

HYPERR >>>

WIN AN XBOX 360!



REVIEW

BLACK & WHITE 2

Giant monkeys, evil cows. Nuff said.



PSP USER'S GUIDE

WIRELESS INTERNET & NETWORKING • CASE MODDING
VIDEO CONVERSION • RUNNING HOMEBREW SOFTWARE

SAINT'S ROW XBOX 360 • PRINCE OF PERSIA 3 • BF2 MODERN COMBAT

A next MAGAZINE

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INTERVIEW

PS2/XBOX HANDS-ON

PS2/XBOX REVIEW

TOKYO GAME SHOW



new PS3 shots



VIVA LA REVOLUTION

We analyse Nintendo's strange new controller



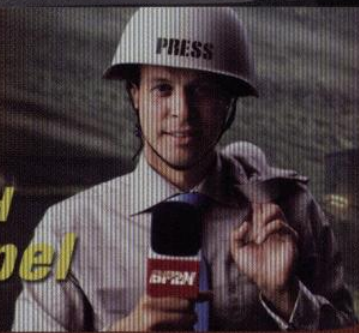
REVIEW

RESIDENT EVIL 4 PS2

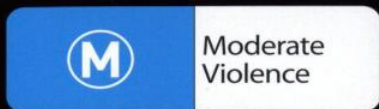
New weapons and levels, same brilliant gameplay



02.23 GMT **LIVE WITH**
Ken Chappel



ONE-MAN ARMY SEEN 'HOTSWAPPING' BETWEEN CHOPPER PILOT, SNIPER AND UNSUSPECTING TANK DRIVER
AWARD-WINNING MULTI-PLAYER GAME CAN ALSO BE WAGED BY 24 SOLDIERS ONLINE* SOURCES ADD:



PlayStation®2

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BREAKING NEWS

**"HE USED MY BODY THEN LEFT ME FOR
A TANK DRIVER" CLAIMS WAR HERO**



THE GREATEST WAR ON EARTH **BATTLEFIELD 2**
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▲ HI-SCORE
HERBIE HIND

QUICKER THAN A MONKEY AT BANANA TIME



ALTHOUGH SINGLE-PLAYER CAMPAIGN IS 'THE BOMB!

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FULL REPORT AT WWW.BATTLEFIELD.EA.COM



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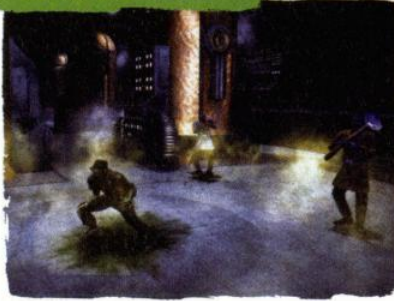


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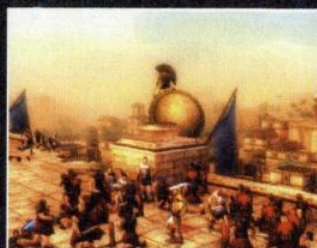
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WIN AN XBOX 360!

They're rolling off the production lines as you read this. Turn to **page 14** to find out how you can win one!

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A sublime return to acrobatic form for everyone's favourite prince...

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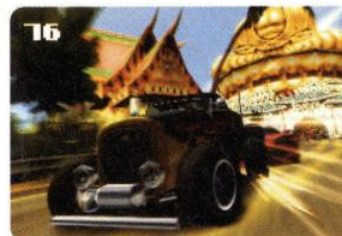
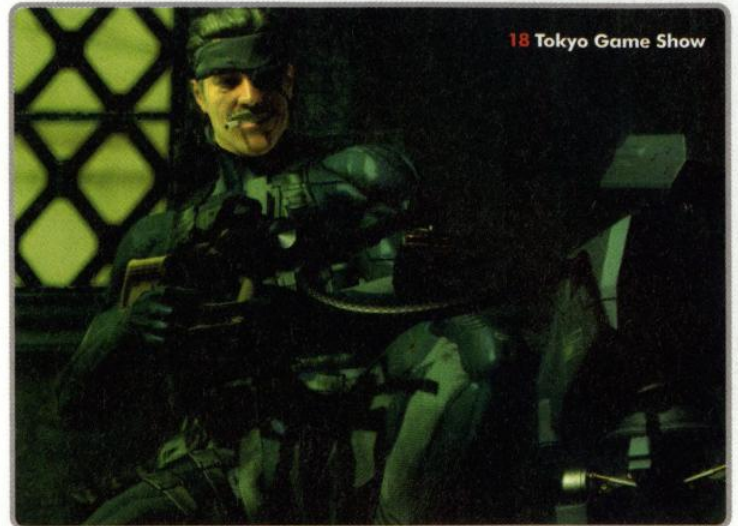
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EDITORIAL

»» How do you use your PSP? Is it just a games machine? Or have you bought some films on UMD? How about memory? Got yourself a fat memory stick yet? Are you using it as an mp3 player? A video player? A photo viewer? Or maybe even dabbling in some homebrew, or dare I say it, emulation? It's a potent device, and despite the fact that Sony keep trying to lock off many of the more interesting applications, it's a device with stacks of potential for the future. Memory capacity will continue to increase, putting large storage for PSP within reach, and Sony are even talking about using the Wi-Fi capabilities to "watch video from home entertainment terminals, anytime, anywhere in the world." Then there's the much vaunted interaction between the PS3 and the PSP. Hell, even between the Xbox 360 and the PSP. The future certainly looks bright for PSP – despite the slump in good game releases at the moment, and on page 40 we've run through some of the basics to help get you started. We've also highlighted a few of the cool PSP games unveiled at TGS in the feature that kicks off on page 18.

Speaking of TGS, how about Ninty eh? The Revolution controller is at once really exciting and a little depressing. Exciting because Nintendo have once again taken a bold step forward and there are countless ways this kind of control could be utilised. Depressing because, let's face it, consumers may pigeonhole the device as a toy, while developers will be forced to design games specifically for the system, which, given the current level of support for GameCube, may be an uphill battle. Let's hope that Revolution really is significantly cheaper to develop for than the other next gen platforms. What's also interesting is that the battle for the living room is shaping up a lot like the battle for the portable space. Think about it. PS3 will offer a more traditional console/multimedia experience where power is the key, while Nintendo are deliberately delivering a less powerful but more innovative product that has the potential to reinvent gaming and expand its audience. It's going to be fascinating to see how this all plays out.

Cam Shea »» Editor



HYPER»»

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HYPER CREW Monthly Top 5 Games

Cam "White Chocolate" Shea - Editor

1. Ableton Live 5.0 – PC
"You think WOW eats up a lot of your life? Best. Software. Ever."
2. SoulCalibur III – PS2
3. Resident Evil 4 – PS2
4. Far Cry Instincts – Xbox
5. Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones – PS2

Daniel "Super Punch Out" Wilks - Deputy


1. SoulCalibur III – PS2
"Fear my I337 tambourine skills!"
2. The Suffering: Ties That Bind – Xbox
3. F.E.A.R. – PC
4. Call of Cthulu: Dark Corners – Xbox
5. Tony Hawk's American Wasteland – Xbox

Malcolm "J-Rock" Campbell - Art

1. Quake 1 – Mac
"Feeling nostalgic... watching old Reload, Lakerman, Clan9 demos."
2. Wipeout Pure – PS2
3. Resident Evil 4 – PS2
4. Pro Evo 5 – PS2
5. Samurai Legend Musashi – PS2

Dirk "Shotgun Battle-axe" Watch - Guy

1. Battlefield 2: Modern Combat – Xbox
"This what Live was made for baby!"
2. GUN – PS2
3. F.E.A.R. – PC
4. Pro Evo 5 – PS2
5. Spartan: Total Warrior – PS2



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News

IN THE NEWS: Simpsons deservedly win no Emmys for season 16. Worst. Season. Ever. / In unrelated news, Fox sue Hyper

MODDING

IMPORT A GO GO

Chipping now legal again

In a landmark decision, the High Court of Australia has ruled that it is not illegal for consumers to add a mod-chip to Sony PlayStation consoles (and as an inference, all other consoles) to play games bought from outside the country. The High Court ruled that playing a game from a different region code did in no way represent piracy so ruled to legalise the chips and, as there are no higher courts to appeal to it looks like this ruling is here to stay. Aside from legalising mod-chips, the ruling could have a more significant impact on Australian gaming. Due to many games only being available from overseas we could see more local releases in the upcoming months to



[above] New, non-breast related use for silicon discovered...

steer people away from modding their consoles. More significantly we could also see a price drop in games to lure consumers away from purchasing cheaper import games. And hey, if that doesn't happen at least you'll be able to import and play Katamari Damacy!

PEACHY

MARIO KART ARCADE GP!

Namco and Ninty get busy

Keep an eye out at your local arcade because Mario Kart Arcade GP could be surfacing there soon. Along with the usual suspects like Mario, Luigi, Wario and Peach, MKA will also feature arcade-only characters Pac-Man, MS Pac-Man and Blinky from Namco's stable. Arcade owners will be able to link four cabinets together to get the multiplayer party started, and you'll even be able to insert your own head into the game via built-in cameras. With 24 courses and a number of new items/weapons, we'll see if Tim can track this one down for next month's arcade.

OVERFLOW

You may remember Every, Extend from our guide to freeware gaming feature and cover disc. Well, it's coming to PSP in the form of "Every, Extend, Extra" and Tetsuya "Lumines/Rez" Mizuguchi is playing a role in its development. Sweet.

Looks like the Halo film may be in safe hands. Microsoft announced recently that Peter Jackson and his partner Fran Walsh have signed on as executive producers.

Datel have announced a new bundle for PSP that will ship with both an X2 battery and a 4GB hard disc drive which will fit into the memory stick slot. No word on when or if the pack will come out here, but we have our fingers crossed. 4GB!

A homebrew app for the Nintendo DS has been doing the rounds on the net. Masquerading as software for viewing hentai, it's actually just a tool to run a Trojan virus that will screw up the firmware and essentially kill your DS. Downloader beware.

Oh dear. It seems that ten Xbox 360 dev kits have been stolen from a warehouse in Duren, Germany. Apparently three of the kits have been recovered, while seven are still out there...

Prince of Persia is coming to PSP, courtesy of developers Pipeworks, and apparently builds on Warrior Within, retaining the core game but adding new content.

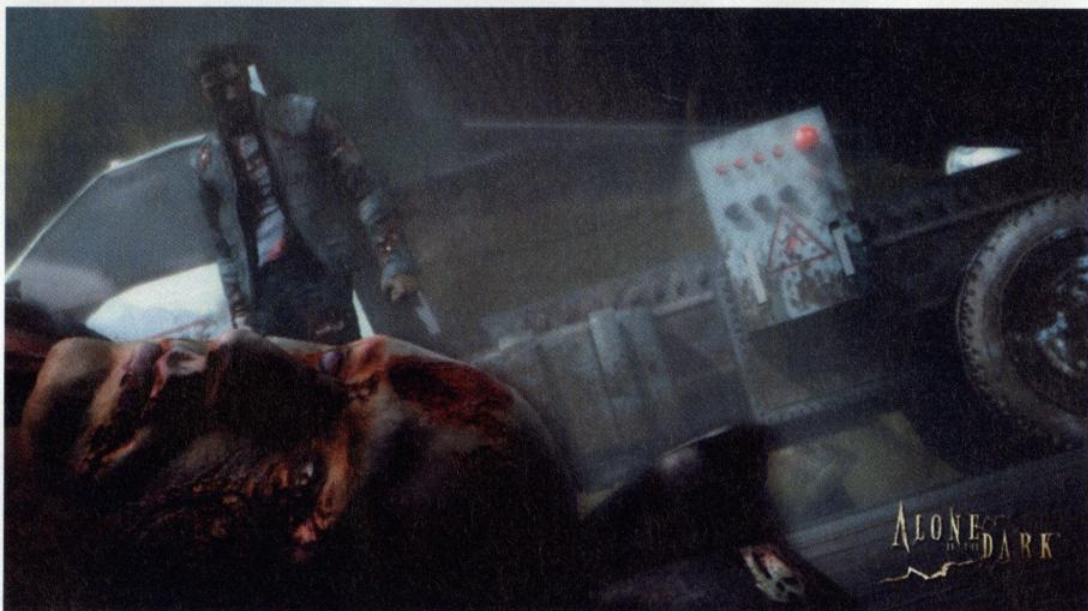
Nintendo DS should be going online in the next few months here in Australia. Locations for hotspots are being discussed and with any luck will be ready for use by the time Mario Kart DS hits our shores. More on this soon.

True Crime: New York City has some stellar voice acting talent behind it. We're talking Christopher Walken, Laurence Fishburne, Mickey Rourke and Mariska Hargitay (from SVU) among others. Full review soon.

FIRST LOOK! ALONE IN THE DARK ON XBOX 360!

Alone in the Dark XBOX 360

Developer: Eden Games • The Hype: "Astonishing real-time physics and full environmental interaction."



FIRST LOOK! CRACKDOWN ON XBOX 360!

Crackdown XBOX 360 Developer: Real Time Worlds

The Hype: "Action driving hybrid with a persistent world and innovative co-op gameplay."



NEW ONLINE SCREENS! MGS3: SUBSISTENCE

Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence PS2 Developer: Kojima Productions

The Hype: Sneaking Missions, Capture Missions, Rescue Missions, Deathmatch and Team Deathmatch for up to eight players.



WINNERS HYPER 144

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- Brad Taylor, Croydon, VIC
- Adam Zanetti, Wollongong West, NSW
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SERENITY

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CAPTION THIS!

PART 73

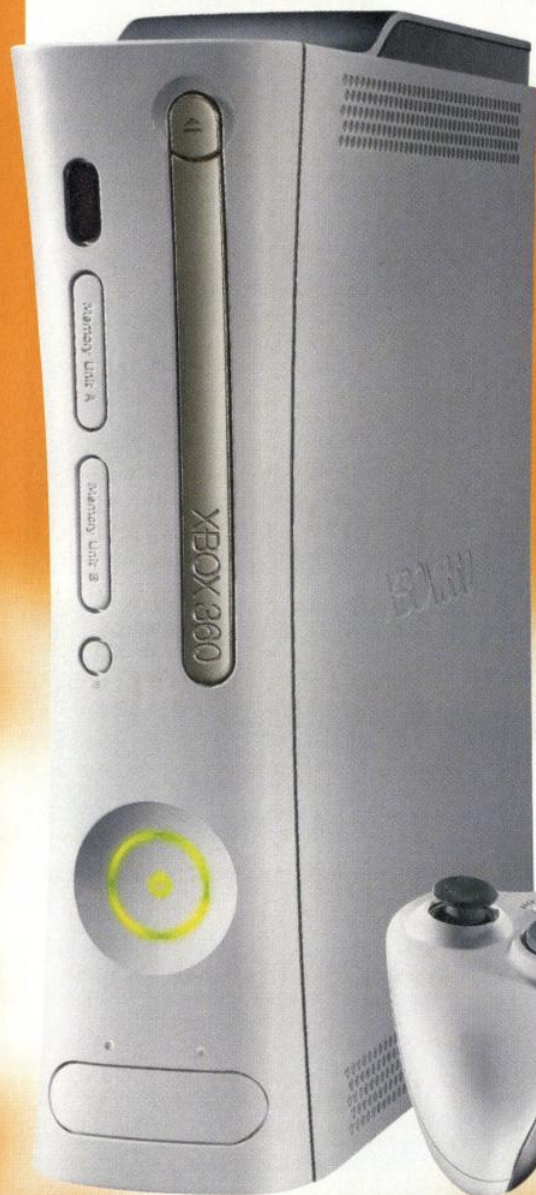
Come on, make us laugh. Just send your funny screen captions to us at captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 73 in the subject line.



As Pram in Makai Kingdom would say, "tee hee"

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It's all thanks to **Quantronics** too, the bastions of import gaming here in Australia. These guys are on the bleeding edge of gaming worldwide, getting the latest titles and systems from Japan and the USA as soon as they become available. They also stock a huge range of peripherals and other goodies – everything from cases and memory sticks for your PSP through to controllers, arcade sticks, replacement parts, accessories and import DVDs, and can service your machines should the need arrive. You can check out their range online at www.quantronics.com.au, or go visit them at their store in Parramatta to have a chat about the latest products and developments. Don't worry, they won't bite.



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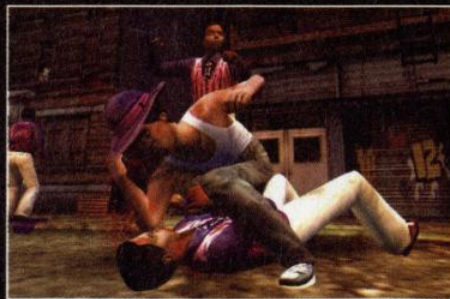
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Tokyo Game Show 05

TGS was a bit of a mixed bag this year. Sure, there was Nintendo's huge Revolution controller announcement, but on the other hand the promised hands-on with PS3 games didn't happen. While PS3 still had a reasonable presence, it was all in presentation or video form. Fortunately Xbox 360 had a strong show, and we were very pleasantly surprised at the number of strong PSP titles. Here are some of our highlights of the show, bearing in mind we've tried to avoid doubling up on E3 titles (see issue 142).

viva la revolution

By Kosta Andreadis

■ When Nintendo president and creative father of a vacuuming pink ball of something or other named Kirby plans on making a keynote speech preceding the Tokyo Game Show, one is wise to clear their schedule. It's a bonus when your schedule already states 'Friday - Iwata speech, so be sober. That means no drinking numb nuts!' Raging alcoholism aside, with any imminent Nintendo announcement the internet community begins to run wild and speculate, hypothesise and other such words meaning the exact same thing. By virtue of its name alone, the Revolution has seen the imagination of many run wild, with rumours about virtual reality helmets, built-in touch screens on each controller, and holographic display units sprouting up all over the net. But in typical Nintendo fashion the end result was, well, we're still trying to figure that bit out. Ballsy? Yes. Genius? Quite possibly.

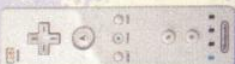
FIRST IMPRESSIONS DON'T LAST

As a company, Nintendo has a long history of keeping its cards close to its chest* and who could blame them, especially when it comes to controllers. D-Pads, shoulder buttons, analogue sticks and force feedback are all staple

components of the standard home console controller thanks to the Big N. Up until now all we knew about Nintendo's mysterious Revolution was its backwards compatibility and that it looked cool and featured full wireless functionality, and with the dust now firmly settled and rationality and optimism back in control we can safely say that the Revolution controller is a definite cause for excitement. But that wasn't always the case, and once we saw it most people probably expected the next words spoken by Iwata to be something along the lines of 'Ever navigate the special features section of a DVD menu and think to yourself, I should be playing a game with this thing?' and to be honest that seemed like a rational response at the time. Heck, even Holographic Display Unit Guy would have been scratching his head. Okay, so apart from resembling what could have been a remote control for one of a number of home theatre devices, there was obviously more to it than that and of course there was, a lot more. Apart from looking sleek, spanking and sexy in white, here's a brief rundown of what it has and does, something we like to call the Revolution Controller Feature List 3000TM**.

TURN IT AROUND

Nintendo have already announced their plans for game downloads from their back catalogue, and for N.E.S. games the new controller will work a treat. Just turn it on its side and voila! You have a N.E.S. pad!



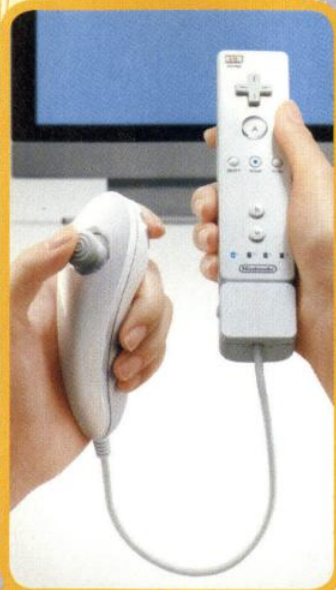
'the feeling is so natural and real as soon as players use the controller their minds will spin with the possibilities of how this will change gaming as we know it today.'

satoru iwata, nintendo president

- Elongated remote-control design for universal appeal.
- Wireless, and battery operated, with full details yet to be disclosed.
- 3D Pointing System providing true and accurate sensors that can detect all movement in a 3D space, including tilting.
- In addition to navigational buttons the control features three face buttons (with one large main button labelled 'A'), a trigger button on the rear, and a D-Pad.
- Built-in rumble functionality.
- Expansion-ready via a connector at the bottom, with an analogue stick expansion to ship as standard. This has been dubbed the "nunchaku" setup.

**EXTENSIONS, BABY!
EXTENSIONS!**

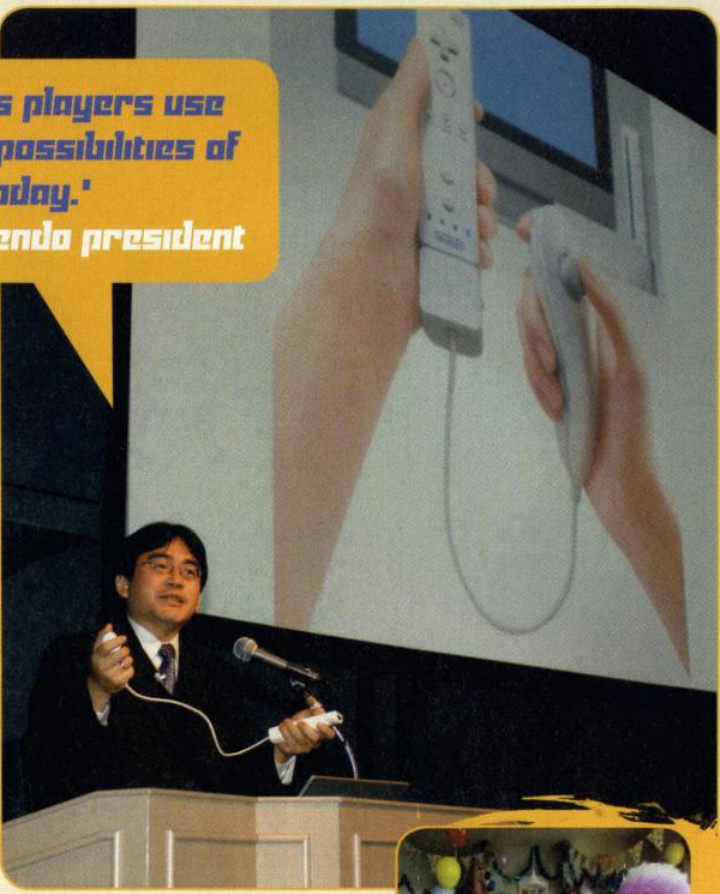
Apart from the analogue stick setup that will ship with the console, Nintendo have also stated that they plan to release a number of peripherals that will act as extensions to the pointer. As to what these may entail, who knows, but when questioned on how players can expect to play GameCube games on the system, Nintendo announced that they plan on releasing a standard controller peripheral that the pointer will dock in. It's also worth mentioning that the Revolution did have controller ports for standard Cube controllers when it was unveiled in May.



EXCITEMENT SETS IN

With no actual Revolution titles on display that utilised the new controller, Shiggy himself introduced a number of interactive demonstrations that provided a great introduction to its versatility. Here are some of the standouts.

1. Shoot Stuff – Using the controller much like a light-gun, players had to shoot blocks that would appear at random places on the screen. Using the controller in this fashion was remarkably intuitive and definitely showed how precise and accurate its detection really is.
2. Fishing – One of the more obvious uses for the controller, but one that also demonstrated movement on the z-axis as you selected where to drop the lure. Once you have a bite using the controller to pull out your catch proved to be quite impressive.
3. Air Hockey – Much like the real thing, own goals included, as two players move the controller around, take a crack at the puck and defend their goal. A simple demonstration that helped solidify the controller as the perfect choice for 'party' styled mini-games.
4. Pokemon Hunt – Except you don't get to shoot them in this simple demonstration. Instead players use the controller to zoom in and out and navigate a large picture/map in search of Pokemon. Sound fun? It's wasn't but Nintendo pointed out the ability to move forward and back can definitely be used for a sniper scope in shooters. That's all fine Nintendo but why am I not shooting Pokemon right now?
5. Flying High – Set in the hub world of Mario Sunshine the controller was used to navigate a small plane through rings. Once again the response was fantastic and it's easy to see this being translated into a flight game or better yet, driving.
6. Metroid Prime – The most interesting and promising demo utilised the "nunchaku" setup with the analogue controller in a recreation of a scene from Metroid Prime on GameCube. Using the pointer (used to aim and



shoot) and analogue stick (move and strafe) in a shooter setting provided the closest representation of the PC-style mouse and keyboard setup we've ever seen on a console and although it was slightly disorientating at first we were floored at the possibilities this could bring to the genre on consoles.

KEEP DREAMING, IN A GOOD WAY

A 3D pointer and the dual wielding setup definitely impressed and one can only imagine how Nintendo will utilise it in their staple franchises like Mario and Zelda. Will we be using the pointer as a makeshift sword for Link, or use it to precisely aim our arrows and hook shots? Will Mario move with the analogue or pointer, or both? Or will the "nunchaku" setup spell the end of certain genres being better suited for PC's like RTS games and first person shooters? Interesting times are surely ahead and we're willing to give Nintendo the benefit of the doubt as final judgement is reserved until we get our hands on some actual Revolution software but word is that won't be until E3 2006. But change is always good, even when it's bad, and if nothing else Nintendo has made the next generation of gaming a hell of a lot more interesting. <<

* Bear in mind that for this analogy to work the industry would need to be a game of poker and Nintendo would be a pretty decent player, much like Matt Damon from Rounders.

** Revolution Controller Feature List 3000TM is not an actual trademark of Hyper Magazine. Think of it more along the lines of an "it's ours, use it and we'll sue your ass for everything you got" kind of thing. Have a nice day!



VIDEO REEL

Nintendo also showed a short video clip that focused on players using the controller in a number of hypothetical ways, from two players using each pointer as racquets in a game of tennis to another using the "nunchaku" setup in what seemed like a Luigi's Mansion type game with the pointer as a flashlight. It didn't stop there as other scenes included a dentist drilling teeth, using the pointer to chop and prepare food, and using two pointers as drum sticks in a music-styled game.

phantasy star universe

System: **PC, PS2** / Genre: **RPG** / Developer: **Sonic Team**

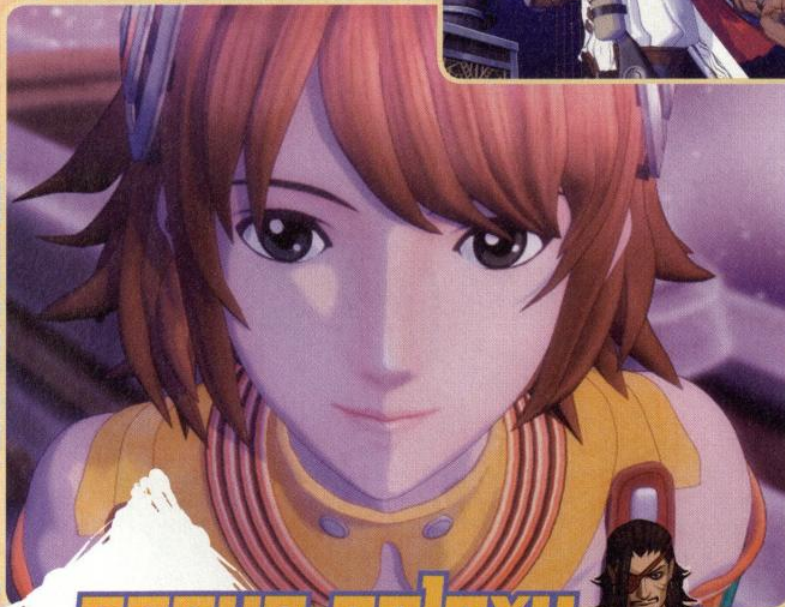
■ If you've never played any of the Phantasy Star games before, pop on over to page 90 and steep yourself in the history of the series, then come back here and join us as we get excited at the first single player Phantasy Star game in more than ten years! Mind you, it's not just a single player game. Not only is Universe set to offer more than 40 hours as a single player RPG, it's also going to have a fully fledged online subscription-based component. It's going to be interesting to play both, as in the offline game you play as a predetermined character (Ethan Waber) trying to find his missing sister under the shadow of The Seed, a mysterious race who are invading his planet. In online, however, you create your own character, but still go through the same timeline, seeing things from many different perspectives.



exit

System: **PSP** / Genre: **Puzzle** / Developer: **Taito**

■ If you've ever wanted to play a character named after a keyboard key then now's your chance. Mr. ESC, hero of Taito's upcoming action puzzle game, aside from having a cool name is a hero with a mission, his mission being to rescue people in danger and lead them out of dangerous situations. Throughout 100 odd levels the player must navigate obstacles, protect trapped civilians from environmental dangers and through a series of simple instructions like stop, follow and wait use the survivors to aid you in solving the puzzles. Expect lots of crate pushing and button switching in this one.



rogue galaxy

System: **PS2** / Genre: **RPG** / Developer: **Level 5**

■ Rogue Galaxy has Level 5's style stamped all over it. This is a good thing. The setting is the frontiers of the galaxy, in the shady areas where adventurers roam in search of treasure and arms dealers help fuel conflicts. The story follows a band of space pirates and has a look that very much picks up where Dark Chronicle left off, with nicely detailed cel shaded characters and worlds, plus awesome anime cutscenes. In keeping with both the adventure theme and high tech world, environments range from Indy-esque jungles through to towering futuristic cities, so you'll always be on your toes. Battles are in real-time, and are certainly more action packed than many RPGs, with an almost anime-inspired quality to the fighting. You can switch between your three party members at will, and we hope the battle mechanics will really let you exploit this for awesome combos.



ape escape 3

System: **PS2** / Genre: **Adventure platformer** / Developer: **SCEJ**

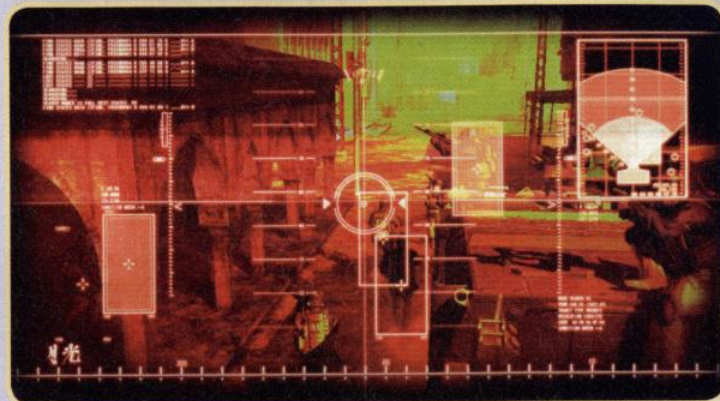
■ After the awful Ape Academy on PSP, Sony owe us a proper new Ape Escape game, and here it is! Ape Escape 3 will have over 430 monkeys to catch, and two playable characters Satoru and Sayaka, each of which can choose from a number of "super-powered" costumes which will have new powers and abilities. The cowboy/cowgirl outfits for instance will come with toy six shooters so you can stun monkeys from a distance. Once again, however, it will be the personalities of the monkeys that will make or break this game, and this time around things have taken an interesting twist. Specter and co have taken over the world's TV networks, airing their own programs, with monkeys stepping in as actors. With this set up you can assume there will be plenty of pop culture parody in both settings and the monkey antics. Also cool is that this time around the monkeys can even steal your gadgets and potentially catch you!



sonic the hedgehog

System: **Xbox 360/PS3** / Genre: **Platformer** / Developer: **Sonic Team**

■ One of the surprises of TGS this year was a real time demonstration of Sonic the Hedgehog for next generation systems by members of Sonic Team. They showed off the new game's sophisticated lighting and shadowing and revealed that the game was using Havoc physics, highlighting it as Sonic sent several enemies flying into brick walls which shattered semi-realistically. The setting was very familiar – ancient rocky ruins and grassy areas, and the only new move we spotted was using ropes strung horizontally to bounce off and get more height. In all, aside from an increase in detail and the implementation of physics, next gen Sonic looks suspiciously like current gen Sonic. Also bear in mind the images that accompany this text are from the E3 trailer (which was also shown at TGS) and not from the gameplay we saw, so we can't say whether they're in-game or not.



metal gear solid 4 guns of the patriots

System: **PS3** / Genre: **Action stealth comedy** / Developer: **Kojima Productions**

■ Metal Gear Solid 4 was by far the biggest title unveiled at this year's Tokyo Game Show, and also the most impressive. Once again Kojima and his team have gone in an unexpected direction, this time with an older Snake many years after the events in MGS2. Snake seems utterly weary now ("an old man exhausted of battle" according to the trailer) and finds himself completely surrounded by enemies in a dense urban environment. Soldiers patrol the streets, alongside tanks and bi-pedal Metal Gear with strangely feminine legs that emit otherworldly shrieks. Snake doesn't seem to be in great shape either, succumbing to a coughing fit and administering a solution into his neck to bring it under control. Otacon once again provides support, but this time via a robot sidekick who can also help out with ammo. Snake also now has an electronic eye patch which he can use to scan surroundings. It's looking interesting, but we really don't know much yet. One thing we do know though, is that it was real-time footage, as Kojima ran through an interactive demo later on in the show.



karakuri

System: **PSP** / Genre: **Action/Puzzle** / Developer: **Tecmo**

■ Action/puzzle games are perfectly suited to the handheld environment and Karakuri looks to us as though it's destined to be a hit. Players take the role of a young boy in control of eight small robots that can be shaped into three formations, lined up to his left and right, following behind him or circling him. Each of the formations have different abilities – the trailing line can be used as a grapple or weapon, the circling robots as a shield. There also appear to be areas where all the robots can be combined to make a kind of super deformed Voltron. From what we've seen, Karakuri looks great with the widescreen PSP format giving players a good view of the area and puzzles. Karakuri isn't due for a while yet but this definitely looks like one to keep an eye out for.



ninety-nine nights

System: **Xbox 360** / Genre: **Action** / Developer: **Q Entertainment**

■ Think Dynasty Warrior. Now make it bigger. No, you're not quite there yet. Make it a little bigger still. Now increase the number of units on screen at any one time by a factor of ten. Apparently there was a magical gem or something that broke and plunged the land into 99 nights of darkness so you have to kill a hell of a lot of people. Enough of the plot – Ninety-Nine Nights is all about the action and it looks like it will deliver in spades. Each of the playable characters has a number of normal attacks to plow through the ranks of enemies as well as a number of special powers to destroy even more. Sure, it's a game we've played countless times before in different forms but it's big and in terms of this style of games, more enemies on screen = bigger and better.



Devil May Cry 4

System: **PS3** / Genre: **Action** / Developer: **Capcom**

■ Little is really known about Devil May Cry 4. So far all anyone has really seen is the teaser trailer in which Dante (albeit a friendlier looking Dante than we are used to) seemed to have something of a bone to pick with the camera but it does raise some interesting speculations. Although the trailer looks fantastic it is by no means as sharp as that of Killzone 2 so it may actually be running on real hardware in game engine. If so then Devil May Cry 4 is going to be one really sweet looking game. Capcom also announced at TGS what everyone already expected, Devil May Cry 4 is going to be a PS3 exclusive.

Chromehounds

System: **Xbox 360** / Genre: **Squad based action** / Developer: **From Software**

■ Giant robots are good. Squad based combat is good. Destructible environments are good. Next generation graphics are good. Combine them all and you should have a hit on your hands. Chromehounds is destined to be a smash, not simply because of the drawing power of mecha but because of the quality the game is showing even at this stage of development. Offering multiplayer for up to six people a side, Chromehounds gives players the opportunity to duke it out with other mecha pilots in a number of game modes like CTF and deathmatch. If you don't have any friends or couldn't be bothered playing online, Chromehounds will also let players control a full team of mecha, giving instructions to the AI machines for support, covering fire, artillery and the like.



eM] 'enchant arM'

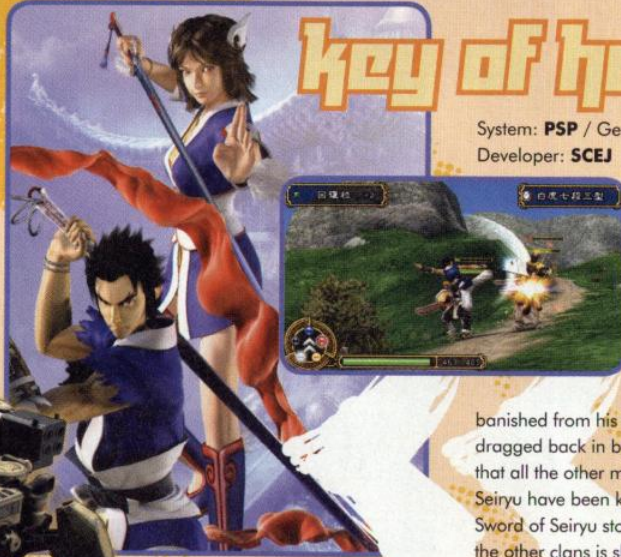
System: **Xbox 360** / Genre: **RPG** / Developer: **From Software**

■ Even though eNCHANT arM is going to be the bane of journalists who insist on using the game's full name, the game is going to be much loved by console roleplayers. To put it plainly, eM looks staggeringly good. Considering the development team worked on Otogi it's really no wonder. Not much is known about the plot or game mechanics at this stage but even if they're only half as good as the screens then eM will still be great. The game's director Masanori Takeuchi has been rather vocal in expressing his concerns about the storage medium for the Xbox 360 and has made it clear that he doubts the game will fit on one disc so it may be shipping on two or even three discs!



