead Studios. This time around, you were put in charge of a small village in a place called Eden. However, Black & White won't be remembered for its city-building. What made Lionhead's first game great was the use of the "creature".

The Creature was a large animal (you could choose between a cow, a monkey, and a tiger) with very sophisticated AI. Your duty was to train the creature to serve you in whatever way you pleased - if you wanted to turn the cute little guy into a massive war machine, you could. Similarly, you could develop his empathy for those around him so that he would watch over his villagers, bringing kindness and peace.

Black & White remains the epitome of God gaming, and God gaming remains the most sophisticated form of real-time strategy available. Through its use of sentient AI, a player must not only build a civilisation, but also make sure that its citizens want to live there. Perhaps if some of our world leaders had a go at Populous or Black & White, we wouldn't have so many problems.

4. What would Jesus do? (GOD GAMES)

If you want to know about God games, look no further than Peter Molyneux. In the way that the universe is just bits of one large exploded mass, Nine Inch Nails is actually just Trent Reznor, and GDC is just an excuse for Will Wright to perfect his stand-up routine, the entire God game genre consists of one guy - Molyneux. Things are never what they seem.

The genre began with Bullfrog's Populous in 1989. In this game (unlike in any other strategy game at the time) your power over the land was both awesome and limited. You could create divine interventions, shape the land, and influence your people, but you could not directly

control them. Your people had free will. It was your job to influence them. Eventually, it was possible to guide them to war against enemy civilisations.

Populous was a hit across all platforms - Amiga, Atari ST, SNES, Genesis, Master System, and Megadrive. The ability to sculpt and create land was an unprecedented real-time gameplay mechanic, and it assisted in helping the player feel that he/she was the Almighty.

The Populous series spawned some memorable spiritual successors (some even think of Maxis' The Sims as one of them). Most notably, they were

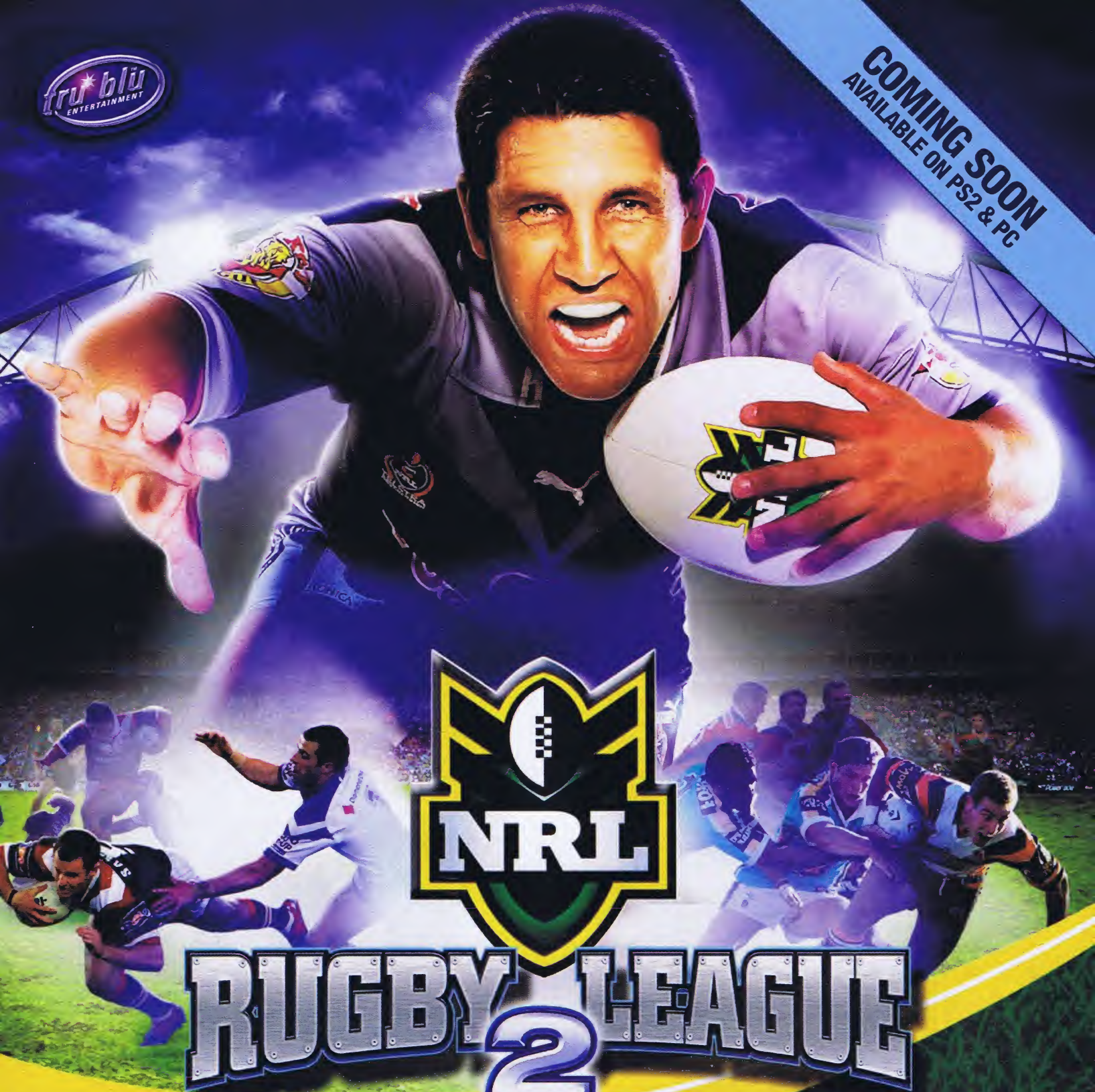
Populous is still a rocking game today



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WHAT A CONCEPT

THE ARTISTIC ODDYSEE OF ODDWORLD INHABITANTS



[above] A digitally produced production piece.

[below] A skilled artist is capable not only of capturing form, but also of suggesting power and movement. These illustrations depict the Stranger's three distinct methods of propulsion.

[below right] Oddworld's artists are highly efficient communicators. Thumbnail sketches such as this one are generated in a matter of seconds and used as reference during the early stages of production.



You have to feel for the pioneers of video game concept art. Their intricate illustrations became nothing more than vague blocks of primary colours clamouring from one side of the screen to the other. In contrast, the concept art of today is brought to life in glorious 3D, rendered in kaleidoscopic colour, and bathed in light and shadow. Game graphics have at last caught up with the draftsman's pencil, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the games of Oddworld Inhabitants.

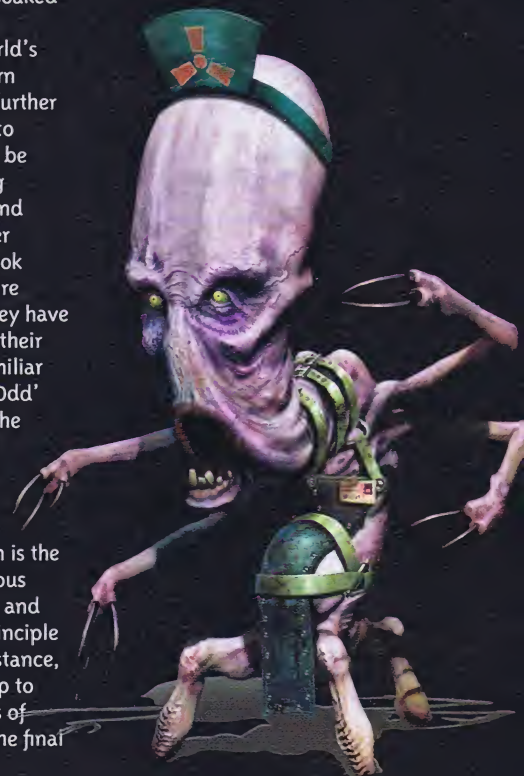
Oddworld's games have always been visually distinct from their competitors' products. Their most recent opus, 'Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath,' is among the most beautiful games on Xbox, and features a truly astonishing array of creatures and environments. Hyper was fortunate enough to speak with two of Oddworld's chief visual architects, president and creative director Lorne Lanning and production designer Silvio Aebischer.

As alien as the Oddworld saga appears on the surface, it regularly explores issues relevant to the modern world. Topics examined include environmental mismanagement, exploitation of labour, disenfranchisement of indigenous peoples and cruelty to

animals. This blend of the fantastic and the mundane is at the core of Oddworld's design philosophy. "Oddworld has always presented the audience with a sort of 'cracked mirror' reflection of the real world," says Lanning. "The visual style of the games is in keeping with that philosophy. Most of the everyday objects, characters and locations look somewhat familiar. It could be possible that something similar exists somewhere or sometime in the real world... until we add the Oddworld twist."

Lanning's team are past masters at crafting these disturbingly familiar design elements. 'Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee' presented us with a horrific industrialised slaughterhouse, while 'Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee' featured a macabre medical laboratory. 'Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath' commences in a sun-soaked environment inspired by the films of Sergio Leone. Oddworld's artists used this classic western setting as a springboard for further experimentation. According to Lanning, familiar images can be subtly distorted by importing elements from other genres and settings. "We had these settler towns," he says, "and they look like old west towns, but they're inhabited by chickens and they have neon Vegas-like signs above their businesses. We like to use familiar things, but take them to an 'Odd' place. So you can recognize the setting, but you still feel like you're being transported somewhere else."

A finished Oddworld design is the product of rigorous experimentation and refinement. A principle character, for instance, is subjected to up to a hundred pages of revision before the final





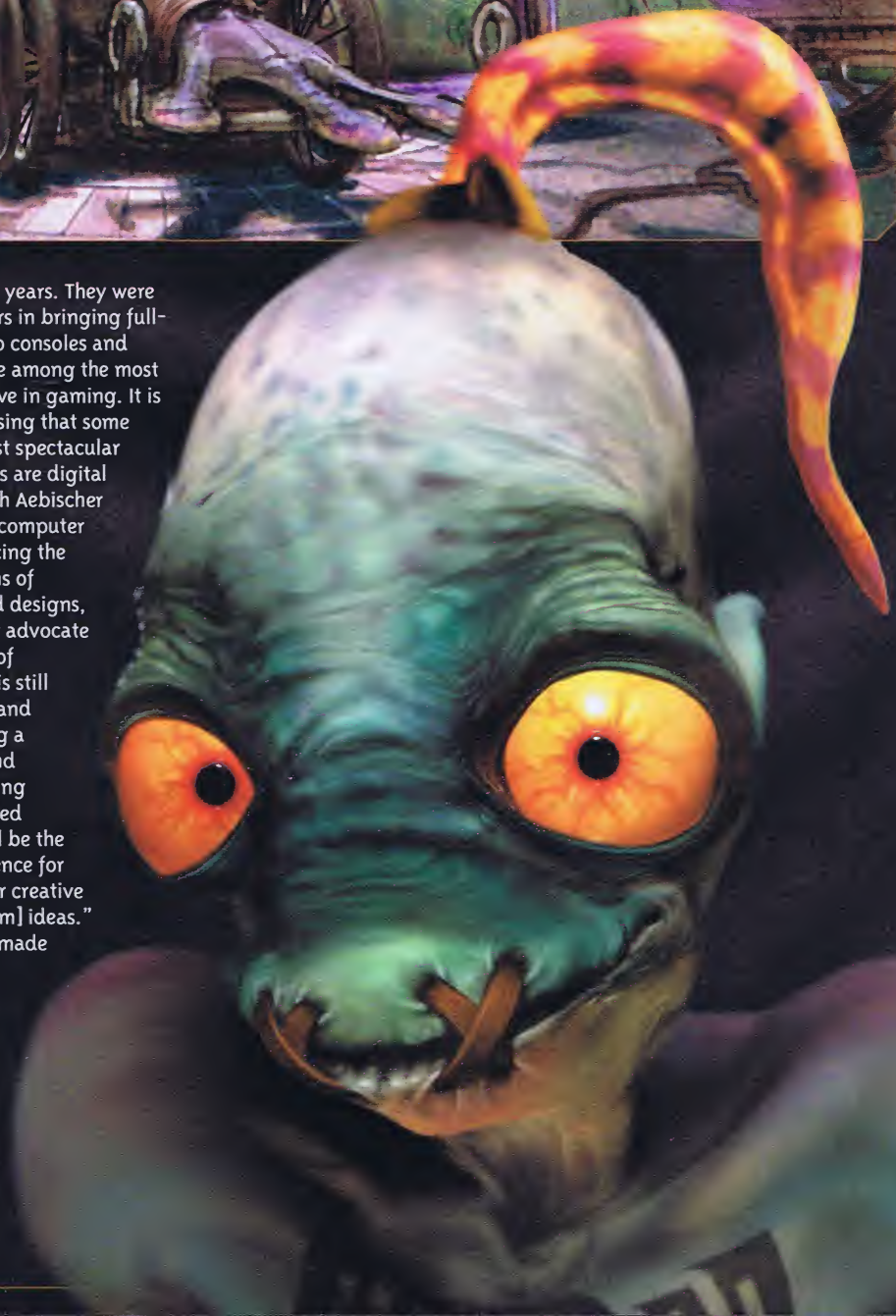
artwork is produced. "Each character goes through many iterations," Lanning says. "Basically this is to explore the possibilities and come to the best creative conclusion."

Even if an artist produces a perfectly suitable design on the first attempt, further experimentation is ordered as a matter of course. Lanning's philosophy is that even if the initial idea is selected as the final design, the process "reinforces that first concept."

Oddworld inhabitants have been at the forefront of gaming

technology for ten years. They were among the pioneers in bringing full-motion CG video to consoles and their characters are among the most vivid and expressive in gaming. It is therefore unsurprising that some of Oddworld's most spectacular conceptual designs are digital creations. Although Aebischer concedes that the computer is gradually replacing the pencil as the means of producing finished designs, he remains a great advocate of the immediacy of sketching. "There is still nothing as tactile and simple as grabbing a pen and paper. And if the pencil is fading away for the finished artwork, it still will be the medium of preference for holding down your creative sparks and [random] ideas."

Oddworld have made it their business to provide gamers with challenging, thought-provoking and (above all) entertaining experiences. Art design is one of the most





THE END OF THE ODDWORLD (AS WE KNOW IT)

During an extensive online interview with The Hollywood Reporter, Oddworld Inhabitants president Lorne Lanning confirmed that his company was no longer in the business of developing games.

EA's lack of promotional support for Oddworld's latest critically acclaimed adventure appears to have contributed greatly to the decision.

Lanning was quoted as saying "It was very disheartening to us... that the largest publisher in the industry had no interest in marketing it regardless of how innovative it was."

Lanning emphasised that Oddworld Inhabitants retained the rights to all of their intellectual properties and didn't rule out the possibility of licensing other studios to produce Oddworld content. He also announced plans to reposition the company to take advantage of the boom in computer-animated film and television, with the production of a feature-length film a distinct possibility.

important elements of the creative process. A concept may commence life as a handful of roughly sketched geometric shapes, but the most appropriate designs become polished production drawings or fully rendered digital paintings. These breathtaking illustrations (worthy artistic endeavours in and of themselves) are the basis of the game's visual identity and the signposts of its moral philosophy.

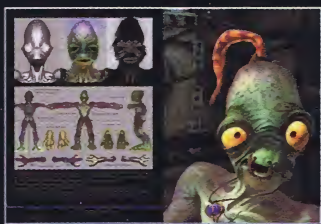
The conceptual artists of previous decades were forced to restrict their own creativity. Despite their talents, they were ever aware that their most intricate designs couldn't be incorporated into the game. While today's in-game engines cannot match a digitally painted static image, the gap has narrowed considerably. When today's concept artists sit down at their drawing

boards and PCs, they do so in the knowledge that anything they can imagine can be reasonably approximated within the interactive environment.

We asked Aebischer to describe how it feels to see his artistic creations brought to life and sent out to interact with millions of gamers around the world. "Well it is fun and one hopes the gamers will enjoy them... Those ideas and designs are an amalgamation of dozens of talented and passionate people. That is maybe what we hope people will see, the passion, hard work and wackiness we put in to make the... experience truly enjoyable and have them want to come back for more down the road."

We would like to thank Lorne Lanning and Silvio Aebischer for participating in this discussion. <<





The Art of Oddworld Inhabitants: The First 10 Years 1994 - 2004

Ballistic Publishing / Softcover / 256 Pages / \$53.00

■ This lavish production explores the artistic genesis of each of the games developed by Oddworld Inhabitants, including the aborted real time strategy title 'Hand of Odd.' Hundreds of images have been reproduced, including character designs, storyboards, promotional images and production art. Expect to see images produced both digitally and by more traditional means, including by pencils, pens, oils and markers. Fascinating text interludes serve to provide background on the design process. We learn, for instance, that Oddworld's favourite hero 'Abe' was originally to possess four fingers on each hand. However, it soon emerged that a four-fingered Abe would offend Japanese cultural sensitivities, and poor old Abe was reduced to three fingers per hand. Unfortunately typos, grammatical errors and mislabelled captions creep in from time-to-time, distracting from an otherwise polished production. 'The Art of Oddworld Inhabitants: The First 10 Years 1994 - 2004' is an essential purchase for Oddworld devotees and art enthusiasts alike. In light of recent announcements, you couldn't ask for a more fitting memento of their achievements.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ODDWORLD INHABITANTS

Oddworld Inhabitants is the California-based brainchild of co-founders Sherry McKenna and Lorne Lanning. Special effects expert McKenna came from a background in film and television. Lanning's resume is somewhat less conventional. Who could have predicted that a man with a background in military software would become such a liberal storyteller?

'Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee' was the inaugural release for the fledgling development studio. Published by GT Interactive, when the whole world was going 3D, this 2D platformer reinvented the genre with its atmospheric setting, tight puzzles, use of shadows, gamespeak and enemy possession, not to mention stunning art-design and extensive full-motion video sequences. It became a gargantuan bestseller on PSone and PC, establishing the company as a major creative force.

'Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus,' followed in 1998 and was also published by GT Interactive. It was similar in style and structure to its predecessor and proved just as popular. The game's computer generated sequences were used as the basis for a theatrically released short film and a spectacular video clip featuring German rap group, 'Music Instructor.'

1998 saw the release of 'Oddworld Adventures,' a poorly received Game Boy adaptation of 'Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee.' Oddworld Inhabitants had only limited involvement in the game's development, preferring to outsource production on all of their handheld titles. A sequel, cleverly titled 'Oddworld Adventures 2,' followed in 2000.



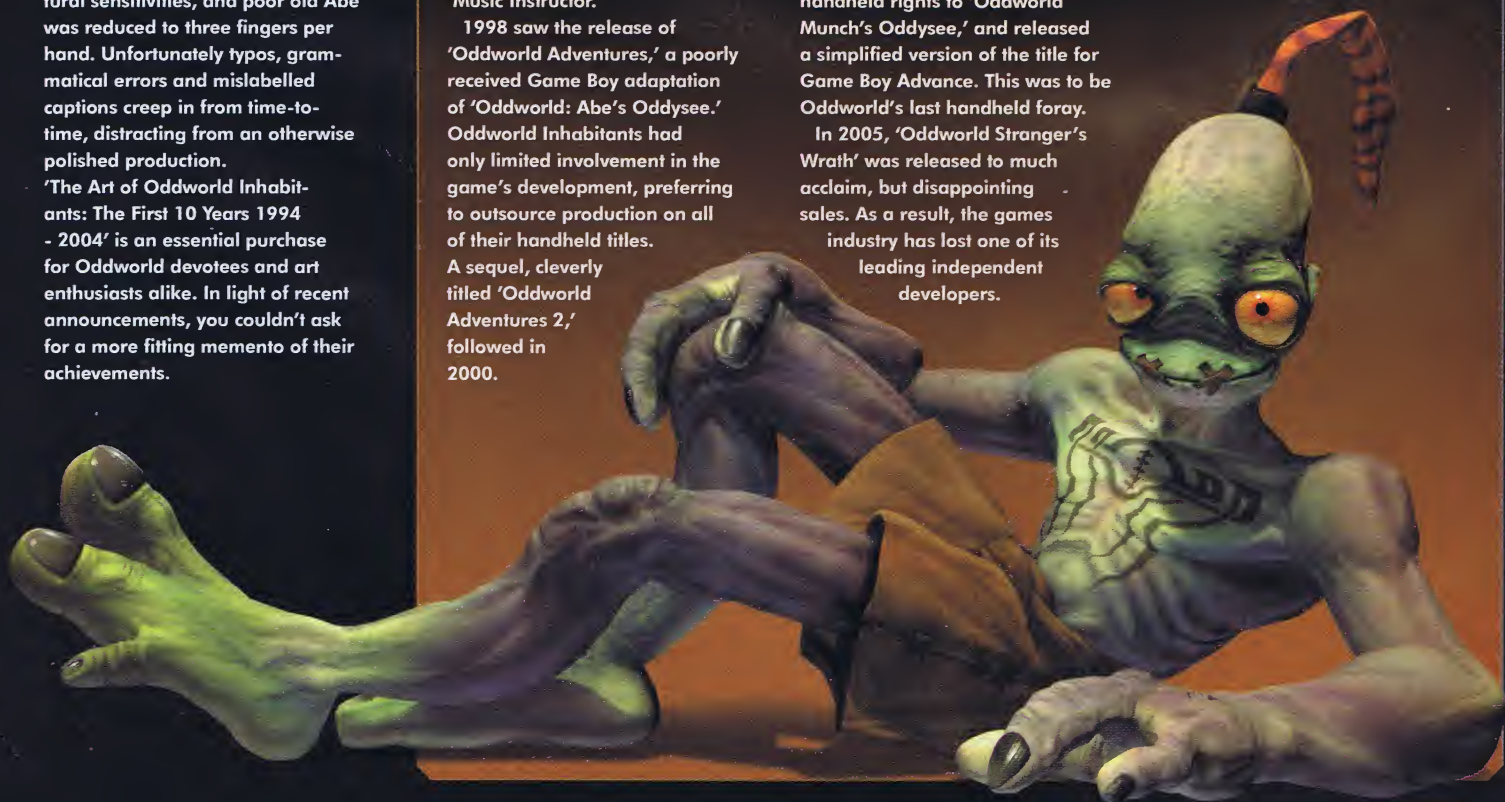
In 2002 'Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee' became an exclusive launch title for Microsoft's much vaunted Xbox console. Published by Microsoft Game Studios, it received only moderately positive reviews and fell well short of sales expectations. This represented Oddworld Inhabitants' first serious taste of commercial failure.

Oddworld responded by returning to the German rap scene (no, seriously), producing an Oddworld-themed music video entitled 'Use Yur Imagination,' for rappers E-Pac.

In 2003, THQ snapped up the handheld rights to 'Oddworld Munch's Oddysee,' and released a simplified version of the title for Game Boy Advance. This was to be Oddworld's last handheld foray.

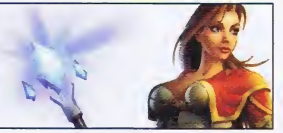
In 2005, 'Oddworld Stranger's Wrath' was released to much acclaim, but disappointing sales. As a result, the games industry has lost one of its leading independent developers.

