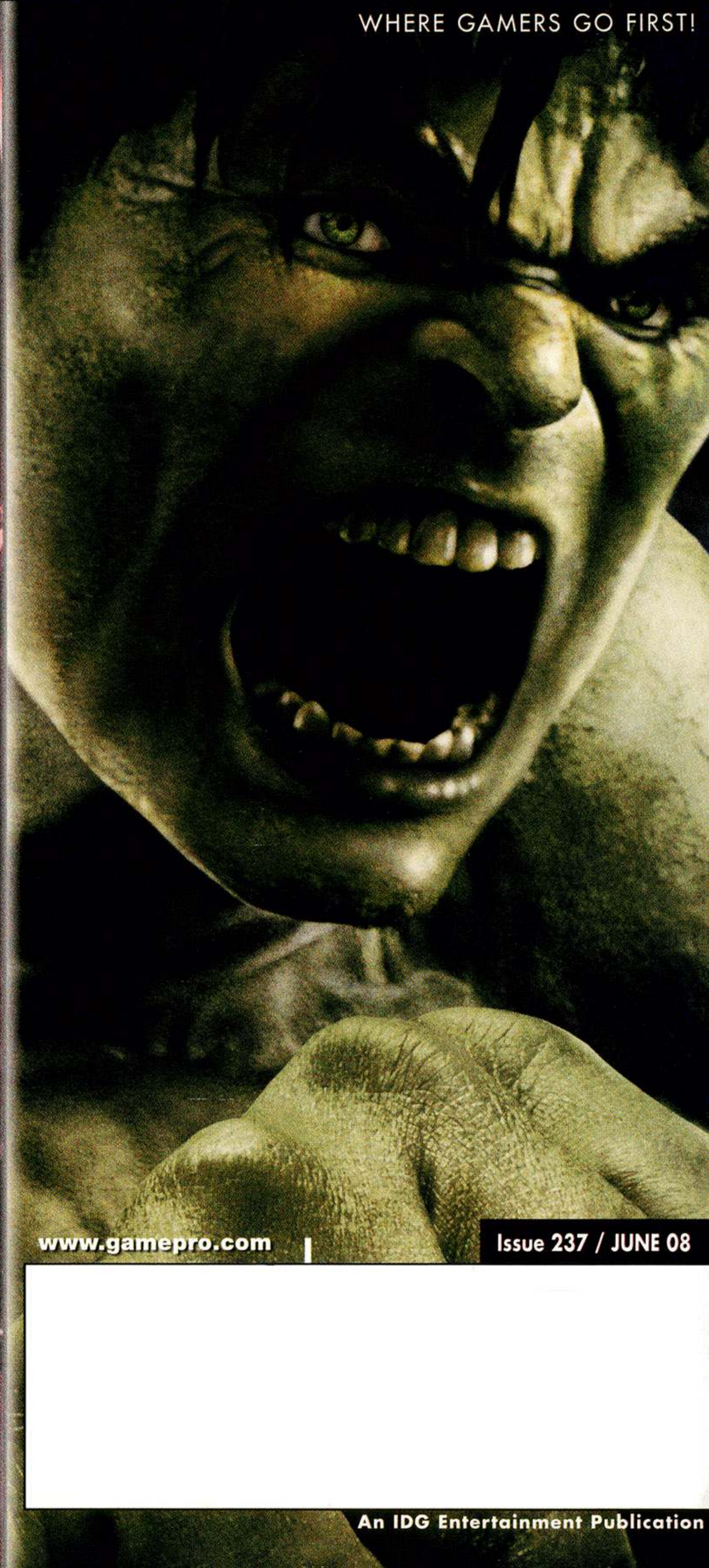


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# GAMEPRO

## ULTIMATE PSP & DS GUIDE!

101 PERFECT GAMES  
FOR SUMMER! P.54

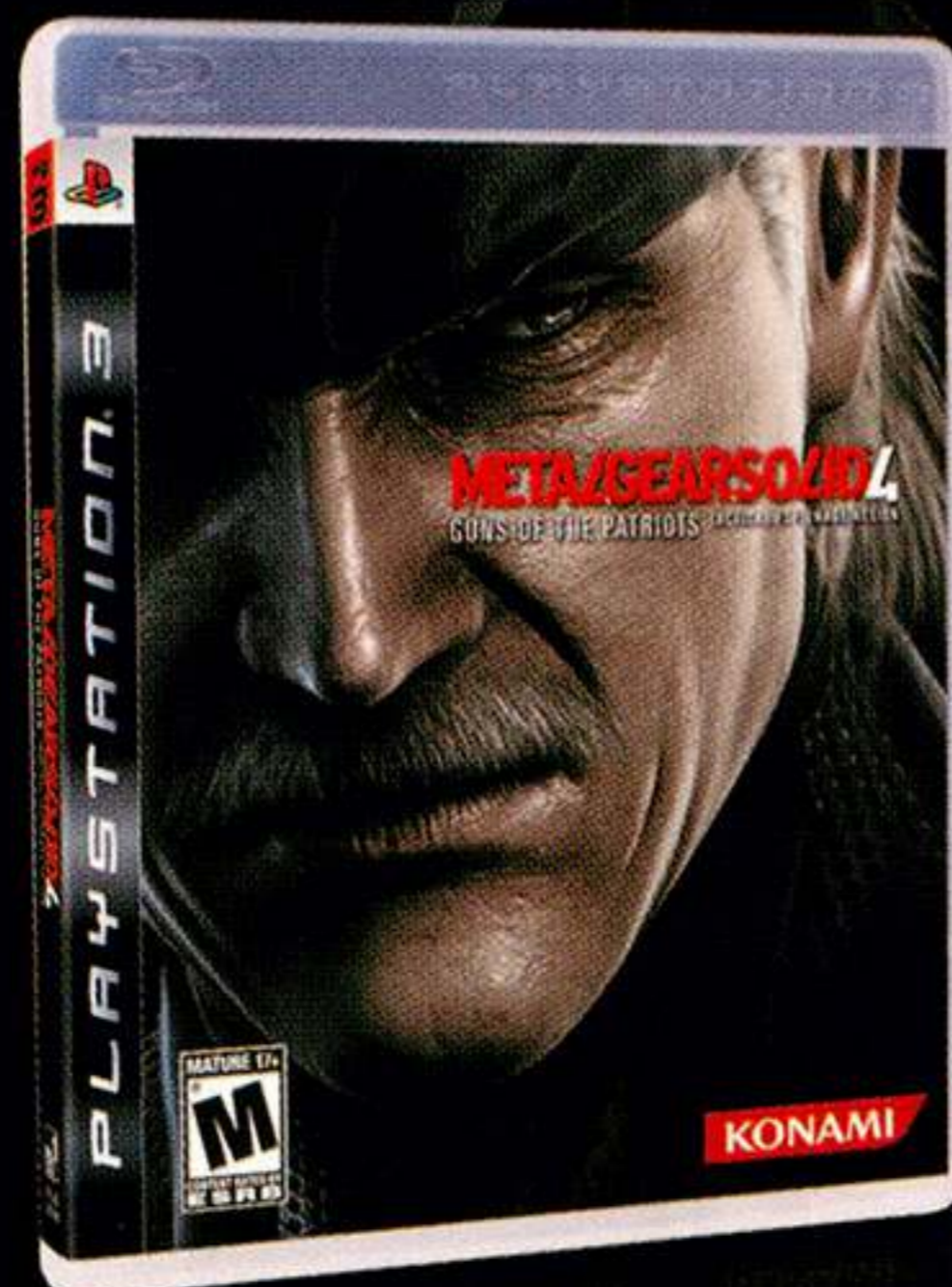
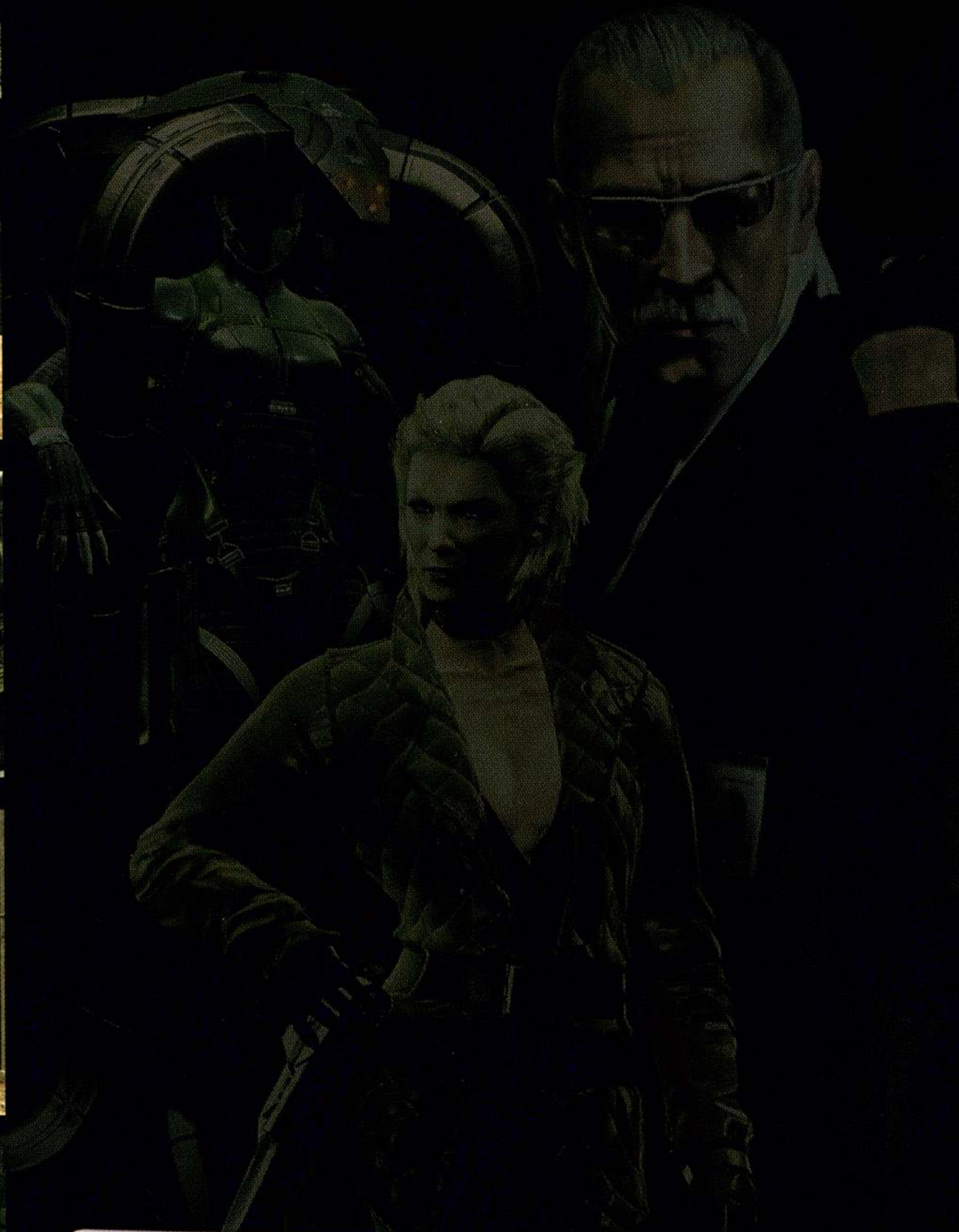


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PLAYSTATION 3



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## ★ Features



**46** LEGO Batman Takes Flight  
GamePro's got an exclusive first look at LEGO Batman—villains, gadgets, and gameplay details inside!



**54** 101 Must-Have Handheld Games  
The definitive buyer's guide for handheld games. Whether you've got a DS, a PSP, or a Game Boy Advance, you've gotta read this ultimate handheld guide!



**66** The Ultimate Guide to God of War: Chains of Olympus (PSP)  
Get ready for the seven goriest kills in God of War: Chains of Olympus, plus strategies for conquering Hades' toughest generals.



"Holy collectible, Batman: This month's issue of *GamePro* has two different covers!"

"Quick—to the newsstand!"





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## Handhelds...really?

Pop Quiz, gentle and not-so-gentle gamers: What is the most popular next-generation gaming system?

The answer is...the Nintendo DS. At press time it had sold about as many units (22 million total) as the Nintendo Wii, Xbox 360, and PS3 combined.

The second most popular console system? Sony's PSP.

This relative popularity begs an important question: Why don't more gaming magazines give more love to handheld games? The easy answer (and sad truth) is that many of our peers view PSP, DS, and GBA games with a certain amount of disdain. Because they're not hardcore enough; because they're not good-looking enough; because, because, because...

*GamePro* doesn't think that...and we know you don't think that.

The truth about PSP and DS games: We're seeing unprecedented levels of innovation and creativity. Game developers and publishers are finally understanding that these systems offer some exciting and innovative opportunities. Finally! If you've played Patapon or Puzzle Quest or Cooking Mama, you know what I'm talking about.

With this in mind, the *GamePro* staff happily dedicates the following issue to handheld gaming. Enjoy!

- The Top 14 Handheld Games of All Time:**
14. The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass (DS)
  13. Namco Museum (GBA)
  12. Cooking Mama (DS)
  11. The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past (GBA)
  10. Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day (DS)
  9. New Super Mario Bros. (DS)
  8. Super Mario World: Super Mario Advance 2 (GBA)
  7. Puzzle Quest (DS, PSP)
  6. LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy (PSP, DS)
  5. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories (PSP)
  4. Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire (GBA)
  3. God of War: Chains of Olympus (PSP)
  2. Advance Wars: Dual Strike (DS)
  1. Tetris (GB)
- George Jones**  
Executive Creative Director



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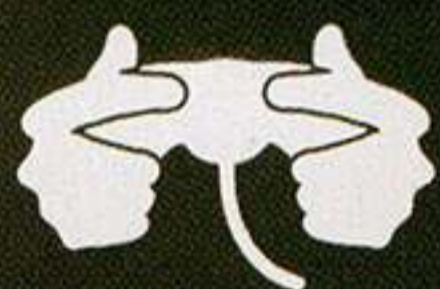
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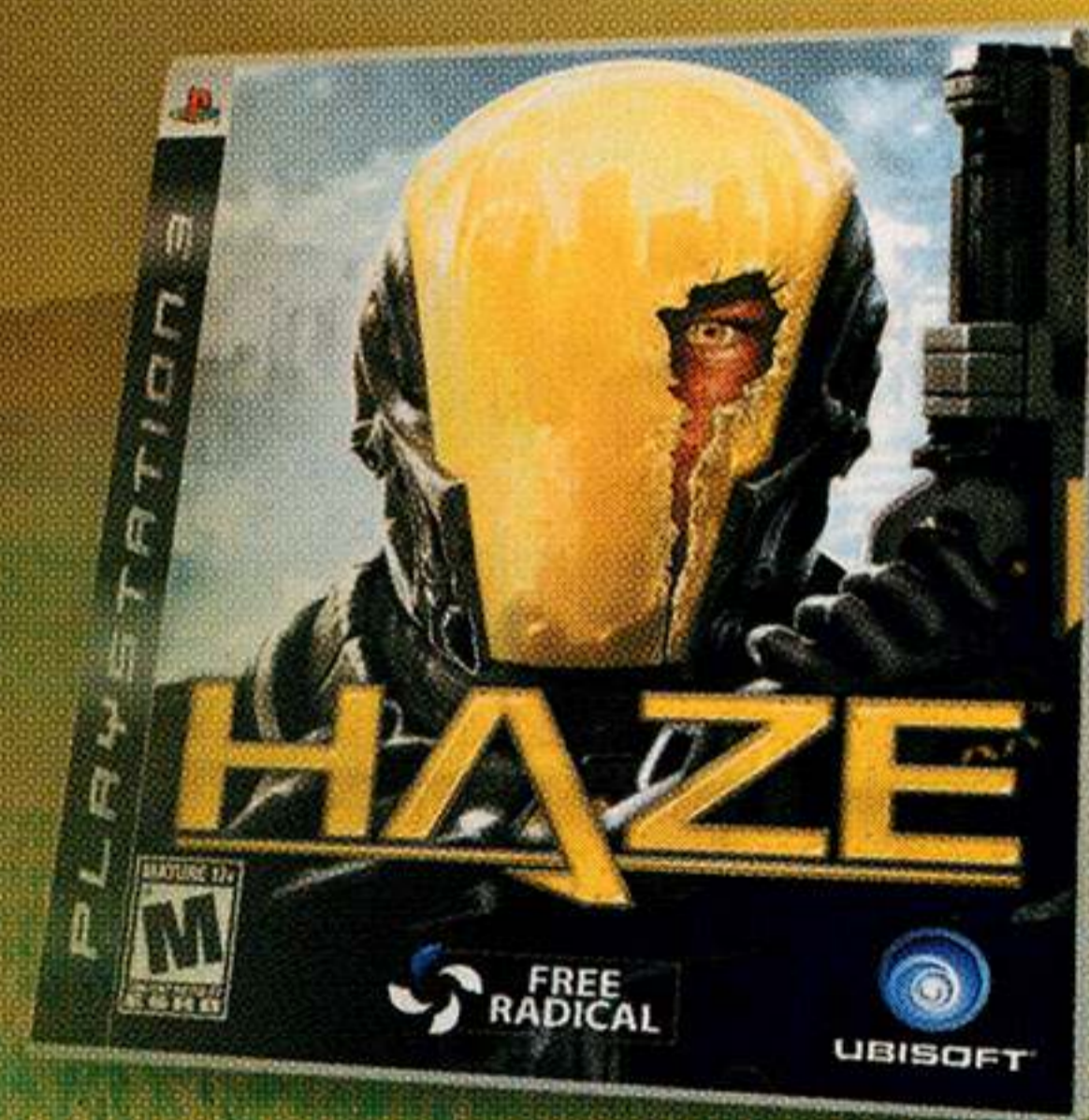


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PLAYSTATION 3

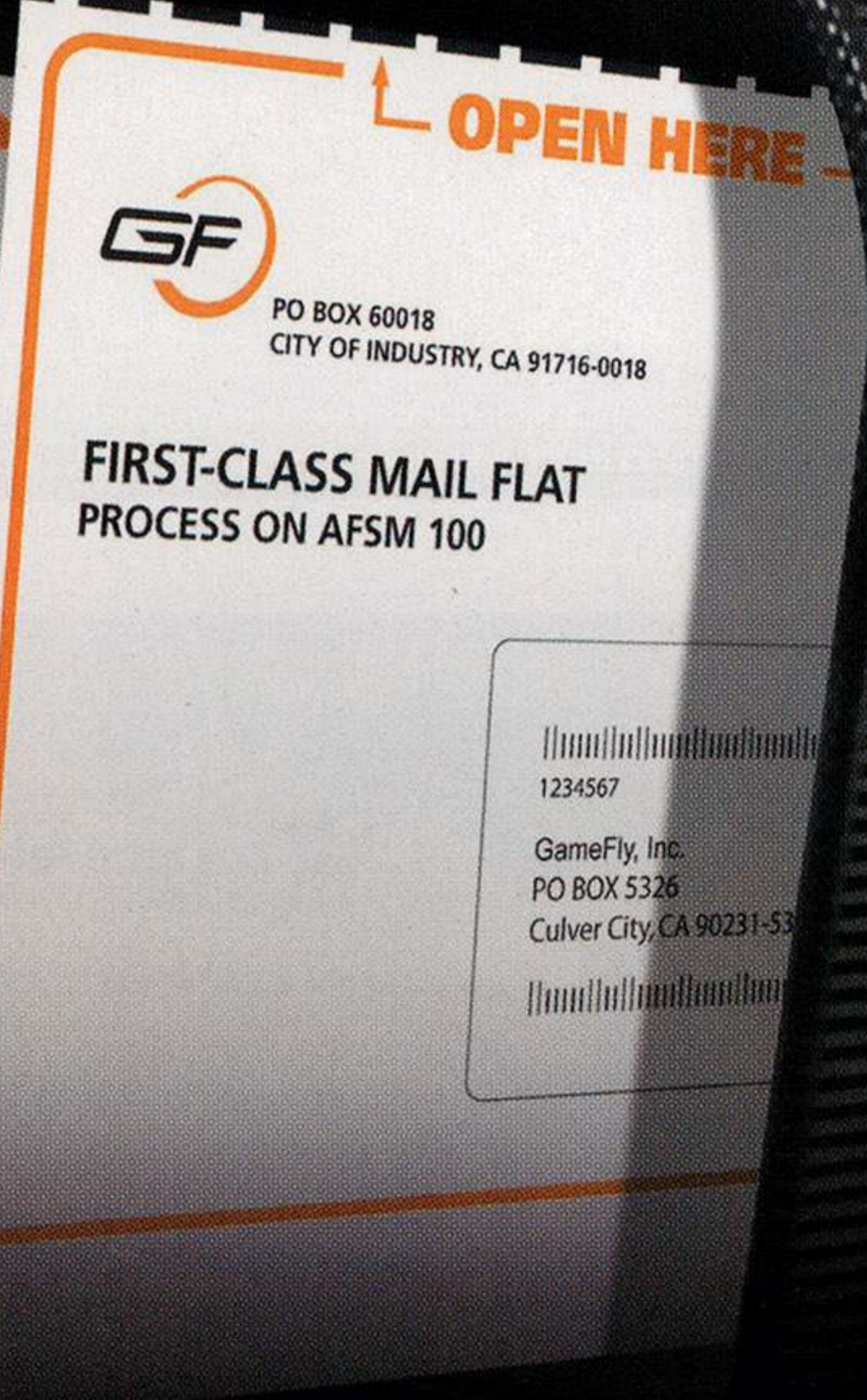
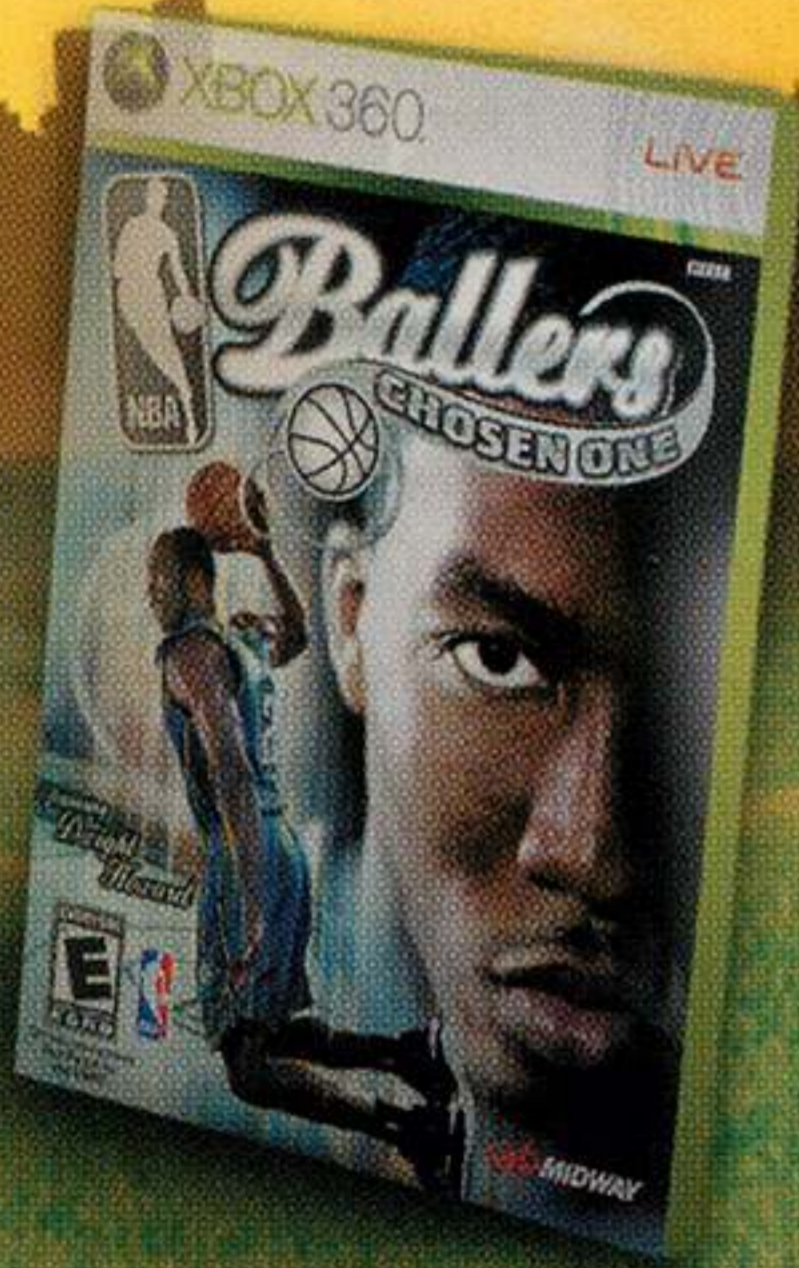
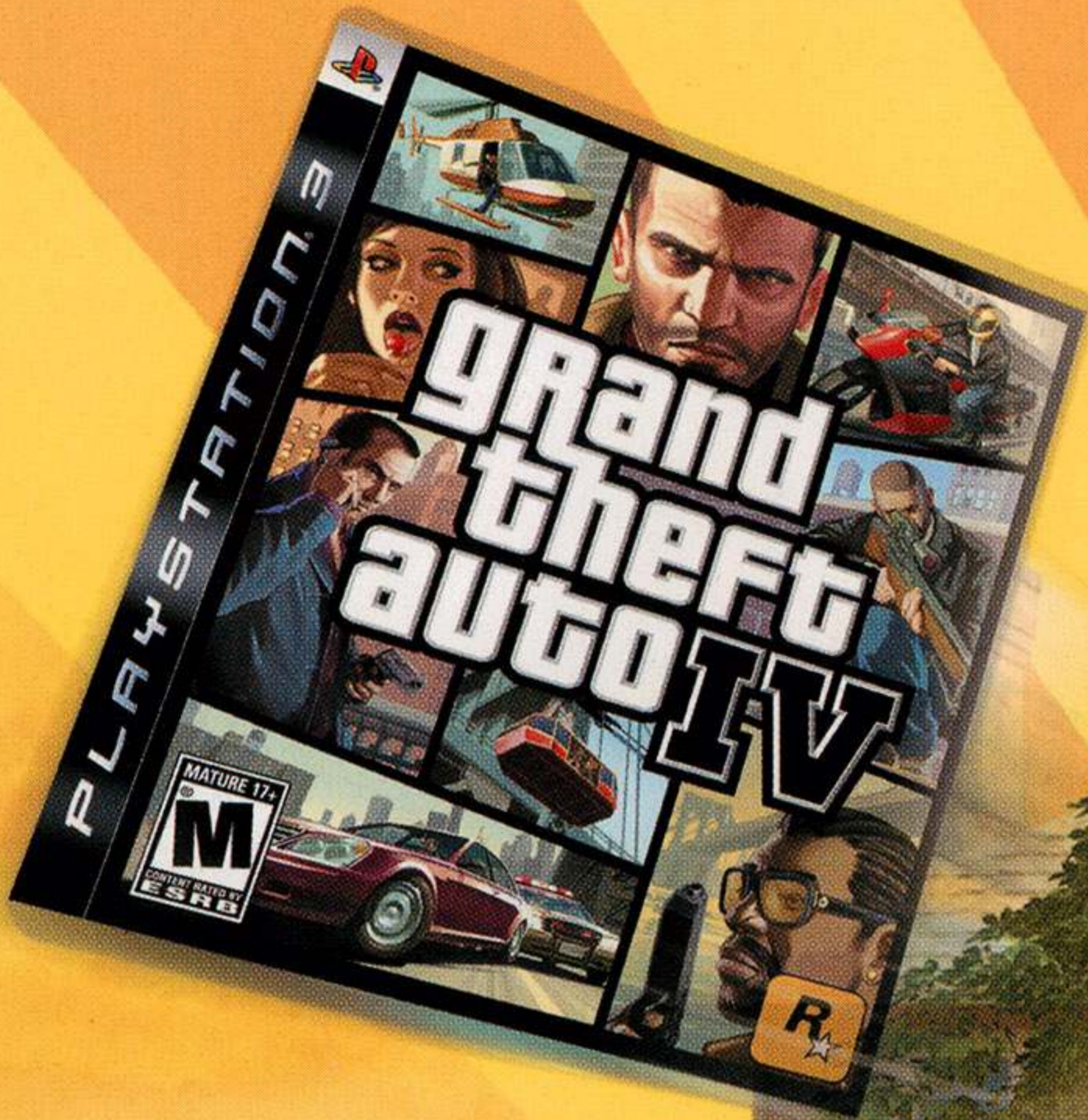
PlayStation 2

PSP  
PlayStation Portable

XBOX 360



# GF GAMEFLY®







Did you notice the massive Goliath looming in the background? There are also 12 new enemies you will face in Resistance 2.

▼ RESISTANCE 2 PS3

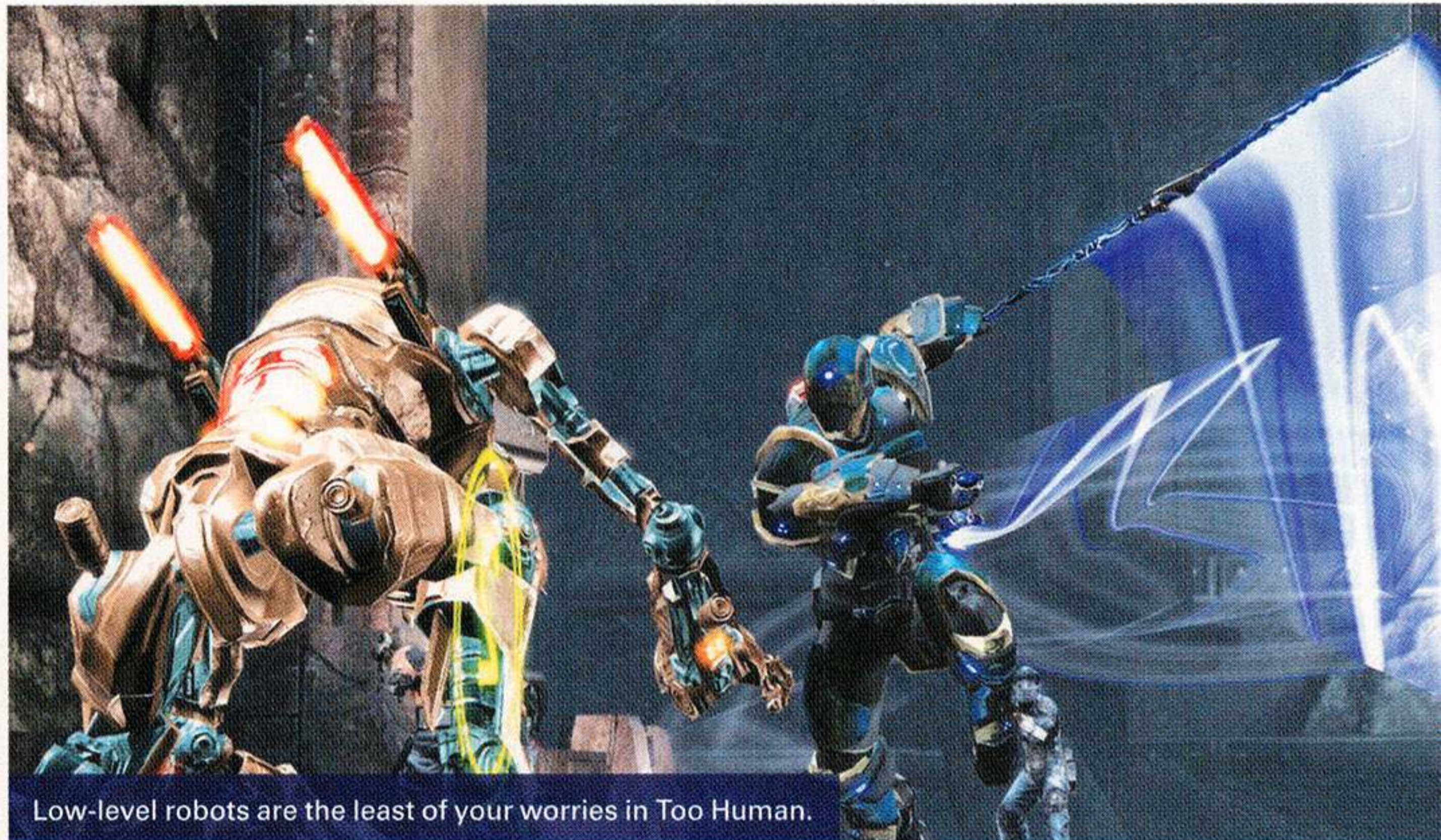


▼ PURE PS3, XBOX 360, PC



▼ COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 3 PS3, XBOX 360, PC





Low-level robots are the least of your worries in *Too Human*.

▼ **TOO HUMAN** XBOX 360



Prototype perfects sandbox play with its shape-shifting, inhuman protagonist.

▼ **PROTOTYPE** PS3, XBOX 360, PC



▼ **VIKING: BATTLE FOR ASGARD** PS3, XBOX 360



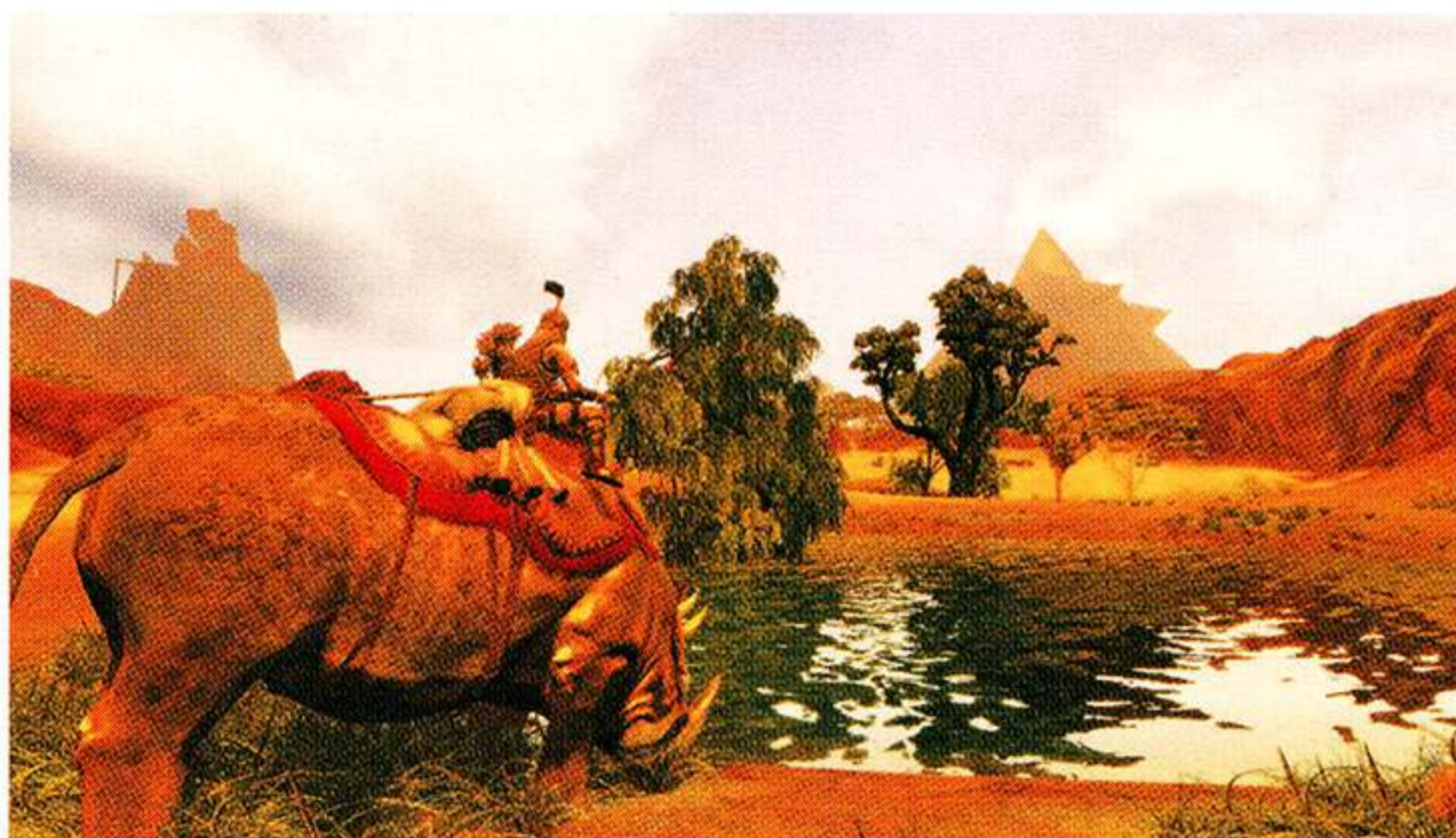
▼ **IRON MAN** PS3, XBOX 360, Wii, PS2, PSP, DS, PC





Ryu Hayabusa has some new tricks up his sleeve, including the ability to wield two weapons at once.

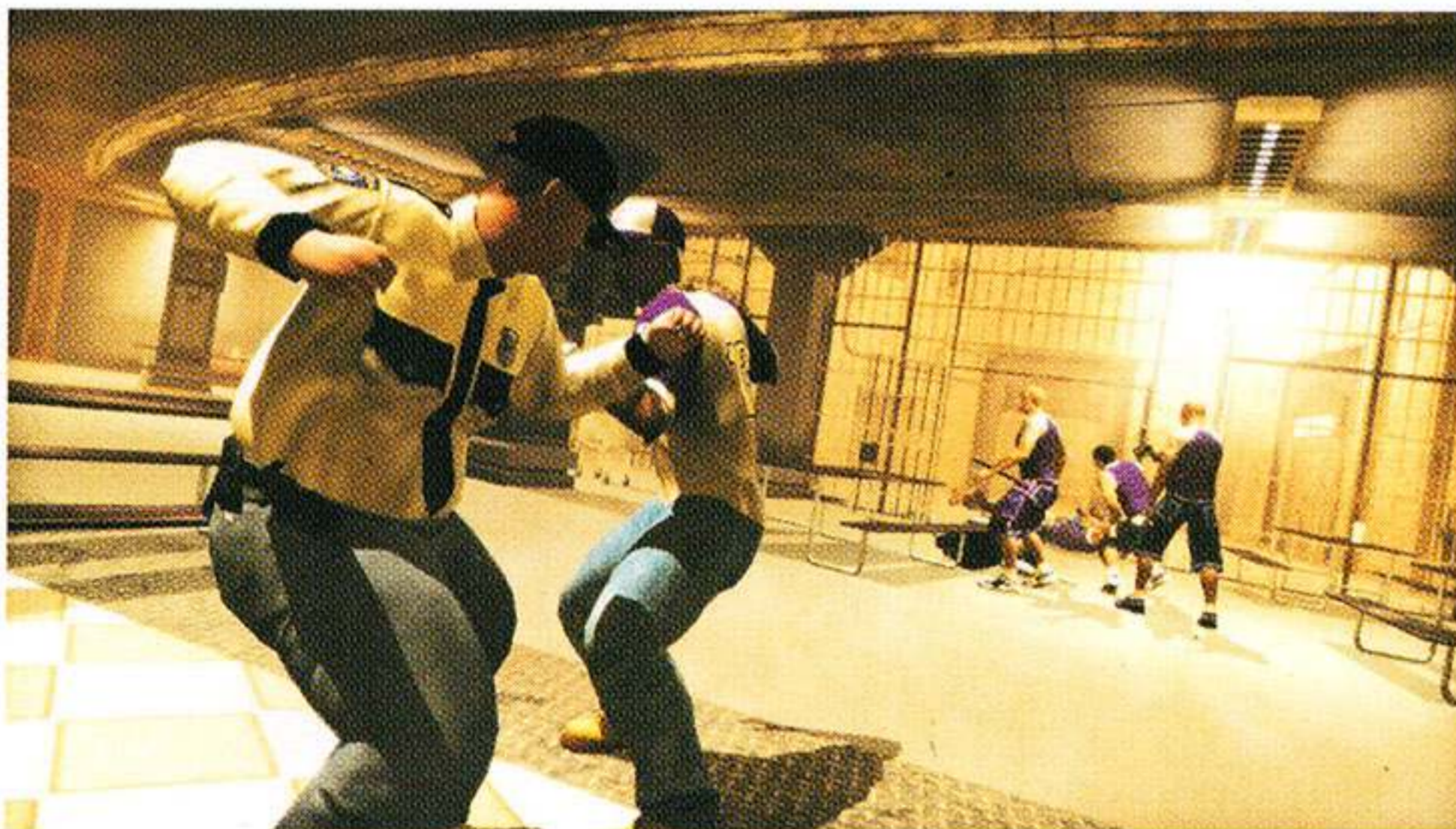
▼ NINJA GAIDEN 2 Xbox 360



▼ AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES Xbox 360, PC



▼ FABLE 2 Xbox 360



▼ SAINTS ROW 2 PS3, Xbox 360



▼ LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES  
PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PS2, PSP, DS, PC



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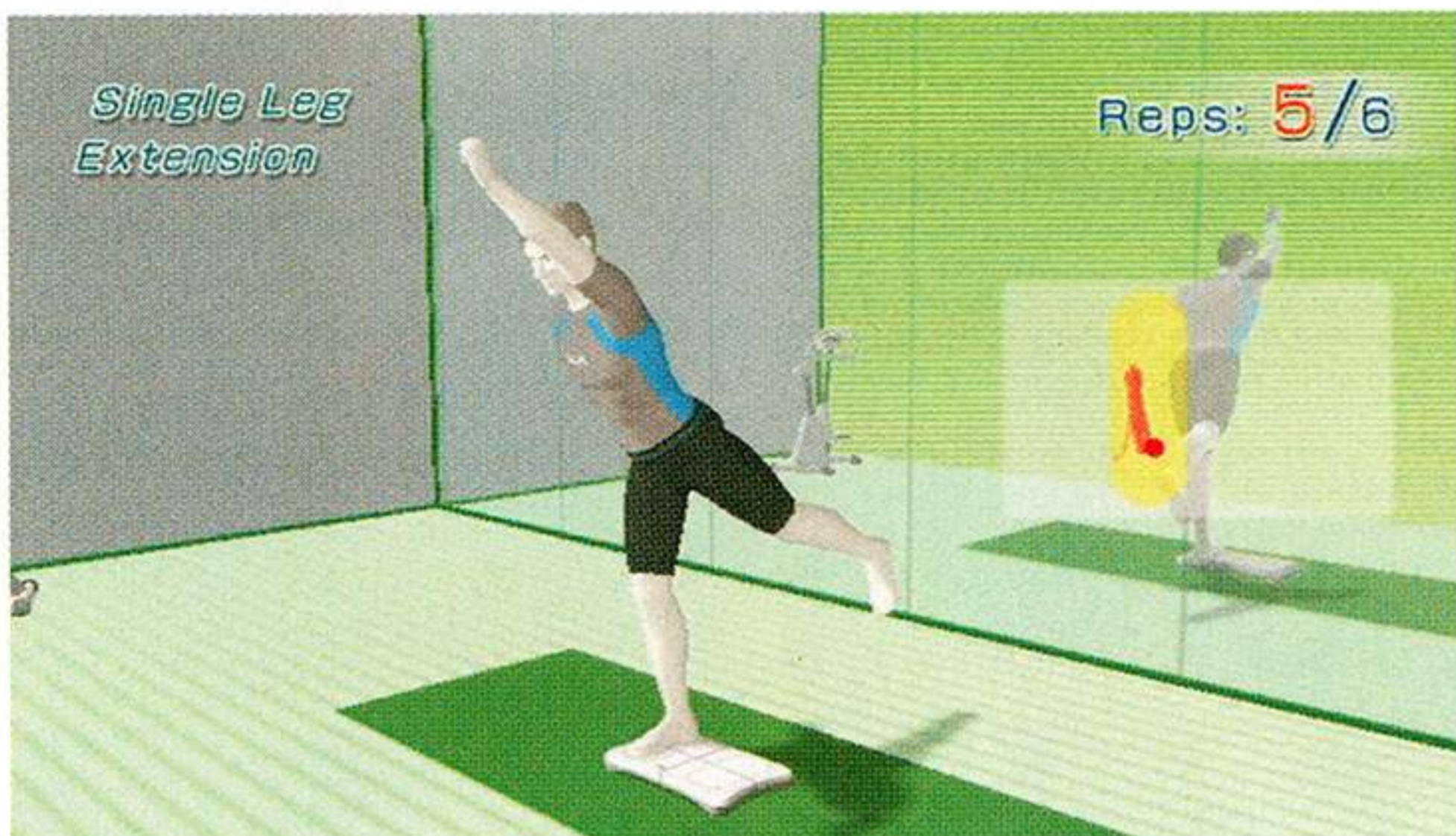
Coaching my team to the top was a tall order. Good thing milk was my #1 pick. Some studies suggest the protein helps build muscle, plus teens who choose it instead of sugary drinks tend to be leaner. Like I tell my guys: If you want to keep breaking records, keep hitting the glass.

body  milk<sup>SM</sup>

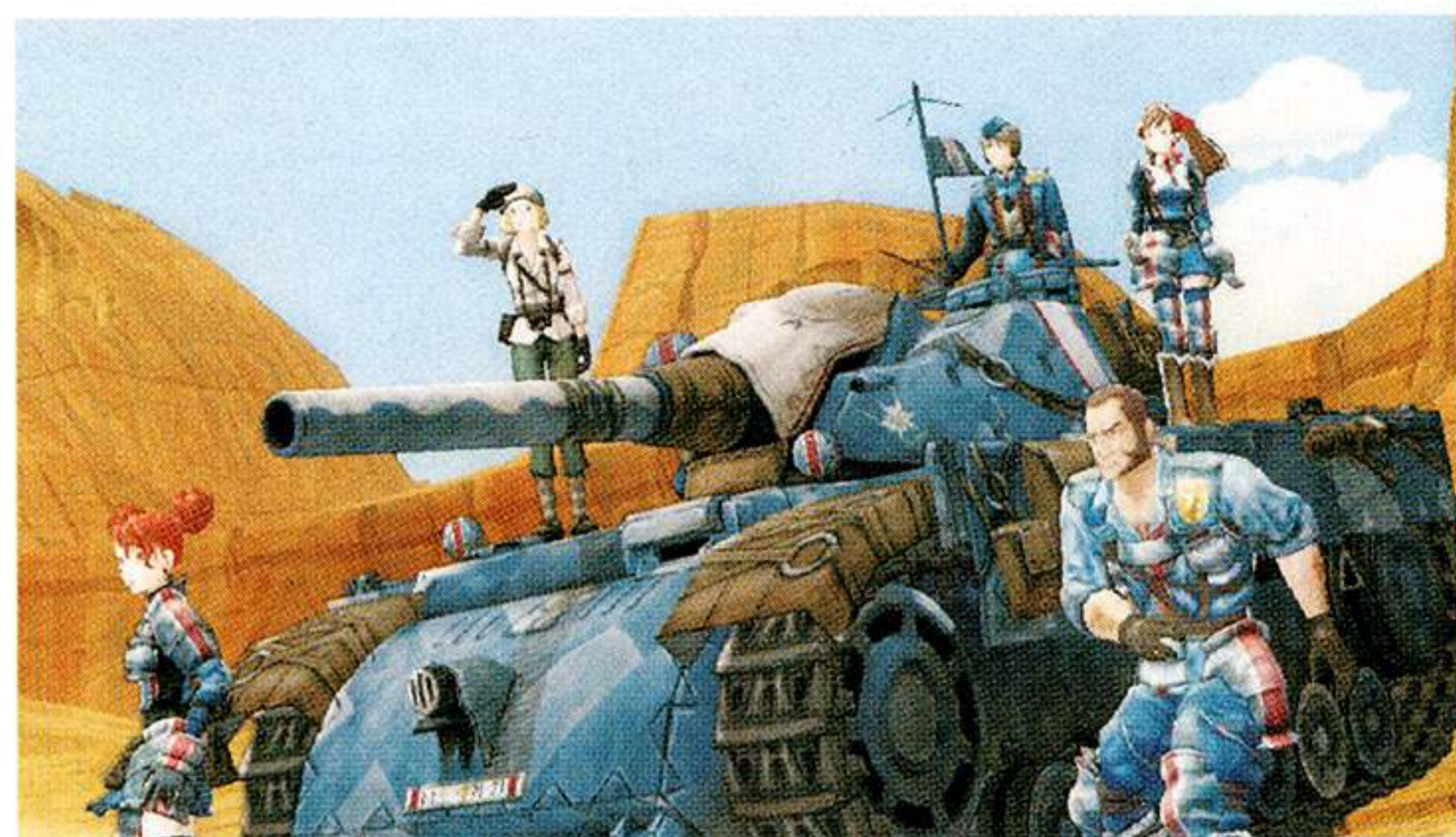
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▼ WII FIT Wii



▼ VALKYRIA CHRONICLES PS3

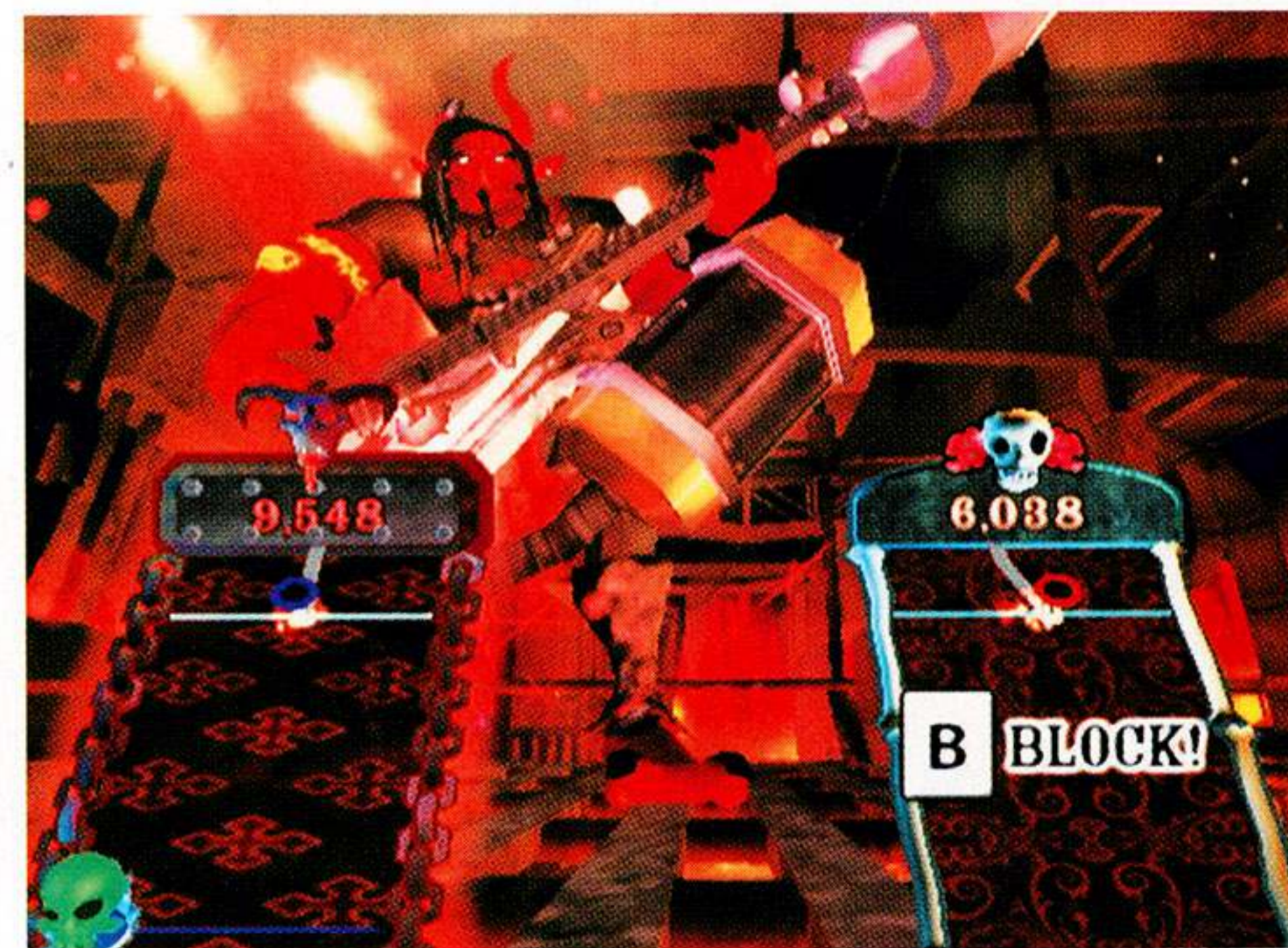


A penetrating blow through Guile's defenses showcase Street Fighter IV's exaggerated facial expressions.

▼ STREET FIGHTER IV ARC

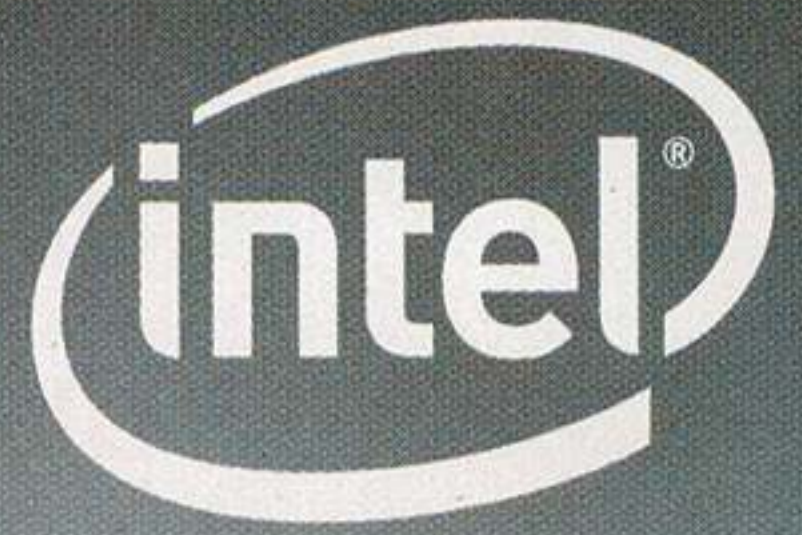


▼ AMERICAN MCGEE'S GRIMM PC



▼ BATTLE OF THE BANDS Wii





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# SPAWN POINT

GAMES. GOSSIP. GEAR.

## INSIDE SPAWN POINT

Prototype . . . Page 18

Video Game Villains . . . Page 20

Good Vibrations . . . Page 26

Death Box 360 . . . Page 28



## PUNCH OUT!

Move over Fight Night: Here are seven big reasons why FaceBreaker from EA Sports is a guaranteed knockout.



**1. Pushing the limits of fun.** Without licensors, FaceBreaker isn't bound by the rules of boxing, allowing total creative freedom for these fighters to do anything and everything. You'll sport gloves and fight in a ring, but everything else is up for grabs.

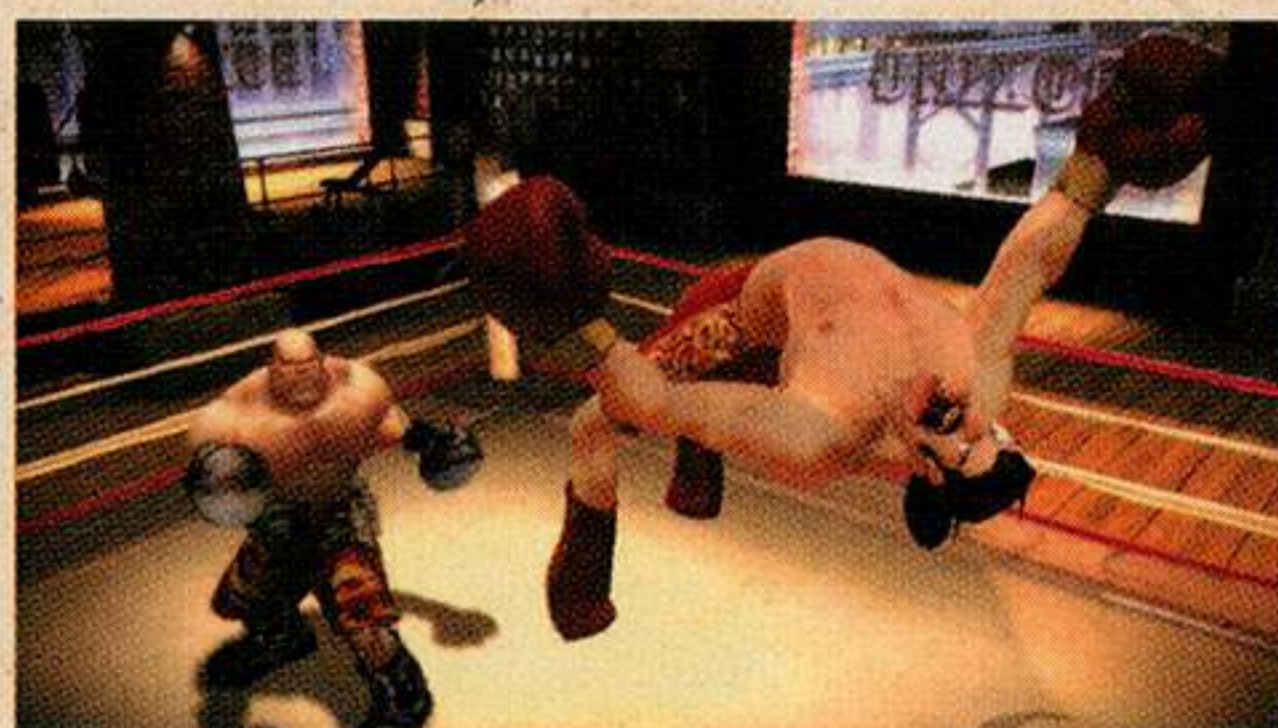
**2. No rules.** There is no referee and no rules other than "last boxer standing wins." This is boxing, but over-the-top moves from head-butts to groin-kicks to the infamous curb-stomp make FaceBreaker more than just Fight Night.



**3. Breaking face.** Winning a fight and knocking out your opponent is part of each fight, but breaking his face in the process is really what this game is all about.

**4. Facial deformation.** FaceBreaker is all about gratuitous deformation. The developers (EA Canada) started with 3D sculpts to see what would happen if you punched a face. They tried all sorts of things from dislocating jaws, popping out eyes, and twisting heads around à la *The Exorcist*. But grotesque is somewhere they didn't want to go.

**5. Punching molasses.** To get the physics of face-breaking just right, the developers put different materials in a balloon to see what would happen when they were punched. They used stuff like meat and molasses, and then filmed the balloon getting hit in slow motion, giving a real feel as to how facial deformation should look in the game.



**6. Punch-Out!! rematch.** With FaceBreaker, the developers are hoping to replicate the classic experience of Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!—a chance to relive the experience with all the upgrades you would expect on the PS3 and Xbox 360. They've introduced Romeo (a Latin lover with a vicious backhand) and Molotov (a demolitions expert who brings explosives into the ring), but they're just the beginning.

**7. Fighting games?** FaceBreaker is influenced by fighting games, but is careful not to cross over from boxing to hardcore fighting. It's a well-balanced experience, that's easy to pick up and play, and catered to all skill levels—be it an expert or casual gamer. Of course, in the end, the former will probably pummel the latter into the mat, but not before everyone gets in a few shots of their own.



# THE POWER OF [PROTOTYPE]

Alex Mercer exists, but he doesn't know why. As a genetically-engineered mutant, Alex has no memory of his past and he's determined to get some answers. Ravaging an already chaotic New York City just might be the only means to uncovering the mystery in Prototype, and these superhuman powers will help him get the results he so desperately wants.

By Chris Morell

## SHAPESHIFTING

1

Like the X-Men's Mystique, Alex can shapeshift—or morph—into bodies of enemies, absorbing their memories and abilities, not to mention their form. Specific targets will provide him with a number of special powers that he can mix and match at will.



## 2 HYPER PARKOUR

Scaling buildings isn't a new concept; the Prince of Persia has been at it for almost two decades. But it's never been done like this. Ultra-fast maneuvering allows Alex to pounce to and from cars, walls, and even towering NYC skyscrapers with ease.







## 3 WEAPON CREATION



Blending a variety of genetic traits means you can form anything from protective skin to razor-sharp claws. With enough creativity, you just might find the perfect weapon for any situation.

## SPEED & STRENGTH 4

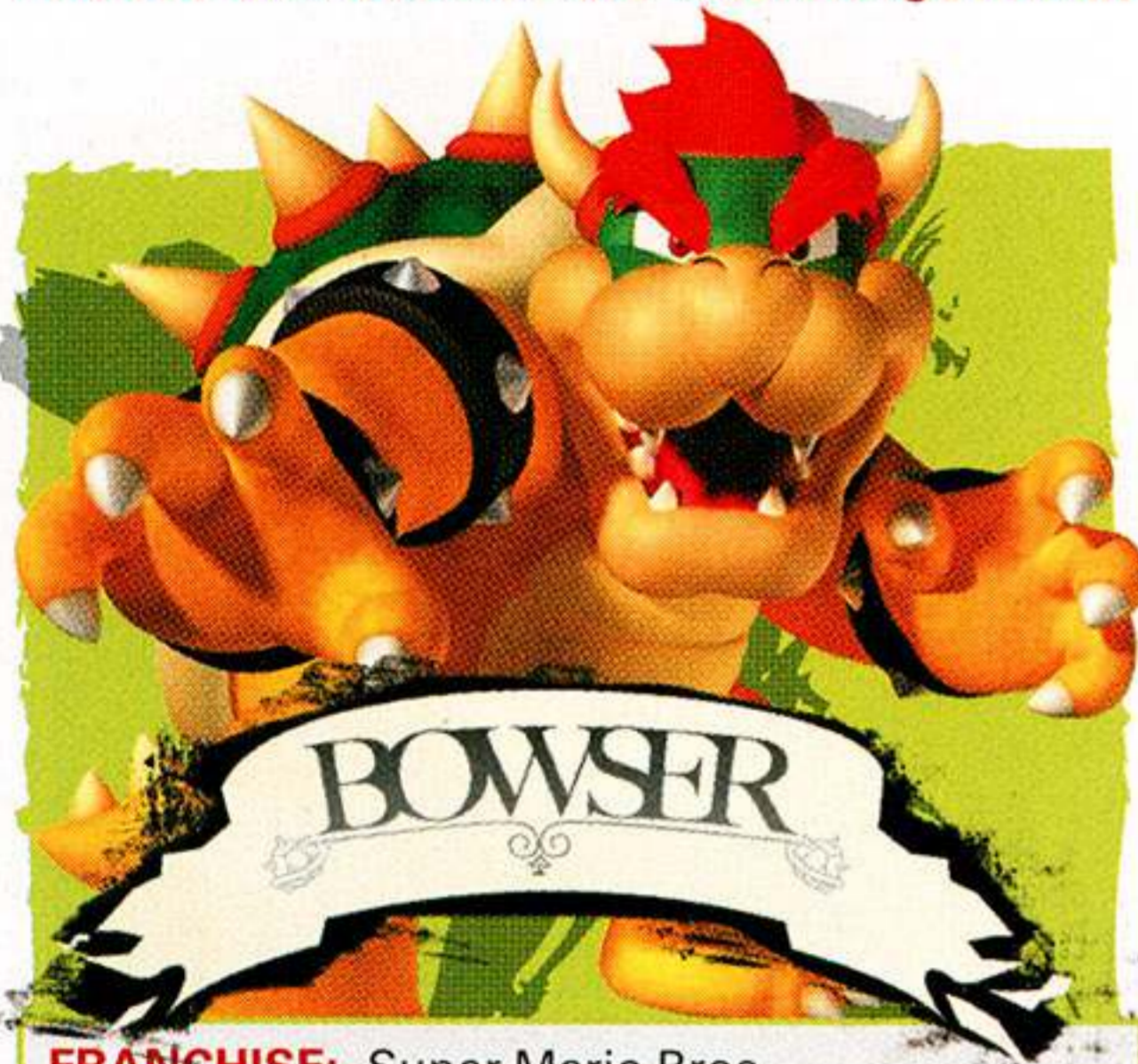
Faster than a car and strong enough to toss one, Alex's superhuman abilities are more deadly when used in combination with the absorbed talents of others.