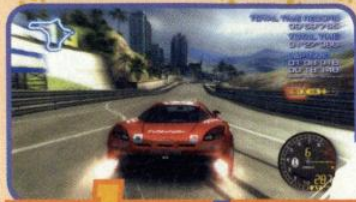
Key of Heaven

System: **PSP** / Genre: **Action RPG** / Developer: **SCEJ**



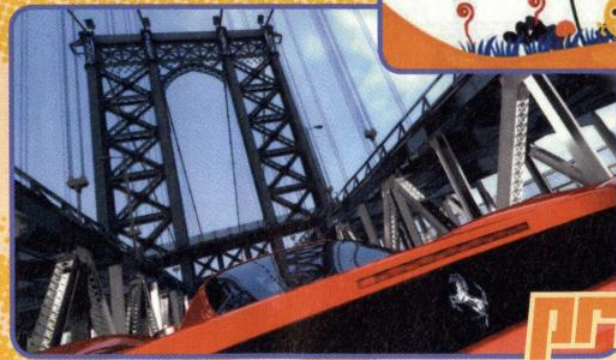
■ In Key of Heaven you play as Shinbu, a bodyguard for hire and a former member of one of five martial arts schools on the mystical continent of Ohka. Although

banished from his former clan, he's soon dragged back in by Suirin, who reveals that all the other members of the Gate of Seiryu have been killed, and the Divine Sword of Seiryu stolen. It seems that one of the other clans is slaughtering all in their path to gain all five Divine weapons, and no doubt it's up to you to stop them. So far, so samey right? Well what is going to set Key of Heaven apart from your average action game is the deep and varied combat mechanics. Although playing out in real-time, you chain together your moves through a menu system, and can build up your own martial arts style through combinations of over 150 skills. It looks to have a nice tactical edge, with both melee and magic attacks, and Sony have even said you'll be able to download new shields, swords and skills online.



ridge racer 6

System: **Xbox 360** / Genre: **Arcade racing** / Developer: **Namco**
 ■ Ridgey 6 is shaping up to be a fun, if a little underwhelming, new addition to the Ridge Racer canon. Fans can expect more of the same – crazy powersliding around tight hairpins, racing over picturesque bridges and burning down dense city streets. The nitro mechanic from Ridge Racer on PSP has thankfully made the transition, and the game certainly looks good in high res with a great draw distance, nice sharp textures and the obligatory specular highlighting and bump mapping. Still, we can't help but think that this isn't going to be the mindblowing game we want it to be.



project gotham racing 3

System: **Xbox 360** / Genre: **Racing** / Developer: **Bizarre Creations**
 ■ So much to talk about with this one! First up, it's looking amazing. 80,000 polygons per car (plus damage modeling), super high resolution textures on the environments, and a smooth frame rate that may hit 60 by release. The game even scales depending on the screen you're using. At 720p you have 2x anti-aliasing, but if you play on a normal TV (and hence at a lower resolution) it bumps up to 4x to really smooth out those lower res jaggies. There are a bunch of new modes, like Route Creator that lets you set checkpoints from a top down view of each city, and Gotham TV which lets you watch online races in progress as well as accessing replays of record breaking times. Then there are the changes to the kudos system. You'll now be rewarded for accurate and concise driving, as well as the showy driving previous games encouraged, so it looks like there'll be something for everyone. More on this soon.



perfect dark zero

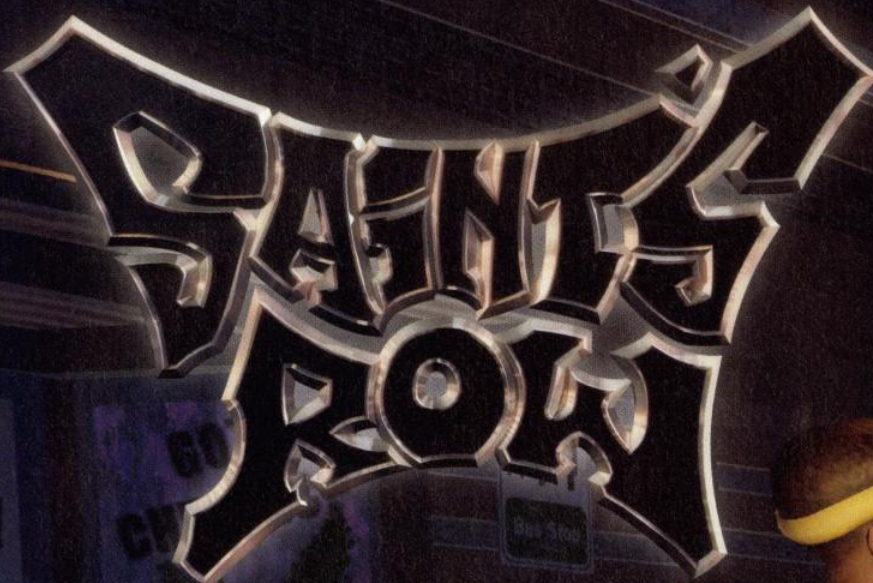
System: **Xbox 360** / Genre: **FPS** / Developer: **Rare**
 ■ Rare's much anticipated FPS sequel is one of the most hyped launch games on the Xbox 360. After a reasonable but not mindblowing showing at E3, PDO seems to have come a long way. The level of detail seems sharper, the enemy AI brighter and the overall pacing of the demo levels a lot tighter. In Joanna Dark's second outing, players will be able to pick up around 25 weapons, use a stealth/cover system to hide from enemies and take potshots whilst protected and use a number of gadgets to help you along your merry way. The multiplayer component of the game is looking solid with some good map design (an ice map being a real standout) but from what we've seen ammo seems to be a little scarce, promoting hiding behind cover and waiting for another player to walk by rather than fast paced action.



loco roco

System: **PSP** / Genre: **Platform puzzler** / Developer: **SCEJ**
 ■ Loco Roco was one of the highlights of TGS. It's probably best described as a platform game, is presented side on and has you controlling a bright orange blob in a colourful cartoon world. Control is almost entirely through the shoulder buttons – you use them to tilt the world one way or the other, and press them together to jump. The goal is to navigate your blob through a completely surreal and stylised world, tilting the ground to roll him along, bouncing from flower to flower or using the X button to break up into countless smaller blobs to get through narrow sections. You eat things as you go too, which makes your blob grow. It's a bit hard to do this game justice through words alone, but rest assured, this is one of the coolest games on the horizon and has "cult classic" stamped all over it.





Hyper recently had the chance to sit down with Jacques Hennequet, Senior Producer on Volition's Xbox 360 title Saint's Row to find out how they're going to take the next step in the evolution of open world gameplay.

System: **Xbox 360**
 Category: **Open world**
 Players: **1-12**
 Developer: **Volition**
 Due: **Early 2006**

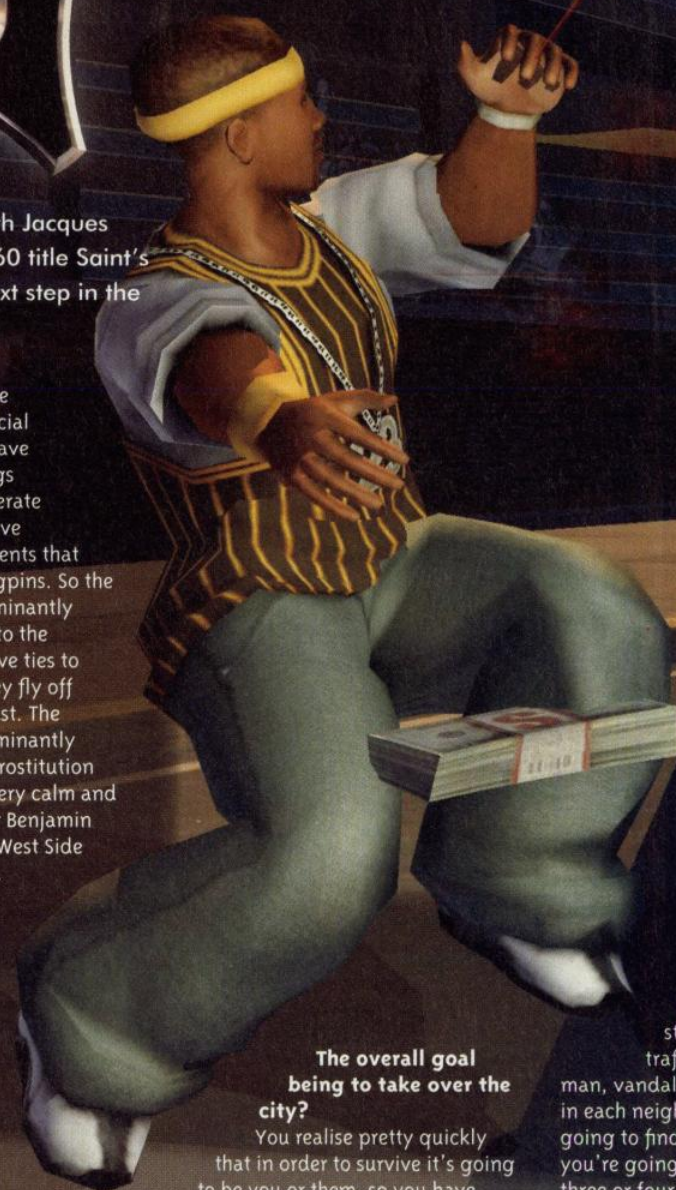
Hyper: How long have you been working on Saint's Row?

Saint's Row has been in development for a little over two years. Production officially started in August of '04.

Tell us a little about the city the game is set in, the rival gangs and who your character is.

The game takes place in the fictional city of Still Water... and you're a low ranking member of the smallest gang in the city, called the Third Street Saints. There are three other much bigger gangs that control the city. One of them is called the Vice Kings, then the Los Carnales, which is a predominantly Hispanic gang and then you have the West Side Rollers. Each gang has a racial predominance but all the gangs are multi racial. Yours is really multi racial. We toyed about with this idea for quite a while, we were worried that people would say "you're basically doing racial profiling" by saying this gang is this. The problem is that it's very unrealistic to create gangs that are fully multi ethnic. So what we did is we gave them a

racial predominance but they all have racial plurality. They all have different main things that they do to generate income and they have different temperaments that are tied to their kingpins. So the Carnales are predominantly Hispanic and are into the drug trade, they have ties to the Columbians, they fly off the handle pretty fast. The Vice Kings is predominantly a black gang into prostitution and racketeering, very calm and business-like leader Benjamin King. And then the West Side Rollers are into cars. They're a Fast and the Furious type of crowd. The Saints is your gang obviously and is sort of the finale. When you finish the three other storylines you actually start the Saints final story part.



The overall goal being to take over the city?

You realise pretty quickly that in order to survive it's going to be you or them, so you have to overcome the other gangs and control the whole city. And the way you do that is you have to control all the neighbourhoods of the city. You have to conquer them.

Missions are unlocked through your respect level yes?

Yeah. Respect is a key component.

Tell us about the various ways you can build respect.

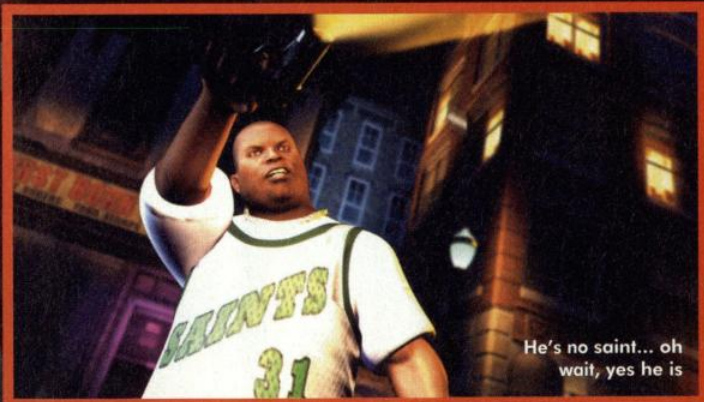
Basically we have thirteen different types of activities that are dispersed in the city. Each of them

being multi-tiered with up to eight levels and variations. They range from street car racing to drug trafficking, pimping, hit man, vandalism, tagging. Basically, in each neighbourhood you're not going to find all the activities but you're going to find several, at least three or four. And you can choose which of the activities you want to perform in that neighbourhood and when you successfully perform them you earn respect in that neighbourhood. You can either do all street car racing, if you really like it, or you can do a little bit of car racing and a little bit of drug trafficking, or you can do whatever combination you want. We let you decide that.

So you could work your way through the game, earning enough respect just through street racing?



SPLOSION!



He's no saint... oh wait, yes he is



If only it had a battle-axe attached...

In the areas that offer street racing yes you can. When you've earned enough respect we unlock a story mission or we reveal what we call a stronghold location, and if you perform the story mission or take over the stronghold, you've basically conquered the neighbourhood. When you've done that you derive an income from it and your gang members start to spawn there which helps you in your further conquest. Now, the city pushes back, the other gangs are not taking that sitting down, so they will counter attack sometimes and try to re-take neighbourhoods. Once you successfully defend a counter attack then the neighbourhood is yours for good.

Tell us a little about the homies in the game.

We have a system of homies

because we wanted you to be able to recruit. So you can recruit from the Saints anywhere and if you have enough respect they will follow you and they will help you out – up to three at a time. If you don't have enough respect they'll basically give you the finger and say "who are you?" When they're recruited they follow you wherever you go until you dismiss them, and they'll help you. If you're attacking they'll attack with you, if you're defending they'll defend with you. If they get killed, well, you've lost them. But we also have six special homies that you unlock in different places in the game for different reasons – you earn them so to speak. And they have special abilities, they have better weapons and they're more accurate and they have certain types of cars and things, and those you keep. They basically go to your crib

and when you want them you pick up your cell phone, you call them and they come help you. If they die you have to pay their insurance bill but you don't lose them, because once we unlock them we didn't want to punish the player and have them lose them.

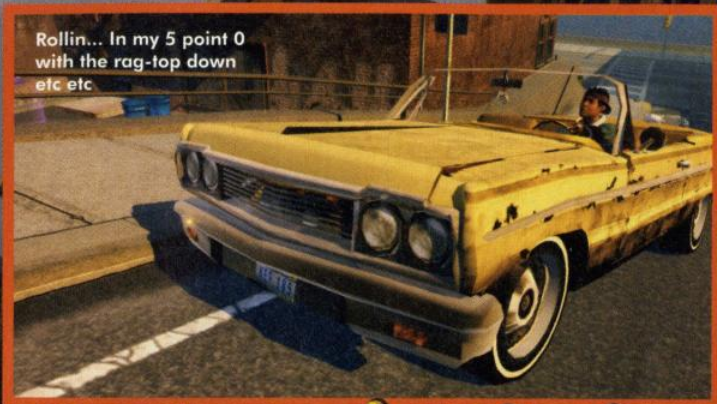
Do your abilities get better through a stat system?

The way you get better, for example in the combat system... we developed what we think is a very good manual system, so you're actually building your skills by playing the game. But it's not so hard that you can't get pretty satisfactory results from the beginning, because we have a sort of an assist. You don't have to be super accurate to hit. But there is a skill involved so you can build it up, like you do drive by shootings and

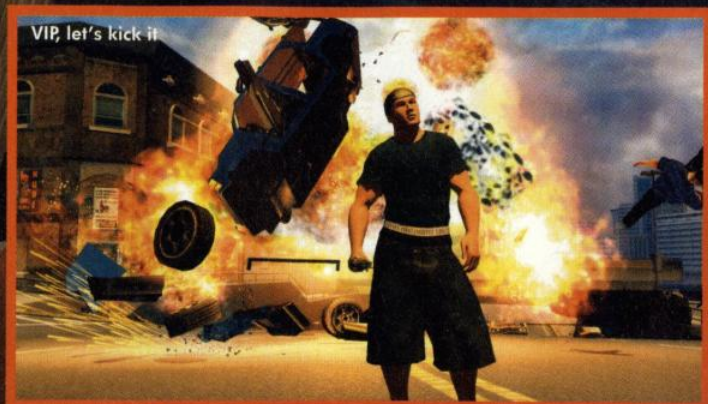
it's not that easy. So we'd rather that people learn it. So the mechanics are easy to pick up. You can be in there and playing in three minutes and having fun. But if you want to get really good, it's going to take you a bit longer.

Once you have the cash rolling in from the various activities in the game (or robberies for that matter), what will you be able to spend it on? How extensively will you be able to customise your character and the world around him?

Customization is really extensive. You can buy a number of things ranging from clothes to tattoos, weapons, music, vehicles and vehicle customization elements. Don't forget that lowering your notoriety through visits costs money too, as does being smoked or busted.



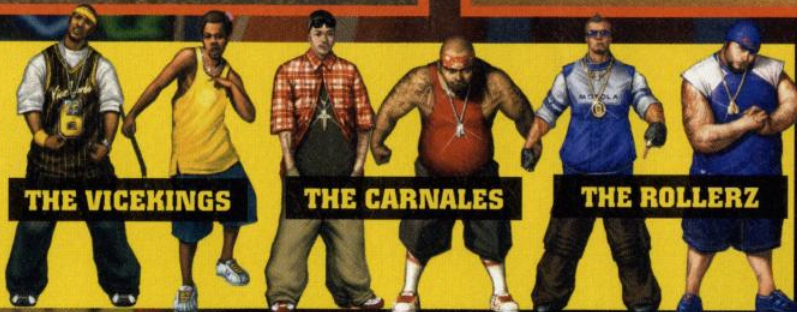
Rollin... In my 5 point 0 with the rag-top down etc etc



VIP, let's kick it

MEET THE GANG(stas)

Your mission - to rid the city of these guys and their awful fashion sense. A worthy cause.



THE VICEKINGS

THE CARNALLES

THE ROLLERZ

The obvious comparison for Saint's Row is with San Andreas. How is it similar, and more importantly, how is it different?

Well first of all, we're not at all shy about descending from GTA to speak. Most of us love GTA and have a lot of respect for that game series and we actually took a lot of our inspiration from the ideas behind GTA. What do I mean by that? What I mean is that I think that GTA actually — and I'm not sure they knew it when they did it — really created a new genre of game which some people call sandbox. We call it open world, but basically what it is — you're not creating a series of levels that you solve one by one. You're really creating a world with a lot of things you can do in it. Then you let the gamer choose what they can do a lot more. So GTA started doing that in a way. We looked at it and went wow, the most fun part of that game is really roaming around, it's the freeform aspects. But it doesn't really matter right? What really matters to complete the game is still the missions, so I said okay, what if we took the most fun part and we made it count. That was a big element initially. What you have to note too is that when we started Saint's Row San Andreas wasn't anywhere near announced, so it's really pure coincidence that

the whole hip hop thing went in. Anyway, so the similarities are there and conceptually the open world design and trying to do that kind of stuff is a big similarity.

What we essentially are trying to do is go to the next step, the next evolutionary step in the open world game design by actually increasing the amount of freedom that you have, giving you even more choices and taking that freeform part and making it matter. Making it count. So even if you go and you're free roaming, if you start killing enemy gang members you're going to start gaining respect, even if you're not doing an activity. And you can actually conquer the whole city without playing any of the story missions. You're not really going to see all of the game, but you can win the game doing that.

The GTA games certainly have a linear story structure at their core, but that linearity brings with it the ability to tell a strong narrative and have strong characters. To give the player a reason to want to move the story along. Where do you stand on the narrative aspect for Saint's Row?

Well, we kept stories okay because again, it's evolution so we don't want to lose people. It's important that the gamer has freedom but also basically

not get lost. So we actually have three storylines, well, four. There's three storylines that correspond to the other gangs and then there's the storyline for your gang after you complete the others, but what we did is we tried to modularise the storylines so they can be triggered in different orders. It's very difficult to do from a design standpoint and we haven't done it to the extent that, in a way, I wish we could do it, but we're basically taking the first steps in developing what I view as a new approach to game design. And it's very difficult to do that, very very difficult, but it's very interesting. So we kept the story structure. I think ultimately as open world develops you're going to see increasingly a back seat taken by the story because I think when you have enough things to do and enough things happening in the world if the gamer is sucked in and starts enjoying it, they make up their own stories, you know what I mean? When you're free roaming around GTA you're sort of making up your own story in your mind. Or even if you look at a lot of the sports games. They don't have any storyline and yet people feel like there's a storyline.

Same with games like Battlefield 1942.

Absolutely. So I think it's very interesting to see how that's going to develop. Through our game but also the other ones. How do you deal with that? I think certain games are going to be very cinematic, essentially interactive movies with very high production values — there's nothing wrong with that. And then you're going to see a whole other avenue of design start to develop, which is the open world

stuff where it's like a back seat to the story but more interactivity.

Would you say the next big thing for this genre would be taking it online?

Absolutely. Moving seamlessly between single player and multiplayer.

And at what point does Saint's Row stand in that move towards online?

Soon, soon. We were almost at a point where we could do it, but we were not quite sure we could deliver. So we said okay, if we're not sure, we won't do it because we don't want to do it half baked. But I would say that there's a very good possibility that if there's a Saint's Row 2 it will happen.

It would be great to have clan based gangs.

And what would be tremendous is that if you're playing single player and your buddies show up and you start an online game seamlessly from the single player in that world. Where they just join you and you get going. And I think we'll get there soon.

What online functionality does Saint's Row have?

I can't tell you too much. There are a bunch of modes, it's for up to 8-12 players. We have co-op and head to head, and all of the modes have the Saint's Row flavour, it's not just online with the assets from the single player. We found modes that tie into the single player gameplay, but they're played on online levels that are designed specifically for online, although they look like parts of the city. And then we're going to have downloadable levels.

How about the online currency?

Every time you play online you earn an online currency, whether you win or lose. You earn more if you win of course. Then you can use that online currency to customise your character just like in the single player with unique things. So we reward the hardcore online players because they'll be able to buy some of the more expensive items

BANGIN' BEATS Saint's Row is going to hit the streets with 120 music tracks across 10 radio stations. The licensing for the soundtrack has been done through Cornerstone and will have a heavy hip hop influence. Three of the stations, in fact, are devoted entirely to hip hop. There'll also be reggae, soul, rock and even a classical station. In terms of the hip hop content, the team are aiming for slightly more underground artists — people that hip hop fans know but that may not be commercially huge. There will also be six original hip hop tracks, at least one of which will be by Xzibit.

VOX POPS

We also spoke to Volition Programmer **Alan Lawrence** about some of the more technical aspects of Saint's Row.

On Xbox 360 development:

It's always a challenge to develop for new hardware, and this is particularly true with an ambitious title like Saint's Row. Overall though, we've been very pleased with the power of the Xbox 360 and level of support from Microsoft. I would say the most difficult area has been getting the most out of the three CPU cores. Writing systems to take advantage of multi-threading is difficult, and for many game programmers it's unfamiliar territory.

On the Saint's Row engine:

We developed our own rendering engine from scratch for Saint's Row. Our artists have tools that allow them to develop shaders without a lot of programmer intervention. This really puts power into the hands of our artists to realize their vision for creating a next-gen look. We developed a lighting model where all the lighting and shadows are computed in real time. The fact this is happening on the scale of a city (and not just in a constrained indoor space) is very special and not something that is possible on current gen.

On what next gen hardware allows the team to do that the current generation doesn't, and how it ties into gameplay:

Besides the huge leap in visual quality of next gen games, the other big area for improvement is with CPU-intensive areas like physics and AI. We use Havok for the foundation of our physics, and we have tied some cool physics features into gameplay. For example, we had so much fun with ragdolls during development, we decided to create a gameplay activity with ragdoll at its core. This activity is known as Insurance Fraud, and the basic idea is that you ragdoll yourself into moving cars or down the stairs, etc. to earn cash. Another example is the explosion sequences from cars and helicopters. When a vehicle blows up it's not just for looks, we spew out over thirty components that are physics objects in the world. You'll often see these pieces smash into people or cars, and if you're not careful you could get hit by a car door yourself. It's amazing how fun it is blowing up cars with grenades or a rocket launcher.

On whether the loss of a hard drive as standard has had much of an impact on the game:

The loss of a standard hard drive didn't have a big impact for us. While we would have liked to stream off a hard drive rather than DVD, we have designed things so that streaming off DVD won't be a problem. We are looking forward to offering significant downloadable content, and hard drive owners will have the advantage of being able to easily store this new content.



Something about the guys head exploding



obviously and brag about it. It's basically bragging rights. That's about the extent of what I can tell you. We think it's going to be really cool and Microsoft are very excited about it, and our testers are really excited about it. They've been playing it for a while and they really like it, so we think it's going to play really well online.

Coming back to single player, how big is the city of Still Water and do you think there's a "sweet spot" for the size of a gameworld for this style of game?

We are trying to hit this sweet spot. The city is about 9 square miles. In my opinion, this is all about the ratio of gameplay to area: there is not much benefit in having a huge world in which you can do very little.

THERE'S ALWAYS A CARRADINE Saint's Row will have a strong lineup of voice actors. Some of the confirmed actors are David Carradine, Michael Clarke Duncan, Clancy Brown and Tia Carrera.

What kind of "memory" will the gameworld have of your actions?

I would say that the world notices your actions even more than it remembers them. We obviously track your notoriety with other gangs and the police, and we track the respect you earn, but mostly the NPCs in the world notice what you wear and how much respect you have earned. You also receive obvious feedback on this.

Do you think it's only a recent development that technology has become sophisticated enough – in terms of AI, physics

and storage – to do this kind of open world play properly?

Oh yeah, definitely. And it's still very much in progress. A lot of people say "oh, the gaming industry is old and getting stale". I think we're not even at the beginning of learning the alphabet, of understanding the medium and what we can do with it. We're barely scratching the surface. So the technology is gradually making us capable of doing those things but it's so recent and so new. It's like the tip of the iceberg – we have a long way to go.

Thanks for your time! <<

WHO STALKS THE STALKER?

BY ALEXANDER JAMES BURKE

IF you haven't read a videogame magazine for the past few years — or you were dead and have only recently been resurrected — you'll be forgiven for thinking S.T.A.L.K.E.R. is a game that has you tailing Mel Gibson or Catherine Zeta Jones with a disposable camera. It's not. The title, in fact, comes from Andrei Tarkovsky's eponymous film. Unlike Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, however, there aren't any magical rooms or self-hating pulp writers. There's just you, your buddies, the army, a bunch of mutants, and the Chernobyl exclusion zone.

MAKING MUTANTS?

Think the Chernobyl disaster has had enough attention? So did the locals, apparently. But GSC Gameworld's Sergiy Grygorovych — S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s designer — says he managed to get them to come around.

"Initially, the officials were rather cautious. They feared we'd 'make mutants out of

them.' We assured them we had the opposite intention — we're making a cautionary game designed to warn mankind against carelessness and prevent any possible accidents like Chernobyl in the future. Hence, the people working in Chernobyl at the moment have been more than helpful to us, showing us around and providing needed information, including photos, documentaries, et cetera. One of the game's supporters is the guy responsible for safety systems at the Chernobyl Power Plant. He became an instant fan once he recognized his office in one of the trailers."

Yes, that's right. His office. In the realm of videogames, this is as faithful a Chernobyl recreation as you're going to get. Grygorovych describes S.T.A.L.K.E.R. as being "60% authentic Chernobyl." "We couldn't make it 100%," he explains, "as it'd make it less interesting gameplay-wise. So we adapted the area to our game's needs and reconstructed in detail the key 'sights' of the place, such as the Chernobyl power plant sarcophagus, Prypjat, the ghost city, the Red Forest, vehicle cemeteries and more."

What's more, almost all of the textures were lifted from Chernobyl itself. "Nearly



all of the textures are authentic!" Grygorovych. "Just thinking of this fact thrills me: you see a rotting village house in the game and realize that it is a 100% authentic Chernobyl building. All the textures are real. It's a virtual Chernobyl tour, if you like. Authentic textures add considerably to the general atmosphere and the grim realism of the game. During our three visits we took thousands of photos."

Photorealistic textures aren't all GSC has up its sleeve in the visual department. The proprietary X-Ray engine has all the visual goodies you can smash out of a DirectX 9 piñata. Added to which, if your graphics card's a little long in the tooth, you're given the option of tuning S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s visuals down to a smoother DX8 finish. "Depending on what kind of machine the user has," Grygorovych says, "the engine will adjust accordingly. The DX9 version of the engine allows for several million polygons on screen and renders soft dynamic lighting and shadows in real-time. It also sports up-to-date shading and detailed bump-mapping techniques. Thus, the game will make most out of both lower-end PCs and top-notch machines. The graphics options will be pretty scalable to adjust for the most comfortable performance."

Mind you, going on about S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s visuals is a bit like not seeing the brothel for all the fat, sweaty barristers walking out of it. This game ain't about the pretties. It's about pure, open-ended exploration. Oh, and maybe a bit of mutant bashing on the side. "The players are free to do whatever they want from the very beginning," Grygorovych says.

"We do our best to keep the player goal-oriented and indicate the directions he should take to progress in the game, but this doesn't limit the player's path at all as he's free to roam wherever the game area permits. Frequently this practice will actually be rewarding as the player can collect more artefacts, receive side quests, more information etc provided he spends time exploring the Zone."

Chernobyl's big - thirty square kilometres, approximately - but not globe-trottingly big. Given that players are allowed to do whatever they want, how is GSC going to keep them from feeling like they're stuck in a cage? "The Zone bears plenty of dangers to the player, ranging from invisible radioactivity and deadly anomalous energy patches to mutants and hostile NPCs. This will serve as a certain restrictor to players, especially at the start of the game when they don't have much gear and weapons to protect themselves. However, players are by no means restricted in their traversing the area freely. The Zone is a global world that is free for the player to explore. In case the player is up to rushing straight away to the center, he could probably make it there, against all odds. Under a more thoughtful play-through, the player will need to complete several tasks first to gain better armaments, protection, and food, before he can move on safely."

Sounds pretty freeform, yes? Although GSC's touting S.T.A.L.K.E.R. as an FPS, there are so many ways to interact with the game's environment other than through blowing holes in it. In fact, the way Grygorovych is explaining it makes GSC's baby sound a little like a post-apocalyptic Club Med: "You can communicate widely with NPCs, enter Stalker clans to obtain teammates, trade items with friends or just drink vodka at the bar and hear the latest Zone news."

SEX ON RAG DOLL LEGS

Importantly, Grygorovych wants y'all to know that this virtual Chernobyl comes with a sexy physics engine. "The game provides for extensive physics use," he says, "from true-to-life bullet physics to physics of the vehicle, ragdoll and dynamic object variety. We did our best





to animate the game world as much as possible and make it believable. Watch out for trash, canisters, and bricks flying around, as some of the monsters may be lifting those from the ground to 'interact' with your head!"

S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s monsters are a crafty bunch. Since they've been subjected to the hot radioactive beef injection for almost twenty years, they've learnt some new tricks. Grygorovych smiles. "The game will provide for several types of creatures, including mutated animals, humanoid creatures and others. All of the creatures bear their own set of characteristics and habits. Flesh - a heavily mutated domestic pig - for instance will appear as a cowardly and mean creature that will barely attack you when fully armed and healthy. But it will definitely pounce to finish you off when you're injured or empty-handed. A number of in-game creatures will possess abnormal abilities such as telepathy or telekinesis. A monster called Bloodsucker can simulate invisibility - it makes him very dangerous as an enemy." When you see these monsters showing off their post-

nuclear abilities like five-year olds on a trampoline, sit tight with the knowledge that at any moment, they could change. Why? Because our highly radioactive mutant brethren aren't scripted. In fact, barely anything in the game is. S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s beasts and baddies are running on a revolutionary new AI engine called Life Simulation. And luckily for you, reader, Grygorovych wouldn't leave me to my brooding until he told me all about it.

"Life Simulation," he says, "has been one of the game's major bottlenecks and has taken a long time to develop. After its implementation, we've faced a lot of issues ensuring the system plays and feels balanced and smooth throughout the entire game. The sheer randomness factor the game possesses constantly has caused a lot of headache and polishing up work. It's been well-worth it though.

"The results however, are amazing: we can drop off any creature or NPC at any part of the game and he will be able to find his most suitable location to dwell in, the



best cover, most fitting places to hunt, et cetera. In other words, we've made every creature self-sustainable and independent. Owing to the Life Simulation system, all the creatures and NPCs make decisions about what'd be best for them to do, where to go, with whom to fight, or from whom to run away. When in combat, the probability of victory is constantly evaluated for every creature against its opponent. If he thinks the enemy is too strong, he will do his best to simply avoid the combat. Victory chances are evaluated based on multiple parameters such as the enemy's weapon type - teeth, knife, gun type - condition, level of injury and hunger, enemy protection equipment, location of the enemy, how advantageous for attack the location is, and so on. The complex situation analysis ensures more spectacular, thoughtful and, most importantly, believable combat on screen.

"Day and night shifts also occur regularly in the game, and they affect the AI. Some NPCs see poorly at night. Other creatures are nocturnal. This all makes the gameplay at night more stealthy and dangerous, but I'm sure there'll be players who will prefer the night-time playthrough. The choice is there at least.

"It's important to note that the Life Simulation system provides for completely different lives for the game creatures and NPCs to that of the player. The player will frequently witness clashes between monsters and NPCs he didn't cause or influence - the player can interfere or stay away - and all of the clashes will be coordinated purely by the game AI as opposed to traditional scripts. This is one of the features that makes S.T.A.L.K.E.R. truly

No matter what you choose, the only way you're going to get ahead in S.T.A.L.K.E.R. and further the story is through questing. (Is this an FPS or an RPG, Mr. Peabody?) "We are preparing hundreds of quests to be picked up at various spots and NPCs in the game," Grygorovych says. "The Dealer, various Stalker clans, scientists, and Stalker loners make only part of the list. The game is reactive to how you play it through, who you make friends and enemies with, and this will impact the sources of the quests you pick up."

S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s NPCs aren't just quest vendors, however. GSC's making sure they're all given individual character and dialogue. Grygorovych informs me that "most of the communication will happen via the interface and text dialogues with answer/question options - take *Morrowind* as an example - but part of the dialogues will be voiced. Clearly, the intricate story of the game will provide for a hefty volume of text, but we tried to make it tight and informative."

Given all this focus on a gripping, open-ended single-player experience with a strong storyline and great graphics and powerful AI and a faithful recreation of the Chernobyl zone, you might be a bit surprised to hear that GSC's putting a few eggs in the multiplayer basket, too. "We'll provide for several of today's most popular multiplayer modes," Grygorovych says, "including deathmatch, team deathmatch, and an original artefact hunt mode. All of the modes will have the strong flavour of the single-player experience - anomalies, radiation, equipment, character exhaustion, et cetera - but are

YOU CAN COMMUNICATE WIDELY WITH NPCs ENTER CLANS, TRADE ITEMS OR JUST DRINK VODKA AT THE BAR

stand out from the rest of the games in the genre."

If you're still struggling with the duck-for-cover AI seen in most action games, the idea of a fully-fledged Life Simulation system may sound a little intimidating. Sadly, it may be time to go back to *Myst*, 'cause it only gets worse. Creatures and NPCs aren't the only things that will slow you down. The Chernobyl environment is harsh enough in real life; S.T.A.L.K.E.R. adds what GSC's calling "anomalous energy" to the mix.

STRANGE ANOMALIES

To explain how anomalous energy affects the player, Grygorovych brings up the example of the Blowout. "Blowouts come as a major blast of deadly anomalous energy sweeping through the entire Zone and killing all the life on their way," he ominously says. "In sensing a blowout approaching, creatures and NPCs try to seek hiding within basements and other indoor areas. Blowouts occur regularly on approximately weekly cycles. After the blowouts, new anomalous energy zones get generated and some others disappear. As new anomalies appear, they generate artefacts around themselves, so once the blowout has passed, it's a good time to start reaping its artefact rewards."

