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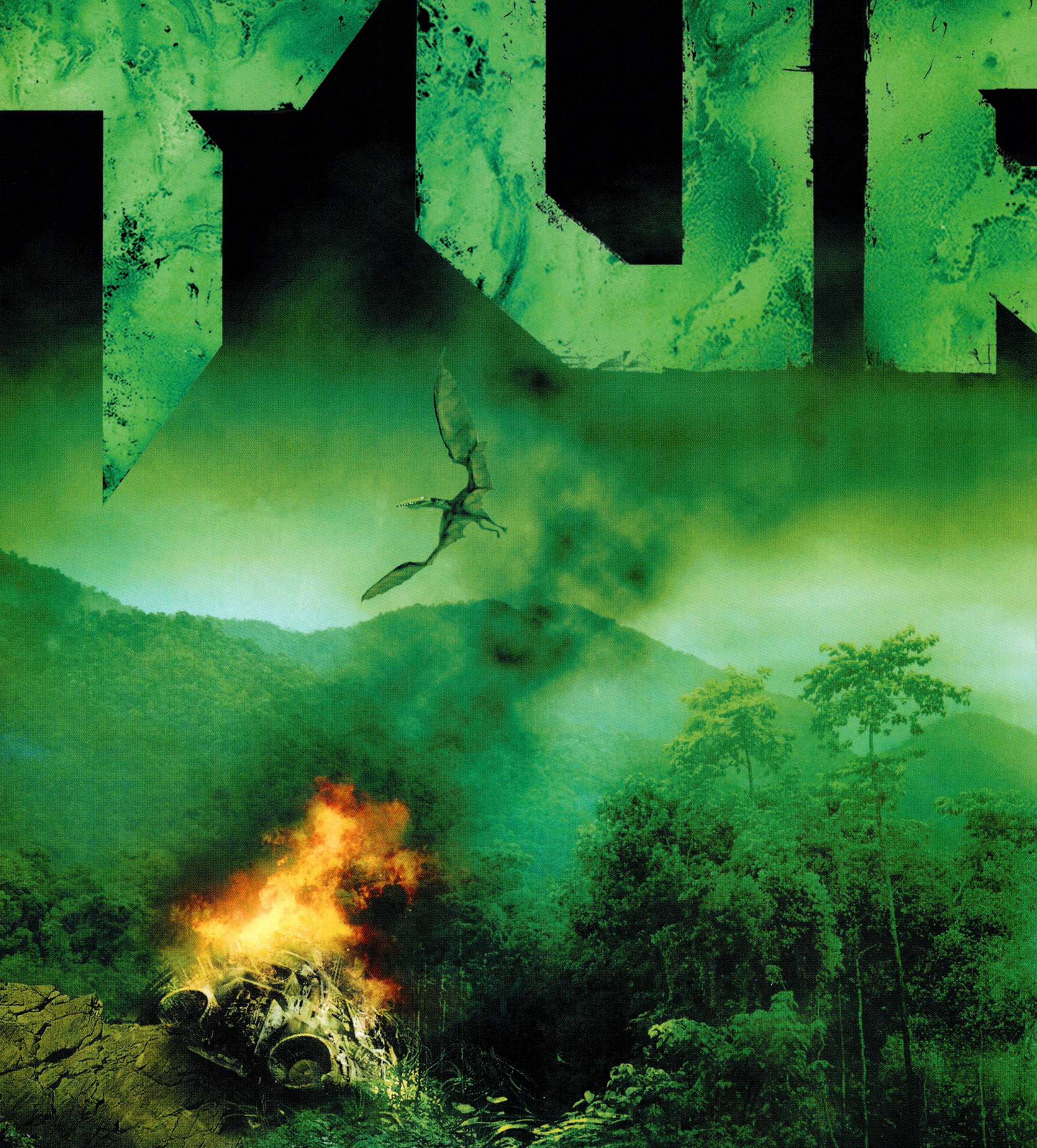
Issue 233 / FEB 08

ZOMG SCOOPS!!

TEKKEN 6 VS. SOUL CALIBUR IV



BORDERLANDS: 500,000 WEAPONS?!



PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360 LIVE

MATURE 17+

M Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Language

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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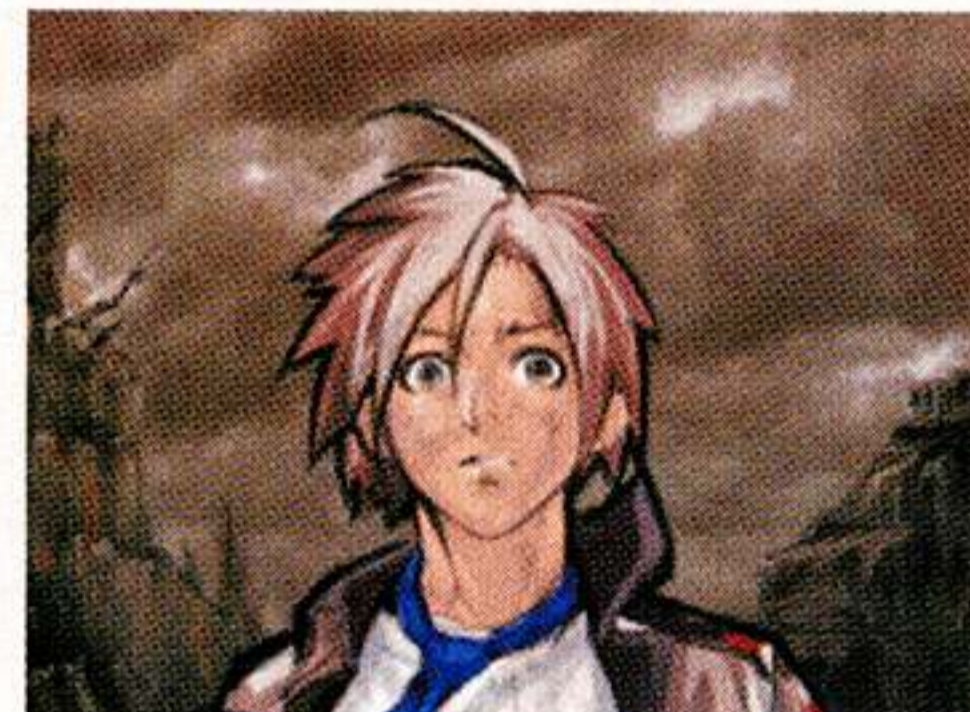
 
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HUNTING SEASON OPENS 2.05.08

ADVANCE WARS

DAYS OF RUIN



"FEATURES LIKE WI-FI PLAY WITH VOICE CHAT, AND MAP CREATION AND SHARING REMAKE THE TITLE WHILE KEEPING ITS ADDICTIVE STRATEGY GAMEPLAY."

- JOYSTIQ.COM

"ADVANCE WARS: DAYS OF RUIN LOOKS TO BE THE MOST EXCITING ENTRY IN THE SERIES SINCE ITS INTRODUCTION. ANY FANS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS SHOULD FIND AN INCREDIBLE NEW DEPTH WITH THE TITLE, AS WELL AS THE MATURITY THAT A GAME ABOUT WAR SHOULD HAVE."

- UGO.COM

"IT MAY BE A BIG CHANGE, BUT ADVANCE WARS: DAYS OF RUIN IS A WELCOME ADDITION TO THE SERIES AND ONE THAT SHOULD BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO THE GAME."

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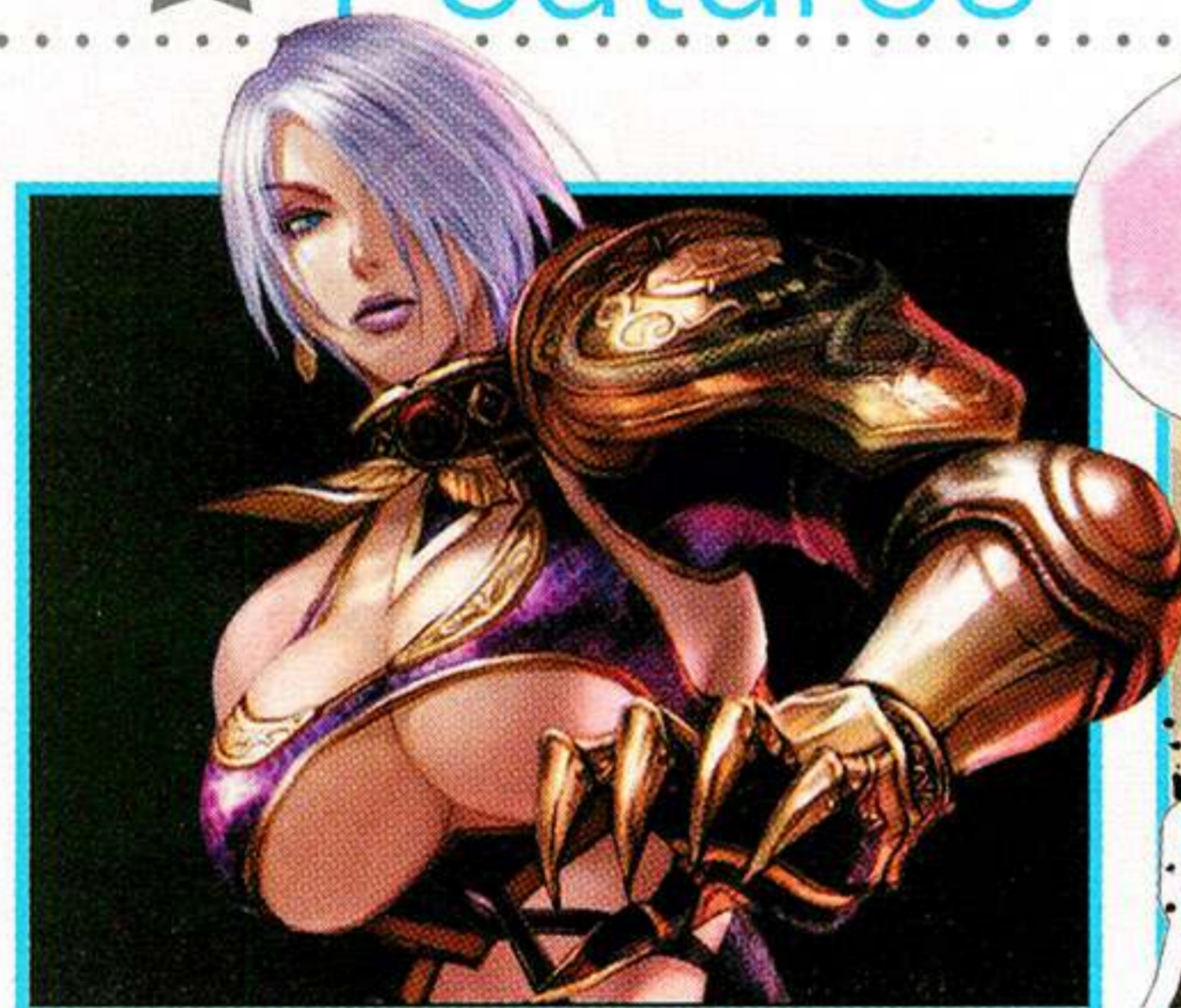
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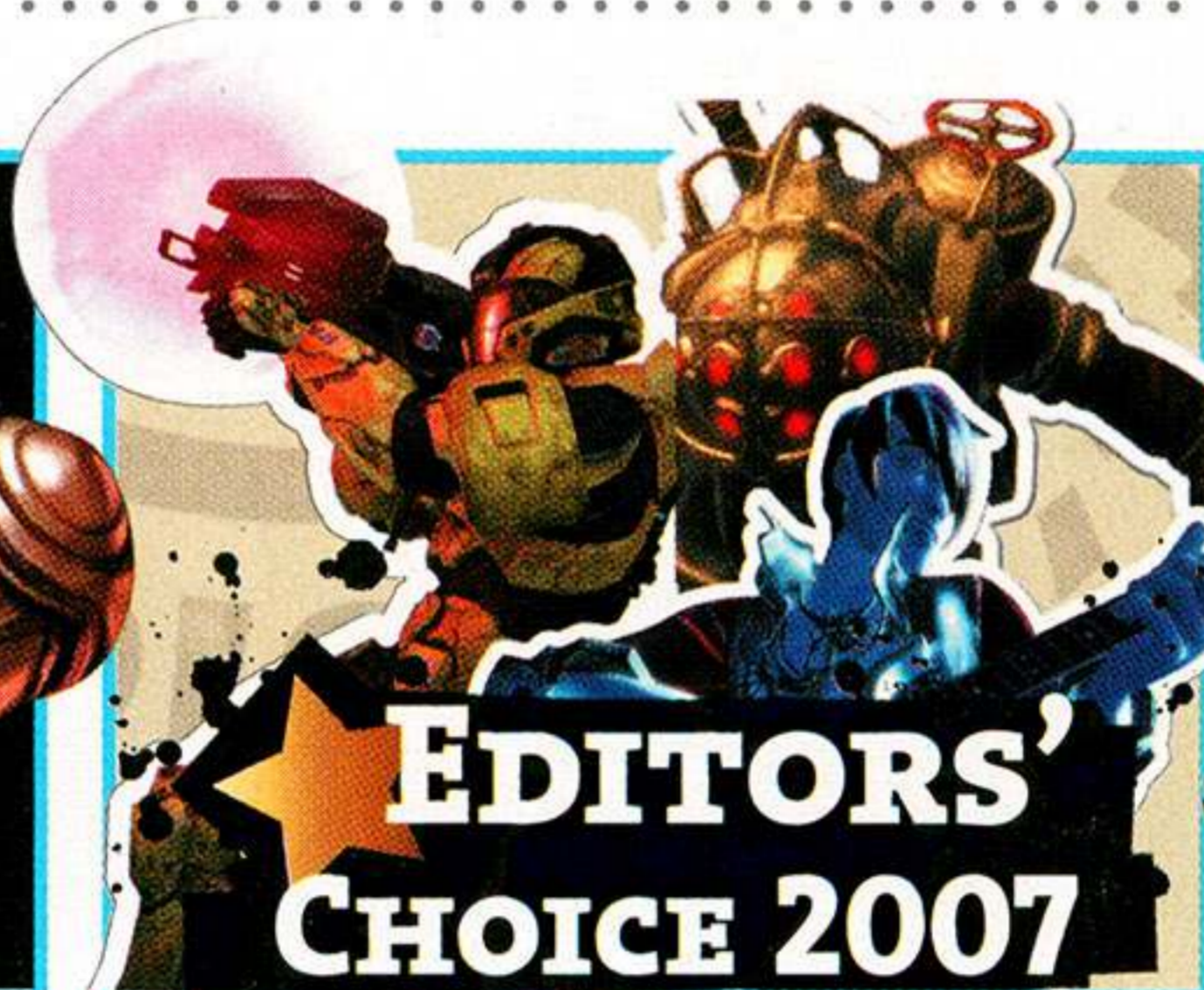
Language
Mild Violence

GAMEPRO

★ Features



54 **Fighting Games**
Tekken 6 or Soul Calibur IV? For fighting gurus, that's the only question. We give you everything we've got on these upcoming fighters that both take versus mode to the next level.



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Mass Effect is here on the Xbox 360, and it's one hell of an epic space odyssey. We've got all the strategy you need to keep you grounded.



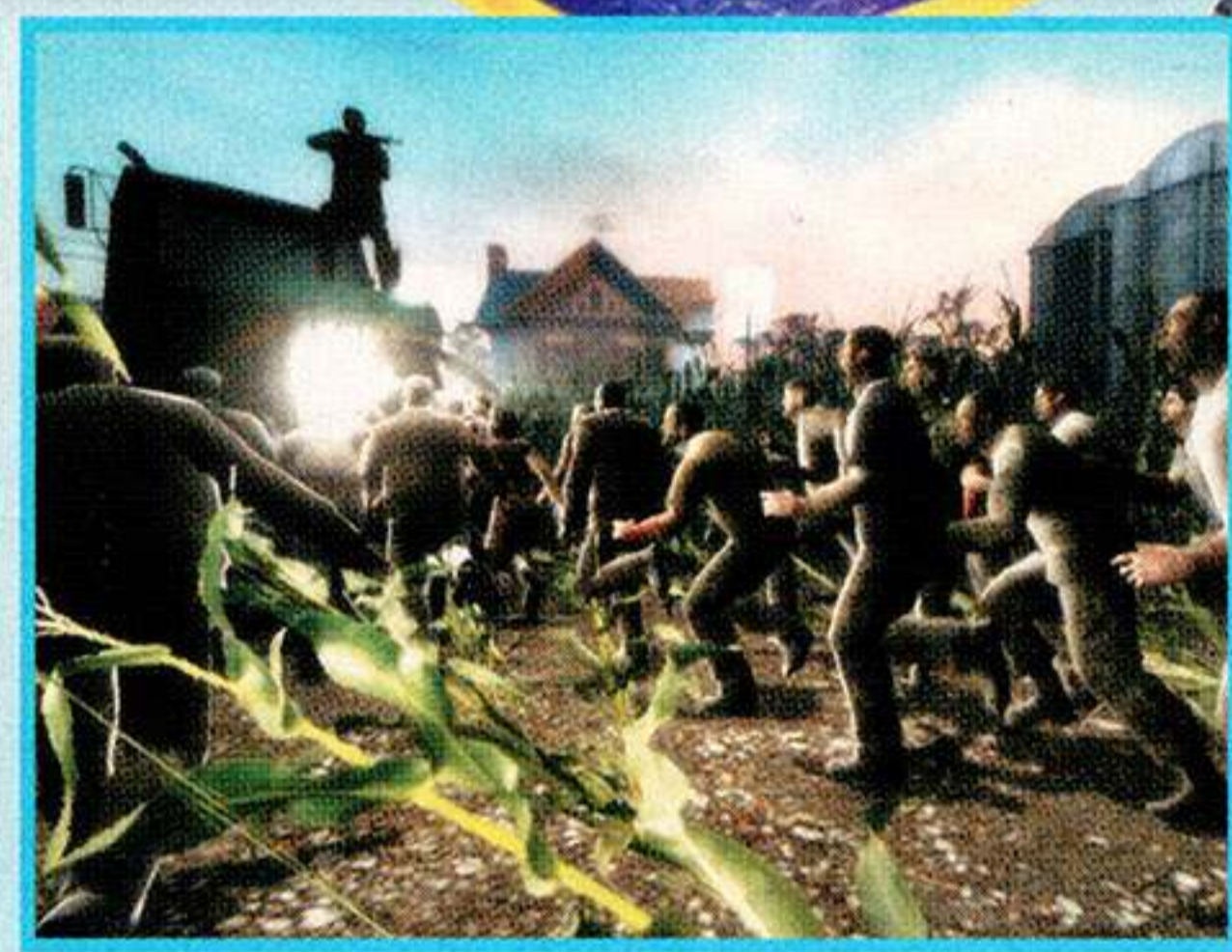
46 **Super Smash Bros. Brawl**
The *only* reason to put down Mario Galaxy. Super Smash Bros. Brawl is almost here, and if you don't have a Wii, it's reason enough to scour eBay for the holiday remains. Here's why you will love the latest in the Smash Bros. series.

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Parting Thoughts on 2007

Now that the dust has settled from 2007, I wanted to take one last whack at a year where gamers were overwhelmed with topnotch offerings.

Worst Game of 2007: *Bullet Witch* (Xbox 360). Despite an alluring main character who uses both firepower and magic, *Bullet Witch* delivered an abysmal gaming experience, with sloppy level designs, lame enemies, and a confusing control scheme. You know you are in trouble when a game's biggest hook is unlockable costumes for the main character.

Best Laugh in Gaming: Although *The Simpsons: The Game* was a mediocre platformer, it did have the best Xbox 360 Achievement, as you got 5 points for pressing the Start button when prompted at the title screen. Comic Book Guy also provided some chuckles with his vast knowledge of various video game clichés.

But enough of the oddballs. Make sure and check-out the *GamePro* Editors' Choice Awards on page 58, and see what our top picks were for 2007, as well as our extensive look at one of the biggest titles of 2008, *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*.

Mike Weigand
 Managing Editor

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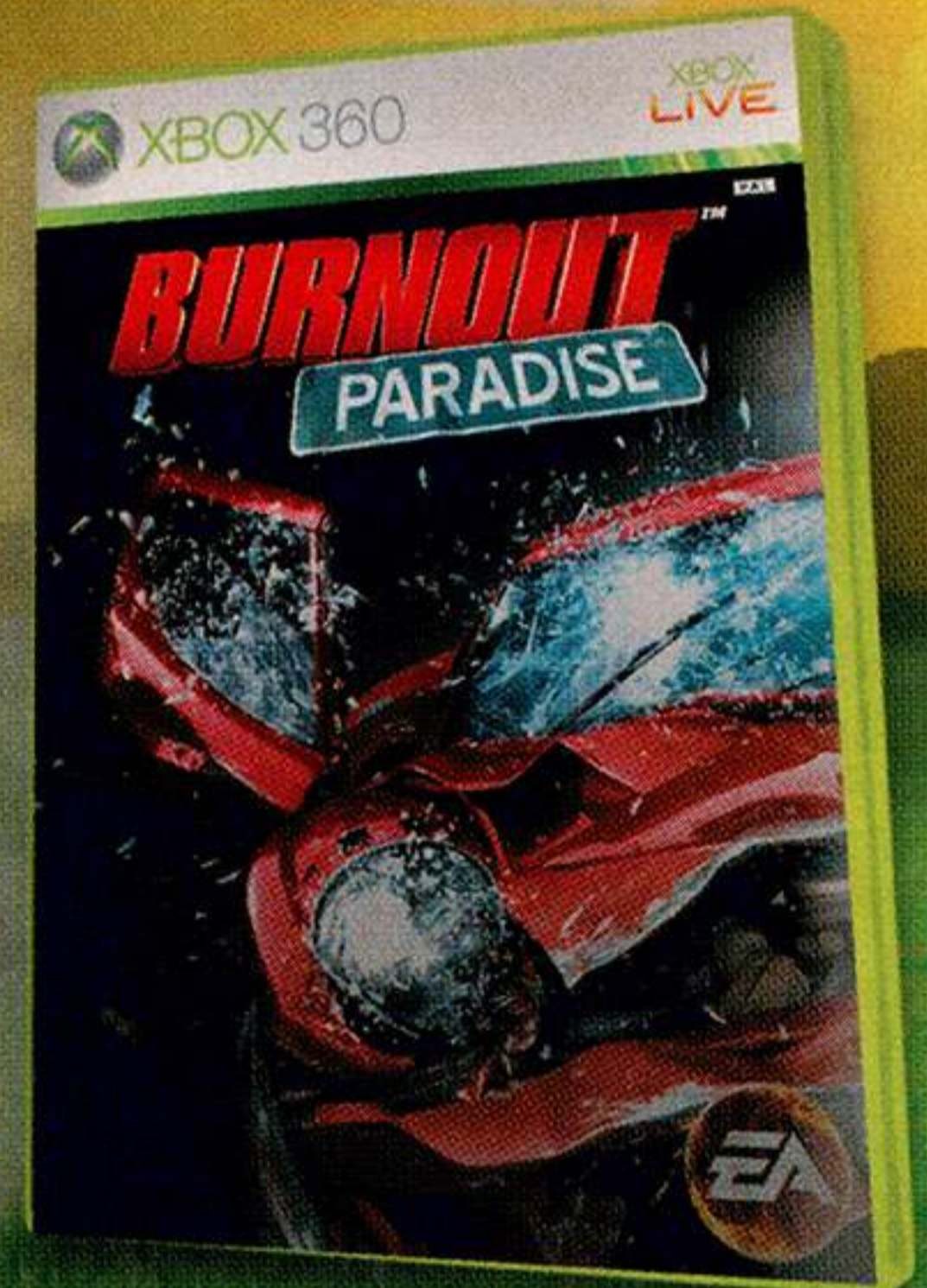
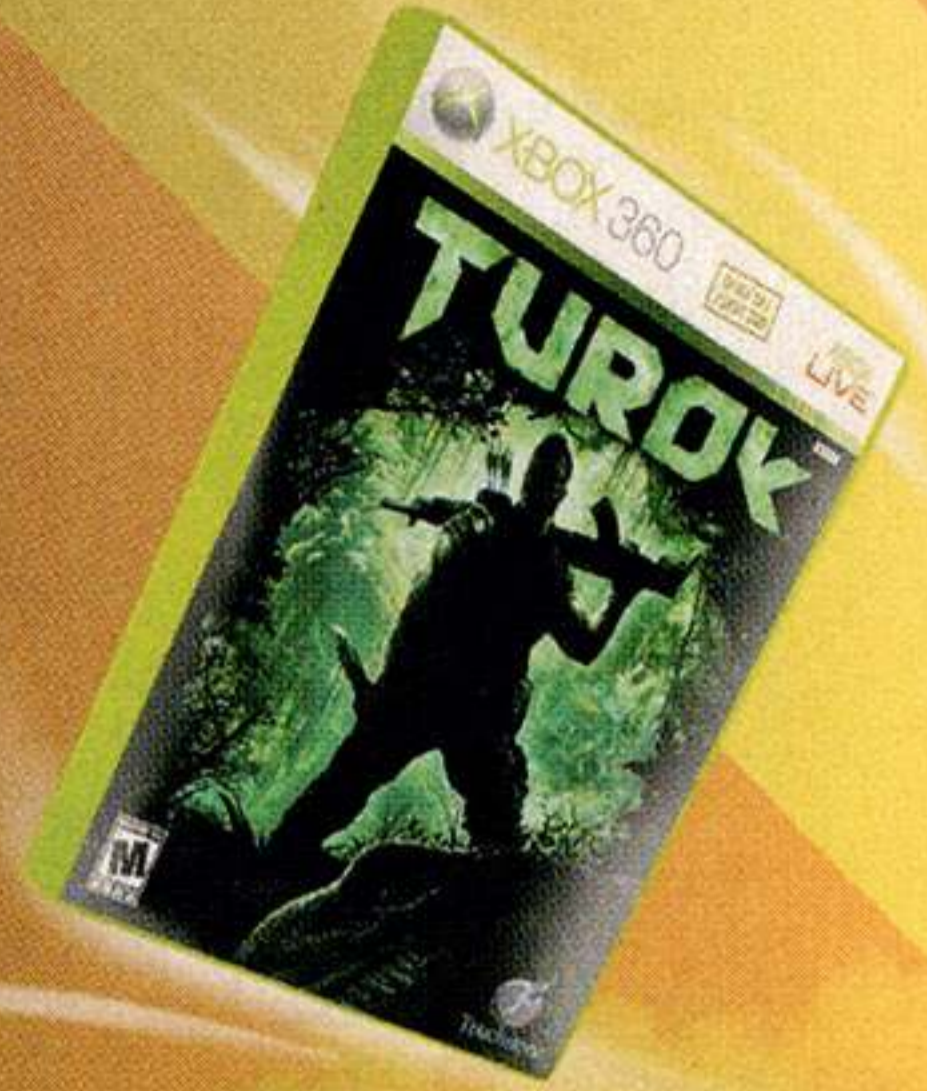


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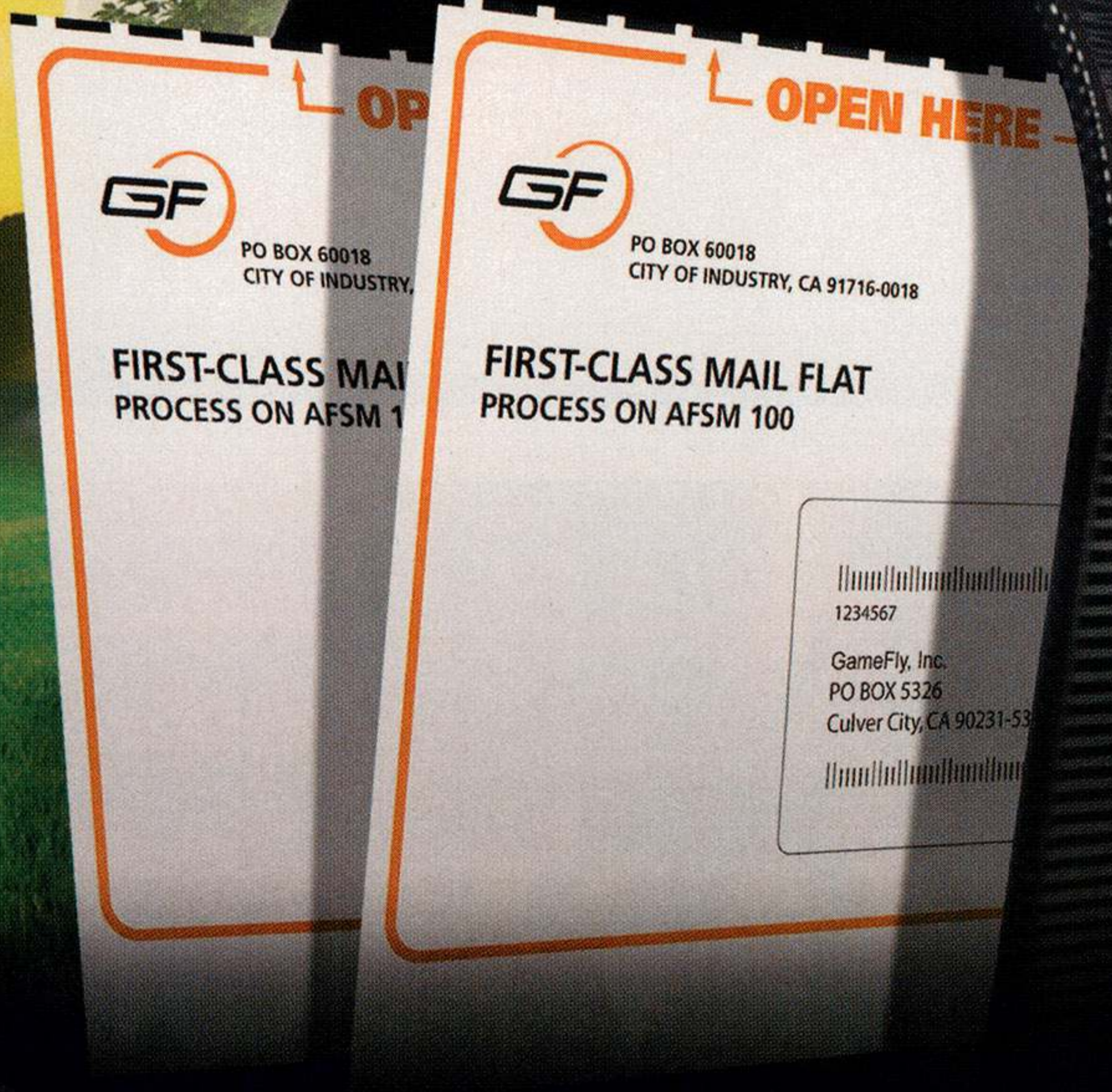
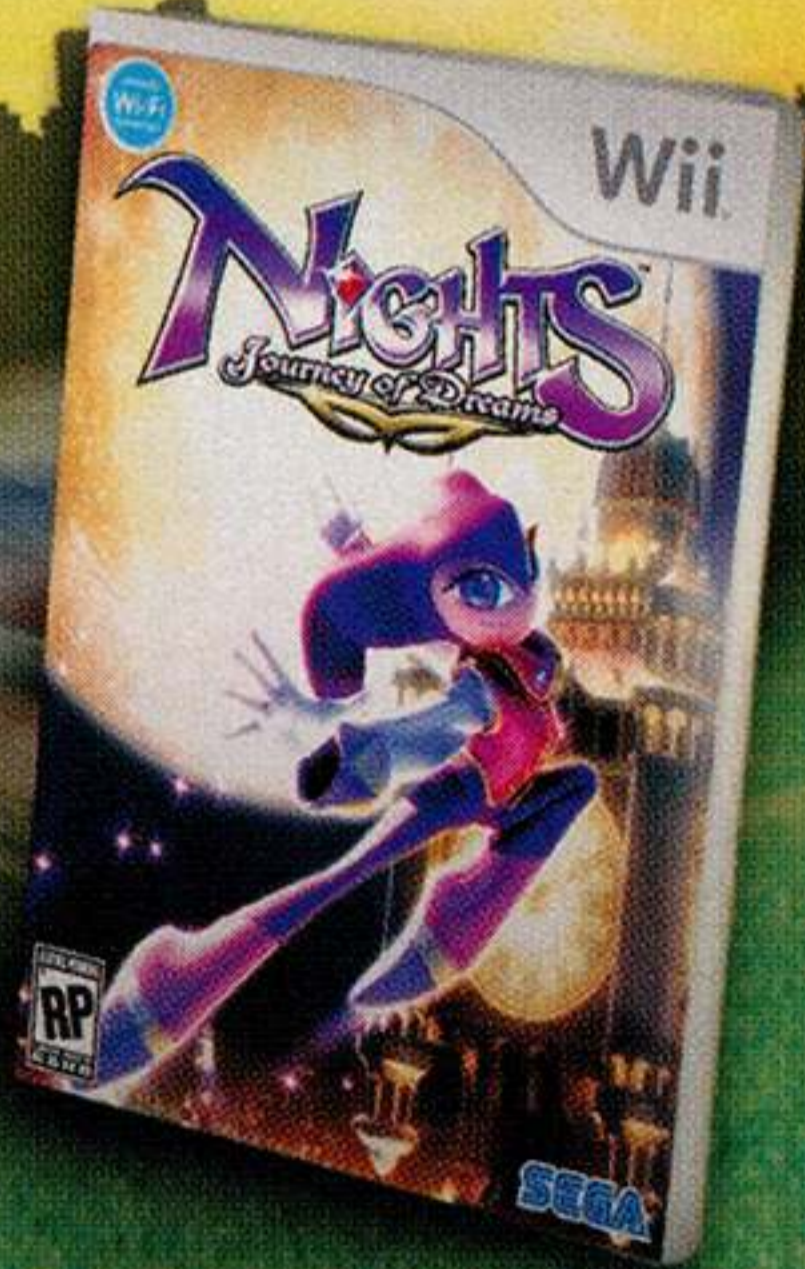
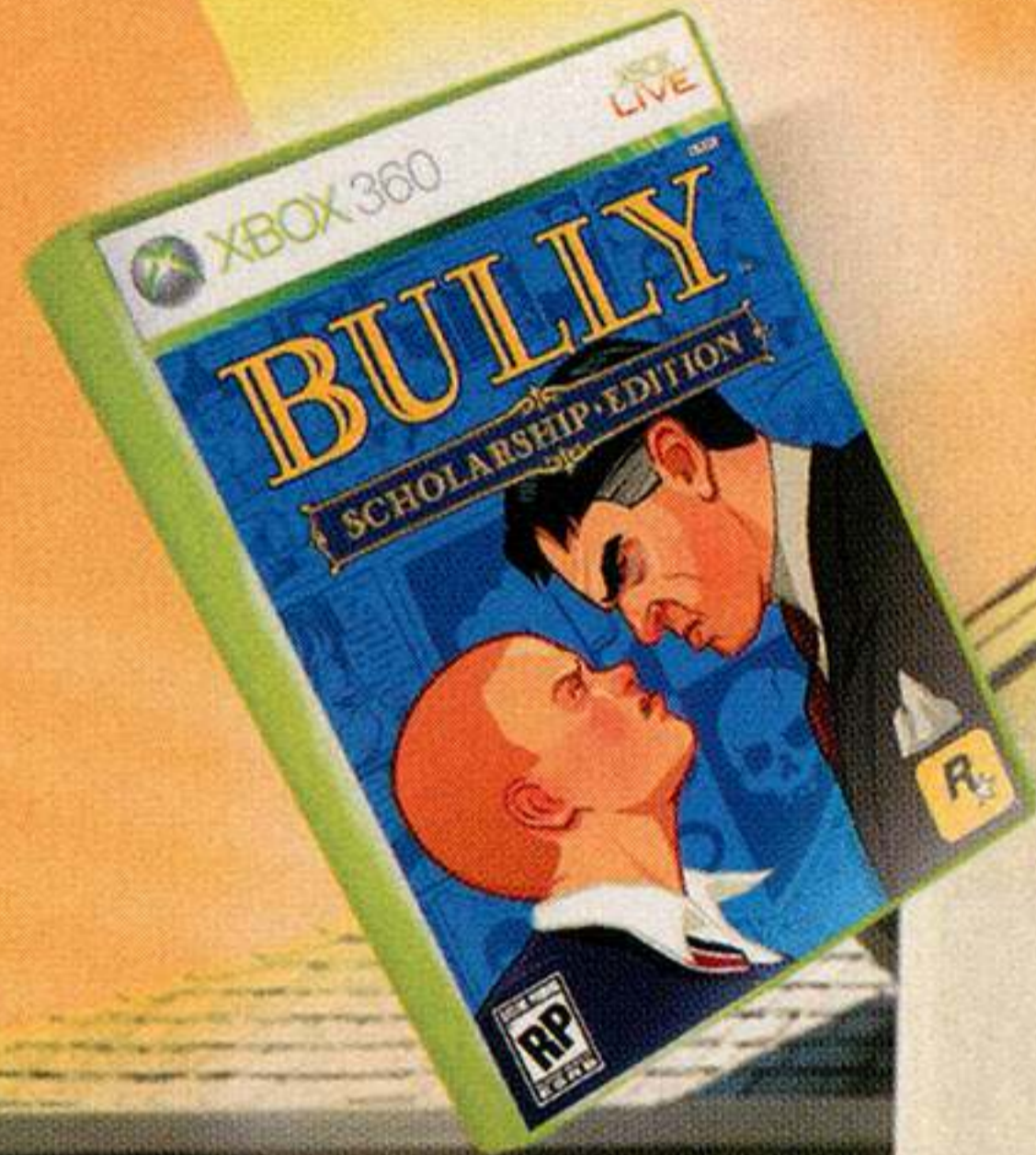
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PLAYSTATION 3

PlayStation 2

PSP
PlayStation Portable

XBOX 360





When the world comes to an end and subways are no more, arm-mounted grappling hooks will be the new public transportation.

▼ **BIONIC COMMANDO** PS3, XBOX 360, PC



▼ **KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: CIRCLE OF DOOM** XBOX 360, PC



▼ **BORDERLANDS** PS3, XBOX 360, PC



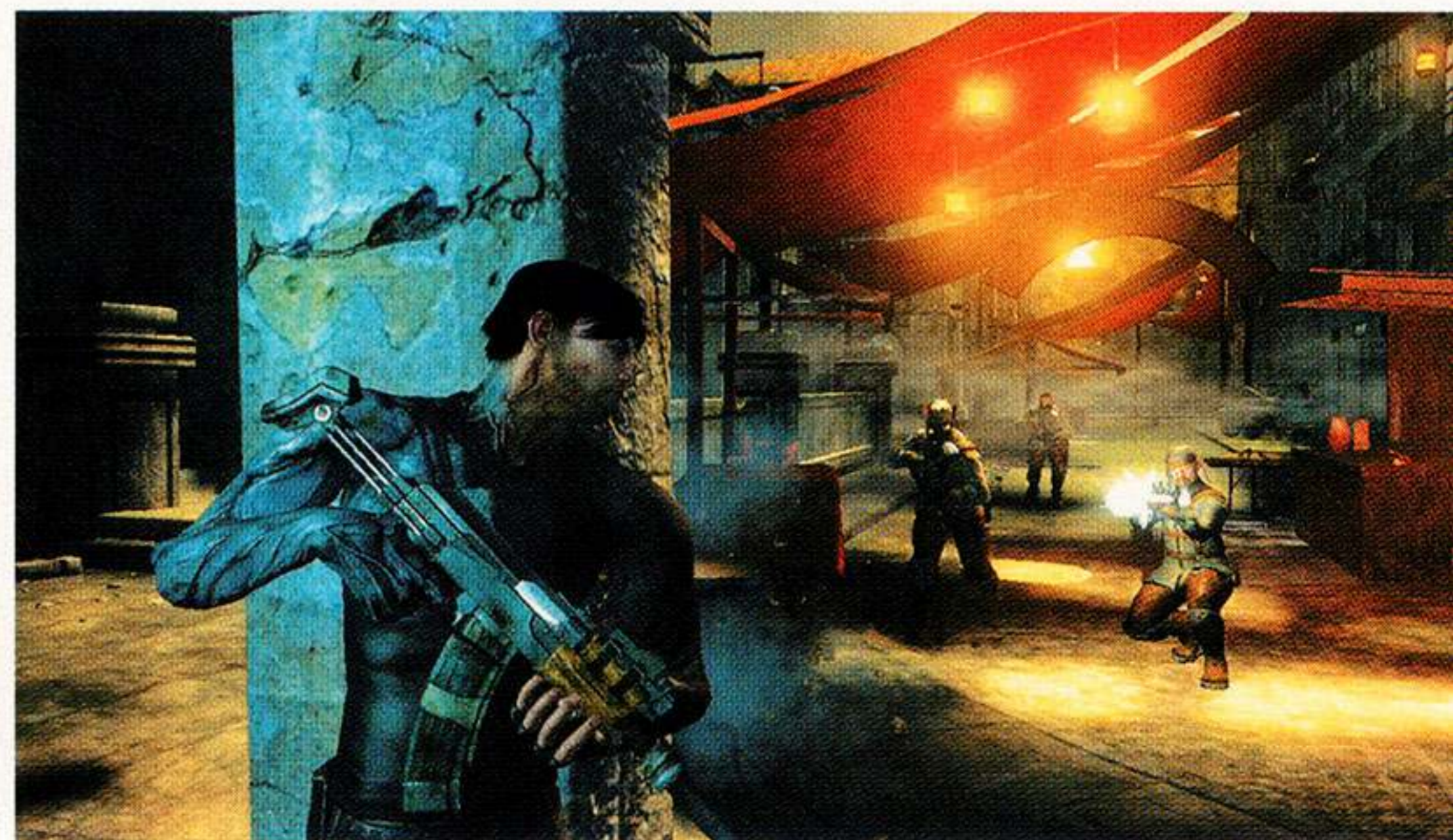
▼ THE CLUB PS3, XBOX 360



▼ DEAD SPACE PS3, XBOX 360



▼ UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE PS3



▼ DARK SECTOR PS3, XBOX 360



RESIDENT EVIL: THE UMBRELLA CHRONICLES wii



IRON MAN PS3, XBOX 360, wii, PS2, PSP, DS, PC



Who needs a crowbar when you have Flower Power?

