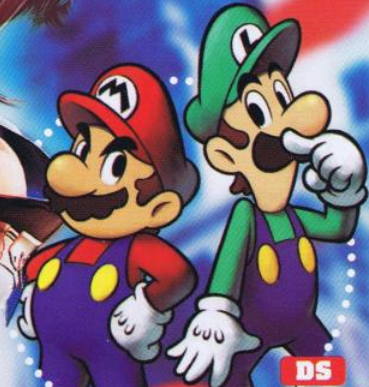


# HYPER

## Final Fantasy XII

Hands on with the most anticipated PS2 game of 2006



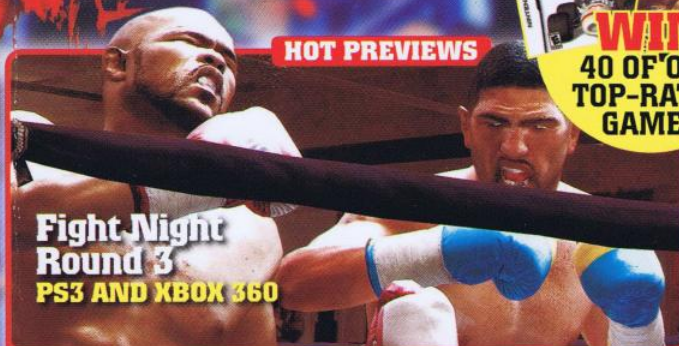
### DS MARIO & LUIGI

The Nintendo DS gets its first brilliant RPG!

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Fight Night  
Round 3  
PS3 AND XBOX 360

## THE MUST-PLAY GAMES OF 2006!



#### FEATURE

### THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO ANIME

Hovercars, giant robots and the apocalypse?

#### INTERVIEW THE OFLC SPEAK OUT!



Why there's no R classification for games

#### REVIEWED

### RIDGE RACER 6 XBOX 360

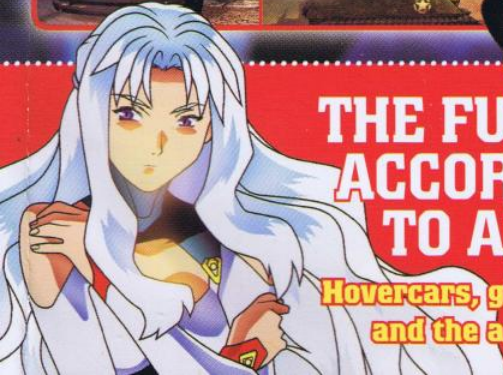


#### RETRO

### CLASSICS COMPILATION SHOWDOWN



We rip off the rose coloured glasses and rate the retro game compendiums!



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149 MARCH 2006  
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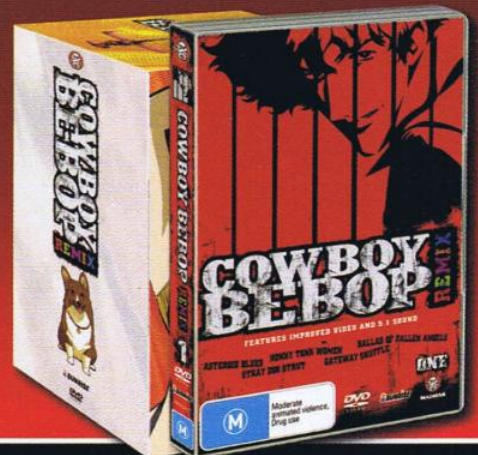
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...and all good anime DVD retailers

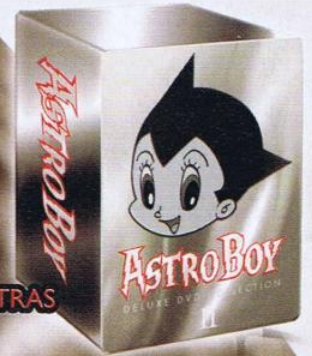
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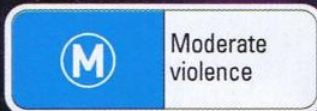
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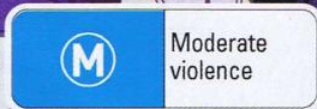
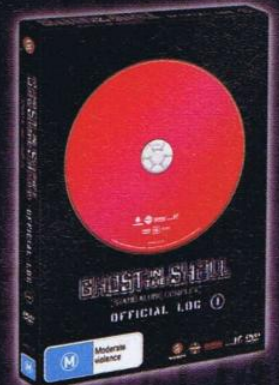
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## 14 FINAL FANTASY XII

Slowly but surely Final Fantasy XII is getting closer to release. Our hands on impressions...



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Win 40 of the greatest games from the last 12 months!

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We sit down with the OFLC to talk about Australia's videogame ratings system.

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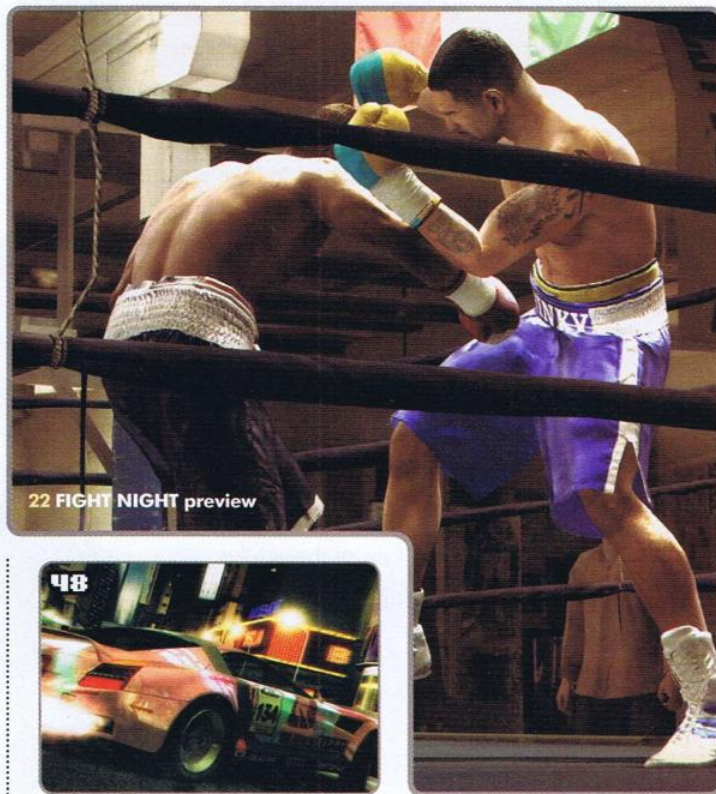
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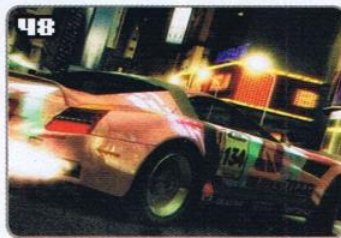
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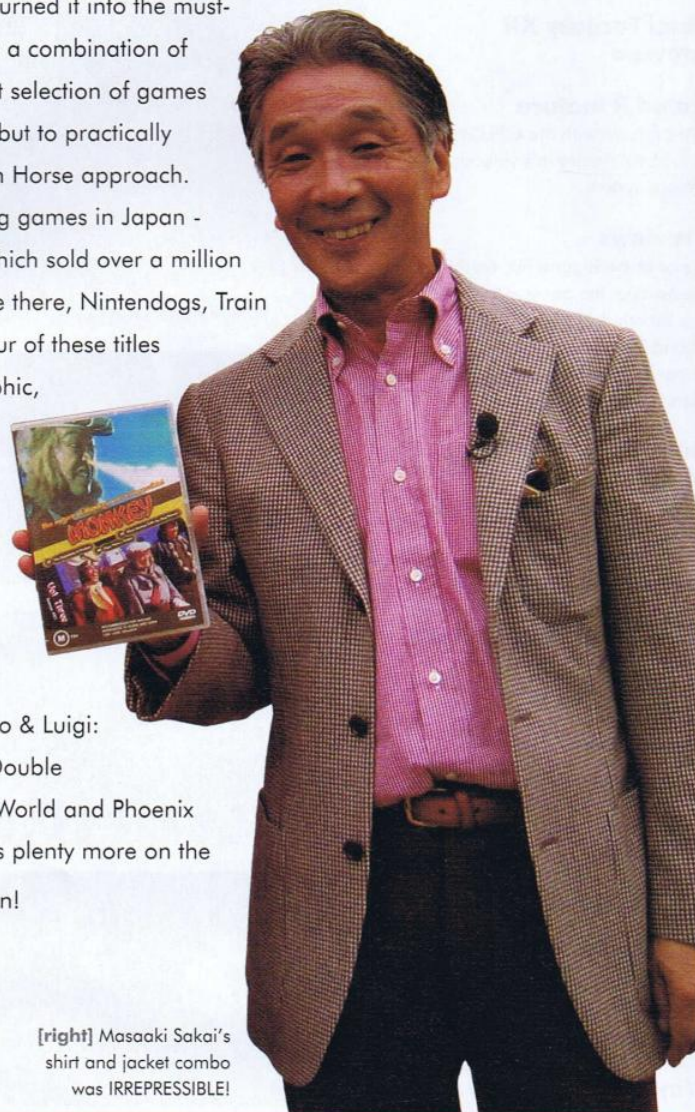
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# EDITORIAL

»» The Nintendo DS is going from strength to strength at the moment. Not only have Nintendo announced worldwide sales of over 13 million units in the handheld's first year on sale, but the DS has performed incredibly well over the holiday season. Well over a million units were sold in December in Japan alone. So many, in fact, that come New Year the system was sold out in many retailers in Japan. How have Nintendo managed to take a somewhat quirky piece of gaming hardware and turned it into the must-have handheld system? Through a combination of innovative hardware and a great selection of games that appeal not only to gamers, but to practically everyone. It's very much a Trojan Horse approach. Take a look at the four top selling games in Japan - Animal Crossing: Wild World, which sold over a million units in its first two weeks on sale there, Nintendogs, Train Your Brain and Brain Flex. All four of these titles appeal to a very wide demographic, bringing new people into the fold, who may then move on to play more traditional titles, of which Nintendo have a bundle. It's a smart approach, and at the moment there truly is something for everyone. In this issue alone we've reviewed Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time, Viewtiful Joe: Double Trouble, Animal Crossing: Wild World and Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney, and there's plenty more on the horizon. Next stop, the Revolution!



[right] Masaaki Sakai's shirt and jacket combo was IRREPRESSIBLE!

**Cam Shea** »» Editor

**Cam "sticky fingers" Shea** - Editor

1. Mario Kart DS - Nintendo DS  
**\*raises fist and shakes it at the sky whilst muttering about "damn blue shells" \***
2. Ridge Racer 6 - Xbox 360
3. Black - PS2
4. Ping Pong - South Coast
5. Amped 3 - Xbox 360

**Malcolm "green fingers" Campbell** - Art

1. SF3: 3rd Strike / SoulCalibur III - Xbox/PS2  
**"Custom arcade sticks rock."**
2. Getting Up - PS2
3. One Piece Grand Battle - PS2
4. Mario Kart DS - Nintendo DS
5. Ridge Racer 6 - Xbox 360

**Daniel "fingerbang" Wilks** - Deputy Editor

1. Full Auto - Xbox 360  
**"Things go boom"**
2. Condemned - Xbox 360
3. Key of Heaven - PSP
4. Magna Carta - PS2
5. Sword of Etheria - PS2

**Kosta "magic fingers" Andreadis** - Writer

1. Mario Kart DS - Nintendo DS  
**"Stay in 2nd, let blue shells take out Cam, then weasel way to victory. Yay!"**
2. Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance - GCN
3. Battlefield 2: Special Forces - PC
4. Farkal (Dice i.e. "Clickety Clickety Clack!")
5. Table Tennis - South Coast

# HYPER»»

## ISSUE 149

### MARCH 2006

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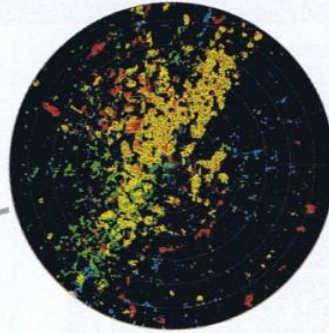


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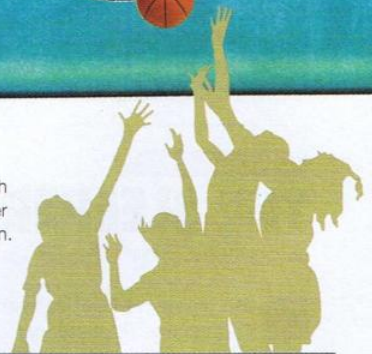


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# News

IN THE NEWS: Infinium Labs regret naming system Phantom / Hyper almost 150 issues old... but still younger than Malky



STREETIES!

## XBOX LIVE ARCADE GETS A CLASSIC

Capcom milk Street Fighter a little more

The Xbox 360's Xbox Live Arcade is looking more and more like a stroke of genius, enabling small developers to put together titles that consumers can get their hands on for cheap, as well as allowing classic games to be reborn. The latter is certainly the case with the announcement that Capcom's first title to be available on Live Arcade is the classic Street Fighter II Hyper Fighting. While we're excited about the offline modes and numerous achievements that will be built in, online play is going to be where this game is at, especially the new "Quarter Match" mode. In this, the aim is to recreate the experience of competing at one arcade cabinet online. Players will have a virtual quarter to buy into games and from

what we've been told, winners will stay on to face the next person in line, while a spectator system will allow other players to watch the match in progress. Throw in voice support and you've got all the ingredients that made Street Fighter II so compelling — great gameplay, liberal trash talking, and of course, and bragging rights as you decimate foe after foe. With the option to track stats as well, you'll be able to check out who the top players are, who has the most consecutive wins and who is the best with each character in the game. We suspect it won't be long before showdowns between the top players start being organised, taking the game to new heights. Hopefully the game will be available online at local launch.

COMMODORE

## THE SLEEPER MUST AWAKEN

Another handheld enters the fray

After many years of dormancy Commodore International, the company responsible for the wonderful Commodore 64, 128 and Amiga computers is back in business and is taking a step back into the gaming world, this time with a handheld device called the Commodore Navigator. At this stage the machine sounds pretty good. It will contain GPS and an internal 20GB HDD for multimedia capabilities as well as games and will ship with five games pre-installed. As it stands, another 90 games will be available from the Commodore web site. We have no idea if the



[above] Commodore fo' shizzay

games are just old Commodore and Amiga properties but it wouldn't surprise us. The machine will operate using Windows CE so expect to have Mame for Navigator available within seconds of the handheld's release.

NEXT-GEN

## LCD DOA?

Stick this on your screen and smoke it

Just when we thought that LCD or OLED was going to be the way of the future as far as screen technology is concerned, Toshiba have to come along and throw a spanner in the works with their new proprietary screen technology SED (Surface conducting Electron emitting Display). The problem as it currently stands is that LCD screens whilst being very sharp, stylish and slimline, can't compare to CRT technology in terms of their refresh rate (pixel response) and black contrast. SED should be able to offer end users the



best of both worlds. The sets use 6,220,800 electron transmitters (one for each colour, red, green and blue for each pixel) that give a response time of only one millisecond — equal, if not a little faster than that of a CRT. To make things even more impressive, the SED screens should have a contrast ratio of an astounding 100,000:1, giving them the most vibrant and realistic colours of any screen on the market. The current demo models only run with 10,000:1 but that should be fixed by the time the screens hit the shelves some time next year. Oh, and on a final note, we don't have any pricing yet but you can be sure that the new technology will weigh heavily on the back pocket, especially considering that the smallest screen will be an enormous 55 inches.

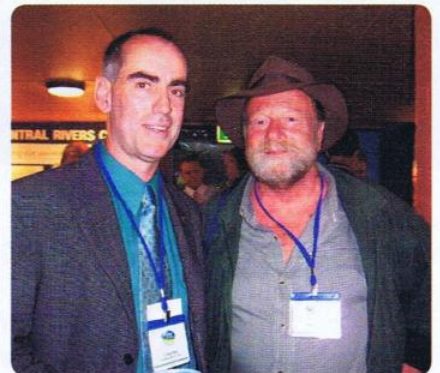


WITH A P

## JACK QUIXOTE

Blood boiling

Everyone's favourite crackpot is back tilting at windmills but his focus seems to have changed in the last few weeks. Gone are the days of Thompson lobbying against games and blaming them for the world's ills, Jack now has his added sights set on a far more insidious enemy, the Florida Bar Association. Jack's old website, Stopkill.com is no more; the domain name is up for grabs. Never fear, if you want crazy rants from the last true crackpot you can head over to his new site theflabar.org. He hasn't toned down his use of hyperbole either, as evidenced by such great quotes as "If you live in Florida, you have a problem worse than hurricanes. It is this: the state's legal profession is being run in such a

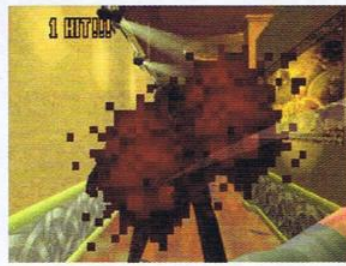


[above] Some guy with the same version of Jack Thompson

way that it just may one day flatten you worse than Hurricane Wilma, if it hasn't already. I want to make sure that doesn't happen" or "Space does not allow me to recount here how The Florida Bar has perverted its 'disciplinary' machinery to protect the porn industry and its unethical lawyers, but you can read all about it in Chapter 7 of my new Tyndale House book Out of Harm's Way. It will make your blood boil."

# COMING SOON!

**Resident Evil: Deadly Silence DS** • Developer: Capcom  
**The Hype:** Shrug off zombies with the touch screen!



# COMING SOON!

**Guilty Gear: Dust Strikers DS** • Developer: ARC System Works  
**The Hype:** Super Smash Bros meets Guilty Gear!



AARR

## A PARROT FOR EVERY VOTER

Those crazy Swedes

A group of Swedish Pirates (the annoying ones that prompted the government to put those bloody awful public service announcements in front of DVDs and movies, not the cool ones with eye patches, rum and buggery) have decided to run for government in the upcoming elections. The Pirate Party as it is so cleverly known has already accrued the 1500 signatures necessary to have the party ratified. Now they only need around 225,000 votes to get a seat. The first thing the Pirate Party plans to do is abolish copyright laws in the country and break any trade ties with the EU that would hinder that step. Although the party want to make entertainment free to the masses all they would really be doing is destroying the entertainment economy and trade of Sweden. After all, not too many European countries would be fond of the idea of not being paid for their exported entertainment. Their run for parliament brings up another long term question – if they're not successful could the signature sheet and party signup be used as a roll call for investigation of software and entertainment piracy?



## WINNERS HYPER 147

**SOULCALIBUR III**  
 See Mail Section page 92

### KING KONG WINNERS

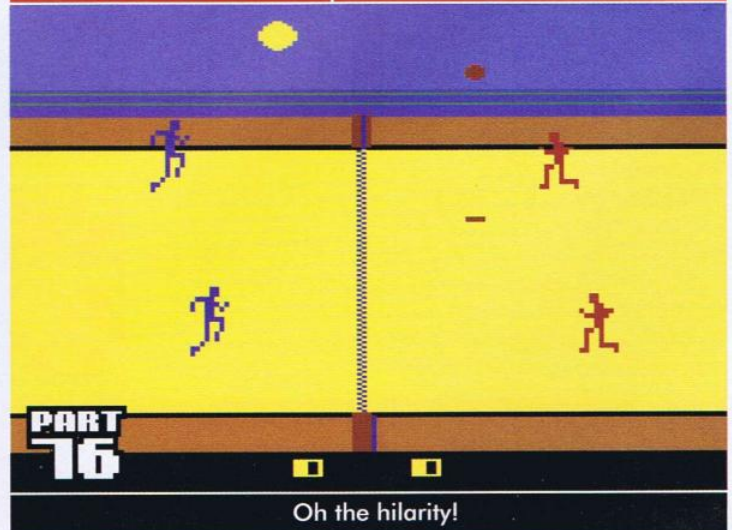
- Troy Dunn, Thornton, NSW
- Ralph McDonald, Waverley, NSW
- B. McManus, Forest Lake, QLD
- Robyn Grellet, Rhymney, VIC
- Roman Skuja, Cloncurry, QLD

### RUNNERS UP

- David Niemiecki, Taylors Lakes, VIC
- Luke Manuel, Port Pirie, SA
- Riley McGown, Lavington, NSW
- L. Turner, New Gisborne, VIC
- Ben Skevofilax, Werribee, VIC

## CAPTION THIS!

Come on, make us laugh. Just send your funny screen captions to us at [captionthis@next.com.au](mailto:captionthis@next.com.au) with **Caption This Part 76** in the subject line.



PART 76

Oh the hilarity!



[above] Type "Swedish pirate" into Google image and this is what you get...



# WIN HYPER'S TOP 40 GAMES OF 2005!

The 40 Games that scored 90% or higher in the last 12 months - just subscribe for your chance to win!

A game has to be very special to receive a score of 90% or higher in Hyper, and this month we're giving away 40 of them! Yes, every locally released game that has received a coveted Big Rubber Stamp of Approval in the last 13 issues! Just check out this list - you could win every single one of these games if you subscribe!

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- God of War (PS2)
- Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones (PS2)
- We Love Katamari (PS2)
- Pro Evolution Soccer 5 (PS2)
- Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (PS2)
- Tony Hawk's American Wasteland (PS2)
- Fight Night Round 2 (PS2)
- The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction (PS2)
- Fahrenheit (PS2)
- Tekken 5 (PS2)
- Gran Turismo 4 (PS2)
- Devil May Cry 3 (PS2)
- Mercenaries (PS2)
- GTA: Liberty City Stories (PSP)
- Wipeout Pure (PSP)
- Ridge Racer (PSP)
- Lumines (PSP)
- V8 Supercars 2 (PSP)
- Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition (Xbox)
- ESPN NFL 2K5 (Xbox)
- Psychonauts (Xbox)
- Forza Motorsport (Xbox)
- Battlefield 2: Modern Combat (Xbox)
- Total Overdose (Xbox)
- Ghost Recon 2: Summit Strike (Xbox)
- NBA 2K6 (Xbox)
- Advance Wars: Dual Strike (DS)
- Mario Kart DS (DS)
- Meteos (DS)
- The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap (GBA)
- Battlefield 2 (PC)
- The Movies (PC)
- Civilization 4 (PC)
- F.E.A.R. (PC)
- KOTOR II: The Sith Lords (PC)
- Chronicles of Riddick (PC)
- Darwinia (PC)
- Football Manager 2006 (PC)

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## DECEMBER WINNER

**HYPER 146: XBOX 360 AND PSP**

- Stephen Hall, Bonnet Bay, NSW



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**HYPER**

**HY0149**

# FINAL FANTASY

Systems: PS2 ■ Category: RPG ■ Players: 1 ■ Developer: Square Enix ■ Due: Late 2006

After nearly four years in development and rumours that the game may not be released in the current generation at all, Final Fantasy XII is beginning to leak out to journalists and the marketplace by way of a playable demo bundled with the latest in Square Enix's other highly popular RPG series Dragon Quest. After playing the demo to death and asking anyone who had a vague ability to answer our questions about the much anticipated game we have come to a definite conclusion — Final Fantasy XII is going to be pretty damn good, and it's going to piss off a number of established fans. In our eyes both of these are a potentially good thing. Being pretty damn good is obviously a good thing (hence the usage of good in the descriptor) but pissing off some of the established fan base is also a good thing because it means that Square Enix are mixing things up and changing the formula that has been simultaneously one of the greatest strengths and greatest downfalls of the franchise.

Even though the magic/skill/ability system may have changed between games, one of the constants in the Final Fantasy series, aside from whiny guys with emo hair and overly large weapons has been the combat system. The familiar feel of the combat menu — the game kindly pausing to allow you to scroll through the sub-menus to choose actions for your party members. The format by and large hasn't changed since the original Final Fantasy in any way aside from cosmetic. The combat system went hand in hand with the random battles and the comfortably lined up warriors facing off at each other. Final Fantasy XII is set to turn things on their head with the two new combat systems, cleverly entitled Wait mode and Active mode.

### HURRY UP AND WAIT

As the name Wait Mode so deviously suggests, players are given the opportunity to pause and issue commands to the characters in the party making this mode not too

much of a change from what has come before. Each character has a constantly filling action bar — when the bar reaches the end the character performs the action that they have queued. If no other actions are queued by the player the character will continue performing the last action or will revert to predetermined attacks or actions set by their AI such as healing or using basic attacks. What is most different about both Wait Mode and Active Mode is that the characters are constantly on the move, repositioning themselves (the player can reposition the main player character as well) for best angle of attack or to get out of the direct line of fire. Gone are the days of characters lining up passively waiting for their turn to attack. They now constantly move around, looking for the best time and angle of attack. Aside from giving the player the opportunity to move around the enemy to avoid attacks or get into range, the new combat system makes the combat, even in Wait Mode feel a good deal more dynamic hopefully doing away with the feeling that plagued most FF games that you're more of a passive observer in most fights rather than an active combatant. Even though there's not a huge amount of scope as far as tactical positioning goes, some is still a hell of a lot better than none.

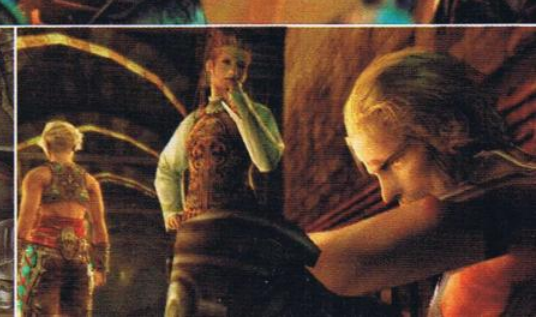
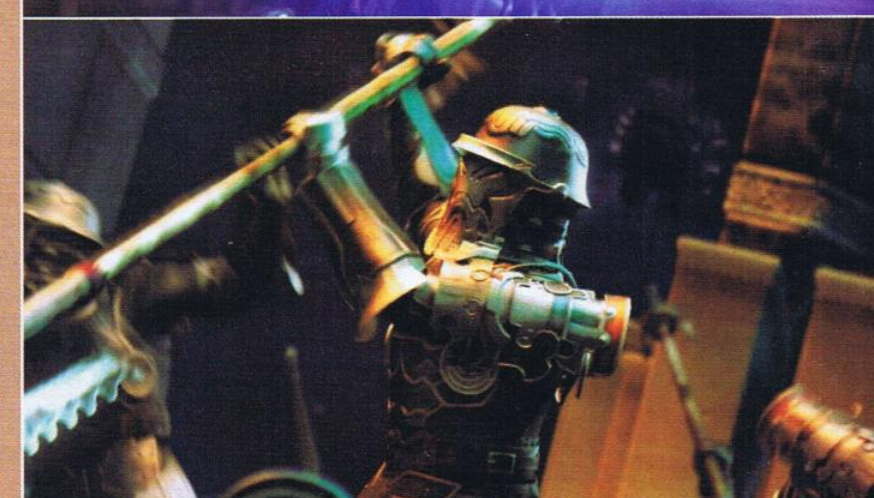
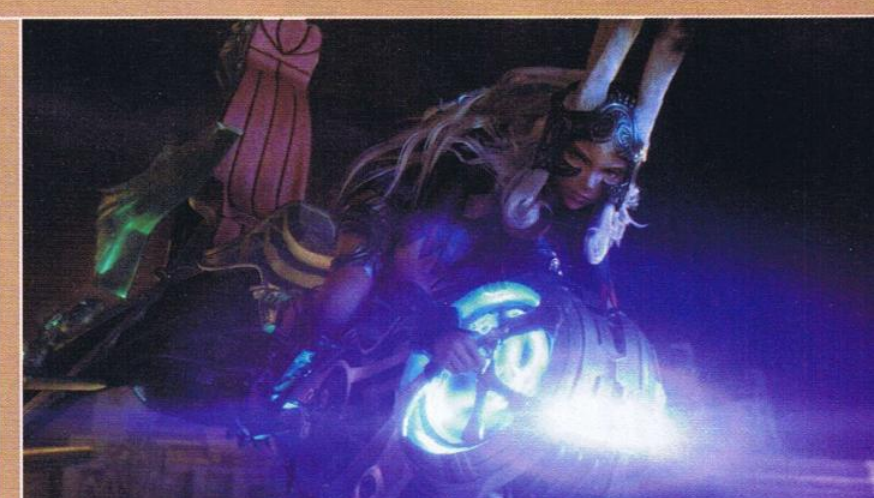
Active Mode is much like Wait Mode in all but one major way; the game does not pause when you open a menu to choose an action or attack. Players are still able to issue commands to AI characters in this mode but the inability to take time to decide on tactics more often than not means that you only have time to make sure your main character is attacking, healing and generally

## FINAL FANTASY XII IS GOING TO BE PRETTY DAMN GOOD, AND IT'S GOING TO PISS OFF A NUMBER OF ESTABLISHED FANS



# XII









being useful. It is this more action based approach to the game that is likely to disturb some long term Final Fantasy players as it does quite radically change the way in which you approach the game.

### NOT SO RANDOM

Going hand in hand with the new approach to combat is the new approach Final Fantasy XII takes towards viewing the world. When moving around the world the game follows the familiar third person perspective of the last few games but with one slight difference; players at all times can see the encounters in their surrounding area. The right thumbstick gives the player control over the camera so you can always get the best view of the action or area. Not only does this mean the end of random encounters (unless you come across a stealthy enemy — we have no evidence of this so far but we're sure there will be some), the demo hints that the enemies may have their own racial AI and animosities. In the Wait Mode demo set in an area called the Phon Coast, the player is charged with killing a number of Sleipnirs (cranky horsey things) and Mandragoras (tiny cranky things) before eventually killing the dreaded Rockeater (a big cranky T-Rex looking thing). This may not sound all that interesting and by and large simply killing stuff is a tad on the dull side but what is truly interesting about this level of the demo is the fact that the Mandragoras hate the Sleipnirs and will attack them on sight. Throughout the Phon Coast level it was possible to sit back and wait for a wandering Mandragora to attack a Sleipnir and wait for them to weaken each other before attacking and finishing them both off. This active enemy AI and ability to see enemies in the surrounding area should make for some radical changes in Final Fantasy as player will not only be able to avoid unnecessary conflicts but actually choose to time their attack for the best advantage.

### THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

Schools of magic have also been refined down to a more logical core. Black magic involves doing damage to an enemy or enemies, White magic includes all healing and restorative magic and the new Green magic seems to encompass all party buffs and a number of enemy debuffs. The more streamlined magic system works very well in the hectic environment of Active mode, making it both easy and intuitive to find the right spell in only a short period of time. A more radical departure from the magic system of

the past is the new way summons work. When a player summons one of the powerful monsters that can fight by their side, the other two characters in the three man party are replaced, leaving the summoning character around to continue to fight, though in reality players will probably take more of a babysitting role, making sure the summon is kept healed whilst it dishes out the big damage. Summons are capable of basic attacks, a few spell and a massive special attack. The basic attacks and spells work much like with normal characters, processing when the action bar is full. The special attack on the other hand does massive damage but also dismisses the creature, bringing back the two party members to complete the battle if anything has the bad taste to survive. Instead of being dismissed at the end of a fight, summons now work on a time system so it's possible to finish a battle and still have a summoned creature in the party for the next battle.

Just about the only thing that really hasn't changed with the latest incarnation of Final Fantasy is the characters. Sure, their names may be different but they do have a certain resemblance to characters from past games. So far we've been introduced to; Vaan, FFXII's main character, a girly-boy with floppy hair, an improbably large sword and atrocious fashion sense; Penelo, a cute and innocent blonde girl with an overriding sense of wonderment that hopefully won't prompt us to want to punch her in the face; Basch, a gruff but kindly scruffy looking knight like character who prefers to let his weapon do the talking rather than reveal that he's actually a nice person; Ashe, a young and driven warrior woman with a sword bigger than Vaans (or "she" could be the most incredibly girly man ever in a series of games known for their floppy haired girly man characters); Fran, a bunny-woman warrior mystic and inevitable feature of a hell of a lot of smutty fan art and slash fiction and finally Balthier, the suave ladies man with a gun — sure, he's no vampire but he'll probably be as popular.

### ZEPPELINS AND EXPLOSIONS

As has become synonymous with the Final Fantasy series, the presentation of the current game is breathtaking. The characters are finely detailed — more so than ever before — and the monsters still have their quirky charms, especially the boss monster on the Active mode section, the unfortunately named "Ring Wyrm", hopefully saddled with the title



## AS HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH THE FINAL FANTASY SERIES THE PRESENTATION OF THE CURRENT GAME IS BREATHTAKING

due to the large ring around its neck rather than the unfortunate skin blemishes it can cause. Most impressive of all is the opening FMV which vaguely introduces players to the world, characters and teases at the plot that will involve some sky pirates, political backstabbing, some other pirates who may or may not be as good as the first lot of pirates, betrayal and explosions.

The combat system may be different and the overall feel of the game may be a radical departure from what players have come to expect from Final Fantasy, playing more like an offline version of Final Fantasy XI combined with some Final Fantasy Tactics than a traditional Final Fantasy game but there's something unmistakably Final Fantasy about the whole thing; aside from the fact that I've just used the words Final Fantasy six times in one sentence. Maybe it's the characters of dubious gender fighting against massive odds with improbably large weapons. Maybe it's the return of familiar enemies like Bombs and the joy you get when hitting them with a Blizzara. Maybe it's the amazing design and sweeping score. Who knows? All we can say is that the game is looking great, but unless you speak Japanese you'll probably have to wait until the end of 2006 to get your hands on an English language copy. <<<



# RATED

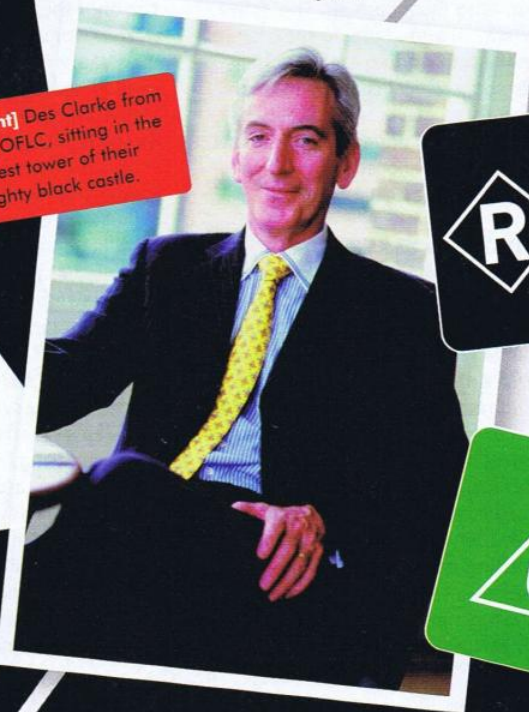
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leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude. Six words that'll ignite the fury of hell within you. "Why," you demand to know, "did the successor to such a well-respected series get banned?" Why, indeed? Does the government just have it in for us gamers? Is a shadowy organisation preventing resuscitation of the adventure genre? Or might it have been that as a piece of software, it was actually pretty crapzilla? Actually, it was none of these things, but, by all means, believe them if they make you a better person.

### EXTRA GORY

Truth is that the Office of Film and Literature Classification deemed the game's content even more inappropriate than that which fits into the 'MA15+' rating (currently the most severe classification a game can receive in this country). And it isn't the first time, either. Several games have been banned in the last few years, including Narc and an extra-gory version of The Punisher. Needless to say, these decisions sure didn't sit well with more than one gamer. Some have gone so far as to paint the OFLC as a vindictive über-censor, heartlessly preventing us from enjoying games that journeyed through the classification process in many other countries utterly unscathed.

[right] Des Clarke from the OFLC, sitting in the tallest tower of their mighty black castle.



## Alexander James Burke

Others are just annoyed that they're going to have to wait it out while their online-ordered copy of Magna Cum Laude slowly squeezes through the intestinal US Postal System.

Is the OFLC - the small, Sydney-based group of lawyers, community radio station managers, accountants, journalists, and educators - really the fascistic Ministry of Truth that so many gamers claim it is? Well, it might help to first understand how exactly a game gets the ratings-system stamp of approval. Des Clarke, Director of the Classification Board, explains: "Depending upon the type of application we get, essentially, we have what we call the 'authorised assessors' scheme in place. What we do is we train people in each company who are authorised by us to assess a game and make a recommendation as to its likely rating - at 'G', 'PG', and 'M'. They can't make a recommendation for a game that's likely to be 'MA15+', but they can, in their application, say 'it's likely to be MA', and indicate the nature of any higher-level content that might influence the rating of the game."

"So, essentially, those authorised assessors are trained each year - they come in yearly for 'refresher' training - and they make recommendations to us. We make an assessment of their report, and if their reports are good and comprehensive - particularly dealing with any contentious material, i.e. language, violence, sex, nudity, et cetera - we'll look at the game."

It's at this point that the game will tumble into its native classification, and people of a certain age and up can happily burn holes in their wallets to buy it. But what actually suits each rating? "Basically," Clarke answers, "the content in each category is defined by the 'impact test'. So, for instance, at 'G', the content should be very mild only. And when we say 'very mild', we mean very mild, because it's the sort of thing to which kids have unrestricted access. Mind you, it's not necessarily a category for children. So we have the impact test going through a hierarchy - at 'G', it's very mild; at 'PG', it's mild content; at 'M', it's moderate content; and at 'MA', it's strong content. It's simply a hierarchy. So, in an 'M', you can

have more graphic violence and sex, whereas in a 'G', you can't have any."

You may be interested to know that, despite having our Ninja Bloodbath III Ultra-Slam Subsistences and WarKill Civilizations 2150s frequently gracing the covers of videogames magazines, most of the content that gets blasted off to the Classification Board is actually, as Clarke put it, "very mild." "The most frequent classification is 'G,'" he reveals. "The next is 'PG', then 'M'... It actually follows the ratings. And 'MA15+', if you look at the figures, we had in 2003-4, the total was 654 classifications, and there were 59 'MA' games, 275 were 'G', so

that's a pretty telling statistic. The majority of games are unrestricted."

### TAKING THE SWEARS ONLINE

In this age of wireless broadband, Fatalitty, and Leeroy Jenkins, though, even the cutest powdery-puff of a game can be rude. Why? They can have online components. So, how does that sit with the OFLC? "If the material is downloaded online," Clarke states, "it doesn't change the rating. We can rate online games, and some companies do have them rated. But others don't because they're not sold in any physical form. If you have to buy an access card or anything here, then yes, it has to be rated. "Online play in itself doesn't affect the rating of the game. It's the form

### THE FIGURES

- 654 games were classified in the 2003-2004 period.
- 750 games were classified in the 2004-2005 period. Clarke says there's been a "gradual increase" in game submissions.
- 18 games have been refused classification since the OFLC began keeping electronic records (keep in mind that many of these have been re-submitted and classified without offensive content). They are Billiardlist, Pocket Gal 2, The Roberta Williams Anthology, Postal, TLC, Pro Surf Executive, GTA III, BMX XXX, The Getaway, Silverball Product Version 8, I Touch, Shellshock Nam '67, Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude, Singles: Flirt Up Your Life, The Punisher, Narc, Postal 2: Share The Pain, and 50 Cent: Bulletproof. Well, we certainly missed out on some classics, didn't we?
- 90 percent of Australia is aware of and understands the current ratings system, according to OFLC research.



[left] NARC contained elements of drug use  
[below] The Punisher living up to his legend



[right] Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude - arse in every way

"Any game can be tampered with. The issue for us is whether the modified material is inappropriate or not."



PERSONAL OPINION

Being the director of the Classification Board can't be much fun. Given that the board members have to sift through every videogame looking for classification, they're probably going to see something they don't like. Clarke explains, however, that this never affects a game's rating. "I don't give personal opinion. We can't work like that. The board is appointed to broadly represent the Australian community. And that community is very diverse. So we have a range of views about the material. The one thing that's refreshing about the board is that you never know which way they're going to jump to a classification. When we all meet together, we express our individual views. We're not all meeting all the time. So when we make decisions, as a small group or individually, they have to reflect the range of views on the board."

"Therefore, a decision is often made not on what I think individually; it's about how the group would react to that content. Yeah, sometimes you might find something truly revolting, but the board says it fits into category, and it's acceptable, so we have to make decisions on that basis. We are restricted in our decision-making by the tools we're given. The Classification Guidelines, the Classification Code, and the Classification Act tell us the framework in which we have to make decisions."

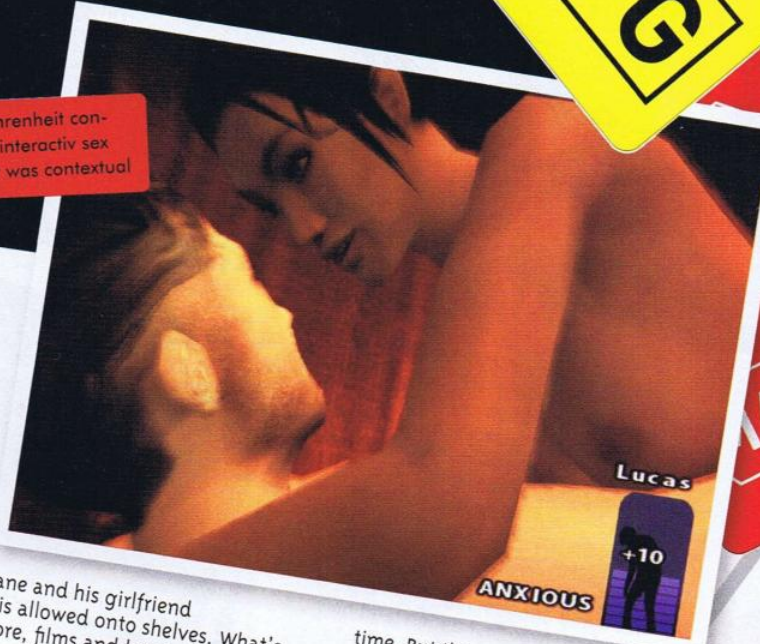
in which you buy it that's rated. Also, we don't have any control over modifications. Any game can be tampered with. The issue for us is not whether the modified material is inappropriate or not, it's that, if a game is changed and is still being sold in that changed form, it needs to be reclassified. If the game is modified somewhere and is not for sale, then we have no control over it whatsoever. But any game that has been sold that has been modified has to be classified again."

The biggest example of this occurred earlier this year, when some Dutch guy unlocked something very hot and coffee-like within the recesses of Rockstar's industrial-strength press-magnet, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas. The racy and enjoyed the world over by lonely masturbators managed to shift San Andreas out of its 'MA' rating. The result? It was banned in the land of Oz.