It's those artefacts that have made you come to Ol' Wormwood in the first place. Yep, amidst all the non-linearity, S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s got a story. "The game will introduce a deep story that players will unravel as they progress. Players' ultimate goal is to solve the mystery behind the Zone - what's controlling it, what's generating regular explosions of anomalous energy, and so on - and to do that they will need to accomplish a number of story-linked tasks. The game will also introduce hundreds of side quests to allow players to earn extra cash and items. Thus, it's all up to players - do they strictly follow the storyline for fast completion or spend time exploring the more distant corners of the huge game world?"

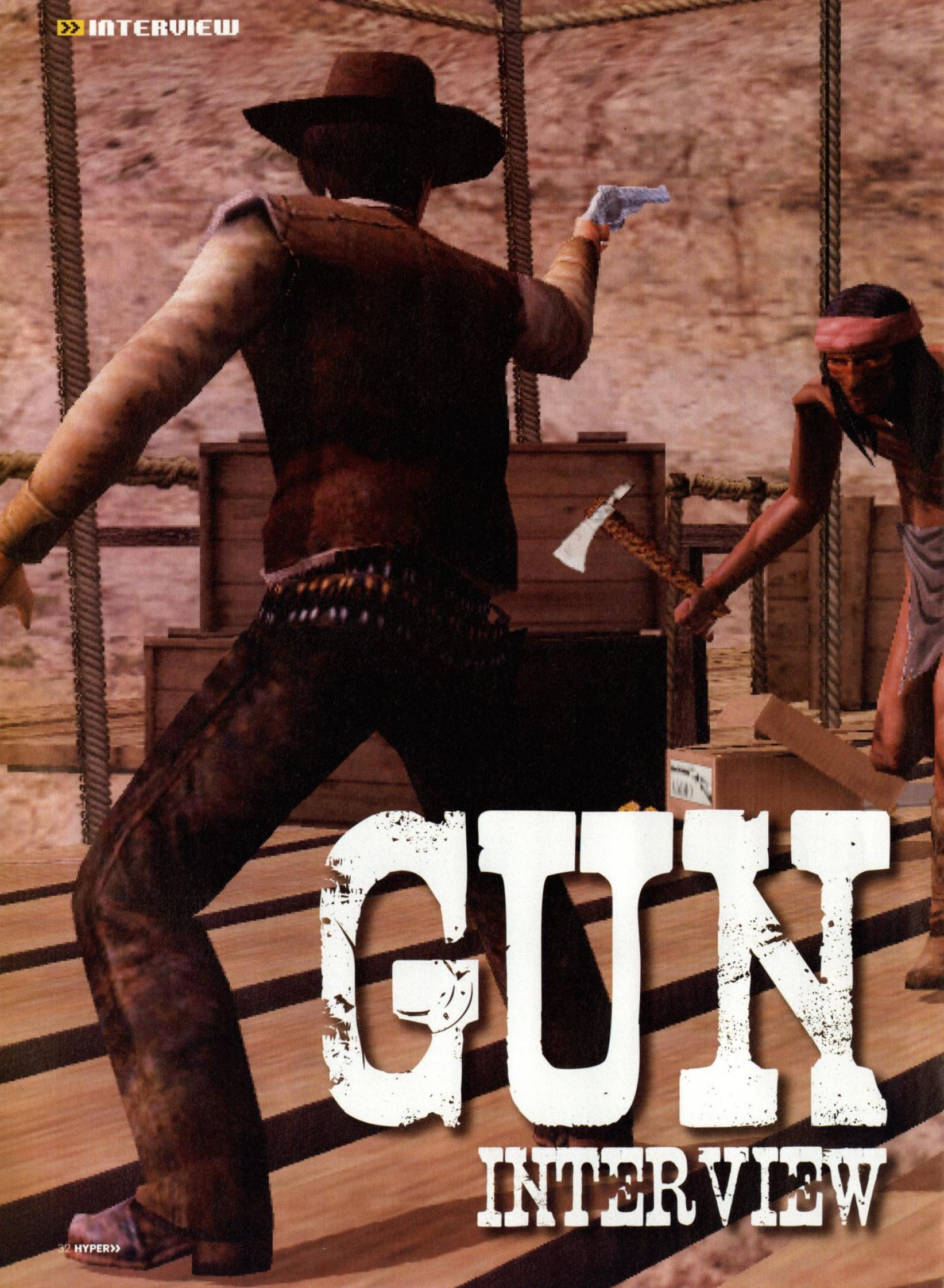
played on specifically created / modified maps. We have a team of professional Counter-Strike players - Ukraine's champions, actually - to work on balancing/testing the multiplayer modes, so we can expect high-quality gaming there."

FERRET STUFFING

Okay, so S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s sounding pretty swish. But both you and I know that I've cleverly avoided something: the monstrous, head-pounding, white-knuckling, ferret-stuffing delays. It seems like a chore to remember an E3 where S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s release wasn't promised soon afterwards. So what's going on? Grygorovych says it all comes down to pleasing the fans: "We are absolutely committed to justifying the players' expectations and implementing the features we promised. Due to the complex nature of the game, it's been really hard to make the numerous game systems and libraries work together and not hinder each other. We are making sure the game plays smoothly and is fun at every single point. We will release S.T.A.L.K.E.R. once this has been achieved. Gladly, we share the same stance on this with our publisher, THQ."

In layman's terms? Back off, ungrateful swine. GSC's been hard at work, and they aren't letting go 'til their most anticipated title is perfect. "There's been loads of gameplay experimenting and testing," Grygorovych adds. "Everything is done with the principle of making it interesting and fun to play using the best of S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s tech. Today's S.T.A.L.K.E.R. is much smoother than the S.T.A.L.K.E.R. of a year ago." I think that's all the reassurance we need. S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s looking to be one of the most ambitious, clever, re-playable, and detailed action games ever made. Can GSC pull it off? Only time will tell. One thing's for sure, though - this game's got enough hype to earn a few stalkers of its own. Ladies and gentlemen, bring your Kodak disposables, and mind the radiation. ❄️





GOON

INTERVIEW

HYPER: Tell us about the Wild West setting for GUN. What inspired you to set the game in this time and place?

Irwin: The old west was the perfect setting for our game because it really hasn't been done well until now. We needed to capture the real brutality, greed and lawlessness of the time because it makes great such intense and compelling gameplay. This was a time when people had access to every vice, took what they wanted and there was no real order. You ended up with every type of person coming together on the edge of civilization. You had outlaws, cattle ranchers, railroad tycoons, whores, immigrants, Native Americans, prospectors and gunslingers. Add to the mix that everyone, and I do mean everyone, carried a gun.

We looked at every source we could get our hands on as the game was being researched. There was a lot of inspiration taken from the real history of the time. It is a period so rich with characters and interesting stories that it was hard just deciding what to focus on. The more research was done the more we discovered how incredibly tough life in that time was. The gritty reality of the game really comes from the way people lived. The team also drew from countless sources to get GUN to where it is now. Movies, television, books, magazines and personal experience were all involved in the final look and feel of the game as well. GUN isn't the same old western that's for sure.

Tell us about Colton White and the game's storyline.

Colton was raised by his father Ned White in the mountains of the Montana territory. Before Ned is killed when renegade army soldiers attack a steamboat, he tells you "I ain't your father". Now Colton is out to discover the truth, and get his deserved revenge.

Is Colton truly a good guy? Or can players take him down a different path if they wish?

Colton isn't your traditional good guy or bad guy. In GUN, the villain doesn't always wear the black hat and the cavalry doesn't show up in the nick of time to save the day. Colton lives by his own laws as he travels across our massive streaming world.

Could you give us some examples of the missions you may find yourself on during GUN?

As Colton White you'll escort a whore stage coach across Apache territory, fight on a steamboat traveling down the grand Missouri river, survive showdowns in the streets of Dodge City, break out of jail, lead an attack on a renegade fort and save a friend from the hangman's noose. There is plenty

of action to keep you busy and immersed in the world.

What kinds of side missions can you take on if you want a break from the main story? How much emphasis have you placed on these "sandbox" style gameplay elements in GUN?

The story is there to guide you through this streaming environment but you can take it at your own pace. Feel free to explore the world, hunt, gamble, ranch, mine for gold, fight off bandit attacks or ride for the pony express. Then go back the main storyline when you feel like it. With these sandbox style elements you'll earn money to buy upgrades as well as earn stat increases.

Tell us a little about how you can build up your abilities in the game.

Stats play a very important role in GUN. The story of the game ties everything together and moves you along but there is an entire world to experience through side missions and exploration. Stats are the reward for immersing yourself in this whole different side of the game. Play through the side missions and you earn upgrades to Colton's skills. With these upgrades Colton is not only able to perform better in the main story but also the rest of the free roaming sections. Perform ranching missions to improve your horsemanship and then hunt down outlaws. Once you've brought back the outlaws dead or alive you improve your quickdraw which gives you that advantage you want over the evil preacher responsible for killing your father. By maxing out your stats you can butcher in a knife fight, gun down your enemies in vicious gun battles and even survive deadly wounds that would kill another man.

IN GUN, THE VILLAIN DOESN'T ALWAYS WEAR THE BLACK HAT AND THE CAVALRY DOESN'T SHOW UP IN THE NICK OF TIME TO SAVE THE DAY

Tell us about the weapons you'll be able to use in GUN and the Quick Draw feature.

There is a whole arsenal of weapons for you to choose from including pistols, knives, shotguns, swords, rifles, bows, tomahawks and even a sharp shooting rifle that will take an enemy's whole leg off from across a bridge. The weapons are upgradeable so as you play and earn money you'll be able to reload them quickly, do more damage and even fire faster.

Quick Draw allows you to get the drop on groups of enemies by slowing the world down. You can target specific points and shoot the gun out of someone's hand or even the hat off their head. Use it to take

down a room full of bad guys or to watch your opponent react as you fill them full of lead in slow motion.

Your horse seems to play a huge role — can it take damage during the many horseback gun battles?

Your horse really is a living breathing animal and can definitely take damage during horseback battle. They react if they are hurt, they fatigue as you ride them too hard and even run when they are spooked by gunfire or explosions. It's a truly amazing sight to ride into battle surrounded by allies all on horseback and just watch the chaos happen. Horses are throwing riders as their legs buckle, outlaws slumping dead off a still panicked mount and even both being killed in one powerful explosion of dynamite. The animations for all aspects are simply beautiful.

How big is the gameworld?

The gameworld is huge. We really feel we've captured the west and dropped the player right into it. There are ranches, towns, cities, mountain passes, abandoned mines (that might just contain some left over gold), Native American camps, placid lakes, raging rivers and a lot more surprises we can't tell you about yet.

Are there any multiplayer modes?

We really wanted to concentrate on making the single player amazing before we moved into multiplayer game modes. We have big plans for the future of this franchise and multiplayer is definitely being discussed.

What engine is the game running on? Is it difficult working on current gen and next gen

hardware at the same time?

Neversoft has built their own proprietary game engine to handle the streaming world. Working on both current and next gen hardware was always going to be a challenge but that doesn't stop us from turning out a superior product no matter what system you're playing on.

How will the Xbox 360 version of the game differ from the others?

The game looks amazing on the 360. Normal mapped textures, higher resolution models, more characters on screen all at 720p resolution. The game doesn't just look better but feels much more alive as you traverse the lawless world of GUN. <<

If there's any justice in the world, Neversoft's GUN will be one of the surprise hits this Christmas, thanks to its great setting, wide open world and fun gunplay. With the game's release just around the corner, we spoke to **Irwin Chen**, the game's associate producer to find out a little more.

Systems: **GCN, PC, PS2, Xbox, Xbox 360** ■ Category: **Action adventure** ■ Players: **1** ■ Developer: **Neversoft** ■ Due: **November**

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES

Systems: GCN, PC, PS2, Xbox ■ Category: Action platformer ■ Players: 1 ■ Developer: Ubisoft Montreal ■ Due: December

Impressions – Daniel Wilks

It's no secret I'm a big lover of the Prince of Persia series. Hell, I even forgave Prince of Persia 2 for the stupid reliance on combat, emo whining and cock rock due to the fact that some of the movement puzzles and level design were exceptional. Prince of Persia 3, now that we've had our dirty little mitts on it for some time, is proving to be good enough to make us forget about the flaws of the previous games. There are new movement abilities, far more intricate

movement puzzles and a stealth combat system that ties in with the movement puzzles giving a real sense of immersion and emergency to the proceedings. And then of course there's the Dark Prince, our hero's cranky alter ego – he also adds a few great new twists to the way the game plays.

DEATH FROM ABOVE!

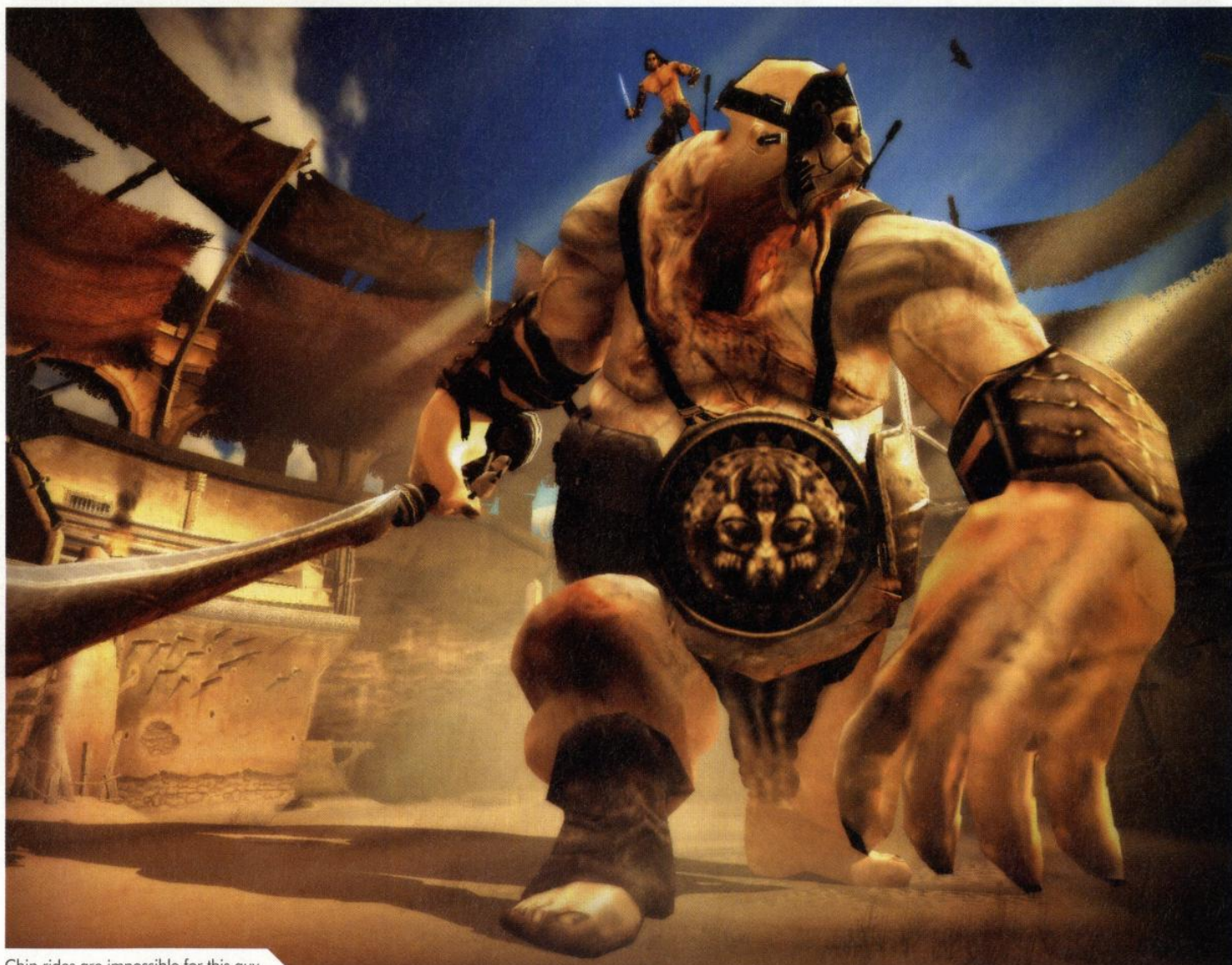
The first few levels had us scratching our heads, truth be told, due to the dull nature of the layouts but it soon became apparent that they were just a reintroduction

to the mechanics, as well as an introduction to the idea of Speed Kills. Instead of rampant button mashing as seen in the last game, The Two Thrones allows players to kill enemies in a few simple moves if they time it right. Sneak up behind an enemy and the screen will turn monochrome, signalling you to hit the triangle button (and presumably the Y button in the Xbox build) to enter a Speed Kill. The Prince will attack the enemy and the player must hit the attack button when the Prince's weapon glows. It's a good system to keep combat in the game but not have it all pervasive. Later in the game the Speed Kills become integrated with movement puzzles. These require real split-second timing but are a blast when you pull them off. Imagine



wall running, leaping from a jump pad (a new addition that allows players to jump diagonally from a wall run), hanging from a dagger point (another new addition that allows you to hang from a wall with your dagger), wall running again, then leaping to gut a guard, all in one seamless stream of moves. It's exhilarating and pretty much guarantees a few expletives about

AS THE DARK PRINCE YOU'RE CONSTANTLY LOSING HEALTH AND CAN ONLY REPLENISH IT BY COLLECTING THE SAND OF FALLEN ENEMIES

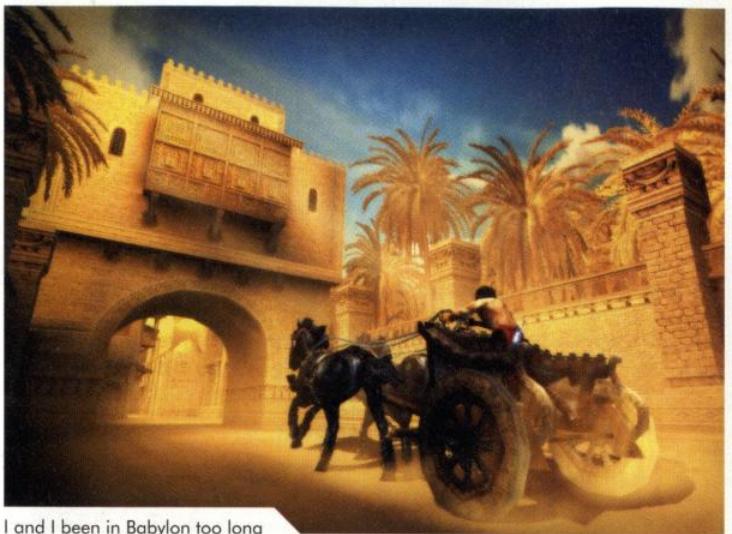


Chin rides are impossible for this guy



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Actually it's already in there. Both the Prince voice actors from the first two games are back, doing the Prince and Dark Prince respectively.

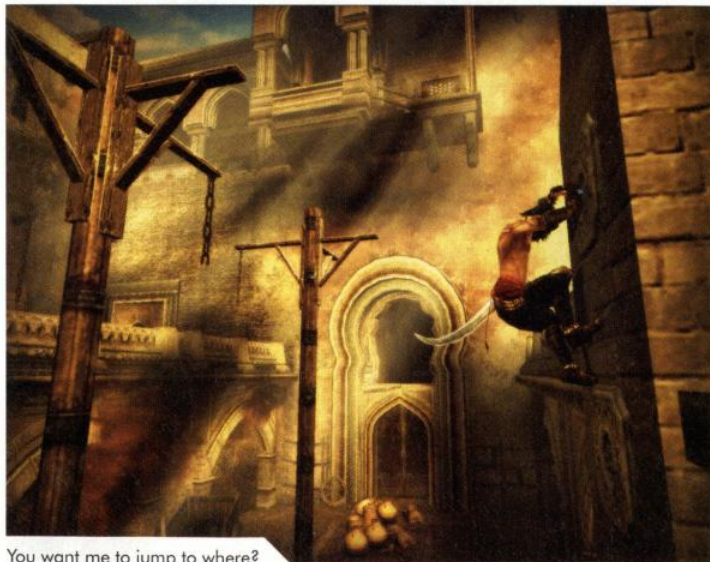
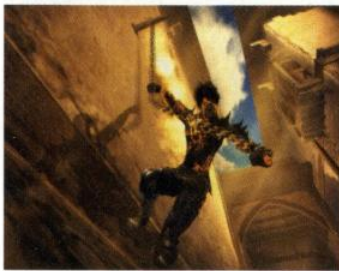


I and I been in Babylon too long

how damn cool the run was.

The Dark Prince adds a new spin to gameplay in both combat and movement mechanics. At certain points in the game the Prince morphs into his dark alter ego. Whilst in that form the Prince has access to far more deadly melee attacks and can use Daggertail, his chain-whip weapon, as a grapple to swing from certain bits of terrain

and to drag sliding boxes for puzzles. The combat as the Dark Prince feels more like that of the previous game, while his Speed Kills require button sequences rather than split second timing. As the Dark Prince you're constantly losing health and can only replenish it by collecting the sand of fallen enemies. It works well and ensures his levels are frantic and tense.



You want me to jump to where?



Impressions – Cam Shea

Unlike Wilks, I'm coming to this series relatively fresh, not having played much Warrior Within – it just didn't have the hook to lure me in. The Two Thrones, on the other hand, has the gaming kavorka. It's effortlessly stylish, and the new movement skills that the Prince has picked up make his bounding acrobatics more entertaining and dynamic than ever before. In addition to dagger points and diagonal wall jumps, the Prince can also slide down curtains and perch Sam Fisher style between two close walls. Can anyone say death from above? Controlling the Prince and hitting long sequences of moves feels intuitive and just as importantly, looks hella cool. And the new Speed Kill system means that you're encouraged to use the environment to get to advantageous positions from which you can take down guards – not just to get to the next area. Praise be to the Prince!

There are a couple of other things we should mention. First up are the chariot racing sequences. These see you galloping along the streets of

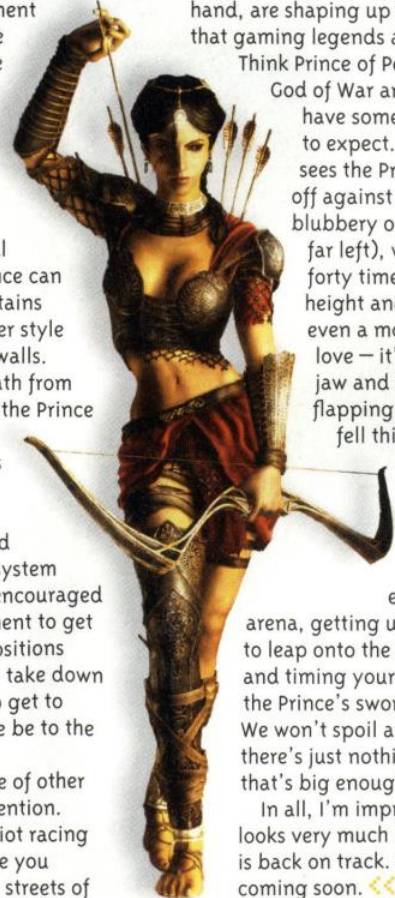
Babylon, fending off "hop ons" (to use Arrested Development parlance), barging other chariots into walls and catching a little air while you're at it. They're not the sort of inclusion that you'll rave to your friends about, but they're a nice change of pace.

The boss battles on the other hand, are shaping up to be the stuff that gaming legends are made of.

Think Prince of Persia meets God of War and you'll have some idea what to expect. The first one sees the Prince facing off against a massive blubbery ogre (see pic far left), who's easily forty times the Prince's height and has a face even a mother couldn't love – it's missing its jaw and has its tongue flapping down. To fell this epic beast you'll have to utilise the movement puzzles around the edge of the

arena, getting up high enough to leap onto the beast's back, and timing your strikes as the Prince's sword flashes. We won't spoil any more, but there's just nothing like a boss that's big enough to climb.

In all, I'm impressed. It looks very much like the Prince is back on track. Full review coming soon. <<



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2

Systems: PC ■ Category: RPG ■ Players: 1-Multi ■ Developer: Obsidian ■ Due: TBC

▶▶ The original *Neverwinter Nights* was a *Dungeons & Dragons* player's dream come true, giving players without a pencil and eraser a taste of just how close a computer game could get to Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson's original concept. Hyper sat down with Obsidian Entertainment's founder and CEO, Feargus Urquhart, to find out exactly why prospective dungeon-masters should once again put their monster manuals on the bookshelf to play the sequel, *Neverwinter Nights 2*.

NO DICE

Although Feargus was cagey about giving any plot developments away, he did make us one promise about the sequel's story. "The original game's campaign was good, but Bioware really didn't have enough time to make it as compelling as it could have been," says Urquhart. "Our goal for this game was just to make more of a

real story. Obviously you have to have an evil force that threatens the realms — but we're making it a lot more multi faceted than that."

Amongst these facets is the fact that you won't be saving the world from the outset, and instead you'll have to build yourself a reputation as a hero. Once you've become somebody of note within *Neverwinter* society not only will you be able to face the evil threatening the realms, but you'll also be rewarded for your status by being able to command your own stronghold, a massive fortified structure that you'll both defend and attack from. Success in *NWN2* doesn't only rely on reputation however, in a move inspired by Obsidian's recent development of *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic 2* you'll also be able to choose between doing things the nice way, or taking a more evil path.

"[Our experience working on *KOTOR 2*] influenced us a lot," says

Feargus. "The good and evil paths in *Neverwinter 2* really come down to who you ally yourself with. For example in the realms inside of *Neverwinter* you can either ally yourself with the Shadowthieves or with the *Neverwinter* Guard, and which allies you choose will define how you progress through the game."

customisable than ever before, with six layers of texture blending and randomly generated greenery offering almost unlimited options to create unique environments. For all its features though Feargus promises that the single player mode alone will be more than worth the admission price.

"We've made sure that if someone

YOU WON'T BE SAVING THE WORLD FROM THE OUTSET, AND INSTEAD YOU'LL HAVE TO BUILD YOURSELF A REPUTATION AS A HERO... BECOME SOMEBODY OF NOTE

Another feature unveiled to us was the game's new campaign creation toolset, a powerful level-editing tool that not only allows you to become your own dungeon master but also drastically lengthens the game's lifespan at the same time. For the sequel Obsidian have implemented sweeping changes to the tool's design making it more

never looks at the toolset, never plays online they'll still feel like they've got their moneys worth, and by bringing the experiences we've had on our previous games is exactly how we're going to do that," assures Feargus. "For those people who have always loved the Bioware and Black Isles RPGs — this is the next generation successor." <<<



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Gee, I don't know, how about some screenshots where something, anything, is happening?

Last one left is on barrel duty!

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PlayStation 2



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TIMESHIFT

Systems: PC, Xbox, Xbox 360 ■ Category: FPS ■ Players: 1-Multi ■ Developer: Saber Interactive ■ Due: Q1 2006

▶▶ We all love to play with time. I know I'd like to reverse time just a few seconds now and then to help myself make the early train. All I need is some kind of time suit to keep myself separate from the — I'll call it a 'timeshift' — and I'd be set. Great idea, eh?

Okay, it's really part of the idea behind Saber Interactive's upcoming Timeshift, where you play the one man who can save the world from some time manipulation that has changed the world. This also makes you public enemy number one. Toolled up with the funky Quantum Suit, you get to play Tivo with the world, rewinding, slowing and stopping time while you remain outside the effects.

SOMETHING EXTRA

This distinctly non-Persia time play offers some original puzzle action that really gives this FPS something

extra. Stop time to walk through a fan that would otherwise be set to puree. Rewind time to ride that conveyor belt into the inaccessible factory. Or slow time to run through a minefield to watch the mines go off in slow mo in your wake. There's been some clever play with the logic of the game too. If you get shot, you can rewind time to have the bullets come back out, but you're still injured — your body is outside the shift, remember? Oh, and the fun to be had fragging bad guys in slow mo and running through their shower of gibbs. Hell, you can even rewind and kill some henchmen twice if you're looking to double your kills.

Rather than some purely sci-fi future concept, kudos to Saber for bringing us a slick Steampunk setting. Environments have a great flavour that help Timeshift to deliver a unique feel. Think Verne, Wells and Sky Captain with a dose of 1984. Weapons are also designed

to fit both style and gameplay. The crossbow is a real treat, while they're hoping to include time weapons to nullify some tough bad guys who might also have some time skills to throw down against yours.

One issue we saw was too much graphical pizzazz during timeshifts.

us it will include timeshifting abilities. How this will work is hard to imagine, but if they pull it off this will be some seriously compelling multiplayer action.

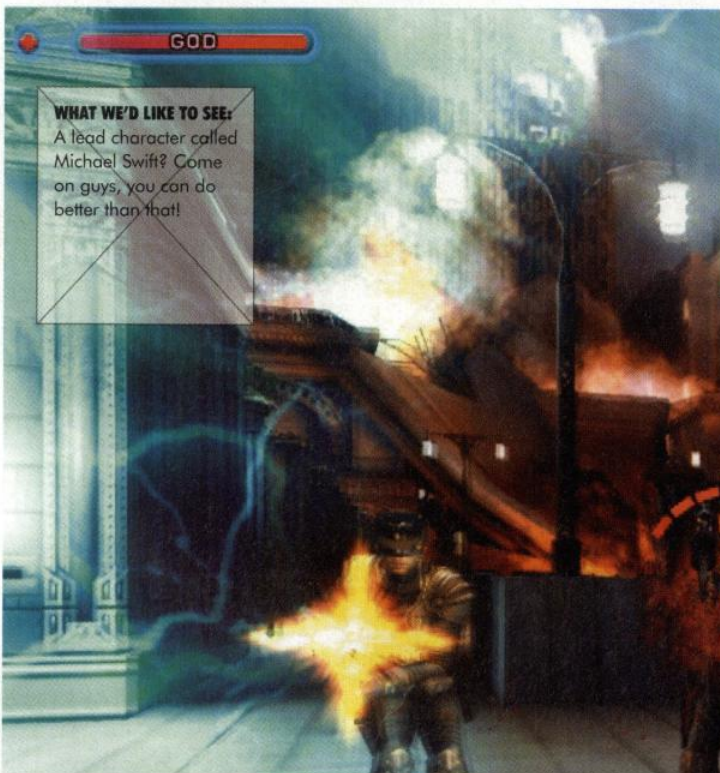
Great news is the confirmation of an Xbox 360 version of the game, but also to release to current gen

YOU GET TO PLAY TIVO WITH THE WORLD, REWINDING, SLOWING AND STOPPING TIME WHILE YOU REMAIN OUTSIDE THE EFFECTS

As the screen warped to indicate the time effect, play became difficult to manage due to limited visibility. We saw some pretty early code for this one, including two takes on the interface, so no doubt plenty will change and hopefully this will be tweaked.

The talk of multiplayer is intriguing, as publisher Atari told

Xbox too. This is certainly the kind of game that could take advantage of a next gen console, but it's nice to see they're keen to deliver this game to the late adopters — and for markets like ours with late next gen arrival. They've done plenty of work on this for the current Xbox, so every Xbox owner will get to taste some Timeshift. <<



That building's so gonna get it

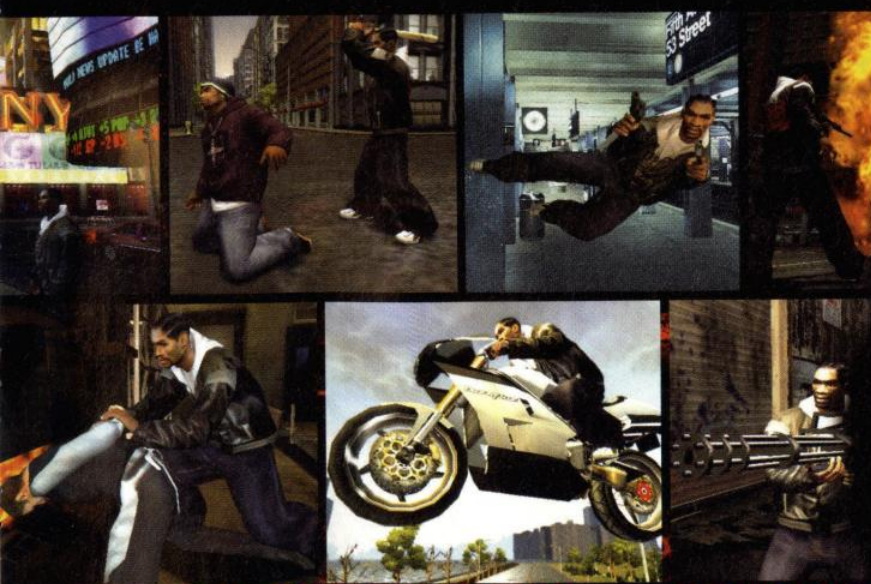


This gun's just a little ridiculous



TRUE CRIME NEW YORK CITY

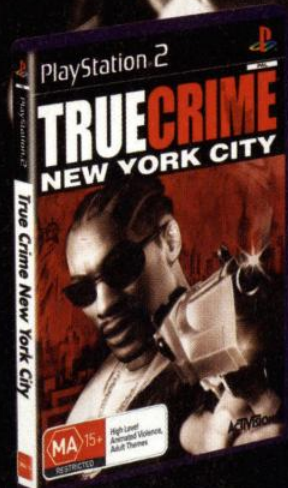
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PlayStation 2



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Hyper's PSP Primer

» VAUGHAN SMITH

Now that the PSP is finally here, you've probably played some games, maybe checked out a UMD movie and perhaps even had a go at putting your own content on the machine. Well the fact is that it requires a bit of extra effort and research on your part to get the most out of your new piece of technology. Lucky for you, we've done the hard yards already, so just sit back and let us guide you through the wonders of the PSP.

THE BASICS

You will need:

1. **PSP and Memory Stick**
2. **USB to USB Mini Cable** (same as the one for most digital cameras)
3. **PC with Windows**, an **Internet Connection** and **USB ports**
4. **Version 2.0 Update** Installed
5. Access to a **wireless network** (optional)

Now the first step for accessing the host of functions on your PSP is plugging it into a PC. Attach the **mini USB connector** from your cable into the plug above the **PSP screen** and the other end into your **USB port** on your PC. Ensure that your PSP is turned on and in the **home** menu. If you are in a game, use the **HOME** button on the bottom of your PSP to exit out. The PSP Home Menu is arranged in a horizontal style with extra menu options branching vertically off each category. Keep going left

until you hit the **Settings** menu and select the **USB connection** option (you may need to hit up or down to select it). This will enable your PSP to talk to the PC. Once **USB mode** is visible on the screen you are connected and your PSP should appear on the PC as a removable drive. You should see a **PSP directory** at the top level, if not then your PSP memory stick isn't formatted correctly. When you are finished connecting to a PC always hit **exit via your PSP first** to close the connection. Always ensure that you don't close a connection until after all data is finished transferring. Obvious, we know, but worth mentioning.

Memory Stick

The PSP uses **PRO Duo**, or **Duo Memory Sticks**. This is very specific, so be sure that you don't get them confused with other types. A PRO stick by itself is too big and won't fit, a Duo will work but the transfer speed will not be as fast as a PRO Duo. There are two brands that you can use and readily buy, **Sandisk** and **Sony**. They both function in about the same way, although the Sandisk ones are cheaper.

As for sizes, 32 MB isn't enough if you want a bit of freedom with how you use your PSP, so going for a bigger card is highly recommended. A 256 or 512 MB card *may* suffice, but you really should be looking at (at least) 1 GB. The prices seem to drop every day and you should be able to pick one up online for between \$150 and \$200. It's a fair chunk on top of the PSP itself, but a must buy if you want to do more than play games and UMD movies. Also, it is important to note that storage providers always quote the size as 1000KB to a megabyte instead of the 1024 that is the actual definition used by computers. So when your card is a bit less than the advertised size, don't panic. It is also recommended to only use your PSP to format your memory stick, and not your PC should the need arise.

DIRECTORY STRUCTURE

A properly formatted media ready PSP should look like this from your PC:

- MP_ROOT
- PSP

The **MP_ROOT** directory is for your video files. Inside that directory should look like this:

- 100ANV01
- 100MNV01

The **100ANV01** directory is for your AVC encoded videos, and the **100MNV01** is for your MP4 videos.

The PSP directory should contain:

- GAME
- MUSIC
- PHOTO
- SAVEDATA

The **GAME** directory is for running downloadable games or applications. The **MUSIC** and **PHOTO** directories are for music and images respectively. If any of these directories are not there you can create them yourself using windows. The **SAVEDATA** directory contains your game saves, and it is created automatically the first time you create a save file so don't worry about it if it isn't there.

Images

To view images simply chuck them into the **PHOTO** directory using windows explorer and your USB connection. Because the native resolution of the PSP is **480 x 272 pixels** it can make browsing images annoying if they are certain sizes — a 4:3 aspect ration for instance will leave you with black bars on either side of the image. You can manually resize the image yourself before transferring it, or find a program to automatically do it for you (one free example is **PSP Image Converter**). Images can also be set as your wallpaper by pressing the triangle button while viewing the image and selecting the option 'Set as Wallpaper'.

