

BLACK: Top shooter or massive letdown? >>>

GETTING UP BANNED!
Hypocrisy in Oz classification?

HYPER >>>

XBOX 360 REVIEWS



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 3
FULL AUTO >>> KAMEO



THE PSP STRIKES BACK!

Reviews of Street Fighter
Alpha 3 Max, Key of Heaven,
Tokobot and Exit.

Tomb Raider

Resurrecting a Legend
PLUS: EXCLUSIVE XBOX 360 SCREENS!

GRIDWERX: GENESIS

Inside an Aussie
Independent
Game Studio



PS2's NOT DEAD!

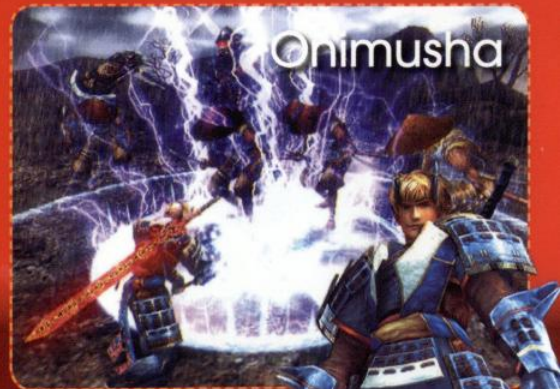
We review the games that prove it



24: The
Game



Drakengard 2



Onimusha

Hyper turns 150

We look at the Best and Worst
Games from each and every issue

A next MAGAZINE

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DAPHNE

IN THE BRILLIANT BLUE



Beautiful, dangerous, and desperate for work

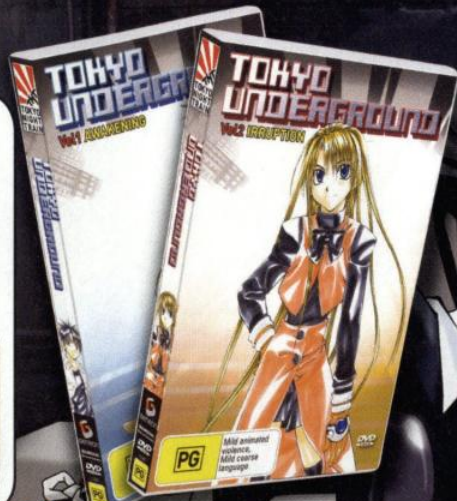
DAPHNE IN THE BRILLIANT BLUE: VOL1&2



TOKYO UNDERGROUND

Deep under the ground of the capital city of Tokyo exists a forgotten sunless world called

TOKYO UNDERGROUND: VOL 1&2



New Getter Robo

Huge monsters stalk the Earth

NEW GETTER ROBO: VOL 1



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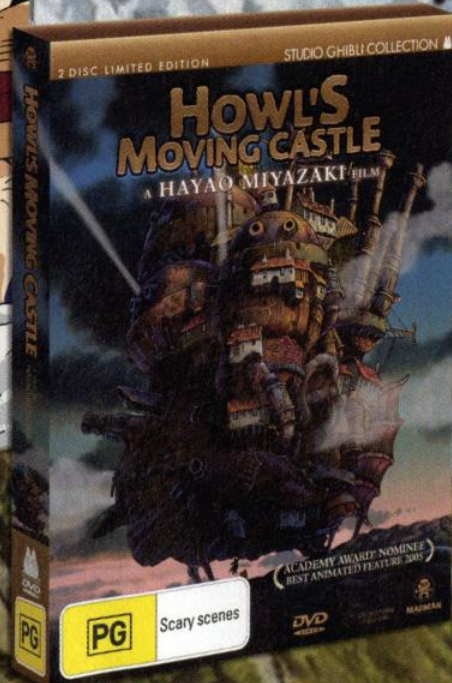
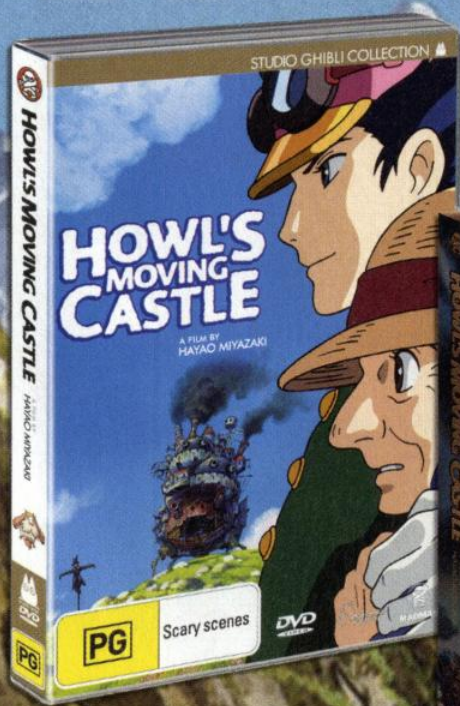
MADMAN ENTERTAINMENT PROUDLY PRESENTS THE LATEST ANIMATED MASTERPIECE FROM FROM HAYAO MIYAZAKI, DIRECTOR OF THE ACADEMY-AWARD WINNING "SPIRITED AWAY"

HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

A FILM BY
HAYAO MIYAZAKI



"There are good films, there are great films, and then there are those of Hayao Miyazaki... Howl's Moving Castle is fantasy filmmaking as it should be." - EMPIRE



LIMITED
EDITION
2 DISC SET



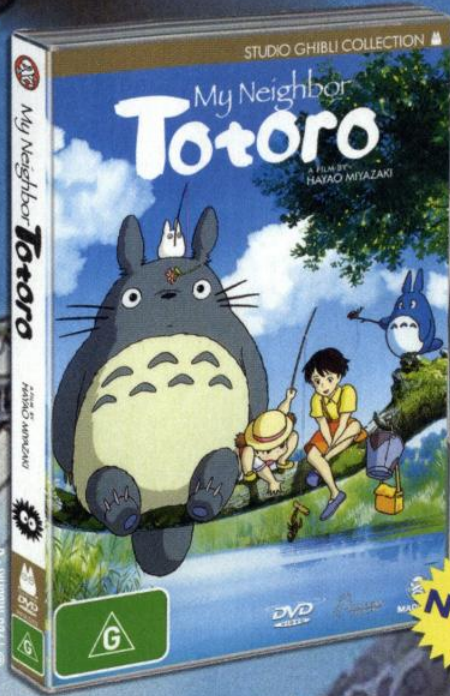
ALL STAR HOLLYWOOD VOICE CAST
CHRISTIAN BALE (BATMAN BEGINS)
EMILY MORTIMER (NOTTING HILL)
LAUREN BACALL (DOGVILLE)
BILLY CRYSTAL (MONSTERS' INC.)
and many more...

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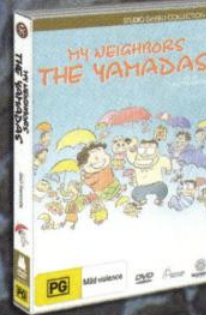
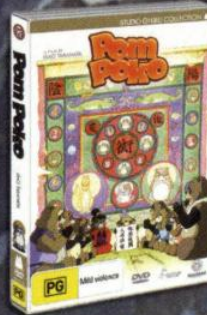
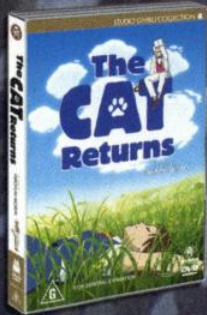
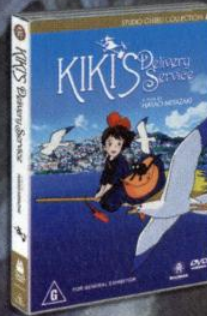
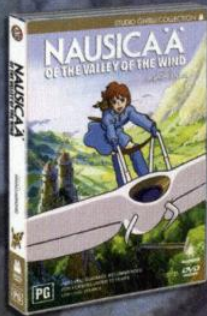
The Critically Acclaimed Family-Favourite Film from Hayao Miyazaki


My Neighbor Totoro

ALL STAR HOLLYWOOD VOICE CAST
DAKOTA FANNING (WAR OF THE WORLDS)
LEA SALONGA (ALADDIN)
PAT CARROLL (THE LITTLE MERMAID)
TIMOTHY DALY (SUPERMAN)
and many more...

"One of the greatest animations ever made...
a hands-down masterpiece." - IN THEMIX.COM.AU

NEW!



A full-page illustration of Lara Croft from the Tomb Raider series. She is shown rappelling down a thick rope, suspended in mid-air. Her long, dark red hair is blowing in the wind. She wears her signature brown leather outfit, including a top, shorts, and a utility belt with a holster and a circular device. Her expression is one of intense focus and determination. The background features a lush jungle with a waterfall on the left and dense foliage on the right.

16 TOMB RAIDER LEGEND

Forget the time she ransacked the Louvre, cos Lara's going back to the tombs!

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We've played through a large slice of the new Tomb Raider game. Find out what we think!

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Is this the FPS that's going to breath new life into the genre?

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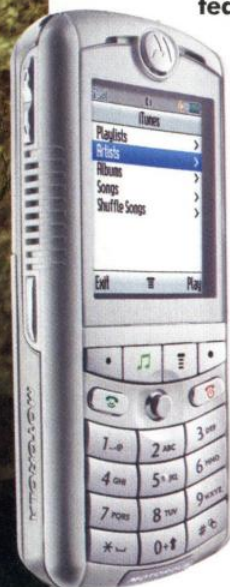
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WANT XBOX 360 GAMES? SUBSCRIBE ON PAGE 14!

EDITORIAL

»» About the nicest thing we could say about the Xbox 360 launch is that it has certainly been a good learning process for Microsoft. About the meanest thing we could say is that they've botched it spectacularly. By now you've all heard that we're not getting the 360 until March 23. Hugely disappointing yes, and probably quite a blow to Microsoft's relationships with retailers and publishers in this country too, but that's really only the end point of a number of poor decisions, all of which have contributed to their inability to get units for our launch.

It's easy enough to pick apart their strategy in hindsight, but even at the time it seemed like an odd decision to launch in the US, Europe and Japan within a short space of time. America and Europe, sure, but to prioritise Japan, a country that let out a resounding 'meh' over the original Xbox smacked of desperation. Desperation to get in there as long before PS3 as they possibly could. But here's the thing. There's no point launching in Japan unless you have a number of titles that will appeal directly to the gamers of that nation. Even for Western gamers the launch lineup was unimpressive, with ports and sequels the order of the day, but in Japan – once DOA4 was delayed, there was basically nothing that would sell the machine.

Meanwhile, Australia, a country that embraced the Xbox with open arms, is left twiddling its thumbs. Microsoft could have launched in America, Europe and Australia within the initial launch window, then launched in Japan around March, packing several titles that Japanese gamers would be interested in, and STILL launching ahead of the PS3. Now, we're not saying that there wouldn't be stock shortages as a result of that scenario – there most probably would be, but there sure as hell wouldn't be tens of thousands of units sitting on store shelves in Japan going nowhere. And that's really what's so galling about the way Microsoft prioritised Japan – they're not catering to their core customers, a dangerous strategy that could earn the ire of not only gamers, but publishers and retailers alike.

Cam Shea »» Editor



[up] For Cam, this issue was Tuesday



[up] Wilks, naked yet again



[up] Malcolm, wise and um, old

HYPER»»

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APRIL 2006

WRITE TO HYPER!

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HYPER CREW Monthly Top 5 Games

Cam Shea - Editor

1. Tomb Raider Legend – PS2
"The most erotic part of the woman is the boobies"
2. Top Spin 2 – Xbox 360
3. Street Fighter Alpha 3 – PSP
4. We ♥ Katamari – PS2
5. Urban Chaos – PS2

Malcolm Campbell - Art

1. We ♥ Katamari – PS2
"♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥"
2. Street Fighter Alpha 3 – PSP
3. Shadow of the Colossus – PS2
4. Psychonauts – Xbox
5. Top Spin 2 – Xbox 360

Daniel Wilks - Deputy Editor

1. Full Auto – Xbox 360
"I'm an expert flautist"
2. 24: The Game – PS2
3. Kameo – Xbox 360
4. Exit – PSP
5. Atelier Iris – PS2

Dirk Watch - Senior Junior Writer

1. Prey – PC
"I see the light"
2. The Godfather – Xbox
3. Outrun 2 – Xbox
4. Daytona USA – Arcade
5. Rub Rabbits – DS

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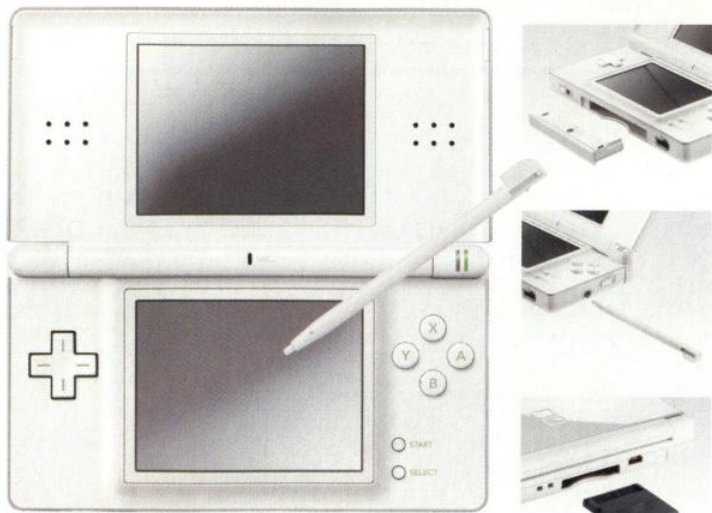
No one instantly becomes an Australian Army Pilot. It takes time to hone razor sharp reflexes and develop split second timing. Abilities which are critical to the success of any mission in the air. That's why all potential Army Pilot candidates must first beat the simulators before they fly the real thing. ADF Aviator, the new

aircrew game from the Australian Defence Force gives you a chance to begin your training now. Created using real military aircraft specs and true battle scenarios, ADF Aviator isn't just a game, it's a taste of things to come. To get your free copy of ADF Aviator visit www.defencejobs.gov.au/adfaviator or call 13 19 01 now.

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News

IN THE NEWS: Romero calls people 4/\^3R5!!1 one in his blog... fails to see irony / Now with 20% more offensive words!



REMIXED!

DS LITE UNVEILED

Coming to Australia... erm, sometime

By the time you read this, a new version of the DS will be available on store shelves in Japan. Called DS Lite, the new model is mostly designed to be a sexier, slimmer version of the original design, perhaps making it a little bit more appealing for the fashion conscious. In addition to being a more compact design — 42% smaller (133mm wide, 73.9mm high and 21.5mm deep) and 21% lighter (215 grams), there are quite a few small tweaks to the layout. Firstly, the power button is on the right edge now, along with the housing for the stylus. The start and select buttons are underneath the face buttons on the right instead of

above them. The system also comes with a cover for the GBA cartridge slot, so you can keep it dust free.

In terms of functionality, as far as we know the Lite will basically be identical to the standard DS, with one subtle but cool difference — you can choose from four levels of brightness through the menu. There will be three different colours available at launch in Japan — Crystal White, Ice Blue and Enamel Nav, and it will be going for 16,800 Yen which works out at a little over \$190 Australian. There's no sign of a launch date here yet but we'll let you know as soon as anything is announced.

FIRST LOOK!

DUE: Q4 2006

Killzone: Liberation PSP • Developer: Guerilla
 The Hype: Killzone goes third person in "an intense portable gaming experience"



CANDID

MORE PS3 SPECULATION

Did Ken Kutaragi lie to us?

There's still not a lot of information on the much anticipated PS3 but the website Kiziko Games has supposedly scored some hands on time with three different developers. Due to secrecy the site apparently can't attribute their information to any source making the validity questionable at best but some of the information does ring true. In amongst the findings, the nameless developers said that the machine will be bigger than the prototype shell shown, the fabled dual 1080p resolution is almost an impossibility and that the graphics do not live up to the hype of Killzone 2 and the Motorstorm. Here are some of the nameless quotes to mull over:

"I think to fit everything that Sony wants in there AND leave space for a 2.5 inch hard drive, the machine would have to grow. The models they're showing off are way too small for what they want."

"Sony wanted 1080p, but we're working at 720p and 1080i, same as on the Xbox 360. Even with [final hardware] in mind, reaching good frame rates at 1080p with next-gen graphics is almost impossible. Instead many developers, ourselves included, are reworking so they run at 720p. PS3's output takes care of upscaling it - so no native 1080p, but it still looks killer."

"Cell is weird and difficult to work with... coding has progressed with high speeds and paper specs in mind, it's one of the reasons framerate specs aren't met yet. We've been anti-aliasing through software which also means a performance hit, although the 720p upscaling minimises that problem a bit."

"We think that in Japan it will most likely release during Summer (2006), Q4 in the US, and Europe in Winter or Spring 2007 - these are our internal projections."

OVERFLOW

As you all know by now Microsoft have delayed the Xbox 360's launch in Australia until March 23. Yeah it sucks, but at least we're going to have a great launch lineup. Y'know, the glass being half full and all of that.

The soundtrack for *Driver: Parallel Lines* has been announced and features some absolutely killer tracks. From the 70s, artists such as Roy Ayers, Parliament, Marvin Gaye, David Bowie and Blondie have been featured. For 2006 you're looking at the likes of *The Roots*, *Ills*, *London Funk Allstars* and *Lyrics Born*. Then there are exclusive tracks from *Public Enemy*, *Grandmaster Flash*, *Paul Oakenfold*, *Audio Bullys* and *Mylo*. All up there are 73 licensed songs, plus a number of original in-game music tracks. Let's hope the game's good.

Halo 2 is coming to PC... but only for people with Windows' next operating system Vista. It's being developed by a dedicated Microsoft Game Studios team in partnership with Bungie and contains all the content from the Xbox version and its map pack, plus the ability to create your own multiplayer maps. Given how delayed Vista has been, when *Halo 2* will see release is anyone's guess but it may not be until 2007.

We've seen the first snippets of a PS3 FPS in development at UK dev studio Kuju. Titled *Redwood Falls*, it demonstrates not just some great character deformation, but also some interesting ideas. Enemies can have limbs blown off and receive brutal damage but will be able to regenerate and even mutate. Whether this will be used for anything other than window dressing remains to be seen.

As of March 7 Japanese gamers have been able to celebrate the imminent release of *FFXII* by buying the "Final Fantasy XII Potion", a promotional drink from Suntory which contains ten herbs, including rosemary, chamomile, lemon balm and elder flower. Sounds foul to us.

BANNED

OFLC OUT OF TOUCH?

We won't be Getting Up just yet...

Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure was recently banned by the OFLC, and we're still scratching our heads as to the reasoning behind the decision. Apparently the game promotes crime through the realistic scenarios in which Trane acquires his graffiti skills (in a totalitarian future society no less), the fact that graffiti is a rewarded gameplay mechanic (unlike, say, Jet Set Radio and its sequel) and that there are biographies of real graffiti artists in the game (most of whom are now considered breakthrough modern artists or designers). According to the OFLC press release the Local Government Association of Queensland is responsible for bringing the game, given an MA 15+ by the OFLC last year, back in front of the review board. Atari will be fighting this refusal of classification tooth and nail so fingers crossed we may actually see the game at some stage. This is where things get interesting though — the OFLC by law has 28 days to send Atari the

full detailed report documenting why the game has been refused classification or banned but as of the time of this writing Atari has only received the paraphrased report giving a brief rundown as to the reasons. As they will be unable to actually prepare their defence until the report arrives, sources inside Atari suspect that the full report won't arrive until the 28th day.

The most worrying aspect of the decision is that it could set a dangerously conservative precedent for future game classifications in this country. Getting Up being kept from Australian consumers can easily open the door to other games being banned on similar grounds. It would be easy to extrapolate the promotion of crime into any game that features any type of crime, such as street racing and realistic scenarios; and apparently realistic scenarios involve anything human. The fact that Getting Up was specifically set in a fictional totalitarian future where freedom of speech is being oppressed was obviously a little



too realistic for some people.

Jokes aside, there's a definite sense that the ruling highlights the problem with our current censorship system. Recently there was an Australian documentary called Rash released on DVD that features interviews with numerous taggers, stencilers and graffiti artists, most of whom wear masks to protect their identities due to their criminal behaviour. Why is it that such a DVD, arguably more educational in the whys and wherefores of graffiti is allowed to be released whereas a game that features unmasked luminaries of the scene giving such educational hints as "keep off the third rail" and "don't bring your book when you go out bombing" get banned? It seems to all come down to the impression that interaction equals instant immersion and that games are, after all, just for kids.

WINNERS

HYPER 148

KUNG FU HUSTLE

- Daniel Rafferty, Geraldton, WA
- Greg Doherty, Brisbane, QLD
- Brayden Walker, Valley View, SA
- Robert Colombi, Bondi Junction, NSW
- Christine Creeney, Eatons Hill, QLD
- Peter Pervan, Indooroopilly, QLD
- Jay Caulfield, St Kilda, VIC
- John Catania, Alexandria, NSW
- Tony Garrett, Doncaster East, VIC
- Tim Chmielewski, Caulfield North, VIC

UNLEASHED AND ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA

- Scott Stephenson, Port Macquarie, NSW
- Bronwyn van Heusden, Payneham, SA
- Steven Joy, Kedron, QLD
- Ben Wynn, Stockton, NSW
- Gail Plint, Pialba, QLD
- Casey Bailey, Chatswood, NSW
- Jason Miller, Scarborough, QLD

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5 ON PSP

- Lucas Janson, Woonona, NSW
- Selena Verhaaf, Bohle Plains, QLD
- Dong Do, Georges Hall, NSW
- Glenn Harding, Glenroy, VIC
- Joshua White, Tamworth, NSW
- Sam Webber, Yamba, NSW

UNDERWORLD EVOLUTION

- Jamie Campbell, Camp Hill, QLD
- Leah Bryan, Elanora, QLD
- Jeff Perkins, Redfern, NSW
- Elizabeth Karpel, Mayfield, NSW
- Ms Jennifer Round, Gerroa, NSW
- A Humpries, Narragin, WA
- Terry Wedding, Jimboomba, QLD
- Leah Pine, Macquarie Fields, NSW
- Vincent Wan, Eight Mile Plains, QLD
- Alvin Farrow, Chatswood, NSW



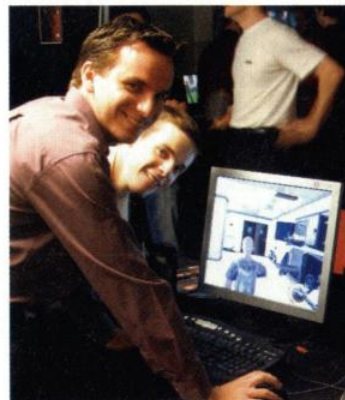
QANTM DIGITAL HARVEST '05

Students strut their stuff

We're big fans of QANTM here at Hyper. After all, these are the guys who are helping to train the next generation of Aussie developers. Late last year QANTM College held their Industry Night 'Digital Harvest', which was an opportunity for visitors from the multimedia, education, animation, games, graphic design and other related industries to come along and see the digital fruits of QANTM students' labour.

On display were two levels of graduating students' work which were seen by guests from leading companies like Liquid Animation, Pandemic Studios, THQ, Halfbrick, Auran and Krome. Many students went on to interviews and even received jobs as a result of the night. Nicely done! Bryn Giles, General Manager of QANTM College said that "The night was a huge success, the students can finally be proud of what they have been working towards all year."

If anyone in the New Media industry would like to know more about upcoming industry nights, or to view graduating students work with a view to employment, feel free to contact QANTM on 1300 136 933 or email: enquiries@qantmcollege.edu.au



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PART 77

Beep boop boop do deep?

Animal Crossing: Wild World

MIKOLAI



The market price of Animal Crossing 'bells' reached a record high in early January amidst heavy bidding but has gone into freefall since then. 20 million Animal Crossing bells sold for \$81 U.S. in an Ebay auction on Tuesday 10th January. Today, those same 20 millions bells are hovering around the \$15-20 mark as the market is flooded with cheap currency and profiteers.

Online sellers may be getting nervous about the continuing price drops but it seems that local Wild World residents are remaining upbeat, when asked about the financial meltdown gripping the community, one resident was heard to reply. "I like you. Have an apple." -Wild World Times: Monday 23rd January-

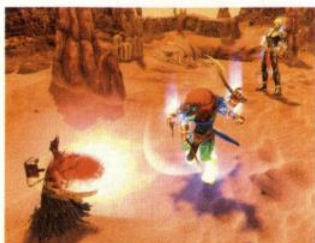
...And things get weird. Seems that a small but thriving virtual economy has sprung up around Nintendo's Animal Crossing: Wild World. Ebay listings for 'bells' [the Animal Crossing currency] started to appear online shortly after the game's release and have snowballed since then. The exchange rate between U.S. dollars and Animal Crossing 'bells' hit a peak in early January but has since dropped considerably as the number of sellers has increased - no doubt spurred on by the promise of quick cash.

As one Ebay seller explained, "It's actually a bit of a pain in the ass. People are like 'I want this, and this, and this and this and this.' I've managed to earn \$400 so far so it's not too bad. There is undermining coming from my competitors though. I went to \$15 so they dropped to \$10. But people come for the service in my town." Indeed.

While virtual economies have long been a mainstay on PCs and in MMORPGs, this is the first time the phenomena has affected Nintendo or the handheld market - made possible by the DS WiFi connection and unofficial USB cards for the system that allow users to 'crack' game code and generate items. The device retails for around \$150 and is available from shady importers.

No official word from Nintendo on any of this, although it will be interesting to see how they react given the safety measures they have promoted for the DS WiFi service.

Expect a flood of 'prize cattle' to appear for sale online when Harvest Moon hits the DS later in the year...



DELAYED

NO HOMM V FOR YOU JUST YET

Heroes of Might and Magic V pushed back

Heroes of Might and Magic V has been delayed, but the reason behind the decision is pretty cool. An open beta was released recently and saw 70,000 downloads in the space of a week. It turns out the fans of the series are as passionate about it as ever - even after the Heroes 3DO debacle - and were vocal in their criticism of how the new game was shaping up, even going so far as to create <http://saveheroes.org/> and getting an online petition up and running. The good news is that the dev team and publisher listened. The game's producer Fabrice Cambounet announced the delay on Ubisoft's forums, saying that "the message from the fans was heard loud and clear - it couldn't be escaped really" and that "We care about the project and the brand, we've been working for more than two years on the game now, and any feedback is valued. On this project the feedback from fans is especially important, as this is YOU who ultimately decide if a Heroes game is good or not."

"The decision has now been taken to delay the release, in order to polish the game, and increase the quality as much as possible. We all need a great Heroes 5 to start the series over! A new publishing date will be set soon."

So there you go, the gaming community has spoken, and it should lead to a much stronger return to the Heroes series.

NEW SCREENS!

DUE: TBA

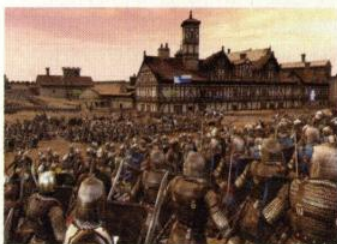
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars PC • Developer: Splash Damage
The Hype: The Stragg invasion of Earth as an online shooter!



FIRST LOOK!

DUE: Q3 2006

Medieval 2: Total War PC • Developer: Creative Assembly
The Hype: Lead "armies across the battlefields of Europe and the Holy Land"



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Artwork by QANTM Students / Main picture by: Sean McNally

WIN ALL OF UBISOFT'S XBOX 360 LAUNCH TITLES!

Five Xbox 360 game packs up for grabs!

Ubisoft have come storming out of the gate for the local Xbox 360 launch with four stellar games: Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter, Far Cry Instincts: Predator, Peter Jackson's King Kong The Official Game of the Movie and Blazing Angels: Squadrons of World War II, and we've got five packs of all four games to give away to five lucky subscribers this month.

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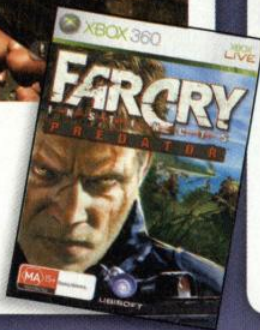
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HY0150

Tomb Raider Legend

LARA'S FUTURE BECOMES CRYSTAL CLEAR...

Systems: PC, PS2, PSP, Xbox, Xbox 360 ■ Category: Action adventure ■ Players: 1 ■ Developer: Crystal Dynamics ■ Due: April 2006

Is Lara back? That's the question we know you want answered, and indeed the question that we were assailed with while playing preview code in the office. People would walk by, stop, ask in an awed tone "is that the new Tomb Raider?" then shortly after, in an almost-scared-to-hear-the-answer whisper "is it any good?" The fans have certainly come out of the woodwork, but it's obvious that this series has taken a bit of a battering. Worn down by years of sequels, then unceremoniously decapitated by Angel of Darkness on PS2, people have lost their faith in the once all conquering heroine of the videogame world. It's time, then, for a fresh start.

But here's the problem. It can't be too fresh a start. After all, that was what led to Angel of Darkness — it was a well intentioned attempt to take Lara into the next generation. Sure, in hindsight eating chocolate bars you found in the sewer, having a forgettable second character (Lara's boyfriend no less) and an absurdly arbitrary level up system were awful ideas, but Lara did need a shot in the arm of some sort. So now we find Crystal Dynamics on development duties for a new title, in the unenviable position of having to restore people's faith in the series, while not straying too far from what made the earlier games great.

Fortunately, there's plenty of life left in the series yet. So while it comes as no surprise that Legend is not a radical departure from the gameplay the series

is renowned for, there's still something refreshing about seeing a modernised and streamlined version of that "core" experience. And as you'll find out, Crystal Dynamics have taken a few chances along the way.

TEMPTING FATE?

There were a few goals that the team made top priority for this game to make it work. First of all, is taking Lara back into the tombs. They wanted to capture the mystery and romance of adventuring through ancient locales; somehow finding a way to climb and skirt huge, often awe inspiring environments. To that end you'll find yourself in some fantastic locations in Legend. From the jungles and caves of Ghana to the vertigo inducing slopes of the Himalayas, old school Lara freaks will definitely be at home navigating the broken stone paths and exploring the ancient temples that the game has to offer.

That said, Lara will also be making her way to a number of more urban environments, including a level based in Tokyo. Before you scowl to yourself and shake your head, we're pleased to tell you we've played through a couple of these levels and they very much retain the gameplay of the tombs. No pseudo RPG elements to be found here. Or Sewer Bars. Indeed, we asked the creator of Lara Toby Gard, who was brought on by Crystal Dynamics as pre-production was coming to an end to help with Lara's look, as well as the story and cutscenes, what



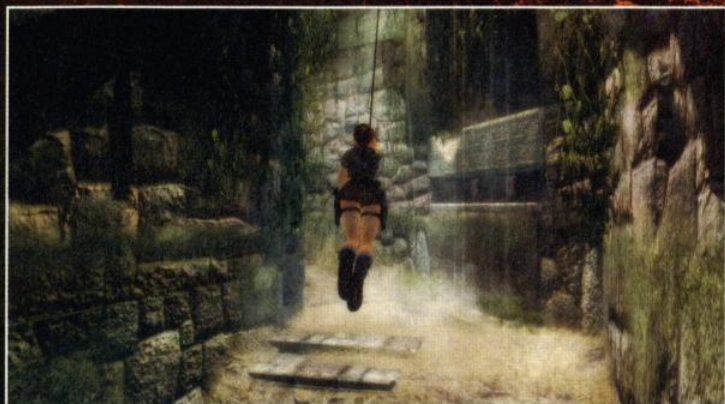
the key difference between the urban environments of this game and the last game are, and he very much underlined the point that "she is still doing what Lara always does, she is overcoming adversity and athletically moving towards her goals, while solving puzzles." Just as it should be.


I'LL TAKE FASTIDIOUS

The second major goal for the team was to make Lara really feel like a kick-ass athlete, not some finicky robot that has to jump at a ledge just so to grab on, or she'll fall to her death. As Toby told us "it was a fundamental project goal to retain the acrobatics of the character while freeing her from the old block based platform gameplay of the past. This involved the creation of a whole set of new moves and an animation system that was much more responsive while keeping the animation fidelity that people expect from a TR game."

As a result, control is more varied and freeform now. While

Lara isn't as nimble as a certain Prince, she has a good ability set and some fantastic animations. She doesn't have to jump perpendicularly at ledges anymore for instance. She can jump from almost side on and still grab on. Animations are more varied too, so you can either cleanly land a jump, just get a foot on and haul yourself up or only just grab the edge. While these kinds of changes are very much expected for a modern videogame, her athleticism is a little more hands on now too. If she only just grabs a ledge with her fingertips for instance, you'll often need to quickly hit a context sensitive button to help her sure up her position or she'll fall. It's a nice way to make you feel a little more involved in Lara's life and death antics. And remember that long wait as Lara slowly shimmied across a ledge? Well that's no more — simply tap a button in time with her movements to make her vault along ledges and up ladders. Animations are, of course, used





High def boobey (traps)

■ While the Xbox 360 version of Legend will not contain any exclusive content, Crystal Dynamics have been doing their utmost to ensure that it's going to get some serious attention. We asked Toby Gard to tell us a little about the difference between the current gen and next gen versions of the game: "The art for the next generation version is being completely re-done. We've switched over to a per pixel lighting model so the entire game has been relit and retextured to support dynamic lights with normal maps etc. All the lights in the game are dynamic and shadows are generated in real time which gives the game a completely different feel. We've also remodelled all the characters in the game (including of course Lara). Most characters have at least 2 times the poly count of the current generation models. They also have normal map support. We've spent a lot of time making Lara look as good as possible including special shaders for hair, clothing and skin." What this all means is that Legend looks stunning on 360. Whether it's Lara's supple looking skin, her flawless curves, the fact that she can cast shadows on herself or the amazing looking lighting, real-time reflections or additional geometry of the worlds around her, owners of HDTVs are going to be more than happy with the results.

In addition there will about 20 achievements to earn in the game. They range in difficulty, from simply beating the game on its various difficulty levels, through to beating time trials for levels and finding hidden rewards.

RAD

■ We asked Toby Gard to tell us a little about the hi-tech binoculars Lara's equipped with for her latest adventure "Lara has a pair of binoculars that are great for just looking around and scoping out the environment. When you are doing so, you can switch on the Remote Analysis Device (RAD) feature and by looking directly at point of interest in the world around you, Lara will tell you a bit about them. It's very useful to help understand the more complex machinery left behind by the ancients."



as visual cues too. The way Lara shifts her weight back in preparation to leap left or right from one ledge to another doesn't just look great, it shows you what she's prepped to do. The preload for jumping perpendicularly back off the ledge, for instance, is quite different. It's all a rich tapestry we tell ya.

PUSHING CRATES

The third aspect that the team identified to modernise the series was integrating puzzles in a more interesting way. When Toby was recruited he was quickly brought up to speed. The project goals in terms of level design were to "eliminate the old lever pulling puzzles in favour of physics based real world interactions, and Legends has a fully featured physics engine that has allowed new types of challenges that previous games could not do."

This is true of both specific puzzles and broader environmental interactions. Many of the puzzles we've played through involve elaborate stone mechanisms – giant wheels that must be set in motion, obstacles that must be removed, elaborate pulley systems to be navigated. Even the old crate pushing puzzles have been given a new sheen. One puzzle requires you to get crates from a lower level up to the weight sensitive panels above. You do this by positioning the crates one by one on the end of a large stone see-saw and jumping on the other end to catapult them up. The idea is that the puzzles should be less abstruse and make more physical sense.

In addition to relics from long lost civilisations, some areas

also have clear signs of recent excavation work. Lights are set up, as are platforms and ropes. It all helps give the feeling that this is a real archaeological site, as well as factoring into navigation.

Another aspect of this refreshed approach to puzzles is Lara's new toy – her magnetic grappling hook. It plays quite a prominent role in the game, and as Toby tells us it's "certainly the most significant new feature for Lara. In a physics based world the ability for her to apply force to objects remotely was absolutely essential, it acts both as a neat way to traverse the world and a great tool for solving puzzles." So using the grappling hook you'll be able to swing across chasms, pull puzzle-related items down to you and even hop on a raft and use anchor points to pull yourself across a lake.

In broader terms Lara will be able to take advantage of her environment in certain places – this may be shooting a damaged column so it topples onto enemy guards or setting off a rockslide for the same result. It's hardly a revolution, and all significant physics related interactions are completely scripted in use (you'll see a context sensitive button pop up on screen when there's something you can trigger), but it's a big step in the right direction nonetheless.

KING ARTHUR'S SWORD FRAGMENTS

The fourth major goal for Legend was to make Lara more human. A lot of attention has been paid in the press to her redesigned looks, but

the quest to humanise Lara runs far deeper than face value. It's actually more about presenting her as a character you can care about, as opposed to the rather mercenary endangered animal killing lass of old. Crystal Dynamics are trying to do this through the story – giving insights into Lara's past and showing us how she developed as a person, as well as an adventurer. According to Toby Gard, "we will learn the reason why Lara is after all these artefacts in the first place, and why it matters so much." Not surprisingly, he didn't want to reveal much more, which is fine by us as we want to experience it first hand, as we're sure you do too. He did, however, tell us that there will be some characters returning from previous games, but would only reveal one, a hacker named Zip who "helped Lara in a previous game and he is now a member of her 'tech team' giving her invaluable information about the sites that she explores."

We can also tell you that the revelations from Lara's past will not only be told through cutscenes. There is at least one sequence where you're actually in control of Lara (in her old outfit no less) in her own flashback, navigating a level that you also get to explore in present day, although it's looking pretty different now.

So there you have it. Legend is shaping up to be the first multi-play Tomb Raider game in a long time. We'll have a full review soon, but for now, kick back safe in the knowledge that Lara is back, and she's in fine form. <<<

Lara's big guns

■ The gunplay has always been a bit of a weakness in the Tomb Raider games, and while the build we played isn't perfect, it's clear that it's on the right track. As you'd expect there's an auto target system, and if you hold on the lock-on button you'll be able to strafe around the enemy while firing. Also cool is that the grappling hook comes into play when you're locking on, allowing you to drag enemies over to you to deliver a swift kick to the head. In an early build we played the animation as you kicked the enemy was a little floaty, allowing you to kick them into the air then start shooting them before they hit the ground. This won't make it into the finished game, but there are plenty of cool moves that will. These include jumping off an enemy's chest in slow mo capping him all the while, and smacking enemies in the head with the butt of your gun. She'll be well equipped too, picking up discarded weapons such as machine guns, rocket launchers and shotguns. She can carry one extra weapon in addition to her unlimited twin pistols at any one time, as well as four grenades.

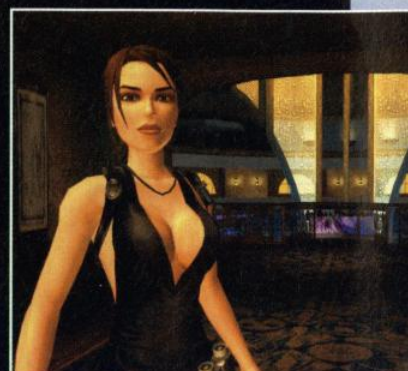
From the levels we've played there certainly seems to be plenty of combat, but thankfully it's pretty straightforward so doesn't distract from the adventuring too much. We asked Toby Gard what the team were shooting for in terms of the balance between exploration/puzzle solving and combat "It depends on the level, but each level has at least a couple of decent puzzles to solve and a good deal of action. Still Lara is an athlete, and moving in interesting ways through her environment to explore them is probably still the primary focus of the game."



The PSP game

■ Legend is basically completely intact for PSP, but whether that's a good thing remains to be seen. The visuals may look quite faithful to the console versions, but we're more concerned by the controls, in particular the precision – or lack thereof – of the analogue nub and whether the camera system, where you must hold down the square button to turn the analogue nub into camera control, will be useable. You really don't want to have to stand still in a firefight so you can work out who's shooting you.

There are a couple of exclusive gameplay modes in the PSP version, both of which utilise wireless play against a friend. The first, Master Circuit mode generates a random obstacle course that you can race through against another player (or the clock), while the second, Raid and Seek sees both players hiding objects then trying to find all of the opponents' before they find yours.



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

We know that there will be motorbike sections in the game, so we have our fingers crossed that they'll actually be engaging, as opposed to feeling tacked on.

She will fight them in the jungles, in the cities...

■ Legend attempts to strike a balance between ancient and modern environs. On the one hand, there's the tropical wonderland of Ghana which kicks off with a spectacular dive off a high ledge into the water way below, and sees Lara traverse jungles, waterfalls and caves, all wonderfully realised with plenty of incidental details like dappled lighting, spider webs and overgrown ivy. On the other hand, Lara will find herself in a rundown museum, engaged in shoot-outs in a very Wild West-esque town and even assaulting a military base nestled amongst the snow covered mountains of Russia.

Perhaps the level that most demonstrates how the gameplay of old can be successfully transplanted into an urban environment is the Tokyo section, and we've played through the entire level. It kicks off with Lara in a gorgeous open cut evening dress (complete with a different set of animations - she wiggles her booty while she walks and turns like she's on a catwalk) meeting with the Yakuza in an exclusive nightclub. Not surprisingly, things go sour and Lara must dive behind the bar amidst a hail of gunfire. She rips her dress for greater mobility (switching back to the usual animations in the process) and proceeds to take them out. From there she must fight her way to the top of a nearby high rise to pay a little visit to the Yakuza boss (see pics below). This involves jumping a motorbike from one building to another, climbing scaffolding, swinging from flag pole to flag pole, using the grapple mechanic to set platforms swinging so you can jump to them and also taking out plenty of guards along the way. It represents a good balance between acrobatics and action, and doesn't compromise the style of gameplay that the fans want. Nicely done Crystal Dynamics!



While the other screens in this feature are from the Xbox 360 game, Lara is certainly no slouch on PS2 and Xbox, as these screens attest!

PREY

ON THIS GAME THE HOPES OF THE FPS GAMER REST. LET US PREY...

» KOSTA ANDREADIS

Systems: PC ■ Category: FPS ■ Players: 1-8 ■ Developer: Human Head ■ Due: 2006

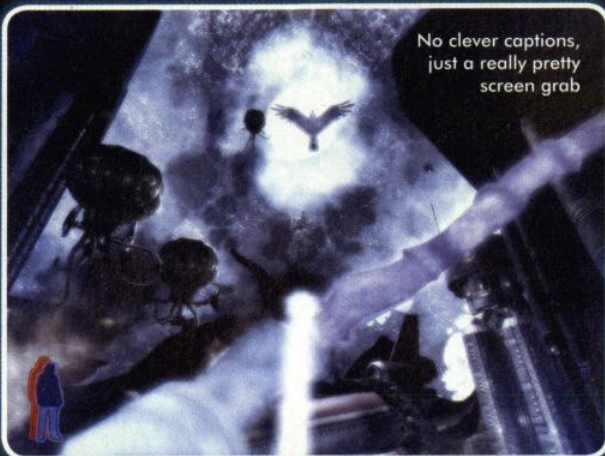
Some people tend to complain about flying halfway around the world for a mere few days to check out a game. There's the whole thing about sitting in a plane for over twenty hours, not to mention the jet lag and the seasonal difference of going from summer to winter. This write-up will not feature any of these time honored complaints not because they're not valid, anyone who has spent over forty hours in a plane in under a week can attest to that, but we're here to discuss Prey. If there's a game out there in development with a lot of history attached to it then here it is. Prey first made headlines back in the late 90s as a promising new shooter from well known studio 3D Realms. It was touted as featuring a cutting edge 3D game engine as well as an enticing sci-fi setting. After a few slow years in development it basically disappeared from the public eye and it was thought we'd never hear of it again. Fast forward to E3 2005 and Prey is displayed in what looks like a near final state and amazes all onlookers with its fascinating and gravity defying gameplay and concepts. Yes, it virtually came out of nowhere, but has instantly climbed up the ranks to become one of the games to most look forward to this year.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH HERMAN'S HEAD

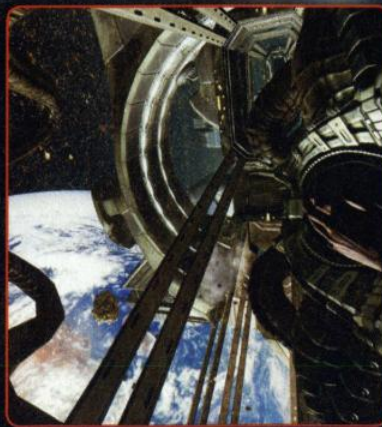
Human Head Studios may not have a long string of games behind them but their small output since forming in 1997 has definitely been worthy of notice, with their most critically and well received creation coming with Rune (released in 2000), a PC title that took Nordic mythology and turned it into a well thought out action game. As it turns out Rune also turned a few heads at 3D Realms who then approached the young development studio to discuss a potential collaboration. Discussions would cover many potential projects but they would almost always gravitate back to Prey, which featured many promising aspects that Human Head felt could evolve into an exceptional game.

With development re-commencing in 2001, with Human Head now at the helm, the title was very much taken back to the drawing board with very few elements from the 90s version left intact. Apart from the sci-fi setting and the protagonist being of Native American descent the only key technological concept kept was that of 'portals'. Up and running in early builds of the engine, portals essentially created a two-dimensional gateway in a geometric environment that allowed players to

FACTOID: MC Escher and HR Giger were the two greatest influences on the game in terms of both environmental and creature design.



No clever captions, just a really pretty screen grab



CRAFTY!

Prey features just the one vehicle players can take control of, a space shuttle, but much like other aspects of the game the vehicle portions are well realised. In the space shuttle players will be able to head into nearby space to face foes as well as dock with small asteroid formations where the change in gravitational intensity affects all physics and rag doll effects present in the game. One cool feature of the craft, the tractor beam, also comes into play in multiplayer matches as it lets you pick up unsuspecting players and send them hurtling off into space or better yet, on a nice little fatal fall.



Q&A

Hyper speaks to Human Head's *Timothy S. Gerritsen* about *Prey*, its numerous features and the technology used.

Hyper: After working on the well received *Rune* for PC, were there any elements from that game or lessons learnt that you took into the development of *Prey*?

TG: In *Rune*, we explored the mythology of the Viking people. With *Prey*, we did carry over some of that exploration of mythology, this time for the Cherokee people. Exploring myths and their power is part of our collective interests at Human Head. We also carried over some of the lessons in terms of game development we learned on *Rune*, such as prototyping gameplay concepts early. That gave us a big leg up when working on the early material for *Prey*.

Technology wise *Prey* definitely feels like a product made possible through technological advancements. What made the *Doom 3* engine seem like the right choice to make *Prey* a reality?

We began *Prey* in 2001, and at that time, that *Doom 3* was really the only next generation engine available on the market. We had talked with Epic about their future plans, but they hadn't even begun work on *Unreal 3* at that point, and we definitely wanted to be involved with a technology that was at the beginning of its lifecycle, rather than winding down. It was the only technology that gave us the look we wanted, and the tools we wanted and yet allowed us to implement the kinds of gameplay we wanted to have.

Were there any significant changes or modifications made to the engine to accommodate *Prey*'s many distinctive gameplay elements?

We modified a number of items in the engine, including adding Portals, extending the gravity control system in the original engine, extending the physics system and changing how the engine handled shaders and textures so as to allow for more detail and clarity. We also optimised the net code somewhat to allow us to have more players per server.