SUPER MARIO GALAXY wii



TOO HUMAN XBOX 360



ALONE IN THE DARK PS3, PC

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Note to teammate: a flaming car doesn't always make for the best cover.

▼ CONFLICT: DENIED OPS Xbox 360



▼ NEED FOR SPEED: PROSTREET PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PS2, PSP, DS, PC

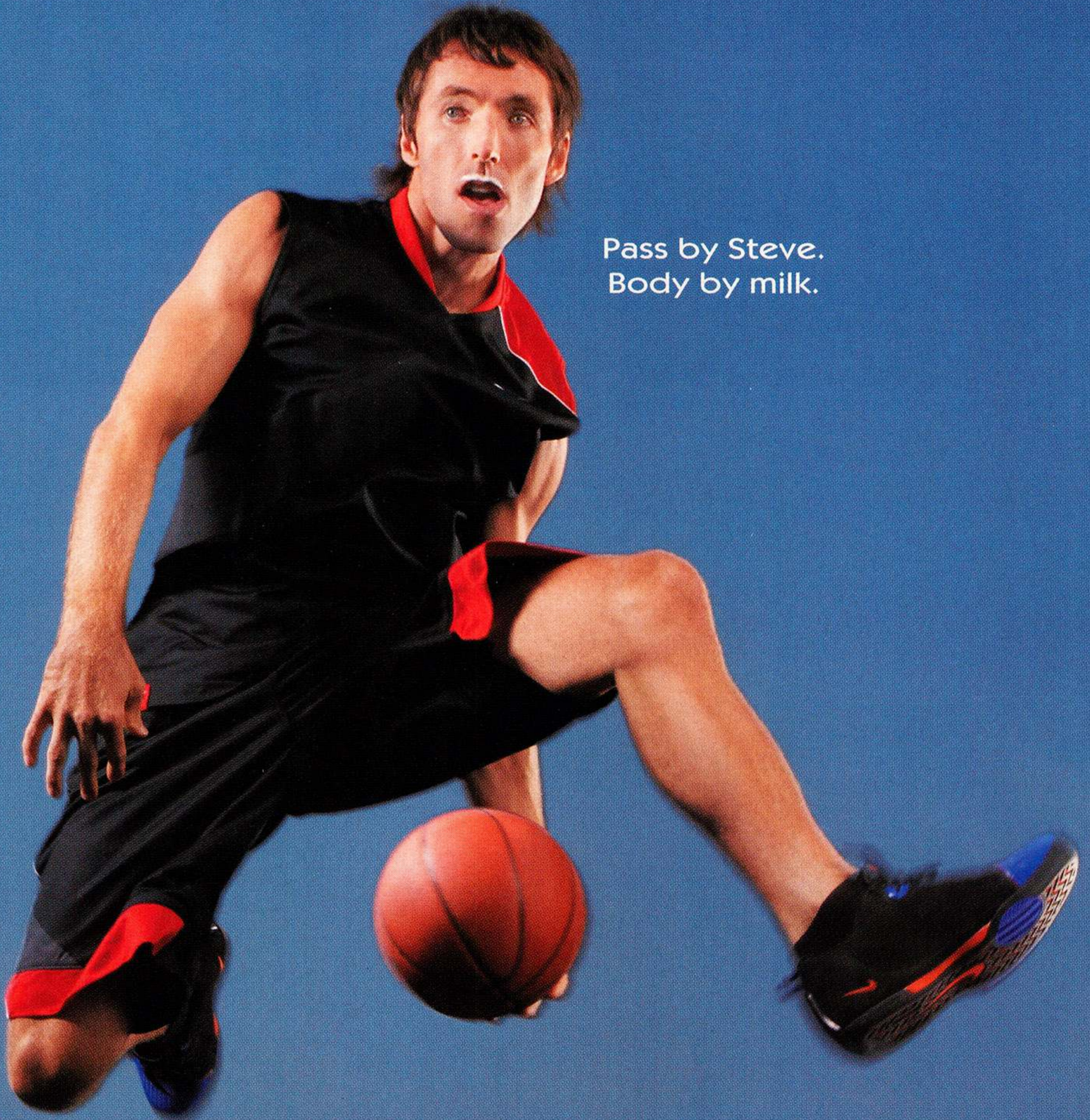


▼ BEOWULF PS3, Xbox 360, PSP, PC



Red vs. Blue lives!

▼ HALO WARS Xbox 360



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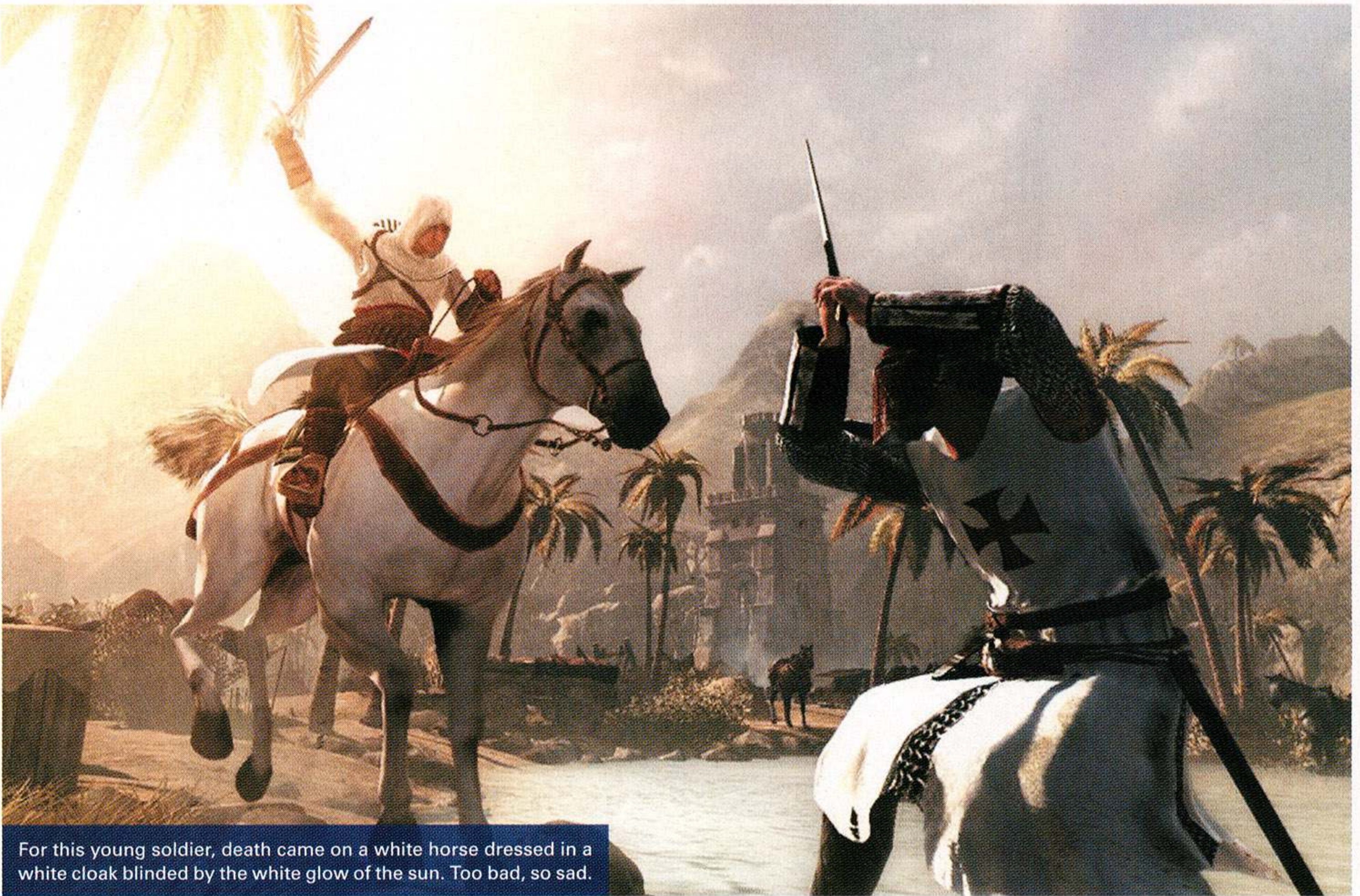
bodybymilk.com



▼ SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO HD REMIX PS3



▼ NARUTO: ULTIMATE NINJA 3 PS2



For this young soldier, death came on a white horse dressed in a white cloak blinded by the white glow of the sun. Too bad, so sad.

▼ ASSASSIN'S CREED PS3, XBOX 360



▼ VIKING: BATTLE FOR ASGARD PS3, XBOX 360



▼ SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL WII

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SPAWN POINT

GAMES. GOSSIP. GEAR.

INSIDE SPAWN POINT

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Ten Games Deserving of a Remake ... Page 22

No More Heroes ... Page 26

Mass Effect ... Page 30

500,000 WEAPONS!

GamePro sits down with *Borderlands* and discovers a shocking secret: The game contains over half a million weapons and some 750,000 items. Wow!



So what's the story behind this case of wretched excess? *Borderlands* is a sci-fi shooter that focuses heavily on cooperative play, plus a light dash of RPG skills. The company hopes *Borderlands* will hit the PS3, PC, and Xbox 360 this September.

"*Borderlands* is a *shooter*," Gearbox president Randy Pitchford says carefully. "We are *shooter* developers, we're *shooter* gamers, and we're dealing with a *shooter* audience." But *Borderlands* has another layer of depth: a *Diablo*-esqué twist where players can find and trade countless weapon and item variations. In fact, *Borderlands* has so many weapon variants that Pitchford claims it includes a version of nearly every gun featured in every first-person shooter...ever. Have you ever wanted to take the destructive stopping power of *Halo*'s shotgun and combine it with *Half-Life 2*'s dual-firing mode? Or maybe add a longer barrel and sniper scope for increased accuracy? By procedurally generating weapons, *Borderlands* can create hundreds of different assault rifles, pistols, rail guns, rocket launchers, and alien weapons, all with unique stats.

The storyline holds promise, too. *Borderlands* takes place in the outskirts of space, on a backwater frontier planet called Pandora. Colonists came to

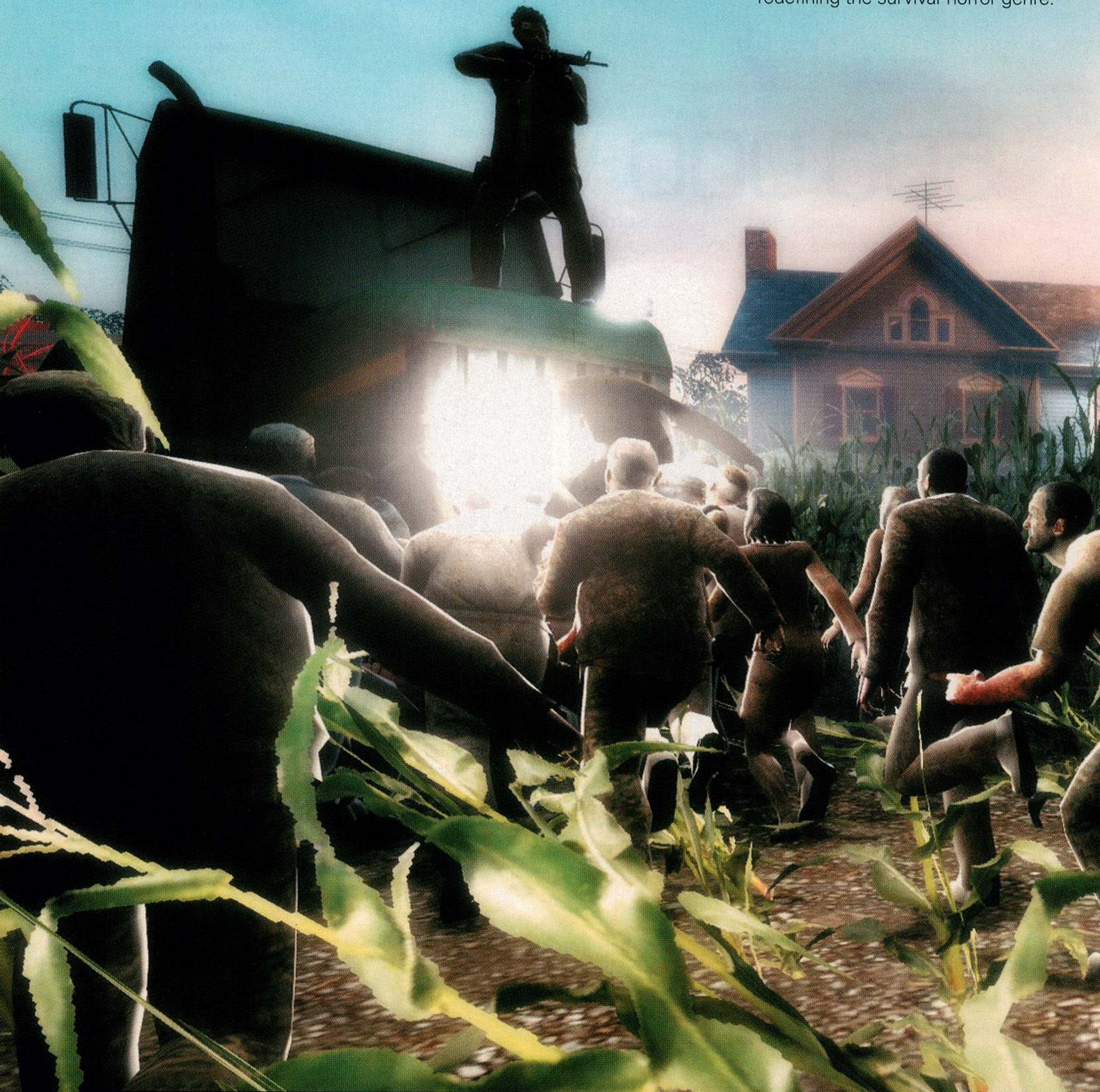
the planet in search of alien life and artifacts, but found only a deserted wasteland and none of the alien tech they'd hoped to find. The colonists who could afford to leave the planet did so immediately, and the ones that stayed banded together in fragile, hardscrabble communities. Others became marauding bandits who scoured the land for weapons and supplies à la *Mad Max*. And now the native aliens are beginning to stir...

You play a fortune hunter that Pitchford describes as a mix between *Mad Max* and *Indiana Jones*. You've come to Pandora looking for something. Looking for what? Pitchford remained tight lipped on the subject. Co-op play features heavily: we watched as Pitchford and his partner took a joyride through the Salt Flats, blasting through enemy vehicles with a slick mounted rocket launcher, then drove into a mining facility for some traditional FPS gunplay. We were then jumped ahead to The Mud Coast where the demo ended with a thrilling conclusion—a massive creature who served as a mobile breeding ground for vicious flying aliens.

Needless to say, we are not only stoked about the massive weapon and equipment selection in *Borderlands*, but the intriguing storyline as well. This is one game that won't go under the radar.



The team behind Counter-Strike and Half-Life have a new target: redefining the survival-horror genre.



Turtle Rock Studios was first founded to help Half-Life creator Valve produce Counter-strike side projects. But this little-known developer is evolving into something much more impressive...and dangerous. Left 4 Dead is Turtle Rock's first original game, and it's one of the *GamePro* staff's most wanted 2008 games.

At its core, Left 4 Dead is a survival shooter with a laser focus on four-player cooperative play. Given the developer's history with Counter-Strike, it should be no surprise that teamwork and precise gunplay serve

major roles in Left 4 Dead. Players choose one of four human Survivors, who work together to blast through zombie-infested cities and ultimately reach a crucial extraction point. But the zombies in Left 4 Dead are fast. Like, really really fast, similar to the "infected" from *28 Days Later* or the zombies in the remake of *Dawn of the Dead*.

GamePro spoke with Turtle Rock's chief zombie slayer, Michael Booth, for a late-breaking update on consoles (no PS3!), new levels, and those icky Boss Zombies.



LEFT 4 DEAD



4 GUNS ARE BETTER THAN 1

How is the single-player campaign different from online co-op?

The primary focus of the game is on the multiplayer cooperative experience. This portion of the game will be playable by one to eight players, with bots filling any unoccupied player spots on either side. We're still fleshing out the details of the purely single-player experience, but it will likely feature the same campaigns with story-driven introductions.

We've mostly seen urban environments. Will the whole game be based in cities?

The entire game is set in the present day. One location is set in an urban environment and takes the player through a series of buildings leading to, eventually, a hospital. Another setting is rural: the survivors must work through a large wooded countryside to reach a farmstead, which is surrounded by a zombie-infested cornfield.

Left 4 Dead scales the game difficulty to match a player's skill. How does this work?

Each of the campaigns requires the Survivors to successfully "escape" as a team. What keeps each game session fresh is the technology we've named the "A.I. director," which monitors the players' experiences and tailors the level of action for each game. For example, if a human team is particularly strong, the AI director will crank up the number of zombies, Boss Zombies, and their abilities.

Can you explain the role of the Boss Zombies in versus mode?

The playable Boss Zombies have completely different attacks and skills from the human Survivors. The Boomer, for example, has the ability to summon common zombies by vomiting on its target. The Tank, meanwhile, is extremely powerful and can hurl cars and other objects at its opponents.

Will there be any way to customize your character or weapon?

On the Survivor side, each player starts off with the same basic abilities, but you'll find new weapons and items as you progress. The items you choose will define your character's strengths and weaknesses.

Okay, we're sold. When can we play it?

Left 4 Dead is attempting to break new ground in the multiplayer co-op space, so we're spending a lot of time testing the game with players of varying skills to evolve and polish the game as much as possible. We're confident the game will be out in 2008, but we don't have anything more specific to announce just yet.

GAMEPRO FORTUNE TELLER

POLYGONUS IS NOT AMUSED.



SUCKS OR RULES

Changing the world, one insult at a time

This month, your all-knowing, all-showing guide to the gaming fates takes a look at the biggest Sony games of the new year.



**GOD OF WAR:
CHAINS OF OLYMPUS**
Release Date: Spring 2008 // PSP

Kratos may be a deity-slayer, but he's no match for the god-like powers of Polygonus. While the series has fared well thus far on the PS2, this psychic can't foresee this engine being recycled many more times. While it will be fun to hack and slash while on the go, Polygonus grows tired of the steady flow of the PSP's plain vanilla action games in the face of innovative DS titles.

VERDICT: The Chains of Olympus are growing weak. If the title fails to innovate, it will signal a dark future for this franchise and Sony's portable unit.

CARD: The Gambler



LITTLE BIG PLANET
Release Date: Early 2008 // PS3

After Super Mario Galaxy wowed the cosmos, most thought the future of the platformer would be bleak for quite some time. Polygonus knows better. LittleBigPlanet's style and substance are a breath of fresh air for Sony's troubled console. It's going to be a great year for the PlayStation 3, and the sack-headed creatures of LittleBigPlanet are Sony's good-luck charm.

VERDICT: LittleBigPlanet has killer-app written all over it, and promises to push platformers back into popularity. This pleases Polygonus.

CARD: The Masterpiece



SUCKS

Shorter Games Developing for modern consoles takes loads of time and cash, but the time it takes to play through games is shrinking. We love multiplayer, but we're getting tired of paying \$60+ for six hours of single player, thank you very much. **SUCKS**

Eye of Judgment Some players groaned at the idea of spending cash on collectible cards for this camera-ready PlayStation 3 title, but the ability to easily copy those cards throws a terrible wrench into an otherwise innovative online arms race. **SUCKS**

Wii Bashing Amid the conjecture that casual gamers don't actually play that much, and the abundance of crappy rushed releases that plague every console, too many people seem to forget that no other platform could've given us a gem like Zack & Wiki. **SUCKS**

RULES

Okami Capcom's under-selling critical darling is prepping for a second chance on the Wii. The ability to unleash godlike powers on the canvas of the world will hopefully prove that Okami was just a hair ahead of its time. **RULES**

Grand Theft Auto IV Rockstar hopes to include a 16-player online multiplayer component in their delayed but eagerly anticipated crime epic. It could turn out to be a pipe dream, but the possibilities make us positively giddy with excitement. **RULES**

Bionic Commando Returns And here we were thinking the grabby robotic arm that made swinging through the NES original such a pleasure was but a sweet memory of youth. We don't yet know when Nathan Spencer will fly back around, but we're already dying to play. **RULES**

What's **your** opinion?
Vote for yourself on sucksorrules.com



GAMES TO DIE FOR

Our current obsessions



HALO 3 (XBOX 360)

No shocker here: finishing the fight with Master Chief in Halo 3 is a watershed event in refined first-person shooting gameplay.



THE ORANGE BOX (PS3, XBOX 360, PC)

Calling it five games in one is being generous, but this distinctive package is still one of the best bargains we've seen in years.



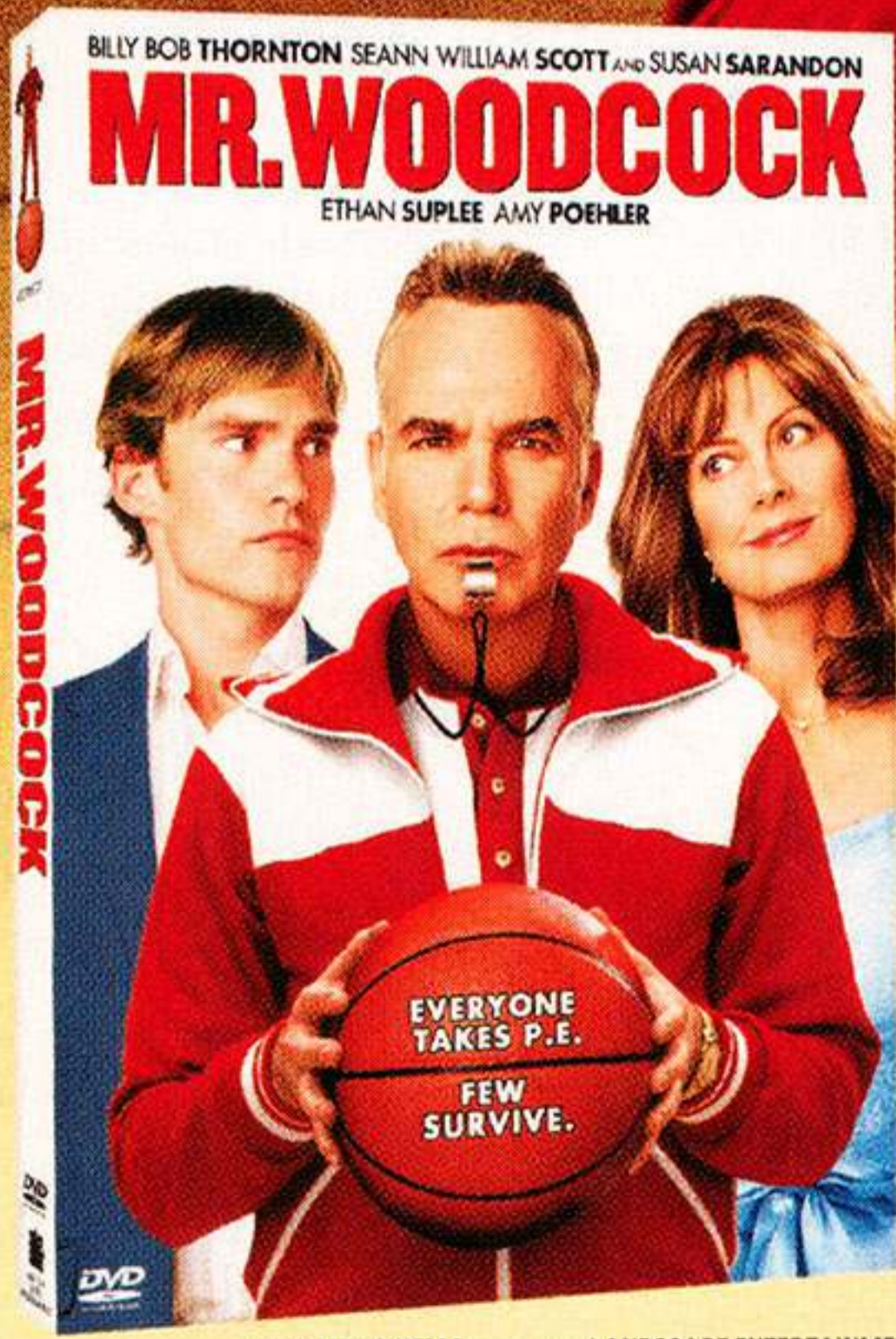
ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS (DS)

Long, deep, and enormously fun, Link's latest rich adventure is good enough to forsake even powerful home consoles for.

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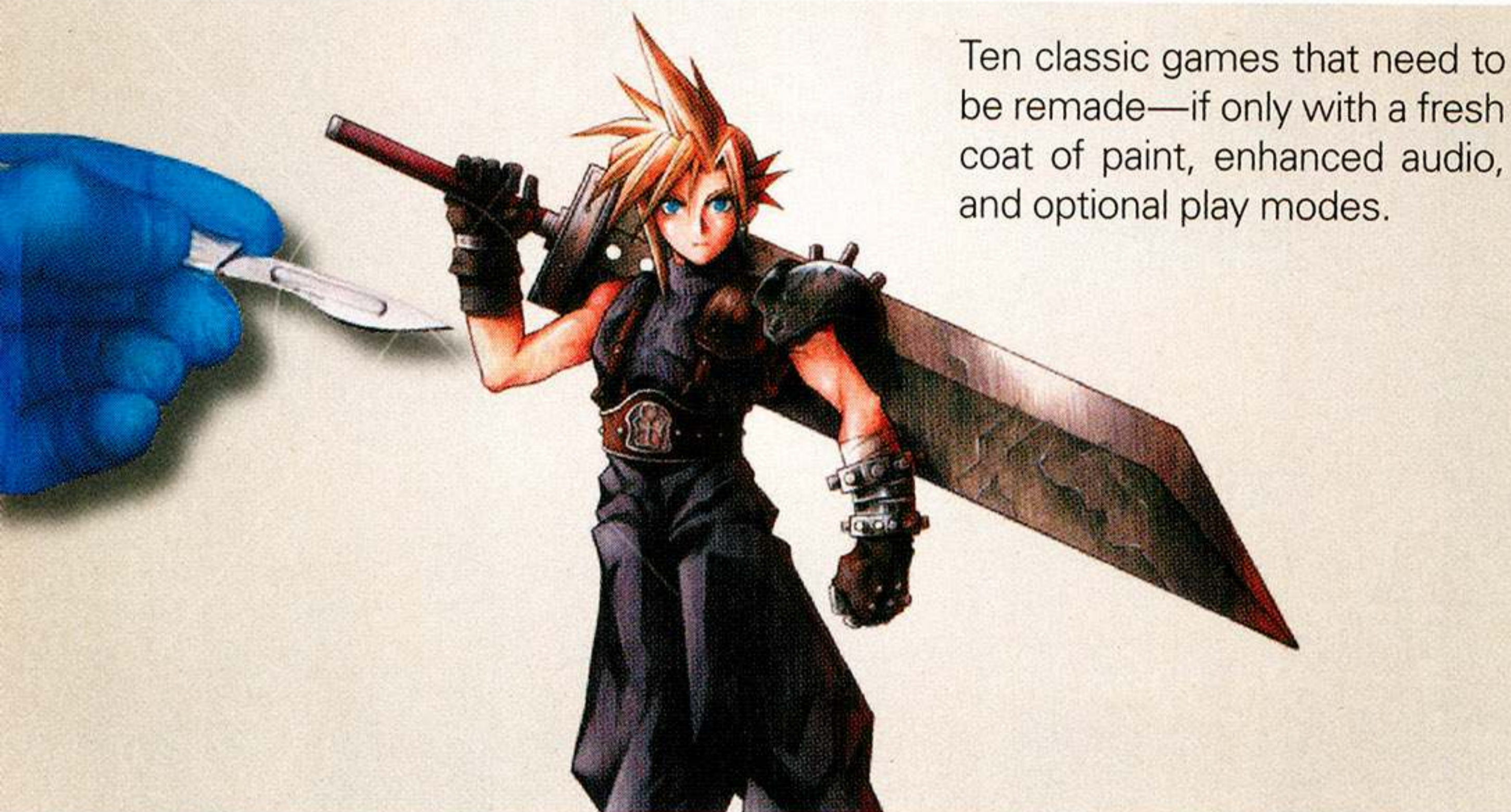
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THE TOP 10 GAMES

deserving of a REMAKE



Ten classic games that need to be remade—if only with a fresh coat of paint, enhanced audio, and optional play modes.

10. CASTLEVANIA (1987)

Add in an orchestrated soundtrack, in-game achievements, online leaderboards, and a few unreleased levels, and voila! Instant classic.

9. HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED (2001)

We've finished the fight. Now let us relive the original in splendid HD glory with 32-person online multiplayer, the Spartan Laser, and essentially identical gameplay.

8. KID ICARUS (1987)

To pull it off, the game would need some highly stylized and mature visuals—a tall order for the cupid-looking protagonist.

7. ROAD RASH (1991)

To bring Road Rash into the HD era, toss in online multiplayer battles, throw in some additional choppers, stir up some new weapons, and you've got yourself a next-gen Road Rash.

6. THE SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD (1984)

A remake would work particularly well if more attention was given to ship strategy, such as added customizations, the construction of new vessels, and next-gen pixie dust onto the graphics—the source material is an eyesore.

5. FINAL FANTASY VII (1997)

To preserve its achievements while simultaneously avoiding the wrath of purists, Square need only refurbish the graphics and sound. Online co-op would be cool, too. Wink, wink.

4. DOOM (1993)

A Doom remake would pioneer video games in so many ways it's best just to list them: immersive 3D graphics, network multiplayer, user-generated mods, and mature content.

3. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (1987)

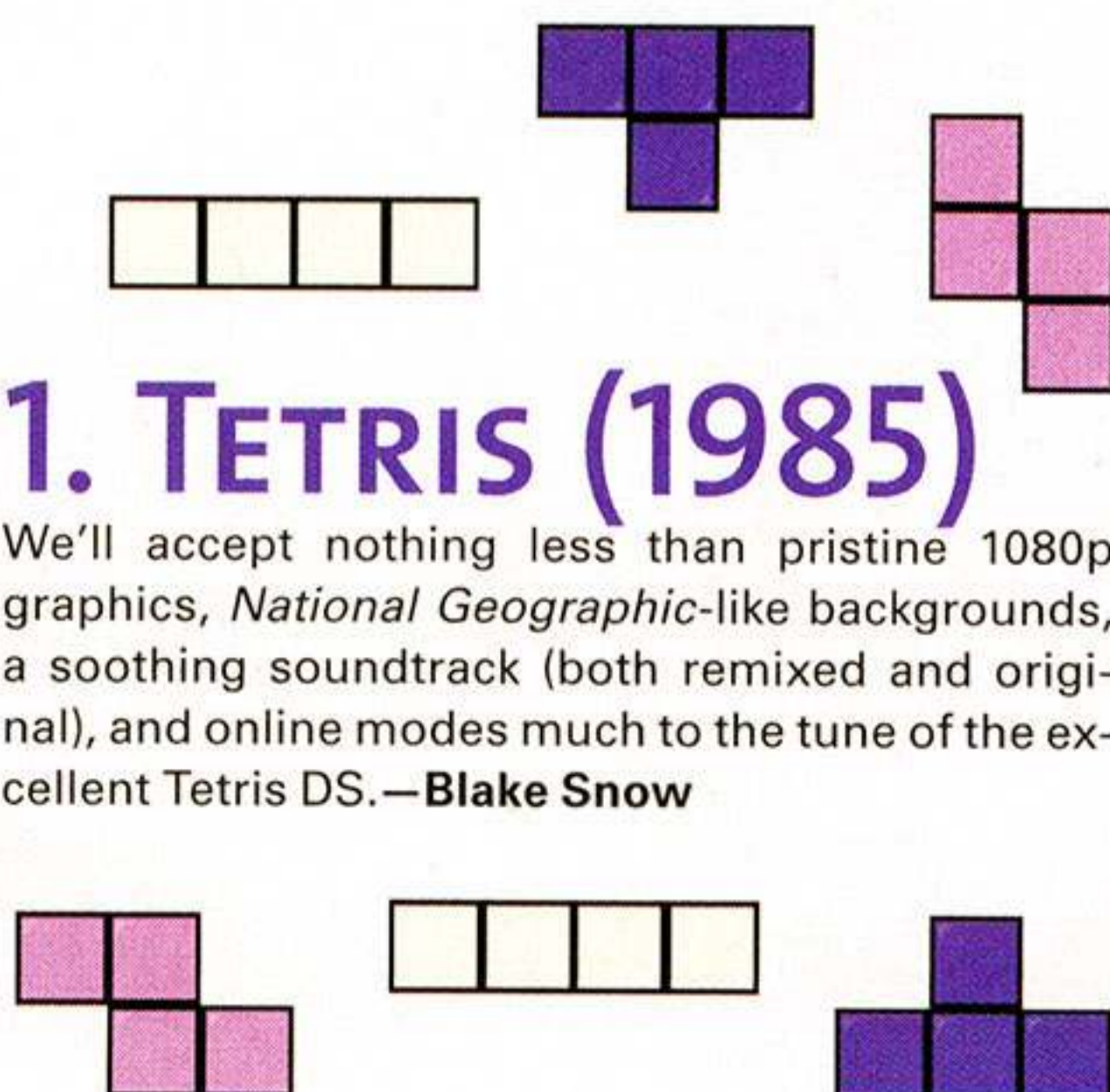
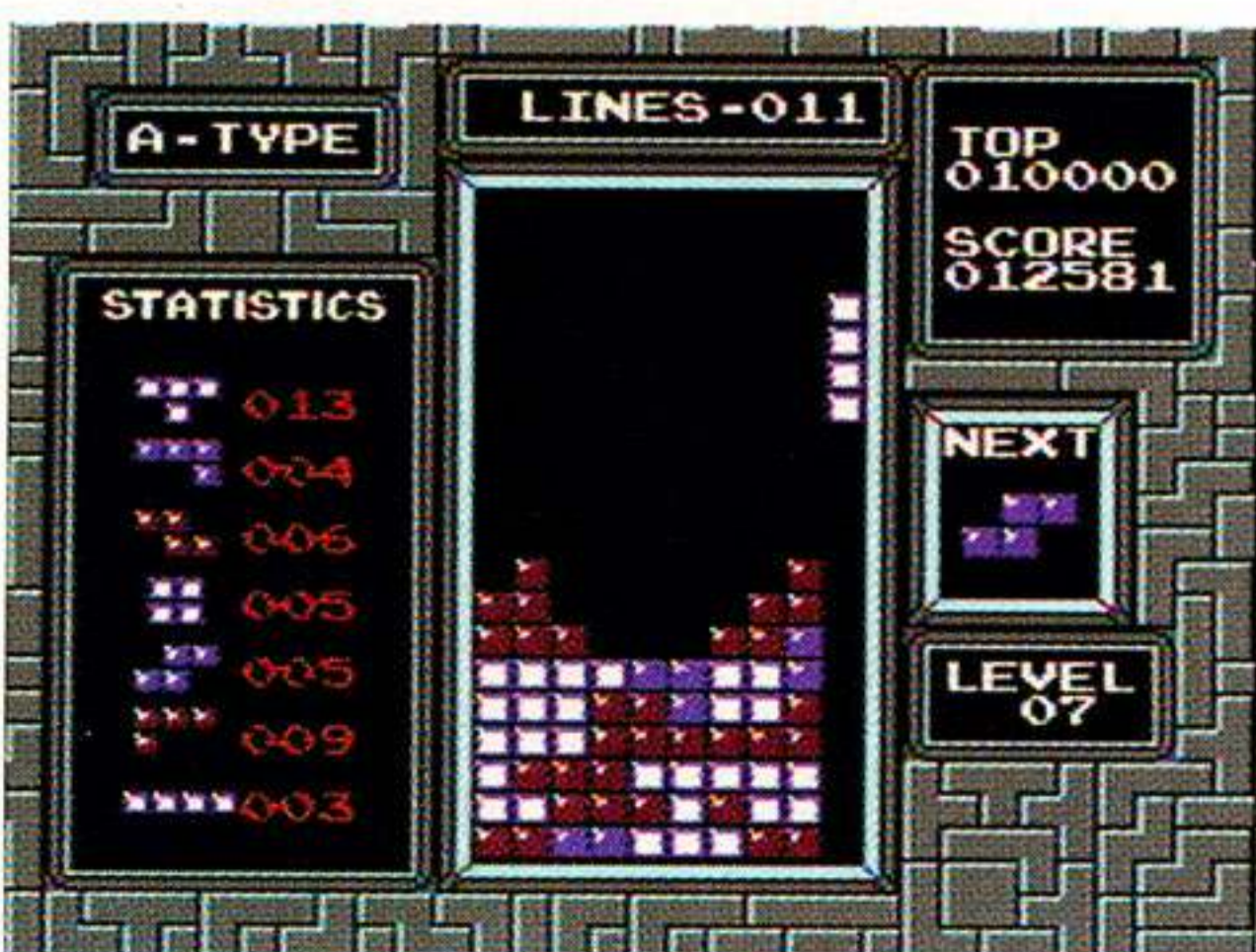
For optimal results, we suggest highly stylized (though still overhead) 2D graphics, newly orchestrated soundtrack, extra dungeons, and of course, the ability to move diagonally.

2. FLASHBACK: THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY (1992)

A Flashback remake need only follow the recipe used to release the Prince of Persia Classic on Xbox Live Arcade: gorgeous lighting, smoother animations, and minor 3D elements while maintaining the original level design.

1. TETRIS (1985)

We'll accept nothing less than pristine 1080p graphics, *National Geographic*-like backgrounds, a soothing soundtrack (both remixed and original), and online modes much to the tune of the excellent Tetris DS. —Blake Snow



THE BIG 5

We sound off on the top stories on GamePro.com.

1 BUNGIE AND MICROSOFT UNTIE THE KNOT

The creators of the Halo franchise are an independent studio again after an amicable split with the Redmond giant.

THE VERDICT: All the Halo IP actually belongs to Microsoft, so don't expect to see Master Chief gracing the PS3, but future blockbusters could now land on more than one console.

2 CONTROVERSY OVER FIRED GAME REVIEWER

Longtime GameSpot reviewer Jeff Gerstmann was unceremoniously fired in December 2007. A Penny Arcade web comic alleged that Gerstmann's departure was retaliation for his negative review of Kane & Lynch, which allegedly enraged the game's publisher and GameSpot advertiser, Eidos.

THE VERDICT: GameSpot waited too long to address this situation, which helped fuel speculation and protests. GameSpot later directly denied the reports, saying that Gerstmann's firing was for "internal reasons unrelated to" advertiser pressure.

3 EA GOBBLES UP BIOWARE AND PANDEMIC

Electronic Arts forked out a rumored \$860 million to acquire the highly respected developers of Mass Effect and Mercenaries.