Audio

PSP supports **MP3** and **ATRAC** audio and playing files on your PSP is really quite simple. Connect your PSP to the PC and transfer all the files you want into the **MUSIC** folder on your PSP. All files in those directories are then available to be played from the Music menu on your home screen.

ATRAC is an alternate format that gives similar or better audio quality as an MP3 of the same bit-rate however with a smaller file size. It requires specialised conversion programs and for general ease of use it is recommended to just stick with MP3 unless you feel like exploring ATRAC further.



Video

Here comes the fun part. The PSP video playback is split into 2 categories:

1. MPEG-4 Video aka **MP4**
2. MPEG-4 Advanced Video Coding aka **AVC**

Now **MP4** files need to be placed in the **100MNV01** directory you already created, and **AVC** files go in the **100ANV01** directory. That is easy enough, however the problem is actually converting your regular video files into those formats. Luckily there are some freely available converters available to do this for you. It is also very important to note that all video files must be in those directories, and cannot be in directories underneath 100ANV01 or 100MNV01.

Before we talk converters we need to explain a few things about the process. Important factors are video and audio bit-rates. Bit-rate describes how much information is in a stream of data. The higher the better, but of course that means the file is larger. You can have a constant bit rate or variable bit-rate. Constant keeps the bit-rate fixed throughout the video, and variable allows some flexibility and maintains a certain quality overall but can help drastically reduce the size.

The time taken for the conversion process is based on how detailed the original file is and how long it goes for.

VIDEO CONVERSION PROGRAMS

The easiest program around with the most features is **PSP Video 9** so that's the one we're

using for this guide. You can grab it at <http://www.pspvideo9.com>

Video 9 gives you quite a few options yet still maintains a relatively easy method of conversion. It can also automatically copy your files onto your PSP if it is in USB Mode and plugged into your PC. To use this program, first you will want to pick a conversion profile as shown below [**Screen 1**] after clicking the setup button.

The easiest way to continue from this point is to save your chosen profile as the default profile and then click on the convert button at the top.

This screen [**Screen 2**] will be shown. From there it is as easy as clicking the **Convert New Video** button, selecting your file and letting the program do its thing. The file will be saved to **C:/Program Files/pspvideo9/MP_ROOT/** (if you used the default installation path) and they will be filed in either of the two directories depending on whether they are MP4 or AVC. To make it even easier you can use the Copy function to help move them straight to your PSP [**Screen 3**].

If your PSP is not detected, make sure that it is connected in USB mode and then hit the Setup button in PSP Video 9. On the settings tab hit the button labelled Auto Find next to the PSP Drive space and you're good to go.

AVC VS MP4

AVC is the new codec introduced with the version 2.0 Firmware update. A version of it is used to encode UMD movies, so it is quite powerful. However due to the fact that it is relatively new there is less support for it so far and less possible resolutions and conversion settings.

CONVERSION SETTINGS EXPLAINED:

Example:
AVC / 320x240 / 29.97fps / 768kbps Stereo / 128kbps

Media type

AVC = AVC Codec
QVGA/SP = MP4 Standard

Resolution

This is the resolution of the encoded video. The native resolution of the PSP screen is 480 x 272. The standard resolutions for regular MP4 encoding are 320 x 240 for 4:3 and 368 x 208 for widescreen. Put simply the widescreen format suits the PSP screen better, and the higher the resolution is the better it will look. The AVC codec allows greater resolution encoding but support in the conversion programs is still developing.



Frames per Second

The number of frames displayed on the screen per second.

Video Bit Rate

The Video Bit Rate of the conversion. Higher is better, except for Variable where a lower QB index gives better picture quality. This is the main indicator of how good a video will look and how big the file size is.

Audio Channels

Mono or Stereo

Audio Bit Rate

Audio Bit Rate of the converted file. Higher is better but it is not as crucial as the video.

QUALITY TESTING

For the quality test we used the E3 2005 Advent Children HD Trailer weighing in at 60.9 MB, running time 2 minutes 32 seconds and wmv format. See the results in the table below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At this stage it is hard to recommend AVC over regular MP4 until higher resolutions are supported. It is a better codec, but at least in this test didn't really offer much more to offset the lack of conversion settings. It is the way to go, but needs more work in terms of support.

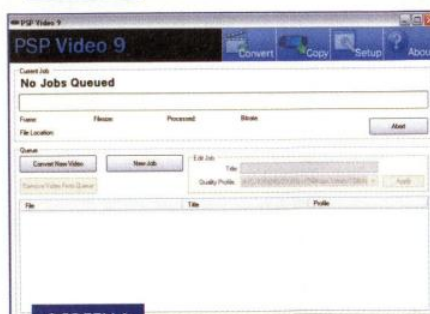
Video Bit-rate is the big factor in file size and how the end result turned out. 1500kbps was essentially overkill, and the difference in quality over 768kbps was minor at best and offset by the increase in file size. We recommend aiming for 512kbps Bit-Rate and to go a step further QB4 which is a Variable Bit-Rate which aims to keep the quality at 512kbps on average.

15 FPS actually looked pretty good, but it just fell over in the high intensity action scenes. For general TV shows it would be fine, but 29.97 is the safer option.

As a result of these tests (and our other general use) we recommend SP/320x240/29.97fps/QB4 Stereo/96kbps for most video content. It outputs a good quality picture with good file size depending on the source material. Constant Bit-Rates of 512 or 768kbps provide a better picture but at a fairly substantial file size increase so may need to be used sparingly depending on your storage options.



SCREEN 1



SCREEN 2



SCREEN 3

CONVERSION SETTINGS	FILE SIZE	QUALITY (1-5)
AVC / 426x240 / 29.97fps / 768kbps Stereo / 128kbps	16MB	5
SP / 368x208 / 29.97fps / 1500kbps Stereo / 128kbps	25MB	5
SP / 320x240 / 29.97fps / 768kbps Stereo / 128kbps	16MB	5
SP / 320x240 / 29.97fps / QB4 Stereo / 96kbps	13MB	4
SP / 320x240 / 15fps / 512kbps Stereo / 96kbps	11MB	4
SP / 320x240 / 15fps / 216kbps Mono / 48kbps	4.8MB	2

Wireless Internet and Networking

This is definitely one of the coolest features of the PSP, but one that is a little harder to get into if you don't have the know how. Setting up your own wireless network requires using a wireless access point or wireless router, but that is a bit outside the scope of this guide. So instead we will focus on what you need to do in regards to getting your PSP to connect to a wireless network and use the Internet.

First ensure your **WLAN** switch is on. It is on the **left hand side of the PSP** (near the analogue stick) and should be set to the **up** position. Then go to the settings menu on your PSP and press down until you see the category **Network Settings**.

Ad Hoc Mode is for networking between PSP units without the Internet, and is a direct connection for when you are playing multiplayer, or game sharing. You shouldn't need to touch this. What we are interested is **Infrastructure Mode**. This mode connects your PSP to a wireless network for browsing the Internet and playing games over the Internet as well. Hit **New Connection** and away we go.

1. **Enter the Connection Name** – This can be anything you want, it is just for your own reference when picking which connections to use. We recommend something like "Wilks sucks".
2. **WLAN Settings** – What you enter here really depends on the settings on the network you wish to join. Using the scan feature will locate any networks nearby that are broadcasting their SSID. Broadcasting means that they are announcing their name and that they exist. Many networks do not broadcast, as it is an extra security measure if hackers don't have an ID to work with. This step in the setup process is mainly for setting the SSID (Service Set Identifier), which is the name of the network connection. If you know the name already you can enter it manually, but it doesn't hurt to use the scan feature. The automatic feature is only for very specific technologies that automatically do all the settings for you. We were not able to test this one out.

3. **WLAN Security Setting** – This is quite an important step. You have 3 options with the PSP: **None**, **WEP** and **WPA-PSK (TKIP)**. The setting you use depends on what security is enforced by the wireless network. They are explained as follows:

- **None**: No key or encryption is used and anybody within range can use the network freely. You shouldn't need this setting, and if you find a network with no security you should politely let them know.
- **WEP**: Stands for Wired Equivalent Privacy. Basically it requires a hexadecimal key to access the network. If this setting is enabled then you need the WEP key, which is generally 10 characters long.
- **WPA-PSK (TKIP)**: WPA stands for Wi-fi Protected Access and is more secure than WEP. Without going too in-depth suffice to say this is the best network security you can use, and if your network supports it you should set it yourself or recommend it to whoever handles it. It also requires a hexadecimal key to connect to the network.

4. **Address Settings** – You should be able to get by with the Easy setting that automatically detects all your IP settings. Definitely try that one first and come back to this if you run into problems. If you need specific settings then dive into Custom.

- **IP Address Setting**: This is how you obtain your IP address. Automatic gets one automatically, Manual lets you set it yourself and PPPoE is used if you need to enter a username and password to login for Internet access. For the Manual setting you need to set the IP Address, Subnet Mask, Default Router and Primary DNS. These values should be given by a network admin if required.
- **DNS Setting**: Use this if you need to set a manual DNS address.

• **Proxy Server**: Again this is a specialised setting that you may need to set depending on if you use a Proxy Server to access the Internet.

• **Internet Browser**: This setting opens the Internet Browser immediately after connecting to the wireless network and may need to be used to login for some services.

5. **Setting List** – This is an overview of all the settings you have made. Hit up and down to review them and use right to continue and save your settings. Now is a good time to test your connection.

If everything was set correctly your PSP will connect to your access point, obtain its own IP address and test the Internet connection. All this information will be shown on a status screen so that you know everything is ok.

Note: Be sure to turn off the WLAN switch when it is not in use as it seems to draw a lot of extra power from your PSP, using up your battery faster.

INTERNET BROWSER

The Internet Browser comes with version 2.0 of the firmware and lives on the far right of the home menu after the Game menu, in a section called **Network**. The first time you open the browser it should ask what connection to use, so select the connection you configured earlier. Pressing the **Triangle** button toggles the onscreen menu on and off. All the menu options are along the bottom of the screen and the d-pad is used for navigation.

To get started select the **File** button on the far left and select **Address Entry**. The familiar PSP text entry pops up, but notice the extra buttons with specific web address components for your convenience. Back to the menu and the options you would usually find in a web browser are all there: Back, Forward, Cancel/Refresh, Home, Bookmarks, History, View, Tools and Help. Check out the Help section for more information on controls if you get stuck. The rest are pretty self-explanatory.

Holding the **Square** button brings up a bar along the top that shows the page tabs and how much of the page has loaded. Whilst holding the button you can use the **analogue stick** to scroll around the page and it works very well. The **L** and **R** buttons can be used to move back and forward as well. Sometimes pages with a lot of graphics and complicated design take a long time to load. However using the **Cancel** button to stop the loading will usually result in a fully loaded page with image not being displayed, which isn't a huge deal when you want the information faster.

E-BAY VIA THE PSP BROWSER



Protection

Since the PSP is an expensive piece of hardware, it's only natural to want to keep your investment looking as good as the day you bought it. Here are our recommendations for keeping your PSP safe.

LOGITECH PLAYGEAR POCKET

The affectionately termed 'sock' that comes with the PSP value pack serves its purpose in keeping your PSP away from harm but isn't very robust. Well the **Logitech Playgear Pocket** (LPP for short) is rock solid, and will keep your PSP safe and ensure peace of mind.

However safety isn't the only feature worth mentioning, the LPP can be folded back to be used as a stand for watching media on the PSP, as well as using the top half of the case to help reduce glare whilst playing the PSP inside the case. However the most fun part of the LPP comes from the fact that it is a clear case. This means you can customise the look and make a fashion statement at the same time.

Option A: The handmade method

This is where those vital skills learned in kindergarten come in handy.

1. Open your LPP and remove the black rubber insert from one part of the case.
2. Trace around the insert onto a blank piece of A4 paper.
3. Cut out the shape and you are left with a piece of paper with a LPP shaped 'window' or hole. Hold onto the LPP shaped piece of paper that you removed.
4. Use the viewing window on magazines/photos/etc that you have to see how they would look as a LPP cover.
5. Use the LPP template bit that you cut out and trace around it on your image so you know where to cut. It's a good idea to loop a small bit of sticky tape and use it to stick your template to the paper so it doesn't move while you trace.
6. Cut out your new shape and place it in the case underneath the rubber insert so that it is visible. Voila!
7. Optional: Use the bottom rubber insert as your template and also trace the hole in



the centre so that your PSP logo will show through on your custom design as well.

Option B: The Digital Method

This method takes out the guesswork and old fashioned tracing skills, but requires a good quality colour printer or similar device.

1. Download a program called **PSPCoverz** at <http://www.shyphen.com/PSPCoverz/> [Screen 4]
2. Arrange your images on top and bottom and use the print preview to verify how they will look.
3. Print the image and then cut the two pieces out and place them in your case.

PSP SCREEN PROTECTOR

Now that your PSP is secured from most physical damage and looks stylish, you need to worry about the greatest asset of the unit – the screen. Dirt, scratches and other pollution can damage your screen and range from an annoyance, to limiting the life of your PSP. Now what you can use here is a screen protector, a thin film that goes over your screen and protects it from everyday use, without detracting from the viewing of the screen.

Things to look for in a Screen Protector:

1. **Custom Fit for the PSP** – You don't want to have to do any cutting whatsoever, so ensure what you purchase is designed specifically for the PSP
2. **Silicon Adhesive** – Silicon Adhesive based protectors leave no residue on the screen and are re-usable and washable.
3. A High Quality product that is perfectly clear and doesn't restrict your view of the screen.
4. **Glare and UV reduction** – Some protectors cut down on glare and filter UV rays from damaging your LCD screen.

Recommended brands include **EXiM** and **Hori**. Expect to pay between \$10-\$20 for a good quality protector (including shipping if bought online). Whilst it may seem expensive, you will be able to use it for the life of the PSP if you buy a good one.

Applying your screen protector

1. Ensure your PSP screen is completely spotless and free from all dirt, dust and debris. Some protectors recommend using a steamy room

for this. It is possible to use strips of sticky tape to remove contaminants from the screen before proceeding.

2. Line it up as best you can, starting from the left hand side of your screen. Ensure the edge you are peeling off is evenly spaced around the side and bottom and squarely aligned on the screen.
3. Place it down on the screen and very slowly peel it off the backing whilst applying firm and even pressure. The slower and more precise you are with the application the less air bubbles you will get. If you can apply it in one slow steady motion then that is optimum. If you need to re-apply it, then do this step by holding the edges with your fingers without touching the backing (as you will leave marks on it from your fingers)
4. Once it is applied to the whole screen check to see how well it is lined up and re-apply as required. If there are small bubbles you can usually nudge them to the sides and they will disappear. You can use something like a credit card to help flatten it out.
5. If you needed to do steps 3-4 a few times you will no doubt gather some dust/grime on the back (sticky side) of the protector. This will show up on your screen, no matter how clean the screen itself is. So what you can do is get some sticky tape and put it across the backing (sticky bit). By taking your time and slowly peeling it off in sections you can remove all the dirt and dust stuck to the back without wrecking the adhesiveness of the protector. It is quite easy to make a mistake though, so be very careful even if you think it is going fine.



SCREEN 4



The Sealed Section

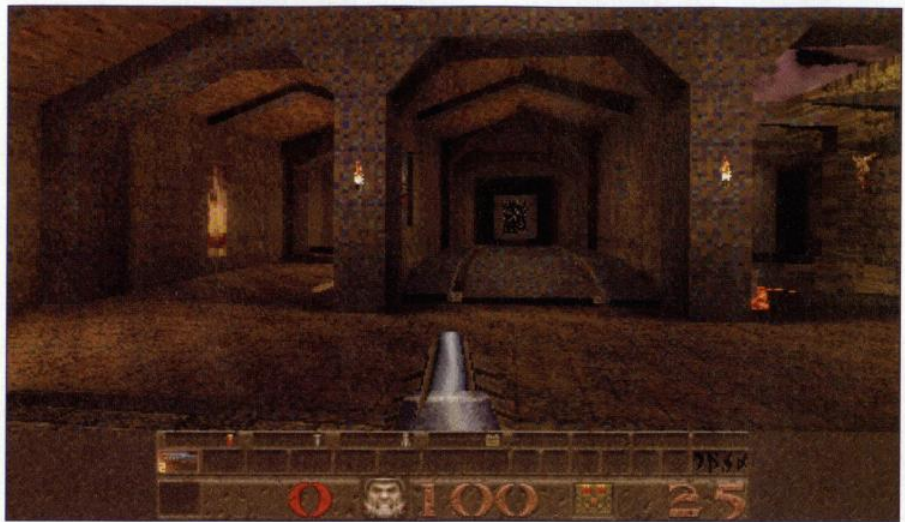
The term 'homebrew' relates to user created software such as applications, games and most notoriously emulators designed to run on specific hardware. For many budding developers and artists, homebrew can be a great creative outlet that can in some cases provide results better than those from established software designers and publishers. It may all sound innocent enough, but when the term 'hardware' and 'emulation' get thrown around the end results tend to obtain the scrutiny of hardware companies. And it's not hard to see why, because decryption and open source almost always leads to hardware hijacking and software piracy. When it comes to piracy Sony felt the full grunt of its widespread potential with its first console, the PlayStation, so when the PSP was developed and eventually released they no doubt went to great pains to minimise the potential exploitation of its new handheld.

ENCRYPTION AND FIRMWARE

Sony's best defence against allowing users to have full control over their PSP content was through the system's encryption which was and still is state of the art. But on principal alone hackers took it upon themselves to crack and/or bypass the security, and thanks to a minor fault in the system's code, this was achieved well before the PSP was released in Australia. It was the first line of defence, the UMD, that was broken almost immediately after the system's US release, allowing people to extract files at will off the discs giving them a better understanding of how the system worked, with the intent of allowing homebrew content to be run off Memory Sticks. Sony, who has always taken a hard line against users running unauthorised software on its systems, responded with timely releases of a new firmware version (the handheld equivalent of an operating system for PC) for the handheld, in an attempt to stop the exploits. In their defence, those who saw fit to hack the handheld stated on numerous occasions that their sole intent was to give people the freedom to compile and run their own code, which led to a whole slew of interesting and noteworthy applications developed and distributed by users for their new handheld. In turn an SDK (Software Development Kit) was made freely available, and as they say, the flood gates were opened.

A NICE SELECTION

One of the most popular homebrew scenes on the PSP is in **application development**, with everything from text readers to virtual PDAs being developed and freely distributed. For



(above) Quake running on PSP - a bit pointless but a cool tech demo
(left) Sam & Max is just one of a bunch of classics that can be run on PSP thanks to SCUMM emulation

example, the PDA software is a full application allowing the user to manage an address book, calendar, notes, time, file management and so forth. Then there are other applications allowing users to read a whole manner of documents and e-books stored in popular PC file formats such as DOC and PDF, which has led to some exceptional comic book readers and handheld magazine publications.

As expected some of the more popular applications come in the form of media players that allow playback of numerous audio and video codecs usually used in downloaded content such as movie trailers, television shows, and music. Other applications take advantage of the wi-fi functionality of the handheld such as a program that allows popular internet radio broadcasts to be streamed through the PSP.

ON TO THE GAMES

The homebrew scene for the PSP is still in its infancy and yet has already provided a large number of results. This is especially true in the gaming department, with freely distributed chess games, Tetris-inspired puzzlers, arcade style top-down shooters, first-person shooters and various other original creations being made available online. Like the majority of the applications, the games are written in **LUA**, the PSP's simple scripting language used to control the many aspects of the PSP's interface and controls. The language's similarity to popular programming language C++ has allowed for widespread homebrew game development, distribution and modification.

One of the more creative interactive music

titles allows players to use their PSP to create and mix their own beats using a simple interface, even allowing for their creations to be saved in popular .wav or .midi format and transferred to PC [**PSP Kick, Screen 5**].

On other side of the creative spectrum there's a title that simply involves punching various celebrities. And this is all par for the course with homebrew, with many people simply trying to get a game out there as quickly as possible with only a select few looking to create a fully fleshed out experience.

THE DARKER SIDE

Legal and ethical questions are brought to the forefront when the same principals and technology is used for system emulation and piracy of existing PSP software, which are both active practises for many owners of the handheld. With everything from Atari 2600, Commodore 64, SNES and Neo Geo being emulated on the PSP one has to wonder where one draws the line between abandonware and copyright infringement.

In the end, it's a battle that Sony won't be able to win outright as those maligned by the electronics giant for 'hacking' their proprietary technology are fighting the cause to keep software and technology in any form open source. That being if you bought it you should be able to configure it.

Kosta Andreadis



"NOTHING SHORT OF AMAZING..."

- OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE



Grand Theft Auto

Liberty City Stories™

OUT NOW ON PSP™

(PLAYSTATION®PORTABLE) SYSTEM



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The Ultimate WIRED LIFESTYLE

If you're anything like us, you're not just a videogame addict, you're a technology addict too. If you get a tingle up your spine at the mere mention of home theatre projectors, 7.1 surround sound and 2000dpi mice, then this feature is for you. It's far from comprehensive, but this is some of the coolest tech to catch our eye over the last few months...



INFOCUS SCREENPLAY 4805 PROJECTOR

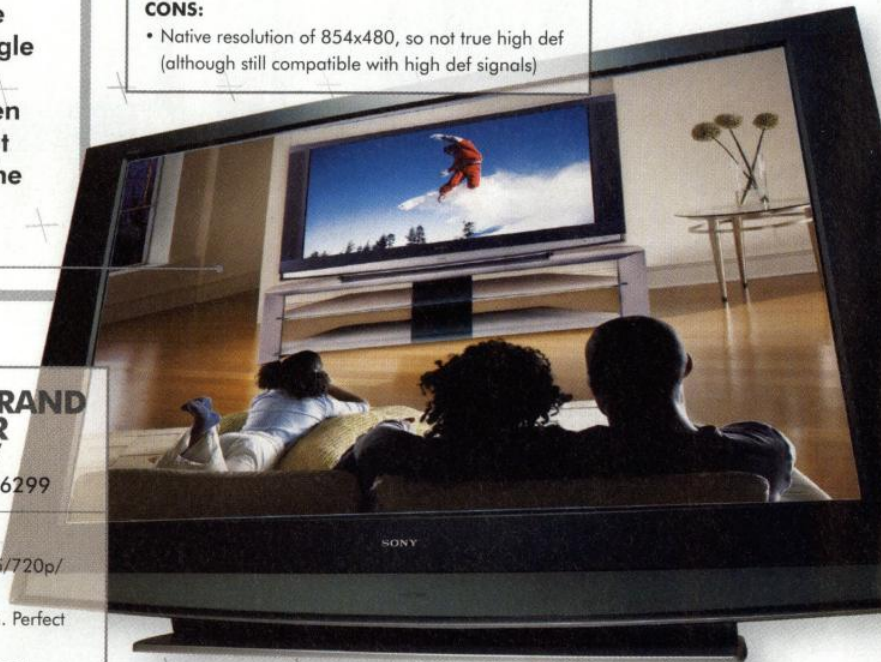
RRP: \$1999

PROS:

- Truly affordable – an excellent entry level projector
- Surprisingly good picture quality for the price, with great contrast and black level
- Optimal size vs picture quality is about 90 inches, which is huge in anyone's book!

CONS:

- Native resolution of 854x480, so not true high def (although still compatible with high def signals)



SONY 151CM GRAND WEGA LCD REAR PROJECTION TV

KFWS60 LCD TV / RRP: \$6299

PROS:

- High definition ready (1080i/720p/576p/480p)
- Massive 151cm 16:9 screen. Perfect for home theatre
- The screen has 3 wide XGA high-res LCD panels – one for red, green and blue signals, which provides a better and more consistent picture quality
- Sexy slimline design

CONS:

- For the price you could get a sweet projector.

HOME ENTERTAINMENT

PANASONIC SB-PF800 SURROUND SOUND SPEAKERS

RRP: TBA

PROS:

- You haven't lived until you've experienced 6.1 surround sound at home.
- The speakers are built on decades of R&D, making for great sound reproduction and response
- Equally as good for listening to music as for home theatre
- Just as much attention paid to build quality as sound quality. Sexy design and will last you a long time
- Combine these with Panasonic's SA-XR55 receiver and a Panasonic projector and you've got yourself a killer setup

CONS:

- You'll need a dedicated home theatre room

PIONEER VSX-915 SURROUND SOUND RECEIVER

RRP: \$999

PROS:

- Awesome entry level home theatre receiver
- Can decode and output all current surround sound formats in full 7.1
- Delivers 7 x 130W power
- Auto Multi Channel Acoustic Calibration System makes it easy to set up your speakers with professional sounding results.
- Preset remote with LCD. Allows you to control multiple devices with the one remote.

CONS:

- It won't fill the hole in your heart, just the one in your living room...



LG LHW750TA 700W WIRELESS HOME THEATER

RRP: \$1499

PROS:

- 5.1 speaker system, DVD player and built in DD/DTS/DP2 decoder in one
- We just can't resist the allure of wireless home theatre!
- Total 700W Output Power (100Wx5 + 200W)

CONS:

- Buying components individually will almost always make for a better setup. Of course it'll cost you a lot more too.

PIONEER DVR-630H 160GB DVD RECORDER

RRP: \$1099

PROS:

- The 160GB HDD can store huge amounts of content, and the dual layer DVD burner can back up to disc very quickly
- Comprehensive inputs. You can plug in your camera via USB or your camcorder via i.LINK
- Excellent picture quality on DVD playback, although if you just want a standalone DVD player, you'd be better off with Pioneer's DV-686A

CONS:

- Can only rip mp3s from CD in real-time and must manually enter track and album listings

LG LST-5100P SET TOP BOX

RRP: \$624

PROS:

- One of the best digital TV receivers out there at the moment
- Good picture quality. Supports 1080i, 720p, 576p and 576i
- DVI output in addition to S-video and component

CONS:

- Design could be funkier

WINDOWS MEDIA CENTRE REMOTE KEYBOARD

RRP: \$199.95

PROS:

- Full control over a Windows XP Media Centre Edition PC from the couch. Great for streaming music, movies and watching TV through your PC
- Keyboard, remote and mouse in one wireless device
- Ergonomic design and backlighting for low light conditions

CONS:

- Operates via infrared, as opposed to Bluetooth or RF. You'll need line of sight.

**SAITEK R440
FORCE FEEDBACK
WHEEL**

RRP: \$139.95

PROS:

- Good response and feel
- Strong force feedback
- Comfortable pedals
- More affordable than high end models

CONS:

- PC only
- A little plastic looking



**STREET FIGHTER
15TH ANNIVERSARY
ARCADE STICK**

RRP: \$150

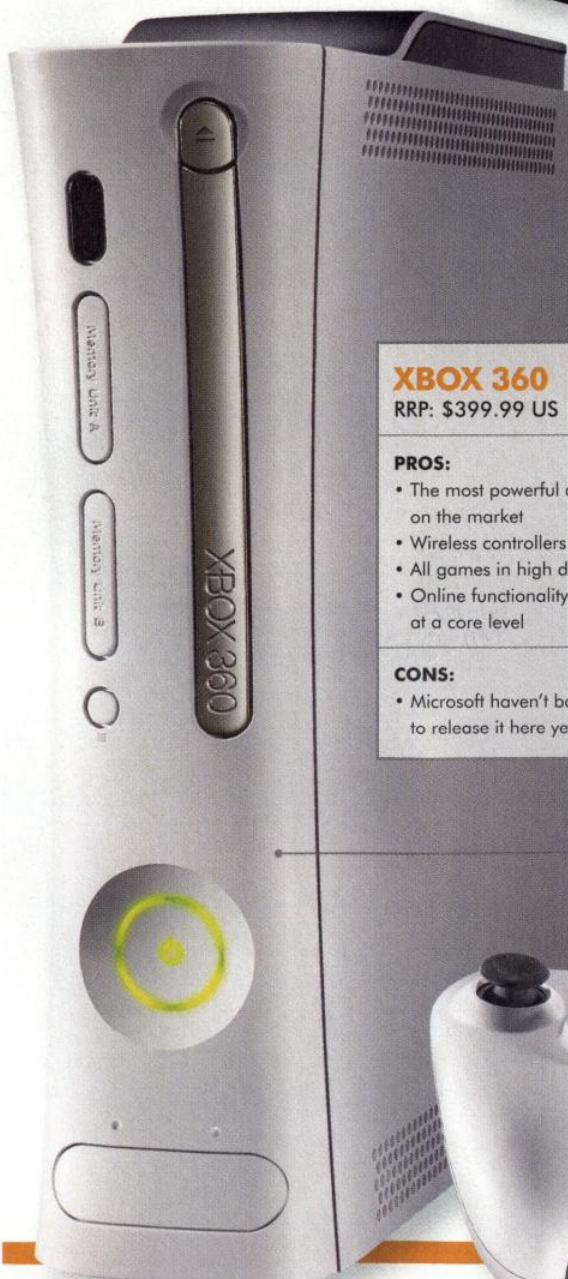
PROS:

- One of the best sticks money can buy
- Works on both PS2 and Xbox
- Sturdy design and great art

CONS:

- Buttons may be a little deep for super precise timing

GAMING



XBOX 360

RRP: \$399.99 US

PROS:

- The most powerful console on the market
- Wireless controllers
- All games in high def
- Online functionality built in at a core level

CONS:

- Microsoft haven't bothered to release it here yet



**MICROSOFT
WIRELESS LASER
MOUSE 6000**

RRP: \$129.95

PROS:

- Features Microsoft's new High Definition Laser Technology, so tracking is precise – even on rough surfaces.
- Magnifier tool and tilt wheel come in handy when navigating and viewing images, documents and web sites.
- Ergonomic design
- Wireless

CONS:

- More of an all round mouse than the new Logitech range. If all you use your PC for is gaming, check out the G5 and G7.





LOGITECH G5 MOUSE

RRP: \$129.95

PROS:

- Top notch gaming mouse
- On the fly adjustment of resolution from 400dpi up to 2000dpi, which allows you to switch between fast twitchy movement and slow accurate movement as the game demands it.
- Can add and remove weights to the underside to get the feel and balance just right

CONS:

- If you want wireless go for the new G7 model. It also comes with two rechargeable batteries



LOGITECH DRIVING FORCE PRO WHEEL

RRP: \$299.95

PROS:

- It has been available for ages, but this is still one of the best PS2 wheels
- 900 degrees of rotation for games that support it makes this one for the racing nuts
- Excellent build quality, feels great to use thanks to the rack and pinion steering system
- Sequential stick shift, wheel-mounted paddle shifters, full set of PS2 buttons

CONS:

- For PS2 only
- It ain't cheap!



NVIDIA GEFORCE 7800GTX

RRP: \$900-\$1000

PROS:

- 430MHz core clock speed, 1.4GHz memory clock, 256MB memory, 24 pixel pipelines
- Run your games at super high resolutions with 4X anti-aliasing and 8X anisotropic filtering
- HDTV features

CONS:

- Expensive
- The rest of your PC has to be bad-ass to take advantage of this card



SAITEK ECLIPSE KEYBOARD

RRP: \$99.95

PROS:

- Perfect for late night gaming or web surfing thanks to "TrueVu" key illumination which lights up the key graphics and keypad in dark conditions. Also has a great setting for bright conditions.
- Solid construction

CONS:

- Wired



SHARP 903

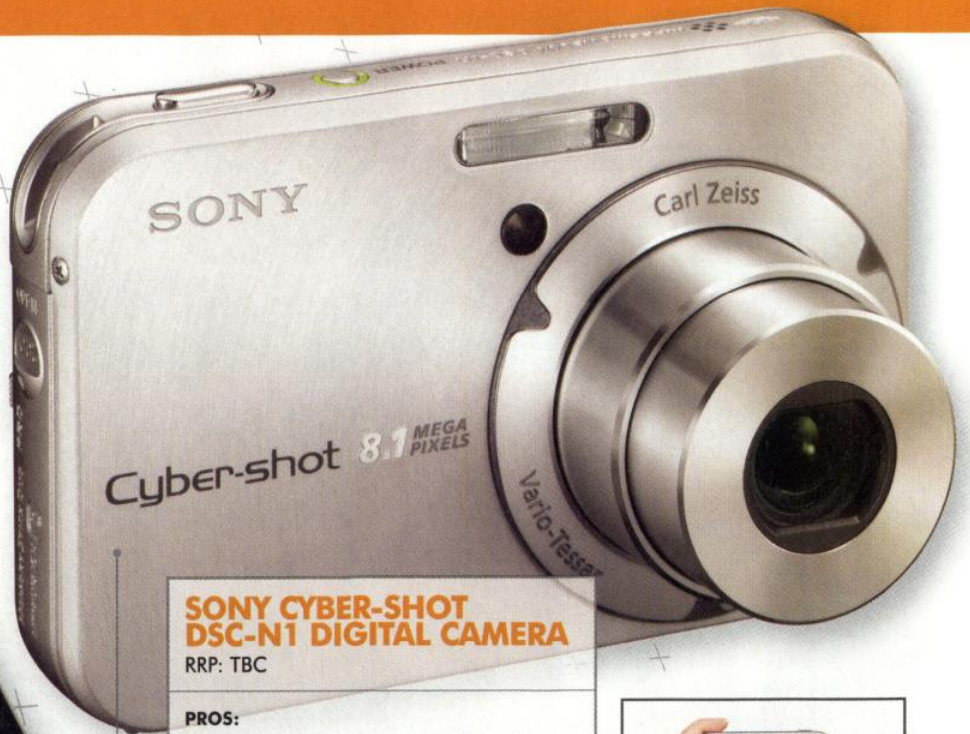
RRP: \$1199

PROS:

- Imposing but slick styling. Quite large, but great feeling build quality and nice non-symmetrical side on profile
- Excellent 3.2 megapixel camera built in with great swivel function
- Nice 240x320 screen
- Integrated music player
- Stereo speakers built in which is great for 3G apps

CONS:

- Only available through Vodafone stores
- No external display



SONY CYBER-SHOT DSC-N1 DIGITAL CAMERA

RRP: TBC

PROS:

- 8 megapixels for super high resolution shots
- Massive 3 inch LCD touch screen is an amazing viewfinder, plus makes navigation and selecting options as simple as tapping the screen a few times
- 3x optical zoom Carl Zeiss lens
- Excellent image quality
- Super thin and super slick design

CONS:

- So called friends may steal it from you



GAME BOY ADVANCE MICRO

RRP: \$149.95

PROS:

- Absolutely tiny – truly will fit comfortably in your pocket.
- Slick design, smaller screen size makes games look a lot sharper

CONS:

- The screen really is small

SONY ERICSSON W800I

RRP: \$999

PROS:

- First ever Walkman branded phone with robust music playback options and excellent sound quality
- 2 megapixel camera built in
- Triband plus HSCSD and GPRS
- Bluetooth and infrared
- Comes with 512MB Memory Stick

CONS:

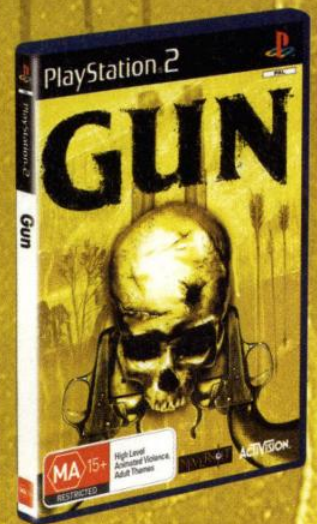
- Do you have an iPod already?