"In the legislation," Clarke notes, "the penalty if you don't advise us of all the content in a game is that classification is revoked. So the board, in this case, decided that there was content we hadn't been told about, so, therefore, we revoked classification, and the game was unclassified. Their choice was to either resubmit the game, advising us of the content, and risk being refused classification, or remove the hidden content — which was never meant to be seen, anyway — and resubmit it then. They needed to get it without the hidden content."

One question that has been lingering around like a stench since the San Andreas fiasco is why the game was banned for Hot Coffee, when something like Fahrenheit — which contains a scene of rumpy-pumpy between Lucas

[right] Fahrenheit contained an interactive sex scene that was contextual



Kane and his girlfriend — is allowed onto shelves. What's more, films and books generate income each day on our shores despite containing content far more severe than anything seen in Rockstar's bastard stepchild. According to Clarke and the OFLC, the distinction comes down to how you experience the material. "The issue of interactivity," Clarke asserts, "whether it's in a film or a game, is an important issue. In our guidelines, you'll find, 'impact may be higher where a scene encourages the use of incentives and rewards.' You see there that, once you have sex in a game and it has a reward, we look on that more strictly than if it were just having sex. The same applies for violence."

If this is the case, however, then why do so many shooters — which, when you ruthlessly slaughter baddies, often reward you with ammunition, medical gear, or

time. But the improvement in graphics technology would make the previous games look comedic, because they're so old-fashioned. If you look at the videogame ratings overseas, though, you can see cultural differences. The main difference comes where there's an 'R' rating — some games that are refused here would achieve an 'R' rating in those environments. The Europeans would assert that they're less tolerant of violence and more tolerant of sex. But that's difficult to demonstrate. Whereas there are some countries that say, 'I'm not going to have violent games, full stop.' And then there are others that are totally unregulated, and they say, 'A game is a game. Don't worry about it.'"

THE BIG ONE

Clarke considers the OFLC system one of the more highly-regulated ones, but also thinks it's very successful. "I don't think that causes people a lot of grief," he states, "because

"Once you have sex in a game and it has a reward, we look on that more strictly than if it were just having sex. The same applies for violence."

cash — freely float around the local EB? Given that DOOM was once considered to be le plus mauvais des maux du monde, surely our culture has just become so desensitized to violence that sex is an easier target? Clarke disagrees. "It's not a cultural shift," he argues, "but a technology shift. A game rated higher ten years ago might get a lower rating now because the graphics were much more clunky, and so they appeared high in intensity at that

the three initial ratings — 'G', 'PG', and 'M' — are not restricted. They're advisory. This works well. Our research indicates that people have a high awareness of the ratings system in Australia. We moved away from the old computer game markings to the common markings because the film markings are widely understood. Even kids understand the system and use it. There's wide public acceptance and recognition. And compared to other jurisdictions, we fare very well,

[right] Singles Flirt Up Your Life was all about the virtual boobies, yet was utterly forgettable



**R** 18+

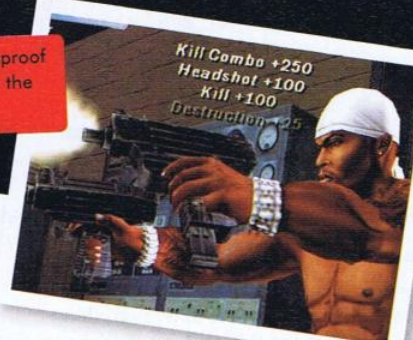
**MA** 15+

**PG**

15+

15+

[right] 50 Cent Bulletproof was almost as bad as the fiddy movie...



### ARTISTIC MERIT

Some gamers have alleged that the reason we still don't have a nice, black 'R18+' for our games is that the OFLC still doesn't take gaming seriously; that it's still just for kids. Clarke hopes he can clear the air by declaring that artistic merit does factor into the rating of a game – albeit in a small way – just as it does with other media. "I think that many entertainment products have artistic merit, as do many games. But artistic merit, in terms of what we do, is only one small part of our considerations. We look at the artistic and scientific merits, but that's a small consideration. We won't say, 'yes, games should be considered art', but artistic merit is certainly part of the criteria in our classification of all products, including games."

in some respects because of the restriction at 'MA'. And in general, we enjoy a good relationship with the videogames industry, the people who manufacture the problems, and the gaming media. Sometimes, we get negative commentary about individual games, particularly those that are refused classification. And there's negative comment about not having an 'R' classification."

It's actually that 'R' rating – or lack thereof – which has stirred up so much anger within the voraciously bubbling cauldron that is the Australian gaming community. Why? Well, as was the case with Magna Cum Laude, if a game is deemed to be 'R18+' and it can't be sold in stores. And whilst the process hasn't actually denied us anything particularly memorable – if you wanted Singles: Flirt Up Your Life so badly, then I seriously recommend that you drop this magazine and find yourself a spouse – it's still aroused Orwellian feelings

in gamers who feel that someone, somewhere, is stopping them from playing what they want. Clarke reports that

it's simpler than this: the OFLC is looking out for the kids, at least for now. "It's a decision that's made by ministers responsible for censorship in all territories of the Commonwealth," he affirms. "They are concerned that adult games may get into the hands of children in an unsupervised environment. The reason they're concerned is that the research into the effects of violence in games on young people make them more violent; some says it doesn't. Their concern is that it is inconclusive, so the level of protection should be higher."

That said, he's certainly aware of the opposing argument. "There's a substantial amount of correspondence from gamers who say there should be an 'R' rating for games. And the IEAA make representations to ministers and ourselves on a regular basis as to why there should be an 'R' rating, and the ministers hear them, and when they consider the issue, they'll no doubt take that into their thinking."

So, does this mean that there may well be an 'R' rating in the near future? Sadly, Clarke won't comment.

Then again, even if the big 'R' never surfaces, it's not that difficult to get yourself a banned game. Clarke is completely aware of this and doesn't see it as much of a problem (provided you're of age). "The thing is," he says, "the classifications are not there to prevent people from purchasing

things overseas. They're there to inform parents, mostly, as to what they're likely to find in a product that they're buying, probably, for their kids. So, therefore, this idea of getting around the ratings system is a bit strange, because that's not what it's all about. It's about providing a service to the community to advise them as to the level of content they're likely to encounter in a product that they might be buying for their children or that their community service we're providing, which is why it's somewhat nonsensical to say, 'Oh, we got around the ratings system.'"

### THE REVIEW BOARD

From a publisher's standpoint, however, having your game banned is going to be problematic. So what can you do? Well, you can either cut out the offensive stuff or make an appeal. Clarke recounts the procedure: "It's a formal process. There's a separate board – the Classification Review Board. It's a statutory board, like the Classification Board, and it's appointed by the Governor General. It's part-time: it meets on application, so it only meets when there's something to review. They don't look at the board's decision; they look at the material and make a new decision. Their new decision may be the same; it may go higher or lower. It's totally independent from us, and then their decision prevails."

What's more, none of this takes too much time. "We have

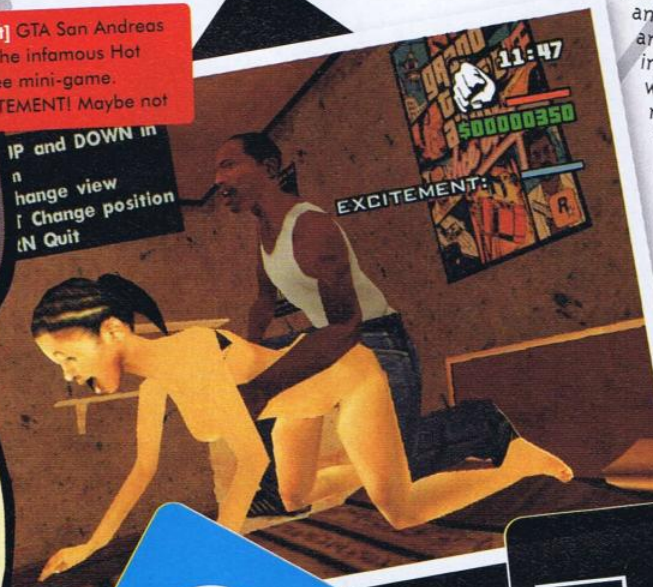
a statutory time limit of 20 days," Clarke adds, "so it has to be done within 20 days. Some companies want a quick decision, so they pay a premium and get a decision within five days, but normally, a week to two weeks is the usual amount of time."

In this way, it's easy to see that getting your game approved for sale here isn't the hideously stifling process that OFLC detractors have made it out to be. In fact, if Rockstar had collectively taken one big cold shower and never done up about it when it was ratings time – there wouldn't have been such a mess surrounding the game. Still unconvinced? Aching all over for the day you'll see the 'R18+'-rated Old Lady Slaughterer sitting inconspicuously on store shelves? Don't hold your breath. While there's a logical chance that, one day, the lack of an 'R' rating may deny us an amazing, electrifying, and unforgettable work of interactive art, I seriously wouldn't count on it. (It'll more likely be Postal 3.) There's an astonishing amount of superlative gaming already available to you

– and you can get the banned stuff online if you really need it – so there's no real point going on about missing out on Magna Cum Laude. It wasn't that good, anyway. ☹

[right] GTA San Andreas and the infamous Hot Coffee mini-game. EXCITEMENT! Maybe not

IP and DOWN in n change view f Change position (N Quit



**M**

**X** 18+

**PG**

**G**

**MA**

**MA**

# FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Systems: **PS2, PS3, PSP, Xbox, Xbox 360** ■ Category: **Boxing** ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Developer: **EA Chicago** ■ Due: **2006**

▶▶ Here at Hyper we're not exactly boxing fanatics. In fact, by and large we don't have much interest in the sport at all. It's a testament then, to the playability of the Fight Night games that we've played the hell out of the first two and are eagerly anticipating the arrival of Fight Night Round 3. Of course, it's not just gameplay that has us drooling, it's the fact that — in addition to PS2 and Xbox — the new game is coming to both PS3 and Xbox 360.

## VISUAL KO

Simply put, you'll be floored by how detailed this game is on next gen. We'd already seen the PS3 version as a tech demo at E3, and now we've had the chance to check out the game running on Xbox 360 as well, and we're mighty impressed. While gameplay is incredibly important, with a sport like boxing the action is so visceral that great visuals can really serve the gameplay, and that's exactly what EA are doing

with this one. The character models are perhaps the most impressive in any game to date. Everything from the skin textures through to the facial expressions and real-time deformation scream NEXT GEN!

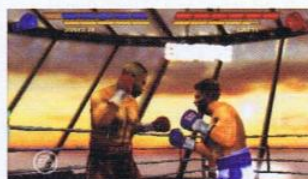
The camera perspective sits even closer to the action now, giving you the chance to really see every detail of the fight. You'll see sweat fly, you'll see bruises swell and cuts open, and you'll be able to tell who has control of the fight just by reading each fighter's facial expression and body language. In fact, EA have even dropped the HUD for the next gen editions, so no more blue or red bars. The idea is that you'll be able to tell how your fighter is faring instinctively; just by watching what's happening. The best part is that it actually seems to work. There's a huge difference between a fighter that's determined and on the offensive and one who's a little uncertain on his feet after getting clocked by a vicious

haymaker. And there's something really special about seeing fear in your opponent's eyes.

Of course, the series isn't just receiving a visual upgrade. EA Chicago have tweaked the gameplay so that you're forced to focus on the fundamentals a little more. You'll still be using the right analogue stick for various punches, which is

definitely the most intuitive system for a boxing game to date, but this time the haymaker is far less effective. To compensate, EA are introducing a devastating new punch that sees you draw back even further on the right analogue stick than you would for a haymaker. When you flow through it's a very powerful, but very avoidable punch.

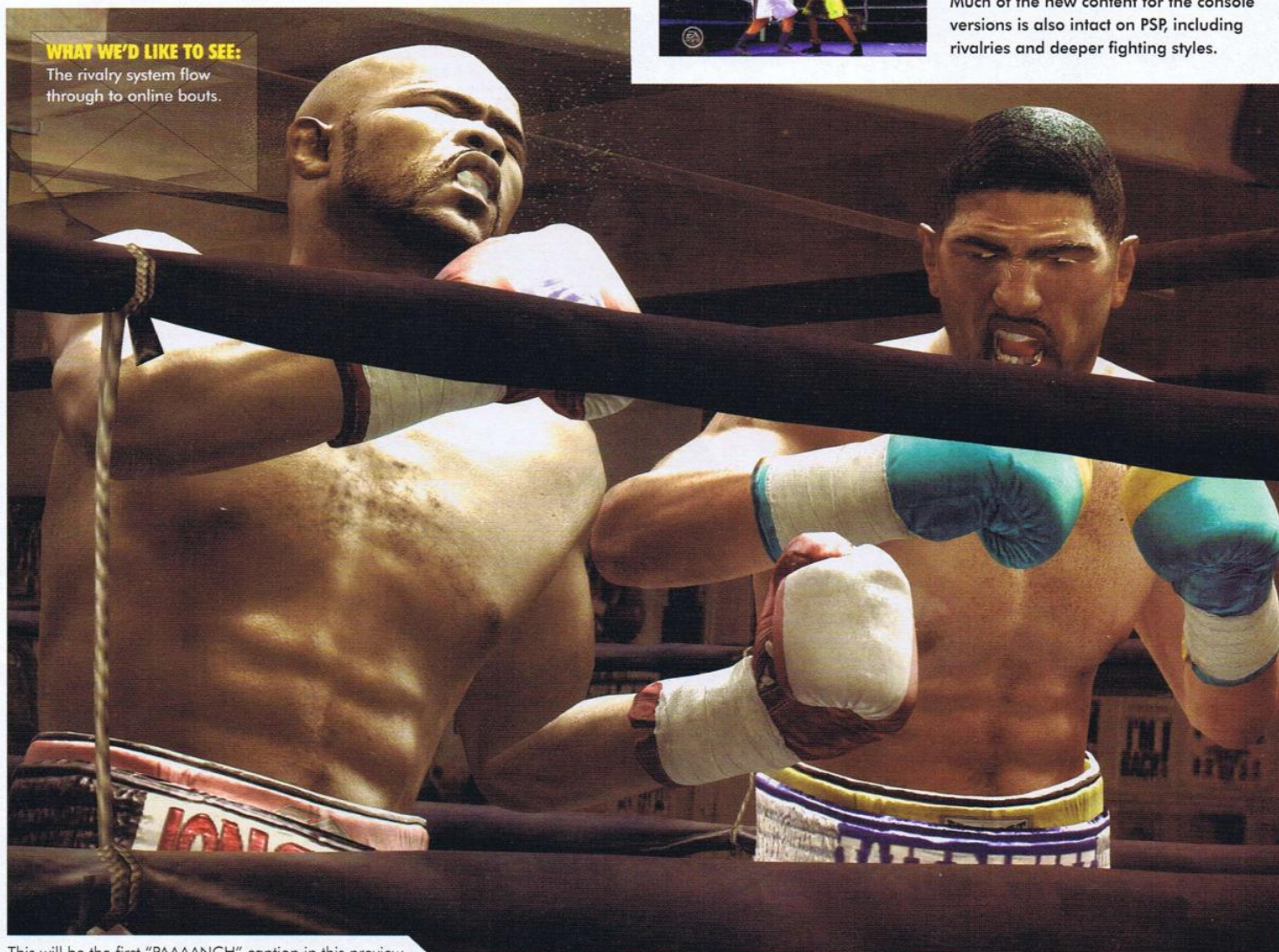
## EVERYTHING FROM THE SKIN TEXTURES THROUGH TO THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND REAL-TIME DEFORMATION SCREAM NEXT GEN!



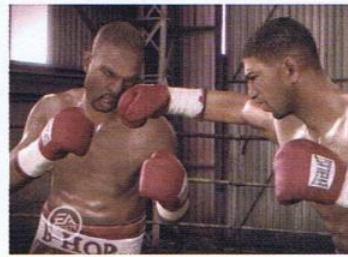
**PSP LOVIN'** Fight Night Round 3 is also winging its way to PSP and is looking pretty solid. Obviously with only the one analogue stick punches are now assigned to the face buttons, but the core gameplay is very much there, with full control over left and right straight shots and hooks via each button, while uppercuts and haymakers are thrown by multiple button presses and button holds respectively. Dodging and blocking is through the shoulder buttons. Much of the new content for the console versions is also intact on PSP, including rivalries and deeper fighting styles.

### WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

The rivalry system flow through to online bouts.



This will be the first "PAAAAANCH" caption in this preview



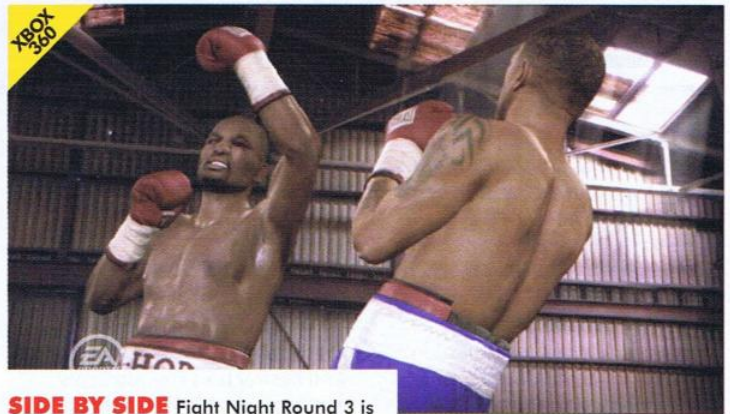
If you connect, you'll either floor your opponent or at least send them into a catatonic state where the viewpoint switches to first person and all they can do for a short period is fend off your attacks.

Another more fundamental change to the series is the inclusion of a more involved career mode. You'll no longer just work your way up the rankings in a vacuum — this game will have a bit more of the egos and the personality that is part and parcel of the sport. What this means for the player is the introduction of rivalries. Other boxers will grow to fervently hate you, so when you go up against them it will be spirited and brutal. Of course, it's not just a rivalry in the ring — you can even talk smack

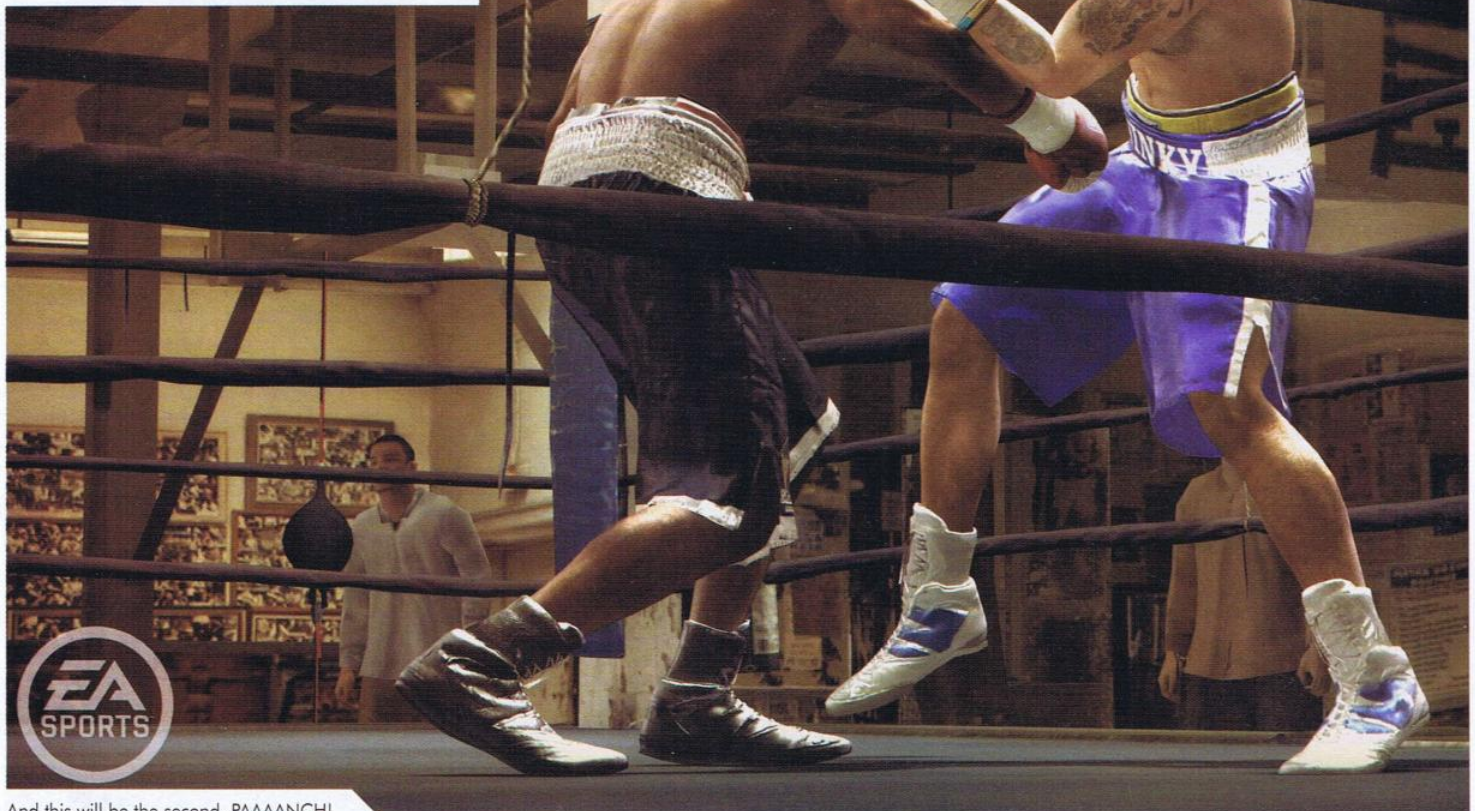
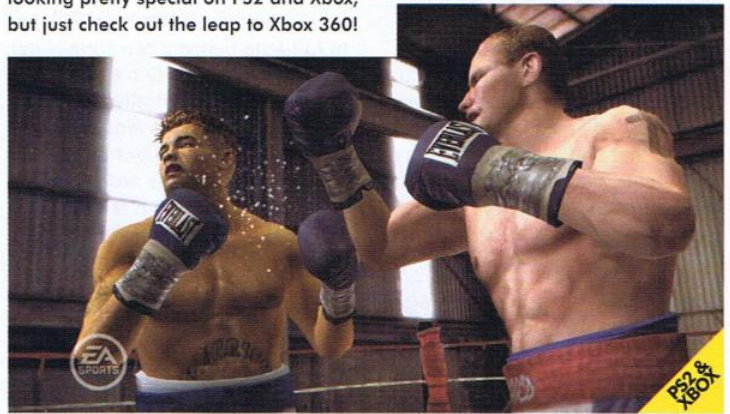
and start a punch up during press conferences and weigh-ins, and other boxers can denounce you to the world.

EA are also giving the player more options in terms of fighting style. You will now be able to determine the way you move, punch and block, all of which will then flow through to strengths and weaknesses in the ring. It should make for a more complex game that requires more strategy on the part of the player — both in offence and defence.

Fight Night is rapidly becoming one of EA's signature series' and it's not hard to see why. Round 3 may be looking amazing on next gen, but you can bet that it's going to be fantastic on Xbox and PS2 as well. Bring it on! <<<



**SIDE BY SIDE** Fight Night Round 3 is looking pretty special on PS2 and Xbox, but just check out the leap to Xbox 360!



And this will be the second. PAAAANCHI!

# FULL AUTO

Systems: **Xbox 360** ■ Category: **Car combat** ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Developer: **Pseudo Interactive** ■ Due: **March**

▶▶ **Wilks:** When I first saw Full Auto I was a bit nonplussed; sure, it looked like a fun slice of car + gun action (and I've always said that what is lacking in nearly every racing game is the ability to blow the crap out of your opposition) but aside from the massively destructible environments it didn't appear to be anything special. Now, after playing the code we've had in the office to death my mind has changed somewhat. I still think the game is a bit of fluff and isn't destined to set the world on fire but Full Auto is destined to become what I like to call an anecdotal game; a game that remains in the memory with events that will be recounted to and by friends. Flying over a jump, shooting a missile at a train overpass

in mid air and causing a train to fall on your nearest competitor is something that will stick in your memory as just being plain cool.

## RUBBLE AND DUST

**Cam:** Yeah I agree. While it's somewhat predictable that the Xbox 360 would see a car combat game with destructible environments very early on, it's still great fun and certainly is destruction on a new scale. You can blow so much shit up in Full Auto that you can literally get stuck under a mountain of rubble. Now that's cool. Basically anything you see can be destroyed: buildings, monuments, gas stations... they're all fair game, and the rubble and dust from your wanton rampage will still be there on your next lap. And

forget avoiding civilian vehicles, just hit them with a well timed rocket on approach and send them flying up into the air as you scream through underneath.

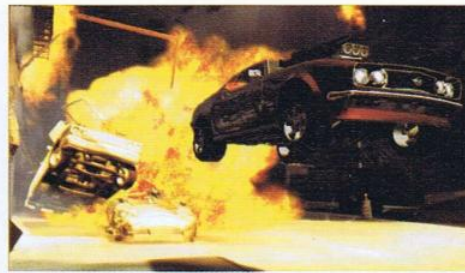
**Wilks:** For all intents and purposes there is only one thing that separates Full Auto from a current generation game and that's the scale of the destructibility. Sure, the graphics look good but they're not a huge step up from current Xbox games but there is no chance in hell of the first Microsoft console being able to render such devastation. The amount of flying particles and physics interactions that can happen in one explosion or crash are quite phenomenal. In one instance, Cam, in the midst of his sucking took a corner a little too wide and side swiped some propane tanks — one blew up but the other sprung an explosive leak and shot across the road, destroying the façade of a building. It sounds like a scripted moment but we were never able to get it to happen again. The other



great thing about the destruction is that it's not just a window dressing gimmick but a core part of the game mechanics; you have to blow shit up to charge your Unwreck meter which enables you to rewind the game for a short while so you can avoid crashes, take shortcut routes you missed and the like.

**Cam:** And it's also a core component of many of the objectives. Sure, you may have to place in the race, but you may also need to get several hundred thousand wreck points as well, meaning everything you can shoot at you probably should. Burn it down! One mode I particularly liked charges you with destroying as many civilian vehicles as possible. The best part is that when each vehicle is destroyed it's paired with an unassuming "ting" sound, as

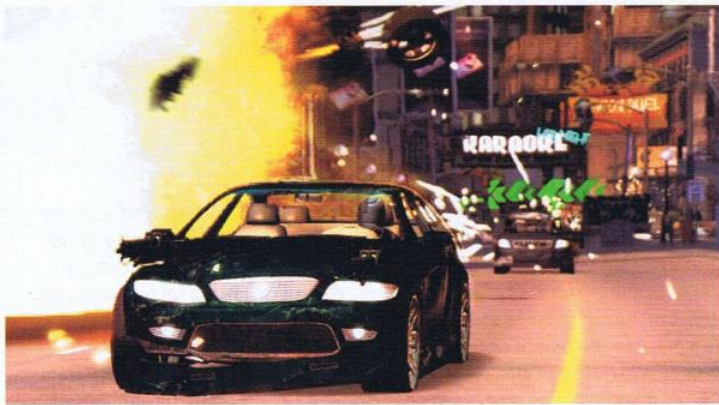
**DESTRUCTION IS NOT JUST WINDOW DRESSING BUT A CORE PART OF THE GAME MECHANICS; YOU HAVE TO BLOW SHIT UP TO CHARGE YOUR UNWRECK METER**



**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
Physics experiments in this game posted online.

The sparkler launcher is not the most deadly weapon





if rampaging through a city leaving nothing but wreckage in your wake is a totally normal thing to do. Another car blown fifty feet into the air? Another tick on the clipboard! Ting! It may seem like a weird thing to dig, but it's all part and parcel of Full Auto's approach to fun, and stringing together long sequences of missile fueled mayhem with an almost constant "ting" ringing in the air is just gold.

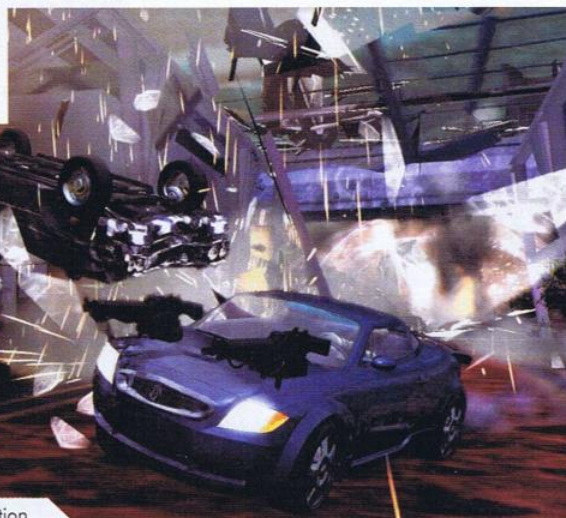
**BLOW SHIT UP**

*Wilks:* I'm right with you there. Full Auto strikes me as a game that knows exactly what it is and should be able to achieve all of its aims. Namely

being a racing game where you can blow shit up. It has no pretensions to realistic racing mechanics or even a particularly amazing sense of speed but as far as the blowing things up stakes go it's a winner. The tracks we've played on so far have been pretty good, a favourite being a town square like area that sees you cruising not only through the streets but through the middle of the town hall. It's a stupid concept but ramming straight through a building works. Aside from the Unwreck meter, Full Auto also has a boost meter which is fuelled by powersliding and jumping. Amusingly it's very possible to screw up a boost, clip an obstacle

and launch yourself far into the air refilling your boost meter and land back on four wheels. Man do you ever feel lucky when that happens.

*Cam:* Complementing that is the "One-Touch Replay" that the team are implementing which lets you hit a button to see the last 12 seconds you just raced through a variety of cameras. You can even pan the camera around the car and move back and forwards through the replay. We have our fingers crossed that you'll be able to save the most spectacular events and post them online through Live. Then the whole world could see some of the crazy stuff you can pull off... <<



A radical way of dealing with gambling addiction



The new Toyota "Topsy Turvy" upside down concept car

# LOST PLANET

Systems: **Xbox 360** ■ Category: **Action** ■ Players: **1-Multi** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Due: **2006**

▶▶ Imagine a blasted arctic wasteland where humans are forced to fight for their very survival against giant, deadly and vaguely insectoid Eigrid who have invaded the already unwelcoming planet. Imagine waking up in this world, thawed from virtual cryogenic sleep without a memory of who you are but a crystal clear recollection of

new shooter/action game for Xbox 360 and from what we've seen so far they're on to a winner.

## FOLLOWING IN AMOS' FOOTSTEPS

It's no wonder that Lost Planet is looking pretty damn solid at this early stage of development when you look at the pedigree of the

apparently chosen for his love of videogames, specifically Onimusha and Resident Evil.

Developed specifically for the Xbox 360, Lost Planet is set to combine run and gun first/third person gameplay with vehicular combat in huge areas devoid of load times due to streaming technology. From the footage we've seen so far the action looks both cinematic and epic, with no enemy smaller than bloody huge. Not to worry though, some of the vehicles Wayne can pilot include massive mecha covered in weaponry.

One of the most interesting things hinted at in Lost Planet so far is the fact that Capcom are going to be taking a leaf out of their own book and using their highly successful Monster Hunter as a template. Whether this means that the world will be massively multiplayer we do not know but we're assuming that many of the co-op multiplayer missions will revolve

around teaming up with a group of other Vital Suit wearing types to take out an enemy too big for Wayne to handle on his lonesome.

Although nothing new in terms of setting and plot — barren wastelands and fending off alien invaders/vengeance on said alien invaders for the death of loved ones are as old as Methuselah — Lost Planet: Extreme Conditions looks as though it is going to be one of the first games that really utilises the next generation hardware, rendering stunning scenes of destruction, massive levels and intricately detailed creatures. We'll definitely be bringing you more information as it comes to light because in our eyes Giant Mecha fighting to the death against huge alien spider things is just too plain cool to pass up. <<<

**FROM THE FOOTAGE WE'VE SEEN SO FAR THE ACTION LOOKS BOTH CINEMATIC AND EPIC, WITH NO ENEMY SMALLER THAN BLOODY HUGE**

your family being destroyed by the Eigrid. Armed with a "Vital Suit" and a burning desire for revenge, Wayne (our amnesiac hero — and the recipient of yet another misguided attempt at naming a lead character by a Japanese developer) sets out in the extreme conditions to give the bugs some hell. That's the premise of Capcom's

people involved. Executive Producer Keiji Inafune created the Onimusha and Mega Man franchises, Producer Jun Takeuchi is also producing Resident Evil 5. Much like the Onimusha series, the developers are basing the look of Wayne around a real world actor, in this case the Korean film star Lee Byung-Hun (Joint Security Area), a man



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

A good story to go along with the mecha vs giant alien spider combat

Yeah, he's still really inconspicuous

# GAUNTLET

## SEVEN SORROWS

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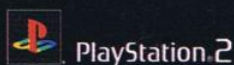
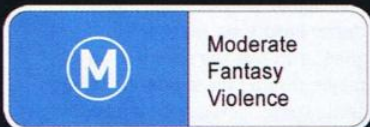


UNITE AS HEROES. FIGHT AS WARRIORS.  
LIVE AS LEGENDS.



GET YOUR TEAM OF UP TO FOUR HEROES TOGETHER FOR A FAST-PACED, HACK 'N SLASH ADVENTURE. WITH AN EPIC STORYLINE, LIGHT RPG ELEMENTS AND ONLINE CO-OP FOR THE FIRST TIME, GAUNTLET SEVEN SORROWS TAKES THE GAUNTLET LEGEND TO A WHOLE NEW REALM OF EXCITEMENT.

COMING SOON



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# MOTO GP '06

System: **Xbox 360** ■ Category: **Racing** ■ Players: **1-Multi** ■ Developer: **Climax** ■  
Due: **Early-mid 2006**

▶▶ The MotoGP Ultimate Racing Technology games have been fine showcases for the Xbox over the last few years, but now it's time to move on. Only months after delivering MotoGP 3, developers Climax have already shifted into top gear, getting their next gen sequel up and running on Xbox 360. We've taken the new game out for a few laps on a massive HDTV with full surround sound and can confirm that it's already one sweet ride.

Let's get the obvious out of the way first. This is a great looking game. The sensation of speed is excellent with the action cranking along at 60fps, and there's a palpable sense of risk/reward as you negotiate each corner. Get it wrong and you'll have a long and not so sexy embrace with the oh so gritty and convincingly textured road, while the rest of the pack flies by. Get it right and you'll revel in the smooth animations as your virtual avatar caresses his powerful machine through the turns, throbbing engine gunning between his legs. Erm yeah.

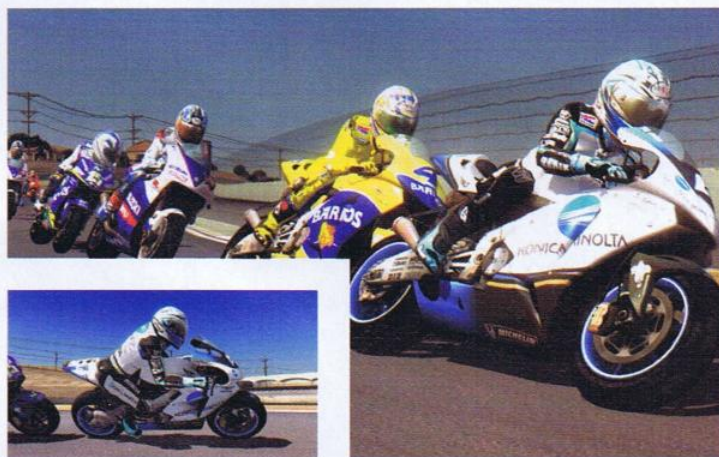
It's a good looking game on the many real life courses, but it's in the "Extreme mode" that the game really struts its next generation stuff. These are the courses that recreate the bike culture surrounding the tour itself – illegal street races that take place around the official races, everywhere from the streets of Tokyo through to outback Australia. It's only when fanging through a fully blown city environment that you'll appreciate the leap in visual fidelity – the huge draw distance, complex buildings and incredibly rich colour palette all jump right out, and certainly compare well to the current king – Gotham 3.

Out of the box Moto GP '06 will pack the 17 courses from the 2005 season, but shortly after release there'll be a free update patch packing all the teams, riders and bikes of the 2006 season, plus the three new GP tracks Shanghai, Istanbul and Laguna Seca!

Looking hot. <<<



Eyes front tiger

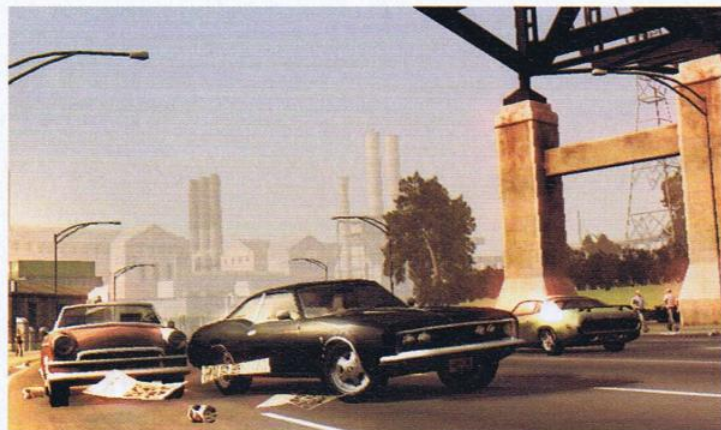


# DRIVER: PARALLEL LINES

Systems: **PS2, Xbox** ■ Category: **Free roaming** ■ Players: **1-Multi** ■ Developer: **Reflections** ■ Due: **March 2006**



This screenshot is better than all of Driv3r



▶▶ Okay, so the last Driver game was entirely unfinished and entirely lacking in personality, but that was all just a cunning ruse by Reflections. What they've done is lower your expectations for the followup to such a point that when it turns out to be pretty decent you'll be so shocked that all you can do is hand over the cash to experience it for yourself. In fact, we can tell you right now that Parallel Lines doesn't suck. The most important change is to the balance of the gameplay. The series' strength has always been the driving component (hence the name) – the weighty handling, the games of cat and mouse with the cops through the open city environments, and thankfully Reflections are taking Parallel Lines back in this direction. The vast majority of the missions will involve driving, with only around 1 in 5 being on foot. Phew!

Parallel Lines also takes an interesting approach in terms of the narrative. The game kicks off in New York in the late 70s. Your character TK is a brash young getaway driver for hire, and the first half of the game will see you freewheeling your way through the underbelly



of the city. Reflections' rendition of New York is massive, and runs reasonably smoothly – certainly leaps and bounds better than the latest True Crime title, giving you huge tracts of road to barrel down and plenty of opportunities for creatively losing the cops. It's all set to a fantastically funky period soundtrack too, but before you get too comfortable, some heavy shit goes down and TK finds himself doing hard time. He's not out until 2006, and hits the streets with a major chip on his shoulder. Time to settle some scores... We should have a full review very soon.

# THE OUTFIT

Systems: **Xbox 360** ■ Category: **Shooter** ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Developer: **Relic** ■ Due: **March/April**

Yes it's another game set during World War II, but this effort from Relic Entertainment is far from a run of the mill title. From the outset it establishes itself as a fun, over the top take on the third person squad based shooter genre. The feature that really brings this approach to life is the dynamic reward system of Field Units. You earn these by killing, destroying and achieving objectives. Field Units can be spent on a variety of things at any time in the game via the simple menu system. Using this system you can replenish your squad, call in air strikes, gun emplacements and a variety of vehicles. The best part is that it's almost instant. If you call in a tank you only have to wait a matter of seconds until it's air dropped in

right next to you (or on top of you if you're going for comedic effect). What this means is that killing rewards you with more options for killing, and the further in you get the more vehicles you can call on, so the action just keeps ramping up.

## THE F.U. SYSTEM

You can choose from three equally improbably named characters in the game: J.D. Tyler, Deuce Williams and Tommy Mac. Tyler has a sniper rifle and shotgun, the stogie smoking Williams carries a rocket launcher and sticky bombs, and Mac has a flame thrower and machine gun. Each has a squad of men who can be given basic commands, and if they die, reinforcements are only a pop up menu away. In fact, even the

death of your character isn't a big deal as it gives you the chance to choose a different character if so inclined. As you can probably tell, The Outfit isn't about realism; it's about firepower and plenty of it.

Gameplay has elements of run and gun, but the enemy AI certainly isn't stupid. They'll man gun emplacements you call in if they can, and even commandeer your vehicles! If you capture an enemy facility you'd better leave some men and heavy weaponry behind to defend it or it may be recaptured.

As the game progresses you'll even start commanding two squads at once, where you can switch back and forth as required or just group them together into an uber unit. While this isn't likely to make the game a great deal more strategic it should give you more options when assaulting positions. Plus, you'll be able to play through the entire single player game in co-op, either



via splitscreen, system link or over Live. Capping it all off is multiplayer over Live for up to eight players.

While The Outfit doesn't scream next gen, it's certainly a pretty game. War ravaged Europe is really nicely represented with massive levels that take in everything from rolling hills and farmhouses through to peaceful looking towns dominated by church steeples. Of course it's not long before the illusion of tranquillity is shattered by huge explosions and some crazy guy wielding a flame thrower. The engine supports an impressive level of destructibility too. Driving a tank into the side of a building will cleave a satisfying chunk out of the wall, and shelling structures is definitely more fun when they tumble into rubble. You ain't pretty no more! <<

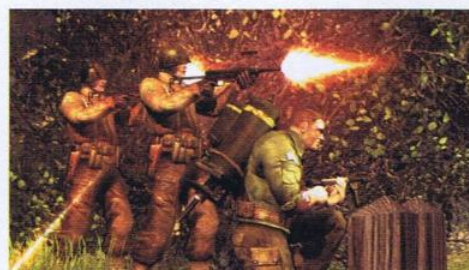
**IF YOU CALL IN A TANK YOU ONLY HAVE TO WAIT A MATTER OF SECONDS UNTIL IT'S AIR DROPPED IN RIGHT NEXT TO YOU... OR ON TOP OF YOU**



**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
Peace and love amongst the people of the world.



A nice Ren & Stimpy moment





# KINGDOM HEARTS II

Systems: PS2 ■ Category: RPG ■ Players: 1 ■ Developer: Square Enix ■ Due: 2006

When Kingdom Hearts was released we really wanted to like it but there were a few problems – the combat got old pretty quickly, the boss battles were less exciting than they should have been, the camera was bad and, ultimately we're not huge fans of Disney cartoons. We'll take Looney Tunes any day of the week. Imagine a game that features Bugs and the Road Runner teaming up with someone from Final Fantasy to take out a giant evil Viking Elmer Fudd in an opera based battle. That would be gold plated genius. We digress but in a round about way we are getting to a point; whilst we weren't too hot on Kingdom Hearts, Kingdom Hearts II is looking great.

