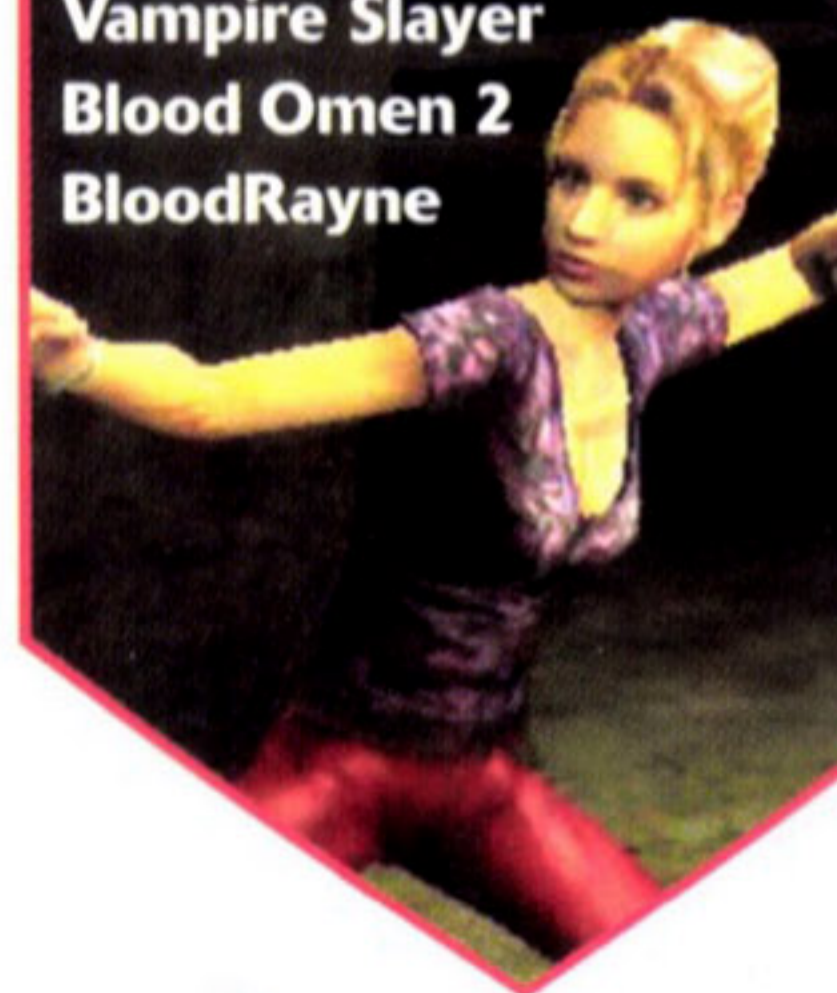


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Sink your teeth into these beauties

**LOVE AT FIRST BITE!**

Buffy the Vampire Slayer  
Blood Omen 2  
BloodRayne



**PLUS:**

10 easy steps to become a Halo god

SSX: The trickiest shortcuts

Take the Xbox challenge



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- 3 Final Fantasy XI

...find out on page 16

**EVEN BETTER ON THE XBOX**

**TONY HAWK 3**

*Massive new level, drastically improved graphics, same great game*

**WRECKLESS:**

Wreckless runs over the competition

**EXCLUSIVE REVIEW**



March 2002 Issue #4

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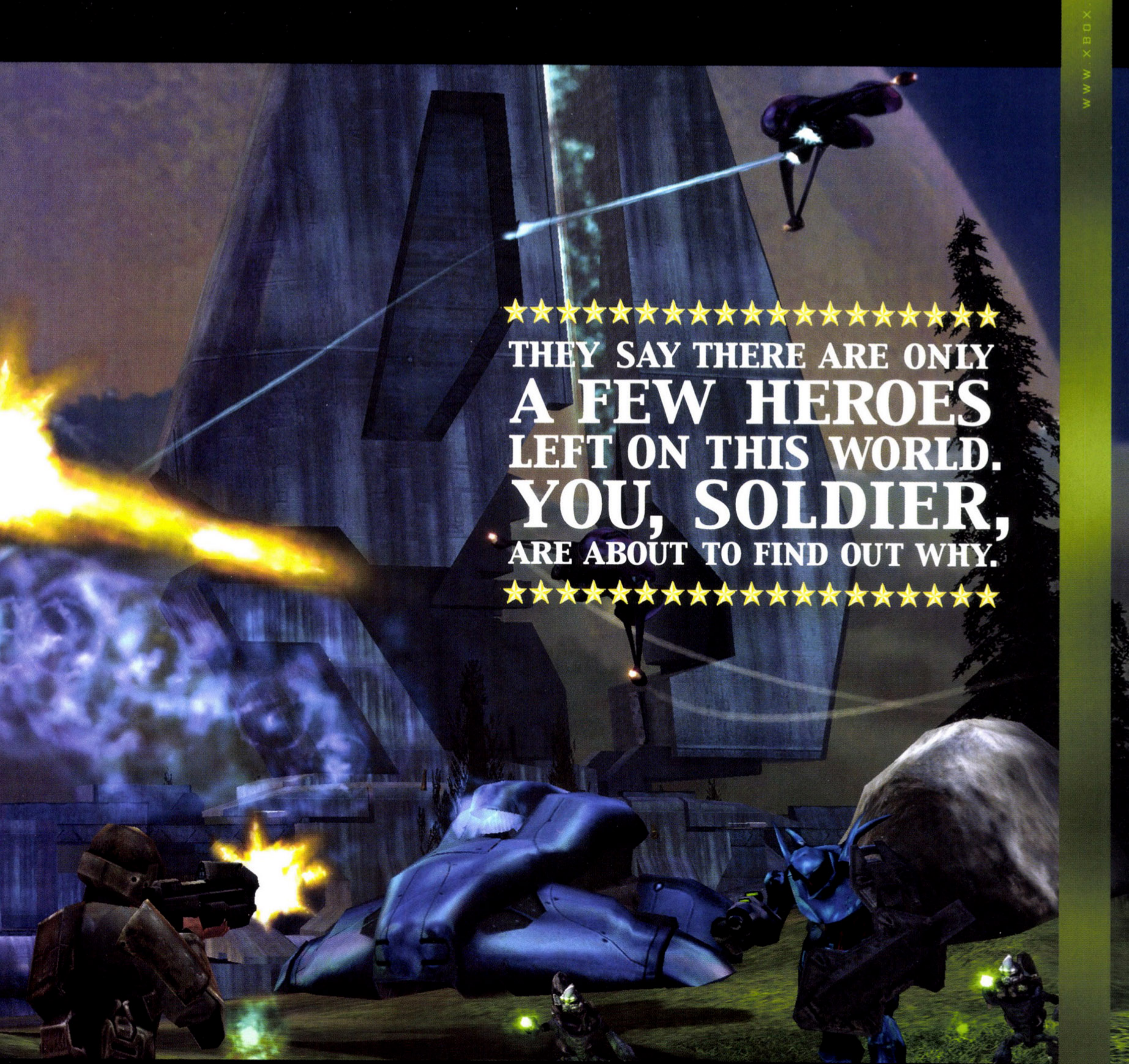




VIOLENCE  
BLOOD AND GORE



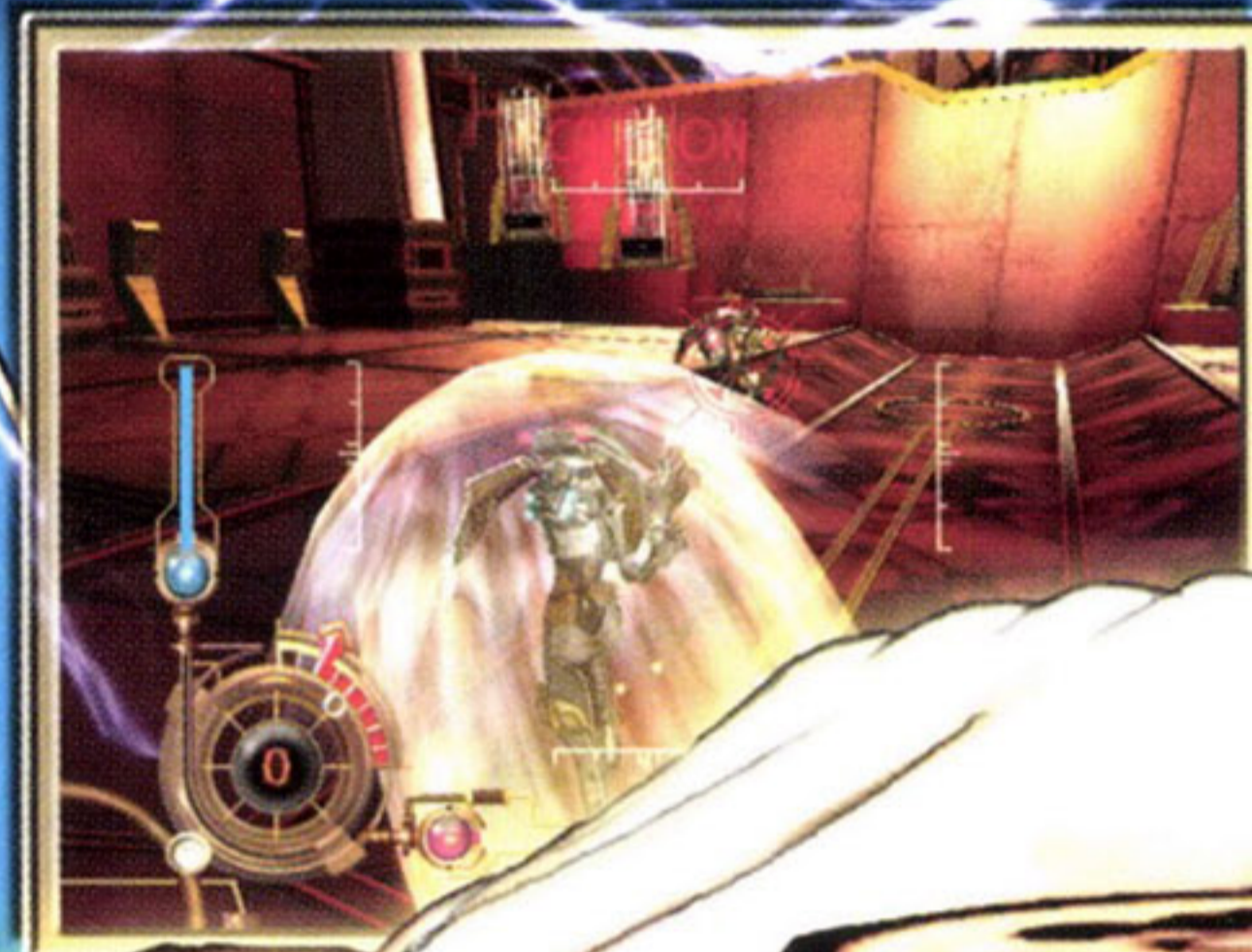
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★  
THEY SAY THERE ARE ONLY  
**A FEW HEROES**  
LEFT ON THIS WORLD.  
**YOU, SOLDIER,**  
ARE ABOUT TO FIND OUT WHY.  
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★



This is no place for subtlety. This is no place for pity. This is a place where aliens want to turn humans into a bad memory. This is a place where strategy matters indoors and out, where your weapons and vehicles are both human and alien. This is a place for carnage. This is HALO.™



# GUNVALKYRIE



## INTRODUCING GUNVALKYRIE.

AN INVADING ALIEN ARMY. A GUN-TOTING BLONDE VIXEN. A LONE SCIENTIST'S DEADLY DISCOVERY. WELCOME TO GUNVALKYRIE, WHERE ONLY YOUR WITS AND CUTTING-EDGE ARTILLERY CAN SAVE THE WORLD FROM TOTAL ANNIHILATION. YOUR MISSION: EXTERMINATE A DEADLY ALIEN SPECIES, CAPTURE A MAD SCIENTIST AND RE-ESTABLISH ORDER TO AN OUT-OF-CONTROL PLANET. THE WHOLE WORLD IS COUNTING ON IT.



Blood and Gore  
Violence



BELIEVE IT OR NOT,  
HER BEST FEATURE IS  
HER TRIGGER FINGER.



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**CRASH BANDICOOT**  
The Xbox finally gets a platform game worth jumping about. Read our exclusive. **Page 10**



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**EXCLUSIVE!**

### TONY HAWK 3

It's better than any other version. Check out the exclusive Oil Rig level on...

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**BITTEN!**

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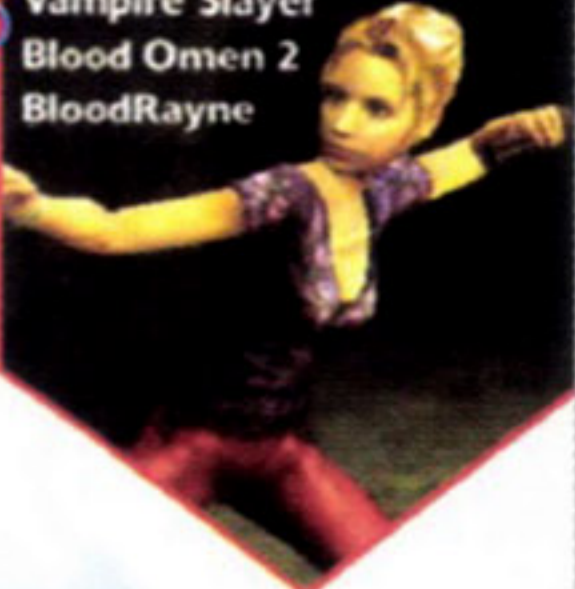
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### PLUS:

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Take the Xbox challenge

### REVIEW MAYHEM

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PlayStation 2



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When battle-ax and sword edges dull, Kain turns to Dark Gifts such as rupture and possession.




Whether in pursuit of power or just for the thrill of the kill, Kain's lust for blood is inspiring.

THE LEGACY OF KAIN SERIES

# BLOOD OMEN 2

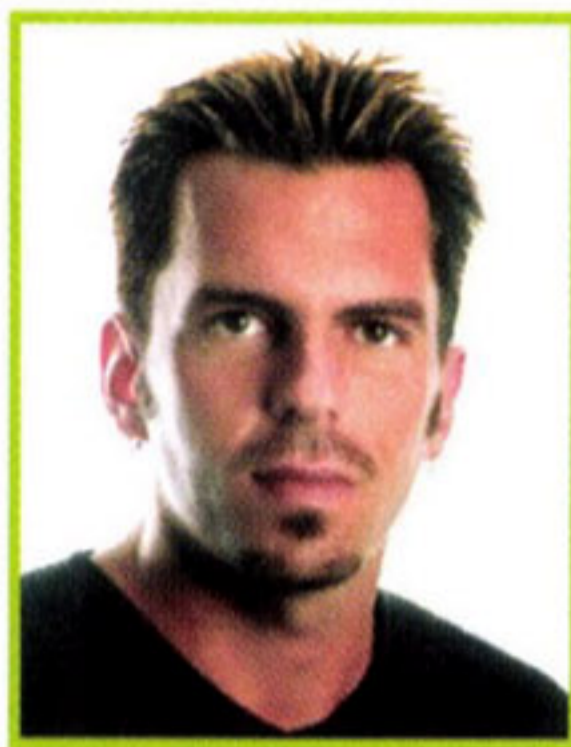
Kain Awakens This March  
[www.LegacyofKain.com](http://www.LegacyofKain.com)

 This game is intended for mature audiences ONLY.

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# Editor's Letter

Meet Predicto, the Seer with the Sneer



## The Next Level

■ Year of the Horse... pah... this is really the year of the Xbox

So 2002 is well under way. Still no flying cars or teleportation, but we do have wall-hanging gas-plasma TVs, and more importantly, Xbox consoles to play on them. Now, while Mrs. Mike is still not sold on the idea of selling blood to pay for the TV, she has warmly embraced the Xbox. Now to lull her into my web of HDTV-purchasing madness, I need to keep those games coming, and this year Microsoft and its partners need to keep things moving. This year, the watchword is going to be *broadband*. CES already saw some revelations about the bargain-priced service, but it won't seem real until we're actually playing those titles over the Net. The games we're really looking forward to

right now are *Brute Force*, a team-based action shooter, and *SWAT* (previewed this ish!), which is also a team-based action shooter. But there are so many other genres out there that benefit from human-to-human interaction.

Sports games, as Sega has proved ably, are much more addictive online than off, and driving games are begging to be transported to the online realm. Can you imagine a sprawling online city where the other traffic was being driven by real people? It's certainly safer than drag racing on the street.

But this year won't just be about online games. Microsoft has tons of stunning, next-generation titles up its enormous sleeve, and the third parties are going to be unveiling just as many surprises. A *Metal Gear Solid* announcement (see our lead news story, page 16) is due imminently, and other once-recalcitrant Japanese companies are coming round to support the Xbox juggernaut. Nintendo's big games will always come from Nintendo, and Sony relies almost solely on third-party blockbusters, but Microsoft genuinely seems to be bridging the gap between amazing in-house projects and innovative software from its partners. And this is a first from a company that has previously done things very much its own way.

When are we going to see all this amazing new stuff? Well, some of the more secretive titles will be unveiled slowly, at events like E3 and later at the Tokyo Game Show. But mostly, it'll be right here in this issue, on our Game Disc, or in future issues. 2002 – the year of the Xbox.



Issue 04 ■ March, 2002

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## Meet the team

Meet our team of superheroes, each with their own unique ability to bring endless joy to the hearts of Xbox owners.

### Mike Salmon

editor-in-chief



#### If you could be a superhero...

Is the Kool-Aid man a superhero? I think he is. I wonder if he drank some mad punch from a radioactive jug. I'll bet he did. He can smash through walls and he has all sorts of other jug-related powers, like the super-pour, the infra-splash, and the ultra-spout. "Ooooooh, yeah!"

**What game do you want to see online?** *Halo*. That game was banned from this list because it's so obvious, but I'm the EIC and I get to do what I like, so I'm sticking with *Halo* and nobody can do anything about it.

[msalmon@imaginemediamedia.com](mailto:msalmon@imaginemediamedia.com)

### Frank O'Connor

executive editor



#### If you could be a superhero...

I think I'd be The Flash. I can't say I'm hot on his skintight costume, but I'd use his super-speed only for mischief. For example, when Dan Egger wasn't looking, I'd rearrange his desk so that everything was a mirror image of when he glanced away. I'd also use it to play myself at split-screen multiplayer *Halo*.

**What game do you want to see online?** Well, apart from *Halo* (dur) I think I'd enjoy a mental online *Bombberman* game, where chaos ruled. With voice-enabled swearing.

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### Sarah Ellerman

managing editor



#### If you could be a superhero...

I'd be Death from the *Sandman* comics. She's such a sweetheart, no one is afraid to go with her when the time comes. What an incredible superpower, to make death okay for everyone. Plus, you know, it's Death! Whose butt can't Death kick? Even Superman, the default "who would win in a fight" guy, would tumble before her deathly sweetness.

**What game do you want to see online?** *Bust-A-Move*, online versus dancing mode. I've got moves, you see. And I want to throw a break broadband-style.

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### Dan Egger

features editor



#### If you could be a Superhero...

It doesn't really matter, as long as I'm saving the supply of Hostess Cupcakes. So I'm sure that would make me someone from the DC universe, and I'm a big fan of Aquaman's outfit. It looks snug and supportive, and after I'm done with the cupcakes, I'll need the suit to hide my roiling, preservative-filled belly.

**What game do you want to see online?** *GoldenEye* would be awesome, although I'm wasting my breath, because Nintendo hates me.

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### Francesca Reyes

senior editor



#### If you could be a superhero...

Sailor Mercury. To be perfectly honest, I don't even know what, if any, her secret powers are, but I'm down with her hair color, love the uniform, and she has the best name of all the Sailor chicks. So either her or the sailor from the Village People. I love Sailors!

**What game do you want to see online?** *Princess Maker Online* – you can marry your daughter, or sell her to Satan, which although hopelessly wrong, is still super-fascinating. Or the not-yet-invented *Supermodel Rancher*.

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### Mike Wilmoth

art director



#### If you could be a superhero...

Bluntman. Or Chronic, whichever one Silent Bob is.

**What game do you want to see online?** *Silent Hill 3: The Quieting*.

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### Juliann Brown

associate art director



#### If you could be a superhero...

Lots of people would use their superpowers for noble and just causes like saving the Earth from mighty villains, but I'd like to be Mr. Fantastic so that I could get a beer from the couch, turn the TV channel with or without the remote, and possibly even pee without getting up, but I don't like to dwell on the details of that.

**What game do you want to see online?** *Halo, Halo, Halo*. The Internet is of absolutely no use to me without *Halo*.

[jbrown@imaginemediamedia.com](mailto:jbrown@imaginemediamedia.com)

### Dave Rees

DVD editor



#### If you could be a superhero...

It's no exaggeration to say that I am, in fact, Spider-Man. I went on a trip to Microsoft and my boss put me in a cheap hotel. It was swarming with radioactive spiders and I was bitten during the night. Sadly, my super powers were limited to swelling, itching, and some kind of garish red lymph node infection.

**What game do you want to see online?** *Grand Theft Auto 3*, because I'm mad-notorious on the underground scene. Plus I like to park in dark alleys.

[drees@imaginemediamedia.com](mailto:drees@imaginemediamedia.com)

### Grandma Dixie

clobberin' matriarch



#### If you could be a superhero...

Now what does a dear old lady like me want with superpowers? Superpowers aren't going to make my sugar cookies any more delicious, are they? Hmm, well, if you insist, I should say that I'd be The Thing, because I have a cold cream in rectal suppository form that can fix his eczema problems right up in no time.

**What game do you want to see online?** *EverQuest*. Oh, it is online? Well that changes everything...

Just ping me in Kunark



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he land was eternally dark, evil prevailed,  
and there appeared to be no hope at all.

And as if that wasn't enough, the young wizard had aged 30 years in a day and a pack of wild hell hounds was trying to devour him. He used his orb and a lava spell to torch the wretched beasts and ran for his life. He continues on his quest to become a master sorcerer, but he still has nowhere near the 45 spells he needs to defeat the darkness.

**Not even near the end**



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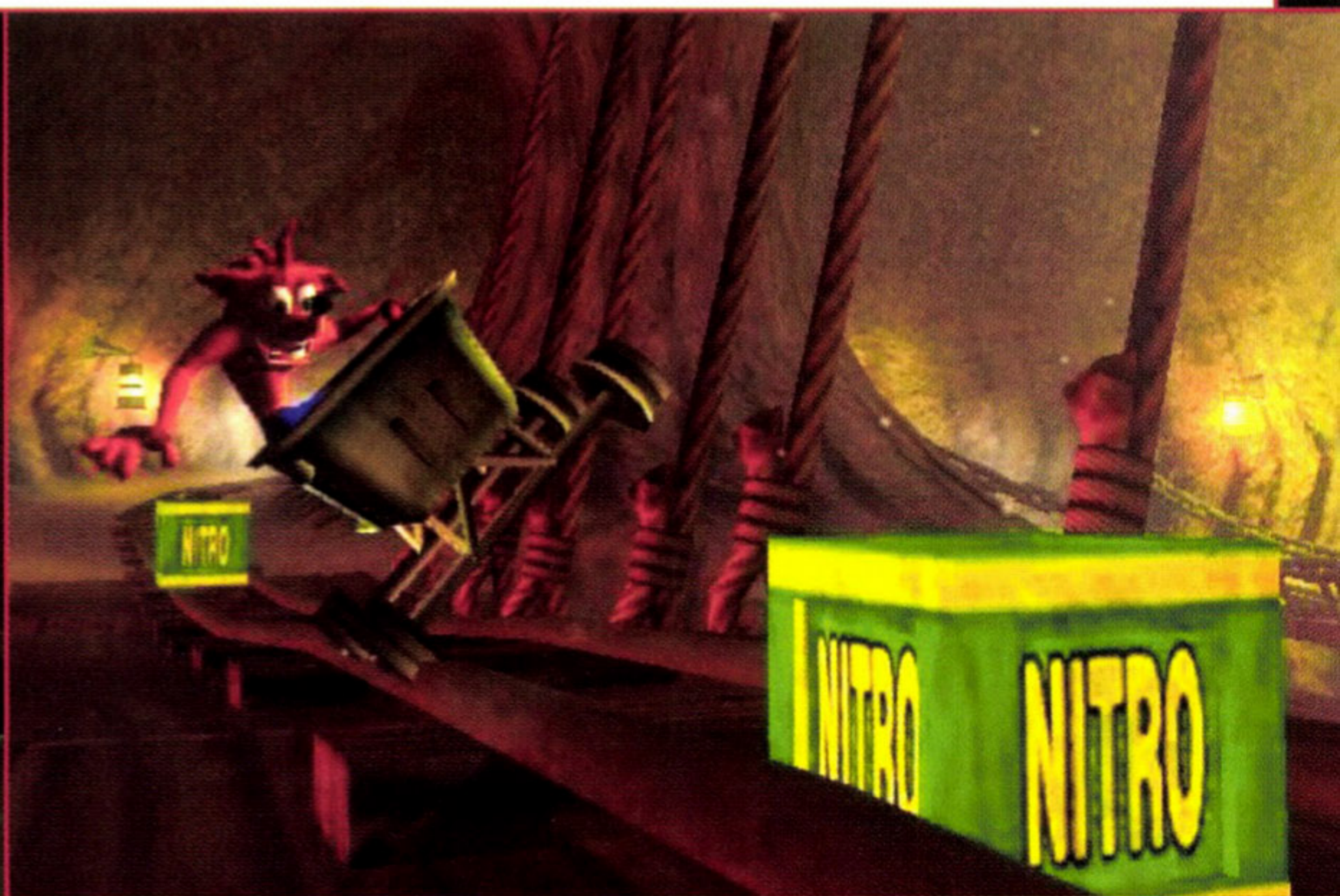


**He may well be fabulously furry, but this giant evil bandicoot is far from cute and cuddly.**

■ No diamonds on the soles of his shoes, but he does have hairy fingers.



■ Crash dons an *Aliens*-style exoskeleton to make this industrial-themed level a little easier to deal with.



■ Blistering speed through the obligatory minecart level is made more dangerous with the addition of crates of explosives.

DEVELOPER: Travellers Tales

PUBLISHER: Universal Interactive, Inc. RELEASE DATE: March!

# Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex

*Fur flies as the bandicoot crashes the Xbox party*



■ Water effects are varied and impressive, with everything from calm azure seas to stinky sewage.

If you're going to have a mascot game on a console, it may as well be the Xbox, since it's currently the only console capable of producing fur in hardware, thanks to (and we're not kidding) a technique called fur shading (a variant on pixel shading). It's similar in style to the oft-mentioned volumetric grass, but all you need to know is that Crash, and a couple of other characters in *Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex*, are now furry just like orange bandicoots in the wild... uhh... or something.

The game series that shone on PlayStation has made the logical leap upwards to Xbox, and taken advantage of the Microsoft hardware every springy step of the way. The hard-drive reduces load times to practically nothing, and makes the pace of play considerably quicker than *Crash* fans might be used to. Sound is surround, and neat graphic touches abound. Zounds!

There are 30+ levels in all, and as in previous iterations in the series, there are differing play styles, perspectives, and objectives. Crash gets to ride in vehicles, leap the conventional platforms, and fight five different and massive bosses. There are some pretty old-fashioned concepts in the game, including the obligatory minecart sequence, complete with jumps and exploding booby traps.

And did we mention the water? Every game that comes out seems to improve water-rendering technology, and *Crash* is no exception. From wintry streams to pacific blue oceans, all the wet stuff has the right stuff. All told, *Crash* promises to be something the Xbox really needs – a cool platform game.

XBOX


**All the wet stuff has the right stuff.**

## Furry friends


The fur shading we see in *Crash Bandicoot*, and also in Microsoft Japan's *Nezumi*, is just a taste of things to come. Consoles and PCs are eminently capable of reproducing metal, stone, and other flat insipid surfaces, but until the advent of Xbox, organic surfaces like hair, fur, and skin were either non-existent or lacking realism. Fur shading and other pixel-shader effects use the Geforce graphic technology properly, and will eventually become the norm, rather than the exception.

COMING SOON...

This game is coming out faster than anyone expected, and we may even have a full review of the red-hot platformer in the next issue. So keep your eyes peeled.




**A fully 3D Metropolis and a Superman that actually flies – could this be a great Superman game?**



■ And while you can blast bad guys from a distance, you can also get in close and punch.

■ The combat system uses locking, not unlike Konami's *Zone of the Enders*.



■ **SUPERMAN'S A CHEATER:** If the game is anything like the Christopher Reeve movie *Superman*, then if you ever screw up you can always fly backwards around the world. Kinda like a super-do-over.

DEVELOPER: Circus Freaks

PUBLISHER: Infogrames RELEASE DATE: Fall 2002

# Superman: The Man of Steel

*It's a bird, it's a plane, it's  
a good Superman game?*



■ Supe's cape billows majestically in the breeze, high above the new-look Metropolis. Check out the draw distance.



■ Two things you can't see in these shots: One, the sense of speed and freedom you get while flying around, and two, the awesome multipass textures, which actually have not yet been implemented. These are just placeholders.

**A**fter the travesty that was *Superman* on N64 from Titus, you could be forgiven for skipping this First Look and getting straight to the previews. But you'd be mad to do so, because even at this super-early stage, *Superman* from Infogrames looks like it's going to handily gloss over the past mistakes. And hey, the biggest improvement is that in this version, Superman can actually fly! And there's no fog!

Infogrames' license is based on the current crop of *Superman* comic books from DC, and that means that it's set in the new, post-Braniac-13 Metropolis. If you haven't been following the series, a cyber-freak from the future has "upgraded" Metropolis and it's now a futuristic glass and plasteel complex complete with hovercars and flyways. It's also filled with marauding sixty-foot-high robots, part of Braniac 13's typically evil plot to take over the city.

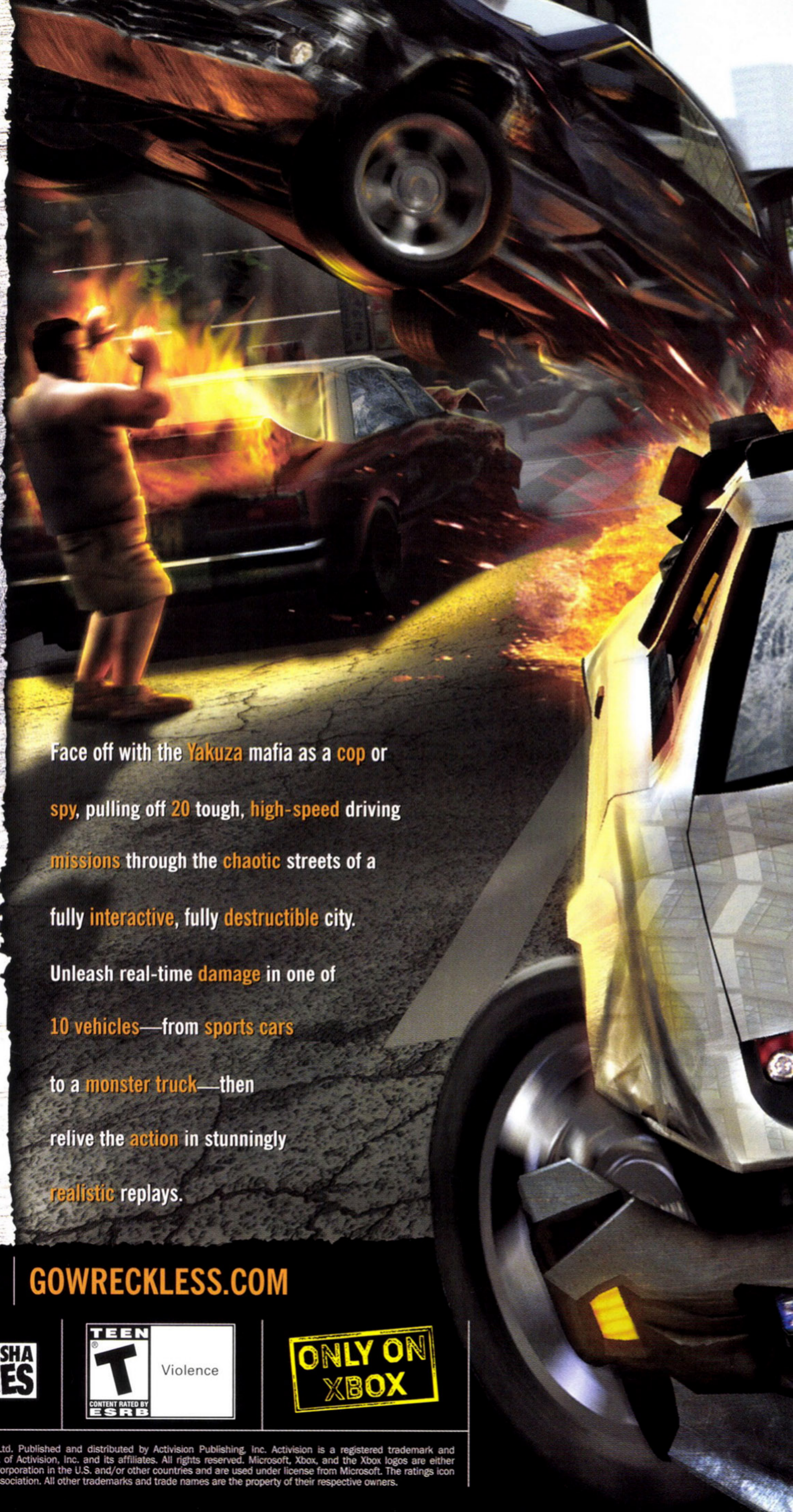
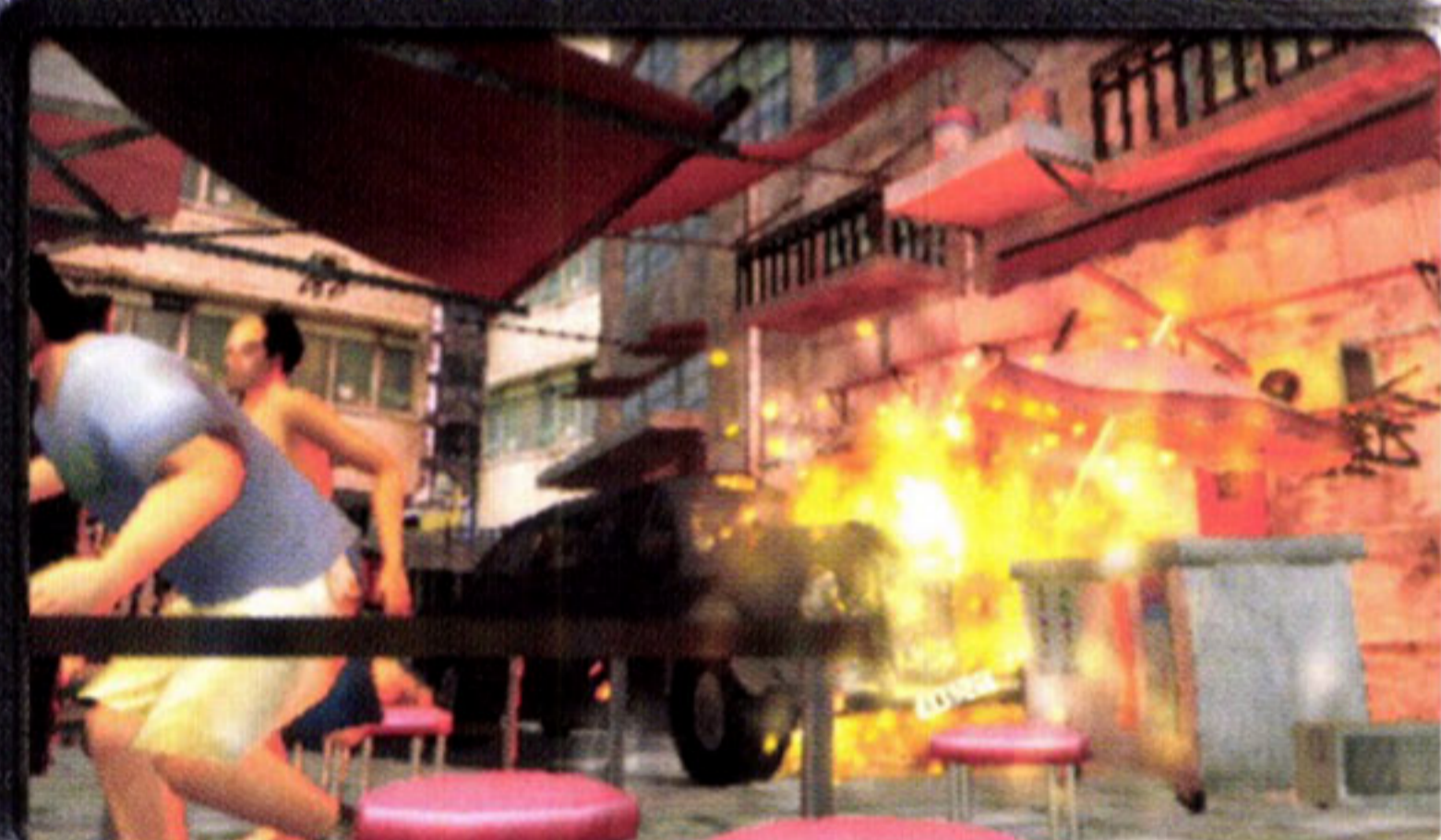
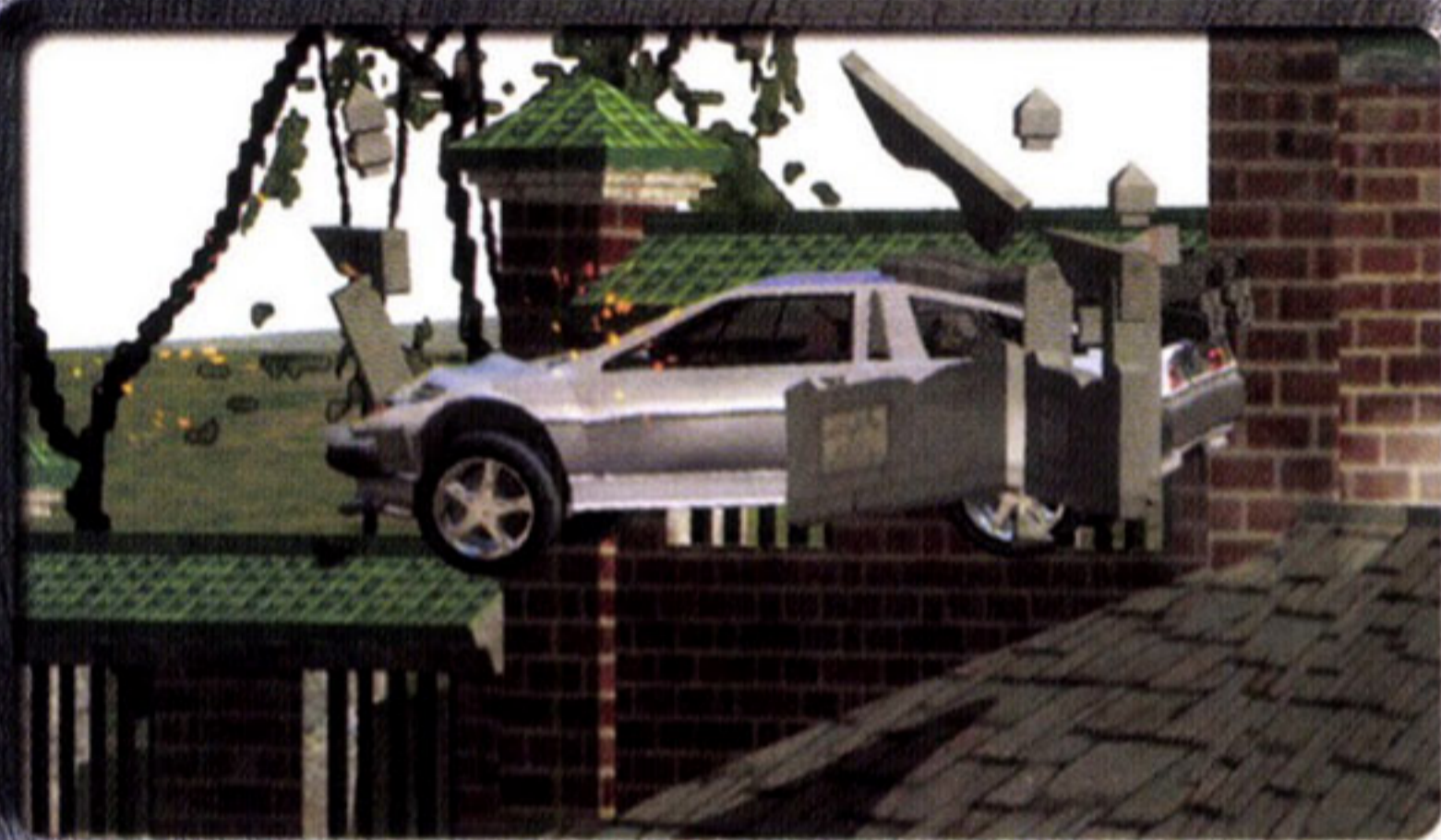
Superman, of course, has other ideas about this, and his mission to save Metropolis (and indeed, Earth) will take him into space, The Forbidden Zone (even though it's clearly labeled "Forbidden"), and a number of terrestrial locations, including the Fortress of Solitude. The gameplay is a cross between *Ace Combat* and *Zone of the Enders*, which is even better than it sounds. Superman can soar around at will, lock onto bad guys for heat-vision battles, or get up close and personal for punching and freeze-breathing.

The very early version we played doesn't yet (but will) feature multipass textures, reflection mapping, or particle effects, so you can imagine how cool it's going to look when that stuff is in there. Boss monsters, hidden areas, and a promised free flight mode will all boost the replay value. What really has us excited is the awe-inspiring freedom and look of the rendered Metropolis. To borrow from hitmaker R. Kelly – you'll believe you can fly.

XBOX

COMING SOON...

In two issues we'll have the whole story on *Superman: The Man of Steel*, including some new multipass texture shots and tons more information on the gameplay, objectives, and cool play modes planned. *Superman* is going to be MASSIVE.



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"...arguably the most exciting, technically demanding, and amazing-looking driving game ever made."

— OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE (JANUARY 2002)



# All Access

Connecting you to the world of Xbox

# Missing in action



26

## PLAY ONLINE

You can wait 'til Microsoft unveils its amazing plan, or turn to page 26 right now!



21

## STEERS &...

...steering wheels. We check out the best technotillers for driving games.



22

## SCURRILICIOUS

The Rumor Mole unleashes his brand of secret sauce.



## Checking in on the biggest games still unconfirmed for the Xbox

Final Fantasy XI could take huge advantage of Xbox HD and Ethernet faculties, but probably won't. Grand Theft Auto 3, however, is a likely bet.



**F** The Xbox launch was an undeniable success (what else can you call a 1.5 million installed base as of the beginning of 2002?), but just because the console's been selling like wildfire doesn't mean that every big game in development will eventually wind up on Xbox. Sometimes there are forces working behind the scenes that are bigger, even, than consumer pressure. For instance, it is rumored that Sega shouldered almost all the development cost and even helped with the development of *Code Veronica* to ensure that it would be a Dreamcast exclusive. Similarly, Sony reportedly took on many of the marketing costs for *Ridge Racer* to keep the popular racer on the PlayStation exclusively. Game publishers have excellent competitive reasons to engage in these kind of secretive deals, but it's frustrating to fans not to know if a certain beloved game will be playable on the system they own. So in the absence of any official confirmation, we've decided to examine the state of three of the biggest videogames out there and speculate on whether or not they are coming to our favorite game machine.

## Metal Gear Solid X



■ We want this combo of stealth and action.

■ **Why it's important:** *Metal Gear Solid* was one of the best-selling games of all time. *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty* on PS2 was nothing short of the most anticipated game of its time and has been rated by many as one of the best games of 2001. Sales so far have been phenomenal in both the US and Japan.

■ **Its Xbox history:**

**September 2000:** Konami first announces the existence of *Metal Gear Solid X*. Although the company is tight-lipped about the content, the game is believed to be an upgrade of either *Metal Gear Solid* or *Metal Gear Solid 2*, with added features. The game is slated for release at the launch of the Xbox.

**November 2000:** Konami announces that *Metal Gear Solid 2* will be a PS2 exclusive, giving credence to the rumors that *MGSX* will be based on the original *Metal Gear Solid*.

**February 2001:** Konami of Europe replies to a website, stating that *Metal Gear Solid X* is still on, but is just "submerged."

**November 2001:** *Metal Gear Solid 2* launches in the US, and a month later launches in Japan. By the holidays, nearly two million units are in stores worldwide and sales are strong.

**January 2002:** Konami of Japan still lists *MGSX* as a title in development. Konami also announces that *Metal Gear Solid 2's* European release will be delayed until March 22.

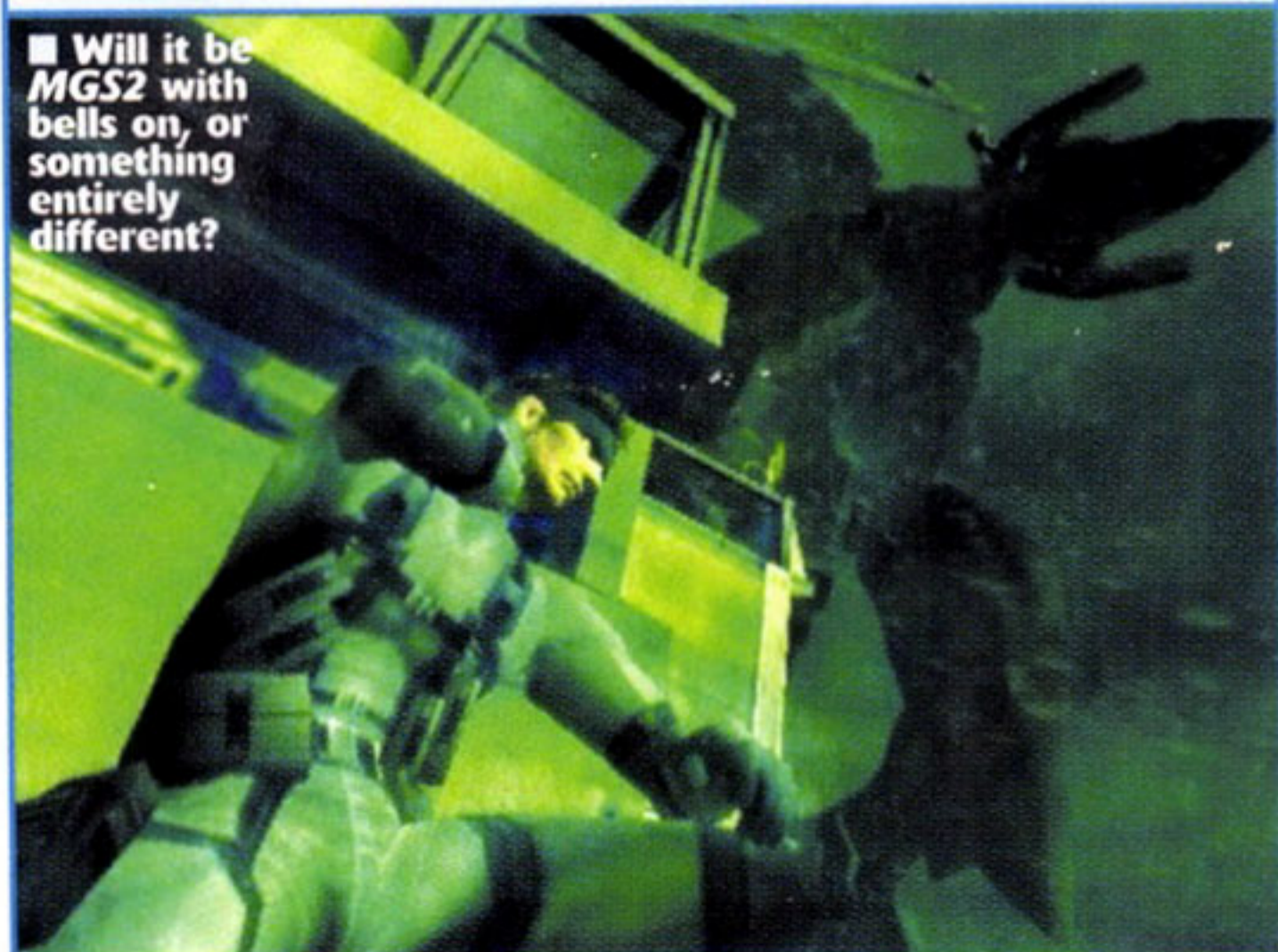
■ **The current official status:** Konami is officially silent on any matter related to *Metal Gear Solid X*.

■ **What may be going on behind the scenes:** It's no secret that Sony has assisted several key developers in marketing and publicizing blockbuster PlayStation2 games. This costly assistance does not come without a price... perhaps silence on *MGSX*?

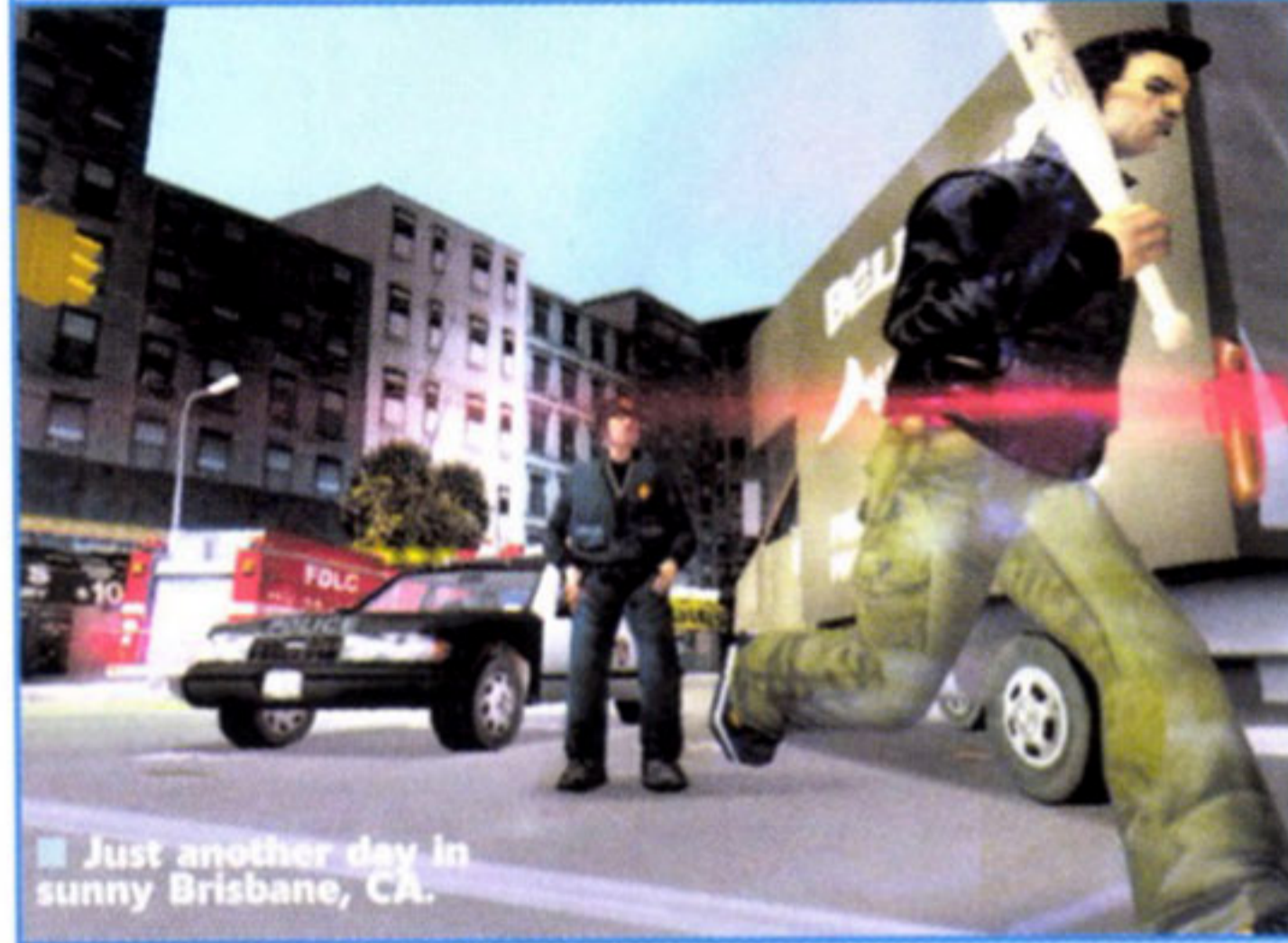
■ **Our "unofficial" take:** Although Konami stated time after time that *Metal Gear Solid 2* was a PlayStation2 exclusive, the company has never officially said that *MGSX* was canned, either. Until they do that, we believe that it *could* show up after the European release of the PS2 version. That's likely when Sony's marketing support is finished.

■ **Odds that we'll see it on Xbox:** 3:2

■ Will it be *MGS2* with bells on, or something entirely different?



## Grand Theft Auto 3



■ Just another day in sunny Brisbane, CA.

■ **Why it's important:** Although Take Two had strong expectations for *GTA3* on the PlayStation2, even they couldn't have expected it to sell as well as it has. The M-rated action game was at or near the top of the sales charts from the time it hit shelves through the 2001 holiday season. An Xbox version would spur the title on to new heights by reaching a whole new fanbase.

■ **Its Xbox history:**

**February 2001:** Take Two announces that its planned support for the Xbox will include a version of *Grand Theft Auto 3*. The game is scheduled for release in March 2002.

**October 2001:** *GTA3* on PS2 launches in the US to phenomenal sales.

**December 2001:** Australia bans *GTA3* because of its violent content.

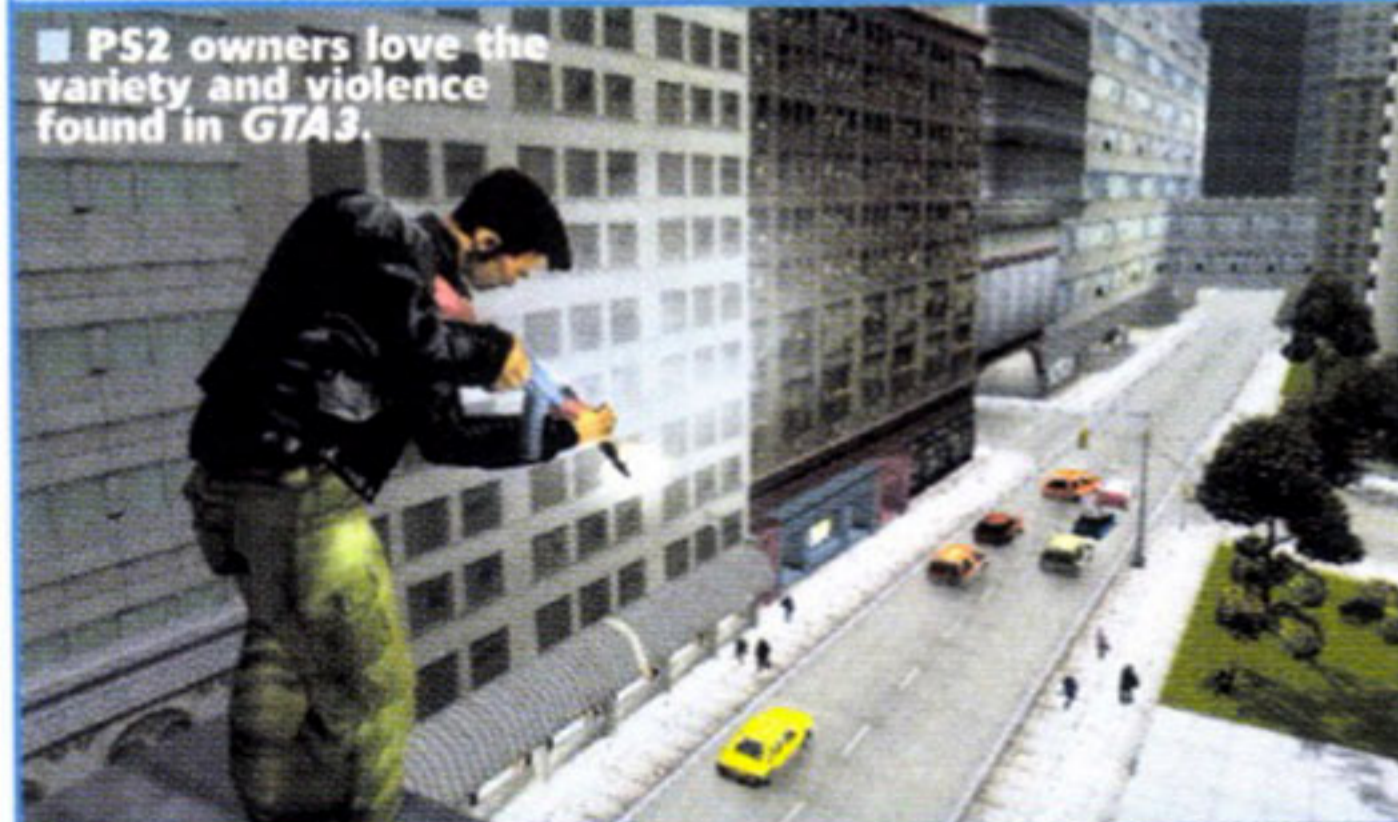
**December 2001:** *Business Week* magazine says that Microsoft is interested in buying Take Two Software. Microsoft denies reports as speculation largely based on a broker's recommendations.

■ **The current official status:** "No comment."

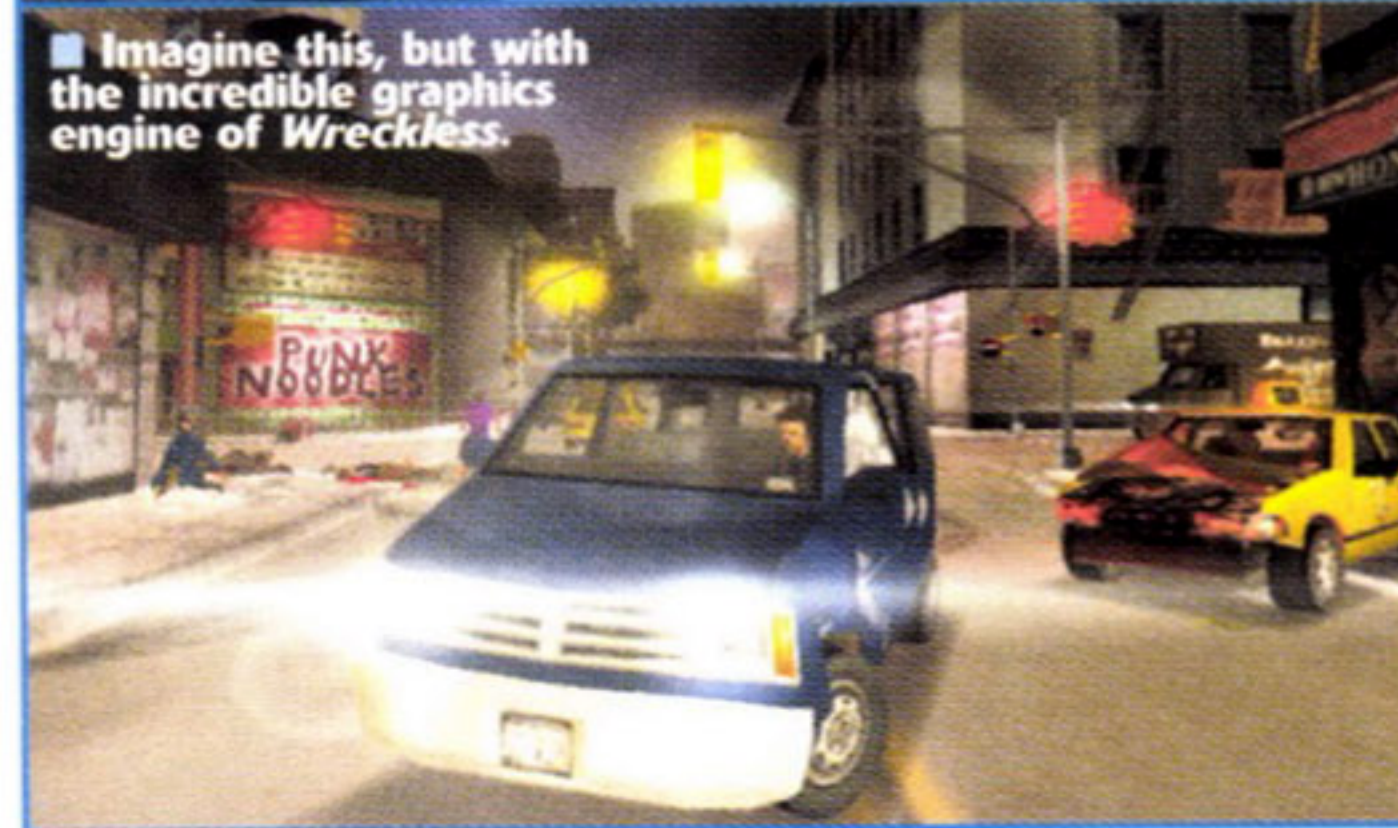
■ **What may be going on behind the scenes:** This could be another case of a deal with Sony. After all, Take Two has been able to publicize this game on TV and through other mainstream markets. It's not beyond reason that Sony may have worked out a deal to hold an exclusive on the PS2 for several months in exchange for marketing support.