Was there a lot of trial and error involved to fully integrate these elements?

We had a difficult time of first integrating all of the features we wanted to have into the game. Our design philosophy was of integrating all of the features extensively into the game so that they didn't feel like one-off gimmicks. This did lead to a lot of trial and error and throwing out of our earliest work. We actually eliminated a few of the early concepts we had since they didn't pan out in actual

production, or we didn't have time to bring them fully to fruition.

Were the features that didn't make it cut due to technology restrictions or that they simply didn't work?

At first we were planning on Tommy having several spirit powers, but in practice it felt a bit gimmicky and forced, so we ultimately decided to restrict his spirit power to just Spirit Walk and Death Walk so that we could focus on making them enjoyable and fun. We also had a few other items that we didn't have time to implement, but we're saving those for sequels.

Death Walk is quite an interesting concept whereby the player rarely actually 'dies' so to speak, how exactly does this feature work and what was the reasoning behind its implementation into the game?

Prey is a narrative, story-driven game and nothing takes you out of the narrative of a game more strongly than when the player dies and you are forced to reload or start over from a previous section. We wanted to find a way to get around that artificiality and keep you in the narrative of the story at all times. Death Walk is simply a realm between the real world and the afterlife where your spirit must fight writhing like creatures to return your body to the real world. In practice, there are blue and red writhes, and you have a few seconds to shoot them. Shooting the red writhes gives you more health, while shooting the blue ones gives you more spirit power. The Death Walk gets harder and harder as the game progresses, and how well you do in Death Walk determines how much health you return to the real world with.

As these features factor considerably in the progression of the game, how are they used to keep each level or part of the game feeling new and/or varied?

Because there are so many features, it allowed us to mix up the action and combine these features in ways that we hope will keep players excited and in the game. We also then started adding twists to the concepts we introduce early so that every aspect of how you play doesn't seem repetitive throughout the game. You can't just assume that something like, say, Spirit Walk only works one way throughout the game. You will be confronted by puzzles or game play strategies that will force you to use the feature in ways you may not have seen at first glance.



FACTOID: Some scientists believe that Dyson Spheres (like the one featured in *Prey*) are both feasible and sustainable using technology available to us today. To read more about them, and the science behind it all, go to: www.nada.kth.se/~asa/dysonFAQ.html

seamlessly walk through and interact with a completely different area with its own geometry. Or to simplify, a hole would open up in the gameworld – allowing you to see, and step through to, a whole new area. This feature stands out mainly due to the fact that two fully realised environments overlap creating a distinct sense of unease and awe in the player. It sounds like something that would be difficult to implement but Human Head found that this concept was pretty easy to get working.

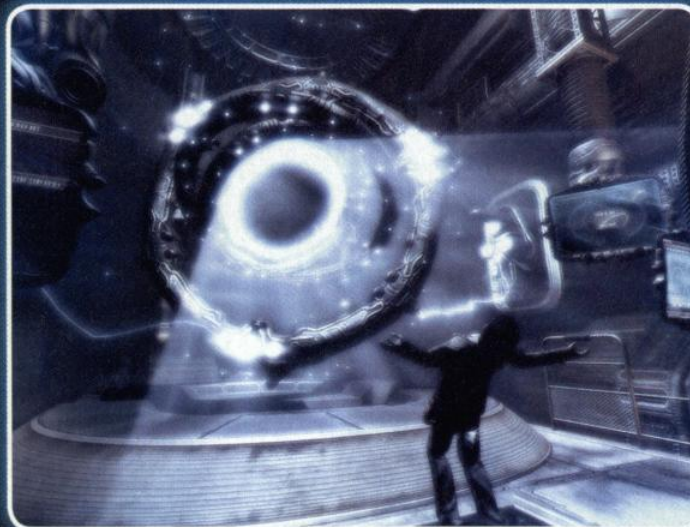
DANCING ON THE CEILING

Prey uses a heavily modified version of the Doom 3 engine (as you can probably tell from the screenshots), and Human Head were one of the very first developers outside of id Software to license its technology. As such there have been many modifications made to realise the game world featured in Prey, and it's quite an impressive feat to see its interactive nature in motion for the first time. Structurally we should probably dive into the story and setting to put you in the proper mindset but as well conceived as those aspects are (and Prey is definitely a story-driven experience) we feel compelled to give you a brief rundown on some of the major gameplay features and concepts found in Prey. They need to be mentioned prior to the other details mainly because it's these very features that make Prey, initially anyway, such an interesting and promising project and quite unlike any other shooter on the market or horizon.

First up there's wall walking, which takes place on luminous pathways that allow players and enemies to walk up walls and across the ceiling, which comes into play both in exploration and battle. Then there's Spirit Walk, a feature that allows players to leave their physical body in spirit form and sneak around like the ghost of Christmas past. Gravitational switches, when activated, will change the gravitational pull of your immediate surroundings paving the way for complex and well thought out environments. Portals, when appearing, may be due to an enemy closing in on your location or more specifically act as a gateway and direct interaction with an entirely new area of the game. To put it into a specific example, instead of walking into an elevator to reach the next level you may see the top of a creature's head through a portal a few metres ahead, fire through it, kill the creature, and then walk through



Meat tripod meets crab grenade. Seriously



and find your centre of gravity change as you fall onto the ground in the next area to explore. Bear in mind these are all incredibly well realised and implemented features that transcend simple gameplay gimmicks seen in the past (the ability to slow down time comes to mind) because they are integral parts of the level design, gameplay, fight strategy, and most importantly gameworld.

RIDING AWAY ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Prey centers on the exploits of Tommy Tawodi, a Native American of Cherokee descent who is very much the reluctant hero. Tommy doesn't really care much about his heritage or culture, which led him to join the army simply as a way to leave it all behind. Now the original story with Prey was more along the lines of 'Native American guy goes out to space to fight aliens for some reason', Human Head have gone to great lengths to ensure that even in the midst of this huge story about an alien race decimating earth and its inhabitants, the core narrative revolves around Tommy and his choices, redemption and love of his

girlfriend (Jen), and grandfather, who also happen to be more spiritually and cultured inclined than Tommy. So in this setting, Tommy is back at the reservation from his stint in the army with a plan to take Jen and begin a new, and presumably much better, life on the road. Of course this isn't the case and being the owner of a local bar and comfortable about her Cherokee background, Jen would want the exact opposite, to settle down with Tommy and build a life together on the reservation.

Irony, as it seems, is not without a sense of humour as Tommy does indeed leave his life behind as an auto-mechanic on a reservation in the American mid-west. But instead of taking to the road to do so, Tommy is literally abducted by a large spherical spaceship that appears over earth in order

➤➤ TWO FULLY REALISED ENVIRONMENTS OVERLAP CREATING A DISTINCT SENSE OF UNEASE...

Although eight players may not sound like much compared to other titles on the market, each arena is designed specifically with this in mind so the experience never comes across as unfulfilling. The word disorientating needs to be mentioned again for the mere fact that in some maps different rooms and players will be subject to different gravitational pulls. So for example you might be in one area overlooking a frantic firefight taking place on the roof in an adjacent area. It takes some getting used to but once you do get the hang of simple things like 'which way is up' and 'I feel a little dizzy', it's definitely a lot of fun. This can also play into certain strategies, for example if you see someone in the midst of a gravitational change you could take advantage of the brief moment of adjustment they might need to get their bearings and get yourself an easy kill. But of course this is coming from someone who's had very little experience with the multiplayer in Prey and once the game is released no doubt there'll be people performing head shot kills whilst in the midst of a gravitational change in no time.

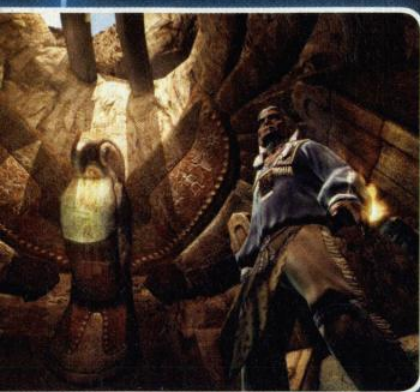
cat and mouse. Always descend into a deadly game of to its namesake as challenges almost portion of the game definitely lives up drastically from map to map, this though the style of play changes quite a combination of two or more and even but in most cases it's more like a portals or gravitational changes on specific things like wall walking, available certain maps tend to focus out crazy. With all of these features the multiplayer it's both hectic and fun used to, and due to the fast nature of puzzle that will take a while to get designed like a large rotating cubic mind each multiplayer map has been many unique features. With this in players deathmatch, utilizing the simple sandbox where up to eight game, multiplayer Prey provides a story, and setting of the single player, layered and intricate environment, changes. Instead of the densely walking, and multiple gravitational be found here like portals, wall geometric tricks and features can least as all the game's many distinct first time is disorientating to say the Playing multiplayer Prey for the

MULTIPLAYER GOODNESS





If only getting out of Redfern was so easy



❖ SPIRIT WALK ALLOWS THE PLAYER TO LEAVE THEIR PHYSICAL FORM BEHIND IN A DEFENSELESS STATE

to harvest its resources, including humans. Now this large sphere is what's called a Dyson Sphere, which is a hypothetical and self-sustaining mega-structure about the size of a planet that is made of an outer shell with a small star at its core providing all its energy. In Prey the outer shell happens to be made out of a mixture of organic, living matter and technologies harvested from various worlds. Once abducted humans are divided into two groups on the sphere, which are those who are to be processed for food and those who are to be used for experimentation. Neither one of these options has a happy ending so it's particularly lucky that Tommy manages to escape his fate and embark on a quest to save his girlfriend and let's hope for our sake, the human race.

Now the fact that the main protagonist is Native American doesn't mean that this is used as an excuse to interject the game with simplified spiritual cues and bows and arrows; the subject matter is treated very carefully and most importantly intelligently. Very early in the game Tommy will witness his grandfather's brutal death but his spirit will pass on and act as a guide to reconnect Tommy to his spiritual heritage. In simple videogame terms the ghost of grandpa will give Tommy boy new abilities such as 'Spirit Walk'. As mentioned earlier, Spirit Walk allows the player to leave their physical form behind in a defenseless state,

IT'LL BE DONE WHEN IT'S DONE (BUT IT WON'T TAKE FOREVER)
As a 3D Realms production no release date has been set or hinted at yet for Prey but the game is in its final stages of development. Apart from some musical implementation (scored by the ever reliable Jeremy Soule) and some final motion capture implementation the team is hard at work ironing out any and all bugs they come across. Now working close with 3D Realms those guys are probably still hard at work on Duke Nukem Forever right? The answer to that would be a yes, but apparently development on Duke's long awaited return may have hit a small bump in the road thanks to the release of one World of War-something.

MOD POTENTIAL

When Prey ships the game will come equipped with full mod tools giving gamers and budding developers instant access to the game's many distinct features. It won't be long before we see multiplayer maps featuring arenas full of portals or even certain constructions that border on the insane. Human Head in particular are eagerly awaiting what the mod community will bring to the fold and are almost certain that new player created creations will leave them scratching their heads thinking 'why didn't we think of that?'

meaning it is still vulnerable to enemy attacks. As a spirit you're not entirely defenseless as you do have a trusty Spirit Bow that allows you to shoot, you guessed it, arrows utilising any spiritual energy in your possession. As a puzzle solving tool the player may be in their body and come across an energy field blocking the way forward, but with Spirit Walk players will be able to walk freely through this barrier, search for the controls to switch it off and even take out an enemy or two in quick succession. Also there are certain constructs that only exist in the spirit realm that don't exist in the physical so for instance you can climb new pathways to reach cut-off areas using geometry that wasn't there a second ago.


OF ACID SHOTGUNS AND ICE PARTICLE BEAMS

The longevity and allure for most shooters, especially in terms of multiplayer, is in the weaponry and Prey is no slouch in this department. Much like the Dyson Sphere of the game's setting weapons in Prey are a mixture of both organic and err, that shiny stuff phaser guns are made out of. We'll skip the wrench you start off with and go straight to the explosives that come in the form of Crawlers, which are small creatures with explosive blood. Treated as a grenade the pin in this case would be their little legs, simply rip them out of their sockets, toss the carcass and watch them explode. Weapons in Prey have dual functionality so a rifle can become a sniper rifle (being organic

this 'thing' attaches to your eye ball giving you scope-type functionality) and Crawlers can become proximity mines when only one leg is ripped off. One of the more alien firearms you come across is more dynamic in nature and is charged from various coloured stations you come across which alter its firepower. This can range from laser-gun red energy bursts to an enemy freezing, and consequently melting, ice beam. One weapon however that needs no description is the acid shotgun - speaks for itself really.

As the game progresses the Dyson Sphere will begin to take note of Tommy's exploits and begin to interfere and experiment with his progress allowing for a dynamic and constantly changing gaming environment. With each new portion of the game demonstrated it became increasingly clear that Prey is quite an epic undertaking and we could easily spend another few thousand words telling you why. But in the end what becomes clear is this, Prey is definitely one of, if not the most promising shooter currently in development and most certainly could live up to its hype upon release. ❖❖





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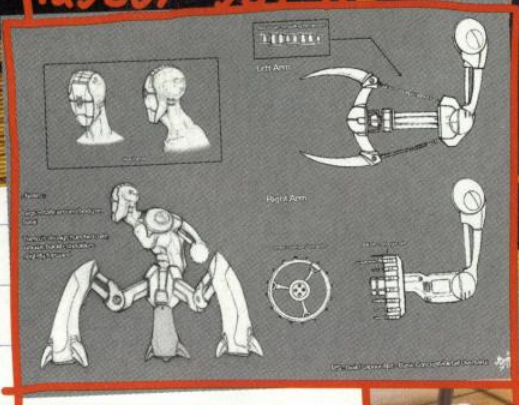
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Lessons Learned Of An Indie Startup

By Ben "Yahtzee" Croshaw

A nightmare dystopian world, where new technology is jealously hoarded, money is lifeblood, and evil faceless corporations rule. But enough about the games industry; let's talk about indie development.

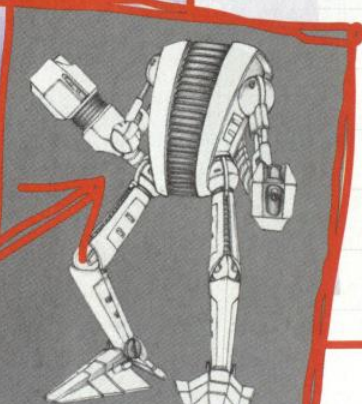
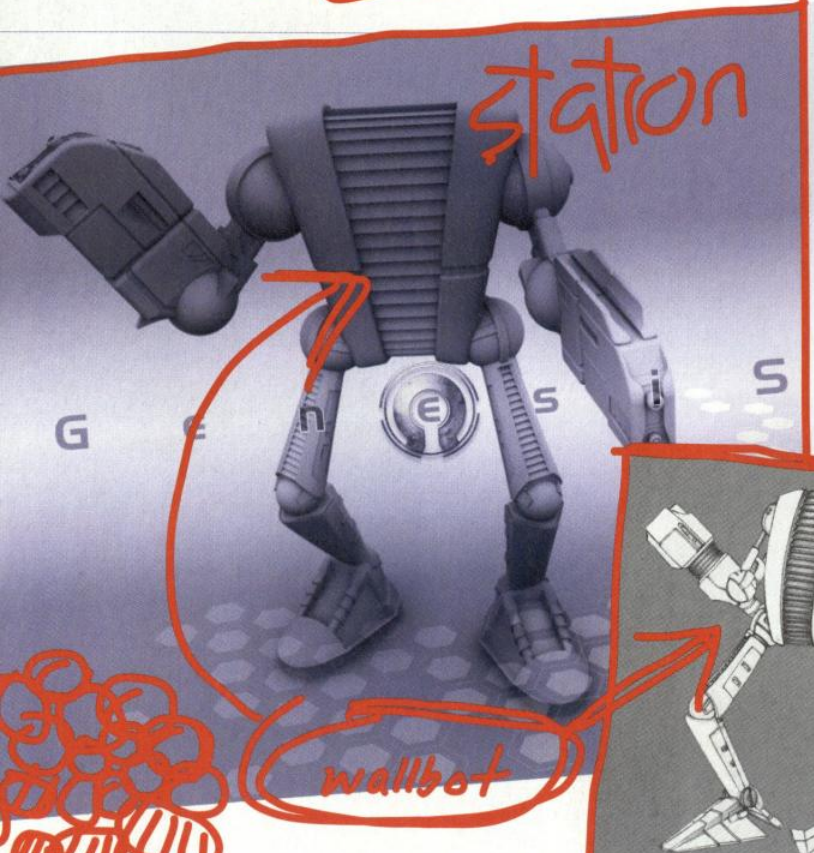
Back when we were all messing around with Amstrads and Ataris, in the brief moments we could spare between fending off woolly mammoths, bedroom programming was common. Indie development wasn't just a sideline of the industry; it practically was the industry. In the times when sixteen colours were considered an extravagance, a game could be written in someone's basement in four or five hours and publishers would fight over it. But now, the march of technology has ruined everything. Suddenly games are Serious Business and they make far too much money to be in the hands of little people. Game design is a rich boy's toy nowadays, and

of Gridwerx, an indie game design company, and the lessons they learned while creating Genesis, the cyberpunk RPG that won the Best Unsigned Professional award at the Australian Game Developer's Conference (AGDC) 2005.

THE BEGINNING

Gridwerx began with Peter Jarrett, an IT professional and former DJ from Brisbane, who had the simple dream to create a videogame. In 2003, he began to research what kind of game would be popular enough to interest a publisher and could also be feasibly designed by a small unpaid independent team. The resultant list was understandably small. Mobile games were too small-time. The console market is completely impenetrable to unproven companies. The less said about Massively Multiplayer and the headaches therein the better. That left a single player PC game. After going down to AGDC 2003 to gain some helpful advice, Peter set up the brand, put a call out for talent, and gradually began to form the first team.

25 enquiries were whittled down to 12 individuals from all over the great big international zoo exhibit we call the internet. After a little more research into popular themes and genres, it was decided that



wallbot

a cyberpunk RPG was the way to go; a genre that is still sufficiently untouched to justify exploration. A forum was set up, and the 12 members of the newly-birthing Gridwerx began to kick ideas around.

A few months later, the forum was immolated in flame war. If you've ever witnessed or been involved in an internet-based collaborative project, you'll probably have seen this coming. Too many people wanting to get their ideas across, squabbling over the choice of wallpaper before they've put in a floor. When a lengthy flame on whether there would be teleportation in the future dragged on ridiculously, the initiative was seized. Out went most of the team, leaving only a handful of the most dedicated, and Gridwerx underwent a reboot.

This time, there was going to be no more of that internet anonymity that turns people into jerks. This time the team would know each other in person, which of course called for strictly local bods. As 2004 gave way to 2005, over 80 artists and coders were interviewed, mostly students of QANTM, TAFE, QUT, Brisbane QCA and other local bodies of learning. This is also the time that I, your humble narrator, came onto the scene, using my experience in amateur adventure game design to insinuate myself into the position of lead writer. After the timewasters were filtered out, a total of around 25 nerds began infesting Peter's basement every other week.

I don't know if it was just the difference of meeting in person, where arguments on teleportation can be swiftly halted with a swift knee to the undercarriage, but this time it worked. The team fit together. We had coders and modellers and level designers and sound engineers for every necessary role. There were still ideas for the game from all sides, in the early chaotic phase when we started out, but this time I was able to coalesce them into a single design document. After the first few months of discussion and shaking out the last few stragglers, we were finally able to begin production.

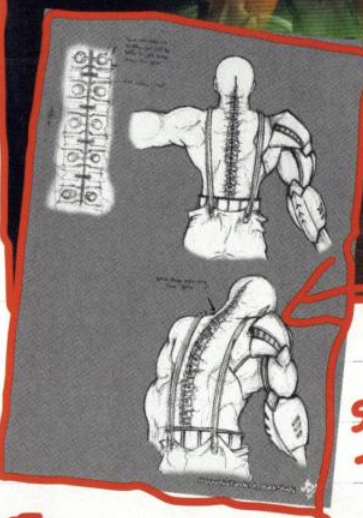
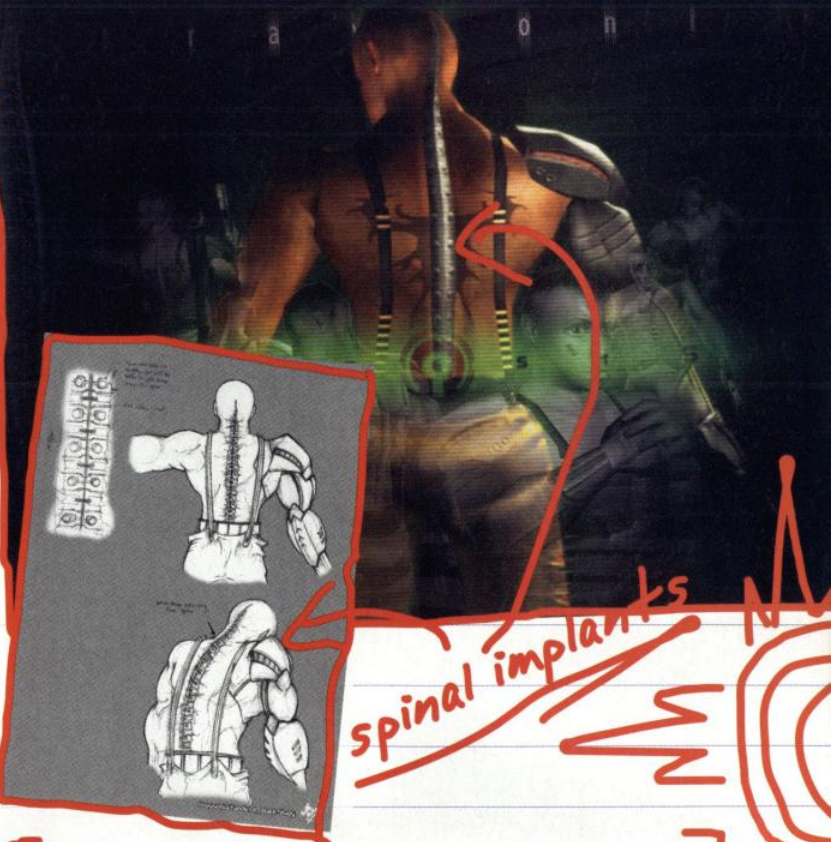
THE MIDDLE

Let me tell you a little about our game, Genesis. That remains a working title; hopefully we can eventually think of something that would not cause people to associate us with Phil Collins.

Genesis is set in England in the closing years of the

21st century, a society where the government is impotent and seven megacorporations fight over controlling influence. On top of that, bio-augmentations are common, and every individual is implanted with a chip that constantly transmits all of their most private details to a gigantic global database called the Grid, a sort of more oppressive, less pornographic version of the internet. The player is a regular everyday punter who wakes up one morning to find that some third party has duplicated their unique identifier number, creating a blip in the database that the authorities will not tolerate to exist. Mercenaries are sent out to liquidate one of the duplicates — either one — and the player is hounded from their home in the middle of the night. The only option now, as a wanted fugitive, is to make for London and attempt to hunt down the copy yourself. The objective of the first level is to escape from Waterloo Station, which is locked down the instant you arrive.

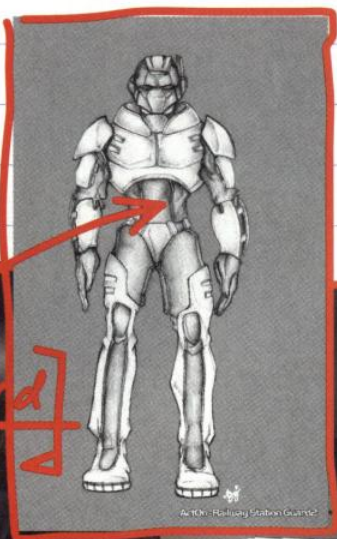
In terms of gameplay, Genesis is a first-person shooter in the sense that it's first person and you can shoot things in it, but it's also an RPG, so constant bloodletting is discouraged. The player has the option of solving problems with any of four different methods — violence, stealth, hacking or diplomacy — depending on how they arrange their stats. On top of that, they can work in whatever capacity they wish for any of the seven megacorporations, with the option to stick loyally with one organisation



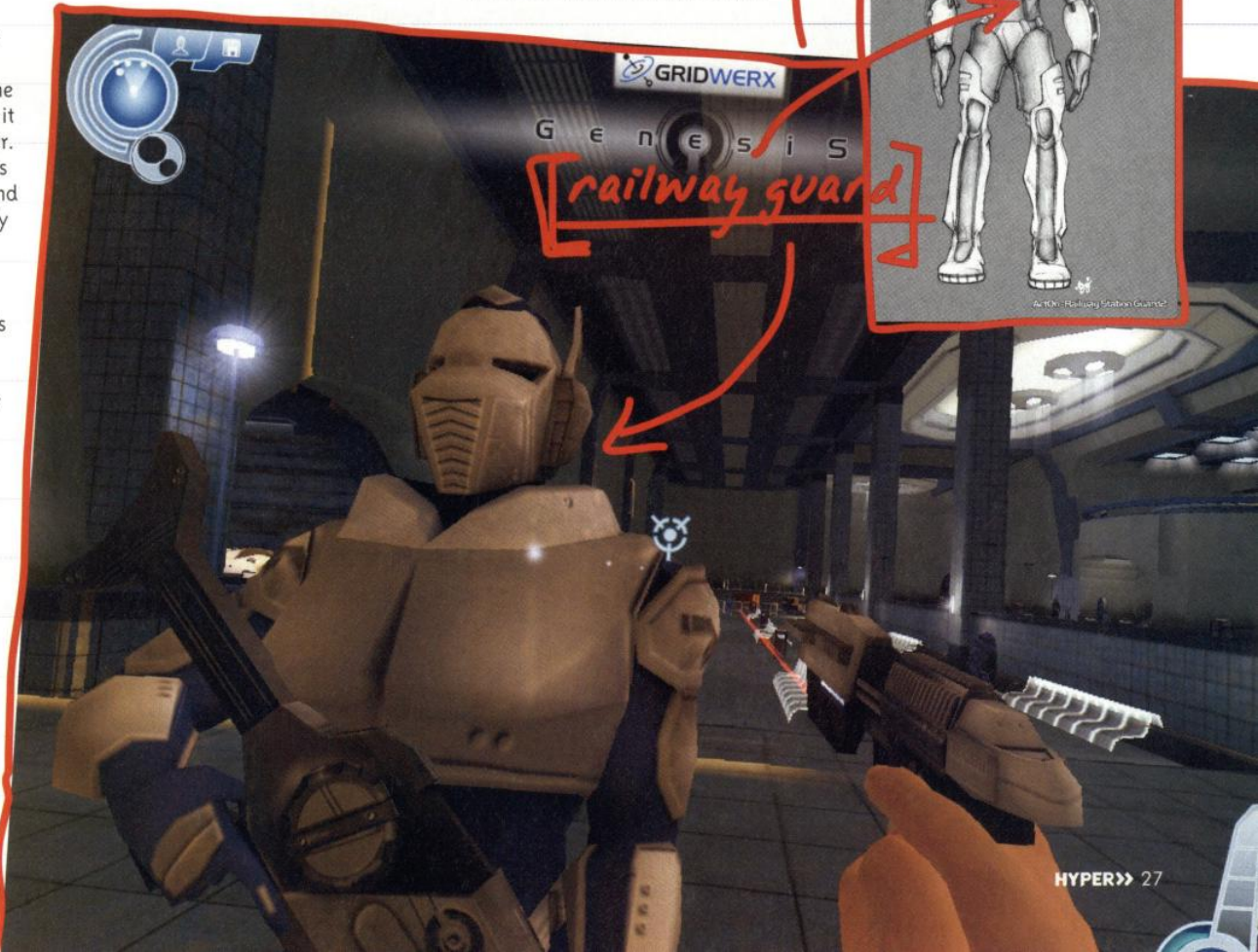
spinal implants

Too many people wanting to get their ideas across, squabbling over the choice of wallpaper before they've put in a floor

or play them all off against each other, Machiavelli-style. That was the game. Now all we had to do was make it. Here, then, was the scheme. We would work on our designated bits of game in whatever time we could spare, meeting up every fortnight

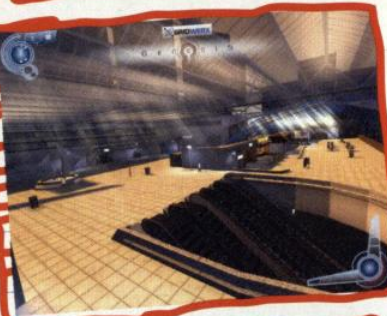


railway guard



1ST REAL SCREENS!

PS1 helmet



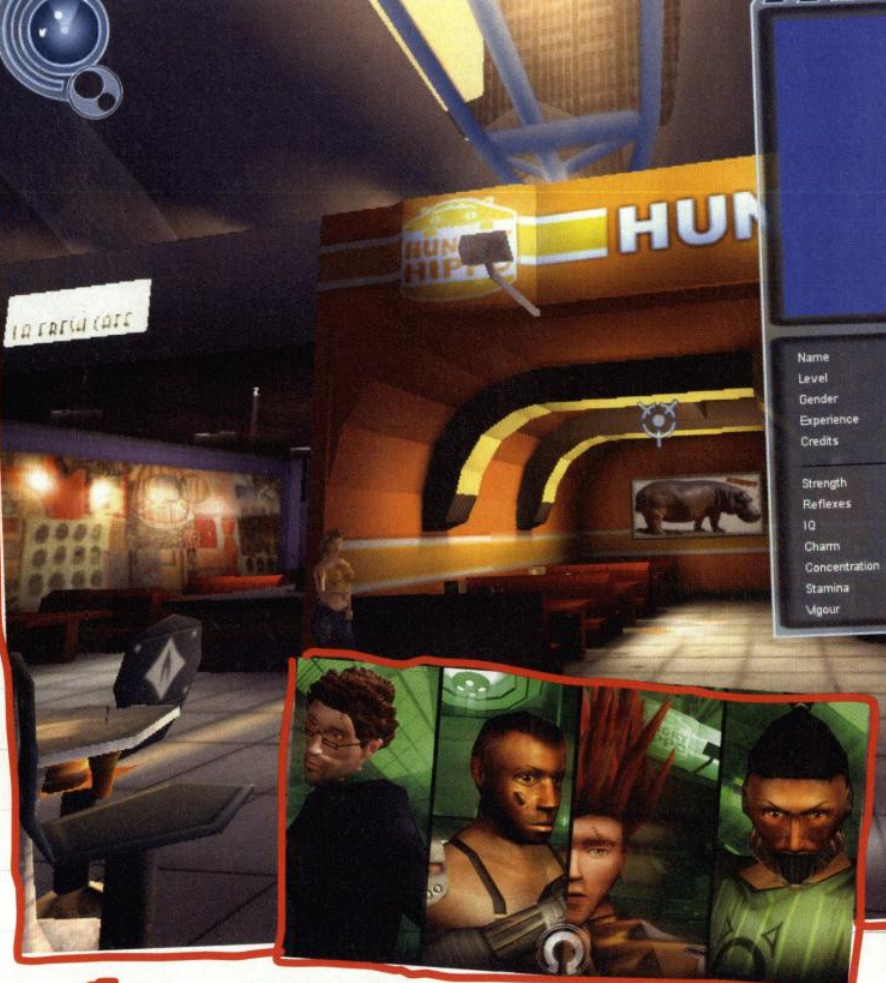
bin is BROKEN

in Peter's basement to compare notes, complete a fully-operational demo of the first level within the space of just under a year, then showcase it at AGDC '05 to wow players and publishers alike. And then perhaps we could picnic with the fairies under the enchanted tree of Neverland, because we were obviously living in a fantasy world. One of the very first lessons we learned was this: no matter how reliable the worker, never trust them to do anything unless you're standing over them while they do it. Working at home, there's too much temptation to prevaricate.

After the first few slow months of progress, we decided to jump ahead by getting together with our computers one weekend and working solidly all day in a pizza and cola-fuelled rush, which we thought would only be necessary every now and again. We ended up doing this every week.

And then there were the technical issues. The engine we were using was Torque, of Tribes fame, which wasn't the most reliable in the world but was the best in our price range, at least while we couldn't get married to a terminally ill oil baron. It took us roughly four or five months just to figure out how to place assets in the level, and we were probably more proud than is appropriate when that first litter bin appeared in the centre of the map. Things turned even more sour as we added more and more assets and characters and interfaces, when Torque began wheezing like an old man on a treadmill. Lockups and crashes became more frequent the more stuff we added, and we were still trying to find ways to improve performance right up to the deadline.

In the end, the demo level had barely half of the interaction we had originally envisioned. Page upon page of conversation was reduced to a few token pleasantries with only the most important NPCs. The hacking and negotiation minigames, something of a selling point, could only be used in one instance apiece. We had worked in some fairly decent combat chase/flee AI, which would have been really



Name
Level
Gender
Experience
Credits
Strength
Reflexes
IQ
Charm
Concentration
Stamina
Vigour

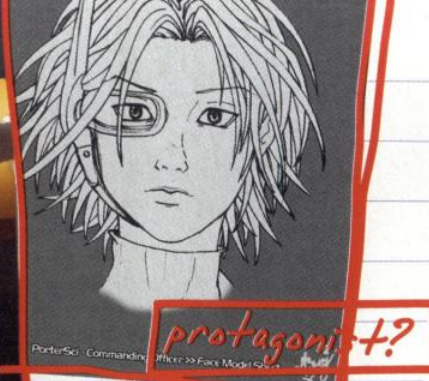
We had taken an empty landscape and in one year turned it into a magnificent futuristic railway station...

impressive if it hadn't routinely made the game crash after a few seconds. The experience/levelling system, skills, augmentations and personal data organiser were either severely reduced or dropped as time wore on.

But enough focussing on the negative – what we created was staggering, considering what we started with. We had taken an empty landscape and in one year turned it into a magnificent futuristic railway station, populated with beautifully animated NPCs and hundreds of detailed assets. Even if we didn't have the whole infrastructure, we could still demonstrate a great

number of impressive additions to Torque's limited default gameplay. All in all, we agreed that the demo was an impressive demonstration of our abilities as a team, and what flaws there were existed only through the twin bugbears of the engine and lack of funding. All that remained was to get it to hold together at AGDC. We were in the running for the Best Unsigned Professional Game award, having been offered the chance to move up from the Best Unsigned Independent category, and spirits were high as the team set off to Melbourne with our marketing material under our arms and a song in our hearts.





mentioned in the same breath as such things.

Back at the publisher pitching, most of Peter's encounters with the big game publishing companies could be summed up with the following (paraphrased) dialogue:

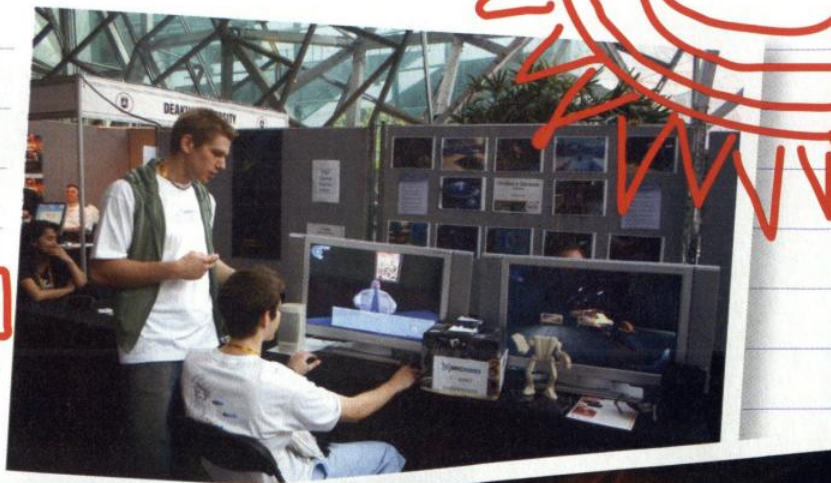
Gridwerx: We've made a game for the PC —
Publisher: PC is dead.
Gridwerx: Well, we are planning on moving to console when we —
Publisher: Which console?
Gridwerx: Xbox.
Publisher: Xbox is dead.

It seems that a lot of things are dead in the professional games industry, which is strange when you can still see them moving about.

After the pitching and the conference came the gala dinner on Saturday night at which the various award winners were announced. Peter sat waiting anxiously at our table, refusing alcohol in case a speech would be required on his part. He became somewhat downhearted after the announcement came that we came second in the Hines Lawyers pitching competition, especially since theirs was the only one other game in the running. The Professional award turned out to be the last one of the evening to be given out, and the fact that we won it came as something of a surprise. It certainly surprised the art team, off getting drunk in a hotel room, who texted Peter several times to make sure he wasn't lying.

So we won the award. But what was there to do from then? We had only really planned up to the conference, after which our scheme ran something along the lines of 'Get Publisher', but no corporate executives were rushing to our side with big smiles and contracts to sign. After the award, there was nothing left to do but catch the flight back home, so a somewhat disillusioned Gridwerx arrived back at Brisbane airport, where they were met with some of their parents and relatives, cheering and holding aloft signs of congratulation.

And that, I think, is one of the most significant events in considering the meaning of Gridwerx and the achievement. I don't think there was anyone



GET MATT SOME PANTS!

involved who didn't make some kind of investment, be it financial or emotional, and even our nearest and dearest were drawn to the project. Gridwerx began from a dream, a quest for glory that bore a curious magnetism. Peter might have pushed it off, and ran alongside it giving it the occasional slap as it gained weight and momentum, but in the end it belongs to us all. It was a structure with many supports, very few of which we could have done without.

When I asked Peter, in preparation for this article, if he thought it has all been worth it, he said that it had and it hadn't. It hadn't in the sense that he had invested over \$12,000 of his own money with no return, and no publisher has been secured at time of writing (let us know if you can help out in that regard, by the way). But in the sense of a great achievement, of starting with nothing and creating something real from it, and as an education in game design that few other experiences could have given, it was a time well spent. Whatever direction the company takes from here, we'll always have the achievement of 2005.

At the moment, Gridwerx is awaiting a new challenge. For more information, check out our website: www.gridwerx.com.au <<



THE END

For Gridwerx, AGDC 2005 was a fiasco right from the start. Peter got up at 3am to catch an early morning flight, in time for our first pitch to a publisher at 11:30, only to find that storms had closed the airport down. When he finally did get there, he phoned David Draheim — one of the coders who would be helping with the pitch — and learned that he was currently in Tasmania. Matt Beaumont, another coder, was swiftly recruited to fill the gap, whereupon he admitted that he only owned short pants, and some time was wasted finding him some formal trousering. And then, on the way to the hotel for the pitch, there came a call from Qantas to the effect that Peter had left behind a bag on the luggage carousel. The bag that contained all the demo discs.

Meanwhile, at the conference itself, the rest of the team had squeezed our equipment into our tiny booth space. It turned out the electronics rental place had accidentally given us a magnificent bastard of a 42 inch monitor that we couldn't even fit on the provided trestle table. On the bright side, even sitting on the floor it was the first thing anyone coming into the hall would notice. Once they did sit down and start playing, however, the attendees had to be tightly regulated, due to the continuing tendency of the build to crash whenever combat was initiated. But on the whole, we received some positive feedback. Even when people said that it was derivative of Deus Ex or System Shock, it was at least heartening that our game could be





LET'S GET PHYSICAL

» ALEXANDER JAMES BURKE



When Newton was sketching up his theories on movement, he missed out on a very important point. Sure, he was on the money most of the time, but the Law of Inertia needs to be revised: whilst it's true that most objects will remain in a constant state of motion unless a force acts against them, this doesn't take into account the dumpster jump. So what's the dumpster jump, you ask? Well, it's when you stand atop your common-or-garden dumpster lid, lock your ethereally blue PhysGun ray onto its shiny, metal surface, and whip backwards, fisherman-style, like Rex Hunt looking for a new beau.

The result? You're flung kilometers into the air. Okay, so perhaps that doesn't really happen. Perhaps I'm referring to the "virtually physical" world that is Valve Software's Half-Life 2. But who goes outside these days, anyway? Let's face it: when we're locked inside, perfecting our monitor-glow tans, HL2 is as Newtonian as it gets.

HOW YA LIKE THEM APPLES?

Mind you, HL2 alone can't bring you dumpster-jumping glory. Its tools, sadly, restrict you to basic crate-stacking shenanigans. You need someone to unlock the doors — a physics gatekeeper — and his name is Garry Newman, creator of the frog-lickingly popular Garry's Mod. Remember not to refer to him as a gatekeeper, however, as he doesn't like it. "I'm just a guy who made a mod," he says. "I just wrapped up all of Valve's physics stuff and put a nice front end on it."

There's little doubt he's being modest, but it's very true that Garry's Mod's genesis wasn't the product of revolutionary thinking. "When I first started work on Garry's Mod," he explains, "it was just a dumb 'lets see if I can do anything' project. I just wanted to test myself — I didn't know whether I could do anything at all, so it was all a learning curve. So I didn't have any aim other than to see whether I could make

something that worked. I developed it on the Source engine because I don't really own any other games with a moddable engine. I could have developed it on the Doom III engine, I suppose... but I wanted more than five people to play it. Anyway, when I released the first version — which was just a gun that roped things together — it exploded and people begged me to keep adding to it, so I did. Valve have been pretty supportive, too.

"Now, when I'm programming Garry's Mod, I always feel like a magician. I always keep what



I'm working on a bit of a secret, then I take screenshots and pull the rabbit out of the hat. As I went on, it became harder to do this, so I'd challenge myself. No-one ever thought that there would be a face poser in the game, for example, but I made it happen, and everyone was completely shocked.

"There were a couple of times when I really thought, 'Holy shit, they're going to love this.'"

They certainly did. (Garry's Mod is recognised by some as the new Counter-Strike.) If you've never played it, though, you might wonder why. How can physics — that subject we loved to loathe at school — be so damn fun? Simple: it gives life to our normal-mapped, specular-lit, new-fangled 3D worlds. Newman concurs. "I think physics will ultimately be used to give an extra feeling of reality; of interacting with the world."

That said, he doesn't think most developers have realised its full potential. "For ninety percent of games, I don't think physics affects game design at all. It just means that they don't have to do death animations, because the ragdoll will take care of it. There might be something in their design document about the lights swinging when they're shot, but that's about it. I think we're probably going to see a bunch of already-old physics puzzles that will replace the tired old jumping puzzles. I'm also sure we'll see some great innovation — as we did with Katamari Damacy — but most of it will be the same old crap that we've already seen in HL2."

Despite this, he understands why developers might be reluctant to ship out something similar to his mod. "I think the problem with packaging and selling a product like it," he admits, "is that you'd have to focus on a very specific area. You couldn't have a bunch of people just running around like crazy idiots, spawning massive chimneys. You could probably focus directly on the building, which would be fun. But I don't think it would be fun for long, unless it were constantly updated."

THE GAMING FUNDAMENTALS

The solution, then, is to find a middle-ground: have your design tempered by physics, rather than based on it. HL2 is a very good example of this: the game itself was, essentially, a beautifully scripted shooter, but the numerous physical puzzles and the mere presence of such a versatile physics engine in the game gave its world unprecedented interactivity.

"I don't think Valve went far wrong," Newman declares. "It's the best physics implementation I've seen to date. They missed out on dynamic fluids, but I'm sure we'll be hearing about that in a future Steam update. I think that, in the last generation of games, physics was always an afterthought, so it never contributed to the gameplay as much as it could have. Also, the engines take so long



to make. HL2 was probably the exception to this, since there were a lot of gameplay elements using physics."

What he doesn't take into account is that, prior to HL2 really, physics came packaged with a terrible stigma. Horrible images of collision detection failure, models that bent more ways than Bikram, and over-stretched textures were enough to inspire fear into even the most physics-obsessed developer. (Valve were among those frightened developers — there were scrapped plans to implement physics into the original Half-Life.)

Then, of course, came Dreamworks Games' Trespasser. Being the first mainstream example of real-time physics in a videogame, you'd expect a few hiccups and growing pains. Trespasser went above and beyond the call of duty, sporting bugs galore. The physics-controlled arm with which players had to do anything in the game could be bent and twisted to cerebral palsy-esque contortions. What's more, CPUs at the time simply couldn't support the amount of work they were being saddled with as a result of the physics simulation. Despite being an actually highly innovative project, Trespasser ended up hindering mainstream acceptance of real-time physics rather than helping it.

It's examples like this that led developers to continue beefing up graphical power whilst leaving physics behind — scripting could handle most "interactivity" concerns, anyway. There's new hope on the horizon, though. Where? AGEIA, the company known for its NovodeX physics middleware. They're on their way to developing the world's first PPU, or Physics Processing Unit. What's good about this? Physics is calculated independently, and is no longer sandwiched next to AI and other miscellaneous processes. In other words, where HL2 had you

CURIOUSER

Garry's Mod just keeps getting better — and weirder — thanks to Team Garry's continued efforts. You might wonder what keeps him updating the project, given the lack of monetary incentive. Truth is, he just likes to surprise people, and he has two favourite examples of this. "The first was when I posed a ragdoll," he notes. "This was pretty early on in development. As soon as I froze one of the ragdoll's limbs, I knew people would go crazy over it. So, I took shots, and rushed to the forums with them. They couldn't believe it; they thought it was photoshopped."

"The second time was when I made the easy welder. I had worked on it a lot. My maths isn't great, but after about three days, I managed to get it to work properly. This was a big stride, since previously, people would have to place the two objects together, then click on one, and then click on the other. Now, they could just click on the points at which they wanted the objects to join."

dealing with one physics puzzle at a time, you could potentially have thousands. This isn't definite, however. Newman, for one, is unsure of its potential. "I don't know how hyped the PPU is," he notes. "All I've seen is a demo where a load of particles are being sprayed on a car. To me, that isn't a great example of physics. I guess time will tell."

Even if Newman's doubts are realised, the mere fact that a PPU is in development is a definite step forward for physics-oriented gameplay. Previously, physics was primarily used to make explosions look cool and cut down on work for animators. Now, it's no longer, as Newman put it, an "afterthought"; its purpose is not purely cosmetic.

PURPLENESS

So where do we go from here? How can physics be properly utilised? Newman has one idea: "I'd really like to make a war game where you go into a city and blow the buildings up. They'd collapse properly and crush people so you'd be able to use them as weapons."

Beyond throwing out your broadsword for a brand new crushed person, physics could also be used to enhance certain gameplay elements that we've come to simply accept as law. Take inventory: in your average RPG, you open a container, drag a new item into your backpack, and the game registers that you're now the owner of that item. Similarly, if you want to, say, pickpocket an Enraged Dire Yogi, you inspect their backpack, drag the desired item into yours, and, if your thieving skill is

high enough, you've got yourself a new +2 Yoga Mat of Purpleness. It's crime by numbers, baby.

If physics were used in that scenario, it would play out quite differently. How? Well, let's say that mat was actually a physical entity in the gameworld, and attached to the Dire Yogi's backpack (also a visible entity). You'd need to work out a way to actually remove the mat from his person without attracting attention — or at least not faffing around after the deed is done. This could create some interesting gameplay opportunities — do you fashion some kind of device to pull the mat out from a distance? Or do you wait for him to put it down at the local shala, and then run off with the whole thing? You could even try tripping him over — his body is a physical entity with interruptible walking animations, after all, and you're not a very nice person — and grabbing the mat before he does. Of course, this raises a host of 'ease of interaction' issues — it's one thing to devise a cunning plan and another to execute it flawlessly using a mouse/control pad. We don't, after all, want to be struggling with that palsied limb again.