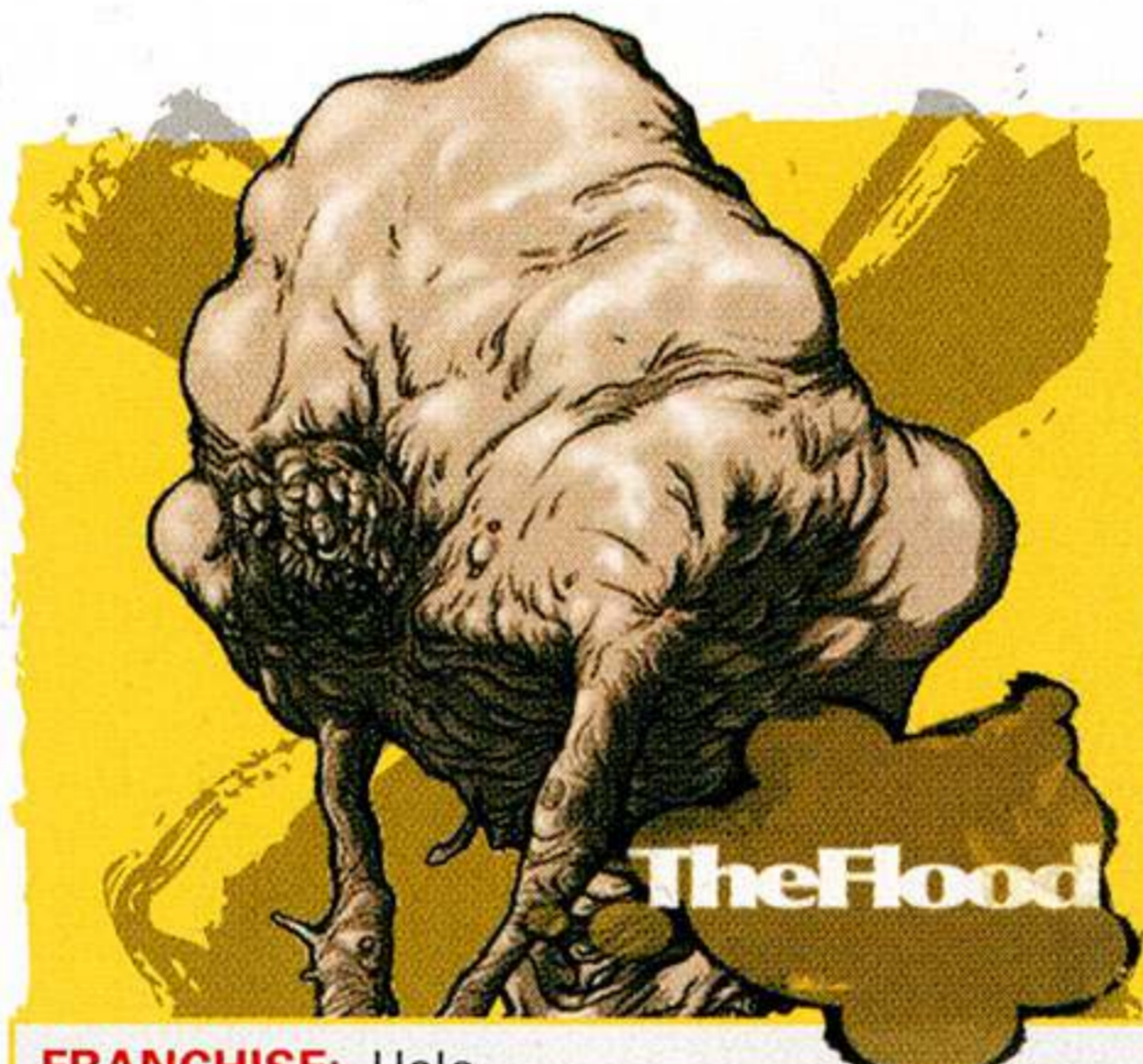


# THE MOST DIABOLICAL VIDEO-GAME VILLAINS

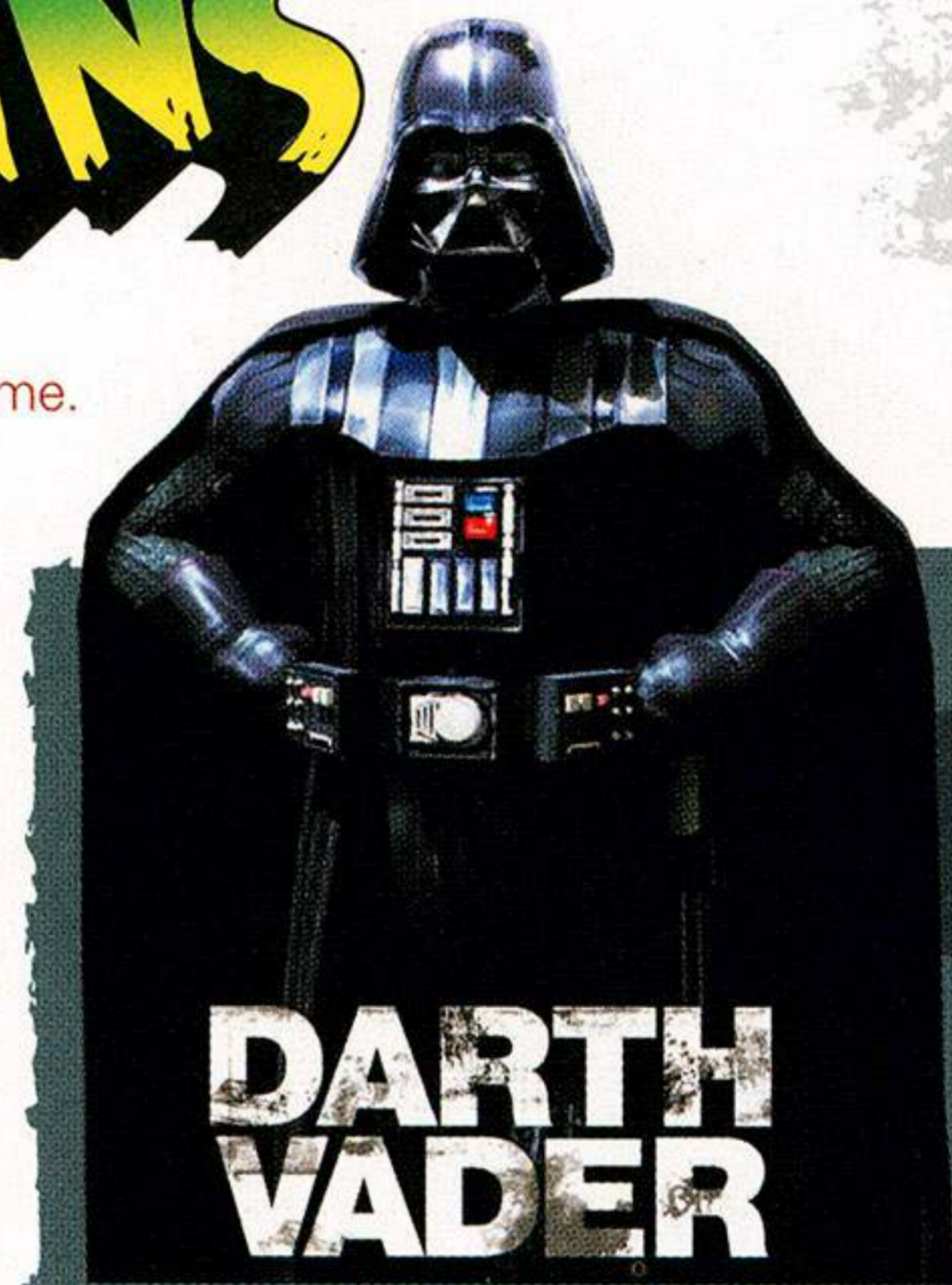
Bosses and baddies are often forgettable, but these nine villains withstand the test of time.



**FRANCHISE:** Super Mario Bros.  
**STRENGTHS:** Fire breath; protective spines and shell; endless Koopa minions  
**WEAKNESSES:** Fireballs; prone to standing over lava; peachy white girls



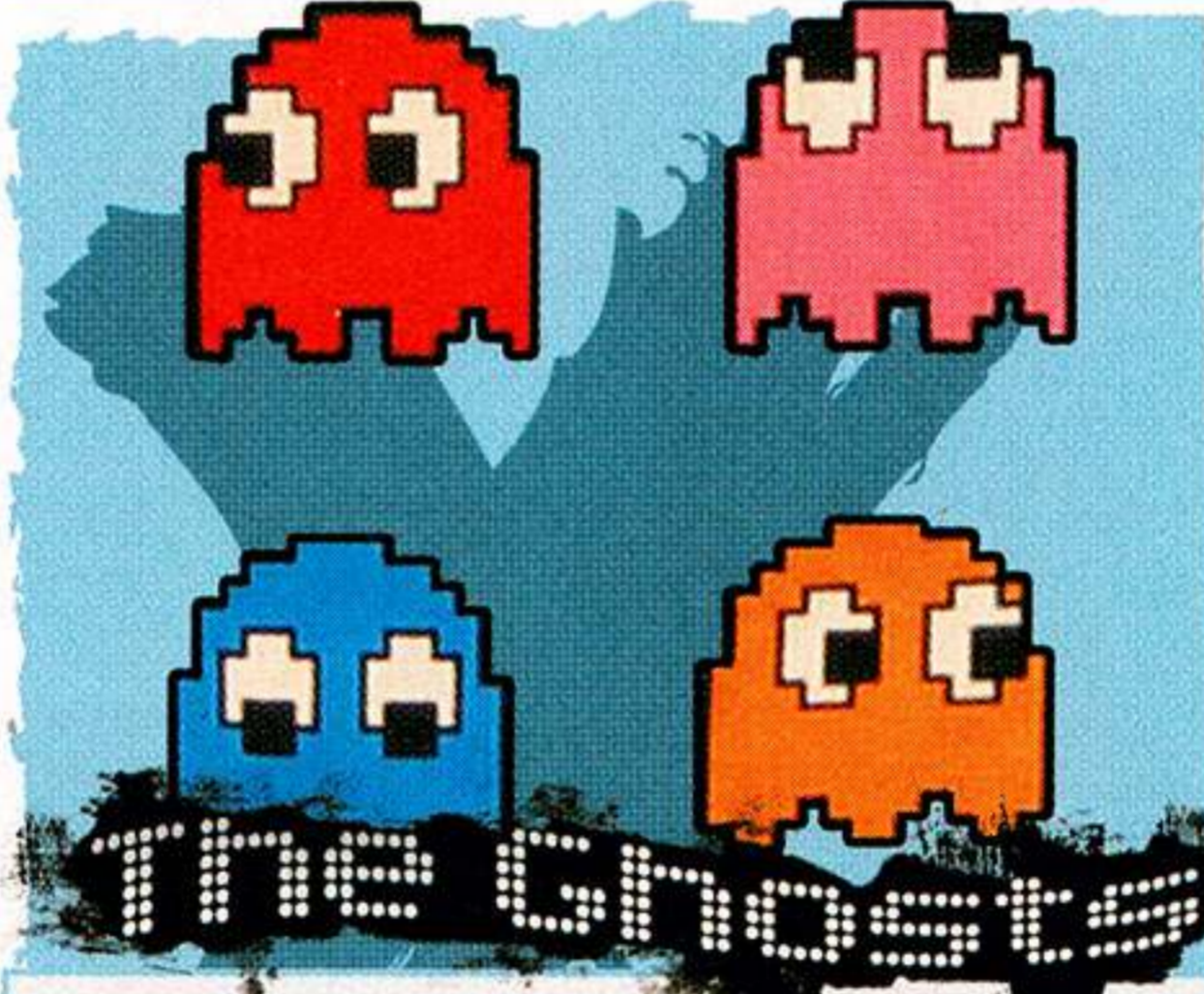
**FRANCHISE:** Halo  
**STRENGTHS:** Rapid reproduction; hard to kill; deadly at close range  
**WEAKNESSES:** Shotgun blasts; lack of armor; John-117



**FRANCHISE:** A gazillion *Star Wars* games  
**STRENGTHS:** The Force; intimidating robotic voice; weather-resistant helmet  
**WEAKNESSES:** The Force; strong family ties; not always 100 percent evil



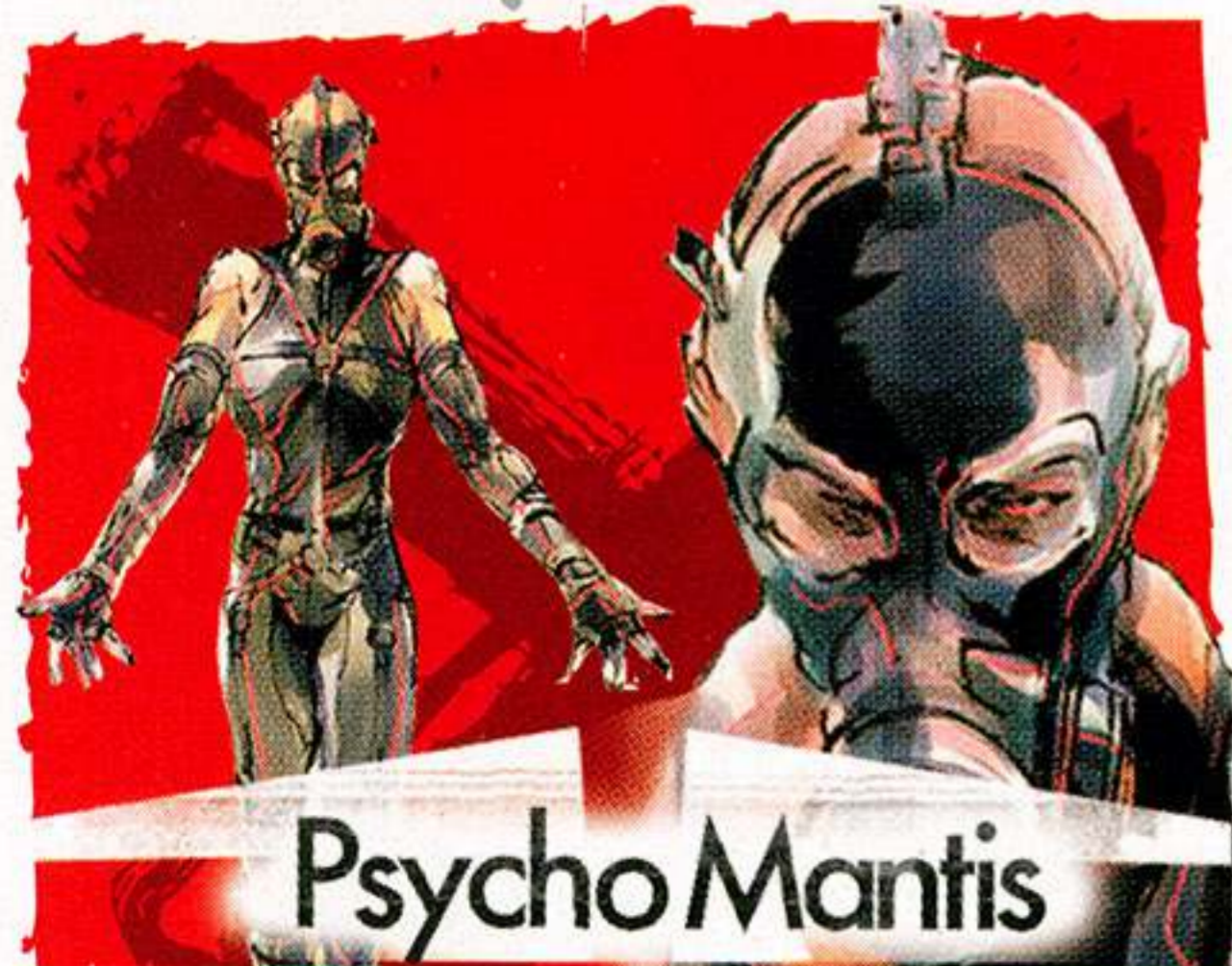
**FRANCHISE:** Metroid  
**STRENGTHS:** Command Space Pirates; shoot energy bolt from eye; glass tank  
**WEAKNESSES:** Breakable glass tank; no protective skull; ain't got no body



**FRANCHISE:** Pac-Man  
**STRENGTHS:** Faster than Pac-Man; stronger as a team; cool nicknames like Blinky  
**WEAKNESSES:** Tendency to run into walls; easily tricked; large flashing dots



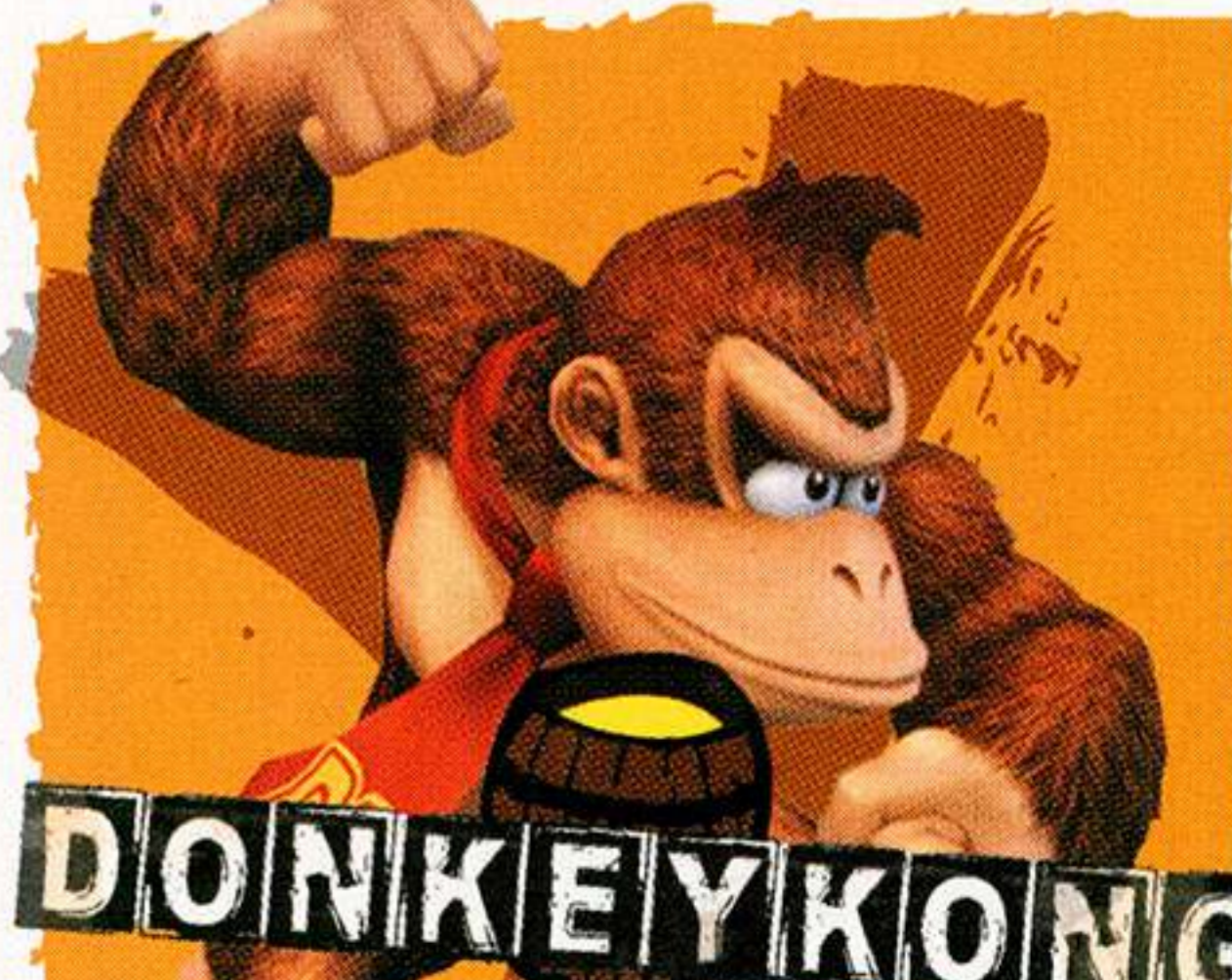
**FRANCHISE:** The Legend of Zelda  
**STRENGTHS:** Triforce of Power; shapeshifting ability; virtually immortal  
**WEAKNESSES:** Master Sword; Silver Arrows; pointy-eared blondes



**FRANCHISE:** Metal Gear Solid  
**STRENGTHS:** Telekinesis and telepathy; FBI/KGB experience; reads memory cards  
**WEAKNESSES:** Other people's thoughts; embarrassing facial scar; daddy issues



**FRANCHISE:** Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!  
**STRENGTHS:** Death uppercut; rippling biceps; annoying post-round trash talk  
**WEAKNESSES:** Punks from the Bronx; James "Buster" Douglas K.O. Boxing



**FRANCHISE:** Donkey Kong  
**STRENGTHS:** Endless supply of barrels; protected by nasty obstacles  
**WEAKNESSES:** Virtually immobile; Jumpman; potentially smelly

Taken from the 47 Most Diabolical Video-Game Villains of All Time. Read the complete feature only on [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com)



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# GAMEPRO FORTUNE TELLER

ARE YOU READY TO ROCK?!



## SUCKS OR RULES

Changing the world, one insult at a time

For those about to game, Polygonus salutes you. How will the most rockin' games of 2008 fare?

**GUITAR HERO: AEROSMITH**  
Release Date: June 2008 // PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PS2

Even Polygonus couldn't have predicted this. The most popular music-game franchise ever is going band-exclusive, and that band is the one that sang "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing." While Guitar Hero's next iteration may have a smattering of tracks from bands like Mott the Hoople and Cheap Trick (hooray?), the set list looks to be about 85 percent Aerosmith. No offense, but this band is almost as old as Polygonus himself (see picture of Steven Tyler above).

**VERDICT:** Guitar Hero: Aerosmith will go over on consoles like the real band would at Ozzfest—not very well. Where are the Beatles or the Rolling Stones at a time like this? Activision better pick some stellar opening bands for this ill-fated concert.

**CARD:** Walking Corpse



**BRÜTAL LEGEND**  
Release Date: Late 2008 // PS3, Xbox 360

He may be an all-knowing deity, but that doesn't mean Polygonus can't enjoy a good chuckle now and then. When it comes to games, he knows the ingenious minds behind the twisted Pyschonauts can be counted upon to deliver hilarity, not to mention a great gameplay experience. The company has tapped the hilarious Jack Black (*Saving Silverman* rules!) to portray the gaming character he was born to play; a violent roadie named Eddie Riggs in the action title *Brütal Legend*.

**VERDICT:** It may not be pinging the gaming community's radar very loudly right now, but heed Polygonus' words; *Brütal Legend* will rock your head and your ass. Jack Black's video game premiere—where's my ticket? Come-on-a-yeah-hah!

**CARD:** Masterpiece



### SUCKS

**Super Smash Bros. Brawl:** Though it sold over a million copies in just 11 days, Nintendo's monster hit has been struggling with online "pipeline strain" that left many unhappy players unable to take their tussling online. **SUCKS**

**No Blu-ray for Xbox 360:** Hot on the heels of Sony's claims that Microsoft was in talks to create a Blu-ray drive for the Xbox 360, Microsoft publicly dropped an anvil on the whole idea. Look for this attitude to change inside the next year. **SUCKS**

**CPL Gets Fraggged:** After more than 10 years of video game competitions, the Cyberathlete Professional League has canceled all 2008 events and ceased operations, citing "fragmentation of the sport, a crowded field of competing leagues, and the current economic climate." **SUCKS**

### RULES

**Grand Theft Auto IV:** It's finally here! Promising dozens of hours of solo campaign play, loads of multiplayer options, and vastly improved combat mechanics, this is one of the biggest gaming events of the year, if not *the* biggest. **RULES**

**HD DVD R.I.P.:** At long last, Toshiba terminated life support on its next-generation home video format, effectively ending any remaining customer confusion about which format to in which to invest. Expect Blu-ray player prices to jump in the short-term, and then steadily decline. **RULES**

**Sequel City:** A whole bunch of high-profile sequels were just confirmed: *Portal*, *BioShock*, *Gears of War*, *Call of Duty*, and *Prey* franchises are all getting new chapters that we're already dying to check out. **RULES**

What's *your* opinion? Vote for yourself on [SucksorRules.com](http://SucksorRules.com)



## GAMES TO DIE FOR

Our current obsessions



**#1**

**SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL (Wii)**

Despite some online multiplayer woes, accessible controls, a wide array of beloved characters, and their inventive attacks make this one of the best times you can have on the Wii.

**#2**

**GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS (PSP)**

Kratos' latest furiously exciting and satisfying action epic puts almost every other current PSP game (OK, we love *Patapon*, too) to shame. If you own Sony's handheld, buy this game.

**#3**

**POKER SMASH (XBOX 360)**

Proof that execution is everything. Creating poker hands with row after row of playing-card tiles is surprisingly appealing, ridiculously addictive, and only sets you back \$10.



# NINJA GAIDEN

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THE FINE LINE BETWEEN HONOR AND VENGEANCE  
WILL BE CROSSED BY ONE.

Hayabusa returns in the only true sequel to Ninja Gaiden. Exclusively on the Xbox 360.  
Four difficulty levels, from Acolyte to Master Ninja.

[xbox.com/ng2](http://xbox.com/ng2)



**TECMO**

**Microsoft**

Team NINJA

Jump in.

 XBOX 360 LIVE



# Sequel-itis (sē'kw lī'tīs) n.

Game sequels are often money in the bank. But for those in search of the road less traveled, here are the six most-promising non-sequels of 2008.

**Dead Space** PS3, Xbox 360  
October 31

The premise: The entire crew of a deep-space mining ship has gone missing, and it's up to you, the sole survivor, to rid the vessel of alien baddies.

**Wii Fit** Wii  
May 19

With potential for interactive skiing and skateboarding experiences, not to mention the included fitness exercises, our flabby physique and imagination await this balance-board controlled experience.

**LittleBigPlanet** PS3  
September

Mario may have left the overworld a long time ago for galactic 3D platforming, but LittleBigPlanet looks to revive the 2D perspective with a highly creative and inviting style that's heavy on community. It's primed to be the YouTube of gaming.

**de Blob** Wii  
June 27

Players tint a monochrome world with a paint-absorbing blob. It's quite a sight to see a drab cityscape go from grey to color, introducing a refreshing new gameplay idea that's near-perfect for the Wii.

**Saboteur** PS3, Xbox 360  
2008

Saboteur gets zero points for original setting (WWII Paris), but its objective-based twist on the World War II has us thrilled: one man attempts to sabotage the oppressive Nazi regime.

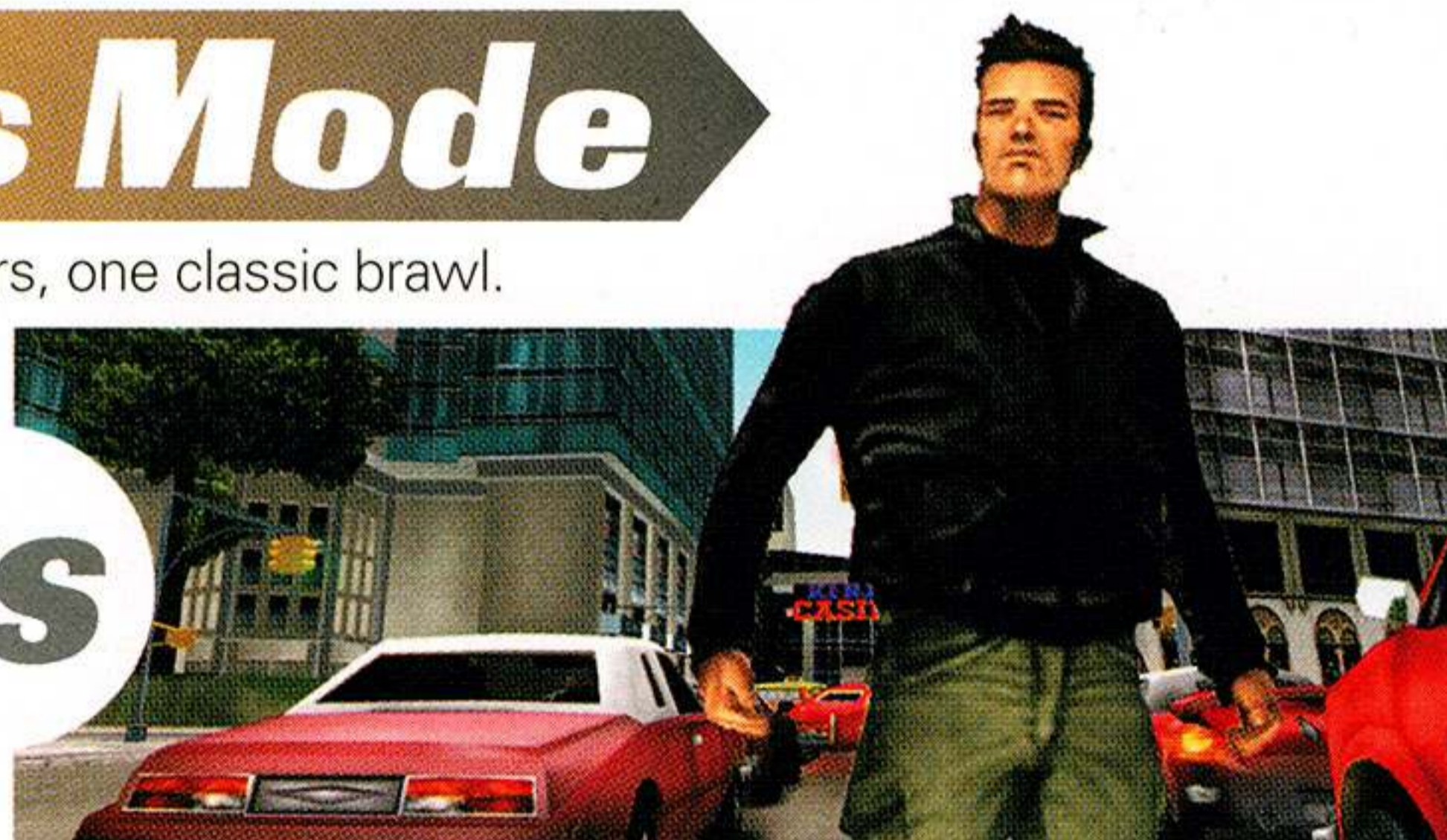
**Spore** PC, Mac  
September 7

Will Wright's Spore lets players nurture multiple species from a multi-cell organism to a land-walking creature, and ultimately, space exploration and cultivation.



## Versus Mode

Two classic characters, one classic brawl.



VS

### Tommy Vercetti (Grand Theft Auto: Vice City)

- Troubled Past:** Murdered 11 people to become the "Harwood Butcher."
- Mob Ties:** Forelli Family, Ricardo Diaz.
- Claim to Fame:** Formed powerful Vercetti Gang.
- Weakest Link:** Places faith in impulsive dingbats like Lance Vance.
- Fashion Sense:** *Miami Vice* chic.

### Claude (Grand Theft Auto III)

- Betrayed by psychopathic ex-girlfriend Catalina.
- Leone Family, Liberty City Yakuza.
- Framed Colombian Cartel for execution of Kenji Kasen.
- Deep-seated fear of public speaking.
- Leather and dark khakis.

#### OUTCOME:

Claude's just sitting down for a plate of ribs when Tommy bursts into the joint wielding nothing but a baseball bat and a loud Hawaiian shirt. Claude goes for his gun, but a home run swing catches him in the teeth before he can pull the .45 Colt from his waistband. Tommy arrived on a simple mission to force a few words from Claude's famously silent lips, but by

the time Vercetti's raging bloodlust is sated, all that's left of the mute is a fine red mist.

**DECISION:** Tommy Vercetti >>>





# TEENAGE ZOMBIES

INVASION OF THE ALIEN BRAIN THINGYS

IS MORE FUN THAN...

POOL PARTY!



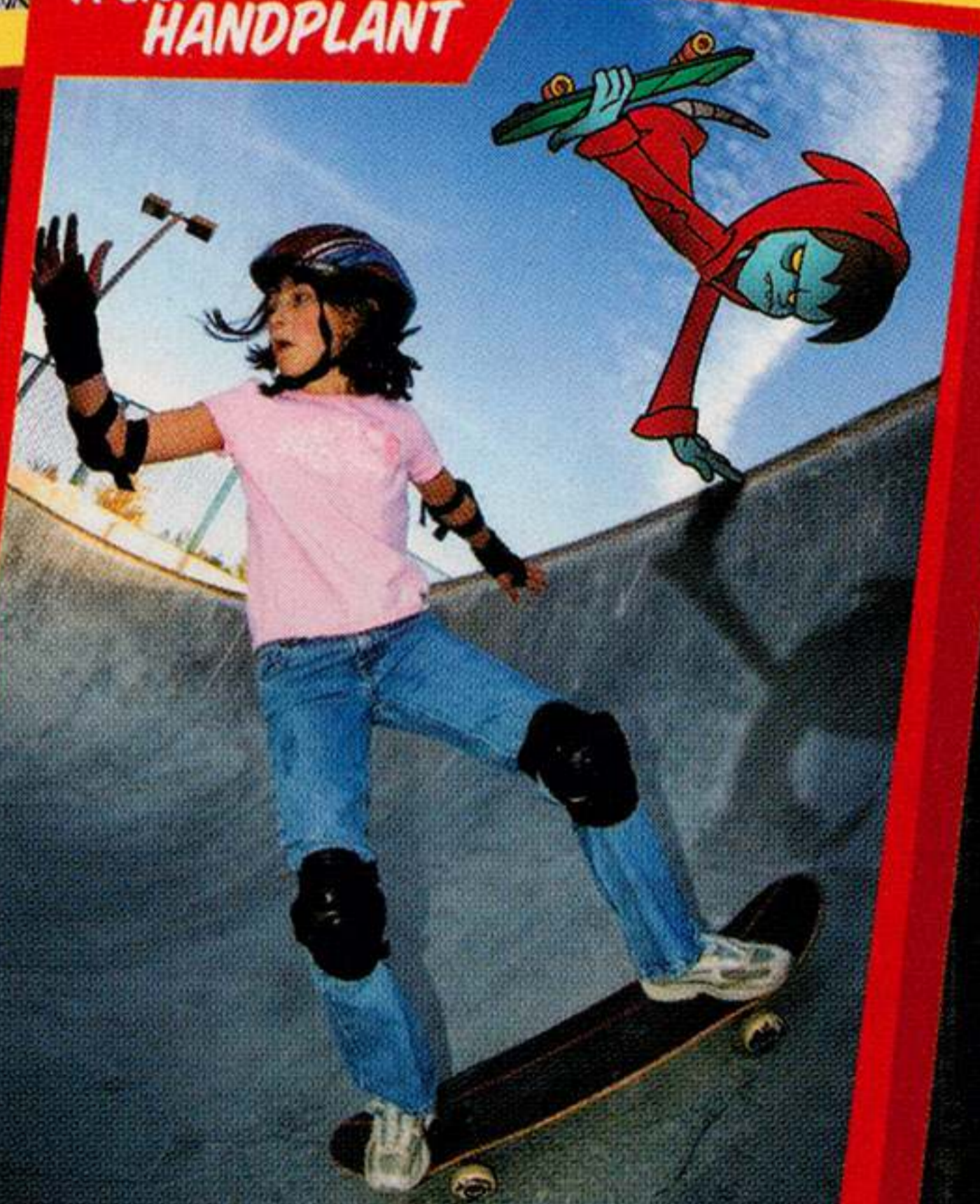
SCHOOLING GRANNY IN HOOPS



TUBING ACROSS THE WAKES

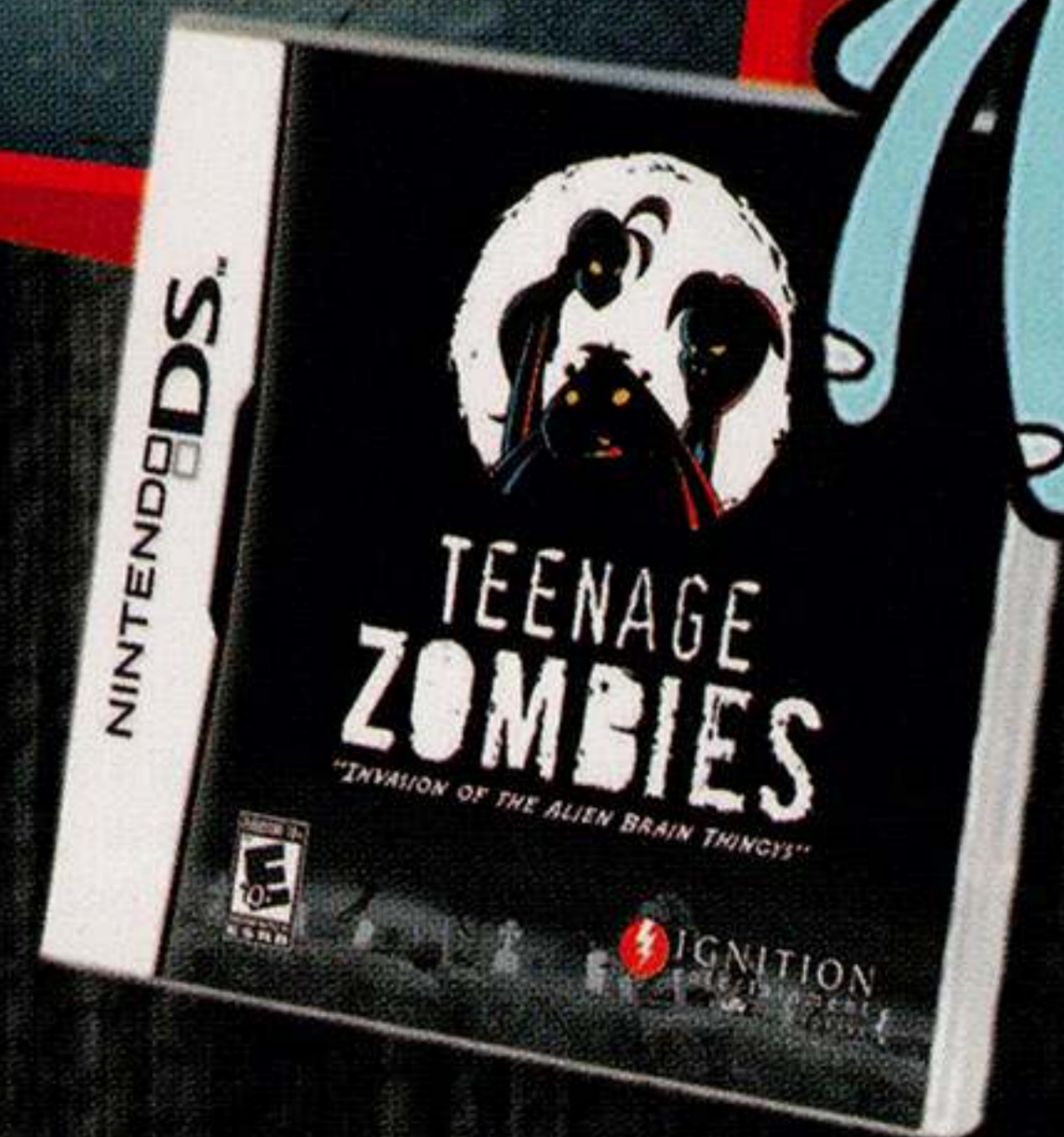


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NINTENDO DS™



# GOOD VIBRATIONS

No rumble = no fun. That about sums up our experience with the PlayStation 3's Sixaxis controller. But with big-name game makers like Metal Gear Solid creator Hideo Kojima screaming for the return of rumble, Sony has finally heard the cries. Here's why you need the new DualShock 3 controller.

## BEST DIRECTIONAL PAD

Still the best console directional pad available, the DualShock 3 beats out Microsoft and Nintendo's controllers, making it the best way to play HD classics like the upcoming Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix.



## RUMBLE, RENEWED

Handy new rumble packs in the palm grips make the DualShock 3 really shake-n-bake. And the best part:

many of your PS3 games are already built to support vibration, and some older games are ready to rumble via online patches.

## PRESSURE-SENSITIVE BUTTONS

A trademark since the PS2, the DualShock 3's buttons are pressure-sensitive, meaning games like Hot Shots Golf: Out of Bounds can identify how hard a button is pressed. In turn, the game will trigger a specific type of golf shot.

## DUAL TRIGGERS

The best dual since analog sticks for the console shooter fan. Xbox 360's triggers still have a slight edge, but the DualShock 3 comes close.

## DUAL ANALOG STICKS

A console staple since the original DualShock.



## MOTION-SENSING

Sixaxis motion controls aren't exactly blowing anyone away, but this tiny little motion- and gravity-sensing device from the original PS3 controller has made its way into the DualShock 3. Hopefully future games will make better use of it than flying pretty dragons.

## HEAVIER THINGS

Forty percent heavier than the lightweight Sixaxis, the hefty DualShock 3 feels pleasingly sturdy; strong enough to withstand the occasional controller-tossing temper tantrum.

## SOLID CASING

The outer casing on the DualShock 3 is a sleek, solid black. On the Sixaxis, it was slightly see-through, producing a cheap look in bright light.



## 1 SMASH BROS. BRAWL SMASHES NINTENDO WI-FI

Super Smash Bros. Brawl players eager to battle their buddies in online matches, were often greeted with a Wi-Fi error code on the Wii. This error causes the game to disconnect, and has been infuriating many anxious brawlers.

**THE VERDICT:** This is just another sign that Nintendo is behind the times with its online experience. Expect some bumps along the way before the company straightens it all out.

## 2 BLU-RAY IS TOO SMALL!

The PlayStation 3 offers more development space than any other console, roughly six times more than its competitors. But Metal Gear Solid 4 creator Hideo Kojima says Blu-ray's hefty 50GB storage capacity is "not enough."

**THE VERDICT:** Kojima has decided to only include one narrative track (English or Japanese) depending on the territory. In the future, Blu-ray storage should increase, so perhaps Kojima's next saga won't warrant any cutbacks.

## 3 NO MAGIC IN FALLOUT 3

The basic combat in the post-apocalyptic role-playing game Fallout 3 may seem complex, but the game will not utilize any magic. Instead, the developers are doing as much as they can with guns, adding another layer where players can shoot body parts and feel the effects of a crippled leg or arm.

**THE VERDICT:** If the weapon combat is all it's cracked up to be, you're probably not going to miss the sorcery.

## 4 GOD OF WAR III COMING TO PS3

Retail copies of God of War: Chains of Olympus for the PSP feature confirmation of Kratos's near arrival on PS3. The instruction booklet displays the PS3 logo with an enlarged "3," the God of War Omega symbol, and the words "coming soon."

**THE VERDICT:** Duh. We know God of War III is coming, but the phrase "coming soon" could mean another year to wait, at least.

## 5 MICROSOFT GETTING NERVOUS?

With Sony's PS3 on the retail rise, Microsoft sent out a press release pointing out that the console race isn't just about hardware sales; it's also about content and community. Microsoft was quick to pull out numbers that flaunted the Xbox 360's popular game sales, assuring customers that Sony's hardware boom might not be all that and a bag of chips.

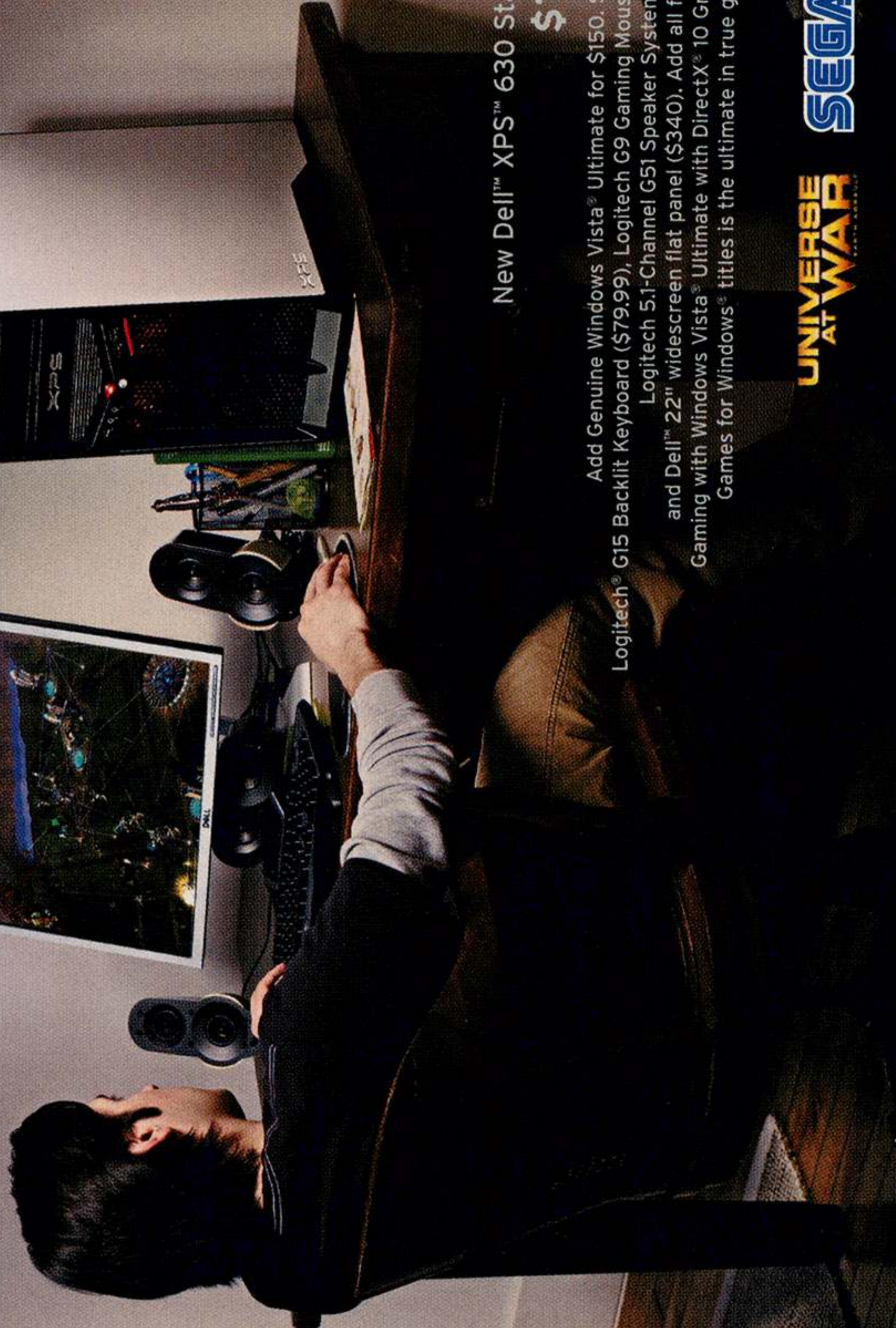
**THE VERDICT:** Sony may have squeaked out a hardware win in February, but Microsoft really wants people to know the important thing is you, the gamer! We're not sure how the console race will pan out, but we certainly like feeling important. Don't you?



Dell recommends Windows Vista® Ultimate.



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Ultimate



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Add Genuine Windows Vista® Ultimate for \$150. Shown with Logitech® G15 Backlit Keyboard (\$79.99), Logitech G9 Gaming Mouse (\$89.99), Logitech 5.1-Channel 5.1-Speaker System (\$169.99), and Dell™ 22" widescreen flat panel (\$340). Add all for \$829.97. Gaming with Windows Vista® Ultimate with DirectX® 10 Graphics and Games for Windows® titles is the ultimate in true gaming play.



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**DELL**

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# DEATH BOX 360

Xbox 360's are sick. We've got the cure.



...ns: Colonial Marines...Aliens: Colonial Marines...Aliens: Colonial Marines... • **Man, my PlayStation 3 is getting a major workout these days.** In between watching Blu-ray flicks (*The Descent*, *300*, and *The Prestige*, all excellent), I've been tossing DiVX shows and MP3s onto my huge 160GB hard drive. I really like how the PS3 is turning into my central "media hub" for all things entertainment. And once that new PSN Store update goes live, I'm expecting to see some cool video download options. 1080p video rentals, perhaps?... • **Sounds like Rare's cooking up some secret new Xbox 360 games, and I'm not just talking about those Banjo-Kazooie rumors.** I've got my fingers crossed for a new *Killer Instinct*, or even a good *Perfect Dark* game. But with my luck, we'll probably end up with *Grabbed by the Ghoulies 2*... • **I played Tekken 6 in a Japanese arcade recently.** The graphics are astoundingly beautiful, but I found the endless juggle combos (wall and ground bouncing) to be frustrating. I hope Namco tones down these death combos when *Tekken 6* hits the PS3 in late 2008 or 2009... • **As for the "death of PC gaming," game designers are invariably telling me that traditional PC development is in big trouble.** Rising development costs, soaring piracy and hardware costs, plus indifferent players does not make for a good mix. With the Xbox 360 and PS3 being so powerful, PC gaming's gotta change in a big, big way if it's to survive as anything more than a shadow of its former self... • **Gentle reminder to Microsoft: Xbox Live Arcade should not be a dumping ground for ancient 16-bit games.** By cluttering XBLA with retro junk, you're missing huge opportunities that are going to Sony. Focus on high-quality games like *N+* and *Castle Crashers*, and drop crap like *Double Dragon* and *Discs of Tron* entirely. Okay? Okay... • **I'll close with my personal impressions of Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots, which I had the honor of playing recently.** It's been a long, long time since I've played a game this polished and enjoyable; what I played was shockingly great, bordering on "instant classic." Afterwards, I tried to replay *MGS3* and found I could barely tolerate the clumsy controls and long-winded cinematics. *MGS4* takes everything that's ever worked in the series—amazing graphics, clever gameplay, shocking story twists—and amplifies it by a factor of 1000, all while neatly slicing out everything that sucked. If you enjoy action or stealth games, *MGS4* is going to blow your mind... • **P.S. Just wait until you see our exclusive cover story that will premiere in the August issue of GamePro.** Mark your calendars: July 8 is the day... • *LittleBigPlanet*...*LittleBigPlanet*...*LittleBi*...

## THE WHY OF RED RINGS

If you've had problems with your Xbox 360, you've most likely been a victim of overheating. A faulty heat sink clamp is often the main culprit, but the overall cramped hardware design doesn't help, and can eventually lead to the dreaded Red Ring of Death.

## DISC DISASTERS

Even if you don't get hit with Red Rings, you might start getting "disc unreadable" errors even on flawless discs. To minimize scratched discs, only move your console when it's safely turned off.

## CONSOLE FENG SHUI

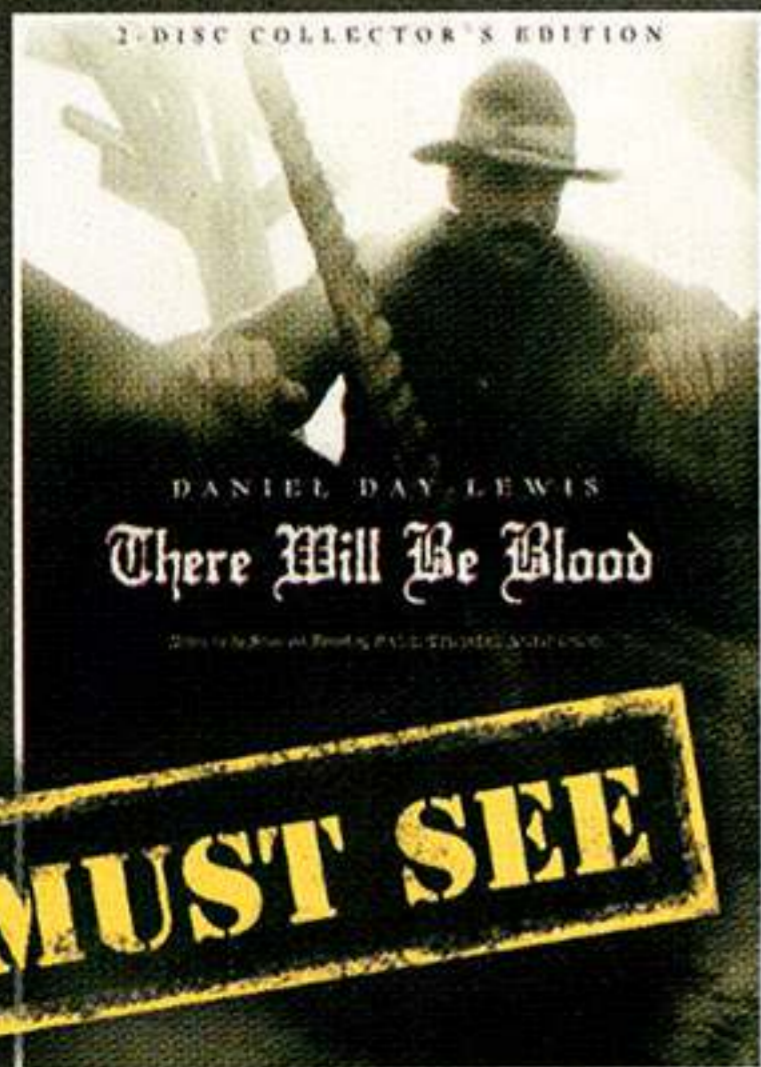
Lose the clutter! If you've wedged your Xbox 360 into a crowded entertainment center, you're asking for trouble. If your fan kicks into high gear regularly, take that as a sign that you need to give your baby a bit more space.

## POWER TRIP

Balance your power. That giant power supply brick needs some elbow room, and seems happiest when elevated from a surface with, say, drink coasters.

# OMG MOVIES

MOVIES FOR GAMERS



### THERE WILL BE BLOOD: 2-DISC COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Paul Thomas Anderson's lauded epic about oil, faith, family, and corruption might lack a director's commentary, but it backs up its memorable performances with featurettes and additional scenes. An Oscar winner for Best Actor (Daniel Day-Lewis) and Cinematography (Robert Elswit).  
ThereWillBeBlood.com  
\$34.99

### BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD

Brothers played by Philip Seymour Hoffman and Ethan Hawke rob their parents' jewelry store with terrible and riveting consequences in this suspenseful melodrama directed by Sidney Lumet (*The Verdict*, *Network*).  
ThinkFilmCompany.com  
\$27.98 (DVD); \$35.98 (Blu-ray)



Pwned this month:  
XBLA detritus  
*Tekken 6*  
PC gaming (again)



e-mail Sid:  
sid\_shuman@gamepro.com





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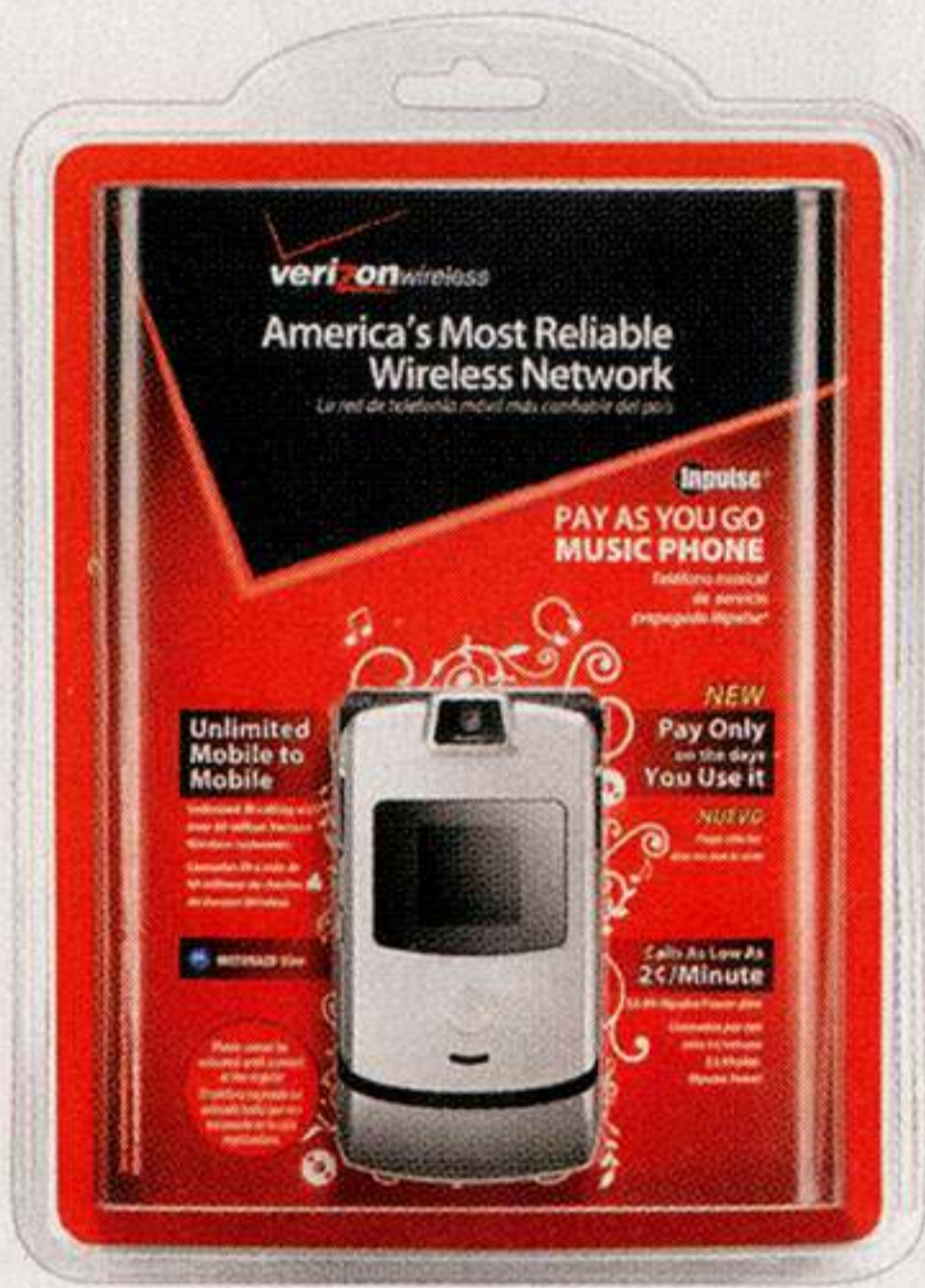
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Outer Haven soldiers are Liquid's elite troops and boast lithe, free-running movements. Hooked talons on their hands and feet enable them to cling to walls and ceilings.

## METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

We played it, and it's spectacular.

PS3

■ Developer: Kojima Productions ■ Publisher: Konami ■ Release Date: June

**S**nugly Nestled in the snowy heart of Nasu, Japan, Konami and Kojima Productions recently held a secret "boot camp" where the companies showed off a nearly complete version of hotly anticipated PlayStation 3 action-epic Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots. Only a handful of gaming insiders were invited, but GamePro still got exclusive hands-on access to an

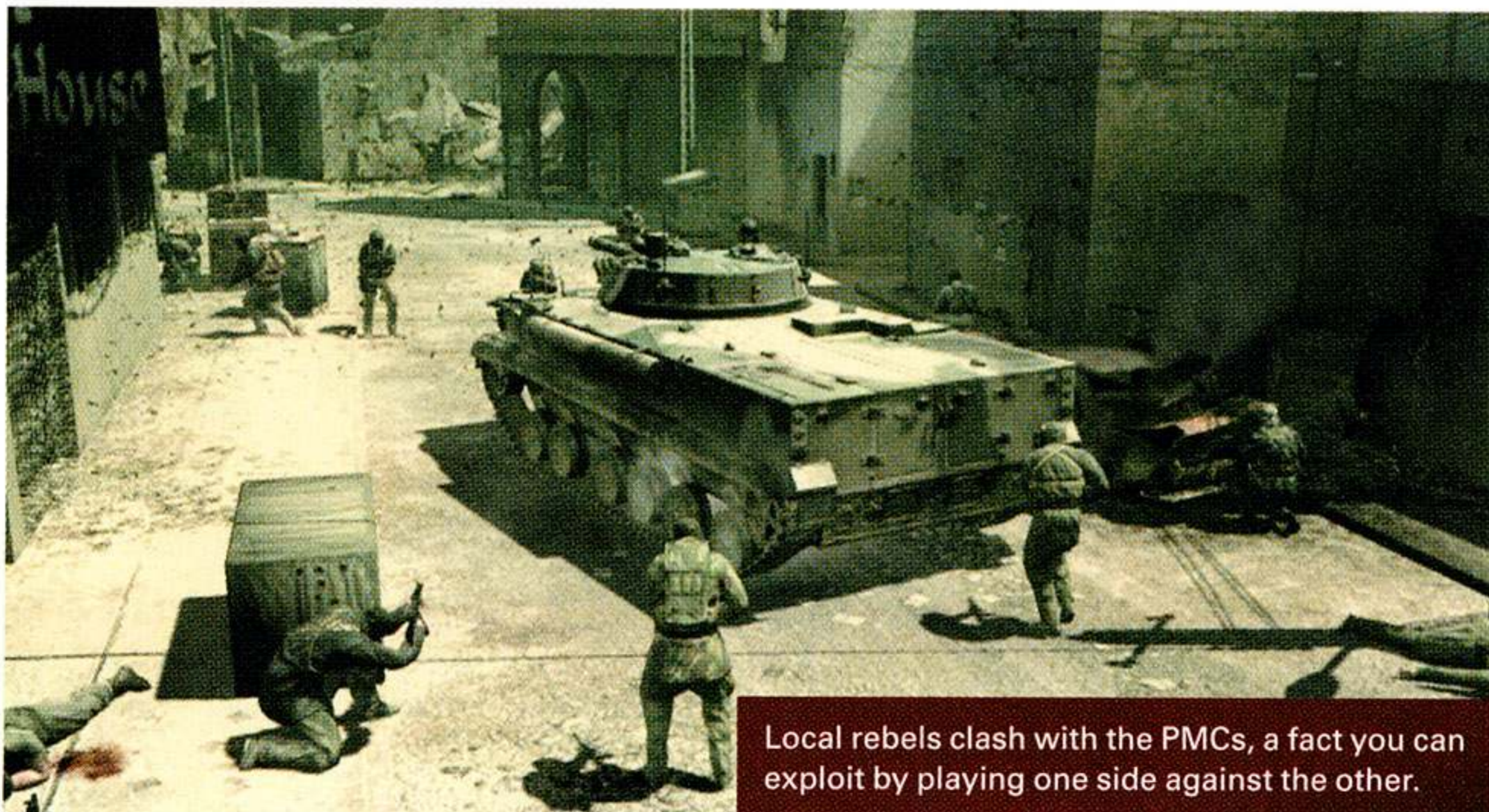
enormous portion of the game. This is our report, complete with extensive hands-on impressions.

Before delving into the Metal Gear Solid 4 experience, however, we've got one word of advice: start saving those pennies! That \$499 PlayStation 3 Metal Gear Solid 4 bundle isn't going to pay for itself, and the game's release date, June 12, is right around the corner.

### DEATH ADDER

From the opening scenes, a palpable cloud of doom hangs over Metal Gear Solid 4. Once an unstoppable force, the legendary stealth operative Solid Snake is starting to show his age—literally. In a near-future world ruled by private military companies (PMCs) and enforced by microscopic nanomachines lurking inside every soldier, Snake's old-fashioned skills and sensibilities make him something of an ancient relic. Snake is still a tough guy, but he's no longer the invincible super-stud he once was due to a mysterious case of premature aging. MGS4's story is infused with a darker, more sophisticated tone; it just feels *right*. Fans of the first Metal Gear Solid will doubtlessly approve of the storyline developments, but we don't dare go into too many specifics: one of the game's charms lies in its intricate, sometimes shocking, storyline twists. No spoilers here!