■ **Our "unofficial" take:** We think this game is headed to the Xbox for two main reasons. For one thing, Take Two refuses to say that the game has been cancelled. For another, this is simply too hot a property not to make its way to the Xbox. The takeover rumors, though, don't carry much weight.

■ **Odds that we'll see it on Xbox:** 2:1

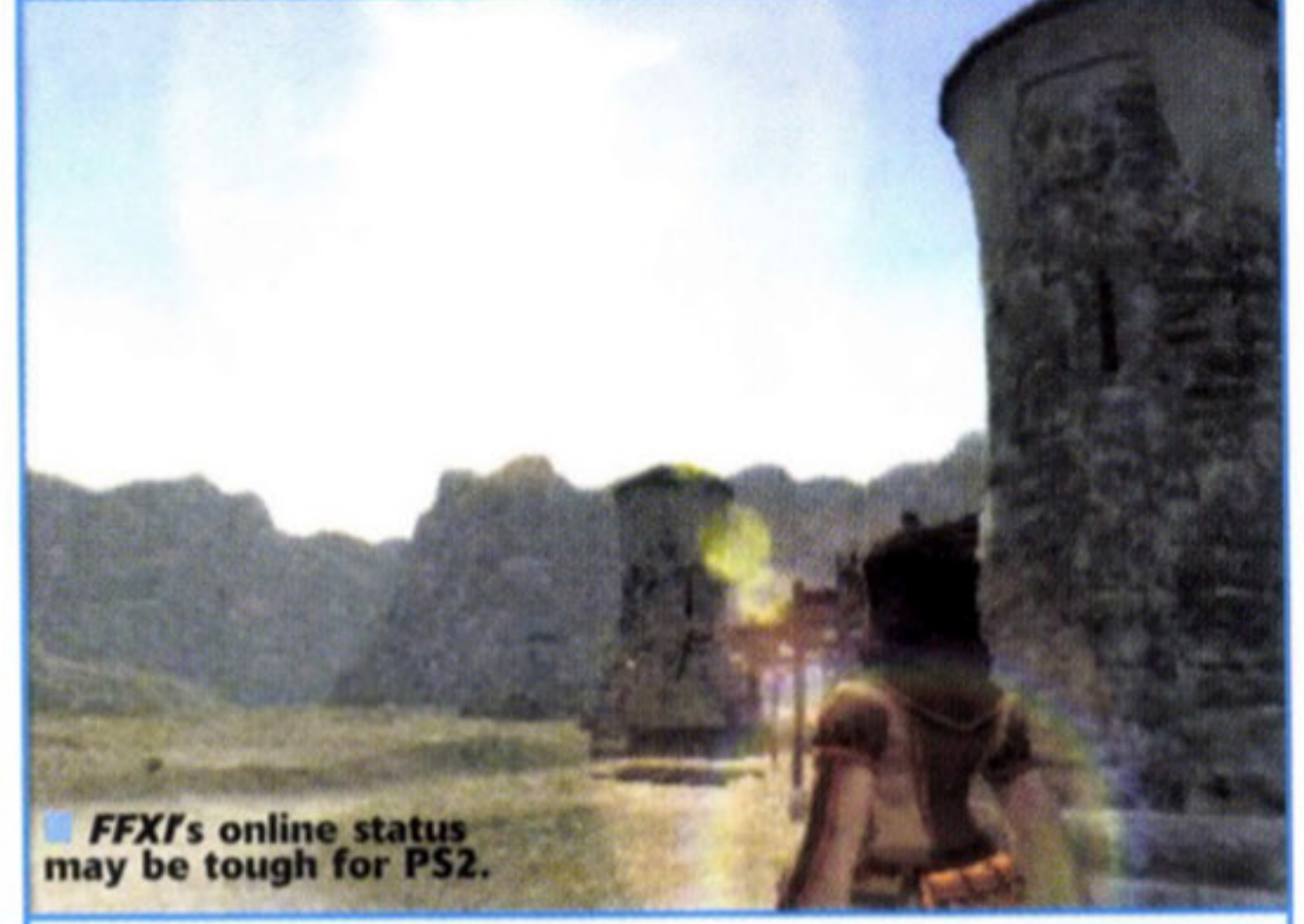


■ PS2 owners love the variety and violence found in *GTA3*.



■ Imagine this, but with the incredible graphics engine of *Wreckless*.

## Final Fantasy XI



■ *FFXI's* online status may be tough for PS2.

■ **Why it's important:** The *Final Fantasy* franchise is one of the biggest names in all of videogames. In fact, some feel that the series has the power to make or break a console. (For instance, when Sony stole Square's allegiance out from under Nintendo, it helped the PlayStation establish itself as the market-leading console of its day.) Plus, the *Final Fantasy* series sells millions of copies in each of the last few incarnations.

■ **Its Xbox history:**

**October 2000:** Japanese news service Nikkei reports that Square is currently developing a *Final Fantasy* game for the Xbox. It also says that the company has been developing the title since the release of Xbox developer kits earlier in the summer.

**October 2000:** Several days later, Square Europe denies that it is developing for the Xbox.

**January 2001:** At the Square Millennium conference, the company announces that *FFXI* will be a fully online RPG.

**February 2001:** At a shareholder meeting in Tokyo, Square's then-president and CEO Hisashi Suzuki announces that his company is interested in multiplatform development and confirms that Square has been in negotiation with Microsoft for Xbox development for more than two years.

**June 2001:** *Final Fantasy* creator Hironobu Sakaguchi states in an interview that *Final Fantasy XI* will most likely see a multiplatform release.

**July 2001:** Square releases the \$137 million feature film *Final Fantasy*. The movie bombs at the box offices, taking in a little more than \$30 million worldwide by the end of its run.

**September 2001:** Microsoft games VP Ed Fries hints that *Final Fantasy XI* could still be headed to the Xbox.

**October 2001:** Sony purchases a 19 percent share in Square for \$124 million. According to a Square representative, the company is still allowed to develop for multiple platforms. Sony confirms this.

**November 2001:** Suzuki resigns after Square continues to post poor financial numbers.

■ **The current official status:** Before he stepped down as president of the company, Hisashi Suzuki said, "We are not necessarily obligated to Sony because of this deal, but we can gauge the situation in the future and offer software to the best-selling hardware maker, and at this time, there is no doubt that Sony is the best."

■ **What may be going on behind the scenes:** Due to money lost by the movie division, Square has been in need of financial aid. Sony stepped in to help, but now that Sony is the second-biggest shareholder of Square stock, the company will likely apply pressure to see that its own interests are met – which would include making sure that the Xbox never sees *Final Fantasy XI*.

■ **Our "unofficial" take:** It sounds like *Final Fantasy XI* is all but certainly off the Xbox. It may show up on the PlayStation2 and PC, but don't hold your breath for an Xbox version.

■ **Odds that we'll see it on Xbox:** 10:1





# A bit of the old this and that

If it's important to the Xbox, it's important to us



■ Looks like a guy who starts every sentence with "Hey!"

## Xbox: The whole story

**The news:** At a recent investment conference, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer spoke for the first time about his company's plans to give the Xbox a larger role than just a games console. Originally, the Xbox was going to be a set-top device with multiple functions including Internet, interactive TV, and much more. However, developers shot down the idea in favor of a games-only machine. Ballmer said, "We went and said, hey, we have some ideas for an all-purpose box, kind of a PC, kind of a video game machine, kind of a set-top box. You know what they said? They said, 'Get outta Dodge, we're not going to write software for that thing.' We came back a year later and we said OK, we're going to start by doing the world's greatest video game machine, and they said, OK, let's talk."

**Why it's important:** Now that the Xbox has launched successfully, Microsoft can put its bigger plans in motion. This could mean we'll hear of more uses for the Xbox in the near future.

**The Official Xbox Magazine take:** While the Xbox certainly has the potential to do many things, for now Microsoft is purely focused on the games. Sure, there might be some pleasant surprises for us down the line, but in the meantime, we still have the best games system on the planet to keep us busy.

## Is It Real or is it Xbox?

**The news:** The people at Codemasters are so confident of their new Xbox racer that they put it to a direct comparison against real photographs of cars and tracks. The game they're willing to put under the comparative microscope is *TOCA Race Driver*, a track racing game scheduled for release in June 2002.

**Why it's important:** Thanks in great part to the Xbox, videogame graphics have been rapidly improving to the point where they are actually becoming comparable to the real thing. Remember when the term "photorealistic" was just marketing bombast?

**The Official Xbox Magazine take:** We'll wait until we see the game in motion. Right now the game looks very, very good. But it's a whole different ballgame once the you are actually playing the game.

■ Which one is real?



## Launch success

**The news:** After months of speculations and pre-launch hype, the Xbox finally hit the shelves of North American retailers. And judging by all reports, the launch was a massive success. According to Credit Suisse estimates, Microsoft sold more than 934,000 Xbox units in the first four weeks of launch. More importantly, the sales numbers stayed strong from one week to the next.

**Why it's important:** A strong launch is crucial for the long-term success of a console. If numbers build early, then third-party developers will feel more comfortable supporting the platform in the future. Judging by early numbers, the Xbox could be in for a long, healthy life.

**The Official Xbox Magazine take:** Hooray! We still have a job! And better yet, more people are jumping on board. It's good to be on a winning team.

## The Robots Down Below

If you thought that the only thing you had to fear from the sewers was Morlocks and C.H.U.D.s (Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dwellers), then think again. British scientists (the most eccentric kind of all) are hard at work trying to jam the poop chutes with murderous cable-hauling robots ostensibly designed to pull fiber optic cables through underground networks.

*What's become clear to us, though, is that these are really two-wheeled robo-chariots to help speed C.H.U.D.s to subterranean domination. The scientists' evil machinations are being employed by a UK company named CityNet, a name not dissimilar to SkyNet, the omnipotent corporation responsible for the Terminator series of death robots. Coincidence? We think not.*

- Monkey count: 0
- Robot count: 100
- Death/injuries: Very soon

Apocalypse Rating: 1 out of 5



## DOA 3.1

**The news:** Tecmo has announced that it will release an update for *DOA3* that gives owners of the original game access to a ton of new features available in the Japanese release. The extra features include new costumes and other goodies and will be available to North American gamers via an add-on disc.

**Why it's important:** One of the greatest promises of the Xbox is that its built-in hard-drive would enable developers to release additional content in their games. We are finally starting to see this come to fruition.

**The Official Xbox Magazine take:** Hmm, how would a company release an add-on disc so that it reaches the greatest number of Xbox gamers? Hmm... perhaps if there were a magazine... possibly official... that had a disc... hmm. Guess they'll figure it out.



■ Clothes... I need new clothes!

# GameWatch

You who are about to die, we salute you



## Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown

**Projected release:** Spring 2002

**The good stuff:** The Merry Men weren't always merry. They had lots of non-merry business to take care of like archery, sneaking into castles, and stealing from the rich to give to the poor. But that's just kid stuff compared to this game. Let's see how non-merry they'll be after you throw in some serious strategy, kingdom building, and resource management.

**The scary stuff:** The still-chalky aftertaste of Costner Hood.



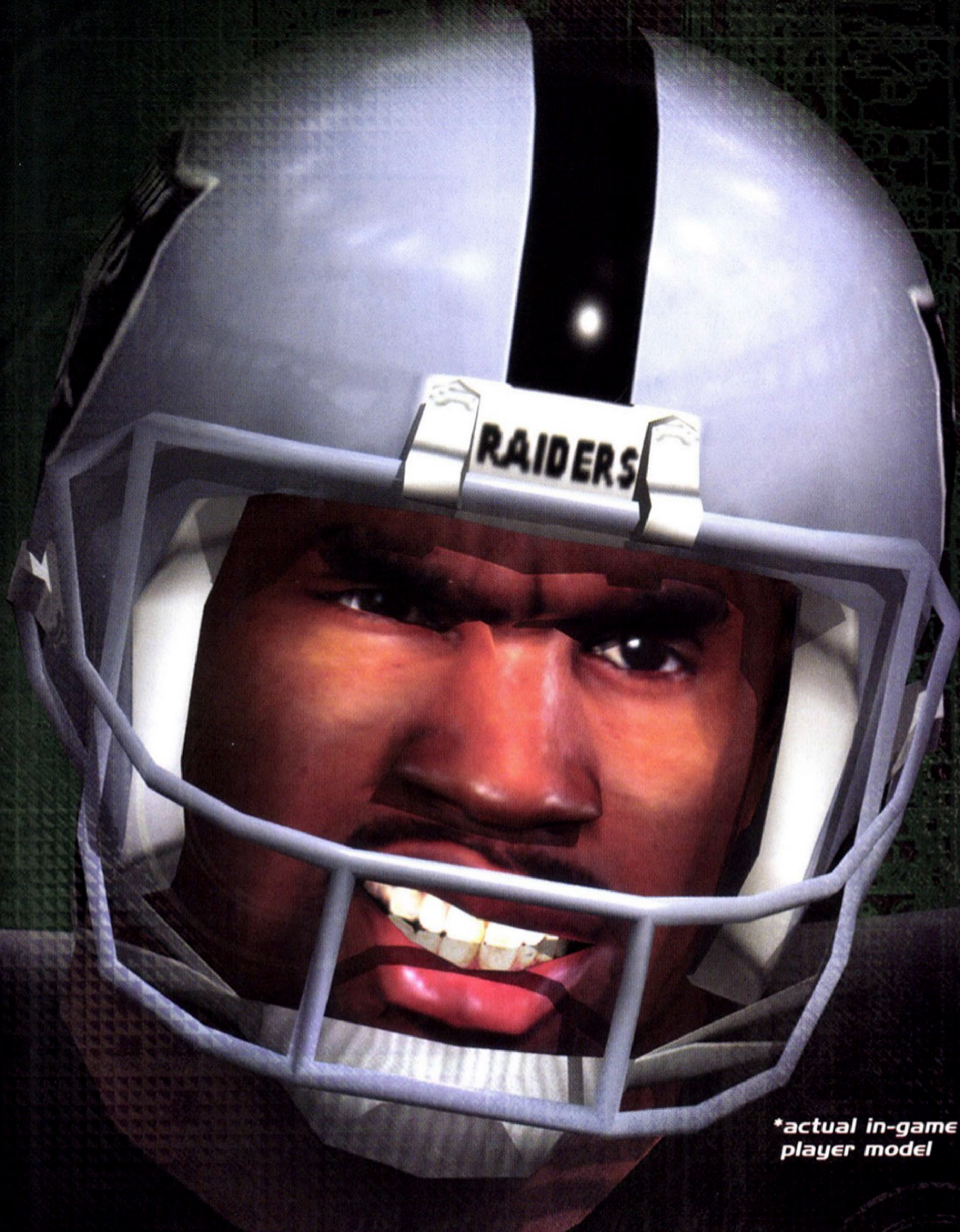
## Circus Maximus

**Projected release:** Early 2002

**The good stuff:** A refreshing change from the usual racing games. It's about so much more than racing; you'll also be fighting your opponents, managing your horses, and getting the very most out of your chariot.

**The scary stuff:** The game plays really well, but so far we haven't seen it take full advantage of the Xbox hardware.

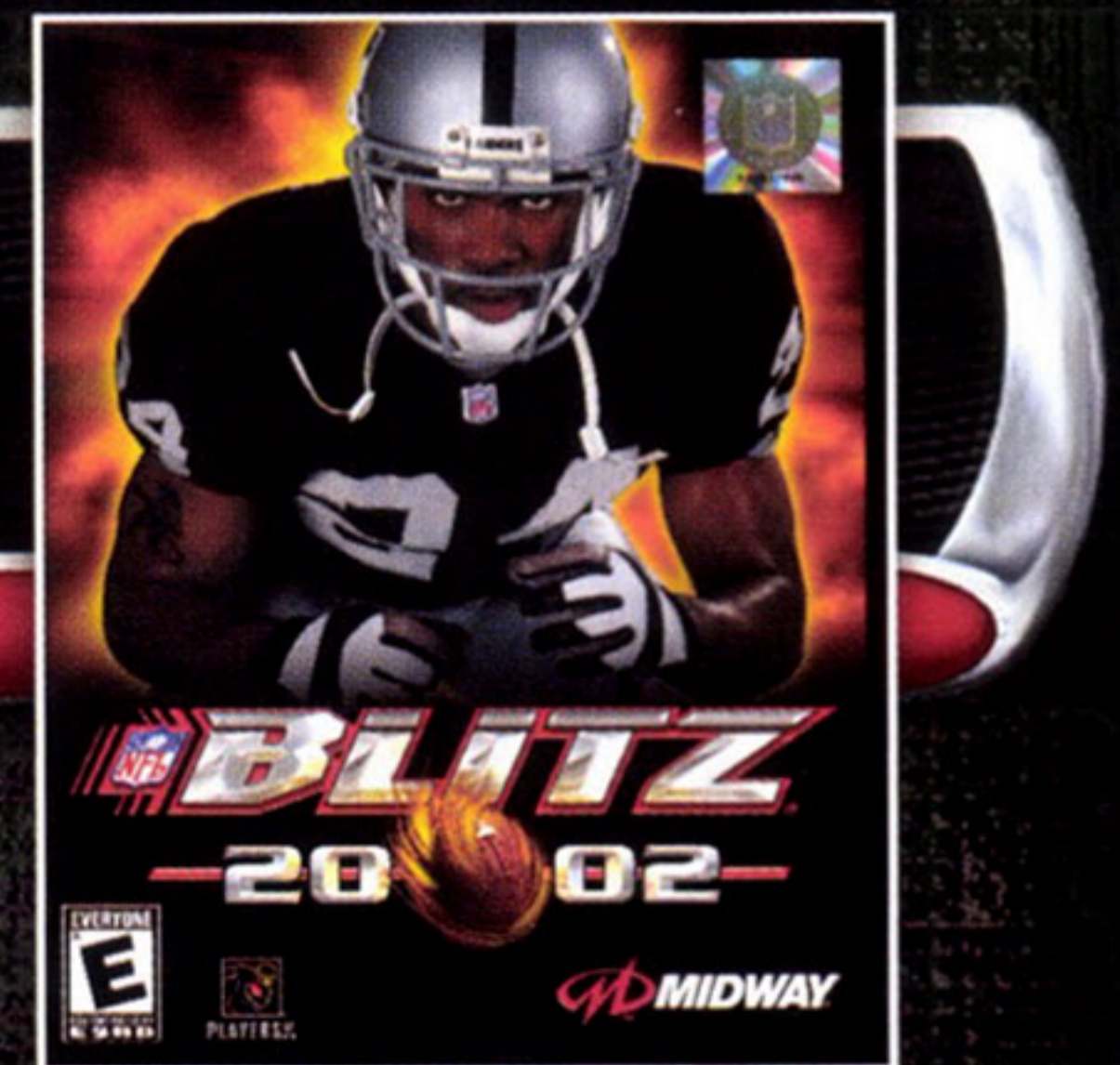
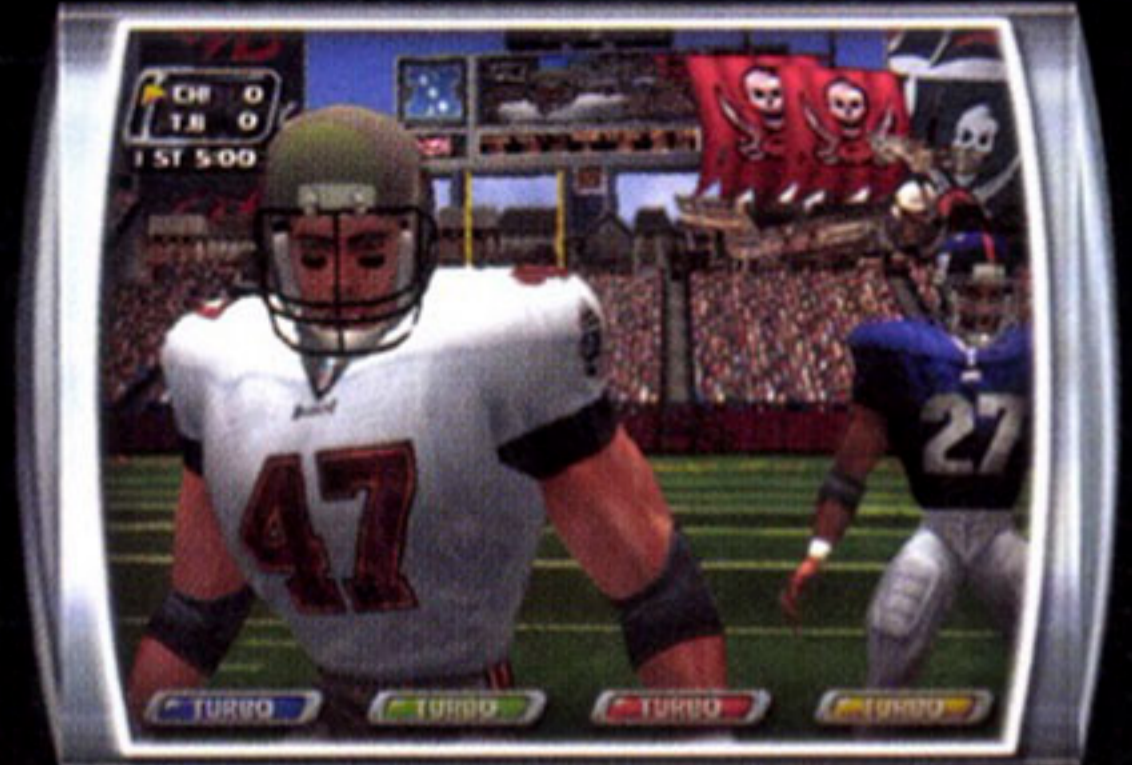
# NFL BLITZ 20-02



\*actual in-game player model

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PlayStation 2



GAME BOY ADVANCE

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Violence

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# Under the Radar

The best Xbox games you've never heard of

## New game? What's it called?

*Battle Engine Aquila.*

## Who's making it?

Three ex-Bullfrog employees who went off on their own to form a development house called Lost Toys.

## What's the game about?

*Battle Engine Aquila* is set in a dark future in which the temperature of our own planet Earth has risen dramatically. This harsh climate change has not only bankrupted the mitten and hot cocoa industries, but it has also melted the polar icecaps and flooded the entire planet. So, as happens from time to time, dry land is now a rare commodity and the central point of disagreement in a global apocalyptic war.

## Why should we care?

This is a game about blowing stuff up from a giant war machine and you ask us this question? We've blown up plenty of stuff in Xbox games with handguns and rocket launchers, but now we're bored and we need more firepower. *Aquila* looks like it will fit the bill nicely.

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

Lost Toys has only developed one game so far – the PlayStation shooter *Ball Breakers* (*Mol-fo* in the UK). The game was generally well received by critics and gamers.



■ Hover tanks, just like the kind we were cheated out of in multiplayer *Halo*...

# The "forgotten" Xbox lineup

Even though the history of the Xbox can only be measured in months, did you know that its oldest game is more than 18 years old? Granted, *Dragon's Lair* isn't really an Xbox game at all – and some of the others on this list can hardly be called *games* – but they do work on the Xbox DVD player. How? They're all old-school laser-arcade games... and they all have a big yellow tag slapped on the front that reads "XBOX Compatible." Neat, huh? We never question big yellow tags.

Interested? Here's a quick wrap-up of the "forgotten" Xbox games now in stores.



## Dragon's Lair

**Originally Released:** 1983  
**Gameplay:** Push left, right, up, or down at precise moments to avoid death.



## Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp

**Originally Released:** 1991  
**Gameplay:** Push left, right, up, or down at precise moments to avoid death.



## Space Ace

**Originally Released:** 1984  
**Gameplay:** See above, but think "Astro."



## Mad Dog McCree

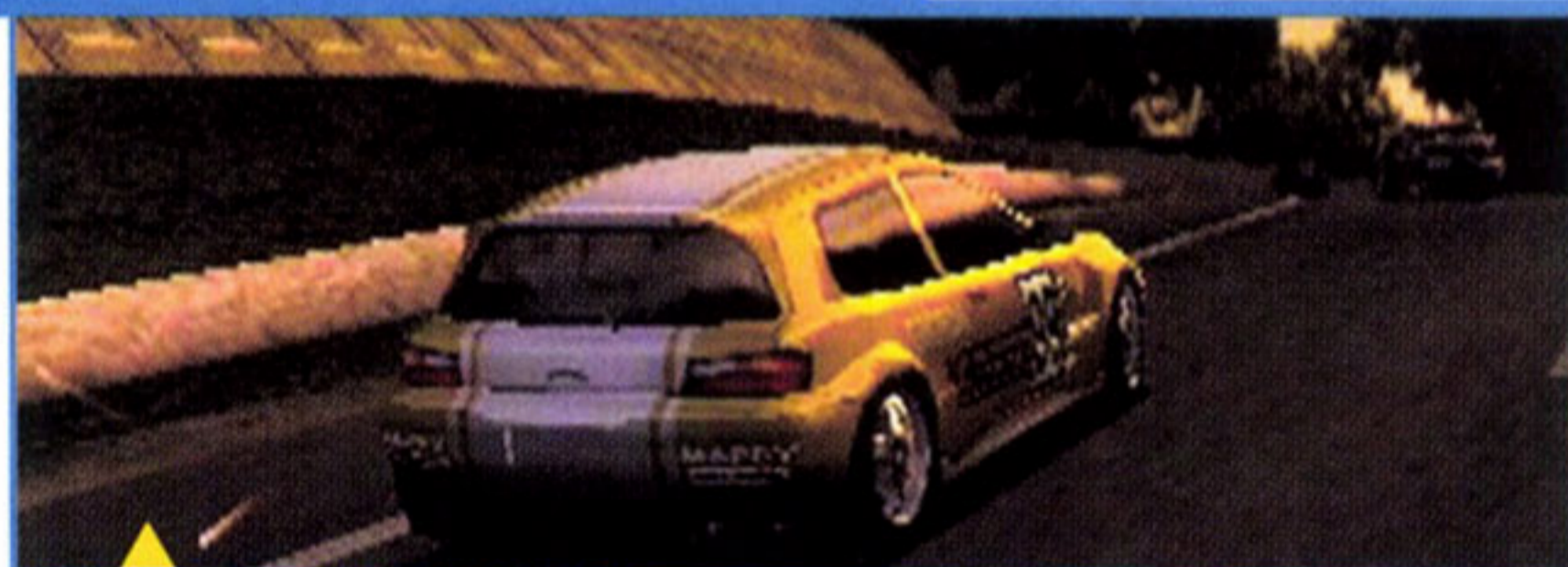
**Originally Released:** 1990  
**Gameplay:** This was the first arcade game to charge a dollar per play and a dollar to continue.



## Time Traveler

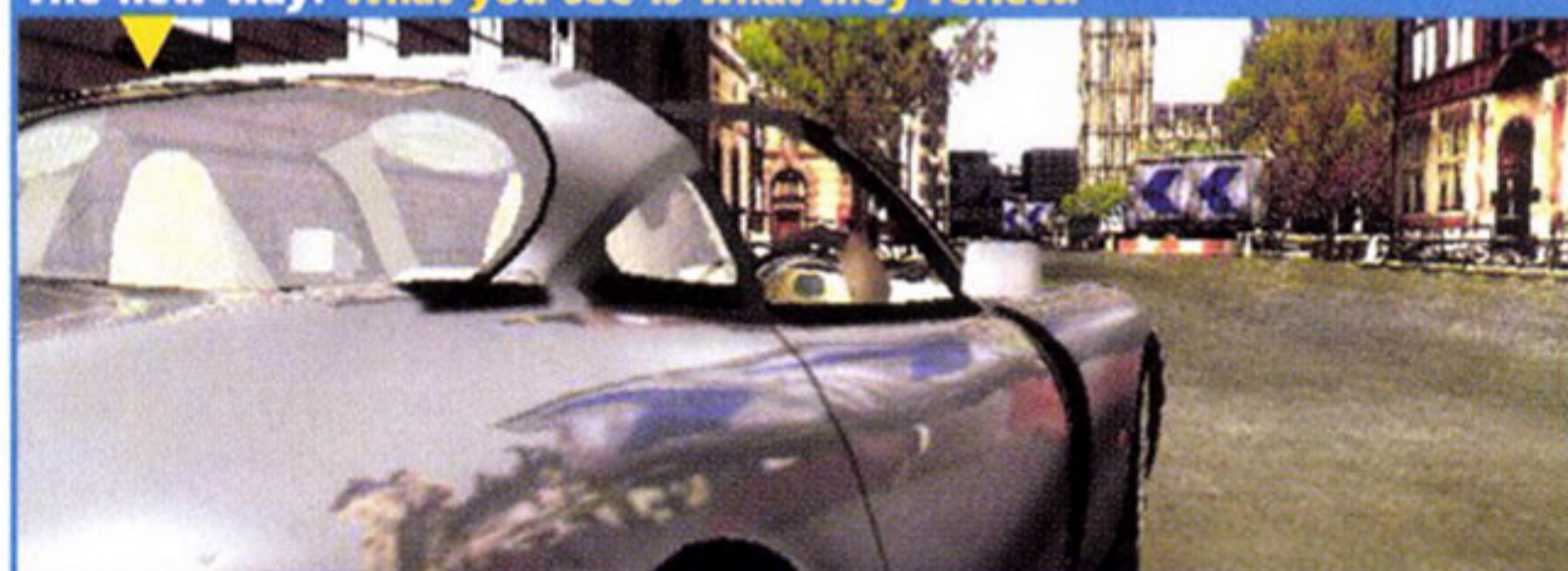
**Originally Released:** 1983  
**Gameplay:** This was the first, last, and worst mainstream holographic arcade game ever made.

# THE IT THING



The old way: Fake, fake, fake.

The new way: What you see is what they reflect.



## High-quality reflection mapping

Have you ever washed your car so well you can clearly see your reflection in the side of it? Kind of feels good, doesn't it? It is perhaps that precise feeling that inspired Xbox game makers to add high-quality reflection maps to so many different games. They show up just about everywhere, but they seem to look the most impressive in racing games.

Pre-Xbox, reflection mapping was generally a faked technique. Developers would create animated reflection textures that approximated what the real reflections would look like. This meant that you might see the reflections of trees passing over cars even if they were driving through a part of the track hedged only by giant chickens. In real life (or with better reflection mapping) you'd see those scary chickens.

Like bump-mapping, reflection mapping is just another step in the search for more realistic videogame graphics, and like bump-mapping, it doesn't look nearly as good on anything but the Xbox. Check it out in Xbox games such as *Project Gotham*, *Wreckless*, and *Test Drive*.

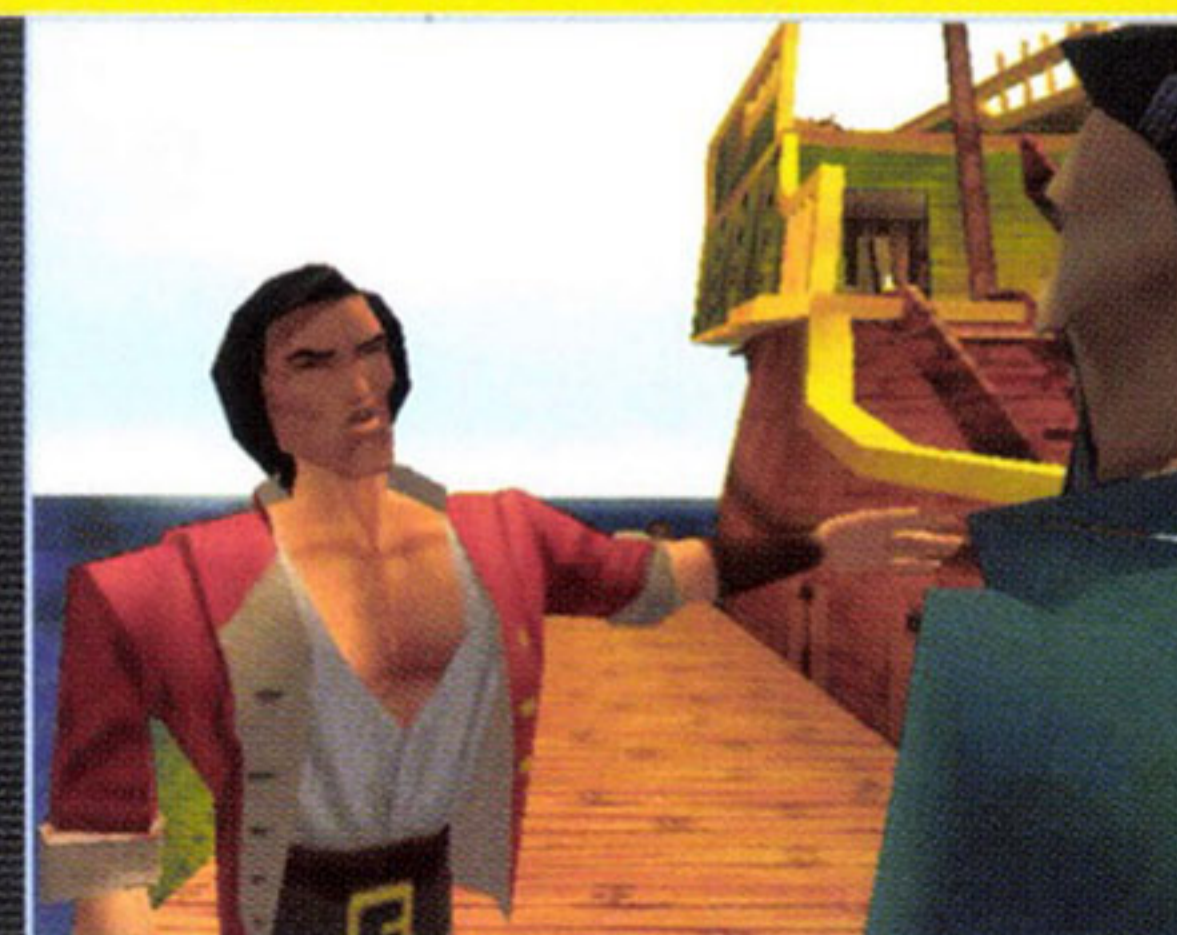
# GameWatch

Avast me hearties, there's trouble on the high seas!



## Taz Wanted

**Projected release:** Summer 2002  
**The good stuff:** Blitz Games, the developer behind *Fuzion Frenzy*, is hard at work on a 3D platform adventure starring Warner Brothers' most famous carnivorous and mental marsupial. Look for plenty of other classic WB cartoon characters to drop in, because the Looney Toons license doesn't come cheap.  
**The scary stuff:** The last few Looney Toons games haven't been much to write home about.



## Galleon

**Projected release:** Early 2002  
**The good stuff:** Created by the two guys who made the original (and best) *Tomb Raider*, *Galleon* replaces the spelunking adventures of the buxom Miss Croft with the high-seas escapades of Captain Rhama Sabrier. Rest assured that all available swashes will be buckled, all lands will be lubbed, and any nearby keels will be thoroughly hauled.  
**The scary stuff:** At this point, the character models look a little bit dated.

# Steering column

**We take two new Xbox steering wheels for a test drive**

**R**acing games just don't feel right on a gamepad. After all, if a gamepad was the best way to pilot a car, chauffeurs would only need leather thumb gloves. Nope, a steering wheel is best for driving, and we're lucky that the Xbox has two solid alternatives right out of the gate.

## Pro Racer

Gamester ■ MSRP: \$29.99

If you're looking for something a little different in steering wheels, the Pro Racer may be exactly what you're looking for. This controller takes a little getting used to because of its unique design, but once you master its nuances, it's a lot of fun.

With most console steering wheels, the problem is bracing the device so that the wheel can turn unhindered by extraneous movement. Typically the solution is a desk brace, but a brace is impractical for the average living room gamer. The Pro Racer avoids this problem entirely by eliminating the base altogether and replacing it with a pivoting steering controller.

To steer, you hold one side rigid and twist the other in the direction that you want to turn. It takes several tries to get the hang of it, but once you get comfortable, it's like you're using a real steering wheel.

This certainly isn't a replacement wheel for those who are looking for the most realistic racing game experience, but if you can get used to the design, this beats a gamepad for overall racing control and playability.

**Bottom line:** It takes a while to get used to, but this is a great bridge between a steering wheel and a gamepad.



■ Most "innovative" controllers have great gimmicks but no useful value. This one has both.

## NASCAR Steering Wheel

Thrustmaster ■ MSRP: \$59.99 ■ Extras: Pedals, lap brace, desk brace

People who make fun of NASCAR games piss us off. Whining that it's a lot of left turns with no driver skill involved misses the point – the subtleties of circle track racing come in the running three-wide, and the many passing opportunities. Unfortunately, it's hard to appreciate those subtleties from outside the car, and it's hard to drive a NASCAR with the Xbox pad from inside the car. The solution? A nice fat wheel, like Thrustmaster's, which enables you to drive like an actual driver – from an inside-the-car view.

The wheel itself is pretty nice, albeit with rumbling in place of true force feedback. You can either clamp the wheel to a desk, or use a weird lap holder on your couch. Since you've probably only got an Xbox on your desk if you're some kind of freak (or game journalist) (same difference), you'll probably use the lap holder. It works well, but forces your knees to be right next to each other, which feels kind of weird if you're a guy. It does feel a bit like being crammed in the cockpit of an open-wheeled racer, though.

The wheel itself is great, enabling finesse in driving that you just can't get from even an analog joypad. You can either use Formula One-style paddles to accelerate and brake, or use the included foot pedals (just make sure you attach them *before* you turn on your Xbox). Either works well. We tried the pedals with *NASCAR Thunder*, *NASCAR Heat*, EA's *F1 2001*, and *Gotham*, and found it really helped in the first three and didn't help so much in the last one – it's really an accessory that works best for us in racing games, not driving games.

There's the usual variety of adjustment options and geegaws, but the bottom line is that this is a fine steering wheel that makes great racing games – which the Xbox is blessed with in abundance – even better.

**Bottom line:** Right now this is the best steering wheel available for the Xbox, but we can't wait for a force feedback version in the future.



■ Although you can't see it here, this steering wheel includes a lap brace that fits between your legs to stabilize the controller even when you're sitting on a sofa.

## GameWatch Some games only need one name...

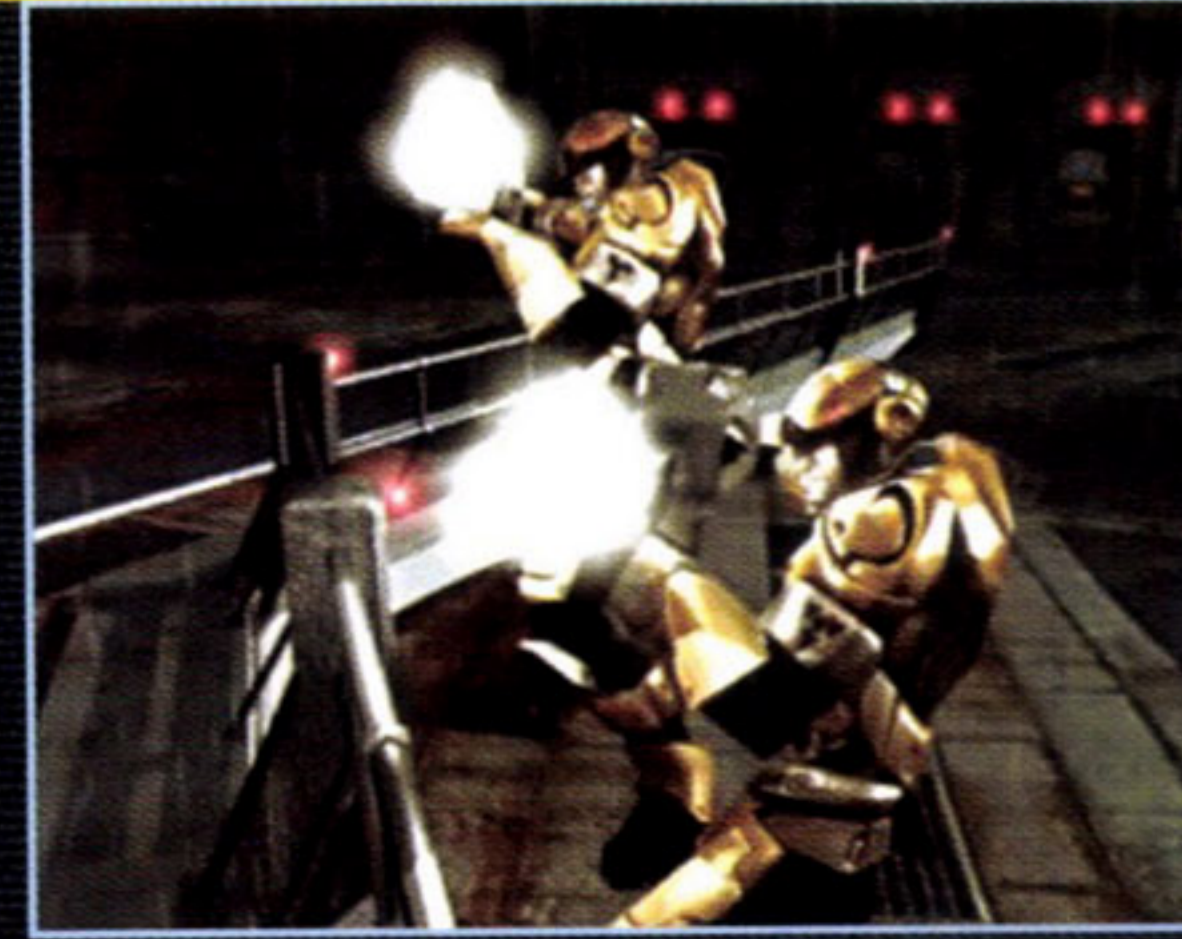


### Breed

Projected release: Fall 2002

**The good stuff:** Can't get enough of the vehicular combat in *Halo*? Well, you might want to take a look at *Breed*. Not only can you control small land-based vehicles, but you can also take control of fighter planes and heavily armed drop ships.

**The scary stuff:** The amount of destructive potential in this game is frightening. Can newly formed developer Brat Designs pull it off?



### Duality

Projected release: Fall 2002

**The good stuff:** First of all, *Duality* looks great. But more importantly, this action/RPG (for lack of a better description) features a dual storyline that takes place in the real world and in a cyber world. You piece the plot together as you weave through both worlds.

**The scary stuff:** This is another PC/Xbox game in development. Could the PC side limit the game's potential?

# NOT The Rumor Mole

Master of disguise • Blabber of secrets • On the lam

Mole here... umm... actually, *not* the Mole here. This is somebody else entirely. Anybody looking for the Mole, he's not here anymore. Especially those big guys from Microsoft who chased him out of the cafeteria the other day. He's not here anymore, so don't bother looking. Since I'm not the Rumor Mole, I can freely report on the top-secret undertakings in the world of Xbox without having to fear for my life... right?



## Neon Moon

While scrounging around the dev offices at Microsoft, I stumbled upon a debug kit for *Rallispport Challenge*, and lo and behold: on that debug was another game called *NEON*. I wasn't able to get the game up and running before security whisked me away (again), but I sent out some signals to my spies to figure out what this *NEON* was all about. Apparently it's being worked on in Europe and is likely a *Wipeout*-style techno racer with stunning graphics. Microsoft showed a video at Gamestock last year that featured a quick shot of a futuristic racer – the Mole hears that this game is *NEON*. My bet is that this game will be one of the key titles for the Xbox

European launch in March – those Euros love their techno.

## Halo gets medieval

Bungie, the Microsoft in-house development studio behind *Halo*, is hard at work on a new game using the impressive *Halo* engine. For the purposes of this article, we'll call the game *Project Wolf*. My spies report that the obviously beautiful game has been in development for nearly two years and was originally shown behind closed doors at E3 '99 as a PC game called *Fantasy Siege*. In fact, I hear that the versatility of the *Halo* engine shown by the game was one of the main reasons Microsoft decided to buy Bungie. Reports from deep inside the

dungeons of Bungie say that the game is some sort of fast-paced castle-sieging game that won't be out until late 2002.

## Lara spreading the love?

As I'm writing this piece, the bigwigs at Eidos are in discussions about the future home (or homes) of *Tomb Raider*. Apparently Sony is promising some major cash and incentives to make it a PS2 exclusive, but Microsoft might just step up their bid to make it multiplatform at the very least. The developers at Core have already been working on an Xbox version of the game (just in case), and word has it that the English developers greatly prefer programming for the Xbox. My bet is that Lara will show on PS2 first, with a special Xbox version out in early '03.

## Future Hawk

Word out of Neversoft is that the next incarnation in the über-popular *Tony Hawk* series will be a dramatic switch in gameplay and graphics. To keep the series from becoming stale, the developers are looking at some new technology and possibly even some adventure-themed gameplay. We hope this doesn't mean solving crime on a skateboard – but you never know. It will be released simultaneously on all platforms (Xbox included) in late 2002.

# Trendspotter

## Rainbow Edition

Diversity has always been an important topic in the videogame world. After all, the Xbox is a worldwide videogame platform that represents countless virtual universes filled with various and sundry creatures. So it's only natural that its characters represent the many colors of the rainbow.

In our world, we generally celebrate diversity through Benetton ads, poorly drawn murals, boy bands, "wacky" sitcom neighbors, and mandatory homeroom lectures. On the Xbox, though, diversity is done up right, with creatures of every color living together in blissful anti-aliased harmony. Just check out this rainbow coalition.



**RED**  
Character: Sinder  
Game: *Cel Damage*



**ORANGE**  
Character: Cartoon zombies  
Game: *House of the Dead 3*



**YELLOW**  
Character: Homer Simpson  
Game: *The Simpsons Road Rage*



**GREEN**  
Character: Shrek  
Game: *Shrek*



**BLUE**  
Character: Azurik  
Game: *Azurik: Rise of Perathia*

# GameWatch Baseball heats up for summer...



## Fahrenheit

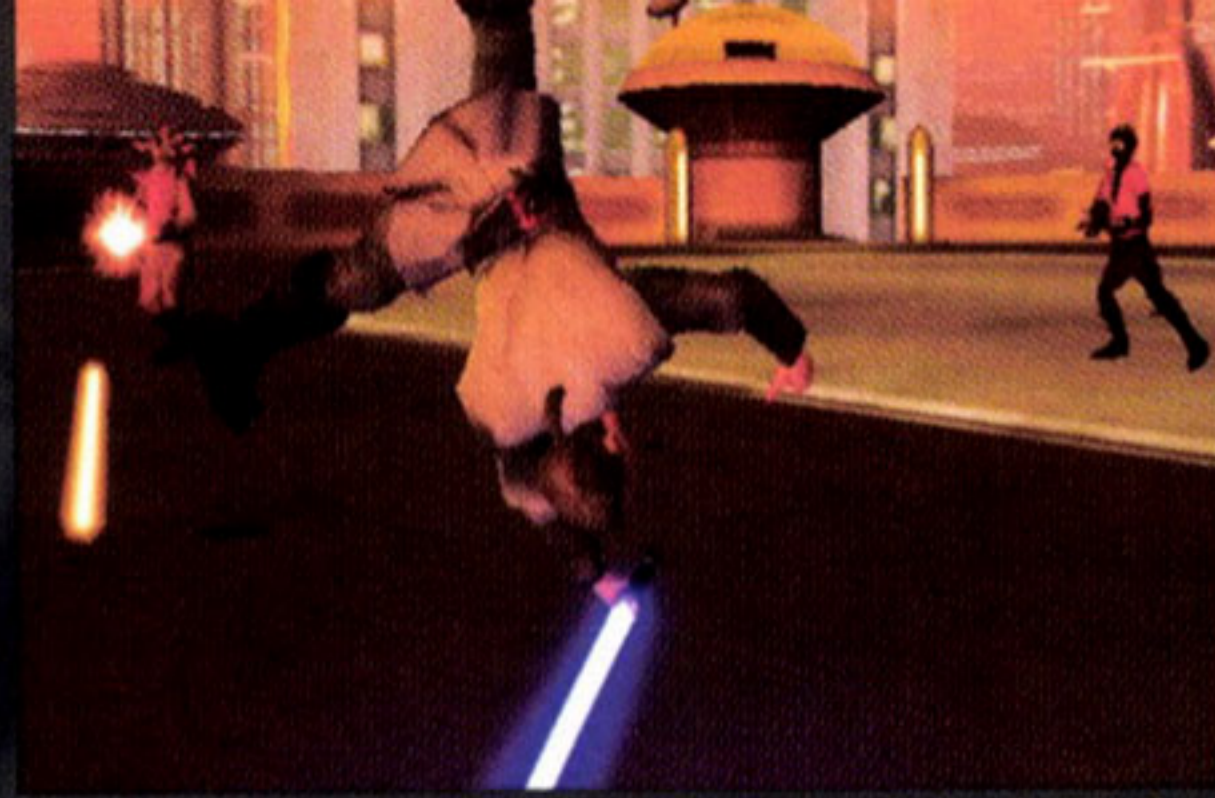
**Projected release:** Summer 2002  
**The good stuff:** We've heard talk about "episodic content" for Xbox games in the past, but this is the first title we've seen that actually plans to use it. Each month, you'll be able to play as the hunter or hunted in a new episode of this creepy murder mystery.  
**The scary stuff:** Is this the future of gaming or just a new way to charge us more for games?



## Triple Play 2002

**Projected release:** Spring 2002  
**The good stuff:** The *Triple Play* franchise has been rolling along largely unchallenged for the last few years, and it looks like this will be yet another strong showing for the series. Look for improvements in presentation and camera angles to hype up the drama and suspense.  
**The scary stuff:** This looks like another PS2 direct transfer... but hopefully EA Sports will take advantage of the Xbox hardware.





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



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Violence

official *Star Wars* website: [starwars.com](http://starwars.com)

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# XBOX ONLINE-KINDA

It's going to be a couple of months before Microsoft's online plans for its new console are fully in motion, but that doesn't mean that the Xbox isn't already on the Internet. In fact, the Xbox already has a strong online community – that's right, we're talking about web sites.

Of course, you won't find a better source for Xbox info on a monthly basis than the **Official Xbox Magazine**, but if you've just got to have your news on a daily basis, you've got a wide variety of choices online. Here are some safe bets broken down into three categories: fan sites, pro sites, and official sites.

## The Fan Sites

### TEAM XBOX

**WWW.TEAMXBOX.COM**

**Strengths:** This is perhaps the most comprehensive Xbox fan site on the Internet. If it happens in the Xbox world, you'll find it on this site in concise, readable stories – and you'll get a link to the site it came from.

**Weaknesses:** Difficult to discern day from day on site.

**Don't miss:** The daily "Xbox on the Net" wrap-up

covers everything Xbox that's covered by other sites. You'll always find something worth checking out.

**Don't be surprised if you see:** An early preview on each and every issue of the **Official Xbox Magazine**.



### XBOX ADDICT

**WWW.XBOXADDICT.COM**

**Strengths:** If you're looking for a quick Xbox fix, this is the place to go. Interviews, features, and an excellent layout make this more than just a collection of other people's news.

**Weaknesses:** Not as comprehensive as some of the other sites.

**Don't miss:** The awesome reader review section.

**Don't be surprised if you see:** Early reviews of the **Official Xbox Magazine** discs.



### FUN XBOX

**WWW.FUNXBOX.COM**

**Strengths:** An impressive new redesign gives this site a fresh look, as does the unique personality of the editors.

**Weaknesses:** Not as big as some of the fan sites, but plenty comprehensive.

**Don't miss:** The editorials – well written, interesting, timely, and even entertaining.

**Don't be surprised if you see:** The home of the **Official Xbox Magazine** forums on this site and a weekly visit from a random magazine staff member.



### 123XBOX

**WWW.123XBOX.COM**

**Strengths:** Clean, clear, and super easy to navigate. You can always find what you're looking for.

**Weaknesses:** Review scores appear to be on a scale of 7-10 – but that is true of many fansites.

**Don't miss:** The cheats section. It might not be the biggest collection of cheats, but it is the easiest to find and use.

**Don't be surprised if you see:** A complete daily update on our uber-popular Challenge section of the magazine. Check it out and see where you rank (for more info on Challenges, turn to page 90).

## The Pro Sites

### IGN XBOX

**XBOX.IGN.COM**

**Strengths:** IGN is well known for snagging early exclusives for previews and the occasional big story. It is also very comprehensive, rarely failing to give a review of a game the day it hits shelves.

**Weaknesses:** The editors seem to rate every game between 7 and 10... even the bad games.

**Don't miss:** The 3,000-word reviews. Even though they can sometimes be wordy, they generally give you the most comprehensive online analysis of new games.

**Don't be surprised if you see:** Random inside humor. Those IGN guys have fun at what they do, and it carries over to their writing.



### GAMESPOT

**WWW.VIDEOGAMES.COM**

**Strengths:** Gamespot is a videogame industry stalwart. It has been around for a long time and they are a trustworthy news source year after year. Gamespot also gets preview exclusives for big games and offers solid reviews.

**Weaknesses:** Sometimes the website feels a little dry.

**Don't miss:** The Gamespot Gamebuyer price checker.

You'll usually find the best price available for your games and hardware.

**Don't be surprised if you see:** Reviews several weeks after they hit the other sites.

Gamespot is thorough and takes a lot of time to finish grading games.



## The "Official" Sites

### XBOX.COM

**WWW.XBOX.COM**

**Strengths:** It's got news and game info straight from the company itself. Plus you'll find special features, developer specials, and columns from Xbox insiders.

**Weaknesses:** It's not a "news" site.

**Don't miss:** The monthly **Official Xbox Magazine** website column where we spill the beans on what we're working on for the next issue.

**Don't be surprised if you see:** Flash animated headers... they're all over the place.



### OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

**WWW.OFFICIALXBOXMAGAZINE.COM**

**Strengths:** A great place to subscribe to the mag or complain about why we don't cover *Dragonball Z*.

**Weaknesses:** The shameless self promotion.

**Don't miss:** The Ask Microsoft section – Bill Gates (or at least one of his lackeys) answers your questions.

**Don't be surprised if you see:** Last month's issue... we're kind of busy writing a magazine.



**Warning:** Grandma Dixie is not a licensed guide writer. In fact, she knows little or nothing about the Xbox, and nothing she says should be taken as fact.

## How to pick the best new Xbox



### A Grandma Dixie™ Guide

Purchasing the right Xbox isn't as easy as it sounds. So, follow along as I walk you through the five most important things to check so you can make sure that you get the best Xbox in the store.

#### 1. Shake it

This is very important, because sometimes polygons fall out during shipping. When you shake the box, loose polygons will sound like screaming ferrets.

#### 2. Give it a thump

Hold the Xbox up to your ear and give it a good thump with your hand. If it sounds hollow and resonant, you've got a ripe one. If it sounds tinny, put it back on the shelf to ripen.

#### 3. Ask yourself: Is it on fire?

A lot of people miss this point, but it's a very important one. A burning Xbox may look "cool," but beneath that smoking mass of plastic and computer chips lay toasted pixel shaders.

#### 4. Ask about its history

What if your new Xbox has been totaled, Bondo-ed, repainted, and then snuck into stores? There are no records of this ever happening, but store clerks are legally obligated to tell you the full history of your Xbox.

#### 5. Give it the TEST

Well, nobody likes this test, but if you want to get the best Xbox you have no other choice. There's no sense in taking home an Xbox with a bad prostate.

## GameWatch

Brutes rule the virtual world

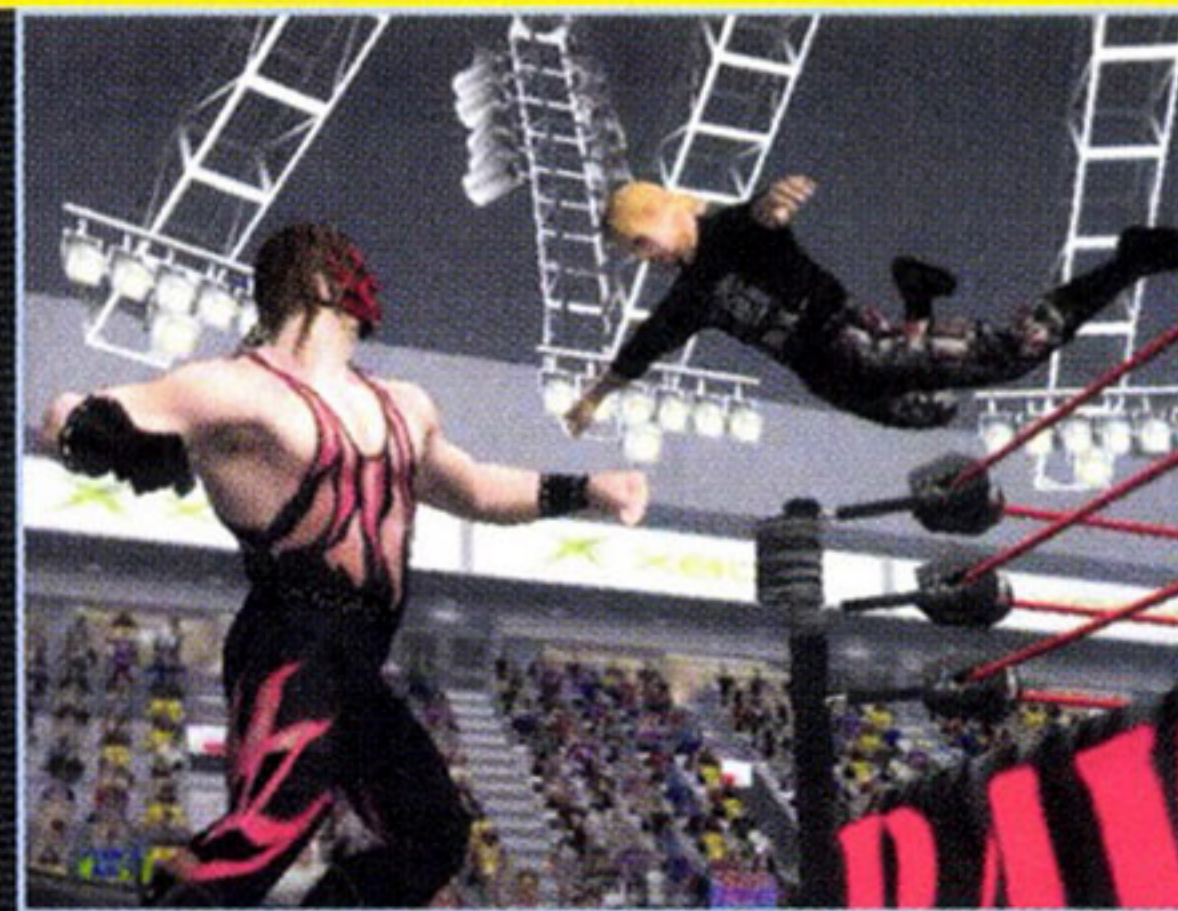


### Brute Force

**Projected release:** Fall 2002

**The good stuff:** Online blasting, fleshy, realistic-looking characters, and squad-based combat that we were skeptical about until five minutes into *Halo*. The game's mixture of realistically-rendered backgrounds and highly animated characters makes for an expressive and exciting look. The hordes of bad guys that you'll have to blast to smithereens don't hurt either.

**The scary stuff:** Online plans still in the land of secrets.



### WWF Raw is War

**Projected release:** Early 2002

**The good stuff:** This is one of the games everyone keeps asking about. Although non-wrestling fans may roll their eyes at the sports-entertainment extravagance of it all, they certainly can't scoff at the graphics. This title features some of the most impressive character models we've seen so far in an Xbox game.