That said, there's more potential here than what's possible in action games. With procedural motion, even an RTS game could be revolutionised — and not in an Age of Empires III, "look, Ma, exploding crates!" kind of way, either. Taking a cue from such Garry's Mod mini-mods as "SourceForts" and "Monster Onslaught V2", you could have the player actually assemble his/her own defenses and buildings! If the prospect of doing all that seems tiresome, you could always delegate some of the building to the game's AI, while the player chooses how they could customise their stronghold.

There are infinite examples of these ideas already on display as a result of Garry's Mod, so if you were really stuck for inspiration, you could always just ask the man in the know. What Garry's Mod tomfoolery has he seen that's truly amazed him? "I get asked this a lot," he laments, "and never know how to answer. I've seen huge comic books, huge robots, huge Rube Goldberg devices, and huge movies. People are constantly amazing me."

So there you go, reader. If you need to know more, hop on down to <http://gmod.garry.tv/>, and grab yourself a copy. Oh, and for all the Jessica Simpsons out there, yes, you'll need HL2. On PC.

Games of all shapes and sizes will benefit hugely from real-time physics. Objects move more realistically, worlds can be manipulated and interacted with far more easily, and, heck, you can take snapshots of spooning space marines and post them on LiveJournal if you so desire. It's spawning from it that show us just how versatile this kind of interactivity can be. And if Isaac Newton disagrees with it? Get real: the guy is dead. <<



PUTTING THE UNITY IN COMMUNITY

Who would have thought that a mod that began as a rope-slinging crossbow would become so popular with gamers and CG porn fetishists all over the world? It's always difficult to tell why a certain project becomes successful, but Newman has a theory: "One of the big appeals of Counter-Strike in the early days was the community. CS was like a huge community-shared project. They'd chat on the forums, awaiting the next patch, then they'd get a new patch every month or so, and then they'd chat about the new patch. The community experienced something together and it was a great feeling."

"To a certain extent, I've tried to play on this with Garry's Mod. We've got nice, clean forums, and people exchange ideas, screenshots, models, and maps. I've added Lua [scripting language] support to enable the community even more. Now, they can make their own guns and game modes, and share them with each other. I've tried to make the mod run by the community just as much as it is by me. Which means that, if I die, it could probably carry on for another year before people noticed."



MOBILE PHONE ROUNDUP

There are so many phones out there it can feel like a minefield finding the one that's right for you. We've tested and rated 12, to make it a little easier...

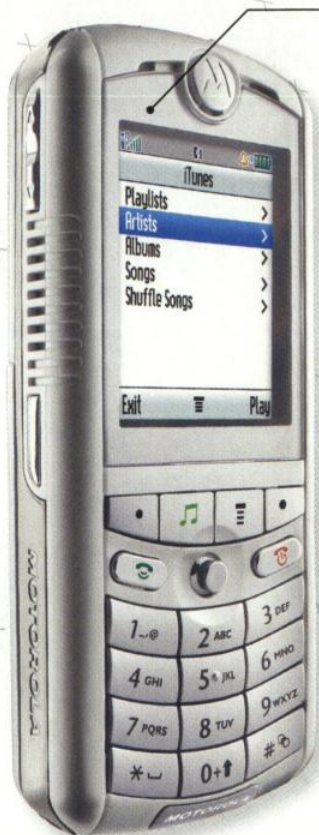
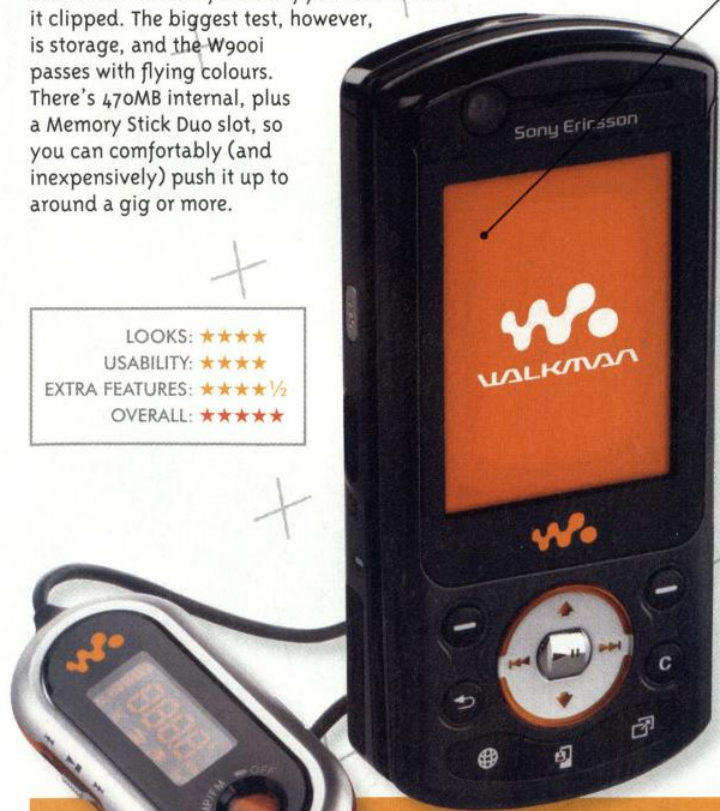
SONY ERICSSON W900i

RRP: \$1199

▶▶ Sony Ericsson's first 3G Walkman branded phone is the W900i and it's quite a slick bit of kit. The design is quite large but serves to make this phone feel impressive and sturdy, rather than ungainly. Of course, the style points rack up fast thanks to the cool swivel mechanic that reveals the number pad. Once open, the layout and feel of the keys and navigation pad is spot on. The 240x320 screen is large and very crisp, and can be used as a viewfinder for the 2 megapixel camera and its wealth of options.

So it's a great phone, and it's also a pretty damn good Walkman too. The first major box to tick is drag and drop support. Just plug the phone in via USB and dump music in the music folder. The second tick comes thanks to the fact that you can plug your own headphones in and the sound quality is great through a good pair of bin headphones. It's less so with the included buds – they're a little uncomfortable to wear and the bass distorts a bit. The headphone cable is also a little heavy (it has basic controls built in), so it's not that comfortable if you don't have it clipped. The biggest test, however, is storage, and the W900i passes with flying colours. There's 470MB internal, plus a Memory Stick Duo slot, so you can comfortably (and inexpensively) push it up to around a gig or more.

LOOKS: ★★★★★
 USABILITY: ★★★★★
 EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★★★½
 OVERALL: ★★★★★



MOTOROLA ROKR E1

RRP: \$499

▶▶ Billed as an iPod/phone hybrid, Motorola teamed up with Apple on this one, and the results are... well, disappointing. Shipping with a 256MB transflash card, you're limited in terms of storage out of the box, but then there's a ridiculous 50 song limit on the number of tunes you can import onto the phone via the included iTunes software. Clearly, this is not an iPod phone, it's just a phone with decent music playback functionality. While the iTunes interface in the phone works quite well, transfer speeds from PC are achingly slow and at the time of testing you can forget trying to import variable bitrate tracks or anything above 192Kbps. The ROKR doesn't use a standard size headphone jack so without an adaptor you're stuck with the average headphones that come with the phone. On the plus side, the dual speakers on the phone are pretty reasonable.

LOOKS: ★★★½
 USABILITY: ★★★½
 EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★½
 OVERALL: ★★★

While the unit itself isn't small, it's relatively light and we're quite fond of its utilitarian design – aside from the slightly uncomfortable convex buttons. It's also quite straightforward to use, although the paltry 0.3 megapixel camera won't win it any fans.

The good news? The ROKR E2 is on its way. It drops iTunes and the track limit, uses USB 2.0 for much faster data transfer and uses the cheaper (and hot-swappable) SD cards instead of miniSD.

MOTOROLA SLVR L7

RRP: \$599

▶▶ Motorola have recently released both the SLVR L6 and L7 models and we've had a play with both. While both have a fantastic form factor – sleek, light and very slim, with a flat hi-tech number pad that looks a lot like the RAZR's (while being surprisingly tactile and usable), the L7 is definitely the model for us. It has a gorgeous matte black finish complemented by neon blue backlight on the keys, and while the screen isn't as sharp as we would have liked at 176x122 pixels, it still looks great for a mid range phone.

Its good looks are definitely the biggest attraction as the L7 isn't a heavyweight when it comes to functionality. It has all the basics you'd expect plus EDGE support for high speed data transfers, WAP 2.0 and J2ME for games. It also has Bluetooth, but only for hands free calls (it comes with a neat little earpiece for that purpose). Sound quality for calls is very good too. Perhaps the biggest disappointment is the VGA only (640x480) digital camera on the back.

All things considered however, if you don't need cutting edge functionality this is one sexy phone.

LOOKS: ★★★★★
 USABILITY: ★★★★★
 EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★★★
 OVERALL: ★★★★★



NOKIA 8800

RRP: \$1599

Ooh, so close. Sorry Nokia, while this is one hell of a sexy looking phone, with its stainless steel finish, slide up mechanism to reveal the number pad (and satisfying click when you close it) and sturdy build, it just ain't ergonomic. It's fine for making calls and feels great in the hand, but when it comes to hammering out an SMS the 8800's depressed number pad is horrible to use. The feel of the buttons is plastic and slippery, and unless you're using the tip of your thumb it's all too easy to hit multiple buttons. And don't even get us started on the center button of the five way navigation panel.

It's such a shame too, because for the asking price, you'd want everything to be perfect. As it stands, you have a very nice looking GPRS, EDGE and GSM tri-band phone with a crisp 208x208 screen, Bluetooth support, FM radio, music playback (even though there's no memory expansion slot) and rather lacking 0.5 megapixel camera. Close, but no cigar.

LOOKS: ★★★★★½
USABILITY: ★★
EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★½
OVERALL: ★★½



SAMSUNG D600

RRP: \$879

This is going to sound a bit gross but hear us out. We like handsets to have big, bright screens but placement can sometimes be a problem. The screen of the D600 is good and large at 240x320 with 262k colours but when opened it presses right into the ear and when closed it becomes a thumbprint magnet, making the D600 something of a grease trap that you will be cleaning nigh on constantly. Dirty ears aside, the D600 is another fine handset from Samsung. Not as feature rich as the 3G compatible Z500, the D600 still manages to cram in the connectivity and usability. Although the handset lacks an IR port making it less compatible with laptops than other phones (unless you have Bluetooth or wish to carry a USB cable with you at all times), the D600 features full Bluetooth compatibility, a WAP 2.0 browser and GPRS. The handset also integrates a crisp 2.0 megapixel camera capable of outputting 1600x1200 shots or storing them on the 73MB internal memory (upgradeable with MicroSD cards). The actual design of the phone is a little thick but feels great in the hand; the slide is wonderfully smooth and you'll probably find yourself flipping it up and down subconsciously.

LOOKS: ★★★★★
USABILITY: ★★★★★
EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★★★
OVERALL: ★★★★★½



SAMSUNG Z500

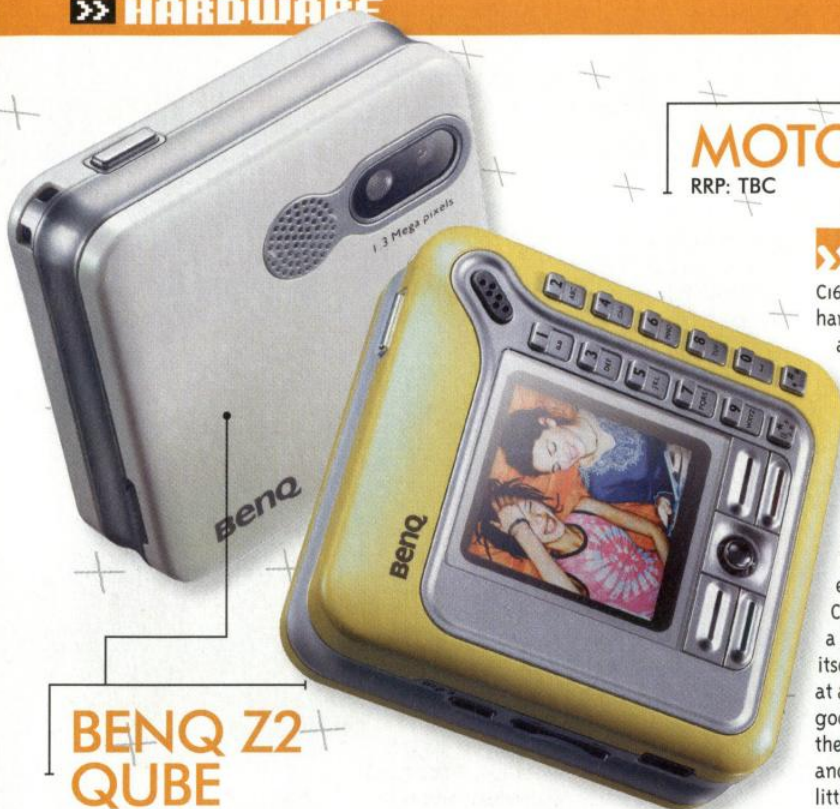
RRP: \$715

The Samsung Z500 positions itself nicely between the "fashion phone" end of the spectrum and solid usability and manages to come out as one of the top mobiles in the field. Although not tiny, the Z500 is currently the smallest 3G phone on the market but the lack of size does not mean it skimps on the features. Aside from basic call features, the Z500 includes a 1.0 megapixel camera, voice recording (doesn't work during a conversation), WAP 2.0, GPRS, MMS, Bluetooth connectivity, email out of the box, MP3 and video playback, 50mb in-built memory, Transflash compatibility, Java and more. The external screen is a 80x64 65k colour OLED that shows connectivity, battery charge and a clock. Whilst the external screen may not be high resolution the OLED is wonderfully bright allowing the screen to be perfectly visible in bright light. The internal screen is a little less impressive boasting a 176x220 display with 262k colours; there's nothing wrong with it per-se but a little higher resolution would

LOOKS: ★★★★★
USABILITY: ★★★★★½
EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★★★½
OVERALL: ★★★★★

be nice for a 3G phone with video playback. For the most part we found the Z500 to be an excellent and attractive handset but there were a few factors that left us scratching our heads; there is no indication that the phone is charging on the actual handset, only on the cord and even at maximum volume the ringtones still come across as a bit too quiet.





BENQ Z2 QUBE

RRP: \$499

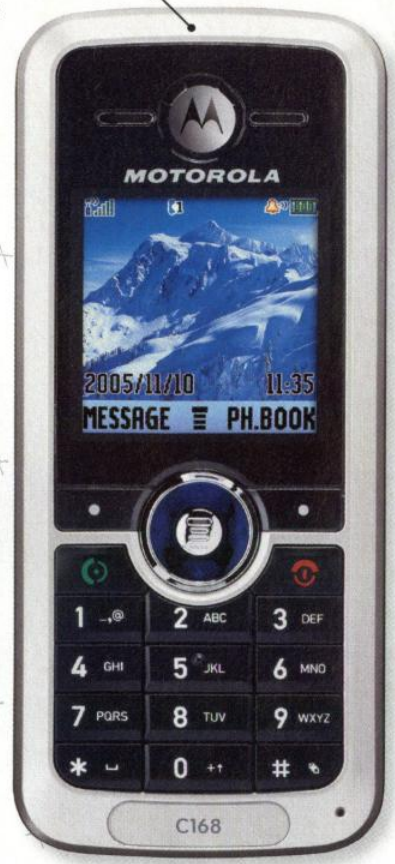
▶ The first time we saw this strange little phone/camera/MP3 player we were, to put it politely, a little dubious about the usability of the device. For a start it's a strange shape, not at all in keeping with conventional handset design; holding a little square of plastic to your ear without having a microphone next to your mouth seems a little unnatural. Then there's the buttons – tiny with another unconventional layout. Then there's the fact that it tries to be everything for everyone – tri-band phone/MP3 player/1.3 megapixel camera. Yeah, we were dubious all right. Well, after using the strange little device for a few days we're sold – with reservations of course. As a straight mobile phone, the Qube functions quite well. The speaker is good and loud and the microphone is sensitive enough that you don't have to raise your voice despite the distance away from your mouth. As a camera and MP3 player the Qube is once again quite good. Using 58MB of onboard memory and an expansion slot for compact SD cards (it ships with a 128MB card). The sound is a little tinny but we have the feeling that is due to the headphones attached to the remote rather than the player itself. The major downside of the handset is the small size and close proximity of all the buttons – if you're got fat fingers like Wilks you're doomed.

LOOKS: ★★★
 USABILITY: ★★★
 EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★★★
 OVERALL: ★★★½

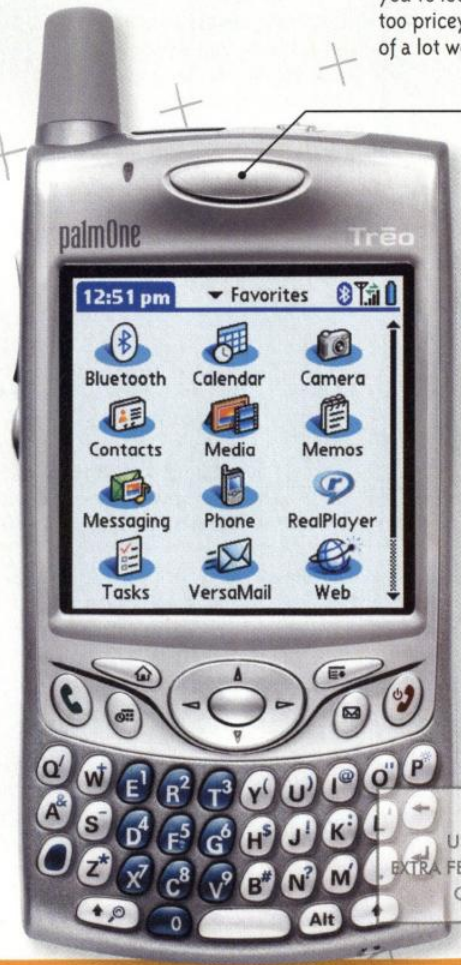
MOTOROLA C168

RRP: TBC

▶ It feels a little wrong looking at a phone like the Motorola C168 side by side with feature rich 3G handsets and top of the line models, as the C168 is the exact opposite end of the spectrum. Rather than delivering a feature rich and very expensive handset, the C168 is very much a usable, entry level mobile phone; perfect for people who don't want bells and whistles, just the ability to talk on the go. Not exactly the pinnacle of style, the C168 is inoffensively designed with a definite lack of flair. The handset itself is nice and light weighing in at a tiny 77g. The keypad is quite good for the most part but we found the central toggle to be a bit small and sensitive making it sometimes a little annoying navigating the menu. The screen is a rather plain 128x128 affair but there's really no need for a higher resolution for a mass market, relatively featureless handset. The audio quality is excellent for calls, polyphonic ringtones and FM Radio (via headset). The most appealing thing about the C168 is the outstanding battery life, boasting around 340 hours (around 2 weeks) standby and 9 hours talk time. If you're looking for an entry level, not too pricey phone you could do a hell of a lot worse.



LOOKS: ★★
 USABILITY: ★★★★★
 EXTRA FEATURES: ★★
 OVERALL: ★★★★★



PALMONE TREO 650

RRP: \$949

▶ Most top end phones come with some form of PDA-like functionality, so it makes a lot of sense to build a proper phone/PDA hybrid. The Treo 650 gets it just about right. It runs on the Palm OS (5.4 in this case) with a large 320x320 touch screen, and has a full qwerty keyboard. The functionality is outstanding, with Word, Excel and Powerpoint support, extensive email support (including syncing directly with workplace Exchange servers), wireless web browsing, support for J2ME games, built in Realplayer software for multimedia, as well as all the organiser apps you'd expect (to do list, calculator, calendar, alarm clock etc). Throw in decent phone features and you have a top notch device. There are a few missteps though – audio during calls isn't as crisp as it could be, there's no integrated Wi-Fi (although it does have wireless WAN and Bluetooth), the included camera is only 0.3 megapixels and the qwerty keyboard is very cramped to use, seemingly designed with munchkinlanders in mind. Also, with only 22MB internal memory you're definitely going to need to buy a big SD card to properly utilise this device.

It may look a little chunky but it's actually quite a manageable size – big enough to be taken seriously and give you screen real estate, but small enough to hold comfortably. It's also reasonably priced for such a feature rich device. Nice.

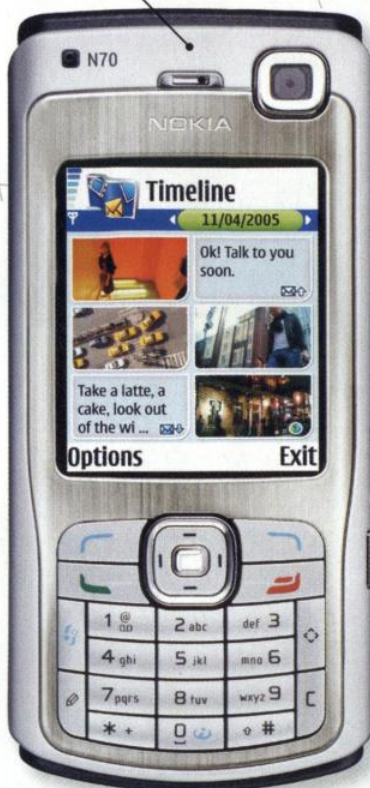
LOOKS: ★★★
 USABILITY: ★★★★★
 EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★★★½
 OVERALL: ★★★★★½

NOKIA N70

RRP: \$979

The N70 smartphone sees Nokia putting its feet firmly back on solid ground with an excellent all round phone. The first thing that grabs you is the large and crisp 176x208/262K colour screen and the phone's alluring brushed metal styling. After booting it up, however, (which takes an interminably long time) you'll discover a wealth of functionality. Getting to grips with the N70 is easy thanks to a series of decent tutorials. The interface is quite different to older models, with a row of shortcuts and calendar info displayed on the (for want of a better word) desktop. Multi-tasking is supported so you can switch between a number of open apps with no problems, and trust us, with its strong software suite you'll use it. The N70 comes packing 22MB internal memory, plus a 64MB MMC card (which is kept in a hot swappable expansion slot on the side). You may need more if you're going to use the 2 megapixel (1600x1200) camera (with LED flash and 20x digital zoom) or the Realplayer media player, however. Run out of room and you've always got the stereo FM radio to fall back on.

Perhaps the biggest downside of the N70 is the cramped number pad – the buttons just aren't spaced out enough. While it isn't small, it's comfortable to use, and the slider on the back that reveals the camera is a good solution to the problem of scratched lenses. The N70 is a Triband phone with 3G and Bluetooth 2.0 connectivity.



LOOKS: ★★★★★½
USABILITY: ★★★★★½
EXTRA FEATURES: ★★★★★
OVERALL: ★★★★★½

LG M4410

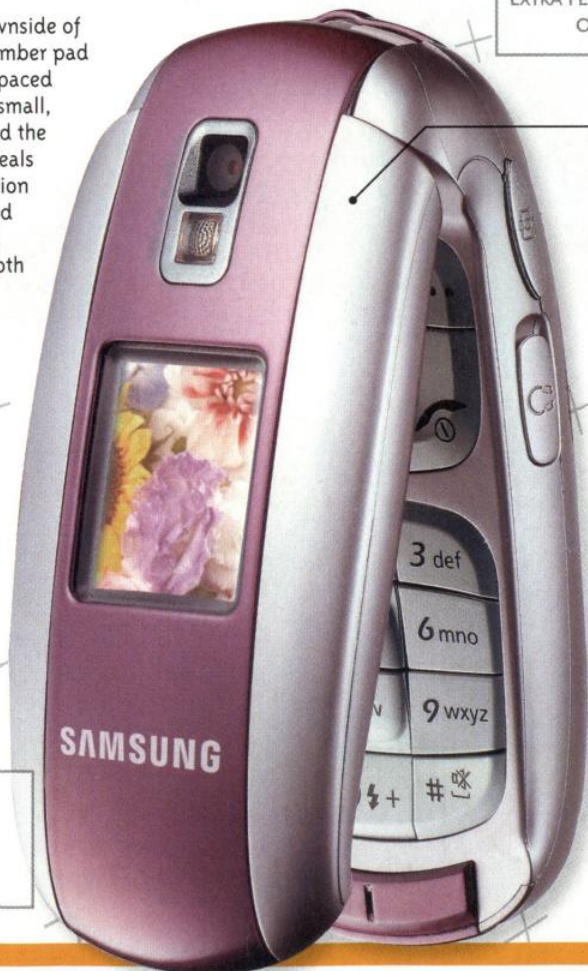
RRP: \$799

The M4410 is another phone with mp3 playback as one of its top priorities, but once again the music side of things feels severely gimped. Let's go through the list shall we? The phone has only 8MB internal memory and ships with a 64MB MiniSD card, so right out of the box you're completely limited. You'd be lucky to fit more than a few tracks at a decent bitrate onto a 64MB card, let alone a whole album. Speaking of bitrates, the 4410 doesn't support variable bitrates which essentially wipes out 90% of my music collection. Sure, you can manually convert to fixed bitrate, but why should we be forced to? Transferring music to the device is also incredibly slow. Capping it all off, music playback isn't loud enough, sound quality is average and you'll need a converter to plug your own headphones in.

Put the music playback aside however, and you have a more than competent phone. The M4410 packs a crisp 262K colour 172x220 internal screen and a 96x96 OLED external screen, it has good button spacing on the number pad and feels great to navigate. The 1.3 megapixel camera is good, and we suspect that the phone's black and silver styling will win it a few fans (although the ugly back panel lets it down a little). The M4410 supports tri-band GSM, plus GPRS and EDGE, as well as Bluetooth. Worth a look, but don't get it for its mp3 capabilities.



LOOKS: ★★★½
USABILITY: ★★★
EXTRA FEATURES: ★★
OVERALL: ★★½



SAMSUNG E530

RRP: \$575

When a phone comes in "Lavender pink" we're thinking it's probably not going to be the phone for us... although if Wilks was to have a sex change (as he so often threatens to do), the E530 would suit him to a tee. This slimline clamshell isn't just a pretty face (or "highly desirable lifestyle accessory" as Samsung puts it), it's a robustly functional ditty too. While many of Samsung's claims revolve around the fashion angle (it's the "ideal shopping companion" apparently, and perfect for "filming your own personal fashion show" in order to see "which dress goes with those high heels best"), the internal 176x220 pixel LCD screen is quite crisp, the external OLED screen is low res but good for variable lighting conditions, it has a built in 1 megapixel digi cam with LED flash, built in mp3 player, almost 90MB of memory and a whole host of the apps you'd expect like calendar, to do list, alarm, calculator etc, all of which make the E530 a solid, if unremarkable phone.

You'd really only buy this one if the looks appeal (did we mention it also comes with a lavender pink strap and lavender pink suede case?), which leaves us a little baffled. While we do have plenty of female readers (and statistically some of them are going to be 'girly girls'), we're not really sure why Samsung chose to send us this phone for review. Are they trying to tell us something?

LOOKS: ★★★
USABILITY: ★★★
EXTRA FEATURES: ★★½
OVERALL: ★★½



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The Big Trouble in Little China of gaming? Sounds good to us...

Reviews

Game Theory

SEAMUS BYRNE

The Price of the Future



The future of gaming does not include you. You, the proverbial bread and butter of the industry, are much less important than you think.

That's pretty much the way of things according to the industry and their current lust for the 'mainstreaming' of videogames. For the industry, gamers are not the difficult part of the market to keep happy. No, happy isn't the right word. They are the ones who are not difficult to keep coming back. The fact is, anyone who wears the label of 'gamer' is not representative of the wider, and more greatly desired, gaming audience.

The avid sports fan who goes to the game instead of watching from home. Or the magazine reader who bitches incessantly on its web forums. Vocal minorities may dominate public perceptions, but it is the silent majority that an industry must work to please. These efforts won't be reflected in any unenunciated response, but by the resounding ring of the register.

Yet if the industry really pushes onward and expects gamers to become increasingly marginalised by a grand new influx of the common man, do they really expect the registers to ring out with mainstream success by upping the price on games yet again?

For the RRP of an Xbox 360 title, there are many other entertainment experiences available for far less cash. A gamer wouldn't necessarily trade a great game for a week of nights out at the cinema, but would an average Joe or Judy? What they can get from cheaper forms of entertainment is variety. With each outing, or with each CD or DVD, a different experience is available for a far less substantial dollar commitment to that single product.

Yet here we are with a \$110-\$120 price

point on store shelves for third party titles. Apparently all those poor game development companies with their mammoth game budgets just can't afford to charge any less. Let's just pretend there are no other entertainment industries spending big money on production while charging much less for product — and still making more money in the end.

Apparently our beloved industry never got the memo that volume sales are a gilded path to glorious profits. Instead, we hear that the industry hates the second-hand market, and that they want to try and put a stop to it. Other industries minimise second-hand markets through pricing that encourages people to value buying something new and encourages building a collection. If recent talk in the US is for real, the games industry would like to minimise our ability to on sell something we have paid a lot of money for.

Would halving price more than double sales? I'd buy more than twice the games I currently do if prices were around \$50. Or, from the other side, would you rather sell five hundred thousand units at \$30 than one hundred thousand at \$110?

There is a real problem here. Some internal industry split between the push for more players and the accountancy desire to squeeze every last dollar from every unit sold. But the maths on all this can't come from what the mainstream would be prepared to pay. It can only come from what gamers have so far been willing to put up with.

Why do we put up with such pricing? No gamer could possibly enjoy paying today's prices. But the fact is we are not in the margins just yet, because the much heralded arrival of the mainstream is yet to occur. Maybe if the vocal minority spoke up more about pricing, the silent majority's continued absence would make us echo even louder.

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM The Overall Score – what's it all about (or maybe not)?

0-49

So, not to change the subject or anything, but what's with Lara's

50-59

blowjob face on page 6? Does anyone else think that's a little

60-69

fruity? Did they do that on purpose whilst giggling like schoolgirls?

70-79

Or do I just have a one track mind? Not that I regularly think of

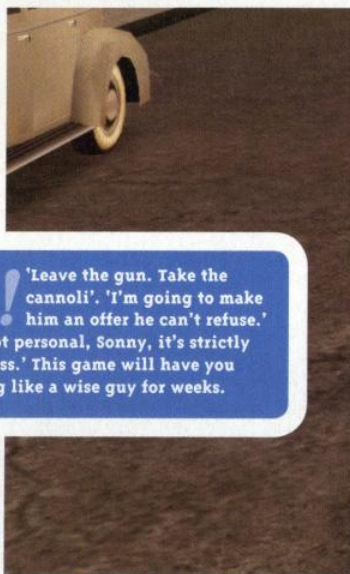
80-89

Lara like that. Not at all. Ulala from Space Channel 5 or Reiko from the

90+

Ridge Racer series, on the other hand... phwoor!





!!! 'Leave the gun. Take the cannoli'. 'I'm going to make him an offer he can't refuse.' 'It's not personal, Sonny, it's strictly business.' This game will have you talking like a wise guy for weeks.



The Godfather

PATRICK KOLAN *does crazy things with orange peel*

▶▶ Dames and guns, horse heads and fast cars, thick New York accents and lots of blood — yes folks, EA's *The Godfather* is finally here. So, do they make an offer you can't refuse? Or should you just fuggedaboutit?

YOUR INFAMOUS HORN

Set in the gritty streets of 40s and 50s New York City, EA have re-imagined New York City into five main locations, run by 'la cosa nostra' or the mafia families of Tattaglia, Barzini, Strachi and Cuneo. Each holds a portion of the city, and as you rise through the ranks, you'll need to loosen their hold. That means taking over their warehouses, killing their goons and eventually bumping off each boss.

On the surface, a lot of the game plays by the well-worn GTA rules. Boost a car, save your game in your house or apartment, find 100 hidden film reels, pick fights with strangers, and progress through

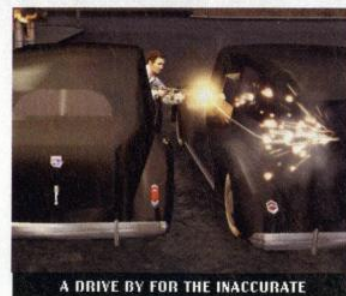
the story, mission by mission. It's definitely modelled on formula, but the balance between action and storytelling keeps the content compelling. *The Godfather* does a great job of sticking you into most of the famous sequences from the first film, including the infamous horse head in the bed scene. Your character almost gets a behind-the-scenes look at the lead-up to the film's key killings, deals and backstabs. It's a treat for fans of the series.

Possibly the biggest innovation to the increasingly formulaic 'vigilante sim' genre is the hand-to-hand combat. Employing the use of two triggers and two sticks simultaneously, the technique takes a little adjusting to. By locking onto a target with the left trigger, you can use the right thumbstick to dish out a few heavy-handed slaps to kick things off. Tilting the stick in different directions and for varying lengths of time unleashes your standard knuckle dust. While locked

on, you can grab your opponent with the right trigger and keep 'em close for a little more beating. If you have a gun equipped, you'll pull the piece under their chin or stick it over their head for a quick execution. It might sound a little clunky, but with practice it becomes second nature.

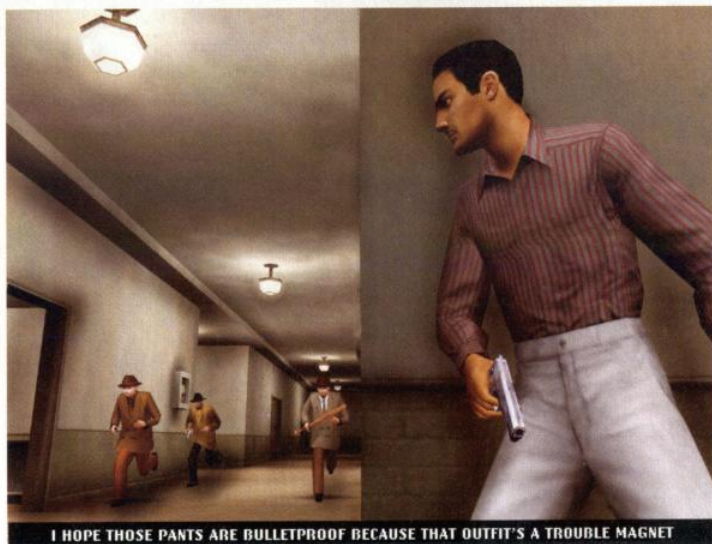
You can also creep along walls and pop out to fire off a couple of rounds — a technique that is vastly improved over *The Getaway*. A fine-aim mode is also included for those who prefer to move the crosshairs instead of locking on.

Another element that sets *The Godfather* apart from the pack is the emphasis on intimidation and negotiation. In your quest to take control of the city and put the other families out to pasture, you'll need to intimidate local business into giving you a cut of the earnings. This is done by approaching a business owner and intimidating them just enough (as indicated by a handy sliding bar that slowly fills with their



growing unease), through either roughing up their establishment and customers, or getting physical with the owners themselves. Interestingly, if another family is already on the take in that place, you'll come under direct attack from passing hoodlums for even attempting to pinch their business. They will fire on you from the street, taking cover behind cars and vendor carts, or they'll storm the place and get in your face. It's impressive how adaptable the AI is — a step up from the run-and-gun grunts of *GTA*. They will hide, stalk and gang up on your ass, fire around corners to remain mostly out of harm's way and they will, most importantly, keep each encounter fresh.

This leads to another big difference



— the seamless integration of player movement from street to building interior. It might not sound like much, but moving from one end of town to the other, then making your way through a nicely detailed hotel to your room and then fighting your way back out again without a load screen is mighty impressive.

Car chases are also pretty nifty. You'll generally have a gunner leaning out of one of the windows, spilling rounds at pursuing vehicles. Car handling is pretty good, though for a big 'American metal' muscle cruiser, steering seems a little off. There's also a distinct lack of variety in cars to thieve — only a handful of unique jalopies, actually. A few different makes or creations would have been nice, if only to add a bit of variety to the street-level scenery.

It's impressive how adaptable the AI is - a step up from the run-and-gun grunts of GTA

A BIT OF ALRIGHT

The Godfather is a bit of a looker, with a good draw distance, and some very impressive explosions and spark effects. Wreck your auto, and watch as the shockwave knocks bystanders on their asses while sending bits of debris and a ball of hellfire into the air. Textures are a mixed bag — great faces and buildings, but the palate is so muted that it borders on dull at times. It's pretty, but outside of the character detail, it's nothing that GTA or True Crime hasn't at least equalled.

Turn the volume up though, because the sound is outstanding. James Caan and Robert Duval, being

the veterans they are, put other game actors to shame. Something pleasantly surprising is that some of the dialogue is actually spoken in Italian with subtitles. It adds enormously to the credibility of the performances in the game, and it's nice to think that EA haven't dumbed the content down in search of a wider audience.

Mark Winegardner, author of The Godfather Returns, was hired to help pen the story and keep the 'feel' of the game true to the original films and books by Mario Puzo. As a result, the dialogue is refreshingly sharp, littered with profanities and occasionally darkly amusing.

It's clear that production values for this title were very high. When you buy the license to a 30-year-old film trilogy that is adored by fans and praised by critics worldwide, you'd better make damned sure you don't cock it up. They didn't. It's great. Hand me that big rubber stamp. <<

» WOULD BRANDO BE PROUD? — It's hard to say. The balance between severe violence and profound storytelling mimics the film's content. The fact that Frances Ford Coppola was not informed about the game's production until April 2005 indicates that perhaps EA wanted to steer clear of the director's possible interference. Upon viewing a preview of the game, he complained that, although it used familiar characters, it was simply too violent. What, and using an actual decapitated horse's head in part one wasn't gory, Mr. Coppola? Hmmm? Still, the OFLC must have had fun trying to classify this sucker.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Free roaming action

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: EA Redwood

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$69.95 PC, \$89.95 PS2, Xbox

RATING: MA15+

AVAILABLE: March 30

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Top script and acting, good AI.

MINUS: Needs more cars. No Pacino.

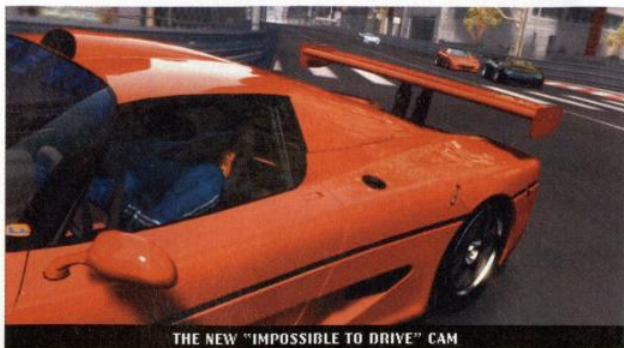
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
87	91	90

OVERALL

90

It does the Corleone name proud.





THE NEW "IMPOSSIBLE TO DRIVE" CAM



!!! There's nothing like driving around London Town to the sound of a classical piece...

Project Gotham Racing 3

DANIEL STAINES focuses on style

Let me tell you a little bit about how I like to play Project Gotham Racing. I've got a system — you could almost call it a ritual. Whenever I get my hands on a new Gotham game, my friend Rhys will come over to my house and we'll play the game for a whole weekend trying to unlock as many cars as possible. Because we have different strengths and weaknesses, we tend to specialise in specific events: Rhys

does the 'racey' events and I do the ones that focus on style. This works out well because it means that both of us get to play the game we want. He gets his lightweight racing sim while I enjoy what basically amounts to a puzzle game with drifting and traffic cones.

And that's what I like about the Gotham series — its diversity.

And that's why I'm so disappointed with Gotham 3.

GOT HAM?

Do you hear that? That's the sound of a thousand Xbox fanboys frothing at the mouth. Probably some PR people too. But hold up on the letter bombs: I'm not saying that Gotham 3 is a bad game. It's actually a very good game. What I'm saying is that it doesn't feel as "Gothamy" as it should. With this game, Bizarre Creations have taken the series in a new direction. Now it's almost entirely about the racing. It's about the immediate thrill of driving a really fast car at really high speeds through really realistic environments. Which is fine — nobody's saying that isn't fun. But I can get it elsewhere.

When I play Gotham, I want Gotham. I want Cone Challenges and Kudos and the growing feeling of satisfaction you get as you gradually acquire better and more powerful cars. These things are present in Gotham 3, but they've been scaled back and deflated into impotence.

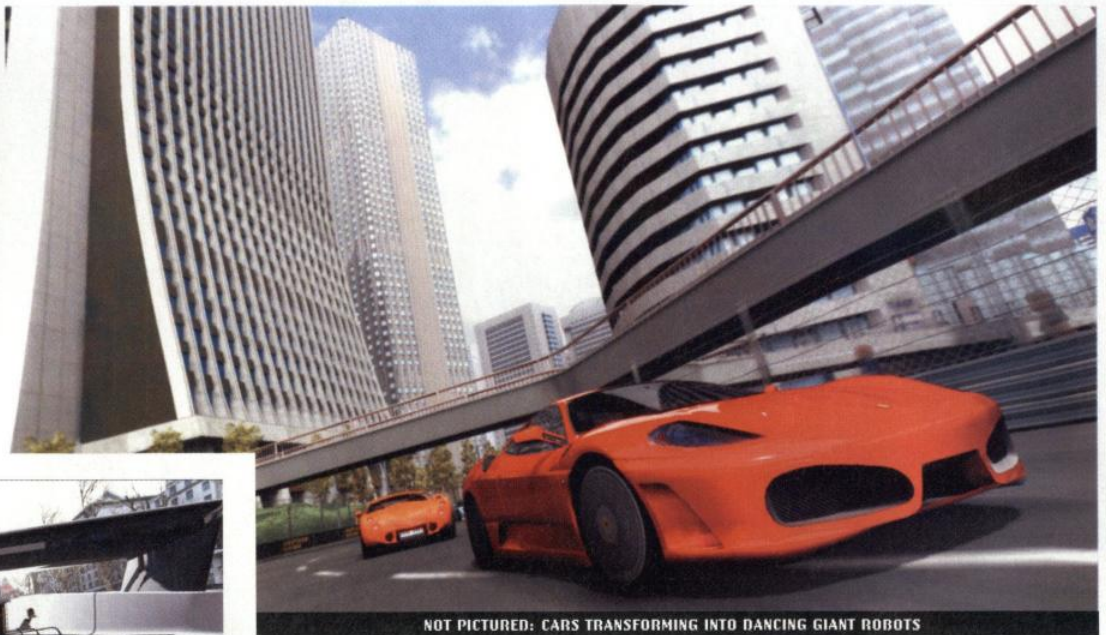


GOOD MORNING MICHAEL

Take the Cone Challenges as an example. Not only has the number of Cone Challenges decreased dramatically in Gotham 3, but the event itself has been stripped of what made it enjoyable in the first place. The bonuses present in the previous games — the bonuses that made driving through an obstacle course of traffic cones deep and strategic — have been removed. You don't get points for finishing the track quickly anymore; nor do you receive extra Kudos for driving through specially marked cone gates at high speeds. So now the entire event's just... what? Extreme Driver's Ed? How totally awesome.

Oh, and do you know what else is totally awesome but actually not because I'm being sarcastic? The new credits system. See, credits are like Kudos: they're earned by





NOT PICTURED: CARS TRANSFORMING INTO DANCING GIANT ROBOTS



I CAN SEE PARADISE BY THE DASHBOARD LIGHTS - MEAT LOAF - MODERN SHAKESPEARE

completing events in the career mode and can be used to buy new cars. Kudos still have value, but only as a means of unlocking "concept cars" in the auto-shop. This would be a pretty good system, but it suffers from two major flaws: credits are way easier to earn than Kudos and pretty much all of the concept cars are worthless. So, yeah, what you end up with is a system where you can buy a totally hot car almost straight away and then not bother buying anything else thereafter. Sure, you could try and get enough Kudos to unlock a concept car – but what's the point? It probably won't be as good as the Ferrari you already have. And so the Kudos and credits pile up...

OMG HAT!

Understand that I'm not criticising these changes just because they're changes: I'm criticising them because I think they're ill-conceived and because I think they dilute what makes Gotham unique in the racing genre.

Anyway, as I said, it's not like I'm trying to argue that Gotham 3 is a bad game. There are many things it does right. The graphics,

Kudos still have value, but only as a means of unlocking "concept cars" in the auto-shop

as you'd probably expect, are incredible. I'd go on about them and try to describe why they're so great, but I just don't see the point. It's a racing game, it's on a next-gen console and it's HDTV compatible. You'd expect it to look amazing and it does. What? You want me to talk about polygons and bump-mapping and whatever else? Please. Just look at the screenshots – they'll tell you more about the visuals than my words ever could.

Perhaps even more impressive than the graphics is the soundtrack. I don't remember exactly how many songs are available, but the tracklist is huge and spans a number of diverse genres – including classical, indie rock and J-pop. And in the unlikely event that you don't like any of the included tunes, you can always replace 'em with your own stuff or just turn the music off altogether. I mean, if you want to be PICKY about it.

Anyway, I'm running out of words now so let's get down to

brass tacks or bare knuckles or shaven monkeys or whatever the hell it is you do when you want to get the point. Gotham 3 – worth buying? Absolutely. All the questionable changes notwithstanding, it's still a Gotham game. It's still got beautiful racing physics that strike a perfect balance between fun and realism. It still gives you the chance to hoon through perfectly realised virtual versions of cities most of us will never visit. It's still FUN. Fun enough for me to play for an entire weekend without stopping. It's just... you know... not as fun as it could be.

Or should be. <<



THE COLOUR OF CHEESE... MMM... CHEESE

AVAILABLE ON:
XBOX 360 / PS3 / DEV

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing
PLAYERS: 1-Multi
DEVELOPER: Bizarre Creation
PUBLISHER: Microsoft Game Studios
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: March 23

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Graphics, great, soundtrack, excellent mechanics and physics.

MINUS: Focus on racing dilutes the game's "Gothamyness", credits.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94	94	85

OVERALL

88

Even when it's disappointing, it's still bloody good



!!! It's refreshing to see a combatant laden with armour and weapons the size of shopping trolleys not able to perform triple somersaults with ease. When Soki prances through combat, each step he takes feels like it's got some weight to it.



MIGHTY PRANCING STRIKE STYLE

HE NEEDS MORE STABBING PRACTISE

Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams

MARCH STEPNIK *worships the Lo Pang*

When a game's intro movie is so spectacular that it feels like it belongs at the bit just before the end credits roll, you know exactly what sort of game you're in for. *Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams*, the fourth in the venerable feudal Japanese action series (and the first to drop the number indicator — ooh... new beginning!) starts with a big bang and never really lets up. It is also one of those established series make-overs you've just gotta love — where the core combat mechanics are virtually identical to what you've grown accustomed to in previous outings, but everything around them is new and different and represents a decisive change in direction.

If *Onimusha*s 1-3 were the *Saving Private Ryan* with their very earnest and naïve tone in saving the world and pulling a few heartstrings along the way (not to mention the strong cinematic presentation and use of famous

actors as leads — including Jean Reno as co-protagonist Jacques in *Onimusha 3*), then this *Onimusha* is very much John Carpenter's *Big Trouble in Little China*: it's fast, it's furious, its characters are street-smart and gritty, and it's ever so keen to poke fun at itself and have a great time doing it to boot.