## CAN WE PLAY AS JACK SPARROW?

Whilst we may not be particularly enamoured with Disney's cartoons, we are fans of a number of their other movies, three of which are

making their first appearance in the Kingdom Hearts universe; Pirates of the Caribbean, TRON (called Space Paranoids in KH2 after the game in TRON) and Nightmare Before Christmas. Little detail is known about these worlds as yet aside from the fact that Space Paranoids will feature light cycle races as part of the action and Johnny Depp is rumoured to be voicing Jack Sparrow in the English translation. If the latter is true then nothing will be able to stop Kingdom Hearts II from rocking the proverbial socks. Other worlds making an appearance in the game include; Mulan, Hercules, Lion King, Beauty and the Beast, the 100 Acre Wood from Winnie the Pooh and Aladdin. Disney's first cartoon, Steamboat Willie will also be making a first time appearance as a game world. To make this trip into nostalgia even better, the entire world will be in black and white, emulating the animation and art and even sound style of the venerable cartoon.

A totally new graphics engine is allowing the creators to do things not possible in the first game, the most notable being transforming characters into four legged creatures, apparently a feat the original engine was unable to pull off. What this means is that in the Lion King world, Sora will appear as a Lion Cub and Goofy will be transformed into a

as our main character. He still wields the Keyblade as his main weapon but the fighting engine has been seriously revamped to keep the combat interesting. Along with the standard array of attacks, Sora now has the ability to switch into different forms to deal more physical damage, more magical damage and most interestingly,

**DISNEY'S FIRST CARTOON, STEAMBOAT WILLIE WILL ALSO BE MAKING A FIRST TIME APPEARANCE AS A GAME WORLD... IN BLACK AND WHITE**

turtle with a powerful shell attack. We have no other details about character transformation in levels but you can be assured that since they've teased us with this little skerrick of information that it will play much more of a role in the final game than just a gimmick on one level.

Sora, the hero of the original game makes a return appearance

combine with another character in the party for a short while to create a powerful hybrid creature capable of different special attacks depending on who he is fused with. All of the character from the original game will be making a repeat appearance in the second game so fans of Disney and Square should be in geek heaven. <<



**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO HEAR:**  
Eddie Murphy doing Mu-Shu's voice, and for no apparent reason, Charlie Murphy doing True Hollywood Stories

So exactly which Disney license does that come from?

# PLAY AS MAN. PLAY AS KONG.

PETER JACKSON'S  
**KING KONG**  
THE OFFICIAL GAME OF THE MOVIE



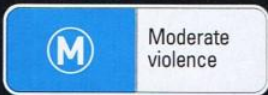
Break jaws, slam enemies,  
and throw massive objects in Kong's  
third-person battles.



Use weapons, traps, and your team  
wisely to survive in first-person as Jack.

November 2005

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PlayStation 2

PSP

XBOX

XBOX 360

WII

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# BLACK

Systems: PS2, Xbox ■ Category: FPS ■ Players: 1 ■ Developer: Criterion ■ Due: Late Feb

▶▶ If you listen to Jack Thompson and a bunch of other stuffed shirts who like to give themselves some rather large accolades as fighters against filth, games will turn you into mindless brain damaged killers. That's a bad thing. Unless becoming a mindless killer will make you as damn cool as the upcoming Criterion FPS Black. It's all about the carnage and rarely has shooting a gun ever looked and felt this damn good. We don't know anything about the plot as yet — after two levels of play all we know about the main character is that he's some type of special ops dude and that he's pretty handy with a gun but that doesn't matter. Even if the final code didn't have a plot we wouldn't care too much, the action

is what grabs you by the short hairs and drags you along faster than a speeding bullet if you'll excuse the bad pun.

## MASTERS OF THEIR DOMAIN

Criterion, best known for their outstanding Burnout series has essentially crafted the same experience into a different genre. Burnout remains one of the favourites of the Hyper crew due to the stripped back nature of the gameplay that renders it down to what makes racing so thrilling — powerslides, weaving through traffic, breakneck speed and, of course, crashes. Black essentially takes the same approach with the FPS genre. Unlike a good number of contemporary FPS games where the

order of the day is ammo conservation and careful planning of encounters, Black encourages run and gun antics, spraying areas with enough lead to create a forest of pencils, hurling grenades for a bit of recon by high explosive and generally killing everything that moves. The combat system even mimics the Burnout crash system by rewarding players with stars for double kills, headshots, multiple kills, ricochet kills and the like. We have no idea what the stars will unlock at the moment but we assume it will be trophies, extra weapons, stages and the like.

The two missions we played, one set in city streets and another set in one of our favourite old chestnuts, an abandoned asylum,

took the same format in mission design; progressive objectives and secondary objectives. In the city level our first objective saw us needing to make our way to a crossroads using one of numerous paths through the bombed out streets. Once there the objective updated to include clearing the crossroads of enemies, assaulting a museum, killing an enemy bombarding the street with a rocket launcher and finally blowing up a troop transport truck. The progressive objectives give a great sense of flow and accomplishment in the levels and also serve to ramp up the action — as each objective



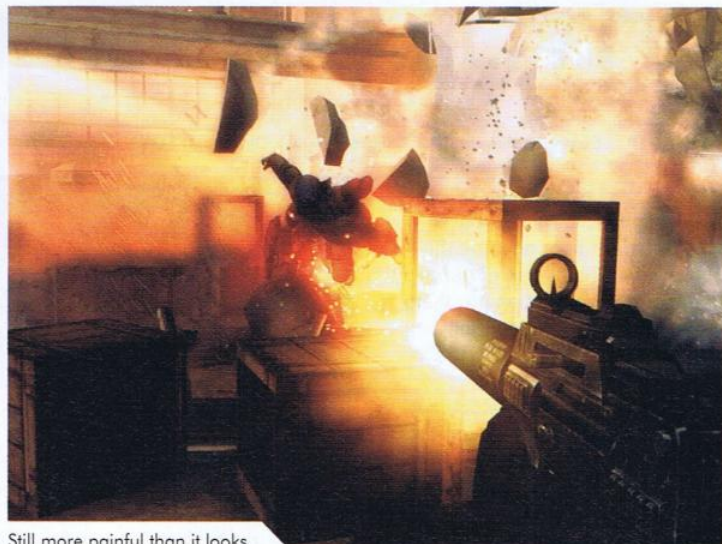
**CRITERION, BEST KNOWN FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING BURNOUT SERIES HAS ESSENTIALLY CRAFTED THE SAME EXPERIENCE INTO A DIFFERENT GENRE**

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
A bunch of really good rewards for racking up the kill points, not just some trophies.



It looks even more impressive in motion





Still more painful than it looks

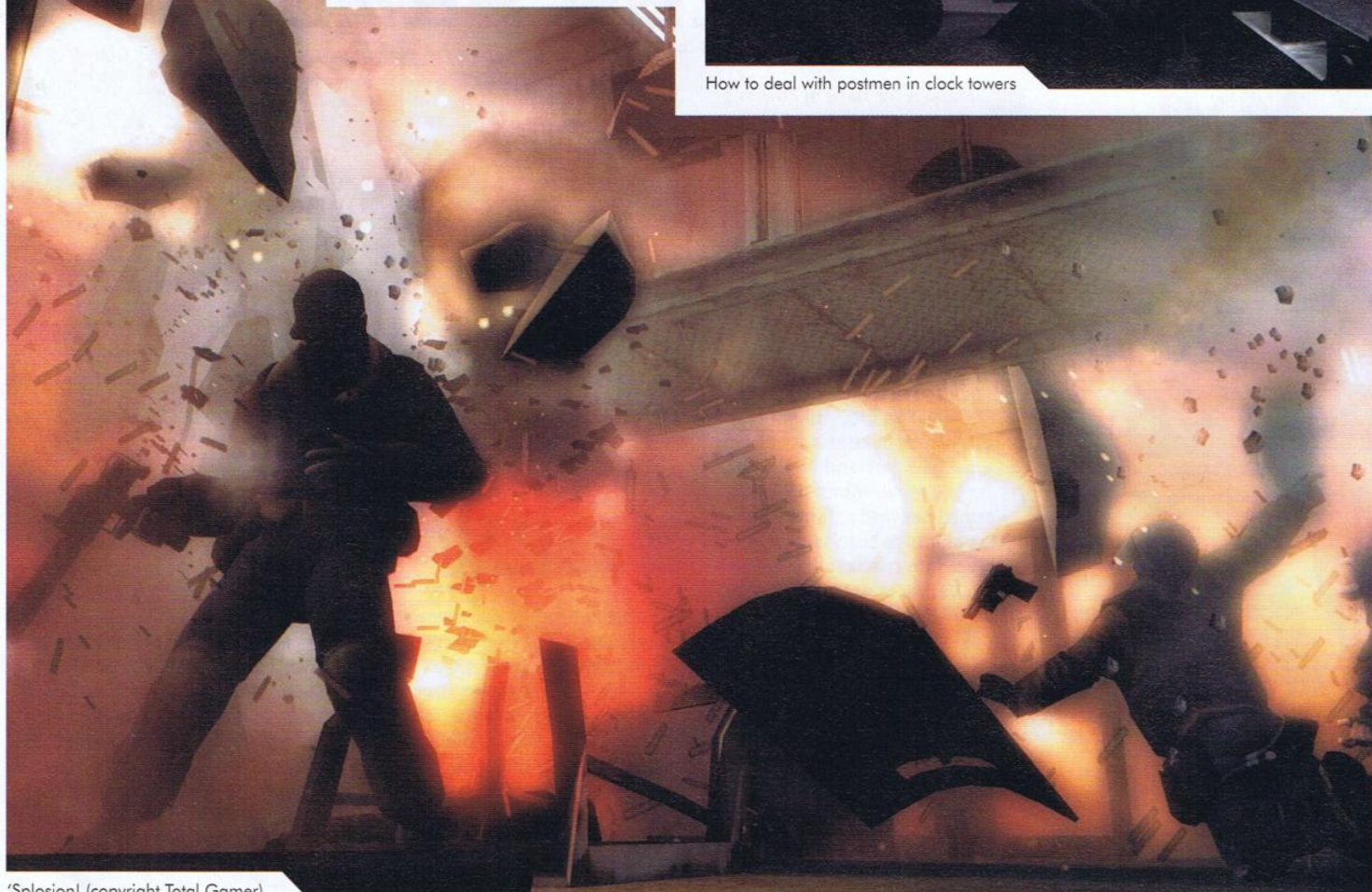


How to deal with postmen in clock towers

was completed the action seemed to crank up a notch. The city level design is quite compact but deceptively so, giving players numerous paths to make their way through the relatively small section of the city. The asylum level, on the other hand was a much more linear experience but did not suffer in the slightest for that. Instead of giving a little freedom of movement, the asylum is more about a series of action set-pieces of rather impressive scale and detail.

There is a consequence of all of the lead flying about in Black; things break. Things break in a big way. The environments in Black are immensely destructible; glass shatters and rains down from on high, cars explode, awning

come crashing down. It's quite a spectacle, made all the more amazing by the fact that the code we played was not only running on a PS2 but was also projected on a cinema screen. You'd expect the game to look pixelated but it looked great. The particle effects — smoke, clouds of dust kicked up by the near constant gunplay — look superb. Coming at the end of the life cycle of the PS2, Black will make one hell of a fitting farewell, pushing the console to the absolute limits of its capabilities. Full review next issue.



'Splosion! (copyright Total Gamer)

# UNTOLD LEGENDS: THE WARRIORS CODE

System: PSP ■ Category: Action RPG ■ Players: 1-4 ■ Developer: SOE ■ Due: 2006

▶▶ Untold Legends was a commercial success but a bit of a critical nothing. Sure the game was a decent slab of dungeon bashing gear acquisition but there were problems with repetition, camera control, the engine and itemisation; no real wonder considering that the development time of the game was very short to ensure it was released at launch.

For the sequel SOE have gone back to the drawing board and started from scratch and it shows. An all new graphics engine renders some great looking anime/comic style characters and beasts, real time weather effects and some very impressive lighting. This time around an evil dude is doing some evil that most people ignore until members of a shapeshifting race are disappearing. As one of these shapeshifters, the player takes matters into their own hands to stop the evil. Yeah, not much of a plot this time either but all of the NPCs are fully voice acted and the



[up] Untold Legends: Now with gameplay

excuse sounds good enough to us. The best advancement we've seen so far is the new combat engine that features basic attacks and special attacks as in the original as well as attacks of opportunity, charge attacks and the ability to shapeshift into a combat form for a brief period of time to dish out some serious damage. Other enhancements include better multiplayer, a far superior inventory system and great character customisation for the look of all five classes.



No anime influences here, no sir



# SUPER PRINCESS PEACH

Systems: Nintendo DS ■ Category: Platformer ■ Players: 1 ■ Developer: Nintendo ■ Due: 2006

▶▶ Mario is the bane of Bowser's existence. Bowser's just a guy (of sorts) who likes a girl, after all. Sure, he may show his affection in a misguided way, what with the almost constant kidnappings, but deep down Bowser just wants to be loved. Finally, he's had enough. This time he's going straight to the source and has kidnapped Mario. And this time, Peach is going to come to him.

Yes, as the title suggests, in this latest DS title you get to play as Peach. Demonstrating a deep understanding of the female mind, Nintendo have armed her with a parasol and the ability to channel emotional vibes into special abilities.

No, we're not kidding – it has something to do with Bowser's "magical Vibe Wand" (now that's a euphemism we haven't heard before) and his new Vibe Island base.

There's Joy, where Peach whirls about like a hurricane which can lift her into the air, whip away enemies and turn



Warning: This game may make you a flaming queen

windmills. There's Rage, which allows Peach to burn enemies and wooden structures that are in her path. There's Gloom, because girls are always on the verge of crying apparently, a talent that allows Peach to make plants grow and to run incredibly fast and become invincible. And finally, there's Calm, which allows Peach to regain her health.

The other piece of the puzzle is

Peach's parasol which can be used to get items, float across water and even pick up enemies and absorb them, presumably to power her vibe abilities. It may sound a bit silly, but should make for some cool platform/puzzle gameplay.

Now what we want to know is, if Peach usually rewards Mario with cake, does that mean that Mario will offer to service Peach's pipes? <<<





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# Hyper's guide to... **BUILDING YOUR OWN ARCADE STICK**

»» **Bryce McDonough**



## **WARNING!**

Some parts of this guide will require the help of an adult or someone proficient with tools. These tools can cause serious damage if used incorrectly, so if you don't know what you're doing **ASK FOR HELP!!** Never do any work on a controller that is plugged into a console – you could damage your console, even destroy it. There is no warranty cover for stupidity! Any damage you do to your controller, console, personal body or neighbour's cat is entirely your own responsibility – Hyper recommends the utmost care with this project.

**B**uilding an arcade stick for yourself can be one of the most satisfying experiences out there. Not only do you get the feeling of satisfaction that comes with building something, but a custom stick can take your favourite fighting game or arcade classic to a whole new level.

Before undertaking this project, it's very important to pay attention to a few key facts.

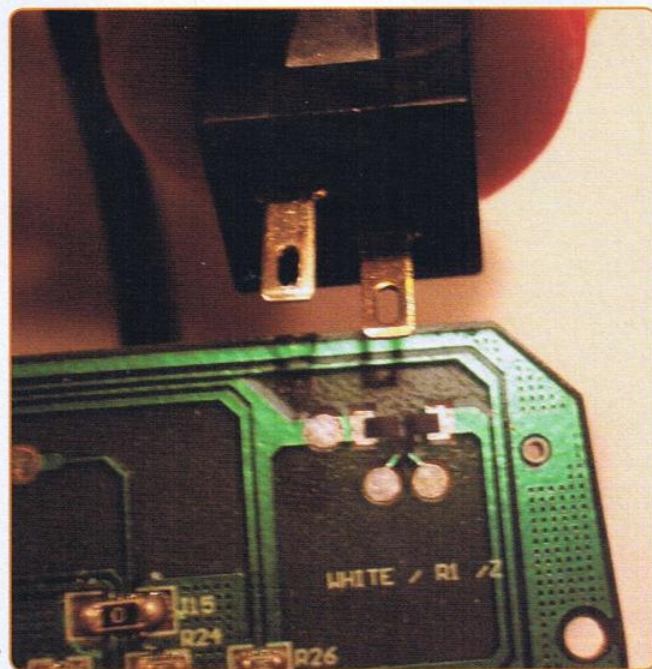
- This is not cheap, nor is it an easy afternoon project. It will take dedication and a solid \$80-100 to complete the project, so make sure you are up to it before you begin.
- It's always a good idea to get all the parts together first before you start doing anything, that way you know you can see the project through to the end. If this means ordering parts online and then waiting for them to arrive, then so be it. Your lead-up preparation time could be as much as a few weeks.
- The project calls for a fair few tools and drill bits etc. as well; make sure you take this into account.
- If you have never used a soldering iron or power drill before, ask for help from a friend or parent who has. Essentially, if you have to borrow the tools (this includes from your family) then borrow the owner as well. It's safer, and a lot faster too.

## **THE OVERVIEW**

What we are aiming to do is build a joystick for use with a console or PC using arcade-quality parts. The easiest way to do this is to 'hack' a cheap controller and wire it up to arcade parts bought from an arcade supplier. The whole thing is then put together into a box of some sort, and there you have your very own authentic arcade control set.

## **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

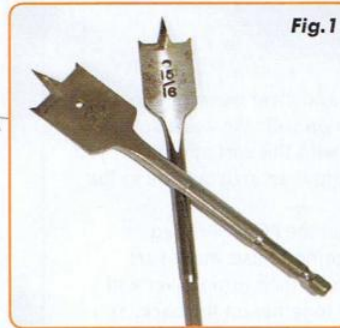
The idea is pretty simple – when you press the button on your controller, what you are really doing is completing an electric circuit – connecting the 'right punch' button with a common 'earth'. Each button inside the controller is made up of these two terminals, and when the two touch, the button switches 'ON'. Every arcade button (the connection part is even called a microswitch) has two terminals on it also, so all we are doing is using wire to take the button and the earth up to a full arcade-quality button and using it to connect the terminals instead. It isn't complicated and requires very little electronics knowledge at all.



## TOOLS

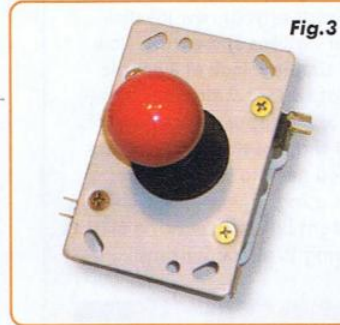
These are the tools you will need:-

- A small jewellers' phillips head screwdriver
- Wire cutter/crimper
- Low wattage soldering iron (15 watts is ideal, no more than 25)
- Rosin-core solder, not acid core!
- A multimeter (optional)
- A power drill plus a 24mm/28mm/30mm spade drill bit. **Fig.1**

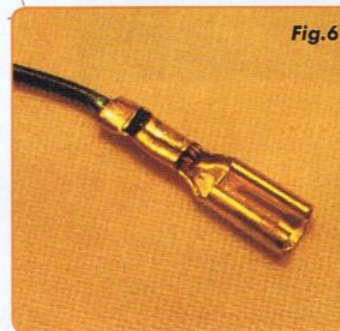


## PARTS

- A cheap but compatible controller **Fig.2**
- Arcade stick **Fig.3**
- Arcade buttons (remember you probably need at least 8) **Fig.4**
- Thin, stranded wire
- Rosin-core solder
- A terminal strip (optional, but recommended) **Fig.5**
- Quick connects **Fig.6**
- A couple of screws/bolts
- A fairly solid shoebox or similar
- A wooden box (building it is possible, an old speaker box works fine as well)



You'll want to use a cheap control pad. I use old third party PSone controllers as they have huge copper connections for easy soldering, are very cheap (if you can find them), and with converters are compatible with every console. If you want to build specifically for Xbox, steer clear of the Microsoft controller, I have heard that the MadKatz controller works well. GameCube I imagine the Nintendo controller will have issues, though I don't know of any viable alternatives. On the PC any digital USB controller should work fine. I personally recommend using a PSone controller together with an adapter as the best option. Needless to say, we are going to void the warranty on the controller, so don't pull apart one that you like.



## 1. GETTING THE PARTS

Arcade sticks and buttons can be tricky to come by. Try ordering online from places like **Zax Amusements** or **Highway.net.au**, or a shop overseas like **Excellentcom.net** in Hong Kong. Alternatively, visit your local arcade and ask where they get their parts from – maybe they can sell them to you.

There are two main joystick styles present in Australian arcades: the Chupa-Chup shaped Aussie sticks and the Japanese 'ball' sticks. Decide which one you prefer before ordering your parts as changing your mind can be hasslesome and very expensive! Buttons come in concave (curved in) or convex (rounded over). Convex buttons are preferred by most gamers these days, though they can still be difficult to find in Australia. Again, make sure you find what you are looking for before you buy! Quality Aussie sticks are made by **MCA** (no website), As for Japanese parts both **Sanwa** ([www.sanwa-d.co.jp](http://www.sanwa-d.co.jp)) and

**Seimitsu** ([www.seimitsu.co.jp](http://www.seimitsu.co.jp)) are fantastic.

A lot of websites out there talk about Happ Controls – however unless you are an American, their big baseball-bat sticks will feel unwieldy and incredibly unnatural.

Quick connects mean you can take the wires off the buttons easier, and are available from **Dick Smith**, **Jaycar**, any electronics store. Hell K-Mart might even stock them. They come in lots of sizes, so make sure you get the size to match your buttons (hint: get your buttons first THEN shop for connects).

If you are going to build your own box to house it in, you will end up with a much nicer-looking stick, however the added expense, time and required expertise also needs to be calculated. For a decent box, you will need wood, nails and/or screws, paint and primer. You can get by with basic tools, but a circular saw will make things much easier and more accurate.

# FAQ

### Can I just use my Sony/Nintendo/Microsoft controller?

In most cases, no. Firstly, a lot of them have technology such as analogue buttons/triggers which doesn't translate well to a digital-only arcade stick. Secondly, most of them are so well-made that they are simply very difficult to 'hack'. Ironically, it's the cheaper pads which have the huge areas of copper. Without large areas of copper for us to solder onto, it becomes tedious and difficult to get it right. Lastly, who wants to destroy a comfortable \$50 controller, when they can destroy a \$10-25 crap controller instead?

### It looks hard/I have no electronics experience/In general I suck at things – can I do it?

For 95% of you, the answer is yes, and you won't need much help at all. If you genuinely want to try this but have no idea, ask someone who does to help you. Most people enjoy sharing their knowledge, and this is a fun way to do it, with the added bonus of getting another friend/family member excited about playing games together.

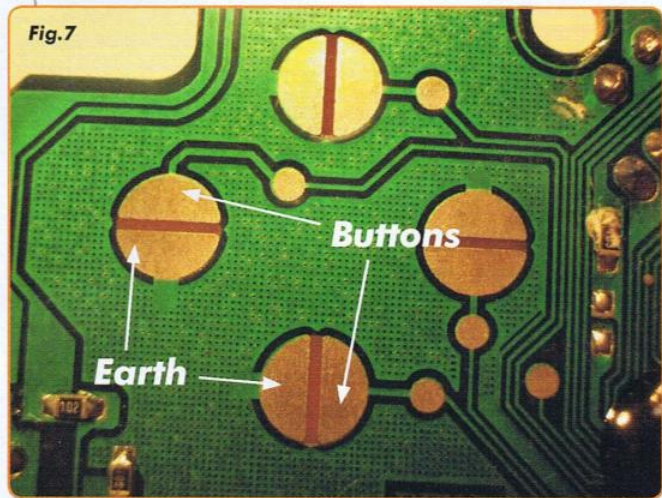


## 2. BUILDING

Before you get started you'll need a clean and clear work area that you can dedicate to it. The electronics section will take you a solid 5-10 hours depending on your experience with this sort of thing. If you have little kids running round your house, find an area outside in the shed to work at or something.

Okay, the first thing you need to do is get the PCB or Printed Circuit Board out of the controller you're going to use. Make sure the controller is unplugged from any console, then turn it over and you will likely find 6 or 7 screws holding it together on the back. You will need a very small philips head screwdriver to dig them out. Pull the front off and you will be looking at a dodgy piece of greenish something. That is our PCB and will be the guts of your new joystick.

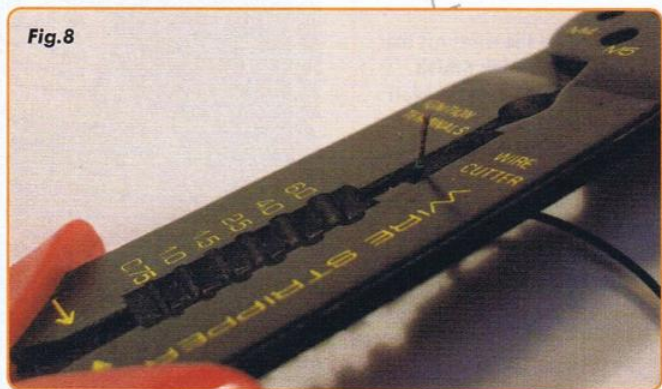
Once you have this you need to find your buttons and earths. How do you find out which is which? It's pretty simple – look at a couple of the buttons. See how they are made up of two separate sides of copper? (Fig.7) Now, look at the left side of the copper – see how it is the same piece as the left side for the other three buttons? This means you have found our common earth. Now you need to solder a wire to the button side for every button you are using. If you want a six button joystick, remember you will need eight buttons counting start and select, and then an earth wire connecting to all the buttons.



## 3. PREPARING THE WIRE

Take your wire out and your wire cutters. What you need now is a length of wire for every button you're going to use (remembering up, down left and right are four different buttons), plus an extra for the earth (you only need one wire for the earth here, because we will daisy-chain it later. Read on). Don't cut these too short – it's usually a good idea to figure out how long you need it to be and then add 5-10 centimetres to be sure.

You have now cut your lengths of wire, but in order to solder them to anything you need to strip the casing off the ends. Strip off about 1.5 - 2 cm off either end to expose the strands of metal inside. (Fig.8)



## 4. SOLDERING

The soldering onto the PCB is probably the trickiest part, and also the most expensive to screw up, so take your time and make sure you get it right. You should try and do as much of the soldering in one go as possible, so get everything ready before you plug it in. I cannot stress enough how much damage a soldering iron can do to your furniture, controller, console or body – pay attention when soldering and make sure to use a stand!

There are a few tricks to help make it easier though. Firstly, tin your wire and soldering iron well (don't know what this means? Then you need the help of someone who does!).

If you want added control, use plenty of flux on the areas of the PCB you will solder to (most solder has flux in it, so this step isn't necessary, but can help).

Thirdly, this is a very useful trick – if you have a tiny hobby drill, drill a little hole through the PCB where you will solder it. You can then poke the wire through this hole giving great accuracy. (Fig.9) If you go for this method, be sure that you only drill through bare PCB and the button you want (don't accidentally put a hole through the earth as well, or you will short the button).

When you have finished soldering, check each button visually to make sure that the solder doesn't stretch over onto the earth. If you 'short' a button like this, your console will act as though the button is always held down. Now check the PCB again to make sure you didn't drop any solder onto any other parts – these could have the dire effect of making it not work at all, or even blowing your console's controller ports. When you are confident that it looks good, it is now time to check your handiwork!

## 5. CHECKING THE PCB

Firstly, if you have a multimeter, use it now to check if each wire is hooked up. Checking on your console is a little more scary – I have my own technique for this. Since I am using a PSone controller, I use my old PSone to check it on, as at least I can live without it if it breaks. I personally put in Tekken 3 (what a shock - Ed) and navigate to practice mode with another controller and turn on button display. Now I can see which buttons are being pressed right there on the screen! Switch over to the hacked controller, and then touch each wire one by one to the common earth. The corresponding button should react on screen. Alternatively, if you don't have Tekken, you can just use the CD player.

It's VERY IMPORTANT to do this slowly and one-by-one. If your console seems like it is doing weird things, or if you see smoke or sparks or anything like that then UNPLUG IMMEDIATELY and check your PCB. I have had shorted wires before, and nothing went hugely wrong, but that doesn't mean it can't, so be diligent!

When you are satisfied the buttons all work as they should, its time to continue. You may want to put the PCB inside an old VHS tape box at this point – it will protect it and keep it safe.



## 6. THE BUTTONS

Connecting to the buttons is the next step. Using a terminal strip here makes things easier. You need another length of wire now that can take you from the terminal strip to each button. Strip one end the same as last time, but the other end probably needs a little more, maybe 2.5cm of exposed wire. Double over the long end, then crimp it into the quick connect. With the earth, you are actually going to crimp this long wire with a small wire together, and the small wire will go onto the next button (**Fig. 10**), where it will be crimped with another small wire etc – this is daisy-chaining and makes earthing all your buttons easier and tidier. So you also need your number of buttons minus one of these little wires (for me, 8 buttons + start + select + up + down + left + right - 1 = 13). Make sure the little wires are actually long enough to reach between the buttons – it's a good idea to find the biggest gap and check your first piece can make it and then make 12 more the same length.

Now you have your wires with connectors hooked up, you can make your first prototype box!

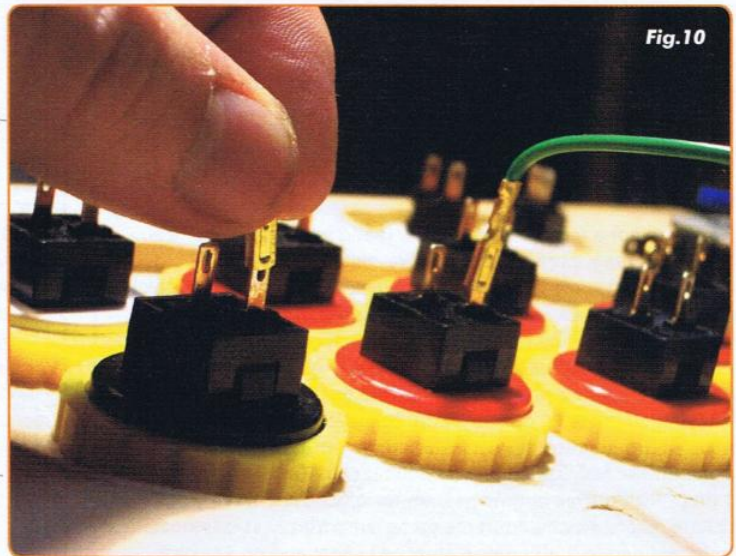


Fig.10

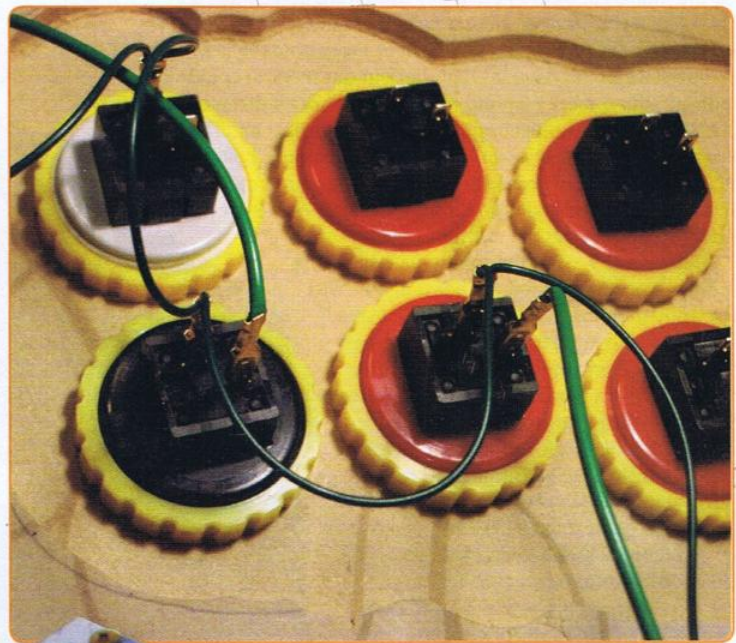
## 7. CARDBOARD PROTOTYPE

Get your sturdy shoebox and design what you think will be a comfy button layout on top. Then cut the holes for the buttons and joystick – you will need to bolt the joystick to hold it in place. The box will be strong enough – my first joystick was in a cardboard box for 6 months before I finally built a wooden one!

Put your PCB into the box and make sure each wire is plugged into the terminal strip, with a wire coming out the other end. Labelling these wires is a very good idea. Now slip the buttons through the holes on top of the box and hook up each button with the appropriate wire and earth. Don't be surprised if you get up and down mixed up the first time – simply unplug from the console, switch them over, and hook it up again.



**Making a flat cardboard prototype is easy and very useful for working out button positions**

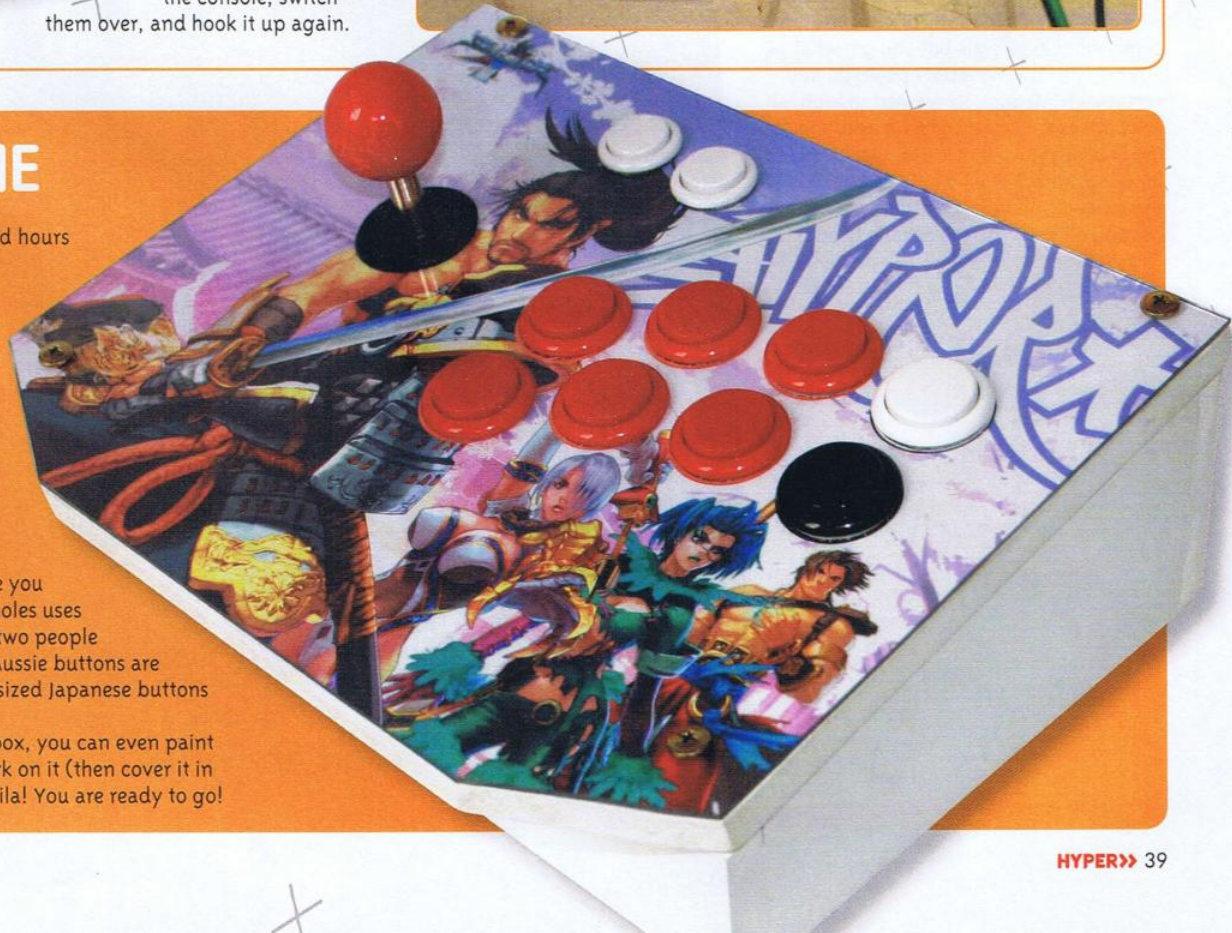


## 8. PLAYTIME

Make sure you put a few solid hours into playing various games with the box-stick, as it's important that you find a button layout you are really happy with.

Once you are satisfied with your buttons as they are, you can simply use the design on top of your shoebox as a template for drawing up the holes on a wooden box (either one you picked up somewhere, or one you build yourself). Drilling the holes uses a spade drill bit and having two people for this part is a great help. Aussie buttons are 28mm diameter and normal sized Japanese buttons are 30mm diameter.

If you do build your own box, you can even paint it up pretty, put some artwork on it (then cover it in perspex to protect it) and voila! You are ready to go!



# ALTECH ZED WATER-COOLED GAMING PC

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»» We're not a tech mag. You know it and we know it. We're a games mag, pure and simple. We cover games, things to do with games and some funky gadgets. When we were sent the Altech Zed system for review we considered doing hardcore numbers and graphs to show you the power of the machine, running all manner of benchmarking software and what have you but then we decided not to. We're a games mag. So how did we test the machine?

By playing all of the PC games we got in the last year that could seriously hurt our current systems when the settings were set to maximum. The first contender was Boiling Point (after patching to get rid of the horrible bugginess). On the office system (P4 3.0ghz, 1GiG Ram, 9800) we could run the game comfortably at 1280x1024, settings set mid to high, draw distance at 600m and no AA. Even then the framerate would noticeably drop if the screen got too busy — like if you were to shoot a rocket at a troop truck. When we fired it up on the Zed system we set all of the settings to maximum, 1280x1024 (we would have set it higher but our monitor couldn't handle anything more — stupid monitor), max draw distance and 4xAA. We were fully expecting to boot up a chugfest and then shift the settings back to get a workable game. We didn't. Boiling Point ran as smoothly as you could ever want, averaging around 60 frames a second. We could go on with the other games we tried to max out to get the machine to chug — Half-Life 2, F.E.A.R., Far Cry — but the results were the same.

The only thing that limited the beast of a PC was our crappy monitor. The only game we played that chugged to any respectable degree was a single level demo of the upcoming PC title TimeShift. The framerate dropped significantly when attacked by multiple enemies but that could be more due to the fact that it's grossly unoptimised and unfnished code. At any rate, when we played it on our test machine the game looked like little more than a slideshow at the same settings, so the difference in performance was still huge.

Nearly six grand is a hell of a lot to spend on a computer, especially one that doesn't come with peripherals but you get what you pay for. It's incredibly powerful and remarkably elegant. Be warned though, all the power comes at a price (in addition to the hole in your wallet) - this machine is loud... but hey, when you have a system this powerful there's something cool about hearing all that grunt under the hood.

**SYSTEM SPECS:**

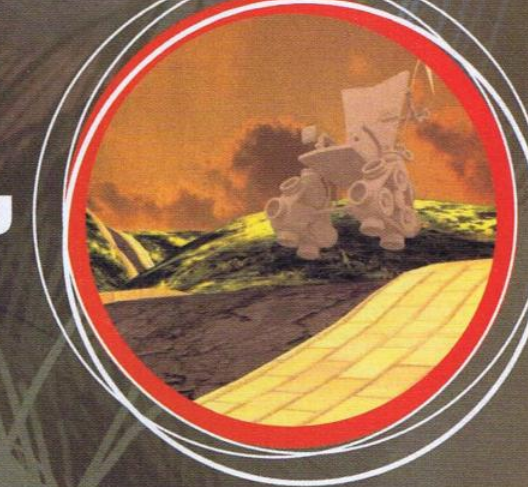
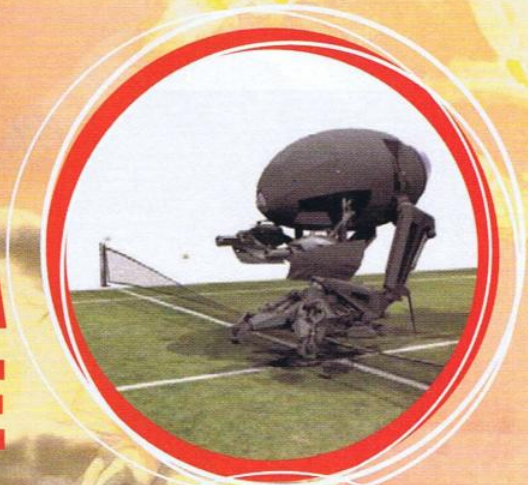
- Processor:** AMD Athlon 64 FX57
- MoBo:** ASUS A8N-SLI Deluxe
- RAM:** 2GB Corsair TWINX-3500LLPRO
- Video:** Dual XpertVision GF 7800GTX 256Mb
- Storage:** Samsung 200GB SATA
- Optical:** Samsung Black Internal Dual Layer 16x DVD +/- RW Drive
- Cooling:** Asetec WaterChill CPU/VGA cooler





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Artwork by QANTM Students / Main picture by: Sean McNally



# LAST ACTION HEAD

to defend his comments, saying that he didn't mean there's no doubt that his casual aside struck a nerve with gamers. And why shouldn't it? More often than not, production values are being dedicated entirely to style, with gameplay tagging somewhere behind asking Franz Ferdinand to compose the title theme. And nowhere is this more prevalent than in that genre we've all loved, hated, and loved again: the First-Person Shooter. Back in the day when Epic was synonymous with gun-brandishing green bunnies and not ubiquitous, power-stuffed graphics engines, the FPS was new and sexy. We had our DOOMS, our Dukes, and even our Dark Forces to feast on, and we were all fat and happy. Exhausted by the Palsy-esque antics of 2D platformers and the Cerebral Palsy-esque restrictiveness of graphic adventures, we found in the FPS a systemic revolution — 3D, navigable worlds, enemies that did more than just run from side to side, and fun guys like John Romero who couldn't possibly make a bad game. Sure, the genre was under Hiroshima-like fire from the press, but we just couldn't get enough.

Nowadays, though, things have changed. World War II shooters have officially been chucked out en masse for longer than the actual war. Spectacular level design? Forget it. Most modern shooters are made for quick, beer-added deathmatch action, not majestic single-player journeys. And whilst deathmatch action can be fun, there are very few shooters that have progressed beyond Quake III: Arena's heady level of tomfoolery. That isn't to say, of course, that innovation is dead. Take Half-Life 2: with Valve's second take on The Greatest Action Game of All Time™, they focused on complete immersion, emotionally sophisticated characters, an elegant and not-too-cheesy plotline, and, of course, massive, physics-oriented, cinematic battles.

Valve also started a multiplayer revolution with HL2 (and I'm not talking about Counter-Strike: Source). Heard of Garry's Mod?

It's a physics-based sandbox that's been turned into hundreds of different, quirky mini-games. Have a look at Monster Onslaught V2 (<http://forums.facepunchstudios.com/showthread.php?t=30392>): it's a brilliant re-working of the "Last Man Standing" concept, where you (and your friends, if you smell nice enough to have any) frantically assemble your own real-time physics-fuelled fort before you're torn to confetti by all the spooks in your nightmares. (A handshake to anyone who manages to assemble a base that can withstand the puiissance of two Combine Striders.)

