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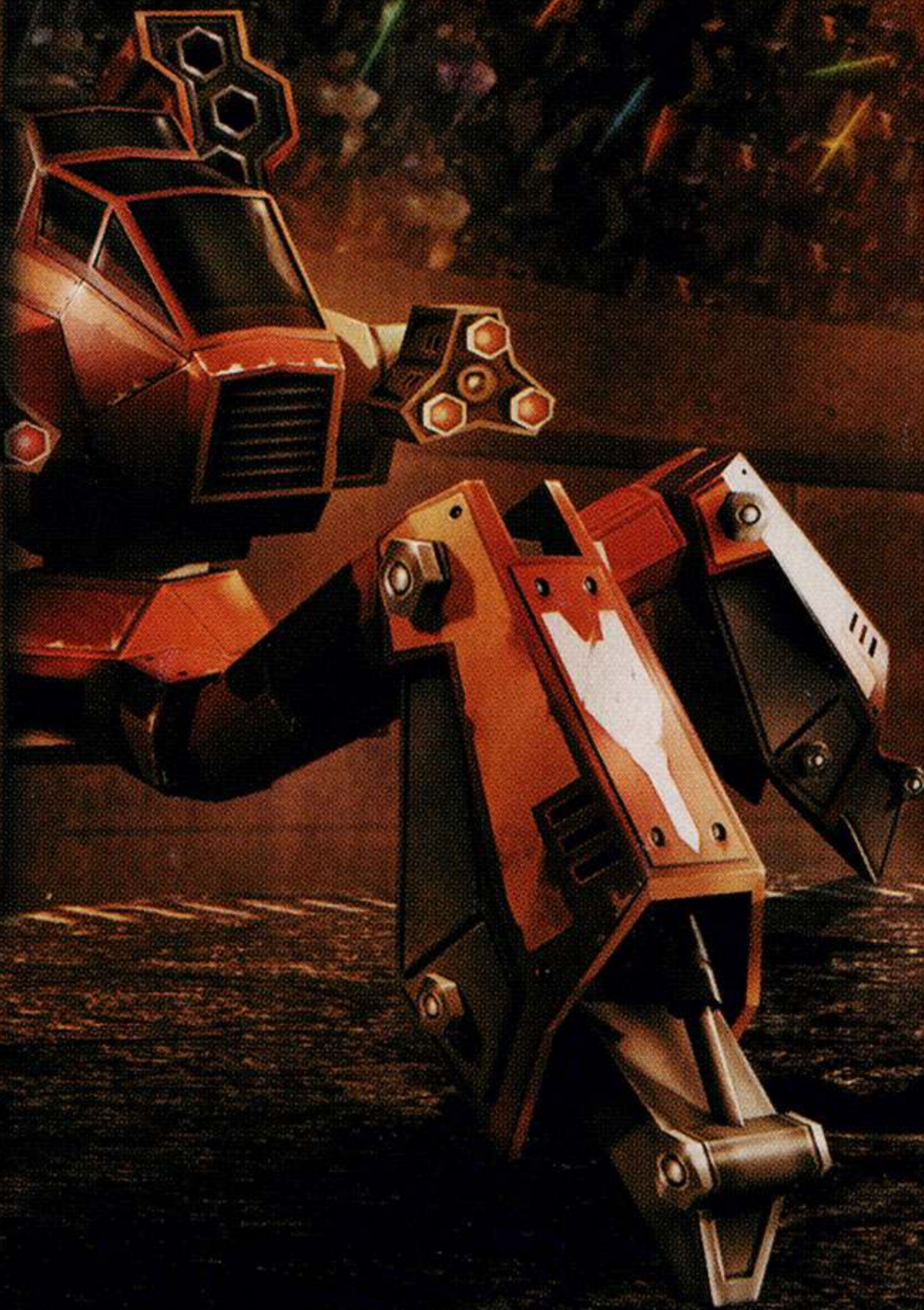
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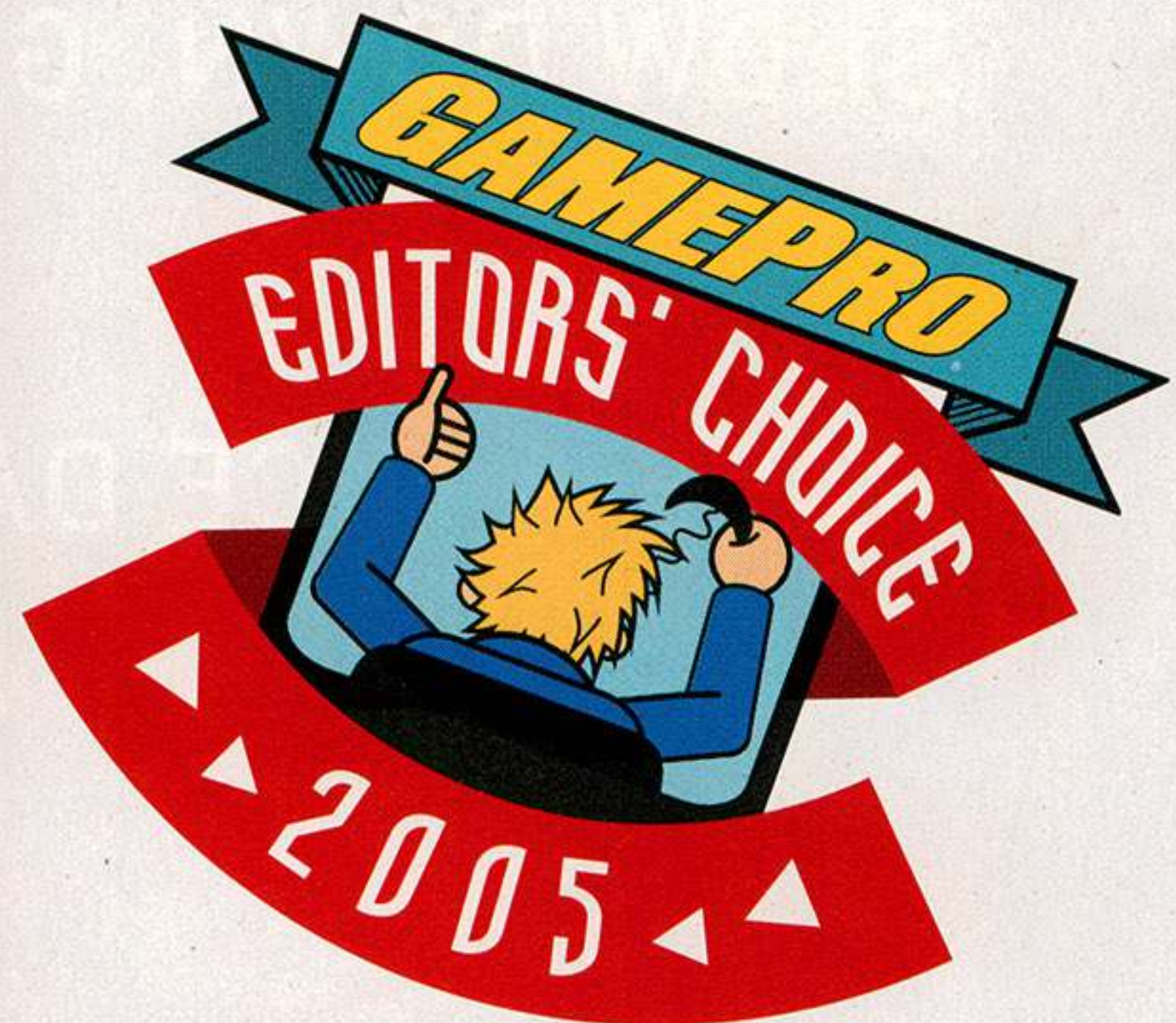
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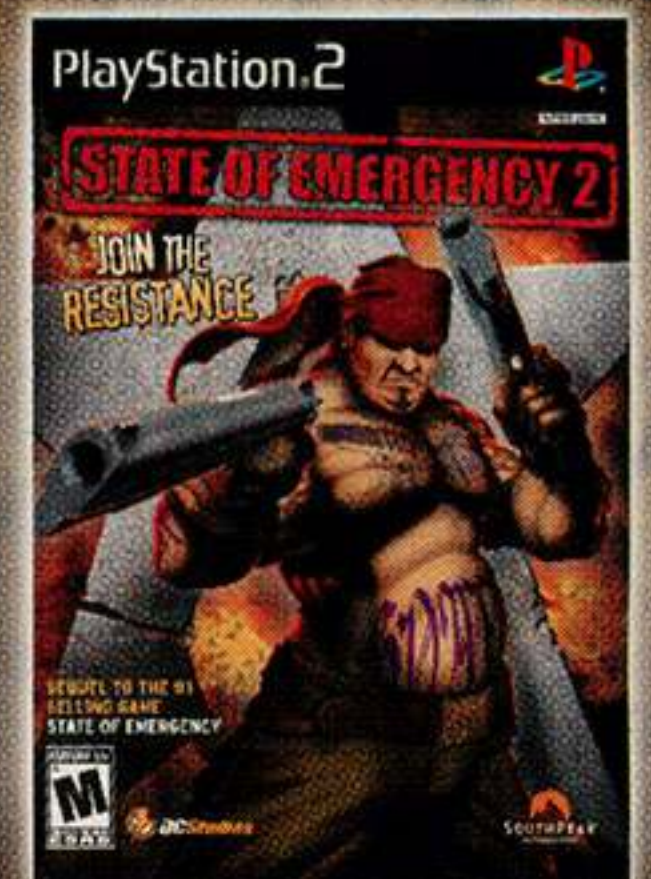
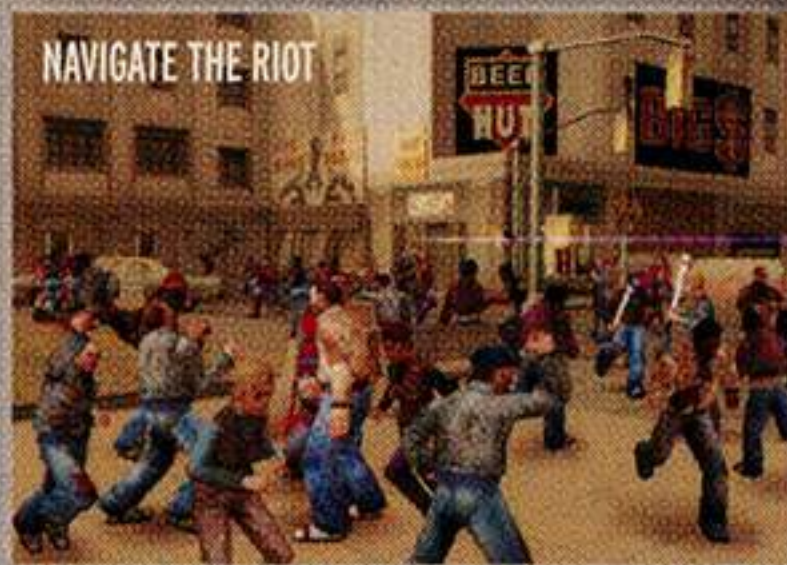
# FREEDOM'S ROLE MODEL RETURNS



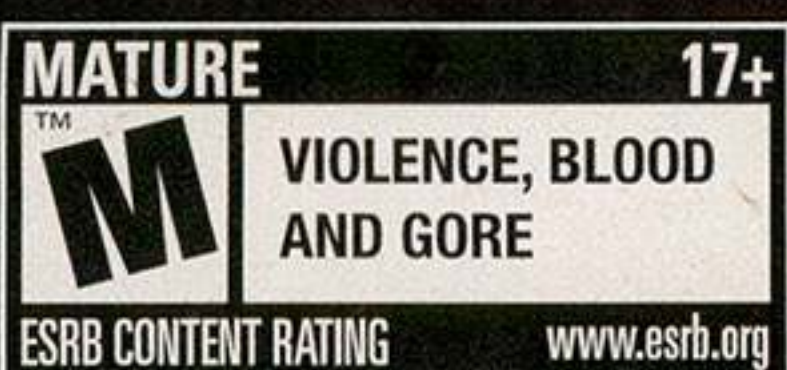
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# STATE OF EMERGENCY 2

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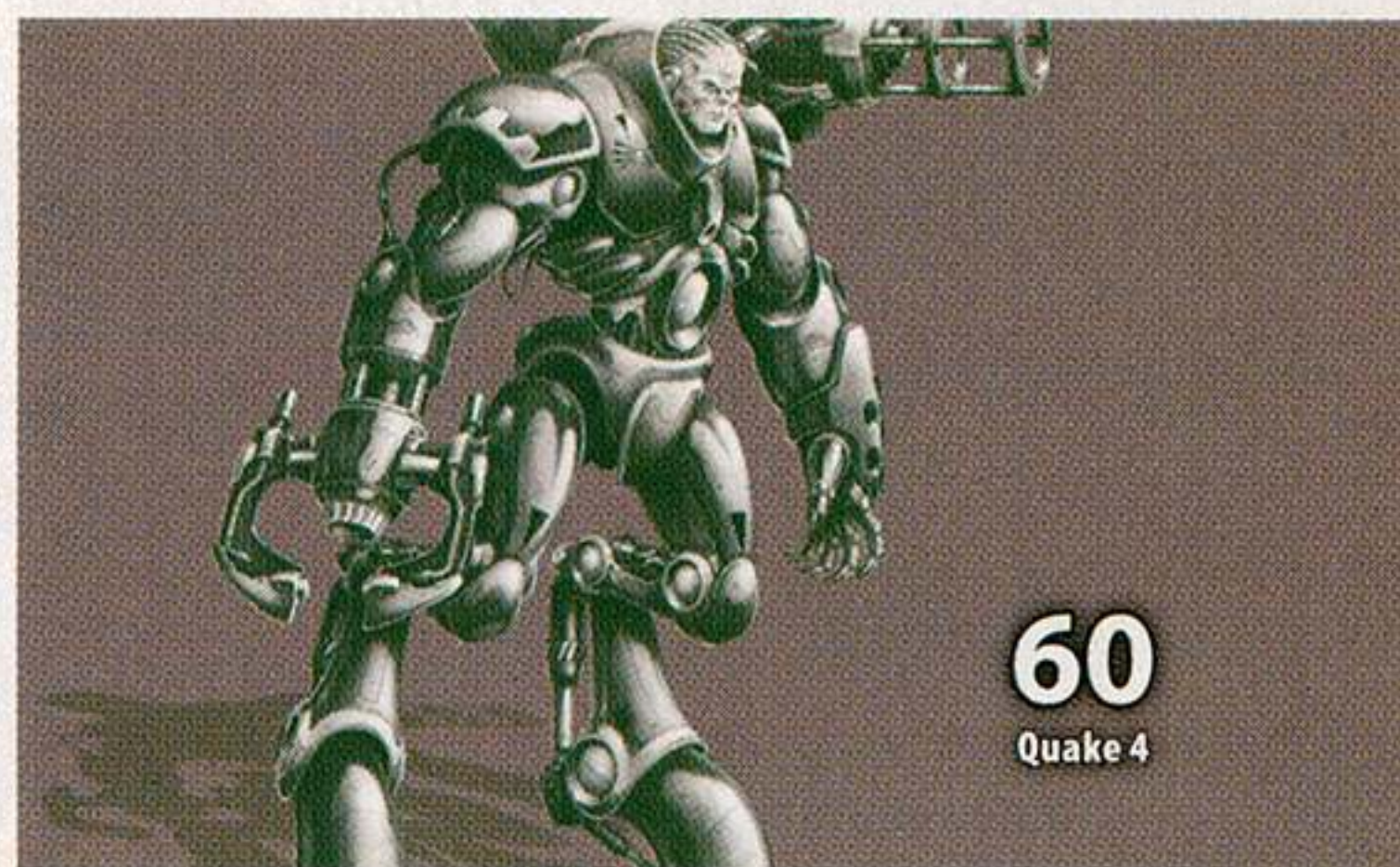
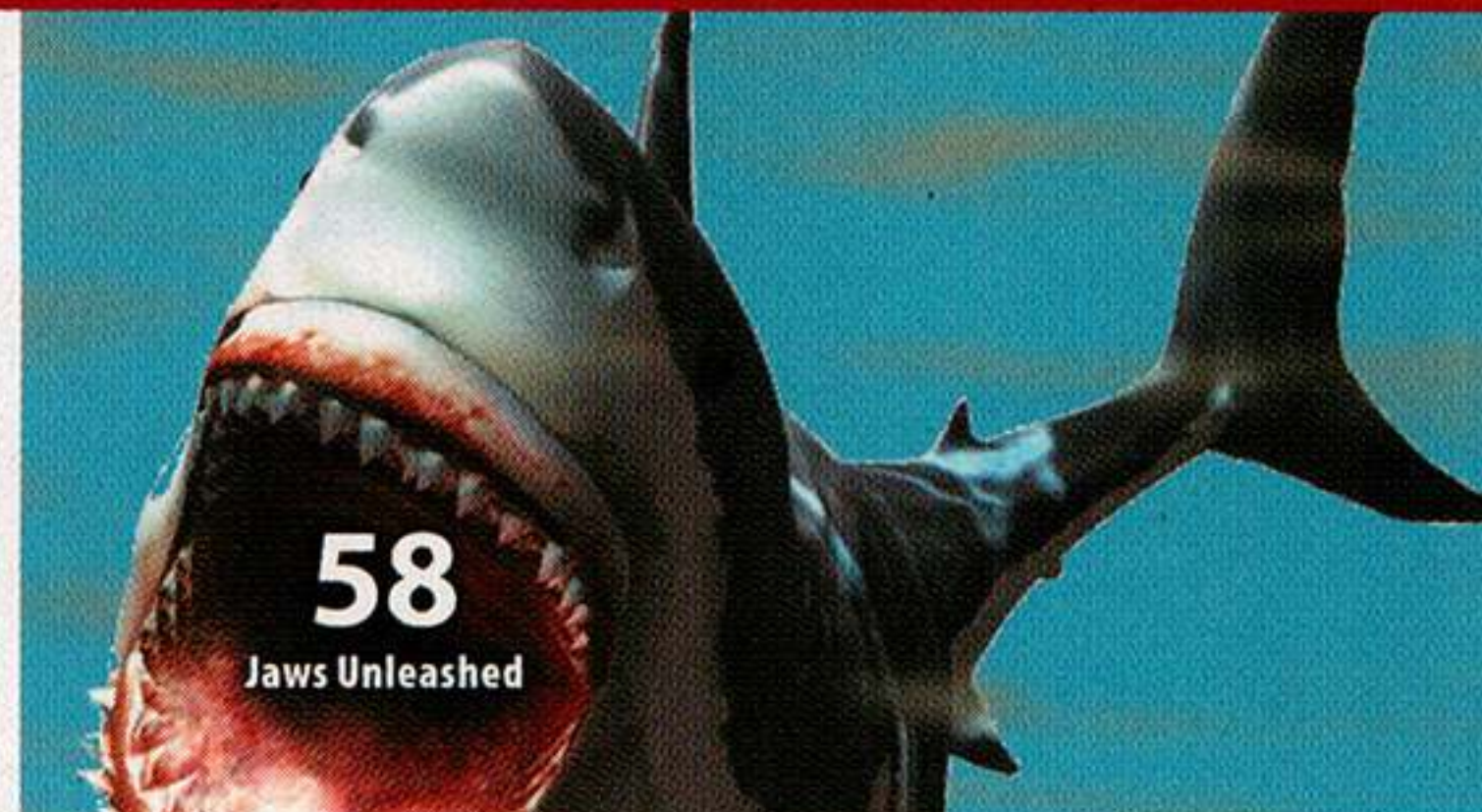
Take a trip down nightmare lane and revisit the Resident Evil series... the good, the bad, and the terrifying.

...And more!



## DEPARTMENTS

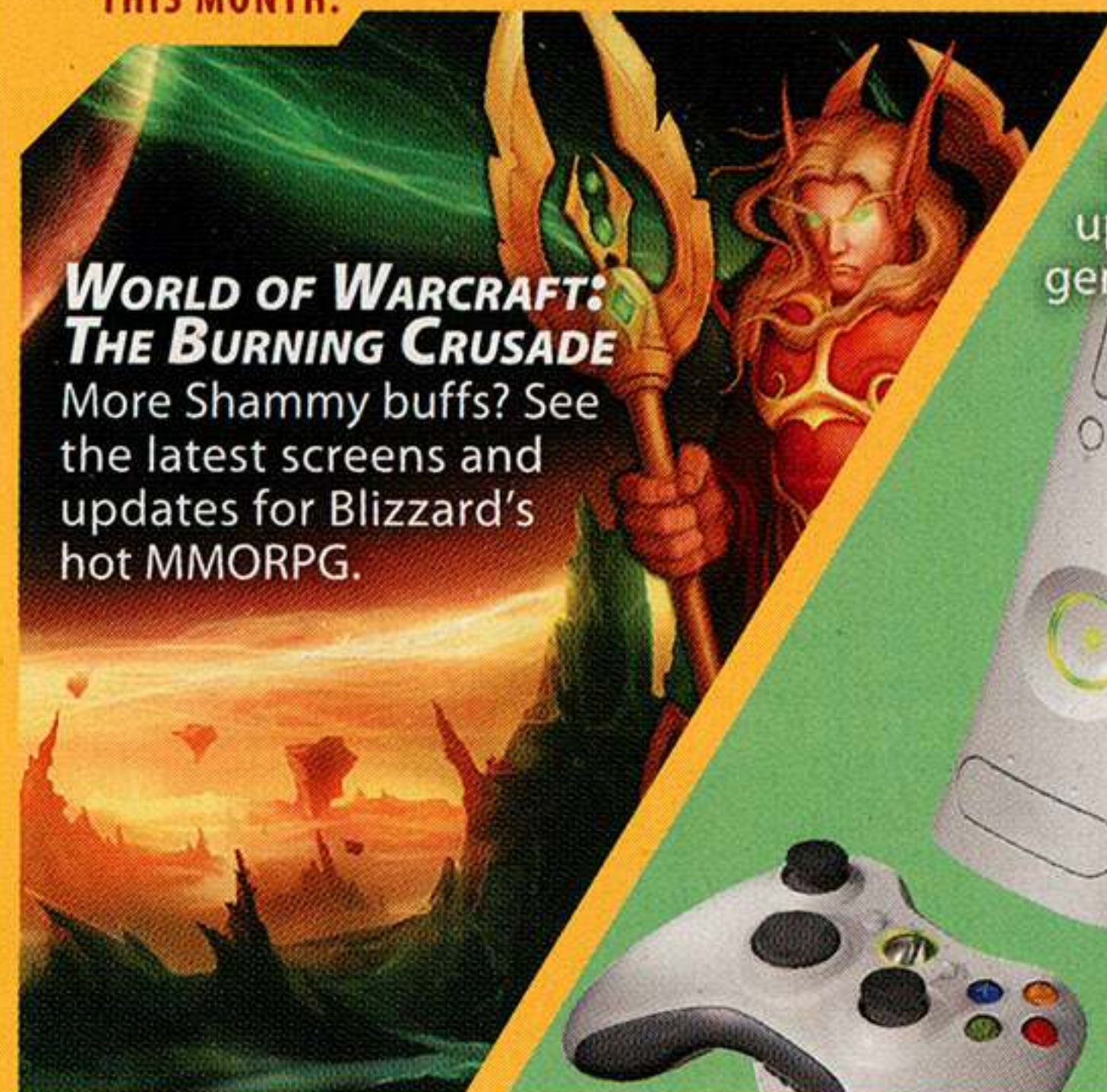
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SOME PEOPLE WILL WANT A PIECE OF YOUR IDENTITY,  
CHANGING IT TO FIT WHAT THEY THINK YOU SHOULD BE,  
AND OTHERS WILL WANT A PIECE OF YOUR TIME, WASTING  
IT WITH STUFF LIKE GETTING DRUNK AND GETTING HIGH  
AND THEN ANOTHER PIECE AND ANOTHER PIECE AND...  
IF EVERYONE TAKES A PIECE OF YOU, WHAT'S LEFT OF YOU?





# HEAD 2 HEAD

## Thank You, 360 Hardcore

**H**ere's a shout out and thanks to all of you hardcore Xbox fans and GamePros everywhere (and you know who you are): You were the ones on the frontlines—or at the front of the lines—for the Xbox 360 launch. You camped out at noon for the midnight release, even though your local video-game emporium and pet shop had only five 360s to deliver. You cruised around in the early a.m. searching for the stores with the shortest lines. You pulled an all-nighter at Sears only to discover at opening time that Sears wasn't carrying 360s. You mobbed Costco even though you didn't have a card. You jumped in front of the horde that trampled the harried clerks at Wal-Mart when they shifted the 360 distribution line. You settled for the core package when they ran out of "loaded" units. You suffered the initial system crashes. You figured out how to log on to Xbox Live. You plowed through the uneven crop of launch games, in search of a good time. You paid \$600 in total. You listed Xbox 360s on Ebay for thousands of dollars to distract the dweebs, suckers, and the infirm. You did all that (and loved it) so that we, those of us in the second wave—who might still be waiting for the robot operator to give us the "go" signal—can charge into the next generation with fewer casualties.

Your sacrifices enable us to make safer, saner buying decisions, and we thank you. Now, let the next-gen games begin!

The GamePros  
Oakland, CA  
letters@gamepro.com

## GTA Is Real?

You know, once I got off work and decided to cruise around the state. I ran over people on bikes and jumped curbs. My car caught fire, and after casually jumping free of the ensuing blast I watched the flaming wreckage fall off the overpass. I then stopped someone and jacked their car. After having fun outrunning the cops (all the while running over pedestrians), I drove into Philly. I picked up a hooker and drove to a secluded spot in the park. We did our little dance, and then I kicked her out of the car. I pulled a bat out of my arsenal of an AK47, a silenced pistol, a sniper rifle, and, get this, a rocket launcher; took my money back; and kept on driving. Later that night, I went to

the nearest military base and stole a tank. Wow! You should have seen it. Everyone from cops to military personnel to the CIA chased me!

They laid down spike strips and sent tanks and choppers after me. I ran to the top of the tallest building

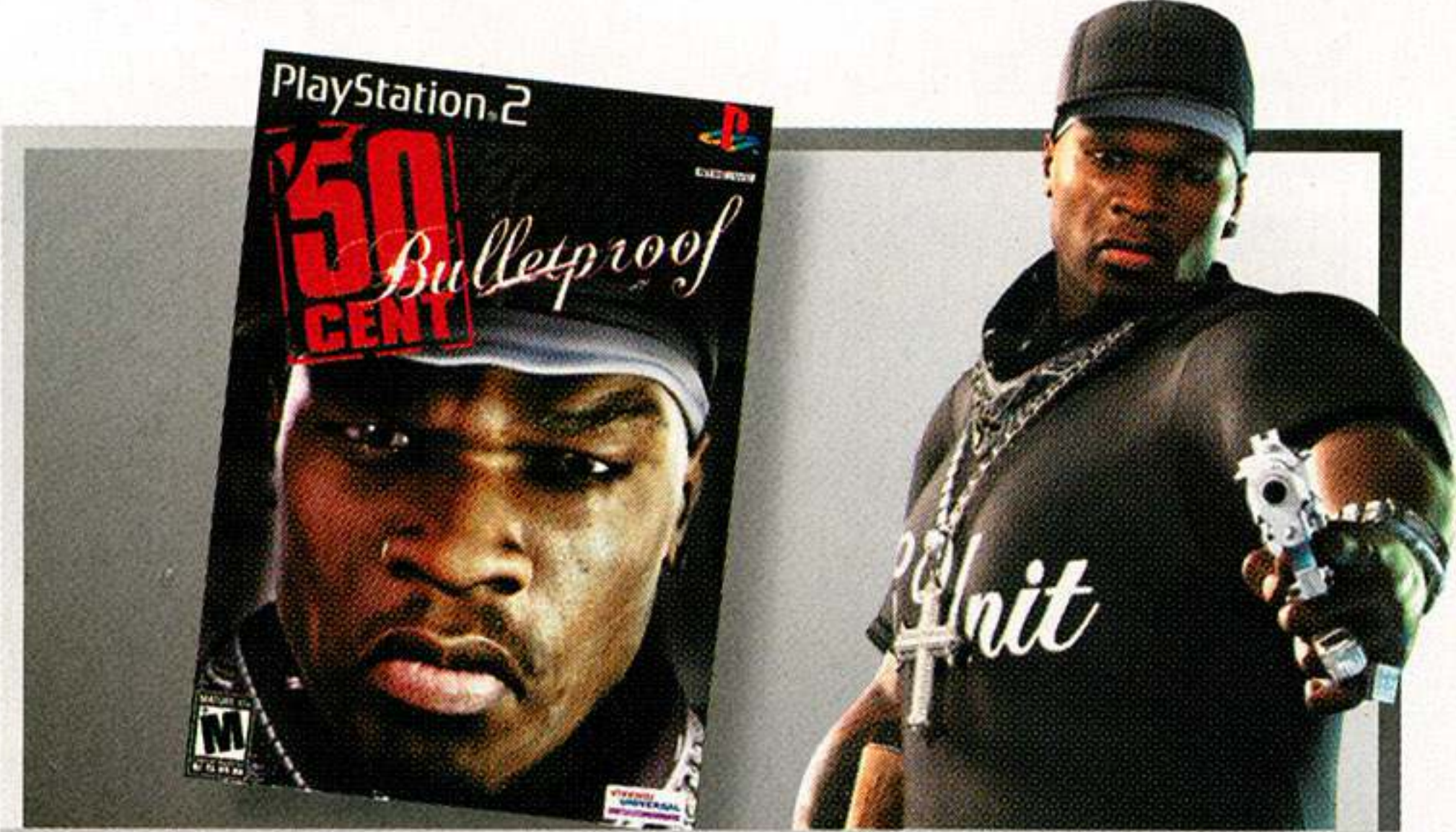
I could find and started sniping everyone and throwing grenades at every tank that ran through the city to stop me. Needless to say, I probably killed at least a hundred people. When the cops finally caught me, they fined me \$100 and sent me on my way with a slap on the wrist. I smiled and went off to find more hookers. Question: How can any child confuse Grand Theft Auto with reality?

► Drew "drizzle" Pepin—  
Via Internet

## Suck on a Life Saver

Advertising in games is starting to really piss me off! It's bad enough when I try to start a game and I'm subjected to ads by ATI and Electronic Arts, but it really sucks the wonder out of the game when you're sneaking down a corridor stalking your soon-to-be victim and you glance up and see an Nvidia billboard. This stuff is popping up more and more, and I just want it to stop! At this rate, we'll soon see Xbox games like Life Savers: Rafting Adventures. Don't know about you, but I don't really wanna raft on a damn life saver.

► Alex Bargar—Via Internet  
Yes, they really stick to your butt.



The April issue's Letter of the Month writer will receive a copy of Vivendi Universal's 50 Cent: Bulletproof (rated M)!



William, thanks for the great insight and inspiration. For that you win the first Xbox 360.

## Confessions of a Middle-Aged Gamer

I'm 40 years old, and I'm a gamer. I've been gaming since the beginning. Growing up I had the Atari 2600, Mattel Intellivision, Colovision, and even those clunky but very fun Bambino handheld basketball and football games. I used to hit the arcades to play Zaxxon, Centipede, and the original sit-in Star Wars game, just to name a few. Heck, I still have my Mattel Football 2! My wife thinks I should give up my love for gaming. She fails to fully understand the relaxation and personal enjoyment I get from playing. All she sees is a middle-aged man sitting in front of the TV with his wireless controller as if he were 17 again. My sons, 10 and 12, don't share her view.

They love the fact that I game and often come to me for help figuring out a level, a puzzle, or determining the best NFL player trade option. Gaming is one of the many ways I am able to stay close to my boys, and we relate well because of it. It also keeps me in tune with what games are out there, and I can make good informed decisions about the games I allow them to play. There's no way a game makes it into my house until I first know its background. Game magazines, like my subscription to *GamePro*, also help keep me in the know for both me and my boys.

Gaming has also been a huge help in another facet of my life. I'm an elementary school teacher. When my students find out I like video games, it opens a window that enables me to relate and communicate with them much more quickly than some of the other teachers. They think, "He's a gamer, too, so he's okay." After a minute or two of discussing the latest games or revealing tips, I find they are more attentive and respectful. They feel more comfortable with me because, although I'm their teacher, they know they have something in common with me, too. That helps a lot.

I don't know how long I'll continue gaming. I honestly have no intentions of giving it up anytime soon. Ten years from now, I envision my sons dropping by for a visit and a game. To me, gaming is more than lots of color and action on a screen. It's relaxation and a gateway. Parents should stay well in tune to what their children play. Not just to protect them but also as a way to stay plugged into them. Use gaming as an avenue for communication. If talking about games with your kids can open the door, there's no limit to the other things they may feel comfortable talking with you about.

► William White—Toledo, OH





THEY'RE GONNA PULL ON YOU—SOME PEOPLE IN ONE DIRECTION,  
AND OTHERS IN ANOTHER AND SOME IN DIRECTIONS THAT YOU KNOW  
AREN'T RIGHT FOR YOU. SO AFTER A WHILE, WHAT WILL ALL THAT  
PULLING DO TO YOU?







## PSP Blues

You are the experts, so I need to ask you a question that has been bothering me for some time. When the PSP came out, there was so much hype about it being the gaming wave of the future. I thought that it was a really good idea, so I traded everything in (and I mean *everything*) at my local game store to purchase one. The only thing that I left myself was my Xbox and one game. But sadly, my PSP has been sitting on my shelf for three months, and I haven't even touched it. I got rid of everything to have this, and I'm not even using it. So my question is where are all of the good games? Sure, there are good "looking" games out there, but they all turn out to be boring with really crappy camera controls. The only thing that prevents me from trading it in is that I know that there will be a Final Fantasy game coming out some time in the distant future. Will there be any more good games in the future? Should I trade this thing in for an Xbox 360? I know plenty of gamers who are having this problem. Tell us there's some freaking hope in the future and that I did not trade in all of my stuff for some worthless piece of technology.

► Jesse Klunzinger—Via Internet

There is always freaking hope, but you're correct that stellar PSP games have been few and far between so far. Final Fantasy PSP? Waaaay out there. If you're starving for immediate gratification, the Xbox 360 may deliver sooner.

## When Zombies Don't Attack!

Beware! The zombies will attack November 23, 2006! Have a meeting spot ready for those still alive. Remember: You must escape alive! Otherwise, who will bring me my game reviews? Resist the Virus; sewers are not safe. And happy New Year!

► The Incredible Holt—Crawfordsville, IN

Fear not, no one or no "thing" can deter *GamePro* from continuing to deliver awesome game reviews (although we will be omitting Resident Evil coverage from our upcoming Indiana editions). And remain calm because help is on the way, too! We are advising the Indiana State Water Department to check all wells in the greater Crawfordsville/Montgomery County area for contamination by substances.

## In Defense of the ESRB

I'm writing in response to the article "Ethical Dilemmas" in the December 2005 issue. I feel that the ESRB is being blamed unjustly for kids being exposed to mature content. The problem is not that the ratings don't deter young kids from playing these games. The responsibility ultimately falls to parents, as it should. You'd be amazed at how many parents my boyfriend, who works at a video chain, has seen about to rent mature games like *Playboy Mansion*, *The Guy Game*, and *Grand Theft Auto* for their children who aren't even teenagers yet. The fact that the ESRB lists content descriptors is

a huge step toward a more informed public, but if parents care enough about what their child is exposed to, they will do their own research. This quote from the ESRB website really hit home with me: "ESRB urges parents to talk with their children about their favorite games. Playing the games with your children helps stimulate those discussions, and playing games as a family can also be a fun way to spend time together."

► JennD—Via Internet

## The Waiting Game

I have been a "serious" gamer since 1998, and I refuse to call myself a "hardcore" gamer. I just know better. I have a dozen different systems with hundreds of games. Hell, I was even a beta tester for Xbox Live. I still put lots of hours a week into gaming. I'm just not feeling the 360 at this point. You get me? There's all this hype about how powerful the system is and how good the graphics are. Yeah, yeah. Strangely enough, the 360 will be the least powerful system of the up-and-coming newer console generation. The PS3 and Revolution are going to be more powerful and probably not cost too much more. Sure, you gotta wait a little while for the other two, but so what? It's the holiday season, and great games are coming out every week for current systems. I am going to play the game of wait and see (just like I did with the Sony PSP). I don't have one, you dig?

► Brett Pavlov—Via Internet

We do. There are great game experiences in store for video-game systems of all generations—past, present, and future. In fact, the Revolution promises to embrace the idea of retro gaming like no other console system. "Latest" doesn't always mean "greatest."

## Heroes Of The Suikoden

When reading an assignment for my history course on ancient China, I discovered something strange. A famous Chinese novel entitled *Tale of the Marshes* (one of China's earliest stories) was well known for not limiting itself to the exploits of one hero but offering instead 108 different story lines, much like the RPG *Suikoden's* 108 Stars plot system. The novel also revolved around a group of bandits who oppose official oppression and government taxes, and share the riches they obtain from robbing from those in power with the poor—a theme used often in *Suikoden*. These connections between *Suikoden* and *Tale of the Marshes* seemed far too similar to be coincidental, so I decided to ask the 'Pros what they think.

► Ethan Reed—Via Internet

You are correct! *Tale of the Marshes* is a famous Chinese story written in the 14th Century that is said to have a basis in actual events that took place in 1120. It is sometimes called *The Water Margin*, and under this title it has been the subject of several famous kung fu movies, too. But the rest of the story is that in 19th Century Japan that Chinese tale was translated into Japanese, illustrated by the famous Japanese artist Hokusai, and entitled *Shinpen Suikogaden* (The Illustrated Edition of the *Suikoden*). At that time, Japan was being ruled by the powerful and harsh Tokugawa shogunate under a strict class system (that included the samurai class). The *Suikogaden's* rebellious tale of average people who dared to challenge the ruling powers became insanely popular amongst the working classes. That counter-culture popularity carried over to modern times and, of course, even into Konami RPGs.





## Imagination: A Terrible Thing To Waste

I'm angry at game developers everywhere. It seems that now nine out of 10 games are basically the same thing. Every game is either some sort of a squad-based, ultra-realistic shooter; a realistic sports game; or an even more realistic racer. It seems like no developer is willing to come up with something new, something original and creative. Every time I go to a local game store to buy a game, I end up walking out empty handed because every game is just like the one next to it. Isn't the real point of a video game to push your imagination to the limit? I recently saw a commercial for the America's Army game, and their motto was "Our developers don't rely on their imagination." They said that as if having an imagination is a terrible thing. What that game developer doesn't seem to understand is that the lack of imagination is what's making games suck.

► ZJR—Via Internet

Your lamentation about the lack of imagination in games is becoming more and more popular. But all is not lost. Check out *Shadow of the Colossus* and *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*, among others, this issue. And take a look at our feature "Five Ways To Save Video Games." With vigilance, imagination and fun will ever rule games.

## 2D, 4-Evar

Let's face it, the Japanese have implanted seeds in us all and we're under their control. Everything about them, we like: their cartoons (anime), their cars, their gadgets, and countless other stuff. Heck, I even like their language.

I've been playing video games since the Atari and reading *GamePro* for almost a decade. As time goes on, 3D graphics are becoming better and better, but we're forgetting what started it all: 2D games—just one more thing the Japanese excel at! I'm talking about games with great 2D "style"—like *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, the Super Mario series (for the NES), and countless others. We need more 2D games, and we need to continue to improve their visual style. And how can developers improve graphics even more? One word—anime!

Thousands of gamers, including myself, love anime in their video games. Imagine playing *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night 2* for the PlayStation 3 or the Xbox 360—if they looked just like anime! That sounds great to me; how about you?

► Demetrius Long—Buffalo, NY

Your point is very well taken. The greatness that is the legacy of those amazing 2D games, many designed by Japanese game makers, proves that the best video games are all about the fun and the gameplay, no matter the visual style. Oddly, we now feel like plunging our faces into a steaming hot bowl of ramen.