PARTY LIKE ITS 1599
And a big cheers to Capcom for knowing when to air out an established series and bring us something fresh to play with. They did it with *RE4*, although with *Dawn of Dreams* it's more of a change in attitude than anything else. Putting some distance between the original trilogy (although there are plenty of references for fans of the series), they've dropped the brooding and somewhat sanctimonious lead hero types and replaced 'em with an unlikely gang of mercenaries who are out to take down those responsible for bringing the Hordes

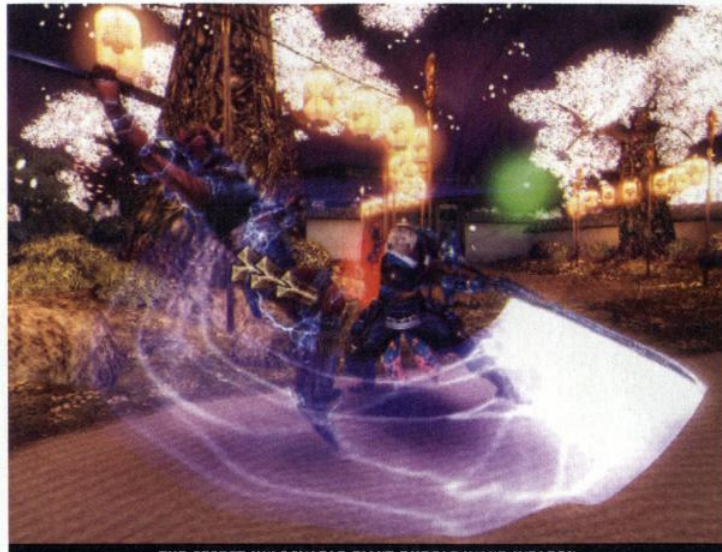
of the Undead back into the world for (inevitably) nefarious ends. Yep, the demons are back again, and before you finish you'll have hacked and slashed and dismembered your way through thousands of 'em.

With snazzy bleached hair and all. The undeniable star of the show is Soki, the new sword-wielding uber-warrior with the trademark ability to suck up the essences of the dead (to further stoke combat and item prowess) who's also a world apart from the protagonists of old. He's bright, stylish, he'll take the piss, and he's a bit of a team player.

See, unlike the earlier titles, *Dawn of Dreams* features a good dose of party play. With a collection of supporting characters sporting various strengths and abilities that you meet along the way, and the ability to hot-swap between them throughout combat (you'll fight often enough with a companion by your side, and you can instruct them to carry out a few essential combat tactics), Capcom has

devised some clever and engaging dual character-based puzzles to break up the many straightforward melee bits. More often than not it's a general split in game path for the two characters in play, but there's plenty of "manoeuvre character A to position X to let character B access/open/use Foozle 29 at position Y" style puzzles that prevents *Dawn of Dreams* taking a lazy pedestrian path through a rather linear game world.

More intriguingly, there's a hub system which even introduces a more adventure-game vibe to the series. From your various hideouts you can buy items, upgrade your characters (who gain levels through combat experience), chat with your various companions on multiple topics (a nice and old-school way of adding substantial character depth) and, of course, instigate the next stage in the unfolding saga (read: start the next level/mission). The real twist is the ability to partner up with different characters and travel back



THE SECRET UNLOCKABLE GIANT BUBBLE WAND WEAPON



WHY DO DEMON/ZOMBIES WEAR HATS? "OH NO, MY DESICCATED SKIN MIGHT BURN!"

to completed mission areas to search out a host of treasure chests (the old rotating pattern puzzles are back too) and items, which in earlier stages required the abilities of characters you hadn't yet made contact with.

THE BIFF

That's not to give the impression that Dawn of Dreams is a radically different experience to its predecessors. It's still all about mass slayings of gruesomely realised creatures interspersed with the odd puzzle and big fight to mix things up. On this front, the combat is as tight as ever. Aside from the swarming number of pulp opponents, there's a strong supporting cast of opponents that'll

The undeniable star of the show is Soki, the new sword-wielding uber-warrior

make you think twice before going into mindless mash mode. Smarts and tactics are rewarded here, and the combination of multiple attack and defence options with awesome battle special effects make it as satisfying as ever. Problematic camera angles still rear their ugly heads on occasion, although the addition of perspective control (finally!) means that this time around, you feel a lot less boxed in.

Topping all this are the regular boss battles, which manage to push all the right buttons. Each boss is an attempt

to out-do the previous in over-the-top style, and in a real display of game design skill offer a reasonable challenge to players in that they rarely seem unfairly powerful or unbeatable. You've got time to work out their strengths and weaknesses and act accordingly – to savour the experience – and you'd only balk that they border on being too long than too short. It's a skilled developer who realises that you can up the tension without forcing the player to rush through such encounters.

Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams represents a respected series hitting its stride; there's been plenty of practice and all the bits that made the previous Onimushas so good have been nicely polished. Combat's fun, the exploration is compelling, the over-arching plot is a silly as ever (and the cutscenes expertly produced too), and the many different locations are as lovingly created as anything previously seen. Epic, over-the-top demon-bashing action with a sense of humour, anyone? This is it. <<

»» SIDE-SHOW CAPCOM – Capcom's proving it has an almost Nintendo-like flair for injecting a fun-fair style flavour to its games by adding a bunch of little side-shows to complement the main attraction. Aside from the already mentioned ability to go back and explore previously unreachable areas, Dawn of Dreams features puzzle boxes (yep, they're back), and the inclusion of combat challenges (kill a mini-boss or a number of enemies in a certain period of time – which can be returned to as often as you'd like). And, of course, once you finish the story proper once you unlock extra play modes, items and difficulty levels that ramps up the challenge factor to near insane levels. It'll take you some serious time and effort before you crack 100% on this one.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Capcom

PUBLISHER: Capcom

PRICE: \$69.95

RATING: MA15+

AVAILABLE: March 30

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Great tone, sweet effects and hot sword-through-flesh action.

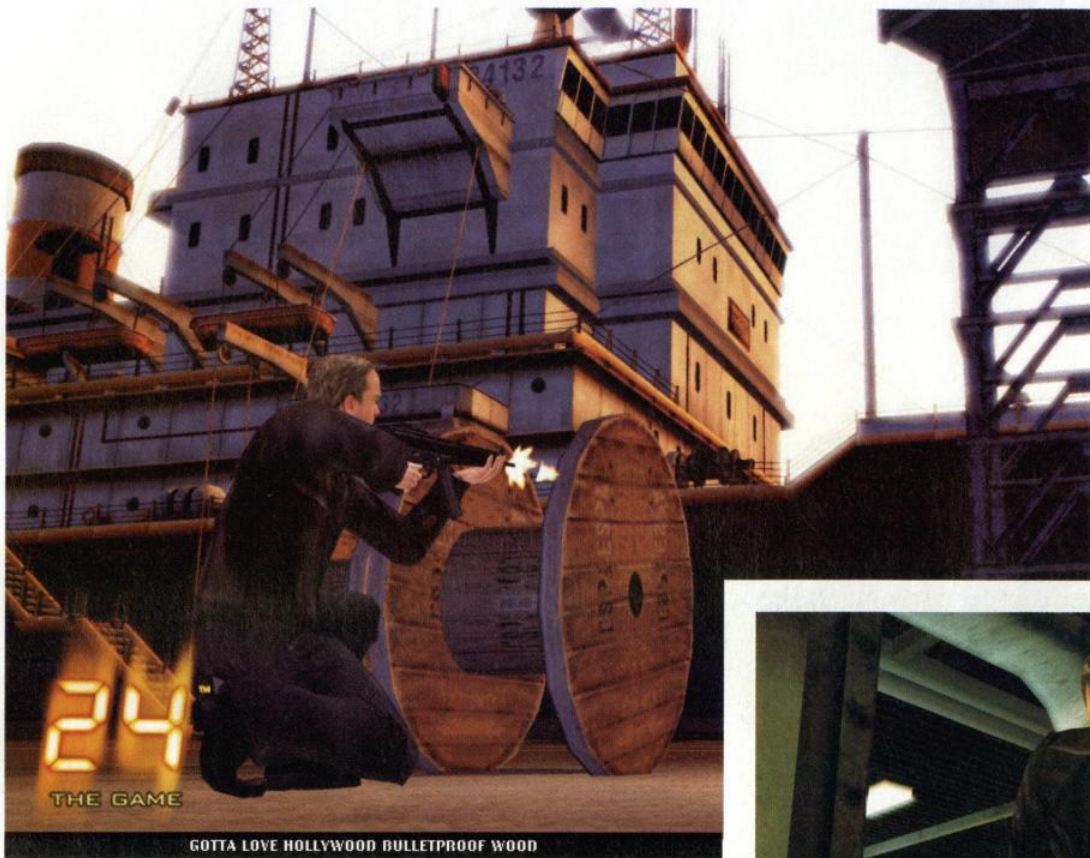
MINUS: Camera glitches, a tad incongruous in parts.

VISUALS 85 SOUND 82 GAMEPLAY 90

OVERALL

88

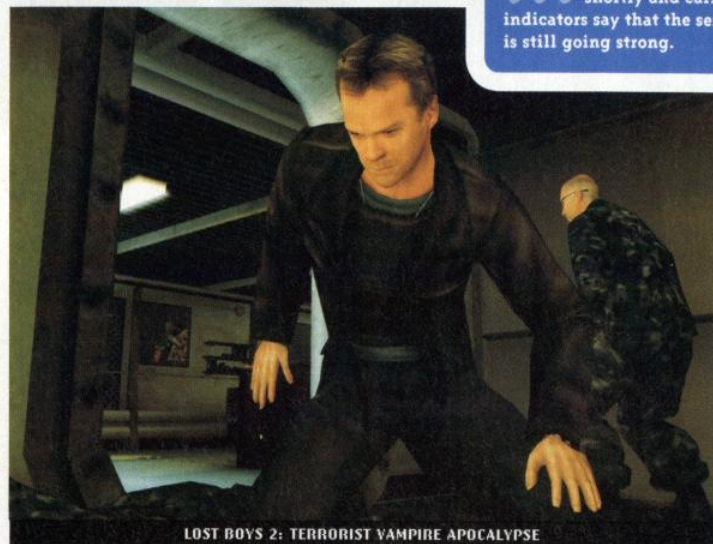
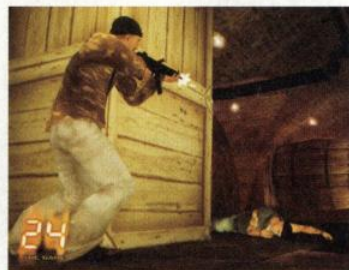
Stylish and fun, this one's a winner.



GOTTA LOVE HOLLYWOOD BULLETPROOF WOOD



!!! Season 5 should be on our screens shortly and early indicators say that the series is still going strong.



LOST BOYS 2: TERRORIST VAMPIRE APOCALYPSE

24: The Game

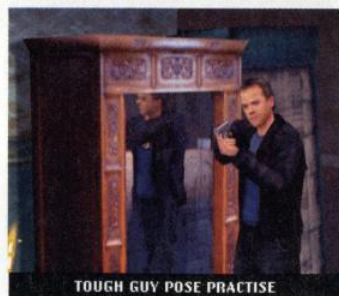
DANIEL WILKS takes place between 2AM and 3AM

If you've watched the series 24 and had a hankering to play the second toughest guy on TV (the toughest is still The Shield's Vic Mackey) now's your chance. Much like the series, giving away the plot or any of the twists and turns therein is a crime (punishable by stoning in some less civilised areas of Australia) but suffice to say it's sufficiently labyrinthine. Set between series two and three, the plot fills in some of the holes that have been begging answers for seasons — who was responsible

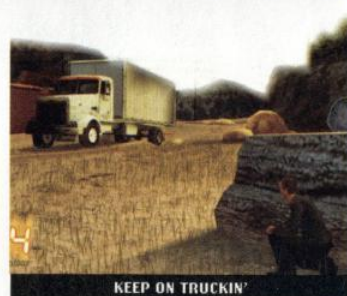
for the attempted assassination by poisoning of President Palmer, how did Kim Bauer wind up working for CTU, how did Jack Bauer and Chase Edmonds end up partners and more.

DISARM AND DESCRAMBLE

Much like the show, gameplay in 24: The Game runs the gamut from third person action through driving, foot chases and numerous mini-games involving satellite imaging, lock picking, code descrambling, bomb disarming and sniping. Set over 24 "hours", each subjective hour is broken down into a number of smaller segments (around 100 missions in all), such as driving to a location, subduing a suspect, interrogating him, heading to the location revealed and securing evidence. The constantly changing gameplay keeps the game feeling fresh and stops you from getting too bogged down in one form of gameplay for too long. This is also a good thing due to the fact that



TOUGH GUY POSE PRACTISE



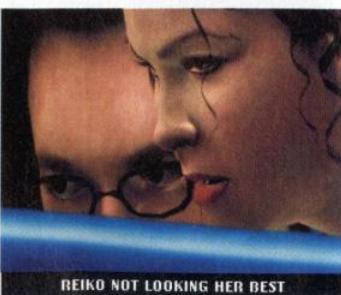
KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

the foot chase sections of the game are atrocious — the controls are too twitchy to support foot chases and if you hit any obstacle you are stunned for a second or so leading to some supreme frustration. Thankfully these frustrations are usually kept to 30 second sections.

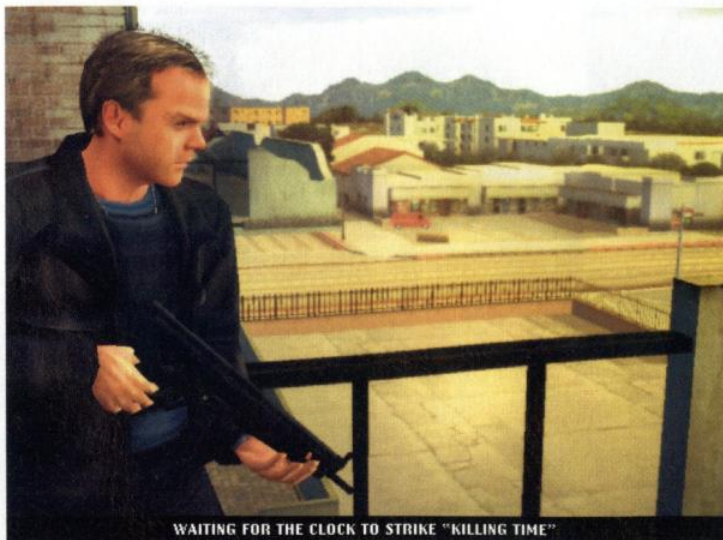
Although the gameplay does change frequently the bulk of the action is third person sneaking/shooting. To some of the more hardcore gamers out there the shooting engine may come across as something like a "My First Shooter" due to the rather forgiving nature and slightly soft targeting, but the action continues to be fun and compelling. In the case of 24: The Game the action seems to be more of a hook for the story rather

than the other way around; the game is not difficult enough to put you off from uncovering the next element of the plot, nor is it so easy that you're just being fed a story with some interaction.

The presentation of 24 is absolutely top notch. All of the major cast members lend their likenesses to their characters and the effect is superb. What's more the game utilises the splitscreen techniques seen in the show, not only in the well produced and written cutscenes but also during gameplay. Rather than just being a stylistic device, the splitscreen plays an integral role in gameplay; when something important happens during a level the screen will split to show both pieces of action, the player and the other



REIKO NOT LOOKING HER BEST



WAITING FOR THE CLOCK TO STRIKE "KILLING TIME"



event. It acts variously as a remote camera (showing guards beginning patrols), a hint as to where to go next (showing the location of a bomb or computer) or as a cue that things are moving into real time.

COUNTDOWN

The recurring countdown motif plays all the way through 24: The Game as can be expected but much like the use of splitscreen it has many different effects on gameplay. Each level takes the place of one of the hours of the television series but the levels don't necessarily play out in real time, the timer instead roughly showing you how far through the level the player has gone. This is not to say that there aren't real time elements to the game however. At points throughout gameplay

When something important happens the screen will split to show both pieces of action

the action will switch to real time and the counter will show you just how much time you have left to complete your objective, whether it be disarming a bomb, escaping from a bomb, rescuing a hostage, catching a fleeing suspect or making it to a rendezvous point in time. After seeing so many lackluster TV to game adaptations in which the central conceit or stylistic device of the show is ignored and replaced with beat 'em up action or shooting (Farscape, Dark Angel, Alias to name but three) it's great to see developers actually taking time not just to make the game look like the show

but to integrate so many elements of said show into gameplay.

The character revelations and plot explanations alone should make 24: The Game a must have for any fans of the series but even more importantly, the gameplay is as compelling (and frustrating) as the show. If you're a fan of the series you need to get a copy. 24: The Game is essentially the Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay of TV adaptations, expending the franchise in new and interesting ways as well as filling in all of the gaps between series two and three. If you're not a fan of the series, it's high time you became one. <<

»» JACK AND FRIENDS – Throughout the game the player takes control of all of the major characters, the action and pacing changing depending on which is being played. As Jack Bauer or Tony Almeida players can expect far more action oriented gameplay as they are trained field agents but later in the game you can expect to play Kim Bauer (this is before she works for CTU) in a stealth mission, one of the analysts using satellite imaging to spot snipers, Michelle Dessler also makes an appearance as a playable character in a mix of stealth and action gameplay.



AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Sony Cambridge

PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: TBA

AVAILABLE: March 23

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Great likenesses, excellent plot, genuine 24 feel.

MINUS: Foot chases are atrocious, some sloppy controls.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	90	87

OVERALL

87

A must have for fans of the series.



Full Auto

Mindless destruction has never been this much fun, says **CAM SHEA**

Full Auto. The name says it all really. Exhibit A: It has cars in it — they go fast and manual transmission isn't an option. Exhibit B: The cars are loaded up with weapons — they blow stuff up and once again, are fully automatic. And finally, Exhibit C: The mindset of the gamer playing Full Auto. While learning courses, vehicle handling and weapon loadouts may help, this is a game you can almost play on auto-pilot, letting the well developed twitch center take control, while you revel in the speed and destruction.



CARDS? ON THE TABLE

As we said in last month's preview, Full Auto knows exactly what it is. Its primary purpose is to throw you into a destructive next gen playground with all the tools you need to have fun — massively combustible environments, the ability to rewind the game to undo mistakes, an expanding roster of weapons and of course, speed boosts. It may sound gimmicky, but if you give it a chance you'll discover one of the sleeper hits at launch.

Car combat games don't need much of an explanation, but here are the fundamentals. The more air you get and powerslides you perform, the faster your boost meter builds up. The more stuff you destroy, the faster your Unwreck meter builds up. There's a decent assortment of vehicles to work through (21 in all), ranging from muscle cars and SUVs through to tuners, classics and exotics, and as you progress through the

Career mode you'll have more and more weapon options. Should you go for the level 3 machine guns on the front and level 1 mines on the back? Or how about all out assault with a missile launcher and grenade launcher both on the front? Decisions, decisions.

It's all these elements combined that give Full Auto its charm. There's just nothing like boosting off a ramp, flipping through the air, boosting again before you hit the ground and executing a clean getaway. Or weaving towards the finishing line with four cars on your tail, all firing shells and grenades at you — a missile takes you out so you rewind and swerve the other way... where a stray grenade totals you, so you use the last of your Unwreck to rewind again, swerving like a madman and scraping over the line in first place. Unwreck really is a stroke of genius. It takes Full Auto from being potentially frustrating and makes it fun. It means you can



experiment. It means you rarely feel cheated as you can almost always try and avoid any calamity that befalls you. It means that you can see just how fine the line between destruction and success can be, and really appreciate the over the top physics that developers Pseudo Interactive have implemented. Sure, it's an obvious thing to include in a game these days, but the difference it makes is huge.

EVENTFUL

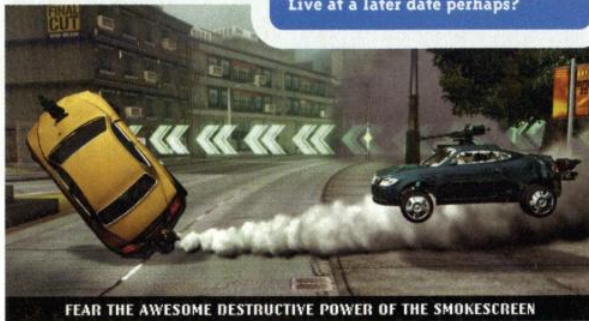
Career mode is comprised of 16 series', each with between three and five events. These range from Underdogs, where you're up against opponents with superior vehicles, to Rampages, which are all about taking down civilian vehicles as fast as you can, through



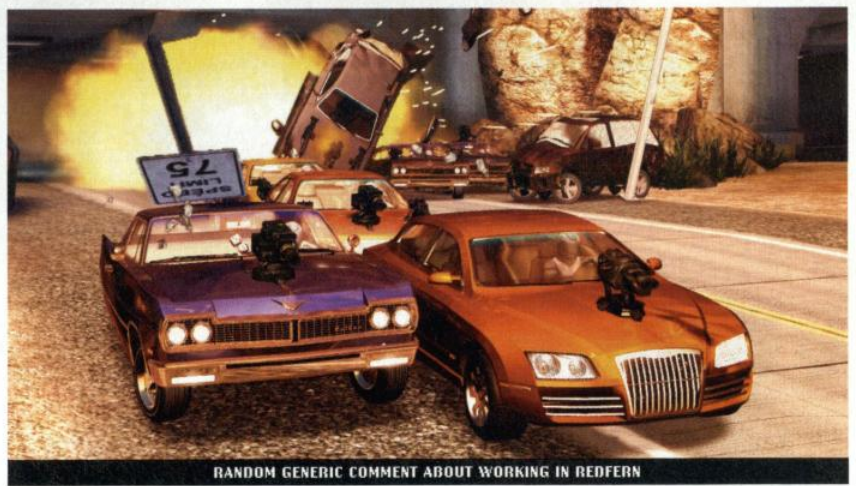
NOT PICTURED: INCREDIBLY POOR LANDING



!!! Full Auto is absolutely begging for a dedicated Stunt Mode. Every time you pull a flipping barrel roll off a ramp you'll wish Pseudo had heeded the call. A download over Live at a later date perhaps?



FEAR THE AWESOME DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF THE SMOKESCREEN



RANDOM GENERIC COMMENT ABOUT WORKING IN REDFERN

to Sudden Death, where you'll have to conserve Unwreck because you only have one life. By and large it's a good selection of game modes, although some are a little flawed - Gang Wars I'm looking in your direction, and some environments work better than others - this game is definitely in its element in dense city and freeway areas, as opposed to out on treacherous desert trails.

While it won't take you long to

This is a game you can almost play on auto-pilot, letting the twitch center take control

beat the Career mode - a couple of days of solid play, there's a stiff challenge on offer if you want to get all golds. We finished Career mode with only 72% of the game complete, and going back for the remaining Full Auto rankings won't be all that

easy as most events need you to not only come first, but also to beat a certain time limit, get a certain number of kills or reach a Wreck point total. Throw in an Arcade mode and online play and although Full Auto may not be massive, it should keep you entertained for a while. Unfortunately we haven't been able to test the online play yet, but we suspect that the added challenge of human competition will make up for the lack of Unwreck. We have, however, tested splitscreen multiplayer and it runs a treat.

Capping it all off are Full Auto's outstanding visuals. This is one hell of an attractive game, and once you've seen monuments crumble, walls cleaved out of buildings, glass shattering all around, scaffolding falling, explosions rocking the air and cars swatted aside by your rolling death machine, you'll never want to go back to current gen.

Well worth a look for gamers that like their racing bread buttered on the explosive side. <<

» AND YOU'RE OUTTA THERE! - It's well worth reiterating just how much Full Auto ramps up the destruction. Sure you might expect to be able to knock over roadside stalls or even shoot down overpasses, but the coolest stuff takes you by surprise, like sideswiping the corner of a building at speed, cleaving a massive chunk out of two walls then continuing on your way. Once you've done that a couple of times you'll start deliberately driving through corners, smashing your way through anything you can. It's not just something you can do either, it's something you're actively rewarded for in the form of Wreck points, and any carnage inflicted is still there to see on the next lap.

Taking out rivals has to be one of the most satisfying elements of the game too, as the action switches to a cinematic slow-mo of the car being "perforated", often with a side of physical comedy as you see your opponent jettisoned through the windshield of the exploding vehicle, ragdolling through the air. Good times.

There are some frustrating elements, however, like getting caught on the odd non-destructible wall, or being unable to knock over a chain link fence after taking a wrong turn and stopping dead, but by and large Unwreck means you can avoid such annoyances on take two... or three.

AVAILABLE ON:
XBOX 360 / PS3 / REV

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Car Combat
PLAYERS: 1-8
DEVELOPER: Pseudo Interactive
PUBLISHER: Sega
PRICE: \$119.95
RATING: M15+
AVAILABLE: March 23

HYPER VERDICT:

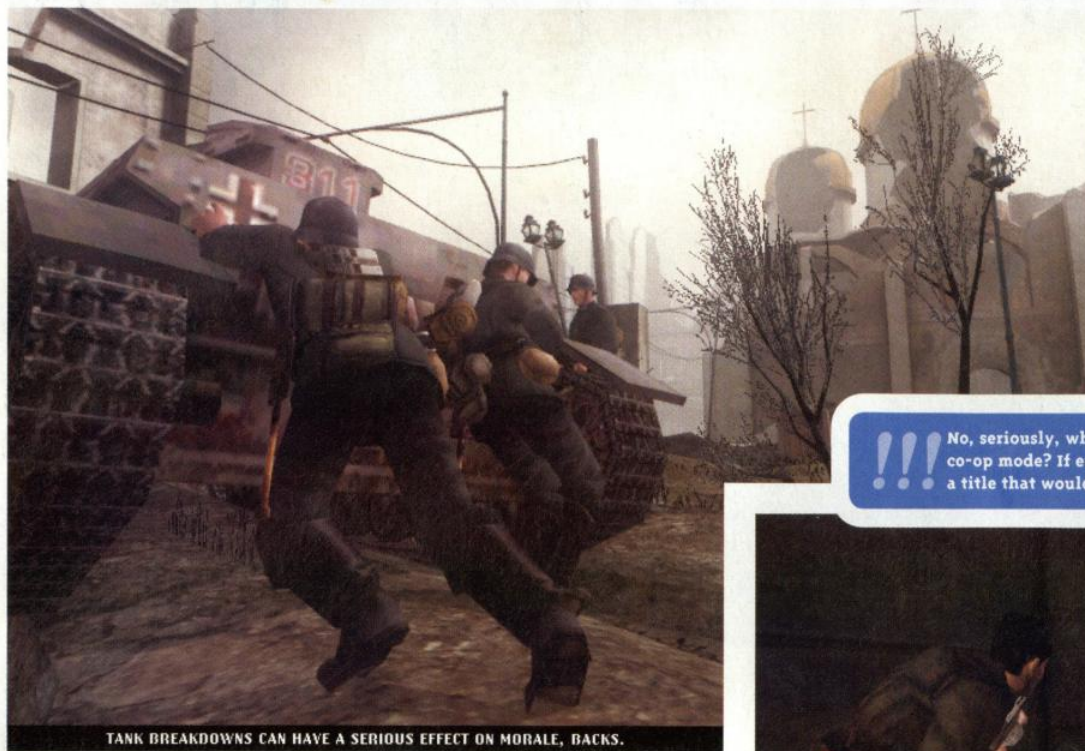
PLUS: Gorgeous visuals, incredible carnage, great mechanics.

MINUS: No stunt mode, the less destructive courses.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91	88	85

OVERALL
85

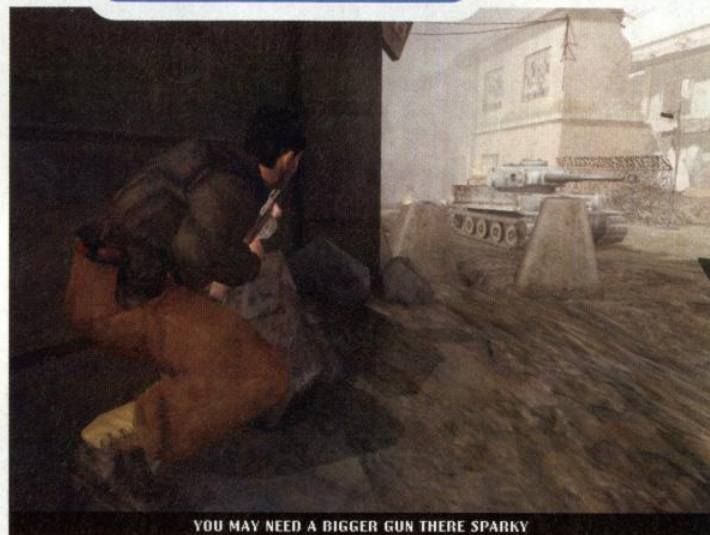
The new breed of car combat gaming has arrived.



TANK BREAKDOWNS CAN HAVE A SERIOUS EFFECT ON MORALE, BACKS.



!!! No, seriously, where is the co-op mode? If ever there was a title that would benefit...



YOU MAY NEED A BIGGER GUN THERE SPARKY

Commandos: Strike Force

PATRICK KOLAN infiltrated Hyper HQ to snag this review

For those unfamiliar with this WWII-based series, *Commandos* prides itself on creating a thinking-players' action title. Past incarnations were played out in an isometric 2D battle-blackened landscape, emphasizing strategy and cunning over grunt and muscle. In *Strike Force*, many of the traditions of the series get vetoed, not least of all the player perspective, which has shifted to first person. That said, *Strike Force* still aims to maintain a fine balance between action and deeply considered manoeuvres. Instead of playing the lone gunman protagonist in a field of SS, you're given command of three distinct specialists — a Green Beret, a sniper and a spy.

GREEN BERET

As such, many missions are tied around employing two-out-of-three of your troops (generally alongside a battalion) that you can swap between with a tap of the assigned button. It's a system that works pretty well, with each character able to look after himself while left to their own devices.

Missions take place in oft-traversed locales such as Nazi-

occupied France, the Norwegian mountains and the streets of Germany. However, the emphasis on strategy adds an enjoyable slant to things. You'll carry out stealthy assassinations, espionage, hostage rescues, ambushes and raids, with some clever level designs allowing for plenty of mayhem in the process. Taking out a panzer by attaching a limpet mine then switching to your sniper to pick off enemies to make a clean escape for yourself, is nail-biting and genuinely good fun.

Early on, such freeform gameplay can seem daunting, particularly because the mission briefings are on the scant side. The radar and map provided in-game help a little bit, but it would be nice to have a little more guidance and specifics. It's not an easy game, either, so an auto save option would have made a difference. As it stands, you must find a safe spot and manually save.

In addition to the usual line-up of bazookas, sub-machine guns and rifles, things like limpet mines, Molotov cocktails and other things that go boom are all at your disposal. Fairly standard stuff. Sniping is

made easier by 'holding your breath' while taking a shot — something that is handled by a gauge that slowly depletes. While you're in that state, things slow around you, allowing a few vital seconds for a clean hit.

Strike Force is more a case of 'the sum total of its parts' rather than stellar in any one area in terms of visuals. Textures are pretty muddy; environments range from impressively modelled to blocky and bland. But the battles are packed with explosions, particle effects, character shadows and lots of troops. It portrays the frantic chaos of war well, but looks tired by comparison to other titles that it will share shelf space with. On PS2 hardware (the system our review code was on), the game stutters like a caffeine addict.

Various multiplayer modes are on offer, and these should keep you occupied if you're after a break from single player. However, a co-op mode is conspicuously absent — having one player cover as a sniper while the other infiltrates as the spy — damn, it would have been a shoe in. Alas, you'll have to wait for the inevitable next-gen sequel for that mode. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: WWII action

PLAYERS: 1-8

DEVELOPER: Pyro

PUBLISHER: Eidos

PRICE: \$89.95 PC, \$99.95 PS2, Xbox

RATING: MA15+

AVAILABLE: March

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Fun and varied, clever missions.

MINUS: Graphical mixed-bag, vague briefings.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
77	85	86

OVERALL

84

A great transition to 3D and a shoe-in for fans.

ANIME BLITZ



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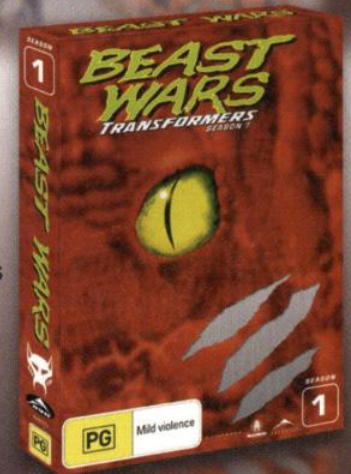
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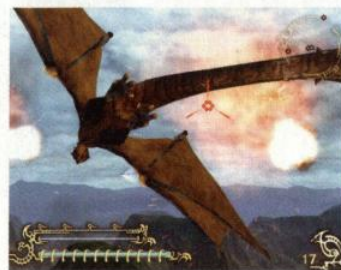
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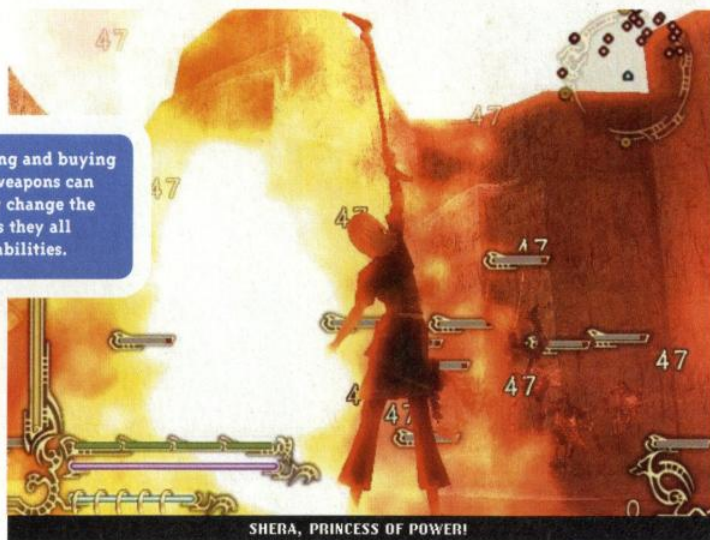
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!!! Finding and buying new weapons can really change the flow of fights as they all have different abilities.



Drakengard 2

DANIEL WILKS *ist ein couchgard*

▶▶ Drakengard was a game with a lot of potential let down by the fact that it never really developed after the first few levels. The idea of merging a hack and slash action game with some flight combat, on the back of a dragon what's more, was great, as was the presentation, a given since it is a Square Enix property but the game itself was a little emaciated. Now there's a sequel and thankfully there's a little more meat on the bones.

FOR THE LITTLE MAN

Once again players jump into the shoes/saddle of a young man and his dragon, initially working for the Knights of the Seal, but after an inevitable double cross going rogue and fighting for the little man. Naturally this means having to hit a lot of things with your sword or burn them to a crisp whilst flying around on a dragon. To distance itself from the original game, the player will recruit new companions during the course of the adventure and can switch to them with a simple button press. Each party

member wields a different weapon and has different strengths and weaknesses. Manah, a female freedom fighter, for example, wields staff weapons, is powerful against magic using enemies and has powerful magic attacks herself. Urick, an axe wielding warrior is best used when surrounded by enemies. Nowe, the main character wields a sword and sits somewhere in the middle ground between his two companions. He is also the only character capable of calling on Legma, the dragon.

Action is broken up into two sections, aerial combat and ground combat. Ground combat is a fairly simple button mashing affair that sees the characters beating the crap out of various different enemies. Each character can find and equip different weapons with varying damage, combos and magical attacks. Through combat experience, character and weapons can level up, the characters gaining more health and the weapons gaining more damage, combos and better special attacks. Although the fighting engine is really quite

simple it is kept enjoyable by the fact that the player needs to switch between characters for different enemies. When outdoors, Nowe can summon Legma, the dragon and fly over the battlefield decimating ground based enemies with blasts of fire. To stop players from simply running roughshod over battles, Legma is vulnerable to magic attacks and some giant monsters, who are in turn nigh invulnerable to his attacks. Aerial combat makes up the other half of the game and, strangely plays somewhat like an on rails shooter like Panzer Dragoon, sans the rails, with lock on attacks, specials and quick dodge/strafes playing more of a role than full control.

Whilst still not a brilliant game, Drakengard 2 still has enough action to satisfy fans of the genre. The presentation and voice acting are good, if not great in parts and the game ramps up nicely throughout the running time. Just be sure to give the game a little time. The first few hours are enjoyable but the action really heats up around the four hour mark. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:
CATEGORY: Action
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Cavia
PUBLISHER: Square Enix
PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: M
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:
PLUS: Huge battles, good voice acting, nice presentation.

MINUS: Bad camera, a little samey.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83	85	81
OVERALL		
78		
Better than the first but the franchise still needs work.		

"The look of the game is superb,
bringing to mind the gritty
pseudo-realism of films like Se7en
and Fight Club"
- Hyper

"Brutal, gruesome and
utterly terrifying"
- Official Australian Xbox360 Magazine

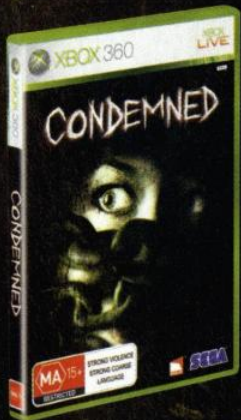


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The green green grass of OH MY GOD STOP SHOOTING ME!



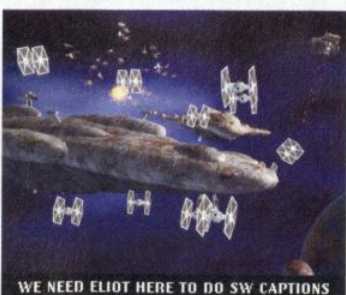
Star Wars: Empire At War

ELIOT FISH is more machine than man these days.

Rebellion, Force Commander, Galactic Battlegrounds... It's not as if they haven't tried, eh? LucasArts and the Star Wars license have a long and tattered history with the strategy genre that's about as epic and operatic as the famous trilogy itself — oh sorry, it's a sextet now (grumble). So here we are: Star Wars Empire at War, a new hope?

THANK THE MAKER

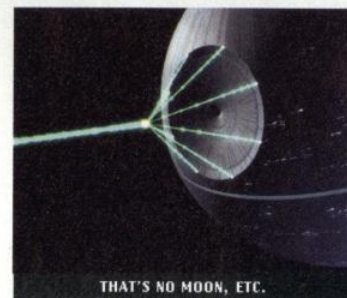
The game is broken down into three distinctly different parts — ground battles, space battles



WE NEED ELIOT HERE TO DO SW CAPTIONS

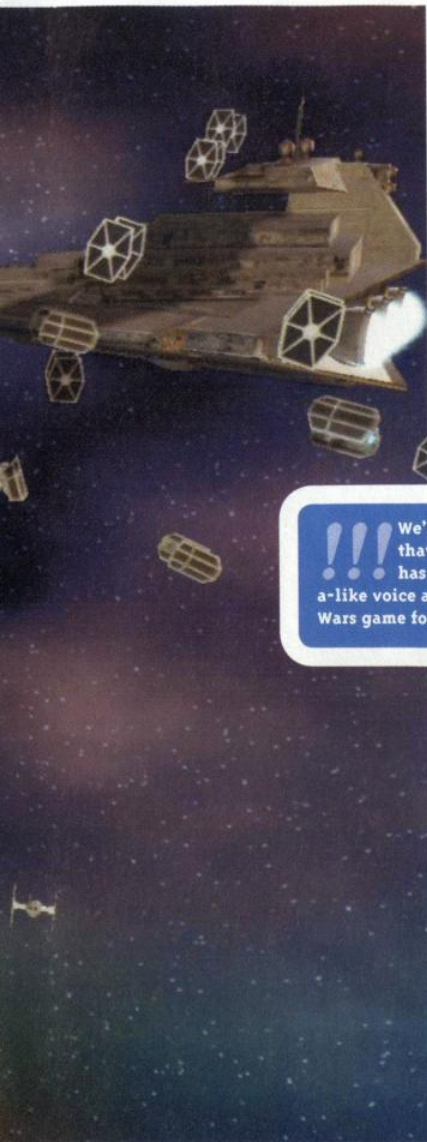
and the galactic overview. Most of your brow-furrowing will take place at the galactic overview screen, which functions a little like the world map in Total War. Each planet you commandeer earns credits which pool into a war chest, allowing you to spend money at any of your planets on improving defences and building up units. It's an expensive job taking over the galaxy, but it's essential to spend money to ensure your planets are well defended. Not only do you need space fleets to protect the space above a planet, but you'll need to build up ground units to stop invasion forces once they break your orbital defense. You'll find that expansion occurs very slowly, as most everything is damn expensive to build and you really need to have units garrisoned before you piss off elsewhere. It should be noted that this galactic overview map plays in real-time, so the longer you sit

and ponder, the more money is trickling in and the more progress your enemy is making. Most will want to set it to the slowest setting to allow for some chin-stroking. However, this also means the game can move at a Jabba-like pace, and it takes some time to get enough money together to actually build fleets capable of invading and then protecting other planets. There are some great ideas in the galactic overview, most that seem inspired by games like Total War. Hero units can be purchased and then sent out on missions to achieve specific goals. Smugglers can be used to silently steal credits from enemy planets, whilst Bounty Hunters will kill off hidden enemy units if discovered. The droids R2 and Threepio are used by the Alliance to steal technology from the Empire undetected, which is the only way you can evolve your tech tree when playing as the good guys. Star Wars fans will



THAT'S NO MOON, ETC.

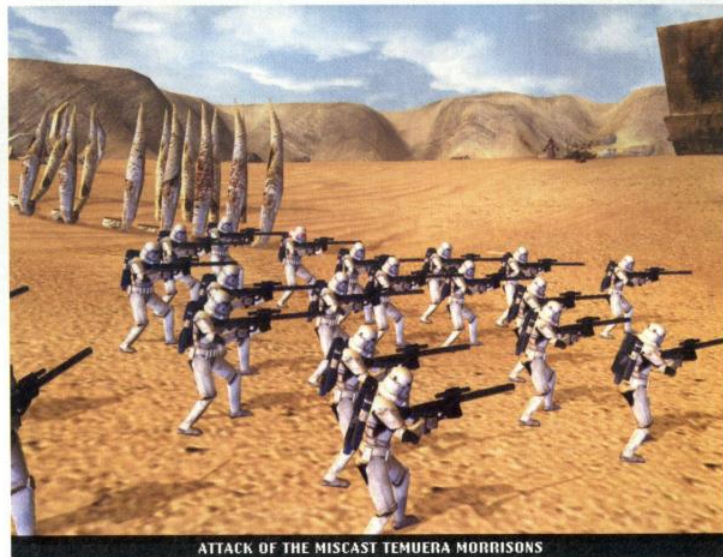
appreciate that kind of clever detail. When battle does take place, you're stuck with the limited units that you've built — there's no resource management during a fight, and thus no way of building new units to keep you going (except in multiplayer Skirmish mode, which gives you credits to spend during battle). Ground battles revolve around controlling various drop zones, as you can ship in your units as required throughout the battle — they don't need to start out in a massive heap at one location. This gives the fairly straightforward gaming a delicate twist — there's nothing worse than seeing your enemy delivering fresh AT-ATs on your doorstep when you thought you'd exhausted their invasion force. Thus, controlling



!!! We're happy to report that Empire at War has the best sound-a-like voice actors in a Star Wars game for a long time.



THE CORELLIAN CORVETTE IS NOTABLY LESS SLEEK THAT THE CHEVROLET VERSION



ATTACK OF THE MISCAST TEMUERA MORRISONS

the drop zones will stifle your opponent's chance of victory.

WALKING CARPET

Naturally, there's a complex rock/paper/scissor thing going on with the units, most of it based around Star Wars logic. There are some nice options too, such as ordering bombing runs (if you have a space fleet in orbit) and having hero units with temporary special abilities, such as R2's ability to commandeer enemy turrets or Han Solo's handy sprinting ability (we always thought he was dashing).

The ground battles do tend to reveal just how clunky the pathfinding can be, which is at times awful. Order a squad to target something and they might happily blast away at a rock or wall that's in their firing line, instead

R2 and Threepio are used by the Alliance to steal technology from the Empire undetected

of moving to get a better angle.

The space battles can be quite spectacular, and are marginally more fun to play. Capital ships have individual systems that can be targeted, which deepens the amount of interaction you can have during battle. Directing your Y-Wings to take out a Star Destroyer's shield generators, not only make tactical sense, but makes you feel like you're living out a Star Wars moment. In that respect though, there's quite a lot of fiddly work to do when battles are on a large scale.

Keeping track of fighter squadrons that have failed to return to the fray after winning

dogfights, or continually needing to manoeuvre your ships around in a large messy fleet can be annoying. The AI is dastardly though, with TIEs purposely luring your fighter craft away from the battle and other such dirty tactics. Ships also have special abilities, so you can use tractor beams, ion cannons and other tricks to turn a battle in your favour.

Aside from the aforementioned pathfinding issues, there are a few other problems with Empire at War. Much like in Total War, you can choose to "Auto-Resolve" some battles, however in Empire at War you risk higher casualties if you choose this option. Why punish the player for not wanting to waste time over minor skirmishes? Using Auto-Resolve, we sometimes lost battles that should have been won easily, forcing us to reload and manually play them out just to ensure victory. Silly.

It may have a number of niggly flaws, but Empire at War is easily the most playable and entertaining Star Wars strategy game to date. <<

➤ **STORYTELLING** – One of the most impressive aspects of Empire at War is the way the Star Wars story has been interwoven throughout the solo (pun intended) campaign (you can choose to start as Alliance or Empire). All the characters pop up and missions revolve around events in Star Wars history, with the game starting just before A New Hope – so no prequel rubbish here. It's an entertaining package full of delights for hardcore fans, from stealing X-Wings from the Empire to discovering the Death Star plans.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Strategy

PLAYERS: 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: Petroglyph

PUBLISHER: LucasArts

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: M

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Great SW feel, character-filled campaigns, space battles.

MINUS: Auto-Resolve needs fixing, progress can be slow, bad pathing.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86	88	84

OVERALL

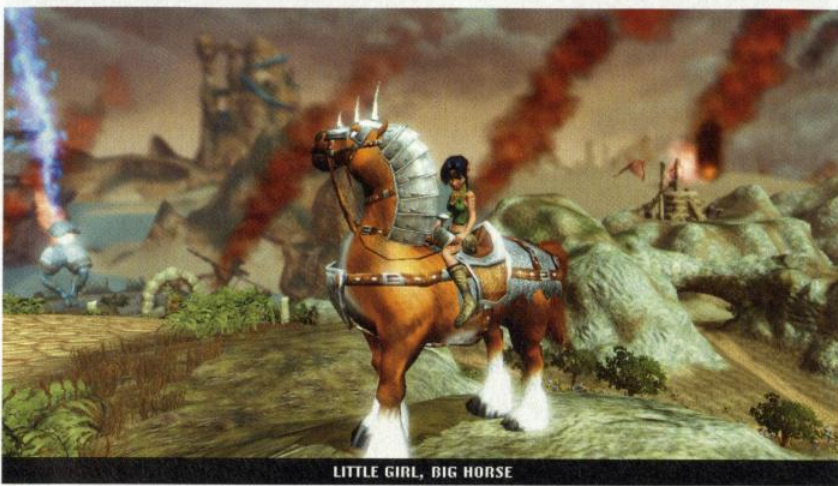
84

The most interesting and fun Star Wars strategy game yet.

