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**Official Xbox Magazine**

**ONLY POSSIBLE ON XBOX**

- 1 **Jet Set Radio Future**
- 2 **Wreckless**
- 3 **Enclave**
- 4 **Brute Force**

Amazing new screenshots of games that simply can't be done on any other system!



**! IMPORTANT !  
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REVIEWS  
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**THE COMPLETE STORY**

# HALO

**FROM START TO SHOCKING FINISH:  
SURVIVING THE GAME OF THE YEAR**

**BETTER THAN  
DEAD OR ALIVE 3?!**

**THERE'S A  
NEW FIGHTER  
IN TOWN...**



**GAMING  
FOR YOUR SOUL**

**BLOOD  
OMEN 2  
GOES FOR THE JUGULAR**



**FIRST REVIEW!**



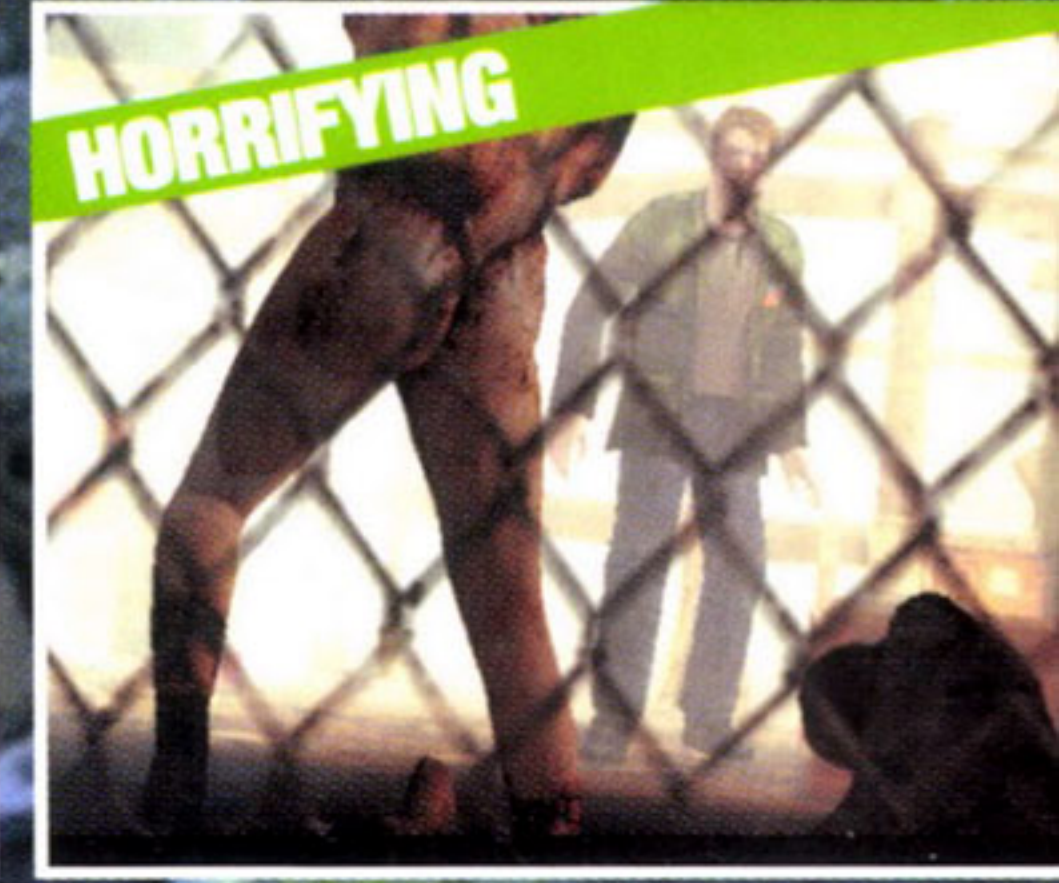
**REVIEWED**

- Munch's Oddysee*
- Amped*
- Silent Hill 2X*
- NHL 2002*
- The Simpsons Road Rage*
- NASCAR Thunder*
- AND MORE!**

**TOTAL FREEDOM**



**HORRIFYING**



**DOH!**



January 2002 Issue #2

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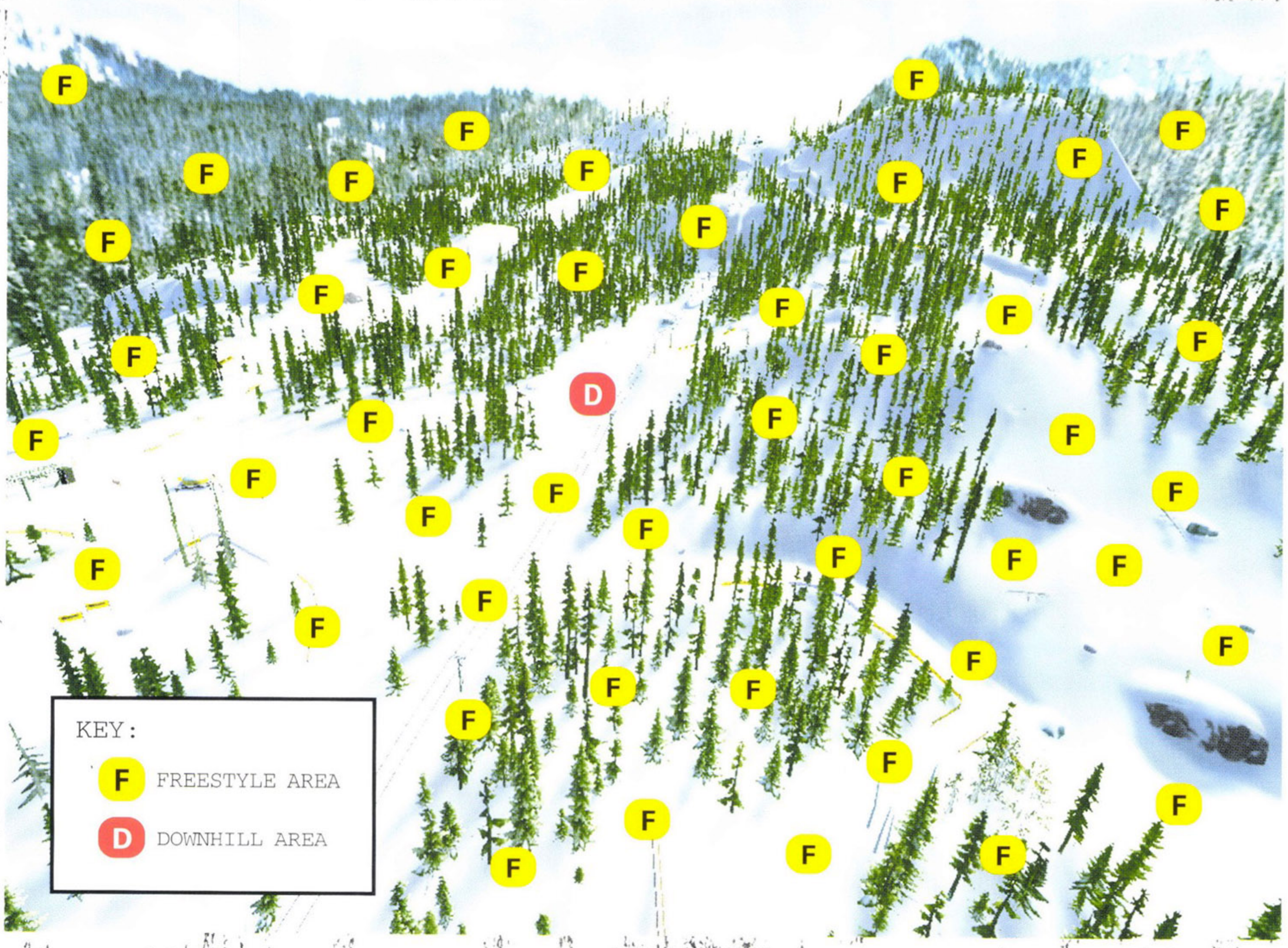
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# CHECK IT! IT'S THE AMPED GUIDE TO FREESTYLE!

A BASIC GUIDE TO THE MOUNTAIN





**THE RODEO FLIP** Also known as the "Don't Try This At Home." The nice part of this trick is that once you're insane enough to try it, you're probably ready for a magazine cover.



The nice thing about freestyle is that you can huck in the park (fig. A) or boost in the pipe (fig. B) and crack your pelvis either way.

**THE MEDIA INTERVIEW**

Dos and Don'ts



**DON'T:**

Forget the shout-out  
Act like you care

**DO:**

Act sullen  
Speak incoherently

**POCKET PHRASE  
TRANSLATOR**

**ENGLISH:**

"THAT WAS A NICE TRICK."

**FREESTYLE:**

"DAG!"

**ENGLISH:**

"I LIKE YOUR PANTS."

**FREESTYLE:**

"DAG."

**ENGLISH:**

"I THINK I'VE FRACTURED MY PELVIS."

**FREESTYLE:**

"DAG."

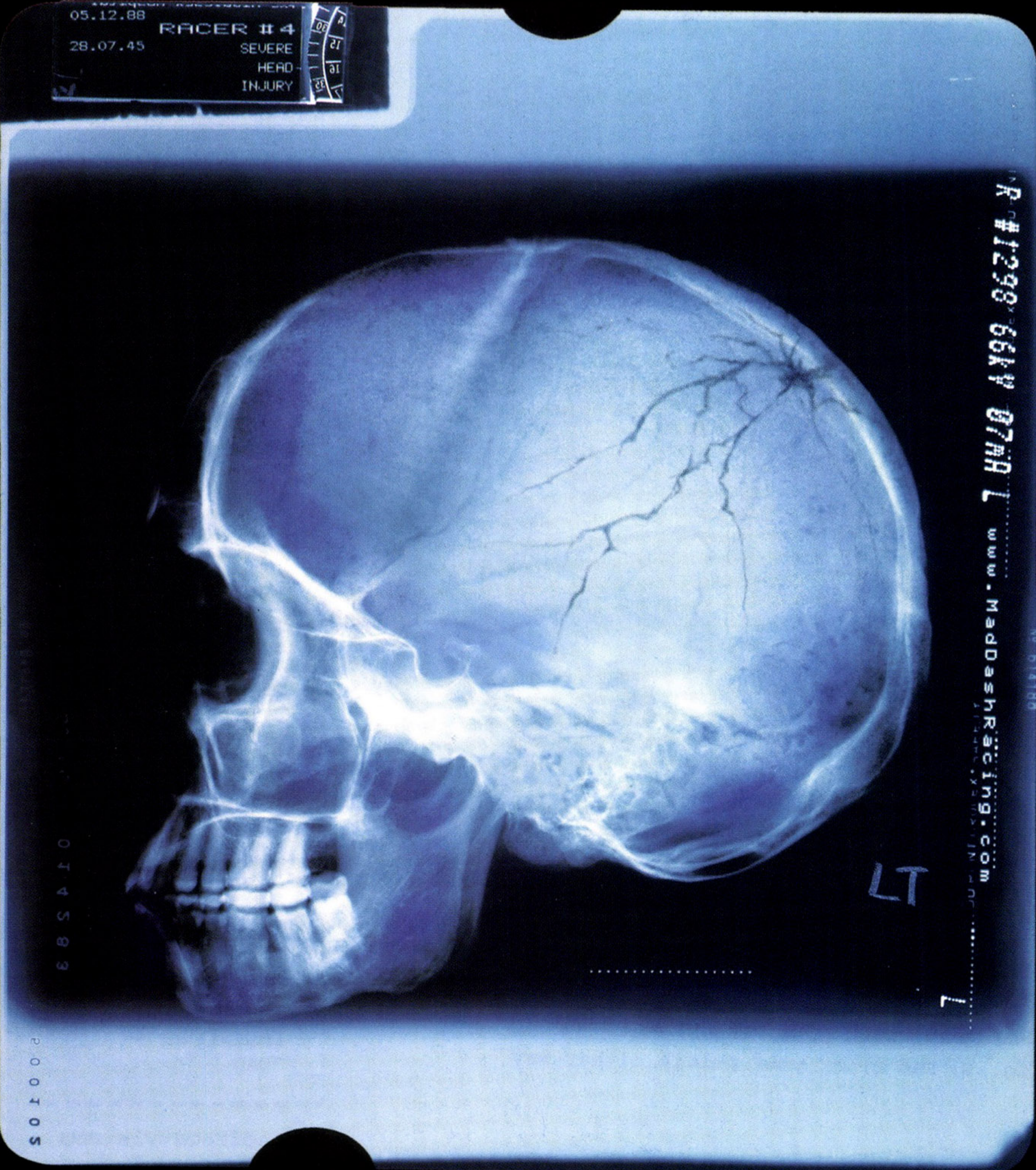
[ampedfreestyle.com](http://ampedfreestyle.com)

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FREESTYLE SNOWBOARDING

**STYLE ISN'T EVERYTHING...  
JUST KIDDING**



XBOX



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**TEEN**  
**T**  
CONTENT RATED BY  
**ESRB**  
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MILD LANGUAGE  
MILD LYRICS

**EIDOS**  
INTERACTIVE  
GAMES WITH CHARACTER

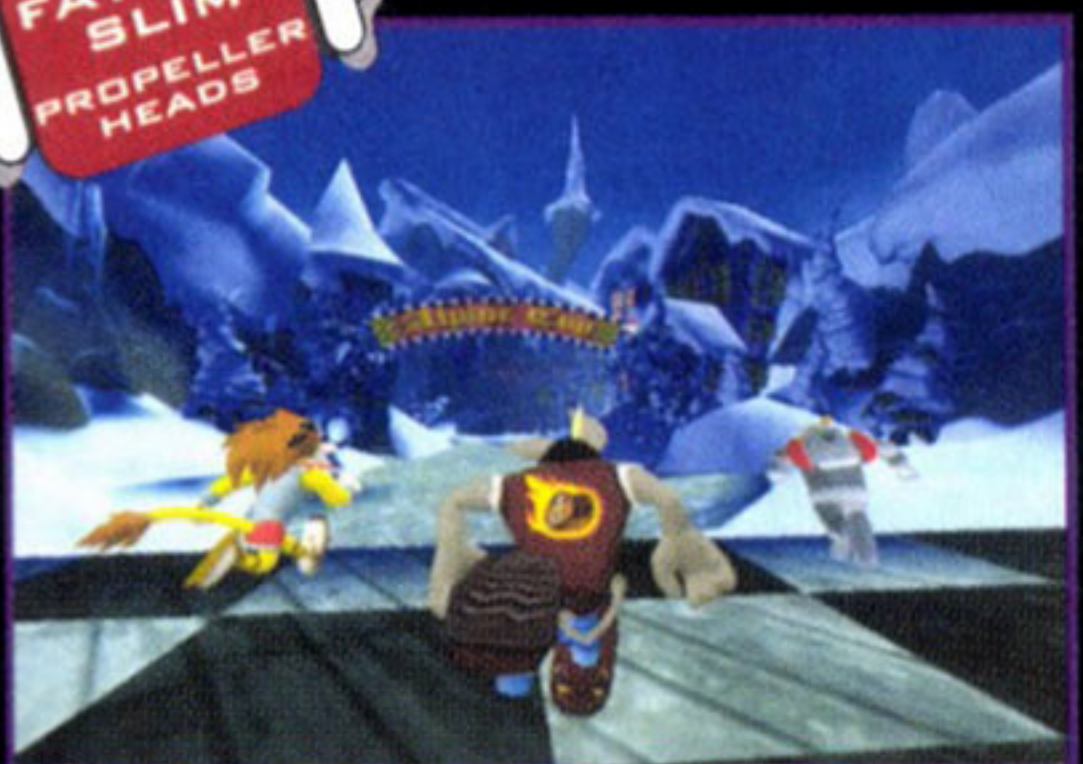


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Whatever it takes to win.

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## 12 First Look

Amazing screenshots and information, piped directly from the distant future.

- 12 ENCLAVE**  
A third-person adventure with graphics to die for. *Enclave* is a true beauty.
- 16 BRUTE FORCE**  
Wondering what Microsoft will do to follow up on *Halo*? Check out *Brute Force*.

## 20 All Access

Hey, this month we save your aching wrists by rounding up and gauging some third-party controllers, and there's hot news from Japan, and we check in on the *Madden vs. Fever* debate.

## 32 Feature

**Halo walkthrough:**  
**It's huge, it's hard, it's Halo.**

We bring you a complete walkthrough of the toughest, biggest, and most incredible adventure ever to grace a console.

## 52 Previews

Worried that there aren't any great Xbox games post-launch? Worry no more.

- 52 JSRF: JET SET RADIO FUTURE**  
Sega comes to Xbox with a huge dose of its patented bump and grind.
- 58 BLOOD OMEN 2**  
An amazing new 3D world, with a beloved hero – or is Kain a villain?
- 60 FALCONE: ENTER THE MAELSTROM**  
The name may not stick in your mind, but the concept and graphics will.
- 65 KAKUTOU CHOJIN**  
With a name like that, the game formerly known as *Project KX* better be good.
- 69 WRECKLESS**  
It's time to find out what your precious Xbox is truly capable of.

## 72 Reviews

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- 80 Arctic Thunder**
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- 90 Test Drive Off-Road**
- 93 Amped**
- 94 NHL 2002**
- 97 Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2**
- 98 Shrek**

## 100 Extended Play

Real letters – real readers. That means you. Find out what the heck you were thinking, and win a Spring Break vacation, or cool Batman stuff.

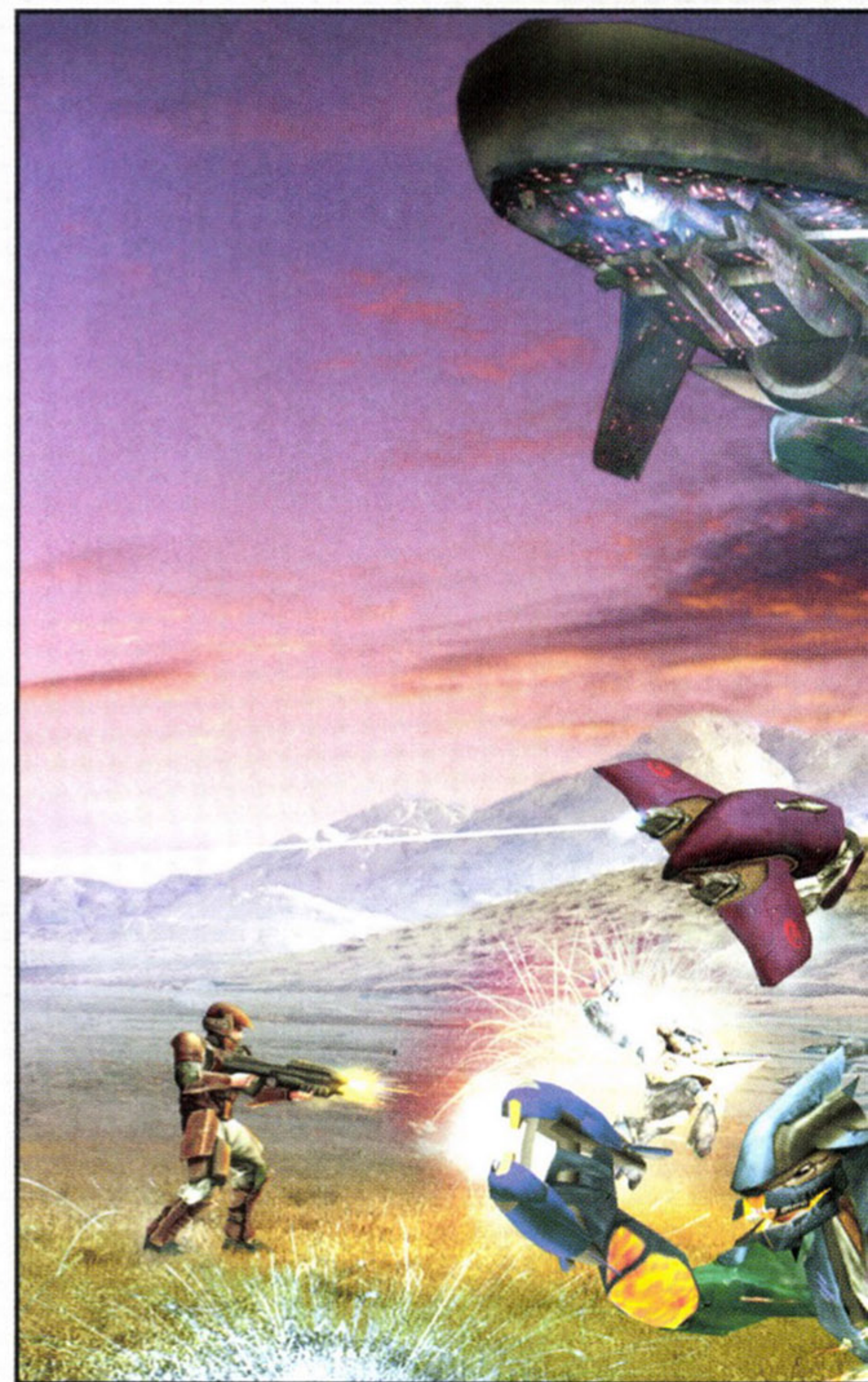
## 103 On the Disc

Or why you really subscribed...

This month's **Official Xbox Magazine** Game Disc is jam-packed with playable game demos, including *Tony Hawk 2x*, *Munch's Oddysee*, and the amazingly fun *Fuzion Frenzy*, as well as tons of video from stunners like *Amped*, *Blood Wake*, *Halo*, and a HUGE *Jet Set* trailer, with phat beats.

## 104 What, That's It?

Ten Ridiculously Tough Questions, posed to a current hero on the gaming scene. To find out who gets the rough treatment this issue, you have to read the whole magazine.



## GameFinder

Too cool to play by the rules? Quickly zap directly to your game of choice:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
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| <b>80 Arctic Thunder</b>               | <b>89 Kabuki Warriors</b>                  |
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| <b>16 Brute Force</b>                  | <b>72 Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee</b>        |
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**KAKUTOU CHOJIN PREVIEW** **FIGHT!** Page 65



**ENCLAVE** **SLICK**  
This might just be the most gorgeously, brilliantly detailed game ever rendered – and yes, it's all in real time. Page 12





**FIRST AID!**

### HALO HELPER

A complete walkthrough of the greatest game ever made. **Page 34**



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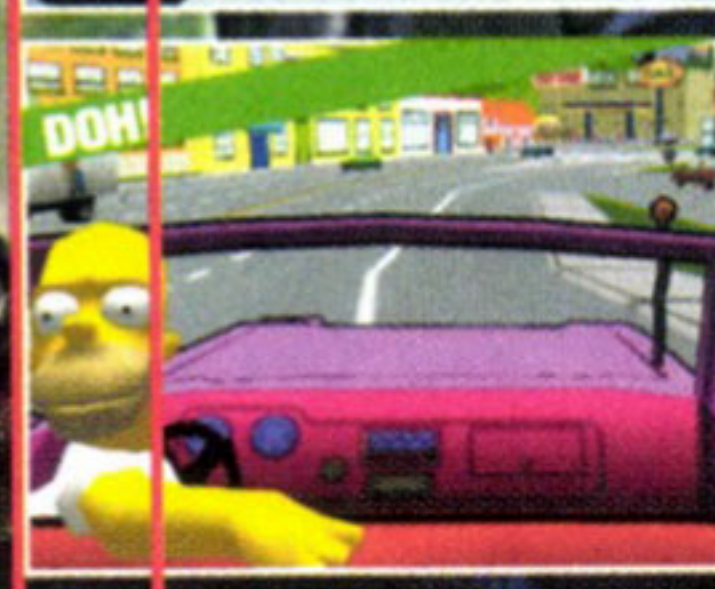
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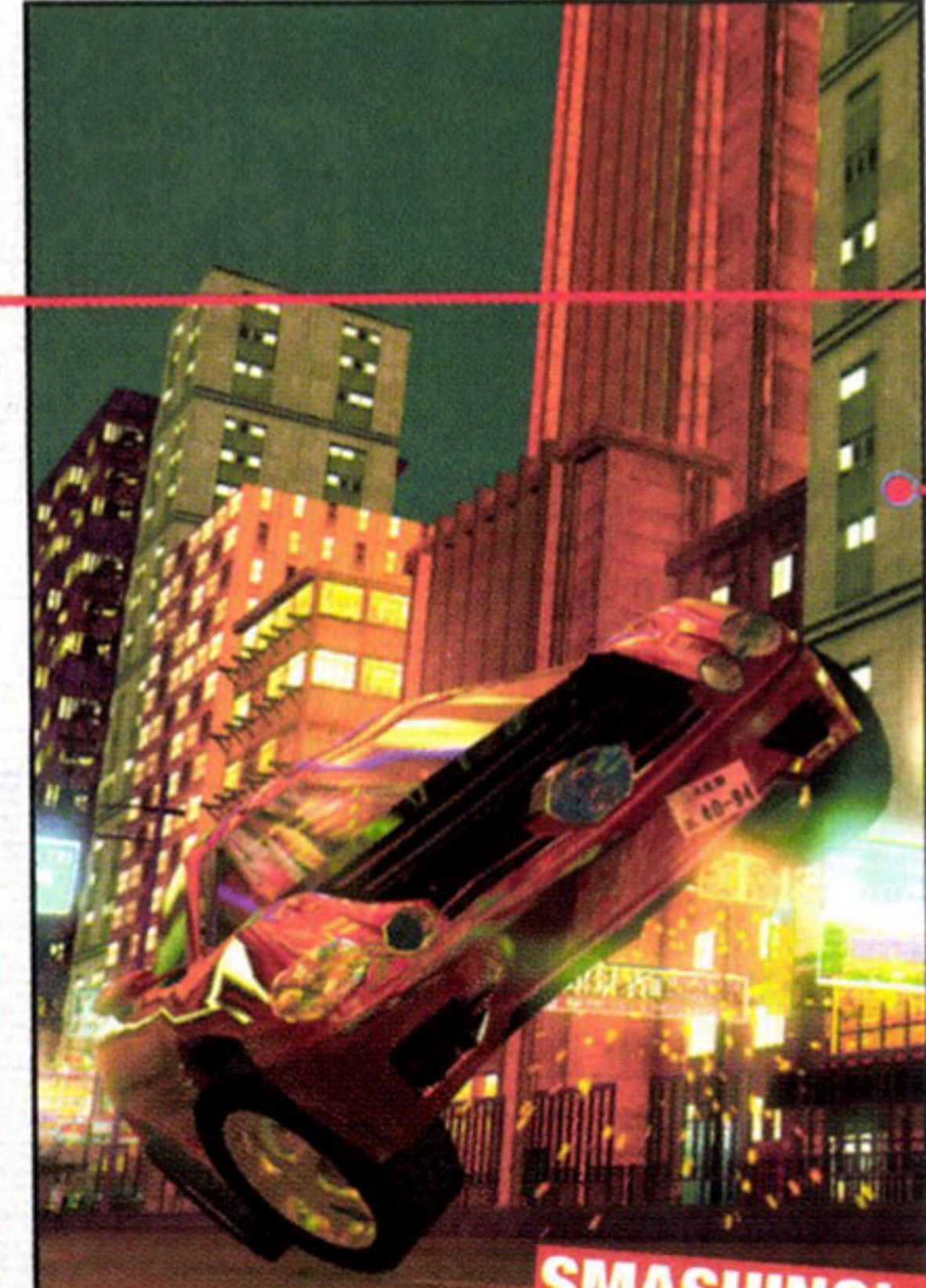
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OMEN 2  
GOES FOR THE JUGULAR**



**SMASHING!**

### WRECKLESS

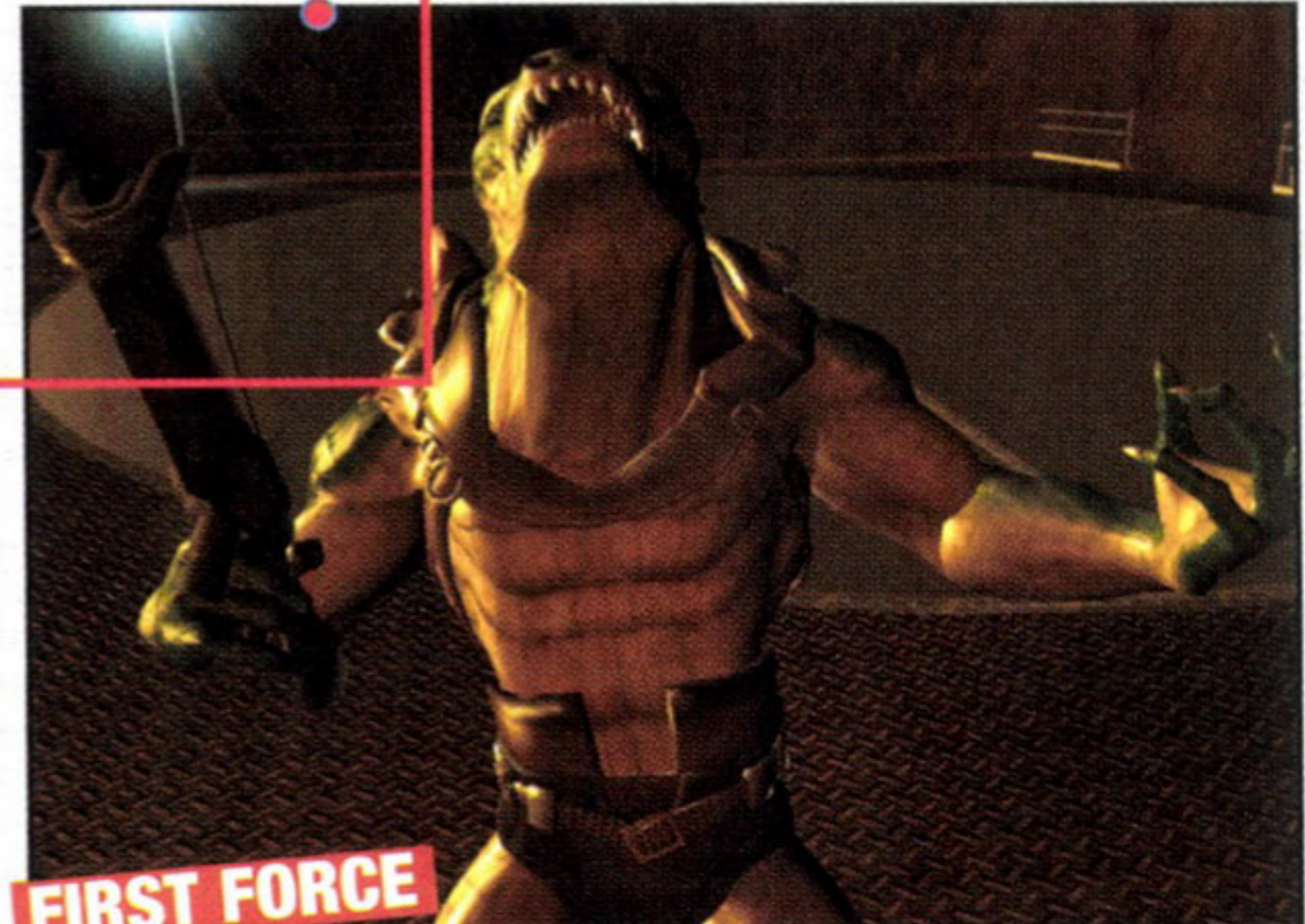
Somewhere between *San Francisco Rush* and game heaven lies *Wreckless*. **Page 69**



**CLEVER**

### MUNCH'S ODDYSEE

We finally review the Xbox's first mascot, Munch. **Page 72**



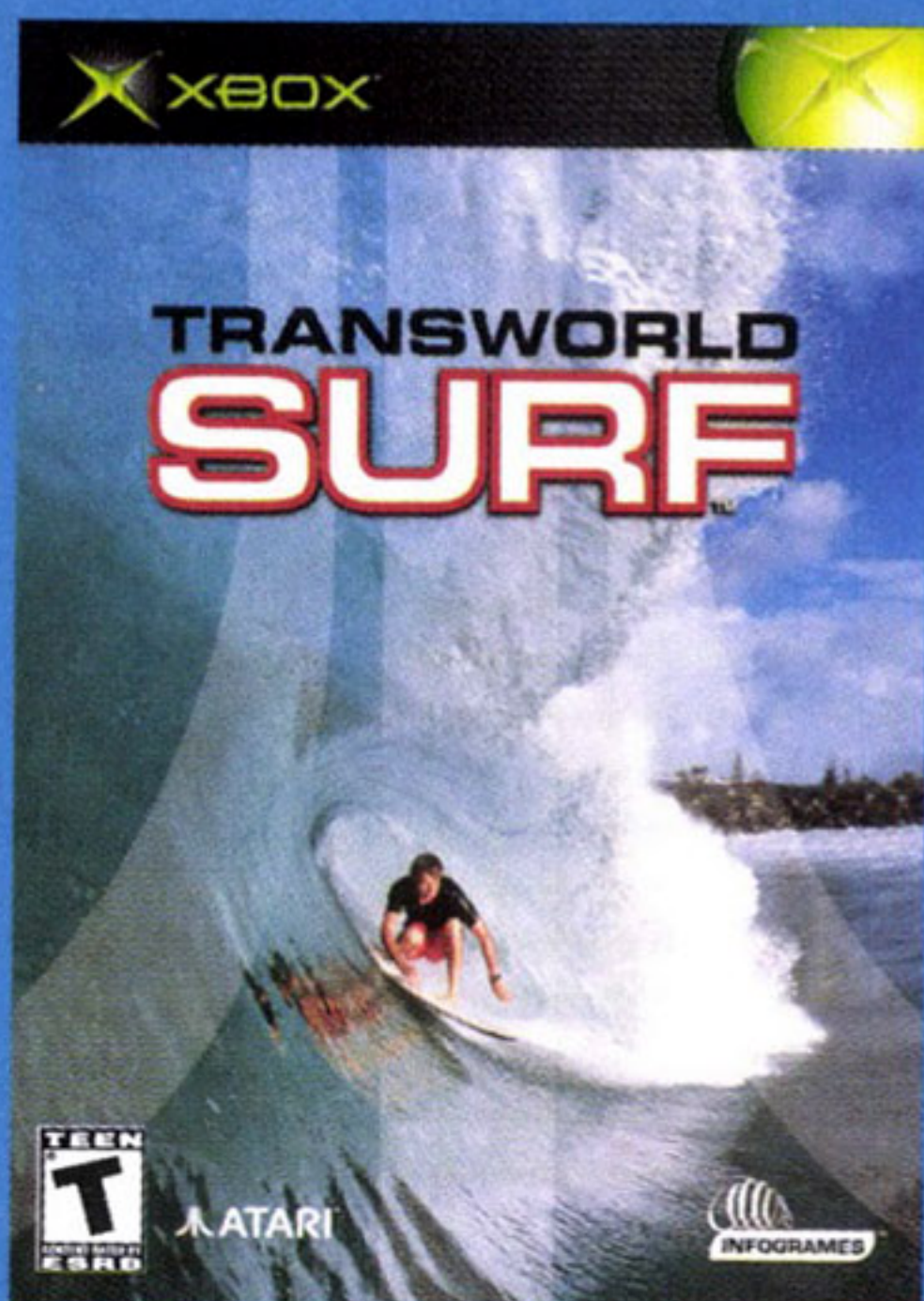
**FIRST FORCE**

**BRUTE FORCE** What's after *Halo*? **Page 16**

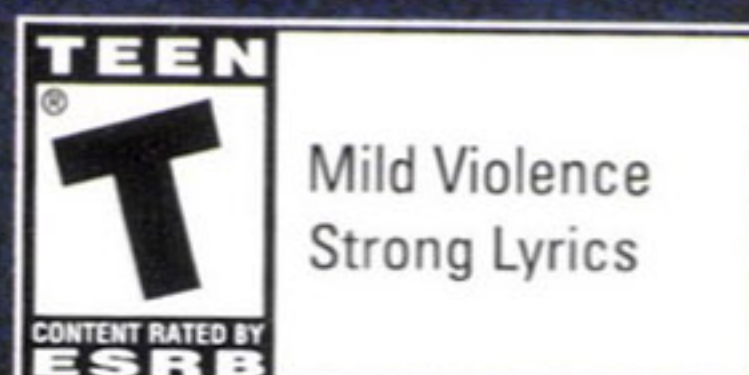
■ **KID-KRUSHA 2002:** The Xbox manual makes no fewer than 12 references to the mighty system's ability to crush children, should it fall from, say, atop a ladder. Welcome to the world of frivolous litigation. No such warnings on anvils or pianos, however.



# ADDICT



**Ultimate Surf Action.** Drop into 20 of the world's sweetest breaks with 13 of the world's hottest surfers. From Teahupoo to Pipeline to Huntington, use the moves that made guys like Taj Burrow, Andy Irons and Shane Dorian famous to pull off massive airs, blazing tailslides and hundreds of other mind-numbing tricks. Immerse yourself in an endless set of waves that look and feel like the real thing. Keep an eye on your karma meter. Hitch a ride with the Reef Girls. Watch out for hungry sharks. And remember to save your best stuff for the photographers who might put you on the in-game cover of TransWorld SURF. [www.transworldgames.com](http://www.transworldgames.com)



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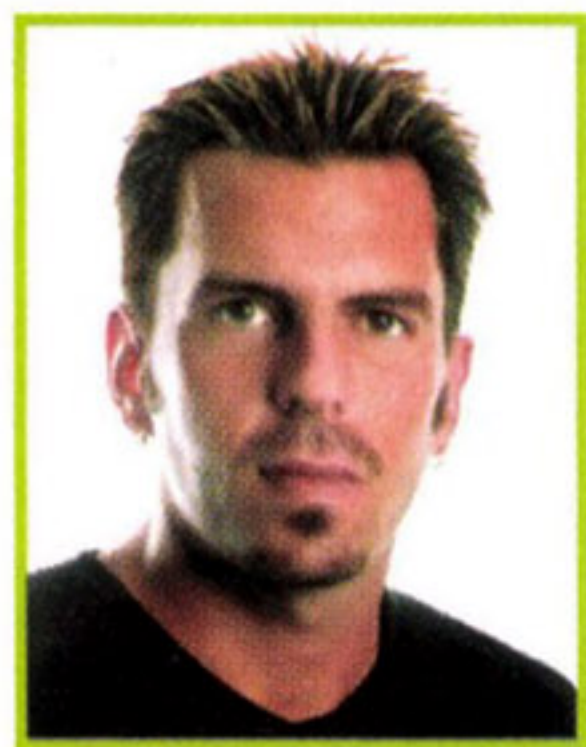




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## What next?

The excitement, the anticipation, the anxiety, and the wait – it's all over now. The hardware is complete and in its destined location under the TV. The software has gone from the neat stacks of launch day into the jumbled pile of gaming bliss. The instruction manual we once held so dear is in that drawer in the kitchen below the aluminum foil and right on top of the yellowed manuals of systems past.

It's here. It really happened. Now what the hell do we do? Post-traumatic launch syndrome is a very real concern. After all, what could possibly be as exciting as the launch of a completely new system? As ever, **Official Xbox Magazine** is here to help. Now that the system is in your hands, our magazine is morphing into a different and far superior beast. It's time for **Official Xbox Magazine** to go from the prime coffee table location to its proper place – right next to your Xbox.

From this issue forward, we have the only Xbox Game Disc in the world. Playable games, exclusive movies, and plenty more surprises to come. We want you to do much more than read this magazine: we want you to play it. Each month we will deliver a package of games, information, and entertainment that simply can't be matched.

Trying to get through *Halo*? Pause the game, flip the mag open to page 32, and keep gaming. Wondering if *Tony Hawk 2x* is really all that? Put our disc in your Xbox and try it out for yourself. Wondering what kind of games you'll be playing next year? While you're ripping your latest CD to the hard-drive, take a look at *Wreckless* (pg. 69), *JSRF* (pg. 52), *Blood Omen 2* (pg. 58), *Enclave* (pg. 12), *Brute Force* (pg. 16), or *Kakuto Chojin*, (pg. 65) and dream about the possibilities.

That old Xbox instruction manual told you how to plug in your box (and how not to crush children, but that's a different story); now your new Xbox instruction manual (the **Official Xbox Magazine**) is here to *really* plug you into the Xbox experience.



— Mike Salmon, editor-in-chief  
Official Xbox Magazine

## Meet the team

The last barrier between you and the evil forces of the video game industry. Apart from the polybag around the mag...

### Mike Salmon editor-in-chief



**If my life were a movie, it would be:** I think it would be a TV movie. Specifically, I'm thinking about the pilot of *Renegade*, starring Lorenzo Lamas. Although it's not a true movie, it has a movie-like quality that I can really identify with.  
**If I were a movie star, I would be:** Lorenzo Lamas, without a shadow of a doubt. And before you people start busting my chops about *Falcon Crest* and *Renegade* being TV shows, clearly you're forgetting the 1994 classic *Gladiator Cop*.

msalmon@imaginemedia.com

### Frank O'Connor executive editor



**If my life were a movie, it would be:** The indie film *Sexy Beast*, starring an especially distasteful Ben Kingsley as Don Logan, a foul-mouthed psycho, and Ray Winstone as Gal, who is plagued by dreams of a menacing, hairy beast. It's pretty much a biography of my split personalities.  
**If I were a movie star, I would be:** Ben Kingsley. Just like Gandhi, I never eat lunch, yet I get violent and foul-mouthed like Don Logan whenever I am hungry.

foconnor@imaginemedia.com

### Sarah Ellerman managing editor



**If my life were a movie, it would be:** *Never Been Kissed*, starring Drew Barrymore. It's about a copy editor from Illinois who was dorky in high school... hey wait a damn minute, someone's getting their ass sued.  
**If I were a movie star I would be:** Let's face it, I am Drew Barrymore in *Never Been Kissed*, or possibly even *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial*, but what I really want to be is Drew Barrymore in *Charlie's Angels* – or at least Lucy Liu. Either way, I'm not down with the dowdy-spaz-Barrymore, but rather the sassy-sexy-Barrymore.

sellerman@imaginemedia.com

### Dan Egger features editor



**If my life were a movie, it would be:** Being that I'm from Tuolumne and all, up in the High Sierras, and I still get raccoons in my bathroom, even though I moved to the big city, I reckon it would have to be *Deliverance*.  
**If I were a movie star, I would be:** Chuck Norris. Although you have to question an actor who only got his gig because of his karate skills, but now has stuntmen do his fights because he's so old. He is the MacGyver of kicking, though. There's no problem that can't be solved with a well-placed cowboy boot.

degger@imaginemedia.com

### Francesca Reyes senior editor



**If my life were a movie, it would be:** Andy Warhol's pop classic, *Sleeping*. It's, like, twelve hours of some guy sleeping. You can watch it or not watch it, but it's definitely soothing.  
**If I were a movie star, I would be:** The guy sleeping in that movie isn't technically a star, but it seems like a pretty easy gig. Just sleeping. Maybe I would be Michelle Yeoh. She's sophisticated, sexy, and can kick just about anybody's ass. Except Jade Fox, but Jade Fox was cheating, with the poison darts and whatnot.

freyes@imaginemedia.com

### Mike Wilmoth art director



**If my life were a movie, it would be:** *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*.

**If I were a movie star, I would be:** Silent Bob.

mwilmoth@imaginemedia.com

### Juliann Brown associate art director



**If my life were a movie, it would be:** I was thinking *Reality Bites*. Why? Because it does. Plus, Ethan Hawke is in it, and he always seems like he's going to cry, which I find endearing. But not *all* the time, that could get pretty annoying.  
**If I were a movie star, I would be:** Franke Potente, the chick from *Run Lola Run*, because I like the fact that she runs everywhere. Our bathroom is up on another floor at the opposite end of the building, so I identify.

jbrown@imaginemedia.com

### Dave Rees DVD editor



**If my life were a movie, it would be:** *Tremors 2*. Although I profess that my life is occasionally similar to *Tremors 1*, with the subterranean worm assaults caused by any percussive movement or noise, it's fair to say that it's more similar to *Tremors 2*, on account of the worms being much more mutated and everything.  
**If I were a movie star I would be:** Fred Ward. You may remember him from such movies as *Tremors*, and more importantly, *Tremors 2: Aftershocks*.

drees@imaginemedia.com

### Grandma Dixie cookie baker



**If my life were a movie it would be:** That *Psycho*, by that there Alferd Hitchcock feller. I could play that nice Norman Bates' mother, she's of an age with me, I like her dress and she doesn't talk too much.  
**If I were a movie star, I would be:** Julia Roberts... we both have the problem with the saggy bosoms. (*We're really, really sorry about Grandma, but when she doesn't have her medication... well, she says things. Awful, disturbing, inappropriate things.* –Ed.)

Write me a nice postcard.



Issue 02 ■ January, 2002

### WORDS AND PICTURES

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Dan Egger ■ Features Editor  
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Out here,

amongst the clouds

and the sea,

a chain gun.



Set sail aboard a torpedo-laden gunboat and while away your days destroying Devil boats, forts and shore batteries. Paradise awaits in the Dragon Sea.

Set

a course

for

destruction

# BLOOD WAKE™

[bloodwake.com](http://bloodwake.com)

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ACTUAL SCREEN SHOT

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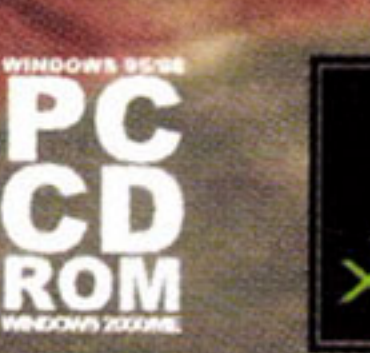
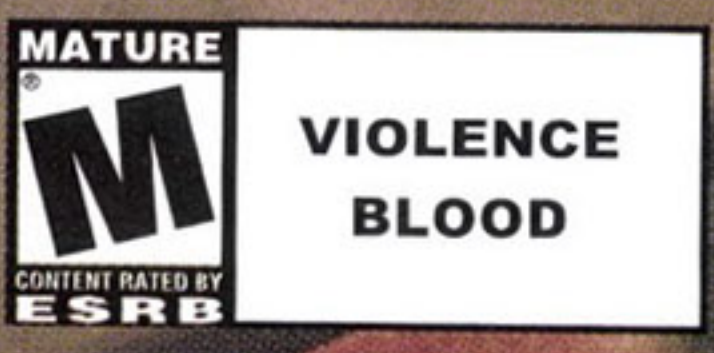
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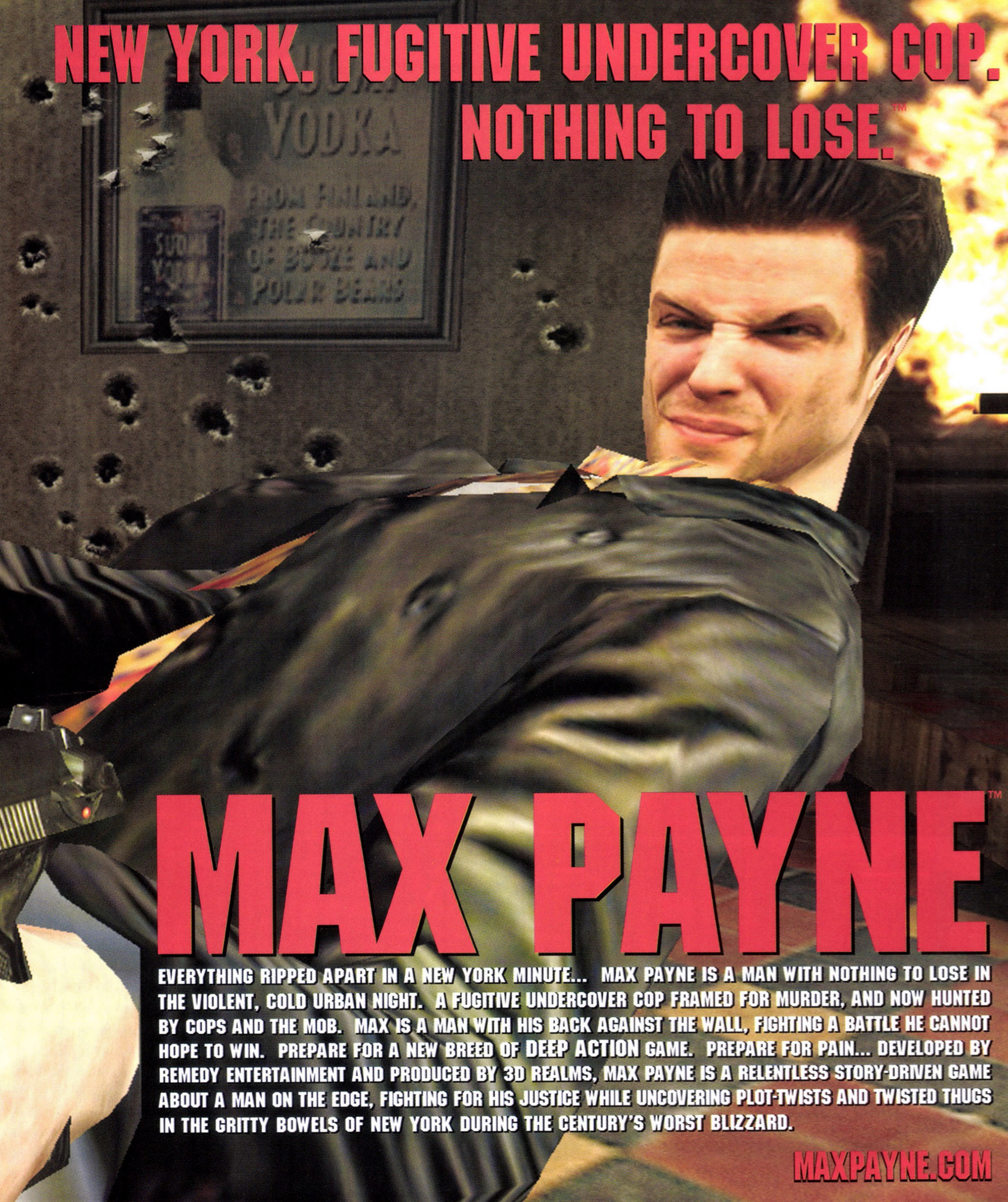
"ONE OF THE COOLEST, AND INCREDIBLY SIGNIFICANT THINGS ABOUT MAX PAYNE CAN'T BE SEEN IN ANY SCREENSHOT. IT'S THE STORY...THE STORY IS ALWAYS IN PLAY, AND EFFECTS EVERYTHING YOU DO." —3D ACTION PLANET

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PlayStation 2



A promotional image for the video game Max Payne. The character Max Payne is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark, heavily damaged leather jacket with a colorful lining. He has a determined, slightly grimacing expression. The background is a dark, metallic wall with numerous bullet holes. A framed sign on the wall reads "SUOMI YOUKKA FROM FINLAND THE COUNTRY OF BOTTLE AND POLAR BEARS". In the top right corner, there is a bright, fiery explosion. The overall tone is gritty and action-oriented.


**NEW YORK. FUGITIVE UNDERCOVER COP.  
NOTHING TO LOSE.™**

# **MAX PAYNE™**

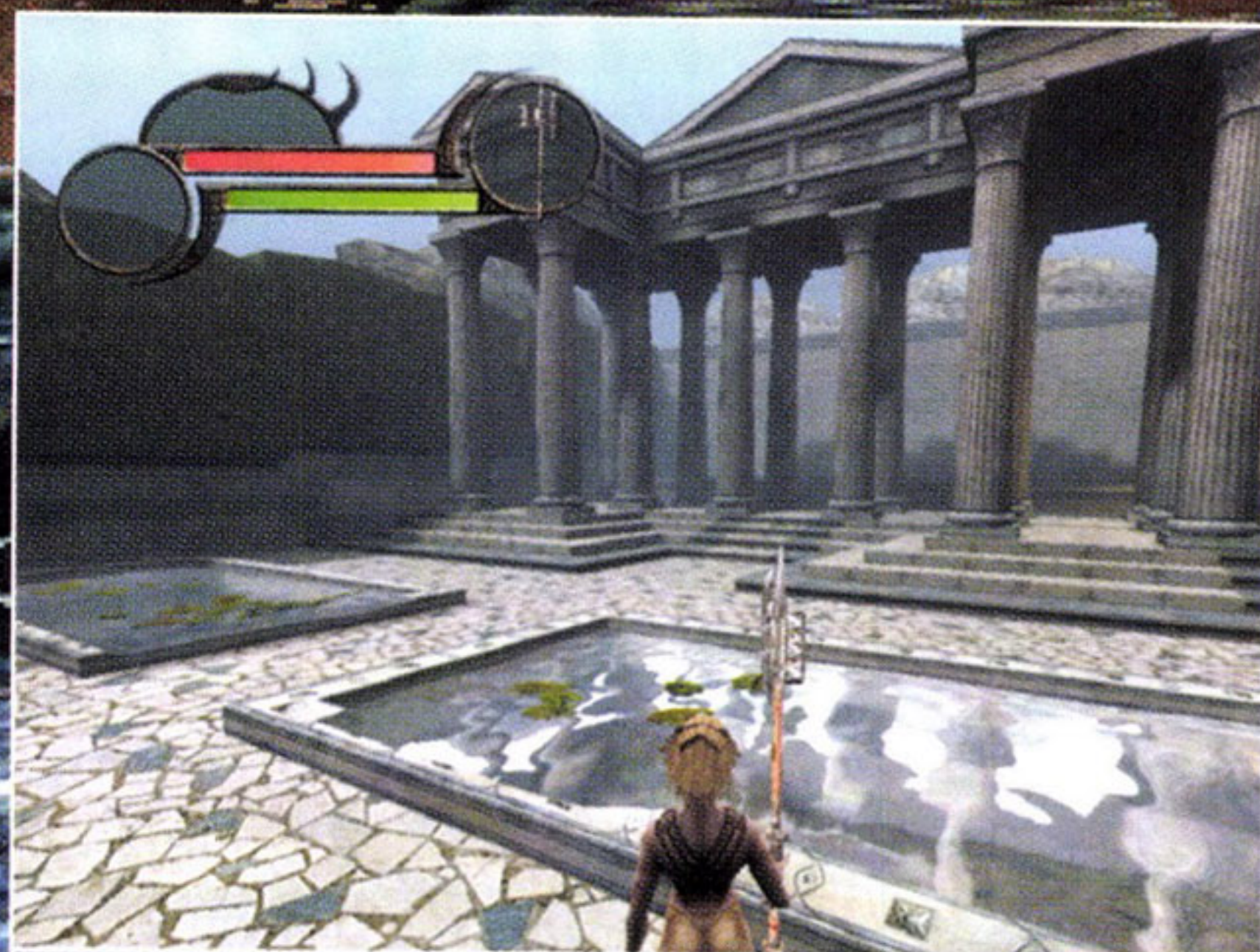
**EVERYTHING RIPPED APART IN A NEW YORK MINUTE... MAX PAYNE IS A MAN WITH NOTHING TO LOSE IN THE VIOLENT, COLD URBAN NIGHT. A FUGITIVE UNDERCOVER COP FRAMED FOR MURDER, AND NOW HUNTED BY COPS AND THE MOB. MAX IS A MAN WITH HIS BACK AGAINST THE WALL, FIGHTING A BATTLE HE CANNOT HOPE TO WIN. PREPARE FOR A NEW BREED OF DEEP ACTION GAME. PREPARE FOR PAIN... DEVELOPED BY REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT AND PRODUCED BY 3D REALMS, MAX PAYNE IS A RELENTLESS STORY-DRIVEN GAME ABOUT A MAN ON THE EDGE, FIGHTING FOR HIS JUSTICE WHILE UNCOVERING PLOT-TWISTS AND TWISTED THUGS IN THE GRITTY BOWELS OF NEW YORK DURING THE CENTURY'S WORST BLIZZARD.**

**MAXPAYNE.COM**





**Ah, excuse me, I'm trying to find the guy who runs this castle. He's supposed to be fifty feet tall and... oh.**



■ **Enclave's environmental effects, like water and weather, are state of the art.**



■ **A hot girl practices for a role as Mola Ram's stooge in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.**



DEVELOPER: Starbreeze

PUBLISHER: Conspiracy Games RELEASE DATE: 2002

# Enclave

The prettiest game you've never seen  
(well, until right now, that is)



■ Hmm. Bump-mapped walls, self-shadowing creatures with evolving AI, and HDTV support. We've come a long way since *Doom*, haven't we?

**D**eveloped in Germany by the rather friskily-named Starbreeze Studios, *Enclave* might be the best-looking game you've never heard of. Two things don't help its cause. The first is a somewhat redundant swords 'n' sorcery theme, and the second is the not-so-compelling name *Enclave*, which is right up there with *Azurik* on the Thrill-o-meter™. Frankly, though, we almost forgot our own names when we first caught sight of this title's unbelievably detailed graphics. When the cops come to investigate the theft of *all* the world's texturemaps, we know where to send 'em.

*Enclave's* gameplay is a multi-character blend of *Thief*, *Tomb Raider* (the good parts), and *Quake*. That means a hefty dose of exploration, puzzle-solving, and lots and lots of blasting. Weapons can range from little wisps of feathery magic to wall-smashing trebuchets.

Each of the game's many playable characters (an assassin, a mage, a warrior, etc.) can utilize a wide range of tactics and weaponry to defeat bosses as small and impotent as a castle guard or as large as a fifty-foot-tall lava freak that spews hot magma. For him, we'd go with the trebuchet rather than the wispy magic.

But when all is said and done, it's the environments rather than the characters that take your breath away. We're talking detailed, rich, lovingly created medieval landscapes with thick, leafy forests and huge, sprawling castle complexes. The interactive environments (shoot an arrow into a tree and it sticks there) are incorporated into gameplay (hide behind a crate and the fiend you're trying to avoid simply smashes through it) and are simply tremendous fun to explore. The lightning-fast third-person on-the-fly strafing control scheme means that all the action is quick and responsive (think *NOT Tomb Raider*). We're excited. Damn excited. **XBOX**

**Defeat a fifty-foot tall lava freak that spews hot magma.**

## Big and bad

The other standout feature in *Enclave* is the absurdly vast boss-monster archetype. We've seen two of them in action; basically, they're vast. One is a fifty-foot-tall lava-spewing magma-monster that haunts a giant lava-filled palace. The other looks very *Quake* – a fifty-foot-tall demon with tusks instead of hands. We tried reasoning with him, but he was very angry because he couldn't pick up a dime from a glass coffee table. On account of his tusk-hands, you see?

COMING SOON...

Next month we'll have a huge preview, talk to developer Starbreeze, and run so many screens your face will simply burst open and spill brains into your lap.





the **FUTURE** of China

##H#3#

DESTINY

**ONE** one

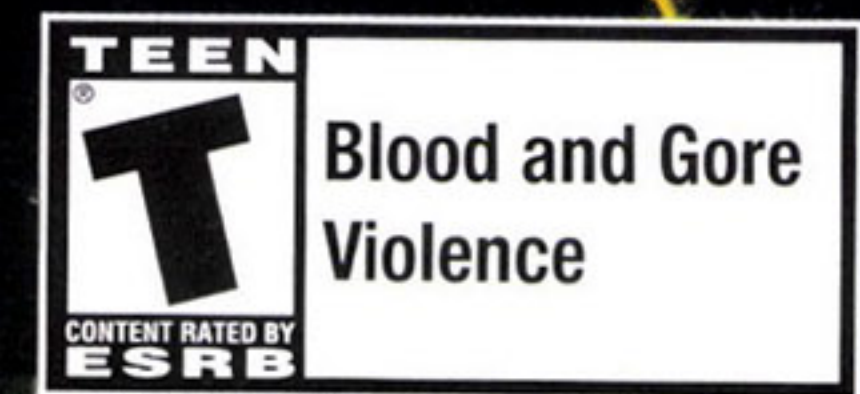


The Force Of One Man...

# NEW LEGENDS™

"Part Final Fight, part Jedi Knight, and part Unreal, New Legends is all Chinese stick-wielding, ass-kicking loveliness."

*Official Xbox Magazine*







...Can Change a Nation.



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■ Umm, isn't that your ride leaving? And isn't this planet festooned with barbaric alien scum? Just a thought.

**The graphic style of Brute Force is a remarkable mix of solid realism and smooth, almost anime-style, character models.**



## Make 'em limp like a gimp

The remarkable graphic engine featured in *Brute Force* will feature location-specific damage for every character, so if you blast an alien in the leg, he'll start limping. This is hilarious for a few seconds, but soon becomes troubling, and eventually it leaves you in a moral vacuum from which there is no escape. Empathy sucks.



DEVELOPER: Digital Anvil

PUBLISHER: Microsoft | RELEASE DATE: Q2 2002

# Brute Force

*Brutality has never been quite so refined*



■ Let's just be glad that whatever left that skeleton behind is dead, and not trying to eat you.

■ Perfect shadows and varied lighting techniques make for a weird mixture of cartoon and photorealistic appearance.



**Y**ou probably think you're too smart for *Quake*. You probably think that just running and blasting isn't taxing enough for someone of your immense tactical means. You probably want to play *Brute Force*, the stunning new tactical shooter from Microsoft.

Let's be quite clear – there is plenty of action here, but it's tempered with the ability to switch between four uniquely talented operatives: a deadeye sniper, a run-and-gun assault trooper, a sneaky scout, or a multitasking feral alien. Each character has a different way of approaching an objective, and while this is definitely a blaster, coordinating strategy will play a major part.

There are four worlds to explore in this massive game, each with a different gameplay strategy and themes running the gamut from Geiger-esque alien landscapes to a dust-covered desert planet. Add to that a massive arsenal of weaponry that includes miniguns and volumetric flamethrowers as well as the slightly more exotic sonic cannons and psychic blasts.

The graphics engine is quite something, with vast draw distances, detailed textures and convincing, yet stylized, character models. Extra attention has been lavished on both friendly/enemy AI and RPG-style character building. As the game progresses, so do your characters' skill sets and relationships. The plot is described as being on par with the best sci-fi (by the writers of the plot, so make of that what you will).