We can share a few details, though. As usual, Col. Roy Campbell and Dr. Hal Emmerich (Otacon) press the legendary Solid Snake to undertake "one last mission." The goal: to assassinate Snake's twin brother, the power-mad Liquid Snake, and save the world from the threat of the PMCs. You might remember Liquid as the chief villain from the original Metal Gear Solid, but here, his personality has been transfused into villainous mainstay Revolver Ocelot. It's a weird, trippy setup, but trust us: it pays off in spades.



Local rebels clash with the PMCs, a fact you can exploit by playing one side against the other.



## SIDEWINDER

The first act opens in an unnamed country in the Middle East, where Liquid Snake's PMCs are clashing with local militias in a never-ending power struggle. As Snake, you'll duck through dusty alleyways, destroy tanks using mortar turrets, and take sides with the local rebels when the situation calls for it. Several hours into the game, Snake meets a shady black market gun runner named Drebin. Though his motives are suspect, Drebin quickly becomes one of Snake's closest allies because he holds the key to accessing an enormous arsenal of weapons. By collecting the firearms of fallen enemies, Snake earns "Drebin Points" that he can cash in to unlock new guns, weapon mods, and extra ammo straight from the field...even in the middle of combat. This meta-game is actually quite enjoyable, and it's tempting to dart out of cover and scoop up fallen guns, stealth be damned. The formula is simple: the more guns you collect, the more you'll be able to buy.

Speaking of guns, Metal Gear Solid 4's arsenal options are already setting new standards. The game includes over 70 unique firearms, with an array of pistols, sub-machineguns, rifles, shotguns, and far, far more. Gun modifications are another bright spot in MGS4. Through a sleek 3D interface, we outfitted a basic M4 assault rifle with a laser sight, red-dot scope, flashlight, under-barrel grenade launcher (shotgun also available), plus a silencer. That's *five* upgrades attached to *one* gun—astonishing! It's a minor miracle that the aging Snake is able to even heft that bulky, do-it-all firearm, let alone shoulder and fire it. In another realistic touch, you can set automatic weapons to single-shot, triple burst, and full-auto modes. Naturally, Snake's still got his old repertoire of close-quarters maneuvers, from basic hand-to-hand combos to silent strangleholds. The end result is an extremely versatile combat system that's loaded with replay value.

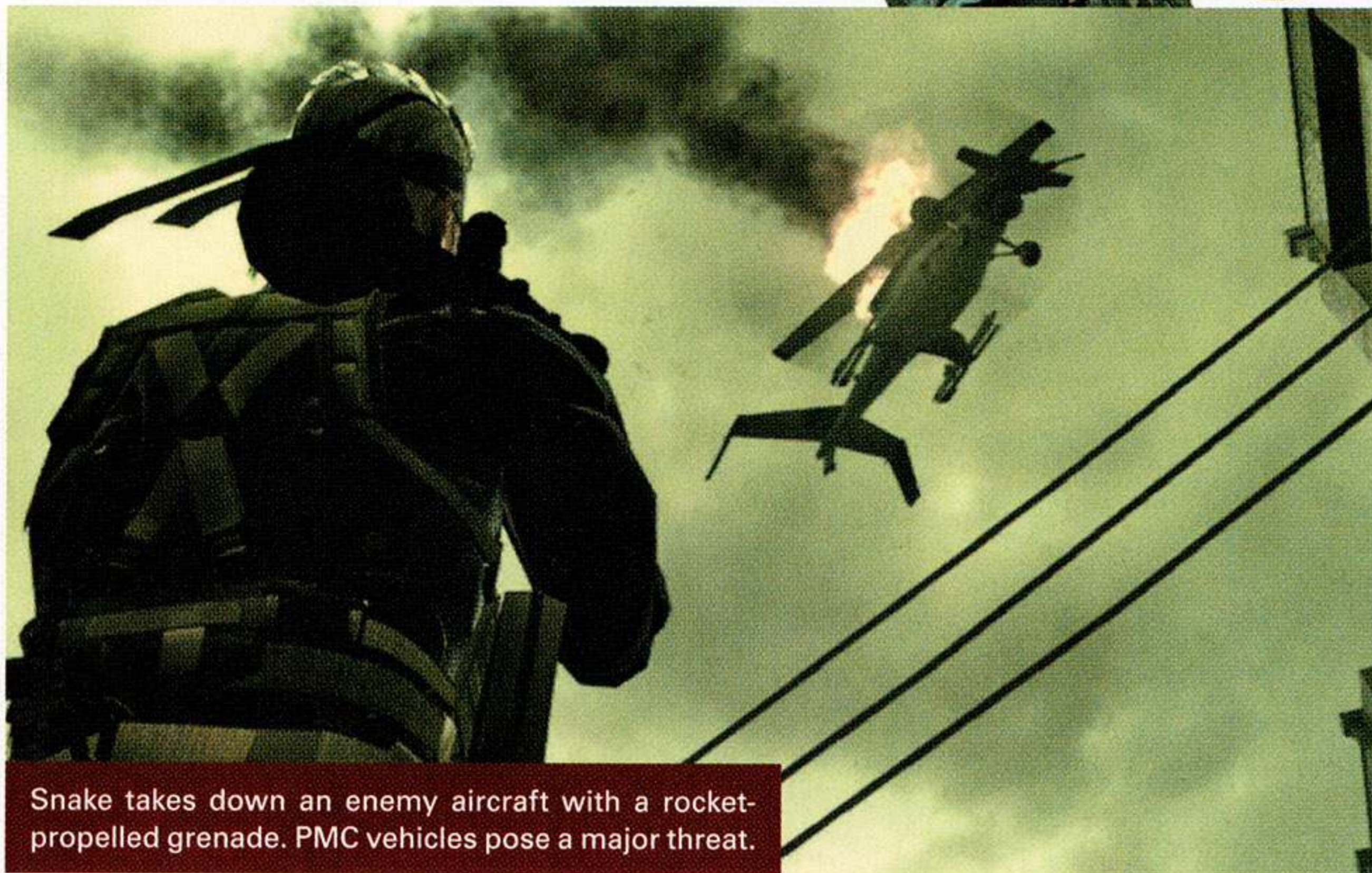
## SOLID START

The three things we liked best about Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots:

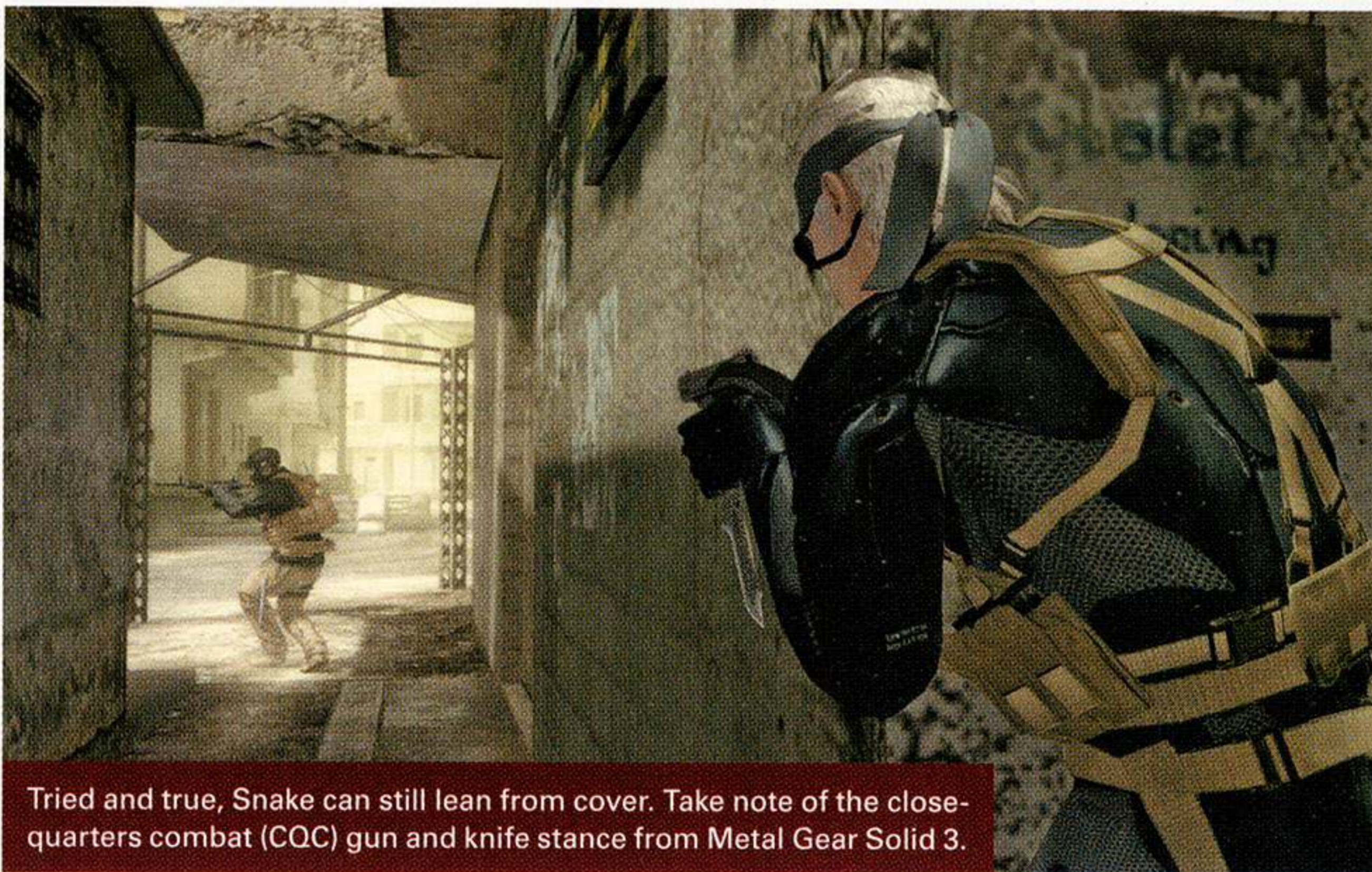
■ **The Graphics:** You thought Gears of War looked amazing? Think again. Metal Gear Solid 4 will blow you away with its ultra-detailed characters and intricate environments, painting some of the most gorgeous graphics seen this side of Crysis. The sand-swept streets of the Middle Eastern stages look so realistic that your eyes begin to naturally register the visuals as a movie rather than a mere game. Clearly, MGS4 puts its 50GB Blu-ray disc to outstanding use.

■ **The Guns:** Prior Metal Gear Solid games have always featured high-tech gear, but MGS4 takes that formula to soaring heights. The final game will feature over 70 weapons, from lethal assault rifles to silent tranquilizer guns, and you can outfit many of them with scopes, recoil grips, laser sights, flashlights, and more. Collecting enemy weapons will unlock new guns and "Drebin Points" for further customization.

■ **The Sound:** Thanks to Skywalker Sound's state-of-the-art audio mastering, the booming gunshots will make your hair stand on end! The Hollywood-style soundtrack, a series hallmark, is also predictably fantastic, and Snake's raspy voice sounds more desiccated than ever. *GamePro* editor Sid Shuman went so far as to say that MGS4 has "the best sound I've ever heard in a game."



SNAKE TAKES DOWN AN ENEMY AIRCRAFT WITH A ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADE. PMC VEHICLES POSE A MAJOR THREAT.



TRIED AND TRUE, SNAKE CAN STILL LEAN FROM COVER. TAKE NOTE OF THE CLOSE-QUARTERS COMBAT (CQC) GUN AND KNIFE STANCE FROM METAL GEAR SOLID 3.

## PIT VIPER

Perhaps the greatest joy of playing MGS4 lies in its simple, intuitive control scheme. Snake may be getting older, but his abilities haven't diminished one bit. You may know about his Octo-cam suit, which allows him to automatically blend in with surrounding walls and floors. More impressive is his suite of new ground-based stealth abilities. "The inch worm" allows Snake to slowly creep past hotspots while playing dead, and is activated by gently nudging the analog stick while Snake lies prone. Snake can also aim and fire guns while lying down, or roll over to assume a back-down position—handy for tossing grenades over-the-shoulder at unwitting enemies—with a quick tap of the  $\Delta$  button. It's impressive to see such a wide range of abilities represented through such simple controller inputs—the learning curve here is very gentle.

## "IMPRESSIVE, SNAKE"

Playing a nearly complete build of MGS4 running on the PS3 was a revelatory experience. The graphics looked sensational, the sound effects and music sounded magnificently epic, and the interface felt sleek and simple. In short, it's be-

coming increasingly clear that MGS4 will be the rare game to live up to its own massive hype. We feel confident that MGS4 is the game PlayStation 3 owners (and Metal Gear fans) have been waiting years to play. Check back next month for more detailed hands-on details of what is quickly shaping up to be the top game for 2008. We couldn't be more excited!—Sid Shuman

## ONE MONTH LEFT!



Metal Gear Solid 4 draws upon much of the lore from its predecessors, and some of those clues pay off in a big way. Metal Gear Solid: The Essential Collection bundles all three previous games (plus director's cut features) into one killer PS2 package for just \$30. If you're new to the series, this is a perfect chance to get caught up before MGS4 hits!

KTFV

Want more Metal Gear Solid 4 screens and news online? Text KTFV to 59479

Only standard text messaging rates apply





Vader looks amazing and fights even more amazingly.

## SOULCALIBUR IV

GamePro goes hands-on with Yoda, Vader, and Soulcalibur IV's new finishing moves.

PS3 Xbox 360

Developer: Project Soul Publisher: Namco Release Date: June

Ever since we've laid eyes on Darth Vader and Yoda in Soulcalibur IV, we've been desperate for any new information. While we've sufficed on a handful of screenshots and a few answers from Namco, we've yearned to really get a feel for the force-wielding fighters. And now we have it. We got tons of hands-on time with both characters, explored their exclusive stages and executed every move we could,

all while chatting with some of the game's lead developers. Not a fan of the Force? Well, we also happened to learn quite a bit about the rest of the game, too. With finishing moves, destructible environments, and a unique new mode that may change the fighting game in a big way, you'll find Soulcalibur IV isn't just a sharpened blade; it's a brand new sword that we can't wait to get our hands on again.

### THE SOUL STRIKES BACK

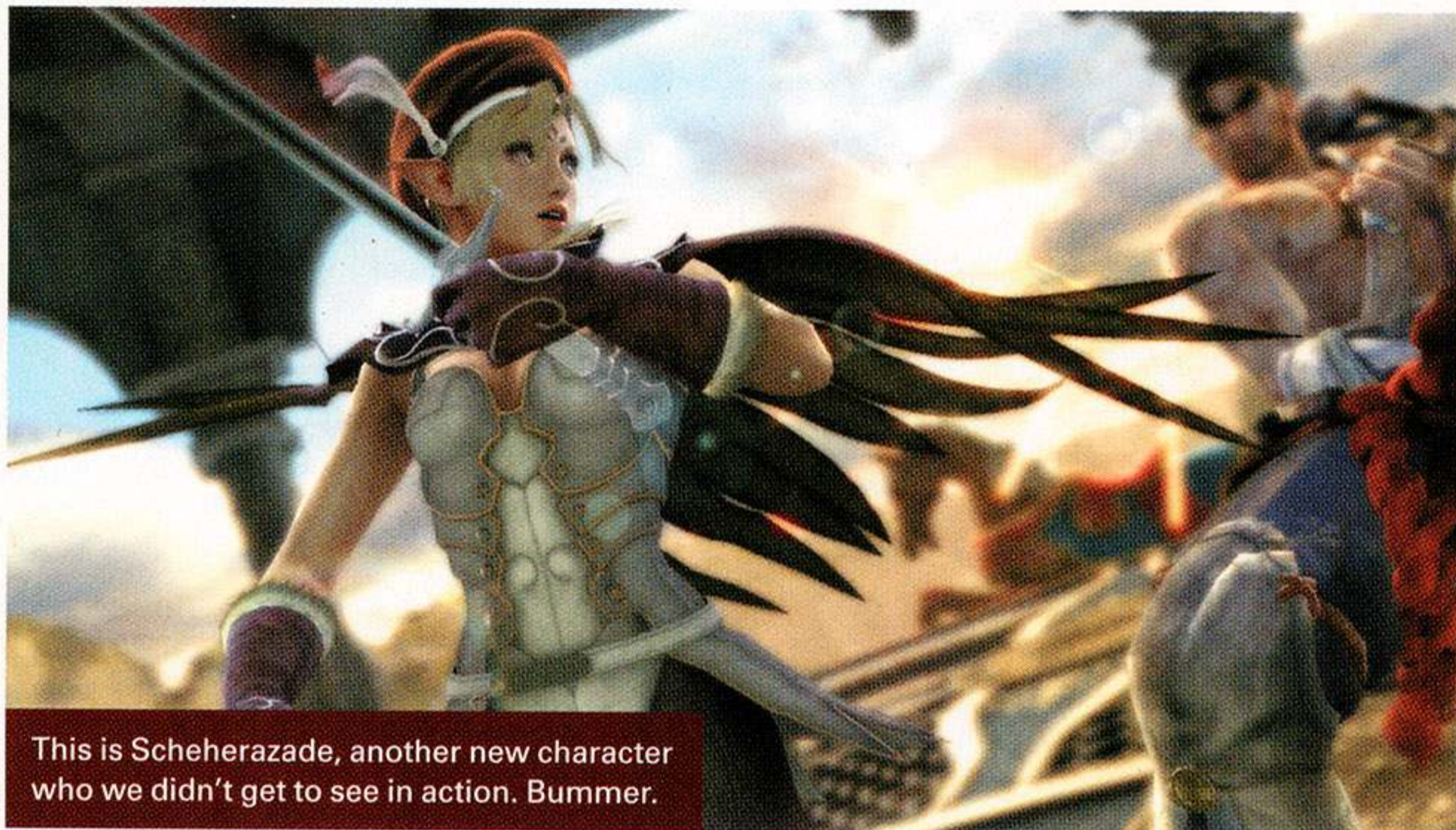
While we're fans of Soulcalibur's stellar engine, what's drawn us to the last few iterations have been the console-exclusive characters (and in the case of SoulCalibur III, the lack thereof kept us away). Before we got into anything else, we thoroughly put Yoda and Vader through their paces. Having spent equal time with each, we have to say we're looking forward to playing as Vader a bit more. While Yoda's acrobatics are entertaining, and some of his moves are slick, the fact that he's a third of the height of the rest of the cast makes him a tricky Jedi to master. His throws, in particular, are more difficult to pull off, as his throws begin with a small leap so that he can grab his larger opponent by the head. While he's immune to throws and high attacks himself, it feels a bit too restrictive to play as or against him at this point. His use of the force is a bit of a letdown too, as he uses his mastery of galactic magic...to feint. While the ability to change attacks instantaneously is a nice one to have, we really hope Namco can include some of Yoda's more proactive powers in the final version. Force Push, please.

Vader, on the other hand, is every bit the badass we hoped. He's methodical and slow (maybe the slowest character in the game), but his moves are all the more commanding because of it. His sword strikes were very professional and powerful, the kind you'd expect from the Sith Lord. His throw was the simple, yet devastating body slam that was used to toss the Emperor to his death.



The Critical Strike is gorgeous and will always inflict maximum damage.





This is Scheherazade, another new character who we didn't get to see in action. Bummer.



It's Yoda vs Voldo in the "Battle of the bizarre fighting styles!"

But what really caught our eyes were the sick Sith attacks Vader pulled off. When an opponent is knocked down, pressing two buttons simultaneously picks up the enemy and suspends him in midair. From there, Vader can slam the enemy down or bring him closer to impale the poor sap with his saber. Vader is also granted the only projectile in the game, as he can toss his lightsaber. Because it leaves you momentarily weapon-less, it's not as risk-free as Link's arrow shot in *Soul Calibur II*. Thankfully, it's much more powerful.

The two characters also come with their own exclusive stages. Yoda fights on an X-Wing docking ship, with ships flying around the combatants while the Death Star hovers ominously in the background. Vader's stage was on a platform in the Death Star, where electronic barriers activated and moved around at random much like the three-way Qui-Gon-Obi-Wan-Darth Maul fight in Episode I. The stages also feature exclusive music tracks, as "Duel of the Fates" played while Yoda battled on the X-Wing and "The Imperial March" played on Vader's Death Star. When we pitted two non-*Star Wars* characters against each other, the main title theme played.

We got significant hands-on time with another newbie named Hilde who is not to be ignored. Hilde is a female soldier who is equipped with a standard sword like Sophitia, but in lieu of a shield, Hilde brandishes a large lance. She's not as

curvy as the likes of Ivy or Taki, but she's still easy on the eyes and tough on opponents. Think of her as a female Siegfried.

### FINISH HIM!

One move we weren't able to try with Vader or Yoda was an intriguing new move called Critical Finish. Best described as a mix between Street Fighter's super moves and *Mortal Kombat*'s fatalities, the Critical Finish is tied to the new armor system. Reminiscent of the breakable weapons in *Soul Blade*, each character has three sections of their armor (top, middle and bottom) which can be progressively destroyed if the character chooses to block too often (it's essentially a way to deter overusing defense). Once all the sections are destroyed, the other character can pull off a Critical Finish the same way *Kombatants* did back in the 90s; by pressing a simple button combination within range of the opponent.

Successfully executing a Critical Finish will defeat your opponent, regardless of the amount of health remaining in your opponent's life bar. The moves are as extravagant as they are deadly, with the stage darkening to highlight the amazing special effects that occur when you pull one off. We were a bit worried it would be a bit of a game-breaker, but the method requires a lot of skill and setup and doesn't appear to be cheap in the least bit.

### ROUND OFF

One feature *Soulcalibur IV* director Katsotoshi Sasaki described at great length was the yet to be implemented Active Match Battle (AMB) system. According to Sasaki, while the Namco team loves the traditional round-based form that has become the norm in fighting games, "they wanted to add a new type of fighting for the player to enjoy." An AMB fight has your character fighting against a gauntlet of opponents. A gauge on the bottom of the screen shows how far away your enemies are from entering the battle. As you fight, they inch closer to you, and when one reaches your character's icon, the fight is on. Defeat an enemy early, and you have a bit of downtime, which in this mode, allows your character to heal up. Take too long, and your next enemy will be ready to attack the second you dispose of the first one.

A few interesting additions make this more than just a glorified Team Battle mode. The method by which you defeat your opponent determines how long it will take him to return to the gauge. A simple K.O. will have him back in immediately, a ring out will buy you a bit of time, and a Critical Finish will remove the character from the gauge altogether. Another thing to be wary of is that enemies will come from anywhere when they reach you on the gauge. Sasaki warned that while trying for ringouts may buy you more time, "Your enemy might come out right behind you and knock you out of the ring, so you'll always have to be strategizing." The team plans to implement AMB in a variety of modes including Arcade, Story, and "another new game mode," which added another secret we eagerly hope to solve soon.

Thankfully, we won't have to wait too long to find out about it, as the game is due on June 24. With a great deal of additions outside of the *Star Wars* universe, *Soulcalibur IV* could be the best next-gen fighter yet.

—Dave Rudden



Get the link to **Soulcalibur IV** screens and news sent to your e-mail. Text **WTC4** to **59479**

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Grab blocks to pull them in full 3D using the Wii Remote.

# BOOM BLOX

Steven Spielberg takes the Wii for a spin.



Wii

■ Developer: EA LA ■ Publisher: EA Games ■ Release Date: May

**B**oom Blox is an upcoming 3D action-puzzle game exclusively for the Nintendo Wii. The core objective is to build a structure of blocks and then blow it all up so that the blocks lie flat on the ground. The game is being developed by Electronic Arts Los Angeles studio overseen by famed movie giant Steven Spielberg, who was also heavily involved in EA's Medal of Honor series. Boom Blox can be played alone across four single-player modes including adven-

ture and puzzle, but it also supports up to four-players for intense versus game battles and a full co-op campaign with over 70 levels.

## GRAB, THROW, BLAST

Built from the ground up for the Nintendo Wii, players will use the Wii Remote to grab, throw, and blast Jenga-like structures made up of more than a dozen different block types. The throw mechanic allows players to throw baseballs, bowling balls, bombs, super bouncy balls, coconuts, and a host of other objects with the Wii Remote. Simply point at a target that is on the screen, press and hold the A button to lock on to it, reach back for the wind up, and let 'er rip by releasing the A button at the same time you would when throwing a real object. Boom Blox uses the impressive Havok physics engine, which "takes into account what type of ball that is being thrown (a bowling ball is going to do much more damage than a golf ball), and the angle/trajectory of the throw to create a very realistic effect," says senior producer Amir Rahimi.

Players can also use the Wii Remote to grab and manipulate blocks in the environment. "If the player, for example, grabs a block and pulls the Wii remote toward their body, the block will move toward the screen; move the Wii remote forward toward the screen and the block will move off into the distance," Rahimi says. And finally, players can use lasers, fire hoses, ghost guns, and more to shoot through Boom Blox's massive 300-plus puzzles.



CONTINUED ►



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Some Blox just don't get along.



The physics are unbelievably accurate and realistic.



## HOW BLOCKS GO BOOM!

- **Bomb Blocks:** These blocks explode when hit. They can also chain react, which is perfect to send the Blox characters flying all over the place.
- **Chemical Blocks:** Blocks are filled with a volatile green liquid. If two of these blocks touch, a nasty chemical reaction will result in a giant explosion.
- **Cloud Blocks:** If not pinned down, these blocks will float away.
- **Fireworks Blocks:** When hit or affected by another explosion, these blocks shoot off in a direction and then explode in an array of fireworks.
- **Point Blocks:** A multiplayer block. These explode into a flurry of coins as soon as they hit the ground. Whatever point value is on the face of the block is awarded to the player that knocked it down.

## BLOCKS VS. BLOX

There are more than dozen different block types and over 30 Blox characters in Boom Blox. The Blox people are living, breathing block types that inhabit the Boom Blox universe, each with their own unique behaviors. The player will interact with the Blox characters throughout the game by either battling with or against them to complete a number of challenges. The frontier-themed mission, for example, introduces Boots the beaver who decides to move out west in search of gold. The player must help Boots as he strikes it rich, only to be ambushed by menacing monkeys. Even for a puzzle game, the frontier mission ends in an epic boss-like shootout between the player and the monkeys.

Every block type and Blox character players encounter in the game get added to the robust level editor. The level editor gives players complete access to everything that is in the single and multiplayer levels. There are even "block types, characters, and tools that are not used anywhere else in the game," boasts Rahimi. "In addition, the editor allows players to take anyone of the 300+ levels included in Boom Blox and modify them in any way that they want." Not a level designer? Players can also build stand-alone objects to blow up simply for the hell of it. Boom Blox is not an online playable game, but players can share their creations from the level editor via WiiConnect24, Rahimi says.

## BLOCK BUILDER

Steven Spielberg's name is on the box, but just how involved with Boom Blox was he really? He came up with the idea, Rahimi says. After playing the Wii for the first time with Mario-creator Shigeru Miyamoto at E3 2006, Spielberg began collaborating with his old pals at EA to create a game that used the Wii Remote to build up and smash down blocks in a fun, visceral way. During production, the EA team would have weekly meetings with Spielberg to discuss everything from the art style to level design strategies. Needless to say, this is as much a Spielberg game as it is an EA game.

Boom Blox is scheduled to release in May, which means *GamePro* readers can look forward to our full review in next month's issue. Until then, happy Boom Blox blasting.—Travis Moses

**G9Q9**

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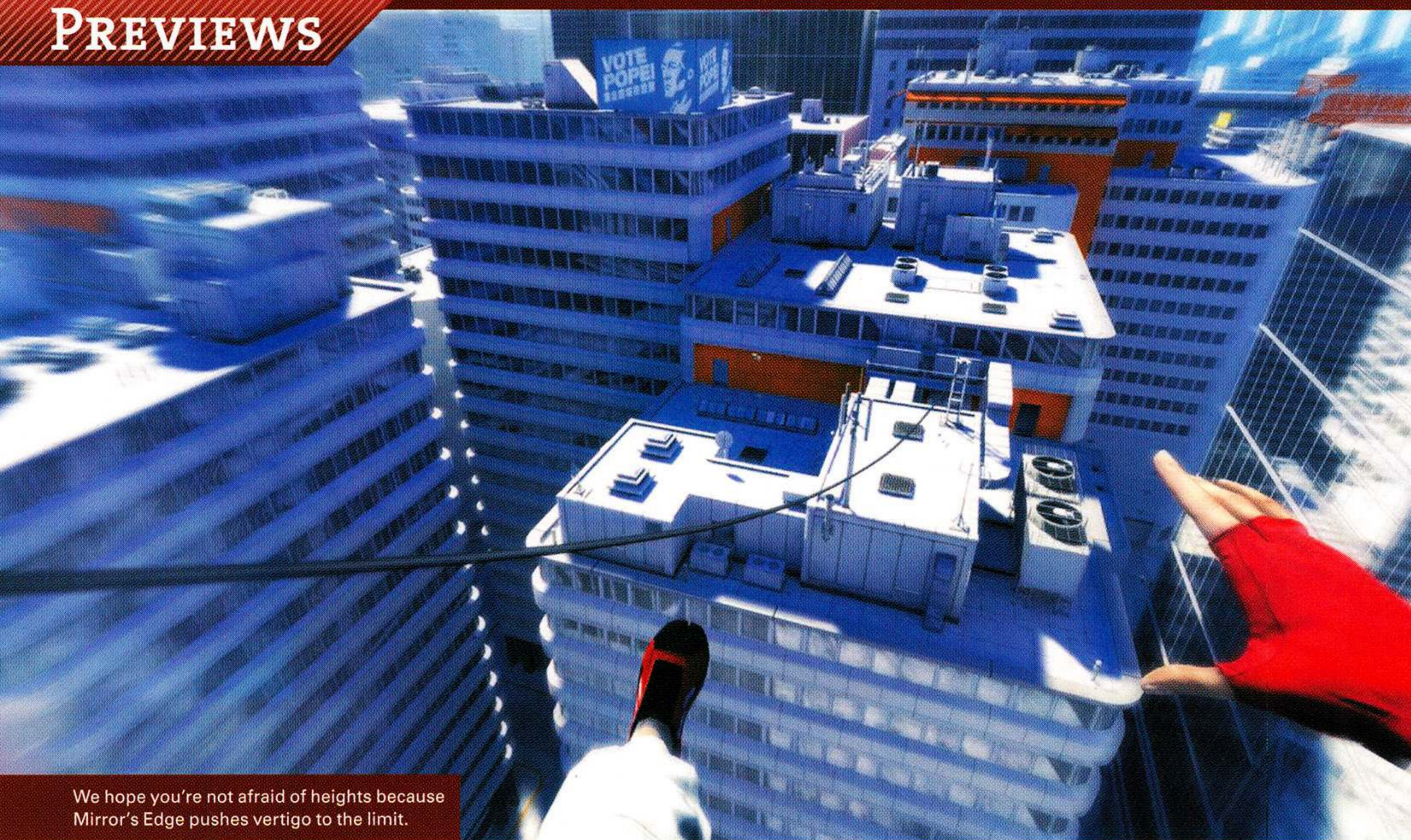
A blue race car is positioned on the left side of a drag strip. The car has "AL VORIS" written on its side. The track is long and straight, leading towards a large crowd of spectators in the distance. The sky is clear and bright. The overall scene is a high-speed racing environment.

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We hope you're not afraid of heights because Mirror's Edge pushes vertigo to the limit.

# MIRROR'S EDGE

Acrobatics in the first-person? We're excited!

PS3 Xbox 360 PC

Developer: DICE Publisher: EA Games Release Date: Fall 2008

Despite the constant influx of new first-person titles in today's gaming marketplace, innovation is sadly lacking. For every title like Portal, there are tons of wartime shooters with gruff soldiers who move around with the grace of a dump truck. The last company we expected to create the next innovative first-person title was Digital Illusions Creative Entertainment (DICE). Perhaps that's why when the company unveiled Mirror's Edge alongside two new Battlefield properties, we were ignorant to its existence for a moment. Once we got to see the game in motion, however, we became fully aware of what may be the sleeper hit of 2008.



Free running, also known as parkour, has become a bit of a fad in gaming, being included in a handful of recent games like Crackdown, Assassin's Creed, and TMNT. Unfortunately, seeing the characters make crazy jumps really emphasizes

the fact that it's not you making the moves, rather it's a supercop, time-travelling assassin, or mutant turtle. By applying parkour to the first-person genre, DICE has made a game that is one of the most immersive we've ever seen.

## A CLEAN MIRROR

Not a whole lot is known of the premise of Mirror's Edge besides the fact that you control Faith, a limber, free-running woman who lives in something of a totalitarian state where billboards praising a powerful leader catch your eye. Even though it's not filled with characters (we were on rooftops, mind you), the clean, sterile look of the city really conveyed an eerie, empty beauty that should be a blast to explore. Faith spent almost the entirety of the demo running from state police. While they're packed to the gills with ammo, Faith spent all of two seconds with a gun in her hand, only for disarming an enemy. Faith's biggest weapon is her agility, and she's the acrobatic equivalent of an atomic bomb.

Over the course of 10 minutes, we got to see Faith perform a variety of amazing moves across the rooftops of a skyscraper-laden city. From what we've heard, a majority of her techniques are mapped to the directional pad, which should make the intent of constant movement all the more easy. Running across a rooftop cluttered with objects, we could imagine simply tapping down to slide under exposed pipes and then up to use a leaning

piece of plywood to launch onto an adjacent building. And it's not just vents and pipes. The demo came to a thrilling conclusion when Faith, on the run from the law, spotted an ally helicopter in the distance. With shots ringing all around the unarmed woman, and enemies closing in, she leapt from the edge of a building, grabbing its landing struts as it flew her to (temporary) safety.

## BETTER DEAD THAN RED

With a city comprised of thousands of rooftops, getting lost would normally be a problem. DICE is trying to counteract that problem by calling out destinations with vibrant, red-marked environmental items. See a red ladder on the side of a building? Odds are you should make a running jump at it and hope you can grab hold of it. A red wire running from one building to another? Traverse it like a balance beam, using the Sixaxis (if applicable) to keep your balance. While it adds a neat visual quirk to the bleached blues and whites of the environment, we were a little disappointed that the correct path was so blatantly colored in. Hopefully in the final version, we'll see more than one way to our final destination.

Speaking of final destinations, the game is due later this year on the PS3, Xbox 360, and PC. We'll definitely keep you updated on this title, if only because we're dying to see more of it ourselves.

—Dave Rudden



# TOO HUMAN

Xbox 360

■ Developer: Silicon Knights ■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Release Date: Fall 2008

**B**efore I tell you about how positive the latest showing of Too Human was, it's important to first point out the negatives for reference. Two years ago I wrote off Too Human as just another action/RPG, but with the worst camera system known to three-dimensional gaming. The unintelligent camera angles were so troublesome the game was basically unplayable.



## THE NEW AND IMPROVED TOO HUMAN

The "new" Too Human camera system, however, features multiple modes, allowing the player to select from a variety of different angles that best suits the action onscreen. For example, the "Iso" camera is catered towards players who prefer the overhead isometric view of games like Diablo and Baldur's Gate. The "Close" camera gives players' a view more akin to God of War. Silicon Knights founder Dennis Dyack says Too Human has six or seven different camera modes at any given time. Thank the Nordic gods!

The combat control scheme in Too Human is unlike any other action/RPG. The right-analog stick controls Baldur's primary hack-n-slash attack, which depending on your character class, Baldur wields a sword and shield, dual swords, hammer, or mace. And no matter which class you choose from, Baldur always carries a pair of rapid-fire pistols. Pistols are fired with the right trigger and can be aimed at two separate enemies at a time.

There are five character classes to choose from. These include the standard character classes, Champion (well versed in combat, defense, and magic), Berserker (for players who like to smash things), and Defender (a traditional RPG tank class).

So it's like Diablo, right? Pretty close. The player level caps at 50, and unfortunately Silicon Knights aren't ready to show any end game content besides epic armor sets. During our demo, Dyack loaded up a level 50 Defender class equipped with a complete armor set, which besides looking badass, offered stat bonuses for having collected the entire high-end armor set just like in Diablo II and World of Warcraft.

## TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT

Too Human runs at a consistent framerate in 720p with 4x anti-aliasing and up to 50 enemies onscreen. That's quite the technical feat considering all the issues developer Silicon Knights has been having with Epic and the Unreal Engine 3.0. There is also only one load time in Too Human, and it's at the beginning of the game. The no-loading touch should be standard at this point, but it's especially impressive for Too Human considering the massive amount of content and abrupt environment changes.

There is no need to worry about inventory micro-management in Too Human. Auto-salvage is an inventory feature catered toward console users, which intelligently salvages your low-class items when your inventory becomes overburdened. Of course, this feature can be turned off in true action RPG fashion.

The last interesting feature Dyack left us with was a trip into the Matrix...err, actually "Cyberspace." Cyberspace is a simulated version of what the world would be like without any artificial intelligence or world wars. Witches who serve as oracles to the human race inhabit Cyberspace. They offer worldly knowledge and useful items that aid Baldur in his quest.

I know it's crazy to say, but Too Human maybe the new Diablo...at least until Blizzard shows us a proper Diablo III (we're not holding our breath). Although Too Human is set in a Nordic universe with numerous cutscenes overlapping the gameplay, the actual core fundamentals are exactly the same, and it looks beautiful. Show us more, Silicon Knights! You can't keep that "Online Play" menu secret for much longer...  
—Travis Moses

Up to 50 enemies onscreen at once is no problem for Baldur, or Too Human's buttery smooth framerate for that matter.



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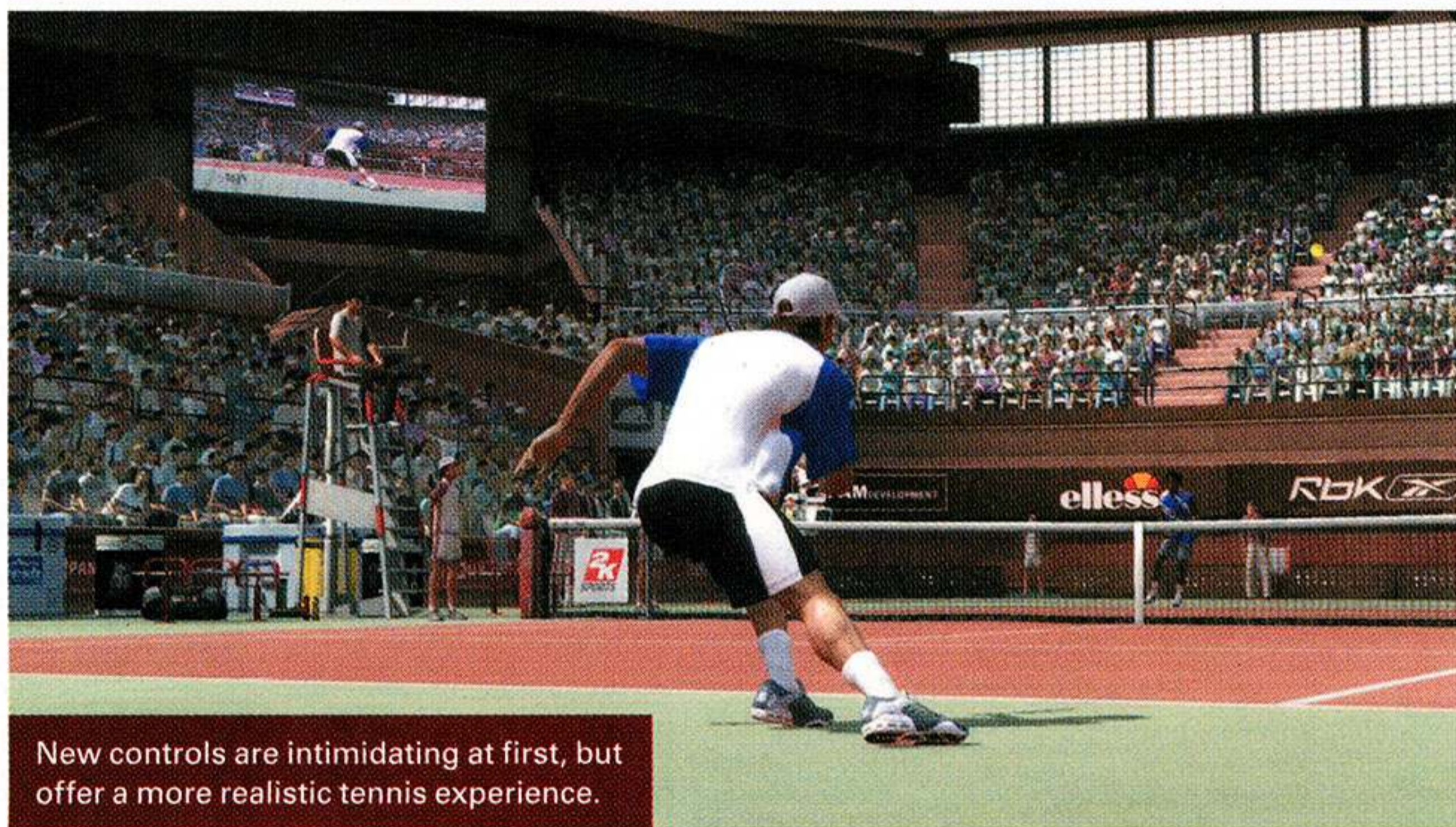
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## TOP SPIN 3

PS3 Xbox 360 Wii DS

■ Developer: PAM Development ■ Publisher: 2K Sports ■ Release Date: May



New controls are intimidating at first, but offer a more realistic tennis experience.

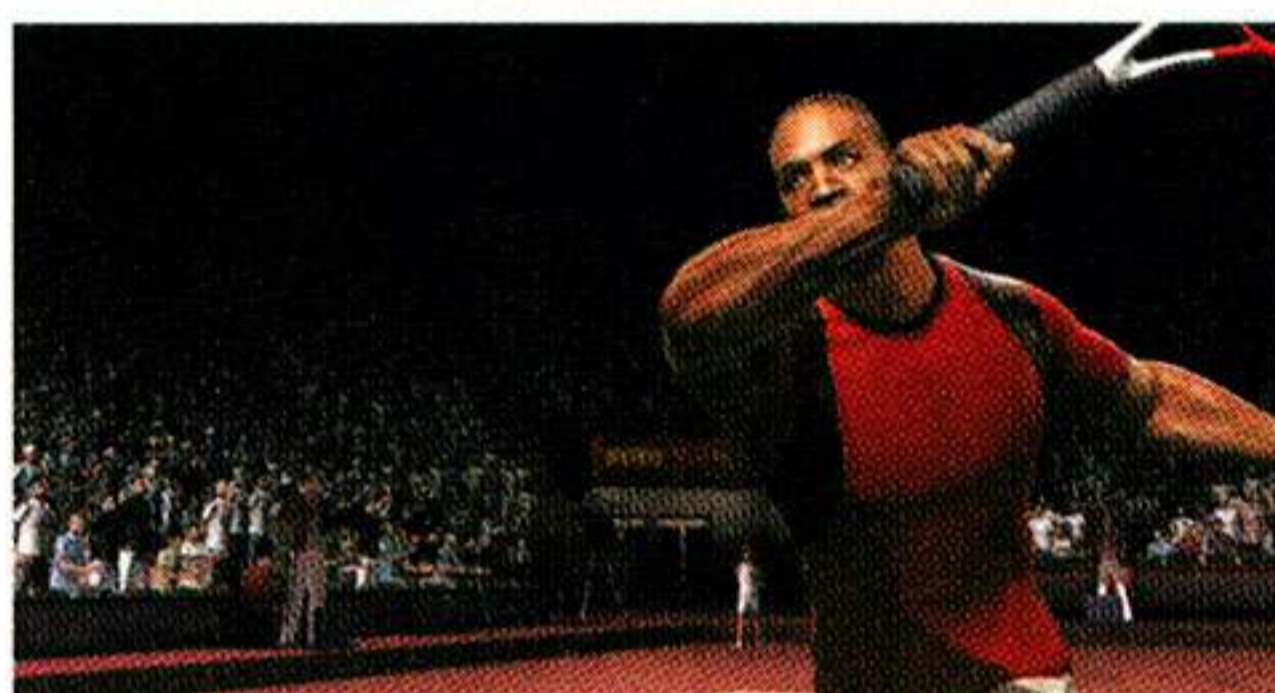
**T**op Spin 3 is as realistic as tennis gets. Gaming tennis has always had two distinct flavors. For fun, cartoon-like games there's Mario Tennis and Wii Sports tennis. For more realistic tennis, the go-to games are Virtua Tennis and Top Spin. 2K Sports unveiled the newest installment in the realistic Top Spin series in Miami recently, and Maria Sharapova was on hand to introduce the game.

Aside from Sharapova, other tennis players, including James Blake, were on hand to take a swing at the Wii version of the game, which is by far the most casual entry point to the series—think Wii Sports tennis, but with much more player control and detailed features.

### TOP-NOTCH TENNIS

On the Xbox 360 and PS3, graphics are top-notch, and it's obvious that a heap of effort was put into making the characters, courts, and animations really shine this time around. There's an in-depth player creator, similar to Tiger Woods PGA Tour, that goes deeper in detail than you'll probably ever need. If you played last year's Virtua Tennis 3, you're looking at that level of graphical detail, but Top Spin 3 does an even better job with fine character details and has better animations from shot to shot.

The final game will bring more than 20 pro tennis players to 40 real courts, some big-name locales and others being smaller, practice-style locations like in Top Spin 2. Each court looks strikingly real, using mapping and high-resolution textures to produce awesome-looking grass, clay, and other sur-

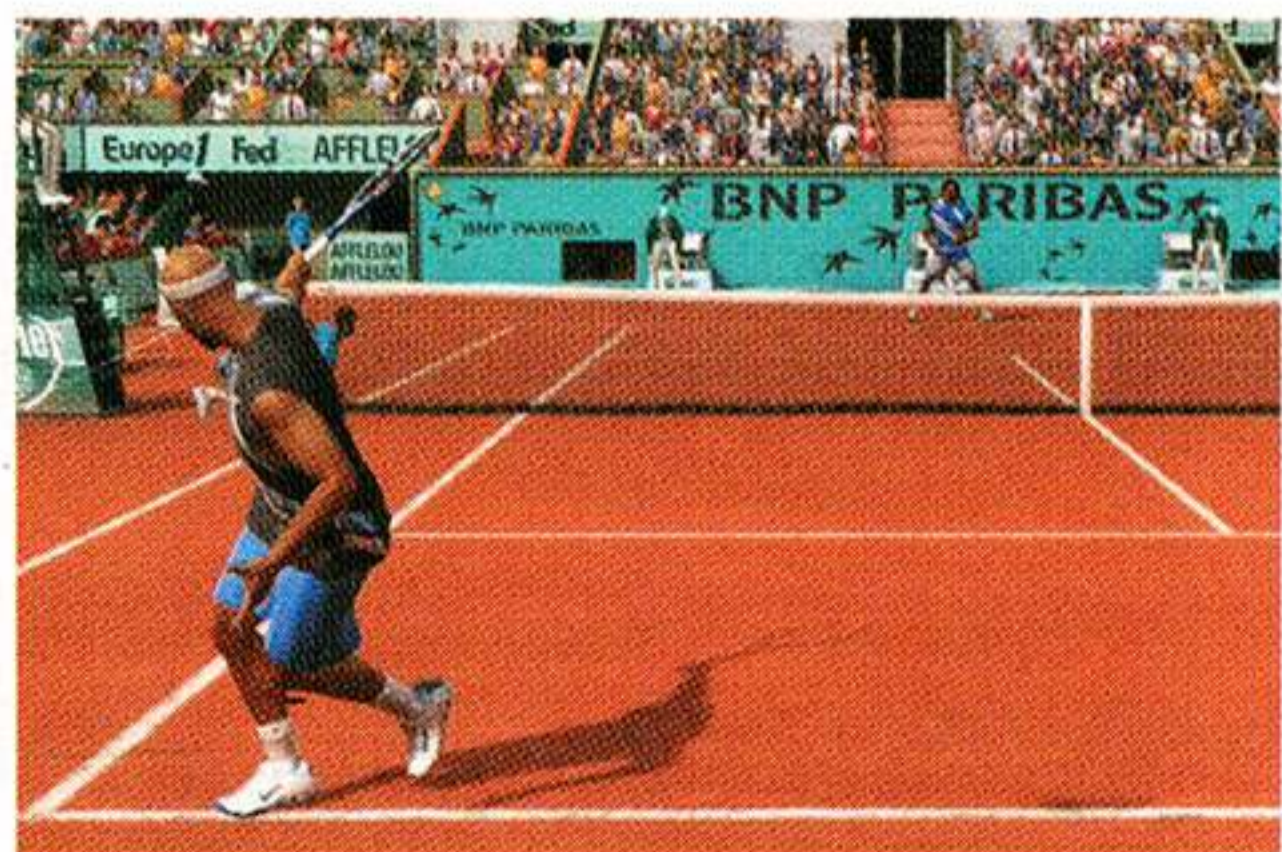


faces. I played a handful of matches on a variety of different courts, and the overall experience was a good one.

### CONTROL CHANGES

The first thing I noticed was how the controls on the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions are different than most console tennis games. Instead of the usual "hold down the button until you hit the ball" mechanic, you'll hold down to power up a swing, then release *before* the ball gets to you, simulating the backward and forward motion of a tennis swing. In Top Spin 3, there's more emphasis on where you position yourself before hitting a shot. So if you're too close to the ball, you might hit a softer "jammed" shot. If you're too far away, you might lunge. It's all pretty realistic.

Tennis fans need to keep Top Spin 3 on their radar, and casual sports gamers should appreciate its level of authenticity. The Wii is the obvious version of choice for those in need of something more immersive than Wii Sports tennis. —Chris Morell



## TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X.

PS3 Xbox 360 PC

■ Developer: Ubisoft Bucharest ■ Publisher: Ubisoft ■ Release Date: Fall 2008

**B**ecome a pilot of the future in Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. An air-combat simulator that will "revolutionize the way you think about combat in the sky." For fans of hardcore flight simulators, H.A.W.X. allows you to take control of more than 50 of the world's most famous high-tech aircrafts. With help from NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey bureau, you'll fly fast and high over realistic, modern landscapes, fictionally aged four years in the future that have endured traumatic post-war bombscaping.



### SKY H.A.W.X.

Players who have always been intrigued by air combat games, but won't play them due to the steep learning curve, will be relieved to hear that H.A.W.X. features an in-game assistance technology that helps turn novice aviators into elite dogfighters. The Enhanced Reality System is the Goose to your Maverick. The E.R.S. displays and manages flight radars, incoming missile detection, an anti-crash and damage control system, weapons trajectory control, and information relay between you and your squadron.

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. is shaping up to raise the bar in the air combat genre with breathtaking visuals and for the first time, a four-player co-op mode. Head-on multiplayer supports up to 16 players, and in true Tom Clancy fashion, "winning players are rewarded with experience points and money to unlock more weapons." H.A.W.X. is currently scheduled for a fall 2008 release date and will also be available on the Wii.

—Travis Moses

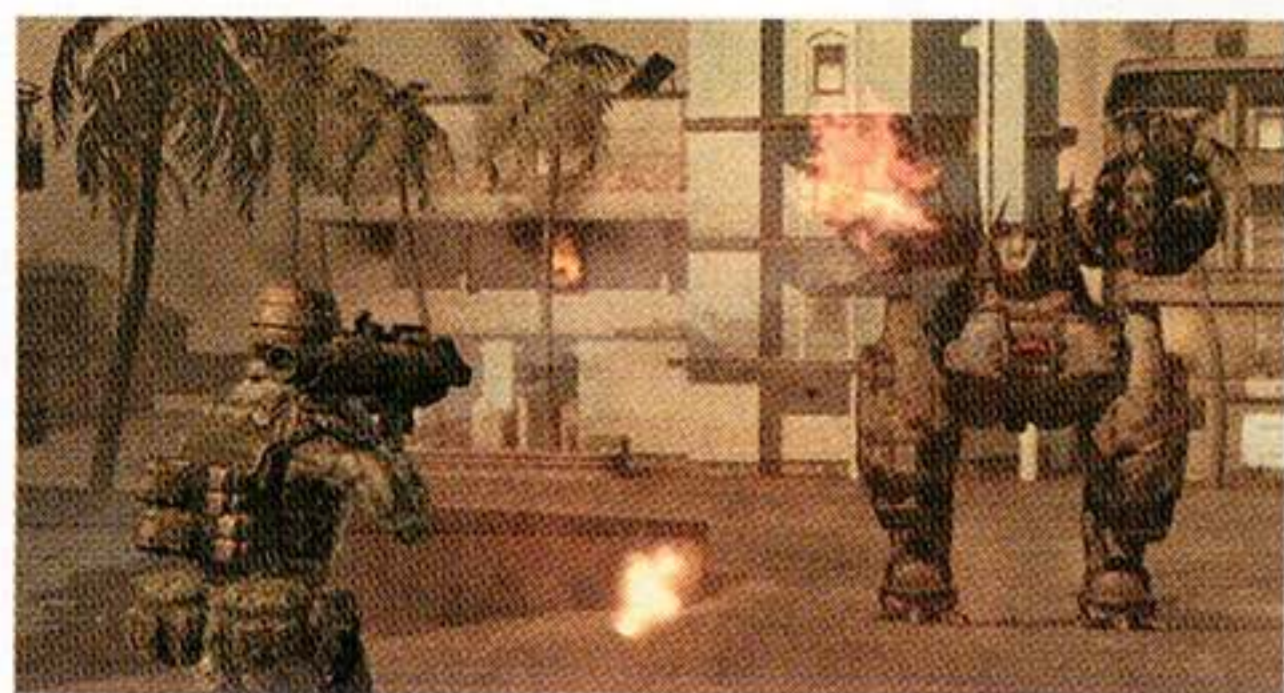




## ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

PS3 Xbox 360

■ Developer: Id Software ■ Publisher: Activision  
■ Release Date: Late 2008



It's been a long wait for id Software's new online team shooter, but Quake Wars is finally heading to the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 later this year. We picked up a controller to try out the Xbox 360 version, and we're ready with a quick after-action report.

The PS3 and Xbox 360 versions of Quake Wars are straight conversions of the PC original—there are few extra features and zero new maps. The core story line also remains identical: the vile cyborg Strogg have invaded a near-future Earth, only to meet stiff resistance from the hands of the Global Defense Force commandoes. Whether you play as Strogg or the human GDC forces, you'll choose from several character classes that each play unique roles on the battlefield. Soldiers assault enemy positions with heavy firepower; Engineers plant defensive turrets and repair vehicles, and Covert Ops focus on hacking and sniping.

Visually, the Xbox 360 version looks sharp and plays fast, with sprawling terrain, flashy special effects, and epic-scale battles crammed with vehicles and explosions. The gameplay combines classic Quake play (speedy movement and twitchy gun battles) with the broader meta-game elements of Frontlines and Battlefield (class selection and vehicle firepower are crucial).

Quake Wars has one key innovation, however, in its objective-based map design. For example, on one level, the Strogg players must try to breach a blast door and gain access to a reservoir in order to poison the populace; simultaneously, the GDC forces must protect that blast door in order to keep the Strogg team from advancing to the next objective. The advantage of this approach is that battles will rage around particular hot spots on a map, lending focus and ferocity. It's a neat twist that gives the player a feeling of purpose that's missing from many online shooters.

With PC gaming slowly dropping off the radar, we suspect that Quake Wars will find a larger, more enthusiastic audience on the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. Though the premise and gameplay fundamentals are sound, Quake Wars's PC origins raise a few potential concerns. Its super-speedy, almost arcade-style action and complex interface are a handful compared to the smooth, minimalist elegance of console-first shooters like Call of Duty 4 and Halo 3. The lack of a proper single-player campaign also limits the appeal to hardcore online warriors. Still, Quake Wars is a refreshing spin on the ever-popular team shooter genre, and if the developers can streamline the controls and keep the interface simple, the game should be worth a shot.

—Sid Shuman

## TALES OF VESPERIA

Xbox 360

■ Developer: Namco Tales Studio  
■ Publisher: Namco Bandai Games  
■ Release Date: Late 2008



It's been rough going so far for Xbox 360-owning RPG fans. While they've had glimpses of hope thus far in the form of Blue Dragon and Lost Odyssey, there hasn't really been an epic RPG on par with the Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest series. Namco Bandai is prepping its Tales series to make it's next-gen debut on the Xbox 360 later this year with Tales of Vesperia and it could be the HD RPG we've been waiting to see.



The 10th entry in the Tales series, Vesperia keeps a very clean, almost cel-shaded animation style consistent with the series while creating a bright and colorful world that fully utilizes the HD capabilities of the Xbox 360. The battles shown to us thus far have focused on conveying the action of the battle and the movement of the enemies, with a welcomed scarcity of menus and status bars.

The combat should be familiar to Tales fans, as it includes the series staple for fighting; you control the party leader, engaging in direct attacks while giving orders to the rest of your squad. The fights we saw were at the beginning of the game, so large-scale magic attacks and epic enemies weren't quite on the plate yet.

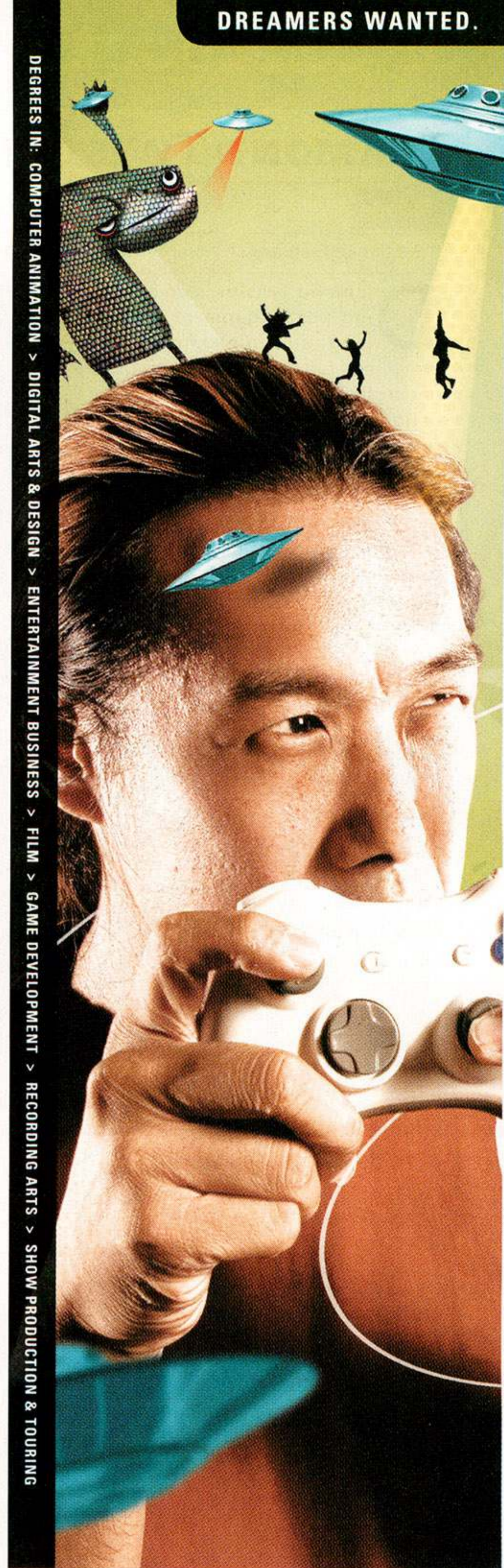


What the beginning of any RPG will accurately convey is the story, and in that regard, Vesperia looks to deliver with a memorable cast of characters, excellent art design, and an abundance of professional-grade voice acting. In fact, Vesperia will have more voice acting (about 15 hours) and anime-style cut-scenes (about 30 minutes) than any other game in the series. With next-gen Final Fantasy and Dragon's Quest titles still far off in the horizon, Tales of Vesperia has a very good chance at capturing the eager RPG audience this year.

—Dave Rudden

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## DIAMOND TWISTER

Mobile

■ Publisher: Gameloft ■ Release Date: Available Now

**D**iamond Twister is an exciting puzzle game of swapping and matching. The story is a fun adventure of high-end robbery in six individual locations; you must complete each puzzle within the time limit and collect the most amount of money to pull off each robbery. With eight different game modes and an amazing 64 different levels of difficulty you can do no wrong. Swapping sparkling diamonds around on the board to create a row of three identical gems, this game is very fast paced and highly addictive for all ages.



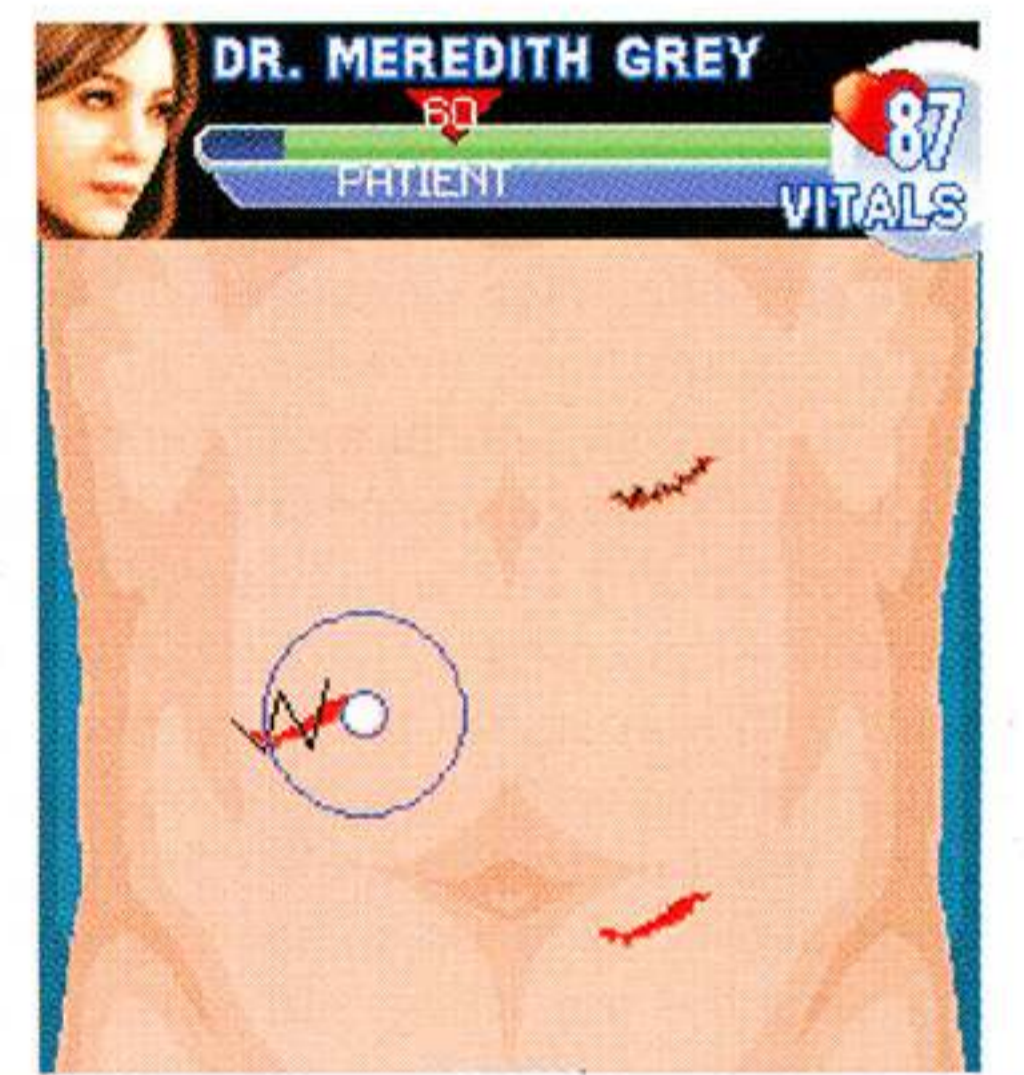
## GREY'S ANATOMY

Mobile

■ Publisher: Gameloft ■ Release Date: Available Now



**P**laying Meredith Grey from ABC's hit show *Grey's Anatomy*, you take on life in the fast-paced Seattle Grace Hospital, trying to move up the ranks until you become a doctor. Meeting and working closely with other characters from the show you will have to accomplish small tasks like wheeling a patient from their room to the MRI room to actually taking place in surgeries. Play through story lines taken straight from the show and collect items along the way to make tasks and goals a little easier. *Grey's Anatomy* is hours of fun for both fans and those who have never seen the show.