THE VERDICT: EA has a disturbing habit of buying and burying brands. Neither developer is broken; let's hope EA doesn't try to fix them anyway.

4 XBOX 360 HARDWARE IMPROVEMENTS

Scheduled for a late 2007 debut, this hardware revision will swap in a 65-nanometer version of ATI's graphics processor, and smaller memory chips.

THE VERDICT: Dare we hope that Microsoft will finally do away with whatever flaw is causing all those red rings of death? Cross your fingers.



5 CAPCOM FINALLY ANNOUNCES STREET FIGHTER IV

Ten years after the release of Street Fighter III, the house that Ryu and Ken built is finally getting a new full-fledged sequel.

THE VERDICT: Details are scarce, but the new iteration better deliver a lot more than simple nostalgia service if this aging series is to remain relevant.

LOST ODYSSEY



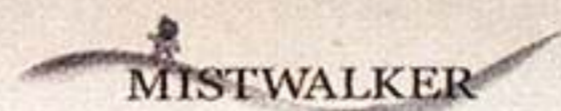
A thousand years of memories lost. It's time to discover them.

From the famed creator of Final Fantasy, Hironobu Sakaguchi, comes a revolutionary RPG experience rich in depth, emotion, and cinematic gameplay. In an age that has harnessed the dark power of magic, you are the mysterious, immortal Kaim—on a quest to reclaim 1,000 years of lost memories. Unlock a past infused with love, betrayal, and war to reveal the path to reclaim your life and rescue the world.



xbox.com/lostodyssey

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XBOX 360 LIVE

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CELEBRITY HOTTIES

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

OVERHEARD THIS MONTH



ZAC EFRON

Date of Birth: October 18, 1987
Hometown: San Luis Obispo, California
 Of famed *High School Musical* success, and most recently the remake of *Hairspray*, Zac Efron is the newest heartthrob in Hollywood.



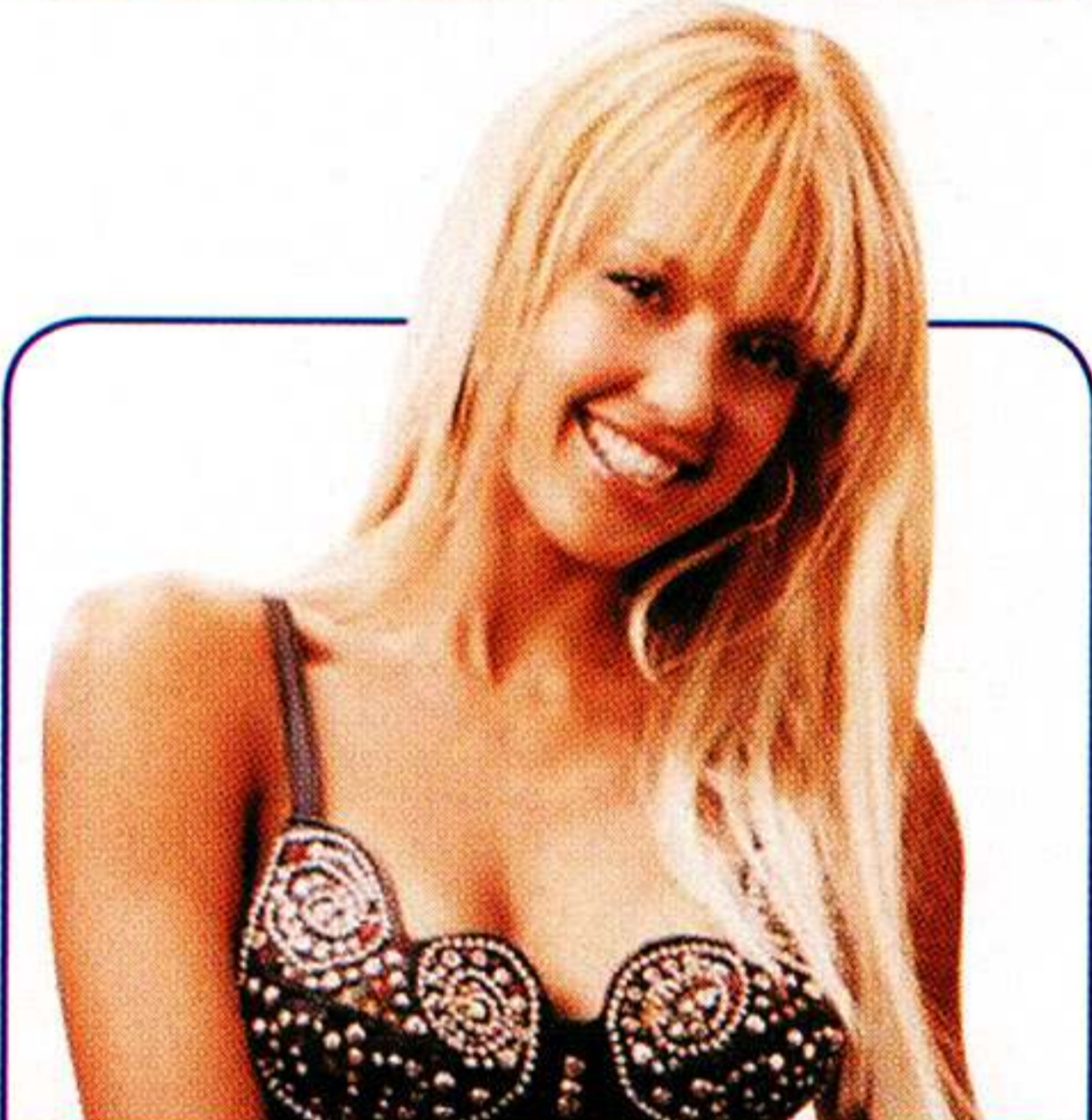
JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

Date of Birth: January 31, 1981
Hometown: Memphis, Tennessee
 Ladies swoon for his angelic voice and passionate lyrics, making JT the most desired man alive.



MEGAN FOX

Date of Birth: May 16, 1986
Hometown: Memphis, Tennessee
Transformers may have well been a dump in the face of diehard fans, but it was hard to complain about the brunette bombshell with a tummy of gold gracing the big screen—especially on IMAX.



JESSICA ALBA

Date of Birth: April 28, 1981
Hometown: Pomona, California
 Fans drooled over Alba in *Sin City*, where she played the role of an innocent cowgirl stripper, but she's more than just a bronzed-skin beauty as one of the most sought after talents in Hollywood.

"Video games today are a race to the bottom. They are pure, unadulterated trash, and I'm sad for that."

Atari founder **Nolan Bushnell** in an interview with *Electronic Design*.



"Fans of BioWare and Pandemic have nothing to worry about—we're the same old guys doing the same old stuff. Just watch and see what happens."

Pandemic Studios' General Manager **Josh Resnick** on the Electronics Arts buyouts.

"The only next-gen system I've seen is the Wii. I see the Wii as the most significant thing that's happened, at least on the console side, in quite a while."

Will Wright, creator of *The Sims* and *Spore*, in an interview with *The Guardian*.



"I think [the PlayStation 3] is a waste of everybody's time. Investing in the Cell gives you no long-term benefits. You're not

going to gain anything except a hatred of the architecture they've created."

Valve Software co-founder **Gabe Newell** in an interview with *Next Generation*.

"We want an open, standard platform, which is much easier than having five which are not compatible. We're platform agnostic."

Electronic Arts's head of international publishing, **Gerhard Florin**, in an interview with *BBC News*.



Geek Speak 2.0

Big words, small type.

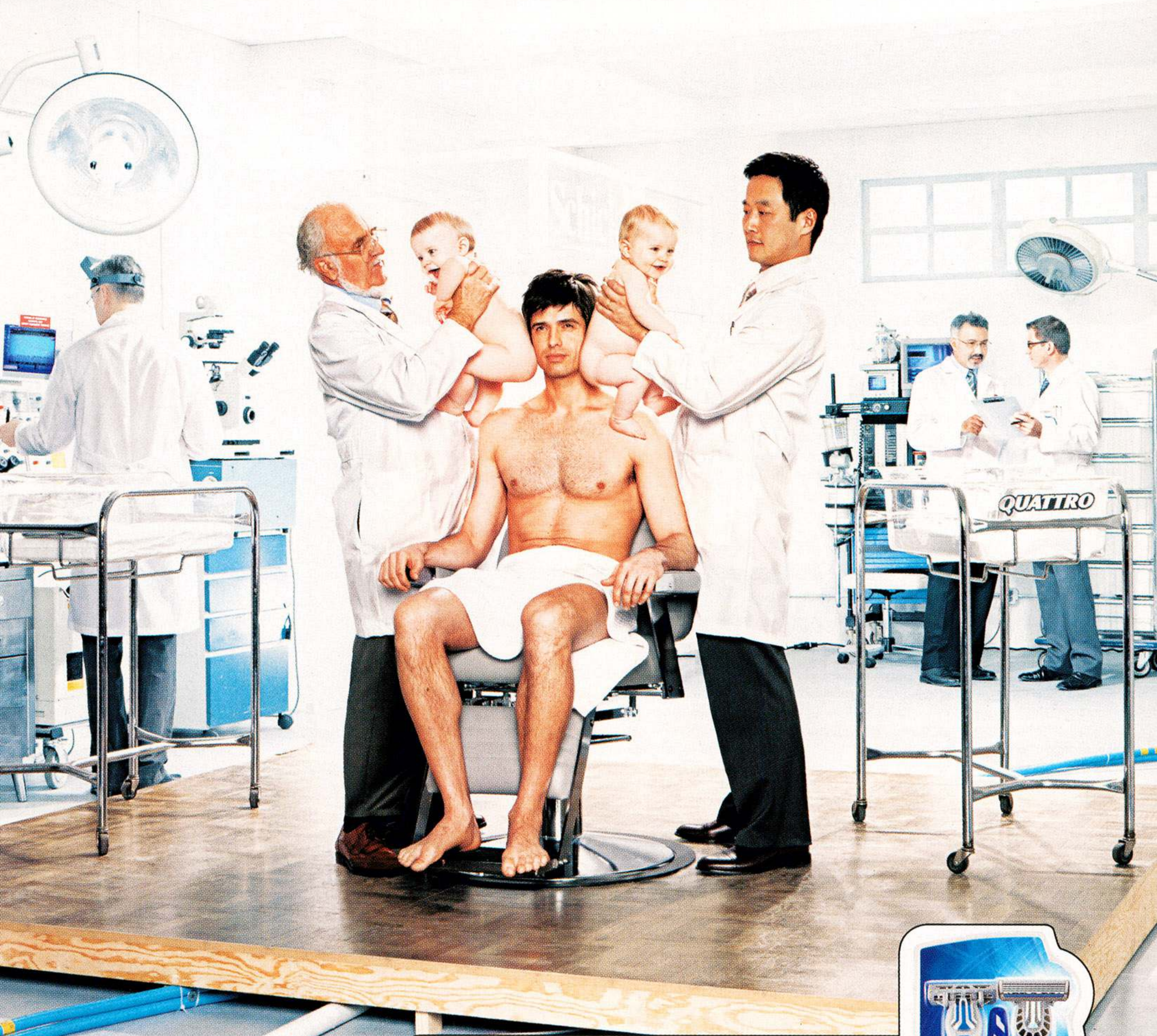
Wallhack: Any cheat or trick that allows you to see or pass through solid walls. Don't be surprised if the developer brings down the ban-hammer on your head for your trouble.

Mule: Any character created for the express purpose of hauling around all the crap you can't carry on the toon you usually play in an MMORPG.

RTFM: Short for "read the freaking manual," and less wholesome alternate phrasings. Usually reserved for when new players ask painfully obvious questions.

Shave Lab Test #43

Rigorous tests prove no disposable shaves
closer than the Quattro Disposable.



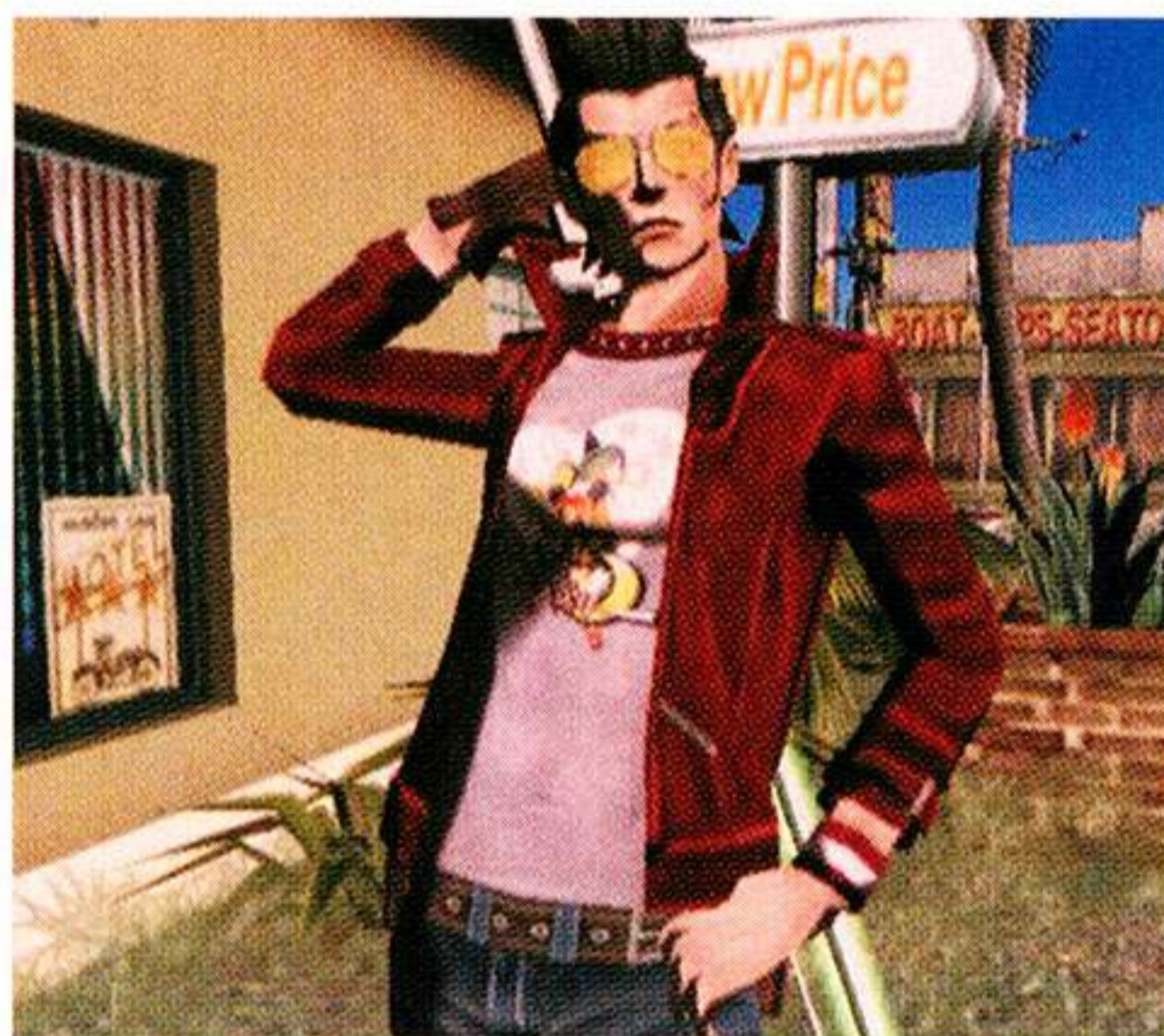
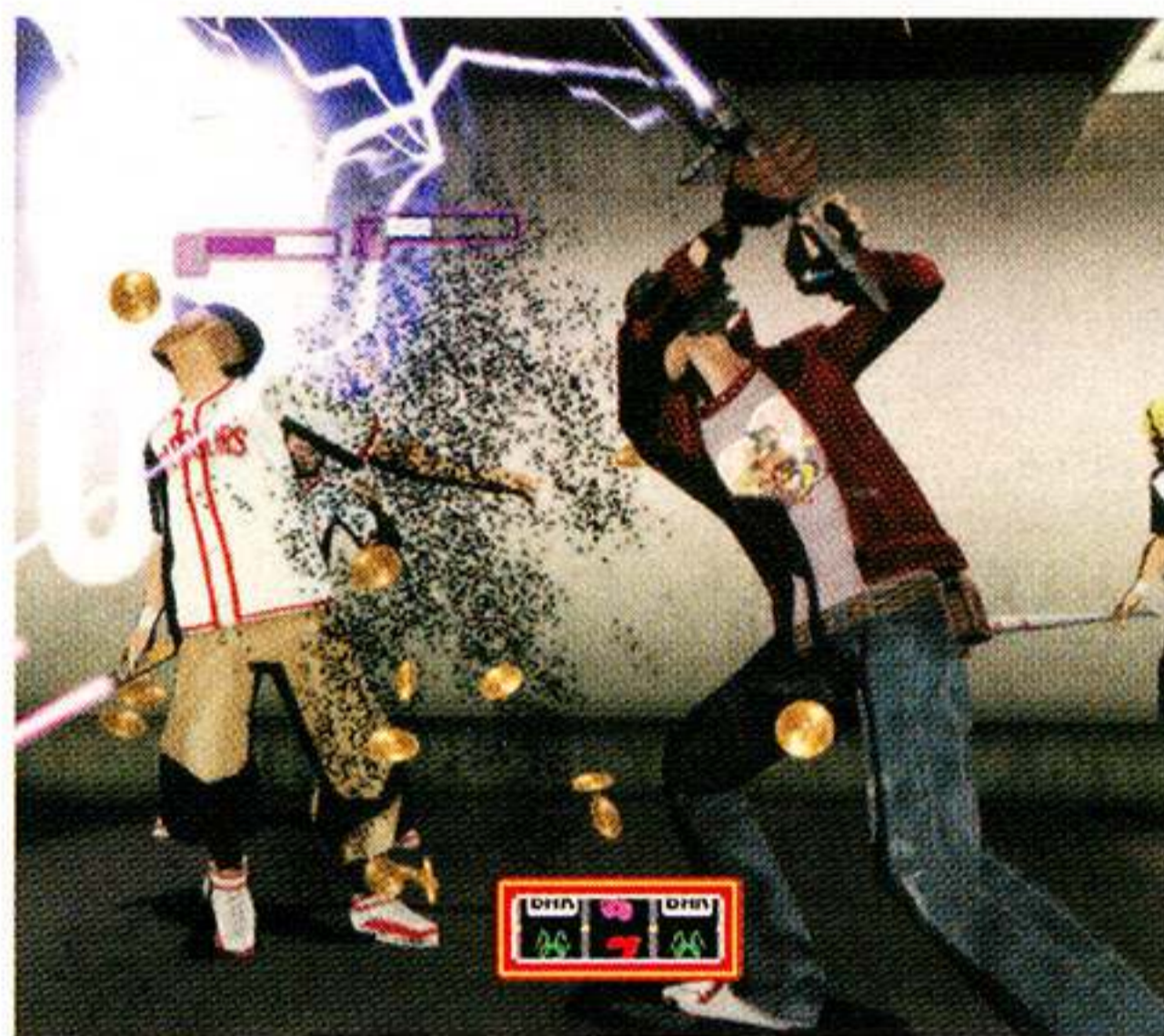
It's irrefutable. No disposable delivers a closer, smoother shave than the Schick® Quattro® Disposable. It's the first disposable with four blades and two conditioning strips, for such a comfortable shave, you can't beat it. The Power of 4® is now Disposable. www.quattrodisposables.com

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BEST GAME YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF: No More Heroes

No More Heroes could be the first Wii game for hardcore players.



Part of what makes No More Heroes so intriguing is in developer Goichi Suda, aka Suda-51, and what he's been working on since the surreal-shooter Killer 7. The story follows Travis Touchdown (awesome) as he kills his way through the ranks of the world's top assassins to become the one remaining "hero." As an action game for the Wii, think Viewtiful Joe meets Killer 7 meets Assassin's Creed (awesome). The gameplay consists of locating and killing a top-tiered assassin, but not before disposing tons of goons that stand between Travis and his target. Even better than the overarching story and goals is the combolicious combat. Travis wields a lightsaber-esque beam katana that attacks high or low based on where you hold the Wii Remote, and can be charged up for finishing attacks (again, awesome).

DVD PRO

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simpsonsmovie.com
\$29.99

STATIC By Sid Shuman

ace...Dead Space...Dead Space...
• God of War III talk? Already? With GOW veterans David Jaffe and Cory Barlog both leaving Sony to pursue more independent endeavors, I'm left wondering who's in charge of sharpening ol' Kratos's blades these days...
• Speaking of PS3 news, I'm hearing more open talk from game guys concerning the notoriously challenging PS3 hardware. Some devs seem to get it (Epic), others are frustrated (Valve), but the key challenge I keep hearing is "memory, memory, memory." Like a PC, the PS3 splits its memory: 256 MB is devoted to system RAM, 256 MB for graphics. The Xbox 360 has 512 MB in one big pool, which is apparently far easier to work with...
• You know what Sony is missing? A mascot. Think about it: Microsoft has Master Chief and Nintendo has Mario, both instantly identifiable characters. Who does Sony have? Kratos is about as close as it gets, but he's a bit too gory and hardcore to represent the entire company. Ratchet isn't a bad candidate either, but the little guy doesn't have that certain star power yet...
• Anyone else think that Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles on PSP is waaaay too freaking hard? I mean, I consider myself an experienced Castlevania player, but this game was much too frustrating to actually finish. Ah well, at least it includes Symphony of the Night...
• Cult game alert #1: Left 4 Dead isn't well known now, but mark my words—it soon will be. You play as part of a four-man survivalist group left stranded in a zombie apocalypse, and you can buddy up with friends on Xbox 360 or the PC to shoot your way through randomized zombie crowds. Looks great so far, and with Valve attached, it could be *the* sleeper hit of 2008...
• We talked a lot of crap and rubbed some folks the wrong way, but in the end, it's us with egg on our faces. Yes, EGM handily won the infamous GamePro Vs. EGM match up in Halo 3. The first battle was pretty close, but our Thanksgiving week fragfest ended in heartbreak for Team GamePro. We didn't win a single lousy match! Well played, EGM, well played...now let's see how you master chiefs fare in Call of Duty 4...
• Cult game alert #2: Everyday Shooter is absolutely magnificent. This super-cheap (under \$10) downloadable PS3 shooter is one of the most creative, addictive games I've ever played, with a phenomenal indie rock soundtrack that you can influence by blowing stuff up. If you have a PS3, make a beeline for Everyday Shooter immediately...
• With Soul Calibur IV planned for 2008, one wonders if Tekken 6 might see a delay to 2009. After all, why would Namco release two fighting games in one year? A Tekken 6 release in 2009 would be a total bummer, though there's always the option of flying to Tokyo and tracking it down in an arcade...
• Metal Gear Online...Metal Gear Online...Metal G...



Pwned this month: Castlevania, Sony, and Tekken 6.



e-mail Sid:
sid_shuman@gamepro.com

GF MOST WANTED

The GameFly Weekly Top 10 is the leading source of online video game rental data—and the *only* top 10 list that features what gamers actually want to play.

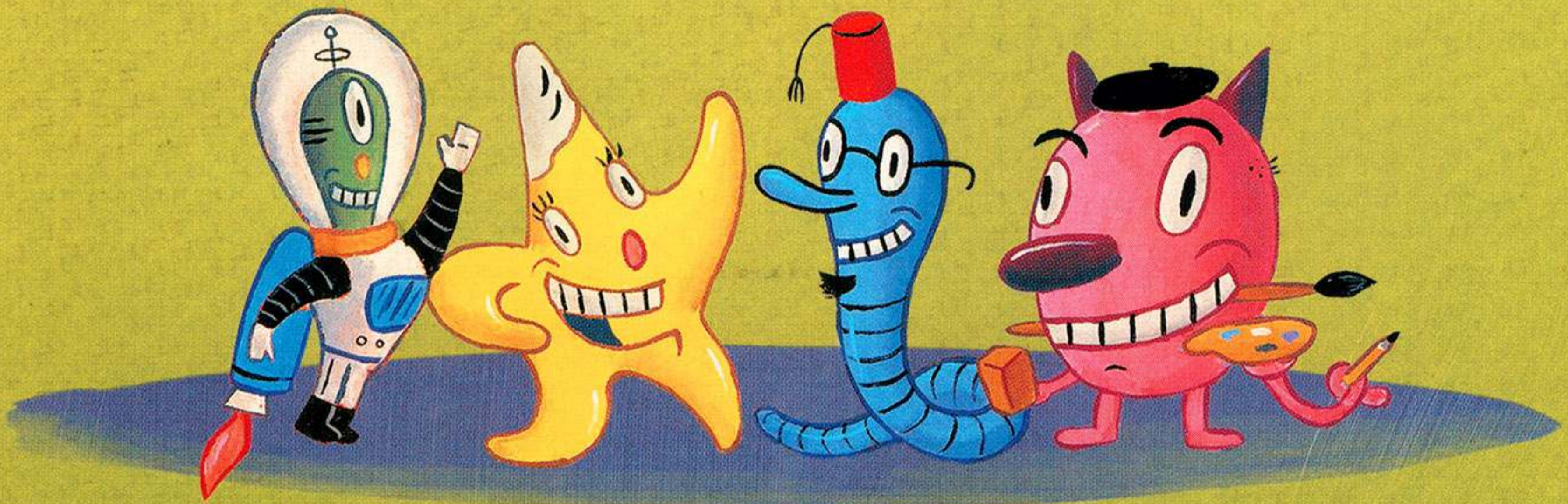
1. Assassin's Creed (Ubisoft) Xbox 360
2. Mass Effect (Microsoft) Xbox 360
3. Kane & Lynch: Dead Men (Eidos Interactive) Xbox 360
4. Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (Activision) Xbox 360
5. Uncharted: Drake's Fortune (Sony) PS3
6. BlackSite: Area 51 (Midway) Xbox 360
7. Need for Speed: ProStreet (EA Games) Xbox 360
8. Assassin's Creed (Ubisoft) PS3
9. Super Mario Galaxy (Nintendo) Wii
10. TimeShift (Vivendi Universal) Xbox 360

UP TO
4 TEAMS

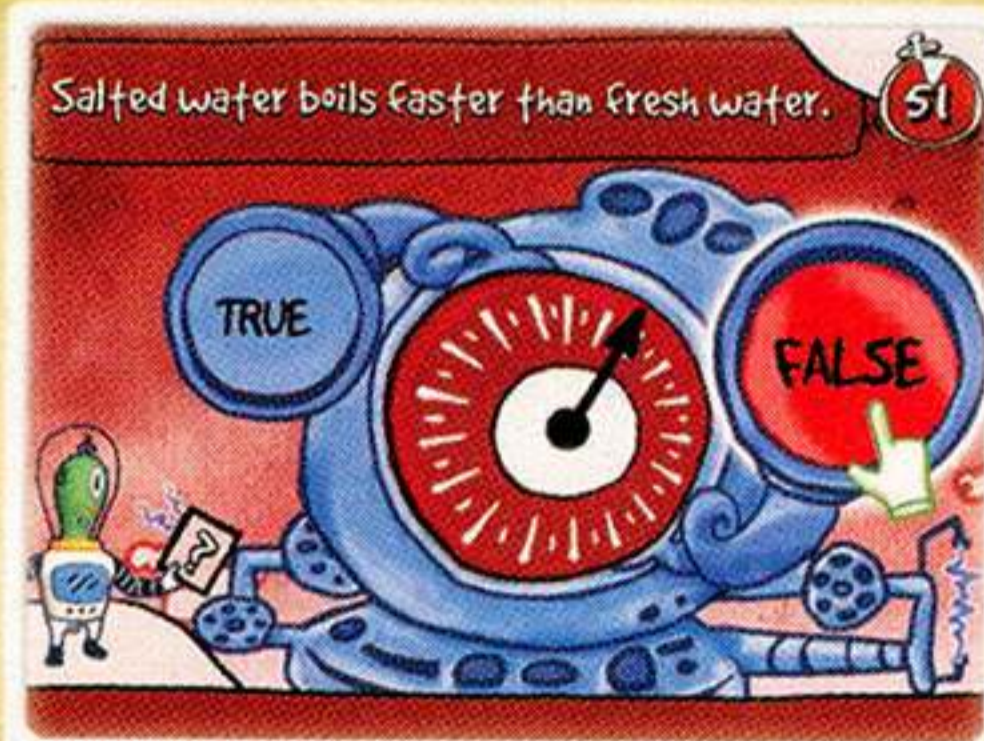


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Wii



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UBISOFT

Are \$60 Games Here to Stay?

The conventional "rise in development cost" argument doesn't always add up—here's why.



COST BREAKDOWN OF A \$60 GAME

When Microsoft released the Xbox 360 on November 22, 2005, it marked the first time that console gamers would be treated to high-definition graphics in all their detailed glory. It also marked the beginning of an era where major game publishers would impose a \$10 next-gen tax—\$60 per game instead of the usual \$50.

Rumblings of a price increase for video games began in 2004 as publishers non-exclusively decided that a \$10 price hike would help offset the rise in production costs as more and more money was being spent on big-budget games. The move, in theory, would help mitigate the high risk of releasing video games. Microsoft and Sony obliged with the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP), but interestingly not everyone got on board.

But what about a rise in development costs—the primary argument publishers used back in 2004 when first exploring the \$60 game standard? While games undoubtedly cost more to make today than they did 20 years ago (think: HD visuals, voice acting, online support, motion-capture), the application of a \$10 price increase is inconsistent at best.

Take EA's Madden NFL 08 for example. The blockbuster game released in August, cost \$59 for both Xbox 360 and PS3, but \$39 for a PC version with near-identical graphics and production values. The same pricing differential is shared by several other titles. Are PC games immune from the alleged rise in development costs, or does rendering a game for Xbox 360 or PS3 really cost that much more?

Deviating circumstances aside, are \$60 games here to stay? Yes and no. Given the success of now-pricier games like Halo 3 and others, I fully expect AAA games (excluding frugal-minded Wii titles) to prevail at a \$10 premium. That said, gamers can also look forward to a greater number of budget games ranging in price from \$20 to \$40 that may or may not neutralize the total affect on their wallets.

If that doesn't work, the price sensitive gamer can always do it the old fashioned way—just simply wait until a desired game goes on sale. —Blake Snow

Versus Mode

Two classic characters, one classic brawl.



John Shepard
(Mass Effect)

Baldur
(Too Human)

Background: Veteran human soldier.

Veteran Norse god.

Best ability: Can manipulate dark energy to create gravitational vortices.

Can skate back and forth between enemies in mid-air.

Weapons: Wide range of upgradeable firearms.

Upgradeable firearms, blades, staves, hammers, and more.

Armor: Upgradeable jumpsuits of the future.

Upgradeable helmets, chests, gauntlets, and boots of the future.

Companions: Mentally challenged dingbats that seem to like getting shot.

Fellow Aesir gods like Thor.

OUTCOME:

John Shepard strides toward Baldur in ruthless badass mode, but all his swaggering machismo earns him is a wry smirk. Each hero opens fire on the other from a distance—Shepard with an assault rifle, Baldur with a pair of gleaming pistols—but as the gap between combatants closes, Shepard has not choice but to switch to a shotgun, while Baldur unsheathes a halberd the size of a telephone pole. Before Shepard can get off a single blast, Baldur

launches him into the air and goes airborne in a blur of feverish bloodlust. Shepard is three different kinds of dead when his pieces finally hit the ground.

DECISION: Baldur >>>>



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10 Jaw-Dropping Moments in MASS EFFECT

Here are 10 moments in Mass Effect that will leave your jaw hanging wide open!




1

Feast your eyes on the Citadel
The Citadel space station is the central hub of the Milky Way. Take the tour of grandeur and marvel at its Titanic wonders.



2

Create the ultimate war hero
Aside from being able to control the outcome of every conversation and mission, you're also able to create your own personal protagonist with more customization options than an EA sports game.



3

Mako drop in
The all-terrain Mako is a hulking ATV which plays a vital role in planetary exploration. The moment you drop onto an uncharted planet with this beast, you'll be glad it's there to shelter you.



4

Behold the galaxy map
There are few games that have the depth and scope of Mass Effect, and you'll grasp that reality as soon as you set your eyes onto the vast and varied locales dispersed throughout the Milky Way.




5

Explore the galaxy
What's the fun in exploring a new planet without forging a new path yourself? Doing so will provide for some interesting discoveries—Alien artifacts perhaps.




6

Massive romance
With all the alien races in Mass Effect you'd be hard pressed to find a more varied smorgasbord of optional odd match ups.



7

Tech abilities and biotics
There's nothing like the exhilarating feeling of running into battle with all your abilities cooled down and ready to go, assigning tactical orders to squad mates, and watching the ass-kicking commence.




8

Be a renegade
With tens of thousands of dialogue options smattered throughout the game, there's nothing more fearful than an intimidating flick of the right analog stick to verbally unloading on an NPC by showing your nasty "renegade" side.



9

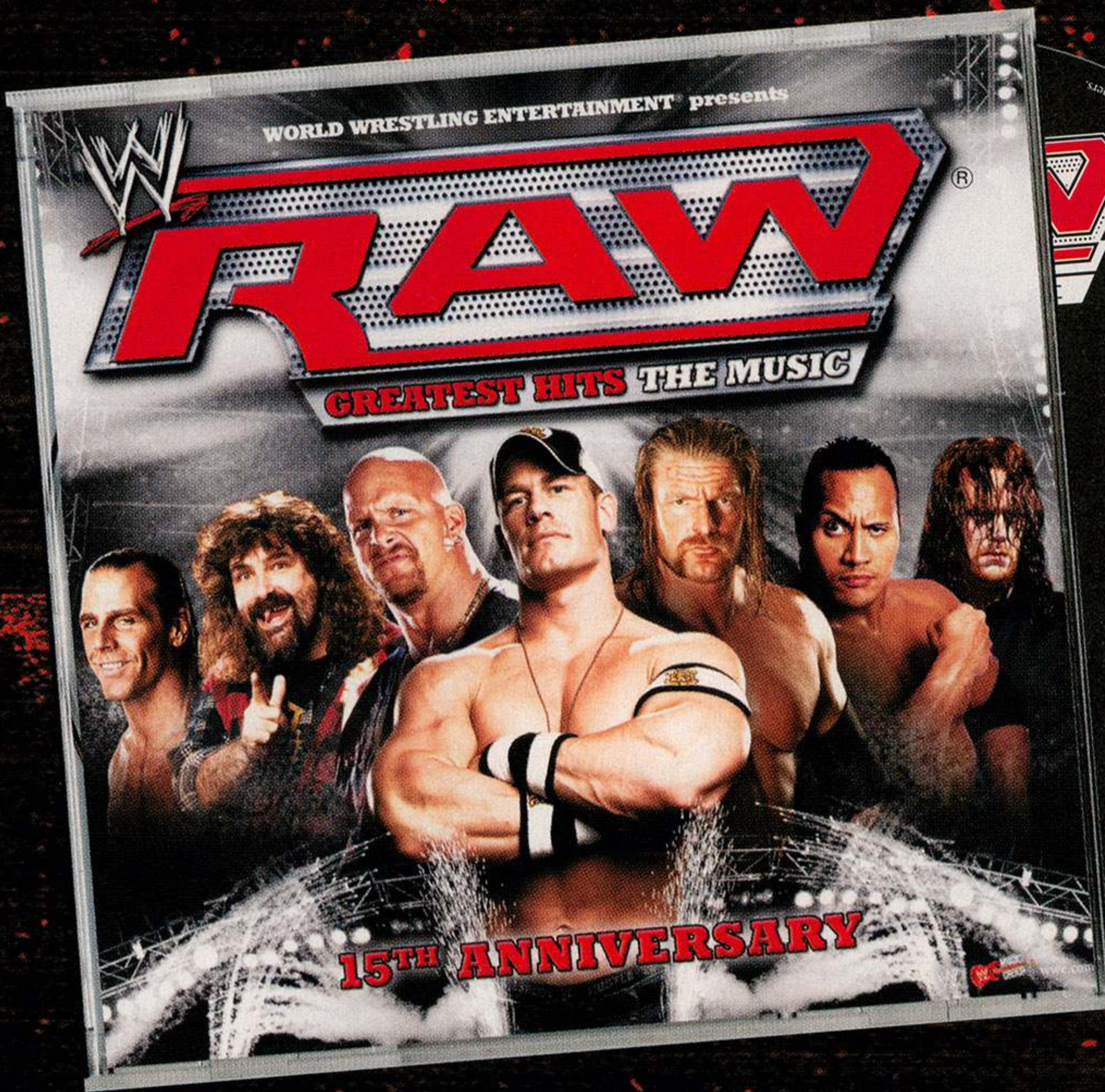
The death of a friend
Without giving too much away, it's fairly easy to discern who the antagonist of the game is early on, as he cold heartedly executes one of your team members. Make sure to show him the same compassion when you two finally meet.



10

Realize your choices affect the galaxy
It's difficult to believe that throughout Mass Effect all the little choices you make will affect the big picture, but that's the hard truth. Make the right or wrong decision to potential sway the entire story arc.—Andy Burt

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Dismembered enemies will still desperately try to attack Ryu.

NINJA GAIDEN II

The development team behind the Dead or Alive and Ninja Gaiden series' readies the "world's premier action game."

Xbox 360

Developer: Team Ninja ■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Release Date: 2008

Tomonobu Itagaki, executive producer at Team Ninja, wants you to feel the emotional tear of a true Japanese sword slicing through human flesh. Once you have that dynamic, he says, then it's at that point you can begin to add more weapons and new moves. This is *Ninja Gaiden II*, the highly anticipated follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Ninja Gaiden* for the original Xbox. It is by far the most visceral, visually-striking game in the series, and Team Ninja is primed to release the "world's premier action game."

DEEP WOUNDS

But how does one go about creating the "world's premier action game," a promise given by Itagaki at Tokyo Game Show in 2007? "I want to achieve a high degree of fusion between the visual pleasures of the game and its mental stimulation. This is the main reason the representation of violence in our game is not just superficial. It forms an integral part of the gameplay experience."

At its core, *Ninja Gaiden II* is an extremely gory game with lots of blood and dismembered

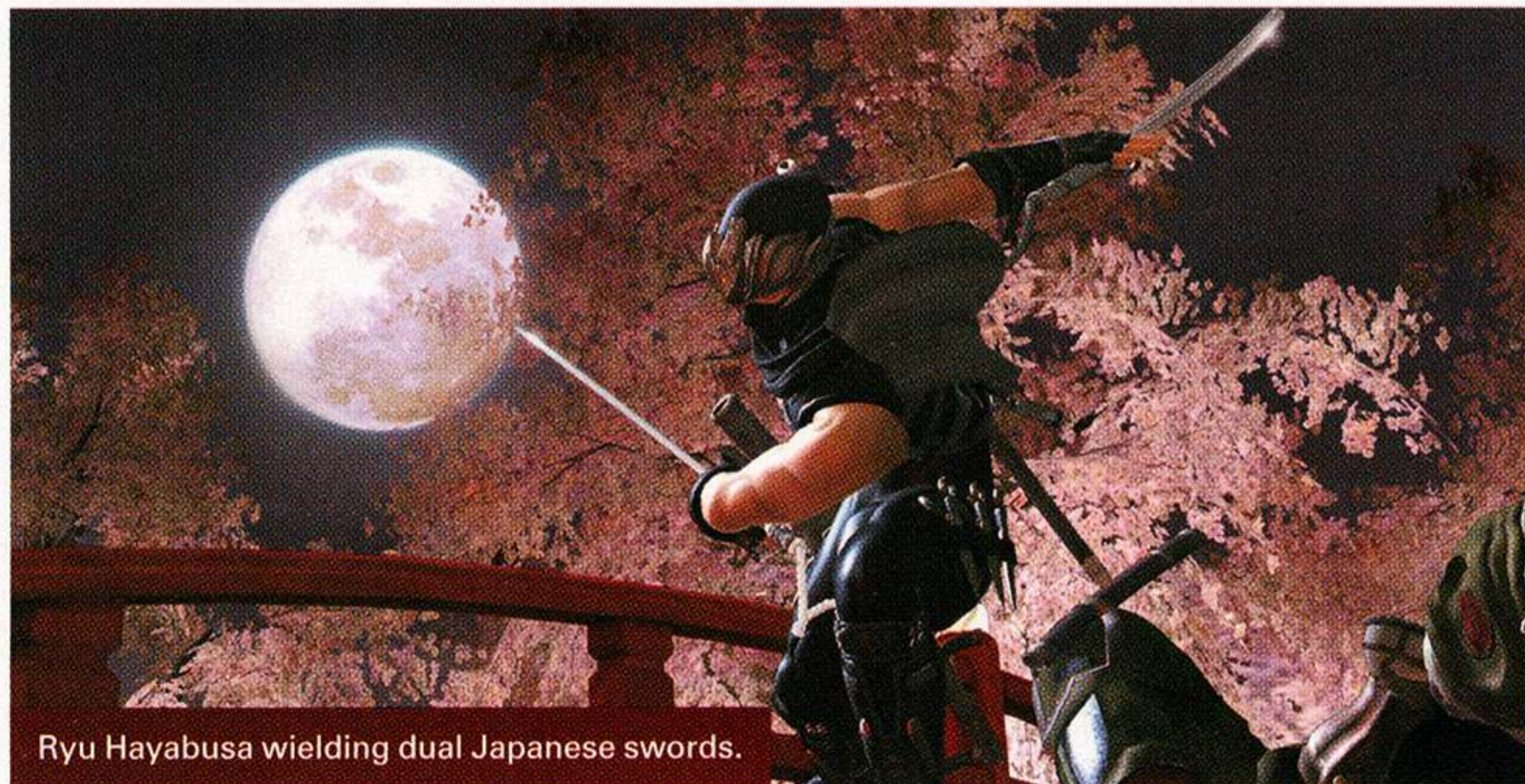
HIGHLIGHTS

- *Ninja Gaiden II* will surely dazzle with beautiful, bloody combat.
- Each weapon is attractive and individually unique.
- Exclusively for the Xbox 360.

appendages. Players will use many different traditional Japanese blades to fight through hordes of ninja enemies and monsters. Ryu Hayabusa, the game's main character, can wield dual Samurai swords, a scythe, shuriken, and more. The most striking weapon we've seen is a brutal pair of Wolverine claws that make minced meat out of enemies. Itagaki told *GamePro* that he felt the appealing weapons in the first game were too similar, so a huge goal for *NGII* is to make each weapon feel individually unique. "The weapons are so attractive that people will want to beat the game multiple times using different ones," said Itagaki.