XBOX

**Extra attention has been lavished on both friendly/enemy AI and RPG-style character building.**

■ Our feral alien character joins forces with the human scout for a nice mix of alien ferocity and Terran sexiness.



COMING SOON...

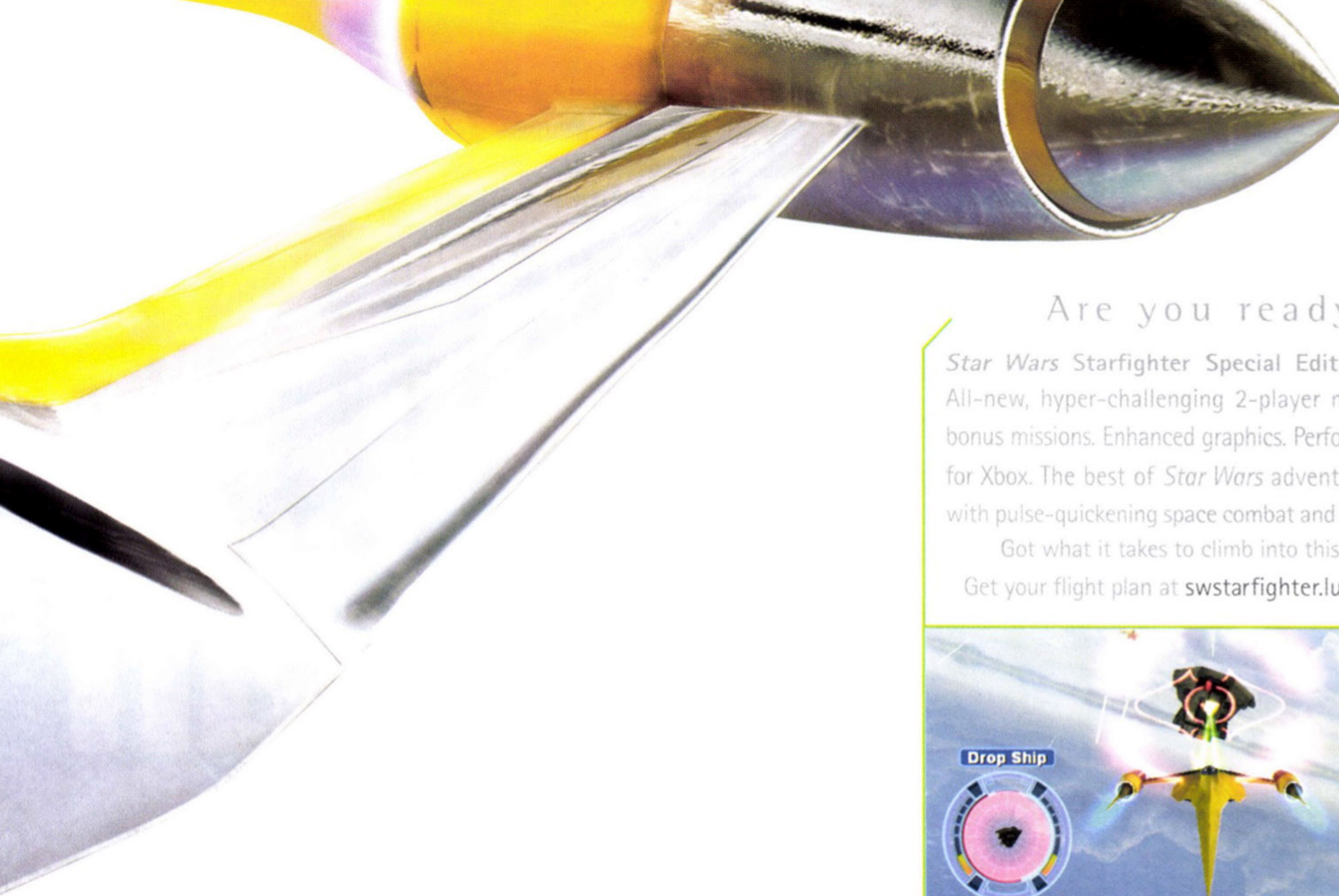
Next month we'll have a full, in-depth preview of this exciting new tactical shooter, or "tooter," as we like to call 'em. Hopefully we'll get some vid for the Game Disc, too!





It's coming.



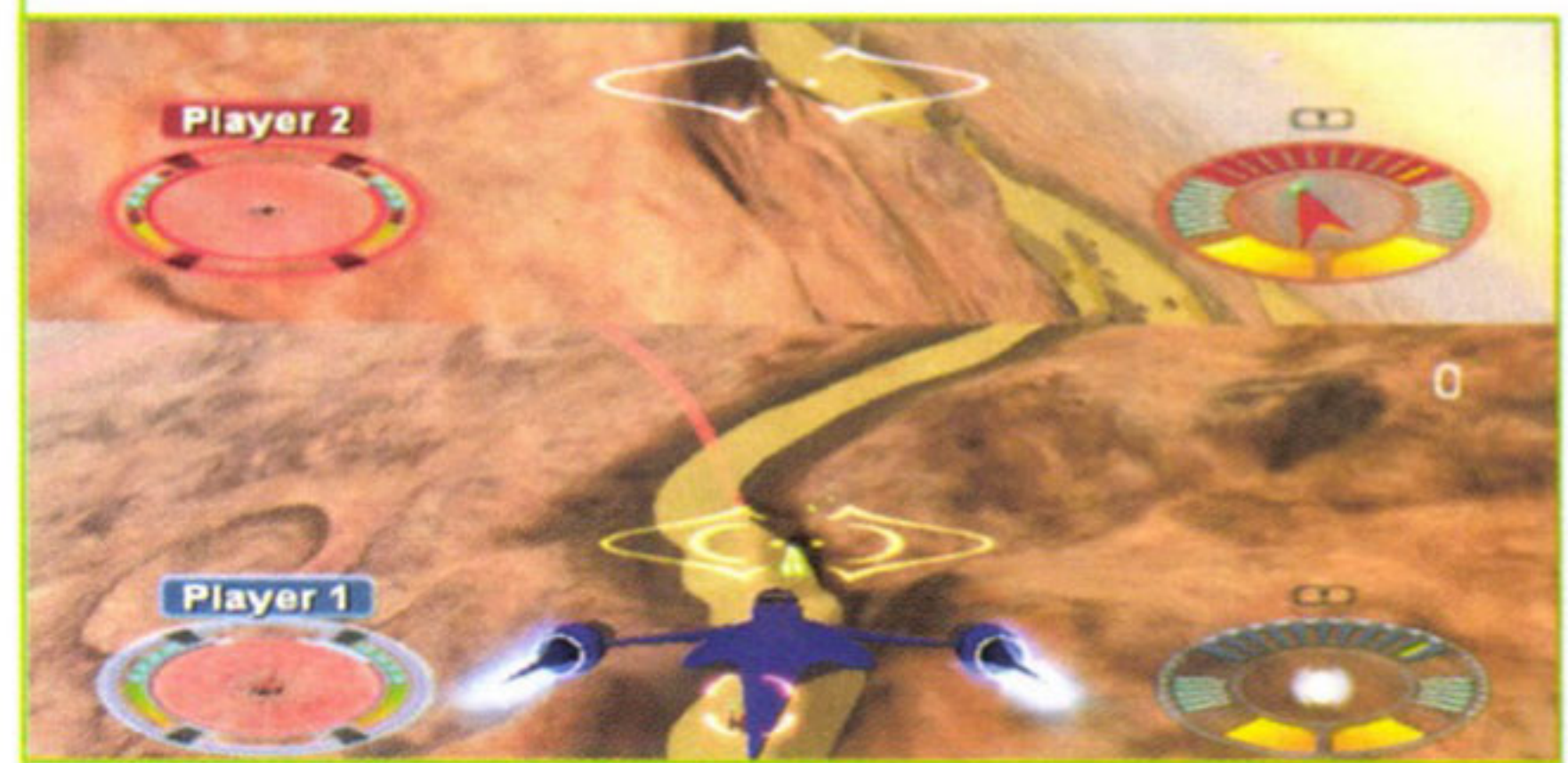


Are you ready?

*Star Wars Starfighter Special Edition* for Xbox. All-new, hyper-challenging 2-player modes. 5 new bonus missions. Enhanced graphics. Performance-tuned for Xbox. The best of *Star Wars* adventure combined with pulse-quickening space combat and blazing action.

Got what it takes to climb into this cockpit?

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# STAR WARS® STARFIGHTER™ SPECIAL EDITION

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# All Access

A backstage pass to the world of Xbox

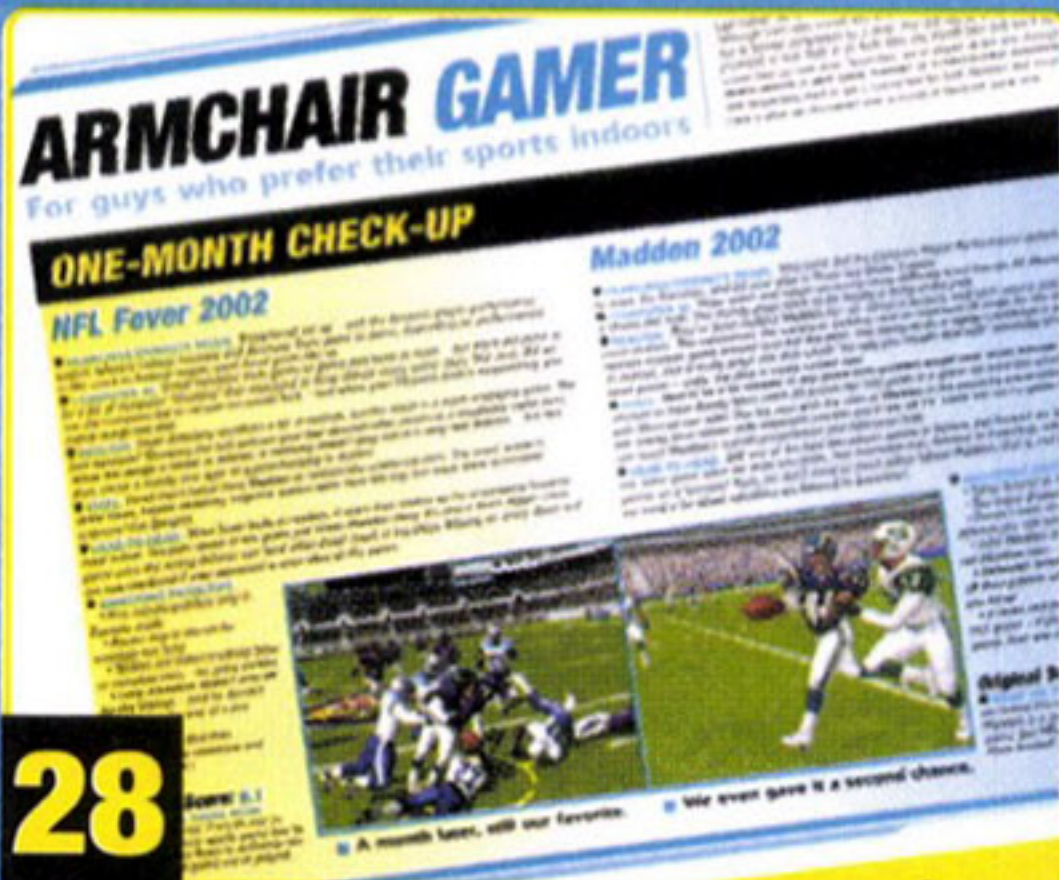
## Xbox controllers: the first wave



26

### Take control!

Xbox controller cramping your style? Grab a third-party peripheral.



28

### Madden vs. Fever

We're one month in and the debate rages on - who's the Football King?

## Toshiyuki Miyata

Product Unit Manager  
Games Production - Xbox Division



**A former executive at Sony, Miyata jumped ship to help set up Xbox Japan. We had a few minutes, a few questions, and he had some answers.**

**Us:** PS2 and GameCube are already on the market in Japan. Since it is scheduled for a February 22 launch, Xbox is going to miss the end of the year. Do you think this is a handicap?

**Him:** We think a hardware life cycle is quite long compared to what people generally think. I mean, it represents four to five years. So we believe the console will have plenty of time to prove it is great and develop.

**Us:** One of Xbox's strong points is certainly its online capability. In Japan, ADSL is developing rapidly, but it is still too early to know if it will catch up in time. What other strengths will the Xbox use to compete with the other consoles?

**Him:** We will compete in many ways. The first one is obvious: graphics. They can reach a level no other consoles can. We have the games, impressive ones, using the potential of the console. You also have the sound system, 5.1 channel, which manages sound in a realtime way in 3D. You see: we are not unarmed. This machine is powerful and very easy to develop on. It is the best environment

to make games. It is actually a guarantee of software support for the console.

The hard-drive is going to be another key element of Xbox success. There are many other ways to use it, other than online application. But regarding online use, this HDD will be a key element. As you mentioned, ADSL is spreading fast across the country, thanks to Yahoo BB. In countries like South Korea, the government made the political decision to develop the broadband connection through the country. The result is outstanding and I think the same can be achieved in Japan.

Of course, the situation is very different here. I believe private groups like NTT, KDDI,

# Xbox storms Japan

Fall 2001 marked a seismic change in the videogame history of Japan. At the center of this change is a new competitor in the Japanese market - the Xbox. Microsoft has finally begun to look like a legitimate contender in a market absolutely dominated by Sony. Just look at what's going on in the Xbox world of Japan.

Some random Xbox employee gets hold of a microphone at TGS - security!



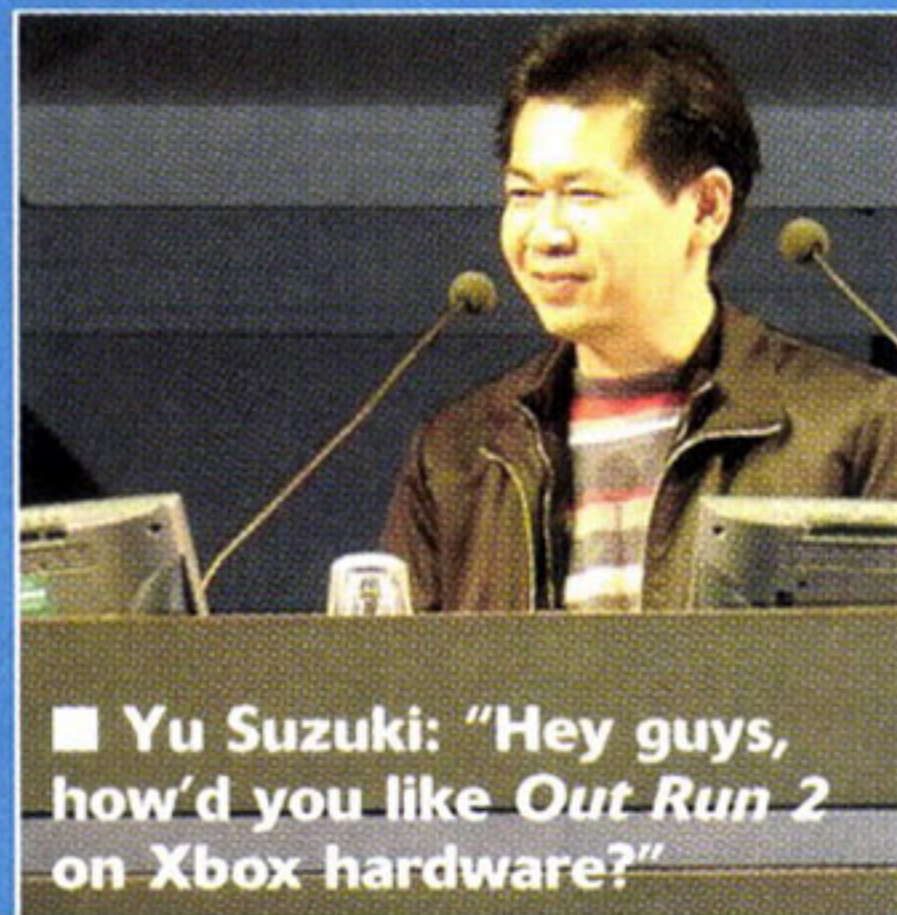


## TGS: JUST ONCE A YEAR

It's been officially announced: there will be only one TGS per year, and it will take place in the fall. Just looking at Autumn TGS 2001, it's easy to see why. The console that made the biggest splash was easily the Xbox because Sony and Nintendo focused on their own private shows earlier in the year. Sega was finally back... but was planning its own show for next year. Considering all this, a single TGS per year would make the show more important to game companies.

## SEGA: BACK – MIGHTY AND UNSTOPPABLE

Sega is back, and everyone knows it. TGS was a return to the fold for industry giant Sega, always a premier first-party developer, and now a stunning third-party developer. Some of Sega's best teams are headed over to Microsoft's new console, much to our delight. Here is what each developer is working on right now.



■ Yu Suzuki: "Hey guys, how'd you like *Out Run 2* on Xbox hardware?"

### Wow Entertainment

Working on the graphically impressive *Major League Baseball 3* (which will be *World Series Baseball 2k-whatever* when it comes over here).

### Hit Maker

*Crazy Taxi Next* is certainly on the way... and if you checked out the ads in our Preview Issue you'd know that *Virtua Tennis* will follow shortly thereafter – or so it would seem.



### AM2

Yu Suzuki's legendary development studio is converting *Shenmue 2* on Xbox and developing an arcade board based on the Xbox. Titles such as *Out Run 2* and *Virtua Cop 3* are in development for this system.



### Sonic Team

Sonic Team is currently working on the Xbox version of *Phantasy Star Online* for the Xbox. Although this game is in development for several different systems, the Xbox is the only one with a broadband adapter built-in.

### Smilebit

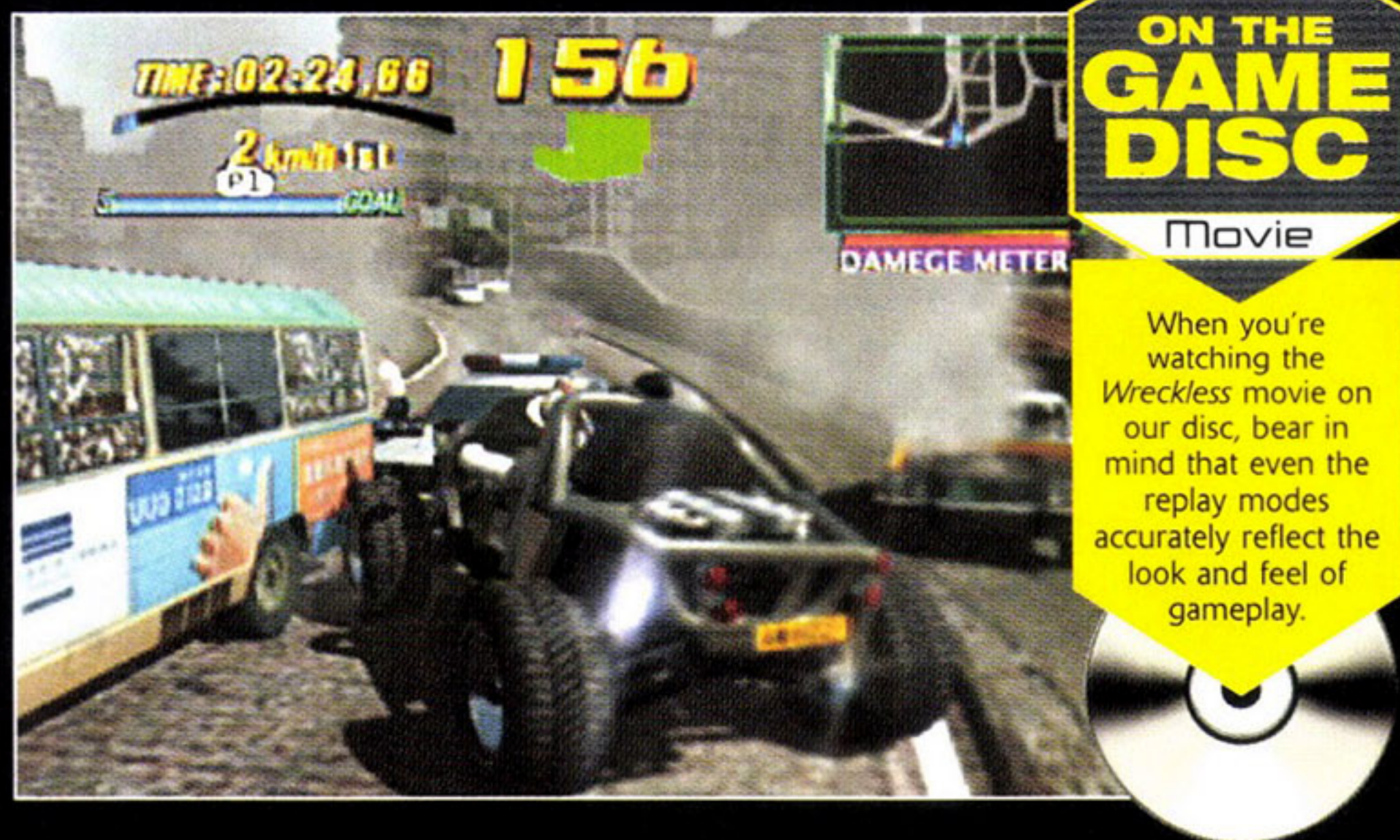
Two big Xbox titles are coming out of this development studio: *Jet Set Radio Future* and *Panzer Dragoon Next*. The first is a sequel to the beautiful Dreamcast rollerblading game, and the second is a next-generation update of a beloved shooting game. Both are greatly anticipated by the hardcore gaming community.

## XBOX STANDOUTS IN JAPAN

Microsoft made the biggest splash of any console company at Fall TGS 2001. Its strength, of course, was the games. Here is a short list of the titles that most caught the attention of Japanese gamers:

### Double S.T.E.A.L. [Wreckless in the US] (Bunkasha):

By far, this was the most visually impressive Xbox game at the show. The Instant Replay mode looks absolutely phenomenal and plays well, too. More importantly, this is the very first example of what could come from small developers. They see Xbox as the only platform they can work on. With more of these companies coming to Xbox, we can expect more surprise titles like *Double S.T.E.A.L.* (for more on *Wreckless* see page 69).



When you're watching the *Wreckless* movie on our disc, bear in mind that even the replay modes accurately reflect the look and feel of gameplay.



### Jet Set Radio Future (Sega, Smilebit):

The game is great and will not disappoint fans of the DC version. While a PS2 version is rumored for 2002, this Xbox version is one of the best Sega achievements on the console so far and includes a revamped engine with greater draw distance and lots more cel-shaded detail (for more on *JSRF*, see page 52).



### Dead or Alive 3 (Tecmo):

Nothing new regarding this title, which was playable and actually a hair's breadth from totally complete for this TGS. The Japanese press was very impressed, as were the consumers who lined up around the booth to play it. In a word: glorious, but you already knew that.



### Genma Onimusha (Capcom):

The game is technically the same as the PS2 version. The gameplay has been redesigned, though, and it offers a greater challenge. The main difference is the introduction of a green power-up that adds strength to the main character or his enemies if they get the power-up first.



### Maximum Chase (Microsoft):

Programmed by Genki for Microsoft Japan, this title impressed people technically. It plays like *Driver* with additional gameplay modes, including shooting! The action moves from densely-packed and trafficked city streets to the dusty backroads of California, and all the while you're being chased by crooked cops, gun-toting psychopaths, and mysterious men in long black Cadillacs. Next issue we'll have a full preview on this game, honest.

or others have more power than the government itself! But we know that people are thirsty [for] this broadband access. So, as a member of this private sector, our impact on this coming broadband society is important. In that perspective, Xbox will be one leader on this market.

**Us:** Major developers are coming to Xbox. They are developing titles according to the market. Is Microsoft first party trying to focus on new game genres to widen the market?

**Him:** I think the most important issue for users is if they would be able to play their

favorite games on Xbox, or not. For example, the fact they would be able to enjoy a great *Ridge Racer* on Xbox will reassure them. I think this is a very important issue. So the involvement of the major Japanese makers on Xbox is a very important thing.

At Microsoft, we have another issue in mind. We have to demonstrate the potential of the machine. In that perspective, we have to show how much our machine can offer very advanced features, how fun it can be using these unique features. So we would focus on originality and innovation.

We want to spread the message "because it is Xbox." Because it is Xbox, this is possible or this can be enjoyed in this

unique way. So naturally users will come to Xbox in greater number. But we would not target at specific markets, for example girls or old persons, etc. This is not our way or strategy. I believe our titles will have enough power to attract people so according to the case, girls would come to one title, etc.

**Us:** You mentioned originality and innovation. Do you think the current Xbox lineup is offering this level of originality and innovation? Are you satisfied with the current offering?

**Him:** I don't know how much power we can put in the words "innovative" or "originality." I

mean, it is hard to tell. I think it is important to lead. You can release a very innovative or original title, but if users do not follow you, this would be only a creator satisfaction.

**Us:** Microsoft designed a smaller controller for the Japanese market. Doesn't the large size of the Xbox itself offer a similar problem?

**Him:** We wanted a design allowing the console to sit beside the television and allow broadband access. Our idea was very different from Nintendo's mobile concept, which allows users to transport the console everywhere. We wanted to put inside the box all the features we have in mind like the HDD, even if it would make the final product a little big.



# A bit of the old this and that

If it's important to the Xbox, we've got it here:

## The monkeys are coming!

**The news:** Intrepid Studios, a satellite of Peter Molyneux's Lionhead studios has unveiled its first Xbox game, *BC*. This action-strategy game is set in prehistoric times and places players smack-dab in the middle of an evolutionary war between apes and humans. No release date has been set for the title yet.

**Why it's important:**

Intrepid is packed full of ex-Bullfrog staffers, which means that Peter Molyneux will assist the production with his hands-on experience and know-how.

**The Official Xbox Magazine take:**

The concept sounds awesome, and we love what these guys have done in the past. And all you have to do is read *Robot/Monkey Apocalypse* (below) to see how we feel about evolution-themed horror.



## Xbox expands development stable



**The news:**

Microsoft has signed on five more development studios to create games that will be published as first-party titles. The developers include Argonaut (*Croc*), Just Add Monsters (*Medieval, Frogger*), Mesa Logic (*Area 51*), Presto Studios (*Myst III: Exile*) and Studio Gigante (*Mortal Kombat, NFL Blitz 2000*).

**Why it's important:**

Stays true to Microsoft's plan of snagging smaller developers and giving them the resources to make a major impact.

**The Official Xbox Magazine take:**

None of these companies have created any, uh, "must have" games yet, but then again, look at what Bungie did with *Halo*.

## Price and date for Xbox Euro



**The news:**

During the X01 conference in Cannes, Microsoft finally confirmed both the price and

date for the Xbox when it launches in Europe. The console will cost £299 (approximately US\$434) at launch and will hit Eurostores on March 14, 2002.

**Why it's important:**

Due to the fact that Japan will likely be a difficult market for the US-based Xbox, Microsoft needs a strong showing in Europe if it hopes to achieve worldwide success.

**The Official Xbox Magazine take:**

The X01 conference was a major success in terms of media mindshare. The European press was very critical of the Xbox before the show, but many were greatly impressed after seeing Microsoft's console in action and getting lager-ed up down the pub on pints of Scruttock's Old Dirigible.

## Xbox repair gurus named

**The news:**

Microsoft has inked a deal with third-party manufacturer Solectron Global Services to handle all North American Xbox quality control and repair services. The company will also handle manufacturing logistics and quality control services for pre-launch production of the console.

**Why it's important:**

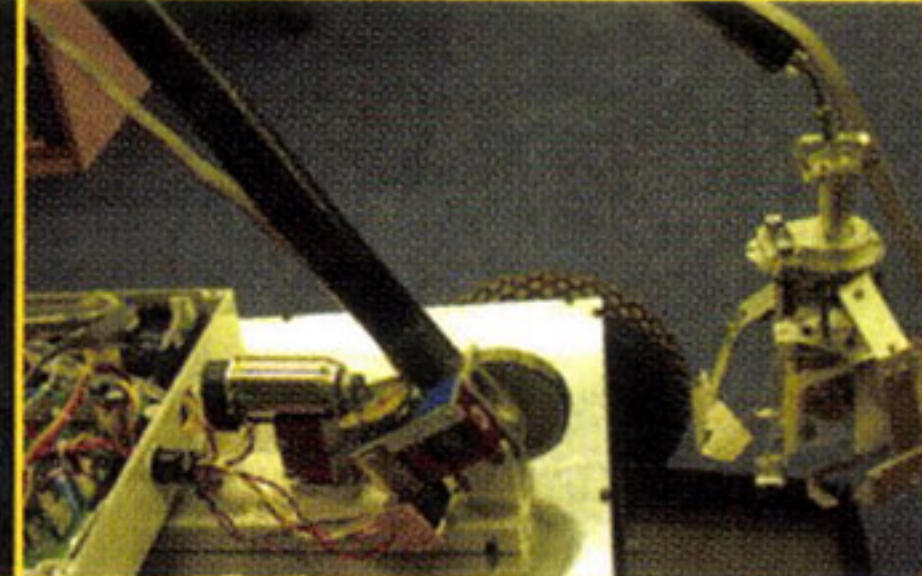
Solectron is a major competitor in the manufacturing business with Flextronics, the company that's making the Xbox hardware.

**The Official Xbox Magazine take:**

Xbox repair? Problems? Should this be making us nervous? Nah.



## Robot/Monkey Apocalypse: Episode III Flesh-Eating Tunneling Subterranean Deathbot



The Intelligent Autonomous Systems Laboratory at the University of the West of England in Bristol (<http://www.ias.uwe.ac.uk/goto.html?slugbot>) has taken us a step closer to the brink of an invertebrate-fueled holocaust, with its invention of a tunneling

robot that perpetuates its underground rampage by powering mighty fuel cells with the energy produced by, get this, eating slugs. It's only a matter of time before it turns its attention to primates. Monkeys first, and then humanity.

- Monkey count: 1
- Robot count: 1
- Death/injuries: Thousands (of slugs)
- Apocalypse rating: 2 mushroom clouds

# GameWatch

Our finger on the pulse of the future. Or something like that



## Rallisport

**Projected release:** Spring 2002

**The good stuff:** Rally racing is huge in Europe, absolutely huge. So it should come as no surprise that Microsoft already has a rally racing game scheduled for the European launch. The good news is that it looks great, includes 25 different licensed rally cars, and features a ton of tracks and gameplay modes.

**The scary stuff:** Rally racing isn't quite as big in the US as it is in Europe.



## SWAT: Global Strike Team

**Projected release:** Q3 2002

**The good stuff:** The game's late 2002 release date should ensure online compatibility, and *SWAT*'s mix of fast shooter action and smart tactical planning should make it a killer app. We happen to know that basically ALL online games will support voice, so prepare for a lot of yelling.

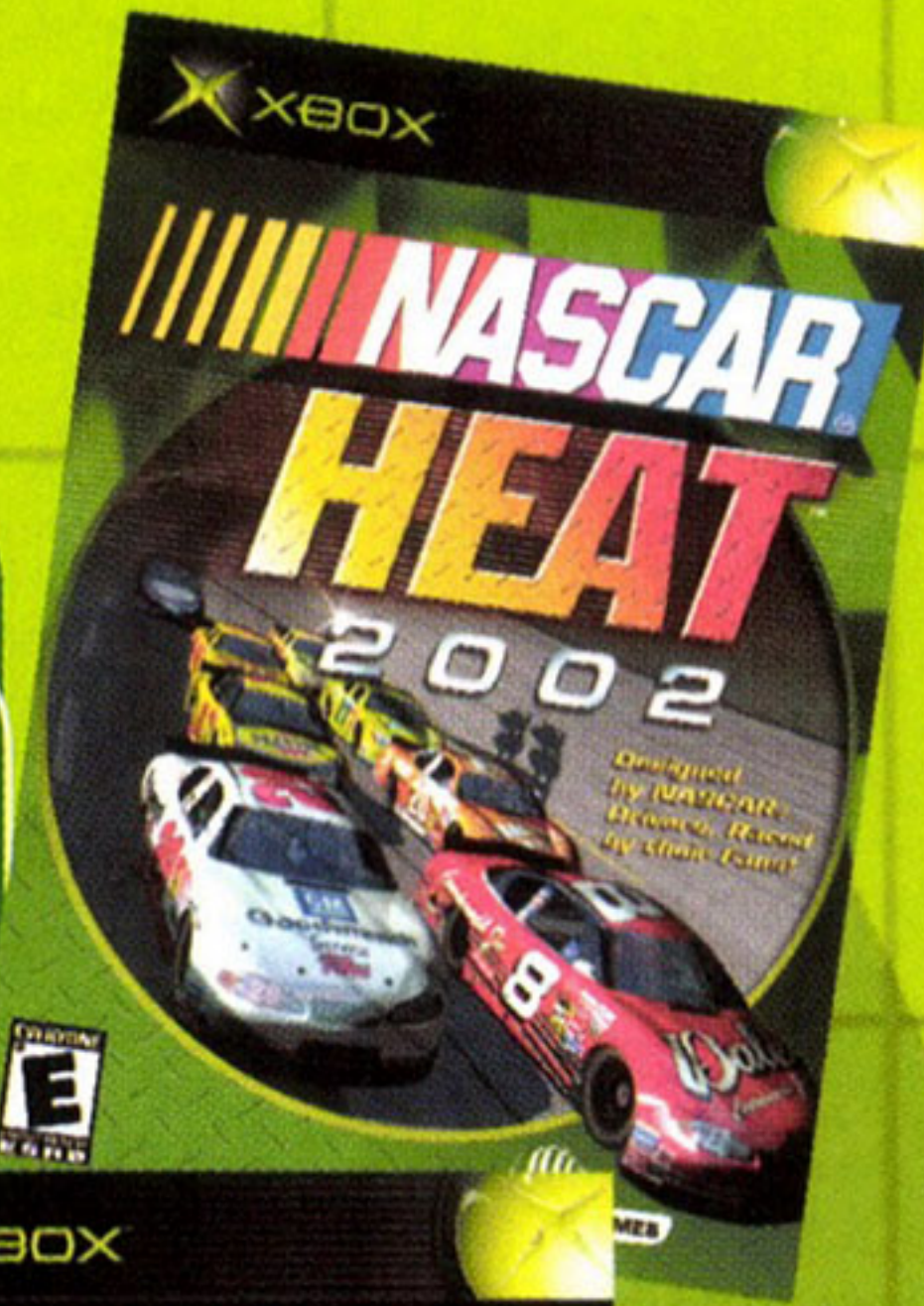
**The scary stuff:** Tactical combat on a console can be done, as parts of *Halo* prove, but it's not easy, and the game's PC heritage might be a hindrance.



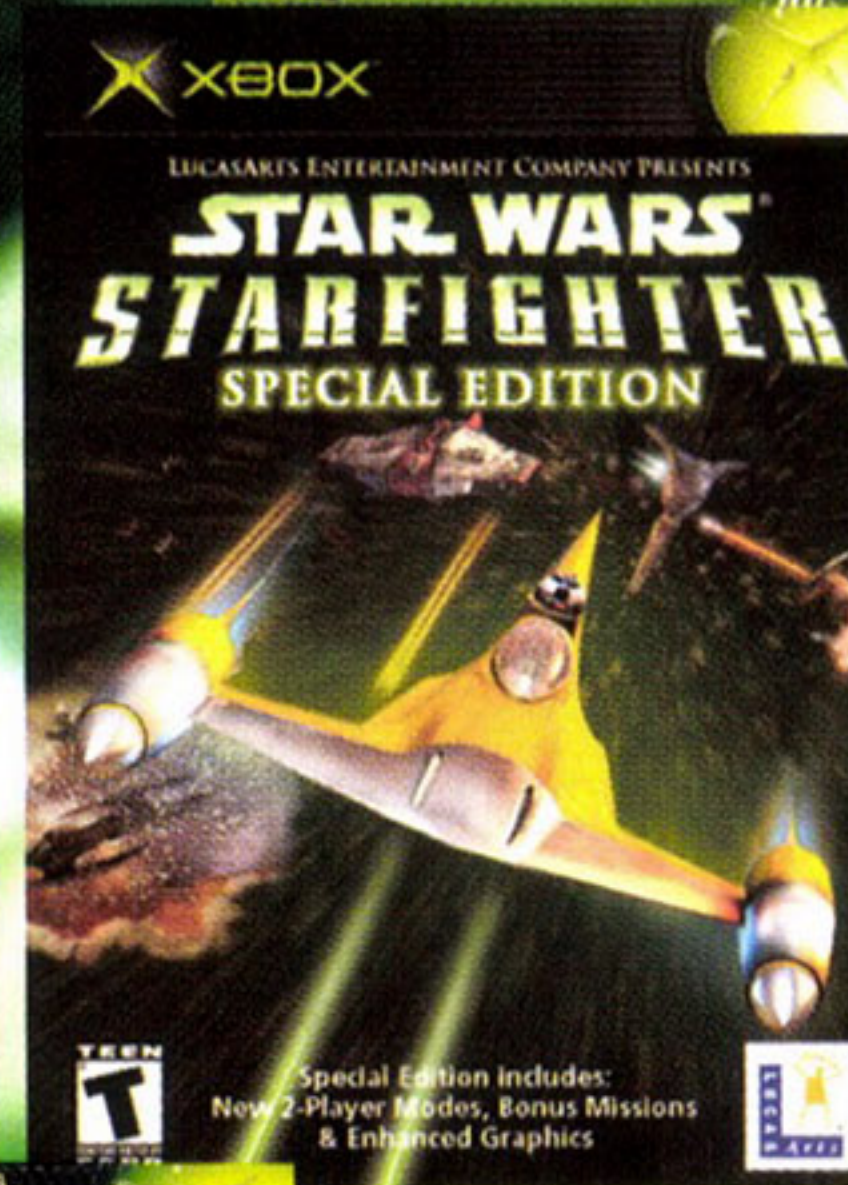


# You've never played like

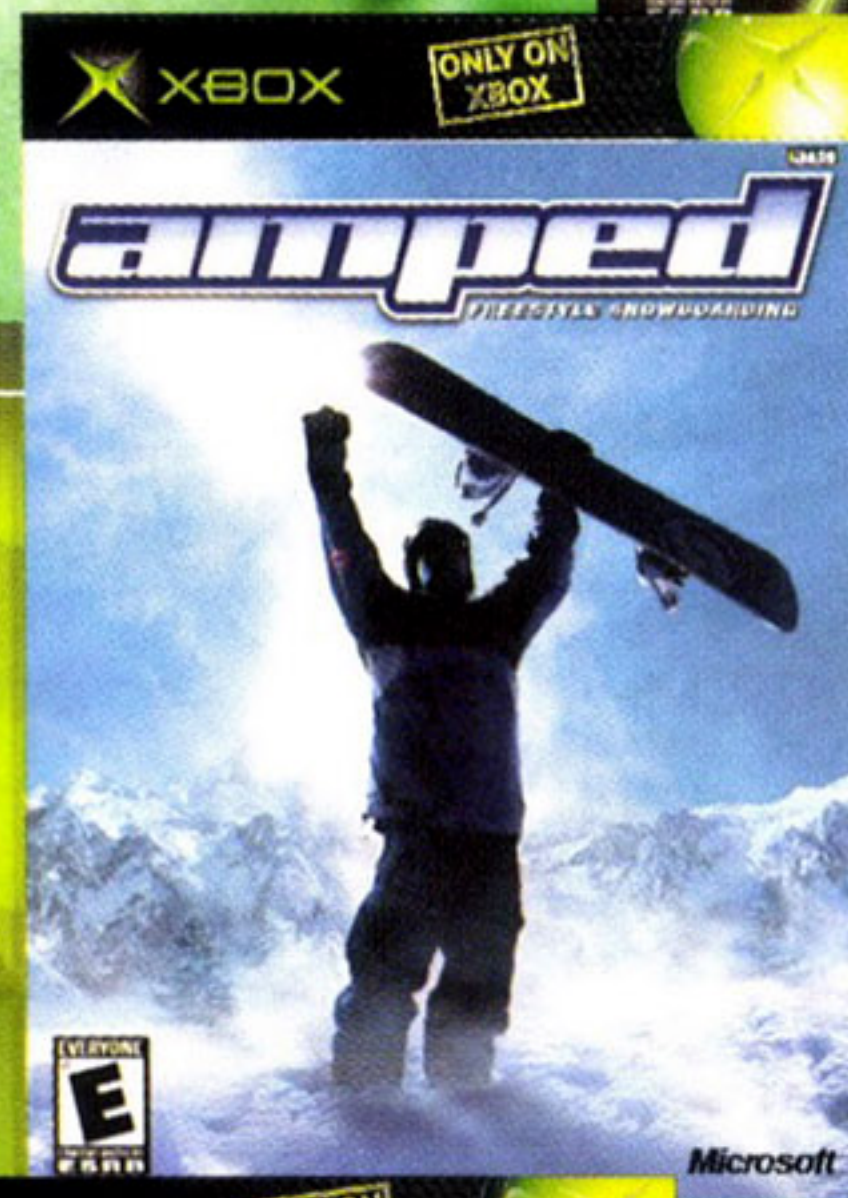
# this before!



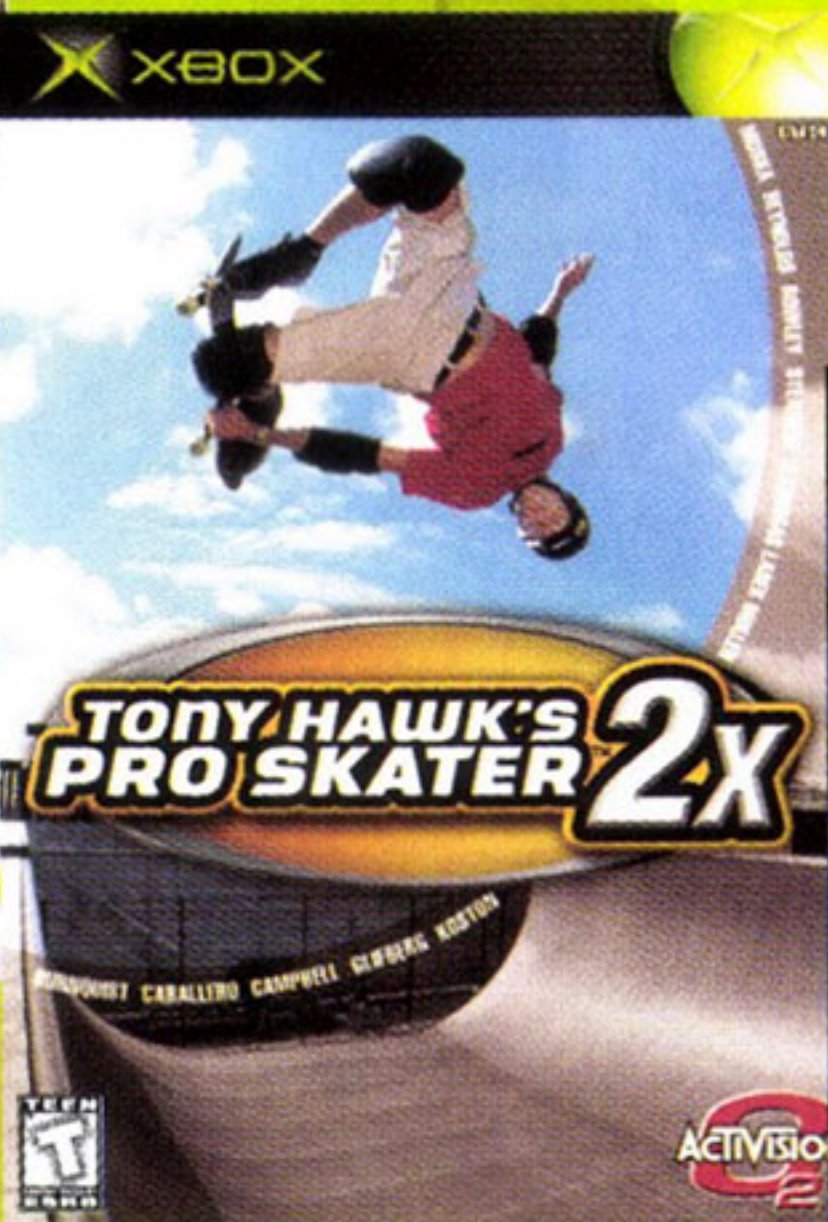
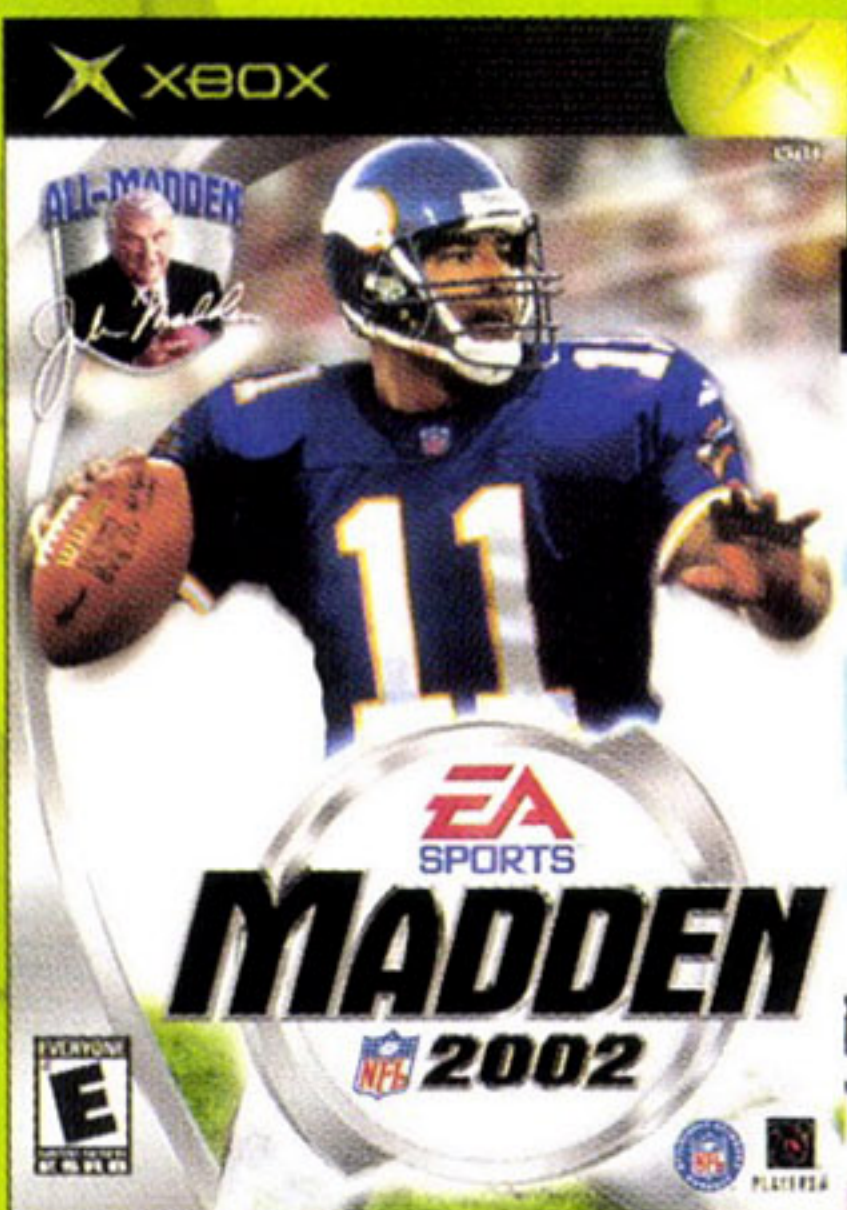
Memory Unit



DVD Playback Kit



Controller



We have all the Xbox Games & Accessories you'll ever need!

# "R"ZONE

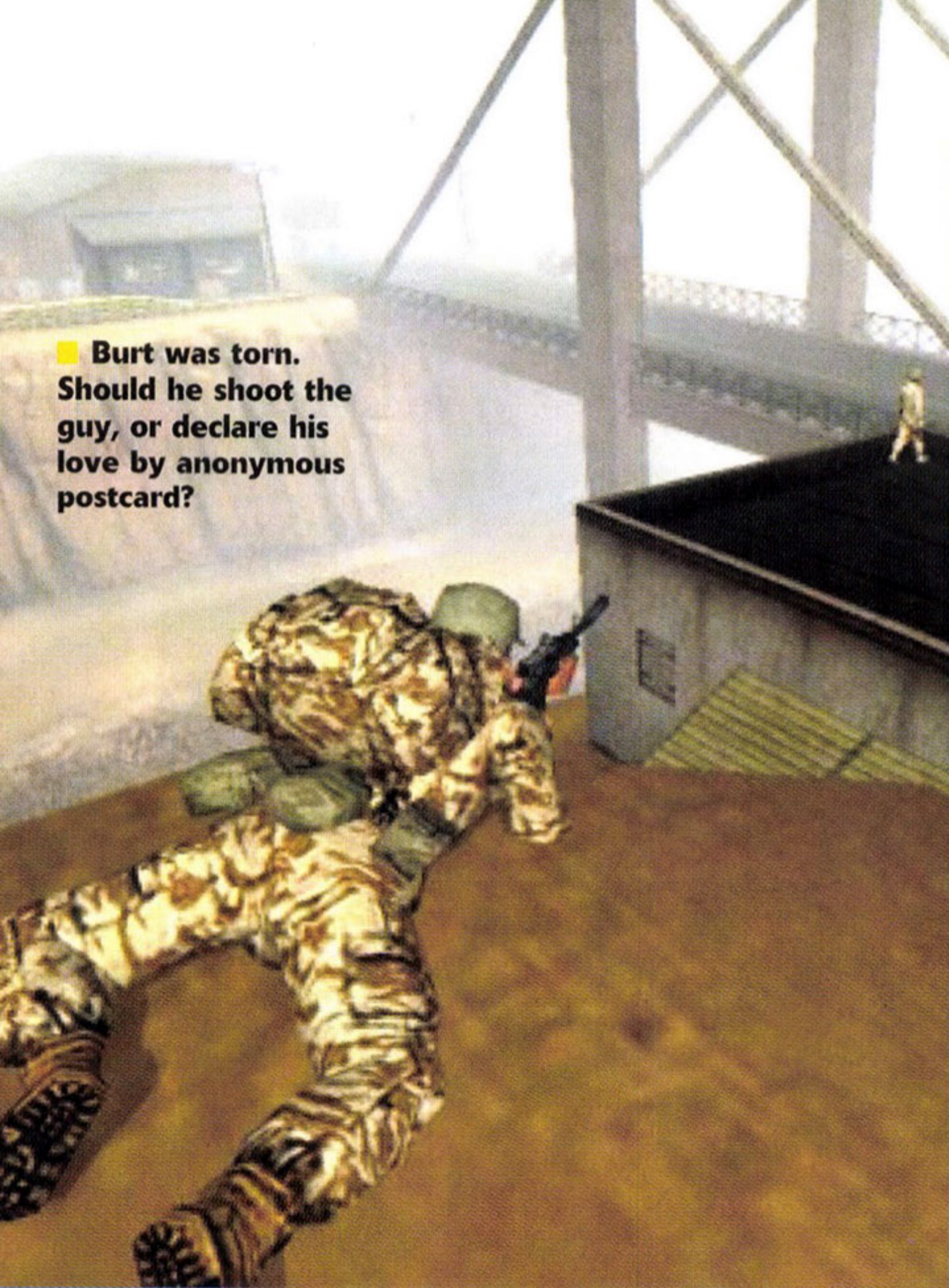
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■ Burt was torn. Should he shoot the guy, or declare his love by anonymous postcard?

## Under the Radar

The best Xbox games you haven't heard of

### New game? What's it called?

Conflict: Desert Storm.

### Who's making it?

Pivotal Games, the company formerly known as Pumpkin Studios, developer of the PC realtime strategy game *Warzone 2100*.

### What's the game about?

The Gulf War may have looked easy and largely painless on TV, but the conflict was all too real to the men and women who fought there. It's a testament to their training that the victory was so lopsided. *Conflict: Desert Storm* focuses on the stealth, strategy, and teamplay elements of the ground war and heats up the experience with massive environments, awesome character models, and (realistic) special effects galore.

### Why should we care?

There really hasn't been a great realistic squad-based shooter for consoles yet, and this game has some serious potential. If it manages to capture the ever-present danger of real war, this could end up as a nice counterpart to the futuristic mayhem of *Halo*.

### Why haven't we heard of it yet?

It's being published by SCI, an English developer that prefers to focus the lion's share of its marketing efforts on the other side of the pond.

## What came first, the horse or the mouse?



■ Horse racing is popular in Japanese arcades and Vegas sports books.

Not to be outdone by Microsoft's launch lineup in the US, the Japanese side of Xbox first-party development has revealed several new titles – and two are notable for their extreme quirkiness. The first should come as no surprise to those who follow Japanese gaming. *Jockey's Road*, a horse-racing RPG [above], is a prime example of a genre that's huge in Japan but practically non-existent elsewhere. The genre is so big right now that Microsoft hired the guy who wrote the script for *Final Fantasy I, II, and III* to write this game.

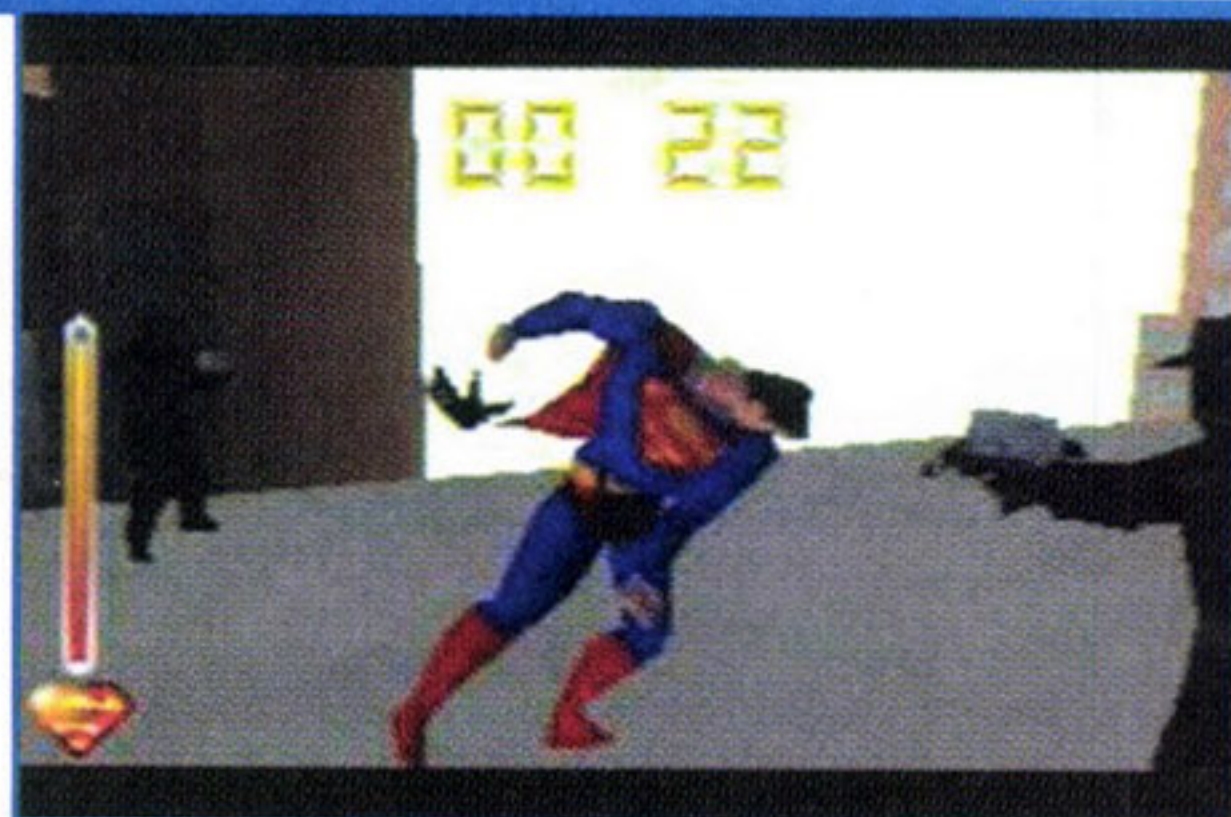
Another unique title in development is *Nezmix*. This game [below] is essentially about rodent gang warfare – you control a mouse and a pack of his friends in a battle to eliminate rival gangs. The concept, while wacky, is promising, and the mice look incredible, down to their realistic, furry bodies.

Microsoft may be facing a steep uphill battle in Japan, but now it has a little more ammo on its side.

■ We used to hate meeces to pieces, but now that they have fur-shading...



## THE IT THING



◀ The old way: Mommy, the doctor says I need glasses.

▶ The new way: I can see! I can see!



## High-resolution mode

When we first got a glimpse of *Dead or Alive 3* in its high-resolution mode, we were stunned like a monkey with its tongue in a light socket. The textures were shockingly crisp, clean, and clear on our HDTV in 480p (progressive) non-interlaced mode, and the game looked better than anything we'd seen before on a console. We tried the same thing with *NFL Fever 2002*, and the results were just as monkey-shocking.

Most console games are rendered at 480i (interlaced) resolution. This means that the console renders the graphics on every other line onscreen, and then renders the other half of the image during the next frame. Because this happens at 60 frames per second, you can't tell the difference, but when the Xbox renders the whole image every frame, the results are staggering. The console is also capable of rendering games at 720i and 1080i, but we probably won't see many soon. More games in 480p, however, are just around the corner.

## GameWatch



### Outlaw Golf

Projected release: Q2 2002

**The good stuff:** The last thing this planet needs is another boring golf game. And *Outlaw Golf* is anything but a boring golf game. Simon & Schuster is hoping to do for golf with this game what they did for the once-boring sport of panty raiding in the high-brow antics of *Panty Raider*.

**The scary stuff:** Game makers tend to confuse "over-the-top" character design with boring copycats of tired TV and movie clichés.



### Chase

Projected release: TBA

**The good stuff:** *Chase* is one of the first products to come out of Microsoft's Xbox Incubator program, and it looks promising. Players assume the role of a Hollywood stunt-car driver screeching through tight chases on movie-set courses and a special stunt-driver training course.

**The scary stuff:** The developer, I-Imagine, has not yet announced a publisher for this game. Let's hope someone picks it up soon.



*DAY 33:*

*Killed Catalisks this morning by  
combining water, air and fire elements.  
Haven't saved the world yet. Really hungry.*

*DAY 37:*

*Fighting never ends.  
Axion working overtime.  
Pulled groin.*

*DAY 42:*

*Spent day in "fire" realm.  
Got lost. Sure wish I had  
"Backpacker's Guide to Perathia."*



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XBOX



# Xbox controllers: the first wave

It seems that some people just can't get past the Xbox Game Controller. Years of streamlined PlayStation and Nintendo peripherals have made it difficult for some gamers to adapt to Microsoft's admittedly potato-esque gamepad. While their bewildered attitude toward the Controller is often

humorous, we're going to get serious for a moment and examine the first wave of third-party control devices. That should shut them up. We honestly wonder: are these control alternatives really better than the original? Below, our conclusions.



**Xbox Game Controller**

Publisher: Microsoft Price: \$39.99

- **The feel:** As mentioned *far* too many times before, the Xbox Game Controller feels a little large in our hands. But the controller feels solid and well built, and that's important. We've used it for countless hours already, and it feels comfortable and familiar in our hands.
- **The buttons:** The slanted diamond layout of the main four buttons takes a while to get used to, but these buttons are extremely well built and responsive. The black and white buttons are sometimes difficult to reach, and we feel that they might have been better designed as second triggers.
- **The analog joysticks:** Both are rounded and smooth with just the right amount of return spring. The button click for each joystick is also good, but we would prefer a little more noticeable "click" for each button press.
- **The digital pad:** This is probably the weakest point on the Game Controller. The digital pad feels good (even after hours of play), but you don't get the obvious horizontals and verticals that a digital cross provides.
- **Triggers:** They offer good response, but they're a little too stiff for long hours of driving gameplay.
- **Extras:** This features 9.5-foot cords and breakaway cables (as do all the licensed pads). We've had problems with the breakaway sections of each of the pads falling off, but we *love* the long cords.
- **Intangibles:** Because this is the standard controller, it's the one that the greatest number of gamers will feel most comfortable with.

■ **The Verdict:**

**If you like the Xbox Controller:** You'll probably want more.  
**If you don't like the Xbox Controller:** Keep reading.  
**Buy this if:** Your friends think you're cheating when you give them a third-party controller.

## Powerpad

Publisher: Interact Price: \$24.99

- **The feel:** Somehow this controller actually feels *larger* than the original Xbox pad. It also feels much, much cheaper.
- **The buttons:** The buttons are much looser than those on the Xbox Game Controller. Even though they're analog, you can press the buttons partially down without actually triggering a response, which is massively frustrating.
- **The analog joysticks:** Both joysticks are too high for extended use, and they both feel a little sloppy.
- **The digital pad:** This is very similar to the Game Controller's digital pad, but it has slightly better horizontal and vertical guides.
- **Triggers:** Nearly the same as the official pad.
- **Extras:** The Powerpad comes in three different translucent colors and has a switch to turn the rumble on or off.
- **Intangibles:** The weird "i" jewel is crooked, whatever that means.

■ **The Verdict:**

**If you like the Xbox Controller:** Stick with it, because this is a clone... but not nearly as good.  
**If you don't like the Xbox Controller:** Any of the other controllers are better.  
**Buy this if:** You're on a budget.