**The scary stuff:** It doesn't have as many options as Yuke's massively deep *WWF Smackdown* series.

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GAME BOY ADVANCE



PlayStation 2



# A trial run for online gaming

Like many Xbox owners, we have been drooling with anticipation for the Xbox online network. As it turns out, we couldn't even wait for the summer launch – we jumped online early thanks to a couple of

interesting little programs from Gamespy. While the experience isn't perfect (by any means), it does give you a small taste of the mighty future of Xbox Online. Here's the deal.

## THE TOOLS:

We're going to assume, for the purposes of this experiment, that you're enough of a hardcore gamer that you already possess a broadband-equipped PC as well as an Xbox and a copy of either *Halo*, *Tony Hawk 2x*, or *Nascar Heat* (or any other game that supports System Link). To this set-up, you need only add:

- **A LAN hub** (these can be surprisingly cheap)
- **Two RJ45 cables** (that's fancy talk for LAN cables)
- **Gamespy Arcade** (trial version) and
- **Gamespy Tunnel** (find them at [www.gamespyarcade.com/support/tunnel\\_xbox.shtml](http://www.gamespyarcade.com/support/tunnel_xbox.shtml))

...and you have online play for only \$25 or so over and above your basic rig.

## THE SET-UP:

Gamespy itself offers the best step-by-step set-up instructions, so we won't duplicate them here. We will, however, remind you to follow the directions very closely. You'll have enough problems to deal with on the software side.

## THE TECHNOLOGY:

Gamespy Tunnel and Gamespy Arcade make playing Xbox games online possible. The first, Gamespy Tunnel, essentially "tricks" your Xbox into thinking that the Internet is just a big LAN. The second, Gamespy Arcade, matches you together with other people looking for a game.

## THE HURDLES:

Although we got the hardware set up in minutes, getting the game to work took much longer. Here are the two biggest issues we ran into.

■ **Firewalls:** If you are playing on a school or work connection, you are most likely going to encounter problems. You might also face firewall issues from your home broadband connection.  
**The Solution:** Ask your provider to open up the 6500 and 6700 ports in the firewall, and that may help. However, sometimes you just won't be able to play behind a firewall no matter what you do.

■ **"Your disc is dirty or damaged" error:** Occasionally when you try to connect to a game you'll get this message. It will keep you from joining the action.  
**The Solution:** Host a game, but don't let anyone join. Once you get to the final hosting menu on your Xbox, back all the way out and try to join another game. If this doesn't work, restart your Xbox.

■ **Lag:** Even though your Xbox thinks it's on a LAN, it's not. If you're not careful, you'll face lag-a-plenty.  
**The Solution:** Look for games hosted near you, and only join servers with low lag to begin with. If you join a game with bad lag, don't waste your time: quit and find a better server.

## THE EXPERIENCE:

Even though we love the concept of being able to play multiplayer Xbox games at any time, there is a price to play online this way, and that price is lag. On some servers it's at acceptable levels, but on others it occasionally becomes a problem. Here is how our game experiences broke down.

### Halo

Typical number of players online: 200-500

*Halo* offers the best online experience of any Xbox game at this point. You'll find the most open games, the toughest competition, and the most overall fun with this game. We still prefer LAN play, but more than once we enjoyed online games that were almost as fast.

### NASCAR Heat 2002

Typical number of players online: 5-30

It's tough to find an open server for *NASCAR Heat*, but when we did find one, we enjoyed the experience. Lag can be a problem, but it's hard to beat the fun of racing against real players.

### Tony Hawk 2x

Typical number of players online: 10-50

Although the multiplayer action isn't fleshed out as much as the multiplayer gameplay in *Tony Hawk 3*, we still had a lot of fun testing out our best tricks against real opponents. However, it wasn't very long before we were right back into *Halo*. We just can't stay away.

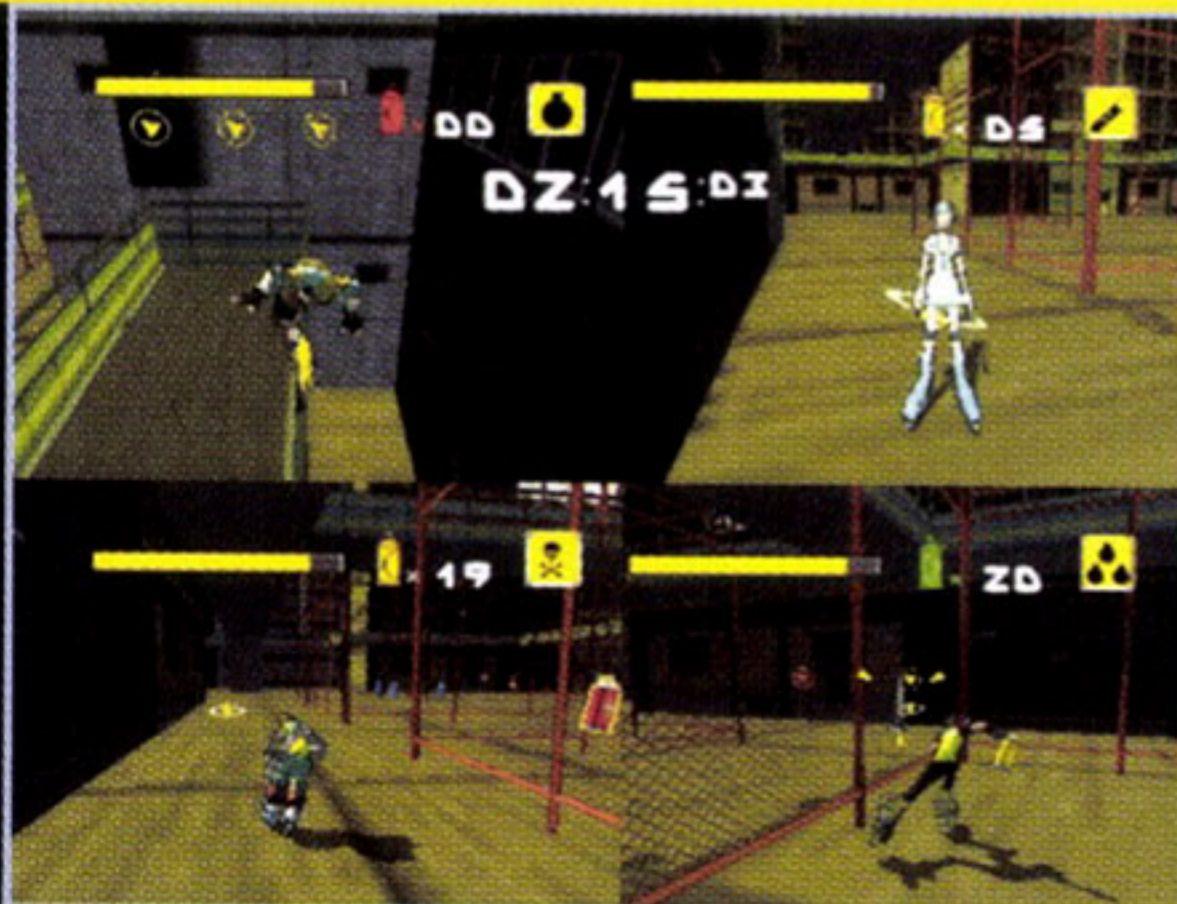


- **Halo:** It's a bit laggy, but still loads of fun.
- **NASCAR Heat:** Great action – but good luck finding a game.
- **Tony Hawk 2x:** Prove your skills.



# GameWatch

Everything's coming up cel-shadey!



### JSRF: Jet Set Radio Future

Projected release: Early 2002

**The good stuff:** Sega finally revealed the multiplayer modes in *JSRF*. There's Capture the Flag, Graffiti Wars (who can paint the most stuff), Tagger's Tag (spray your opponents), Race, and Death Ball. The latter mode is all about getting your death ball into your goal before the other players get their death ball into their goal.

**The scary stuff:** There won't any be online multiplayer support.

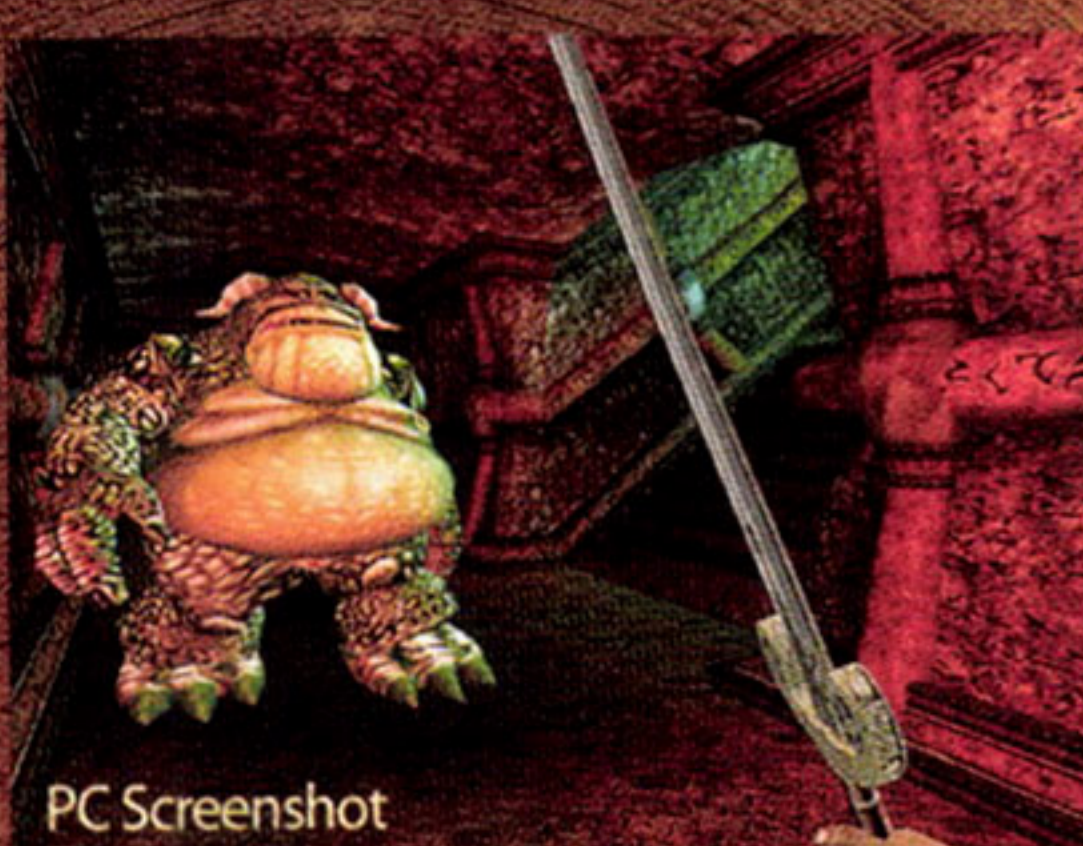


### Orchid

Projected release: Fall 2002

**The good stuff:** *Orchid* is just an average girl who can summon giant glowing megamonsters to do her bidding. That's when she's not kicking ass *Matrix*-style. "I remember kung-fu!" The 3D cel-shaded graphics feature a lot more detail than other games of this visual ilk, and the use of reflective textures and even bump-mapping give this a unique visual flair.

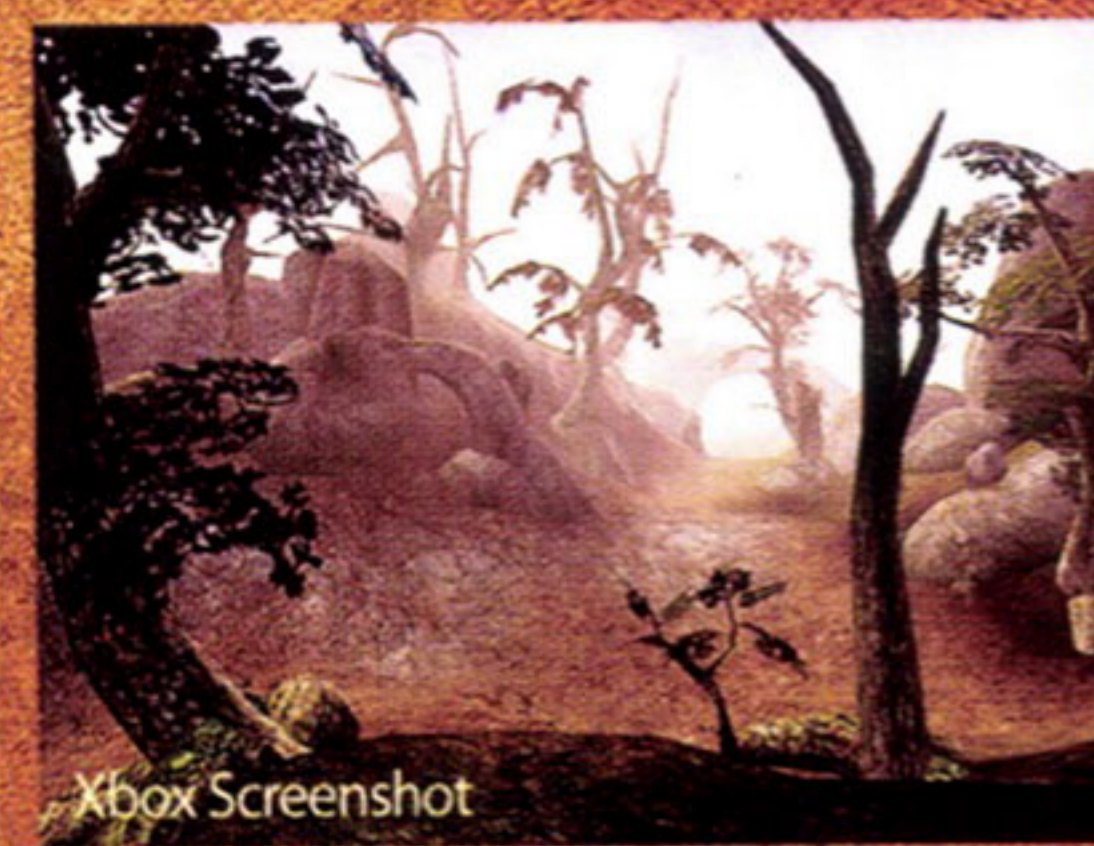
**The scary stuff:** Monster designs by ex-*Spawn* artist Tony Daniel.



PC Screenshot



Xbox Screenshot



Xbox Screenshot



PC Screenshot

Best RPG of E3  
- Computer Gaming World

Top 20 Games of E3  
- GameSpot

#1 Xbox Game of E3  
- Gamesmania

Elder Scrolls Series  
- GameSpy Hall of Fame



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\* *Live another life. Play any character you can imagine, from the heroic warrior to the secret assassin.*

\* *Explore another world. The enormous game world is open and free for you to discover. Go anywhere you want and do anything you want.*

\* *Next generation technology. Realistic textures and objects, incredible polygon counts, and advanced weather systems truly take you to another world.*

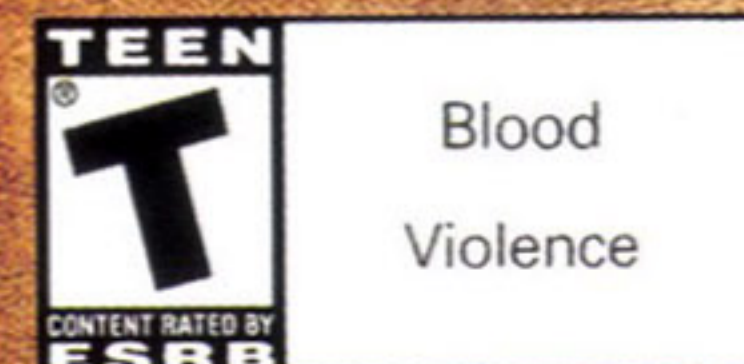
\* *Download new adventures. Included with the PC version is "The Elder Scrolls Construction Set". Create, share, and download new characters, dungeons, quests and more.*

The Elder Scrolls III

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# 2 BALLS OF STEEL 1 REPUTATION AT STAKE...



Xbox screen shots shown

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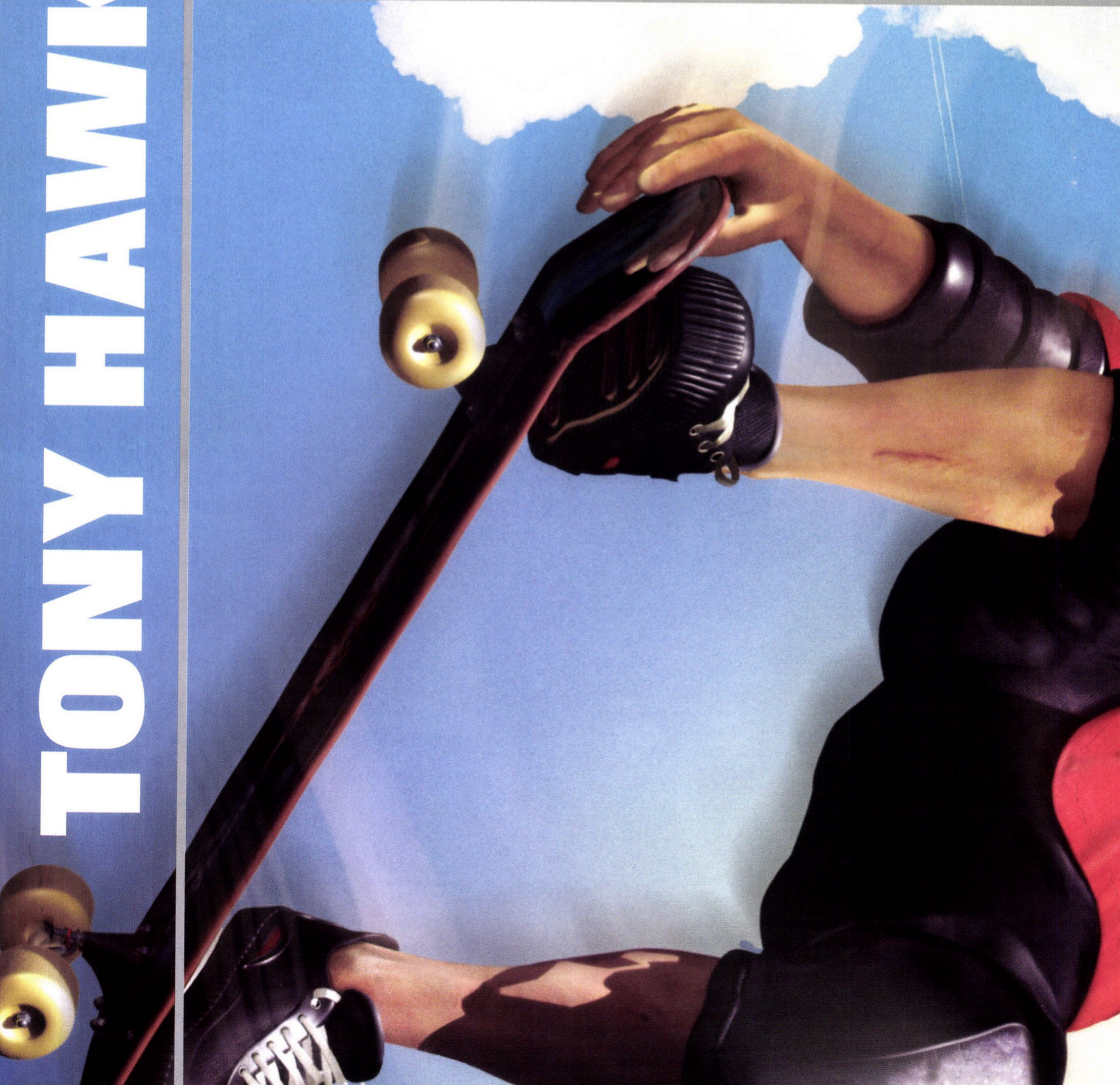
PlayStation.2

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# TONY HAWK 3

# BETTER





# ON XBOX!

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## **TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3**

Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Neversoft

**S**o what's the difference between *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* and its predecessors? Where do we begin? For one thing, it has all new levels, and on Xbox, that includes an exclusive, extra level that isn't available on PS2 or GameCube. In most other gameplay respects, though, the titles are identical – which is, of course, a good thing.

The skater lineup remains almost unchanged. We have returning heroes like Steve Caballero, Kareem Campbell, Rune Glifberg, Eric Koston, Bucky Lasek, Rodney Mullen, Chad Muska, Andrew Reynolds, Geoff Rowley, Elissa Steamer, Jamie Thomas, and Mr. Skateboarding himself, Tony Hawk. For various licensing reasons, Mr. Bob Burnquist is not making the cut this time around, but if you're a Bob fan, you can simply make him in the vastly improved Create-A-Skater mode. Just make sure you send him his licensing fee....

The basic Career mode has also remained largely unchanged. It's still split into two-minute rounds where you can try to

### **THE LEGEND OF TONY HAWK**

**Born:** Carlsbad, CA  
**DOB:** 5/12/1968  
**Height:** 6' 2"  
**Weight:** 170 lbs.  
**Hometown:** San Diego, CA  
**Marital Status:** Married  
**Children:** Two

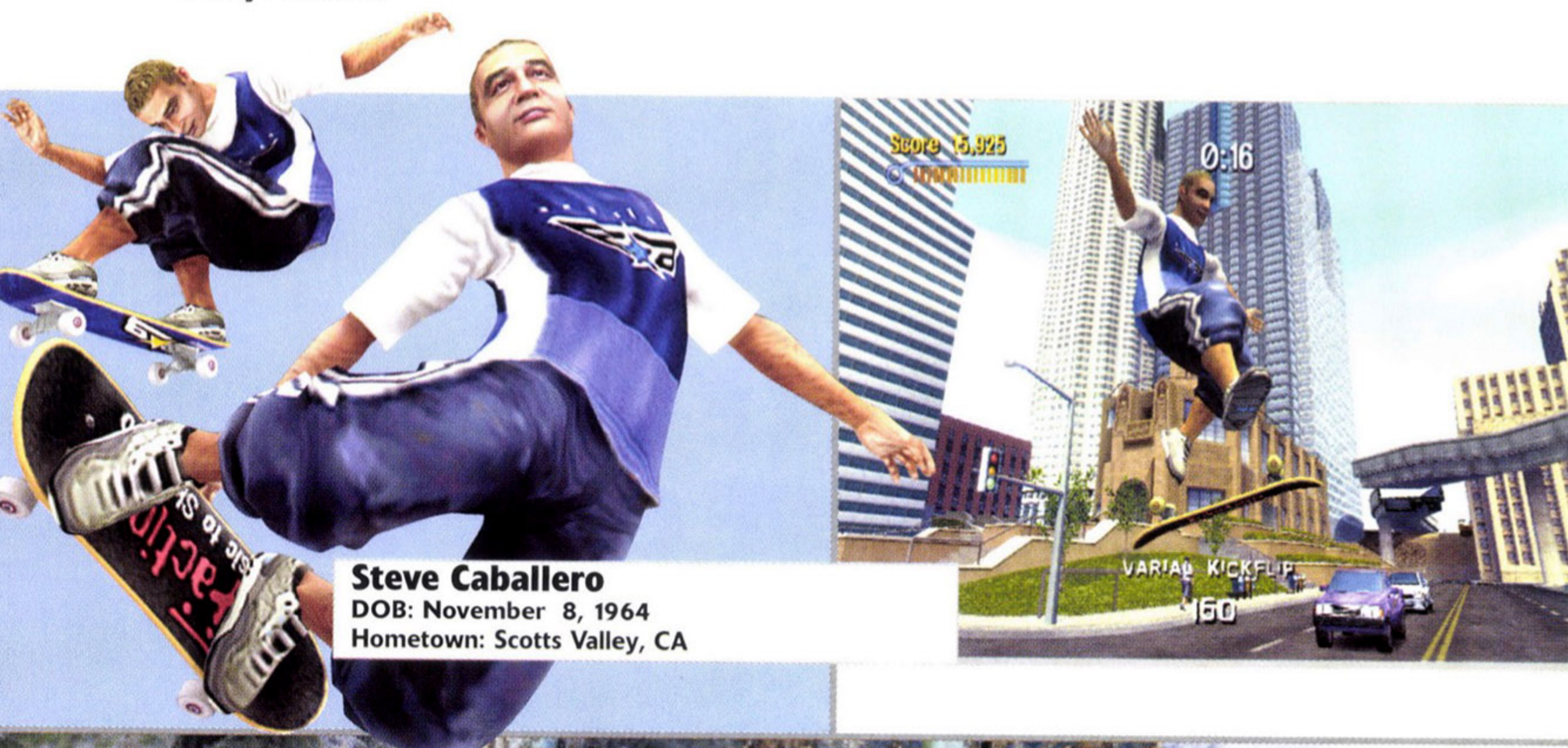
Tony, Tony, Tony. He's been a famous skater for a long time, but you could argue that he really came into his own *after* the videogame. Tony's biggest achievement is up for debate, and he's won tons of contests, medals, and accolades, but none match the awesome spectacle of his incredible, legendary, unrepeatable 900.

The event took place on a cool San Francisco summer day during the "Best Trick" contest at the ESPN X Games in 1999. The event was supposed to be a multi-competitor, time-limited event, but when the crowd and other skaters saw Tony was getting into a zone, they simply backed off and cheered as he attempted the mythical 900 degree rotation 10 times. On the eleventh attempt, the momentum and cheering of the crowd reached its zenith, and so did Tony's skill. He turned two and a half times in the air, high above the half pipe. Landed, trailed a hand, and skated clean into history.

"This is the best day of my life, I swear to God," Hawk said after the feat. "I couldn't have done it without you [fans]. This is it. This is what it all comes down to. I feel like everything [in my career] has led up to now. That's it for me, I swear. What else is there? The 900 was my goal."

# Cover Story

Tony Hawk 3



**Steve Caballero**  
 DOB: November 8, 1964  
 Hometown: Scotts Valley, CA



■ The level of detail is now almost absurd, including accurately texture-mapped treads on the soles of skaters' shoes.

■ The feeling of "place" is much better this time around, thanks in part to great use of light and shadow.

■ The Xbox-exclusive Oil Rig level [right] is not only pretty, but one of the more complex grinds.



complete as many objectives and points on a level as possible. This time around, however, there are more secrets (yes, including "hidden" combos) to uncover and some new tweaks to the control scheme.

The addition of a balance meter is the most obvious new tweak, and will improve your grinds and plants, but a more subtle and important twist is the "revert." This seemingly innocuous little 180 spin is done on a ramp after a vert or lip-based trick. Instead of ending the combo there, performing a revert lets

## WHOOPS, APOCALYPSE!

Neversoft's rise to fame and fortune has not been without some controversy. The company, founded in June of 1994, is now part of the massive Activision empire, purchased after the massive success of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* on PlayStation. The game's importance to Activision cannot be understated – the company even has a boardroom named after the skating money machine.

But it wasn't always skating perfection. Neversoft's first product to market was the lovely but basically unoriginal *Skeleton Warriors* for Sega Saturn. Its beautifully animated pseudo-3D graphics were its main claim to fame. Its mix of scrolling platform and hack-'em-up action was fun but uninspired and did little to hint at what the company was headed toward.

In 1997, the company got the slightly more glamorous task of porting Shiny's *MDK* to PlayStation. The innovative PC title had been a smash hit, and Neversoft was able to re-create the experience quickly on the Sony system. Things were looking up, right? Well, there was a snag. Bruce Willis.

The *Die Hard* star had been signed up to appear as the hero in a game called *Apocalypse*. In a series of development twists and turns, he ended up becoming your "virtual partner" in the game, emasculating what appeal the fully motion-captured Willis might have had. Bruce, smarter than the average star, picked up a chunk of Activision stock as part of the deal, and reputedly hobbled the company's carefully planned return to profit. Rumors that his agents had to approve every single graphic image in the game are sadly true.

If you want to know how Neversoft feels about the whole thing, then head to the mall level in the original *Tony Hawk*. In a dusty room above the escalator lies a ton of unsold boxes of *Apocalypse*. The moral of the tale? *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* actually uses the *Apocalypse* graphics engine.

you continue into a manual, making the number of points available from ramps much, much greater. That's especially useful when the clock's counting down and there's nowhere to grind.

Multiplayer games are cool, and you have the option to switch the two-player split screen from horizontal to vertical, which sounds minor, but in a game of Slap! it's imperative that you choose the letterbox look. This lets you see where an oncoming opponent is before he or she gets a chance to "Smack" you.



**Kareem Campbell**  
DOB: November 14, 1971  
Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

■ The balance meter is a grueling test of skill for anyone, but even the slickest player will have to pay cash money to get his balance close to perfect.

Score 23,254



1:27



SWITCH

## SKATER GEAR SOLID

Hey, if you're familiar with the second level of *Metal Gear Solid 2*, then you'll be perfectly at home in the Xbox-exclusive Oil Rig level of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3*. Set on a VAST oil rig off the southern coast of California, this level is one of the most layered, multi-tiered, and complex sets ever to grace the series. And since an oil rig is basically made of rails... well, you can imagine.

The level also wins the award for scariest intro, where you plummet from a massive ramp high above the rig – and it should be noted you have to jump off correctly to grind a level goal from here. But you have to see the water effects on this level – the guys at Neversoft "cheated" a little to make the effect, but plunging into the briny deep has never been quite as exciting.

Make no mistake, this isn't some tagged-on, ill-conceived extra, it's a classic *Tony Hawk* level, up there with Los Angeles and Schoolyard 1.



ROWLEY DARKSLI

700

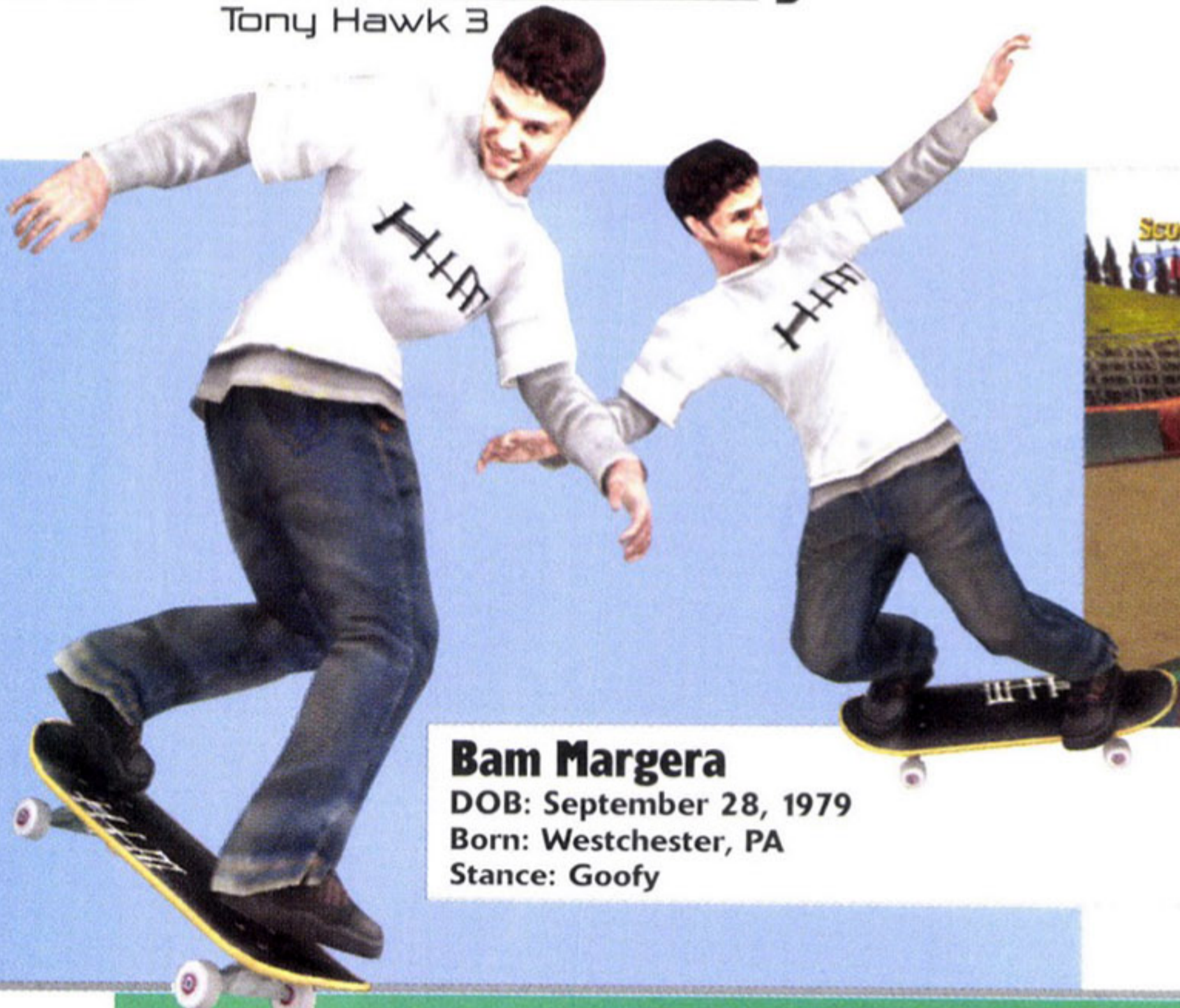
## WHITHER NOW, X?

If you're reading this and wondering what the deal with *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x* is, then you should read the review in our first issue. We loved it. We pointed out that it was the most complete, most detailed, and most compelling *Tony Hawk* experience to date, and given that we haven't reviewed 3 yet, that's still basically true.

The game has every level and character from *Tonys One* and *Two*, including the secret stuff, as well as five all-new levels, each more brilliantly designed than the last. Add to that high-res textures, volumetric grass, and the ability to select your own soundtrack, and *Tony Hawk 2x* should be on your must-have list anyway.

# Cover Story

Tony Hawk 3



## Bam Margera

DOB: September 28, 1979

Born: Westchester, PA

Stance: Goofy



Although "adventure" would be something of an exaggeration, it's fair to say that the task-based elements of *Tony Hawk* have been substantially improved and expanded. For instance, in the LA level, you have to first cause an earthquake (which, as we know, is done by grinding rails) and then leap onto the collapsed freeway. Why? So that you can dislodge a precariously balanced car, dumping it in front of a police chase, stopping the bad guy and saving the day. Success in each of these little tasks is greeted with a little game

## FORM VERSUS FUNCTION

Graphically, *Tony Hawk* has always been a weird symbiote. Without that slicker-than-cataarrh-sliding-down-a-greasy-bobsleigh-run game engine, the *Tony* experience just wouldn't be the same. Again, the guys at Neversoft gave us some insight to how graphics on the Xbox version work.

**Us:** These textures don't look the same as the PlayStation2 and GameCube versions of *Tony Hawk* – what did you guys do to enhance them?

**Neversoft:** We reworked a major portion of the game's textures for the Xbox – mainly res-ing them up, adding small details (scratches, dirt, etc.), and in some cases making new textures from scratch. The blending on Xbox is much nicer – the particles systems look smoother and more natural – and it's all held together by the Xbox's full-screen anti-aliasing. I think all of those things work together to give a much smoother, more detailed look to the game.

**Us:** Textures are such an important part of a game's "look." Where do you guys actually source the textures, and how are they then implemented into gameplay?

**Neversoft:** Our artists do a ton of research, and shoot a ton of reference photos. We have some of the best artists in the industry, and they take pride in never relying on stock or prefab textures. Everything in the game probably started from a photo or reference material, and then was

painted and tweaked and reworked to add layers and "depth" to the image. Lighting is an equally important part of the texture's look – and our artists hand-light nearly every vertex in the game – cutting in shadows, adding hand made light maps – whatever helps give the level a sharp look, and makes all the edges readable and skateable.

**Us:** What kind of relationship do you, the art department, have with level designers?

**Neversoft:** It's a sickeningly close relationship... symbiotic, in some ways. Since everything in the game is skateable, a simple art change – like adding a new sign or a tree – could potentially destroy complex lines the designer has built into the level. So the two camps – art and design – need to have absolute and perfect communication with one another. At the same time, an art guy might think of a way to make a building or element look better by adding geometry, which might lead to a new line the designer hadn't thought of, and then we go and put that in the game. So it works both ways. We're lucky to have some of the

most creative design/art talent in the industry.

**Us:** What's changed regarding skeletal animation and character design between this and *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*?

**Neversoft:** *THPS2* was done on an old, first-generation engine, that was about four years old by the time *THPS2* was released. We were able to scrap it and start from scratch with *THPS3*, so we have much more complex skeletons (with toes and hand bones), and animation blending scheme that can take into account three different simultaneous motions and blend them together... and a more complex physics and scripting system to bring the tricks to life. Our goal is to keep pushing towards certain verisimilitude in the animation system until you can't tell the digital skaters from their real-life counterparts. We learn a bit more with each iteration of the game.

**Us:** So, in *TH2x*, you gave us volumetric grass, bump-mapping, and some nifty pixel-shader effects. What Xbox-specific features can we expect to see in *Tony Hawk 3*?

**Neversoft:** It's a secret.



■ Vomit-inducing vertigo takes hold as you pull a sweet combo thousands of feet above the ocean.

## TONY ONLINE

In spite of the fact that *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* for Xbox does NOT feature online play, it should still be possible to play against heroic skaters in distant lands thanks to the Gamespy software currently doing the rounds. We haven't been able to test this for ourselves, since we don't have anything like a 100% complete *TH3* build, but since they use the same software for system link games here as in *TH2x*, it stands to reason that *TH3* will work in an identical fashion. And Neversoft agrees with this assertion.

The Gamespy software works on most PCs with a router. You install some Windows software that "fools" your Xbox into thinking that a mass of Internet players is actually on the same LAN as your console. There are some issues with lag and complexity that you won't find in the real Xbox network rolling out later this year, but in the interim, it's a fun little project.

The software currently works very well with *Halo*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x*, and others. To find out more about what you'll need (a router or LAN hub, for one thing!) then go to [www.gamespy.com](http://www.gamespy.com) to check out the details or turn to page 26 for our own description of how we got it working.

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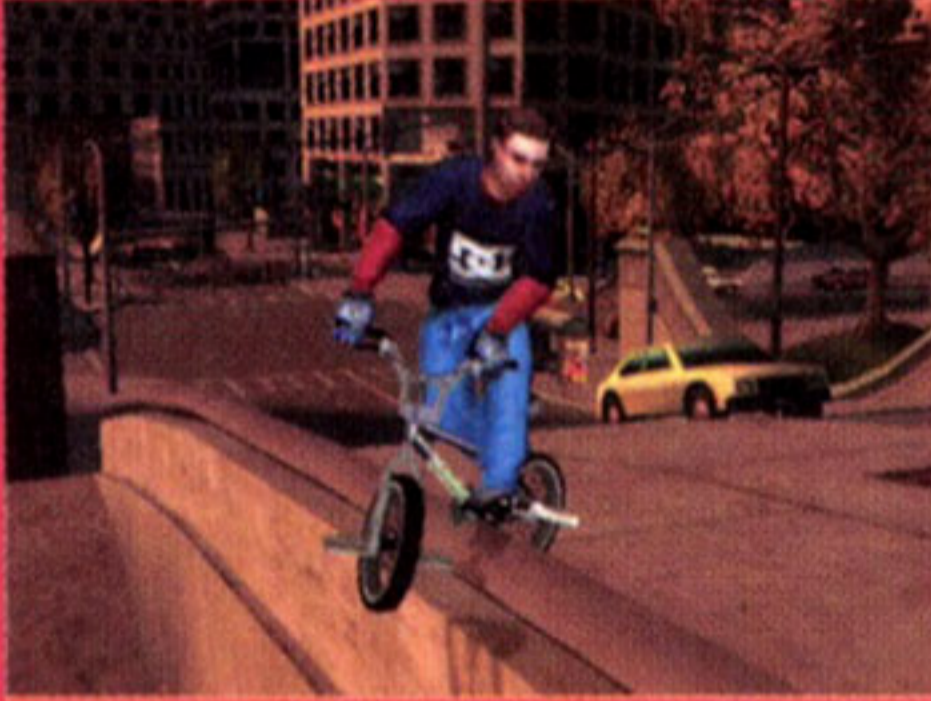
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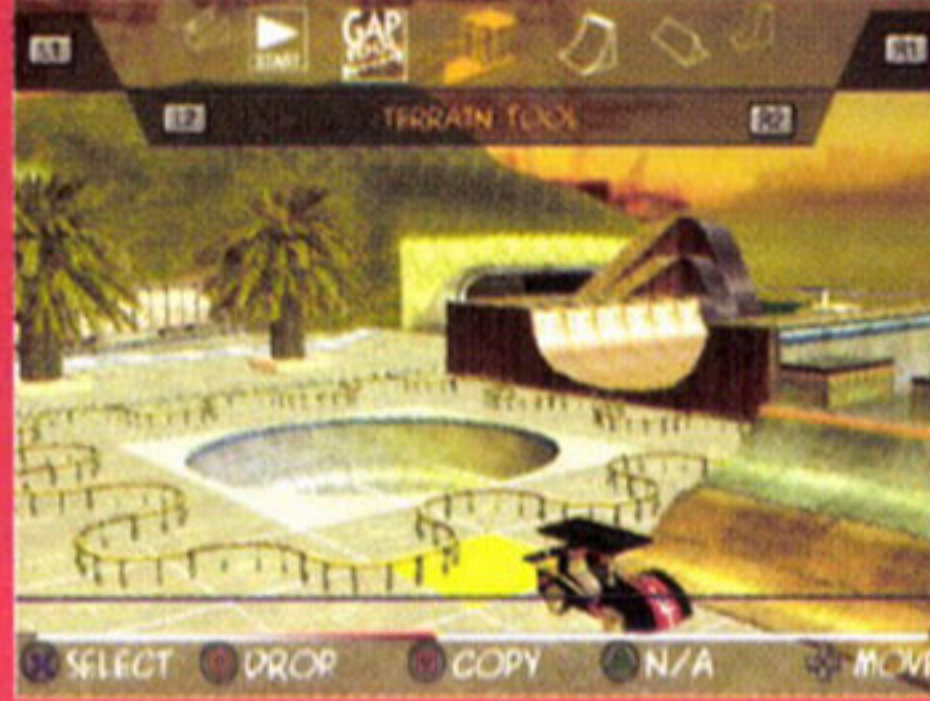
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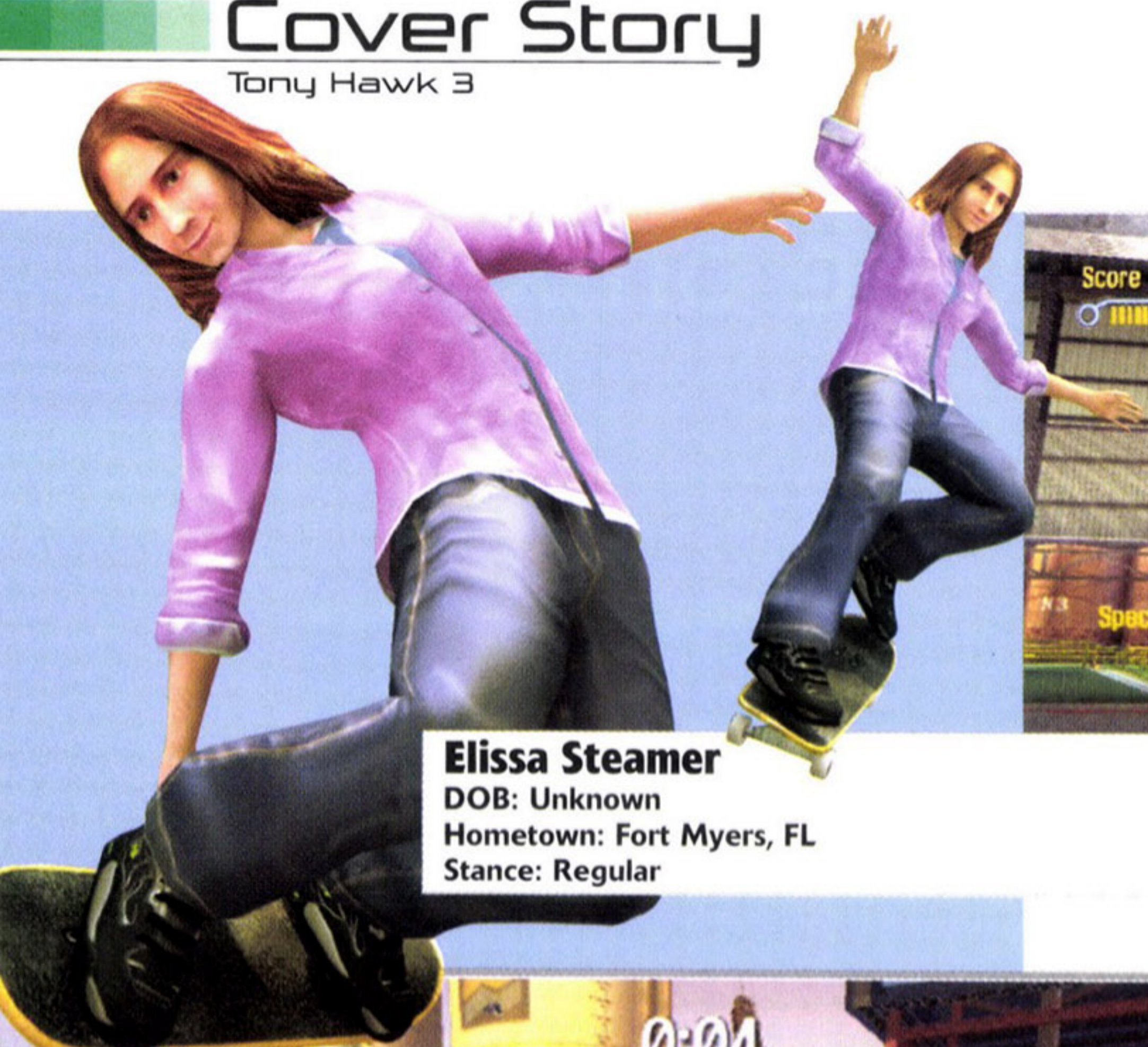
PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE



# Cover Story

Tony Hawk 3



**Elissa Steamer**  
 DOB: Unknown  
 Hometown: Fort Myers, FL  
 Stance: Regular



engine cutscene, which makes it very clear what you just did – even if it was an accident.

The levels themselves are more complex architecturally and seemingly better-designed. Some, like Los Angeles, are sprawling in scope and densely packed with skateable areas, secrets and goodies, while others, like Canada, are more focused and intense. That means there are lots of seemingly innocuous objects that actually let you rack up massive points – and many levels have huge, unlockable hidden areas.



■ You can leap from pipe to pipe to railing, creating huge combos, especially when you include “valve unlockings.”

## LA is sprawling in scope and densely packed with skateable areas, secrets, and goodies.

### DESIGN MATTERS

It's a masterpiece of game design, no doubt and in order to speed our retirement, we asked Scott Pease (Cheesy Peasey), the game's producer, to reveal all the secrets of the gameplay and system design. Now all we have to do is learn how to program...

**Us:** Now that the gap between PS2 and Xbox Tonys is closing, can we expect to see simultaneous releases in future?  
**Him:** It's too early to tell for next year... But yes, we are definitely working towards this goal.

**Us:** The Tony franchise has been and is defined by quality games, but are you worried that taking it to 4 or even 5 might dilute the series, or do you see it more like a Madden-style incremental improvement?  
**Him:** We're not really worried – there are so many new things left to do with the Hawk franchise, and we always change things up. We're not interested in doing the same game over and over. For example, last year we just barely dipped our toes in the great big online pool. That whole side of the game – playing online with other people – can be expanded for years to come, and we've got a ton of ideas. As long as the game is still interesting to us, we'll probably keep making them.

**Us:** Can we use our own soundtracks in Xbox TH3?  
**Him:** You sure can.  
**Us:** Will sound effects support Dolby 5:1?  
**Him:** We output a Dolby 5:1 stream, and the in-game sound effects make use of standard surround sound effects, when played positionally. The Doppler effect on the cars, for example, will move across all of the speakers in your home theater set-up.

**Us:** Will you support HDTV modes?  
**Him:** Not in this version. We're looking into it for future versions of the game.

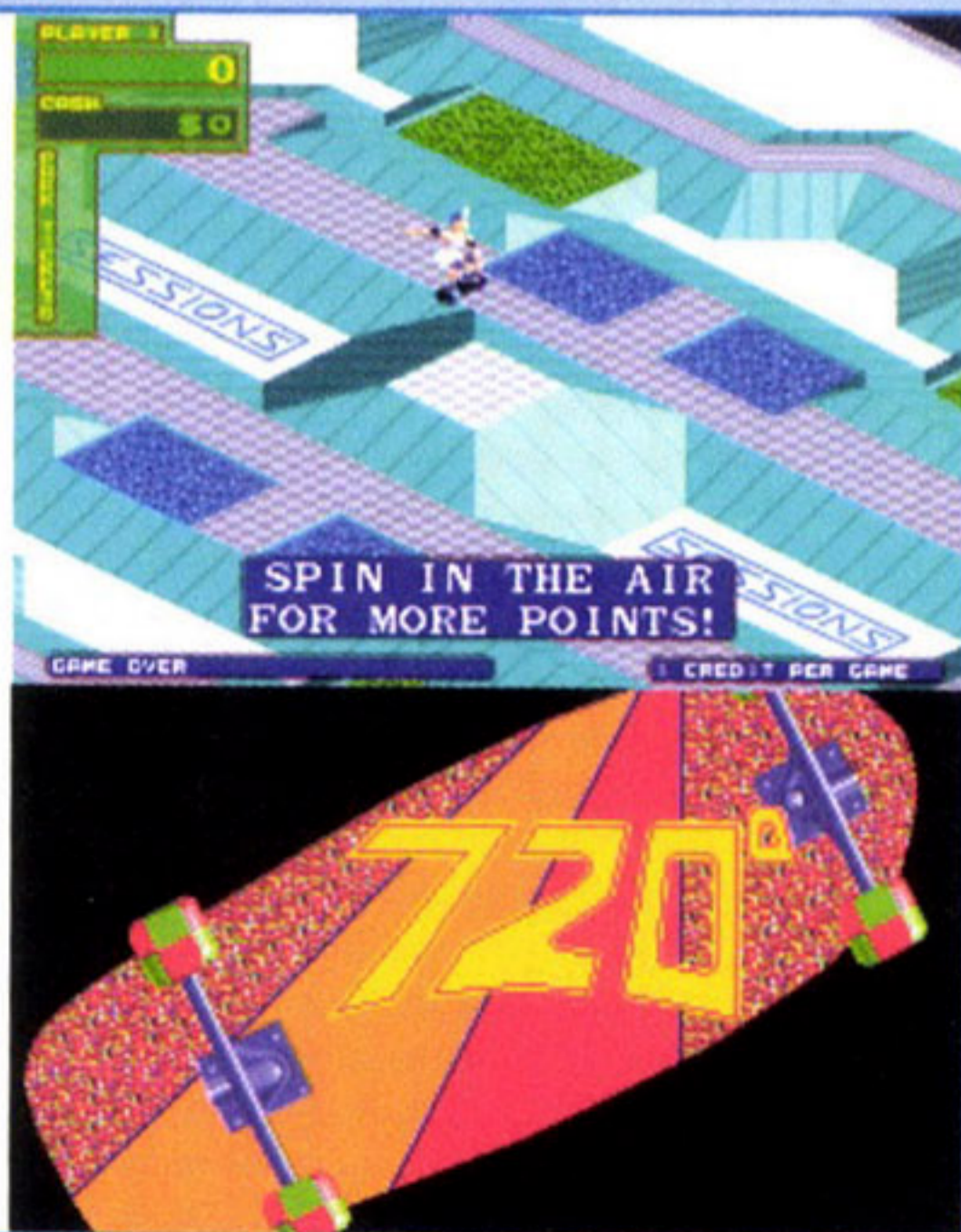
**Us:** Will Online or Network play modes be supported?  
**Him:** We have four-player System Link in the game. We understand that there are some other “solutions” out there for playing System Link games over the Internet. We haven't tried this with THPS3, but in terms of bandwidth, THPS3 has been built from the ground up for online play on other

platforms, so it should be a good experience. There are also some new games (Slap! and King of the Hill) which were designed for four players.  
**Us:** Why did Neversoft take on the Xbox conversion this time, and how did the team enjoy that experience?  
**Him:** We've enjoyed having this version under our own roof. The conversion goes much smoother and faster, and we can ensure that the gameplay and player control is identical to the other versions. Our artists also work at a very high native resolution for textures, but on other platforms they often have to reduce those textures in order to meet the limitations of the platform. On Xbox, we were able to go back and res everything back up – the way it should have been from the start. It's going to be hard to go back and work on other platforms, but we're going to use the knowledge that we learned making THPS3 for Xbox to make us a better developer overall.

### TONY'S GRANDPAPPY

Way back in the olden days, back when Neversoft Towers in Calabasas was all fields and windmills, a little company by the name of Atari had a game not entirely unlike Tony Hawk. It was called 720, which gives you a clue about the state of actual skateboarding in those days. Like Tony, it used a 3D perspective (albeit an isometric one) and a unique control scheme.

The coin-op had the advantage of an innovative radial rotating joystick that you spun faster to turn faster. It also had (in those days) a stunning guitar soundtrack. The ultimate trick was of course the 720 degree spin, but nowadays little kids can do that in their sleep on a scooter.



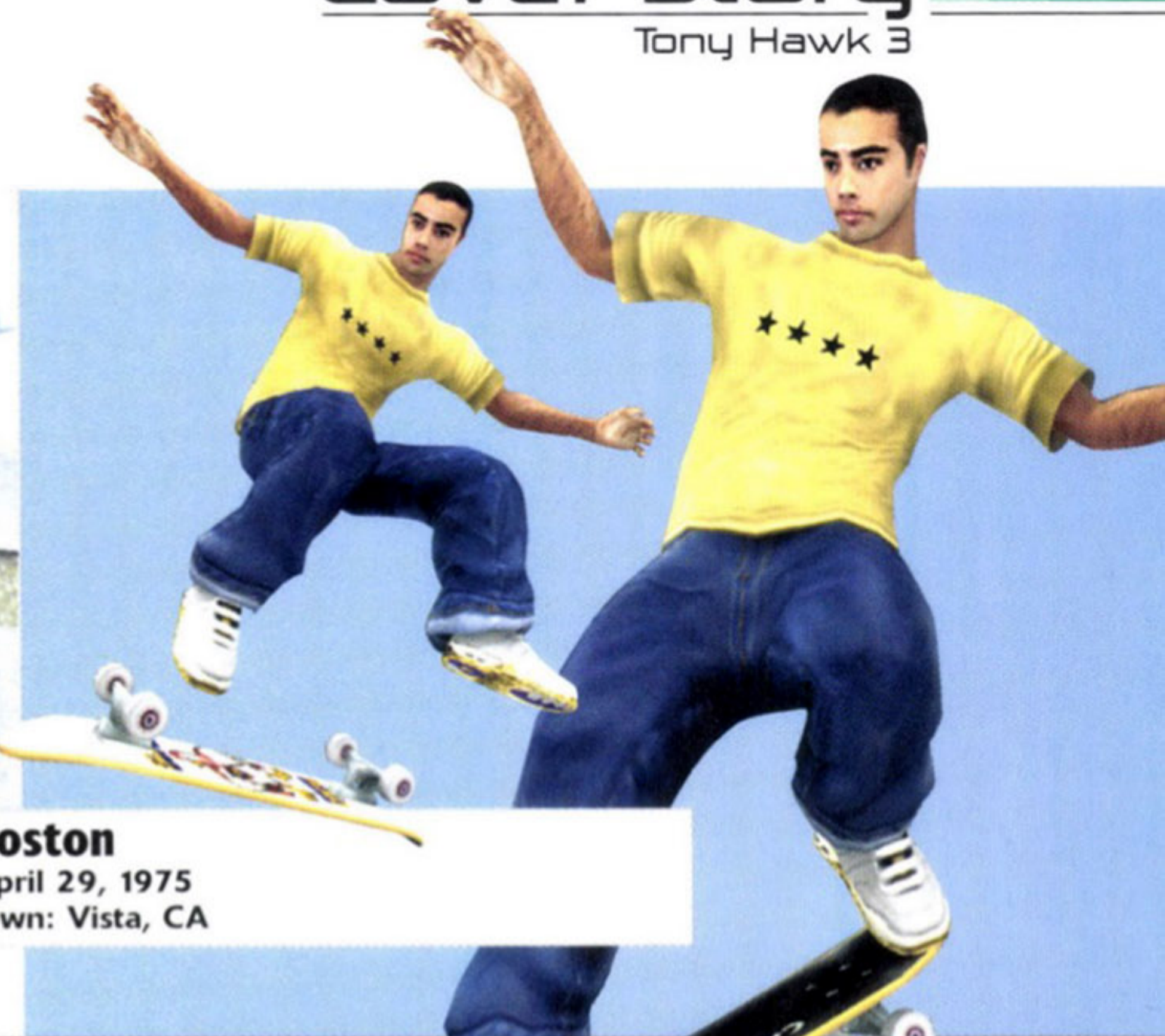
And Tony earns his keep in this game. There's an awesome and surprisingly useful narrated tutorial where Hawk himself guides you through important and subtle aspects of gameplay. Even seasoned *Hawk* players will benefit from checking out the tips. Apart from obvious play pointers, the tutorial very lucidly explains how to do stuff like switching from one grind to another without leaving the rail.

On the PS2 it was game of the year, come this spring it'll be even better on the Xbox.

- Frank O'Connor



**Eric Koston**  
 DOB: April 29, 1975  
 Hometown: Vista, CA



■ What *Tony Hawk* game would be complete without a big, warehouse-based indoor skate park?

Score 3,100



0:27

Special Trick

DOUBLE KICKFLIP

1,800



## FOUR? BUT WE ONLY JUST GOT THREE!

As we were writing this (and this happens a lot) Activision announced (gasp!) that they would be making a *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*. Who knew? But cynical as we can be, that's a sequel we're excited about already, especially if the last two Xbox outings were anything to go by.

What will make *TH4* different? Well, you can expect online features, new textures and effects, and most importantly, a revamped game system. Don't expect the franchise to abandon the gameplay that made it great - it will simply be tweaked, tuned, and embellished. You'll see more tricks, bigger, more interactive levels, and a bunch of surprises. Apart from *Gradius* and *Street Fighter*, *Tony Hawk* is the only sequel franchise that has progressively and noticeably gotten better every time. Even *Mario* had a couple of stumbling blocks.

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# Warrior



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Violence



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# GAMES OF THE NIGHT

By Jeff Lundrigan

Here are three games for Xbox that you can really sink your teeth into (or is it the other way around?)

Who wants to live forever? Well, if myth and fiction are to be believed, plenty of folks. And while they have to stay in a box during the day and suck blood, well, they also get some cool powers and usually look good in leather. That's right, we're talking 'bout vampires.

Over the next year, the Xbox will be home to a slew of undead critters of various stripes. In one

case, this means you have to put them down hard, Slayer style. In another, you get to feed off random victims from clear across the room. In the last, well, let's just say you're pretty much just going to have to hang on for the ride.

So, wait for the sun to set, sprinkle around a little native soil – or some garlic powder – and always remember, the blood is the life...

# Buffy the Vampire Slayer

**Single White Female seeking devilish sorts for impaling and long walks on beach**

Publisher: EA Games/Fox Interactive ■ Developer: The Collective ■ Release: Spring 2002

▶ It's not easy being the Slayer. Not only do you have to deal with vampires, demons, and who knows what other evil scum that come rising out of the Hellmouth, but you've got all this homework, no end of boyfriend troubles, and it's really tough finding stylish yet affordable clothes that can also take a beating. On the other hand, you also get to kick a lot of ass, which no doubt helps work off a lot of everyday frustrations.

With its blend of hip humor and slam-bang action, there's probably no other TV show that'd make a better game than *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. In fact, it's an idea that's been kicking around for a very long time – developer The Collective originally began working on *BtVS* for the PlayStation, then the Dreamcast, and (luckily for us) has finally settled on the Xbox as its platform of choice. This long development history has its up side and its down side: the good news is that the game is going to look and play pretty amazing; the bad news is that the TV show it's based on has long passed it by in terms of changes to the show and characters. Still, while some diehard ▶

**“Oh, I do look fat in this, you say? Well what do you think now that all your freakishly long teeth are on the ground?”**

# Feature

Games of the Night



■ You can unleash a combo of kicks and punches to soften up the already frangible vampires for the stake.