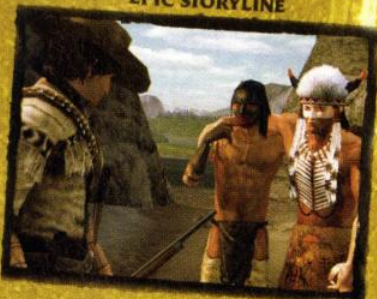
PORTABLE

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GUN™



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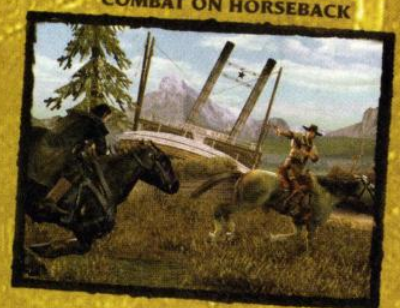
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PlayStation 2



ACTIVISION



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activision.com.au

PORTABLE



IPOD NANO

RRP: \$299 (2GB),
\$359 (4GB)

PROS:

- Sexy and streamlined design. Incredibly small – we're talking .7cm thin and weighing 42 grams!
- Everything you know and love about iPod

CONS:

- Is it too small?
- 2GB and 4GB isn't exactly huge storage



NOKIA N90

RRP: TBC

PROS:

- Slick clamshell design with funky swiveling components
- 2 megapixel camera with Carl Zeiss lens and flash built in, and good camera options
- Fantastic 2.1 inch 352x416 internal display and reasonable 128x128 external display
- Triband plus HSCSD, GPRS and EDGE

CONS:

- Quite large

SONY MDRV700DJ HEADPHONES

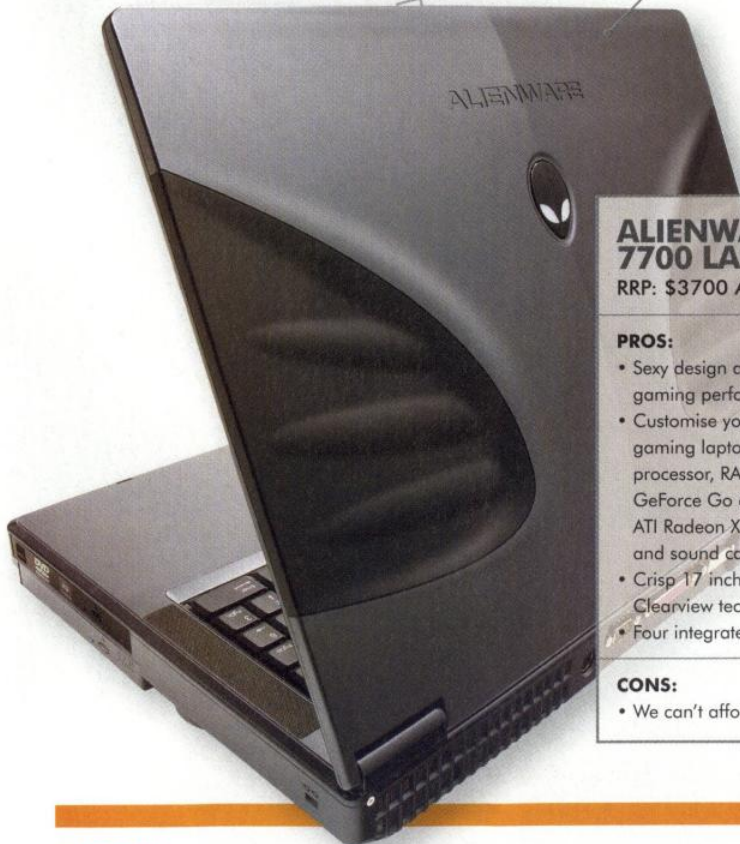
RRP: \$329

PROS:

- Powerful bass response thanks to its 50mm driver unit
- Excellent all round sound quality
- Comfortable, good build quality

CONS:

- Do you really want to take headphones this nice out of the house?



ALIENWARE AREA-51M 7700 LAPTOP

RRP: \$3700 AND UP

PROS:

- Sexy design and geared towards great gaming performance
- Customise your rig to create the ultimate gaming laptop. Choose your Pentium 4 processor, RAM and GPU (256MB NVIDIA GeForce Go 6800 Ultra GPU or 256MB ATI Radeon X800), HDD, optical drive and sound card
- Crisp 17 inch LCD screen featuring Clearview technology
- Four integrated speakers and a subwoofer

CONS:

- We can't afford one! Boo!



BE THE ONE

THE MATRIX

PATH OF NEO™

11.08.05

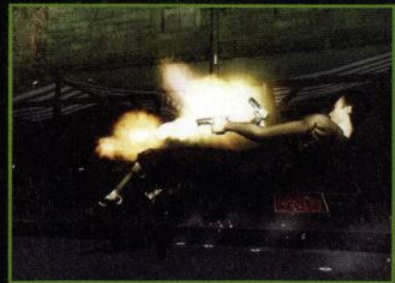
www.thematrixpathofneo.com



Award for
Technological Excellence

"With The Matrix: Path of Neo, games finally get to really enter The Matrix."

-Gamepro, 10/05



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(05)

PlayStation 2



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56 Battlefield 2: Modern Combat

All the goodness of Battlefield with a compelling single player game too!

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Reviews

Game Theory

SEAMUS BYRNE

Why we love sequels



It's time to admit a deep, dark secret. Gamers LOVE sequels. Like some family skeleton in the closet, the more time passes the less likely we are to expose this beastly love affair to the light of day. But when we embrace the reality of this forbidden lust we can accept its place

in our hearts and open our minds to the true meaning of this passion.

In a cinema experience, which is at its heart a storytelling one, 'much the same thing' isn't always what an audience is looking for. They're looking to be taken somewhere new. This distaste for sameness in cinema has been seen as a cause for recent declines in box office figures.

With a successful game franchise, the cynical attitude seems to claim developers are simply leveraging one good idea to generate a continued revenue stream. But this begs the question of why we keep buying such product. What is it about game sequels that fill a need that new game properties do not?

Where a game sequel is most directly exploiting a great cast of characters, its sequels offer developers a chance to enhance gameplay and game features, adding to an already attractive package, hopefully, a more immersive and entertaining game experience.

Unlike a movie, a gamer is more open to revisiting the same characters because the interaction in gameplay allows the player to participate in a new scenario. In a film, the passive format means the viewer demands more from the filmmaker. In a game, the player wants to be granted the opportunity to share an active experience with characters they already get along with and would fancy spending more time with, like catching up with an old friend.

Where a sequel comes about through a

franchise based around engaging gameplay, players are ultimately looking for that 'much the same thing' that movie buffs dread. But again, a game is about the interactive experience — when we've had a good one, we look forward to another experience that builds on the one we've had before.

In this space, developers can focus on staying true to successful gameplay, while focusing on new features, maps and graphics that enhance the original experience. Whether a player should bother moving to a new version of much the same thing is constantly answered by the hordes that do.

For those who strive to innovate, there is a fundamental hurdle in the attraction of the familiar. Like the rise of McDonald's and the death of the corner hamburger joint, there is an attraction to repeated experience. When you are happy with a product — not necessarily ecstatic — you're more likely to go with what you know than go with something unknown.

Take all ye in search of love. Numerous psychological studies on attraction have uncovered that propinquity, or simple continued exposure to any stimulus at close proximity (whether conscious or not), will make something more appealing over time. There is comfort in people and objects we experience often, directly or indirectly, while anything new must overcome initial anxiety of the unknown.

The converse is that in a comparative environment, innovators must work harder to convince us of their offerings, while past performers enhance their familiarity effect with every successful iteration.

It's noble to talk about our preference for undiscovered territory. But it's good to understand our instinctual preference for the familiar if we are to make a genuine effort to support innovation in games. This doesn't mean we must forsake our desire for the sequel, but it will help to shake off our natural aversion to a title we've never seen before.

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM The Overall Score – what's it all about (in a roundabout way)?

0-49

As much fun as drinking a mixture of off milk and cask wine...

50-59

The milk's only just turning so you probably won't barf. Just feel sick

60-69

The milk's fresh enough, but it's still just a bad combination

70-79

Now you get to choose. Milk or wine? Both are quite tasty...

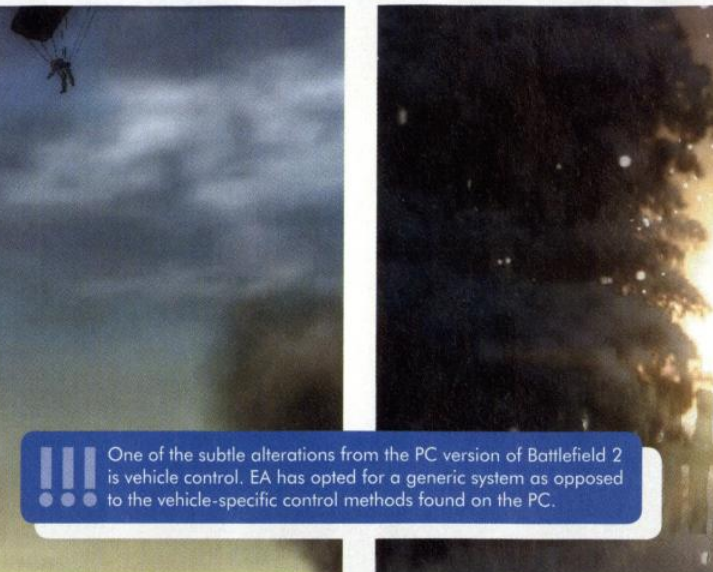
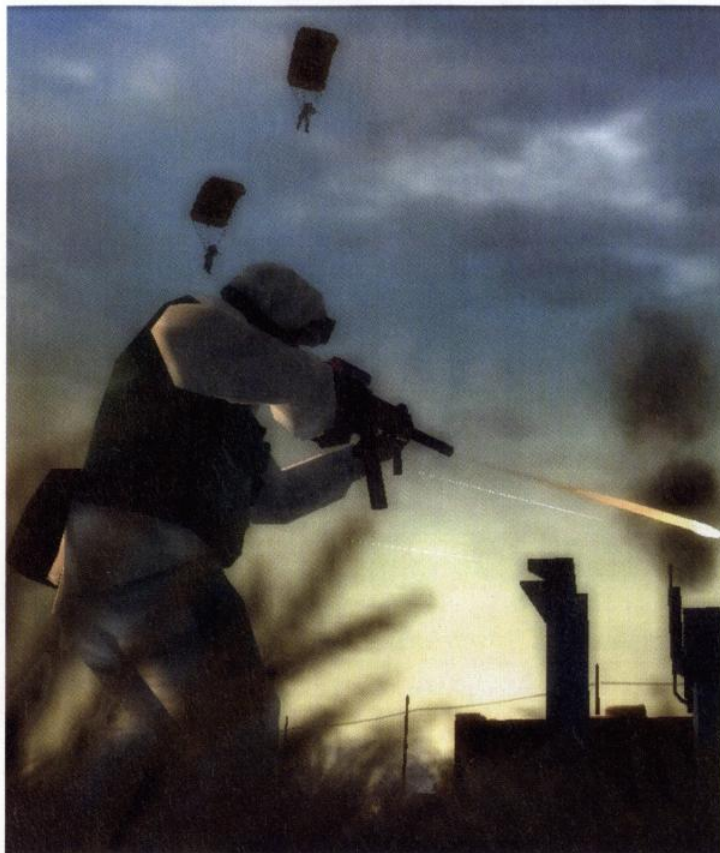
80-89

The analogy has gone too far, but whatever this is, it tastes great!

90+

These games are so good you forget you even have a drink





||| One of the subtle alterations from the PC version of Battlefield 2 is vehicle control. EA has opted for a generic system as opposed to the vehicle-specific control methods found on the PC.



Looks like it won't be chopping any heads

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT

MARCH STEPNIK gets his Battlefield buzz on...

Really, only a bunch of blind monkeys could have buggered this one up. Take one FPS engine, sprinkle a sizeable collection of weapons and vehicles on it, allow a large bunch of enthusiasts to battle it out against another large bunch of enthusiasts on big, smartly designed maps, and put the focus of play squarely on tight teamwork. Release it on consoles and watch the cash roll in. This massive-scale, multiplayer centric shooter concept worked a treat on PC, so it's gotta work on console too, right?

HANKERING
The short answer is that with BF:MC's multiplayer component, it most certainly does. Bugger - even the multiplayer Xbox Live demo that was released months before the full game's launch is still sitting high on the service's most played charts. While a lot of its success has to do with developer DICE's trademark sandbox approach to team-based multiplayer (giving you a number of alternative choices as to how to decimate your foes; will you use heavy, direct weapons or will you

mount good defences, laying mines around the perimeter of your control points?) and the huge number of weapons and vehicles to pick from (over 50 and 30 respectively), you can't discount the simple fact that B2:MC faces virtually no competition in the console market. Most contemporary war shooters are intimate affairs (Ghost Recon, Rainbow Six), while games like Halo 2 and the Battlefield-inspired Star Wars Battlefront II offer comparable experiences but with a strong sci-fi edge. B2:MC really is in a class of its own to those hankering for massive-scale, modern combat.

And, you know, much like its PC counterpart, B2:MC would've worked with nothing else but its robust conquest and CTF-based multiplayer mode. But that's only one half of the BF:MC story. Ever since EA announced that the console version of Battlefield would feature a bona-fide single player experience, interest in this conversion has been high - just

how exactly would it be done? Not conventionally, that's for sure. It's an interesting setup: DICE was left to focus on developing what they know best - multiplayer Battlefield - while EA's UK-based dev studio was tasked with creating a captivating single player adventure.

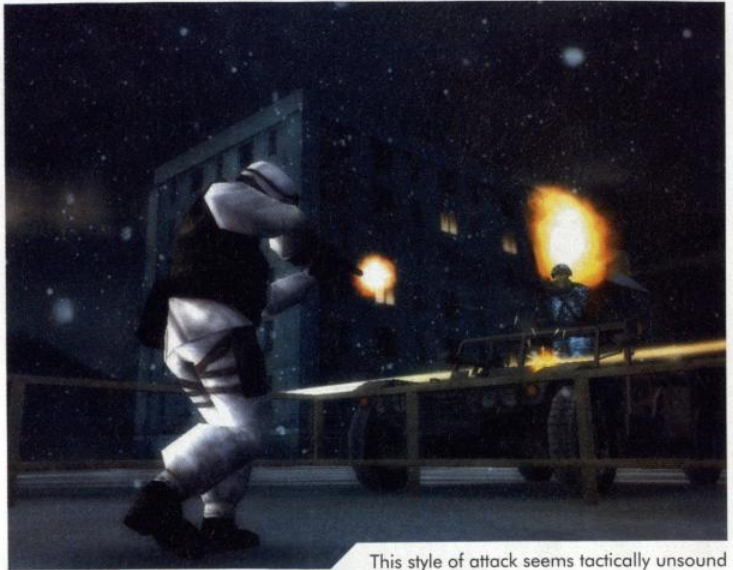
SPLIT PERSONALITY
And never the twain shall meet. Well, not exactly, but the single player is indeed a curious oddity that's quite separate to the multiplayer side in more ways than one. Yep, there's a story behind it all told through nicely produced cutscenes, and the whole experience benefits from the direction offered by multiple mission objectives - as you'd expect. But there are two key features that morphs B2:MC into something new. Hot-swapping. The ability to instantly take control of any comrade within your sights is a fascinating innovation, and it



[above] Still life of wintery soldier



[above] He's doing the Running Man



This style of attack seems tactically unsound



Tanking out the trash



changes the pace of the game entirely. Rather than having to return to a spawn point to change character class, you can do so at the press of a button (on death too, you rarely have to trudge all the way back to the heart of the skirmish). Have you managed to quell some infantry but are taking heat from a nearby tank? Switch to a heavy weapons character and blow the tank to bits. We just hope you don't get motion sickness.

It does take a leap of faith though (to be on the safe side give your current character some cover before you swap) but when it works it certainly is a thrilling rollercoaster ride about the battlefield. Initially disorienting, getting used to the system rewards players with a blistering pace and greater sense of control. Or you could, of course, ignore it altogether.

Secondly, the single player campaign is awash with ranks and rewards. Points are earned for not only completing main objectives but playing with panache — you're encouraged not only to be deadly efficient with your weapons, but to string attacks together. Score multipliers from delivering

THE ABILITY TO TAKE CONTROL OF ANY COMRADE WITHIN YOUR SIGHTS IS A FASCINATING INNOVATION

successive head shots/one-shot kills, for example, are particularly lucrative. Rewards come in the form of increased rank which brings access to new weapons and increased capabilities (like larger ammo clips).

Of course, single player is all one giant tutorial, but an enjoyable one nonetheless. It's also a great way for newcomers to get up to speed with Battlefield 2 systems before they hit the big wide online world of B2:MC. Nice stuff.

As for the story, it won't win awards but its intelligence shouldn't go unnoticed either. What B2:MC does well is paint war as a place where military powers and ideologies meet without clearly defined notions of good and bad. It's also not a tale of personal glory and emotional attachment; you're a cog in a giant machine doing your highly specialised part to win the war. The mission objectives in each mission focus your actions and the cutscenes that follow put these into a bigger context — a smart and

simple approach that doesn't drown players in chest-beating jingoism.

It would have been great to have seen co-op multiplayer included in the single player campaign, even if it was restricted to only a couple of players at a time. As much as Battlefield is a game that rewards players in proportion to the effort put in (learning the systems, playing the game correctly), taking part in the objective based missions with a few friends would have been the cherry on top. Maybe we'll see something like it in the upcoming Xbox 360 version? We're sure EA will have an ace up their sleeve apart from next-gen graphics...

For now, though, we've got the best contemporary multiplayer shooter on consoles. It's the same freakishly addictive mp magic as found on the PC coupled with one helluva comprehensive single player training campaign. Meet your new vice. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action

PLAYERS: 1-24

DEVELOPER: Dice/EA

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: M

AVAILABLE: November 21

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Multiplayer magic, interesting single player, good controls.

MINUS: Unfriendly learning curve, no co-op friendly mode.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 91 91

OVERALL

92

Battlefield on console.
Enough said.





Check out page 86 for your chance to win a copy of F.E.A.R.



These guys aren't too smart but they'll scare the pants off you



[up] Hooray for particle effects!



[up] Yay for bulletproof office partitions!

F.E.A.R.

There is nothing to fear but **DANIEL WILKS**

Both sides of my brain are warring as I try to write this review of F.E.A.R., the latest game destined to be a sleeper hit from Monolith. On the one hand I look at the modular level design, poor narrative and constant and apparently very deliberate attempts by the developers to break the mood and I hang my head in disappointment. On the other I keep remembering the many, many gunfights with what are without a doubt the smartest enemy AI ever to grace an FPS. Sure I may have

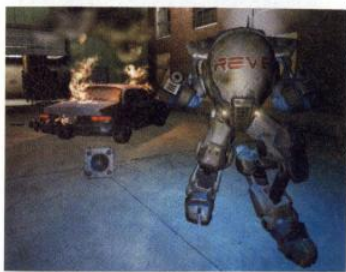
been owned more than my fair share of times but it was a worthwhile owning. It's not too often that you can watch your health get whittled down and have a smile on your face, look from your broken and bloody body to the enemies peeking out from behind cover and think to yourself, "I'll give you that one guys, but next time things will be different". When you start thinking of the AI in terms of another player as far as skill goes you know you're onto something pretty special.

TYPE GUY

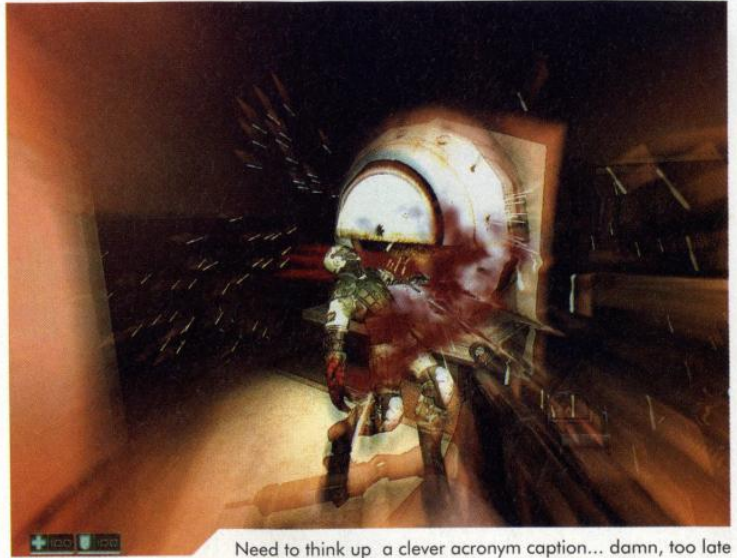
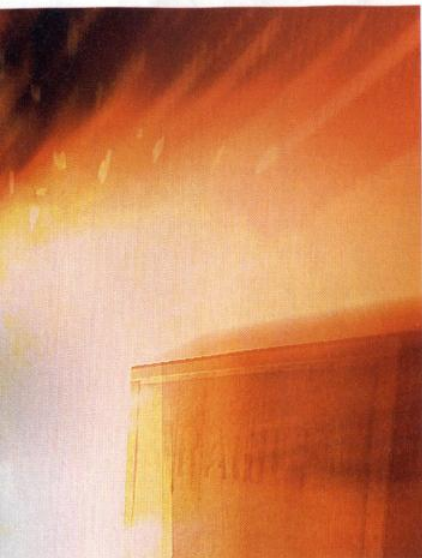
There's not much about the plot of F.E.A.R. that needs to be said that hasn't been said before. You're a special forces type guy working for the clever acronym of the month, F.E.A.R. (First Encounter Assault and Recon — clever huh?) with reflexes so high that he can slow time for a short period of time. Some scientists have been dabbling in Things Man Was Not Meant To

Know™ so there are a bunch of pissed off psychically controlled clone super soldiers running around under the command of a pissed off psychic super soldier by the name of Paxton Fettel. There's also a creepy little girl with a penchant for exsanguinating people sent in to quiet the cloned masses or flensing them if she has the whim. The rest of the plot is unfolded through cutscenes throughout the game as well as frequent voicemail messages that can be listened to. Saying it's a cursory plot would be something of a disservice to people who write cursory plots — the story of F.E.A.R. (aside from some narrative brilliance shown at the end) is little more than an excuse for some gunfights and blowing stuff up.

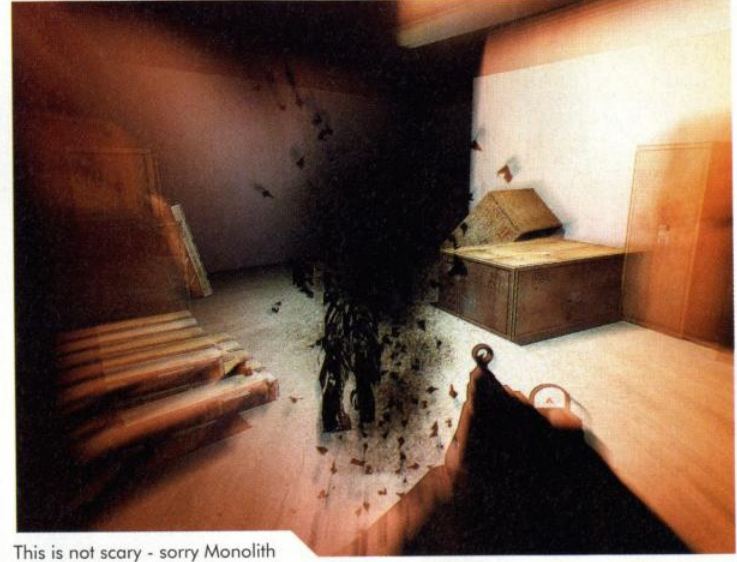
Ultimately gunfights and blowing stuff up is what you're playing an FPS game for in the first place, right? If that's your bag (and if you're an FPS player, chances are it is), F.E.A.R. delivers. Oh boy does it deliver. In our previews we've really hyped up the intelligence of the enemy AI. The final game goes that little step beyond where it was at in the preview code. Everything you can do the enemy can do. Everything. Every gunfight will see you taking cover behind obstacles, using the terrain to the utmost, flushing enemies out from hiding with grenades, trying to flank and basically doing everything in your power to survive. The clones will do the same. They will flank, they will take cover, they will



[up] Not pictured: ED 209



Need to think up a clever acronym caption... damn, too late



This is not scary - sorry Monolith

out maneuver you. It may sound like the AI in a number of recent games but it's not. The enemy AI is as close as you can currently get to playing with other people without the hassle of an internet connection, an internet café or friends. They are smart to a point that the only way you will survive is by listening to their radio chatter. You try to flank them and one of the enemies will spot you and tell the other troops (who will probably be laying down suppressing fire on your last position) of your movements. They will change tactics accordingly. Throw a grenade and they won't just yell "Grenade!" as many AI enemies have done in the past but will get the hell out of dodge, find some

WHEN YOU START THINKING OF THE AI IN TERMS OF ANOTHER PLAYER YOU'RE ONTO SOMETHING SPECIAL

cover and stay alive. They work together as a team and if you're not on your toes they will kill you.

FAST AND DEADLY

It's easy to think of bullet-time style effects as simply being a gimmick nowadays but in F.E.A.R. it is a crucial tool of survival. Combat is fast and it is deadly and there are many occasions where the only way to survive is to slow things down a little. Instead of coming across as being cheap, slowing time will be looked at as a vital ability, the difference between life and a

quick-load. Unfortunately for all of the coolness of the combat and AI, F.E.A.R. really lets itself down when it comes to level design. For the most part levels are confined to modular buildings made up for the same rooms, the same office layout, the same piles of junk. That said the incidental detail in these levels is outstanding — during firefights chunks will be blown from walls, papers from desks and within second the entire area will be so full of detritus that it's near impossible to see the enemy, adding a whole new layer to the battles. <<

>> **OFFICE SPACED** F.E.A.R. is a horror game. It openly tells you this with frequent scenes of bloody violence and horror as well as multiple spring loaded cats (things that jump out at you for a quick boo scare), so why is it that Monolith seem determined to break their own mood? Throughout the game there are numerous Office Space references such as memos about TPS forms, swingline staplers and even a fat character much like Milton (albeit an evil Milton). We love Office Space as much as the next guy but come one now — don't establish a mood and then do your utmost to undermine it. Also, whilst little girls are inherently creepy, after umpteen appearances where she does little more than giggle she begins to lose impact.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS

PLAYERS: 1-16

DEVELOPER: Monolith

PUBLISHER: Vivendi

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: MA 15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Incredible AI, incredible fights, sexy engine.

MINUS: Modular levels, poor narrative flow, Office Space.

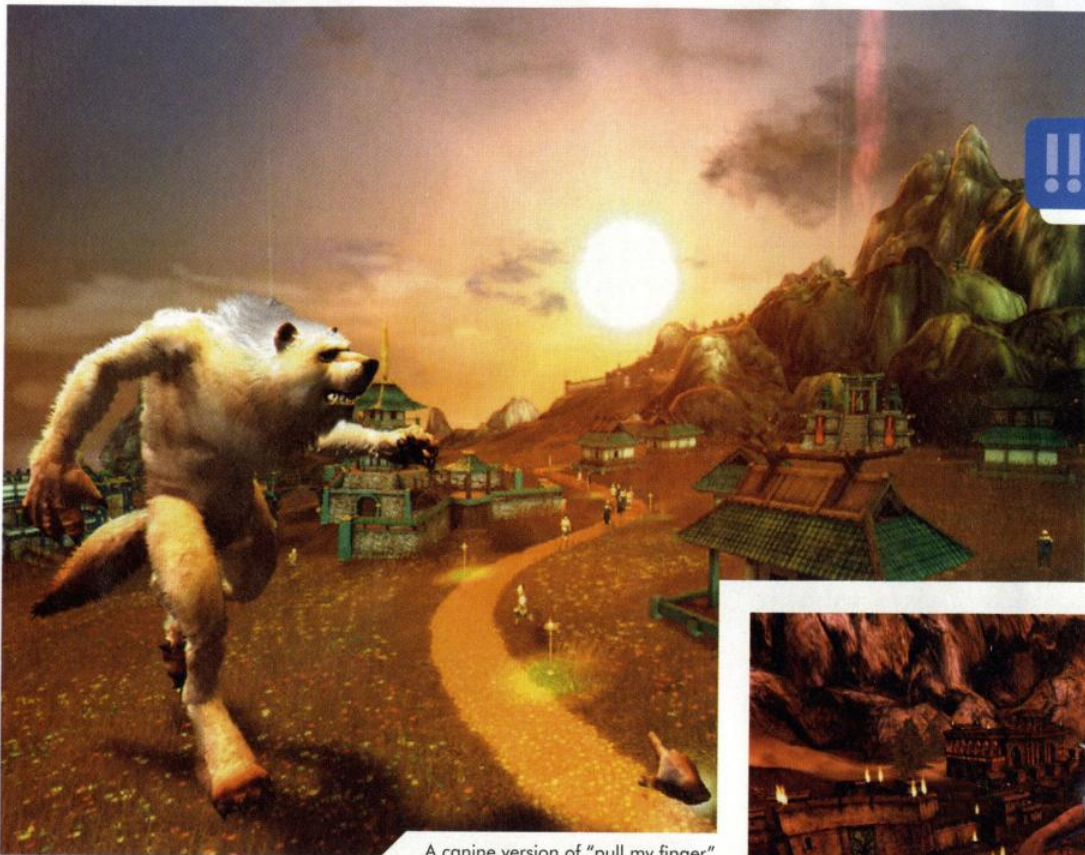
VISUALS 94 SOUND 91 GAMEPLAY 93

OVERALL

91

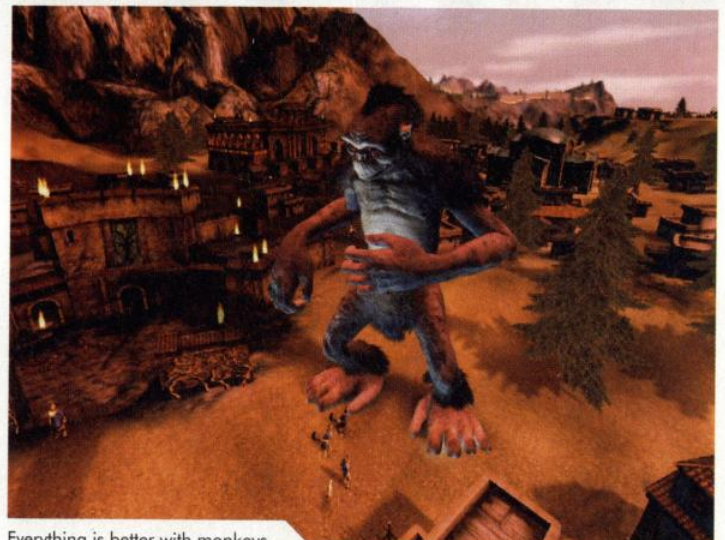
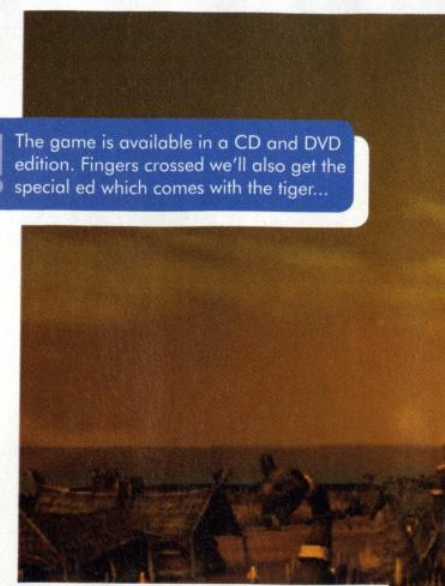
Amazing technology and AI. Why break the mood?





A canine version of "pull my finger"

!!! The game is available in a CD and DVD edition. Fingers crossed we'll also get the special ed which comes with the tiger...



Everything is better with monkeys



BLACK & WHITE 2

KOSTA ANDREADIS exercises his god-like reviewing powers

There's nothing strange about wanting to be a god. With the power to do anything you want, good or bad, you'd think that it would be nothing but fun. But with the power to create and destroy, sooner or later the choices you make will affect people in ways you never thought possible. Don't take it from me, go and rent Bruce Almighty from your local video store and Morgan Freeman will tell you exactly the same thing, albeit in a much cooler voice. But the original Black & White from Lionhead Studios did just that; it put players in the role of a deity with a civilisation to oversee and assist in what ended up being a fairly open ended experience where you could be a nice benevolent god or an evil 'son of a bitch that was my house' god. However, the open endedness adversely affected the overall experience, which is something Molyneux and co hoped to rectify with the sequel, Black & White 2.

BOULDER + UNSUSPECTING CIVILIAN = EVIL

This time around the game aims to provide a cohesive and focused experience utilising the original's 'god game sandbox' as a template.

What becomes clear from the first few moments with this game is the obvious distinction between the path of good and evil. The game's advisors make it pretty clear from the outset, war and military conquest is the path of evil and peaceful civilisation building is the path of righteousness. Using your creature and armies to pillage neighbouring towns and settlements will shift your alignment towards evil, yet building mansions, bath houses and taverns may sway neighbouring towns to join you peacefully.

Essentially Black & White 2 progresses through numerous islands where you'll need to conquer its inhabitants before you can move on to the next. How you do

so is up to you and thankfully the game does let you strike a balance between war and city building, although playing in either extreme (good or evil) is often the way to go. As a god, although you can cast miracles and change night into day, most of your time spent in the game will be either on city planning and construction and or managing your armed forces and creature.

What keeps the experience feeling somewhat unique is the simplified interface, which for the most part, does away with menus and large volumes of onscreen information. For example, creating a farmer or a miner is a matter of picking up a citizen and literally dropping them into the role. Citizens will always inform you what structures they need or want the most at the town centre and placing them is also done via a simple drag and drop of the mouse. Controlling your armies, which are made up by the men populating your civilisation,



[up] Angel and Devil - still not funny

is also quite simple as you pick up and place the various troop flags anywhere on the ground or on any land or structural target you want them to attack. Pleasing your citizens, military conquest, and completing various other mini-games masquerading as side quests all earn you tribute points allowing you to spend on spells, lavish structures or wonders. It is interesting to note that a peaceful conquest of a nearby town will have its citizens migrate to your city, whereas the only way to have more than one town is through military means. This feels weird at the start but it makes sense when you realise that the pure path of good requires military use for defensive purposes only.



Watch where you stick that finger buddy

NOBODY EVER PICKS THE COW

As mentioned earlier controlling your armies is done very simply and once they're engaged in battle the AI takes over with very little micromanagement available on the player's part. This is more likely due to the fact that your creature will be taking part in almost every battle you're engaged in. Unfortunately this time around the creature feels a lot less like a virtual pet and more like a programmable robot and the reason for this is that each action it chooses to take part in, from crapping on a farmer to gathering wood, the game will spell this out to you via a speech bubble. And through stroking or smacking your creature you can control it unquestionably to either continue this action in the future or to never do it again, with each of the actions stored in a menu, immediately making half of the creature AI rule-set viewable to the player.

In the original, controlling your creature and training it was a far more frustrating experience and even though it's a lot simpler this time around it does feel a little bit too 'yes or no' (or perhaps black or white? - Ed). The creatures

available from the outset are an ape, lion, wolf and cow with each creature having initial tendencies towards certain tasks or warfare. As the game progresses your creature will physically grow and change according to its behaviour, and this can range from an overweight

THIS TIME THE CREATURE FEELS LESS LIKE A VIRTUAL PET AND MORE LIKE A PROGRAMMABLE ROBOT

entertainer to a muscle bound war veteran. The creature's various animations are all amusing to watch and seeing your creature face off against an opposing creature almost always results in an epic encounter.

As made clear when the first screenshots were made available, Black & White 2 is an amazing visual achievement, from the environments to the structures and of course the creatures. Everything from the water rippling when you pass your hand over it to the ground changing to molten rock under your creature's evil feet is all presented with the highest of production values. But as they say, the best is saved for last, and tribute points saved for the

game's wonders, which range from peaceful to menacing earthquakes, hurricanes and the most notorious — the volcano, are well worth it. Not only are these the most powerful and influential spells in the game but they also provide the best eye candy. Casting a hurricane or

earthquake on an enemy city is as much fun as causing the natural disasters in the original Sim City. The variation in visuals depending on your alignment is amazing to watch, from dark molten rock and industrial smoke filled cities to lush colourful meadows. This pretty much sums up the entire experience — Black & White 2 provides a clear path of good and evil, paving the way for a varied and engrossing game experience that is worth playing through twice. This is a far more focussed game than the original, and as such this may lose it some fans but no doubt gain those who were not sold on its premise the first time around. <<



AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Simulation/RTS
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Lionhead Studios
PUBLISHER: EA
PRICE: \$89.95
RATING: TBC
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Doing godly things like making volcanoes erupt, visuals.

MINUS: Often feels over simplified, the interface can sometimes annoy.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
92 80 85

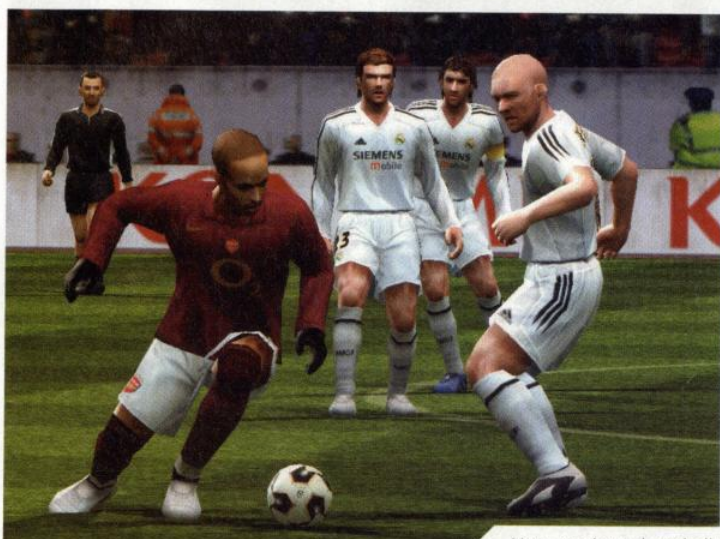
OVERALL
86

Being good or evil, now with added RTS warfare.