But the fun doesn't stop with tangible blades of steel; Ryu also has his magical ninja arts, aka *Ninpo*. For example, Ryu can focus his energy to summon fireballs or a deadly tornado of wind blades to cut through his opponents. These special moves are particularly effective in a bind where multiple enemies surround Ryu.

The combat in *NGII* is relentless. Dismembered enemies, "will attack Hayabusa relentlessly, even after they have lost a part of their body," said



Ryu Hayabusa wielding dual Japanese swords.



Appendages litter the battlefield after each fight.



Ryu's blistering speed and agility have been turned up a notch from previous installments of the game.

CONTINUED ►



Rival ninja clans aren't the only enemy Ryu must fight in NGII. Monsters ooze green blood...how typical.



Ryu summons a fireball with his magical Ninpo ninjutsu arts.

CONTINUED ►

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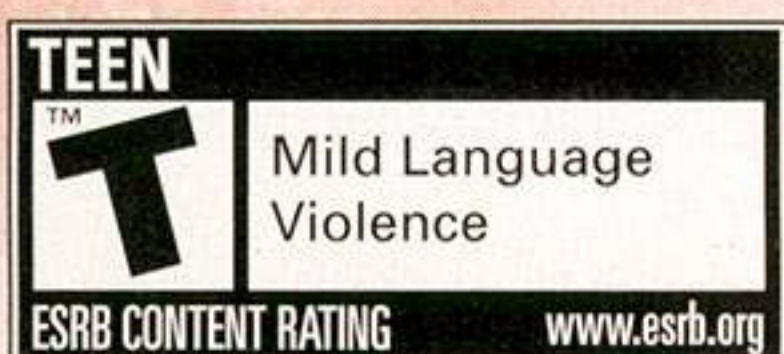
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wii

Itagaki. "In fact, when they have lost all hope and are resigned to their fate, their A.I. and attack patterns become unrelentingly vicious." Although the dismemberment factor of the game is vastly over the top, beheaded enemies will not continue to attack Ryu. Heck, this isn't a Resident Evil game.

BLEEDING BEAUTY

It's easy to see that NGII yields an excessive amount of blood from enemy wounds; just look at the screen shots. But to make NGII the bloodiest game ever is not the goal for Team Ninja. "There are two ways that blood is expressed in the media: in a beautiful and stylistic way, or in a gruesome and superfluous way," Itagaki expressed. "Please remember that we always place the utmost importance on beauty in our games."

And beautiful NGII is. The graphics are crisp and the colors vibrant, almost stylized. The graphics are even upped from the PS3's Ninja Gaiden Sigma. "The standard of quality I require from this game is in an entirely different league than the original," said Itagaki. "In order to achieve this standard we have spent the past two years creating a new action engine from scratch."

The new engine allows Team Ninja to do a lot of really cool things that couldn't be achieved with the hardware of the original Xbox. Multi-dimensional battles, improved enemy A.I. routines, compartmental dismemberment and pulverization, and a realistic animation system that represents the real ninja arts.

NGII also brings a revamped health system that enables Ryu to automatically heal himself when no enemies are present. A single enemy in the vicinity will disable Ryu from auto healing. "Don't forget here," Itagaki added, "that the enemies' ability to pursue has been greatly improved since the first game, so players won't be able to get away so easily."

Fans of the series know getting away easily is not the way of a true ninja. Ninja Gaiden games are well known for their unforgiving difficulty, sometimes too difficult. Team Ninja hopes to offset the frustrations of playing NGII with four planned levels of difficulty. The easiest level of difficulty, Itagaki said, will be tailored to those who have never played a Ninja Gaiden game before, and will be even friendlier than the previous games' Ninja Dog mode.

EXCLUSIVITY

Sigma, the most recent Ninja Gaiden game, was a PS3 exclusive, but NGII is coming only to the Xbox 360. We asked Itagaki for some answers. "Ninja Gaiden was born on the first Xbox, so it's only natural to create a sequel for the Xbox 360. It's like a son wanting to attend the same college that his father graduated from." Also, Rachel, who was a playable character in Sigma, will not return for NGII. There will be, however, a new "and very attractive heroine" in the game," Itagaki added.

With all the extravagant blood, sharp blades, and severed limbs, Ninja Gaiden II promises to be a huge title for the Xbox 360 in 2008, and with any luck, the world's premier action game. —Travis Moses

NG2

Get the link to **Ninja Gaiden II** screens and news sent to your e-mail. Text **NG2** to **59479**

Only standard text messaging rates apply

Way of the Ninja

A QUICK CONSOLE HISTORY OF NINJA GAIDEN

Our favorite blue ninja, Ryu Hayabusa, has been around for a long, long time, making his debut on the NES. Since then, he's appeared in several console games leading up to this year's Ninja Gaiden II.

NINJA GAIDEN (NES, 1989)



Ninja Gaiden essentially marked many of the staples still used in the series, such as Cinematic cut-scenes, the Windmill Shuriken, and the magical ninja arts.

NINJA GAIDEN II: THE DARK SWORD OF CHAOS (NES, 1990)



NGII for the NES was the first game in the series to introduce "Shadow Clones" that produced an invincible copy of Ryu that would mimic his every move.

NINJA GAIDEN III: THE ANCIENT SHIP OF DOOM (NES, 1991)



Infamously known as the most difficult game in the original series, NGIII included only minor tweaks to the near-perfect gameplay of the first two games.

NINJA GAIDEN TRILOGY (SNES, 1995)



In 1995, Tecmo released the Ninja Gaiden Trilogy for the SNES with updated graphics, improved audio, but made no changes to the gameplay. Many fans were disappointed with the SNES release because of censored gore, framerate issues and omitted music tracks (three Ninja Gaiden Sega offshoots were released shortly after).

NINJA GAIDEN 2K SERIES (PS3, XBOX, XBOX 360, DS, 2004-2008)



In 2004, Tomonobu Itagaki and his team of ninja game developers, rightly called Team Ninja, revived Ninja Gaiden with a new story arch and a full 3D environment on the original Xbox. An updated version of the game called Ninja Gaiden Black followed a year later on the Xbox with new moves and features. In 2007, the PS3 saw Ninja Gaiden Sigma, the same game again but with updated graphics and introduced Rachel as a new playable character.



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UBISOFT®



This nifty little plasma cutter lops of limbs in no time flat!

DEAD SPACE

You'll give an arm—and a couple of legs—to play this Resident Evil-style shooter.

PS3 Xbox 360

Developer: EA Redwood Shores Publisher: EA Games Release Date: 2008

Bizarre multi-limbed aliens, a mysterious derelict ship, and a futuristic stasis gun that does everything from lift heavy objects to eviscerate enemies. This is Dead Space.

EA's leap into survival-horror games is a long overdue one, and who could blame the company for wanting in on the gory action? A genre of games owned primarily by Resident Evil and Silent Hill, most horror games are created by Japanese developers who bring a more psychological

brand of fear. Dead Space is a Western game designed by Western developers. And though this is one creepy experience in the vein of *Alien* and *Event Horizon*, it looks and plays similar to what Western gamers are used to: third-person action.

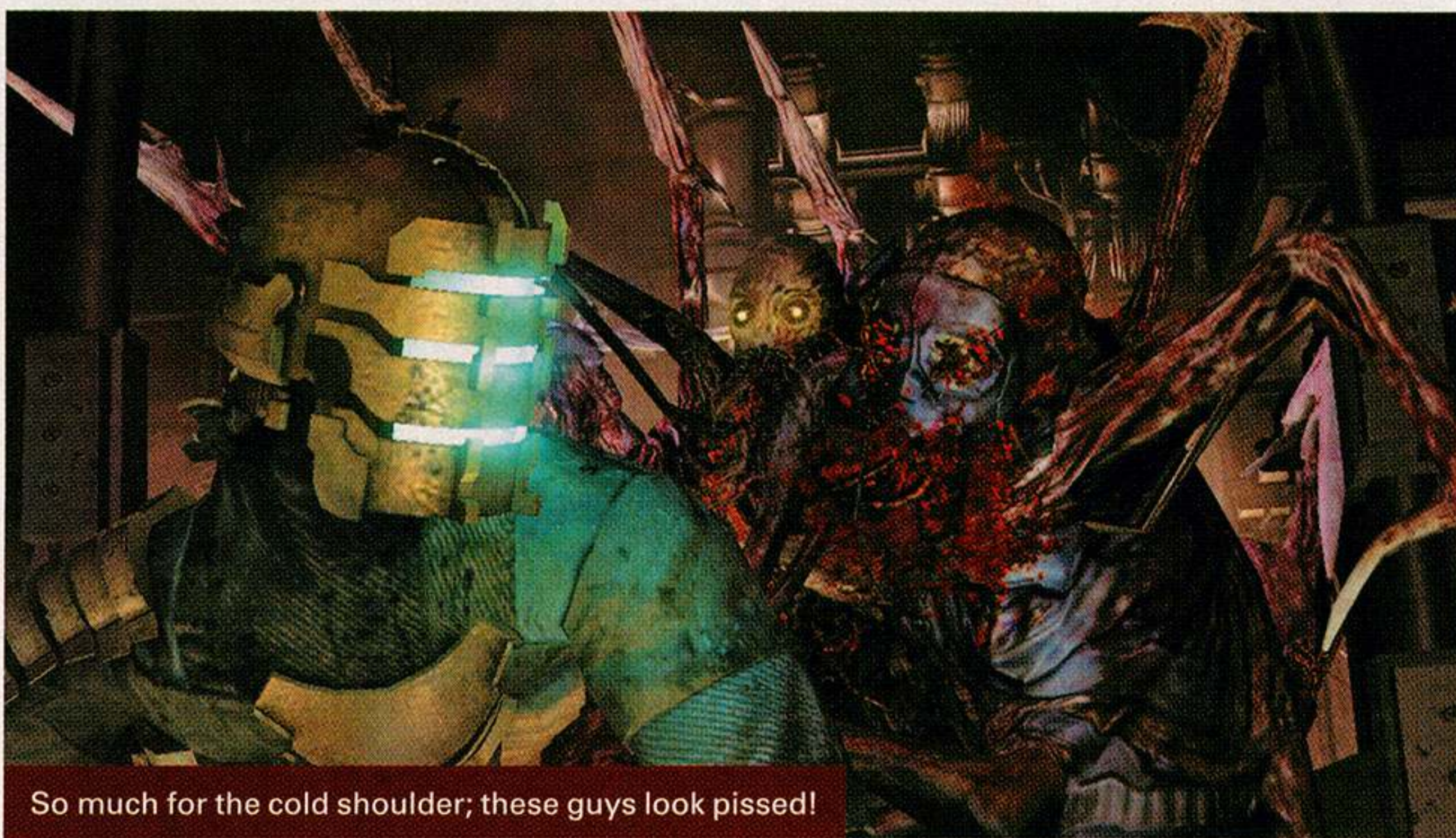
DEAD SHIP

Intro the fray. Isaac Clark, a spaceship engineer, gets called aboard a stranded craft for what he thinks is a routine fix-it operation. Of course, it's

just one of those days for Isaac. You know, the kind where your workspace is overrun by a mysterious and murderous alien force. As Isaac makes his way to the hull of the vessel, he's spooked by dead bodies hanging from the ceiling. He attempts to activate the ship's refueling sequence, but it's going to take a little personal legwork to get it done. Off to investigate the problem, Isaac's stunned by a spider-like alien around the corner following his first steps. Quickly drawing his do-it-all weapon, he first shoots off one of the creature's legs, showcasing Dead Space's innovative dismemberment technology.

The multi-armed and -legged creatures are reminiscent of Midway's *The Suffering*, or the movie *The Thing*. Many of the unnamed foes have blade-like protrusions sprouting from their limbs. As more pop out around what seems like every other corner, Isaac continues to lop off body parts, using converted mining tools like plasma cutters and the stasis gun, in addition to a confiscated pulse rifle. The weapons' three-pronged laser sights look particularly striking, and will flip horizontally or vertically depending on whether you want to lop off limbs or vivisect foes. Gooney!

Heads up. Without warning, a pterodactyl-like creature swoops in from above, but quickly vanishes into the darkness of the ship. As Isaac stumbles into a containment room, he gets locked in. The lights go out and it's suddenly pitch-black. The sounds of creeping and heavy breathing get louder and louder. Whatever it is, it's overhead now.



So much for the cold shoulder; these guys look pissed!



Into the abyss. The zero-gravity areas of Dead Space are just plain cool.



Dead Space's dismemberment technology lets you sever arms and legs, however many they might have.

STRANDED

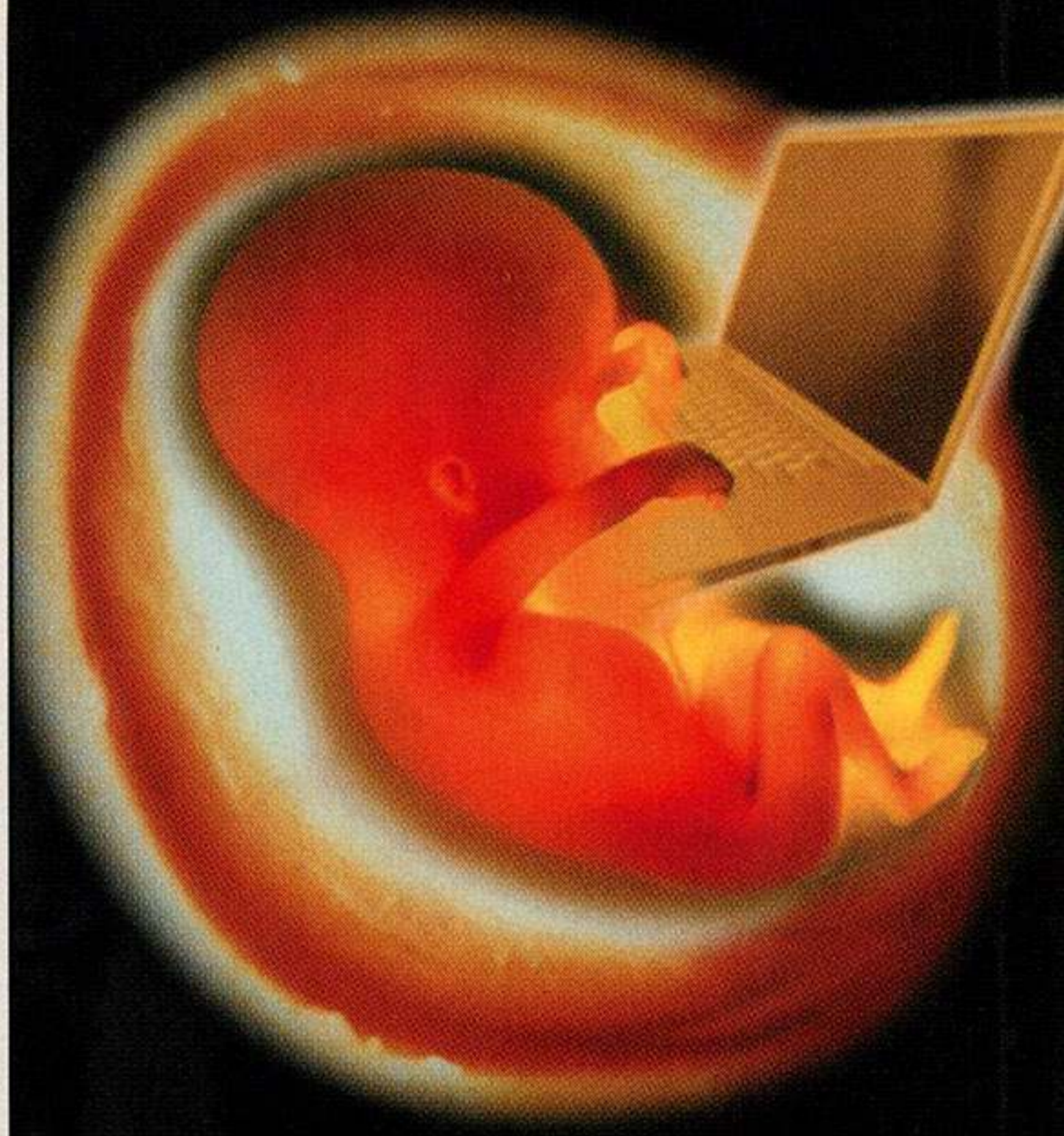
During these moments of eerily near-silence, the game's positional audio takes over. Isaac tries to decipher exactly where this creature is by audible footsteps. *Clank, clank. Thud!* It's inside. A quick struggle leaves the creature impaled on the decontamination room floor, the momentary safety well-earned. But it doesn't last for long.

As Isaac opens a large sealed door, a monotone female voice issues a warning. "Entering zero-G." Isaac's gear grants him limited oxygen and allows him to stay fastened to a surface, but to navigate through the gravity-less environment in the room, he has to jump. As he vaults from platform to platform, almost swimming through the atmosphere, more creatures attack. He fends them off, but that's only half the battle. There's a reason Isaac is here. The room holds the ship's Gravitron, the device that produces artificial grav-

ity to the rest of the ship. To get it back up and running, he uses the Stasis gun (not unlike Half-Life 2's Gravity gun) to force pieces of the machine's clutch together. *Gravitron online.* That did it! But the natives are getting restless. A gigantic worm-like creature suddenly grabs Isaac's foot and drags him through twisting hallways, until...

THE WAITING GAME

Well, they can't give it all away. But from what we've seen, Dead Space is one of the most effective survival horror games in ages. The focus on action and resource management, with the addition of a clean interface and simple controls, bodes well for Resident Evil 4 fans looking for a new fix. But the spooky alien race steals the show, and what better setting to showcase the terror than inside a ship isolated in the black depths of dead space.—Chris Morell



[GEEKED AT BIRTH.]



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Crypto's arsenal of alien weapons does everything from stun to probe.

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! BIG WILLY UNLEASHED

Anal probing and cannibalistic fast food...

Wii PS2

Developer: Locomotive Games Publisher: THQ Release Date: February

Destroy All Humans! was once a prime example of a truly original game concept. Flipping Doom and countless number alien-thrashing games their heads, DAH! was one of the few games to actually hand the anal probe over to the player. Destroy humans? What a concept!

TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER

The smart-mouthed martian Crypto isn't quite as lovably bizarre as *The Simpsons'* Kang or Kodos,

but his Zap-O-Matic and probing device still make him one extra terrestrial to fear. In the first DAH! game for the Wii, Big Willy Unleashed takes place in the funk-slathered 1970s where the story is a play on the classic 1973 sci-fi flick, *Soylent Green*. A fast food restaurant where the secret meat is humans seems like the perfect place to carry out the plan...until rival chain Colonel Kluckin discovers the secret. Now Crypto must use a Bob's Big Boy-like robot to fend off foes and protect the precious DNA burgers.

be familiar to anyone who played Grand Theft Auto, and it's technologically sound on the Wii hardware, a feat considering the heaping pile of third-party Wii games that seems to be growing everyday. The large amount of gameplay, solid controls, and witty humor are reason enough for Wii owners to give Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed a chance, even if it's a bit on the cannibalistic side.—Chris Morell



Big Willy defends his precious fast food joint by any means possible.

On the Wii, Crypto's kinesis powers control nicely via the Remote—simply flick your wrist to toss helpless earthlings about like rag dolls. Crypto's jetpack makes him mobile, and with weapons that melt and shock at will, he's got enough firepower to take down the Master Chief.

WII WILL CONQUER YOUR PLANET

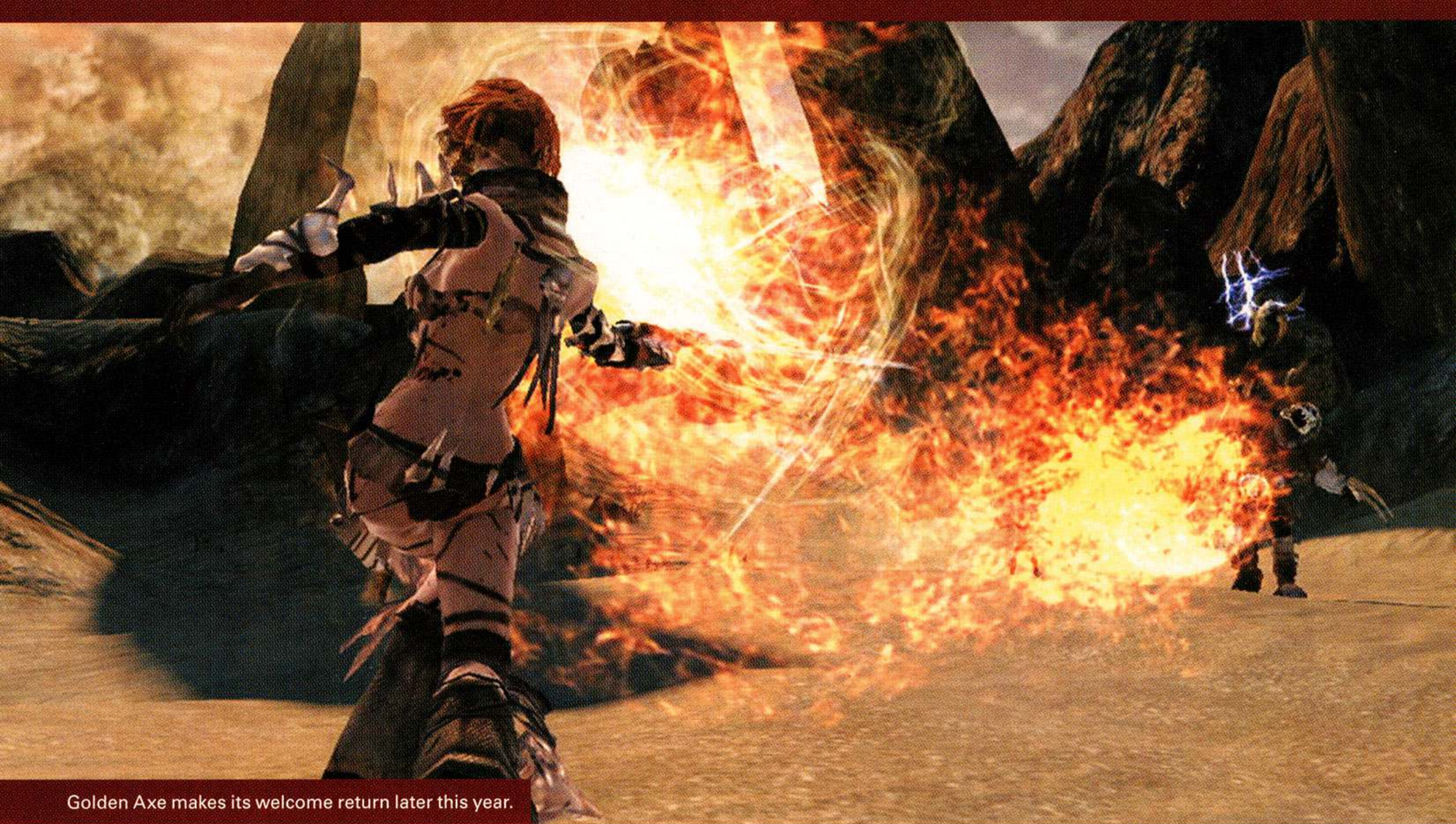
The DAH! open-ended mission-based gameplay should



Crypto's guns control nicely with Wii Remote.

PBCT

Get the link to **Destroy All Humans!** screens and news sent to your e-mail. Text **PBCT** to **59479**
Only standard text messaging rates apply



Golden Axe makes its welcome return later this year.

GOLDEN AXE: BEAST RIDER

Kicking gnomes and severing heads in a fur-lined bikini

PS3 Xbox 360

Developer: Secret-Level Publisher: Sega Release Date: 2008

If I could reclaim all of the money I spent at the arcade drinking Orange Julius and playing Sega's quarter-cruncher Golden Axe when I was in middle school, I'd probably be able to pay off my student loans. Though I will never see those quarters again, short of acquiring the powers of time travel (the unicorns tell me it's coming soon), this spring I will be able to renew my love of the classic action-adventure game with Golden Axe: Beast Rider.

WITHOUT A SADDLE

This re-imagining of the original Golden Axe is a gritty and bloody game that follows the story of Tyris Flare as she seeks to avenge her slaughtered

tribe. Many of the elements that made the first Golden Axe so great are present, including Tyris's fire magic, an omni-present golden axe, Gilius Thunderhead, Axe Battler, Death Adder, and the gnome who now spends his time collecting the dismembered body parts off the battle field.

But it's the beasts that make this third-person action game unique. Just as in the original, Tyris can mount any beast and use its attacks, as well as her own sword. But this time around she can lop off heads while the fangs of her furry companions shred torsos in half. Though there's no cooperative play, there looks to be plenty of exciting elements to keep long-time fans jazzed.

—Todd Melick



A combination of mounted and on-foot combat vary the action in this gritty story of revenge.



SECRET AGENT CLANK

PSP

■ Developer: Sony ■ Publisher: High Impact Games
■ Release Date: Fall 2008



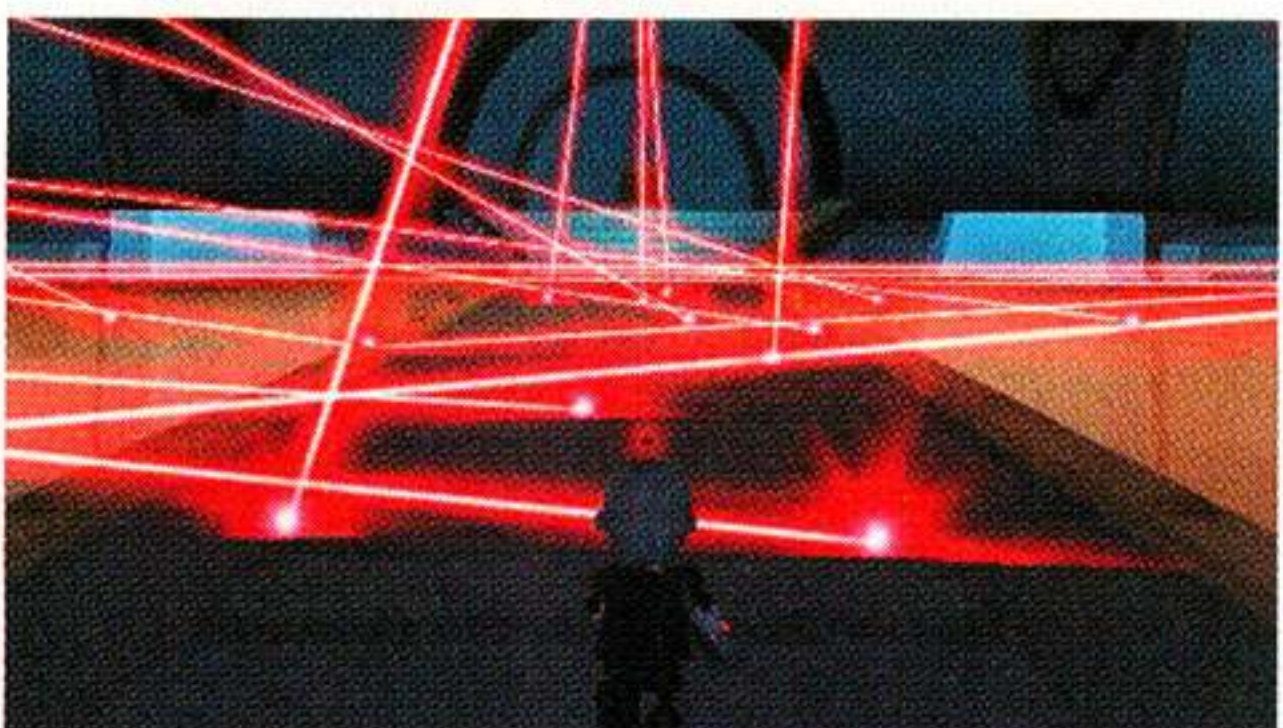
If you enjoyed the destructive platforming mayhem of Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters then you'll absolutely love Secret Agent Clank. To play up the "secret agent" motif, High Impact Games is putting an emphasis on James Bond-style espionage for Clank's solo adventure. Gunplay is at a minimum compared to Ratchet's typical arsenal, but Agent Clank is outfitted with more than his fair share of cool gadgets and a tuxedo to boot. This isn't your average Men's Warehouse tux either. Clank's bowtie doubles as a boomerang capable of targeting multiple enemies, and the rose in his lapel turns into a monster-eating ferocious flower.



Like the Groovotron bomb in Ratchet & Clank Future for the PS3, which causes all enemies in the vicinity to break out in dance, Clank's gadgets lean toward more of a supportive role. Most of the damage is dished out in close-quarters combat, and Clank's specialty is three-hit combinations with some rather debonair finishing moves. In the vein of recent Ratchet & Clank games, Clank can acquire upgrades for new combos and finishing moves to keep things fresh.

The traditional platforming gameplay is broken up with the introduction of sneaking missions. Press the button prompts in the correct sequence to watch the nimble robot dive away from oncoming traffic, flip into the shadows like an agile agent and slink past laser-guided security systems.

During boss battles, players command the role of Captain Qwark. It's an odd twist, but the boss battles are essentially flashbacks of secret agent Clank's accomplishments that sneaky Qwark is taking credit for. OK, fall 2008 can't come soon enough. We want to play now.—Travis Moses



KABOOM KABOOM (WORKING TITLE)

DS

■ Developer and Publisher: Vogster
■ Release Date: Spring 2008



Adult-Swimmers take note. Kaboom Kaboom (working title) is right up your alley. And if wise-cracking robots aren't your thing, the exaggerated cartoonish destruction should suck you in.

But hey, what's humor without a game behind it? Kaboom is setting out to be a deep real-time strategy game for the Nintendo DS, something that prior DS games have done, though usually with the driest of tones. Here's the deal. Players construct their own brand of back-talking Heroic robots—whose skills can be constantly upgraded—that can drastically alter the tide of war.



It starts like Warcraft with each player entering a battle and crafting a headquarter. There is a set amount of cash flow that can be used to do anything from throw up buildings, birth more troops, and upgrade your current heroes. Once you're out of resources, things get dire, and you'll have to rely on straightforward strategy to get the job done...or perish. Most of your team's "expendable" robots are controlled automatically, so your job is to directly command your heroes by pointing and clicking with the DS stylus.

Eleven different brands of robots spout out hilariously digitized one-liners that accompany the wacky weapons alongside more than 20 single-player missions penned by the duo behind SpongeBob SquarePants the cartoon. Four-player Wi-Fi rounds out Kaboom Kaboom.—Chris Morell



NANOSTRAY 2

DS

■ Developer: Shin'en
■ Publisher: Majesco ■ Release Date: January



The first Nanostray was a rather popular DS shooter. As a fun, retro-style shooter that has a nice amount of customization, the DS makes the perfect platform for its nostalgic blend of old-school shooting. The game's based around the mysterious Nanostray virus, but the hokey story plays second fiddle to the retro fighting gameplay. It starts as a left to right side-scroller, but eventually the stages will run from bottom to top and vice-versa. For those who want to blast right past the story, Arcade mode will cut out the fluff.

The biggest draw in Nanostray 2, aside from its obvious retro style, is being able to customize and configure each weapon in the game. Each playable ship is more than well-equipped for battle, with six unlockable weapons per craft. The more you play, the more you unlock. And you'll definitely need the firepower. With 16 bosses and over 100 unique enemies to fight, at times you'll think the onslaught will never stop. The new Nanogauge builds up multiplier bonuses for each shot, which once full, lets you pulverize hoards of attacking ships.

With 32 challenges, a simulator that changes up the premise each time you play, and two-player co-op and duel play (supports single-card play), there's hardly a dull moment. The best part? Show off your score in Nanostray 2's online championship where the best will come to battle.—Chris Morell



THE 9

Only the biggest games make *GamePro's* monthly spastic info dump

Special guest **Bill Roper**, the main force behind the *Diablo* and *Hellgate* series', shares the nine biggest games on his wish list.



Halo 3

1 Halo 3 • One of my best friends is a Halo fanatic, so we've been waiting until our schedules lined up to play through the Campaign in co-op mode. It's time to show the Covenant who the Master Chief really is! **2 Super Mario Galaxy** • I've been a Mario man for, well, ever. Mario 64 was the reason I bought my Nintendo 64. Everything I have seen about this game makes me even happier that I own a Wii. **3 Rock Band** • I'm a musician and (among other things) play bass. I think this actually worked against me in *Guitar Hero* because my eyes would see one thing while my ears and fingers instinctively did something else. In *Rock Band*, not only can I do what I do best (sing), but it makes me very desirable as a band mate. Now if I could just master the drums...



Super Mario Galaxy



Call of Duty 4



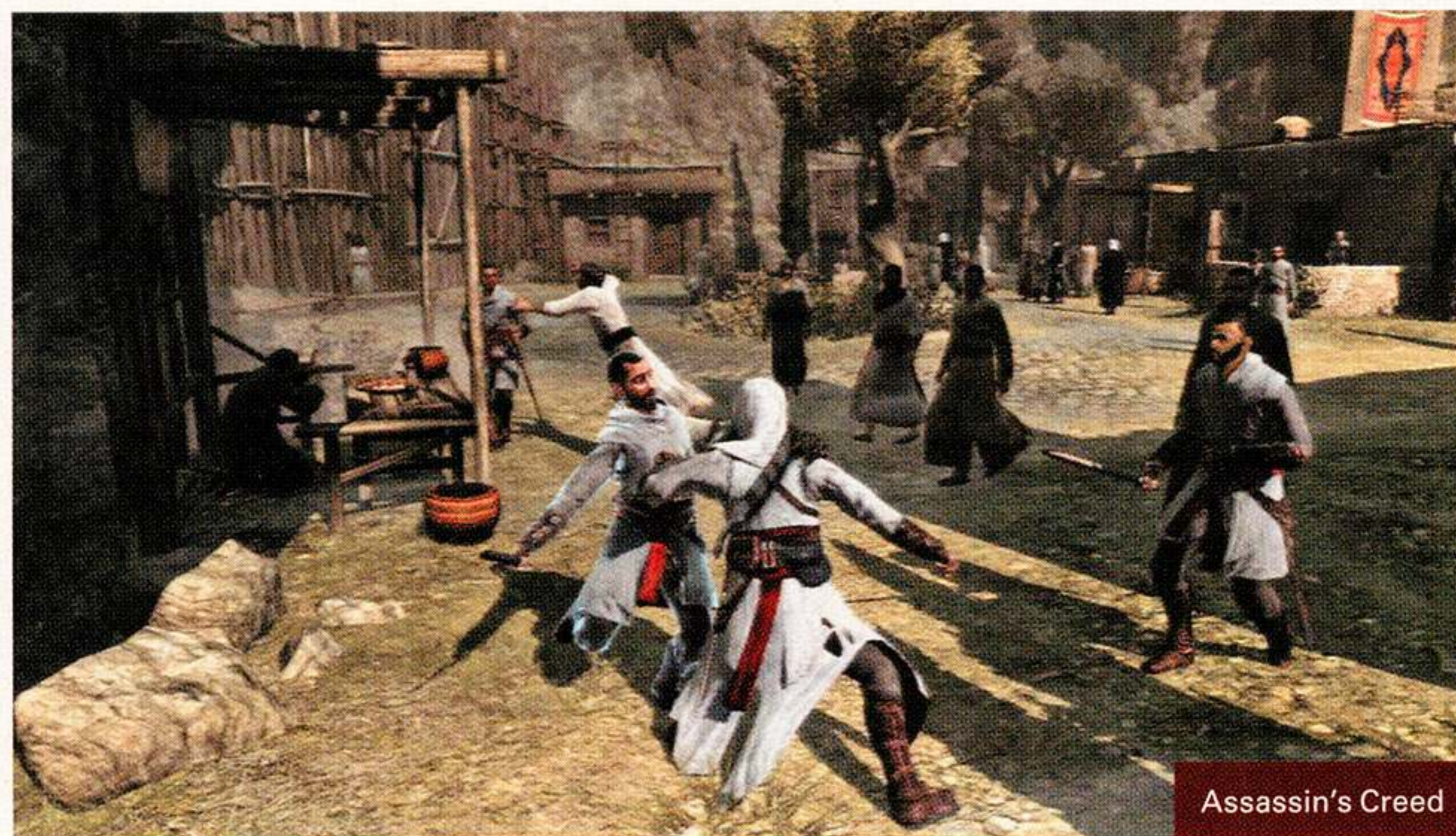
Spore

4 The Orange Box • I played about 10,000 hours of *Team Fortress*, and I have been purposely holding off on opening my Orange Box until *Hellgate: London* shipped. Now, I can not only check out *Portal*, but don the Heavy Gun in *Team Fortress 2*! **5 BioShock** • I love old-school, heavy-on-story RPGs as much as I do action, and *BioShock* is the next game that gets popped into my 360...the only problem is I kind of want to be Big Daddy. **6 Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare** • The *Call of Duty* series is so good, and I actually appreciate the fact the campaigns are short, but intense. The class-based online play is also something I enjoy (hence my TF addiction), so I'm looking forward to checking that out, too. **7 Assassin's Creed** • The game looks simply beautiful, but more importantly, I like the gameplay mechanics. Jade Raymond is one of the really true and fun people in the gaming industry, so supporting her latest effort is just the right thing to do. **8 The Simpsons Game** • I love *The Simpsons*, and the premise for this game is the first time the characters and ideals behind the series are being

properly represented. Mmmmmm...games and doughnuts. **9 Spore** • *Spore* is, if nothing else, a grand experiment and journey into the creativity of Will Wright. This is a title every game designer wants to try out, and I can't wait to see how it all gets pulled together.



The Orange Box



Assassin's Creed

BEOWULF: THE MOVIE GAME

Mobile

■ Publisher: Gameloft ■ Release Date: Available now



If you've never heard of Beowulf (shame on you!), then you'll definitely gain knowledge of the epic via the film that's in theaters now. If movies aren't even your thing, you're in luck, because Gameloft has released an adaptation of the film in mobile game form. Fight Grendel, sea serpents, and dragons to prove why Beowulf is the greatest king that ever lived.