## Vortex

Publisher: Gamester Price: \$24.99

- **The feel:** The controller itself feels fine, but the buttons and the joysticks aren't up to the quality of the Microsoft pad.
- **The buttons:** While we like the different shapes for the black and the white buttons (they're easy to find by feel), the other buttons feel too lightweight and not responsive enough. As with the Interact Powerpad, the unresponsive aspect can cause problems during heated gameplay.
- **The analog joysticks:** The joysticks are way too tall for our tastes. They make precision movement difficult and long-term gameplay painful.
- **The digital pad:** The controller handles are not designed for comfortable digital pad control. We had to move our thumbs out of a comfortable position in order to use the pad. After a long gameplay session, this can be painful.
- **Triggers:** Slightly less springy than the original triggers.
- **Extras:** A thin glowing strip replaces the Xbox jewel.
- **Intangibles:** We like the silver finish.

■ **The Verdict:**

**If you like the Xbox Controller:** Then you'll like this one, but will probably prefer the Xbox standard.  
**If you don't like the Xbox Controller:** This doesn't offer anything new (unless you count the silvery finish).  
**Buy this if:** You're fascinated by shiny objects and can't get used to the black and white buttons on the original pad.



## GameWatch

Shooting, shooting, and more shooting. And some flying



### Gun Valkyrie

**Projected release:** February 2002  
**The good stuff:** A Sega original with convincingly stellar graphics and quick, responsive gameplay that features lots of alien shooting and impressively large bosses. It's smooth, arcade-style action with loads of moves and different attacks to boot.  
**The scary stuff:** Early versions of the game featured clunky controls, but Sega assures us that they're changing up the control scheme to be a little more "fluid."



### Ghost Recon

**Projected release:** Spring 2002  
**The good stuff:** Next year, you won't have to be alone in your bedroom with your Xbox. Instead, you'll be alone in a ruined Croatian church tower, surrounded by decay, with your world view siphoned through a sniper scope, waiting on hair trigger to acquire and eliminate targets.  
**The scary stuff:** *Ghost Recon* looks bitchin' on PC, but we've no idea how fleshed out it will be for Xbox, or how it will gel with Xbox Internet plans.



## Control Pad Pro

Publisher: MadCatz Price: \$34.99

■ **The feel:** Although this controller is not quite as comfortable in our hands as the original pad, it is the heaviest, most solid, and smallest controller of the bunch.

■ **The buttons:** The Control Pad Pro uses a non-slanted diamond configuration that's similar to the PS2's. It also features round buttons

that are spaced out further than the regular Xbox buttons.

■ **The analog joysticks:** The left joystick is excellent, but the right joystick requires a bit of a stretch, which can be a problem for games that use both the buttons and the right joystick.

■ **The digital pad:** This is our favorite directional pad of the bunch. The cross layout makes it easy to give clear horizontal and vertical directions.

■ **Triggers:** The best of the bunch for driving-game fans, but we'd prefer a little more travel.

■ **Extras:** An added macro button allows you to record and use button combinations with a single press of a button. It's an excellent bonus for cheaters just like you!

■ **Intangibles:** This controller looks and feels the most rugged of the bunch.

### ■ The Verdict:

**If you like the Xbox Controller:** This one is quite different and may feel funny to you.

**If you don't like the Xbox Controller:** This is certainly your best alternative.

**Buy this if:** You are frustrated with the official pad but still want to play Xbox games.



## Coming soon

All these controllers on the horizon for the Xbox – and is it just us, or are they actually getting bigger? We'll review 'em all very soon.



■ Interact Black Thunder Racing Wheel



■ Interact Shadowblade Arcade Stick



■ Gamester Reflex Arcade Stick



■ Thrustmaster NASCAR Pro Victory wheel



■ Thrustmaster Top Gun Fox 2 Pro



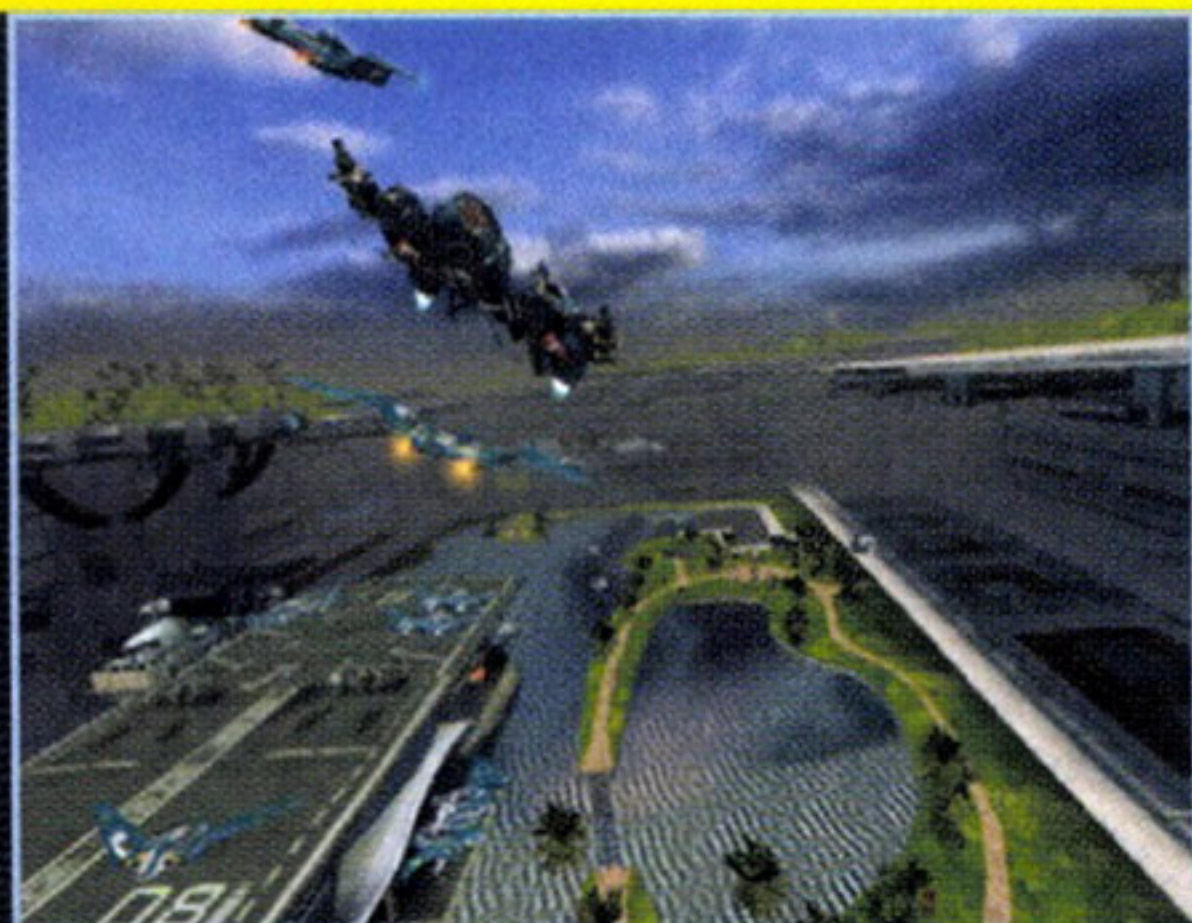
■ MadCatz MC2 Racing Wheel



■ MadCatz Panther X joystick



■ Pelican X-Wing Controller



## Yager

**Projected release:** Q2 2002

**The good stuff:** Set in an alternate universe, this high-intensity shooter mixes the best of flight combat with fully-fleshed-out RPG story elements. It's not about flying through level after level shooting stuff... In this game, story matters, and you determine where the plot goes.

**The scary stuff:** Yager has nothing to do with famed test pilot Chuck Yeager. He's a hero... he deserves his own Xbox game.

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# ARMCHAIR GAMER

For guys who prefer their sports indoors

Last month, we reviewed both *Madden 2002* and *NFL Fever 2002*. Although both titles scored very well, *Fever* surprised us all by edging out its storied competition by a sliver. The race was so close that we promised to look back in on both titles one month later and see if our scores held up over time. Since then, we've played all the way through several seasons in each game, matched up in head-to-head showdowns, and desperately tried to get a natural feel for both *Madden* and *Fever*. Here is what we discovered after a month of hardcore game time.

## ONE-MONTH CHECK-UP

### NFL Fever 2002

- **FRANCHISE/DYNASTY MODE:** Exceptional set-up – and the dynamic player-performance system (players' ratings increase and decrease from game to game, depending on performance) is like crack to fantasy-league sport-head geeks like us.
- **COMPUTER AI:** Great variation from game to game and team to team – but there did seem to be a bit of computer "cheating" that managed to keep almost every game close. Not once did we see the computer fail to recover an onside kick – and when your 28-point lead is evaporating, you notice things like that.
- **REALISM:** *Fever* definitely sacrifices a bit of realism, but the result is a more engaging game. The best example? Throwing the ball without your feet planted often results in a laughably awful pass. While the design is based in realism, it certainly doesn't play out in a very real fashion... but this does create a totally new type of quarterbacking to master.
- **STATS:** Fared much better than *Madden* in realistically producing stats. The usual suspects (Brett Favre, Peyton Manning, Edgerrin James) were near the top, but there were occasional surprises (Tim Dwight).
- **HEAD-TO-HEAD:** What *Fever* lacks in realism, it more than makes up for in amazing head-to-head action. The pure speed of the game just blows *Madden* away. It's also a much bigger chess game since the wrong defense can (and often does) result in big plays. Blitzing on every down will get you murdered if your opponent is even okay at the game.

- **ANNOYING PROBLEMS:**
  - Five-minute quarters only in Dynasty mode
  - Passes stay in the air for waaayyy too long
  - Tackles are either crushing blow or complete miss – no gang tackles
  - Gary Anderson doesn't kick off for the Vikings – and he doesn't have biceps the size of a pro wrestler, either
  - Two words: Ron Pitts. (Commentary is repetitive and basically stupid.)

**Original Score: 9.1**  
 ■ **WHAT WE THINK NOW:** Perfectly scored, if we do say so ourselves. Every sports game has its problems, but *Fever* is definitely the best football game we've played.



■ A month later, still our favorite.

### Madden 2002

- **FRANCHISE/DYNASTY MODE:** Very solid, but the Dynamic Player Performance system, ability to move the franchise, and 25-year play in *Fever* just blows it away.
- **COMPUTER AI:** Plays smart and tough on nearly every difficulty level (except All Madden, where it cheats like hell). The money plays seem to be mostly a thing of the past.
- **REALISM:** They've been making *Madden* for, oh, about a century, and each year it gets more and more realistic. The animations, the variety in tackling, and an improved AI make for the most realistic football game around (just not the best). The ability to do a replay Challenge is brilliant in its realism, and it really plays into that whole "no way you caught that ball" mentality of head-to-head games – sadly, the play is rarely turned over.
- **STATS:** Tend to be a bit inflated in any game with quarters longer than seven minutes. It's not unusual to have Randy Moss catch 20 passes for 350 yards in a game (at least not when we played with Moss on our side). The big plus with the stats in *Madden* is the amazing presentation. Nothing like seeing your career stats displayed just like you'd see on TV. There still isn't a game around that can touch *Madden's* overall presentation and television-look.
- **HEAD-TO-HEAD:** Still one of the best two-player games in history, but haven't we been playing this same game since we wore Lee jeans, had feathered hair, listened to Loverboy, and played our games on a Genesis? Yeah, we don't mind so much either (about *Madden*, that is, not Loverboy – we mind a lot about admitting we listened to Loverboy).



■ We even gave it a second chance.

- **ANNOYING PROBLEMS:**
  - Takes forever to kick off
  - Too many dropped INTs
  - Doesn't seem to matter what defense you call sometimes
  - John Madden and his dreadfully old Madden-isms – shut up already!
  - Receivers occasionally break off their pattern without letting you know
  - It looks and plays exactly like the PS2 game – if you've played that game, then you don't need this one

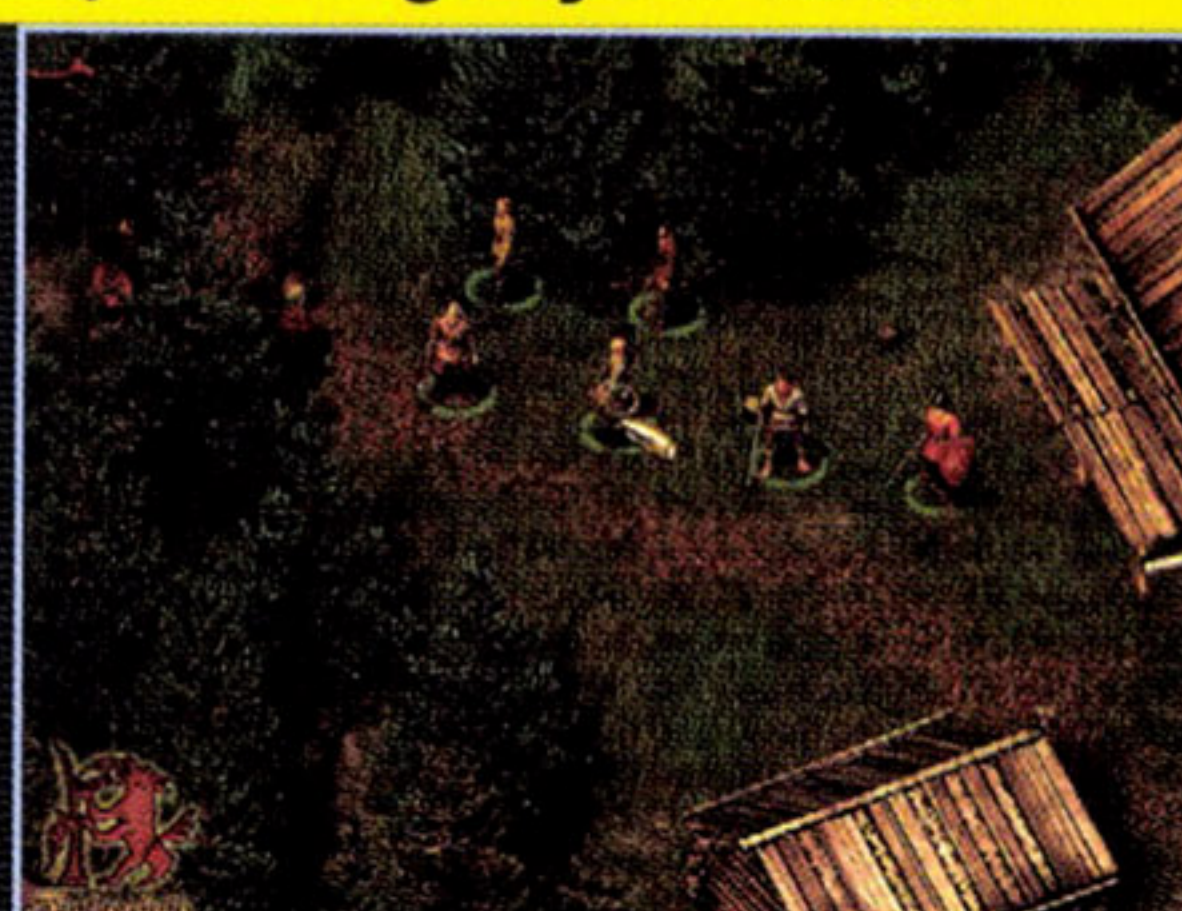
**Original Score: 9.0**  
 ■ **WHAT WE THINK NOW:** Again, we nailed this one on the head. *Madden* is a spectacular football game, but *NFL Fever* is a better Xbox football game.

## GameWatch

You like RPGs? Oh, we've got your RPGs



**THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND**  
**Projected release:** Spring 2002  
**The good stuff:** This is not your typical console RPG. It's an open-ended, non-linear adventure that creates a massive, living world and society, then gives you the freedom to explore and fight sword-wielding skeletons. Plus, the game's action-based fighting style is a welcome change from the turn-based blah we're used to.  
**The scary stuff:** Console RPG fans may take a while to warm up to this choose-your-own-adventure style of gameplay.



**FATHERDALE**  
**Projected release:** Spring 2002  
**The good stuff:** You don't see this very often – an RPG sim. Okay, it's only kind of an RPG sim. Sure, some of the characters are immortal, but for the most part, this game focuses on a realistic simulation of medieval life circa 1000 A.D. Realistic battle, realistic professions, and even a realistic inventory system.  
**The scary stuff:** An RPG without sword-wielding skeletons? Impossible.



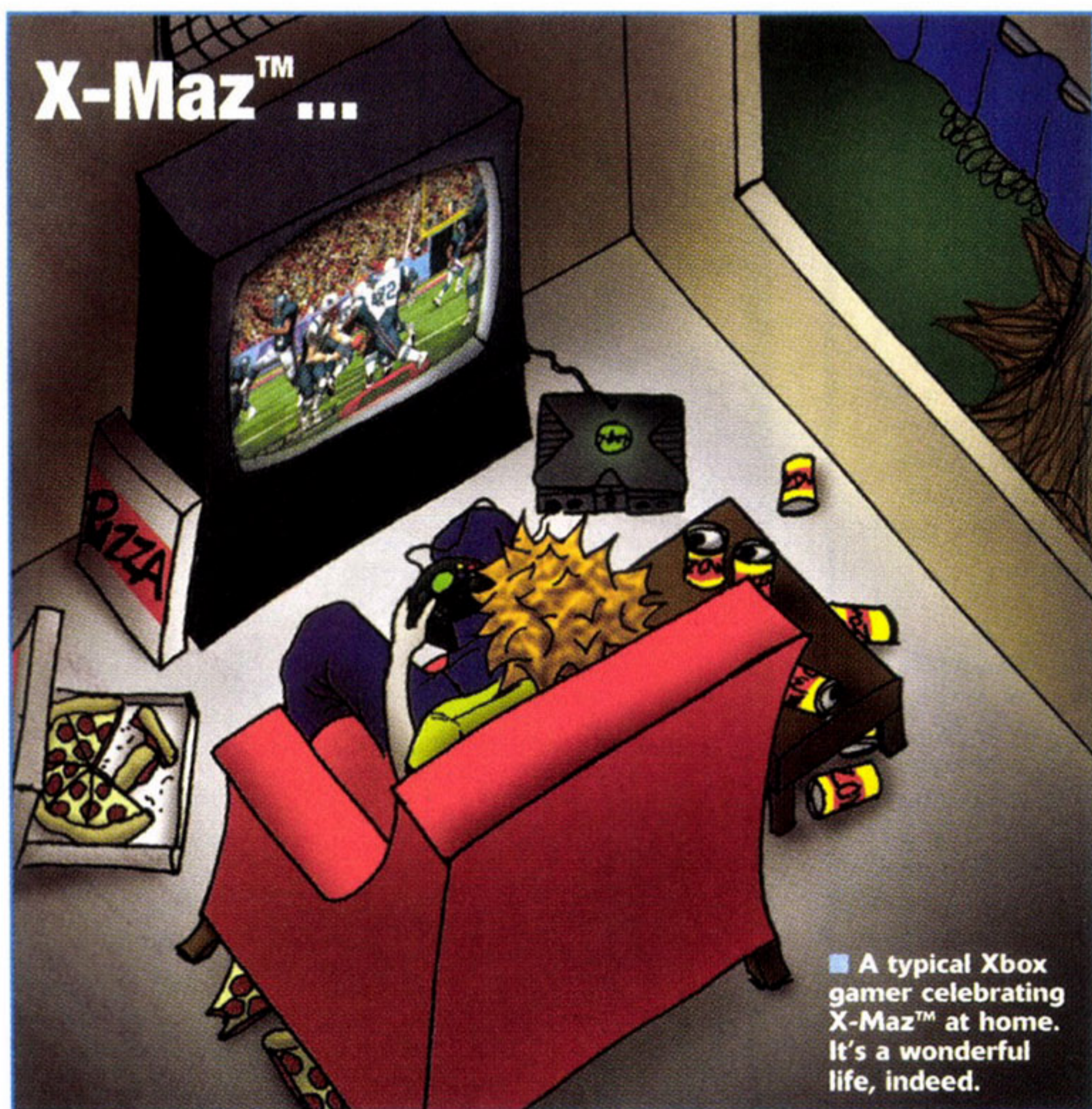
## Season without reason

**I**n the fine tradition of George Costanza's father (remember Festivus?) we've decided to invent our own holiday, combining all the best elements of Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Christmas, but wrapping them in a reminder of what this season is really all about – the Xbox. So with that in mind, we'd like to present X-Maz™: the Holiday for the Hardcore. It's non-denominational, so nobody is excluded. Even PS2 and GameCube fans are welcome.

The festival begins on December 18 and runs through January 18 – an entire month of Xbox gaming excess. There are some dietary requirements – you may only eat pizza and candy, and you can't get out of bed 'til noon. From noon 'til midnight, you must play Xbox games (religiously) and occasionally go to the bathroom. A copy of *our* bible (duh, the **Official Xbox Magazine**) will help you in your devotions. Where appropriate, a Christmas tree should be replaced with a Redmond redwood.

We'd also like to advise that you continue to respect your existing religious beliefs in the interim. X-Maz™ is respectful and tolerant of other faiths. It is by no means a replacement.

And remember, when you find yourself sitting in the dark, surrounded by pizza crusts, ignoring your responsibilities, that's what X-Maz™ is all about. Have a bitchin' X-Maz™.



### Comanche

**Projected release:** Fall 2002

**The good stuff:** Realistic flight sims generally steer clear of consoles in favor of a nice, comfy PC, but thanks to NovaLogic, mouse-a-phobes will finally have a tasty helicopter simulator to call their own. To make things more enticing, this beautiful, densely populated shooter will feature large-scale online support.

**The scary stuff:** We heard this game had to be slightly retooled to cut out some skyscraper explosions.

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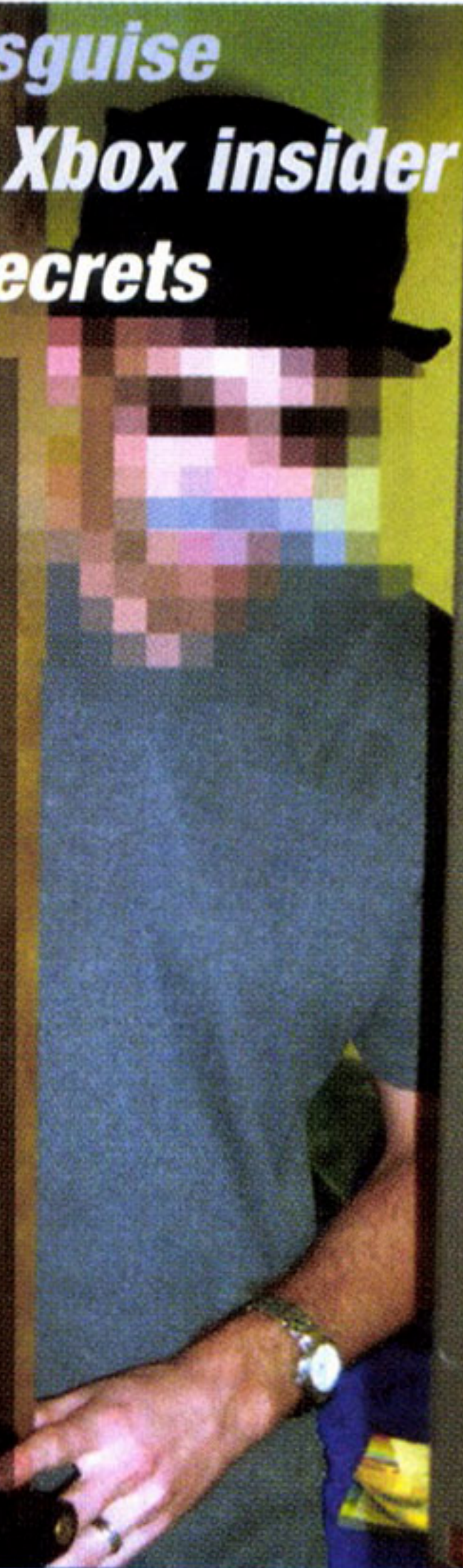
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# The Rumor Mole

Master of disguise  
All-knowing Xbox insider  
Blabber of secrets

It's a good time to be a mole. Now that the hush-hush launch phase is finished up, the canaries are starting to sing – and that is sweet music to this Mole's ears. However, due to the amazing success of Official Xbox Magazine (there isn't an Xbox employee in the building who hasn't read every issue cover-to-cover), it's getting even harder keeping my identity unknown. Fortunately, I managed to get a new ID card, a little makeover, and some new friends. People talk, and the Mole listens...



## The curse of Bruce Lee

Is it the Chinese Mafia, famously bad luck, or just pure coincidence that Bruce Lee and his family have suffered such tragedy? First there was Bruce, then Brandon, then that dreadful Acclaim fighting game for the Genesis, and now... the game that never was.

Microsoft wisely purchased the Bruce Lee license and was planning on the *Bouncer*-esque game being one of the killer-app launch titles. On five separate occasions Microsoft has prepared to show *Bruce Lee: Quest for the Dragon*. Each time, the company was sorely disappointed by the game and had to hold it off. If the Mole were working on this game, he'd either be getting the damn thing done or getting his resume all polished up... time is running out.

## Halo 1.5

The original plan for *Halo* was to release an online expansion pack when the Xbox network was up and running – however, since the final code wasn't ready, *Halo* was finished off without this option. But that doesn't mean there won't be an online version of *Halo* ready for the launch of broadband gaming. In fact, the Mole has learned that Microsoft and Bungie are toying with the idea of releasing the full original *Halo*, plus a three-level addition to the game, more than 30 multiplayer maps, and a host of new weapons and characters. No decision on pricing, but they have been discussing a rebate program for the purchasers of the original *Halo*. Personally, I don't care what it costs: I want *Halo* online and I want it now!!!

## Minimum Payne

After nearly four years of development, *Max Payne* finally came out on the PC; two weeks later, a superior version was ready for the Xbox. This stunning achievement is the talk of the PC dev world and a big plus for the Xbox. Many companies are now planning simultaneous Xbox and PC releases with the PS2 and GameCube versions coming out three months to a year later. *Half-Life 2* comes to mind... and maybe for the Xbox first.

## Xlth hour

By now everyone knows that Sony bought a 19-percent interest in *Final Fantasy* maker Square just prior to the Tokyo Game Show, all but ensuring that *FF* won't be coming to Xbox after all. What you *don't* know is how it all went down. Lunchroom buzz up here at Redmond says that Square had been promising to support Xbox for over a year and a half and was just waiting for this TGS to do the unveiling. How close was it? Well, some people in the mailroom sent off more than a dozen large green boxes to Japan and Hawaii back before E3. Apparently many people have actually seen *FFXI* up and running on an Xbox dev kit – sadly, it looked great.

# Trendspotter

The Xbox strives to replicate the real world, of course, but even we were surprised to learn that modern-day ethical dilemmas come up in the world of videogames. This month's trend in Xbox games is CLONING.

Until recently, game developers were unable to unlock the secrets behind videogame DNA. But thanks to modern advances in computer technology, developers have not only deciphered the videogame genome, but they've also uncovered the secrets to cloning characters. Despite global bans on the practice of cloning, the work of these game makers has already begun in earnest. For instance, look at this character... despite nominal changes in hair color, the original DNA shows through, right down to the bug-eye glasses and Limp Bizkit goatee (which many believed could not be cloned). Are they playing God? You decide.

### Character: Sampson



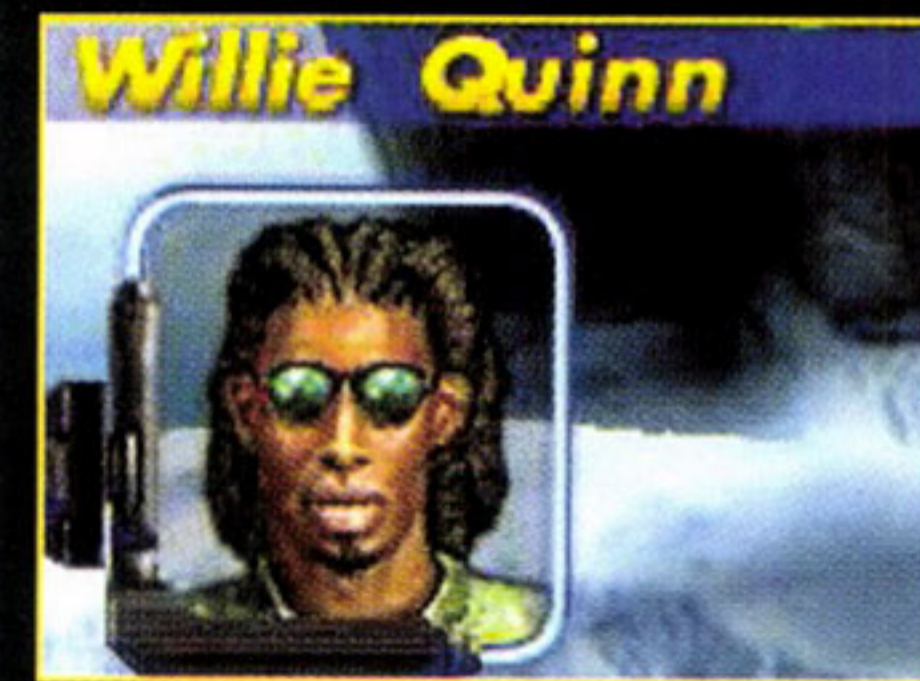
Game: **Fuzion Frenzy**  
Unique twist: Red bandanna

### Character: Zach



Game: **Dead or Alive 3**  
Unique twist: Green hair dye

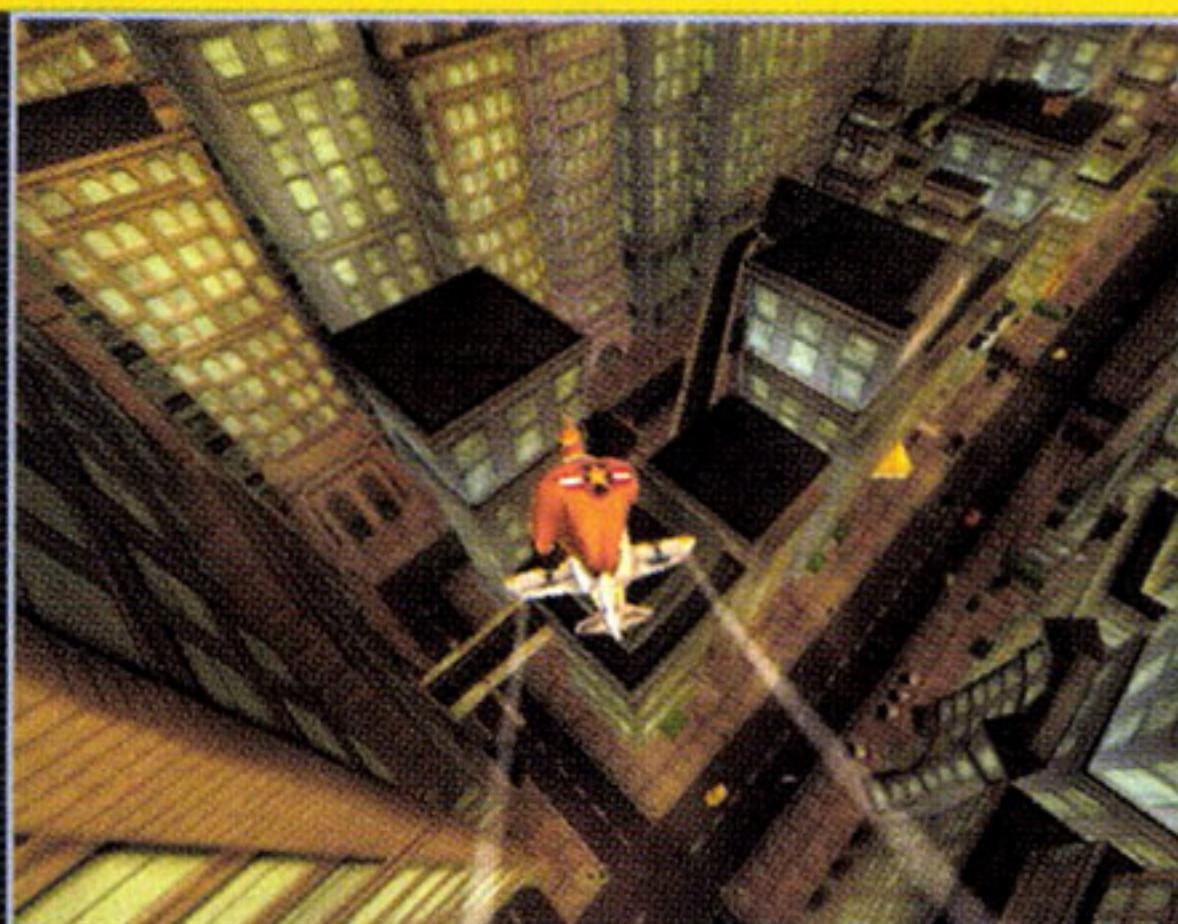
### Character: Willie Quinn



Game: **Arctic Thunder**  
Unique twist: Refreshingly, none at all

# GameWatch

It's where freaky flying and freakishly beautiful fighting meet



## Freaky Fliers

**Projected release:** October 2002  
**The good stuff:** *Freaky Fliers* is, in the most basic of terms, a kart racer in air. It's got crazy cartoon characters, wildly varied environments, and more than your usual number of shortcuts. Plus, *Freaky Fliers* boasts enough mini-games to keep you busy for hours while you wait for your buddies to show up for a proper race.  
**The scary stuff:** We're suffering from severe cases of both kart-racer burnout and cel-shading exhaustion.



## Soul Calibur 2

**Projected release:** 2002  
**The good stuff:** One of the prettiest and deepest fighting games of its generation, the original *Soul Calibur* is still considered the absolute best Dreamcast game ever made. The sequel promises more of the same (which is good) and plenty of new characters and moves.  
**The scary stuff:** We don't know if this is coming to Xbox first or PS2 first, and we fear a watered-down PS2 port if it's the latter.



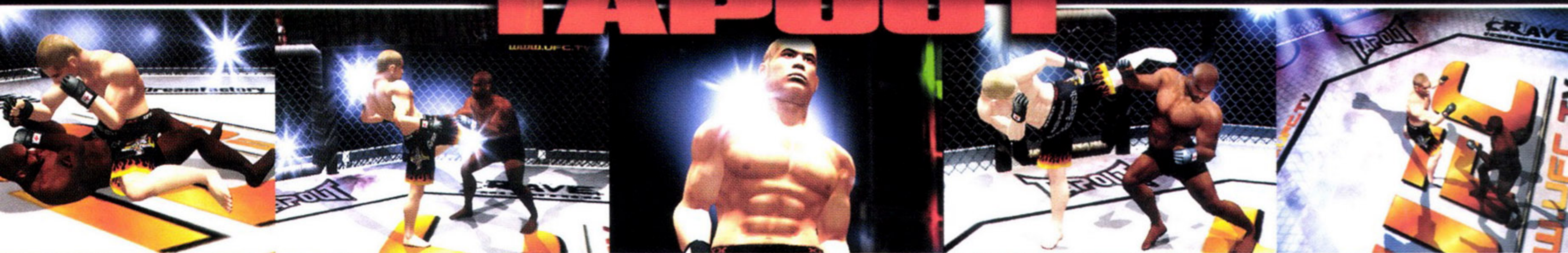
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**! WARNING !  
SPOILERS  
INSIDE**

# HALO: COMBAT SOLVED

A full walkthrough... from the gorgeous beginning to the shocking conclusion.



## 10 THINGS WE LEARNED WHILE PLAYING HALO

1. Covenant basic training needs work - the Grunts are the most cowardly troops in the universe.
2. Human troops have invincible knees - at least while riding on a Scorpion tank through narrow passages.
3. Invisible Elites aren't very smart - you've killed hundreds of their friends, and it still doesn't occur to them to just hide in a corner and let you pass.
4. The Covenant must be short on money or else they'd have built more of those devastating tanks, the scariest weapon in the game.
5. The beings who made *Halo* were thoughtful - those handy arrows sure made our life easier.
6. Plasma grenades must really hurt - why else would Covenant troops jump off high bridges to avoid them?
7. Parts of *Halo* are really, really cold - the ice must be awfully thick if it can hold a Scorpion tank.
8. If you see your enemies run, run - you'll know what we're talking about when you finish the game.
9. Soldiers get snippy when you shoot them by accident - and even when it's not an accident.
10. The Covenant believe in reincarnation - why else would one Grunt scream "Not again!" when you stick him with a life-ending plasma grenade?



### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

As a favor to you, dear reader, we played through *Halo* on every single difficulty level, from the quite challenging Easy to the insanely tough Legendary. No matter which level you play, the enemies are the smartest we've ever seen in a game. The different difficulty levels don't dumb down the enemies - they merely adjust damage and the amount of enemies.

**Easy** - Takes quite a few hits to knock down your shields and do any kind of damage.

**Normal** - Tough enemies, fair damage, great balance. This is definitely the best level to start on.

**Heroic** - Enemies do more damage, and there are a few extra. Not for the faint of heart, but completely doable.

**Legendary** - Unfair in a completely fair way. The enemies aren't invincible, and they still fight the same way, but they are practically doubled - as is their damage. Anyone who finishes this is truly a legend. [See challenge, page 49.]

**I**s *Halo* the game of the year? *Most likely.* Is it the best action game ever? *Quite possibly.* Is it the one Xbox game you must play from start to finish this year? *Absolutely.*

That's why we've taken a little time out of our incredibly busy schedule to dissect this game from start to finish. We've filtered

through all the usual walkthrough crap to bring you only what's important. We're not going to tell you when to look right and strafe left - just how to completely annihilate any being that gets in your way. So if you're stuck, we'll be there to help.

As a bit of warning, the last four pages are clearly marked spoilers. **DO NOT READ THESE**

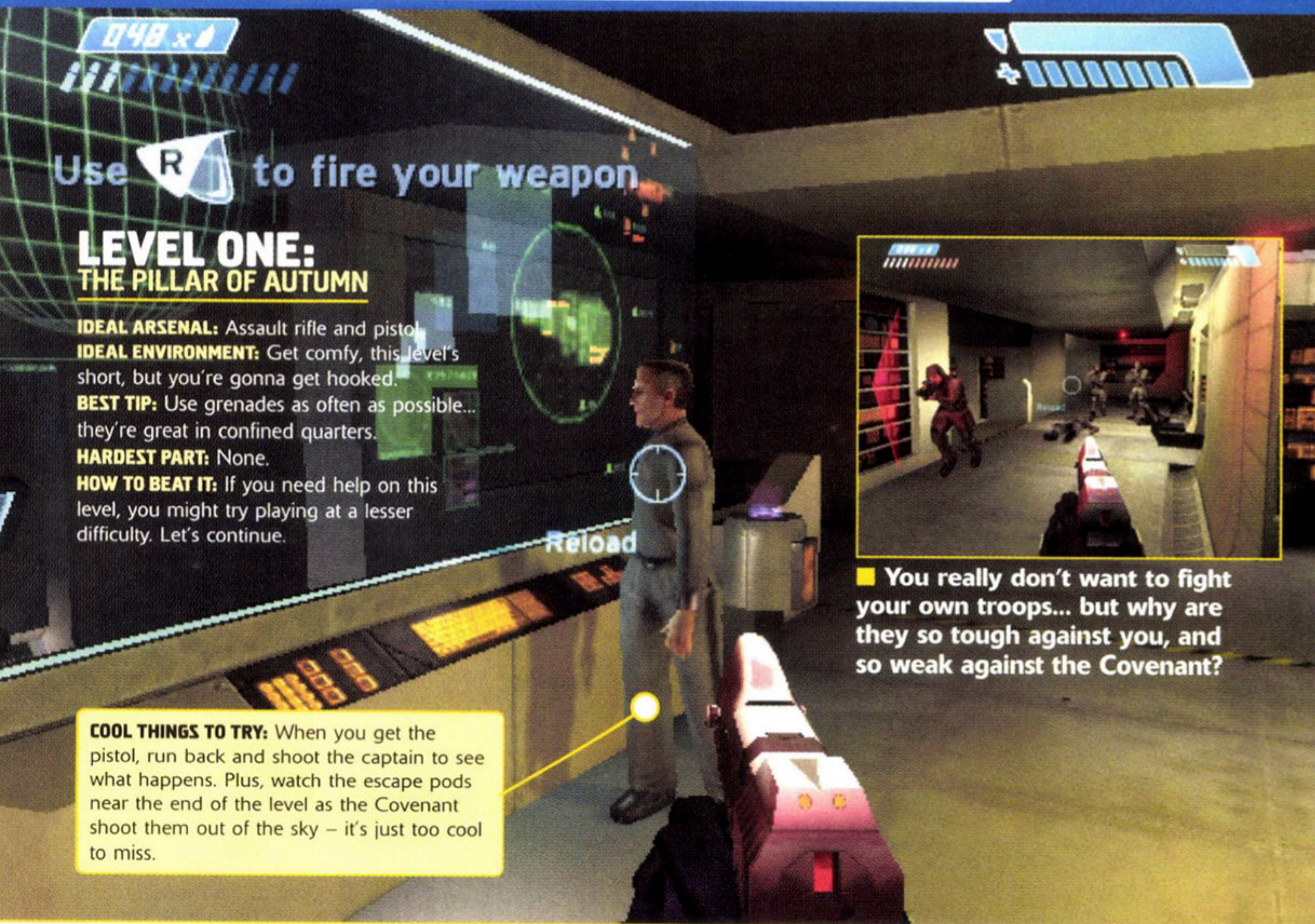
**PAGES** until you need them. We really mean that. We want you to experience *Halo* the glorious way that we did - completely surprised and utterly amazed. Reading these pages before getting to the later levels will ruin some wonderful game moments for you.

And as if it's not enough that we played the game from start to finish on every difficulty level, we

also employed the help of some real *Halo* experts. Some people have been playing *Halo* for more than six months - and who better to ask than the testers about the best way to defeat this game? So, with the help of Ryan Hylland, Mat Noguchi, Zach Russell, and Luke Timmins, we bring you the most complete and useful *Halo* strategy you'll ever read.







Use R to fire your weapon

### LEVEL ONE: THE PILLAR OF AUTUMN

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Assault rifle and pistol

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Get comfy, this level's short, but you're gonna get hooked.

**BEST TIP:** Use grenades as often as possible... they're great in confined quarters.

**HARDEST PART:** None.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** If you need help on this level, you might try playing at a lesser difficulty. Let's continue.



■ You really don't want to fight your own troops... but why are they so tough against you, and so weak against the Covenant?

**COOL THINGS TO TRY:** When you get the pistol, run back and shoot the captain to see what happens. Plus, watch the escape pods near the end of the level as the Covenant shoot them out of the sky – it's just too cool to miss.

### LEVEL TWO: HALO

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Sniper rifle and alien rifle.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** This is your first outdoor environment: wear flannel.

**BEST TIP:** Park your Warthog within 50 yards of life pods. If you keep it manned with soldiers, these guys will wipe out a ton of aliens for you. Park them in a central location, jump out, and pull out your gun for devastating results.

**HARDEST PART:** When you need to rescue your buddies from an alien base, you will be attacked from above and below by Covenant forces.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** Park your Warthog (with soldiers in the gunner positions) so that it provides cover fire for you. Then quickly make a run to get inside the base. You'll pick up extra troops who'll help wipe out the rest of the aliens.

**COOL THINGS TO TRY:** The Warthog is an excellent offensive weapon. Use it as a battering ram. Just watch out for plasma grenades, they're deadly.



■ Use a manned Warthog as a mobile turret. But don't sit in the driver's seat while your buddies fight. Get out and attack.

#### WALKTHROUGH:

**Starting out:** Outrun the Banshees by hanging close to the far left side of the map. If you want to shoot them down, have at it, but if you just run along the far side, they'll leave you alone quickly.

**The Base:** When you reach the first base, the aliens will send drop ships. These typically land on alternating sides of the base, but keep an eye on the skies. One trick is to drop a grenade just outside the drop ship when the Covenant forces are exiting.

**Warthog:** When you get in the Warthog, make sure to keep your gunner alive. He's your biggest support.

**The energy bridge:** When you enter the bridge room, get the most out of your gunner; let him pick the guys off at a distance. Then park and let him cover you as you head to the right-hand side of the building to turn on the bridge. The switch is through a small passage on the right side.

**Reunion tour:** First find a life pod crash site and get yourself a sniper rifle.

Afterward, you'll see a path on each side. We suggest that you go left first. Park your Warthog and gunner in the open area overlooking the base. Use yourself as bait to draw alien fire, and your driver will chew the shooters to shreds. Move closer if needed. Rescue your troops, and if possible, pick up another soldier to sit in the passenger seat. Do the same thing at the other base. Try to get down into the base as quickly as possible and find your buddies. Use grenades to clear out aliens inside the base.

**Sniper time:** Once you've killed all the aliens at the two bases, head up to the next area. Find the crashed escape pod and park your Warthog nearby. Grab the sniper rifle by the pod. Head to high ground and use it to pick off Covenant while your Warthog gunners take care of the rest.

**Cleanup:** Once this area is cleared, head to the next area and follow a similar strategy. Park your Warthog by the lifeboat, then head to high ground and snipe. Jump on the drop ship and split.

## THE BESTIARY



### GRUNTS

**Watch out for:** Their grenades... especially in later levels.

**Best weapon to use:** Any weapon will do.  
**How to beat them:** Shoot them, grenade them, melee them... it's up to you.

**Secret tactic:** If you take out an Elite, most of the Grunts surrounding it will panic.



### ELITES

**Watch out for:** Their plasma rifles.

**Best weapon to use:** Plasma pistol or sniper rifle.

**How to beat them:** Charge up the plasma pistol and then follow it up with a couple quick shots or a melee attack.

**Secret tactic:** If you sneak up behind them, you can kill them with a single melee attack.



### INVISIBLE ELITES

**Watch out for:** Their invisibleness.

**Best weapon to use:** Assault rifle.

**How to beat them:** It's okay to take a shot or two from these guys in order to get a bead on them. Once you find them, they're not hard to kill.

**Secret tactic:** Firing randomly will help you spot these guys quickly.



### SWORDSMAN ELITES

**Watch out for:** Their mighty swords.

**Best weapon to use:** Plasma pistol.

**How to beat them:** Stay away from these guys. They'll kill you with a single shot.

**Secret tactic:** If you see a sword swinging on its own, you've run across an Invisible Swordsman. Shoot at the sword quickly, or else you'll get hurt or lose a lot of AI buddies.



### GOLD ELITES

**Watch out for:** Everything. These are some of the most dangerous creatures in the game.

**Best weapon to use:** Plasma pistol, sniper rifle, or rocket launcher.

**How to beat them:** Use your biggest weapons on these guys and focus on them first in battles. They will always be your biggest threat.

**Secret tactic:** The Gold Swordsman is a deadly foe, but a charged plasma pistol burst and follow-up shots will put him in his place.



### JACKALS

**Watch out for:** Some Jackals will use the plasma pistol to take out your shields with a single shot.

On Legendary Mode, these are extremely dangerous.

**Best weapon to use:** Plasma pistol, needler, grenades.

**How to beat them:** Use a charged plasma pistol burst to take out the big shields... then kill the Jackals with a few shots.

**Secret tactic:** Toss grenades over their head to wipe out their exposed flank. Also, watch out for your bullets bouncing back off their shields and hitting you.



### HUNTERS

**Watch out for:** These aliens have two attacks: a huge green energy burst and a dangerous melee attack.

**Best weapon to use:** Pistol, sniper rifle, fragment grenades. (NOT PLASMA GRENADES, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD.)

**How to beat them:** Stay the hell away from them – their melee attacks are brutal. Use a zoomed pistol or unzoomed sniper rifle to fire shots into their weak-armored backs.

**Secret tactic:** If you're really brave, you can let them run at you and then step out of the way and melee attack them in the back. If you can do this, you're the man.



*can a single ray of light  
really save the galaxy?*







■ **TOP:** The Big Room of Death.... beware.  
**BOTTOM:** Hunters hate snipers and pistols.

## LEVEL THREE: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Sniper rifle and plasma pistol.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Kill the lights. It gets dark.

**BEST TIP:** Take the Covenant out with the sniper rifle before they fire back. It will save you time and your buddies' lives. More Marines = a much easier life for you. Remember this. It's a crucial theme of the whole game.

**HARDEST PART:** The large open room on the Covenant ship.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** Stay close to your soldier buddies, as they're less likely to die when you are near, and they'll kill a lot of aliens for you. Also, recharge your shield. Aliens don't normally come through doors after you, so step inside a door and replenish whenever you are low.

**COOL THINGS TO TRY:** If you're really a good shot, you can take out a Hunter in a single shot – just aim for the exposed red parts in its armor.

### WALKTHROUGH:

**First strike:** The key to the early part of this level is to snipe as many baddies as possible before they return fire. Always take out the turrets first; they present the greatest danger. Hang to the left side all the way up the hill and snipe as many big bad guys as possible. *Never* trade away your sniper rifle in this level... you'll need it later.

**Clearing 1:** You will go through one clearing – use the turrets to eliminate the maximum number of bad guys, or just take them out with your sniper.

**Clearing 2:** You'll face a second major battle where the gravity lift is located. In this area, be sure to take out all three turrets first with your sniper rifle. Jump in one to

wipe out aliens as they arrive in drop ships and as they come down the gravity lift. Once they're clear of the lift, jump off and help your guys on foot so you don't waste anyone with friendly fire. Your buddies will help later on.

**Introducing the Hunters:** Once all the lower-level aliens are gone, two Hunters will drop. Use your sniper rifle to take them out. The trick is to fire quick taps of three or four shots with a pistol or sniper. (Hint: Hunters are poorly armored in the back. If you hit them correctly, you can take them out with a couple shots.)

**Beaming aboard:** Make sure to bring a sniper rifle with you when you beam up to the ship. The Invisible Swordsman will try to get you right off the bat... use the sniper rifle

without zooming and hit him quick. Otherwise he'll wipe out your support. The first time you play this level, though, just watch and listen to the horror as your teammates drop without knowing what the hell hit them. Go upstairs and take out the lower level from above. Open the door for your buddies and fight your way to the next massive room.

**The big room of death:** Work your way to the far wall (opposite the entrance) of the room and then protect your guys as they move to the far corner so that they don't die. Try to take out as many Covenant troops on the upper level as possible.

**More Hunters:** If you've protected your guys, they will keep the two Hunters occupied while you stick and

move with a sniper rifle or pistol. Run backward for the best shot. Don't zoom in.

**The New Threat:** Fight through hallways for a while. Use grenades in tight hallways for maximum effect and to clear out invisible Elites. When you get to the open area with a second level in the middle, snipe the Elite Swordsman, as he's your biggest threat by far.

**The Captain's brig:** This room has one Gold Swordsman and two invisible troops... focus on the Swordsman. If you have any sniper bullets left, take him out from a distance. If you don't have a sniper rifle, use a charged plasma pistol to disrupt his armor and follow up with a couple quick shots.

**The rest:** Just fight your way out of the level.

## LEVEL FOUR: THE SILENT CARTOGRAPHER

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Plasma pistol and rocket launcher.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Turn up the audio so you can hear your AI buddies... they're hilarious.

**BEST TIP:** When you find the door to the map room, park a manned Warthog right in front of the door. When the final Gold Swordsman comes after you, your pals will wipe him out.

**HARDEST PART:** The map room entrance platform.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** This spot is packed with bad guys, so it's best to park your gunners safely away from grenades and then jump out with the pistol to head shot the rest in the zoom mode.

**COOL THING TO TRY:** Wade out into the water... it looks even better close up.

### WALKTHROUGH:

**First steps:** Fight on the beach. Get the Warthog. Drive close to the aliens and let your gunners do their business. (Help out if necessary.)

**Map room platform:** Stay to the left and fight along the map room platform. Use your buddies to clear the platform, then jump out and protect them from grenades with your pistol. Drive down to the map room door and clear it out.

**Preparation:** Drive out of the map room to the next area, clear it out, and look for a passage up the hill. Drive on until you see a Warthog crash site and load up. Return to the passage and leave the Warthog. Head up the passage on foot.

**Hunter battle:** You'll see two Hunters... kill them with your pistol. Get one of the overshield power-ups if you need to. Remember, you can sidestep their attacks, and hit them in their weak red spots.

**More Hunters:** Travel around the side and go into the building. You'll see two more Hunters. Power up, then kill one with the pistol. Go to the top and get another overshield, then return and kill the second Hunter.

**Security:** Continue on to override security. Defeat the two invisible shooters. Get the power-up. Go to the right side of the platform (if you're facing the water) and jump down to the ledge below and then to the ground.

**Remanning:** Go back to the crashed landing craft and load up on anything you're missing. Flip the Warthog, drive forward along the beach, and you're back to the beginning. Pick up gunners and passengers and return to the map platform. Use your Warthog to kill the biggies... run them over, then jump out and help your gunners. Once you clear the top level of the platform, drive down to the map room door and park your Warthog and gunners as close to the door as possible.

**Shafted:** In the first big room, kill the bad guy and go right. Use the high ground to your advantage. Go to second room. Use small gun to take out the regular guys and use

the rocket launcher to wipe out Hunters. They're not so tough now, are they?

**Cheap fun:** Continue on, but before you go, look down from the edge and you might see a bad guy. Drop a couple of grenades on him and laugh. Head as far down as possible to accomplish your objective. Then head back up. Run like a scared little girl if you have to. Save your rocket launcher.

**Battle Royale:** Now remember how we had you park your Warthog at the door of the map chasm? Here's why. It kills the Gold Swordsman. Save the rest of your rockets for the three invisible guys at the top of the platform. Your gunners will do the rest.



■ **Park your Warthog on the platform and let your gunners keep the Covenant occupied.**





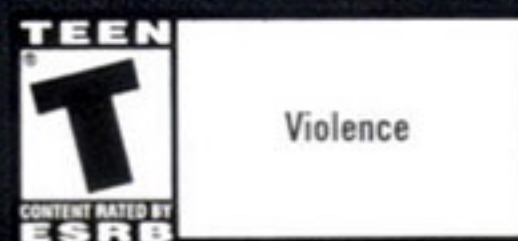
*it depends on who's holding it.*



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# HALO: COMBAT SOLVED

Strategy

1. Don't sit in the driver's seat of the Warthog, get out and help your gunners.
2. The longer you hold the trigger on your Assault Rifle, the worse your accuracy becomes. Use short bursts.
3. Aim your rocket launchers at your enemy's feet. This way you'll be far less likely to miss wildly.
4. The machine gun on the Scorpion Tank is terribly inaccurate... stick with the main cannon.
5. When attacking with Covenant Banshees, fly straight up, aim directly down, and pull back on the left stick.
6. If you're attacked by a Banshee, let it fly right at you and hit it with a rocket just before it flies overhead.
7. Use the Warthog as a battering ram... it's an instant kill. Just watch out for plasma grenades.



## THE WEAPONS

### MELEE ATTACK

**Especially useful for:** Killing aliens from behind.

**Best against:** Sleeping Covenant Grunts.

**Single player tactics:** This is one of the most powerful attacks in the game. If a Covenant has his back turned, you can wipe him out with a single shot.

**Multiplayer tactics:** If you run or jump while attacking, the melee attack has even more effect.

**Secret tactic:** Use a charged plasma pistol to take care of the armor and stun the victim, then follow up with a quick melee attack to seal the deal.

**Did you know:** There are unique melee times for each weapon. Pistols can attack and re-attack much more quickly than a rocket launcher or needler, for instance.

### PISTOL

**Especially useful for:** Zooming in and hitting headshots.

**Best against:**

Distant enemies and Hunters.

**Single player tactics:**

Some consider this the most powerful and useful weapon in the game... if used effectively. Use it to zoom in on distant targets, aiming directly for the head.

**Multiplayer tactics:** If you can hit headshots, this weapon can destroy multiplayer opponents.

**Secret tactic:** The pistol is far less accurate on full auto. Squeeze off each shot individually rather than holding down the fire button.

**Did you know:** That a head shot is two times more effective than a regular body shot.



### ASSAULT RIFLE

**Especially useful for:** Close attacks.

**Best against:** Enemies later in the game (see spoiler section).

**Single player tactics:**

Don't try to waste shots at a distance or attempt head shots, as this gun is not very accurate.

**Multiplayer tactics:** Stay close and look for another weapon.

**Secret tactic:** Use short bursts. The longer you hold down the trigger, the less accurate you'll be.

**Did you know:** This gun does not give any bonus to head shots.



### PLASMA PISTOL

**Especially useful for:**

Wiping out enemies with shield, plus it has an excellent rate of fire.

**Best against:** Jackals, Elites, and enemies later on (see spoiler section).

**Single player tactics:** Hit a target with the weapon charged, then follow it up with three or four quick shots, and you'll take out even the toughest Covenant baddie.

**Multiplayer tactics:** Use the same tactic in multiplayer and you'll eliminate your opponent's shields and then shoot away his life.

**Secret tactic:** In multiplayer, if you hit a vehicle packed with people, all of their shields will drop to zero.

**Did you know:** The charged burst will actually track enemies like a homing missile.



### PLASMA RIFLE

**Especially useful for:**

A reliable, basic weapon.

**Best against:** Most everyone.

**Single player tactics:**

This is a great all-around weapon – just watch out for the overheating.

**Multiplayer tactics:** The plasma rifle will stun its target. This is a great way to slow down a speedy target.

**Secret tactic:** Use the switch.

Fire the plasma rifle until it almost overheats and then quickly switch to your other weapon. This way you never need wait for it to cool.

**Did you know:** That if you stun a player in a vehicle, even the vehicle's weapon will move slowly for a while.





**8.** Don't bother firing at Covenant drop ships, just concentrate on the troops they bring.

**9.** The Ghost's best advantage is its strafing ability. It can move side to side as quickly as it can move forward.

**10.** The Covenant Tank is the most dangerous enemy in the game. Whenever you see it, attack it first.

**11.** Be careful when you get close to Grunts later on in the game - they can be deadly using plasma grenades.

**12.** If you kill an Elite in the middle of a bunch of Grunts, the Grunts will flee in terror.

**13.** The best way to take out Covenant Tanks is to use the rocket launcher on foot. Two rockets should do it.

**14.** Shoot Invisible Elites with a charged up plasma pistol and their invisibility goes away.

**15.** Elites use armor that replenishes just like yours. If you give them time after getting hit, they'll come back as good as new.



## SHOTGUN

**Especially useful for:** The later stage of the game.  
**Best against:** Late game enemies (see spoiler section).  
**Single player tactics:** Get as close as you can to an enemy before firing. If they have a shield, it will most likely take two shots.  
**Multiplayer tactics:** The closer you are, the more dangerous this weapon is.  
**Secret tactic:** (See spoiler section.)  
**Did you know:** That this should be your weapon of choice on tight multiplayer maps.



## NEEDLER

**Especially useful for:** Delayed damage.  
**Best against:** Useful against Jackals, since it can go around the shield.  
**Single player tactics:** Fire as many into a target as possible. The resulting damage can be impressive.  
**Multiplayer tactics:** This is a great defensive weapon for guarding the flag in CTF games.  
**Secret tactic:** Fire 10 of these into a single target and there will be a mighty explosion.  
**Did you know:** The needles will track targets.



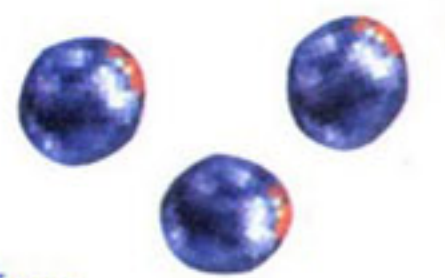
## ROCKET LAUNCHER

**Especially useful for:** Killing bosses and vehicles.  
**Best against:** Hunters, invisible Elites, and alien tanks.  
**Single player tactics:** Save your rockets for bosses, and you'll fly through the toughest sections of the game.  
**Multiplayer tactics:** Aim for the area around your enemy. Even if you miss, the blast should cause damage.  
**Secret tactic:** If you've ever played *Quake* in your life, you know this one: aim for the feet. You'll be less likely to miss, and you'll usually send your enemy into the stratosphere.  
**Did you know:** Rockets are fairly slow. You need to give a good amount of lead to a moving target.



## SNIPER RIFLE

**Especially useful for:** Wiping out enemy forces from afar.  
**Best against:** Gold Elites and Hunters.  
**Single player tactics:** Stay back and snipe any target you can. They usually won't attack you if you're far enough away. The sniper rifle is also the best way to quickly take out covering fire from above.  
**Multiplayer tactics:** The multiplayer map Blood Gulch is full of great sniping spots... search them out and you'll destroy your enemies.  
**Secret tactic:** Learn to shoot without using the zoom. Although the gun is less accurate from the hip, it is faster and very effective against bosses.  
**Did you know:** The sniper is useless against enemies later in the game.



## GRENADES

**Especially useful for:** Fighting in tight spaces and destroying clusters of enemies.  
**Best against:** Groups of Grunts and Elites (Plasma). Groups of future enemies (Fragment).  
**Single player tactics:** Toss grenades around corners and into groups of enemies.  
**Multiplayer tactics:** If someone sticks a plasma grenade on you, chase after them and give them the "hug of death." Plasma grenades are also great for taking out vehicles.  
**Secret tactic:** Drop a plasma grenade at your feet while running away from bad guys. If they give chase, you'll get them.  
**Did you know:** You can start chain reactions with grenades on the floor.



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## LEVEL FIVE: ASSAULT ON THE CONTROL ROOM

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Rocket launcher and various weapons.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Get some snacks. This level is long and treacherous.

**BEST TIP:** Always try to get a sniper to ride on your vehicle. He'll take out the Covenant at long range.

**HARDEST PART:** Almost everything.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** Stay focused, alert, and patient. You'll need to be at the top of your game to get through this level.

**COOL THING TO TRY:** At the end of the level, blow up a Banshee before it takes off, and you'll be able to skip a major part of the level.