## HEROES LORE: WINDS OF SOLTIA

Mobile

■ Publisher: Hands-On Mobile ■ Release Date: Available Now

**H**eroes Lore is an epic RPG with plenty of quests, magic, and monster slaying. Featuring over 120 different weapons and items you are sure to find what suits you best in your adventure. Level up as you fight your way through over 30 hours of exciting game play and explore over 100 huge monster-filled maps. You can choose one of three different characters who each have their own unique story and choose different Guardians who will help you through out your battles with magic that will grow as you level up. Heroes Lore is the best selling mobile game in Korea and once you start playing, you will understand why.



## SUSHI MANIA

Mobile

■ Publisher: Hands-On Mobile ■ Release Date: Available Now



**S**ushi Mania's a fast-paced game of quick reflexes and addictive gameplay. You roll around this side-scroller as a little sushi roll on a mission to find all the lost sushi roll babies and to collect missing sushi ingredients. You must roll into enemies, jump gaps, and double jump onto ledges all while making sure you are taking the right paths and collecting what you need to complete that level. With 20 stages, and six different mini games, this is sure to please any type of gamer.



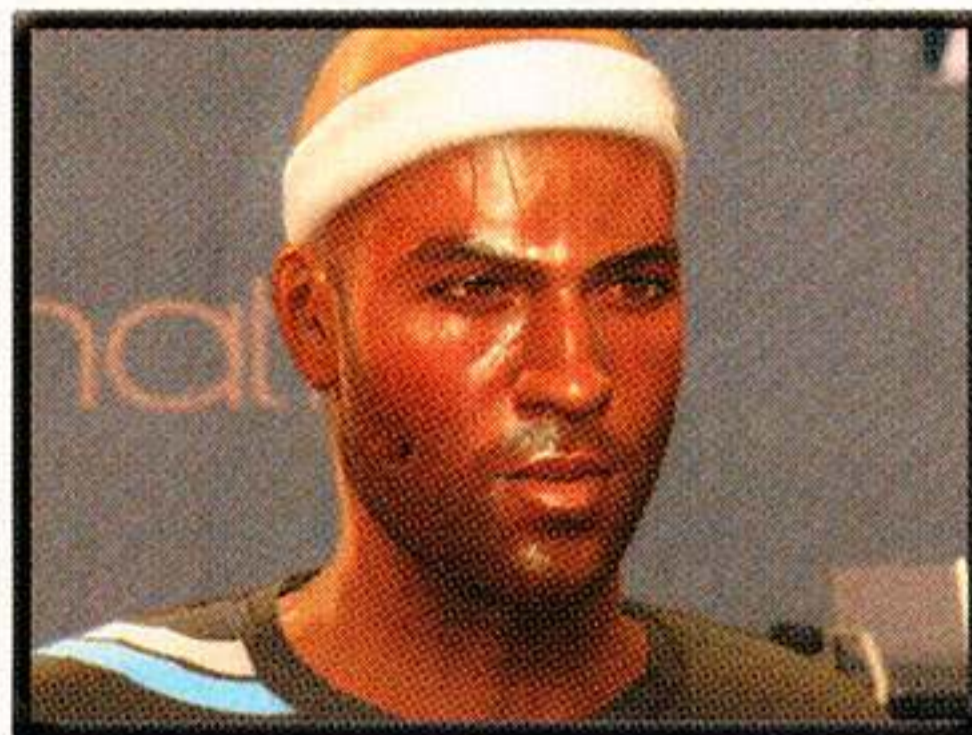


# ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE?

**9 out of 10** - Official Xbox Magazine, June 2008



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**Evolutionary Visuals™** - Watch in real time as your players get progressively hotter, sweatier, and dirtier while competing at breathtaking venues.



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# LEGO BATMAN

TAKES FLIGHT





# Finally, a Batman game that doesn't suck

We've got a live one here! Traveller's Tales takes the fan-favorite LEGO franchise to Gotham City with LEGO Batman. It may be hard to believe, but this could (easily) be the best Batman game yet...

By Hugh Sterbakov



▲ The caped crusaders improve their arsenal with special suits, like Batman's glider suit, that allow them upgrades such as more powerful weaponry or the ability to reach new areas.

**T**he best breath of fresh air in gaming comes when a new title arrives with little fanfare and plenty of skepticism, but in the end, turns out to be damned great. With 20/20 hindsight, everyone was expert enough to see that Halo, Grand Theft Auto III, and even Doom were going to be hits. Then again, it's a lot easier to judge a pitch after you've taken a swing.

Well, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more refreshing home run than the kinetic and addicting LEGO *Star Wars* titles developed by Traveller's Tales. Suitable for all ages in the best of ways, with humor that doesn't pander and challenges that don't punish, these games smashed expectations and delivered the next iteration of platform gaming for both retro-minded and younger gamers alike.

Suddenly, with that beautiful hindsight, LEGO titles look like no-brainer hits. Lucky for us, the brand is pairing with some of the best intellectual properties in entertainment, this time with no less a cultural juggernaut than Batman. "It's been really cool to work on a Batman game," says Loz Doyle, the game's producer. "When we heard we were going to do a Batman game, the team went nuts." So have a lot of fans of the legendary Caped Crusader.

## Wholly Original, Batman!

LEGO Batman presents an original story based on the comic book lore, developed internally by Traveller's Tales and sanctioned by DC comics. The action starts after an exodus from Arkham Asylum, as a mob of Batman's most notorious archenemies break loose and create the kind of havoc and mass hysteria that results in the Batsignal flaring high in the clouds over Gotham City.

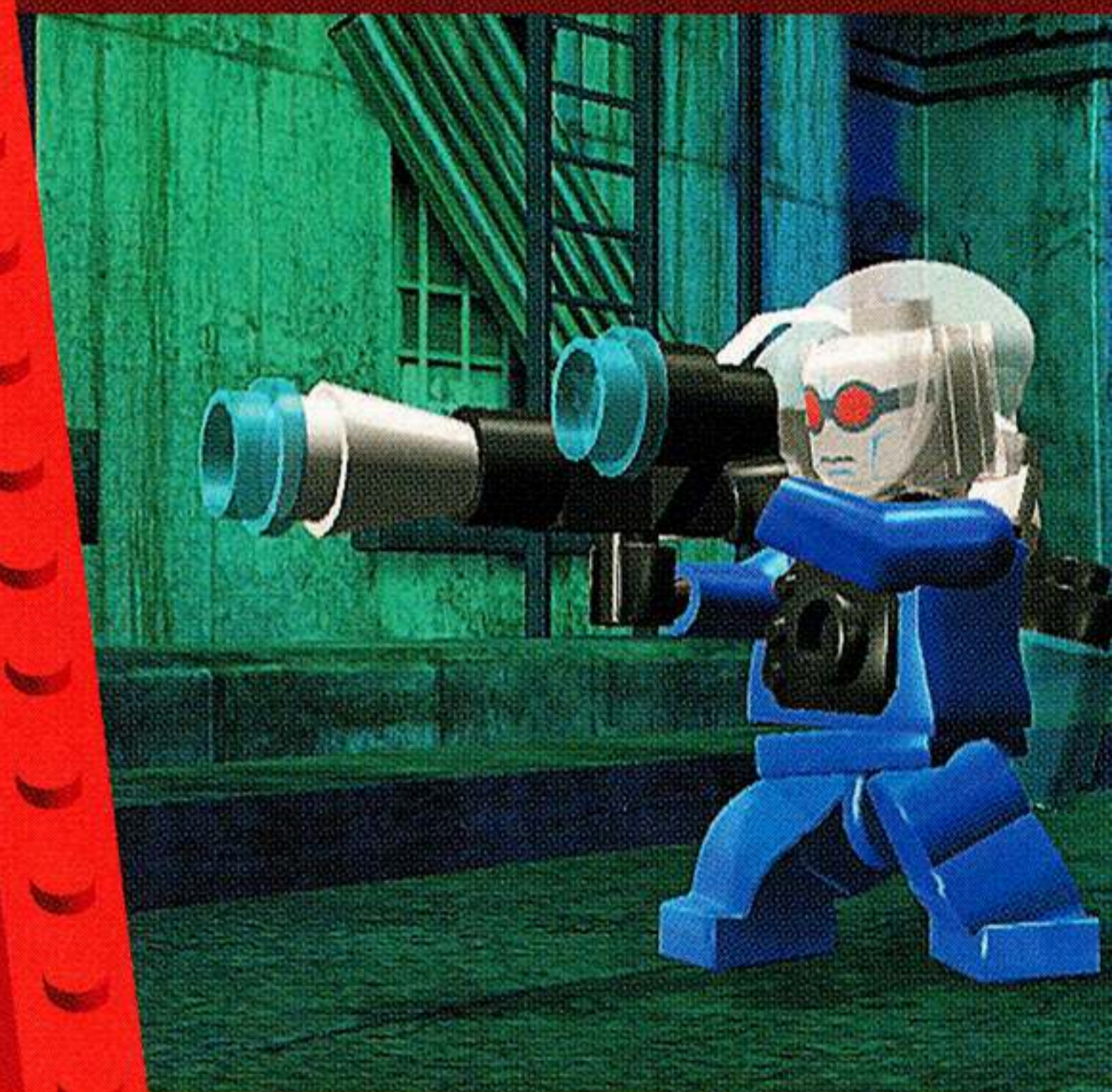
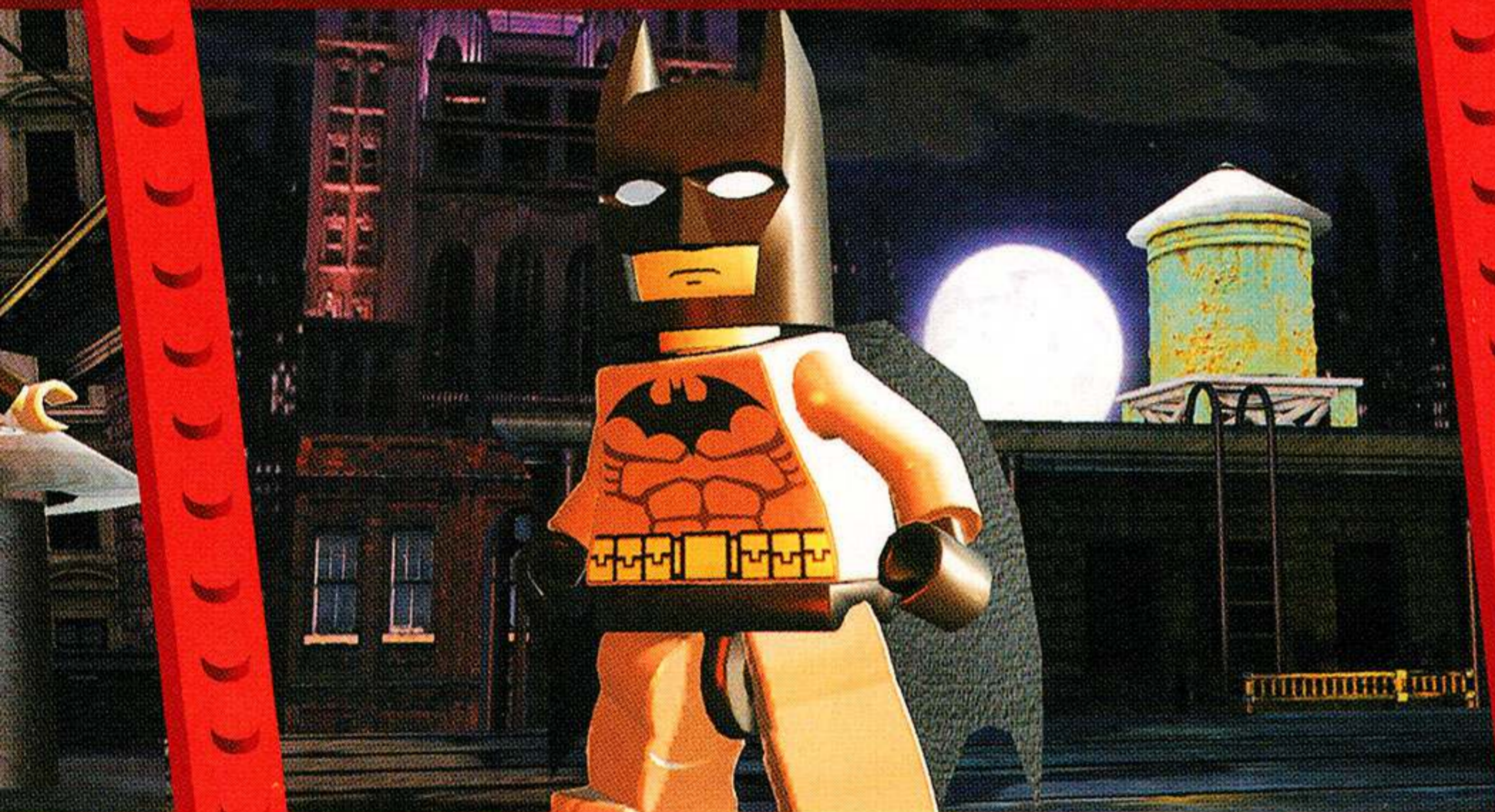
"The villains team up into three groups," says Doyle, "each headed by a massive supervillain, with some other bad guys teaming up with them." Those ringleaders would be The Joker, The Penguin, and The Riddler. They're supported by over 20 partners in crime, including well-known Batman villains like Mr. Freeze and more obscure rogues like Killer Croc. Fan-favorite Harley Quinn was also recently announced as the right-hand woman to her boyfriend, Mistah Jay (aka The Joker).

Of course, all of the characters are represented with mini figures, or "minifigs," which are LEGO recreations of their iconic appearances. "It's the little touches that give the minifigs their character," explains Doyle, who will have his hands full with this sprawling roster of villains. Each of the enemies has a



CONTINUED ▶





▲ Batman begins his Lego adventure this fall on every major platform, including a unique version developed specifically for the Nintendo DS.

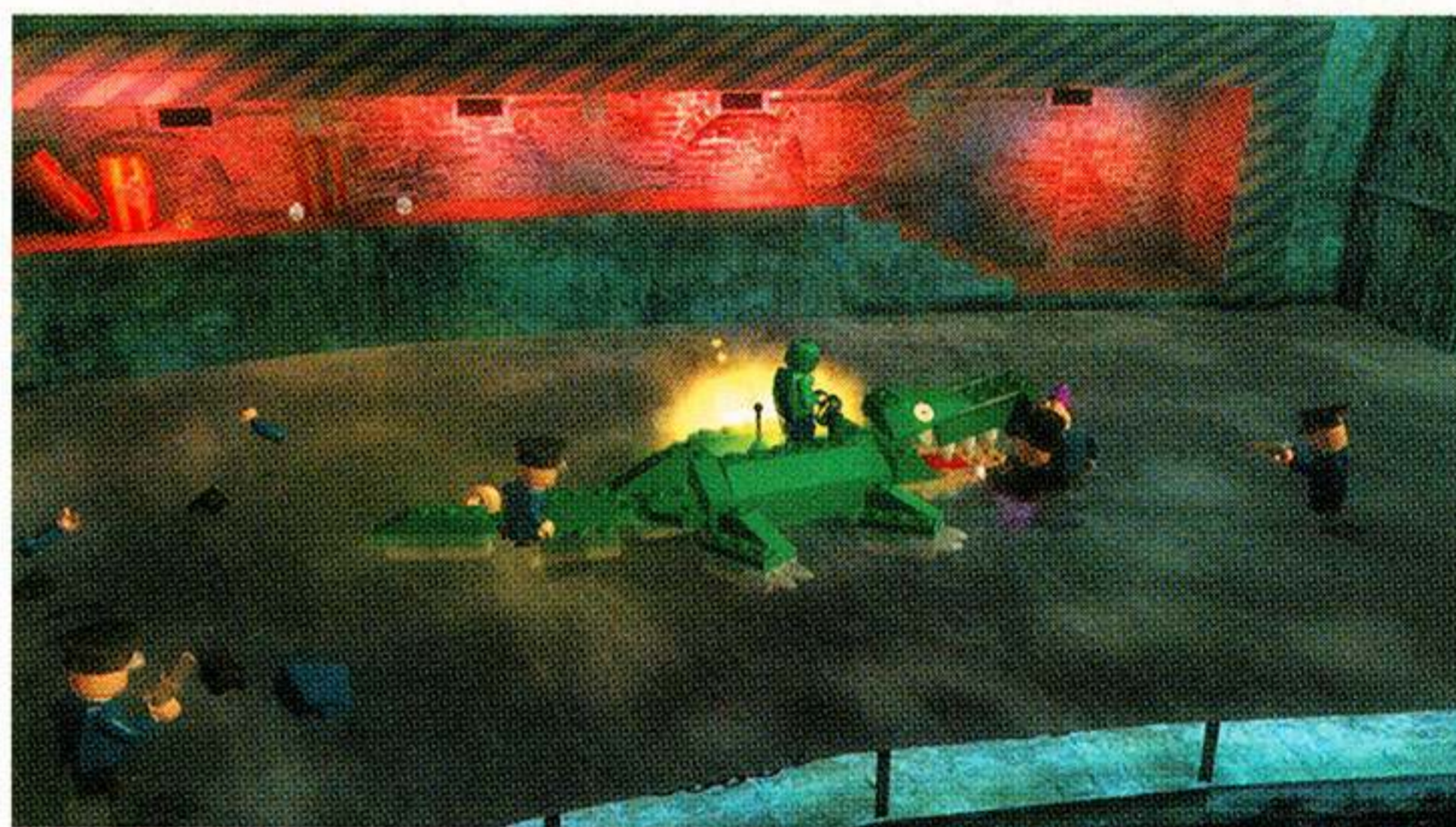
unique attack, such as The Joker's electrified hand buzzer. Many of them also have special abilities: The Penguin can take flight with his high-tech umbrella, and also traverse confined spaces thanks to his squat stature. Catwoman wields her trademark whip and a very appropriate super jump, Scarecrow emits fear gas, and Two-Face flips a LEGO coin before making decisions. Doyle also promises that some of the lesser-known characters will be the most fun to play. "I love Killer Croc," he says. "As a mini figure, he looks amazing, he's a chucking-people-around kind of bad guy. He even picks up busses."

This epic trial for Batman and Robin will unfold in a linear story that encompasses eighteen unique locations, each with two distinct playable areas. We checked out a very early build of the game for Xbox 360, and the set design seemed heavily inspired by the visuals of early-90s Batman, including *Batman: The Animated Series* and the Tim Burton films. Batfans won't be disappointed by the familiar, yet wholly original Gotham City as represented here, which offers a far more gritty and lifelike verisimilitude than in *LEGO Star Wars*. The wet, grimy streets of Gotham have been faithfully created with excellent details, like reflections in puddles and gritty, bumpmapped textures, while the tone nimbly merges the pantomime humor of the LEGO series with the gothic action of the comic and the creepy, sadistic humor famously employed by Batman's most iconic villains.

### Building the Dark Knight

The gameplay structure of *LEGO Star Wars* has been overhauled for Batman as well. The best element of the LEGO games is the opportunity to play as a wide variety of characters. But *Traveller's Tales* is, of course, beset with just two heroes—Batman and Robin. They've tackled this problem in two ways.

First, our heroes play up their James Bond side with a wide variety of costume upgrades that grant special abilities. Batman's demo suit, for example, includes explosive charges that can destroy certain obstacles, while his glider suit facilitates travel across long distances. Robin's tech suit allows



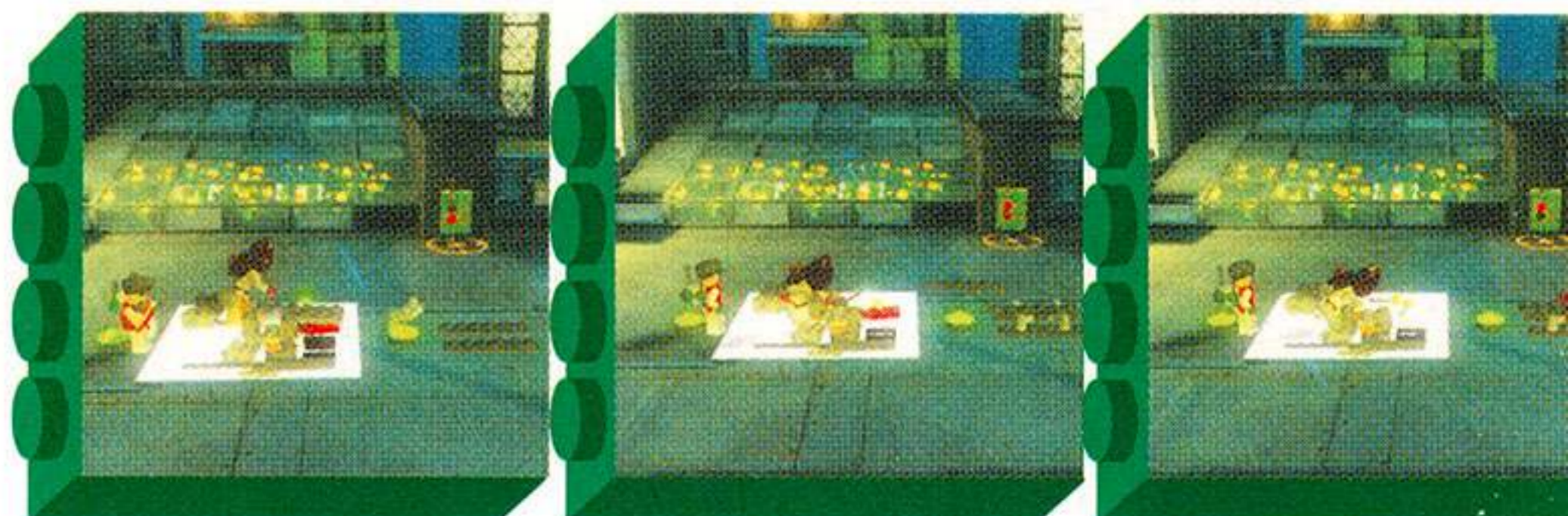
Playable villains are one of the best features of *LEGO Batman*. The storyline jumps between the perspective of the dynamic duo and their egomaniac enemies, allowing you to play the plot from both sides. In free play mode, all of the heroes and villains will be available to control.

him to access computer terminals, and his magnet boots let you clomp your way up and over metal obstacles. Not bad, not bad. But it gets better.

"Robin's vacuum suit is one of the coolest upgrades in the game," says Doyle. "It can suck up LEGOs in the environment...then you reach a station where you can unload all of the bricks and build a new object, like a door or a platform. You don't know what it's going to be until you get there." You'll access these new costumes at certain quick-change stations in each level. Plus, as in *LEGO Star Wars*, you can replay already completed levels with the new suits in order to access hidden locations.



As you might expect from a LEGO game, a large portion of the action will revolve around building special items, like this batcopter. Batman and Robin will also have to collect pieces in order to construct special doorways and terminals to allow them to proceed, or special secret items that unlock a plethora of secret extras.







▲ Each villain has unique abilities, including the Penguin's arsenal of deadly umbrellas and Killer Croc's super strength.

## LEGO Wishlist

We love the LEGO games, but we're holding out hope for...well, *saucier* fare. Here's a collection of classic movies that would make killer LEGO games!



### LEGO ALIENS

LEGO face huggers, LEGO pulse rifles, LEGO Ripley...this premise has "instant classic" written all over it! You'd blast xenomorphs, pilot LEGO dropships, and erect hastily constructed LEGO barricades to block the aliens. The climax would be an epic battle between a LEGO powerloader and the alien Queen. Plus, how awesome would an all-LEGO flamethrower look? Answer: *so awesome*.



### LEGO MATRIX

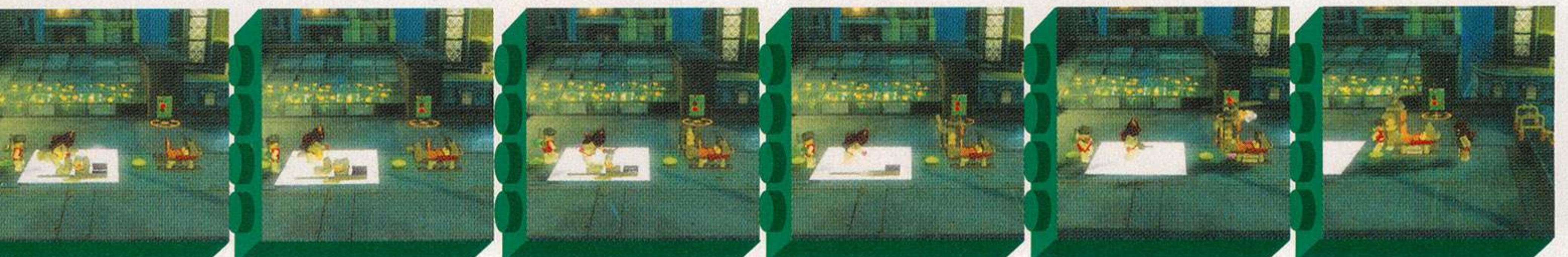
LEGO Matrix is simply a superior concept. Neo, Trinity, and Morpheus are incredibly iconic characters who would translate effortlessly to LEGO minifigs. And can you say "LEGO Bullet Time"? There's also an entire trilogy of classic film scenes to draw upon, though we'd be more interested in a LEGO Smith clone battle than a LEGO Zion orgy scene. Just sayin'...



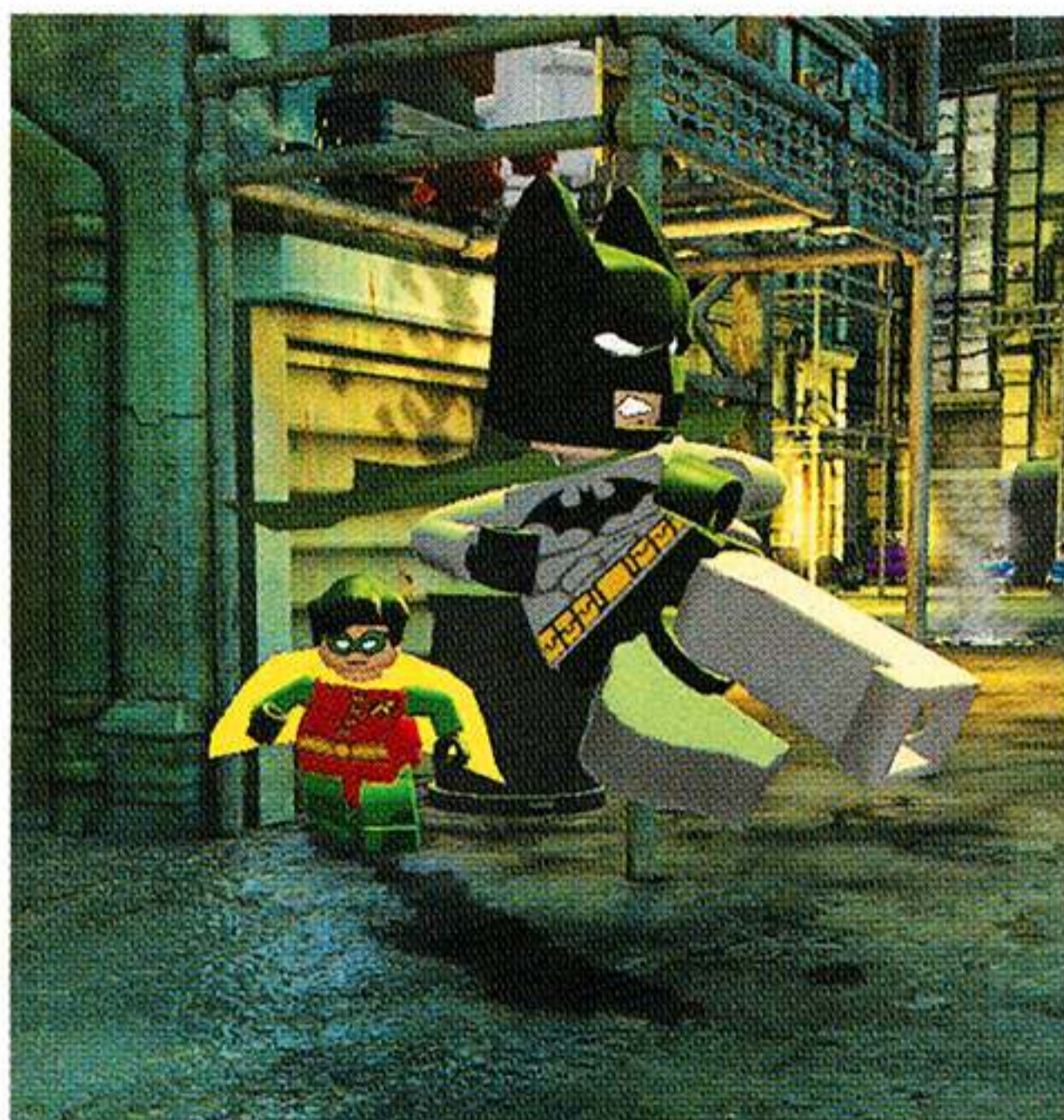
### LEGO DAWN OF THE DEAD

LEGO zombies are both creepy *and* cute—an ideal combination. Plus, the original film's satire of consumer culture would be the ultimate irony: after all, you're playing a *licensed game*! Director George A. Romero (who directed the original 1979 version of *Dawn*) would doubtlessly approve, if he's not too busy stinking up the place with another crappy *Diary of the Dead* movie.

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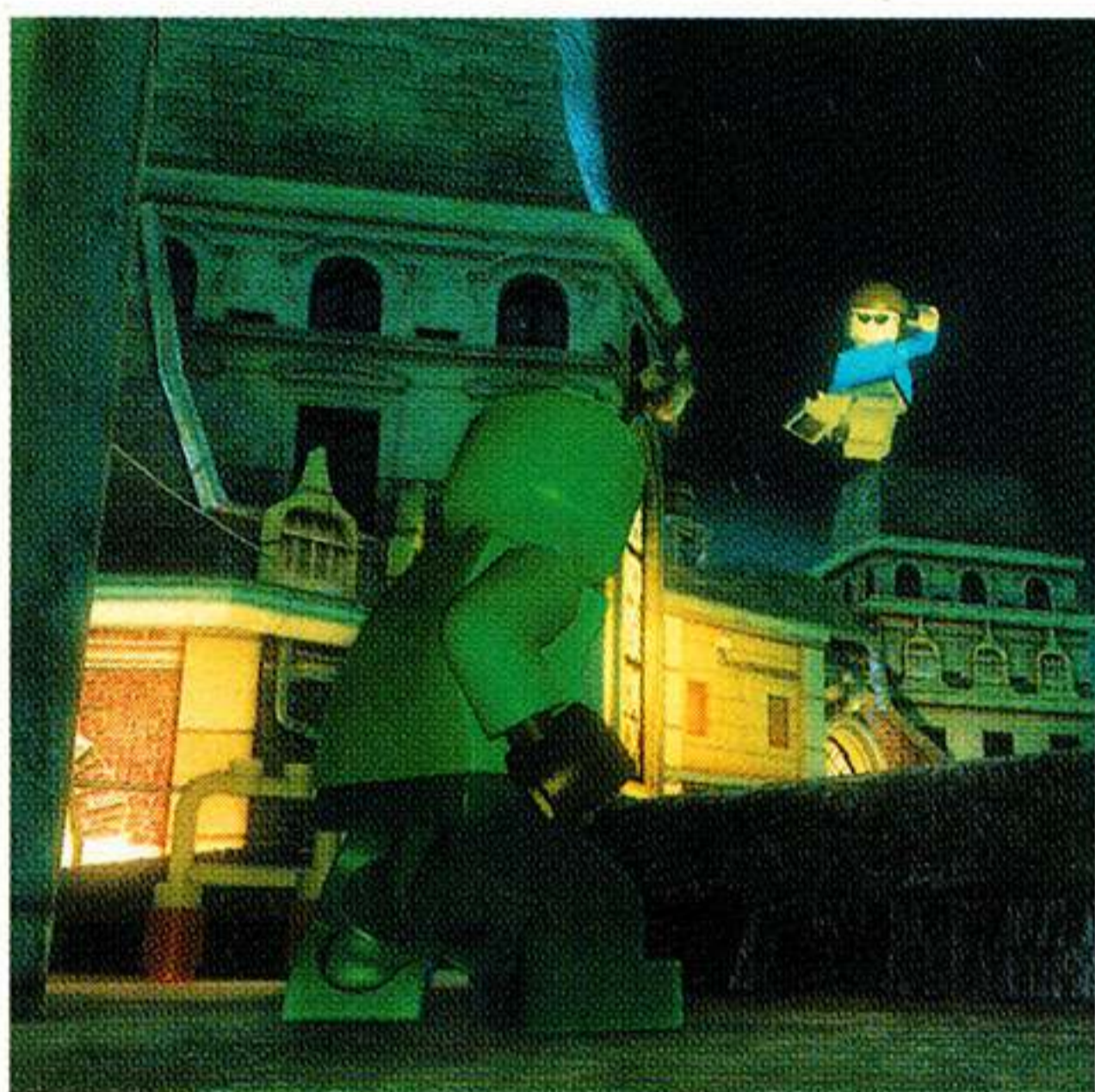




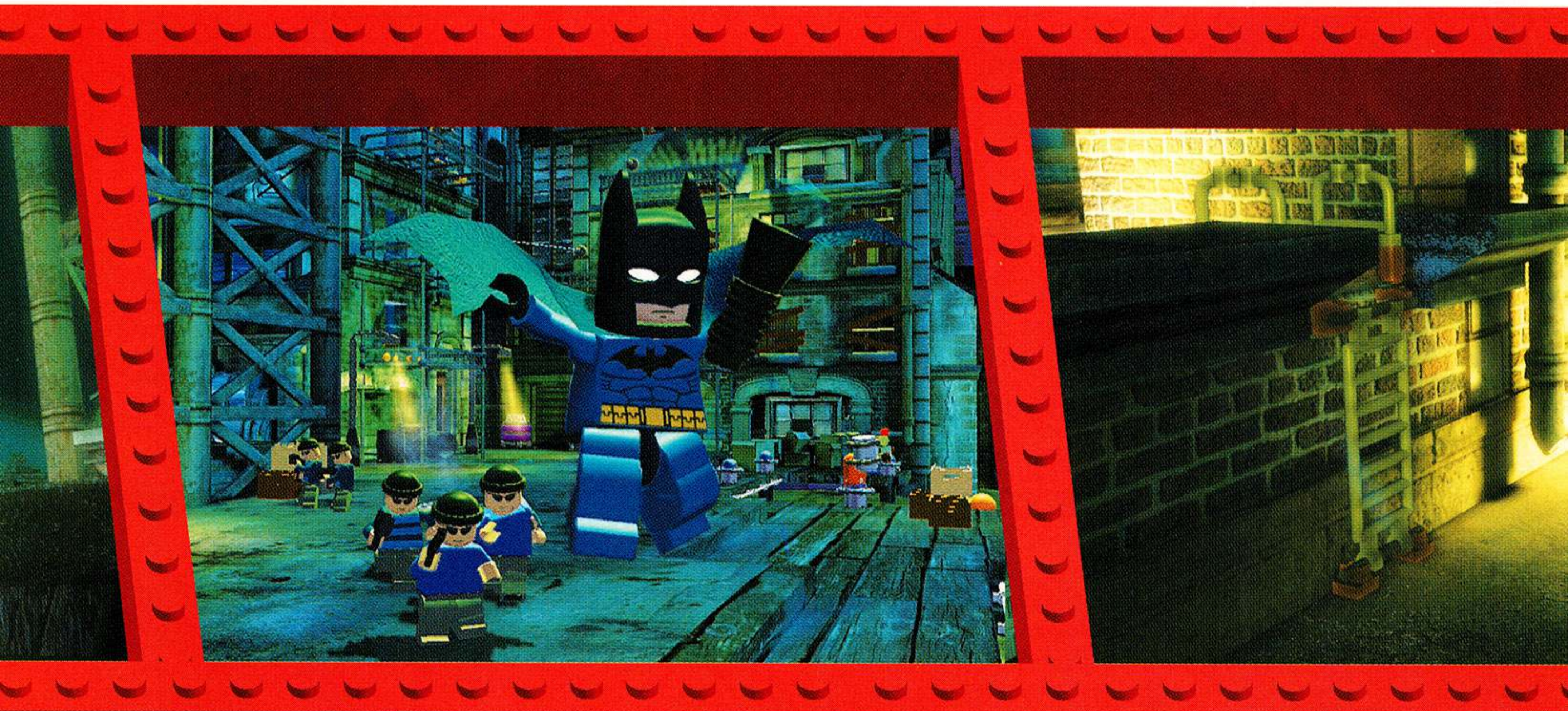
Far more exciting than the costume changes, however, is LEGO Batman will allow you to play through the story from both sides of the law: Between each of the 36 levels, the storyline alternates from the perspective of Batman and Robin to their nemeses. There will even be separate "hub" areas: the heroes will operate out of the Batcave, while the villains will launch their do-baddery from the sinister Arkham Asylum.

Although story details are shielded under a heavy shroud of secrecy, we do know that Joker launches a plot to kidnap Commissioner Gordon and sets a trap for Batman and the Boy Wonder in an abandoned amusement park. These scenes seamlessly mix logic puzzles with dexterity challenges, such as leaping across the tracks of a decaying rollercoaster. Once the action switches over to the dark side, you'll control The Joker and Harley Quinn as they dodge the police en route to a major showdown with the fuzz—a boss battle where you must use a crane to drop explosive teddy bears on the pigs' paddywagons.

Another, more acrobatic battle is set across the dark rooftops of Gotham. In it, Batman clashes with Catwoman after she swipes a sparkling LEGO diamond. In a charming cutscene, Catwoman distracts Batman with a kiss (to the utter disgust of youngster Robin), only to lose the diamond over the edge of the roof. But who swoops in to snatch it up? None other than the Penguin, who makes off with the



LEGO Batman is the darkest, most detailed LEGO game yet, featuring a surprisingly gritty recreation of Gotham City. Tim Burton would be proud.



▲ Batarang combat is a pivotal part of this game's interface. A multi-target system allows Batman and Robin to target multiple enemies for their bat-shaped wrath.

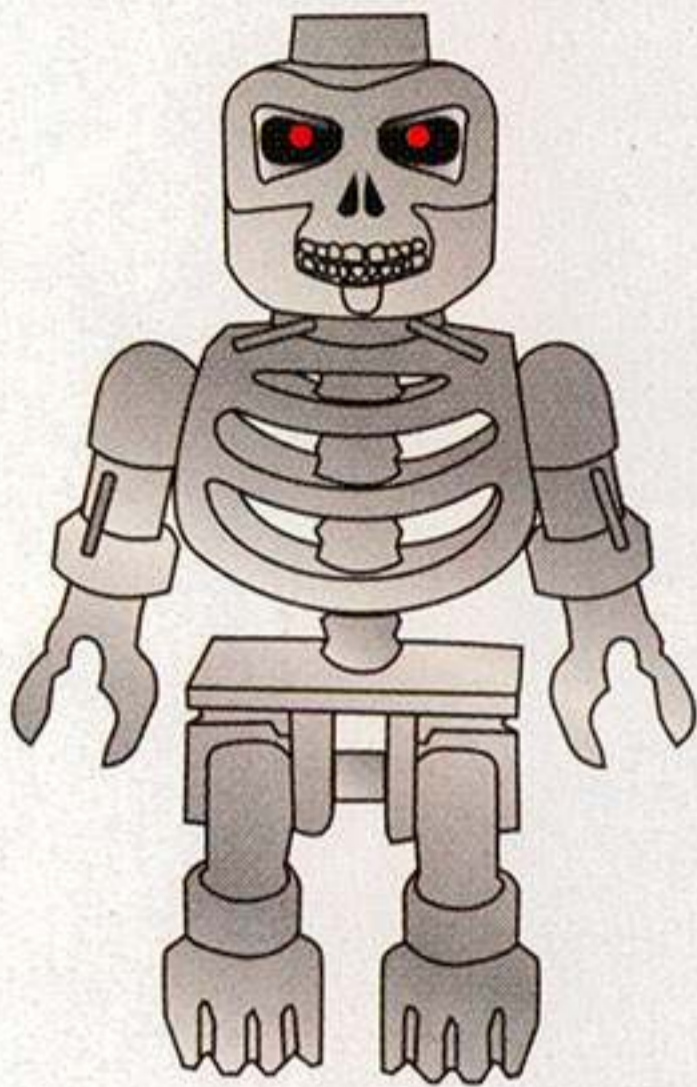


## LEGO Wishlist

We'd kill to see these LEGO games.

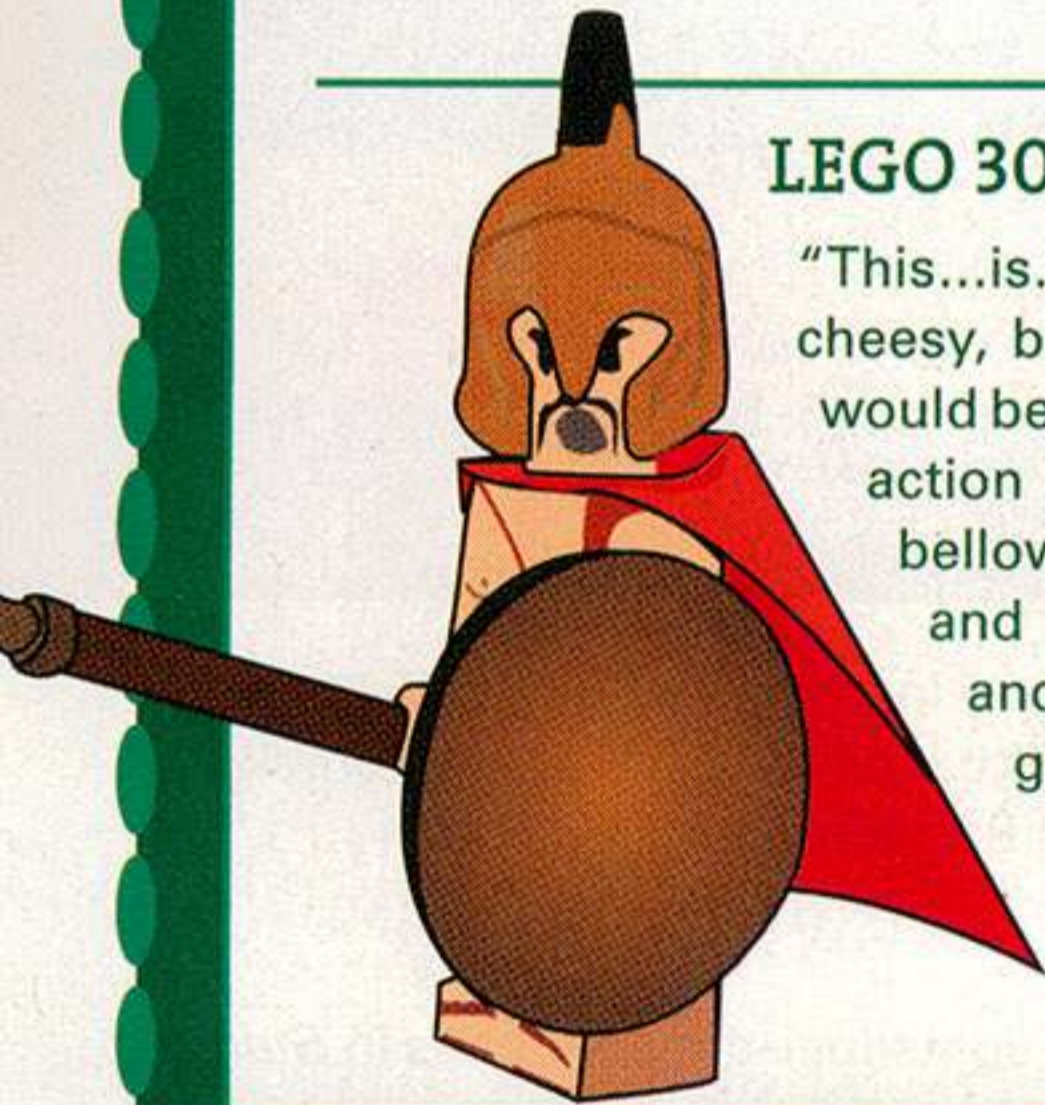
### LEGO TERMINATOR

This one's a no-brainer, with a blocky Ah-nold flexing and scowling behind '80s LEGO shades while stalking waitress Sarah Connor. LEGO T2 would work even better, though we're not sure how the T-1000's morphing abilities would be represented using LEGO bricks.



### LEGO 300

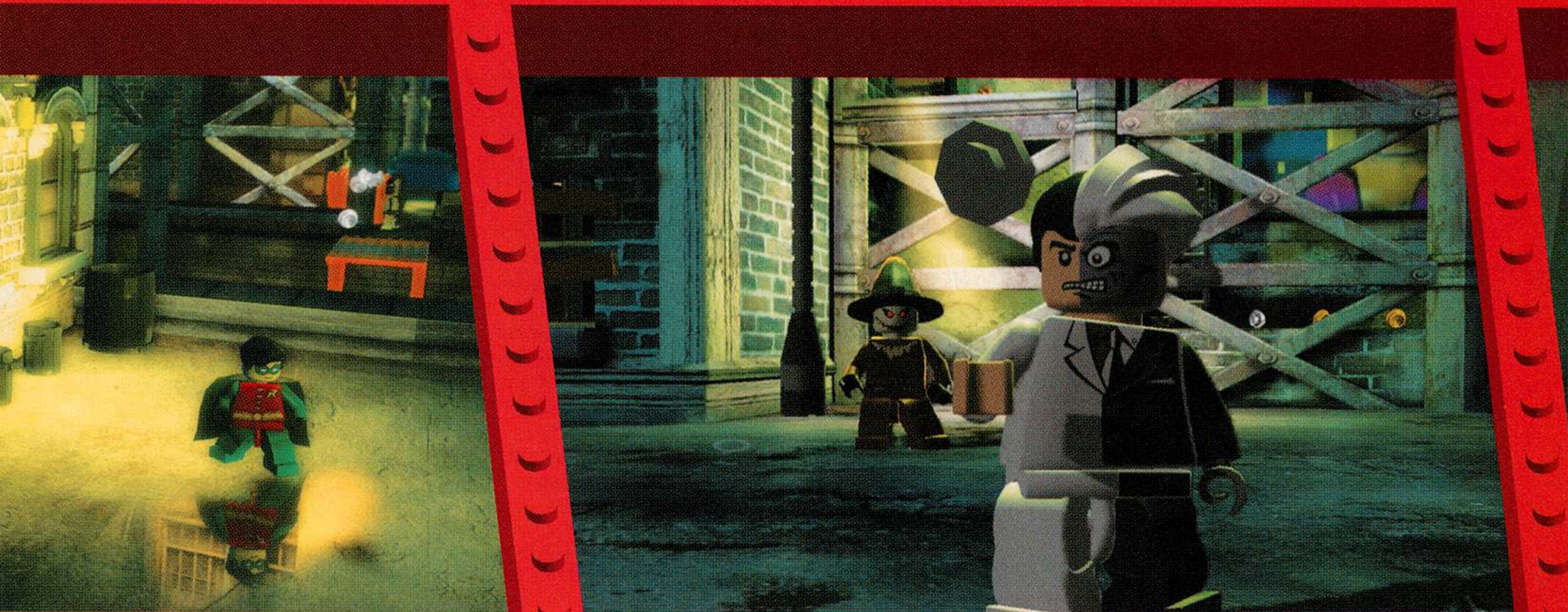
"This...is...LEGO!" Okay, that might be cheesy, but a 300-inspired LEGO game would be anything but. Imagine the epic action scenes, the ice-cold dialogue bellowing from tiny plastic mouths, and the LEGO arterial spray. Oh, and a LEGO Xerxes. This has to be greenlit immediately—we'll take the standard 10 percent cut.



## The History of Batman

Like any worthy comic hero, the Dark Knight Detective has a checkered past. Here are the highlights.

- 1939:** Batman, created by artist Bob Kane and writer Bill Finger, first appears in *Detective Comics* #27.
- 1940:** Robin, the Boy Wonder, makes his debut in *Detective Comics* #38.
- 1966:** The campy *Batman* TV series, starring Adam West, premieres on ABC.
- 1986:** The first Batman video game, an isometric adventure, is released on the MSX...and some other obscure game platforms you've never heard of.
- 1986:** Frank Miller's ultra-gritty graphic novel *The Dark Knight Returns* changes the landscape of comics. It's a premise similar to that employed by *Metal Gear Solid 4*, with an aging Batman questioning his role in a near-future world.
- 1989:** Director Tim Burton's *Batman* film, starring Michael Keaton in the title role, artfully mingles the camp of the TV series with the gothic darkness of the comics. Several sequels follow.
- 1992:** *Batman: The Animated Series* debuts under mastermind Paul Dini, and sets the bar for intelligent, story-driven cartoons.
- 1997:** Director Joel Schumacher and actor George Clooney deliver one of the most universally reviled films in the history of fanboy cinema, *Batman & Robin*.
- 2005:** The franchise is resurrected by director Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins*, the first film to capture the original essence of the character.
- 2008:** The sequel to *Batman Begins*, *The Dark Knight*, will be released this summer, followed by the debut of LEGO Batman: The Videogame in the fall.



▲ Fantastic character details abound. Check out Two-Face flipping his LEGO coin. "Should I kill Joel Schumacher for what he did to me, or let him live?"

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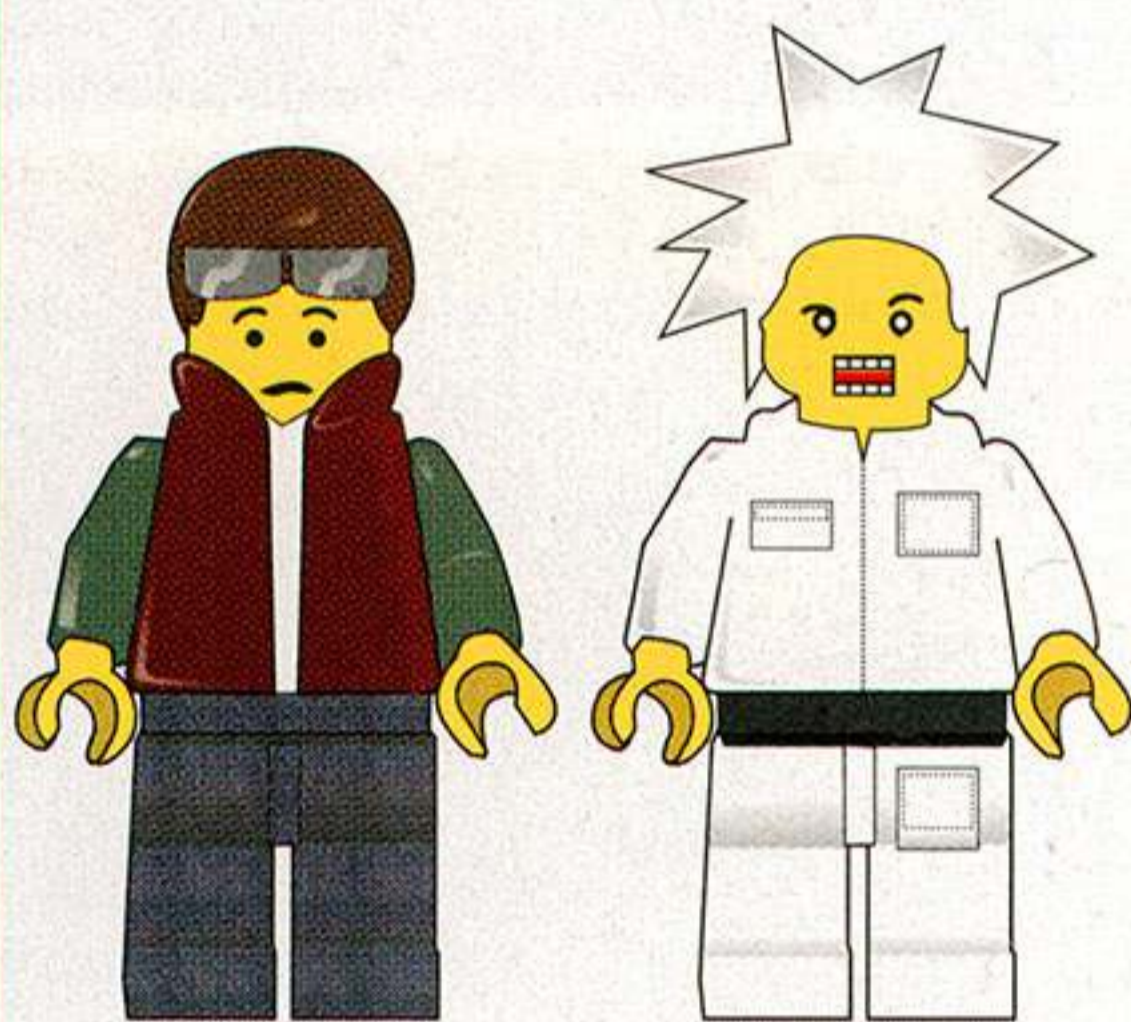




▲ The Penguin and Catwoman team-up for this rooftop caper heavily reminiscent of the classic conflict in 1992's *Batman Returns*.

## LEGO Wishlist

We'd kill to see these LEGO games.



### LEGO BACK TO THE FUTURE

With one classic trilogy already LEGO-fied (*Star Wars*) and another on the way (*Indiana Jones*), it's time for Marty McFly and Doc Brown's exploits to be recreated in brick form. Between Doc's mad dash to set the cables up in 1955, Marty's Hoverboard acrobatics in 2015, and the thrilling train ride in 1885, there's more than enough action for developers to draw upon. What's taking so long? "Hellooooo? McFly?"

goods on the draft of his flying umbrella. This scene seemed to be heavily inspired by *Batman Returns*, right down to the set design and lighting. Rumor has it that the Riddler's caper involves a daring break-in at Fort Blox, the LEGO equivalent of Fort Knox. Sounds like a job for Batman!

### Rock Out With the Blocks Out

The combat in LEGO Batman promises to be the next evolution of the lightsaber-driven battles in *Star Wars*. In addition to a widely expanded array of close-range grapples, all of the characters will have ranged combat abilities. For Batman and Robin, that means they'll be busting out their signature Batarangs. But our heroes' signature weapons are far more than standard projectiles. Holding down the ranged attack button brings up a targeting reticule that you can move around the screen, stacking several consecutive targets before unleashing. You may recall this type of interface from later *Zelda* games, *Rez HD*, or even *Panzer Dragoon*. Traveller's Tales is determined to incorporate Wii Remote gestures into the Wii version of the game, using swipes for Catwoman's whip and control jiggling to build LEGOs with your hands. "We'll go with whatever's the most fun," says Doyle.

Of course, the Batarang is only the tip of the Batberg. LEGO Batman will also feature action on land, sea, and air with sequences utilizing the Batboat, Batwing and the Batmobile, in addition to villain-driven vehicles, including the Scarecrow's biplane (which was designed from an actual toy available in a real LEGO Batman playset). "These will be free-roaming vehicle levels, rather than on-rails," explains Doyle. "They're in the style of the Hoth levels in LEGO *Star Wars II*. Lots of exploration, lots of explosions."

Fans of the LEGO franchise seem to have reveled in blowing those things up with a friend, so LEGO Batman is designed with cooperative play firmly in mind. Online co-op will be available on the Xbox 360 via Xbox Live and on PlayStation 3 over the PlayStation Network. Ad-hoc co-op will be available on the PSP version as well. LEGO Batman will also see the light of day on other consoles, including the PlayStation 2, PC and Mac, as well as an all-new, uniquely designed Nintendo DS version.

"The DS version is gonna be awesome," declares Doyle. "It's written from the ground up by the same team that did LEGO *Star Wars: The Complete Saga* for the DS. There will be loads of touch screen stuff in there, like Catwoman's whip, all of the panels and switches, and certain attacks like the grapple gun. And the vehicles are going to be really cool too. I can't wait for people to see that version." Considering how charming the LEGO games have been thus far, neither can we.

Stay tuned to this batchannel: we'll have more details on this game before it hits shelves this fall. **GP**



**Hugh Sterbakov** writes the coming-of-age superhero comic book *Freshmen*, which is currently in development as a feature film. He also buys the toys for *Robot Chicken*, and just got his three-week sober chip from a crippling *World of Warcraft* addiction.

Reach him at [fatboughl@aol.com](mailto:fatboughl@aol.com).





# Help BATMAN Contest

Win a LEGO® Batman™ skinned Xbox 360®



Help!! The prisoners of *Arkham Asylum* have escaped! *Commissioner Gordon* needs Batman to catch them all. Look for the *Bat-Signal* on the pages within the feature story, and add up the total number of *Bat-Signals* to let Batman know how many prisoners have escaped!! In return for your help, you will have a chance to win a custom-painted Xbox 360 Elite with LEGO Batman. Hurry, you don't have much time!!

Stay tuned for more Batman contests and prizes in the upcoming months in *GamePro Magazine*.

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No purchase necessary. Enter online at [www.gamepro.com/LEGOBatman](http://www.gamepro.com/LEGOBatman) and follow the instructions. Please complete all information required on the entry form. If you are entering online and are under 13 years of age, you will be asked for a parent or legal guardian's email address so that we can let them know you are entering this sweepstakes. Limit one online entry per person. No other forms of entry will be accepted. Normal Internet access and usage charges imposed by your online service will apply. Sweepstakes open to legal U.S. residents only (excluding Puerto Rico). This offer is Void where prohibited, and is subject to all federal, state and local laws. Visit [www.gamepro.com](http://www.gamepro.com) for complete Giveaway rules and Regulations.



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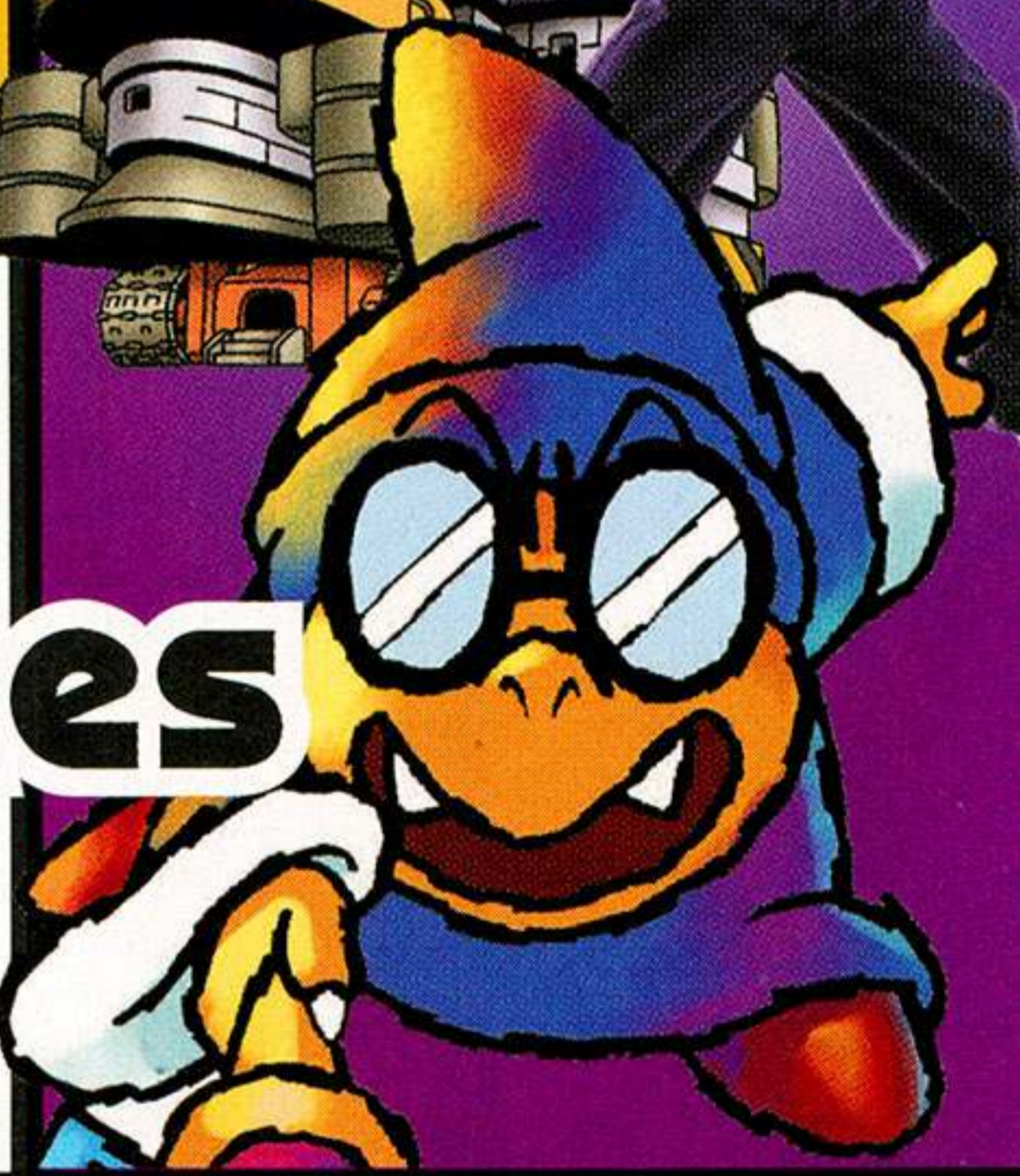
Feature



# 101

## Must-Have Handheld Games

Dozens of handhelds. Thousands of games. Countless AA batteries. From Game Boy to the PSP, *GamePro* chronicles the top portable games ever made. *By Tracy Erickson*





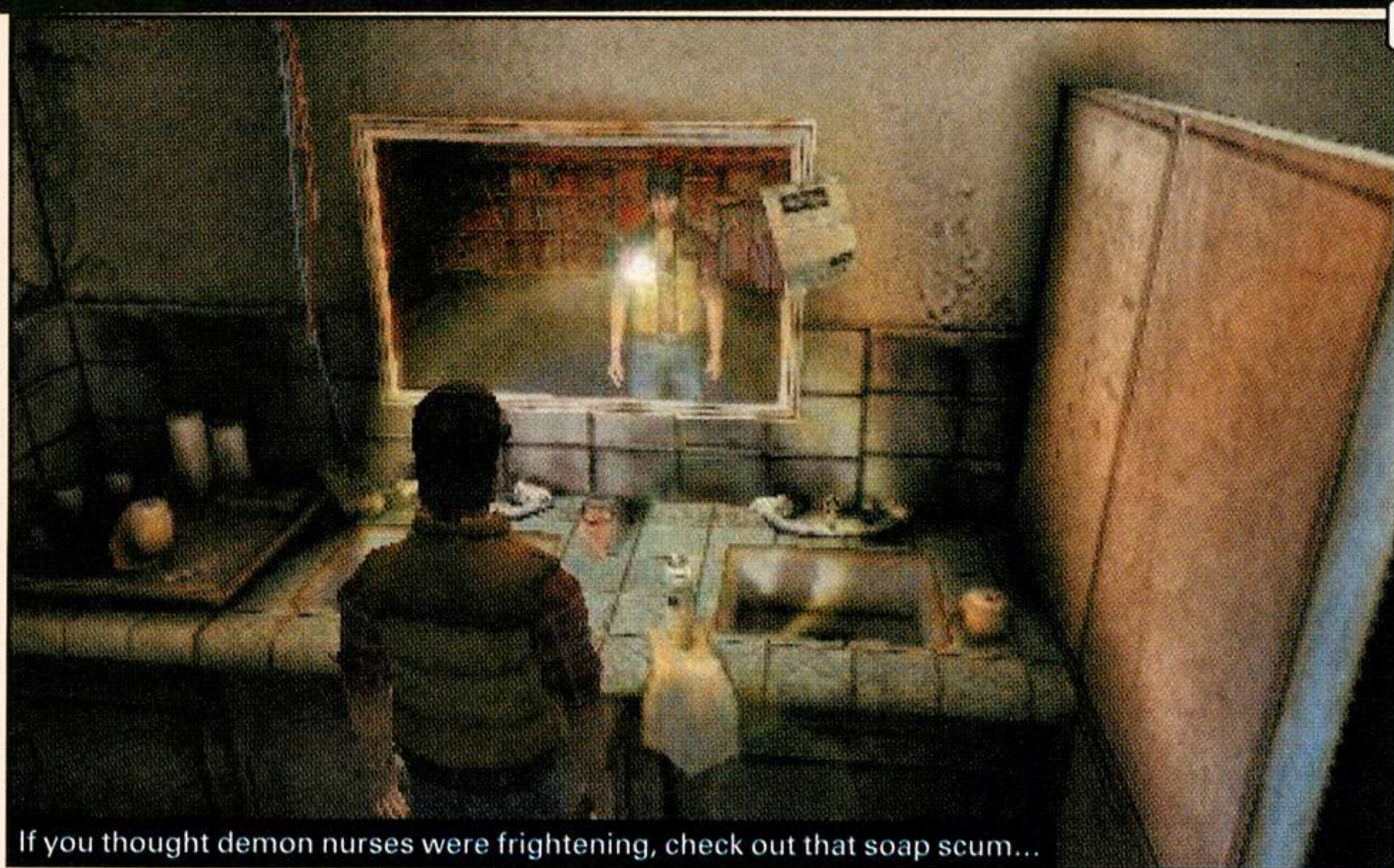
**O**ne of the worst-kept secrets in the game industry is that handhelds are simply more popular than home consoles. Handheld gaming might not pack the sizzle of new-gen consoles like the PS3 or Wii, but like Shakespeare said, the play's the thing. After almost 20 years of handheld gaming, there are literally thousands of worthy portable games to play. How do you distill the gold from the crap? *GamePro's* making that question easy. This month, we've crafted the definitive, ultimate, end-all be-all handheld game guide.\* Some of these games are classics, others are addicting, and still others are just plain weird. But every single one is worth your time. So to prepare for our definitive handheld game guide, you might want to grab a soda, a notepad, and a credit card: this could get expensive!