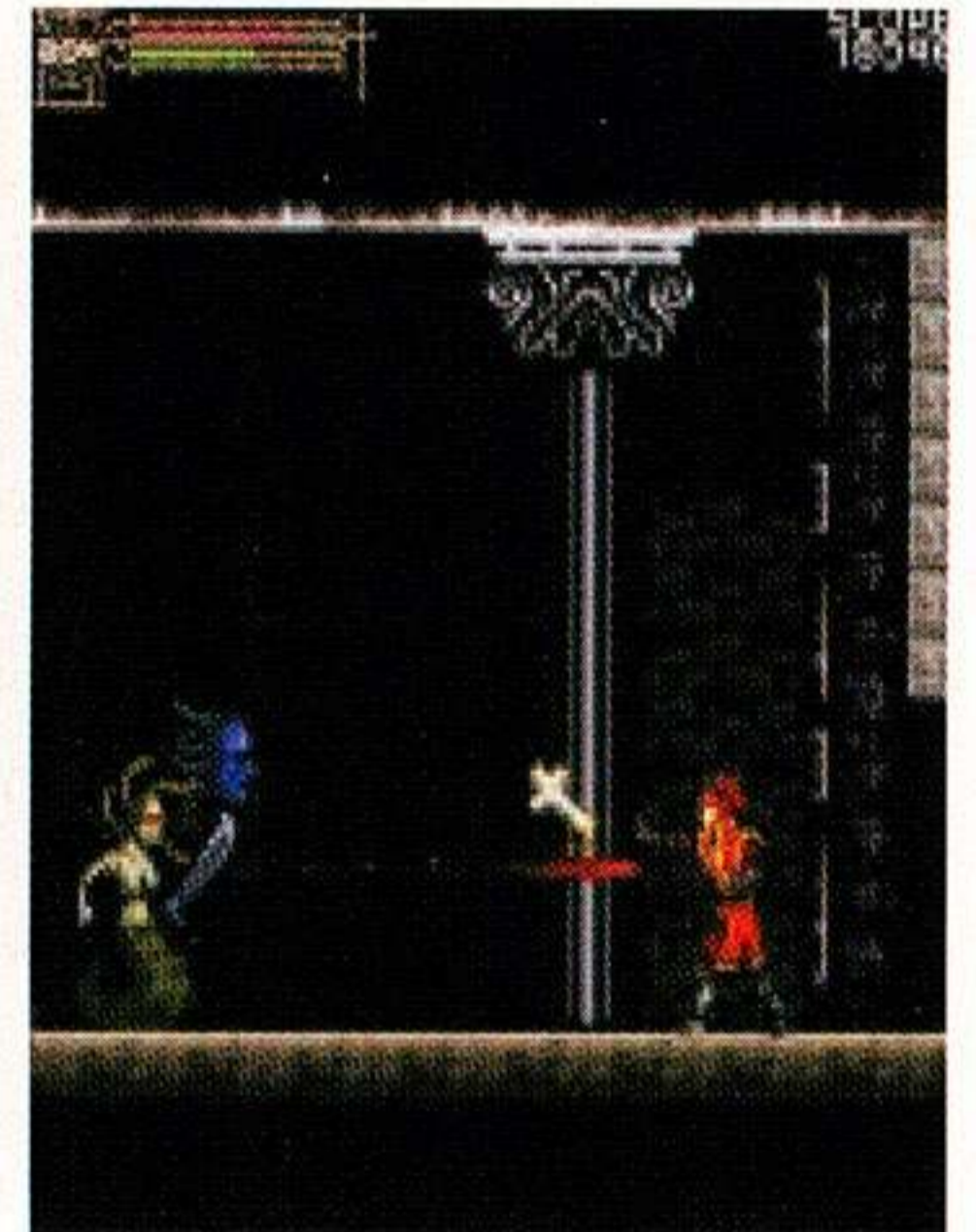
CASTLEVANIA: ORDER OF SHADOWS

Mobile

■ Publisher: Konami Mobile ■ Release Date: Available now



It's inarguable that fans of the Castlevania series just can't enough of it. Fortunately for them, Konami Mobile has released a cell phone title with all new characters and adventures. The game also includes traditional RPG, so you can develop your skills to better face the seven deadly bosses that the game confronts you with.



LEGO STAR WARS

Mobile

■ Publisher: THQ Wireless ■ Release Date: Available now



It came as a shocker that LEGO Star Wars was actually a good game. So, it's not shocking to see an adaptation of the game available for cell phones. Here, you play as Anakin Skywalker. With your trusty lightsaber, you battle through 18 perilous stages to save Senator Palpatine from the evil General Grievous.



CONTRA 4

Mobile

■ Publisher: Konami Mobile ■ Release Date: Available now

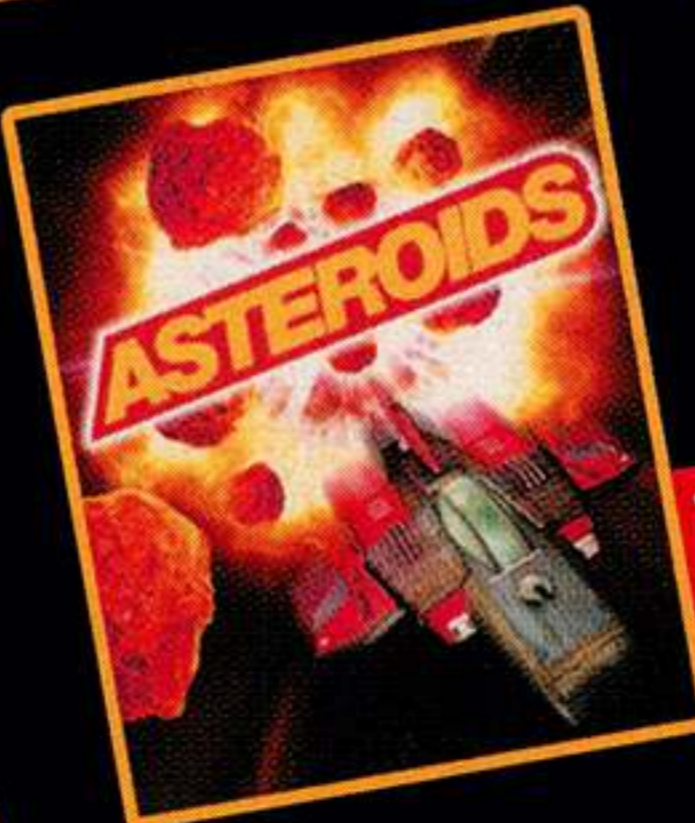
Fans of Contra will be pleased to hear that this mobile version of the franchise will feature an all new adventure with everybody's favorite gunslinger, Bill Rizer. Sort through the many weapons you'll have at your disposal, such as a machine gun, laser and flame thrower, to bring down the five bosses you'll encounter on Galuga Island.





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SMASH ATTACK

Online play, custom stages, and crazy new characters: Nintendo's prized fighter comes out swinging on the Wii, and only *GamePro* has the full story!

By Dave Rudden and Scott Steinberg



Sonic the Hedgehog ▶
The wild-fighting speedster.



◀ Wario
Naughty and nasty.
Watch for farts!



K
L

Pit ▶
Woah! Wings, swords,
and arrows!

Solid Snake ▶
Armed and dangerous,
surprising unstealthy.

Mario ▶
The well-balanced mainstay.

Meta Knight ▶
Think Kirby...
with an edge.

SMASH ATTACK!

HOW TO PLAY SMASH BROS. BRAWL



Confused? Don't be. Our illustrated guide explains everything you need to know about surviving Brawl's chaotic battles.

TODAY'S SPECIAL!



Special moves are the heart of Brawl's combat. While previous games had "Smash Attacks" (strong strikes your player can charge) at the top of the power spectrum, Brawl introduces the "Final Smash," which is similar to Street Fighter's Super Combos. These massive attacks require your character to pick up the new Smash Ball item.

HANG IN THERE!



Unlike most fighting games, Brawl's fights aren't won on dishing out damage alone. Instead, the object is to knock your opponent off the edge of the screen, which become easier as his/hers/its damage meter rises. Just because you find an attack has moved you off of solid ground, don't fret! Each character can double jump and use a recovery attack to get back on the map, while others have grappling hooks, and winged characters offset their lightness with the ability to glide.

ATTACK OF THE SECOND TIER!



Just because a character didn't make the cut as a Brawler doesn't mean it won't be a part of the fight. Assist Trophies will summon forth more obscure Nintendo characters to make their mark on the match. Call on a Nintendog and it'll obscure the screen with its slobbering face. Other characters, like Starfox boss Andross, will deal out more direct damage.

ITEMIZE THE FIGHT!



A proper Brawl will have a constant influx of items that can change the course of the battle. Old standbys like the Super Mushroom and Baseball Bat return, while new weapons alter the battle even further. Try the Pitfall, which creates a hole in the ground, or the Cracker Launcher, which explodes fireworks in your opponent's face!



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TEKKEN 6 vs. SOUL CALIBUR IV

Namco picks a fight with its two new-gen brawlers. We pick a winner!

Super Smash Bros. Brawl ain't the only top-tier fighter in town. As we speak, Namco Bandai is putting the finishing touches on Soul Calibur IV and Tekken 6, long-awaited entries in two of the most celebrated fighting series in history. Soul Calibur IV will land on the Xbox 360 and PS3, while Tekken 6 is expected to be PS3-only.

We're dying to play both games. If you're a fighting fan, you are too. But out of these two marvels, which one is worth getting excited about *right now*? We broke down the stats, compared the features, and picked a winner. You might be truly surprised!

GRAPHICS

Both Tekken 6 and Soul Calibur IV look sensational, and that's based on our real-time impressions, not early press stills. Tekken 6's graphics features are based around the PlayStation 3's Cell CPU and RSX graphics chip, which offer enough horsepower to render colossal, highly detailed outdoor arenas, smashable walls and floors (complete with secret rooms), and eerily lifelike fighter designs. But the first feature to catch your eye will be the over-the-top "hit sparks," which explode in a dazzling shower of explosions and *Matrix*-style distortion effects.

Soul Calibur IV has its own visual style that's best described as "painterly." But the highlights here are the high-dynamic range (HDR) lighting and real-time reflections, which make the fighters look like they're ready to jump off your TV screen and launch an assault on your living room. The 3D environments are also looking sharp, with bigger layouts and destructible hazards ala Tekken 6.

EDGE: Soul Calibur IV

As beautiful as Tekken 6 looks, there's just no arguing with Soul Calibur IV's stunning HDR lighting and intricately detailed characters.



TEKKEN 6



SOUL CALIBUR IV

Soul Calibur IV's first new fighter, Hilde, is armed with a spear and a short sword.



TEKKEN 6

New brawlers Bob (top) and Miguel (bottom) enter a super-sized roster in Tekken 6.

TEKKEN 6



Tekken 6 hits arcades in Japan...but when will it hit the PS3?



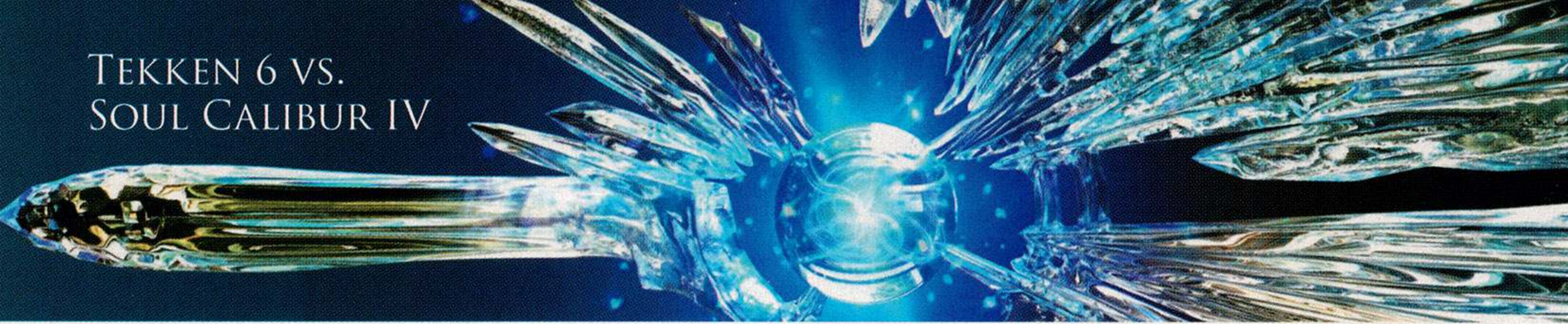
SOUL CALIBUR IV



Welcome back to the stage of history with Soul Calibur IV, coming in mid-2008.

CONTINUED ▶

TEKKEN 6 VS. SOUL CALIBUR IV



FIGHTER ROSTER

This category has a clear-cut winner—Tekken 6 is expected to have some 40 playable fighters in its final version. The roster will include virtually every character from past games, all of which will see new moves, combos, and improved animation. You can also look forward to four newcomers: Miguel, a hot-blooded Spaniard; Bob, a big-bellied bruiser with alarming agility; Zafina, a slinky female with spider-like attacks and fighting stances; and Leo, a young, somewhat androgynous girl with surprisingly powerful attacks. Though quality is more important than quantity, it looks like Tekken 6 will sport a lot of each.

Soul Calibur, being a much newer series than Tekken, traditionally works with a leaner character roster and Soul Calibur IV should be no exception. So far, there's only one confirmed new character: Hilde, a female knight armed with a short sword and a spear, each of which have a dedicated attack button. As of now, only 13 characters have been confirmed...though that number is sure to grow by leaps and bounds as the game creeps closer to completion (for reference, the final arcade version of SCIII featured 27 selectable characters). Though Soul Calibur IV's fighters are a deep and dynamic lot, it's hard to disagree with Tekken 6's "everything and the kitchen sink" approach to fighters.

EDGE: Tekken 6

Tekken 6's huge roster isn't just for show: the characters all play with unique styles and strategies. The four newcomers are also hugely diverse and, in the case of Bob, rather amusing.

ONLINE PLAY

This is an especially brutal category to judge based on pre-release games, but there's one key fact to note: Tekken already has some experience in online play. By releasing Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online for the PS3 in late 2007, the Tekken team will have gained valuable insight and experience in running an online fighter. What's more, Tekken 5's online mode was actually rather good, with well-designed game lobbies and tolerable lag management. We know very little about Tekken 6's online play, except that the game was supposedly optimized for online from the ground up. But if Tekken 5's online is anything to judge by, Tekken 6 will be a serious online contender.

Soul Calibur IV's first-ever online mode is also mysterious, but we do know several key details. For one, you can take custom-made fighters from the Create a Soul mode directly online, and you may be able to trade them with friends. The developers are also considering online leaderboards, and even sharing match replays.



SOUL CALIBUR IV

Character customization has long been a hallmark of Soul Calibur, and SCIV will be no exception.

EDGE: Tekken 6

We're going with experience on this one: the lessons learned by Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online will greatly benefit Tekken 6...at least we hope it will.

CUSTOMIZATION

Character customization has long been a hallmark of the Soul Calibur series; outfitting new weapons and outfits have been in since the first game. Soul Calibur IV is also rumored to allow players to trade their custom-built characters online. Though details are very scarce here, we expect Soul Calibur IV will have a very deep create-a-character mode like Soul Calibur III...but hopefully with more than a few measly blank character templates.

Tekken is a bit newer to the customization game (custom outfits came in Tekken 4) but has proven itself by offering players hundreds of unlockable outfits and effects in Tekken 5. Tekken 6 will continue this trend, but add a new wrinkle in the form of custom "items" you can equip for each character. So far we've seen Bryan Fury fire a pump-action shotgun, Anna Williams kick her high-heel shoes at a foe, and Craig Marduk smash his opponent with a huge club. We have no idea how these elements will translate into the final gameplay, but they're certainly bold choices.

EDGE: Soul Calibur IV

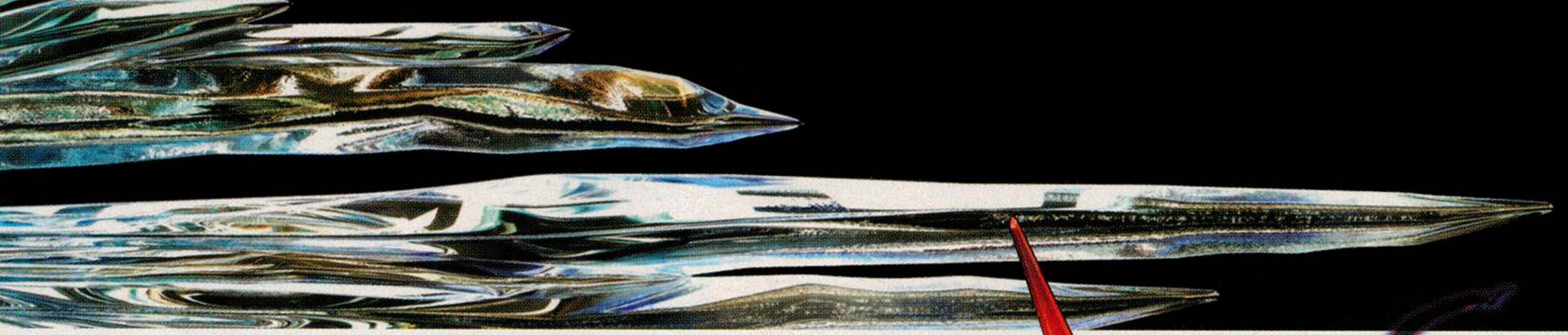
Both games will allow players to make many interesting variations of their favorite characters... but Tekken 6's weapons sound a little goofy and out of place.

TEKKEN 6 ROSTER

Rumored to be 40 fighters in the final version.

Anna Williams	Eddy Gordo	Kuma	Paul Phoenix
Armor King	Feng Wei	Lee Chaolan	Raven
Asuka Kazama	Ganryu	Lei Wulong	Roger Jr.
Baek Doo San	Heihachi Mishima	Leo*	Sergei Dragunov
Bob*	Hwoarang	Lili Rochefort	Steve Fox
Bruce Irvin	Jack-6	Ling Xiaoyu	Wang Jinrei
Bryan Fury	Jin Kazama	Marshall Law	Yoshimitsu
Christie Monteiro	Julia Chang	Miguel*	Zafina*
Craig Marduk	Kazuya Mishima	Nina Williams	
Devil Jin	King	Panda	

* New character



TEKKEN 6



Special weapons are a new addition to Tekken 6, but we're still not sure precisely how they function.

Nightmare gets a little freakier looking with each Soul Calibur game. ▶

RELEASE DATE

This is the toughest category to judge. In theory, Soul Calibur IV will be the first game to launch. However, Tekken 6 is already further along in its development process; its arcade version, for instance, should be live in Japan by the time you read this. But it will take time to translate Tekken 6 to the PS3, meaning that Soul Calibur IV is likely to hit the Xbox 360 and PS3 before it. When, exactly? Current speculation points to a likely spring 2008 launch for Soul Calibur IV, but that date isn't set in stone. Popular wisdom suggests that Tekken 6 will see a late 2008 release on the PS3, but will Namco want to pit its two biggest games against each other by releasing them in the same year?

EDGE: Soul Calibur IV

In a paradoxical twist, Tekken 6 is further along than SCIV, but will likely hit consoles much later. Of course, this will give Team Tekken more time to add extra polish.

FINAL DECISION

We give the nod to Soul Calibur IV primarily because we know it's actually coming out this year. Tekken 6 may be further along, but we're guessing that the PS3 version may not hit until late 2008 or even—gulp—2009. What's the sense of getting worked into a lather over Tekken 6 when it may be years off? Our advice to Tekken fans: focus on Soul Calibur IV for now.

EDGE: Soul Calibur IV *GP*

SOUL CALIBUR IV ROSTER

It's light for now, but will surely grow.

Astaroth
Cassandra
Hilde
Ivy
Mitsurugi
Nightmare
Raphael

Siegfried
Sophitia
Taki
Tira
Voldo
Yoshimitsu



GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE 2007

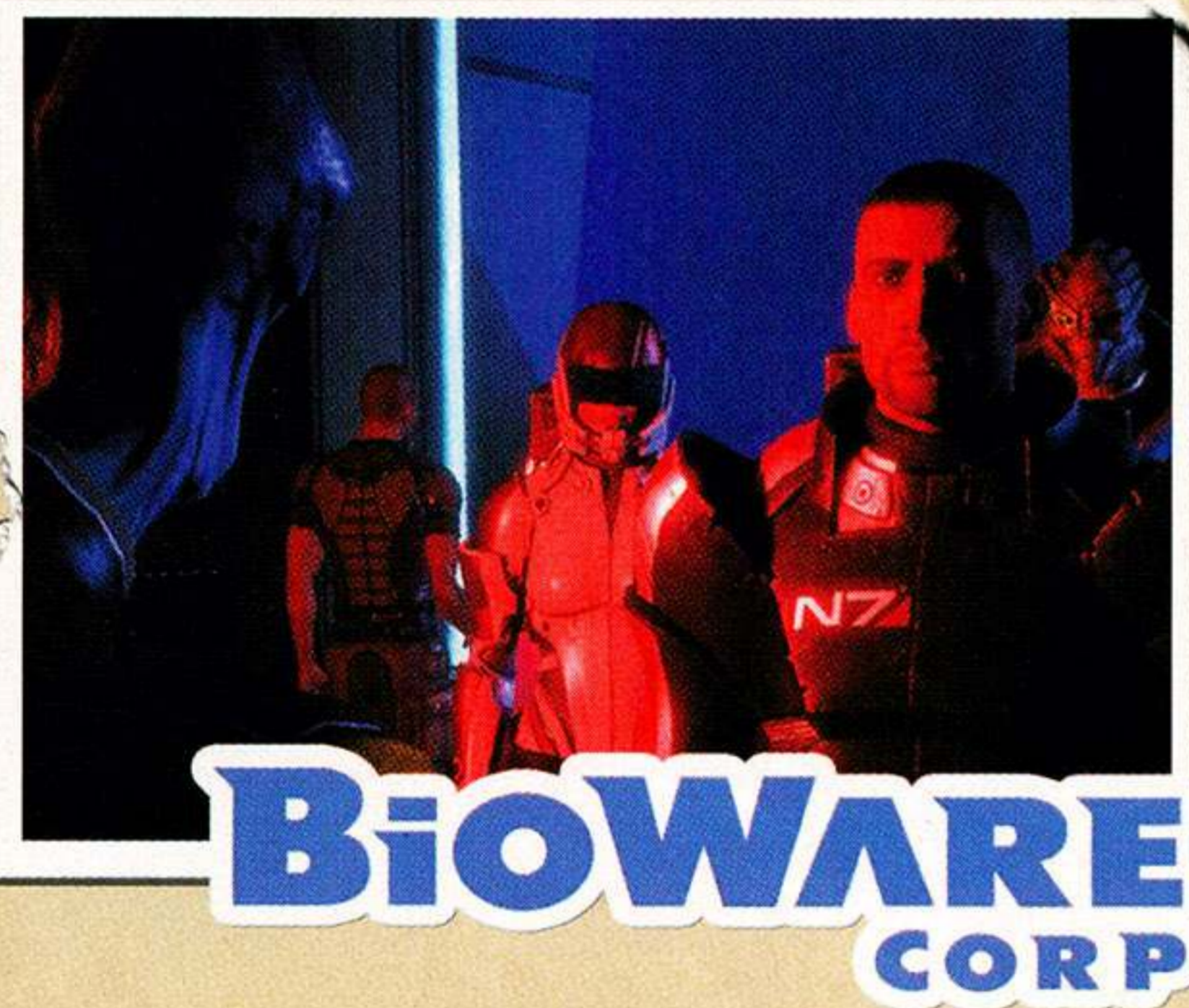
For this year's Editors' Choice awards, we made a New Year's Resolution: no more boring award categories! We've retired dusty old standbys like "Best Action/Adventure Game" in favor of more dynamic awards that celebrate gaming innovation (Game Developer of the Year), overlooked excellence (Best Unlockable Content), and stuff that's just plain cool (Most Epic Boss Battle). We hope you like the changes, and be sure to check back next month for the biggest daddy of them all: *GamePro's* Game of the Year!

★ CONSOLE OF THE YEAR

WINNER: Xbox 360

Xbox 360 took the top honors among the editors this year, dominating Sony just as the PS3 finally begins to boom and the PS2 slowly fades away. Most editors cited the Xbox 360's superior game selection and Xbox Live as the deciding factors, though many grumbled about the console's persistent problems with Red Ring failures. Nintendo's Wii also made a strong showing, but will interest remain as high next year? We shall see.

RUNNER-UP: Wii

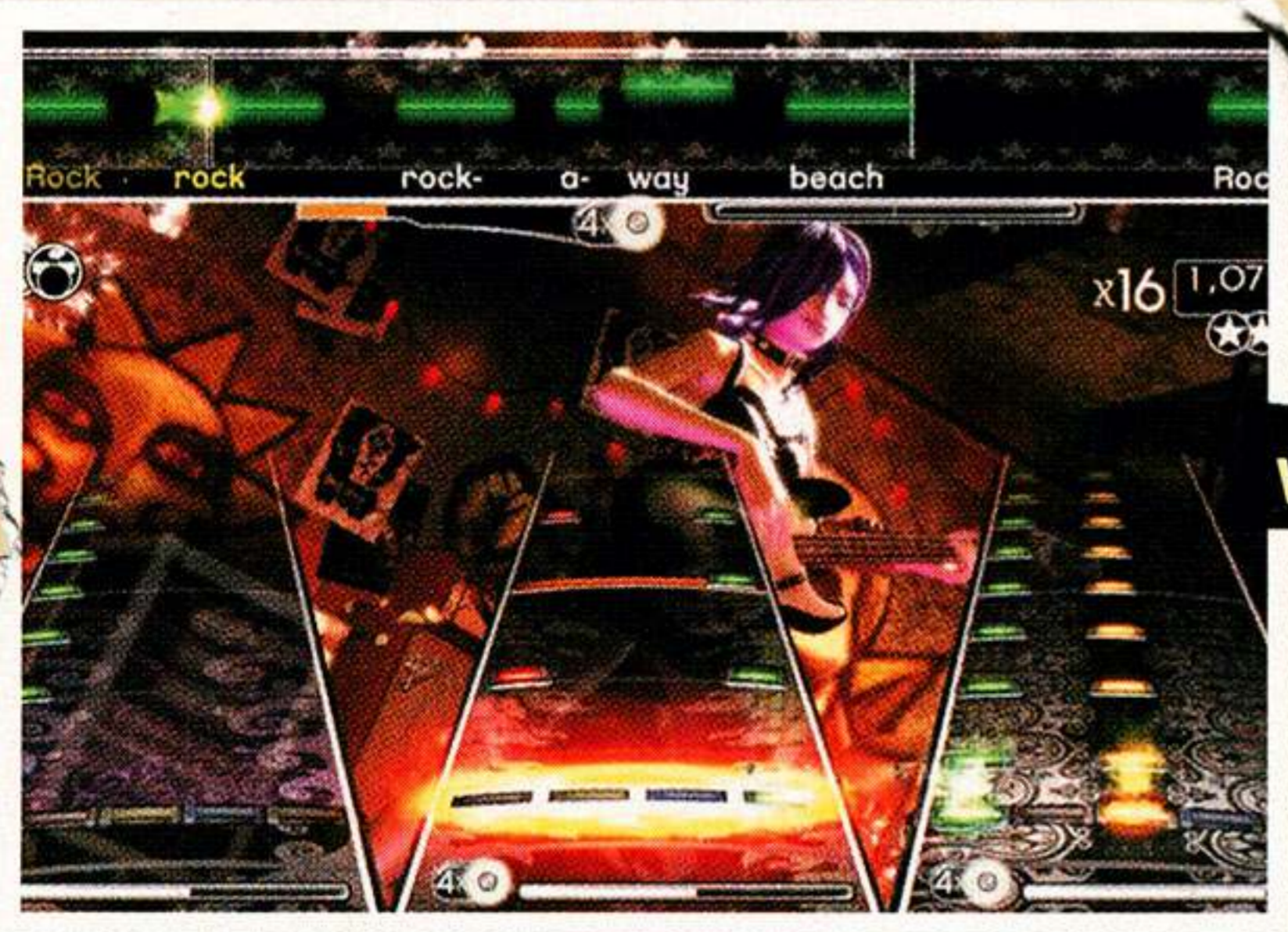


GAME DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR

WINNER: BioWare (Mass Effect)

This was a razor-close race that was only resolved through a highly contested runoff vote. We ultimately awarded it to BioWare on the merits of its phenomenal *Mass Effect*, an sci-fi role-playing game that's one of the most polished, artistic, and downright impressive games ever made. It really is like playing a movie...and for once, we mean that as a compliment. *Mass Effect* is an extraordinary effort by BioWare, and we eagerly look forward to developer's future as part of EA.

RUNNER-UP (TIE): Harmonix (*Rock Band*) and 2K Boston (*BioShock*)



INNOVATION AWARD

WINNER: Four-player cooperative play (*Rock Band*)

Surprise, surprise: *Rock Band* walked away with the gold. Playing with a full band, complete with drummer and singer, was seen as a hugely ground-breaking achievement by most of the editors. *Portal* (part of *Half-Life 2: The Orange Box*) also placed strong for its mind-bending *Portal Gun*, while *Halo 3's* online File Share and Forge rounded out the top three finalists.

RUNNER-UP: *Portal Gun* (*Portal—The Orange Box*)

BEST NEW CHARACTER

WINNER: Big Daddy & Little Sister (BioShock)

Assassin Altair was the odds-on favorite to win this category, but fate had different plans. Ultimately, BioShock's symbiotic duo of the Big Daddy and Little Sister had more support among the editors, though fire-haired Nariko from Heavenly Sword was also well-liked.

RUNNER-UP: Altair (Assassin's Creed)



MOST EPIC BOSS BATTLE

WINNER: Colossus of Rhodes battle (God of War II)

An easy win for God of War II's jaw-dropping Colossus of Rhodes encounter, a high point in a series that has brought us some of the most memorable boss battles in video gaming. It's also worth noting that the spectacular Colossus fight actually opens the game! Halo 3's chaotic Dual Scarab shootout came in a distant second.

RUNNER-UP: Dual Scarab battle (Halo 3)



BEST NEW WEAPON

WINNER: Spartan Laser (Halo 3)

A tight race all around, but Halo 3's Spartan Laser was the staff favorite. This anti-vehicle weapon doubles as a handy sniper rifle, and can wipe out a light vehicle or soldier with one blast. But in a genius design choice, it suffers from a nerve-racking recharge period between blasts. Well played, Bungie.

RUNNER-UP: Groovitron, (Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction)

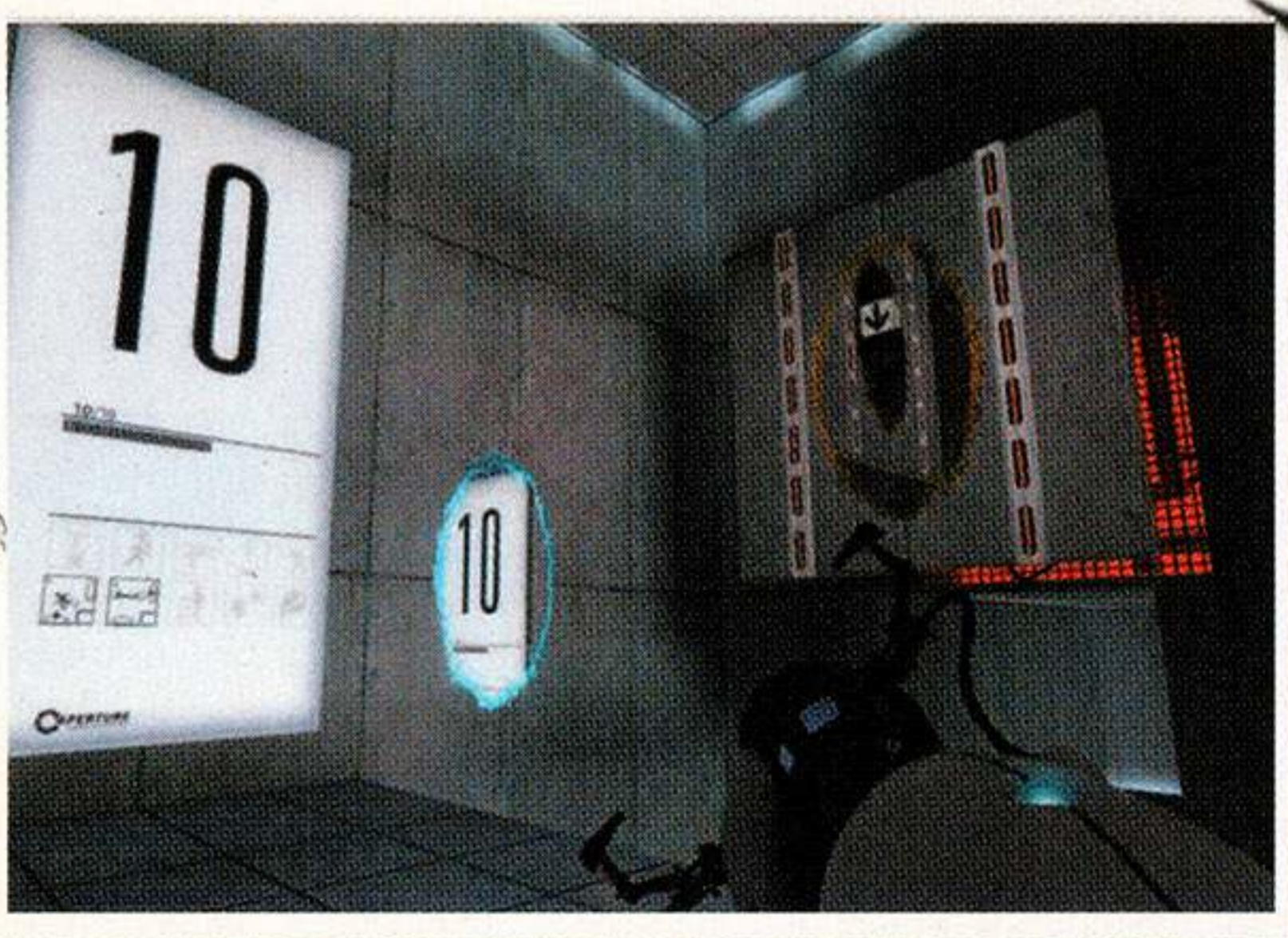
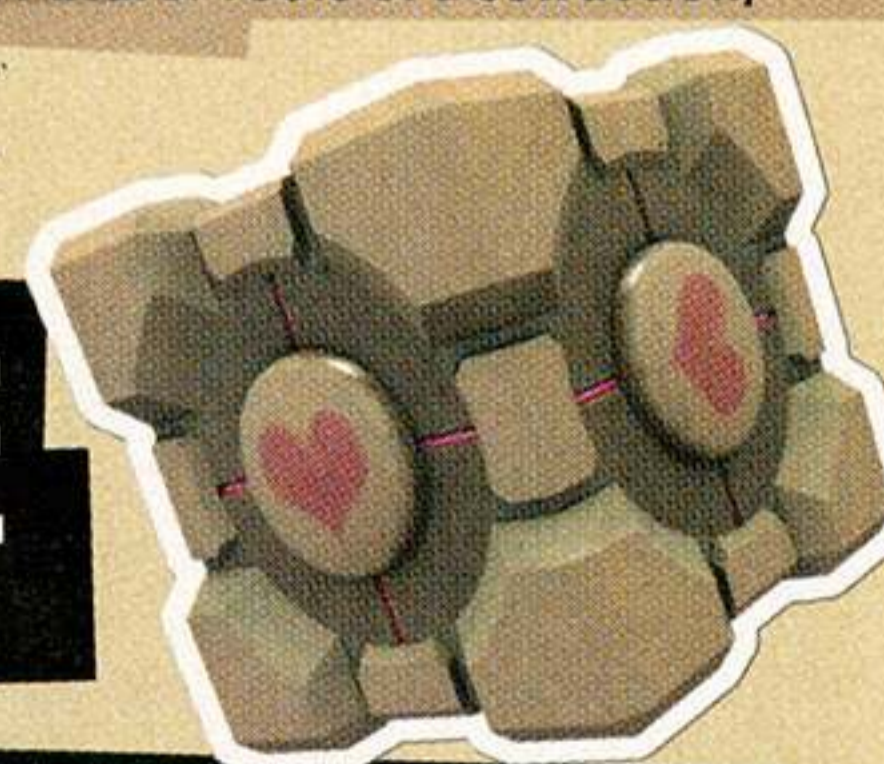


MOST MEMORABLE VILLAIN

WINNER: The Voice (Portal—The Orange Box)

Many editors expected BioShock's sinister Fontaine or Mass Effect's genocidal Saren to take the win here. But in a surprise upset, Portal's creepy/funny Voice won the vote. Why? As The Voice might say, "It's a mystery I'll solve later. By myself. Because you'll be dead."

RUNNER-UP: King Bohan (Heavenly Sword)



CONTINUED ►

BEST STORY

WINNER: BioShock

Something of an upset here; BioShock's eerie underwater horror show took the honors, while Mass Effect's epic struggle for galactic survival made a strong second place showing. Whatever the winner, there's no doubt that both BioShock and Mass Effect represent new highs in video game storytelling.

RUNNER-UP: Mass Effect



BEST PARTY GAME

WINNER: Rock Band

Another easy win for Rock Band, a game that was destined to dominate this category. Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection and Mario Strikers, other editor favorites, just couldn't compete, and Guitar Hero III was utterly ignored.

RUNNER-UP: Mario Strikers Charged



BEST GRAPHICS

WINNER: Crysis

A no-brainer here: Crysis's eye-popping PC graphics dominated this category handily. If you restrict the vote to console games, Call of Duty 4 was the big winner—its graphics are almost supernaturally beautiful.

RUNNER-UP: Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare



BEST UNLOCKABLE CONTENT

WINNER: Symphony of the Night game, (Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles)

A no-contest. Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles got an almost universal nod for its inclusion of the entire PlayStation game Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, universally known as one of the top Castlevania games ever made. You have played Symphony of the Night, haven't you?

RUNNER-UP: Uncensored gore mode (Manhunt 2)

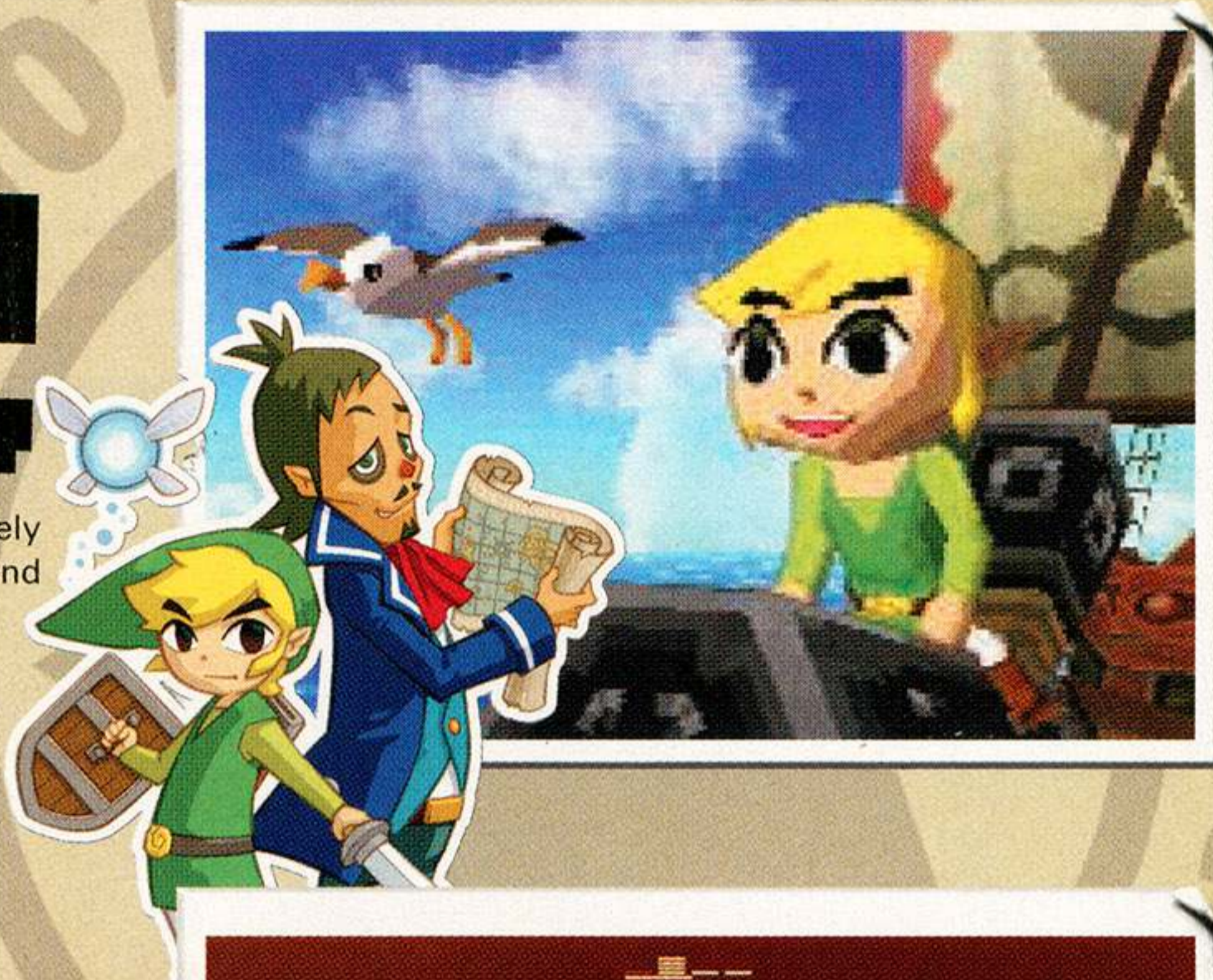


BEST HANDHELD GAME

WINNER: The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

A tight race between Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass and Puzzle Quest ultimately tipped in Zelda's favor. Silent Hill Origins for the PSP was a last-minute addition, and though it didn't win, the editors agreed that it was an impressive achievement.