■ Most of the action is fighting, but there's a huge element of exploration and adventure.

Buffy fans might be a little disappointed the game is set firmly during an unspecified time between the show's third and fourth seasons (see sidebar), others will doubtless welcome a chance to lock horns with classic *Buffy* villains like The Master.

Countless eons ago, a race of evil gods known as the Old Ones (have there ever been Old Ones who weren't evil?) were cast into Hell, where they've been stewing ever since. However, thanks to the activity around the Hellmouth in good old Sunnydale, California, they see a chance to create a bridge between Hell and Earth, and once again reign over us hapless mortals. To this end, they send an army of demons into this dimension, enlisting the aid of the 600-year-old vampire, The Master, to usher in their rule. Yup, it's yet another apocalypse coming down the pipes, and it's up to Buffy – and the rest of the Scooby gang – to somehow stop it.

The game's emphasis is mostly on action, with a nice selection of puzzles thrown in for good measure. The developers at The Collective, however, are quick to insist that *BtVS* is not just another mindless, *Final Fight*-style (or worse, *The Bouncer*-style) beat-'em-up. Instead, they're aiming for a control scheme and gameplay that's

much closer to a full-on fighting game, if one set in a wide-open, 360-degree environment, often involving multiple opponents. Buffy can call on an arsenal of over 60 different moves, including weapon-based techniques and a range of special abilities called "Slayer Powers," which include super speed, gymnastic moves, a super jump, and others, which improve with experience.

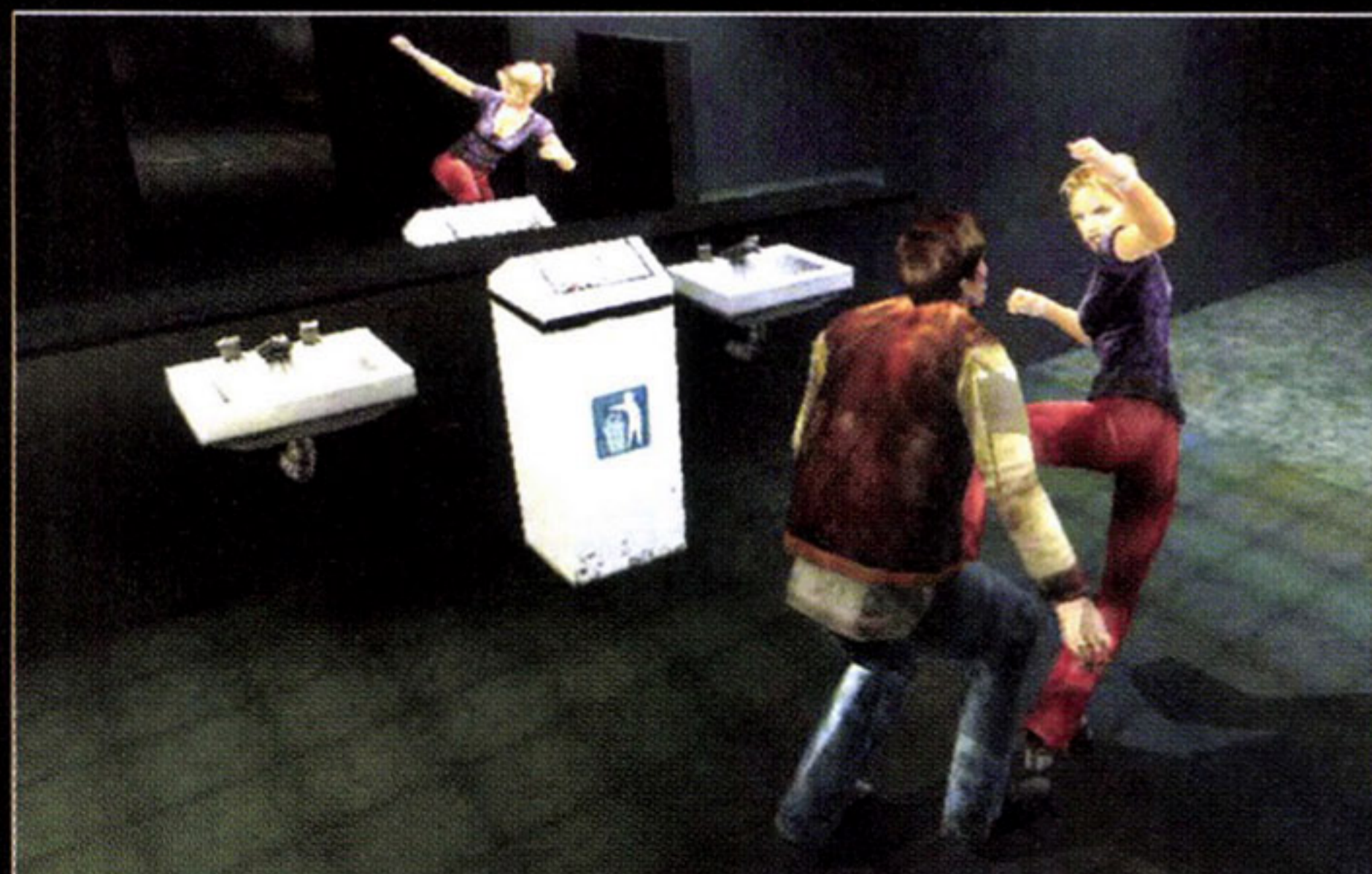
And she's going to need every single power and technique she can muster. A great deal of

work has gone into the enemies' AI – much like those found in the TV show, these Big Bads watch and learn. Using the same combat techniques over and over quickly results in the bad guys figuring out the routine, then learning to counter it. This will force players to constantly switch up their attacks, try new combinations, and be very smart about how they overcome their opponents.

Many of the environmental puzzles will also require brains as well as brawn. Although some are the usual "find the switch, open the door" type things, others involve creative solutions such as setting off fire sprinklers to short out an electronic lock. Other characters from the show will not be playable, but you can count on Giles, Angel, Willow, Cordelia, and Xander to show up from time to time with handy advice. All the actors from the show – with the notable, disappointing exception of Sarah Michelle Gellar herself – have lent their actual voices to the proceedings, so the interaction should be fairly authentic.

Likewise, the environments themselves should be plainly familiar to fans of the show. Sunnydale High School, its library, The Bronze nightclub, Sunnydale's infamously too-large cemetery, and other locations have been faithfully re-created. Numerous nifty graphics effects, from morphing creatures to dynamic fog, also perk things up. Even at this late date, however, there's no clear word on what Xbox-specific enhancements have been added, but it's worth pointing out there was also a PC version in the works until about six months ago, and those assets seem to be the ones used here. As a result the polygon count is high, and the all the textures appear very large, sharp, and full of detail.

Sometimes a long development cycle can be a sign of trouble (*Daikatana*, anyone?), but other times it just gives a developer all the time they need to get things just right (*Halo*, anyone?). It would be premature to say *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* falls into the second group, but judging by the ambition being brought to it and the impressive screen shots, it doesn't seem like a bad bet either. Besides, any game with a perky, kick-ass heroine slaying the undead can't be all bad, right?



■ Miss Manners doesn't say much on bathroom etiquette, but this can't be right. This is HOW toilet paper gets stuck to heels.



■ The attention to detail lavished on Buffy's shirt and ponytail is something to behold.

## THE GOOD NEWS AND THE BAD NEWS

Setting *BtVS*, the game, several seasons back from *BtVS*, the current TV show, has its good points and its bad ones:

### Top five good reasons *BtVS* is set in Season 3:

5. No dealing with house payments.
4. Might get to burn down Sunnydale High School (again!).
3. No Dawn.
2. Always wanted to kick around The Master.
1. Cordelia and her amazingly tight blouses.

### Top five bad reasons *BtVS* is set in Season 3:

5. No chance to make Buffy beat up Spike, then sleep with him.
4. That pesky "Cram for the SATs" level.
3. No Dawn.
2. Total lack of frat parties (or does that belong on the "good reasons" list?).
1. No chance to see Willow and Tara "make up."



It's coming.



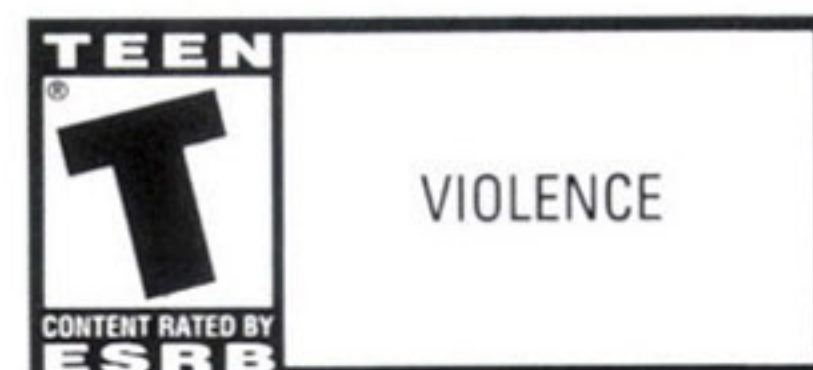
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# Blood Omen 2

## Projectile bloodsucking returns!

Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Crystal Dynamics ■ Release: Spring 2002

Back in 1996, the original *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* was a tightly designed, and at times shockingly bloody, game that remains something of a classic to this day. In the years since, there have been a pair of spin-off titles set in the game's world of Nosgoth, *Soul Reaver 1 & 2*, but it's only now, six years later, that we're finally getting a true sequel.

And it looks like a corker. Developer Crystal Dynamics has completely updated the 2D, top-down graphics of the original to a fully realized 3D world, with all the Gothic trappings you could ask for. Set 400 years after the original, Kain awakens from a 200-year slumber to find that Nosgoth has changed dramatically – but he can't exactly remember how it got that way. As it turns out, Kain had marched his vampire army across Nosgoth, conquering the land, until he reached the city of Meridian. There he was defeated by the powerful Seraphin Lord, who literally had him put to sleep.

When Kain awakens, he finds his army scattered across the land. Some vampires have gone underground, infiltrating Meridian in hopes of thwarting the Seraphin. Others, it seems, have

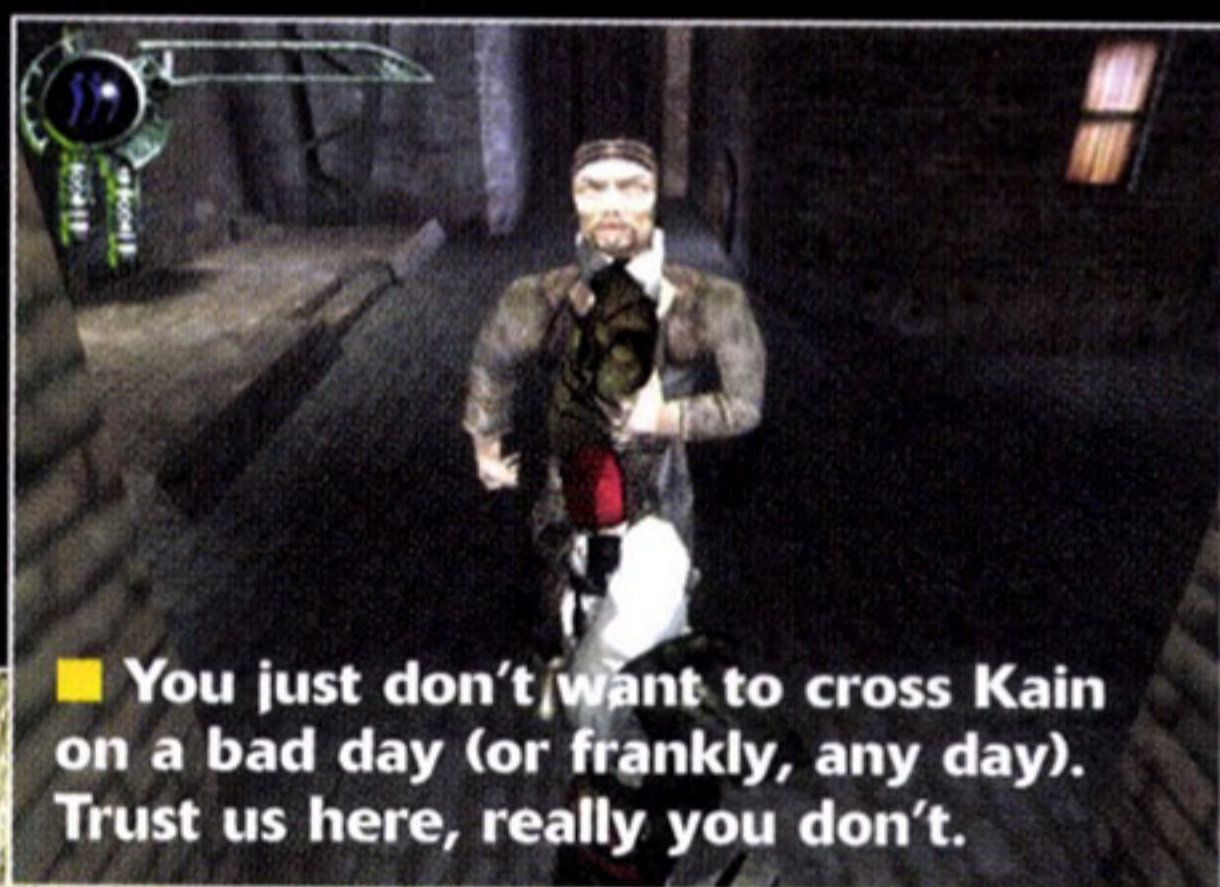
been turned into "hounds" and used to help hunt down their fellow undead. *Blood Omen 2* is Kain's journey to succeed where he once failed, to regain his knowledge and power, defeat the Seraphin Lord, and rebuild his shattered kingdom.

Initially, with much of his powers forgotten and not having gotten any exercise in 200 years, Kain is relatively weak. The game begins with a short tutorial level, guided by female vampire Umah, who appears many times throughout the game with additional lessons. With experience, Kain earns up to seven new Dark Gifts, including massively long jumps, blending into the mists, and the ability to possess non-player characters. Like the original, *Blood Omen 2* is a mix of about 70% action with 30% puzzles, but there is also a new emphasis on more stealthy approaches. In fact, it's possible to silently creep up behind an enemy and quietly perform a number of lethal stealth attacks without raising any fuss.

The combat, however, looks tremendously satisfying. Although attacks and blocking don't require any particularly complicated button/joystick combinations, every character is divided up into five attack "zones," and responds differently depending on where an attack is being aimed. For example, if a character blocks the typical three-button combo of slash right/ slash left/ overhand strike, the blocks themselves follow a corresponding block right/ block left/ block overhead pattern. The result is combat that looks incredibly fluid and dynamic, and does not repeat the same, single, boring block animation over and over again. Kain also has the ability to pick



■ Here's what makes Kain the envy of all the other vampires – 'cause when he's hungry, he's double-dog hungry, y'know?



■ You just don't want to cross Kain on a bad day (or frankly, any day). Trust us here, really you don't.

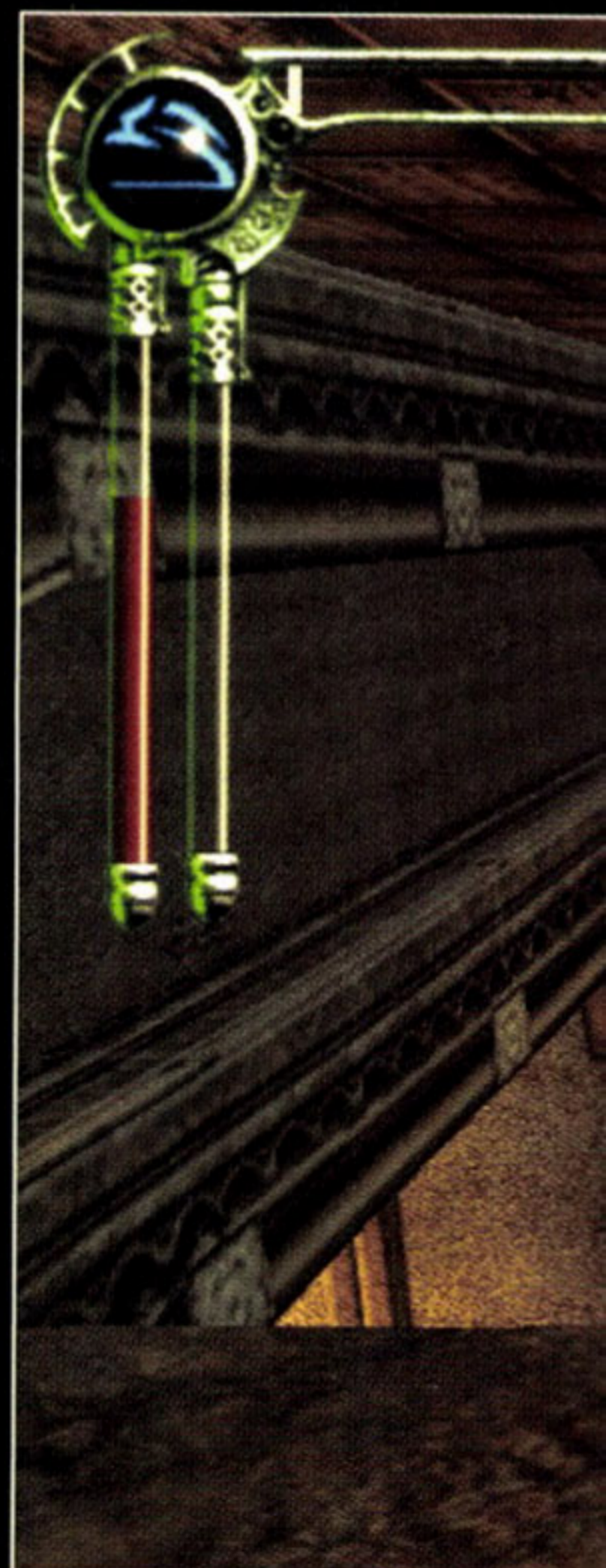


■ Very large, incredibly detailed textures are what set the Xbox version apart from other systems.

up and use weapons from fallen enemies, each of which has different moves and effects associated with it – and edged weapons are great for lopping off heads with a single stroke.

As for the puzzles, the architecture of Meridian is a curious mixture of medieval architecture and magic-based technology. Meridian runs on "Glyph Energy," which is produced and harnessed by the mysterious and secretive Glyphwrights. A good number of the puzzles involve tracing Glyph conduits and figuring out how to use the different mechanical devices around the city. Once again, good use has been made of the Xbox's large texture capacity, and everything looks terrific.

Many of the game's 11 levels are huge, but within a given level there will be no load times at all. Things proceed at a relatively quick pace, with continue points scattered liberally around, but there's plenty of opportunity for exploration, too. NPCs react to your presence, so peasants will flee if you approach them threateningly, and you can try to lure them into an alley if you need a quick snack. Fans of the original will be heartened to know that every attempt has been made to keep Kain as literally bloodthirsty as he was before. Which is very cool indeed. The original *Blood Omen* stood out for its no-holds-barred (or at least, very-few-holds-barred) approach to its dark vampire subject, and this sequel is clearly pulling no punches either.



# BloodRayne

*The only problem is that it isn't more violent...*

Publisher: Majesco ■ Developer: Terminal Reality ■ Release: Fall 2002



■ You can expect a lot of cool graphics effects, like fire and fog.



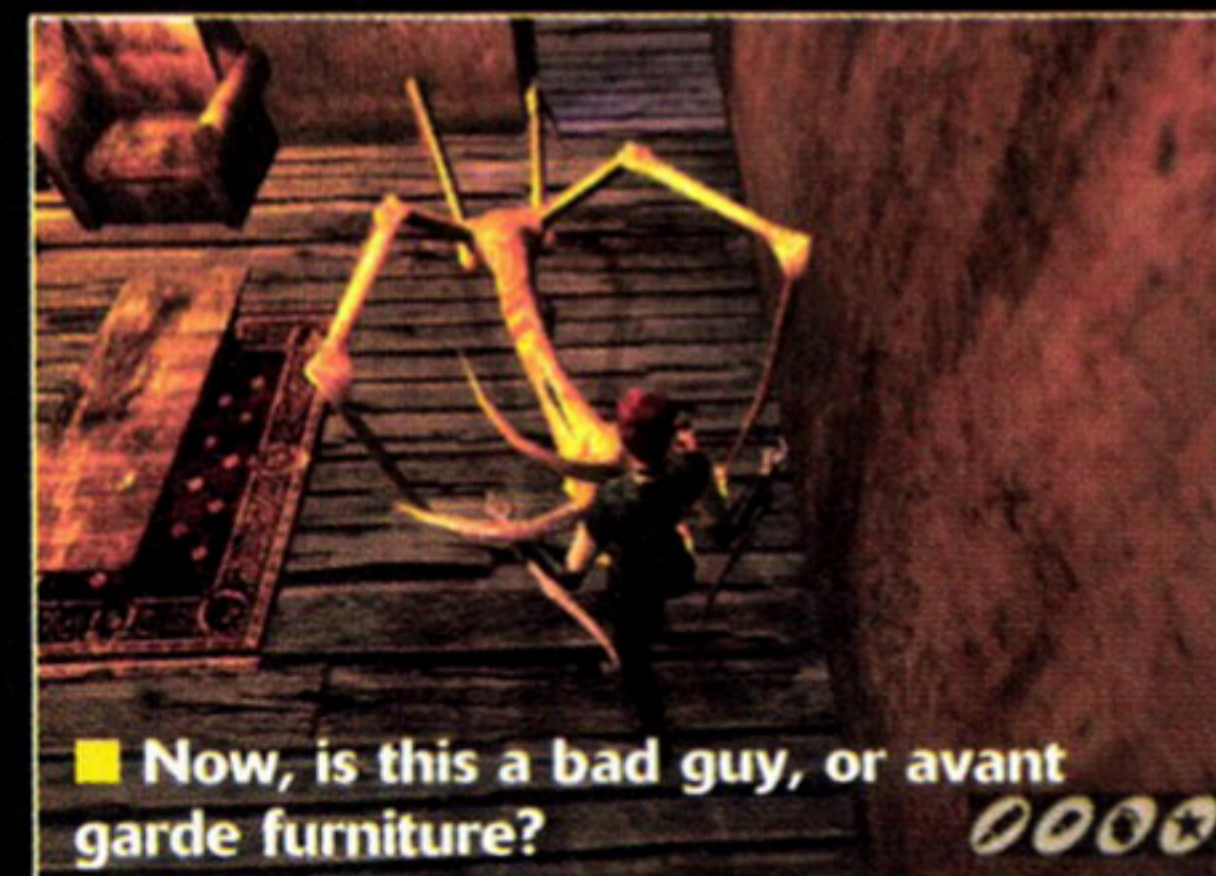
■ Kain's got a bunch of new Dark Gifts, and can jump around like nobody's business.

## Pre-Nazis?

Terminal Reality's David El Meckies and Frederick Jones explain: "It's really less mysterious than everyone is making it out to be. In 1919 Hitler joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). He became chairman in 1921 and it wasn't until after 1930 that this group was referred to as the Nazis. Our game starts in 1927 where BloodRayne has her first encounter with the (at that time) pre-Nazi plan. The whole reason we called them that was to avoid haughty responses like 'There weren't technically Nazis until after 1930.' We've really done a great deal of research to be true to many facts so that when we present all of the fabricated elements they will seem a little more plausible, hopefully keeping the player immersed in the world we're creating. However, we misjudged the public and instead have a lot of people asking what a pre-Nazi is. Since most of the game does take place in the Nazi era, to save everyone the confusion, they are all Nazis."

▶ Ever since the days of the original *Wolfenstein 3D* (heck, even back to *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and before), the mix of Nazis and the supernatural has proven a potent mix. But never have the two elements been blended quite like *this*.

Meet BloodRayne, a human-vampire hybrid developed in the 1920s by the US government specifically to deal with otherworldly threats to democracy – and deal with *extreme* prejudice. It seems that in the mid-'30s, a group of pre-Nazi scientists (see sidebar at left) have uncovered an ancient temple on the coast of Argentina that's home to vast, ancient powers. Hoping to harness these evil forces for the glory of the Third Reich, they've set up a massive research complex to study and control them. Unfortunately, they didn't count on a couple of things: one, there's something even darker and more evil hidden there they can't control nearly as well, if at all; second, agent BloodRayne has been sent to investigate; and if they thought their day couldn't get any worse, they've got another think coming.



■ Now, is this a bad guy, or avant garde furniture?



■ "So we was sitting down to meatloaf, Tuesdays is meatloaf, when in walks this broad..."



■ Although the character art is astonishing, it's the realistic backgrounds that keep you watching.

The emphasis of *BloodRayne's* gameplay is on sheer, unadulterated, over-the-top action. The developers at Terminal Reality are quite consciously gunning for a level of hyper-kinetic frenzy on par with that found in movies like *Blade* and *The Matrix*. BloodRayne herself





■ Shooting left and right means that strafing takes on literally a whole new dimension.

possesses a wide variety of superhumanly fast and agile moves, and a mix of weapons that range from curved blades snapped to each forearm to the ability to wield a Schmiesser submachine gun in each hand. Further, she must consume blood to survive, and drinking enough will trigger her "Bloodlust," pumping her already lethal skills up a notch. Even more blood sends her into BloodRage, which, for all intents and purposes, is going to *eleven* (it's, like, one louder).

And, as in the movies this game is emulating (not to mention another recent "homages" – *ahem* – like *Max Payne*) BloodRayne has the ability to go into Bullet Time, slowing the action for a clear advantage in combat. The developers have also given the player the ability to trigger some purely visual camera effects, such as slow motion pan and zoom during particularly spectacular kills, or tracking any projectile to its target. The enemies' AI enables them to do things like call for reinforcements and set ambushes as well. Overall, assuming it all



■ There is a degree of autotargeting to make joypad control palatable.



■ Gymnastics aren't just for visual flair, they serve an important purpose in gameplay. And dodging is as useful as shooting.

works as intended, the result should be interesting at the very least, and near-sensory-overload at its best.

*BloodRayne* uses Terminal Reality's own home-grown Infernal Engine, a further update/refinement of the company's previous Nocturne Engine (which, in case you were wondering, explains *BloodRayne's* close resemblance, right down to the forearm blades, to *Nocturne's* female-vampire-turned-government-agent Svetlana Lupescu). This cross-platform engine enables a lot of cool graphic effects like water, multiple shadows, cloth and rope simulation, and skinned models, but also enables the game to take advantage of Xbox features like bump-mapping and vertex shading. If nothing else, everything shown about the game so far promises a feast for the eyes.

It is still a bit too early to tell if the gameplay will live up to its promise – there's still a long way to go, and the proof is in the playing, which no one has had a chance to do yet. However, *BloodRayne* sounds like just our kind of game.



■ Only thing scarier than a Nazi is a dead Nazi smoking and wearing a monocle.

## NICE VAMPIRES

Although there have been too many vampire-themed games to name, here are the better ones, in no particular order:



### Blood Omen

Activision; 1996; PlayStation, PC  
With a hearty "Vae Victus!" the vampire anti-hero Kain cuts a bloody swath through the land of Nosgoth, slurping sustenance from hapless mortals as he goes. This is easily one of the better-designed games of the late 2D era.



### Castlevania series

Konami; 1987-2001; NES, Game Boy, Genesis, SNES, PlayStation

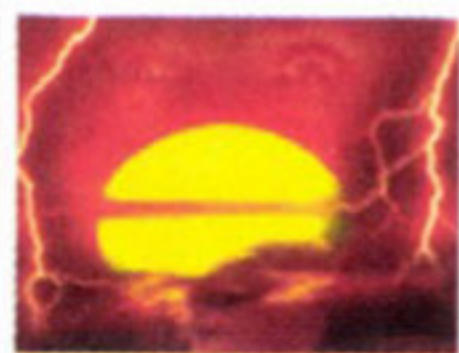
Going way back to 1987 on the 8-bit NES, up through *Chronicles* for PlayStation just last year, Konami has kept various members of the Belmont clan slaying hordes of the undead for years. Sadly, its stab at 3D, *Legacy of Darkness* for N64, was poor.



### Darkstalkers series

Capcom; 1994-1998; Arcade, PlayStation

Okay, so really, there's only one vampire in it, Dmitri – the rest are other "creatures of the night" from various world locales – but these remain some of the best 2D *Street Fighter*-style fighting games Capcom ever produced.



### Dracula Unleashed

Viacom; 1992; PC, Sega CD

Before you're done playing you'll understand why FMV adventure games were such a plague upon the industry. However, the acting is actually pretty good, all but one of the puzzles are pretty easy, and for what it is, it isn't bad.



### Soul Reaver series

Eidos; 1999-2001; PlayStation, Dreamcast, PS2

Crystal Dynamics' spin-off series to *Blood Omen* has had its faults, but you'd be hard-pressed to find a more atmospheric and downright pretty couple of games, no matter what system you're playing them on.



### Vampire: The Masquerade - Redemption

Activision; 2000; PC

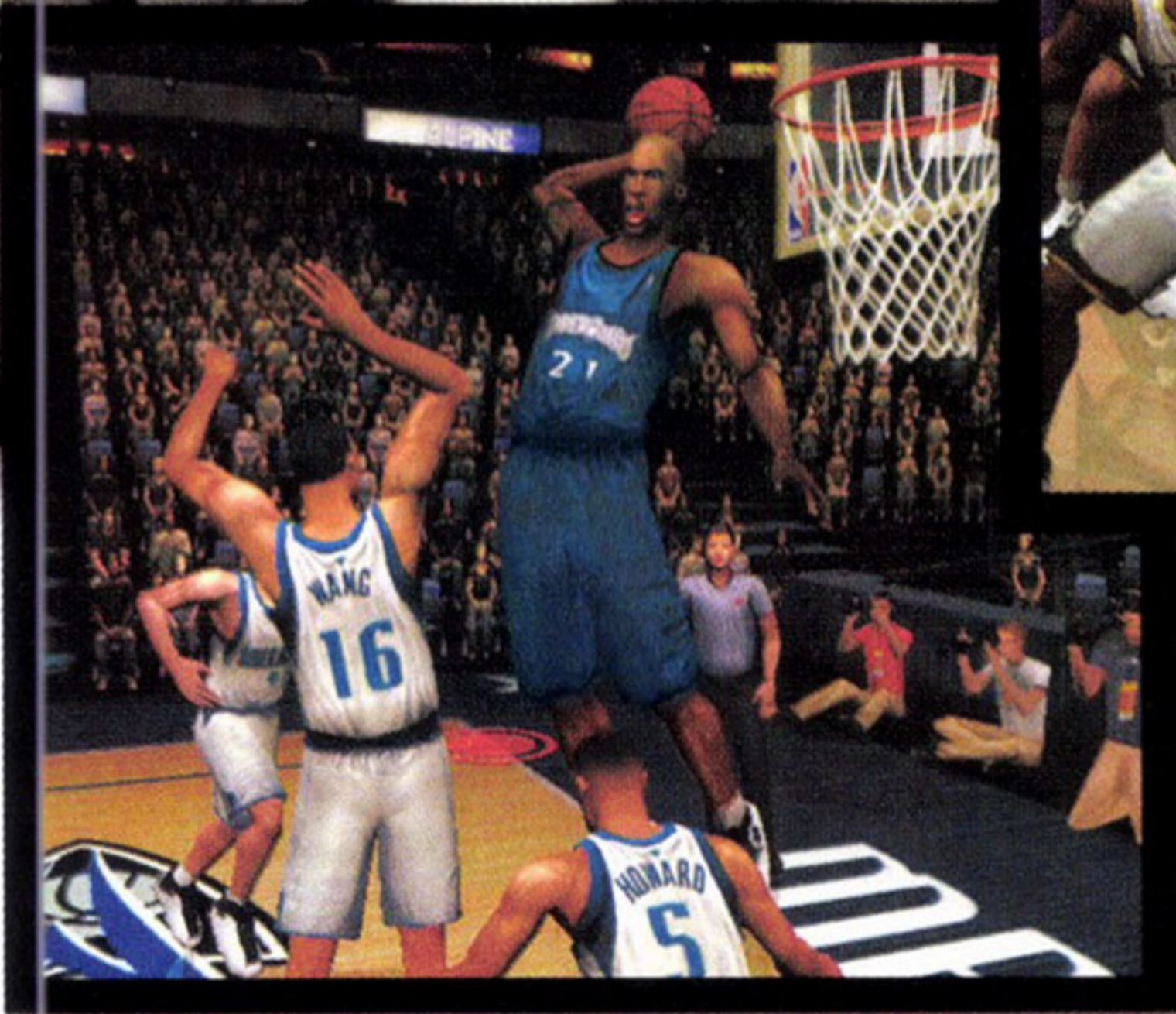
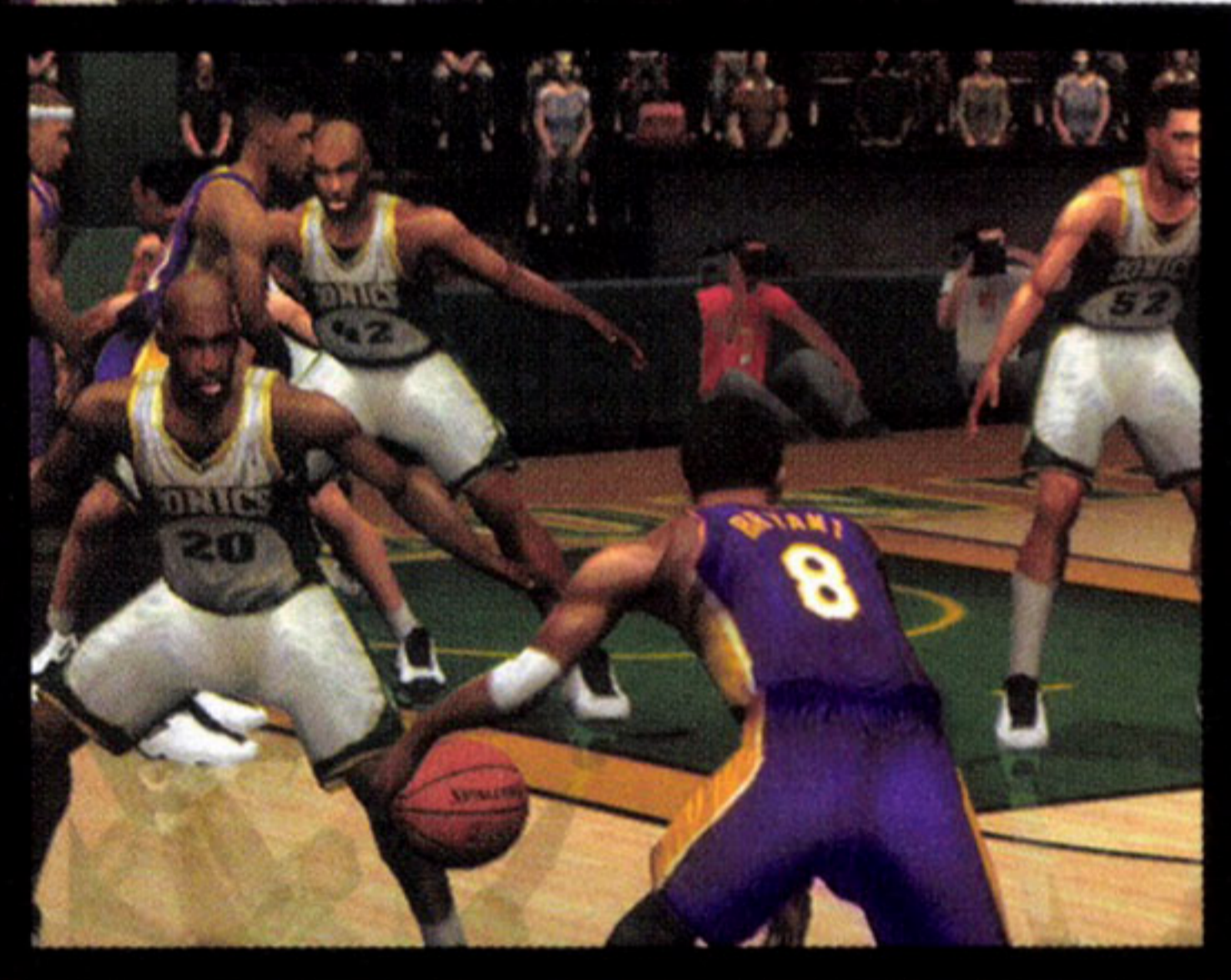
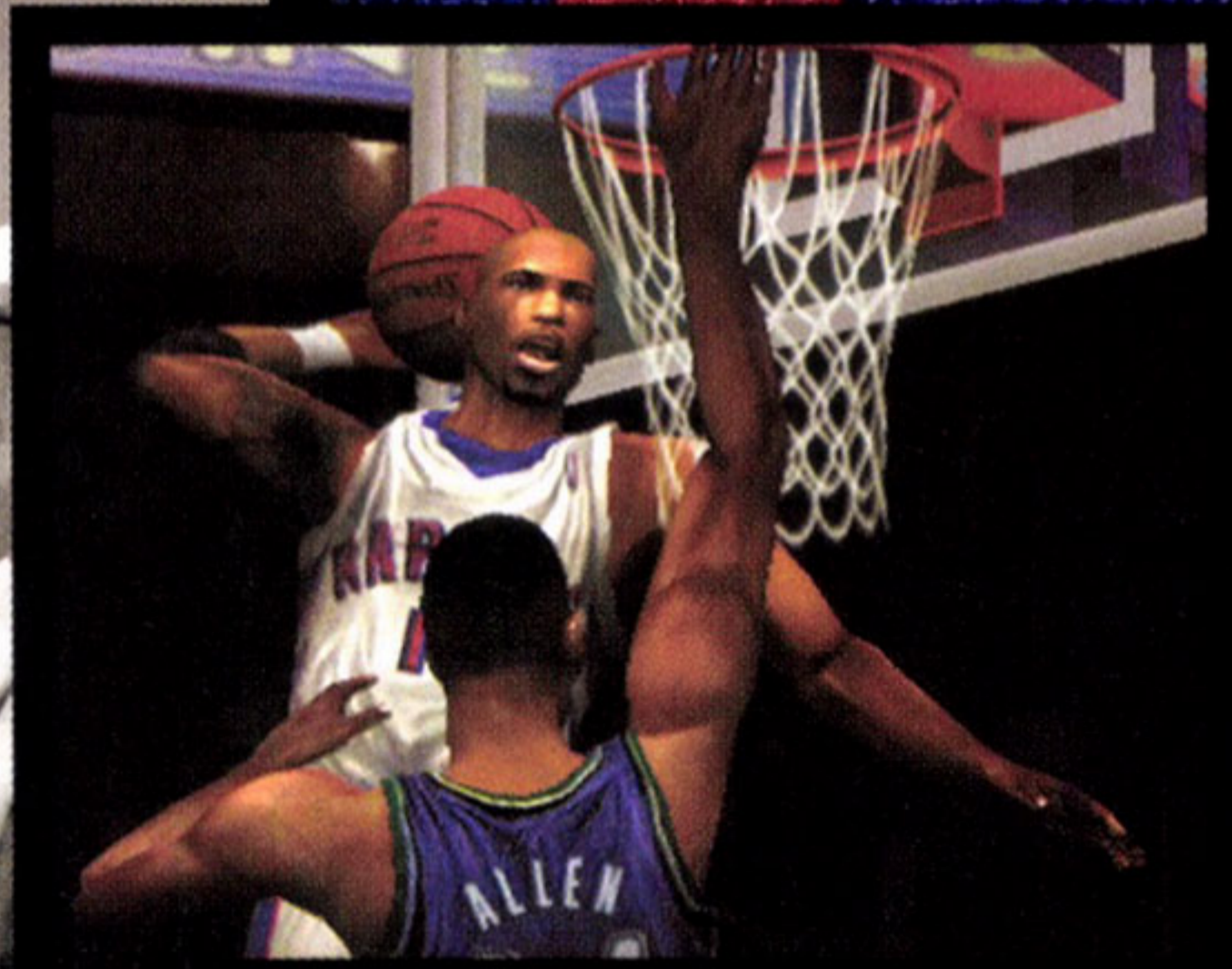
Sure, you have to download the patches before this got to be completely playable, but if you like your RPG/adventure games with riveting storylines, sprawling levels, intricate puzzles, and a ton of leveling-up options, this is amazing.





Oh Vince, I did so want to move to Los Angeles.

Yeah, well bust out the mittens, Buttercup. I just signed for 7 with Toronto.



Your office is a 20,000 seat arena, your salary has a whole lot of zeros, and "Who stole my stapler?" is "Who's picking up Vince on D?" You wanted real, you got real. Build an all-NBA team during the draft. Check your team's actual NBA playbook, and call those plays with real-time coaching. And details? You can count the players' cornrows. Have your secretary take a memo — this rules.

[insidedrive2002.com](http://insidedrive2002.com)  
[nba.com](http://nba.com)



*It's a living.*

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# Previews

Up close and personal with upcoming Xbox games

**Gunvalkyrie**  
takes shooters  
to a different,  
tougher level.

■ You won't be confined to cramped corridors only. You'll be able to take your fierce fighting outside where it belongs.

■ There are a good variety of monsters to destroy throughout *Gunvalkyrie*, but most of them remain well within the assorted bug domain.

**Only on Xbox**



Itchin' to blast aliens Sega-style? The first and only place you'll find *Gunvalkyrie* is on Xbox. Cherish it before it foolishly treks to another system.



# Gunvalkyrie

**Hi, I'm Kelly and I like romantic dinners, fuzzy kittens, and blasting alien scum.**

**E**xcuse us while we get the obligatory story out of the way... *Gunvalkyrie* tells the tale of a brilliant scientist named Dr. Hebble, who is credited with accelerating the technology of a fictional 19<sup>th</sup> century after he stumbles upon an incredibly powerful type of energy. But, as with most games, trouble is brewing. Dr. Hebble has gone missing and in his place are hundreds of vile alien creatures threatening to send man into extinction.

Thankfully, a group of scientists has prepared exactly for this type of situation by creating GUNVALKYRIE, an elite organization formed to protect the new technology and to enforce the laws that prohibit exploiting said technology. And in a climate infested with mecha-monsters, it's GUNVALKYRIE that's charged with exterminating the threat, while uncovering Dr. Hebble's location.

Was he kidnapped? Or has he simply disappeared? Ah, the

mystery at the heart of every action videogame (or at least this one) propels the action and dictates how the adventure of the techie freedom fighters, Kelly and Saburota, plays out.

Now, let's get to the meat of what *Gunvalkyrie* is all about – action, and lots of it. But, more importantly, how you'll manage the action is through a complex set of controls. A third-person shooter with that certain trademark Sega touch, *Gunvalkyrie* works absolutely every single button on the Xbox controller. Both analog sticks perform double – no, triple – duty through the game with the left controlling your character, and the right moving your gunsight around. But, in addition, if you click down on either stick, you'll be able to perform certain moves that are vital to surviving the game's alien landscape. The L-trigger utilizes your Valkyrie suit's energy reserves in order to give you an aerial boost (i.e. jump), while the R-Trigger is used for shooting. The end result feels a little like a cross

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: **Smilebit** PUBLISHER: **Sega** RELEASE DATE: **March**

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Quickly becoming one of the hippest developers in the Sega stables, Smilebit has played a large part in keeping the company's innovative spirit alive with games like *Typing of the Dead* and *Jet Grind Radio* on Dreamcast.



■ The controls in early portions of the game have a very steep learning curve.



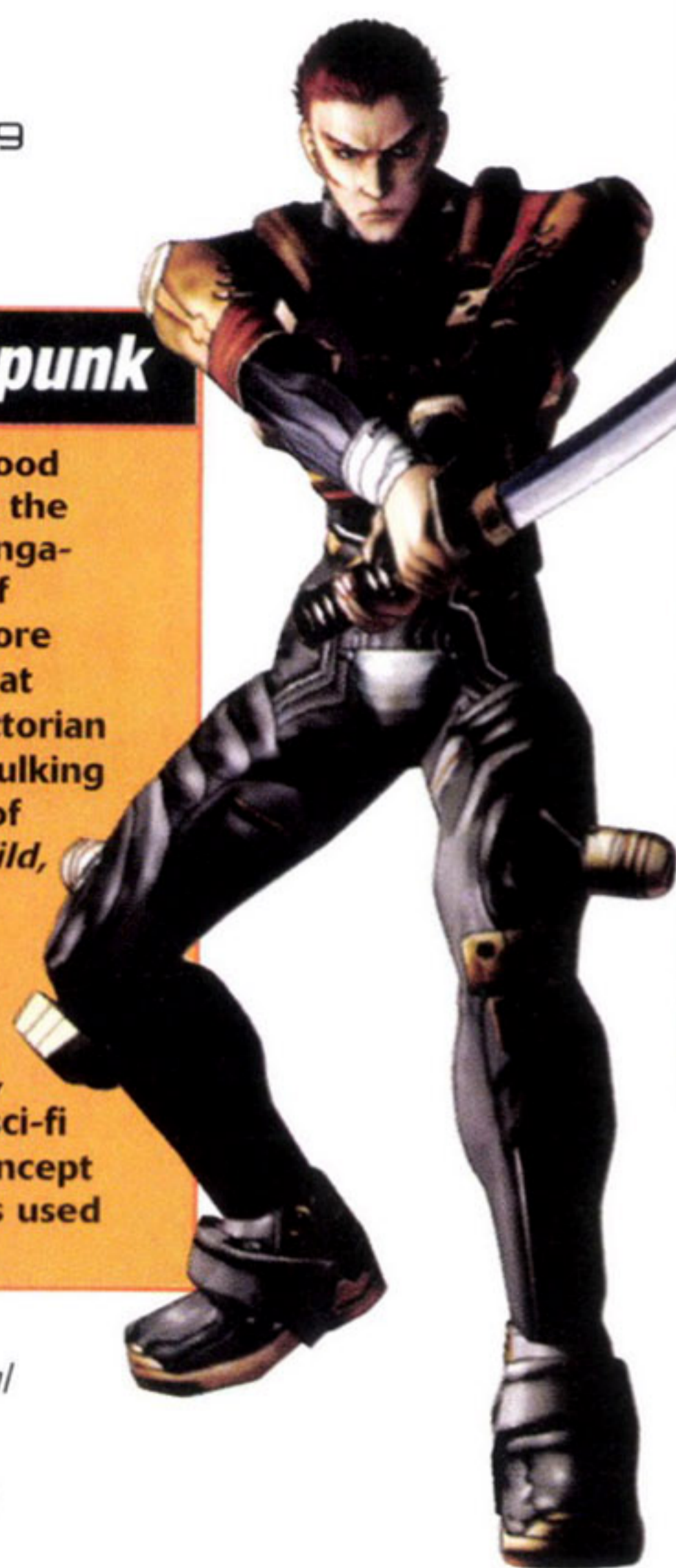
■ But once you get them down, you'll be able to blast in all directions, above and below.



■ And once you learn how to utilize your boost, you'll easily dispatch foes on the fly.

## Steampunk Vs. Elekipunk

*Gunvalkyrie's* creators have put a good amount of emphasis on the fact that the game's universe takes place in a manga-esque world based on the concept of "Elekipunk." Most readers will be more familiar with Steampunk, the idea that technology leapt forward around Victorian ages leading to riveted robots and hulking trains zipping around at the behest of women with bustles. Just think of *Wild, Wild West* or *Sakura Taisen*, and you have the right idea. Elekipunk is sort of the same thing, except instead of the machines of industry using steam to propel them, they use electricity. Okay, use your sci-fi imagination here, kids. This is the concept that *Gunvalkyrie* is based on and it's used to interesting effect.



Some creatures are more easily destroyed with your machine gun, while others will go down quicker at the business end of your fire launcher.

### WIRED

For an amusing romp through Japan-style English, check out [www.smilebit.com](http://www.smilebit.com). For hard-hitting facts about *Gunvalkyrie*, check out the main site, [www.sega.com](http://www.sega.com).

between the dual-stick antics of *Virtual On* and the frenetic gameplay of Dreamcast's *Charge'n'Blast*... but just a little bit.

In fact, the reality is that *Gunvalkyrie* is pretty unique. While many of its features may be derived from other games and genres, the gameplay experience seems pretty original. Each one of the game's ten humongous stages carries a certain mission objective, whether it's to clear the area of enemies or to retrieve a specific item. Either way, you'll have to blast through hordes of airborne, ground level and wall-riding vermin

to get where you're going. And this is no easy feat.

But to help you on your way through the game is the inclusion of money, in the form of GVP, that you can use to buy items and upgrade your suit and weapons. The amount of GVP you receive after a stage depends entirely on your performance, which is derived from a few different variables that include the amount of time it took you to clear the stage, the number of

enemies defeated, as well as your "technique." Therefore, the better and savvier you are, the more moola you get to take to the bank for more powerful guns and suits. You'll be able to customize everything from the lock-on for your gun, to a more long-reaching grapple hook, to more boost time in the air. All of these things are incredibly important to surviving the game, which can be incredibly tough.

The ability to choose between playing Kelly or Saburota is significant only really for advanced players. Kelly is more agile and has a bigger capacity for weapon upgrades and variety. Saburota is a bit more difficult to control and only has two different weapons, not three. In the game, he's pitched at more "advanced" players who are accustomed to the control scheme. Actual gameplay itself isn't much affected by your choice, but Kelly is the only character you can play during boss fights.

Visually, *Gunvalkyrie* is almost arcade-ish in its sharpness, clarity, and color palette. With constant action, the backdrops move quickly past your cleverly and subtly cel-shaded character while never dropping a single frame. The whole thing moves smooth – like butta. There certainly isn't an obscene amount of variation in landscapes, but what's in the game is well designed and compelling. Once the game releases in March, we fully expect *Gunvalkyrie* to provide the Xbox some of that much-needed Sega charm and polish. With some tweaks to the control scheme, this might be the game that quirky shooter and action fans are waiting for.

– Francesca Reyes

## Smilebit quickie

Back when *Gunvalkyrie* was announced for Xbox, we had a chance to sit down with Hasayoshi Yoshida (Y) and Takayuki Kawagoe (K), the director and producer (respectively) for the game.

**Us:** Why did you decide to make a third-person shooter? Do you think it will suit the market?

**Y:** First, people who wanted to always make an action/shooter gathered to build this project. Plus, we wanted to make a technological achievement, which would remain in the industry, here in Japan. I think these are the two main reasons.

**Us:** What things have influenced the design of the game?

**Y:** Okay, this concerns our designer. He had this attraction for a while now. You have a design stream called "steampunk." He wanted to design something new, but still with a retro taste. So, he decided to include electricity. So, yes, it is similar to steampunk, but thanks to electricity, we have been able to deliver a new world. However, we have no movies or manga in mind [as influences].

**Us:** What hopes do you have for the games industry in general, and what direction would you like to see it move toward with the release of so many new systems?

**Y:** I played online a lot on a PC. On this particular platform, network games have

quite a history and they are common. On console, they are still new so many people find them attractive. That may explain why *Phantasy Star Online* has been played by so many. However, it won't be long before console users get used to this kind of game. So, network game popularity will drop as a result. In fact, the only thing which changes concerning these games is certainly the connection speed. It gets faster every day, but that's all. I don't think the future will be online. Now, concerning the machine power, when you had to consider around three features before, now you have to take into consideration more than ten. More power means you can do more but that would dramatically increase the amount of work and the scale of our structure.

**K:** I don't think it is a problem to have more power. In the current market you have to increase the appeal to fit users' benchmark. So, sometimes you may have to do the impossible. It's not easy to do, but it's more a problem of creativity. This concerns any platform. Now, if the increase in power means an increase of the price, that would be a problem for users.

## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Graphics and framerates are silky smooth.
- Different attacks and weapons provide variety.
- An interesting take on an established genre.

### ODDS ARE...

As an original game with no recognizable characters to plaster across ads, commercials, and the like, it's hard to say whether gamers will warm up to Kelly's adventures. We hope so.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Slick, smooth, and action-packed, we'd love for *Gunvalkyrie* to knock our socks off with its final release and to do the same for gamers everywhere. While it certainly has its flaws, we're interested to see where Smilebit takes the genre.

### NEEDS WORK

- Controls are a little on the sketchy side.
- Did we mention that the controls are on the sketchy side?
- An original franchise? Will it fly for license fans?

### HYPE:

As one of Sega's original games made especially for Xbox, *Gunvalkyrie* is lightning-paced action done with the company's trademark flair. Fans are anxious to see how it handles.

Out here,

amongst the clouds

and the sea,

a chain gun.



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

Set

a course

for

destruction

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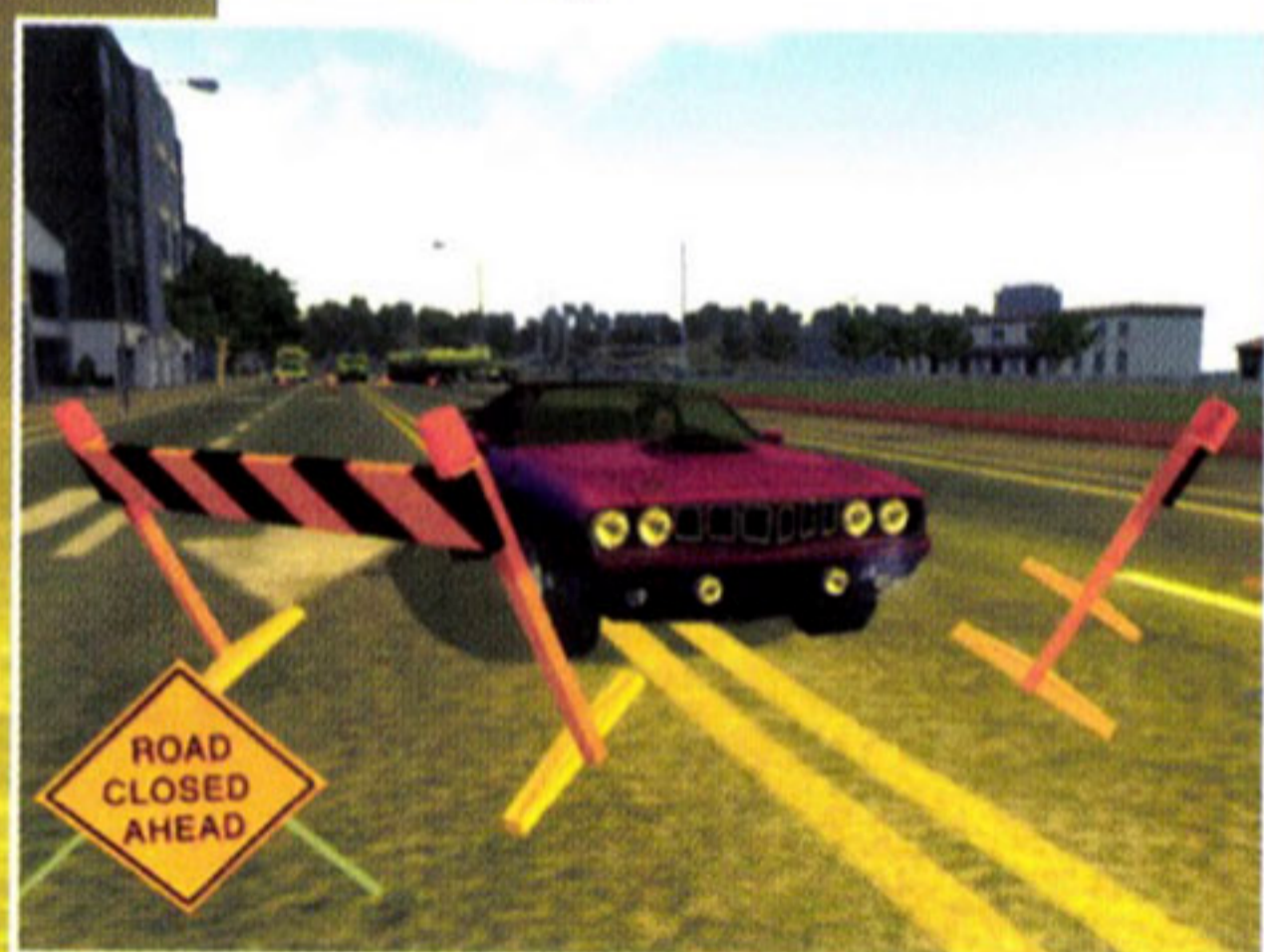
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■ Ignore the radar at your peril. It tells you exactly where the cops are hiding, and where to go next.



■ That police Chevy Caprice is no match for your tweaked AC Cobra, but it is a lot better in the rain and fog.



■ You can often ignore the road signs, since the cities have been mapped almost in their entirety, which gives a feeling of freedom.

# Test Drive: Overdrive

*Life in the big city just got a little bit faster*

## Reflections

**Matt Guzenda**, producer of *Test Drive*

Both [PS2 and Xbox] versions share the same game code (AI, physics, etc.), but each version has a completely separate graphics-engine team so that we can get the most out of each machine. For example, the cubic environment-mapping in the Xbox version relies on one of the Xbox's strengths. It's a true reflection of all six planes of vision (front, both sides, top, and bottom, although we don't use the plane facing the ground a whole lot). The PS2 version will also have reflections that reflect the environment (much the same as *GTA3*), but it will be done in a slightly different way. One of the nice features of the Xbox is the pixel-shader, so we've already included some effects using that, which won't be in the PS2 version like swaying trees and moving water. Also, the Bink technology allows us to plug in AVIs within the game very easily so there are some cool effects that we can use that for which won't be easy to duplicate on the PS2.

**N**ow steps in the next contender. The *Test Drive* series has had to deal with fierce competition on both the PC and consoles from the likes of *Need for Speed* and *Gran Turismo*, but now there's a new console in town, and *Test Drive* may have a shot at being a key part of Xbox's racing lineup. With a new engine designed from the ground up, the return of the Chevy license, and some of the most realistic city environments we've seen in ages, now is the perfect time for *Test Drive* to get super-sized.

The game now takes place around a Story mode, to complement the renegade feel of *Test Drive* racing. You'll be playing as a hot driver trying to work up through the ranks of the underground racing elite, winning cars and new tracks by

competing in linear races, circuit races, and once again in drag races. San Francisco, Tokyo, and London have been rendered in stunning detail for your driving pleasure, with tracks that give new meaning to the word "informal." Who needs cops and city officials when you've got orange pylons and a Viper?

While games like *Gran Turismo* and *Project Gotham* live the straight life, *Test Drive* has you playing out your *Fast and the Furious* dreams by

hitting the roads for illegal street matches. That means avoiding realistic pedestrians and civilian drivers who obey the traffic laws and react to your driving, as well as trying to peel away from the fuzz when they catch you running a red at 180mph. Twenty of the world's best cars will be at your disposal, from classics like the Ford Mustang and the Plymouth 'Cuda to the Viper, Jaguar XK-R, and Lotus Esprit V8.

The true monument to the

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: **Pitbull Syndicate** PUBLISHER: **Infogrames** RELEASE DATE: **March 2002**

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Though the company was founded in 1997, the Pitbull Syndicate is actually a collection of videogame veterans. More importantly, they're so old-school that up until a few years ago, they were still using Amigas in art-asset development for PlayStation games, and most of the big programmers still know Assembly. Shudder. Their most recent titles include *Demolition Racer* and *Test Drives 4, 5, and 6*.

■ The Ford GT40 is a legendary vehicle, but it can't actually fly. This right here is what we like to call "an accident."



**WIRED**






Check out Pitbull's history at its website, [www.pitbull.co.uk](http://www.pitbull.co.uk), and savor the lack of an annoying Flash rockstar "intro."

game's power comes in the astounding level of detail Pitbull has managed to pull out of the system, with a bunch of artists who are compulsive enough to add details like individual bolts on the back of stop signs. We didn't say it was healthy, but it sure is pretty. Pitbull has started from scratch to create a new graphics

engine, and it shows. When you're in Marin and realize that you can see the actual Golden Gate miles away, you'll realize just how far the *Test Drive* engine has really come. When the fog rolls through San Francisco, it's no longer there to hide problems in the engine, but as a realistic effect so true to life, in fact, that you can

## Best shag-friendly Test Drive cars

Sure, those pedestrians jump outta the way when you're burning through a red light at impossible speeds, but there are those times when you just want to slow down, pull up, and get yourself a little one-on-one time with the residents of London, Tokyo, and San Francisco. But which car?