From the tone of the last two paragraphs, it's pretty obvious that I think HL2's major innovation was bringing physics to the fore. More than just being an excuse to blow shit up, you actually used the world around you to progress. Sure, it was your basic "physics puzzles" setup, but at least Valve tried something new.

Unfortunately, most physics-endowed FPSs since HL2 have used ol' Newton's ruminations in a pretty asinine fashion — you know, the typical "here's a room, here's a grenade, here are some bad guys, now rearrange the décor" scenario. It looks cool, but it really doesn't add much to the gameplay. What physics can really add to the FPS is easily-assembled emergence.

What's emergence, you ask? Essentially, it's the idea of having multiple solutions to a single problem. On a larger, more speculative scale, it's all about your game accommodating whatever new idea a player may squirt out of his thinking box in order to solve something. Whilst we're certainly not there just yet, there's no doubt that emergence has been used successfully in some great shooters, particularly System Shock 2.

I know I'm probably reaching my System Shock 2 name-drop quota for the year, but it bears reiteration: in Irrational's masterpiece, if you had to get past a big, angry, monster, you could do it in a variety of ways. For instance, you might find comfort in the shadows and sneak past. Too much effort? Why not reprogram the security system to attack the smelly old beast? Doesn't float your canoe? Try giving your temples a gentle stroke and using some of your 1337 psi-powers! And if all else fails, pick up the most phallic implement you can find and blast the poor lug into early quietus.

✦ ALEXANDER JAMES BURKE

## THE BAD STUFF

In almost every FPS, you'll see the scourges listed below. Why do we keep them? For sentimental value? Because we're too stupid to come up with anything new? I guess we'll never know, but the first step to recovery is admitting we have a problem.

**CRATES AND BARRELS:** Like Gary Glitter, provincialism, Friends, and sk8er punk, some things never die... even if they probably should. Case in point: the humble crates and barrels that you'll see littered through every indoor, outdoor, underwater, interstellar, and nought-flavoured level in any FPS ever. Honestly, when you're walking down the street, how many explosive barrels and SMC-dogged crates do you see? Unless you're hanging out in Marrickville, I doubt there'd be too many. So why do we see them so often in shooters? Their presence oozes purid visions of developers sighing, "Oh, whatever, Hieronymus. It's late and the level looks crap all empty like that. Throw in a few crates. Now, let's get some tequila and play nude Twister in the cabana." I know they're simple to model and texture, but surely it's time to move on!

**ZOMBIES:** I like my living dead as much as the next man, but once you've seen 'em trudging through Martian space stations, dilapidated industrial complexes, post-apocalyptic cities, and gothic citadels, it becomes fairly obvious that they must have a fantastic publicist. In any event, were you an alien overmind, a mad scientist, a mysterious terrorist, or even a corrupt politician, would you really want to manufacture something with all the moves of a tectonic plate, fewer brains than Nick Lachey, and who looks like John Merrick's better half? I think that, if Resident Evil could drop the angry corpses for at least one instalment, then the average FPS could live without them, too.

**POWERUPS AND WEAPON DROPS:** Lessee, if you were a maddened evil mastermind with a small gear and weapons stash all over your you a) scatter your medical gear and plenty to prove, would super-secret base to compensate for the lack of plush Persian carpets, or b) buy a few cheap rugs and secure all the goodies where no interlopers could find them? Something tells me, unless the Xanax's really got to your head, you'd pick the latter option.

It seems the special-school students that make up the bulk of the bad guys across all FPSs could use your help, because they've made the mistake of choosing "option a" over and over again. The worst part is that it's completely unnecessary. Worried that a player's going to find himself up against a Hell Knight with nothing but his pyjamas and a few pellets? Well, then, why not make it so you don't need 1,500,000 bullets to kill the beastie? Perhaps our poor old end user could have the option of dropping a chandelier on the monster's head or

**CORRIDORS:** It's understandable that, as an evil genius, you'd probably be a bit preoccupied with being, well, evil. But does that really mean you need to completely abandon the construction of your home base to some creepy old man with unnatural fixation on mazes? If you're like the villains in your common-or-garden FPS, your minions would need an above genius IQ just to get the toilet in under a week!

What's more, endless twisty passages are pretty terrible Feng Shui. Try to be a bit more open in your design; throw in a water feature or three. You'll be surprised at how energised and efficient your super-soldiers will become, not to mention players, who'll definitely appreciate the change of scenery.

With this gameplay model, a developer doesn't have to worry about building a million different corridors for the player to go down; in fact, an emergent world needn't be big at all. It just needs to react to the player in a way that accommodates his/her approaches to different obstacles. Added to which, there's no fear of losing the "shoot stuff" flavour of the FPS, as the option to blast your way through will always be there if you're hankerin' for some destruction massive.

Of course, we're going to need more than flashy physics to make FPS gameworlds truly emergent. Sophisticated environment and NPC AI is extremely important, too. How? Well, say we go back to the monster in System Shock 2. The only reason all of those different ways to get past the big guy worked was that Irrational had already taken them into account; they knew not only that players would try those methods, but also how they'd try them. But what happens when a player comes up with something completely bells-ringingly, leotard-wearingly, shaving-cream-eatingly left field? Not much, actually. This is where brainy AI should kick in. Games should be able to figure out why a player would try a certain approach, and if that approach isn't deemed a worthwhile means of traversing an obstacle, then he/she should be at least rewarded for having a good idea. Likewise, NPCs (hostile or otherwise) should respond to players in a realistic and believable fashion.

While we're making the environment and its denizens more reactive, it might be an idea to space it and pace it all a bit more. Would Terminator 2 really have been the masterpiece it was if every damn scene was a gunfight? If there's anything that games like Unreal - that's Unreal, boyo, not Tournament, Championship, or Story of Professional Wrestling - and Half-Life taught us, it's that a bit of exploration and non-violent world-interaction actually adds to the gameplay, rather than detracting from it.

This exploratory style is especially useful if you're stitching together one of those newfangled "horror" shooters, similar to - but hopefully better than - F.E.A.R. Want to know where Monolith's pants-wetter went wrong? I'll tell you: said that "the game has supernatural elements, but

we don't want to overshadow the action." (For crying out loud, the supernatural elements were supposed to be what made the game unique!) A note to developers: if you drench our brains in violence, we'll soon get desensitised to it.

So what's the solution? As said above, action in a horror shooter needs to be spread out. If you're lost for inspiration, have a peek at now-defunct Ion Storm's Thief: Deadly Shadows, the sequel to Looking Glass' Thief II: The Metal Age. In the infamous Cradle level, you'll spend most of the first half absolutely terrified despite the fact that, as you later discovered, there was nothing hiding in the shadows. It's a testament to Ion's finesse and creativity that a part of a level that was so boxers-soilingly scary was also the only part in the game where the player was completely safe and sound.

This experience was enhanced, of course, by Deadly Shadows' purdy graphics. What's that, you roar indignantly? Did I not, at the beginning of this piece, effectively denounce the importance of graphics in shooters? Not really. It's just that the cosmetics are - or should be - something that adds to the gameplay, rather than being the gameplay itself. If we wanted to just see pretty moving pictures, we could watch Toy Story. It's time developers realised that you can't just keep belting out the same sci-fi shooter, hoping that a few extra texture layers will revolutionise the genre.

Far be it from me that I should suggest we should go back to the days of false geometry and pancake-flat sprites. But we cannot continue the development and consumption of games that are really nothing more than updated versions of Space Invaders. If it really is "all about the graphics", then this once-illustrious and innovative genre is going to hit the rocks faster than a termite-added shack in New Orleans. ❖❖

## THE GOOD STUFF

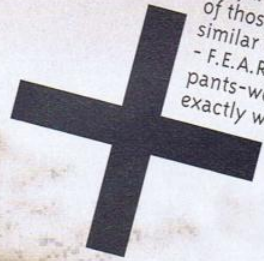
I think, throughout this feature, we've established that many FPS developers have been fairly lazy with their output. The genre needs to make a monumental shift towards openness and depth, because if it doesn't, despite all the good memories, it's in danger of becoming the next adventure genre. Although it may not actually be the case, we'd like to think that gamers will only be satisfied by graphics for so long. That being said, there are certain things that should not, and do not need to be changed, such as the examples below.

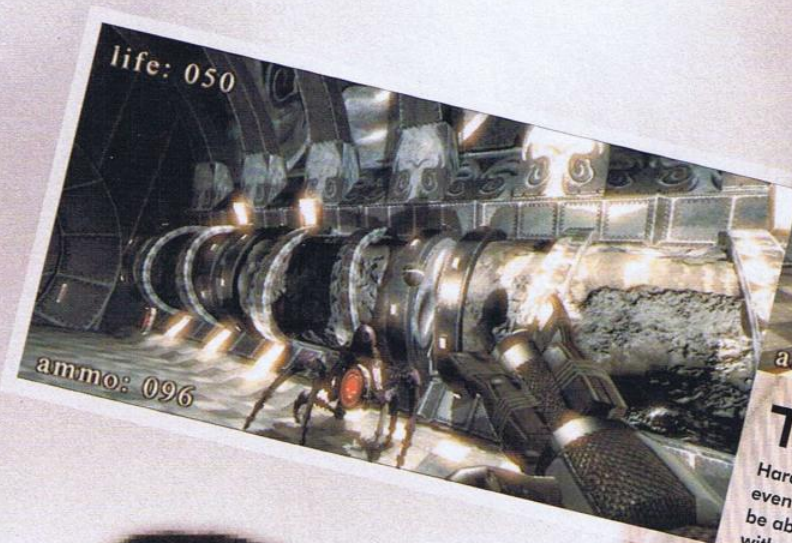
### THE OBLIGATORY MELEE WEAPON: Cheesy? Sure.

Unnecessary? Probably. But if you're not going to go crazy with plenty of different weapons, then you need at least one melee basher or slasher. It's a fact of life. Forget the BFG, the Concussion Cannon, the Gravity Gun, or even the Rocket Launcher; the obligatory melee weapon is the heart, soul, and genitals of any refined FPS weapons system. It's as important as levels.

Don't believe me? Then why the hell did you almost weep with joy when Barney returned your trusty crowbar in Half-Life 2? Do you really think Quake III: Arena would have been the same without the humiliating gauntlet frag? Or DOOM's chainsaw? Halo 2's energy sword? You get my point.

### REAL-TIME EXPOSITION: Cutscenes are the devil. No, I don't care what you have to say. They're the devil, alright? What Half-Life did with its opening scene in 1998 revolutionised not only the FPS, but gaming in general. For once, we weren't forced to sit through some badly-acted cinematic, just waiting to get down and dirty with some action. Instead, the story was introduced and subsequently conveyed entirely through your eyes. If two characters were discussing something important, it was up to you to eavesdrop. What would the game have been if everything at the beginning - chatting with scientists, getting ordered around, accidentally blowing up your workplace - had been communicated through some inconsequential cutscene? In the words of Hobbits from Beneath A Steel Sky, "Crap, son." FPS developers, take that lesson to heart. In order for us to care about your storyline, we need to be a part of it.





# TINY SHOOTER

Hard drive had too many profiteroles? Is it having trouble squeezing in even the most basic Windows Media upgrade? Wondering if you'll ever be able to fit in a new shooter ever again? If you just can't bear to part with your Bananarama MP3 collection, may I suggest taking a little trip to <http://www.theprodukkt.com/kkrieger.html>. What will you find there? A visually high-quality FPS called .kkrieger. It's no Deus Ex, but at least your hard drive will be able to handle it - it's only 96k in size. The reason it's so small is that there's no extra baggage: all textures, models, and so on are generated procedurally as the game loads up. Promising? You betcha.



## 48 Ridge Racer 6

Drifting goes high def

### Review Index

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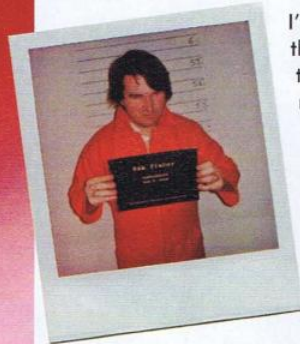


# Reviews

## Game Theory

SEAMUS BYRNE

### An indie revolt



I've been playing my way through the demos and freebies amongst the Independent Games Festival main competition finalists and it's clear the indie scene is in great shape. What stands out is how bold some of the design schemes are for these games. Darwinia has been getting a lot of attention lately with its hard line polygon style that accentuates the virtual universe concept. At the other end of the spectrum

the 2D MMO Dofus, with its super cute turn-based action all delivered through Flash. The categories cover innovations in visual art, audio, technical excellence and game design itself, and there is no question of any category being light on deserving recipients.

This makes me wonder what the future holds for console versus PC games development. We keep hearing how massive the costs are for console development, with large demands on license, distribution and marketing, which makes it more difficult for new players to enter the market. Yet this begs one big question — why would an indie want to target the console market anyway? It is right that all these factors make it difficult. But you could infer from this 'cost concern' that consoles are the only worthy gaming platform in the long-term.

As the IGF shows, independent development is all about the PC, with easy development access for solo developers and small teams plus the incomparable capacity for online game distribution. You can make a name for yourself through online channels and it's easy for gamers to grab a demo and see what you've got to offer. Darwinia's distribution via Valve's Steam engine has given them and their demo access to hundreds of thousands of gamers worldwide. And they're selling their game for a very affordable US\$19.95. If you

want a boxed copy, you can get it direct for another \$10, but a digital download sounds just fine to me. Other independent games, like Ragdoll Kung Fu, are available on Steam for even less. As demanding as AAA titles are, if a strong independent scene flourishes it will be difficult for big studios to maintain their claim to high pricing.

Another long-term prospect is browser driven gaming. There is no doubt we're going to see continuing improvements in this area, with AJAX site development already pointing us toward full application access through standard browsers. The beauty here is that down the line we could have our MMO wherever we are, with smart phone mobile browsing giving us access to, if not the full game, perhaps some task layer that allows us to manage our game actions external to the full GUI. I know I'd love to be able to update my Even Online skill training settings from a handset.

Maybe the PC will be an entry point for developers before their studio is ready to take on console development costs. Maybe. I just can't help feel this could become an exception to the rule. Maybe there is a long-term prospect for more open gaming platforms, based around PC, browser and mobile technologies that let developers and gamers connect more directly? Such an eventuality is unlikely to be driven by current game industry heavyweights — Valve and their Steam an exception — but by independents looking to alternative routes to market with their more innovative products.

The aptly named Phantom PC-based online console may have set some of these general concepts back by some years. But with determination and the right minds and talents involved, there is always the potential for a new 800lb gorilla of the gaming scene. Any indie producer just needs to look to Peter Jackson and his beloved Weta for inspiration on that front.

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM The Overall Score – what's it all about according to the thesaurus?

0-49

Shite, craptacular, woeful, sucky, utter bollocks, feculent, awful.

50-59

Crap to average, fairly stinky, dire, unpleasant, smelly, unfun.

60-69

Run of the mill, average, ordinary, some redeeming features, almost.

70-79

Fair, the process of removing weeds from one's garden, good.

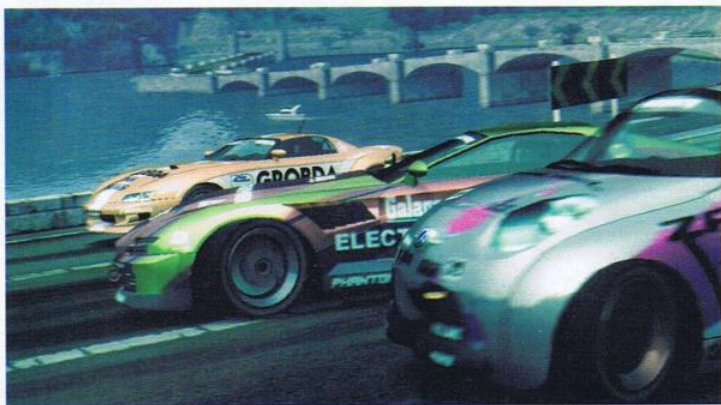
80-89

Great, cool, sweet, playable, grand, illustrious, bootylicious.

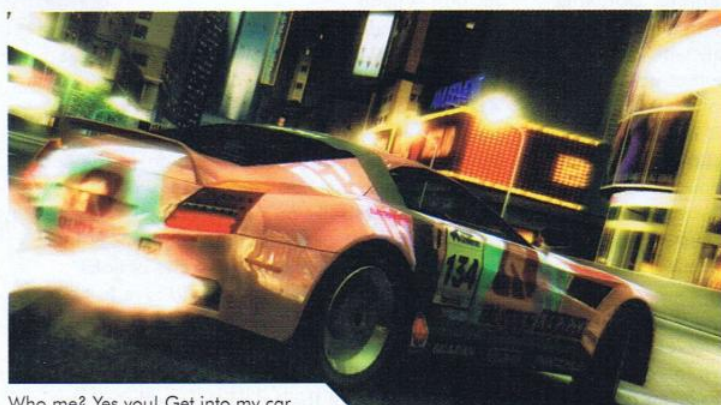
90+

Splendiforous, genius, cooly-highharmony, super sweet.

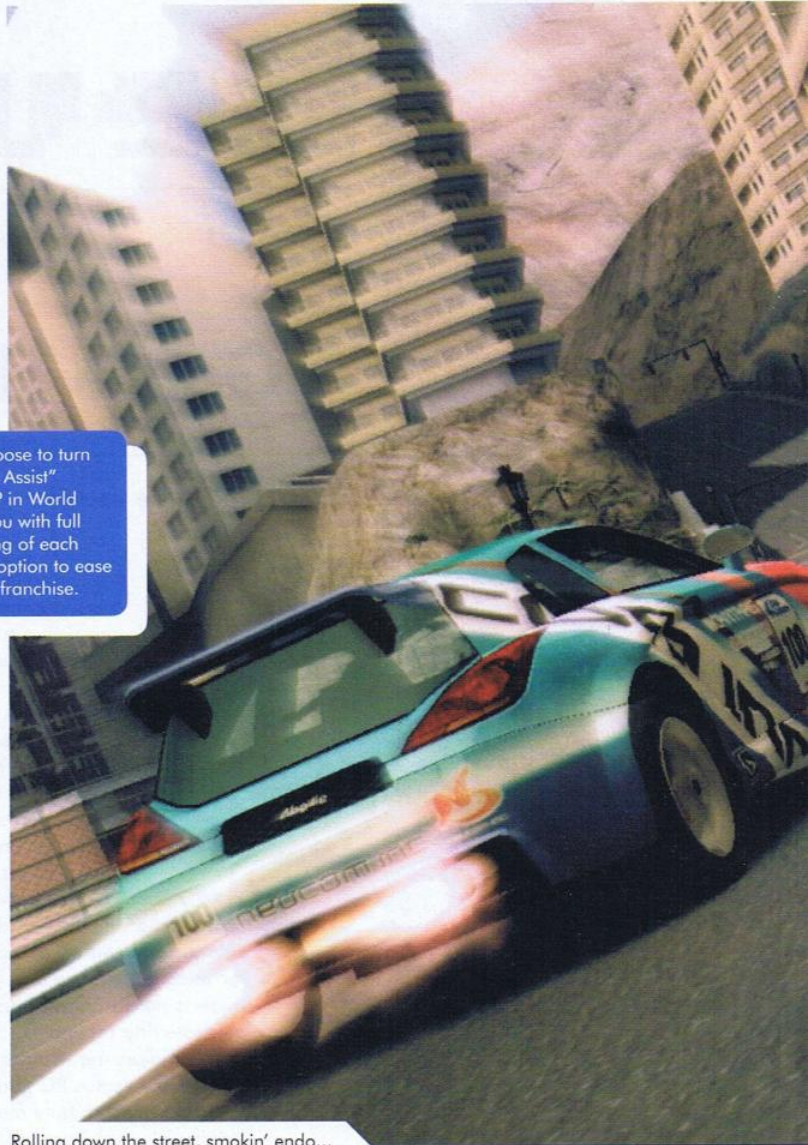




|||| You can choose to turn on "Nitrous Assist" for each GP in World Xplorer. This starts you with full tanks at the beginning of each race, and is a good option to ease newcomers in to the franchise.



Who me? Yes you! Get into my car



Rolling down the street, smokin' endo...

# RIDGE RACER 6

**CAM SHEA** is a driftaholic

» The Ridge Racer games are a deliberately artificial construct, plain and simple. They're not about recreating the physics and mechanics of racing vehicles. They're not about a realistic world. And they're certainly not about wily and adaptive AI opponents. The Ridge Racer games are all about crafting an utterly compelling high speed experience for the player, and disregarding anything that may get in the way of having fun. Think about it. Imagine, for a second, that you're the AI racer at the back of the pack. Your sole duty each race is to accelerate slowly off the start line letting the human controlled car sweep past you in the first ten seconds, then plodding

around the track in last place until he/she finishes. Not much of a life eh? Not exactly a simulation of a virtual racer's hopes, dreams and rivalries within the Ridge Racer championship. But so what? Everything in this series is about serving a purpose, and for the most part that purpose is to make you feel like an absolute gun behind the wheel. Have Namco succeeded for the sixth console release of Ridge Racer? Have they ever...

### SPUNKY OLDER SISTER

Ridge Racer 6 has a whole lot in common with the PSP game. They both have exquisite handling, they both share a certain visual aesthetic, they both have the nitrous mechanic and they both absolutely barrel along at top speed. Most importantly though, they both give you a long and entertaining career mode to get stuck into. In the case of Ridge Racer 6, it's the World Xplorer mode, a branching grid of race options that you tackle in the order



Now with the power of Applesaucity

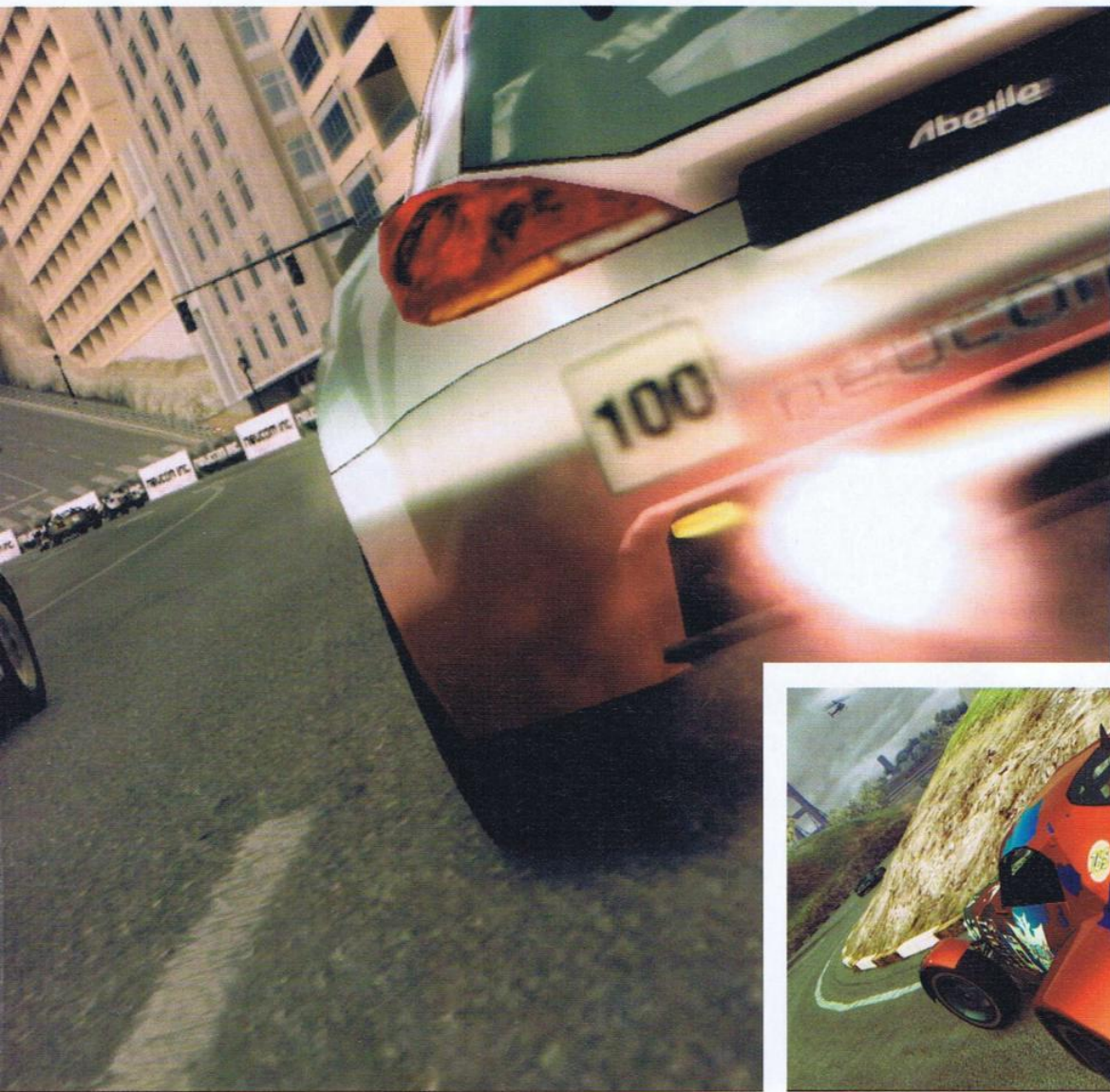
you see fit. As you complete races, you'll fill in sections of the map and unlock new vehicles, gradually getting access to faster and faster cars. Completists will be sure to beat all the races along the way, but there's also the option to take a single direct path through this mode, drastically upping the challenge. There are a few different race types in World Xplorer, including the classic Duel races, as well as races that strip back use of nitrous, but they're just seasoning for an already tasty broth, as the core gameplay is wonderfully streamlined.

As in the PSP game, World Xplorer

is a bit of a slow burner. It will take you a while to really start seeing the blistering speed that the series is known for, and once again there are only a handful of courses, albeit with a large selection of alternate routes to keep things fresh, so it's all about learning each course and mastering every corner. Course design for the most part is superb, and the faster you go the more you'll have to revise your racing line. Use of nitrous is more strategic in Ridge Racer 6 too. You can now unleash two or three tanks at once for an even faster and more prolonged boost, but the interesting part is that you can't earn







## THE LATER RACES ARE LESS A BATTLE AGAINST THE TRACK AND MORE AN ACTUAL COMPETITION

nitrous while using nitrous (except for in one race type), but the faster you're going when you drift the more nitrous you'll earn, so rather than just unleashing it when you hit a straight, it makes more sense to time it so that your tank runs out just as you hit a turn so you'll careen around it at top speed or higher, and thus gain more nitrous.

The further into the game you get the more competitive the AI gets too, so while the early races may be a breeze, it's not all that long before you'll actually have to fight for first

place, which makes for a nice change of pace after Ridge Racer on PSP. It's not just a competition of raw speed either. These guys take good racing lines, tussle with each other for places and often get around your rear vision mirror fuelled blocking manoeuvres. Remember that 14th place guy I mentioned earlier? He still sucks, but the racers in the top half of the pack actually seem to care, making the later races less a battle against the track and more an actual competition.

### STYLISH AND SMOOTH

The visuals are, by and large, stylish and smooth, with some great

lighting and shadow effects and plenty of showy architecture. It's a little more moody than we were expecting, with overcast days, dusk races and night races, as opposed to the blistering sun, beaches and palm trees of the first couple of games, but this is all part of the Ridge Racer series moving on, and helps make the world a little more immersive. Best of all, it all canes along at 60fps with nary a hitch to be found.

While Ridge Racer 6 is largely an "if it ain't broke" game, the combination of intense speed, fantastic driving mechanics and a great career mode make this a must-buy for the fans. <<

AVAILABLE ON:  
X360 / PS3/ REV

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Arcade racing

PLAYERS: 1-14

DEVELOPER: Namco

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: G

AVAILABLE: March 2

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** More challenging than on PSP, awesome drift mechanics, soundtrack.

**MINUS:** Takes a while to ramp up, lighting glitches, awful announcer.

VISUALS 89 SOUND 89 GAMEPLAY 91

OVERALL  
**89**

Sweet sweet Ridge Racer action. How can you say no?

>> **THE MEAT IN THE ONLINE PIE** - Ridge Racer 6 also comes packing some serious online loving. There's racing for the full complement of 14 racers which will really put your skills to the test... as well as choking up courses with cars. For us though, the most interesting online mode is the Global Time Attack, which sees you completing three lap time trials with your results uploaded and tallied into a global rankings leaderboard. There's a real thrill competing to be the fastest on any one course in the world, and downloading rival ghost cars and seeing how other people tackle the same courses is a vicarious thrill.





Look closely and you can see tradesman's crack

# AMPED 3

**DANIEL WILKS** is a pig on a spring

Whether you like or dislike Amped 3 will ultimately come down to one thing; whether or not you like the presentation. Gone are the semi-serious or semi-cool cutscenes from the previous games, Amped 3 instead has one of the most wildly inventive set of cutscenes and introductions we have ever seen in a game. If you look at them as Indie Built trying to be cool then you'll most likely let your dislike carry on over to the rest of the game. If, on the other hand you allow yourself to get caught up in the sheer madness and random nature of the presentation then you will find that the rest of the game underneath it, although not too dissimilar from previous games in the franchise, is pretty darn good.

## PRACTICALLY DEAD

Why the emphasis on presentation? Well, to be frank it's the greatest differentiation from the last games and the current incarnation.

Controls feel remarkably similar to the last two Amped games (although a lot more forgiving when it comes to falling) but the presentation makes the game a new experience. There are a hell of a lot of objectives in Amped 3, split up over different areas on the seven mountains that make up the game. The Story Mode (which you need to play through to unlock all of the content and areas) is a trifling bit of nonsense about some amateur boarders, a new guy (you), an evil corporation and some other stuff. Essentially it's just an excuse to throw some craziness at the player whilst they are compelled to navigate the mountains performing different tasks, gaining high scores, impressing the locals, selling out (the new name for sponsor challenges) and what have you. Completing objectives rewards the player with reputation which unlocks new objectives, new story missions and new areas to explore.

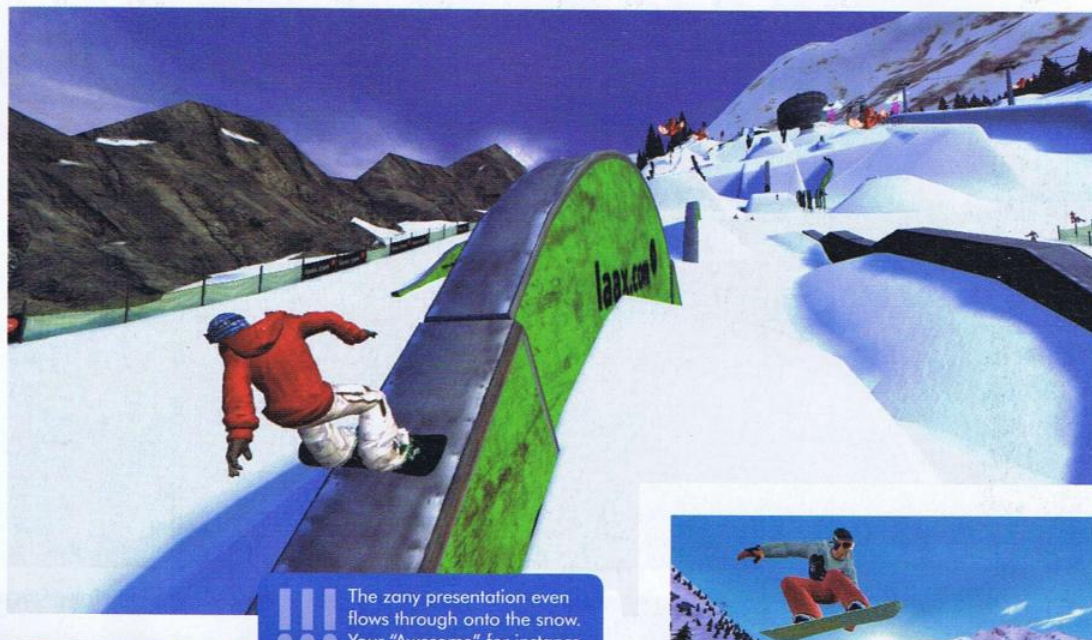


Cooooooool Boarders! Time to f\*\*k it up!

Along with tricking to get high scores, Amped 3 also includes objectives involving sleds and snowmobiles, both of which require balance to complete more than fingers flying over the trick buttons. The non-boarding sections come across as a little undercooked but they are few and far between so you don't have to worry about completing them too much. One other style of objective that you'll probably find yourself hunting out does involve a sled, but instead of trying to make it through some slalom gates, the player instead has to see how much

damage they can do to themselves by bailing and hopefully crashing into something hard and, if you're lucky, pointy. If you achieve the requisite damage score (and cringe a few times as you see your avatar ragdoll painfully down a mountain) the game happily proclaims "You're Practically Dead!"





!!! The zany presentation even flows through onto the snow. Your "Awesome" for instance, results in a kaleidoscopic cartoon array emanating from the base of your board. And the Yellow Submarine influences are pretty clear. Good, trippy fun.



The innovative "Crotch Cam" in action



doesn't take advantage of two of the most hyped features of the Xbox 360, namely online integration and multiplayer. Multiplayer is limited to a few offline co-op sledding missions and the only online feature available is the ability to post up high scores, not particularly appealing considering how relatively easy it is to push a high score when you get the knack of buttering. It's a real pity that so little effort has been put into these aspects of the game, as decent multiplayer — point competitions and the like, could have pushed the title up to being one of the must haves at launch. Oversights aside, if you can handle the schizophrenic approach to the presentation and can deal with a tongue being placed firmly in cheek, Amped 3 is a fine way of wasting your time. With over 1500 objectives, that's a lot of time you can kill. <<

**IF YOU ACHIEVE THE REQUISITE DAMAGE SCORE, THE GAME PROCLAIMS "YOU'RE PRACTICALLY DEAD"**

**BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME**

The player character is hugely customisable from the outset with more gear and clothing choices becoming available as objectives are completed. This customisation actually flows into gameplay with a new addition to the series, the ability to build in your own additions to the park. Certain quests give the player the ability to build different objects, say a rail or kicker and these can be placed anywhere, at any time on any mountain if you have the money. It's a brilliant feature that really comes in handy at times. There are a few high score objectives in which one extra object to trick off becomes a godsend.

Although the player models are nicely detailed in close up and the snow looks superb, nothing really screams next gen about the look of Amped 3. Even more strangely, the game doesn't seem to have been made for the widescreen format as quite often during some of the more technical objectives, such as having to trick through a number of rings and achieve a set score, you can't actually see where the next ring is because they are above the top of the screen. Considering the high definition focus of the console and the fact that the vast majority of high definition screens are widescreen it seems like a pretty major oversight. Disappointingly, Amped 3

>> **INDIE BACKED** - Amped boasts a rather huge soundtrack made up of 300 assorted tracks ranging from Indie to pop-punk, house and hip-hop. It's definitely an eclectic mix but there should be a number of tracks any player can find that will be inoffensive. We say inoffensive very deliberately; the soundtrack of Amped 3 may be big but a good number of the songs are very dull. At any rate, it's still better than the plethora of Steve music that made up the soundtracks of the previous two games.

**AVAILABLE ON:**  
X360 / PS3 / REV

**DETAILS:**

**CATEGORY:** Snowboarding  
**PLAYERS:** 1-2  
**DEVELOPER:** Indie Built  
**PUBLISHER:** Take 2  
**PRICE:** \$99.95  
**RATING:** M 15+  
**AVAILABLE:** March 2

**HYPER VERDICT:**

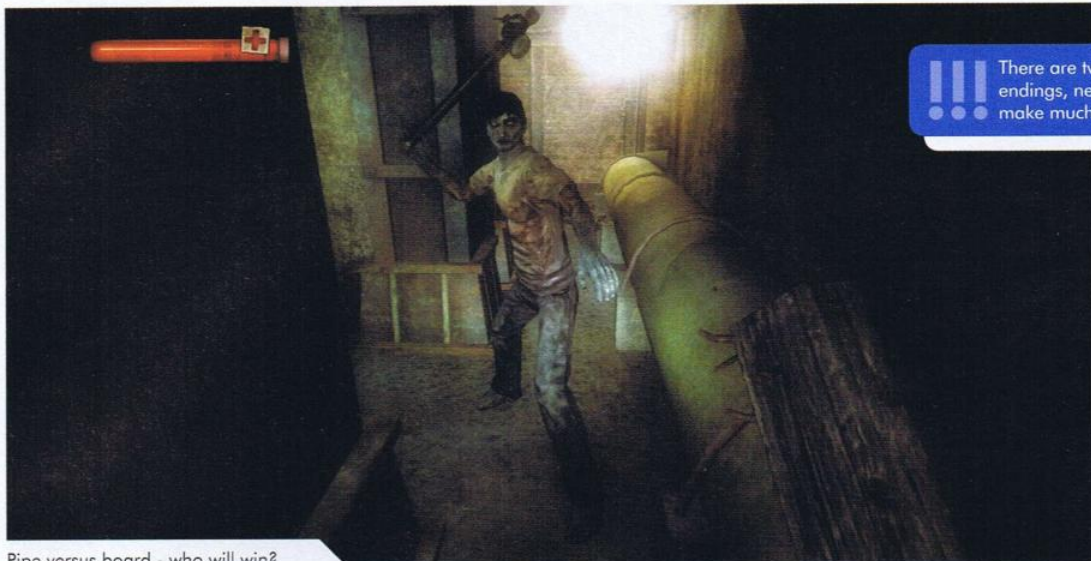
**PLUS:** Pervasively odd, funny, addictive.

**MINUS:** Floaty controls, sad multiplayer, lack of online.

VISUALS 86 SOUND 82 GAMEPLAY 87

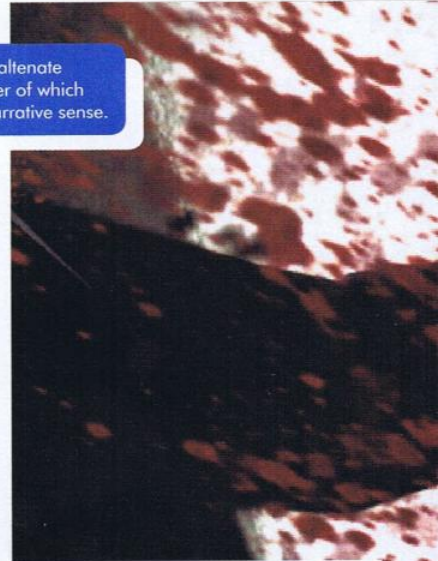
OVERALL  
**86**

A fine game but feels a little rushed for release.



Pipe versus board - who will win?

!!! There are two alternate endings, neither of which make much narrative sense.



A scene cut from Jackass: The Movie

# CONDEMNED: Criminal Origins

**DANIEL WILKS** doesn't need an excuse to kill derelicts

It's a strange feeling to be simultaneously overwhelmed and underwhelmed by a game. Does it leave you with the feeling of simply being whelmed? Old joke, I know, but that's the feeling you get when playing Condemned: Criminal Origins. Part of your brain jumps around saying "WOW", whilst the other gets sick of doing the same thing over and over again. You'll be amazed by the look and the mood

of the game from the gritty *Se7en* inspired opening credits through to the final moments before the rather aimless and nonsensical ending but begin to groan when you hit the umpteenth murderous bum in the head with a board studded with nails.

### BUMFIGHTS

More than any other game on the 360 at the moment (not like there are really that many of them at any

rate) Condemned shows off the advantage of high definition. The look of the game, undeniably its greatest asset is superb, bringing to mind the heightened gritty pseudo-realism of films like *Se7en* and *Fight Club* (as a whole David Fincher deserves a lot of thanks by the staff at Monolith) is crystal clear in its murkiness. The world may be dark and full of long shadows, peeling paint and rotting debris, both human and garbage but the level of detail never falters. Motes of dust swim in the pools of light cast through grimy windows and clouds of real insects swarm around corpses rather than simple black dots. The extra resolution is used to fantastic effect, bringing the dark and dangerous world of Condemned to life and keeping the mood right where it should be — somewhere between the pit of your stomach and the seat of your pants; the general freak out area. Each new area keeps the tension



[up] Child mannequins are always creepy

ramped up by presenting familiar environments that have been turned a little to the left, skewing them in a way that makes them unnerving. Schoolyards and a library after dark become places of subliminal terror as the everyday is looked at through murderous eyes. The devil is in the details and he's a scary bastard.

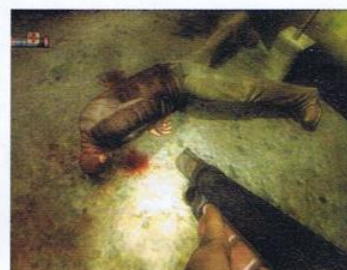
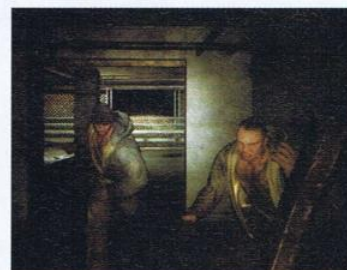
The melee system, based mostly around found weapons such as pipes and pieces of wood (as well as the occasional fire axe, spade or crowbar) is initially engaging but does wear thin towards the end of the game. The player is capable of a basic swing, the speed and damage of which is determined by the weapon wielded, a short term block, a swift kick to the jewels and most importantly a taser. Melee combat revolves around timing the block right to throw the enemy off balance



Never take a taser to a bumfight



NB: Actual gameplay not this bloody



[above] Another murderous vagrant

so you can follow up with a crushing blow to the noggin. A well timed kick to the goolies or a taser to the face can also ruin a killer bum's day. Although the fights remain tense throughout the play time, doing the same thing over and over again detracts from the overall mood of the game. It's as though Monolith balanced up the investigation and combat parts of the title and decided that investigation is for wussies and killing things is better.

## IT'S AS IF MONOLITH DECIDED THAT INVESTIGATION IS FOR WUSSIES AND THAT KILLING THINGS IS BETTER

The few times in the game when you get to use a gun come as something of a relief, not because you really need a gun but because it means the fights are over faster and you can get back to digging on the mood.