RUNNER-UP: Puzzle Quest

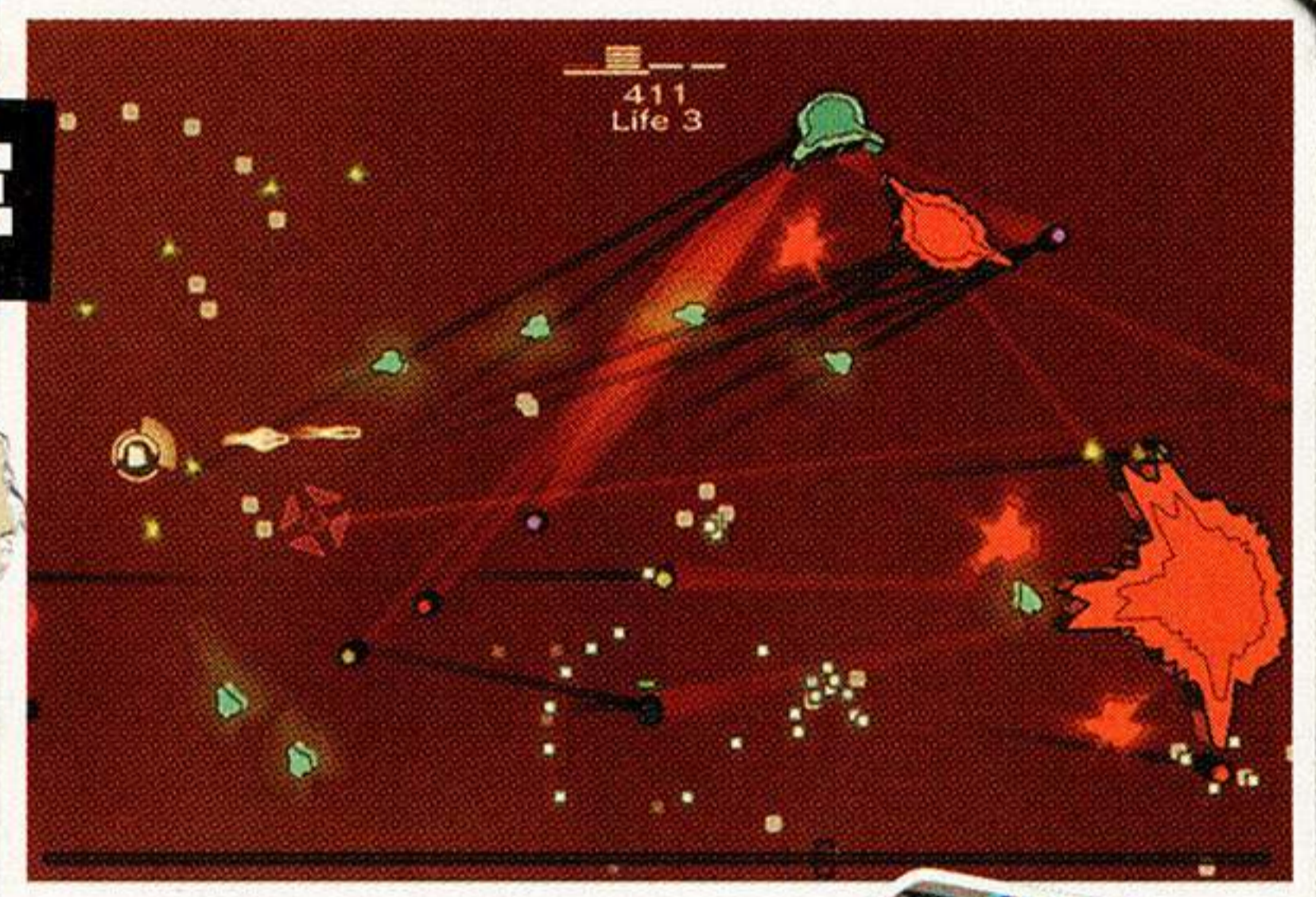


BEST DOWNLOADABLE GAME

WINNER: Everyday Shooter

Tekken 5 and Puzzle Quest were expected to dominate this category, but the editors ultimately rallied behind PS3 exclusive Everyday Shooter. This homebrew game charmed us with its hallucinogenic visuals, guitar-driven soundtrack, and Asteroids-style shooting.

RUNNER-UP: Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection



“OMG” MOMENT

WINNER: Slow-motion crash replay (MotorStorm)

This award honors the most amazing gameplay moment in all of 2007—something that literally made us exclaim, “OMG!” The first glimpse of MotorStorm's mind-blowing slo-motion crash cam was an experience that was indelibly etched into the brains of our editors. Many games released early in the year (ahem, Crackdown) are forgotten come award time. Not MotorStorm!

RUNNER-UP: Nuclear strike and aftermath (Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare)



BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT

WINNER: Hellgate: London

Lair and Manhunt 2 garnered some hate, but Hellgate: London handily won this dubious honor. The editors were eager to play a new game from the creators of Diablo II, but found themselves frustrated with Hellgate's spotty production values, nonexistent storyline, and crippling launch bugs. Diablo II was legendary. Hellgate? Not so much.

RUNNER-UP: Lair



VOTE OR DIE

Next month, GamePro names its final Game of the Year, as well as the best games on Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, and Wii. Can't wait to find out who wins Game of the Year? Then visit GamePro.com now for the full list of 2007 finalists, late-breaking winners, and a chance to pick your own Game of the Year in our annual Readers' Choice Awards.

MASS EFFECT: THE EPIC GUIDE

An epic adventure deserves an epic strategy guide. Learn key concepts and strategies for this massive RPG! *By Andy Burt*

Building a better soldier

How you build your character will affect many different aspects of gameplay, from skills to story and dialogue. But beware: your choices are permanent, so make the right ones!



Psychological profile

Your choice here will cause many different dialogue possibilities throughout the game. This section verifies your personality: one option pits you as the lone survivor of a brutal enemy attack, while another makes you a hero who put his life on the line for others. You can also choose to play as a cold, calculating killer. These three options will determine how positively (or negatively) you're viewed among your military and civilian peers.

Pre-service history

This section has the least affect on the game's story, but will affect your journey nonetheless. The first three sections describe your background, and the options are diverse. You can choose to have been born in outer space, or on an alien world an army brat who joined the military at a young age. You can even choose to play as a former criminal who escaped the slums of Earth to join the military. Whichever backstory you choose, you're in the military now, bub!

Renegade vs. Paragon

The concepts of "Renegade" and "Paragon" serve as Mass Effect's morality system, i.e. dark side and light side. Both choices have their pros and cons, but taking the "balanced" approach is the least effective.



Renegade

You boost your Renegade meter by being callous towards others. During conversations, options that appear in red will add to your Renegade level. If you feel like being a total badass throughout Mass Effect, then Renegade is the path to take.

If you want to go Renegade, the "Intimidation" stat is the one you'll want to concentrate on...though you'll close off story options that are available only to Paragon players. One of the most positive aspects of going Renegade relates to Intimidation. If you level up your Intimidation stat early on, you'll earn massive discounts at shops and gain weapons and upgrades you ordinarily wouldn't have found.

Paragon

Having high Paragon will make you seem just and righteous to characters you meet. Conversation options that appear in blue will boost your Paragon, but you'll need to pump up your "Charm" stat to take advantage.

Much like going Renegade, choosing the Paragon path will open up new avenues of the storyline. You may not have the brute force advantages of the Renegade, but you'll be left with slightly more story options due to your helpful nature. The best bet is to level up your "Charm" stat early on while you're in the Citadel, which is chock-full of storyline threads and helpful characters that respond well to Paragons.

military specializations

Here is where you truly customize your character, choosing one of six classes. Each class has some unique stats, including those found in the combination classes. Choose wisely!

infiltrator

(combination of Soldier and Engineer): Infiltrator's have a good balance of brawn and tactical combat skills, and are especially good with a sniper rifle.



vanguard

(combination of Soldier and Adept): A very powerful military specialization, Vanguard's have the best of the brawn and the biotics, though it will be difficult until far into the game to have them surpass another character of a singular class.

soldier

Soldiers are your basic fighters and gun-slingers. They are more resistant to damage than other classes, and can also upgrade to heavy armor. They can also use every weapon type. Fans of shooter games like Halo 3 should consider hopping right into the battle-hardened Soldier class.

sentinel

(combination of Engineer and Adept): Great for being in the midst of combat to clean up the mess, Sentinel's excel at auxiliary combat assistance and healing/repair.



engineer

Engineers are great to have in combat to do backend stuff while the real action is going on. They are skilled in repairing vehicles, which will be imperative during galaxy exploration. They also have decryption skills, which will allow you to obtain many weapons and weapon upgrades that might otherwise be inaccessible.

adept

Adepts are Mass Effect's version of the classic RPG mage. They may not be the best fighters, but they make up for it with their devastating biotics (Mass Effect's version of spells). There are many different biotic skills, and they can hurt enemies or help your party.

CONTINUED ▶

General tips

A smattering of handy tips to keep your Effect as Mass as possible.



Balance your party.

Remember that a balanced party can be the difference between life and death. When going on a new mission, you'll want someone in your party who specializes in one of the three core military specializations: Soldier, Engineer or Adept. Having mixed specializations is also helpful, but make sure that you keep your party balanced. Having a party with sheer brute strength may seem like a good idea at first, but when you're left with no one to heal your injured fighters, you'll be left stranded in a galaxy of crap.



Take time to explore.

Mass Effect is HUGE, and it's easy to overlook minor details that can pay off later. For instance, there are many ways to gain experience, aside from fighting. Simply checking out the views from the upper deck of C-Sec will give you experience. You'll also gain experience by flexing your Paragon or Renegade qualities in conversation. Our advice is to take your time and perform lots of small tasks—you'll earn more equipment and experience then if you perform missions alone.



Finish what you start.

You'll find early on that the missions start to really add up, and it's easy to forget about some of the smaller entries in your mission journal. The best way to keep track of everything: never leave a mission half-finished. If a mission or assignment requires you to return to the Citadel to deliver an item or talk to someone, then take care of that before continuing on. In the end, this will keep your journal organized and make it easier to figure out where to go next.



Don't skip skill points.

Leveling up is useless if you don't apply your skill points. As soon as you gain a level, jump into your squad menu and level up those stats! Also, sometimes characters will leave the party for an extended period of time, then reappear later. If they do come back, they'll often have oodles of unassigned skill points just waiting to be applied. Don't forget!



Sell off the old stuff.

There may not be a ton of weapon types throughout Mass Effect, but there are plenty of weapon upgrades. This can make keeping track of everything—across all of your characters—a bit confusing. When you upgrade to stronger weapons and upgrades, it's best to either sell off the old equipment or turn it into omni-gel. This will cut down on inventory clutter and score you some bonus dough.



Go where no man has gone before.

When you're on a mission, you may feel like making a beeline straight to the action. Resist that urge! Take the time to explore the surrounding systems and planets. Oftentimes, these locations will have some interesting new secret to uncover, or maybe even simply a new Prothean artifact to collect. It only takes a few extra minutes to check out some of the smaller systems, and it's often worth the effort.

KEY WEAPONS, UPGRADES, AND SKILLS

Going into battle without the right weapons and skills is like going to school without wearing pants. Here are a few things to remember.

sniper rifles



This stat, as well as the weapon itself, is a crucial tool for clearing out a new planet filled with enemies. At the beginning of the game, the sniper rifle is difficult to use, so make sure to level up your character's sniper rifle stats early on. There are many situations where all you'll need to clear out an enemy base is a safe position and high sniper rifle stats.

tactical armor



Having a pumped-up party is useless if they can't take a few hits, and leveling up your tactical armor stats is the easiest way to improve their defense. In addition to supplying a shield to defend your characters, this stat can eventually unlock the ability to equip stronger armor (Soldiers only).

electronics



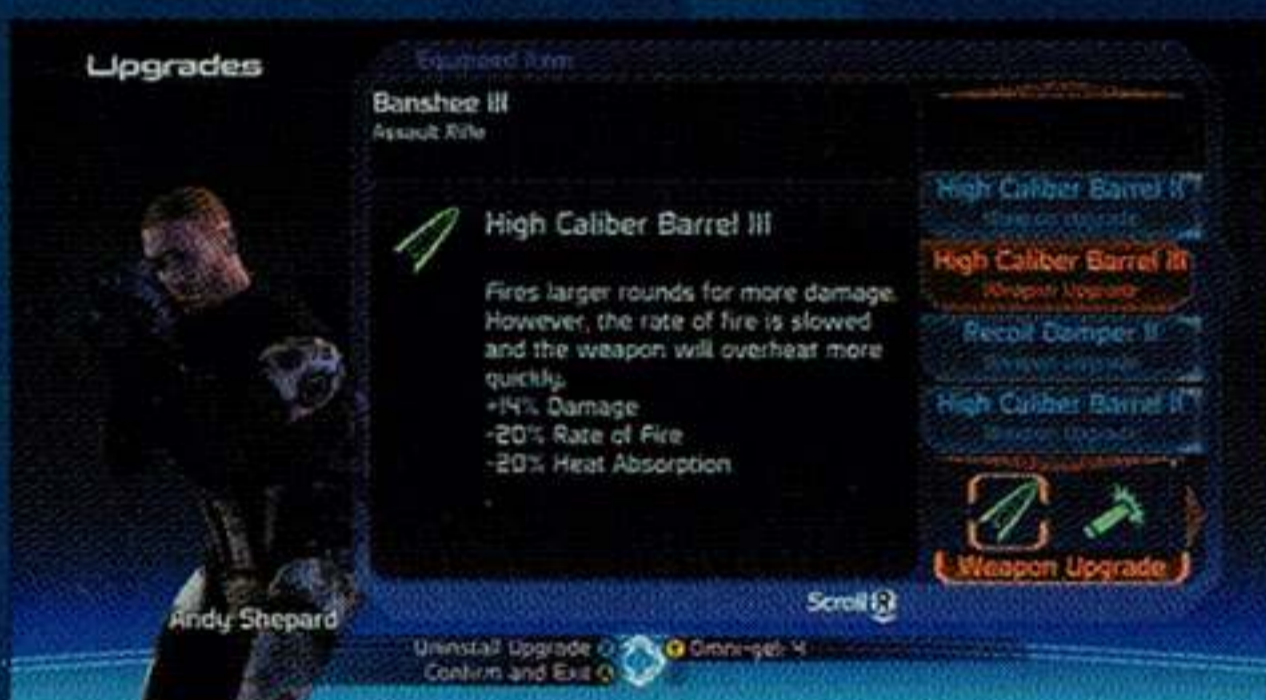
Whether you use an Engineer or an Infiltrator, you'll need someone in your party who can repair your vehicle's hull when you travel between planets. Sometimes you'll spend the majority of a mission housed in your vehicle, and if it comes under attack, you'll be in big trouble if you can't repair it. Focus on pumping up the Electronics stat for faster repairs...which will also open up Damping, a handy combat skill.

biotics



Whether or not you're an Adept yourself, make sure your squad has a high-level biotic user to help crush enemies while others can take them out with weapons. Adepts have access to awesome abilities that allow them to throw objects and warp, so level up those biotic stats.

ammo upgrades



You'll encounter many different kinds of enemies throughout the game, and each one will be vulnerable to a certain bullet types. So don't forget to swap in the proper ammo upgrades on all your squad members before battle!

CONTINUED ►



THE CITADEL: YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME

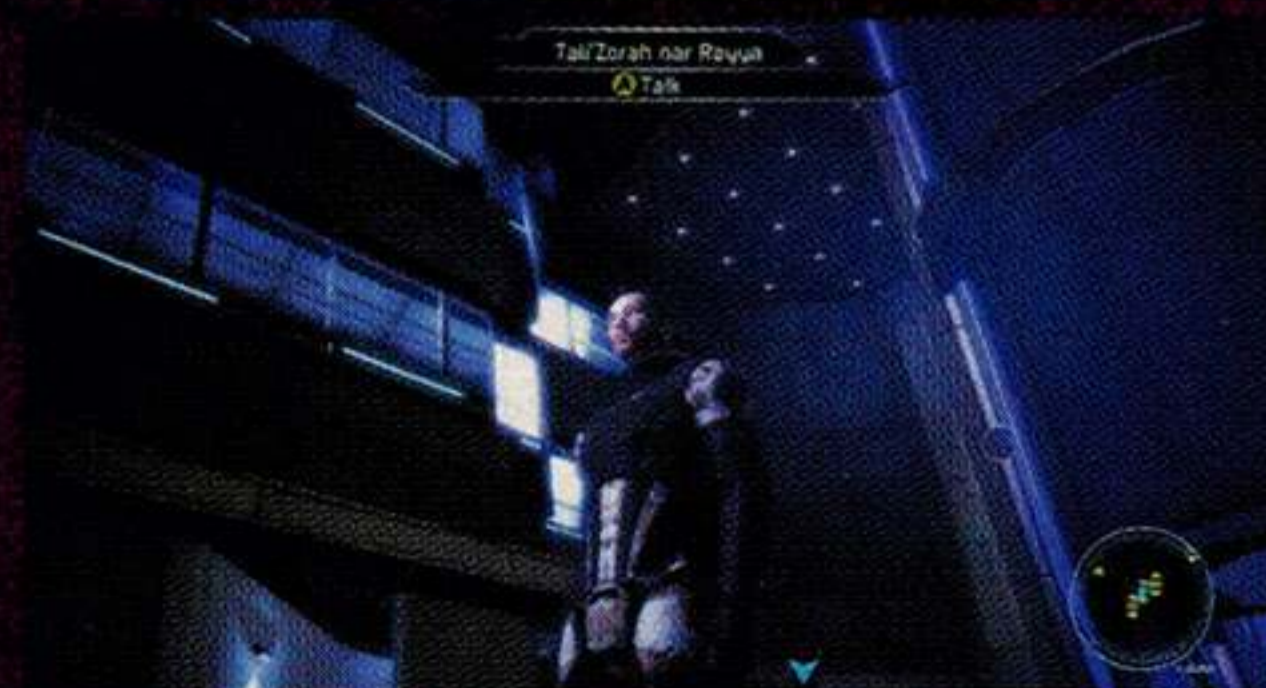
This gargantuan Prothean-built metropolis is home to the Council, which you will report to often for mission debriefings. There are other hotspots you'll want to visit often, too.

embassies



The alien embassies in the Citadel are a great place to learn and converse with some of the exotic races you'll encounter throughout the game, as well as gain new assignments. You'll be able to discern the relationships the various aliens have with one another, while keeping your finger on the pulse of the latest gossip in the Citadel.

c-sec



The Citadel Security branch of the space station, this area is a great place to gather information and obtain new missions. Though not officially a part of C-Sec, Shepard will often be approached by C-Sec officers when they need a job done...particularly if the job requires a little rule-bending.

chora's den



Chora's Den is the hub of crime and underworld happenings in the Citadel. You'll often find many Citadel denizens involved in some illegal activities in this area. Return here often, as there is usually some new crime lord to grill or seedy bartender to question. Also, if you're bored, sitting down for a dance can be briefly amusing.

Decryption



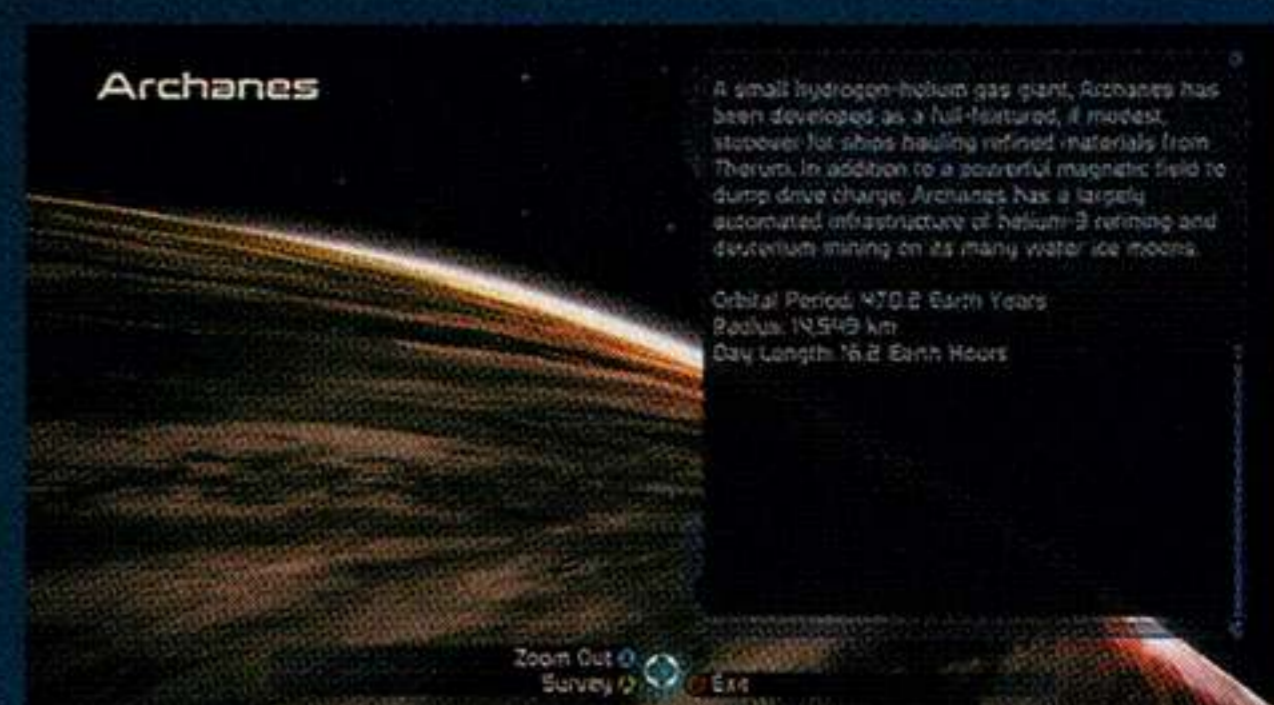
This is a great stat to upgrade for battle and exploration alike. On one hand, you'll have a powerful and deadly skill to use in battle, and on the other you'll be able to unlock many secure objects, which often contain valuable gear. Like Electronics, this is also a stat for your Engineer or Infiltrator to upgrade early on.

Pump up decryption



When you're exploring all those terrestrial bodies you'll come across ruins and artifacts that will require Decryption in order to investigate. Make sure your Engineer or Infiltrator has high Decryption stats. This will allow you to investigate everything you find immediately, without having to backtrack later.

Watch your health



When exploring a planet with a hostile atmosphere, keep an eye on your health, which will deplete slowly as you explore the terrain. It seems like common sense, but always keep the Mako close by in case you don't notice your health depleting, as you won't want to have to restart the mission due to an inconvenient death.

Planetary Exploration



Once you gain control of the Normandy, the entire galaxy will be at your fingertips. These tips will help keep you moving.

Electronics are a must



As you traverse over planet terrain, you'll frequently travel in the Mako. You'll need to maintain a high Electronics stat in order to repair your craft if you come under heavy attack, as jumping out of the Mako will often result in getting blasted by artillery. Learning when to keep fighting and when to pull back and repair is key to surviving some of the more hostile planets you'll visit throughout the game.

Mako Destruction



If you ever find yourself under heavy fire while traversing planets in the Mako, you needn't rely on the cannon—you can easily squash some enemies beneath the wheels of your tank. Even large-scale Geth soldiers can still be stunned with the Mako; try ramming into them. Also, save your powerful cannon blasts for the larger enemies and use your less damaging machine gun on the smaller foot soldiers.

Don't Rely on Radar



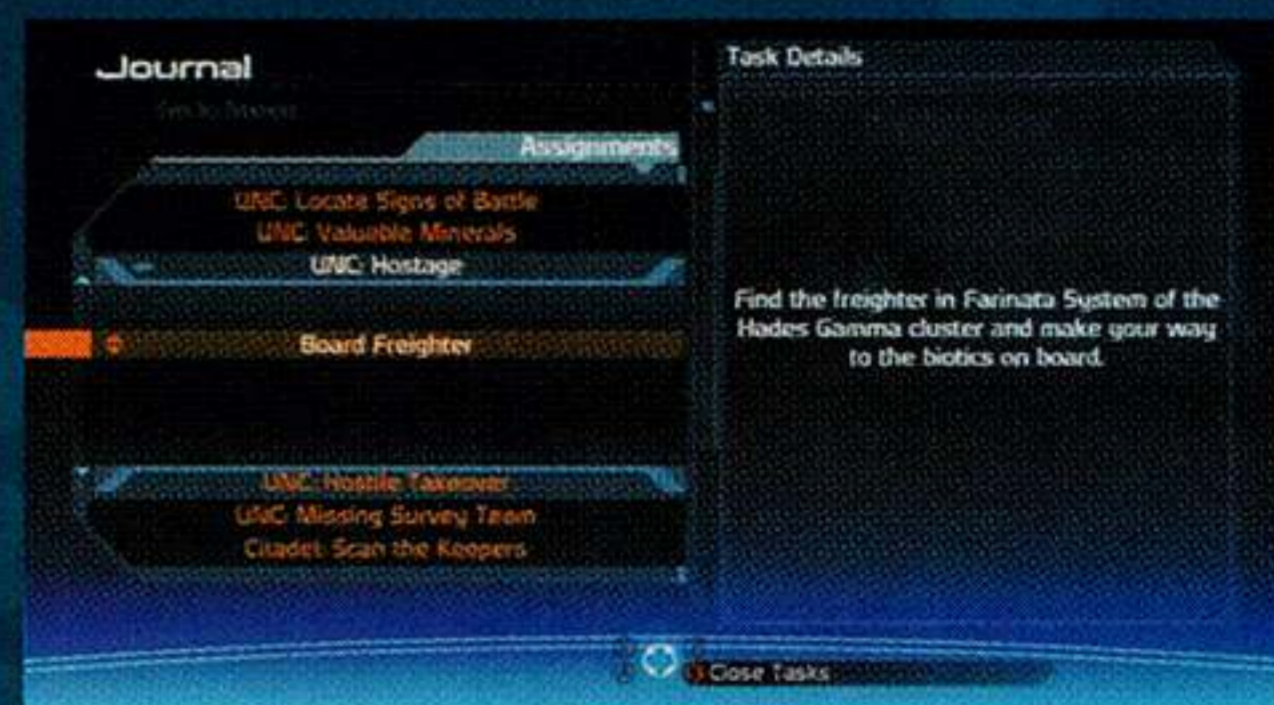
If you get deep into planetary exploration, you'll find that quite a few things on the various planets will not pop up on your radar, such as mineral readings and ruins. In order to find every secret in Mass Effect, you'll have to scour the planets yourself. Though this may seem time consuming, it's a great way to earn extra experience too.

Always Investigate Anomalies and Ruins



Aside from gathering information to review in your codex, investigating every little dot on your planetary map will help you gain experience, and often you'll be able to salvage weapons and items from these locations, as well as unlock new story segments.

Consult (and organize) your Journal



Traveling from system to system can result in sensory overload and losing track of your missions and assignments. Check your journal often to see if there's anything worth checking out; many of the smaller personal assignments can easily get lost in the shuffle. Keeping your journal organized by finishing off smaller missions early will help lose the clutter. **GP**

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GAME OF THE MONTH

BURNOUT PARADISE

We thought that the tidal wave of amazing releases was finally over. We assumed that since the holiday buying season was now coming to a close, that we'd seen the last of the big name releases for a while. That meant no more Mass Effects and no more Assassin's Creeds. Things were looking pretty lean until February, when Smash Bros. Brawl is set to release.

But then, we received Burnout Paradise and all was right with the world again. With its slick presentation, huge immersive world and finely tuned gameplay mechanics, Paradise quickly won us over and reminded us that, holidays or not, there are still quality games on the horizon.

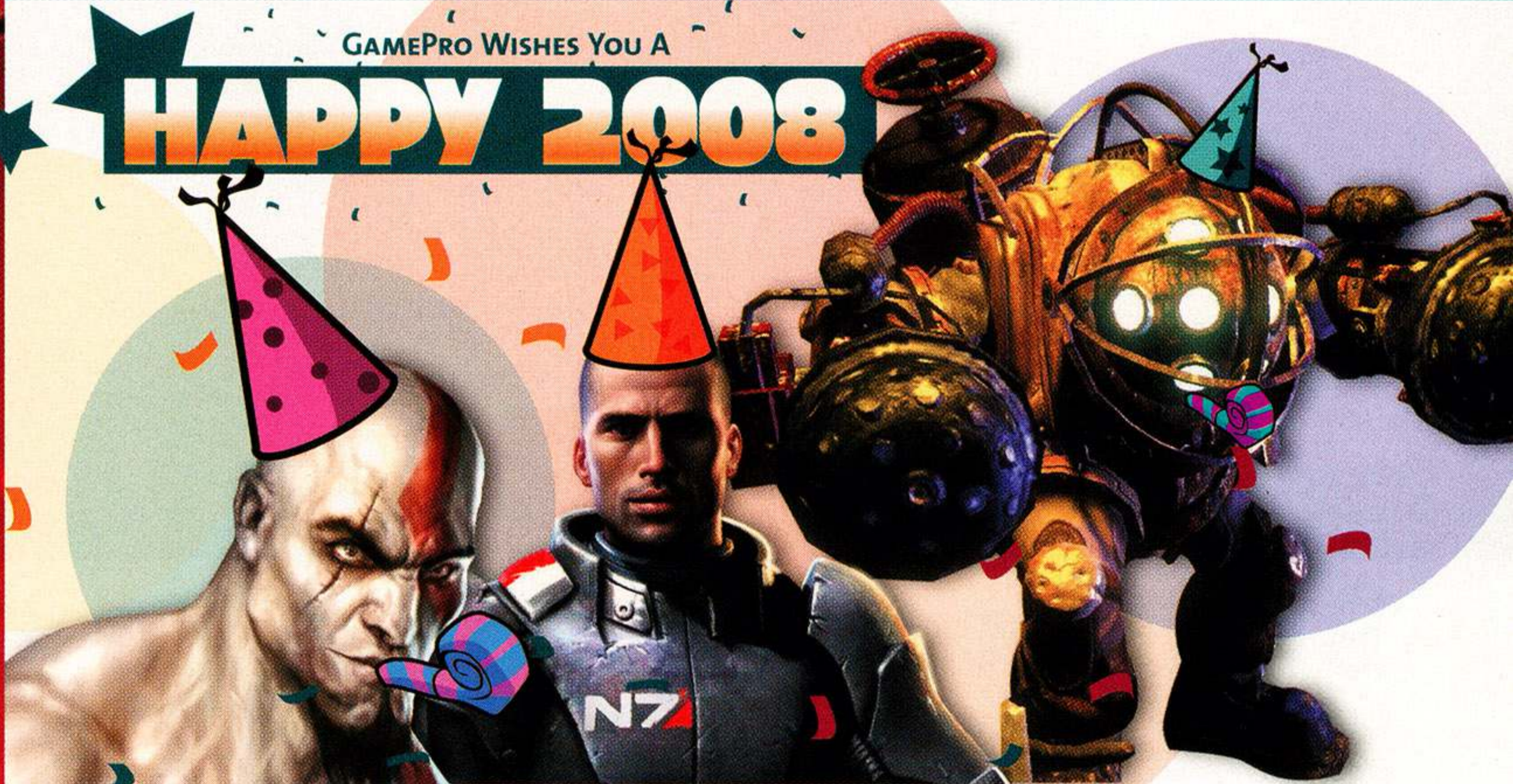
We're all big fans of the Burnout franchise at *GamePro* and expectations ran high, so it's a good thing that Criterion broke out all the stops for Paradise. Senior Editor Chris Morell had the opportunity to hop into the driver's seat and hasn't stopped raving about the game since. So buckle up and turn the page to see why the latest installment in the Burnout franchise just might be the best ever created.

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GAMEPRO WISHES YOU A

HAPPY 2008



By the time you read this, the New Year will have come and the calendar will read 2008. This is the perfect time to take a moment and reflect on all the great games you played in 2007. We were treated to amazing titles like *God of War II*, *BioShock*, *Rock Band*, *Call of Duty 4*, and *Mass Effect*—there's no denying that the past year was great for both the industry and gamers alike. But there are tons of reasons to look forward to 2008 as well: games like *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, and *Grand Theft Auto IV* are all on the horizon, and who knows what other surprises the new year will bring.

It's a great time to be a gamer and we here at *GamePro* are honored to be a part of your gaming lives. Rest assured that we'll continue to bring you the same honest and in-depth reviews that you've come to know and love. We hope you had a Happy New Year's and say hello to 2008!

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.

POSITION

7/8



You'll cause more mayhem than you can imagine while racing through Paradise City.

BURNOUT PARADISE

Where the grass is green and the cars are pretty.



PS3 ESRB: E10+

Developer: Criterion Games Publisher: EA Games

Sometimes, game reviewers get so caught up in reviewing games as products that they forget why people play games in the first place—for fun. Even at *GamePro* where our final review score is based on “fun factor,” we must take into consideration specific consumer needs such as graphics, sound, online features and most importantly, value. In the five or so years I’ve been reviewing games, I’ve only encountered a handful of titles that deliver on all fronts while simultaneously providing an intrinsically fun experience.

But it’s obvious that *Burnout Paradise* deserves to be recognized as a game that truly has it all. It more than lives up to the high expectations that surround the *Burnout* franchise and it stands as one of the most entertaining titles that I have ever played.

WHERE THE GRASS IS GREEN

Burnout developer Criterion Games has been mashing up cars at breakneck speeds for years but instead of simply adding a “new-gen” sheen to the tried and true formula, they forged a bold path and started completely from scratch. Gone are the confined races, cluttered menus and online lobbies, replaced by a huge city, on-the-fly racing, opened-ended objectives and an online mode that is seamlessly integrated into the overall experience.

Of course, Criterion wisely held onto the one element that has always been *Burnout*’s trademark: insanely fast racing and phenomenal car crashes. But

Paradise’s true strength is that this familiar concept has now been intertwined with a near flawless game experience. From the moment you hit the streets of Paradise City, there is almost no loading screens or menus to contend with. The game employs a true sandbox principle that allows you to play the game as you wish. The entire city, from the downtown metropolis to the distant countryside, is at your disposal and each area is loaded with enough events to keep you busy for a loooooong time.

THE MAIN EVENT(S)

The main modes that you’ll encounter consist of Races, Road Rage events (get X number of take-downs), Stunt Runs (achieve a specific stunt score), Marked Man challenges (reach a goal with rivals out for your hide) and Burning Routes; that’s enough content to fill out a standard racing title but *Paradise* is far from standard. Now, each of the approximately 75 vehicles available in the game has its own special Burning Route. There’s



The new Crash mode can be triggered during any on-the-fly wreck.



Unreal Tournament III has a massive fleet of deadly vehicles, but this Leviathan tank can crush most of them in a nanosecond.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT III

Proof that old-school PC shooters die hard.

■ Developer: Epic Games ■ Publisher: Midway

PC ESRB: M

Take a moment to pity poor Unreal Tournament III: the game finally sees the light of day after experiencing several delays and a name change only to find that it has to compete with recently released titles like Halo 3, Call of Duty 4, Quake Wars and The Orange Box. Talk about an uphill battle!

The good news, however, is UTIII not only lives up to the high standards of the franchise, it's Epic's best effort in years and a must-buy for fans of the series.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

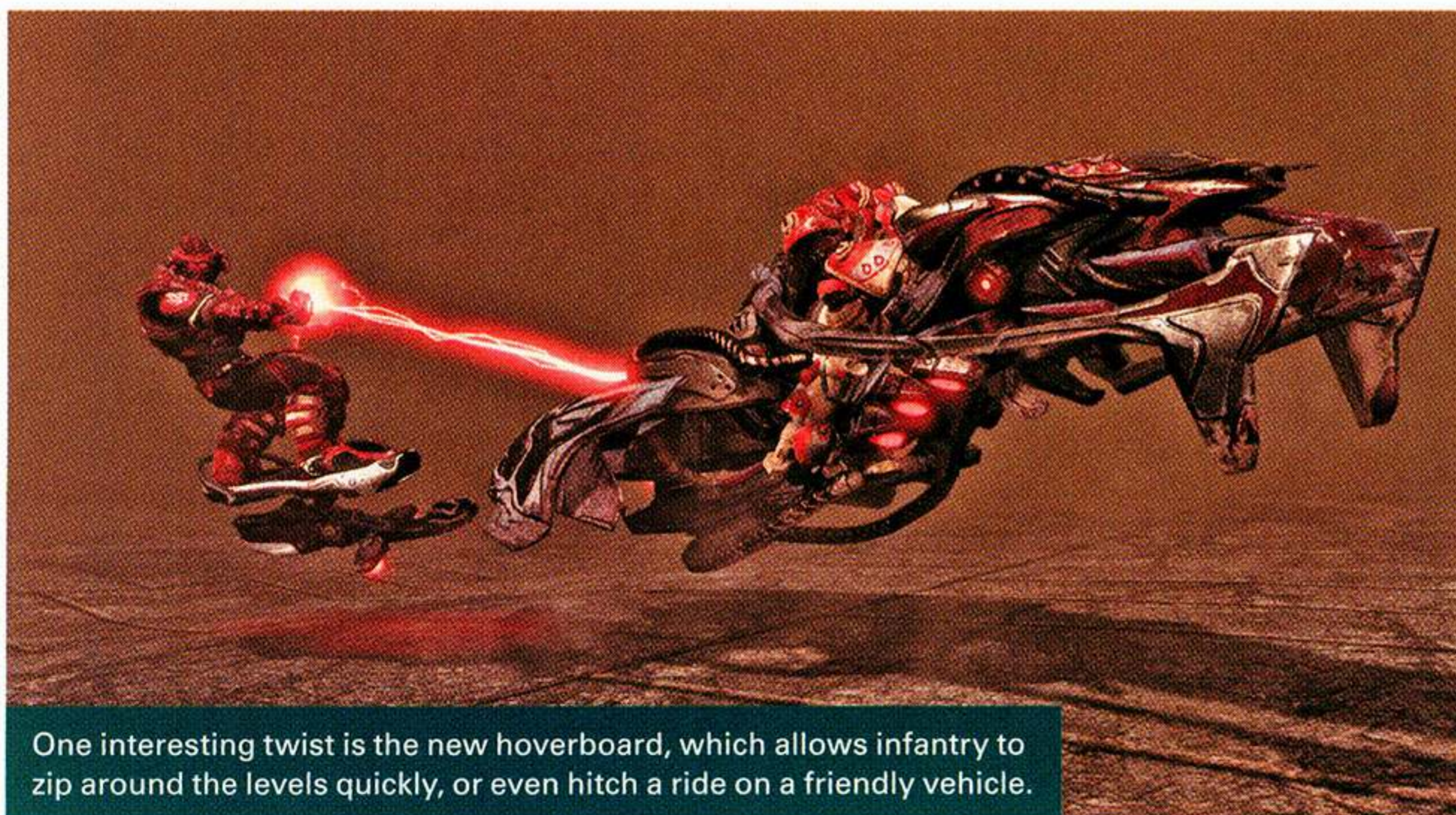
In some respects, UTIII harkens back to the first Unreal Tournament, which is a smart move con-

sidering that the original title was far sleeker than its subsequent sequels. You now spawn with a precise Enforcer pistol rather than an inaccurate assault rifle and the Impact Hammer returns to replace UT 2004's oft-ignored Shield Gun. Also gone are the floating power-ups, such as Adrenaline meters and wild wall-bouncing. Like the original UT, UTIII allows users to pick up modular armor pieces that can protect individual body parts.