-  **Ford Mustang:** Solid, sexy, sweet. How can you go wrong when you've got a beauty like this under you? Unfortunately, you're also as vanilla as exotic gets. Try again. The one pictured here, by the way, is the boxier 2001 version.
-  **Dodge Viper:** This is a surefire win, right? Unfortunately, driving a Dodge Viper puts you squarely in "Hollywood producer" territory. They'd only have to peek over the door to see that you're wearing penny loafers with no socks. Is that a toupee? No, just implants.
-  **Jaguar XK220:** Jaguar famously peed off its most loyal customers by announcing a successor to this car seconds after the checks for the XK200 had cleared. That's gotta put a dent in your libido, thinking you just wasted \$250,000.
-  **1969 Corvette:** This one's got our shagging seal of approval. The hefty price tag yells "snob," but the choice in cars shows that you've got taste. Plus you can always use a British accent and pretend you're in the Secret Service.
-  **Ford GT40:** High power, high style and Ferrari-beating performance. Unbelievably, the Ford Corporation is actually bringing it back, which is a little redundant, since most of the old ones are cherry, and capable of modern supercar speeds. Fords are sexy again.

still see the shadows of far-off buildings through the mist. Even the Marina Safeway is intact. London takes you from the cobblestone streets of Buckingham Palace through SoHo's bright lights, complete with animated videos, tumbling leaves, and realistic rain spatter that's actually reacting to the environment.

While technologically *Test Drive* is making a huge leap, the physics, gameplay, and style are still true to the series. Three cities, 20 cars, and a story that isn't completely redundant make for good reasons to watch out for *Test Drive* again.

— Vincent Lopez



■ The Golden Gate Bridge leads into the winding hills of Marin, but in case you're wondering, it stops before you get to Mill Valley.

## Xbox Destiny

Yes, *Test Drive* is coming to multiple platforms, but no, it won't look quite as picture-perfect on anything but the Xbox. Your new friend BINK Video (get used to that name, it'll be used in conjunction with the Xbox for years to come) allows full streaming videos in the game, so when the *Test Drive* team promises a realistic look at Tokyo video billboards, they aren't kidding. Incredible reflection-mapping means you can see the silky sunlight reflect off all sides of the car, and pixel shading allows Xbox-exclusive effects like swaying trees and the illusion of moving water.

## GAME POTENTIAL

**LOOKS GOOD**

- Intricate level detail (real windowsills, you freaks!).
- Realistic fogging.
- Cool new story feature.

**NEEDS WORK**

- Control still can't top the competition's realism-to-fun ratio.
- Why is there always a cool guy with an Afro nowadays in games? Whatever happened to the classic fade?

**ODDS ARE...**

*Test Drive* will have to work hard to show up the hoop-jumping features and beautiful curves of *Project Gotham*, but *Test Drive's* got a long-running name behind it, not to mention a strong fanbase to back it up. They love their exotic cars, and it shows.

**HYPE:**

*Test Drive's* been taking a back seat to some of Microsoft's other major releases, and Infogrames isn't pushing the game as hard some of its other titles. With the release date pushed back until next spring, however, the game might have enough room to get the hype it deserves, free from the first-wave glut of major titles.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

For *Test Drive* to compete, it's got to innovate, not just reiterate what it has done in previous versions. New features may be in solid steps rather than daring leaps, despite the addition of the Story mode, but the graphical leap alone makes this one to watch out for.

# Preview

Future Shock Troopers



■ **Enormous attention to detail helps you forget that this is an imaginary, futuristic world.**

# SWAT: Global Strike Team

## Weapons and Tactics just got a heck of a lot more Special

**T**he *SWAT* series is already a favorite with PC gamers, and now, with a new direction, it's about to reach a new audience. Previous *SWAT* games have been created by in-house Sierra teams, but *Malice* developer

Argonaut has now been given the task of bringing *SWAT: Global Strike Team* to Xbox.

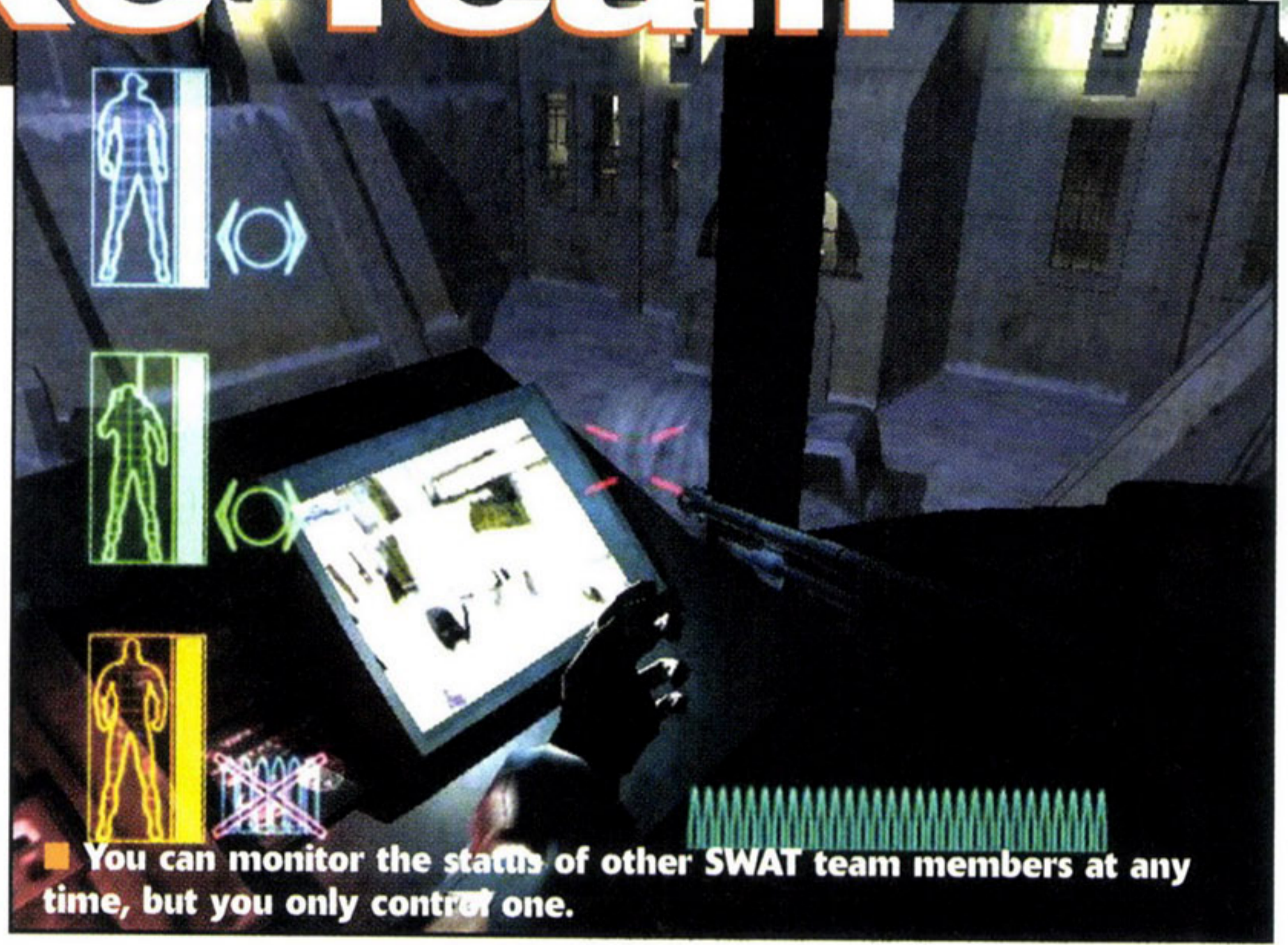
Following the antics of the Global Strike Team (founded in 2020 as an international offshoot from the original SWAT organization), the gameplay is about helping countries and organizations out of tricky situations beyond their control. Needless to say that the missions usually involve terrorists, hitmen, or both.

Naturally the futuristic setting lends itself well to lots of fancy laser-type weapons, but fans of the *SWAT* series might be a little put off by the new time slot, as it were. *SWAT* fans tend to love the gritty realism provided by prior games, and may not take well to having their Special Weapons And Tactics served up with a side of space hardware.

## Xbox Exclusive



Well for one thing, this is only coming out for Xbox, and you don't get much more exclusive than that. But for another thing, this is one of the few games that genuinely needs all of the Xbox features and horsepower to even happen. You've got the online play, the weird lighting effects, and the cool filtering on shadows and glare – all relying heavily on things certain other consoles just don't have.



■ **You can monitor the status of other SWAT team members at any time, but you only control one.**

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: Argonaut Software PUBLISHER: Sierra RELEASE DATE: Fall 2002

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Although Argonaut's finest hour was undoubtedly the theme song to *Buck Bumble* on the N64 ("Right about now it's time to get down to the biggety-Buck-Bum-Ble.")\* Many remember the company better for its work on the Super FX graphic chip used in the game *Starfox*. The company also innovated 3D shooters with early Amiga classic *Starglider*.

\*WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH BUMBLE?: Sharp-eyed readers may have read a *Buck Bumble* reference before, but this won't be the last time either.





**WIRED**

Go see what Argonaut has done past and present at [www.argonaut.com](http://www.argonaut.com) and you'll be glad you did.

**Harnessing the power of Xbox, hard-edged shadows show off the bump-mapped textures.**

Argonaut has designed a new engine to give *Global Strike Team* its own distinct look and feel compared to past *SWAT* titles. Harnessing the power of Xbox, hard-edged shadows show off the bump-mapped textures, and a photo-realistic film filter is also being used to give the game a true-to-life look. What that does is enhance the contrast effect between, say, the bright light of daytime sky and a building in its shadow.

Right now, Argonaut and Sierra are looking at the game's massive online potential, and if everything goes well, the game will ship as a sprawling single-player action game, but with tons of online multiplayer options. Naturally this will have a hugely beneficial effect on the implementation of team strategy elements.

Gameplay is viewed from a first-person perspective and, as with past

*SWAT* titles, strategic elements will play a major part in the action.

- Dan Egger

**What is SWAT?**

**SWAT** is simply an acronym for **Special Weapons And Tactics**, and it's actually a division of the police force. **SWAT** members are trained to deal with crisis situations that include hostages, dangerous locations, and of course disgruntled employees. The heavily-armed ladies and fellas usually spill out of the back of a van before rushing around and yelling "hut, hut" like a quarterback trying desperately to draw the other team offside. They do *not* give out traffic tickets, asking rhetorical questions about why they pulled you over - and they don't go around not arresting burglars either.



**GAME POTENTIAL**

**LOOKS GOOD**  
 ■ Stunning graphics engine.  
 ■ Brilliant light and shadow.  
 ■ Perfect architecture.

**NEEDS WORK**  
 ■ Unclear online strategy (Microsoft's, not Argonaut's).  
 ■ The switch from contemporary to future setting may jar *SWAT* fans.

**ODDS ARE...**  
*SWAT* will attract new followers while keeping the loyal legion of mustachioed fans from its PC heyday.

**HYPE:**  
 With online play and an innovative graphics engine leading the feature-set, it's likely that *SWAT* will gather some pace in the coming months. We'll certainly be paying close attention to this little number.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**  
 Graphics alone can often save even a loosely-strung-together shooter, but the combination of the *SWAT* franchise and Argonaut's gaming expertise should mean that every element, gameplay, graphics, and design, are tight and cohesive. *SWAT* looks to have the complete package. What happens with Xbox Online will determine whether this game is good or incredible.



**Only on Xbox**

The Xbox version is still in its design stages, although its port from the PS2 code is nearly complete. The developers plan on putting in a bunch of Xbox-specific features, possibly including jukebox-style music support and hard-drive loading enhancements, but they haven't told us yet. So, you know... hang on and we'll tell you next month.

# Spy Hunter

**Now we're going to take you back in time, to a better place**

If you take a deep breath, you can probably still recall the musty, smoke-tinged perfume of popcorn and excitement that comprised the smell of an early Eighties arcade. And those were the heydays. As you meandered through the dimly-lit graveyard of coin-ops, the cacophony of noise would pare down to its component notes – the throaty bass of Sega's *Turbo*, the otherworldly clang of Atari's *Tempest*, and finally, the thumping hypnotic repetition of the theme from *Peter*

*Gunn* that signified your arrival at the *Spy Hunter* cabinet.

Of course there was always a line, a disturbingly sticky carpet, and the constant danger of fiscal ruin. No such problems now, with the imminent arrival of *Spy Hunter* for Xbox. This isn't a sequel so much as a remake. Naturally, the vertical scrolling has been replaced with an advanced 3D engine, and the simplistic gameplay has been beefed up to suit its fancy new duds, but under all that veneer is the classic game.

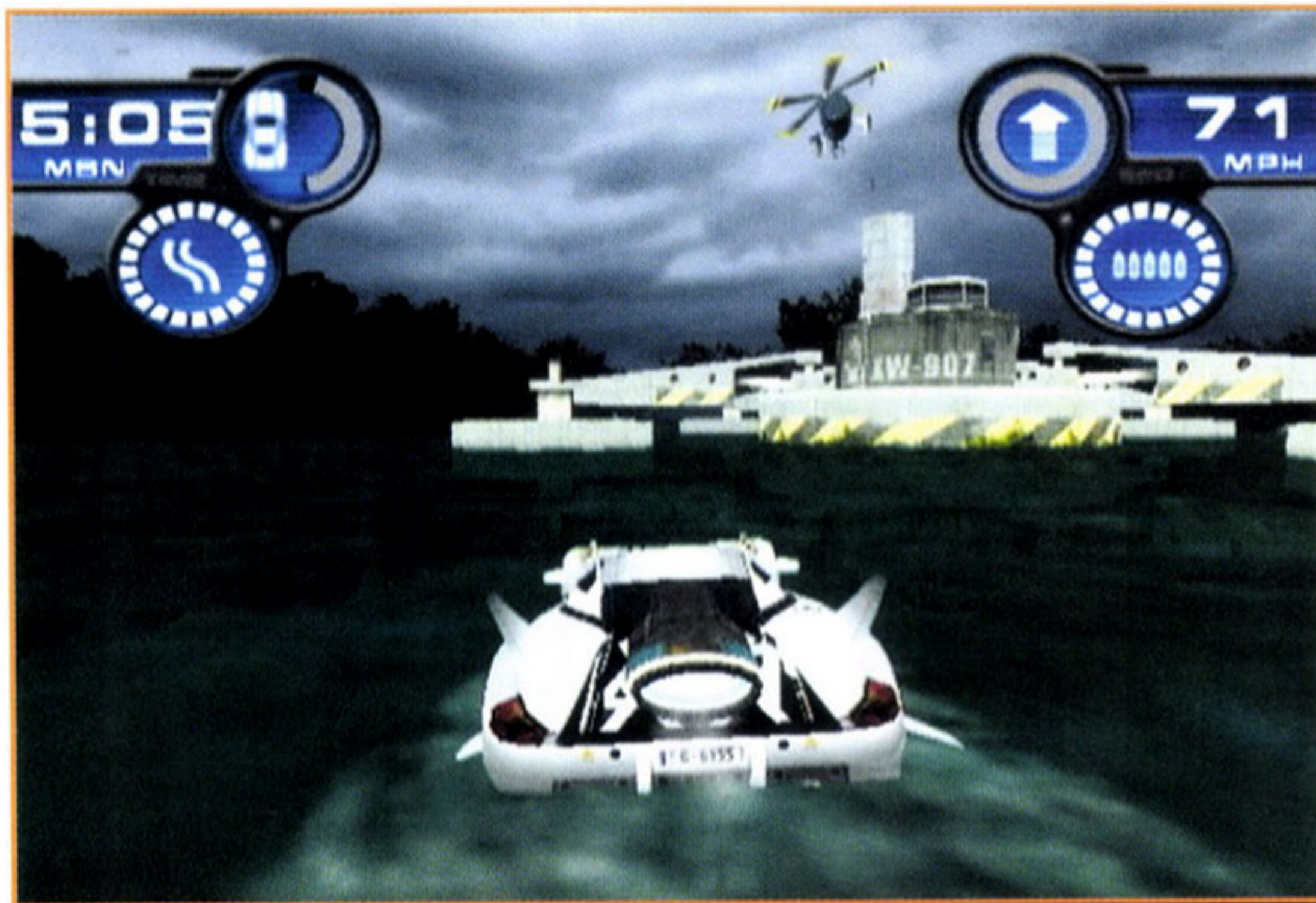
You play the part of an intrepid spy, driving the very state of the art in espionage vehicles. The G-6155 Interceptor would make 007's Q very proud. In the original, it could transform into a boat to take to the

water, but in today's re-imagining, it can become a jet ski and a motorcycle just as easily, although only after the car or boat has been basically smashed to bits, revealing the smaller vehicle underneath.

## TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: **Midway** PUBLISHER: **Midway** RELEASE DATE: **Q2 2002**

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Midway is the company that now owns Atari Games, which is NOT related (anymore) to Atari, which in turn is owned by Infogrames, but *Spy Hunter* started life as a Gottlieb coin-op, but also appeared with Bally/Midway livery, which is no longer used because Bally pinball tables are now handled elsewhere...wait. Is this confusing?



■ A sports car that turns into an aquatic vehicle, first seen in *James Bond: The Spy Who Loved Me*. It was a Lotus Esprit back then.



■ Those anti-Spy-Hunter forces are facing the wrong direction.

■ Humvee! Barrels of exploding toxic waste! This is a job for...

## Midway carney communiqué

A few of our pressing questions are thrown to the team at Midway. They kindly catch them and slap some answers down.

**US:** The *Peter Gunn* theme – we're presuming it's intact – how is it used in the game, and will the Xbox version let you rip your own soundtrack?

**THEM:** *Spy Hunter* just wouldn't be the same without the *Peter Gunn* theme. [It] is used in a number of different places in *Spy Hunter*, including an innovative remake by the popular rap-rock group Saliva. Not all of the Xbox features have been finalized as of yet.

**US:** How much of the original coin-op has been translated into a 3D world, and what things are new?

**THEM:** We made a concerted effort to translate as much of the original game as possible. We used many of the same weapons, enemies, and fundamental gameplay mechanics in this iteration. The biggest change, besides going to 3D, was the implementation of missions. The missions were added to hold the player's interest as well as keeping the game moving forward. Gamers can

expect relentless action – simply put, "prepare to be hunted."

**US:** What was it like to translate the work done on the PS2 to the Xbox?

**THEM:** What were the pros and cons? For the most part, it's been a fairly smooth transition. The team hasn't had many problems in porting the code over at all. We've only run into minor problems, and most of these are simply the result of working with an unfamiliar platform. Nevertheless, you can expect countless hours of addictive gameplay from the Xbox version of *Spy Hunter* to be just as engaging as the PS2 version.

**US:** Can we look forward to any new conversions of classic Midway coin-ops? Given your choice, which old-school arcade game would it be your fantasy to see given the 2002 treatment?

**THEM:** In response to the first part of the question, Midway is working hard to bring back and update all of the classics from our past. You guys will just have to wait and see what comes out [in the] next year. I personally would love to see a great remake of *Tron*, and of course *Defender*.

### WIRED

Midway's website could use a bit of sprucing up, to be perfectly honest. So until that happens, you can check out [www.spygirls.com](http://www.spygirls.com), which amazingly isn't a porn site.

Fourteen missions take you through various locales, including the backroads of England, the jungles of Panama, and the cobalt archipelago of Key West. Now that we think about it, the original must have been set in Key West – all those endless bridges and azure seascapes. The missions generally involve driving, blasting, and dodging assailants with the aid of a vast arsenal of spy-type weapons. These include old defensive favorites, like oil-slicks and smoke screens, but offer much more in the way of offensive weapons like lasers, missiles, and cluster bombs.

And there's actually a plot! Since the original coin-op was kind of faceless, this has presented a nice opportunity to flesh out the *Spy Hunter* universe, and you'll actually find out a few surprises about the guy behind the wheel as the game progresses, including his hatred for the evil NOSTRA corporation (his main foe throughout the game). The addition of 3D, off-road sequences, and cool set-pieces make us more than a little excited about an Xbox version.

– Frank O'Connor

### 1983: Best Year Ever!

Feathered hair, legwarmers, *Spy Hunter* in the arcades, raging hormones, and the single best year for movies ever in the history of years with movies in them. Just take a look at this partial list and bow down before the pre-eminent films of our time.

- **The Big Chill** – Part class reunion, part swinger party.
- **Flashdance** – What a feeling!
- **King of Comedy** – Martin Scorsese directs Jerry Lewis
- **Return of the Jedi** – The last good *Star Wars* movie. (Ewoks signalled the end was near)
- **National Lampoon's Vacation** – Christie Brinkley.
- **Risky Business** – Pimping for college money.
- **The Right Stuff** – Cowboy astronauts.
- **Terms of Endearment** – The beginning of the modern-day chick flick.
- **Silkwood** – Meryl Streep, cancer, and much crying.
- **Yentl** – Barbara Streisand is a boy.
- **Class** – The original MILF, Jacqueline Bisset.
- **The Dorm That Dripped Blood** – We just like the name.
- **WarGames** – "Would you like to play a game?"
- **Monty Python's The Meaning of Life** – Brit comedy troupe's last great movie.
- **My Tutor** – Old women teaching young boys about love... being young boys, we liked this idea.
- **Octopussy** – Often considered the best of the Roger Moore Bond films. But it's no *Spy Who Loved Me*.

## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Crisp, smooth graphics.
- Lots of cool new weapons.
- Tons of varied missions.

### ODDS ARE...

*Spy Hunter* has come here to kick ass and chew bubble gum, and apparently is all out of bubble gum (apologies to *They Live* and the incomparable Rowdy Roddy Piper).

### NEEDS WORK

- No LAN feature!
- Misnomer – you're not actually hunting spies.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

It looks like this particular antique has been very carefully restored. The lush, detailed graphics, neat plot elements, and fully faithful interpretations of the old-school gameplay make it one of the more intriguing racing-combat games on the horizon.

### HYPE:

It's *Spy Hunter*. People love *Spy Hunter*, and although Midway's arcade business has crashed and burned, the company still seems to know what buttons to push when it comes to selling console games.



SEGA  
SPORTS

segasports.com

NBA 2K2

There are worse things than missing  
the game-winning free throw.

Like having to call your roommate  
"Daddy" for a week.



Dominate with precise pick-n-roll plays.



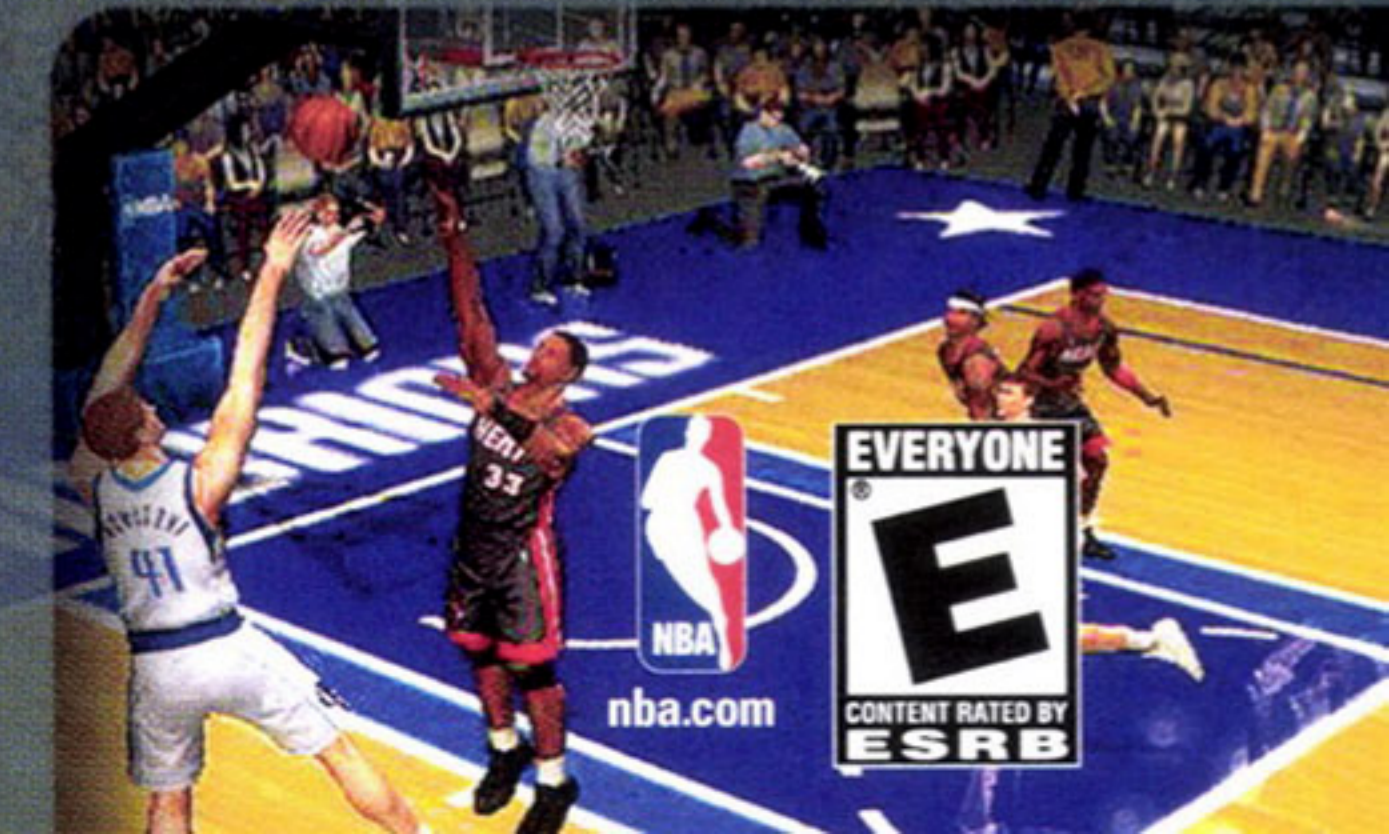
Shut down opponents with a variety of zone defenses.



Blow by defenders with crossovers, spins and jukes.



Stun opponents with all-new alley-oops and dunks.



PlayStation.2



Dreamcast.

RACE TIME  
01:46.76  
LAP TIME  
00:04.38  
BEST LAP  
00:48.96

● 1	Saab 9-3 T16	01:36.53
↑ 2	Opel Astra T16	+00:05.09
↓ 3	RAJA	+00:05.84
● 4	Ford Focus RC	+00:07.90



Only on  
**Xbox**

The best-looking rally racer is an Xbox exclusive! You won't find it anywhere else.

# RalliSport Challenge

## Microsoft takes racing off the beaten track

**W**ith the explosion of off-road racing videogames over the past few years, it seems only fitting that Xbox should finally have a rally racer to call its own so it can push aside the plethora of SUV poseurs. With its emphasis on knowing the varying terrain types of every course and perfecting the art of powersliding, *RalliSport Challenge* promises to

deliver both simulation and arcade thrills while dazzling gamers with stunning visuals. The sport itself is incredibly accessible, with the wide variety of driving skills and vehicles to learn and handle.

The most unique aspect of *RalliSport Challenge* promises to be the game's inclusion of four separate styles of rally competition. From hill climbing to ice racing to actual Rallycross racing,

enthusiasts will have more than their share of different modes to compete in. All the licensed vehicles are also at gamers' disposal, as well, which means that you'll be able to zip around snowy mountains in cars from all the top rally manufacturers – Audi, Lancia, and Subaru, among others.

Expect all the little details to be polished to a blinding sheen, including realistic driver models that lean with every turn and co-drivers who call out directions for every possible situation. The result is a massive rally game with a truckload of tracks and terrain types to be conquered, smart AI that will give you a hard run to the finish line, and well-tuned physics that respond to every bump and skid on the road.

And if you think that this preview is unbelievably positive, well – this is one game that may very well deserve all these kudos in its final form.

From the accurately modeled tracks that display fully animated (and often interactive) objects to the highly responsive damage models of each car that nicely reflect all the spills and rollovers that happen on your journey to the finish line, all the little aspects of the game are nicely done and look amazing. In addition, Microsoft has implemented the rumble feature to immerse players in the whole

### TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: Digital Illusions PUBLISHER: Microsoft RELEASE DATE: Spring 2002

**WHO ARE THEY?:** Think *Shrek* (Digital Illusions' Canadian branch developed *Shrek* for Xbox), except without the missions, the farting, and that green ogre. All that would be left was the game's brilliant, bump-mapped graphics utilizing all of Xbox's visual bells and whistles. Previously known for its rally games, the Swedish developer is now set to flex its knowledge on Xbox.

### WIRED

For press release coverage, check out Microsoft's [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com). For more in-depth insight, check out Digital Illusion's [www.dice.se](http://www.dice.se).



■ Bump-mapped, reflective icy roadways? Check!



■ Animated sideline fans and expansive horizon? Check!



■ Big variety of terrain and multiple times of day? Check!



■ Accurate car physics and responsive environments? Check!

## The B List

Microsoft has made sure to fly the flag pretty hard concerning the inclusion of the outlawed Group "B" cars from the 1980s. What were the Group "B" cars? Basically, they were insanely overpowered, four-wheel-drive rally cars designed by manufacturers who were testing the limits of their engineering knowhow. For instance, the Lancia Delta S4 was able "to accelerate from 0 to 100 km/h in 2.3 seconds on a gravel road," according to the website of one fan ([www.stormload.com/groupb](http://www.stormload.com/groupb)). Group "B" included loads of different manufacturers, among them Toyota, Ford, and Ferrari. But after several fatal crashes in the mid to late '80s, many of the manufacturers withdrew from Group "B" and ultimately, the cars were deemed illegal for competition. Now, though, *RalliSport Challenge* players will be able to resurrect some of these behemoths of vehicular power in the game without all that nasty death stuff getting in the way of pure speed.

experience by having the controller run the gamut from light to heavy rumbling, depending on the type of road or terrain you're crossing. The result gives players a real sense of having their hands wrapped around a wheel and powersliding around an icy turn, then switching to a gravelly straightaway.

Microsoft has also included the standard career mode, which will allow fledgling rally racers to earn their way through all the different circuits in order to unlock new cars and tracks, while learning which vehicle and set-up will work best for each and every situation. Ultimately, your goal will be to reach the World Class circuit, and you can be assured that the competition will be tough.

And have we mentioned *RalliSport's* graphics? Handled by the European branch of Digital Illusions (*Shrek*, *NASCAR Heat*, *Swedish Touring Car Championship*), it seems that every detail has been pored over to convey

## ...gives players a real sense of having their hands wrapped around a wheel...

a realism not yet seen in racing games. And the variety of terrain gives the developer ample opportunity to test out its programming muscle. Ice courses reflect objects in all their bump-mapped glory, while your car leaves tracks across snowy roads. In short, *RalliSport* looks remarkable.

Everything appears to be in order but *RalliSport's* real "challenge" may be whether there are enough US rally fans to make it a success. With the game's attention to detail, a monster amount of variety and modes, and a four-player splitscreen option for you and three of your friends, there should be enough in *RalliSport Challenge* to hook even newbies into rally racing for the long run.

- Francesca Reyes

## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Rumble feature used well to convey terrain.
- Beautiful environments with massive draw distance.
- Them are some nice lookin' car models.

### ODDS ARE...

With its sharp looks and a huge stable of tracks, courses, and road types, *Rallisport* is aiming to please both novices and veterans alike.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Visually impressive, already, and with a good attention to the physics and dynamics of rally racing, this is one game that will show off what Microsoft has always been best known for: quasi-sim arcade controls in a realistic setting. In other words, perfect for a racing game of any kind.

### NEEDS WORK

- Driver models need more animation.
- Will an all-rally racing game appeal to US gamers?
- Will the inherent difficulty in rally racing turn off casual racers?

### HYPE:

Surprisingly, there's been little hype surrounding *RalliSport* so far, but plan on it being pitched to those who loved the arcade hijinks of *Project Gotham* - but with a rally twist, of course.



# Reviews

The definitive source for Xbox reviews

## Keep 'em coming!

Now that 2002 is fully underway, it's time for the second wave of Xbox games to start hitting systems – and for gamers to start reaping the rewards. The software onslaught is led by a little game that we like to call *Wreckless*, and if you read the lead review of it, you'll find that it's all that it's cracked up to be. Add to this *Genma Onimusha*, *Blood Wake*, and Sega's first game on Xbox, *NFL2K2*, and you have a recipe for the excellence in store for system owners. Even we're a little surprised by the quality of the titles being released in a typically slow season for the entire industry. Goodies like *Wreckless* show that Xbox has more than a few cards up its sleeve. Next month, the Sega monsoon hits with *JSRF: Jet Set Radio Future* and *Gunvalkyrie*.

## How we score

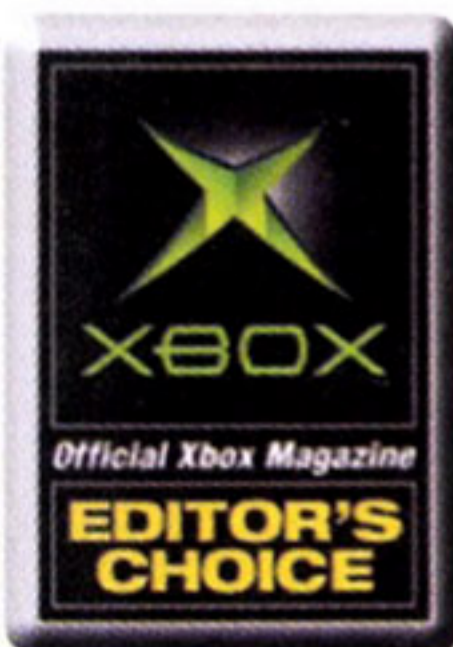
**10 – 8.5** Only the best and the brightest score in this range. If it scores 9.0 or above, then there's no guessing involved. Buy it, love it, and watch as other games follow in its footsteps

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

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

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

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



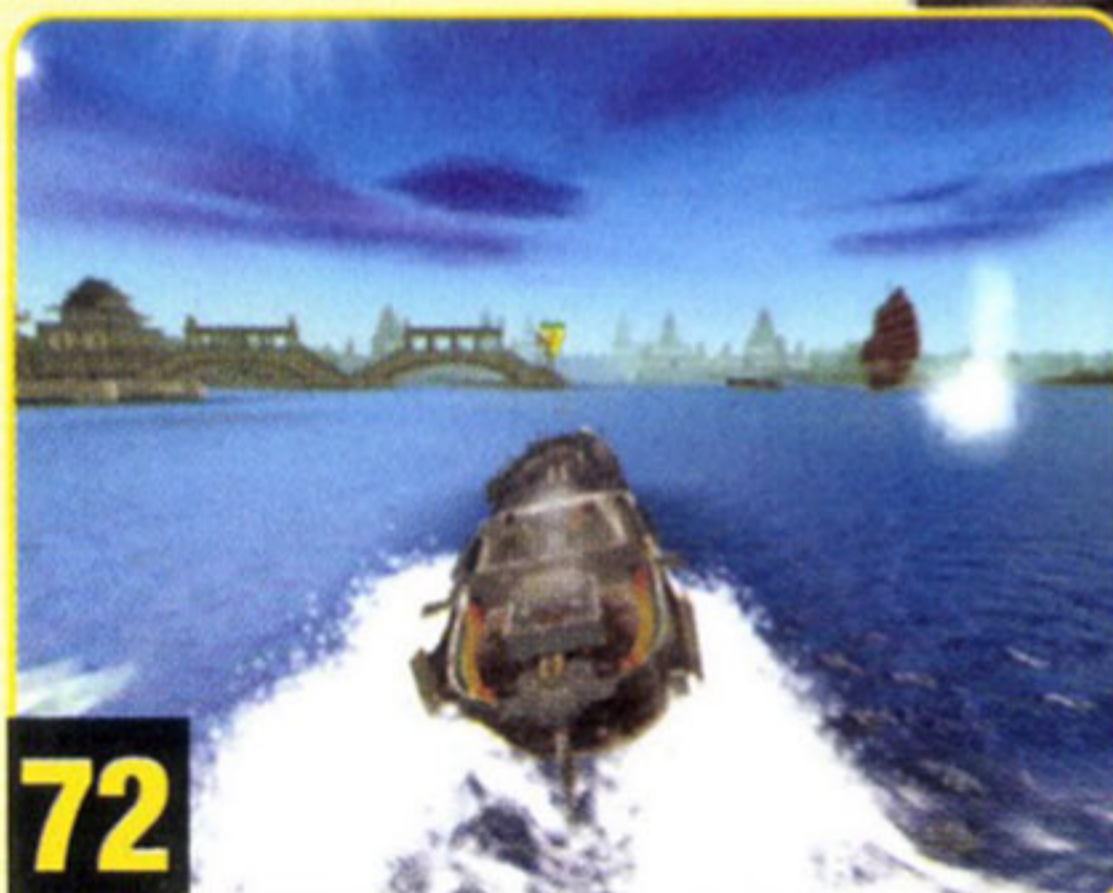
## Editor's Choice Award

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

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**68**  
**SSX Tricky**  
EA Big shows exactly why it's so Big with this epic snowboarding masterpiece.



**72**  
**Blood Wake**  
Imagine car combat, only with boats, and you're halfway to picturing the Xbox game with the most advanced water physics.



**74**  
**Genma Onimusha**  
Genma must be Japanese for "bigger, better, more" because that's just what the Xbox version offers.

## SMASH AND GRAB

This is one of the later missions in *Wreckless*, one where you have to smash all these limos to bits, and then race towards an escaping space shuttle. Hey, nobody said it had to make sense.



# Wreckless

*Gentlemen, start your drooling...*

DEVELOPER **BUNKASHA PUBLISHING CO** | PUBLISHER **ACTIVISION** | MULTIPLAYER **1 (??!!)** | WEBSITE **WWW.WRECKLESS.COM**  
EXTRAS **HDTV SUPPORT, DOLBY 5:1**

**Y**ou know what? *Wreckless* might be the first videogame that you have to buy even if you don't like it. Why? Because it will make your friends jealous, it will prove that your Xbox is an unstoppable force of preternatural gaming fury, and there are probably a good few months of entertainment to be had just from watching the replay mode.

I'm going to get down to what's wrong with this game right away, because there's a lot of fancy talk coming, and I wouldn't want to distract you from the game's flaws. The

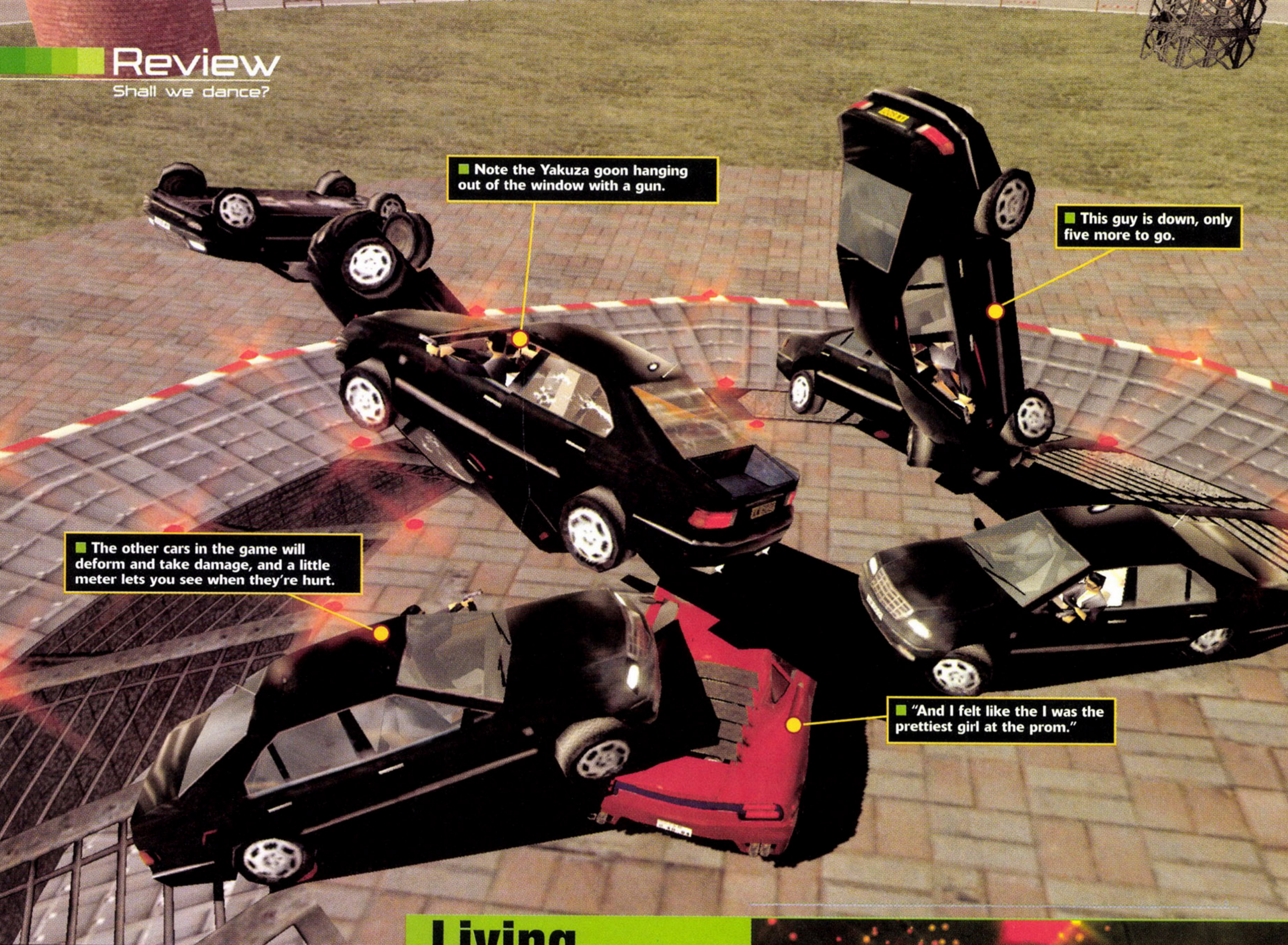
most crucial of these is that there's no two-player mode, which is a shame, because two-player *Wreckless* would definitely have been something to see. The plot is senseless and while bugs are few and far between, there are plenty of visual glitches – although admittedly the glitches in this game are still more technologically astounding than the working bits of many other games.

In concept, this is not much different from *Driver*. It's very, very mission-based. You can play the part of two goofy undercover cops/spies, or a couple of *Resident Evil*-looking hotties. This changes

the mission structure, vehicle choice, and plot, but it's more like a branching of paths than anything else. Gameplay remains very similar regardless of who you pick. Most of the missions involve racing, chasing, or destruction of public property on an impressively epic scale.

There's only one city in the game, Hong Kong, and there are comparatively few vehicles to choose from – and all of those are fictional, if similar to some real autos. Each vehicle has its own dramatically different handling characteristics, and it does make a difference which one you pick. They





■ Note the Yakuza goon hanging out of the window with a gun.

■ This guy is down, only five more to go.

■ The other cars in the game will deform and take damage, and a little meter lets you see when they're hurt.

■ "And I felt like the I was the prettiest girl at the prom."

range in size and stature from a tiny and fragile bubble car, to a slow but near-indestructible armored vehicle.

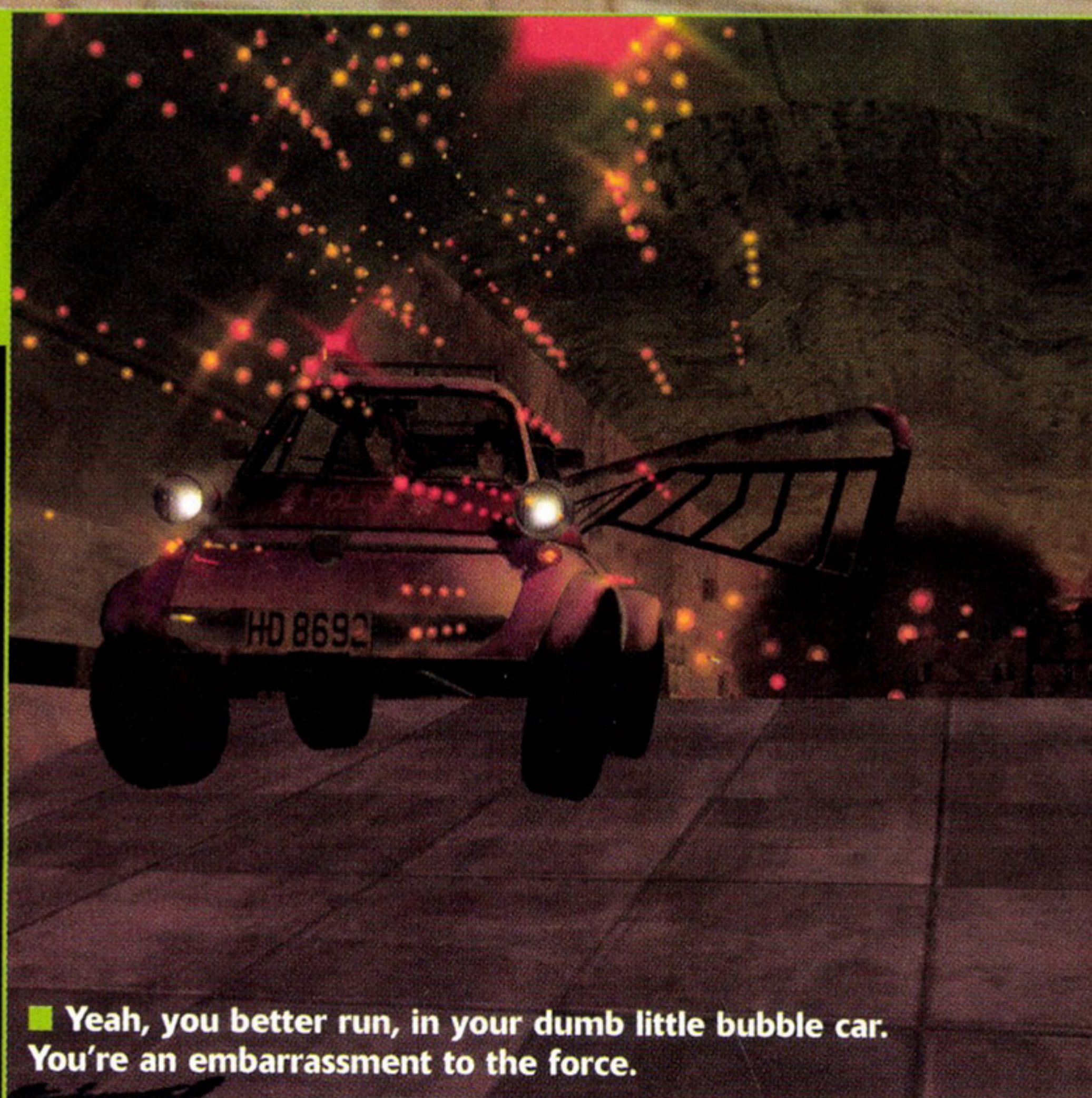
Mission challenges can vary from chasing down and destroying Yakuza limos, to carefully creeping up the scaffold-clad sides of a tall building. You can select moderate or hard difficulty, and light or dense traffic. Weirdly, it's sometimes easier to choose dense traffic, since *Chase HQ*-style seek-and-destroy missions sometimes depend on sandwiching enemy vehicles in traffic – the damage you do to other vehicles is context-sensitive, so leaping onto them from a great height does more damage than simply bashing into them.

Graphics are quite simply the state of the art. It's not like they're always pretty. In fact, some of the cut scenes are horrifyingly, yet amusingly, bad. But in gameplay and replay, there's nothing else quite like it, and you will not see this on any other system thanks to

## Living, breathing world

To give you an idea just how fleshed out this game really is, consider this... On one of the early missions, where you have to first disable a huge truck and then drive to the top of a building, you can simply drive off and explore the city until the timer counts down. Once you leave the construction site and the mission begins, you are awed to realize that the construction site was simply one small locale in a vast, living, moving city that exists in and of itself.

Buses continue along their routes, shoppers mill around the streets and marketplaces are still teeming with chickens and exploding dim sum stands. You can cruise over to the harbor, drive into downtown parking structures or simply gawk at the sheer number of things going on in this city. At least until the time runs out.



■ Yeah, you better run, in your dumb little bubble car. You're an embarrassment to the force.

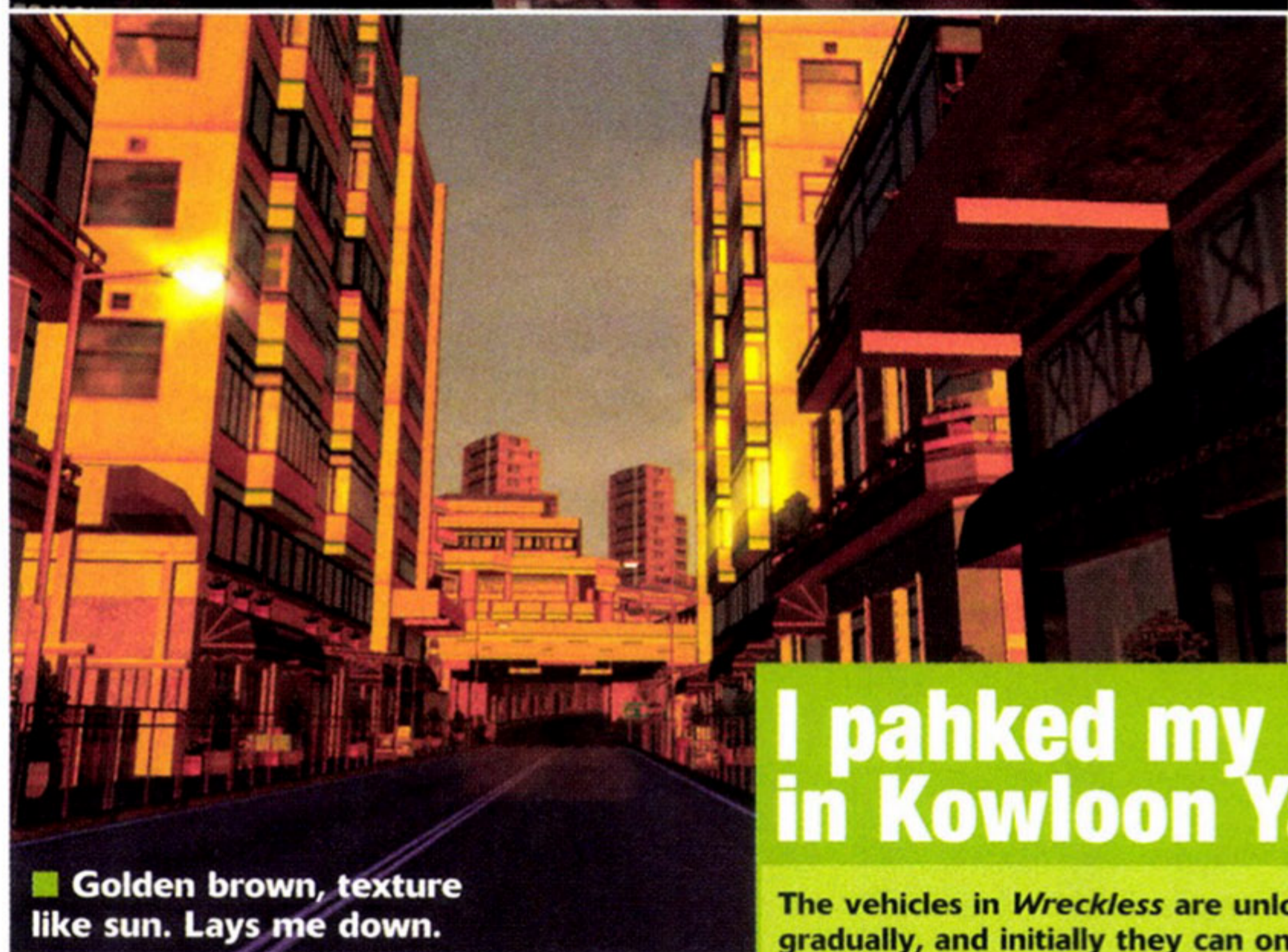


■ Those girls are actually very pretty.



■ Oops. I hope I didn't break anything.

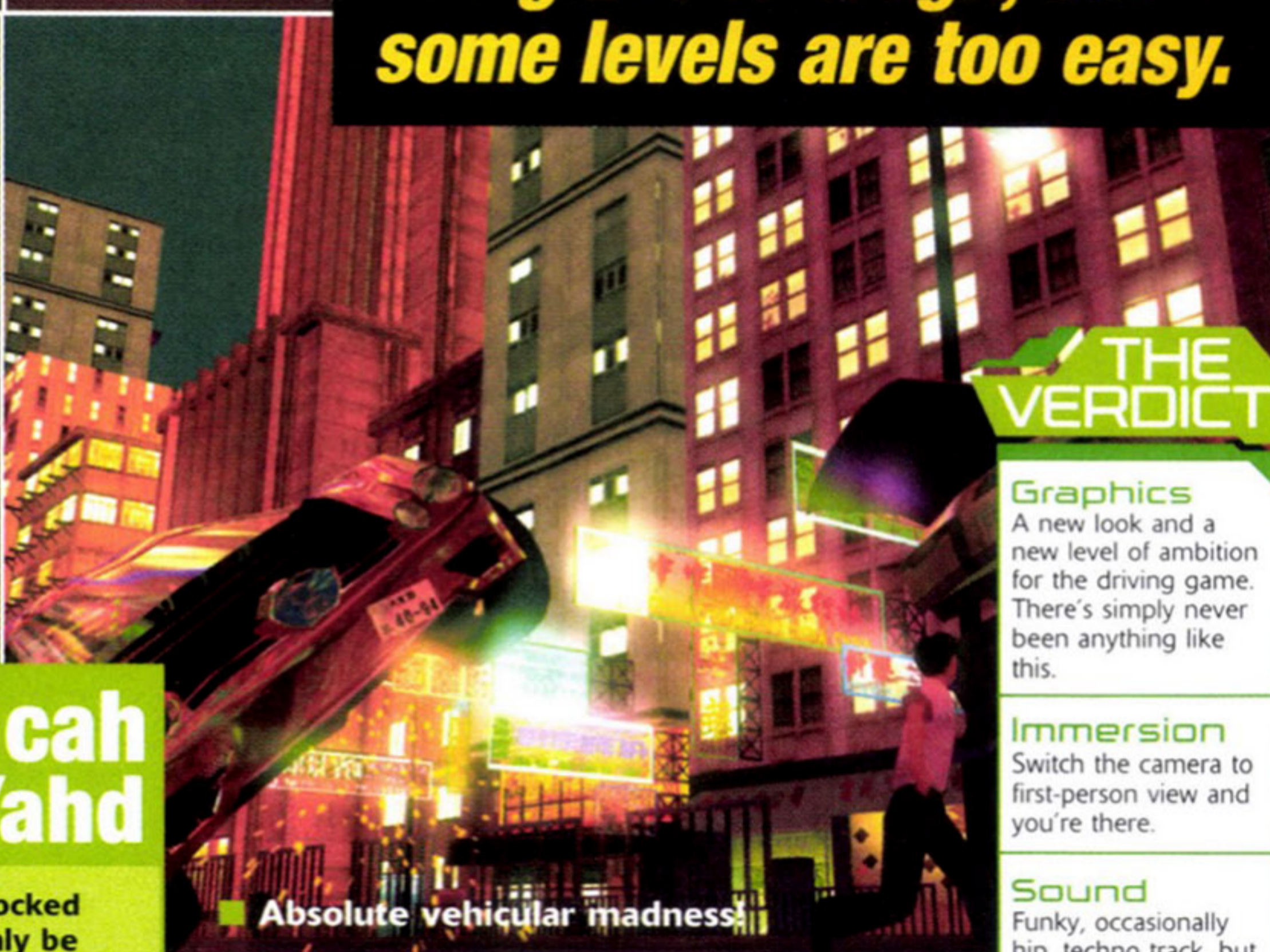
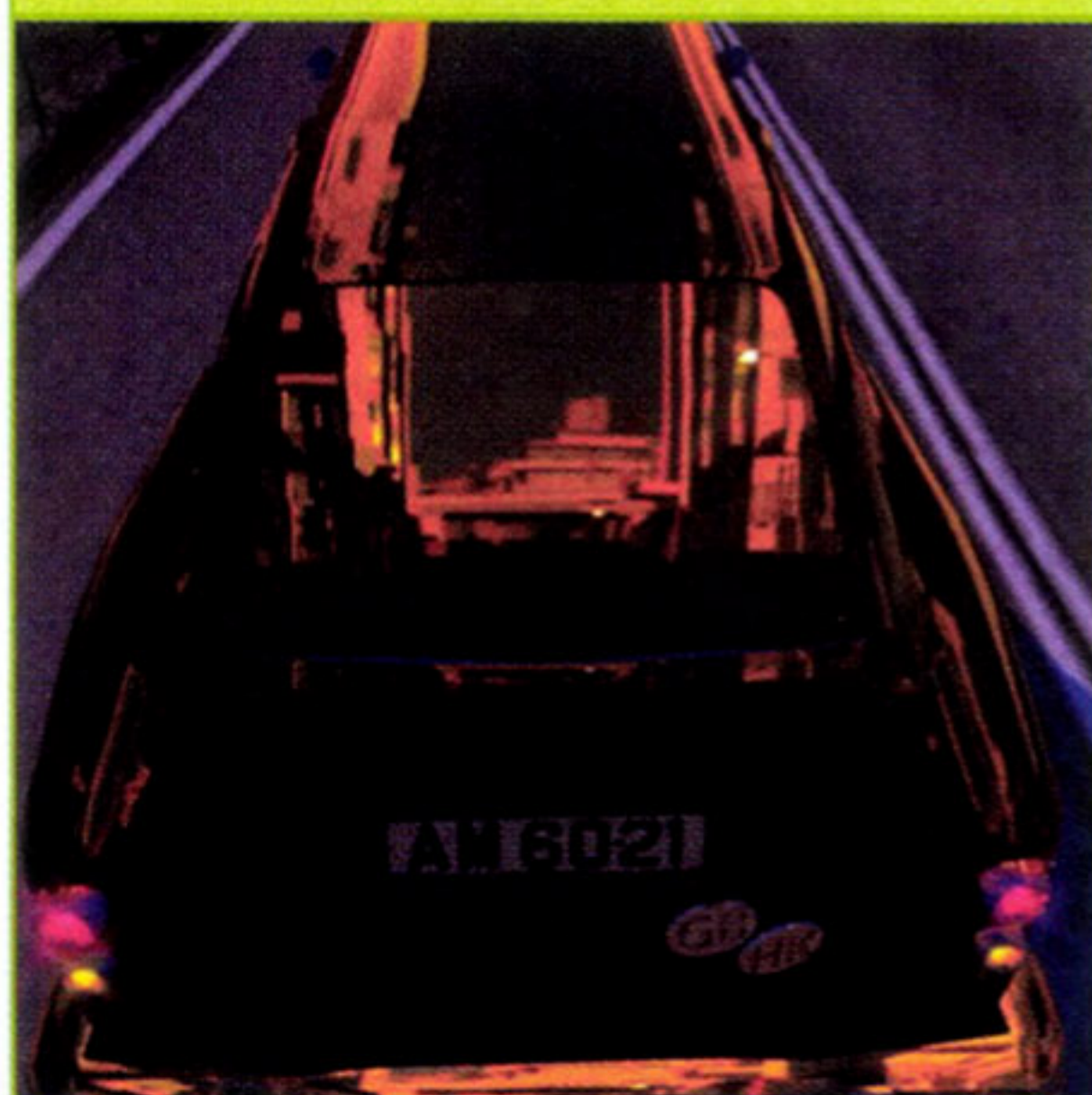
**The game is tough, but some levels are too easy.**



■ Golden brown, texture like sun. Lays me down.

## I parked my cah in Kowloon Yahn

The vehicles in *Wreckless* are unlocked gradually, and initially they can only be driven by either "New Spies Ho and Chan" or "Hong Kong Police and Inspector." (Yes, those are the characters' names. Really.) An unlockable cheat lets you use the other team's vehicles later. Vehicle choice is very far from cosmetic too, since initially unimportant vehicle traits, like turning radius and braking distance, end up being more important than top speed and mass. You have to choose the right tool for the right job.



■ Absolute vehicular madness!