[above] Oddworld's games Abe's Oddysee, Abe's Exoddus, Munch's Oddysee and Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath



World of Warcraft: Battlegrounds

Systems: PC ■ Developer: **Blizzard** ■ Publisher: **Vivendi** ■ Available: **Now**



With the advent of the release of Battlegrounds we thought it would be a good idea to have a look at the much anticipated PVP instances. Having a level 60 and a level 53 to play around with, I thought it would be easy page filler – jump into Warsong Gulch, the CTF instance and Alterac Valley, the huge scale PVP/PVE instance for a few hours, write my first impressions and take a couple of cute screenshots of me getting a couple of nice Windfury crits on unsuspecting Alliance players making them go scurry to the forums to complain about how overpowered Shaman are because I got a lucky one in a thousand triple crit.

Unfortunately things are not always as easy as they look to be on paper. My main characters are on Durotan (60 Troll Shammy) and Proudmoore (53 NE Druid) – two relatively high population servers with a decently sized Australian contingent, though admittedly there are more Australians on Proudmoore because it is apparently the unofficial Australian server. I'm pointing this out because a) this could be the problem, and b) this may not be the problem at all.

LET'S PLAY ALREADY!

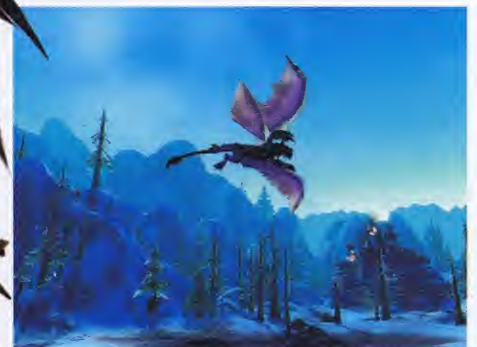
You see, since Battlegrounds has come out I have never once been able to get into Alterac Valley. I put my character in the queue, go off and do something else and wait. And



[above] The Frostwolf cavalry...apparently

wait. And wait a bit more. Then I go to bed because I'm tired or go and find something else to do. Whilst the fact that you can do something else while waiting in line is a good thing, the length of the wait is a definite negative factor. In each instance I have waited for more than three hours before giving up. On the Saturday just past I had my shaman waiting in line for a little over seven hours while I cleaned my room, read a book and did myriad other things to kill time.

Nothing. Add to this reports that games in Alterac Valley can take upwards of five hours and you have a very long day and something definitely not conducive to casual play, something WoW reports to be. Before anyone offers me some cheese to go with my whine I will say that I'm still plugging away at getting into AV because, well, I'm a fanboy and I want some of those sweet, sweet honour rewards. What are honour rewards? To put it basically, they're sets of gear farmed through gaining order in the faction pertaining to that Battleground, much like the PVP (player versus player) honour rewards currently available for





[above] Another Alterac event I've not seen



going up in the honour ranks, only a good deal more powerful. Shaman + Unstoppable Force = Win.

I may not have been able to get into Alterac Valley so far but Warsong Gulch is another matter entirely. Due to the small team size — a maximum of ten players per side — and the relative shortness of a game (the average game only takes between 20 minutes and an hour) the wait time to get in is short, usually no more than 20 minutes. When I first heard about the instance I was confused, thinking "what the hell does Capture the Flag have to do with an MMORPG?" In essence, the gameplay mode has absolutely nothing to do with the genre but it doesn't matter. CTF plays a more important role — it gives mindless PVP a reason. Instead of having two groups continuously fighting a pointless (though sometimes fun) PVP war, going backwards and forwards but achieving nothing of note, Warsong Gulch and Alterac Valley (for those lucky few who can get in) give PVP a goal. Capturing a flag may be the aim of the game mode but in reality it's more of a framework to build a coherent team based PVP experience. Giving a purpose to otherwise pointless

gameplay adds something that the game, up until this point has been relatively lacking — end game content. It's not perfect and it's currently a little unbalanced as it allows teams of differing numbers to compete against each other but it gives us players hope for future content patches. Although there have been no guarantees, it can be safely assumed that a few more Battlegrounds instances will be released before Christmas. So far Blizzard have hinted at siege engines so fortifications should be a definite

addition as well. The other big question that remains is whether the upcoming expansion pack (as yet not officially announced, unnamed and given no set release date) will contain these changes or whether they will be free to download.

Daniel Wilks



Links

»» Kosta Andreadis, Duke of Nowhere



Wireless Hotspots

www.wirelessnation.com.au/

»» Wires, cords and cables are for suckers, that much is certainly true – or not. Either way wireless is the wave of the future, and almost all of the latest computing and mobile gaming gadgets on the market support the technology in full. The only problem of course is that if you don't have a fancy wireless router where do you go to take your PSP or Nintendo DS online? The answer of course is wireless hotspots, the only place to be for some really hot cord-free, high-bandwidth wireless action. With Australia being a country of considerable size (i.e. she's fat) thankfully this great resource provides a comprehensive list of all the key hotspots from Melbourne to Crazy Sydney.



Virtual Digestive Tract

www.btinternet.com/~l.a.lester/Toilet/

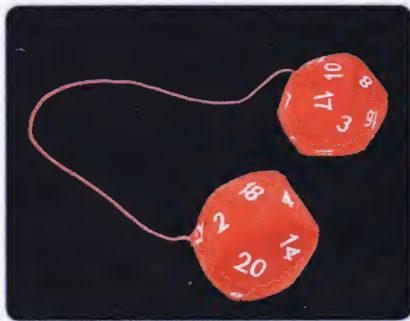
»» When the realisation dawns on you that someone you admire or look up to, fictional or real life, has to go to the toilet because they suffer the same digestive traits as the mere mortal that you are – they usually begin to look a lot less 'high and mighty'. As it turns out it seems that even Cloud Strife, Solid Snake, Lara Croft and yes, Wario all have to take a dump on occasion and more so after eating certain types of Indian or Thai. Nerds out there will most likely point out that videogame characters are made up of vector based sprites, polygonal shapes and textures, and do not contain any internal organs or digestive systems, but damn them and their books!



Blizzard Steals Comedic Genius

www.comedycentral.com/shows/chappelles_show/index.jhtml

»» Comedian Dave Chappelle, star of Comedy Central's Chappelle's Show, has been MIA for quite a while now. Even after being paid a large sum of money to create a third season of his hit sketch show, the star apparently checked himself into a mental health clinic in South Africa. It isn't Hyper policy to comment on tabloid media stories but in a recent resurface Dave proclaimed his love for playing World of Warcraft, or WoW. Turns out that all those rumours about stress, illness and drug abuse are false, it seems that Chappelle's absence is due to Blizzard's ungodly talent for creating awesomely awesome games. From a promising little game that grew up into a phenomenon, WoW has now graduated into a fully fledged absorber of human souls, much like Oprah.



+1 Fuzzy Dice

www.jinx.com/scripts/details.asp?affid=-1&productID=438

www.zellestyle.com/catalog/index.htm

»» Fuzzy dice hanging from a rear-view mirror usually means that the driver of the car is moderately cool. If said driver were to also be in possession of some killer shades (i.e. sunglasses) and would wear them whilst driving outside of the sun cycle (i.e. night-time) then they would be 'Cool as Ice', much like the Vanilla Ice (i.e. Robert Van Winkle) film of the same name. Turns out that while we cool people have dropped our guard slightly over the last decade, Dungeons & Dragons nerds have actually left their mother's basement and got driver's licenses. Oh well, its going to have to be a good year for wedgies and other nerd hazing.



Rag Doll Physics

www.izpitera.ru/lj/tetka.swf

»» A long time ago in a galaxy far far away an apple fell on some dude's head who then wanted to know where his car was. The very same dude then had an epiphany with vodka and ice and discovered the miracle of gravitational physics. His name was Sir Isaac Newton, the godfather of soul and funk music and famed scientist. He's dead now, cloned and dipped into bronze to adorn numerous universities across the globe always remaining an iconic figure and representing 'da bling' well into the afterlife. Excerpt taken from "MTV Presents - The History of Modern Science."



Gangsta Gadgets

<http://www.syncmag.com/slideshow/0,1895,1831958,00.asp>

»» Just another day in the hood sitting with my Laptop Lowrider decked out with a chrome iPod Spinner. The lights blink on the Scarface Special Edition Router running the latest high-speed DSL as I click on a link my homie MC Boz sent me with my Ba-Donka-Donk Mouse. It's snaps from his latest concert and the pictures came out dope thanks to the Redman Eye capabilities of his digital camera. The streets is tough and sometimes you gots to lay low inside the crib. But damn son, these days there ain't shiznack on the TV – but at least I gets to pop a cap in that white boy Rove's ass as I change the channel with my Universal Firearm Remote.

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PIONEER HTZ-929DVR

RRP: \$1999 / WWW.PIONEER.COM.AU

»» You know, I've wanted a DVD recorder for as long as they've been out. I don't actually watch that much TV but there's just something about being able to record onto DVD that is really appealing. Now that I've had the HTZ-929DVR system in my home for a few weeks, I really hope that Pioneer forget to ask to get it back, even though it's taking up a good chunk of my lounge room floor. Ditto I've always wanted some tower speakers. I've already got a 5.1 setup at home but tower speakers are just plain geek sexy. With the HTZ-929DVR (that's a hell of a mouthful) package you get both.

The XV-DVR9H DVD-RW/HDD Tuner plays the central role in the entertainment system. It's a chunky piece of equipment and weighs roughly half a ton but for the size and weight it sure packs in a lot of features. For a start the unit plays DVDs, supports progressive scan and has a fantastic picture quality. Colours are vibrant and there is no noticeable artifacting. As the name suggests the unit also records onto DVD. Setup is easy after a bit of practise (the remote has more buttons than is entirely healthy) and recording functions in much of the same way as video, only the image is a good deal clearer. Surprisingly, DVD doesn't hold as much video as you would think — at maximum picture quality you'll only be able to store around an hour of recorded video, two at standard definition, four in long play and six in extended play. The unit also features an 80gb HDD, enabling even more recording, transfer between disk and HDD, video editing and the ability to watch DVD and record simultaneously (which can also be achieved by using correctly formatted DVD-RW disks).

A clever 5.1 speaker system rounds out the package. Why is it clever? Aside from looking pretty damn spiffy, the front speakers have removable/pivoting rear speakers attached. Basically if you want a standard 5.1 setup you can remove the tops of the speakers and place them normally but if you're pressed for space you can pivot the tops of the speakers and use Pioneer's "Direct-Diffuse" speaker technology to bounce sound off the ceiling and walls to give a virtual 5.1 sound. Whilst the rear sound quality isn't quite as good using the "Direct-Diffuse" as it would be when using full rear speakers it still sounds very good and definitely saves on clutter. The sub is nice and chunky and pumps out some good heavy bass and the centre speaker handles the job well, only showing a bit of high end distortion at high (neighbour annoying) volume. Fingers crossed that Pioneer don't read this and realise I need to send it back.



28 WICKED POSTERS FROM JAPAN

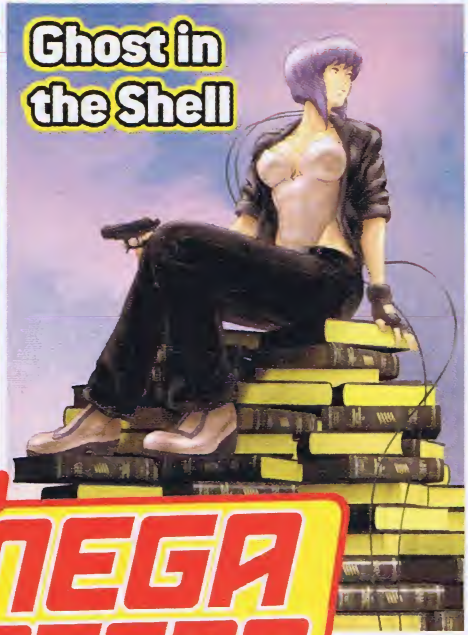
ANIME ACTION



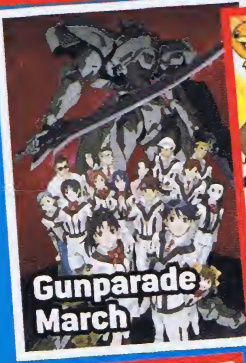
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66 Wipeout Pure

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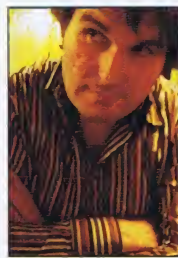
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Reviews

Game Theory

SEAMUS BYRNE

Making games fun again



I had the pleasure of visiting Deadline Games in Copenhagen, developers of the manic new shooter Total Overdose. A title that, based only on screenshots, has been hit with the accusation of being a GTA wannabe.

But after even just five minutes with your hands on the controller, you realise the game is something special. Something new in its combination of gameplay and something primal to the art form. It takes the player back to the heart of what makes gaming good — raw, unadulterated fun.

We're all friends here. Let's be honest. How many gamers have seriously finished GTA? Should we all exchange percentage completion scores? There is no denying that anyone with 100% completion should wear it like a badge of honour. The problem isn't that it is super hard. It is just that there is so much to do and most importantly, it gets repetitive and requires lengthy commitment to driving across boring expanses. After a point it just isn't fun anymore and it becomes like work.

Total Overdose has been entirely developed with fun as the core concern. The Danes behind the title love games and were unashamed about their interest in taking the best bits from other games they've enjoyed. Their lust for Burnout 3, Tony Hawk and John Woo films is readily apparent in both their talk and their walk.

Hands on with a game devoted to this classical ideal of raw fun is almost shocking. It makes you wonder what happened to this central tenet of our hobby, because when you taste it again you realise how rarely fun is experienced in this way today. All good

games offer plenty of fun moments and as devotees we all take our fun from games in a variety of ways. But Total Overdose's development model — if it wasn't fun, it was taken out — has delivered a game where there is hardly a single moment where you are not having fun in a visceral way. There is no room for taking a breath here. This isn't a rollercoaster ride — that has slow parts. This is more like a BASE jump.

But it's a jump that anyone can take. There is no requirement for mastery here. The team showed me the trigger and showed me the shoot-dodge button — think Max Payne but with almost no limits on usage, because that wouldn't be as much fun. After that, picking up other skills is quick and easy and you suddenly realise you're racking up Tony Hawk style combo kills and scoring Loco moves that you feel no compulsion to save for a rainy day. In this game you want to be overwhelmed by enemies. It is more fun that way. If you die, you can always rewind — Prince of Persia style, except again with more utility to ensure the fun doesn't have to stop.

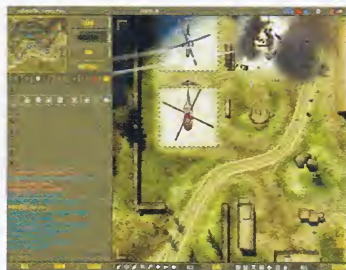
This raises all kinds of questions for games as fun versus games as work. Should you punish off-piste play? Or is a wandering gamer a sign that they're not compelled to follow your core game structure? Is an unlock system a form of reward or is it just a form of hoop jumping? I'll never unlock every car in GT4, but I'm close in Burnout 3. Not because I want to specifically achieve that goal, but because I just keep coming back for more fun. There is a place for games that make you work, but that should never be at the expense of fun. When fun is at the heart of the hobby, there is no argument naysayers can level at us that will stick. Working hard to kill is creepy. Killing a Mexican crimelord with an explosive piñata? That's just hilarious.

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

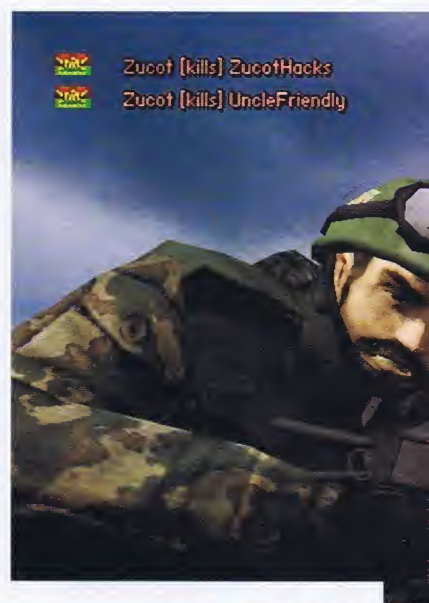




[above] Battlecrane!



[above] I can see my house from here



Zucot (kills) ZucotHacks
Zucot (kills) UncleFriendly

BATTLEFIELD 2

Don't call **TIM LEVY** sir, he works for a living

After playing BF2 for a while, you begin to realize that, no matter how hella fun it is to tool around with modern military machines and weapons in a host of exotic (cough cough) locations, there is no way that you would want to enter a real war as a frontline soldier. And this is what is so cool about BF2 – it really places you into the midst of some of the craziest, realistic, breath taking gun battles to date – all without the giant scabs, the sorrow of losing close friends, or having to be sodomized by a brain-washing, power tripping sergeant major in boot camp.

When Battlefield 1942 was released about 3 years ago, it was the first really successful online 1st person shooter to stray from the maze type Counter Strike and Doom games. Suddenly, the great outdoors came to life with the state of the art (well for 1942) war machinery and ground troops re-enacting the main battles of WW II. It was

the perfect blend of FPS, arcadey driving/flying sim, strategy game and, err, history lesson rolled into one. It has been a game played 24/7 to date and has literally armies of fans, so you can imagine (or maybe not) the anticipation for the games real sequel. And the wait has been well worth it.

WAR IS HECK

Battlefield 2 has successfully retained all the things we found fun on the original, 64 player, capture/defend the flag gameplay as well as adding numerous improvements and depth. The conflict is now set in the near future (probably about 2 weeks from now...) in a war being fought on 2 fronts. The reason for the conflict is not explained but it probably stems from that age old argument about which IS the better take away food – Hamburgers, Kebabs, or Noodles. The Imperial US Forces (United States Marine Corp) take on both the fictitious Middle



Eastern Coalition and the Peoples Liberation Army (China) in their beautifully rendered, respective (think dusty deserted desert cities, oil fields, mountainous regions and river valleys) homelands. A new inclusion to the maps is that each map can be scaled in size to suit either 16, 32 or 64 players.

Each army's 'real' weapons have been well researched and are a joy to use, though it may take a while to truly master each of the 7 different soldier kits, as well as the helicopters, jump jets, tanks, APC's and dune buggies. All of the kits (engineer, special-forces, sniper, anti-tank, medic, assault, supply/machine-gunner) are well thought out with excellent balance in regards to firepower, though they all differ in the new categories

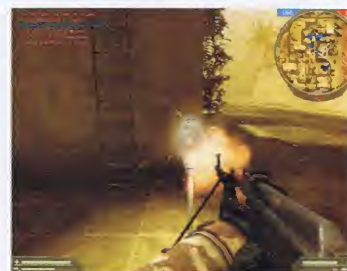
of body armour and sprint ability. Some of the classes dispense health (and can revive dead troops through shock paddles), ammo or can repair vehicles. Most interestingly, there is a new class that can be played by only one player per team – The Commander. He can play both as a grunt in the field and switch over to a highly zoom-able map interface to call in artillery strikes, drop supplies and convey satellite information to his troops about enemy locations, which really is a game winning job in itself.

STARS AND BARS

A new online point system has also been employed called 'Global Points' which are stored on a data base deep in the centre of the Earth, or maybe Sweden. Upon reaching



!!! Don't install the 1.01 patch from EA - it adds a number of gamebreaking bugs that make it unplayable



[above] Do the hustle! Doo doo doo, do doo etc.

certain point scores, you are entitled to go up one of 10 'ranks' (from Private to Master Gunnery Sergeant) and you get to unlock 1 new small arms weapon - just choose wisely as it may be some time before you can unlock another. The best way to see which weapon to unlock is by accessing the new super-in-depth statistics page and seeing which kit type you use the most.

More emphasis has been placed on team work so you can now enlist a small squad of up to six players, which allows you to communicate using IP audio chat. The squad system has been well implemented and gives the more casual gamer the chance to see what 'clans' are about. Basically - you can earn more points as a team because you can deal with most hostile situations as well as earning points for assisting the team by driving, killing or dishing out supplies.

» **NO BF FOR YOU!** As it currently stands, BF2, even though it proudly displays the nVidia logo at the loading of the game is unplayable by anyone with a Geforce 4 card unless they download an unofficial patch. The reason for this seems to be the lack of current generation pixel shader support on the Geforce 4 cards. Currently EA have no plans to release a patch enabling the game to be played on older systems.

More emphasis has been placed on teamwork

WHAT'S YOUR MAJOR MALFUNCTION?

In regards to friendly fire (FF), as most BF2 servers are 'ranked' aka Global Scoring, you get penalised for 'Team Killing'. Although it does increase the level of realism to the game, some other issues need to be ironed out. Even though you can jump out a 3 story building and survive, if you are just barely touched by any moving friendly vehicles you die instantly, the driver will get -2 and the killed friendly gets the option to 'punish' you for an extra -2. You can just imagine how you feel after some noob runs over your 'highlighted' mine with a full Armoured Personnel Carrier, netting you -16 points and you get kicked from the server.

This TKing is probably why the game doesn't seem as funny as the arcadey, more popular 'FF off' server games of BF1942 - you are always having to concern yourself with 'tip toeing' around not killing anyone by accident.

Visually, the game is gorgeous with intricate attention to detail. But one thing that looks exceptionally amazing is the lighting and shading effects, especially how the time of day is conveyed with different lighting. Also, the game runs very smoothly online and we have very rarely encountered dredded lag - which was BF Vietnams undoing. But unfortunately, all these pretty pictures and trajectory calculations come at a premium and you will need a beefy computer (2.8 Ghz) just to run the game properly - though this game could well be worth the upgrade. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Shooter/ strategy

PLAYERS: Heaps

DEVELOPER: Dice

PUBLISHER: EA Games

PRICE: \$99.00

RATING: M 15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Addictive, well balanced kits, visually impressive, unlaggy

MINUS: Addictive, tough system requirements, TK issues.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
92 90 91

OVERALL
91

Just one more game before I go to the toilet...





!!! The version 2.0 patch for Boiling Point might be out by the time you read this, so get it at www.atari.com.



[above] Arnold Vosloo hates peasants



BOILING POINT: Road to Hell

ELIOT FISH puts the kettle on...

“We boil at different degrees,” it says on the box. It may be set in a South American jungle, but this isn’t a game about cannibalism and putting people in pots. Apparently some old American philosopher blurted out those words back in the 1800s, and now they’ve come back to haunt the world on the back of the Boiling Point DVD case.

PEOPLE IN POTS

Boiling Point: Road to Hell is the tortured tale of one Saul Myers (played by that bloke who was the mummy in, er, *The Mummy*)

and his desperate search for his kidnapped daughter. It comes from the brains trust at Deep Shadows, a small Russian developer intent on exploring the possibilities of epic, open-ended, first person gaming. Not five minutes into Boiling Point and you can see the influence of *Deus Ex*, *Morrowind*, *Far Cry* and *Grand Theft Auto* - games that tantalise us with immersive role-playing, the freedom to explore and play the game the way we want to. It’s all very ambitious, and inevitably the technology is what lets both the developer and gamer

down. Creating anything as large and as non-linear as Boiling Point is destined to end in bizarre glitches and lots of niggly unfinished bits.