## READER REVIEW

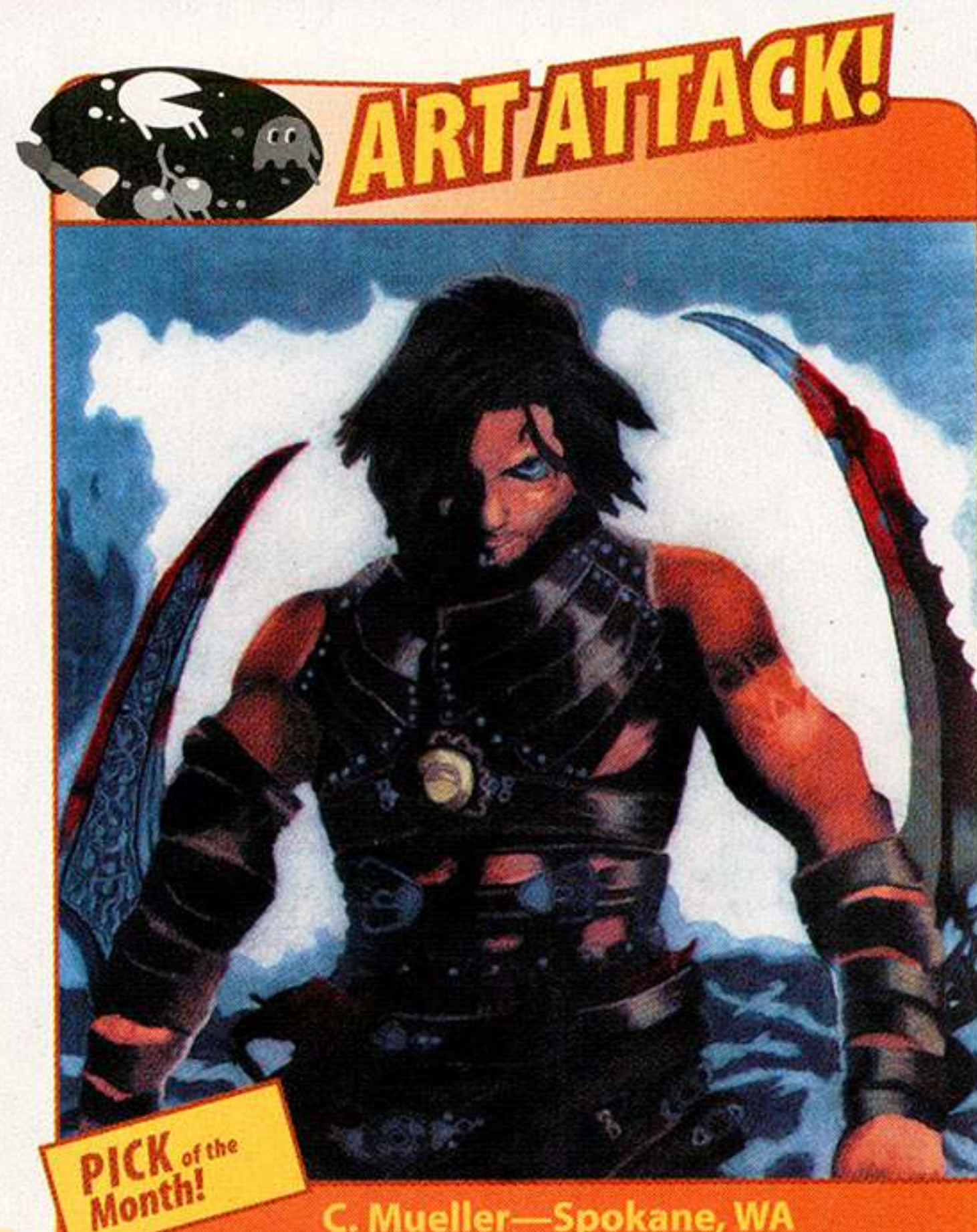
### Xbox 360



This is definitely a load. I'm an older guy, and I usually think that when I reserve something it should be there when it says it is supposed to be. I reserved my Xbox 360 three months ago, but I was informed that I wasn't going to get mine until possibly into January of 2006. This simply outrages me. The system is completely paid off, and I'm left out in the cold. I know the game stores have nothing to do with this and that it all rests in the hands of Microsoft. And as if matters are not bad enough, I turn on the TV and see MTV giving out Xbox 360s to hundreds of screaming little girls and boys for free. I can't help but feel like I'm getting the short end of the stick on this whole deal. You know Microsoft is perfectly poised to take the upper hand in this console war, and I can't doubt that they are going to lose if they keep operating like this. Making diehard fans (like myself) angry isn't going to keep them around too long either. I know I'm not the only one to suffer this and that this situation is on every disappointed Xbox 360 shopper's mind. I just had to get my little rant off my chest.—DreadPirate

FUN FACTOR  
**1.0**

Agree? Disagree? Or just think you can do better? Write your own user reviews at [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com), and maybe you'll see your opinions here next.



C. Mueller—Spokane, WA

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# BUYERS BEWARE

**W**ell, the holidays have passed by once again, fellow gamers. Unfortunately, there isn't enough yuletide cheer in the world to offset the frustration that follows when our holiday gaming gifts end up as nothing more than the video-game equivalent of fruitcake. Nevertheless, The Watch Dog is here to help combat some of your holiday woes. This month, we'll be discussing the release of Nintendo's long-awaited Wi-Fi service.



## Nintendo Wi-Fi: No Strings Attached

Nintendo has finally done it. After years of playing down the Internet as a viable medium for gaming, it has finally released its wireless-gaming network to the world for use with the DS. Like so much of Nintendo's products, Nintendo Wi-Fi (as it's officially called) is made to be fun, extensive, and almost glaringly simple. From the time we've spent with it, including playing the current lineup of games that utilize the Wi-Fi connection, we can hardly disagree. Nintendo has done a smashing job making the connection straightforward: There's no complicated setup or excessive drivers to install, and with just a few taps of the touchscreen, you're ready to smash into your friends in Mario Kart DS or hang out with your pals in Animal Crossing: Wild World.

But some folks may still be confused by a small piece of hardware called the Wi-Fi USB connector that Nintendo has released. Available only through Nintendo's online store, the connector is intended for DS owners who have a high-speed Internet connection but do not have a wireless network. The device connects to a USB port on your PC and relays information between your DS and your computer's broadband connection, essentially filling the role that a wireless router would. But why is it being sold through only the company's online store? Largely because Nintendo wants to avoid confusion for people who already have a wireless network. When the average consumer goes to their local store to pick up a DS or a DS game, they'll likely figure that they need the Wi-Fi USB



connector in order to play Wi-Fi-enabled games. However, this is a rare case because most consumers' households already have a wireless-enabled network. To prevent the sale of unnecessary hardware, Nintendo decided to offer the unit only online to the few people who might actually need one. It's a different story for gamers in Canada, though, where the company packaged the Wi-Fi USB connector with Mario Kart DS because of the lack of available wireless networks in the country.

Thankfully, setup remains equally as simple as, if not easier than, setting up a connection with your household access point; it takes


literally no more than four taps on the DS to set it up, and transfer speeds seem more than adequate for the online action of the DS. Nintendo has the connector listed at \$35, which may seem expensive, but for the services it provides—a wireless access point anywhere there's a broadband connection and a Windows XP PC with a USB port—it ends up being a relatively good bargain. Plus, rumor has it that the device could also be used when the Revolution is eventually released. For its first foray into wireless Internet gaming, Nintendo has done an impressive job of creating a robust and easily accessible network for gamers.



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PlayStation 2

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\*This game is not yet rated by the ESRB. If rated Mature you must be 17 or older or have permission from an adult to purchase the game.



# KRISTANNA LOKEN GOES FOR THE JUGULAR

Kristanna Loken talks about her role in the upcoming video-game-to-film adaptation *BloodRayne*.

**K**ristanna Loken, best known for her role as the Terminatrix in *T3*, has sunk her teeth into a video-game role with Uwe Boll's adaptation of Majesco's *BloodRayne*. The film of the same name, which opens January 7, serves as the origin story to the video-game franchise. The movie also stars Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Michelle Rodriguez, Udo Kier, Matt Davis, Billy Zane, Michael Paré, Meat Loaf, and Geraldine Chaplin.

"Because the movie is a prequel, I just wanted to make the character my own incarnation," said Loken on the set of Boll's *Dungeon Siege* movie, where she also plays a role. "Obviously, we went with the artwork of the character and the overall feeling from the game, but I just tried to create the character from scratch."

## Jekyll and Hyde

Loke dons a variation of the sexy outfit that made the virtual 'Rayne a Playboy model. She found that the character goes well beyond the skin-deep beauty. "Rayne is half-vampire and half-human," said Loken. "It's a bit like Jekyll and Hyde. The story revolves around her discovery that she's a Damfir. She knows she needs blood to sustain herself, but she has a hard time dealing with killing...so she resorts to other ways of getting her blood."

The R-rated film has plenty of blood as well as a good deal of action with swords and 'Rayne's famous blades. Loken did extensive weapons training on location in Romania for the two-and-a-half-month shoot. "We did a lot of weapons training with the different types of blades that she uses," said Loken. "We worked with the choreography to get the overall feel and body movement of the character. I just tried to stay very limber."

## Signature Moves

Fans of the game franchise will find several of 'Rayne's signature moves in the film. Loken said she made sure to incorporate some of the game moves into the choreography. But because the film is a period piece, and a prequel to the games, there was no wirework used. The end result is a combination of game moves and Loken's take on the character, wrapped into the appropriate time period.

The real draw for Loken was playing a vampire—even if she's only a Damfir—because she's always loved vampire movies and always wanted to play one. "I think that just the taboo fact of needing blood in order to live—there's something very intriguing and sexy and dark about that," said Loken. "It's very intimate. You're dealing with people and going directly for their life force, and taking that power from them and integrating it into yourself. There's something really sexy about it."

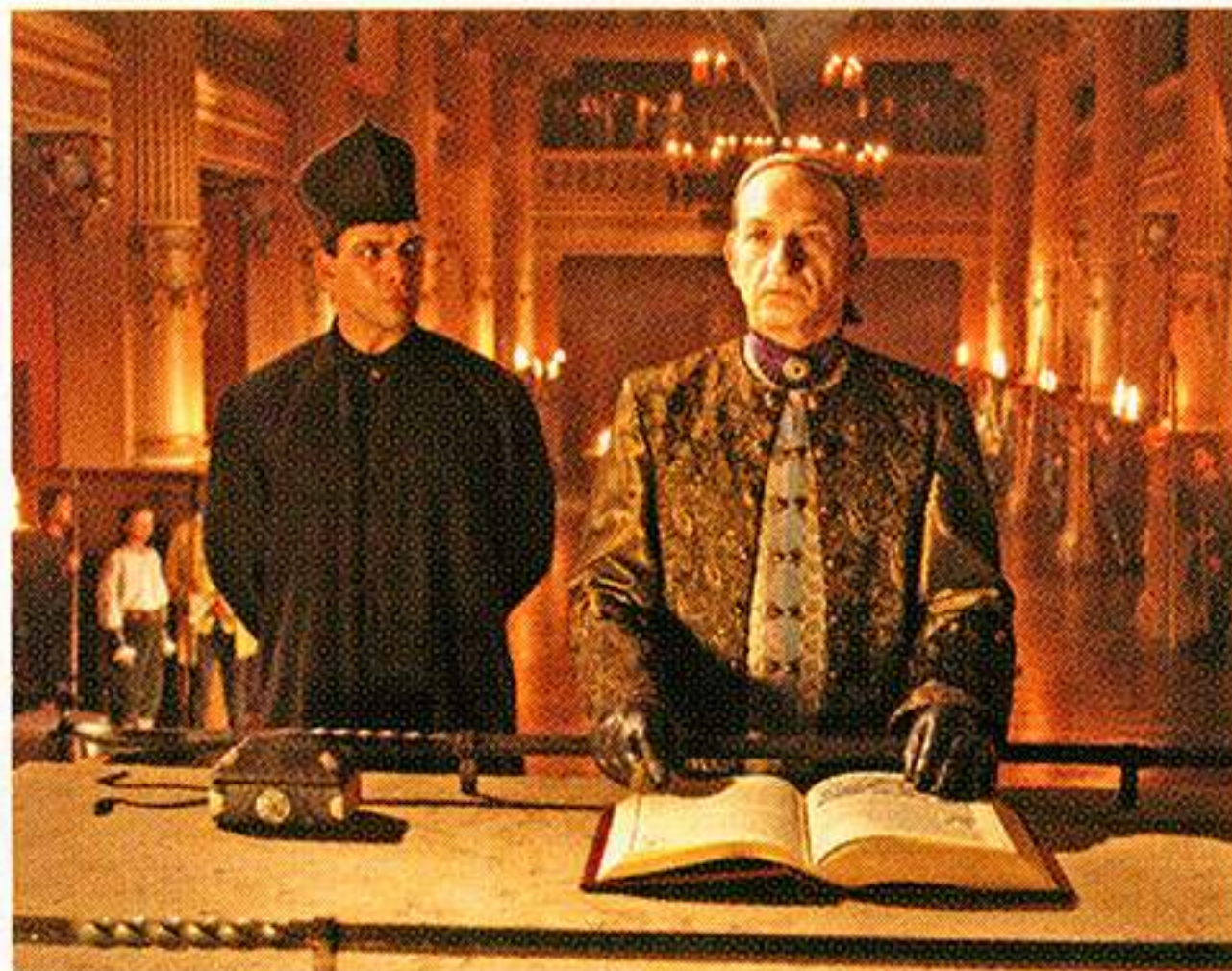
Should *BloodRayne* score high at the box office, Loken is game for reprising the role a second time around, assuming the pieces all fall into place.



Kristanna Loken plays the half-human, half-vampire Damfir, better known as BloodRayne.



Kristanna Loken and Michelle Rodriguez battle it out. Fans of the video game will find several of 'Rayne's signature moves integrated into the film.



*BloodRayne* for an Oscar? Academy Award-winner Ben Kingsley plays the role of Kagan.



Tarantino regular Michael Madsen (left) plays Vladimir; Matt Davis (right) also stars.



# Underappreciated Gems

Sometimes, truly amazing games slip between the cracks or get lost in the shuffle. Let's pay respect where respect is due with these 10 underappreciated gems.

## 1) Ico PS2

For starters, Ico doesn't feature an onscreen interface, and it offers very little in the way of dialogue. Still, the game's tough puzzles, brilliant visuals, and captivating story line complete an enchanting experience. Buy it immediately, and keep your eyes peeled for Shadow of the Colossus.

## 2) Poy Poy PlayStation

Mmmm...Poy Poy—surely you missed this one! Poy Poy was the first multiplayer game to let you throw your opponent around in a last man-standing competition. Poy Poy is a classic party game, so seek out a copy of it while you still can.

## 3) Beyond Good & Evil PS2, Xbox

Ubisoft created a surreal science-fiction/fantasy world where adventure seekers will feel right at home. Don't let the Disney-inspired visuals fool you; this is adventure gaming at its best. The subversive plot—which deals with government corruption—is totally relevant today, too.

## 4) Incredible Crisis PS2

What do a dance competition, a massage on a Ferris wheel, and a bank robbery have in common? They're all Incredible Crises! A Japanese family's series of tragedies becomes a hilariously bizarre experience that defies description in Incredible Crisis. You can find the game for chump change, and it's worth a spot in your gaming curio rack.

## 5) Katamari Damacy PS2

Roll around and collect every single thing in your path—that's the premise for Katamari Damacy. You start out collecting thumbtacks and progress to bovines, people, and even skyscrapers! It's intuitive and amusing, and keep your eyes peeled for We ♥ Katamari, the much-anticipated sequel.

## 6) The Adventures of Cookie & Cream PS2

This cutesy game actually requires more than one person to complete, a gameplay mechanic that's practically unheard of. C&C is cooperative gameplay at its best.

## 7) Mad Maestro PS2

You can test your rhythm with some inspirational classical music in Mad Maestro. This one's definitely a trip!

## 8) T2 Judgment Day Arcade

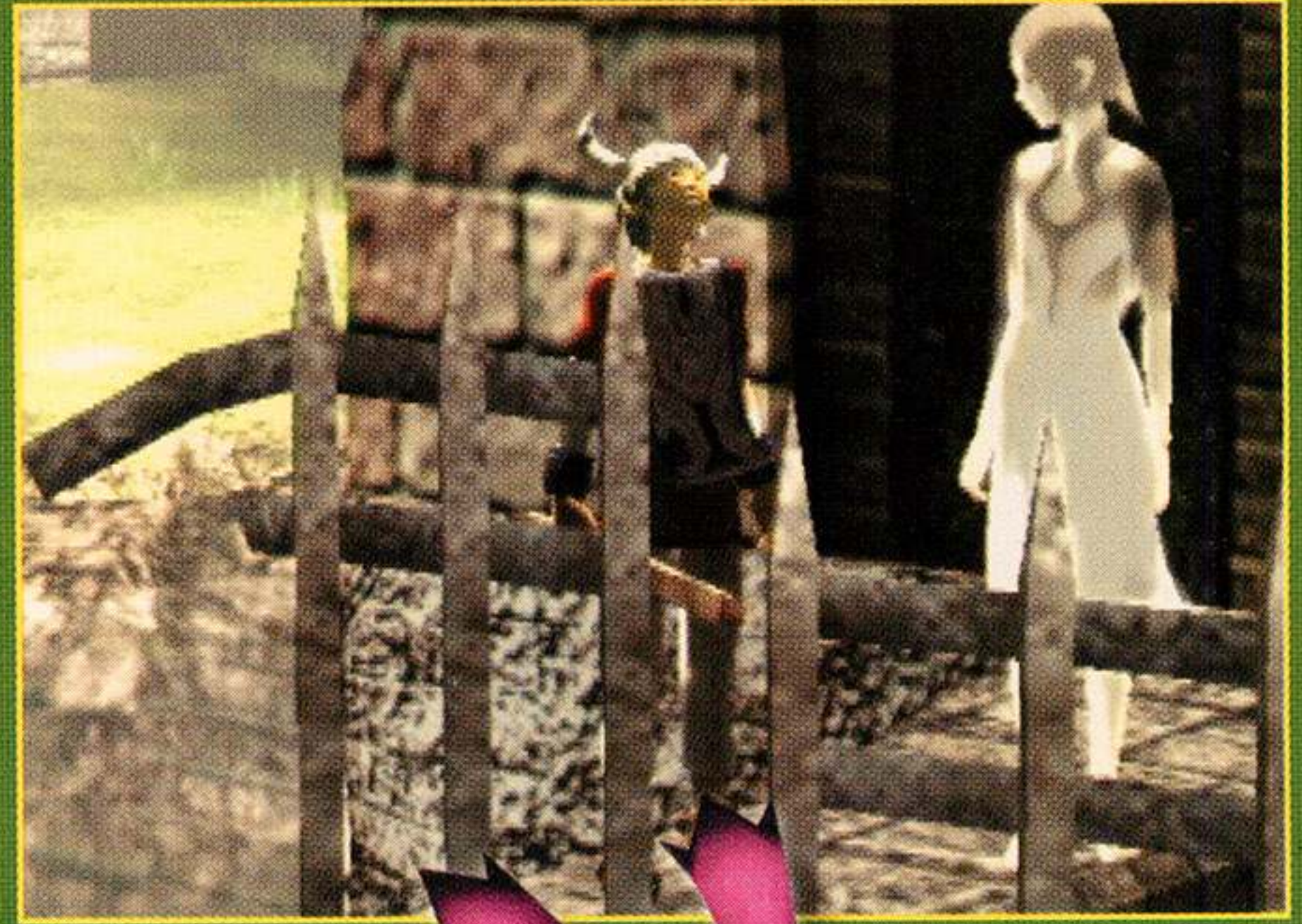
T2 Judgment Day easily stands as the best Terminator game ever created (please don't mention Rise of the Machines), and in a neat coincidence, it's also probably the best light-gun shooter ever designed (with the possible exception of Space Gun). It's still occasionally found in arcades, and the game's legacy lives on thanks to MAME.

## 9) Typing of the Dead Dreamcast

The faster you type, the more zombies you'll blow away. Who said video games aren't educational? Typing of the Dead is really just a reworked version of House of the Dead 2, but it's zany enough to be fiendishly addictive. It's available for both the defunct Dreamcast and the PC; the latter version is obviously the one to get.

## 10) Zombies Ate My Neighbors SNES, Genesis

Konami brought us this 16-bit gem from the vaults of LucasArts. Goofy weapons like soda-can grenades and water guns made this monster mash extraordinary. It's basically just Gauntlet with cartoon monsters, but after you complete a few levels and build up your arsenal, just try to put the controller down.



## Agree...Disagree... What's Your Net Ten?

We posed the question, "What's your favorite underappreciated gem?" to the online community in our forums at GamePro.com. Keep checking the forums for more online polls!



"Where's Mister Mosquito? That game was like honey."—Rice Burner

"Don't forget Pocky & Rocky!"—Brother Buzz

"The Ape Escape franchise"—Killa412

"I thought Evil Dead: Regeneration was underappreciated."—EyeGuy

"Incoming for the Dreamcast"—Monsterman8

"Star Ocean: The Second Story"—DroBomb



## Resident Evil

Vital Signs examines influential franchises. Where have they been? Where are they going? Time for a checkup!

FUN FACTOR RATING

5.0

4.0

3.0

2.0

1.0

1996

2001

2005

Resident Evil

Resident Evil Director's Cut

Resident Evil 2

Resident Evil 2: Dual Shock Version

Resident Evil 3: Nemesis

Resident Evil Code: Veronica

Resident Evil Code: Veronica X

Resident Evil

Resident Evil 0

Resident Evil Dead Aim

Resident Evil Outbreak

Resident Evil 4

Resident Evil Outbreak File # 2



**Resident Evil**  
PlayStation, Saturn, PC  
March 30, 1996 (PlayStation)

Giving new life to the musty survival/horror genre and stealing the spotlight away from the Alone in the Dark series, the original zombie-mutilating masterpiece made Resident Evil a household name by incorporating prerendered backgrounds, mind-blowing FMVs, a story better than most zombie movies, and one genuinely spooky mansion.  
**Fun Factor: 5.0**

**Resident Evil Director's Cut Dual Shock Version**  
PlayStation  
September 14, 1998

Milking the name for all it's worth, this reissue was a titanic waste of dough.  
**Fun Factor: 3.5**

**Resident Evil 2**  
GameCube, PlayStation, Dreamcast, N64, PC  
January 21, 1998 (PlayStation)

The favorite of many RE fans, the sequel stretched out the confined combat zone of the first game and brought the carnage out into the streets of Raccoon City.  
**Fun Factor: 5.0**

**Resident Evil 3: Nemesis**  
GameCube, PlayStation, Dreamcast, PC  
November 12, 1999 (PlayStation)

A haunting memory of the first time gamers realized that Nemesis would not stop coming after them just because they had entered a different room still resides in their minds. Uber hottie Jill Valentine—with that low-cut top, short skirt, and boots—is also not easily forgotten.  
**Fun Factor: 5.0**

**Resident Evil Code: Veronica**  
Dreamcast  
March 29, 2000

Code: Veronica took place three years after the events of Resident Evil 2, in which Claire Redfield is looking for her brother and butchering crusty zombies in the meantime.  
**Fun Factor: 4.0**

**Resident Evil Survivor**  
PlayStation  
August 31, 2000

A Resident Evil FPS, Survivor was hated by everyone who gave it the four seconds of playtime it didn't deserve.  
**Fun Factor: 2.0**

**Resident Evil Gaiden**  
Game Boy Color  
December 14, 2001

The only Resident Evil title to land on the Game Boy Color, Gaiden switched to a pitiful first-person view during enemy encounters.  
**Fun Factor: 2.5**

**Resident Evil**  
GameCube  
April 30, 2002

The muscle of the GameCube helped this remake become successful. And as the original was released in 1996, this was the first time that many gamers

had their jugular veins munched on by zombies from the first Resident Evil game.  
**Fun Factor: 4.5**

**Resident Evil 0**  
GameCube  
November 12, 2002

The Phantom Menace of Resident Evil, 0, while not a horrible game, didn't quite live up to its brothers due to some moments of lackluster gameplay and a case of more of the same but with better graphics.  
**Fun Factor: 4.5**

**Resident Evil Dead Aim**  
PlayStation 2  
June 18, 2003

With better results than a House of the Dead game, Resident Evil Dead Aim made use of the GunCon 2, giving lead showers to the living dead.  
**Fun Factor: 4.0**

**Resident Evil Outbreak**  
PlayStation 2  
March 30, 2004

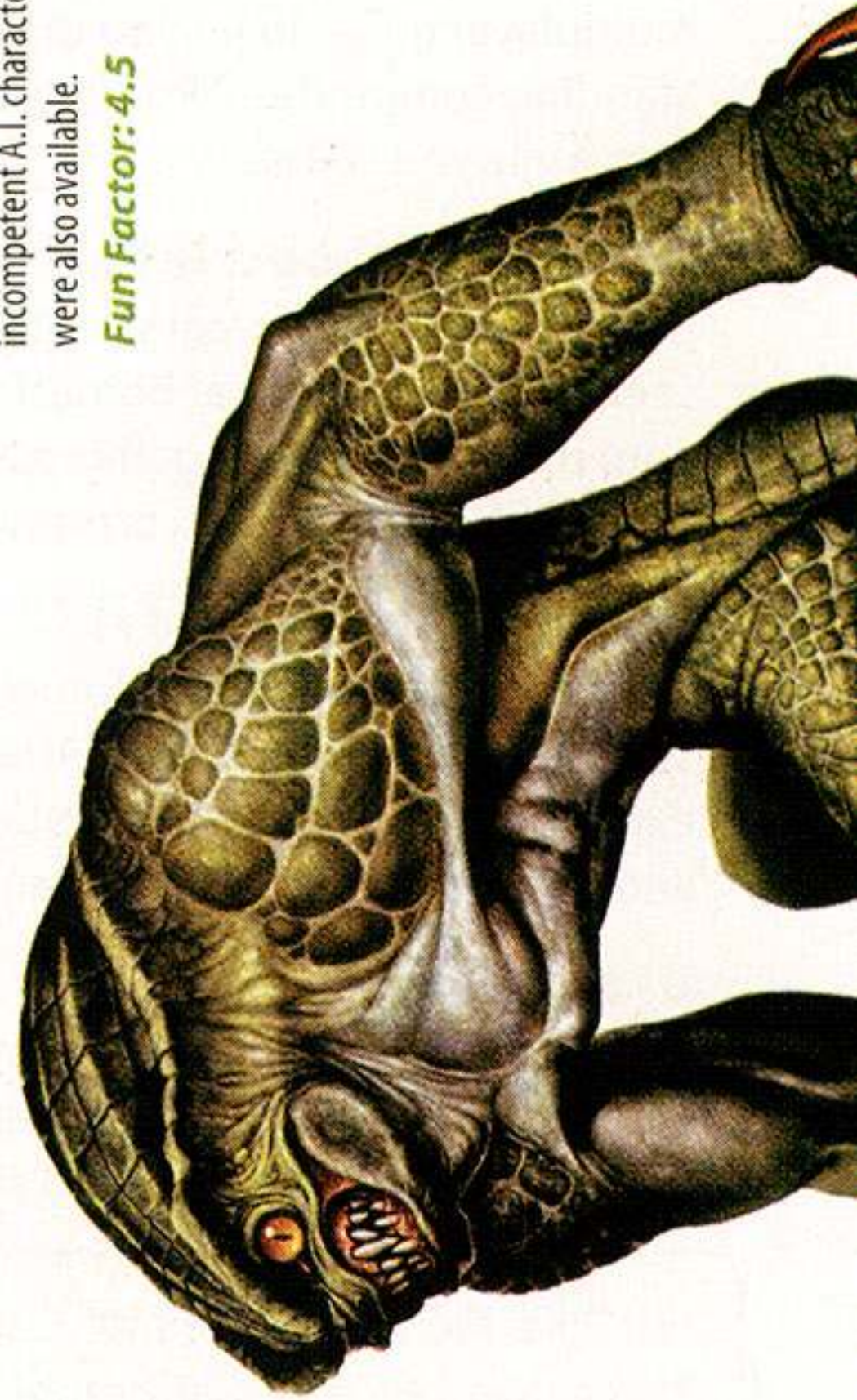
In the tolerable Outbreak, you could team up with two other online players; for those without a broadband connection, incompetent A.I. characters were also available.  
**Fun Factor: 4.5**

**Resident Evil 4**  
PlayStation 2, GameCube  
January 11, 2005 (GameCube)

If past Resident Evil games were Pop-Pops on the scary meter, this one was an atomic war-head: Killing off the clichéd concept of the undead drooling all over the place and bumping into each other, RE4 was as frightening as entertainment can get without the real threat of death.  
**Fun Factor: 4.5**

**Resident Evil Outbreak File # 2**  
PlayStation 2  
April 26, 2005

Developers may have thought, "Outbreak received decent reviews even though it was made with minimal effort. Let's do it again!"  
**Fun Factor: 2.5**





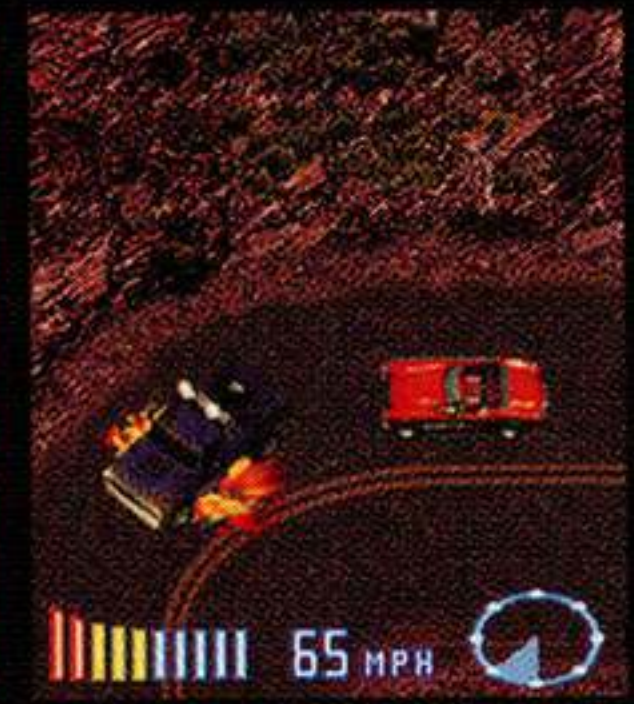


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## Perfect Dark: Don't Call It Disco

Video-game soundtracks sure have come a long way since the moderately musical bleeps and bloops of yore. After years of music produced and programmed within the game engine, the ability to play music became a selling point for some games, which led to the amassing of popular songs and musical talent for in-game music. Then the phenomenon took the next step as game soundtracks have become albums unto themselves (GTA: San Andreas is a recent example), further dovetailing gaming and music.

Enter Nile Rodgers. The music industry vet, founding member of Chic ("Good Times," "Le Freak"), producer (Madonna, Mick Jagger, and many more), and film score composer (*Beverly Hills Cop* and *Rush Hour 2*, among others) founded Sumthing Else Music Works. SEMW as a record label and distributor made game soundtracks its primary focus to become a leader in the emerging niche. The outfit's latest project, *Perfect Dark Zero*, is a prime example of the company's commitment to creating a soundtrack that not only works well with the game but can also stand alone as an album. Rodgers produced the track himself, and David Clynick, who did the music for the first *Perfect Dark* game (for the Nintendo 64), assumed composition duties again, this time assisted by MorrisonPoe and San Francisco house DJs/producers Kevi and Kat. "This is the beginning of the future of game soundtracks," notes Rodgers. "*Perfect Dark Zero* brings it."

And these releases aren't just showing up on the video-gaming community's radar. SEMW's *Hitman: Contract* soundtrack, composed by Jesper Kyd, picked up the 2005 BAFTA Award (British Academy of Film and Television Arts—the U.K. equivalent of the Oscars) for Best

Original Music. The award is part of a logical progression; as video games become more accepted as mainstream entertainment, right alongside movies and TV, so too do video-game soundtracks. Movie soundtracks have topped the charts before, and even TV show themes have gotten into the act. So why not video games? People like Nile Rodgers and companies like SEMW are trying to push this movement forward to entice even more composers and musicians to get on board.

### Dark's Disco/Hip-Hop Connection

Don't tell Nile Rodgers that disco's dead. He's been active in the music industry for a good 30 years, first appearing as a founding member with Bernard Edwards of the renowned disco-funk band, Chic. In fact, it's clear that the Sugarhill Gang lifted (er, sampled) Chic's instrumental backing in "Good Times" wholesale for the seminal "Rapper's Delight," which ignited the rise of recorded hip-hop. Word has it that when Rodgers and Edwards had their lawyers look into that usage, they were paid a visit by some persuasive and well-armed gentlemen who "suggested" they drop their suit. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, the Beastie Boys, De La Soul, and Fugees are among the hip-hop stars who have since sampled that famous Chic bass line.



## The Best Rodgers/Edwards Tunes You've Never Heard

- "Dance, Dance, Dance (Yowsa, Yowsa, Yowsa)" (1977)

Performed by Chic

- "Everybody Dance" (1977)

Performed by Chic

- "Le Freak" (1978)

Performed by Chic

- "Good Times" (1979)

Performed by Chic

- "We Are Family" (1979)

Performed by Sister Sledge

- "I'm Coming Out" (1980)

Performed by Diana Ross



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Price: \$249.95. Contact: Wow Wee Robotics, [wowwee.com](http://wowwee.com)

The Xbox 360 controller in the picture is not included and is only intended to demonstrate size comparison. Sorry!



## Roger Ebert Doesn't Care About Video Games

Celebrated film critic Roger Ebert recently weighed in on the medium of video games on his website, [RogerEbert.com](http://RogerEbert.com). The verdict? Ebert believes that video games are "inherently inferior to film and literature."

The topic came up when a reader objected to the film critic's generally dismissive attitude toward games. Ebert clarified his views on the value of games, lauding the "elegant, subtle, sophisticated, challenging, and visually wonderful" elements of some games. Still, Ebert argued, they'll never achieve the "stature of art."

His rationale? A video game relies on the interaction and choices of its users, not on the "authorial control" of a writer or director. The most incendiary comment, however, came at the end of the article: "For most gamers," Ebert wrote, "video games represent a loss of those precious hours we have available to make ourselves more cultured, civilized, and empathetic." Ouch!



Ebert on games: They're "a loss of precious hours." Photo courtesy of [RogerEbert.com](http://RogerEbert.com)





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| 2) I'm Sprung - T-Pain        | real6496 |
| 3) Stay Fly - Three 6 Mafia   | real6497 |
| 4) Run It - Chris Brown       | real6498 |
| 5) Here We Go - Trina         | real6499 |
| 6) Shake - Ying Yang Twins    | real6500 |
| 7) Girl Tonite - Twista       | real6501 |
| 8) Presidential - Youngbloodz | real6502 |
| 9) We Be Burnin' - Sean Paul  | real6503 |
| 10) (When We)... - Ginuwine   | real6504 |

## Money Mike

Wallpapers

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Time Is Money	real6536
Pimp Apparatus	real6537
Ho On Line 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6	real6538
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| Because Of You - Kelly Clarkson   | real6511 |
| Bet You Can't Do It Like... - D4L | real6512 |
| Crazy Train - Ozzy Osbourne       | real6513 |
| Dem Boyz - Boyz N Da Hood         | real6514 |
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| Down With The... - Disturbed      | real6517 |
| Draped Up - Bun B                 | real6518 |
| Ella Y Yo - Aventura/ Don Omar    | real6519 |
| Go Sit Down - Maceo               | real6520 |
| Hung Up (Chorus) - Madonna        | real6521 |
| Icy (Hook) - Gucci Mane           | real6522 |
| If You Were... - M. Hernandez     | real6523 |
| I'm A King - PSC                  | real6524 |
| Lighters Up - Lil' Kim            | real6525 |
| Like... (Ciara Verse) - Bow Wow   | real6526 |
| Lovers And Friends - Lil Jon...   | real6527 |
| Nasty Girl - Notorious B.I.G.     | real6528 |
| Slow Wind - R. Kelly              | real6529 |
| Stuntman - D4L                    | real6530 |
| Unbreakable - Alicia Keys         | real6531 |
| Unpredictable - Jamie Foxx        | real6532 |
| Wait - Ying Yang Twins            | real6533 |
| Your... (Yes Sir) - Pretty Ricky  | real6534 |

## Cool Wallpapers



## Top Wallpapers



## Top Sound FX

- |                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Beat Box - Long                    | fun6025 |
| Bleep Generic                      | fun6026 |
| Chicken                            | fun6027 |
| From Hell                          | fun6028 |
| Lottery - You Won An Incoming Call | fun6029 |
| Mamma Calling                      | fun6030 |
| Old Telephone Ringing 05           | fun6031 |
| Police Siren                       | fun6032 |
| Police Siren West Coast            | fun6033 |

## Ringtones

### Jamster Top 10

- |                                 |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| 1) Gold Digger                  | poly8275 |
| 2) Tubular Bells (Exorcist Th.) | poly8276 |
| 3) Don't Cha                    | poly8277 |
| 4) Grind With Me                | poly8278 |
| 5) Sugar, We're Goin' Down      | poly8279 |
| 6) Naked                        | poly8280 |
| 7) Because I Got High           | poly8281 |
| 8) Candy Shop                   | poly8282 |
| 9) Drop It Like It's Hot        | poly8283 |
| 10) Bad Boys (Cops Theme)       | poly8284 |

## Screensavers



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SPECIAL FEATURE

# THE SAGA CONTINUES







CONSOLE

# NINTENDO STRIKES BACK

WARS

## CONSOLE IX

*The Xbox 360 and the PlayStation 3  
are looming on the horizon, but for 2006*

*Nintendo is coming on strong with Metroid  
Prime Hunters for the DS leading off a multipronged  
attack that includes The Legend of Zelda:  
Twilight Princess and the Revolution, too....*

CONTINUED ►





EXCLUSIVE

Metroid Prime Hunters takes place between Metroid Prime and Metroid Prime: Echoes. In fact, Samus wears the power suit she used in Metroid Prime.

# METROID PRIME HUNTERS: SAMUS SEES DOUBLE

Nintendo isn't waiting for the Revolution. It plans to make the best Metroid game ever...right now! *By Undercover Lover*

If you want to get to the Revolution, you're going to have to go through Samus Aran. The first big production from Nintendo for 2006 is neither the Revolution nor The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess: It's Metroid Prime Hunters for the DS. Nintendo's plan, which includes a collaborative, trans-Pacific effort between developers at Nintendo Company, Ltd. (NCL) in Kyoto, Japan and Nintendo Software Technologies (NST) in Redmond, WA, is nothing short of making Hunters the first immersive adventure with multiplayer gameplay for a handheld system. "I had originally thought to create this game for the GameCube," says Kensuke Tanabe, lead producer of the Metroid Prime series, "but when we realized the multiplayer capabilities of the DS, we realized the potential to expand the Metroid franchise into brand-new directions."

### Where in the Metroid Universe?

To get a clear sense of where Metroid Prime Hunters is headed, it's probably a good idea to set your bearings...something that's not always easy to do with Nintendo games. The Metroid Prime series takes place between Metroid and Metroid II, and Metroid Prime Hunters takes off somewhere between Metroid Prime and Metroid Prime: Echoes.

Samus has been advised by the Galactic Federation that although she is not being "ordered" to investigate the discovery of ancient artifacts in the Alimbic system, she is being "highly advised" to do so. The artifacts are sources of a mysterious energy of unknown origin and potential power.

Just as blood in the water creates a shark magnet on planet Earth, the promise of unlimited power sets off a rush by bounty hunters across the galaxy to secure the artifacts. Six ruthless hunters in particular have set the object in their sights, each for their own reasons, which are both political and personal.

However, this DS game isn't meant to follow a strict continuity between the other two Metroid Prime games. "Hunters skews off between Prime and Echoes, and it's more of an offshoot than part of the Metroid lineage," says Rich Varodi, lead designer at NST. "That gives us the freedom to feature the other Hunters and explore new worlds."