### LAW & ORDER: SCU

Unfortunately next to the look and feel of the setting, everything else comes across as being a little undercooked. The level design is generally pretty modular and dull and involves a hell of a lot of backtracking, either to get to the next objective/crime-scene or to go back to pick up some first aid or a new weapon due to the complete lack of

an inventory. In a similar manner the narrative seems to reverse through itself a lot, not making a huge amount of sense. Are the derelicts turning murderous because of a maybe psychic serial killer? Is it a 12 hour parable about the evil that dwell in the hearts of all men (or at least men who don't bathe on a regular basis)? Not needing to tie all of the plot threads together allowing the audience to draw their own conclusions is one of the hallmarks of good writing; being so obtuse that drawing a conclusion is next to impossible is not. What starts as a clever story of a SCU (Serial Crimes Unit) agent hunting for a serial killer known as the Matchmaker within 30 minutes of starting the game transforms into a story of a man on the run trying to clear his own name and find the real perpetrator when his gun is stolen and the two other cops working on the case are murdered with it. Then it becomes obtuse and seemingly more focused on killing derelicts in some rather visceral but all too samey melee battles. <<

>> **CSI** - Forensic evidence plays a role in the game but don't expect to be doing much in the way of sleuthing. The player has access to all of the tools for forensic investigation and an investigators instinct. What this essentially means is that at times during the game an on screen prompt will tell you to investigate an area. The X button brings up whatever piece of equipment is right for the occasion and a little strafing about will generally find the clue which is then conveniently sent back to your lab tech via a video phone. Not exactly the most immersive approach to investigation.

**AVAILABLE ON:**  
**XBOX 360**

### DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Survival Horror

**PLAYERS:** 1

**DEVELOPER:** Monolith

**PUBLISHER:** THQ

**PRICE:** STBA

**RATING:** MA 15+

**AVAILABLE:** March 2

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Incredible atmosphere, beautiful graphics, chilling mood.

**MINUS:** Samey and obtuse.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

95 91 78

OVERALL

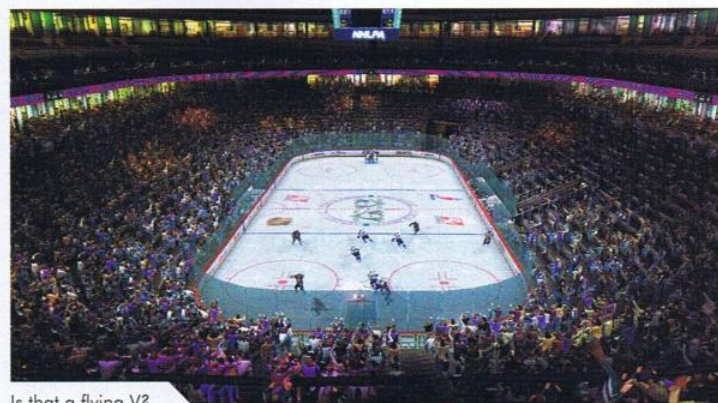
77

Style over substance.

Next month we'll be reviewing NBA 2K6 on Xbox 360... sit tight sports fans.



Tear 'em a new icehole



Is that a flying V?

# NHL 2K6

**DIRK WATCH** is a dirty Canuck

When it comes to sports games there are few as pick up and play friendly as Ice Hockey. It's fast paced, violent and fun, easy to learn but with hidden layers of depth if you look. NHL 2K6, the latest ice hockey game from 2K Sports is all of these things. It's a great game to be sure and destined to be a winner with a couple of friends around but high definition rinks and men with too few teeth aside there is little to differentiate the Xbox 360 version of the game from the PS2 and Xbox versions. That said there is no better hockey sim currently on the market.

### CANADA, PUCK YEAH

Controls are precise and smooth so you don't need to worry about learning too many subtleties if you're new to the genre — face buttons are context sensitive and control passing, dekeing and shooting when you have the puck and various forms of defense when you don't. Aside from quick matches, NHL 2K6

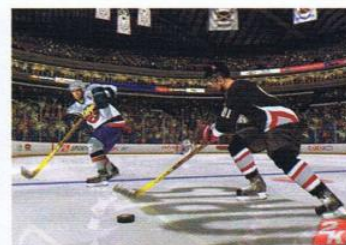
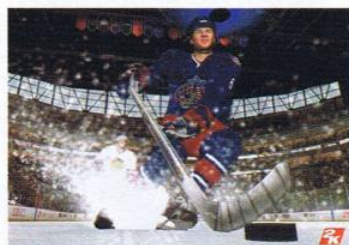
features an extensive career mode, a franchise mode akin to Championship Manager and the like as well as 12 mini-games. Although all of the single player content is good, NHL 2K6 truly shines as a multiplayer game. There are a huge number of teams to unlock, including the infamous 1972 Russian and American teams and each multiplayer match has a number of variables that can be changed to suit your tastes.

There is only one gameplay innovation that separates the 360 version of the game from the current generation and that's a nifty little feature called crease control. Clicking in the right thumbstick when the goalie is selected as active player will transfer the player into a third person perspective of the goalie. The goalie has a green wedge emanating from him showing roughly the area defended. When in crease control the goalie player needs to maneuver a defense reticule over the opponents targeting reticule to block the shot.



Sure, it's not realistic in any sense of the word but it's a fun inclusion.

If you're hanging out for a hockey game on the Xbox 360 then by all means pick up NHL 2K6, it's an excellent and deceptively deep hockey game with enough sim elements to keep purists happy as well as readily accessible gameplay for the uninitiated. If you're not interested in the flashy graphics, however, the PS2 and Xbox builds are very similar so you may want to opt for one of them. <<



**AVAILABLE ON:**  
X360 / PS3/ REV

### DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Ice Hockey  
**PLAYERS:** 1-2  
**DEVELOPER:** 2K Sports  
**PUBLISHER:** 2K Sports  
**PRICE:** \$99.95  
**RATING:** G  
**AVAILABLE:** March 2

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Excellent multiplayer, deep franchise mode, tons of unlockables.  
**MINUS:** Virtually identical to the current generation versions.

VISUALS 87 SOUND 85 GAMEPLAY 84

OVERALL  
**84**

Great hockey. Good looks.

# ANIMEBLITZ



## JANUARY 06

### IN STORES NOW

## AGAINST ALL ODDS A PROMISE WILL BE KEPT. THE PLACE PROMISED IN OUR EARLY DAYS

THE NEW FILM FROM MAKOTO SHINKAI (VOICES OF A DISTANT STAR)

This sci-fi story centers around three teenagers, a rip in the space-time continuum, and the perseverance to keep a promise against all odds. The film captures slice-of-life beauty between three friends, while epic events threaten to drive them apart.

*"It's not just the best anime I've seen this year, it's the best film I've seen this year. And it just may be one of the best anime I've seen, period."* - THE ANIME REVIEW

*"A rare treasure... serious, thoughtful, powerful anime that's as beautifully animated as it is written."* - ANIME ON DVD

#### DVD EXTRAS

- Interviews with the Japanese cast and director
- Original Japanese trailers



## REQUIEM FROM THE DARKNESS

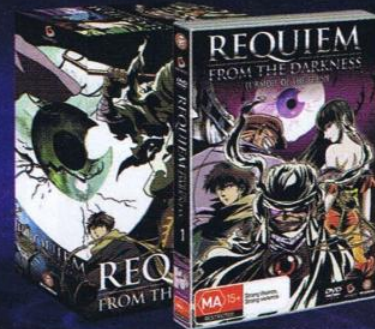
FEAR LURKS IN THE DARKNESS

*"For anyone who's into the horror genre of anime, or just likes a good ghost story around the campfire, you must check this out"*

- ANIME NEWS NETWORK

#### DVD EXTRAS

- Line Art Gallery
- Background Gallery
- Textless Opening and Closing Animations



## KALEIDO STAR

EVER DREAM OF JOINING CIRQUE DU SOLEIL?  
PREPARE TO TAKE CENTRE STAGE!

*"Kaleido Star had me mesmerized since I first saw the trailer... and it's held me since then"*

- ANIME ON DVD

#### DVD EXTRAS

- Commentary
- Character Profiles
- Production Sketches
- Clean Opening and Closing Animation



## DOT HACK LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT COLLECTION

3 DVD BOXSET WITH ALL 12 EPISODES OF .HACK//LEGEND

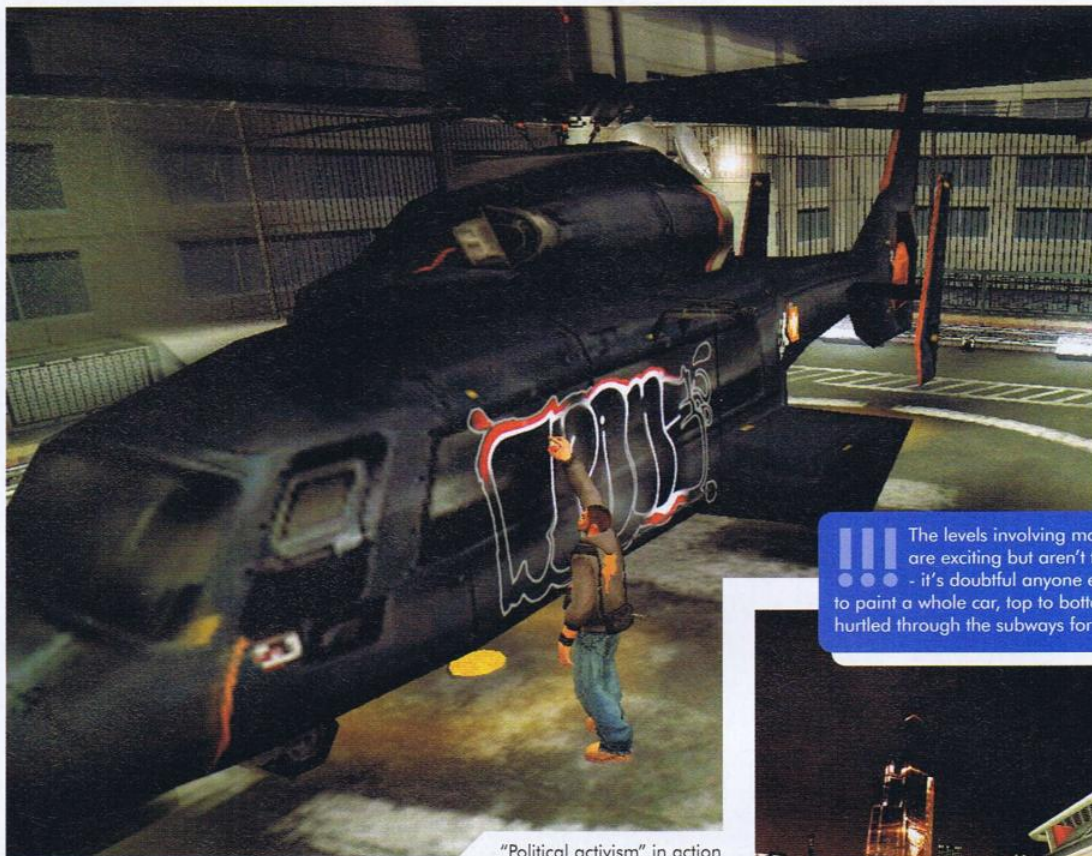
Shugo and his twin sister Rena are the newest players in the hip video game called 'The World' and their adventures are only just beginning!

#### DVD EXTRAS

- Textless Opening and Closing Animations
- Art Gallery and Character Art Gallery
- Video Game Trailer
- Liner Notes

*"Truly Spectacular"* - T.H.E.M. ANIME REVIEWS

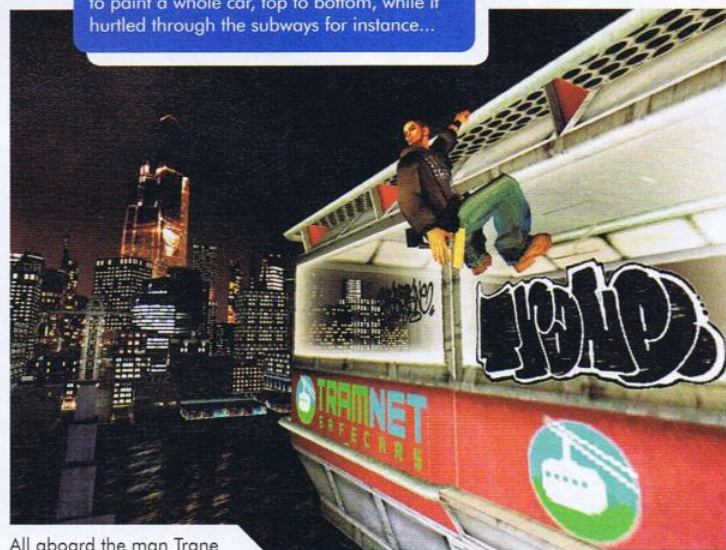




"Political activism" in action



|||| The levels involving moving trains are exciting but aren't that authentic  
 ●●● - it's doubtful anyone ever managed to paint a whole car, top to bottom, while it hurtled through the subways for instance...



All aboard the man Trane

# MARK ECKO'S GETTING UP: Contents Under Pressure

**MALCOLM CAMPBELL** manages to avoid any erection jokes. Oh. Dammit.

It may be the height of arrogance to stamp ownership in the title of a game when it's doubtful he wrote even a single line of code, but Mark Ecko deserves a lot of credit in bringing this game out. If we believe the publicity, it's been his ambition to make a game that honoured his heroes, the graffiti writers of New York, and in doing so provide "the ultimate course in graffiti". That's a tough call, risking not only his reputation as a street-savvy-type dude if the game looks fake, but the ire of legends like Cope2 if they are misrepresented. Now, I'm no Bronx bomber with twenty years of paint under my nails, but I'd wager that Ecko and The Collective have done a decent job of making Getting Up a pretty authentic experience.

## BAD FOR OZONES

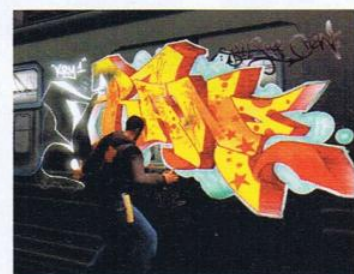
It's not hard to slip into the role of Trane as he goes about making his mark on New Radius, the city with more than passing resemblance to

New York. Making walls less blank with a quick marker or aerosol tag quickly becomes instinctive, whether the mission objectives call for it or not, and making a real mess of things is a guilty pleasure (enjoyed within the legal confines of a fictional videogame, of course). On his travels Trane will also see the tags and pieces of real-life graffiti legends, many of which he'll be able to photograph, adding a short bio of the artist to Trane's blackbook (a writer's sketchbook and visual diary). This little collect-them-all gameplay element gives Getting Up a real sense of the history and personalities of the graffiti community and was the highlight of the game for me, although I was hoping the artists' portfolios might have included a few more flicks.

Trane's graffiti looks pretty authentic too. I had worries about the sort of faux-graffiti you get sometimes in movies and games that are the product of people that

have only ever used a spraycan to touch-up their garden furniture, but it's not bad at all. There are quite a few pieces that will have you saying, "hey, that looks good/dope/fresh/pants tres bien/sick mate" and there's a large range of styles to choose from.

There's no getting around the fact that Getting Up has a bit of an urban flavour, being a game about young men sneaking around urban environments doing urban things. So of course it has a rap soundtrack. Surprisingly, it's really good, with some thoughtfully selected tracks that add to the vibe without dominating it and a whole host of exclusive songs from respected artists like RJD2, Rakim and Talib Kwali, who also lends his voice to Trane. You would probably think that an urban-flavoured game with Mark Ecko's name in the title would see you customising Trane appearance (that is, playing dress-ups) with a huge range of unlockable licensed Ecko urban clothing, but no! Not even



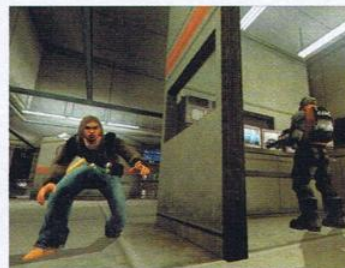
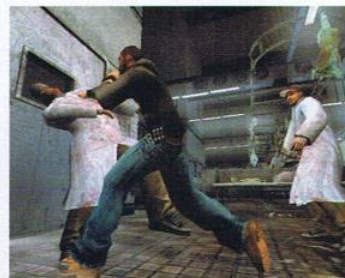
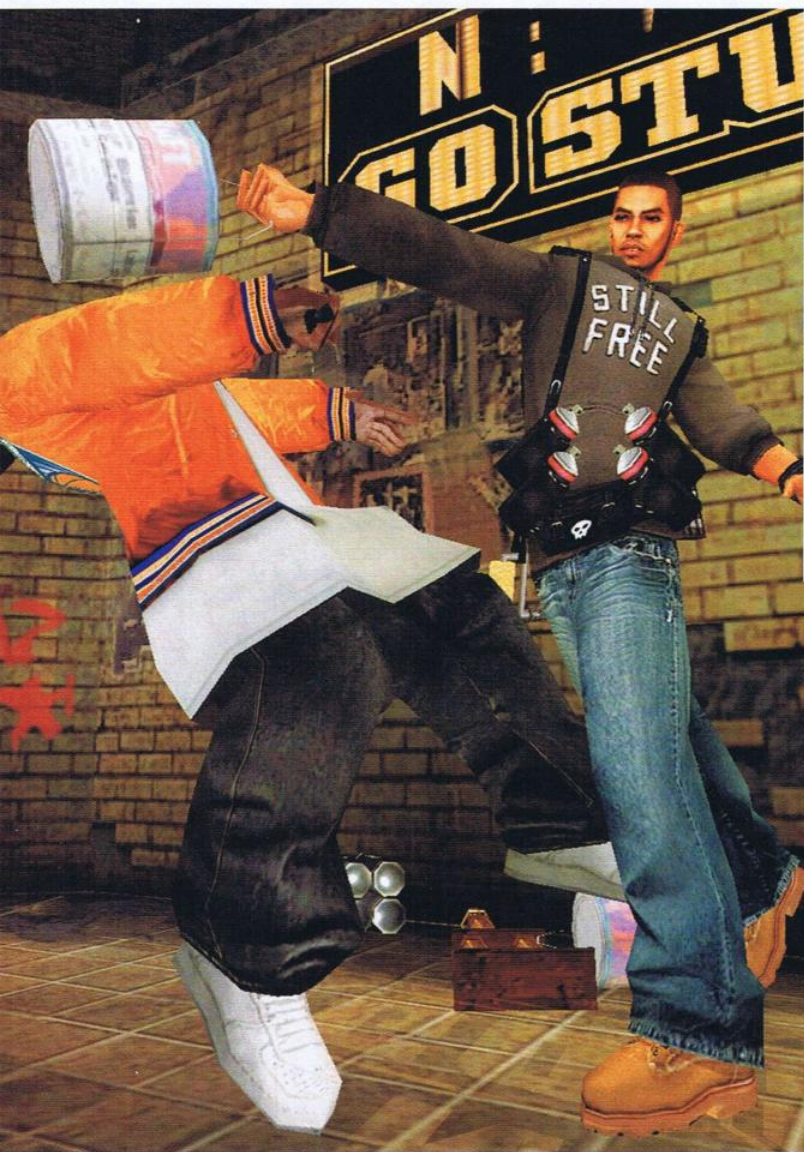
a little bit! Woohoo! Credit to Mark Ecko and The Collective for displaying some good taste and discretion.

## ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN

Authenticity, atmosphere and real-life references do not make a game however, and I can't help feeling a bit disappointed by Getting Up. Mainly, I didn't think I'd end up fighting riot cops so much, but let's start at the beginning.

Getting Up follows the story (see box-out) of how Trane goes from lowly toy to all-city legend and is structured in a strict linear manner. A free-roam approach would have been preferable, but narrative can help





Home Alone Brooklyn style

focus a game so we'll let that slide until the sequel. The game progresses in mini-levels, each with objectives to be met and a range of other non-critical objectives. Typically there will be three or more primary pieces to paint, some secondaries and some Freeform challenges - "hit this wall with 10 marker tags in 45 seconds" being a common one. You can mark most surfaces with small tags, stickers and posters, but the larger stuff like throw-ups, pieces and murals (that is, the good stuff) can only be painted in designated areas. A small annoyance, but one that stifles a player's creativity. Hitting the intuition button will guide Trane to the paint spots and from there it's a matter of jumping, climbing and shimmying to the X-marker. Occasionally this can be

### MAKING WALLS LESS BLANK WITH A QUICK MARKER OR AEROSOL TAG QUICKLY BECOMES INSTINCTIVE

satisfyingly challenging, but more often the route is clearly signposted, standard action-platformer fare. The process of painting is initially quite fun (within the legal confines of a fictional videogame, of course). An outline appears on the wall and Trane must fill it in, watching for drips and minding the can pressure to ensure the piece is neat and scores more "rep" points. The problem is the novelty wears off quickly and it's not long before it becomes a chore. The 'fat cap' nozzles speed the process up once unlocked but it's obvious The Collective saw the limitations in the mechanic and

decided to inject some variety with the wheat-paste posters and roller pieces later in the game. As you may imagine, they get tired quickly too. Then there's the fighting. If you're not stealthy enough and someone sees you (a common occurrence - Trane has virtually no peripheral vision when painting) then it's time for a good old-fashioned barney, complete with pipes and two-by-fours. But while the fighting engine is better than average and copping beef from other writers is supposedly part of the graf lifestyle, at times there seems to be a greater emphasis placed on duking it out with cops and construction workers than on the graffiti. Tellingly, the unlockables list is full of special moves and arena battles.

My expectations for Getting Up may have overshadowed what is in truth a decent game, but I can't get past the disappointment that the stellar effort that was put into the art, the blackbook and the soundtrack didn't carry through to the gameplay. <<

» **LEGAL BEAGLES** - Despite a strong disclaimer on the boot-up screen there's no getting away from the fact that Trane is participating in highly illegal activities. The developers have attempted to justify his actions by making him a political activist - about halfway through the game Trane's motivations shift dramatically from his aspirations of being a graffiti King to exposing a corrupt mayor, bringing down the oppressive police state and uncovering the truth behind his father's death. Funnily enough, the plot is remarkably similar to a 1980s b-grade pseudo-graffiti movie called Turk 182, right up to the use of the Brooklyn Bridge as a massive political statement...

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

DETAILS:  
**CATEGORY:** 3rd-Person Action  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
**DEVELOPER:** The Collective  
**PUBLISHER:** Atari  
**PRICE:** \$89.95  
**RATING:** MA 15+  
**AVAILABLE:** Feb 17

**HYPER VERDICT:**  
**PLUS:** The involvement of the real-life legends, soundtrack.

**MINUS:** Pedestrian game design, not enough freedom, not enough trains.

VISUALS 85 SOUND 92 GAMEPLAY 78

OVERALL  
**80**

As a tribute to graf it's great, as a game it could've been better.



Tankfully there will be no bad wordplay in this caption. Oops



Don't step on your Army Men dude!

# BATTALION WARS

**STEPHEN FARRELLY** likes making things explode

Originally pitched as the console update to Advance Wars, Battalion Wars would eventually shift focus as an all-new, original title for GameCube developed by British studio, Kuju. Although the specific reason for removing the Advance Wars leg-up from the game has never been revealed, Battalion Wars still manages to mirror many facets of its original older sibling, despite the forced segregation. What results from this is a fun and enjoyable military romp that tries to be its own game, without getting away with at least a little comparison (and thanks) to Advance Wars.

## TOTALLY CENTRIC

The first noticeable parallel to the Advance Wars series is in Battalion Wars' presentation. The world maps acting as the main menu background, the bright colours and Nintendo-centric fonts and bleeps all look borrowed from

Advance Wars while the game's central characters, Commanding Officers from two opposing armies, have the same appearance and personalities as the COs from Advance Wars. It's plainly obvious, even from the outset, that this was designed as an instalment in the Advance Wars series. But, whatever the reason for the split it doesn't stop Battalion Wars from being a capable game in its own right.

There is a wafer thin story as background to the action in Battalion Wars. Think an uneasy truce between two nations - the Western Frontier and the Tundra Empire - with a long history of conflict. Imagine, for a minute, that this truce breaks... it's time to get on with the killing.

Throughout each skirmish, the COs will banter with each other in much the same way they did in Advance Wars, and for the most part it's light-hearted and humorous enough to crack a smile.



Jeeps, tanks, gunships, jets, transport vehicles... this game's got you covered.



[above] The other type of blow job



[above] Battalion Strike



But otherwise, the real tale is told in the mission objectives. Just like Battlefield 2: Modern Combat, each mission in Battalion Wars follows on to the next. So, rescuing scouts in one mission means the scouts will give you vital information to act upon in the following mission. It's all preset, so it never feels dynamic, but it's a nice touch.

Furthering the parallels to Modern Combat, Battalion Wars also lets you hot swap (though the emphasis on doing so isn't so dominant). The idea is at any given moment during the course of your mission, you can take on the role of anyone from your basic grunt, to Flame Veterans, Heavy and Light Tank drivers and more. Taking control of these characters will let you set them

up in the tactical position you need, but it's entirely possible to order them from your Command Bar, also.

## GO GENERAL HERMAN!

Battalion Wars succeeds in its pick-up-and-play value. There is much to learn throughout your campaign, but the game is designed in such a way that the learning curve is never too steep, or for that matter, condescending. In fact, the game does an excellent job of teaching you the basics and allowing you to tackle each mission in any way you see fit. At times it's blatantly obvious what you have to do, but for the most part there is enough recourse in your arsenal of combat commands to allow you to tackle objectives with a distinct



Not pictured, gamer with Light Gun



degree of strategy and style.

You'll be rewarded at the end of each mission with an A, B, C or D ranking based on percentages of Speed, Technique and Power. The overall percentage from these scores is your basis for the aforementioned grade. Naturally, the higher the grade the more you unlock within the game.

The overall mission structure is fairly brief, though you will find yourself having to repeat (if not for a higher grade, then because some missions are just bastards to complete). But this brief nature keeps the flow of the game in check, and while snippets of the story are interjected throughout, you'll find the drive for pushing on is to see what the next tactical objective is, as opposed to what Tsar Gorgi has up his sleeve next.

## BATTALION WARS IS FUN; IT'S EASY TO LEARN, DIFFICULT TO MASTER AND INCREDIBLY ADDICTIVE

Initially the game seems clunky, and even childish. We couldn't help but feel we were in control of a kitted up Lemming who'd joined the Nintendo army, and controlling him didn't feel right at first. All the game characters are cartoon-like in appearance (in keeping with the Advance Wars theme), as well as the vehicles which, though inventive, also carry the kiddie aesthetic. Environments on the other hand are at least semi-realistic in design, though not too much that it throws the game's visual aesthetic out of balance. This doesn't mean the game is all mushrooms and pink though, in fact, far from it.

Battalion Wars can actually be quite cruel — watching one of your comrades running around on fire might look funny while it's happening, but seeing his lifeless body slump to the ground while his spirit departs for the next world is a grounding element indeed. Throughout, you're reminded of the nature of war, whether you're liberating POWs, capturing command centres or destroying stored armament — life and death remains a constant price for your actions.

Battalion Wars is fun; it's easy to learn and difficult to master. It's incredibly addictive and reeks of Nintendo. Kuju have done a great job to maintain the Nintendo tradition of addictive and quality gameplay. The game isn't perfect — the lack of a multiplayer mode severely hurts this product, and the presentation could easily put a lot of people off, but anyone willing to invest some time in this will definitely have plenty to gain. <<

❖❖ **NO FRIENDS HUH?** According to Kuju, a multiplayer mode was too difficult to make "satisfactory to all gamers". They had working multiplayer modes but couldn't rest on a design direction to maintain a balanced approach for all players. The problem with this, however, is that ten minutes with this game will make you WANT multiplayer even more than the single player campaign. The game pulls off big environments as well as countless soldiers and vehicles on-screen at any one time... it would have been sooo great \*sob\*. Tsk, tsk Nintendo and Kuju.

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

### DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** 3rd-Person Action

**PLAYERS:** 1

**DEVELOPER:** Kuju

**PUBLISHER:** Nintendo

**PRICE:** \$99.95

**RATING:** PG

**AVAILABLE:** Now

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Addictive gameplay with enough strategy and lateral thinking.

**MINUS:** No multiplayer, kiddie visuals, sometimes awkward controls.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
78	83	86

OVERALL

82

A fun, adventurous romp that needed multiplayer.



This is one of our actual screenshots...



# SWORD OF ETHERIA

**DANIEL WILKS** isn't in Kansas anymore

Trust the Japanese to take a simple (if somewhat dark) and much beloved story by Frank L. Baum and turn it into something... else. *Sword of Etheria*, believe it or not is a very tenuous transposition of the Oz stories, made most famous by the film *Wizard of Oz*. Of course, coming from Japan, the land of the Rising Sun (and rising eyebrow), don't go expecting Munchkins, flying monkeys, lovable tin men and witches of the wicked and good varieties. Expect a boy with no real memory of the past, a

musclebound, surly but generally kind leonine warrior, a mysterious chick with a spear, gods who hate you and are kidnapping/killing all of the children around a certain age, giant monsters with jetpacks and some vaguely justified mysticism. Oh yeah, I nearly forgot; there's also a red, winged, talking demonic looking cat who can turn into a sword and seems to know far more than he is letting on. His name is Toto. To use a rather hackneyed phrase, "this ain't your daddy's *Wizard of Oz*".

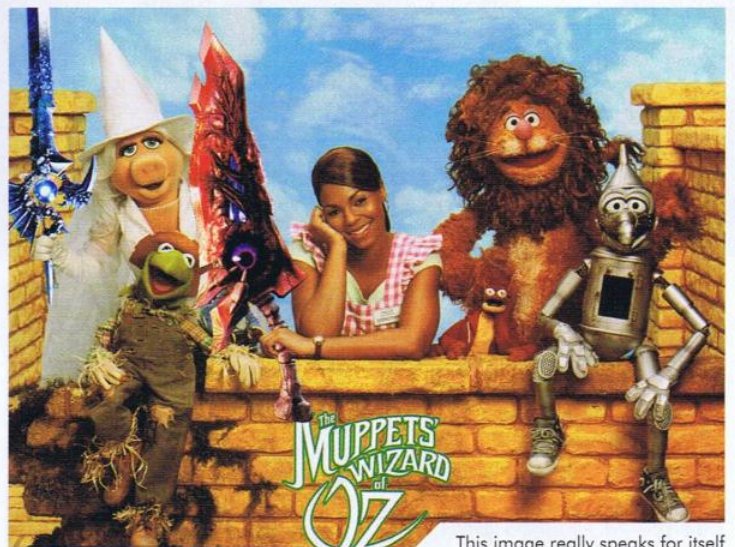
## SWINGING TOTO

There's no real point going into the plot. It doesn't really make a lot of sense but acts as a fine excuse to prompt you to swing Toto at another bunch of enemies. For the most part there is little to differentiate *Sword of Etheria* from the numerous other sword games on the market. You mash a button to attack, another to block and yet another to jump.



[above] And this would be the other...

Why the hell is Toto a cat? Toto is a dog. A flying demon dog who turns into a sword is logical but a cat is just beyond the pale.



This image really speaks for itself



[above] Official site instructions

It's simple and rather effective. What does make *Sword of Etheria* different is the special/power up system. All sword games have some way of powering up attacks so some time in combat you can unleash a massive blow doing huge damage. It's the nature of the beast. *Sword of Etheria* utilises a juggling mechanism for powering up attacks.

After the first few fights in the game you will find yourself with two AI controlled henchmen, both of whom will fight by your side. They can be given simple orders like "come here" or to attack a specific target. During combat you can finish a combo by either launching a target up or away; if one of your hench-people is close enough to the enemy they will attack it and



[above] Sweet fan art. Take that Konami!

keep the juggle combo going, sending it to the next AI character and finally back to the player. The longer the juggle is kept up the higher the "tension" meter gets, making for stronger and stronger deadly attacks. It's great, it's fun and very addictive. High juggle combos also reward the player with a large amount of Etheria (the magic widget of the game) which can be used between levels to increase player stats and make items such as better armour or magic amulets.



## 4、まわせ！まわせ！



敵がふっとんだ先に俺やアルミラがいればお楽しみの始まりだ！  
俺たちがガンガン追い討ちしてボウズにパスするぜ！  
そいつをまたぶっとばして攻撃をつなげれば、俺たちのテンションも急上昇よ！

Super Happy Bounce Hit Game



Malky's impression of Sword of Etheria

## 5、いっぱいぶちかませ！



[up] Why don't our websites look like this?

Unfortunately the rest of the game isn't so great. The level design is mediocre at best, comprising little more than a series of interconnected rooms requiring the player to kill all of the enemies present, as well as the occasional monster generator to unlock the door to the next area. At the end of each series of vaguely interconnected rooms is an inevitable boss that may look

## TO USE A RATHER HACKNEYED PHRASE, "THIS AIN'T YOUR DADDY'S WIZARD OF OZ"

impressive but rarely lives up to expectation. Some of the bosses are stupidly easy to beat whilst other will have you pulling your hair out in frustration, not because they are hard or that you can't work out the gimmick for beating them, rather that your AI companions do little to help aside from throw a few futile attacks and gain the attention of the boss while you're trying to attack its weak point.

### RATHER NICE

It's a pity that the general design of the game falls down because the actual look of the game is rather nice. The characters are well

designed and animated, albeit in a rather anime inspired way and the pre-rendered cutscenes, when they appear are actually truly spectacular, utilising washed out colours, expressionist styling and odd angles and imagery. The sound is a mixed bag ranging from some decent voice acting — the guy who plays Leon sounds like every other lovable tough guy in a Japanese game ever — to some average music and awful sound effects, the latter being repetitive to the extreme, seemingly only featuring a half dozen different battle noises, if that.

Although not the most sterling example of the genre, the combination of the addictive juggle combo system and the very warped take on Wizard of Oz give Sword of Etheria a kind of car crash fascination; sure, you won't necessarily come out the other side having an entirely enjoyable experience but you'll want to take just another look to see if there's something recognisable sticking out of the mess. <<

» **WICKED REFERENCES** - One of the major appeals to Sword of Etheria is trying to find those rare moments where you can see a vague reference to the source material. On a very basic level the hero's little sister is named Dorothy, Leon uses a feline claw for a weapon (and can transform into a shiny version of Lion-O) and of course Toto, but there are other more obtuse references. There's a magical maelstrom at the beginning that presumably brings our hero into being echoing the twister that brings Dorothy to Oz. There are flying (non-monkey) evil henchmen who kidnap Dorothy. How many references can you find?

AVAILABLE ON:  
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action  
PLAYERS: 1  
DEVELOPER: Konami  
PUBLISHER: Konami  
PRICE: \$99.95  
RATING: TBA  
AVAILABLE: February

### HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Juggles, no munchkins, WTHIWWJP?

MINUS: WTHIWWJP?, poor level design, bosses.

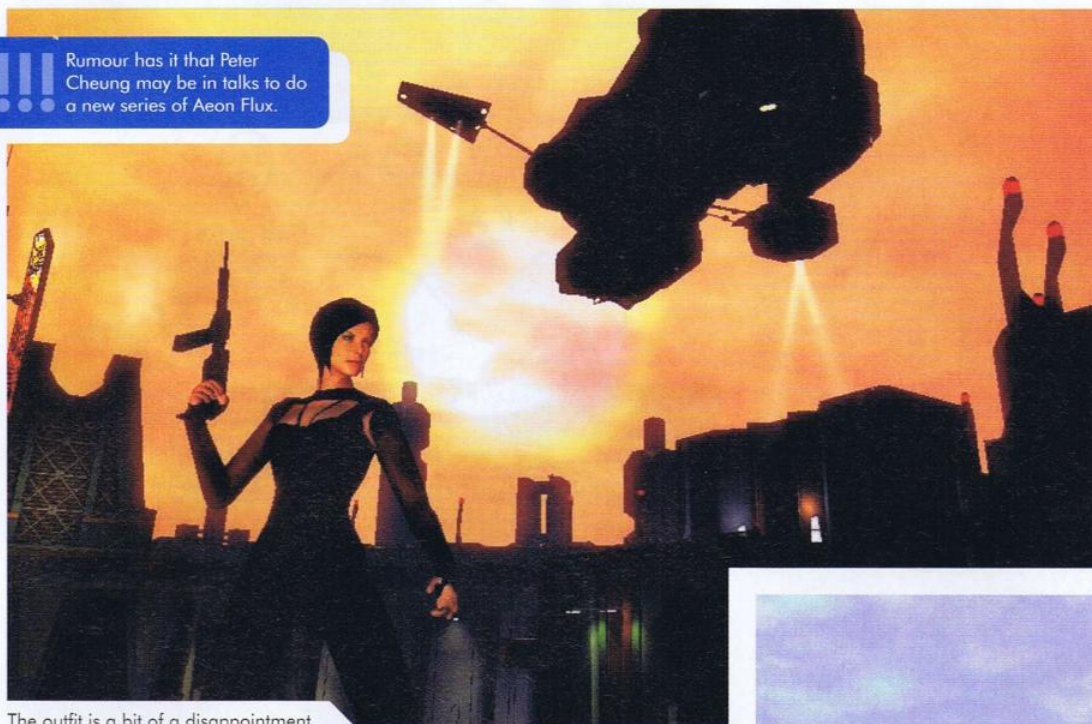
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
81	78	77

OVERALL

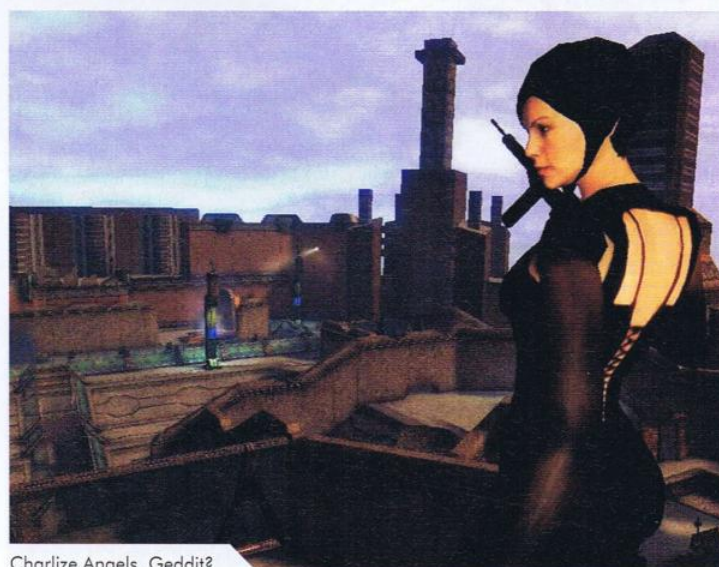
74

Hit monsters with a talking flying red demon cat sword.

!!! Rumour has it that Peter Cheung may be in talks to do a new series of Aeon Flux.



The outfit is a bit of a disappointment



Charlize Angels. Geddit?

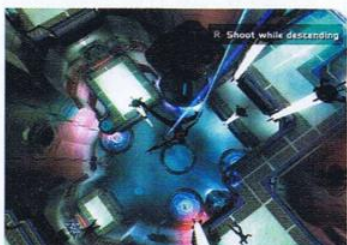
# AEON FLUX

**DANIEL WILKS** wore a leather codpiece to write this review

I'm a huge fan of Peter Cheung's subversive animated series Aeon Flux. I love the style, I love the moral ambiguity and the sheer strangeness of it all. Hearing that a game and movie were coming out gave me pause but I managed to hold out a little hope that Hollywood would not bend over a beloved series and give it a right good reaming. After reading numerous reviews of the film stating that it is this year's Catwoman my heart sank.

## HUNTING AND SPYING

Aeon Flux the game owes a lot more to the animated series than it does to the movie (although Aeon is modeled after Charlize Theron), charting her morally grey and rather abstruse adventures



between the Monican Rebellion and Bregna. As with the cartoon each mission has little to do with the last and can see her playing on any side of the conflict, ranging from spying for the Rebellion through to hunting malefactors for the dictator of Bregna, Aeon's sometime lover Trevor Goodchild.

As Aeon, players embark on a number of missions ranging from spying on an underground science facility to planting counter propaganda graffiti around Bregna and everything in between. To do this she is armed with a variety of acrobatic moves, some devastating hand to hand combos, nifty finishing moves and a multipurpose gun that can fire four types of round. Level design is for the most part made up of a number of movement puzzles akin to PoP followed by some hand to hand combat or shooting and a bit of puzzle solving either utilising Aeon in a big rolling sphere or a smaller rolling sphere used to hack computers and security doors. Movements are for the most part context sensitive so the levels are more about working out where to

stand and jump rather than what skills to use but it's still rather fun and the context sensitivity does allow the animators to go all out with the style of the moves. Puzzles, all utilising a similar "keep the ball on the track and make it to the end zone in the time limit" are fun but can be very unwieldy, especially in the case of the smaller remote ball, leading to numerous reloads and the occasional thrown controller.

Combat, whilst looking good can be very frustrating due to the lack of any lock on functionality, instead targeting the closest enemy in front of you. The same applies to shooting, with Aeon locking on to the nearest target and giving the player no way to switch to the desired target aside from running around and hoping. Although riddled with inconsistencies and small graphical glitches (due to the Bloodrayne 2 engine that has in built problems with clipping and ragdolling), Aeon Flux is quite a decent game; not great by any stretch of the imagination but definitely a pleasant way to spend a few hours. <<

AVAILABLE ON:  
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action  
PLAYERS: 1  
DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality  
PUBLISHER: THQ  
PRICE: \$79.95  
RATING: M15+  
AVAILABLE: Now

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Good animations, retains the ambiguity of the series.

**MINUS:** Poor clipping, no lock on, retains the ambiguity of the series.

VISUALS 79 SOUND 76 GAMEPLAY 74

OVERALL  
**71**

Better than expected but lacking on many fronts.



I will? Have my! Revenge... DEMON



This may look cool but it's lying to you



# SWORDS OF DESTINY

**DANIEL WILKS**... is playing... a game?

Swords of Destiny has the worst voice acting in the history of poorly translated Japanese games. It's terrible. Imagine if you can, the world's worst news reader forgetting their glasses so they have to concentrate on the auto-prompter a little too hard and simultaneously forgetting that the end of a line does not mean the end of a sentence. The only way we can explain how bad the voice acting is that the actual "cast" were probably people that were sitting around the office on the day and instead of using an actual script they simply played the cutscenes with the sound off and had the "actors" read the subtitles. That's the way it sounds. No rehearsal or even knowledge of the line before they read it. No takes, just one fluid bit of verbal excrement. Each line is

read in time to the subtitles, pausing for as long as it takes for the next line to appear on screen and the "actors" obviously have no knowledge of the direction the sentences are heading because they may start a sentence inflected as though it were a statement only to find a few subtitles and inappropriate pauses on that it's actually the beginning of a question. Add to that the fact that the cast sound bored, mispronounce all of the names and Chinese words and generally sound worse than any amateur theatre company or, even worse, those dickheads who dressed up in skeleton costumes and carried around a coffin with "education" written on the side, all the while chanting bullshit slogans to protest university fees. Damn I hate those guys.