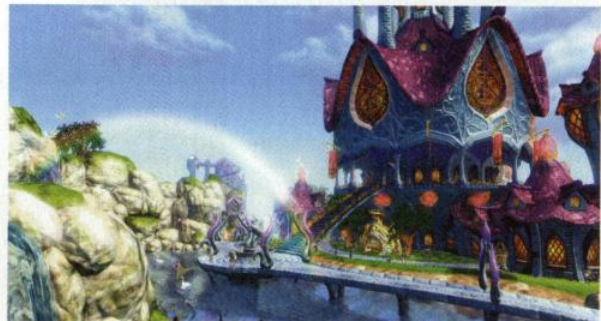
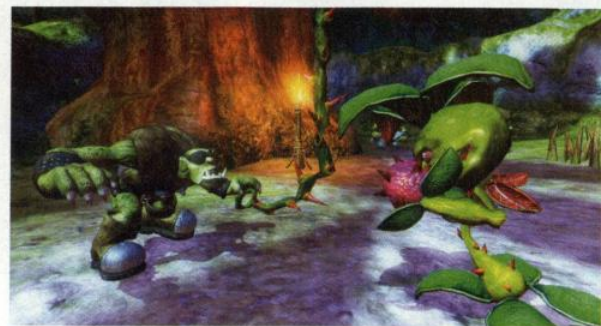


!!! After a poor kids game, a shoddy port and Kameo you have to wonder if Microsoft have regrets about buying Rare.

THIS IS A TOTALLY USELESS TACTIC TO USE FOR THIS BOSS FIGHT



LITTLE GIRL, BIG HORSE



Kameo: Elements of Power

DANIEL WILKS is a fairy woman on the inside

Kameo has been a hell of a long time coming. Initially slated for the GCN, Kameo switched to being an Xbox title when Microsoft acquired Rare and impressed quite a few people when it was shown at E3 3 years ago. Then it disappeared, only to resurface as one of the launch titles for the Xbox 360. It's been a long wait. Has it been worth it? Yes. And no. Microsoft is wise to make Kameo one of the launch titles for the

system as not only does the game have a fine and much loved pedigree (any Rare fanboy will talk incessantly about the strengths of the company), but it fills the "Zelda" style game category at launch, a game to which it quite obviously aspires in part.

NEXT GEN HORSE RIDING

Set in a fantasy land where magic and technology are at odds, Kameo casts players as the titular heroine,

a hip swinging, tattooed and rather sexed up elfin/fairy lass, capable of wielding the power of the Elemental Warriors — creatures that allow her to transform into different beasties to combat the villainous trolls and their allies. At the culmination of the opening/tutorial sequence that sees Kameo staging a one girl assault against an ominous castle to rescue her kidnapped family from the grasp of her evil sister, Kalus (another example of someone being cursed at birth with a name that shapes their destiny), Kameo is pimp-slapped so hard by Thorn, King of the Trolls that she loses all of the Elemental Warriors in her possession. Naturally the rest of the game involves collecting them and fighting Kalus and Thorn again. In between the story missions are smaller missions in which Kameo must use her newfound powers to fight off some huge new Troll war machine in the badlands (the DMZ between the land of Kameo's people and that of the Trolls). During these stages Kameo

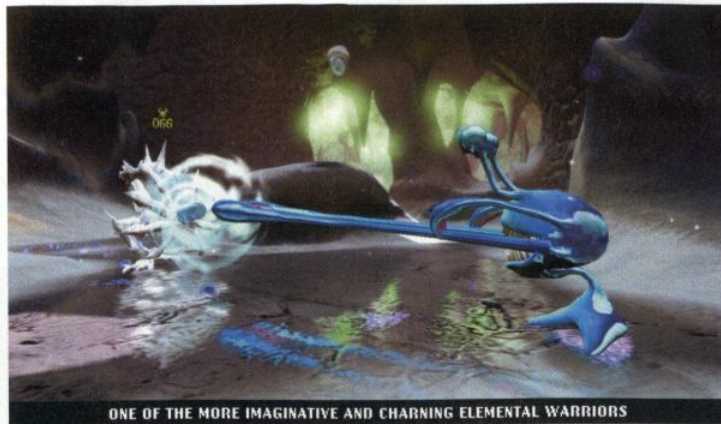


STUPID TROLLS

can ride a horse. Although this may speed up travel a little the real reason for the horse seems to be to show off the processing power of the 360 by having players charge through hordes of Trolls and knock them flying.

The action in Kameo is all based around using your various Elemental Warriors to solve puzzles and to get around the various, beautifully realised levels. Seven of the ten warriors are gained by battling the Shadow Trolls, evil netherworld denizens that can only be killed with light. The first fight against a Shadow Troll is a blast but the six battles that follow are less amusing. The first Warrior is the charmingly ugly Pummel Weed, a pugilistic plant somewhat reminiscent of an evil piranha plant. As the name suggests, Pummel Weed is basically all about punching the crap out of things. He





ONE OF THE MORE IMAGINATIVE AND CHARMING ELEMENTAL WARRIORS

can also dig into the ground for short periods to pass under objects, a skill needed to navigate the first areas of the game. Soon Kameo gains more Elemental Warriors and their skills and the game is set in its formula — switching between the various forms to move between areas, battle Trolls, solve puzzles and beat the snot out of a few impressive looking bosses.

In theory this works well but in practice it actually bogs down gameplay somewhat. During the early stages of the game there is a logical flow of what Warriors should be used for different puzzles but as the game progresses the puzzles/areas become a lot more difficult to navigate rather than more clever, especially in the boss battles, leading to no end of frustration as you trial and error your way to a solution. This frustration is exacerbated by the

It's a breathtaking world inhabited with some beautifully designed characters...

camera which will frequently make it very difficult to look where to go next unless you switch to first person — not the most advisable thing while you're being assaulted by a multitude of enemies. The game doesn't so much scale in complexity as difficulty, Rare having seemingly decided that making it harder for players to perform the required actions would be a great way to extend the length of play. As it stands Kameo can be easily beaten in under ten hours.

SHINY GET

Far and away the most impressive element of Kameo is the look. It's a breathtaking world inhabited with

some beautifully designed characters and creatures with animation that really bring them to life. Kameo herself is a superb model. Although you'll spend the least time playing in that form, Kameo can hover and jump (a skill few other forms have). The hover animation is wonderful to behold, the waif dangling in the air, her legs and arms moving to adjust balance. All of the forms are equally well animated but some are far more appealing than others; Pummel Weed and Rubble (a pile of boulders — gotta love the clever naming synonymous with Rare games) especially look great and have a lot of character in their moves and sounds.

Kameo ably fills the action/puzzle/adventure slot in the launch lineup but the huge development time of the title doesn't really show. Sure it looks great and has some fantastic ideas but you'd think after four plus years Rare would be able to come up with a working camera, good underwater controls and a game that lasts longer than ten hours. <<

➤➤ **KAMEO SQUARED** — Kameo has an unlockable Co-op mode but after playing it for more than a minute you'll wonder why. Presented in split screen, both players control an identical Kameo model with three Elemental Warriors (level specific) and play through. That's it. If there were new puzzles that required players to use different forms simultaneously it could be fun but as it stands the co-op is little more than a space filler. Why Rare decided that both players should play exactly the same character model is a mystery as well.

AVAILABLE ON:

XBOX 360 / PS3 / REV

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: Rare

PUBLISHER: Microsoft

PRICE: \$99.95

RATING: PG

AVAILABLE: March 23

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Beautiful, great ideas, charming.

MINUS: Frustrating, short, camera issues.

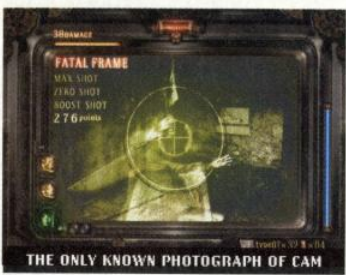
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	89	85

OVERALL
82

Not worth the wait but still a fun bit of action/adventure.



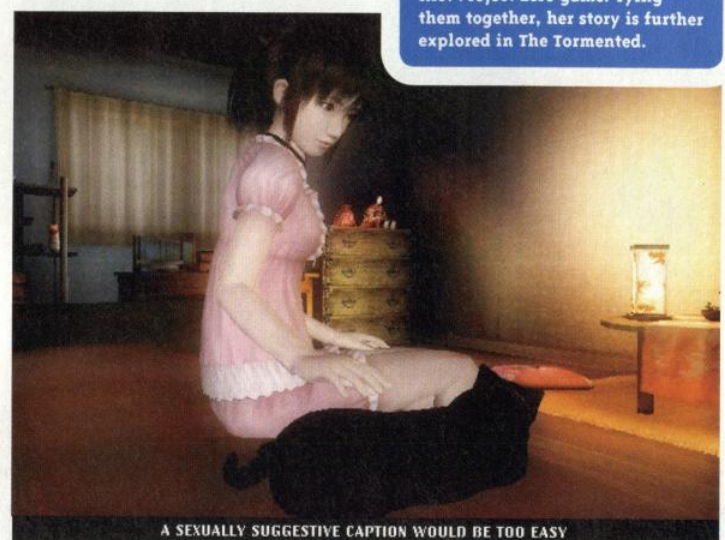
!!! Fans of the series might recognise Rei's housemate/assistant Miku as the protagonist of the first Project Zero game. Tying them together, her story is further explored in *The Tormented*.



THE ONLY KNOWN PHOTOGRAPH OF CAM



TOO OLD AND CLOTHED FOR MARCH



A SEXUALLY SUGGESTIVE CAPTION WOULD BE TOO EASY

Project Zero 3: The Tormented

MARCH STEPNIK *digs the whole scantily-clad heroine thing...*

Makoto Shibata, director of the Project Zero series, has gone on record to claim that he's seen a ghost in real life, and more than once. When asked for advice on how to handle such an encounter, the pragmatic Japanese developer recently responded with "I can give no advice. I myself am really scared every time I see one, and you cannot predict when you will have an encounter. I once saw a ghost who had a damaged face and I couldn't figure out if it was a he or a she. I was kind of panicked and pretended that I was dead."

NOT SO HAPPY SNAPS

Maybe snap 'em with a camera then, eh? Whether a quirky publicity stunt or sincere belief, Makoto Shibata lives and breathes ghosts, and knows how to produce a damn fine survival horror game with a most distinct twist. Where the Resident Evil series is almost camp with its action-movie treatment of shambling zombies, and the Silent Hill series is a seriously twisted hell-on-earth fantasy, Project Zero instead draws its

inspiration from a long and fine tradition of Japanese horror. And Japanese art and folklore too; as much of the series relies on amazing special effects as seen in such Japanese classics as Ring and Ju-on: The Grudge, a big part of Project Zero's charm is its detailed treatment of Japanese myth, architecture and style — offering an experience that is as beautiful and subtle as it is haunting.

And with *The Tormented* this formula remains absolutely intact, right down to using the Camera Obscura — the only 'weapon' in the game — to battle the exclusively non-corporeal enemies. This time, however, Tecmo has completely revamped the front-end of the experience. In both Project Zero and PZ2: Crimson Butterfly the action and story progressed in a fairly linear and straightforward manner — you entered the haunted world (or were already there) and never left until you ultimately fought your way out of it. *The Tormented* contains a richer narrative: without giving too much away, the protagonist Rei travels between the everyday world

and the haunted one almost at will. In a first for the series, a modern day house serves as the game's 'hub' area to interesting effect.

Apart from offering respite from the haunted house/world and a stark contrast to it, the house sequences allow Rei to explore not only her deceased fiancé's reappearance and the strange ghost world, but the histories of her housemate Miku and the journalist also investigating the phenomenon, Kei. That you can also play as these two characters (with different strengths and weakness to boot) further solidifies the new adventure game flavour to the experience.

So with three playable characters is it three times as fun? Not quite. While it's rewarding to follow each of the protagonist's personal tales, the real thrill is scaring yourself shitless in the game's awesomely presented haunted house(s). And while this aspect is as technically good as it ever has been (you'll feel panicked and want to play dead more than once throughout), the only gripe here is that it's really starting to feel a little old. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Survival Horror

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Tecmo

PUBLISHER: Take 2

PRICE: \$49.95

RATING: MA15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPHER VERDICT:

PLUS: Beautiful design, character driven, great atmosphere, cheap!

MINUS: Main play feeling dated — something new for next-gen maybe?

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	88	87

OVERALL

87

As unsettling and creepy as ever...

GAUNTLET

SEVEN SORROWS

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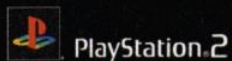
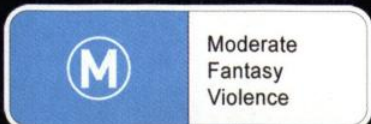


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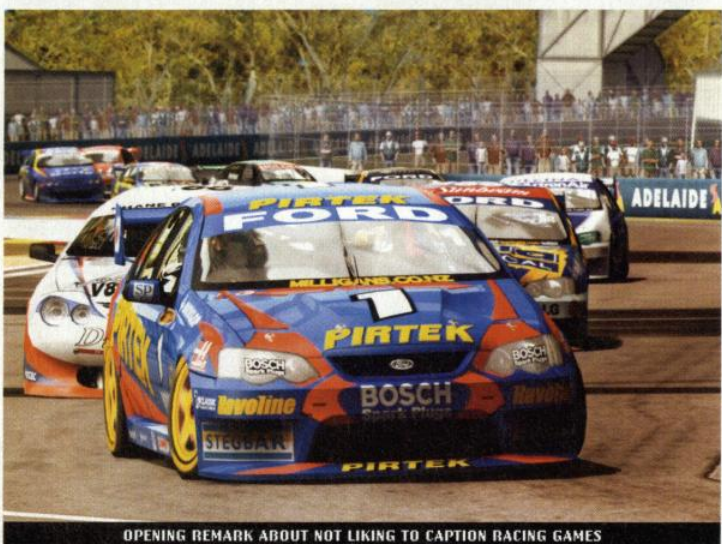
COMING SOON



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OPENING REMARK ABOUT NOT LIKING TO CAPTION RACING GAMES



!!! PSP owners take heart. Codemasters is working on a handheld version and it should be out fairly soon...

V8 Supercars 3

MARCH STEPNIK brings his singlet and stubbie holder out of retirement...

▶▶ Flags. Of all things new and improved in V8 Supercars 3, the flags are perhaps the most obvious. See, drive just a little too dangerously amongst the pack of rev-head opponents and you'll be flagged with a warning, a speed reduction penalty if persistent and a trip to the pits if you've pushed things just a bit too far.

It may seem trite but it's an important point. Just in case you weren't quite sure where the V8 Supercars series was coming from (or going to, for that matter), the first few races in V8 3's main Pro

Career mode make it nice and absolutely clear: this is a full-blown racing game, with a strong focus on all the elements that make up competing in high-octane cars. Sure, you can race it as casually or as seriously as you want (with all the full 2005 race season rules on, V8 Supercars 3 provides some serious tests of racing endurance), but it all comes back down to the thrill of not only mastering a track in its own right but competing against a score of aggressive and hungry drivers as well. After all, one simple prang — be it a barrier or an opponent's rear-end — and it could all be over in an instant.

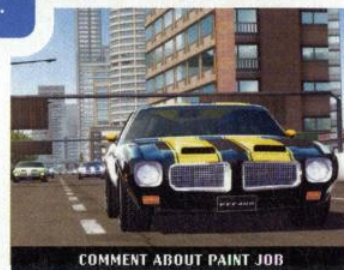
THIS IS (NOT) hardcore

Of course, it's not all hardcore. For a game that sells itself as a showdown between Holden and Ford on 161 laps of Bathurst, Codemasters has produced a remarkably well-rounded racing experience.

On the one hand, you've got all

the titular V8s and other muscle-bound cars you'd expect. But Super Trucks? Formula 1000? Rally cars? Classics? Even sprint cars, ride-on lawnmowers and slot cars? There's over thirty different car classes to race in (culminating in over 120 championships to compete in) offering a good range in feel and handling on the track, mixing things up rather nicely. One moment you'll be fighting to stay on the road in an arse-heavy American muscle car 'round a bend, while the next may see you fangling about in a lightweight Formula 1000 vehicle — its power-to-weight ratio and aerodynamics requiring a far more tactile approach to keeping it on the track. If you thought V8 Supercars was just about the V8s, think again — V8 Supercars 3 expands even further upon the selection found in its predecessors.

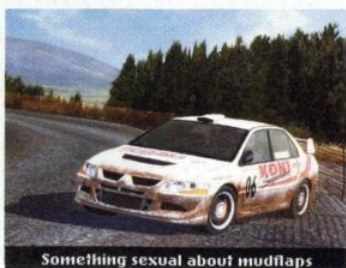
Codemasters' inclusive approach to racing is also evident by the overhauled front-end of the game



COMMENT ABOUT PAINT JOB

and the game modes available. Aside from the V8 Quickstart mode, V8 Supercars 3 features two main play modes for two very different types of challenges — World Tour and Pro Career. World Tour is a Gran Turismo style collection of arcade-style championships, consisting of a number of different races usually lasting no more than a couple of laps each. Rules here are obviously relaxed and the aim of the game is to get you through as many of the different cars, tracks and racing styles available as possible.

Meanwhile, the hardcore faithful have a stiffer challenge to look forward to in Pro Career mode. This is where purists can undertake a full season of the V8 Supercars championship. Each career path (ranging from off road cars, classics,



Something sexual about mudflaps



SOMETHING ABOUT "BROCKIE" OR WHATEVER HIS NAME IS



GENERIC 70S MUSCLE CAR FUNNY CAPTION

GT, Oval racing and Touring Cars amongst others) starts you off a novice and has you winning lesser competitions before earning a shot at the big leagues. This is V8 Supercars 3's main story mode, complete with Frank, the series' trademark over-enthusiased Scottish mentor, in the many track-side cutscenes.

BIG SMASH!

The racing itself has been nicely tweaked. Most notably, fans of the series will find handling a much more comprehensive experience than in the previous versions. In particular, the cars now feel like more of an extension of the track itself — bumps, changes in elevation and other road conditions and their effects on the car are now much more noticeable. The rally stages too

The relationship between car damage and vehicle handling is tighter than ever

are perhaps the best on a console (apart from the Codemasters' Colin McRae series, to which V8 Supercars 3 owes a great deal), with handling much more responsive and less like trying to drive a block of ice down a grassy slope.

The damage modelling too has been re-worked, with a wider range of effects. Lose your windshield in a prang, for example, and the audio noticeably changes (different engine noise, the sound of rushing air), as does visibility with a more crisp view of the world beyond the windshield's space. Or another example (not reliant on the in-car viewpoint): lose

your rear spoiler (or a wing, for that matter), and you'll find the handling of your car changes accordingly — with the aerodynamics of your vehicle changed, you'll have to take those bends a little slower. The relationship between car damage and vehicle handling is tighter than ever, meaning that those cheap, videogame-based racing tricks (car-pinball, shortcuts, etc) just won't get you very far at all.

Which all leads to some absolutely thrilling and satisfying racing. Of course, the other series trademark of realistic and challenging opponent AI is the icing on the cake in V8 Supercars 3 — this is the best racer of its kind currently on consoles. Now if Codemasters could just include a better tutorial system to bring the novice driver up to speed (a system mostly glossed over in this game), the V8 Supercars series would be hard to fault. <<

» EXTRAS — Sim Mode is back and this is where you access the extra stuff to see and do in V8 Supercars 3. Here you can set up a custom race (not to be underestimated in the longevity stakes), engage in time trials on the available (unlocked) tracks, engage in multiplayer (either locally or over the net) and check out saved replays. New to V8 Supercars 3 is the ability to enter in codes for a variety of in-game goodies. Apart from unlocking hidden and bonus cars and tracks, it offers a bunch of arcade-style powerups and restrictions to drastically change the way a race plays. Cool!

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing
PLAYERS: 1-16 (PS2 8, Xbox 12)
DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PRICE: \$89.95 PC, \$99.95 PS2, Xbox
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Great visuals, plenty of racing, good arcade progression.

MINUS: Poor tutorial.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	85	92

OVERALL

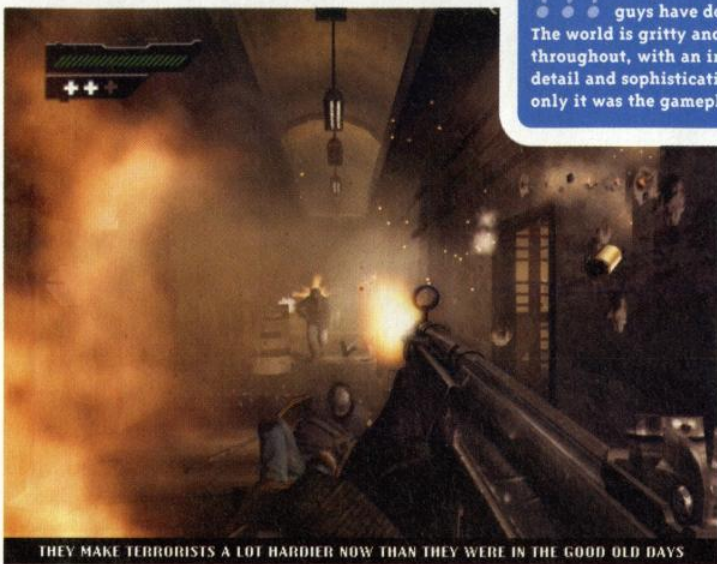
90

A gutsy racer has just gotten gutsier.





WHAT LIGHT THRU YONDER WINDOW BREAKS BLAH BLAH BLAH



THEY MAKE TERRORISTS A LOT HARDIER NOW THAN THEY WERE IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS

!!! While its gameplay may be disappointing, Black's art guys have done fantastic work. The world is gritty and dilapidated throughout, with an impressive level of detail and sophistication in lighting. If only it was the gameplay they promised!

Black

CAM SHEA and DANIEL WILKS aren't bitter or anything...

Cam: After being wowed by Black at E3 last year, then again in our hands on with it a month or so ago, the final product (which we've now finished) comes as something of a shock. A hugely disappointing shock. From the moment it was announced, the premise of Black was "Gun Porn". Who cares about the guy doing the shooting? Criterion said that this game would place the guns at center stage, with gameplay inspired by high octane action films - arcadey and insanely gratifying. Well, no more. The final version of the game strips out the features we loved, instead focusing on a more "realistic" presentation, and the utterly pedestrian storyline puts the emphasis back on the knob holding the gun.

IF CHINS COULD KILL

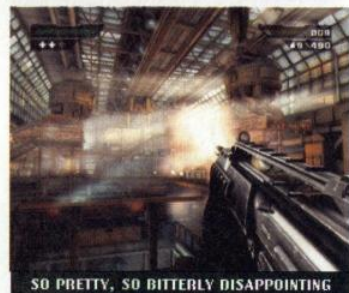
Daniel: Don't you mean the chin holding the gun? Every one of the interminably stupid cutscenes

in which people talk in gravely voices seems to focus on the chin and nothing else. I want to say something pithy like "Black is the colour of my disappointment" but that doesn't quite cover the way I feel. Criterion made me into a liar. I played the early code and loved it. I raved about it in the magazine. This is not that game. Not by a long shot.

Cam: Yeah, it's like they got an arrogance injection or something midway through development and forgot what they do best. "No, we're not about insanely fun arcadey games" they pronounced, "we're a serious company, and to prove it we're going to make a seriously boring game". So say goodbye to kill stats racking up on screen as you play, and say hello to insufferable cutscenes that you can't skip. Now that's game design. In fact, the best part of the game happens in the first ten seconds when you pick up the shottie and blast the first door down. From

that moment on, it's lukewarm.

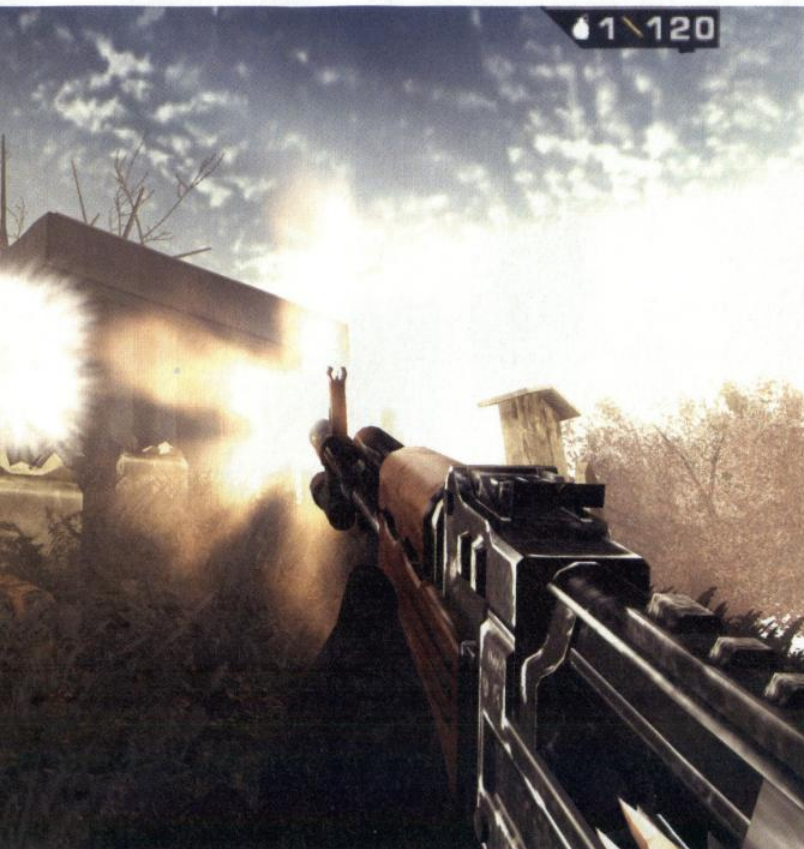
Daniel: It seems a little strange to bag a game for not being as good as the preview code, it's usually the other way around but that is the exact case here. The early code we played was essentially Burnout with guns. You racked up kill combos and other assorted gun related silliness against hordes of dumb but oh so killable goons. The final product is almost the polar opposite. The action seems to have been slowed down and all of the arcadey elements are gone. Instead of racking up head shots, long range kills, multi-kills and the like to unlock bonus content, now players have to track down some incomprehensibly stupid stuff like blackmail material. Why the hell would the government be keeping blackmail material against the main character on the wall of an abandoned farmhouse in some mythical Eastern European country instead of in, say, the Pentagon? It



SO PRETTY, SO BITTERLY DISAPPOINTING

seems to be one of the ways they've gone from arcade to faux realism without understanding the concept of realism in the first place. I'm pretty sure that most people (and I'm referring to enemies here) don't require two or three dozen bullets to smack into them before they decide to die. Not having been shot though I can't say that for sure.

Cam: There are enemies that I've ploughed an entire 80 round clip into and they're still standing. But here's the rub - this bullet-hardness is their only attribute for the most part. These are not enemies that are intelligent. Sure, they'll move around a lot making them harder to hit, but they don't necessarily move from cover to cover, just from waypoint to



THIS SCREEN REMINDS US OF WHAT BLACK COULD HAVE BEEN



NOT PICTURED: UGLY WHITE SEAMS TO SHOW WHERE OBJECTS AND ENVIRONMENTS BREAK



waypoint. There are guys who will respond to a grenade being thrown by crouching behind their shields – facing AWAY from the grenade. The enemies have clearly been designed with the original intent of the game in mind – to be cannon fodder, then made much harder to kill when Criterion decided to take the game in another direction. What we're left with is just plain average – not just the AI, but seeing the same animations over and over again as you trudge through wave after wave of spawning enemies. If the enemies were easier to kill, this wouldn't be so bad as the pace of the game would be considerably lifted, but as it stands Criterion have taken what would have been a short (but fun) game and stretched it out as much as they can.

Daniel: The level design echoes this in a number of areas too; fight your way through a factory, warehouse, abandoned asylum, etc, leave, follow passage, come back out into the same room full of new guards, do it again. Or missions where guards will continuously respawn until you destroy the magic widget that ends the level. Cheap.

The best part of the game happens in the first ten seconds when you pick up the shottie

CHUNKIFIED

Cam: Then there's the much vaunted destructibility of the environments. Sure, in the asylum level every column might be made from chunky Matrixonite, meaning that they can be chunked off down to the gnarled metal underneath, but in most cases your only interaction with a column/wall is to leave a sprite bullet mark on it (sometimes even off the edge of it). How to tell which is which? Simply look for the telltale white seams – if there are seams on a wall/column/gravestone, you can destroy it, if not, bad luck. It's pretty arbitrary but there you have it. All glass in the gameworld can be shattered too, and I can't deny that there were moments of pure action movie bliss when all the destructible elements came together – running along a walkway with enemy machine gun fire trailing just behind, windows shattering as you try to get to cover, or shooting it out in

a dilapidated warehouse, chunks flying off columns, dust heavy in the air, murky light filtering in from skylights above. In fact, it's the moments where the game clicks – combined with superb visual design throughout – that make you realise just how much better Black could have been.

Daniel: Those moments make the game all the more disappointing in the long run. You see what could have been but then you get shot in the back by a guy that spawned in the room you just cleared, you empty a clip into him, he falls, starts to get up, is invulnerable for a few seconds then you drop him with another clip. The game does look fantastic but it's like shiny wrapping paper on a Christmas present that turns out to be your dead grandfather's monogrammed handkerchiefs – it's initially appealing but when you get past the surface you remember what could have been and get a little sad. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: FPS

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Criterion

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$89.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: Now

HYPER VERDICT:

PLUS: Fantastic visual design creates a gritty world.

MINUS: Pedestrian gameplay in a genre with plenty of competition.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	84	70

OVERALL

74

There's some definite choke-ase from Criterion with this one...



THE ONLY RECOGNISABLY MALE CHARACTER



THESE ARE GUYS, REALLY

!!! Shadow Hearts: Covenant has a much better real time combat system as well as a gay, masked wrestling vampire superhero.



NOT A GUY

Magna Carta

DANIEL WILKS *thinks culottes are the devil's work*

I sometimes rag on Final Fantasy (a series I am very fond of) for having a cast of whiny, angst ridden girly men. I take all of that back. Seen in a vacuum, the men of Final Fantasy may look like Boy George but when put up against the characters from Magna Carta they look as macho as Mr T, Vin Diesel and Chuck Norris fighting dinosaurs, robots, Nazis and nazi robot dinosaurs, and from experience I can tell you that's pretty damn macho. Saying that the male characters from Magna Carta have embraced their feminine side is like saying that Insane Clown Posse is only a slightly crap band and that their fans, the Juggalos only make me chuckle a little bit. All three are gross understatements, two of which have been calculated to get me some amusingly misspelled hate mail. The facts about ICP and Juggalos need no further explanation but lets take a look at Calintz, the main character of Magna Carta. He has breasts. He wears an off the shoulder outfit. He has a spray of feminine hair. His pleated culottes (and they

can be described as nothing else) are cut out at the child bearing hip to show a maximum of skin, kind of like a set of arseless chaps gone wrong. If it weren't for his deep voice you'd be convinced the character was female. All of the male characters are like this.

WILKS' TRUE SEXUALITY
Why harp on about the girly men? Am I showing off my true sexuality? Perhaps, though doubtful. The look of the characters is one of the only truly memorable features of Magna Carta, yet another Japanese RPG with a great story, some cute monster design and pretty awful mechanics. Set in the midst of a war between two rival races, players take control of a team of mercenaries, ostensibly working for the good guys who are sidetracked from their mission when they attempt to help an amnesiac girl with powerful healing abilities regain her memories. Whereas the plot is good, the mechanics of the game leave a lot to be desired.

Combat is played out in turn based real time somewhat akin to Shadow Hearts. Players need to hit a certain



sequence of buttons with the correct timing to pull off an attack. As there are only two combinations per style of attack it's pretty easy to master combat, making it a chore and by no means fun. All magic works in the same manner, giving no real change in play depending on the character being used at the time. Thankfully there are no random battles to be caught in - instead you see the enemy it's impossible to avoid before you are forced to fight it.

Magna Carta doesn't really do anything wrong - it just fails to do most things right. If you want a good story and don't care too much about the mechanic go right ahead, otherwise you may want to wait for Dragon Quest VIII. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: RPG
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: 505
PUBLISHER: Red Ant
PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: PG
AVAILABLE: Now

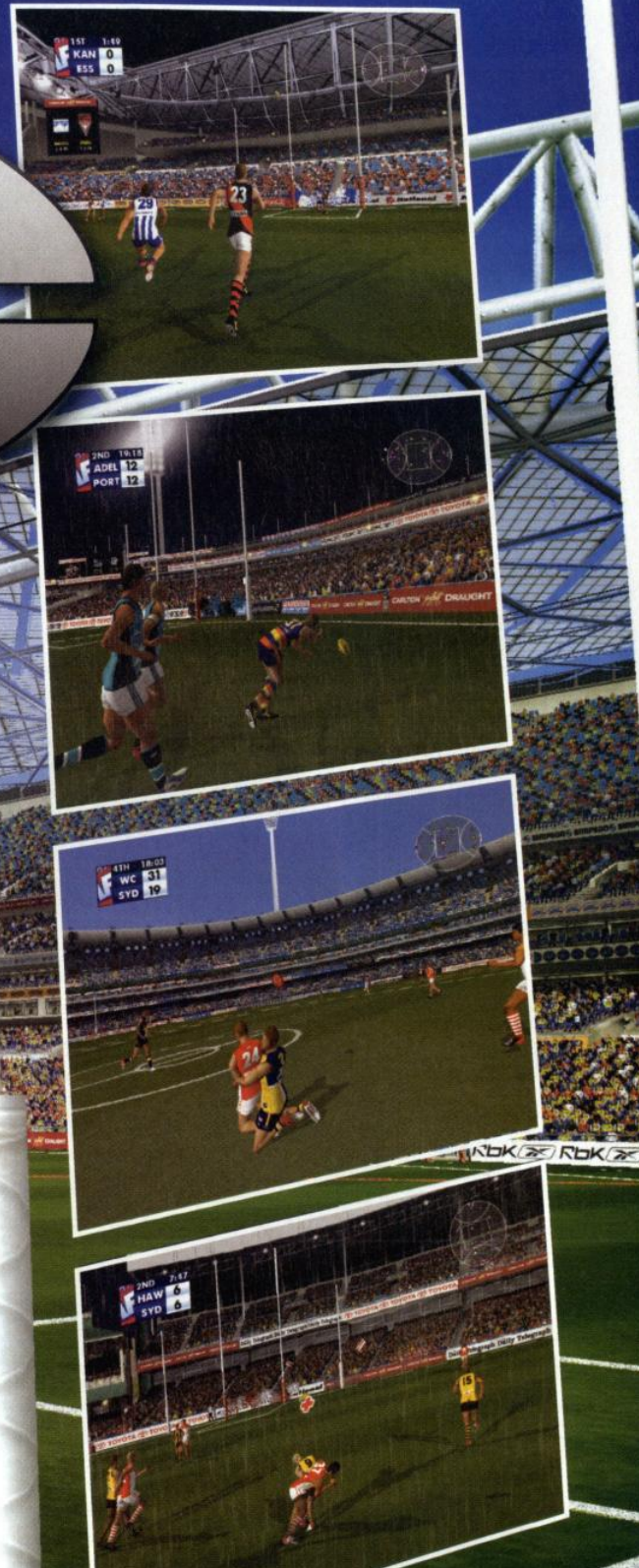
HYPER VERDICT:
PLUS: Good story, monster design, girliest girly men ever.
MINUS: Girliest girly men ever, dull mechanics, worst title track ever.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
71	74	66
OVERALL		
64		
<i>Good story, bad mechanics.</i>		



AFL

PREMIERSHIP



- Xbox Exclusive: Updated with the stats from the 2005 AFL Premiership season.
- Challenge your friends at home or on Xbox Live for premiership glory.
- A completely new game engine allows for more realistic and accurate player models, fantastic stadium environments and all the bonecrunching action of the real thing.
- Sensational Career Mode which includes player trading, national AFL draft & player career development.

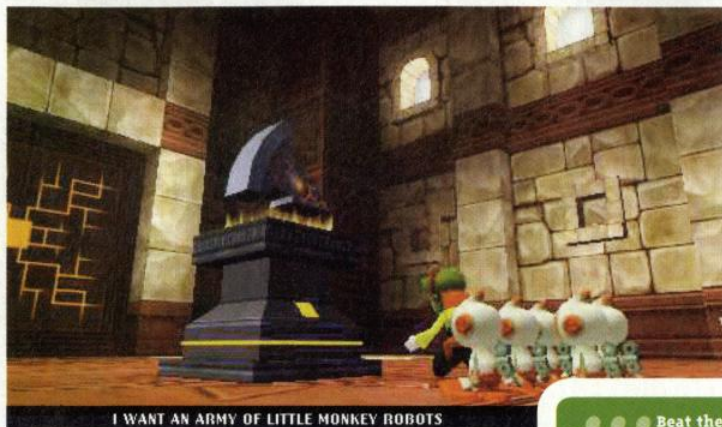
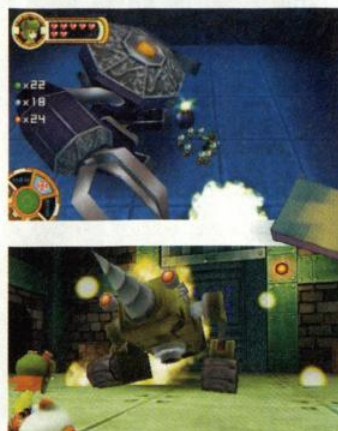


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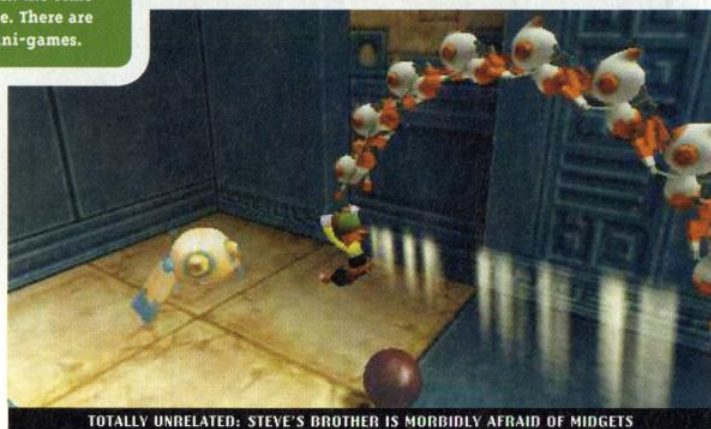
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I WANT AN ARMY OF LITTLE MONKEY ROBOTS

A ROBOT WITH REAL BALLS. SIGH

!!! Beat the Story mode and you'll unlock the Time Attack mode. There are also a selection of mini-games.



TOTALLY UNRELATED: STEVE'S BROTHER IS MORBIDLY AFRAID OF MIDGETS

Tokobot

▶▶ How's this for a cool premise. You're a young boy named Bolt who has learnt to harness the powers of the Karakuri - tiny robots with Voltron-esque combination moves. You're charged with using them to explore the ancient ruins of an old and technologically sophisticated dead civilisation. Along the way you'll acquire new abilities and come up against foes that want the technology for themselves. Okay, so it's not wildly original, but you heard the part about the team of tiny robots right? Well that's what sets Tokobot apart from the myriad other platform games on the market.

MR ROBOTO

Everywhere you go you're followed by eight (at first - you gain more Tokobot acolytes as you progress) of the little critters and you must switch formations on the fly and utilise their various abilities to make your way through the world. There are three basic formations, each of which has puzzle solving and combat capabilities. Most of the moves are accomplished by jointing, which fixes the Karakuri in their formation. When they're trailing behind you, for instance, jointing allows you to whip them forwards in a robot chain - either to take out enemies or to latch onto magnetic blocks, allowing you to climb up them to a platform above. Jointing when the

Tokobots are spread out to either side of you, on the other hand, lets you do a whirlwind attack by spinning around. This also doubles as a way to glide from platform to platform. As you progress you'll also learn new Karakuri Combinations - team up moves that require parts (the main collectables in the game) to use. These can be anything from the Samurai Hover form, where all the Karakuri combine to form a katana swinging robot, giving you a little extra oomph in battle (in theory), to a crane form (for solving crate-related puzzles), train form (for what amounts to mine cart rides) and rock throwing form (to clear the path ahead). Most of the Combinations can only be used in specific locations, however, so don't expect to be able to utilise them in interesting ways.

Tokobot does a few things well. You learn new moves at a steady rate, so you'll always feel like a new Combination move is just around the corner. The Karakuri animations are also great - watching them bounce back in line after whacking them into a wall for one helps give the game some personality. The same can't be said for the rest of Tokobot, however. The environments are thoroughly dull - lots of poorly textured rock platforms and basic geometry. The graphics engine looks for all the world like it's been ported from a

first gen PS2 platformer, while the camera system harks back to the generation before that. While you can snap the camera behind you with the L trigger, you'll often be fighting to see where you are in relation to enemies and even bosses. Compounding the camera is the imprecision of the analogue nub, meaning that you're going to be struggling to line up your Tokobots in the middle of boss battles or to get across swinging sequences that require you to be dead straight. I know it's a massive cliché for reviews of 3D platformers to whinge about the camera, but we'll stop writing it when developers start fixing it.

Despite the potential of roving ancient ruins with an army of robot sidekicks, Tokobot ends up being a bit of a nothing game, lacking both engaging puzzles and enemies. It's not bad, but by the same token it's hard to recommend.

Cam Shea

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP

DETAILS:
CATEGORY: Platformer
PLAYERS: 1
DEVELOPER: Teemo
PUBLISHER: Take 2
PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS 70 SOUND 70 GAMEPLAY 72

OVERALL
71



!!! Wear headphones: The soundtrack has some great jazz and funk.

Exit

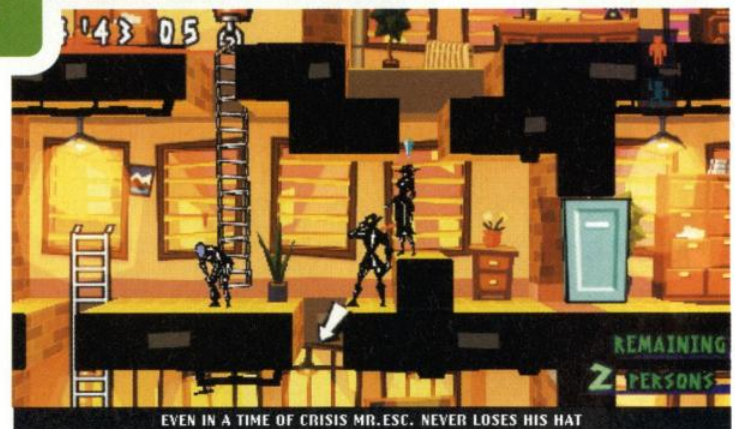
There's a lot to love about Exit: the cartoony presentation, the soundtrack, the cutscenes, the clever puzzles and mechanics. There's also a lot to hate about Exit: the fact that an animation has to completely cycle before the next one can begin, the fact that there is only one solution, the trial and error approach that a number of levels require. I'll start at what is traditionally the end of a review and say that good triumphs over evil (or frustration in this case) but sometimes it's a close call.

PURE PUZZLE

The goal of Exit is to help people escape from disaster areas. To this end players take the role of the appropriately named Mr. ESC. He's

a professional escapologist. In the west, escapologists get chained up, buried alive and somehow make it out in one piece. No so in Japan. Mr. ESC makes his living by helping people escape from disaster areas. Each of the 100 levels sees the hero making his way through burning hotels, treacherous icy landscapes and the like to rescue a number of trapped people. When first seeing a level you can be forgiven for thinking that Exit is a platformer as each area is made up of a number of precarious jumps, hazards to avoid and the like but the gameplay is pure puzzle.

Using the d-pad, Mr. ESC can move around the level with the thumbstick moving a pointer that can be used to give basic directions to helpers or scroll the area to see where to go



next. Littered throughout the levels are a number of single use items such as fire extinguishers, rope ladders and keys necessary to clear a path to the exit. As each person can only carry one item at a time, players must use Mr. ESC and all of the people rescued to solve the puzzles. Hazards are instantly fatal so you can expect to try the levels over and over again, either because you've used an item out of sequence and left yourself with no more options, or, far more frequently, that the animations cycling have forced you to run into a fire or fall into a pit before the jump animation can begin.

The level of frustration is high, but the level of satisfaction gained by finishing a level within the time limit is also very high. Exit isn't exactly a killer puzzle app for the PSP but the fantastic presentation combined with the huge level count should keep you hooked for a good long time.

Daniel Wilks

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Puzzle

PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Taito

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

PRICE: \$79.95

RATING: G

AVAILABLE: March 30

VISUALS 88 SOUND 85 GAMEPLAY 83

OVERALL

81



!!! Here's a game that needs a sequel but please for the love of god add a dedicated block button



Key of Heaven

▶▶ The lack of many RPGs on the PSP perplexes us in Hyper land. You'd think that a handheld system (and a Japanese system at that) would be swimming in RPG goodness, but such is not the case. So far to our count there are only four locally, three of those, including Key of Heaven fitting more into the action mould than a true RPG style. Queries aside, if you're looking for a martial arts themed action RPG with good presentation and strange voice acting then look no further – not only because it is the only martial arts themed action RPG with good

presentation and strange voice acting on the PSP, it's also pretty good to boot.

EAT UP MARTHA

The story begins with our hero, Shinbu, saving a young girl Sui Lin from a band of thugs. Discovering she is the soul survivor of the clan that Shinbu was kicked out of for some rather BS reason revolving around being told by his master to check out some sacred statue then expelling him for actually doing it, Shinbu decides to help her. From then on it becomes a long and rather confusing story



about swords that may be keys that unlock something and an evil clan lord stealing them to unlock the thing that is presumably pretty powerful so something you'd rather not have in his hands. What this means is that Shinbu has to traverse the world with little help from his map and beat up a lot of people, occasionally stopping to talk to every single person in the area to find the right generic looking individual to trigger the next event. Although the story serves as a fine excuse for the action, the actual implementation of the questing leaves a lot to be desired. The comment above about having to talk to every single person in the town to cue the next event isn't a single incidence – in the first three or four hours of the game there are at least three incidences where the next event is triggered by talking to a guard who is the spitting image of every other guard in the area and is not even identified with a special name or distance from the

other guards. Another quest has you returning to a city to look for a guy you may not have met yet only to find out he has gone somewhere else when you read a sign standing in the background of where he was when you may have first met him. It's frustrating to say the least.