The overall effect is of a striking return to form, and series vets will spot the similarities between UT and UTIII almost instantly: in particular, the main title theme will make UT vets grin. UTIII also has a heavier, weightier feel, which Epic claims is due to increased gravity settings. This helps do away with UT 2004's "floatier" feel and, again, makes UTIII more like a true sequel to the first Unreal Tournament. If you loved the first UT then you'll feel right at home in UTIII.

WARFARE IS HELL

Beyond shooter staples like deathmatch and Capture the Flag, UTIII narrows its focus with a new vehicle-centric mode called Warfare. Quite similar to UT 2004's Onslaught mode, Warfare is a combination of Domination (capturing and securing waypoints), UT 2003's Bombing Run (you can drop a special orb in an enemy waypoint to capture it instantly), and



One interesting twist is the new hoverboard, which allows infantry to zip around the levels quickly, or even hitch a ride on a friendly vehicle.



In *Soulcalibur Legends*, most of your enemies are content to spend most of their time standing around waiting for their turn at the beat-down buffet.

SOULCALIBUR LEGENDS

An exclusive spin-off adventure of surprisingly low caliber.

Wii ESRB: T

Developer and publisher: Namco Bandai Games

Whether it's *Mortal Kombat* branching out into adventure games, or *Street Fighter* spawning a film, brawlers don't have a stellar track record when it comes to venturing outside of the arena.

FREAK SHOW

The skeletal outline of an effective, if pedestrian, piece of entertainment is visible at first: grasp the hilt of a powerful sword, carve a path through legions of nasties, and gather allies and upgrades while improving your skills. Unfortunately, that basic potential just makes the bitter disappointment of reality go down with all the smooth flavor of a three-pronged fish hook. The production values and gameplay mechanics at work in *Soulcalibur Legends* are worlds away from the relatively crisp sheen of even old PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast entries. As you take Siegfried on his journey to recover the shards of the evil Soul Edge blade, you'll find yourself wondering what decrepit alternate universe this ridiculously repetitive throwback was plucked from.

AN EYEFUL OF EYESORE

Soulcalibur Legends is uninventive, unappealing, and downright tedious, and there isn't even a brief introductory honeymoon period to temporarily shield your eyes from the dreadfully simplis-

tic realms you're cursed to wander over and over again. From the plain corridors of the Zenon mansion to the frozen Himalayas, all levels draw from a shallow well of rough textures, angular geometry, and pure linearity, and none get any prettier the third or fourth time you're forced through them.

Graphics that would fail to impress on last generation's machines would be forgivable if the combat were rich and deep, but not one of the seven warriors has a library of attacks beyond the single digits. Yet even with so few movements to translate from motion sensitive controller to screen, all are misinterpreted a solid third of the time. Sweep your arm horizontally, and your avatar is just as likely to perform an uppercut sweep or thrust instead of the simple swing you intended. It's enough to make you thankful that not one dopey enemy or recycled boss battle will challenge you for more than a couple of minutes, even if the main pattern of play only diverges from killing dudes until a door opens to offer the most basic of switch puzzles.

RUNNING IN PLACE

Even the light RPG elements are virtually pointless. Perform well in each stage, and harvest simple upgrade icons from breakable barrels and crystals, and your crew will grow in level and earn access

to new weapons. The trouble is, you won't learn a single new attack, gain an extra inch of health or spirit energy, or even do much more damage per swing than you did as a rank amateur.

There are a few tolerable moments strewn about that seem positively memorable in such a dim context, but don't go thinking that braving such half-baked gameplay will yield any interesting insights into your favorite characters. If anything, your best bet is to approach the whole affair with a strong sense of ironic detachment when gems like "as long as we don't lose, we'll win!" and "once you're dead, it's all over!" infest the incoherent narrative. Better yet, just avoid it altogether.—Cameron Lewis

FUN FACTOR

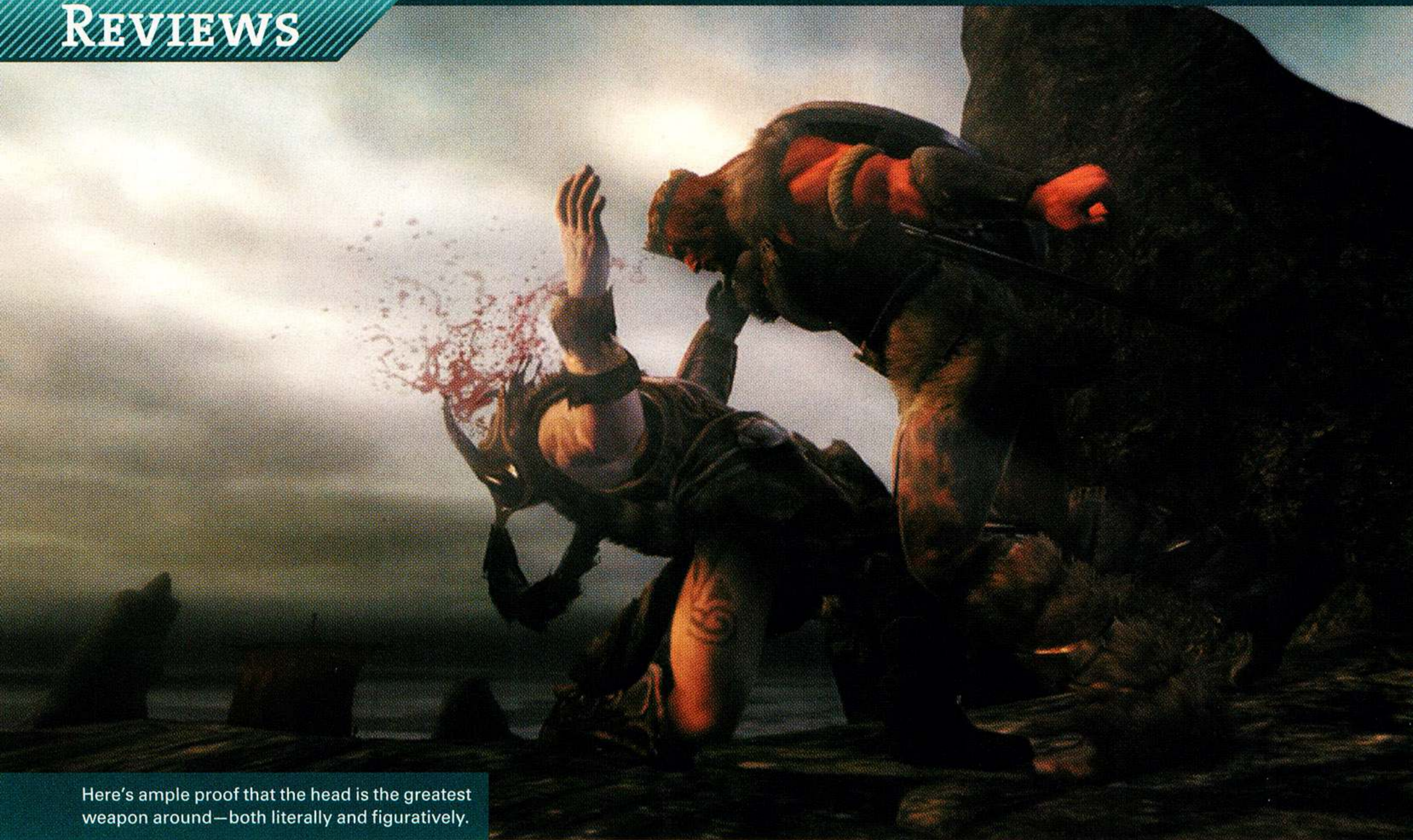
2.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: A few decent battles; playing as Lloyd from *Tales of Symphonia*, local co-op support.

CONS: Poor graphics; shallow and repetitive combat; meaningless character progression.



Here's ample proof that the head is the greatest weapon around—both literally and figuratively.

BEOWULF: THE GAME

You're probably better off renting the movie instead; better yet, go read the original poem.

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer and Publisher: Ubisoft

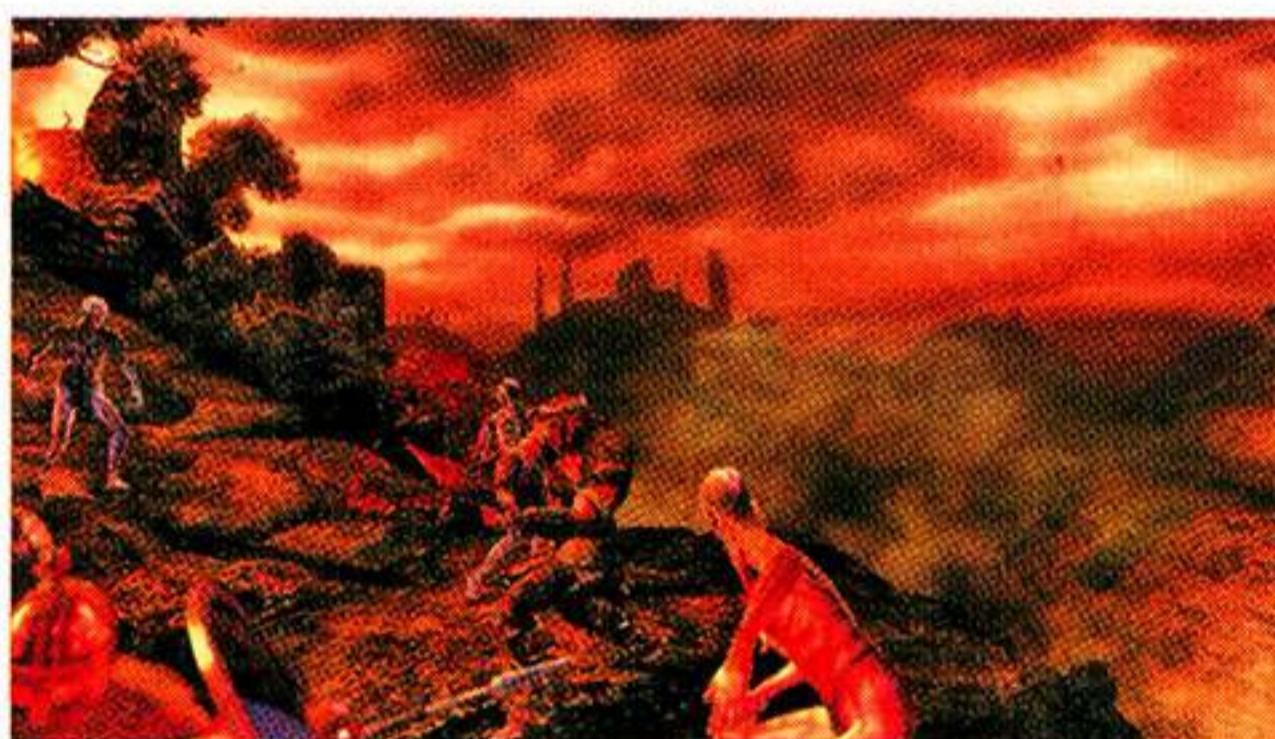
Beowulf: The Game is a bloody hack-n-slash adventure based on both the Old English epic poem of the same name and the recently released Robert Zemeckis-helmed movie. The story is decent enough fodder for a game but the entire enterprise is executed in a questionable and rather forgettable manner.

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Much like the recently released Conan game, Beowulf is as linear as it is gory and it cribbs a majority of its control and design cues from God of War. Stylistically, the characters look cartoony and the story jumps around a lot, but I had my share of fun with it even if I felt like I was replaying the same missions over and over.

The overall experience centers on pulling off reasonably satisfying weapon combos and button-mashing "fatality" sequences all while controlling a squad of brain-dead allies who prove to be as useful on the battlefield as a pack of preschoolers.

Also mind-numbing is the game's story, which roughly follows the original narrative—Beowulf saves the Danes from the monster Grendel and then deals with Grendel's pissed off mother—but it also features a lot of extraneous side missions that aren't related to the main story.



POETIC LICENSE

The bad thing is that these side missions are often nonsensical and are obviously present as filler. Here's one example: as Beowulf, you come upon a desolate, burned-out village with no survivors. But wait, there are four or five half-naked virgins spread throughout the level and trolls randomly tromping through to try and grab them. Hey virgins, it's called running away—try it some time.

Still, the game does offer up a decent action experience. The battles are epic even if they are derivative and if you aren't a literature snob, you probably won't care that the game isn't true to the original poem; seriously, how many of you have even read the thing? Just be prepared to go head-to-head against some weak design choices, like the Carnal Fury power. It's pretty awesome—

think Kratos' Rage of the Gods ability—but it's so powerful that it almost felt unbalanced; there's also a penalty for using it, which just seems counterintuitive.

WEEKEND WARRIOR

In the end, Beowulf: The Game is a simple and gory tie-in to the big budget movie. If you liked what you saw at the theater and need a way to blow off a few hours then it's a perfect weekend rental. But it doesn't live up to the epic nature the classic poem and it certainly isn't going to make you forget about God of War III either. —Casey Lynch

BEKT Get the link to **Beowulf** screens and news sent to your e-mail. Text **BEKT** to **59479**
Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

3.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Action can be satisfying at times and it doesn't shy away from the gore.

CONS: The story doesn't do justice to the source material; side missions are nonsensical.



Speed is everything in Link's Crossbow Training but accuracy counts, too. Hit these targets in the bulls-eye and you'll get bonus points.

NINTENDO Wii ZAPPER

It's a good idea but is it really necessary?

Wii ESRB: N/A

Developer and Publisher: Nintendo

If you think about it, the standard Wii Remote already functions as a light-gun, so you really don't need a gun-shaped peripheral. This is why the Wii Zapper is such an odd duck: It's a nifty piece of equipment but it doesn't bring anything new to the table.

WEAPON JAM

The setup of the Wii Zapper is pretty simple: You slot the Wii Remote into the front, holster the Nunchuk in the back and route the wires through a compartment that sits under the unit. You might want to leave the Nunchuk hanging free in your off-hand, however, as the Zapper's design requires you to keep it braced awkwardly against your forearm. I struggled to find a comfortable grip because the Zapper just didn't feel natural in my hands.

And as I already mentioned, there's no real reason to invest in the Zapper. Yes, there are some awesome light-gun titles coming out for the Wii like Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles but the Zapper doesn't add anything to the experience and in some ways, it can even detract from it (see sidebar).

DEAD AIM

The Zapper does have one ace up its sleeve. It comes bundled with Link's Crossbow Training, which features a slick suite of mini-games starring everybody's favorite hero. The game offers up a surprisingly varied and interesting set of challenges that require both accuracy and speed but it's ultimately a shallow experience. Still, it is fun for brief bursts.

The Zapper's low price is also compelling—the whole package only costs about \$20—but it's a redundant peripheral that doesn't really enhance your experience. I'd suggest you pass this one up unless you're a Wii fanatic, a light-gun aficionado, or a Zelda freak who just has to have every single Link game around.—Tae K. Kim



DOES IT PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS?

We tested the Zapper with some upcoming titles and found that in some cases, it can negatively affect the experience. Because of the Zapper's design, the A button becomes nearly unusable, which sucks because a lot of games use it extensively. Also, in games like Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, you can shake the Wii Remote to reload; the downside here is that the Zapper adds unnecessary bulk and weight to your hand, making it much more of a burden to replenish your ammo. And the awkward way it sits along your forearm made extended sessions of games like Medal of Honor Heroes 2 much tougher to bear. In the end, the standard Wii Remote and Nunchuk combination is a far better option.

FUN FACTOR

3.25

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: It's inexpensive and comes bundled with a decent game.

CONS: It's sort of pointless considering the Wii Remote already acts as a light-gun.



Giant mechanized robots shooting missiles? Our childhood fantasies just came true.

UNIVERSE AT WAR: EARTH ASSAULT

Small annoyances hold back an otherwise amazing game.

PC ESRB: T

Developer: Petroglyph Games Publisher: Sega

Universe at War is like a breath of fresh air that carries with it the vague stench of something foul. It offers three interesting and diverse sides, great graphics, and some tantalizing strategic elements but it's afflicted by some unfortunate quirks that hold the game back.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Universe at War begins with Earth in near total ruin after an alien race, the Hierarchy, invades the planet in a quest to strip mine our resources and wipe out humanity in the process. You pick up what's left of the American military around Washington and attempt to make one last stand; from there, a second alien race, the Novus, are introduced and things get really hairy. But hold

on: there's yet another alien race, the extremely powerful Masari, who enters the picture late in the game.

Like other prominent RTS games, you get to play as each of the races and this propels along the single-player campaign. The three alien races are quite diverse and offer very unique gameplay experiences. The Novus, for example, are fragile but fast, the Hierarchy relies on brute force and the Masari offers a mix of both. It's not groundbreaking but the balance between each side is tight, which should prove especially beneficial for the game's multiplayer component. The gameplay also offers a nice mix of tactical and strategic elements and visually speaking, the game shines with amazing battlefields and animations.

MINOR MALFUNCTION

Unfortunately, the overall game is hampered by a few flaws. The pathfinding is suspect which often led to units getting stuck or wandering where they shouldn't. Furthermore, there were some interface issues, such as a problem with getting units grouped into squads. There are other little quibbles, like infantry units being presented as individuals rather than as an overall squad, which really makes unit management a chore.

Build queues are also limited to six units, so churning out a massive army requires constant babysitting of your production buildings. None of these issues by crippling in and of themselves but are persistent and annoying throughout.

Universe at War is ultimately a game of contrasts. On one hand it has plenty of great ideas and promise, but it lacks that polish that helps elevate games towards greatness. It's a shame that it doesn't quite live up to its potential but I still recommend that gamers check it out. Fans of the genre, especially those looking for the next big multiplayer RTS experience, will undoubtedly find much to admire in this package. At the least, it'll help you tune up for StarCraft II. —Andrew Dagley



FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00



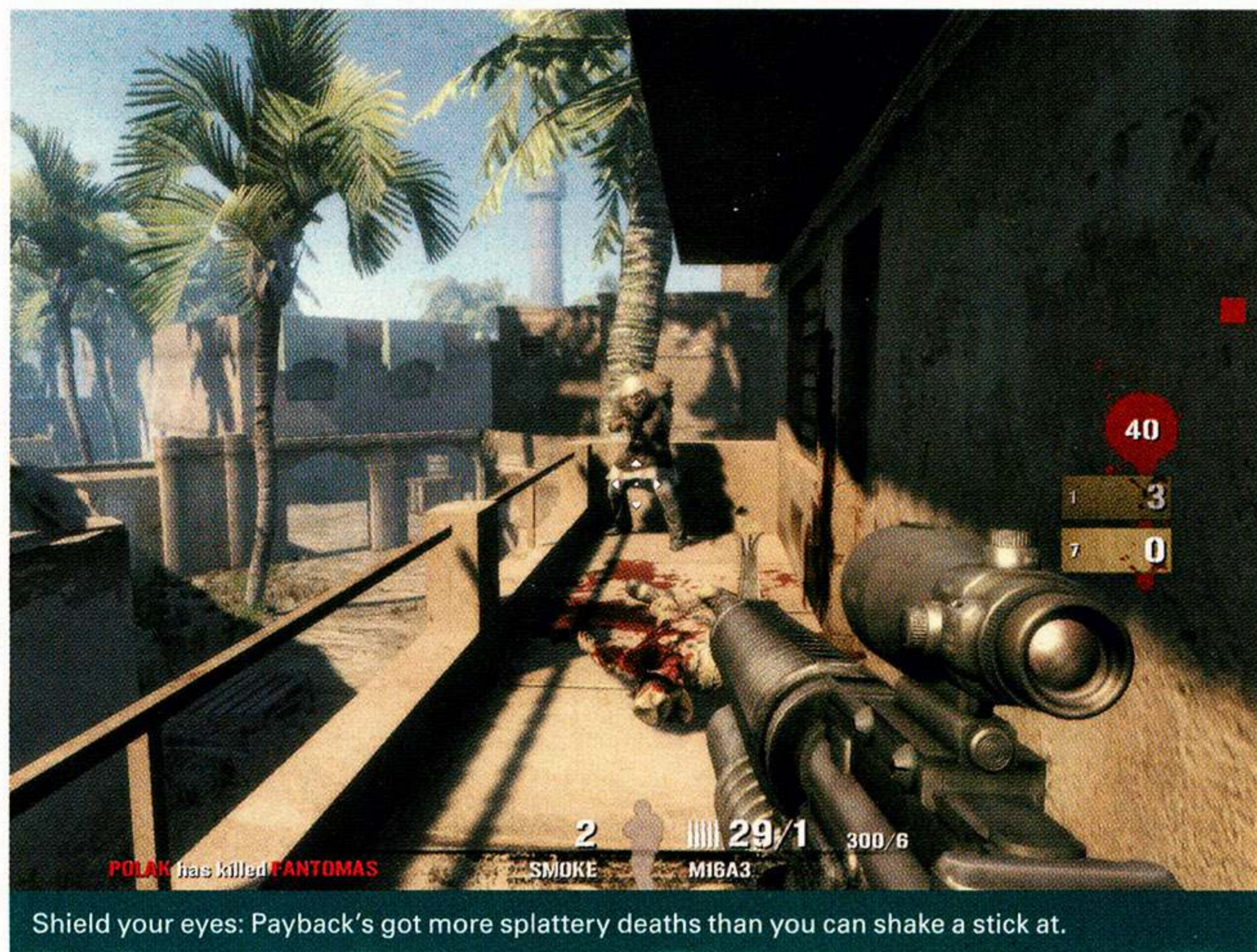
PROS: The available factions are varied and interesting; the title has a lot of promise.

CONS: Small issues keep the game from achieving greatness.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE: PAYBACK

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: Cauldron HQ Publisher: Activision



Shield your eyes: Payback's got more splatery deaths than you can shake a stick at.

In 2007 gamers had a banner year. As I type this, there are a lot of triple-A titles sitting on store shelves. The bar has been set incredibly high and mediocre titles look that much worse in comparison. And this is definitely the case with *Soldier of Fortune: Payback*. Had the title been released during a slow year, it may have caught a brief moment in the spotlight, but as it stands, the game doesn't do anything interesting or memorable aside from treating your eyes to some mindless violence.



POP-UP BLOCKER

One probable reason *Payback* is so poor might lay in the fact that developer Raven Software, which handled the previous versions, wasn't involved this time. The game definitely lacks the usual polish that gamers have come to expect from the veteran development house; *Payback* is riddled with awful textures that seem to appear out of nowhere. While the graphics are decent, the framerate chokes along at points, which kills most of the fun.

The game will please gore-addicts, as you can perform some brutal amputations and cause great bodily harm to your foes. But it gets boring after a while and bodies always magically evaporate into thin air upon death, which cuts down on the realism.

FPSUCK

There really is nothing compelling about *Payback*. The single-player campaign, which can be completed in a handful of hours, is nothing memorable and the story abounds with clichés; if you've played *Call of Duty 4* or *BioShock*, you'll find yourself unimpressed by what *Payback* has to offer. Prepared to be let down by *Payback*'s multiplayer, too; more slow down and texture problems than in the single-player campaign make the experience mediocre at best.

In the end, *Payback* is a run-of-the-mill shooter that doesn't leave much of a lasting impression. It's good if you just want some mindless fun but don't go in expecting anything more because the only payback you get is a shot in the foot.—Andy Burt



FUN FACTOR

3.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Decent enough graphics; some missions are mildly engrossing.

CONS: Slow down and pop-ups galore; a generally unpolished gaming experience.

CONTRA 4

DS ESRB: T

Developer and Publisher: Konami

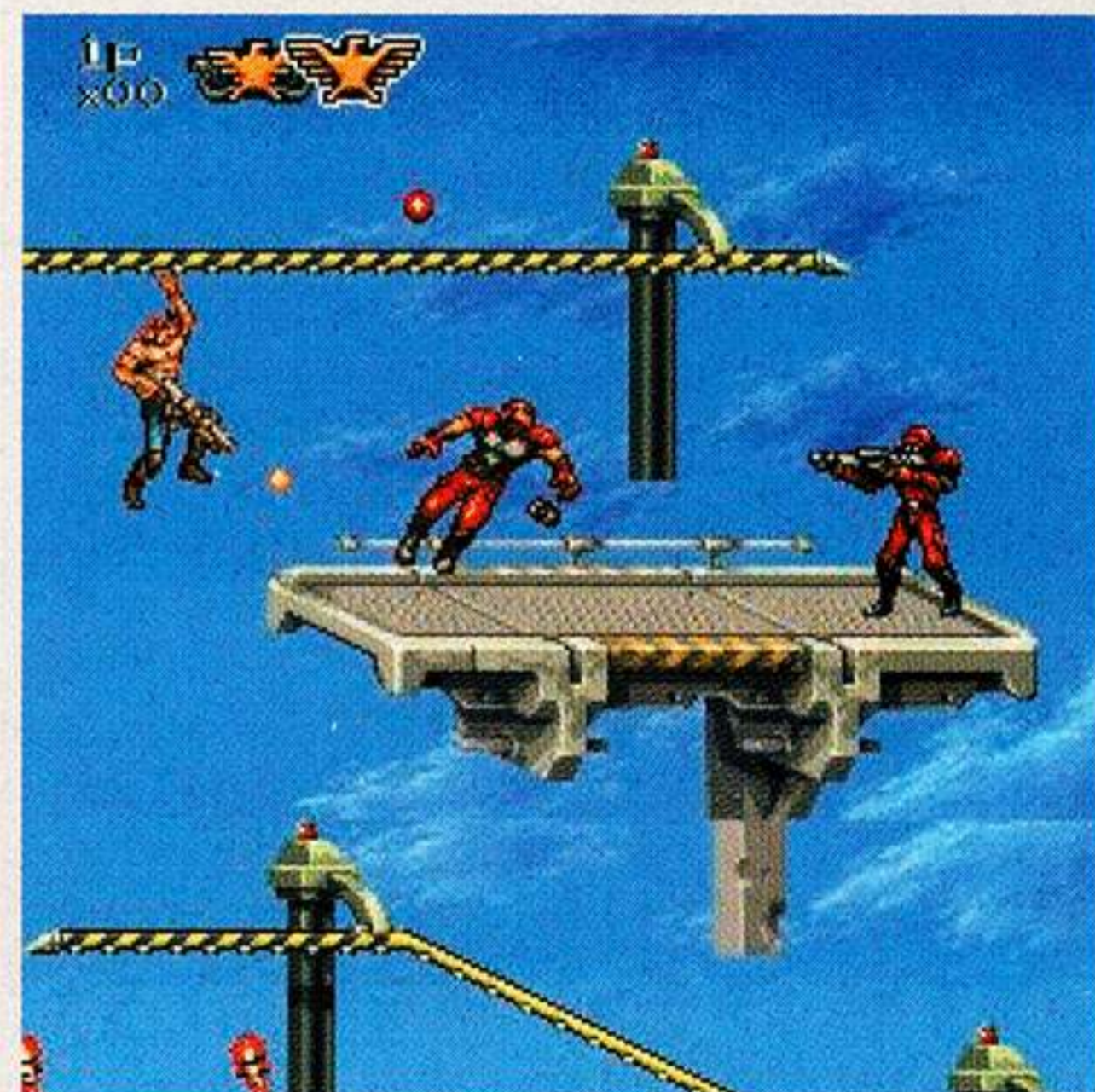


After a decade-plus of 3D missteps, Konami finally delivers a *Contra* title worthy of succeeding the SNES classic, *The Alien Wars*. One part homage and one part evolution, *Contra 4* is two screens of delicious torture.

At first glance, *Contra 4* seems like it would be a better fit for the Sony PSP. The wide screen could have accommodated the action better and the ability to choose between analog or digital controls would have been welcome. Konami, however, saw the potential that lay in the DS' dual screens and took the opportunity—to double the difficulty. The enemies are still brain-dead and their weapons largely ineffective, but the onslaught never stops, and you've got twice as much area to keep your eyes on. The invisible area in between the screens is a bit of an issue, as you'll sometimes lose track of a bullet or an enemy in there, but thankfully, the stages are usually set up to avoid that problem.

While *Contra 4* ups the difficulty you are given a few neat tricks to help even the score. Special weapons, a *Contra* hallmark, have been given a big upgrade. You can switch between two weapons à la *Contra 3* and new abilities like the grappling hook gives you some much-needed maneuverability.

Contra 4 also features immense replay value. The game itself is fun enough to warrant multiple playthroughs but you can unlock a bunch of awesome content including the original NES *Contra* and *Super C*. With three of the best 2D shooters all housed on one cart, *Contra 4* is an amazing value. While it may not make use of the system's touchscreen, *Contra 4* is the perfect portable title: it's easy to play in short bursts but also engrossing enough to get sucked into.—Dave Rudden



FUN FACTOR

4.50

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Neat tweaks on the traditional *Contra* formula; unlockable NES *Contra* and *Super C*.

CONS: Expect a lot of cheap deaths; unbalanced weapons can take the fun out of boss battles.



The art style of SimCity Societies is clean and bright, if perhaps a bit on the sterile side.

SIMCITY SOCIETIES

Proof that you just can't go home again.



PC ESRB: E10+

Developer: Tilted Mill Entertainment Publisher: EA Games

Although it's one of the most-recognized franchises in all of gaming, the SimCity series seemed to be headed towards a dead-end. The latest entry, Societies, tries to take things in a better direction but it ultimately gets lost along the way.

GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOVERNMENT WORK

Rather than try to slap a next-generation paint job onto SimCity's rusted chassis, Societies serves as a series reboot, and as such does away with many long-standing concepts. You no longer have to manually link every building to a power source—plop down a power plant and the electricity flows on its own.

The concept of zoning, meanwhile, has been thrown out altogether: You can simply plop tract homes right next to offices and movie theaters at will as long as you've got the cash. Though this releases you from seemingly arbitrary restraints, it also diminishes the sense of long-term planning inherent in the SimCity experience.

LET THEM EAT CAKE

Your design choices also don't result in many consequences; no one in the Societies universe seems to mind when they wind up living next door to a heavy metal night club. In fact, as long as your citizens can make it to work in the morning and

soak up a little entertainment at night, they'll be perfectly satisfied. You can still click on each Sim to learn their desires and frustrations, but they're far less specific than they used to be.

URBAN OUTFITTER

The true joy of Societies, then, lies in sculpting the overall aesthetic of your city. There are six cultural currencies—productivity, prosperity, creativity, spirituality, authority, and knowledge—and all buildings either produce or absorb them. Place war memorials and police boxes, and you'll earn the clout you need to open a new prison. Put up hand-painted murals and tetherball courts, and you'll rack up creativity sufficient to support a new multiplex.

The result of your architectural choices has a dramatic effect on look and feel. You can create burgeoning metropolises that adhere to vastly different principles, from a spiritual utopia to a fascist police state. Each approach presents its own set of unique challenges which results in a nice sense of challenge.

HIT THE BRICKS

Unfortunately, even this enjoyable aspect is simplified to the point where you could easily grow tired of your city within a few hours regardless of what path you take. Societies is interesting enough if

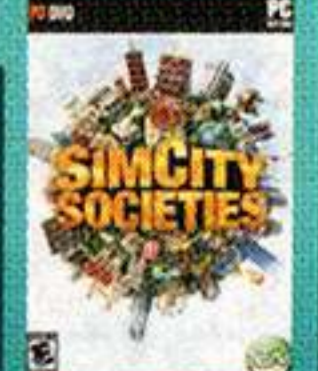
you're just looking for a casual bit of click and drag but if you're looking for the sense of depth and complexity that made the previous SimCity titles so memorable, you might find yourself feeling disappointed.—Cameron Lewis



FUN FACTOR

3.25

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Pretty architecture; relaxing and simplified city building for casual gamers

CONS: Far too simple for existing fans; exceptionally easy; some frame-rate woes

PARTY GAMES

We sit down with two hot new party games that are sure to make your next gathering a blast!

SCENE!T!

Xbox 360 ESRB: T

Developer: Screenlife Games Publisher: Microsoft



The popular Scenelt! board game makes a pretty flawless transition to the console scene with a version for the Xbox 360. It plays exactly like the DVD version: you watch clips from movies and answer trivia questions for points. The only difference is that you control the game using four wireless buzzer controllers and an infra-red receiver. The game itself is pretty slick and the presentation is solid. There's a good mix of genres and films from the modern day and the past and a lot of variety to the questions. The questions are also obvious enough that you can get by even if you aren't familiar with the movie but of course, the more knowledgeable players will likely dominate.



And much like any other party game, the enjoyment you gain from Scenelt! will depend on how many people are involved. Get four people together and you'll have a better time than if only two are playing. For the purposes of review, GamePro editors gathered around during lunch and after work and played over the course of several days. Things never got as heated as, say, during an inter-office Halo 3 match or a round of Strikers Charged

but we still had fun trash talking and bragging about the questions we got right.

If you throw a lot of parties or have people over often, this is a good game to have on hand, especially if you're just looking to have a night of casual fun with some friends.

—The GamePros

FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: There's a good variety to the questions and movies; wireless controllers work well.

CONS: You really need four players to take full advantage; game's pacing can be a tad slow.



SMARTY PANTS

Wii ESRB: E

Developer: Planet Moon Studios Publisher: EA Games



Smarty Pants definitely has a more youthful vibe than Scenelt! but it's designed in such a way that both adults and children can have fun with it. The game is also far more interactive than Scenelt! in that you have to physically move the Wii Remote around for certain tasks such as buzzing in to answer the questions and spinning the wheel that determines the next category. There are also little mini-games like a tug-of-war between two players and a dancing mini-game to determine bonus multipliers.

The cool part is that you can input your age when you first sign in so the game levels the playing field if you have players from different age groups, which is perfect for parents who want to play with their children. There is a nice variety to the questions—the categories include Art, Books and Science—but we noticed more occurrences of repeats than with Scenelt!; on the flip side, the game moves along at a quicker pace and the motion-sensing mini-games make for some hi-

larious moments. We also dug the kid- and family-friendly vibe of the game: you can choose to play a co-operative match and you can eliminate the countdown timer in favor of a wager style of gameplay. We also liked the fact that you could use Mii's as your avatars.

While it won't hold the attention of adults for long, Smarty Pants is a fairly entertaining party game for younger gamers that offers a nice change of pace from games like Mario Party and WarioWare.

—The GamePros



FUN FACTOR

3.75

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Kid-friendly vibe is entertaining for families; good use of motion-sensing controls.

CONS: Adults may find the game a little too young for their tastes.



TIME CRISIS 4

PS3 ESRB: T

Developer and Publisher: Namco Bandai Games



The standard handgun is usually enough but it's always nice to have options.

As someone who sunk their fair share of quarters into Time Crisis 4 arcade machines, I had high hopes for the PS3 port of Namco Bandai's slick light-gun shooter. And I wasn't disappointed, as it's a near perfect port. For short bursts of light-gun action, it's pretty tough to beat, especially considering the fact that it's the only one around.



IN THE NICK OF...

Most of you have probably played a Time Crisis game but if you haven't, it's one of the better light-gun franchises around. In TC4, you play as one of two pretty boy cops and basically shoot the crap out of everything that moves. The game employs a neat cover system that requires you to hold a button in order to position yourself to take shots at the enemy; when it's time to reload or when things get dangerous, you simply let go of the button and duck to safety. You also have an arsenal of weapons that includes machine guns and shotguns.

The PS3 version comes with the new Guncon 3 controller that's bristling with buttons but they're intuitively placed and it's comfortable in your

hands. It looks like a gun with half a Dual-Shock melded on; you do have to strap two awkward looking LED sensors to the upper two corners of your TV to make the whole contraption work but once you set it up, it's pretty damn responsive.

RUNNING OUT OF...

Of course, the enjoyment you get out of the game depends on your love of light-gun games. Because it's an arcade port, it's fairly short and only diehard fans will play it over and over again. There is an interesting FPS mode that's fun for a few levels but it's ultimately gimmicky and your hands start to cramp because of all the buttons involved. There are also some mini-games present and I'm sure there are other hidden goodies you can unearth but the game's shelf life is pretty short.

But the game is still a blast, even if you eventually get tired of it. If you're a PS3 owner who loves light-gun games then Time Crisis 4 is the only game you need; it's also the only game you can have. —Tae K. Kim

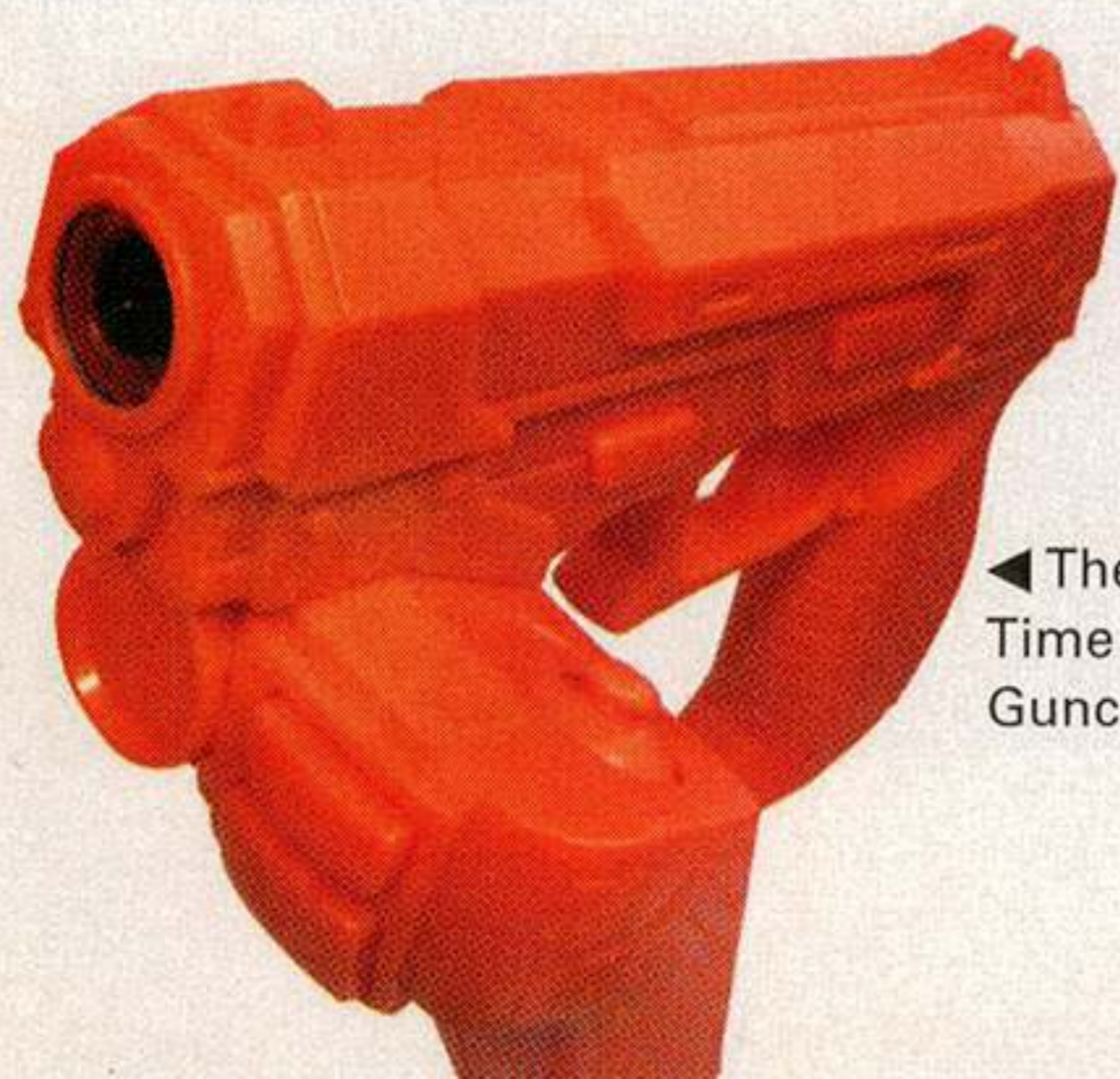


FUN FACTOR

4.00
OUT OF 5.00

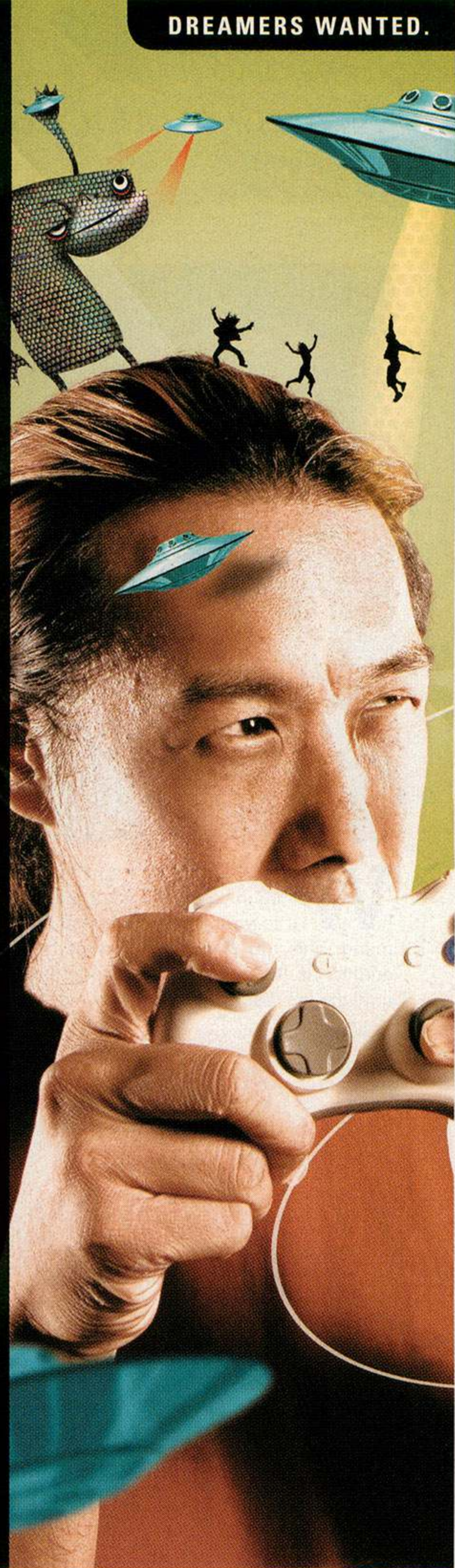
PROS: Plays just like the arcade version; the new Guncon 3 is well designed.