### WALKTHROUGH:

**I would have been your daddy:** Fight until you get to the outdoor bridge. Slowly go across... use the alien pistol to take out Jackals. Head down to the bottom and clear it out before you reach the end. Walk toward the other door; when it opens, jump down to the lower level so you can eliminate the Gold Swordsman. Back up and charge the plasma pistol... shoot the Swordsman and then follow up with a few shots to kill him.

**Outdoor 1:** Make it through the structure until you get outside. Jump first to the turret and shoot the other turret across the way. Run to the crashed Warthog and grab the sniper rifle and the rocket launcher. Jump in the Warthog and wait for two passengers. Drive close to the tank, and once you're behind a big rock, jump out and fire two rockets into the tank.

**Scorpion:** Drive to the next spot and let your gunners clear the area. Jump on the Scorpion and wait until four soldiers jump on. Drive through the tunnel and shoot the alien tank from the upper ledge. Drive the tank into the base, kill the two Hunters, and then shoot

the flying ship from the sky. After that, drive the tank through the building.

**Rolling thunder:** Get on your tank and roll. You will eventually need to get off the tank, though. We're sorry. If you still have the rocket launcher, you are set. Run up the hill and let your forces fight the aliens on foot. Use your rockets to fight the two Ghosts and the Banshee.

**Interior:** Once inside, be as sneaky as long as possible and then attack. You will eventually face a Gold boss with a fast firing rifle. Take him out with a charged pistol or a rocket if you still have one.

**Bridge 2:** When you reach the bridge, cross it slowly and carefully, taking position behind the barriers in the middle. Be mindful of the troops on the other bridge.

**Bridge 3:** You will enter another building and exit at another bridge. If you have rockets, dispense with the Hunters on the other bridge. If not, discretion is the better part of valor... a hasty rush to the other side will usually work. **WARNING:** watch out for the invisobaddie on the far side of the bridge.

**Indoors:** Enter yet another

building... watch out for two invisobaddies in a long hallway... use your alien pistol to stun them visible or use a grenade. You'll enter another central room with two Hunters in the middle. Shoot at them through the first fully available window. Their weapons won't be able to hit you. You should weaken them significantly before they can reach you – and if you have a rocket launcher, you'll be set. If not, look for a pistol. It should be laying around somewhere.

**If I had a super weapon:** Now you'll face a new bridge and a new challenge. Use the rockets you just got for killing the boss and immediately shoot the Banshee that's parked on the bridge. (Note: if you are in a hurry, make a run for the Banshee before shooting it, wipe out any potential drivers, hop on board and fly to the top of the structure, open the blast doors, and use the ship to clear out the aliens. This will enable you to skip the rest of this level.) Then use your other weapon and grenades to take out the foot soldiers. After that, take down the second Banshee. The best way is to stand near the opening and let it hit the wall.

Then hit it with a rocket or a grenade. Now shoot the tank on the ground below with your rocket launcher.

**The bottom:** You will go down a lift... there's an invisoguard at the bottom. Once you've reached the bottom, you'll be able to commandeer a Ghost. You'll see a pit under a structure; enter and get a rocket launcher and sniper rifle if you don't already have these. (If you followed instructions, the tank at the bottom should be ash. Aren't you glad you followed the guide?) There is also a slim chance that the Banshee flier you killed from the bridge will be available on the ground. If it is, by all means, get in it and fly to the top, as you'll avoid all sorts of trouble and can wipe out all the aliens with little effort.

**The trip up:** If you don't have the Banshee, just use a Ghost flyer and navigate your way to the top. Use the side strafe to avoid the Hunter's green weapons. Watch for the Gold Swordsman at the very top... get out of the Ghost, climb the tower, and use your sniper and the rest of your rockets to finish them all off.

## THE VEHICLES



### WARTHOG

**Strengths:** High-speed movement and machine gun turret.

**Weaknesses:**

You can't fire while you drive.

**Special tactics:** Load this baby up with soldiers, park it in the

middle of a battle, and then jump out to help with the action. If you don't have buddies, drive into the fray, jump out, and man the turret yourself. Also, you can make guys get out of the Warthog by pressing X next to them. This way, you can man the vehicle with better soldiers.

**Advanced tip:** Once your guys are attacking the enemy, sneak around to the side and flank them... they'll never know what hit 'em.



### SCORPION TANK

**Strengths:**

The cannon is deadly, and up to four others can jump on board.

**Weaknesses:** The machine gun is not very effective.

**Special tactics:** Make sure you have as many guys as possible

on the tank with you at all times. They will help greatly in the middle of battle. Also, try to make sure that a sniper jumps on board. This will make you almost unbeatable.

**Advanced tip:** In co-op mode, have one player be a sniper and ride as a passenger. He can target enemies from a distance and help the tank driver aim shots. Also, in multiplayer, make sure that the back of your tank is facing opponents when you shoot, or else they'll be able to snipe the driver easily.



### TURRET

**Strengths:** High rate of fire.

**Weaknesses:** Poor accuracy.

**Special tactics:** Stay away from these unless you have a large mass of enemies at a good distance. However, these are good for taking down Banshees.

**Advanced tip:** Use grenades to move turrets to better locations. Explosions cause turrets to move, but they are never destroyed. Try moving a turret into a hallway full of enemies and have some real fun.



### GHOST

**Strengths:**

Speed and strafing ability.

**Weaknesses:**

Not much firepower.

**Special tactics:** This is a great getaway vehicle that strafes almost as fast as it moves. You're hard to

hit and nearly impossible to catch. Your guns will stun opponents, so you can stun an enemy and quickly run it over.

**Advanced tip:** When you're flying through the air off a jump, hit A. It will make your nose go up and you'll pick up some air.



### BANSHEE

**Strengths:** It can fly, and the fuel rod cannon is extremely powerful.

**Weaknesses:**

It's difficult to control.

**Special tactics:** Fly straight up, aim down, and then hold back on the left stick. This will let you hover for a while and pick off enemies from above.

**Advanced tip:** If you see a Banshee parked and surrounded by enemies, hit it with a grenade or rocket launcher so that no one can use it until you turn it over. The aliens in *Halo* are damn smart, but they still haven't figured out how to turn over a vehicle – thankfully.



**WARNING:** THE FOLLOWING FOUR PAGES OF THIS STORY ARE PACKED WITH *HALO* GAME SPOILERS. DO NOT READ THEM UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED LEVELS SIX AND SEVEN.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO IGNORE THIS WARNING, YOU ARE RUINING AN INCREDIBLE GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE... WE WARNED YOU.



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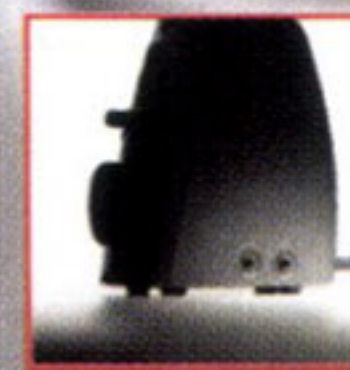
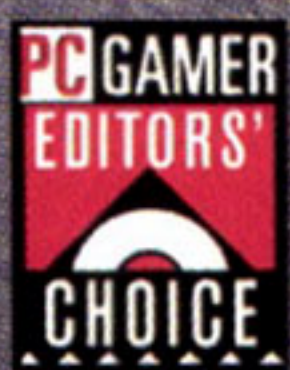
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SURRENDER TO THE SYSTEM



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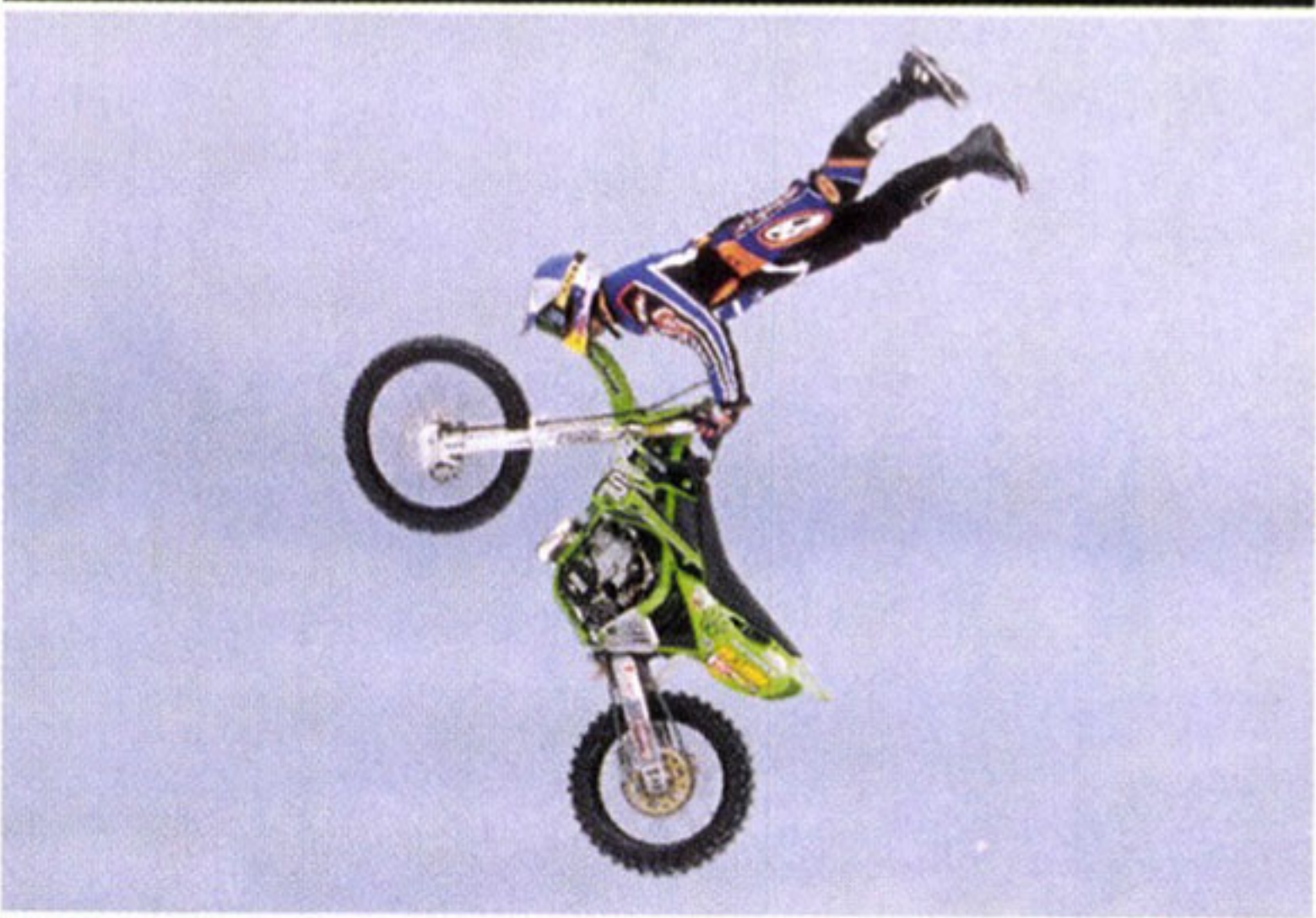
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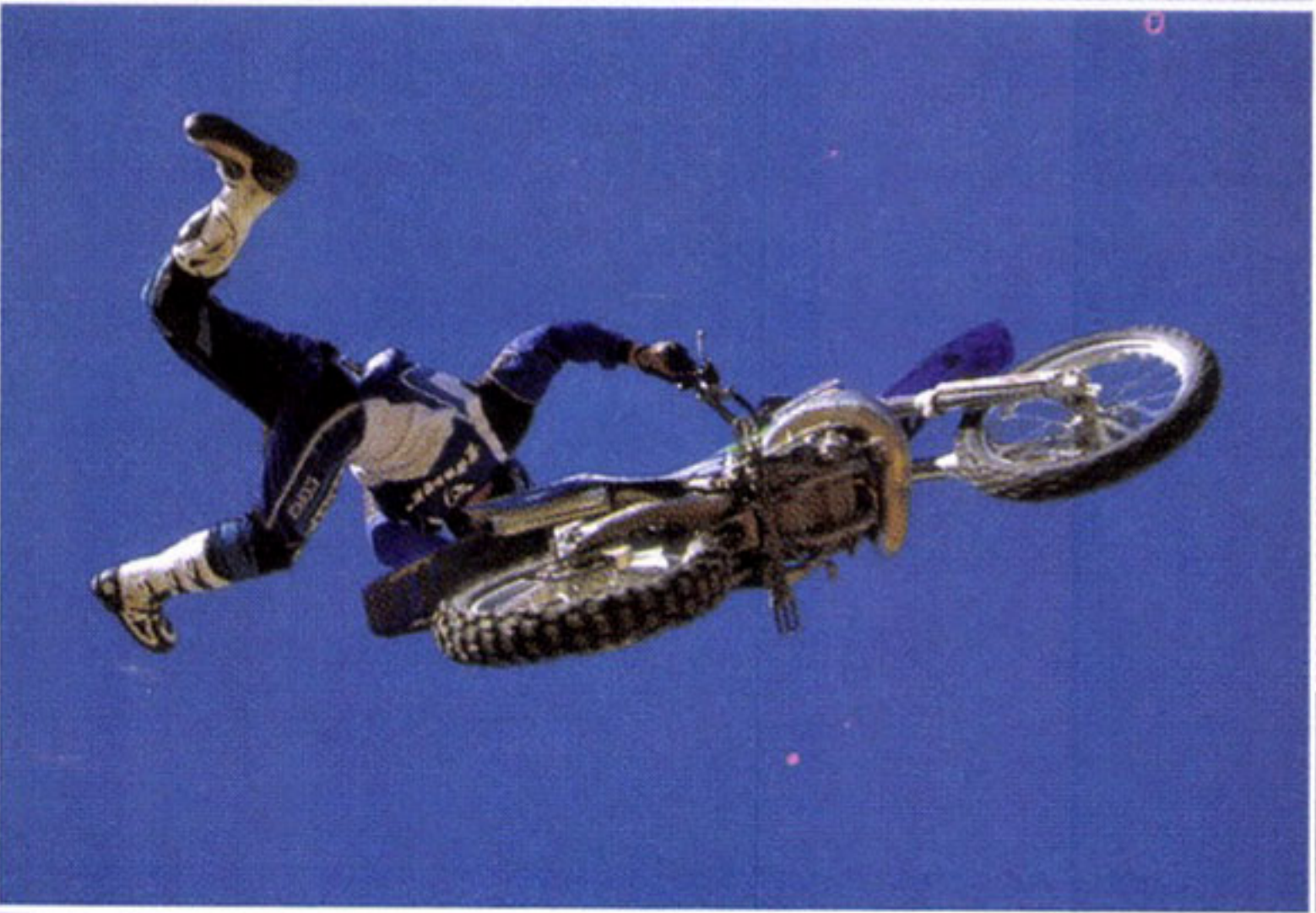
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■ This is just a hint of the carnage you're about to face... maybe it's time to turn back.

## LEVEL SIX: 343 GUILTY SPARKS

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Shotgun and rocket launcher.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Turn off the lights and grab your blanky... this one's scary.

**BEST TIP:** Have your mom on speed dial.

**HARDEST PART:** Getting out alive.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** Follow the instructions.

**COOL THING TO TRY:** Surviving.

**WALKTHROUGH:**

**The Skinny:** This level is just too good to ruin with a walkthrough, but don't worry, you won't really need it. Here are a few tips that will ensure your survival.

**Tips:**

- The shotgun is your best friend.
- Be wary of plasma grenades, they may come back to haunt you.
- Just do what the game tells you.
- Keep your composure.

## THE SPOILER BESTIARY



### INFECTION FORMS

**Watch out for:** Their numbers.

**Best weapon to use:** Assault rifle.

**How to beat them:** Liberally

spray the assault rifle in every direction – or use the fragment grenades to wipe out large numbers of these beasts.

**Secret tactic:** If your shields are full, it's acceptable to let a couple of these guys hit you. But you should be very wary of them if your shields are low.



### THE FLOOD

**Watch out for:** Their persistence

and occasional weapons.

**Best weapon to use:** Shotgun.

**How to beat them:** Wait until they get close and

hit them with a single shot. This is the only weapon (other than the rocket launcher) that really takes them out.

**Secret tactic:** Stick one with a plasma grenade, then shoot it with the shotgun and run backward. His pals will get blown apart when the grenade goes off.



### EXPLODERS

**Watch out for:** Their exploding.

You should also watch out because they can get blown over your head by a grenade and then

explode behind you.

**Best weapon to use:** Shotgun – at a distance.

**How to beat them:** These guys are actually a great help in battle. Wait until they are surrounded by the Flood and set them off. They'll wipe out their own forces.

**Secret tactic:** Be patient: if you time your shot, you'll take out a lot of enemies.



### SENTINELS

**Watch out for:** Their laser beams.

**Best weapon to use:** Plasma pistol or plasma rifle.

**How to beat them:** Draw them

into tight confined spaces, like hallways, so they can't spread out and attack.

**Secret tactic:** Charge up the plasma pistol and you can take these guys out quickly.



■ Hey, why is this Grunt running away in fear? Ohhh, trust us, you really don't want to know.

## LEVEL SEVEN: THE LIBRARY

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Shotgun and assault rifle.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Dark, loud, and comfortable.

**BEST TIP:** Use the Exploders as your weapons.

**HARDEST PART:** Getting to the index.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** Forget about killing every enemy. Make a run for the goal.

**COOL THING TO TRY:** Use precision firing to knock the limbs off your enemies.

**WALKTHROUGH:**

**The Skinny:** This is another straight-forward, but difficult, level. A walkthrough won't really help, but the following tips will.

**Tips:**

- Keep moving: stay away from Exploders.
- Use the shotgun for big enemies and the assault rifle for small ones.
- If you find a rocket launcher, use it quickly and then pick up your discarded main gun.
- Shoot the Exploders when they are close to other creatures.
- Use every grenade you get – you'll get plenty more.
- These guys aren't as smart as the aliens, so don't expect them to dodge.
- Be careful using plasma grenades, they may come right back at you.

**The Hard Part:** When the game finally tells you to recover the index... go straight for it. There are just too many enemies, and if you have a full life you should be able to make it pretty easily.



■ **TOP:** Let Sentinels help whenever they can. **BOTTOM:** Forget it all and run for the index.





## LEVEL EIGHT: TWO BETRAYALS

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Shotgun and plasma rifle.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Comfy – this one takes a while, too.

**BEST TIP:** Use the vehicles whenever possible.

**HARDEST PART:** Getting the last Banshee.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** At the very end of this level you'll find yourself stuck in an intense battle between Covenant and Flood. Stay to the far left side of the map, and make a daring run at the Covenant tank with your rocket launcher. If you survive, scramble to the Banshee and gain air quickly.

**COOL THING TO TRY:** Use the Banshee to wipe out every single enemy.

**WALKTHROUGH:**

**The gun pointed at the head of the universe:**

Quickly go to the top of the tower and pick up a health and the sniper rifle... but don't use it yet. Get to the bottom of the dam as quickly as possible and get the rocket launcher that's on the right hand (facing the big building). Run back up several levels higher and take out the tank from a distance. Return to the bottom and use

your sniper rifle or rocket launcher to take out the Gold Elite. He is your biggest threat as you try to get the Banshee. **Breaking stuff to look tough:** Use the Banshee to clear the bridge and then land on it, loading up on weapons and ammo. Keep your rocket launcher... you may need it. If you see aliens and the Flood fighting, let them fight, and then defeat weakened winners. Beware of Gold guys inside.

**Another bridge:** Use a rocket or a charged-up alien pistol to take out the Gold Swordsman. Let the bad guys fight each other whenever possible. Pick off the survivors. **Another building:** After you go through a long hallway, there will be a sharp turn. Lob a grenade around the corner and you'll take out a monster with a rocket launcher. The next bit is extremely difficult, but the basic idea is to make it to the bridge and kill everything behind you.

**New Bridge:** Getting across the bridge is also extremely difficult. The best idea is to just get across as quickly as possible, using every grenade, bullet, and weapon that you have. This is a good time to break out the rocket launcher. **Outside again:** Once you've fought through the next building, you'll be back outside at a clearing. Jump aboard the Ghost and immediately focus on the aliens surrounding the tank. Side strafe away from the tank cannon and patiently pick off the ground forces. Once they're clear, fly down into the pit in front of the tank and get more rockets. Fly up, hide behind a rock, and then use the rockets to destroy the tank. **Down and up:** Fly down through the tunnel and then through the barrier (you'll fit).



■ A shotgun will work on the Sentinels if you're close, but plasma weapons are better.

## OUR 10 FAVORITE VISUAL TREATS IN HALO

10. Watching the Covenant shoot escape pods out of the sky while on the Pillar of Autumn level.
9. Shooting a Banshee with a rocket launcher and diving out of the way as the smoking rubble careens barely overhead.
8. Using the night-vision sniper scope to take out an enemy.
7. Running out into the water on the Cartography Island and seeing how good it looks.
6. The invisobaddies.
5. Blowing up anything with the Scorpion tank. Best. Explosions. Ever.
4. The carnage leading up to the Flood.
3. The Flood at its greatest numbers.
2. The huge Covenant vs. Flood battles.
1. The entire end gameplay sequence (too bad you won't have time to actually enjoy it.)

Flip the Warthog and take it up the narrow pathway. When you reach the top, jump out and use the turret. Drive until you reach the opening and the massive tower. Use the cannon to shoot down the Banshee and then kill the two Hunters on the right. Continue on to the right, leave your Warthog behind, and wipe out the tank with a rocket launcher. Run up and get on the turret to take out the two Elites below.

**In the air:** Jump into the Banshee and fly as high as possible. Destroy the other airborne Banshee and then, from high above, pick off all the targets below, starting with the turrets. Fly directly above your target, point your nose directly down, and hold the left joystick back... this will allow you to hover out of reach of enemy weapons.

**Disruption:** Land on the platform. Enter and step into the beam to disrupt it. If your health is low, escape can be difficult. Don't be afraid to run. Otherwise, a shotgun is the best weapon for this part.

**The tunnels below:** Jump on a Banshee, fly into the tunnel, and wipe out all the resistance. Or just let them fight and wipe out the remnants. Target the right side first and you'll eliminate most of the rocket launchers. Watch for more rocket troops around the corner. Open the door.

**On foot:** Make your way across the bridge, using grenades to kill small enemies and make sure that nothing gets behind you. Watch out for the rocket launcher.

**Final run:** You'll see another battle going on. Stay out of it as long as possible.

Go around the corner (the tunnel's blocked) and you'll see another battle in action. Let them fight and take out the winners. Take out the rocket launchers on the left by running at them and fighting at close quarters.

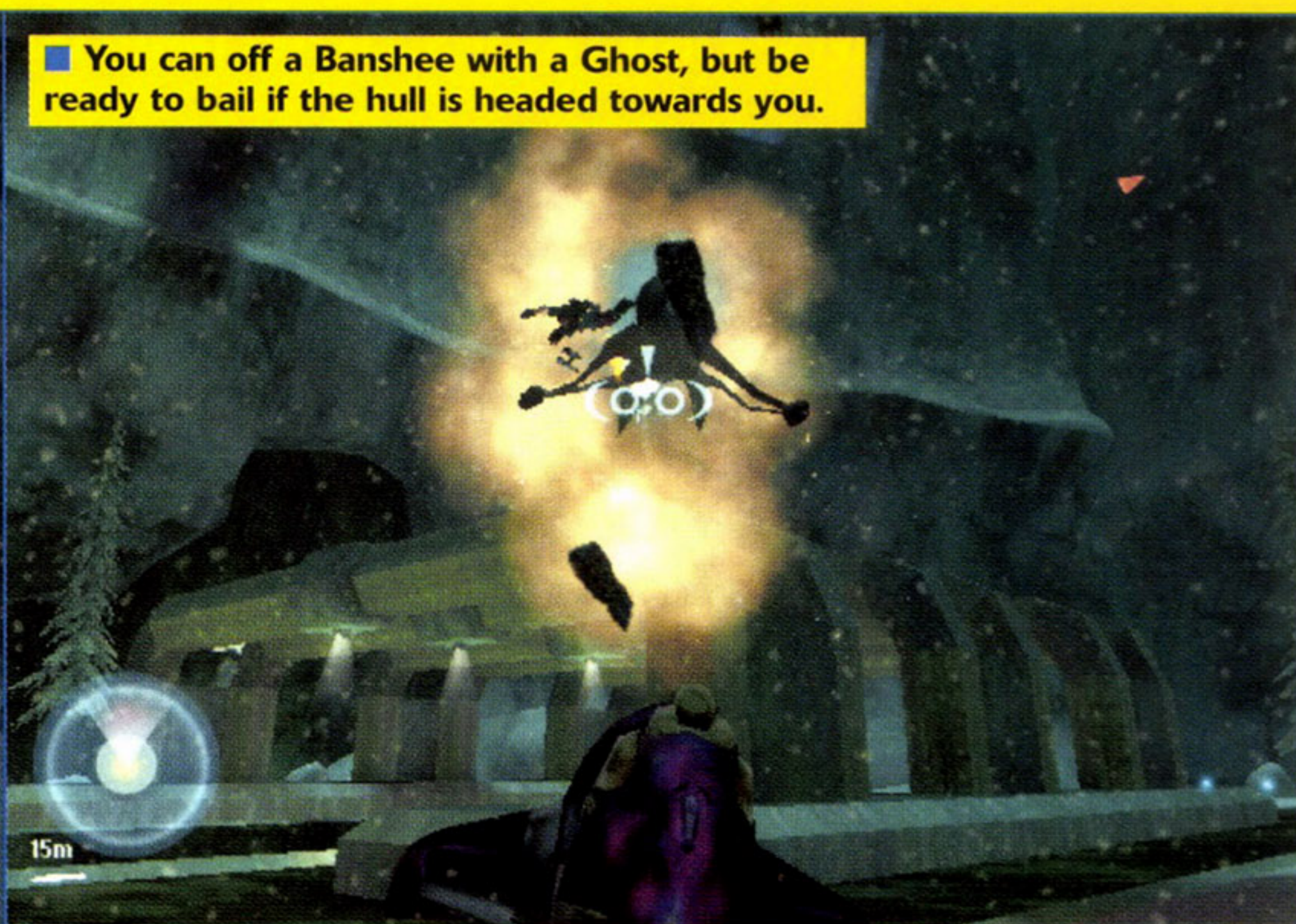
**Ground war:** Now you've got one ground battle left... and it's a toughie. Stay to the far left until you can get into the base. Regroup, reload, and then make a run at the closest alien tank with your rocket launcher. Immediately jump on the Banshee and gain altitude. From here, you can head to the waypoint or exact some revenge. Needless to say, we prefer the revenge.

**Getting out:** Once you get to the waypoint, you'll be attacked by drones. Stay up high, as they don't shoot up particularly well.

■ If you stay at a high enough elevation, you can pick off enemy troops at your leisure.



■ You can off a Banshee with a Ghost, but be ready to bail if the hull is headed towards you.





**! WARNING!  
SPOILERS  
HERE**



■ Nothing is quite as much fun as watching two foes battle each other. The winner is always you.

## LEVEL NINE: KEYES

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Shotgun and alien rifle.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Somewhere secluded so you don't look like a fool when you start shouting at the creatures onscreen.

**BEST TIP:** Grenades are your best friend in this level.

**HARDEST PART:** Escaping after you find the captain.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** Immediately jump off the captain's platform and run to the left. Open the door in the left corner and Covenant will stream out and fight the Flood for you. Otherwise, if you decide to battle it out with the Flood and you actually survive (which ain't easy), then there are a host of Covenant waiting to finish you off.

**COOL THING TO TRY:** At the end of the level, you can actually jump on top of a Covenant drop ship and use it to get you to an empty Banshee – skipping an amazing amount of enemies and jumping right into the next level.

### WALKTHROUGH:

#### Under new

**management:** Fight, fight, fight, and let the other guys fight whenever possible... this time around, it's best to help the Flood rather than the Covenant. If you have a shotgun, the Flood can be handled.

**On the ground:** You know the routine by now, just keep fighting. When you are told to wait at the bottom of the gravity lift, don't dawdle. Get to the top of the hill as quickly as possible and they'll beam you up.

**In the ship:** When you reach the hangar room of the ship, jump downstairs and save yourself some trouble. When you reach the second big room,

bypass the first door and sneak alongside the firefight. Use lots of grenades and shotguns.

**The captain:** When it's time to escape, try it yourself a couple of times. Difficult, isn't it? Now, when you are given the command to escape, jump off to your left (facing the doors) and open the one on your far left. The Covenant and the Flood will fight each other to a standstill. Like *candy*.

**Chaos:** Now just fight your way down to the escape pod bay. Jump onto the alien drop ship (it looks scary, but it can be done). Jump onto the bridge and then jump down onto the Banshee. Jump in and you're set.

■ When you finally find Captain Keyes, you need to act quickly. Don't worry about fighting the Flood, just open the door and let the Covenant do your dirty work.



## THE 10 MOST SATISFYING THINGS TO ACCOMPLISH IN HALO

**1. Killing a Hunter with a melee attack.** Let him rush, sidestep, and then attack.



**2. Killing a Gold Swordsman with a melee attack.** Hit him with a charged pistol burst from very close up and then immediately attack.



**3. Running over bad guys with a Warthog.** Just watch out for plasma grenades.



**4. Blasting groups of enemies with the Scorpion cannon.** It's the most powerful weapon in the game.



**5. Skipping a major section of Level Five.** When you reach the bridge with the Banshee on it, shoot any possible drivers and get to it quickly.



**6. Shooting down a Banshee with a rocket launcher.** Wait until it is right above you before you fire.



**7. Shooting down a Banshee from a Banshee.** Use the left trigger for a devastating attack.



**8. Finishing the game in Legendary mode.** It's truly worth the effort.



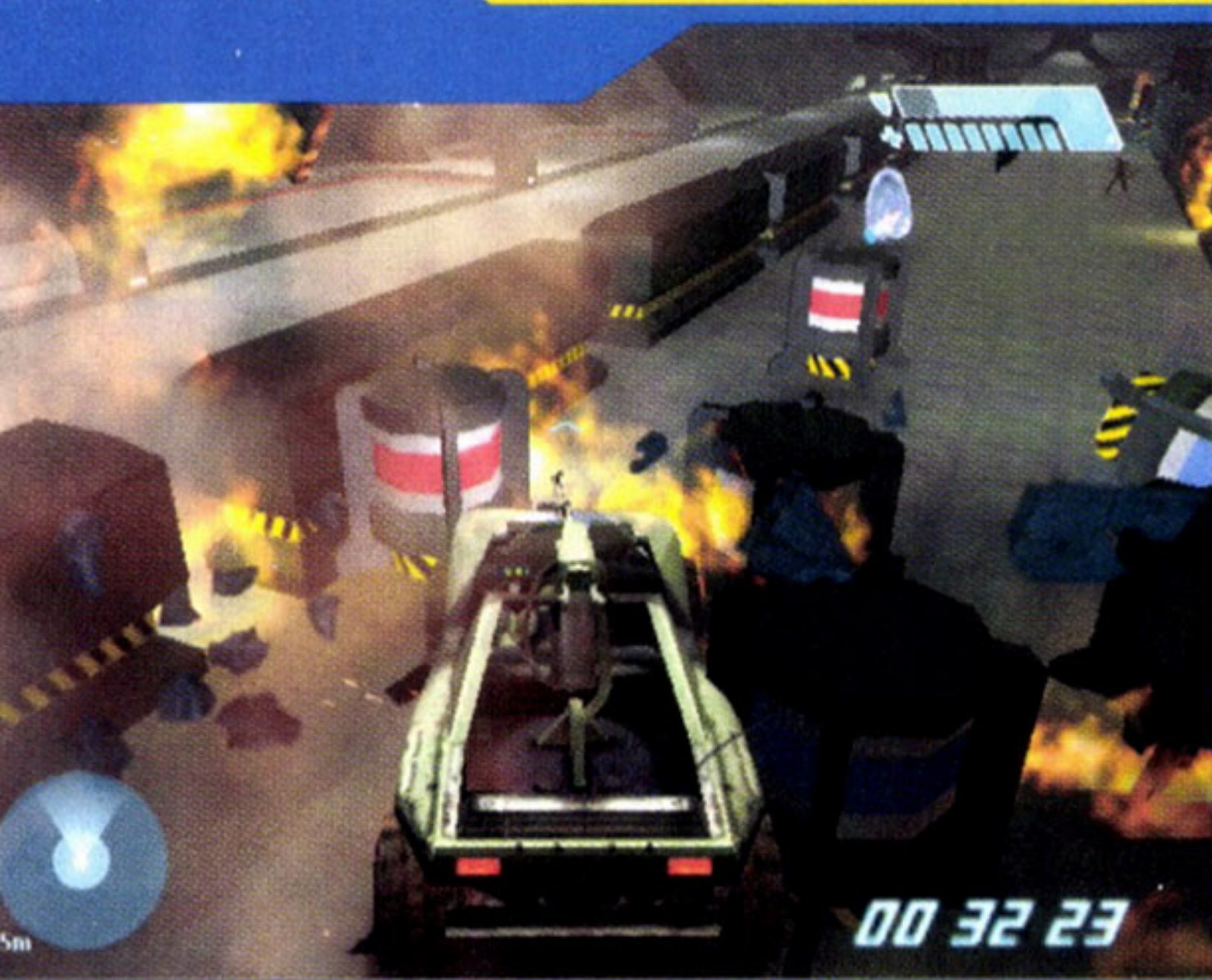
**9. Playing through the entire game co-op in Legendary mode.** ...and still remaining friends.



**10. Taking out a pal in multiplayer with a plasma grenade.** ...and it doesn't count if they're on a vehicle.







■ Running over aliens is some serious fun, but if you want to finish the game, just ignore 'em.

## LEVEL TEN: THE MAW

**IDEAL ARSENAL:** Shotgun and rocket launcher.

**IDEAL ENVIRONMENT:** Invite some friends, they've got to see this.

**BEST TIP:** Know how to alternate between the shotgun and the alien weapons while holding on to the rocket launcher.

**HARDEST PART:** The end run.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** You'll have to figure this one out, but we'll give you this one tip... if you jump out of a falling Warthog near the ground, it'll greatly reduce the damage taken.

**COOL THING TO TRY:** Take the last part slowly and savor the moment. You'll fail, but it'll be worth it.



■ Ah, finally our pickup has arrived. Now it's time to kick back and relax... or maybe not.

■ So how good are you at driving a Warthog? Why do we ask? Uh, no reason, really.



■ You'll need plenty of rockets. Don't be afraid to leave the room and get more in the armory.

### WALKTHROUGH:

**The Skinny:** You've reached the end; let's just hope you remember everything you've learned.

### Tips:

• Watch out for the Spec Ops Covenant in black... they are the toughest by far.

- Some Spec Ops Grunts carry a weapon that explodes when they die. Steer clear.
- Plasma weapons are best for taking out Sentinels.
- Before you go into the engine room, visit the armory and load up on ammo.
- After you destroy each vent,

jump down and grab one of the health packs on both sides of the floor level.

• In the final run, don't worry about the bad guys, just stay to the middle and get to the end as fast as you can.

• Don't wait for the first pickup, he's not going to

make it. Just keep moving.

• Look for shortcuts. They are any of the big open doors you see on the sides as you go.

**The hard part:** This will require several attempts. After a big battle, find a checkpoint so you don't have re-do the battle. After that? Game Over.



## OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE CHALLENGE

### Just how bad are you?

**W**ant to prove to the world that you have the gaming chops that legends are made of? Well, here's your chance. **Official Xbox Magazine** is going to run a series of challenges designed to find out who is the absolute best Xbox gamer in the world. Due to legal complications beyond our comprehension (much less our ability to explain) we aren't allowed to give "prizes" for certain kinds of challenges. So what we're doing is starting an Elite Gamers section in **Official Xbox Magazine** that will give mad props to the very best gamers out there. Are you one of them?

## BECOME A LEGEND

Playing through *Halo* on Normal or even Heroic is tough, but if you play through on Legendary, then you are the real deal. The designers at Bungie were kind enough to include a few surprises to those who were man enough to beat their masterpiece on the hardest level. Take a picture of your TV, send us a video, or otherwise prove beyond a reasonable doubt that you finished *Halo* on Legendary, and you get 1,000 elite points. The first person to prove this gets an extra 2,000 elite points for their promptness. After all, the prize of pride should be enough.

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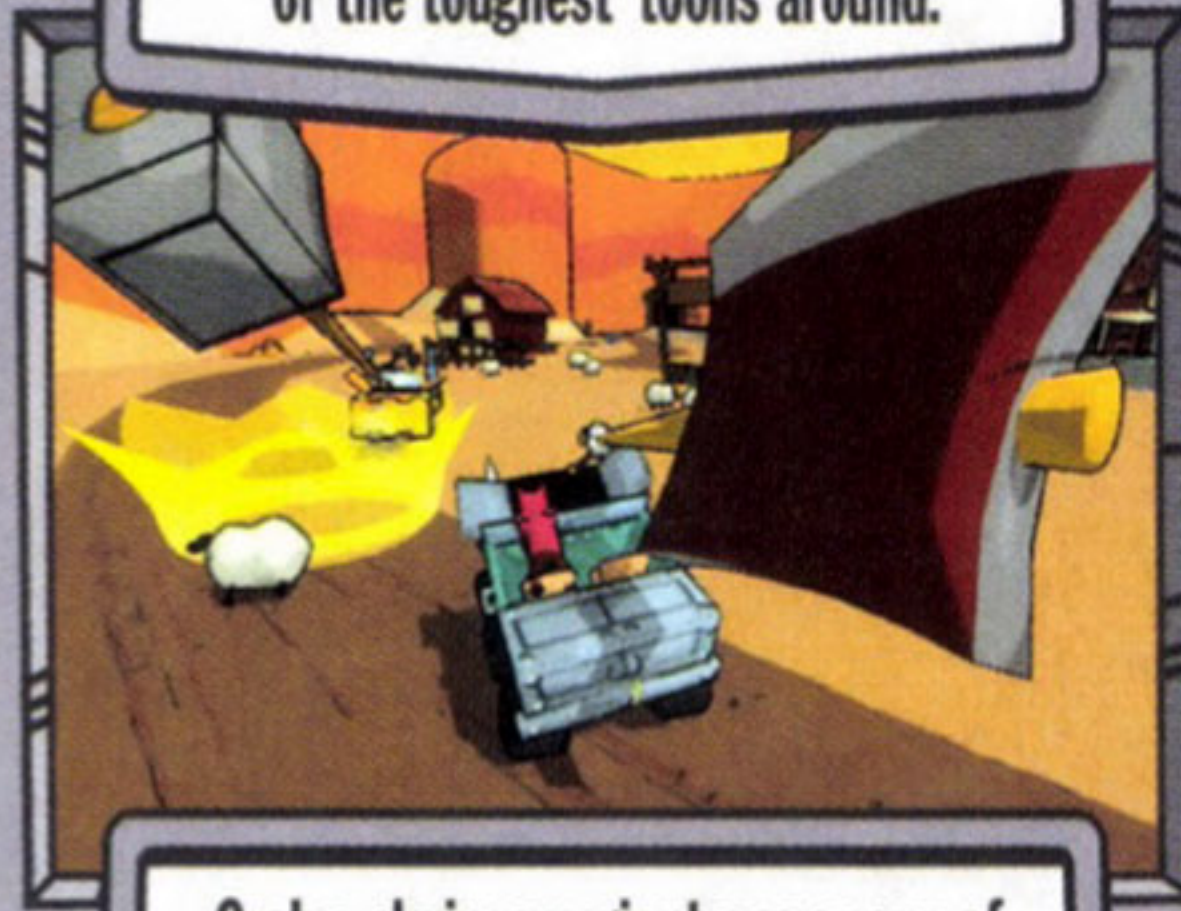
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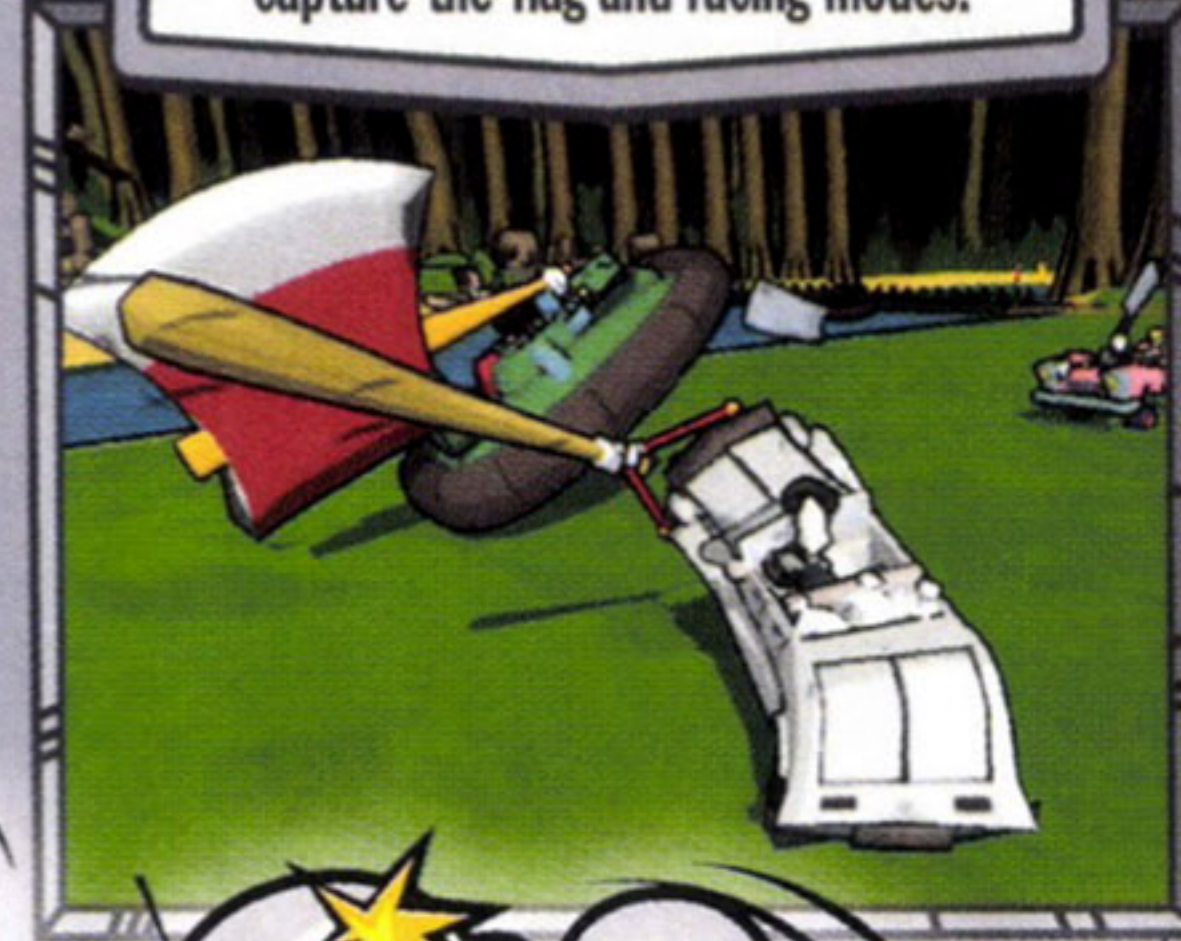
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# Previews

Xbox games of the post-apocalyptic future



Don't try this at home. Yes, even if you live in a cel-shaded universe and have a pair of nitro-powered skates.



For the gamers who complained that beating *Jet Grind Radio* was "too hard," *JSRF*'s new graffiti feature is for you.



# JSRF: Jet Set Radio Future

**Making the future past perfect**



It's always harder to forge your own path than it is to blindly follow the pack. For Sega, the "hard way" is how the company has been continually operating since it started cranking out its games into arcades and onto the Sega Master System way back in 1986. And this is a tradition that continued up until Dreamcast, Sega's most recent (and final) console in the gaming market. Always trying something new, both with gameplay and available technology, Sega created some of its most memorable games to date on Dreamcast by releasing *Shenmue*, *Samba de Amigo*, and, most notably, *Jet Grind Radio*.

With its clever (and at that moment in time, precedent-setting) use of cel-shaded graphics, *Jet Grind Radio* managed to garner an amazing amount of interest from gamers. But the real hook was the gameplay – which combined a good amount of tough challenges to test players' old-school skills, along with features completely its own. Any gamer who managed to pull off an intensely intricate XL tag on the side of a skyscraper while grinding along a drainpipe and dodging the horde of evil cops can attest to this fact. And now, the game's sequel, *Jet Set Radio Future*, is set to follow in the original's footsteps on Xbox – but not without

### Super Magnetic Neo Tokyo

When Smilebit started work on *JSRF*, the team took time to examine what could be improved in the original in order to make the sequel more accessible to gamers. One of the main elements they adjusted was the graffiti tagging feature (as described in the accompanying preview), but the team has also seen fit to make actually grinding around town a little less difficult. They accomplished this by making many of the rails in the *JSRF* world "magnetic." Therefore, if you jump on or near a rail, you'll have more of a chance of landing on it than in the original, which had a pinpoint accuracy that turned off many a gamer.



packing in several very worthwhile additions, tweaks, and overhauls. The most noticeable change is in the gameplay, which affects the tagging feature. In the original, the different graffiti sites ranged in size from small tags to elaborate wall murals. The larger-sized tags required players to stop and pull off a series of directional moves in order to spray them. Therefore, the challenge lay in dodging the cops long enough in order to have enough time to complete a tag. According to Sega, though, the result was often overly difficult for players, so for the sequel, the act of tagging was significantly simplified.

Smilebit has done away with the complex directional moves involved with tagging altogether and has opted to place the emphasis in *JSRF* on speed. Now, all the player needs to do

at a graffiti site is simply press the R-Trigger to use a spray paint can. Depending on the size of the tag, you'll need to allot more cans. The larger the tag, the more cans you'll



**Only on Xbox**

Though Sega proclaims that it's "platform agnostic," *JSRF* can't be seen on any other system for now. While there are rumors of a PS2 port of *JSRF*, don't expect it to be any time soon.

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: **Sega** PUBLISHER: **Smilebit** RELEASE DATE: **February 2002**

**WHO ARE THEY?:** One of the youngest teams in Sega's internal development stable, Smilebit has already made a huge impression on gamers with its unique take on action games with *Jet Grind Radio* for Dreamcast. They've since followed up with the über-wacky *The Typing of the Dead*, which traded a lightgun in for a keyboard in order to whack zombies in the arcade classic. A little left of center, but always innovative, Smilebit is the perfect example of how daring, creative, and sometimes strange Sega's sensibilities can be. And now we're lucky enough to have 'em on Xbox.

GAME:	SYSTEM:	SCORE:
<i>Jet Grind Radio</i>	DC	10/10
<i>Typing of the Dead</i>	DC	8/10
AVERAGE:		9/10





ビート

## Big Audio Dynamite

Shortly before the Autumn TGS, Sega announced that *JSRF* would follow in *Jet Grind Radio*'s audio footsteps by including some of the hippest, funkier music tracks this side of, well, *Jet Grind Radio*. The musical roster features the return of Wavemaster's remix maestro Hideki Naganuma, who was responsible for much of the hip-hop-tastic feel of the original, as well as the introduction of the Latch Brothers, a DJ trio that includes Beastie Boy Mike D. In addition, there are quite a few other groups signed on to bring their musical stylings to the soundtrack, including Cibo Matto and Bis. Hell, if it's anything like the original, it'll be one of the best game soundtracks in the history of game soundtracks.

**Any gamer who managed to pull off an XL tag on the side of a skyscraper while grinding along a drainpipe can attest to this fact...**

need. You can pull off a gigantic tag while grinding by, but you'll have to keep the R-Trigger held down. And the police? They're susceptible to your attack, too. With a carefully placed tag on their backs, you can knock them down and get them out of the way.

On top of the change in *JSRF*'s gameplay mechanics, Sega has seen fit

to make it a multiplayer experience. A whole new Race mode has been added for you and a buddy to race around some of the different environments. While there are plenty of other multiplayer modes that Sega has yet to confirm, you can be assured that Smilebit has plans to possibly include four-player gaming for the whole *Jet Set* family. From what we've played so far, this is shaping up to one of Xbox's most unique and engaging games in the new year.

- Francesca Reyes

### WIRED

For movies, screens and news updates of *JSRF*, check out [www.smilebit.com](http://www.smilebit.com) for the latest.



## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Finely "tooned" cel-shading technique looks fantastic.
- Fast-paced action and multiple objectives make for loads of gameplay.
- Huge, massive areas to cover with highly detailed environments.
- Loads of characters to play as.

### ODDS ARE...

*JSRF* is geared to be the ultimate coup at gaining street cred with hardcore gamers for Microsoft's black box - and we're not one to argue with sweet graphics and gameplay. It's hit material with Sega's trademark "edge."

### NEEDS WORK

- Because the edges are so well-defined, there are some aliasing problems, but they'll most likely be sorted right quick.
- The gameplay might seem a bit oversimplified for fans of the original, but this might not be such a bad thing.

### HYPE

As one of the biggest titles in the "second wave" of Xbox games, *JSRF* is receiving some heavy promotion through Sega and Microsoft, with the latter betting on it being one of the premier titles for the system.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

We love *JSRF*; from the hip, savvy graphics to the street-smart soundtrack to the clever gameplay, this is a complete package. Fans will love the additions and upgrades, while newbies will get hooked on the unique premise. As Sega's first non-sports title on Xbox, we're looking forward to seeing more of the game as it progresses.



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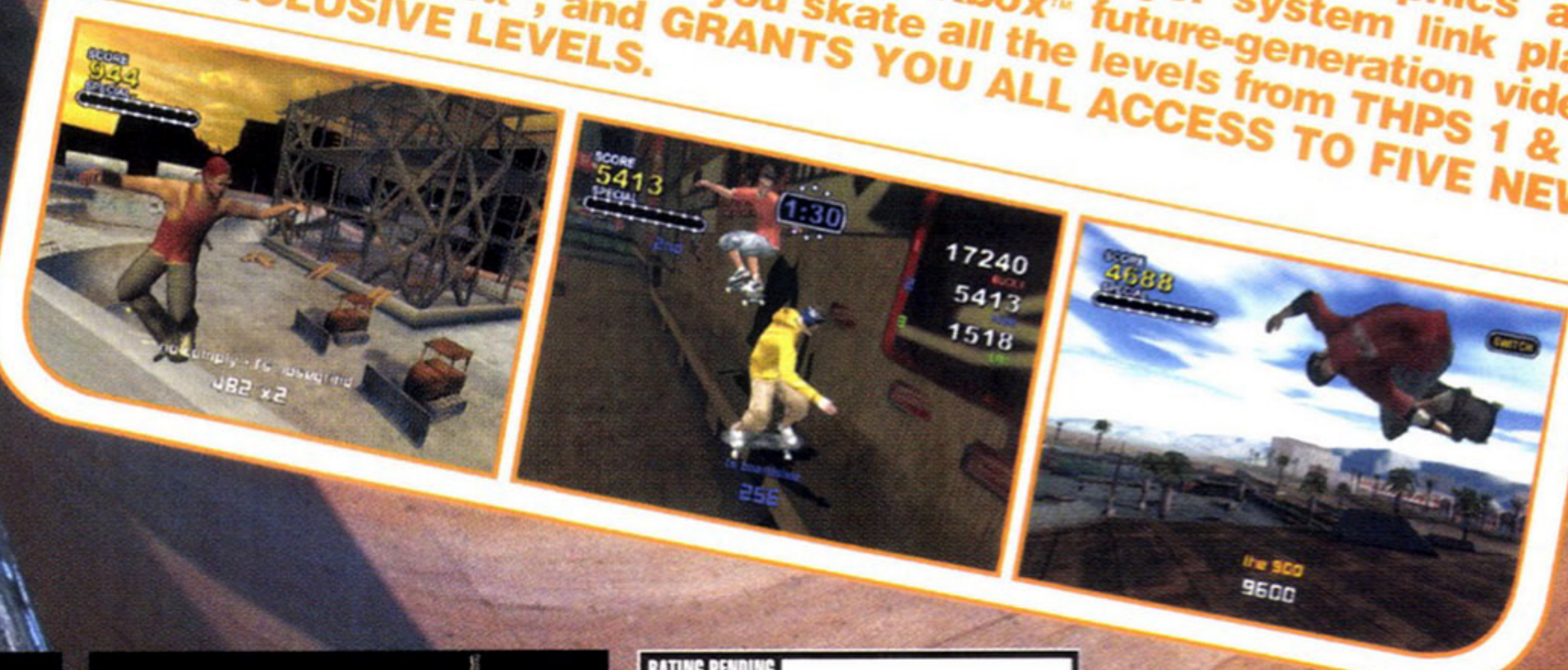


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**MT. GARRICK, ONCE A PEACEFUL MOUNTAIN RETREAT, HAS BEEN MYSTERIOUSLY CLOSED DOWN BY THE IRON-FISTED CHIEF O'LEARY.**



**NAYA AND HER SNOWBOARDING COUNTERPARTS LEAD A RESISTANCE, LOOKING TO UNCOVER THE CONSPIRACY.**

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**NAYA HAS OTHER IDEAS. SHE KNOWS  
SOMETHING BIG IS GOING ON UP THERE  
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**BUT THAT'S NOT THE HALF OF IT. NAYA ALSO  
HAS TO FIND ALL THE UNASSEMBLED BOMB  
PARTS AND FIRE THE **ARTILLERY CANNON**  
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■ As soon as I'm done drinking all of this guy's blood, I'm going to come over there and kick your butt. I mean it!



**Xbox Imperative**

This is yet another game that spans the gap between what's possible on older systems and what the Xbox is capable of. We've seen this running side by side with its lovely PS2 counterpart, and it has to be said, the Xbox rendition looks far superior. Better color palettes, nicer particle effects, and more defined textures, characters, and architecture. The fog that rolls a few inches above the ground in some levels is desperately eerie. Add to that the creepily immersive use of Dolby, and you've got yourself quite a showcase. It'll be cool to see how the next game in the series really takes advantage of Xbox.

# Blood Omen 2

## Sometimes it's okay to suck

It's too bad Capcom isn't planning on bringing *Devil May Cry* to the Xbox any time soon. Or is it? As it turns out, a game that looks every bit as impressive (although admittedly somewhat different) is coming from the people who brought you *Blood Omen*. Unsurprisingly, the game is called *Blood Omen 2*. What is a surprise, however, is the fact that it's shaping up to be a world-beater.

Gone are the repetitive and slightly characterless expanses of rock and emptiness found in the first game. Gone, too, is the *Gauntlet*-style overhead viewpoint. *Blood Omen 2* is a third-person 3D action/adventure game that looks, in short, amazing. The reason we mentioned *Devil May Cry*, quite apart from the obvious

occult nature of the game, is the title's emphasis on staggeringly well-conceived architecture, with soaring spires, brooding Lovecraftian wastelands, and charnel houses soaked in the blood of millennia. Dramatic? A wee bit, but then so is the game.

You play Kain (you might be familiar with his legacy), a vampire who awakens to find his kinsmen slain and his once-awesome power depleted to almost nothing. It seems that a single mysterious figure is responsible for these ill tidings. Naturally, you're going to hunt him down, kick his ass, and probably bite loads of peasants along the way. In fact, you'll have to, because right now, you're as weak as an especially frail kitten who's just woken up from a long nap and has a pretty bad flu.

The gameplay comprises a very deft mixture of hand-to-claw combat and a fair amount of platform-style exploration. Our hero (villain?) has to make his way through a world inhabited by foes natural and supernatural – everything from a crossbow-wielding dominatrix to the guardian of a long-forgotten prison in

a long-forgotten world. Although initially armed with ferocious talons, Kain can also pick up an impressive arsenal of swords, axes, and man-sized scimitars. Combining smart use of weapons with the ever-increasing gamut of magical powers he earns will eventually give Kain the tools he needs to reclaim his kingdom.

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: **Crystal Dynamics** PUBLISHER: **Eidos** RELEASE DATE: **2002**

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Crystal D, as we like to call 'em, has been around for a long time, with its first major projects showing up on the ill-fated 3DO system. The relationship with 3DO continued for some years (and included classics like *Gex* and *Blood Omen*), then ended bitterly in a squabble over mining rights at the company's Bay Area HQ. Or so we heard. Anyhoo, now the developer has a new logo, is owned outright by Eidos, and has plenty of experience with Xbox (*Mad Dash*).

GAME:	SYSTEM:	SCORE:
<i>Blood Omen</i>	<b>PSOne</b>	8/10
<i>Legacy of Kain</i>	<b>PSOne</b>	8/10
<i>Gex: Enter the Gecko</i>	<b>PSOne</b>	7/10
AVERAGE:		7.8/10



## Crystal's method

The fellas at Crystal Dynamics step up with some answers:

**Us:** What graphic techniques have you achieved on Xbox that weren't possible on other, crappier systems – like the PS2, for example?

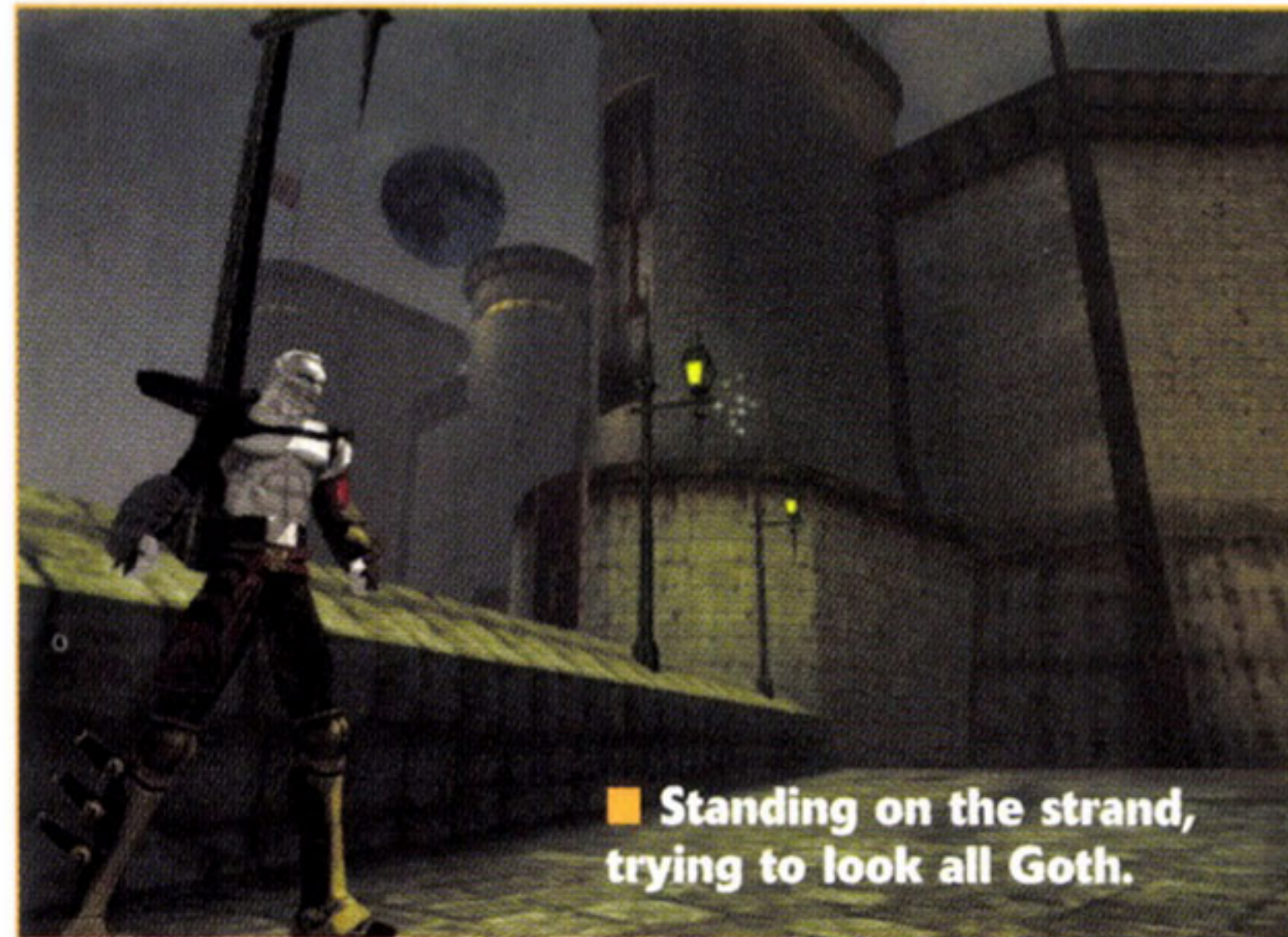
**Them:** There are two things the player will see right away that we've used exclusively on the Xbox. First, our on-screen resolution is much higher, so the graphics will be crisper, textures will have more detail, and the worlds overall will look better. It really is amazing to see the difference that alone makes. Second, we are adding highly detailed character shadows. Instead of the usual morphing blob of darkness at their feet, you will see a perfect outline of the character projected on the ground and walls. The effect is very cool.