Aussie gamers are thankfully getting version 1.1 of Boiling Point out of the box, however, this is the sort of game that Deep Shadows will continue to patch for as long as they can afford it. The ambitious nature of the game means that there are just so many possibilities for things to go wrong, but by the same token, gamers will discover that it also means endless delights can be experienced. Boiling Point is a difficult game to stop playing. The fact that you can explore an enormous island – well, it’s more like a small country, really – that contains all of the game’s content, without a single loading screen, taking on missions until you have a whole shopping list to experiment with... well, you can see that it’s the kind of game you can play for hours on end, and still feel like you



have weeks of gaming to uncover.

At its heart, Boiling Point is a first person shooter. But it offers up this action in the context of a role-playing experience, much like the great *Deus Ex* did. You pick and choose your own enemies over the course of the game by helping or hindering various factions – from the simple civilians on the street, to the government, guerrillas, CIA,





[above] All set for someone wearing fur



[above] The Apollo capsule way off course

native indians, mafia and so on. Working for one, invariably upsets another. It can sometimes be a struggle juggling your allegiances, especially if they start to clash with various sub-missions you've acquired. But Boiling Point always puts you in control, and there's usually always a way out of a situation that you've backed yourself into. Sometimes even just throwing money at a faction will cool them off.

Getting about the huge world in Boiling Point is where the Grand Theft Auto comparisons come into play. Because the landmass is so large, like GTA: San Andreas, you'll need to drive a variety of vehicles, fly helicopters or small planes, and also use boats. Deep Shadows have tried to inject as much realism into the game as possible, so it's



Destined to be a minor classic, regardless of flaws

easy to puncture your tyres and lose control of your car, simply run out of fuel, or even get run over. Actually, one of the game's most annoying current bugs is how poorly the NPCs drive their vehicles around. Leave your car parked for 5 minutes, and come back to find three other vehicles trying to push their way through it, honking their horns like complete madmen.

GETTING DRUNK

The realism - or more accurately, the immersion - extends to your own character, in the sense that you can get drunk, use a mobile phone, sleep in your car, become a drug addict, suffer injuries that result in you limping or unable to shoot a gun properly and so on. You also have a variety of stats that will improve the more you use them - such as handling certain weapons, or carrying lots of items so your strength increases. Part of Boiling Point's allure, is seeing how all these elements play out over time and how they affect

the overall game experience.

All this experimentation, sub-questing, vehicle hooning, tequila drinking, and stat building aside, Boiling Point's central story missions are designed in such a way that you start to feel like a detective. Following leads and earning money to pay for information leads you to explore and enjoy the game in such a way that you get drip-fed new characters, locations and access to items, as you continue to hunt for your missing daughter. It works, and it will keep you coming back, regardless of the endlessly tiring traveling between locations, partially broken game mechanics, repetitive building interiors, and poorly voiced characters.

Overall, Boiling Point is one of those ambitious games that is destined to be a minor classic, regardless of its flaws. It would be a bigger hit if it was a lot more polished. You can do whatever you want, but beware that you might also break the game in the process. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Deep Shadows
PUBLISHER: Atari
PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: MA 15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Exploring is fun, detective work, challenging missions.

MINUS: Too much travel, bugs, game design can be exploited.

VISUALS 82 SOUND 83 GAMEPLAY 85

OVERALL
83

Glitchy and flawed, but almost fulfills its huge ambition.



!!! With THX certification, it's really time to shell out for a decent surround system to enjoy European Assault to the fullest. Firefights in particular come alive, with bullets whizzing past all over the place.



[above] Shiny icons = bad camo

MEDAL OF HONOR: European Assault

MARCH STEPNIK swings by Amsterdam first...

It couldn't have been any more soul-destroying. Upstarts leave EA and the Medal of Honor team to form Infinity Ward and sign with rival publisher Activision. Infinity Ward goes on to create Call of Duty, one of the most respected and best selling PC wartime first person shooters in ages. To top it all off the next Medal of Honor to be released, Rising Sun, is a mere shadow of the series' glory days. With unimaginative and pedestrian level design, sappy AI, and an ultra-short campaign, Rising Sun may



have been a financial success, but it didn't fool too many people. Not to mince words, it was crap.

GENEROUS HELPINGS
Medal of Honor European Assault is a different story altogether. The guys at EA Los Angeles have done a sterling job of regrouping after the tragedy that was Rising Sun, and producing a war time action game set around the Battle of the Bulge in Europe (and North Africa), that both looks and plays the part remarkably well. There's nothing entirely groundbreaking in European Assault, but what it does it does convincingly and with a generous helping of style. As is now utterly expected of EA there's a certain amount of polish in the overall presentation of European Assault, but it's the gameplay itself that's particularly on the money. Employing a bunch of established gameplay systems and blending them nicely together, it's not long before EA LA has you under its grim

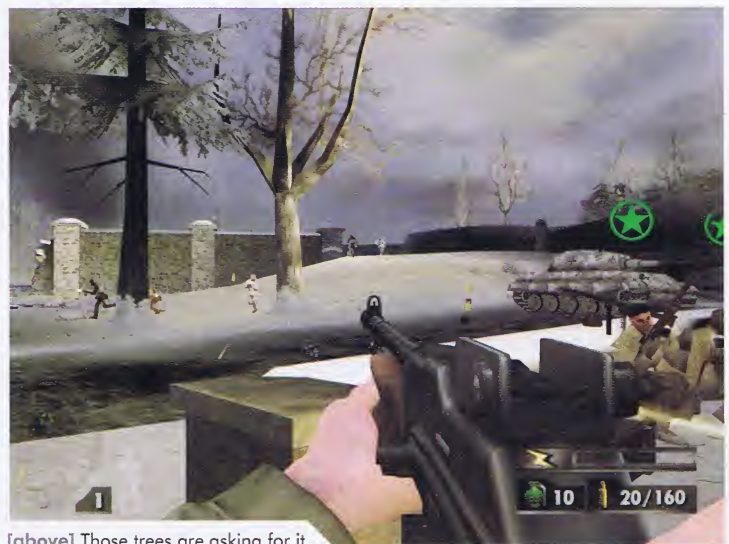
but thoroughly enjoyable spell. Firstly, your character - US Army Lieutenant William Holt - has mastered the ability to seamlessly crouch and go prone, position himself behind cover and lean not only left or right into the fray, but over and under cover as well. What's impressive is how easy it is to manoeuvre yourself in the game; your focus moves away from the 'how to' and more towards the 'doing'. And that's engaging in some absolutely fantastic skirmishes. A lot of this has to do with the enemy AI, which is top notch. German units also use cover well, and won't hesitate from retreating if too much flak comes their way. They're patient too, waiting until the right moment to pop up from behind cover and let loose a few rounds. While you have your occasional kamikaze runner, the majority of them are a challenging kill.

But it's the level design that ultimately greases the whole European Assault wheel. Lessons have been learned, and the underlying theme to Euro Assault level design is big and open. Basically, while there are plenty of choke points, many of the areas throughout the game feature multiple entry and exit points. The effects are fantastic; not only do you have to be extra cautious as you advance into enemy territory, but you have to remain ever-vigilant of your position in relation to your surrounds throughout. The number of times you'll cark it because you didn't watch your flank and a cunning German has snuck their way around you is sheer brilliance. You will learn to play like a soldier.

SILLINESS
There are silly bits, however. Two particular problems in European Assault conspire to take your suspension of disbelief and throw it right back in your face. The least



[above] Dare we say BLAU!



[above] Those trees are asking for it



annoying one is the use of brightly coloured floating icons for item location, which scream out "look, I'm a bleedin' game icon". Fair enough, but we're surprised EA didn't go for a more subdued palette to blend in better with the suitably depressing surrounds. They also disappear after a fairly short period of time, which in a realistic war shooter is just asking for trouble until you learn to mostly ignore them.

The other, more crucial problem is your squad. Even with the ability to give limited commands and their basic support in firefights, you'll come to loathe these bumbling buffoons. The number of times they'll take one of your bullets "for the team" is really too much. What's worse, the button for healing one of your comrades is the same as the

The underlying theme to Euro Assault level design is big and open

one for reloading your weapon. So pray they don't pass in front of you just as you hit the reload button: if they do, that's one less medkit for when you really need it yourself. On the whole they add a tremendous amount to the atmosphere to the game; it's just a shame EA couldn't further polish them to the same high standard of the enemy AI.

But the real damage in European Assault comes from the lack of mid-level save. In a gutsy move by EA, character death forces a restart at the beginning of a mission - in turn encouraging you even further to play cautiously and like a real soldier would. Sure, there

are usually enough medkits and revives (depending on the difficulty level selected, of course) to keep you out of trouble for a while but these tend to dry up fairly quickly. And as already discussed, with the open level design and cunning AI, death often lurks around any seemingly innocuous little corner. Combine these factors with the size and overall difficulty of the later missions and you've got a system that will infuriate all but the most dedicated of gamers out there.

If you can hold yourself back from throwing the controller down in disgust during the later levels, European Assault will reward. All the fundamentals are covered, including optional secondary objectives, and EA Los Angeles have even squeezed some moments of brilliance in between all the exchanges of gunfire. But for us, the real icing on the cake was the number of surprises that were thrown our way throughout the relatively short campaign to keep you on your toes. <<

❖ **MULTIPLAYER, OR THE LACK THEREOF** It's really starting to give us the shits. European Assault lacks any sort of online multiplayer option, and even the local options are pretty weak. Given the excellent level design (big and strategically open spaces), you'll have to shelve your hopes for massive, team-based fire fights at a LAN. Multiplayer here is limited to 4 player, same system split screen. Taking into account the comparatively short single player campaign, this seems a massive oversight on EA's behalf. Given their reluctance with online play, couldn't they have at least given us system link? A maximum of four players seems like a terrible waste on all those gorgeously large maps...

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-4
DEVELOPER: EA Los Angeles
PUBLISHER: EA
PRICE: STBA
RATING: M 15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Engaging war shooter with great production values.

MINUS: Lack of online or multi-system LAN play, high difficulty level.

VISUALS 78 SOUND 89 GAMEPLAY 82

OVERALL

81

Wanna relive WWII, again?



[above] Hulk like foxy boxing!



!!! With the plethora of superhero movies coming out in the next 12 months, hopefully some of the inevitable licensed games will be this good

[above] Hulk vs Battletech, who will win?



THE INCREDIBLE HULK: Ultimate Destruction

WILKS SMASH!

Rarely do superheroes translate well into games. There are myriad reasons for this but most of the time it simply comes down to the fact that at no point do most of the games actually let you play around with the hero's superpowers. Take *Fantastic 4* and *Batman Begins* (both reviewed this issue) for example. Both games are based on superhero franchises and both fail to actually allow the player to use any powers aside from when the game tells them it's OK — and even then it's a simple matter of hitting the button it tells you to. *Ultimate Destruction*

takes an alternate path, giving the player near complete freedom to use powers wherever and however they like. It could be argued that it's easier making a Hulk game because all he does is smash stuff but that's neither here nor there. *Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction* is one of the few games that actually makes the player feel as though they are controlling a superhero. He's a nigh on unstoppable force of nature and he's incredibly fun to play.

MEAN GREEN FIGHTING MACHINE

On a basic level, *Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction* plays something like *GTA* meets *Rampage* with a smattering of *Streets of Rage*. Bruce Banner's big green alter ego is the focus of *Ultimate Destruction*, a good thing since the Bruce Banner stealth sections of the previous Hulk game were its ultimate downfall. This time around Banner only makes an appearance during cutscenes,



the entirety of the gameplay being based around Hulk smashing stuff, tussling with the armed forces, fighting superpowered enemies, exploring and taking part in mini-games. The story sees the Hulk taking part in a number of missions, most of which involve either destroying something or stealing something to use to make a cure for the Hulk condition. Aside from story mission, players can freely explore the game area, picking up comic covers (which unlock cheat codes, cinematics and other special features) and competing in mini-games that are unlocked by wither picking up covers

of by completing story missions. Combat plays a huge role in *Ultimate Destruction* and the game has a strong fighting engine to support it. Players start out with a small range of moves and combos- they can punch and kick, string together three hit combos, pick up compact cars and turn them into steel boxing gloves to increase hitting power and throw basically anything. Even though the basic attacks would be enough to support the entire game, players can buy now attack moves with points gained through combat, exploration and smashing stuff.





[above] Hulk only joking when say "eat me"



New moves range from simply being able to string together longer combos to being able to weaponise different vehicles, turning them into shields or devastating attacks, area effect attacks, stuns, juggles, air attacks, grapples, critical attacks, dashes, recoveries, new forms of movement and more.

ISN'T LEAPING BUILDINGS SUPERMAN'S THING?

The Hulk has three basic forms of super-locomotion (in addition to basic movement) – jumping, running and sliding, all of which are as exhilarating as the excellent web-swinging in the last few Spider-Man titles. Jumping, the most easily identifiable Hulk movement power enables the player to cover large distances in a single bound by charging up a jump by holding down

He's a nigh on unstoppable force of nature and he's incredibly fun to play

the jump button. Whilst in the air the player can hold down the jump button, charging up another jump that can be released upon landing, enabling them to bound across the landscape at a rate of knots. By holding down the right trigger, Hulk can run. This may not sound like a big thing – pretty much everyone can run – but in addition to traveling faster, Running makes the Hulk into a wrecking ball capable of running up sheers surfaces. Whilst running the Hulk can smash through anything, knocking pedestrians, vehicles and smaller structures out of the way and can even scale walls. Sliding is a bought power and allows the player to turn a large vehicle (like

a tank) into a skateboard to slide through the streets. Whilst sliding is nowhere near as useful as the other two forms of movement it's just a huge amount of fun. One thing in common between all three forms of movement is that the player always feels a little out of control as it's very easy to go slightly off course and the Hulk, while running, steers like a cow. Rather than break the game, this feeling of being slightly out of control only serves to reinforce the feel that the player is stepping into the big purple pants of a superhero.

Although much of Ultimate Destruction is excellent, there are a few flaws that hold it back from being an absolute classic. Most importantly, the camera is not particularly conducive to boss battles. Players can lock on to a target for the fight but often the camera will not actually focus on the target, making it very difficult to actually see what is going on. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Sierra
PUBLISHER: Vivendi
PRICE: \$69.95
RATING: M
AVAILABLE: September 15

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Feel like a superhero, exhilarating movement, deep fighting
MINUS: Some dodgy camera control

VISUALS 88 SOUND 86 GAMEPLAY 91

OVERALL

91

Once of the great superhero games



» **HULK UNLOCK!** There are numerous unlockable features in Ultimate Destruction ranging from mini-games to "cheat" codes. Mini-games are unlocked through completing missions and are a great way to make some more points to buy moves. So far we are far from unlocking all of the games but current favourites see Hulk punting compact cars through a set of goal posts or bashing an enormous golf ball through city streets to try to make par. Cheat codes include such things as Canadian flag boxer shorts and giant inflated gorillas that can be picked up and used like hang-gliders by the Hulk.



!!! Multiplayer is included but most of the game time is taken up looking for the other players rather than shooting them.



[above] Startlingly easy boss battle



[above] Shut the hell up Slippy

STARFOX: Assault

DANIEL WILKS examines the bottom of his shoe...

▶▶ We here at Hyper are big fans of evolution in franchises. We like it when a developer extends on the gameplay set up in a previous incarnation of the title but sometimes evolution can go a little off track — take Bryce for example, who has evolved from an OK person to a Tekken playing fanbot, or Starfox: Assault which has forgotten the essence of what the franchise is about and evolved the series into something you would scrape off the bottom of your shoe. The blame doesn't lie entirely on Namco's shoulders — equal responsibility belongs to Rare as they made an equally misguided attempt at Starfox with their game, Adventures. Both Rare and Namco have seemed to have missed the point of the franchise — the charm and attraction of Starfox is not the fact that it stars yet another anthropomorphic talking animal (who has gone from being a professional mercenary to being a wisecracking know it

all). The attraction is balls to the wall space combat, something that Rare omitted entirely and that only makes up about 40% of the play time of Assault.

ARWING AND A PRAYER

After a relatively strong beginning which sees Fox in his beloved Arwing shooting down hordes of enemy fighters, gunships and not a few capital ships before fighting two boss battles against a giant ape head and a big old bug (dubbed the Redundo-Bug in the office for its amazing ability to remain airborne after having its wings blown off), players are thrust into what brings the game down — ground based combat. Although the game looks like a standard third person shooter, the game still feels as though it still wants to be in space. Fox moves too fast to be accurately controllable and has no sense of weight. He simply zips around swinging the various guns wildly, not that a lack

of accuracy is a problem as the game sees fit to simply throw hordes of mindless enemies at the player giving them ample targets to hit without having to do anything as vulgar as aim. A ground based vehicle is also available to pilot but it moves slowly, controls badly and is even more difficult to aim with than Fox on foot so it only serves to add to the frustration. To make matters worse, the ground based missions in Assault never seem to progress past the point of telling the player to kill everything that moves and occasionally switch weapons or power up a shot to take out a shielded enemy.

The engine is fairly impressive in the fact that it can render a large number of enemies on screen at any one time but character models and textures come off as a little bland because of it. Whilst the soundtrack is genuinely quite good, voice acting is cheesy and melodramatic, casting Fox and the crew as rather charmless whiners or smartasses. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action
PLAYERS: 1-4
DEVELOPER: Namco
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPHER VERDICT:

PLUS: Decent flying levels, great music.

MINUS: On foot levels, incredibly short (4-5 hours).

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
82	80	61
OVERALL		
60		
The appeal of the original game was not an anthropomorphic fox.		



!!! Mayhem features a swag of new weapons and attacks to play with. The Fatkin's Strike, Inflatable Scouser and Flood attacks all provide a good laugh. Among the others, the debut of the Sniper Rifle tickles us pink: this accurate and lethal baby may be all business, but damn, it gets the job done.

[above] Now that's sexy



[above] Townville Steve the worm

WORMS 4: Mayhem

MARCH STEPNIK avoids the obvious "worms" and "ring" angle.

Forget Forts Under Siege (that weird RTS take on the venerable Worms series), Mayhem brings the callous, worm-mashing action back to its pedigree roots. But Team 17 hasn't ambled too far back: those pining for the immediacy and simplicity of the 2D days will have to keep on dreaming. Worms Mayhem is the successor to the bold but inevitable move that was Worms 3D, and the end results are a mixed bag. There are some welcome new features in Mayhem, but there's still plenty about worms in 3D that frustrates, and it begs the question: how did Team 17 miss them?

HOLY BAZOOKA DONKEY

The most prominent change to the series is the inclusion of the Weapons Factory, allowing you to create your own weapons for use in the game. The premise is dastardly straightforward: pick your weapon type (thrown or launched, for example), its appearance,

and its various destructive properties (like kickback, splash damage, etc), with a points system preventing you from creating the Worms equivalent of a nuclear frickin' bomb.

Single player has been tweaked too, with a story mode offering a more varied selection of objectives than ever before. Apart from destroying worms and a bunch of inanimate objects, you've missions where collecting items or simply escaping the map at a specific collection point results in success. As always, these are a side dish to the main serving of multiplayer action, but a fun way nonetheless to learn the nuances of the game.

Team 17 has addressed the slightly under-whelming effects of the weapons from Worms 3D in Mayhem (vital in a series that is all about the destructive madness caused both to worm and landscape), but they've managed to miss the annoying glitch where

worms frequently get momentarily stuck to world surfaces (which, not surprisingly so, is particularly frustrating due to the unforgiving, time-based nature of the game).

The use of one controller for multiplayer games is a good idea (get off the couch and pass it around, you lazy bums), but the lack of individual customisation is not. Without the ability to set axis values to individual profiles, you've got a game that doesn't cater to individual styles. Worse, the woefully slow camera speed — your primary tool in not only navigating but strategising in Worms — is utterly ignored.

The transition to 3D has been more than a little bumpy but the fundamentals have remained intact. It's a shame Team 17 hasn't addressed the niggling issues which were so prominent in Worms 3D; with only minimal further polish Worms Mayhem could have been great. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Turn-based action

PLAYERS: 1-4

DEVELOPER: Team 17

PUBLISHER: Atari

PRICE: \$69.95

RATING: G8+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Hyper Good play modes, excellent party play. Awesome maps

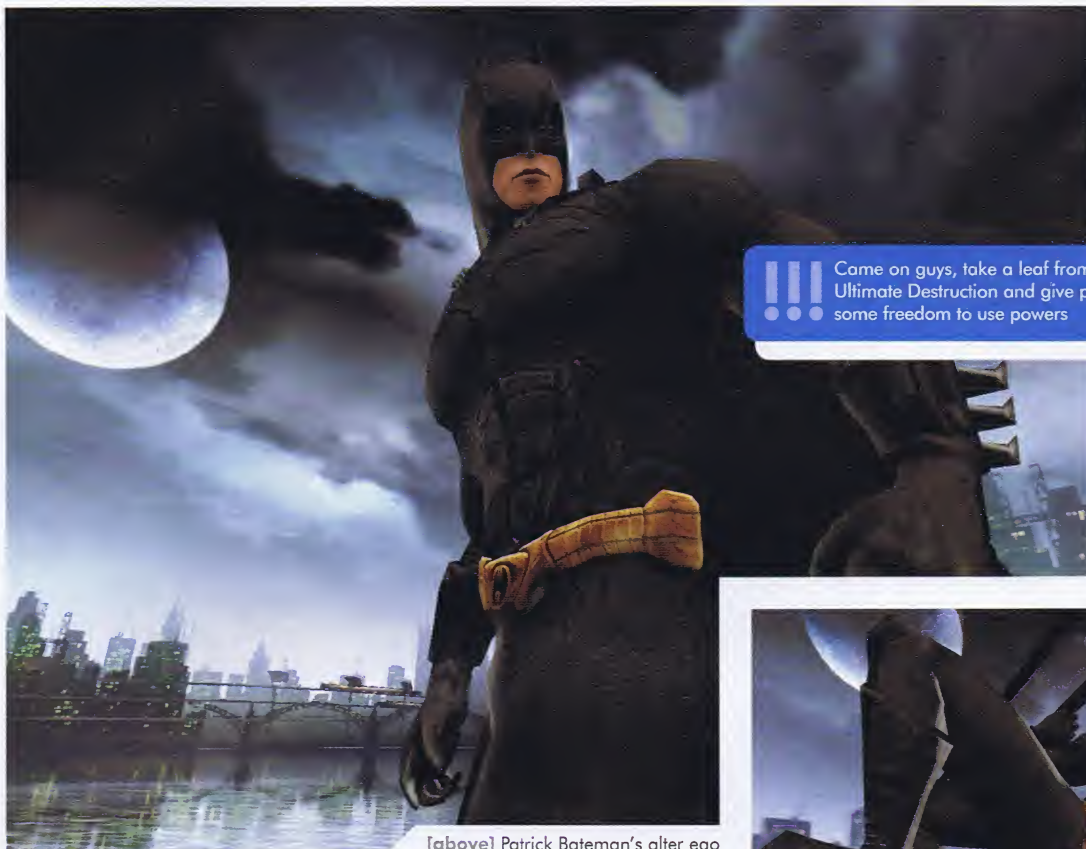
MINUS: The whole presentation lacks a bit of spunk and jazz, control issues

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
81	62	80

OVERALL

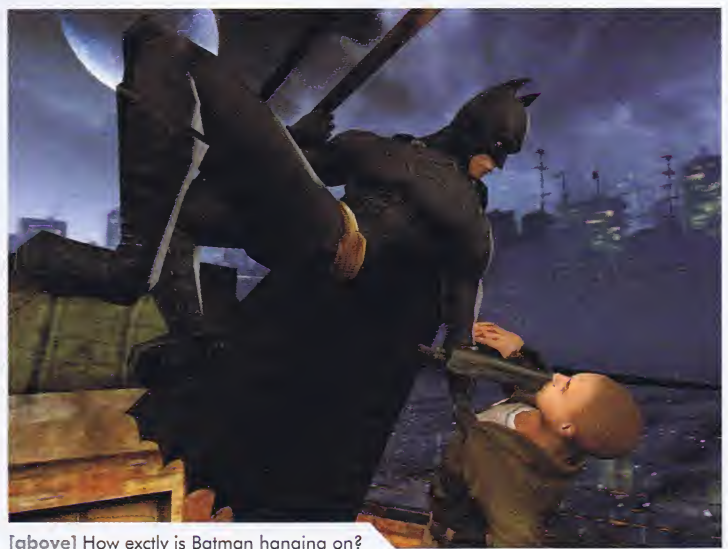
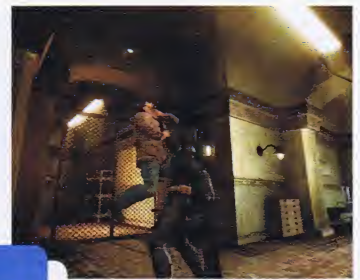
79

Control is needed more than customisation.