*\* The following is a list of 101 games we want. Some are classics, others are similar-feeling alternatives, and a few don't exist yet (but should). While we've put some heavy hitters at the end, this is by no means a "worst to best" list.*

DS  
101.

## Drawn to Life

This one's perfect for the kid in all of us. *Drawn to Life* is a simple, charming game where players use the DS's touch screen to draw their own character, accessories, and items. It's a simple, pleasing game that combines side-scrolling platform-jumping action and an RPG-style village for buying items and unlocking levels. A fun, creative game that, for once, almost perfectly leverages the DS's touchscreen.



If you thought demon nurses were frightening, check out that soap scum...

PSP  
100.

## Silent Hill Origins

What *Silent Hill Origins* lacks in originality, it makes up for in scares. Nothing comes close to this disturbing handheld thriller (especially if you play while wearing headphones). As a prequel to the console games, *Origins* sets a macabre stage for the series with its gritty graphics, horrific scenes, and psychologically taxing gameplay. Without a doubt, the only game on our list that'll have you screaming like a little girl...but still begging for more. *Origins'* success makes us all the more hopeful for a PSP version of *Resident Evil 4*.



PSP  
99.

## Final Fantasy I

This sharp re-make of the original NES *Final Fantasy* is almost as interesting as a historical document as it is a game. An old-school RPG to the core, *Final Fantasy I* could be faulted for its random battles, one-dimensional story, and simple character development...yet this game sparked a role-playing game craze that thrives to this day. There are more polished RPGs available, but playing the original *Final Fantasy* is like listening to the first Ramones album: you can just feel the genius, even if the presentation isn't perfect. A must-play for dedicated RPG fans.

DS  
98.

## Dementium: The Ward

Checking out *GameCock's* Nintendo DS debut is worth it for survival-horror fans looking for something beyond *Silent Hill Origins*. While not graphically advanced and possessing a rather ham-hocked story, it still manages to dish out some entertaining frights. You wake up in a haunted hospital that's occupied by wandering surgical abominations. The visuals are good, but the audio is simply outstanding. A flawed gem that never saw a proper retail release.



DS  
97.

## Trauma Center: Under the Knife

Become a stylus surgeon in this unique game that has paddled the adventure genre back to life. At the heart of its gameplay are surgical procedures that harness the touch screen in creative ways, such as slicing out tumors or tying off arteries via taps and swipes of the touch screen. But as a young physician, your tongue needs to be as sharp as your scalpel in order to pass intense grilling from patients and superiors. It's a bit text-heavy at times, but *Under the Knife's* pacing is perfect for those long, lonely bus rides to school. It's like a book, only better.

### Similar Games

DS  
96.

#### Phoenix Wright, Ace Attorney

The long arm of the law touches Nintendo DS in this crazy courtroom adventure. Playing as legal eagle Phoenix Wright, you're tasked with using the DS's touchpad to route out criminals via clever logic and creative reasoning. An off-the-wall adventure that won't get any objections from us.

DS  
95.

#### Hotel Dusk: Room 215

Low-key personality keeps *Hotel Dusk* from being as popular as either of the above series. Stay a night with this film noir-styled adventure though and you're sure to come back for more. As long as you're willing to work through a few unintuitive puzzles, *Hotel Dusk* deserves a deposit.

OPERATION SCORE

660

MISS LIMIT



TIME LIMIT

04:05:60



Doctor! You have to drain the blood

"Damn it Jill, I'm a gamer not a surgeon."



CONTINUED

2008



**PSP 94. Dungeon Siege: Throne of Agony**

No need to agonize over where to get your handheld hack-and-slash fix because Dungeon Siege has you covered. Scantly clad elven women and beefy barbarians lead you through gorgeously-designed dungeons to bash all manner of monsters to mush. Tons of magic weapons, equipment, and spells provide more than enough incentive to trudge through the chaotic world of Aranna. The handheld iteration of the series isn't perfect, but that doesn't keep it from being a satisfying hack-and-slash RPG.



Sore thumbs and loose buttons await you in Dungeon Siege.



**Similar Games**

**PSP 93. Neopets: Petael Adventures: The Wand of Wishing**

Don't let the cutesy brand fool you—The Wand of Wishing offers some of the best hack-and-slash role-playing of any handheld game out there. Long loading times frustrate the experience, although by all other accounts it's a decent RPG. Pick this up if you're in need of a solid dungeon crawler.

**#Mobile 92. Doom RPG**

Hell goes hack-n-slash in this mobile take on the classic first-person shooter. Trekking through a possessed Martian base involves turn-based battles that retain the first-person perspective for which the series is known. An unusual, but great RPG that was designed for mobile phones.

**PSP 91. Alien Syndrome**

Sega's out-of-this-world RPG got panned on its release, but dig deeper and you'll still find an enjoyable dungeon crawler. Fans of hack-and-slash RPGs will adore the high-tech weaponry and old-school, item-collecting charms.

**GBA on the DS**

Don't forget: The Nintendo DS can also play Game Boy Advance games via a slot on its rear. Viva la backward compatibility!



**DS 87. Animal Crossing: Wild World**

Nintendo's kid-friendly take on The Sims goes wild in its touch screen translation. Fashion, interior decorating, and gardening are the order of the day in this non-violent social simulation. An impressive array of customization options for your animal avatar, along with great online interaction features set Animal Crossing apart from other portable games. Expect to sink a lot of hours into building your character, as Animal Crossing's only draw is all the free time it demands.



Enjoy a second virtual life in Animal Crossing.

**DS 90. Jam Sessions**

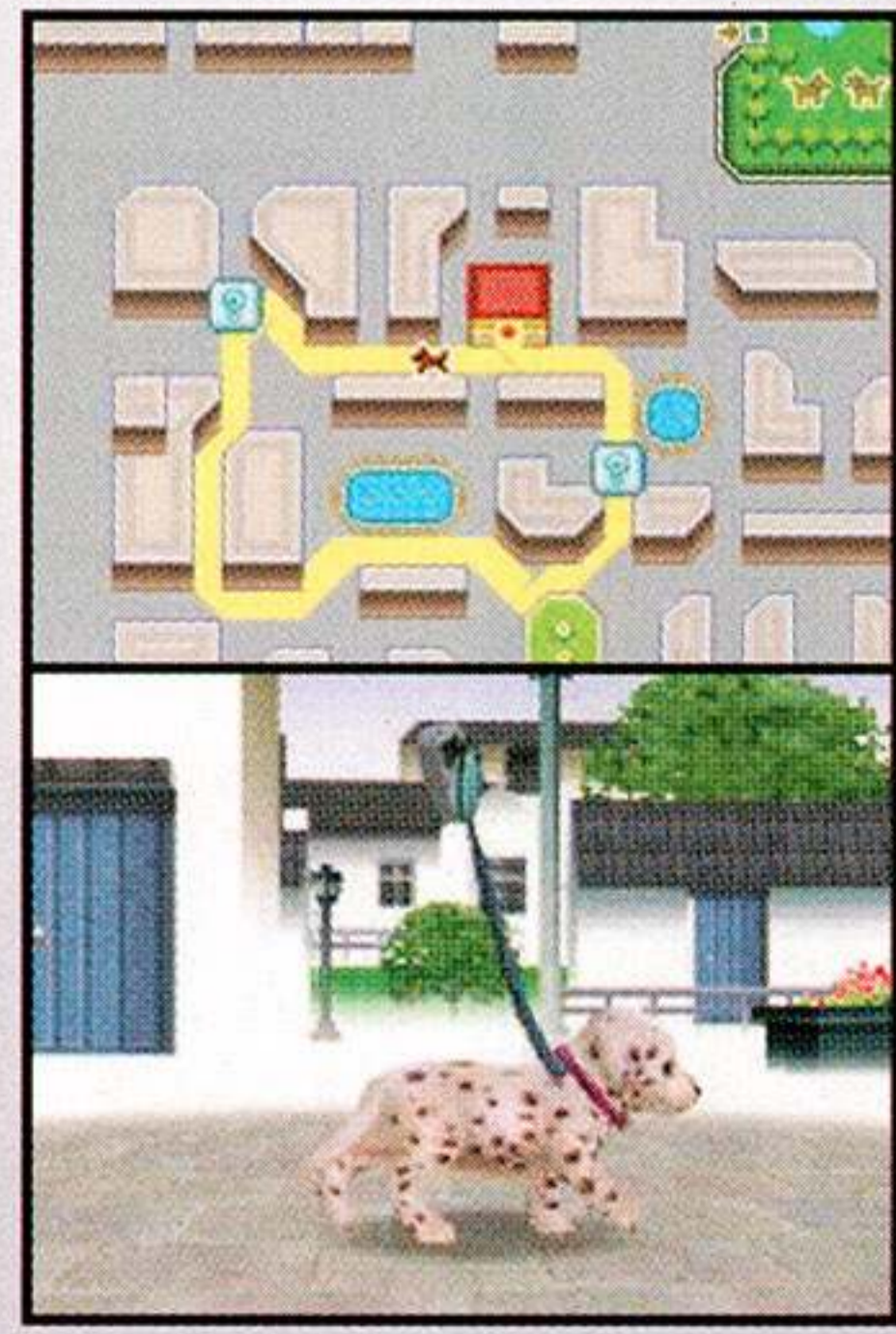
If you've got one hand in your pocket, then the other one must be flicking the stylus across Jam Session's virtual guitar string. Less a game than a digital music maker, one of this game's key features is the ability to record your own tunes. You can play more than a dozen different pack-in songs, although the small track list will have you saying saying gimme more, gimme gimme more.



Games like Sessions turn your handheld into a mini-boom box.



**DS 86. Nintendogs**



Nintendo let the dogs out when it released the first bonafide hit for its dual screen handheld. All of a sudden, undesirable chores like walking your pup and scrubbing his mane were cool again thanks to an adorable assortment of digital dogs. Imaginative use of the touch screen to play games with your little one, as well as utilization of the microphone for vocal commands set Nintendogs among the most sophisticated handheld games ever made.



**Similar Games**

**PSP 89. Beats**

We've got the Beats and it's easy to understand why—slick, yet simple graphics combined with basic button-pressing rhythmic gameplay à la Guitar Hero. The real showstopper is playing to your own MP3 collection; just drag-and-drop your iTunes folder and Beats does the rest. The low, low price (\$5) makes it a steal. Only available through the PSP's online store.

**iPod 88. Phase**

It comes as no surprise that the only iPod game worth owning comes from the musical masterminds that brought us Rock Band. Taking music stored on your iPod, Phase lets you tap the click wheel to the beat as icons flow down the screen in rhythm. A little derivative, but being able to play to your own music rocks. You'll find it on iTunes.



PSP 85 **LocoRoco**

Now every boy (and girl) can have a blob of their own thanks to the gelatinous platforming action of LocoRoco. This cute and creative game has you guiding miniature globules through colorful stages, using only the PSP's two shoulder buttons to tilt your surroundings. Loco Roco is far too short for its own good, but its saccharine-sweet soundtrack (voiced by singing children) will echo in your head long after your PSP is powered down. An overlooked gem—don't miss it!



LocoRoco turns platform gaming upside-down.

**Similar Games**

GBA 84 **Drill Dozer**

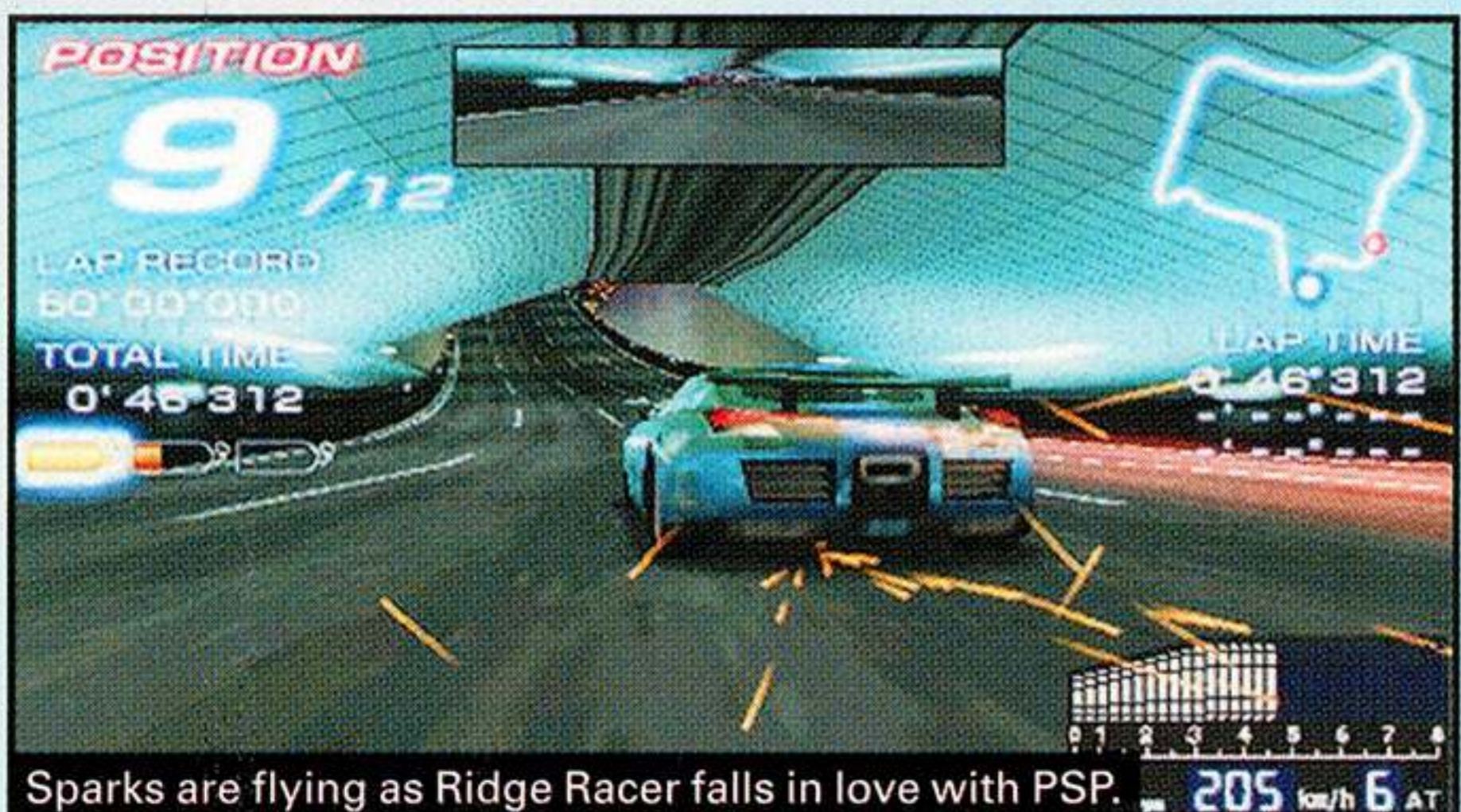
Sharing the same shoulder button-focused controls as LocoRoco, Drill Dozer has you guide a living drill bit through obstacles and enemies. It's a bizarre, yet surprisingly solid platformer screwed out of attention during the dull final days of the Game Boy Advance. The good news is, it'll play on your DS!

PSP 83 **Crush**

You'll be up until the early hours of the morning playing this inventive platformer starring an insomniac that must navigate tricky 2- and 3D stages. A simple press of the L button crushes a 3D level into a side-scrolling 2D perspective, making for some mind-bending platforming. An underappreciated gem that deserves a little love.

PSP 82 **Ridge Racer**

Drifting to PSP at launch, Ridge Racer still manages to be one of the greatest launch titles for any system, as well as the tightest realistic racer available on a handheld (well, until Gran Turismo hits the PSP). Superior control, detailed visuals, and a wealth of options set the bar high for portable racing. The lack of online play is regrettable, although the superb quality of its driving mechanics keep it in pole position.



Sparks are flying as Ridge Racer falls in love with PSP. 205 km/h 6 AT

**Similar Games**

PSP 81 **ATV Offroad Fury Pro**

After the poor reception of PSP launch title Blazin' Trails, hardly a glance has been shot at its amazingly improved sequel. Ridin' dirrty is a pleasure in ATV Offroad Fury Pro thanks to tight controls that make competing in its lengthy career and online multiplayer modes a breeze. Simply put, it's among the best off-road racers on any platform.

# Best Multiplayer Games



WiFi makes mobile multiplayer easy. Here are our top picks!

DS 80 **Mario Party DS**

Partying with a plumber and his toadstool-popping Princess sounds sketchy, but if you let loose your expectations you're bound to enjoy Mario Party DS. A great assortment of mini-games and single cartridge multiplayer supporting up to four players make it the best installment yet in the long-running series.

DS/PSP 79 **Worms: Open Warfare 2**



Nearly drying up with a string of lackluster installments, Worms finally squirmed their way to multiplayer perfection in Open Warfare 2. Online play on both DS and PSP make it the best in the series for multiplayer competition. Better graphics and a bigger screen give the PSP version an edge.

PSP 78 **Star Wars Battlefront: Renegade Squadron**

Online competition for up to 16 players provide a new hope for handheld Star Wars games. Large maps, a slew of character customization options, and rock-solid performance are good enough reasons to keep the Force in your PSP.

PSP 77 **Pixel Junk Monsters**



A fantastic game, though its Remote Play requirements mean the cost of entry is high: you need a PS3, a downloaded copy of the game, and a PSP with access to a Wi-Fi hotspot. Though playable on the PS3, Pixel Junk Monsters excels as a PSP game because it's simple, cute, and endlessly replayable. As a tiny shaman, you set up cannons, arrows, and flamethrowers to blast away at incoming waves of bumblebees and golems. It's available as a download on the PSN store.

DS 76 **Geometry Wars Galaxies**

Geometry Wars is still the best game on Xbox Live Arcade, so it's a natural choice to make the jump to the DS. You pilot a tiny starship fighter through waves of geometric enemies, blasting in all directions with taps on the DS's touch screen...it's clunky at first, but gets easier with practice. Galaxies adds new perks over its predecessor, including an upgradeable "pet" and hundreds of unlockable levels.



CONTINUED ▶



PSP  
75.

## Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories

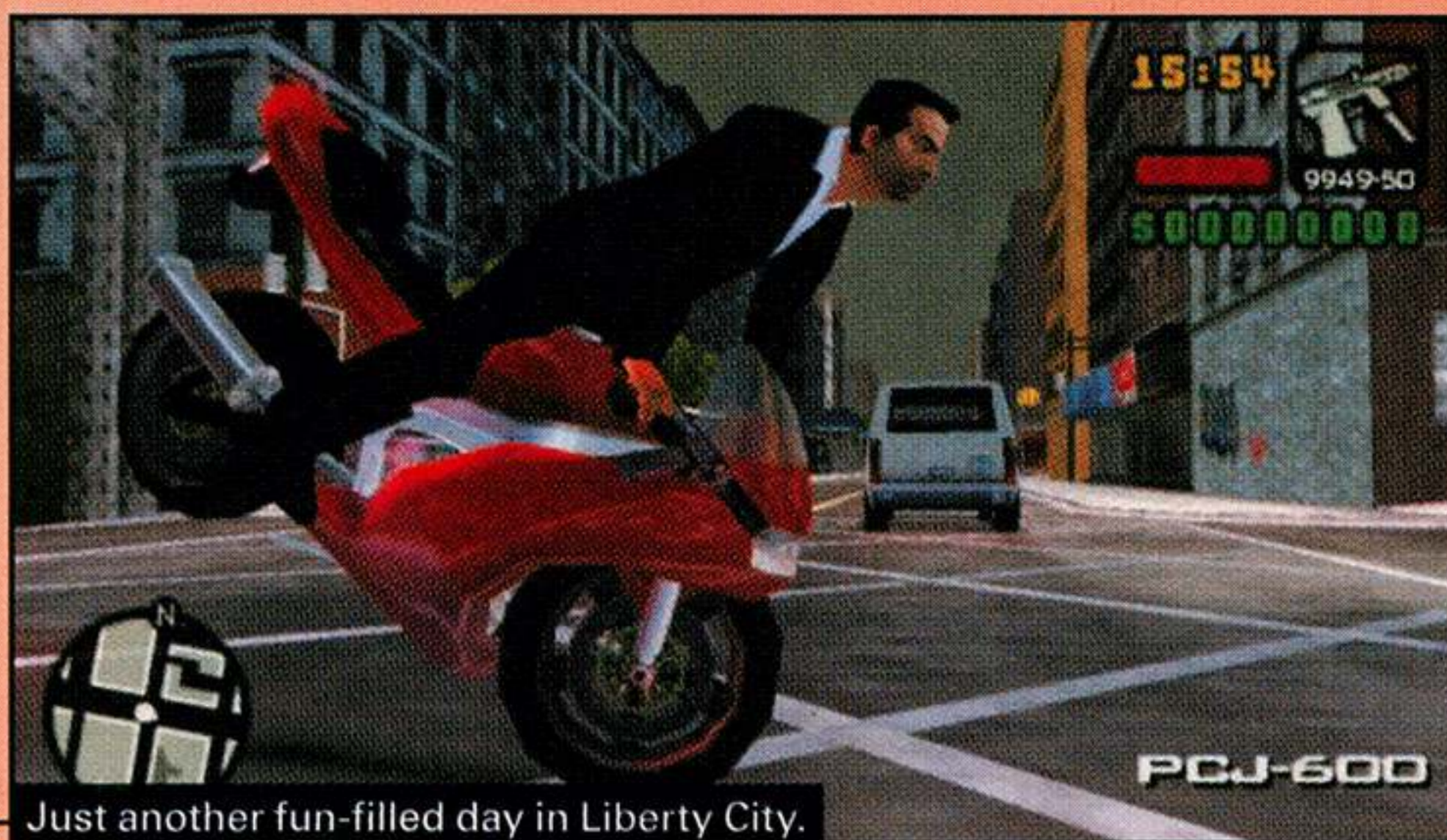
It might be hard out there for a pimp, but Liberty City Stories makes it easier by bringing the immensely popular Grand Theft Auto series portable. Keeping tabs on your lovely ladies while building the Leone crime syndicate is as fun as it is technically impressive. Liberty City Stories packs the enormous urban locale onto your PSP in an amazing feat of game engineering. Although not perfect, it's hard to deny the pleasure you'll get from this stellar side-story—it really is the equal of Grand Theft Auto III, and pure pleasure even on that small screen.

### Similar Games

PSP  
74.

## Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories

Vice City Stories doesn't offer much different from its predecessor other than its tropical setting, but that shouldn't keep you from getting in on all the action. Exploring the crime-ridden streets of Vice City taking on action-packed missions is loads of fun, even if visiting Liberty City ought to be your first priority.



Just another fun-filled day in Liberty City.

PSP  
73.

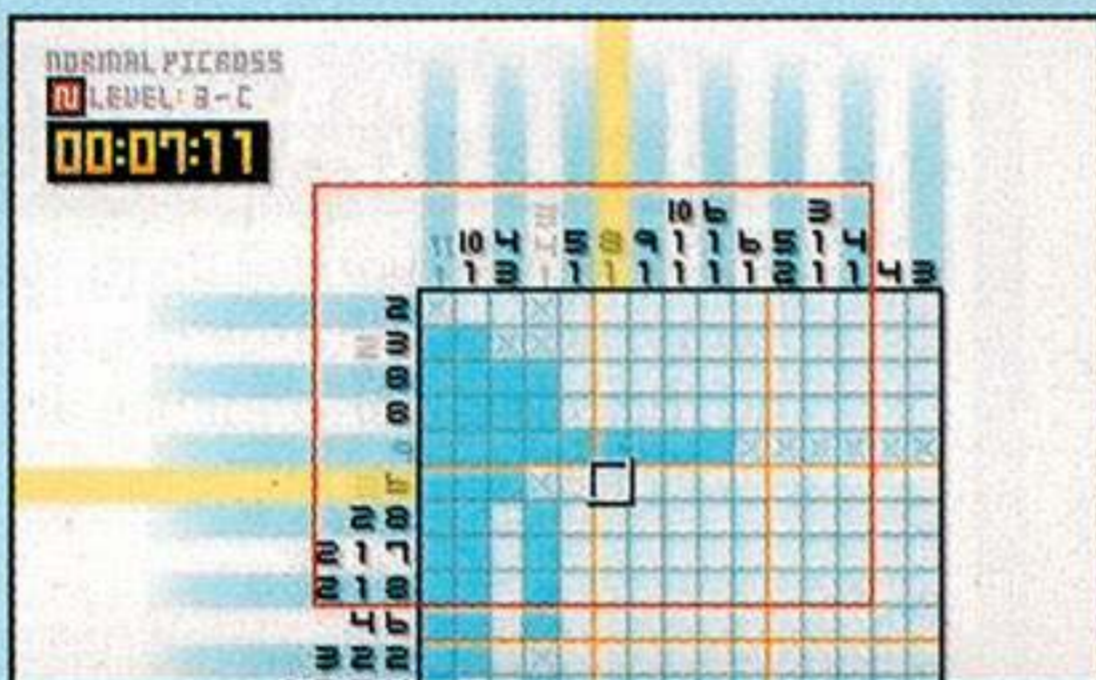
## Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice

The second Pursuit Force game lets you to literally take justice into your own hands. As a renegade cop, you take down baddies using any means possible, from high speed chases to acrobatic shootouts. A totally crazy action-packed game: just wait until you land on an enemy's car hood to take him out!

BDS  
72.

## Picross DS

This crossword-like puzzler makes fantastic use of touch screen controls. Loads of mind-bending puzzles, a full editor, and online play give Picross DS immense value. It's a good thing too, as the game's incredibly addictive quality will have you going back to it for months after purchase.



Uncover the secret image in Picross DS, or make your own!

GBA  
67.

## Mario vs. Donkey Kong

Mario's old rival sticks it to him again in this wacky platformer. Focusing on a blend of arcade-style platforming and straight up action, Mario vs. Donkey Kong takes side-scrolling platforming in a creative new direction that influenced dozens of games that followed. Challenging stages, random reflex-based mini-games, and a kooky sense of humor will have you going bananas for this innovative game.



Getting into the swing of things in Mario vs. Donkey Kong.



# PSP Retro Wishlist

Sony has confirmed that more PlayStation and PlayStation 2 games will end up as downloadable titles for the PSP, a trend that's just fine by us. Here are the classics we'd love to replay as PSP titles.



PSP  
71.

## Metal Gear Solid

The Japanese are already getting a PSP version of this pioneering stealth game. Hopefully they'll release it in the States soon—it's a perfect chance to get caught up before MGS4 hits the PS3 in June.



PSP  
69.

## Final Fantasy VII

Square Enix's RPG masterpiece single-handedly catapulted the original PlayStation to "must-have" status. PSP owners would gobble up a downloadable version of this classic, and its bite-sized battles are perfect for road trips.



PSP  
70.

## Shadow of the Colossus

Shadow of the Colossus's boss battles are the stuff of legend, as you climb and stab 50-story tall behemoths. We'd focus on the Time-Attack mode, where you earn upgraded gear for rapidly killing colossi.



PSP  
68.

## Resident Evil 4

Aiming at infected villagers would be simple, given the PSP's analog stick. Better yet are the Mercenaries mini-games, which are timed missions set amidst zombie armies. This game is screaming for a PSP port—make it happen, Sony!

### Similar Games

GBA  
66.

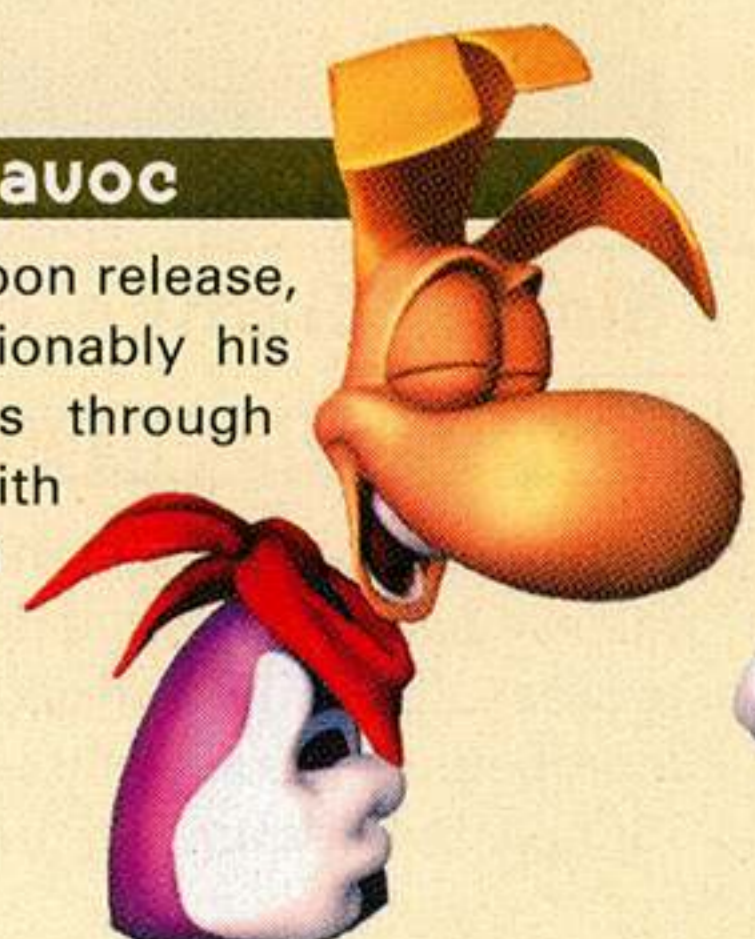
## Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3

Mario's nasty adversary makes his solo debut in this crazy action-platformer. Donning various caps allows for a wide-range of abilities, which are key to progressing through superbly designed side-scrolling stages. True to Wario's greedy character, only the best players can locate every piece of treasure hidden throughout the dozens of levels.

GBA  
65.

## Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc

Failing to garner much attention upon release, Rayman's third outing is unquestionably his best. The limbless hero traipses through challenging 2D levels packed with bizarre enemies and obstacles in between special 3D racing stages. A sleeper hit worth seeking out.





**PSP 64. Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters**

Fitting tools of destruction in your pocket can be difficult when you're going commando, but Size Matters makes it possible. The first portable outing for Ratchet and his robotic buddy Clank establishes a new standard for handheld action with vivid visuals, a challenging story mode, and full online multiplayer. Adjusting to the limited camera controls takes time, although it's a minor complaint in the face of big action on your little screen. Size Matters isn't just a watered-down Ratchet game—this is the real deal.



Lock and unloaded.



Daxter wasn't kidding when he said he had a fire in his pants.

**Similar Games**

**PSP 63. Tokobot**

Prehistoric robots take platforming to a new age in Tokobot—a short, but sweet romp through ancient ruins that test your jumping abilities and skill in commanding a legion of loyal mechanical pals. Only its short, linear story keeps Tokobot from being more than a diamond in the rough.

**PSP 62. Daxter**

Jak's obnoxious fur ball friend finds himself a leading ottsel in one of the PSP's earliest hits. Although Daxter doesn't innovate much, it's the first handheld platform-action game to provide a true console experience with mouth-watering graphics and seamless gameplay.

**PSP 61. SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Tactical Strike**

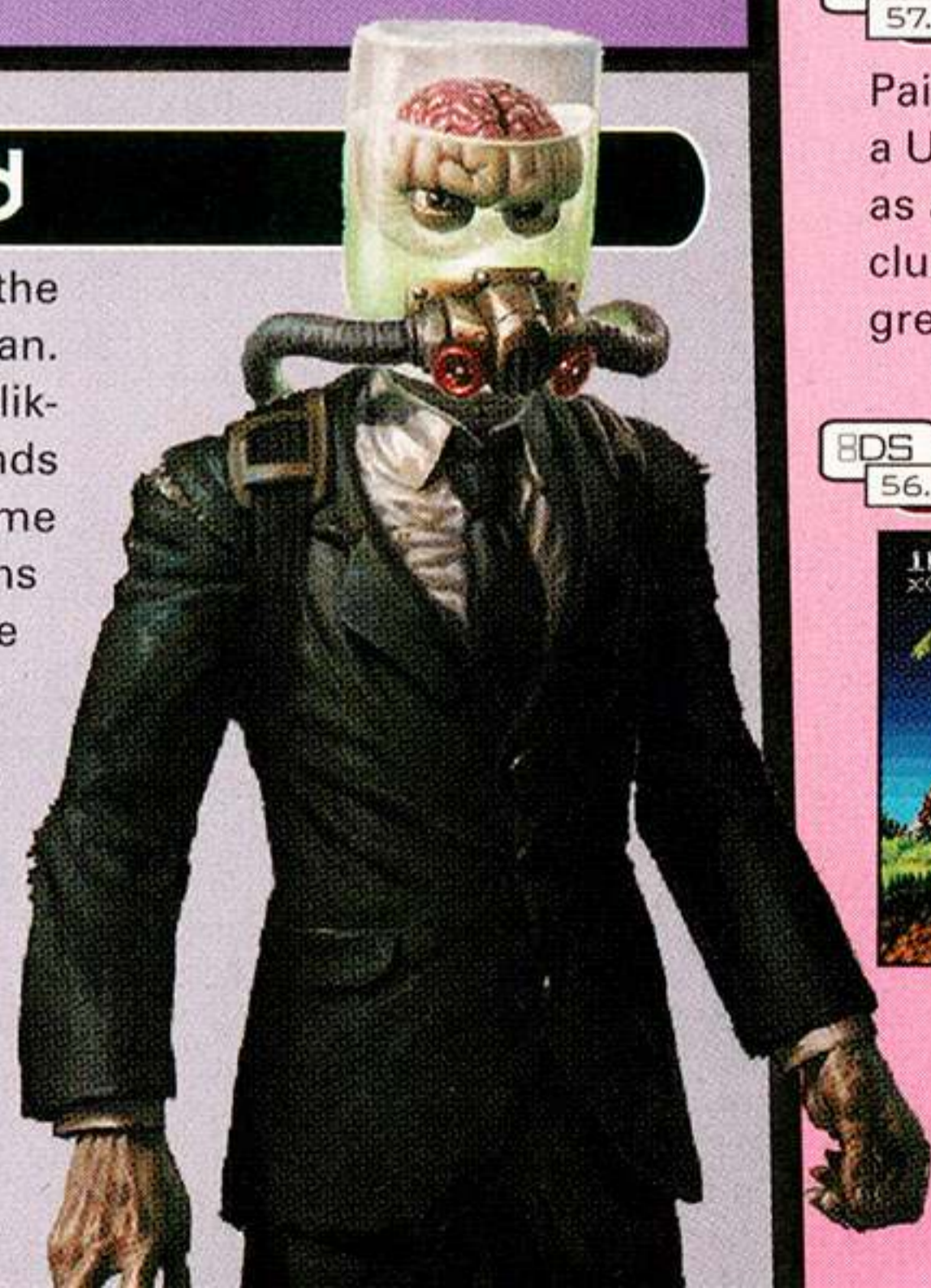
The third SOCOM for PSP ups the tactical element for more deliberate, thoughtful action perfect for portable play. An impressive array of features including online play, voice commands and chat, and an 11-mission single player campaign easily make it best of the handheld series. The squad member AI is a little dumb, but that's what you're there for, right? PSP shooter fans need look no further—this is definitely the one to get.



If you're a shooter fan, SOCOM: Tactical Strike should be your first stop.

**PSP 60. Dead Head Fred**

You'd have to be a stiff not to love the quirky tale of private eye Fred Neuman. When a powerful mob boss takes a disliking to Fred's investigative work, he ends lopping off Fred's cranium. Thanks to some fanciful science, our starring PI remains alive with an arsenal of interchangeable tops. Exacting revenge requires swapping heads to take advantage of their unique abilities, solving puzzles, and beating back undead foes. Hilarious dialogue, great visuals, and a lengthy story put it head and shoulders above the competition.



**Solid Sequel?**

**PSP 59. Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops. Plus**

Late last year, IGN reported that Kojima Productions and Konami were starting work on a follow-up to the highly popular PSP game Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops. Unfortunately, those sequel reports turned out to be a bit hasty: Kojima Productions assistant producer Ryan Payton confirmed that the studio is "not developing it [a sequel] right now."

There's a bright spot, though. Metal Gear fans (and there are a lot of them these days) can upgrade Portable Ops. with the stand-alone expansion pack Portable Ops Plus. The expansion adds new characters (including an aged Snake circa MGS4), new missions, and a new single-player mode called "Infinity Mission."



**EDS 58. Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow**

While he's been visiting consoles less and less these days (or should we say nights?), don't count Dracula out of the handheld equation. Dawn of Sorrow marks the first touch-enabled installment for the revered Castlevania series and it's nothing short of brilliant. The lack of any significant innovations to its core gameplay doesn't keep it from being enjoyable. Labyrinthine level design, loads of action, and clever use of the touch screen ensure you'll be playing until the sun comes up.



Soma Cruz brings a distinct touch to Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow.

**Similar Games**

**EDS 57. Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles**

Pair a previously unreleased installment with a lauded classic and you get a UMD with a silver lining. Series favorite Symphony of the Night comes as a bonus for completing the tough-as-nails Dracula X game, which includes gorgeous 3D graphics with classic 2D side-scrolling play. Two great games in one package that won't drive a stake through your wallet.

**EDS 56. Contra 4**



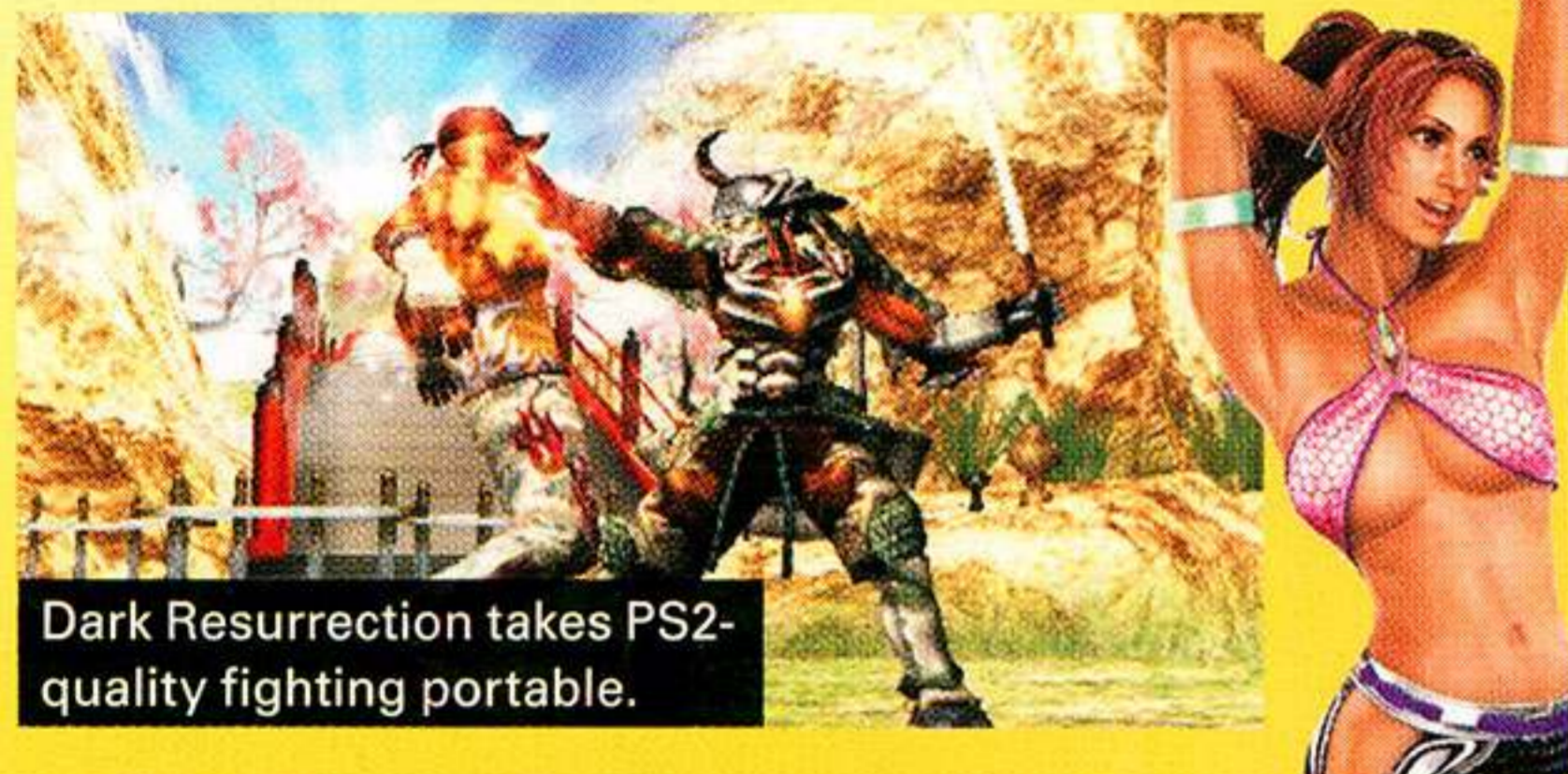
Bill and Lance take an excellent adventure in this exclusive handheld installment of the beloved side-scrolling action series. Slightly dated visuals and an extreme level of difficulty keep it from being accessible to anyone other than series stalwarts, yet it still deserves recognition as an example of superior 2D action.

CONTINUED ▶



**PSP**  
55. **Tekken: Dark Resurrection**

Portable pugilists finally have something to be proud of in Tekken: Dark Resurrection. Finely tuned fighting mechanics make it the definitive handheld fighting game, while the PSP's horsepower gives it some of the smoothest, most detailed graphics on the system. Online bouts are missing here, although head-to-head wireless matches using any of the 30+ characters is an acceptable consolation. Extra modes include Tekken Bowling (a fan favorite) and some other mini-games. You can even play with your Tekken-less friends using game sharing. Protip: you'll want to play on the new, slim PSP-2000 due to its superior directional pad and face buttons.



Dark Resurrection takes PS2-quality fighting portable.

**BDS**  
54. **Lunar Knights**

With Foxhound holed up in its den, this overlooked action RPG from Metal Gear Solid creator Hideo Kojima comes out to play. A war between humans and vampires ropes you into an otherworldly saga packed with great characters, deep customization, and satisfying action. Clever uses of the touch screen break up level grinding and a competitive wireless multiplayer mode offers an unlikely bonus for an RPG. Throw in a rich presentation and voice acting to make Lunar Knights a must-have.



Day or night, Lunar Knights shines.

**Similar Games**

**BDS**  
53. **Contact**

Sharing some similarities with Lunar Knights, Contact bears more complexity in dozens of attributes and abilities to track through the course of its lengthy story. The emphasis on stats management leave it far less accessible, despite being truer to the hardcore contingent of the genre.

**GBA**  
52. **Mario and Luigi: Superstar Saga**

Brothers take up arms in this side-scrolling adventure that's as much platformer as in-depth role-playing game. Traditional RPG elements including experience points and the ability to acquire new skills complement classic Mario platform challenges for a one-of-a-kind game.

**BDS**  
51. **Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime**

An adorable, yet slimy protagonist lends undeniable charm to this quirky action RPG. Top-down action sequences accompany unique tank battles mixing action and tactical management of your tank's crew and weaponry. Different to be sure, but entertaining nonetheless.



**GBA**  
50. **Metroid Fusion**

After an eight-year cryogenic slumber, 2002 marked the return of Nintendo's stellar side-scrolling actions series with Metroid Fusion. Although it offers a new storyline continuing bounty hunter Samus Aran's quest to rid the universe of the soul-sucking Metroid race, the game retains the elements that made the series a classic nearly a decade earlier. Intense combat, varied platform challenges, and intricate puzzles combine with gorgeous 2D graphics for a near-perfect action game.



Side-scrolling doesn't get any better than this.

**Similar Games**

**BDS**  
49. **Scurge Hive**

An unabashed Metroid clone, Scurge Hive offers the same intricate action. Instead of side-scrolling, the game goes with an isometric perspective that gives it more of an RPG feel. Better weapons give it an edge over Samus' missiles and power beam, although it suffers from overly difficult platform-jumping sections.

**GBA**  
48. **Metroid: Zero Mission**

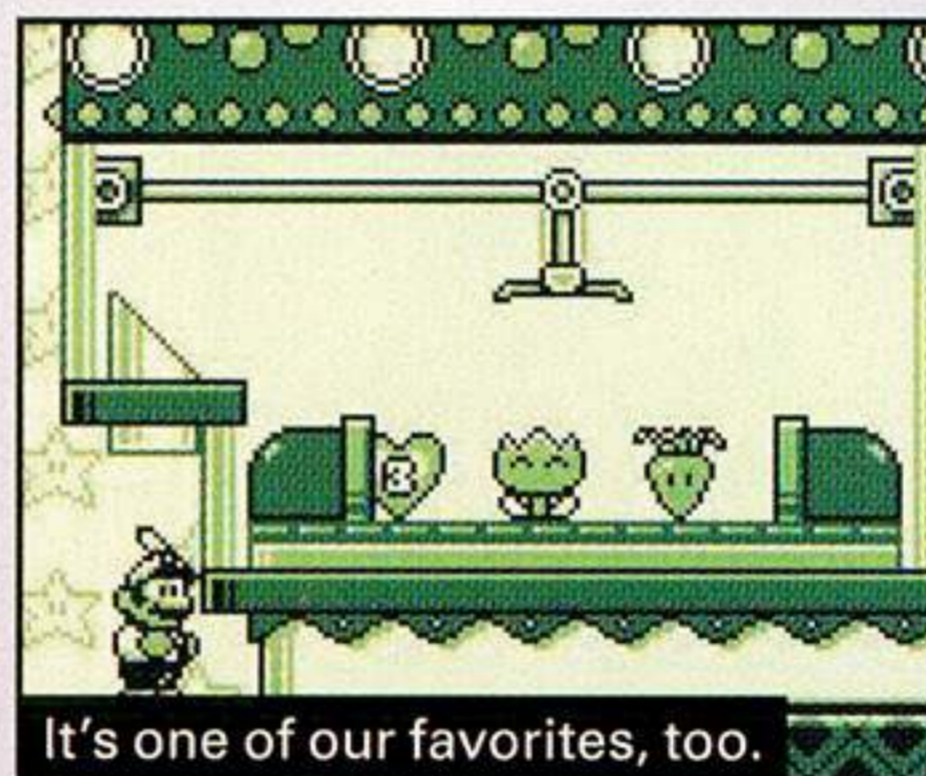
Space diva Samus Aran returns to Zebes in this colorful remake of the groundbreaking NES original. The gameplay is vintage Metroid—blasting aliens, collecting suit upgrades, and prowling corridors—but the beautiful production values make it shine.



**BDS**  
47. **Metroid Prime Hunters**

This first-person shooter is a tricky beast: the 3D graphics are gorgeous, but the controls take practice, practice, practice. Still, for FPS play on the DS, this modern retread of Metroid gets it right...or as right as you're going to get it.

**GBA**  
46. **Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins**



It's one of our favorites, too.

Unquestionably the greatest platform game to ever grace a handheld, Super Mario Land 2 offers some of the most innovative gameplay as well. Many of its notable features—the ability to backtrack through levels, a world map, and various power-ups—serve as creative new additions to the series that endure to this day. The game also marks the first appearance by Mario's greedy rival Wario. There's just no other way to put it: Super Mario Land 2 is pure gaming gold.

**Similar Games**

**BDS**  
45. **New Super Mario Bros.**

While not as innovative as Super Mario Land 2, it's just as good. A gorgeous graphical update and fresh platform challenges give New Super Mario Bros. immense appeal. Plus, multiplayer mini-games are a nice bonus.

**BDS**  
44. **Super Princess Peach**

This emotional side-scrolling adventure takes inspiration from Mario's early hip-hopping adventures. What makes it so unique is the ability to use Peach's moods to solve puzzles such as making beanstalks grow from Peach's tears. One of the most creative portable platformers on any system.



**BDS**  
43. **Yoshi's Island DS**

Much like New Super Mario Bros., Yoshi's Island DS counters its lack of innovation with unbelievable good gameplay. This spiritual successor to Super Mario World 2 is among the most stylish and challenging platformers anywhere.



**GBA**  
42. **Final Fantasy Tactics Advance**



While the PlayStation original will forever hold the tactical role-playing crown, Final Fantasy Tactics Advance stands as a worthy successor with interesting new ideas and highly polished gameplay. Challenging turn-based battles expand upon the first game with new jobs, races, and abilities. Although controversial, a brand new law system adds a unique dimension to battles in which characters violating special rules can get booted from the field. Unparalleled depth and charm easily mark it as one of the best in the tactical role-playing genre.

**Similar Games**

**PSP**  
41. **Jeanne d'Arc**

Strip away some of the complexity of the Final Fantasy Tactics series and you're left with Jeanne d'Arc—a beautiful, yet simple tactical RPG. Straightforward, yet challenging combat joins with gorgeous cel-shaded graphics for a PSP must-have.

**PSP**  
40. **Metal Gear Acid**

Solid Snake's turn-based adventure slithers onto our list with surprisingly good card-based tactical gameplay. It's not a "true" Metal Gear per se, as complicated rules prevent easy espionage. But once you crack its secrets, you won't want to drop Acid.

**PSP**  
39. **Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII**

Phenomenal real-time battles and gorgeous graphics put Crisis Core among the most impressive handheld games ever. Cameos from popular Final Fantasy VII characters make it a trip down memory lane, even though its innovative gameplay does much to differentiate it from other RPGs. Definitely one of the key PSP games for 2008, as its enormous launch sales in Japan proved.



Even the monsters have spiky hair in Crisis Core.

**Similar Games**

**GBA**  
38. **Final Fantasy VI Advance**

Arguably the greatest 2D Final Fantasy installment lands on Game Boy Advance with new espers and an added dungeon. Unnecessary name changes and dialogue tweaks are the only weaknesses in this otherwise perfect port. A true RPG masterpiece.

**GBA**  
37. **Golden Sun**

One of the best handheld 2D RPGs ever! The turn-based battles and straightforward character development give it a classic feel, but the innovation here is the unique use of magic and summoning. Magical Djinn enable you to make quick work of enemies and solve simple puzzles peppered throughout the 30+ hour adventure. A true RPG classic.

**PSP**  
36. **Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops.**

Only a Psycho Mantis couldn't appreciate the sophisticated stealth-action gameplay that Portable Ops. dishes out exclusively on PSP. Totally original from the ground up, the game does more than port over the console series. Creative recruitment mechanics take advantage of Wi-Fi hot-spots, letting you draft soldiers into Snake's espionage ring. Additionally, robust online play complements an intriguing single player story. The storyline, setting, and gameplay feel are straight out of MGS3: Snake Eater, and the game features a surprisingly solid control scheme. Don't let this one sneak past you.



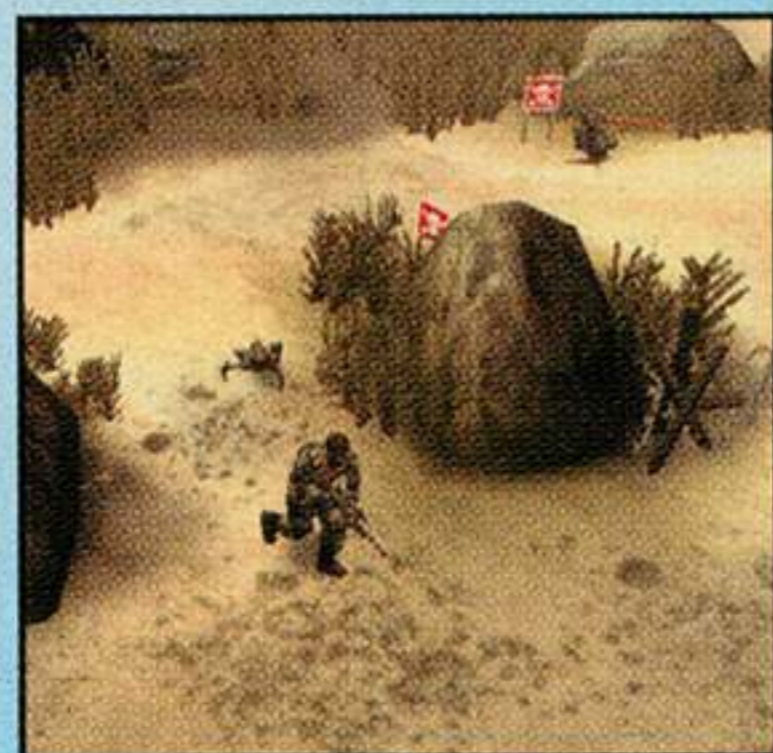
Keep your friends close, Portable Ops.

**Similar Games**

**PSP**  
35. **Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow**

Focusing more on action than stealth, Gabe Logan's second PSP adventure unquestionably tops the genre. Logan's Shadow surpasses Portable Ops in terms of control, even if it isn't as rich an experience. Don't let this gem get lost in Snake's shadow—it's one of the PSP's very best.

**PSP**  
34. **Killzone: Liberation**



This handheld sequel unshackles the PlayStation 2 first-person shooter series for top-down blasting. The perspective takes some getting used to but, thankfully, all of the in-your-face action remains intact, letting you beat back creepy Helghan invaders on the war-torn surface of Vekta.

**PSP**  
33. **Final Fantasy Tactics: War of the Lions**



War of the Lions is a flawless recreation of the original PlayStation's Final Fantasy Tactics. The gameplay is turn-based, so you spend turns to heal, move around the grid, or attack enemies. Two new character classes and a new head-to-head multiplayer mode make our fantasies come true...finally. This is a remake that is worth the full retail price.



CONTINUED ▶



# Link through the Ages

Choosing the best handheld Zelda game isn't easy.

The Legend of Zelda series has consistently pushed the limits of handheld gaming with each new installment, from the Game Boy to the Nintendo DS. It's among the most influential, well-designed, and just plain fun franchises around. Deciding which of the six portable versions deserves your rupees can be as hard as a Goron's backside, so here's the skinny.

Classic

**GBA 32. The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening**

The originator. Link's first portable adventure paved the way for deep, engrossing action games on handhelds. An amazing game that stands the test of time.

**DS 31. The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages/Oracle of Seasons**

Two versions of the same core game offer different puzzles and quests, both stellar experiences. Not as groundbreaking as Link's Awakening, yet still a fantastic pair of games.

**GBA 30. The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past**

Although it's a port of the SNES game bearing the same name, A Link to the Past is emblematic of the series. When you think of Zelda, this is it—a required play for any fan.

**GBA 29. The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap**

Link's miniaturizing Minish cap contrasts ironically with the big gameplay packed onto this GBA cartridge. A brilliant original entry in the series that's second only to Link's Awakening.

**DS 28. The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**

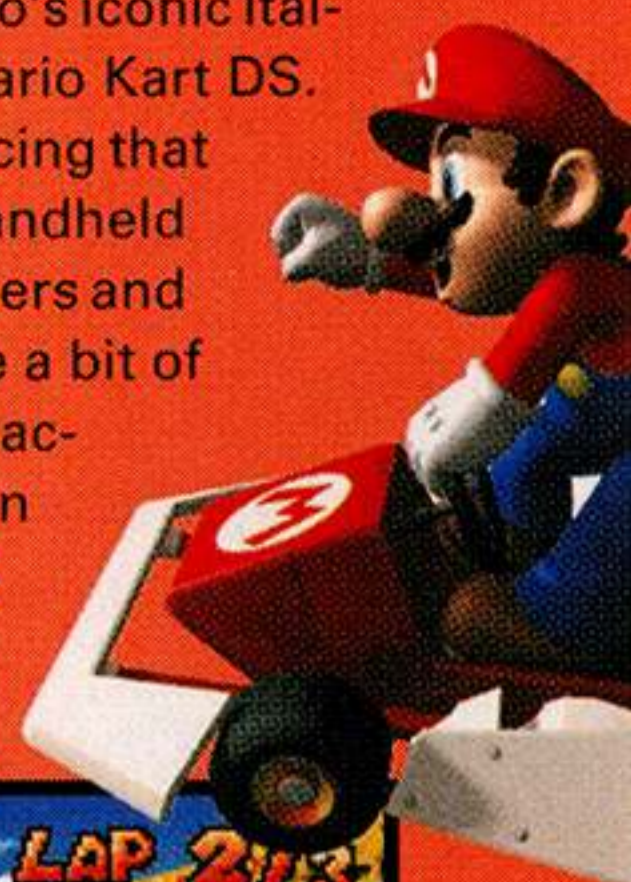
The most recent addition touts innovative touch controls and beautiful cel-shaded graphics. Another great installment, but it takes a back seat to the earlier, more iconic 2D games.

Great



**DS 23. Mario Kart DS**

Normally light on his feet, Nintendo's iconic Italian plumber gets a lead foot in Mario Kart DS. Full online play joins stellar kart racing that puts it over-the-top as the best handheld racer. Limits on the number of players and tracks available for online play are a bit of a drag. Nonetheless, classic characters and venues come together in new form, making Mario Kart DS a familiar yet altogether fantastic racing experience.



Mario Andretti, eat your heart out.

## Similar Games

**PSP 22. Wipeout Pulse**

While it hasn't made as much of a splash as Wipeout Pure, Pulse packs in more options, better graphics, and added online racing. As always, futuristic combat racing is the main thrust, but vehicle customization and the ability to take snapshots during memorable races add a fresh coat of paint.

**PSP 21. Burnout Legends**

Combining the best of the series and smashing it all together in one fantastic package is Burnout Legends, the ultimate in crash-tastic racers. The lack of online multiplayer is a serious oversight, and the load times grate on the nerves, but there's still more than enough speeding tickets to earn and cars to crash in the satisfying single player and local wireless modes.

**DS 20. Twisted Metal: Head On**

The only game on our list that lets you smash through the Eiffel Tower as a psychotic clown behind the wheel of an ice cream truck, Twisted Metal has as much morbid appeal as hard-hitting vehicular action. Once you master the squirrely controls, you're sure to smile as you barrel through the wreckage of fellow players online.



**DS 27. Advance Wars**

The first installment of the highly-regarded Advance Wars franchise is not just among the best handheld games of all time, but quite possibly one of the most outstanding turn-based strategy games ever created. While successive installments have added various units, changed visual styles, and even toyed with gameplay mechanics, the original Advance Wars marches on as the definitive handheld strategy game. There's no question about it—if you like strategy games, you need to play this phenomenal title.



Kanbei finally puts that Red Ryder rifle to good use.

## Similar Games

**PSP 26. Field Commander**

Ensemble Studios' genre-topping strategy series hits the DS, and it's surprisingly addictive. Traditional strategy mechanics such as resource collection and technology trees give the turn-based battles in Age of Empires a nostalgic feel, and the touch-based controls are loosely analogous to the original PC interface.

**PSP 25. Panzer Tactics DS**

Like Field Commander, Panzer Tactics DS aims for the same tight turn-based strategy gameplay as Advance Wars but with a more realistic tinge. Slower pacing and complex unit management however, are best left for hardcore strategists.

**DS 24. Age of Empires: Age of Kings**

Blatantly pulling from the Advance Wars play book, Field Commander deploys a similar style of turn-based strategy gameplay. A more realistic presentation and online gameplay establish it as a must-have for PSP owners, even if it doesn't hold the same cache as Nintendo's series.



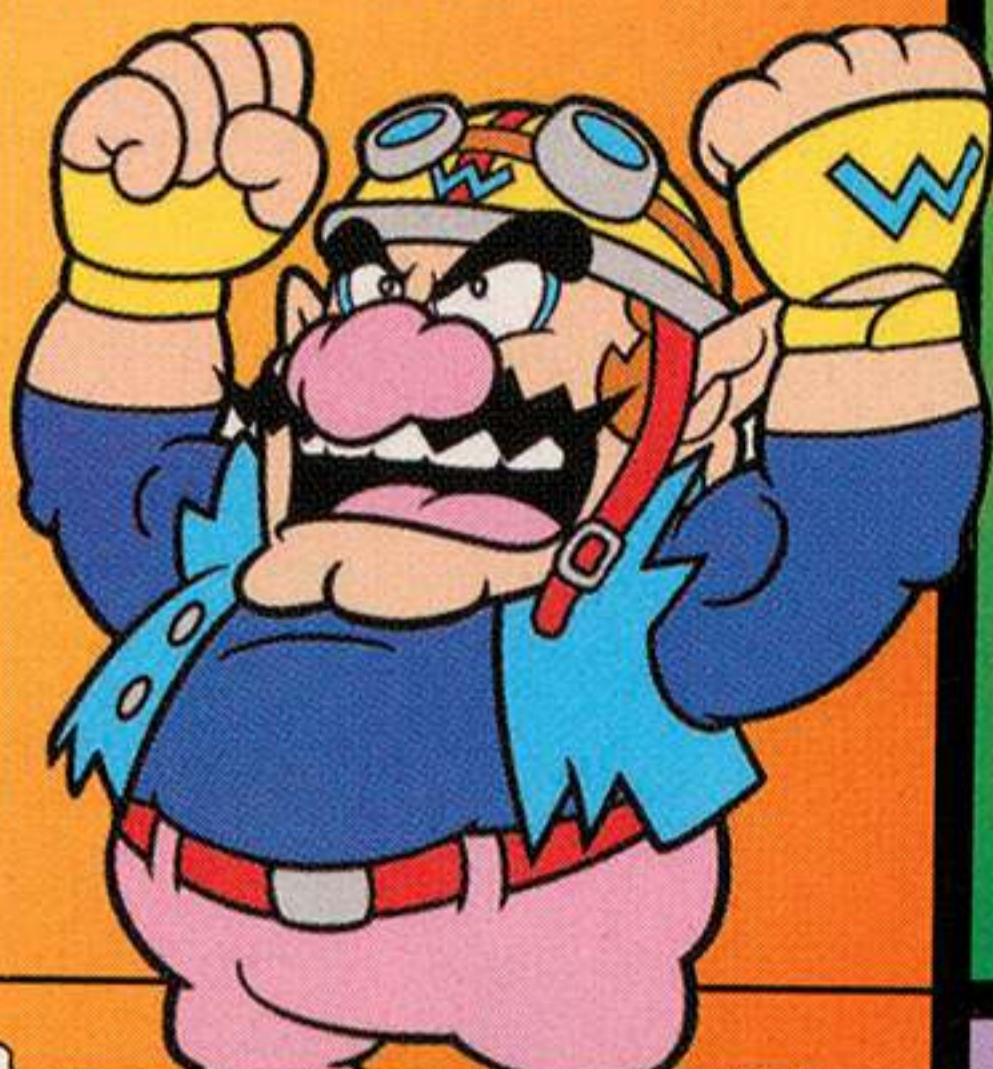
BDS

19.