## THE VERDICT

### Graphics

A new look and a new level of ambition for the driving game. There's simply never been anything like this.

### Immersion

Switch the camera to first-person view and you're there.

### Sound

Funky, occasionally hip, techno track, but sound effects and voiceovers aren't quite as good.

### Design

Changes wildly on a mission-by-mission basis. Sometimes inspired, sometimes tired.

### (+) Good,

### (-) Bad,

### (?) Perplexing

+ Most technically advanced graphics engine to date.

+ Frenetic, fast-paced, and varied.

- No two-player mode.

- Too short and easy.

- Some scrappy level designs.

? No soundtrack select option.

Official Xbox magazine verdict

9.1  
10.0

an almost obscene reliance on the Xbox pixel-shading abilities. Take a look at the screenshots on this spread. Every object you see, every pedestrian, and every vehicle is fully animated, behaves realistically, and is self-shadowing, fully rendered in 3D, and often deformable.

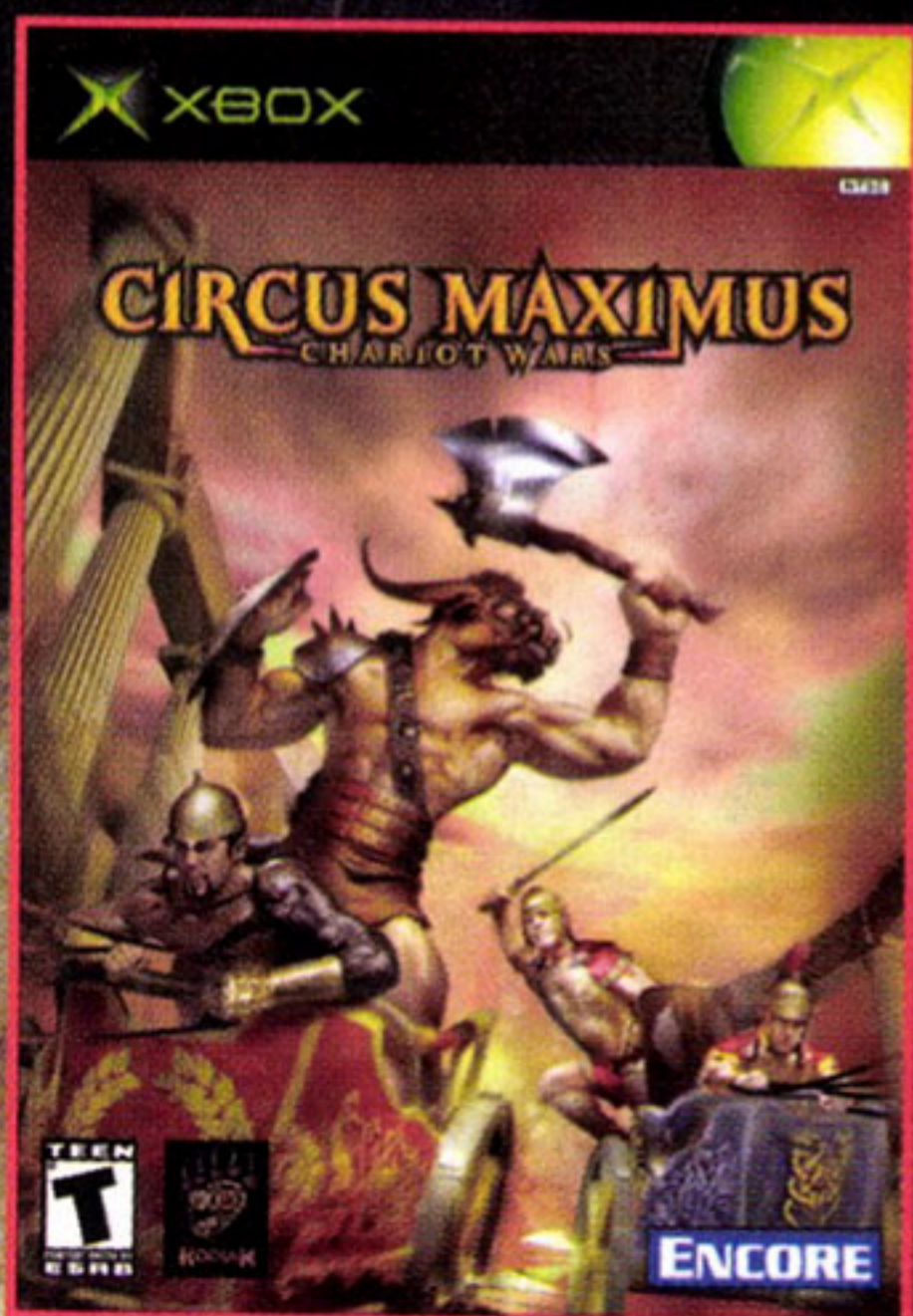
So to put that in perspective, people won't just run or leap out of the way, they'll flatten themselves against a wall if there's no escape route. Vehicles don't just careen off your car in an impact, their windows shatter and spider, their hoods fly off, or they'll brake to avoid you, and the car will dive on its suspension. Often you only catch these details in replay mode, but seeing the sunset shadow of your car cast across a pedestrian's arm is something else. And don't even get us started on the water. A nighttime vista of a casino boat reflected in the near-calm Hong Kong Harbor is astounding. If only there were time to stop and gaze.

Hong Kong is laid out in all its tightly-packed, chaotic splendor and you can go almost anywhere you like. In fact, were it not for strictly enforced time limits, you could simply cruise around the city forever, smashing your way into the Hong Kong Traffic Department's annals of insanity.

This means that shortcuts abound, and using them will eventually become second nature. Simply following the arrow or radar often won't cut it. You'll have to think fast, plan ahead and eventually learn the layout of the city. One shortcut involves smashing into a mall, driving up two escalators and bursting through a plate glass window onto the traffic below. The variety of play, including obstacle courses, photo shoots, midnight races and stunt driving is staggering. *Wreckless* is a work of art, and for its few, but glaring failings, it's still a stunning achievement.

- Frank O'Connor

"Boys! No weapons on the coffee table!"



ONLY ON  
XBOX

FEBRUARY 2002

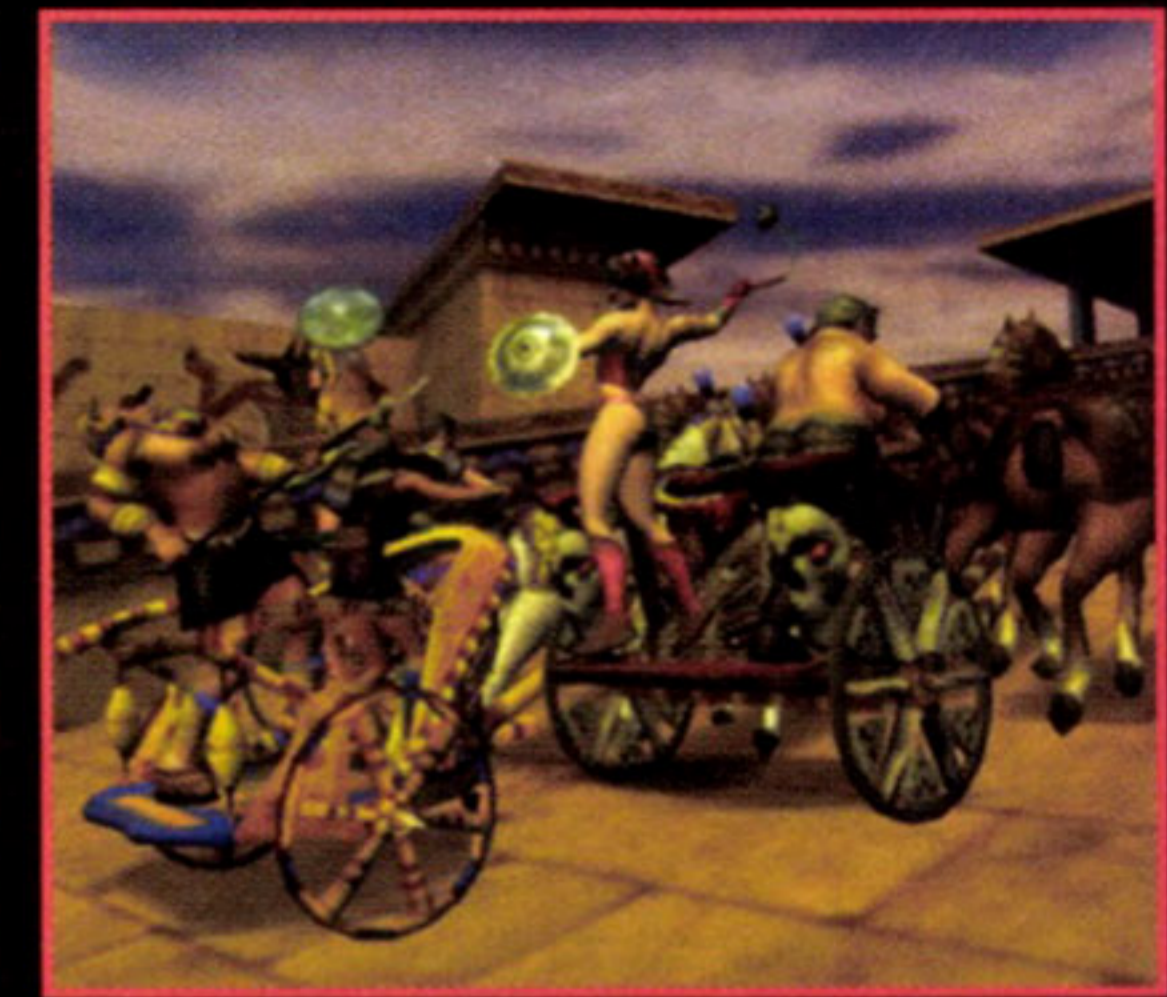


# CIRCUS MAXIMUS

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Suggestive Themes  
Violence

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Go really fast. If something gets in your way, turn

# SSX Tricky

DEVELOPER EA CANADA | PUBLISHER EA SPORTS BIG | MULTIPLAYER TWO-PLAYER

WEBSITE [SSXTRICKY.EA.COM](http://SSXTRICKY.EA.COM) | EXTRAS DOLBY 5.1

**D**on't let the screenshots deceive you, this isn't your average snowboarding sim. *SSX Tricky* foregoes the peaceful euphoria of cruising down the slopes and instead throws you into a cutthroat race down some of the wildest mountains ever devised. Purists may not approve – but who cares? It's an absolute blast to play.

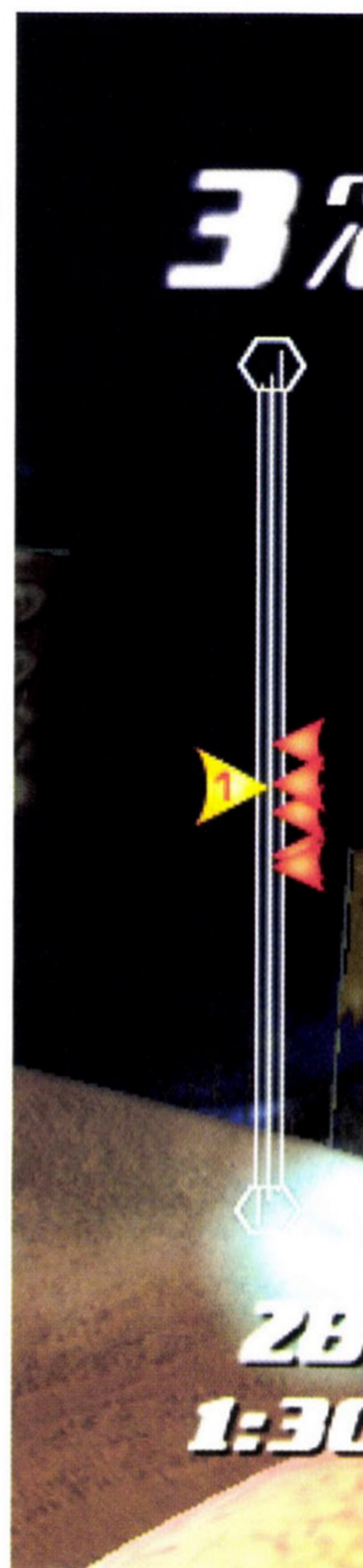
The finely tuned play mechanics are what

make the game so astonishingly fun to play. Your boarder's response feels perfect no matter what surface you're on (powder, ice, etc.) and the trick system is challenging but still remarkably fun. The controls may look intimidating at first (*SSX* utilizes both of the analog pads, the digital pad, and several of the buttons), but the learning curve isn't as steep as you might think. In fact, with a little practice, it won't be long before you're

shooting down the slopes, throwing punches at the opposition and doing complicated tricks like a pro.

What's more, even *after* you master the racing, there's still a "showoff" mode to string tricks together and hit multiplier icons to get high scores. Earn a medal in either mode and you'll unlock new tracks, pump up your character stats, and earn new boards. There's a tremendous amount of content to be had,

■ The characters each have their own personalities and will even quip at each other by name while they're racing.



■ Rivalries form depending on your behavior. We were very aggressive, so everyone was our enemy. It made us sad.

■ Maximize your stunt meter and Run DMC will chime in to cue the fact that you can now perform the game's uber tricks – tricks so reality-defying that they had to use a German word to describe them! Those crazy Germans!



1113

Tricky



33 mph  
1:44.82

1770

11100

Tricky

■ A quasi-new look for an old favorite – *SSX Tricky* still comes out on top.

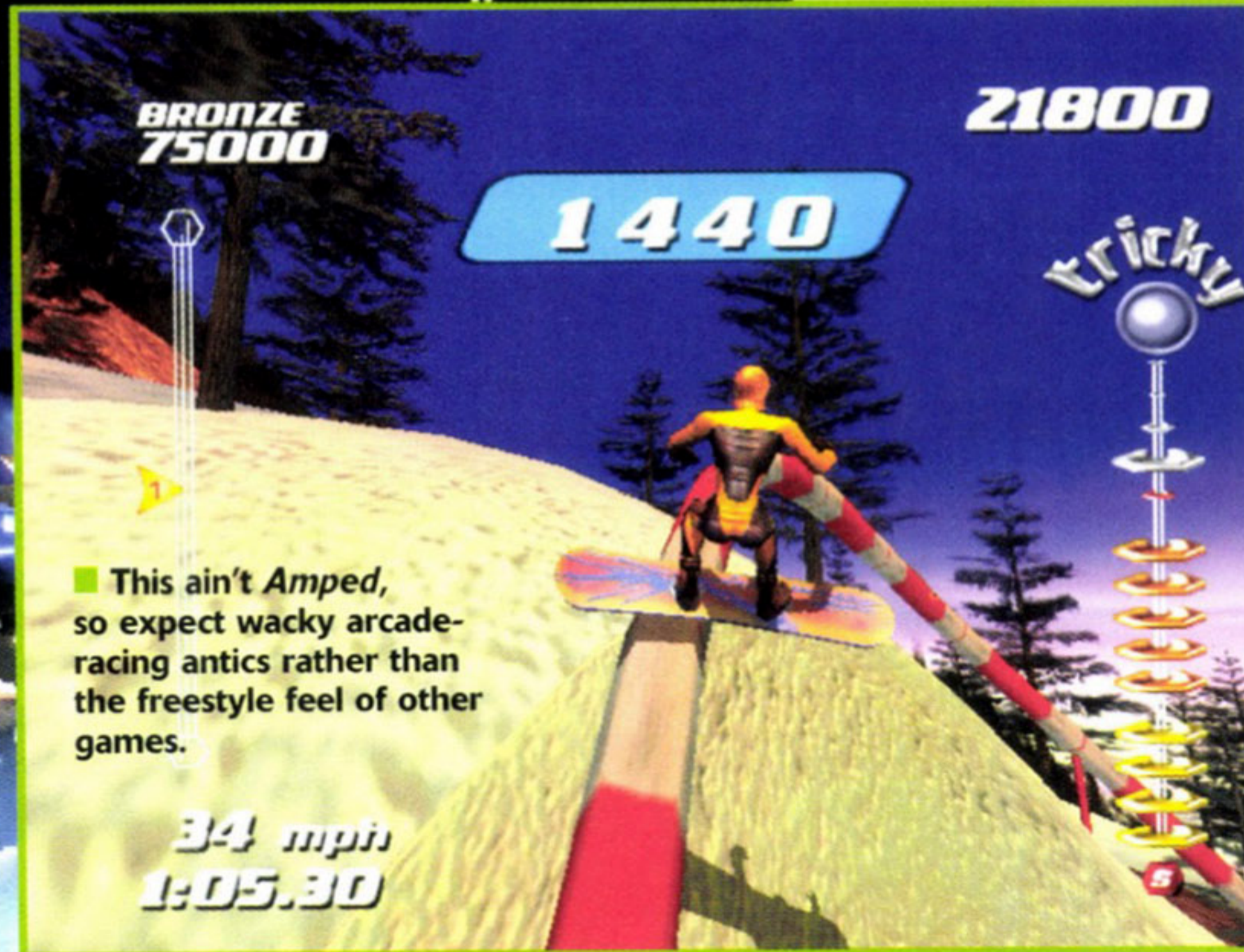
THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Bright, colorful, and cartoony. If it weren't for that darn choppiness...

**Immersion**  
The world of *SSX* comes complete with cheering audiences, trash talking competitors, and some innovative track layouts. Yeah, we were pretty drawn in.

**Sound**  
Great interactive music's complemented with just the right amount of well done supporting sound effects.

**Design**  
All the disparate elements – speed, snowboarding, punching people – have been perfectly blended together to create an enthralling white-knuckle racing experience. And hey, the Trick mode is fun too!



BRONZE  
75000

21800

1440

Tricky

■ This ain't *Amped*, so expect wacky arcade-racing antics rather than the freestyle feel of other games.

34 mph  
1:05.30

**SSX Tricky's got all the speed a racing fanatic possibly needs...**

and while most players won't want to beat the game with all 12 characters, it still adds a lot of replayability.

Our biggest caveat is that there are still moments when the framerate drops dramatically despite the fact that the game doesn't seem to be pushing the Xbox very hard. Sadly, this is almost always during an extremely intense moment when you are duking it out with other riders on a confined piece of track. Despite this, *SSX Tricky* is still a gem. It's got all the speed a racing fanatic needs, all the technique a gamer can handle, and a unique sense of style to call its own.

– Blake Fischer



3 7/8

CHECKPOINT  
890

5540

35 mph  
0:42.71

■ While there are some quibbles over the lack of Xbox tweaking for this PS2 port, *SSX Tricky's* gameplay still shines through.

**Director's cuts**

If you want to take a break from the action, you can always go to the DVD features section and check out the "making of" movies. In these, the team discusses the creation of *SSX Tricky's* levels, characters, music, tricks, and more. It doesn't go into a whole lot of depth, but it's definitely worth watching if you ever wanted to see some of the stuff that goes into making a videogame.

- (+) Good.
- (-) Bad.
- (?) Perplexing
- + Great level design.
- + Tons of stuff to unlock.
- + Better looking than the PS2 version.
- No Xbox extras.
- Some slowdown – not much, but it's still there.
- ? Why does an Xbox version of a PS2 game still drop frames of animation?

Official Xbox  
magazine  
verdict  
**8.7**  
10.0

■ **BLAKE'S REAL DEAL:** How did Blake break his toe? While he was walking up the staircase in his home, he nearly dropped his Xbox. In the process of saving it, he stumbled and bent and broke his toe on the stair. Horrible, really. The Xbox was fine.

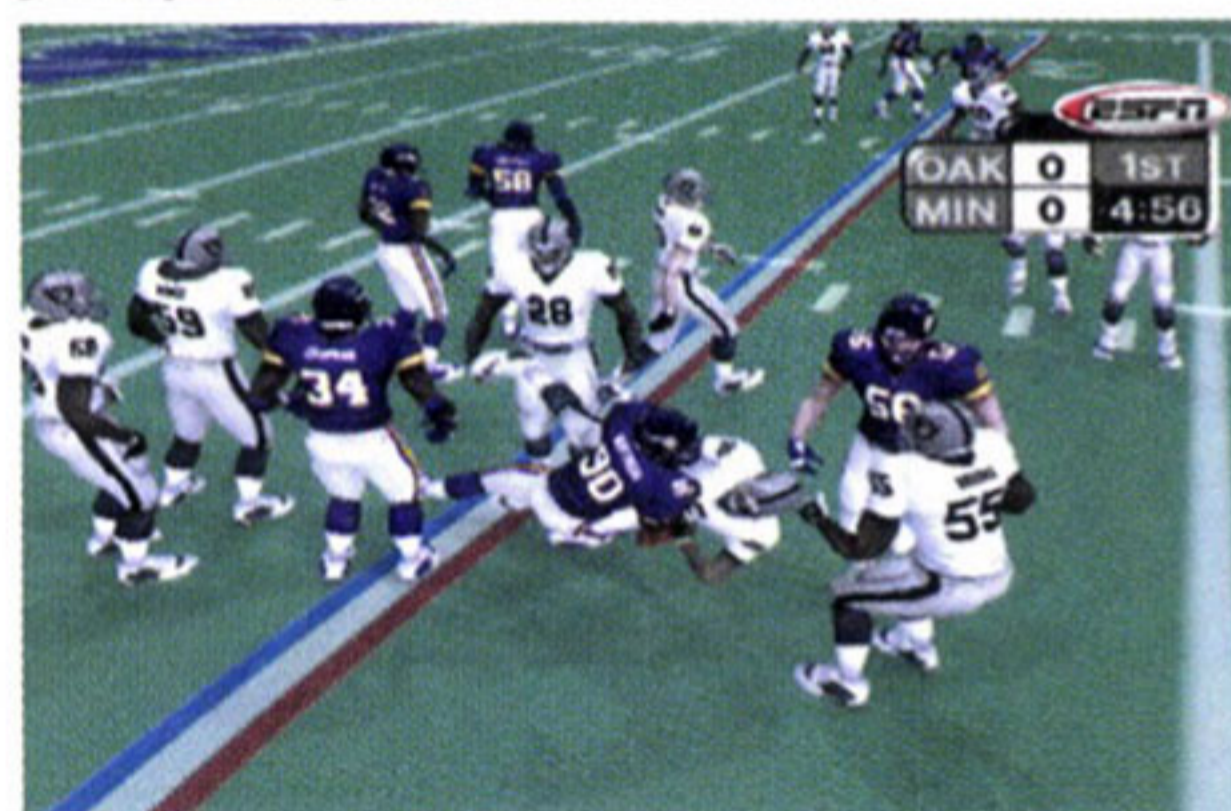
A good attempt that just sails wide right

# ESPN NFL Primetime 2002

DEVELOPER **FARSIGHT STUDIOS** | PUBLISHER **KONAMI** | MULTIPLAYER **1-4 PLAYERS**  
WEBSITE **WWW.KONAMI.COM**



■ Unnecessary tickling... That's a fifteen-yard penalty and loss of down.

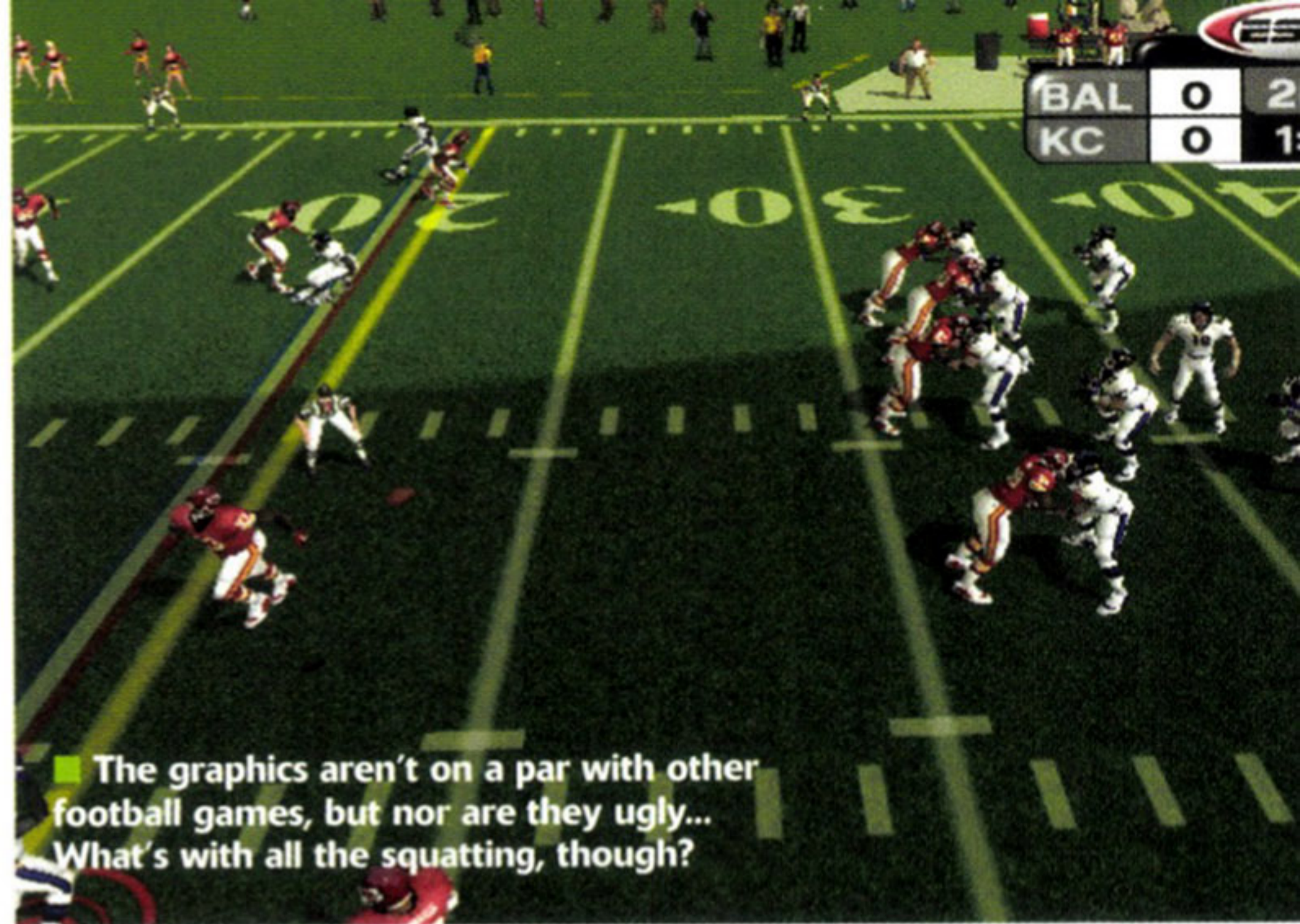


■ Stick with the running game and win.

**T**o Konami's credit, *ESPN NFL Primetime 2002* is one of its better sports-game efforts in recent years (knowing the ESPN franchise's videogame heritage, this isn't saying much). Unfortunately, the football sub-genre is stacked with talent, relegating *Primetime* to fourth-string status behind All-Pros like *Madden 2002*, *NFL2K2*, and *NFL Fever 2002*.

Nearly every facet of *Primetime*, from the Franchise mode to the gameplay, is at least competent, and at times quite good. In fact, if this were the only football game available for the Xbox, it wouldn't be a tragedy. The problem is that we've been spoiled by three of the most fun and polished games around, making every one of *Primetime's* flaws that much more noticeable.

For the most part, the game holds its own in the graphics department. The



■ The graphics aren't on a par with other football games, but nor are they ugly... What's with all the squatting, though?

player models look a tad blocky, but are nicely detailed with good-looking textures. The stadiums look good and have plenty of detail, both in the crowd and on the sidelines. Many of the animations are excellent, but a few odd-looking tackles and weird throwing angles by quarterbacks are apparent. Unlike the totally lifelike player movements of the competition, however, *Primetime* tends to look like it's moving a little too quickly, akin to old film footage from the '20s and '30s.

Gameplay skews rather heavily toward an arcade style, with lightning-quick changes in direction from the players and leaping tackles from five yards away. Running the ball is quite effective and enjoyable, but the passing game definitely needs some work. Wide-open players get hit in the chest and drop the ball way too often, and you never seem to know the rhyme or reason as to why a pass was caught or dropped. On longer routes, receivers have a habit of giving up on the ball, too.

Football fans are certainly spoiled these days, and *Primetime* may find its slot switched to that of the late-night infomercial. We do hope, though, that it won't discourage Konami from coming back next year for another try, as the franchise finally shows a bit of potential.

— Rob Smolka



■ "Coach, I can't wait 'til halftime to go to the bathroom. I drank too much Gatorade."

## THE VERDICT

### Graphics

Except for a slightly "Keystone Kops" feel to the action, it looks like there's a real football game happening on your TV screen.

### Immersion

You'll get lost in the Franchise mode, and the quick-playing games ensure that you'll never be bored.

### Sound

Chris Berman and Tom Jackson are better than *Madden's* and *Fever's* crews, but at times sound like they're mailing it in. Atmospheric sounds are on par with other games.

### Design

Offers everything a good football game should, and does it with reasonably good style.

(+) Good.

(-) Bad.

(?) Perplexing

+ Fast and fun gameplay.  
+ Responsive controls.  
+ Well-done Franchise mode.

- Passing game has a few kinks.

- Movement a little herky-jerky at times.  
? Why must I switch to my preferred defensive player on each play? Where's the player lock button?

Official Xbox Magazine Verdict

7.1  
10.0



■ The players look blocky, but their textures are detailed and sharp.



200 Miles Per Hour. 1000 Decisions Per Second. >>



>> Catching air in SF. Looks good, earns style points and offers tasty view. But you lose lap time and possibly your bet. What do you do, pally?



>> Powersliding. It earns points, but increases risks. A.K.A. crashing. And crashing equals dents. Equals less kudos. Equals loser. Better think fast, chief.



>> Welcome to NYC, circuit #178. Virgin run and you're off pace. You can learn the line. Or just go for style points. Again, your call, tough guy.

With over 25 cars, 4 cities and 200+ circuits,  
what will you do? It all depends:

What's driving you?

**PROJECT GOTHAM**  
RACING™

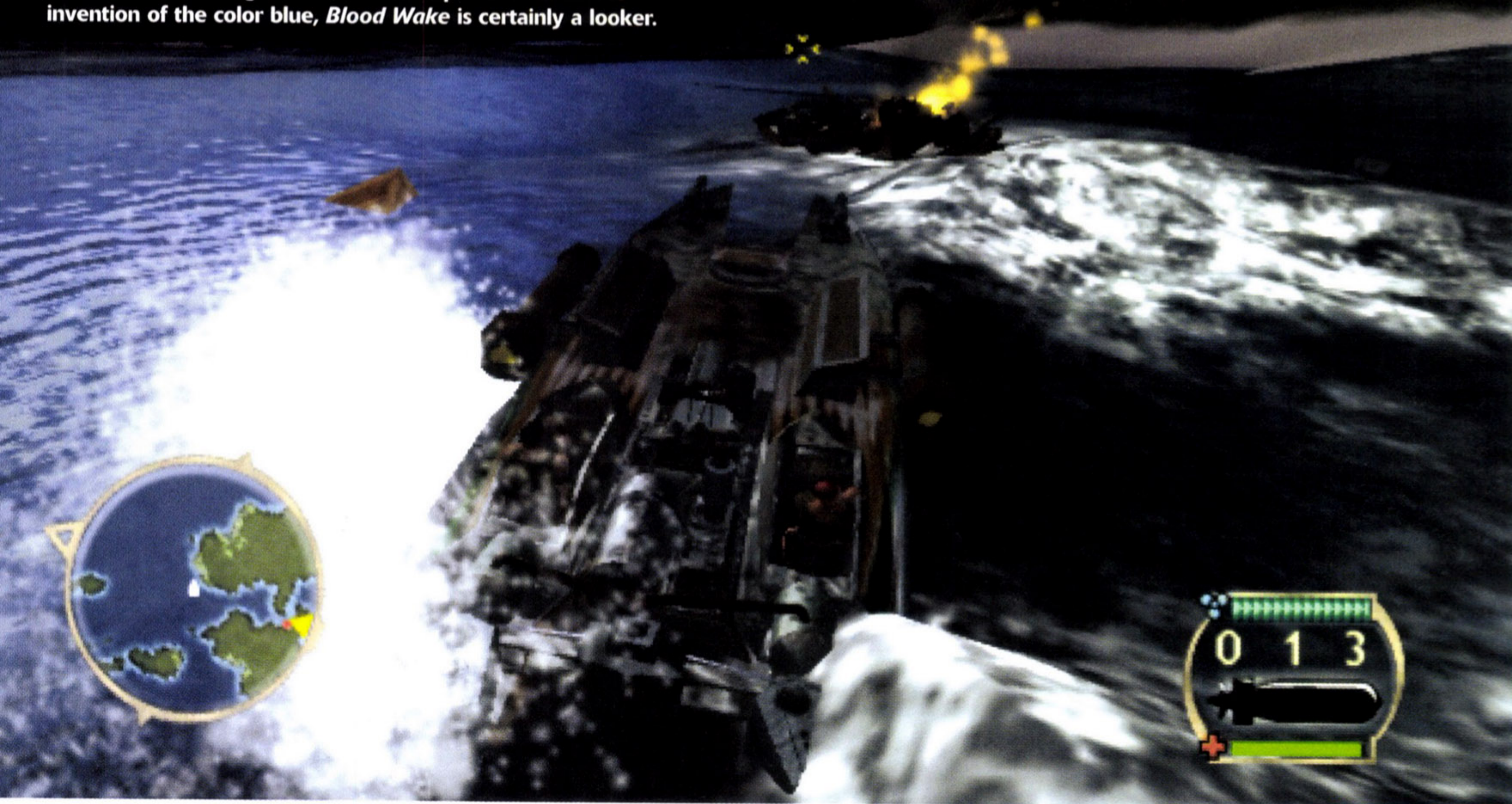
[microsoft.com/games/projectgotham](http://microsoft.com/games/projectgotham)



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■ The most stunning achievement in aquatic art since the invention of the color blue, *Blood Wake* is certainly a looker.



Beautiful like an ocean, deep like a kiddy pool

# Blood Wake

DEVELOPER **STORMFRONT STUDIOS**, PUBLISHER **MICROSOFT**, MULTIPLAYER **1-4 PLAYERS**  
 WEBSITE **WWW.BLOODWAKE.COM** † EXTRAS **DOLBY 5:1, HDTV SUPPORT**

**F**rom the moment I first laid lustful eyes on *Blood Wake*, I was dying to get my hands on it. After all, what could go wrong? The most beautiful water, realistic waves, and nonstop action... It'll be like *Twisted Metal* meets *Wave Race*... Perfect. Or so I foolishly thought. In the end, *Blood Wake* was kinda like that date with the Morris twins – beautiful, just what I dreamed of, but ultimately it didn't go anywhere.

The moment you gently insert *Blood Wake* into your Xbox, you're greeted with a graphical showpiece from start to finish. The water is absolutely unreal, the boats (enemy and yours) are done with incredible detail, and the water physics are just too good to believe. Unfortunately, the game and story wrapped around this wondrous engine aren't worthy of the visual splendor.

It's not that the gameplay is bad, it's just nothing special and it changes very little

from the first level to the last. Of the 27 missions, only one or two actually require a different type of gameplay. Almost all of the missions involve you (in a boat – duh) firing torpedoes at boats or rockets at land targets. The number of boats, turrets, mines, etc., change but the basic play mechanic doesn't. Far too often, gameplay becomes "shoot the red triangle with torpedoes and the yellow triangle with rockets," thereby turning the stunning graphics into mere backdrops for the

Defender-tastic gameplay. The worst part of it is that the best way to get through this incredibly tough game (even on Easy, it is TOUGH) is to sit still and fire from a distance. The enemy turrets and boats are deadeyes when you're moving but have incredible difficulty hitting you if you don't move an inch. This one little problem damages the game quite a bit. Going quickly and maneuvering well is actually discouraged, which is frustrating. I can't think of anything I'd rather *not* do in a boat/action game than sit perfectly still.

Another hole in the deck of *Blood Wake* is the story. It's my professional opinion that game makers should either spend time developing a good story or shouldn't bother doing one at all. To their credit, the developers of *Blood Wake* obviously didn't bother with the story, but they still left in

some of the lamest page-turning "story" elements in recent memory. It's all professionally done, but it's damn hokey and delivered in such a way that I doubt any single person in the free world will watch every story scene. I tried, but after a while I just couldn't be bothered.

It's my firm (and politically incorrect) belief that people who say "looks aren't everything" are generally pretty ugly and hoping for an in. However, after playing *Blood Wake*, I can honestly say that looks really aren't everything. There is definitely some fun to be had, and the graphics are a great showpiece for the technical prowess of the Xbox, but the game itself isn't anything new or terribly exciting. That being said, I'd still buy *Blood Wake* just to taunt my PS2-lovin' friends.

- Mike Salmon



■ **Enemy AI varies from incredibly dumb to super-smart. Hint: Sit still and land targets can't hit you, move and you're dead.**



■ **The boat-to-boat combat is conducted on both the high seas and in heavily fortified harbors.**



■ **Friendly AI vehicles constantly get in your way and then complain about it in annoying voice-overs.**

Watch it! They're on our side!

THE VERDICT

## Why not...

What a waste. *Blood Wake* had all the potential to be a stellar game, but in the end it was just an average game with great looks. We want to see *Blood Wake II* and here are some ideas for how to make it live up to the potential.

**ADD STRATEGY:** Rather than some awful voice-over telling you the plans, why don't you make the plans, decide what boats to deploy, then go into battle. Like *Sea Battle*, but all 3D and whatnot.

**IMMERSE US IN THE STORY:** Why not use the stunning graphics engine to deliver the story? It can't be any worse than the page-turning nonsense used for this game. It'd also be nice to get to know the characters on the boats, give them some animations, cut-scenes, etc.

**CO-OP:** A great way to extend the single-player life of a game is to include co-op play. Our preference would be for two people to be on one boat with one driving and firing machine guns while the other targets and fires the big weapons (think *Halo* and the Warthog).

**GET RID OF TRIANGLES:** Use the look function already in the game to spot enemy craft from a distance and completely eliminate the reminder that we're playing a game. Do real wars feature convenient red and yellow triangles? Didn't think so.

### FIVE THINGS WE LEARNED WHILE PLAYING BLOOD WAKE

5. When boats capsize they leave behind crates full of health and ammo. Sure does come in handy.
4. Boats handle like Cadillacs.
3. Never trust your brother.
2. Yellow triangles mean turrets, while red triangles mean boats.
1. The more beautiful the graphics, the greater the expectations for gameplay.

### Graphics

Amazing. The best water (and water physics) in the history of games. Period.

### Immersion

Incredible in-game graphics and a story told with the videogame equivalent of a bad novel on tape.

### Sound

The water and sound effects and even the music are spot-on. Too bad the voice-overs are so damn annoying.

### Design

Despite the wide-open nature of the ocean, the game keeps you on track and in the action. Unfortunately, there isn't enough variety in said action.

(+) Good.

(-) Bad.

(?) Perplexing

+ Water like you read about (in magazines like this).

+ Action is frenetic and fun (for a while).

+ Did we mention the water?

- Story sucks

- Handles a bit like a boat... a little too real.

? No LAN play? This game is dying for LAN play.

Official Xbox magazine verdict

7.4  
10.0

Official Xbox magazine Challenge

Are you game?  
Page 90



■ Holding the button down to charge your attacks (both physical and magical) makes it nearly impossible to hit the 180 degree turn button, but it's a fantastic tradeoff.

**Samurai-themed horror survives on Xbox – and it's better than ever**

# Genma Onimusha

DEVELOPER **CAPCOM** , PUBLISHER **CAPCOM** , MULTIPLAYER **NONE** , WEBSITE **WWW.CAPCOM.COM**  
 EXTRAS **DOLBY 5.1, HDTV SUPPORT**

**C**apcom's slightly re-titled port of its PS2 offering *Onimusha: Warlords* breathes fresh life into what was already an excellent survival-horror hack-'n'-slasher. With new enemies, items, and areas, a deeper battle system, and a higher level of challenge, this is definitely the better version. Sure, it's still derivative and more than a little dated, but it's also a damn fun game.

The plot of *Genma Onimusha* is textbook survival horror. The main character is Samanosuke, a master swordsman who, along with a female Ninja named Kaede, must rescue a kidnapped princess from a

horde of demonic captors. To better enable this bold effort, the game's battle system has been overhauled, and is much deeper now. Both physical and magical attacks can now be charged up into more damaging forms by holding down the attack button, making careful strategy as important to combat as quick reflexes. Also new are green souls, which grant Samanosuke the ability to become invulnerable for a time. Conversely, if an enemy absorbs a green soul, that enemy will become both more powerful and completely berserk.

Which is the last thing you need, since "Genma" apparently translates into English as

## The right tool for the job



While arcade-honed reflexes don't hurt, *Genma Onimusha* will be a lot easier for those who budget their magic and vary their choice of weapon to match the opposition. Groups of small, swift enemies are typically best dispatched with the quick yet low-powered Shippuu and its tornado-like magic attack. Larger, lumbering enemies are better matched with the lightning rod-like Raizan or the flame-spewing Enryuu, both progressively slower to use but more damaging. And don't even bother swinging a sword at the airborne wasp-demon boss Hecuba – just blow her out of the sky with your musket.



■ One of the few graphical changes comes in the form of several new sets of armor for Samanosuke, including the bitchin' Ogre armor shown here.



■ You + green souls = you're indestructible. Them + green souls = crazy, more powerful demons. Here's a hint: make sure YOU get the green souls.

THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Unfortunately, completely identical to the PS2 version. Slightly brighter gamma makes details look better on some TVs and washed out on others. HDTV support helps – if you have an HDTV, that is.

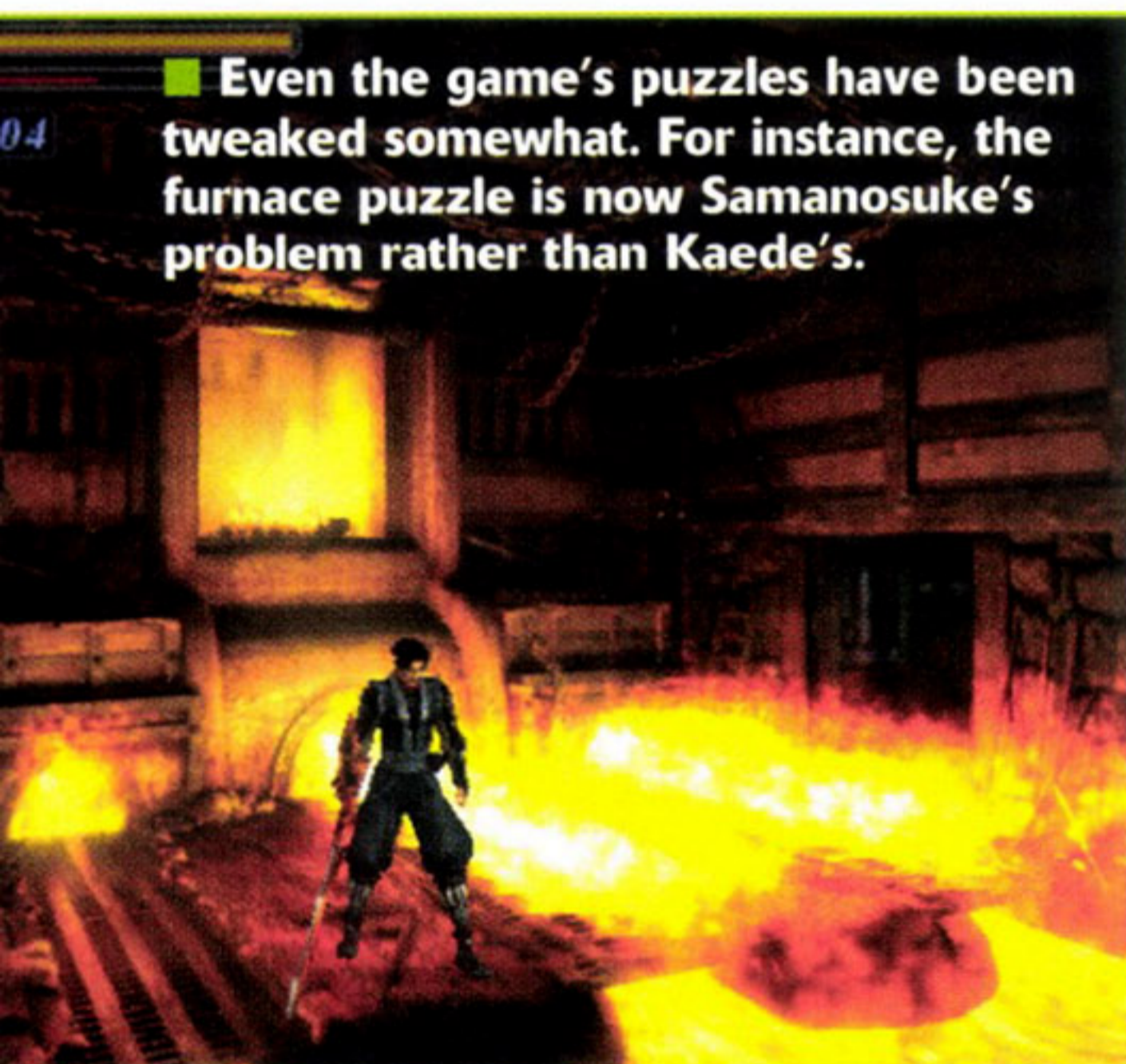
**Immersion**  
More of a hack-'n'-slash actioner than a *Silent Hill 2*-type psychological thriller, but it's still great fun to swing the big Ginsu at Hell's minions.

**Sound**  
Not much ambient sound and wooden dialogue, but a strong orchestral score, all of which sounds great in Dolby 5.1.

**Design**  
Dated. *Onimusha* began back in '97 as a title for the original PlayStation, so many of the advances in the past year or two (realtime backgrounds, analog control) are absent.

(+) Good.  
(-) Bad.  
(?) Perplexing  
+ Deeper battle system.  
+ Heavily tweaked for freshness.  
+ Ninja babe in super-short skirt.  
- Graphics, controls, and plot feel old-fashioned.  
- High difficulty, not for newbies.  
? The demon king's name is Fortinbras? Wasn't that a musketeer?

Official Xbox magazine verdict  
**7.9**  
10.0



■ Even the game's puzzles have been tweaked somewhat. For instance, the furnace puzzle is now Samanosuke's problem rather than Kaede's.

camera angles just can't compare to the real time environments, dynamic camera, and elegant analog controls of more modern fare like Capcom's own *Devil May Cry*. Plus, the game follows the standard "kill stuff, get red thing, unlock new area, kill more stuff, get blue thing, unlock new area" progression a

bit too closely. Nonetheless, this is a nicely enhanced port of a solid original game, and until *Devil May Cry* or *Onimusha 2* shows up for Xbox, it will remain our "carving demons into little bits with a samurai sword" game of choice. Well worth your time.

- Eric Bratcher

Scary dollies



Ayane is the most unique of Genma Onimusha's new enemies – never before have we moved so quickly from "I am a fearless, macho, demon-killing machine" bravado to pure, unadulterated, "run for your life" terror. Still, the concept of an evil doll is hardly new...



■ Despite popular belief, children most definitely should not play with these two.



■ A fuzzy, cuddly, ribbon-in-the-hair-wearing engine of bloodshed and destruction.



■ Even in low-budget made-for-TV films, dolls with pointy teeth are always scary.



■ Even a cute dolly is scary when it says "My name is Talky Tina, and I'm going to kill you." Even more so when the doll tries to follow through with it.



■ We loved *Toy Story*, too, but what was that thing?

"much, much harder." Nearly every location in the game now contains more demons, stronger demons, or both more and stronger demons. The apex of this enhanced difficulty is the Ogre Tower, a brand-new, 30-level optional dungeon that makes the game's critical path look like a day-care center. At its peak, you'll meet one of the game's new enemies – the brutally effective Ogre King. Other new enemies are samurai formed of glowing smoke as well as Ayane, a vicious little demonic geisha doll who pops up from time to time sporting giant blade hands – and who simply cannot be killed.

There remain some serious weaknesses in *Genma Onimusha*, largely symptoms of the game's dated origin. Its pre-rendered backgrounds, *Resident Evil*-style "forward, backward, swivel" control scheme, and static

Keep moving. There's nothing to see here

# Nightcaster: Defeat the Darkness

DEVELOPER **VR1 ENTERTAINMENT**, PUBLISHER **MICROSOFT**, MULTIPLAYER **NONE**  
 WEBSITE [WWW.XBOX.COM/NIGHTCASTER](http://WWW.XBOX.COM/NIGHTCASTER) EXTRAS **EXTRA HELPINGS OF FRUSTRATION**



■ You'll have to face down bosses for each of the elements (for example, this Ice Dragon) in the second half of the game.



■ You don't need a Ph.D to figure out which spell to use on which monster; it's all color-coded to make your life easier.

## The Bald and the Beautiful

Welcome to *Nightcaster's* version of a persistent world. You begin *Nightcaster* as a young mage, then at some point you'll find yourself a middle-aged man (complete with ponytail), and ultimately, an wizened wizard (deep, gruff voice included). Is there really a point to all this? Aside from boosting your spell powers a bit with each age shift, not really.



■ Young'un   ■ Drinking age   ■ Old fart

**W**hen people complain about next-generation games, you can usually separate them into distinctly different camps. Some games are all style and no substance, while others are so poorly realized that it's difficult to get to the actual gameplay. And then you have games like *Nightcaster*: technically proficient with an interesting gameplay system, but with no polish or soul to back it up. In a way, it's the worst possible combination – a promising game that does two things wrong for every one it does right.

Labeled as an action game, *Nightcaster* most closely resembles the arcade classic *Gauntlet*, with players controlling Arran, an up-and-coming wizard, with one analog stick, while directing his spell-casting aim with the other. The left- and right-triggers are used to cycle through Arran's numerous (and often visually impressive) spells, as well as to cast them. Each of the game's 12 chapters is filled with vast sprawling wastelands, packed to the hilt with enemies, items, and allies.

The real emphasis of *Nightcaster* is on knowing which elements to use for each situation and how to manage your Runes. Thankfully, almost every item is color-coded for your pleasure. Spells fall into any of four different categories: Light, Dark, Water, and Fire. Each of your enemies will fall into one of these handy groupings, as well, making it easy to pick which spell will do the most damage against each foe. And this is basically the whole of *Nightcaster's* gameplay "hook" in a nutshell.

Other than the drive to find new spells and the occasional item, there's really no sense of progression throughout the game other than the fact that you'll be facing a bigger number and variety of enemies in later stages compared to the earlier levels. And as impressive as some of the later spells can be, nothing can remedy the way in

which the game is structured. Save points must be "unlocked," for the most part, by battling a massive horde of creatures. If you die, you're screwed, and it's back to the last save point with your sorry hide.

We'll concede that there will be gamers who'll absolutely love *Nightcaster's* formula and that there's something compelling about pushing through to complete your spell collection. But *Nightcaster* doesn't reward the player enough for all the frustration you'll endure in order to finish the game. And the storyline... well, it's so poorly implemented through inconsequential cut scenes (did we mention that they rhyme?) and cumbersome "story scrolls" that you'll be more confused and bewildered than involved or immersed. In the end, though, *Nightcaster* is most heartbreaking because if done well, it could have presented itself as a game to be reckoned with.

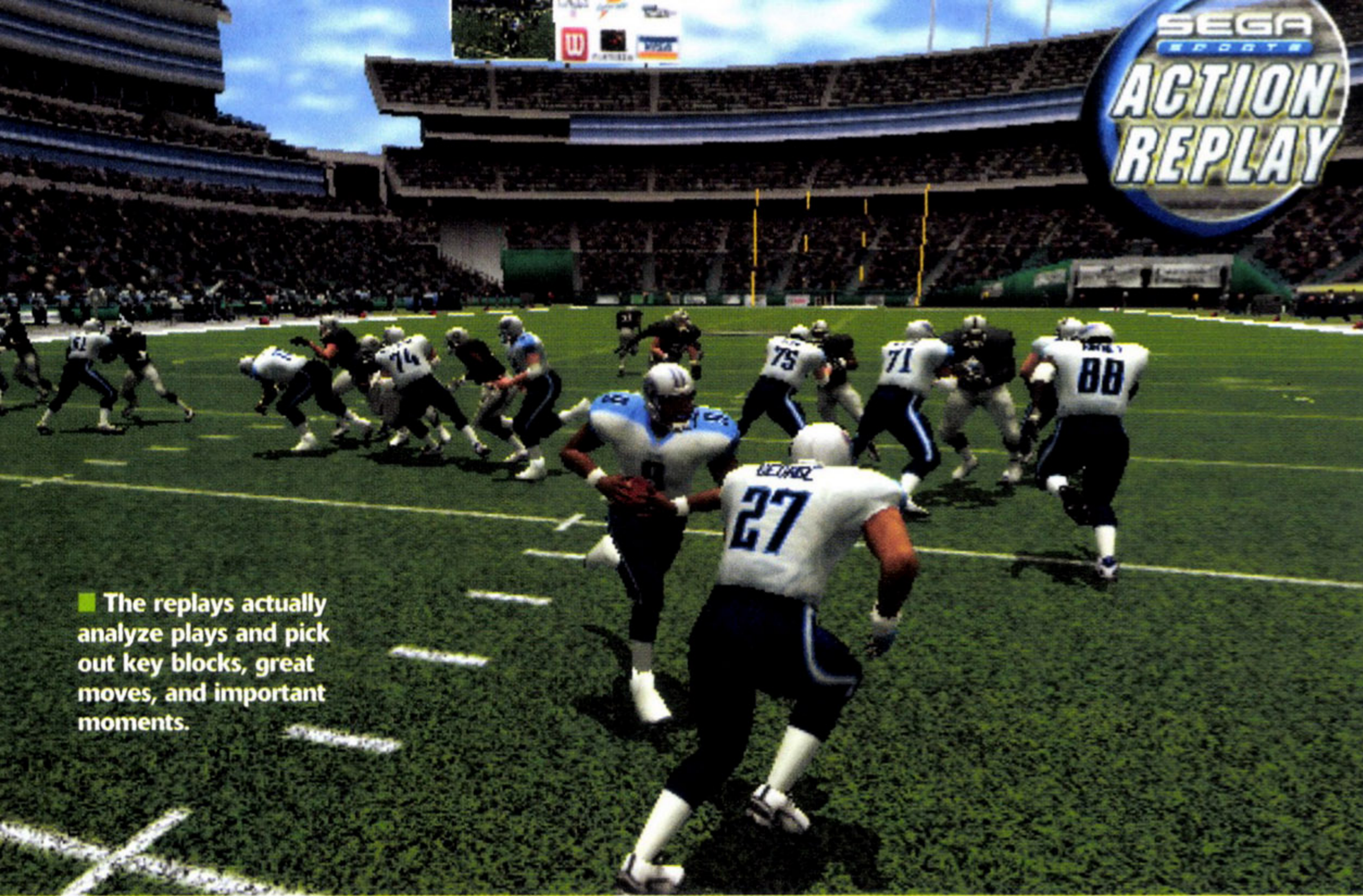
– Francesca Reyes

### THE VERDICT

<b>Graphics</b> A mix of good and blah with some beautiful effects but redundant textures.	<b>Immersion</b> Quasi-beautiful environments pull you in, frustration pulls you out.
<b>Sound</b> Repetitive soundtrack and sound effects, but quite nicely done.	<b>Design</b> Could've been so much better in terms of saving systems and narrative, but isn't.

- (+) Good.
- (-) Bad.
- (?) Perplexing
- + Great spell effects, especially later.
- + Impressive light sourcing.
- + Compelling spell system..
- Lack of polish and personality.
- Repetitive environments.
- Lame story segments.
- ? But I don't want to be an old man!

Official Xbox magazine verdict **4.9** 10.0



■ The replays actually analyze plays and pick out key blocks, great moves, and important moments.



■ "Listen, Officer, Michael Irvin's long gone."



■ The spins in NFL2K2 look almost real.

## Is the Xbox football heaven or what?

# Sega Sports NFL2K2

DEVELOPER VISUAL CONCEPTS, PUBLISHER SEGA, MULTIPLAYER 1-4

WEBSITE WWW.SEGA.COM EXTRAS NONE

If you're a football fan *and* an Xbox owner, you're literally in polygonal pigskin heaven. After all, three of the greatest football games ever made look and play best on the Xbox, including Sega's brilliant *NFL2K2*.

For starters, the game commentary is nothing short of extraordinary. Rather than use old-school TV commentators, Sega hired actors and recorded the most realistic and intelligent audio we've ever heard in a sports game. The commentators remember what happened earlier in the game, call up stats at just the right moment, and offer insight that's actually insightful (not just catch-phrases). But nothing compares to *NFL2K2*'s replays. We've watched hundreds, yet we're still impressed each time we see one.

While the graphics in *NFL2K2* are not as groundbreaking as the sound, the game looks much better than its PlayStation2 and Dreamcast counterparts. Those versions switch between high-resolution replays and low-resolution gameplay. Once you see the Xbox version's hi-res visuals running in

gameplay, you'll know why the Xbox is the best football-gaming console on earth.

As far as gameplay is concerned, *NFL2K2* features excellent AI, tight control, and a complement of special moves that skilled players can use to add yardage to almost every play. The passing game will frustrate those familiar with *Madden* and *Fever*, but once you learn the secret (lead the receiver), you'll shred defenses when you spot the open man.

Only two things keep *NFL2K2* from matching our scores for *Madden* and *Fever*. The first is the graphics, which don't quite measure up to the competition, and the second is depth. Even though *NFL2K2* has plenty of features, it just can't match the extras in *Madden* and *Fever*.

Despite these very minor issues, *NFL2K2* is a phenomenal football game that could easily be on the top of the heap next year. But to be perfectly honest, we're pretty darned happy with this year's version just the way it is.

- Dan Egger

## Head to head to head

The big three are all finally here. Let's see how they shake out:

### Madden 2002

Score: 9.0

- Strengths: Presentation, depth and polish.
- Weaknesses: It's a port and doesn't push the Xbox hardware.
- Perfect for: Gamers who can't get enough of the *Madden* series.

### NFL Fever 2002

Score: 9.1

- Strengths: Graphics, control, and an incredible use of the Xbox hardware.
- Weaknesses: Depth and presentation.
- Best loved by: Those willing to give a new franchise a chance.

### NFL2K2

Score: 8.8

- Strengths: Commentary, special moves, and instant replays.
- Weaknesses: Depth and graphics.
- Best loved by: Those familiar with the popular Dreamcast series.

## THE VERDICT

### Graphics

Although the game doesn't look quite as good as its Xbox brethren, it does look much better than any other version of *NFL2K2*.

### Immersion

Thanks to the amazing replays and commentary, no other football game feels more like a TV broadcast.

### Sound

The play-by-play is unmatched in the sports videogame world. It stays fresh even after countless hours of play.

### Design

Although this is multi-system port, it's a fantastically designed football game.

(+) Good.

(-) Bad.

(?) Perplexing

+ No sports game sounds better.

+ Great defensive and ball carrier control.

- The computer makes terrible play calls occasionally.

- Sega's in-game self promos can get overbearing at times.

? Where's the cool training mode that we loved so much in Sega's tennis games?

Official Xbox magazine verdict

8.8

10.0



Looks like the Ghost is toast. Let's just ride this "Bobsleigh" out of here before the Covenant finds us.



### The curl is mine

Curling apparently had its origin in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Scotland. During a bonspiel (curling match), curlers take turns sliding smooth 40-pound rocks down an icy lane, getting as close as possible to a pin some 38 yards away. As each stone glides toward the pin, the players vigorously sweep the ice in front of it with brooms in an attempt to guide its progress. Unusual, to be sure, but before you mock curling, remember – the Scots also gave us golf.

The official Low-Budget, Licensed Shovelware of the 2002 Winter Olympics

# ESPN International Winter Sports 2002

DEVELOPER **KONAMI**, PUBLISHER **KONAMI**, MULTIPLAYER **TWO-PLAYER SPLIT SCREEN, NO ONLINE PLAY**  
 WEBSITE [WWW.KONAMI.COM/MAIN](http://WWW.KONAMI.COM/MAIN) EXTRAS: [ONLINE SCORE REGISTRY AT WWW.RANKING.KONAMIUSA.COM](http://WWW.RANKING.KONAMIUSA.COM)

**K**onami's original *Track & Field* arcade game was instrumental (along with Activision's *Decathlon* and Epyx's *Summer Games* family) in establishing the Olympic-themed button masher as a great way to pound on a buddy. Unfortunately, almost 20 years later, the genre's puddle-deep, arcade-style gameplay is getting quite stale. Konami's cumbersomely-titled latest competitor is a typical example. It's not a horrible game; it's just far too familiar.