### Combat for the Masses

The other Hunters are a set up of sorts. Nintendo hopes that Hunters for the DS will produce spinoff games starring Samus's new rivals. Similar to Aran, the six Hunters are each outfitted with multiple weapons, unique



Hunters will have their own morph abilities. Weavel, for instance, can split into sections. The auto-firing stationary gun tracks the mobile unit wherever it goes and blasts everything in its path.

morph abilities, and their own spaceships. "We hope a few of the new Hunters become really popular so we can build new games around them," Tanabe emphasizes.

Moreover, Hunters for the DS is a multiplayer, Wi-Fi-capable game, and the six antagonists provide an obvious way to create that experience in the Metroid universe. A variety of multiplayer games will be offered, including deathmatches, capture the flag, and king-of-the-hill-style contests. Up to four players can choose to play as Samus or any of





the six Hunters in 25-plus maps that are based on five worlds from the single-player game. "No one's ever created a serious shooter like this for a handheld machine," Varodi adds.

You'll be able to use to the Nintendo Wi-Fi connection to challenge other Hunters players worldwide, and Nintendo says Wi-Fi will go live on March 20, the date of the game's release. You can even use a single cart to hook up with three other friends.

### Mission to Mayhem

But lest you think the mass-player version will dominate the action, the NST crew is quick to sing praises for the game's single-player adventure, too. "This is another mission for Samus Aran," Varodi says. "She's a bounty hunter, and this is what she does. She goes on mission after mission, and this is one she took after the events of Metroid Prime."

New for Metroid-series fans will be the ability to pilot Aran's ship to the five worlds in the game in a race to arrive before the other Hunters—and the other Hunters are not going to make it easy for you. The worlds in Hunters are huge, but now you have an entire galaxy to contend with, too.

If a rival grabs an artifact before you do (or steals it from you), you might have to chase him to another planet and beat him into submission to take it back. Where he might go, when, and under what conditions is cunningly calculated by the A.I. according to the best scenario for that individual Hunter to escape your pursuit and complete his mission. So no two Hunters players are going to have the same single-player experience.

### Prime Example

NST is on a mission to make Metroid Prime Hunters the most-ambitious, most-complex DS game ever. In addition to being the latest addition to the Metroid legacy, the game is clearly

## THE HUNTERS

Samus Aran is up against stiff competition in Metroid Prime Hunters. She has to face off and compete with six other bounty hunters, who all seek the power of the Alimbic artifact for their own political, personal, or profitable purposes. Nintendo, in fact, hopes that one or more of these Hunters will be so strong versus Samus that they will spin off into video games of their own.



Kanden



Noxus



Weavel



Spire



Sylux



Trace

a message from Nintendo that it is going to push its technology all the way to the next generation. "This game is huge," says Varodi. "The joke around the office is: Nobody told us to make a DS game. We made this Metroid adventure, and it happens to fit in the DS."

Samus Aran is leading her fans, DS gamers, and even Nintendo itself on a grand adventure into the next generation. "The next Metroid Prime game," says Tanabe, "will be for the Revolution."

Each Hunter has a unique bag of deadly tricks in store for Samus.



Each Hunter has a unique bag of deadly tricks in store for Samus.



If a rival Hunter gets to an artifact before you do, you'll have to track him down all over the galaxy to get it.



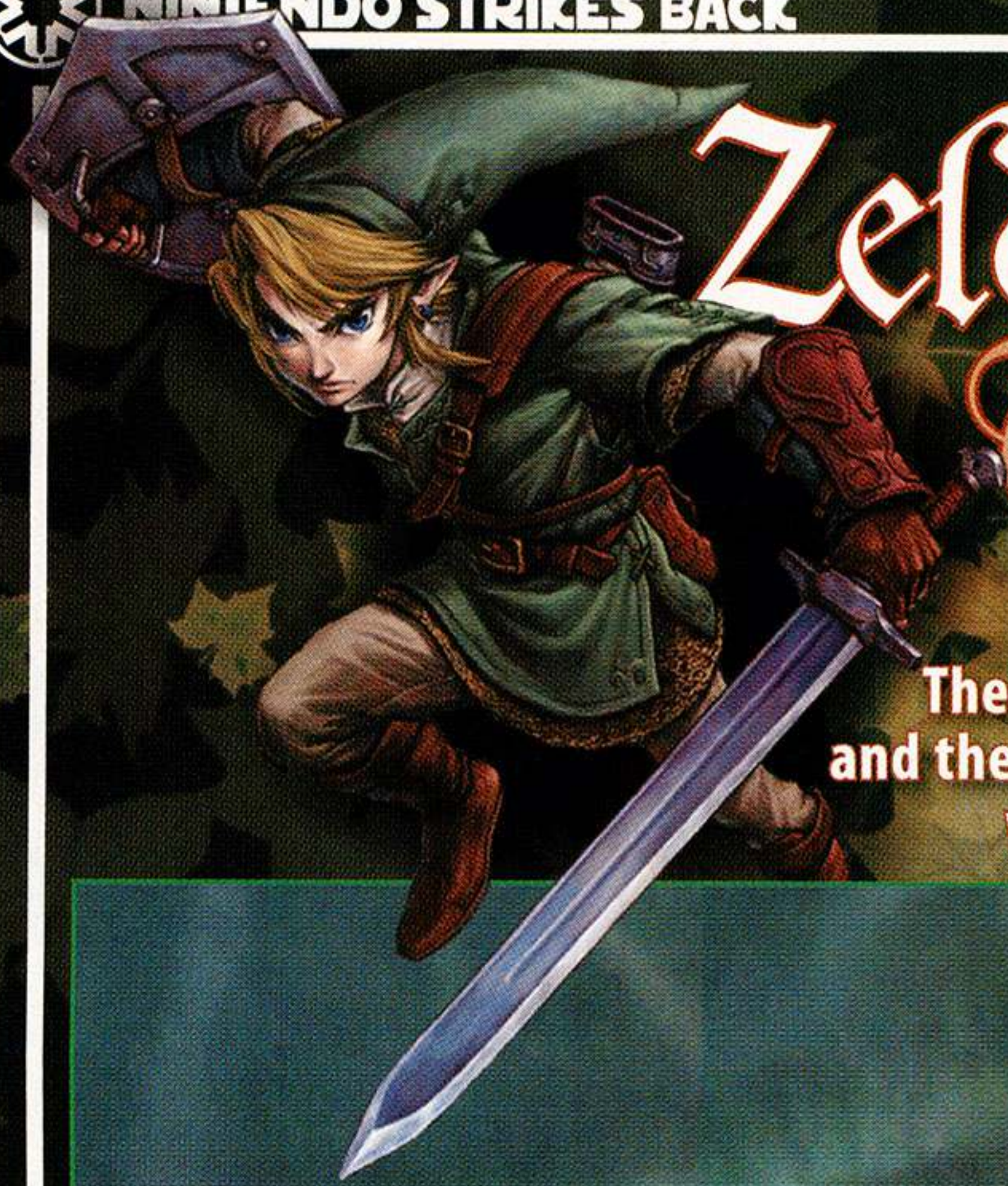
All your actions and weapons are controlled via the DS touchscreen and the stylus.



Spaceship designs reflect the unique visual style of the Hunters and their powersuits.

CONTINUED ▶





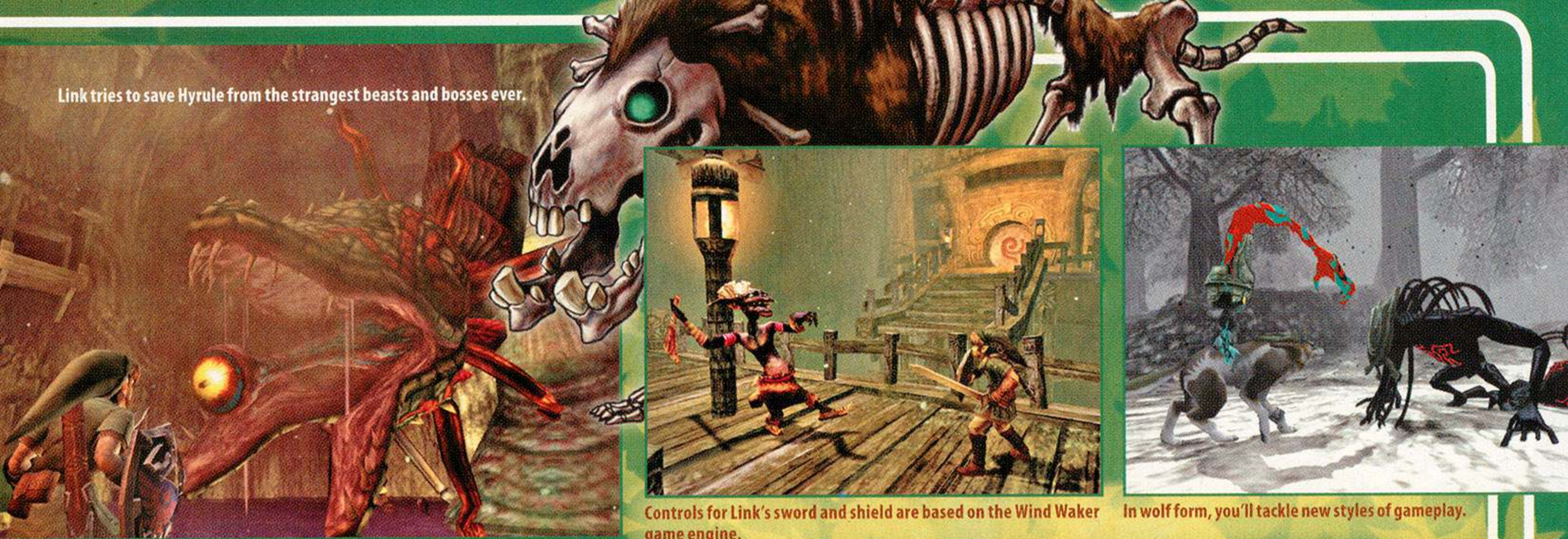
# Zelda Approaches The Twilight

The hero that is Link has always come to the rescue, and there's no doubt *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* will do the same for the GameCube. *By Chibi Lobo*





Link tries to save Hyrule from the strangest beasts and bosses ever.



Controls for Link's sword and shield are based on the Wind Waker game engine.

In wolf form, you'll tackle new styles of gameplay.



The Legend of Zelda is one of those core Nintendo franchises that sets the course for the company's direction. The saying goes that software makes the hardware, but will Link rally the GameCube or start the Revolution?

Even Samus Aran and Mario are set to leapfrog the 'Cube for new digs in Nintendo's next-generation platform. When Nintendo announced it was pushing the release of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess from the planned Fall 2005 to March 2006, fans began saying "sayonara" to the GameCube. And, of course, that March time frame is for the Japanese release, so expect Summer 2006 or later for the U.S.

### Nintendo Stays the Course

But key Nintendo of America executives are adamant that Link isn't going anywhere...until he rides into the GameCube.

Reggie Fils-Aimee, vice president of sales and marketing, says Nintendo will not let the GameCube Zelda go gently into that good night. "We've been quite clear that The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess is going to launch for the GameCube," he says, "just as we've been clear that GameCube games will have value through the launch of Revolution."

Additionally, Perrin Kaplan, vice president of corporate communications, has said, "Nintendo has a commitment to the GameCube owners who've been patiently awaiting this new Zelda game and doesn't want to force them to wait to buy a brand-new system in order to play the game."

### Link Ages Up

Whatever platform it might eventually show up for, that Twilight Princess will be a hit is as sure a thing as the green on Link's outfit. Zelda games have a rabid following, and every GameCube adventure so far has been better than the one previous. This is a sort of farewell tour.

The first buzz generator is the darker tone of the game. Naturally, the hero is a brand-new Link incarnation. He's going to be an older young adult, and just as Wind Waker used a brighter cartoon atmosphere to tell the tale of that particular "kid," Twilight Princess is going semi-real and grown up.

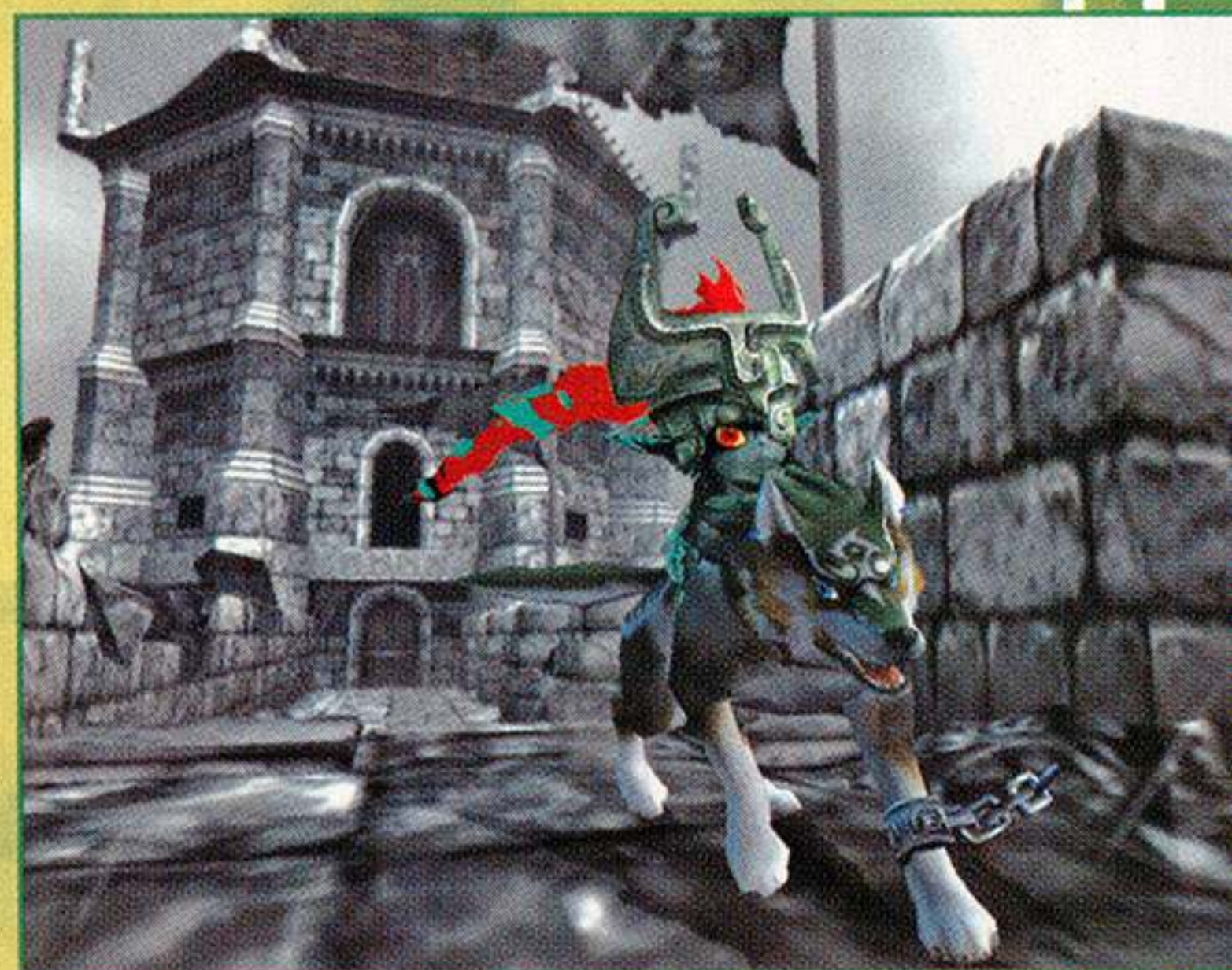
### The Twilight Zone

The dark nature of the adventure is also going to see Hyrule threatened by an eerie twilight that is consuming the land. Strange and evil creatures emerge from these supernatural shadows, and much like in A Link to the Past for the SNES, the hero will have to venture into the dark world to confront the terrors within.

Twilight Princess is based on the Wind Waker game engine, so the basic control scheme should be intimately familiar to Zelda players. But once he enters the twilight land, Link transforms into a wolf! He can only function in that dimension in lycanthropic form, which radically changes the gameplay. But at least he also has a playable partner (with opposable thumbs) this time around, too, the mysterious Twilight Princess alluded to in the game's title.

### Princess and the Revolution

Anyone who's seen that Nintendo Revolution TV spot where gamers are swinging next-generation controllers around like...well, like Link battling orcs, knows where The Legend of Zelda is eventually headed. But until that time in a future generation not so far away, bet the farm that Twilight Princess and the GameCube is where the legend will continue.



In the Twilight world, Link (as a wolf) finds an ally, but what her purpose and motivation is remains a mystery at this time.

CONTINUED ►





TALKING ABOUT THE

# REVOLUTION

Nintendo started the video-game revolution before there even was...well, the Revolution. So when it comes to a transition from one generation to another, it's practically an adage: **Never count out Nintendo.** *By Undercover Lover*

**T**he Xbox 360 is out, and the PS3 is looming on the horizon. The PS2 and Xbox clearly outsold the GameCube during this current-console generation. But none of that has cooled the heat that the Revolution buzz is generating.

### Start the Countdown

Both Nintendo President Satoru Iwata and Nintendo of America Vice President of Sales and Marketing Reggie Fils-Aimee are on record as designating a 2006 launch time. And by the

end of 2005, Nintendo had uncharacteristically prepped video-game media to be on hand for an "important announcement" in Los Angeles on May 9, one day before the opening of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3).

Sounds like the Revolution is happening. The story so far has IBM, ATI, MoSys, and NEC allied for the system's CPU, GPU (graphics processing unit), and memory. Reports have it packing 104 MB of main memory with 512 MB of flash ram behind it. That combo eclipse's the GameCube's comparatively meager memory

The Revolution controller's joystick attachment has been dubbed the "nunchuck" by Shigeru Miyamoto.



# CONTROLLING THE FUTURE

Let's face it: You can only cram so many buttons onto a game pad. The Xbox 360 and PS3 have eight main action buttons, two analog sticks (with click buttons), Start and menu buttons, and a full directional pad.

In case you weren't counting, that's 13 different ways to interact; 15 if you count each clicking analog stick separately; and 18 if you count the four-way directional pad as four separate buttons.

Enough is enough.

By design, the Revolution controller is the exact opposite of Sony and Microsoft's overloaded pads. If you hold the wireless Revolution device as a standard remote control, you'll rely on just two primary action buttons: a nice comfy "trigger" and a nice big A button. That's it.

Groundbreaking, huh? But if you think about it, this "less is more" approach is pure Nintendo. It's betting that this wireless marvel—which can track and translate subtle hand movements into onscreen actions—is enough to fill in for the missing buttons. Want to blast a zombie? Aim at the screen and pull the trigger. Need to hit a home run? Swing that Revolution controller, baby, just like the real thing.

If the tracking technology comes through, the Revolution controller may end up being the smartest thing Nintendo's ever done.

We could be looking at a revolution...in more ways than one.

—Vicious Sid



Nintendo President Satoru Iwata hopes he's not the only one who will love the Revolution controller.

but doesn't outmuscle the Xbox 360's 512 MB of pure main RAM. The Revolution will house a proprietary disc drive that supports 12-centimeter DVD-style discs as well as the current GameCube disc format. Revolution discs will reportedly hold 4.7 GB of data. By comparison, GameCube discs have a 1.5 GB capacity. And the Revolution will be 100 percent backwards compatible with the GameCube... and without emulation like the Xbox 360.

## Games in the Lead

What's been most intriguing are reports from the developer front that the Revolution will not have the pure horsepower that the Xbox 360 demonstrates and the PS3 promises. But this is entirely consistent with Nintendo's pronouncements all along that gameplay not graphics is the only way to drive next-generation games.

And games are what Nintendo does best. Already many of its best-known brands are committed to Revolution iterations. Super Mario, Metroid, and even Animal Crossing are leapfrogging the GameCube straight onto the Revolution, and Super Smash

Bothers is on track as a launch title. Only The Legend of Zelda among Nintendo's many power brands is committed to make a pit stop on the 'Cube on its way to Revolution land.

Games are also going to finally drive Nintendo online. The GameCube, like the DS, will have built-in Wi-Fi capability for wireless Internet access as well as local area multiplayer gameplay. This will enable Nintendo to roll out its big guns (of sorts), and libraries from the N64, SNES, NES, and arcades will be downloadable. Third parties are also in negotiation to make their classic titles available. Gamers of all ilk—hardcore and casual alike—are chomping at the bits to revisit these famous games.

## At the Controls

In line with its commitment to gameplay, the Revolution controller has been in the spotlight since Iwata and General Manager Shigeru Miyamoto demoed it at the Tokyo Game Show last fall. Ever since it rolled out the NES back in 1989, Nintendo has been fascinated by its controllers. The Revolution wand has been likened in appearance to a video remote control. Completely wireless, gamers will wave it or point it at their TVs to control onscreen action to make possible gameplay that Nintendo promises will be...well, revolutionary (see sidebar, "Controlling the Future").

The Revolution will house four GameCube controller ports and two memory card slots.



With a minimalist button layout, much will be riding on the wireless Revolution controller's ability to produce amazing gameplay.

## Revolution and Revelation

So what we have so far is a next-generation game system that's housing less hardware horsepower than its rivals but that should be much less expensive. It's completely backwards compatible with current-gen games, and it's online capable for the express purpose of downloading content, particularly classic games. And, of course, it's all being designed and orchestrated by Nintendo, a company whose name is synonymous with top-quality video-game experiences. Microsoft and Sony are certainly set to crash and bash at the high end of the hardware wars, but Nintendo is carrying on the Revolution on its own end.



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Intersection:  
**Grand Theft Auto**  
**Stories**



Whether it rubs a raw nerve or epitomizes video-game cool, there's no denying that GTA connects with America's youth, from the streets to suburbia. Take a ride with two young men as they cruise San Andreas. *By Jose Antonio Vargas*

**O**ne from the suburbs, the other from the ghetto, both street thugs. Brendan Golden, wide-eyed and shaggy-haired, is a junior at Langley High School in McLean, Virginia. It's a school of about 2000 students, 70 percent white and 16 percent Asian, almost all headed straight to four-year colleges. The cars parked at Langley High's football field-sized lot—BMW's, Infinitis, and Benzes among them—are the makes you'd be stealing if you were playing Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas.

Robert "Tito" Ortiz, who became a dad in July, is a senior at Jefferson High School in South Central Los Angeles. It's a school of about 3800 students, 92 percent Latino and 8 percent black, where only a third of the incoming freshman class make it to graduation. Last spring, three brawls erupted there ("Brown on black! Brown on black!" one student yelled out), two of which ended in campus lockdowns.

They're playing the same game, but what they get out of it—the game experience—varies with who's sweating on the controller. And where fantasy and reality meet, two players who have never met, and never will, cross paths. It's game time.

**ABOUT GETTING EVEN**

"His mom got killed in a drive-by shooting," says Tito, hair buzzed, shoulder stooped, his low voice trailing off, skimming the words. "He's gotta get even."

Tito is of course referring to C.J., the black street thug at the heart of San Andreas.

**Respect. San Andreas is about respect...they dawg you, they rag on your tattoos, they hate on your clothes. That's the way it is in real life.—Robert "Tito" Ortiz**

It's nearly 9:30 p.m. in South Central L.A. A school night. Sitting on the edge of his twin-sized bed, Tito, 17, just got off work. Long day at Jefferson High. Long night at Foot Locker. He's a sales clerk, clocking in at least 20 hours a week, working on weekends and a few nights during the week. His older brother, Francisco "Cisco" Ortiz, 23, is plopped down on the other twin-sized bed, palms sweaty, playing San Andreas.

Cisco and Tito, sons of Mexican immigrants, grew up on West 47<sup>th</sup> Street. "We don't say we're from L.A. We say we're from South Central,"

says Cisco, proudly. Though the Ortiz family—Mamá cleans houses, Papá recycles scrap metal—lives in public-assisted housing, their small two-bedroom apartment has two big-screen TVs. There's one in the living room with Mamá falling asleep on the couch, babysitting the neighbor's daughters. There's another in Cisco and Tito's room with posters of TuPac Shakur and *Scarface* adorning the walls. There's no personal computer, no laptop, no Internet connection. Just a PlayStation 2, a few games, and stacks after stacks of CDs, from Biggie to Mos Def.

"It's a game, just a game, right?" says Tito, jumping off the bed, now sitting cross-legged on the carpeted floor. "But at the same time, it's more than that. There's reality to it."

Isn't it any wonder, he asks, that most of the characters in San Andreas—the gangmembers, the corrupt cops—are blacks and Latinos? No surprise that you don't see a white person in the 'hood, he says, either in the South Central of the game or the South Central he lives in.

"Even down to the choppy Spanglish, the 'Horale, homes,' that some of the gangsters say," Tito goes on, "it's all realistic...."

Cisco, a pharmacy technician who recently lost his job, cuts Tito off.



"The game's violent, yeah. It's dangerous, yeah. It's a stereotype, yeah," says Cisco, staring straight at the TV screen. Finally, Cisco hands Tito the controller.

"Respect. San Andreas is about respect," says Tito, still sitting on the carpeted floor, way too close to the TV screen. "When you start out, they dawg you, they rag on your tattoos, they hate on your clothes. That's the way it is in real life. But you can change all of that in the game."

## connecting with the 'hood

Forget that it's a humid, sticky, sunny afternoon in peaceful, quiet, dull suburban McLean, Virginia. That's outside. Inside is a different story. It's 10:29 a.m. in loud, foul-mouthed, exciting San Andreas, and Brendan is driving around aimlessly in Las Colinas. Right now, he's stealing a car.

First a car named "Willard," low score in sex appeal, high score in squeaking. Then a car named "Cheetah." Followed by a car named "Flash," dark-colored, close to the ground and, yes, flashy.

"There's so much you can do in San Andreas. So much...it kinda never ends," says Brendan, sitting on the edge of his twin-sized bed, hands on a controller, eyes fixed on the TV screen. His friend Cyrus Movaghari (everyone calls him "Cy") lounges on the computer chair, snacking on Chips Ahoy!, looking a little bored. They're chilling out

in Brendan's bedroom, a pad with no less than seven posters of the rock band Motley Crue, in a palatial three-story, three-bedroom home—Mom works in investment, Dad's a lawyer—that goes up a hill in McLean.

Brendan, who is white, and Cy, who is Persian American, are 16-year-old juniors at Langley High School, the kind of well-to-do, over-achieving sanctuary of high AP and SAT scores that also offers every possible sport, from gymnastics to field hockey, to student athletes. Cy, who's the vice president for the Class of 2007, is quick to describe Langley High as not being "too far off from that high school in *The OC*—but not with that many hot chicks."

"You hear all the preps at school saying that Langley is like *The OC*," says Brendan, who, like Tito, works at least 20 hours a week—as a courtesy clerk at the nearby Safeway. He's sitting on an ottoman, watching Cy play the game.

"But whether I want to be a gangster in San Andreas or a druggie on *The OC*, it's all about

what's hot out there," he goes on. "People want something to hold onto. People want something to connect to."

## street life?

Rockstar Games, the publisher of the juggernaut GTA series, has repeatedly said that San Andreas "speaks for itself."

Then what is it saying?

To Brendan, San Andreas is nothing more than a fantastical sandbox, a way out of the suburbs, virtual escapism at its best. But to Tito, San Andreas is akin to a distorted carnival mirror, an exaggerated yet still realistic version of his everyday life.

Tito is sure that San Andreas was designed by "gringos." "Don't we gotta be some sort of gang-bangin', PCP-sellin' Mexicans who like to shoot? Isn't that what people think?" he asks. Brendan thinks that a "diverse group of guys, blacks and whites and Latinos" ("and some girls," he adds) created San Andreas.

With the help of tattoo artist Mister Cartoon, screenwriter DJ Pooh, and rap photographer Estevan Oriol, all of them based in Los Angeles, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas was developed by Rockstar North, based in Scotland.

*This article was condensed from a story that ran in The Washington Post with permission from the author.*

**Whether I want to be a gangster in San Andreas or a druggie on *The OC*, it's all about what's hot out there. People want something to hold onto. People want something to connect to.—Brendan Golden**





# Five Ways To Save Video Games

It's time for video games to move forward, but designers (and publishers) seem to be dead set on keeping them stuck firmly in the past. Here are five ways they can turn the tide. *By Vicious Sid*

## 1 Stop Objectifying Women



Dragged through the mud: Rumble Roses

Sexy is fine, and titillating can be fun. But when you show stupid jiggle physics and scantily clad girls cooing and moaning and wriggling, you show yourselves for who you really are: sex-crazed children. And don't think for a minute that the mainstream media doesn't pick up on this. Let's face it: The last thing we need is another Hot Coffee-style sex scandal, especially when this crap is so puerile and insignificant to begin with. Do we really have to corrode society just to sell a few thousand more units?

### Chief Offenders

**Dead or Alive:** *Originator of the bikini-and-jiggle-physics combo*

**Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix:** *There's nothing wrong with lesbian affairs...until you launch marketing campaigns around them.*

**Rumble Roses:** *Good, clean fun...while wrestling in the mud*

**Tomb Raider:** *If you had breasts like Lara's, your spinal column would implode.*

**Memo to Game Developers:** Yeah, yeah, TV and movies struggle with similar problems, so maybe video-game developers aren't the only evildoers here. Still, you can buck the trend—just look at *Beyond Good and Evil*, a game with a hip, normal-looking female lead character. You won't find any jiggle physics, crotch thrusting, or bikini splits there—the game features just an average girl with average looks. How revolutionary!

## 2 Get New Story Lines

Okay, so here's a big one. Why is it that half of the games on the market begin with your character as the sole survivor of some mysterious holocaust? As you stumble over the bloody bodies and piece together the ghastly clues, you come to realize that—holy crap!—the spaceship/planet/laboratory was invaded by aliens/parasites/demons! This storytelling cliché can be traced back to the original *Doom* (and further back to films like *Aliens*) and was once a truly novel approach. Now, it's just evidence of a massive creative malaise in the game industry.

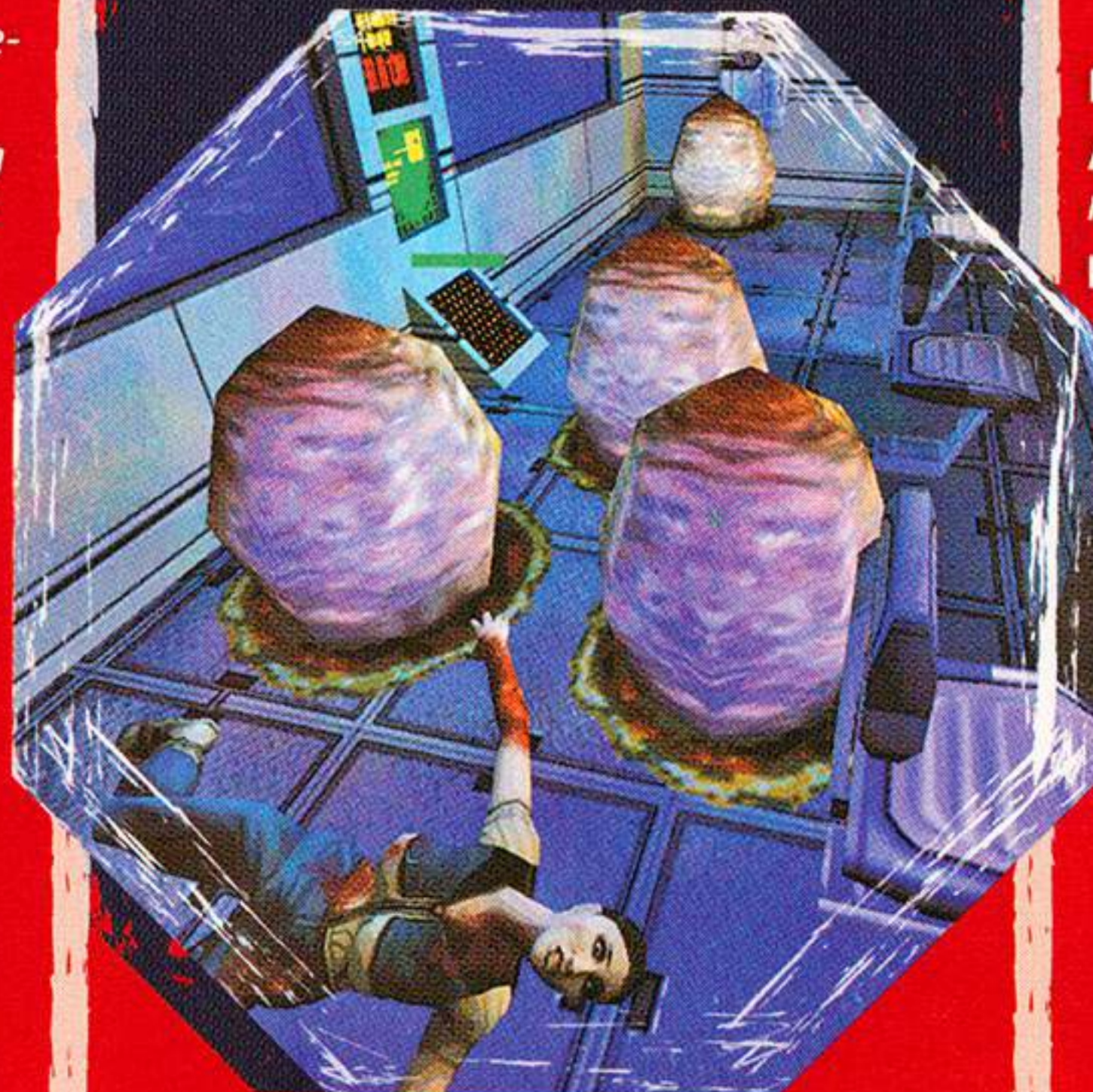
### Chief Offenders

**System Shock 2:** *We forgive you!*

**Halo:** *At least Bungie waited until the third act to introduce the Flood.*

**Half-Life:** *Look deep inside yourself and admit the truth.*

**Memo to Game Developers:** Guys, *Doom* was released 13 years ago. Enough with the lazy survivor-meets-invaders story lines. If you're hot to show an invasion of some sort, why not show it through the player's eyes while it's actually in progress? Why not let the player be an active participant in shoring up the defenses? Why not let the player act as an invader? There's just no excuse anymore, so do something new.



Now where have I seen this before?



I am the Chosen One...or something.

## 3 Enough With The Epics

While we're on the topic of game story lines, it's high time designers stop revolving around the thoughtless drivel that sees A) the player as the hero; B) the hero taking on impossible odds to defeat some oppressive enemy force; and C) the hero saving the world—and perhaps even existence itself—by beaming enough baddies in the head with his magical sniper rifle. It now seems that every game must play with bigger and bigger odds. Surely the hero can't shoot his way out of the alien-infested space-terrorist hideout armed with only a BB gun seconds before the black hole swallows the galaxy! All this action is set, naturally, to an overheated operatic choir on the soundtrack. This is all pointless because after all, you're the hero: You know you'll win if you quick save enough.

### Chief Offenders

**Final Fantasy VII:** *Only Cloud can save us now!*

**Advent Rising:** *Only you can save the human race now!*

**Halo 2:** *Only Master Chief can save the planet now!*

**Memo to Game Developers:** How cool would it be if the hero died halfway through the game, and the player carried on as the villain? Or what if it slowly became evident—slowly—that the player *himself* was the villain, whether on purpose or by accident? And how about this radical thought: What if there were *no heroes* and *no villains*, just ordinary people doing the best they could under supremely tough circumstances?



## 4 Stop The Spectacles

Call it *The Matrix Reloaded* principle. The Wachowski Brothers foolishly tried to top the action sequences in the first, classic film. When designing the second two *Matrix* films, they spared no cost to bring the absolute pinnacle of special effects and stunt work to the viewer. And if you've ever seen the second two *Matrix* sequels, you know that these fancy action scenes added *nothing* because the films, frankly, stunk up the place.

That's how modern video games are starting to feel. *Doom 3* may look like filet mignon, but it plays like charred, gristly hamburger. What good are glitzy graphics when the game experience is locked in the mid 1990s?



Looks cool...but to what end?

### Chief Offenders

**Doom 3:** Good...but as good as the graphics?

**Half-Life 2:** Great...but as great as the physics?

**Halo 2:** Noticing a trend?

**Memo to Game Developers:** The Wachowski Brothers could have focused on making *one* worthy follow-up to their classic first film and spent only as much money as was necessary to bring that vision to life. The result would have made fans happier and brought in just as much (if not more) green. Don't let your games become like the second two *Matrix* films.

## 5 Cinema Is Sinful

So, why is it that half of the games on the market bill themselves as "cinematic experiences?" Must every game be stuffed to the point of overflowing with cinematic interludes, elaborate set pieces, and intrigue-filled story lines that go nowhere? What is to show for all that expensive investment? Precisely nothing.

It's becoming incredibly expensive to design a triple A-caliber game title, but mimicking Hollywood isn't going to help. If you want proof, look to last summer's box-office wasteland. People have grown weary of Hollywood and Hollywood's ways—they want something *real*. There are other downsides, too, in the form of ballooning budgets and dwindling profit margins.

Break the cycle! Always remember that gamers are looking for games. If they want a great "cinematic experience," they'll order *Lawrence of Arabia* through Netflix. Look at *Nintendogs*' sales—they're spectacular. 'Nuf said.

Games are games. Let's keep them that way.

### Chief Offenders

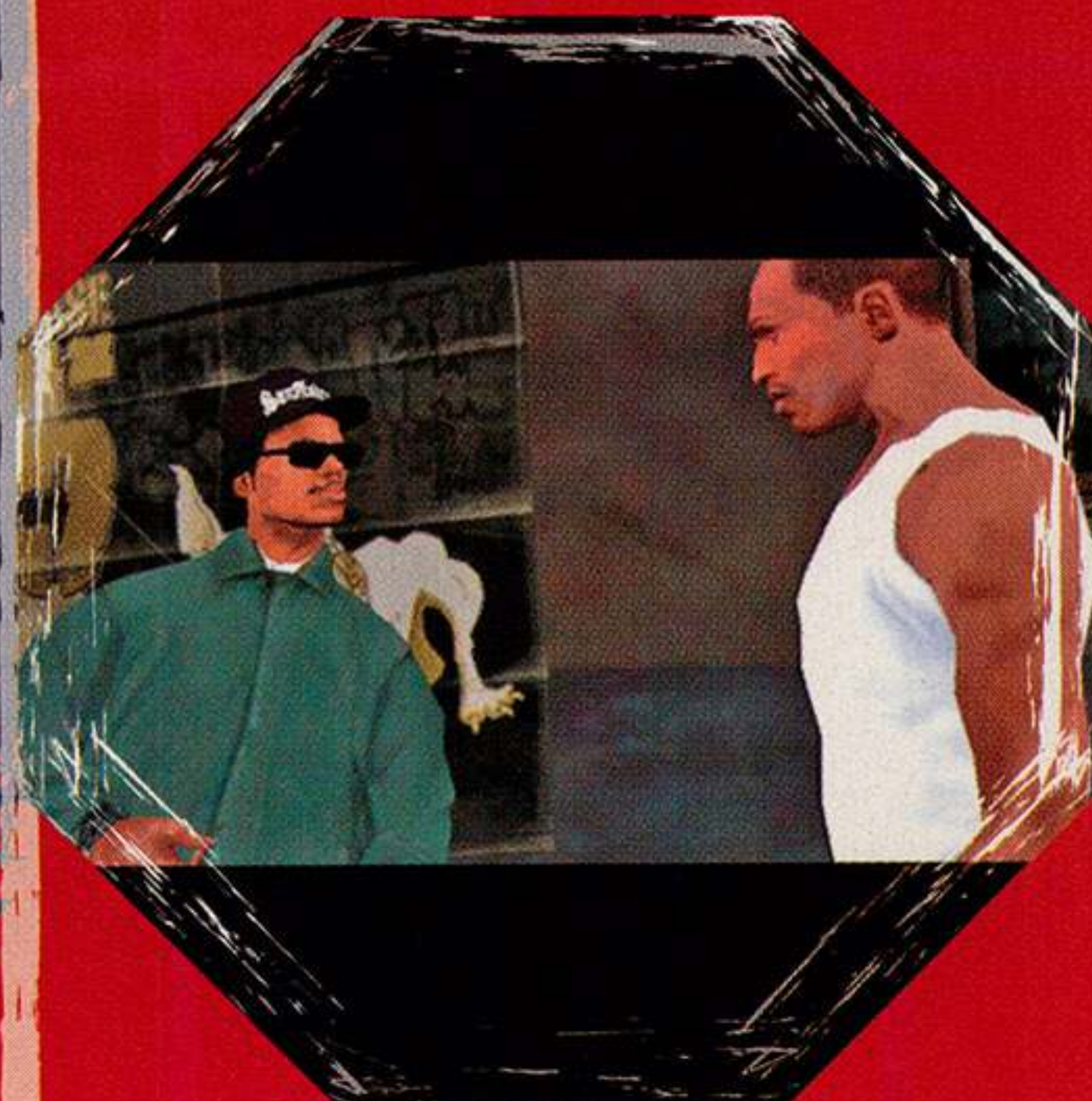
**Final Fantasy VII:** Developers forget that this great game would've been better without cinemas.

**Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas:** Without a director, it turns out that Samuel L. Jackson is lost.

**Halo 2:** Talk about big, rambling cinema scenes that go nowhere.

**Memo to Game Developers:** There's no reason to mimic the presentation, style, or conventions of a Hollywood film. Stick with being a great *game*. If that game happens to be *Halo 3* or *The Godfather*, so be it. But if you're an industry executive and your goal is to turn the video-game industry into the "New Hollywood," please kindly mail us your home address so we can kidnap you and end the madness once and for all.

Don't make movies. Make games, dammit.



Let's talk...and talk...and talk....

## GamePro's TOP TEN TAG-TEAM HEROES

- 10 Lance and Bill (Contra)
- 9 Billy and Jimmy Lee (Double Dragon)
- 8 Mario and Luigi (Super Mario)
- 7 Toejam and Earl (Toejam and Earl)
- 6 Sonic and Tails (Sonic the Hedgehog)
- 5 Sam and Max (Sam and Max)
- 4 Earthworm Jim and Snott (Earthworm Jim)
- 3 Hana and Rain (Fear Effect 2)
- 2 Rebecca Chambers and Bill Cohen (Resident Evil Zero)

Ratchet and Clank

1

RATCHET  
DEADLOCKED

ONLINE  
BROADBAND ONLY

INSOMNIAC  
GAMES

PlayStation 2



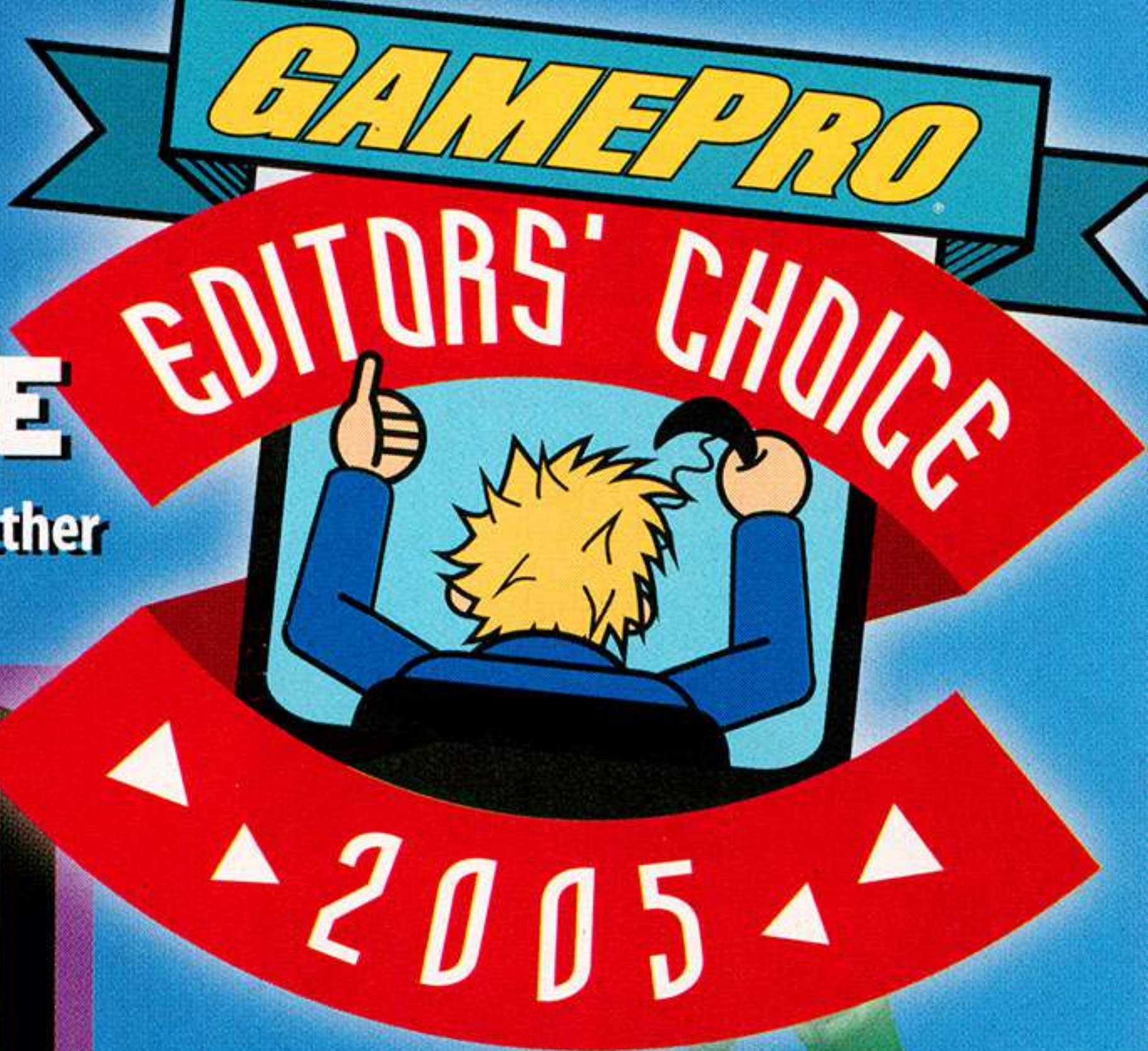
LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.  
PLAY IN OURS.

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# GAMEPRO BEST OF 2005 EDITORS' CHOICE

It's that time of year! The *GamePro* editors put their heads together and came up with these top games of 2005. *By The GamePros*



## BEST GAME OF THE YEAR

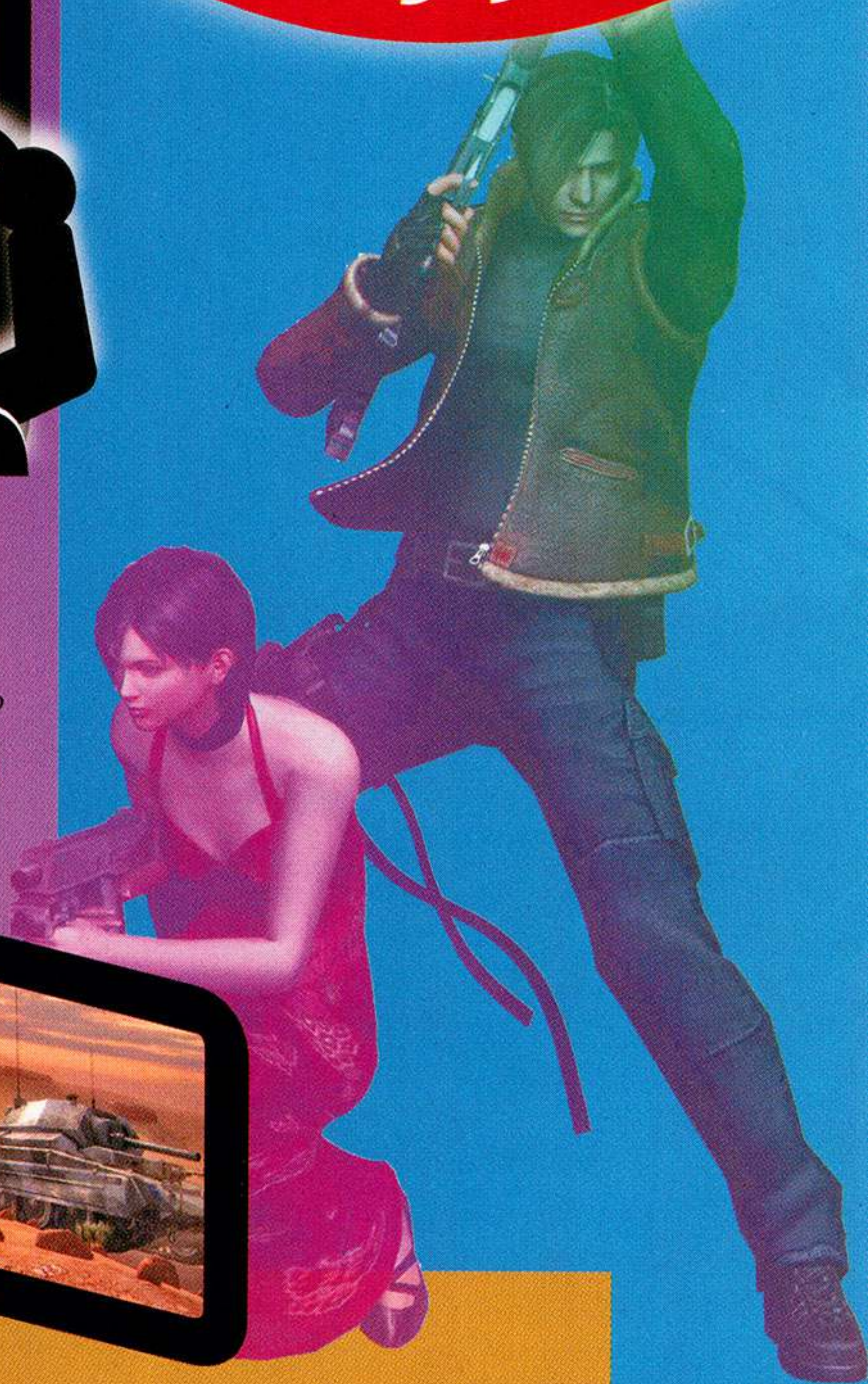
### Resident Evil 4

Capcom PS2, GameCube

Resident Evil 4 was unanimously selected as the Best Game of the Year by the *GamePro* staff. But more than being the most-popular game, Resident Evil 4 also did a remarkable thing: It completely reinvented an already well-liked franchise by ditching long-held conventions. As details on the game began to surface, longtime fans reacted with horror upon hearing that the game wouldn't feature any zombies or other traditional monsters. However, these concerns evaporated once they began to take Leon Kennedy on his epic, horrific quest to rescue the president's daughter. Another key modification was the nixing of trademark prerendered environments and static camera angles in favor of a third-person approach. These changes resulted in what is now regarded as one of the—if not *the*—finest entries in the Resident Evil series to date.

#### RUNNER-UP

Call of Duty 2 Xbox 360, PC



## ACTION/ADVENTURE

### Resident Evil 4

Capcom PS2, GameCube

Resident Evil 4 proved to gamers that you can take a winning formula and make it better. With an all-new over-the-shoulder viewpoint, an improved control system, and more scares than any other game in the series yet, Resident Evil 4 became an instant classic and will surely serve as a benchmark for all future survival/horror games to come. RE4 was originally released for the GameCube, and the PS2 version added new bonus content that only improved on a near-perfect gaming experience. Simply put, if you love survival/horror games, this is the only game you need.

#### RUNNER-UP

Shadow of the Colossus PS2







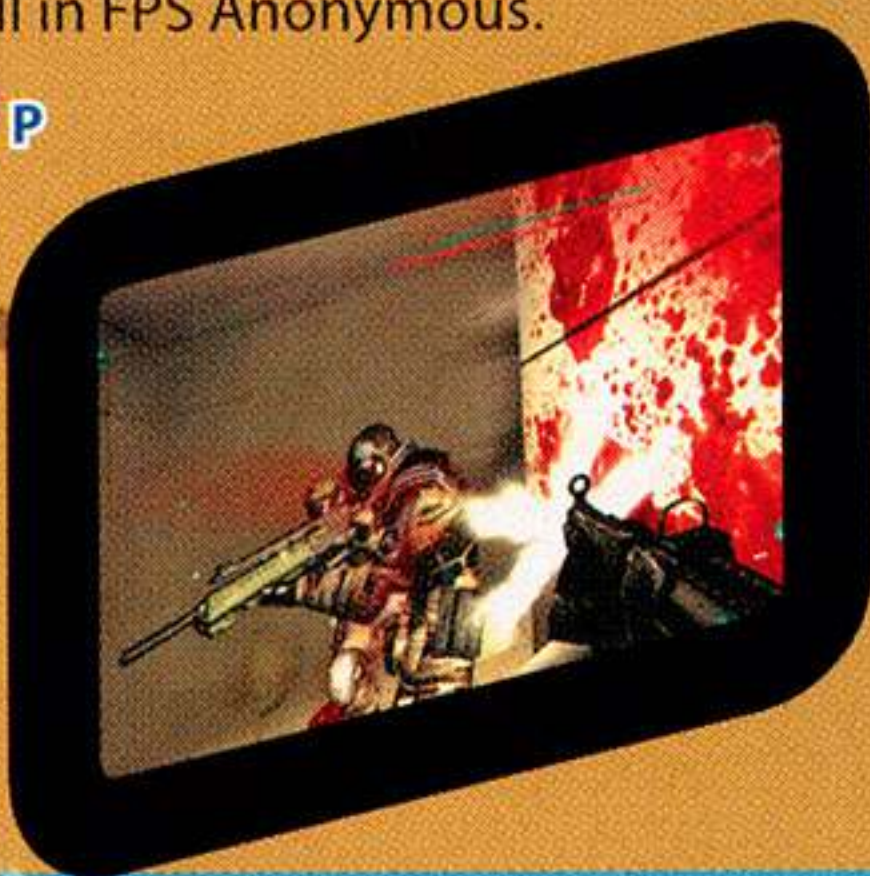
**COMBAT/SHOOTING**  
**Call of Duty 2**

Activision Xbox 360, PC

While several *GamePro* editors touted F.E.A.R. as 2005's essential shooter, *Call of Duty 2* on the Xbox 360 was just too good to be denied the top spot. Infinity Ward worked technical wonders with this World War II sequel, which we think is easily the best-looking and best-performing Xbox 360 launch title. *Call of Duty*

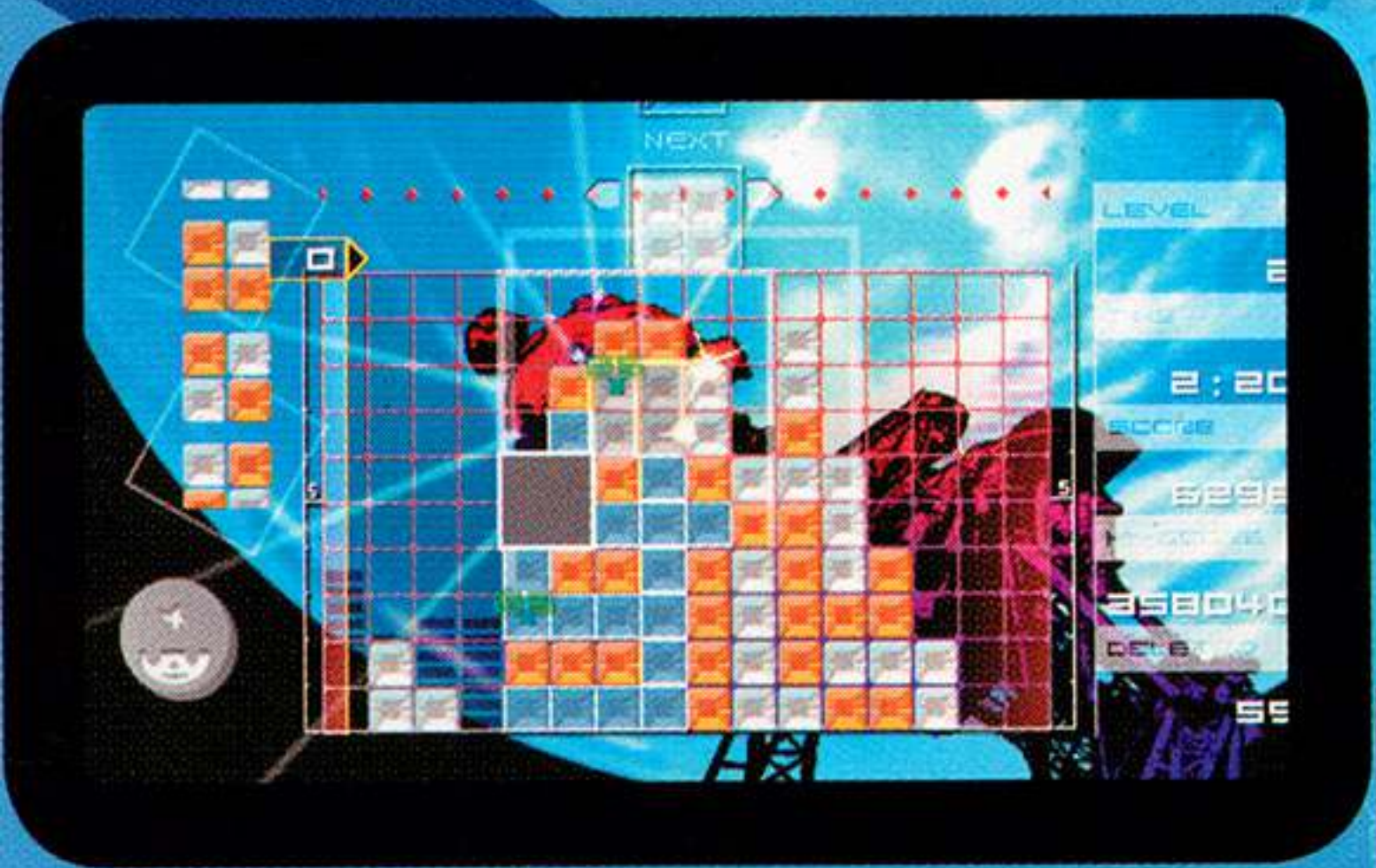
returnees were treated to even more heart-pounding action than in the first game with nary a drop in intensity. The pacing in the game's single-player campaign is near perfect, and its addictive Xbox Live online play is reason enough to enroll in FPS Anonymous.

**RUNNER-UP**  
**F.E.A.R.** PC



**BRAIN/REFLEX**  
**Lumines**

Ubisoft PSP



Puzzle games seldom think outside of the box—literally. *Lumines* looked like just another Columns clone on the surface, but pop on the headphones, and you discovered one of the best ways to kill time during bus rides and subway commutes. Blocks get cleared to the beat of dazzling strobe-light flashes and disco-ball swirls, and the music really starts to shine the better you play, propelling you to string together massive combos to get a chain of infectious musical riffs. Plus, being a pocket composer is more intuitive than the cryptic and avant-garde *Electroplankton*, which can't hold a beat when compared to this aural masterpiece.

**RUNNER-UP**  
**Meteos** DS

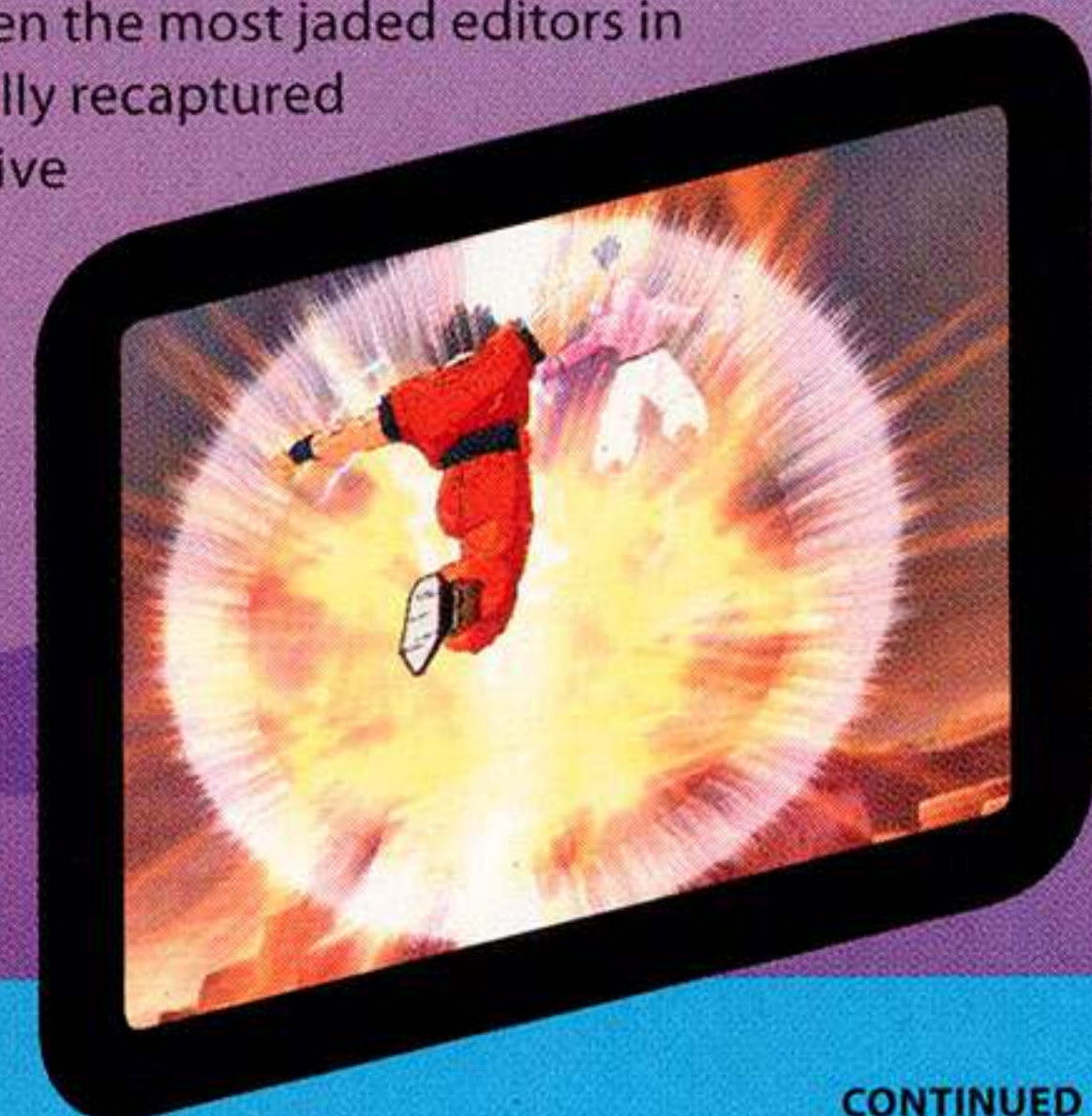


**FIGHTING**  
**Tekken 5**

Namco PS2

*Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi* put up a strong fight, but *Tekken 5*'s sleek, polished gameplay kept it on top this year. Even the most jaded editors in the office had to admit that *Tekken 5* beautifully recaptured the magic of the earliest *Tekken* titles. The massive fighter roster (32 playable characters!) resurrects many old-school favorites, such as Wang and Bruce. Best of all, *Tekken 5* includes arcade-perfect versions of *Tekken*, *Tekken 2*, and *Tekken 3*. Even if you aren't a *Tekken* fan, getting four classic brawlers for the price of one is simply an unbeatable deal.

**RUNNER-UP**  
**Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi** PS2



**RACING**

**Burnout: Revenge**

EA Games PS2, Xbox

The last *Burnout* game wowed players with more vehicular mayhem than seemed legally possible, and the sequel upped the ante to an impressive degree. With modified races that took full advantage of explosive *Crashbreakers* and a newly upgraded *Crash* mode, even the simplest of on-road collisions became mangled-metal joyfests. Add to this the fact that every single game mode can be played online, and you have one of the most-complete arcade-racing experiences ever. While some other fine racing games were released in 2005, *Burnout: Revenge* blew them all away.

**RUNNER-UP**  
**Burnout Legends** PSP

CONTINUED ►



**ROLE-PLAYING**

**Fable: The Lost Chapters**

Microsoft Xbox, PC

The RPG genre has faced dark times as of late. In the absence of the latest and greatest Japanese RPG (Final Fantasy), the demise of famed RPG developers (Black Isle, Troika Games), and the anticlimactic diversion from BioWare (Jade

Empire), Fable: The Lost Chapters stands out from the crowd—even though it doesn't deliver on all of its grandiose promises. The subtle balancing tweaks and an added chapter give the short adventure a longer life, and the added visual luster in the PC version of the game provides a definitive edge over the paltry competition.

**RUNNER-UP**  
**Guild Wars** PC



**SPORTS**

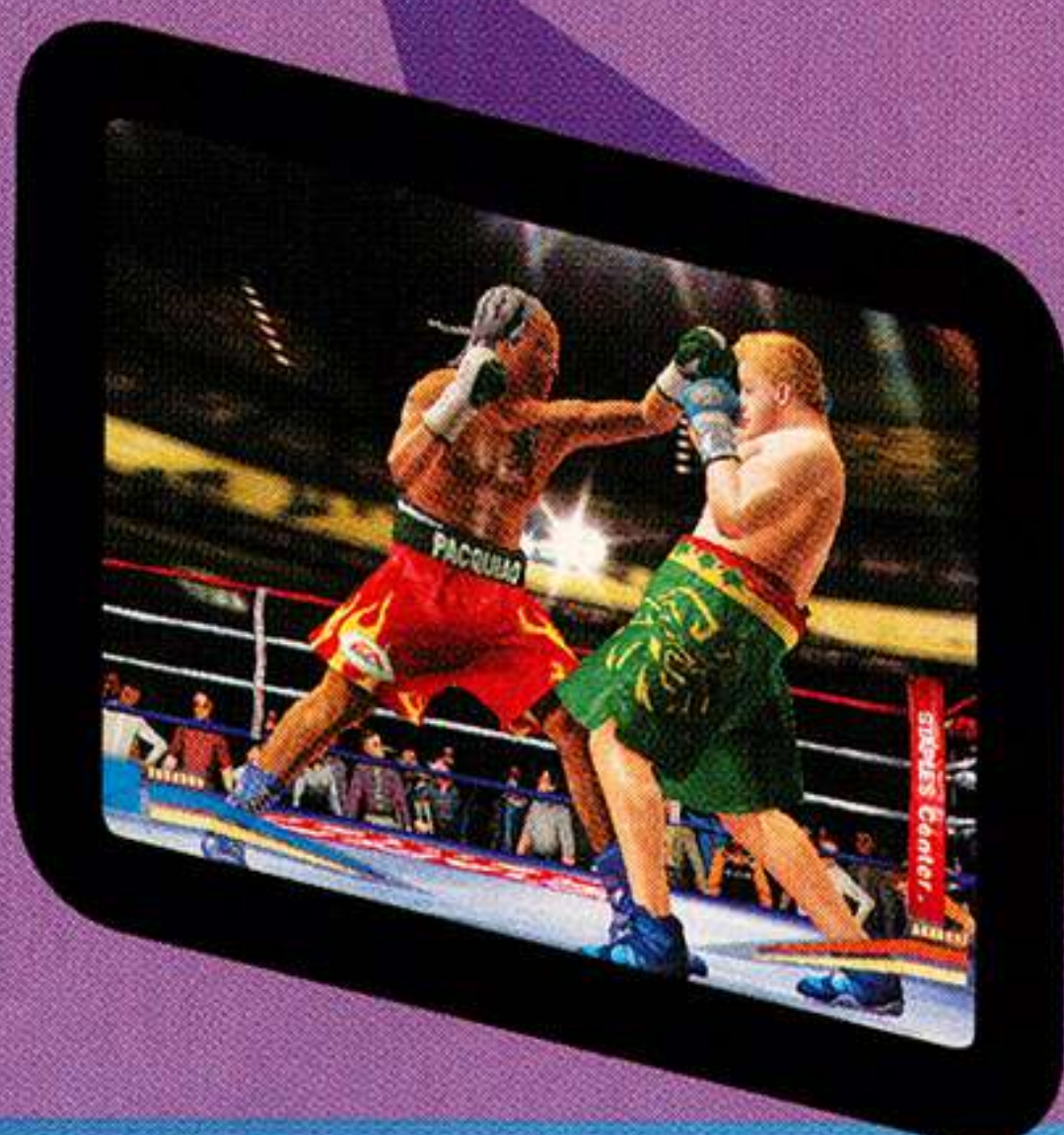
**Virtua Tennis: World Tour**

Sega Studios PSP

You may be horrible on the real-life hard court, but once you swing the virtua racquet, we guarantee that you'll be hooked and playing like a pro. Hitting a ball back and forth may sound flat at first, but factor in spins, lobs, slices, and overhead shots, and you'll instantaneously bounce with excitement. What made this tennis game easily our top sports pick of 2005 was its surprisingly super-smooth action on the PSP and its addictive multiplayer gameplay, which is unrivaled on any system. The score remains love, love all the way.

**RUNNER-UP**

**Fight Night Round 2** PS2, Xbox



**EXTREME SPORTS**

**SSX On Tour**

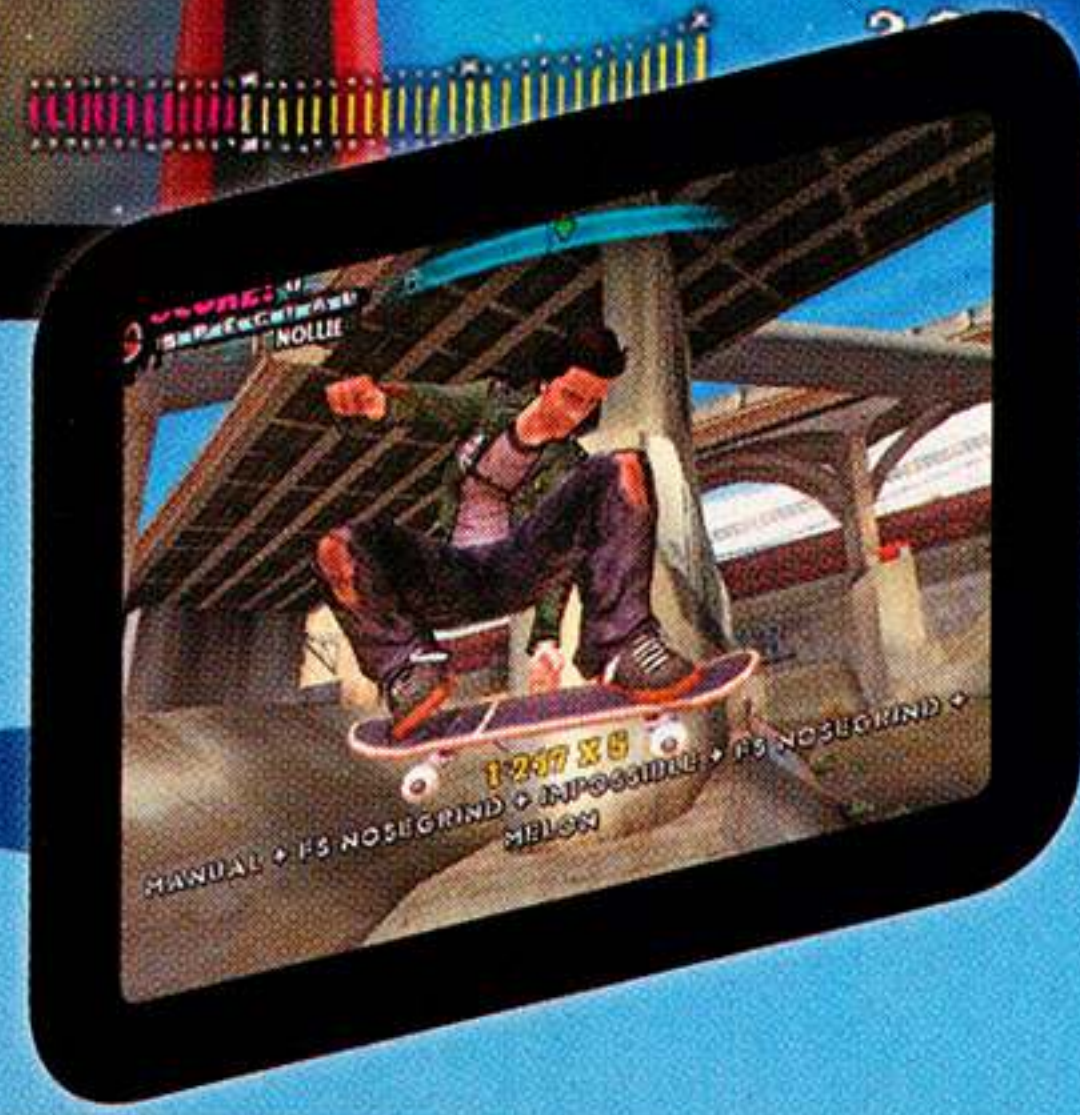
EA Sports Big PS2, Xbox

More tricks, more air, and more attitude helped take SSX On Tour to new levels of enjoyment, whether you decided to strap on a board or a pair of skis to your feet. The newly implemented skiing gameplay added a great deal of originality to the satisfying trick system, while the new character customization gave you a tremendous amount of personality when it came time to tear up the mountainside. If you're a fan of getting enormous air or busting out insane tricks, you must play this game.

**RUNNER-UP**

**Tony Hawk's American Wasteland**

PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox



**WORST GAME OF 2005**

**187 Ride or Die**

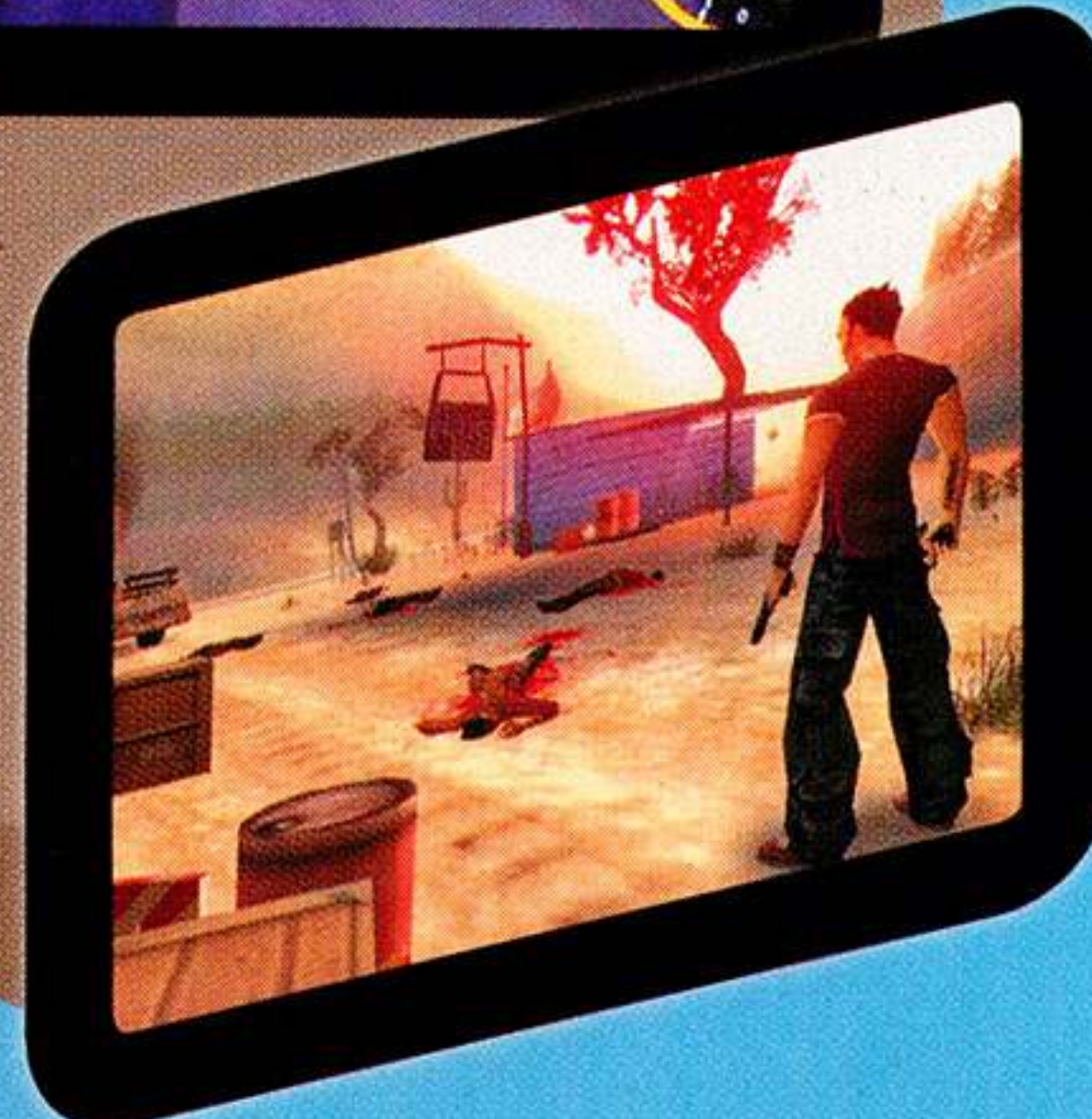
Ubisoft PS2, Xbox, PC

This one was close, but in the end, 187 Ride or Die prevailed as the Worst Game of 2005. Essentially a vehicle-combat shooter, the game had a simple objective: race rivals and fire weapons at them. Throw in a hip-hop soundtrack and some wannabe "cool" gangsta lingo, and you have a game that attempts to cash in on several levels but delivers on none of them. Total Overdose (the runner-up) also earned strong ire from the staff with its Grand-Theft-you-know-what play scheme and some of the most ludicrous play facets we've ever seen—such as the ability to charge at enemies like a bull.

**RUNNER-UP**

**Total Overdose: A Gunslinger's Tale in Mexico**

PS2, Xbox, PC







One does not simply walk into Mordor.





OR THE BLUE MOUNTAINS.

OR FORNOST. OR ETTENMOORS.

OR MITHLOND.

OR RIVENDELL.

OR THE SHIRE.

OR MORIA.

OR ISENGARD.

EPIC CONFLICTS ARE ARISING ON THE FRIGID PLAINS OF THE NORTH. VAST NAVIES APPROACH FROM THE SEA. YOU MUST COMMAND THE GREATEST HEROES OF MIDDLE-EARTH AND BECOME A LEGEND YOURSELF. BUILD UNIQUE, IMPENETRABLE FORTRESSES. CONTROL ARMIES OF ALL THE RACES OF MIDDLE-EARTH. THERE IS MORE TO SEE AND FAR MORE TO FEAR.







OR THE WITHERED HEATH.



OR THE IRON HILLS.

OR EREBOR.

OR CELDUIN RIVER.

OR MIRKWOOD.

OR DOL GULDUR.

OR LORIEN.