BEST OF TIMES, BLURST OF TIMES

Action RPGs live and die from the strength of their fighting engine. Key of Heaven somehow manages to do both. The engine is simultaneously one of the best, most flashy and most fun combat experiences in an action RPG and the single worst. Instead of the usual gear grind you see in RPGs where the player quests to get a succession of better gear, Key of Heaven instead utilises a huge skill system. Shinbu is proficient in Bugei (martial arts) and frequently enemies will drop Bugei scrolls, adding more strikes to his repertoire. In order to use Bugei scrolls, Shinbi must have access to





Action RPGs live and die from the strength of their fighting engine. Key of Heaven somehow manages to do both.

the required Kenpu, tiles that fill the slots on the scrolls making them usable. There are dozens of Bugei and Kenpu to be found in the game making collecting them all not only useful in combating enemies but also extremely addictive as you want to see the next glorious animation. All Bugei and Kenpu are based around elements making them strong against some elements and weak against others. Aside from the normal Bugei, there are also numerous "Freestyle" Bugei to be found throughout the game that allow players to create their own custom combos. By creating elemental chains that feed on each other (each attack being followed

by an element that trumps it) players can create devastatingly powerful, not to mention flashy looking combos. There are a few multiplayer combat modes but we have been unable to test them.

While the swordplay may look fantastic, the defensive system is equally terrible. There is only one button for sword fighting, the circle button, so you'll find yourself mashing it a fair bit. Nothing wrong with that; since the birth of the genre mashing has been par for the course, but unfortunately the block button is the exact same button. Mashing attacks and holding it in blocks. In theory this works but in practice it is terrible. When you

>> **CROUCHING TIGER GORMLESS DRAGON** Key of Heaven is a great looking game. The character design is very good (special attention seems to have been paid to the female character models) and the swordplay animations are spectacular. The voice acting and sound is also good... if you can forgive the fact that Japanese words are frequently pronounced wildly differently each time they're said. Shinbu, whilst looking good is one of the most gormless characters you will ever come across in an RPG. Not only is he a step behind the player in terms of realising what's going on, he seems to be about a dozen steps behind the characters in the game. Can someone that gormless truly be the saviour of the world?



AS ROY & HG WOULD SAY, "HELLO BOYS"

press the button the first time (to hold it in), Shinbu will attack, opening him up for three or four attacks before the block will kick in and even then it's very easy for an enemy to break your guard or hit you from behind, causing you more damage than if you were to simply press on with your attack. If you have the patience to put up with the flaws in the questing and combat system there's a good 15-20 hours of fun to be had — hopefully enough time for a better action RPG to be released locally.

Daniel Wilks



AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action RPG

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: Climax Entertainment

PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$79.95

RATING: M15+

AVAILABLE: 23rd March

VISUALS 86 **SOUND** 81 **GAMEPLAY** 75

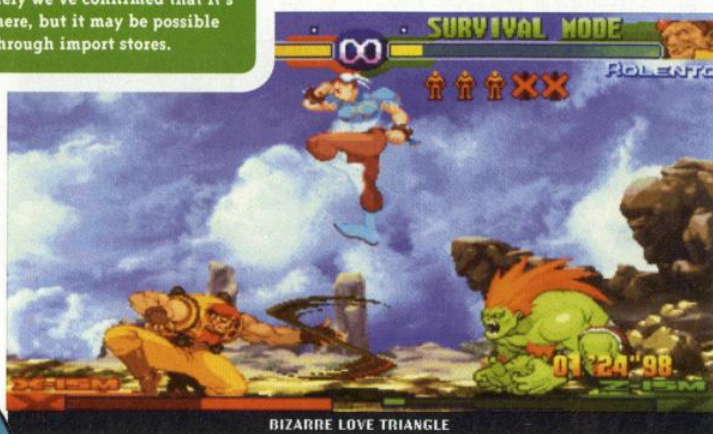
OVERALL

72



!!! The PSP D-pad may not be great for Streeties but all is not lost. People who pre-ordered the game in Japan got a free attachment that can be stuck to the D-pad, making movements feel more intuitive. Unfortunately we've confirmed that it's not going to be available here, but it may be possible to get your hands on one through import stores.

Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max



▶▶ The PSP isn't exactly swimming in great fighting games at the moment, so hopes have been high for Capcom's latest handheld rendition of one of the great Street Fighter releases — Alpha 3. It may be an old game, but it still plays beautifully.

WHAT ABOUT J-ISM?

Perhaps the most notable mechanic in Alpha 3 is the "isms" system, where you choose between A, X and V isms before each fight. At a basic level this determines your style of super — A-ism has a three level super bar and each character has several super combos, X-ism is a mode that harks back to Super Street Fighter II with a single super bar, and V-ism lets you perform custom combos, heightening your character's speed and combo abilities for a short period of time. There are also other differences between isms, with the super bar building at different speeds, attack and defence level tweaks, different strength guard meters, and the availability of varying technical abilities such as ground recovery, taunts, air blocks and alpha counters.

With 37 characters available right from the start this is a massive lineup, with all the old favourites returning, plus some new faces such as Yun, Maki and Eagle from Capcom Vs SNK 2 and Ingrid from Capcom Fighting Evolution.

The best part though is the extra attention Capcom have given to modes in the game. Well, perhaps I should say the extra attention they gave to modes for the stellar PSone Alpha 3 release (back in 99), which they have now resurrected for the PSP game. Chief among these is the World Tour mode, which is as close to a career mode as this game gets. You choose your character, then take him or her around the world, competing in fights with different rules and settings — you may fight two characters at once or can only do damage through super moves. Along the way you level up and earn 'ism pluses' that you can assign to your character. These can be anything from reduced block damage to a constantly increasing super bar. It's a cool mode and a good way to make playing on your own more interesting. Other modes include Arcade, Survival, Dramatic Battle (go two on one), Reverse Dramatic Battle (face off against two opponents), Training and Final Battle (go straight to Bison, do not pass go). Most of these return from the PSone game, which is fair enough as they're worth including.

There are two important introductions though. One is the excellent Variable Battle mode. In it you choose two characters and can tag between them during the fight with your second character leaping

in with a flying kick. Unfortunately it doesn't seem like you can juggle tag which is pretty disappointing, but it's cool nonetheless. The other is Network play, allowing you to face off against a friend wirelessly.

There are a few things that let Alpha 3 down though. The first is that this game hasn't been designed from the ground up for the PSP. The 16:9 presentation is nothing but the old 4:3 stretched. You can actually set the game to 4:3 in the options to see how it's meant to look. It's a hell of a lot crisper, and further confirms our suspicions that this is just an enhanced port of the PSone game. Disappointing. The other problem we have is that the PSP's D-pad is horrible to use — it's too big and too imprecise. Obviously this is outside Capcom's control, but just keep it in mind — Alpha 3 is still awesome fun and essentially arcade perfect, but your control will never be flawless.

Cam Shea

AVAILABLE ON:
GBA / DS / PSP

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Fighting
PLAYERS: 1-8 (round robin)
DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: Capcom
PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: M15-
AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS 86 SOUND 80 GAMEPLAY 91

OVERALL

87



Devil Kings

Don't let this game's title fool you — Devil Kings really isn't anything to do with the venerable Devil May Cry series at all, except for the same Capcom logo at the beginning of the game. Nope, this is Capcom's take on Koei's long-running mass-slaughter-a-thon series, Dynasty Warriors. So you've got the same feudal Asian setting (although this time it's Japan instead of China, with a strong fantasy flavour to it), the same large scale battle against hundreds (and around a score at a time) of bumbling combatants, and the same use of repetitive controls to execute repetitive action en masse.

It is the best looking Feudal Epic Combat game currently on the PS2 however, with solid visuals and some nicely-detailed terrain (although the pop-up's a bit of a pain — you'll have to keep an eye glued to the mini-map to work out where your opponents are coming from). The animation too is top-notch, making it really fun to watch your (effective) one-man army decimate its foes.

So the question is — what new ideas or gameplay does it bring to the mass-battle action table? Nothing, really. You'll have seen all of what this game has to offer after your first mission, and while there are a number of different characters to play as and level-up (each with their own stories to follow-through), replayability seriously suffers with the noticeable lack of varied game modes.

Still, what it does it does well. The real disappointment is that Capcom completely neglected to inject much needed spunk into this terribly stale genre.

And the decision to combine fancy CG sequences with anime sequences in the same cutscenes (of which there are many) is just odd. Really odd.

March Stepnik

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Feudal Action Combat / **PLAYERS:** 1

DEVELOPER: Capcom / **PUBLISHER:** Capcom

PRICE: \$79.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
78	80	65	68



SWAT 4: The Stechkov Syndicate

Irrational Games have become somewhat of a critical darling of late, with a string of great releases including the wonderful Freedom Force, Tribes: Vengeance as well as, of course, SWAT 4. The clue is in the title and those in the know, which we'll assume includes you, will know that SWAT is a popular and generally well liked series from Sierra that just so happens to be the spiritual successor to their Police Quest adventure game line from the 80s. As in SWAT 4, players take the role of squad leader through varying and well detailed scenarios that would make a well mannered cop first on the scene look to his rookie partner and say, "make the call". For example the first mission in the expansion has players at the scene in an arcade parlor where a turf war has erupted between rival gangs and the scene is set for entry — with a whole manner of armed thugs, hostages, guns and drugs on hand. It's quite a complicated scenario, with suspects unwilling to comply with orders to lay down arms often leading to them trying to flee and stash their narcotics, including the now staple down the toilet bowl trick.

Right off the bat the missions, A.I. and complexity of the overall game has been taken to the next level with this expansion, something that will please fans of the series to no end. There are new weapons, improved A.I., amazing sound, and an expanded on-line co-op mode. Also the inclusion of a main story thread linking each mission together has made the single-player experience feel that much more rounded this time around.

Kosta Andreadis

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Tactical Action / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: Irrational / **PUBLISHER:** Vivendi

PRICE: \$49.95 / **RATING:** MA15+ / **AVAILABLE:** March 31

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
84	91	85	83



Trackmania Sunrise Extreme

It may be terribly passé to tack on the word 'extreme' to game titles, fizzy drinks or sporting events, but dammit, we can forgive it simply because Trackmania Sunrise was such a breath of fresh air when it came out on PC, and now it's available for people who missed it the first time around packing extra courses and other content.

But first, the obligatory introduction to what the game's about. In the spirit of David Wildgoose, I wonder whether I can get away with simply quoting from Wilks' review of Sunrise? Of course I can, I'm the new official mascot! Here goes: "Imagine yourself rocketing along at 400 miles an hour, hitting a loop perfectly, zooming out the other side, hitting a speed boost hurling you up a ramp so you can do a quarter pipe gap transfer, feathering the brake to powerslide around a hairpin curve and zooming over the finish line only to discover that you've missed the gold medal time by three tenths of a second. Welcome to Trackmania Sunrise, a PC only racing game that is sheer joy, frustration, elation and aggravation in roughly equal measures." So that's Sunrise. It has five modes covering everything from straight-up time trial racing through to puzzle solving and even platform jumping. It's an interesting mix of styles, and each challenge will often take several (if not dozens) of attempts. This release also contains the eXtreme add-on that was released online a few months ago, which packs new cars, new tracks and new building blocks. To ensure even better value, there's even a link to user created content in the main interface, and trust us, there's plenty there to be going on with from the fanbase.

Vanilla Moe

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing/Puzzle / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: Nadeo / **PUBLISHER:** Digital Jesters

PRICE: \$49.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now

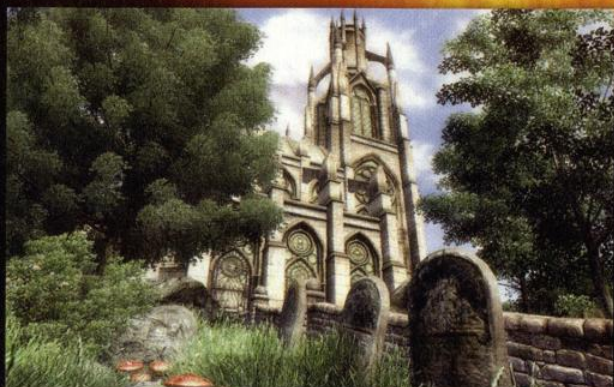
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	83	88	86





Winner, Best RPG of E3

– Game Critics Award, GameSpot, IGN, GameSpy,
Xbox Evolved, Console Gold, Daily Game, Games Domain



“Oblivion is, at this time, the best-looking
game I have ever seen in my life.”

– Xbox.com



“The biggest title for the Xbox 360™,
and the one I’m most looking forward to.”

– GamePro Magazine



“One look at Oblivion will shatter your
conceptions about what is possible in a
video game.”

– GameInformer

The RPG for the Next Generation





The Elder Scrolls IV

OBLIVION™



Being able to play Stairway to Heaven impresses no girl...



Corpse Bride

WARNER BROS, PG

With Tim Burton at the helm of another gothic stop motion feature, it's perhaps fair to have certain expectations going into the *Corpse Bride*. After all, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* is a classic, a film bursting at the seams with character, great songs and amazing visual design. But where *Nightmare* had a clear purpose and charming characters, *Corpse Bride* is a bit aimless, with protagonists that are at best uninteresting, at worst rather dull.

The plot, which was inspired by an old (and decidedly darker) Russian folk tale, has plenty of potential. On the eve of his arranged marriage, the groom to be Victor mistakenly says his vows to a dead bride who was killed and buried in the woods. He's sucked into the afterlife with the rotting remains of the jilted bride who is convinced that he's the man for her. What ensues is an odd love triangle between groom, bride and corpse bride, each of whom is as unsympathetic as the other. Indeed, it's not until the end that you'll feel any empathy for the corpse bride, despite her potential as a character.



While the animation is quite accomplished and voice cast first rate (Johnny Depp as the main protagonist Victor, Emily Watson as his bride to be Victoria, Helena Bonham Carter as the corpse bride, as well as Tracey Ullman, Joanna Lumley and Albert Finney), it's hard to become involved in a film that's so lukewarm in terms of personas, and the selection of musical numbers lack the sparkle of Danny Elfman's previous work on *Nightmare*. It ain't bad, but it's no classic either.

Celia Hobart

MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 7



Nice deerstalker eh?

Wedding Crashers

ROADSHOW, M15+

Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn aren't the most picky of actors, and of late it feels like at least one of them is required by law to make an appearance in every comedy made. Still, the law of averages states that every so often, one of the films they're involved in will be pure gold. This is not one of those times. Mind you, *Wedding Crashers* isn't that bad either. It's a largely enjoyable bit of fluff that rides hard on Owen Wilson's charisma but at two hours long outstays its welcome a little too.

The premise is that Wilson and Vaughn play John and Jeremy, two guys who get their kicks by crashing weddings and leeching onto attractive women any way they can. They're very un-PC party guys who are verging on detestable but thankfully never quite get there. Things get a little more interesting when they go for the ultimate wedding crash and worm their way into the wedding of one of the daughters of the Secretary of the Treasury William Cleary, played by Christopher Walken. Wilson finds himself falling for one of the other daughters Claire, played by Rachel



[up] Yet another soapie star gone good

McAdams, but soon finds out she's engaged, while Vaughn has a fling with the third daughter, played by Isla Fisher, who declares her love for him immediately. Long story short they're invited to spend time with the family at their palatial estate where Vaughn gets his comeuppance in some quite funny sequences, while Wilson battles to win the heart of the girl he loves. Naturally it all goes pear shaped, but you can guess how it ends.

Once the film moves into more straight romantic comedy/gross out comedy territory it becomes a lot more likeable, and a fantastic cameo by Will Ferrell is the icing on the cake.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 5



Night Watch (Nochnoy Dozor)

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, MA 15+

➤➤ *Night Watch* is like "The Little Russian Film That Could" — it tries so hard to impress you that half the time it succeeds. Of course the other half of the time it runs entirely off the rails and leaves the viewer exasperated, confused or sometimes ever so slightly angry. When it all boils down to a final verdict though, the schizophrenic charms of the first, very deliberately crafted Russian blockbuster win out. Set in the real world and the one that takes place in shadows, *Night Watch* is the first in an epic trilogy telling the story of the "others"; evolved humans with special powers who have made the decision to either fight on the side of good or evil. On the so called side of good, the *Night Watch* act as police, guarding against and policing the denizens of the night. The *Day Watch* (the name of the yet to be released second film) watch over the denizens of the day and prevent them from interfering with their lives.



Give it to me!

All setup with no real payoff as is fitting for the first part in a trilogy, *Night Watch* tells the story of the incumbent apocalypse, a woman in the centre of a maelstrom, a messianic boy and a lot of fast editing. It's an exercise of style over substance for the most part but the style is sublime; colour palettes seep into each other giving a strange organic feel to the frames and subtitles playfully dance around the screen, actually playing part of the filmic experience rather than simply a line to be read. It may end with something of a whimper but leaves you hungry for what may come next.

Daniel Wilks

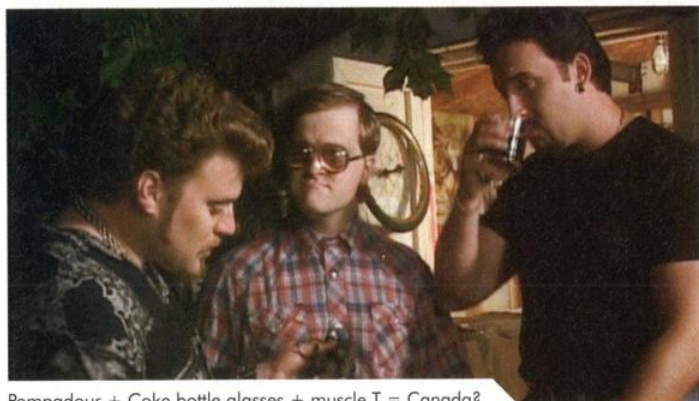
MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: TBA



Tell him I'm not talking to him any more



We license Dark Others ourselves.



Pompadour + Coke bottle glasses + muscle T = Canada?

Trailer Park Boys SEASON 1 & 2 (3DISC SET)

MAGNA PACIFIC, MA 15+

➤➤ An unrelenting dig at the false nature of reality television, *Trailer Park Boys* is a Christopher Guest-ish faux fly on the wall documentary about two petty criminals recently released from prison and their return to regular life in the Sunnyvale trailer park in Nova Scotia.

Aside from teaching us the valuable lesson that there is an abundance of trailer trash in Canada, much like America, *Trailer Park Boys* is a clever and often hilarious slice of TV. Playing on the simple fact that the addition of a camera takes the reality out of any situation, the two main characters, Ricky and Julian spend a good deal of the series shying away from their natural inclinations (such as

selling pot to the local stoners) to impress the people behind the camera. It's all clever and funny stuff but if you go in expecting an American style sitcom you will come away very disappointed as the humour and pacing on display is very Canadian. Somewhat like Australian and to a lesser extent British humour, *Trailer Park Boys* doesn't telegraph the laughs and doesn't expect you to get all of the gags. The pacing is a lot slower than the typical American fare as well, meandering along at its own sedate, trailer park pace. Think of it as a *Canuck Office* or *Bad Cop*, *Bad Cop* and you're on the right track.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: TBA



Death is the only escape from this movie

The Man

ROADSHOW, M 15+

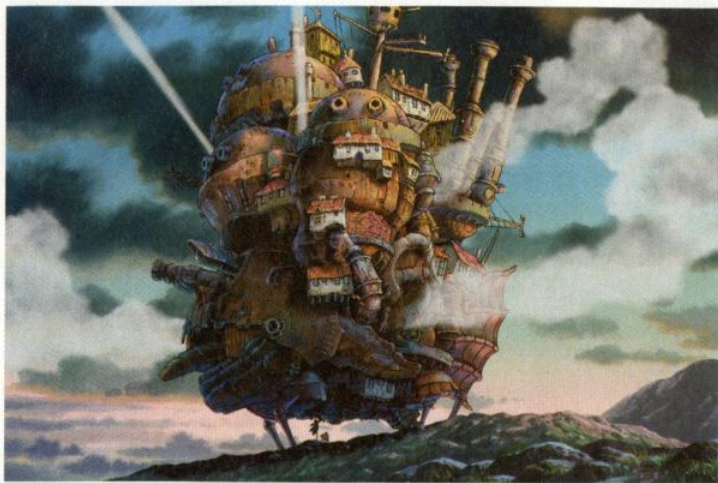
➤➤ At a shade over 75 minutes in length, *The Man* still manages to overstay its welcome. Stop me if you've heard this before — a hardbitten Fed has to team up with a good natured but slightly dim witted civilian to bust up a crime ring. They're the original odd couple. In this iteration of the overused buddy cop formula, the hardbitten Fed is Samuel L. Jackson, running through the gambit of his Sam Jacksonisms such as yelling every line and talking up how much of a badass he is, playing an ATF agent tracking down a gun running operation headed by ex-Bros front man turned bad guy character actor Luke Goss. The good natured civilian is Eugene Levy playing the same character

he's been typecast as since playing Jim's dad in *American Pie*. He talks and talks and talks some more.

They run through the whole course of buddy cop clichés leading to the final conclusion that both lead actors were contractually obliged to appear in the film, were behind on their alimony/mortgage or are simply whores who will do anything for a pay cheque. Don't let the DVD cover lie to you either — the so called hilarious blooper reel is four and a bit minutes of people not being able to remember their lines. Nothing funny there. It's a sad day in the Hyper offices when Eugene Levy can't make us laugh.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 4 / EXTRAS: 4



Light my fire big boy

Howl's Moving Castle (2 DISC SET)

PRODUCTION: STUDIO GHIBLI
CATEGORY: ADVENTURE

It's a little sad to say but you know what to expect from a Miyazaki film — a young girl getting caught up in an adventure much bigger than her, a clash between nature and industry and a coming of age/love story. *Howl's Moving Castle* fits very neatly into this very Ghibli mould. Sophie, a young milliner runs afoul of some unruly soldiers only to be saved by Howl, a dashing wizard, himself being chased by the malevolent blob-like henchmen of the Witch of the Wastes, a former paramour of Howl desperate to have him back. Seeing Sophie as an usurper, the Witch steals her youth, prompting the young (now old) heroine to trek out into the wasteland to try and take her youth back. In typical Ghibli fashion, Sophie meets and befriends a number of strange and charming characters during her trip through the wastes, starting with a barely animated scarecrow she names "Turnip Head" who leads her to the moving castle of the title, where she becomes Howl's live in cook and cleaner.

Although undeniably charming and full of the incredible

imagination for which Miyazaki has become renowned, *Howl's Moving Castle* falls a little flat in terms of storytelling; after meeting with Howl, his bound fire demon Calcifer and starting off on her adventure the story becomes fractured, meandering around everywhere without ever seeming to have too much in the way of narrative drive. The film seems happy to mill around and play on the charm and for the most part the audience will be happy with the decision as well but there are plot points raised that are never acted upon and one brought up, right at the end of the film that was never there before, just so the film can have a convenient denouement. Criticism aside, *Howl's* is still a wonderful piece of animation with some fantastic design. The castle itself is a wonder to behold, a huge contraption part building, part robot and part monster that lumbers across the wastes. The English dub is very good with special mention going to Christian Bale as Howl, the mighty wizard prone to tantrums and sulking.

Daniel Wilks

ANIMATION: 10 / STORY: 7
EXTRAS: 5 / OVERALL: 8



Turmoil of the Flesh indeed...



Requiem from the Darkness VOL 1: TURMOIL OF THE FLESH

PRODUCTION: TOKYO MOVIE SHINSHA
CATEGORY: HORROR

What initially appears to be a rather run of the mill period horror series turns out to be something far more cerebral and interesting. Set in the Edo period, *Requiem* follows Yamaoka Momosuke, the son of a merchant who chooses to forgo his family business to become an author. Although hired to write a book of children's puzzles, Yamaoka's real passion is for tracking down scary stories for the compilation he plans on writing, the *Hyakumonogatari* (One Hundred Stories). As the young author begins to track down the legends he plans to write about he comes into contact with a mysterious group calling itself the Ongyou. These three strangers, Mataichi the monk, Nagamimi, a hulking brute and master of disguise and Ogin, a beautiful puppeteer use their skills to come to the truth of the legends and mete out punishment to the guilty parties.

What initially seems to be a show about a few creepy stories quickly evolves into an interestingly moral conundrum; as the story progresses the Ongyou become both hero and

villain, delivering retribution to those that deserve it but damning the price that need be paid to get there. This is the world in which Yamaoka is trapped — does he ignore what he knows is going on and live with the consequences, does he join in despite his moral qualms or does he risk the wrath of the Ongyou and their mysterious benefactor?

Each 23 minute episode tells another story and uncovers the truth behind the myth. It's entertaining stuff, made more so by the unconventional approach to the animation. Each different character seems to be drawn in a different style; some, such as Yamaoka are drawn naturalistically but others are only rough sketches of humanity, monstrous hulks or caricatures. It's as though the less moral the character is the more inhuman or abstract they become. The lack of any real coherent through story may put some people off but the creepy episodic nature of the series, much like the animation has an off-kilter charm.

Daniel Wilks

ANIMATION: 8 / STORY: 7
EXTRAS: 1 / OVERALL: 8

My Neighbour Totoro

PRODUCTION: STUDIO GHIBLI
CATEGORY: DRAMA

My *Neighbour Totoro* follows the day to day lives of two sisters, Satsuki and Mei, and their father, as they move to a new house in the country to be near their mother in hospital. One day Mei follows a curious creature into a hollowed out tree and literally falls onto the chest of a giant Totoro, or spirit of the woods. This massive and somewhat soporific creature soon becomes an obsession of the girls and a large part of their new life at the farm. *Totoro* is one of the undisputed classics of the Ghibli range, and it's not hard to see why. It may be a family friendly film, but it absolutely oozes a mastery of both the medium and of the nuances that create thoroughly believable characters. Miyazaki once again ably demonstrates why he takes such a hands on approach to animation (he personally draws thousands of frames for every film and touches up/approves EVERY single frame used), as despite its often routine subject matter the animation is superb. It's also wonderfully paired with what could

best be described as a hands-off approach to narrative. What I mean is that this isn't a plot driven film - it's not about what happens so much as who it happens to. In *Totoro* Miyazaki doesn't so much develop the characters as simply give them room to breath. And despite the fantastical nature of some of the events, *Totoro* is such a success because of the ordinary, because of the window we're given into the characters' daily lives. The unbridled excitement of the girls moving into their new house, for instance, is infectious and almost as much fun for the viewer as it is for them. This is just one of several charming scenes - the Totoro joining the girls in the rain at the bus stop, the whirlwind growth of the seeds they plant in the garden and the eight legged cat bus whisking them away. By taking a thoroughly magic realist approach to the subject matter, Miyazaki has created a world that you almost feel you can reach out and touch.

Cam Shea

ANIMATION: 10 / STORY: 8
EXTRAS: 1 / OVERALL: 10



Mei down the Totoro hole

The Place Promised in Our Early Days

PRODUCTION: COMIX WAVE
GENRE: DRAMA

The Place Promised is the first full length feature film from Makoto Shinkai, the one man digital animation studio behind the critically acclaimed *Voices of a Distant Star*. It's a fantastic follow up too, once again featuring world-changing background events that are completely secondary to the characters and their interactions.

In an alternate post WWII world, Japan is divided into separate countries. To the North is US-Japan and to the South is The Union. Hiroki and Takuya, two best friends who live in the North, are obsessed by the mysterious tower that rises kilometers into the sky near the border in the South. It's unknown exactly what the tower does, but the two friends know that they want to go there, so they start building a light aircraft to take them. Completing the picture is Sayuri, a cute classmate who Hiroki is rather smitten by, and with whom they spend a wonderful summer and become firm friends. Hiroki promises to take Sayuri to the tower with



them, but fast forward to three years later and this promise hasn't been fulfilled and things have drastically changed. To say any more would be to spoil the plot, which is at once touching, strange and cool.

Shinkai shows a deft touch for both outstanding cinematography and well imagined characters, both of which serve to effortlessly draw the viewer in. Good thing too as this is a work with a deliberately slow pacing, where it's the small things that are important, not exposition. Aside from the overuse of the words "the place promised", there's little to fault about this release. It may be too slow for some, but we loved every minute.

Celia Hobart

ANIMATION: 8 / STORY: 7
EXTRAS: 3 / OVERALL: 8



Spring Break always starts innocently...



HYPER

150 issues of Gaming Goodness™

150 issues get! Now that Hyper has reached the grand old age of 150, it's time to take a trip back through the highs and lows of each and every issue. Revel in the acerbic hyperbole, rage at the digital travesties forced on the gaming world, recoil at some questionable scoring and rejoice at the triumphs of design that have since gone on to become icons of the industry.

#1
BEST: Street Fighter 2 Turbo (Mega Drive) 96%

"A must have for all Sega owners. You've been waiting for a long time. Claim what is rightfully yours" *Andrew Humphreys*
WORST: Lethal Weapon (SNES) 32% "By far the greatest challenge will be fighting off the intense boredom you will feel exactly 13 seconds into every game (guaranteed!)" *David Wildgoose*

#2 JANUARY 94
BEST: NHL Hockey 94 (Mega Drive) 94%

"If I was stranded on a desert island and could only take three games with me, NHL Hockey 94 would be one of those games" *Andrew Humphreys*

FIFA International Soccer (Mega Drive) 94% "No stuffing around with this one - FIFA International Soccer is practically the perfect Soccer game" *Andrew Humphreys*

WORST: The Incredible Crash Test Dummies (Mega Drive/SNES) 18% "As for gameplay, lets just say you'd have more fun going through life with rubber bands wrapped around your testicles than you would playing this game for even a minute" *Andrew Humphreys*

#3 FEBRUARY 94
BEST: NBA Jam (Mega Drive/SNES) 95%

"Oh, and where the hell is Shaq?" *Andrew Humphreys*
WORST: Last Action Hero (SNES/Mega Drive) 9% "Don't rent, buy, steal or even look at this game - you'll go blind" *Andrew Humphreys*

#4 MARCH 94
BEST: Doom (PC) 96%

"The worlds in Doom look so real it's easier to believe you are really there than playing a computer game" *N/A*
WORST: Dragon's Fury 2 (Mega Drive) 59% "You'll probably have fun playing it... but it's very

much a 'been there, done that' situation" *Russell Hopkinson*

#5 APRIL 94
BEST: Myst (Mac/PC) 96%

"It's massive, it's addictive, it's beautiful and it's real hard" *Stuart Clarke*
Sim City 2000 (Mac/PC) 96% "If you want to be a god, but don't really care for people continually debating your existence (or lack thereof), then the Sim series is for you" *David Wildgoose*

WORST: Critical Path (PC) 35%
 "The entire game took me only 15 minutes to complete" *Grantley Day*

#6 MAY 94
BEST: Ultima 8: Pagan (PC) 95%

"The god of fantasy role playing games, Ultima 8, is finally here" *Grantley Day*

WORST: T2-Judgement Day (SNES/Mega Drive) 28% "Remember our review of Last Action Hero? No? Well get the February issue and read it, only change the name of the game to T2" *Steve Polak*

#7 JUNE 94
BEST: John Madden Football (3DO) 91%

"Both the scrolling of the field and the zoom and tilt instant replay feature are smoother than Stuart after a few beers" *Andrew Humphreys*

WORST: Mickey's Ultimate Challenge (SNES) 23% "They are all basically the same stupid puzzles" *Steve Polak*

#8 JULY 04
BEST: Sam & Max CD ROM (PC) 95%

"A breath of fresh air for the PC game world, allowing everybody to enjoy kid's stuff for adults" *Grantley Day*

WORST: Racing Aces (Mega CD) 17% "Did I mention the playability? No I didn't. That's because there isn't any" *Andrew Humphreys*



"Just like Super Metroid this is another fine example of what games are all about"

Andrew Humphreys

#9 AUGUST 94
BEST: Stunt Race FX (SNES) 92%

"Just like Super Metroid this is another fine example of what games are all about" *Andrew Humphreys*

WORST: Detroit (PC) 45% "Detroit has a multiplayer option so, rather than being bored by yourself, you can bore all your mates instead" *David Wildgoose*

Astro Chase 3D (Mac) 45% "There are 40 levels to struggle through" *Stuart Clarke*

#10 SEPTEMBER 94
BEST: Star Wars: TIE Fighter (PC) 95%

"You will be playing TIE Fighter for a long time" *Jason Hill*

WORST: D-Day (PC) 38% "A war game so biased... fun for only the most insecure of arm-chair strategists" *Chris Wheeler*

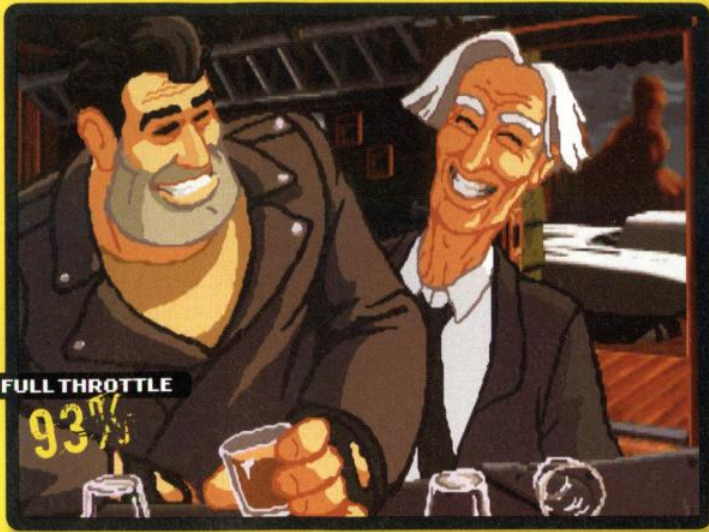
#11 OCTOBER 94
BEST: Earthworm Jim (Mega Drive) 94%

"Who said 16 bit gaming was dead? Whoever it was (and I suspect each and every one of you) is an idiot - an idiot who hasn't played Earthworm Jim" *Andrew Humphreys*
WORST: Pac Attack (SNES) 45% "Please, God, not one more stinking second of this pitiful game!" *Eliot Fish*

#12 NOVEMBER 94
BEST: Doom II: Hell on Earth (PC) 94%

"Doom II is a gift from the heavens - or is that hell?" *Ben Mansill*
Road Rash (3DO) 94% "Road Rash on the 3DO is more than a game. It's an epic production" *Andrew Humphreys*

WORST: The Psychotron (PC) 25% "You have impaled yourself on your joystick rather than play



another minute of this game" Damien Hogan

#13 DECEMBER 94
BEST: System Shock (PC) 95% "Perhaps the only thing that even comes close to being a criticism is that the gameplay is very complicated" Chris Wheeler
WORST: Maniac Sports (PC) 40% "It's frightening to think of people who take this vomit seriously" Ben Mansill

#14 JANUARY 95
BEST: Inferno (PC) 93% "The Best Computer Game Music Ever" Ben Mansill
Relentless: Twinsen's Adventure (PC) 93% "Five steps beyond anything I have seen before in this style of game" Julian Schoffel
WORST: One Must Fall (PC) 45% "Pity it's a piece of junk" Chris Wheeler

#15 FEBRUARY 95
BEST: FIFA International Soccer (3DO) 95% "GOOOOOAAAAALLLLLL!!!" Eliot Fish
WORST: Motocross Championship (32X) 58% "Take Road Rash for the 3DO, take away all the good bits and you're left with Morocross Championship" Andrew Humphreys

#16 MARCH 95
BEST: Heretic (PC) 90% "Look, just buy it, OK? Heretic is the second best 3D game ever. Being marginally less terrifying and having no chainsaw makes it more parent friendly too" Ben Mansill
Samurai Showdown (3DO) 90% "Samurai Shodown is a brilliant game and 3DO owners can chop, slice and carve to their hearts content with this one. Lets hope 3DO gets some more Neo Geo games!

Happy hacking!" Andy Hodgson
Hardball IV (PC) 90% "There are so many options that every aspect of the game is covered. The only thing missing is Dancing Homer" Harry Maragos
WORST: Voyeur (PC) 50% "It's a tragic shame that a game which has generated much interest over it's 'steamy' and controversial content is lame and almost unplayable" Ben Mansill

#17 APRIL 95
BEST: Discworld (PC) 93% "From the outset this game has plenty of quality humour" Mark Lingane
WORST: Virtuoso (PC) 15% "Avoid it like the plague" Julian Schoffel

#18 MAY 95
BEST: Dark Forces (PC) 96% "The amount of fun in this game cannot be charted with conventional mathematics" Chris Wheeler
WORST: The Punisher (Mega Drive) 48% "Two buttons!?? What the *@#\$ do you think they invented the six button controller for?" Russell Hopkinson

#19 JUNE 95
BEST: Myst (3DO) 95% "I still get shivers down my spine every time I hear the atmospheric sound effects" Vaughan Stevens
WORST: Guilty (PC) 48% "Unfortunately a good concept does not a good game make" Chris Wheeler



#20 JULY 95
BEST: Star Trek The Next Generation: A Final Unity (PC) 92%

"To date, this is easily the most successfully executed Star Trek game I have played" Julian Schoffel

WORST: Seal of the Pharaoh (3DO) 5% "Don't even touch this bodgy piece of shit. You may catch something" Russell Hopkinson

#21 AUGUST 95
BEST: Full Throttle (PC) 93% "It's hot, it's hard, it's here" Julian Schoffel

WORST: Kingdom: The Far Reaches (3DO) 5% "This game makes Dragon's Lair look like Harpoon 2!" Julian Schoffel

#22 SEPTEMBER 95
BEST: Dark Forces (Mac) 96% "Mac owners around the world rejoice!"

Eliot Fish
WORST: Cadillacs & Dinosaurs (Mega CD) 10% "Insultingly simple and totally boring" Ben Mansill

#23 OCTOBER 95
BEST: Buried in Time: The Journeyman Project 2 (PC) 95%

"If you don't investigate this one further, you're missing out on one of the games of the year" Eliot Fish
WORST: Bloodwings: Pumpkinhead's Revenge (PC) 25% "For your money, you get a whopping three levels" Ben Mansill

#24 NOVEMBER 95
BEST: Doom (Mac) 96%

"Is Doom on the Mac any good? Does the Pope sit in the woods? Oh well, I bugged that joke up, but you get the idea" Stuart Clarke

WORST: Nick Faldo's Championship Golf Deluxe Edition (PC) 45% "Look up the words appalling, rip-off and shonky and so save me the trouble of writing this review" George Soropos

#25 DECEMBER 95
BEST: FIFA Soccer 96 (PC) 96% "FIFA '96 is Tony Yeboah thundering a volley from 25 yards into the net" David Wildgoose

Crusader: No Remorse (PC) 96% "I've never seen animation of this quality before" Julian Schoffel
WORST: Kileak the Blood (PlayStation) 40% "An action/adventure game that moves at the blistering pace of one centimetre per hour" Julian Bures & Jason Serda

#26 SPECIAL (HINT, CHEAT AND PLAYGUIDE)

#27 JANUARY 96
BEST: Hexen (PC) 94% "If you're a fan you won't need me to tell you to go out and buy it, and if you're not, then who's bottom have you had your head stuck up for the last two



"Doom II is a gift from the heavens – or is that hell?"
Ben Mansill



TOMB RAIDER

95%

years?" George Soropos
WORST: Wetlands (PC) 30%
 "Wetlands is one long gee-whiz cut scene with occasional piss-weak shoot 'em up bits" David Wildgoose

#28 FEBRUARY 96
BEST: Sensible World of Soccer (PC) 95%
 "SWOS is a game that will appeal mainly to football fanatics" David Wildgoose

WORST: Fighter Duel (PC) 15%
 "Call me an old fashioned anally retentive whiner, but my idea of living the fighter pilot fantasy is not repeating the same straight dogfighting routine ad nauseam" Ben Mansill

#29 MARCH 96
BEST: Doom (PlayStation) 96%
 "Lets face it - it's Doom. No more need really be said" Stuart Clarke

FIFA 96 (PlayStation) 96%
 "Everything I said in my review of the PC version of this game still holds true here" David Wildgoose
WORST: Ice & Fire (PC) 55%
 "Who are these idiots always quoted on the packaging of dodgy games anyway?" George Soropos

#30 APRIL 96
BEST: Sid Meier's Civilisation 2 (PC) 96%
 "Civilisation 2 is the veritable Big Gaming Experience" Ben Mansill

FIFA 96 (Saturn) 96%
 "I wonder if I can get away with it again. That is, simply regurgitating slabs of my PC review of FIFA 96 like I did for the Playstation version last month" David Wildgoose

WORST: Brain Dead 13 (PC/Mac/PlayStation/3DO) 10%
 "Perhaps it's (the 13) the collective IQ of the programmers. Although, thinking



WIPEOUT 2097



"Possibly the best racing game ever"

Dan Toose



JUMPING FLASH 2

of it, that does sound a touch generous" David Wildgoose

#31 MAY 96
BEST: Descent II (PC) 94%
 "Descent II packs in so many new features it's almost a new game" George Soropos

Terminator Future Shock (PC) 94%
 "Nothing cheers me up more that a pleasant stroll around a decaying post-apocalyptic nightmare world" George Soropos

WORST: Wayne Gretzky & the NHLPA Allstars (PC) 50%
 "To prefer this over NHL is a physiological impossibility" David Wildgoose

#32 JUNE 96
BEST: Zork Nemesis (PC) 95%
 "While Zork Nemesis is certainly similar to Myst, it is by no means a mere imitation but a groundbreaking adventure release in its own right" Julian Schoffel

WORST: Extreme Pinball (PlayStation) 40%
 "Hey, I've already reviewed this in its PC incarnation, so maybe I can just repeat what I said in that and hope no one notices. It worked for FIFA 96" David Wildgoose

#33 JULY 96
BEST: Tekken II (PlayStation) 95%
 "Gameplay is what makes Tekken II so special" Dan Toose
Duke Nukem 3D (PC) 95%
 "If you're a fan of gore and scantily clad women, all that has been taken out of the final version due to censorship laws" Dan Toose
WORST: Virtual Golf (Saturn) 55%
 "Oh the rapture and joy! Hitting a white ball and chasing it!" Dan Toose

#34 AUGUST 96
BEST: Jumping Flash 2 (PlayStation) 94%
 "Jumping Flash continues unabated in its single handed reinvention of the platform genre" David Wildgoose

WORST: Galaxian 3 (PlayStation) 30%
 "Galaxian 3? What happened to Galaxian 2?" Roger Bolton

#35 SEPTEMBER 96
BEST: Cyberstorm (PC) 91%
 "A great balance between management and straight-out strategy warfare" March Stepnik

WORST: Olympic Summer Games (SNES) 11%
 "Olympic Summer Games makes the old sports compilations on the Atari 2600 look impressive" Andrew Iredale

#36 OCTOBER 96
BEST: Quake (PC) 96%
 "Needless to say, there was no sleep the night we got the full version of Quake" Dan Toose
WORST: Olympic Games (PlayStation) 50%
 "Another not so successful attempt at recreating the Atlanta Olympics, ruining a good sporting event by turning it into a button mashing conker" St.John Graham

#37 NOVEMBER 96
BEST: Formula 1 (PlayStation) 94%
 "From the moment the CD boots up in your Playstation and the slick intro has you performing Mexican waves around the television, F1 will have your soul and you will be its slave" Eliot Fish

WORST: Mega Man 2 (GameBoy) 10%
 "Many of these (Mega Man games) have been pretty good. This one, however, is appalling" David Wildgoose

#38 DECEMBER 96
BEST: Wipeout 2097 (PlayStation) 95%
 "Possibly the best racing game ever" Dan Toose

WORST: Deadly Tide (PC) 25%
 "11:35am. Turn on computer. Go and make coffee... 2:39pm. I have now finished the entire game" David Wildgoose

#39 JANUARY 97
BEST: Tomb Raider (PlayStation) 95%
 "The best action adventure game of the year" Dan Toose
Worldwide Soccer 97 (Saturn) 95%
 "Yes folks, it's another soccer game. Only this time, though, it's not simply a pale imitation of FIFA" David Wildgoose

WORST: Blast Chamber (PlayStation/Saturn) 40%
 "There's a really good idea for a game lurking somewhere deep within the gameplay bowels of Blast Chamber" David Wildgoose

#40 FEBRUARY 97
BEST: FIFA 97 (PlayStation) 95%
 "The most complete and



CARMAGEDDON

comprehensive soccer game that money can buy" Dan Toose

WORST: Destiny (PC) 25%

"Anyone being forced to buy a gift for someone they have no respect for at all could do a lot worse than consider this as an option" George Soropos



#41 MARCH 97

BEST: Super Mario 64 (N64) 95%

"Everything you have heard about this game is true, and then some!" Nino Alergeropolous
WORST: Break Point (Saturn) 20% "It plays like a one-legged, worm-infested, rancid, roadkilled dog" David Wildgoose



#42 APRIL 97

BEST: Turok Dinosaur Hunter (N64) 90%

"Easily the best 1st person shooter on console to date" Dan Toose

Soul Blade (PlayStation) 90%

"A predictable result from the top fighting game developers for the PlayStation" Dan Toose

Realms of the Haunting (PC) 90%

"Good elements of multiple genres all rolled into one..." Dan Toose

WORST: Incredible Hulk - The Pantheon Saga (PlayStation) 25%

"PROGRAMMER STUPIDITY!" David Wildgoose



#43 MAY 97

BEST: Saturn Bomberman (Saturn) 92%

"Don't let its simple appearance fool you, this game rocks hard" Dan Toose

Quake: The Scourge of Armagon (PC) 92% "Levels better than those we all saw in the original Quake" Dan Toose

WORST: Crimewave (Saturn) 52%

"Eidos, the publishers of Tomb Raider haven't don't themselves any favours here" George Soropos



#44 JUNE 97

BEST: Mario Kart 64 (N64) 95%

"If you love gaming then you need Mario Kart 64" David Wildgoose

WORST: Super Puzzle Fighter 2 (PlayStation) 62%

"Talk about stretching out a license!" Dan "Completely wrong about Super Puzzle Fighter 2" Toose



#45 JULY 97

BEST: Micro Machines V3 (Playstation) 91%

"Micro Machines is a hell of a game" David Wildgoose
Dark Reign - The Future of War (PC) 91% "The best real time strategy game ever by a long shot" Dan Toose

WORST: Sky Target (Saturn) 65%

"Sega should concentrate more on original software rather than just porting all of their arcade games" Steve O'Leary



#46 AUGUST 97

BEST: Carmageddon (PC) 90%

"Carmageddon is like the Duke Nukem 3D of racing games" Eliot Fish
Wipeout 2097 (PC) 90% "A fantastic racing game which is probably just a touch better on the PlayStation" Dan Toose

WORST: Namco Museum 4 (PlayStation) 48% "From hopelessly sad to excellent!" Eliot Fish



#47 SEPTEMBER 97

BEST: International Superstar Soccer 64 (N64) 94%

"With third party support like this, Nintendo must be happy" Dan Toose

WORST: Muzzle Velocity (PC) 45%

"Muzzle Velocity is an excellent idea but fails dismally due to poor execution" George Argy



#48 OCTOBER 97

BEST: Dark Reign (PC) 96%

"We misprited the review score of Dark Reign when we did the review" Dan Toose
WORST: War Gods (PC) 72% "If you're a big MK fan, then certainly look into War Gods as it will be right up your alley" Eliot Fish



#49 NOVEMBER 97

BEST: Final Fantasy VII (PlayStation) 95%

"Final Fantasy VII is more akin to being an epic fantasy movie rather than just being 'another Japanese RPG'" Dan Toose