[above] Patrick Bateman's alter ego

!!! Come on guys, take a leaf from Ultimate Destruction and give players some freedom to use powers



[above] How exactly is Batman hanging on?

BATMAN BEGINS

DANIEL WILKS wants rubber bat-nipples

▶▶ To put it bluntly, Batman Begins is yet another in a long line of crap games based on good films. Actually, that's not entirely true. There are a number of things to like about the game. It certainly looks decent, the voice acting is up to spec and some of the combat mechanics are quite good. They just don't come together as a decent enough whole. Batman Begins isn't all that bad a game, it's just not very good.

WILKS ON THE HARP

Loosely following the events of the film, Batman Begins sees players making their way through a number of familiar settings — the sewers, abandoned factories, wharves stacked with containers and the like beating up crims, sneaking around, solving simple environmental puzzles and waiting for the game to tell you to press the B button. Before we harp on a little more about the B button (we reviewed the

game on Xbox but same goes for the other systems), it's important to note how the combat system works. At once it's quite clever and very flawed. You see, this version of Batman isn't as tough as previous incarnations so stealth and fear are the order of the day rather than brute force. Stealth can be used (obviously) to sneak up behind enemies — those with guns are highlighted on your HUD — allowing them to be taken out in a single attack and leaving their unarmed brethren vulnerable. If more than one armed assailant is present Batman can use the environment to scare some sense into them and cause them to drop their guns, once again leaving them vulnerable to attack. Whilst this interaction with the environment sounds clever and definitely in keeping with the film, all it boils down to is wandering around in stealth until the game tells you to hit the B button.

Combat is the same — mash away

at X and Y until the game tells you to hit B to either do a finishing move or grab the offending mook to interrogate them. You can hack into security cameras, pick locks or unscramble code locked machinery, once again by pressing the B button when the game tells you to. You can use your grapple to traverse gaps but once again only when the game tells you to press the B button. There are also driving sections but these come off as a distinctly second rate Chase HQ. The whole game follows this formula — Batman Begins appears to give you a range of things to do and some freedom but in reality all the player has to do is navigate a set path and wait for the context sensitive B button to come into play. Batman Begins is not an altogether dull experience but it is an unrewarding one. It's a pity, because the film on which it is based is one of the truly great superhero films to have ever graced the silver screen. <<

AVAILABLE ON: PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Eurocom

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

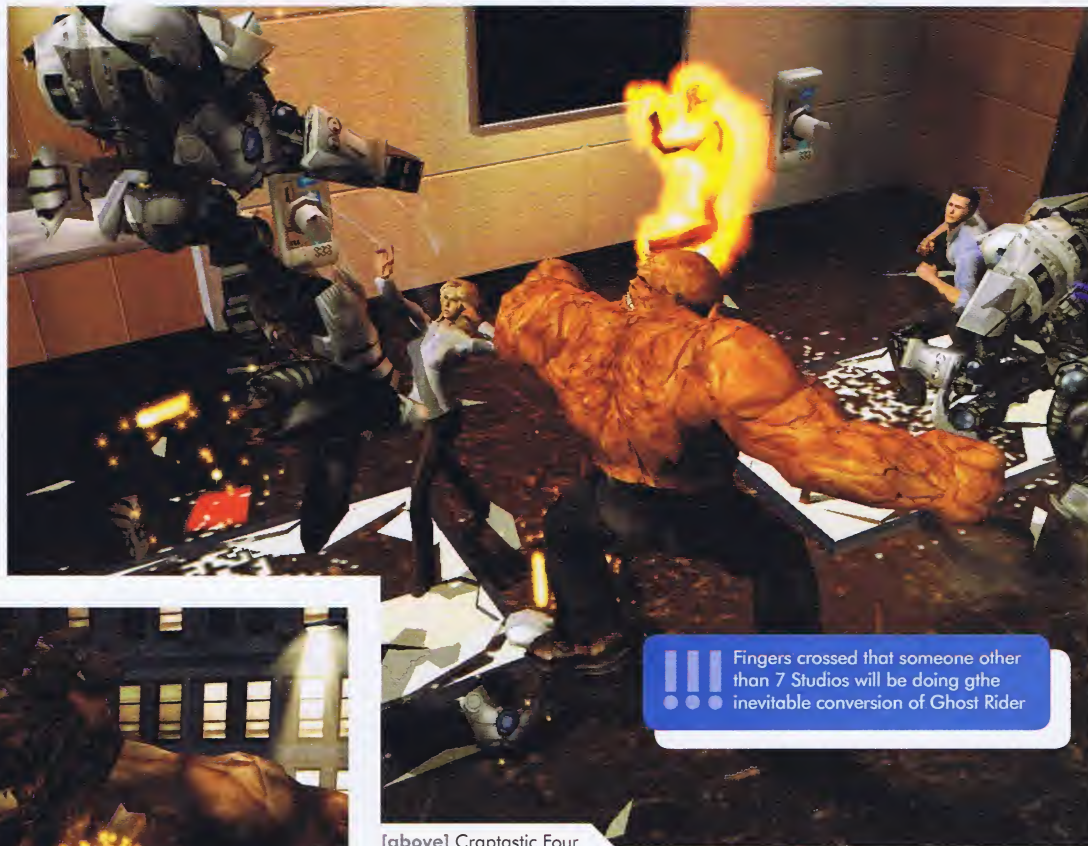
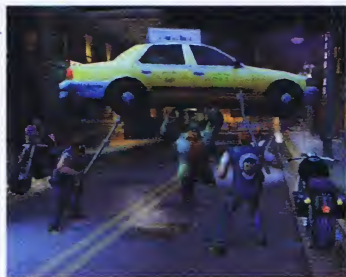
PLUS: Looks decent, using fear is a nice idea, good voice acting.

MINUS: Context sensitive everything, unrewarding.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
81	86	68

OVERALL
66

Watch the movie again instead...



!!! Fingers crossed that someone other than 7 Studios will be doing the inevitable conversion of Ghost Rider

[above] Crapstastic Four



[above] Dull boss #1



FANTASTIC 4

GHOST THAT NEVER LIES thinks it's clobbering time...

There's one thing you want to get from your average superhero game — you want to feel like a superhero. You want to be able to use superhuman powers to defeat enemies. This is not what you get from *Fantastic 4*. At the time of writing this the *Fantastic 4* movie is still a few weeks away but we have our fingers crossed that it is a damn sight better than the game or we could very well have another Catwoman on our hands. Apparently *Fantastic 4* follows the general story of the movie, so players will start from the point of discovering their powers and play through to the point where they switch their console off in disgust rather than risk throwing a controller through a window.

WORK EXPERIENCE KID: THE GAME

If you've ever played a third person action game in your life you've played *Fantastic 4*. It matters not

that the characters the player can control throughout the course of the game have access to a range of incredible powers — the ability to turn invisible and project force-fields, stretch, become a being of living fire or stone — they play the same as each other or any other third person character for that matter. Each character, The Thing, The Human Torch, Mr. Fantastic and Invisible Woman has the same basic attacks (with slight tweaks on damage for the stronger characters) and a bunch of different looking special super moves. The only time when there's any sense of the character being imbued with real power are cutscenes or the myriad occasions players need to stand on glowing spots on the floor and hit the right button to trigger a short cutscene. Never in the game is the player given any freedom to use their powers; it is simple button mashing at its most basic against a

cookie cutter selection of enemies, including Mole People, robots, cranky tribesmen and mummies, all of whom act identically. Frequent boss battles liven things up a bit — if you consider killing the same boss multiple times only to see it regenerate because you had no idea you had to smash some magic widget, fun.

The camera is frequently appalling with some areas locking the cameras into a "cinematic" (read useless) position or simply moving to an area that shows neither the player nor the enemies. Due to a mix of camera and control issues it is very easy to be put in a position where the player can do nothing but look at the life bar dwindle. Character models are uniformly quite ugly and the framerate is erratic. The only saving grace of the game is co-op multiplayer but the novelty of bashing the same retarded enemies with a friend will wear off pretty quickly. <<

AVAILABLE ON: PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

- CATEGORY:** Bad beat 'em up
- PLAYERS:** 1-2
- DEVELOPER:** 7 Studios
- PUBLISHER:** Activision
- PRICE:** \$69.95
- RATING:** M
- AVAILABLE:** Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: It's over quickly, better than Catwoman.

MINUS: Bad controls, painfully generic and poorly designed.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
66	72	53
OVERALL		
53		
Painfully generic, short and dull. Not exactly a super combo.		



[above] Pastel tracks are all the rage

!!! Want to get the Medieval ship? You'll need to get 70 gold medals. Want the Zone craft? Get gold in all four Zone courses.



[above] Your Head Asplode



WIPEOUT PURE

CAM SHEA shotgunned this review the day the game was announced...

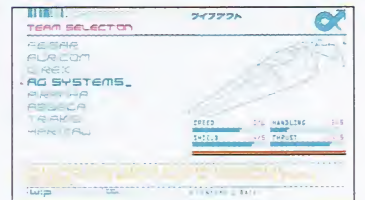
Wipeout is a truly next generation series. It was born alongside the PSone's European launch ten years ago to the month and helped to give the system cred as a machine for the clubbing age. Gamers simply hadn't seen anything like this before. Not only was Wipeout incredibly fast, but it took racing and course design in a new direction, with steep hills, big air and smooth exhilarating driving mechanics that took time to master.

EBENEZER GOOD Wipeout was a game that deliberately targeted dance culture and an older consumer than was normal at the time with its fantastic soundtrack, future cool style, slick Designer's Republic veneer and conspicuously prominent letter E (subtle huh?). It was a game born of not just the 3D age, but the marketing age. The best part, however, and a feat that has been replicated very few times since, is

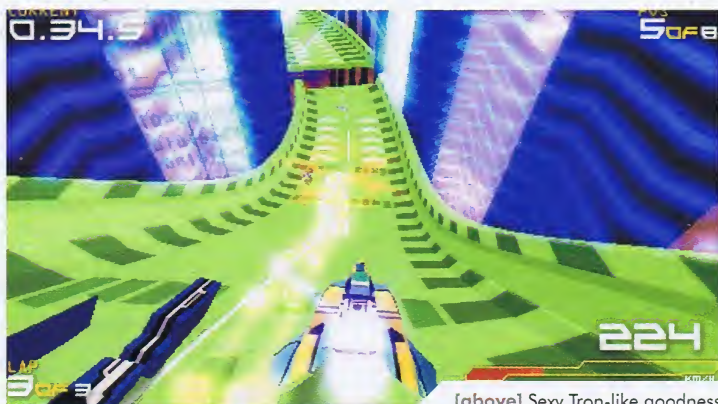
that Wipeout felt authentic to its target audience. Wipeout didn't just try to be cool – Wipeout WAS cool. In short, everyone was happy. Wipeout went on to spawn the phenomenally successful Wipeout 2097 less than a year later, followed by Wipeout 64, Wipeout 3, and Wipeout Fusion on PS2.

And now we come to Wipeout Pure. Given that the original helped spearhead the 3D age, it seems only fitting that the series should return on the PSP to help herald the age of serious 3D power in a handheld.

It's a pretty sublime return too, although oddly enough, Wipeout Pure is probably one of the least accessible titles in the series. The



original was criticised for being very hard and each new game seemed to streamline things a little more – allowing you to "grind" the edge of the track and tweaking the handling to make it easier to come to grips with. Wipeout Pure is a return to a harder style of Wipeout game, where practice is essential and courses and handling can only be mastered over extended play. After spending some time with Pure I went back and played Wipeout 2097,



[above] Sexy Tron-like goodness

» STATISTICS CAN BE FUN

Wipeout Pure keeps track of an impressive array of stats. Not just what you have medals for and your best times on every course at every speed, but also stuff like total play time, how many speed boost pads you've hit, how many laps you've done, how much time you've spent in the air, distance raced, how many times you've used or absorbed each pickup, and best of all the "how much time you've spent looking at the stats" counter which is at the very bottom and counting away. Classic.



[up] Wilks' reflexes can't handle Wipeout



» Pure is probably closest in handling to 2097, but is still less forgiving

Wipeout 3 and Wipeout Fusion, and was amazed at how much easier to pick up they were. Pure is probably closest in handling to 2097, but is still less forgiving in many ways.

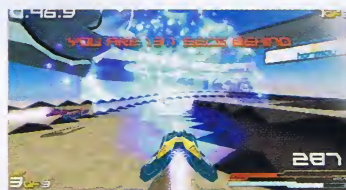
Of course, this isn't necessarily a problem, it just means this game won't be for everyone. Those who are prepared to really spend the time getting good at Pure will find it every bit as rewarding and immersive as previous titles. Those who just want a quick racing fix, on the other hand, probably won't have much fun. In fact, it's kind of funny to think of a futuristic high speed anti gravity racing game as not fitting into the arcade racing genre, but there you have it. Wipeout Pure is by no means a sim either, but it does have deep handling mechanics, imposing speed and — at times — challenging course design.

TERRAFORMED FOR GAMEPLAY

The twelve new courses (eight of which are in the game out of the box — the other four are/will be available for download) are all set in and above the terraformed island of Makuna. Never mind why (the

backstory involves the death of the AG league under the weight of corruption, and its rebirth years later in a fresh amateur league), all that matters is that you'll find an eclectic and compelling selection of tracks on offer. Much like the handling, they're more from the Wipeout 2097 school of track design than Wipeout Fusion, with narrower raceways, no loop the loops and no off-road sections. There's a great mix, from straightforward courses where the main element to master is hitting all the speed boost pads, through to hair pulling pieces of design packed with hairpins and sequences of S bends that require judicious use of airbrakes and side shifts.

It's all wrapped up in an incredibly pretty package too. Technically the game is on par with anything else released for the system (although the frame rate does dip now and then), with impressive light bloom effects, realistic looking clouds and fog, and fantastic explosions, but it's the design of the world around the course that's the highlight. Taking its cues from Wipeout 2097 (once again), the design is



» IN THE ZONE

One of the only elements to return from Wipeout Fusion is the Zone mode. In it you rocket around four tracks designed specifically for Zone and must pass through as many checkpoints as possible before you eventually run into the walls one too many times and run out of energy. There's no braking, no opponents and no weaponry, and with every few checkpoints the speed of your AG craft gets a little faster until the track practically becomes a blur and you've nothing but twitch handling skills to keep you on course. It's a great distraction from the other more traditional modes on offer and the super slick visual styling of the courses that consist of plainly textured shimmering silver and metallic blue only adds to the appeal.



One complaint we have with Pure is that you can be over penalised for flying off the track. The reset may be near instantaneous but you'll often be placed a fair way back.

0:36:4
LAST 1:15:12
BEST 1:03:44

futuristic yet familiar – the city areas are sprawling and gritty yet distinct, with the Tokyo pop theme of 2097 back in full effect. You'll see neon signs with cute figures or advertisements on them, you'll see giant mascots atop architectural marvels, you'll see kanji signs, you'll see video screens and you'll see messages like "Robots Build Robots" emblazoned on walls. From the towering and dense urban centers and their industrial underbelly of Modesto Heights and Chenghou Project through to the luminous sky rises in the ultra modern city setting of Sinucit, this game has style to spare. It's not all city environments though. You'll blaze through the



underwater tunnels of Vineta-K, along the coastal roads of Citta Nuova, through the snowcapped peaks and wind farms of Sebenco Climb, out by the forests, lakes and mountains of Blue Ridge and to cap it all off, along the high speed banked straights and winged paths of Sol 2 high in the sky above the island. It all flies by when you're racing, but take the time to look around and you'll see some amazing design.

Once you've mastered the eight new courses that ship with the game you can hop online via Wi-Fi or a USB connection to your PC and download extra content. At the time of writing two "Gamma" packs have already been released (just head to www.Wipeoutpure.com), giving you three more courses, one more ship and new wallpapers/colour schemes. There's at least one more course on the way, and perhaps even more exciting, Sony have said that there will be music pack updates containing a total of 40 more tunes to race to! Now



while downloadable content is all well and good, what really annoys us is when it's not "bonus" content, but content that could and probably should have been included as part of the game in the first place. The fact that these tracks were released to the Japanese market months ago only confirms that they could easily have been incorporated into the retail release. Give us real bonuses!

In addition to the twelve new courses, four classics from WipEout past also return. The Classic courses are: Karbonis from WipEout, Sagarmatha from WipEout 2097, Manor Top from WipEout 3 and Mandrashee from WipEout Fusion. Each course is done Tron style, with glowing colours and scenery, and cute pixel explosions. Whilst they're exactly the same course layout, it's amazing how putting them in a radically different environment alters the feel.

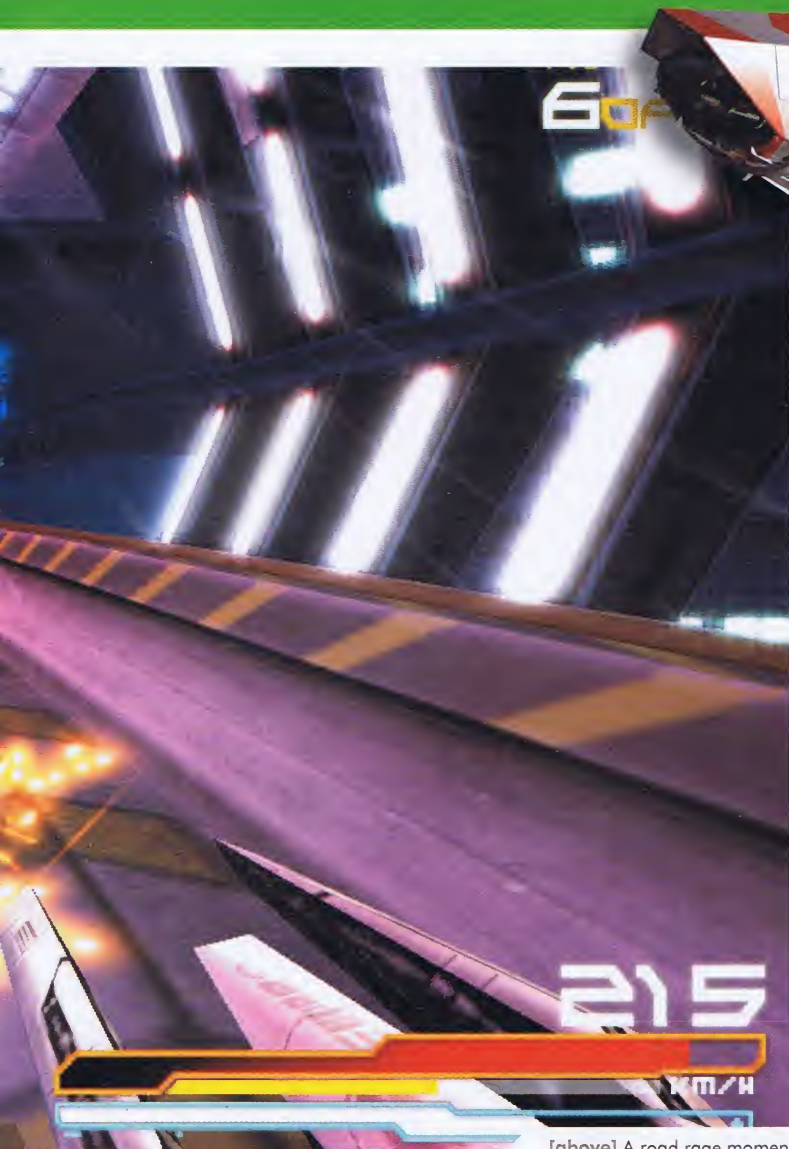
FULLY SICK

The game and its unlockables are structured around a medal system – gold, silver and bronze. You work your way up through the five speed classes (Vector, Venom, Flash, Rapier, Phantom) taking on the Alpha, Beta and Ascension (Alpha and Beta in one) tournaments, but that's only

>> TICKED WUNES

No WipEout game would be complete without a thumping soundtrack, and Pure is no exception with 20 tunes (plus 40 more available for free download sometime soon). The highlights for us are LFO's Flu-Shot, Photek's C Note, Jay Tripwire's Room 2 and Freq Nasty's Grand Theft. Here's the full list:

Rennie Pilgrem & Roxiller – Bug
Ming + FS – Hellion
Paul Hartnoll – Ignition
DrumAttic Twins – Twister
Plump DJs – Black Jack 3
Photek – C Note
Aphex Twin – Naks Acid
Friendly – We Got Juice
Elite Force – Cross The Line
Themroc – Mean Red
Cosmos – Kinection
LFO – Flu-Shot
T Power – The System
Jay Tripwire – Room 2
Stanton Warriors – Night Mover
Tiesto – Gold Rush
Cold Storage – Onyx
Tayo Meets Acid Rockers Uptown – Crafty Youth
Freq Nasty – Grand Theft
Roysopp – Curves



[above] A road rage moment



[above] Danger behind as well



[above] Wet and dry handling

Completists will want to get gold medals for every course

the beginning. Completists will want to get gold medals for every course at every speed class in Single Race mode, gold medals for every course at every speed in Time Trial (there are bronze, silver and gold times to beat), not to mention gold on every Zone course. As you collect medals and beat Zone courses, you'll unlock all four of the Classic tracks (which form another tournament), two new ships, and all four of the Zone courses. There's always something to try and beat, which is definitely one of the game's strong points.

Although the gameplay will be familiar to Wipeout fans, with speed boost pads, power up pickups and air braking the order of the day, Studio Liverpool have made a number of common sense changes. One of the biggest tweaks is the elimination of pits to recoup energy.



Instead, any time you pick up a weapon you can choose to absorb its energy. It's a great solution and with the amount of pickups in the game there's really no excuse for a premature and fiery end to a race. It also means that weapons/power ups you don't particularly like can be put to good use. Other changes are the inclusion of a side dash move (double tap L or R) which is quite vital for some of the trickier corners, not to mention avoiding bombs/mines and opponents on straights. When catching air you can now hit left, right, left or right, left, right on the D-pad to do a barrel roll which gives you a boost (and takes some energy) when you hit the ground. Nice.