# THE LORD OF THE RINGS™ THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH™ II

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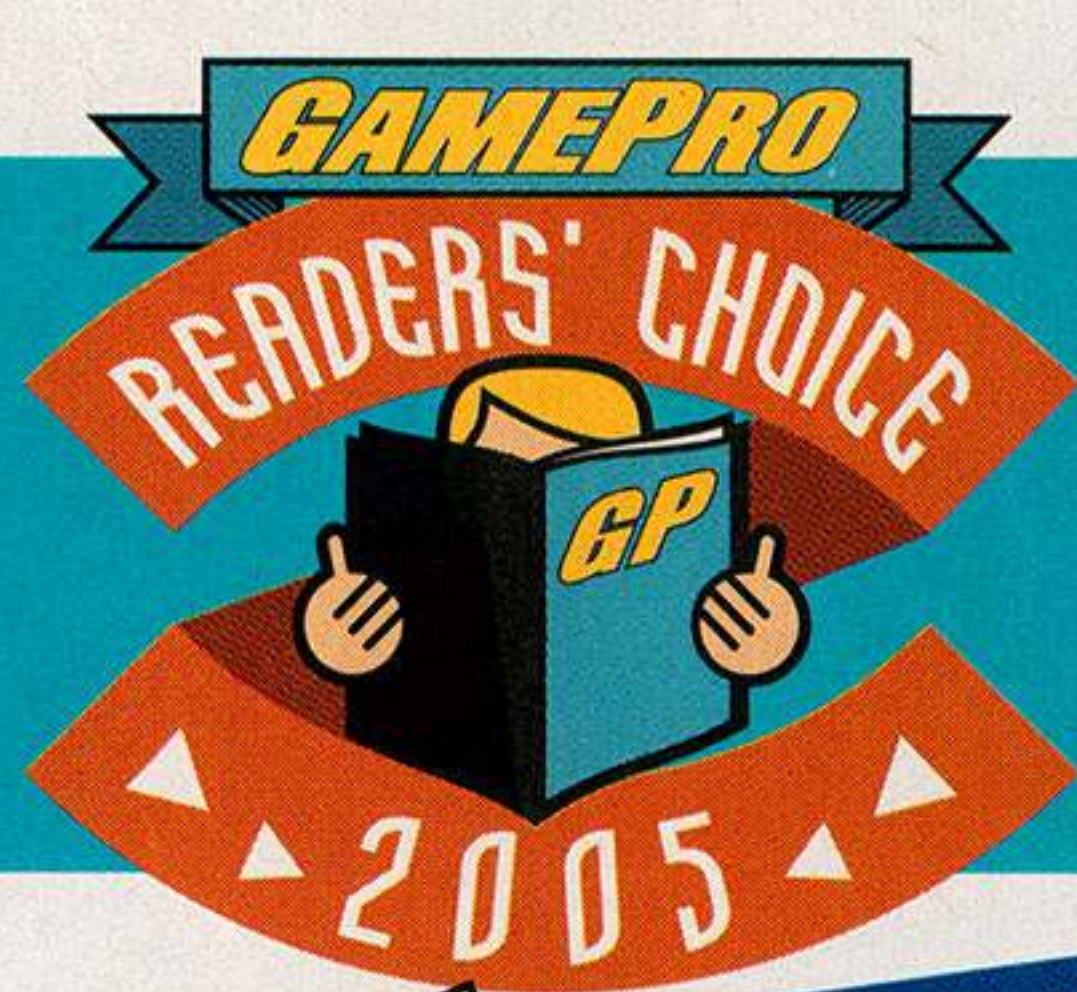


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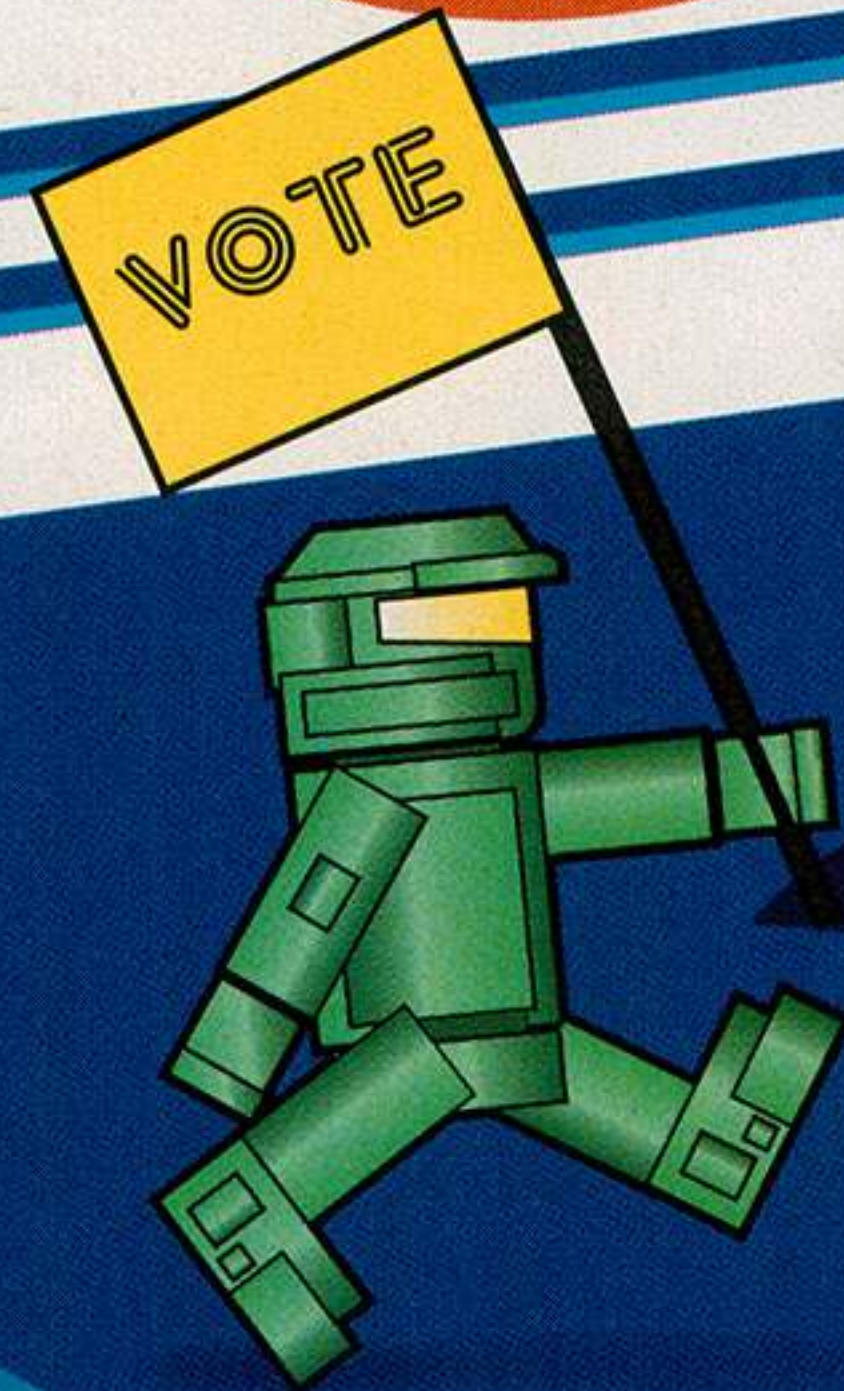




# 2005 GAMEPRO READERS' CHOICE



Make your voice heard! Go to [GamePro.com/rca/](http://GamePro.com/rca/) and tell us your favorite games of 2005—you might even win a cool prize package.



## BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE

- Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow DS
- Condemned: Criminal Origins Xbox 360
- Destroy All Humans! PS2, Xbox
- Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening PS2
- Dragon Ball Z: Sagas PS2, Xbox, GameCube
- God of War PS2
- Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories PSP
- Gun PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube
- The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction PS2, Xbox
- The Matrix: Path of Neo PS2, Xbox
- Mercenaries PS2, Xbox
- Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks PS2, Xbox
- Ninja Gaiden: Black Xbox
- Ratchet: Deadlocked PS2
- Resident Evil 4 PS2, GameCube
- Shadow of the Colossus PS2
- Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves PS2
- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow PS2, Xbox
- Ultimate Spider-Man PS2, Xbox, GameCube
- The Warriors PS2, Xbox

## BEST FIGHTING

- Dead or Alive 4 Xbox 360
- Dragon Ball Z Budokai: Tenkaichi PS2
- One Piece: Grand Battle PS2
- Soulcalibur III PS2
- Tekken 5 PS2
- WWE SmackDown vs. Raw PS2
- WWE: WrestleMania 21 Xbox

## BEST RPG

- Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of the Cursed King PS2
- Fable: The Lost Chapters Xbox, PC
- Final Fantasy IV GBA
- Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance GameCube
- Fire Emblem: The Sacred Stones GBA
- Guild Wars PC
- Radiata Stories PS2
- Romance of the Three Kingdoms X PS2
- Romancing SaGa PS2
- Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga PS2
- Sigma Star Saga GBA
- Suikoden IV PS2
- Suikoden Tactics PS2
- Xenosaga Episode II: Jenseits von Gut und Bose PS2
- X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse PS2, Xbox, GameCube
- Ys: The Ark of Napishtim PS2

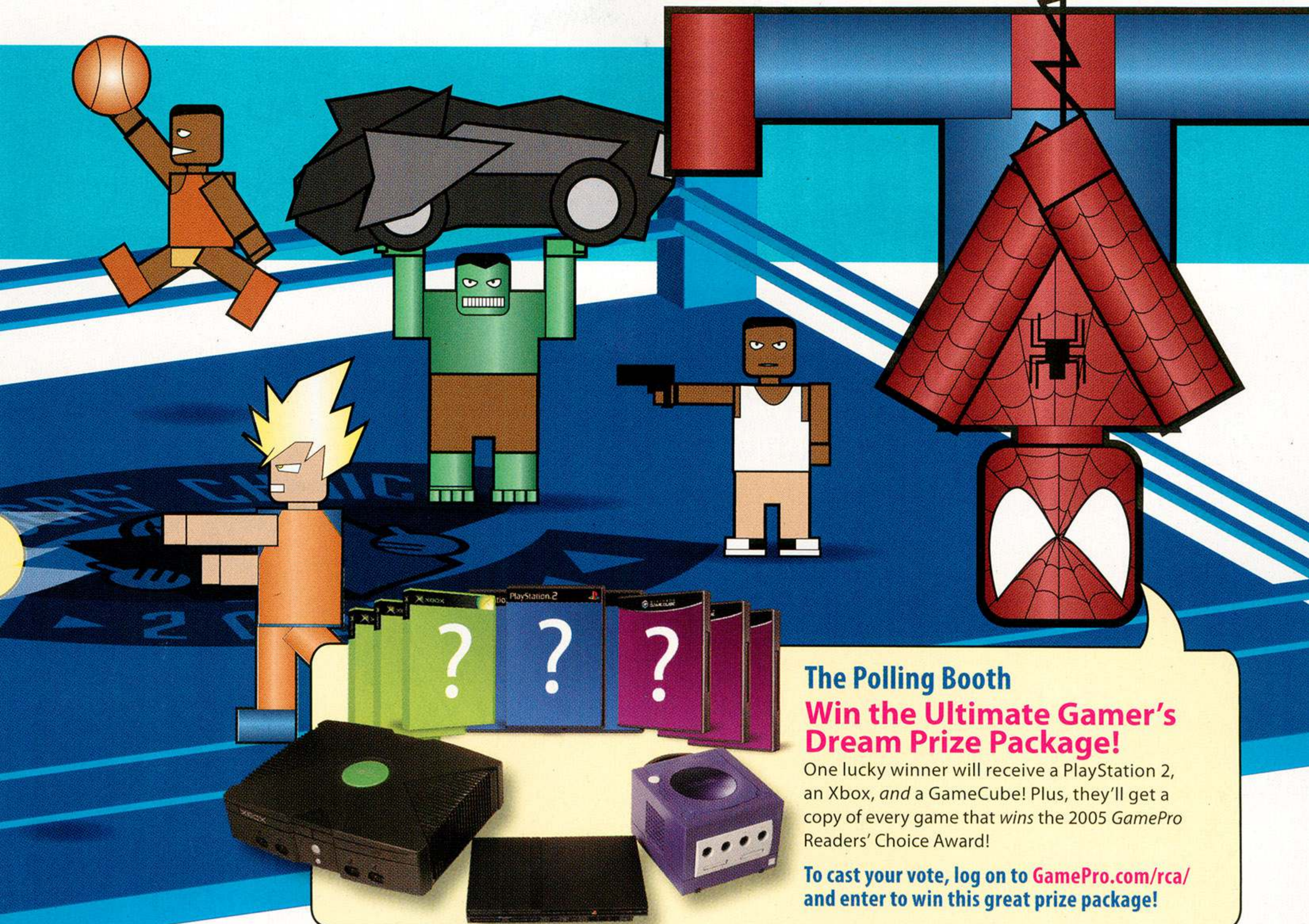
## BEST BRAIN/REFLEX

- Bomberman DS DS
- DDR Extreme 2 PS2
- Donkey Konga 2 GameCube
- Dr. Mario & Puzzle League GBA
- Karaoke Revolution Party PS2, Xbox
- Lumines PSP
- Meteos DS
- Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney DS
- The Sims 2 PS2, Xbox

## BEST COMBAT/SHOOTING

- Area-51 PS2, Xbox
- Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood PS2, Xbox, PC
- Call of Duty 2 Xbox 360, PC
- Call of Duty 2: Big Red One PS2, Xbox, GameCube
- Darkwatch PS2, Xbox
- Delta Force: Black Hawk Down Xbox
- Doom 3 Xbox
- Far Cry Instincts Xbox
- F.E.A.R. PC
- Half-Life 2 Xbox
- Halo 2 Multiplayer Map Pack Xbox
- Medal of Honor: European Assault PS2, Xbox, GameCube
- Perfect Dark Zero Xbox 360
- Project: Snowblind PS2, Xbox
- Quake 4 Xbox 360, PC
- SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs PS2
- Star Wars Battlefront II PS2, Xbox
- Unreal Championship: The Liandri Conflict Xbox





### The Polling Booth

## Win the Ultimate Gamer's Dream Prize Package!

One lucky winner will receive a PlayStation 2, an Xbox, and a GameCube! Plus, they'll get a copy of every game that wins the 2005 GamePro Readers' Choice Award!

To cast your vote, log on to [GamePro.com/rca/](http://GamePro.com/rca/) and enter to win this great prize package!

## BEST SPORTS

- Blitz: The League** PS2, Xbox
- College Hoops 2K6** PS2, Xbox
- FIFA Soccer 06** PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox
- FIFA Street** PS2, Xbox
- Fight Night Round 2** PS2, Xbox, GameCube
- Madden NFL 06** PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube
- Major League Baseball 2K5** PS2, Xbox
- Mario Superstar Baseball** GameCube
- Mario Tennis: Power Tour** GBA
- MLB 2006** PS2
- MVP Baseball 2005** PS2, Xbox, GameCube
- NBA '06** PS2, PSP
- NBA 2K6** PS2, Xbox
- NBA Live 06** PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox
- NBA Street V3** PS2, Xbox
- NCAA Football 06** PS2, Xbox
- NCAA March Madness 06** PS2, Xbox
- NHL 06** PS2, Xbox, GameCube
- NHL 2K6** PS2, Xbox
- Outlaw Tennis** Xbox
- Super Mario Strikers** GameCube
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06** PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube
- Virtua Tennis: World Tour** PSP
- World Soccer Winning Eleven 8 International** PS2, Xbox
- World Tour Soccer 2006** PS2

## BEST EXTREME SPORTS

- Amped 3** Xbox 360
- SSX On Tour** PS2, Xbox
- Tony Hawk's American Wasteland** PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube
- Tony Hawk's Underground 2 Remix** PSP

## BEST RACING

- ATV Offroad Fury Blazin' Trails** PSP
- Burnout Legends** PSP
- Burnout: Revenge** PS2, Xbox
- Enthusia Professional Racing** PS2
- Forza Motorsport** Xbox
- Gran Turismo 4** PS2
- Jak X: Combat Racing** PS2
- Juiced** PS2, Xbox
- L.A. Rush** PS2, Xbox
- Mario Kart DS** DS
- Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition** PS2, Xbox
- NASCAR 06: Total Team Control** PS2, Xbox
- Need for Speed: Most Wanted** PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox

## GAME OF THE YEAR

Across all platforms, throughout the whole year, which game was the absolute best?

- Burnout: Revenge** PS2, Xbox
- Call of Duty 2** Xbox 360, PC
- Dragon Ball Z Budokai: Tenkaichi** PS2
- F.E.A.R.** PC
- God of War** PS2
- Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories** PSP
- Half-Life 2** Xbox
- Lumines** PSP
- Madden NFL 06** PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube
- Nintendogs** DS
- Resident Evil 4** PS2, GameCube
- Shadow of the Colossus** PS2
- Tekken 5** PS2
- Ultimate Spider-Man** PS2, Xbox, GameCube

## WORST GAME OF THE YEAR

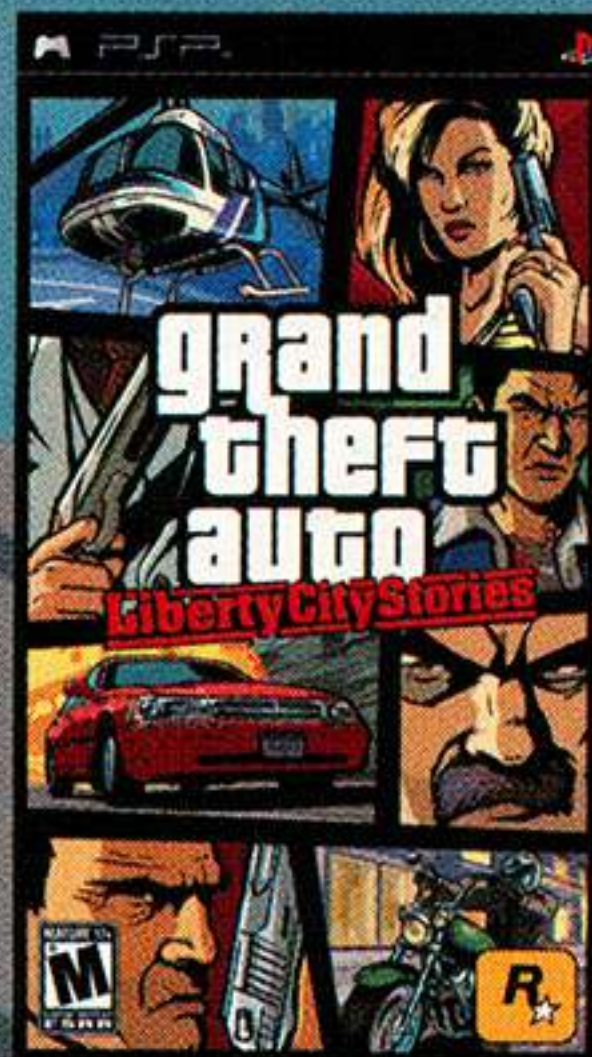
Write in your choice for Worst Game of the Year: Which game of 2005 made you miserable?

Results will appear in the May 2006 issue of *GamePro* magazine. The winner will be selected at random from completed online ballots received by the deadline.

No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited. Contest ends February 20, 2006. Go to [GamePro.com/rca/](http://GamePro.com/rca/) for the 2005 *GamePro* Readers' Choice Official Rules.



# CONQUERING GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES



From the seedy streets of Liberty City, here's the information you'll need if you're shooting for 100-percent completion. *By Vicious Sid*

## Crucial Cheats

These codes are standard issue for any new Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories player...but don't come crying to us if they mess up your saved games. Use codes at your own risk! Enter the following codes during gameplay and not while the game is paused. If you entered a code correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

**\$250,000:** Press L, R,  $\Delta$ , L, R,  $\circ$ , L, R.

**Clear Wanted Level:** Press L, L,  $\Delta$ , R, R, X,  $\square$ ,  $\circ$ .

**Full Armor:** Press L, R,  $\circ$ , L, R, X, L, R.

**Full Health:** Press L, R, X, L, R,  $\square$ , L, R.

**Never Wanted:** Press L, L,  $\Delta$ , R, R, X,  $\square$ ,  $\circ$ .

**Perfect Vehicle Traction:** Press L, Up, Left, R,  $\Delta$ ,  $\circ$ , Down, X.

**Weapons Set 1:** Press Up,  $\square$ ,  $\square$ , Down, Left,  $\circ$ ,  $\circ$ , Right.

**Weapons Set 2:** Press Up,  $\circ$ ,  $\circ$ , Down, Left,  $\circ$ ,  $\circ$ , Right.

**Weapons Set 3:** Press Up, X, X, Down, Left, X, X, Right.

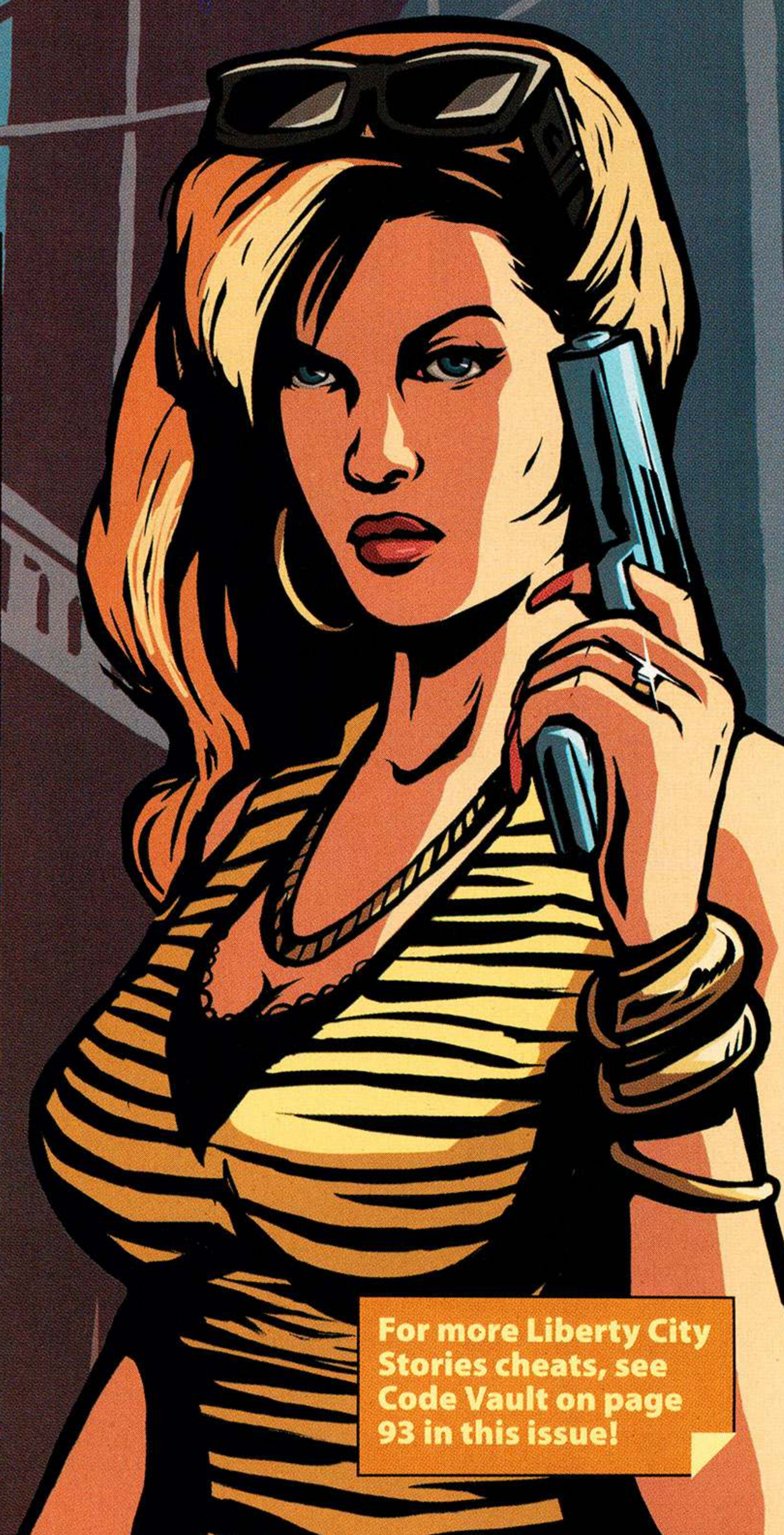
## Killing Time

In 2003, 17-year-old Devin Thompson allegedly shot and killed two police officers and a dispatcher. When he was apprehended by police, according to *The Tuscaloosa News*, the suspect told officers, "Life is a video game. You've got to die sometime." A \$600 million lawsuit on behalf of two of the victim's relatives—spearheaded by outspoken video-game detractor Jack Thompson—blamed the influences of Grand Theft Auto III.

## GTA Goes 8-Bit



An amateur coder by the name of Brian Provinciano successfully ported Grand Theft Auto III to the decidedly low-tech NES hardware. Officially named Grand Theftendo, the game runs at a glorious 256 x 240 resolution. Check out Provinciano's handiwork at [grandtheftendo.com](http://grandtheftendo.com).



For more Liberty City Stories cheats, see Code Vault on page 93 in this issue!



## 9MM Mayhem And Scooter Shooter

9MM Mayhem is found in Portland's Red Light District in the alley across from JD's place—look for the Freeway motorcycle behind the stairwell. Scooter Shooter is found in Chinatown—look for the Faggio scooter parked by the stairs that lead to the rooftop helipad.

In both missions, the goal is the same: You man an Uzi while your driver chases down pesky moving targets. You have just over three minutes to wipe out as many enemies as possible. Act quickly! Don't forget that you start with three Adrenaline pills—tap R to slow down time for a few precious moments.



## Slash TV

First, beat Vincenzo's Portland Chainsaw Masquerade story line mission. Then, swing by your hideout and change into the Overall outfit before heading to the southernmost boat in Portland Harbor. Enter the ship and look for the big, open room. Enter it and then press Up on the directional pad to begin this side mission.

If you want to survive all five levels, be sure to bring an AK47, a .357, or a SPAS12 Shotgun. Stand in the middle of the room while blasting the psychos, and run away only if you get mobbed. If you beat the fifth, hardest level twice, you earn the Chicken Suit. Sweet!



## Trash Dash



The hardest part of this side mission is simply locating a Trashmaster truck. There's one parked at the scrap yard in Portland... but it might be easier to enter the Trashmaster code (see Code Vault, this issue). The goals are the same in all three districts: You need to pick up all 12 dumpsters and then return to the junkyard in Portland before time runs out. It helps to pause the game and plan your route.

## Noodle Punk



Look for the Faggio scooter in Chinatown, Portland. Delivering noodles is not unlike performing a drive-by shooting—just hold the L button, press Left or Right on the analog stick, and then tap O to sling steaming-hot noodles. In a cruel twist, you must beat all 10 difficulty levels in one sitting to earn completion credit. Ouch! Still, the reward is sweet: a permanent boost to your health meter. So much for low-carb diets...

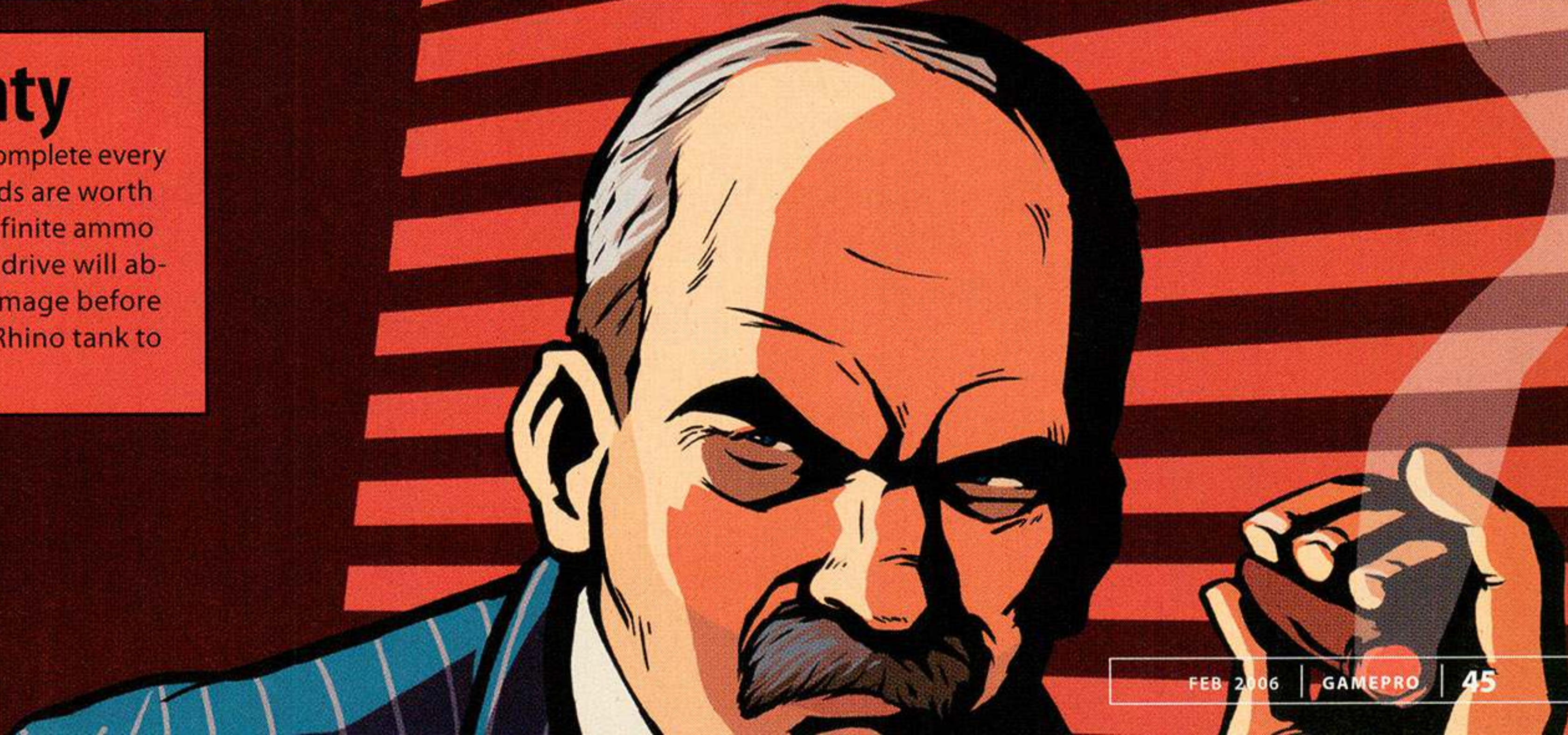
## Car Salesman



This missions can be found at the auto dealership in Saint Mark's, which resides in the northeast sector of Portland. Selling a car isn't rocket science. Some prospective customers expect a slow, gentle ride; others crave carnage and destruction. But whatever you do, don't stray too far from the local Pay 'N Spray shops—you never know when you'll need to repair damage or tweak the paint job to your customer's preference.

## The Full Monty

It might take a ton of time to complete every single activity, but the rewards are worth the effort. Besides gaining infinite ammo for all weapons, any car you drive will absorb massive amounts of damage before it explodes. Also, look for a Rhino tank to appear at Fort Staunton.





# RESIDENT EVIL 4



Resident Evil 4 is loaded with secrets and unlockable features. Here's how to unlock almost everything—from extra costumes to special play modes. *By Major Mike*

## Ada's Report

Complete Chapter 1 of Separate Ways and save the game to a memory card. Restart the game. At the main menu, select Extras and Ada's Report will be an option.

## Assignment Ada



Complete the game on Normal mode and save the data to a memory card. When you restart the game, go into Extras and Assignment Ada will be added to the menu.

## Chicago Typewriter



Complete Separate Ways and save the game to a memory card. Start a new game using the saved game data, and Leon can purchase the weapon from the Merchant. Ada can also obtain this weapon for her second playthrough of Ada's Separate Ways.

## Infinite Rocket Launcher



Complete the game on Normal mode and save the data to a memory card. Start a new game using the saved data, and Leon can purchase this item from the Merchant.

## Leon's Italian Suit And Ashley's Armor



Complete the game on Normal mode and save the game to a memory card. Start a new game using the saved game data, and you can select these costumes.

## Leon's RPD Costume



Complete the game on Normal mode and save the data to a memory card. Start a new game using the saved data, and Leon's RPD costume will be available.

## Matilda

Complete the game on Normal mode and save the data to a memory card. Start a new game using the saved data, and you can purchase this item from the Merchant.

## The Mercenaries



Complete the main game and save the data to a memory card. When you restart the game, go into Extras and The Mercenaries will be added to the menu.

## Play as Ada in The Mercenaries

Pass the Pueblo stage in The Mercenaries with a four-star rank or higher.

## Play as Wesker In The Mercenaries

Pass the Waterworld stage in The Mercenaries with a four-star rank or higher.

## Play as Hunk in The Mercenaries

Pass the Commando Island stage in The Mercenaries with a four-star rank or higher.

## Play as Krauser In The Mercenaries

Pass the Castle stage in The Mercenaries with a four-star rank or higher.

## Handcannon

Complete The Mercenaries with all five characters scoring a five-star rating on every stage. Start a game in Normal mode, and Leon can obtain this item from the Merchant.

## P.R.L.412



Complete the main game's Professional mode and save the data to a memory card. Start a new game using the saved data, and Leon can obtain the powerful P.R.L.412 from the Merchant.

## Professional Mode

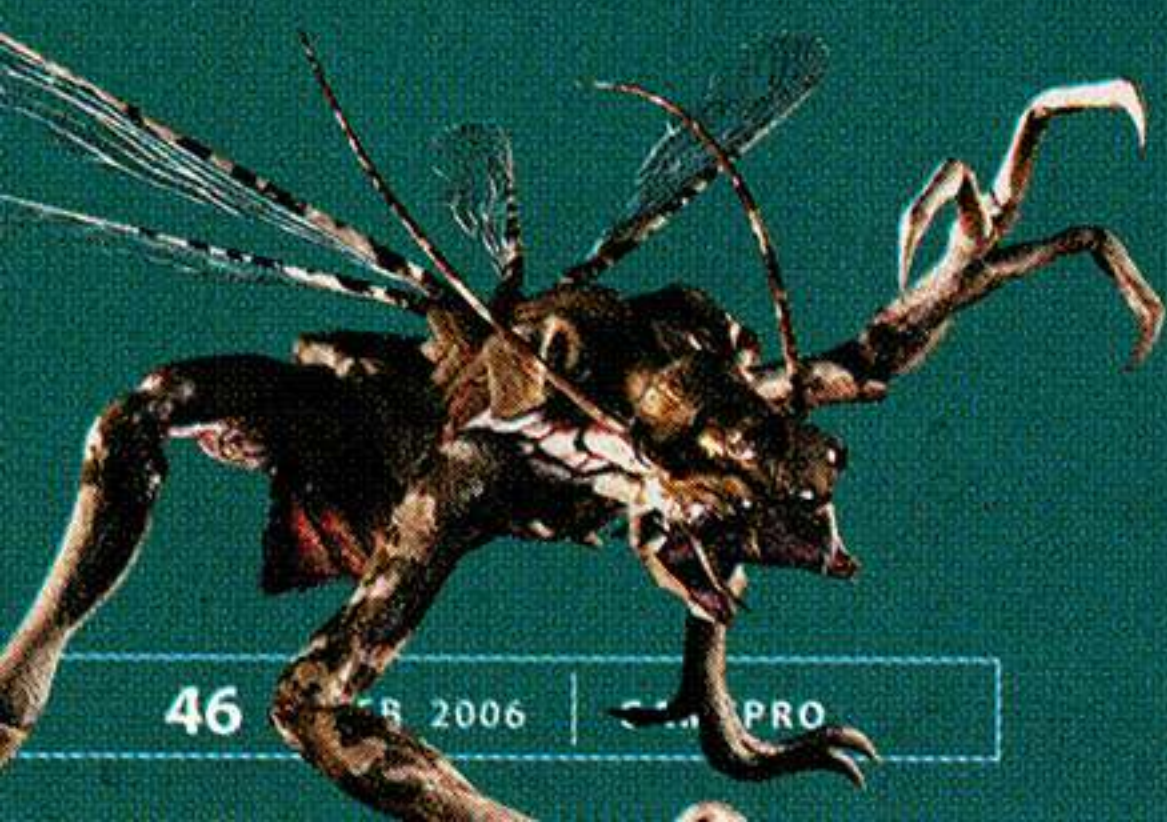
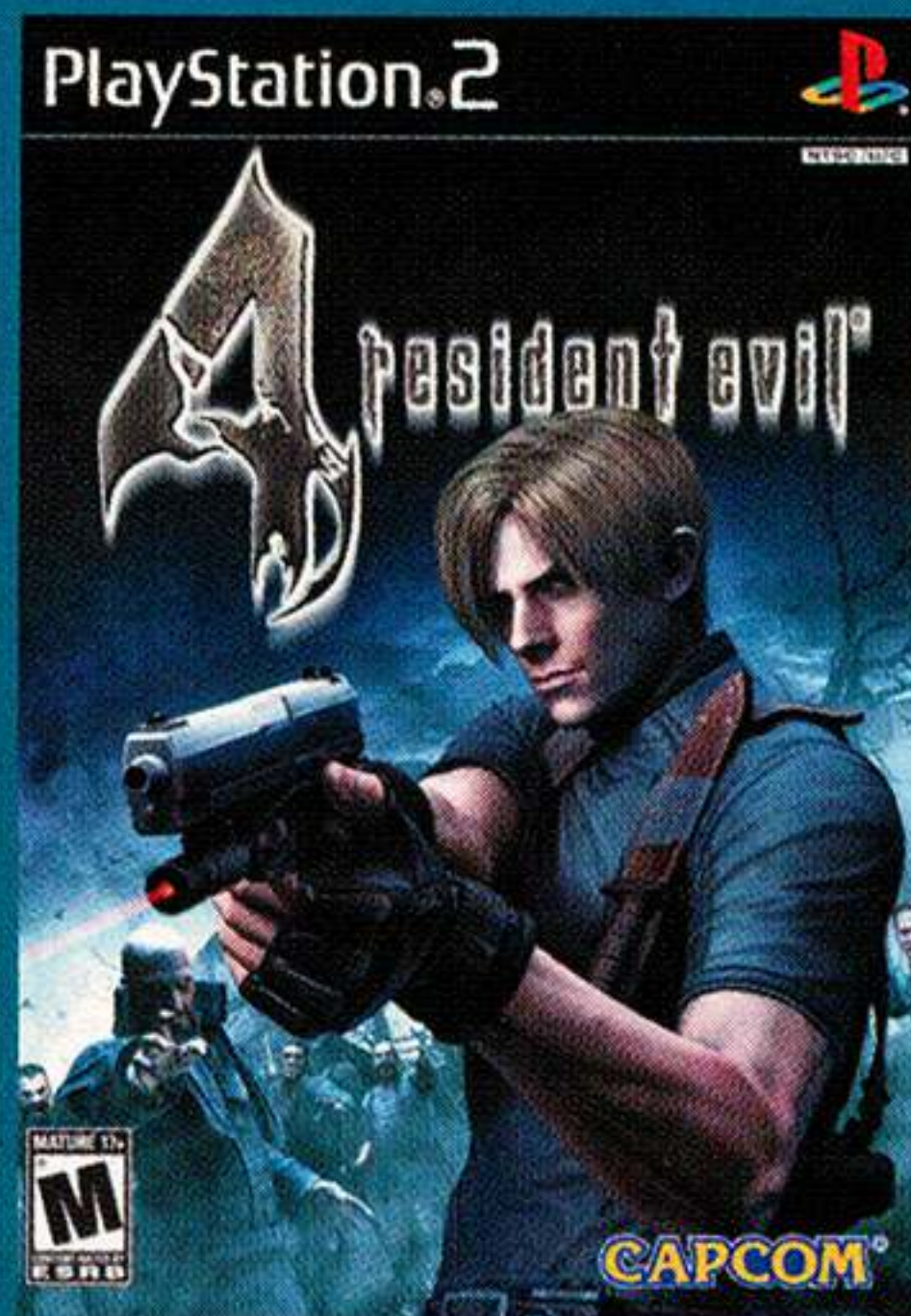


Complete the game on Normal mode and save the data to a memory card. When you start a new game, Professional mode will be an option.

## Separate Ways



Complete the game on Normal mode and save the data to a memory card. When you restart the game, Separate Ways will be added to the main menu.





# THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE GALAXY IS IN YOUR HANDS. ARE YOU READY?

## THE FLEETS

Do you quickly build a fleet of TIE fighters and swarm the enemy before they gain strength? Or take time and build a more powerful fleet of Star Destroyers?

## THE WEAPON

Do you protect the Death Star and reveal it at a critical moment? Or do you break out your big gun first and use Rebel planets for target practice?

## THE CREATURES

Do you attack head-on and risk massive casualties? Or flank the enemy, circle around and hope any rancors you meet along the way aren't hungry?

## THE ELEMENTS

Do you wait until after the ice storm and lose the element of surprise? Or do you take advantage of low visibility and attack when they least expect it?

## THE ARMIES

Do you crush bases under the feet of AT-ATs and risk losing a few? Or do you call down ships from space and bomb them back to the Stone Age?