**Us:** How will Dolby 5:1 sound be implemented in gameplay?

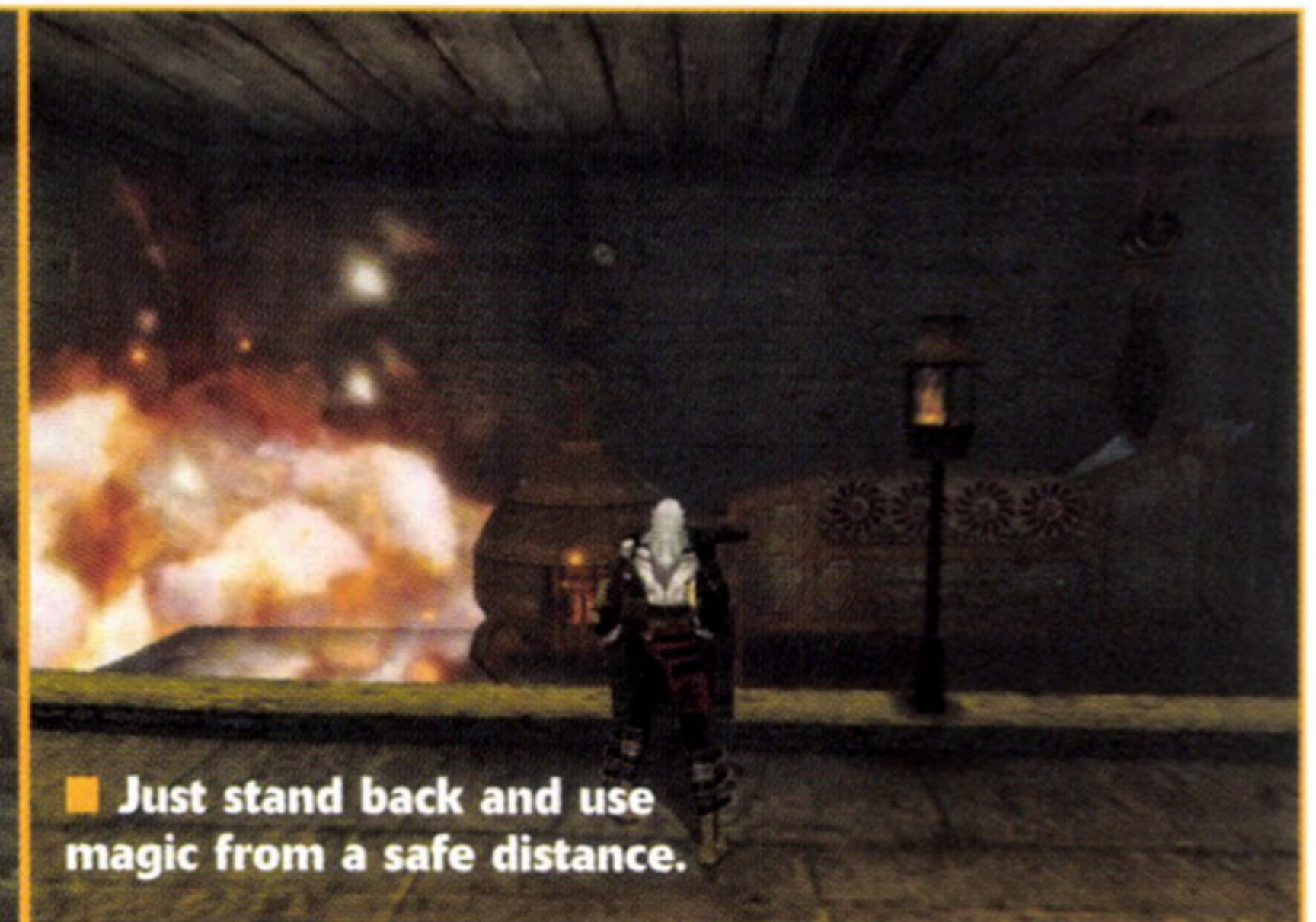
**Them:** For those players with a Dolby 5.1 digital home theater, they will hear all the sound effects and voiceovers as Kain would hear them in the 3D space of the game. When a Sarafan Knight is sneaking up behind Kain, the player will hear the footsteps and armor clinking behind him as well.

### Presents of darkness

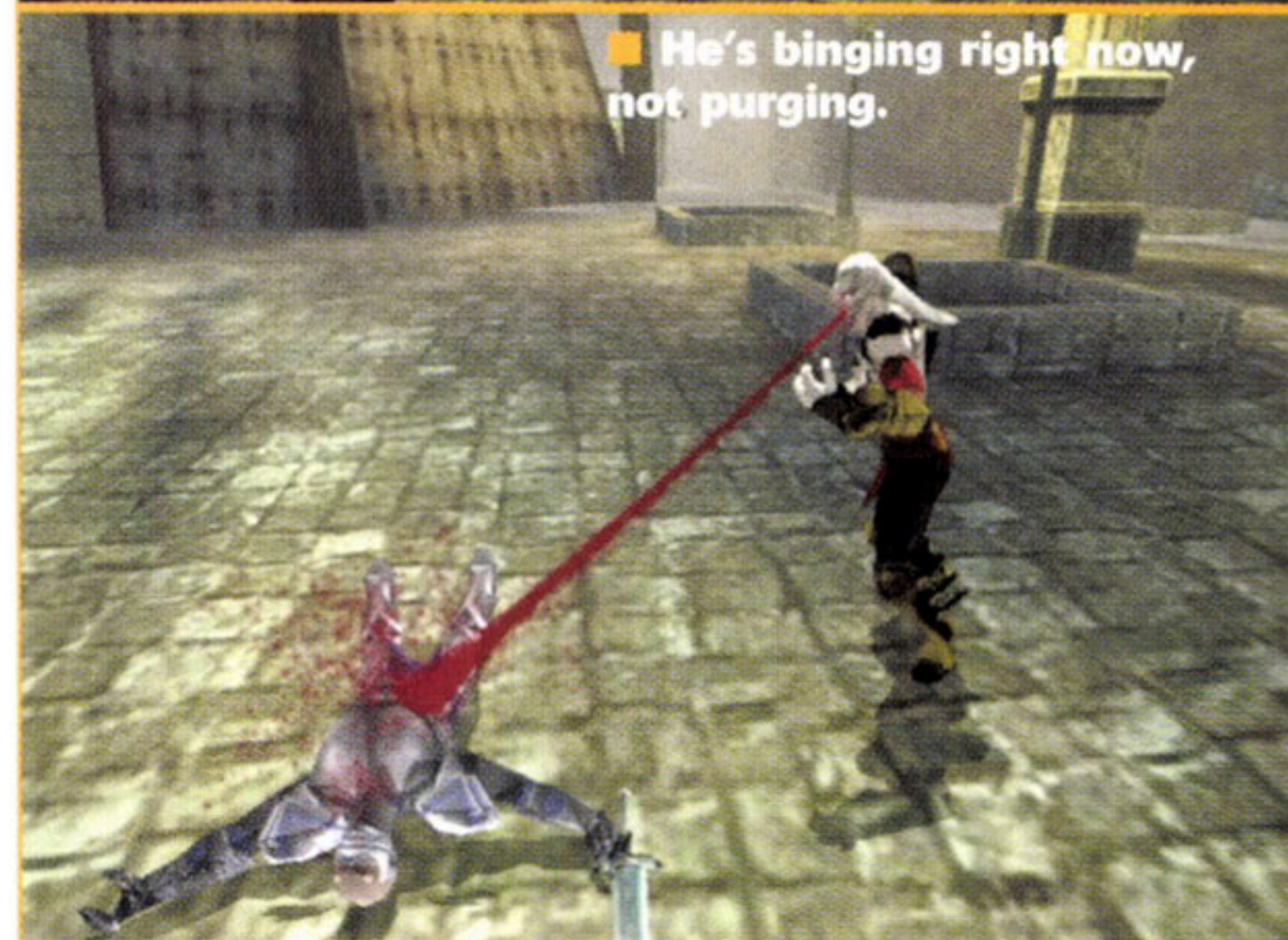
It's all very well charging around Nosgoth with claws extended and temper tantrum well and fully underway, but without mastering (and, indeed, finding) your six dark gifts, you simply won't get very far. These abilities allow Kain to progress through the game. Now, the secretive people at Crystal Dynamics don't want to give away all these abilities, but we will reveal our favorite – a super-leap that's charged, extending an ethereal arc that you guide out to the spot you wish to jump to. Looks a lot like a golf swing arc indicator, only much more intimidating.



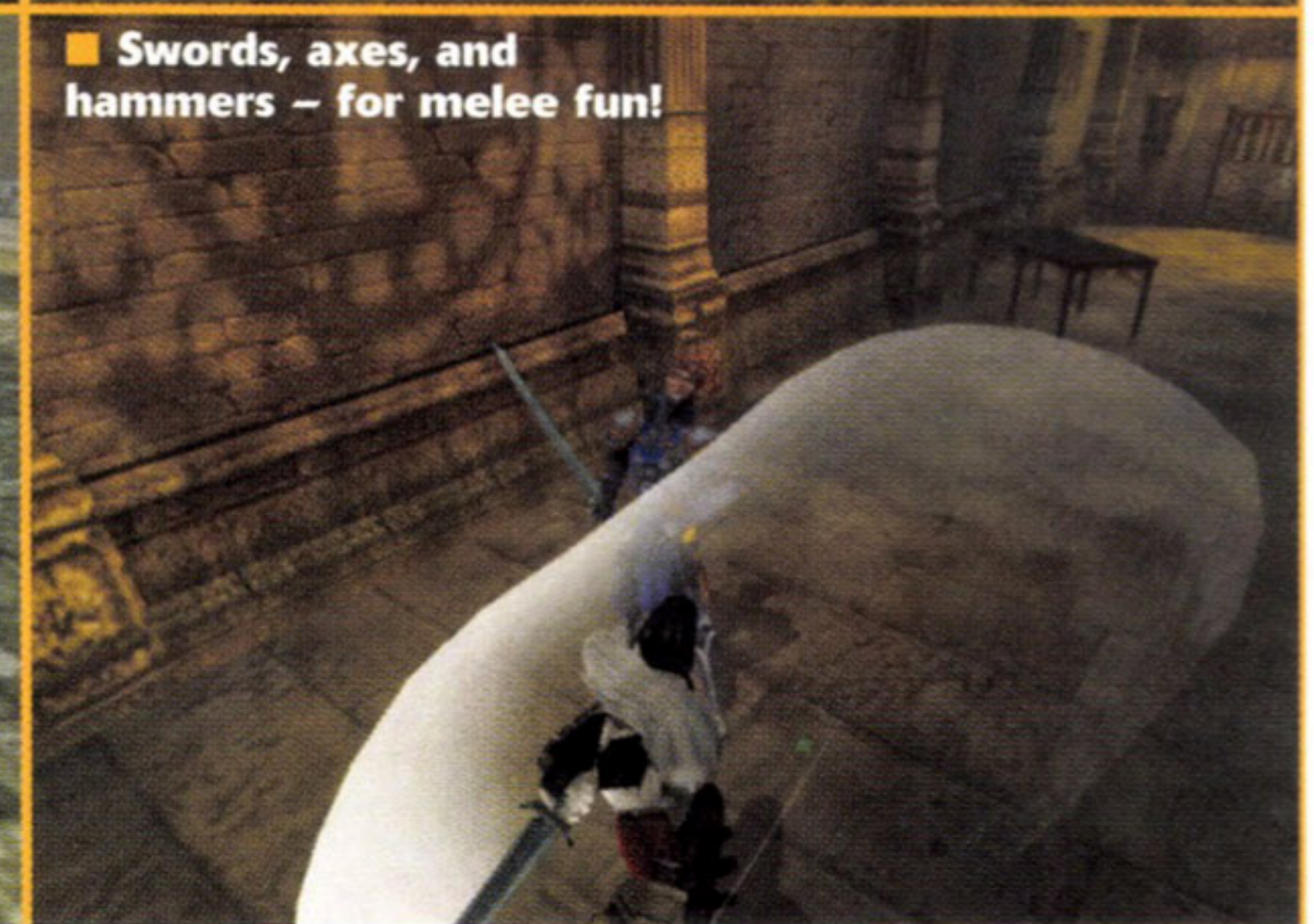
■ Standing on the strand, trying to look all Goth.



■ Just stand back and use magic from a safe distance.



■ He's binging right now, not purging.



■ Swords, axes, and hammers – for melee fun!

## And if you don't like what guards or peasants are saying, you can always suck out their blood in an outrageously violent fashion.

The work-in-progress that we saw was already progressing at a ferocious pace. One of the coolest features we saw was a combination of a populated environment and Dolby 5:1 sound. This made it possible to stroll into a busy marketplace and be surrounded by the burble of ongoing conversation – of course, if you don't like what guards or peasants are saying, you

can always suck out their blood in an outrageously violent fashion. But they won't always stand there and let you: ambitious AI has them running for help, taking cover behind obstacles, or even fleeing in blind panic.

Kain's magical abilities, such as the skill to become invisible (or at least misty) or leap vast chasms are what make the gameplay as compelling as the plot. Learning the intricacies of the combat system and its combos (including the ability to combine weapon and unarmed attacks) make the moment-to-moment exploration all the more exciting.

– Frank O'Connor

### WIRED

Crystal Dynamics no longer has its own website. So if you live in Texas, and want to give blood, go to [www.giveblood.org](http://www.giveblood.org) and wonder why they're bogarting the URL.

## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Sprawling, elaborate environments.
- Awesome Gothic horror plot.
- Plenty of magic and fighting.
- Densely populated world.

### NEEDS WORK

- Slow-paced, for an action title.
- Very linear game structure.
- Not made specifically for Xbox.

### ODDS ARE...

This is so much better-looking than its predecessors that it's hard to even think of it as a sequel. Fans of the prior titles will be super-excited about this, but it's compelling and accessible enough to bring in new players, too.

### HYPE:

With this combination of cool graphics and a proud history, the latest *Blood Omen* will very likely rock somebody's world. The Xbox version, in particular, is starting to look very hot. It probably won't show until February, which should be a quiet enough month on the game scene for it to really shine.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

To be perfectly honest, this looks something like *Devil May Cry* meets *Tomb Raider* – but we mean that in a good way. The wonderfully detailed and imaginative landscapes are just begging to be explored, and the mixture of soldiers, peasantry, and supernatural enemies are just begging to be punched (and also kicked, and generally mauled). If the overall game design matches the promise of the visuals, then we're in for a big treat.



## Preview

Falcone: Enter the Maelstrom



■ The targeting reticule is almost rendered useless by the absurd amount of lead with which you're polluting the area in front of you.

■ That, ladies and gentlemen, is the Maelstrom. Despite imperatives to the contrary, it should NOT be entered.

# Falcone: Enter the Maelstrom

## Crap name – good game?

**W**hat happens when you mix the rapid-fire action of, let's say, *Unreal Tournament* with the rocket-jockey gameplay of *Colony Wars*? Add to that the nigh-absurd graphic horsepower of the Xbox, and what do you have? A very interesting-looking game – with the unfortunate and immediately forgettable title of *Falcone: Enter the Maelstrom*.

The mission-based levels switch between the frozen vacuum of deep space and the cramped confines of enemy vessels, which you'll board between dogfights to loot their booty. "Looting their booty" is an official pirate term, and not something we heard on UPN (though, sadly, we did). And this game is all about booty-looting piracy on the high spaceways. If it sounds like a cross between *Wing*

*Commander* and *Quake*, then you're halfway there.

The novelty of combining genres often leads to one or both being watered down and marginalized. This is not the case with *Maelstrom*, however, since each half of the game is not only fleshed-out in terms of



## Xbox Connection

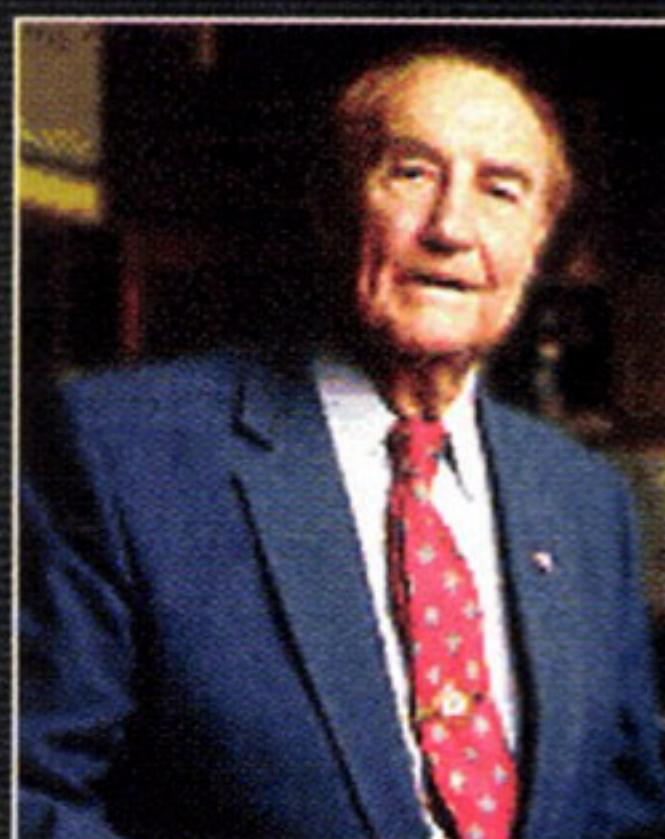
The Xbox version of *Enter the Maelstrom* will be the only one with both split-screen shenanigans and online multiplayer brilliance. Why? Because of that big, gaping Ethernet port on the back of your system. Bet you're glad you chose this system now. The multiplayer mode will support both space-based dogfighting as well as the more stealthy inside-the-spaceship bits.

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: **VIE** | PUBLISHER: **TBD** | RELEASE DATE: **2002**

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Virgin Interactive Entertainment was formerly known as Virgin Games. The company produced awesome Genesis titles like *Aladdin* and *Cool Spot*, and was owned by eccentric ballooning gazillionaire Richard Branson. He has a nice beard and big teeth. The company has had its ups and downs over the years, losing European distribution of money-printing-licenses from Capcom and LucasArts games.

## Other famous male Stroms



### Strom Thurmond

OK, admittedly he's the only famous one, but the 345-year-old Senator from South Carolina is dead set against new wine-labeling techniques. Also, he collects children in a horse-drawn cage for the last King of Bulgaria. Or was that the Childcatcher General? No matter.

### Strom Selleck

Crazy old coot who played *Matlock P.I.*, a Hawaii-based detective with a red Ferrari who drove around solving crimes on the basically crime-free island paradise.

### Strom Cruise

95-year-old star of *Greys of Thunder*, the nonagenarian NASCAR movie... (That's enough Stroms – Ed.)





■ Although you're armed to the teeth, there are times when discretion is the better part of valor.

## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Compelling blend of two very different genres.
- Great space-battle sequences.
- Huge array of gameplay options.
- Fleshed-out multiplayer mode.

### ODDS ARE...

*Maelstrom* will do brisk business among space-shooter fans who enjoyed titles like *Wing Commander* and *Colony Wars*, but it's likely to meet a cooler reception from FPS fans who'll simply have many more titles to choose from, like *Halo*, *Unreal Championship*, and by that time possibly even *Doom*.

### NEEDS WORK

- Going from space shooter to *Unreal*-style bits may be jarring.
- Generic-sounding plot might be dull.
- Worst game name ever, in a terrifyingly horrific history of names.

### HYPE

Since this game doesn't have a US publisher yet, it isn't getting too much play in the media. We hope it'll be picked up and promoted by a company with the heft and muscle to do it justice. And the good sense to give it a proper name.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

This game intrigues us. It titillates and teases us with its rude mixture of clashing gameplay styles. Also, we're huge fans of piracy, so any game that lets us run up a Jolly Roger (let's hope these spaceships have a flagpole) is all right by us. We're also stoked about the possibilities of online play – although a persistent “universe” filled with pirates would be even more exciting than the peer-to-peer gameplay being discussed at this point. Still, there's plenty of time...

**As you advance in the ranks of both space combat and first-person-shootery, your reputation as a galactic bad-ass will grow.**

gameplay, but is also directly relevant in plot terms, too. As you advance in the ranks of both space combat and first-person-shootery, your reputation as a galactic bad-ass will grow, much as in the ancient space shooter *Elite*.

As your reputation and ego spiral out of control, so does your ability to recruit new specialists into your growing armada of death. You can hire hackers to make breaching new ships easier, explosive experts for the same purpose, and even assassins (after all, every shooter has to have a sniper). The teamwork aspect becomes

increasingly important as you progress through the 20 missions.

The Xbox version of the game will include online multiplayer aspects, covering both space-battle sequences and the more familiar first-person-shooter parts. A split-screen mode will also be included for the broadband-challenged.

This is the first really interesting-looking space-combat sim since *Freelancer* appeared, so it should be one to watch in the coming months.

– Frank O'Connor

### WIRED

Don't go to Virgin's somewhat unpleasant UK site at [www.vie.co.uk](http://www.vie.co.uk); instead check out [www.2000ad.nu/2000adsystem/coversbyartist/artist.php3?Artist=JIMM](http://www.2000ad.nu/2000adsystem/coversbyartist/artist.php3?Artist=JIMM), where you can see covers by game graphic designer Jim Murray.

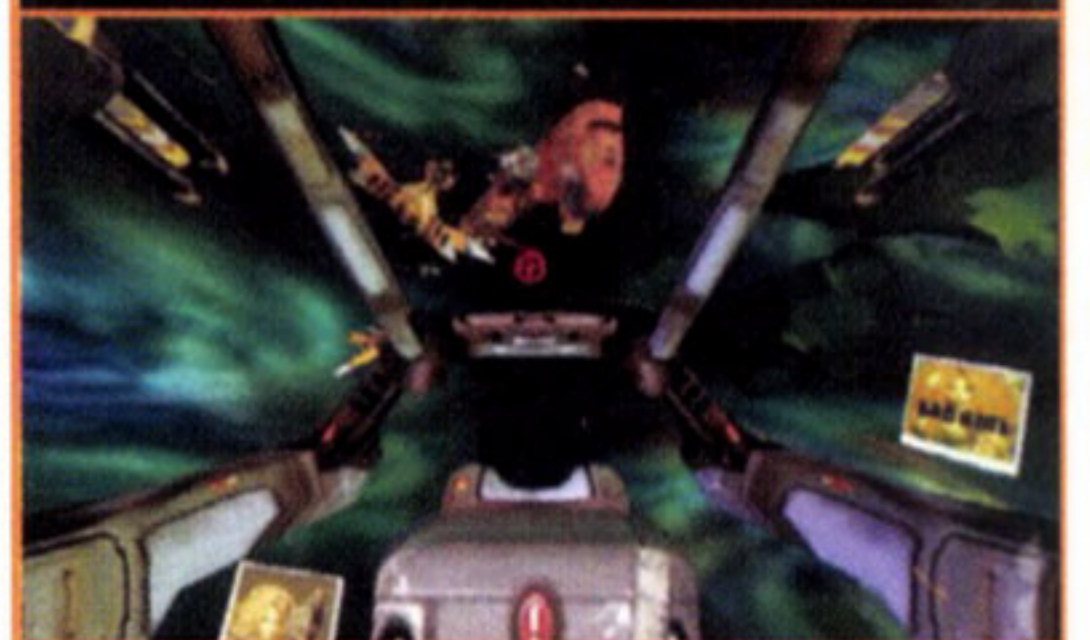
## Before/After

Here's how things have progressed in the last 20 years of console gaming. Yes, we said 20 years.

### ES86 ET20 E-3

#### Star Raiders – Atari – 1979

Written by Doug Neubauer, the designer of the Atari 2600 I/O and audio chip (called POKEY), this was arguably the first fully immersive 3D space-combat sim. As you can see from the screen above, it's practically identical to *Enter the Maelstrom* in every way.



#### Enter the Maelstrom – VIE – 2002

Although they had a bit more RAM to confuse things, and the Xbox is much more complicated, the guys at VIE were still able to make this half-assed stab at cloning *Star Raiders*.

■ As you can see, things like a health bar and weapons status icons have yet to be implemented.









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Rule 4 Section 3 Article 10

The amount of time between plays  
is not to exceed 40 seconds.



Pass, hand off, scramble. You want it, this QB can do it.



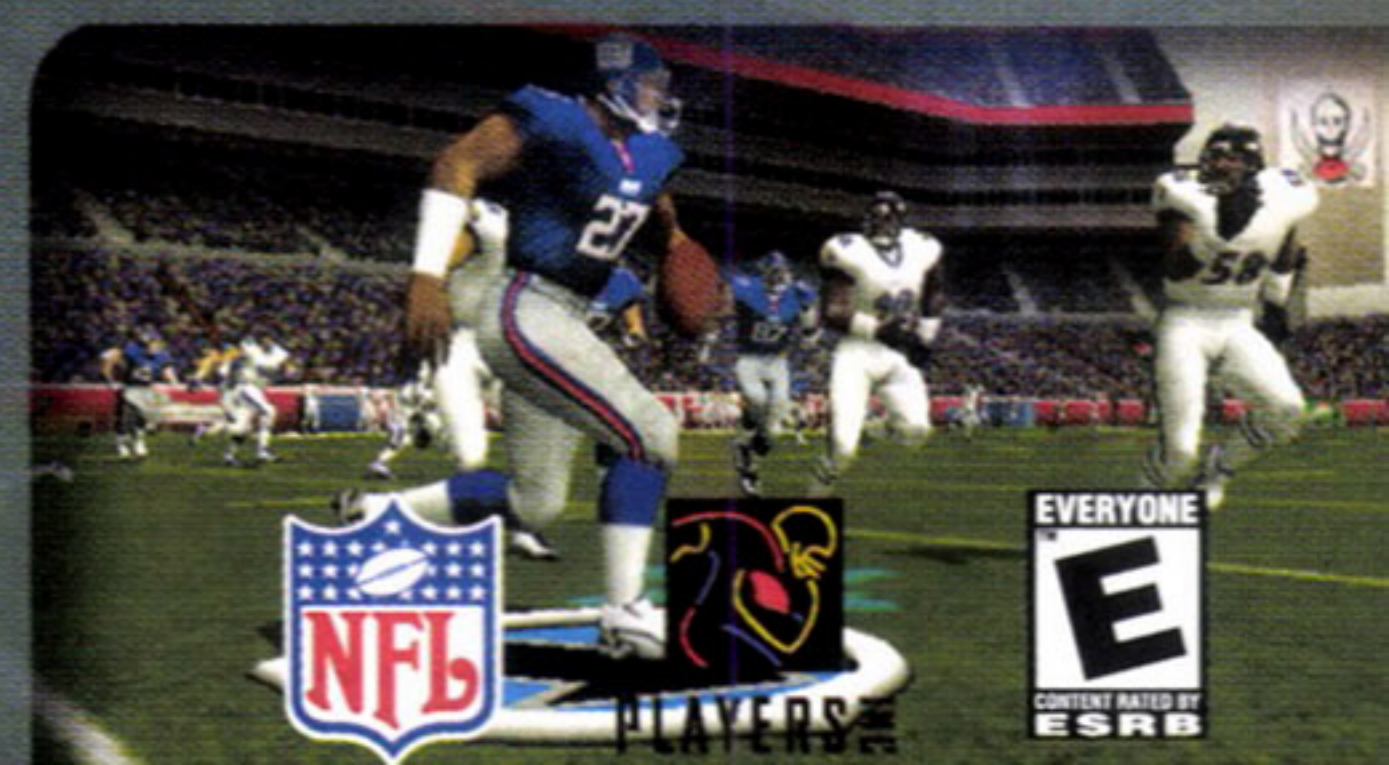
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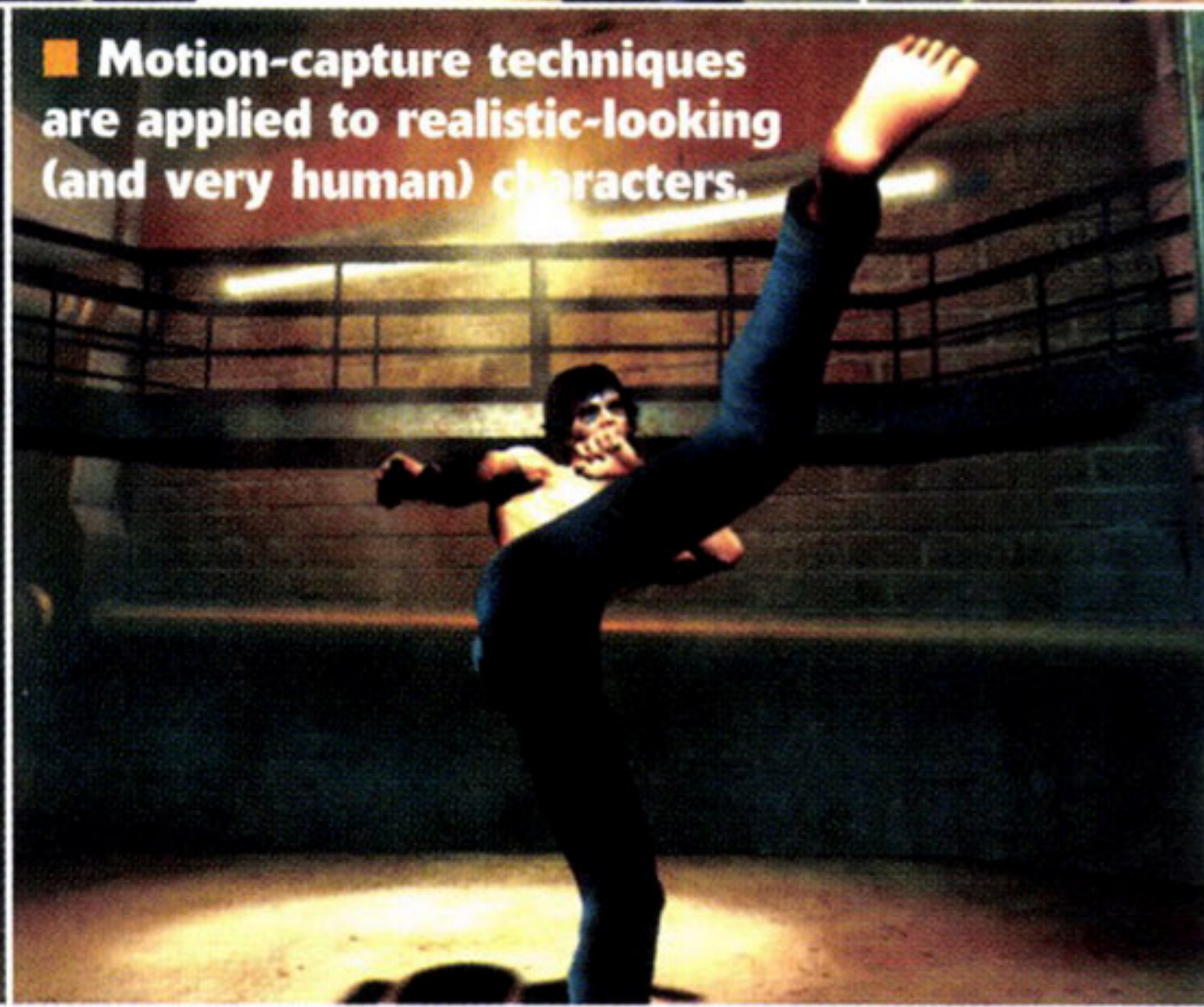
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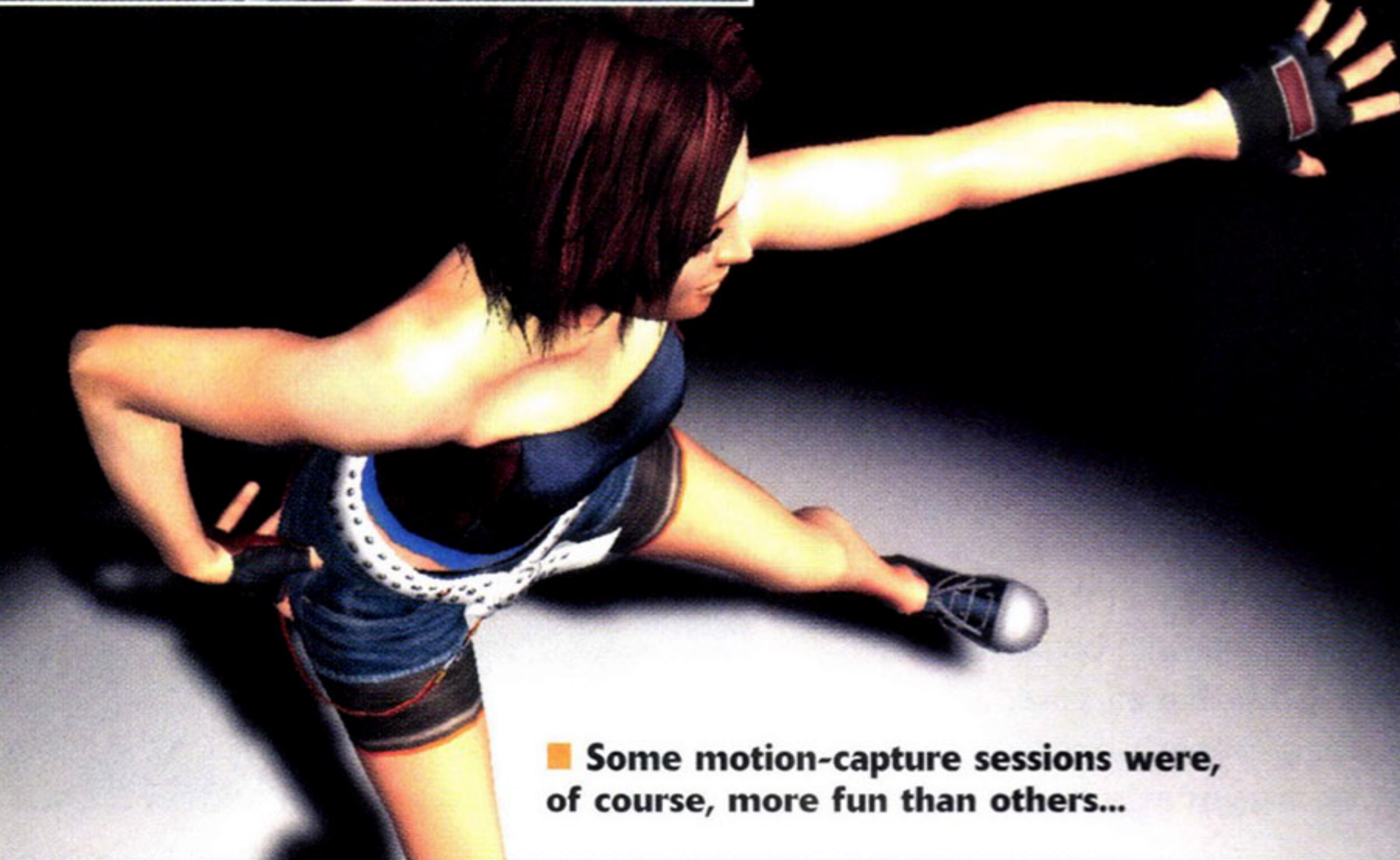
■ The first rule of Fight Club is...



■ Motion-capture techniques are applied to realistic-looking (and very human) characters.



■ The Ninja [pictured, left] is the game's primary antagonist. Note the "X" carved into his chest.



■ Some motion-capture sessions were, of course, more fun than others...

# Kakutou Chojin

And in this corner, the next Xbox superstar

**A**ny game that starts its life as "Project X" had better be something special when it finally peeks from behind the curtain. Under its Japanese title, *Kakutou Chojin* (which will probably change to something less Japanese for its US debut) has been revealed as the most photorealistic fighter to date, with almost weird (and certainly very human-looking) fighters.

Much of the grim graphic look comes from atmospheric self-shadowing, and other, very Xbox, graphical effects. Even the neon-lit streets look moody, thanks to harsh shadows and some amazing weather effects. This point will be belabored in the months to come, but it does look a lot like *Blade Runner* in style.

The characters thus-revealed are a reasonably varied bunch, with a

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: Dream Publishing PUBLISHER: Microsoft RELEASE DATE: 2002

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Dream Publishing is the new name for a company largely composed of former Dream Factory personnel. Dream Factory, you may remember, was the company that made the brilliant *Tobal* series and the game that sold many a PS2, *The Bouncer*. We admit it: that game may have been somewhat compromised, but the company does generally know its fighting games, as the underrated *Tobal* series proved.



Clothing and muscles stretch and morph realistically.

This bra lifts as it separates – indispensable for kung fu action.

Characters use the Xbox GPU to achieve perfect self-shadowing.

Brooding Gothic backdrops remind us of Mistress Ursula's chamber... never mind.



Only on  
Xbox

This title has been in development for some time – and only in the Xbox development environment – so we're hoping for a full-on Xbox experience. Expect bump-mapping, stretchy skin, and self-shadowing galore. No word yet on hard-drive features or Internet play, however.

## Whatever it is, everyone in the game looks really pissed.



classic '70s Bruce Lee (complete with huge sunglasses), a Brad-Pitt-in-Fight-Club-lookin' dude, a fat guy, a hot chick, and some type of Ninja/Tengu. We imagine that they will all have been summoned to some type of martial arts tournament, each with

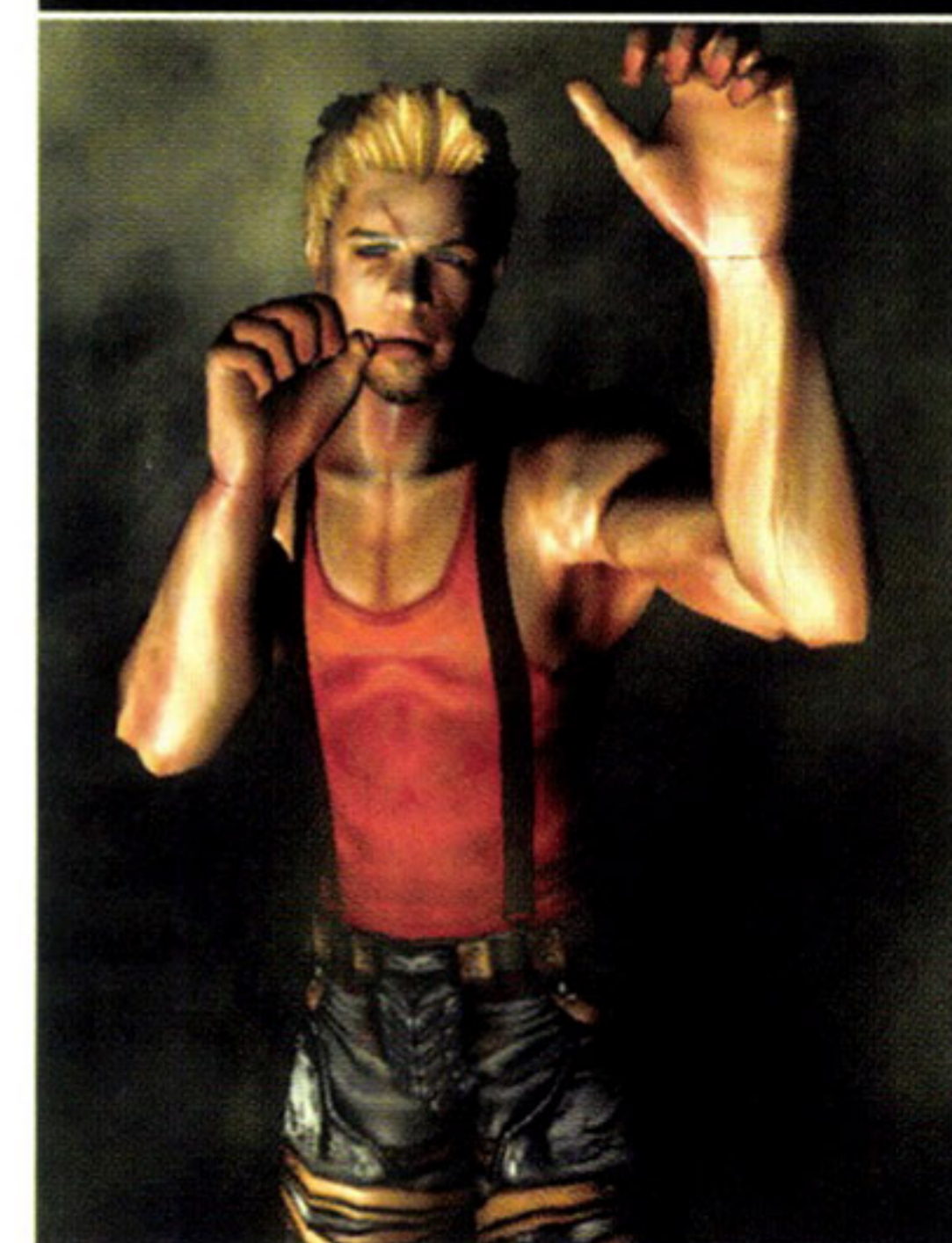
their own dark (and probably) comical reason for attending – but we're prepared (but not expecting) to be surprised on the plot front. Perhaps the game starts with a fender bender on a muggy evening and degenerates into fisticuffs? Could it be a scrap over

the last good onion at Safeway? Whatever it is, everyone in the game looks really pissed.

The Brad Pitt doppelganger appears to have volumetric hair, albeit with slightly thick strands. This contrasts nicely with his very smooth and stretchy skin. As characters perform moves, their skin, rather than simply shifting like armor plates, actually appears to morph over the contours of their skeletons. The effect is superb. It's also mirrored in the cleverly rendered fabrics and clothes that each fighter wears, although many of the characters appear shirtless to show off their stretchy skin, complete with bump-mapped veins. Gross, but effective.

The play mechanics of the game are the biggest mystery at this point –

■ The Brad Pitt-looking dude features volumetric, convincing hair and a realistic physique, as do most of the game's characters.



## Fighting Supermen?

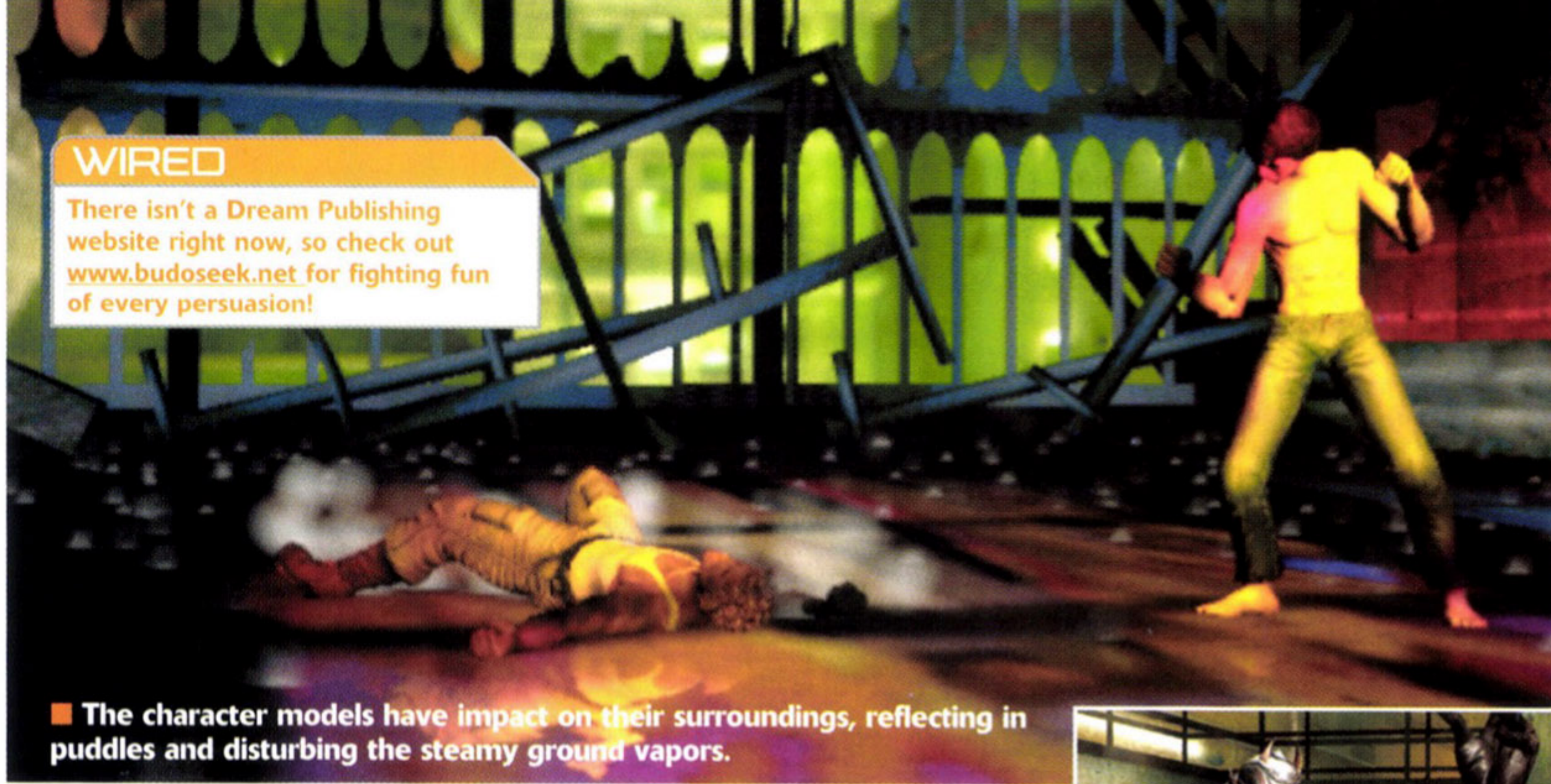


The expression "Kakutou Chojin" translates pretty roughly as "Fighting Supermen," which presumably refers to the team of bad-asses assembled for the game. However, it could also translate roughly (and phonetically) as "Fighting Decay," which might refer to the dripping, collapsed ruins in which many of the fights seem to take place.



## WIRED

There isn't a Dream Publishing website right now, so check out [www.budoseek.net](http://www.budoseek.net) for fighting fun of every persuasion!



■ The character models have impact on their surroundings, reflecting in puddles and disturbing the steamy ground vapors.

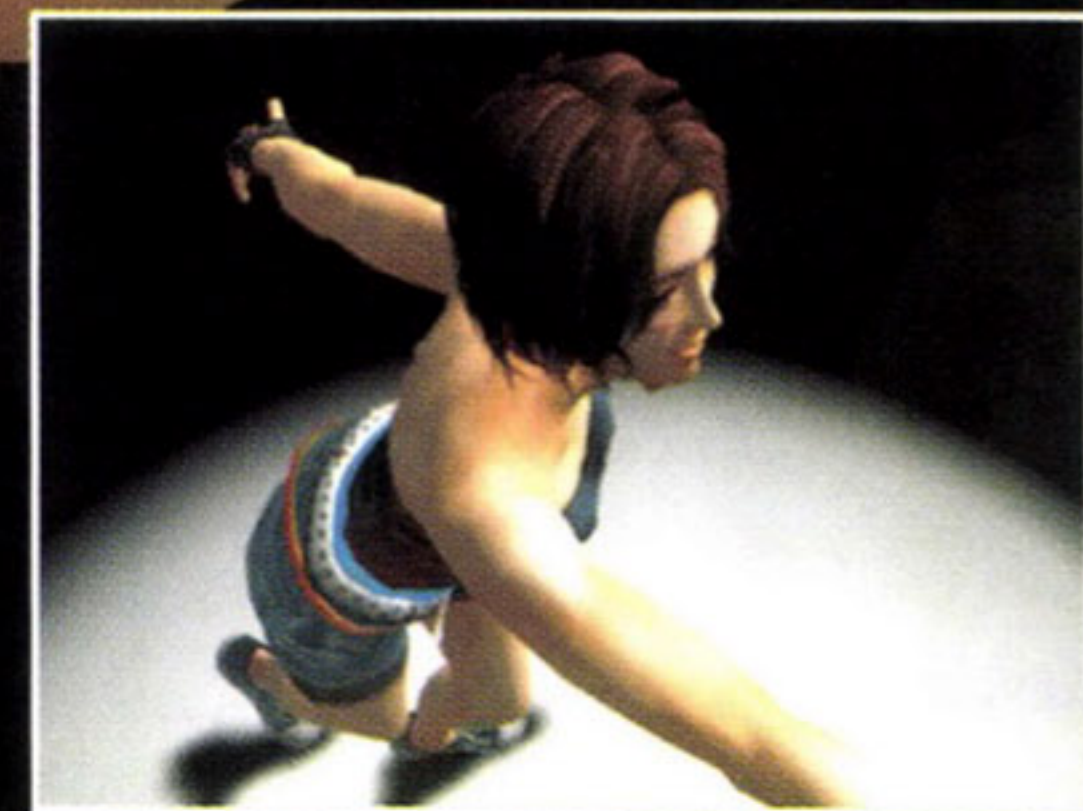
although from what we've gathered, this will be a very free-flowing 3D environment, with characters free to run around the arenas at will, while fights will take place with a certain degree of the orbital mechanic we're all used to. Backdrops also contain some pretty awesome environmental effects, like rain that actually spatters

opponents, or groundwater that splashes convincingly as you fight through it.

All in all, this is shaping up to be one of the biggest games of 2002, and Microsoft has already proven with *Halo* and *NFL Fever* that it's a first-party publisher to be reckoned with.

— Frank O'Connor

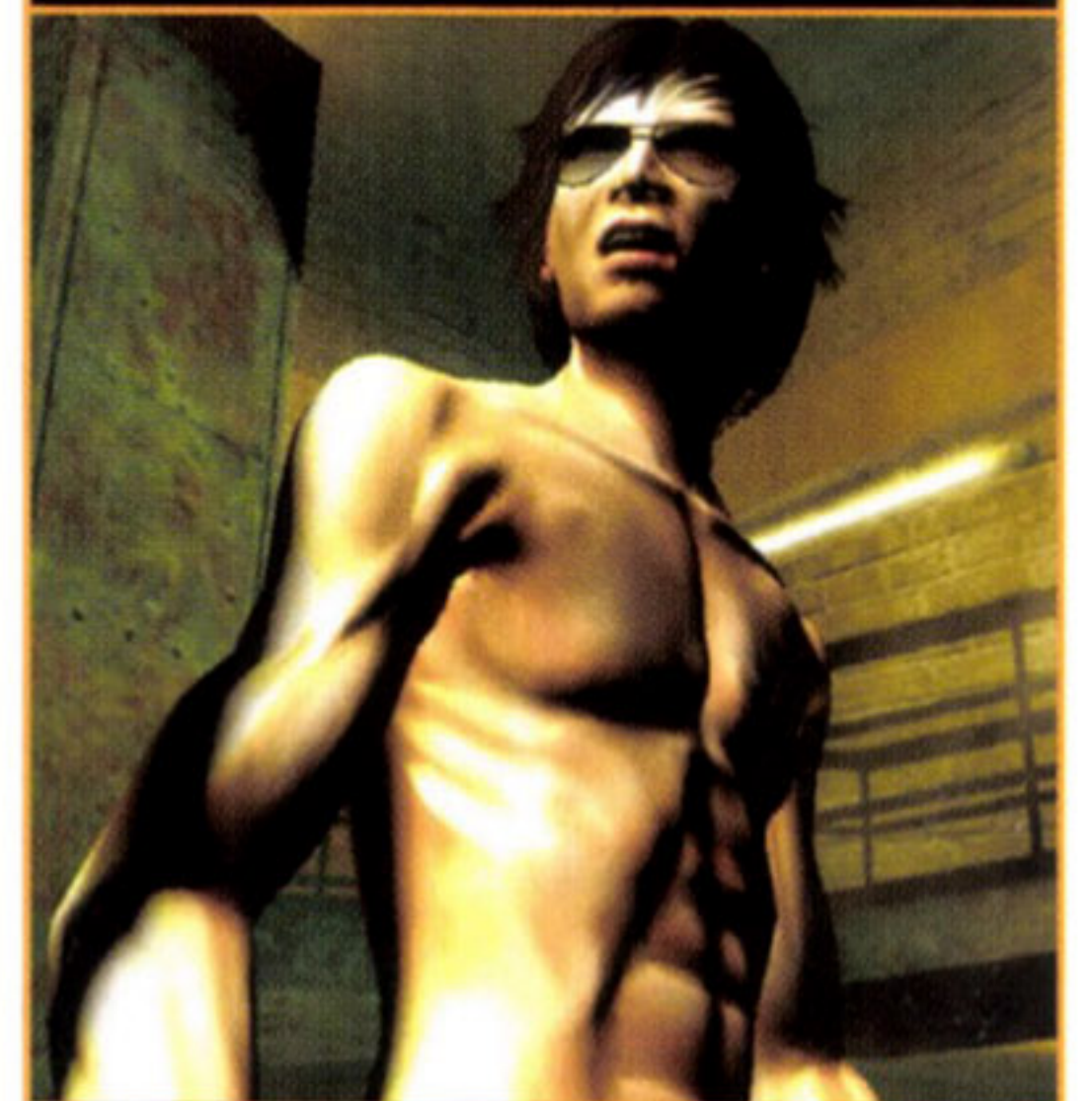
■ I caught a black-tipped big-mouth bass, and it was thiiiiiiis big!



■ A female character runs through a formalized "Kata," showing off a wide range of movement as well as *Kakutou's* unique skinning tech.



## T&L



Transform and Lighting, that is. Hardware T&L has been a valuable feature in 3D graphics hardware for years, but never has it been so apparent as in the upcoming second-generation Xbox titles. Although the first batch of Xbox games — like *NFL Fever*, *Halo*, and *Munch's Oddysee* — make good use of the raw horsepower the machine provides, they don't necessarily take advantage of the system's subtler features, such as pixel shaders.

*Kakutou* is a perfect example of what can be done with the Xbox GPU (Graphics Processing Unit), and the results are evident in the screenshots. Instead of the usual individually texture-mapped surfaces, each character has a flexible "skin" wrapped around a polygon skeleton. The end result is a stunning, organic effect as skin and muscle appear to morph naturally as the character animates, and similar techniques are used for clothing.

Even more impressive, and one of the defining features of the game, is the harsh use of hard-edged shadow and contrast. This not only sets up a dystopian fighting environment, but it perfectly shows off the self-shadowing on characters. So as the Bruce Lee lookalike moves, his limbs cast shadows on his torso, as well as the ground, all in photorealistic relation to lighting and surroundings.



■ Lighting plays a huge role in building game atmosphere.



## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Character models that look fleshy and real.
- Dark, brooding backdrops.
- Totally convincing motion capture.
- Dramatic weather effects.

### NEEDS WORK

- Few characters revealed at this point.
- Fighting system not yet clarified.

### ODDS ARE...

That Microsoft will start spoiling this like a favorite child — lavishing it with money, attention, and publicity.

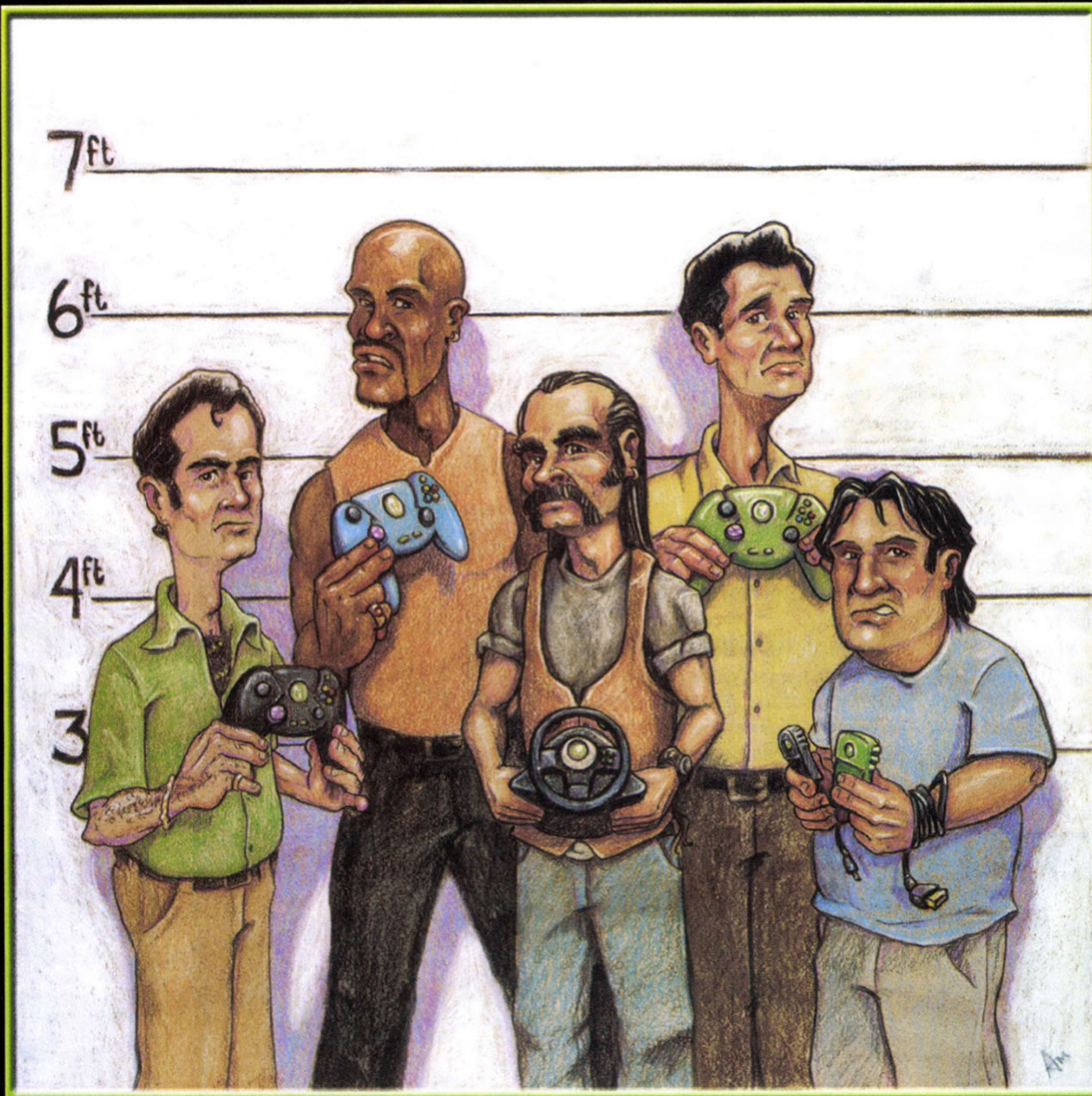
### FINAL THOUGHTS

It's fair to say that there's as much we don't know about this game as what we do know, but even with that in mind, *Kakutou Chojin* is looking red-hot. The weirdly realistic-looking characters are enthralling in motion, and if the fighting system can come even close to matching the graphics in terms of quality, then this could be killer.

### HYPE:

We first saw movies of this in the very early stages of its development. It's gotten a lot better since then, but even back in its embryonic state, there was something quite special and charismatic about it. We expect that *Kakutou Chojin* is going to be HUGE.





check out our lineup...



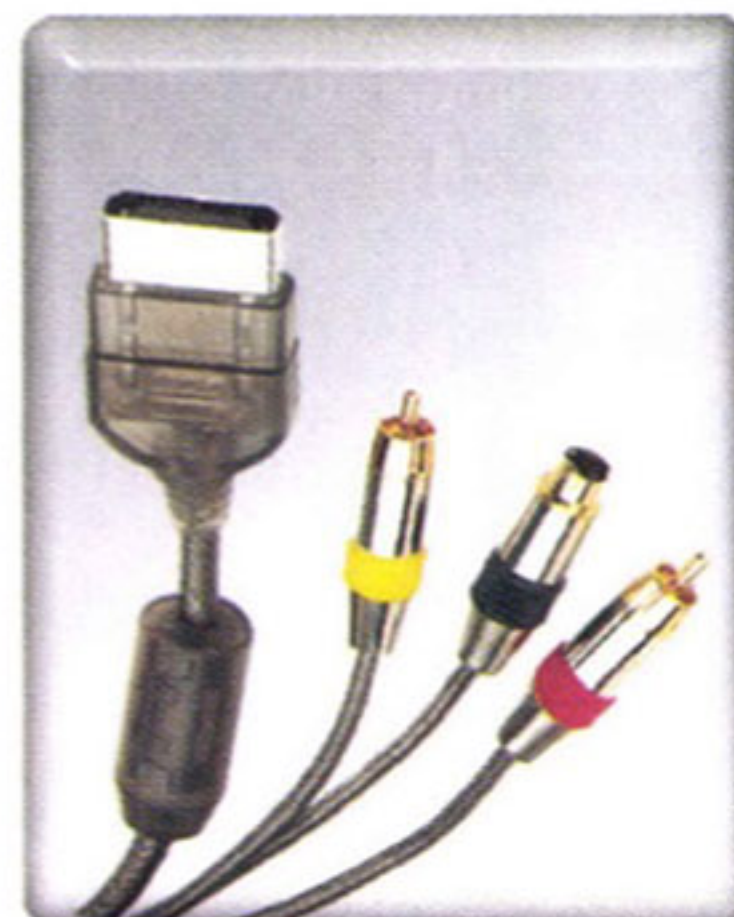
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**PowerPad**



**Flash Memory Cards**



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**Black Thunder™  
Racing Wheel  
coming soon!**





# Wreckless



## Hong Kong Phooney: Number-one super game

**W**hen you drove to work or school this morning, you might have noticed something extraordinary. One hundred percent of Americans now see using turn signals as a form of Communism, and they exercise their perceived right not to do it. Apparently, signaling your intent to turn is lame, and veering from lane to lane with impunity is the way to go. *Wreckless* takes the concept of bad road manners so far north that you might just forget about the jackass who tailgated you at 70 for 20 miles this morning.

Phew, now that we've got *that*

Only on  
Xbox



This game started life as a tech demo submitted as part of a GeForce graphics contest. It's since ballooned into arguably the most exciting, technically demanding, and amazing-looking driving game ever made. There are effects in the game that simply couldn't be replicated on any other system, dependent as they are on the Xbox's mighty pixel shaders.

settled, we can talk about a game with roots in classics like *Chase HQ* and *Spyhunter*, but with technology and graphics so advanced that it makes other games look silly. It's also so violently chaotic that players weaned on slow games like *Robotron* and *Smash TV* might be overwhelmed. If your idea of excitement is *Myst*, then you might want to skip this entirely.

The gameplay follows the exploits of some Hong Kong police operatives as they try to bust open the dealings of a new Yakuza set-up trying to muscle its way into Hong Kong and Kowloon. Most missions, therefore, involve chasing and smashing vehicles in the crowded city streets, although some tasks may be as simple as racing from Point A to North Point (that's hilarious if you know Hong Kong geography, or so Frank tells us).