You're definitely going to have to master the new techniques to do well in Wipeout. And like the previous PSone titles, each time you move up a speed class re-adjustment is required, almost forcing you to learn the tracks anew as you find previous lines no longer work at the new speed. Our advice is to get stuck into the Time Trials and keep racing against your best ghost until you can get silver or gold in each. Entering the higher

speed tournaments without practise can be a sobering experience.

As mentioned earlier, Wipeout Pure isn't as pick up and play as other titles in the series, but whether this is a weakness depends on how much time you want to put into it. We'd also argue that the courses aren't fantastically balanced - you'll find yourself easily getting first on some but struggling to keep up with the pack on others. With the change from blue to white, it's also harder to see speed boost pads coming up, further underlining that track memorisation is key. If you can get past all this, Wipeout Pure is a great new inclusion in the Wipeout canon. It's gratifyingly fast, incredibly pretty and easily one of the slickest games available for PSP. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: AG racing
PLAYERS: 1-8
DEVELOPER: Sony Studio Liverpool
PUBLISHER: Sony
PRICE: STBA
RATING: TBA
AVAILABLE: September 1

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
91 90 89

OVERALL

90





[above] MGS3: Snake Combat Skipping



[above] It still don't look like a card game

METAL GEAR ACID

➤ Metal Gear Solid (or Ghost Babel as it was known in the west) on the Game Boy Color proved that Snake could still fight it out with the best of them, regardless of his diminutive size. As huge fans of god-made-man Hideo Kojima, we were salivating at the thought of a fully realised, 3D portable Metal Gear game hitting the PSP. Unfortunately, Metal Gear Acid is a low-water mark for the consistently solid franchise.

TERRORIST THREAT, SIGH

Structured around a plot involving a planeload of hostages held to ransom, Solid Snake is pulled from retirement (Ice fishing? Dog sledding? What kind of twisted retirement destination involves year-round sub-zero temperatures?) to tackle the terrorist threat. This being a Metal Gear game, there's obviously plenty of twists and turns and double-crosses in store, and a cast of weird and campy villains to bump off.

But the meat of the game is where things take a turn for the unusual. Eschewing real-time stealth combat in favour of turn-based, 'card game' gameplay, Metal Gear

Acid ventures into risky territory.

Working with a deck of moves, items, characters and special abilities, you must make your way to the end of each area, completing objectives, and trying desperately not to get spotted. Your hand consists of six cards, and each card carries a 'cost'. You can generally only play two cards per turn, but things get messy when you use a card with a high cost — the higher the cost, the longer it takes for your turn to come around again. Enemies work with the same card system, but the slow gameplay will instantly alienate fans of the series.

The amount of damage dealt or received changes depending on which way you're facing your enemy. Giving yourself the 'higher ground' is critical in later confrontations. The AI is unforgiving. Unfortunately, the camera is also unforgiving, and constant adjustment with the L, R and thumb-pad will become ritual.

In theory, the card-battler approach sounds like an interesting spin on the traditions of the franchise. But sloppy, tedious and downright unfair play mechanics will infuriate you. The game plays

out like a convoluted game of chess, and the constant waiting will slowly fizzle your nerves.

There are little oversights too, such as codec communications popping up, interrupting your turn at inopportune times, and canceling any moves you had lined up. Enemies get a boost to their card abilities during 'alert mode'. You do not.

Graphically, though not a powerhouse showpiece, the PSP engine runs smoothly, sitting somewhere a little behind the PS2's Sons of Liberty. Textures are a little flat, and there is some annoying clipping at times, but the framerate is buttery. Playing



!!! A cel-shaded, PSP Acid sequel has been announced! There's plenty of potential here; let's hope Konami irons out the wrinkles.



special cards and abilities will trigger related cutscenes from past games — a nice touch, and one that shows exactly how far the series' graphics have come.

A couple of hours into the story, you'll find yourself in stages requiring serious planning. And after sloughing it out all the way to the end, just to be defeated while waiting for the 'Level 2 Keycard' Card to show up in your deck, well, it nearly caused my PSP to become airborne.

Yes, the script is pretty tight, and the art direction is pretty good but it's just not as fun as it should be.

Patrick Kolan

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Turn-based strategy
PLAYERS: 1-2
DEVELOPER: Konami
PUBLISHER: Konami
PRICE: STBC
RATING: TBC
AVAILABLE: September 1

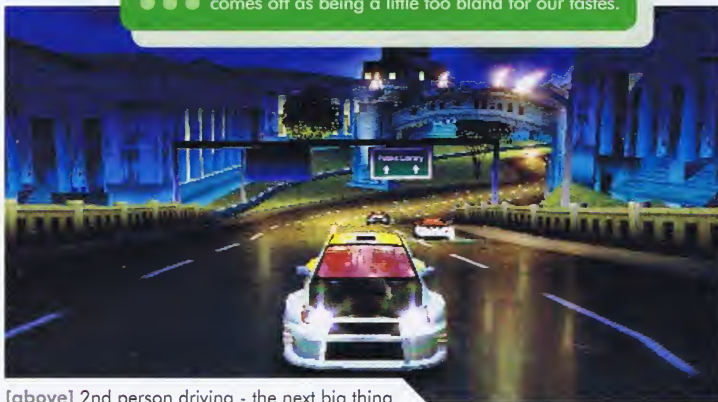
VISUALS 82 SOUND 80 GAMEPLAY 68

OVERALL

75



!!! The wireless multiplayer on offer works well enough, but much like the rest of the game it comes off as being a little too bland for our tastes.



[above] 2nd person driving - the next big thing



[above] Quite aggressively judging by the!

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND: Rivals

Much like Underground 2 on DS, Rivals on PSP is very much a neutered version of the Underground series we know and love on console. Gone is the massive city to explore with various events to drive to, as is the story (or what passed for a story). Rivals is menu driven, with a whole host of modes and events to work through.

THE LIST

That's not necessarily a bad thing though, giving Rivals the chance to give players a more focused experience. Unfortunately it doesn't quite get there. Game modes are split into two broad sections. The Quick Play Battle option has four race types (each with ten events at bronze, silver and gold levels): Street Cross and Drag, which Underground fans will already be familiar with, Drift Attack, which has been revamped (to its detriment), and Nitrous Run which is entirely new, giving the player a full nitrous canister with every checkpoint passed and the target of a certain number of gates to get through before the time runs out. Whilst a good idea, it just feels clumsy in execution

and lacking the high speed skill that's required for other super fast racers like Burnout or MC3. The meat of the game, however, is found in the Circuit Race menu, with Novice, Pro and Master difficulty classes to work through, each with Circuit, Lap Knockout and Rally Relay race modes. Circuit races are a no brainer — race against opponents or the clock through a number of laps, Lap Knockout eliminates the car coming last at the end of each lap and Rally Relay lets you choose two cars for each race, with a swap after the first lap. Once again there are bronze, silver and gold medals for each race, so there's an awful lot racing. To top it all off, there's a Car Spec series for Sports, Street, Tuner, Max and GT classes as well. The reward system is the usual treadmill affair — keep winning events to earn points to spend on performance upgrades and new cars. Keep winning events to unlock new visual upgrades and unlock new levels of performance upgrades. Keep winning events to unlock more cars for purchase. And so on. The problem is that while there may be plenty of races and plenty of modifications to work

your way through, it's just not that engaging. Simply put, Rivals is a very vanilla flavoured rendition of tuner culture and arcade racing. The environments for one are really barren. This city doesn't feel like a living breathing entity, just a series of static, lonely courses. And you'll get to know each course all too well thanks to the number of times you're forced to race them. It's not that Rivals is bad, it's just lacking the spark to actually make it compelling. There are also a couple of factors that make it much more frustrating than it should be. One is the implementation of control on the analogue nub — it's too sensitive so you're constantly

oversteering. You'll most likely find the D-pad a better solution. The other is the woeful traffic. Most of the time it's so sparse as to be ineffectual, but then a car will appear out of a side street, flipping you and often ruining your race in the process. This is nothing but bad, bad design. Random elements are all well and good, but only if the player is equipped to deal with them. Midnight Club 3 lets you barge through most traffic and in Burnout Revenge hitting traffic can be used to your advantage by leaving the wreckage behind for others to drive into. Rivals just screws you for the sake of it.

Cam Shea

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Arcade racing
PLAYERS: 1-4
DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PRICE: STBA
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: September 5

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
79	83	69
OVERALL		
76		

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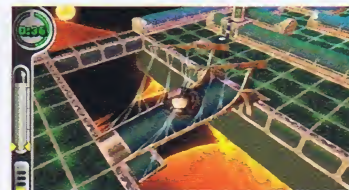
[above] Liquid death in the palm of your hand



!!! Kids used to be given blobs of mercury to play with in science class, until someone realised mercury is in fact extremely poisonous. No more blobs for you!



[above] Someone was on something



MERCURY

There's an old saying - which I just made up - that goes: if you haven't played Marble Madness then you haven't lived. Fortunately, you can now experience something very much like that ancient classic on your PSP: Archer Maclean's Mercury.

WHO THE HELL IS CALLED ARCHER?

We're not sure who Archer Maclean is supposed to be exactly, but the game is a wooden-labyrinth style puzzler where you have to tip a little blob toward a goal, without falling off the edge or letting the time limit expire.

The tricky part is that the little blob is made of mercury, one of only two elements that are liquid at room temperature (the other is bromine but it's just a nasty brown liquid which doesn't render well in 3D). So if you even go near the edge, the evil gremlins of inertia and surface tension will work together to suck half your blob off into the abyss.

You, the avid puzzler, sweat your way through forty or so increasingly complex levels, constantly questing for the elusive goal.

Of course, just rolling a blob of

mercury through a maze would be way too easy. So there are dozens of traps, tools and gadgets to help and hinder your progress. Paint shops spray your mercury different colours so it can pass through colour gates. Sometimes you start with three blobs at once - combine two to form a third colour, or combine everything to return to base silver. Or you might need to use a splitter to create two blobs so you can position one on a pressure plate to hold open gate for the other. Or you might have to do it for three blobs at once.

Then there are teleporters, monsters that chase you around the maze trying to eat your blob, hammers that slam the blob into a dozen pieces, dozers that push it off the edge, and about fifty other things.

Did I already mention that the game is damn hard? It's damn hard. Levels are categorised into time limit, task and percentage levels. The first is pretty obvious: beat the clock through a fairly simple maze. A task level requires you to operate one or more machines, and a little number on the level select screen tells you how many gadgets there are in the level. Oh, and there's still

a time limit. Percentage levels are full of traps and tricks and you can't activate the goal unless you have a certain percentage of your mercury blob remaining. This means you can lose bits of it off the edge, but once you drop below the required percentage the level restarts.

Mercury is another great tech demo for your PSP, especially the physics on the blob combined with the neat, crisp level textures. Sound is a little disappointing though, with only a few sound effects on top of fairly generic ambient beats.

Mercury is best played in a completely silent room with no distractions. The tiniest flicker in the corner of your eye is liable

to send your blob sailing toward the abyss and you sailing toward your flatmate with fists flailing. It's an exercise in frustration, repetition, perseverance and incredible, soaring satisfaction once you finally a) figure out the level and b) actually complete it.

A five-minutes-at-a-time game, this is not. But it chews up long trips like nothing else, even Lumines. Time dilates when you play it, and if the other people on the bus are unnerved by your occasional screams of frustration, so be it.

Anthony Fordham

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Puzzle
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Awesome Studios
PUBLISHER: Ignition Entertainment
PRICE: STBA
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: TBA

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
89 78 91

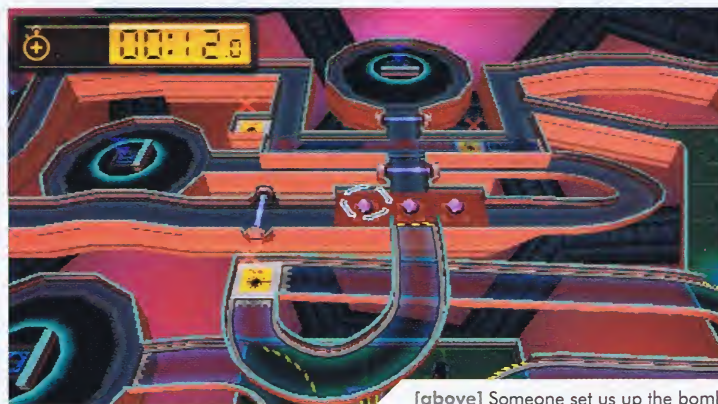
OVERALL
81

SMART BOMB

By and large puzzle games are ideally suited to the handheld format. They're small, intimate and don't require massive processing power to push out pretty visuals to remain attractive. All they need to do is prove to be addictive, compelling and contain some great puzzle action. Take Lumines, Tetris, Super Puzzle Fighter and Zoo Keeper for example. Aside from Lumines none of them could really be considered pretty but the gameplay is excellent. Why are we pointing this out? Because Smart Bomb fails on nearly every level.

Saddled with the silly premise that the puzzles are actually ways

to disable different components of a bomb, the Smart Bomb "story mode" sees players completing a number of puzzles against the clock to stop said bomb from exploding, turning the screen white, making you wait 15 or 20 seconds to try it again and give up in disgust. The major problem with the story mode is that the majority of the puzzles need a little bit of tinkering to work out the solution, something you don't have the luxury of doing in the strict time limit. The arcade mode goes some way to rectifying this by not having a timer but the other major flaw of the game comes into play to ruin the experience here



[above] Someone set us up the bomb

as well. Controls in Smart Bomb are very imprecise, either ignoring input, lagging or not actually doing what the player wanted. The idea is nice but the execution of Smart Bomb is seriously flawed.

Daniel Wilks



AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Puzzle
PLAYERS: 1-4
DEVELOPER: Core Design
PUBLISHER: Eidos
PRICE: STBA
RATING: TBA
AVAILABLE: September

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
60 55 45

OVERALL

45

DYNASTY WARRIORS

No year is complete without at least one new version of Dynasty Warriors coming out. Thank god the PSP has arrived otherwise we would have had to content ourselves with only one "new" Dynasty Warriors title this year. As always the gameplay of Dynasty Warriors is as thin as a thin person who has decided to go on a diet to fit into the latest summer fashions straight from Paris but is strangely compelling. If you've played a Dynasty Warriors game before you know what to expect. Even if you haven't, five minutes of frantic button mashing as you try to take down hordes

of enemies will clue you in.

Much like all of the previous Dynasty Warriors games, the PSP version is all about taking on a host of enemies, mashing buttons, heading on to the next group of enemies and maybe tackling a boss style character, the enemy leader. Set in semi-fictional, semi-historical China, Dynasty Warriors allows the player to choose from a number of playable characters from differing factions striving to conquer territory from rival factions. Adding a bit of a new twist to the formula, players choose the site of their next battle on a strategic map covered in different nodes, some of



which are populated by enemy, some of which give bonuses to morale, can heal resting troops and the like, on their way to conquering the enemy capital. The use of nodes is a great addition to the handheld game as it allows players to partake in a number of short battles, instead of having to delve into much longer battles as seen in the console versions of the game. Unfortunately even though the setup

of the game is perfect for handheld the execution of the game is not. The player character is too large on the screen often obscuring the player's view of the world, controls are iffy and the framerate frequently suffers.

Daniel Wilks



[above] Hadoken! Sorry, wrong series

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Omega Force
PUBLISHER: Koei
PRICE: STBA
RATING: TBA
AVAILABLE: September

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
72 70 62

OVERALL

62

EVERYBODY'S GOLF

☞ Golf games are, by and large, too technical and cumbersome for my tastes. However every now and then a title like Mario Golf (or in this case Everybody's Golf (EG)) comes along with just the right set of ingredients to appeal to golf fans, arcade and casual gamers alike. EG is one of Sony's strongest franchises in Japan; the PS2 version having four renditions and each selling around a million copies. That is brand power – so it is little wonder that this little title was also the best-seller on PSP when the machine launched there last December.

BATTER UP (© DARREN FROM PCPP)

What makes this game so popular is difficult to define. Sure the graphics are lush, with six fully 3D courses, each with a distinctive and colourful theme; an army of cute-as-hell cartoony characters to unlock, accessorise and level up; and saveable replays of your most memorable shots, but this alone certainly does not maketh the game. The music and sounds are ideal, ambient, unobtrusive and crisp. The ability to level up your characters, unlock items and equipment (which

in turn improve your game) and take on a friend via the ad-hoc mode certainly help. Load screens which contain helpful tips to improve your game, the fantastic control system (implementing 'just impact' technology!) for hitting the ball, medals for unbelievable achievements... take any one of these and it is a very good thing. Factor them all into the one game and it is a wondrous thing.

To criticise feels almost blasphemous, considering how much fun I have had playing this thing. Although there are six courses, the last outing on PS2 contained twelve – some people feel there is room for a couple more on a 1.8GB UMD. Also, unlocking new courses, new characters and new equipment can amplify this problem as you will end up playing each course around 50-60 times. Load times, although accompanied by helpful tips, can occasionally drag on. But the keyword here is fun. Unadulterated fun in single player or multiplayer mode. And that's what we're all here for, right?

Bryce McDonough



[above] Bryce strokes first (hehehe)



AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Arcade golf
PLAYERS: 1-8
DEVELOPER: Sony Japan
PUBLISHER: Sony
PRICE: STBA
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: September 1

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 85 90

OVERALL

88

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR

☞ Golf has often been described by clever wits as a great way to ruin a pleasant walk. This can be taken many ways but we think it means that golf, not the fastest paced game in the world, can be likened to a brisk walk with a few moments of action in between. This sense of waiting for the action definitely comes into play in Tiger Woods PGA Tour. Whilst the Tiger Woods series currently stands as the be all and end all of golf games as far as gameplay and customisation goes, the series' first foray onto the PSP is hampered by the walk – or in this case, the

incredibly lengthy load times between courses and even shots.

TIGER IN THE TANK?

To start with the good, Tiger Woods PGA Tour has excellent customisation and controls. Players can create a character using the EA Gameface technology, allowing for a huge range of character looks. Throughout the game players can spend their earnings on new outfits that not only customise the look of the character but also add to player statistics, so allow them to drive the ball further, control the ball better, putt more accurately or the like. Swing is



controlled through the analogue stick, pulling it down to draw the club back and then pushing forward at the height of the back-swing to achieve maximum effect. The angle of the stick when pushed forwards determines the slice of the ball. It takes a little getting used to but after a few holes of practise the controls become very intuitive. Although the game is not online

compatible it does feature some excellent WiFi multiplayer support.

Unfortunately the good comes with the bad and the bad is made up exclusively of horrendous load times. The initial load of the game can take up to the minute and you can expect 30+ seconds of loading between holes. Even the loads between shots can take up to 15 or so seconds.

Daniel Wilks



[above] A good walk ruined

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Sports
PLAYERS: 1-2
DEVELOPER: EA
PUBLISHER: EA
PRICE: \$69.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Real soon

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

86 84 89

OVERALL

81

PSP REVIEW RECAP

For the full reviews check out Hyper 140.



RIDGE RACER

Simply put, Ridge Racer is the must-have launch title for PSP. It takes courses from all the previous Ridge games, polishes them to a next gen sheen and slots them into a compelling World Tour mode. The best news though, is that even if you already know every dip, curve and hairpin on offer, you'll be doing it with the best driving model the series has ever seen, by a long way. This is drifting the way we've always dreamed it would be — intuitive and easy to pick up, but with enough subtlety and depth to ensure you'll always want to have one more go. And just to ensure there's a twist on the formula, the boffins at Namco have incorporated a nitro system, whereby drifting fills up your nitro tanks, giving you the incentive to drift as hard and long as possible at every opportunity. It's genius we tell you, genius.

Not only is Ridge Racer a brilliant game in its own right, it's also the ultimate showcase title for the PSP's launch, heralding the new age of flashy, super fast handheld gaming. So what are you waiting for? Grab yourself a good pair of headphones and lose yourself in the high speed world of Ridge Racer. You won't regret it.

Cam Shea

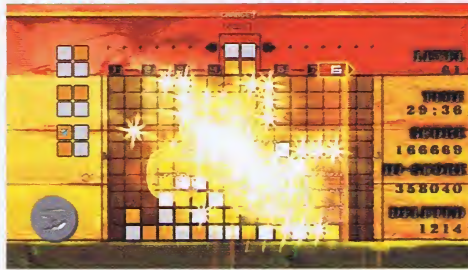


AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Arcade racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-8 /
DEVELOPER: Namco / **PUBLISHER:** Sony /
PRICE: STBA / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** September 1

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
92	93	93	93



LUMINES

Nintendo wouldn't be where they are now in the handheld market without Tetris. It was that simple yet endlessly addictive puzzler that made the Game Boy in the early days. While Lumines won't be as important to Sony for the launch of the PSP, it really deserves to be. It's that good.

Other falling block puzzle games have incorporated combo mechanics before, but none have done so in quite as innovative a way as Lumines. The basic mechanics are straightforward. Blocks come in two colours and fall in 2x2 arrays. It's up to you to create 2x2 blocks of the same colour then build on that block with as many other blocks as possible, increasing your score multiplier with each addition. But here's where it gets cool. Craftily utilising the 16:9 screen, a line sweeps from left to right in time with the music, clearing away any colour blocks you've created as it goes. Thus, you're always trying to create the biggest chain ahead of the line as you can, and tempo of the music changes with each track, the feel of the game also subtly changes.

While we'd like to be able to start Challenge mode again from a midway point (you'll hear those early songs A LOT), Lumines takes puzzle gaming to a new level of style. Great stuff.

Cam Shea

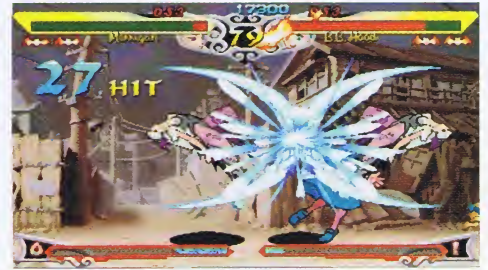
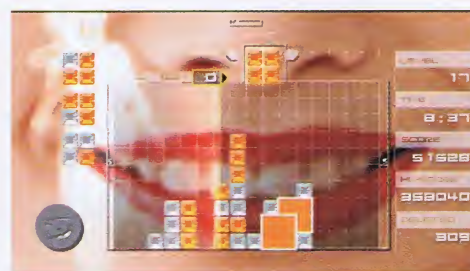


AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Puzzle / **PLAYERS:** 1
DEVELOPER: Q Entertainment / **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft /
PRICE: \$79.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** September 1

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
91	94	91	91



DARKSTALKERS: THE CHAOS TOWER

Another best-of game in many respects, Vampire Chronicles takes 20 characters from all three Darkstalkers games and jams them into the first 2D fighter for the PSP. The best part though, is that you have the choice of which subtly different fighting engine you'd like to use, which sets the backgrounds and BGM to that series. It's a nice touch because although it's only the hardcore fans that will appreciate being able to use all three, they're the people that are going to be buying this game anyway.

Vampire Chronicles may not sport a fighting engine and system quite as evolved as, say, CVs2 or SF3, but it is on a par with Alpha 3, which is a very good thing. Guard cancels, a Super bar, chain combos — these are all present. There is no parry or high/low jump, but dash moves and defensive special moves play a much bigger role in overall strategy.