## BAD COP

By now you're probably wondering why more than half of the review is made up of bitching about the voice acting. Basically that's the most memorable part of the game. The level design is generic swordplay stuff, the monsters are basic variations of little guy with sword, big guy with club, exploding head, dragon or bat



thing, the story is rendered into something that needs to be skipped due to the voice acting and the camera is frustratingly erratic. Sure, the central gimmick of combining one of three magic swords with blades dropped by downed enemies to create more powerful fusion blades is excellent, as is the critical system that sees the player killing multiple enemies if they manage to hit one when the targeting reticule is purple. Unfortunately the little areas of good are drowned in the sea of average. If you're in need of a sword game with a great gimmick, see if you can con a friend into buying it. Otherwise you should go and play Sword of Etheria instead and hope Ninety Nine Nights is out soon. <<



[above] Cue button mashing... NOW!

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

### DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Action

**PLAYERS:** 1

**DEVELOPER:** Artoon

**PUBLISHER:** Atari

**PRICE:** \$79.95

**RATING:** TBA

**AVAILABLE:** Feb 24

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Great sword fusion gimmick, criticals are sweet.

**MINUS:** Worst voice acting ever, average.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
78	48	63

OVERALL

58

So average only the bad is truly memorable.



I feel like we're being watched



This is for ruining my race in Mario Kart!



## MARIO & LUIGI: Partners in time

▶▶ Normally I'm not a huge RPG fan, preferring my gaming to include more sniper rifles, hadokens and slow motion crashing than the humble RPG can provide, but there is one exception to the rule — any RPG with "Mario" in the title. Yes, whether it's of the Paper variety or some form of Saga, there are few games that I anticipate more than a new Nintendo RPG. Partners in Time comes from Alphasream, the guys behind the wonderful GBA game Superstar Saga, and once again they've delivered a top quality title.

### MUPPET BABIES ALL OVER AGAIN?

Where Superstar Saga innovatively delivered dual character control — a button for both Mario and Luigi and a number of team up moves



that factored into puzzle solving and battles, Partners in Time ups the ante. Through some paradoxical events, Mario and Luigi must team up with their baby selves in order to save the Mushroom Kingdom from the Shroobs — an alien threat that have taken over Peach's castle and decimated the Mushroom Kingdom of the past. Thus, you'll use Peach's Castle in the present as a home base and travel via a number of portals into different parts of the Mushroom Kingdom in the past to collect all of the Cobalt Star pieces (what a shock! Fragments of something crystalline have dispersed throughout the land... again) which you hope will bust out enough Voltron-esque power to defeat Princess Shroobella or whatever her name is. Once again, the story is just an excuse for the action and boy is the action good.

Alphasream have utilised the DS brilliantly for this title and controlling all four characters soon becomes second nature. A lot of the time you'll be controlling Mario and Luigi carrying baby Mario and baby Luigi on their backs, but it's when you split the brothers

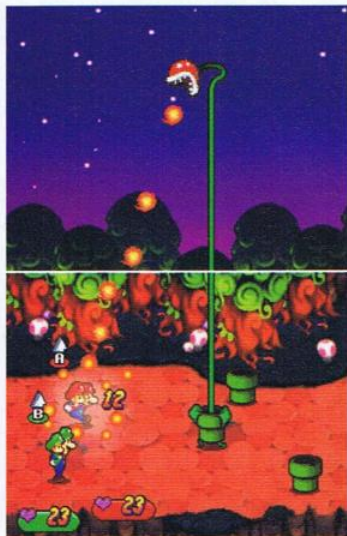
up into two teams that the game gets interesting. Each of the face buttons is assigned to a brother, so even though you're controlling the movement of the team, each brother jumps independently using a face button. The shoulder buttons are modifiers, giving the pairings a whole host of moves, from abilities that return from the last game such as tunneling into the ground to get under gates, through to new moves like rolling into a ball. Then there are moves that require the pairs to interact. When Mario and Luigi are in a ball for instance, they can run over baby Mario and baby Luigi to flatten them out, which in turn allows the baby brothers to get through narrow gaps. The variety of abilities is well thought out and has given the developers ample room to move in terms of movement puzzles. That said, there's never anything that will take you longer than a few seconds to work out which is a bit of a shame. The dual screens come into play when the foursome are split this way. Normally the top screen displays a map of the area (which is broken up into distinct rooms — as opposed to the open worlds of Superstar Saga),



but if the babies use their special skills to get into a new area they'll appear on the top screen. There are numerous puzzles where you must switch between the older brothers on the bottom screen and the babies on the top to progress, and all switching between characters and screens is gratifyingly seamless.

The battle mechanics are much expanded too, and take Action Commands to a whole new level. What this means is that even though battles are turn-based, you never EVER have to just sit there and watch moves play out. There's always something you can do. At a basic level this means hitting a button when you jump on an enemy to maximise damage, or jumping when an enemy attacks to avoid damage, but now that you're often taking four characters into battle, there's





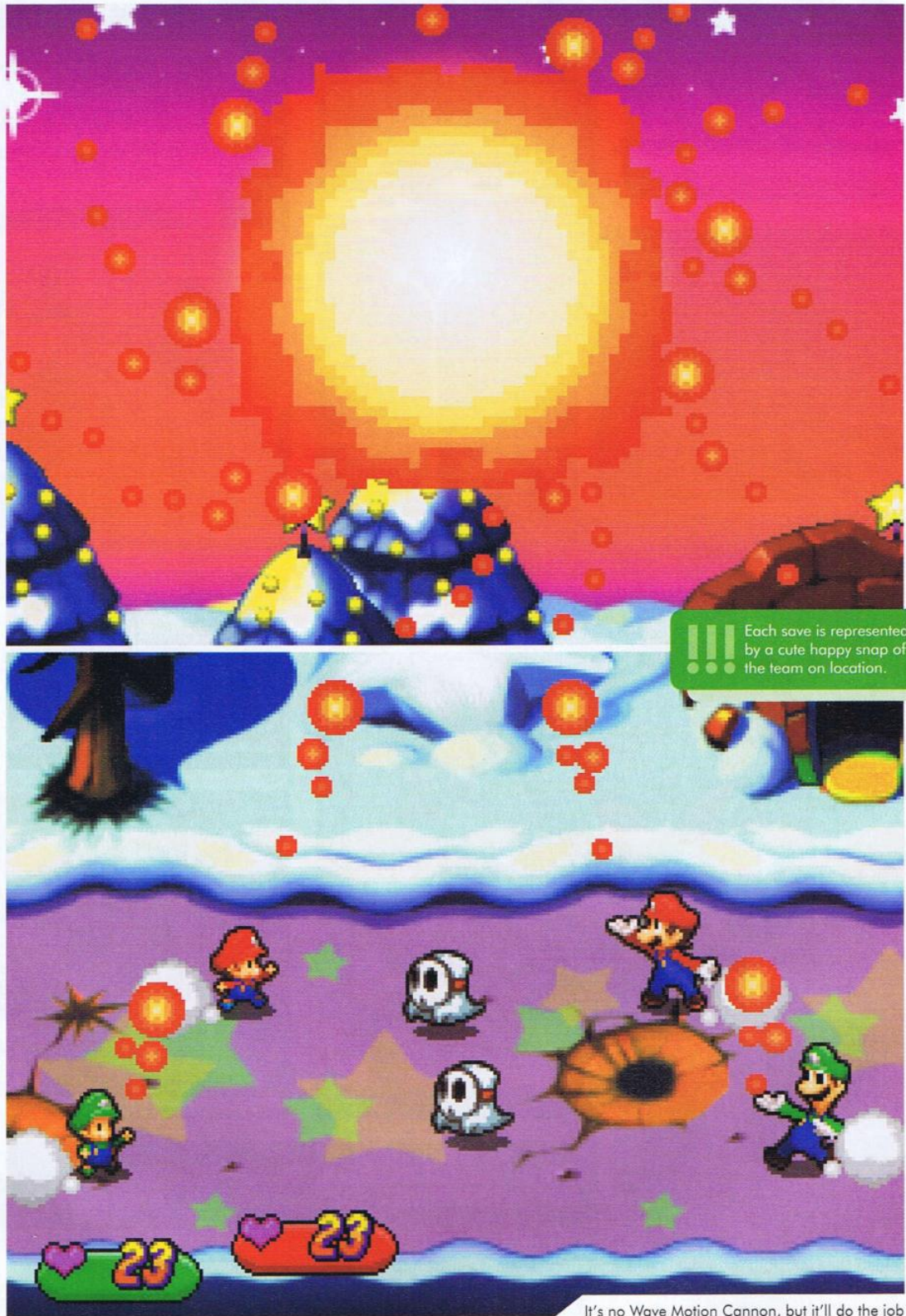
[up] Happy to see me?



[up] Child abuse Mario style

a hell of a lot more to it. Indeed, every hit you get when battling as a pair can be parlayed into a double hit when all four characters are available, so you'll try to keep the li'l and big bros teamed up as much as possible. There are some cool modifiers on moves too. Take the red and green shell special attacks. If you have just Mario and Luigi you'll kick off the shell at the enemy and after it hits it will bounce back to the other brother who must hit his button to kick it at the enemy again. So far so simple. If you have all four characters though, one of the babies will ride the shell and if you hit his button when it hits the enemy you'll deliver a much stronger attack. As the shell spins back and forth you're hitting three buttons in a faster and faster rhythm, which is actually harder than it sounds, and quite satisfying when you nail it.

Even the basic attacks like a head bonk become almost balletic with team up attacks. Mario and baby Mario leap at an enemy and as they make contact you hit baby Mario's button so he can get the first strike in. This causes Mario to pirouette up into the air and as he comes down



Each save is represented by a cute happy snap of the team on location.

It's no Wave Motion Cannon, but it'll do the job

you hit his button for a second strike. It's all about hitting the right button at the right time, and it soon becomes second nature as almost every battle has you jumping each brother independently to avoid an attack or utilising one of the special items that requires all four buttons to pull off. Simply put, Partners in Time's battle mechanics are brilliant.

The enemies are just as well designed and weighted. When they attack a little icon on screen will show you whether you'll be defending yourself with either a jump or your hammer. Each

Mario		Luigi	
HP	37	HP	20
POW	19	POW	26
DEF	26	DEF	15
SPEED	21	SPEED	26
STRENGTH	18	STRENGTH	17

Wife's Slacks		Wife's Slacks	
HP	33	HP	32
POW	31	POW	37
DEF	35	DEF	30
SPEED	20	SPEED	24
STRENGTH	30	STRENGTH	20

Item	Value
Branded Slacks	287
Preferred Pants	224
Patched Slacks	94
Starchy Jeans	71

World famous and well-made slacks that will last and last.

### >> STACKS OF SLACKS ON RACKS

Like Superstar Saga, Partners in Time utilises a clothing and badge system. Each brother can wear one pair of "slacks" (now there's an antiquated word) and have one badge equipped at any one time. Pants give you stat bonuses, while badges can have any number of effects. You may get a boost in power or defence by getting a "Great" rating when using a special attack item. You may get a powerful first attack in battle. You may be more likely to get Lucky hits. There are a huge number of badges in the game, and like clothes they can be both bought and found so it's worth exploring every corner of each map.



While primarily a family friendly title, there are a few slightly disturbing elements, like the fact that the Shroobs power their UFOs with energy extracted from imprisoned Toads, which is then funnelled into a very Slurm factory-esque creature.



You'll cut your own ears off when baby Peach starts crying



By law every Jap RPG must feature at least 1000 ellipsis

enemy has a number of variations in their attacks, but they're all signposted by subtle movements. An enemy may fly up to the top screen then swoop back down again, sometimes taking a pause before attacking, sometimes not. At first you'll jump as soon as it begins its descent, getting it right only half the time, but it's not long before you realise that the indicator

**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR FOES LIES NOT IN RAW POWER BUT IN THE ACTION COMMANDS**

for the pause is a little hop on the top screen. Once you've worked that out there's no reason to ever get hit by that enemy again. Every opponent is like this and it means that you don't just master combat by getting stronger — you do it by

learning patterns and getting to know each enemy and variation. And just as you've mastered the attack patterns of all the enemies in an area you'll move on and have a whole new assortment of enemies to face. The beauty of the system is that combat is always engaging and can always be mastered. This is turn-based fighting par excellence — you can always avoid attacks or deliver counter attacks and there are always countless options at your fingertips.

**LUCKY STRIKES**

While you can avoid enemies while moving about, it's not that often that you will. Partly because of the engaging battle mechanics, but

partly because, like all RPGs, you crave the experience points. With each level up points are allocated into health, power, defence, speed and the ever illusive 'stache rating (which influences how likely you are to get a Lucky strike in battle and also the discount you'll get when buying items) and you can also use Lakitu to top up a little further on one of these. As your stats increase, so too do those of the enemy, but as I just said, the beauty of this game is that the difference between you and your foes lies not in raw power but in mastery of the Action Commands. Avoid their attacks and maximise your own and you'll always win. Those of you who played Superstar Saga (and if you didn't — go out and buy it now, it's genius) are probably thinking at this stage of the review that Partners in Time sounds like it has everything that the previous game had plus

▶▶ **FLAWIFICATIONS** - Partners in Time is not without its flaws. This isn't a game that will really challenge you: the puzzles are straightforward, you'll never get lost and even the boss battles will rarely require a restart. Why craft such elegant mechanics if you're not going to test the player? There isn't much to do outside the main story either, and by the time you've built up a really good collection of badges and mastered all the Bros Items the game's over. The pacing is a little slow sometimes too, making it feel like a bit of a trudge making your way to the next boss. Didn't the last map look just like this? We also would have loved some kind of tattle badge/ability and bestiary ala Paper Mario, but that's nitpicking really. So there you have it, it's a great game, but these are the elements that are holding Partners in Time back from a 90%+ score.



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

**DETAILS:**  
**CATEGORY:** RPG  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
**DEVELOPER:** Alphadream  
**PUBLISHER:** Nintendo  
**PRICE:** \$69.95  
**RATING:** G  
**AVAILABLE:** Feb 23

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	70	89

**OVERALL**  
**88**

Alphadream didn't even bother including baby Waluigi. Bastards

more depth to puzzle solving and combat. Well, that's true... but only to a certain point. While *Partners in Time* builds wonderfully on the gameplay of *Saga*, creating a game that's tailor made for the DS, it also, in contrast, takes a much more traditional approach. What that means is that it's an adventure where stuff happens and it's up to our heroes to save the day. *Saga*, on the other hand, was very much a parody of the Mario universe, poking fun at the conventions of the Mario games while still being immersed in them. In *Saga*, no

one knew who Luigi was, and Mario could be recognised just by showing off his trademark jump. That kind of self referential humour has been lost in *Partners*, making it a little less interesting. That's not to say that it's not entertaining — there's still a pervasive sense of zaniness, with some decent characters, such as your talking suitcase Stuffwell, and amusing encounters, like a meeting with the Hammer Bros who have to be liberated from haxor helmets that make them speak L337, but in our opinion, *Superstar Saga* has the

edge story and character wise.

Fortunately, *Partners in Time* has the edge almost everywhere else. The visuals are, as you would expect, crisp and colourful, and the twin screens are used to great effect. Also notable is that Alphadream haven't crammed in extraneous touch screen or mic input just because they can. Instead they've focused on gameplay first and foremost. It may be a little too easy, and you're only looking at 20 hours play from start to finish, but the DS has its first great RPG. **BACK TO ADVENTURE!**

**Cam Shea**



[Arnie] He had to split



[above] Joe versus gimps



Kick punch block it's not in the mind



## VIEWTIFUL JOE: Double Trouble

▶▶ Henshin-a-go-go baby! What started out as a niche but slick reinvention of the 2D side scrolling fighting genre has since turned into a fully-fledged franchise. Enter Double Trouble, a DS exclusive title that takes the core gameplay of the series and gives it a liberal touch screen twist. So while the presentation and basic action is very faithful to the previous titles — slick attack combos, the signposted dodge system, slowing down time to evade projectiles or execute super stylish moves, and the end of level upgrade system, it's not long before you've learnt a number of touch screen moves. Sure, we've lost some stuff too, such as fast forward, but the new moves help give this title its own feel.

### CAPTAIN BLAU

As is par for the course, you can throw logic out the window when it comes to the new moves. Using Split for instance, allows you to divide the lower screen in two horizontally (by moving the stylus left or right) and "edit" the scene. Thus if there's a fire above you and a burst fire hydrant somewhere nearby, you can split the screen and drag the fire

over to above the water and put it out. Or if a big battery is powering an electrical shield that you can't get past, you can split the screen and simply slide the battery out of its slot. You can even use it to get past a wall that's blocking your way by moving the top half of the wall and jumping through. Very cool.

The Slide powerup is also mostly used for puzzle solving. It requires you to slide the stylus down the touch screen, dragging the "close up" viewpoint from the top screen down. Thus, if the top screen is focussing on a keypad or a lever that can be pulled, you can drag it down to the bottom screen and interact with it via stylus. Joe also has access to an extra powerful combo in this mode, and there are also enemies that can only be defeated by tapping them during Slide.

Scratch, on the other hand, is mostly used for attacks and is probably the ability that's most awkward to use. To initiate it you have to tap the right shoulder button then scratch on the screen with the stylus. Items will drop from the sky and hurt nearby enemies. It works well when you've dodged enemy attacks and they're stunned, but in the heat of a fight you're better off just sticking to punch/kick combos.

The touch screen abilities definitely bring a new twist to puzzle solving, and prove to be a great inclusion. Unfortunately though, you're constantly switching between two control schemes.

Whether you use a finger or the stylus, moving

!!! While the touch screen "puzzles" do feel a little arbitrary, it's all part of Joe's surreal charm...

from the face buttons to the touch screen just isn't seamless. Fortunately it's cool enough in practice that we're willing to forgive Capcom and their army of three armed game testers.

The visual style of Double Trouble is very much in keeping with previous titles, utilising quite basic modelling with a cool cel shaded veneer. It's far from a visual tour de force — you'll never have stacks of enemies on screen at once, and each level is broken up into many short sections (which actually works in the game's favour — we love getting a huge string of ratings at the end of each level), presumably to accommodate loading — which is a momentary pause at most. Technical issues aside, there's plenty to like about the design — especially some of the nods to other Capcom properties such as the Resident Evil mansion early in the game, complete with the same music and zombie dogs. Well worth checking out.

Cam Shea

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

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Beat 'em up  
PLAYERS: 1  
DEVELOPER: Clover  
PUBLISHER: Capcom  
PRICE: TBC  
RATING: TBC  
AVAILABLE: Late March

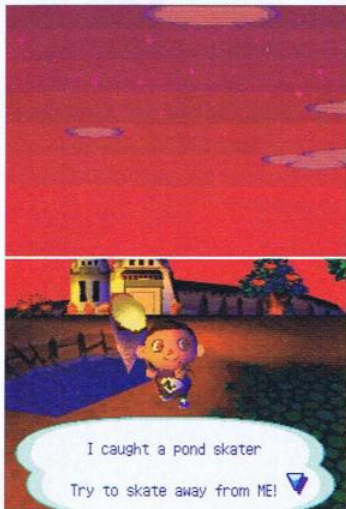
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

80 70 84

OVERALL

83

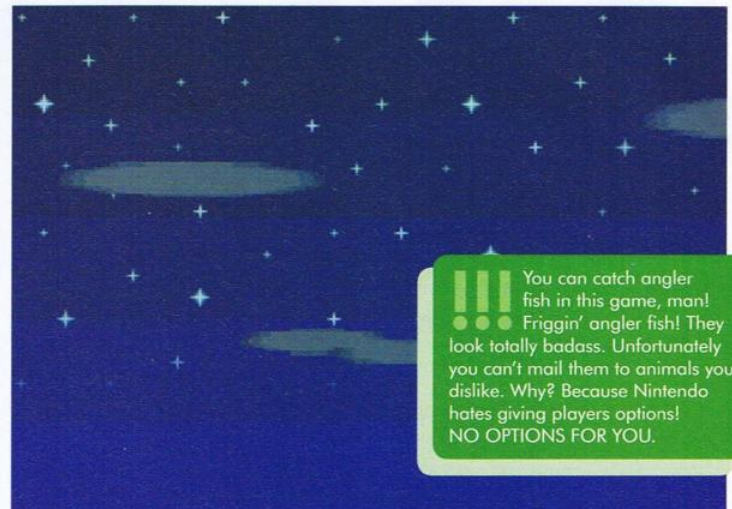




[up] All the fun of fishing...IN A GAME!



[up] Fishing AND penmanship



## ANIMAL CROSSING: Wild World

Who am I writing this for? Those who've played the Cube version, or those who are new to Animal Crossing? Well, I'll deal with the latter first, shall I? Pull up a coffee.

### AVATAR A GO GO

In Animal Crossing, you play as a cute little version of yourself, who moves into a forest village populated by cute little talking animals. Then, you do things.

Right then. So what's new in the DS version? Well, nothing and everything. It's exactly the same game, but with innumerable tiny improvements that somehow add up to make the whole experience a hundred times better than before. Closets, for example, hold more than three items. When you run around your town, there is smooth scrolling, instead of that awkward transition between acres. (Looks gorgeous, too.) You no longer have to send your fossils away to the Faraway Goddamned Museum to be identified. Little things like that.

But it's more than just corrections — it's additions, too. There's more fish to catch, for example. Your animals are more interactive than before, in — again — innumerable tiny ways. Ways that would be boring to list and describe, but believe me, you'll feel much more involved in their happy little lives than you did in the Cube version. I'm truly sorry to report that you still can't write letters to 'fixture' characters like Blathers, or the Able sisters, but their personalities have been fleshed out in other ways. Blathers, for example, has a short storyline in which he attempts to overcome his fear of insects, with the help of his sister Celeste, who



runs the — OH MY GOD I FORGOT TO MENTION! There's a SKY!

God, how inhibiting was the Cube version, am I right? You're supposed to be living in this lush forest utopia, but you feel like an ant on a mound. Well, no more! The DS version has not just smooth scrolling, but a sky! A big, beautiful sky. Ah yes, the whole game just... BREATHES now, doesn't it? Ahhhhh. Lovely. And here comes the really good bit: the sky has stars in it, and you can make your own constellations.

Much of Animal Crossing's appeal is the personalisation element. You get really attached to this pocket village of your very own. Well, making constellations is the ultimate in personalisation. I moved my hand across the heavens themselves, and drew a big dick. It dangles above my peaceful forest town; watching. The animals point it out to me in conversation, and



That's actually what P-Funk looks like



remark upon its beauty. One of them greets me every day with a cheery, "Rape me!" So innocent. It's hard not to love them.

Sorry, I'm talking about dicks and you probably still don't know whether or not to buy this game. Let me ask you some questions. Do you like funny things? How about cute animals? What about colours — do you feel generally positive about the visible spectrum? Interior decoration and fashion design — do these things rocket your bocket?

If you answered "Yes" to most of those questions, go ahead and buy Animal Crossing: Wild World. If you answered mostly "No", you'd probably be better off with some sort of urban... gun... thing. I dunno; whatever it is you people play. (Oh, it goes online, too. And it's rad.)

Patrick "P-Funk" Alexander

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

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Life sim

PLAYERS: 1-4

DEVELOPER: Nintendo

PUBLISHER: Nintendo

PRICE: \$69.95

RATING: G

AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

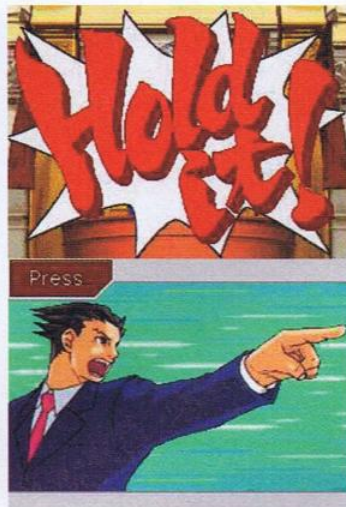
85 88 86

OVERALL

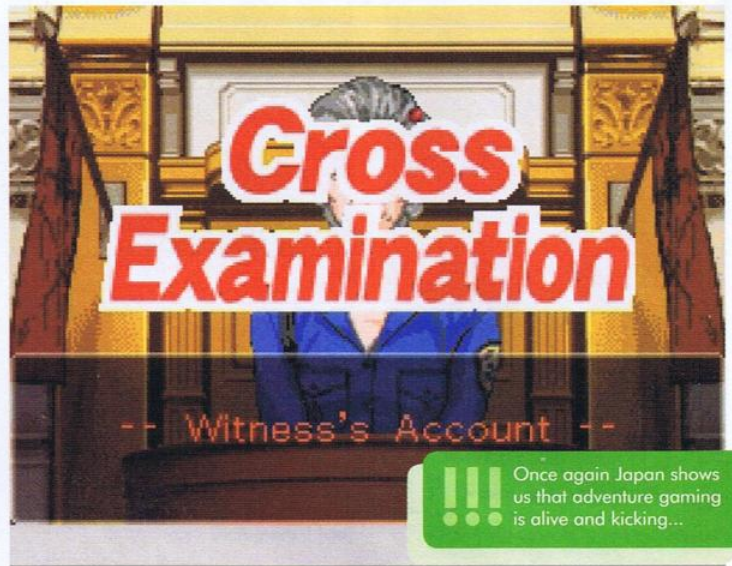
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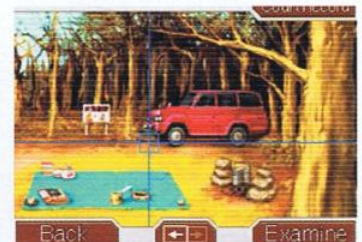
[above] Wanted for crimes against hair



[above] HOLD IT... PULL MY FINGER!



You can cut the sexual tension with a stylus



# PHOENIX WRIGHT: Ace Attorney

▶▶ It'd be true but probably misleading to make this opening statement: Phoenix Wright is, at its heart, a linear text adventure game. Because, well - it is. But the court-room antics, excellent scripting, and laugh-out-loud humour rise above the game format, making this game a thoroughly enjoyable experience nonetheless.

## POWERFUL HAIR

Phoenix Wright is a rookie lawyer with an odd anime haircut, which seems to have been blown backwards at a 90 degree angle from his head by the very force of his objections. You join him as he stutteringly takes on his first big case as a defense attorney - but despite his uncertainty, soon enough he's throwing dramatically pointed fingers around left and right, and yelling objections in a fashion that would make any Hollywood lawyer proud. The over-the-top, shouting, table slapping, and comedic antics

are what make the game so fun, as everything suddenly turns into a life-or-death leap of logic and legal revelation. And for some reason all the prosecutors look like pirates, which is just cool.

The game operates in two distinct phases: gathering evidence, then presenting it in court. The more enjoyable court phase takes up the majority of the game, which is a good thing, as the evidence gathering does begin to grate. It requires you to move around finding the sequence of events to trigger the next bit of story - it's at these times that the shortcomings of the linear style are most obvious.

But during the courtroom sections, you use your powers of deduction to interrogate witnesses and expose the lies in their statements. You can press the witness and try to trip them up, or present evidence to contradict a sketchy testimony. This is incredibly fun - the scripting really shines here as you uncover a whole raft of unexpected turns and betrayals.

There are penalties for presenting the wrong evidence - enough slip-ups, and you lose the case. But given all you need to do is re-start from your last save point, it's really not all that scary. The real joy comes from figuring out the logical puzzles of the case. While you could sit there and present every piece of evidence against every bit of testimony, reloading when you fail, it'd take forever and be incredibly boring - so you're forced to deduce which pieces of evidence are relevant and damning. And when you do, you'll rejoice in

Phoenix's indignant shout of "OBJECTION!" as it echoes across the courtroom in giant red text.

Interestingly, unlike the first four cases, originally for GBA, the fifth case was created specially for the DS - and it shows. The graphics suddenly improve, and the microphone and touchscreen can be used to forensically examine evidence. While these are fun additions, some do feel a little tacked on.

So this isn't a game whose strength lies in graphics or fast-paced gameplay. It's a slower-moving thinker, full of humour, and logical deduction. There's no replay value, as once you've played through the game you know what you need to do to win. But it's long enough and entertaining enough that despite its occasional shortcomings, Phoenix Wright is really exceptionally fun. The defense rests its case, Your Honour.

Sally Woellner

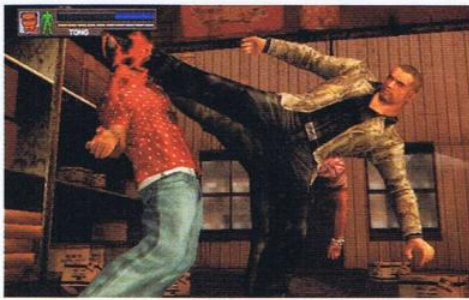


AVAILABLE ON:  
GBA / DS / PSP / N-GAGE

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Adventure  
PLAYERS: 1  
DEVELOPER: Capcom  
PUBLISHER: Nintendo  
PRICE: TBA  
RATING: TBA  
AVAILABLE: TBA

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
74	72	92
OVERALL		
80		



## URBAN REIGN

▶▶ Sometimes people need to be told that a little known game is good. Other times people need to be warned to stay away. Take a guess where this review is headed. Namco have set out to fuse the greatness of Tekken and Final Fight into a semi-roaming beat 'em up. Instead of taking the best things in each franchise (technical fighting and Mike Haggar) they have instead drawn the worst from both, leaving a terrible mess of bad controls, idiotic AI, rancid camera and dull stages. Players take the role of a street tough beating up people in the name of good. You move from location to location beating up similar looking gangstas and thugs.

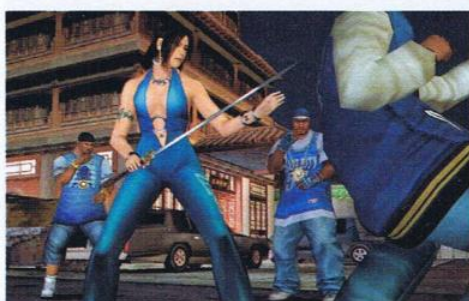
You have to worry about a game where you can complete the first 15 levels in a little over ten minutes but that is what Urban Reign is like. The battles don't last long; either the player cheesed the opponent out or the opponent/s juggle you into a position where you can do nothing but watch your health bar dwindle away to nothingness. There really is nothing else to say about Urban Reign. It's dull, the combat system is atrocious, the enemies are cheap and there is no co-op mode (an unforgivable oversight). While the visuals definitely have some appeal, with well constructed character models (that are waaay too samey) and tight plosive combat animations, the combat system is seriously undercooked, making it far too easy to get caught in an endless juggle. Didn't anyone playest this game? Oh, and the camera actively hates you and all of your family. Did Death by Degrees teach Namco nothing?

**Dirk Watch**

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

**DETAILS:**  
**CATEGORY:** Crud / **PLAYERS:** 1 /  
**DEVELOPER:** Namco / **PUBLISHER:** Namco /  
**PRICE:** \$89.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
75	70	41	33



## INFECTED

▶▶ I love zombies. Not in a touching them in the bathing suit area kind of way (that kind of love is reserved exclusively for space pirates), more in the way that they are a timeless enemy. Like Nazis, Communists and rabid Nintendo fanboys there are no end to them and you don't have to feel bad for shooting them.

This appeal of the zombie is what makes Infected such an enjoyable, if forgettable game. There's a story but it really doesn't matter — all you need to know is that you're a cop immune to zombification and what's more, your blood is fatal to weakened zombies. The game is made up of a series of levels and missions in which the player needs to pacify an area of the zombie menace by shooting them to weaken them and then squirting some of your blood on them to make them explode. By positioning multiple zombies close together you can string together combo kills for some pretty showers of blood and beneficial pickups.

Infected contains multiplayer for up to eight people but it mostly comes across as rather generic and dull, the only interesting feature being that you can infect another person's PSP with a zombified version of your cop (which is very cool as there's plenty of scope for character customisation, so when you see your cop on their screen, you know it's yours).

Short and sharp, Infected has a lot of pick up and play fun going for it but unless you love zombies it can get pretty old pretty fast.

**Daniel Wilks**

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

**DETAILS:**  
**CATEGORY:** Shooter / **PLAYERS:** 1-8 /  
**DEVELOPER:** Planet Moon / **PUBLISHER:** Majesco /  
**PRICE:** \$TBA / **RATING:** TBA / **AVAILABLE:** TBA

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
80	81	76	73



## NAMCO MUSEUM BATTLE COLLECTION

▶▶ There's been a Namco Museum release on basically every system made in the last ten years, so it's no surprise to see a compilation pop up on PSP. This one contains 16 arcade "classics" - Pac-Man, Galaga, Galaxian, Rally-X, New Rally-X, Dig Dug, Xevious, Bosconian, Rolling Thunder, Mappy, Tower of Druaga, Dragon Buster, Grobda, Motos, Dig Dug 2, Mappy and King & Balloon, and the good news is that for the old school gamer, there's definitely enough here to while away some hours on public transport. While you could hardly consider every game included a classic (King & Balloon? What the hell is that about?) there's no doubt that Pac-Man and Dig-Dug are every bit as good as they were way back when, as are the famous Namco space shooters and the lesser known Rolling Thunder... to name a few. This compilation also has "Arrange" versions of Pac-Man, Dig-Dug, Rally-X and Galaga. All this means is that they've been given a basic makeover, with slightly updated graphics and tweaked gameplay. There's even some wireless multiplayer thrown into the mix, with our highlight being four player Pac-Man Arrange. Remember the awesome Pac Man Vs bonus disc that came with R:Racing on Cube? Well now you can have a portable version!

Not only is the game lineup pretty decent, but the presentation is solid, you can tweak basic game settings, and importantly, change the rotation and ratio of the presentation. The (admittedly minimal) load times are a bit of a mystery though, considering how small these games must be. Couldn't they all be cached on your memory stick to avoid spinning the UMD at all? It's also a pretty steep asking price at \$80. In any case, a solid old school compilation.

**Dirk Watch**

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

**DETAILS:**  
**CATEGORY:** Arcade compilation / **PLAYERS:** 1-4 /  
**DEVELOPER:** Namco / **PUBLISHER:** Namco /  
**PRICE:** \$79.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
60	60	80	78



# BF2: Special Forces

TIM LEVY GIVES US A FRANK DISCUSSION OF SEX AND GAMES

Battlefield 1942 was the first online game that I really traded my real world for. Living in an online 'you're nearly about to die, oh you survived, oh but you just died again' world is far more exciting than say taking out the garbage and mopping the floor in the real world. Fortunately for me, I met a beautiful girl in a sleazy nightclub who helped ween me out of my Chuck Norris fantasy world to play the game of love and let me score 'points' with her. If I could rack up enough points with her, she would unreluctantly help me do stuff, like mop the floor and take out the garbage. Unfortunately for both of us, BF2 came along and I am currently dealing with my re-established addiction by attempting to have sex and play BF2 simultaneously. My hippy parents would be proud of my updated multitasking version of their 1969 'make love - not war' credo which is of course 'make real love and faux war at the same time'

With the release of Special Forces expansion pack, I can see the love/war ratio tipping slightly in the wrong direction, even if it is only (hopefully) for a couple of months. SF not only

adds 8 new maps, 6 new factions (SAS, SEALs, Spetsnaz Insurgents / Rebels) and 8 new vehicles to play with, but it also includes new weapons and tools of the trade which can be unlocked and used in the still wildly popular core BF2 game.

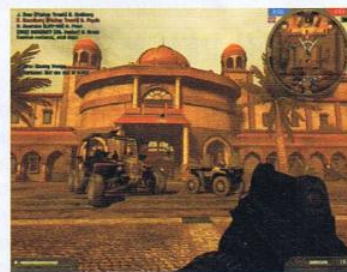
Three of the maps are at night and to deal with the darkness you can activate your night vision goggles. Darkness is a bit of a pain in the ass as using the goggles dulls the gorgeous graphics into green monotone, though night does change your strategy in that it is easier to ambush someone and much harder to see claymores and mines. Nonetheless, night does make for stealthy atmospheric gameplay. Another cool tool is the zip line (aka flying fox) and grappling hook. As the maps are primarily infantry focused, with a lot more building interiors, there are many opportunities to use rope to access rooftops or balconies and best of all, swashbuckle between roof tops to get behind enemy lines and capture strategic flag points. Another fun tool is the Support classes' tear gas launcher. If you've had a bad day in the real world,



why not wreck everyone else's by tear gas spamming everyone into a debilitating pseudo drug induced haze. You get no points but it IS funny for a little while (\*wipes tears of laughter from eye\*).

You know a game is great when you start creating games within games, and hooning around on the new ATV 4WD quad motorbike with the sole purpose of running people over is a classy way to kill a few hours. BF1942 already had devoted servers for jeep races and it looks like the ATV and the new Jet Ski could see a resurgence in BF racing again. Now if they could just bring out dirt bikes and some ramp mod tools then we could all live in aerial heaven. Imagine doing huge jumps and spraying away with your AK in some crazy aerial joust matches - RAD!

And talking of games within games, there have been a lot of



people making BF movies and mods, and although very hit and miss you can check them out at any of the BF2 fan sites.

Overall, it looks like a lot of BF fans have purchased the expansion pack and there are armies of people online just dying to kill you. Admittedly, there are a few bugs with SF such as it is a system hog (2 gig RAM = less crash) and has occasionally mismatched team/enemy logo colours (I swear) and the helicopters are too resilient, but these issues, as well as the damn 'dolphin dive' (<http://media.putfile.com/Dolphin-diving>) exploit are all going to be addressed in the next patch. <<



At night, everyone becomes the Hulk





**Celebrity Doctor Site of the Month whose name starts with P**  
[www.drphil.com/](http://www.drphil.com/)

» Okay, let's do a little role play, Cam you be a fat woman who doesn't feel sexy anymore and has problems keeping the flame in her marriage alive and eats constantly. And I'll be the psychotic maniac from another dimension, Dr. Phil. Wilks, you can be a middle aged single mother watching at home on TV. Dr. Phil yells, "Do you want to spend the rest of your life looking like a circus animal? Do you want me to throw up all over you and force you to lick it up?" Fat Cam cries, "No, please help me, Dr Phil". Dr Phil pulls out a rusty butcher's knife, "Here's my advice fatty. Stop eating! If you even think about eating another piece of fatty food I'm going to kill your children and feed them to Oprah. Wayeeeeeeh!"



**Sideways Master Chief**  
[www.halozero.new.fr/](http://www.halozero.new.fr/)

» Side-scrolling platform/shooting hybrids never really hit their peak, mainly because the genre as a whole breeds garbage. For every Metal Slug (admittedly there are quite a few) you'd get dozens of err, stuff that sucked. I'd rattle off a few examples but who can be bothered trying to remember, or worse, using the internet for research as opposed to leeching warez. But anyway, Halo + Side-scrolling shooter = the link above. That's just in case you were thinking that the clever heading above was referring to a sequel to last year's indie hit film Sideways where Master Chief goes wine tasting in the country on the eve of his wedding with Paul Giamatti and ends up banging a hot Asian broad.



**The Earth Is Mine**  
<http://local.live.com/>

» Let me introduce you to my friend Microsoft, he's kinda cool in a way but a little bit behind the times. But don't worry, he more than makes up for his lack of predication through a series of shameless copycat maneuvers. Just the other day he was fiddling around with Google Earth and thought it was pretty cool but what would make it better would be if he copied it and then somehow found a way to embed it into his Internet Explorer software and Windows XP operating system. And just to be on the safe side he decided to ensure it ran using outdated ActiveX controls that will most certainly compromise the security on any PC that decided to use the thing. Genius!



**Inventions that will change the World!**  
[www.powerballs.com/](http://www.powerballs.com/)

» I'm always coming up with new inventions that will make me rich and change the world as we know it — sometimes even for the better. But, for one reason or another no one is willing to put up the capital so I can build prototypes, which is weird but anyway here's a few. There's the nuclear powered belt that unfastens itself when you stuff yourself at a restaurant providing both relief and relaxation. Then there's a nuclear powered wall clock that not only tells you the time but also asks you the time, and then replies "are you sure because I've got a quarter past?" Finally there's a comb that comments on your brushing technique offering tips on improvement and reminders to get a hair cut - nuclear powered of course.



**Newsflash! Students Make Game**  
[www.thatcloudgame.com/](http://www.thatcloudgame.com/)

» As much as we'd like to think otherwise, gender differences make their way into game design all the time. For example a game like The Sims is designed primarily for women and men who want to be women, whereas games like Killer Axe Guy 6: The Bloodening is designed for men who climb Ice Mountains in T-Shirts, just like Sly did in the movie Cliffhanger. Here we find a game about cloud herding that features pleasing music, leisurely paced gameplay and no violence or competitive macho-isms of any sort. That's not to say that it's a bad game but being a well endowed man who often gets mistaken for a tripod, clouds simply ain't for me unless they're dark and raining down on a bloodied battlefield.



**Mr T. and Chuck Norris Facts**  
[www.4q.cc/t/index.php?topthirty](http://www.4q.cc/t/index.php?topthirty)  
<http://chucknorrisfacts.com>

» Mr. T is allergic to doorknobs. That's why he can only kick through doors. Chuck Norris' tears cure cancer. Too bad he has never cried. Mr. T has never seen his own reflection, not because he can't get a hold of a mirror but the very fabric of the universe can only handle one Mr. T at a time. Chuck Norris frequently donates blood to the Red Cross, just never his own. Mr. T once fell into a pool of lava, he nearly drowned. On a clear night the stars shine only because Chuck Norris lets them. Mr. T always drives on the right side of the road, no matter where he is in the world. There is no theory of evolution, just a list of creatures Chuck Norris allows to live. Before Mr T was born there were only 25 letters in the alphabet. And so on...

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Supernerd	\$44.95	10GB	10c / MB	www.supernerd.com.au
Supernerd	\$59.95	Unlimited	Nil	www.supernerd.com.au
Oz Forces	\$68.95	No Set Limit	Nil	www.ozforces.com
TPG - Pay As You Go 512	\$24.95	200MB	15c / MB, capped @ \$35	www.tpg.com.au
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Monkey will soon call one of these people a "poooooffttta", but which one?

## Monkey – COMPLETE BOX SET

SHOCK, M 15+

Following the travels of the king of monkeys who "loves to fiiiiight!", Pigsy, a pig monster and Sandy, a water monster who must lead the holy priest Tripitaka to India to collect Buddha's sacred scriptures, the 1979 Japanese series, *Monkey*, is one of the defining television shows from the Hyper crew's collective childhood.

If you've been watching *Monkey* since you were a kid like we have, then we can assure you that the series has lost nothing over the years. After sitting through this box set you will once again be compelled to snap off the nearest available broom handle and use it to batter imaginary monsters, all the while muttering memorable phrases such as "come out you pansy demon poooooffttta!"