## Cooking Mama



A delicious concoction of touch-enabled cooking mini-games make Cooking Mama a handheld treat. Well-designed recipes, cute characters, and loads of replay value are good enough to pass the watchful eyes of an Iron Chef.



### Similar Games

BDS

18.

#### Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day

Not anywhere close to the zaniness of WarioWare or Cooking Mama, Brain Age nevertheless presents one of the finest mini-game packages on any handheld. Simple number games and word exercises intend to enhance your IQ, but we find it just expands our fun quotient instead.

GBA

17.

#### WarioWare, Inc. Micro MiniGames

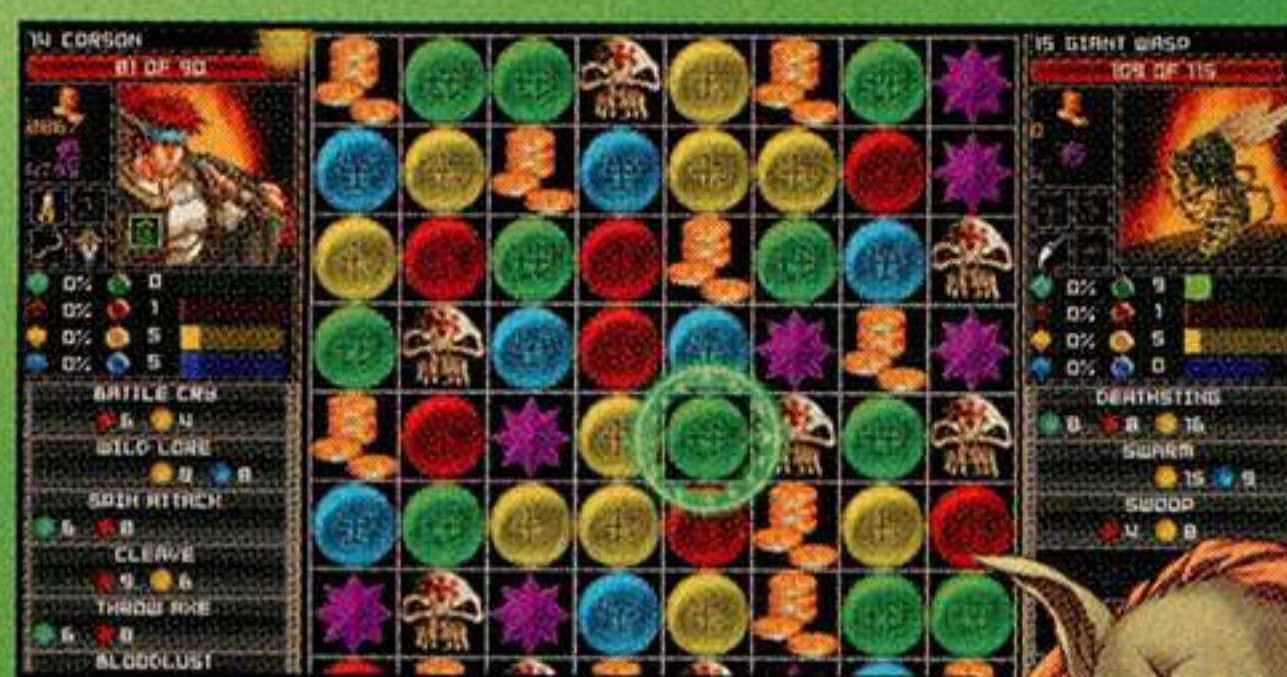
When a game demands that you pick your nose one minute and brush your teeth the next, you know you've stumbled on gold. WarioWare, Inc. kick-starts the insanely popular franchise with a clever assortment of twitch mini-games that work perfectly on Game Boy Advance. Hilarious one button mini-games and an uncanny sense of style give it the scent of a modern handheld classic.

BDS PSP

15.

## Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the WarLords

Tetris may have opened the way for portable puzzlers, but Puzzle Quest stands above the pack. Its unique combination of puzzle-solving and role-playing is like nothing else out there. The core jewel-matching gameplay is like Bejeweled or Columns, while skills and spells round out the role-playing side. Not only does this combination provide immense depth, but also makes the game incredibly addictive. +1 charisma for the PSP version thanks to a cleaner presentation, although the DS edition gets a special enchantment for intuitive touch controls. Anyway you put it, Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the WarLords levels up handheld gaming as a must-own.



Crisp visuals give the PSP an edge.



PSP

14.

## Patapon

The beat goes on for the team responsible for LocoRoco in Patapon, a rhythmic real-time strategy game exclusive to PSP. Using the face buttons to pound out rhythmic commands to cutesy Patapon tribesmen, you guide them in a prophetic quest to return to their holy promised land. Patapon is more than just clever beats and pretty presentation though, offering in-depth equipment customization and battle tactics for beating massive screen-filling bosses. At the budget price of \$20, you can't afford to miss this instant classic.



BDS

16.

## Elite Beat Agents

Cheerleaders for the downtrodden, Elite Beat Agents has you keeping tempo for a band of self-help motivators via rhythmic taps and slides on the touch screen. The scenarios are hysterical; you'll cheer on a stressed-out babysitter, and even a violinist who has to suffer through a crippling bout of intestinal distress. It's worth springing extra to import the Japanese version for its superior soundtrack, which is loaded with bizarre but memorable Japanese pop.



BDS

13.

## Tetris DS

Anyone who has a Game Boy can attest to the sheer addictive power of pack-in puzzler Tetris. Although not new when it hit Nintendo's handheld in 1989, its Game Boy outing quickly launched the Russian puzzle game into mainstream popularity with its easy-to-grasp puzzles and absurdly catchy music. If you've got a choice, you've got to go with the new Tetris DS version—it's loaded with multiplayer battle modes and vivid graphical flourishes.



### Similar Games

PSP

12.

#### Lumines

This PSP launch title owes much to Tetris. Colored blocks fall from the top of the screen and you clear them by forming like-colored formations, tying your actions to a rhythm for maximum points. Beautiful special effects and a snazzy soundtrack gave it a stylish edge over its 8-bit inspiration. The original is hard to find, but Lumines II is also good.

BDS

11.

#### Meteos

Developed by the same brain that came up with Lumines, Meteos takes a more vertical approach to puzzle-solving. Meteors showering down on a dozen different planets can only be cleared by moving up or down the field using the stylus. Although incredibly difficult, it's also packed with value and style.

GBA

10.

#### Dr. Mario

A neglected classic. You might have a bit of trouble tracking down this GBA cart, but the effort is worth the wait: Dr. Mario is an inventive spin on the classic Tetris formula. You stack vitamins to eradicate like-colored viruses. It's simple, but like the best handheld games, is terribly addictive.

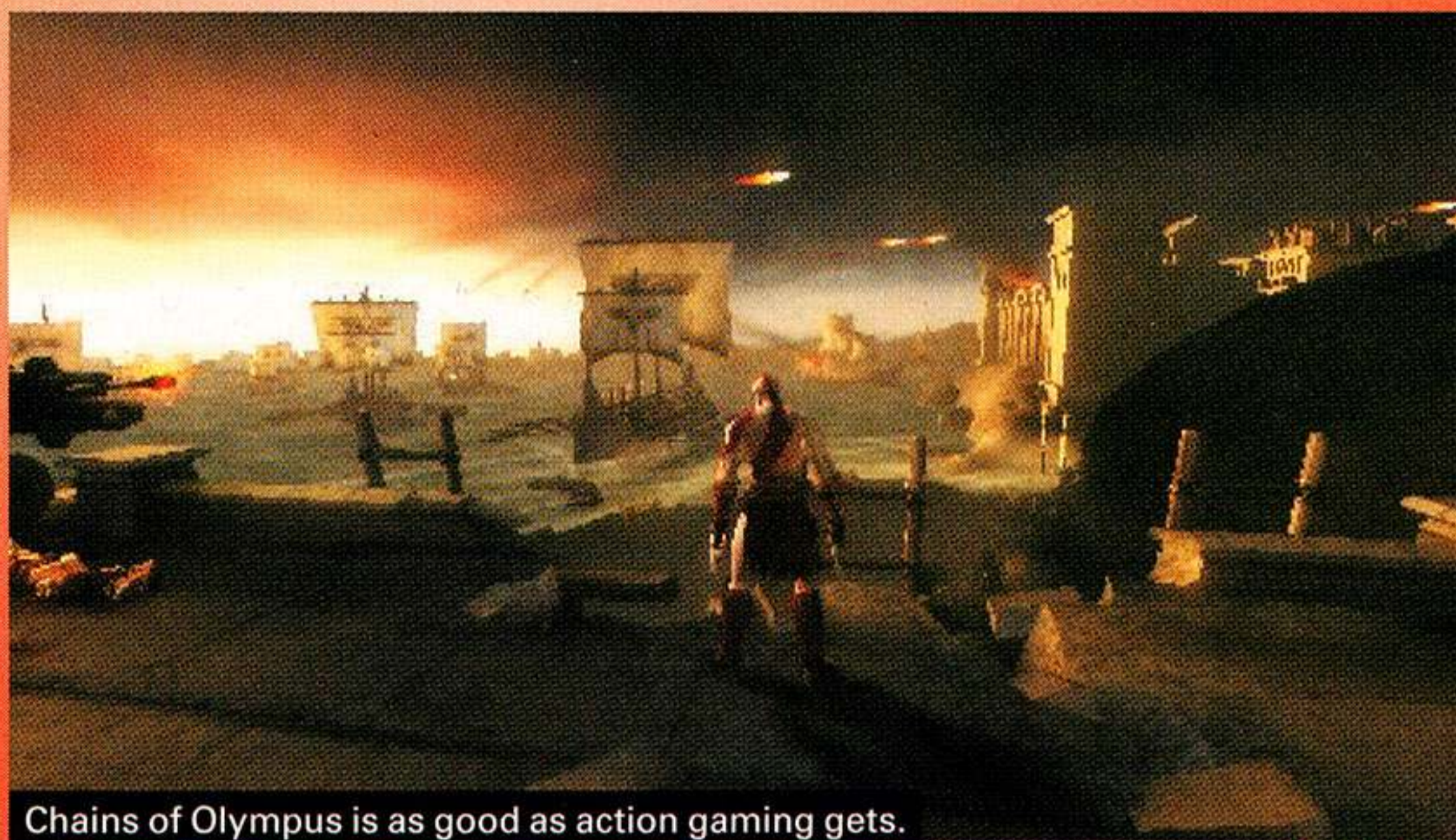
CONTINUED ▶





PSP  
09

# God of War: Chains of Olympus



Chains of Olympus is as good as action gaming gets.

Like mana sent from the gods, God of War: Chain of Olympus single-handedly reinvents the portable action genre with its tightly wound combat and unparalleled presentation. Unquestionably this is the finest-looking game ever created on any handheld, which alone is enough to warrant a look. Even better, Kratos's portable saga deserves praise for its energetic action, epic boss battles, and superior puzzle design. God of War fans will want it because it reveals storyline secrets; newcomers will want it because it's simply the best PSP game available. All in all, it's bloody good fun.

## Similar Games

DS  
08

### Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword

While it isn't nearly as exciting nor as polished as Chains of Olympus, Dragon Sword does offer enough satisfying action to quench your digital blood lust. Touch screen controls are iffy, but no matter how you slice it pocket ninja battles get an entertaining nod.

PSP  
07

### Chili Con Carnage

A cult classic. If you like Max Payne, you'll dig the spicy action served up in Chili Con Carnage, an awesome handheld game that was sadly overlooked due to its goofy name. This over-the-top shooter is all about gun-slinging combos and varied violence. Trust us—this game is much, much better than you think.



Too much chili wrecks carnage on Jose.



# Missing in Action

If there's any justice in the universe, we'll live to see these games go handheld.

DS  
06

### Super Smash Bros.

A DS port of the original Smash Bros. is long, long overdue. This fighter's simple controls and pick-up-and-play style make it a natural choice for the DS. Four-player WiFi brawls are a no-brainer.



PSP  
05

### Diablo II

The Lord of Terror calls! Diablo II's addictive RPG action, randomized dungeons, and collectible items make it a joy to play in either small sips or leisurely swallows. A DS version would make the most sense – you'd tap enemies to attack and items to collect. Get to it, Blizzard

PSP  
04

### N+

In this intense little platform-hopping game, you simply jump, jump, jump to score points, dodge mines, and clear levels with blazing speed. Its bite-sized levels would work beautifully on either the DS or PSP, while custom levels would extend the experience



PSP  
03

### LittleBigPlanet

The PS3 version isn't out yet, but a PSP version already seems like a can't-miss. The Mario-esque platform-jumping style would fit the PSP well, and like the PS3 version we'd expect customizable levels you could share with friends.

PSP  
02

### Gran Turismo

Polyphony Digital swears the classic sim racing series is coming to the PSP, but the studio has been focused on GT5 for the PS3. We're expecting sparkling visuals and tight controls...two of the PSP's biggest strengths



When he's not callousing his thumbs playing handheld games, **Tracy Erickson** enjoys cooking, running in the rain, and watching (for the hundredth time) Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. He writes for PocketGamer as U.S. correspondent, where he can be reached at [tracy@pocketgamer.co.uk](mailto:tracy@pocketgamer.co.uk).

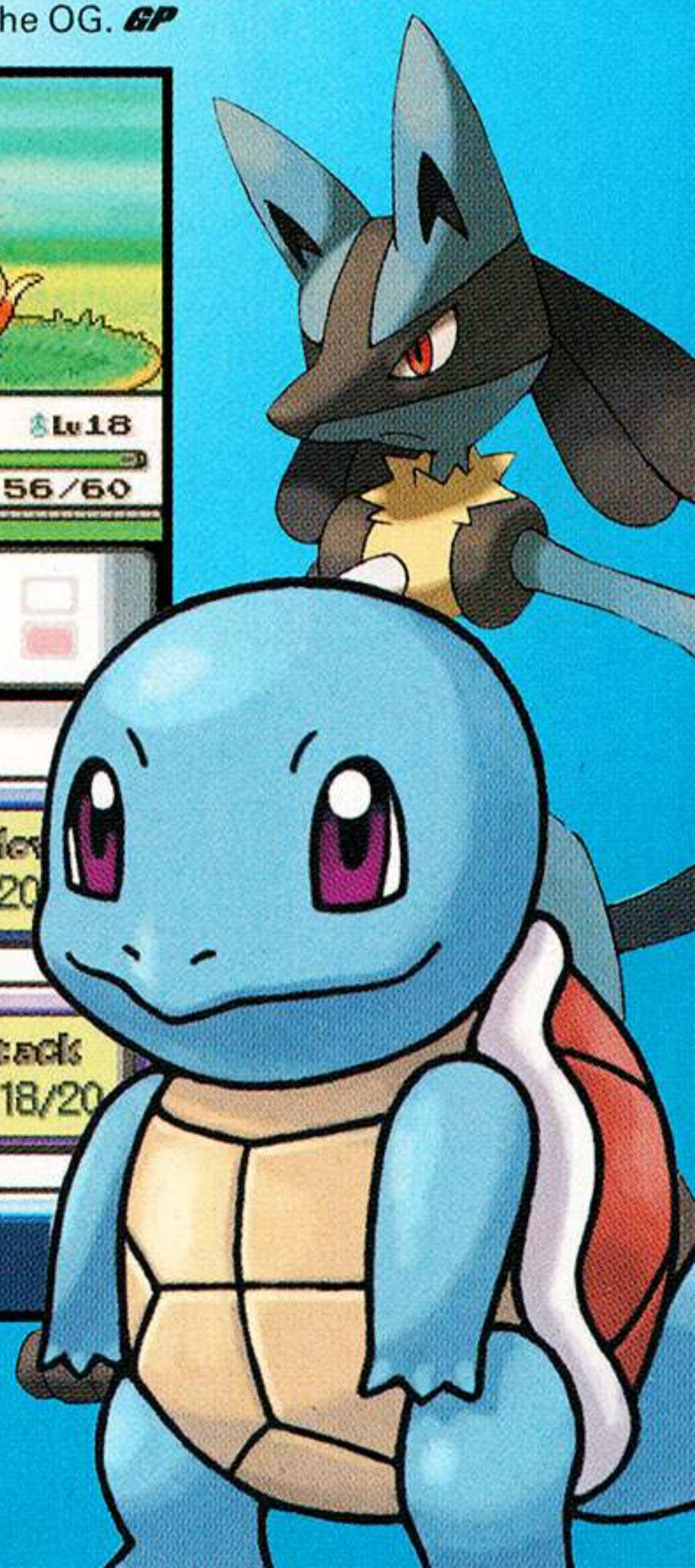
DS  
01

## Pokémon Diamond/Pearl

No other games in the history of handhelds have had such a profound impact as Pokémon. As the first installments in the long-running franchise to hit Nintendo DS, these two versions of the same core game are unquestionably the best of the collectible monster series. Amazingly, Pokémon Diamond and Pearl are more than just a novelty. Role-playing elements instill depth to the game, broadening its appeal to adults and youngsters alike. Key evolutions including new monsters, added battle abilities, wireless multiplayer, and touch screen support puts these titles at the pinnacle of the franchise. High quality, long-lasting, addictive gameplay make it easy to catch Poké-fever. Mewtwo copycats have attempted to clone the Pokémon experience, but it's all about the OG. **GP**



Even PETA digs the Poké-action.





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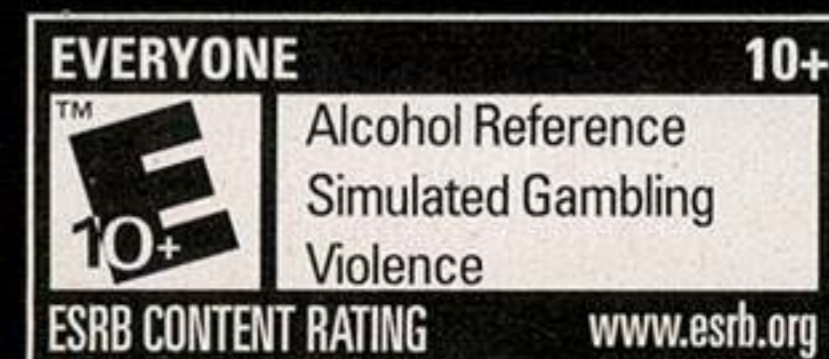
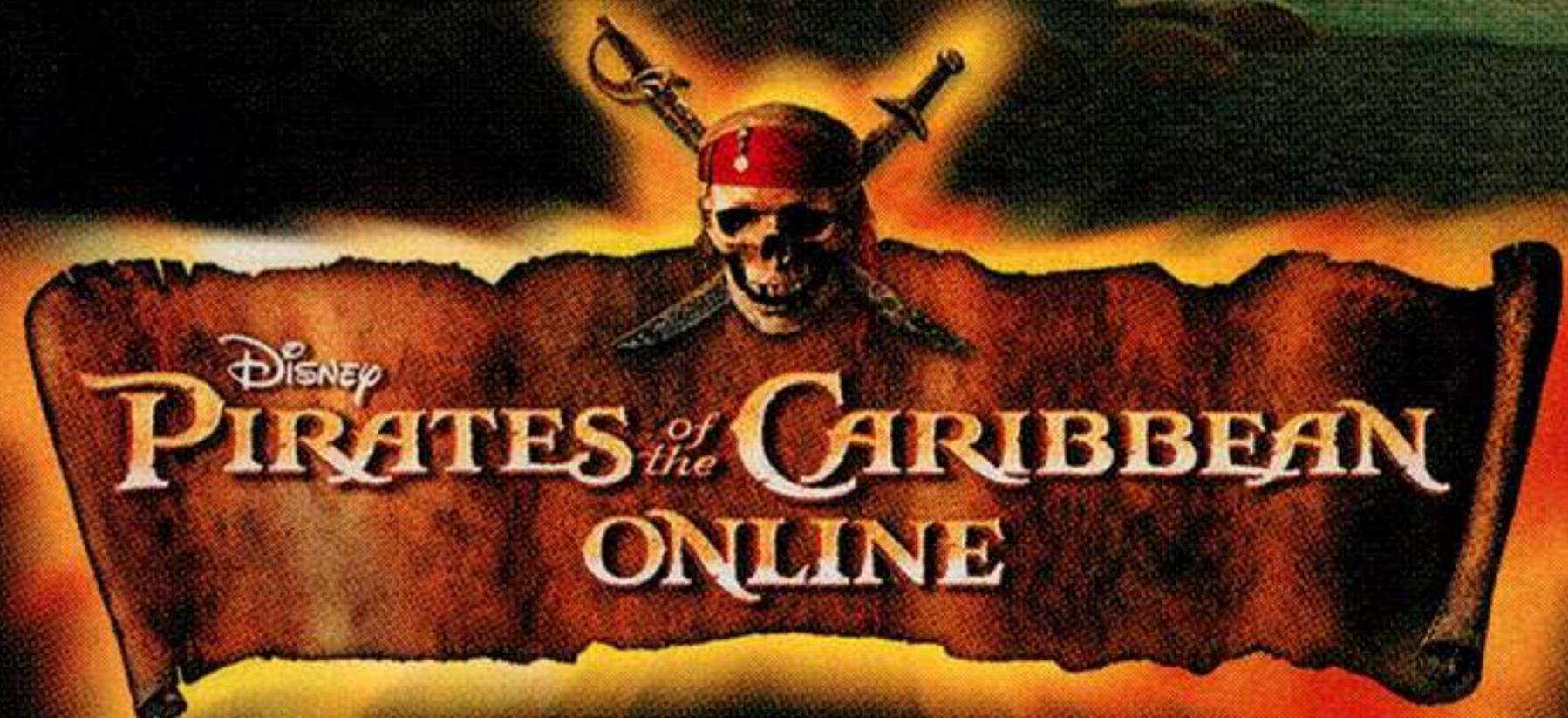
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# God of War: Chains of Olympus

## The **Ultimate** Guide to **Ultra** Violence!

Kratos arrives on the PSP in the blood-soaked prequel Chains of Olympus. And even though his latest quest is on the small screen, the carnage hasn't been toned down one bit. Here are the seven most violent highlights from the game. *By Patrick Shaw*

### Here it is: The Most Devastating God of War Weapon Ever.

Roughly half-way through God of War: Chains of Olympus, you'll acquire The Gauntlet of Zeus, which is essentially a massive metal boxing glove that you can use to shatter your enemies' bodies with ease. Unlike certain useless weapons featured in previous God of War games (ahem—the Spear of Destiny), the Gauntlet is essential in combat against the game's largest and most heavily armored adversaries.

Once you gain The Gauntlet of Zeus, it's important to level it up as quickly as possible so that you'll be able to unlock some of the weapon's most destructive special moves. The highest-level move you'll gain, Olympic Thunder, is immensely powerful and can quickly clear out an area swarming with enemies.

# W T T T The Gauntlet of Zeus



Obliterate the Competition by rattling the entire area with this killer weapon.





## Bathing in the Blood of the Basilisk



## Vanquish the Mammoth Lizard without Breaking a Sweat.

Your first encounter with the giant Basilisk is easy: it smashes through a wall and chomps a hapless Cyclops nearby, then looks to you for dessert. Slash the Basilisk's face repeatedly with your Blades of Chaos, and when it goes limp, brain it with the Cyclops's spiked club. The Basilisk makes a hasty retreat!

You'll run into your scaly foe again, only this time you'll have to face its entire body. Avoid the beast's flaming breath or you'll be burnt to a crisp—try double-jumping over the fire. Now wreak havoc on the Basilisk with everything in your arsenal, especially your Efrete spell. Pull the stone structures down when prompted, and they'll collapse over the monster and spurt out precious life and red orbs. Continue your onslaught and you'll eventually snap the Basilisk's jaw off its hideous head.

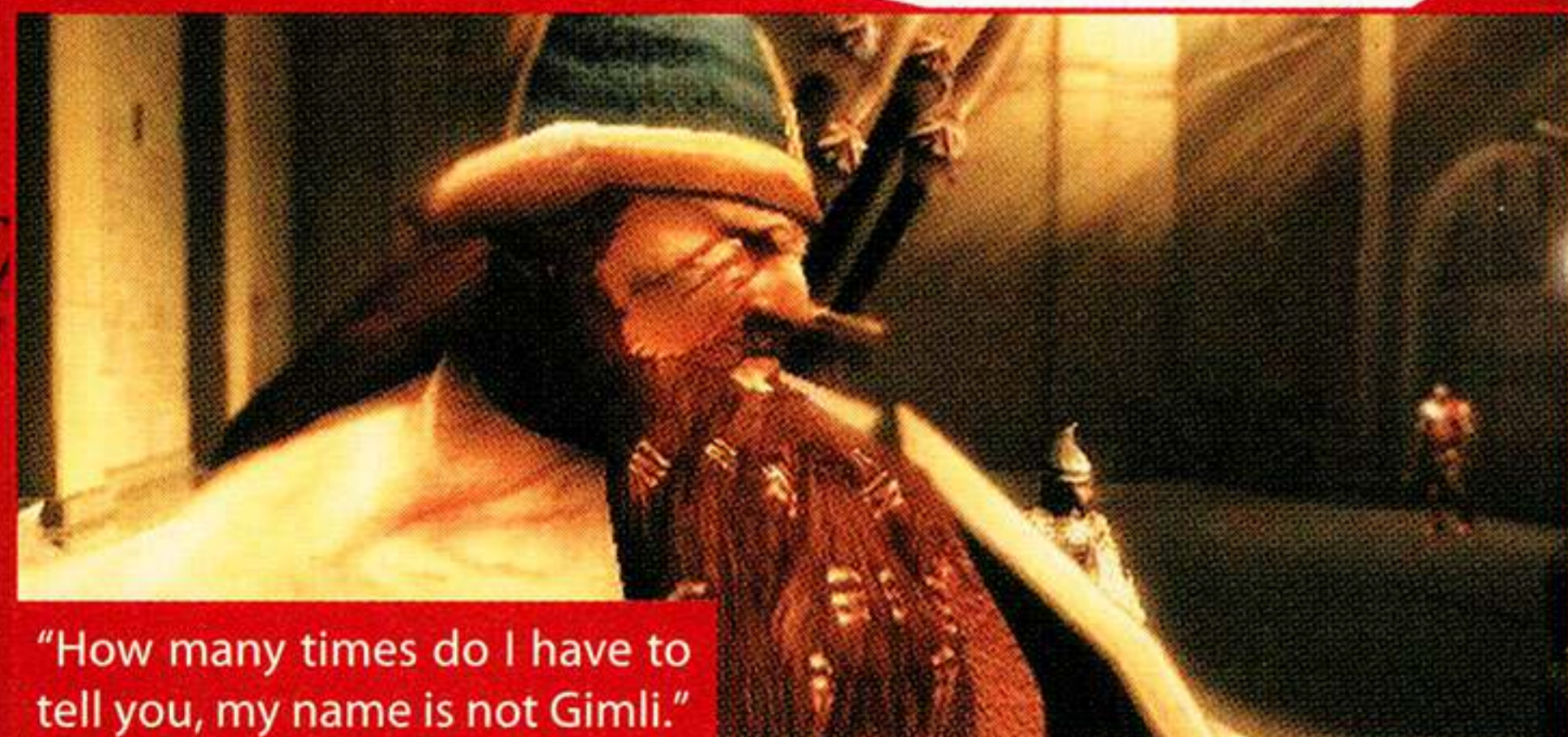


Kratos's Adversaries are just as freakishly huge as ever. Witness the Basilisk!

## Deliver this Arrogant King to Hell by Painting the Room With His Brains.

The hulking Persian King may be twice your size, but with a little strategy you can bring him to his knees. Dodge his sluggish but devastating attacks, and then retaliate with the wrath of your Blades of Chaos.

During the battle, the Persian King's minions will flood the room. Kill them off quickly because they'll whittle you down while you're squaring off with the King. The King will eventually beg for mercy. No dice! Press the series of buttons that flash across the screen to lift up a chest and repeatedly smash his head into a bloody pulp. This is one of the gooiest finishing moves in God of War history.



"How many times do I have to tell you, my name is not Gimli."

## Crushing the Skull of the Persian King



CONTINUED ▶



# Slaying Prisoners for Health

## Restore Your Life by Spilling the Blood of the innocent.

Low on health and can't seem to find a green chest to heal your battle wounds? If you're in an area where prisoners are shackled to the walls, put them out of their misery by goring them with your blades. When you kill them, their life force will refill your health bar. Towards the end of the game you can also snap the necks of ghosts to fill your energy. There is no end to Kratos's ruthless behavior!



Hey, at least he's not clubbing baby seals for health...



## Unleash the Two Most Vicious Attack Combos in the Game.

### Headbutt and Decapitation Combo

Early in Chains of Olympus, your weapons and magic aren't yet powerful enough to easily carve through large hordes of enemies. At this stage in the game, it's easy to become overwhelmed by enemy numbers. Instead of attempting to fight them all at once, grab a smaller, weaker enemy by pressing Circle—it's unblockable.

Once you've grabbed a weakened enemy, you can execute a brutal chain of attacks. Kratos head butts his foe, kicks him to the floor, and buries his blades into his throat, before tugging his head right off his torso. Although this gruesome finishing move has limited use, as it only works on the lowliest of foes, it's definitely one of the most fun to watch.

## Savage New Combos



### Rampage of the Furies Combo

Hack your enemies to shreds with the enhanced Rampage of the Furies combo, which has seen major changes since God of War II. First, you'll need to power up your Blades of Chaos to Level Three. Then, while wielding the Blades, press and hold L and then press O to ferociously whip the life out of enemies with this nunchuk-style combo.

The new Rampage of the Furies is most damaging when used on a single enemy target. If you're quick and precise, you can massacre an enemy effortlessly with this combo. And don't forget—you can execute the Rampage of Furies in mid-air, too!



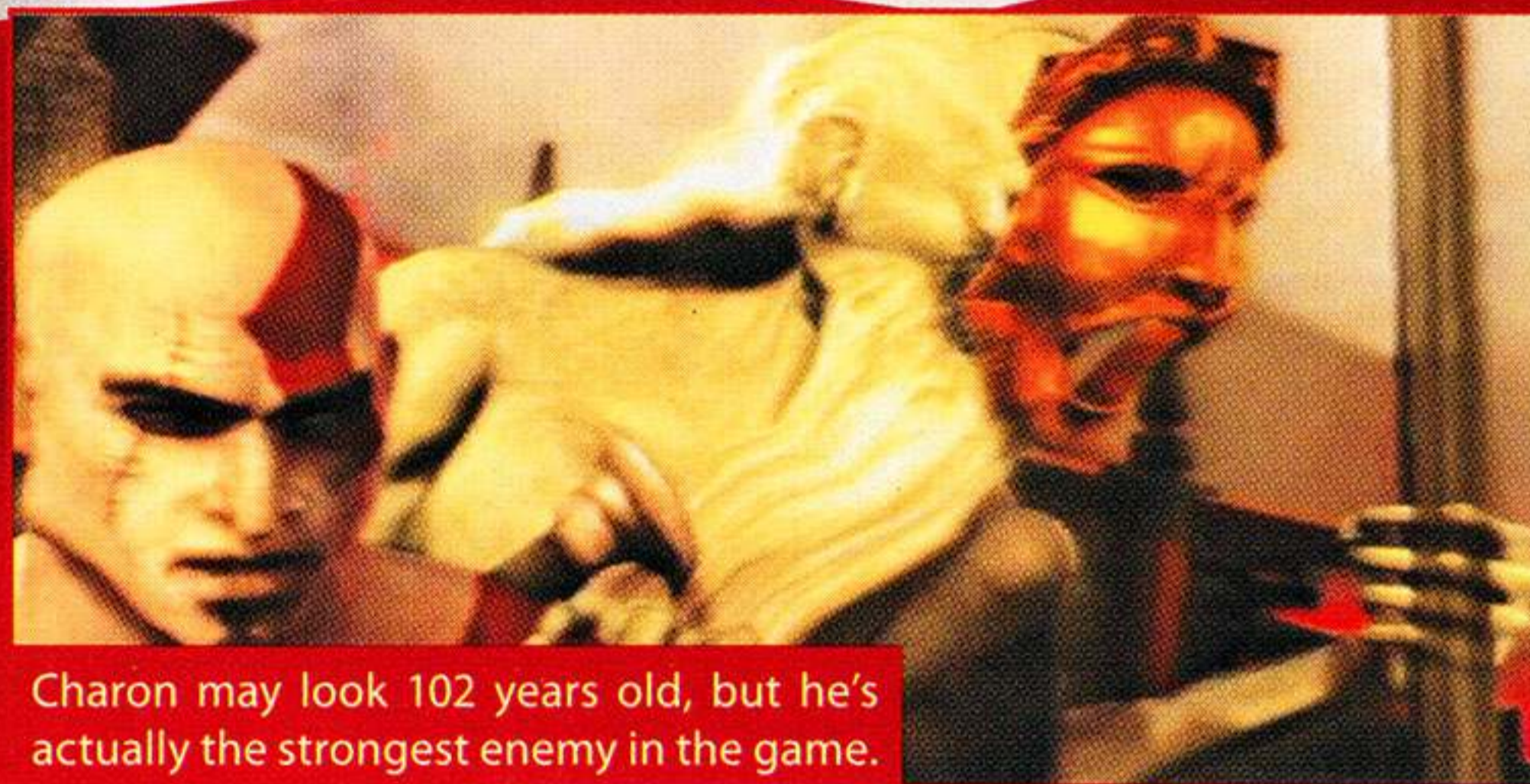


# Slaughtering Charon

## Conquer the Toughest Enemy in the Game!

The battle against the ferryman of the dead, Charon, is the most challenging fight in the game, period. In order to overpower this skeletal adversary, you're going to have to learn to anticipate and defend against his variety of attacks. The key to taking the least amount of damage is to absorb Charon's attacks by blocking them with your Sun Shield.

Deflect both his scythe slashes and his burning projectiles, and then quick thrash him while he's vulnerable. Keep up the punishment, and Charon will soon retreat to a platform; smash the pillars holding up the platform and jump over the shock waves he emits. When he's weakened, you'll be prompted to tear his scythe from his grip. Kratos then staples him to the wall with his own weapon. But don't relax just yet! Charon will now return to the fight with only the upper half of his body intact. Bludgeon him with the Gauntlet of Zeus to kill him once and for all.



Charon may look 102 years old, but he's actually the strongest enemy in the game.

## The Most Barbarous Kill in Chains of Olympus.

The Cyclops is not a new enemy in the God of War franchise, but this brutal way of slaying them is. Start belting the one-eyed ogre with all of your might, using either the Blades of Chaos or the Gauntlet of Zeus. When the fiend is about to keel over, press the series of buttons that flash across the screen to deliver a deathblow.

If you've successfully entered the buttons to finish off the Cyclops, you'll peel back his sole eyelid, raise your blade into the air, and then plunge it into his eye. Next, you'll stomp the blade deeper into the Cyclops's eye socket with your foot. This death animation is absolutely one of the most violent moves in any God of War game to date.



Little-known fact: Cyclops eyeball juice is a Grecian delicacy.

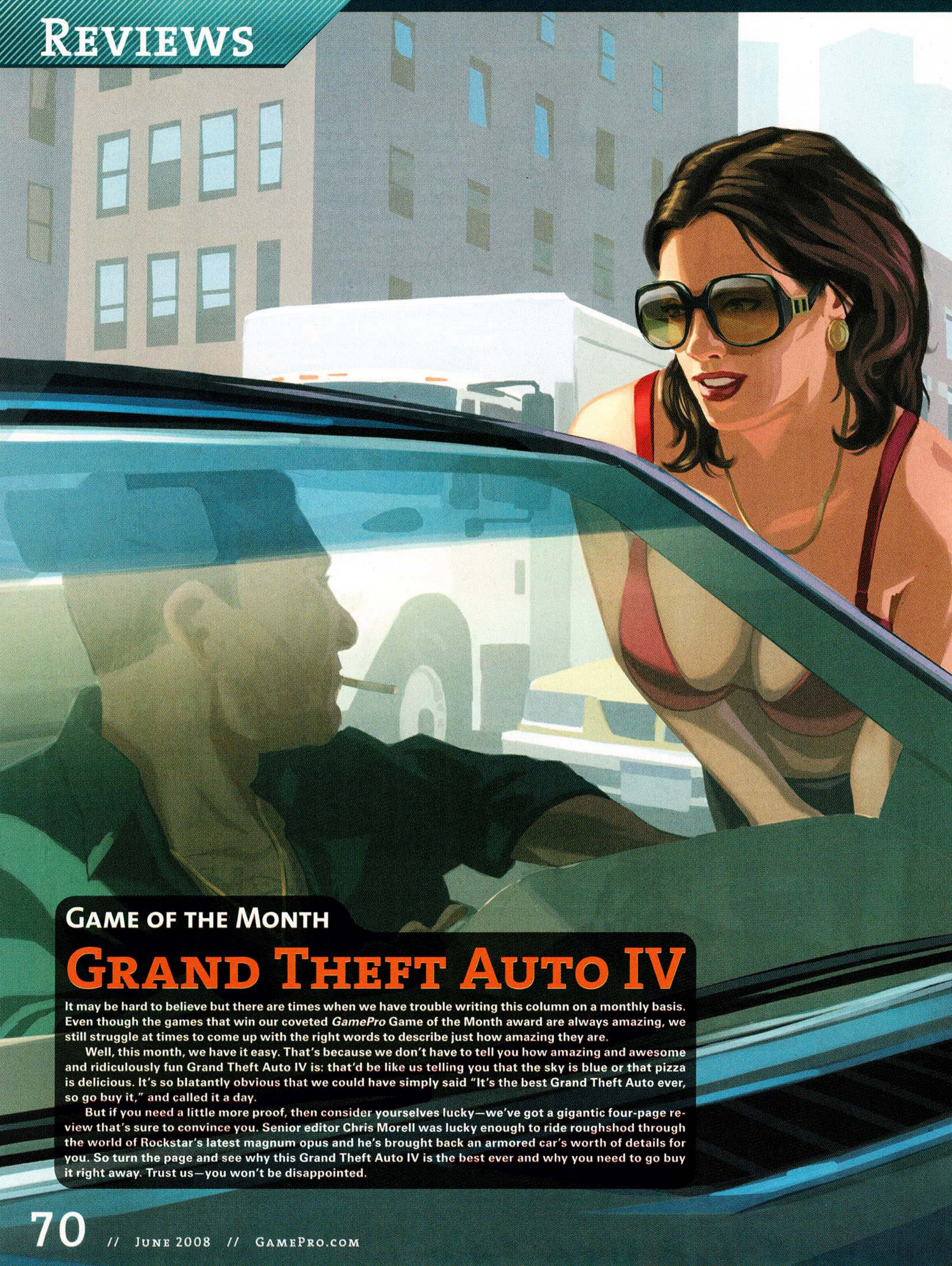
# LASIK, Kratos-style



**Patrick Shaw** bangs his head to brutal death metal, runs [OMGHorror.com](http://OMGHorror.com) and [SlobsofGaming.com](http://SlobsofGaming.com), and secretly ends his days watching episodes of *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

Reach him at [pshaw@gamepro.com](mailto:pshaw@gamepro.com)





## GAME OF THE MONTH

# GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

It may be hard to believe but there are times when we have trouble writing this column on a monthly basis. Even though the games that win our coveted *GamePro* Game of the Month award are always amazing, we still struggle at times to come up with the right words to describe just how amazing they are.

Well, this month, we have it easy. That's because we don't have to tell you how amazing and awesome and ridiculously fun *Grand Theft Auto IV* is: that'd be like us telling you that the sky is blue or that pizza is delicious. It's so blatantly obvious that we could have simply said "It's the best *Grand Theft Auto* ever, so go buy it," and called it a day.

But if you need a little more proof, then consider yourselves lucky—we've got a gigantic four-page review that's sure to convince you. Senior editor Chris Morell was lucky enough to ride roughshod through the world of Rockstar's latest magnum opus and he's brought back an armored car's worth of details for you. So turn the page and see why this *Grand Theft Auto IV* is the best ever and why you need to go buy it right away. Trust us—you won't be disappointed.



## GAME REVIEWS:

Battle of the Bands (Wii).....	83	Grand Theft Auto IV (Xbox 360).....	72
Command & Conquer: Kane's Wrath (PC).....	84	Iron Man (Xbox 360).....	81
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# MARIO KART Wii



Sometimes, we have to make some tough decisions here at *GamePro*. For instance, some months we have two equally amazing games vying for Game of the Month honors. This month, we not only had GTAIV, but the awesome Mario Kart Wii to choose from; this was sort of like trying to decide which one of our parents we loved more. The *GamePros* spent long hours debating the relative merits of both titles, and, in the end, Grand Theft Auto IV won by a hair.

But even though Mario Kart Wii came up short this time, it is, without a doubt, still an excellent title in its own right. It was a hard decision to make and one that you'll likely face the next time you go to your local game store. But look at the bright side: when you're forced to choose between two stellar titles like GTAIV and Mario Kart Wii, you're going to come up a winner no matter what. Of course, if you want our humble opinion, you really should buy both.

## GAMEPRO'S RATING SCALE

Behind the numbers:

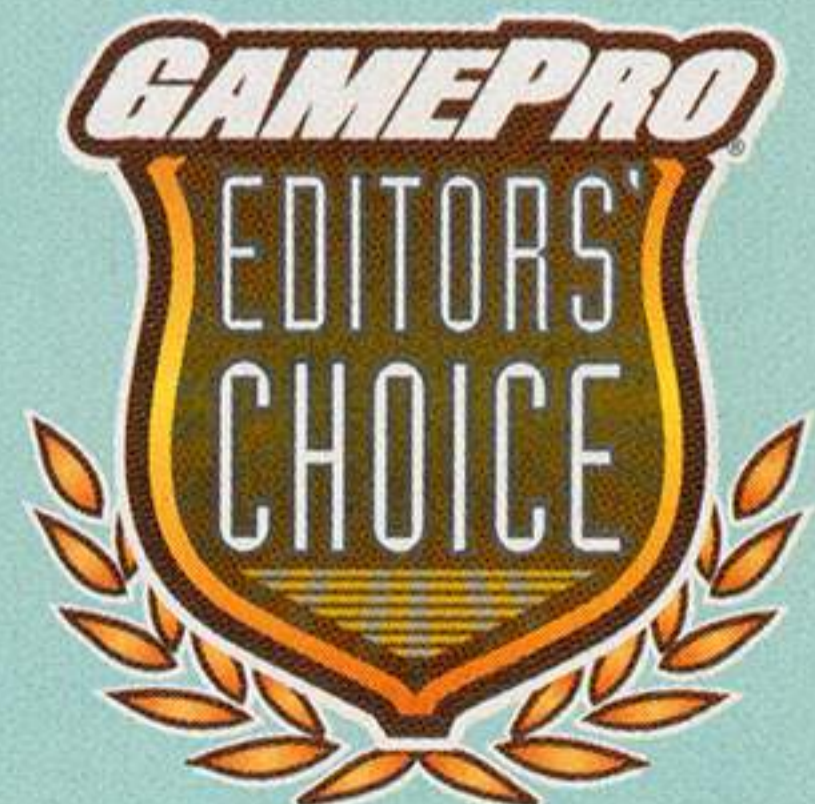
**5.00–4.50** The best of the best. If you don't own this game, you should. Think Halo, Zelda, Resident Evil, and Metal Gear Solid.

**4.25–3.50** Highly enjoyable, but falls short of true greatness. The Fight Nights and Tony Hawks of the world.

**3.25–2.50** Approach with caution—try before you buy. Enter the Matrix and the Dynasty Warriors games fall squarely in this category.

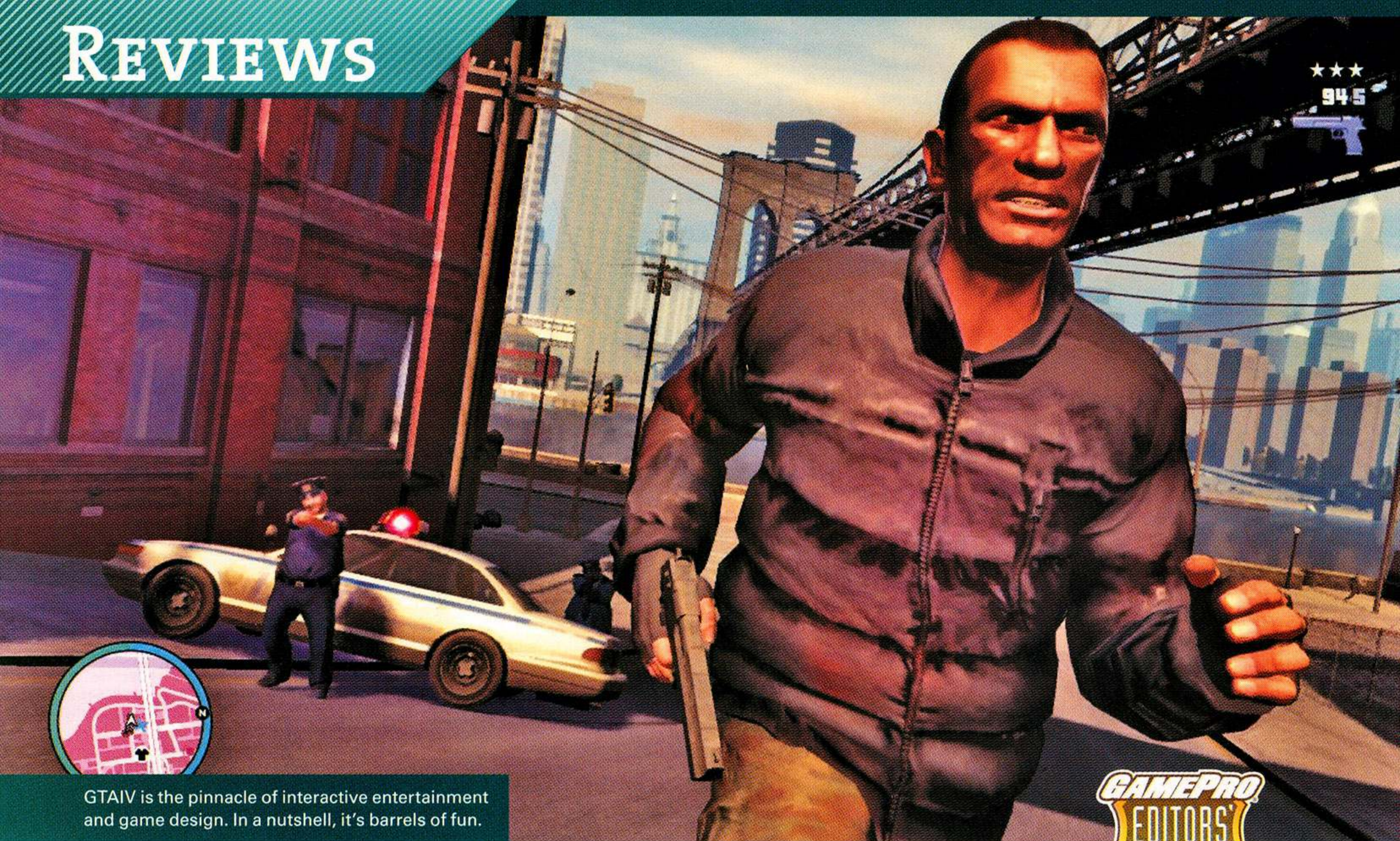
**2.25–1.50** Should come with a sticker: "Warning, contains poisonous amounts of suckage." Remember Backyard Wrestling?

**1.25–0.00** An absolute insult to humanity. Kill it with fire and holy water.



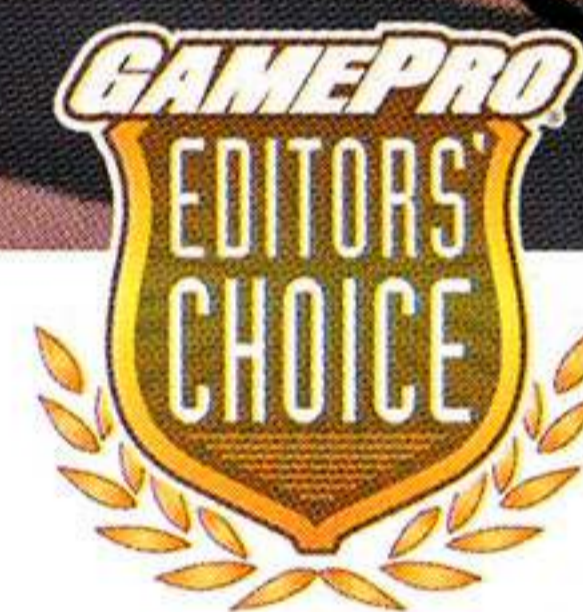
Games that score **4.50 or higher** are awarded our coveted Editors' Choice Award.





GTAIV is the pinnacle of interactive entertainment and game design. In a nutshell, it's barrels of fun.

## GRAND THEFT AUTO IV



Go. Buy. This. Game.

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: Rockstar North Publisher: Rockstar Games

"We can pick the game, Niko Bellic, but we cannot change the rules."

—Dimitri Rascalov

As they showed seven years ago with their industry altering hit, Grand Theft Auto III, Rockstar Games is a company that can not only change the rules but completely rewrite the

rule book. And just when you think the controversial company has nothing new to say, they unveil Grand Theft Auto IV, a game that pushes the envelope further than anyone could have expected.

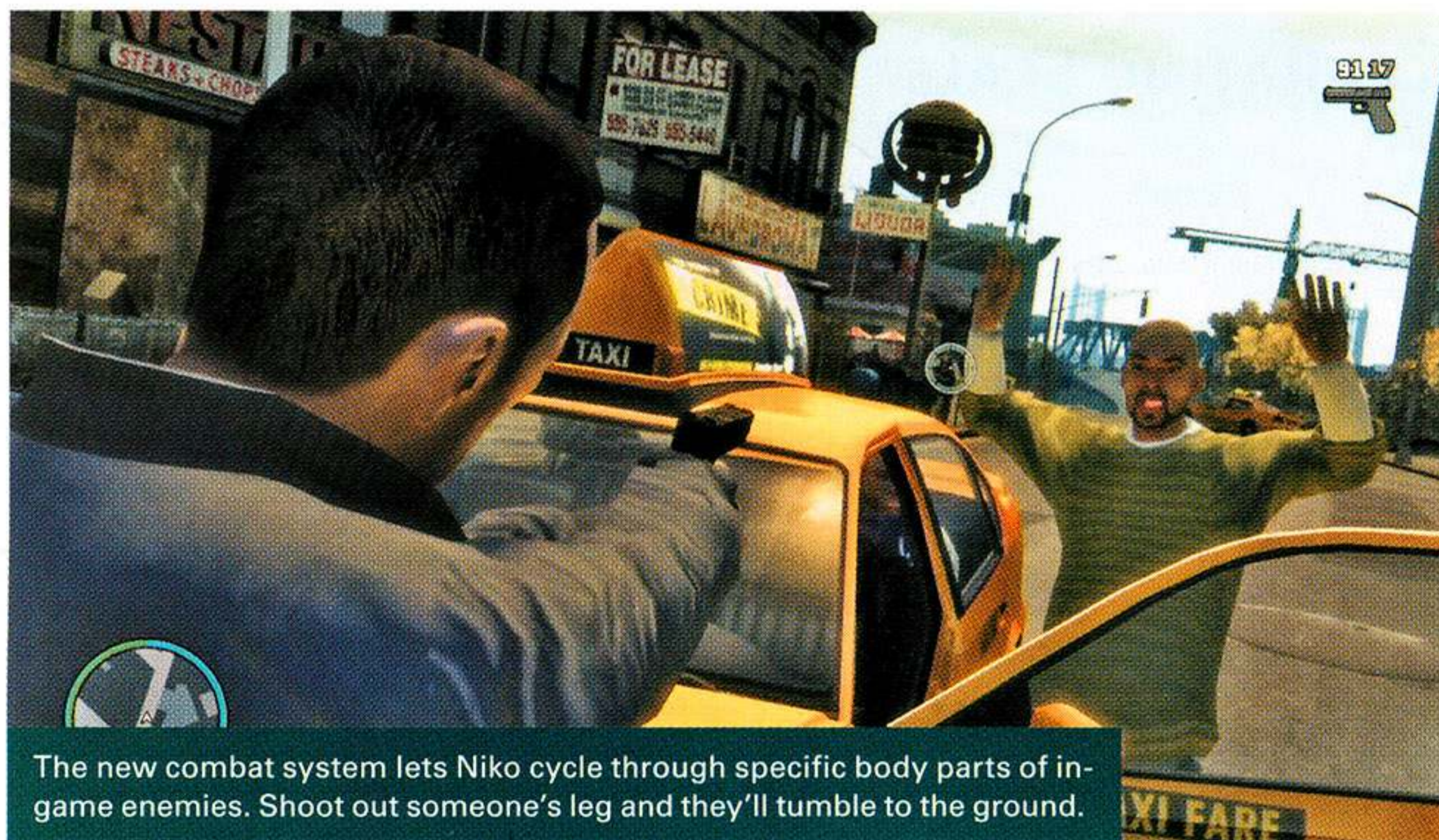
Though controversy, delays, and other setbacks haunted the game's development, Rockstar still managed to produce a game that meets, and in some cases, exceeds, our ridiculously high expectations. Sure, it doesn't reinvent the wheel but

much like Apple and its constant refinement of the iPod, developer Rockstar North has tweaked the GTA formula to the point of near perfection. GTAIV is not only the culmination of almost a decade of hard work, it also represents the pinnacle of interactive entertainment and game design.

With a simple yet compelling story, a memorable protagonist, top-notch voice acting, and an intriguing online multiplayer component that offers a long-lasting, customizable experience, GTAIV is, without a doubt, the complete package.

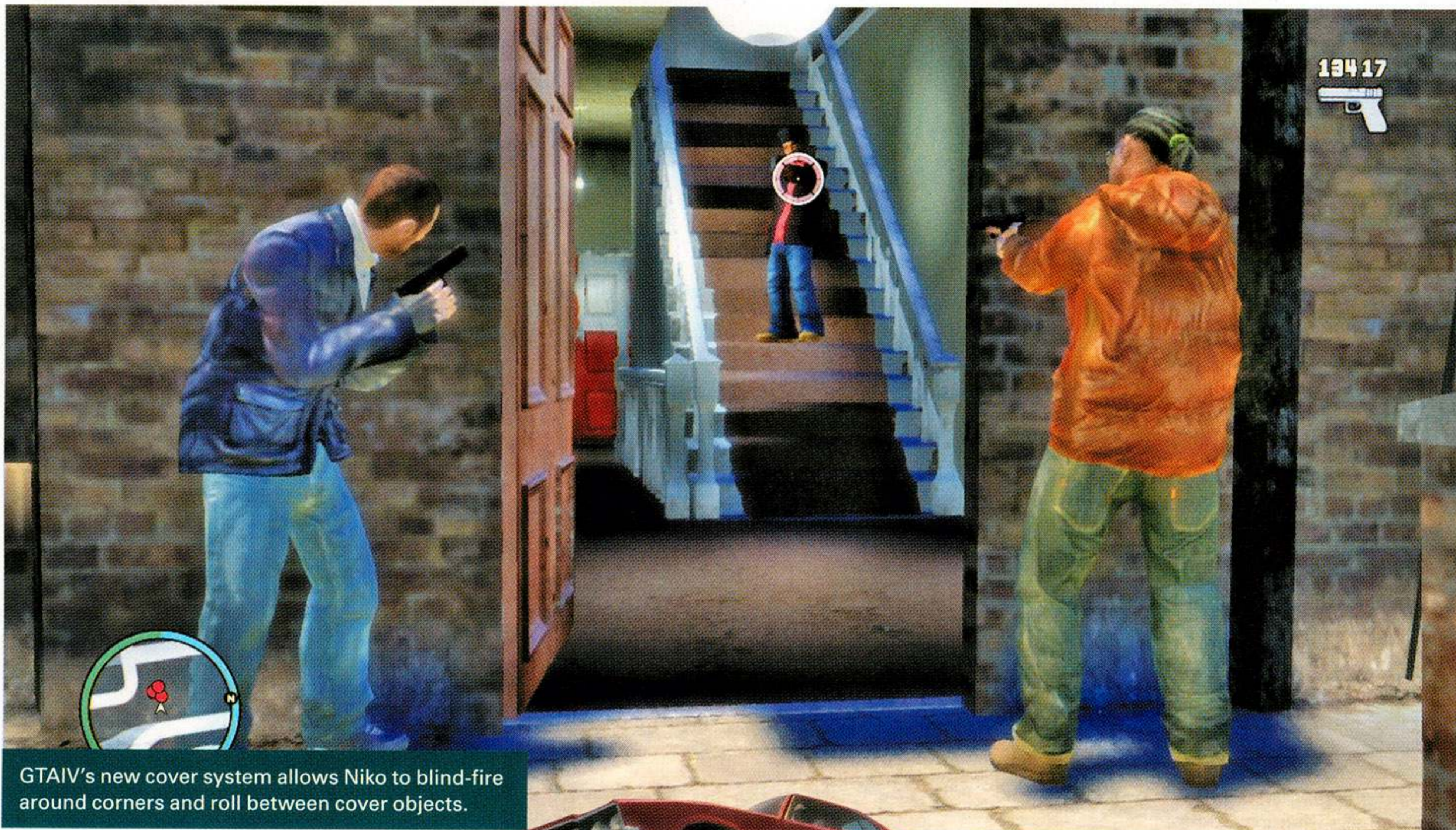
### COMING TO AMERICA

Niko Bellic arrives in Liberty City, a fictional yet strikingly accurate representation of New York City. Niko is an eastern European immigrant lured to Liberty by his cousin Roman, who fills Niko's head with visions of mansions, money, and beautiful women; thinking he is about to live the American dream, Niko arrives to a much starker reality: cousin Roman is not the self-realized success that he had portrayed himself to be. Instead, he lives in a rundown apartment and runs a struggling taxi business. But Niko didn't survive as long as he has by sweating the small stuff. He takes his cousin's embellishments in stride and sets out on his journey through Liberty City—if the good life won't come to him, then he'll go and hunt it down. And of course, there's something larger and more personal at stake for Niko. So begins the next chapter in the GTA saga.



The new combat system lets Niko cycle through specific body parts of in-game enemies. Shoot out someone's leg and they'll tumble to the ground.





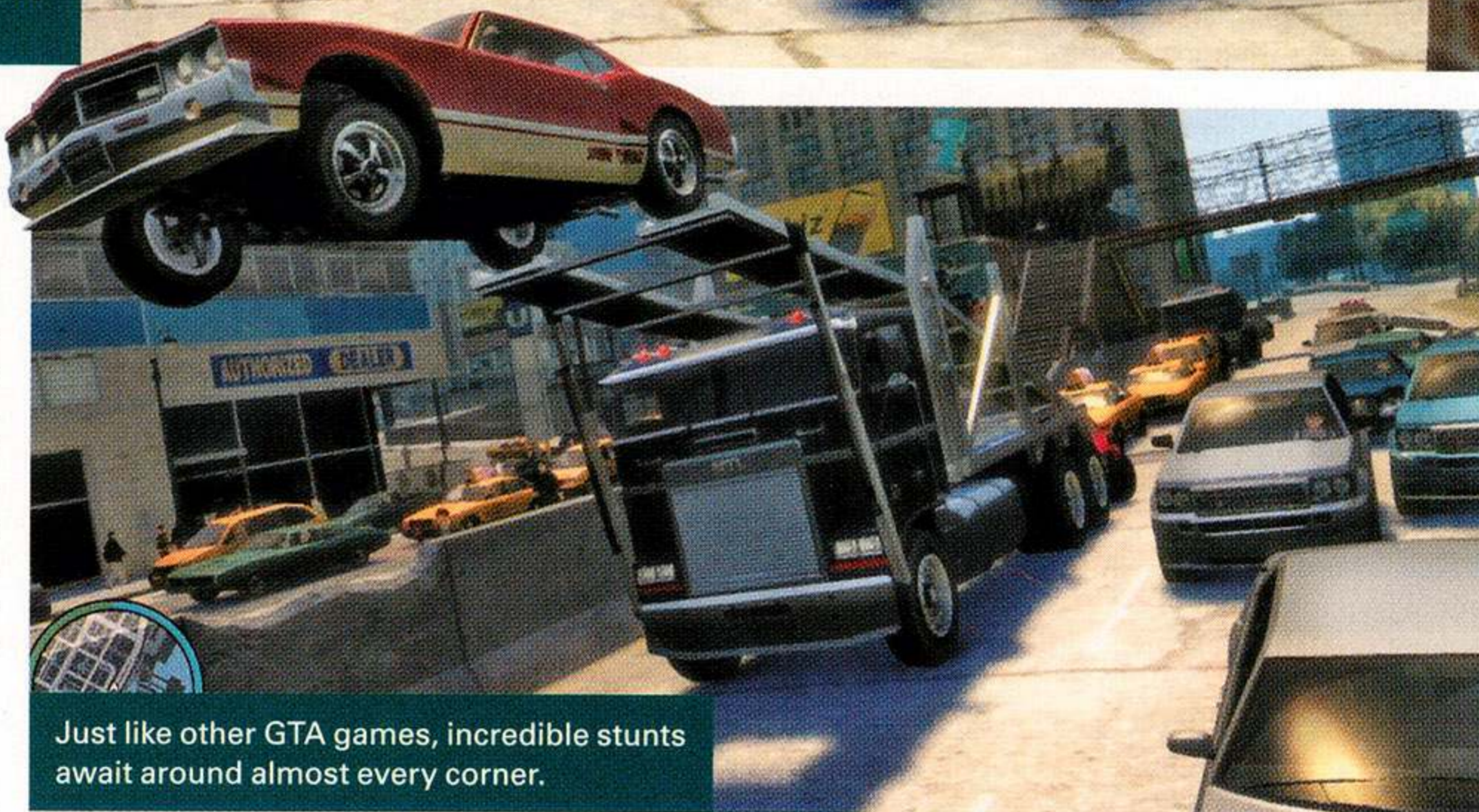
GTAIV's new cover system allows Niko to blind-fire around corners and roll between cover objects.

Much like the previous titles, GTAIV sets you loose on the streets with a single contact—your cousin Roman—who slowly deals out small tasks and errands. From there, Niko branches out from his dilapidated apartment in Broker—Liberty's take on Brooklyn—to more interesting and often times dangerous locales. These include Dukes (Queens), Bohan (the Bronx), Algonquin (Manhattan), and finally, Alderney (New Jersey). The story in GTAIV is definitely simpler and more streamlined than in past games and you never feel like you're muddling through the 25-plus hours of single-player mode, a testament not only to the developer's writing skills, but the excellent gameplay experience that they've crafted.