WORST: Birthright (PC) 68%

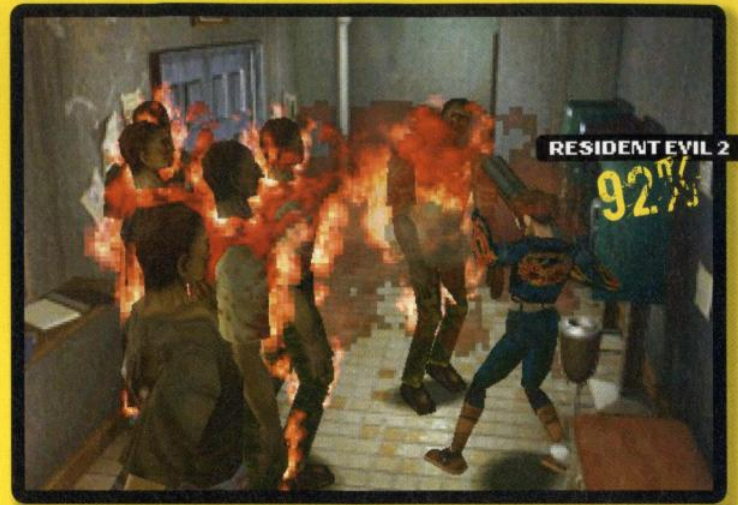
"Wise up Sierra; if we're playing a fantasy game we want to hear flutes and lutes, not some Jimmy Page try-hard strangling his strat" George Argy



#50 DECEMBER 97

BEST: Goldeneye (N64) 95%

"Goldeneye is a game that sets standards for other games to follow" Ren Hoek
Total Annihilation (PC) 95% "No two ways about it, Total Annihilation is one of the PC games of the year" Dan Toose



RESIDENT EVIL 2



"Make no mistake: the evil has returned"

Kevin Cheung

WORST: Broken Sword 2 (PlayStation) 79%

"Quite a few dull bits" Ross Clarksmith

Shadows of the Empire (PC) 79%

"If you're a Star Wars fan and feel like a simple arcade game, then this is a worthy purchase" Eliot Fish
Ken Griffey Baseball (Gameboy) 79% "Gameboy, as much as we love you, take a bow, kiss the bosses spouse and retire with dignity!" March Stepnik



#51 JANUARY 98

BEST: Diddy Kong Racing (N64) 95%

"It's total eye candy with bitchin' gameplay... Yes, it kicks major arsel!" Eliot Fish

WORST: 7th Legion (PC) 52%

"Come on MicroProse... why on earth is your first foray into real time strategy so shonky?" Dan Toose



#52 FEBRUARY 98

BEST: Quake II (PC) 96%

"If you have a 3DFX card, buy this game now. If you don't, buy one THEN buy Quake 2 as well" Dan Toose

WORST: Judge Dredd (PlayStation) 64%

"Judge Dredd fans may stick with it..." Eliot Fish



SOUL BLADE



#53 MARCH 98

BEST: I-War (PC) 92%

"One look at I-War will have a Sci-Fi enthusiast wiping that patch of dribble from their chin" Dan Toose

WORST: Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub Zero (N64) 45%

"The whole game seems to be a case of 'die so you can learn how to avoid the trap'" Dan Toose



#54 APRIL 98

BEST: Tobal 2 (PlayStation) 95%

"This is the best fighting game to come out on any home system, with full 3D movement to boot" Dan Toose & Kevin Cheung

WORST: Descent to Undermountain (PC) 58% "Where did it all go wrong?" Eliot Fish



#55 MAY 98

BEST: Resident Evil 2 (PlayStation) 92%

"Make no mistake: the evil has returned" Kevin Cheung

Mysteries of the Sith (PC) 92% "It doesn't score as high as Jedi Knight because it's an add-on. But it's better!" Eliot Fish

WORST: Vs (PlayStation) 55% "Almost all prior Playstation fighting games are better" Dan Toose



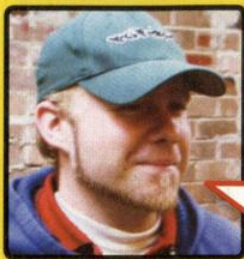
#56 JUNE 98

BEST: Gran Turismo (PlayStation) 92%

"Look out, Rage Racer, there's a new racing God in town and it takes absolutely no prisoners" Kevin Cheung
Forsaken (PC/PlayStation/N64)



SYSTEM SHOCK 2



"It will terrify and captivate you, and you won't want to stop till the very end"

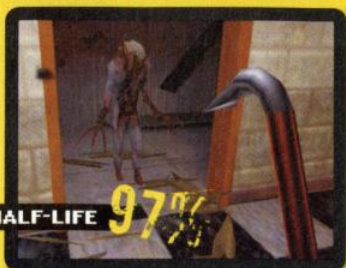
March Stepnik

92% "Takes the 3D shooting game to new levels" Dan Toose
Black Dahlia (PC) **92%** "Dennis Hopper" Ross Clarksmith
WORST: WCW Nitro (PlayStation) **62%** "These sort of games are always more amusing with a friend" Kevin Cheung

#57 JULY 98
BEST: Unreal (PC/Mac) **97%** "Spooge-worthy" Eliot Fish
WORST: Chill (PlayStation) **48%** "There are plenty of better alternatives out there" Kevin Cheung

#58 AUGUST 98
BEST: Descent: Freespace (PC) **92%** "Freespace is the most satisfyingly realistic Space Combat game yet" Eliot Fish
WORST: Supercross '98 (PlayStation) **48%** "Finding merit here is impossible" Dan Toose

#59 SEPTEMBER 98
BEST: Banjo-Kazooie (N64) **96%** "The truth of the matter is that Rare have created the Mario killer" Cam Shea
WORST: Frenzy! (PlayStation) **47%** "Terminally pointless" Eliot Fish



HALF-LIFE

#60 OCTOBER 98
BEST: Motocross Madness (PC) **92%** "Motocross Madness is fully configurable to your own kooky tastes" Cam Shea
WORST: Buggy (PC) **44%** "Horrible - utterly horrible! - controls" David Wildgoose

#61 NOVEMBER 98
BEST: Grand Prix Legends (PC) **92%** "GPL is one of the best racing simulations ever" Jackson Gothe-Snape
Colin McRae Rally (PC) **92%** "A PC driving game experience for arcade nuts and simmers alike" Eliot Fish
WORST: Hedz (Head Extreme Destruction Zone) (PC) **63%** "A fun few hours of diversion" Jacinta Thomler

#62 DECEMBER 98
BEST: Half-Life (PC) **97%** "From the moment the intro starts, the game is spellbinding. You are Gordon Freeman" Dan Toose
WORST: Deer Hunter 2 (PC) **35%** "Deer Hunter 2 uses a graphics engine that is about as competent as Keith Richards teaching quantum theory. In other words, it's slow, ugly and constantly stuttering" Cam Shea

#63 JANUARY 99
BEST: Turok 2: Seeds of Evil (N64) **92%** "An excellent example of what a sequel should be like" Cam Shea
Fallout 2 (PC) **92%** "My goodness, this just rocks so hard..." Eliot Fish

WORST: Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowling (PC) **60%** "Ten Pin Bowling... as far as I can see, it's a sport so unprofitable that bowling centres are forced to recycle old shoes from the local clown college" Cam Shea
Reah (PC) **60%** "Did you know that Myst is still one of the highest earning games around?" George Soropos
Roland Garros 1998 (PC) **60%** "If you're after a tennis game this month, then there's only one choice - and this isn't it." David Wildgoose

#64 FEBRUARY 99
BEST: Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (N64) **94%** "Zelda is a magical experience with pure class" Kevin Cheung
Falcon 4.0 (PC) **94%** "Worth the amazingly long wait" Thom McIntyre
WORST: Deer Hunt 3D (PC) **15%** "How in Satan's bottom did this ever become a genre?" Eliot Fish

#65 MARCH 99
BEST: Metal Gear Solid (PlayStation) **93%** "On a visual scale, MGS is like nothing the Playstation has ever seen" Kevin Cheung
WORST: South Park 64 (N64) **61%** "Not even the Chewbacca defence can save this one..." Cam Shea

#66 APRIL 99
BEST: Baldur's Gate (PC) **94%** "Finally an AD&D RPG that does the game some justice" Adam Duncan
WORST: Deer Avenger (PC) **25%** "I've had enough dammit!" Cam Shea

#67 MAY 99
BEST: Alpha Centauri (PC) **93%** "It's Sid Meier at his very best" Ross Clarksmith
WORST: Dark Vengeance (PC) **55%** "Basically, it's a cow to control, and you spend the game struggling with the controls more so than your enemies." Cam Shea

#68 JUNE 99
BEST: Civilization: Call to Power (PC) **94%** "Have they succeeded? Hell yes" Dan Toose
Fighter Squadron: Screamin' Demons over Europe (PC) **94%** "Best graphics in its class" Thom McIntyre
WORST: Chameleon Twist 2 (N64) **60%** "The most boring of the countless platform permutations available on the Nintendo 64." Hugh Norton-Smith
Snowboard Kids 2 (N64) **60%**

"Essentially the same game with only a few minor improvements" Hugh Norton-Smith

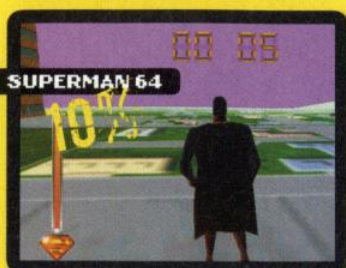
#69 JULY 99
BEST: Everquest (PC) **95%** "The new king of massively multiplayer RPGs" Adam Duncan
WORST: Lode Runner 3D (N64) **55%** "Hideously unoriginal and lacking in several departments" Hugh Norton-Smith
Rampage 2: Universal Tour (N64) **55%** "Rent it. Better yet, have your friend rent it" Hugh Norton-Smith
Beavis and Butthead: Bungوله in One (PC) **55%** "Purile smutty crap" Dan Toose

#70 AUGUST 99
BEST: Homeworld (PC) **94%** "Homeworld looks like it is the strategy game of the year" Dan Toose
WORST: Saga: Rage of Vikings (PC) **49%** "There's a veritable truckload of better games from this genre out there" Adam Duncan

#71 SEPTEMBER 99
BEST: V-Rally 2: Championship Edition (PlayStation) **92%** "Enough options, cars and tracks to have you driving around like a madman for ages" Eliot Fish
Heavy Gear 2 (PC) **92%** "You can't go wrong getting Heavy Gear 2" Adam Duncan
WORST: Superman (N64) **10%** "Run from this game faster than a speeding bullet" Hugh Norton-Smith

#72 OCTOBER 99
BEST: Soul Calibur (Dreamcast) **96%** "In totality, Soul Calibur is proof that the next generation of console gaming is truly upon us" Kevin Cheung
WORST: Neon Genesis Evangelion (N64) **61%** "Sounds more like a cow in heat than a 100-tonne mech" Nick O'Shea

#73 NOVEMBER 99
BEST: System Shock 2 (PC) **97%** "It will terrify and captivate you, and you won't want to stop till the very end" March Stepnik
WORST: Shadowgate 64: Trials



SUPERMAN 64

of the **Four Towers** (N64) **38%**
 "There are no battles, few other characters and even fewer redeeming features" *Adam Roff*

HYPER #74 **DECEMBER 99**
BEST: Final Fantasy VIII (PlayStation) **93%**
 "Characters that make the story so much more captivating than any other game on offer" *Kevin Cheung*
WORST: Jet Rider 3 (PlayStation) **42%** "Recommended as a drinks coaster only" *DMC*

HYPER #75 **JANUARY 2000**
BEST: Donkey Kong 64 (N64) **96%** "It's like a music video clip without tits!" *Arthur Adam*
WORST: Battletanx 2: Global Assault (N64) **51%** "A regressive, sub par and ultimately disappointing sequel" *Hugh Norton-Smith*

HYPER #76 **FEBRUARY 2000**
BEST: Final Fantasy Anthology (PlayStation) **92%** "The more worldly among us will definitely enjoy this title" *Kevin Cheung*
WORST: Paperboy 64 (N64) **56%** "Midway may have thought this would be cool, but it's just a bad mistake all 'round" *Anna Kyn*

HYPER #77 **MARCH 2000**
BEST: Quake III Arena (PC) **95%** "The Quake phenomenon continues..." *Eliot Fish*
WORST: South Park Rally (PlayStation) **49%** "If Crash Team Racing is da bomb, then this is the bombed" *Cam Shea*

HYPER #78 **APRIL 2000**
BEST: The Sims (PC) **94%** "The Sims has turned out to be all Will Wright promised and more. It redefines the word addictive" *Cam Shea*
WORST: Ready 2 Rumble (Game Boy Colour) **50%** "Stay tuned for the Atari Jaguar and Commodore 64 Ready 2 Rumble reviews next issue" *Cam Shea*

HYPER #79 **MAY 2000**
BEST: Battlezone 2 (PC) **92%** "Does the gameplay live up to the gob-smacking visuals?" *Eliot Fish*
WORST: ECW Hardcore Revolution (N64) **55%** "ECW: Hardcore Revolution rears its butt-ugly head" *Arthur Adam*

HYPER #80 **JUNE 2000**
BEST: Dead or Alive 2 (Dreamcast) **92%**
 "Bouncy tits" is the

response you'll get from most cretins when you ask them about **Dead or Alive**" *Kevin Cheung*
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver (Dreamcast) **92%** "Ever wonder what would happen if Shadow Man and Zelda fancied each other at a party, ended up having some unrestrained rumpy-pumpy, then woke up in the morning to regret it?" *Arthur Adam*

Tony Hawk's Skateboarding (N64) **92%** "Has some of the best gameplay you'll ever see on the N64" *Cam Shea*
WORST: Toy Story 2 (Game Boy Colour) **30%** "Groan... not another bloody Game Boy platformer" *Cam Shea*

HYPER #81 **JULY 2000**
BEST: Deus Ex (PC) **97%** "Wow. Just go buy this game. That's all there is to it" *Eliot Fish*
WORST: Resident Evil: Survivor (PlayStation) **39%** "Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear" *Cam Shea*

HYPER #82 **AUGUST 2000**
BEST: Perfect Dark (N64) **97%** "Perfect Dark is easily the N64's best game, and its only weakness is that the N64 can't keep up with it" *Roland Flanagan*
WORST: Speedy Gonzales: Aztec Adventure (Game Boy/Game Boy Colour) **40%** "What a shame that the level designer that they hired was an idiot. Andale, andale!" *Frank Dry*

HYPER #83 **SEPTEMBER 2000**
BEST: Vagrant Story (PlayStation) **95%** "Forget Final Fantasy. Forget Zelda. Vagrant Story is the finest the genre has had to offer in years" *Kevin Cheung*
WORST: Dinosaurs (Gameboy Colour) **40%** "All up, Dinosaur stinks of a rushed movie cash-in which is only going to disappoint fans who are looking to continue the experience on their Game Boy" *Frank Dry*
Spawn (Gameboy Colour) **40%** "For some reason, the way they've drawn him, it looks like he's running around in a corset and bra. Well I guess it wouldn't be funny if you'd just paid \$49.95 for the cartridge" *Frank Dry*

HYPER #84 **OCTOBER 2000**
BEST: Final Fantasy IX (PlayStation) **95%**
 "Final Fantasy IX will be remembered as one of the Playstation's finest hours" *Kevin Cheung*
WORST: Austin Powers:

HYPER #85 **NOVEMBER 2000**
BEST: Baldur's Gate 2: Shadows of Amn (PC) **93%** "Anyone who likes computer RPGs will appreciate the outstanding effort Bioware have put into this awesome game" *Dan Toose*
WORST: F-18 Thunder Strike (Game Boy/Game Boy Colour) **40%** "This was not a good idea. A dogfighting sim on a gameboy?" *Frank Dry*

HYPER #86 **DECEMBER 2000**
BEST: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (PlayStation) **95%** "Rarely is a gaming genre single handedly defined as elegantly as the skateboarding sim was with Tony Hawk" *Cam Shea*
WORST: MTV Skateboarding (PlayStation) **49%** "Break a couple of fingers on each hand with a hammer and spray some mace into your eyes and start playing. Congratulations! You've just experienced the agony and sheer mediocrity of MTV skateboarding" *Cam Shea*

HYPER #87 **JANUARY 2001**
BEST: Escape From Monkey Island (PC) **93%** "When an adventure game requires you to place a prosthetic hand inside a termite circus to solve a puzzle, you know you're going to be in for some good adventuring" *Eliot Fish*



"Rarely is a gaming genre single handedly defined as elegantly as the skateboarding sim was with Tony Hawk"

Cam Shea

Welcome to my Underground Lair (Game Boy Colour) **60%** "The novelty could wear off fairly quickly" *Frank Dry*

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WORST: Silent Scope (Dreamcast) **61%** "The youth of today's obviously fragmented schizophrenic porn-obsessed drug-addled slacker-hacker fabulous-furry-freakout monkey-see monkey-do mentality has meant that this is a control pad only title... Pointless" *Cam Shea*

HYPER #88 **FEBRUARY 2001**
BEST: Shenmue (Dreamcast) **94%**
 "Redefines what we can expect in an adventure game" *Dan Toose*
WORST: X Squad (PS2) **69%**
 "Some nice ideas that have gone to waste" *Eliot Fish*

HYPER #89 **MARCH 2001**
BEST: Banjo Tooie (N64) **92%** "A game that will charm the bright yellow pants off you" *Cam Shea*
Giants: Citizen Kabuto (PC) **92%**
 "Eggs = offspring = Lots of Giants. Sounds good" *Roland Flanagan*
Championship Manager Season 00/01 (PC) **92%** "There are truly thousands of menacing statistics and numbers, that are only really relevant to someone who is at least partly clued up" *Jackson Gothe-Snape*
WORST: Gunman Chronicles (PC) **57%** "After reading this you'll probably never hear of it again" *Gareth Jones*

HYPER #90 **APRIL 2001**
BEST: Severance: Blade of Darkness (PC) **90%** "A good one for graphics sluts, fantasy freaks, and those who like beating creatures to

death with their own leg" Dan Toose
Mario Tennis (GameBoy Colour) **90%** "A glorious example of how such a simple concept can be made so staggeringly addictive and fun, simply through clever design and imagination" *Eliot Fish*
WORST: Driving Emotion Type-S (PS2) **63%** "Expect to spend a hell of a lot of the first couple of hours swearing, whinging, throwing the control pad at the wall in frustration, hitting start and retry over and over again" *Gareth Jones*

#91 MAY 2001
BEST: Onimusha (PS2) **90%** "The best fun the PS2 has offered in ages"

Kevin Cheung
Star Wars: Starfighter (PS2) **90%** "You'll truly be living out your Star Wars fantasies in this one" *Eliot Fish*
Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix (PlayStation) **90%** "Fear Effect 2 is a 'prequel' to Fear Effect, but thankfully there are no Gungans or midichlorians" *George Soropos*
WORST: Simpsons Wrestling (PlayStation) **16%** "To the developers, Big Ape Productions, if you're going to make games like this, for God's sake change your name! The pickings are just a little too easy - YA BIG APES!" *Cam Shea*

#92 JUNE 2001
BEST: Black & White (PC) **93%** "My creature, for instance, will go and find a field full of sheep and then practice throwing them at the nearest cliff" *Justin Hoffman*
WORST: Army Men: Green



Rogue (PS2) **30%** "How do I even begin to describe the sheer vomitousness of this game?" *George Soropos*

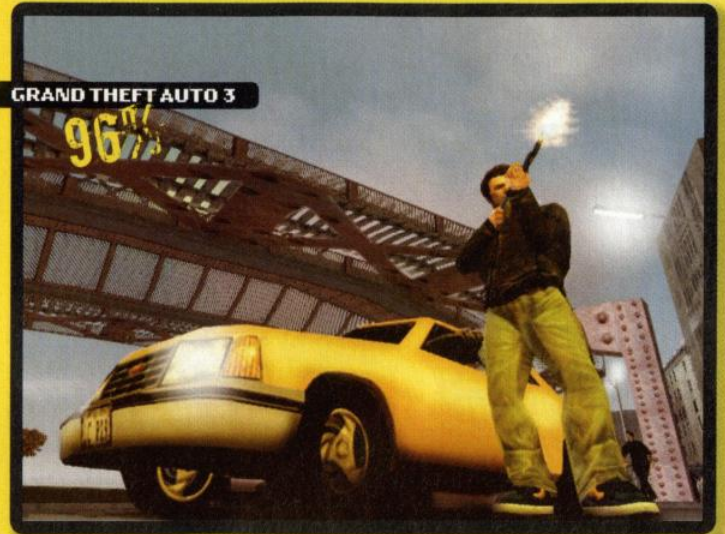
#93 JULY 2001
BEST: Red Faction (PS2) **91%** "We know the GeoMod engine is impressive and lots of fun, but it hasn't changed the way we play"

Eliot Fish
WORST: The Simpsons: Night of the Living Treehouse of Horror (GameBoy Colour) **40%** "It's certainly a whole lot better than The Simpsons Wrestling" *Cam Shea*

#94 AUGUST 2001
BEST: Gran Turismo 3 A-Spec (PS2) **95%** "Arguably the best racing simulation on any platform"

Kevin Cheung
WORST: The Bouncer (PS2) **48%** "The Bouncer is such a fragmented experience that it simply cannot be termed 'playable'" *Kevin Cheung*

#95 SEPTEMBER '01
BEST: The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages/Oracle of Seasons



(GameBoy Colour) **94%**
 "There is simply no hesitation in recommending both these games to any gamer, young or old" *Frank Dry*
WORST: Gangsters 2 (PC) **51%** "Like the real-life face of crime, Gangsters 2 is ugly as sin" *James Cottee*

#96 OCTOBER 2001
BEST: Arcanum (PC) **93%** "Imagine a small, hairy dwarf with a double-barrelled shotgun"

Eliot Fish
WORST: Special Ops: Covert Assault (PlayStation) **65%** "A pretty feeble gaming experience" *Eliot Fish*

#97 NOVEMBER 2001
BEST: Advance Wars (GBA) **92%** "An incredibly deep, challenging and addictive strategy game"

Eliot Fish
WORST: 4x4 Evolution (PS2) **55%** "This is no frills" *Cam Shea*
Jurassic Park III: The DNA Factor (GBA) **55%** "Another movie-license videogame bites the gameplay gherkin" *Eliot Fish*

#98 DECEMBER 2001
BEST: Devil May Cry (PS2) **93%** "Stylish Hard Action"

Bryce McDonough
WORST: Total Soccer (GBA) **49%** "Called 'Operation Always Score', the strategy is as follows, when you get the ball at any place on the field simply run in a straight line towards the goal. As long as you remain running in a straight line the defence will never successfully tackle you, thus giving you an open shot at goal, and yes, this works on all difficulty levels" *Kosta Andreadis*

#99 JANUARY 2002
BEST: Grand Theft Auto 3 (PS2) **96%** "The longer you play GTA3, the more it continues to surprise and delight you with moments of

stunning coolness" *Kevin Cheung*
WORST: Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex (PS2) **68%** "All the characters and settings have a laminated sheen, like the furniture at McDonalds. Any effort to become involved in the game slides right off" *James Cottee*

#100 FEBRUARY '02
BEST: Wipeout Fusion (PS2) **93%** "The future has arrived" *Cam Shea*

Wizardry 8 (PC) **93%** "Everything an RPG lover could want" *Eliot Fish*
Golden Sun (GBA) **93%** "Epic. Grandiose. Expansive. Engrossing" *Bryce McDonough*
WORST: 007: Agent Under Fire (PS2) **60%** "It succeeds as a kind of 'My First Videogame'" *David Wildgoose*

#101 MARCH '02
BEST: Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty (PS2) **96%** "There is no excuse for not owning Metal Gear Solid 2"

Frank Dry
WORST: Evil Twin (PS2) **55%** "Plagued with problems" *James Cottee*

#102 APRIL 2002
BEST: Halo (Xbox) **96%** "The best console shooter ever, by a long shot"

Eliot Fish
WORST: UEFA Champions League 2001/2002 (PS2) **68%** "Too many flaws" *Dan Toose*

#103 MAY 2002
BEST: Deus Ex: The Conspiracy (PS2) **96%** "Solid Snake is yesterday's man. JC Denton is this century's coolest action hero"

David Wildgoose
WORST: Mortal Kombat Advance (GBA) **33%** "You're flogging a dead horse Midway" *Joey Tekken*



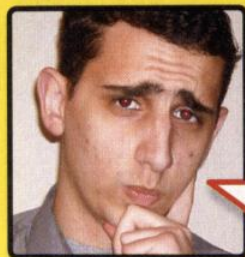
"The best console shooter ever, by a long shot"

Eliot Fish



METROID PRIME

96%



"The most impressive 2D to 3D transition since Zelda on the N64"

Kosta Andreadis



#104 JUNE 2002

BEST: Virtua Fighter 4 (PS2) 94% "Kudos to AM2 for adding genuinely new features this time around" Dan Toose
WORST: War Commander (PC) 60% "Throws gamers in the deep end" Dan Toose



#105 JULY 2002

BEST: Super Smash Bros. Melee (GCN) 93% "Literally bursting with fan-boy love" Stephen Farrelly
WORST: NBA Jam 2002 (GBA) 6% "Pain, misery and frustration. Worst GBA game ever" Cam Shea



#106 AUGUST 2002

BEST: Morrowind (PC) 93% "You will live and breathe this game"

Eliot Fish

WORST: Tactical Ops: Assault on Terror (PC) 25% "A total waste of time" Dan Toose



#107 SEPTEMBER '02

BEST: Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos (PC) 94% "The classic series reborn"

John Dewhurst

WORST: Gremlins: Stripe Vs Gizmo (GBA) 37% "One of the most infuriatingly dull games we've ever played" Cam Shea



#108 OCTOBER 2002

BEST: Resident Evil (GCN) 92% "Too good to miss" Stephen Farrelly
WORST: Gore: Ultimate Soldier (PC) 60% "A paint-by-numbers FPS with blood and guts aplenty" John D



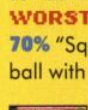
#109 NOVEMBER '02

BEST: Super Mario Sunshine (GCN) 93% "Shiggy's Super Happy Smile Time Fun Factory" Cam Shea
WORST: Crazy Taxi 3: High Rollers (Xbox) 62% "A no effort sequel devoid of new ideas and interesting design" Cam Shea
Alien Vs Predator 2: Primal Hunt (PC) 62% "Game over man, game over" Frank Dry



#110 DECEMBER '02

BEST: Yoshi's Island (GBA) 93% "Best 2D platformer ever? We think so" Cam Shea



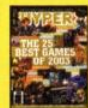
#111 JANUARY 2003

BEST: Kingdom Hearts (PS2) 70% "Square really dropped the ball with this one" Eliot Fish



#111 JANUARY 2003

BEST: GTA: Vice City (PS2) 95% "Another classic" Eliot Fish
WORST: Worms World Party (GBA) 60% "It's not long before the lazy, glitch-ridden nature of the port becomes apparent" Cam Shea



#112 FEBRUARY '03

BEST: The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past/Four Swords (GBA) 93% "The gameplay in Four Swords is an enticing mix of cooperation and greed" Frank Dry

WORST: The Simpsons Skateboarding (PS2) 30% "The only nice thing we can say about The Simpsons Skateboarding is that it's better than The Simpsons Wrestling. And that's like saying



you'd prefer to eat dog shit over human shit" Cam Shea



#113 MARCH 2003

BEST: Metroid Prime (GCN) 96% "The most impressive 2D to 3D transition since Zelda on the N64" Kosta Andreadis

WORST: Earthworm Jim 2 (GBA) 53% "Another 16bit port that has been given the quick and nasty treatment" Cam Shea



#114 APRIL 2003

BEST: Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc (GCN, PS2, Xbox, PC) 90%

"A fast-paced slice of platforming heaven" Eliot Fish
NBA 2K3 (Xbox, PS2, GCN) 90% "The best basketball sim out there" Eric Cabrera

WORST: Dead Or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball (Xbox) 68% "The vicarious pleasure to be had in G-strings and jiggling is only ever fleeting" Cam Shea

Pac-Man World 2 (PS2, Xbox) 68% "The camera is so horrendous that at times you can't see Pac-Man on screen" Eric Cabrera



#115 MAY 2003

BEST: Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance (PC, PS2, Xbox) 94% "Now with added substance!" Eliot Fish

WORST: Dark Angel (PS2, Xbox) 56% "Even when mauled by the effects of a lazy digitisation, Jessica Alba's still pretty damn hot" Daniel Staines



#116 JUNE 2003

BEST: The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (GCN) 97% "Pure magic. Games don't get much better than this" Eliot Fish

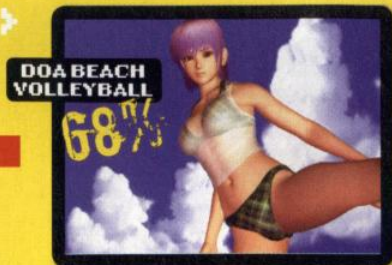
WORST: Dakar 2 (PS2) 50% "If you only play one rally game this year, choose something else" Daniel Wilks



#117 JULY 2003

BEST: GTA: Vice City (PC) 95% "If only they'd worked on that pineapple-up-the-butt character animation" Eliot Fish

WORST: Evolution Worlds (GCN) 57% "Dull turn-based combat that's wrapped up in kiddy crap" Frank Dry



DOA BEACH VOLLEYBALL

68%

#118 AUGUST 2003

BEST: Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising (GBA) 93% "Strategy with all the dull bits taken out" Mr Anonymous

WORST: Crazy Taxi: Catch a Ride (GBA) 40% "The environments are a pixelated mess" Cam Shea



#119 SEPTEMBER '03

BEST: Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution (PS2) 92% "An excellent package"

Malcolm Campbell
WORST: The Incredible Hulk (GBA) 58% "Duller than one of Frank Dry's parties. And that's seriously dull" Cam Shea



#120 OCTOBER 2003

BEST: F-Zero GX (GCN) 89% "There's an intensity from weaving through

that much traffic at such a high speed that simply can't be equalled in any other racing title" Cam Shea
Tron 2.0 (PC) 89% "The first movie tie in game that is actually better than the movie upon which it is based" Daniel Wilks

WORST: Buffy: Wrath of the Darkhul King (GBA) 52% "The single most generic game we've played since 'Mr Generic in Generic Land'" Cam Shea



#121 NOVEMBER '03

BEST: Super Mario Advance 4 (GBA) 92%

"It's Mario baby, in full portable glory" Stephen Farrelly
WORST: The Great Escape (PS2, Xbox, PC) 61% "It's ironic that a game called The Great Escape is so fastidiously linear and devoid of opportunity for player expression" Daniel Staines



#122 DECEMBER '03

BEST: Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge (Xbox) 93%

"Like a boy's own tale brought to vivid life" Daniel Wilks



ZELDA WIND WAKER 97%



TRON 2.0 89%



ROGUE OPS



"They say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions – this is a lie – it is paved with copies of Rogue Ops"

Daniel Wilks

Viewtiful Joe (GCN) 93% "It's as stunningly simple as it is deep, and it's as deviously challenging as it is fun" *Stephen Farrelly*

WORST: The Italian Job: L.A. Heist (PS2, Xbox, GCN) 57% "The blatant product placement and shameless in-game advertising will doubtless set your blood boiling" *Brett Robinson*



#123 JANUARY 2004

BEST: Pro Evolution Soccer 3 (PS2) 93%

"Like tinea in your grandfather's shower, the Pro Evolution Soccer series is infectious" *Jackson Gothe-Snape*

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (PS2) 93% "This is how all 3D action games should be" *Philip Kenan*

WORST: Group S Challenge (Xbox) 62% "Group S Challenge is

a Gran Turismo 3 clone, and not in a 'similar though subtly different' kind of way, but in a 'we're cashing in on your hard work, please don't sue us' kind of way" *Brett Robinson*



#124 FEBRUARY '04

BEST: Deus Ex: Invisible War (PC, Xbox) 93%

"Accidents, unexpected AI behaviour, player creativity... it all results in a game that never plays the same way twice" *Eliot Fish*

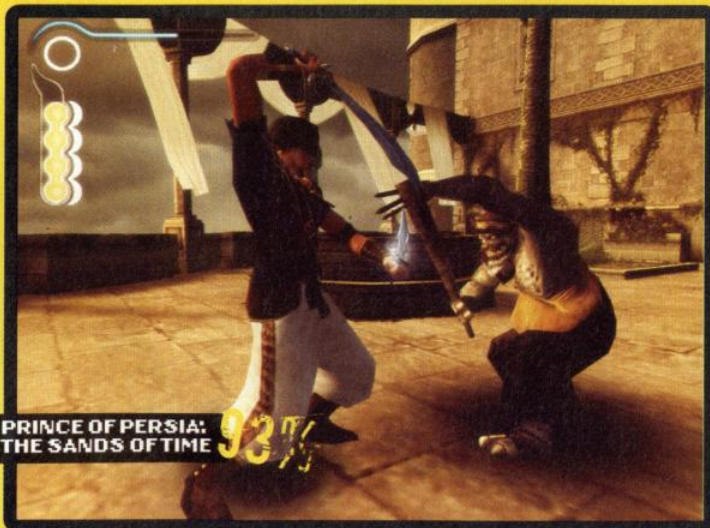
WORST: Roadkill (PS2, Xbox) 49% "Roadkill is a morally bankrupt game with not a sniff of gameplay innovation" *John Dewhurst*



#125 MARCH 2004

BEST: Empires: Dawn of the Modern World (PC) 89%

"Its strategic depth is unparalleled" *Asher Moses*



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

93%

WORST: Spawn: Armageddon (PS2) 33% "A game so bad that should you suffer the misfortunate of playing it, you will invite other people to watch just to confirm that the absolute awfulness isn't some kind of bizarre hallucination" *Daniel Staines*



#126 APRIL 2004

BEST: Fire Emblem (GBA) 92%

"Hyper loves Fire Emblem" *John Dewhurst*

WORST: Kirby Air Ride (GCN) 50% "Kirby has the most dumbed down and just plain dumb control scheme since Nokia opted not to put shoulder buttons on the N-Gage" *Cam Shea*



#127 MAY 2004

BEST: Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (Xbox) 93%

"You'll spend most of your time using the Prince's cool acrobatic skills to negotiate a wonderfully realised palace that looks as if it was built by a crazed gymnast" *Bennett Ring*

WORST: Underworld: The Eternal War (PS2) 12% "A brief saving grace comes from the fact that the game includes some decent sound bites and video clips direct from the film but ultimately that's kind of like saying that being stabbed in the lungs is not so bad because the knife was clean instead of being smeared with excrement" *Daniel Wilks*



#128 JUNE 2004

BEST: Unreal Tournament 2004 (PC) 92%

"PANCAKE!" *Daniel Wilks*

WORST: Rogue Ops (Xbox) 24% "They say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions – this is a lie – it is paved with copies of Rogue Ops" *Daniel Wilks*



#129 JULY 2004

BEST: Rise of Nations: Thrones & Patriots (PC) 90%

"An awesome RTS blend" *Eliot Fish*

Shining Soul 2 (GBA) 90% "Both charming and challenging, offering players plenty to sink their teeth into" *Eleanor Eiffe*

WORST: Corvette (PS2) 41% "Developed by the work experience kid" *Joey Tekken*



#130 AUGUST 2004

BEST: Thief: Deadly Shadows (Xbox, PC) 93%

"The story in Deadly Shadows is expertly delivered to the gamer, and once you get four or five missions in you will literally be

gripped with intrigue" *Eliot Fish*

WORST: UFC Sudden Impact (PS2) 55% "No impact, sudden or otherwise" *Daniel Wilks*



#131 SEPTEMBER '04

BEST: Disgaea: Hour of Darkness (PS2) 89%

"For sheer scope and for the wonderful humour that seems to have soaked into its every pore, Disgaea simply can't be beaten" *Brett Robinson*

WORST: Army Men: Sarge's War (PC, PS2, Xbox) 54% "Without this landmark franchise so many Christmas dreams would have gone unshattered, as children opened their presents to discover games that didn't actually make them cry" *Maurice Branscombe*



#132 OCTOBER 2004

BEST: Doom 3 (PC) 94%

"Blessed be the almighty shotgun, for thou dost rock so hard" *March Stepnik*

WORST: Catwoman (GCN, PC, PS2, Xbox) 24% "Imagine if you can, taking Rise to Honor and Prince of Persia, forcing them to have sex at gunpoint and then putting down any of the offspring that had the full complement of chromosomes. Then take the deformed child of violence, put a mirror in front of its malformed visage and repeatedly tell it it's beautiful until it believes you and you have Catwoman" *Screw Flanders*



#133 NOVEMBER '04

BEST: Astro Boy: Omega Factor (GBA) 93%

"A perfect example of how Less is More in videogames" *John Dewhurst*

WORST: Evil Genius (PC) 62% "Who would have thought that being evil was so frustrating?" *Daniel Wilks*



#134 DECEMBER '04

BEST: Half-Life 2 (PC) 95%

"Physics is a big player in HL2 and the basic things that flow from it add a new depth to the world" *Timothy C. Best*

WORST: Rocky Legends (PS2, Xbox) 71% "To put it in words that the champ himself might like, Rocky ain't no bad game, it's just kinda same-old same-old" *Daniel Wilks*



UT 2004

92%



BATTLEFIELD 2



"It really places you into the midst of some of the craziest, realistic, breath taking gun battles to date"

Tim Levy



#135 JANUARY 2005

BEST: GTA: San Andreas (PS2) 97%

"If GTA III was a rough diamond, then San Andreas is the fully polished gem" *Eliot Fish*
WORST: Under the Skin (PS2) 62% "There's nothing more to the game than running around, collecting coins and trying not to get hit" *Poemy*



#136 FEBRUARY '05

BEST: Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords (PC, Xbox) 91%

"Effortlessly captures the essence of Star Wars" *Daniel Wilks*
WORST: The Urbz: Sims in the City (PS2, Xbox) 65% "It's Queer Eye For The Straight Urb" *Mikolai*



#137 MARCH 2005

BEST: Katamari Damacy (PS2) 93%

"Destined to go down in videogame history as one of those benchmark achievements as far as design and gameplay go" *Danielcy*
WORST: Capcom Fighting Jam (PS2) 68% "Even die-hard Capcom fans will find this underwhelming" *Malcolm Campbell*



METAL GEAR SOLID 3



#138 APRIL 2005

BEST: Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (PS2) 96%

Hideo Kojima has proved once and for all that he is without a doubt one of the coolest videogame designers of the last decade" *Eliot Fish*

WORST: Spider-Man 2 (DS) 58% "The perfect example of a developer not only having trouble utilising the dual screens but also of struggling with the basics of good game design" *March Stepnik*



#139 MAY 2005

BEST: Tekken 5 (PS2) 93%

"Best. Tekken. Ever" *Bryce McDonough*
WORST: Sprung (DS) 41% "Beating each scene is a matter of eventually stumbling through the right sequence of responses, rather than through puzzle solving or use of critical acumen" *Cam Shea*



#140 JUNE 2005

BEST: Ridge Racer (PSP) 93%

"The must-have launch title for PSP. It's screamingly fast, it's gratifyingly pretty and it has plenty of depth" *Cam Shea*

WORST: Tenchu: Fatal Shadows (PS2) 50% "Let me out of this mediocre game" *John Dewhurst*



#141 JULY 2005

BEST: Forza Motorsport (Xbox) 93%

"Scraping over the finish line in first place with a beat up car is absolutely thrilling" *March Stepnik*

WORST: Street Racing Syndicate



(GCN, PC, PS2, Xbox) **60%** "At least have the decency to get hoochie mamas - this is street racing after all" *Kosta Andreadis*



#142 AUGUST 2005

BEST: Darwinia (PC) 90%

"The kind of thing a Sinclair ZX Spectrum may have been able to turn out had it been outfitted with a 1.5Ghz processor" *Maurice Branscombe*
WORST: Dungeon Lords (PC) 46% "Probably the most unfinished game to reach the shelves" *Daniel Wilks*



#143 SEPTEMBER '05

BEST: Battlefield 2 (PC) 91%

"It really places you into the midst of some of the craziest, realistic, breath taking gun battles to date" *Tim Levy*

The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction (GCN, PS2, Xbox) 91% "He's a nigh on unstoppable force of nature and he's incredibly fun to play" *Daniel Wilks*

WORST: Smart Bomb (PSP) 45% "Smart Bomb fails on nearly every level" *Daniel Wilks*



#144 OCTOBER 2005

BEST: Total Overdose (PC, PS2, Xbox) 94%

"You almost think the game should come in a value pack with some tequila and shot glasses" *Seamus Byrne*

WORST: Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory (DS) 55% "We were right to be sceptical" *Dirk Watch*



#145 NOVEMBER

BEST: Psychonauts (PC, PS2, Xbox) 94%

"It's hard to pin down one genre that Psychonauts falls into so we have come up with a new genre of our own to give it a label. Sublime" *Wilks*

WORST: 187: Ride or Die (PS2, Xbox) 48% "The whitest whitey mcwhite product that ever pretended to be black" *Cam Shea*



PSYCHNAUTS



#146 DECEMBER '05

BEST: Pro Evolution Soccer 5 (PC, PS2, Xbox) 95%

"A bit like swilling a fine Grange Hermitage around in your mouth" *Eliot Fish*

WORST: Built-in Games (Palsonic 68cm TV) 29% "Super low res" *Tim Levy*



#147 JANUARY 2006

BEST: Civilization 4 (PC) 96%

"It's time to reignite that lustful fire one more time" *Eliot Fish*

WORST: Shadow the Hedgehog (GCN, PS2, Xbox) 56% "Why, Sega, why? Why would you unleash this monstrosity on the public?" *Patrick Kolan*



#148 FEBRUARY '06

BEST: Mario Kart DS (Nintendo DS) 93%

"Kart racing gold Jerry, gold" *Cam Shea*

WORST: True Crime: New York City (GCN, PS2, Xbox) 55% "Let me tell you what a true crime is - that a game like this could get released in the half-baked, buggy, design-crippled state that it's in" *Eliot Fish*

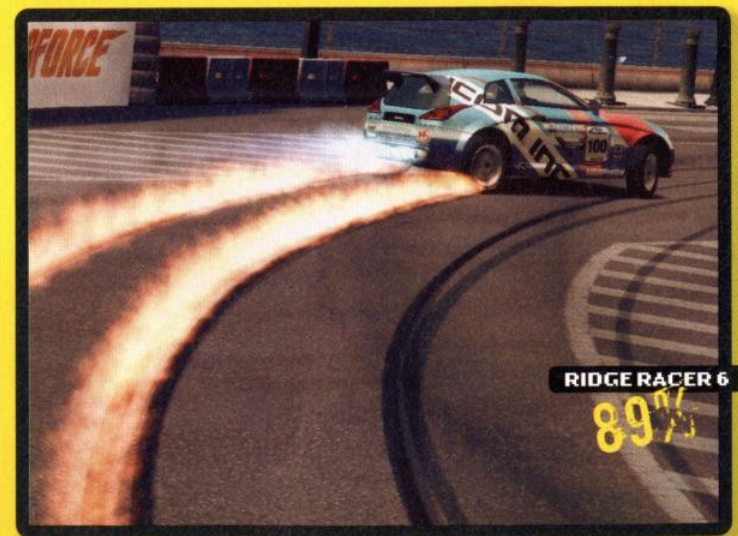


#149 MARCH 2006

BEST: Ridge Racer 6 (Xbox 360) 89%

"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" *Cam Shea*

WORST: Urban Reign (PS2) 33% "Did Death By Degrees teach Namco nothing?" *Dirk Watch*



RIDGE RACER 6

89%



SUPER HAPPY IMPORT MADNESS

A look back at the consoles that never officially made it to Australia

By Mikolaj

While the current videogame market is a three horse race between Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo, this hasn't always been the case. In fact, it's a relatively new development. Back in the 90s, at least eight different console manufacturers were eyeing off the market and store shelves were groaning under the weight of several rival systems.

1990 marked the start of the modern console industry. The all conquering N.E.S. was at the end of its life span, home computers were on the wain and industry was drunk from the money it saw. Everybody wanted to cash in on the impending console boom and new systems began to flood the overseas market. Within the space of just three years (1990-1993), Sega, Panasonic, Hudson/NEC, Atari, SNK, Nintendo, Fujitsu, Commodore and Amstrad released new consoles.

Predictably, the market couldn't sustain all these competing brands and things got ugly — name calling, price wars, lawsuits, etc. The handful of systems that survived and prospered internationally found their way to Australia and our retail shelves (Sega & Nintendo). Those that failed generally took the parent company down with them in a spiral of shame and bankruptcy (everyone else).

Still, the early 90s was a golden age of videogames. A time where huge innovation, dumb luck and momentous acts of stupidity often went hand in hand. Heady days where anything seemed possible, executives could drink on the job and the back pages of EGM were full of exotic machines.

15 years later, with credit cards in hand and our nostalgia set to 'rose tinted', Hyper looks back over some of the classic (and not so classic) import consoles of the early 90s — the ones that never quite made it over here in any official capacity. After all, your parents may have been too tight fisted to spring for a Neo Geo, but that doesn't mean you can't.

THE TECHNICAL STUFF

Different countries have different power voltages, e.g. in Australia we use 240v. In Japan it's 110v, the U.S. uses 130v and U.K. is 220v. Sending the wrong voltage through a console is a sure fire way of killing it. Luckily, it's relatively easy to get around this, all you need is a step down converter — these converters can be purchased from shops like Dick Smith. As a general rule, you'll need a converter with a 240v input and an output that corresponds with the region the console is from. For instance, to play a PC Engine you'll need a 240v input and a 110v output. Any qualified shop assistant should be able to help you with this since power output is universal to all electrical appliances. Most of the consoles mentioned above came with composite output as standard (the red, yellow and white cables). As such, they should work fine on any NTSC compatible television. Older consoles may have an RF output. This should also work fine on any modern television.

EUROPE U.K.

Commodore and Amstrad (alongside Spectrum) dominated the European market with cheap home computers in the 1980s. Unfortunately, their ill-conceived attempts to ride the console boom saw them all end up in bankruptcy hell by 1993.

What Commodore and Amstrad failed to grasp was that it took more than forcing an aging CPU inside a poorly designed console shell to compete with the Japanese giants. A lesson they learnt the hard way when both the CD32 and GX4000 tanked and took the companies with them. As the U.K. videogame mags of the time would have phrased it, 'A shambling mockery of a sad parody'.



AMiGA CD32

MANUFACTURER: **COMMODORE**
RELEASE DATE: **1993**
CURRENT PRICE GUIDE: **\$70-\$100 AUS**
KEY TITLES: **PINBALL FANTASIES, WORMS, UM...**

■ The final nail in the Commodore coffin, this was an ill-fated attempt to repackage the Amiga 1200 home computer as a console. It didn't work. The CD32 failed to attract much interest in Europe and was all but ignored everywhere else in the world. In a textbook example of getting everything wrong; the CD32 was lumbered with a cheap and nasty design, awful control pad and chronic lack of games — the bulk of which were enhanced versions of older Amiga titles. With Sega's Saturn and Sony's PlayStation on the horizon, Commodore's machine was obsolete even before its release and the company simply wasn't able to compete with the Japanese giants.



GX 4000

MANUFACTURER: **AMSTRAD**
RELEASES DATE: **1989**
CURRENT PRICE GUIDE: **\$50-\$100 AUS**
KEY TITLES: **THE SOUND OF A SMALL CHILD WEeping ON CHRISTMAS MORNING**

■ A precursor to the Commodore CD32 debacle, this was another failed attempt at a console by a British company. Just how Amstrad planned to challenge the Megadrive and Super Nintendo with outdated 8bit technology and no software support remains a mystery. Was everyone drunk and high? Even the games press took to openly mocking the Amstrad GX 4000 upon its release and it was in bargain bins throughout the U.K. within a month. Amstrad took the hint and shuffled off after this, never to trouble the world again.