!!! The PS2 version now has online play, which we'll check out thoroughly once PAL players start getting online.

Balls...heh heh heh



More captions about balls



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

ELIOT FISH volleys it home in injury time

Playing a new PES is a bit like swilling a fine Grange Hermitage around in your mouth. Each one you try has different characteristics, but ultimately, you're going to swallow it, not spit it into the bucket. It's just too good.

Okay, maybe that was a crap analogy, but the fact is that PES 5 is going to really please fans of the series. Each year we sit back and marvel at how different the new PES always feels, yet somehow it's still the great game that we know and love. PES 3 had bizarre hand-balls, PES 4 had overly effective through-balls... So what does PES 5 have?

SURRENDER MONKEYS

The first thing you'll notice is that Henry and Terry adorn the menu screens. Yes, Arsenal and Chelsea are fully licensed this time around. At least we're one step closer to a fully licensed Premier League.

Changes to the Master League this year include a brand new set

of default players. These blokes are younger than Vornander and co, meaning that the more you play them, the better they'll get. The exp system has been improved so that points are more logically distributed — some players develop better than others, making one or two chaps worth holding on to for future stardom. There are new positions too: Wing Backs and Supporting Strikers.

Out on the pitch you'll notice that the game's animation has been improved once again, with noticeably sweeter first touches, flick-ons, a variety of volleys and some towering powerful headers. However, the key to scoring goals this time around is simply down to passing the ball properly. It's all about figuring out how to break down your opposition, making PES 5 an enthralling challenge.

Corners are now much tougher, and through balls harder to pull off — the overall balance of the game is better than ever, making it harder to figure

out where a team's weakness lies. But this is far from frustrating play. In order to make the chances happen, you need to stroke the ball around to open up space, which makes this PES feel more like real football than ever. It may mean that chances on goal are harder to come by, but when they do, it's dynamic and satisfying. Once you create the opportunity, you have to have the guile to take it and really punish your opponent.

To ensure a better all-round game, passing mechanics have really been tweaked. Long range passes are sweeter — and they fixed chipped through balls so that they don't always get cut off by defenders. Even the simple X pass can now split teams in two if you spot a good run or a poorly positioned defender.

PES 5 is more like real football than any of the previous PES games, and it's bloody beautiful. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:
CATEGORY: Sports sim
PLAYERS: 1-8
DEVELOPER: Konami
PUBLISHER: Konami
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:
PLUS: The most realistic and satisfying passing game yet. Faster loading.

MINUS: Slow substitutions, you'll lose 12 months of your life again.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	80	96
OVERALL		
95		
Better than the last two Pro Evos, amazingly.		



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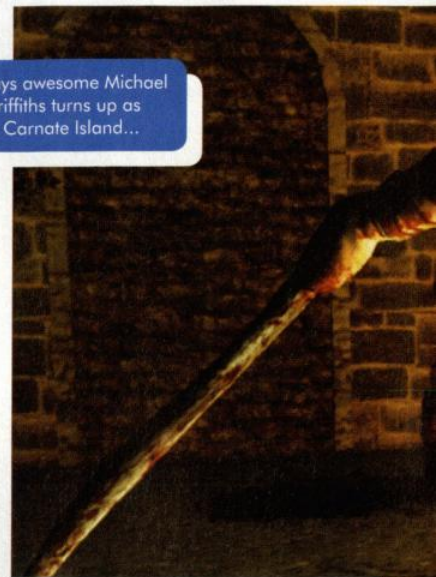
PC
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ROM



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!!! Blackmore is voiced by the always awesome Michael Clarke Duncan, while Rachel Griffiths turns up as Jordan, the head of cleanup on Carnate Island...



Just another day in Redfern

THE SUFFERING: Ties That Bind

DANIEL WILKS remembers not to drop the soap

When one thinks of pleasant memories, good friends and fine food, the mind doesn't always instantly focus on prison. It's more likely to focus on family or holidays or the love of your life or some other assorted crap. Torque, the main character of The Suffering franchise isn't that type of wimp. His fondest memories of recent years are of prison. This could be because before the first game his wife and children were brutally murdered and he was convicted of the crime. Depending on how you dealt with certain moral choices in the game determined whether Torque was in fact a murderer or just a very violent and angry man in the wrong place at the wrong time. Either way you played it, Torque had to fight an army of demons based on methods of execution, contend with the mysterious Blackmore, a man seemingly responsible for every bad thing that has happened in Torque's life, and uncover a strange

conspiracy involving something known as The Foundation and horrible occult experimentation. The culmination of The Suffering saw Torque escaping from the island prison and speeding towards Baltimore, for freedom and maybe some understanding of why he can become a primal creature made of rage and hate. This is not to be.

BALTIMORE IN RUINS? NOOOO!

Ties That Bind kicks off right where the last game ended, Torque speeding into Baltimore harbour in his stolen boat. Unfortunately for our cranky anti-hero it's not a pleasant homecoming. The demons have followed and Baltimore is in ruins. What's left for the man who has lost everything? Why, tracking down Blackmore and getting some answers, that's what. Like the previous installment in the series, Ties That Bind eschews the usual trappings of a survival horror game

and opts for more straight out third person action. To this end the player will find themselves fighting against hordes of demons as well as more human enemies with weapons ranging from baseball bats and pieces of pipe all the way through to M60 machine guns and grenade launchers. Typical level design sees Torque killing his way through an area, either protecting or killing a civilian NPC depending on which way you want the morality to go.

There are two areas in which Ties That Bind doesn't really stack up. The vast majority of the weapons just don't seem to have any real punch aside from in the easy difficulty setting. This could be because TTB focuses more on turning into Torque's creature form than the first game. The sanity meter seems to charge a lot faster, supporting the theory, and there are a number of walls that can be knocked down in creature form as well as special new enemies that



[up] Good, bad, I'm the one with the gun



[above] Getting prison block friendly





Silent Hill, eat your heart out



Now that's just nasty

can only be killed when you're all hulkified and cranky. Unfortunately instead of making the game more thrilling, the frequent necessity of the creature form really detracts from how damn cool it is and can add a huge degree of frustration in combat — sure you can kill most enemies in one or two hits but the wild swings can easily take out any of the dumb NPCs that you need to escort (if you decide to be a good guy) or can hit one of the omnipresent explosive barrels that will kill you in a snap. The other problem is difficulty. The game is a rollercoaster of difficulty levels — at one moment you'll find yourself plowing through demonic hordes and the next you'll die, die, die, die, die and die some more until you manage to fluke your way through to the next checkpoint.

THE CREEPER LOOKS LIKE CLIVE BARKER'S CENOBITES AND NIGHTBREED MADE SWEET LOVE TO A COCKROACH

CREEPY AS ALL HELL

Once again *The Suffering* proves to be a triumph of creature design and mood. The demons based on forms of execution in the first game have mutated into avatars of urban decay in the second. Whilst most of the creatures share a lot of similarities with the originals as far as look goes there are some nice new twists that keep them fresh and creepy as hell. Amongst the monstrosities we have skinned humans carved into dogs, giant froglike bipeds with gaping maws representing urban cannibalism from the depression, legless obese cops

with flashlights protruding from their heads and guns sticking out of their guts (corrupt cops), as well as demons based on drug addiction, pyromania, gun violence, stabbings and other assorted nastiness. On top of all that there are some incredibly creepy characters that show up every now and then to give you a case of the screaming willies. One, a slave hunter doesn't look so bad but listening to him talk about hunting escaped slaves is rather unnerving. The Creeper, on the other hand looks like something you may get if Clive Barker's *Cenobites* and *Nightbreed* made sweet, sweet love to a cockroach. He's a large, trenchcoat clad individual with a high pitched voice and insectile legs springing from his back and crotch. To make it even more appetising the three legs sprouting from his nethers have moaning women impaled on them. It's an image you're not likely to forget for a while. <<

» **THE MORALITY OF MURDER** Throughout *Ties That Bind* players are faced with a number of moral choices to help people stranded in the chaos of Baltimore, leave them to their fate or kill them outright. Depending on which route the player chooses their creature form will change to reflect their morality, not in any real meaningful way as in the first game but it does strengthen the attack power of the creature form and give them access to some rather natty looking special attacks such as flailing chains or guns growing out of the creature's back.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action/Horror

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Surreal Software

PUBLISHER: Midway

PRICE: \$79.95

RATING: MA 15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Incredible creature design, moody, solid action.

MINUS: Wussy weapons, over reliance on creature form.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	86	84

OVERALL
83

A few tweaks and this could be a really solid horror series.



!!! The RE4 chainsaw controller is also making its way to PS2 in time for release!



Now this is the type of character we like



Giant Doctor Baghead, I presume?

RESIDENT EVIL 4

DANIEL STAINES learns Spanish by Capcom Correspondence

“Un forastero!”
 When you hear that, you know you’re in trouble. It’s Spanish. It means ‘a foreigner’ or ‘an outsider’. It also means that a burly zombie farmhand is hankering to ram a rusty pitchfork into your ribs. Do you know how hard it is to aim straight when a gang of bloodthirsty backwater cultists is baying for your innards? It’s hard. Really hard. Which is why it’s a good thing I have my shotgun. With shotguns, you see, you don’t have to aim straight. You just sort of point in the general direction of whatever you want to kill and pull the trigger. Chik-chik. Boom. Bye-bye bearded guy with shovel. Chik-chik. Boom. Bye-bye maniacal housewife with kitchen knife. Chik-chik. Chik-chik. Chik-chik... Oh. Crap.

HELLS YEAH
 So yeah, Resident Evil 4: what an awesome game. That introductory paragraph? That’s my attempt to capture the experience of playing

RE4 using my own unique brand of bad-boy prose. It’s a pale imitation, trust me. I guess RE4’s just the sort of game you have to play to really understand what’s great about it. I mean, I could easily blather on about how it’s the best action game made in recent years, about how it’s a radical departure from the rest of the series, about how playing it is like being in a gory version of the Goonies where Chunk is packing a bazooka and Corey Feldman is a hot Asian chick... but to hell with that. Just play it. Just go and buy it or rent it or whatever and play it. It’s totally rad.
 You’re still here. Oh, I get it — you’re one of those GameCube people. You’re wondering whether you’ve been ripped off. You’re wondering whether or not all the new additions in the PS2 version of RE4 render the original GCN version inferior and obsolete. Well, the short answer is no — and the long answer is no, but kind of maybe, depending on where your priorities lay.

It doesn’t look as good as the GCN version. Some of the textures are a little muggier, some of the models have a few less polygons and the rain effects are kind of crappy. It still looks absolutely freakin’ awesome, but it just doesn’t look quite as absolutely freakin’ awesome as the original. So there’s that.
 But, on the plus side, there is the extra content. In case you’re the spoiler sensitive type, I won’t tell you what the new costumes and weapons are — but I will say that they’re all pretty cool. As are the new missions, which see you playing through key events as Ada Wong. Sure, they recycle a lot of locations and enemies from the main game and yes, some of the mission objectives aren’t exactly well designed, but whatever: you get five hours of extra gameplay and more sexy Ada action. That’s hardly something to complain about. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
 PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:
CATEGORY: Action/Horror
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: THQ
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA 15+
AVAILABLE: November 11

HYPHER VERDICT:
PLUS: Impeccable design, gameplay, graphics and sound. New content!

MINUS: Um... doesn’t look quite as good as the GCN version?

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94	93	94
OVERALL		
94		
Where’s everybody going? Bingo?		



HE'S A HERO. BUT WHOSE HERO?



COME NOVEMBER 25TH YOU DECIDE

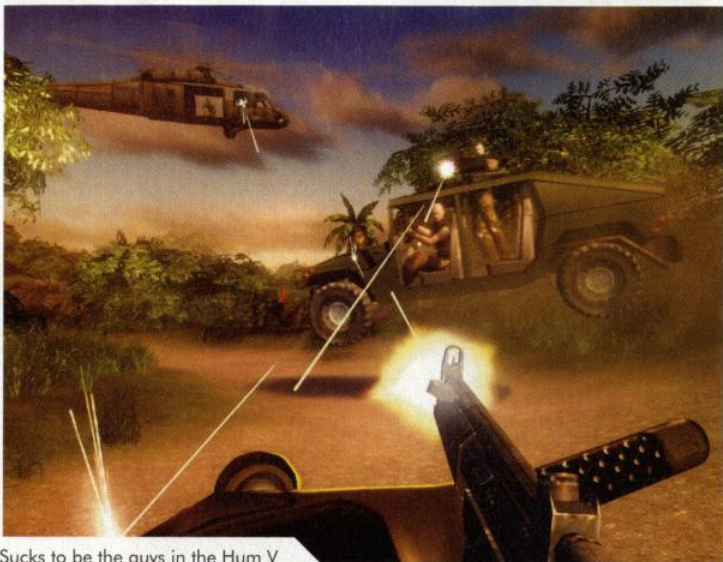
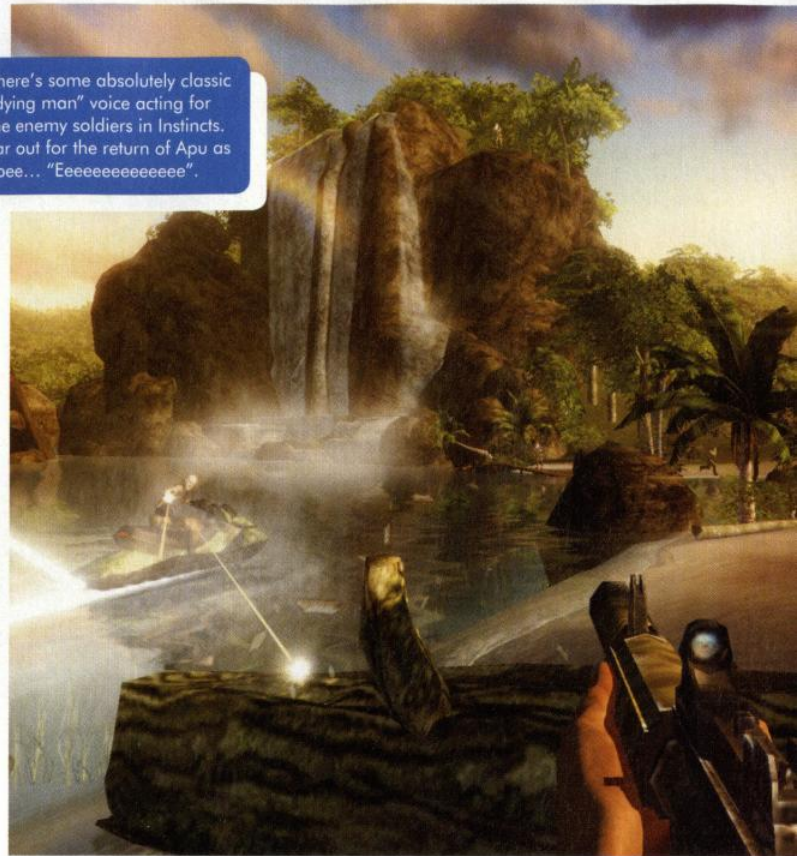
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Works better when you use the sight dude

There's some absolutely classic "dying man" voice acting for the enemy soldiers in Instincts. Keep an ear out for the return of Apu as a bumble bee... "Eeeeeeeeeeeeeee".



Sucks to be the guys in the Hum V



FAR CRY INSTINCTS

CAM SHEA ventures into the jungle... again

So, I think I can safely strike the Jacutan archipelago off my list of places to visit. Sure, it's a fictional place, but as far as tropical paradises go, I prefer mine without the evil godless genetic mutants and heavily armed mercenaries. And call me crazy, but I'd probably prefer a holiday without being experimented on and becoming a barely human force of nature. Unfortunately for Jack Carver, he feels the same way, yet in a bizarre Groundhog Day style twist he finds himself once again escorting Val

Cortez out to Jacutan when, you guessed it, all hell breaks loose and he's forced to kill to survive.

OLD DOG, NEW TRICKS

Far Cry Instincts on Xbox starts out in much the same way as its PC forebear, with Jack alone in lush jungle and beach environments, where stalking and stealth are the name of the game as you gradually try and even the odds against the countless patrolling guards. Jack's picked up a few new tricks, however, chief among which is the ability to set traps and the ability to roll onto your back when prone. The first comes in handy for when you want to become "Jack the jungle prankster", as we like to call him, allowing you to set up spiked branches to whip into your enemy's face when they follow the sounds of your carefully thrown rocks, and the second allows you to crawl under shacks and shoot guards through exposed floorboards.



[above] They smell so bad you can see it



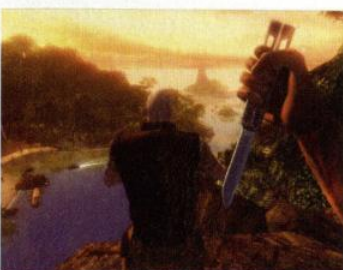
[above] Will Feral - heh heh heh

They're good additions in principle, but in practice are largely more trouble than they're worth.

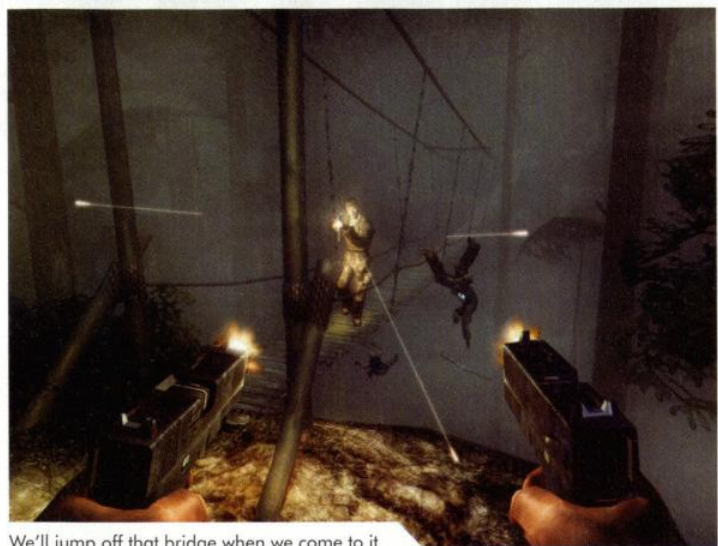
Fortunately, these are just the tip of the iceberg as far as new moves go, and it's not long before Jack finds out first hand just what the purpose of the elaborate bases and fortifications on the islands are for. He's injected with a serum designed to bring out the primitive animal powers that humans have supposedly lost as they evolved. What this means for Jack is that as the game progresses he evolves Feral Strength, Feral Sense and Feral Speed, allowing him to do things like lock onto enemies and unleash devastating melee attacks, see in the dark, and leap large distances. The abilities become

available to you at a steady rate, and although some are more useful than others, they change up the gameplay nicely, allowing you to become the aggressive predator as well as Mr Stealthypants. They're also a well balanced addition to the game, being dependent on your adrenaline bar for use, which slowly recovers on its own, or can be boosted by bloodlust or pick ups.

As Jack evolves, so too does the level design. There are a number of quite distinct sections, ranging from more open plan jungle playgrounds through to claustrophobic and strictly linear interiors. You'll journey deep into dank mines and creepy research facilities, bound across gaps on



[above] Float like a butterfly knife...



We'll jump off that bridge when we come to it

an open hillside, and eventually discover that you're not the only experiment to go awol. If we had to find fault with the flow of the game, it would be that each of these sections is a little longer than it needs to be. Instincts can be a very hard game at times, and after clearing out the umpteenth base, or exploring yet another kilometer of mine shafts, it begins to feel like a bit of a chore. If each individual style of area was trimmed down a bit, the game would have been punchier and probably more fun.

Even so, Instincts is positively dripping with atmosphere — tension is built wonderfully as you move away from the sun-kissed beaches, eventually finding yourself in the perpetual twilight of the thickest parts of the jungle. Suddenly the tables have turned; only a short while ago, you were the stalker,

IF THE PACING WAS BRISKER, INSTINCTS WOULD BE THE SORT OF GAME THAT NEVER LETS YOU SETTLE

luring enemies into traps and picking them off from the bushes. Now you're the skittish one, seeing blurred movement flitter at the edge of your vision and coming across encampments that have been decimated by an unknown force. If the pacing was brisker, Instincts would be the sort of game that never lets you settle.

The AI is also one of the weaker aspects of the game. Enemies are tough, but mostly through numbers and coming at you in waves, as opposed to through believable, tactical behaviour. They may be able to set off alarms, and they may have an almost mystical awareness the instant you've

thrown a grenade, but there's no way you could mistake that for intelligence, and this makes the game less immersive than it could have been. It's particularly disappointing in the sections where stealth is an option, as they're alerted mechanically to your actions, making it hard to eliminate enemies one by one.

BLOOMIN' GOOD

It's no exaggeration to say that Far Cry Instincts is one of the prettiest games on Xbox to date. It's not just the panoramic vistas and dense vegetation either — there are plenty of smaller touches that round out Instincts as a package. The way your vision is blurred momentarily after swimming, the use of contrast and colour in lighting each area, the effects as Jack trips out, the amazing explosions and heat haze, the list goes on.

It's pretty, it's fun and you can rip people apart with your bare hands. Well worth checking out. <<

» EDIT THIS Instincts isn't just a long and brutal single player game. It also ships with a very cool map editor, which, although requiring some patience, can net some pretty cool results at an upload friendly file size. It's going to be interesting to see some of the maps people come up with in the next few months. Instincts also has a number of multiplayer options. The mode that stands out the most for us, however, is Predator, which pits a number of players as mercenaries against one player with enhanced Feral powers. Great for late nights!

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-Multi
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA 15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Great looking game and good fun for the most part.

MINUS: Fall damage, AI, vehicles not that useful, can be frustratingly tough.

VISUALS 90 SOUND 86 GAMEPLAY 85

OVERALL
87

It may have flaws, but this is one of the best FPSs on Xbox.



Ima totally stab you in the head



The Paddlepop Lion has a dark side



!!! The bosses all look really impressive but keep your eye out for the cranky temple.

GENJI

DANIEL WILKS tries to remember his classical literature

According to the Sony marketing spin, *Genji* is based upon a famous Japanese novel from the 11th century called the Tale of Genji, a story about a pretty boy samurai and his dealings in court. Saying this is tantamount to saying that I am based on Jesus, because, you know, I have arms and legs, and sometimes a beard. If *Genji* can skip out on the subtleties of court life and the defining trait of having a pretty face and replace it with action, giant magical warriors and a boss battle against a cranky temple, I can skip out on the whole son of god, walking on water, miracles schtick. It's a good game, sure, but come on Sony — saying a game is based on a classic of Japanese literature because it shares part of the name is taking PR a little too far.

GO ON, HAVE A BLAST

Whining aside, if you're a fan of *Onimusha*, *Devil May Cry* or any number of third person action

games then you'll have a blast with *Genji*. You see, you've played this game before for the most part. The only real difference being that there are two characters to play and the combat system rewards finesse over out and out button mashing.

Set in feudal Japan, *Genji* tells the story of an exiled noble (and later a mammoth and surprisingly violent monk) in their search for some magical stones called Amahagane, which, when held by special people imbue them with power. Naturally our heroes are two of these people. Although the combat system remains essentially the same for the two characters, each of them has different abilities allowing for a little exploration and puzzle solving. While the samurai can jump high to reach ledges and the like, the monk is strong enough to smash obstacles. It's not the deepest gameplay mechanic but does add a little spice to the mix.

The Amahagane are what makes the combat scheme stand apart from

the countless other games in the genre. Normal combat is the typical two button affair — one light and one heavy attack with the ability to charge up an attack to do more damage or affect an area instead of a single opponent. With Amahagane equipped, our heroes develop the ability to slow time. Instead of being a simple bullet-time style effect the slow time switches the player to a finesse mode, putting them in position to counter an attack. While time is slowed the enemy will attack once and the player has a split second to hit the attack button when it flashes up on screen. If the player times the move correctly he can instantly kill a non-boss enemy or multiple weak enemies. Against a boss the move can cause a massive amount of damage. As the player finds more Amahagane the length of the slow time is increased and can be activated once for each Amahagane to increase the length of the window to hit the attack button. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Game Republic

PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$79.95

RATING: MA 15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Looks good, two characters, finesse over mashing.

MINUS: Samey, short.

VISUALS 86 SOUND 81 GAMEPLAY 82

OVERALL 80

Good samurai action but you've played it before.



!!! Faction heroes (Jedi Knights, Boba Fett, for example) are now playable in Battlefront II, and rather than being the showstopper they were in the original, they appear only for a limited duration each occasion to help turn the tide of battle (you can set who gets to play heroes at the options screen – either the highest or lowest scoring player, or random selection if you so desire).

Vader mocks the size of his enemy's penis



In space, no one can hear March's girly scream



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

Ewok and Gungan massacres? **MARCH STEPNIK** is sold...

Last year's *Star Wars Battlefront* is the best selling *Star Wars* game of all time, which is a tad surprising when you consider that not only did the multiplayer-centric title lack any substantial single player offering (Sucky-Bots-R-Us), but the whole felt like it was knocked together at the eleventh hour.

BELLS AND R2-WHISTLES

Well say goodbye to that dinosaur because *Battlefront II* is a helluva lot more polished and better in almost every way. The core of the experience remains unchanged: playing as either Rebel, Empire, Republic or CIS (those pesky battle droids), players wage war on *Star Wars* flavoured maps doing their best to either eliminate all opposing forces or capturing all of the map's command posts first. New to the sequel are Capture the Flag and Hunt (a genocidal game mode where you can also hunt down a location's natural fauna – say goodbye Gungans and Ewoks!) play modes

which offer a solid alternative to the territory-based main play mode.

Apart from being a more rounded *Star Wars* experience thanks to the release of Episode III (not surprisingly, most of the 16 or so new maps – of which several are generic space battle locations – come from Ep III locations), Pandemic has come up with some smartly designed maps that are bigger and more interesting than those seen in the first. Our favourites include the fog-heavy Dagobah map (complete with bogged X-Wing and subterranean Dark cave) and the Death Star interior (a mish-mash of the detention centre, Falcon hangar bay and swish Kenobi vs Vader corridors).

Engineers are the new character class, and apart from packing a decent punch these guys can repair vehicles, turrets and medical/ammunition bots on the battlefield.

But the most impressive addition to *Battlefront II* is the space-based assault style of play. The ability to

spawn in a hangar, jump in a TIE fighter (or any space-based vehicle) and launch, engage in dogfights, take out individual systems on a large scale cruiser or land in an enemy hangar then proceed on foot to the ship's interior for sabotage, all without a load screen, is an absolute treat. It's no X-Wing vs TIE fighter in dogfights but it's the next best thing.

Single player is much stronger too. Not only are the bots much improved, there's a whole new story tying all the maps together. Told in hindsight from the perspective of the Republic's 501st Legion (with narration by Temuera "Clone Progenitor" Morrison), and with multiple mission objectives, this is a classy game in its own right. Galactic Conquest – *Battlefront*'s tactical mini-game – has also been spruced up. Featuring a turn-based tactical overlay which allows you to buy new fleets, recruit new units and plan your next assault, GC is a much more enticing and rewarding mode than the first game's. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action (Multiplayer)
PLAYERS: 64 PC, 24 PS2, 32 Xbox
DEVELOPER: Pandemic
PUBLISHER: EA
PRICE: \$89.95
RATING: M
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Spruced up single player, new units, great new maps and mechanics.

MINUS: Visuals are still a little rough.

VISUALS 82 SOUND 91 GAMEPLAY 90

OVERALL
89

Now this is more like it.



!!! There's a little lag in online multiplayer, but not enough to be game breaking.



X-Men Xtreme Hula Hoop



Punch, punch, punch, punch, etc.



X-MEN LEGENDS II

DANIEL WILKS goes to yellow spandex heaven

It's a hard task for a sequel to succeed over an original game without changing any of the core gameplay mechanics but X-Men Legends II has achieved such a feat by simply adding more. More characters, more costumes, more areas, more enemies and more powers. It's not really a different game per-se, just a bigger one. And in this case size does matter. This time around the X-Men face a much deadlier opponent than in the first game, Apocalypse, the oldest and perhaps most powerful mutant in the Marvel universe, an Egyptian prince dedicated to his notion of survival of the fittest and to make matters worse he's teamed up with another of the X-Men's nemesis(eses), the rather goofily named but somehow really cool, Mr. Sinister, a mutant geneticist bending his mind to the service of Apocalypse.

GEEK NIRVANA

Due to the genocidal nature of the villain, old enemies have become

grudging allies — Magneto and The Brotherhood have joined forces with the X-Men, allowing players to choose from 15 characters including such fan favourites as Magneto, Gambit, Jean Grey and Wolverine as well as some lesser known characters such as Scarlet Witch, Sunfire and Bishop as well as another three who can be unlocked during gameplay. Although the characters play much the same way as in the original game — simple two button attacks, special powers, team combos and the like, the addition of the new characters, especially the "evil" mutants allows the player to create a dream team — geek nirvana if you're an X-Men fan. Even if you're not a rampaging fanboy for all things yellow and blue spandex (or black leather if you joined the series in the late 90s) there is still a lot to like in X-Men Legends II. The game runs through five chapters, each book-ended with some impressive pre-rendered cutscenes giving around 20-25

hours of gameplay the first time through. The areas are much bigger than the first game and reward exploration with hidden items, unlockable special areas and the like.

Playing through the campaign in single player is fun — the story is good, the action constant and challenging and the boss battles a blast — but the real joy of X-Men Legends II comes with co-op. At any time up to three other players can pick up a controller and join the action. The single player AI is decent to be sure and quite customisable, but it can't match the greatness of other human beings joining in. The only problem with multiplayer is that the camera zooms out so all characters are visible on screen at once, so if you split up to cover two sides of a room the camera can pan out so far you can hardly see the action. If you don't have three friends willing to come around for some mutant bashing fun fear not — you can jump online and hook up that way. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

- CATEGORY:** Action RPG
- PLAYERS:** 1-4
- DEVELOPER:** Raven Software
- PUBLISHER:** Activision
- PRICE:** \$69.95
- RATING:** M 15+
- AVAILABLE:** Now

HYPER VERDICT:

- PLUS:** Large levels, great character selection, four person co-op.
- MINUS:** Terrible accents.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	80	84
OVERALL		
83		
Geeky heaven.		



!!! If this kind of game appeals, you should definitely also check out Destroy All Humans.



Taking Auntie Jack's threats literally



BRRRAAAAIIIIIIINSSSSSSS!!!!!!!



STUBBS THE ZOMBIE

Brains! Brains... Brains. Brains? **DANIEL WILKS.**

It's no secret that I loves me some zombies. Not love them in the biblical, getting down and dirty trouser tent kind of way. That would be wrong. No, I love them in the 'old friend you don't see nearly enough but really enjoy your time spent together' kind of way. I'm also a big believer in the Inevitable Zombie Apocalypse. As movies have shown us countless times, eventually there will be no more room in hell so the dead will walk the earth, or an American research facility will create a gas that brings the dead back to life, or a comet with strange radiation will come crashing down to earth resurrecting the recently departed. Or voodoo, ancient curses, haunted TV sets, microwaves, religious cults, god going on holidays, lightning, alien parasites, demonic possession, contaminated wine or rockstars who sold their soul to the devil. Something will bring the dead back to life and we'll have to deal with the consequences.

DEAD IN SHAMBLES
Up until now games have done a good job of preparing us for the Inevitable Zombie Apocalypse, showing us how to kill the shambling dead. Wideload games have taken a more touchy-feely approach to the upcoming zombie plagues by actually casting you as one. Players take the role of Stubbs, raised from the dead by some mysterious force when a "City of the Future" is built over his shallow grave. As a zombie, it's up to the player to munch on as many tasty brains as they can get their hands on, form an army of the undead and maybe, just maybe, find out who killed you. Eating brains forms the basis of the game. Hell, even the loading screens moan "braaaaiiiiiinnssss". When Stubbs eats an enemy's brain they become one of his undead minions which can be roughly controlled either by whistling to them or pushing them in a direction. Aside from brain chomping, Stubbs can also possess people by throwing his arm at them,

part to stun people, throw his guts as grenades and bowl his explosive head. Each of the abilities is regenerated by eating brains, as is health. Each level sees Stubbs eating his way through an area towards a boss battle or similar event. Different levels will see Stubbs in a Thriller-esque dance-off with a police chief, pissing in the local water supply to create an Inevitable Zombie Apocalypse, fighting off a chainsaw wielding redneck and the like. It's fun and funny but there are a few problems that hold Stubbs back. First and foremost, the game gets too samey after a few hours of play. Action games thrive on new abilities and weapons being unlocked throughout the game giving the player a sense of scaling and progression but Stubbs gains all of his powers within the first few hours. And no matter how much fun it is to eat people's brains and command an army of zombies, doing the exact same thing every level can get tiresome. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action
PLAYERS: 1-2
DEVELOPER: Wideload Games
PUBLISHER: Aspyr
PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: MA15+
AVAILABLE: November 25

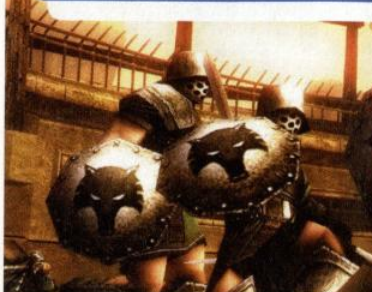
HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Braaaaiiiiiinnssss! Rednecks, zombie dance-off.
MINUS: Repetitive, progression of abilities is too fast.

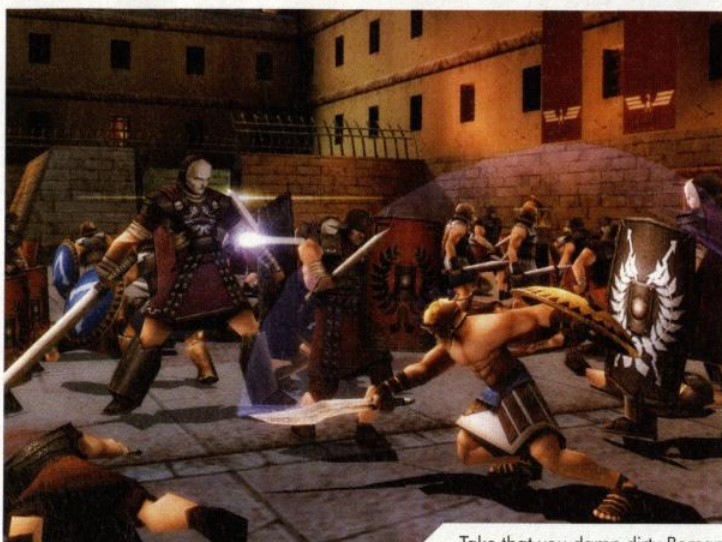
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86	89	84
OVERALL		
84		
Tasty like brains but a little squishy too.		



||| In a departure from the Total War series, Spartan Total Warrior uses history (Romans vs Spartans circa 300 B.C.) as a backdrop before brushing in myth, magic and a light sense of humour for a more fun console experience. Those expecting a dry take on history will be disappointed; as will those expecting character and dialogue of the same standard as God of War.



There are more appropriate times to strike a pose



Take that you damn dirty Roman



SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR

MARCH STEPNIK massages his thumbs and tries to forget God of War...

▶▶ Spartan: Total Warrior is a mass-scale hack 'n' slash action adventure in the vein of the Dynasty Warrior series that takes a markedly different approach. Coming from a background in sports games and the hardcore real-time strategy series Total War (of which Shogun, Medieval and Rome have all garnered heaps of praise for their authentic and challenging take on mass-scale historic warfare), Creative Assembly has debuted with a strong slasher that puts the focus on the act of combat itself – and all the emergent strategy that comes with biffing it out with hundreds of enemies at once. The distinction is subtle; most games of this type offer a flimsy illusion of danger and thrills merely via a substantial head count, but scratch beneath the surface and you find AI that's slow, dumb, and likes to keel over altogether far too easily. Sure, you slaughter hundreds of enemies – but they're mostly empty kills.