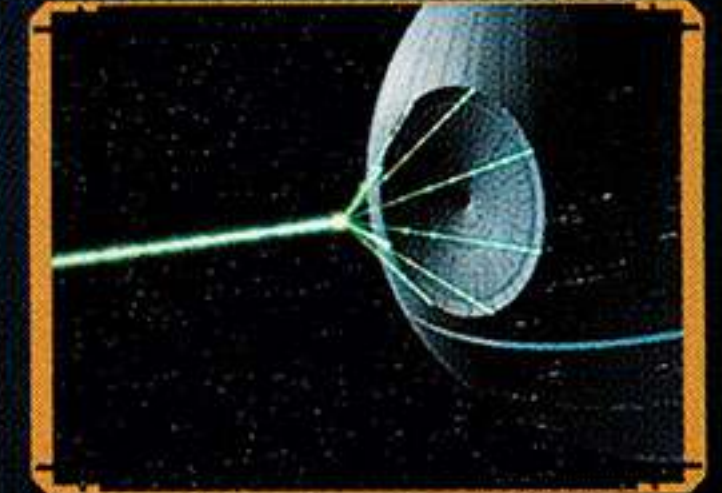
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Game experience may change during online play.





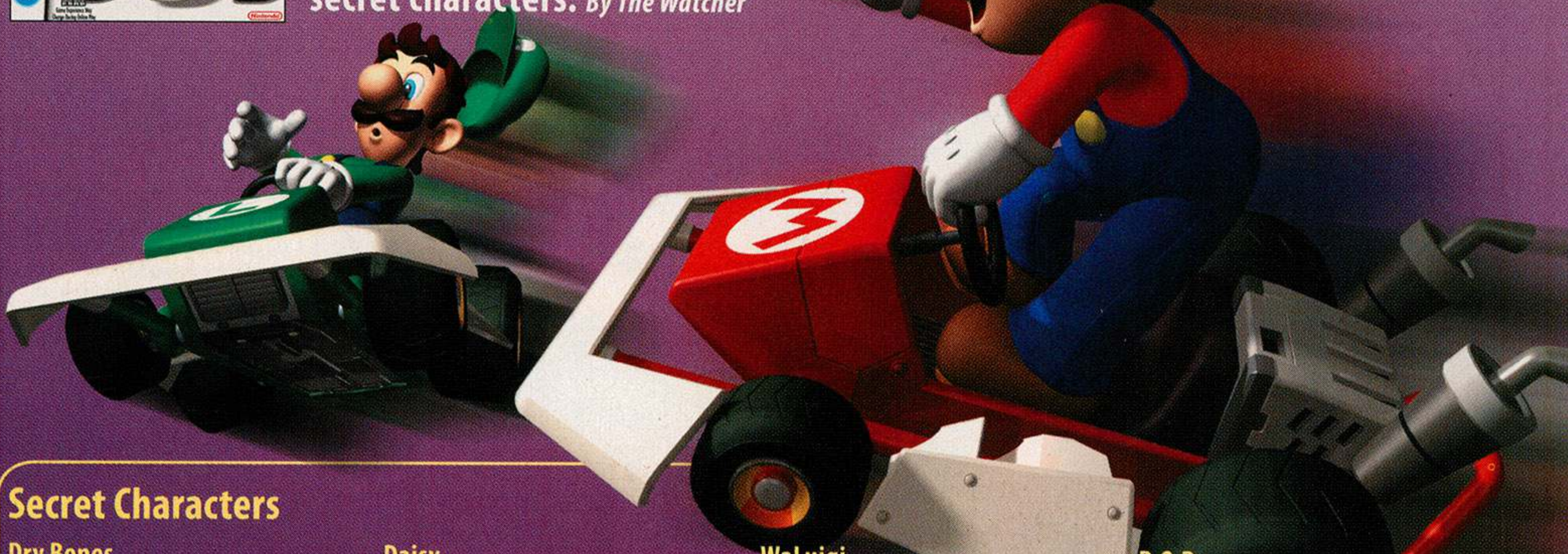
# PROSTRATEGY

## MARIO KART DS



Let the addiction begin! Mario Kart DS is an incredibly fun game, and we give you the best strategies for each track. We also reveal how to unlock the secret characters. *By The Watcher*

ALL SECRETS REVEALED!



### Secret Characters

#### Dry Bones



Unlock this nimble, skeletal koopa by winning gold trophies across the Nitro Grand Prix on 50cc.

Dry Bones is easily the most agile racer in Mario Kart DS. Given that he doesn't bear the burden of carrying around all that extra flab we call skin and vital organs, Dry Bones can veer through traffic without losing much of his speed. His minimal weight also helps him pull off some amazing acceleration, but his top speed leaves something to be desired. Still, his Mini-Turbos are super powerful given his light load and acceleration, and he's a great choice for those who like to move a lot on the track.

#### Daisy



Unlock this auburn-haired princess of Sarasaland by winning all gold trophies in the Retro Grand Prix on 50cc.

For being a dainty princess, Daisy is quite an able racer. Not only does she have a strong top speed, but she also doesn't get pushed around easily by other racers on the track. Her acceleration is modest, and unfortunately, she has the agility of a three-toed sloth, making corners and power-sliding particularly difficult. But for those who want a female character who can hold her own against the boys, Daisy's the best you can get.

#### Waluigi



Unlock Wario's little brother by getting all gold trophies in Retro Grand Prix on 100cc.

Like Wario, Waluigi has no major flaws. He has the strongest acceleration given his weight class, and he handles far better than Donkey Kong, Bowser, or even Wario. However, in order to maintain his acceleration and handling, he has the lowest top speed of any heavyweight. In short, Waluigi is one of the most well-balanced characters in the game and fits well on any track.

#### R.O.B.



Unlock this Robotic Operating Buddy, or R.O.B for short, by finishing Nitro Grand Prix in 150cc mirror mode with all gold trophies.

R.O.B's all-metal frame makes this NES accessory an incredibly hefty racer. Don't expect him to launch off the track with his low acceleration—however, he does have a very impressive top speed and will never be pushed around by other racers given his bulkiness. What really makes him stick out is his impressive handling in comparison to that of Donkey Kong, Bowser, and other heavyweights.



## Racing Strategies

### Rocket Start



Useful on any track, a rocket boost will have you speeding off the starting line as your opponents eat your dust. To pull off a rocket boost, press and hold Accelerate just as the countdown is about to switch from 2 to 1. If you time the rocket boost right, you'll gain an early advantage, but if you time it wrong, you'll end up with your engine backfiring and you'll be the one eating dust.

### Mini-Turbos



A powerful tool of the pros, Mini-Turbos give drivers an extra boost of speed as they make their turns. To carry out a Mini-Turbo, start drifting (press and hold Drift) as you go into a turn and then promptly press Left and Right alternatively until orange sparks come out from under your tires. From here, release Drift, and you'll suddenly get a swift boost in your speed. Be careful, though, and make sure that you don't swing out too widely when turning and attempting to boost, or you may lose more ground than you hoped to gain—or worse, you may even slide off the track!

## Track Strategies

### Rainbow Road



A classic Mario Kart track, Rainbow Road has been in every iteration of the game, and each one is unique. One common feature they all share is that they're always one of the most challenging tracks in the game, and in Mario Kart DS, it's no different.



Rainbow Road's windy curves are bad enough, but what makes this track so difficult is its lack of railings, so cornering can be tough, especially when you're bumped by another, heavier racer. Also, be careful when trying to drift or pull off a Mini-Turbo as the moves tend to push you close to the edge of the course.



Early in the race, as you wind your way up to the top of the track, be mindful of the turbo strips lining this area. They're useful for pulling ahead, but they also put you precariously close to the edge, opening up yourself to being bumped off by another racer and likely placed at the end of the pack.

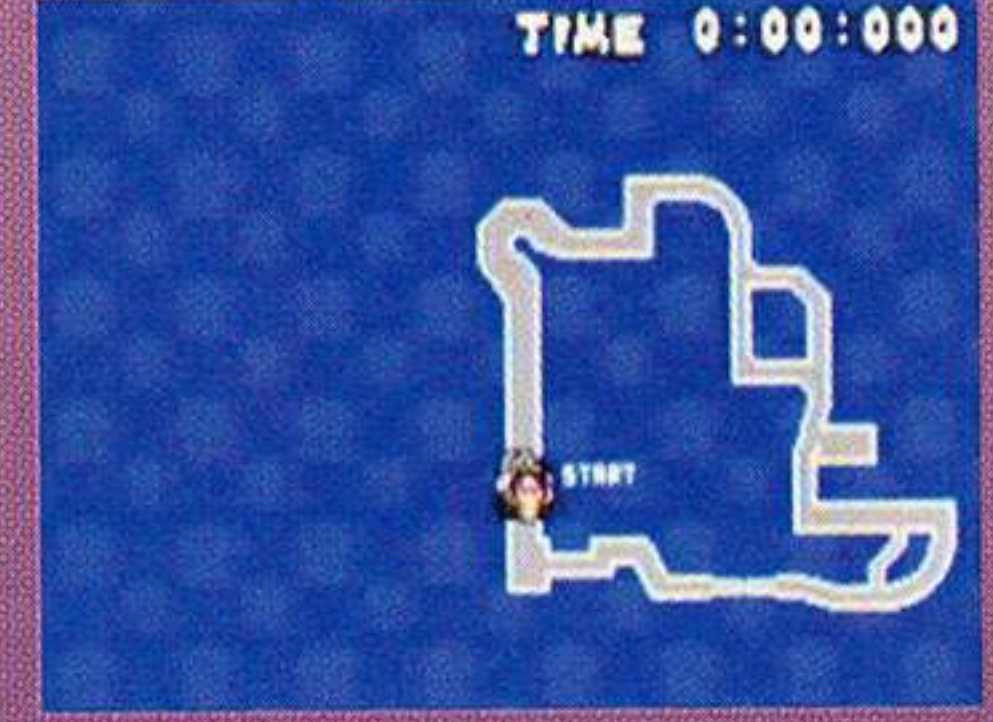


The corkscrews and loops found on this track can be both a blessing and a curse. While they're useful in boosting you to top speed, they also pose a major threat if you're suddenly hit, which usually result in you falling off the track and floating into space, requiring the aid of Lakitu to drag you back and delaying you for at least five seconds. However, you can use this to your advantage by saving any useful items and hitting your enemies while in the middle of a loop.



Bananas can be amazingly useful on this track; a few well-placed ones can easily push a racer off even the easiest of turns. And for heavyweights, mushroom boosts can be used to similar effect on lighter characters.

### Delfino Square



Made especially for Mario Kart DS, the Delfino Square track resembles an urban environment. Tight alleyways, sharp 90-degree turns, and a few surprises make this course stand out as particularly difficult if you're not used to it. This track is also one of the most versatile and challenging in the game.



After a straight start, you must make a wide right turn around a statue. This is one of the few opportunities for an easy Mini-Turbo, so drift and boost here to gain some distance.



Delfino Square is riddled with 90-degree turns, which can be more difficult than those on other tracks. But if you time them right, you can really gain an advantage over the competition...just make sure you pull out of a drift if you know you're going to hit a wall.

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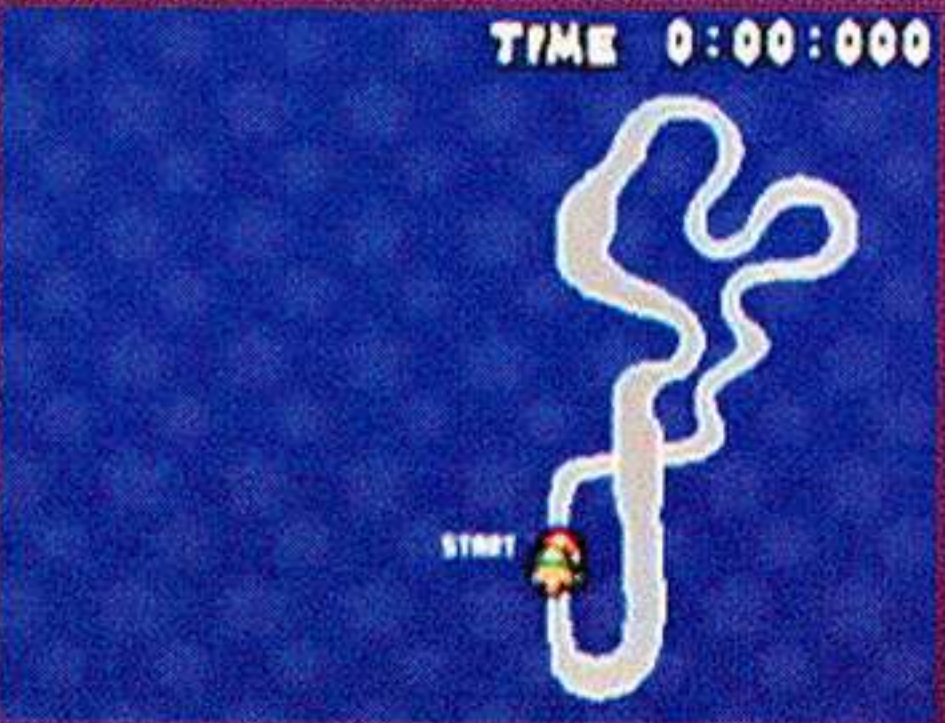


There's a secret passage between some buildings as you cross the dock, but make sure you have a Mushroom boost, or you'll slog down in the mud as you cross.



Dropping items in some of the tight areas of the track is the surest way to take down an enemy. Bananas and Fake Item Boxes can work wonders...just be careful that you don't run into them on your next lap!

**DK Pass**



Similar to Frappe Snowland, DK Pass is a relatively small snow level with plenty of sharp turns, dangerous cliffs, exploding snowmen, and giant snowballs—all of which keep you from sliding down this track with ease.



The beginning of the race has numerous sharp turns as you wind your way up to the top of the mountain—use these as an opportunity to build up some Mini-Turbos, but be careful as the right side of the track abruptly ends in a steep ridge where players can easily fall off.



After the last sharp turn and near the summit, drive onto the hill to the left of the track, where you'll find an item box. This box gives out only Single- and Triple-Mushroom boosts, Red Shells, or Stars—regardless of your position in the race. Even though you may have to drive off-road to get it, the items you receive more than compensate for the drop in speed and can help give you that extra advantage you need to pull ahead.



As you progress down the summit, the path becomes somewhat bumpy. Even though there are some turns that could be used for Mini-Boosts, be careful as the uneven snow makes it difficult to pull them off, and you could end up merely sliding into the wall and losing precious ground.



Near the end of the track is one of your last turns, where a handful of snowmen are hugging the right corner. This is a great area for pulling off a Mini-Boost as long as you can slide between the snowmen. If you're using a more maneuverable racer, you

should have more of an advantage weaving through them; otherwise, stick to swinging around them just to be safe. You don't want to go from first to fourth because you hit an exploding pile of snow at the end of your last lap!

**Luigi's Mansion**



The DS version takes a page out of the GameCube one as Mario and the gang get to see what Luigi was so scared about when they visit this haunted mansion and its surrounding area. Ominously dark, this spooky course is far more challenging than it is scary. And once you master the many turns, muddy graveyards, and walking trees, you'll have nothing to be scared of.



Once you begin the race and enter the mansion itself, start drifting and build up a Mini-Turbo early—just when you're about to make the first inside turn. This gives you a big advantage as you'll quickly slide through the tight turns and enter the main room with a Mini-Turbo ready to be fired.



Most of the turns on this track aren't as sharp as those in others; instead, they snake back and forth and make it difficult to pull off consistent Mini-Boosts. Pick and choose when you decide to try one, otherwise you're likely to slide off the track into the overgrowth and lose time.



About halfway through the course, you must drive through a muddy forest with only a few patches of dry land. Because the mud slows you down, it's important to either stay on land or do Mini-Turbos as often as you can to stay ahead of the pack.



The walking trees can prove to be a nuisance, but they shouldn't be a big problem (they move relatively slow and don't knock you out like an item would). Just be careful that you don't accidentally hit one while trying to pull off a Mini-Turbo.





# Rule the school!



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## TIME ATTACK

Once you've beaten *Shadow of the Colossus*, you gain access to a few new Game Modes. In addition to Hard Mode, you also unlock the challenging Time Attack Mode.

Time Attack Mode is basically a series of Colossus battles where not only do you have to battle the Colossi, but you are also up against the clock. If you can manage to bring down each of the sixteen Colossi within their allocated time limit, you will be rewarded with a set of special items that can then be used during the adventure mode.

Here's how Time Attack works: After beating the game, you are asked to save your progress. Once saved, you can load this save file from the Title Screen by choosing Load Game, which starts a new game from scratch (there will be a number "2" next to the save file, indicating that this is your second play through). Once the game starts, approach any one of the sixteen idols lining the shrine's walls and press **○** to pray in front of it. Doing so activates that Colossus's Time Attack and you are automatically transported to the start of the battle. For every two Colossi you beat in Time Attack Mode, Dormin gives you a special item, which appears in the vortex pool at the back of the shrine. For more information on these items, refer to Items section that follows.



When you beat the game on Hard Mode, you gain access to an even tougher Hard Time Attack Mode. Depending on the Colossus, the time limit may be longer or shorter, there may be more markers or markers in different places, and it may take many more stabs to kill it. Good luck!

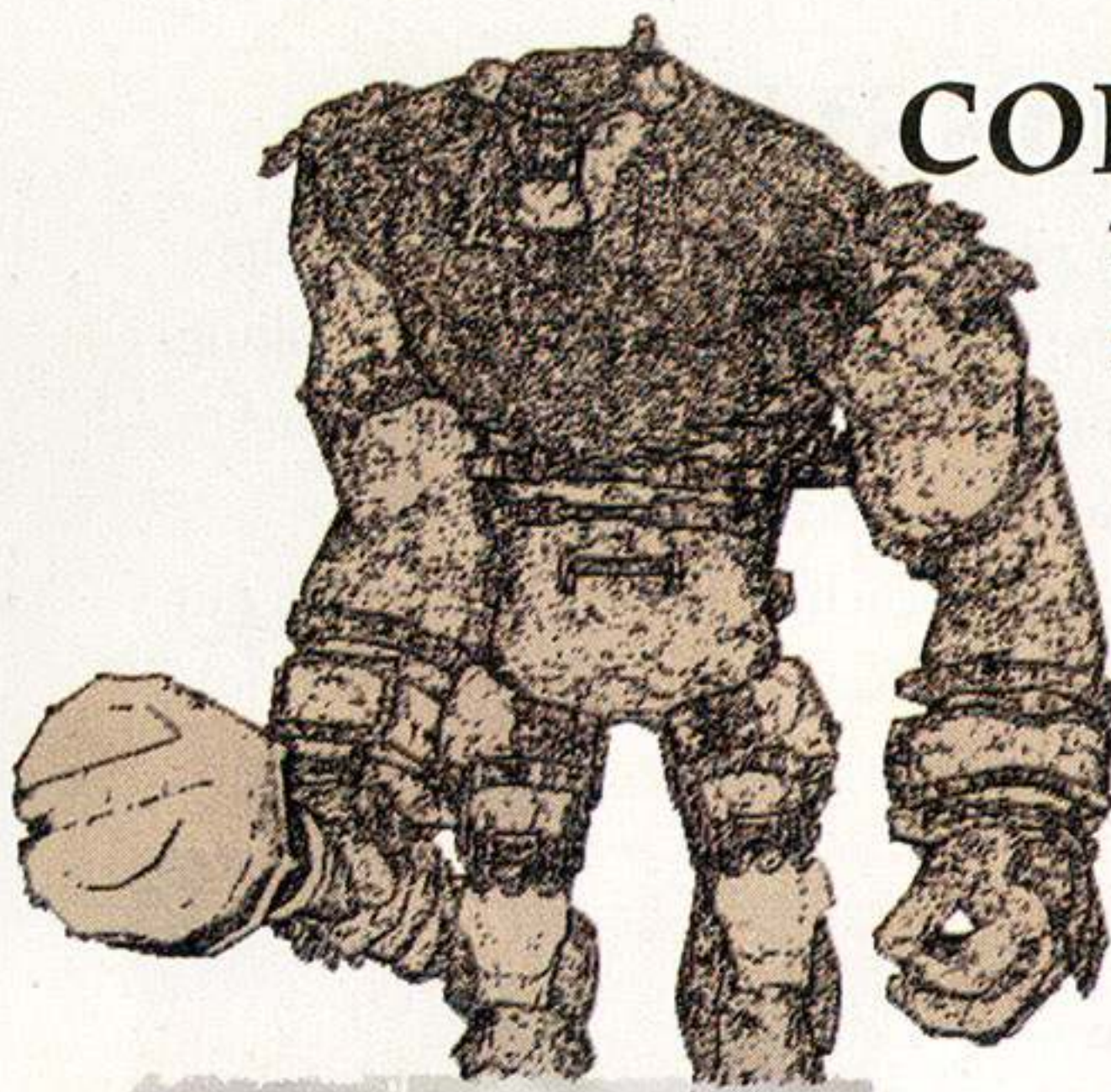
## Strategies

The same general strategies from the standard game apply to Time Attack Mode—climb and seek out the markers, watch your stamina and bring down these giants. The only difference is that you must do it quickly! There's little room for error. Adding to the challenge, your Stamina Meter is the exact same size it was during that Colossus' original battle. For example, when you go up against Colossus I (the first Colossus encountered in the game) your meter will be tiny, just as it was when you first fought it. Lastly, any items you earn during Time Attack Mode can only be used during the standard game.



The following are a list of the Time Attack time limit requirements for both Normal and Hard Time Attack Modes, as well as Colossus-specific strategies and tips to help you beat the clock and achieve record times.





## COLOSSUS I

To shave off some precious seconds, immediately start to whistle as soon as the battle begins. This stops the Colossus in his tracks and allows you to catch up with it in record time. In Hard Time Attack Mode a second marker appears on the Colossus I's right bicep.



TIME REQUIREMENTS	
Normal Mode	2:30:00
Hard Mode	2:50:00

## COLOSSUS III

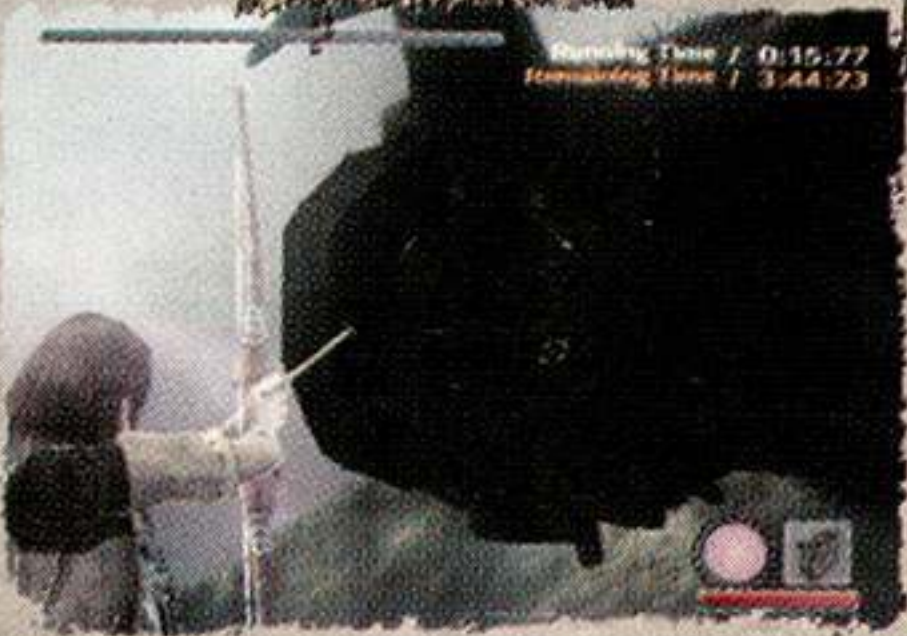
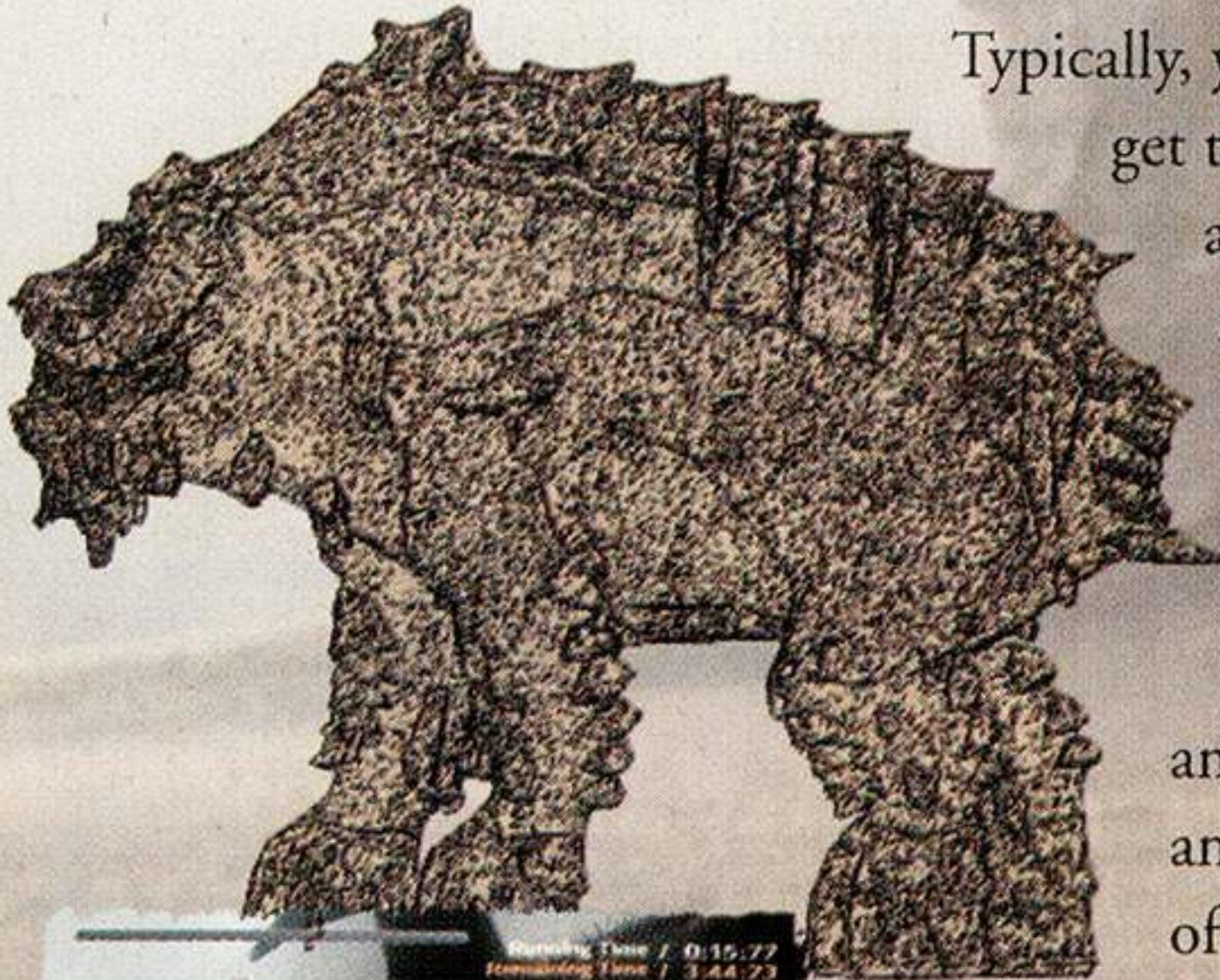
The biggest time cruncher here is luring Colossus III to attack the stone platform in order to shatter its armor and get to the marker. To force it to do this quickly, rush toward Colossus III as soon as the battle begins and position yourself at the edge of the platform. This causes the Colossus to take two steps back. As soon as it does so, roll into the center of the platform and wait for it to attack. Colossus III takes two more steps back and moves into just the right spot to shatter its armor, allowing you to quickly get access up its arm.



TIME REQUIREMENTS	
Normal Mode	6:00:00
Hard Mode	5:00:00

## COLOSSUS II

Typically, you need to get this Colossus's attention by running in front of it, which wastes time. Instead, break out the bow and arrow early and shoot a volley of arrows at its head. When it rears up, shoot the left hoof as the path to the marker on this side is shorter than the one on the right.



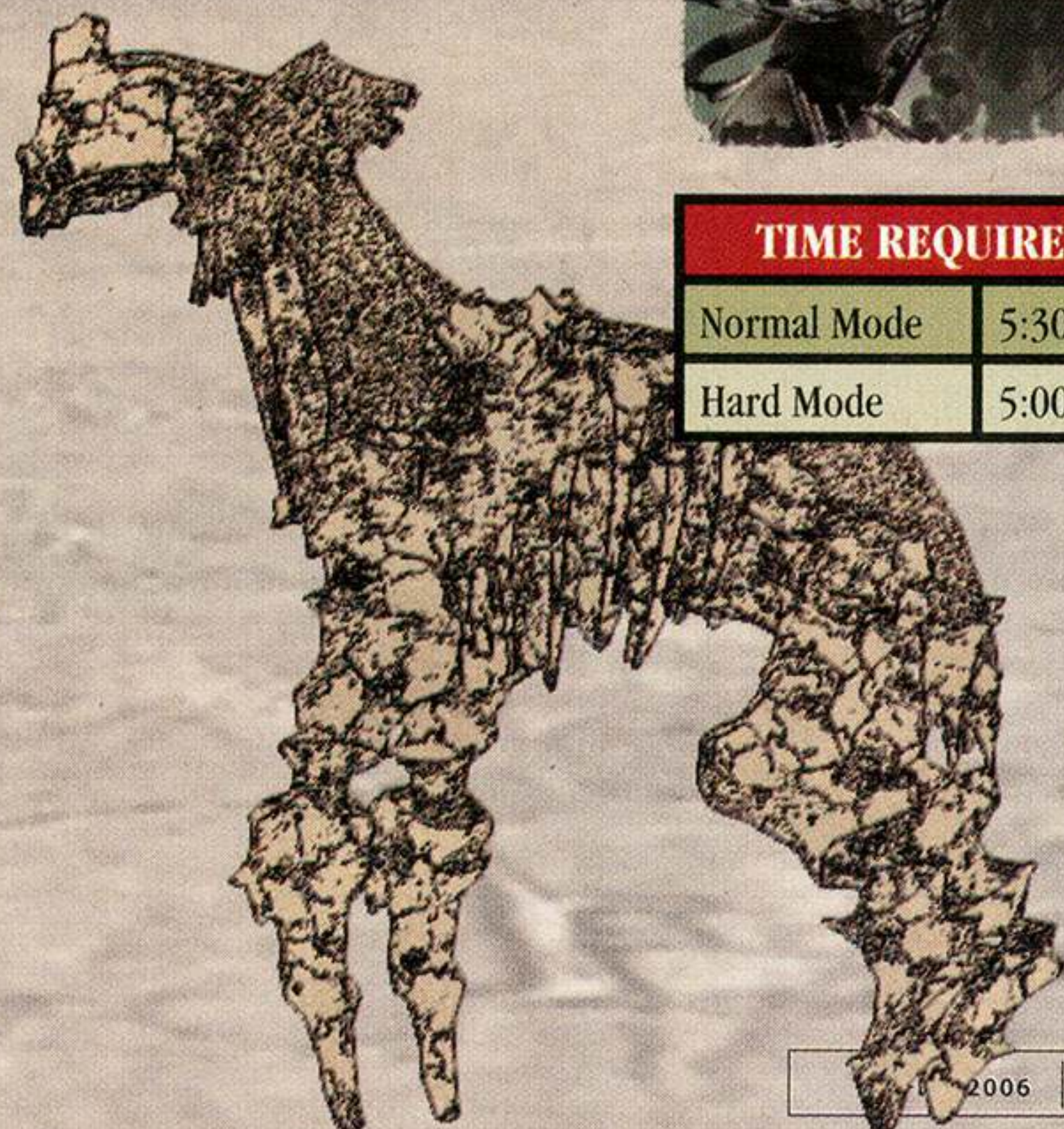
TIME REQUIREMENTS	
Normal Mode	4:00:00
Hard Mode	4:30:00

## COLOSSUS IV

Just getting Colossus IV into position eats up half the clock. To do this as quickly as possible, immediately get its attention by whistling when the battle begins. As soon as it gives chase, run to one of the two back mounds and wait on top near the edge. As soon as Colossus IV draws near enough to attack you, drop into the underground tunnel and run out the other side. Once you're on top of this Colossus, a series of quick stabs allows you to defeat it swiftly.



TIME REQUIREMENTS	
Normal Mode	5:30:00
Hard Mode	5:00:00



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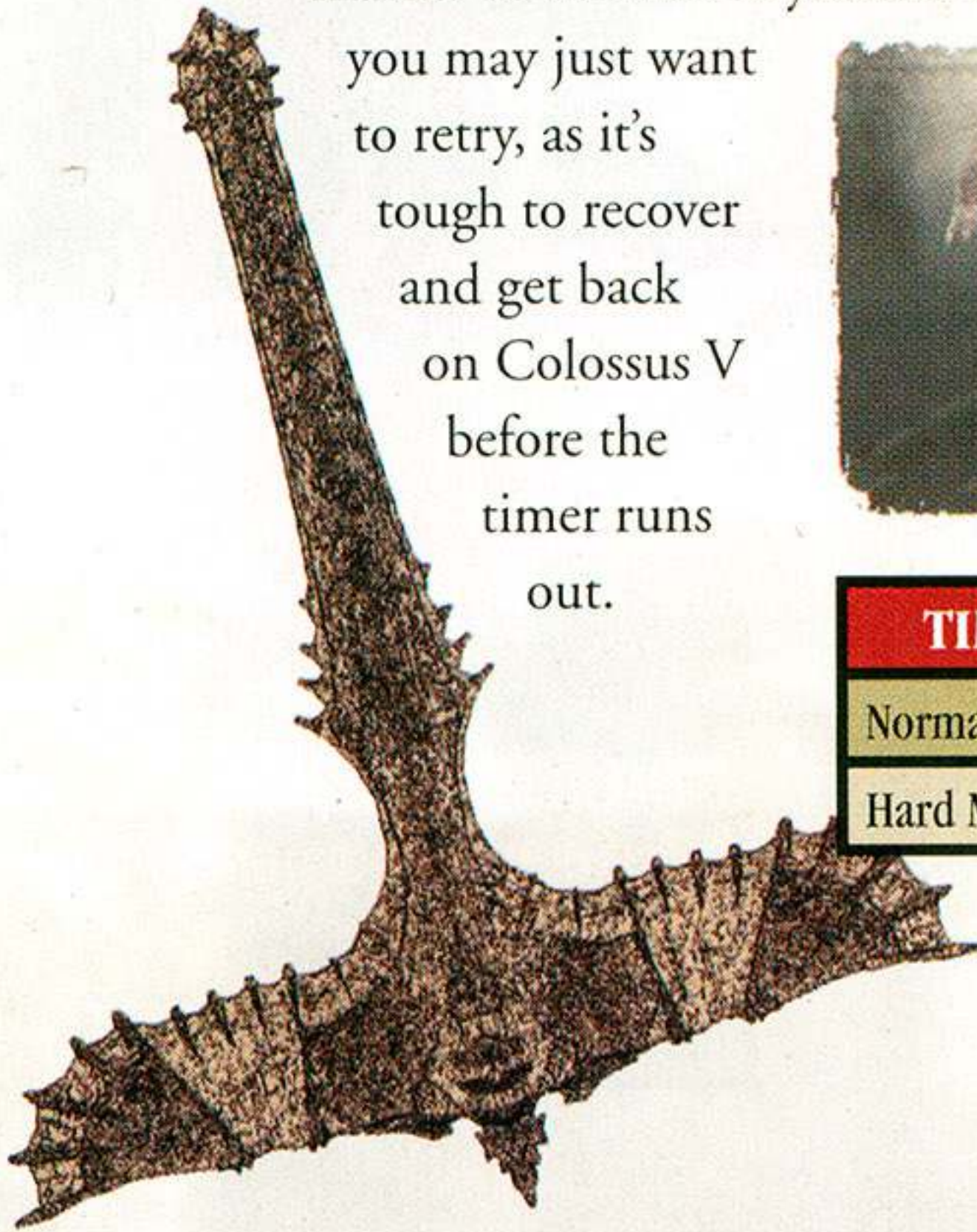
# COLOSSUS V

You will eat up almost a minute of your time just swimming to the platform in order to get Colossus V to attack. Keep **R1** held down to swim faster and come up for air before you run out of breath and then dive back down, for a second run. The order in which you attack Colossus V's three markers is the only thing that will really save you time. Attack the wings first, then make the trek down the tail for the final marker at the end. If you fall off during this battle,

you may just want to retry, as it's tough to recover and get back on Colossus V before the timer runs out.



TIME REQUIREMENTS	
Normal Mode	5:30:00
Hard Mode	5:30:00

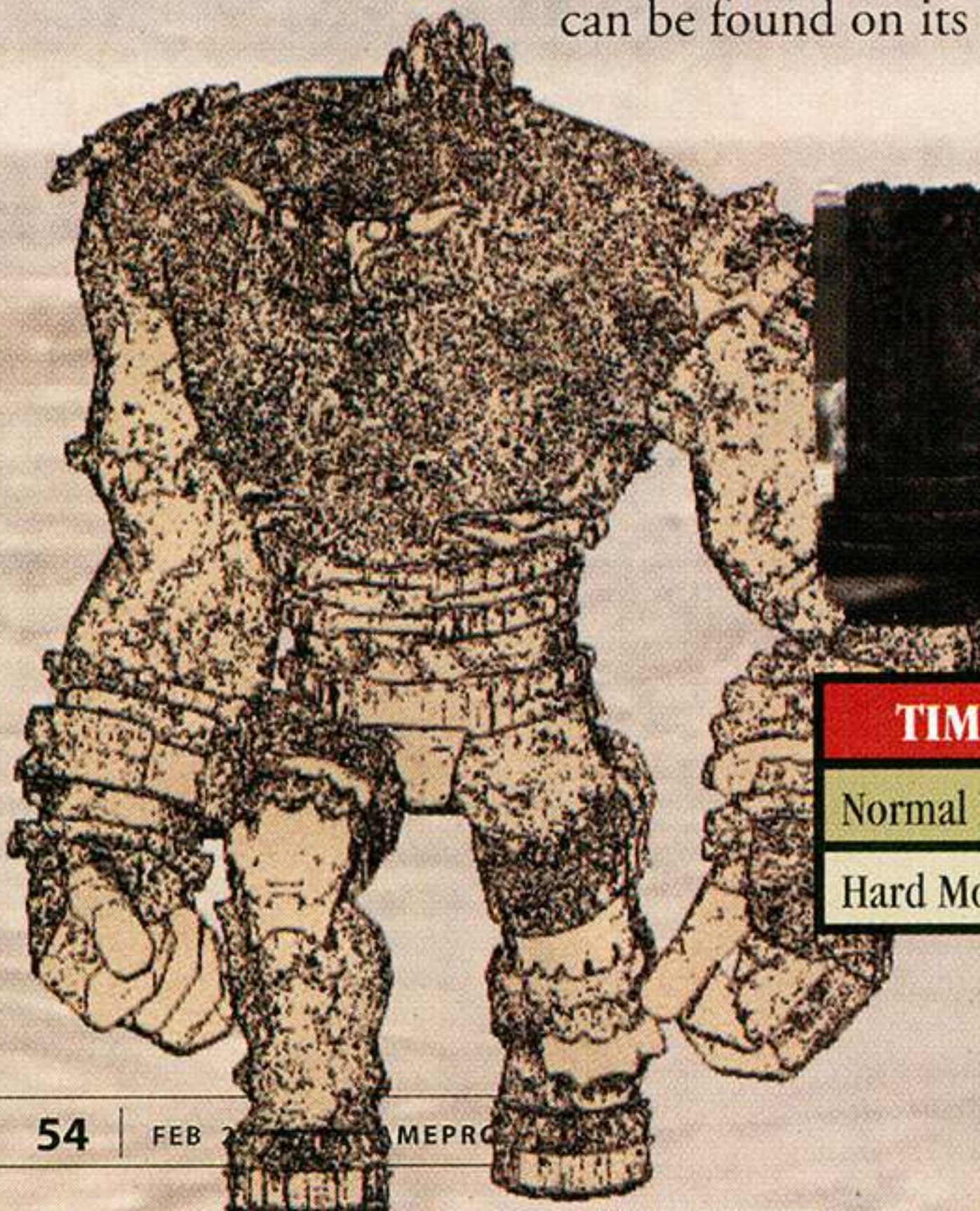


# COLOSSUS VI

This is one of the tougher Colossi to beat in Time Attack Mode, as the time limit is really short (especially in Normal Mode). As soon as the battle begins, run, climb and leap your way to the hiding area at the back of the arena. Make sure you are out of its view but whistle so it knows you are there. If you stay in sight, it may try and attack you versus lowering its head to get a look—that's precious seconds you can't afford. The order in which you should attack the markers is head first, and then drop and grab your way down to the one on the back. In Hard Mode, an additional marker can be found on its left hand.