If on the other hand you've never before experienced the wonderment of *Monkey* we almost envy you, as you have 52 fresh episodes (including 13 never-before-seen) of some of the most hilarious physical comedy, fantastically cheesy special effects and possibly the best use of an English dubbing track ever, all set to



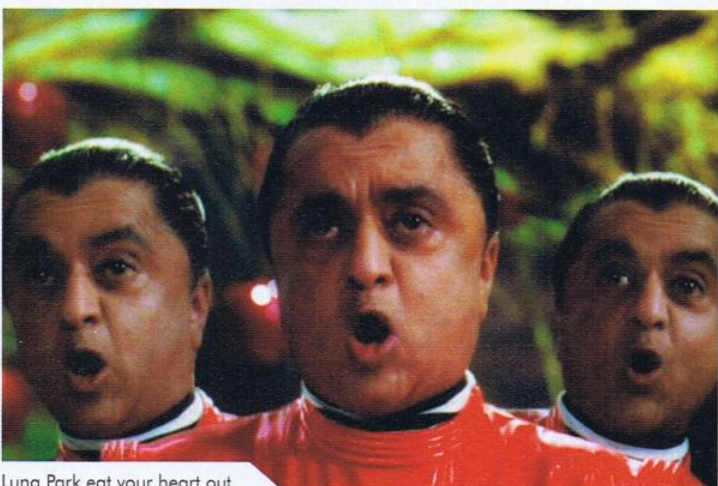
[top] The visual definition of IRREPRESSIBLE!

an unshakable '70s rock soundtrack that will never, ever, leave you.

Unfortunately, the only thing this set doesn't have is a single special feature, which hurts us more than a skull-punishing pain sutra. Not perfect, but still, the nature of *Monkey Complete Box Set* is... irrepresible!

**Maurice Branscombe**

**SERIES: 9 / EXTRAS: 0**



Luna Park eat your heart out



## Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

ROADSHOW, PG

Taking a well loved and remarkably screwed up "kids" book and film and remaking it with Tim Burton at the helm is pretty much a guarantee that the end result will be more than a little strange. Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is a menacing concoction, perhaps even more morally dubious than the previous film starring the wonderful Gene Wilder. In the last film Wonka was portrayed as something of an avenging angel; even though it was never explicitly stated it appeared as though he orchestrated the events that cause all of the children bar Charlie to meet their comeuppance, whereas in the Tim Burton treatment Wonka is a far more flighty creature. It's doubtful he set up the events or if he even cares that anything happened he's so stuck in his strange little world. In *Pirates of the Caribbean* Depp famously channelled Keith Richards into his character Jack Sparrow and now he seems to have found another muse in Michael Jackson. It's hard to listen to his singsong voice, look at his pale skin and outlandish clothes and not think of the dethroned king of



pop, adding a slightly more sinister air to the proceedings. Although Depp is the biggest drawback of the film, the children are the real stars. Freddie Highmore is truly likable as Charlie and the other four children are great actors and atrocious characters. Special mention also has to go to Deep Roy as the Oompa Loomas; the Busby Berkley-esque musical numbers are a real treat.

**Daniel Wilks**

**MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 8**

# Vixen / Supervixens / Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!

AV CHANNEL DIRECTOR'S SUITE, M 15

▶▶ I'm going to come right out and say it, Russ Meyer is one of the unsung cinematic geniuses of the 20th century. After creating the entire skin flick genre in 1959 with *The Immortal Mr Teas*, Meyer went on to make some of the most memorable cult films of all time including *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* (a movie with one of the greatest titles of all time, coming second only to *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed Up Zombies*) and *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*. Although his plots change between movies, all of Russ Meyer's output has a similar theme. Strong, Amazonian women taking charge of their own lives and sexual desires, using and casting aside men, the reverse of what is usually seen in mainstream film. All of his films are filled to nearly overflowing with massively endowed women, nudity, sex, violence and a smidgen of gore but they remain bizarrely innocent

and good natured as Meyer seems to place his films in a Looney Tunes version of America where violence may be grotesque but is rarely permanent and bad guys get what is coming to them. The dialogue in all three films seems to have been spirit channelled from another planet, sometimes having little to do with what's on screen. In *Vixen* a sex scene is inter-cut with a Marxist giving a speech to a draft dodger, in *Faster, Pussycat!* an old man comments that women being allowed to wear pants has led to a Democrat in the Whitehouse and *Supervixens* ends with a naked woman perched on a mesa giving Porky Pig's iconic "That's All Folks" signoff. It's brilliant, funny and clever stuff and deserves to be seen by another generation of film lovers. Besides, how can you not love the director who inspired John Waters to make movies?

**Daniel Wilks**

**MOVIES: 7/8/9 / EXTRAS: 8**



Karate Boobies!



But can he hit a homerun with it?

## Hanzo the Razor – BOX SET

EASTERN EYE, MA 15+

▶▶ There's no way a series of films like *Hanzo the Razor* could be made in the West today. Maybe in the late 60s and early 70s it would have been possible but our all pervading moral majority would never let something like this see the light. Between the years 1972 and 1974 Shintaro Katsu was one of the true hard men of Japanese cinema, most famous for playing Zatoichi about five billion times in the long running series. Aside from the blind masseur, Katsu played one other samurai of note, Hanzo "The Razor" Itami, a Dirty Harry-esque samurai cop who is willing to go to any length to catch his criminal. The epithet "The Razor" does not refer to his sword as you may expect but rather to his impressive one

eyed trouser python, a weapon he used almost as much as his sword to "pump" female criminals and witnesses for information; as one of the trailers so tactfully puts it, "A woman's body leaks secrets". Sure, it's exploitation, showcasing blood, violence, sex and a little sexual violence but it's great exploitation, played with just the right amount of humour. Shintaro Katsu serves as a lynchpin for the movies, playing his role as the virile samurai cop absolutely straight. Not even when he is training his "weapon" by dousing it in boiling water, beating it with a stick, thrusting it into a sack of rice or piling heavy stones onto it does he crack a grin. You will.

**Goomba**

**MOVIES: 7 / EXTRAS: 2**



They threw the gas bomb against my aunt's window

When Brazilian muck up day antics turn bad

## City of Men

AV CHANNEL, M 15+

▶▶ It's strange for a spin-off series to be as good as the film that inspired it but *City of Men* is one of those rare exceptions. Brought to the small screen by the same team responsible for the outstanding Brazilian film, *City of God*, *City of Men* walks similar ground but over a series of 30 minute episodes tells a far more grass roots story, being concerned more about the day to day life of the protagonists rather than the all pervasive drug trade and related violence that served as the central focus of the film.

The series follows two young friends Acerola and Laranjihna through their day to day lives, their first loves, get rich quick schemes and dodging being

brought into one of the drug gangs plaguing the city. It's really quite striking stuff. The two leads come across as so charismatic and natural that the almost soap operatic formula of episodes never intrudes on the enjoyment of the series.

Stylistically the series is similar to *City of God* utilising a combination of handheld, 8mm and steadicam as well as crude animations and voice overs to illustrate the dreams of the characters. *City of Men* focuses on the good aspects of life, even in the barrios and, as a result, becomes quite a life affirming piece of television.

**Daniel Wilks**

**SERIES: 8 / EXTRAS: TBA**

# Serenity now

Firefly may have been shot down in mid flight, but Joss Whedon's appealing blend of sci fi and western has had another chance to soar. And soar it does. *Serenity* is the feature length followup to the cult classic series and is both an excellent cap to the story for fans and a compelling introduction for newcomers. Simply put, this is a film with soul. It may be action packed, but *Serenity's* charm lies in its characters and its down to earth humour. Now that the film is on its way to DVD, there's no better time to have a chat to two of our favourite cast members - **Nathan Fillion**, who plays the rogueish Captain of the *Serenity* Malcolm Reynolds, and **Morena Baccarin**, who stars as the alluring "companion" Inara. **Johanna Juntunen** spoke to them recently in L.A.

## How did you get the news (of "Firefly's" cancellation?)

**N:** Joss came down to the set while we were working.

**M:** Jewel called me and then Joss called. And then we all went to Nathan's house and got drunk.

**N:** Yeah, that's true. We were so afraid that the last three days that were left were going to be torture, and we went in and everybody was determined to have a great time.

**M:** We kept saying "what's the worst that could happen?"

**N:** "They're going to cancel us?"

## How did you react when *Firefly* became such a hit on DVD?

**M:** I think I was the last to know that because I had moved on. Somebody said that it's coming out on DVD. I thought "oh, that's great, a couple of people will buy it." (laughs)

**N:** The show getting cancelled was a downer because we thought we had a great show. The DVD selling well was like a little pat on a back, like a consolation prize. It said "guys, you weren't doing anything wrong".

## What kind of feedback do you get from fans?

**M:** They have a very mutual understanding of the work, I think. They really enjoy the same things that we enjoy in it. They have such an in-depth understanding of the world, the universe that was created. They really do their research, and they read things about it. They have these really intelligent questions about the Alliance vs. the Browncoats, it's really cool.

**N:** There's beautiful art work and posters on the internet. "Things I've learned about *Firefly*" lessons.

**M:** They have quotes that we've said.

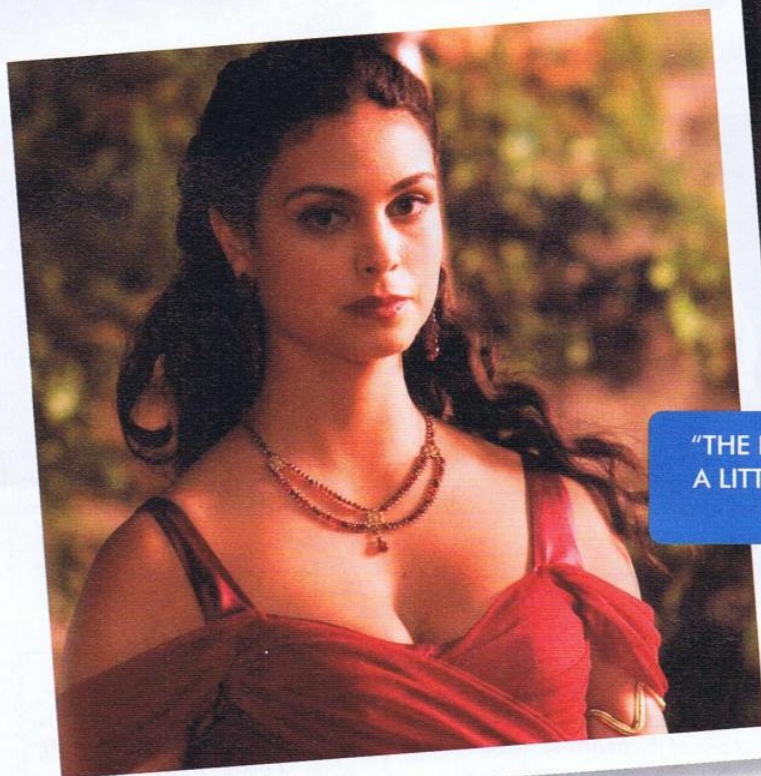
**N:** Yeah, makes you feel pretty clever. And it makes it look like this show ran for years

## How did you originally get the roles on *Firefly*?

**N:** My manager told me about this new sci-fi western, and I said "what???" And he said "yeah, it's Joss Whedon", and I had auditioned for Angel when *Buffy* first came around. So I was well aware of his talent and I had a couple of friends on *Buffy*. So I was intrigued, read it...

**M:** Did you have a script?

**N:** No, it was the treatment written by play by play how the script was going to be, it hadn't been written yet. I had a holding deal with 20th Century Fox. It was like "we'll give you a job, we don't have anything yet but just hang in tight", and they set me up with a meeting with Joss Whedon.



"THE DVD SELLING WELL WAS LIKE A LITTLE PAT ON THE BACK, LIKE A CONSOLATION PRIZE"

I was in his office, Amy Brit was there I remember, she's lovely, and there's this guy in the corner with this purple sweater with a big hole in it, scraggly red hair and big red wiry beard. I was thinking "who is this guy and when is Joss Whedon going to

get here?" We sort of started chatting and I realised that that was Joss. We spent about 45 minutes chatting about the show, and that's how I got my audition and eventually the show.

**M:** I came in last. They had already cast somebody in my role. The treatment came to me similarly as to Nathan, but I was in New York. And I was so sick of going to tape things and not getting jobs, that I passed on it and said "no, I don't want to audition for this". I went to do a play and came back, and decided to go to L.A. for a week. Somebody already had the job but got fired, and the part was open again. I saw it as fate. I had to audition at 3 p.m. and at 5 p.m. I had to go to meet Joss. I was also wondering who this guy was, but we just chatted for 30-45 minutes and I was like "I'll do anything

this guy does". He's so passionate and intelligent. Then I tested the next day and got on set. These guys were all there, and they're already shooting.

**N:** We were a week in and she came wide eyed to the set.

**What kind of feedback did you get when the movie was coming out?**

**M:** They were so excited about the movie. We showed them a little clip and people just wanted more and more.

**N:** We stopped. Nothing wrapped up. So there are a lot of people out there who invested and are left hanging.

**M:** Including us.

**N:** Yeah. I remember watching the first season of *Alias* and they had those wonderful cliffhangers. At the end of each episode I wanted to see the next one, thinking how were they going to get out of this one. And *Firefly* fans have been left like that for almost two years. That's a long time to wait for the cliffhanger.

**Who did you base your character on, is he like a John or something else?**

**N:** A friend of mine grew up in Texas and he worked on a farm with his grandfather. He would tell me these amazing stories of his grandfather who can't be flustered. This one story that particularly struck me was, they were castrating bulls. The process is that you throw them into this stall, close the gate behind them, do your business and get the next one in

there. While they're getting this one bull in, they're shutting the gate, the bull kicked and hit the gate between his thumb and a post. And it severed his thumb which remained inside his glove, but it was hanging. He was "oh well, we have six more to do, so let's keep this going". He didn't show the pain in any way. And there's my friend Cory, 9-10 years old going "grandpa, you have to go to the hospital", crying. Because of him he decided to go, but I think he was a tough man. He's had some hard living. That's the kind of man I imagined Malcolm to be, he grew up on a ranch. He's a hard worker, not somebody who cries from a little pain.

**Is there some Han Solo in him as well?**

**N:** That comparison can be made, and it's often made. I'm glad for it because I'm a big fan of Han Solo, but if you're going to this movie expecting Han Solo I think you'd be disappointed. But I do enjoy this character. Malcolm is a little crankier and more weird than Han Solo.

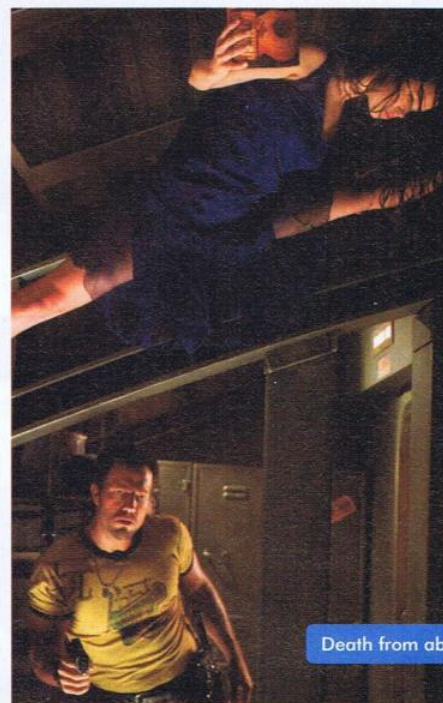
**What kind of training did you do for Serenity?**

**M:** I was in a 'fight club' for three weeks. I was trying to do one kick for probably two weeks.

**N:** I was there barely three weeks. And I would complain about my time there, and every time I'd come in there I'd see Summer doing her thing, kicking something above her head about 60 times. I'd be warming up and doing my stuff, cool down and leave, and she's in the corner fighting 9 guys. And she had to start months before us. She worked really hard.

**What about with guns?**

**N:** We got to fire off a lot of really cool looking futuristic weapons and they brought in a



Death from above!

quick draw artist; the fastest drawer in the world. And he taught me how to quick draw.

**How fast are you?**

**N:** I wasn't bad. My drawback is that my gun is very long, so you have to pull it high and then drop your shoulder. Instead of pulling it up in front of you, you actually have to pull it back first.

**M:** I did archery which I really liked and that was all.

**We heard the Wonder Woman rumours surrounding you, are they true?**

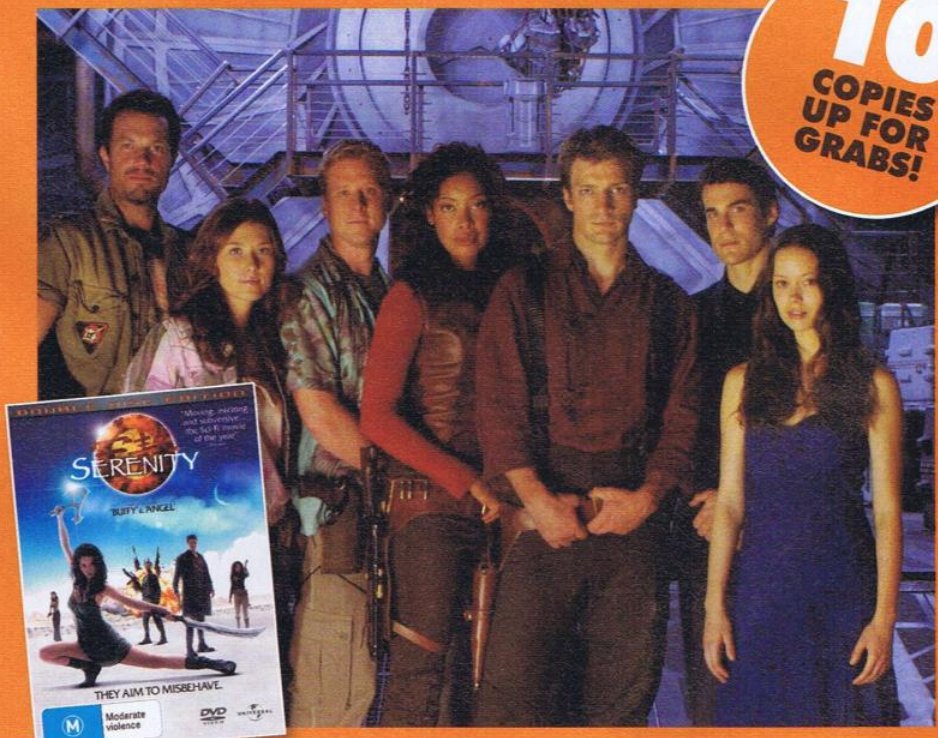
**M:** It's one of those things, it's not up to me. I'd love to be Wonder Woman. That would be awesome, but you have to ask Joss about it. I think he's still trying to write the script. It's very premature. <<

## WIN SERENITY ON DVD!

>> The Australian *Serenity* DVD release is looking especially hot. In addition to the commentary, deleted scenes and featurettes that the rest of the world gets, there are some fantastic extras exclusive to our edition. There's the "A Filmmakers Journey - Journey with Joss from Script to Screen" featurette, the Joss Whedon Q&A Session - Filmed at Fox Studios in Sydney (keep an eye out for Cam and Wilks in the audience), exclusive extended scenes, a look at the cinematographer and a guided tour of *Serenity* by the cast and crew. Thanks to our friends at Universal Pictures we have ten copies of *Serenity* to give away on DVD. To be in the running, just answer this simple question:

**What character did Nathan Fillion play in Buffy?**

Send your answer, plus your name and address on the back of an envelope to: **Preaching to the Converted, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email us at **hypercomps@next.com.au** with the comp name in the subject line.

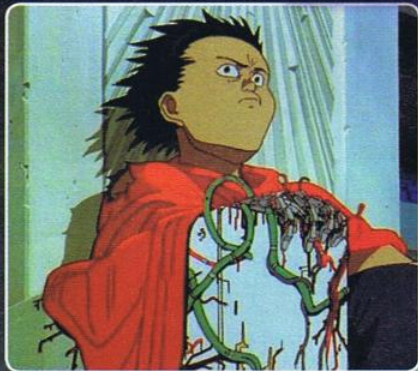


10 COPIES UP FOR GRABS!

**Terms & Conditions:** 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am January 24 and entries close at 6pm March 15. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am March 16 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the May issue of *Hyper* on sale April 5. 9) 10 winners will each receive a copy of *Serenity* on DVD (RRP \$39.95). Total value of competitions is \$399.50. 10) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

A Hyper Snapshot of...

# the future according to anime



## akira

YEAR: 2019

**The Future:** The future is not a nice place in Akira. Motorcycle gangs roam the streets, as do the military. In the wake of WWII which showed us that Tokyo is perhaps the most explosive substance on the planet, Akira presents one of the darkest futures in Anime, not because there is no hope left, just that that hope exists at the whim of higher powers; not gods but governments. When Tetsuo, a young street punk comes across a strange boy and begins to develop psychic powers, the near omnipresent military/government complex takes an interest. Naturally everything goes to pot. Aside from the bleak view of the future. Akira also showed us that in 14 years, motorcycles are going to be the single coolest looking mode of transportation known to man. Honestly, who didn't want Kaneda's bike?

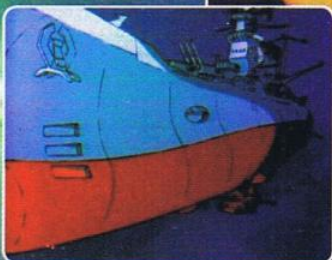


## gankutsuou

YEAR: 5050

**The Future:** Gankutsuou, the translated name given to Dumas "The Count of Monte Cristo" when it was first released in Japan may be set in the future but aside from the addition of some high technology foibles like personal spacecraft and lurid neon lighting, the setting is very similar to that seen in the novel. Although the

setting has been transposed to the fictional area of "Luna" parallels to Paris at its height of aristocratic decadence are obvious. Luna is a place where any whim can be addressed and the pleasures of the senses are there for the taking. The future may be a bright and decadent place but the story of hatred and long sought after revenge is timeless.



## star blazers

YEAR: 2199

**The Future:** Although the future may be a little dark — constant bombing from the dastardly Gamilon is threatening to destroy life on Earth through radiation, so the starship Yamato (renamed the Argo in some western dubs), a retooled WWII era battleship fitted for spaceflight must search for the semi mythical planet of Iskandar. It may have seemed like all problems in that future could be solved by powering up the Wave Motion Cannon, blowing something up, nearly crashing into a planet/moon/derelict spaceship/space station only to have the engines power up again just in the nick of time but aside from the nationalistic theme of the Japanese triumphing over adversity after being bombed by the Americans, Star Blazers shows a future with an unshakeable belief that anything is possible if you try, believe and have a Wave Motion Cannon.



# ling

## bubblegum crisis tokyo 2040

**YEAR: 2040 (strange that)**

**The Future:** Corporate greed and technology running amok is the order of the day in 2040. Of course, to get to that point, Tokyo had to have been destroyed — this time by a devastating earthquake rather than a nuclear war or mysterious Tokyo Bomb (a bomb made from Tokyonium ore, the most explosive element on Earth — see Akira for a fine example). Robots created to help rebuild the devastated city are only the first wave of artificial workers — soon all aspects of life are inextricably entwined with the robot "Boomers", proving once and for all that Japanese people have not seen Westworld. Take this as a lesson; robotic prostitutes will eventually try to kill you and god forbid if one of them looks like Yul Brynner.



## planetes

**YEAR: 2075**

**The Future:** A refreshingly direct take on the future, 2075 in Planetes is portrayed as much like the world of today, only with working space stations and off world travel. No aliens need be fought in this future, the enemy here is orbital junk that needs to be cleaned up to stop potential space disasters and, worst of all, the influx of life insurance sales people more than willing to take advantage of people who know that their job is dangerous enough that they may not come back every time they go to work. The greatest thing about the future in Planetes is how similar it is to every day life; sure, we may not have rockets and our jobs might not be in zero G but the problems the characters face are universal.



## cowboy bebop remix

**YEAR: 2071**

**The Future:** The Earth doesn't really have much of a go at it in the future. It's blown up, under bombardment, ravaged by war or, in the case of Cowboy Bebop, left nearly uninhabitable by a transportation accident, leaving only those too poor to escape to take care of her. The rest of the solar system is terraformed though, so little old Earth can fall by the wayside. The expanding influence of humanity has had an inverse effect on policing — instead of cops upholding the law most criminals are brought to justice by bounty hunters. The nomadic bounty hunters of the future are a damn sight more evolved than those living today, preferring smooth jazz and blues to Whitesnake and preferring the simple things in life rather than a big double wide and Nascar.

## ghost in the shell stand alone complex 2nd gig

YEAR: 2030

**The Future:** Following on from the landmark film Ghost in the Shell and the series, Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex, 2nd Gig (actually the second season though it is telling a different story from Stand Alone Complex) takes us back to a future where the line between man and machine is inextricably linked. In this future the question of what constitutes a person is one mulled over by numerous people. Kusanagi wonders if machines have a soul and Batou wonders if someone can really be called human if their parts have been replaced by cybernetics. The future is also more politically motivated than we have seen before, with mistreatment of immigrants stirring unrest in the masses.



## gundam seed

YEAR: COSMIC ERA 71 (THE FUTURE!)

**The Future:** The most interesting thing about the future in Gundam Seed is not that kids ride around in powerful Mobile Suits, it's the fact that even though mankind can colonise the universe they're still up to their old tricks and using petty prejudices as an excuse to kill each other. Instead of black and white or white and asian or what have you, the boundaries are drawn between the normal humans and the Z.A.F.T., evolved humans who are a little faster, a little stronger, a little smarter and a little more Aryan than the normal man. Actually, no, the most interesting thing about this future is the fact that the Gundam have hands when it would be much more logical to have weapons built in instead of having to hold them.



## 1960s astroboy

YEAR: 2000

**The Future:** Where are my flying cars? Astroboy promised us that we would have flying cars six years ago. Television lied. Instead of reliving the future of one of the generation's favourite cartoons, instead we present The Astroboy March, music by Tatsuo Takei, words by Don Rockwell:

*There you go, Astroboy, on your flight into space.  
Rocket hi----gh, through the sk----y  
For adventures soon you will face.  
Astroboy bombs away,  
On your mission today,  
Here's the count----down,  
And the blast----off,  
Everything is go, Astroboy!  
Astroboy, as you fly,  
Strange new worlds you will spy,  
Atom ce----lled, jet pro----pel----led  
Fighting monsters high in the sky,  
Astroboy, there you go, will you find friend or foe,  
Cosmic ran----ger, laugh at dan----ger, everything is go,  
Astroboy!  
Crowds will cheer you, you're a he----ro,  
as you go, go, go, Astroboy!*

## wolf's rain

YEAR: 200 YEARS AFTER  
WOLVES BECOME EXTINCT

**The Future:** Actually that's not entirely true; more precisely Wolf's Rain is set 200 years after the remaining wolves worked out how to disguise themselves as human to avoid being slaughtered. As happy as that sounds, the future is even more downbeat. It's believed that wolves know the way to paradise but if they go there it's a sign of the apocalypse so even the chance of salvation comes at the cost of everything else.



# ROWSET BLITZ



## INFINITE RYVIUS COLLECTION

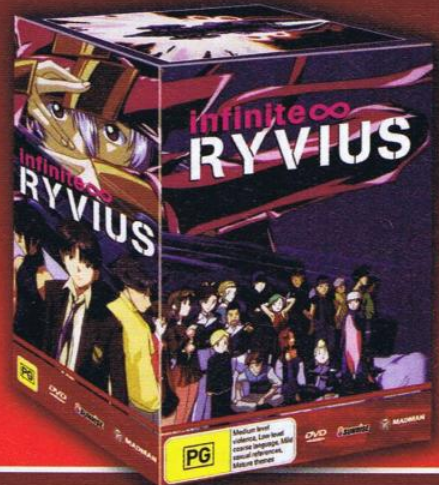
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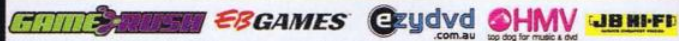
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# WIN WIN WIN



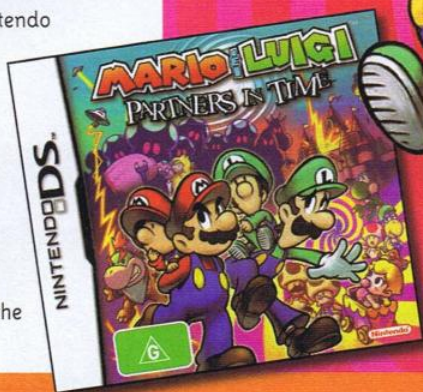
## WIN MARIO & LUIGI: PARTNERS IN TIME!

» Having already written close to 2000 words on why we love this game, you'd think it would be a stretch to write any more. Well, you'd be wrong, as Partners in Time is like a friendly tick that burrows under your skin and into your heart. Where many DS games focus on utilising the touch screen, Partners in Time is all about the dual screens and making it simple to control four characters at once. The mechanics are wonderfully implemented, giving you a whole host of team up moves both in battle and while exploring the world, all with Nintendo's trademark level of polish.

Thanks to our diggity dawgs at Nintendo Australia, we have six copies of Partners in Time to give away. To be in the running, just **send us some awesome Nintendo artwork.**

Send your entry, plus your name and address to: **Partners in Gaming, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or if you'd like to send us digital art, email us at [hypercomps@next.com.au](mailto:hypercomps@next.com.au) with the comp name in the subject line.

6  
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GRABS!



## WIN 24 ON DVD & PS2!

» All four seasons of 24 are now out on DVD, and what a healthy dose of great television they represent. For those that don't know the premise, each episode is played out in real-time, with a season comprising 24 hours of events. This approach brings with it a whole new style of writing and directing in order for events to dovetail together at the right time and to keep things interesting across each hour. Fortunately, lead character Jack Bauer's life is anything but run of the mill, with terrorists, kidnappings, undercover assignments, drug addictions and so on helping to make him the hardest man on television, and 24 keeps delivering the goods, with the fourth season arguably being the best yet. The game is shaping up very nicely too, taking place between seasons 2 and 3 and truly feeling like an interactive episode. Thanks to Fox Home Entertainment and Sony we have three prize packs to give away, each of which contains seasons 1-4, on DVD and a copy of the game on PS2. To be in the running, just answer this simple question:

» What is Jack's daughter's name?

Send your answer and your name and address to: **Comp no 24, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email us at [hypercomps@next.com.au](mailto:hypercomps@next.com.au) with the comp name in the subject line.

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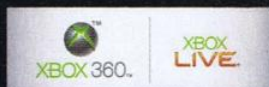
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# TIMESHIFT

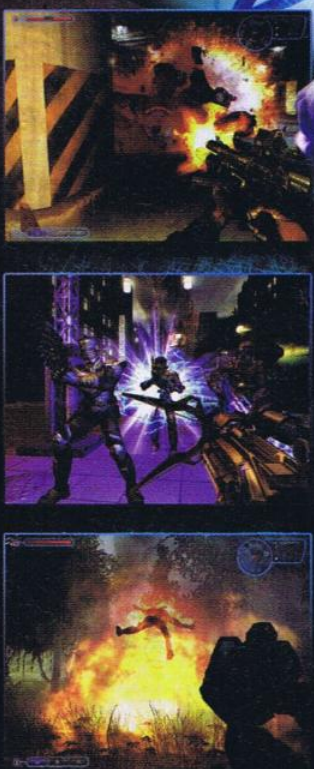
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YOUR HANDS.

COMING OUT  
MARCH 2006

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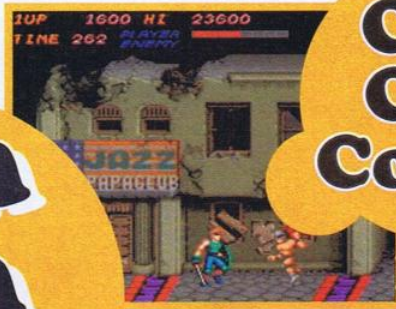
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# Classics Compilation Showdown

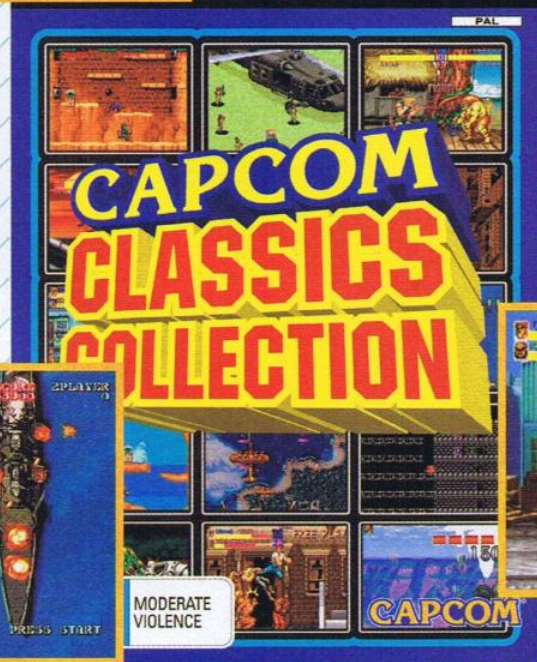
With an ever expanding roster of retro gaming compilations appearing on store shelves across the country, it's a bit of a mine field out there for those thirsting for an old school gaming fix. Which compilations are worth your hard earned cash? Read on to find out...

» Maurice Branscombe

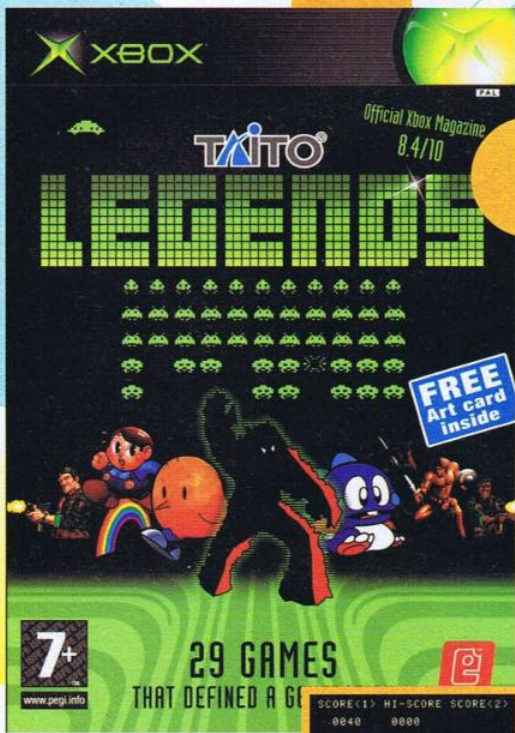
## Capcom Classics Collection



ation® L



## Taito Legends



In recent years Taito's reputation may not have fared well against a stream of B-grade console releases and endless reiterations of its Puzzle Bobble/Bust a Move series, but during the early days of the videogame industry the Japanese publisher was nothing short of a phenomenon. Merely two words can sum up the company's integral role in videogame history: **Space Invaders** - a game that spawned a thousand clones and whose influence is still felt in every space shooter made today. Even so, Taito's back catalogue has far more to offer than just one iconic game and in this collection of 29 of the company's most notable releases, Taito Legends definitely has more hits than misses. **Bubble Bobble** for example is a classic of the highest calibre, and is every bit as playable and addictive today as it was in 1986, as is its sequel, the inimitable **Rainbow Islands**. Other notable additions include games like **Elevator Action**, **Operation Wolf**, **New Zealand Story**, **Rastan** and of course no less than three versions of **Space Invaders**. If you've played any of these games before

PC, PS2,  
XBOX

then you'll already know how special they are, and while the entire disc doesn't hold up to quite as high a standard as these, overall the compilation works well.

Presentation-wise however, the collection is only marginally better than the Midway Arcade Treasures series, with a bunch of static menus leading you to the games. The supplementary material isn't particularly inspired either but there is quite a lot included, consisting variously of flyer artwork and some 3D models of the original arcade cabinets, and we do get several short interviews with both the creator of **Bubble Bobble**, Fukio Mitsuji, and the creator of **Space Invaders**, Tomohiro Nishikado, who both give insight into their games' creation that will prove invaluable to fans of either series. Strangely enough Taito has also chosen to omit the one game that they have so consistently pushed upon us over the years, with not even a glimpse of Puzzle Bobble to be seen.



When you think of the arcade, and in particular arcades of the '80s and '90s, you think Capcom. It is doubtful that any other company has had more iconic franchises born and bred in the darkened corners of game houses than the company that brought you *1942*, *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*, *Final Fight* and the big one, *Street Fighter*

2. Capcom Classics Collection proves once again that these games are timeless

PS2, XBOX

classics in the true sense of the term. Quite simply, regardless of how many times you come back to these games over the years they just never get old, and in that respect this compilation is easily amongst the very best of its kind. With the aforementioned games included and no less than three different versions of *Streets of Rage* on the disc the only things you'll need to make your living room seem more like a real arcade is the bubble gum and coke stains on the carpet, a "If you don't



play, you don't stay" sign on the wall and a creepy man in a booth who changes notes to coins, and knowing our readers, you'll have at least two of those around your house already.

Although not every game works today the majority of the lesser-known games on the disc are not satisfied with being merely filler, with most being surprisingly playable. A few

notable titles include *Legendary Wings*, *Mercs* and *Forgotten Worlds*, all shooters, and *Trojan*, a scrolling hack 'em up.

Of the 22 games provided there are however some puzzling omissions. Captain Commando, is notably absent, quite inexcusable for a character who was once Capcom's mascot, also missing is the underrated beat 'em up *Knights of the Round* and most unforgivable of all we are not even given a sniff of the original *Street Fighter*. These few oversights along with the disc's paucity of special features and barebones presentation means that while Capcom Classics Collection is certainly a compilation of fantastic games, its full potential as a retrospective is never achieved.



## Midway Arcade Treasures 2

Strictly speaking Midway Arcade Treasures 2 is a step back from the series' first instalment, although admittedly how

GCN, PS2, XBOX

big a step is dependant solely on how much you like the *Mortal Kombat* series, with both parts 2 and 3 of the fighting series taking top billing on this one. Unfortunately time has not been kind to many of the games on this disc, including both *Mortal Kombats*, which with the benefit of reflection are now revealed for the pretty sloppy games that they always were, providing ample evidence of exactly why *Street Fighter* never had anything to worry about back in the early '90s. Other notably aged games include *NARC*, *Primal Rage* and *Pit Fighter*, which never really get fun. Amongst the 20 games available there is still a number of worthy games on offer including the sequel to *Smash TV*, *Total Carnage*, *A.P.B.*, a police car chase game, and fantasy dungeon crawler *Gauntlet II* all make the cut, but overall the roster definitely smacks of B-list material. The inappropriate pyramid presentation has been replaced this time with a sort of sci-fi inspired theme with a DNA helix styled menu system although unlike some other compilations (*Activision Anthology*, *Intellivision Lives*) it really gives us nothing else other than a place to access the games. This time the disc does contain the original trade commercials for the *Mortal Kombat* games as an added bonus, which are interesting purely to see how the game was being marketed to arcades, and as with the first *Midway Arcade Treasures*, developer interviews and game histories are also available.

## Midway Arcade Treasures

Midway have never been known for their subtlety, and thanks to the success of *Mortal Kombat* are more often associated with the ultra-violent end of the retro gaming spectrum. But as the games encapsulated in this first of three collections shows, there was once a lot more to Midway than just fatalities. With 24 games ranging in genre from shooters to puzzle games to games that defy classification, this first collection of treasures represents the best Midway has to offer.

Like a few of the other compilations an inappropriate theme has been chosen for this game's presentation, in this case it's Egyptian pyramids. Exactly how this theme ties in with Midway or its arcade treasures is never made clear but the implication that the games within are a bunch of dusty relics is thankfully prevented by the inclusion of a number of genuinely classic games. With easily the best line up of the three Midway retro

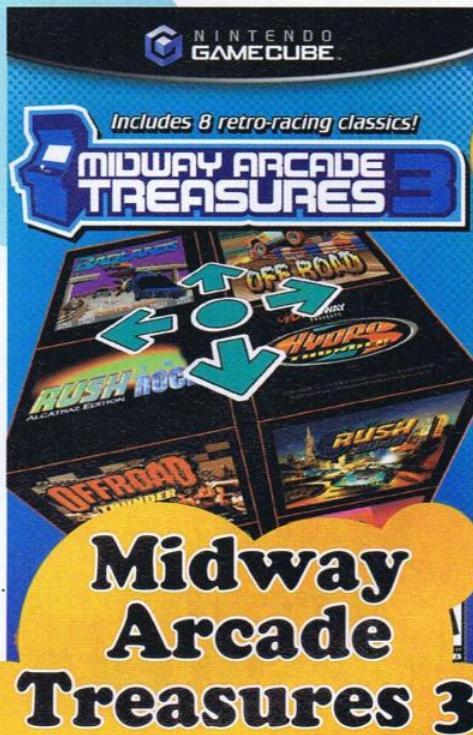
collections, *Arcade Treasures* includes 24 games, featuring the likes of *Spyhunter*, *Defender*, *Robotron 2084*, *Gauntlet*, *Joust*, *Paperboy*, *Smash TV* and a number of other notables.

Given, some of the games don't play nearly as well as they once seemed, *Paperboy* and *Rampage* in particular just don't seem quite as fun, but with games like *Rampart* (part *Tetris*, part shooter, all bloody fantastic) and *Marble Madness* on the disc you really can't go wrong with this selection. Even oddities like *Root Beer Tapper* are a lot of fun to revisit - or visit for the first time as the case may be.

Additionally the collection contains pages of game histories and some very special interviews with the creators of many of Midway's biggest games including Eugene Jarvis, creator of such classics as *Defender*, *Smash TV*, *Robotron* and many more.

GCN, PC, PS2, XBOX





## Midway Arcade Treasures 3

With only eight games on this disc, and none of them particularly good, Midway were obviously running out of puff at this point. Consisting variously of racing games from the '80s and predominantly '90s, Midway Arcade Treasures 3 is categorically the least compelling retro compilation not just of this contest, but quite possibly ever. Games like *San Francisco Rush 2049*, *Race Drivin'*, *Hydro Thunder* and *S.T.U.N. Runner* range from the passable to the dismal. All of them are quite deservedly obscure, making it very hard to imagine how anyone could even feign nostalgia when presented with these quite crusty nuggets of gameplay history best left forgotten. Realistically the only game on this compilation that could be called a "treasure" is *Super Off Road*, a top-down racer that was the precursor to great games like *Micro Machines*, and another Hyper favourite - *Mashed*. Luckily (or unluckily) two of the eight games included on the disc are different versions of *Super Off Road*, and a third, *Badlands*, is essentially the same game but with weapons.