There are a total of 10 events in *ESPNIWS 2002* (good grief – even the acronym is bloated), and predictably, some are better than others. Among the best are two incarnations of ski jumping, a *Dance Dance Revolution*-style take on figure skating, and a halfpipe snowboarding event that (refreshingly) actually strives to set itself apart from *Tony Hawk* rather than copy it. Then there's Curling, a peculiar, frozen take on shuffleboard or horseshoes (see sidebar) that proves both refreshing and engaging

despite the fact that it moves at a snail's pace and seems completely out of place in this selection of events.

There are also plenty of problems, most of which smack of low-budget production. The various events' tutorials often leave out important information – how to leap out of the starting gate when skiing, for example, giving the game a strangely steep learning curve. The player's subsequent struggle is dutifully chronicled by bland, repetitive commentary, prompting the observation that the entire audio portion of the game, from the wimpy, disco-style menu music to the sparse in-game sound effects, is underwhelming at best. Sadly, the graphics are equally uninspired, full of flat textures, low poly models, and jerky animation. In this day and age of *Halo*-tastic (or for that matter, *Shrek*-tastic) bump-mapping, *Amped*'s sparkling snow, and *DOA3*'s models, this just isn't enough. Finally, *ESPNIWS 2002* is really meant to be a party-style multiplayer game, yet *Fuzion Frenzy* has a faster pace, quicker

loads, better music and graphics, more precise controls, support for four players (not just one or two), and 450% more choices of what game to play. The whole point of Olympic-style games is for multiplayer fun and it is absolutely unforgivable that this game only supports two-players – for that alone, we dock it a full point. Patriotic souls will surely appreciate *ESPNIWS 2002*, but the overall experience isn't anything new and isn't even as good as its predecessors.

– Eric Bratcher



Halfpipe snowboarding is among the more interesting events. It doesn't even rip off *Tony Hawk*.

## THE VERDICT

**Graphics**  
Bland. There's nothing here that even hints of the Xbox's power. Looks like a case of "port-itis" – was there a Dreamcast version?

**Immersion**  
The ESPN-style presentation looks good, but it lasts far longer than the actual events, thus dragging down the pace of the game.

**Sound**  
Too-sparse music and sound effects, and the announcer is boring. And repetitive. And repetitive. Did we say repetitive?

**Design**  
Uneven – some events are far better than others.

(+) Good,  
(-) Bad,  
(?) Perplexing  
+ Not all button mashing.  
+ Curling – it's true, curling.  
– Cruddy visuals and sound.  
– One or two players only.  
? The *Wipeout*-style acceleration zones on the "Bobsleighting" track.

Official Xbox  
magazine  
verdict  
**5.9**  
10.0



## All the reviews that are fit to print (and a few others too)

# Review roundup

Need some help navigating the software-filled waters of Xbox Land? Look no further than our handy Reviews Roundup, wherein you'll be able to pore over all the games we've reviewed in order to distinguish between the titles to buy and the titles to rent. And in some cases, those to avoid altogether.

Game	Publisher/Developer	Description	Issue	Rating
<b>4X4 EVO 2</b>	Take Two/Terminal Reality	Offroading in SUVs is made mediocre by bland design and lunar physics.	December 2001	<b>5.5</b>
<b>Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding</b>	Microsoft/Microsoft	With an emphasis on freestyling, <i>Amped</i> takes snowboarding games into new territory.	January 2002	<b>8.4</b>
<b>Arctic Thunder</b>	Midway/Midway	Snowmobile racer with power-ups a la <i>Hydro Thunder</i> is hampered by mediocrity.	January 2002	<b>5.9</b>
<b>AirForce Delta Storm</b>	Konami/Konami	Zippy flight shooter sequel with plenty o' missions pitched at genre fans.	December 2001	<b>7.1</b>
<b>Azurik: Rise of Perathia</b>	Microsoft/Adrenium Games	Good ideas badly implemented and constricted by poor graphics and design.	February 2002	<b>3.7</b>
<b>Batman Vengeance</b>	Ubi Soft/Ubi Soft	Port of a PS2 game featuring the cartoon-style caped crusader with little perks.	February 2002	<b>4.6</b>
<b>Blood Wake</b>	Microsoft/Stormfront Studios	Intense boat-shooting action that's a little too repetitive to enhance the great graphics.	March 2002	<b>7.4</b>
<b>Cel Damage</b>	EA/Pseudo Interactive	Crazy cel-shaded multiplayer shoot-'em-up that confuses more than entertains.	December 2001	<b>6.8</b>
<b>Dark Summit</b>	THQ/Radical Entertainment	A good mix of snowboarder and adventure game, slightly akin to an icy platformer.	January 2002	<b>7.0</b>
<b>Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2</b>	Acclaim/Z-Axis	A good trick structure and decent playability make this a fun treat for BMX fans.	January 2002	<b>8.7</b>
<b>Dead or Alive 3</b>	Tecmo/Tecmo	Glorious looking, fast-moving fighter with all the right moves to make it special.	December 2001	<b>9.5</b>
<b>ESPN NFL Primetime 2002</b>	Konami/Far Sight Studios	A decent pigskin game. But not enough to succeed against the holy trinity of <i>Fever</i> , <i>Madden</i> , and <i>2K2</i> .	March 2002	<b>7.1</b>
<b>ESPN International Winter Sports 2002</b>	Konami/Konami	Another link in the <i>Track 'n' Field</i> button-mashing chain that falters in formula.	March 2002	<b>5.9</b>
<b>F1 2001</b>	EA/EA Sports	Smooth handling racing port that could've used some TLC, but it still shines.	February 2002	<b>8.7</b>
<b>Fuzion Frenzy</b>	Microsoft/Blitz Games, Ltd.	Fast, furious, four-player party action that satisfies the old-school gamer and casual gamer alike.	December 2001	<b>7.8</b>
<b>Genma Onimusha</b>	Capcom/Capcom	A tweaked port of PS2 survival horror featuring tougher everything and cute ninja babes.	March 2002	<b>7.9</b>
<b>Halo</b>	Microsoft/Bungie	<i>Best. FPS. Ever. Okay, change that. Best. Game. Ever.</i> Surpassed the hype completely.	December 2001	<b>9.5</b>
<b>Kabuki Warriors</b>	Crave/Genki	A strangely bland fighting game featuring theatrical men in drag wrasslin' for cash.	January 2002	<b>5.9</b>
<b>Mad Dash Racing</b>	Eidos/Crystal Dynamics	Big tracks and four-player action make up a cute but tough platformer/racer for all ages.	February 2002	<b>7.3</b>
<b>Madden 2002</b>	EA Sports/EA Sports	While simply a port, it's a port of what was an amazingly great game to begin with. A classic.	December 2001	<b>9.0</b>
<b>Max Payne</b>	Rockstar/3D Realms, Neo	Violent and cheesy at the same time, this is mindless action at its best.	February 2002	<b>8.8</b>
<b>MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael</b>	THQ/Pacific Coast Power & Light	A mediocre port of a mediocre PS2 motocross racer. And that's about it.	February 2002	<b>6.5</b>
<b>NASCAR Heat</b>	Infogrames/Monster Games	Weird AI and incomplete NASCAR track selection don't hold back this racer.	December 2001	<b>8.2</b>
<b>NASCAR Thunder 2002</b>	EA Sports/EA Sports	A PS2 port that went un-enhanced but otherwise plays fairly well for hardcore NASCAR fans.	January 2002	<b>6.9</b>
<b>NBA Live 2002</b>	EA Sports/EA Canada	Strangely immersive hoops action that fares well, but it's not without some flaws.	February 2002	<b>7.6</b>
<b>NFL Fever 2002</b>	Microsoft/Microsoft	Spectacular debut football sim that fully exploits every advantage of the Xbox hardware.	December 2001	<b>9.1</b>
<b>NHL 2002</b>	EA Sports/EA Canada	Even if it's only a port of an average-looking PS2 game, it still rocks the rink.	January 2002	<b>8.6</b>
<b>NHL Hitz 20-02</b>	Midway/Black Box	Good looking, high-powered "extreme" hockey action, done surprisingly well.	January 2002	<b>8.4</b>
<b>Nightcaster: Defeat the Darkness</b>	Microsoft/VR1	<i>Gauntlet</i> -esque, singleplayer spell casting that falls short in too many places.	March 2002	<b>4.9</b>
<b>Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee</b>	Microsoft/Oddworld	A splendid, imaginative romp through Oddworld with plenty of inventive touches.	January 2002	<b>9.0</b>
<b>Project Gotham Racing</b>	Microsoft/Bizarre Creations	Spot-on arcade racing action with modes aplenty and a fun, refreshing points system.	December 2001	<b>9.0</b>
<b>Sega Sports NFL2K2</b>	Sega/Visual Concepts	Sega's own brand of football action comes to Xbox without any trimmings but flies high.	March 2002	<b>8.8</b>
<b>Shrek</b>	TDK/Digital Illusions	The ogre hero shows his pretty face with impressive bump-mapping, but <i>Shrek's</i> gameplay is sub-par.	January 2002	<b>5.3</b>
<b>Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams</b>	Konami/KCET	Super-creepy antics frame a stellar storyline told with Xbox-exclusive perks.	January 2002	<b>8.9</b>
<b>The Simpsons Road Rage</b>	EA/Radical	A Simpsons-licensed <i>Crazy Taxi</i> ripoff that fails to inspire but quasi-amuses.	January 2002	<b>6.2</b>
<b>Star Wars Starfighter SE</b>	LucasArts/Secret Level	A super "special" redux of an already solid game with extra Xbox goodies.	December 2001	<b>7.0</b>
<b>Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open</b>	Infogrames/Angel Studios	An only ordinary offroad racing game that unfortunately has no real high points.	January 2002	<b>5.6</b>
<b>Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x</b>	Activision/TreyArch	A solid version of an existing game that packs in enough extras to really shine.	December 2001	<b>8.8</b>
<b>TransWorld Surf</b>	Infogrames/Angel Studios	Quite possibly the most inventive, accessible, and incredibly fun surfer ever.	December 2001	<b>8.2</b>
<b>Star Wars Obi-Wan</b>	LucasArts/LucasArts	A <i>Tomb Raider</i> -esque romp with clever Jedi powers and 3D antics included.	February 2002	<b>7.0</b>
<b>SSX Tricky</b>	EA Big/EA Canada	One of the wackiest but best snowboard racers to grace consoles comes to Xbox.	March 2002	<b>8.7</b>
<b>Wreckless</b>	Activision/Bunkasha	What's more fun than smashing up a city in a monster truck as a good guy? <i>Nothing.</i>	March 2002	<b>9.1</b>



# Extended Play

Strategy ■ Reader Interaction ■ The Disc

**Beat 'em, berate 'em, and play 'em.**



**84**

## Multiplayer Halo strategy!

Or "How to Annoy Your Friends to Virtual Death."



**86**

## Project Gotham tips!

Unlock every car and track by utilizing our mad skillz.



**95**

## Win Genma Onimusha!

Not only a game, but a nifty t-shirt as well. Sweet.

# SSX Tricky

**The race for the gold gets a bit easier when you know the best path down the mountain**

Almost every track in *SSX Tricky* is riddled with shortcuts. While you can beat the race mode without them, using the right ones will make your life that much easier. The following pages contain our favorite from each track (which we've also cleverly named) and detailed instructions on how to find them. Use these well and you may just find yourself in first place a bit more often...

## GENERAL HINTS

### >>>> Boost the rails

If you use boost on a rail that acts as only a minor shortcut, you'll not only gain a few seconds on the opposition, but you'll also gain your boost back when you get off. Clever, huh?

### >>>> Use your fists

Knocking an opponent down gives you max boost, so take the time to master throwing out some punches whenever you pass an opponent. Keep in mind, though, that the more you strike out at opponents, the less likely they'll be there to help you up later on in the tournament. And so what if the riders aren't as friendly later – with any kind of luck, they'll never be able to catch up. And that's the best revenge, isn't it?

### >>>> Be cautious

While you're going to be tempted to do big stunts off of every surface, you shouldn't. More than one race has been lost because of an uber trick that didn't go off exactly as planned and resulted in a huge wipeout. Also, be careful when your uber meter is full – an accidental attempt at an ubertrick can put you in last place if you're not careful, Mr. Showoff.

### >>>> Use your boost

This may seem obvious, but don't finish the race with a full boost bar – it does you absolutely no good. Make sure you're constantly using your boost during the race instead. Make sure you do enough tricks to keep it coming (360s are fast, easy to do, and don't require much air), and if you get really low you can always punch out an opponent for an added boost.

## GARIBALDI

This track's pretty easy, but it still has a lot of big shortcuts. Done correctly, *The High Road* will be all you need to procure the gold, though (provided you don't screw up all the other sections of the track.)

>>>> **The High Road** – This is the best shortcut on the track, but it's a little hard to find. After you hit the second check point and the tri-jump there, keep an eye out to your left and you'll see the SSX sign for the shortcut. Veer off the track to your left, go through the sign, and hop on the rail there. The rail will eventually drop you on a track of your own – just go full throttle and keep jumping the gaps and you're home free.



◀ Smash the sign and there's a rail hidden right behind it. Hit your boost, hop the gap, and you're in good shape.

▶ The sign's not hard to find – you just have to keep an eye out for it.



## SNOW DREAM

This is a fast track that doesn't have a lot of useful shortcuts. The rails early on are neat, but we found that they were more trouble than they were worth. Instead, stay focused on racing and keep an eye out for the shortcut we highlight below.

### >>>> Out of Bounds

Look for an SSX sign on the left side of the track behind a fence at the second checkpoint. Use the jump in front to vault the fence and go through the sign. Now, aim for the rail that separates the left and right fork and hold turbo down. Follow the rail, drop to the next platform, and finally, jump the roof of the small structure in front of you.

## MERQURY CITY MELTDOWN

The problem with Merquy City isn't that there aren't enough shortcuts – there are tons – it's that most of them are moderately tough. Expect to crash a lot.

### >>>> Towering Trick Inferno

This shortcut is tough to find since it isn't marked by SSX signs. After you go over the huge snow-covered bridge and over all the glass jumps, you'll end up on normal track again. After the first big jump, you'll come to a hard right turn. If you look to your left, you'll see the police barriers there again. Go left (we found it easier to go on the right side of the car) and jump off the ledge there (it comes almost immediately) If you're going fast enough and you time your jump right, you'll land on a building top across the way and then drop off the other side. This isn't the easiest shortcut to master, but if you pull it off the results are more than worth it.

## TOKYO MEGAPLEX

This track is actually loosely based on an unlikely, but still very real, place. Just outside of Tokyo's Narita Airport is a massive indoor ski... um... plex. The giant ramp-shaped refrigerated building is so big, it needs its own power station.

### >>>> You're a Cheater

So here's a fancy yet frigid cheat to help you out. The tube to the top has two entrances. The top one takes you to the rails, while the bottom one takes you to the platform below the rails. If you miss the top entrance, take the bottom one, do your tricks while you're in the air, and then, as soon as you land and get the points, hit select. This reset will actually put you up to where you wanted to be. Sweet!

## ALOHA ICE JAM

This track is short, fast, and brutal. If you play your cards right, however, it's one of the easiest tracks to score the gold on thanks to the fact you can take shortcuts almost the entire way down. Best of all – they're not that hard to do. Find the penguins!

### >>>> Boom Tube

No matter what you do for the first part of the race, you'll be sitting pretty if you can pull off this medium-difficulty shortcut. Look for the giant monster head floating in the center of the track about halfway down the mountain. Jump into its mouth and you'll be put in a tube that takes you over a huge stretch of track. The catch is that it's in small segments so you'll have to make sure you don't fall out. We recommend not using boost here and jumping between each tube at a normal rate of speed. If you do make it to the end of the tube (which, sadly, isn't as easy as it sounds), you'll be treated to an immediate shortcut on your left – just follow the red SSX sign.

## MESABLANCA

This track is fast and the shortcuts aren't quite so obvious. Surprisingly, the best shortcut on the track is by far the easiest to get to, so pay attention and make sure you don't miss it.

### >>>> The Mines

This shortcut is easy. After the first checkpoint you'll see the blue SSX sign on your left. Crash through it and follow the somewhat narrow path into the mines. Once inside you can hop on a rail, hit turbo, and enjoy. It's interesting to note that if you miss this first entrance to the mines there is another one that comes up in just a few seconds – it's not as efficient a shortcut, however, and it's harder to do.



▲ This shortcut is great and it's super easy to find. Just look for the blue SSX sign at the checkpoint, follow the path behind it and...  
▲ ...Voila! You're in the mines! The mines of DOOM! Muhahahaha! Just kidding.



## ELYSIUM ALPS

This track is long, but features some great shortcuts. Keep an eye out for signs that point out quick jumps on banked turns, and there's also a small trail that shoots off the right side of the track near the beginning. You'll also want to make sure you don't get stuck at the large glass gates near the end. Play it safe, instead, and go over them on the sides instead of trying to jump the small openings on each one.

### >>>> Hold the Ice

The worst part about Elysium Alps is the long run on the ice, but if you know what to look for, you can almost skip the entire section. After you hit the second checkpoint you'll come to a very unique triple jump in the middle of the track. Right after this, keep your eyes peeled and find the red SSX sign on the left. Go through the sign, following the narrow path through the mountain gap and back on to the main trail. You'll see another red SSX sign directly in front of you. Go through this sign and proceed straight through this untracked section. Eventually you'll go off a cliff and land on an extremely useful alternate track. Keep your turbo going and make all of the jumps and you'll skip right over the ice.

▶ As soon as you see the triple jump, keep your eyes peeled for...  
▶ ...the red SSX sign nestled in the left corner. That's your clue that the shortcut is upon you!

## ALASKA

This is, by far, the hardest and most intense track in the game. It's not only incredibly long, but most of the shortcuts we found are incredibly hard to pull off. More often than not you'll miss the shortcut, crash, and fall behind. Still, we managed to find a fairly simple one that'll help you out.

### >>>> Better than Nothing

This shortcut is easy to find. After you cut across the ice field and go through the ice cave (you'll know when you get there), ignore the hard left at the bottom of the hill and instead veer right into the untracked powder. Continue down to return to the main track with loads more time on the clock.

### >>>> Crazy Hard

Finding this shortcut isn't too tough, but actually doing it without crashing is. After the initial drop-off at the start of the race, you'll go through a series of turns, another small drop-off, and then some more turns. Coming up next (about 40 seconds into the race) is a small platform jump with the left side higher than the right. Take the left ramp – into the icicles. If you do this right, you'll catch the corner rail (somewhere in the middle of the path) and can then jump off at the end – onto a secret path! You're troubles aren't over yet, as you still have to keep jumping and sliding between paths to stay on this shortcut. Good luck!



▲ If you can hit this rail, you're partway there – but it's still not going to be easy.  
▶ Even though this shortcut will put you in the lead, this track is still nowhere near done, so watch your back.



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**Codemasters** 

**GENIUS AT PLAY**



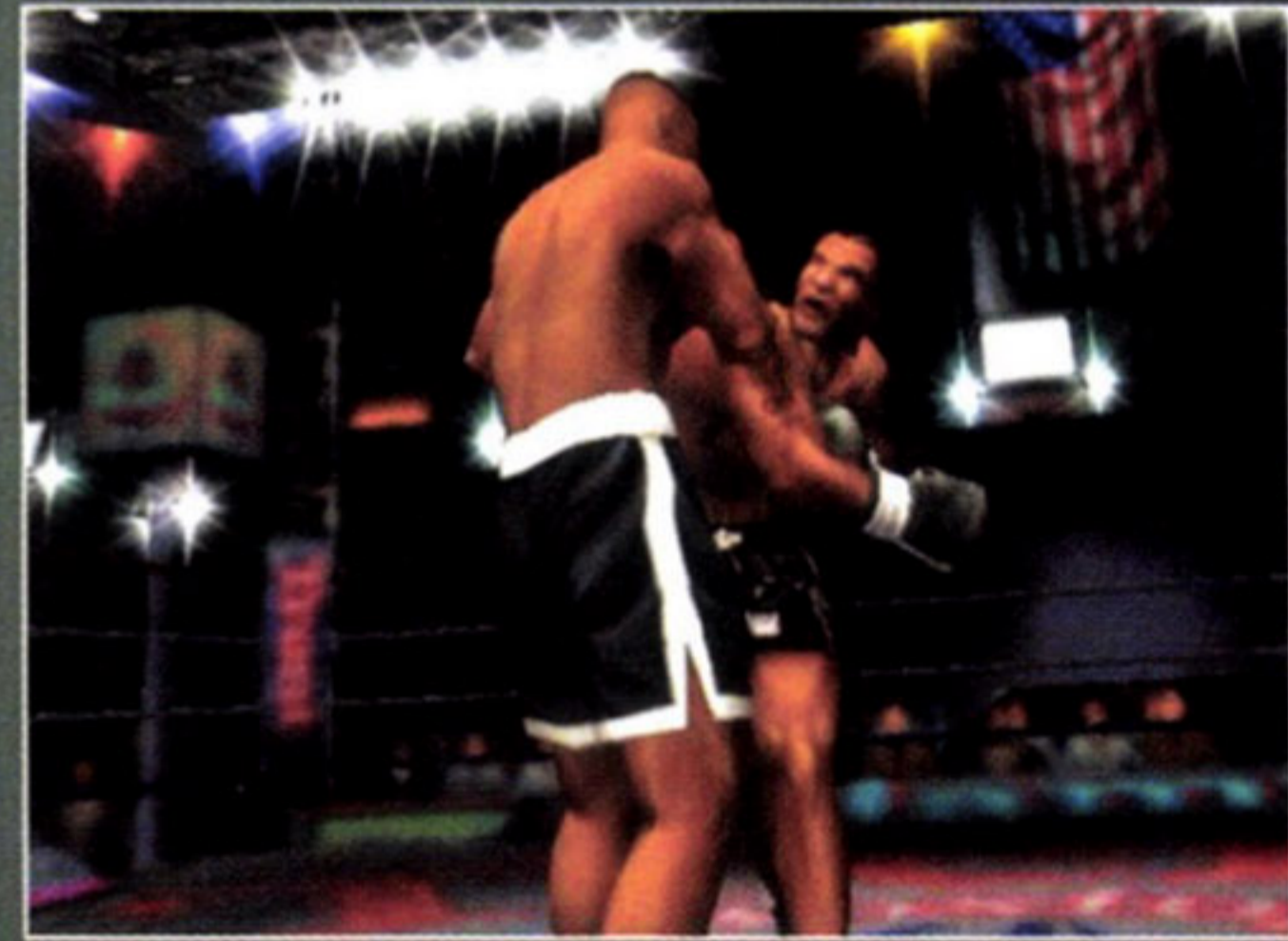
PlayStation 2



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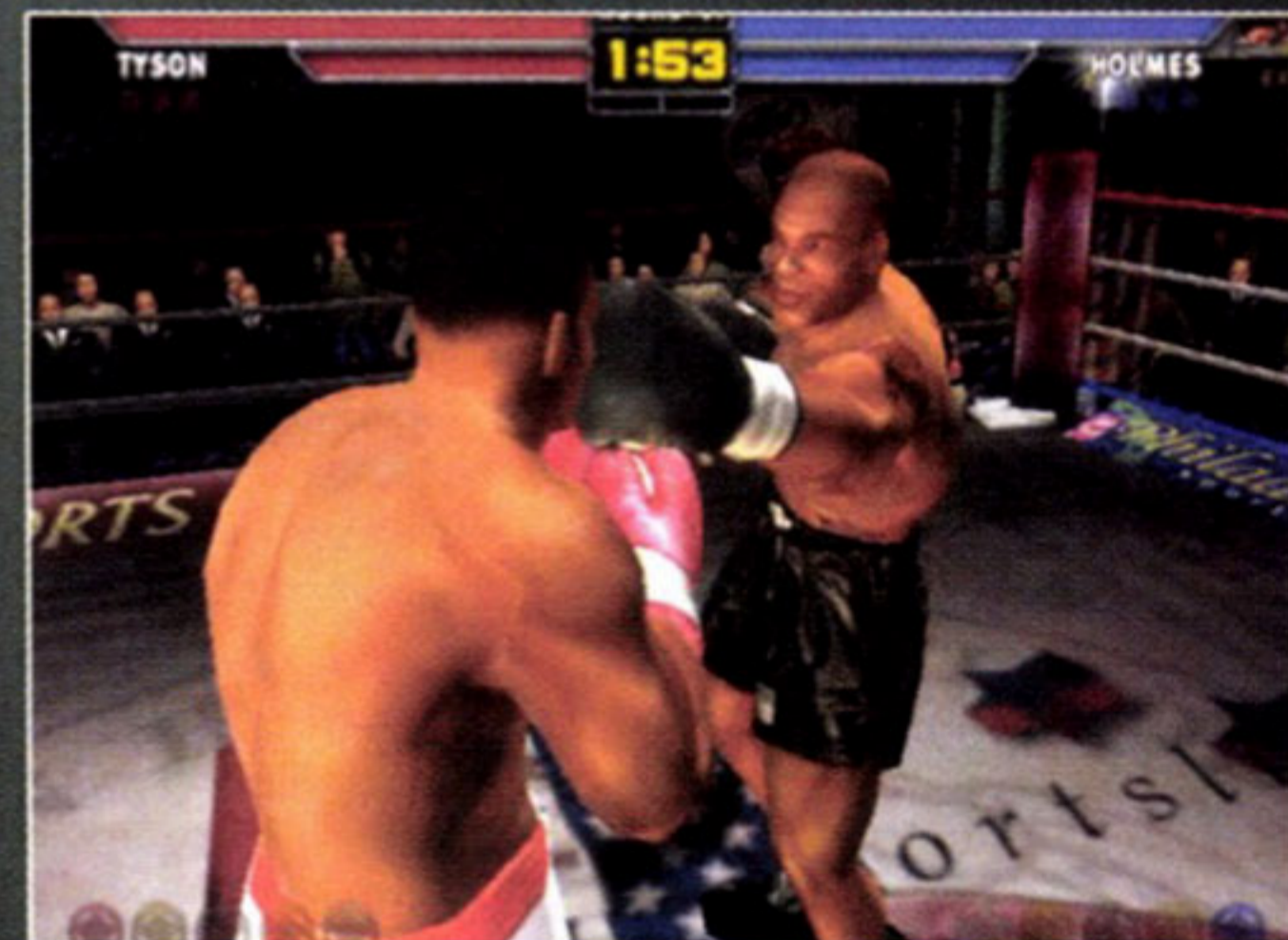


Rain hurt on your opponent with over 600 brutal power punches, illegal moves, signature blows and combos.



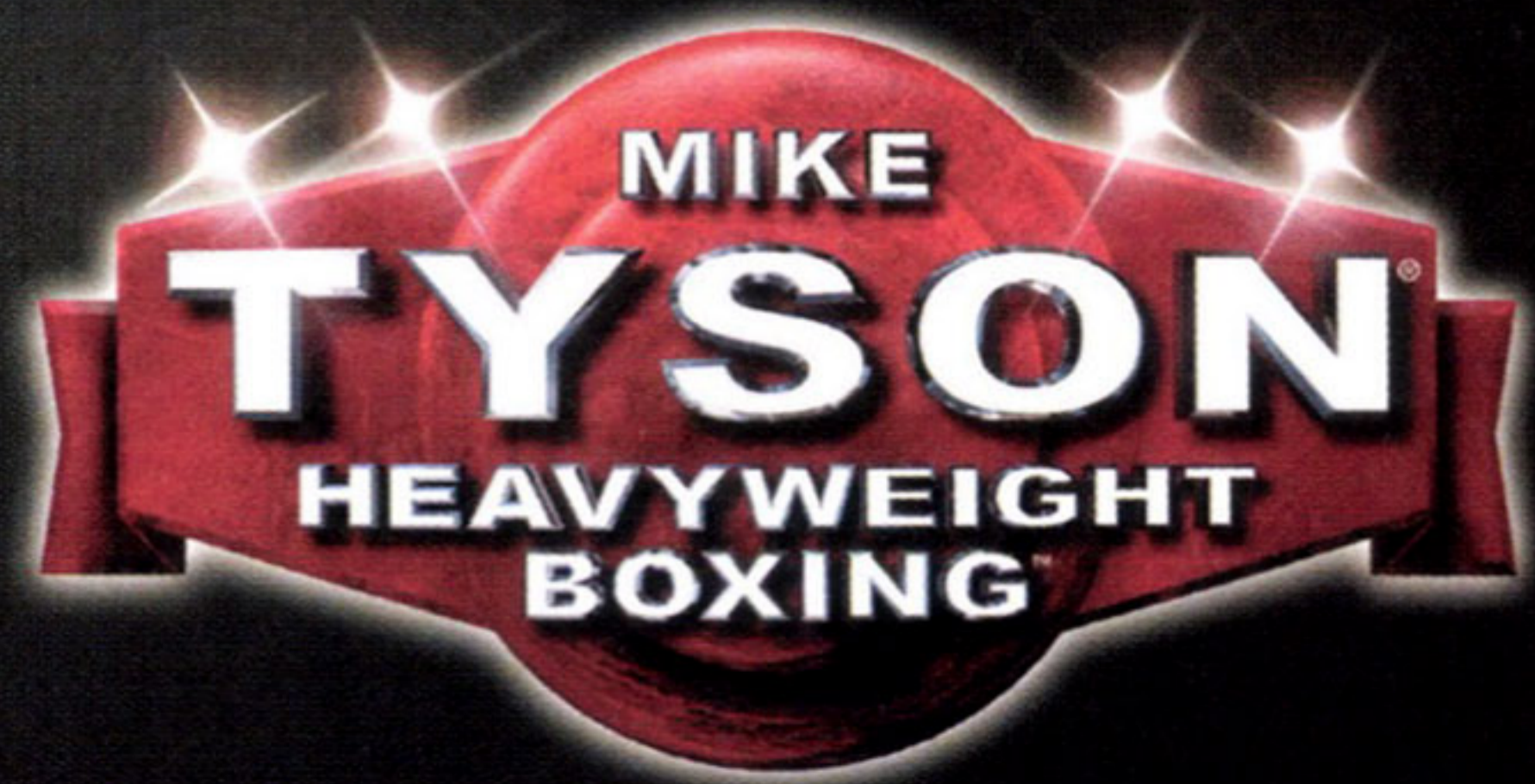
Fight as (or against) 16 top heavyweights including Holmes, Tua, Witherspoon and multiple world champ Iron Mike Tyson.

Short Fight. Long Recovery.



Take on all comers with 9 game modes and over 200 unlockables to build your own custom World Champion.

Screen shots taken from the  
computer entertainment system.



**BRUTAL BEYOND BELIEF.**

# Become a Halo god

## HOW TO ANNOY YOUR FRIENDS IN 10 EASY STEPS

We play a lot of *Halo* in the **Official Xbox Magazine** office. We repeat: We play a LOT of *Halo*. Just ask our long-suffering managing editor, Sarah, and she'll tell you that every work day at 5 p.m. (and when we're lucky, even at lunchtime), you can find us huddled around televisions in different parts of the office virtually sniping and pistol-whipping each other through the magic of *Halo* and the office LAN. All this quality time with the game has given us insights into making the most of multiplayer – namely, Capture the Flag with all vehicles turned on in Blood Gulch. Benefit from our wisdom with the following tips and turn yourself into a *Halo* multiplayer master in no time. Just don't blame us when your friends start to hate you for winning all the time.

>>>>

### 1. Blue Line Defense

Blue Line Defense is a hockey term and basically what it means is moving the defense forward, thereby putting more pressure on the attack. In Blood Gulch this is best achieved in a Scorpion Tank. Bring the tank up close enough so that you can easily see the teleporter (and destroy anyone that comes out of it). Have your teammates move forward toward the flag. The downside is that you'll leave your base empty. Beware of "Canyon People" (i.e. those who like to hug the canyon walls in the shadows) sneaking around your defense. Also make sure you are out of sniper range by using the low hills in the center of the map to your advantage.

■ Moving the defense forward makes for maximum pressure.



>>>>

### 2. Confusion

Whenever the members of the other team sees that the enemy has captured their flag, they freak out and start to move toward your base to intercept the flag carrier. To counter this, do what they wouldn't expect. Stay in their base with the flag for a bit, then head up top and use the teleporter. Many times the other team is already at your base desperately trying to prevent your team from scoring. You can simply saunter in behind them to place the flag and get the point.

■ Running frantically with the flag rarely works. Instead be patient, wait for an opening, then run like hell.



>>>>

### 4. Teleporter Camping

Any vehicle will work for this technique, but the Ghost is the most fun. Just sit patiently by the enemy's teleporter and run over unsuspecting Master Chiefs as soon as they zap through. It certainly ain't nice, but it definitely gets the job done.

■ We like to call this "road kill."

>>>>

### 3. Tank Killa

The pistol is the absolute best weapon for taking out a tank. Just zoom in and pop people in the head. It takes only about six shots to completely take out a tank driver.

■ Nothing is more frustrating than having a giant tank and getting picked off by some twerp with a teeny gun.



>>>>

### 5. Ghost Popcorn

The situation may seem hopeless when you're on foot against a Ghost, but if you have grenades, the advantage goes to the guy on foot. Just drop a grenade right in front of you: as the Ghost comes to run you down, it'll fly harmlessly overhead and usually kill the driver. Then shout "Thanks for the ride" for maximum annoyance.

■ Grenade kills are easily the most satisfying in the game.





## >>>> 6. Violence Without Bullets

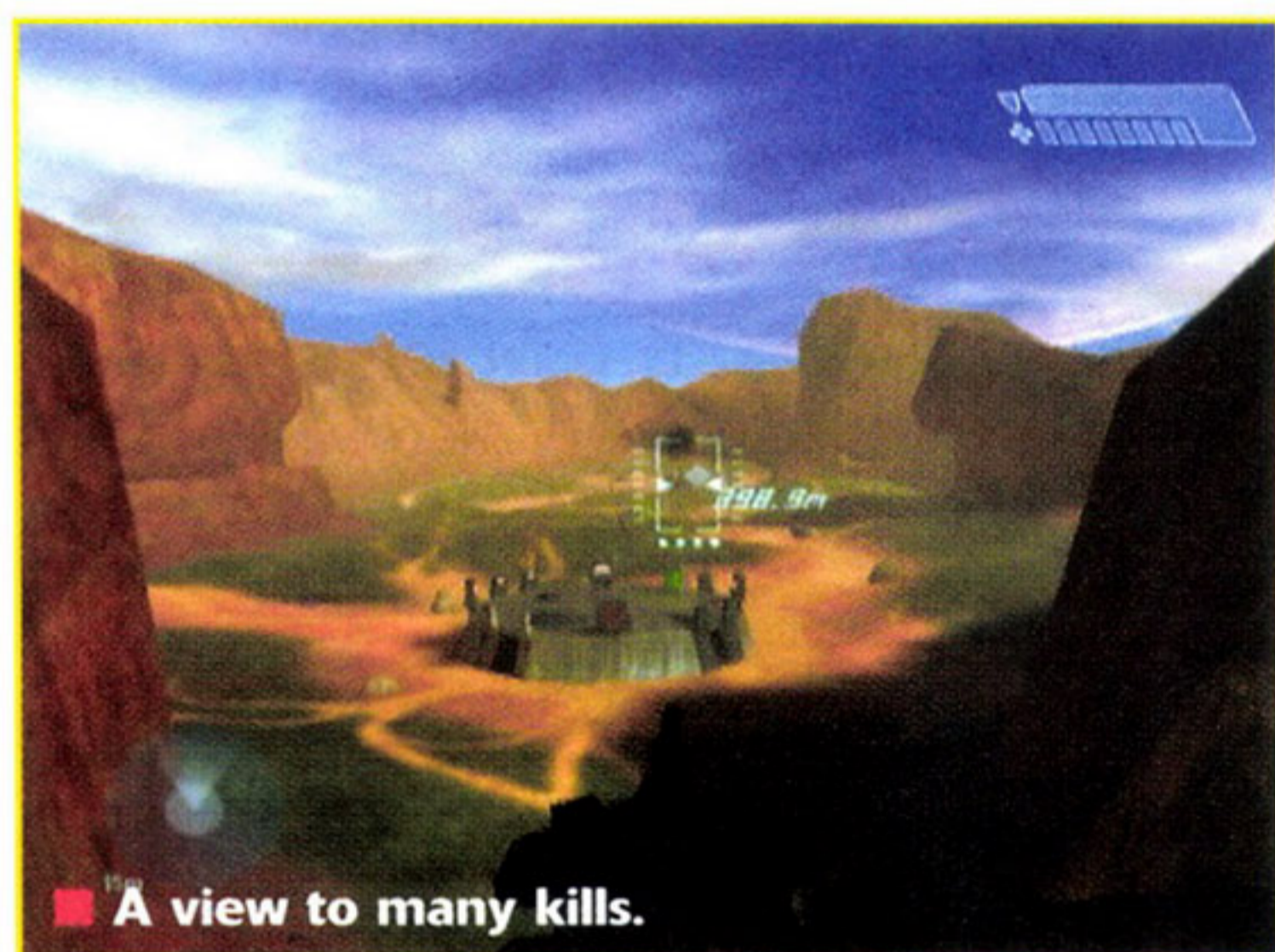
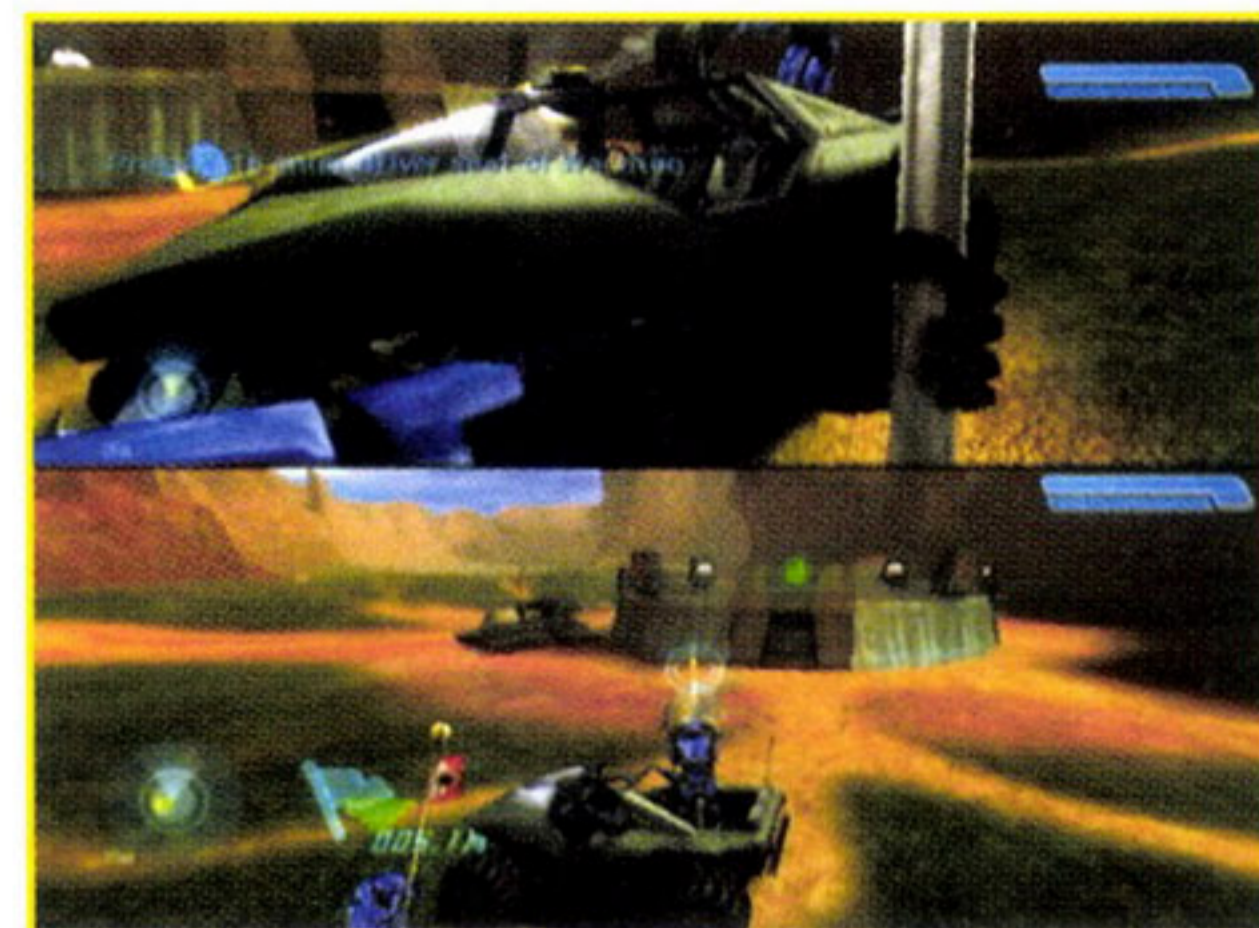
One of the most overlooked and effective attacks in *Halo* is the butt of the gun to the back of the head. One hit and they are down. The best way to do this is to get the invisibility or approach the base from the canyons. Go up on top and whack the two snipers over the head, grab the flag, and bam, more points. Too easy, really.

■ Just before you smack an unsuspecting foe on the back of the noggin, yell "Excuse me."

## >>>> 7. Warthog Run

One of the most effective flag runs in the game is the two-man Warthog run, one on the gun and one at the wheel. However, in order to make this work, you MUST make sure the enemy doesn't have a tank – if they do, then this is just a double suicide. Drive around the base in circles while the gunner lays down some fire, then park in a spot where the gunner can still hit the top of the base. Driver goes in to get the flag while the gunner lays down cover fire. Get back in the Warthog and go back to the base.

■ We repeat, do not try this if the enemy has a tank!



■ A view to many kills.

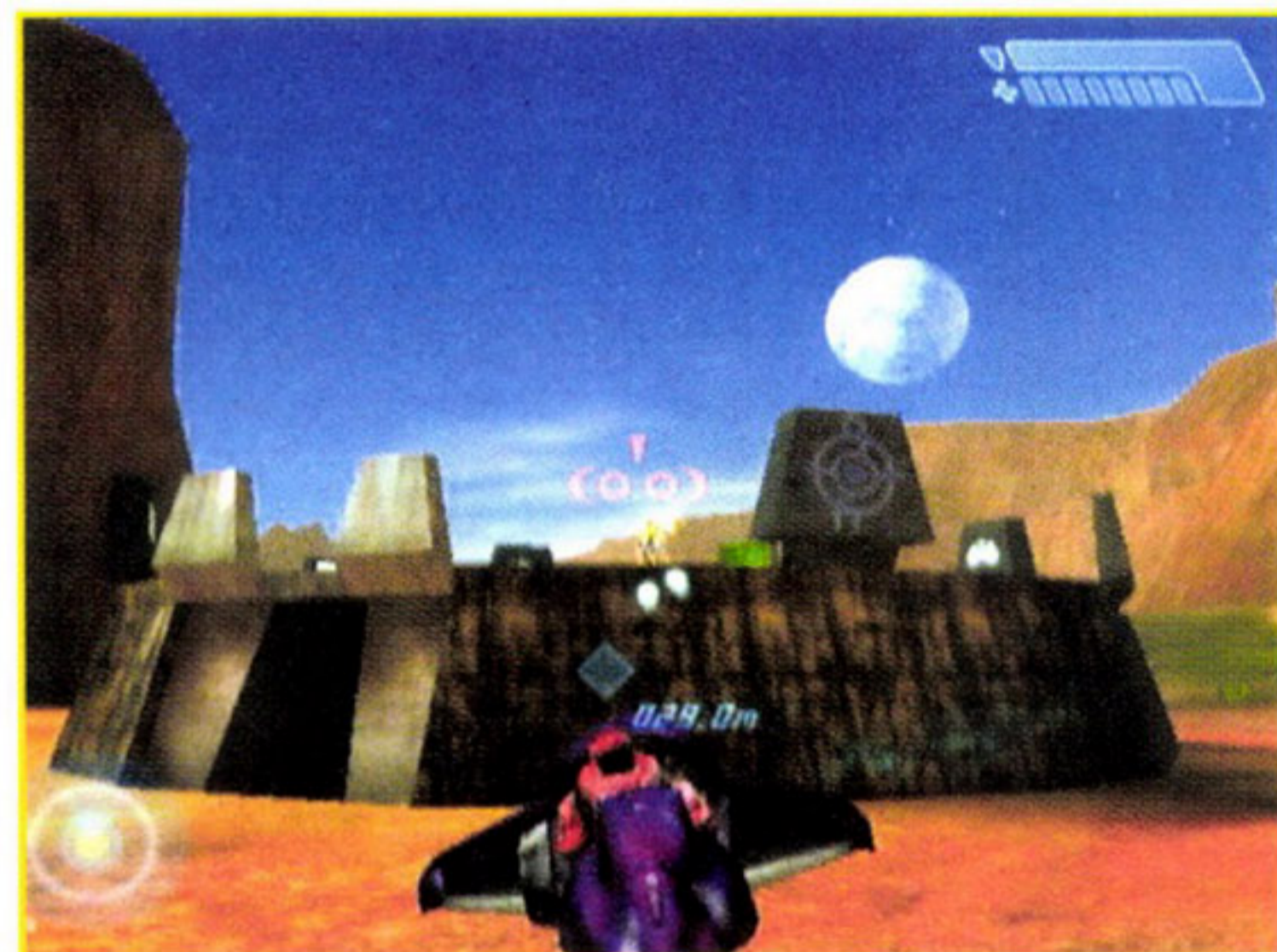
## >>>> 8. Hill Tank

Behind the red base is a raised and very effective sniper spot for the red team. However, just because you are on the blue team doesn't mean you can't enjoy the fruits of this fine location. Get a tank and get behind their base and up on the hill. From here you can mercilessly pick off just about every spot on the map, including the hard-to-reach tops of both bases.

## >>>> 9. Teleporter Block

Nothing is more annoying than having to run across the map, especially when trying to catch a flag carrier. Just park any vehicle over the teleporter pad and block off teleportation. A great way to control the middle of the map. For maximum effect and an especially coordinated flag run, block the teleporter until your teammate gets the flag, then back off and let him through before covering it again. Frustrating to the other team and damn effective.

■ Keeping the teleporter blocked is often the difference between winning and losing on Blood Gulch.



## >>>> 10. Circling the Wagon

The best way to grab the flag when playing against a strong defense is to frustrate your opponent. One way to do this is to jump on a Ghost and head to the enemy base. Instead of immediately going inside, though, just drive circles around the base again and again. Before long, your turtle-like foes will peek their heads outside to see what's up. That's when you run them over and take the flag unhindered.

■ If someone tries this trick on you, just ignore them until they get off the Ghost.

## >>>> Bonus Tip: The Bait and Switch

When you manage to snag the enemy flag and find yourself surrounded by the enemy, you don't necessarily have to run. Keep a calm head and throw the enemy flag into the open, then follow up by doing one of two things:

1. Run back into the enemy's base and wait for the flag to be returned. The enemy always goes for the flag first and when it is returned, you'll know right where they are in order to make for the best escape route.
2. Wait at a safe distance and toss grenades at the flag, and get ready to fire at the enemy as they scramble to get it back. This works especially well if you can take cover behind a tree, rock, or around the enemy base itself. If it works, the enemy will still be respawning while you already have the flag. This works the best if you have a Ghost handy, as well.

■ Rather than fleeing like a coward, you can set up a trap for mass carnage and still get the capture.



## Favorite strategies

- **MIKE S. [MR DEATH]:** Warthog Run. I usually like to camp out at the enemy base, near the canyon wall and simply shoot 'em all while they respawn.
- **DAN [DONUT]:** Circling the Wagon. Distracting the enemy and taking out anyone on foot is easy in a Ghost.
- **FRANK [FRANK]:** Rocket Sniper. If I can get past the first line of defense with the Rocket Launcher, it's easy killin' storming the enemy base with the launcher in tow.
- **FRANCESCA [FRANTASTIC]:** Blue Line Defense. Use the hills to shield yourself from snipers at the enemy base and you've got it made.
- **DAVE [MCCAIN]:** Bait and Switch. On a good day, I can take every single one of the enemies out in their own base, and STILL hold onto the flag.
- **MIKE W. [MIKE W]:** Circling the Wagon. Using the Warthog to confuse the enemy and jumping out at the first opportunity is perfect.
- **JULIANN [GEE]:** Canyon Sniper. If you can take the Sniper Rifle into the hills and aim at the enemy base, you can pick them all off once your ally goes in to grab the flag.

# Project Gotham Racing

Still riding around in that VW Beetle? Got your eye on that F355? Your friends here at the Official Xbox Magazine have gone under the hood of *Project Gotham Racing* to assemble a strategy guide that will finally put your sorry butt in a Ferrari.

## The Magical Mystery Tour

Actually it's not a mystery at all: there are only three ways to unlock all 29 cars in *PGR*: earn four golds in each of the levels of arcade and quick race, win a one-on-one race, or simply rack up massive Kudos. Here's our breakdown for doing all three with flash and panache.

## >>>> Arcade race

Despite its name, the arcade race isn't really a race at all. The goal is to drive as quickly and stylishly as possible through all the green cones (and the blue ones). The key to that is powersliding. Here's how it's done (see pics below):

Tap the foot brake (L trigger) as you get ready for the turn. This slightly shifts

the weight of the car onto the front wheels, which improves front wheel traction.

Hold down the hand brake (A button) as you begin to turn. How long you hold down the brake depends on how fast you are going and what kind of car you are driving. Practice to get the timing down.

Turn "into the skid." If you are doing it right, you may have to turn in the opposite direction of your powerslide to keep your rear wheels from swinging out to the left or right of your front tires; that's called "fishtailing" and you want to avoid it.

Don't do donuts. *PGR* rewards fast, stylish racing, not skid marks. Doing 360 donuts in a wide part of the road will give you a smaller number of Kudos than finishing with a faster time.

Remember that your Kudos points remain "active" for a few seconds after you earn them. That way you can string together bunches of Kudos for bigger points. In the later stages of the arcade mode you will have to learn to earn Kudos even when there are no cones around. The easiest way to do this is to tap the hand brake and turn quickly to induce a short slide. The goal isn't to earn Kudos, but to keep your scoring string intact until you reach the next section of cones. To the right is a visual guide to combo-ing Kudos points.



■ Just sliding is okay for newbies but "the perfect slide" gets max points.



■ Turn into the skid at this point.



■ Keep the car going fast.



■ Now race ahead as the points continue to rack up.



## Quick race

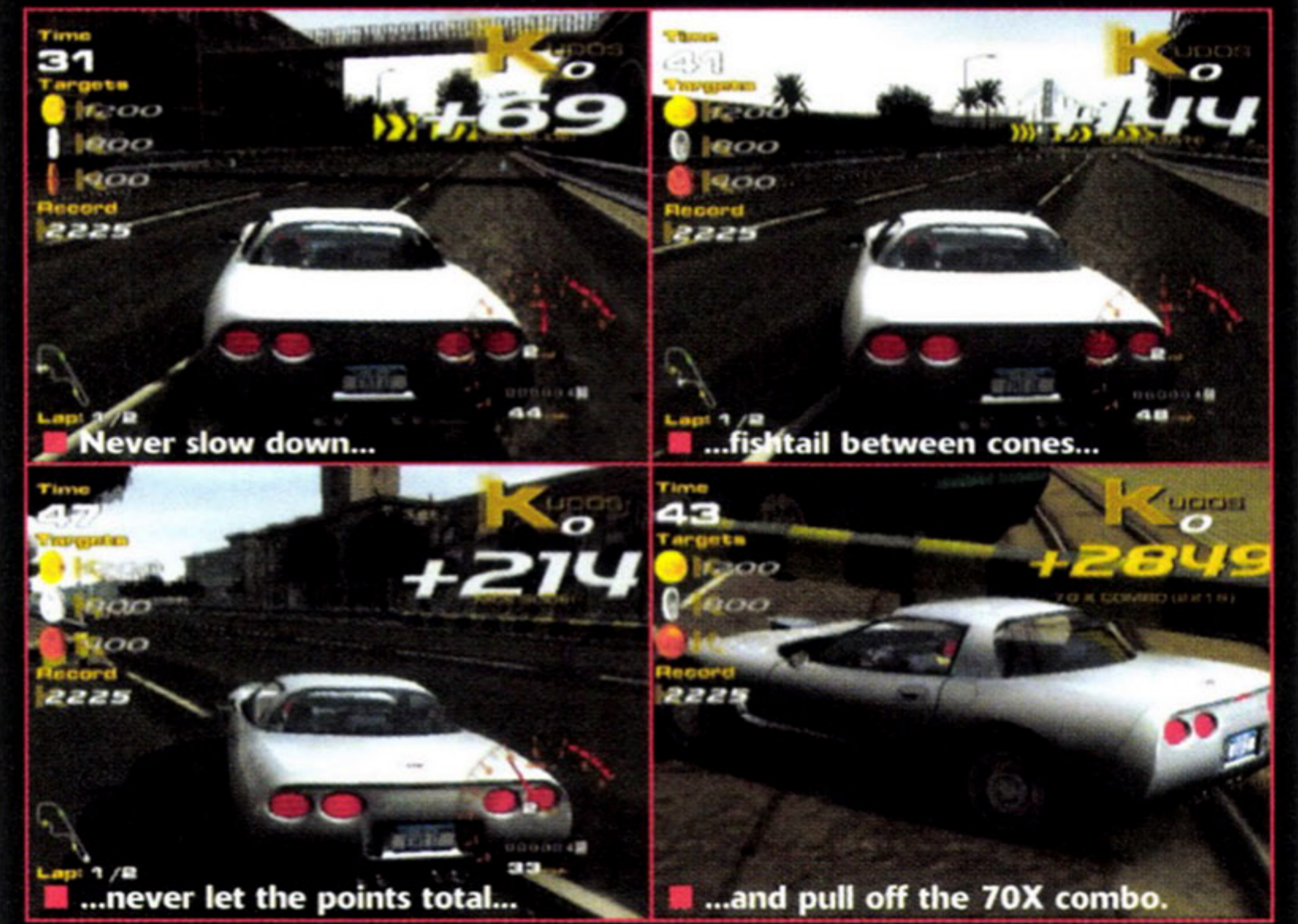
The key to winning the quick race is similar to the one-on-one: play dirty. Choose the car you have with the best top speed and the best handling. Acceleration is less important during these races. Get into the top three at the beginning of the race and then bide your time. Once you get close to the final lap, powerslide into the cars in front of you. With luck, you'll send them spinning hopelessly out of control.



## Combos count

### ARCADE RACE LEVEL 1 SAN FRANCISCO

- A perfectly clean run without stringing combos together is 1,000 Kudos – good enough for Silver.
- A completely clean run with one long combo from start to finish can get you 3,000 Kudos – easy gold.



## One-on-one

Whenever you open up a new chapter in *PGR*, check to see if it has a one-on-one challenge. If it does, you should immediately play that challenge and forget about the rest in that chapter for the simple reason that it will be easier to win the other challenges once you have a nicer car.

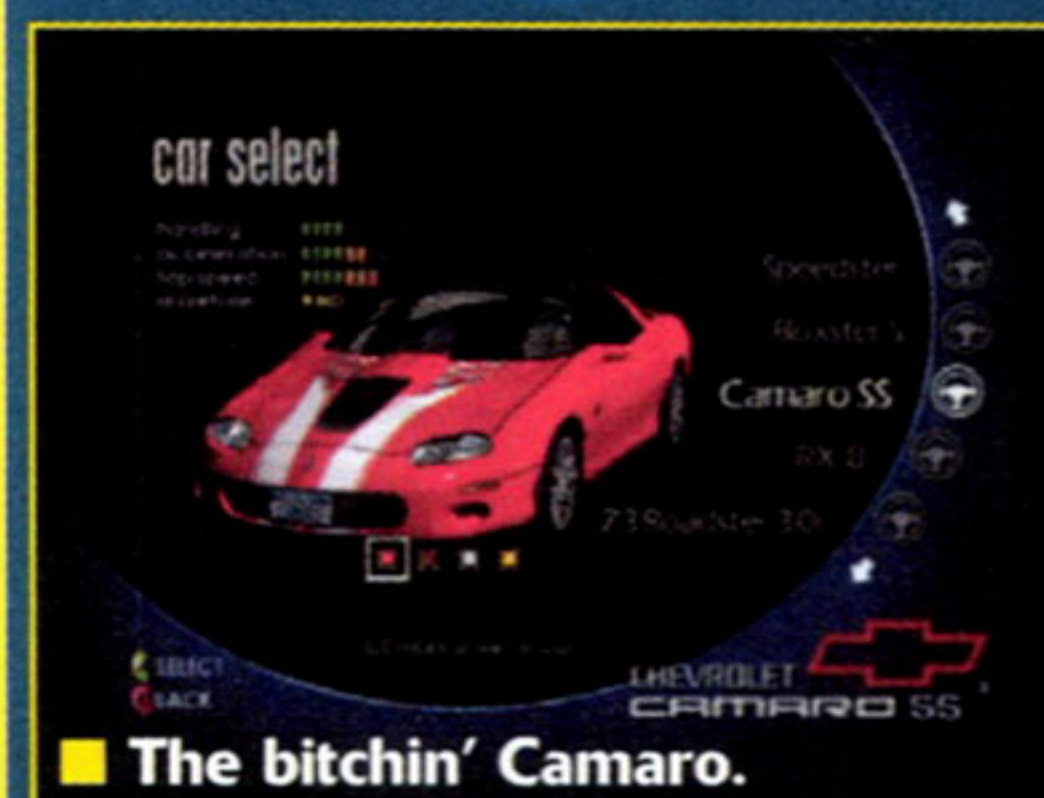
There are two strategies for winning the one-on-one. You can give yourself an enormous head start at the set-up screen and then try to rack up Kudos on your way to the finish. Or you

can give yourself a paltry one- or two-second head start and do what we do here at the magazine: play dirty. Unlike *Metropolis Street Racer*, you don't lose Kudos in *PGR* when you hit another car. Therefore, it is easiest to win by letting the computer's car get slightly ahead of yours and then slamming into it when it goes to turn. Hopefully you'll bounce off and continue on your way and you send the computer into a tailspin. It's cheap, but fun and effective.

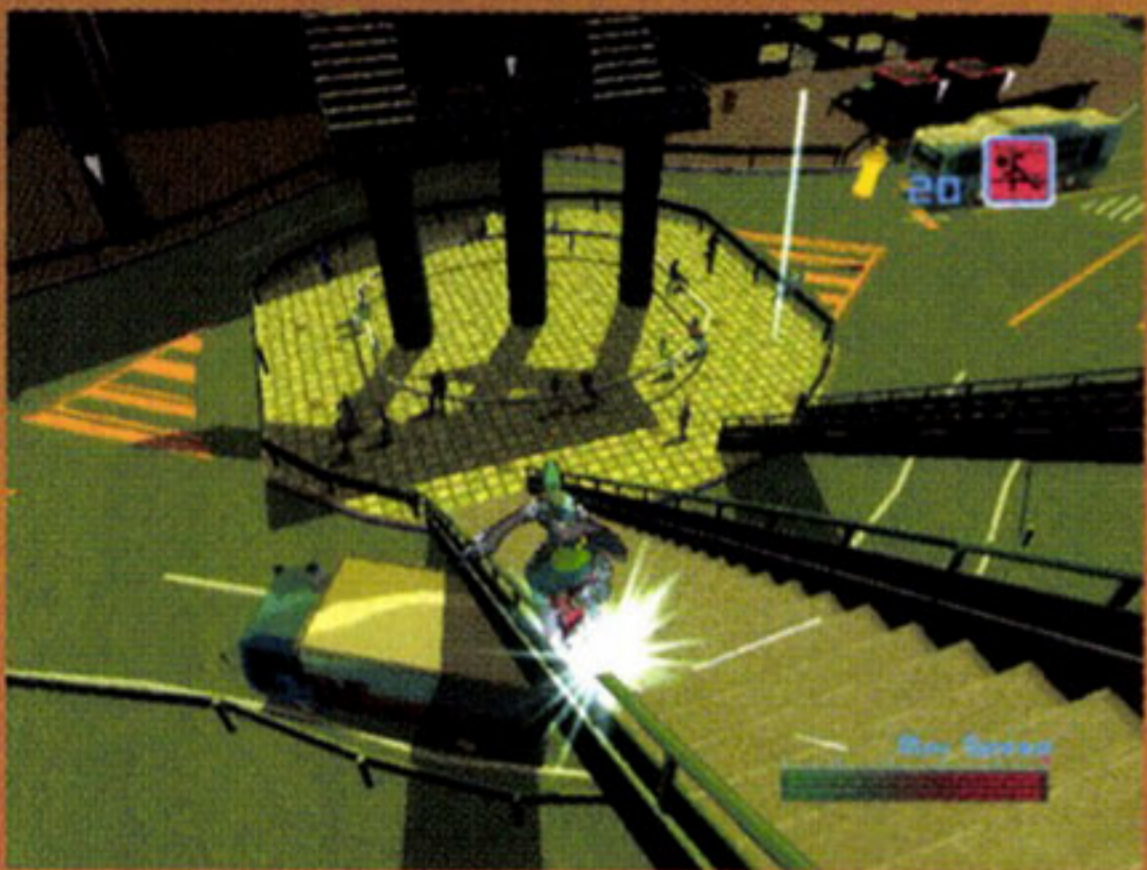


## Choose your weapon

Not all cars are created equal. For the arcade races, these are our favorites: Chevy Camaro, Ferrari F-50, Dodge Viper RT-10. For the quick races, go for top speed. Our faves: Mazda RX-8, Delphino Feroce, Porsche Carrera GT.