TIME REQUIREMENTS	
Normal Mode	3:30:00
Hard Mode	6:30:00

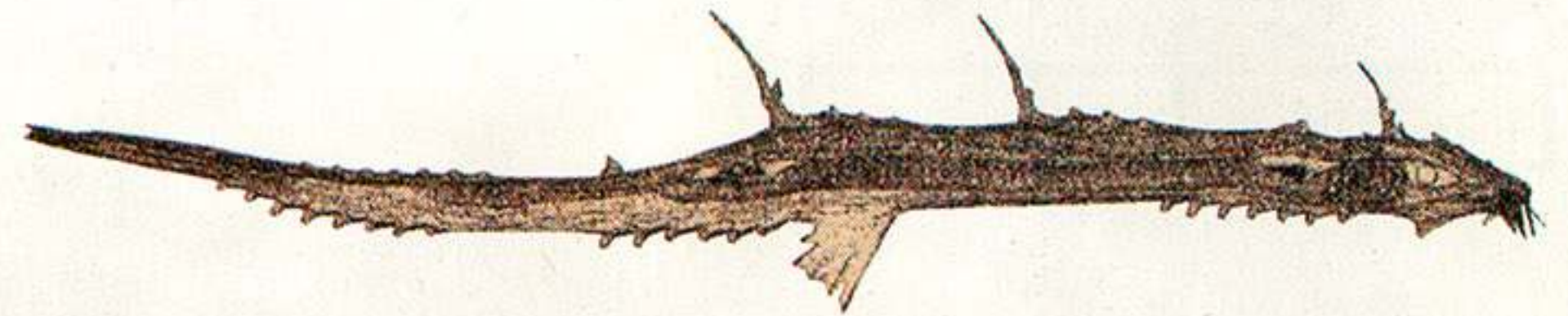


# COLOSSUS VII

You should have plenty of time to beat Colossus VII. The key is to avoid becoming overzealous, methodically making your way along Colossus VII's back to its four markers. A good way of saving some seconds is to execute the Downward Stab maneuver at each spine marker to take out each quickly. While this is a risky proposition, as if you miss you will most likely slip off into the water, but it saves you loads of time if pulled off correctly. To execute this secret move, press **△** to jump, then quickly hold **R1** + **R2** to lunge and stab at the same time.



TIME REQUIREMENTS	
Normal Mode	12:00:00
Hard Mode	8:00:00



# COLOSSUS VIII

The trick to quickly getting Colossus VIII on its back is to continually whistle the moment the battle begins, which lures it up onto the coliseum wall. Forget about taking the stairs to get down to the ground floor. Instead, run to the right, locate the gaping hole in the wall and drop down. You take some damage, but quickly reach ground where you can get a solid bead on the beast's legs. An alternate strategy that works well is to lure Colossus VIII so that its underbelly is exposed in one of the barred windows, then shoot three arrows into its soft flesh, which also causes it to tumble to the ground.



TIME REQUIREMENTS	
Normal Mode	8:00:00
Hard Mode	7:30:00



*Check out strategies for the rest of the Colossus battles in Time Attack Mode at [bradygames.com/colossus](http://bradygames.com/colossus)*



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## Full Auto

Xbox 360

If the Project Gotham Racings and Gran Turismos of the world leave you wishing for a bit more “bang” for your buck, get ready for the drive of your life. Sega is aiming to tear up the road in its upcoming game Full Auto, which adds some unique twists to the racing genre—namely, things like machine guns, rocket launchers, shotguns, and land mines.

### Twisted Metal

You can select from a stable of 21 vehicles, including some old-fashioned muscle models and more elaborate rides like a limousine. Each car can also be equipped with two weapons and five preset armament combinations, so you’ll have a surprising amount of freedom in fine-tuning your rolling death machine.

With so much firepower strapped to your car, it’s sometimes hard to remember that you’re actually taking part in races and not just reducing your opponents to mangled metal. Thankfully, Full Auto sports over 80 events that span 18 tracks and environments, including some jaw-dropping cityscapes where nearly every single thing can be blown up or destroyed.

### Beautiful Destruction

All the destruction, however, can be both a blessing and a curse. Debris can hinder an opponent in front of or behind you, but if you’re not careful, it can also turn your car into a smoldering wreck. To keep you in one piece, you can tap in to a special power called Unwreck that essentially enables you to rewind time to a point before a collision or wreck. The better you drive, the more your Unwreck meter will regenerate. It’s a simple system that’s a blast to use.

While Full Auto still needs some loving care when it comes to fine-tuning, the framework of what could be an extremely enjoyable racing title seems to be in place. With a tentatively scheduled plan to support up to eight players online, you’re bound to find something to blow up or fill with lead, regardless of whether you’re playing solo or taking on other players from around the world.—JohnnyK

■ **Hands-On** ■ Developer: Pseudo Interactive  
 ■ Publisher: Sega ■ Target release date: February





# Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 4 (working title)

PS2

Xbox 360

Xbox

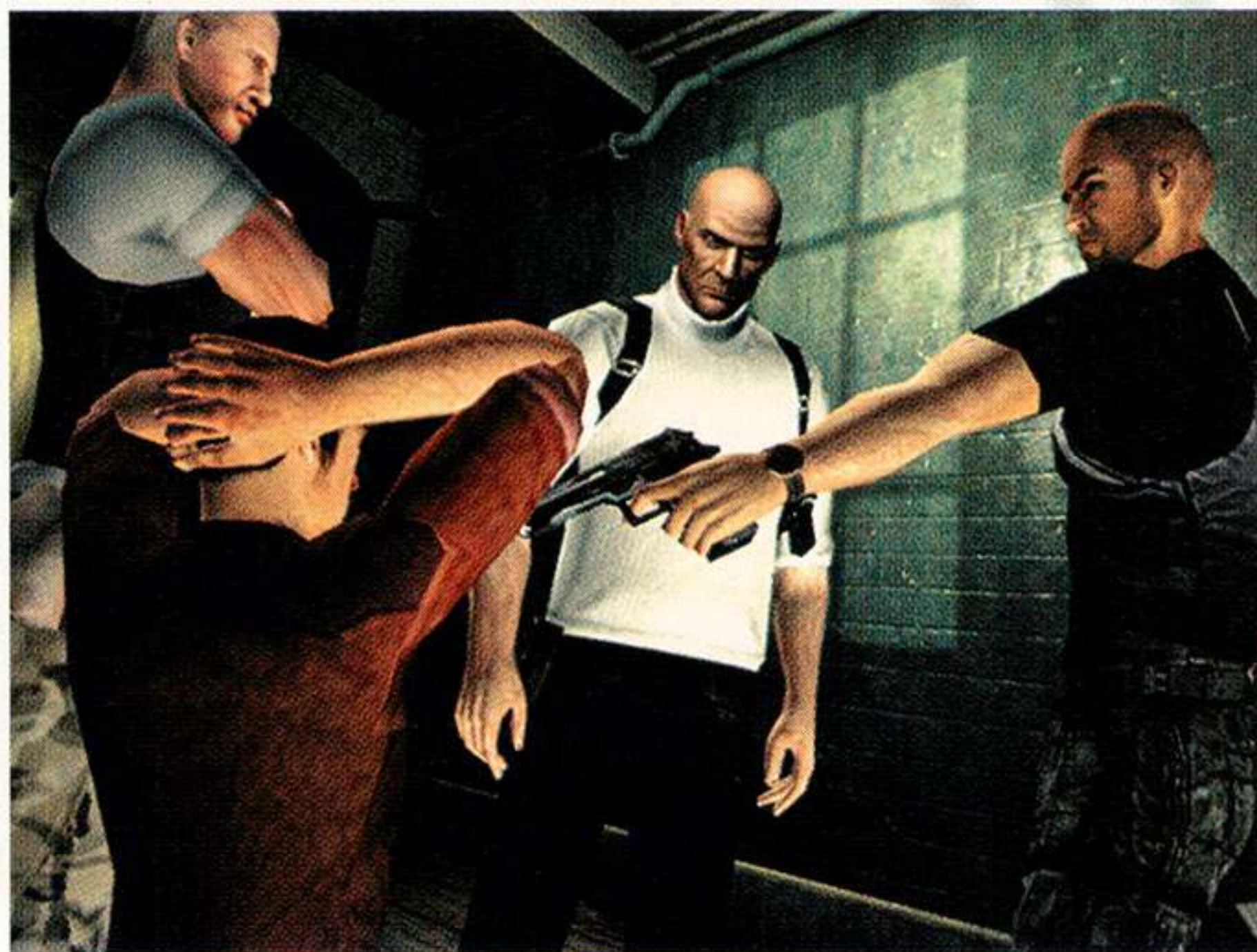
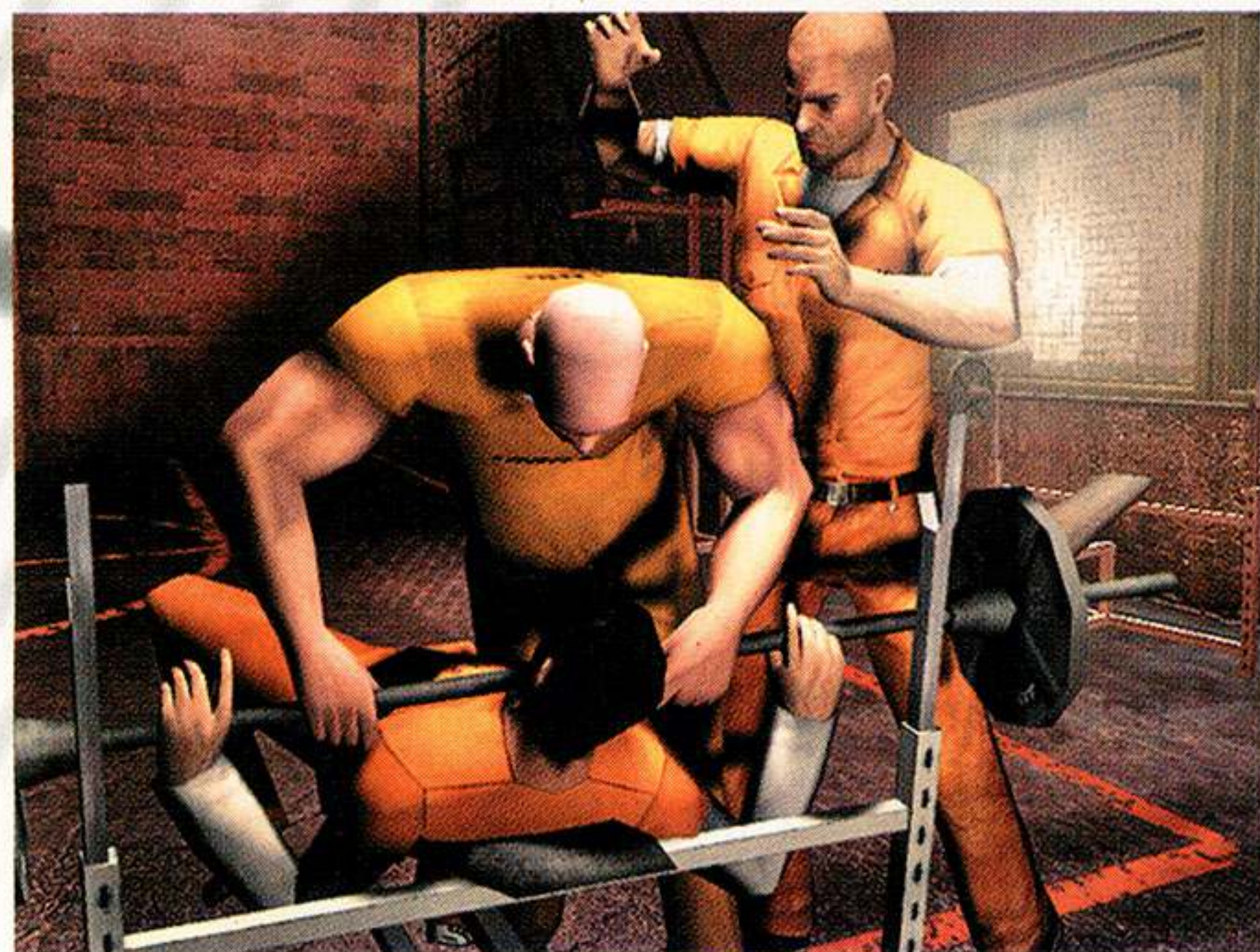
GameCube



The next Splinter Cell already? You better believe it. Ubisoft is being tight lipped about its new stealth legend, but rest assured that the new game will offer more than just the usual shadowy adventure. Plus, a brand-new online component is expected, too.

Here's what we know: Sam Fisher is pissed off. His life is now spent behind bars after his discharge from Third Echelon. Oh, and he also went on a bank-robbing spree. Compelling lead in? Check. Anticipated stealth action? Check. March release? Well...we'll see. —*Four-Eyed Dragon*

■ **First Look** ■ Developer and publisher: Ubisoft ■ Target release date: March



## Teen Titans

PS2

Xbox

GameCube

Based on the sporadically appearing comic franchise of the same name, Teen Titans, which has recently enjoyed immense popularity due to its animated TV incarnation, is poised to port the look and feel of its 2D brethren to the 3D plane.

Artificial Mind & Movement (A2M) has painstakingly re-created the game from the ground up and included an amazing amount of signature characters and locations from the animated series. Players can assume the roles of the primary Teen Titan members, including Robin, Starfire, Cyborg, Beast Boy, and Raven. Each character has their own unique traits and abilities, which helps the team navigate certain environmental hazards and defeat specific foes, such as Beast Boy's morphing ability or Cyborg's strength, more easily. In addition, players can switch between Titan members on the fly to employ tag-team moves and combos. Furthermore, Teen Titans supports simultaneous four-player co-op play through 15 missions.

While the story mode adds an unwritten chapter to the Teen Titans continuum, the game's Arena mode lets players compete in Power Stone-style matches with 24 unlockable characters in 13 arenas.

Our early hands-on PS2 build featured three distinct levels, where we faced off against supervillain bosses Gizmo, Mammoth, and Mumbo. The in-game graphics seemed a little muddled, and the camera had a few problems keeping the entire Teen Titans team visible onscreen, but the gameplay looked solid. Plus, Teen Titans may be the only outlet for fans due to the rumored cancellation of the animated series. —*Rice Burner*

■ **Hands-On** ■ Developer: Artificial Mind & Movement (A2M)  
■ Publisher: Majesco ■ Target release date: February



GAMEPRO.COM FOR THE LATEST MEDIA UPDATES ON TEEN TITANS.



# Jaws Unleashed

PS2

Xbox

The great white shark, popularized by the *Jaws* movie franchise, is arguably mankind's most feared predator, and *Jaws Unleashed* gives players the opportunity

to assume the role of this ferocious creature to wreak havoc on Amity Island. Years

have passed since the movie ended, and Amity Island has enjoyed a period of major industrial and residential development, which has unfortunately encroached on *Jaws*' hunting territory. After a fatal incident involving the death of a powerful industrialist's son, the island goes to war against *Jaws*; however, the great white shark knows how to fight back.

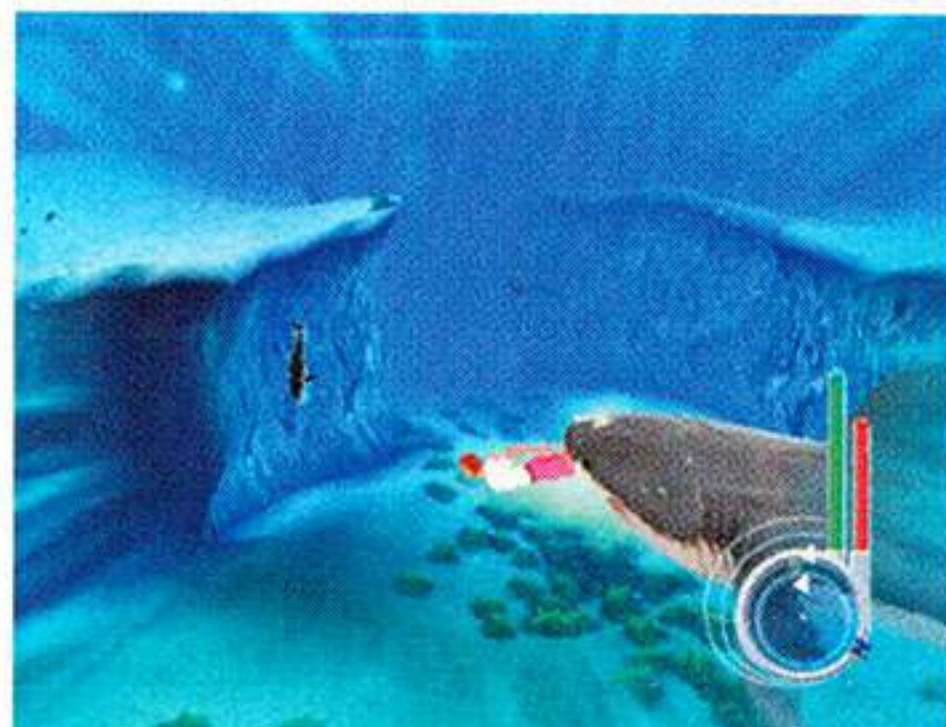
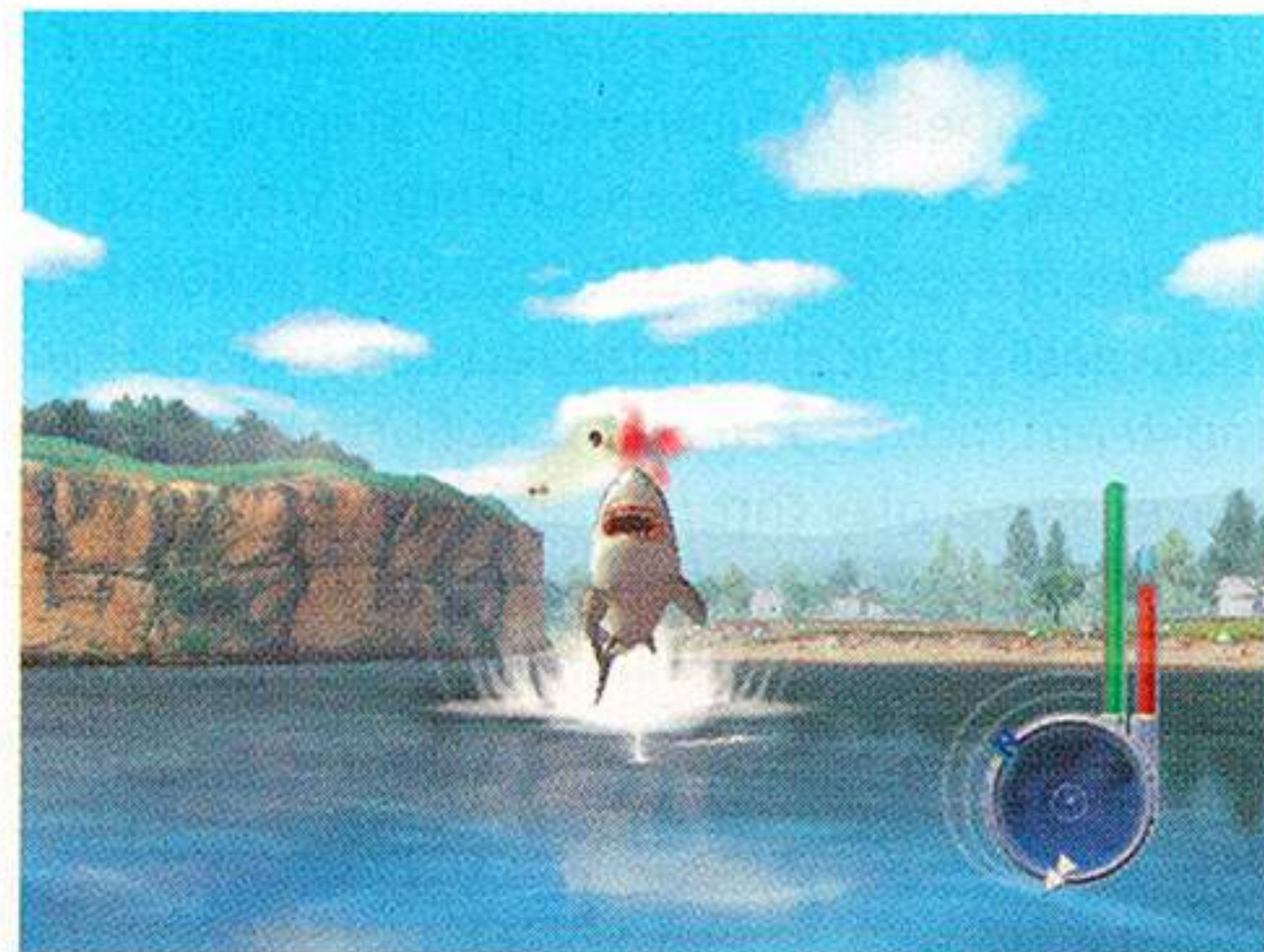
The hands-on builds featured a single level of free-roaming, blood-letting yumminess. *Jaws*

has a bona fide arsenal of abilities to bite, gnaw, and mangle his prey, including underwater attacks, surface attacks, tail swipes, head butts, and awesome aerial maneuvers. Holding the Bite button and rotating the Left Thumbstick allows *Jaws* to literally rend his prey into bite-sized morsels. Potential food can be shred into 12 various delectable pieces.

While killing prey, tearing it into pieces, and eating the pieces is sadistically thrilling, hunting and eating is vital for *Jaws*' survival. The game engine requires *Jaws* to eat in order to stave off hunger and regenerate health from damage. *Unleashed*'s physics engine is surprisingly well done. Carcasses slowly float to the surface, wounded prey leaves realistic blood trails in the water, and sea creatures react like their corporeal versions—fish scatter in schools, seals are skittish, and other sharks try to steal your wounded meals.

Comparing the two builds yields the typical console results: The PS2 version offers a superior control layout, but the Xbox incarnation features outstanding graphics. Whichever version you plan to pick up, *Jaws Unleashed* is expected to rock your world.—*Rice Burner*

- Hands-On
- Developer: Appaloosa Interactive
- Publisher: Majesco
- Target release date: January



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## TimeShift

Xbox 360

Xbox

Set in the near future, TimeShift lets you assume the role of retired Air Force colonel Albert Swift, a test subject for a Quantum time control project. While preparing for his first jump, Swift is accidentally transported to the 1900s when the Quantum laboratory is invaded by a masked man. Upon his return to his original time era, Swift finds a changed world that he doesn't recognize. Swift's knowledge of Quantum jumping and his native reality makes him an enemy of the state, which is headed by the mysterious stranger, and it falls to Swift to set the time continuum right.

While many first-person shooters have gone the route of increased physics and enhanced graphics, TimeShift does both, but it also brings an entirely new time-control element to the table. This feature lets you have god-like powers without resorting to god-mode cheats. You can rewind, slow down, or stop time at any opportunity to avoid munitions, get the drop on enemies, or flank kill zones. While you may think it's just a minor gameplay gimmick like the time controls in *Blinx* or *Prince of Persia*, you're sorely mistaken. TimeShift's difficulty is set so high that you must master the time controls to make any progress. Also, controlling time doesn't make you invulnerable. If you're shot and then you rewind time, you're still shot—the bullet will move backward out of your body, but the bullet wound will not close up.

With the ability to equip three weapons simultaneously, a total of nine destructive weapons that feature secondary fire options, and 35 free-roaming combat missions taking place in alternate-reality time periods, TimeShift may be a formidable addition to the FPS category this year.

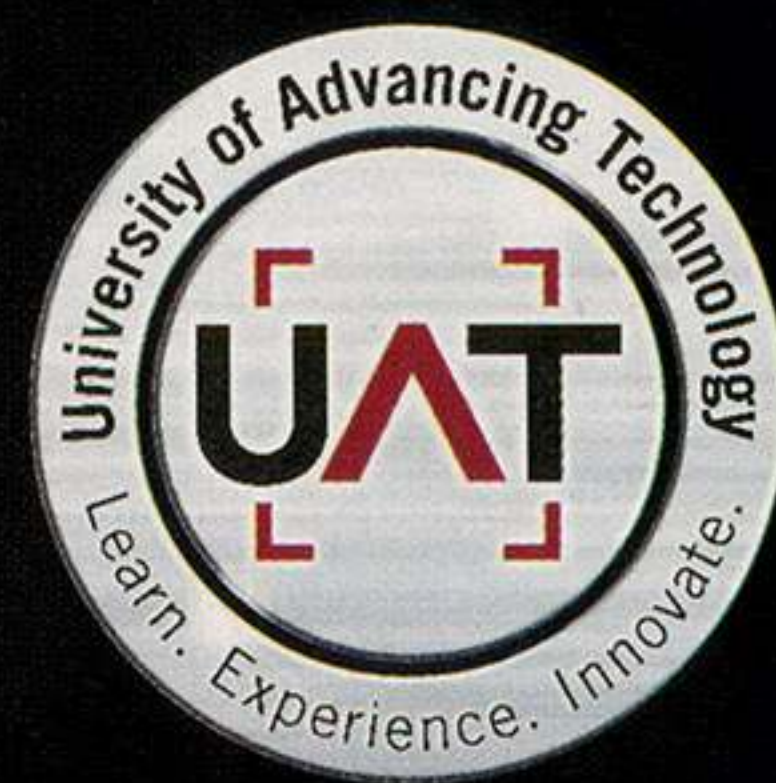
—Rice Burner

### First Look

- Developer: Saber Interactive
- Publisher: Atari
- Target release date: March (Xbox 360); Summer 2006 (Xbox)



[ GEEKED AT BIRTH. ]



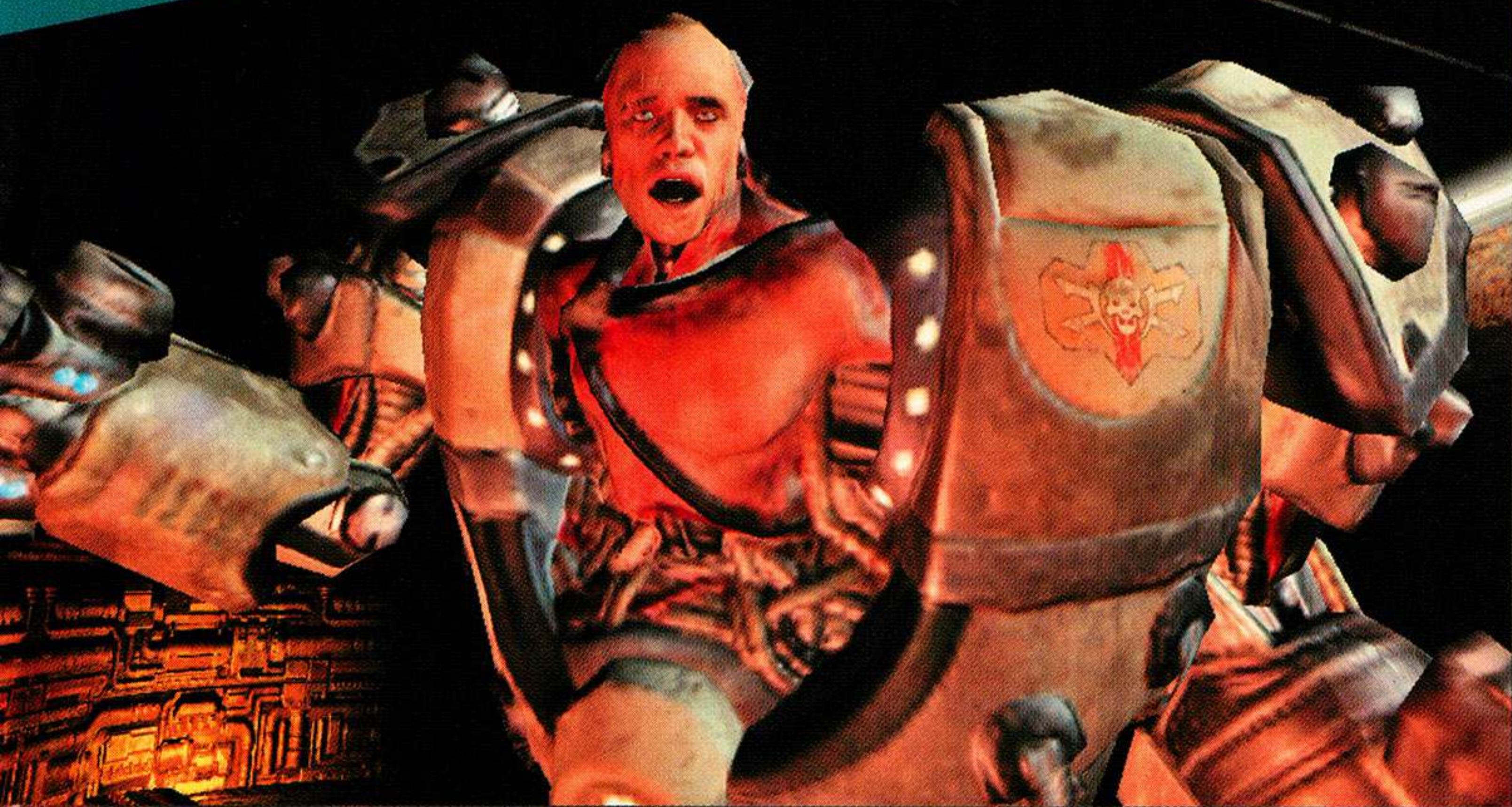
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The cannibalistic Strogg get a Frankenstein-sized face lift in Quake 4 thanks to the Doom 3 engine.



**PROTIP:** The acid vomit from these partially Stroggified zombies is unbelievably damaging, so terminate them with extreme prejudice.



**PROTIP:** Blast this Harvester with your chain gun to detonate any missiles it releases, then unleash a few rockets for the coup de grace.



**PROTIP:** You can fry the Gladiator's shield with the Lightning Gun, but it's easier to just shoot grenades underneath it.

## Quake 4

**Wretched excess reigns supreme in Quake 4, a gore-drenched Xbox 360 shooter that neatly achieves cult-classic status.**

Xbox 360



Hot on the heels of last summer's Doom 3, id Software has returned with a new bloodbath and a new development partner, Raven Software. Does Quake 4 deliver the goods? You bet it does... just don't expect anything earth shattering.

### The Gore War

From the grotesque opening cinema to the brain-splattered finale, there's never a doubt that Quake 4 is truly a next-gen title—there's just no way to squeeze these luscious visuals onto a PlayStation 2 or Xbox. Quake 4 showcases every mind-blowing special effect in the book, but the slightly herky-jerky frame rate shows that the developers were perhaps a bit too ambitious at times. Still, out of all of the Xbox 360 launch titles, Quake 4 is easily one of the flashiest.

Quake 4's rousing soundtrack summons the kind of square-jawed heroic overtones that are usually reserved for WWII games like Medal of Honor. The uninspiring assortment of stomps, clomps, and gurgles add little to the sonic environment, while the booming weapon sound effects mostly just grate on your nerves: Why does the machine gun sound like a couple of homeless guys whacking on a rusty trash can?

### Say It Loud: Strogg and Proud

Your adversaries are vicious alien cyborgs called the Strogg, and they prove to be far more resourceful than Doom 3's demonoid dummies. Though they're hardly deep thinkers, the Strogg are more fun to fight because

they're capable of launching crude ambushes and rudimentary flanking maneuvers. Quake 4's arsenal has received a nice overhaul, too. You'll snag the usual hyperblasters, rocket launchers, and railguns, but you can now upgrade your weapons with various modifications, such as chain lightning or homing capabilities. *Niiice.*

The key plot twist—though it's hardly a secret at this point—is that you get transformed into a vile enemy Strogg late in the game. But aside from that little surprise and a few quickie vehicle segments, Quake 4's straightforward gameplay is old school to a fault. If you were hoping for a more strategic, Halo-esque experience, you might be disappointed by the game's simple run-n-gun action. If your trigger finger is itchy, though, Quake 4 will *scratch scratch scratch* you 'til you bleed.

### 'Borg To Be Wild

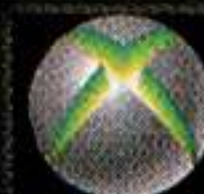
There's a lot to like about Quake 4: vivid (and violent) visuals, comfortable controls, and a surprisingly addictive multiplayer mode. And as a cool bonus, Activision even threw in a gorgeously high-definition version of Quake II. So what more do you want?

—Vicious Sid

**KEY MOMENT:** Watching helplessly as rusty buzz saws hack off your legs during the Stroggification process. Good times, good times.



You'll definitely want an HDTV to fully appreciate Quake 4's ultra high-resolution environments.



GRAPHICS . . . . . 4.5  
SOUND . . . . . 3.0  
CONTROL . . . . . 4.0

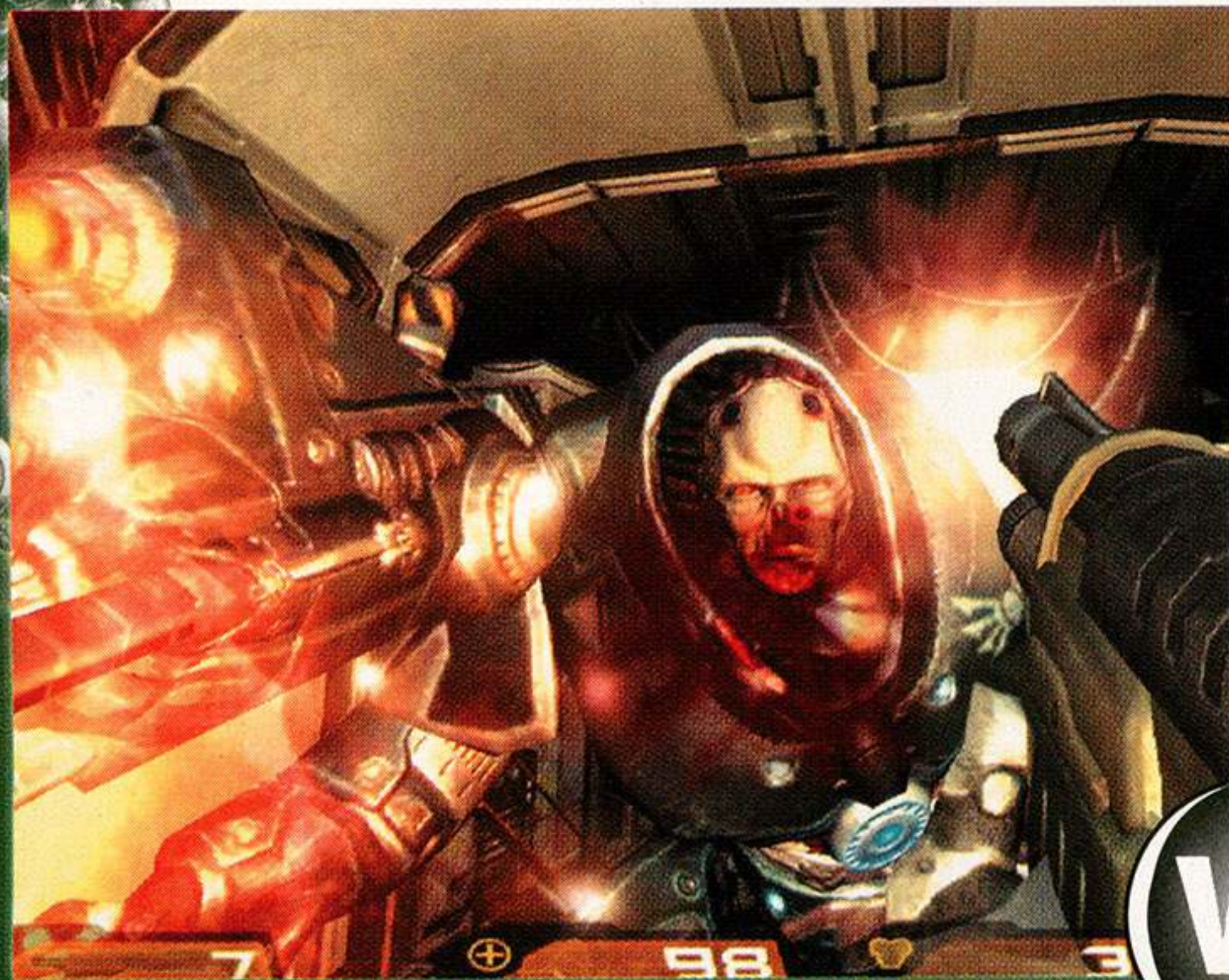
FUN FACTOR  
**4.0**

Developer: Raven Software ■ Publisher: Activision ■ \$59.99  
Available now ■ First-person shooter ■ 1 player; 8 online ■ ESRB: M



# Head-to-Head: Quake 4 vs. F.E.A.R.

It's winner-take-all as we pit these two ferocious first-person shooters against each other in the ultimate deathmatch. May the best shooter win! *By Vicious Sid*



Quake 4 has a winner's pedigree, but F.E.A.R. poses a stiff challenge.



F.E.A.R. has tons of buzz, but can it take down Quake 4?

VS.

Quake 4



F.E.A.R.

	<b>Quake 4</b> ■ Developer: Raven Software ■ Publisher: Activision ■ Available on the Xbox 360 and PC	<b>F.E.A.R.</b> ■ Developer: Monolith Studios ■ Publisher: Vivendi Universal Games ■ Available on the PC	<b>DECISION</b>
<b>Graphical Beauty</b>	The <b>excruciatingly detailed environments</b> in Quake 4 look like they were ripped straight from the set of <i>Aliens</i> .	The real-life locales look great, but the <b>flashy special effects</b> are unlike anything you've ever seen.	<b>Draw.</b> Both games look amazing but in completely different ways.
<b>Arsenal</b>	Shotguns, hyperblasters, and nailguns round out Quake 4's firepower. The weapon upgrades are cool, but otherwise <b>you've seen this stuff before</b> .	F.E.A.R.'s guns are <b>sleek, lethal death-dealers</b> . Favorites include the Penetrator and the 20mm Repeating Cannon.	<b>F.E.A.R.</b> Compared to F.E.A.R.'s, Quake 4's arsenal comes across as somewhat dated.
<b>Gore Factor</b>	Mission objectives are often putrid (e.g., overfeeding a massive larvae to the bursting point), and <b>still-twitching body parts</b> decorate the environments.	F.E.A.R.'s disturbingly realistic murder scenes, <b>blood-spurting gunshot wounds</b> , and messy dismemberments are the stuff of nightmares.	<b>Draw.</b> Both games are disgusting in their own delightful ways. Splat!
<b>Single-Player Campaign</b>	World War II overtones add some emotional heft, but this war is ultimately a <b>soulless shooting gallery</b> .	The creepy story has <b>more flair than many Hollywood flicks</b> . The enemy soldiers are scary-smart, too.	<b>F.E.A.R.</b> F.E.A.R.'s interactive horror tale is infinitely more engaging and suspenseful.
<b>Multiplayer Action</b>	<b>Traditional (and hardcore) all the way.</b> Quake 4's multiplayer comes straight from Quake III: Arena. That's both good and bad.	Multiplayer <b>plays like Counter-Strike with a dash of Halo</b> . The match types are diverse, too—Team Slow-mo is incredible.	<b>F.E.A.R.</b> Quake diehards will scoff, but F.E.A.R.'s multiplayer action is just more interesting.