The fully populated streets can feature up to 300 simultaneously modeled vehicles, complete with physics and AI. It's really something to see, especially when you throw in



■ The real-time deformation applies to the cars, not the pedestrians unfortunate enough to get in the way.

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: Bunkasha | PUBLISHER: Activision | RELEASE DATE: February 2002

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Actually, they're a pretty mysterious bunch. Bunkasha is a Japanese "media" company whose previous efforts included nudie books and other magazines. Not that we're faulting them for it, because by assembling what is clearly a crack team of programmers, the little Japanese outfit has immediately established itself as a force to be reckoned with – and from what we hear, a very pleasant office to visit.





■ This is a rare picture of a basically empty street.



■ Don't worry about the sparks, this mission actually requires crashing.



■ Poor little bubble car, so small and weak and slow. You need a Porsche.



■ Anything in the game can be smashed, crashed, and destroyed.

## You can smash through jams, but often it's faster to find a route around the chaos.

dozens of fully animated people going about their business – or leaping out of the way, depending on circumstances. The traffic in particular is amazing, and it has a very specific effect on gameplay. You can, of course, simply smash your way through most traffic jams, but oftentimes it's faster to find a route around the chaos.

That's where shortcuts come in, and they're a feature you'll use more and more as you experiment with the game. A shortcut might be something obvious, like an alleyway that can be seen with the little scrolling radar map displayed above the game at all times. It might be more subtle, though – like

a flimsy barricade that you can smash your car through, soaring gracefully over a crowded park only to land

safely (but violently) hundreds of yards away. (That's the kind of subtle we like.)

The cars, buses, trucks, and vans all feature collision-damage models, and you can deftly turn an expensive sports car into a bent piece of junk in no time. That's why a monster truck is best, but there are flimsier modes of transport you'll be forced to use, too.

It's hard for us at this stage to see how the final game structure will shape up, but it's pretty clear that *Wreckless* is destined for greatness. We've simply never seen so much stuff happening in a videogame at once.

– Frank O'Connor

## Photoshop-realistic



Anyone who has ever used Adobe Photoshop will appreciate how long it takes to apply a filter to a static 2D picture. You have to wait while the little progress bar fills up – let's say 10 seconds for an emboss filter, for example. So then you turn on the replay mode in *Wreckless* and watch in 3D as Photoshop-like filters are applied in realtime to every intense 3D graphic on screen. There's no progress bar, just solarized, embossed, cel-shaded, and daguerreotype versions of the action you just played. The effect is staggering and will actually be incorporated properly in the game based on where you were – security cameras, for example, will record your mall rampages.



## Thank the Lord for the nighttime

The missions in *Wreckless* take place at all times of day, but the most spectacular are the nighttime missions (as you can see from our deliciously exclusive screenshots). The city lights are a convincing mix of harsh neon and soft sodium glow, and rampaging through a mall takes on a whole new feeling as you smash through the windows and back onto the streets – it's the exact same feeling as coming out of a theater in the early evening to find it's turned dark. Your eyes almost have to adjust to the light! The dazzle of headlights in traffic is amazing, and some of the replay stuff at night looks like TV footage.

### WIRED

Bunkasha doesn't have its game website up and running yet, so you might want to check [www.activision.com](http://www.activision.com) – but Bunkasha's main website has pictures of naked girls on it. We can't give it out, but it's a ".jp," rhymes with "unka," and is short for Bunkasha.

## Itching to smash up something exotic? Check these babies out.

*I-like-driving-in-my-car*. It's not quite a *Jag-u-ar* is what Brit band Madness sang in the Eighties. But what they really wanted was a fake car from *Wreckless*.



**SUPER BUGGY**  
Not awfully fast, but tough as nails and pretty capable when it comes to big drops.

**SUPER CAR**  
OK, so it looks like a DeLorean with a British flag on its roof, but there's more to it than that.



**METER MAID**  
This interesting conversion of a Messerschmidt Bubble Car won't win any style points.

**TANK**  
Relive your favorite moment from *America's Greatest Police Chases* – and yes, it shoots.



**MONSTER TRUCK**  
For when it absolutely, positively has to get there on time. And in one piece.

**STREET RACER**  
One of the fastest cars available in the game, but it's not too sturdy in the long run.



## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Most frighteningly busy streets ever rendered.
- Amazing graphics throughout.
- Brilliantly conceived smash-and-bash gameplay.
- Split-screen shenanigans!

### NEEDS WORK

- Framerates might be tied to a respectable 30, but not 60.
- Some resolution and aliasing issues.
- Humans kept scampering out of our way just in the nick of time. Doh!

### ODDS ARE...

*Wreckless* will do for driving games what *Street Fighter 2* did for fighting – that is, completely re-inject life into a dull genre with astonishing graphics and gripping gameplay. Activision should be congratulated for picking up this obscure little title.

### HYPE:

Magazine coverage of this game will become ferocious, but these are likely to be the highest-res shots you've seen. Why? Because we have a direct pipeline into the mysterious Bunkasha organization. With this and *Maximum Chase* on the horizon, racing never looked so good.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

We have to be very clear on this point. On the same day we played *DoA3* on HDTV in our office for the first time, we also played this, which was almost enough to make us forget about Tecmo's beauty. Why? Because it was simply the most amazing use of console hardware we've ever seen. Watching the car smash through a plate glass window, bounce off a trolley bus, and careen into a crowded marketplace, complete with vendors running for their lives in a Hong Kong so realistic you'd swear you could smell the harbor, was one of the defining moments of our collective gaming life. Except for Dan Egger. He missed it because he was in the bathroom.





# Reviews

The definitive source for Xbox reviews

## So good, it's scary?

After we finished last issue, we were a bit skeptical as to whether the Xbox could follow up with even more stellar gaming goodness for this issue's reviews. Well, color us surprised, as Xbox had exactly that – a bumper crop of solid titles such as *Munch's Oddysee*, *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2*, and *Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams* up its figurative sleeve. We promise, Xbox, we won't make that mistake again. In the following pages, read up on all the games you should (or shouldn't) have for the long cold winter.

## How we score

**10 – 8.5** Only the best and the brightest score in this range. If it scores 9.0 or above, then there's no guessing involved. Buy it, love it, and watch as other games follow in its footsteps.

**8.4 – 7.0** Just shy of greatness, but still an exceptional experience.

**6.9 – 5.0** There's a bit of entertainment to be found, but something's amiss.

**4.9 – 2.0** Rushed, poorly executed, or maybe just tired. Only fools dare tread further.

**1.9 – 0.0** Craptacular goodness that is proud to call *Fantastic Four* (PSOne) or *Superman* (N64) its superiors.



## The Xbox Elite

Any game that scores 9.0 or higher will be stamped with our Xbox Elite Award. This mark guarantees a solid game to be had by all (all that have \$50, of course). So buy it already.

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### Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams

Proceed at your own risk.



93

### Amped

Microsoft's bid for the snowboarding crown takes an alternate route down the freestyling mountain. Is it any good?




97

### Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2

The *Tony Hawk* of the two-wheelers comes to Xbox. Should you care?





■ Sometimes, when you're confronted with a packed room like this, you'll be overwhelmed. Try to keep a cool head.



# Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

## It's an Odd world after all

DEVELOPER **ODDWorld INHABITANTS** | PUBLISHER **MICROSOFT/INFOGRADES** | MULTIPLAYER **NONE**  
WEBSITE **WWW.ODDWorld.COM** | EXTRAS **HDTV CAPABLE, DOLBY 5.1 SURROUND SOUND**

It's been a long, long time since we've played a game anything like *Munch's Oddysee*. At one time, it certainly wasn't unusual to play through a title that challenged you in more ways than one. Games like *Out of the World* forced you to use your brain, while others like *Super Mario Brothers* tested your skills – both leaving in their respective wakes many a busted controller.

Now, in the new generation of Sooper Powerful Gaming™, it seems that it's become less a priority to challenge players with complexity than to simply appease them with

a short parade of pretty graphics. It's a fine line between the two – thankfully, the third chapter in the *Oddworld* series succeeds in walking that line. *Munch* is one of the most challenging – and rewarding – games in a long, long time.

Series fans will look back with fondness on the first two chapters in the *Oddworld* series. They introduced the world to Abe, a Mudokon slave who managed to save his fellow workers, and take down the evil, repressive Glukkon enterprises enslaving his people. It was the classic anti-hero story that managed to captivate gamers, who came for

wonderfully crafted story cinemas, then stayed for the amazingly addictive gameplay. Disguised as a platformer of sorts, the *Oddworld* series has always remained a tough puzzler at its heart, forcing players to really scrutinize and think about every move they make in order to rescue their Mudokon pals while slipping through the countless waves of Sligs and Glukkons. Abe was crafted with so much personality that he quickly became one of the foremost virtual celebrities of the gaming world.

Now, the series has made the leap onto the Xbox, and into the 3D world, for the first



■ Take possession of a foe to gain entry to new areas or solve puzzles.

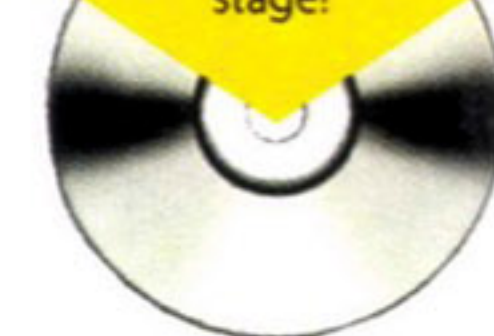


Only on  
**Xbox**

An Xbox-exclusive title that can't be had anywhere else, on any other system. Nyah, nyah!



It's sheer Mudokon madness on the disc! Watch the trailer or play a special demo stage!



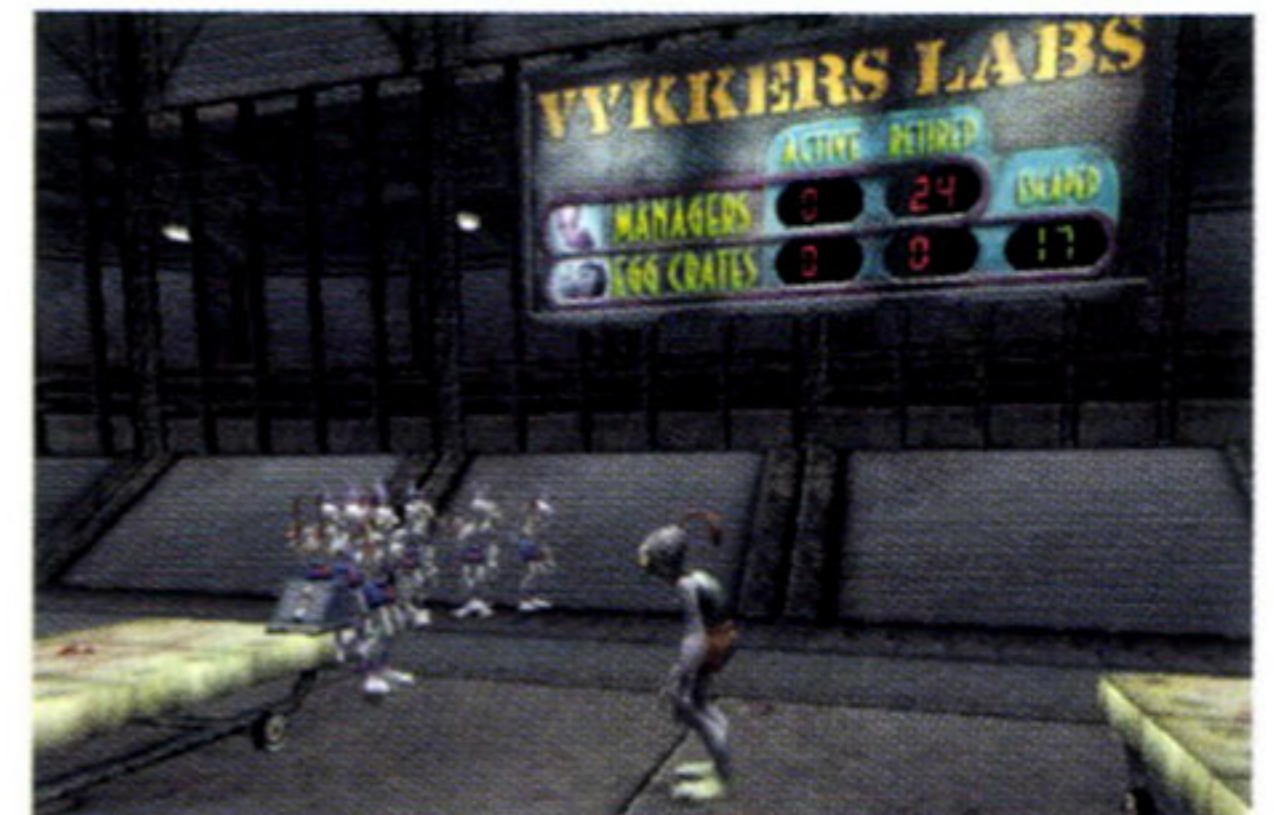


■ More dangerous than nasty Sligs or Slogs are floating water mines.

■ Marvel at the silky, smooth visual goodness of *Munch's* water. Powered by Xbox. And talent, of course.

■ Munch positively zips when in water.

■ Always be on the lookout for switches.



■ Handy-dandy "scoreboards" help you keep track of how many enemies and allies occupy each stage of the game.



■ Munch isn't completely useless out of water; watch as he zaps the living schnookers out of these Sligs. Booyah.

time. This latest "odyssey" tells the tale of Munch, the lonely last survivor of an aquatic race of creatures called Gabbits. At the start of the game, Munch discovers that the evil Glukkons have hunted his people to near extinction. The last, best hope is to recover the last can of Gabbit eggs, which is being held somewhere in the confines of the Vykker Labs, a sinister establishment populated by evil scientists. Early on, Munch is "modified" by the Vykkers—leaving him with the ability to control mechanical objects.

Meanwhile, Abe returns to the series, as well. But this time, he must assist Munch in his quest, who will in turn help him to rescue his unhatched brethren. Along the way, both Munch and Abe are responsible for rescuing as many of their friends as possible; Munch must save Fuzzles, while Abe is in charge of rescuing Mudokons and their eggs.

Surprisingly, all of these story elements

are integrated into the gameplay. You're not only charged with safely leading different creatures to a rescue area, but you'll have to survive the precarious trip to said rescue area past all sorts of nasty foes and obstacles. Certain areas of each stage are only accessible to either Munch or Abe, while you're responsible for having them meet up at the end of each stage in order to exit. You can see where this gets incredibly tough, especially in some of the later stages that will have you scratching your head wondering just how the hell you're going to survive, even without saving your pals in the process.

This is where *Munch's Odyssey* shows an amazing amount of both divine inspiration and diabolical difficulty. On one hand, the level designs and puzzle layouts are wonderfully clever, placing the responsibility squarely on the gamer to figure everything out and execute their own solution. The flip



## Vigilante justice

Much of the strategy behind surviving different stages in the game involves putting your friends to work for you. Save enough of the warrior Tomahawk Mudokons in a given stage and you can sic 'em on a gang of nasty Sligs with a well-timed "Get 'em" from Abe. Or alternately, Munch's Fuzzle friends are pretty mean and useful when they're confronted with a room full of Vykkers. But you'll have to be careful. You can't afford to lose too many pals in a fight if you're going for a 100% on your Quarma.

## Corporate heads

Meet your enemies. Or "meat" your enemies.

### Glukkons:

The armless fatcats that represent everything wrong in the *Oddworld* universe. These guys are lazy cowards with way too much money and way too much of a predilection for causing grief and misery for the Mudokons and Gabbits.



### Sligs:

The henchmen of the Glukkons, these guys are mean, nasty, and quick to pull a trigger on absolutely anything. Their witty banter usually only consists of insults to each other shortly before they attack you.



### Vykkers:

The brains behind every diabolical operation in *Oddworld*, the Vykkers specialize in performing sinister experiments that emphasize pain to their subjects. They're pretty handy with knives, as well.



### Slogs:

Fleshy mounds of canine-esque malice that usually accompany Sligs on duty. They obey no man or Mudokon and will often turn their ravenous attention on their masters if placed in the same room with them.



### Interns:

The low men on the Vykker totem pole, the Interns are simply gofers for their bosses, which means that they'll make your life a living heck if you're not careful in avoiding them.





## Control freaks



As most fans already know, both Munch and Abe are able to control or possess different creatures. Munch's brain implant (courtesy of the Vykkers) allows him to control mechanical cranes via a remote control. This helps him transport enemies to their death or friends to safety (or vice versa if you're especially cruel). Abe is able to use Sprooce Shrubs in order to possess different enemies. This is essential in getting past many a hairy situation. And when you're in control of the enemy, you'll note that they each have their own Gamespeak, as well.

side is that the more weak-willed amongst us will be instantly turned off by the amount of brainpower and persistence that a game like this requires. Believe us, you'll be giving the Quick Save option a constant workout, as you'll die more often than you care to keep count of. To our great relief, *Munch* packs serious save options. The Quick Save/Load feature makes a return visit from *Abe's Exodds* and is welcomed with open Mudokon arms, as well as saving to the hard-drive or the memory card. Now, though, you're able to save absolutely anywhere within the game and start up your game exactly where you left off – no save icons, no end-of-level saves only, no worries. This feature makes what could be a monstrously sadistic exercise in frustration into a superbly challenging adventure.

But not all of *Munch's* charm lies in its gameplay. Indeed, the real appeal of the game can be seen, heard, and felt through its graphics, sound, and cast of characters. A megaton of love went into making this game, and you can feel it emanating from the facial animations of every creature in the game, in every line of dialogue spoken, and

in the design of their surroundings. It seems that no detail was too small for this personal-touch philosophy, right down to the icons that decorate all of the power-up vending machines. An impressive amount of imagination was placed into setting up just the right amount of function for every object.

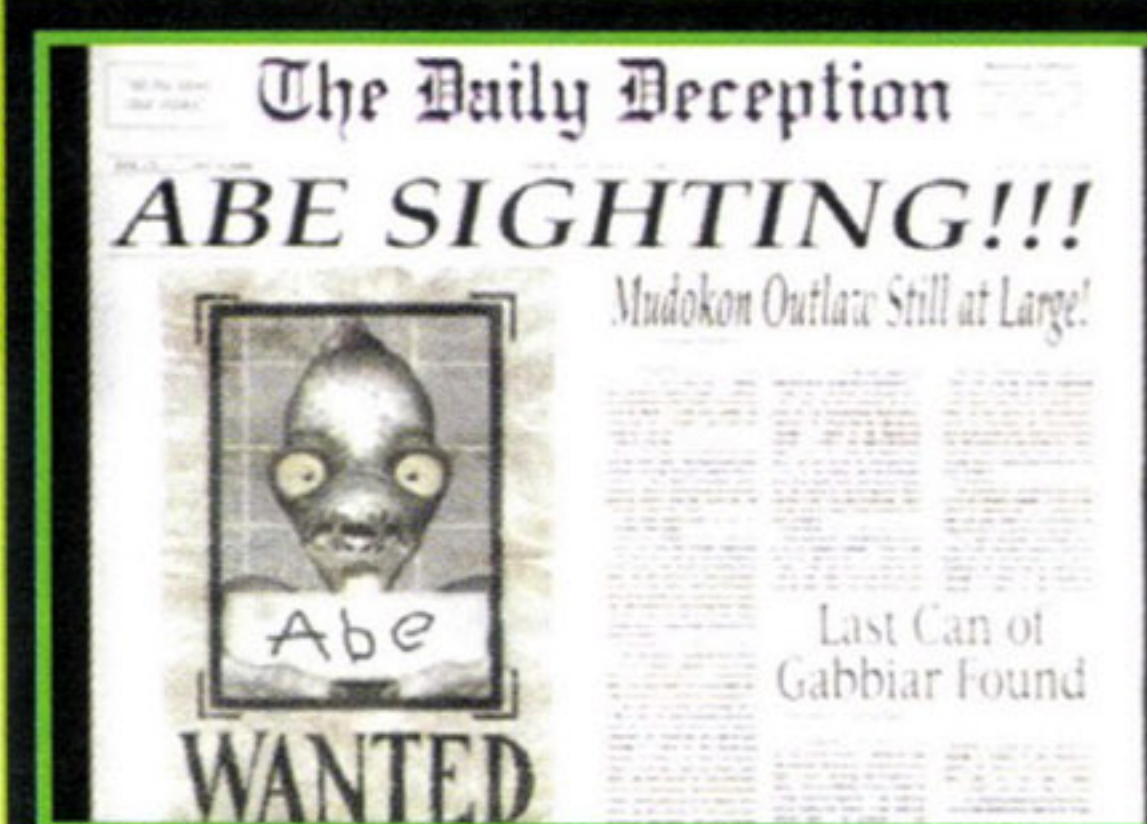
But the result could be just that much more inspiring if Abe's and Munch's world was just the least bit less drab. From the browns and muted greens of the forest to the dark, metallic blues of the factories, it might be hard to admire some of the game's small details when they all come in different shades of blah. And when you take a gander at a game as inferior as *Shrek*, you'll still shake your head in wonder at why some of the flat, smeary textures scattered around certain areas of *Munch* haven't been optimized to dazzle you more than the bright, bumpmapped goodness of *Shrek*. Weird. Add to this some strangely longish loading times between stages. While these are merely quibbles that no one will dare squabble over, they do deserve mention.

While Microsoft was originally pitching *Munch* as a direct competitor to the other

■ **QUARMA, SCHWARMA:** As in past *Oddysees*, you're gonna have to make the most of your rescuing abilities in order to beef up your "Quarma," which indicates what a good Mudokon or Gabbit you are. The higher your Quarma, the better your world is.

**Urging your pals to "go into the light" is ultimately a good thing.**

**Extra! Extra!  
Read all about it!**



**When you finish certain stages in the game, you'll be able to read up on how your actions are affecting the Glukkon world at large in big, sensational headlines from the local newspaper. If you're managing to do a great deal of damage to the enemy, your actions will be accurately reflected in black and white. There's nothing better than making the front page, after all.**

consoles' mascot vehicles, it'd be wrong to place it in the same category. While *Mario* and *Crash* are platformers, *Munch* is truly a puzzle game. And for those that realize and embrace this type of gameplay, *Munch* is a testament to how imagination, creativity, and some good ol' production values can make something as unlikely as a puzzle game really truly shine. Tough, but ultimately forgiving, *Munch* may not be for everyone – but honestly, what type of game really is for everyone?

– Francesca Reyes

## THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Wonderfully crisp, but it seems like some PS2 textures were ported over and not optimized for Xbox.

**Immersion**  
This is a living, breathing world – fully realized with all sorts of personalized touches.

**Sound**  
One of the best things about *Munch*, with amazing voice-overs and great effects.

**Design**  
Painfully well done to the point of controller-throwing frustration and many sleepless nights.

(+) Good.  
(-) Bad.  
(?) Perplexing  
+ Amazing amount of humor, mood, and personality.  
+ Clever, challenging puzzles.  
+ Fully realized game world.  
– Flat textures and bland color palettes.  
– Some questionable ally AI.  
– Quasi-long loading levels.  
? How do Mudokons REALLY lay eggs?

Official Xbox  
magazine  
verdict

9.0  
10.0



# THE GAME HAS ARRIVED

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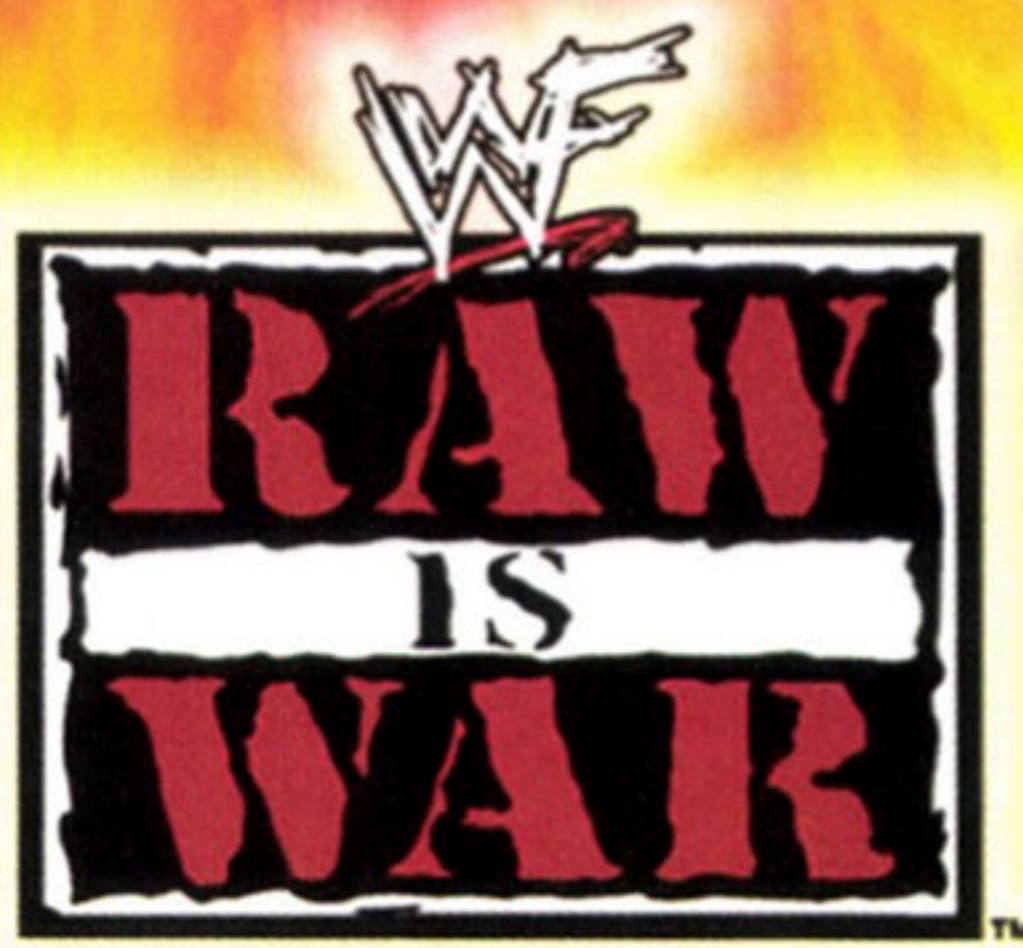


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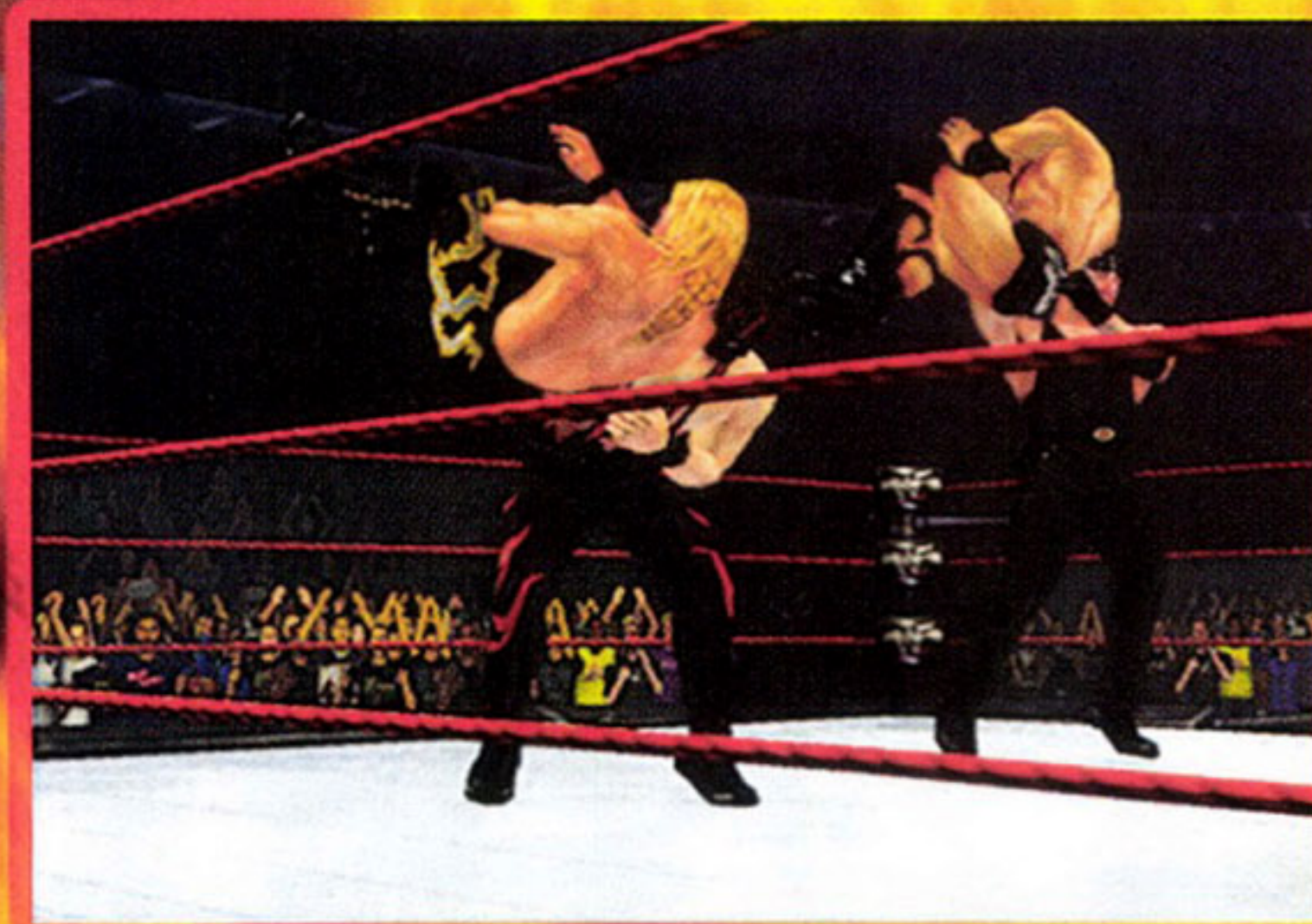
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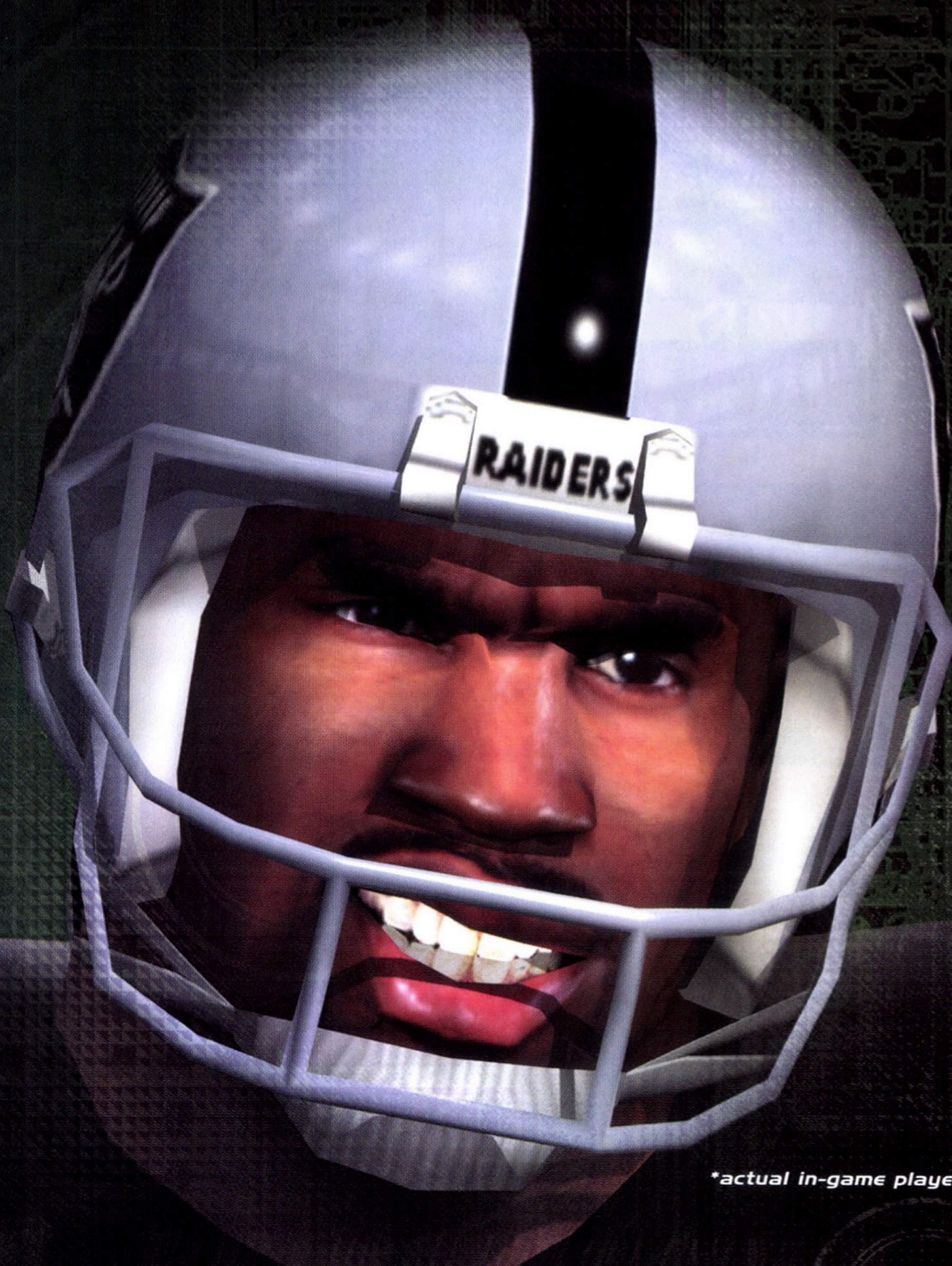
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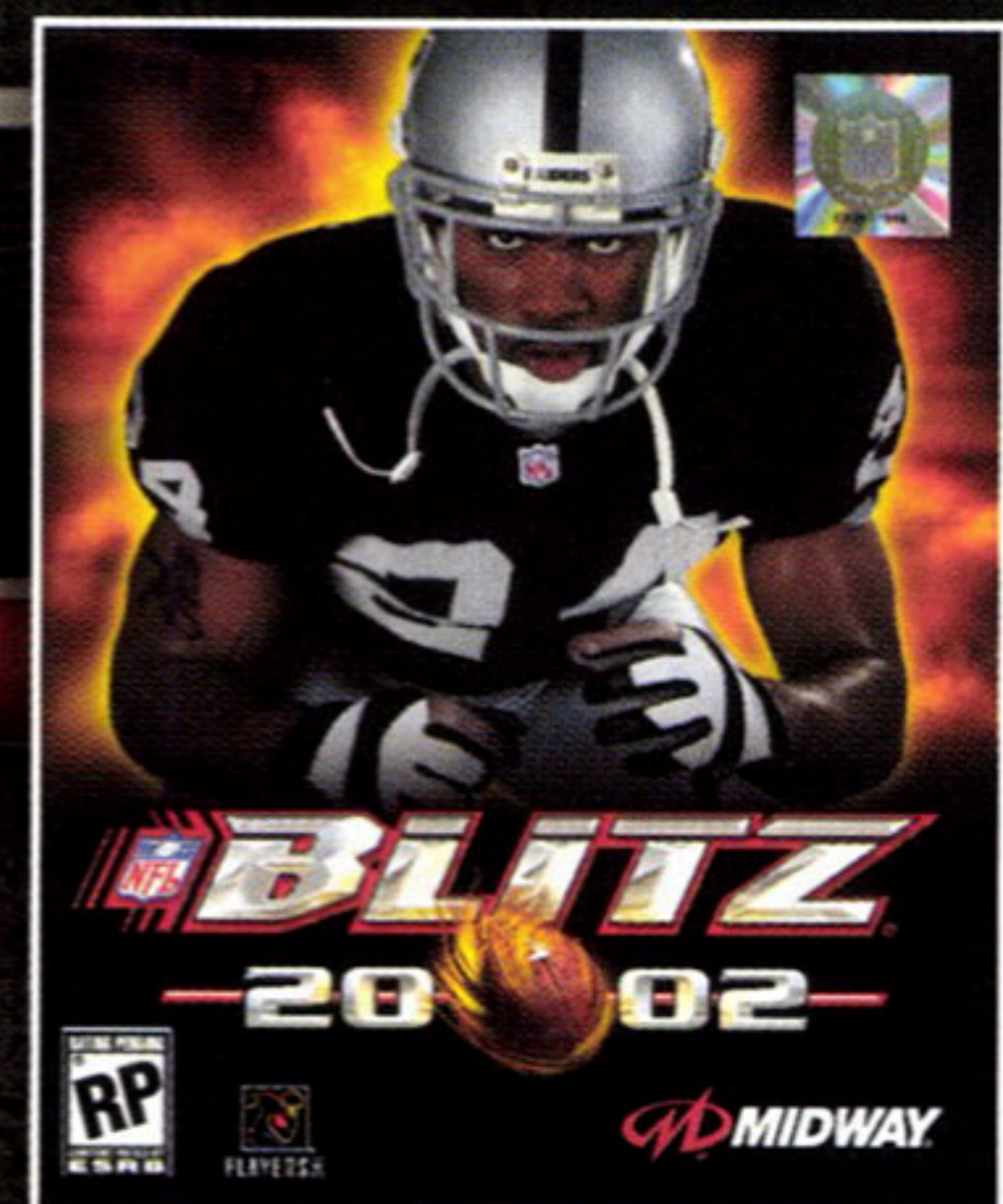


NFL Blitz 20-02 has evolved. Real teams, real players, real attitude, but totally re-invented for maximum impact. With an all-new engine powering 8-on-8 action, a new running game dimension, and the revolutionary Impact Player customization feature, NFL Blitz 20-02 delivers "No Refs. No Rules. No Mercy." football for the next millennium.

GAME PREVIEW AT [WWW.NFLBLITZ.MIDWAY.COM](http://WWW.NFLBLITZ.MIDWAY.COM)



PlayStation 2





Dear Gamer: Welcome to Dullsville. Population: You

# The Simpsons Road Rage

DEVELOPER Radical | PUBLISHER Electronic Arts | MULTIPLAYER 1-2  
 WEBSITE [www.ea.com](http://www.ea.com) | EXTRAS New voiceovers straight from the cast



■ One of the chief pleasures of the game is its full complement of character voices and inside jokes.

**A**h, if only the makers of *Road Rage* loved the art of gameplay as much as they obviously loved *The Simpsons*. Perhaps if they had, this would have been the finest, most detailed, and most satisfying licensed game ever made. After all, *Road Rage* deftly transfers the 2D world of *The Simpsons* into a fully realized 3D world with an attention to detail that boggles the mind. The game re-creates countless throwaway gags, spot-on character interactions, and the show's trademark visual humor in every single frame.

Unfortunately, there just isn't much of a game built upon this infrastructure. To say that it plays kind of like *Crazy Taxi* would be a lie... because the design is ripped-off 100 percent from *Crazy Taxi*. It's as if the gameplay was an afterthought. Even the mission mode seems tossed together. Only

one out of the 10 missions isn't about running over stuff, and that mission is even more inane. The two-player mode has promise, but it's shallow, too.

If only *Road Rage* contained the slightest spark of original gameplay, we could truly enjoy the amazing world that it's set in. As it stands, it's a nice place to visit, but you won't want to stay long.

- Dan Egger

## THE VERDICT

<b>Graphics</b> The attention to detail is excellent. There's always something cool to look at.	<b>Immersion</b> Visually, you'll feel like you're in a real version of Springfield. If only the gameplay were as compelling.
<b>Sound</b> The character quips are great, and you'll find yourself laughing out loud occasionally.	<b>Design</b> The gameplay is pure <i>Crazy Taxi</i> rip-off... but more boring. Hopelessly unoriginal in an amazingly original setting.

**GOOD (+), BAD (-), PERPLEXING (?)**  
 + Captures the feel of *The Simpsons* perfectly.  
 + It is, at times, incredibly funny.  
 - The gameplay is MIA.  
 - The missions are repetitive and dull.  
 ? Why isn't there a tour mode to show off this amazing world?

Official Xbox magazine verdict **6.2** 10.0



■ *Road Rage* would've been better served by actual gameplay.

Go straight, turn left, rinse, repeat...

# NASCAR Thunder 2002

DEVELOPER EA Sports | PUBLISHER EA Sports | MULTIPLAYER 1-4 players splitscreen  
 WEBSITE [thunder2002.ea.com/xbox.html](http://thunder2002.ea.com/xbox.html)

**D**espite the best efforts of some very smart marketing people, NASCAR is still very much a love-hate sport. Although EA Sports' *NASCAR Thunder 2002* doesn't come close to bridging the gap, it does provide a decent NASCAR racing experience - even if the graphics stink.

Featuring a full NASCAR license, *Thunder* offers up all the tracks, drivers, and cars you'd expect. Sadly, there are only two single-player gameplay modes, Season and Career, and the only difference between the two is that in Career mode you must sign sponsors and keep them happy. The races are fun, and the ability to tweak the gameplay means that both novices and hard-core NASCAR freaks (you know who you are) will have an enjoyable experience.

The sense of speed is incredible, and the game whips along at a great framerate.

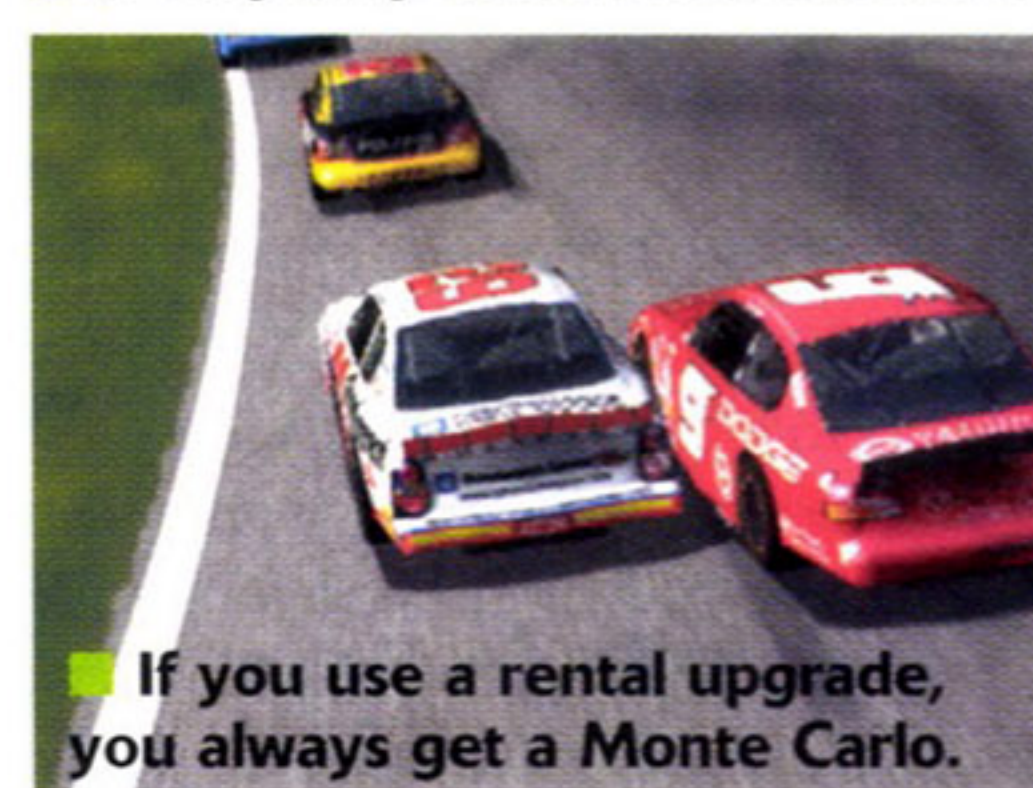
■ Lens flare goes nuclear, as if to say, "Look at my flare, suckas!"



■ Will he turn left? Will he turn right? We're betting on left.



■ If only Jiffy Lube went this fast.



■ If you use a rental upgrade, you always get a Monte Carlo.

However, since *Thunder* is a port of the PlayStation2 version of the game, that system's graphical failings come shining through. There is no anti-aliasing, and as a result the horizon becomes a muddled mess of headache-inducing colors if you play too long.

If this were the only NASCAR game available on the Xbox, *Thunder* would probably fare better. But because the excellent *NASCAR Heat* from Infogrames offers better graphics and more gameplay options, *Heat* gets pole position over the distant *Thunder*.

- William Harms

## THE VERDICT

<b>Graphics</b> The car models and pit animations are sweet, but everything else sucks.	<b>Immersion</b> You either like NASCAR or you don't. If you're in the first group, there's plenty to like.
<b>Sound</b> The drone of the motors, screeching of tires, and smashing of metal is well done.	<b>Design</b> There aren't as many options as in <i>NASCAR Heat</i> , but there's still enough to please NASCAR fanatics.

**GOOD (+), BAD (-), PERPLEXING (?)**  
 + Great framerate, incredible sense of speed.  
 - The PS2-esque graphics make us sad.  
 - Limited gameplay modes.  
 ? The opening screen features "Sweet Home Alabama," but after that - nothing. What up with that?

Official Xbox magazine verdict **6.9** 10.0





■ Oh no! Construction workers! I bet they harrass me for wearing revealing clothes.



■ Hopefully that shield provides protection from the elements, since you're only wearing a tank top.

Imagine if Hydro Thunder froze over...

# Arctic Thunder

DEVELOPER MIDWAY, PUBLISHER MIDWAY, MULTIPLAYER 1-4 VIA SPLITSCREEN  
WEBSITE WWW.MIDWAY.COM EXTRAS: RUMBLE-RIFFIC

Once upon a time, videogames were played in dusty halls, on huge cabinets, surrounded by a blue haze of cigarette smoke. These venues were called arcades, and we used to hide in 'em when we cut school.

These days, there are only about three left in the US – filled with broken machines



■ It's possible to catch insane amounts of air. Watch out, though, for gondolas.

and located in sketchy neighborhoods in malls with a Montgomery Ward's. If you went into one of these hallowed hellholes this year, you may have seen *Arctic Thunder*.

The Xbox version of the game is basically the same, and if you're already familiar with *Hydro Thunder*, then you get the basic premise. Choose a racer (try a giant monkey named Ponzo), beat competitors around icy tracks, and open up the new stuff, including hidden tracks and new snowmobiles.

Snowmobiling is fun in real life, but *Arctic's* addition of *WipEout*-style weapons makes it more of a blast. Power-ups are collected en route, and are usually used to knock other racers out of the running. Proximity mines and snowbombs can take care of other racers from a distance, but for close-up combat you can use *Road Rash*-style punches and kicks. There are also *Wave Race*-style tricks to perform.

A health meter adds another layer missing from the comparatively shallow *Hydro Thunder*. Like *Hydro*, though, about half of the game's tracks are hidden. You start off with six, including Washington D.C.'s first appearance in a racing game, and a much more logical Alaskan Pipeline. You can open up others (grayed out in the select screen) by completing races in pole position. It starts off easy and soon gets tough. You really have to use the weapons and *San Francisco Rush*-style shortcuts.

Now, if you're reading this review and thinking, "Boy, they sure are comparing this with a lot of other games," you're right. That's because *Arctic Thunder*, while fun and distracting enough, is basically really derivative. There are simply no original ideas here, and it fails to make ample use of the Xbox hardware. The multiplayer mode, at least, offers some variety, and the Battle mode (think *Mario Kart*) is pretty compelling.

– Dan Egger

## Shake it up

The most notable feature in *Arctic Thunder* is the... uhh... thundering vibrations from the Xbox controller. From start to finish, *Arctic Thunder* gives the rumble feature in the Xbox pad a fierce workout. Depending on your tastes (or preferences), the violent shaking is either super-irritating or weirdly erotic. Either way, it's cheaper and just as effective as one of them coin-operated vibrating beds (Shag-O-Matic™) you might find in the sleazier hourly-rate hotels downtown. Not that we'd know about that first-hand, of course.

## THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Although they're clear and crisp for the most part, things occasionally get messy and over-busy.

**Immersion**  
Not enough sim and too much arcade to really draw you into the experience.

**Sound**  
Noisy, brash, and immediately annoying, with weirdly under-powered snowmobile sounds.

**Design**  
The *Hydro Thunder* principle is partially applied to snowy wastes, but it's not quite there.

(+) Good.  
(-) Bad.  
(?) Perplexing  
+ Incredibly fast.  
+ Seismic-like rumble feature.  
– Poor graphics engine.  
– Uncompelling track designs.  
? Did it take them two, or three, weeks to port this game?

Official Xbox magazine verdict

5.9  
10.0



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## All the fun of high-sticking, without the bloody teeth

# NHL Hitz 20-02

DEVELOPER **BLACK BOX** PUBLISHER **MIDWAY**  
MULTIPLAYER 1-4 WEBSITE [WWW.NHLHITZ.MIDWAY.COM](http://WWW.NHLHITZ.MIDWAY.COM)

**M**idway has been milking this trick for years. Take your favorite sport, cut the number of players in half, double the scoring, and turn the amp up to 11 ("because it's like 1 louder, ya know?"). We've played this game before when it was called *Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey '98*, only this time it is much, much better.

*NHL Hitz 20-02* is by far the best of these bombastic sports games. What makes the familiar formula so winning this time is the combination of great graphics and real creativity. In the past, Midway was content with average visuals, but *Hitz* is actually a good-looking game. The player characters are huge, and there is great attention to detail – from the flaming puck to the secret codes hidden in the stands right down to the stretching mesh on the players' jerseys.

In typical Midway fashion, there is plenty of comedy in the chaos. When one of your players catches fire, a bolt of lightning strikes him from heaven as he bursts into flame. In some cases, his linemates will actually come up and warm their hands on him. Fights are fast and funny, and if you can catch a guy on his heels, there are even special finishing moves.

## The St. Catherine's Street Riot

While *NHL Hitz 20-02* might be over-the-top hockey, it doesn't compare to real life. In March 1955, then-president of the NHL, Clarence Campbell, suspended the Canadiens' Maurice "the Rocket" Richard for a stick-swinging incident. The very next game, on March 17, Campbell was in attendance at the Montreal Forum but barely escaped the wrath of the fans, who spilled out on the street for a seven-hour hockey-fueled riot that covered five miles of Montreal.

The actual gameplay is a balance between hits that shake the TV, and super spin moves. Goals are, of course, available by the bushel, although the brutal catch-up AI that plagued other Midway sports games is, thankfully, missing – a definite plus in favor of *NHL Hitz*.

Beyond the obvious fun that comes from a four-player game of hyper-hockey without any rules, there is actually a robust single-player experience. There's also an excellent training mode, as well as two different tournaments to compete in. Victories and correct answers to trivia questions earn you tokens that can be redeemed for alternative jerseys, mysterious teams, and hidden stadiums. Bottom line, if you want real

## Catch a guy on his heels, and there are even special finishing moves



■ There are cool fantasy stadiums you can unlock such as a Wild West town and a disco.



■ A hockey game the Hanson brothers would really enjoy (we mean the goons from *Slapstick*, not the twits from "Mmmmbop").

hockey, get *NHL 2002*; if you want to score goals, break jaws, and have a hell of a lot of fun, get *Hitz*.

— Jim Preston

### THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Solid. The best we've seen in an "extreme" sports game.

**Immersion**  
Excellent. From the drop of the puck to the drop of the gloves, you are absorbed in the action.

**Sound**  
Ordinary. There's the usual rockin' soundtrack, and the commentator is occasionally funny and always loud.

**Design**  
Fantastic. Great balance with excellent controls.

(+) Good.  
(-) Bad.  
(?) Perplexing  
+ Sweet graphics.  
+ Hilarious carnage.  
+ Lots of stuff to unlock.  
- Can be repetitive.  
- Doesn't take full advantage of the Xbox.  
? We've never seen a goalie skate the length of the ice and score before.

Official Xbox magazine verdict

8.4  
10.0



# In racing, you're only as good as your equipment

"Just when I thought NASCAR® Heat™ couldn't get any better, the Xbox™ comes out and takes it to a whole new level!"

— Rusty Wallace

1989 NASCAR® Winston Cup Champion

Get the most out of your Xbox™ video game system with NASCAR® Heat™!

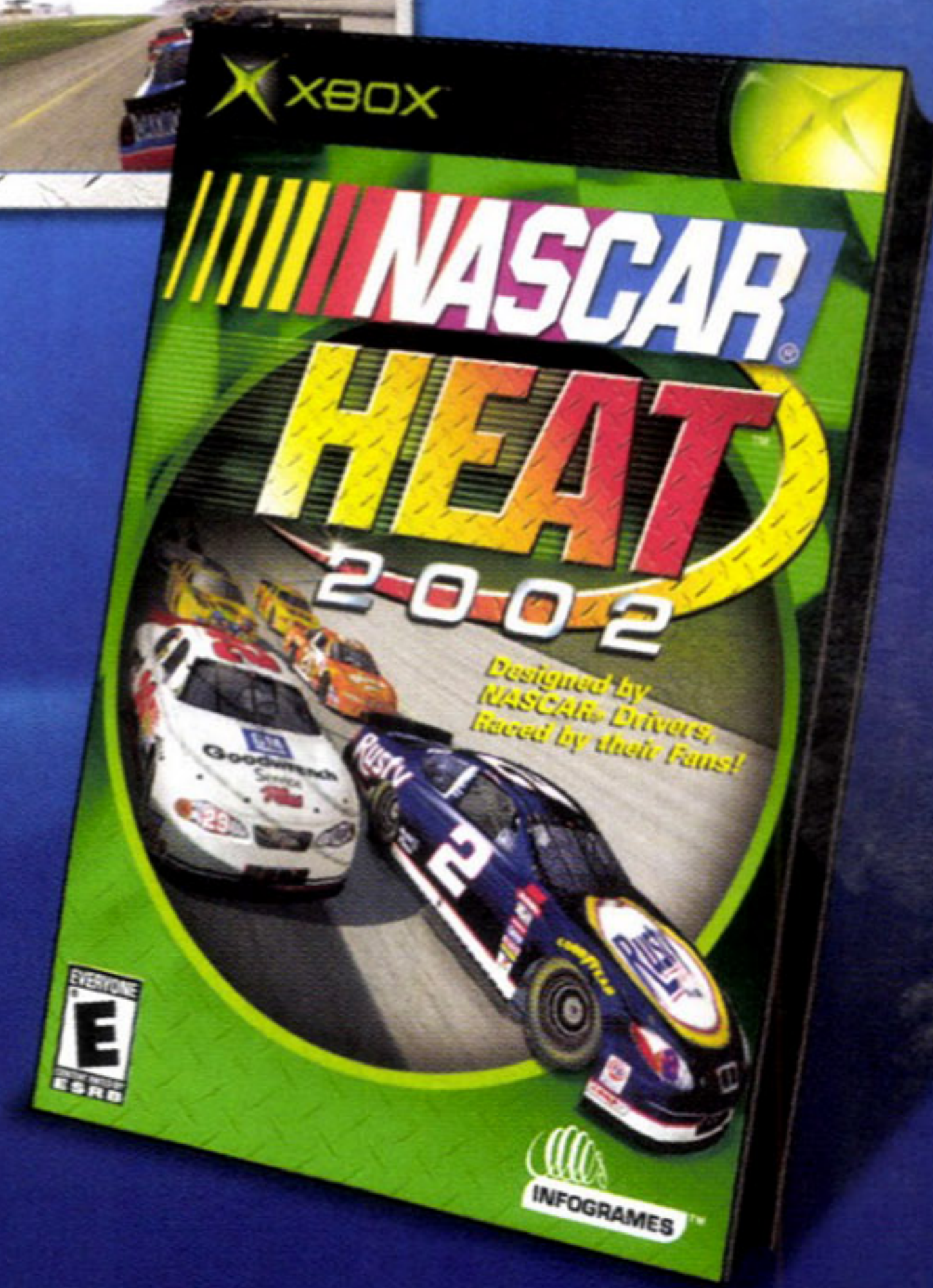
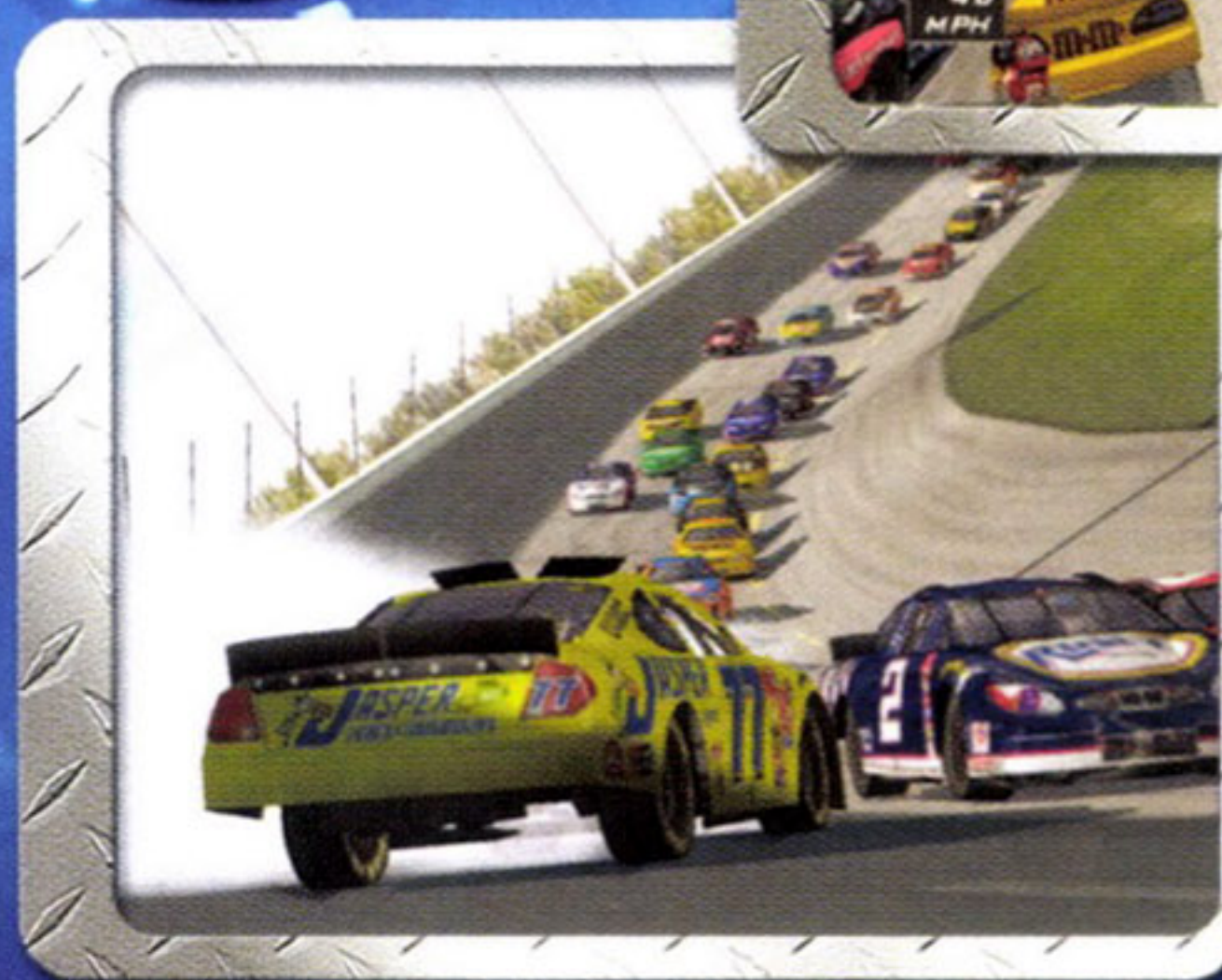
The only NASCAR® game where drivers dare YOU to compete in challenges THEY actually faced!

#### Key Features:

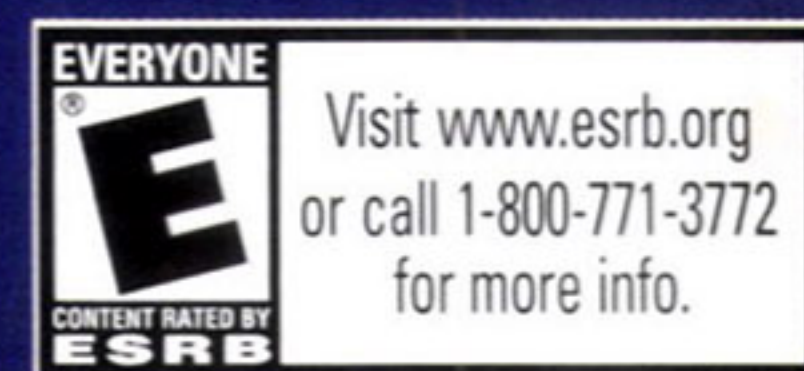
- 1st NASCAR® racing game for Xbox with a 43-car field!
- DVD quality photo-realistic graphics!
- Supports Xbox system link for up to 32 players! (4 per video game system)
- Booming Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound!
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**EXCLUSIVE!**

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Designed by  
NASCAR® Drivers,  
Raced by their Fans!