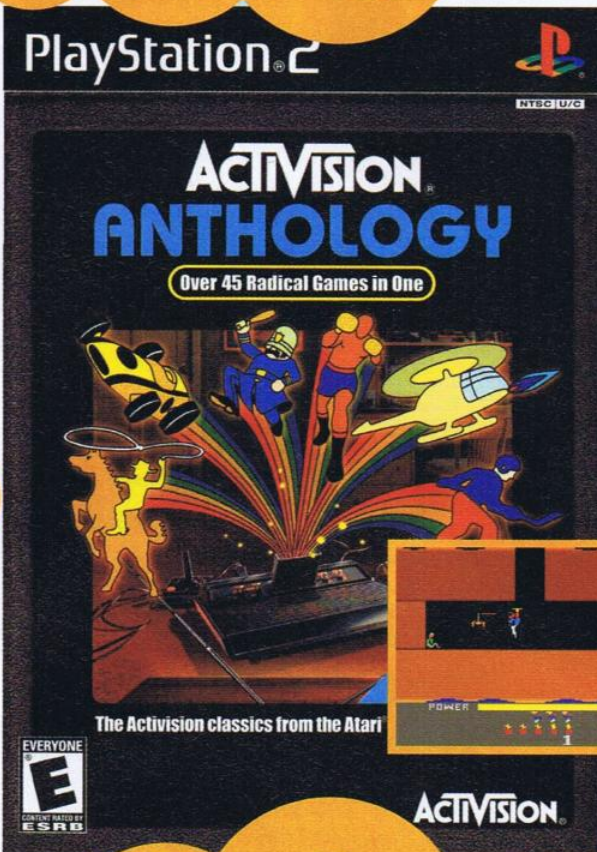
The presentation is bog-standard with uninspiring menus and not so much as a single significant special feature in sight. To compound the poor roster of titles and the non-existent features the majority of the games are also poorly emulated, with framerates in some of the 3D games dropping lower than Wilks' trousers at the mention of a bare-arsed chinride.

GCN,  
PS2,  
XBOX



## Activision Anthology

PS2



## Atari Anthology

PS2,  
XBOX

If you say anything about Atari it must be that they were innovators. Decades before the name was appropriated by the French the title Atari represented an incomparable force in both the business and art of videogame production. Atari Anthology is a virtual museum of some of the company's proudest moments, with a few of their not-so-proudest moments thrown in for good measure. The disc features 18 arcade games including the game that started it all, *Pong*, as well as timeless classics *Asteroids*, *Tempest* and *Missile Command*. All the arcade games are near-perfectly emulated from their original code and run as accurately as you could hope for, and most are surprisingly playable and addictive even today. As an added bonus each game is presented framed by its original arcade cabinet artwork, which adds some authenticity. Unfortunately the artwork is also completely distracting from the game and you'll almost certainly make good use of the thoughtfully provided option to remove it. As well as an arcade collection this



I don't want to give the ending of this article away, but if I were to say at this point that Activision Anthology wasn't the odds-on favourite to win today's battle at retro-compilation stadium I would be a filthy liar. Of all the collections laid before you, many manage to give you more games than you could play in one afternoon and plenty of nostalgia to spare but very few of them give you much else to do other than to reflect briefly on your misspent childhood. What makes Activision Anthology so special then is that it doesn't merely rely on the player's pre-existing nostalgia, and instead not only gives you a unique context in which to play the provided games, but also more than enough positive reinforcement to keep you playing long after other retro compilations have lost their lustre.

For starters, although Atari may have created the console, it was always Activision that most spectacularly put the Atari 2600 to work, and this compilation is testament to that fact. Games like *Pitfall*, *Boxing*, *Kaboom!*, *Barnstorming*, *Megamania*, *Demon Attack*, and one of our all-time favourite 2600 games, *River Raid*, are at once the nicest looking games ever to

anthology also includes 67 Atari 2600 games like *Yar's Revenge*, *Adventure*, *Combat* and many others, each of varying degrees of playability. It is a pity however that some of Atari's later stuff wasn't included from the 7800 and Jaguar eras, but then I guess they have to leave something for the inevitable sequel.

In terms of presentation Atari Anthology goes for a solar system themed menu, nice in an irrelevant kind of way, but it still feels like a squandered opportunity. I'd much rather have seen a virtual representation of Andy Capp's Tavern circa 1972, the legendary pub where Atari founder Nolan Bushnell placed his first Pong cabinet - instead we get astrological constellations. Speaking of the father of arcade gaming, Bushnell gives a rather interesting interview on the disc about starting the company, building the games and in general gives his perspective on this whole crazy videogame business. Along with this interview footage (low-res naturally) the game presents a hefty collection of scanned flyers, instruction manuals, game boxes and other Atari merchandise. Unfortunately not a single Atari

television commercial makes it into this collection, leaving a considerable gap in the special features. Still, with 85 games on the one disc you could hardly ask for a more comprehensive compilation.



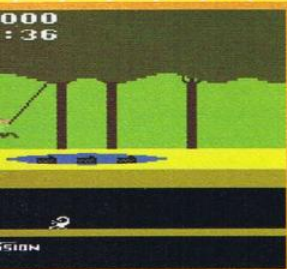


release on the system as well as being the most playable. Although, much like the other compilations, not every one of the 45 games available is a true classic, the majority of them are entirely playable in a way that many games from the same era struggle to be.

What really seals the deal for Activision Anthology though is its presentation and extra features. The first thing you notice upon entering the game is that the menu is not so much a menu as it is an interactive bedroom, decked out in full 1980s fashion. Navigating around you can find your game rack, TV and of course Atari 2600 console as well as a boom box that pipes in real '80s tunes by the likes of Twisted Sister, A-Ha, Wall of Voodoo, Soft Cell and Blondie.

Achieving a variety of goals in each game will also unlock a number of special features, including new games, new game modes and some of the most hilarious quintessentially '80s television commercials you may ever see. You can also unlock a collection of the original cloth patches that Activision once posted out to keen players who sent in photographs of their high-scores throughout the '80s. These small crests, typically emblazoned with a humorous slogan,

hang on a corkboard on the wall of the game's bedroom for all to see. It may not sound like much, but collecting authentic period merchandise has its charm, and is enough to extend the life of these near-ancient games a lot further.

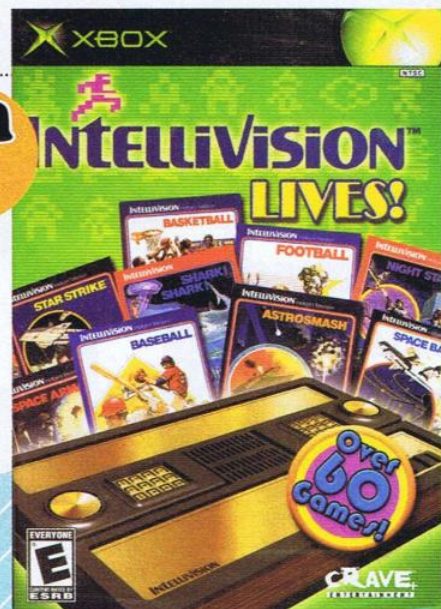


## Intellivision Lives!

GCN,  
PS2,  
XBOX

These days the Intellivision seems like an arcane obscurity excavated out from the dusts of time, but in the formative era of console gaming this gold-trimmed, wood-paneled rectangle represented some of the most technologically advanced hardware the gaming public could get their hands on. Despite a heated advertising war with Atari, in which it was claimed, quite rightly, that the Intellivision's graphics were significantly superior to those found on the Atari 2600, the Intellivision still struggled for true mainstream recognition and most gamers today could easily be forgiven for never having heard of it, let alone played it. This compilation of almost 70 Intellivision classics then is an excellent time capsule for both the nostalgic and the uninitiated. Taking its cues from Activision Anthology's superb presentation, Intellivision Lives! moves out of the bedroom and into a virtual 1980s pizza restaurant/arcade. Amongst a variety of arcade machines you can find an assortment of games in every genre that was available in the early '80s, namely "combat", "space", "sports" and "arcade".

Among these are some true gems like *Astrosplash*, a brilliant cross between space invaders and asteroids, and then there are some games that have aged

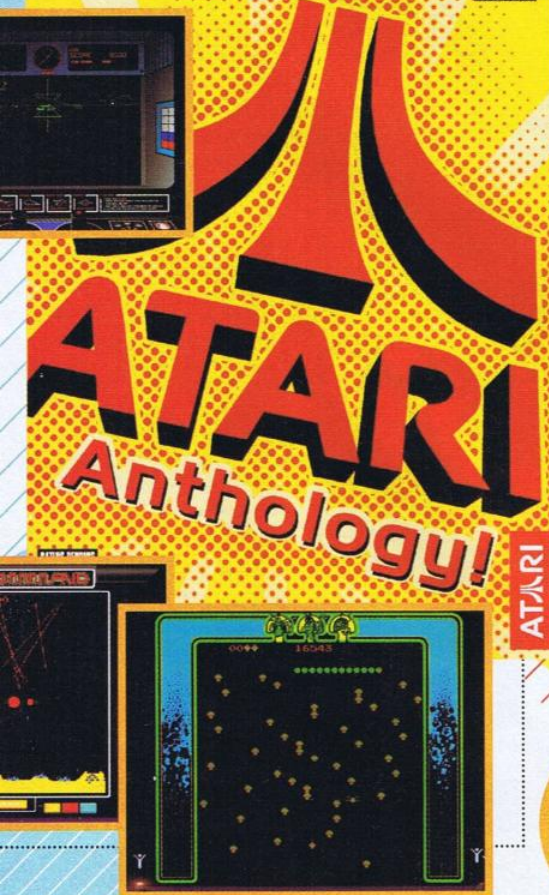


beyond all recognition, like *Magic Carousel*, where you, well... ride a carousel.

Included with the huge selection of games are a few bonuses that can be unlocked with high-scores. These include whole new games, some never before released to the public, as well as the original Intellivision TV commercials, which although they contain less guffaws than the Activision ones, are still hilarious beyond description.

Problems do arise when it comes to the controls however. The original Intellivision controller was a brown brick with a gold disk for movement and no less than 16 buttons to press, including an entire numeric keypad. Understandably each console's decidedly meagre button count doesn't accommodate many of the more demanding games without the use of an on-screen menu, which can take a degree of fun out of some of the more intense games. Nevertheless, this is a fitting tribute to one of the industry's most underrated consoles.

PlayStation 2



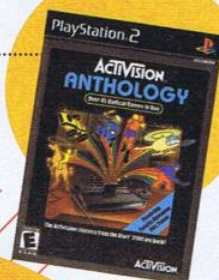
## The Slapfight

Without too much surprise, *Activision Anthology* is our pick for the best retro gaming compilation available today. Simply put, none of the other collections can match the effort put into making Activision's greatest Atari 2600 games as compelling and relevant today as they were when they were first released. The immediately era-setting 1980s bedroom menu system and the authentic period soundtrack means that even if you don't bring your own sense of nostalgia to the party, it goes most of the way to creating one for you, and the sheer wealth of unlockable content means that you actually have a reason to keep playing after the initial thrill of reliving childhood memories fades.

*Capcom Classics Collection*, although it doesn't have the atmosphere or special features of some of the other collections, makes up for it by having some of the most memorable and enduringly playable games of all time earning it our runner-up prize.

*Intellivision Lives!*, much like *Activision Anthology*, actually makes an effort to extend this retro compilation idea into more than just a collection of old games linked by a menu. The games included are obscure, and it's doubtful that many of you will have any happy childhood memories to draw on when playing them, but fantastic presentation and good special features once again make all the difference taking it into third place.

*Taito Legends* and *Atari Anthology* pop into fourth and fifth places respectively with their barebones approach to presenting undeniably classic games. And lagging somewhat behind is *Midway's Arcade Treasures* series, which while they have a lot of great games on offer, don't quite have the staying power of their competition and particularly with the later releases feel fairly hastily cobbled together.



# The Lost Adventures of the STARFOX



## >> Koza Andreadis

**ARGONAUT SOFTWARE** Founded in the 80s by teenager Jez San, Argonaut made a name for itself when San developed one of the first 3D games ever made with Starglider for the Commodore 64. When it partnered in 1993 with Nintendo on the development of the Super FX chip, Argonaut would receive its greatest success when StarFox sold in excess of 4 million copies worldwide. Argonaut would later find success with titles such as Croc for the original PlayStation and more recently I-Ninja.



The SNES was quite a powerful piece of hardware in its day, it allowed for some impressive graphical effects such as scaling, rotation, transparency and even giving the illusion of a 3D environment via what was been dubbed the 'Mode 7' technique. What allowed for such a wide variety of new and impressive visuals was the implementation of on board chips into each cartridge that improved the performance of the system. For example the DSP chip allowed for more impressive Mode 7 visuals in Super Mario Kart than those seen in F-Zero, and the C4 chip developed by Capcom allowed for semi-transparent effects such as rain to be used in their Mega Man X series of games. Of all the chips created and embedded with game cartridges for the SNES, the Super FX chip developed by Argonaut is probably the best known as it allowed for true 3D environments with shaded polygons, light sourcing and simple texture mapping. Although it didn't shape the future of the system, it did bring one classic series to the fold, that being StarFox, or StarWing as it was known here in Australia.

### SUPER FX

StarFox became an almost instant classic, and certainly would not have been possible without the Super FX chip. But even in its day it wasn't considered a graphical powerhouse; the Sega CD system could easily outdo it in terms of pushing polygons, and the latest 3D titles for PC were even more advanced. Yet somehow StarFox became the 3D game of the moment, a fact many attribute to the title's fantastic gameplay. A co-production between Argonaut and Nintendo, the on-rails shooter that let players take to the sky in an 'Arwing' as

one Fox McCloud provided an exceptionally well designed gaming experience that rewarded skilled players accordingly with some exceptionally difficult missions. After its release in 1993, and Nintendo's decision to scrap the CD-ROM add-on for the SNES, development began on a new Super FX chip called the Super FX 2 which was virtually twice as powerful as the original chip. Due to the overwhelming success of the original chip's flagship title development also began on its follow up, StarFox 2.

Hype for the game was there from the outset and as the game began to take shape, in early 1995 screenshots, displays and other such promotional materials began to surface. As the title neared completion, Nintendo decided to halt production on the game with no official reason for doing so. Many at the time believed that the imminent release of the Nintendo 64 and the rapid rise of impressive 3D gaming made the technological leaps made with StarFox 2 look pale in comparison. The decision to cancel the title left quite a few fans a little disgruntled but with one of the earliest titles announced for the Nintendo 64 being StarFox 64 (or Lylat Wars) the disappearance of the franchise was quite brief, and in fact at one stage it is believed that both StarFox 64 and StarFox 2 were simultaneously in various stages of development. As such many of the features displayed in StarFox 2 made their way over to the Nintendo 64 title such as a multiplayer mode, free-roaming environments and the ability to explore on ground in 'tank' mode.

Although it was never fully completed, key developers on StarFox 2 have stated that it was 'virtually finished' and all that



# TEAM

remained was rigorous testing to iron out any bugs. Once cancelled, fans of the series were left wondering about the game, and it wasn't until a few years later that several 'beta' versions of the game began to appear online, which finally gave gamers the chance to play StarFox 2 using emulation software on their PC. Although other titles such as Yoshi's Island already used the Super FX 2 chip, because the game itself was not in a final state it took emulation software developers a while to get a stable version of the game working. Exactly how the game leaked is unknown, but being able to play the game reveals StarFox 2 to be quite a unique entry into the series.

## PLAYING THE BETA

As it introduced the idea of large free-roaming environments it used this concept for virtually every level in the game, a drastic departure from the on-rails shooting of the original. As players flew around large environments, controlling the Arwing was kept familiar allowing for barrel rolls and other aerial techniques as enemies were destroyed and objectives met. The free-roaming environments introduced various objectives such as destroying key targets as well as activating switches to proceed to the next iteration of the level. One of the new features also allowed the Arwing to transform into a walking tank-like frame paving the way for ground missions that controlled more like a traditional shooter with strafing and targeting. Specific walker

missions were also designed in an almost Zelda-style fashion with rooms to explore, enemies to destroy, switches to activate and pathways to unlock. Instead of the difficulty level providing various paths on the star map/level hub of the game the difficulty level here introduced more threats and obstacles (such as missiles and battleships) on the game's interactive map. Ship-to-ship dog fighting missions against members of the StarWolf team are also included and these provided some great aerial combat that would find its way into the Nintendo 64 title. With the introduction of a multiplayer mode came some new members to the StarFox team like a cat by the name of Miyu and a white poodle named Fay, two characters that were wisely dropped from the line-up in all subsequent StarFox releases. Visually the game benefited from the improved Super FX 2 chip with some rudimentary texturing and overall more complex environments. It's a shame the title was never released as it stands as a more than worthy entry into the StarFox series that we're sure would have caused quite a stir upon release, thanks to its drastic and well realised departure from straight on-rails shooting. <<

>> Although it was never fully completed, key developers on StarFox 2 have stated that it was "virtually finished" <<



## STARFOX TIMELINE

### STARFOX (SNES) - 1993

More than a demonstration of the Super FX chip StarFox proved to be an exceptional game with varied missions and a wonderful difficulty-to-skill balance. Although bland looking by today's standards the gameplay still holds up remarkably well.

### STARFOX 2 (Unreleased) - 1995

As Nintendo geared up for the release of their 64-bit console, Nintendo ceased production on the hotly anticipated follow-up to the groundbreaking SNES hit. Available online in various beta forms, players finally have the chance to play this great game.

### STARFOX 64/LYLAT WARS (N64) - 1997

The only StarFox title to be developed in-house by Nintendo saw the triumphant return of the series with the same intense gameplay and a great multiplayer dogfight mode.

### STARFOX ADVENTURES (GCN) - 2002

Formerly known as Dinosaur Planet, StarFox Adventures was also the last game developed by Rare for a Nintendo console. In this third person adventure the series took a drastic turn from aerial combat to Zelda-style adventuring.

### STARFOX ASSAULT (GCN) - 2005

With development reigns passed over to Namco, the StarFox series returns to its roots with decent on-rails aerial missions and some questionable Battlefield style vehicle hopping combat.





# MAIL HYPER!

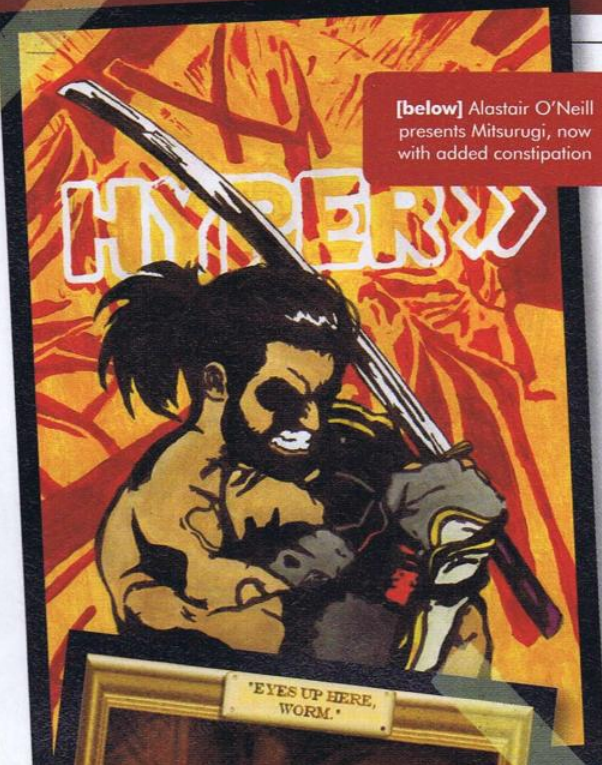
**POSTAL:**

78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia

**EMAIL:**

freakscene@next.com.au

**OUR MITSURUGI BLAH BLAH BLAH** comp entry spectacular! Thanks to everyone that entered and congratulations to the winners.



[below] Alastair O'Neill presents Mitsurugi, now with added constipation



**MITSURUGI WINS!!**  
[above] Liam Newton lubs teh boobies

**MITSURUGI WINS!!**

[below] Daniel Lucas 2005 and his interesting nunchaku positioning



**MITSURUGI WINS!!**

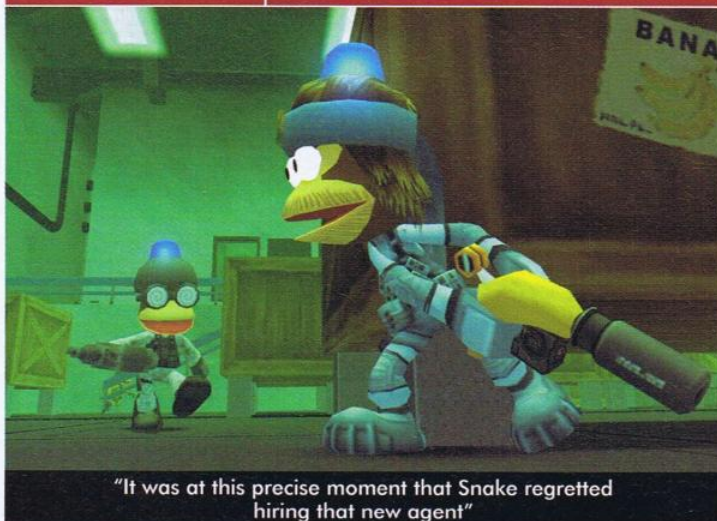
[below] Dehlia Hamwood gives us some gropetastic laughs



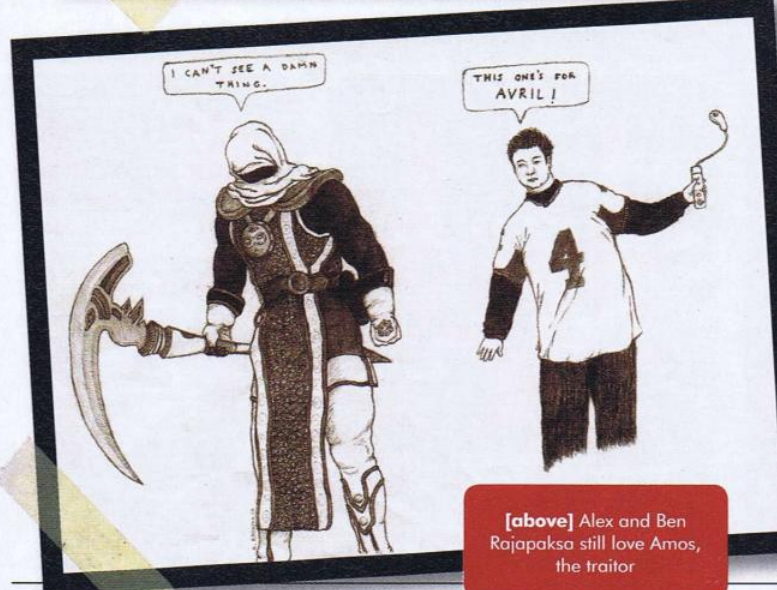
# CAPTION THIS!

**PART 74 WINNER**

**Michael Hugo** avoided the drugs and/or Simpsons references and in doing so won our hearts...



"It was at this precise moment that Snake regretted hiring that new agent"



[above] Alex and Ben Rajapaksa still love Amos, the traitor

08/05



Sophitia  
Alex

[left] Michael Sharpe - so innocent, so sweet, so stabby

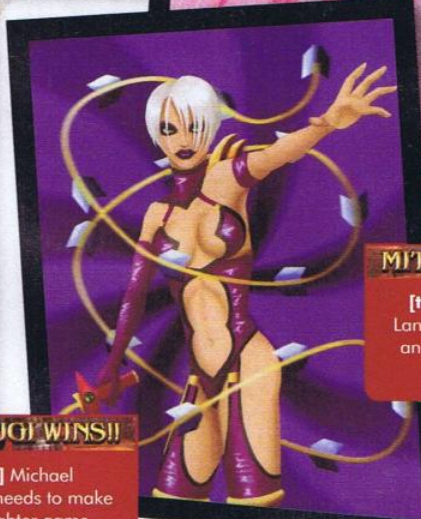


**MITSURUGI WINS!!**

[left] Braidy Newman gives us some real fighting girl hotness. Awesome art!



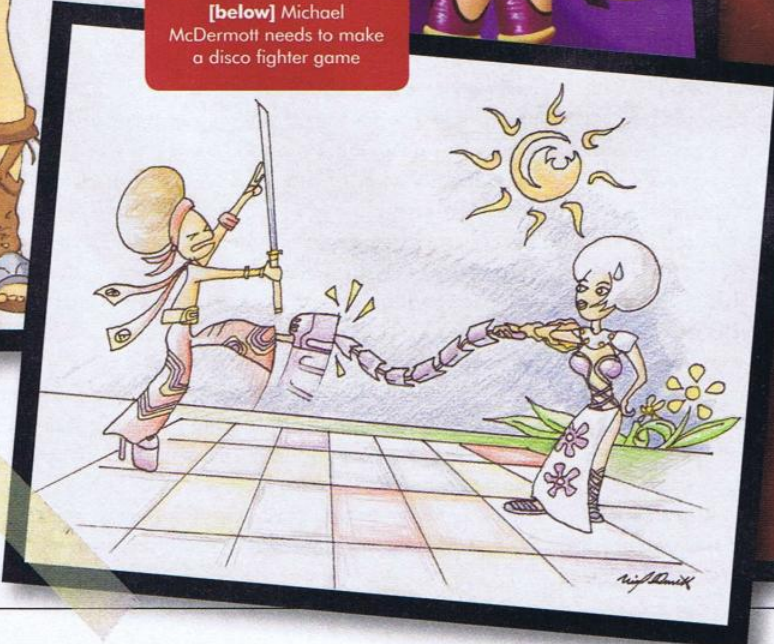
Sophitia



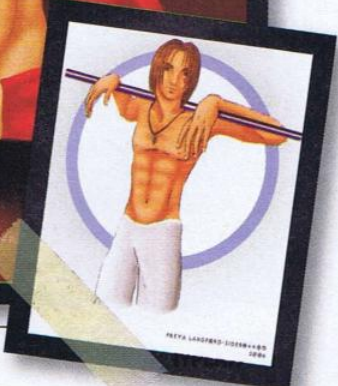
**MITSURUGI WINS!!**

[these 3 here] Freya Langford-Sidebottom has an awesome name and great art

**MITSURUGI WINS!!**  
[below] Michael McDermott needs to make a disco fighter game



[above] Robert Crawley loves it Grecian



FREYA LANGFORD-SIDEBOTTOM  
2000

# The Passion of the Gamer

MIGHT AS WELL FACE IT – YOU'RE ADDICTED TO GAMES.

## Part 2: Detox

By Dylan Burns

**G**aming detox is not something that need be done to remove you totally from enjoying games. Instead, it is a method in which a buffer zone is created that allows you to slightly distance yourself from games and therefore come back to them with renewed vigour - an elastic band method, if you like. It is at its core an attempt to refresh your perspective and allow you to then return wholeheartedly to your passion if you find yourself addicted to games.

As discussed in Part 1, game addiction is not necessarily a bad thing, it simply produces quite a few undesirable personal habits, which it may be of benefit to try and change, especially if you are a stallion looking to attract some young fillies. Sexual needs aside (that's a whole other article), gaming detox has many similarities to drug rehabilitation, only it does not involve quite so violent the withdrawal symptoms, nor leave

you with needle-scarred arms and the urge to hug a very large and sweaty man named Carl (unless you're a magazine editor, who, I'm told, gather bi-monthly and do so in order to 'dull the pain'). Gaming detox has as its reward the fact that you get to discover games all over again. So, once you have accepted the shameful title of gaming addict and the stigma it brings, it's on to the Gameboffin Five-Step Plan:

**STEP 1 - Distancing:** The first important step is to create that buffer zone between yourself and games. The best way to do this is to try and stick to a definite period of time in which you will not play games. At first, this may be difficult even at the length of minutes, but eventually you should be able to keep away from the screen for at least half an hour or even more.

What should you do during this seemingly torturous period? Well, reading is fine (even about games), so is any other geeky activity you normally do. Avoid homework or housework, as these activities feel like punishment and we wish to remove the psychological association between not playing games and punishment. At this stage, it's simply important that you realise that you can actually survive without games.

**STEP 2 - Verisimilitude Readjustment:** The purpose of this step is to readjust your perspective and allow you to appreciate that there exists a world outside of videogames (or so science tells us, but Descartes and Cogito Ergo Sum is a tangent best left unexplored). The key word here is 'appreciate', it's not essential that you actually attempt to traverse the hostile environments that suddenly thrust themselves upon your senses like an ugly girl at a nightclub. To do so would be disastrous and may cause you to have to start all over at step 1. Baby steps. Baby steps.

**STEP 3 - Embrace The Pain:** Indeed, pain will occur as it is a natural reaction. Instead of giving in to your gaming urges, in this step you must confront your pain and your fears. Yes, there remain three games you

haven't passed, and you're even up to 80% on two of them. How does being separated from them make you feel? Instead of a ritualistic session whereby you greedily devour every gaming second until the game is used up, you are forced to confront the pain of not playing games. It's okay, there are two more steps to go, and you're over half way there!

**STEP 4 - Acceptance:** By now you should be quite able to go for a definite period of time without falling to the floor and shaking uncontrollably in the foetal position. You have come to accept that it is in fact possible to let the outside world intrude upon your Matrix-like existence. Smells and other sensations that you perhaps thought long forgotten will return like the gentle susurrus of waves upon the shore, bathing you in their existence. Take this time to savour the moment of your head peeking above the water, for you are like a cannon ball

reaching the zenith of its parabolic flight; the final step awaits.

**STEP 5 - The Return:** Stepping into the outside world is all fine and dandy, but really it is quite a scary place and us passionate gamers are not adequately equipped with the evolutionary characteristics required to deal with it. Sooner or later, our eyes become drawn to those electronic rectangles that await our pleasure in our lounge rooms. Our hands mold perfectly into our chosen consoles' controllers, and we're happy. Step 5 embraces this action. You didn't really think that detox was meant to be a long-term measure, did you? Hell no, it was simply so that we could justify this final step - the return to games. We've done it tough up until now, we even went without games so that we could return to them with



FIG 1. Unattractive period woman looks unattractive

more glee than usual. This abstinence method, coupled with a strong network of friends to support you during its phases, is proven to increase your pleasure of games and thus leave you more deeply entrenched in them than ever before. The return stage of detox should be done in concordance with other activities that help to associate pleasure and gaming, such as copious amounts of caffeine, bulk packets of nutritional sustenance (i.e. chips, biscuits, anything crunchy really) and a complete absence of whining interrupters (i.e. mother, girlfriend and/or seventeen calls from some Indian bloke saying, "Mista Brun. You Mista Brun?" before I promptly hang up).

If approached in this way, following the five-step detox plan, you should find yourself grinning from ear to ear and rubbing your thumbs from R.S.I. You will, upon deeper rumination, actually realise that you appreciate games more because you were forced to be without them. As many a sappy sentimental song would say, you never miss what you have until it's gone, unless it's some kind of fungal growth.

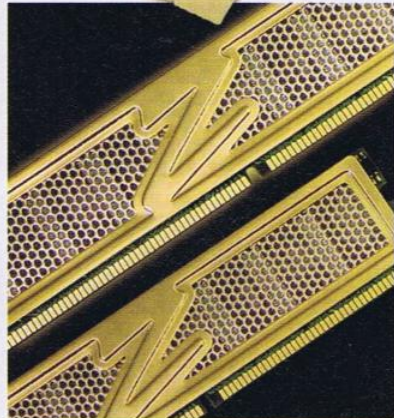
© Sir Dylan Gameboffin Burns III, 2005

# BATTLEFIELD

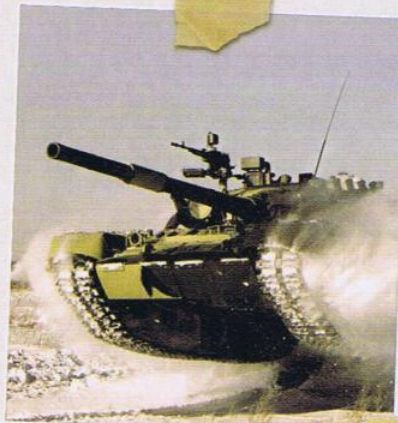
## GEAR



Artillery



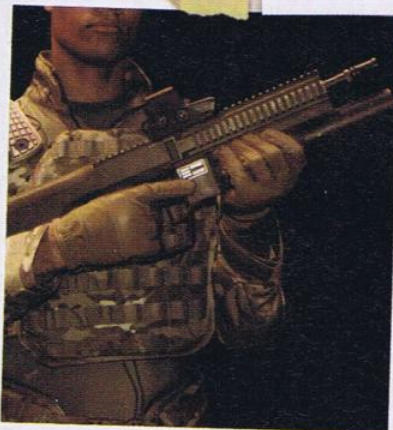
OCZ XTC Memory



Battle Tank



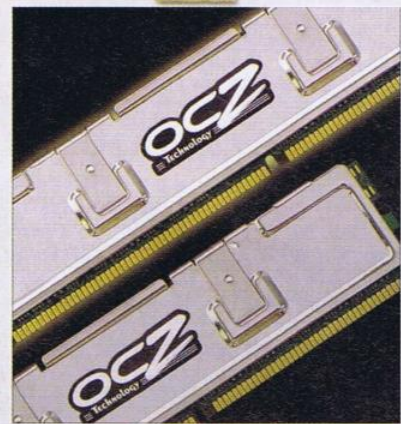
Grenades



Squad Automatic Weapons



Apache Helicopter



OCZ Platinum Memory



**Listen up soldier, we're at war!** Are you armed and ready to enter the battlefield? Are you willing to risk another man's life because you came to combat with inferior fragging equipment? If you want to down the opposing force's vehicles and frag your enemy into shameful oblivion then I suggest you listen up! Here in the battlefield you need more than just an elite squad and an apache helicopter for terrain supremacy...you need the confidence and power that comes with the OCZ Platinum Edition memory capable of overclocking your gaming rig into a finely tuned weapon. Make every shot count with the ultra fast XTC GX Gold Edition memory, or decimate the competition with a DDR2 Gold 2GB dual channel kit. Gear up soldier, and enter the battle equipped with the most potent weaponry...arm yourself with OCZ!

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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 1st Jan 2006  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	NFS:Most Wanted	Racing
2	▲	WWE Smackdown vs Raw 06	Sports
3	▼	Buzz: The Music Quiz Bundle	Family
4	⊕	GTA: San Andreas	Adventure
5	▲	Ricky Ponting Int Cricket 05	Sports
6	▼	SingStar 80s Bundle	All Other
7	▼	Eyeto: Play 3 Pack	Compilation
8	▼	NRL Rugby League 2	Sports
9	▲	Ratchet Gladiator	Adventure
10	⊕	Star Wars Battlefront II	Action

TOP  
10

## Nintendo DS Games Over \$40

W/E 1st Jan 2006  
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Nintendogs Dachshund	Simulator
2	▲	Nintendogs Chihuahua	Simulator
3	▼	Nintendogs Lab & Friends	Simulator
4	▼	Mario Kart	Racing
5	▲	Super Mario 64	Adventure
6	▲	Animal Crossing Wild World	Strategy
7	▼	King Kong	Adventure
8	▼	Harry Potter Goblet Of Fire	Adventure
9	⊕	NFS: Most Wanted	Racing
10	▼	Sonic Rush	Adventure

TOP  
10

## Game Cube Games Over \$50

W/E 1st Jan 2006  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon XD: Gale Darkness	RPG
2	◆	NFS: Most Wanted	Racing
3	◆	Harry Potter Goblet Of Fire	Adventure
4	▲	Mario Party 6	Family
5	⊕	Mario Super Star Baseball	Sports
6	▲	Fire Emblem: Path Radiance	RPG
7	▲	Dancing Stage Mario Mix	All Other
8	⊕	King Kong	Adventure
9	⊕	The Sims 2	Strategy
10	▼	Paper Mario 1000 Year Door	Adventure

TOP  
10

## Xbox Games Over \$50

W/E 1st Jan 2006  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	NFS: Most Wanted	Racing
2	⊕	GTA: San Andreas	Adventure
3	▲	Star Wars Battlefront II	Action
4	▼	Ricky Ponting Int Cricket 05	Sports
5	⊕	Prince Of Persia 3: 2 Thrones	Adventure
6	⊕	True Crime 2 New York City	Adventure
7	◆	Battlefield 2 Modern Combat	Action
8	▼	Crash Tag Team Racing	Racing
9	▼	Harry Potter Goblet Of Fire	Adventure
10	⊕	Tony Hawk USA Wasteland	Sports

TOP  
10

## PC Games Over \$20

W/E 1st Jan 2006  
RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	The Sims Full House	Strategy
2	▲	The Sims 2: Nightlife	Strategy
3	▼	Age Of Empires III	Strategy
4	◆	The Sims 2	Strategy
5	⊕	World Of Warcraft	Strategy
6	▲	NFS: Most Wanted	Racing
7	▼	Civilization IV	Strategy
8	◆	The Sims 2: University	Strategy
9	⊕	FEAR	Action
10	▼	The Sims 2: Holiday Party Pk	Strategy

TOP  
10

## Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30

W/E 1st Jan 2006  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon Emerald	RPG
2	◆	Bratz Rock Angelz	Adventure
3	◆	Chronicles Of Narnia	Adventure
4	⊕	Pokémon Fire Red	RPG
5	⊕	Pokémon Leaf Green	RPG
6	▲	Dogz 2005	Simulator
7	◆	Donkey Kong Country 3	Adventure
8	▼	Harry Potter Goblet Of Fire	Adventure
9	▼	Madagascar: Op Penguins	Adventure
10	⊕	NFS: Most Wanted	Racing

TOP  
10

## All Format Games Over \$50

W/E 1st Jan 2006  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	NFS: Most Wanted	PlayStation 2
2	▲	WWE Smackdown vs Raw 06	PlayStation 2
3	▲	GTA: Liberty Cities	PSP
4	▼	Buzz: The Music Quiz Bundle	PlayStation 2
5	⊕	GTA: San Andreas	PlayStation 2
6	▲	Ricky Ponting Int Cricket 05	PlayStation 2
7	▲	NFS: Most Wanted	Xbox
8	⊕	NFS: Most Wanted	PSP
9	▼	SingStar 80s Bundle	PlayStation 2
10	▼	Eyeto: Play 3 Pack	PlayStation 2

TOP  
10

## PlayStation Portable Games Over \$40

W/E 1st Jan 2006  
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	GTA: Liberty Cities	Adventure
2	◆	NFS: Most Wanted	Racing
3	◆	WWE Smackdown vs Raw 06	Sports
4	⊕	Pursuit Force	Adventure
5	◆	Star Wars Battlefront II	Action
6	▼	King Kong	Adventure
7	⊕	Crash Tag Team Racing	Racing
8	⊕	Medieval Rerurrection	Adventure
9	▼	Namco Museum Battle Cltn	Action
10	▼	FIFA 2006	Sports

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



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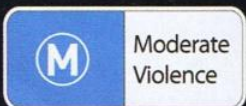


DEFEAT RIVAL FLEETS IN  
DRAMATIC NAVAL BATTLES



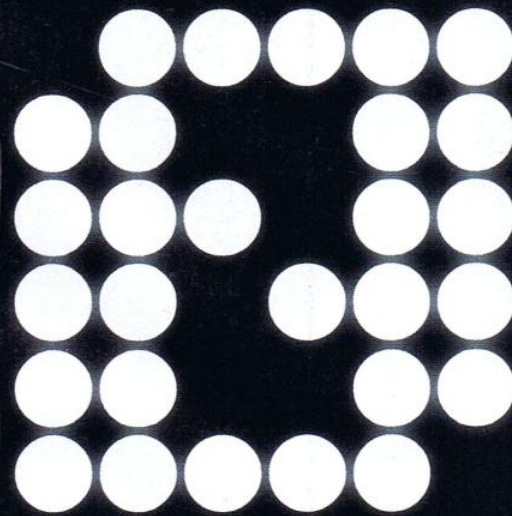
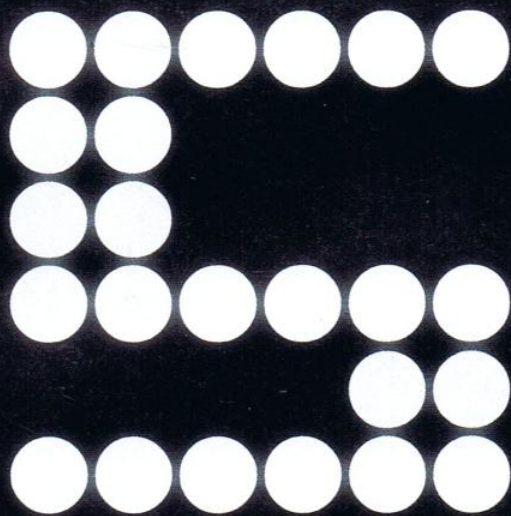
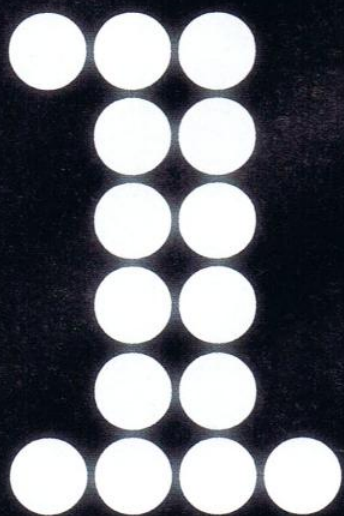
CONQUER IN MULTI- OR  
SINGLE-PLAYER MODES

COMING SOON



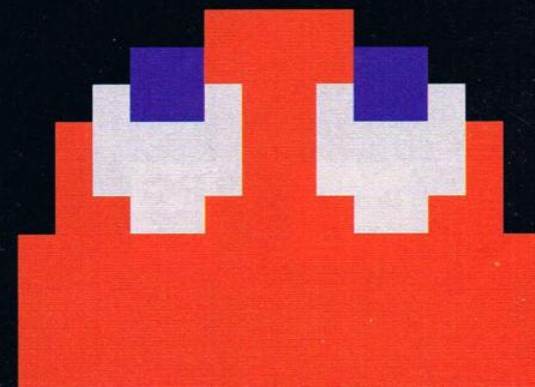
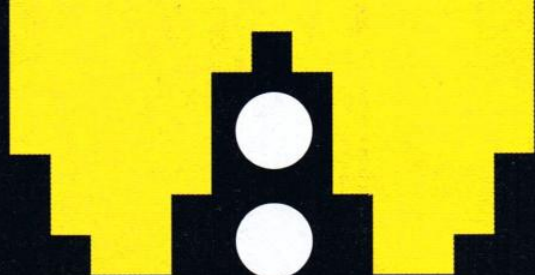
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Next Issue:



## **HYPER'S 150TH ISSUE!**

150 issues and still going strong! Next month is going to be HUGE! Not only will we be reviewing some of the biggest Xbox 360 titles, including Perfect Dark 0, Gotham 3 and Fight Night Round 3, we'll also be checking out Key of Heaven and Tokobots on PSP, plus the stellar V8 Supercars 3 and Black. Then there's a look inside an indie game studio, a massive mobile phone playtest, and of course, who could forget our birthday celebrations? Don't miss it!



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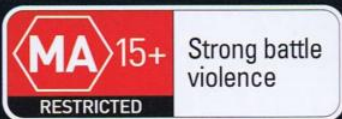
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PlayStation 2



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