CONS: Replayability is an issue; FPS mode is interesting but ultimately gimmicky.



◀ The new Time Crisis 4 Guncon

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WARHAMMER 40,000: SQUAD COMMAND

PSP ESRB: T

Developer: Red Lynx Publisher: THQ



The Predator tank is a valuable offensive weapon; be sure to protect it from enemy fire.

Whether you're new to the Warhammer 40K universe or a hardcore vet, you owe it to yourself to check out Squad Command. This turn-based strategy game is a great addition to the franchise and should tide you over until the inevitable release of Dawn of War 2.



STEP BY STEP

Squad Command plays out far differently than Dawn of War and its many expansion packs. It's a turn-based affair, so the battles are more methodical and slower paced. You start out with a squad of various units which range from standard Space Marines to vehicles; every unit possesses a set number of action points that they expend each turn to perform actions like movement and attacks.



Most levels require you to completely destroy every single enemy unit though there are some varied objectives like blowing up specific targets. The graphics are a little muddy but they get the job done and the controls are pretty slick, though panning around the levels can be a bit of a chore.

WITH THE LIGHTS OUT...

I also didn't like the mission difficulty, which can be pretty brutal—be prepared to replay missions often. There's also a thick fog of war that covers the playing field and you constantly come under attack from hidden foes, which can slow the pace of the game down. Despite this frustration, however, I found myself wanting to return to the game over and over again.

For Warhammer 40K fans, this game's a no-brainer but even if you're unfamiliar with the franchise, Squad Command is a quality turn-based strategy game that deserves serious consideration.—Tae K. Kim



FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Makes good use of the Warhammer 40K franchise; fun and engaging turn-based action.

CONS: Missions can be hard; the pace of the game can slow to a crawl at points.



ENDLESS OCEAN

Wii ESRB: E

Developer: Arika Publisher: Nintendo



When I was first assigned to review Endless Ocean, I was excited. The idea of swimming around in full scuba gear while using the Wii Remote to navigate underwater sounded intriguing. I felt like the game's premise had potential. But after taking the plunge, I was disappointed to find that life under the sea is tedious, repetitive, and ultimately boring.

The biggest problem with Endless Ocean is that it lacks any sense of challenge or fun. It just simply plops you underwater where you're left to explore at your leisure; your scuba tanks are filled with an endless amount of air, all of the sea life is cuddly and loves to be petted. The only real challenge I faced in the game was not falling asleep while I was immersed in what turned out to be a virtual aquarium.

But at least the controls are solid. Swimming through the ocean is as simple as holding down the B button and pointing the Wii Remote in the direction you want to go. The graphics are also surprising decent; you will never mistake it for the Discovery Channel but they get the job done. The real problem is that I was left wondering why I was going through all of the effort.

Endless Ocean's underwater atmosphere is soothing and relaxing but it lacks a crucial element: fun. It could pass as a mildly interesting educational title but it's presented in a manner that can only be described as sleep-inducing. I can only recommend this title for children, especially those who are obsessed with marine biology, but even they might have trouble staying awake through extended sessions.—Todd Melick

FUN FACTOR

1.25

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Controls are surprisingly good; underwater visuals are soothing.

CONS: There is no real game here to speak of; it doesn't come close to being fun.



NAME OF GAME	SYSTEM(S)	PUBLISHER	FUN FACTOR	ESRB	ISSUE REVIEWED
Assassin's Creed	Xbox 360	Ubisoft	5.00	M	1/08
BioShock	Xbox 360	2K Games	5.00	M	10/07 ▶
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	Xbox 360	Activision	5.00	M	1/07
Formula One Championship Edition	PS3	Sony	5.00	E	5/07
God of War II	PS2	Sony	5.00	M	4/07
Halo 3	Xbox 360	Microsoft	5.00	M	12/07
Mario Strikers Charged	Wii	Nintendo	5.00	E	9/07
The Orange Box	Xbox 360	Valve	5.00	T-M	12/07
Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction	PS3	Sony	5.00	E10+	12/07 ▶
Rock Band	Xbox 360	MTV Games	5.00	T	1/08
Rogue Galaxy	PS2	Sony	5.00	T	3/07
Super Mario Galaxy	Wii	Nintendo	5.00	E	1/07
World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade	PC	Vivendi	5.00	T	4/07
Blue Dragon	Xbox 360	Microsoft	4.75	T	10/07 ▶
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	PSP	Konami	4.75	T	11/07
Final Fantasy	PSP	Square Enix	4.75	E10+	7/07
Guitar Hero II	Xbox 360	RedOctane	4.75	T	4/07
Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	Xbox 360	Activision	4.75	T	12/07
The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	DS	Nintendo	4.75	E	11/07
Madden NFL 08	Xbox 360	EA Sports	4.75	E	10/07
Mass Effect	Xbox 360	Microsoft	4.75	M	1/08
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	PS3	Tecmo	4.75	M	8/07 ▶
Resident Evil 4 Wii Edition	Wii	Capcom	4.75	M	8/07
Shin Megami Tensai: Persona 3	PS2	Atlus	4.75	M	9/07
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	Xbox 360	EA Sports	4.75	E10	10/07
Worms: Open Warfare 2	DS	THQ	4.75	E10+	10/07
Clive Barker's Jericho	Xbox 360	Codemasters	4.50	M	12/07
Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars	PC	EA Games	4.50	T	6/07
Contra 4	DS	Konami	4.50	T	2/07
Crackdown	Xbox 360	Microsoft	4.50	M	3/07 ▶
Crysis	PC	EA Games	4.50	M	1/08
Drawn to Life	DS	THQ	4.50	E	10/07
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	PC	Activision	4.50	T	12/07
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	DS	Square Enix	4.50	E10+	12/07
Forza Motorsport 2	Xbox 360	Microsoft	4.50	E	8/07
Heavenly Sword	PS3	Sony	4.50	T	10/07 ▶
Mario Party 8	Wii	Nintendo	4.50	E	7/07
MotorStorm	PS3	Sony	4.50	T	5/07
Need for Speed: ProStreet	Xbox 360	EA Games	4.50	E10+	1/08
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	DS	D3Publisher	4.50	T	6/07
Silent Hill Origins	PSP	Konami	4.50	M	12/07
Super Paper Mario	Wii	Nintendo	4.50	E	6/07 ▶
Supreme Commander	PC	THQ	4.50	E10+	4/07
Unreal Tournament III	PC	Midway	4.50	M	2/07
Virtua Fighter 5	PS3	Sega	4.50	T	4/07
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	PS3	THQ	4.50	T	12/07



ASK THE PROS

You ask, we answer.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

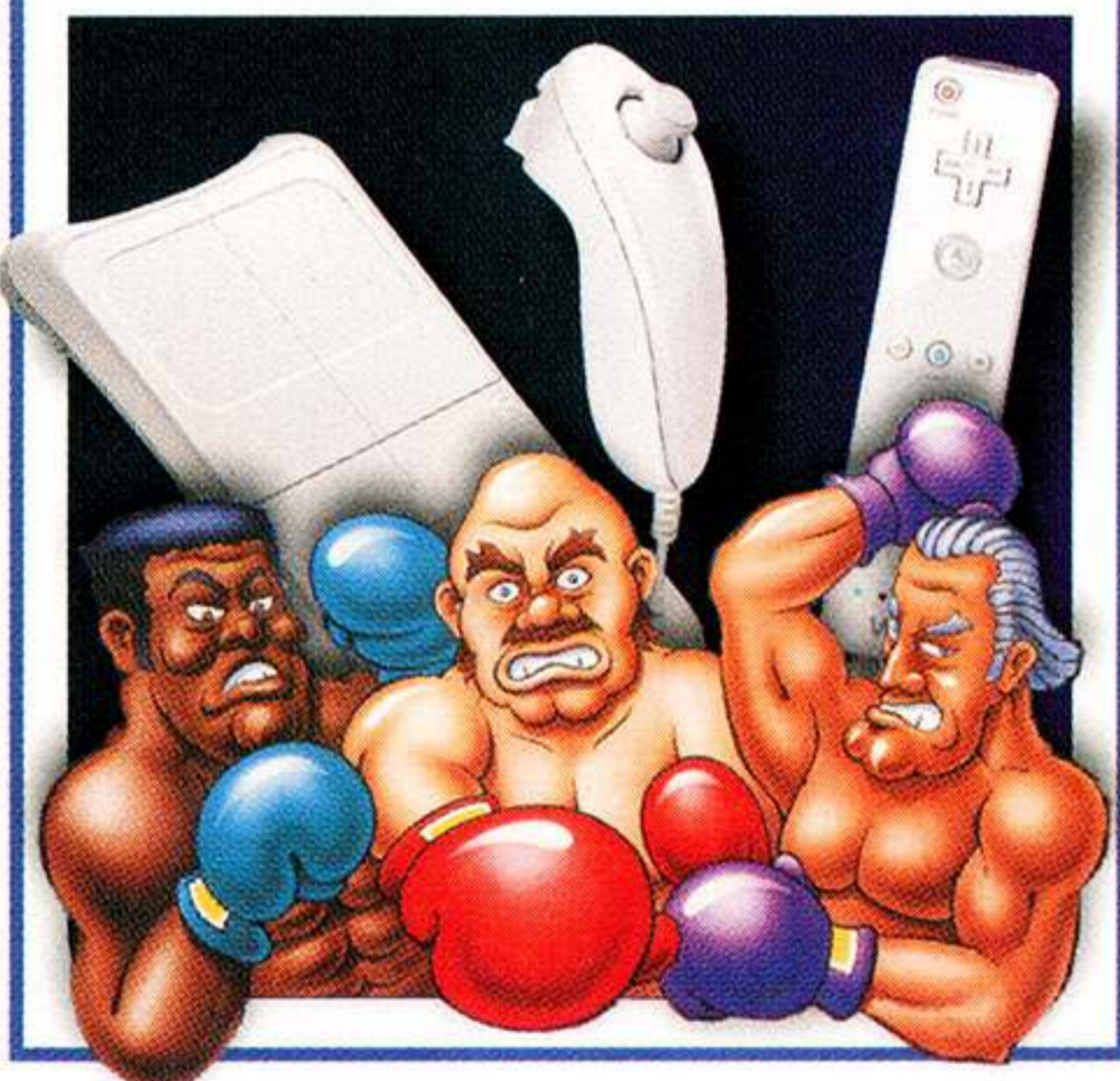


MAMA SAYS PUNCH YOU OUT.

Q: Hey just a quick one for you. Is there any talk of bringing Super Punch-Out!! back? Because that would be killer.—jointman99



Tae K. Kim says: Super Punch-Out!! was an awesome game. Sure, it lacks the pop culture cachet of Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! but the SNES classic still reigns as one of the best arcade boxing titles around. I don't know if Nintendo has any plans to bring Super Punch-Out!! back. My best guess is that they will bring the original to the Virtual Console. As for a remake, the best we can do is hope. With the Wii's motion-sensing controls and the popularity of Wii Sports, it sort of makes sense for Nintendo to do one. In the meantime, you should check out Victorious Boxer Revolution which is based on a Japanese Manga title.



ONE IS A GOLDEN NUMBER

Q: Hey Sid, I'm going to be embarking on my first system build and it all seems pretty straightforward. Should I set up my hard drives with a RAID? Is it really worth the extra c-note for another hard drive?—kyler_713

Sid Shuman says: I get this question, and ones relating to 10,000 RPM (aka ultra-fast) hard drives frequently. I'll give you same answer I give everyone else: It probably isn't worth the hassle and the extra expense. Why? It just doesn't make things that much faster. I'd say invest in more RAM or a better video card instead. Go with a nice 7200 RPM drive. Generally speaking, you'll be hard-pressed to notice a speed difference with RAID or 10K RPM drives. I've used both and the speed boost is barely noticeable. RAID is trickier yet because having two drives means you have twice the chance for failure. Buy one big, fairly fast drive and you're golden.

TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY

Q: Would it be easier putting a new graphics card in a four-year old computer, or just buying a new one? My current rig can't even play KOTOR.—Sin540

Sid Shuman says: You'll definitely want to spring for an all-new PC; a really nice video card would likely choke on your current PC's bottlenecks, like the slower processors and RAM speeds. I would personally hold off until you simply must have one, so you'll get a bit more performance for a bit lower price. Also look into selling your current one—even if you get \$200 for it, that's \$200 less you'd pay for the new rig. Score!

THERE'S NO BIAS LIKE WII BIAS

Q: How much do Sony and Microsoft pay GamePro to make Nintendo look bad? I noticed on your survey, 22 percent say they play more PS3, while only 14 percent say they play more Wii. I got these sales figures off Wikipedia: Worldwide sales figures Wii: 13.17 million as of September 31, 2007; Xbox 360: 8.9 million as of July 31, 2007; PlayStation 3: 5.59 million as of September 30, 2007. Nintendo is by far the greatest thing to happen to video gaming and the Wii is no exception to their greatness.—feckusellouts

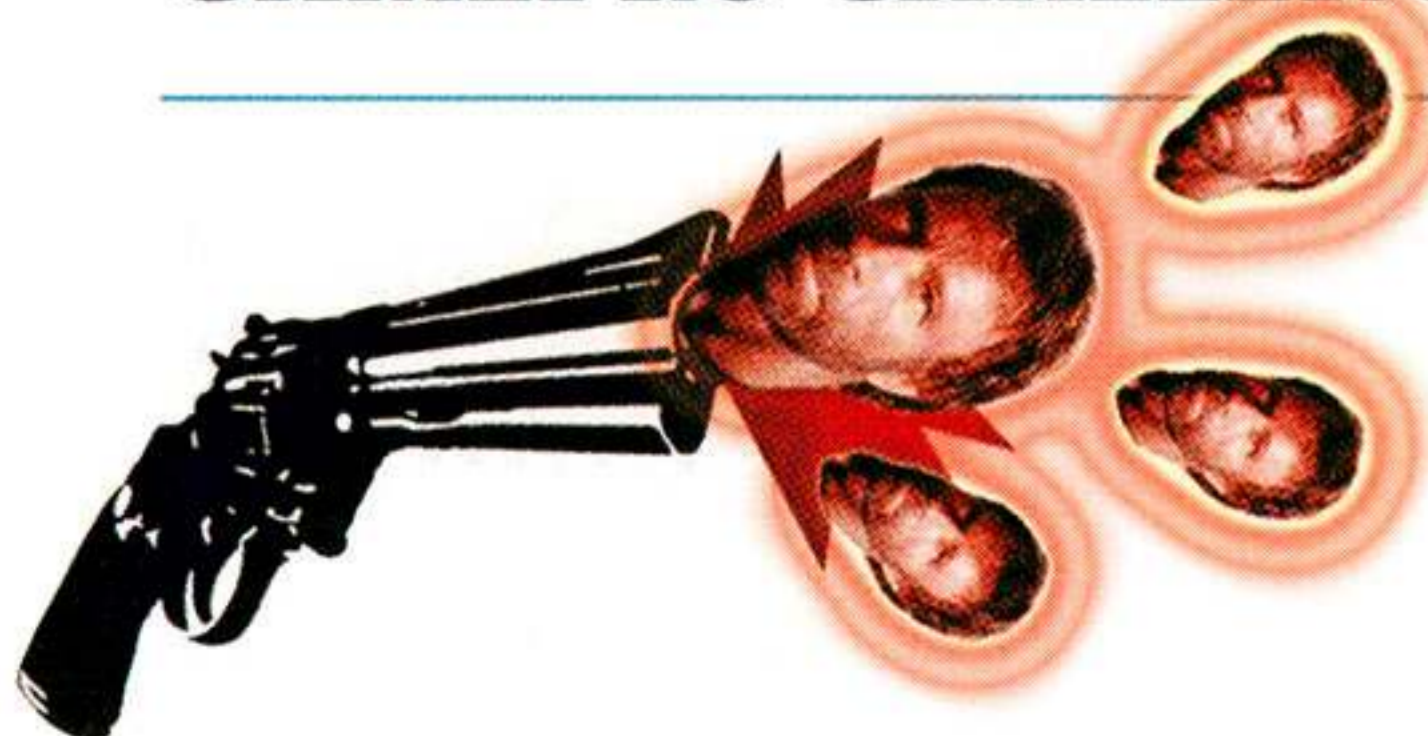
Am I a biased Nintendo fanboy Mario?

It's-a obvious!



GAMEPRO CHALLENGE

This month we asked you what dream weapon you'd like to see in this winter's hottest shooters...and some of them are real nightmares!



The GF pistol: A semi-automatic pistol that shoots spheres of Greek Fire. It also will have a 20 meter firing range and have an addable laser scope. Dem minotaurs taste mighty fine barb-b-que'd!
—kingoftwilight, **Status: End Boss**

RFOM/ CN-RHK1: A gun summons Chuck Norris to round-house kick the enemy at the speed of light.
—Shamon, **Status: Playa**

.20 Cal Eviscerator: Fires a small caliber bullet that enters the body and ricochets until exploding and revealing the victims innards.
—Kalell, **Status: Moderator**

The fluffy-whip gun: Shaped like a Lancer Rifle, I just shoot it in my mouth and I'm a happy camper.
—JoeyKnukle, **Status: Playa**

Take the GamePro Challenge at www.gamepro.com/community/

H2H

HEAD TO HEAD
You write, we respond.

MASTER CHIEF'S GUIDE TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS:

Just rob children!



NO LIVE LOVE

If you've been on the Microsoft boards then you've seen my plight. If not, I'll say it quickly. I saved up for six weeks for a 360 and Halo 3, going through a babysitting class, suffering and scraping for any kind of reprieve from the more-than-a-month wait. Finally, I get the damn thing, and guess what—I don't get one month free of Xbox Live! It wasn't used, it was new. I got it from Gamestop—does that affect it? I looked for a code in all the manuals that I could redeem to get the month free—no dice. Now I'm in debt to my mom (she helped me pay...I'm not a loser, I'm a minor) \$20 bucks more so I could get three months.
amidamaru88—Via Internet

SHAMEPRO

ATTACK OF THE EVIL TWIN

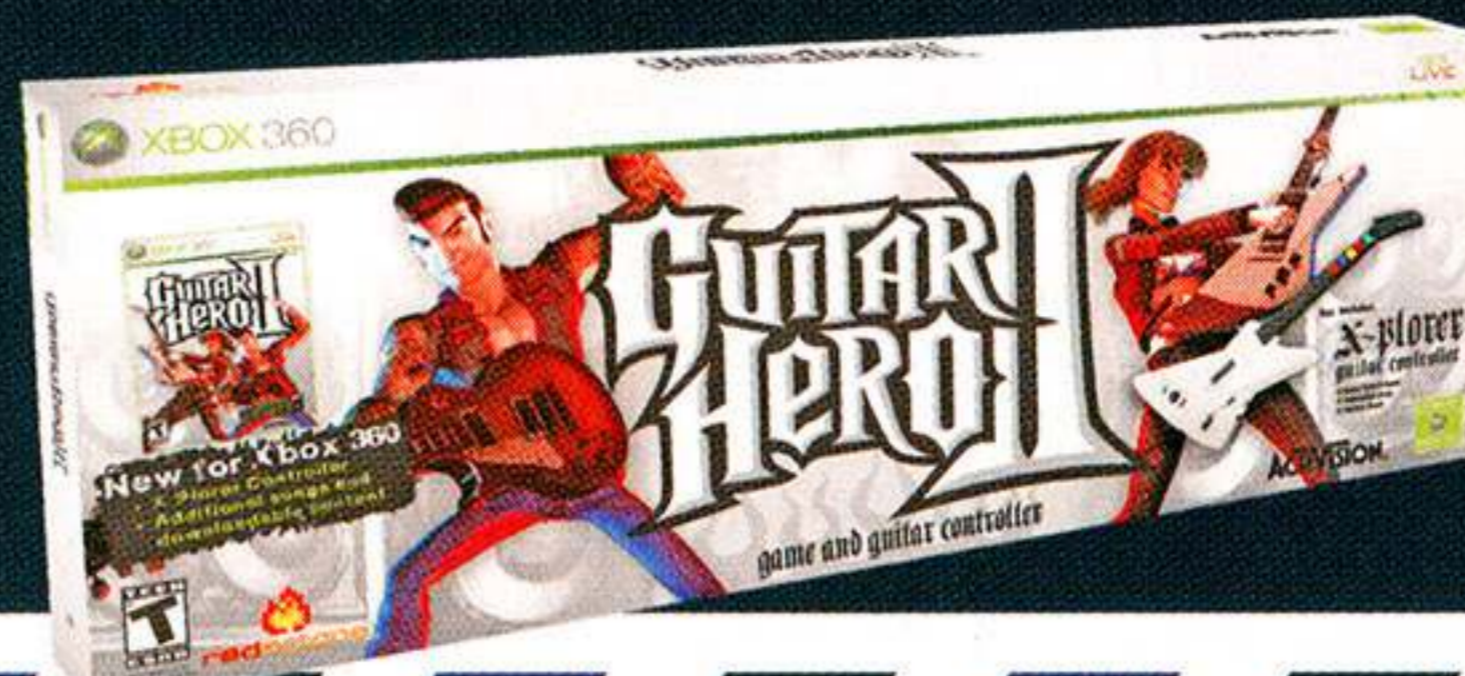
I'd like to register my astonishment, that I received a subscription renewal letter one month after signing up. Did you confuse me with someone else? Did I sign up a while ago with short-term amnesia (not bloody likely)? Or do I have an evil twin who exists solely to make me pay for things I did not buy? I would also like to know if I will still receive GamePro if I ignore the letter you sent?
Toby—Ridgewood, NJ

To err is human. This is more than likely a glitch in our database and is fine to ignore—you'll keep getting your issues of GamePro. Unfortunately mix-ups happen from time to time, and just like you, we like to blame it on our evil twin as well, ShamePro.

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!



There's more to the gaming life than consoles...

DON'T BE AFRAID TO FLASH

I have played a lot of games in my life. I have visited places like Hyrule in The Legend of Zelda, Peach's Castle in Super Mario Bros., slaughtered locust in Gears of War, and aliens in Halo 3. These are all extraordinary games but not everyone can experience them because they don't own a game system. While the console wars are raging everyone is forgetting one of the best forms of videogames: internet flash games.

Even though I can't get enough of Halo 3 right now, I keep going back to flash games. Thanks to my favorite flash gaming website, Kongregate.com, I have been able to play Portal: The Flash Version, and lots of other great games. The web site has many of the same features of Xbox Live, like achievements and personal profiles. The biggest advantage of flash gaming is that it's free. Sure you can spend \$60 on a great game like BioShock and have an unforgettable time, but don't forget about all the great free games out there on the Internet.

Andres Alvarez—South Ozone Park, NY

No next-gen game can match the mighty gameplay depth of my BALLOONS!



GAMES CAN'T CUT LIKE A KNIFE

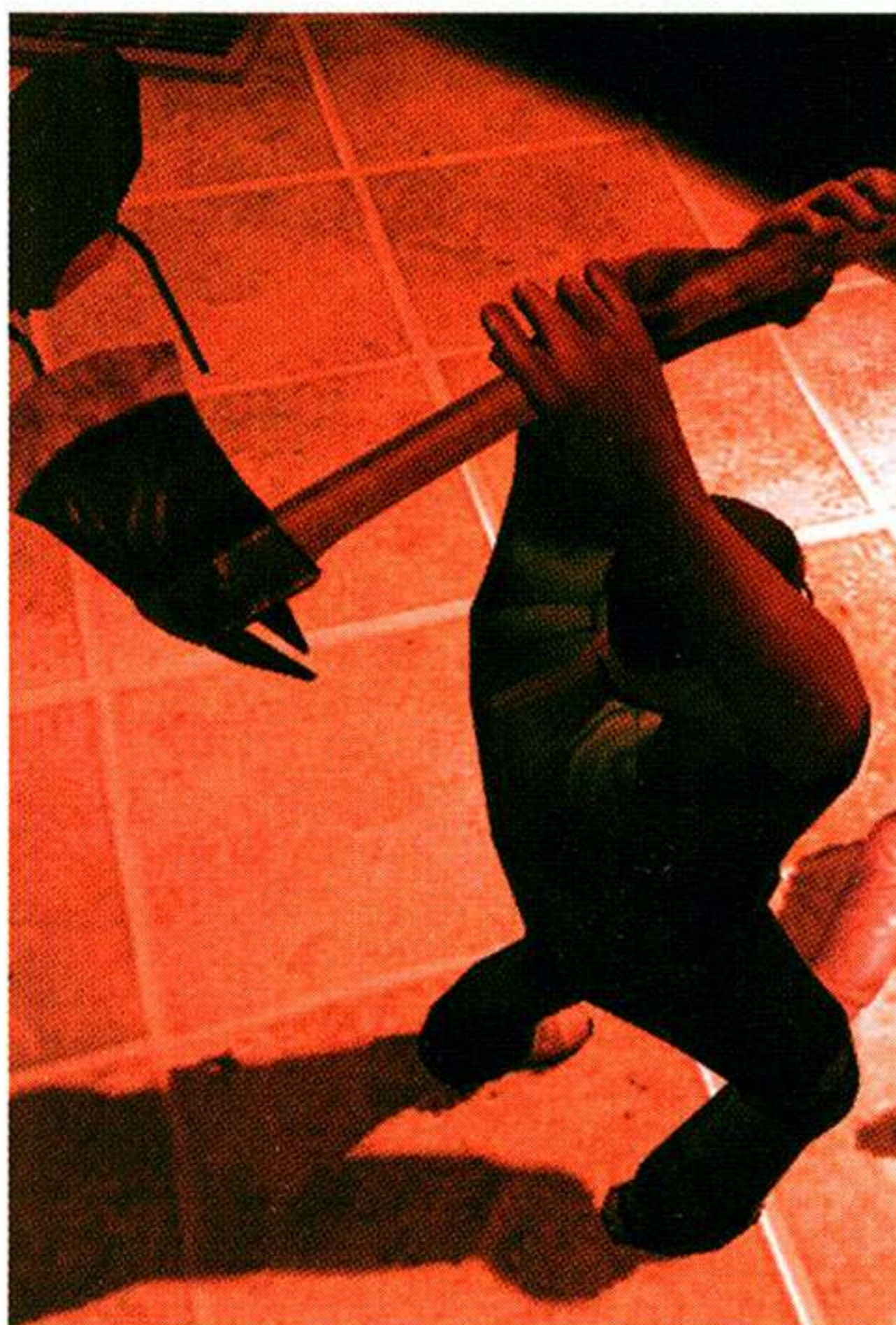
I'm a huge video game fan but there's one thing that's got me annoyed. I can't figure out why parents and teachers think videogames are so bad. It's not like video games can pick up a knife (I think)! It's not video games that cause people to be the way they are. I mean, video games don't kill people. Video games aren't all bad. On another topic, I could probably beat the Man of Steel in a thumb-wrestling contest. I guess this is another of life's mysteries.

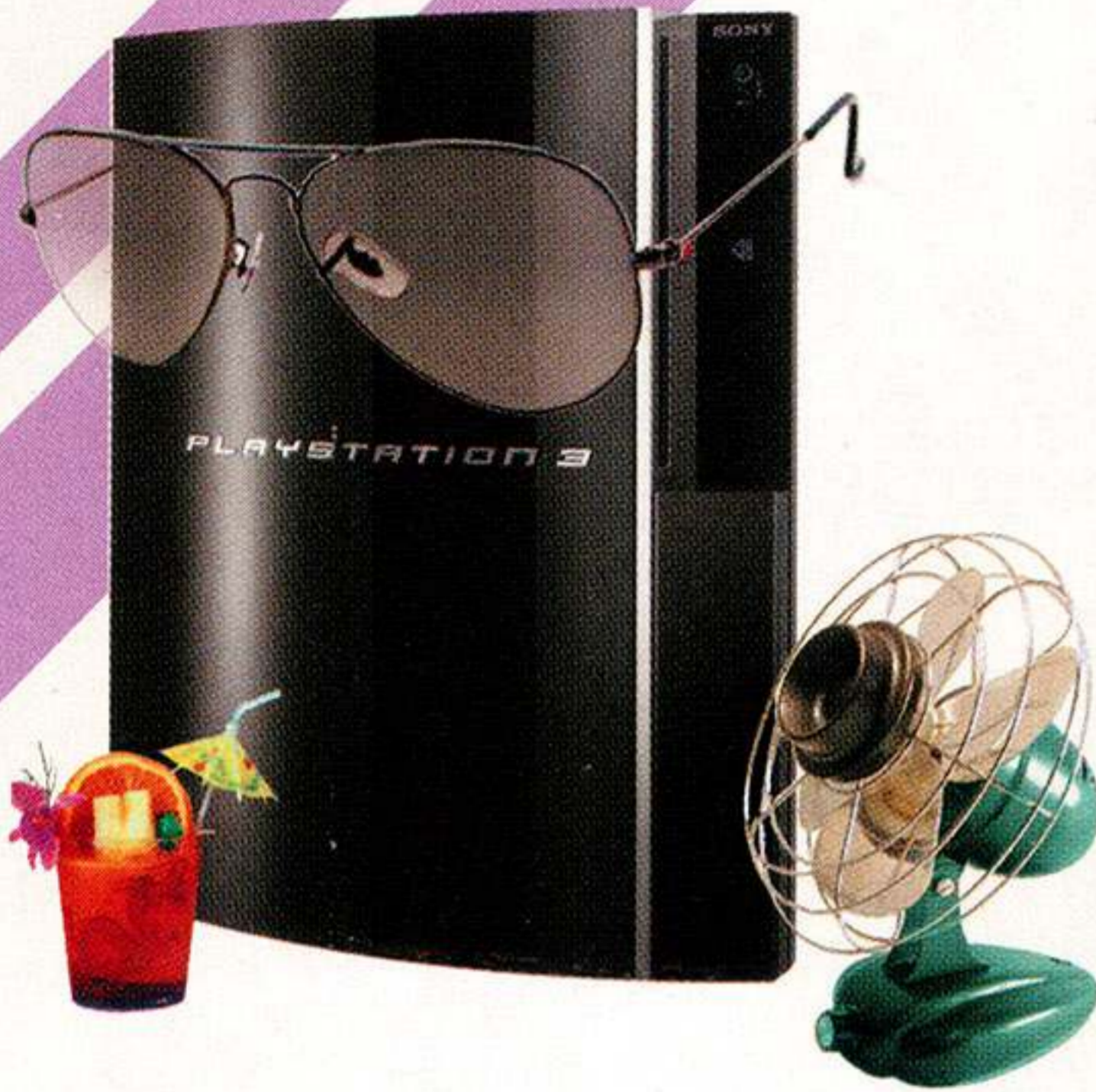
Steak 2.0—Reno, NV

BATTLE OF THE ROCK BAND

I'm just a guy from a small town with a big dream. I've read that Rock Band is going to have a bunch of downloadable tracks. I started thinking that would be a great way to get people to listen to original music. Rock Band should hold their own Battle Of The Bands and the winner would have their music available as downloadable content. I have played all the Guitar Hero games and can't stop playing them. A lot of other people play those games and really want to try out Rock Band. This would be a great way to get people to play the game and have their original music published.

Paul Redmon—Goshen, OH





brand is top tier, each one is going to have an upside and a downside, some will keep your system cooler, but this usually comes at the expense of noise. Nyko and Pelican are two popular brands so I'd go with one of those.

LOOKING FORWARD TO PLAYING BANJO

I received the very first issue of *GamePro* free with a NES game and have been a subscriber ever since. I enjoy colorful fantasy world games and have grown tired of the many dark and drab FPS. The many RPG's look great, but most are turn-based and I prefer real-time combat. I would like to see an article on Rare and some updates of the new Banjo-Kazooie game.



Don Berhent—Willowick, OH

Banjo-Kazooie was a great game and many of us are looking forward to its debut on the Xbox 360. There's not much information released on the game at the moment, though there's a teaser trailer out on the web. We can tell you other than the bird and bear, Gruntilda and Jolly Roger will be in the game and that the gibberish language will remain intact. You can bet as soon as we learn more about this you'll be able to catch the scoop at *GamePro*.

Soon my friend...soon.



CAN DO WITH THE PS2

I'm a diehard PS2 fanatic. The PS2 serves all the purposes I need and I have no complaints. It makes me sad to see in each issue of *GamePro* that, little by little, the PS2 is becoming obsolete. I can't see spending \$500 for a PS3—I can think of more important needs in life. I also used to collect football cards until the manufacturers felt the need to offer "new and improved" cards that eventually became too expensive to collect.

Larry Means—New Carlisle, OH

COOLING THE ENGINES

I have the PS3, Xbox 360, and Wii game consoles, and have noticed in stores that there are third-party cooling systems for them. My question is, are these coolers necessary to prolong the life of the consoles? If they are, in your opinion, which is the best one for each console?

Robert Rosenbaum—Oxford, OH

That's one of the bigger questions circling around right now, largely due to the Xbox 360 failures. While we haven't conducted any tests here at *GamePro*, I can tell you that keeping a system cool is good preventative maintenance. As far as which

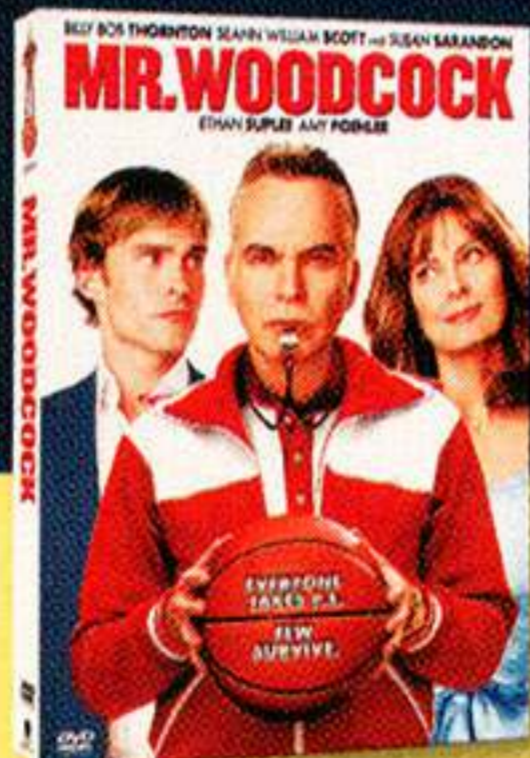


ART ATTACK!

This month's winner receives

Mr. Woodcock on DVD

Everyone takes P.E. Few Survive!
Mr. Woodcock on DVD January 15!



Winner:
Carlos Guillen
Selma, NC

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GOLDEN AXE: BEAST RIDER

PS3, XBOX 360

Feast your eyes on the fiery redhead Tyris Flare as she mounts one of the many rideable beasts in Golden Axe: Beast Rider. When riding beastback, this scantily clad warrior can attack enemies with her sword, or the ferocious fangs of her beastly companion. This isn't your quarter-crunching Golden Axe classic for the arcades; this is the new, ultra-gory Golden Axe: Beast Rider coming in 2008 for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. Look for more Beast Rider coverage in the "Previews" section in this issue, and on gamepro.com!



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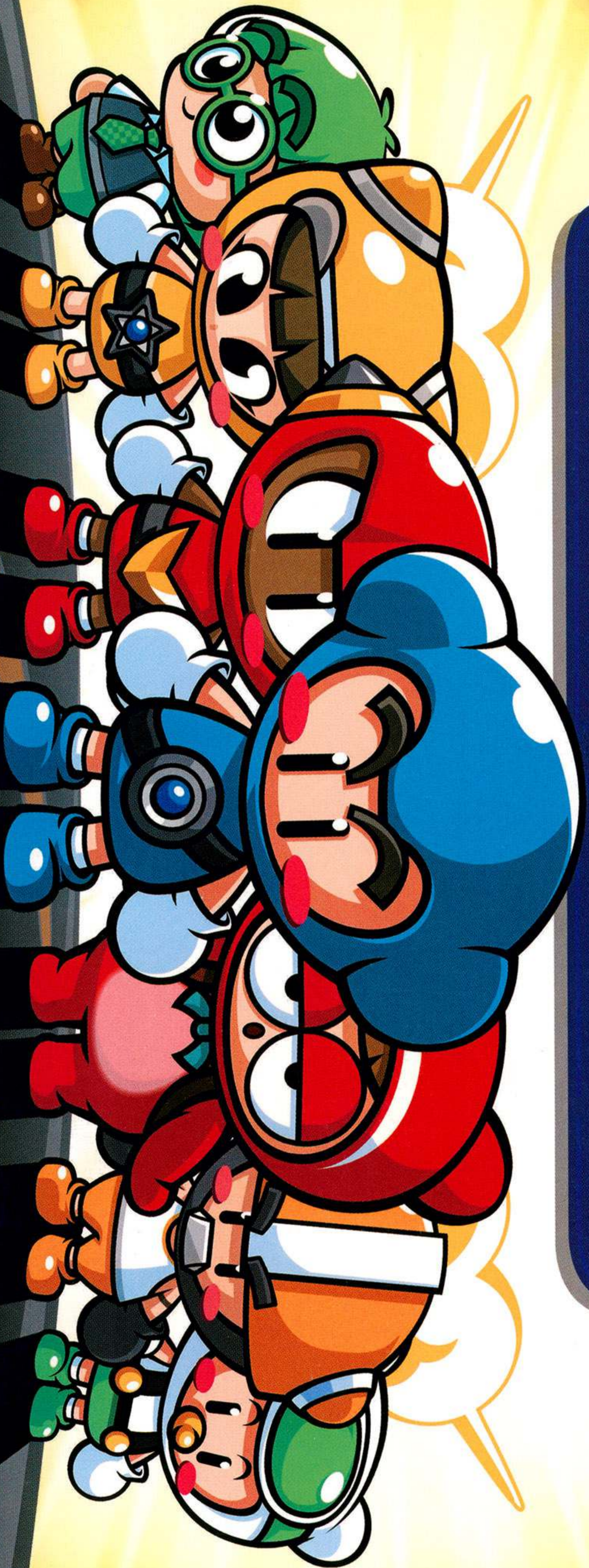
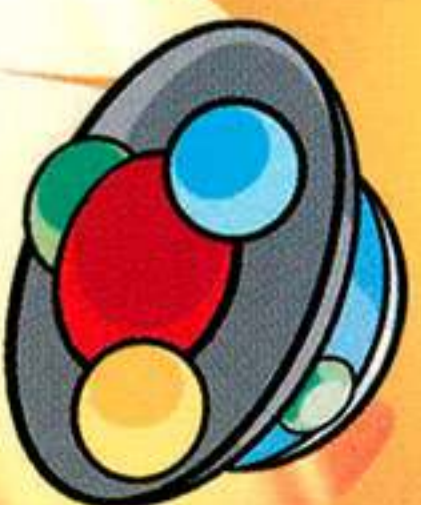


RIDERS WANTED

KART RIDER



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NEXON

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