JAPAN

For Japanese manufacturers, the story was a little different. The PC Engine was genuinely successful in its native territory and both the Neo Geo and FM Towns Marty performed reasonable well. Problem being, none of these systems managed to sell overseas.

Ironically, the very things that made the above consoles popular in Japan worked against them internationally, i.e. games about octopus rape and nonsensical marketing campaigns. Ultimately, it was all a bit too Japanese and weird for our gaijin sensibilities. Oh, and the Neo Geo was too expensive.

PC ENGINE / TURBOGRAFX16

MANUFACTURER: **N.E.C./ HUDSON**

RELEASE DATE: **1987**

CURRENT PRICE GUIDE: **\$150-\$200 AUS (PC ENGINE + CD ROM / PC ENGINE DUO)**

KEY TITLES: **DEVIL CRUSH, JACKIE CHAN ACTION KUNG FU, Y'S, BONK, + A MILLION SHMUPS**

■ The PC Engine is the exception to the rule here, i.e. people actually liked it and it had good games and support - in Japan at least. The system's U.S. launch was, however, a disaster. Renamed the TurboGrafx16 for the overseas market, the system was released in 1989, a few months ahead of Sega's Megadrive.

While both the Megadrive and TurboGrafx16 were on relatively equal footing from a technical standpoint, their marketing couldn't have been more different. Sega geared their advertising and games towards a U.S. market with a heavy emphasis on sports games. In contrast, the TurboGrafx16 had little advertising support initially and its games never really struck a chord with U.S. consumers - Keith Courage anyone? Lack of software support was also an issue with many of the best games from Japan never given a U.S. release... how things have(n't) changed!

Anyway, the system was eventually released in limited numbers for the U.K. and European market but by that point the Super Nintendo had been released and Sega had Sonic The Hedgehog. The PC Engine continued to enjoy success in Japan and was superseded by the PC FX in 1994 but the TurboGrafx16 was dead by 1993.

FM TOWNS MARTY

MANUFACTURER: **FUJITSU**

RELEASE DATE: **1991**

CURRENT PRICE GUIDE: **\$250-\$300 AUS**

KEY TITLES: **AFTERBURNER, SPLATTERHOUSE, TRUXTON, WIDE SELECTION OF HENTAI**

■ Strange, this. The FM Town Marty was another attempt at repackaging a home computer as a console, albeit, a Japanese one. Fujitsu's original FM Towns home computer ran off a 386 processor and was launched in 1989 to moderate success. The 'Marty' featured the same 386 processor



squeezed down into a console and has the honour of being the first 32bit console released.

While an impressive machine and host to some great conversions - including 32bit Afterburner, Truxton, Splatterhouse and more - the Marty was never more than a cult hit. Indeed, it was only the extensive selection of Hentai on offer that kept the system afloat during its twilight years. Not the warm and fluffy variety either...

Fujitsu later released a follow up; a 486 based 'Marty 2' but it never really went anywhere. In any case, Westerners didn't deserve a 32bit consoles in 1991.

NEO GEO

MANUFACTURER: **SNK**

RELEASE DATE: **1991**

CURRENT PRICE GUIDE: **\$200 AUS**

KEY TITLES: **SAMURAI SHOWDOWN, KING OF FIGHTERS, METAL SLUG**

■ The Neo Geo was years ahead of its time and it remains the longest supported home console in history. First launched in Japan in 1991, the AVS home system was identical to the Neo Geo (MVS) arcade machines that could be found outside dodgy fish and chips shops the world over. That kind of technology came at a price. While the system was launched in the U.S. with price tag of \$599 - before eventually dropping to \$399 - the real problem was the price of games. Rom chips didn't come cheap back in the days before CD and with the massive memory requirements of Neo Geo titles, most games cost upwards of \$300 U.S. With titles for the rival Megadrive and Super Nintendo coming in around \$40 - \$50 U.S., the machine was always going to be a niche system.

A CD based Neo Geo system was released in 1994 as a way around the prohibitive price of games. Unfortunately, the system was lumbered with a single speed CD Drive and painfully slow loading times. A new model was released in 1996 with a double speed CD but it had a serious design flaw that resulted in overheating after extended play. Someone probably died, I dunno... In any case, it was all too little, too late. Needless to say, neither the AVS system nor the later CD based Neo Geo were ever released officially in Australia. You could however track them down at all good importers.



USA

While Sega and Nintendo had dominating the U.S. market during the 16bit era, the onset of a new generation of consoles brought two very different rivals to the forefront. On the one hand, you had Trip Hawkins (co-founder of E.A.), screaming about how 3DO would become a videogame standard; i.e. much like VHS Video had done a decade earlier.

Then there was Atari; the company that had virtually invented home consoles in the late 70s before very nearly destroying the same industry in 1984. While they had tinkered with home computers since the crash of the mid 80s, the company was looking to reinvent itself and reclaim past glories.

Ultimately, they both managed to blow it.

3DO

MANUFACTURER: **PANASONIC / GOLDSTAR / MISC OTHERS**

RELEASE DATE: **1993**

CURRENT PRICE GUIDE: **\$80-\$100 AUS**

KEY TITLES: **ROAD RASH, NEED FOR SPEED, JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL**

■ The 3DO certainly looked impressive on paper. It was the first 32bit system to get a release in the U.S., was backed by the likes of Matsushita, AT&T, MCA, Time Warner and E.A. and had a unique business model to license manufacture. With the Megadrive and Super Nintendo fast approaching the end of their lifespan this was going to romp it home and become an industry standard. Ah, such innocent days...

Ultimately, two things killed off the 3DO. The first was the price tag. It was launched at \$700 U.S. and all the pleas that it was 'a multimedia system' and not just a games console couldn't persuade people to part with the money. And secondly, the games just weren't that great. While there were some minor classics like Need for Speed, John Madden and Road Rash, overall, the quality of games was pretty low. Which is of course what happens when you let anyone make them...

Anyway, the 3DO never managed to hit its forecast sales target in the U.S. and when the vastly superior PlayStation was released in Japan a year later, it was all but over. A planned successor, the MK2, never made it to market and after 1995 3DO became a software developer - notorious for its crappy Army Men games. The company finally went bust in 2003.



ATARI JAGUAR

MANUFACTURER: **ATARI**

RELEASE DATE: **1993**

CURRENT PRICE GUIDE:

\$100 AUS

KEY TITLES: **TEMPEST 2000, ALIEN VS. PREDATOR.**

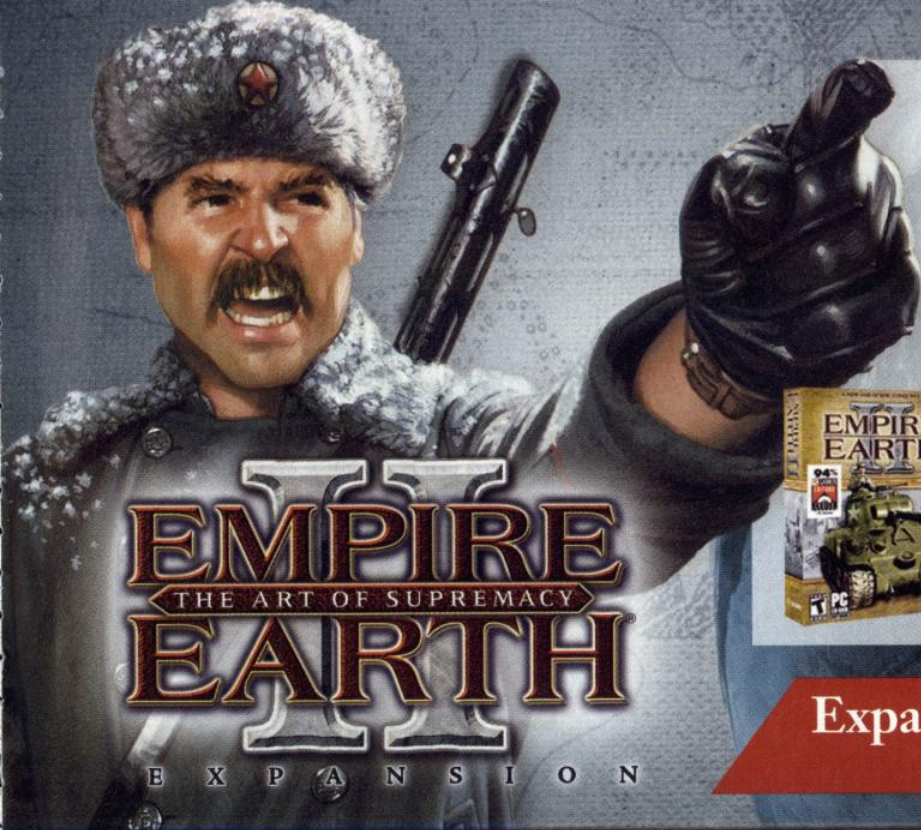
■ Atari's fall from grace is long, stupid and well publicised. While the company had been bought and sold a dozen times

over since the heyday of the 2600, things came to a head in 1993 with the release of the Jaguar. Touted as the world's first 64bit console by company director Jack Tramiel, the Jaguar was Atari's first attempt to re-enter the console market in seven years. Not surprisingly, it all went pear shaped.

While Atari insisted that the Jaguar was a 64bit system, this was made on the (incorrect) basis that two 32bit processors amounted to a 64bit system. Technical gibberish aside, the systems was genuinely powerful for its time. All well and good, but with five separate processors working in tandem, few developers were ever able to take advantage of this power. Indeed, the Jaguar was an even bigger nightmare to program than Sega's Saturn and few companies bothered. In the end, just 55 games were released for the system and only 22 of those were from third party developers.

When the system failed to sell and the games failed to materialise it was all over. A belated CD add-on was released as a last desperate attempt to woo consumers but the impending PlayStation and Saturn had claimed another scalp. By 1996 Atari had merged with a company called JTS and all Jaguar stock was liquidated. The system was never released outside the U.S.





PC PowerPlay

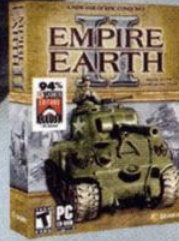
REVIEW JUNE 2005

"Excellent Enemy AI"

"There is alot of depth, perhaps more than any other RTS that has come before... Mad Doc has produced something very special"

8/10

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MAIL HYPER!

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SKIP TO THE PAUSE

Greetings Hyper Crew, Crate-man here.

How did Christmas and New Years go for you guys and gals? Party hard?

I got the privilege to see a few of your pimped out places while I was protecting Santa from possible threats (planes, dogs, poisonous milk and cookies, etc). Cam's place especially was nice. Though, Wilk's was so unclear that it could make a garbage disposal depot look like the cleanest thing in the world.

Anyway, I'll get to the point of what I wanted to discuss with you guys and gals. Pausing for in-game cut scenes.

Videogames have, over the years, become quite elaborate. As storage capacities and graphics improved, there has been a greater focus on



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AEON FLUX - IN CINEMAS MARCH 16

the story telling element of each game in order to make it stand out.

Instead of 'Jumping Jack's 5 balls were stolen. Help Jack search for them', we have 'Jumping Jack was robbed in plain daylight of his 5 balls, during which he was knocked out and doesn't know who he is. Can Jack piece together his identity and ultimately find who took his balls?'

Some games even attempt to tell the story of multiple characters, and ultimately how they all tie in together.

The most common way videogames do the story telling is through cut scenes. Some games have such elaborate stories that cut scenes make up a large amount of your playtime. With games that focus primarily on the story, cut scenes can be known to go for immeasurable lengths. A lot of the time, you can't press a single button during these scenes. I began to ponder the reasons why developers would do this.

It's a well known fact that interruptions are one thing a gamer dislikes. Having the phone ring, or a family member walk in and ask you to do something can be quite annoying, especially when you are at difficult area in a game. Luckily, in most cases, there is a pause

button you can hit to stop play till you return.

But what about cut scenes? What if the phone rings, or someone comes in and asks you to do something while you're watching a cut scene. In most cases, there is no pause button, and the information shown can be important.

Usually there is no save before a long cut scene, so if you want to see it again, you'd have to play back from some ridiculous point.

If developers want people to learn a game's story, then not having a pause or re-watch feature during cut scenes is not a very good thing. Gamers are normal people; there are times when they must pause to do something else.

Why not let them do so? Pausing isn't going to harm the meaning of the cut scene in any way.

To allow pausing for cut scenes would be a beneficial revolution for everyone. You don't have to go to the dinner table late every night because you were waiting for the game to allow you to pause. It'd allow you to quickly go clean up the place when you see your wife down the driveway. There'd be no more gaming tantrums when your parents take your game and console away because they asked you to help them with the groceries five times and you were stuck waiting for the cut scene to finish.

There is not a single thing I see wrong about allowing a pause button for cut scenes. It's beneficial to gamers in everyway.

So what are your thoughts on this matter? Do you believe games should allow for pausing during cut scenes? Do you think games will allow this feature one day?

I know there's likely some technical reasons why some games can't do this, but these reasons can't apply to every game around. I would just like to know your thoughts on the issue.

Pausing in cutscenes is definitely a good idea but even more than that we wish developers would give players the option to skip cutscenes. Some games have this feature, sure, and others have cutscenes we actually enjoy watching but far more often we come across games with insufferable and

pointless cutscenes. Black, reviewed this month is a fine example.

The cutscenes are nearly entirely composed of chin and people talking some inane crap about some guy in some fictional Eastern European country who may have some thing and some stuff, well, like, you know? The cutscenes are dull and pointless but Criterion forces you to sit through them (although you can skip them on subsequent play throughs). For the love of god, unless it's Moes chin we don't want to know. Let us skip cutscenes. Oh yeah, let us pause them too.

TWO WARRIORS

Hyper crew,

I type before you a broken man, suffering from several knife wounds to the back, many of which were exacerbated by the sharp twisting motion that Ubisoft Montreal have obviously been working on for quite some time.. I am referring to the recent addition to the Prince of Persia series, the Two Thrones. This much hyped release was an extreme disappointment, and this saddens me greatly, especially when I consider those very painful thoughts relating to the conclusion of this exceptional series of games, including the classics, with this rushed and uninspiring game. The length of the game alone was a low blow to gamers everywhere, lured into a false sense of security following Warrior Within, which easily took twice as long to pass, which boasted a compelling storyline, that carried the player through varied and interesting environments. Two Thrones, however, contained a very loose and bland story that failed to hook me in the way that Warrior Within did.

The Prince now seems like a weak character that is so easily swayed by the Dark Prince's comments and suggestions to do "naughty things", such as not returning his shopping trolley to the supermarket, or a variety of other lame "badass" actions brought out by his inner conflict with his "evil" self. That said, I found the dialogue between the Prince's alter egos to be entertaining and well done, when it wasn't drowned out by the music or sound effects (the adjustable volume bars in

CAPTION THIS!

The all conquering Mr M was narrowly beaten this month by **Paul "Linton" Johnson** who knows what we like and it's crazy Japanese cooking shows.



Who's cuisine reigns supreme!

the menu screen have almost no effect on the volume and balance of the game effects) While the addition of the dagger holes and jump pads were cool, I felt that Ubisoft simply thought that if they incorporated these novelties into every movement puzzle, they would easily create a winning game. The environments in general were not up to the standards of Sands of Time or Warrior Within, and even though all the critics have some unexplainable feud with POPWW, I found that it was a very impressive game, easily up to the standards of Sands of Time in terms of environments and movement puzzles. Which is more than I can say for the Two Thrones which contained very claustrophobic and controlling environments, especially when playing as the pathetic Dark Prince, where the game creates a feeling of pure hatred towards the son of a bitch who said to the rest of the development team, "Hey guys, wouldn't it be cool if the dark prince was constantly losing health, at a rate that is impossible to keep up with without wasting at least 3 sand tanks while trying to find the correct path through dimly lit areas and insanely difficult traps?". Not to mention the speed kills, while again cool in theory, were almost essential to passing many areas of the game, as jumping in to fight enemies honourably more often then not resulted in you stumbling out of the blood bath with little to no health, that would be crucial to passing the next area. This again made me feel that this was the developer's gaming experience to enjoy, and they'll be damned if they let the player do what they want. I would like Hyper to reflect on their review of this game after reading this admittedly long letter, but I figured seeing as this email is not concerning next gen console recycled bullshit, I won't have to worry about taking up the few pages you guys have to paste crap with titles like "I Heart Nintendorz!!!Eleven!!!" or "Damnably Delays". I mean, goddamn, when will you people learn that Nintendo are idiots who shoot themselves in the foot with non-conformist crap like remotes for controllers, and Australia often doesn't have to deal with crap games that don't even make it over here, or new \$700 consoles that explode when you play them, because we often have to wait a couple of months.

Guy Incognito

P.S. I am once again disappointed with the fact that the Mail section has really let itself go,

the back section of the magazine used to be one of my favourite parts to read, however, now I simply skip this section and think of the oldest news I can remember about xbox 360, and know that I have summed up in three seconds what the fanboys took 15 lines to crap on about.

P.P.S. The name at the bottom of the letter is only for my protection from Daniel Forrest and the Nintendo fans out there (yes both of them) who can't see past their stupid fanaticism and realise that Nintendo are no longer top dog, and they don't look like they are going to be a contender this time around.

We were almost going to celebrate the fact that the first two letters in the section didn't contain any references to Nintendo but you had to go and ruin it by having a go at Ninty at the end of your letter. You do realise that all that means is that next month we will get dozens of letters having a go at us because we hate Nintendo because we published your letter or some such nonsense. To hopefully stave off some of this mail we will restate for the record - We heart Nintendo. Now back to your initial point, good for you. Warrior Within was a decent game but for our money Two Thrones is the superior of the two. Warrior Within was far too focussed on combat for our liking and the constant cock rock blaring made us cringe. To us the movement puzzles are everything in Prince of Persia so the addition of new forms of movement automatically give more options in terms of the puzzle structure. To each their own though. The next Prince of Persia may please us both.

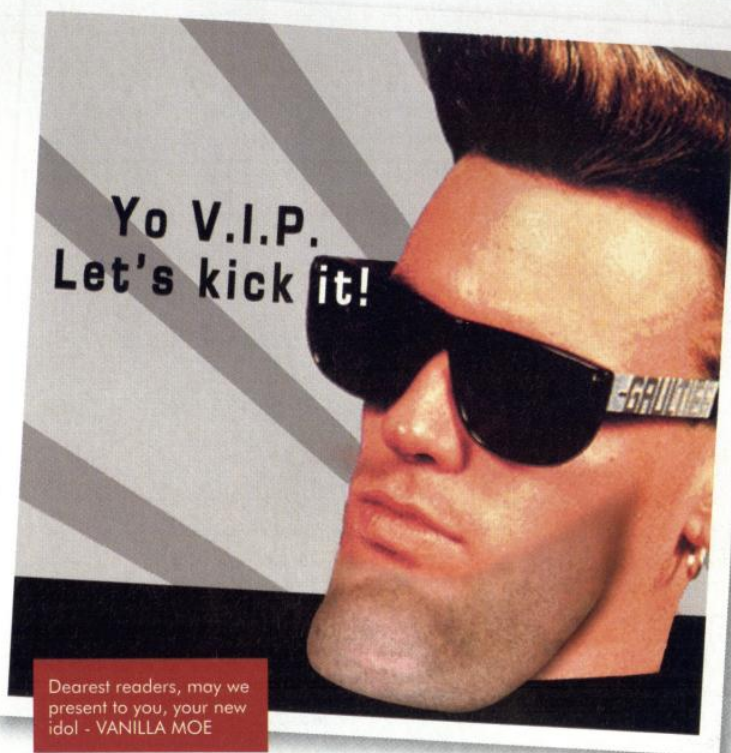
APOCALYPSE 2: THE DOOMENING

Hyper,

I find myself finally disappointed enough to want to vent publicly my feelings over the current state of the gaming world, or rather lack of it.

As I see the one millionth FPS and button mashing action game vomited out of the production line I feel less and less like caring about what used to be my favorite past-time, gaming is fast stagnating, and there is little in the future for me to get excited about.

I'm not interested in frame rates or polygon counts, since they seem to be the new excuse to eliminate character and plot from videogames even in RPG's which are the most story driven of all genres, something demonstrated



wonderfully in fable, the first Knights game and jade empire, we were free to pilot our idiot avatar about the most beautiful environments with boasted up to three paths! Awesome! What the hell happened to Bioware? Where is the freedom and story of their earlier games (particularly Torment)? Last of a God-damn bloodline crap and visit the water/fire/jungle/evil planet is tedious and overused, though the second Knights game had some good ideas and character for a Star Wars title. I understand them (not just Bioware but every developer), trying to secure the casual gamers dollars, and I understand the casual gamer wanting something great to look at, but what is it about them that makes developers think that a game should only last for four hours and have absolutely no replay value whatsoever? Do the casuals like this? \$80-\$100 has just been paid for what sometimes seems an interactive commercial for a franchise. Little effort seems to be spent on those of us who don't want multiplayer, gaming to me isn't a social activity, it's something I enjoy as a means of escape, much like reading, I don't read socially either.

I understand the enjoyment people get from multiplayer (some of my friends are mad for Halo) but with crap like that blocking the tube there is no room for the innovators, thank christ Tim Schaffer is back, Psychonauts is something I'm very much going to enjoy, pity it won't sell as well as it should. I am being unreasonable

attacking multiplayer so viciously but it is being used as another excuse to neglect the single player experience. So a naughty word my mother would be ashamed of me uttering multiplayer.

Is America as much to blame for this as I think it is? I am specifically thinking of Microsoft who I admit I am deeply prejudiced against. Why did they buy out the mind behind Lumines and meteos? The American stock and trade is rubbish action games, the Japanese aren't guilt free when it comes to crap action games either but I am not looking forward to Microsoft's Master Chief Extreme Action Puzzle Simulator 1.0 on X-Box 360.

If only they could establish an interest further than their own cultural borders, wouldn't it be great for Rockstar to set GTA in Moscow or Tokyo? To play as the Rakitiry or Yakuza instead of the Italian American mafia for whom over 40 billion films already exist. Someone should show them some of Takeshi Kitano's films, I think they would appreciate his gloss free take on violence.

I am also dubious about all 3 next gen consoles, Nintendo is thoroughly boned, the 360 is merely a hub geared almost solely for online use, and the ps3 is going to cost \$1000.

Set me straight, give me hope for the future, tell me my psp is going have have some games worth owning other than Lumines (Hell I'd kill for that cheer squad game on DS, that is a stroke of comedy genius!), and also is the Cromartie game any good? Will we see it here

in this region? When is Twilight Princess going to be released? And Okami? Why did they cancel Sam and Max? I want that man dead. Bring back the bigger news section and overflow! But keep bad cop and the passion.

Yours sincerely,
Steerpike.
 P.S Another Driver game? Ha Ha!
 Not so funny.....

We can never understand why people get so doom and gloomy for no readily apparent reason. Sure, Planescape Torment had a great story, one of the best but honestly, why compare everything to it. While we're on the subject of Torment, a game we dearly love, people keep talking about the freedom it offered. The truth of the matter is that it didn't offer a lot of freedom. It offered you a lot of choice. These are different things. Sure you could choose your morality and your dialogue but you were channelled in one direction for the majority of the game. Speaking of Bioware though, we're going to be having a chat with them next issue about Mass Effect, a game which we believe is shaping up really well. It seems as though you have decided that gaming is doomed, not been lead to that conclusion by any actual factors. There are great games all around you. You may not like multiplayer but other people do. Your claims about the next gen consoles are dubious. 360 almost solely geared towards online? Sure it has strong online capabilities but out of the launch window titles for Australia there is one that is solely online. That leaves 33 titles with the emphasis on single player. Why is Ninty boned? They have the lowest manufacturing costs so they will undoubtedly make money. PS3 costing \$1000; there has been absolutely no announcement of price point in Aus and it's highly doubtful that Sony will launch a console at \$350 more than the first cab off the rank.

Your point about crossing cultural borders is an interesting one but your example is a little flawed. You know what we would get if Rockstar set a GTA in Russia or Japan? Another GTA game. You'd steal cars, kill people, do side missions and the occasional story mission that will turn out to be a little dull.

You want us to set you straight and give you hope? Why should we have to? There are great games all around and more coming every month. Wilks is salivating at the

thought of Dragon Quest VIII and Cam is hanging for Prey. Find something for yourself. If you can't, you're not looking hard enough.

TOTALLY OVER TON

Good afternoon,
 Overton
 Good Bye
 Overton
 Overton
 Overton
 Overton
 Overton
 Overton
 Overton
 Overton
 Overton
 Overton

Good Morning,
 Spam
 Good Night
 Spam
 Spam
 Spam
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 Spam
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 Spam

ZOMG!!!! 1 !!!ELEVENTY! A GIRL!

To the frinking awsum team at hyper central!!

Im a 17 year old chick gamer! and a Hyper fan for years!!

And it has come to my attention that alot of guys think that Chick gamers

1. Are fat nd ugly
2. Dont have a life
3. They love to play simulators gamers like The Sims ". "
4. Or they are a lesbian

And I wish to prove THAT THIS IS NOT TRUE!!!!

I have been gaming for most of my life starting with the classic Duke Nukem 2D!! Playing through games like Half-life, Never Winter Nights, Red ninja, Dead or Alive to name a few! And I will not play The Sims or any game like it, they are meaningless nd pointless! Gaming is my life and I wouldnt give it up or any thing!

I do have many friends, but not alot of the chicks ever understand what im talking about so my friends mainly consist of guys.

I love going shopping stuff the clohting stores, give me a game shop or a computer store and you cant get me out!! But then comes to my next problem, just becuae we are chicks doesnt mean we dont know what we are talking about!

I just needed to get that off my cheast! Chick gamers are rare but we rock!!

**GAME ON!!
 JAXX**

Girl gamers are just like guy gamers - neither group can spell. We kid, we kid.

Good to see one of the fairer sex stand up and shout about gaming. Keep it up.

FORMER PRESIDENT BILL KLINTON USES VOAGRA!

Everybody knows the great sexual scandal known as "Klinton-Levinsky".

After the relations like this Klintons popularity raised a lot!

It is a natural phenomenon, because Bill as a real man in order not to shame himself when he was with Monica regularly used Voagra.

What happened you see. His political figure became more bright and more attractive.

It is very important for a man to be respected as a man!

See our Voagra shop to enter upon the new phase of your life.

He is Klin-Ton. As overlord, all will kneel trembling before him and obey his brutal commands. End communication.

DS DOUBTER

22 months onwards I can officially call myself a fool. Nearly 2 years ago I wrote a letter to Hyper. Somehow this idiotic letter made it to letter of the month, further highlighting my idiocy. This was me ranting on about Nintendo being stupid making the Nintendo DS and not adding multimedia functions to their home consoles.

Firstly - the DS is incredible. I own a DS and a PSP and I can honestly say that the DS is far superior. Secondly - to do with the multimedia functions, thank god they aren't including them. Why? Because Nintendo is a pure gaming company and I and millions of others love it that way.

Anyone who thinks otherwise, go spend twice or maybe triple the money on a competitors console which does things that you most likely have already. Just about anyone who can afford a PS3 or X360 is going to have a DVD player etc in their household.

Then comes the games, im not going to say all PS3 and X360 games suck but they aren't an innovation.

They aren't doing anything new, all you get is better graphics and a higher price tag. I also noticed the other day that X360 games sell for \$110... ridiculous. As I see it my choices are to pay twice or triple the amount of money for a console that plays the same old games or spend a half or third of my money on a console that is a REVOLUTION and will change the face of gaming. I'll also be comfortably spending less money on each game I buy on this console due to Nintendo's lower development costs.

If you're a Sony and/or Microsoft supporter reading this and you think "just another fanboy", you're wrong. Well maybe you're not, I admit I am one but for good reason. I am open minded, I have tried Playstation and Xbox several times, in fact my brother owns an Xbox and I have played that a fair bit I must admit (only for Halo 1 and 2 though) but the enjoyment I take out of my GCN is far superior to what I got from the Xbox and PS2 - combined.

Anyway, i'm rambling. My point is - I have come to realise how great Nintendo really is and I withdraw every word from that letter.

Thanks,
Pat

PS. What score did you give Zelda: Ocarina of Time on N64 & have you ever given a perfect 100 score? If not, what was the highest rating you have ever given, and to which game?

Man, you nearly had us with your first and second paragraphs but then you go and blow it by resorting to Nintendo fanboyism and baseless accusations. There is no indication whatsoever that the 360 and PS3 will be two or three times the price of the Revolution. You can't say that games on the Revolution are going to be an innovation without them giving concrete details of games. The controller is innovative, yes but the games are still in the ether. The price of games also can't factor into it - you have no idea how much PS3 and Revolution games will cost. At the beginning of every console cycle there are games that cost more than standard. It happened with the first wave of Dreamcast, N64, Playstation, PS2, Saturn, SNES and others. With no indication that Nintendo won't do the same thing you can't really bring that up. At any rate, distributors have already said that prices will be dropping after launch. All that aside, if you want to see the highest scores we have given check out the 150th issue feature in the mag.

winwinwin

WIN AEON FLUX GOODIES!

»» Ever since we first saw Aeon Flux on Liquid TV we've been smitten by it. Peter Chung's often bizarre world bristled with style, featuring a far from infallible lead with the gawkish limbs of a teenager but the incredible athletic prowess of a trained killer. Full of corruption, ambiguity and over the top action, Aeon Flux was definitely one of the more unique animated series' to come along. The great news is that thanks to our friends at THQ and Paramount we have some awesome Aeon Flux goodies to give away. Not only do we have the recently released PS2/Xbox Aeon Flux videogame, which was a pretty decent slice of action gaming, we also have the three disc Aeon Flux - The Complete Animated Collection: Director's Cut on DVD. Four runners up will receive one of each, while one lucky winner will get both the DVD and the game, plus a choice of either a PS2 or an Xbox console to play it on! To be in the running, just answer this simple question:

»» Who plays Aeon Flux in the live action film?

Send your answer, your preference of PS2 or Xbox, and your name and address to: **Time To Flux It Up, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email us at hypercomps@next.com.au with the comp name in the subject line.



WIN ATV OFFROAD FURY ON PSP OR PS2!

»» They've taken a very long time to reach our shores, but finally the latest installments in the ATV Offroad series are here. We're talking about ATV Offroad Fury 3 on PS2 and ATV Offroad Fury Blazin' Trails on PSP, two games that let you bump and jostle your way around some wild offroad courses. To paraphrase the great Spinal Tap - talk about mudflaps this game's got 'em. Both games have been developed by the very capable Climax, and their experience shows, with both games packing a wealth of modes, features and unlockable content. The PSP game also comes with robust online functionality, spanning both racing and downloading ghost data from the best racers in the world.

Thanks to our compadres at Red Ant, we have five copies of each to give away. To be in the running, just answer this simple question:

»» What other racing series are Climax known for?

Send your answer and your name and address to: **I'm ATVing It!, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email us at hypercomps@next.com.au with the comp name in the subject line.



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 February 28 and entries close at 6pm April 12. 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 April 13 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 June issue of Hyper on sale May 3. 9) 1 winner will receive their choice of a PS2 or Xbox console (RRP \$250), one copy of the Aeon Flux animated collection on DVD (RRP \$29.95) and one copy of Aeon Flux on the system of their choice (RRP \$79.95). Four runners up will each receive one copy of the Aeon Flux animated collection on DVD (RRP \$29.95) and one copy of Aeon Flux on the system of their choice (PS2 or Xbox - RRP \$79.95). Five winners will each receive a copy of ATV Offroad Fury 3 on PS2 (RRP \$49.95) and ATV Offroad Fury Blazin' Trails on PSP (RRP \$79.95). Total value of competitions is \$1449. 10) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP
10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 5th Feb 2006
RETAIL SALES

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

TOP
10

Nintendo DS Games Over \$40

W/E 5th Feb 2006
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Mario Kart	Racing
2	▼	Nintendogs Dachshund	Simulator
3	◆	Nintendogs Lab & Friends	Simulator
4	◆	Nintendogs Chihuahua	Simulator
5	◆	Animal Crossing Wild World	Strategy
6	◆	Super Mario 64	Adventure
7	⊕	WarioWare: Touched!	Action
8	▼	Sonic Rush	Adventure
9	⊕	Hasbro 4 Game Fun Pack	Family
10	▼	King Kong	Adventure

TOP
10

Game Cube Games Over \$50

W/E 5th Feb 2006
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokémon XD: Gale Darkness	RPG
2	◆	NFS: Most Wanted	Racing
3	▲	Mario Super Star Baseball	Sports
4	▲	Mario Power Tennis	Sports
5	▲	Paper Mario 1000 Year Door	Adventure
6	⊕	Resident Evil 4	Adventure
7	▼	Fire Emblem: Path Radiance	RPG
8	▼	Mario Party 6	Family
9	▼	Pokémon Colosseum	RPG
10	▼	Metroid Prime 2: Echoes	Adventure

TOP
10

Xbox Games Over \$50

W/E 5th Feb 2006
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	NFS: Most Wanted	Racing
2	◆	Star Wars Battlefront II	Action
3	◆	Ricky Ponting Int Cricket 05	Sports
4	▲	The Sims 2	Strategy
5	▲	Battlefield 2 Modern Combat	Action
6	▼	Prince Of Persia 3: 2 Thrones	Adventure
7	▲	Crash Tag Team Racing	Racing
8	⊕	The Warriors	Action
9	⊕	Matrix: Path Of Neo	Adventure
10	⊕	AFL Premiership 2005	Sports

TOP
10

PC Games Over \$20

W/E 5th Feb 2006
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	World Of WarCraft	Strategy
2	◆	Age Of Empires III	Strategy
3	◆	The Sims 2: Nightlife	Strategy
4	▲	FEAR	Action
5	▼	The Sims 2	Strategy
6	▲	The Sims 2: University	Strategy
7	▼	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
8	▲	Civilization IV	Strategy
9	▼	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
10	⊕	Battlefield 2	Action

TOP
10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30

W/E 5th Feb 2006
RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	Shrek Superslam	Action
2	▲	Star Wars Trilogy	Adventure
3	▲	Bratz Rock Angelz	Adventure
4	⊕	Crazy Frog Racer	Racing
5	▲	Donkey Kong Country 3	Adventure
6	⊕	Finding Nemo + Incredibles	Adventure
7	⊕	Mario Tennis Power Tour	Sports
8	▼	Pokémon Emerald	RPG
9	▼	Pokémon Fire Red	RPG
10	▼	Pokémon Leaf Green	RPG

TOP
10

All Format Games Over \$50

W/E 5th Feb 2006
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	NFS: Most Wanted	PlayStation 2
2	▲	WWE Smackdown vs Raw 06	PlayStation 2
3	▼	Buzz: The Music Quiz Bundle	PlayStation 2
4	◆	GTA: Liberty Cities	PSP
5	◆	Ricky Ponting Int Cricket 05	PlayStation 2
6	⊕	SingStar 80s Bundle	PlayStation 2
7	◆	World Of WarCraft	PC/MAC
8	⊕	Mario Kart	Nintendo DS
9	▼	Eyeto: Play 3 Pack	PlayStation 2
10	⊕	Shrek Superslam	GBA

TOP
10

PlayStation Portable Games Over \$40

W/E 5th Feb 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	⊕	Crash Tag Team Racing	Racing
6	▼	The Sims 2	Strategy
7	▼	Virtua Tennis World Tour	Sports
8	⊕	World Series Of Poker	Family
9	◆	Star Wars Battlefront II	Action
10	▼	Medievil Resurrection	Adventure

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



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PlayStation 2



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Next Issue:

MASS EFFECT™

BIOWARE TAKE ON THE **XBOX 360**
WITH A TRULY EPIC PROJECT...

PLUS: Reviews of Ghost Recon 3, DOA 4, Dragon Quest VIII, Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers and Ape Escape 3. Hell, we might even review Perfect Dark Zero and Fight Night Round 3 while we're at it.

HYPER 151 ON SALE APRIL 5



SMS

Cute text zone

1. Pls wait, b4 u go..

2. Cool Cute Text

3. From 116611104 to 116611951

1. **116612345** 2. **193319**

Text : 116612105 and Send to : 193319

How to download

- 116612345**
- 193319**

Text: 116612345 and Send to 193319

JAVA GAMES

only for nokia 40/nokia 60 series only

ANIMATIONZONE

HOTZ !!

116613568	116613569
116613557	116613572
116613562	116613563
116612324	116612334
116612882	116612330
116612335	116613117
116613133	116613134
116613519	116613520
116613491	116613492
116613493	116613524

HOTTEST WALLPAPERS

MONO	POLY	B. Eyer. Pear
116613210	116613211	My Humps HOTZ !!
116613231	116613232	Request Line
116610239	116610240	Don't Phunk With My Heart
116610161	116610162	Don't Lie HOTZ !!
116610229	116610230	Shut Up
116610231	116610232	Let's Get Started HOTZ !!
116610235	116610236	Anxiety HOTZ !!
116610233	116610234	Where Is The Love
116610237	116610238	Hey Mama
116610235	116610236	Anxiety
116610239	116610240	Don't Phunk With My Heart

MONO	POLY	kelly clarkson
116613204	116613205	Because Of You
116612917	116612918	Breakaway HOTZ !!
116612915	116612916	Beautiful Disaster
116612913	116612914	A Moment Like This
116610335	116610336	Since You've Been Gone
116610333	116610334	Behind These Hazel Eyes

MONO	POLY	Maroon 5
116610363	116610364	This Love (Intro)
116610365	116610366	She Will Be Loved
116610367	116610368	Harder To Breathe
116610359	116610360	Sunday Morning
116610361	116610362	Must Get Out HOTZ !!

MONO	POLY	mariah carey
116611094	116611095	Shake It Off (Remix)
116611092	116611093	We Belong Together (Rmx)
116612083	116612084	Get Your Number
116612075	116612076	Shake It Off HOTZ !!
116610353	116610354	We Belong Together
116610351	116610352	It's Like That HOTZ !!
116610309	116610310	I Know What You Want
116611100	116611101	We Belong ...+Shake... (Mix)

MONO	POLY	eminem
116610087	116610088	Sing For The Moment
116610085	116610086	Stan HOTZ !!
116610083	116610084	Cleaning Out My Closet
116610077	116610078	Just Lose It
116610073	116610074	Mocking bird HOTZ !!
116610069	116610070	Without Me
116610067	116610068	Way I Am HOTZ !!
116610065	116610066	Lose Yourself
116610063	116610064	The Real Slim Shady
116610079	116610080	Like Toy Soldiers

MONO	POLY	RealTone
116613553	116610788	Wolf Howling
116613552	116613242	Sea Gulls
116613551	116613244	Night Owl
116613550	116613245	Dolphin
116613549	116613246	Girl Kiss
		Big Laugh
		Answer the phone..
		Ferrari F1 Engine
		Hey I Sexy man
		Hey! Sexy...

Real Tone H/P Support Model : Nokia 6600, 6230, 3300, 6820, 7xxx, Bxxx, SE: T610, T630, K700, P800, P9xx Samsung : S100-300...etc

BzBeez

116610810

M.blaster

116612263

Star Battle

116612253

666 guitar

116610767

Subspace

116612203

Micro Pool

116612264

Solitaire

116612502

Bubble Pop

116612150

Xterminer

116612262

Spartet

116612252

Lord of the ghost

116612323

Code Red

116612462

Tank

116612254

Cupid stupid

116612463

Love tones dedication

MONO	POLY	
116613667	116613668	Shine On-Ryan Cabrera
116613644	116613645	When You ..Music Box)-Westlife
116613642	116613643	You Raise ..(Piano)-Westlife
116613671	116613672	Slow Jam (Piano)-Monica + Usher
116613673	116613674	There You'll Be -Faith Hill
116613665	116613666	You'll Be In My Heart -Phil Collins
116613663	116613664	Close To You -Carpenters
116613657	116613658	La Vie en Rose-La Vie en Rose
116613659	116613660	All I Ask Of You-Phantom
116613669	116613670	Romance D'Amour-Romance
116613402	116613403	I Finally Found..Babra , Bryan
116613400	116613401	Tell Laura I ...Ray Peterson
116613398	116613399	The Prayer-Andrea , Celine Dion
116613396	116613397	Time To Say ...Andrea, Sarah
116613262	116613263	I Will Love Again-Vanessa
116613208	116613209	Future Lovess -Madonna
116612767	116612768	Paint My Love-Michael Learns
116612470	116612471	Songs 4 Lovers-Liberty X
116612466	116612467	Don't Love You...Craig David
116612195	116612196	When You Say That ..Westlife

Songs of faith

MONO	POLY	
116613640	116613641	You Are My All In All HOTZ !!
116613638	116613639	Shout to The Lord
116613636	116613637	More Love More Power HOTZ !!
116613634	116613635	Awesome God HOTZ !!
116613632	116613633	As The Deer
116613619	116613620	Amazing Grace(Swing) HOTZ !!

love songs

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116613226	116613227	All I Have To ..The Everly ..
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116613216	116613217	Rhythm Of The Rain-Cascades
116613430	116613431	Can't Buy Me Love -The Beatles
116613428	116613429	Every Breath You Take -Police
116613426	116613427	Arthur's Theme-Christopher Cross
116613424	116613425	Come Together-The Beatles
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116613420	116613421	When I Need You
116613438	116613439	Leaving On A Jet ..

Hitz & Hotz

MONO	POLY	
116613648	116613649	Don't Forget-Mariah Carey
116613646	116613647	Ghost Of You -My Chemical
116613609	116613610	One Piece -One Piece Theme 1
116613675	116613676	One Piece -One Piece Theme 2
116613677	116613678	Find The Way-Mika Nakashima
116613679	116613680	Totoro -Totoro HOTZ !!
116610239	116610240	Don't Phunk ..Black Eyed
116610928	116610929	Don't Cha-Pussycat
116610924	116610925	Pon De Replay-Rihanna
116610399	116610400	These Words -Natasha

latest Pop Song

MONO	POLY	
116613527	116613528	Sunshine-Ricki Lee
116613529	116613530	Beat Of My Heart-Hilary Duff
116613531	116613532	Guilty Conscience-Eminem
116613533	116613534	Just Don't Give Me A Fk-Eminem
116613535	116613536	My Name Is-Eminem
116613537	116613538	Role Model-Eminem
116613543	116613544	My Humps (Euro Trance Mix)
116613545	116613546	Stickwits (Techno Mix)-Pussycat
116613392	116613393	Meditation Of Thais
116613390	116613391	Canon In D--Pachelbel
116613408	116613409	Advertising Space-Robbie
116613406	116613407	Wasabi-Le Hardy
116613404	116613405	Albion-Babysambles
116613402	116613403	I Finally Found Someone-Babra
116613400	116613401	Tell Laura I Love Her -Ray

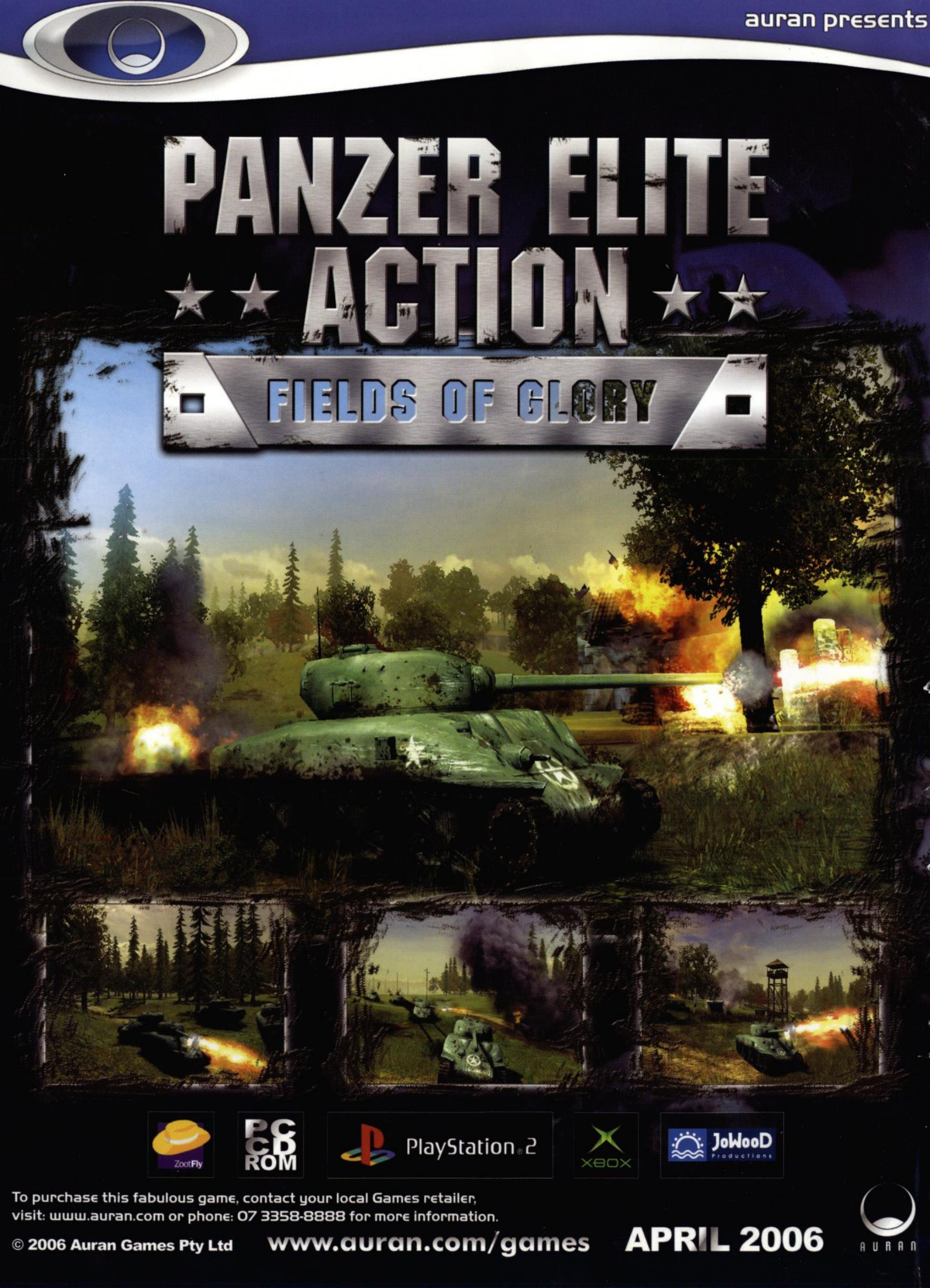
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MONO	POLY	
116612199	116612200	You Raise Me Up-Westlife
116612195	116612196	When You Tell Me That
116612197	116612198	Desperado-Westlife
116610165	116610166	You're Beautiful-James Blunt
116612182	116612183	You're Beautiful (Chorus)...
116612099	116612100	You're Beautiful (Techno)
116610926	116610927	High-James Blunt
116612095	116612096	High(Disco Mix)-James Blunt
116610922	116610923	Tripping-Robbie Williams
116613408	116613409	Advertising Space-Robbie Williams
116610101	116610102	Feel Good Inc.-Gorillaz
116612091	116612092	DARE-Gorillaz

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