EXPRESS YOURSELF



With ground-breaking cel-shaded graphics, incredible stunts and all-new tricks and attacks, JSRF is a totally hip action-adventure way ahead of its time.



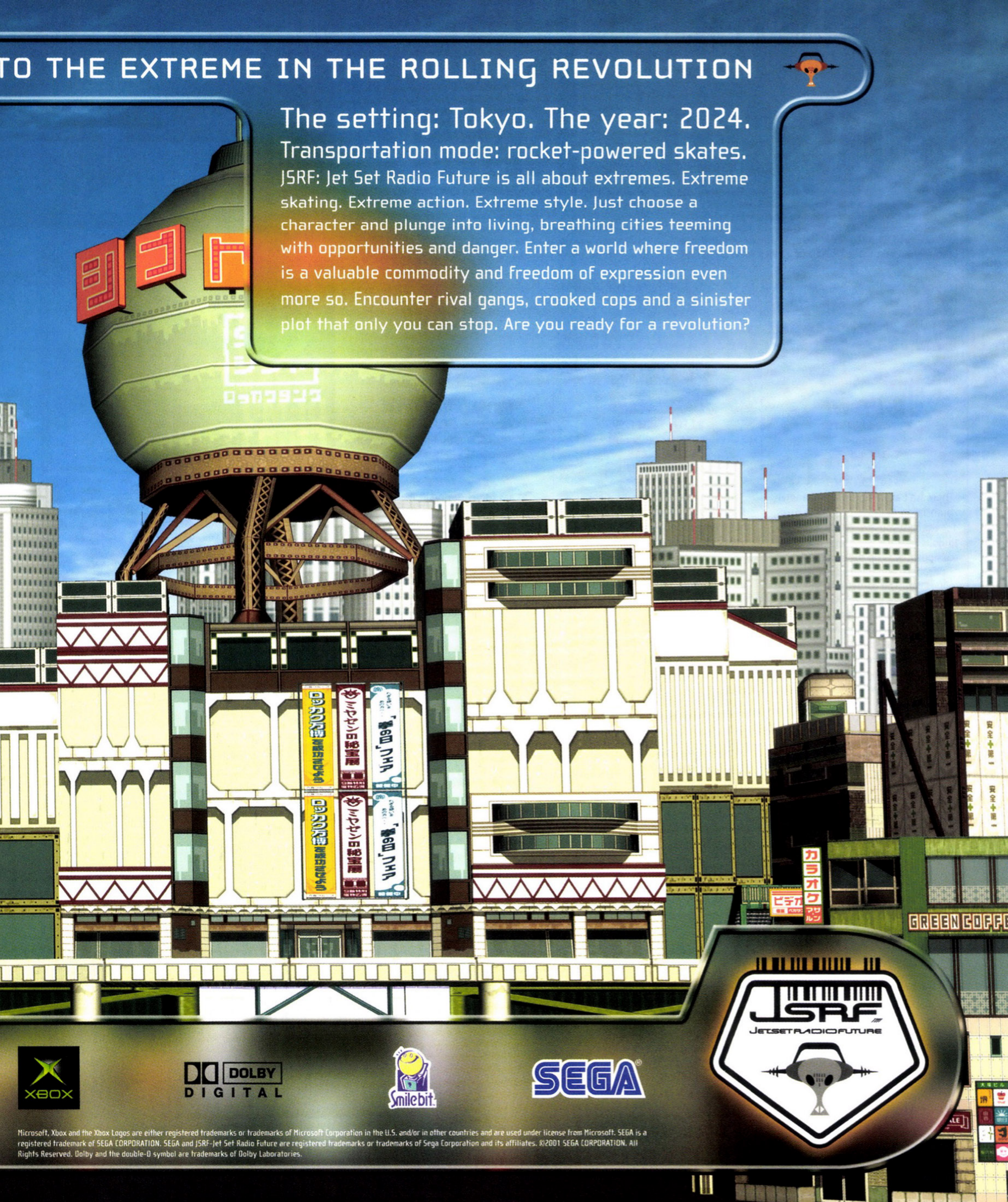
RATING PENDING  
**RP**  
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Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)  
or call 1-800-771-3772  
for more info.

# TO THE EXTREME IN THE ROLLING REVOLUTION



The setting: Tokyo. The year: 2024. Transportation mode: rocket-powered skates. JSRF: Jet Set Radio Future is all about extremes. Extreme skating. Extreme action. Extreme style. Just choose a character and plunge into living, breathing cities teeming with opportunities and danger. Enter a world where freedom is a valuable commodity and freedom of expression even more so. Encounter rival gangs, crooked cops and a sinister plot that only you can stop. Are you ready for a revolution?



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# YOU GOT GAME?

It's time to separate the men from the wee-girly men and see who really has the skills. **Official Xbox Magazine** is running a series of challenges to find out who can say that they're the best Xbox gamer in the world. Due to legal complications beyond our comprehension (much less our ability to explain) we

aren't allowed to give "prizes" for certain kinds of challenges. So what we're doing is starting an Elite Gamer's section in the magazine that will give recognition to the very best gamers out there. However, we do plan on offering a **HUGE\*** prize to the overall winner at the end of the year.

## THE OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE CHALLENGE

### Run up the score

#### NFL Fever

**ELITE POINTS:**

2,000

**DEADLINE:**

April 1, 2002

**CHALLENGE:**

There isn't anything better than total humiliation to prove how big a man (or woman) you are. All we want you to do is beat the living snot out of the computer. Run up the score, take no prisoners, and utterly destroy the opposition. The gamer with the most lopsided score gets 2,000 points and an infinite amount of bad karma. For tips we suggest calling Mike Martz.

**PROOF:**

Picture (or video) of the postgame screen showing your complete domination.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

N/A.

### Blood boiling

#### Blood Wake

**ELITE POINTS:**

1,000 (1,000 bonus)

**DEADLINE:**

April 1, 2002

**CHALLENGE:**

You can say what you want about *Blood Wake*, but there is no denying that it is one tough-ass game. We had trouble finishing off the evil boats on Ensign and haven't even thought about trying it on Admiral. If you can do it, then we'll give you 1,000 elite points for your effort.

**PROOF:**

A shot of the select screen for the last level with the highest difficulty selected and checked off.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Be the first to prove your ocean-owning skillz and we'll plopp an extra 1,000 elite points on your plate.

### BMX bandit

#### Dave Mirra BMX

**ELITE POINTS:**

1,000 (500 bonus)

**DEADLINE:**

April 1, 2002

**CHALLENGE:**

Do a 35-trick combo in the Devil's Peak (hint: use the mine cart tracks).

**PROOF:**

A screenshot of the result of your combo.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Select Dave Mirra as your rider and do a suicide triple backflip 900 somewhere in the Highway 47 cloverleaf.



## DEMO CHALLENGE

This is one everybody can play since the demo disc that comes with this issue is all you'll need – oh, and some killer racing skills.

### Project Gotham Racing

**ELITE POINTS:** 1,000 (1,000 bonus)

**DEADLINE:** April 1, 2002

**CHALLENGE:** Rack up a run with 2,020 Kudos on the style challenge and you deserve every single point. Here's a hint: You'll need to use your joker to pull this off.

**PROOF:** Picture (or video) of the post-race screen.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** Pull off this amazing feat with the Ferrari (which must be unlocked by getting all golds) and you get an extra 1,000 points. Remember you only get one joker.

## READER CHALLENGE

Joseph Gray and a friend are laying down the gauntlet. Are you up to the challenge?

### INTERIOR TANKING

#### Halo

**ELITE POINTS:** 500

**DEADLINE:** April 1, 2002

**CHALLENGE:** Cram every single Ghost and Warthog into one base on Blood Gulch. It's messy and takes some time, but it's damn hilarious when it's done.

**PROOF:** A picture showing the mess you've created.

### RIDICULOUSLY TOUGH CHALLENGE

#### Halo

**ELITE POINTS:** 5,000

**DEADLINE:** April 1, 2002

**CHALLENGE:** You think that's cool? How about getting a Scorpion Tank in the base as well? We've been trying desperately to make this happen, but no luck yet. Our bet is that it can't be done. Prove us wrong and get 5,000 Elite Points and our eternal respect and adoration.

**PROOF:** A picture of the tank in the base, and we'd like it to be firing for maximum effect.



## ELITE GAMERS

Here is where the best of the best receive their props in a mad-like way. It's like a league standings table, only YOU are the league. We've only got results from the *Halo* challenge, but here is how everyone stands. Get in your proof and see if you can make or even top the list.

Name	Points	Challenges Won	Name	Points	Challenges Won
Alex Tierney	3000	Halo, First in	Thomas Pierce	1000	Halo
Kerry Allen	1000	Halo	Vic Laurel	1000	Halo
David Lockwood	1000	Halo	Micah Cooper	1000	Halo
Desmand King	1000	Halo	Billy Talent	1000	Halo
Nick Lucio	1000	Halo	Scott Zmolek	1000	Halo
James McGee	1000	Halo	John P. Vitela	1000	Halo
Primagen	1000	Halo	Kenneth Wheeler	1000	Halo
Tim McCambridge	1000	Halo	Jeff Buchanon	1000	Halo
Matt Ford	1000	Halo	LI'l Davey Rees	1000	Halo
Kevin Hammond	1000	Halo	Dick Carramusa	1000	Halo

## STILL PLAYING

These challenges from last issue are still open, so start gaming...



### PROJECT GOTHAM RACING

**ELITE POINTS:**  
1,000 (500 bonus)  
**DEADLINE:**  
March 1, 2002  
**CHALLENGE:**

2400 Kudos Points in Arcade Race, Very Hard level, on the New York track.

**PROOF:**

Picture of post-race screen.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Pull this off with a Camaro for 500 more points.



### AMPED

**ELITE POINTS:**  
1,000 (1,000 bonus)  
**DEADLINE:**  
March 1, 2002  
**CHALLENGE:**

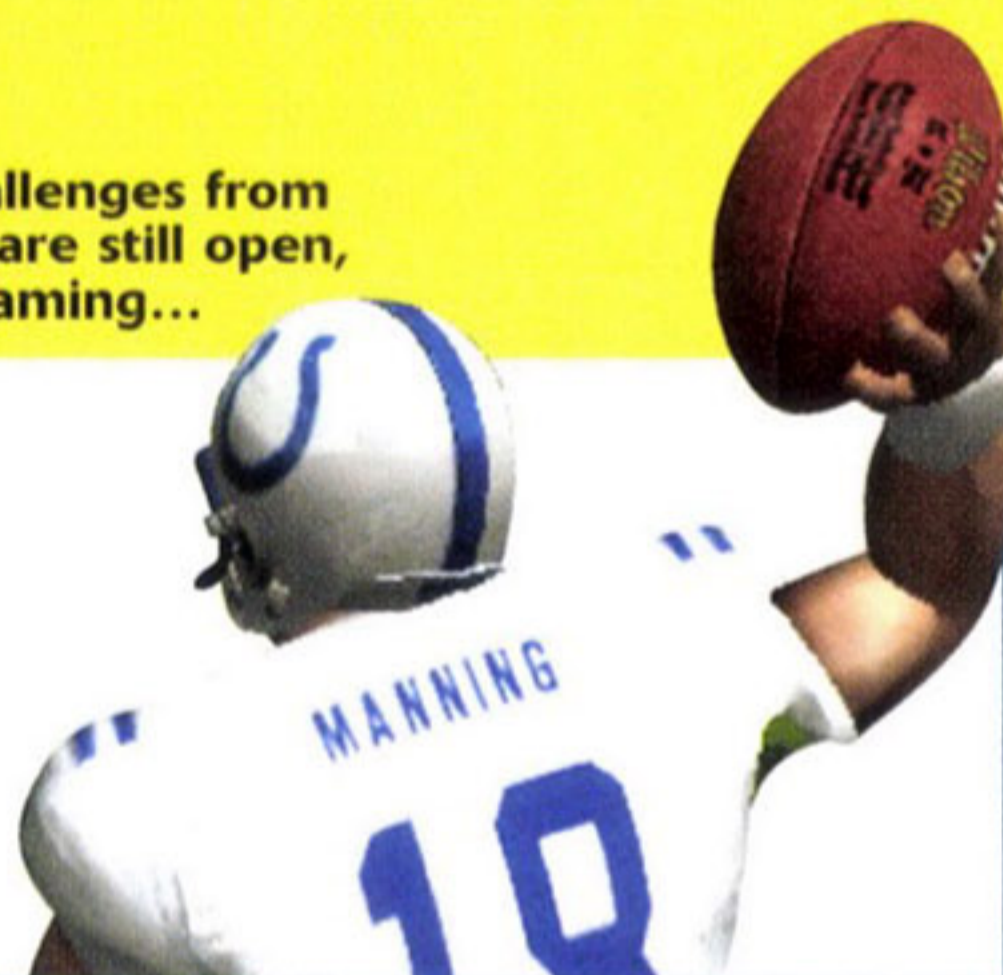
Score 500,000 on any one run.

**PROOF:**

Picture (or video) of the post-run screen.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

300,000 media points on the same run for the bonus.



### NFL FEVER

**ELITE POINTS:**  
1,000 (500 bonus)  
**DEADLINE:**  
March 1, 2002  
**CHALLENGE:**

Create a player in Mike Salmon's likeness and get him into the hall of fame.

**PROOF:**

We want to see a picture of the Hall of Fame screen with Mike Salmon (spelled right), in there.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Get him in as a field goal kicker for the bonus.



### HALO

**ELITE POINTS:**  
1,000 (2,000 bonus)  
**DEADLINE:**  
March 1, 2002  
**CHALLENGE:**

Play through on Legendary.

**PROOF:**

Take a picture of your TV.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Alex Tierney already did it.



### ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE

**ELITE POINTS:**  
2,000 (bonus 2,000)  
**DEADLINE:**  
March 1, 2002  
**CHALLENGE:**

Go through the game and save every single species to achieve Angelic Quarma – or even more enticingly, go through the game destroying every single creature to get Black Quarma.

**PROOF:**

Take a picture of the newspaper screen for either.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Do it both ways and we'll hit you with 4,000 points for your considerable efforts.



### MAD DASH RACING

**ELITE POINTS:**  
1,000  
**DEADLINE:**  
March 1, 2002  
**CHALLENGE:**

Score a total time of 2:44 and we'll just give you points.

**PROOF:**

Anything that can quickly and easily prove you've done it.

## EVERYBODY'S A WINNER

Being the benevolent types, we just love giving other peoples things to our readers. Even if your name doesn't grace this list of winners, there is always next month. Every single issue we give you a chance to win. Why? Because we can. Congrats!

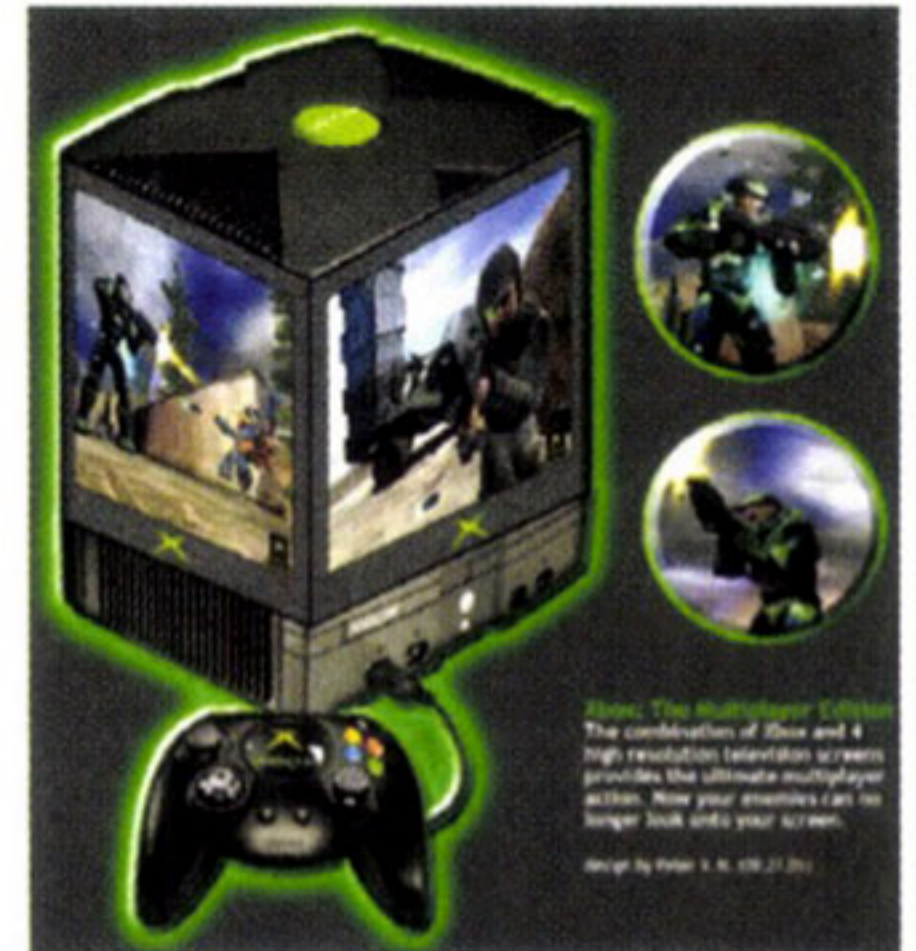
### Skate Away with an Xbox Grand Prize Winner

(November 2001, Preview Issue)

• Peter Ngyuen

**Peter wins:**

- One glorious Xbox
- A Birdhouse Skateboard autographed by Tony Hawk
- Two copies of *Tony Hawk 2x* for Xbox
- An **Official Xbox Magazine** t-shirt
- A hat of some kind (only he'll know what kind for sure)



### Take Control With Gamester Contest Winners

(December 2001, Premiere Issue)

## One Grand Prize Winner

• Raymond Rivera of Bronx, NY

**Raymond wins:**

- The entire Microsoft first-party launch software lineup
- The entire Gamester Xbox peripheral collection
- A full year's subscription to the **Official Xbox Magazine**
- A Gamester t-shirt

## Ten Second Prize Winners

- Quentin Appleby of San Angelo, TX
- Jason Staples of Mankato, MN
- Buu Cao of Diamond Bar, CA
- Yi-Fan Wang of Fullerton, CA
- Jennifer Buckley of Tolland, CT
- Chris Vailati of Abingdon, MD
- Dan Ribarovic of Cape Coral, FL
- Peter Toivonen of Columbus, OH
- Thuan Ngyuen of Rosemead, CA
- Russ Lewis of Kansas City, MO

### Second Prizes: A Gamester Xbox ProRacer wheel

## 100 Third Prize Winners

- |                     |                       |                     |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Andy Bucak          | Martin Lindquist      | Dan DeToma          |
| Al Provato          | Patrick Miller        | Andrew Espinosa     |
| Leonard A. Alt      | Allan Wallin          | Robert Conner       |
| Christopher Norkus  | Marj Conner           | George Javaras      |
| Samuel de Dios      | Josh Neely            | Bart Wilson         |
| Kerry Allen         | Carl Penn             | Ryan Hedden         |
| Joshua Tricome      | Steve Hoffman         | Derek Guster        |
| Anthony Setser      | Joshua Joseph Correia | Dallas Cole Epp     |
| Nick Breckenbridge  | Shawn Channell        | Edward Roberts      |
| Sean O'Neill        | Janis Ocko            | Billy Alicea        |
| David J. Caplan     | Cody Adams            | Ben Serviss         |
| Gregory C. McCullar | Spencer Slama         | Anibal Sousa        |
| Donald L. Long      | Adam Pernini          | Joe Rodriguez       |
| Tony Ramirez        | Michael R. Woods, Jr. | Adam Prather        |
| Bryan J. Smith      | Elena Hickman         | Brandon Lee Waite   |
| Carlos Balagot, Jr. | Joel Dominguez        | Ian N. Olmo         |
| Lindsay Yamamoto    | Steve Jufer           | David Puglisi       |
| Patrick Balagot     | John David Edgett     | Stephen R. Husak    |
| Shaun Hershey       | Brandi Engel          | Jacob Leal          |
| Daniel Cheng        | David Schroll         | Bruce Hankins       |
| Theodore Toggweiler | Tim Lehman            | Robert Guernick     |
| Florian Richter     | Jacob LaFontaine      | Sue To              |
| Matthew Lao         | James A. Riley II     | Rancisco Reynoso    |
| J. Peter Mustonen   | Christopher Matheson  | Rich Hall           |
| Alex Quinn          | Jeff Allen            | Charles R. Burnette |
| Brandon Kosoko      | David Riordan         | Clayton Wade        |
| John Pastore        | Chris Schmidt         | Tremayne Ezeff      |
| Tyler Sampson       | Michael Mottolo       | Kevin Lachaud       |
| Dustin Lee Dawson   | Derek Nielson         | Eduardo Carrillo    |
| Korey Hughes        | Rene G. Verduzzo      | Benjamin Lute       |
| Teresa Perkins      | Joy Atkins            | Frankie Lara        |
| Ed Garrity          | Lucio Reza, Jr.       | Philip Heinicke     |
| Anthony Ricci       | Matthew Zago          |                     |
| Aaron Trythall      | Ira Browne            |                     |

### Third Prize Winners receive: A Gamester t-shirt

## PROVE IT

Send video or pictures (and include your full name and where you come from) to:

**I'm a Legend**  
C/o Official Xbox Magazine  
150 North Hill Drive  
Brisbane, CA 94005

Or electronically with the header "I'm a Legend" to [xboxmag@imaginemedia.com](mailto:xboxmag@imaginemedia.com).

# Reader Interaction



Another issue, another letters section. And now that Microsoft has secured itself a good place in the console wars over the past holiday, Xbox owners everywhere have more questions than ever about what's going on and what's in store for their beloved gaming box. And who better to turn to in times of need than us here at the Official Xbox Magazine. Sure, we're a bit salty at times. And yes, sometimes we may not have ALL the answers. But, in terms of games and gaming, honey, we've almost always been there and usually done that. We've been providing Xbox owners with the very best in Xbox-related information since 2001 and we're not going to stop now. So, send your deepest, most pressing inquiries to us here at: [xboxmagazine@imaginemedia.com](mailto:xboxmagazine@imaginemedia.com). You won't regret it. Or maybe you will, but that's an issue for another time and place.

## Dynasty Fever

I've started a dynasty in *NFL Fever 2002* and have a big problem. There is no way to make the quarters longer than five minutes. At the menu to create a dynasty, the quarter length toggle is dark and unchangeable. Do I have to unlock it somehow? Is this just a screw-up by the developers or am I just missing something?

Adam Raymond  
Buffalo, New York

**We say:** You're not missing anything, Adam. *NFL Fever's* Dynasty Mode will only allow five minute quarters by design. There's no way to change this, and there's no code or unlockable cheat to let you adjust the quarter lengths. Why did Microsoft do this? Simply because this is the only way to manage stats realistically for the duration of your goal (be it getting your players into the Hall of Fame or something else). If you had the ability to change quarter lengths, the developers feared some outrageous, unbalanced stats might screw up your records. Hope this answers your question, Adam.

## Size doesn't matter

Why is everyone saying that the Xbox has only 8GB of hard-disk space? Is someone leaking old info to them?

Reese H.  
Via email

**We say:** Reese, according to Microsoft, no matter what your hard-disk size is (whether it be 8GB or 10GB), the machine will only recognize 8GB as useable by the owner (i.e. you) for game saves and music files. And, while there are a small number of units that shipped with a 10GB hard-disk, the drives were uniformly formatted to 8GB. Moral of the story: every Xbox has 8GB – no more, no less – and that's more than enough space for anything the Xbox needs to do.

## Game, Server, Net?

Ever since I heard the Xbox was going to be shipped with an internal modem I have been so excited to be able to play over the Net. This all ended when I found out that it was going to only support broadband and

not dial-up connections. While I can afford DSL or Cable, it isn't available where I live and won't be for at least a year. This has really got me down in the dumps since I have been hearing different rumors about just how awesome some of the downloads and online options might be. I also have two other friends who have are having the same dilemma with their systems. So what can I do about this and are the rumors really true? If the rumors are true, is there any other way I could get these files? Maybe you could add some of them to the game disc for the poor and deprived people, like me?

Mat Williamson  
Via email

**We say:** That's a tough situation to be in, Mat, and these are circumstances that we're ready to deal with. For those Xbox owners who won't have the resources or open access to broadband services, we will be doing our best to provide many of the downloadable perks on the game disc packaged with this very magazine. Sometime soon, by late

spring/early summer, we will start placing much of this stuff on our game disc, so stay tuned for further details.

## Metal head

I absolutely love *Twisted Metal*. I purchased the entire series for the PlayStation. Now, I have an Xbox. After playing the *Cel Damage* demo on the *Halo* disc, I'm not satisfied. It's too cartoony for older gamers to play. I was wondering whether any *Twisted Metal* games will be available on the Xbox any time soon. Thanks.

Derek Cheung  
Via email

**We say:** Sorry to say, Derek, but you won't be seeing any *Twisted Metal* games on any other system than the PSOne or PS2 for a very long time. SCEA (Sony Computer Entertainment America) owns the rights to the series and the franchise, so you'll never see it on GameCube or Xbox, unfortunately. But this doesn't mean that you won't find the

same vehicular combat thrills in games like *Blood Wake* on Xbox. While it might not have the killer multiplayer mode to best the TM series, the single-player may very well appeal to your tastes. Give it a look, Derek.

## Shades of gray

Do any of you, in your Xbox wisdom, know if the PC game *Black and White* is slated to appear on Xbox? I heard rumors of it on the official Xbox forums, but I don't put too much faith in hearsay and wanted to know if you guys have any definitive answers? I know Peter Molyneux is currently working on *Project Ego*, and I was just wondering if there was any hope for *Black and White*? Yes? No? Maybe in the future? Not a chance in hell? Anything? I appreciate it, and keep up the good work.

Marco Antonio  
Via email

**We say:** No confirmation on *Black and White* for Xbox as yet, Marco. There have

## Feeling blue



■ Azurik has NO idea what's around the corner...

First of all, the Official Xbox Magazine rocks! Great job. Nevertheless, I can't believe the harsh review of *Azurik* in the February issue! I know the game has its problems, but I feel it's a pretty good attempt at the action/adventure genre. While I too am surprised by the frame rate, I don't have a problem with *Azurik* being blue. It's a fantasy – does everything have to be a mold of human life and a few extras? I really hope that people don't take the review too seriously because I think the game is not all that bad. If I had to rate it, I would give it a 7. I like games where you have to think to solve puzzles. It reminds me of original NES games like *Zelda*. I just think the review was harsh. The gaming community gave the game a 7.7! That says a lot!

Ryan Bunson  
Via email

**We say:** You make a good point, Ryan, but the great thing about reviews is that they're subjective, not objective. We certainly don't expect our readers to agree with every score we give in the magazine, but we do try to explain all the reasons as to why certain games receive the scores that they do. *Azurik*, in our reviewer's opinion, just wasn't compelling enough, visually or gameplay-wise, to recommend. He felt it was rushed and inferior compared to many of the other offerings on Xbox (or even on other systems, for that matter). We made sure that the reviewer was a fan of the genre beforehand, so he wouldn't approach it from, say, a fighting game fan's point of view. We value your feedback, Ryan, but, in this particular case, perhaps we can simply agree to disagree about *Azurik*.

## “Your underlying tones would suggest that since the Xbox is targeted towards an older audience, anyone mature does not care about Dragonball Z...”

been lots of rumors flying around, since at the time the game seemed to be coming out for every other console. But all the rumors and “secret announcements” happened so incredibly long ago that no one’s heard a peep since about the game’s chances on Xbox. No one wants to confirm it for us, but we’ll keep trying to find out as it would be a great addition to the Xbox game library, so keep your fingers crossed, Marco. It seems that all the attention is now being paid to Project Ego, Molyneux’s latest project, and Black and White seems to have faded into the background.

### Way of the Dragon

In reference to your January 2002 issue, on page 100, where it says, “intelligent Xbox-loving gamer seeks same...”

[You say that] as a staff you may all own “PCs, PS2s, Game Boys, everything,” but how many of you are *Dragonball Z* fans? Is it the sheer number of inquiries that you receive about this title coming to Xbox that gets under your skin? Or is it the fact that you do not have the interest to uncover such details? Your underlying and sometimes bold tones would suggest that since the Xbox is targeted towards an older audience, anyone mature doesn’t care about *Dragonball Z*. If this is the case, I would have to disagree with you. Like *The Jetsons*, *Dragonball Z* has as much value to a child as it does to senior citizens.

While I agree that titles like *Dragonball Z* are more likely to end up on the GameCube in the US, I would also have to assume that you never would have dismissed a *Dragonball Z* inquiry so lightly had your audience been [in] Japan. Chances are that you get flooded with email requesting this information over and over. Could your readers be trying to tell you something? Where are your loyalties? To your readers, or to what you want to write about? While it may be disappointing to your readers, I respect that as an author you need to enjoy what you write about, otherwise you need a new career. I ask that you please respect all fans, no matter their interests. We all know that your staff is better than us all – it just pains us to be reminded so frequently. Poking a bit of fun at our investments is one thing, but please keep in mind that to some folks there is NO greater mystery.

All that being said: What is the real reason as to WHY you aren’t wondering about whether there will be a *Dragonball Z* game on Xbox?

Nice Nakago  
Via email

**We say:** Okay, Nice, you busted us and we apologize if we come off as snide in our comments about DBZ. In our defense, though, ask any magazine or website editor in this industry and they’ll tell you that it’s become a sort of joke to poke fun at the number of requests and inquiries they get regarding *Dragonball Z* games. Each and every person doing this type of job receives hundreds of emails in the course of a week, and about 90% of them can be summed up with “When is a *Dragonball Z* game coming out?” None of us have anything against the franchise (except for the fact that there’s never been a good US videogame representation of the franchise), but perhaps we should’ve let our readers in on the joke. But the funny/frustrating thing is that no matter how many times we answer the question (in print, even!), it’s like Sisyphus eternally pushing a big boulder of *Dragonball Z*-related questions up a hill in the ninth ring of Hell. IT NEVER ENDS.

But perhaps you’re in luck, now that Infogrames has secured the US license for games based on *Dragonball Z*: the company has issued a release stating that it will start developing said titles for “next-gen systems” this year. Whether or not they’ll be good or whether they’ll be fighting games or RPGs has not been clarified by Infogrames. But when we do find out more, it’ll be in these pages that you’ll read about. Perhaps then we’ll finally have the answer that DBZ fans have been continually begging for.

### Wrecking Cruise

I have a question concerning *Wreckless*. Will there be a free-roaming gameplay mode? Or will most of the game consist of the player completing missions? My second question is about Microsoft’s online plans: Will there be a fee to play online with Microsoft’s service? If so, how much?

Paul Oplocki  
Via email

**We say:** *Wreckless* basically follows an objective-based mission structure, but you shouldn’t have any problem exploring the town, Paul. Some of the time limits are very, very generous, so if you’re not dead set on completing the objective the first time through, you can simply pound the pavement to check out all the different urban locales until the time runs out. As for Microsoft’s

online plans, they haven’t set in stone any pricing or firm details, yet. We’re getting anxious, too, so we’ll definitely keep asking them, Paul.

### Bullet time

Since I bought my Xbox I seem to be a home a lot more often, but every time I do get out and go to the movies I always end up playing in the arcades. The best and the only game I play there is *Time Crisis 2*. Is there any plan on the way to bring *Time Crisis 2* or its sequel to Xbox? And if so, when? If not, are there any other lightgun shooters coming to Xbox? Also, are there plans for an Xbox lightgun?

Hector Rueda  
Miami, FL

**We say:** While Namco has yet to announce any sort of appearance of its arcade lightgun shooter on Xbox (and we highly doubt it will ever, unfortunately), don’t fret, Hector. For the patient, Sega’s bringing its *House of the Dead* series to the ‘Box later this year in the form of *House of the Dead 3*. Aside from *Virtua Cop*



Mr. *Ghost Recon*, is, in fact, waiting around the corner for our ol’ blue pal.

### Ghost on the machine

I am looking forward to Tom Clancy’s *Ghost Recon* in the spring of 2002. Will *Ghost Recon* be improved for Xbox, or will it just be ported over from PC? Also, what Internet options will it have?

PolarBear868  
Via email

**We say:** PolarBear, there’s good news, and of course, there’s bad news. The bad news is that *Ghost Recon* probably won’t ship until around September 2002. The good news is that the game will take “full advantage” of the advanced Xbox graphical abilities, and it seems very likely that it will feature new modes and unique Internet features, thanks to the broadband-only nature of the system. Personally, we’re hoping for voice-over-Net using the Xbox Communicator headset, since the squad combat would be something else with live chat. You can expect to see more details on this amazing title in the near future, but know for now that it is NOT just a lazy PC port.

# MARCH MADNESS

## Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc

Don't just SEE the game, PLAY the game.

This month, racing fans will be psyched to see a collection that spans the genre, from the aquatic antics in *Blood Wake* to the frozen tundra of *Arctic Thunder*. We also bring you the first playable demo of *Project Gotham Racing*, the definitive Xbox racer. But due to popular request, this month you also get the massive bonus of the complete collection of all the Official Xbox Magazine playable game demos to date!



## ON THE DISC:

**NEW GAME DEMOS!** This is what you came for:

- **Arctic Thunder** – Midway  
Fast-paced snowmobiling action and a good test for the Xbox rumble effect.  
**DEMO TIP:** Practice stunts – they won't earn you anything of note in this demo, but you do get some bonus weapons in the final game.
- **Blood Wake** – Microsoft  
Best water physics in a multiplayer boat-combat game? Oh you bet your sweet landlubbing behind they are...  
**DEMO TIP:** Use the height you gain and lose on waves to target floating mines.
- **Project Gotham Racing** – Microsoft  
The most visually spectacular cities ever rendered, and the shiniest re-creations of (only) superfast exotic vehicles you've ever driven.  
**DEMO TIP:** Check out the demo challenge on pg. 91 and earn some Elite Gamer points.

**CLASSIC GAME DEMOS!** Bonus Content!

- **AirForce Delta Storm** – Konami  
Fly, fly, fly little Starling. Air combat, Konami-style, Xbox graphics. Any questions?
- **Azurik: Rise of Perathia** – Microsoft  
It is NOT a Q-Tip! It's a dangerous super-weapon. Wield it with wisdom, young one.
- **Cel Damage** – Electronic Arts  
Cel-shaded for the polygonally jaded. EA's graphically stunning car combat is in the house!
- **Fuzion Frenzy** – Microsoft  
A fine selection of deliciously addictive mini games from the maxi classic.
- **Mad Dash Racing** – Eidos  
So many animals, so little time! That's why they're all sprinting. Think of it as a game-stampede.
- **NASCAR Thunder** – EA Sports  
America's favorite motorsport and a bit of "Sweet Home Alabama."
- **NFL Fever 2002** – Microsoft  
Who'd have guessed that Microsoft would have the best football game? But here it is!

- **NHL Hitz 20-02** – Midway  
Arcade-style hockey takes to the ice.
- **4X4 EVO 2** – Take Two Interactive  
Huge landscapes, and a huge selection of 4x4s!

## TRAILERS AND FEATURES

Multimedia madness from Bink!™

- **Xbox Unleashed**  
From New York to LA, Xbox fans witnessed the launch of the millennium, with guest star Bill Gates!
- **The Making of The Thing**  
Man is the warmest place to hide, and our Game Disc is the coolest place to watch.
- **Top 10 Plays of the Month**  
Ten prime examples of the very pinnacle of Xbox gaming.

## Interfacing

It's like last month, except it's all anti-aliased and whatnot.

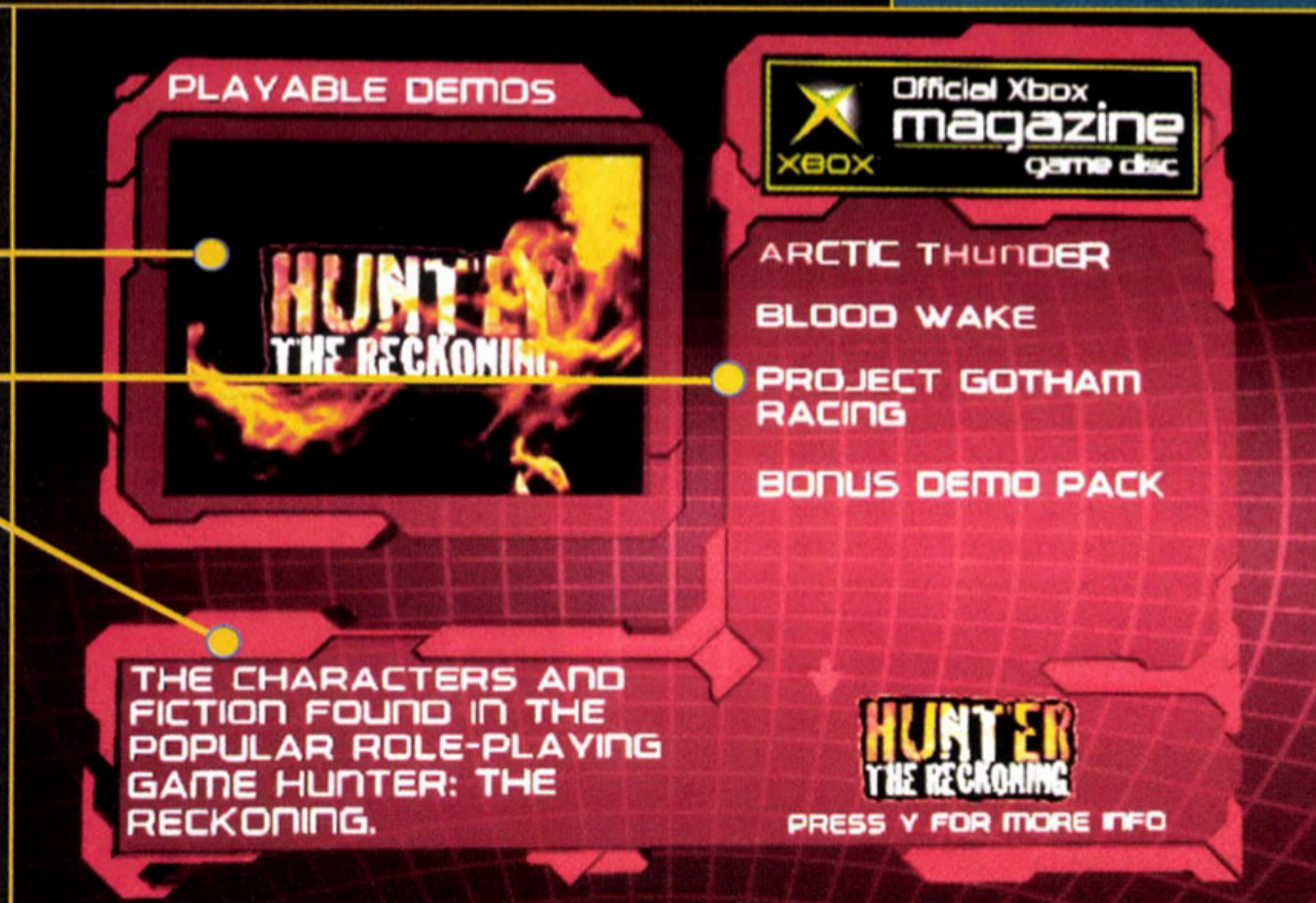
**VIDEO BILLBOARD:** It's kind of like Xbox TV without bad hair (or at least not as much bad hair).

**MENU SYSTEM:** Click these to see/play them – pretty simple.

**SUBLIMINAL TEXT MESSAGES:** If you don't read them, they will enter your brain anyway and make you do our bidding – so you might as well read them.

**FANCY-SCHMANCY 3D:** Use the white button on the Xbox pad to zoom around the interface in glorious 3D. It's like a game – without the bugs.

**Disc problems:** If you experience problems playing the Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc, gently clean the surface with a clean, soft cloth. If this doesn't help, go to <http://www.officialxboxmagazine.com> to order a replacement.



Uses Bink Video Technology.  
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## Ad Index March, 2002

Looking for the perfect game ad? Want to know about some other games coming to the Xbox? Just point and... uhh... turn (sorry, haven't figured out how to "click" with magazines yet – we're working on it).

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# The samurai way

*The pen is mightier than the sword, and we've got the copies of Genma Onimusha to prove it!*

**I**f you thought that the PS2 version of *Onimusha* was a whirlwind adventure of samurai-sized proportions, then you ain't seen nothing yet. With the recent release of *Genma Onimusha* on Xbox, fans have now been given a tougher, more challenging journey through the life and times of the noble warrior Samanosuke, one of the coolest characters yet in Capcom's stable.

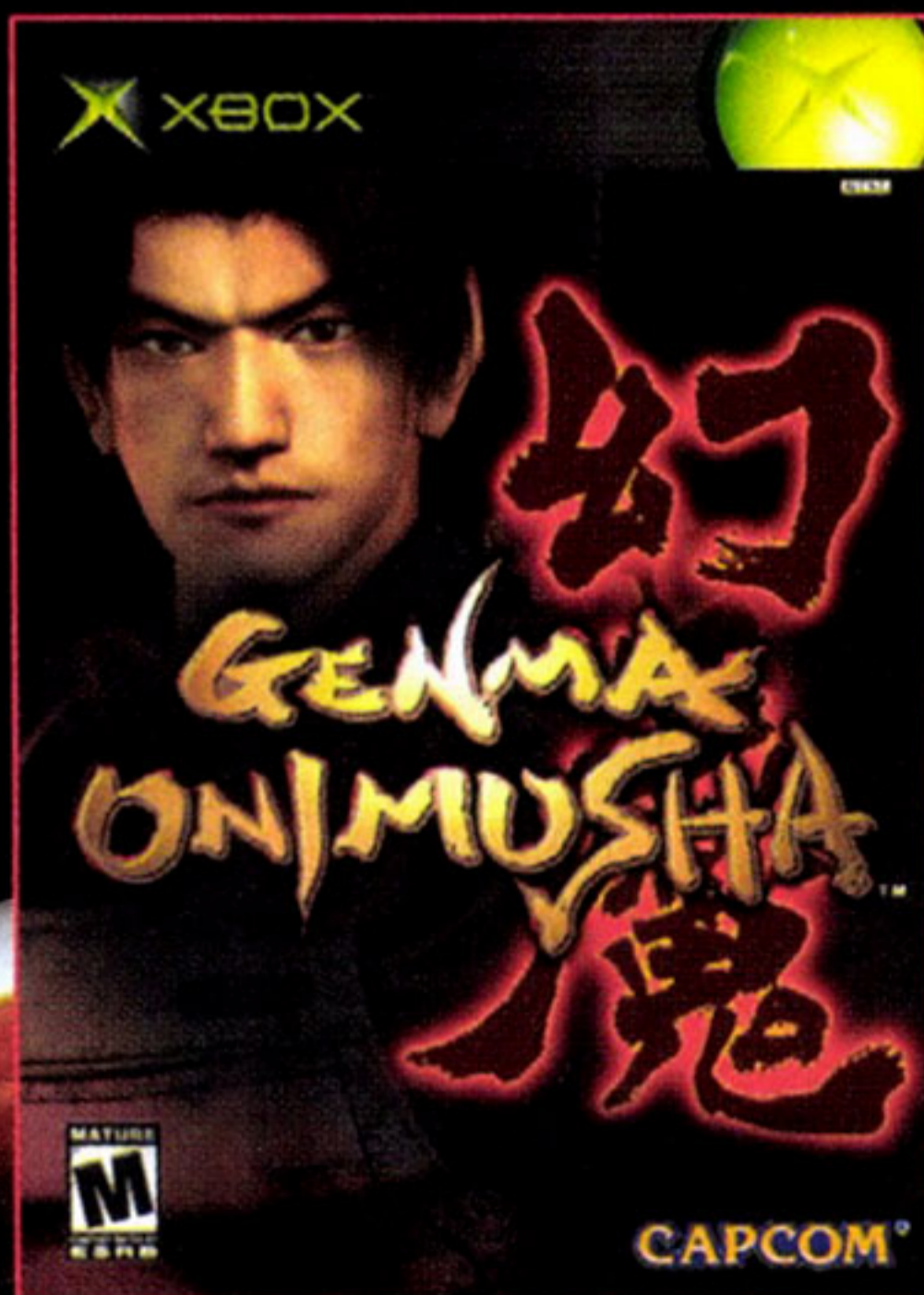
And now Capcom is ready and raring to reward five lucky Xbox owners with their very own copy of *Genma Onimusha* to play, as well as one *Genma Onimusha* T-shirt. Not to be outdone, we here at the Official Xbox Magazine will also throw one of our snazzy *Official Xbox Magazine* T-shirts into the mix as well. And all you have to do is show us your creative side!

Send us your best fan art featuring *Genma Onimusha's* lead character, Samanosuke, or his lovely ninja sidekick, Kaede. The best five submissions will grab the coveted goods and will see their artwork

run in a future issue of the Official Xbox Magazine. If you need any pointers on what Samanosuke or Kaede look like, look no further than our full review of the game in the reviews section or on Capcom's website at [www.capcom.com](http://www.capcom.com). So, get in touch with your artistic side and send us the results for your chance to score on a little post-holiday gift giving, Xbox-style.

**Send your electronic art, with the subject header "Onimusha Contest," to us at: [xboxmagazine@imaginemedia.com](mailto:xboxmagazine@imaginemedia.com) or send us the hard copy of your art at: Onimusha Contest/Xbox Magazine, c/o Imagine Media, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005.**

Make sure to give the legal text below a read so you'll know the exact ins and outs of entering this contest. Good luck!



■ Now you too can journey the feudal landscape as samurai hero, Samanosuke, accompanied by cute female ninjas. Did we mention that it's free for contest winners? Well, we just did.

**Legal text:** The winners will be determined by the vote of three judges, each of whom (a) is an Imagine employee assigned to our Xbox magazine team, and (b) will be chosen by the President of Imagine. These three judges, whose decision is final, will base their decision on the following criteria: Originality, approach to product design/concept, and artistic/technical production skills.

After you have prepared your illustration, make sure to make a copy of your art for your own files, as we can't and will not return any submission. Also, all submissions sent by U.S. Mail or overnight delivery must be no larger than a regular 8.5" X 11" sheet of paper. All entries must be received no later than April 1, 2002. We'll announce the winner in the seventh issue of Official Xbox Magazine.

Only one entry allowed for each individual entrant. Each of the three judging criteria noted above will be weighted equally at 33%. By entering this contest, you agree that Imagine Media shall have the right to use your name, likeness, the submission, and/or other information about you for promotional purposes and without further payment. All prizes will be awarded and no minimum number of entries is required. Prizes won by minors will be awarded to their parents or legal guardians. Imagine Media is not responsible for damages or expenses that the winners might incur as a result of the Contest or the receipt of a prize, and winners are responsible for income taxes based on the value of the prize received. A list of winners may also be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Imagine Media, Inc., c/o Xbox Prize Team, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. Lastly, while no purchase is necessary to enter, this contest is limited to residents of the United States, excepting in Arizona, Maryland, Vermont, Puerto Rico, where it is void, and where ever else it might also be prohibited by law.

## 10 Ridiculously Tough Questions

Steve Race has long been a part of the videogame industry – he's had what we would call a colorful career. He was a VP at Atari during the company's golden years, he left to start the toy company Worlds of Wonder, he helmed Reebok as the company rose to challenge Nike, he was president of Sony during the fabled launch of the PlayStation, and he presided over Microprose before he left to join the dotcom dream.

Now he's back in game business, but nothing could have prepared him for the toughest 10 questions in the industry.



**1) What do you think, compared to PlayStation, Xbox did right at launch?**

Microsoft actually used the letter "X" to brand their product, unlike Sony, where internally we called the system "PSX."

*Score: 7* Agreed, but the best answer was GREEN. The PlayStation should have been GREEN.

**2) What do you think, compared to PlayStation, Xbox did wrong at launch?**

Xbox lacked a killer app and is packing out \$100 or more on each sale.

*Score: 0* [Cough.] Halo. [Cough.]

**3) What brought you to Majesco, and what will you bring to the company?**

United Airlines, and my toothbrush.

*Score: 10* Correct on both counts.

**4) Majesco rose to prominence making 16-bit titles in the age of 32-bit hardware, and in 1999 the company grew by developing quality ports and licensed games. In the future will Majesco focus on similar "forgotten" markets, or will it move forward in a more traditional game-publisher pattern?**

We're going completely "legit." We delivered three titles at the launch of Game Boy Advance last year, and we're

releasing a total of eight titles for the new handheld in 2001. We currently have several products in development for PlayStation2 and we're working on a number of Xbox and GameCube titles as well. In addition to continuing ports of some well-known franchises, we've invested in our own IP with *BloodRayne*, due for release at the end of this year.

*Score: 8* We've seen BloodRayne and it definitely looks legit.

**5) You've worked with Atari, Sony, Microprose, and now Majesco during your career. What keeps bringing you back to the videogame industry?**

It seems to be the only place I can get employment. It's an exciting and dynamic industry that has really become legitimized by the entry of non-traditional game companies like Microsoft and Sony. I also love knowing the answer to the question "How do we sell video games to girls?"

*Score: 6* So, how do you sell games to girls?

**6) You helmed Reebok during the introduction of the "pump" tennis shoe and conquered Nike in market share. What happened to the inflatable footwear revolution... or more succinctly, why don't our shoes blow up?**

The pump was a terrific marketing ploy used as a point of differentiation in a virtually undifferentiated market. I was staggered to see some of the baseball-glove companies put the technology into their equipment. It was an enduring technology that lasted a season. Not unlike some gaming platforms.

*Score: 3* But what about our shoes? They still don't blow up!

**7) Who wins in a fight: Teddy the Talking Bear from *AI* or Teddy Ruxpin?**

Teddy Ruxpin isn't a fighter. For crying out loud, his sidekick Grubby was a bug.

*Score: 3* Yes, he was a bug, but he had lots of legs for lots of kicking. With his help, Ruxpin wins easy.

**8) What do you feel the new publishing deal with *Rage* will mean to Majesco in the future?**

Hopefully it's the start of a beautiful relationship.

*Score: 7* Sorry, sentiment won't earn you extra points with us.

**9) Rank your new office as compared to your offices at other companies.**

I have an office at Majesco in Edison, NJ. Need I say more? My favorite office was in a former home in CA. The whole office was paneled in wood, with a ton of built-ins and a fireplace. It was almost as nice as the offices at LucasArts in the good old days.

*Score: 10* We love wood paneling, especially on the side of station wagons.

**10) Five Word Answer: What do you hope people will say about Majesco five years from now?**

Terrific games. No more closeouts.

*Score: 8* All XBOX, All The Time would have also been acceptable.

*Final Grade: 62/100*

*62% D* It's okay, we'll chalk it up to new guy jitters.

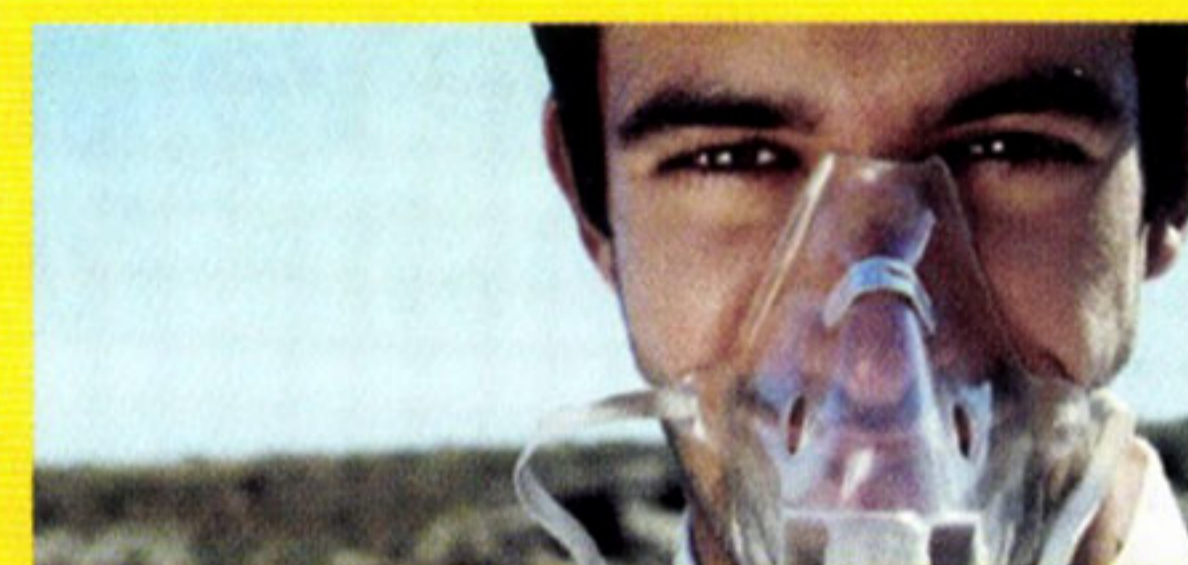
### Ridiculously Tough Hall of Fame

Lorne Lanning	71%
Peter Molyneux	70%
Takayoshi Sato	74%
Bill Gates	67%
Steve Race	62%

Is it even possible to score better than a C on our grading scale? Find out next issue.

## Next month

### May the Force be with you.



Hey everyone, it's me again, writing to you from the future... *one month in the future*. I'm sure that you're having plenty of fun in your present time, but here in the future things are absolutely spantacularic. (Take heed, past dwellers – the word *spantacularic* will be coined, declared obscene, and then embraced by youth culture in the near future, so don't use it casually, because you'll be embarrassed later). Anyway, check out what we've got in our next issue, it's going to be fatter than Nelly Furtado...oh wait, she hasn't got that glandular thing yet... oops, I've said too much.

### A long time ago, in a galaxy not so far away

You'll be happy to know that *Star Wars* is still important one month in the future. In fact, we've got one of the biggest announcements in *Star Wars* game history. Yep, it's huge, it's exclusive, and it's all right here. Don't you wish you could be here with me?

### Reviews of the future

No, we're not going to review the future. (Although we could, thanks to Ronco... Keep watching late-night TV and you'll know what I'm talking about.) In my time, we've already finished reviewing new games for the Xbox including *Inside Drive 2002*, *UFC Tapout*, *WWF Raw*, and the spantacularic *Jet Set Radio Future*... Man, if Future Mike Salmon finds out I'm using this word, I'll be in the unemployment tube for sure.

### The future... of the future

The 100 Most Important Games of 2002. This is mostly a history lesson to us future-dwellers, but to those of you still living in your own time this feature promises to shed some light on your immediate future, although it won't tell you about the outrageously popular reality show *Space Survival*... oh, you'll see soon enough.

### On the Disc

In my time, discs have been all but replaced by game crystals, but don't worry, we still produce an Xbox game disc, so you don't have to get the new Crystal Xbox if you don't want to. Either way, this will be our best disc ever (at least that's what they're saying in the future on all of the forums – yes, there are still forums in the future and they are still filled with some of the same trolls!)

- Amped
- DOA3
- Wreckless
- Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2
- And more!

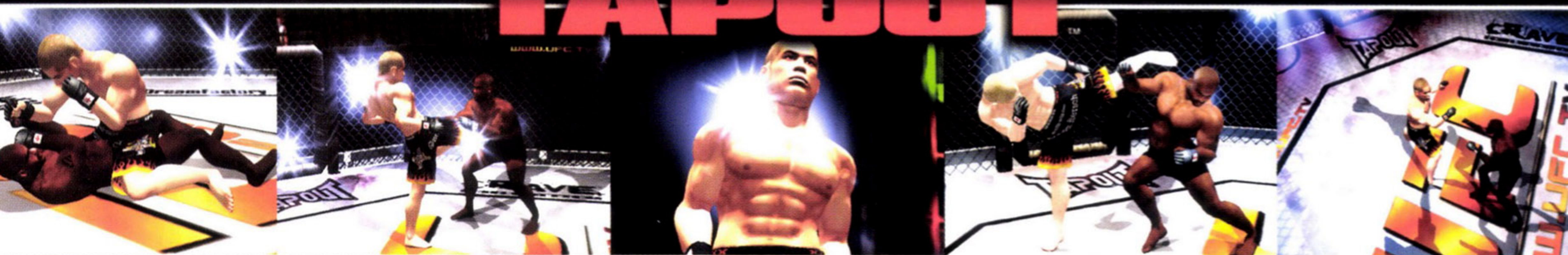
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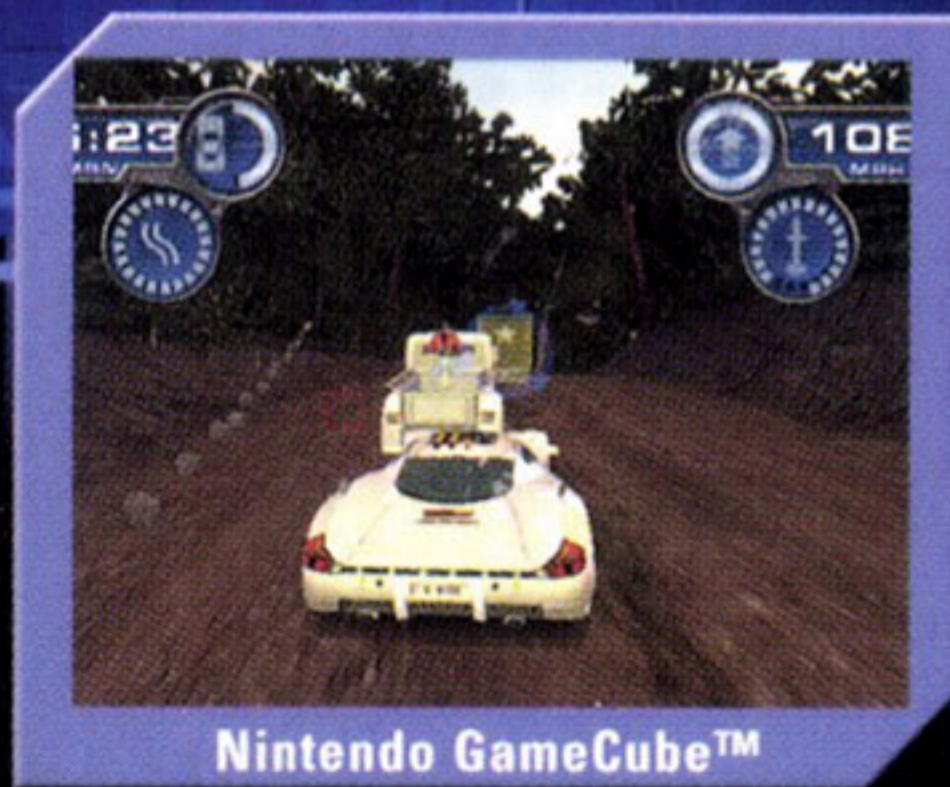


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