SPANK THE ROMANS
Not so in Spartan. The game features a combat system which manages to offer quite a bit of strategic depth without being overly complex. It will take a good few hours to get used to, but once familiarity sets in it's a remarkably fluid process that feels like you're really in control. Kills aren't easily earned and there's great pleasure to be had from surviving a massive melee. Especially when you've got some choice in deciding how to go about the assault. Do you take out the archers first? Should you focus on the more powerful opponents before the grunts? Would it be smart to go backup your comrades?
The other distinguishing thing about Spartan: Total Warrior is the amount of detail and direction that has gone into the environments you battle in. Where other, similar titles suffer from generic, randomly generated locations which serve as mere backdrops for generally

mindless slaughter, each of Spartan's maps are packed with multiple objectives, scripted events and a nice attention to detail that prevents things from ever becoming too monotonous. There's a nice mix of experiences too – from juggling attackers to protect important units, to sneaking through enemy encampments. One of our favourite moments was running with thirty or so comrades headlong into a whole swag of enemies for some large scale butchering. You simply can't forget about the mass slaughter.
Spartan: Total Warrior is gas of a mass-combat action adventure and also quite refreshing. It's not perfect; combat does take a while to get used to and it can all get a little overwhelming at times. The story and characters too are a little flat and uninspiring (especially when compared to the ultra cool God of War), but you'll be having too much fun with the rest of it to be too bothered. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:
CATEGORY: Action
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER: SEGA
PRICE: \$89.95
RATING: MA 15+
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:
PLUS: Objectives, challenges and varied play environments.

MINUS: Steep learning curve, extreme difficulty so start with easy first!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	83	88
OVERALL		
88		
This ain't a mere button masher.		

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PG

Mild
Violence



COMING OCTOBER 2005

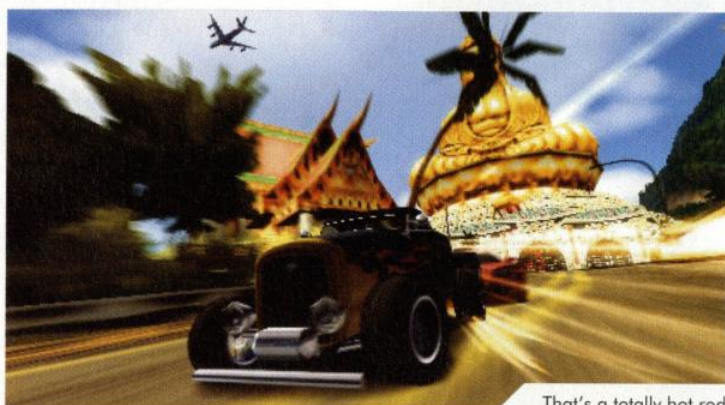
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This is why you never get in a car Cam's driving



That's a totally hot rod

BURNOUT LEGENDS

▶▶ When described, Burnout Legends sounds like the best thing since a guy who was slicing bread decided to use the knife to stick up a bank, stole stacks of money then lived happily ever after on a desert island filled with cocaine hookers. The concept is to take the first three Burnout games and create an unholy arcade racing trinity beast on PSP. The problem is, not only does it feel like Criterion were really rushing to get this title to market in time, but it also feels like a compilation, rather than a loving tribute.

STEAMING JAM

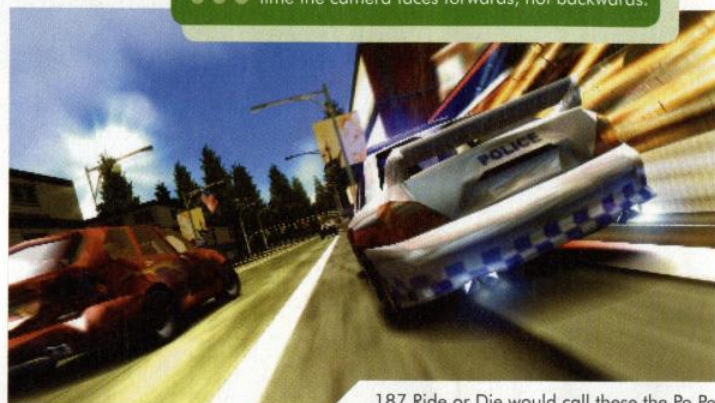
What's the difference? Well, Legends feels like it's trying to jam disparate elements together as opposed to creating a unified 'best of'. Criterion have essentially taken Burnout 3 and put it in a blender, then ladled in steaming bowls of Burnout 1 and 2 (in the form of courses, vehicles, crash junctions and modes like Pursuit) and then blended it in the hope that it would taste good. And in many ways it does. The racing is fast, the visuals are shiny and there's a lot of content to unlock and beat. From a familiar world map you work your

way through a host of events for each of the car classes - Compact, Muscle, Coupe, Sport and Super, pummel 100 crash junctions and unlock 89 vehicles as you go. So far so good.

It doesn't take long for the cracks to show though. For instance, while it may sound cool to be able to play old courses with new game modes like Road Rage, just try that with a course like Burnout 2's Big Surf Shores and you'll see that the winding coastal road school of course design just doesn't gel with the combative style of Burnout 3's gameplay. And while it's great that you're racing on B1 and B2 courses with the segment-based use-at-any-time hoopy frood burnout bar of Burnout 3: Takedown, some of the old courses feel like little more than a chore now. Harbour Town I'm looking in your direction.

Legends is also a very unforgiving game. You'll crash for the most ridiculously inane reasons, and unlike other Burnout games, getting a takedown doesn't make you immune from damage, occasionally leaving you to crash as soon as the cutscene ends. Mind you, this doesn't apply to the AI who can happily barge semi trailers out of the way and continue racing after

!!! While after touch control has made it into Legends it's quite pointless now - most of the time the camera faces forwards, not backwards.



187 Ride or Die would call these the Po Po



taking you down. Speaking of the AI, they're tuned to be a little too aggressive for our tastes, especially considering you're more likely to be penalised than they are.

But what about wi-fi? Doesn't that level the playing field? Well yes it does. Unfortunately it's also quite boring for the most part, although if you can get the full complement of six players together the ability to create custom tournaments is pretty cool.

Legends also loses points for its overly long auto save times (turn it off is our advice) and somewhat frequent glitches. We fell through the ground in crash mode on more than one occasion, and that time the horn sample got stuck and played



for an entire race was also a delight.

As negative as this review may sound, the main reason we're being so critical is because Criterion usually produce such polished titles, and Legends falls below their normal standard. It's still a great game, and well worth a look for Burnout virgins, but it's not the classic we were expecting.

Cam Shea

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

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Arcade racing

PLAYERS: 1-6

DEVELOPER: Criterion

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$79.95

RATING: M

AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS 86 SOUND 86 GAMEPLAY 81

OVERALL
82

YOSHI'S UNIVERSAL GRAVITATION

▶ If you felt like a dickhead talking to your Nintendo on the bus, then you're probably not going to want to play Yoshi's Universal Gravitation outside the house either. It's got a tilt sensor built into the cart you see, and the gameplay requires you to tilt your GBA left and right to change the gravity in the game's side scrolling platform world to help you collect inconsequential dealies and get to the end of each level. You'll definitely look like a bit of a tosser — like those



actors Microsoft always seem to hire for their gaming ads who hold the controller like a divining rod, swaying back and forth as they're ROCKED by the power of Xbox — but unlike a game like WarioWare Twisted!, it's not really worth it.

FISHER PRICE GAMING?

Developers Artoon have quite simply failed to make this game appealing to anyone but the very young. The tilt mechanic has plenty of potential, allowing you to do things like walk on walls, unroll carpet-like sections of land, roll balls over enemies and swing pirate ships higher and higher, not to mention guide Yoshi in a number of guises — bouncing ball Yoshi, balloon Yoshi and boat Yoshi. But it's just a cute gimmick on top of a thoroughly average game. Compounding things, levels are broken up into short unrelated sections, making it feel like My First Patronising Platformer, and the gameplay is unlikely to test anyone who's played a Ninty game before. Although it does get more interesting and more challenging about halfway in, you have to wade through a lot of dull play to get there, and it's just not worth it.

Cam Shea



The DS isn't a toy for kids

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

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Platformer

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Artoon

PUBLISHER: Nintendo

PRICE: \$69.95

RATING: G

AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS 70 SOUND 70 GAMEPLAY 65

OVERALL

67

TWISTED METAL: Head On

▶ Ten years after the series hit our screens, Twisted Metal returns to its roots. In a wise move from developer Incognito, Head On apes the solid, over-the-top dynamics from Twisted Metal 2, and produces another satisfying instalment.

Car combat games are reliant on three key elements — speed, tight controls and good collision detection. Head On nails all three, with a surprising amount of creativity. Levels are expansive, particularly the Greek village and Tokyo levels, where the draw distance makes sending

a homing missile up your competitor's tailpipe from a mile off all the more satisfying.

Wireless multiplayer is awesome fun. The addition of co-op modes and traditional deathmatch options makes Head On's pick-up-and-play gameplay perfect for evenings with your casual gaming mates or hardcore fans of the series.

Head On keeps the action fluid from a visual perspective too. With a double-tap of the accelerator, the nitrous boost kicks in, and there's a pretty decent sense of speed. The engine itself is reminiscent of the simple, flat-but-clean textures of

the PS2's GTA 3, with some good modelling and environmental damage effects. Explosions, smoke trails and particle effects are all used to good effect, and vehicles combust with satisfying brutality.

Usually a sticking point for recent PSP titles, load times are thankfully kept to a minimum. On the whole, Head On is a very solid title, with excellent production values, good AI and learning curve. However, the PSP's thumb-nub joystick is cruddy, and it won't be long before you hit the D pad instead, making the parallels to Twisted Metal 2 more obvious.

Patrick Kolan



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

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Car combat

PLAYERS: 1-6

DEVELOPER: Incog Inc

PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$79.95

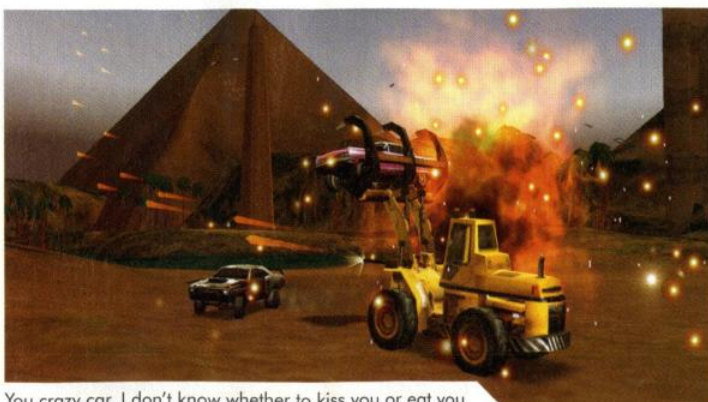
RATING: PG

AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS 80 SOUND 83 GAMEPLAY 84

OVERALL

83



You crazy car, I don't know whether to kiss you or eat you



BET ON SOLDIER

After six years of game engine research and development, French studio Kylotonn are taking a risky roll-of-the-dice with *Bet on Soldier*. Unfortunately, their take on the FPS genre comes off as convoluted, cheesy, and ironically enough, underdeveloped.

Set in the near future, *BoS* sees players filling the shoes of generic action hero Nolan Danesworth, on a mission to avenge the murder of his wife. In order to do so, he must climb the ladder in a 'The Running Man'-esque kill-or-be-killed televised tournament, 'Bet on Soldier'.

What ensues is a very straightforward shooter, with a simple twist at the core — you nominate a couple of antagonists to face off against in the course of each level, and if you come out victorious then you get a payout relative to the difficulty of the competitor. But that's it. That's the full extent of the 'bet' mechanics.

The game contains the obligatory set of light and heavy weapons, very limited team-mate control and some poorly implemented bump mapping. Add to this some floaty jump physics, goofy running animation and some dodgy AI (team-mate snipers don't snipe, enemies have a very obvious cone of vision) and *BoS* looks more and more like a game that needed rethinking from early on.

32 person multiplayer support is a nice addition, and competing against humans really shows how limited the AI in the main game is. Competing for virtual money affords you better weapons and upgrades adds a little originality to the traditional online shooter modes.

Patrick Kolan

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS / PLAYERS: 1-32 /
DEVELOPER: Kylotonn / PUBLISHER: QV Software /
PRICE: \$89.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	70	60	65



FABLE: The Lost Chapters

Fable has finally made it to the PC and it's good. The name's something of a misnomer though — something more appropriate would be *Fable: The Lost Paragraphs*. There is new content in the PC version of the Xbox favourite to be sure, a few new missions (finding blue mushrooms for some stoners is a bit of fun), some new abilities, new items and about two hours worth of extra missions tacked on at the end but lost chapters they are not. For the most part the game remains the same, seeing the player mucking about in a rich and vibrant, though rather linear due to area design, fantasy world, following their story of betrayal and revenge or otherwise solving side quests, getting married, having some sex, getting fat, getting tattoos and generally having a good time.

The controls don't feel as streamlined as in the Xbox game, with a slightly dodgy follow camera and some strange default layouts but the engine, a year on still looks stunning. The new missions added after the resolution of the main plot are a nice addition, giving a little more in the way of gameplay but overall there are a few events in the finale that cheapen everything you did before.

Fable: The Lost Chapters is a fun game but after a year's work more than a few extra missions would have definitely been appreciated. If you've never played *Fable* and have a hankering for some good solid action RPG fun, *Fable* should be a definite purchase. If you've already played it on Xbox there's not enough new content to warrant a second look.

Daniel Wilks

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action RPG / PLAYERS: 1 /
DEVELOPER: Lionhead Studios / PUBLISHER: Microsoft
PRICE: \$89.95 / RATING: MA15+ / AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
89	86	87	86



ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

The old adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" should be faxed to Treyarch. Their web-swinging mechanics from *Spider-Man: The Movie 2* were just about perfect — being able to shoot two webs allowed for rapid movement, tight turns, an incredible sense of freedom of movement and on top of it all was just plain cool. Sure it took a little practice to get used to but the old web-swinging mechanic was still user friendly. *Ultimate Spider-Man* "refines" the web-swinging mechanic by only having one web, replacing the charge up jump mechanic of the previous game with a rather pedestrian double jump and boils everything down into a simple button press. It may be user friendly but after the greatness of their last game it comes across as somewhat dull.

Although the web-swinging is a little lackluster, *Ultimate Spider-Man* excels in both style, which emulates comic book panels and colouring, as well as story telling. Based on the best selling *Ultimates* line of Marvel comics (which essentially modernise the origins of characters to make them more contemporary), *USM* introduces us to a teenage Peter Parker, his nemesis, Eddie Brock, otherwise known as *Venom* and a wide spectrum of other familiar *Spider-Man* characters. Aside from playing as *Spider-Man*, *USM* also gives players the opportunity to dish out some damage as *Venom* adding a nice mix to the flow of the game. Unfortunately, the campaign is incredibly short, lasting only around five hours. Extra life can be squeezed from the game by hunting around the city for races, street events and challenges but these are almost identical to those seen in the previous Treyarch *Spider-Man* games.

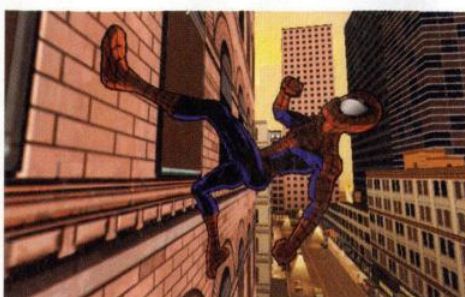
Daniel Wilks

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1 /
DEVELOPER: Treyarch / PUBLISHER: Activision /
PRICE: \$79.95 / RATING: G / AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
89	87	86	82





L.A. RUSH

It's not that hard, honestly. Even John Cusack's retarded younger brother (who works at a Hungry Jacks near Redfern by the way) could tell you the ingredients that made San Francisco Rush fun. Lots of hills and jumps. That would be the main one. Many a shortcut. Yep, that's important too. And how about the fact that it was a straight up high speed arcade racing game? Oh yeah, can't forget that. Simple right?

Then why is it that for L.A. Rush, Midway have completely ignored those oh so basic tenants of the series? Why does the game take place in a mostly FLAT city? We don't care if you can get air off ramps or take shortcuts through people's yards — it's not the same. We don't care if you can free roam through a massive city — if the surroundings are boring that's irrelevant. And since when was the Rush series about car clubs and bling? Honestly, if you're going to change the series, do something a little less clichéd. Ooh, underground car clubs, that's so now man. Oh, and also, a game ceases to be an arcade racer when you have to PAY to enter events and fix cars. If you can reach a point where you no longer have enough money to enter anything but the entry level races (which we did), you know something is wrong. And don't even get me started on the hundreds and thousands of hyperactive cops in the damn city, or the "it worked in Burnout so now we're going to apply it in an artless fashion to the wrong style of racing game" crash cutscenes. It all adds up to a dull game that's frustrating to play. This is not Rush. But hell, even if it was called something completely different we still wouldn't like it. Bad design is bad design.

Cam Shea

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing / PLAYERS: 1-Multi /

DEVELOPER: Midway San Diego / PUBLISHER: Midway

PRICE: \$79.95 / RATING: PG / AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS

84

SOUND

80

GAMEPLAY

50

OVERALL

60



MAKAI KINGDOM: Chronicles of the Sacred Tome

One glance at this game and you know it's a Nippon Ichi title. Makai Kingdom continues their tradition of putting gameplay first and visuals a distant second, and once again it works a treat.

The plot isn't spectacular, and as per normal features cutscenes that seem to go on for ever, but at least the dialogue and characters are quite funny. The game revolves around a "bad ass freakin' overlord" called Lord Zetta who stupidly destroys his netherworld (as opposed to his nether regions, thankfully) and must bind himself to a book to survive. With the help of a prophet named Pram and other overlords who create new netherworlds for him to conquer by writing in the book, it's up to you to help Zetta get his body back. Once again, it's just a setup for the engaging turn-based battles that follow.

In Makai Kingdom you create characters in the hub world, confining them to ordinary objects like rocks and flowers, with stat bonuses and losses as a result. There's a shop where you can buy equipment for your characters, although unlike Phantom Brave you don't level up your weapons. The gameplay is still turn-based but on a team level rather than the individual, and you can exit a map once you've got enough points... or stay on and kill all the enemies. Coolest of all, you can now bring vehicles and structures into levels with you, for greater reach and firepower, as well as attribute bonuses and extra options for characters. It's impossible to do the gameplay justice in such a small space, but for Nippon Ichi fans, think of Makai Kingdom like a combination of Disgaea and Phantom Brave. Sweet huh?

Game Cat

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Strategy / PLAYERS: 1 /

DEVELOPER: Nippon Ichi / PUBLISHER: Teh Hella Q /

PRICE: \$79.95 / RATING: PG / AVAILABLE: Nov 4

VISUALS

70

SOUND

70

GAMEPLAY

85

OVERALL

84



XENOSAGA EPISODE II: Jenseits von Gut und Bose

XENOSAGA! is the cry let out by RPG fans everywhere with the PAL release of the series. Episode II has arrived and it revolves around the background stories of the characters and how their memories are crucial to the future. However, to ease you into the game this special release comes with a DVD containing all the cutscenes in Episode I to explain what has happened previously. Watching hours and hours worth of cutscenes from another game may seem a bit weird, but it is oddly compelling viewing and is recommended before you start playing.

There are no random battles and all fights are initiated after dialogue or through visible on-screen enemies. A detailed description of the battle system is a bit much for this limited review so suffice to say that it is very tactical and many boss fights require you to exploit a weakness with no mercy in order to win. This just highlights how good the battles are, as you generally need to plan ahead on the go to come out on top. The areas are fairly evenly split between on foot exploration, and piloting huge mechs called E.S Robots. The E.S Robots have room for two party members, and different pilot combinations unlock certain special attacks.

Much of the game consists of watching cutscenes and walking through 'memory' areas, so patience and an interest in the characters is required. The graphics are fantastic and the story telling superb, but the background music leaves a lot to be desired. Overall, it's an enjoyable game but for story heavy RPG fans only.

Vaughan Smith

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG / PLAYERS: 1 /

DEVELOPER: Monolithsoft / PUBLISHER: Sony /

PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M / AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS

87

SOUND

70

GAMEPLAY

85

OVERALL

82





JAK X: Combat Racing

» You've got to wonder why a big company like Sony would decide to change one of their flagship franchises in such a drastic way — taking a platformer and turning it into a combat racing game. You've really got to wonder why they made that decision considering that one of the least liked additions in Jak 3 was the racing elements. All in all Jak X isn't a bad little racing game. The sense of speed is decent, some of the courses are well designed and it looks good. The sense of humour prevalent in the previous games returns as well. Some of the race modes are a good deal of fun and undeniably clever — one sees you racing against the clock to simply kill as many AI drones as possible while another sees you collecting tokens that stop the timer for a set amount of seconds so you can complete the course within the gold medal time limit. The race goes for two laps and the tokens don't respawn so it's a really good test for both your reflexes and your memory.

That said, there are many glaring flaws in Jak X that make it less than optimal. Why do so many of the courses in a combat racing game feature traffic? Why is it that the rear firing weapons deflecting missiles only works half the time. Why is the handling so poor on many of the vehicles? Why is it that you seem to explode from looking at a wall where an enemy racer can crash into anything unscathed? What's next in the Jak franchise? **Jak QWERTY: Xtreme Typing?**

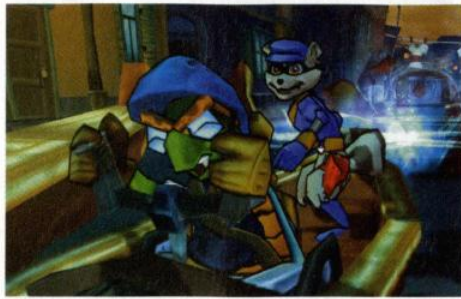
Game Cat

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-8 /
DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog / **PUBLISHER:** Sony /
PRICE: \$79.95 / **RATING:** TBA / **AVAILABLE:** Nov 10

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
85	82	80	80



SLY 3: Honour Among Thieves

» At first glance, you could be forgiven for thinking nothing much has changed for the third outing of Sly Cooper, and indeed, the game does start out in rather familiar territory. Sure, Bentley's now confined to a wheelchair (although in typical Bentley fashion it has a jetpack, giving him greater manoeuvrability), and Murray has found enlightenment and gone out on his own, but it's not long before the three are reunited. The team, however, doesn't stop there. The biggest twist for Sly 3 is that as the game progresses you recruit more and more playable characters. This, combined with the usual assortment of mini-game style challenges, sections where you swap between characters on the fly, and the fact that even Carmelita is playable on a couple of occasions, all adds up to a game that keeps you on your ever so quiet thief toes. Not all of the new characters control as well as Sly, but the eclectic cast and missions certainly help maintain interest throughout, not to mention injecting plenty of personality.

It's great fun too, although most gamers will find it a little on the easy side. As if confirming that Sony are pitching this game at a younger audience, Sly 3 even has come with "3D" glasses for several "3D" sections in the game. We've used inverted commas because the 3D effect isn't what we'd call impressive, and is more likely to give you a headache than convince you that raccoons and turtles are coming out of your TV. Fortunately you can play these sequences in plain ol' 2D too.

Sly 3 also has a bunch of two player splitscreen multiplayer modes to unlock, including air and sea battles, as well as the chance to pit Sly versus Carmelita one more time. Oh, and at \$59.95, you're getting great value for money.

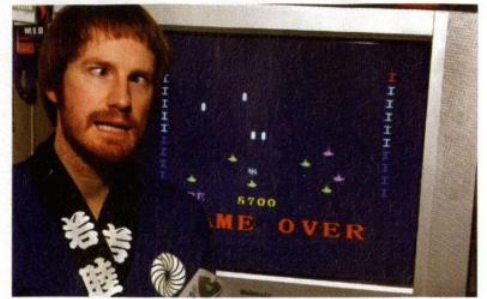
Dirk Watch

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Platformer / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 /
DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch / **PUBLISHER:** Sony /
PRICE: \$59.95 / **RATING:** PG / **AVAILABLE:** Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
85	84	84	84



PALSONIC 68CM TV: Built-in Games

» Palsonic, an excellent Australian TV manufacturer, have decided to include two, super low res video games into their latest budget TVs. What is more interesting than the games themselves, are the reasons that would force you to play these games at all. The only reason we could think up was that maybe you are staying in a sleazy half star hotel and the door handle has broken off leaving you trapped in your diminutive room with no reading material except for the ironic exit sign above the door, so you turn on the TV to find that there is no reception because the aerial has been stolen to break into someone's car, but you discover the TV remote (it's chained to the TV) has a button named 'game' so you attempt to whittle away the hours (whilst intermittently yelling for help) by playing these two built-in TV games.

One game is a hybrid of Frogger and the bastard son of Space Invaders. The other is a Tetris rip-off but with a wider playing field.

The first, a submarine shooter, takes a while to become difficult, but when it does, the tolerances between dodging and shooting the horizontally moving enemy subs and the falling depth charges becomes nail bitingly slim.

The best thing about the Tetris game is it can be played with the TV (after you have fashioned an aerial out of discarded bed springs) running in the background for extra challenge.

Otherwise, the picture is good and Palsonic is a good option to buying the more expensive 'name' brands.

Tim Levy

AVAILABLE ON:
PALSONIC TVs

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Puzzle/Shooter / **PLAYERS:** 1 /
DEVELOPER: Palsonic / **PUBLISHER:** Palsonic /
PRICE: \$199 (factory second) / **RATING:** G / **OUT:** Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
09	06	63	29



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ROME

TOTAL WAR

BARBARIAN INVASION

DARKNESS FALLS...

It is 363 AD and the last Emperor of the unified Roman world is dead. His successors now rule a divided Empire. Each calls himself Emperor and each would happily see the other dead. Beyond the frontiers of the sundered Empire new enemies are lurking. This will be a sword-time - an age that is arrow-bitten and deadly. The Barbarians are at the gates in the official expansion pack for Rome: Total War!

- A brand new campaign game.
- 10 new playable factions - defend and unite the Eastern and Western Empires, or burn them to the ground as one of 10 new factions, including the Huns, Franks, Saxons and Goths.
- 100+ new units - Each with their own tactical strengths, weapons and abilities, including Schiltrom and Shieldwall formations, swimming and axe-throwing, crossbows and Carroballistae...
- Barbarian Hordes - march your entire people in search of a new homeland.

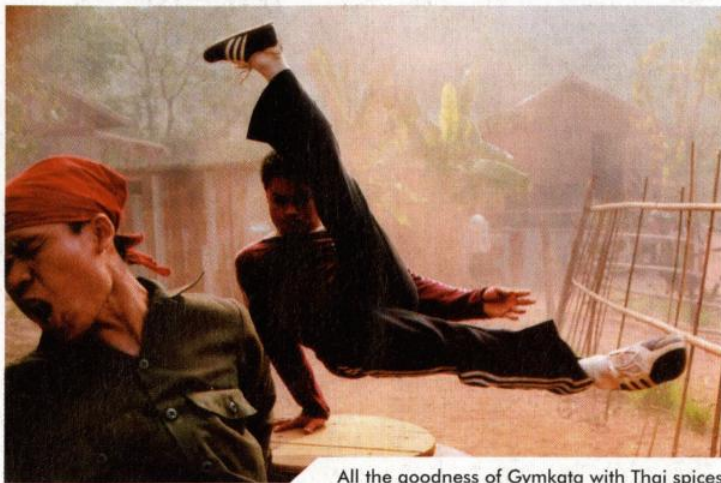
You were there for Rome's glory. This October you can be there for the Empire's fall.



Requires Rome Total War to Run



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All the goodness of *Gymkata* with Thai spices



Born to Fight

EASTERN EYE, M 15+

▶▶ The experience of watching this Thai action film goes a little something like this — "cool... haha... cool... did you see that? NO WAY! AWESOME! HOLY SHIT! THAT'S GOTTA BE FAKE! AWESOME!!! Rinse and repeat for the next 80 odd minutes. *Born to Fight* is never going to be mistaken for a good movie — the plot is rather lacklustre and pretty much missing for the last hour of the film altogether and the acting is about as good as you can expect from a cast of stuntmen and Olympic athletes. If anything, *Born to Fight* might be mistaken for a 21st Century remake of *Gymkata*, and if you're familiar with that piece of 80s cinematic oddity, then you know just how awesomely awesome it is.

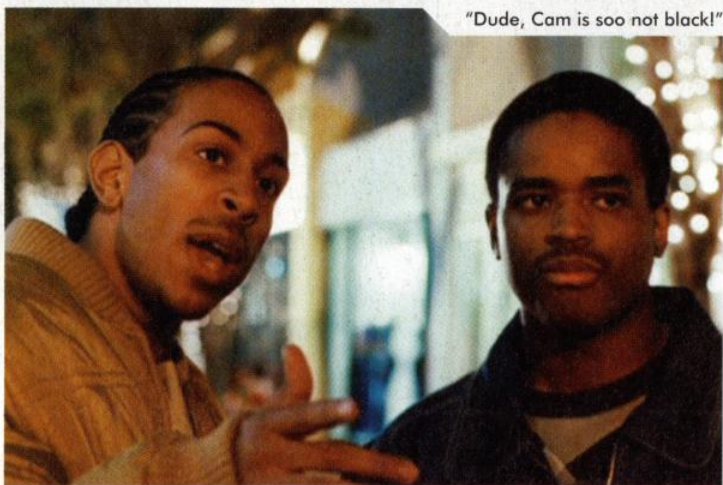
The basic premise holds that a bunch of Thai Olympic athletes and a cop come to a remote village for some charity and whilst they are there a bunch of really evil terrorists take over, massacre a bunch of villagers (a number of scenes which actually hit all the right emotional notes) and start making demands. After discovering that the demands are just a cover for something much bigger the athletes and indeed every survivor in the



village decide to fight back. For the next hour or so you get one piece of action after another as all the athletes use their sporting talent to stick it to the terrorists, old men beat up terrorists, a one legged dude beats up terrorists — you get the drill. Great action choreography, incredible, death defying stunts and enough "F#\$K YEAH!" moments to make you jump to your feet and cheer the outlandish audacity of it all every few seconds make *Born to Fight* one of the most entertaining and crowd pleasing bits of movie fluff to come along in ages.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: TBC



"Dude, Cam is soo not black!"



Crash

WARNER BROS, MA 15+

▶▶ It's rare that you'll come across a film that is at once subtle, yet also has the power to slam you in the face and leave you numb. *Crash* is such a film. Paul Haggis has managed to write a film that illuminates the insidious and yet subtle ways that racism permeates through society and clouds and colours every individuals' actions, reactions and value based judgments. In society, stereotypes evolve as way of categorising vast amounts of information into neat little packages for processing, but what happens when these stereotypes invade and influence every aspect of your existence without you realising it? It is an especially potent idea when you mix this reality with a society of readily available weapons and a culture seemingly obsessed with violence.

Crash is both warm and horrific at the same time. As the film evolves, you will despise and be confronted by overt racism, and yet by the end you must reconcile your own emotions of sympathy and understanding for each individual. This is the power



of the film, and must be seen to truly appreciate life's complicated dynamics. *Crash* has many funny moments though and is emotionally light at times as well.

The cast is of notable standing and they each complement each other's roles well. Of special note in such a wide cast are Don Cheadle (Det Graham Waters), Dato Bakhtadze (Lucian), Matt Dillon (Officer Ryan), Ludacris (Anthony) and Sandra Bullock (Jean Cabot). Extras include commentary with Paul Haggis and Don Cheadle and a behind the scenes.

Rebecca Izard

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 6

Sleepwalkers

WARNER BROS, TBC

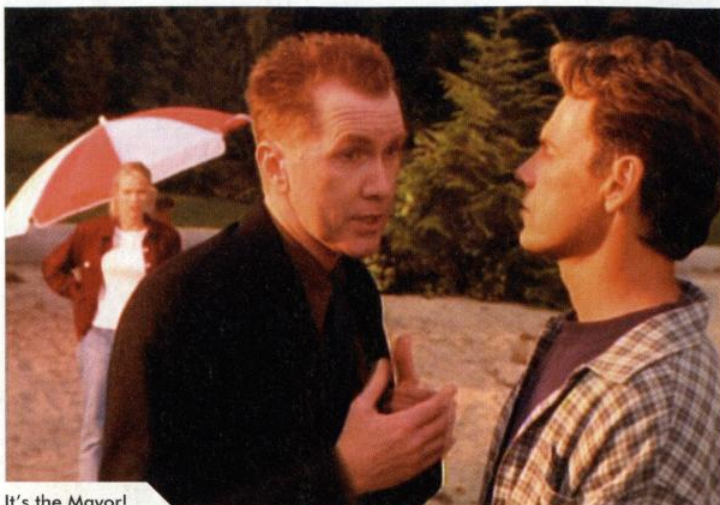
Finally the television series *Sleepwalkers* has made it to DVD. The series was first screened in 1997 and was axed before the whole nine episodes aired, showing its potential fans only five of the possible nine. The series centers around the neurophysiologist Nathan Bradford (Bruce Greenwood) and his specialised and hand-picked team of dreamscape technicians. Their investigations into the dream life of humans takes place in a niche research facility that allows them to walk consciously around in the dreams of their volunteers. The team, including psychologist Kate Russell (Naomi Watts... before she was famous), are called upon to wander as participants through the dreaming minds of their potential clients. They are witness to the potential traumas in each individual's subconscious or seek

information for the resolution of unsolved crimes. They essentially guide the keys that unlock individual minds. At any time the team might find themselves walking in the dreamscape of either a dying comatose serial killer for knowledge of where his last victim is, or the nightmares of a young boy that causes him to act out violently when sleepwalking.

The rules of reality exist very much like they did for *The Matrix* - if you die in the dream, you die in real life. The series appears to be a little dated now and is not as slick as *The Cell*, yet it has merits for being ahead of its time. It is once again a failing of the networks to let a series drown before the fans had time to put out the life raft.

Rebecca Izard

SERIES: 6.5 / EXTRAS: 0



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The good people at Universal Pictures tell us that *American Pie: Band Camp* is the hilarious new addition to the *American Pie* series and has all the raucous humour we have come to expect from these outrageous comedy classics! It features a cast of lovable and riotous characters led by Steve Stifler's over-the-top younger brother Matt (Tad Hilgenbrinck). Matt, facing expulsion from school, is sent to band camp for the summer to redeem himself. True to the irreverent Stifmeister ways, he plans on playing a series of practical jokes on the kids at camp. But instead, Matt falls for a young woman camper, Elyse (Arielle Kebbel), and tries to change his ways, producing truly hilarious results. All the ingredients are here to ensure this is the tastiest slice of *American Pie* yet!

End Mr Movie phone. To celebrate the release of the *American Pie* box set 4-Play (which contains all four films, including *Band Camp*) on DVD, Universal Pictures and Skechers have been kind enough to give us six prize packs. Each contains 4-Play and a pair of the new Skecher Mache shoes. These spanking new trainers were described to us as "Laid-back yet seriously smooth, the Mache in Olive lend instant 'street cred' to any look. With a flat sole unit and suede and mesh finish, these gems have a true retro air about them." so hey, come and get 'em!

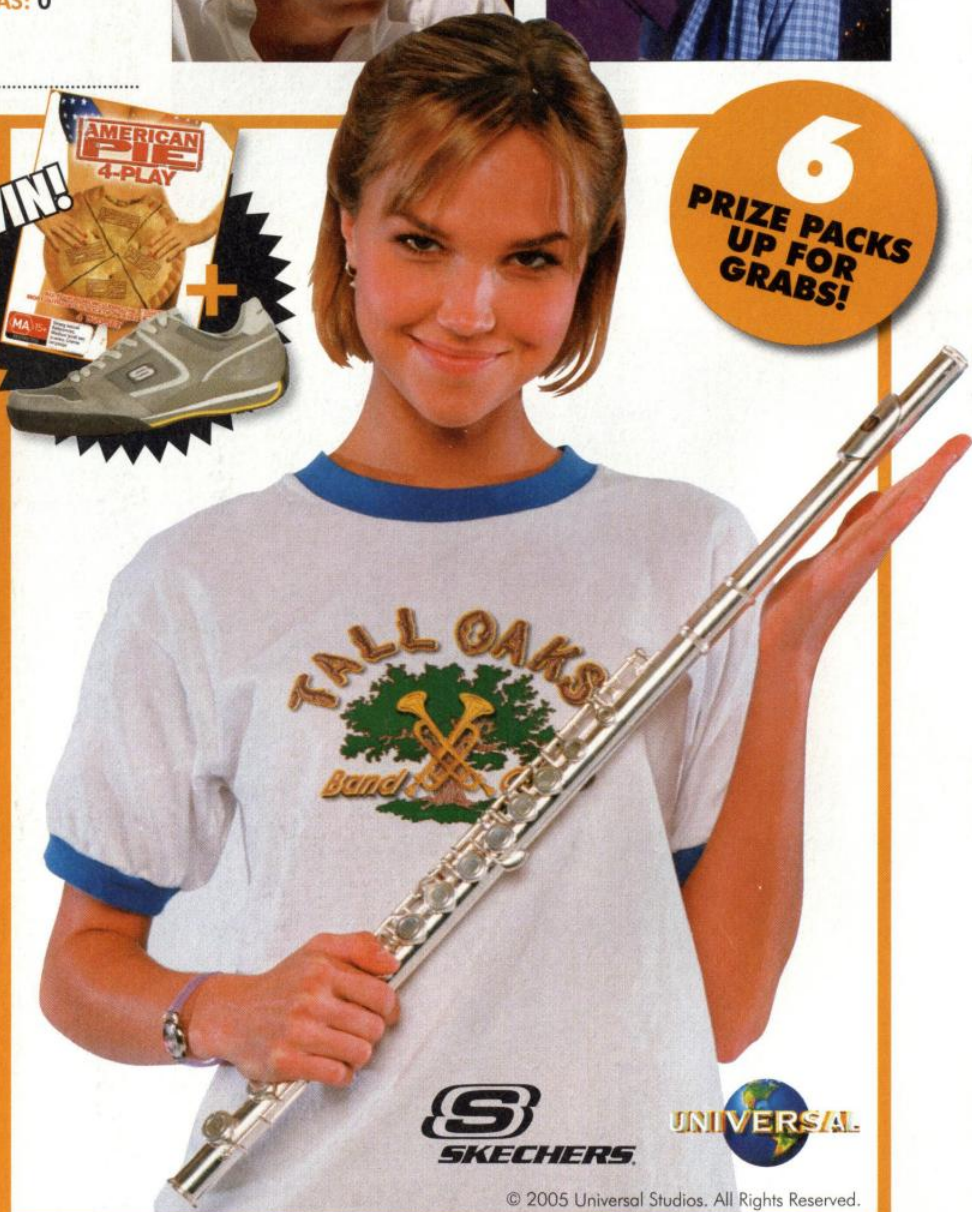
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Name three non-American Pie films that Eugene Levy has been in.