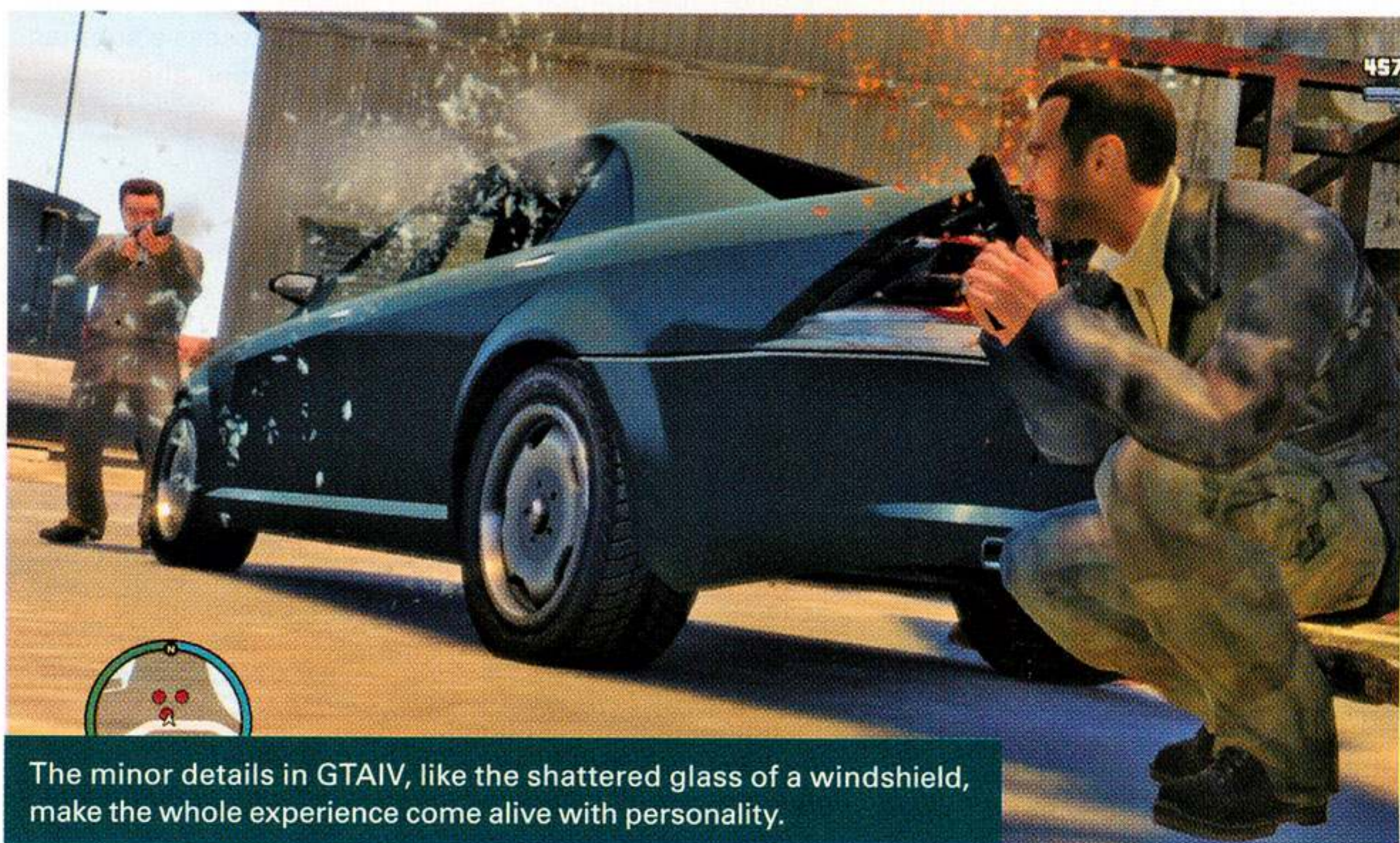
### GETTING INTO CHARACTER

And that single-player experience stars a protagonist that may ultimately prove to be the most memorable GTA hero yet. Niko is an interesting character with a style and vibe all his own. The game's entertaining cinematic cut-scenes that precede each mission do a great job of setting the proper tone and mood. Mission variety is also a strong suit of GTAIV: Niko is always doing something interesting, from completing hits to drug raids to bank heists and more. One of the more memorable missions I played had Niko driving a Trashmaster garbage truck to pick up trash bags full of stolen diamonds. With two helpers swaying on the back of the truck fending off the pursuing enemies, getting the ice to safety required some fancy maneuvering through the city streets, a task made all the more harrowing by the Trashmaster's lack of speed and maneuverability.

Niko's life is also far more streamlined—there's no property to buy and you don't have to do mundane things like eat food (unless you want health) or exercise to put on muscle; in other words, the game is about quality and not quantity. When you



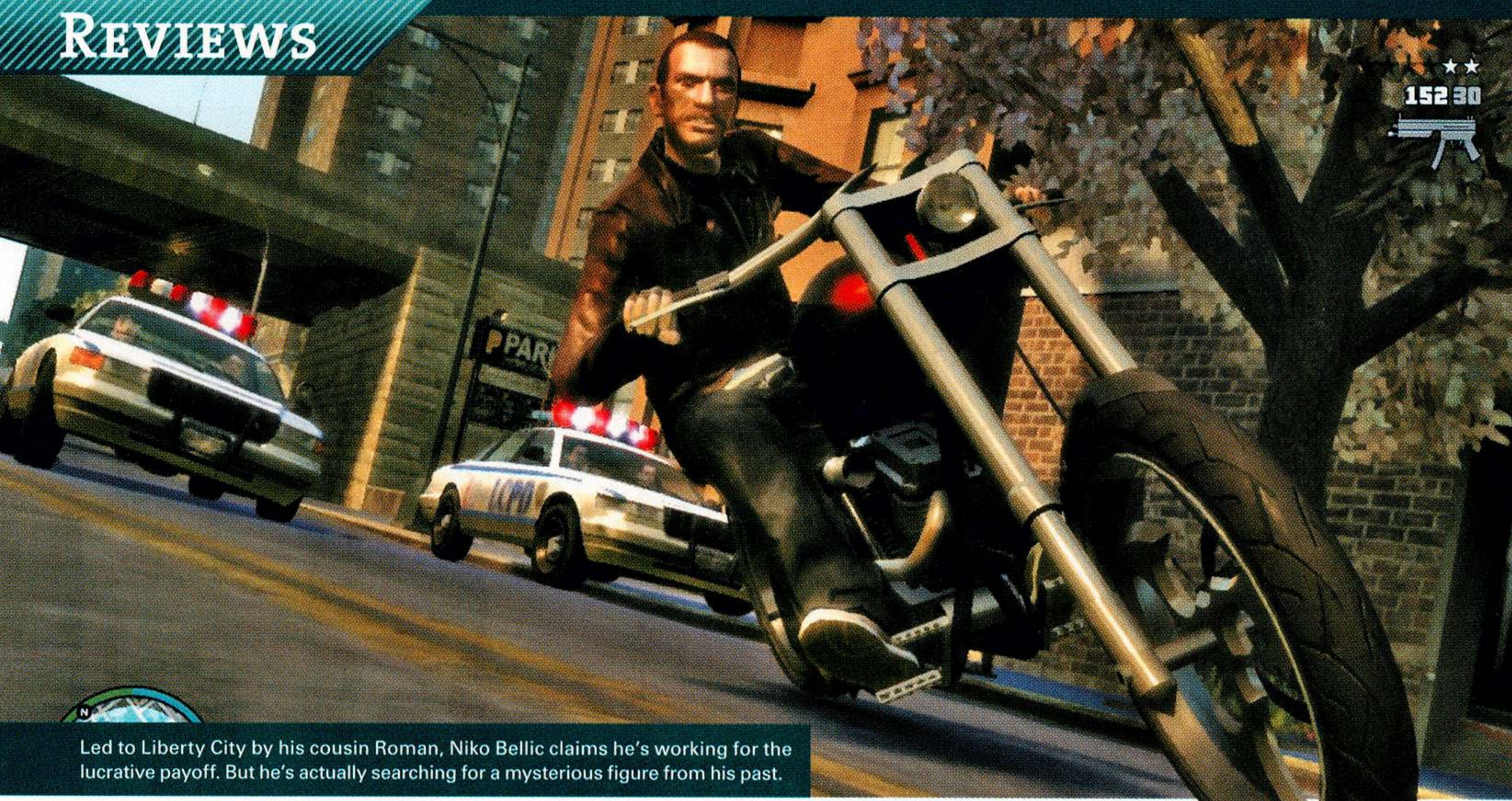
Just like other GTA games, incredible stunts await around almost every corner.



The minor details in GTAIV, like the shattered glass of a windshield, make the whole experience come alive with personality.

CONTINUED ▶





★★  
15230  
[Gun icon]

Led to Liberty City by his cousin Roman, Niko Bellic claims he's working for the lucrative payoff. But he's actually searching for a mysterious figure from his past.

need firepower, Niko can visit a local weapons shop or make friends who provide guns as a service. You'll meet other connected individuals but you'll have to keep up relationships to keep on their good side. You can engage in activities such as playing darts, shooting pool, or even hitting a local bar to maintain good relationships; ignore a friend for too long and you won't reap the benefits. And, of course, you can also go on dates and try to establish "friendships" that way.

Most of the missions in GTAIV prove to be incredibly fun, and a new combat engine and targeting system makes firefighting feel epic. A cover system that feels reminiscent to Gears of War adds a nice layer of strategy, allowing players to target enemies and free aim on different body parts. An enemy's health is displayed around the round targeting circle, and a head shot can take most foes down in one pop. Rocket launchers and grenades can light up any conflict, but submachine guns, Uzis, and shotguns will probably prove to be your best friends. A pistol lets you perform an execution, which ties nicely into assassination-themed story missions.

## PLAYER'S CHOICE

Of course, the variety of missions and weaponry speaks to one basic truth: the GTA franchise has always been about choice and empowering the gamer, concepts that GTAIV takes to an entirely new level. The game offers you a lot of freedom and gives you opportunities to make a lot of decisions. Some are trivial—which type of car you decide to take on a mission, for instance—while others have serious implications; I won't ruin any surprises, but let's just say that there will be times when you will have to think long and hard before you take aim and pull the trigger. It's no exaggeration to say that GTAIV provides each gamer with their own personal gaming experience.

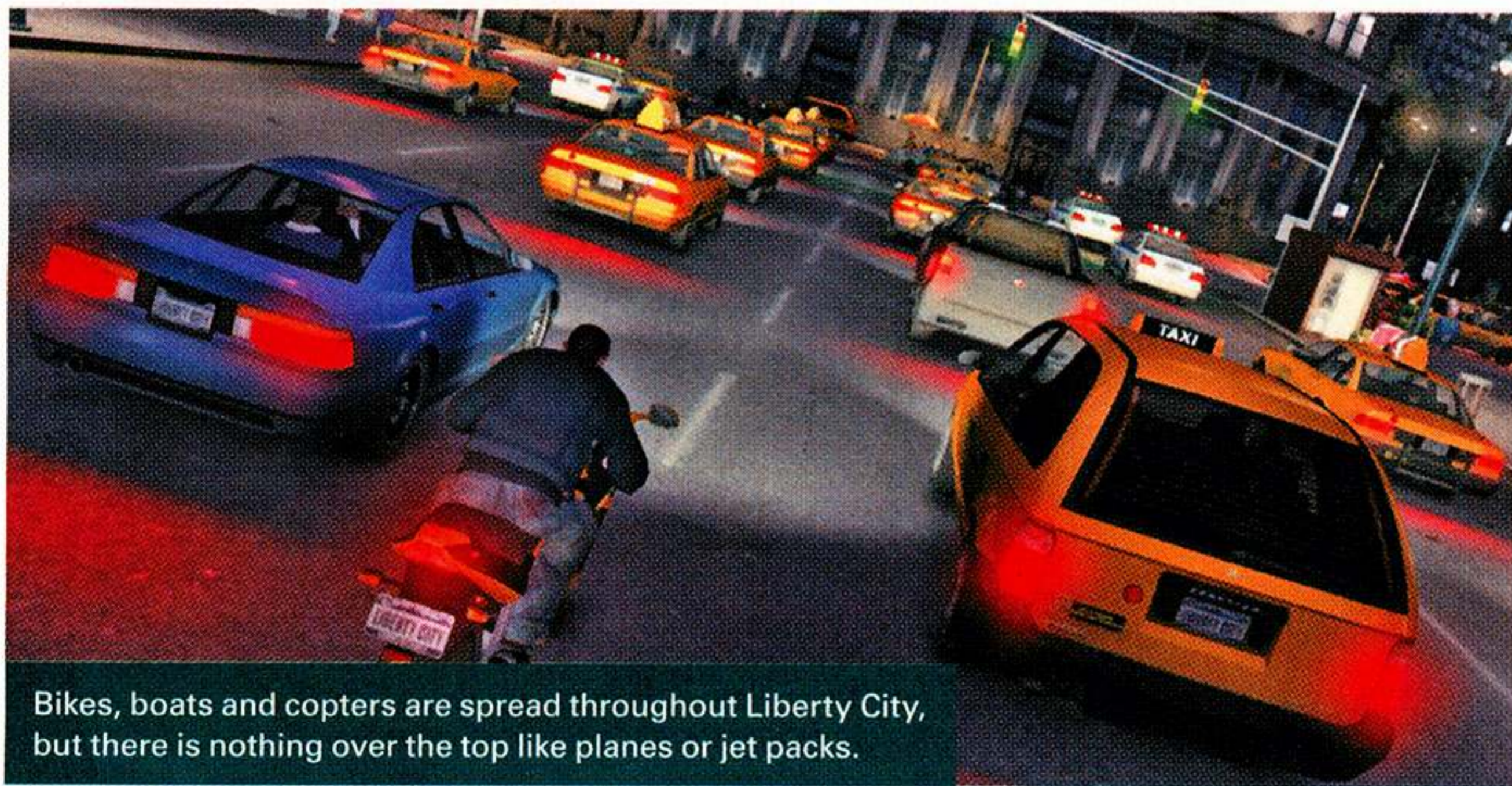
Thankfully, the game's presentation has received a major upgrade, making your time with the game feel far more intuitive and fluid. A prime example of this is Niko's smartphone, an all-in-one device that acts a telephone, organizer, and text- and picture-messaging device; it delivers pertinent information but never takes you out of the game—you never need to access a submenu or hit pause. Contacts call you, and alternatively,

you can call them, to initiate missions. Text messages keep you informed with quick updates and picture messages prove vital to locating specific targets. You can even use the device to replay failed missions, which is a welcome feature. And, of course, in typical Rockstar style, the developers allow you to customize the smartphone with new backgrounds and ring tones, both of which can be downloaded through Liberty City's in-game Internet.

## THE CITY IS ALIVE...

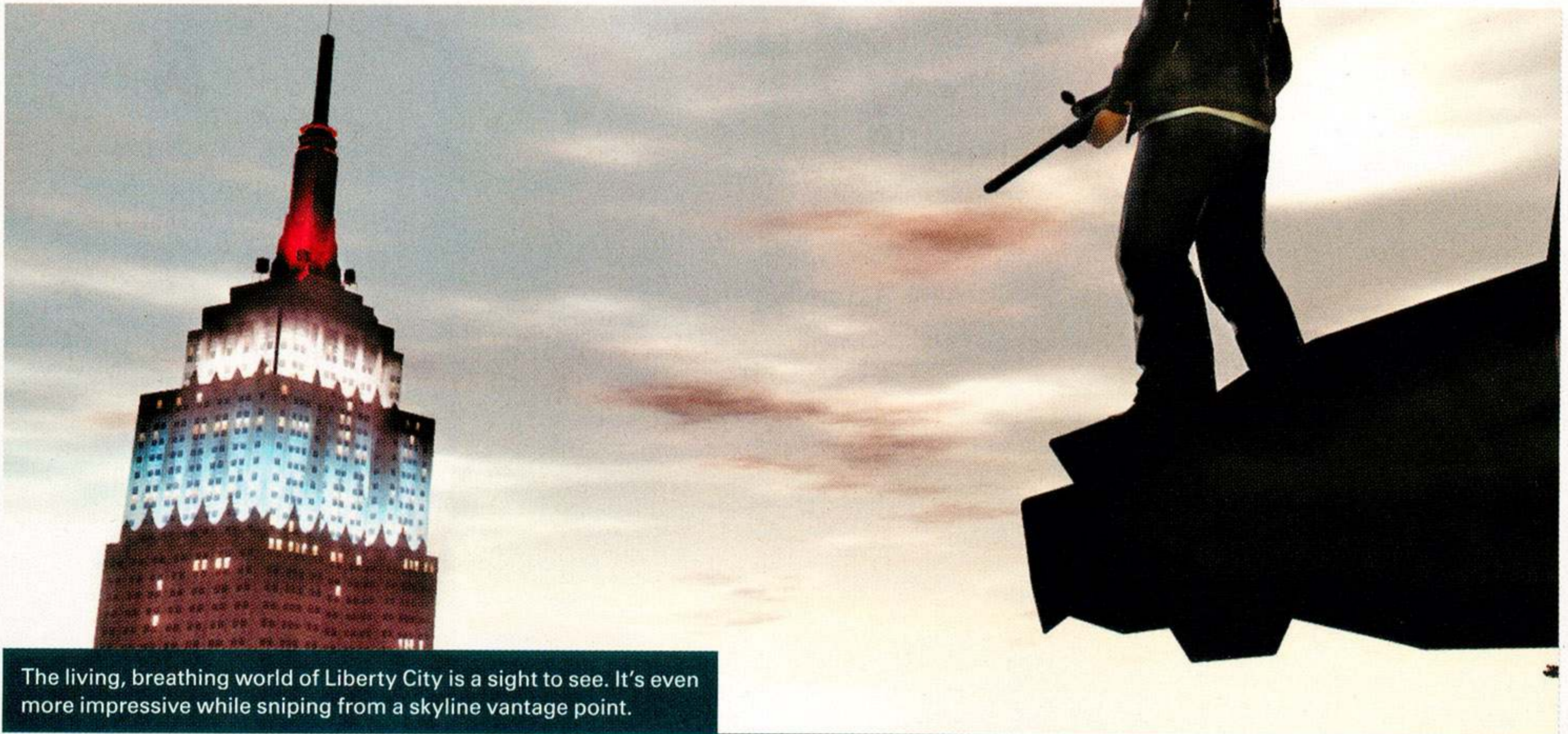
But as interesting as those refinements are, and as interesting a character as Niko is, the true star of this show is undoubtedly Liberty City itself. The thriving metropolis seems to have a life of its own, with crowded streets and incredibly interactive pedestrians. Bump a woman on a sidewalk and she might drop her coffee, as well as a few expletives. Run over a mailbox and a fountain of mail will spew into the wind. Other GTA games have featured memorable locales but none can match the immersive detail, size, and scope of GTAIV's Liberty City. Sure, those patented GTA glitches—clipping, texture pop-in, and the like—still abound but they can't take away from the majesty and beauty of the metropolis.

There's something interesting waiting around every corner, a feat which no other game has been able to accomplish before. Steal a car and a patrolman might attempt to drag you out; but push on the gas and you'll leave the unlucky copper hanging onto the open door for dear life. As you duck and weave around traffic, he'll slowly lose his grip and his body will flail around every turn until he eventually gives up. It's little details like that that make GTAIV more than just a great game. In other words, the story and the gameplay are the cake and the little details serve as the delicious frosting.



Bikes, boats and copters are spread throughout Liberty City, but there is nothing over the top like planes or jet packs.





The living, breathing world of Liberty City is a sight to see. It's even more impressive while sniping from a skyline vantage point.

## I GET AROUND

As you can see, Liberty City is an intricately designed city; normally, this would make it difficult to navigate except for one thing: every car in GTAIV has built-in GPS navigation, which makes getting around the city a snap. It works exceptionally well, accounting even for one-way streets. It also comes in handy when you need to evade police detection: a new "wanted level" system eliminates cop bribes of the past. Now, it's all about line of sight. Commit a crime and a flashing circular zone that represents the nearest pursuing officer's zone of sight lights up your radar; escape that area without being seen by another cop and you're golden. If you're on foot, a parked car will sometimes be your only way out, but be warned that you'll need a few seconds to hot-wire it, and the nicer the car, the longer it takes to spark up. And of course, in a pinch, running your car through a Pay 'n' Spray can quickly get you out of a jam.

Cars are as fast and loose as ever, making super jumps and motorcycle wheelies a nice distraction—unless, of course, you get stuck behind the wheel of a behemoth like a garbage truck or

an 18-wheeler. Boats can also provide an easier getaway should you need to get wet to ditch the heat and helicopters offer up a nice aerial view of the city, as well as access to some out of the way places.

## PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE

One other thing I loved about GTAIV: considering the fact that it's been a target of political and media pundits who keep harping on the infamous "Hot Coffee" incident, it's understandable to think that Rockstar might tone down the adult themes in GTAIV. But thankfully, that didn't happen. This is a mature game, and a devilishly good one at that. It never makes concessions in the name of being politically correct, living up to its M-rating with gusto—there's tons of swearing, violence, and sexual innuendo. You can visit strip clubs and pick up prostitutes—there is no nudity from what I could tell, so don't get your hopes up.

As for the game's faults, there aren't many. As I mentioned, the standard GTA glitches like clipping still plague the game. And even though the plot line is simpler than previous GTA games, it still

gets cluttered at times, with a glut of characters entering the scene; it can be tough to keep track of exactly why things are happening and to whom. Of course, this is offset by the fact that the game remains entertaining throughout and a new character introduction is usually a precursor to a set of missions that proves to be more fun than the last.

## GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH

I could talk on endlessly about what makes GTAIV such an awesome game, but really, the only way to know is to experience it for yourself. It truly is the product of game design at its finest. In Liberty City, Rockstar has created a gritty yet lifelike atmosphere that is the perfect complement to the fun missions that drive the game. The graphics are on par with the best of this generation and the audio shines with a soundtrack that is arguably better than San Andreas—my personal favorite was the reggae station dedicated to the Bob Marley family. And I didn't even mention the massive multiplayer component which adds a ridiculous amount of value to what is already the must-own game of 2008. (We'll have a complete breakdown on GamePro.com once GTAIV releases and the online servers reach critical mass.)

Any way you slice it, Niko Bellic's journey through Liberty City and his quest for answers to his shadowy past is an experience you just cannot afford to miss. Rockstar has created one hell of a vehicle that's driven by a compelling story, memorable characters, and amazing gameplay. All you have to do is pick up the controller and enjoy the ride.—Chris Morell



Bump a cop and you'll discover GTAIV's new "wanted level" system. Evade the cops' area of search and line of sight, and you're free as a bird.

## FUN FACTOR

**5.00**

OUT OF 5.00



**PROS:** The best GTA ever, in all ways; it succeeds on pretty much every level.

**CONS:** Story is weighed down by too many characters. Weird "glitches" still abound.





6th

Powerslide through a turn until your wheels spark then let go for a nice speed boost. Do this as often as you can.

# MARIO KART Wii

Is Mario Kart Wii a must-own Wii title? You bet your red shell it is!

Wii ESRB: E

Developer and Publisher: Nintendo

**Y**ou have to hand it to Nintendo: they are doing everything they need to win the current console wars. They're selling consoles left and right and more importantly, they keep putting out quality titles that people are almost guaranteed to go nuts over. And the hits just keep on coming: right on the heels of their immensely successful Super Smash Bros. Brawl comes Mario Kart Wii, another title that is sure to keep the momentum going strong for the Big N.

## THE GANG'S ALL HERE

Mario Kart Wii isn't your prototypical racing game. It sits in the middle ground between realistic simulations like Gran Turismo and arcade-focused speedsters like Burnout. But it has something those other titles don't—the special Nintendo style that makes it stand out from all the rest.

The best example of this lies in Mario Kart Wii's roster of racers: the cast of characters is composed mostly of Nintendo all-stars like Mario

and Bowser with a few nice surprises thrown in, which I won't spoil. Each racer also has access to a variety of vehicles, each with their own individual stats. Sadly, the characters don't have as much individual personality as they do in games like Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Strikers Charged, but you do have a nice variety to choose from.

## YOU SPIN ME ROUND ROUND

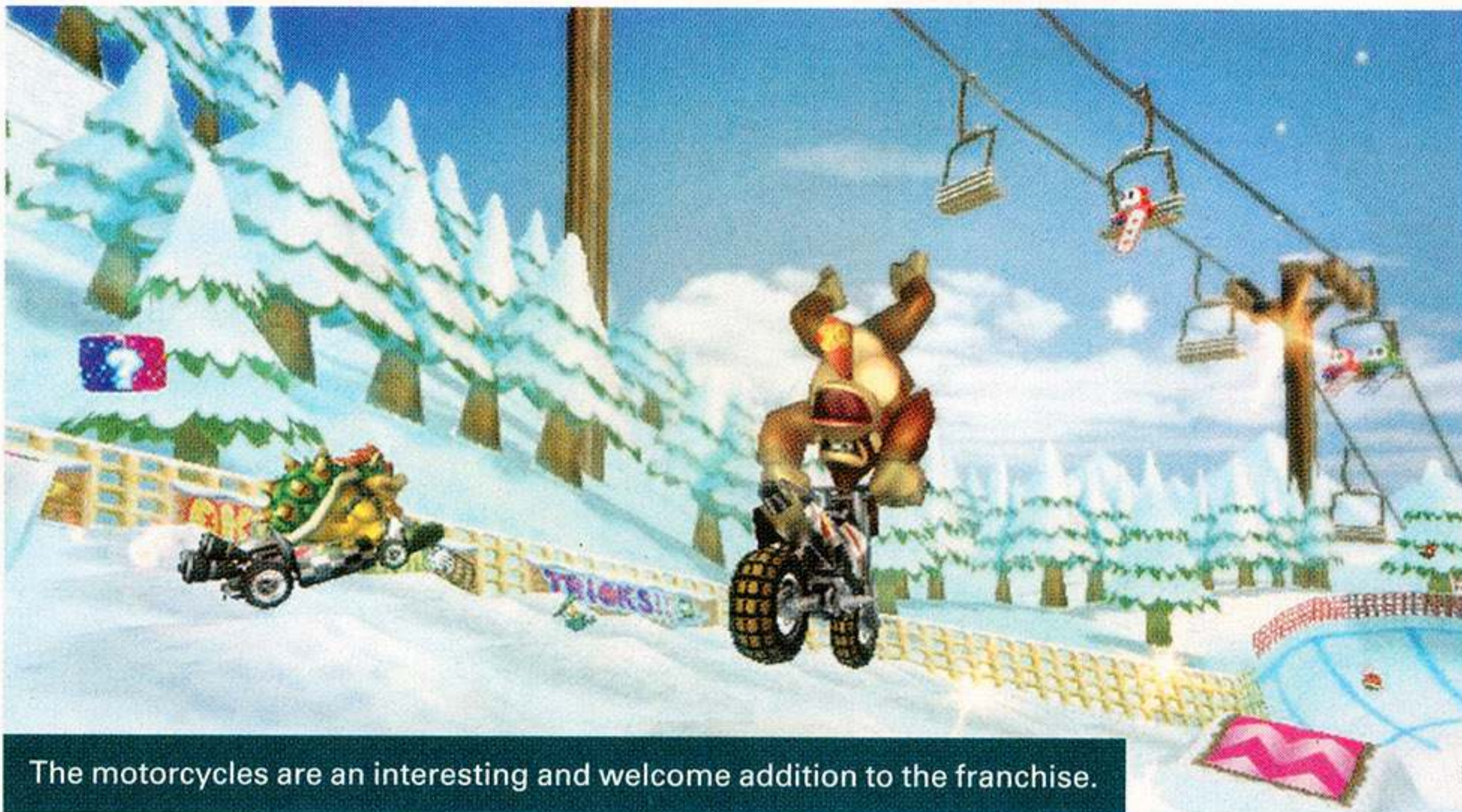
From a gameplay standpoint, Mario Kart Wii doesn't deviate much from the formula set by the previous titles in the series: in short, it's tons of fun. There are two types of events: races and battles. Races are all out sprints to the finish line while battles consist of racers roaming around an enclosed space, tossing shells and other weapons at each other. If you've played any of the previous titles, you'll be on familiar ground but even if you are new to the series, you'll still be able to master the game's racing action after a few sessions.

Drifting, where you slide around the track at an angle to generate a speed boost, is still the name of the game and using it effectively is often the difference between racing in first and puttering in last. If anything, all of the tracks are built for drifts so it just makes sense to use them. Items also play a huge role and varies from simple banana peels to the powerful Bullet Bill, which transforms you into the classic ballistic enemy from Super Mario Bros. and rockets you around the track.



The levels are a nice mix of new tracks and classic courses from past Mario Kart games.





The motorcycles are an interesting and welcome addition to the franchise.

## ABSOLUTE POWER CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY

Of course, this brings me to my number one complaint about Mario Kart Wii: The game goes out of its way to reward racers who fall behind. Say you're in last place and you run over an item box—chances are you'll get some über power-up that'll help rocket you back into contention. That's great if you absolutely suck but what happens if you're good enough to jump out into the lead? You'll be assaulted by all manner of shells, bombs, and lightning strikes. The worst part is that the game will arm you with lame power-ups like banana peels if you're in first, so it's hard to defend yourself.

This leads to a lot of frustration and I lost a lot of races simply because my opponents got lucky with some power-up. The penalty for getting hit is also way too harsh: get struck by a shell or run into an obstacle and you'll come to a dead stop for a few seconds, which proves especially deadly in the later races. Falling off the race course is even worse—it takes forever to get reset and you'll spend the rest of the race trying to catch up. Fall off the track multiple times and you might as well quit and start again.

Presentation wise, the game also fails to dazzle with graphics and audio that get the job done but won't blow you away. Also, when you go split-screen for multiplayer, things start to get pixelated and fuzzy, which is sort of disappointing.

## ONE MORE TIME

And yet, even with these faults, Mario Kart Wii is without a doubt awesome. I always judge a game's worth on whether or not I find myself going back to it time and time again and I definitely found Mario Kart Wii to be addictive, even with its minor frustrations. All of the unlockables definitely help too—getting a new vehicle or a new character is a great reward for the work you put in.

Mario Kart Wii also has a huge ace up its sleeve: online multiplayer. I didn't get to test it out because no one else has the game as I write this, but unless it's completely broken, I can't see how it won't be a great addition to the series, the complexity and fickleness of Nintendo's online service notwithstanding. The Mario Kart Wii channel is also a cool little widget that sits in the Wii Menu and lets you access online stats without needing to boot up the game. I hope to see more games take advantage of this cool feature.

## NINTENDO POWER

There's no denying it: no one does Nintendo better than Nintendo and Mario Kart Wii is just the latest example which proves that, when it comes to designing an amazing Wii game, Nintendo has the secret formula down pat. It's a fantastic title that's fun, accessible and should prove to be a big hit with casual Wii gamers and hardcore racers alike. Whether you play solo, with friends or with strangers online, Mario Kart Wii is a great title that all Wii owners have to check out. —Tae K. Kim

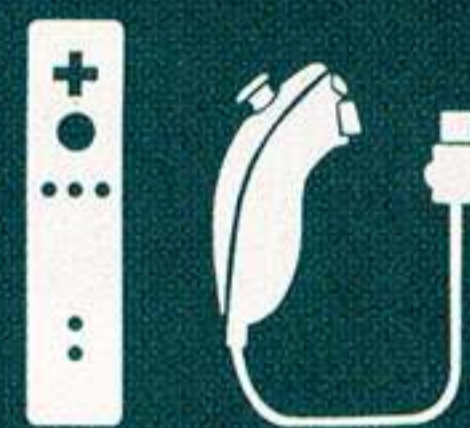


## TOTAL CONTROL

Mario Kart Wii offers a lot of flexibility when it comes to the controls. You can play four ways:



Wii Remote only



Wii Remote and Nunchuk

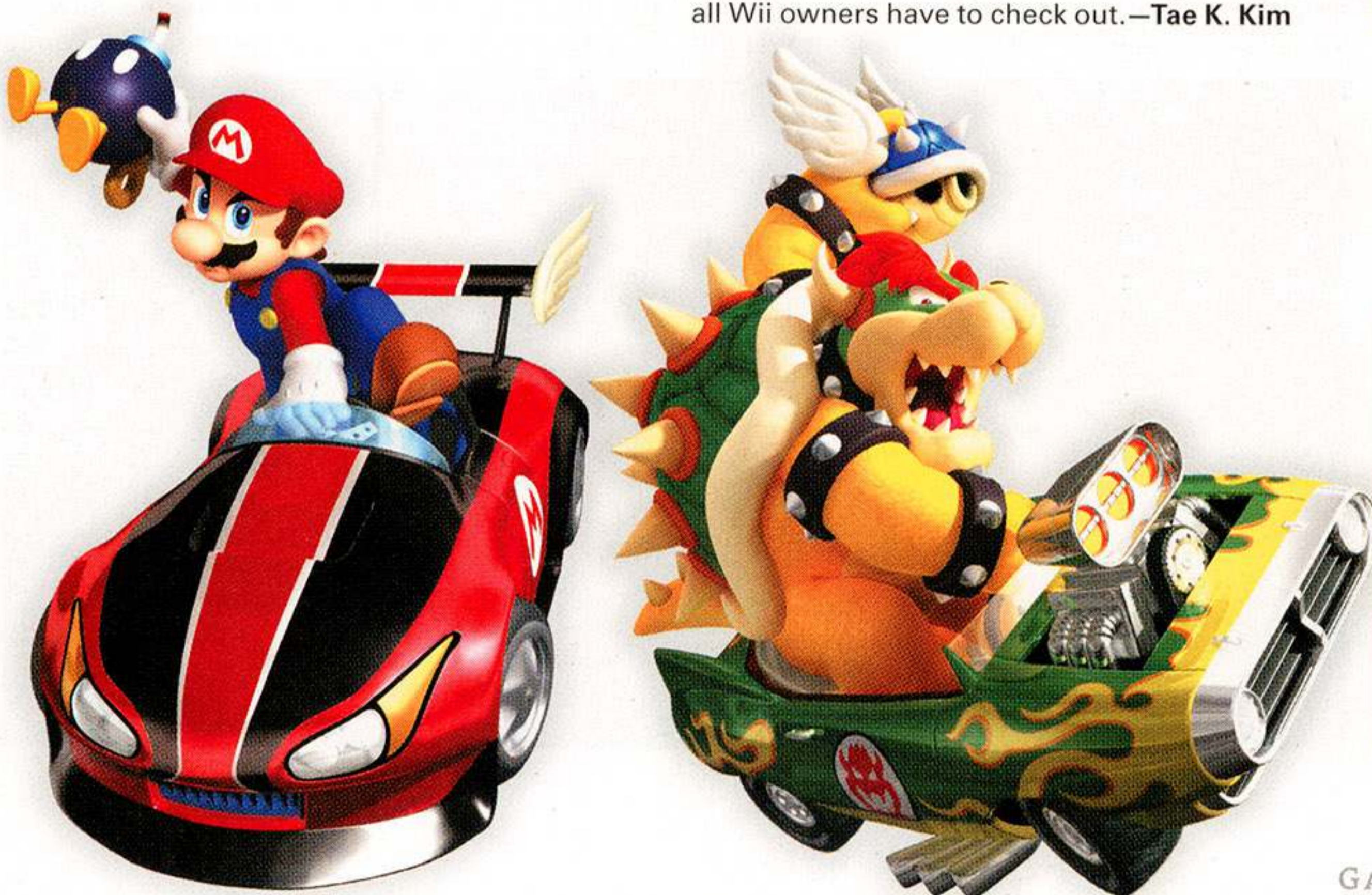


Classic Controller



GameCube controller

There isn't much difference between them—only using the Wii Remote requires you to physically move the controller to steer while the other methods use the analog stick—and they offer up enough precision to get you by. I tested all four methods and found that the GameCube controller felt the most comfortable but personal preferences may differ.



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## FUN FACTOR

**4.75**

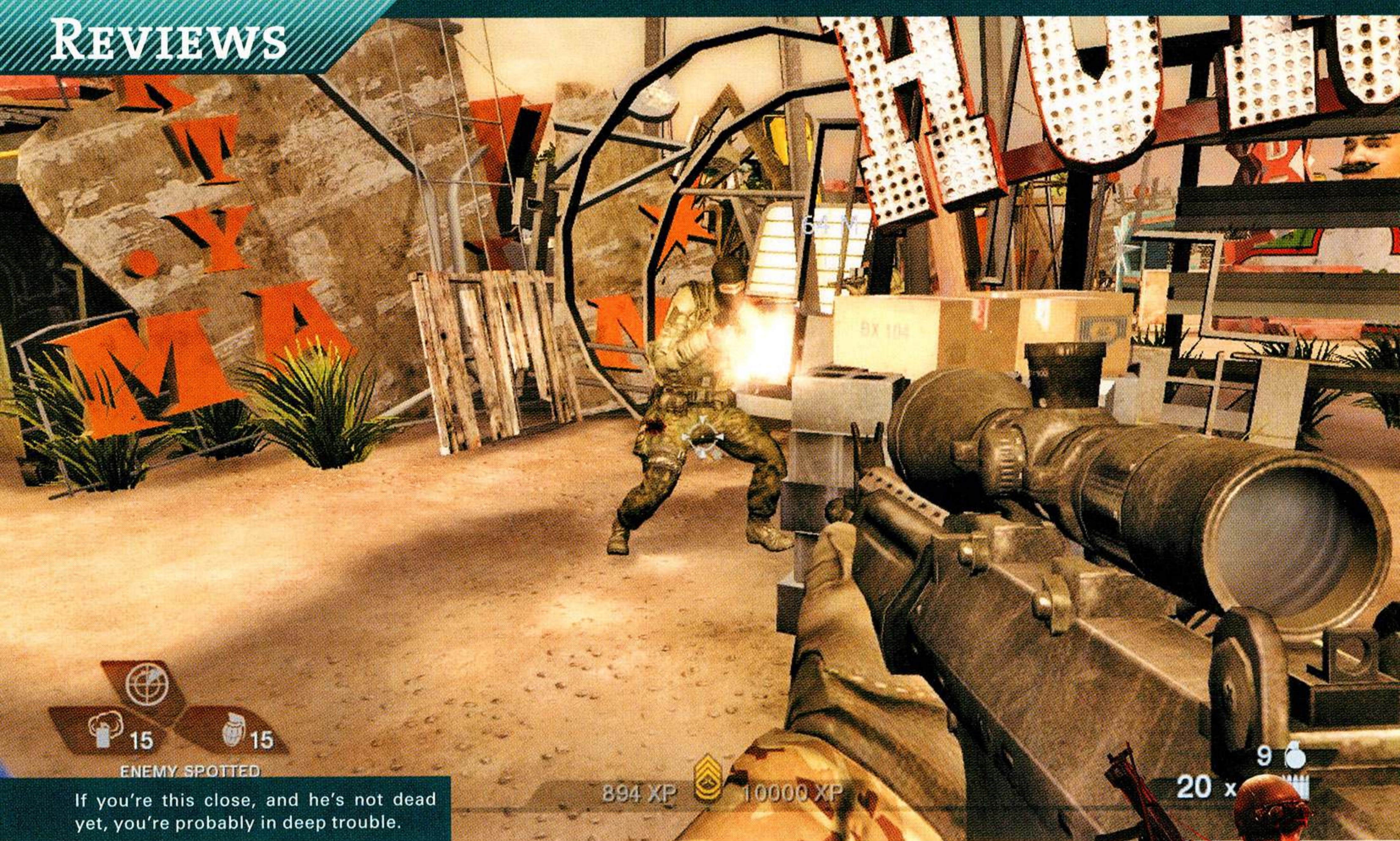
OUT OF 5.00



**PROS:** Addictive and fun racing action; roster of characters is great; lots of neat unlockables.

**CONS:** Some items are too powerful; stragglers are unfairly rewarded; graphics are just okay.





## TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS 2

Further proof that no matter what you do in Vegas, it's almost always a good time.

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal Publisher: Ubisoft

**W**ith its quick pace, memorable locations, and smooth controls, the original Rainbow Six Vegas helped revive the long-standing tactical shooter franchise. While the sequel, Vegas 2, doesn't shake things up as much as its predecessor, it's still got enough glitz and glamour to eat up large chunks of your free time.

### DEEP COVER

As I said, Vegas 2 doesn't veer that far off of the beaten path forged by the first Vegas title. Not much has changed gameplay-wise, which is a good thing for battle hardened vets who fought their way through the first title. You're still cast as a highly trained anti-terrorist specialist who roams around with his squad mates, picking off evildoers with an impressive array of firepower. You still rely on cover, blind-fire (to distract opponents), and peek-out (for the well-executed pinpoint precision shot). You also command a squad of highly trained operatives as you clear rooms and secure objectives.

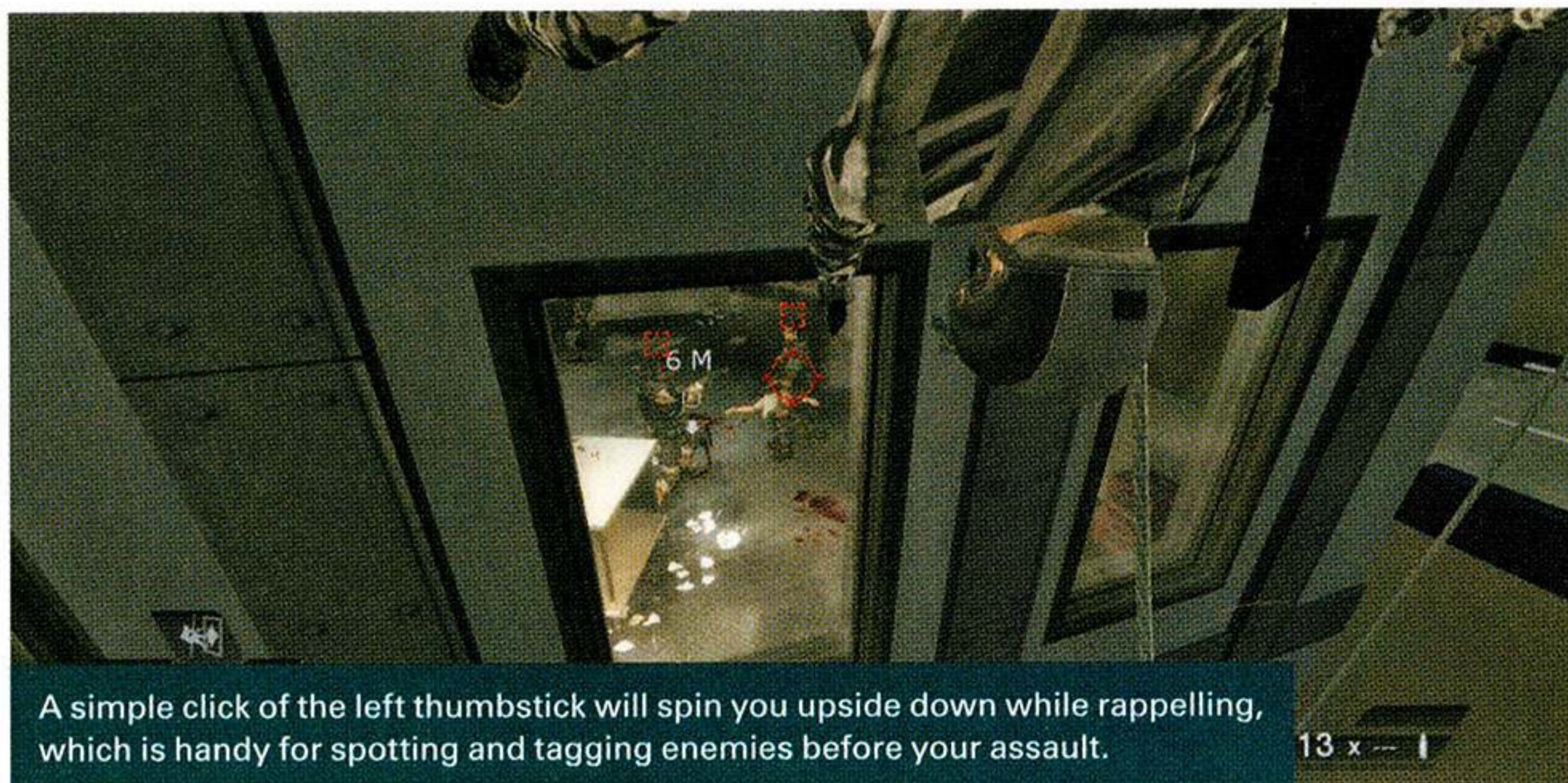
Thankfully, the controls, which were tight and intuitive in the first installment, haven't changed much. Controlling your own character is a breeze and commanding your two A.I. companions quickly becomes second nature. Center your

reticule on a patch of ground, an objective, or a closed door, and a simple button tap sends them on their context-sensitive way, ready to go loud or breach-and-clear at your urging. They're not perfect: sometimes they seem to think they're safely behind cover even as bullets streak into them by the dozen, and asking one to toss a grenade can be tantamount to suicide under most circumstances, but they pull their weight,

effectively follow orders, and only very rarely get stuck on corners or each other.

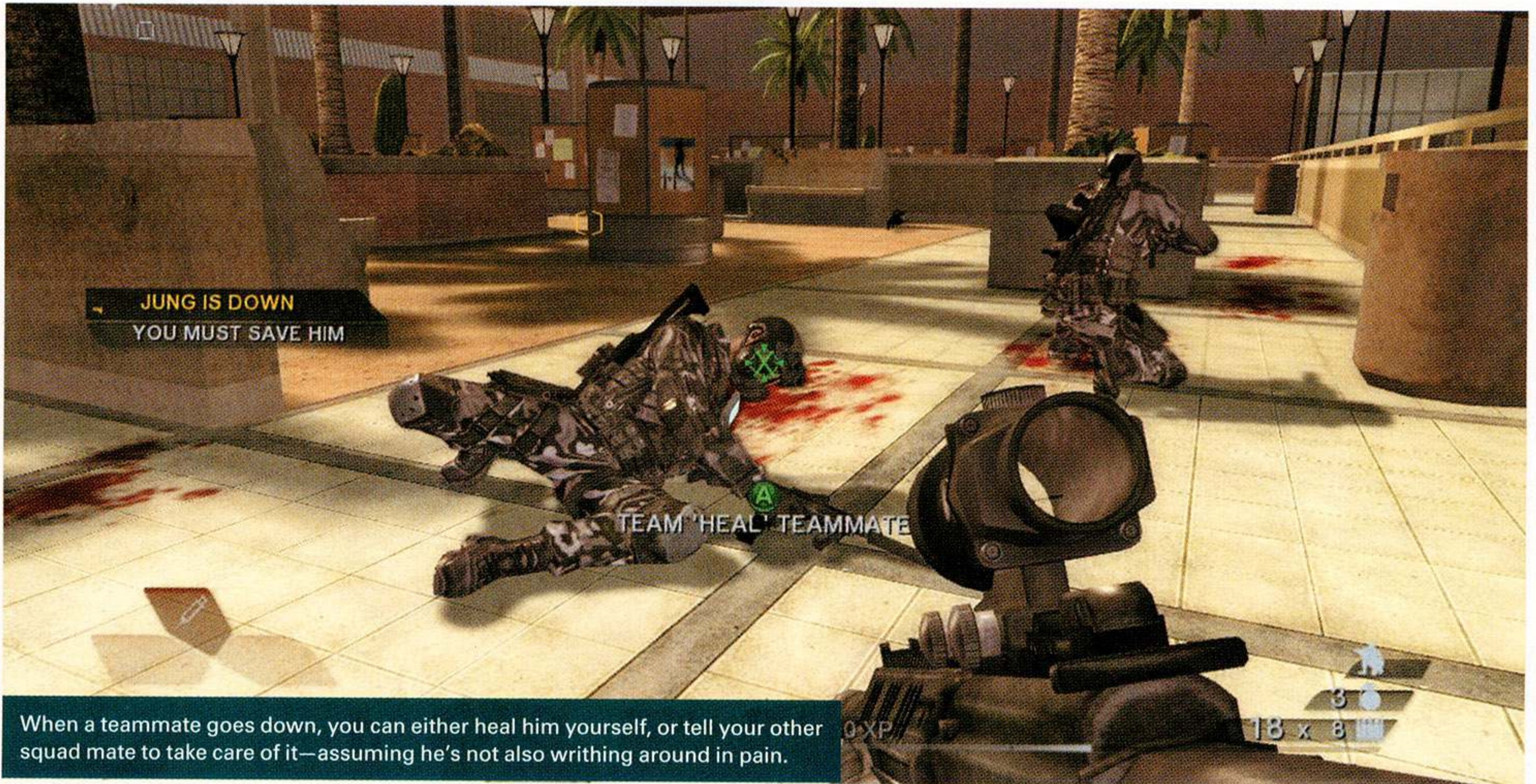
### BRIGHT LIGHTS, SIN CITY

Of course, the gameplay is only half of the equation here in Vegas 2; the rest is made up by the game's exciting and dynamic setting. From the saturated purples of a night club's decor to the themed booths of the convention center, Las Vegas

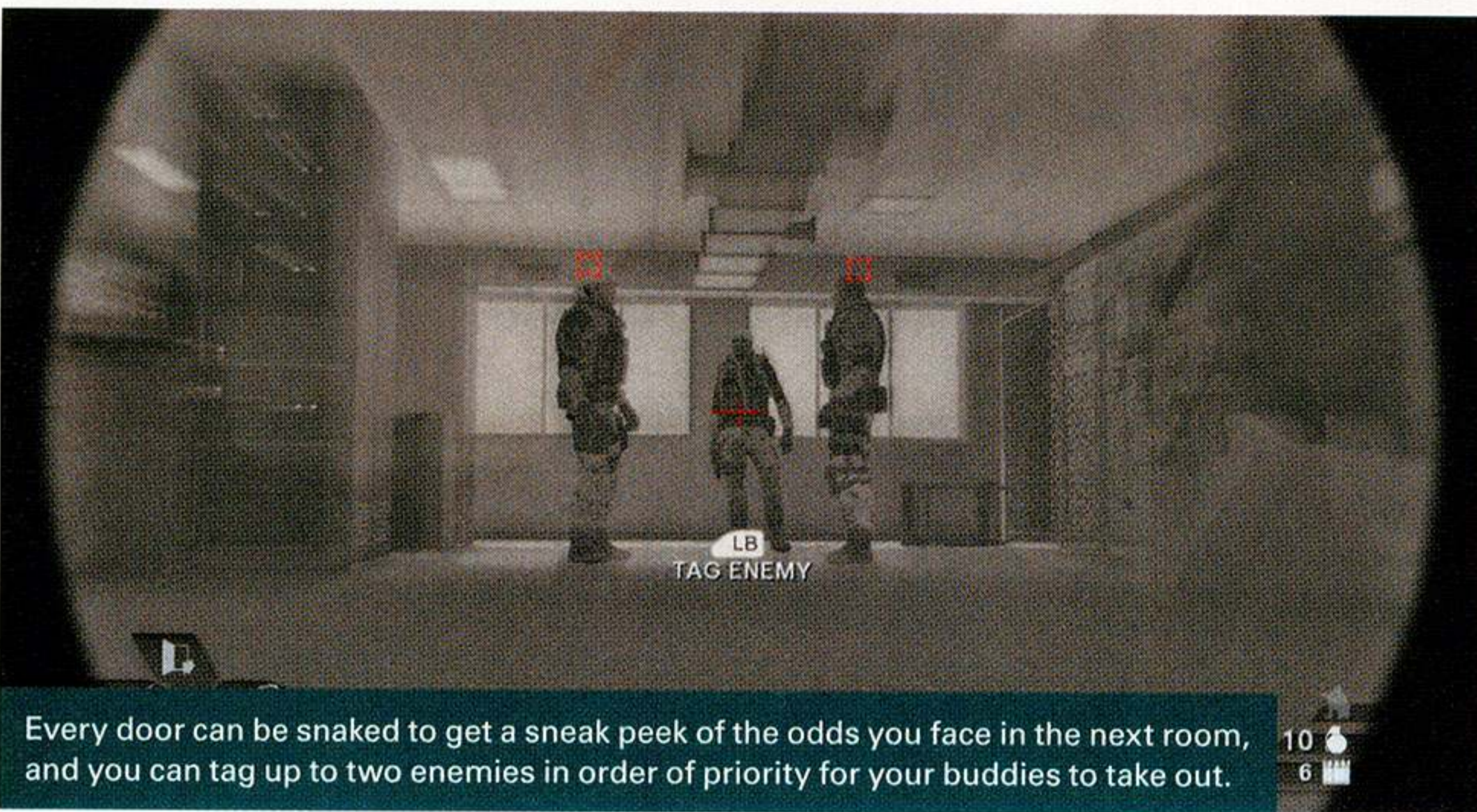


A simple click of the left thumbstick will spin you upside down while rappelling, which is handy for spotting and tagging enemies before your assault.





When a teammate goes down, you can either heal him yourself, or tell your other squad mate to take care of it—assuming he's not also writhing around in pain.



Every door can be snaked to get a sneak peek of the odds you face in the next room, and you can tag up to two enemies in order of priority for your buddies to take out.

once again proves to be a rich and satisfying playground to explore. Unfortunately, the six main missions are still disjointed hops between discrete engagement zones, which dampens the impact of the overall world. The game also relies heavily on cheesy, invisible script triggers that makes the world feel like a series of jack-in-the-box showdowns, but such complaints are softened by an increased quantity of assault points—doors, skylights, bay windows, etc.—that allows for more tactical creativity.

Recruit a human compatriot for co-op, and this tactical flexibility makes each detailed environment a joy to play through multiple times. Sadly, only two players can take on the main campaign and only the host can command A.I. squad mates, but players can enter and exit at will without interrupting their friends' progress. The game could have also used more checkpoints so that players who don't survive firefights aren't needlessly punished. Thankfully, however, elements from the main story are present even when you head online and every narrow victory and harrowing defeat is more meaningful and memorable as a shared combat experience.

## GUNS AND AMMO

Vegas 2 adds another potent layer to its already solid replayability with an engaging reward system that bestows experience points whether you're ventilating some trash-talker online, or carving a path through 12 flawed terrorist hunt levels that support up to four co-op players even as they spawn terrorists out of thin air. As you make your way through 22 ranks, from Recruit to Sergeant to Elite, you'll unlock wearable equipment, from simple balaclavas and helmets to brawny assault armor. You'll have to be careful how you dress, though, since improved protection means decreased mobility.

What's more, kills can also count toward A.C.E.S. rewards, specific to 20 levels worth of three distinct combat disciplines: Marksman, Close Quarters, and Assault. Score a head shot, kill an opponent from behind, or wax a fool through cover, for example, and you'll rack up points in the appropriate category and earn powerful new weapons. Both progression systems are padded to a certain extent. Every other level of each A.C.E.S. bestows experience points instead of gear, and too

many hard-won ranks give you nothing but new camouflage patterns. Still, there's no denying the addictive pull of working to earn an AK-47 or a particularly slick, customizable sniper rifle.

## MAKING THE GRADE

Unfortunately, the encyclopedic array of firepower can only add so much to a predictable collection of competitive multiplayer modes. Whether you're hunting a team leader, securing satellite dishes, planting bombs, or just tearing around in deathmatch with 15 other people, only the stylish scenery differentiates the experience from equally effective variations found elsewhere. Many of the map designs are remarkably well-tuned, forcing almost constant movement just to survive, but what this series urgently needs to stand out in this particularly crowded field is an inventive new mode.

When you come right down to it, though, Rainbow Six Vegas 2 succeeds thanks to its amazing co-op, carefully balanced gameplay and memorable setting. Sure, there are some aggravating scripting and design issues present but much like the city it's set in, Vegas 2's pleasure outweighs the pain.—Cameron Lewis

9DN7

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## FUN FACTOR

4.00

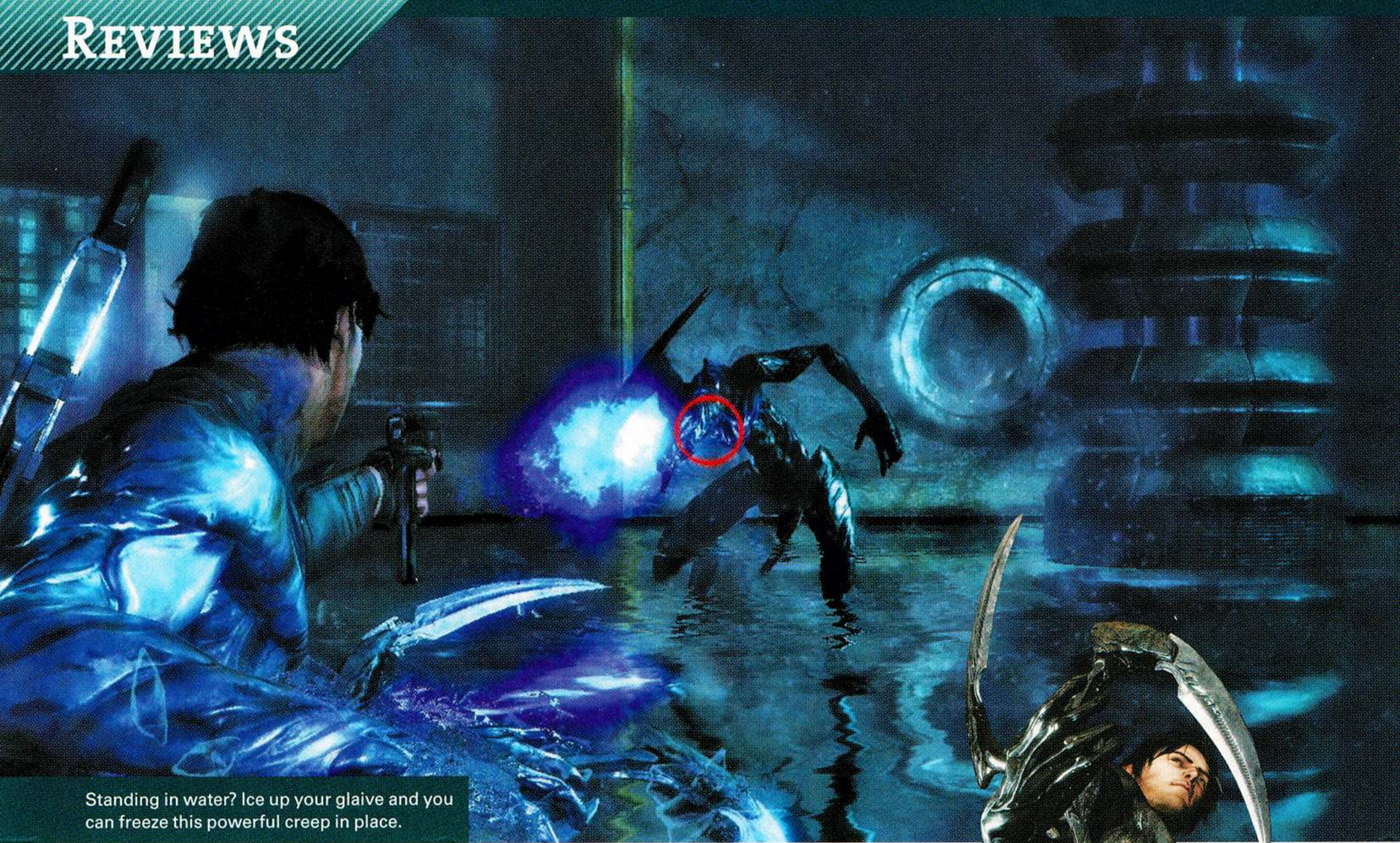
OUT OF 5.00



**PROS:** Solid control; increased tactical options; challenging co-op; addictive and satisfying.

**CONS:** Checkpoint placement; obvious script triggers; main campaign only supports two players.





Standing in water? Ice up your glaive and you can freeze this powerful creep in place.

## DARK SECTOR

There's a light at the end of the tunnels, but this hero can't quite find his way to it.



■ Developer: Digital Extremes ■ Publisher: D3 Publisher

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

The best covert operatives exploit every advantage they can find, and Hayden Tenno, the star of *Dark Sector*, has got a few unique tricks up his form-fitting sleeves. Unfortunately, he also spends a fair amount of time fumbling around in the dark.

### ALL TOO HUMAN

Hayden's adventures as a government operative are already underway when we join him at a dreary prison hidden away in Lasria, a dismal corner of the former Soviet Union. Although his immediate objective is a routine assassination, he soon stumbles upon a larger plot that will require all of his skills to overcome. Okay, so it's not exactly the stuff of sci-fi legend but *Dark Sector's* narrative more or less succeeds in getting the job done.

The same can't be said for the dodgy controls, which are serviceable, but far from perfect. For



example, my character would sometimes somersault into enemy fire instead of taking cover like I wanted him to, and keeping the poor guy alive meant resorting to frequent and frantic acrobatics. Luckily, Hayden's repertoire of abilities starts expanding and helps you to forget about the fluky control scheme.

### ULTIMATE FRISBEE

Most of these abilities are tied to the glaive, a triple-edged, disc-of-death nightmare that eviscerates, decapitates, amputates, and bisects anything in its flight path. The common experience of firing bullets can't compare with the savage catharsis of carving opposing forces up with your glaive. You can also temporarily coat its metallic surface with three elemental powers—fire, ice and electricity—which also serve as the basis for some simple puzzle-solving: put out fires to access certain areas, freeze dripping water into impromptu cover, or slip your newly charged glaive through a gap in a fence and guide it to a circuit box with slow-motion, after-touch flight controls.

As cool as these ideas are, they're held back by level designs that don't take full advantage of your abilities. With a few exceptions, *Dark Sector* is a long sequence of corridors, rooms, and plazas featuring nearly identical encounters with utterly predictable enemies. The glaive is one of the coolest weapons I've seen in a long time, but combat feels more like an assembly line than an organ-

ically evolving battlefield. Even more interesting variants like Heavy Troopers and cloaking Chromas adhere to rigidly mechanical and easily exploitable behavior. The hardest battles, like those against helicopters or a Stalker elder, are challenging only because a single hit almost always means sudden death.

### KILL THE CARRIER

Add in a decent but wholly uninspired multiplayer mode and you have what amounts to a decent game whose considerable potential is squandered thanks to some iffy design decisions and inconsistent gameplay. The wonderfully adaptable glaive is cool enough that I'm left rooting for an improved sequel, and I'm hoping the designers learn some lessons from their interesting but ultimately flawed first attempt. —Cameron Lewis

### FUN FACTOR

3.50

OUT OF 5.00



**PROS:** Glaive weapon is cool; solid variety of powers and upgrade system.

**CONS:** Bland level design; one-hit deaths are cheap; enemy A.I. is too simplistic.





Scarlotti



Tearing right into the middle of a large group of enemies is a good way to get your expensive armor reduced to scrap metal.

# IRON MAN

Marvel's metal man is flying high again, but his quality control department has some explaining to do.

Xbox 360 ESRB: T

Developer: Secret Level Publisher: Sega

After he's kidnapped by the same sorts of goons he used to sell weapons to, industrialist Tony Stark dons the mantle of Iron Man and embarks on a quest to destroy his former customers. Too bad this righteous turnaround is just a prelude to a repetitive assembly line of unspectacular destruction.

## BATTLE FATIGUE

You'd think stepping into a powerful suit of futuristic armor would have translated into a thrilling video-game experience. Who wouldn't want to hover in mid-air using blast jets, disperse guided missiles with a flick of a hand, or peel the top off a tank like you're popping a can of soda? Iron Man might not be a mutant or an alien, but he's still undeniably dangerous.

And while the combat in Iron Man has its moments, the execution leaves much to be desired. You engage in some awesome feats—catching and hurling a missile back at whoever fired it, for example—but the vast majority of combat is spent endlessly blasting through brainless A.I. who rarely do more than sit in place and unload ammunition in your general direction. Even the bosses, who prove to be rather anticlimactic opponents, rely more on brute force and overwhelming firepower rather than intelligent tactics and cunning skill.