The artwork in Vampire Chronicle also deserves special mention, as it looks fantastic compressed down to the PSP's slick 16:9 display. The animation doesn't miss a beat from its arcade origins with the moves practically leaping out of the screen. Throw in a wealth of extras and unlockables and you have another reminder of why we love 2D fighters so much. Now, bring on Street Fighter!

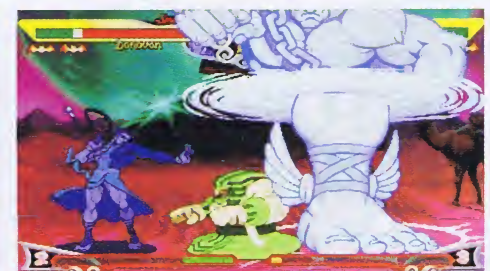
Bryce McDonough

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: 2D fighter / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 /
DEVELOPER: Capcom / **PUBLISHER:** THQ /
PRICE: STBA / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Sept. 1

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	89	87	86





!!! The second screen is completely wasted, with no option to display anything other than a steering wheel. How about a damn rear view mirror?

RIDGE RACER DS

Ouch. There's no other word for it. The PSP gets a loving tribute to the greatest courses in Ridge Racer history with incredible handling, the new nitro mechanic and flashy new graphics, while the DS... gets a port of an N64 game. I'll say it again. Ouch.

It's not even that Ridge Racer 64 was bad — it wasn't. In fact, it was one of the best racing games on the N64. It's just that after playing RR on PSP, Ridge Racer DS looks and handles like a dinosaur.

ATTENTION BUBBLE BOYS!

The good news is that if you're living in some kind of reality TV entertainment bubble where you're only allowed to play DS games, Ridge Racer DS will be fun for a while. It runs faster than we were expecting, giving a good sensation of speed at a snappy frame rate. It also has all the variations of both the courses from Ridge Racer and Ridge Racer Revolution, plus an all new one that was cooked up by Nintendo Software Technology for the N64 game.

BUT. If, on the other hand, you're a master thief who steals

famous artworks in order to fund his videogame addiction, and thus have both a DS and a PSP, there's no contest. The DS version is woeful by comparison.

As mentioned earlier, it runs well, and the structure of the game is reasonable, with a bunch of GPs to work your way through. There's also the Car Attack mode which consists of a whole host of one on one races. Beat the opponent and you'll unlock their car. Of course, anyone with any skill in the blocking tactics that were required to beat the hardest one on one races in the original PSone titles will be sorely disappointed that the lack of a rear vision mirror renders this impossible. Oh well.

Ridge Racer DS is a pretty straight up port of Ridge Racer 64 in many ways, so everywhere you look you'll see big ugly pixels and bland textures. You'll also notice the liberal changes that have been made to the settings for the Ridge Racer and Revolution courses. Why oh why the clear blue water, crisp white sand and iconic palm trees of the beachside run from Revolution was changed to a jaunty Sunday drive through the goddamn

mountains and the countryside, complete with oh so exciting barns we'll never know. It robs Ridge Racer of much of its tone and flavour, leaving it a little lifeless as a result. Even so, the actual courses themselves remain the same and have stood the test of time well.

There aren't that many courses, but we could live with it if the drift mechanics were solid enough. They're not. They're simplistic and frustrating, with very little depth to master. You'll find some corners feel great, but at others your tires will suddenly grip before or after you want them to, jerking you out of the drift and into the nearest wall.

It's also a little strange that the N64 game had a choice of three handling mechanics, but this only has one. Hmm. Adding to the game's woes the collision detection with other cars is awful, the sound is really limited (worst collision sound effect — yes, singular — ever). One of the control options is to use the touch screen to steer the car. It's incredibly hard not to consistently over steer, so you probably won't use this option for long, but when it works it actually feels great. The lack of an option to change the sensitivity is just another indication that this is a half-baked release at best.

Cam Shea

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Arcade racing
PLAYERS: 1-6
DEVELOPER: NST
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
PRICE: \$69.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS 75 SOUND 65 GAMEPLAY 69

OVERALL

69

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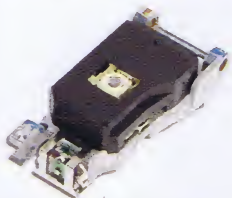
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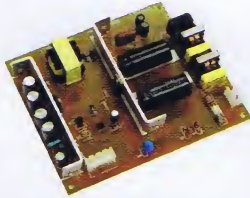
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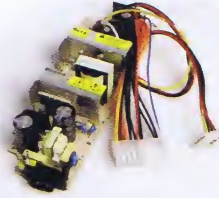
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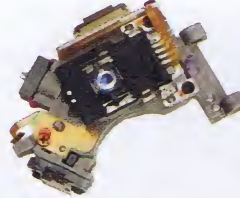
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WIN KILLER 7, A GAMECUBE AND OTHER GOODIES!

»» There's an incredibly clichéd old proverb that goes "You don't have to be crazy to work here, but it helps". It seems that Capcom took that saying to heart when hiring staff for Killer 7 because there's more than a puff of the wacky tobacco about this game. This videogame meets art project puts you in the shoes of Harman Smith, a wheelchair bound man with seven distinct personalities, each of which you can swap between at will. And you'll need to if you hope to stop the Heaven Smiles terrorist group from bringing the world to its proverbial knees. But that's not the only interesting aspect of Killer 7. The gameplay is like no other title out there — it's survival horror that's been streamlined, with the added bonus of a gimp for an advisor and the ability to harvest blood... not to mention minimalist yet ultra stylish cel shaded graphics. It's not an easily classified game, but for that very reason it's well worth a look.

Thanks to our chums at THQ and Nintendo we have quite the tasty Killer 7 prize packs to give away this month. Our major prize winner will walk away (from his or her mailbox that is) with a brand spanking new GameCube, a copy of Killer 7 for GameCube, a Killer 7 t-shirt, a Killer 7 standee and a Killer 7 window vinyl. Give me a hells yeah! Five runners-up will receive Killer 7 on GameCube and a Killer 7 t-shirt. Don't ever say we don't love ya!

To be in the running, just tell us in 100 words or less:

 **If you could have one alternate personality, what would its name be and what powers would it have?**

Put your answer, as well as your name and address, on the back of an envelope and send it to:
The Kevin Smith Fanclub, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016.

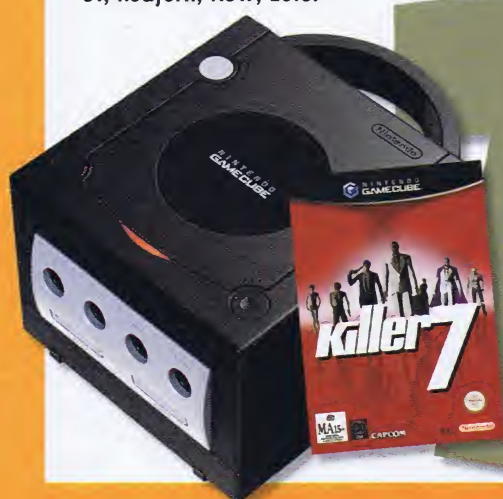


MAJOR PRIZE

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5 RUNNERS-UP

- 1 x Killer 7 GCN
- 1 x Killer 7 T-Shirt



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I wish this was the dude with the lollypop



Friday Night Lights

UNIVERSAL, PG

▶▶ The year is 1998 in the small Texan town of Odessa and it's the end of the world for a group of brave, conflicted and confused high school boys. The football state finals are coming up and they know that the last 10 years of their lives and potentially their futures ride on the next few Friday nights. Friday Night Lights is a sports film but one that takes a decidedly different approach to the genre than is usual. Rather than simply glorify the sport (which the film does do), FNL focuses on the effect of the game and the finals on the town and players. It looks at the horrendous pressure placed on a group of teenagers by a town that relies on them for pride and vicarious thrills. It also looks at the pressure that these boys place on each other. At one point towards the beginning of the film one of the players comments that he doesn't feel like he's 17. This sums up the feel of the film, a bunch of boys carrying the hopes and dreams of a whole town on their shoulders and doing their utmost not to break under the pressure. Sad and wise human drama aside, Friday Night Lights also contains



[up] I divorced Angelina Jolie? Damn.

some breathtaking game footage and marvelous cinematography. The package is rounded off with a decent features package that includes deleted scenes, an audio commentary with the writer and director as well as the true story of the 1988 Odessa Panthers.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 7



Everyone loves a spazzo man

"Please forgive me for making such a selfish choice, May."

Police Story 2

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

HK LEGENDS, M

▶▶ The original Police Story did two things. It changed the face of action films forever and made Jackie Chan an international star, making it a natural thing (especially in Hong Kong) to get a sequel in production right away. Whilst Police Story 2 is not in the same league as Police Story as far as action and stunt work is concerned, it's still a hell of a fun film and ably shows just what Chan was capable of in his prime. This time around, intrepid cop Ka Kui (Chan) is hot on the heels of a band of kidnapers who are holding the city to ransom. Naturally his girlfriend May (the always adorable Maggie Cheung) suspects something is going on and there's another woman (much like in Police Story) and becomes involved, leading to a spectacular showdown in an abandoned factory (is there any other kind) involving fist, feet and a hell of a lot of explosives. The HK Legends disk is a fantastic transfer of the film and the commentary by Bey Logan is a very entertaining hour and a half for anyone interested in HK film. Like most of Jackie Chan's films, Police



Have you not seen anything like this before?



[above] 'Splosion!

Story 2 comes with an outtakes reel but unlike most of them, this reel is not particularly spectacular or funny as most of the outtakes seem to be of people being hit very hard in the head and sitting down dazed whilst someone tries to stem the bleeding.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 7

Ong Bak 2 DISC SPECIAL EDITION

AV CHANNEL, MA 15+

Many people have said that the star of Ong Bak, Tony Jaa is the next Jackie Chan. Others have claimed he is the new Bruce Lee. Tony Jaa is neither. He is his own animal, combining incredible athleticism with a grace that is simply uncanny. As of yet we don't know if he can be funny like Chan or has the incredible magnetism of Lee — we'll have to wait a few more films for that. What we do know is that Tony Jaa is going to be huge in action cinema. Ong Bak is a perfect showcase for his abilities. The plot is paper thin, the dialogue is trite and the acting is universally quite terrible but the action is some of the most amazing put on screen in recent memory. After the head of a tribal Buddha is stolen by a bad guy for some reason, Tong (Jaa) is chosen to travel to Bangkok to get it back. Along the way he fights a bunch of people (including a few evil Australians), jumps over or slides under everything imaginable



and gets involved in some of the best choreographed hard hitting martial arts battles ever filmed. The 2-disk special edition we get in Australia actually ranks as the best version of the film available in the world as it not only contains Luc Besson's theatrical cut but the uncut Thai version as well (which is great because Besson cut two vital scenes explaining a character's reason for being), an excellent Australian documentary "Born For the Fight" about Muay Thai schools in Thailand, a whole heap of behind the scenes features, interviews, Muay Thai demonstrations and more.

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 10



Flipping out and killing people



It doesn't get much camper than this

He-Man and The Masters of the Universe

AV CHANNEL, PG

This 10 episode collection of the classic Filmation series is a product that almost every 80s child should be chomping at the bit for — I know I was. Problem is, if you think He-Man, now, is going to represent what it did 20-odd years ago, you should probably prepare yourself as the series has barely withstood the test of time, instead revealing a camp, kooky and at times, frighteningly queer cartoon starring a barely dressed Nazi poster boy. Ok, so maybe it's not all that bad, but like so many other cartoons of the generation (Thundercats, M.A.S.K., GI Joe), He-Man barely treats its viewers with intelligence and oft-times makes no

sense. That doesn't mean, however, it won't rekindle fond memories for people that grew up with Stratos, Teila and Orko, just don't go expecting something of the calibre of the latest He-Man series, or any other current action series.

For die-hard fans, the disc comes replete with documentaries and interviews with cast and crew as well as the nerdiest fanboys on the planet! It's definitely a collector's dream, but if you harbour fantasies of reliving a magical feeling from your childhood with this, you might be in for a rude surprise.

Stephen Farrelly

MOVIE: 3 / EXTRAS: 6

Whose shot is it? *mannerism*



Sopranos Season 5

WARNER BROS, MA 15+

The long awaited fifth season of The Sopranos couldn't have come soon enough and it lives up to the quality of writing and performance we've come to expect from this exceptional series.

We take up where we left off with Tony living in his dearly departed mother's house having been kicked out by the long suffering Carmella. She in turn struggles on her own with Anthony Junior and finds herself more than a little involved at school. On the business front, Paulie is involved in some quite literal 'turf' wars. Tensions are high with the New York syndicate in disarray after the death of Carmine Senior. The battle for the new Don is on!

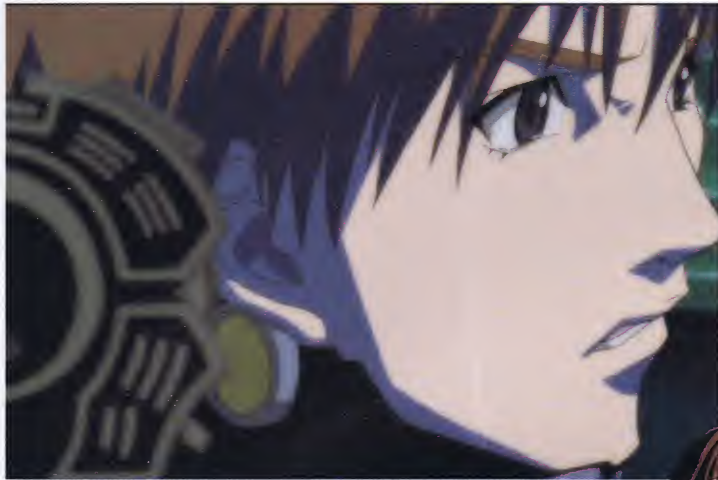
New kid on the block for the series is Steve Buscemi, playing

Tony's long incarcerated and apparently reformed cousin, Tony Blundetto. He is somewhat of a surrogate little brother for Tony. Uncle Jun is starting to lose his marbles and despite house arrest, goes walkabout and attends a large number of funerals. Dr Melfi rejects Tony's romantic advances, leaving him free to return to therapy, and with everything from bears in the back yard, FBI informants in his midst and Artie Bucco as a roomie, this can only be a good thing!

Not much in the way of extras, although Steve Buscemi's director's commentary is both tedious and strangely fascinating.

Evelyn Marshall

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 5



The hell happened to that guy's head?

Gantz VOL 1: GAME OF DEATH

CATEGORY: ACTION
 PRODUCTION: GONZO DIGIMATION

▶▶ Gantz is a very strange series, not just because of the plot, which is strange enough by itself but also because of the director's approach to the plot. Kei, the person that most resembles the hero in Gantz is a horrible person. He's rude, arrogant, lazy, obnoxious, a whiner and obsessed with sex. He's also dead, having been smashed into bloody fragments by a train. Or is he? His death is the last thing he remembers before appearing in a room populated by a cadre of other apparently dead people and a featureless black sphere named Gantz that can't spell properly. After playing a WWII era propaganda song the sphere tells the inhabitants of the room that

their lives belong to it. Then the story starts to add complications like aliens that like friendship and green onions, creepy kids who killed themselves and lots of exploding bodies. Then it gets weird. Although the visuals of Gantz revel in violence with frequent and gory deaths the main characters show a huge reluctance to actually commit any violent acts. Likewise Gantz is very sexualized with a solid dose of nudity and sexual themes but with no actual sex. An interview with the director Ichiro Itano goes some way to explain the very graphic approach to the series – apparently censorship in Japan is at an all time high and he wanted to make a series that pushed the boundaries of what could be shown. Whilst this explains the graphic look it will take a few more episodes to explain why the leads are essentially pacifists in a brutal world, what the Gantz is and just what the hell is going on. It will be a confusing watch but ultimately we think it will be a rewarding one.

Daniel Wilks

**ANIMATION: 9 / STORY: 8
 EXTRAS: 6 / OVERALL: 8**



Like a James Bond opening credits



You think I'm nowhere to be found

Madlax VOL 1: CONNECTIONS

CATEGORY: ACTION/DRAMA
 PRODUCTION: BEE TRAIN

▶▶ Madlax comes as something of a disappointment after the first episode as what looks as though it will be a nice, slightly maudlin action series quickly changes into a character drama. Not that there's anything wrong with character drama mind you, just that if you're going to make such a drastic tonal change you better make damn sure that you have characters that you can care about. Unfortunately Madlax is made up of characters from a lightweight action series. They're slightly interesting but could only carry a series if there was some spectacular action to back them up. The first disk introduces viewers to Madlax, a mercenary for hire in the civil war between Gazth and Sonika. She likes pasta, guns and is pretty good at killing people. In four episodes this is all we really find out. After



killing a bunch of soldiers in the seemingly unconnected first episode, Madlax comes in contact with a young, almost catatonic girl and her protector and sits around pondering some stuff. The characters are vague and the pacing of the show is schizophrenic at best – when the action heats up it goes to the point of being ridiculous with one scene showing Madlax lovingly hugging an assault rifle and firing without aiming to destroy a fully loaded attack helicopter but the drama often consists of people looking wantonly through a window or wondering what they're going to have for dinner. The plot also contains so many disparate elements that not only is it hard to keep everything in check, it's just not really worth the effort.

Daniel Wilks

**ANIMATION: 8
 / STORY: 6
 EXTRAS: 3 / OVERALL: 5**

Scrapped Princess

CATEGORY: FANTASY DRAMA
PRODUCTION COMPANY: BONES

Set in a fantasy/medieval setting, *Scrapped Princess* has quite a cool hook. The main character, Pacifica Cassul, is a marked girl. When she was born, a prophecy declared that she would be the poison that destroys the world. On her sixteenth birthday no less. Thought to be killed as a child, hence the scrapped princess moniker, she actually survived, and is being hunted by soldiers in the name of their god Mauser. Fortunately, her older brother Shannon and sister Raquel have vowed to protect her, and they're traveling across the countryside trying to keep Pacifica's identity under wraps.

The series starts shortly before Pacifica's sixteenth birthday, and while the first DVD only hints at the wider picture, there's certainly a good foundation for a compelling series. The tone of the episodes we've seen so far, whilst having some humorous elements, is for the most part quite serious, which fits the set up to a tee. Much of the early going is slow paced and based around setting up the characters



(both good and bad) and story, with the potentially disastrous decision that Pacifica's siblings have made to keep her alive – i.e. choosing family over risking the apocalypse – given center stage, with several fight scenes thrown in for good measure.

While interesting, the first disc isn't exactly riveting viewing. We suspect that this series will be one to stick with, however, as there's certainly a lot of potential in the story, and it doesn't make too much sense to give away a lot in the early going. The design and animation is quite strong too, with some great scenery as the group travels, strong character designs and interesting mix of fantasy and military influences.

Celia Hobart

**ANIMATION: 7 / STORY: 6
EXTRAS: 3 / OVERALL: 6**



So much subtle fan service in this pic

Elfen Lied

CATEGORY: FANTASY/HORROR
PRODUCTION: GENCO

Now this, this is just awesome. *Elfen Lied* opens with an incredibly brutal fight scene. Well, less a fight scene than a massacre actually. A naked woman covered in blood calmly escapes from an obviously high security institution/laboratory, systematically cutting every guard that stands in her way into pieces. Literally. You've never seen so many arms and legs sliced off, and heads popped like champagne corks than in this one sequence. The mysterious nature of the killing – all done with surgical precision and from a distance, and the fact that the guards empty clip after clip into the girl to no effect, really serves to whet your appetite for what it all means.

After the girl – Lucy, has left the compound, a sharpshooter scores a hit on the side of her head and she falls off a cliff and into the sea. Now here's where it gets especially twisted. She's discovered washed up on the beach by Kohta and Yuka, a pair of teenagers who knew each other as children and are now back in the same town to go to college. It seems the hit on the head has

left Lucy with no idea who she is – or even the ability to talk. They take her in and what follows is a series of brutal juxtapositions of helpless, child-like Lucy being cute and mothered, then regaining her identity and brutally killing, only to revert again. The intent is obviously to shock, and whilst crazily over the top, it certainly succeeds.

Over the first disc you'll see elite soldiers sent in to find and terminate Lucy, you'll find out that she's a Diclonius, and just one of many that have been experimented on and left naked and bloody and chained up all their lives, and you'll find out what exactly the Diclonius' mysterious killing ability entails – which we won't spoil here because it's one of the coolest revelations on the first disc.

Elfen Lied didn't hook us in right away, but by the end of the first disc we were calling up Madman asking when we could get our hands on the next installment. Great stuff.

Cam Shea

**ANIMATION: 8 /
STORY: 8 /
EXTRAS: 4 / OVERALL: 8**

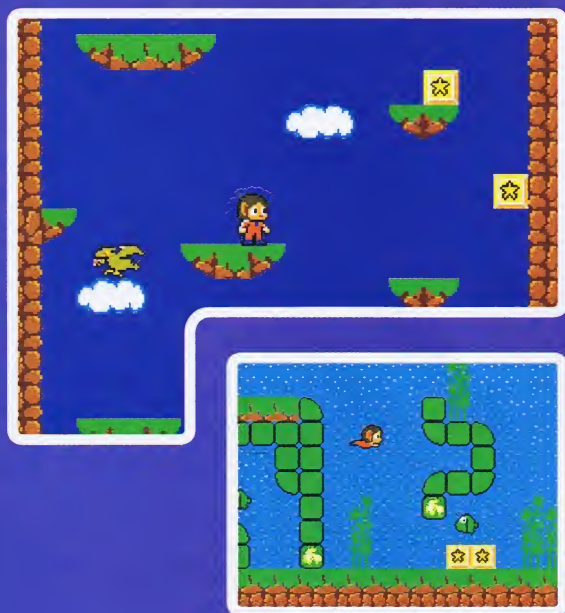


Nice hat



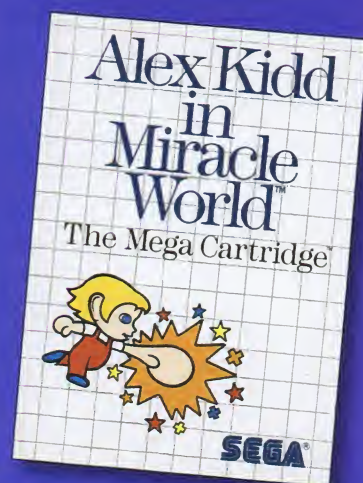
CHRONICLES OF THE KIDDO

>> SHEAMUS DUGGAN



If there were a list of legendary video game heroes of eras gone by, the name "Alex Kidd" would have to be a fairly high ranking entry under the "8-Bit" category. Positioned somewhere between Mario and that guy from Golden Axe, most likely right next to Wonderboy, Alex Kidd was one of the era's most prominent characters, starring in no less than five Master System titles and one Mega Drive in his fruitful career. Almost anyone who owned a Sega Master System, or even knew someone who owned one, seems to be familiar with the little guy with giant ears and a heart of gold, and although many often infuriatingly refer to him as "Alex the Kid" (it's "Alex Kidd" fools, Kidd is his surname!), he was probably Sega's most recognised character from the mid 80s to the early 90s. Alex Kidd was to the Master System what Mario was to the NES, and he flew the flag for Sega when the speedy blue hedgehog was nothing more than an idea waiting to happen. While Alex never did receive as much attention and praise from the mainstream as Nintendo's chubby Italian plumber, he nonetheless holds a special place in the memory of gamers who knew him and his quirky little platform games.