Put your answer, as well as your name, address and shoe size, on the back of an envelope and send it to: **American 'Tang, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016.**



6 PRIZE PACKS UP FOR GRABS!



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Briareos. He's no Batou. You just can't please us...

Appleseed

CATEGORY: ACTION SCI FI
PRODUCTION: DIGITAL FRONTIER

▶▶ The city of Olympus was built to be a paradise. It was to be a place without war and crime, where the populace were content and happy. To help achieve this, half of Olympus' population consists of Bioroids, artificial lifeforms that are very similar to humans, except that emotions like love and hate are suppressed, supposedly giving them a more objective, docile view of the role they play in society. They also have no reproductive abilities and must go in for regular maintenance to stay alive. It's a delicate balance that's overseen by a massive, all knowing computer network called Gaia working in council with seven elders, and one that is soon to be shattered by the agendas of several factions.

Into the calm before the storm comes Deunan Knute, a legendary fighter who only recently was still out fighting in the combat wastelands, unaware that the war was over. Knute is brought back to Olympus to find her former lover Briareos is now cold and distant, and more machine than man, and that a Bioroid named Hitomi has become her most valuable



connection to this new world.

It would be unfair to reveal any more of the plot than this, but given that it's based on the manga series by Masamune "Ghost in the Shell" Shirow, you should have some idea what to expect, and it sure as hell doesn't disappoint.

Appleseed is brought to life by some of the best CG graphics seen in anime to date. It's artfully done and while some may quibble that traditional cel animation can still achieve more natural and expressive facial expressions, CG anime has a number of advantages too, and *Appleseed* capitalises on these with stunning action sequences and jaw droppingly sweet settings.

This two disc Special Edition comes with a commentary by the director and producer, as well as a making of doco, design archives and character profiles.

Cam Shea

**ANIMATION: 10 / STORY: 8
EXTRAS: 7 / OVERALL: 9**



Use robot punch!

Samurai 7 VOLUME 1: SEARCH FOR THE SEVEN

CATEGORY: ACTION
PRODUCTION: GONZO

▶▶ Based on the famous Akira Kurosawa film *Seven Samurai*, *Samurai 7* transposes the familiar story to a war torn future in which mechanised bandits (the leftovers from the war) patrol the countryside demanding tribute in form of crops from helpless peasants under the threat of death. After losing most of their rice stores for the year, one such village decides to fight back, hiring samurai to defend their village the next time the bandits return.

The first episode sees a young priestess, her little sister and one of the young village men venturing to the nearby industrial city to find samurai. Each episode essentially adds one new character to the mix, giving viewers a wonderfully paced approach to the story. The characters are well realised with special mention going to the comic relief character Kikuchiyo, a giant robotic samurai who generally means well but doesn't seem to understand that brute force and ignorance aren't necessarily the best way to approach an obstacle and Kambei,



a great and noble samurai who looks upon his past as nothing but a series of battles lost.

The animation by Gonzo is simply spectacular, mixing 2D and 3D styles, realistic character models as well as stylised mecha and nearly demonic cyborgs. By the end of the first disc we are introduced to four of the seven samurai with a hint of who the fifth may be. It hooks you from the opening reel and the steady progression of characters as well as the introduction of a primary/secondary villain, a rich debutante son of the local magistrate who has women kidnapped for his personal harem ensures that you'll be back for more.

Daniel Wilks

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

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» Staying back late at work just isn't much fun anymore. Before the time of F.E.A.R. we'd hang back, play some multiplayer games, maybe have a beer or two and eventually polish off whatever work remained to be done. Now, however, when the night comes we're more likely to cower under our desks, hoping against hope that when we get the strength to emerge we don't find a creepy girl walking along the ceiling of the office eviscerating all in her path. F.E.A.R. It has that kind of effect on people...

Not only is F.E.A.R. one hell of an atmospheric and involving title, it's also packed with the latest tech, and with all the graphical frippery turned up can bring even a high specced machine to its knees. Good thing, then, that NVIDIA were kind enough to give us the fastest video card available to give away to one lucky Hyper reader. Yes, we've got a GeForce 7800GTX card, and it'll run the game like a dream... a very very freaky dream. Thanks to Vivendi Universal Games we've also got five F.E.A.R. prize packs, each containing one copy of the Director's Edition of F.E.A.R., one F.E.A.R. T-shirt, one F.E.A.R. hat and one F.E.A.R. poster. The first winner drawn will receive a GeForce 7800GTX video card and a F.E.A.R. prize pack, and four runners up will receive F.E.A.R. prize packs.

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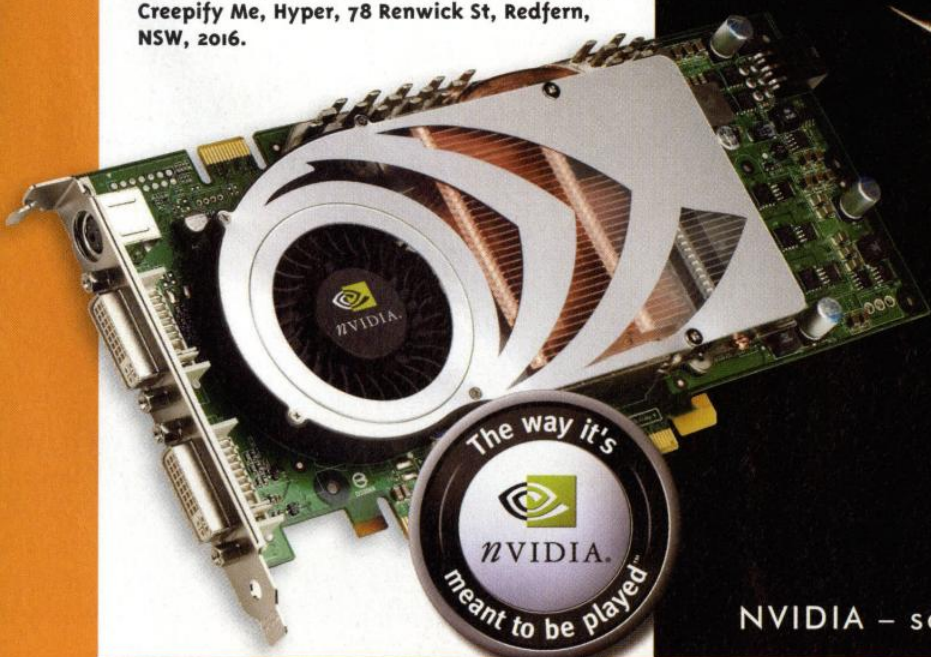
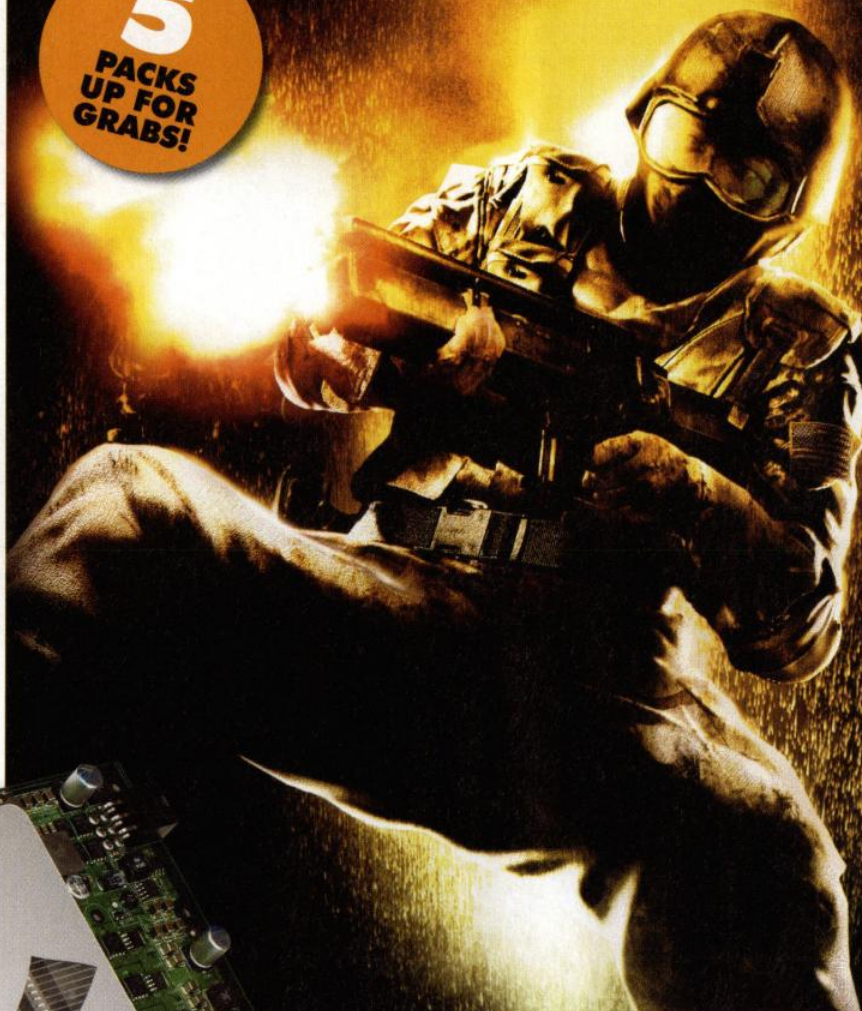
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NVIDIA – so fast it's scary

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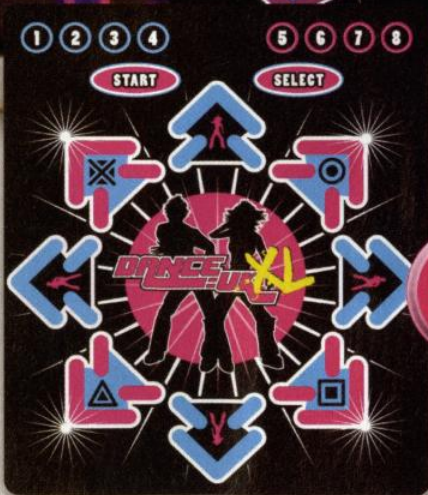
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INVENTING THE WHEEL

The origins of Phantasy Star

>> Mikolai

While Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest are generally credited with the invention of the console RPG, Sega's Phantasy Star was just as instrumental in the genre's development. Released in the West in 1987 - a full year ahead of either Final Fantasy or Dragon Quest - Phantasy Star introduced many of the conventions that would come to dominate RPGs. Since then, the Phantasy Star series established itself as one of the longest running franchises in gaming history. With Sega now set to bring the series to PCs and the PlayStation 2 for the first time (see our Tokyo Game Show feature), Hyper looks back over the Algol Star System and its citizens' never ending quest to defeat the villainous muppet that is Dark Force.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LEVELLING UP

Dragon Quest (renamed Dragon Warrior in the U.S.) by Enix is widely acknowledged as the first console RPG. Released in Japan in 1986, it proved a runaway success and a cultural phenomenon. Dragon Quest almost single handedly introduced the Japanese public to the concept of role-playing games. While the dice and stats approach of D&D had proved a mainstay in the U.S. throughout the 80's, the concept never found an audience in Japan. Enix's Dragon Quest changed all that. It tailored the levelling up of D&D and the fantasy themes of Tolkien for a Japanese audience. In the process, Dragon Quest created the blueprint for a new sub-genre of the RPG, one that would run parallel to the PC based games that would dominate the western market.

Of course, the huge success of Dragon Quest didn't escape the industry's attention and a number of developers began work on their own iterations; most notably, Sega and Square. With limited third party support, Sega were forced to utilise internal development staff and the then unknown Yuji Naka and Rieko Kodama were charged with producing the company's first RPG. Although this was virgin

territory for a company used to producing quick fix arcade games, it was hoped that the game would provide a showcase for the Master System's technical advantage over the N.E.S.

Still, back in 1986 the RPG genre was almost a blank canvas and the duo of Yuji and Rieko were quite literally making it up as they went along. Phantasy Star was released in

Japan in 1987, just two days after Square's Final Fantasy (December 18th and 20th respectively). It appeared on U.S. store shelves a year later, just in time for Christmas 1988, and was the first of the three Japanese RPGs to make the jump across the ocean. Unfortunately, the relatively small user base of the Master System meant that the game went largely unnoticed by the general public - the vast majority of which owned an N.E.S. Phantasy Star may have been technically superior to both the renamed Dragon Warrior and Final Fantasy but it would be these N.E.S. releases that would ultimately receive the bulk of the acclaim and public attention. Regardless, the trilogy of Dragon Quest, Final Fantasy and Phantasy Star laid the groundwork for all subsequent console RPGs.



PHANTASY STAR

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

RELEASED: 1987 JAPAN, 1988 U.S.

■ Best remembered for its 3D dungeon sections, *Phantasy Star* also introduced many other groundbreaking conventions. It was the first turn-based RPG to appear on a console (in the West), the first to feature a female lead, the first to introduce combat animations, one of the first featuring battery backup and it clocked in at a massive 4 megs. While the game pushed the limits of 8bit technology, it was the storyline that captivated audiences and ensured its success. Fusing elements of Greek Mythology with more traditional RPG fare, the game's storyline revolves around Alis Landale and her quest to avenge her brother's death and overthrow the corrupt King Lassic.

Designed to showcase the power of the Master System in the wake of Nintendo's dominance, the game is widely considered to be one of the best releases for Sega's 8bit system. Compared to the original *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* it certainly showed an evolutionary leap in the genre; both in storyline and technical achievement. While it may be a fan favourite, the game itself did little to change Sega's fortunes in the 80s console wars. Master System owners loved it; the rest of the world ignored it or waited for *Final Fantasy* to be released.

PHANTASY STAR 2

MEGADRIVE

RELEASED: 1989 JAPAN, 1989 U.S.

■ If the original *Phantasy Star* helped invent console RPGs from the ground up, the three subsequent games in the series refined this innovation. Released soon after the launch of the Megadrive, *Phantasy Star 2* found the commercial success that had eluded its predecessor. [There were PS2 lunchboxes and everything]. Aesthetically, however, the game showed little improvement over the original. Aside from the cutscenes,

the in game graphics were little better than the Master System version and the 3D dungeons were replaced with the overhead perspective that would be used for all Megadrive incarnations. But while it didn't trouble the Megadrive's increased processing power, *Phantasy Star 2* is still fondly remembered and this is primarily because of the engrossing storyline. Set 1000 years after the original game, it saw the series ditch the mythology of the first game in favour of the sci-fi leanings that would dominate all future releases – one of the first RPGs to do this.

In this instalment, the central computer of the Mota planet, Mother Brain, has malfunctioned and started spreading chaos throughout the land (some things never change). Monsters have begun to appear and it's up to a government agent named Rolf to crack heads and take names. While it doesn't seem particularly impressive these days, this was also the first console RPG to allow you to choose which party members you wanted to take into random generated battle.

PHANTASY STAR 3: Generations of Doom

MEGADRIVE

RELEASED: 1990 JAPAN, 1991 U.S.

■ Regarded as the black sheep of the family [it's actually quite good], *Phantasy Star 3* has fallen out of favour in recent years – the main reason being the storyline's



departure from previous games in the series and the lack of involvement from Yuji Naka (who was programming the original *Sonic* game at the time) and Rieko Kodama.

Set 1000 years after PS2, the game centers on a civil war between the Orakians and Layans. To cut a long story short; a giant vessel was launched into space just prior to the destruction of the planet Palma in PS2. This vessel and its inhabitants were to prolong the human race, etc. After 1000 years of floating through space, however, the inhabitants of the vessel have fractured into two rival groups and all memory of their origins has been erased from history. Kinda like George W. Bush and those cocaine stories.

The game begins with you assuming the role of Prince Rhys on his wedding day to a mysterious girl called Maia. Before the ceremony

Dragon Quest, Final Fantasy and Phantasy Star laid the groundwork for all console RPGs

can commence she is snatched away by a 'punk ass' demon and you set out to rescue her. This sets up the third game's biggest twist – when you eventually rescue her you are given the option of either marrying Maia or your travelling companion, Lena. Depending on which you choose the game then takes a different path. This ability to choose who you marry played a crucial part in PS3 as it would ultimately affect the game's final outcome. Played over three generations, the game had four separate endings depending on your choice of brides.

PHANTASY STAR 3: Text Adventure

SEGA GAME LIBRARY

RELEASED: 1991 JAPAN, 1989 U.S.

■ This obscure release for Sega's Game Library (the short lived Tele



Modem gaming network for the Megadrive) followed the individual adventures of eight characters from the second game and their respective backgrounds. Primarily text based, the game was later also released as a Mega CD bundle. For obvious reasons, Sega doubted the market appeal of a text based RPG in the West and never bothered to release it.

PHANTASY STAR ADVENTURE

GAME GEAR
RELEASED: 1992 JAPAN

■ An adaptation of Phantasy Star 2: Text Adventure, this Game Gear title featured more graphics but the gameplay remained virtually the same. The eight characters involved were Rolf, Nei, Rudo, Amy, Hugh, Anna, Kain and Shir. Which probably doesn't mean much to casual fans of the series.

PHANTASY STAR GAIDEN

GAME GEAR
RELEASED: 1992 JAPAN

■ This side story takes place between the events of PS1 and PS2 and revolves around Alis leaving the planet of Palma (prior to its destruction) to start a new colony. Aimed at a younger audience, the graphics in this release were given



more of an anime feel and, er, that's all we really know about this one at the moment.

PHANTASY STAR CLASSICS

MEGADRIVE
RELEASED: 1994 JAPAN

■ The original Phantasy Star game was ported across to the Megadrive in extremely limited numbers during the system's early days and offered as a prize in a sweepstakes giveaway. There was no effort on Sega's behalf to update it graphically because they were busy playing train simulators and smoking crack [maybe]. In other words, it was a straight pixel-by-pixel port. Still, it proved so popular that the company later gave it a commercial release in Japan. The original version goes for a mint on eBay these days and is one of the rarest Megadrive titles available. The commercial release is more widely available but will still cost you. If you're sensible, you'll just play the Master System original.

PHANTASY STAR 4: The End of the Millennium

MEGADRIVE
RELEASED: 1993 JAPAN, 1994 U.S.

■ Phantasy Star 4 saw Yuji and Rieko back on board and is widely considered to be one the best RPGs released for the Megadrive. Brought out in 1994, it was designed to wrap up all the loose ends of the series and as a swansong for the Megadrive. As well as featuring improved graphics and anime storyboards, the game also introduced two crucial new features. The first was 'combination

battle' which allowed you to use 'Techniques' (magic) in a specific order to garner special attacks - similar to the system in Chrono Trigger. This was also the first time that the Hunters Guild concept was introduced in the Phantasy Star series - your party was now able to undertake a variety of side missions if you felt like it. Of course this would later go on to form the basis of Phantasy Star Online.

Also worth noting is the fact that the games designers were originally looking at reverting back to the 3D dungeons of the first game in this fourth instalment. Ultimately this never happened and the game stuck with the traditional top down view.

Chronologically, the game takes place between PS2 and PS3 and starts with you on a mission alongside your mentor, Alys, to rid a nearby town of monsters. Said monsters are defeated but some 'bad shit' goes down and Alys dies - thus the game begins proper.

Sadly, the Megadrive was approaching the end of its lifespan at this point and so Phantasy Star 4 never found the fan base that it deserved.

PHANTASY STAR COLLECTION

SATURN
RELEASED: 1998 JAPAN

■ For reasons we won't get into here, many of Sega's most popular franchises never saw a release on the ill-fated Saturn. Where the hell was Sonic? Phantasy Star was another IP not to get an outing on the system. Instead, the company released this compilation, which featured Phantasy Star, Phantasy Star 2, Phantasy Star 3 and Phantasy Star 4 alongside illustrations and Cosplay commercials for the games.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

1 6 2
DREAMCAST / GCN / XBOX
RELEASED: 2000, 2001, 2002 JAPAN, 2000, 2001, 2002 U.S.

■ The first original Phantasy Star game in six years, PS Online was a massive departure from the 16bit days of old. Set on the planet of Ragol, the game allowed teams of up to four people to explore the planet while undertaking various missions for the Hunters Guild. The first console RPG to allow players from around the world to play online, it was a watershed in the development of the genre. Not since the original Phantasy Star was released in 1987 had such a massive



shift in the nature and style of console RPGs been undertaken. As Akinori Nishiyama from Sonic Team puts it, "I felt like yelling 'We win!' when we came up with the ideas for creating a Phantasy Star online-game scenario."

The game proved a massive hit with fans and became an instant classic on Sega's short-lived Dreamcast before being ported across to the Xbox and Gamecube in 2002 with all new backgrounds, enemies and features - where it was promptly ignored.

PHANTASY STAR COLLECTION

GAME BOY ADVANCE
RELEASED: 2003 U.S.

■ Western audiences never had the option of picking up the complete Saturn collection so this had to suffice; it features PS, PS2 and PS3.

PHANTASY STAR: Generation 1 (Sega Ages)

PLAYSTATION 2
RELEASED: 2003 JAPAN

■ This is a full reworking of the original Phantasy Star game complete with upgraded graphics and music. Released as part of the Sega Ages budget catalogue, no word on a Western release has been heard and, lets face it, it doesn't look like it's gonna happen.

PHANTASY STAR EPISODE III. C.A.R.D. REVOLUTION

GCN
RELEASED: 2003 JAPAN, 2004 U.S.

■ Another major departure for the series, Episode III is still set on the planet of Ragol, but the hack and slash gameplay of the previous two online outings is replaced with a card battle system - think Baten Kaitos. Strangely enough, Card



The Brains behind the operation



YUJI NAKA

Yuji Naka was one half of the Phantasy Star development team but would become best known for his work with a certain Sonic The Hedgehog. The lead programmer on the original Sonic title, he would go on to head Sonic Team and do other cool stuff.



RIEKO KODAMA

Rieko Kodama began work at Sega in 1984 as an illustrator and designer, and she worked on titles like Ninja Princess and Alex Kidd in Miracle World before coming on board as the director for Phantasy Star. She made her debut as a producer with Skies of Arcadia.

Phantasy Star Online was a massive departure from the 16bit days of old

Revolution largely fell between the cracks upon its release. Given the series' prestige history and the success of Episodes 1 & 2 there was little advertising for this game and it was near impossible to find in Australia. Good work Nintendo.

Overall however, the response to Episode III was not what Sonic Team would have hoped. Many players used to the simple interface of the past two games didn't like the new card based battle system and even an improved storyline for offline play didn't stop this from fading into obscurity quicker than a Big Brother contestant.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE BLUE BURST

PC
RELEASED: 2005

■ Blue Burst, the latest installment in the Phantasy Star Online series is currently available as a download for PCs. Seems that planet Ragol still has some mysteries to solve and it's up to you and your 733+ talking friends to get to the bottom of things. Essentially an update of Episodes 1 & 2 for Xbox Live, Blue Burst features 33 new missions and is playable online-only. The graphics have been polished up since the console outings and you can now customise your avatars to your hearts content before setting out to crack heads. According to Yosuke Moriya, spokesperson for Sega of America, "We've saved the best for last; the PC version of Phantasy Star Online is the most graphically detailed, content rich version of our popular action-RPG." But then you'd expect him to say that wouldn't you. <<





MAIL HYPER!

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THE END IS NIGH!

The launch of the xbox 360 is very near, yet a major flag has gone up. Is Microsoft signalling the end of PC gaming, maybe. Ok, lets dig a little.

1. Firstly, the only reason the Microsoft xbox sold quite well, was because it was released with better hardware, due the earlier release of Playstationz. A game like "Fifa, or Total Overdose" would be a better purchase on Xbox, as it supplied better graphics, yet PS2 sales were always stronger than Xbox.

2. Segas Dreamcast launched before PS2, but quickly it was overtaken, and vanished without a trace. Ok, so if Microsoft launch first, when PS3 arrives, would it possibly be the better performing machine. If so, history suggests that people would then swing to PS3, especially

as its fan base is so strong, plus better hardware, why would Xbox still succeed. Ladies and Gentleman, here lies the answer.

With a new system costing the same as a top of the line video card for PC, yet console markets holding the greatest sales, wouldn't it make sense that ATI and Nvidia concentrate on the consoles. They have both challenged each other (ATI with Xbox, Nvidia with PS3), and why wouldn't they make upgrades available for consoles. Imagine, after the xbox's first year, when PS3 has better hardware, plus better sales, Xbox announce an upgrade which makes the Xbox360 more powerful, at only a small price (Say \$300). Therefore, Xbox launching early only capitalises on early sales, and Nvidia and ATI make alot more money, as console market is so massive.

Its an out there idea, just remember though, this already exists with PC's. As consoles become similar to a PC configuration, so do the possibilities. I know I'm not paying \$900 to upgrade my X800xt Pc card, I'll just buy a \$700 Xbox360, and wait for the \$300 upgrade in a year.

Interesting conspiracy theory but fundamentally flawed on so many levels it's hard to know where to start. PS2 sales for games are stronger than Xbox because the console has been around for longer and has a larger install base. The Dreamcast died because of lack of support, marketing and a high price, also due to the fact that it was markedly behind the PS2 in terms of technology. The

biggest problem you have is the understanding of consoles. PC gaming works with scaling - games need to work on a variety of systems with a number of different components and technological baselines. Consoles are all about standards. Every console is manufactured to be the same. They can all run all of the games for the system (the exception being games that will require a HDD but memory is vastly different to graphics processing in terms of complexity). Giving numerous baselines for a console not only makes it more difficult for developers to program for but also creates confusion in the marketplace. Considering that Nvidia and ATI make a shitload of money with PC videocards and Microsoft essentially own PC gaming due to their little Windows and Direct X technologies can you really see them deliberately killing PC gaming?

GRAMMATIC WAR ZONE

Cant think of anything funny to say (except wizzle wazzle) so ill go strait into the questions.

1. Why is it that the OFLC pulled San Andreas off the shelves cause of a bit rumpy pumpy, but Fahrenheit which has two sex scenes, one actually requiring you to control the "thrusts", is ok?

2. I heard that konami are releasing suikoden 1+2 on psp on 1 UMD, im very excited but im afraid it wont reach our shores, do you have any info?

3. Does the psp have regions (NTSC, PAL etc) like other consoles?

Thanks for your time, Glenn

1. *The reason that San Andreas was pulled from shelves was not strictly because it had sex in it but because this was not shown to the OFLC when the game was being rated. When having a game rated, the distributor must show the OFLC all content that may be controversial/raise the rating, no matter if it is hard to access or locked off and only accessible by cheat codes. As the Hot Coffee content was not shown to the OFLC at the time of the game being rated the OFLC had no choice but to remove the game from circulation as it was clearly in breach of the rules. We don't agree with what happened but the rules are the rules.*

2. *We haven't heard anything about it as yet but we wouldn't be at all surprised.*

3. *PSP games are region free but PSP movies are region coded. We're not sure about the validity of this but we've heard that there may be some problems playing wirelessly with two games from different regions though.*

TWO BY TWO, HANDS OF BLUE

Dammit I'm pissed off!!

Ok, now for the past few years I have been developing my own ideas for an animated TV series. I've created characters, written scripts and made a sinister enemy which I gave the rather clever name of 'The Universal Alliance'. Now you can only imagine what went through my head when, in Hyper 144, I read the article about the 'Serenity' competition and found out the name has already been used. 'Angry' does not even begin to describe how I feel. Yes, so all I've lost is the ability to use this name - the bulk of my remaining ideas are intact. That's not the point. Although creating my own TV show is currently just a pipe dream - even if it were to be developed it wouldn't be for years to come, the fact that I've spent ages working on all this only to lose something, really pisses me off. I really liked the name 'Universal Alliance' it was really unique and original. Now thanks to these Serenity F-wits, I can't use it.

I know that complaining in the pages of Hyper does little to help, I just needed to let off some steam and let everyone know that the yanks are stealing Australain ideas. Grrr.

How on earth can I protect my intellectual property before I intend to use it? (and thus gain copyright) For now I've lost the use of a name. How soon before all my other ideas get used up by someone else?

Pete The Completely And Utterly Pissed Off

Addendum

On a final note, despite your praises, I hope Serenity fails miserably.

Purely because they nicked one of my ideas. I'm also a little suspicious about whether or not other ideas of mine have found their way into the movie. Seven good guy characters? (according to the pic in Hyper) 4 guys and three girls? A brother and sister recruited early in the movie? Hmm. Far too similar to what I have.

Either this is one of the best hoax/troll posts we've ever seen or you've got a real bee in your bonnet about something really innocuous. The show Firefly, on which Serenity is based was first released in 2002 and was being worked on by creator Joss Whedon for years before that. If your logic of stealing ideas is true then it is just as likely you stole Whedon's as he stole yours. At any rate, just because someone used a name doesn't mean no one else can.

CAPTION THIS!

PART 71 WINNER

There's funny, and then there's **Bret Sammut's** entry this month. The best of a great bunch...



No matter how hard Scrapy tried, the shame of what he and Velma got up to would never wash away

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The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP
10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 2nd Oct 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	AFL Premiership 2005	Sports
2	⊕	Ricky Ponting Cricket 2005	Sports
3	⊕	FIFA 2006	Sports
4	▼	Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Adventure
5	▼	Burnout 4 Revenge	Racing
6	▼	SingStar Pop Bundle	All Other
7	⊕	Destroy All Humans	Adventure
8	⊕	Mortal Kombat Shaolin Mnk	Action
9	▼	Eyeto: Play 2 Pack Ptm	Compilation
10	⊕	Gran Turismo 4	Racing

TOP
10

Nintendo DS Games Over \$40

W/E 2nd Oct 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	Nintendogs Dachschund	Simulator
2	⊕	Nintendogs Lab & Friends	Simulator
3	⊕	Nintendogs Chihuahua	Simulator
4	▼	Super Mario 64	Adventure
5	▼	Madagascar	Adventure
6	◆	Yoshi Touch & Go	Action
7	▼	Pokémon Dash	Racing
8	⊕	Star Wars Ep 3 Revenge Sith	RPG
9	▲	NFS: Underground 2	Racing
10	▼	WarioWare: Touched!	Action

TOP
10

Game Cube Games Over \$50

W/E 2nd Oct 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Mario Party 6	Family
2	▲	Starfox Assault	Adventure
3	▲	Resident Evil 4 CE	Adventure
4	▼	Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Adventure
5	▲	Paper Mario 1000 Year Door	Adventure
6	◆	Mario Kart Double Dash	Racing
7	◆	Pokémon Colosseum	RPG
8	⊕	Mario Golf Toadstool Tour	Sports
9	▼	Metroid Prime 2: Echoes	Adventure
10	◆	Mario Power Tennis	Sports

TOP
10

Xbox Games Over \$50

W/E 2nd Oct 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	Ricky Ponting Cricket 2005	Sports
2	⊕	FIFA 2006	Sports
3	▼	Burnout 4 Revenge	Racing
4	▼	Halo 2	Action
5	⊕	Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	Action
6	▼	Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Adventure
7	⊕	Mortal Kombat Shaolin Mnk	Action
8	⊕	Far Cry Instincts	Action
9	▼	Cricket 2005	Sports
10	⊕	Brothers In Arms Rd Hill 30	Action

TOP
10

PC Games Over \$20

W/E 2nd Oct 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	The Sims 2: Nightlife	Strategy
2	▲	The Sims 2: University	Strategy
3	▼	The Sims 2	Strategy
4	▲	World Of Warcraft	Strategy
5	▲	Half Life 2	Action
6	▼	Battlefield 2	Action
7	▼	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
8	◆	The Sims Full House	Strategy
9	⊕	Empire Earth 2	Strategy
10	⊕	WarCraft 3	Strategy

TOP
10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30

W/E 4th Sept 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon Emerald	RPG
2	◆	Pokémon Fire Red	RPG
3	⊕	Charlie & Chocolate Factory	Adventure
4	◆	Madagascar	Adventure
5	▼	Pokémon Leaf Green	RPG
6	◆	Pokémon Sapphire	RPG
7	▼	Pokémon Ruby	RPG
8	▼	Fantastic Four	Adventure
9	▲	Star Wars Ep 3 Revenge Sith	RPG
10	▼	Lego Star Wars	Adventure

TOP
10

All Format Games Over \$50

W/E 2nd Oct 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	AFL Premiership 2005	PlayStation 2
2	▲	Nintendogs Dachschund	Nintendo DS
3	▲	Nintendogs Lab & Friends	Nintendo DS
4	▼	The Sims 2: Nightlife	PC/MAC
5	◆	Nintendogs Chihuahua	Nintendo DS
6	⊕	Ricky Ponting Cricket 2005	PlayStation 2
7	▼	Pokémon Emerald	GBA
8	⊕	FIFA 2006	PlayStation 2
9	⊕	Ricky Ponting Cricket 2005	Xbox
10	▼	NFS Underground Rivals	PSP

TOP
10

PlayStation Portable Games Over \$40

W/E 2nd Oct 2005
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	NFS Undergrnd Rivals	Racing
2	▼	Burnout Legends	Racing
3	◆	Untold Legends	RPG
4	◆	Midnight Club 3 DUB Ed	Racing
5	◆	V8 Supercars 2	Racing
6	◆	T Hawk Undergrnd 2 Remix	Sports
7	◆	Coded Arms	Action
8	▲	Medievil Ressurrection	Adventure
9	⊕	Spider-Man 2	Adventure
10	▼	Wipeout Pure	Racing

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



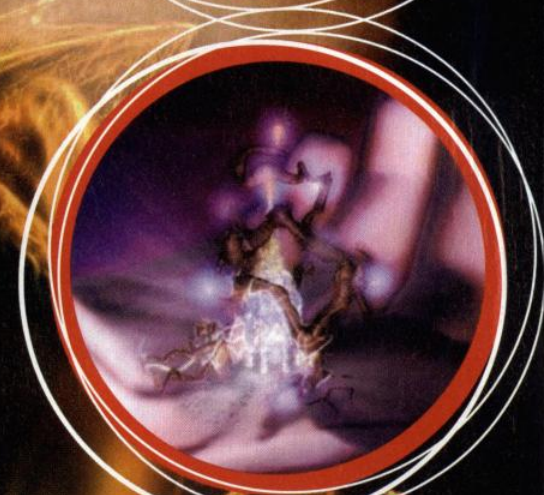
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Full SCIII review next issue.

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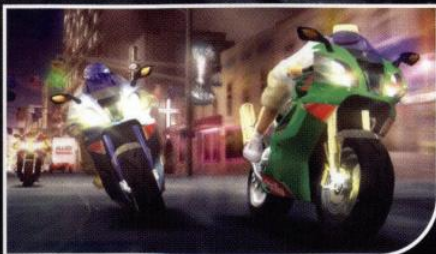
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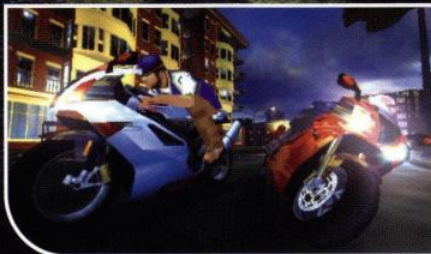


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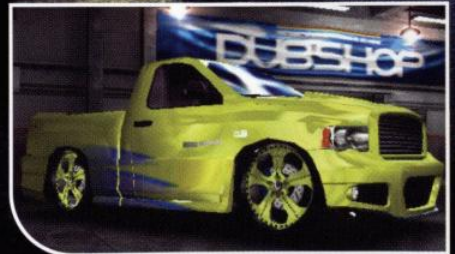
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