Not your average, everyday kinda survival horror

# Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams

DEVELOPER **KONAMI** | PUBLISHER **KCET** | MULTIPLAYER **NONE**  
 WEBSITE **WWW.KONAMI.COM** | EXTRAS **DOLBY 5.1 SURROUND, XBOX-EXCLUSIVE STAGE**

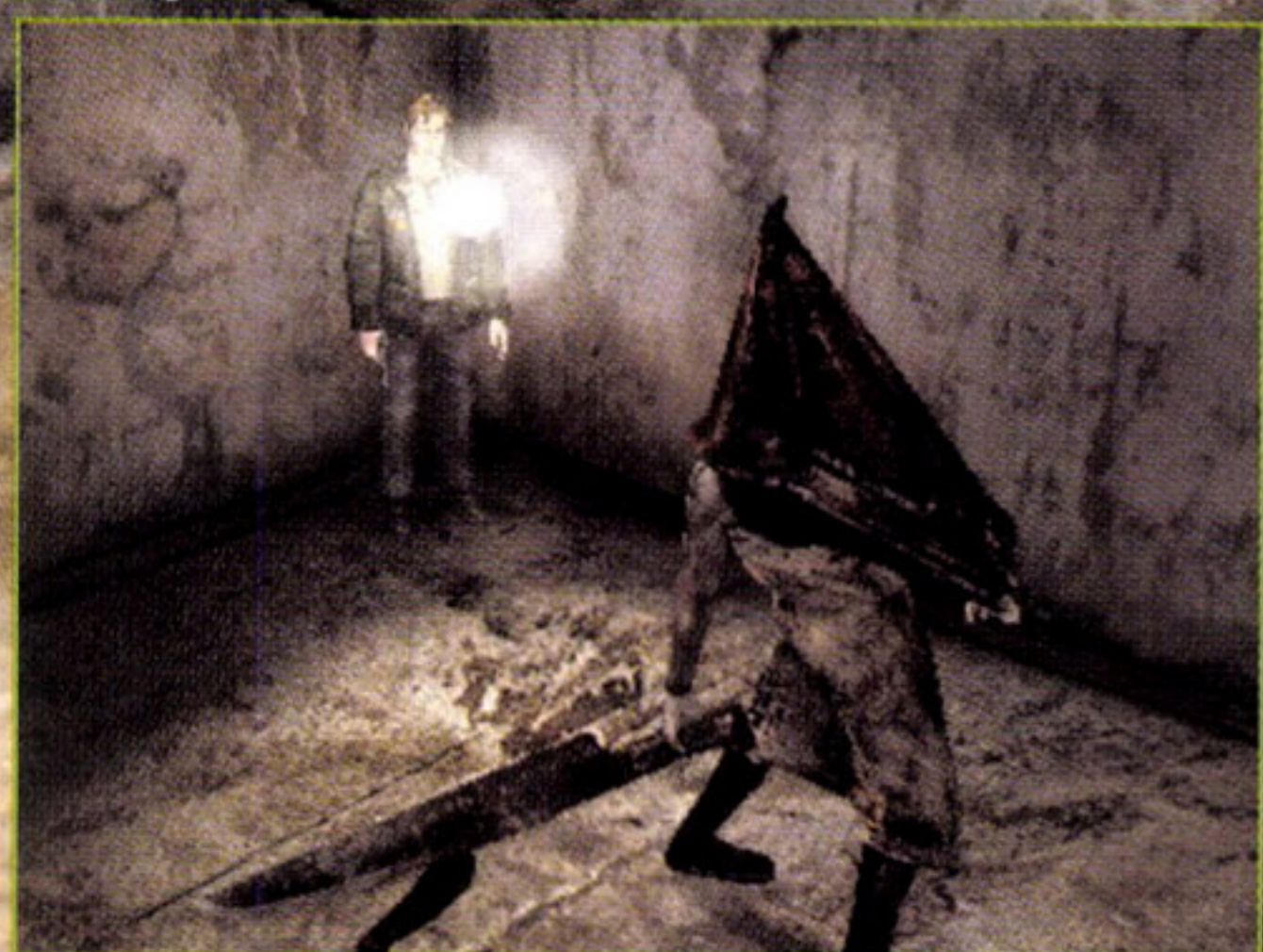
**W**hoever said that survival horror games were merely shockfest fodder most likely never delved into the *Silent Hill* universe.

Much more than a simple bloodbath, the *SH* series has always struck us as enjoyably smart, achieving its chills through suspense and mood, not by simply serving up gore on a platter. By creating a believable world tainted by the supernatural, the effect is more psychological than the sci-fi thrills delivered by Capcom's *Resident Evil* series.

We wondered: after such a splendid debut on PlayStation, could the sequel possibly live up to the highly imaginative spooks of the original? Well, yes and no. If you've played the first *SH*, you'll know



■ James stops to affectionately admire his, shall we say, "Xbox-enhanced" realtime shadow.



■ James: "My, sir, what a big sword you have!"  
 Creature: "The better to skewer you with..."

■ **Dating Tip #23: Nothing's a bigger turn-off to a girl on a date than getting lost in some freaky, surreal hospital while her beau guns down scary, faceless nurses. It's just kinda rude.**



**Only on Xbox**

All-new, exclusive chapter for Xbox!  
 All-new, enhanced graphics for Xbox! All-new, initially accessible options for Xbox! Rejoice!





■ While the cast of monsters in *SH2* could've used more variety, they sure as hell don't get creepier or more imaginative (and possibly silly) than the ones that *DO* show up.

exactly how things work in *SH2* – you guide James Sunderland, the lead character, through a fog-enshrouded town, beating down freaky monsters while solving puzzles. All the elements are intact; relative-to-player controls, a completely 3D game world, and a free-floating, controllable camera. In fact, it seems as if no attempt whatsoever was made to evolve the gameplay from the original. As disappointing as this may seem, the familiar feel places the game's design and storyline squarely in the spotlight.

With the creepiest creeps this side of a '70s horror movie, both the sights and sounds of *SH2* have been lovingly crafted. You'll jump at every moan, clank, and crash – each perfectly placed for optimum fear. Fans will also be delighted by the improved voice work (not hard, considering the stilted high-school dramatics of the first *SH*).

Visuals are crisper and cleaner than the PS2 version, with rusty walls and dirty bathrooms emanating the right amount of grunge and grime to re-create the hellish corridors of Silent Hill. All of these elements are so devilishly rendered that players will no doubt share James' horror as the events unfold around them. This is what makes *Silent Hill* so wonderful – you never know what to expect, but you'll be caught up in the moment all the same.

But what about the storyline? Well, this seems to be what received the most attention in *SH2* – and deservedly so. As James Sunderland, you arrive in Silent Hill to track down your wife. The problem is that she's been dead for three years – then

again, dead people don't usually send letters asking you to find them. And this is where James' adventure begins. The premise is interesting enough, but the way the story unravels and the way in which all the characters James meets during his journey are interwoven into the shocking finale makes *SH2*'s script more akin to a complicated novel rather than a mere videogame. The questions that arise from the game's open-ended resolution also prove that the team behind the game put A LOT of thought behind every interaction and every clue. It's amazing to think that someone put so much effort into using a videogame as a vehicle for such a mature, sophisticated story that raises as many questions as it answers. For this, Konami deserves kudos.

The flip side is that some players will find

## There's something about Maria



The spunky blonde stranger famed for her midriff-baring antics as a dead ringer for James' dead wife in the main scenario apparently needed further exposition in a brand-new, Xbox-exclusive sub-scenario called "Born From a Wish." While the side story only clocks in at 60 minutes or so, hardcore fans will be thrilled by the option to play as the revolver-toting Maria.

the ending to be somewhat puzzling and unrewarding. For those who merely want to blow away zombies and be dazzled by shocking visuals, there's some of that to be had – but they should know that the action is slow, the direction is sometimes aimless, and the plot is paced at a steady, but purposeful, crawl. It's as if Konami was directing *SH2* at more thoughtful gamers, those that have the time to be immersed and to carefully consider the game's events. In addition, *SH2: Restless Dreams* includes an extra "chapter" where players can explore a new area in town as Maria, one of the auxiliary characters in the main adventure. While the added gameplay only amounts to around an hour and the main game clocks in at nine or ten, the trip is well worth it.

We'd be lying if we said that *Silent Hill 2* was everything we'd hoped to see in a sequel to the brilliant original. But we'd also be lying if we said that it wasn't outstanding in its own right.

– Francesca Reyes

## Survival horror no-no's

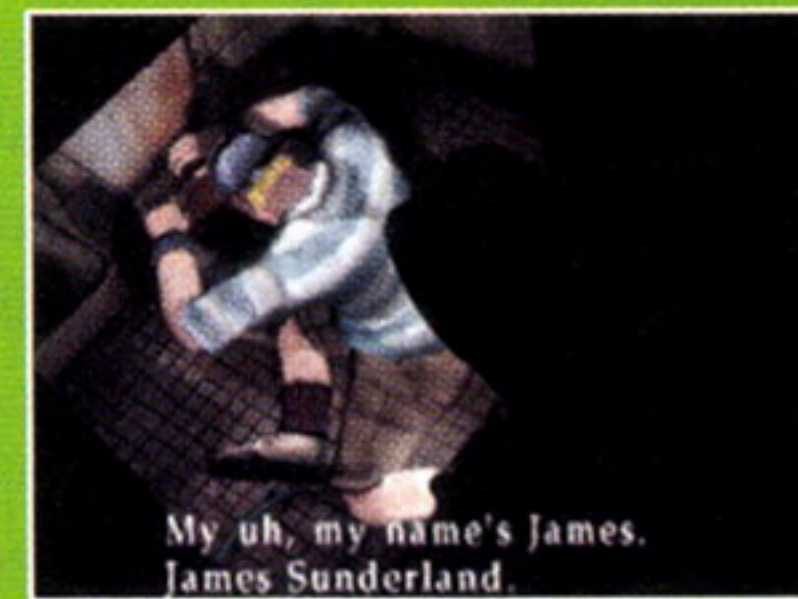
If you're anything like us, you've been told certain things since childhood that can be generally agreed upon as common-sense virtues. Stuff like "Don't run with scissors!" or "It's all fun and games until someone gets an eye poked out!" – wise words, indeed. While the realm of survival horror may not be the best place to test out folk wisdom, there are still some things that you just really shouldn't do.



**#1** Never stick your arm in a muck-filled hole in the wall. Especially if you can't see the other side.



**#2** Never stick your hand in a muck-filled toilet bowl in a dirty bathroom. Trust us. It's just a bad idea.



**#3** Never chat up someone in the dirty bathroom – especially someone with their head in the muck-filled toilet.

## THE VERDICT

### Graphics

Crisper and cleaner than previous versions on PS2, with the ability to turn the noise filter off at the get-go for high-definition visuals that'll leave you shivering.

### Immersion

With the creep factor knocked up to 11, this game is so involving that you'll be tempted to always leave the lights on.

### Sound

Wonderful, especially if you have a surround sound home theater. The effects will make you jump out of your seat.

### Design

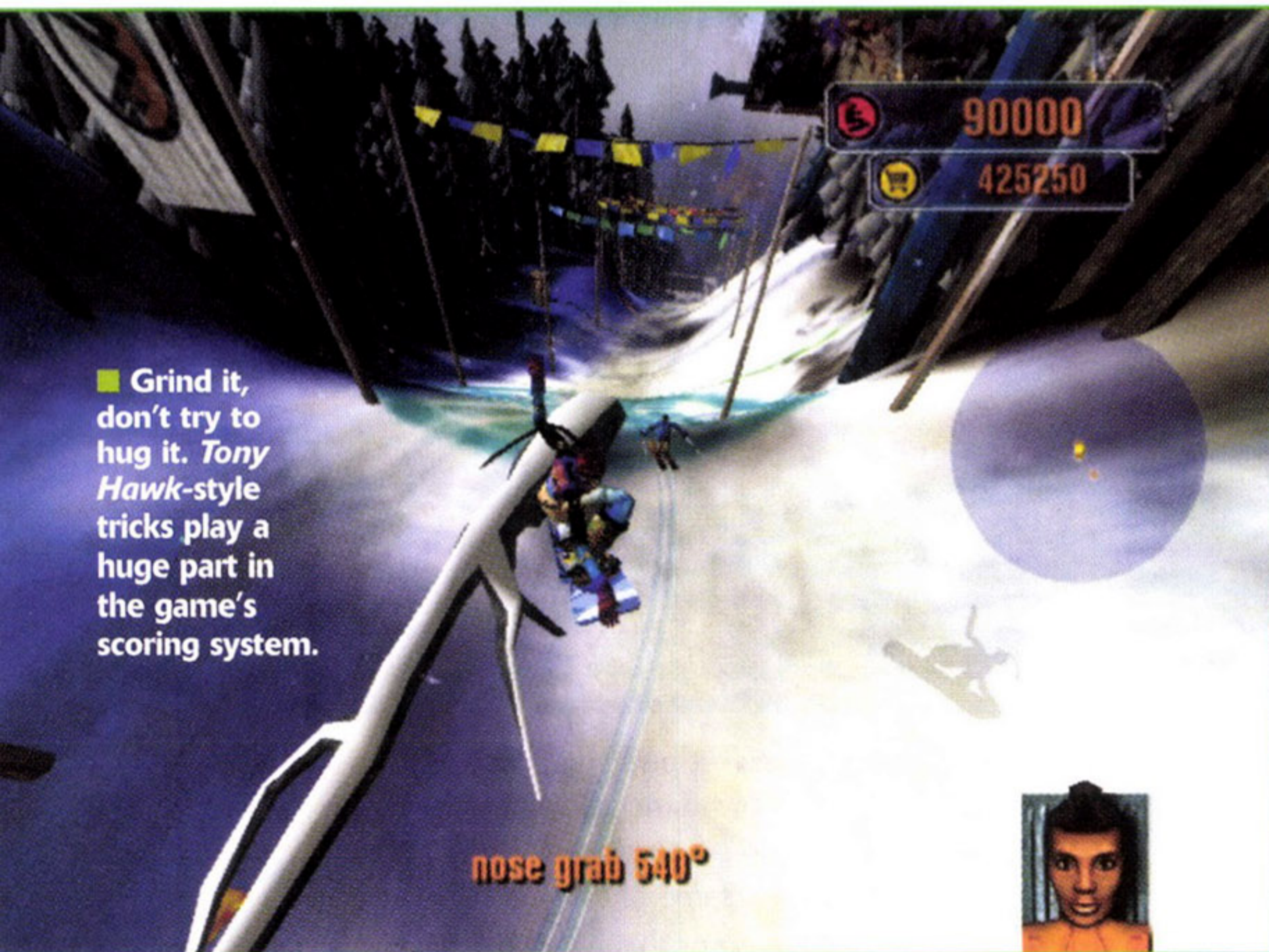
Creepy, chilling, weird, and freaky... our thesaurus ran out of other words to describe how good it could be at moments.

- (+) Good.
- (-) Bad.
- (?) Perplexing
- + Brilliant storytelling.
- + Truly wonderful atmosphere.
- Relatively short gameplay length.
- Lack of variety in monsters.
- ? Where do baby zombies come from?

Official Xbox magazine verdict

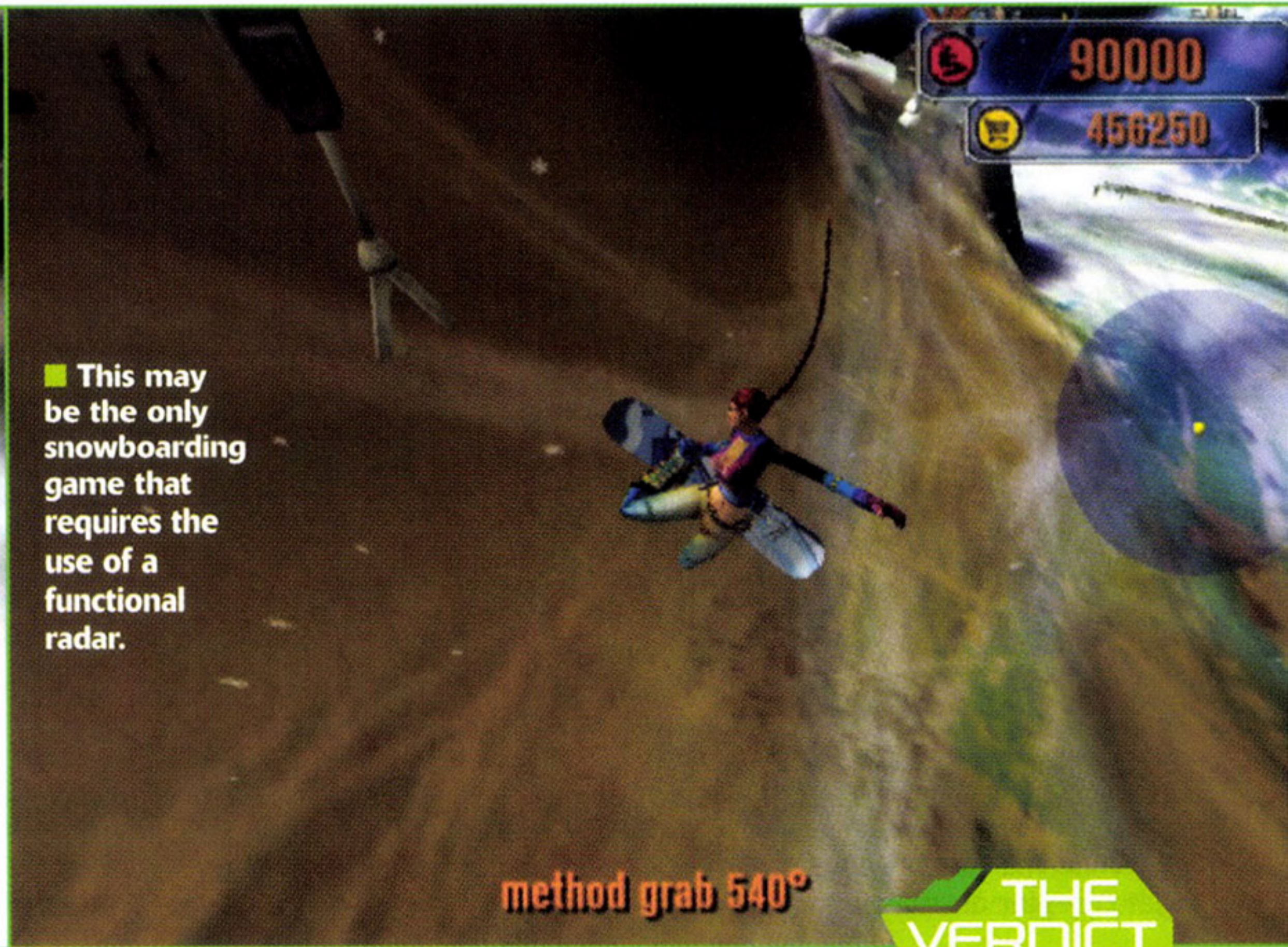
8.9  
10.0





■ Grind it, don't try to hug it. *Tony Hawk*-style tricks play a huge part in the game's scoring system.

■ This may be the only snowboarding game that requires the use of a functional radar.



## So much for misplaced "uphill battle" puns

# Dark Summit

DEVELOPER **RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT**, PUBLISHER **THQ**  
MULTIPLAYER 1-2 PLAYERS VIA SPLITSCREEN | WEBSITE [WWW.DARKSUMMIT.NET](http://WWW.DARKSUMMIT.NET)

**D**ark Summit, which is part arcade snowboarding simulation, part action/adventure, takes a refreshing turn on the multi-colored slopes by injecting some new play mechanics, as well as an espionage-twined storyline, into winter games.

Players carve powder as Naya, a sexy wild-child-cum-secret-agent, investigating

mysterious happenstances on the slopes of Mt. Garrick. The hook is that all mysteries and objectives are resolved on a snowboard. So, in essence, you're looking at *Scooby Doo* meets *SSX*, with Naya as the obligatory sexy redhead (a la Daphne). So, not only will you have to execute mad Misty 380s, while jibbing rails, you'll also have to complete different missions and challenges in order to progress. Tricks also come into play; there's a system similar to other action-sports games with specials akin to *Mortal Kombat* button presses, as well as standard directional modified moves.

Standard play mechanics are bolstered by a unique challenge system. Winging down branching icy paths, you'll use a HUD radar display to find highlighted COM satellites. Pass through 'em, and sub-quests are assigned. Earning points by escaping security forces, tackling fellow skiers, and collecting bomb parts unlocks new courses and definitely boosts replay value – only the formula isn't perfect. Sure, opening new

venues is fun. But those equipment points garnered through trick performance? Yes, they can be spent, but only on lame, pre-assigned outfits and boards that do nothing to tweak gameplay. They're only superficial, for the most part. Extra characters only really serve to spice up multiplayer, as well. You won't receive cool new Story mode elements using them.

Sumptuous visuals, however, are more compelling than the gameplay. From snow sprays to objects that bound down the mountain via Radical's own physics modeling, it's a trip. While the crash animations could've used some work and the character physics are a little floaty, the overall presentation remains fairly solid. But *Dark Summit* is an avalanche of short-term thrills.

– Scott Steinberg

## Holy Alien Cows, Batman!

Aliens and videogames have gone hand in hand since the dawn of pixelated time. In fact, the number of extraterrestrial-related titles is a list longer than you could possibly shake an anal probe at. At one point in *Dark Summit's* development, the suggestion was made that the mysteries that plagued Mt. Garrick's slopes were due to various alienesque shenanigans and included an Area 51-type location. While that has since been scrapped, some alien infestation remains in the form of a later challenge in Naya's Story mode. You're charged with leaping over a herd of alien cows in order to complete the challenge – how the cows became aliens or anything of the sort is still a mystery.

## THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Luscious landscapes, picturesque horizons, painted ice, and smoldering piles of goo, oh my! Like Fat Bastard said, "Dead sexy."

**Immersion**  
Too cheesy, but effective nonetheless. If it hadn't tried so hard to be kid-friendly, you'd be more impressed.

**Sound**  
Er, um... it's there. Speech samples pass muster, though typical techno tunes and mediocre sound effects aren't exactly a sales point.

**Design**  
In a word – curious. Ideas could've been fleshed out for greater success, though its unique challenge implementation works surprisingly well.

(+) Good.  
(-) Bad.  
(?) Perplexing  
+ Tight gameplay.  
+ Lovely visuals.  
+ Unique approach.  
– Grows repetitious.  
– Too skewed toward "xtreme" audiences.  
– Unrealized upgrade system.  
? Why does Naya look like a Borg in drag?

Official Xbox  
magazine  
verdict  
**7.0**  
10.0



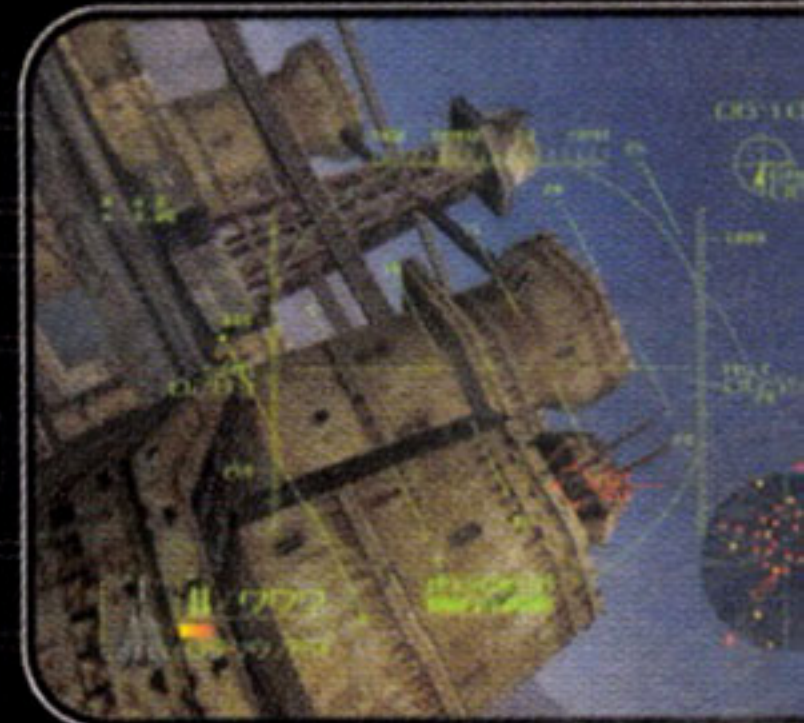
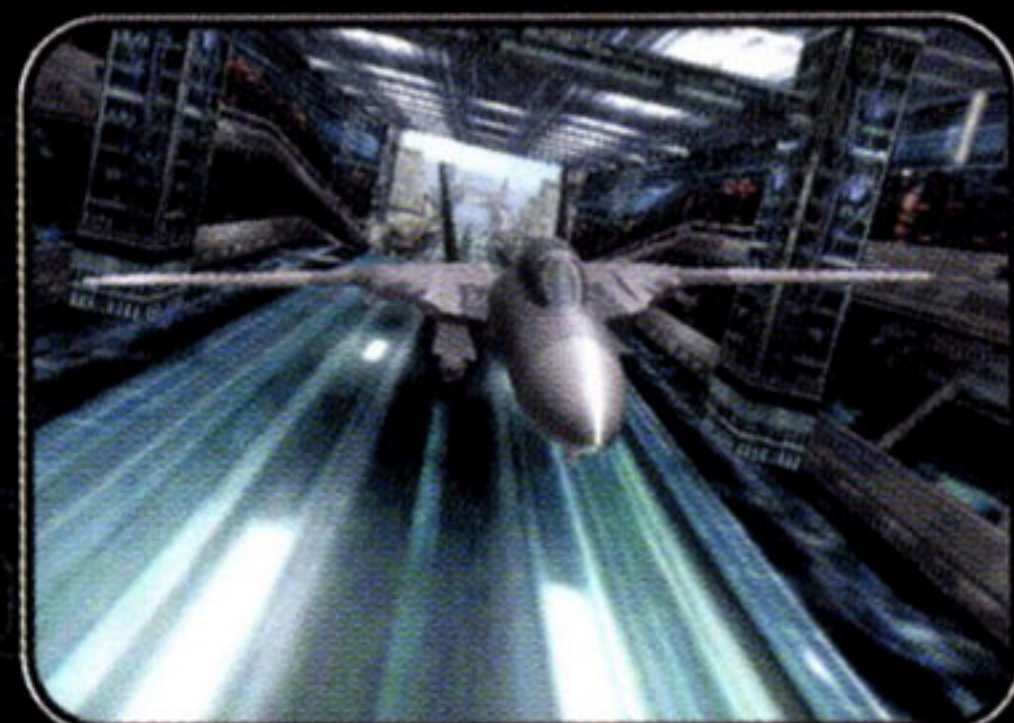
■ Our heroine has a LOT of outfits.





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he land was eternally dark, evil prevailed,  
and there appeared to be no hope at all.

And as if that wasn't enough, the young wizard had aged 30 years in a day and a pack of wild hell hounds was trying to devour him. He used his orb and a lava spell to torch the wretched beasts and ran for his life. He continues on his quest to become a master sorcerer, but he still has nowhere near the 45 spells he needs to defeat the darkness.

**Not even near the end**



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## A curious blend of performance art and martial art



The critics have spoken. You take a bow.

### Kabuki: What the heck is that?

Although we're all familiar with the white-faced, stylized theater of Kabuki at a purely surface level, it's actually some pretty deep stuff, man. It developed centuries ago as entertainment for the working and middle class of Feudal Japan (presumably the upper classes were busy uniting the country, fighting Ninjas, and whatnot). Kabuki is an art pretty much set in stone – there are more than 300 plays, but no new ones in the last 100 years – which means the art is constantly being perfected. And here's a fascinating Kabuki fact that you can impress a date with. You know those almost-stereotypical Kabuki woodcuts of the cross-eyed, white-faced Japanese actors? The cross-eyed part is said to mimic the actors of yore, who would stamp their feet and cross their eyes to get the attention of a distracted audience.

# Kabuki Warriors

DEVELOPER GENKI | PUBLISHER CRAVE | MULTIPLAYER 1-2

WEBSITE [WWW.CRAVEGAMES.COM](http://WWW.CRAVEGAMES.COM)

**Y**ou've got to hand it to Genki, *Kabuki Warriors* is very brave stuff. Although not quite as bleeding-edge artsy as, say, *Parappa*, or *Vib Ribbon*, it's certainly the most conceptual fighting game we've ever laid eyes on. It goes a little something like this: a 2D fighting game (with 3D animated characters) that plays like an exact blend of *Samurai Shodown* and an actual Kabuki performance, because that's just what it is. Choose from 12 initially playable characters, each with his own specials and attacks, then take them through "Tour Mode," a strangely

bizarre trek through the different Kabuki theaters of Japan that features 53 cities in which to perform your plays.

The character design and animation is startling, and captures well the somewhat-eerie sensibilities of Kabuki performers, from an overly made-up Ronin samurai to an overly (yet appropriately) made-up lady-man. Yes, a lady-man. All of the characters in the game are typical and representative Kabuki standards, and will be recognizable to fans of the art. Which is where things start to fall apart a little.

If you're not a fan of Kabuki, then this is simply a standard and playable little fighting game, with nice graphics and little else to recommend it. Small touches like some of the characters' intricate costumes are well done, visually, as are some of the effects, like the fire-breathing special. In the end, the fighting engine isn't particularly deep, and, aside from the ability to hoard money in Tour Mode to progress, there's little incentive to continue shimmying your way through faceless enemies and deliberately bland stage sets. Even the different modes aren't incredibly enticing and consist of standard Versus, Time Attack, and the aforementioned Tour Mode.

If you love Kabuki, then the characters, the "posing" method of charging up your audience and earning money to "play" in different shows (i.e. fights), and the weird atmosphere make this a much more compelling purchase. It's laudable, but ultimately it's just not an essential purchase for your Xbox.

– Frank O'Connor

### THE VERDICT

#### Graphics

Sharp, detailed, and occasionally startling, but the deliberate stylized look gets old.

#### Immersion

If you're not into Kabuki, then there's really not a lot to recommend the premise over, say, *DoA3*.

#### Sound

Cool, if occasionally repetitive, Kabuki wails and chants. Nice musical accompaniment, too.

#### Design

Sometimes clever, sometimes inspired, but mostly derivative fighting action.

(+) Good.  
(-) Bad.  
(?) Perplexing

+ Love the original spin.  
+ Love the animated textiles and fabrics.  
– A fairly shallow fighting engine.  
– Absolute love of Kabuki is required  
? Why this and not *Kengo*?

Official Xbox  
magazine  
verdict

5.9  
10.0



We defy you not to look at his undies. It's hypnotic and horrifying at the same time, like a Calvin Klein train wreck.





**We expect more from a game that promises "the mighty Hummer"**

# Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open

DEVELOPER **ANGEL STUDIOS**, PUBLISHER **INFOGRAMES**, MULTIPLAYER **1-2 VIA SPLITSCREEN**  
WEBSITE **WWW.US.INFOGRAMES.COM**

**T**here's just no holding back that *Test Drive* series. Running out of numbers to keep track of each successive *Test Drive* game, someone's decided to simply burden all following installations with names too long to remember. The latest version is *Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open* – and the game's about as memorable as its title.

To be fair, *TD Off-Road: WO* is a playable game; we just weren't too thrilled while we were playing it. Unlike the series' PC roots, the latest version of *TD* is hardly realistic, with pickups and SUVs flying over 200-foot cliffs – and nary a snapped axel among them. The game's emphasis is on Hollywood-style stunt driving and finding the right path to the next checkpoint. Not exactly gripping stuff.

Graphically, *Wide Open* is only ordinary. There is a respectable draw distance, but too often textures will pop up when you get within a certain range. The vehicles look like their real-world counterparts, although the

lack of damage on any of the 13 cars destroys some of the illusion.

There are only three major locales (Utah, California, and Hawaii) and three race types within them: Blitz, Circuit, and Scramble, which all involve going through checkpoints. After a few different races, it all starts to seem the same.

The repetition isn't helped by the shallow Career mode. Start with \$30,000 in cash, buy a vehicle, and try to win some money. And if you want to sell that vehicle back, you get exactly what you paid for it, making money management academic.

Physics are improved from the PS2 version – you no longer spin out at the slightest tap. However, the physics are still a little too "lunar" for our taste. More entertaining than *4X4 Evo-Whatever*, but this one simply doesn't stand out.

– Jim Preston

## \$90K for a Hummer?

*Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open* is one of the first videogames to boast "the mighty Hummer," the civilian version of the military's Hum-Vee. These style-less monsters can climb 60-degree grades, drive over 16-inch logs, plow through 30 inches of water, and weigh in at a svelte 7,000 pounds. But at a starting price of around \$90,000, they're really for the wealthy redneck – or diminutive movie producers.



■ A bridge too far? Actually, the bridge is a rare smooth surface.

## THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Okay. Too much draw-in on the textures, and the colors seem muted.

**Immersion**  
Fair. The controls are intuitive, although the physics are floaty.

**Sound**  
Ear-gouging. Maybe we're getting old, but the grating soundtrack will send you running to Enya.

**Design**  
Boring. Run around the woods looking for checkpoints. Sigh.

### GOOD (+), BAD (-), PERPLEXING (?)

- + Maps are huge.
- + It won't confuse you.
- + Better than *4x4 Evo 2*.
- It's boring.
- The graphics can be bland.
- The Career mode is facile.
- ? Why can't we have the excellent *Test Drive: Le Mans* for Xbox?

Official Xbox magazine verdict **5.6** 10.0



# DAVE MIRRA 2 freestyle bmx™

FREESTYLE TRICK MANEUVERS // GAME VERS. 2.0  
SUPERMAN/CAN-CAN/BACKFLIP/TRAIL TSP/FLAIR/  
PEG GRAB/MANUAL/NOSE MANUAL //

HEIGHT LEVEL

LEU+11  
C.....T

+

LEU+22  
C.....T

+

LEU+33  
C.....T

+

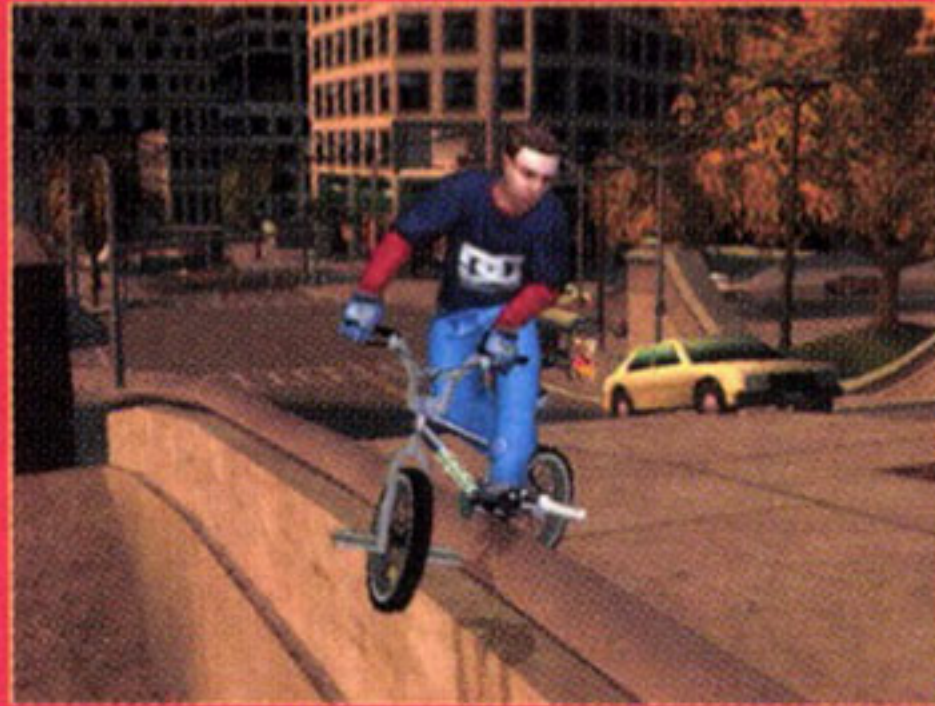
LEU+54  
C.....T

+

LEU+64  
C.....T

+

LEU+95



the innovative s.i.k. trick system with the new grind, wall ride, manual and lip trick modifiers, lets you pull off over 1,500 tricks ☐



state-of-the-art park editor lets you take your BMX experience to an all new level ☐



14 pro riders: englebert, cario, Harkin, Laird, Lyons, Mackay, MacMurray, D. Mirra, T. Mirra, Moliterno, Nyquist, Ramsdell, Shaw and Wirch ☐



8 massive levels - 4x bigger than before - for the very best in vert, dirt, street and park riding and all of camp woodward™ ☐



10 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS.  
11 X-GAME MEDALS.  
ONLY ONE GAME BOASTS THAT  
KIND OF HARDWARE.

developed by  
**Z-AXIS**

**Acclaim**  
**MAX SPORTS**

acclaimmaxsports.com

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Mild Lyrics



PlayStation 2

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# '02 Spring Break

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EXCLUSIVE EVENTS



Official Xbox Magazine

# ROAD TRIP SAN FELIPE INVASION

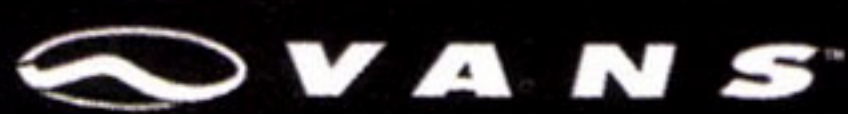
*BeachComber*

*Rockodile*

WK.1	3.10-14
WK.2	3.17-21
WK.3	3.22-26
WK.4	4.1-5

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■ That's not a pre-rendered backdrop – it's all real mountain and you can go anywhere you like.



■ Pull off insane tricks and see if your friends can match them!

## The new king of the hill

# Amped

## Freestyle Snowboarding

DEVELOPER MICROSOFT PUBLISHER MICROSOFT MULTIPLAYER 1-4

WEBSITE [WWW.XBOX.COM/GAMES/SPORTS/AMPED.HTM](http://WWW.XBOX.COM/GAMES/SPORTS/AMPED.HTM)

**S**nowboarders, welcome to your fantasy. Check this. You are magically dropped off at the top of Brighton, all of the skiers have been rightfully kicked off the slopes, snowboarders have gone and rebuilt the runs with rails and jumps at every turn, and you can take off down the hill any way you damn well please. Jib, grind, trick, and fly any way you like.

*Amped* is far from perfect, but there has never been a game that better captures the spirit and sheer joy of snowboarding. There is no clock, no course you're forced to follow, and seemingly no limit to the variety of rides you can have on the 120 different runs. The tricks range from aerial spins, flips, grinds, and jibs to just about anything you can create. The control scheme is intuitive and centers around the analog (or digital) stick. This technique of pulling off tricks is immediately accessible and fun, although it

does take more than button-mashing to master more advanced moves.

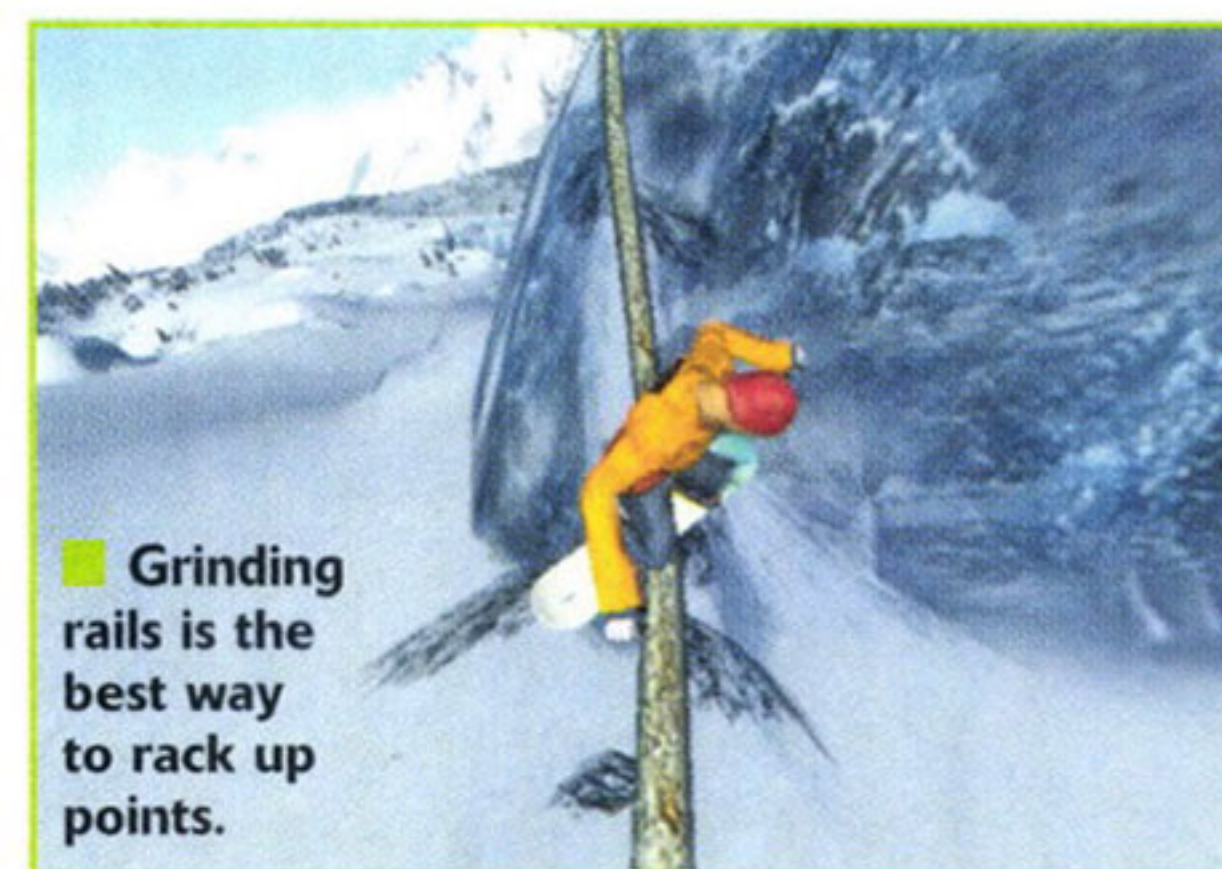
The flaw in *Amped* is that the actual game structure (unlocking runs, advancing, etc.) is pretty basic and lacks the originality and freedom that it really should have. You have to rack up a certain amount of points to advance, but the unique twist is that you also have to impress the media – a unique twist that is ultimately not all that unique or interesting, as all you do is perform tricks in certain areas where the media await. Probably the best (yet most annoying) part of the game involves the sponsors, whom you have to please with specific kinds of tricks – which is actually a great way to draw out gamers who rely too much on one tired style. Trust us, by the time you finish the sponsor challenges, you'll be amazed at how much better your free runs have become.

The multiplayer games are a welcome return to freedom and the place where

*Amped* will get the bulk of our playtime. You can create your own contests and take on friends to see who can create the cleanest, most inspiring run. King of the Hill is the best of the bunch – you head down the hill any way you like and perform as many tricks as you want, then the next player has to follow your shredding and try to match or best your tricks.

*Amped* is an absolutely stunning experience that occasionally lets a decent game get in the way.

– Mike Salmon



### Only on Xbox

Perhaps no other Xbox game (even *Halo*) is a better example of what the Xbox can do if used properly. We're not talking about the graphics, as they are decent at best. We're talking about the hard-drive really being utilized. The mountains in *Amped* are huge, and they're streamed directly to the hard-drive so that every tree, rail, and flake of snow is visible at all times. What's even more amazing is that the developers don't pull any of those worn-out "hide the draw-in" tricks, like obscuring the mountain with slopes. It's all there, all the time, and the Xbox is the only console that could even come close to pulling this off.

## THE VERDICT

### Graphics

The mountains are stunning and humongous, but the riders and effects are just average.

### Immersion

The total freedom is liberating, and it really feels like you've been dropped at the top of a mountain.

### Sound

The single-largest soundtrack to a videogame ever. You won't know any of the songs, but you might end up liking a few.

### Design

For a game that offers so much freedom, the actual game structure is quite confining and repetitive.

(+) Good.

(-) Bad.

(?) Perplexing

+ Amazing freedom.  
+ Great multiplayer.  
+ HUGE soundtrack.  
– Collision detection is spotty.  
– Pleasing sponsors is a major pain.  
? Why doesn't upgrading equipment improve your rider?

Official Xbox  
magazine  
verdict

8.4  
10.0



**The best hockey game out there – but is that good enough?**

# NHL 2002

DEVELOPER **EA CANADA** PUBLISHER **EA SPORTS** MULTIPLAYER 1-4  
WEBSITE [HTTP://NHL2002.EA.COM/EN/](http://nhl2002.ea.com/en/) EXTRAS **DOLBY STEREO 5.1**

**W**hile the football scene is crowded with great games, the hockey rink boasts only one superb hockey-sim series: EA's *NHL* games. There really is no competition to speak of, but EA deserves credit for improving the game every year. This year, the series makes its Xbox debut with *NHL 2002*, an excellent but slightly flawed effort.

Visually, there is no difference between the Xbox version and its PS2 and PC counterparts. The framerates are a little more solid, but the colors seem strangely muted in some camera angles, as if all the team

jerseys were washed together in hot water and a dash of bleach – weird.

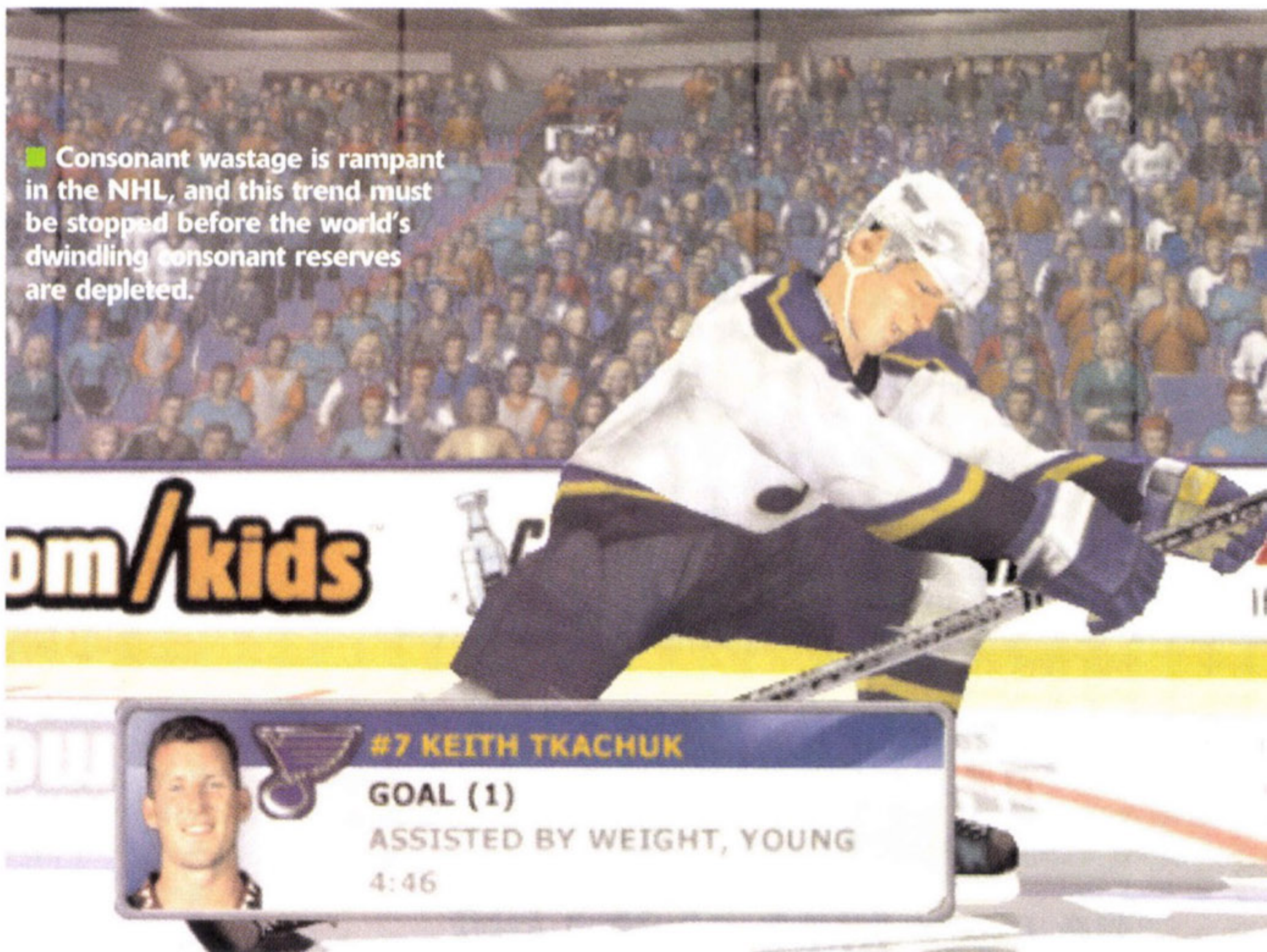
It's not terribly distracting, though, since most gamers will prefer the faster, more stable framerate over dazzling Technicolor. Besides, you'll likely spend most of your time unlocking EA's new "hockey cards" feature. You earn points for every hockey challenge you complete, and you can trade in those points for nearly 200 player, celebration, and Easter egg cards. It's a great addition to the franchise, and one that we hope becomes a fixture in future installations of the game.

The gameplay is, as usual, quite solid

with great controls. Unfortunately, the defensive AI can be terribly frustrating at times. Too often, one of our blueliners simply missed his man completely, letting the opposing forward waltz in for an easy scoring chance. We were forced to switch to the last man back every time because we simply couldn't trust our computer-controlled defensemen.

This is the only major blemish in what is otherwise an exceptional game. The new breakaway cam is a nice touch, introducing more of a TV-style presentation, and the create-a-player feature is far deeper than it has ever been. The new color guy is a bit of a tool, but we've always enjoyed Jim Hughson's commentary. It may not be perfect, but since it's our only choice for real hockey simulation on Xbox, we're lucky *NHL 2002* is as good as it is.

– Jim Preston



■ Consonant wastage is rampant in the NHL, and this trend must be stopped before the world's dwindling consonant reserves are depleted.



■ Gone are the give-n-go's of yesteryear, and in their place are easy saucer passes.

## Card game



The biggest addition to *NHL 2002* is the excellent player cards originally found last year's *Madden* game. The cards come in three different colors (Bronze, Silver, and Gold), and you can use them during a game to boost your players' stats. There are also some cool celebrations to unlock and some nice Easter eggs, including sumo hockey.

## THE VERDICT

### Graphics

Very good. Players look great, with superb animations – the only complaint is the occasionally washed-out colors.

### Immersion

Total. EA does TV-style presentation better than anyone.

### Sound

Excellent. Everything sounds authentic, from the cut of the blades to the PA announcer.

### Design

Uneven. It's too arcadey, with not enough emphasis on smart defense.

(+) Good.

(-) Bad.

(?) Perplexing

- + Awesome graphics.
- + Great hockey atmosphere.
- + Cool trading cards.
- Super crappy defensive AI.
- Color commentator is annoying.
- ? Why does the fighting get worse each year?

Official Xbox  
magazine  
verdict

8.6  
10.0



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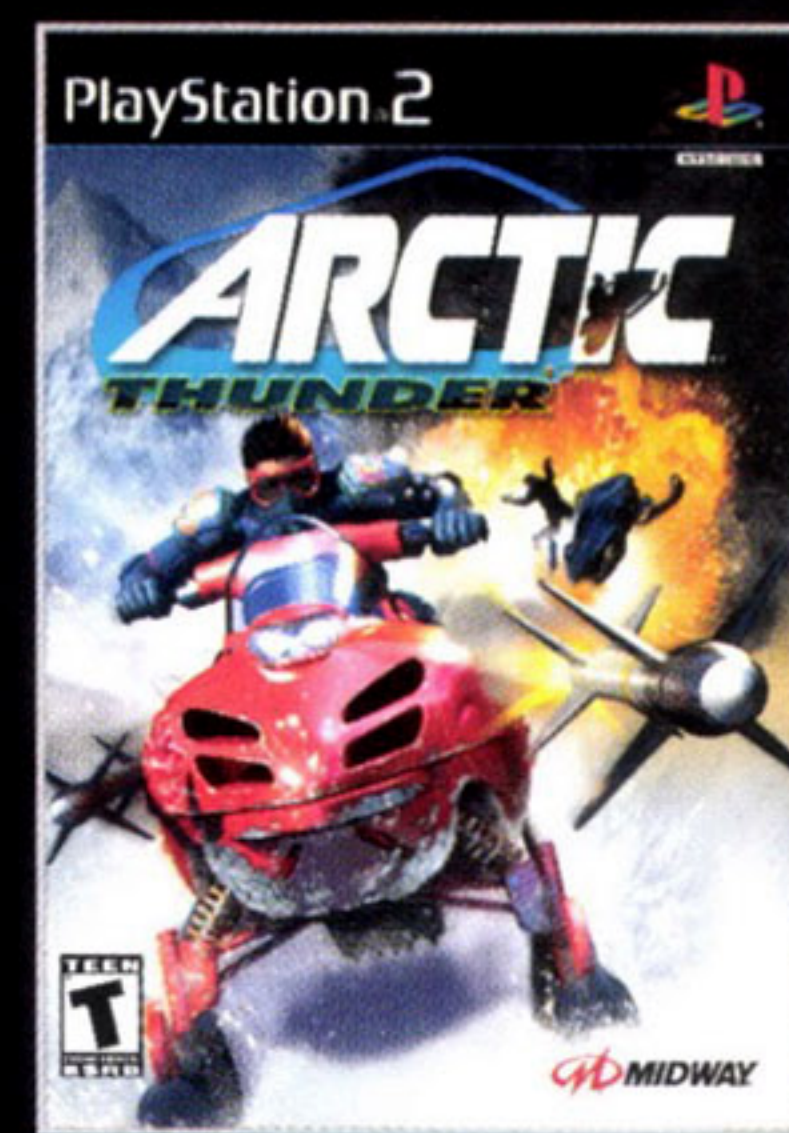
Throttle the competition with hard-core hand-to-hand combat.



Hyper-realistic racing velocity and major air give new meaning to "breakneck speed."



Make 'em feel you with combat weapons like snow bombs, missiles, and The Atomic Snowball.



Sneak Preview @ [www.arctichunder.midway.com](http://www.arctichunder.midway.com)

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Just as fun as Tony You-Know-Who

# Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2

DEVELOPER **Z-AXIS**, PUBLISHER **ACCLAIM**, MULTIPLAYER **13 SUB-GAMES**  
WEBSITE **WWW.ACCLAIMMAXSPORTS.COM** EXTRAS **TWO EXTRA LEVELS**

It might not soar like a Hawk, but *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2* comes pretty damn close. The bike-based trick extravaganza is about the most fun you can have with hyper-extended knees and blunt-force head trauma, and *Mirra 2* is much improved over its predecessor.

Developer Z-Axis has wisely kept the best feature of the first game: an incredibly good trick system. Not only does *Mirra 2* feature dozens of standard tricks, but nearly all of them can be combined to create such insane tricks as a 720-suicide-backflip-tabletop-no-hander.

Not only are the trick names huge, but the 10 new levels are simply gigantohumongous™. It will take you at least a half-dozen runs just to search for every gap, nook, and transfer – and several hours to master a map. There are a dozen cool challenges per level, including at least one mind-blasting insane challenge. Best of all, the Xbox version has two very cool levels you won't find in the PS2 edition.

New this year is an incredibly detailed map editor that is the best we have ever seen in a game of this type. And if you want to talk smack to some friends, the multiplayer mode features 13 different

sub-games. Our favorite? The Wipe-Out mode, which rewards the player with the most hideous face-smashing, teeth-shattering pavement kiss – that's right, the game actually rates your crashes!

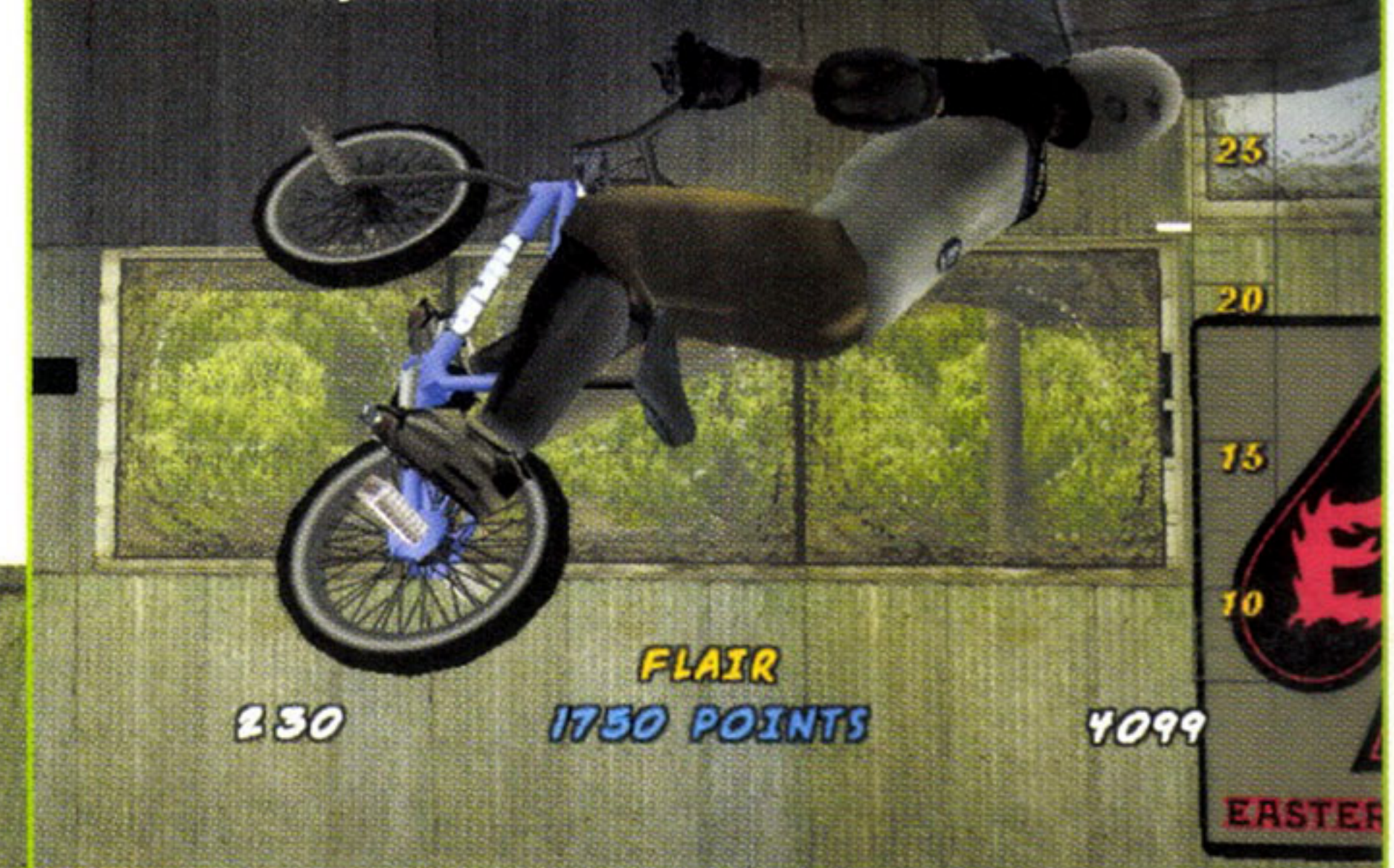
Add in a ton of stuff to unlock, a rock-solid framerate, 14 riders to choose among, and superb controls, and you have yourself a damn fine game. Musically, there is the usual variety of hip-hop and grinding metal, but if you prefer something else, you can always rip your own tunes to the hard-drive and play to those. The graphics are merely ordinary with few dramatic touches, but the player models look nice and the whole thing is very respectable. When all's said and done, *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2* is definitely as rewarding as the *Tony Hawk* series, but has the wheels to carry it through on its own.

– Jim Preston

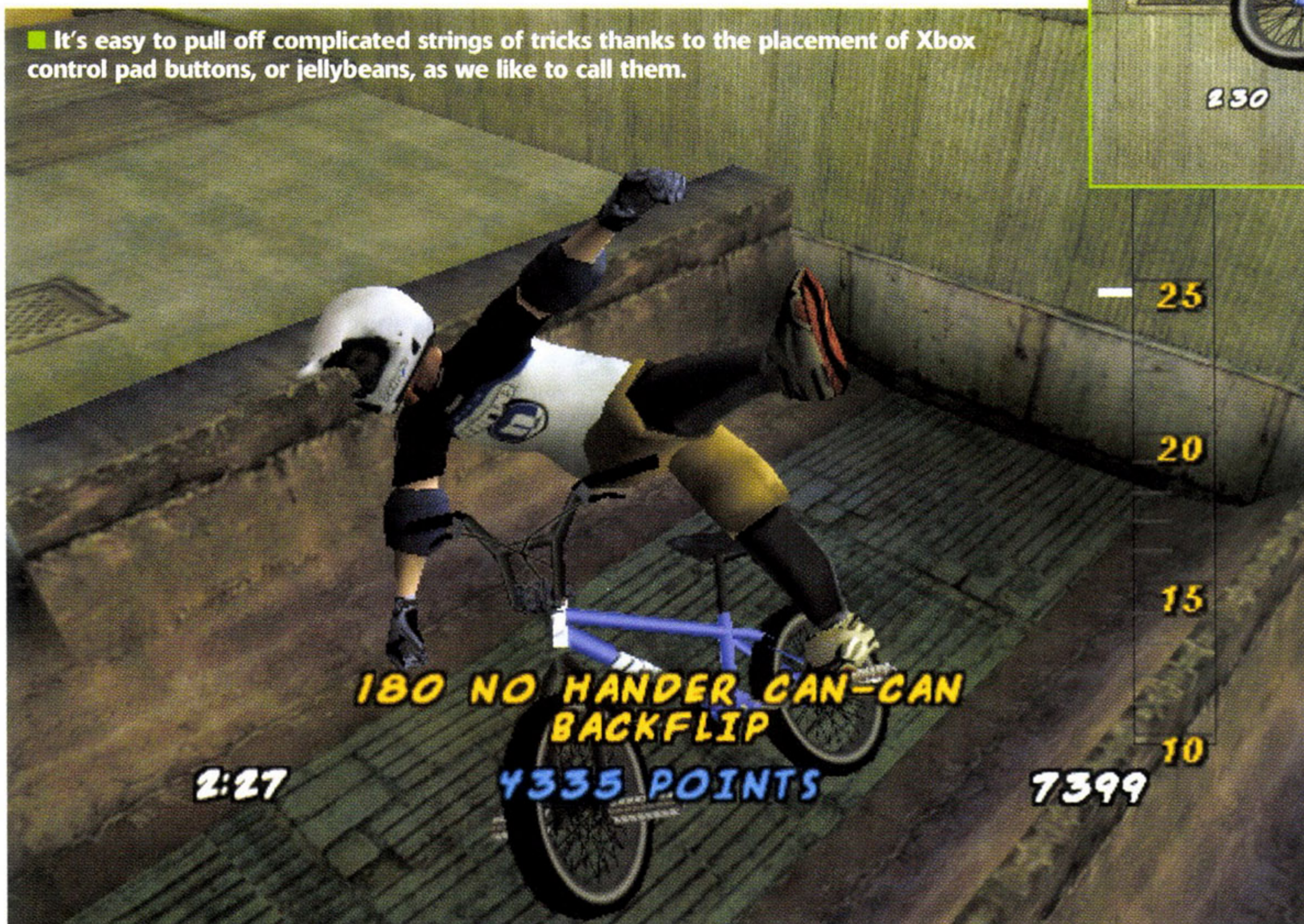
## Trauma-rama

According to doctors, there are three types of traumas that racers can experience: penetrating trauma, deceleration trauma, and blunt-force trauma. The human head averages about 10 lbs., and if it were to hit something while traveling just 35 m.p.h., it would experience 25 Gs, or 250 lbs. of pressure on your precious melon. The moral of the story? Unless you want a cracked noggin, wear a helmet when biking, smart guy. It looks goofy, but without one you might end up goofy.