One of the most interesting characteristics of the Alex Kidd series was the fact that none of the games were actually sequels to any of the others; each one had its own unique and distinct flavour. While most were essentially good old-fashioned action platformers, the gameplay, character designs, art direction and general feel of Alex's adventures varied significantly from one game to another.



ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD (1986)

■ The original and many would say the best, Alex Kidd in Miracle World is by far the most popular and well recognised of the Alex Kidd series, most notably because it came as a built-in game with the Master System 2. Originally released by Sega to compete with Mario, Miracle World was one hell of a captivating game. Lovable character? Check. Bright and colourful graphics? Check. Awfully repetitive yet somehow insanely catchy theme music? Check. Alex Kidd typified addictive action platformers of the era, but at the same time set itself apart from the pack with its unique Japanese charm. Armed only with the ancient





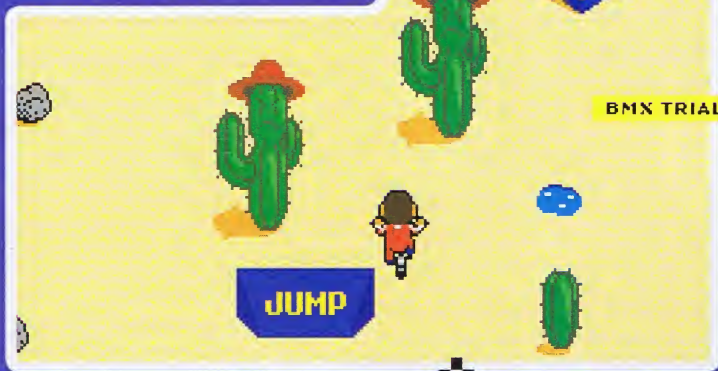
MIRACLE WORLD



art of Shellcore (the ability to break rocks with your fists), young Prince Alex ran, jumped, punched, swam, motorcycled and pedi-coptered his way through the world of Aries on a gallant mission to stop the tyranny of Janken the Great, evil master of the Janken game (known to us as "Rock, Paper, Scissors"). Boss battles consisted of facing off against Janken the Great and his henchmen, the appropriately named Stone Head, Scissors Head and Paper Head in Janken matches, an inventive little feature that epitomised the quirkiness of the series. Back in those days game saves were something that hadn't yet been implemented in cartridges, and as a result Alex Kidd in Miracle World was one tough cookie that all too often broke the metaphorical teeth of eager young gamers who dared take a bite. It featured a few insanely difficult parts toward the end of the game that all too frequently left the player hurling the control pad at the wall in anger and frustration, before picking it up, plugging it back in, and playing the game from the start all over again, hoping that maybe this time they'd make it just that little bit further. A sign of a great game if ever there was one.

ALEX KIDD: BMX TRIAL (1987)

Released in Japan only, this hard to find spin-off saw our hero display his prowess on the bike racing circuit, in a seemingly Micro Machines like BMX game. It certainly looks like a lot of fun, but unfortunately required a special paddle controller to play, rendering it unplayable even to those who may have discovered its emulated version online. Not that anyone would even think of doing such a thing, as emulating obscure Japanese video games from the 80s robs developers of their rightful profits now, doesn't it?



BMX TRIAL



SOMEWHAT ENIGMATIC Alex Kidd was created by Ossale Kohta, a somewhat enigmatic man who has been known to work under different pseudonyms. In addition to Alex Kidd, he worked on other cult classics such as the original *Phantasy Star* games, *Space Harrier 2* and the long forgotten *Zillion* series. He's currently working under the name Kotaro Hayashida for Japanese RPG developer Game Arts, the people responsible for the *Grandia*, *Lunar* and *Gun Griffon* games. If you're able to read Japanese, there's a 6-page interview at Sega Japan with Mr Kohta that sees him revisit *Miracle World* all these years later for a bit of a chat about its development. Find it at http://www.sega.co.jp/community/album/04_alex/home.html.



ALEX KIDD: THE LOST STARS (1988)

■ Alex's second proper adventure saw him leave the Miracle World (via a magical door on top of a mountain, of course) and travel to mysterious new realms to recover the stars that had been stolen from his home planet's sky by the evil creature Ziggurat. Featuring a magnificent array of weird and wonderful worlds, blindingly bright colours, epilepsy inducing flashing lights, off the wall enemies and what was probably the humble Master System's best ever attempt at speech



in a game (a blue sphere loudly proclaiming "I'm the miracle ball!"), Alex Kidd: The Lost Stars was like taking an acid trip in a psychedelic circus taking

place inside The Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky With

Diamonds". Only instead of newspaper taxis and girls with kaleidoscope eyes there were marching decks of cards, naked punk rockers that shot skulls from their arses and evil toy dogs that tried to kill you by barking out deadly solidified vocal waves taking the shape of the words "Bow Wow". Gone was Alex's ability to punch things, though you could fight off enemies with clouds if you were lucky enough to find the "cloud shot" power-up. Confused yet? The Lost Stars also featured a Wonderboy style time/vitality meter that brought a constant sense of urgency (that often verged on panic) to the gameplay. Really, if you've never played The Lost Stars then you've never truly lived.

THE LOST STARS



ALEX KIDD IN HIGH TECH WORLD (1989)

■ High Tech World actually had absolutely nothing to do with a world that could be remotely considered high in technology, unless you consider Feudal Japan with telephones and pizza delivery as "high tech". Less action and more puzzle solving RPG style platforming was the order of the day here, as Alex searched to find the 8 missing pieces of a map that led not to mysterious ancient treasures, not to the secret of eternal youth, but to the new video game arcade in the next town along. Why he didn't just ring up directory assistance on his telephone for the address and ask his mum to drive him there is anyone's guess, but in any case it was a good excuse for a hilariously absurd game. Case in point: In one section Alex must pass a multiple-choice test given by his teacher in order to receive part of the map. Not an unusual

concept, it starts off easily enough by asking for the capital of Japan. "Tokyo of course! I'm totally gonna ace this!" you'll think, before BAM! The game suddenly hits you with "Light from the Sun reaches the Earth in how many seconds?", "Which Classical composer was named Amadeus?", "1+2+3+4+...+98+99+100 = ?" and "What is the name of the 15th scene in Space Harrier?"

Not so smart now, are you chump? In order to pass you needed to get all ten questions correct. It's great to think that this game was actually made with primary school aged children in mind, in pre-Google times no less. High Tech World is packed full of hilarious Sega promotion, absurd accidental deaths and other random nonsense that will leave you staring at the screen in complete and utter bewilderment for



BO



HIGH-TECH WORLD

WIZARD "REMEMBER, OF EARTH, WIND AND FIRE, EARTH IS STRONGEST!"



LIGHT FROM THE SUN REACHES THE EARTH IN HOW MANY SEC.?
1.5 +2.50 3.500

a second before laughing out loud at the ridiculousness of it all. There also happened to be an insanely strict time limit on proceedings, which meant that even if the player miraculously made it to the end of the game, the arcade would probably be closed anyway. Anyone who can beat this game without a guide is a goddamn certified freaking genius.

ALEX KIDD IN THE ENCHANTED CASTLE (1989)

Enchanted Castle was Alex's first and last outing for the Mega Drive, and was sadly a step backwards for the series. In many ways it attempted to be *Miracle World 2*; the music, Janken matches, vehicles and items of the earlier game were all back, and many of the levels and enemies bore remarkable similarities to those found in the original. Yet *Enchanted Castle* wasn't nearly as good as the game it struggled to imitate, and unlike the other titles in the series, brought nothing new and interesting to the table. The levels were poorly designed, the control felt loose and playing it was for the most part an

unexciting experience. Quite possibly rushed out for the sake of having an Alex Kidd title for the Japanese release of the Mega Drive, *Enchanted Castle* was a mediocre game that should have been a lot better.

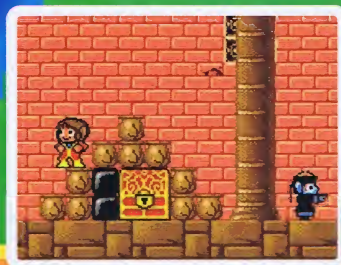
ALEX KIDD IN SHINOBI WORLD (1990)

After his flawed outing on the Mega Drive, Alex returned to the Master System a year later in the form of *Alex Kidd in Shinobi World*, his final adventure and interestingly enough the first to resort to the old cliché of basing the plot around rescuing a kidnapped girlfriend. But what a rescue it was to be! All of a sudden the big-eared Prince was a slick ninja warrior, slicing up enemies with katana blades and deadly shurikens, moving like the wind, double jumping off walls and even turning himself into a fireball to burn his way through hoards of veiled foes! *Shinobi World*, as you might have guessed, was an Alex Kidd themed tribute to Sega's excellent *Shinobi* games, and managed to bring the series into a faster paced, more action packed setting (complete with remixed *Shinobi* tunes) while simultaneously retaining that



ever-present Alex Kidd charm. *Shinobi World* is considered by many to be the crowning glory of the series, and was a fitting farewell for the big-eared prince who knew no fear.

Given that Master Systems and the Alex Kidd games can now be purchased for a pittance on Ebay and in various pawn shops Australia wide, why not splash out just a little and give this classic series a new lease on life? The gaming gods will thank you for it. <<



Links

<http://shellcore.smspower.org/>
No good Japanese videogame is ever without its own special run of obscure merchandise. Alex Kidd was no exception, with such items including a pleasant little pencil tin and a board game that looks every bit as perplexingly fantastic as any of the video games. Check them out along with early concept art, a television commercial, Japanese game magazine scans and more goodness at this Denmark based fan site.

www.ocremix.org

OverClocked has a few funky Alex Kidd tunes for you to play at your next home rave. The *Miracle World* underwater theme remix is particularly nice...

www.vgmusic.com

...while VG Music features an almost scarily complete discography of nearly every single Alex Kidd tune from every game in glorious MIDI, for you to put on your ipod and listen to on the bus to hockey practice.

<http://segaguild.neffirms.com/>
According to the Sega Collector's Guild, Alex Kidd in *Shinobi World* is officially the hardest game to find for the Master System in America. The SCG also contains a wealth of knowledge on obscure Sega related topics, software and hardware reviews, editorial rants, tips for collecting and very unfortunate puke-like wallpaper.



ENGLISH

As is often the case with Japanese games, Alex Kidd underwent a few changes in translation for western culture. The English version of *Miracle World*, for instance, replaces the Japanese version's end of level rice ball with a more American-friendly hamburger. Our version of *Enchanted Castle* saw the loser of a Janken match crushed

with a Warner Bros. cartoon-style anvil from the ceiling, whereas in the Japanese version the player somewhat disturbingly had all their clothes torn from their body. *High Tech World* wasn't even originally an Alex Kidd game, and was instead based on an 80s anime called *Anmitsu Hime*, before a few minor graphic and dialogue changes transformed it into a Kidd adventure. And here's a little fact that'll help you win first place in video game trivia night down at the local pub; *Shinobi World* nearly featured a boss named Mari-Oh, a parody of Nintendo's mascot that unfortunately didn't make it to either version of the game. One can only assume that Sega decided against risking a lawsuit from the sue-happy Nintendo lawyers!



MAIL HYPER!

POSTAL:

78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia

EMAIL:

freakscene@next.com.au

TAKE 2 OF THESE

I had a dream where it turned out Amos' "nice guy" image was just a front for the fact he was actually a criminal genius and master of disguise. Two of his disguises included a school girl with pigtails and a world-famous female African-American jazz violinist who eats her violin as part of her act.

Then I woke up with a massive migraine and threw up all over.

Tim Chmielewski

OK Tim. Never tell us what goes on in your head ever again.

ONLY ONE RONNIE

Name: THE RON

Born: Ronville, America's 51st state.

Alias: YOUR RULER, MORTAL!!!

Appearance: Red hair, freckles and a giant mallot, for clubbing people and generally causing pain. Oh, and also really fat.

Motto: TO THE COAL MINES, SLAVE.

Current Location: Sitting on my throne in the recently conquered Mexico.

Most famous for: My boxing match with the Anti-Ron.

General Summary: THE RON is an immortal being, who travels across the lands with his army of mushrooms and cabbages, squishing cities and conquering worlds. He rules over everyone, and will soon eat the president. He has also eaten Godzilla, Rodan and Micheal Moore. He wants all reading this to return to the mines, whether they be sugar, or coal, IMMEDIATELY.

ALL HAIL THE RON!!!!



I AM THE KING OF SPAGHETTI!

Nice try The Ron but for our money you're no Crate Man.

SUPER HAPPY WOODEN BOX

It was a sad day when it was announced that poor little super-happy Amos was resigning, leaving a gaping hole in the character of the magazine and threatening to shake the foundations of Hyper itself. However all is not lost, the mag that has kept me entertained for years will continue its reign of glory, if and only when a suitable replacement is employed. That replacement is as obvious as the crushingness ability of Evil Malky, the lovingness of Levy and the mystery surrounding David Wildgoose (and his ghost). The best replacement is "THE CRATE" and for many reasons.

Crate has been inhabiting the gaming world as long as any gamer can remember, blessing each individual with protection from the evils of the world, the health and strength to carry on and achieve goals and aspirations, the crucial piece of fruit or ammunition one has been seeking for so long. Only Crate has the in-depth experience of a wide array of games over consoles and decades. It 'contains' knowledge and 'holds' the answer to the mascot issue. In many conversations with Crate, it has been revealed that it will attempt to maintain structure and rigidity to the position of mascot and provide resistance to any attempt of being crushed by other jealous individuals. Crate is no longer the fragile, 'do not drop', inanimate object of the gaming and transport industry. Crate is much more and therefore is the best choice!

Jack

Another vote for the Crate. Our sometimes little, sometimes big wooden/metallic friend is certainly looking like the front runner for the new mascot so far and it's no wonder. Jack, you've done a wonderful job of highlighting the strong points of the crate but something leads us to believe that you may actually be in the employ of this contender, churning out propaganda in the hopes of swaying others over to your camp. You failed to mention that the crate is inflexible, it's hard edged and that often it promises the world but proves to be empty.



[above] Liam Newton rocks so hard it hurts the planet Earth

MARTIZZLE FOR MASCIZZLE

Hello boys! I am once again sleep deprived, so you know what that means - email!!!

Apologies it has taken me so long to contact y'all, but, umm, stuff... yeah. Nonetheless, if the job is still going, I'm still really really keen to become da Mascot (of doom).

As the official Hyper mascot, I would strive to live up to the almighty benchmark left by Amos - I have an image on my PC that I study and muse over daily which I find to be most inspiring. Every day I feel I get to know the man behind the name deeper and deeper, and through that knowledge I come to understand what it really TRULY means to be a mascot.

If chosen, I would take it upon myself to increase awareness of this fine publication by attending every street rally in Sydney proudly brandishing a placard sporting the Hyper logo - regardless of relevance e.g. the next anti-war

CAPTION THIS!

PART 68 WINNER

Brok Alexander Power (or BAP for short) made us have a few funnies this month with his entry



Conker knew something was wrong when even the mayor didn't attend the ceremony

DEPT. OF MISC. AMOS SIGHTINGS



[up] We accidentally deleted the email this came from, sorry dude



[above] Jarrod Howard discovered why Amos really quit being mascot

rally held, Hyper's logo will be there. Guaranteed.

I am currently involved in a project, the goal of which is to increase usage of the word 'blau'. I have thus infected myself, my flat mate and several workmates with the affliction to randomly exclaim "Blau!" whenever things do not go according to plan. I will be contacting Webster and Macquarie shortly regarding inclusion in the 2006 dictionary and thesaurus.

Top 5 Reasons to Elect Me

1. The key ingredient in 'Nature's Goodness' is 2-4 desoxypropineuramine (Pleasing taste, some monsterism...)
2. Servicable Stan and/or Kyle voice
3. My television has a game built into it (weird, eh?)
4. Step - pause - turn - pause - pivot - step - step NOT Step - pause - turn - pause - pivot - step - pause!!!
5. Amos is the way, the truth and the light. I understand this now, I am saved.

Blau!

-Martina.

...why must it be???

A vote for Martina is a vote for the Hyper crew getting beer. Although methinks your grasp of the meaning of Blau may be a little askew.

FAN FICTION

I've been reading your mag for about 3 years and it is without a doubt, better than anything else that can claim to be a video games magazine. Following a tradition now evident in many letters you've received I shall now proceed to defend your honour by saying, TO THOSE OF YOU WHO DON'T LIKE IN HOUSE JOKES, GET OVER IT! It must be obvious by now that there are even greater amounts of people who like this mag because of the nature of the mag itself. In house jokes are the only way my friends and I survive as fifteen year old school

students; I mean what can be more satisfying than yelling DEFILE! when someone does something like attack someone's face with a permanent marker.

Anyway I'd like to say that I'm a proud gamer that's open to many platforms, from many years gone by, I started with the Sega megadrive, then Playstation, computer, GBC, PS2, GCN and XBOX. (Although I own neither) Then I began playing N64, SNES and NES, and I still do, especially the older Final Fantasy games, (My favourite was six)

Then I got the June Hyper and you went and ruined all my plans by throwing in a free ware CD, I'm totally addicted to Ancient Domains of Mystery now, as well as Taurus Trooper and I would rather play it than any of my PS2 games.

Well, I'll now leave you with some questions, which I'll hope shall be answered in some form, or another.

1. What overall score did you guys give Final Fantasy VII?
2. Have you guys Ever rated the Neon Genesis Evangelion Movie DVD box set (BEST ANIME EVER...yes, its true, I write Fan-Fiction for it all the time)
3. I'm hoping the Revolution will be able to stand up to the PS3 and the X-BOX 360, it should come out alright, but can they expect a growth/Decline in their market share?
4. Advent children won't be in the cinemas, LIES!!!! (another common saying among us)

Well as I sit here typing, my Black Mages CD playing in the background, I contemplate my next weekend of four player Super Smash Bros Melee (I'm the best with Peach MWAHAHAHAA) and Phantasy Star Online and say to you, seeya.

Anthony Smith

- 1) We gave it 95 back in '97. Word.
- 2) Probably. For our money whiny teenagers, incomprehensible plots and overt religiosity do not

LETTER OF THE MONTH

MASHED (NO PILLS AND WHIZ THOUGH)

Firstly I must thank you, not just for such a great magazine, but for enlightening me to the joy that is Mashed. When I saw this game for \$15 at sales earlier this year I just had to buy it. As a part of the video game club at my uni, every week the projector has been dominated by Naruto 3. Sure the game's alright, but I like variation. For the past month I'd brought along Mashed in an attempt to get people to give it a chance. Last Friday as I set the Xbox up, they were finally willing to give it a go. It was a roaring success, all but 2 people shifted from Naruto to huddle around Mashed! By the end of that same night, 2 people from the club had already gone and bought their own copies, along with also the prospect that this week it will knock Naruto off the big screen!

Now on to a question, ever since we've shifted from carts to discs, one thing has always bothered me, how easily games can be destroyed by scratches and such. Now I'm all for buying legit games and see beyond the common argument of "it only cost \$2 to make the game, they just try and rip you off", but when my game reaches that point where it can no longer play, it's disheartening that I'd have to pay another \$100 when I've already paid for the development side of things... I really just want a new disc which is worth \$2. Why don't they develop a system where by you can send your original disc back along with say \$10 and get sent back a brand new disc? It'd be so much better for rarer games especially, as for example, I finally picked up Rez and Project Zero ex-rental yet they're nearing the end of their lives, there's only so few copies of such games out there. Besides, it'd stop the need for "backups" and could help slow piracy somewhat.

One last thing, is it ever possible you guys might put up like a guide online outlining what issue each review was in? Can be so frustrating trying to search through back issues for that obscure gem of a title... yet it's good to embrace the memories, though you still owe me a review of Shenmue 2 on Dreamcast "shakes fist". If anyone needs me, I'll be in the angry dome!

Cheers,

Matt

Excellent, another convert to the cult of Mashed. Soon no other multiplayer game will rear its ugly head - they will all bow to the awesome power of Mashed! Now, on to your problem about replacing discs - many games do have a returns policy on damaged discs for replacements already but this does not and will never include second hand games. No company is going to replace something you bought second hand that could have been played/owned by dozens of people before you.

You want a review of Shenmue 2 on Dreamcast? Ok, it goes a little something like this. Shenmue 2. Platform: Dreamcast. Shenmue 2 on Dreamcast is just as good as the Xbox version we reviewed a couple of years ago, only unavailable from sources other than second hand and not as pretty.

Anyway, have a mouse.

Oh, and we have an internal database of review issues/scores going back about seven years which we'll get around to putting online eventually.



You've won a Microsoft® IntelliMouse® Explorer for PC!

Best. Mouse. Ever. The IntelliMouse® Explorer is an ergonomic optical mouse with five re-programmable buttons and an excellent feel for serious gaming!

make for great viewing. Give us Escaflowne or Gasaraki anyway.
3) *We really won't know until the consoles come out, but Nintendo aren't entering into the hardware pissing contest between Sony and Microsoft. They're not trying to compete on raw processing power, instead hyping their supposedly revolutionary new controller. It's going to be tough for them in the next gen, but at the very least their*

first party titles will make the machine worth buying.
4) *We seriously doubt it will be coming out at the cinemas - there won't be too many cinema chains willing to take the risk of picking up a niche, animated, one-hour film based on a game that was released a number of years ago and is already saddled with the stigma of a massively hyped and over budget flop of a movie. Sorry dude.*

The Passion of the Gamer

GAMING GUILT

By Dylan Burns

The days are getting darker, the outside world more hostile to traverse. This is the gaming season - a time when exercise (for those who believe in that mythical activity) can be warded off. Mainly because it's raining, but also because of the fact that you probably wouldn't go out even if it weren't.

Usually I am quite happy with my passion for games, and often take time to laugh exaggeratedly like an evil overlord at those poor souls who have, for one reason or another, been sucked into that big black hole that is referred to as (gulp) employment. How I have managed to coquettishly tease that monster is a story for another time and place, and it is sufficient to say that not much comes between this Hyperian Knight and his love for games.

So there I am, ready to enjoy a bloody good gaming session, when it hits me - gaming guilt! Perhaps many of you have experienced this; its insidious infection comes in many forms. You know that you really should finish that essay, perhaps do the housework, or go to paid work. In fact, a million other tasks should really come before games, but you just can't bring yourself to do them. You want to play games, not wallow in so-called reality. From whence comes this guilt that sometimes threatens to reduce our love of games? I intend to find out.

But first, two related questions often aimed at me, sometimes under the guise of disparaging remarks regarding my gaming passion, are as follows: 'What exactly is it that makes games so fun?' and 'Are games at all productive?'

Well, games are fun for many reasons and, much like experiments involving rats and some rather invasive electrodes, it seems human nature to want to repeat an experience that is fun or which produces good feelings. Without delving too far into the private penchants that the previous premise supports, it seems apparent that if games weren't fun for some reason, then we wouldn't want to play them.