## MISPLACED PRIORITIES

The level design is also surprisingly dull, with vast landscapes that have little character or depth. There are entertaining optional "hero objectives" like stopping missile launches or downing jets sprinkled throughout the levels but I'd gladly trade it all away for something that actually affected the gameplay in a positive fashion, like an upgrade system that didn't force you to horde credits just to buy some lame suit or weapon improvement.

The game also features a terrible difficulty curve. Imagining being forced to restart a mission because some super-cannon one-shot kills you through an obstacle. Or how about los-

ing all of your lives in rapid succession because your suit's lock-on targeting refuses to target the rapidly regenerating blaster that's defending the submarine you're attacking? Any way you cut it, it's just not worth the aggravation to play through what is just another botched licensed movie game. —Cameron Lewis



## FUN FACTOR

2.25

OUT OF 5.00



**PROS:** Large, open environments filled with targets and objectives; suits look nice; decent explosions.

**CONS:** Repetitive; poor difficulty balancing; brain-dead enemies; upgrade system is broken.



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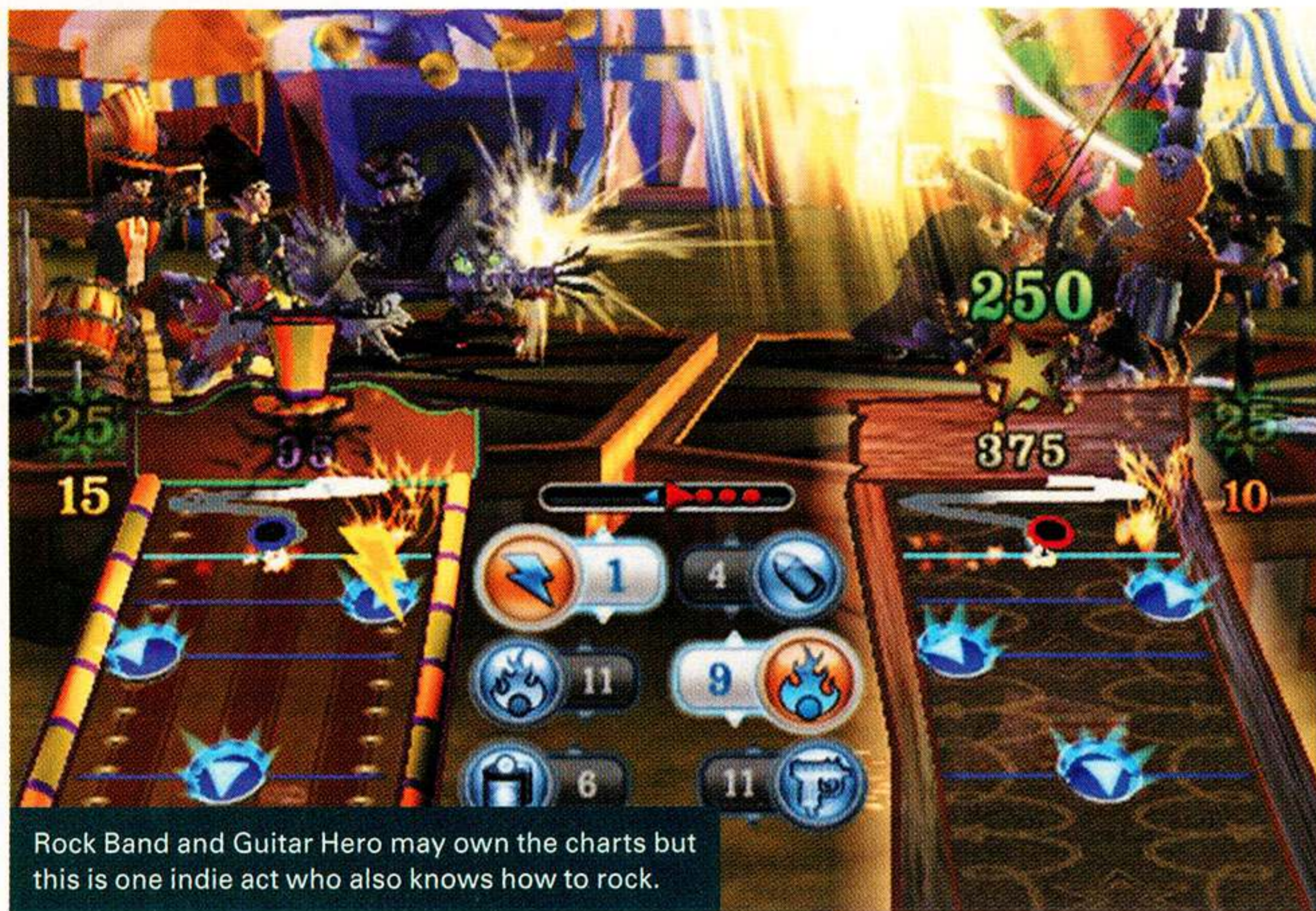
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# BATTLE OF THE BANDS

Wii ESRB: T

Developer: Planet Moon Studios Publisher: THQ



Rock Band and Guitar Hero may own the charts but this is one indie act who also knows how to rock.

You have to hand it to developer Planet Moon Studios: instead of trying to compete directly with the insanely popular Rock Band and Guitar Hero franchises, they wisely chose to side-step the competition by offering up a rhythm game experience that's unique and different. Although it won't make you want to give up your fake drums and guitars, Battle of the Bands is a charming title that's definitely worth "listening" to.

## BANDING TOGETHER

Battle of the Bands focuses less on replicating an authentic musical experience and more on offering you a solid rhythm game. You control the game entirely with the Wii Remote and as notes scroll along a familiar looking fret board, you move the Wii Remote in one of six ways to the rhythm: down, left, right, thrust, small squiggle (rapidly moving the Wii Remote side to side), and large squiggle (same as the small squiggle but bigger). As you chain moves together, you can unleash one of three attacks, which you can cycle through on the fly using the A button, to harry your opponent. These run the gamut from simple electric attacks to a devious smokescreen that obscures their playing field for a few seconds. You can also activate a shield with the B button, which lets you deflect your opponent's attack.

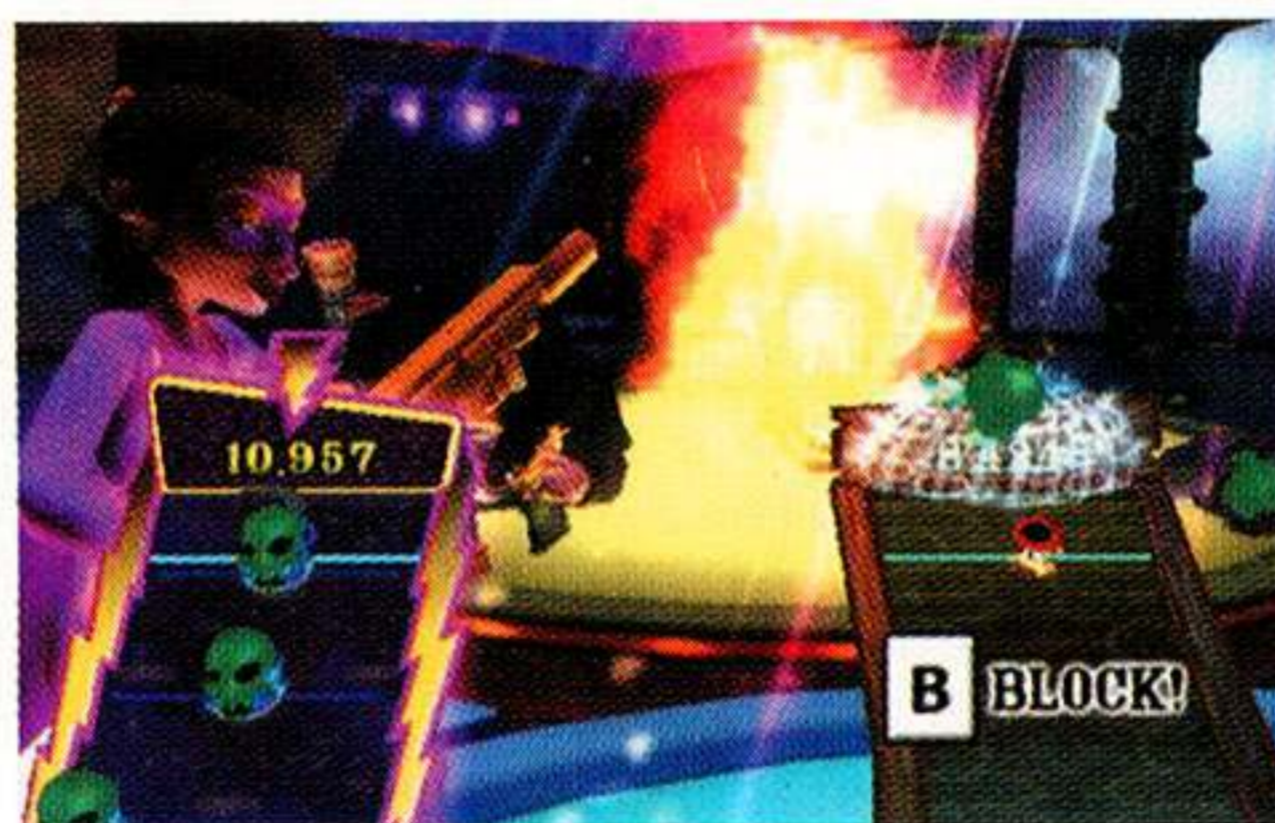
## SWEET, SWEET VICTORY

Scoring successful attacks also sways the style of the music in your favor during the battles. Say, for instance, that you're playing as a goth band (there are 11 bands and five musical styles in total): as you gain the upper hand, the song will change to reflect your sinister style. If your opponents score enough hits, they grab control of the music. It adds an interesting layer to the gameplay and it helps that the varied interpretations are amusing and expertly performed—my favorite was the marching band version of Cyprus Hill's "Insane in the Brain."

Just be warned that the controls are a little fickle and require you to be pretty flagrant with your motions, so prepare to suffer through some sore wrists. The graphics are also just passable, serving as mere backdrop and nothing more; the same can be said for the game's rather forgettable story line.

## WE GOT THE BEAT

I have to admit that I was initially skeptical of Battle of the Bands. But after playing through it, I'm convinced that it can find its own niche. It's a fun little title that will prove especially pleasing to those who can't wrap their heads around Rock Band or Guitar Hero. It doesn't have the addictive staying power of those two heavyweight franchises, but it's an accessible rhythm game that's perfect for the casual gamer and younger rock-god wannabes alike.—Tae K. Kim



## FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00

**PROS:** Interesting take on the rhythm game genre; stylistic renditions of songs are awesome.

**CONS:** Not as deep or addictive as Rock Band or Guitar Hero; graphics and story are forgettable.

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The GDI are going to have to bring more firepower if they hope to take down this well-defended NOD base.

# COMMAND & CONQUER 3: KANE'S WRATH



The Tiberium Wars might be over but the battle's just begun.

PC ESRB: T

Developer: EA LA Publisher: EA Games

**C**ommand & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars was, without a doubt, one of the best "old-school" real-time strategy games to be released in years. It helped reestablish the franchise as an RTS power-house and sold well to boot, so it's no surprise that we're now being treated to an expansion pack. Entitled Kane's Wrath, this NOD-themed expansion is the best add-on we've seen so far for a C&C game.

## SAY GOOD NIGHT TO THE BAD GUY

Kane's Wrath centers squarely on the NOD faction (the "bad guys") and their enigmatic leader, Kane. Rather than picking up after the conclusion of Tiberium Wars, the main campaign jumps back in time a bit and fills in some holes in the NOD's rather tumultuous history. The narrative is just a part of the overall equation but it has a sense of depth to it, thanks mostly to the campy yet well-crafted full-motion video sequences sprinkled throughout the game.

Gameplay-wise, Kane's Wrath doesn't deviate from the basic C&C formula. You still harvest Tiberium, build up your base, commission units, and head out to punish your enemy. The sad news is that the NOD is the only faction that has a full campaign: fans of the other two factions will be left out in the cold. But the missions offer a lot

of thrills, with objectives that will be familiar for series vets—your main task is to do the bidding of your charismatic leader Kane. This mostly involves butting heads against the Global Defense Initiative (the "good guys") and the Scrin (the "mysterious aliens").

## GLOBAL DOMINATION

But don't think that Kane's Wrath is just a rehash of Tiberium Wars: the game features a new global conquest mode that really helps set it apart. Reminiscent of the classic board game Risk, this new mode sets all three factions loose on a Tiberium-stained planet and gives them a handful of starting bases. Players can then upgrade these bases in order to improve their defensive capabilities and to gain access to superweapons. These bases can also recruit strike forces, which are useful for constructing new bases and attacking enemy bases.

Victory is attained either by eliminating the two other factions completely off the map or by fulfilling a variety of side objectives—the GDI, for example, has to control a certain amount of the map and its cities while the Scrin need to construct a set number of towers. It's not a perfect system, but in contrast to some other recent games to attempt a global meta-campaign, Kane's Wrath does a good job, especially for an expansion pack.

## AT EASE, SOLDIER

There's no doubt that Command & Conquer 3: Kane's Wrath has some flaws, and unless you're a fan of the NOD, you'll probably feel a little cheated by the lack of a GDI or Scrin campaign. Still, Kane's Wrath is quite impressive nonetheless. It does exactly what a good expansion should: it follows closely in the footsteps of its parent title while also bringing something new to the table. It exhibits the same sense of polish and depth that made the original Tiberium Wars such a classic. RTS fans who can't get enough of the Command & Conquer universe should definitely check this one out.—**Andrew Dagley**

## FUN FACTOR

4.50

OUT OF 5.00



**PROS:** A great follow-up to an amazing RTS title; global meta-campaign is interesting and fun.

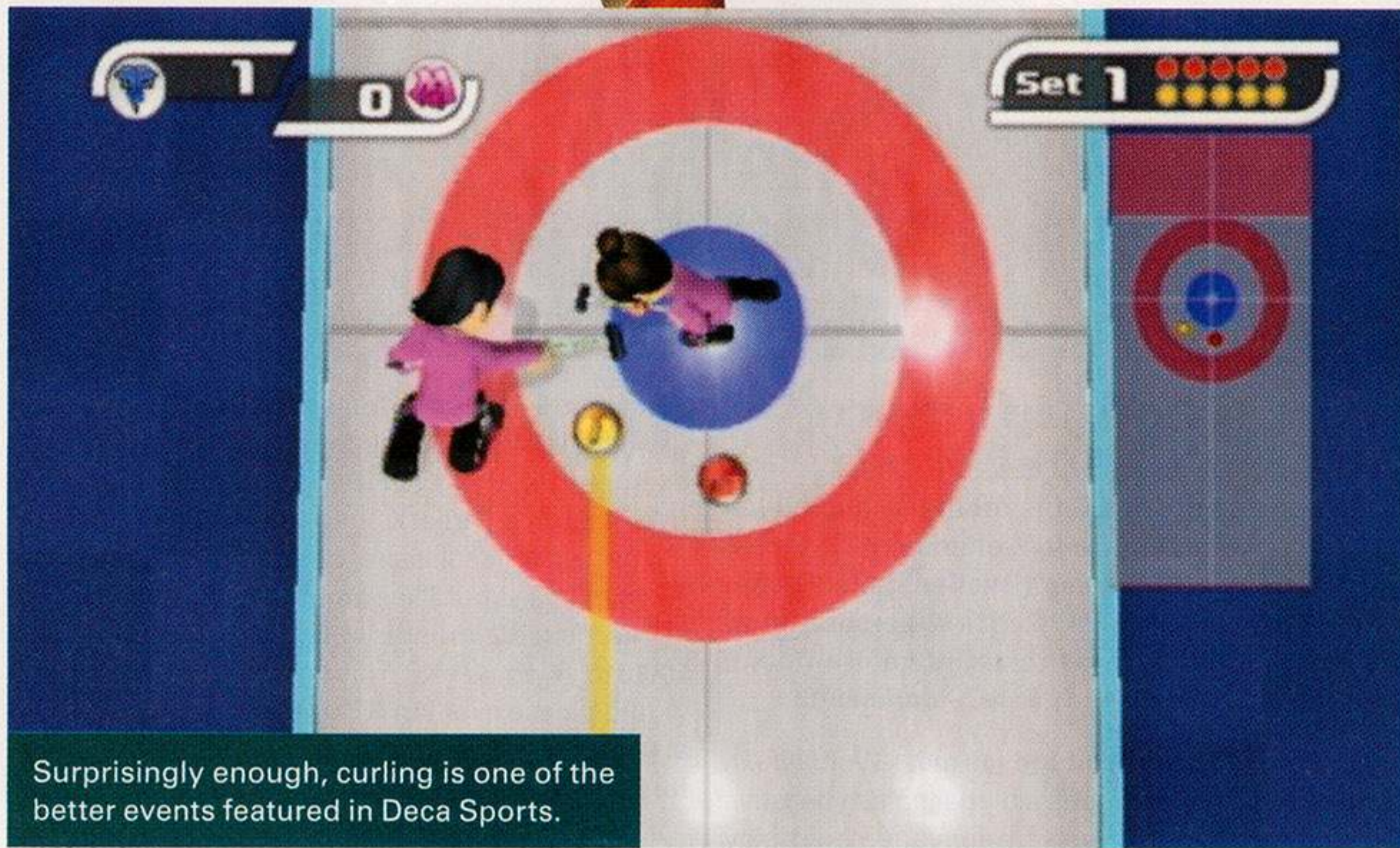
**CONS:** The main campaign focuses solely on one faction.



# DECA SPORTS

Wii ESRB: E

Developer and Publisher: Hudson Soft



Surprisingly enough, curling is one of the better events featured in Deca Sports.

Despite the fact that it's limited in terms of graphics and depth, *Wii Sports* still stands as the quintessential Wii title: it's fun, accessible, and addictive. Quite a few titles have tried to mimic its formula with varying degrees of success, but none have managed to recreate the magic of the original. *Deca Sports* comes close thanks to an intriguing mix of off-beat events but it won't make you forget about *Wii Sports* anytime soon.

## DECA(DENT)

The best part of *Deca Sports* is that it features some sports that you're probably not used to seeing in video games, the most interesting of which are curling, beach volleyball, figure skating and archery. Rounding out the roster is kart racing, snowboard cross, supercross, badminton, basketball, and soccer. All the events have a mini-game feel to them and can be played in short bursts. You can play them alone against the computer but really, the true fun of *Deca Sports* lies in competing with your friends.

Some of the events allow only two competitors while some allow up to four. The events are rather uneven in terms of fun—some are great (curling, figure skating), others are so-so (badminton, soccer), and some are just plain bad (kart racing, supercross). Still, I liked that the events offered such unique experiences; while I wish some of the mini-games were more polished and featured more depth, it was nice to have a wide range of events to choose from.

## STEP UP TO THE PODIUM

*Deca Sports* mimics the *Wii Sports* formula well—cutesy graphics, simple controls, unique gameplay—but it doesn't have the same charm and polish. I was disappointed about the lack of user-created Mii support; while there is a varied roster of playable characters, being able to use my own Mii would have been awesome.

In the end, *Deca Sports* isn't a great title but it is a fun diversion that's sure to go over well with the casual Wii owner. Hardcore gamers and those expecting the second coming of *Wii Sports* will probably be disappointed, but if you like to gather around the Wii with some friends for a few quick rounds of fun, then definitely consider adding *Deca Sports* to your library. At the least, it'll help make the wait for *Wii Sports 2* a little bit more bearable.—Tae K. Kim



## FUN FACTOR

3.50

OUT OF 5.00

**PROS:** Interesting mix of events; unique sports like curling and figure skating are interesting.

**CONS:** Not a whole lot of depth; probably won't appeal to hardcore gamers.

It's the first time in my life that I've felt like I actually fit in. Or at least I'm happy now that I don't. Truly **OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE** dedicated video **MANIAC**

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# ASK THE PROS

You ask, we answer.

### QUESTION OF THE MONTH



#### BREAKING IN

**Q:** How do I break into the gaming industry to get my grubby hands on preview game builds and to make a career out of it?—twan1212



**Tae K. Kim says:** There are few ways. You could work for a developer or a publisher, at which point you might be given access to early builds, depending on your position. Or you could work for a game magazine or press outlet. To prepare for a career in gaming, play a ton of games to build a comprehensive knowledge of the medium. Depending on what you want to do later in life, there are some skills you can build right now as well. Work on becoming a better writer if you want to go into game journalism (aka start a gaming blog). Work on becoming a better communicator; good interpersonal skills can be key and will come in handy down the line (i.e. talk to everyone you come in contact with). If you want to go into development, you can start learning computer programming, graphic design, or art, depending on where your interests and natural talents lie. Also, you could get an internship at a video game magazine or press outlet, you could become a game tester, or you could get a job in the industry in some way (head of janitorial services FTW!). Hope that helps. Good luck!

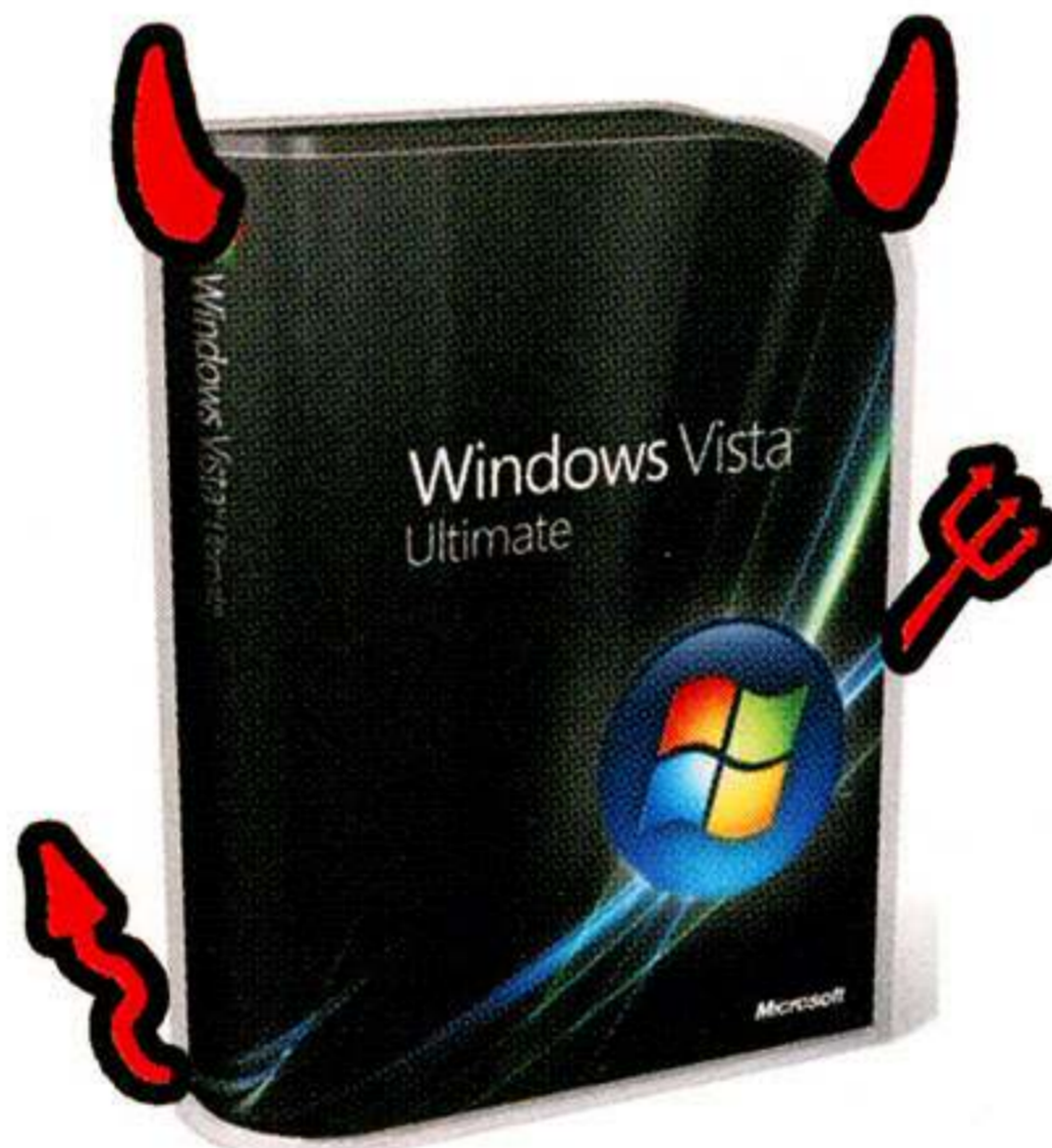
One does not simply walk into the game industry...



#### WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT: WOLFENSTEIN 3D OR DOOM?

**Q:** So I dug up my SNES the other day and pulled out my copies of Doom and Wolfenstein 3D, which got me thinking. Why isn't Wolfenstein 3D considered the game that started first-person shooters when, in fact, it was released before Doom, which is credited for the genre?—darksand3

**Mike Weigand says:** You are correct—Wolfenstein came first, but Doom made a bigger splash because the first levels were freeware (anyone could play them) that gave gamers a taste as to what the entire game was about. And practically everyone who played the freeware version loved it, and then paid for the full game.



#### MICROSOFT CRAMPING MY STYLE

**Q:** Is there no way to install DirectX 10 on Windows XP?—KiLL3ri

**Sid Shuman says:** Sorry friend. As part of an unfortunate push to get gamers to invest early in Windows Vista, Microsoft made DirectX 10 (and all its advanced graphical benefits) exclusive to Windows Vista. This kind of sucks, seeing as how Windows

Vista has occasional problems when running older games—Unreal Tournament 2004 is one oft-cited example. Is there anything stopping Microsoft from bringing DirectX 10 to Windows XP? Nope—it's not a technical issue, but a marketing one. But XP loyalists should keep a little faith. I believe that in the next 12 months, Microsoft may well port DX10 to Windows XP. This is pure conjecture, but it would please existing XP loyalists (many of whom are waiting a year or two for Vista to stabilize before taking the plunge).



#### AN "OLD GAMER"

**Q:** I am an "old gamer" who isn't good with traditional console controls. Am I correct to assume the Wii should be much easier for me to "work" than a PS3? Forget the basic bowling and tennis games, I am talking about games like Medal of Honor Heroes 2 and Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles. So is the Wii less complicated than the Xbox 360 or PS3?—hvarsov

**Tae K. Kim says:** It is true that some of the newer video game consoles can be intimidating to some people. Controllers these days are bristling with buttons and some games unnecessarily use them all. To answer your question, the Wii is easier to manipulate, especially for games that use only the Wii Remote. But

## GAMEPRO CHALLENGE

Describe the most original video game idea that needs to be developed



"You are a teacher. It's up to you to choose assignments and figure out ways to relate material to students. The 'boss' could be end-of-chapter exams, leading up to the final. Believe it or not, real teaching is very intense. Sure, some blow it off (like any job), but to truly be successful, you have to put in a ton of work."

—TheTeacher, Status: End Boss

"Awkward Boy. A simulation game where you play a starting freshman in high school and progress through life (kind of like Bully but with different paths). Maybe you decide you want to be a jock and you work out a lot. Or maybe you decide you want to be a regular dude. There's no limit to the options."

—rahra12, Status: GamePro All-Star

"You're the merchant from Resident Evil 4. He always pops up right after you fight hordes of zombies, but how did he make it through the same level you did without dying? I'm leaning more towards a stealth game."

—Trump89, Status: End Boss

Take the GamePro Challenge at [GamePro.com/community](http://GamePro.com/community)



# GAME GIRL



I'm thinking about getting my girlfriend a video game for her birthday because she likes to play but doesn't really care for the games I do. Are there any games I should avoid getting her that might turn her completely off to gaming?—KSoze



Britini\_Martini's Response:

I personally think that a girl can play and enjoy any game a guy can. It's all about preference and depends on how prissy the girl is. It's difficult for me to pick a game that a girl most likely wouldn't be interested in, but if your girlfriend is like me, she might not appreciate it if you bought her an overtly "girlie" game, so I'd stay away from getting her something like Imagine: Babyz which is insulting to female gamers. Just try to stick with something not too difficult for a novice gamer to jump right into and ideally pick something with some form of multiplayer support so you can play together.

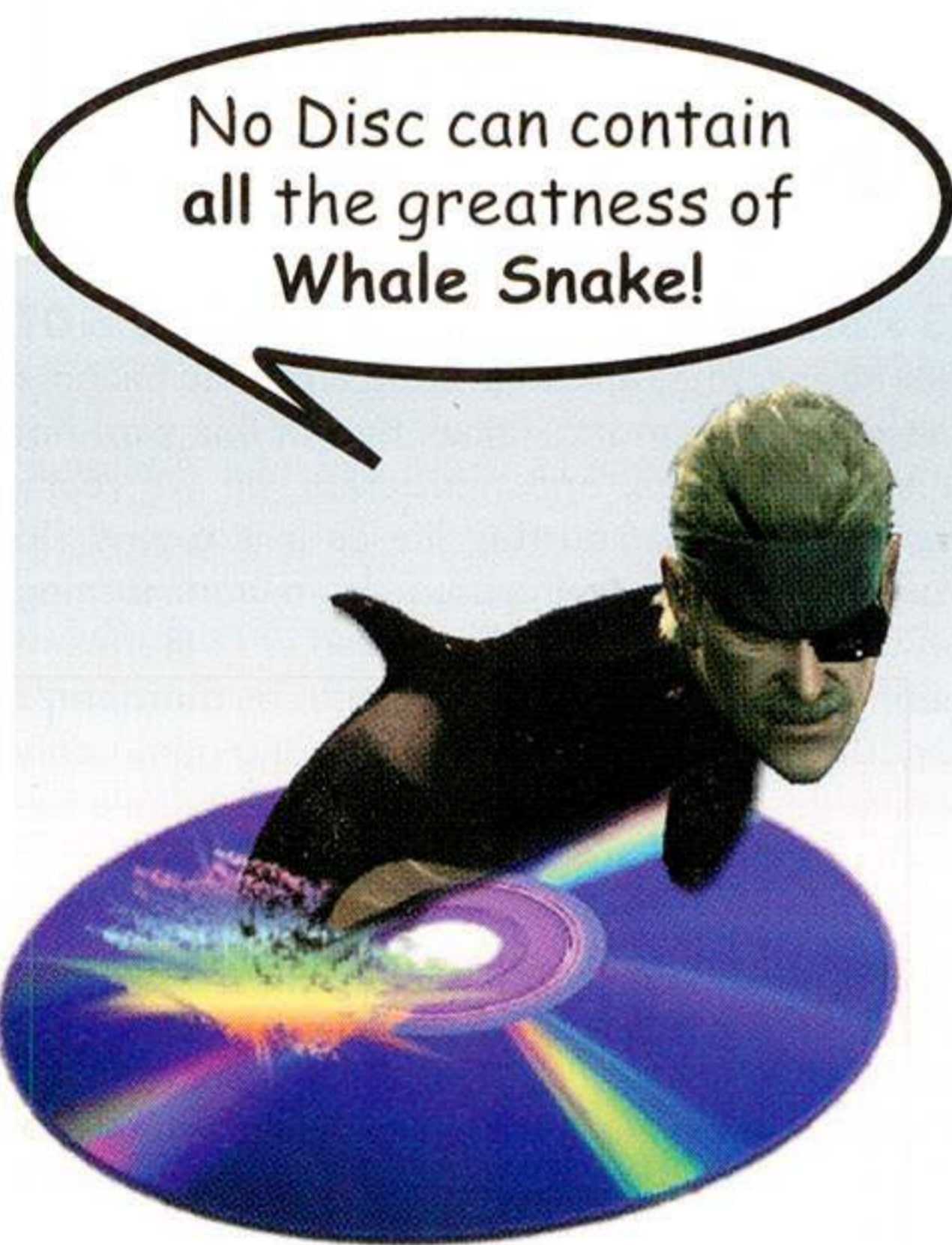
Send your questions to the Game Girls at [GameGirl.com](http://GameGirl.com)

even games that use the attachable Nunchuk are still more than manageable. That's not to say there aren't complicated Wii games, nor does it imply that the PS3 and Xbox 360 are devoid of accessible games. My advice would be to find someone who owns a Wii and try it for yourself. It really is a console that you have to try out first hand, then you can decide if it's right for you. And keep on gaming, "old timer;" the world needs more mature gamers.

## HOW MUCH STORAGE CAPACITY IS NEEDED FOR NEXT-GEN GAMES?

**Q: A while ago you posted a response to the question about needing Blu-ray for gaming. After seeing games like MotorStorm which took up 16GB of space and loose talk about Metal Gear Solid 4 filling up 50GB, has your opinion changed, or do you still feel that its not necessary?—Valcore**

**Chris Morell says:** I don't remember saying we don't need Blu-ray, but I probably said we're not ready for it yet. I still feel Blu-ray is not an absolute necessity for gaming at this current stage, though it will be within the next few years. There's no denying Xbox 360 DVD-9 games like Gears of War can produce huge, beautiful gaming experiences, but as technology becomes more advanced, the amount of data on discs will definitely increase. Hence, Blu-ray is a big plus for Sony developers (though consumers do suffer the higher price tag). What's interesting, though, is the extra disc space isn't just a benefit for graphics, but for other things like audio and physics. For a while, it seemed developers were making games for the sake of making them bigger, but now there's a distinct move back to quality over quantity. Regardless, making a highly interactive world takes up lots of space, so price aside, Blu-ray is a benefit to games, even if it's not used all the time.

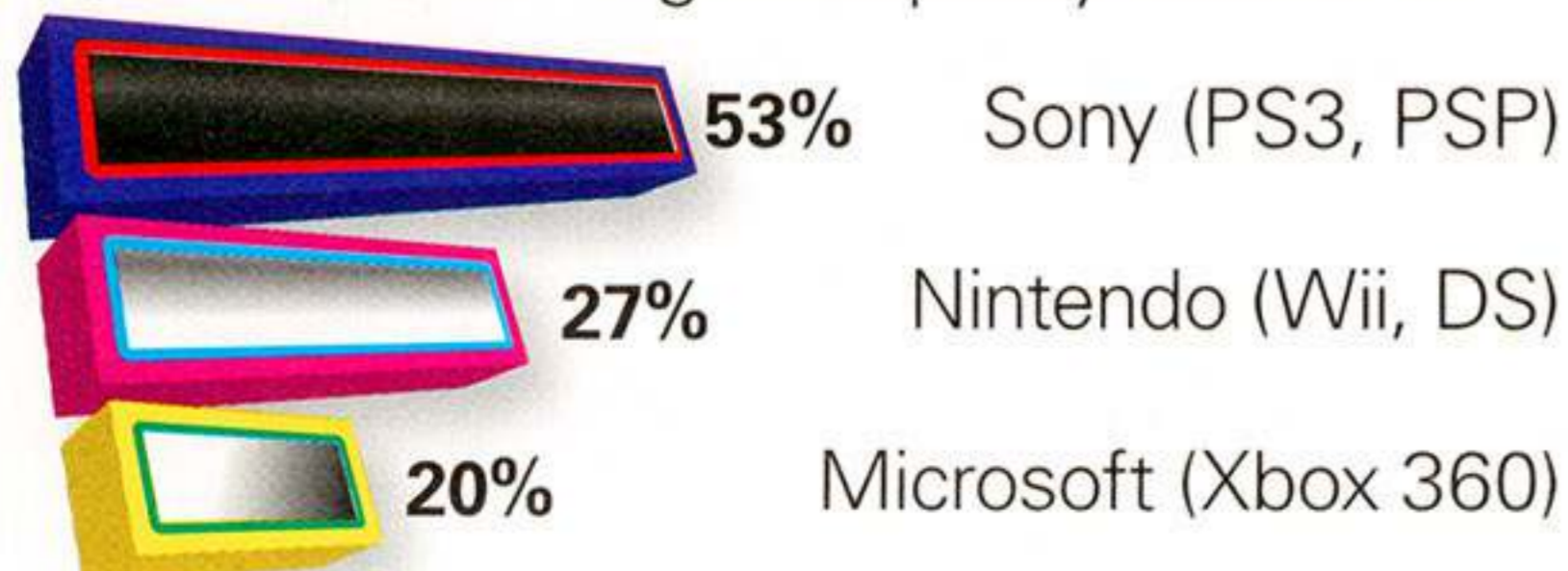


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## GAMEPRO POLL

Results as of April 1, 2008

Who makes the highest-quality software?



## AWESOME THREADS

Overheard on the [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com) message boards...

### Member of the Month



**Rezarecshun**  
Rank: GamePro Hall of Fame  
Sex: Male  
Age: 19  
Expertise: Being an enigma  
Hometown: Anytown, USA

"To dismember Sony as the only company that copies is asinine at best. Good ideas will always be emulated by everyone."

On Sony as a copycat.



**BeQuietandRead**  
Status: Playa

"Even though I love the PS3, I know in my heart that this prediction will never come true."

On an analyst's prediction that the PS3 will have sold more units than the Wii by 2011.



**ACEMANWISE**  
Status: End Boss

"I just read an article about Sony releasing too many models of the PlayStation 3. It confusing consumers about what to buy."

On too many PlayStation 3 models.



**skateboard34**  
Status: n00B

"Do you think World of Warcraft is better than Guild Wars?"

On Guild Wars or WoW.



**teh2Dgamer**  
Status: Hero

"GameProWorld.com was the very first website I ever visited when my school first got the Internet (yes kids, there was a period of time where schools didn't have Internet access, and my older siblings even went through typing classes that used typewriters)."

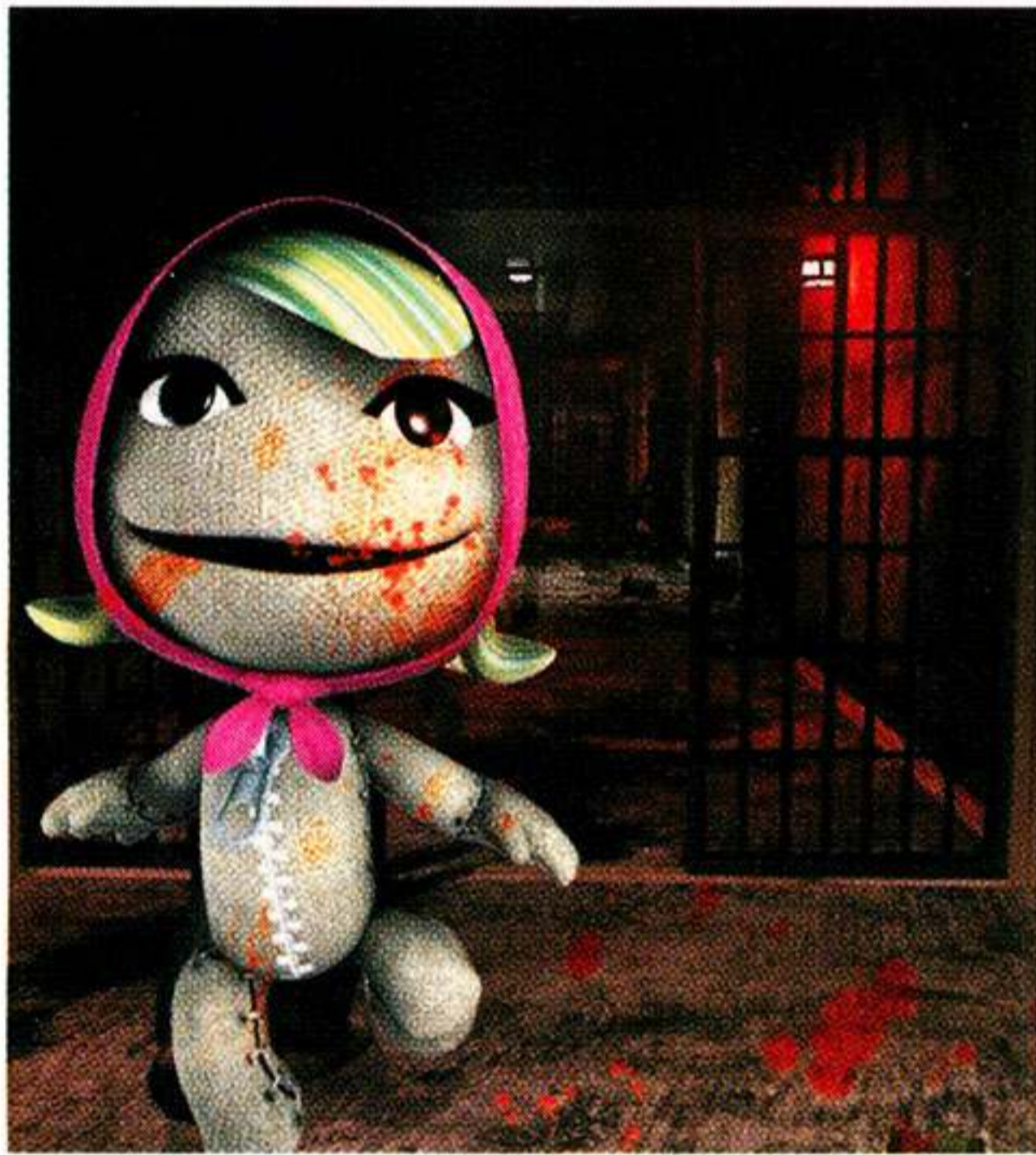
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# H2H

HEAD TO HEAD  
You write, we respond.



## “OMG WTF KIDDIE GAMES”

I hear this all the time on GamePro.com. The most recent was on the subject of LittleBigPlanet for PS3. So let me get this straight: Kiddie games always suck? If that's the case, then all Mature-rated games must be instant-fun. Perhaps Mario, Sonic, and The Legend of Zelda had hidden blood, because those were really good games. But Lair was Mature, and it sucked. So did Manhunt 2, which was super bloody. You're kidding yourself if you think content type dictates quality.

**ShortHairedOffender—Mayfield, KY**

## MISLEADING YOUR READERS

I don't mean to be a burden, but the April 2008 issue falsely advertised previews of BioShock 2 and Call of Duty 5. I got all excited to read new information, only to find little to no details. I am a moderate gamer, with barely any skill I might add, and when I see games that I like, I want to get the info. I did the same with Halo 3. But I have to admit that I was a little disappointed to find that you bluffed. I'm not mad, because BioShock and Call of Duty 5 are relatively new, but I'm confused. Why did you state they were there, but they weren't? Was it for kicks, attention grabbing, or was it a mistake? If those two games really are coming out, please tell; if they aren't, please don't bluff. I paid for the issues with my hard-earned money, and I don't appreciate being misled.

**Oliver Duenas—San Lorenzo, CA**

Sorry to disappoint, Oliver. It wasn't our intent to deceive. The good news is Call of Duty 5 is rumored to be released in late 2008, and BioShock 2, has recently been confirmed for release in late 2009. But as you said, new information is sparse at the moment for obvious reasons.

## LETTER OF THE MONTH CONTEST

### GUITAR HERO II XBOX 360 BUNDLE

The Letter of the Month winner will receive the Guitar Hero II bundle for the Xbox 360. Rock on!



### TOO COSTLY FOR ME

The way video games are headed, I don't think I will be playing them in the next generation because they are getting too darn expensive. \$60 a pop for Xbox 360 and PS3 games...even though some PC counterparts are often \$20 cheaper? C'mon! Although I currently play nine hours a day, someone's gonna have to start sending me free games to keep up with my favorite hobby.

**Tayson Smith—Via Internet**

We feel you, Tayson. But as we previously covered, the increased number of \$20-40 budget games (assuming you buy them from time to time) may neutralize the total effect on your wallet in light of \$60 games. If that doesn't work, you can always do it the old fashioned way—wait until a game goes on sale...just don't expect us to send you free loot on a regular basis.

Bling Bling!



### HOW MANY SEQUELS DO WE NEED?

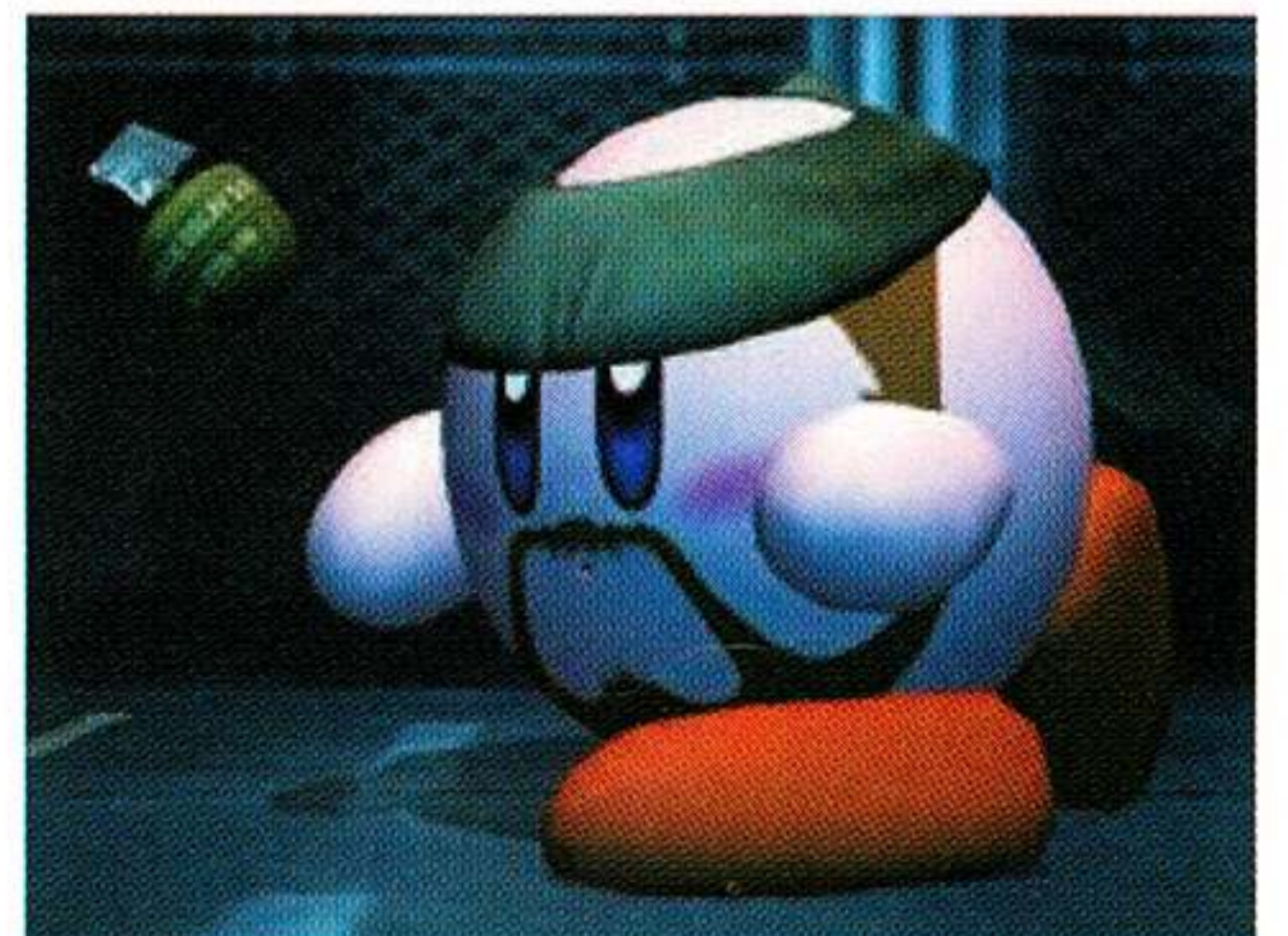
Looking at the cover of last month's issue makes me really sad. Fallout 3? Resident Evil 5?! Final Fantasy XIII?! There's nothing but sequels here, and most of these titles don't even need sequels. I mean, when it boils down, would you rather remember a game as "that's one really good game," or "that one game that spawned a bunch of crappy offshoots?" These sequels almost never capture the charm of the first game and are usually underdeveloped due to massive fans clamoring for its release. Do we really want to keep sponsoring a wave of sequels that make us forget the original? I don't mean to say all sequels are bad, but where are all the new innovative games? Why not give Portal, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed, or No More Heroes a cover story? Is this what gaming has come to?

**Jacob Gulliver—Minneapolis, MN**

### IS REALISM REALLY THE WAY TO GO?

Next-gen games are often sought after to become more realistic, more lifelike. But, in this world of thieves, burglars, and murderers, do we really want games that portray life as it is today? Do you really enjoy coming home from work, turning on the TV, only to be bombarded with stories of people getting robbed, assaulted, or murdered? If not, why would you pop in a video game only to see (or commit yourself) the same crimes being committed on your virtual streets? Games were supposed to be a departure from real life. A place of limitless imagination and wonder. A place where you could be a superhero fighting crime and saving people, a mad genius building an evil empire, or even God shaping the earth. I'm not against the GTA's of the world; I just don't want the elimination of enjoyable, unrealistic, fantasy games. Some of us actually want to escape the aggravation that real life often presents.

**Talen Guzman—Via Internet**





## IT'S THE GAMES, STUPID!

Xbox 360. PlayStation 3. Nintendo Wii. These are all very good consoles, each with unique pros and cons. But I think our society has forgotten the true meaning of gaming. Many people overlook the Wii just because it's not as graphically advanced as the PS3 or Xbox 360. But when you actually play the Wii, you find yourself having fun in a new way. Sadly, too many players judge games by their looks nowadays.

**Fernando Morales—Via Internet**

We're definitely at a video game crossroads right now—a place that has seemingly divided long-time gamers, publishers, and storytellers alike, and encourages new players to pick up a controller. Change can be a scary thing, but so long as we remember what got us here (read: really fun games, be they fantasy or realistic), I think we'll be all right. Game on!

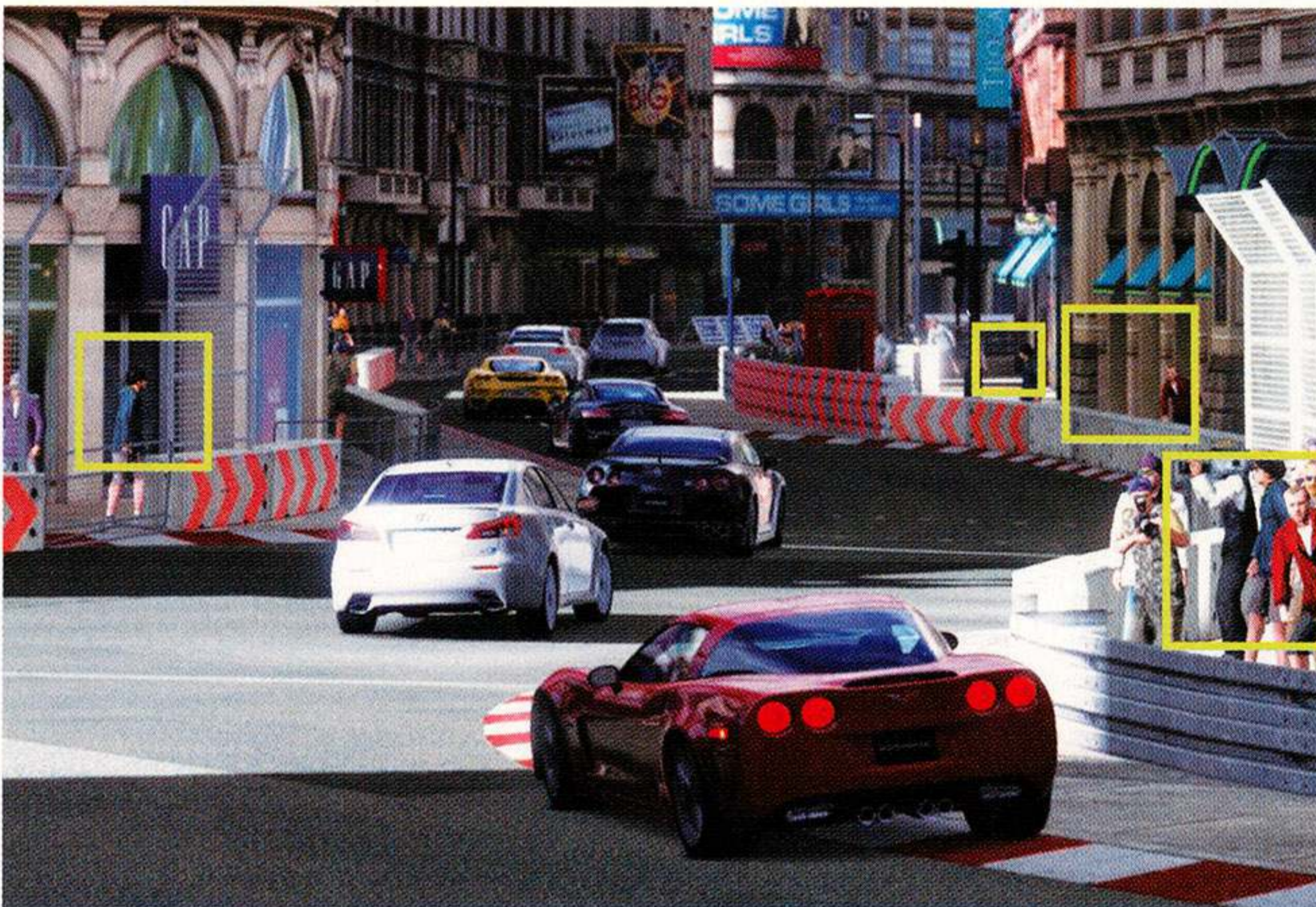
## THE PROBLEM WITH SOME GAMERS

I'm an all-around gamer. I enjoy different genres on multiple systems, including PCs. But there is one thing that has bothered me for a long time: I get called a nerd by fellow gamers for playing MMORPGs. I admit I'm a nerd because gaming is one of my only hobbies, but it's really annoying to get called a nerd by other gamers just because I play fantasy games and MMOs. Any serious gamer could be considered a nerd. So don't be hatin'!

**Blah Blob—Via Internet**

## LET'S CONNECT!

Got a question or comment? Write to us at: [letters@gamepro.com](mailto:letters@gamepro.com) or *GamePro*, Head2Head, 501 2nd St., Ste. 114, San Francisco, CA 94107. Be sure to tell us your city and state, too.



## WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

I've been a subscriber and big fan of your magazine since October. I love reading about all the cool games that are coming out, and I really like the Head 2 Head section. Unfortunately, almost every month there is at least one idiot who has no idea what he is talking about. Few of them have made me lose sleep, except for the guy who wrote March's "Seeing Red Over Wii." That dude has got to stop complaining! Instead of worrying about the cover, why not pay attention to the games? If *GamePro* is so partial, why not switch magazines?

**Jordan Robinette—Temecula, CA**

## SEEING DOUBLE

In the April 2008 issue, I noticed something wrong with the "Opening Shot" of *Gran Turismo 5*. There was a man in a red-buttoned shirt at the front of the picture, and in a different spot, the same guy wearing a blue shirt. Duplicates abound. If these games are supposed to have amazing life-like graphics, then why are the same people in the crowd over and over again?

**hockey2541—Via Internet**

Sony: you are so busted! Obviously, developers can only go so far in achieving realism in games. But give 'em time. I'm sure duplicates won't "disrupt" gameplay for too much longer (sigh).

# ART ATTACK!

*This month's winner receives*

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- Nerdcore (?) Anime Style The King of Kong
- A Fistful of Quarters Movie Review
- Jack Thompson's Cool? No Effing Way....

**OMG Nintendo**

- Nintendo Shares Fall 10%..
- Disney "Magic Connection" DS

**Gran Turismo 5**



Sony on Tuesday said the precursor to Gran Turismo 5 will be available on Blu-ray and as a download from the PlayStation Store.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- Video Game News**
- Nintendo reveals its top selling Wii, DS games
  - Gran Turismo 5 Prologue coming April 17 to PS3
  - Guinness World Records: Gamer's Edition comes Mar. 11
  - Rumors suggest new 120GB, DualShock 3 PS3; Sony declines comment
  - Nintendo to introduce Virtual Console demos on Wii
  - In stores this week: Turok, Bomberman Land

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# NEXT MONTH: HALO WARS



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PARTING SHOT

“BRAINS.”

# LEFT 4 DEAD

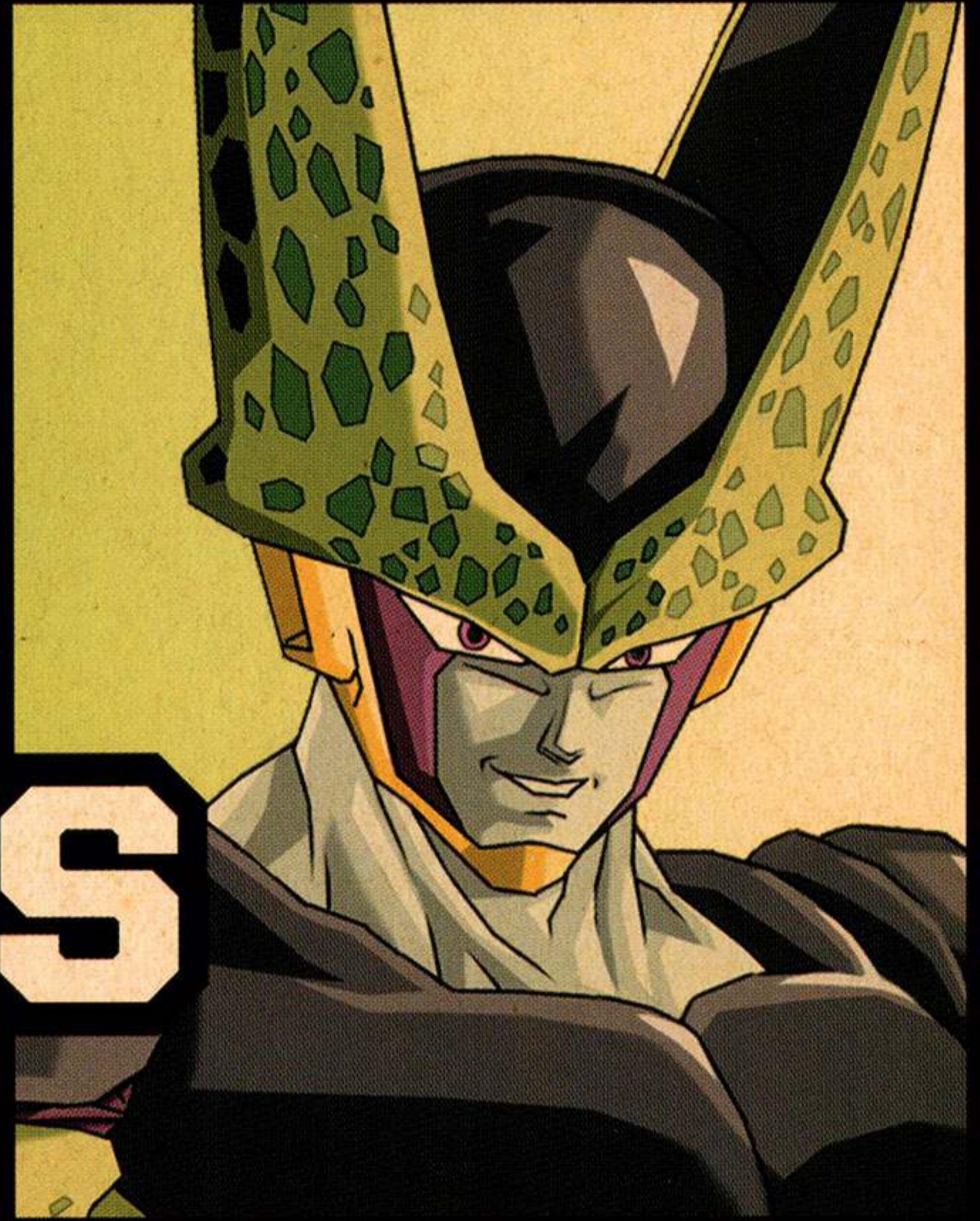
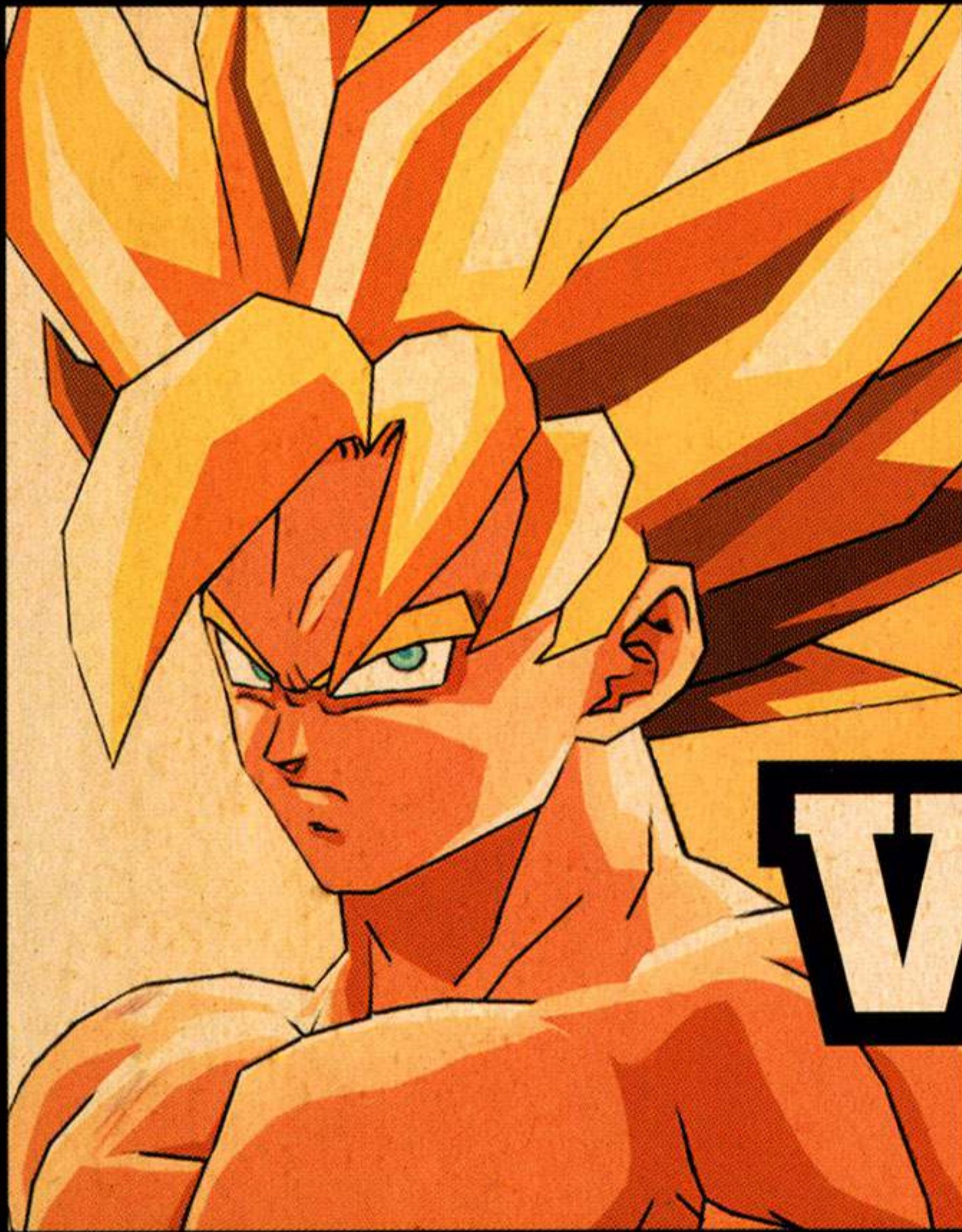
XBOX 360, PC

According to Turtle Rock founder Michael Booth, Left 4 Dead's A.I. director that manages the endless horde of Infected zombies procedurally generates controlled waves of Infected based on player's skill level, game pace, and drama. The A.I. is so intelligent that Booth is confident players won't be able to tell the difference between zombie bots and the player-controlled zombie bosses.





KAMEHAMEHAMEH!



VS

DESTINY WILL BE DECIDED  
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PLAYSTATION 3



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