■ Camera angles shift as you play, which is initially distracting, but eventually feels natural.



■ It's easy to pull off complicated strings of tricks thanks to the placement of Xbox control pad buttons, or jellybeans, as we like to call them.



## THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Solid. No draw-in and rock-solid framerate. Not an Xbox showpiece, though.

**Immersion**  
Good. The controls are intuitive and the game is easy to master. Pop-up help menus keep you focused.

**Sound**  
Average. The crunch of body on asphalt is nice, but the soundtrack soon grows repetitive.

**Design**  
Awesome. Trick system is brilliant; levels are huge and very creative; great multiplayer.

**GOOD (+), BAD (-), PERPLEXING (?)**

- + Killer trick system.
- + Huge levels.
- + Great editor.
- Ordinary graphics.
- Too much cheesemetal on the soundtrack.
- ? On some levels, it's possible to fall off the world.

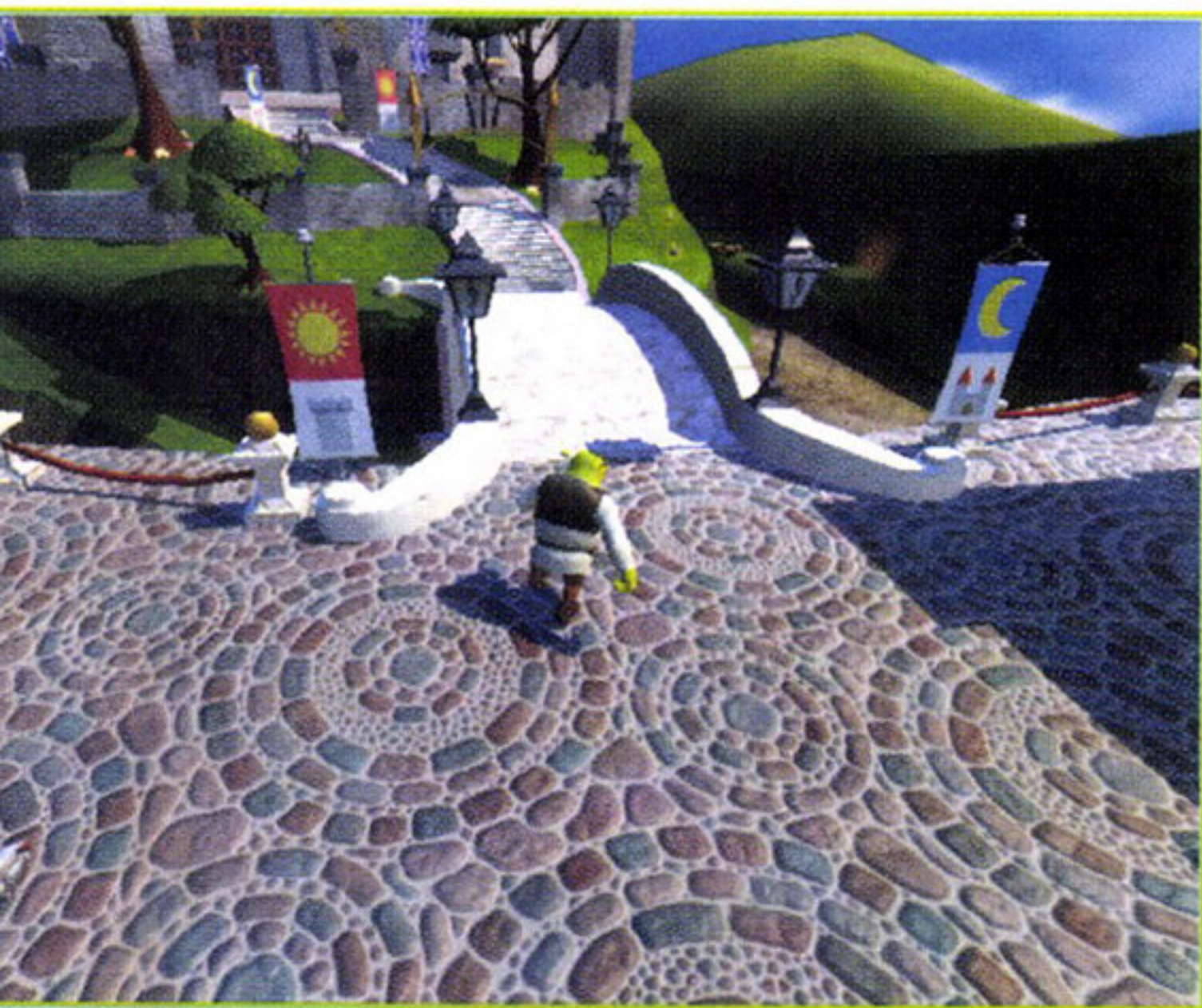
Official Xbox  
magazine  
verdict

**8.7**  
10.0





■ The shocking hidden love story in *Shrek*.



■ No denying the game *looks* fantastic.



■ Shrek admires the bump-mapped landscape and ponders who he will be forced to fart on next.

## To burp is human — to fart, divine

# Shrek

DEVELOPER **DIGITAL ILLUSION** | PUBLISHER **TDK MEDIACTIVE** | MULTIPLAYER **NONE**  
 WEBSITE **WWW.TDK-MEDIACTIVE.COM**

**S**o Shrek has jumped from the silver screen to the small screen, like so many other virtual heroes in the past. Movie licenses are nothing new, but some fare better than others. Unfortunately, Shrek's foray into a living fractured-fairytale-gone-interactive action/adventure meets with severely mixed results.

For those who've somehow missed out on the ubiquitous campaign for the movie — Shrek's an ogre. He belches, grunts, and produces spectacularly explosive farts. TDK has carried these juvenile yet admirable traits over into the game's controls. Gamers will find themselves running, jumping, or bashin' baddies in textbook fashion, but not without unloading the aforementioned burps, grunts,

and farts on enemies in order to fulfill mission objectives found in each "world." Complete enough missions in one world and another opens along with a whole new set of objectives or "assignments," with eight worlds in all, each with several tasks to finish.

Assignments range from humorous to frustrating to downright tedious. Rescuing egg children from a perverse Humpty Dumpty (who's teaching them to fall off walls) or pooting on pesky witches beats knocking out factory repairman-guarded whistles any day. But the main problem with *Shrek's* gameplay design is that there is no progression — you'll find yourself doing the same exact thing in the final world that you found yourself doing in the very first world. Therefore, there's no sense of reward or satisfaction when you open a new area; you know exactly what to expect before you even access it. Perhaps the only difference is that this time you're kicking witches, instead of sheep or robots or skeletons or... well, you get the idea.

For all its problems, *Shrek* does harbor some interesting elements. A cool race mode feature opens after four missions are completed, where bonus tokens (tradable for cheats) may be obtained. Eye-searing visuals replete with colors most humans didn't even know existed also guarantee to delight. But in the end, *Shrek's* gameplay can't seem to live up to the standards set by its own amazing graphics and license.

*Shrek* isn't a bad game, but neither is it especially wonderful. The game's main audience — kids — will find it a pleasing diversion, but they may not stick around to struggle through the difficult-to-figure-out and even-harder-to-complete mission objectives. And older gamers won't be enthralled for more than a few minutes.

— Scott Steinberg

### THE VERDICT

#### Graphics

Fairytale worlds gone bad never looked so good. Bizarre shapes, funky colors, bump-mapped EVERYTHING!

#### Immersion

Rampant humor and colorful characters do a decent job of pulling you in... although the gameplay pulls you out too often.

#### Sound

Effects are sufficient, if unspectacular. Speech samples could've been performed by more enthusiastic actors, though they elicit giggles nonetheless.

#### Design

Standard platform action/adventure model on of top mission goals gets tedious and frustrating after the umpteenth time.

(+) Good.

(-) Bad.

(?) Perplexing

+ Just plain goofy.

+ She's a looker.

+ Nice handling.

— Varied mission quality.

— Often aggravating.

— Too gimmicky.

? That damned ubiquitous Scottish accent. Shrek might as well bellow, "Get in mah bel-lay, wee man!"

Official Xbox  
 magazine  
 verdict

5.3  
 10.0



200 Miles Per Hour. 1000 Decisions Per Second. >>



>> Catching air in SF. Looks good, earns style points and offers tasty view. But you lose lap time and possibly your bet. What do you do, pally?



>> Powersliding. It earns points, but increases risks. A.K.A. crashing. And crashing equals dents. Equals less kudos. Equals loser. Better think fast, chief.



>> Welcome to NYC, circuit #178. Virgin run and you're off pace. You can learn the line. Or just go for style points. Again, your call, tough guy.

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# Reader Interaction

## Intelligent Xbox-loving gamer seeks same



We love letters. We love receiving them. We love reading them. We love responding to them. But not any old letters. We love receiving well-written, thought-provoking, *spell-checked* letters that address intelligent concerns from Xbox fans and owners. We love receiving letters that ask questions we're also wondering about. (Hint: we aren't wondering about whether there will be a *Dragonball Z* game on Xbox.) If you're a likeminded Xbox fan who is wondering about the greater mysteries of gaming and understands the importance of utilizing the spell-check button in your email program, we want to hear from you. Send your missives to us at: [xboxmagazine@imaginemedia.com](mailto:xboxmagazine@imaginemedia.com). You will be heard, appreciated, and possibly even answered in our next issue. Snail mail can be addressed to us at: **Official Xbox Magazine, c/o Imagine Media, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005** – but we aren't likely to read it.

### Making progress

In your magazine, you claimed Xbox would support progressive scan DVD movies. However, the **Official Xbox Magazine** website states the Xbox does support progressive scan, but only for games, not movies. Which is true? I have a HDTV-ready Sony, and if this is true that it only supports progressive scan for videogames, this is pretty disappointing, to say the least.

*Olaniyan Josef Mustipher*  
Via email

**We say:** There seems to be a lot of confusion surrounding Xbox's progressive scan capabilities, Olaniyan. As it stands right now, Xbox will initially support progressive scan for Xbox games, not DVD movies. But in the future, it will be possible to upgrade the DVD drivers to support progressive scan for DVD movies, not just games. When this will happen is not yet confirmed, but it's something that Microsoft is counting on providing to Xbox owners who want to use their system to play DVD movies.

### Absolutely positively

Do you absolutely have to have the Xbox DVD kit to play DVDs? As I understand it, when you insert a DVD into the drive, the Xbox "dashboard" fires up with an interface. Can you not just play DVDs via the Xbox controller?

*Kyle Look*  
Via email

**We say:** You definitely will need the DVD Movie Playback Kit in order to play DVDs on your Xbox. It

contains the necessary software to read DVD movies as well as a remote control and a remote sensor. Without these, you won't be able to view DVD movies.

### LAN-lubber

I've read that you can play with eight and even up to 16 people (on Xbox) using a

"LAN." What exactly is "LAN?" Is it an adapter or does it come with the system? If I do have to buy it, how much will it cost?

*Robert Dacosta*  
Via email

**We say:** Robert, LAN stands for "Local Area Network." In other words, a LAN is a method for playing a game across a closed network usually consisting of multiple systems within the same room or building. In regards to Xbox, when we mention that a game is capable of multiplayer via LAN, we mean that with a System Link cable and multiple consoles, multiple televisions, and multiple copies of the game, you'll be able to hook up your Xbox to others in order to play multiplayer games. Games like NASCAR Heat allow you to hook up eight systems with four players on each Xbox for a total of 32 human-controlled cars at once. Therefore, if you have a group of friends, each with their own Xbox system, all you really need to do is buy a System Link cable (\$14.99) and link compatible games. For multiple systems you'll need a Link cable Hub (no price yet). The Xbox also works over a regular LAN – like the one in our (and perhaps your) office.

### Extra Payne

What will be the big difference between the Xbox version of *Max Payne* and the other iterations of it on PC and PS2? Are there gonna be any extras?

*J. Thompson*  
Via email

**We say:** Unfortunately, the answer is no. The *Max Payne* on Xbox will be an identical version of the PC game – but is that a bad thing? After playing the game on Xbox, we can say that it's definitely better suited to a console than a PC, and the game looks incredible. Sorry to disappoint you, but there will be no additional Payne, so to speak.

### Breaking the code

Hello. I just picked up your first issue and after giving it a good read (it made it to the bathroom with me – that's *definitely* a good read). My question is this: Do we really need cheats? I noticed in the magazine that there was a reference made to eventually having a section for codes and strategies. Now, the Xbox being what it is, and the

complete standard-setter that it will be for gaming, I feel that it will attract a more educated, mature gamer. And those of us who appreciate the challenge in gaming that the Xbox will certainly offer most definitely despise codes and cheaters. I don't know, maybe I'm a whiner, but hints are one thing, cheat codes are an abomination! Let's save the cheats for that purple box that looks like my little sister's Barbie makeup container. Those gamers will appreciate them.

*David*  
Via email

**We say:** We understand where you're coming from, David, but there are just as many readers wanting cheat codes as there are gamers who care nothing for them – and since cheat codes have proven so incredibly popular with gamers, companies have taken great pains to include them within their titles. And who are we to deny the multitude of players who buy games from getting the "most" out of their purchase? That said, we do understand the flip side of cheating – it can ruin a good game by turning it into nothing more than a series of button presses leading to Big Head Mode, rather than a real experience. But, then again, you can always skip the section and move onto the meatier strategies, which is where a good chunk of our efforts will lay.

### Xbox Soul-ed out?

Hi, one of many frustrated Dreamcast owners here. I bought the first Xbox magazine and shortly after decided to subscribe. I was especially interested in the column titled "GameWatch," because it mentioned *Soul Reaver 2*. I was extremely disappointed when I heard the news that Eidos was not going to make *Soul Reaver 2* for Dreamcast and immediately decided to cash in my DC and start an Xbox fund! I hope you guys will feature something in the next issue about SR2 and whether or not it will be available for the Xbox (fingers crossed).

*Tony Ford*  
Via email

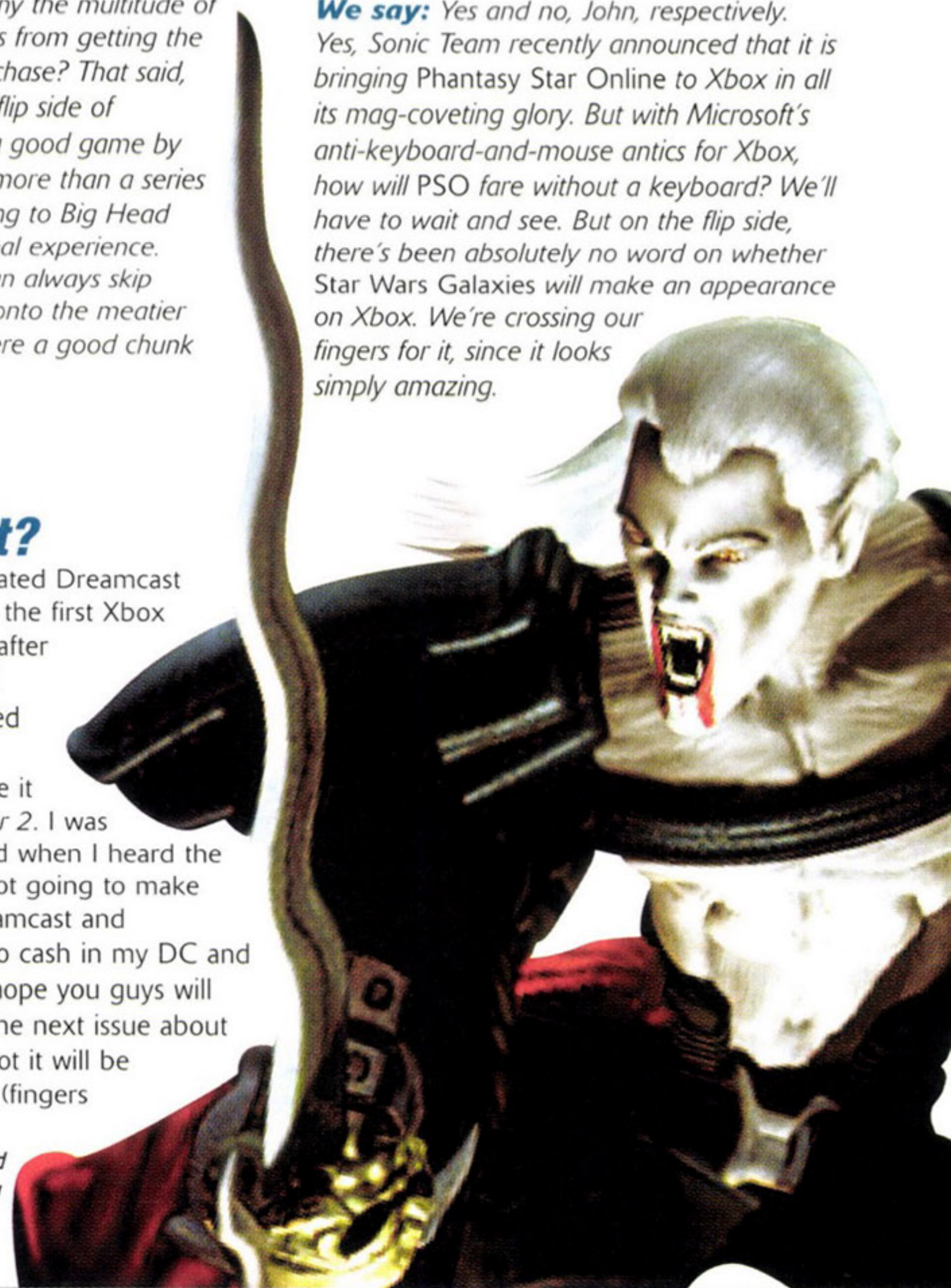
**We say:** We were slightly confused ourselves about the future direction of the various Kain games, which led to us making an incorrect statement in the issue you're referring to. To clarify: it's not actually *Soul Reaver 2* that's headed to Xbox. Instead, it will be *Blood Omen 2*, which follows Kain and is the sequel to the original *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen* that was the very first in the series on PlayStation. *Soul Reaver* follows Raziel and first showed up on PlayStation and Dreamcast; its sequel is headed to PS2, exclusively – so far.

### Phantasy Star Wars

Will Xbox be receiving an installment of *Phantasy Star Online* or *Star Wars Galaxies*?

*John Kline*  
Via email

**We say:** Yes and no, John, respectively. Yes, *Sonic Team* recently announced that it is bringing *Phantasy Star Online* to Xbox in all its mag-coveting glory. But with Microsoft's anti-keyboard-and-mouse antics for Xbox, how will PSO fare without a keyboard? We'll have to wait and see. But on the flip side, there's been absolutely no word on whether *Star Wars Galaxies* will make an appearance on Xbox. We're crossing our fingers for it, since it looks simply amazing.





## Fantasy petition

I have been a videogame fan as long as I can remember. I own just about every worthwhile console in existence. However, I have always been faced with the same dilemma. None of the systems I own give me a "realistic" feeling about their games. The Xbox could change all that. This is by far the most extraordinary machine ever created. Since the days of the SNES and *Chrono Trigger*, I have also been a diehard Square fan. Every new *Final Fantasy* seems more real than the last. Can you imagine the Xbox rendering a *Final Fantasy* game? The results would be beyond our comprehension. With Squaresoft on Xbox, GameCube would fall on its ass in the RPG genre. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do, right? Hell, no. Efforts have been made by other zealous RPG fans and myself to bring famous Square titles to the most powerful console on earth. Remember... it's the gamers themselves that ultimately decide the fate of a console. Without gamers, there would be no Squaresoft. A petition has been set up to persuade Square to join our side. Just remember that everyone working together on this will push it through. If you feel the same way, sign my petition at <http://www.petitiononline.com/sxbgm/petition.html>, or email Square directly at [support@squaresoft.com](mailto:support@squaresoft.com).

Paul Stanley  
Jacksonville, FL

**We say:** Thanks for the letter and URL, Paul. While Square has yet to sign on for any games for Xbox (and Sony does own a 19% interest in the company), it certainly can't hurt to sign the petition. That said, show your support of Paul's and countless other Xbox-owning Square fans' plight by letting your voice be heard. We'd love to see a *Final Fantasy* game on Xbox – with your help, it might become a reality.

## On the dash(board)

I have two questions about Xbox that I have been wondering for a long time. 1) If you save game files on the hard-drive in the Xbox, will you be able to transfer those files to a memory card and vice versa? 2) Will you be able to play music CDs on Xbox?

Dan Wickett  
Via email

**We say:** Dan, it's completely possible to transfer saves from the hard-drive of your Xbox onto your memory card by simply copying it using your X-dash. As for CDs on Xbox, the answer is "yes." You can access any music CDs through the options on the dashboard, plus you can rip them to your hard-drive and blast whatever tunes you want during a session of *Tony Hawk 2x*. (Of course, this feature has to be implemented on a game-by-game basis – just because Tony supports it doesn't mean Halo does!)

## Thinking globally, buying locally

I'm an exchange student from Germany, and I'll stay in the US for one year. I want to buy the Xbox here in the US and use it in Germany after this year. So the question is whether the Xbox works with all TV systems, or not and whether I can use German or European Xbox games on the American Xbox, or not.

Jan  
Via email

**We say:** That would be a negative, Jan. The Xbox you buy in the US will be NTSC and incompatible with the PAL televisions in Europe. We hate to say it, but if you do buy an Xbox in the US, you'll end up having to buy another European Xbox when you return home. This is the only way to play European software or DVDs.

## Sequel-tastic

I have heard that *Thief III* and *Deus Ex 2* are coming to "next-gen" consoles before they hit the PC. I have also heard that *Thief III* is coming to the Xbox, but *Deus Ex 2* is still undecided. I would very much like to see *Deus Ex 2* on Xbox. So please! Bring us *Deus Ex 2*!

Jeffrey Reynolds  
Via email

**We say:** Warren Spector, the man behind these games, did say that they would both come to Xbox first. However, this wasn't an official statement. If we're lucky, we'll see *Deus Ex 2* on Xbox by late next year.

## Work on your gamer's tan

Ever since you purchased the mightiest console on Earth, you've probably spent as much time outside as the boy in the bubble. As a result, you are likely the color of Rose McGowan and in dire need of some fun and some sun. Well, have no fear: Official Xbox Magazine is here for you.

How would you like a trip for two to San Felipe, Baja Mexico? How about five days and four nights of luxurious hotel accommodations? Oh, and how about VIP passes to the hottest parties and free transportation? Thanks to our partner for youth marketing and leisure travel, LA Ski & Sun Tours, ([www.laskiandsuntours.com](http://www.laskiandsuntours.com)), all this and more can be yours.

Here's how you win. Send in a heartfelt essay (no more than 100 words) as to why you are the most deserving and needy reader we have. The one that moves us to tears or hysterical laughter wins. Oh, and you have to send us some photographs of your wild time so we can live vicariously through your wanton exploits.

**Legal Stuff:** The grand prize winner will be determined by the vote of three judges, each of whom (a) is an Imagine employee assigned to our Xbox magazine team, and (b) will be chosen by the President of Imagine. These three judges, whose decision is final, will base their decision on the following criteria: Originality, approach to concept, and writing skills.

After you have prepared your submission, make sure to make a copy of your essay for your own files, as we can't and will not return any submission. All entries must be received no later than January 28, 2002. We'll announce the winner in the fifth issue of Official Xbox Magazine.

Only one entry allowed for each individual entrant. Each of the three judging criteria noted above will be weighted equally at 33%. By entering this contest, you agree that Imagine Media shall have the right to use your name, likeness, the submission, and/or other information about you for promotional purposes and without further payment. All prizes will be awarded and no minimum number of entries is required. Prizes won by minors will be awarded to their parents or legal guardians. Imagine Media is not responsible for damages or expenses that the winners might incur as a result of the Contest or the receipt of a prize, and winners are responsible for income taxes based on the value of the prize received. A list of winners may also be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Imagine Media, Inc., c/o Xbox Prize Team, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. Lastly, while no purchase is necessary to enter, this contest is limited to residents of the United States, excepting in Arizona, Maryland, Vermont, Puerto Rico, where it is void, and where ever else it might also be prohibited by law.

WIN  
A TRIP  
FOR TWO!



■ In San Felipe, the girls are very friendly.

■ Crazy hat not included in prize package. You'll have to bring your own.



Email entries to:  
[xboxmagazine@imaginemediacom](mailto:xboxmagazine@imaginemediacom)  
with the header **Gamer's Tan.**

## The B to the I to the A to the S

I am a 16-year-old equal-opportunity gamer that works at a software store. As soon as we got your first issue, as I always do with the magazines we get, I flipped through it and read a whole lot of it. I would like to commend you on a job well done as far as magazine layout and gaming content, not to mention that it is probably the most hilarious magazine I have read in a LONG time. But there was one part that bothered me, and that was how ultra-biased you are! At first it wasn't that big of a deal, and actually very funny at parts, but I discovered it on just about every single page of your first issue. As a gamer that has liked a wide array of consoles from every generation, it bothers me that you guys would think that the Xbox is simply going to annihilate the competition. After reading your whole issue, I decided that the issue wasn't good for much more than quality toilet paper due to the fact that my Charmin's Ultra Soft hasn't been good to me lately. Maybe I should start buying your magazine in rolls. Anyhow, congratulations on a funny magazine, but if at all possible, try to keep the bias to a minimum. I will continue to read the magazine and look forward to seeing how it evolves.

Kyle Lester  
Via email

I have been looking forward to the Xbox magazine for a while and went right to the newsstands to check it out when the magazine hit. I was ready to purchase the magazine right there... until I started reading it. Although your coverage of the system and the games was very good, you gave a great look at Xbox hardware and accessories and supplied a lot of information about the upcoming launch games. It was a great pre-launch issue... except for one huge problem. Throughout the issue I found constant digs at PS2 and GameCube. What's up with that? Is it that difficult to promote the qualities of Xbox without taking shots at other systems? I understand that you are an official magazine, but this is just ridiculous. I found your cheap shots immature and completely unprofessional. You sound more like ranting fanboys than professional journalists!

I hope that this is a trend that will not continue. This is a great time to be playing games and if people want to take full advantage of it then they should be open-minded and – here's an idea – get more than one system! I think Xbox is a great-looking system and I have every intention of buying one, but I have a PS2 and I am getting a GameCube.

Jubei\_6  
Via email

**We say:** Sad to say, we received quite a few letters just like these two (only the spelling was awful and they used naughty words), and our answer is: LIGHTEN UP. We were just having a bit of fun and, in case you missed it, we also made fun of the Xbox. We are an Xbox magazine, and we wholeheartedly believe that the Xbox is the best gaming console on Earth. If you can't handle us poking a bit of fun at some of your investments (and can we just add that as a staff we own PCs, PS2s, Game Boys, everything), then you need to take several pills that lend themselves to the chills.



# A darker justice must be served

**Flex your creative muscles and be rewarded with exclusive Batman collectibles!**



To properly celebrate the impending arrival of Ubi Soft's *Batman™ Vengeance*, we here at the Official Xbox Magazine have concocted a wicked challenge for you to tackle. We're asking that you reach deep within the darkest recesses of your twisted mind in order to emerge with the perfect creation of the best *Batman*-styled super-villain. We're not talking something silly, like a giant, evil Easter Bunny, either (although that would be cool).

Give us your visual rendition of the perfect comic-style *Batman* arch-villain, fully equipped with awesome super powers designed to take the Dark Knight down. Then, once you've either illustrated your super-villain or whipped it up in Photoshop, send it along to us with a short, 50-word paragraph explaining why Batman would be quaking in his black boots at the mere suggestion of your character's villainous existence. Are you up to the challenge?

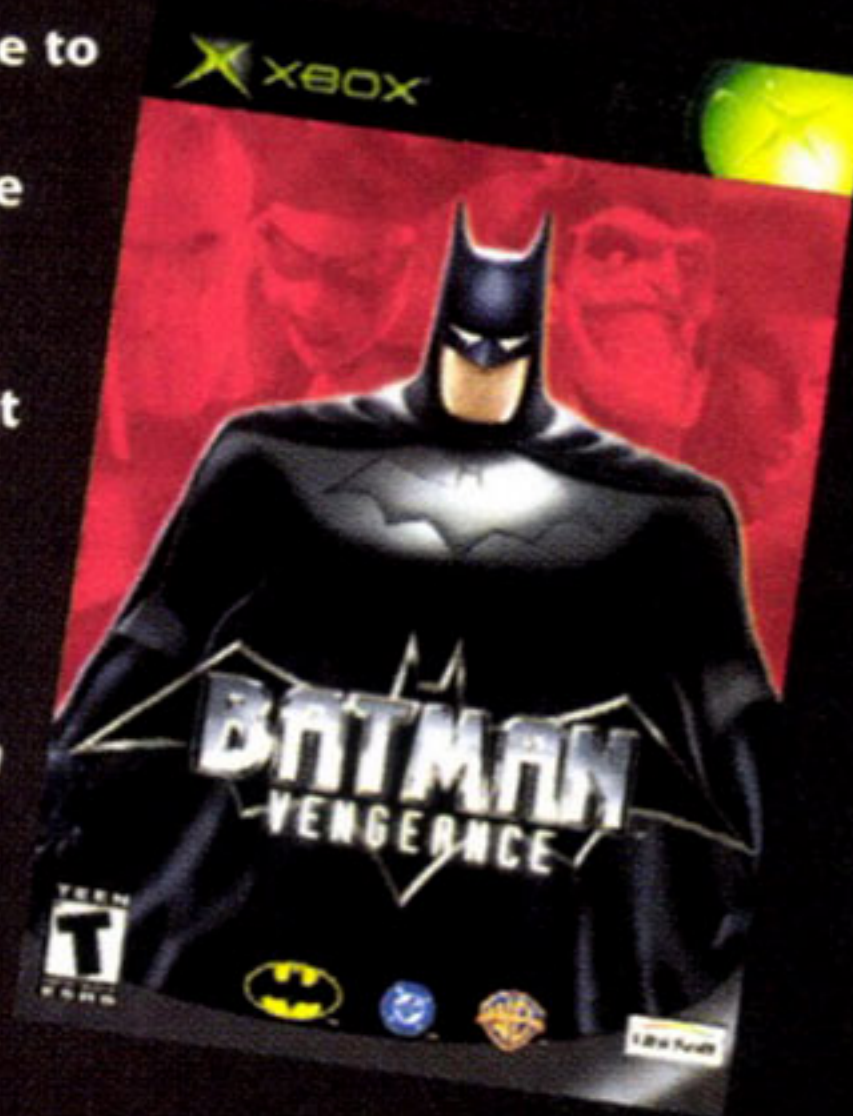
**The best, most wicked creation will be justly rewarded with a killer grand prize package that features:**

- One exclusive limited edition Ron Lee Batman collectible model figure
- One exclusive limited edition Ron Lee Harley Quinn collectible model figure
- One exclusive limited edition Batman light sculpture
- One *Batman™ Vengeance* T-shirt

Yes, you heard right. All the model figures are numbered and sure to be a high priority on any *Batman* fan's wish list.

But the grand prize winner isn't the only lucky schmuck in the bunch. Nineteen talented runners-up will also receive goodies in the form of one *Batman™ Vengeance* T-shirt apiece.

These prizes aren't for just anyone, though. You'll have to put your best, most talented, and creative foot forward in order to snag a prize. So, read up on the legal mumbo-jumbo below for all the instructions and rules, then start calling on your darker, more depraved side to dream up the perfect *Batman* nemesis. And, if you're wondering – no, you can't use an existing *Batman* villain. We're plenty schooled on our comics, so don't try to slip some *X-Men* villain by, either. Good luck, and may the most twisted soul win.



**Send your illustrations to:**

**Xbox Batman Contest  
C/o Imagine Media  
150 N. Hill Drive  
Brisbane, CA 94005**

Or send your electronic submissions to:

[xboxmagazine@imaginemediacom.com](mailto:xboxmagazine@imaginemediacom.com).  
Please put "*Batman™ Vengeance*  
Contest" in the subject header;  
otherwise, it may not be considered.

**Legal mumbo-jumbo:** The grand prize winner, and runners-up, will be determined by the vote of three judges, each of whom (a) is an Imagine employee assigned to our Xbox magazine team, and (b) will be chosen by the President of Imagine. These three judges, whose decision is final, will base their decision on the following criteria: Originality, approach to product design/concept, and artistic/technical production skills.

After you have prepared your design/submission, make sure to make a copy of your art for your own files, as we can't and will not return any submission. Also, all submissions sent by U.S. Mail or overnight delivery must be no larger than a regular 8.5" X 11" sheet of paper. All non-conforming oversized submissions will be discarded, immediately. So, no big poster sized entries, please. Submissions sent electronically should not exceed 5MB (yes, oversized electronic submissions will also be discarded, immediately). All entries must be received no later than January 28, 2002. We'll announce the winner in the fifth issue of Official Xbox Magazine.

Only one entry allowed for each individual entrant. Each of the three judging criteria noted above will be weighted equally at 33%. By entering this contest, you agree that Imagine Media shall have the right to use your name, likeness, the submission, and/or other information about you for promotional purposes and without further payment. All prizes will be awarded and no minimum number of entries is required. Prizes won by minors will be awarded to their parents or legal guardians. Imagine Media is not responsible for damages or expenses that the winners might incur as a result of the Contest or the receipt of a prize, and winners are responsible for income taxes based on the value of the prize received. A list of winners may also be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Imagine Media, Inc., c/o Xbox Prize Team, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. Lastly, while no purchase is necessary to enter, this contest is limited to residents of the United States, excepting in Arizona, Maryland, Vermont, Puerto Rico, where it is void, and where ever else it might also be prohibited by law. BATMAN and all related characters and elements are trademarks of and © DC Comics.



## ON THE DISC:

### PLAYABLE DEMOS This is what you came for:

- **4X4 Evo 2** – Take Two Interactive  
Test your mettle with your pedal to the metal in Take Two's triumphant trans-America trial.  
**DEMO TIP:** Play with the camera angle until you get the top-down view – it's like *Micro Machines 4X4*.
- **Cel Damage** – Electronic Arts  
Cel-shaded, animated freaks battle for supremacy in car combat coded cartoon-style.  
**DEMO TIP:** It's all about the axe, baby. Get the axe and go on a bit of a rampage.
- **Fuzion Frenzy** – Microsoft  
Remember *Combat* for Atari 2600? Well, it's 2001, and time to revisit that fun feeling.  
**DEMO TIP:** Sumo and Tailblazer are easily the best two mini-games. The key to *Fuzion Frenzy* (the mini-game) is to beat up others and steal their orbs, then jump like a madman for the score.
- **Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee** – Microsoft  
Abe is back, and this time he's brought a pal. Meet Munch, a face you won't soon forget.  
**DEMO TIP:** Not really indicative of the actual game, but it does give you a feel for the amazing world of *Munch's Oddysee*.
- **Tony Hawk 2x** – Activision  
Skate or die. Or at least bark your shins. The ultimate version of the ultimate skating game.  
**DEMO TIP:** Get to the hidden DJ booth or the multi-tiered half-pipes with a bit of exploring and really pump up the score.

## TRAILERS AND FEATURES

Live, from the confines of your Xbox, we are pleased to bring you our prodigious pictorial purview of the finest game trailers and movies available. All presented in glorious Bink™!

- **Amped**  
Snowboarding the way it was meant to be: radical AND extreme.
- **Blood Wake**  
Get your sea legs blown out from under you, landlubbers!
- **Halo**  
Best. Shooter. Ever.
- **JSRF: Jet Set Radio Future**  
Sega's mix of graffiti and in-line skating, updated and re-imagined for Xbox!
- **Mad Dash**  
So they're animals, and they're racing... on foot!?!?
- **Nightcaster**  
Imagine what *Gauntlet* would look like in the year 2002...
- **Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee**  
See some of the levels that *aren't* included on our playable demo.
- **Sega GT**  
The Dreamcast version rocks, the Xbox version adds roll.
- **Star Wars Starfighter: Special Edition**  
LucasArts tarts up a PS2 classic with exclusive Xbox additions.
- **TransWorld Surf**  
Finally, a surfing game that isn't just for Barney's.
- **Wreckless**  
Exclusive video from what promises to be the most chaotically brilliant driving game of the year.

# FIRST PLAYABLE

## Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc.

Don't just SEE the game, PLAY the game.

Last month we thrilled you and filled you with video goodness, courtesy of our first Game Disc – and that was just a plain old vanilla DVD! This month we're proud, yes proud, to unveil the first playable, fully interactive Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc. It's packed to the last meg with playable demos, stunning video, and some half-clothed people frolicking in the sun.



## Interfacing

It's like last month, except it's all 3D and whatnot.

- **VIDEO BILLBOARD:** It's kind of like Xbox TV without bad hair (or at least not as much bad hair).
- **MENU SYSTEM:** Click these to see/play them – pretty simple.
- **SUBLIMINAL TEXT MESSAGES:** If you don't read them, they will enter your brain anyway and make you do our bidding – so you might as well read them.
- **FANCY-SCHMANCY 3D:** Use the white button on the Xbox pad to zoom around the interface in glorious 3D. It's like a game – without the bugs.



**Disc problems:** If you experience problems playing the Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc, gently clean the surface with a clean, soft cloth. If this doesn't help, go to <http://www.officialxboxmagazine.com> to order a replacement.

## Ad Index January, 2002

Looking for the perfect game ad? Want to know about some other games coming to the Xbox? Just point and... uhh... turn (sorry, haven't figured out how to "click" with magazines yet – we're working on it).

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The Advertiser Index is provided as a service to our readers, and as such, Imagine Media, Inc., will not be responsible for any typographical errors found within it.

■ **THINK BINK:** What's Bink? It's the compression codec used for video compression on Xbox. It's better than MPEG II quality and allows game developers a lot of flexibility when compressing audio and video.



## 10 Ridiculously Tough Questions

Each month, we ask an Xbox game maker 10 ridiculously tough questions, and then grade the answers on a scale of 1 to 10 according to what we think they *really* should be. This month we put Takayoshi Sato, CG Works Director on *Silent Hill 2*, in the hot seat. He likes his hair orange and his pants leather.

**1) The overarching theme of *Silent Hill 2* seems to be "loss" and the fear that comes as a result of loss. If you *had* to lose just one of the following, which would it be:**

- A. Your ability to create art
- B. Your sight
- C. Your money and savings

**C.** If I lost my sight and my ability to create art, I would never be able to make more money. I could always recover from losing money.

*Score: 7* But without lots of money, there is no art... at least that's what we tell our bosses.

**2) What is the biggest difference that you've found in the way that American and Japanese gamers look at horror?**

— Americans like more of an impact to their senses, both in visuals and sound. Japanese gamers prefer more sophisticated game systems and overall game quality.

*Score: 10* We blame Freddy, Jason, and Richard Simmons.

**3) In one sentence... what's the deal with all the monster sex?**

— Because they are starving for love and communication. Monsters need love and mercy, too.

*Score: 9* And booty calls, don't forget booty calls.

**4) True or False: If this game were created from the start for the Xbox, it would have been able to close the gap even further between CG and gameplay.**

**True.** But I don't know how much closer it could come.

*Score: 5* Three words... Realtime Monster Sex.

**5) In five words, what is the meaning of life?**

— Don't go to Silent Hill.

*Score: 10* It's a great place to visit, but we wouldn't want to live there.

**6) In five words, what is the meaning of death?**

— Don't go to Silent Hill.

*Score: 9* We wouldn't want to live there... but the dead seem to really enjoy the place. It's kinda like Florida for the post-elderly.

**7) True or False: If you encountered a slimy hole in a wall in a creepy abandoned hotel... would you stick your hand in that hole?**

**True.** There may be something inside that could change my life forever!

*Score: 2* Like Hansen's disease!

**8) True or False: If you encountered a dirty toilet in that same hotel... would you stick your hand in it?**

**True.** But only after sniffing it first.

*Score: 8* Guess we can't fault you for expecting us to do it in the game...

**9) What do you have nightmares about?**

— Budgets.

*Score: 4* Judging how well *Silent Hill 2* is selling worldwide, you may be looking at unlimited budgets in the future. That doesn't sound too scary.

**10) You've been living in the US for several years now... what would you rather eat, a Moss Burger from Japan or an In-N-Out burger?**

— I prefer In-N-Out. It's simple and much better.

*Score: 10* Agreed. A good old-fashioned Double Double can outdo a rice-cake burger any day.

*Final Grade: 74/100*

**C** The highest score ever in the history of 10 Ridiculously Tough Questions — guess it's time to up the ridiculously tough part a bit.

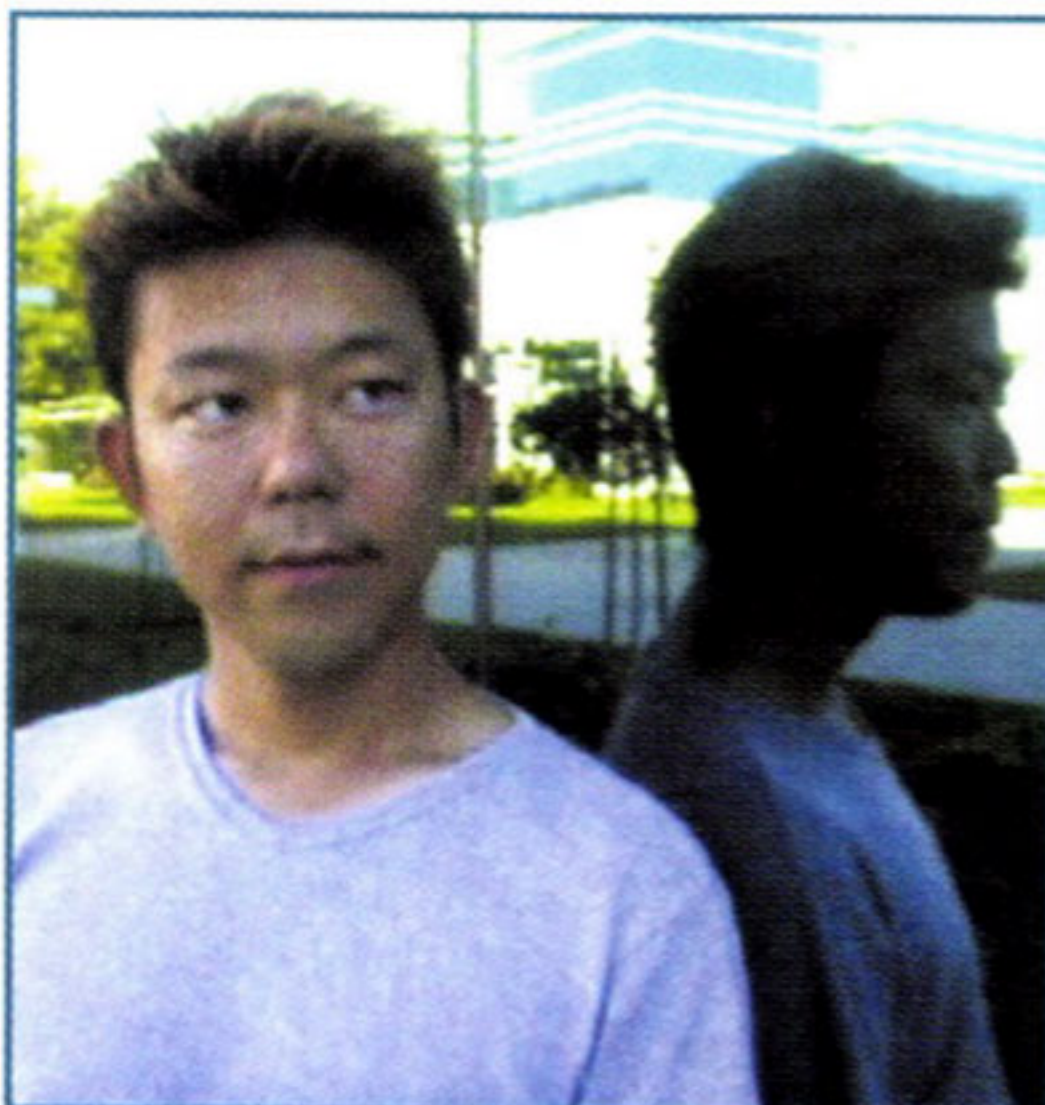
### Ridiculously Tough Hall of Fame

Lorne Lanning 71

Peter Molyneux 70

Takayoshi Sato 74

Looks like we're starting to get soft. That'll change.



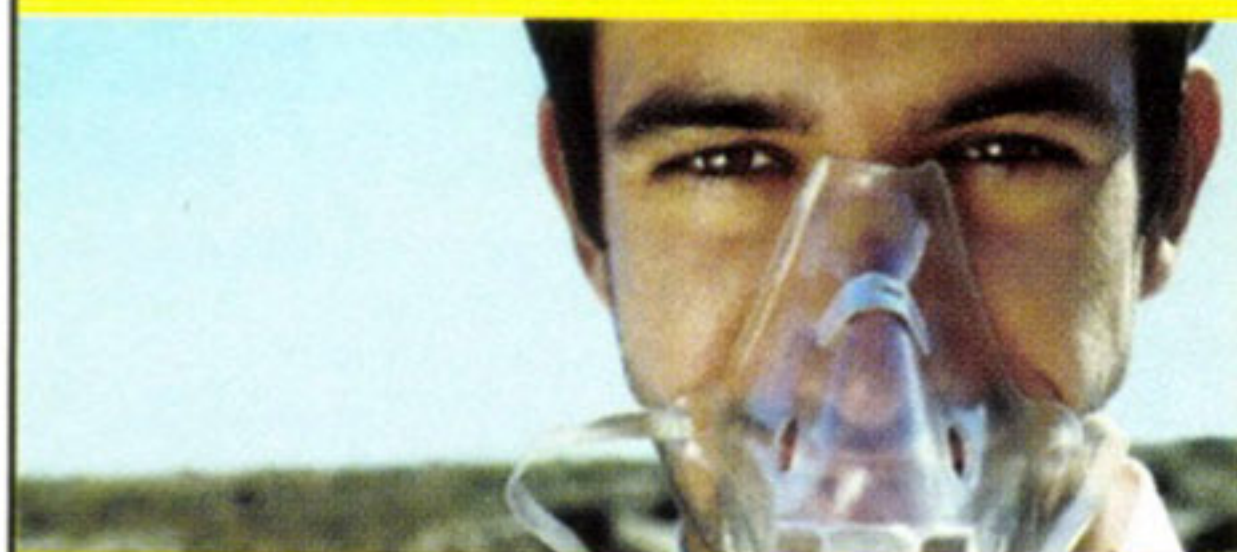
Takayoshi Sato was the CG director and character designer for *Silent Hill* and *Silent Hill 2*.



James Sunderland broke Sato's rule for life: Don't go to Silent Hill.

## Next month

### Welcome to THE FUTURE



As you read this section, you are not reading text that we wrote this month, you are reading text that we will write a month from now. So kick back and enjoy this exclusive sneak peek into THE FUTURE.

#### Greetings, Past Dwellers.

How are you enjoying December? Although we can't reveal what will happen during the month because it would likely destroy the space-time continuum, we do feel obligated to warn you that December is a very, very bad month to lick your cat.

Now that we've already finished this month's magazine (in your time, it's next month's issue), we have to say that it is our most pre-mesent (a very popular word in our time) issue yet. It's chocked full of futuristic stuff like:

#### STUNNING REVIEWS

We've played, finished, and scored the latest Xbox games such as *Max Payne*, *Mad Dash Racing*, *NBA Live*, and others we can't disclose (space-time continuum thing again).

#### GIANT PREVIEWS

In your time, previews of blockbuster games like *Maximum Chase* and *House of the Dead 3* seem incredible... and a month from today, they still are incredible.

#### XBOX ONLINE

Unfortunately, humankind is not evolved enough to hear about this yet... in a month, though, you will be ready. And you're probably going to sprout gills (ooh, we've said too much).

## The Best Disc Ever

As time passes, fads come and go (don't get caught up in the whole edible furniture craze), but one thing holds true. A great disc is a beauty to behold, and there is not a disc greater than this month's platter o' demos. Here's a sampling of the games you'll play:

- *AirForce Delta Storm*
- *NFL Fever 2002*
- *Azurik: Rise of Perathia*
- *Mad Dash Racing*
- *Nascar Thunder 2002*
- *NHL Hitz 20-02*

#### "Grandma Dixie— in the future"

So, now we must return to our future time and leave you to learn from the mistakes that you'll obviously make. Go forth... we'll see you when you get here.



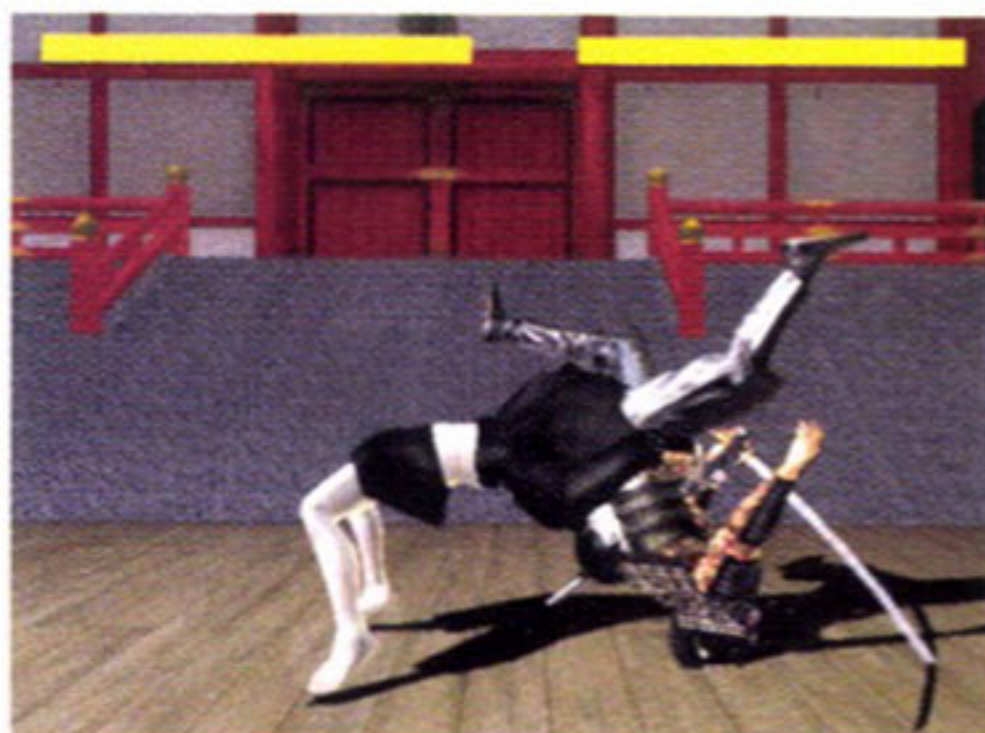




# KABUKI WARRIORS™



Fight warriors in winner-take-all competitions on stages across Japan.

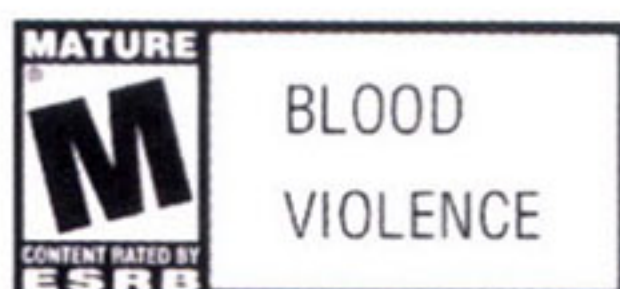


Pummel opponents and strike dramatic poses to gain the crowd's favor.



24 Characters, with different weapons and unique attacks like fireballs, fire storms, lightning and tornadoes.

As a fight promoter, you lead your troop of Kabuki Warriors on a dramatic journey from Edo to Kyoto. Defeat your opponents with strength and style to win the fight and win the crowd - then trade warriors with defeated competitors. With every victory your samurai troop grows stronger, as you make your way to the ultimate battle in Kyoto.





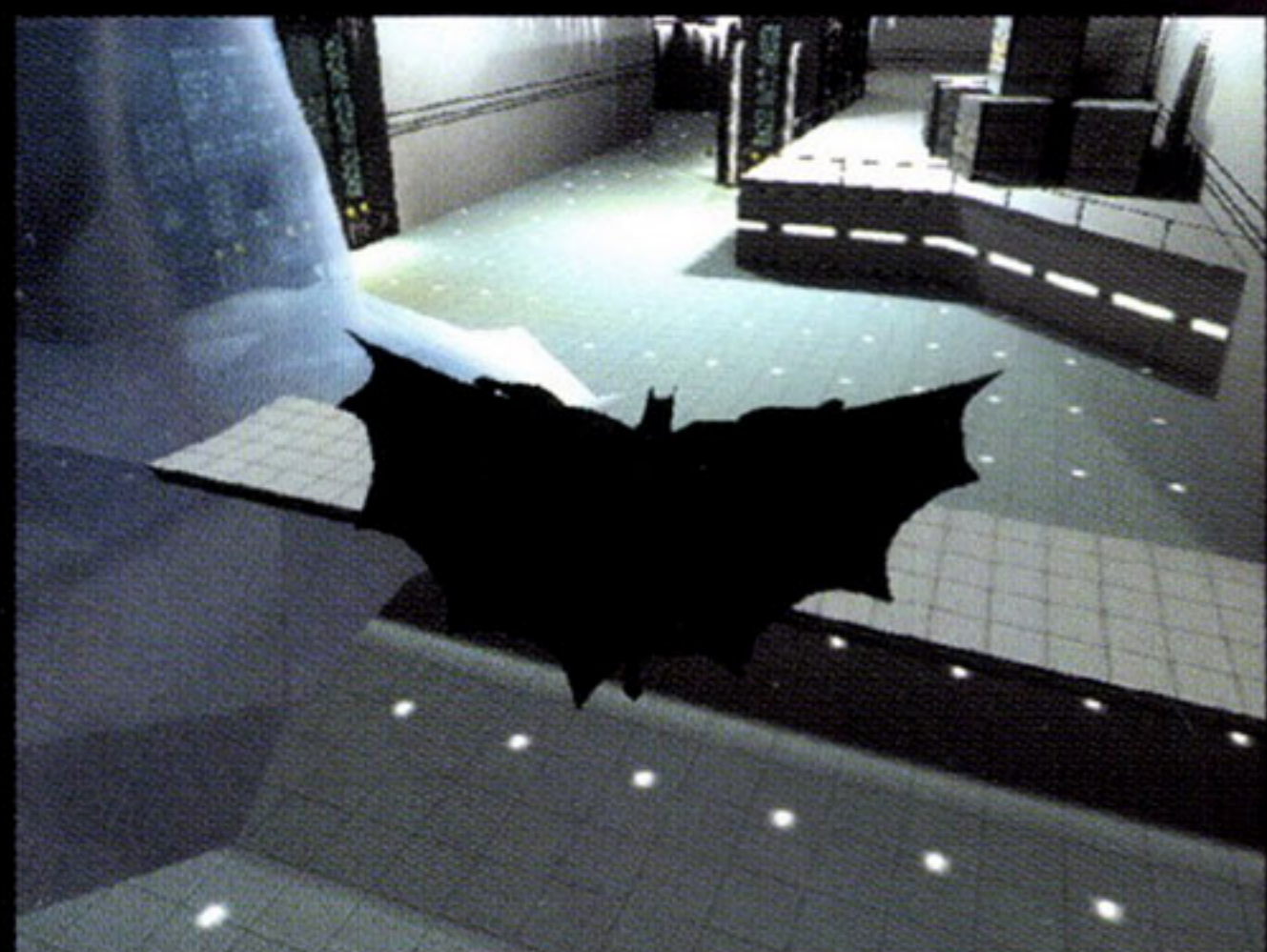
A DARKER JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED

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(so)  
"PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc., Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. TM, © Game Boy Advance and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo.

**TEEN**  
**T**  
CONTENT RATED BY  
**ESRB**  
Violence

**DOLBY**  
**DIGITAL**

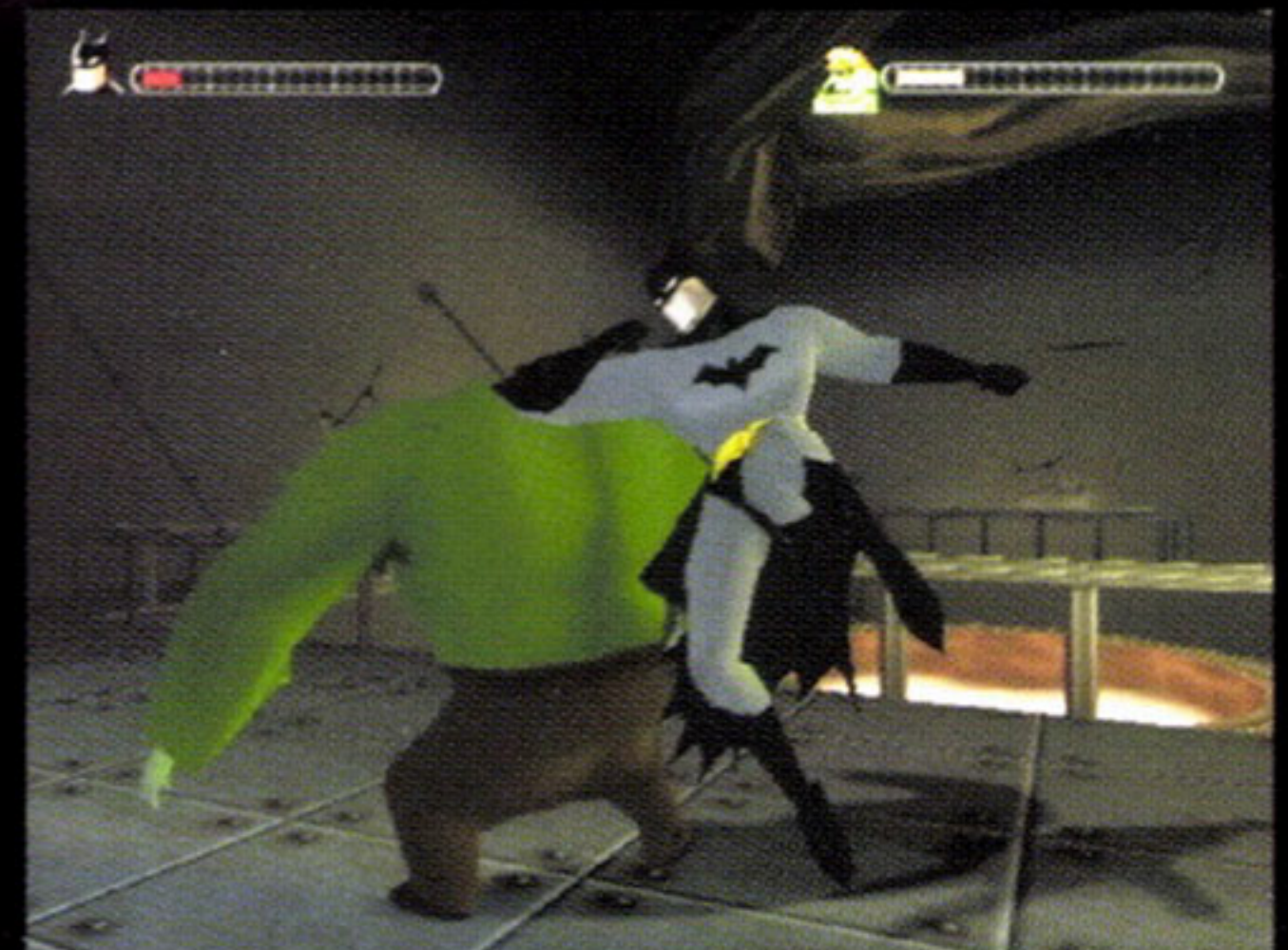
# BATMAN VENGEANCE



Next Gen Action with over 500 animated Batman moves



Next Gen Gear including 10 devices like remote charges



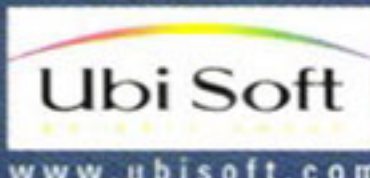
Next Gen Combat with intense martial arts combos

For more info visit [www.ubisoft.com/batmanvengeance](http://www.ubisoft.com/batmanvengeance)



PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE



[www.ubisoft.com](http://www.ubisoft.com)