Of course, the intensity of gamers differs among the ranks. Some gamers are hard-core; they exist only to beat others or their own high scores. Their pleasure is derived from overcoming an immense challenge and the knowledge that very few people in their immediate geographical area are as good (read obsessed) as them. Some people just seem to like the pretty lights and pictures on the screen and the pleasures for them come from the aesthetic experience, rather than from any kind of game progress or want to complete it. Most of us fall somewhere within these extremes.

However, gaming pleasure is not something that we can quantitatively measure, like we can, say, weight or temperature. Pleasure is a subjective quality that can only be expressed lexically, from me telling you about it and describing it in detail. My experience of gaming pleasure may sound the same as yours, as I describe it, but we shall never actually know if it is the same because you can never actually be me as I experience it.

Surely gaming guilt stems from a feeling that I have not accomplished anything with my day, have not actually produced anything, except perhaps added to the electricity bill. Or have I? Let's see, I've driven many kilometres, upgraded five stats, slayed the beastly beast, done some burnouts, enjoyed various games' parables, thrown the controller

at the television four times in frustration at a stupid cheating game, burped, farted, changed the cords to play different consoles, configured the mouse, downloaded a patch, abused everyone online and - let's just check, yep, eaten most of what's left in the fridge. Now in my book, that's a pretty damn productive day!

Many other favourable results can be had from a successful gaming session: elation at completing a hard part of the game, satisfaction at mastering new button combinations, pleasure and appreciation of a game's design and/or soundtrack, and many more such aspects.

But unfortunately that won't convince my naysayers - evil, wicked people that they are. They will deny my attempt to call game progress productive, and will sneer derisively at my calls to appeal to subjective or personal gains. Such people dwell with both feet planted firmly in 'reality', a verisimilitude where funny looking plastic rectangles are the reward for their labour. 'This is productive!' they will say, as they wave their plastic notes at me. Damn economics threaten to topple my newfound ideas! But I shall persist.



Now, I'm not saying that work is necessarily a bad thing (as much as it hurts me to admit it), but that the guilt I feel for playing games rests on the belief of most people, and thus instilled in us from a young age, that playing games does not gain anything at all - it's time wasted. However, when I swagger down to my local video store to engage in a somewhat gladiatorial conversation with Geeky Geekinson - who suspiciously seems to slink in behind me every time I visit - I'm on a level playing ground, if you like, and can spout off all that I've discovered and achieved with my day of gaming. He gets me, and in some weird way we can both appreciate that something has come from our efforts. He and I, perhaps the only two people in the world to do so, come to an understanding that indeed our gaming expeditions count as experiential productivity, and can wish a hard and fast sixteen-punch combo K.O. on all those who would deny it to be so!

But unfortunately, now at the end of my ruminations, I am left in limbo. I have only my own (and Geeky's) self-justification to fall back on. Perhaps my views will never be reconciled, and it may be that I'm alone when these disparate feelings of enjoyment and guilt exist within the same epistemological moment. However, if you, like me, have suffered from gaming guilt at some stage, then I hope you will take some solace from my words and realise that some people just don't get it, they never will.

If it is my fate to become a gaming pariah, then so be it. I embrace it with glee, for then at last I may be able to stop those guilty glances at last week's dishes and staunch the frustrated tears that threaten to well in my eyes when arguing against those who just can't see the importance of what I do.

Therefore, to all who have followed me in this rant, I say this: shed that gaming guilt, throw that tea towel down, take those rubber gloves off (unless you really want to keep them on, which is fine as well I guess), or call in that sick day you're owed, and plant yourself down in front of your favourite game. And me? Well, one day I may just beat Geeky Geekinson's high scores. And that, my friends, will be a day to remember!

© Sir Dylan Gameboffin Burns III, 2005



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20,000
PRIZES & GIVEAWAYS

26th - 27th
august

**sydney olympic park
showgrounds hall 4B**

→ **FRIDAY 26th AUGUST**

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Showcasing the latest products
from ATI Technologies.

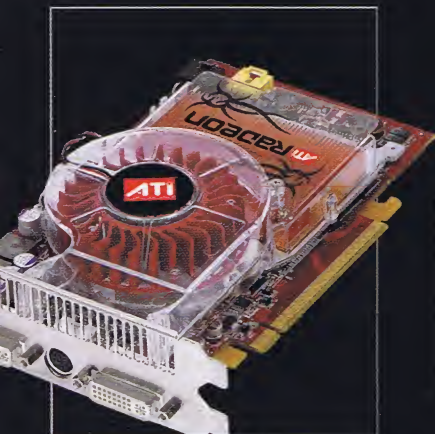
Open to the **media, distributors,
resellers** and related industries.

→ **SATURDAY 27th AUGUST**

Event starts 12noon - 5pm

Open to the General Public
Showbags and giveaways plus
heaps of prizes to be drawn
throughout the day.

ATI Promo girls on site!



THE GREAT SHARK HUNT

BY MIKOLAI

GAMES SECOND-HAND

THE ADVERTISEMENT PLACED IN THE weekend paper was vague, 'box of Sega Games + Dreamcast \$100'. Still, I decided it would be worth a look. No telling what might be in that box. Mint copies of Dreamcast Rez? A long forgotten Sega Saturn? My mind raced.

DESPERATELY CLUELESS HOUSEWIVES

When a woman with an accent answered the phone and said I could come out and have a look that afternoon I knew I was onto a potentially lucrative trip out to the suburbs. I have yet to meet a housewife with any appreciation of videogames and the foreign accent was just the icing on the cake. The hunt was on. I was confident she would have no idea what she was selling.

I arrived at the house and couldn't help but notice that the entire front yard was covered in children's toys. Ringing the doorbell I was greeted by six hyperactive kids, all aged 10 years and under and a flustered looking

a Master System while another one was practising Kung Fu on the box. When I asked the women about the Dreamcast she said it was in the other box and brought it out. This box contained two Dreamcasts, another Megadrive and various accessories. I had been meaning to try and barter her down from the original \$100 asking price but when I saw the second box with two Dreamcasts I didn't even bother. I handed over my money and the fisting fighting, box destroying, wrong cartridge inserting kids helped me carry it all to my car. The two boxes I bought for \$100 contained the following:

- 2 x Dreamcast
- 1 x Dreamcast keyboard
- 2 x Super Nintendo
- 2 x Megadrive
- 2 x Master System
- 1 x N.E.S. + Lightgun
- 40 x Megadrive Games
- 12 x N.E.S. games
- 7 x Master System Games

No sealed copies of Rez or a spare Sega Saturn but the contents of those two boxes were easily worth three times what I had paid for them. After dusting everything off and keeping a few bits and pieces for myself I put the rest up on Ebay. Seven days later I had sold it all for just over \$300.

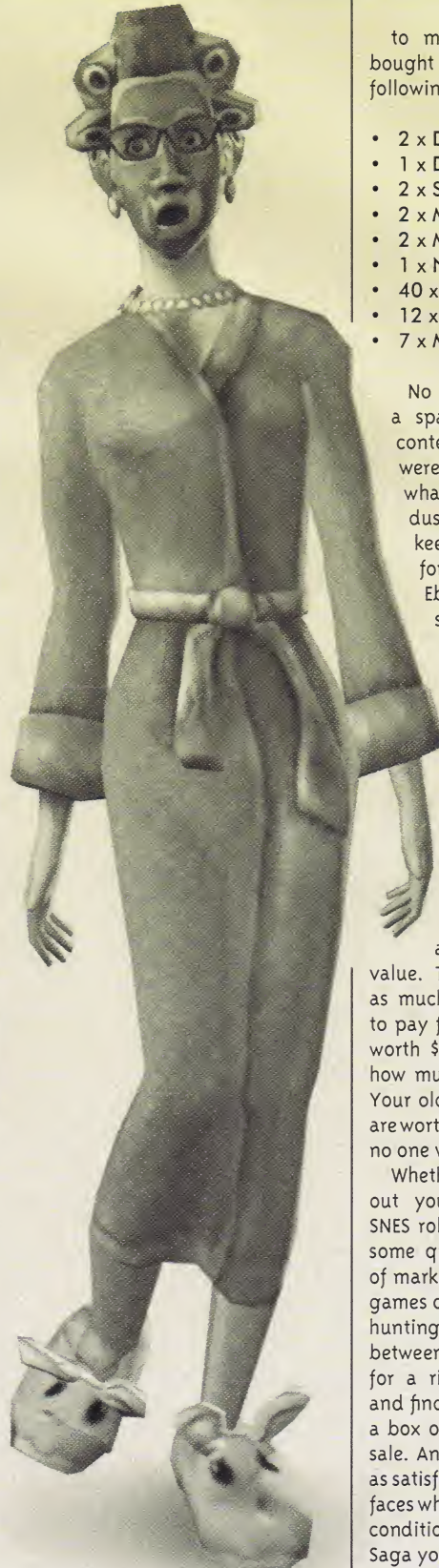
BARGAIN GAMES

women. As she went to get the box of games the kids started asking me about what videogames systems I owned and then got into a fistfight about it amongst themselves. After slapping her kids across the back of their respective heads the women invited me in.

The box was massive. As I started to look through it I noticed a couple of Super Nintendo's, an original N.E.S., some Master Systems and more. Meanwhile the kids were frantically grabbing loose cartridges and shoving them in my face. The smallest was attempting to insert a Nintendo cartridge in

There's money to be made in ignorance. And when it comes to hunting down rare videogames your profit margin is all about the ignorance of others. Thanks to Ebay and the Internet most videogames have a predetermined market value. That is, a game is worth as much as people are prepared to pay for it. Radiant Silvergun is worth \$300 (AUS) because that's how much people will pay for it. Your old Megadrive sports games are worth virtually nothing because no one wants them. Simple.

Whether you just want to round out your collection of obscure SNES



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Whether you just want to round out your collection of obscure SNES role playing games or make some quick money, being aware of market value and where to find games cheap is the key to bargain hunting. It's the difference between buying Chrono Trigger for a ridiculous mark-up online and finding a mint copy sitting in a box of SNES games at a garage sale. And besides, there's nothing as satisfying as seeing your friends faces when you show them the mint condition copy of Panzer Dragoon Saga you picked up for \$20.

RARE



V. RARE BOXED DREAMCAST REZ
\$250 ono. Still in shrinkwrap. No
rainchecks ph. 2468 1012

With this in mind Hyper presents
its official guide to bargain
hunting:

1. Forget Ebay when it comes to bargain hunting. Ebay is where people sell rare games for a healthy mark-up, not buy them. While it was possible to hunt down bargains on Ebay a few years ago, there are simply too many people online now who know the market value of a given game or product. You're not going to get Radiant Silvergun cheap on Ebay, everybody knows exactly how much it's worth and will bid accordingly. But hey, find a copy cheap somewhere and Ebay is the place to sell it.
2. The weekend shopper section of a newspaper is an excellent way to pick up potential bargains. The less detailed the classified the better. Generally speaking a housewife doesn't know anything about games. It may be Panzer Dragon Saga for Sega Saturn sitting there but for her it's just a 'box of Sega games'. Look for vague classifieds. If someone is advertising a 'Super Nintendo + 5 games' they probably have no idea what the individual games are or if they're worth anything. In most cases the games will be crap but it's always good to phone and check just to make sure they don't have a mint condition copy of Zelda or Metroid sitting there in their original covers. Or something called Chrono Trigger?
3. Pawnbrokers are your friend. Well they're not, but they are



DREAMCATCH GAME CONSOLE PLUS GAMES \$100

good source of cheap games. To this day I still cannot walk past a pawnbroker without having a quick look inside just in case. The simple fact of the matter is that no one will sell their games to a pawnbroker unless they're desperate. Consequently, you'll find two types of games in a pawnbroker; those that were stolen and those sold by desperate people. Sure the bulk of these will be shitty PS2 games but a junkie doesn't really care about the games they're just nabbed in a home invasion. Ikaruga on Dreamcast? How many junkies will have any idea of its market value or for that matter care? Ideally, the people working at the Pawn Brokers should

be as clueless about market value as the junkies. You're best bet is therefore a shitty pawnbroker in a bad neighbourhood.

4. Sunday markets are apparently a good source of cheap games. I wouldn't know as I'm never awake early enough to head down to one but from all accounts you can pick up old systems and games amidst all the cheap pirate software from Asia.
5. Garage Sales are like a Sunday market, only smaller. Obviously. These are usually advertised in the paper and a quick phone call beforehand will let you know if they're selling any games.
6. Video Stores. This tends to work best at the end of a console's lifespan when the video store is attempting to offload stock to make way for new games. If they're not interested in selling a particular game you can always claim that you 'lost' it. Depending on the video store they'll either

let it go or demand you pay for it. Still, if no one else has a copy and it's sitting there on the shelf being ignored it's worth it. I've been banned from countless video stores in my lifetime but there's always another

EX-RENTAL

video store. Or a relative who's membership card you can borrow.

7. Crappy Corner stores. See that battered old Neo Geo arcade cabinet outside your local corner store. Notice how it's got an original Metal Slug game? That's worth a lot of money to someone on Ebay. Make the storeowner an offer. Ideally you can keep the cabinet and sell the Metal Slug cartridge for a profit online.

Good luck. <<

JPN IMPORTS

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP
10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 26th June 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Juiced	Racing
2	▲	Madagascar	Adventure
3	⊛	SingStar Pop Bundle	All Other
4	⊛	MOH European Assault	Action
5	▼	Star Wars Ep 3 Revenge Sith	RPG
6	▼	GTA: San Andreas	Adventure
7	▼	Gran Turismo 4	Racing
8	▼	Lego Star Wars	Adventure
9	⊛	God Of War	Adventure
10	▼	Midnight Club 3 DUB Ed	Racing

TOP
10

Nintendo DS Games Over \$40

W/E 26th June 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Madagascar	Adventure
2	▼	Super Mario 64	Adventure
3	▲	Star Wars Ep 3 Revenge Sith	RPG
4	▼	NFS: Underground 2	Racing
5	▼	Yoshi Touch & Go	Action
6	◆	WarioWare: Touched!	Action
7	◆	Pokémon Dash	Racing
8	⊛	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
9	◆	Rayman	Adventure
10	⊛	Robots	Adventure

TOP
10

Game Cube Games Over \$50

W/E 26th June 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	⊛	Starfox Assault	Adventure
2	▼	Resident Evil 4 CE	Adventure
3	▲	Donkey Konga w Drums	All Other
4	▼	Baten Kaitos	RPG
5	▼	Pokémon Colosseum	RPG
6	⊛	MOH European Assault	Action
7	▼	Mario Kart Double Dash	Racing
8	⊛	Batman Begins	Adventure
9	▼	Legend Of Zelda 4 Swords	RPG
10	▼	Paper Mario 1000 Year Door	Adventure

TOP
10

Xbox Games Over \$50

W/E 26th June 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	GTA: San Andreas	Adventure
2	▲	Juiced	Racing
3	▲	Madagascar	Adventure
4	▼	Star Wars Ep 3 Revenge Sith	RPG
5	▼	Halo 2	Action
6	▼	Lego Star Wars	Adventure
7	⊛	MOH European Assault	Action
8	▼	WWE WrestleMania XXI	Sports
9	▼	Forza Motorsport	Racing
10	▼	Doom 3 Limited Edition	Action

TOP
10

PC Games Over \$20

W/E 26th June 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	⊛	Battlefield 2	Action
2	▲	The Sims Full House	Strategy
3	▼	The Sims 2: University	Strategy
4	▼	GTA: San Andreas DVD	Adventure
5	▼	World Of Warcraft	Strategy
6	▼	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
7	▼	The Sims 2	Strategy
8	⊛	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
9	⊛	The Sims Superstar	Strategy
10	⊛	The Sims Makin' Magic	Strategy

TOP
10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30

W/E 26th June 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon Emerald	RPG
2	▲	Madagascar	Adventure
3	▲	Pokémon Ruby	RPG
4	▲	Pokémon Sapphire	RPG
5	◆	Pokémon Leaf Green	RPG
6	▼	Pokémon Fire Red	RPG
7	▼	Lego Star Wars	Adventure
8	▼	Star Wars Ep 3 Revenge Sith	RPG
9	⊛	Dragonball Z: Buu's Fury	Action
10	◆	The Incredibles	Adventure

TOP
10

All Full Priced Games

W/E 26th June 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon Emerald	GBA
2	⊛	Battlefield 2	PC/MAC
3	▼	GTA: San Andreas	Xbox
4	⊛	Juiced	PlayStation 2
5	▲	Madagascar	PlayStation 2
6	⊛	SingStar Pop Bundle	PlayStation 2
7	⊛	MOH European Assault	PlayStation 2
8	▲	Madagascar	GBA
9	⊛	The Sims Full House	PC/MAC
10	▼	Star Wars Ep 3 Revenge Sith	PlayStation 2

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

JUNE 05 Vs MAY 05
RETAIL SALES 2004



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



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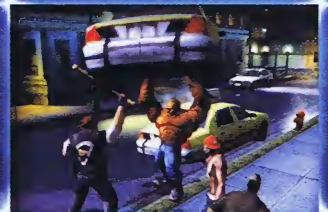
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PLAY THE GAME



Master An Arsenal
of Superpowers



Two-Player CO-OP Mode



Fully Destructible
Environments



Relive The Movie Action
and More

SEE THE MOVIE 07.07.05

FANTASTIC 4



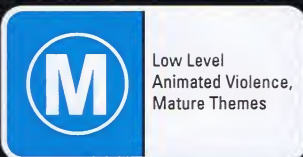
Play as each member of the Fantastic Four in
the ultimate team-based action-adventure game!

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

PlayStation 2



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activision.com.au

Next Issue:

THE WORST 25 VIDEOGAME CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME.

Who will come out on top
at the Bottom?

PLUS: Hyper's Top 50 games of all time, Undercover in Everquest 2, our Xbox Live roundup and an inside look at Marc Ecko's Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure.

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Enter the reference number of the item(s) you wish to purchase when prompted.
Your phone must have WAP enabled in order to download polyphonic ringtones and wallpapers. You must check the compatibility list at the bottom of the page before ordering.

POLY RINGTONES

NO UNWANTED SURPRISES, NO SUBSCRIPTIONS!

Pop Ringtones

	REF N°
Coldplay Clocks	100291
Delta Goodrem Almost Here	103991
Jamiroquai Feels Just Like It Should	104059
Kelly Clarkson Since You've Been Gone	103968
Mariah Carey It's Like That	104001
Moustache Everywhere	104030
Mylo In My Arms	104061
Tamara Jaber Ooh Aah	104009

Theme Ringtones

	REF N°
Get Smart	101020
Godfather	101022
Mission Impossible	101073
Old Style Telephone	103701
Seinfeld	101116
Sex And The City	101118
Star Wars	101822
The Apprentice	103655

Rock Ringtones

	REF N°
AC/DC Highway To Hell	100073
Linkin Park In The End	101528
Metallica Master Of Puppets	101540
Queen Another One Bites The Dust	101572
Simple Plan Shut Up	103987
Survivor Eye Of The Tiger	101597
The Verve Bittersweet Symphony	101610
Violent Femmes Blister In The Sun	102158

Rap Ringtones

	REF N°
2Pac Changes	100010
50 Cent Candy Shop	103993
50 Cent In Da Club	100040
Dr Dre (ft Eminem) Forgot About Dre	100406
Eminem Mockingbird	104025
Eminem (ft Dido) Stan	100501
G Unit Stunt 101	102086
Kelis Milkshake	102090

MONO RINGTONES

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Rock Ringtones

	REF N°
Garbage Why Do You Love Me	202995
Green Day Holiday	202996
Grinspoon Better Off Alone	202919
Korn Word Up	202924
Linkin Park In The End	200071
Marilyn Manson Personal Jesus	202903
Simple Plan Shut Up	202983
Slipknot Wait And Bleed	200070

Theme Ringtones

	REF N°
Buffy	200065
Friends	200089
Harry Potter	200062
Inspector Gadget	200182
Mission Impossible 2	200098
Rocky	200181
Super Mario Bros	200183
The Sopranos	200180

Rap Ringtones

	REF N°
50 Cent 21 Questions	200164
50 Cent Candy Shop	202989
Eminem 8 Mile	200007
Eminem Business	200151
Eminem Cleaning Out My Closet	200025
Eminem Lose Yourself	200006
Eminem Mockingbird	203021
Snoop Dogg Signs	203023

Dance Ringtones

	REF N°
ATB Don't Stop	200002
DJ Sammy Heaven (Slow)	200054
Eiffel 65 Blue	200097

Other Ringtones

Kasey Chambers Pony	202952
Lazyboy Underwear Goes Inside The Pants	202953
Maroon 5 Sunday Morning	202954

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CHART TONEZ

	Poly	Mono
Backstreet Boys Incomplete	104063	203056
Black Eyed Peas Don't Phunk with My Heart	104035	203031
Gwen Stefani Hollaback Girl	104041	203037
Gorillaz Feel Good Inc.	104034	203030
Ricki-Lee Hell No!	104066	203059
Frankie J Obsession	104022	203018
Random Put Your Hand Up	104065	203058
Will Smith Switch	103996	202992
Rogue Traders Voodoo Child	104055	203048
Rob Thomas Lonely No More	104002	202998
P-Money ft Scribe Stop the Music	104017	203013
Snoop Dogg Signs	104027	203023
Jesse McCartney She's No You	104060	203053
Foo Fighters Best Of You	104052	203045
Missy Higgins The Special Two	104007	203003
Bodyrockers I Like The Way	104023	203019
Jennifer Lopez Hold You Down	104064	203057
Amerie 1 Thing	104039	203035
Ciara 1, 2 Step	103985	202981
Destiny's Child Girl	104024	203020
50 Cent Just a Lil Bit	104062	203055
Tina Cousins Wonderful Life	104057	203050
Nelly N Dey Say	104054	203047
Delta Goodrem A Little Too Late	104051	203044
Shakaya Are You Ready?	104067	203060

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COMPATIBILITY - Mono Ringtones: Nokia Only; Polyphonic Ringtones: Kyocera: KE424c, KX2; LG: C1100, G1600, G7100; Motorola: C350M, C550, C650, C975, E360, E365, E380, E398, T720, V220, V3, V300, V400, V500, V550, V600, V80, V878, V975; Nokia: 2650, 3100, 3108, 3120, 3200, 3220, 3230, 3300, 3510i, 3585, 3595, 3650, 3660, 5100, 5140, 6010, 6020, 6100, 6108, 6170, 6200, 6220, 6230, 6260, 6585, 6600, 6610(i), 6620, 6630, 6650, 6670, 6680, 6800, 6810, 6820, 6822, 7200, 7210, 7250(i), 7260, 7270, 7600, 7610, 7650, 8910i, N-Gage, N-Gage QD; Panasonic: A19, A38, G50, X400P, X60, X70; Sagem: MyV55, MyV65, MyV75, MyX2; Samsung: C100G, D410, E100, E330, E700, E710, V200, X100, X430, X460, X600; Sharp: GX10, GX10i, GX15, GX20, GX25, GX30, GX32; Siemens: C55, C56, C60, C65, CF62, CX65, M50, M55, M65, M6V, MC60, MT50, S55, S56, S57, S65, SL55, SL56, SL5C, SX1; Sony Ericsson: F500i, K500i, K700(i), P800, S700(i), T230, T310, T610, T616, T618, T630, Z1010, Z600

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