## Overall Victor: F.E.A.R.

Quake 4 has guts, but F.E.A.R. takes the glory with a superior single-player experience, heart-stopping multiplayer gameplay, and an overall experience that's impossible to match. If you've got a choice, you should buy both...but if you're strapped for cash, stick with F.E.A.R.





Young Joanna Dark takes on the bad guys in one of the game's colorful missions.



**PROTIP:** The tireless cliché returns: Red barrels will explode if you shoot them.



**PROTIP:** Always reload your weapons whenever possible because you'll chew through ammunition faster than you think.



**PROTIP:** Whenever you're using a mounted gun, remember that you can remove the M60 from its housing.

# Perfect Dark Zero

After five years, Joanna Dark returns to the gaming scene with a rock-solid prequel to Perfect Dark.

Xbox 360



Released in the wake of GoldenEye 007, Perfect Dark hit the N64 with plenty of momentum from its pedigree, wowing gamers with a clever mix of first-person shooting and challenging gameplay. Now, five years after the original game appeared, Joanna Dark gets a second adventure—a prequel—this time on the next-gen Xbox 360. And while Perfect Dark Zero is enjoyable at its core, the nagging distracting details and brief one-player adventure are big disappointments.

## Sub-Zero

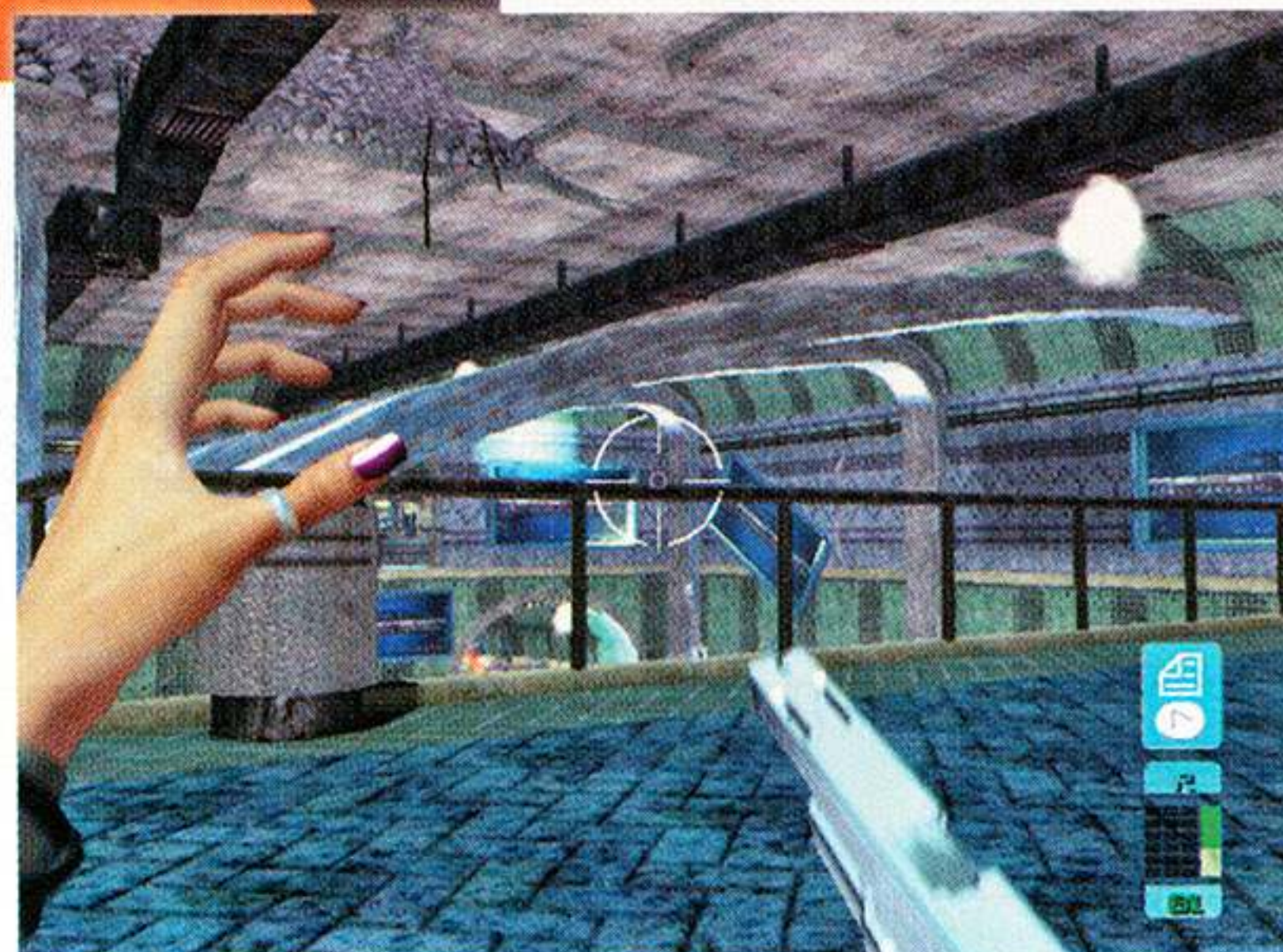
Zero takes place before the first Perfect Dark game, and it finds Joanna, a hotheaded bounty hunter, under the wing of her mentor and father, Jack. (It's quite odd how Jack Dark is supposed to be a bounty hunter extraordinaire, yet half the time Joanna is tasked with saving his life from enemies who can't even shoot straight.) That's all you really need to know



(or care about) for once the lead starts flying, it's strictly business as Joanna smashes her way through 13 levels set in various locales. To aid her through her missions, Joanna has one of the game's strongest suits at her disposal: awesome guns. Each firearm features multiple functions ranging from hand grenades to motion-detecting machine-gun tripods to other weapons of mass destruction. The game's Dolby Digital soundtrack effectively brings these helpful "tools" to life... just be sure to mute the 1970s cop-movie music score.

## "She's Got a Gun!"

The awesome arsenal of firepower, however, is no match for goofy aesthetic and other rough edges, and this is especially true of the enemy A.I. After foes are shot in the extremities, they rub their wounds and then spring back as good as new. Another sore spot is the clumsy and awkward rag-doll physics engine: Defeated enemies crumple up, contort into goofy positions, and behave more like human-sized pieces of Styrofoam. Furthermore, some bugs abound—especially the occasional ventilated character that flies wildly around the screen like a punctured balloon. Plus, characters are encased in a high-sheen substance that makes them look like plastic (plus their voice-overs make them sound like wimps). These annoyances detract from an otherwise enjoyable firefight.



**PROTIP:** In the Subway level, use the Falcon's secondary function to push the jumpy guards over the edge so that they start shooting each other.

## Zero Sum Total

Playwise, the online deathmatches offer plenty of replay value, but the core solo missions are easy to overcome in a couple of sittings and offer little replay value. Overall, Perfect Dark Zero is a solid first-person shooter (it's certainly more user-friendly than Quake 4), but the nagging flaws push it a few notches below the greatness of its predecessor—not to mention justifying the \$50 price tag. Diehard fans of the first game will probably give Zero a little more latitude.

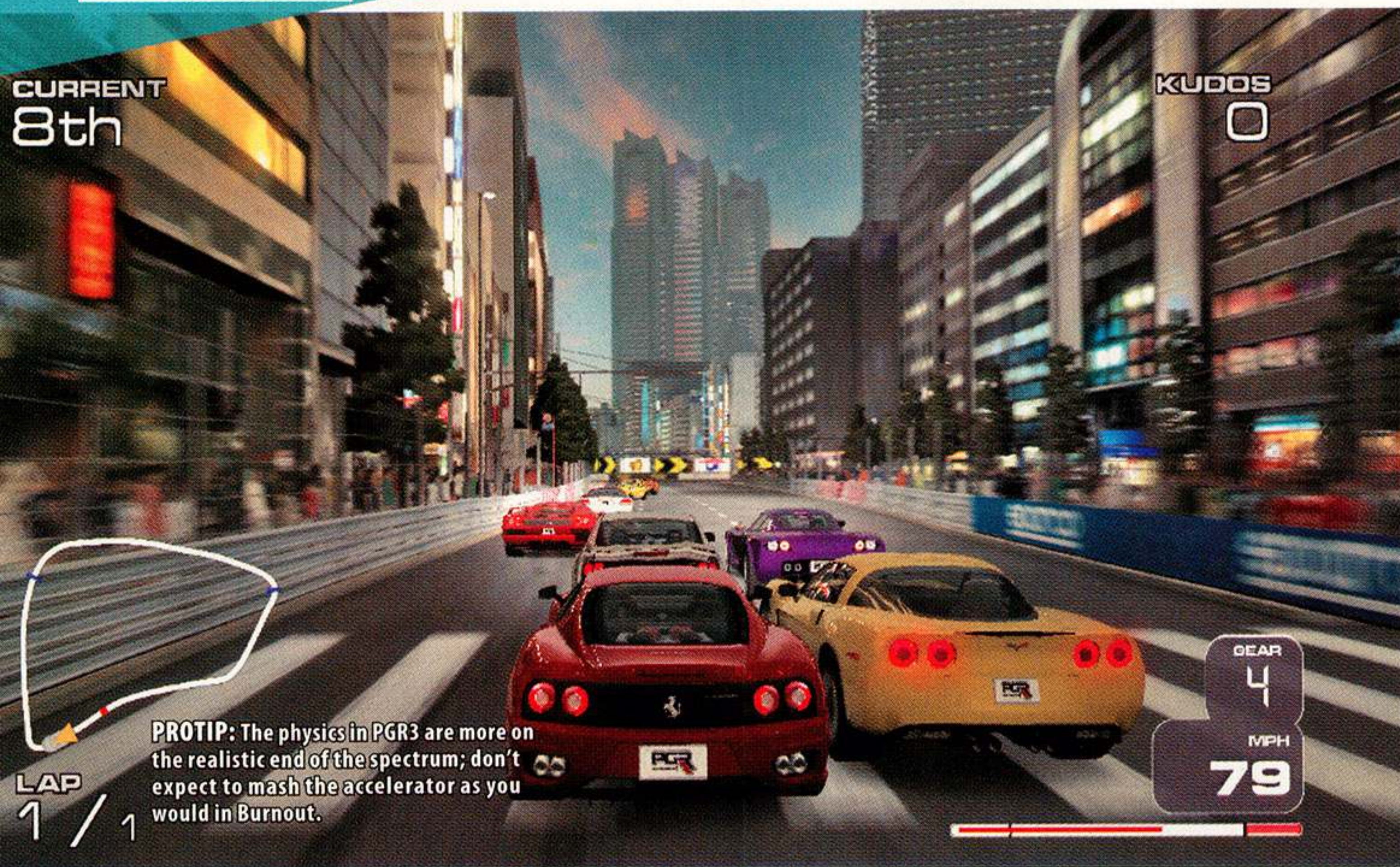
—Major Mike

**KEY MOMENT:** Getting a hold of a Magnum revolver and discovering why Dirty Harry calls it "the most powerful handgun in the world"

	GRAPHICS . . . . .	4.5	<b>FUN FACTOR</b> <b>4.0</b>
	SOUND . . . . .	4.0	
	CONTROL . . . . .	4.0	

Developer: Rare Publisher: Microsoft \$49.99; \$59.99 (Limited Edition) Available now Shooting 4 players; 32 online ESRB: M





**PROTIP:** You don't have to go lower than third gear in most turns.



**PROTIP:** This ain't Gran Turismo: Ramming into an opponent's car can make your car spin.



Walk around the garage to see your car in breathtaking detail.

# Project Gotham Racing 3

**Microsoft's premier racer doesn't redefine the racing genre, but it sure heralds a visual revolution.**

If you've been keeping track of the Xbox 360, then the photorealistic screen shots of Project Gotham Racing 3 surely caught your eye. Racing junkies will rejoice that PGR3 mostly delivers on the visually decadent promises—but it's by no means a timeless classic.

## Leaving Gran Turismo in the Dust

Forza Motorsport on the Xbox set the standards high for racing-game graphics, but PGR3 just raised the bar. Car models are simply breathtaking; each car has the interior dash faithfully modeled, complete with the rear-view mirrors, working gauges, and driver's hand gripping the steering and shifting gears. Exterior environments seem lifelike, especially at high speeds, putting the visuals of Ridge Racer 6 to shame. Cross the Brooklyn Bridge in PGR3's rendition of New York, and you'll easily forget that those are polygonal girders passing you by. While decidedly next-gen in its graphical execution, PGR3 does stop short of aesthetic perfection. With

only five levels offered (New York, London, Tokyo, Las Vegas, and Nürburgring), the scenery gets old sooner than you'd like—especially when all but one of the stages are set in a metropolitan environment.

## Refreshing, Not Redefining

The fundamentals remain the same for the third installment, but the game has been noticeably scaled to cater to both veteran and neophyte drivers. From the onset, you can purchase a respectable super car, and the game is extremely adjustable based on your racing preferences. Hate straight-up racing as opposed to Kudos-centered (that's PGR's way of saying combo points) races? Then set the difficulty in Street Races to Easy. In fact, it seems almost too easy to burn through the single-player mode, which takes about 15 hours. Maybe that's not such a bad thing, though—the load times drag, making it an annoyance when you need to restart the same race.

PGR3 continues the franchise's tradition of expansive online play, which will likely be the bulk of what most will play. There's no sign of lag online, and you'll quickly be humbled by the range of skilled drivers on the digital tarmac.



**PROTIP:** Play in the cockpit to get the most out of your experience.

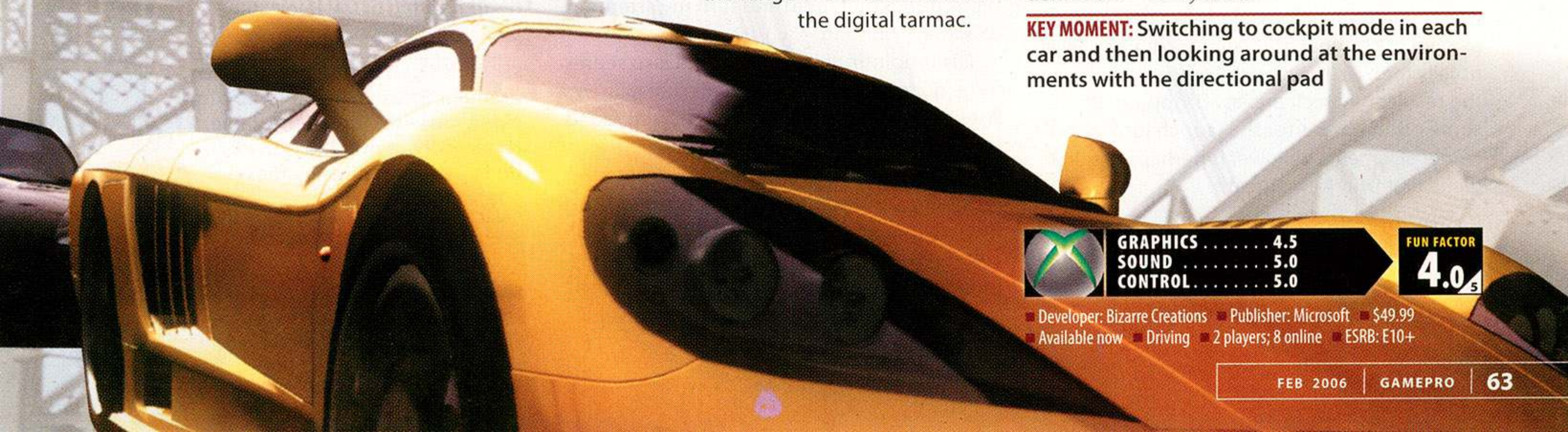
## Singing to a Different Tune

Few racing games care for a respectable soundtrack, yet one of the highlights in PGR3 is that you're not subjected to grating generic rock (Forza) or unnerving elevator music (Gran Turismo 4). Radio stations range from classical to hip-hop to electronica to even Bhangra and Japanese pop. Top it off with the satisfying screams and hums from engine revs, and you have one of the best audio experiences in any racing game.

Is Project Gotham Racing 3 the best racing game ever? Not quite, but it's well worth owning, even if it's just to immerse yourself in the cockpit of a Ferrari lavishly rendered in high definition.—*Funky Zealot*

**KEY MOMENT:** Switching to cockpit mode in each car and then looking around at the environments with the directional pad

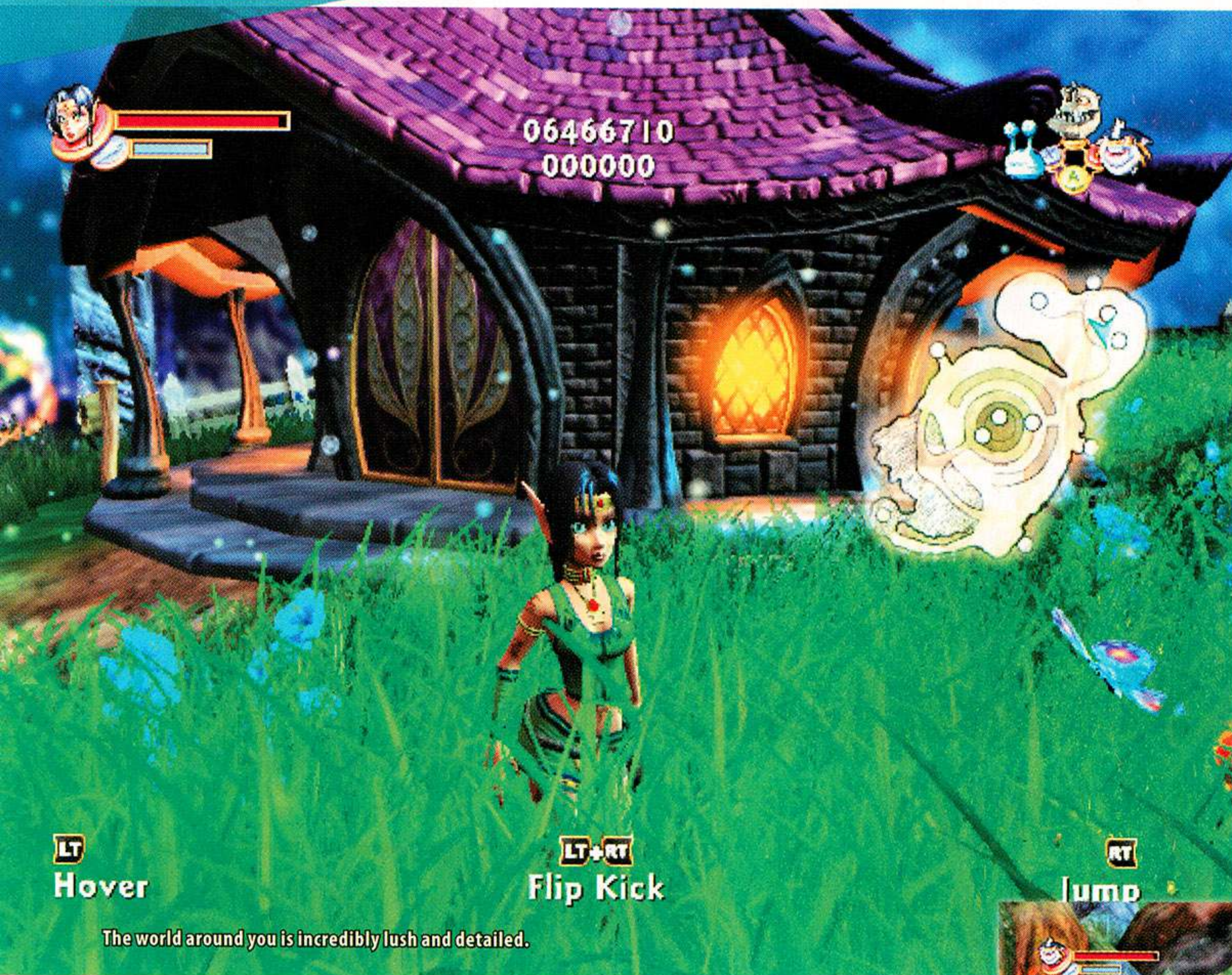
Xbox 360



X	GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR	4.0
	SOUND	5.0		
	CONTROL	5.0		

Developer: Bizarre Creations Publisher: Microsoft \$49.99 Available now Driving 2 players; 8 online ESRB: E10+





The world around you is incredibly lush and detailed.



**PROTIP:** While slow, Major Ruin can ram into enemies if you charge up his special attack.



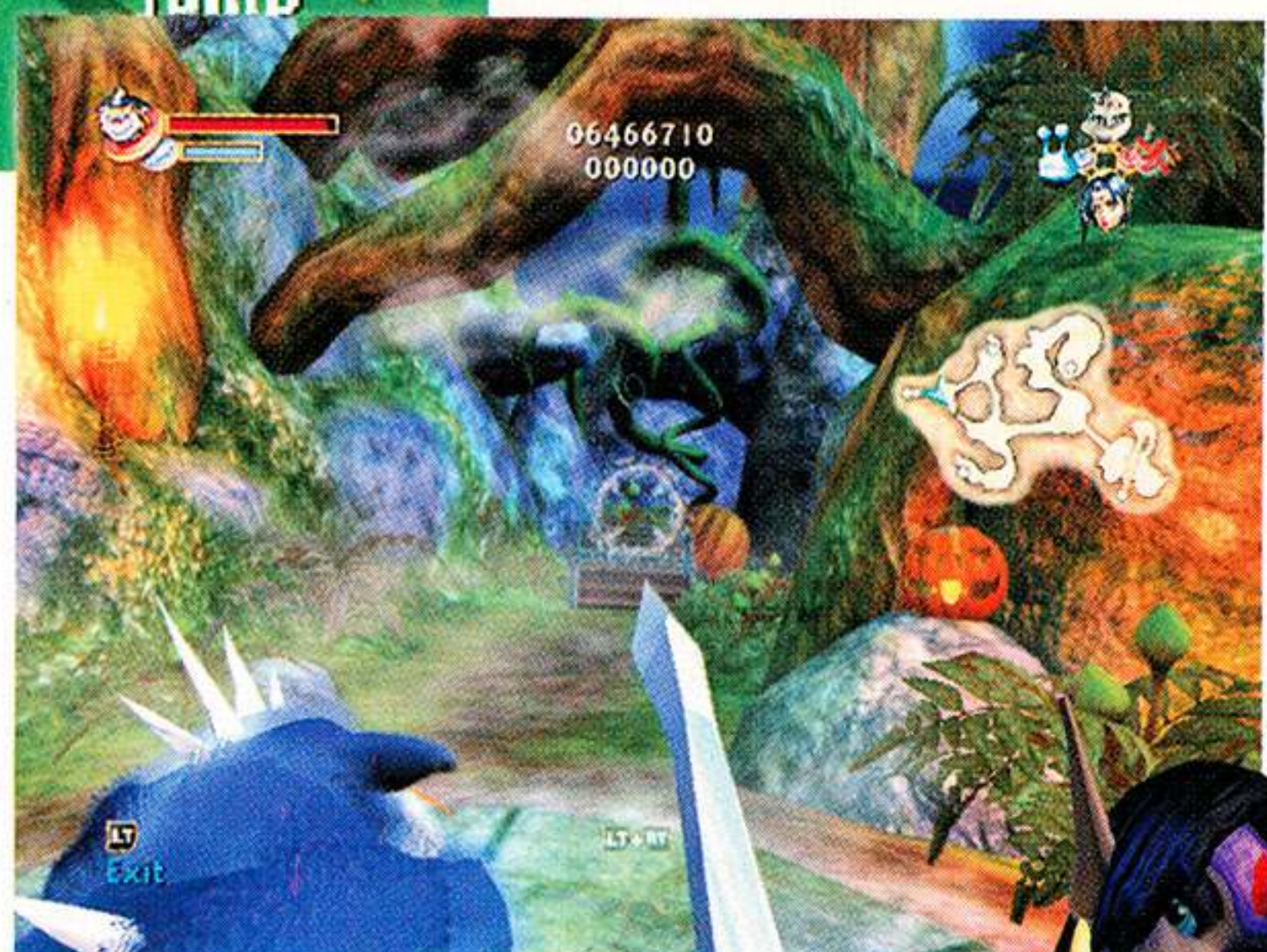
**PROTIP:** Rubble is a handy ally, but he must use his own body parts as projectiles.



**PROTIP:** Using water-based allies on the ground will usually prove to be disastrous.

# Kameo: Elements of Power

**Kameo: Elements of Power** makes its debut on the Xbox 360 after years in the making, yet it proves to ultimately be a disappointment of major proportions.



**PROTIP:** Chilla's icicle spears are handy for hitting distant enemies and switches.

Xbox 360



It's been a long, hard road for the release of *Kameo: Elements of Power*. Originally slated for the GameCube, then shuffled to the Xbox, and finally to the Xbox 360, Rare's much-hyped adventure is finally here and ready to play. But unlike a fine wine, this game hasn't gotten better with time.

## Eye Candy at Its Sweetest

*Kameo: Elements of Power* has a lot going for it. For one, it has some of the best visuals you'll see in any Xbox 360 launch title. Environments and character models are incredibly detailed and well animated, lending the game a tremendous amount of personality. The more expansive levels usually throw in hundreds of onscreen enemies, the results of which are jaw dropping. While some other games for the launch look good, *Kameo: Elements of Power* is perhaps the first game that truly looks great.

## Beauty and the Beasts

As you play through the game, *Kameo* gains the ability to call on a number of special element-based animals, such as the icicle-throwing Chilla (the gorilla) and the fire-breathing Ash (the

dragon). Each animal has its own unique attacks and powers (as well as an embarrassing and juvenile name); it's just a shame that most of them prove useful only when solving puzzles. The game's combat engine is woefully repetitive and unresponsive at times, turning even routine enemy encounters into a frustrating mess. Granted, the puzzle solving is pretty spot on, but I literally cringed whenever I had to break out of that mold and turn my attention to actually fighting.

Disappointingly, the story line also seems to be quite hit and miss. It seems that *Kameo*'s sister has awakened an evil Troll king, but good luck getting that from the game's inane and sometimes downright confusing cut-scenes, including perhaps the worst "game over" sequence ever put in a game. With so much of *Elements of Power* looking absolutely stunning, it's a crying shame that the parts of the game that actually tell the story seem so amateurish and rushed.

Just like a supermodel, *Kameo: Elements of Power* is all about outward appearances. The visuals are stunning, but the weak and repetitive gameplay, vapid cut-scenes, and groan-inducing attempts at humor make this game perhaps one of the most disappointing of the Xbox 360 launch.—JohnnyK

**KEY MOMENT:** Listening to the melodramatic British narrator, who provides you with clues in the game, repeatedly saying the horrendously cheesy animal names—over and over again



GRAPHICS . . . . . 5.0  
SOUND . . . . . 3.5  
CONTROL . . . . . 3.5

FUN FACTOR  
**3.0**

Developer: Rare Publisher: Microsoft \$49.99  
Available now Action/adventure 2 players ESRB: T



**PROTIP:** When playing as King Kong, always try to go into a raging frenzy before fighting by rapidly pressing Y to become an even stronger juggernaut.



**PROTIP:** Some nasty confrontations can be avoided through distraction by killing a smaller animal and allowing the other attacking carnivores to feast on the remains.



**PROTIP:** Tap B often to listen to Jack's audio cues to gauge how much ammo remains in your weapon.

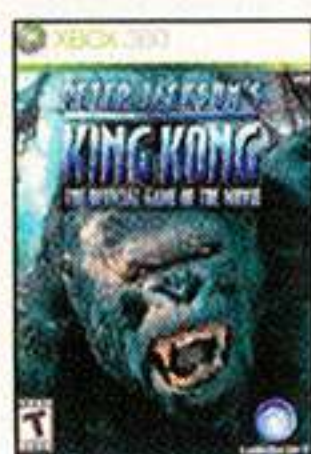


**PROTIP:** Remember to swap your empty or weak weapon for your ally's whenever you have the chance—you need it more than they do!

# Peter Jackson's King Kong

Ubisoft's killa gorilla beats the odds (and a lot of dinosaur ass) in this surprisingly entertaining movie-licensed Xbox 360 launch title.

Xbox 360



Despite the typical industry pitfalls associated with forgettable movie-licensed games and hurried system-launch titles, Peter Jackson's King Kong manages to deliver the goods with the unlikely blend of first-person shooting and third-person gorilla fighting in this entertaining and highly engaging jungle adventure. With plenty of challenging and violent monster battles set in gorgeous island environments, King Kong has little trouble proving he's still one top banana.

## Rumble in the Jungle

The story closely follows that of the film—with the addition of several extra plot twists and added scenarios—as you and your film crew land on a remote island infested with prehistoric predators, nasty natives, and one really big ape. The game maintains a highly cinematic atmosphere with outstanding voice acting and characters that feature realistic likenesses to the stars in the movie (including Naomi Watts

and wisecracker Jack Black), which creates an especially dramatic experience. This Hollywood presentation really shows in the absence of any HUD and in the adopting of the clean-screen approach of games like *The Getaway*, but the lack of any vitality or ammunition gauges also leads to a bit of confusion. The first-person action segments (which comprise the majority of the gameplay) benefit from exciting combat (with weapons ranging from shotguns to spears), a super-simple, stripped-down control scheme, and a nifty save-anywhere feature that helps mitigate some of the difficulty. But the real fun comes when you take on the role of the mighty Kong in brutal third-person combat against a variety of massive beasts.

## Going Bananas

Graphically, the Xbox 360 King Kong is way ahead of those on the other multiplatform versions, but it isn't quite the mind-blowing next-gen quality that some gamers might expect (just check out Jack's misshapen mitts). Still, the lush tropical environments, killer lighting effects, and excellent audio help maintain the immersive atmosphere throughout. Although the game shines overall, there are a few areas where minor issues seem to dampen the fun.



**PROTIP:** Thrown spears and bones can be reused in dire situations by simply picking them up or even pulling them out of wounded beasts.

On the technical side, some of the environments are extremely dark (making it too easy to get lost), while the frequent and frustratingly long load times are a true buzz kill. Controlling Jack's slothful movements can also be annoying, and the nebulous life and ammo measurements lead to lots of exasperating deaths. But the biggest gripe by far is the infinitesimal length of the game—we strolled through King Kong in a leisurely six hours. Sure, we had a blast during that time, but the adventure was over almost as soon as it began, leaving us with a crummy handful of unlockables. For shame!

## Long Live the King

But even with this list of gaming grievances, Peter Jackson's King Kong is still an excellent way to burn a few hours swinging through the secret jungles of death. Flawed though it may be, the chance to fight as a giant ape is something gamers have dreamed of since the 2D days of *Rampage*.—*Sir Bones*

**KEY MOMENT:** Mercilessly beating the crap out of a pack of vicious T-Rexes with your two giant, hairy, death-dealing hands!

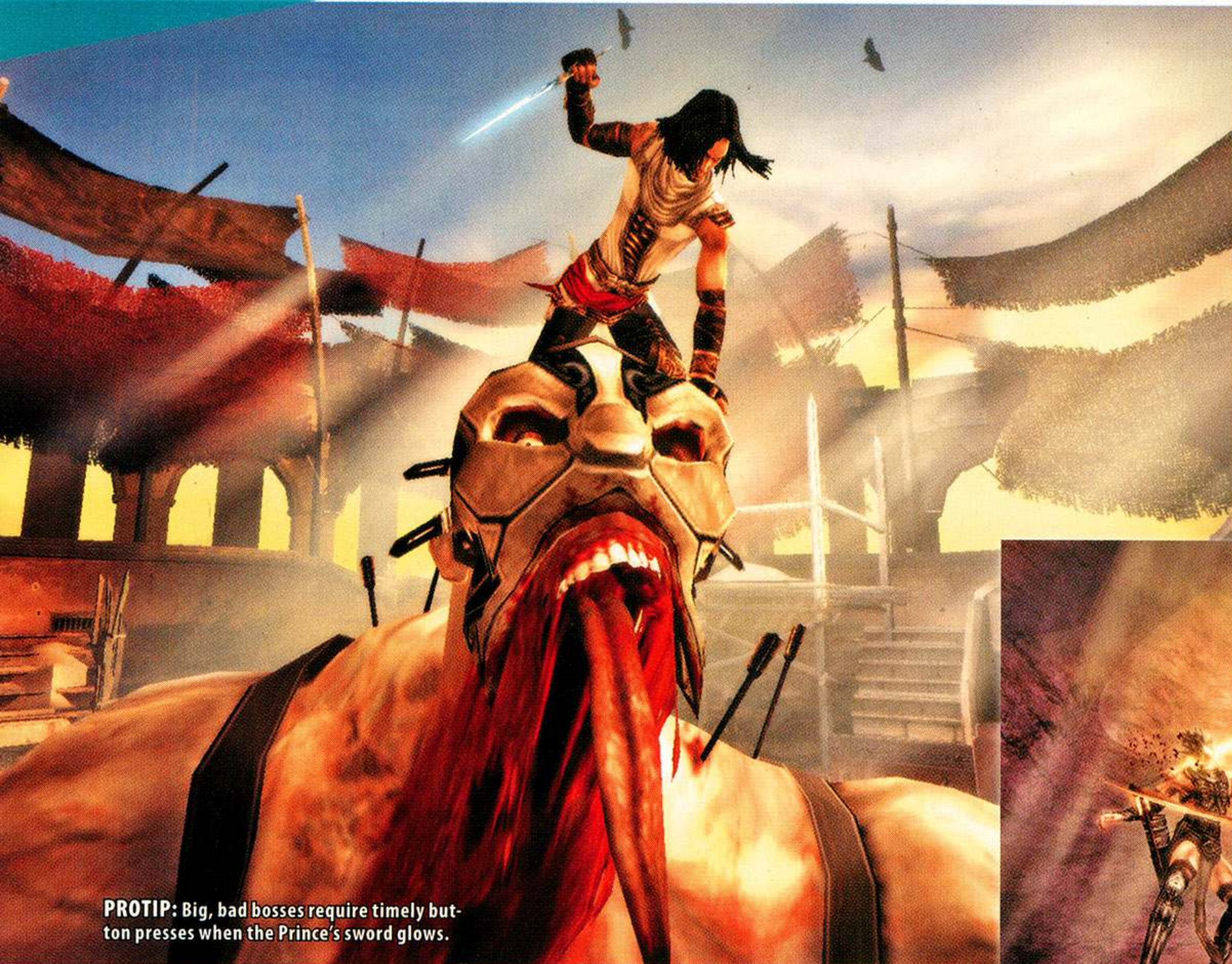


GRAPHICS ..... 4.5  
SOUND ..... 5.0  
CONTROL ..... 4.0

FUN FACTOR  
**4.0**

Developer and publisher: Ubisoft ■ \$59.99  
Available now ■ Action/adventure ■ 1 player  
ESRB: T ■ Also on the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube





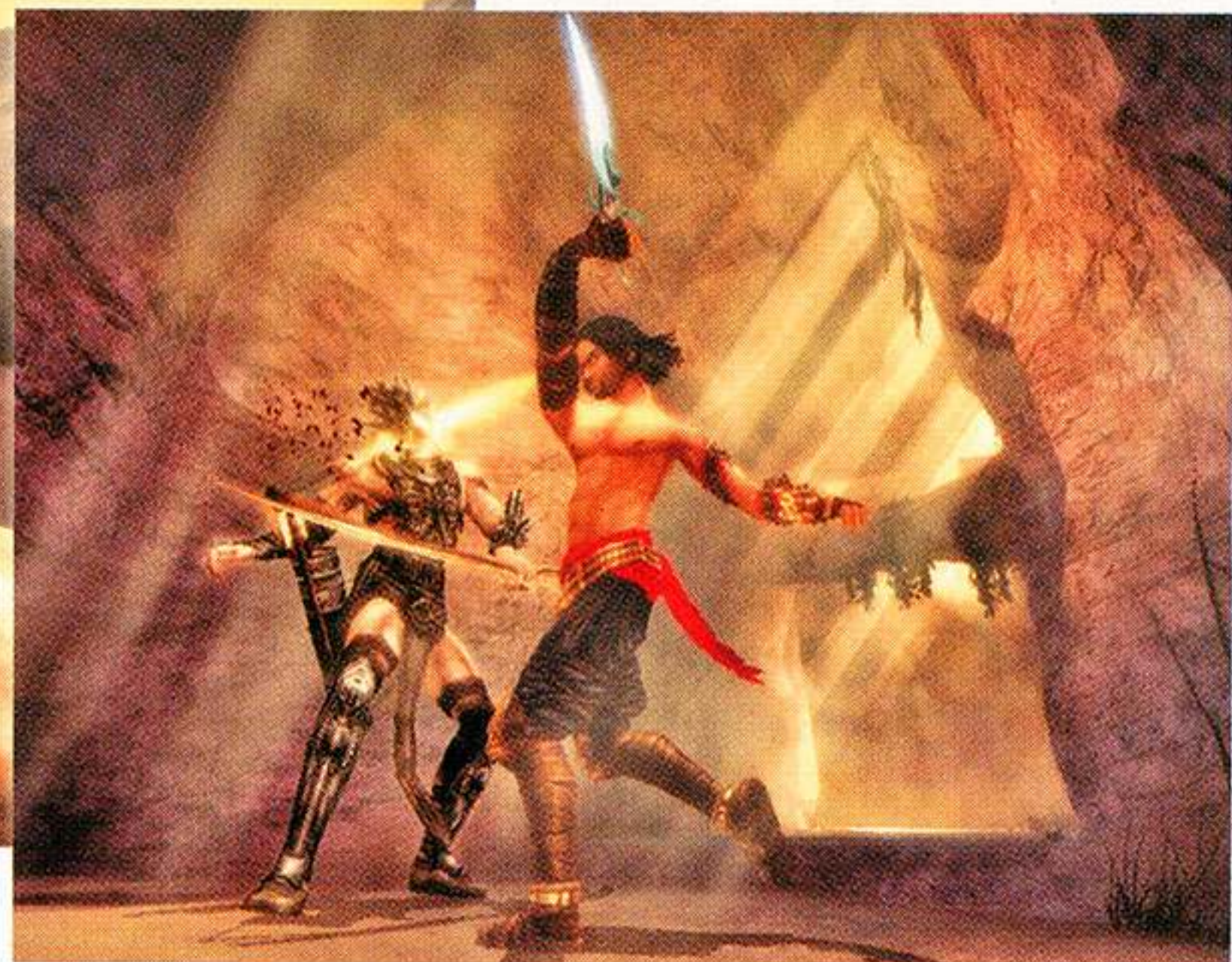
**PROTIP:** Big, bad bosses require timely button presses when the Prince's sword glows.



Bigger isn't always better.



A variety of stealth kills make sneaking steadily rewarding.



**PROTIP:** You don't have to learn every attack combo—a few trusty ones will get you by.

# Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones

The Prince turns dark for another stellar PlayStation 2 adventure.



not before her spirit frees the Prince—at a price; his contact with the Sands infects his body, thus periodically transforming our hero into the Dark Prince during the course of the game.

Though the dark/light aspect (à la Metroid Prime 2: Echoes) has been done before, the new Dark Prince sequences are actually quite fun. The Dark Prince's health constantly depletes and can be restored only with the Sands, forcing him to platform at light speed. Plus, the Dark Prince sports a chain for swinging and a trusty whip for slingin' baddies. Bonus.

### Simpler Is Better

Warrior Within upped the series' combat ante, but it tried a bit too hard with the whole time-altering aspect as traveling back and forth between the past and present was more of a pain than a pleasure. The gameplay in The Two Thrones feels more like that of Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time with mostly linear platforming puzzle sequences. But The Two Thrones features loads of tricky new platforming techniques, such as boosting off diagonal wall springs, swinging via a chain, and stabbing door-opening gears and climbable wall crevices, in addition to new and improved wall running and Prince of Persia-patented acrobatics.

### God of Persia

Taking a hint from Sony's slasher, Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones makes use of a God of War-style timing-based button-pressing system for stealth kills and boss battles. But unlike in God of War, you'll need to tap only one button when the Prince raises his blade for a glowing prestab. With precision, you'll delight in multistage cinematic kills, a technique that is also utilized on bulky bosses. And, for the first time, the Prince's acrobatics have been nicely integrated into boss battles.

The Prince still has more in common with the badass "Warrior Within," but his soft side does emerge now and then, especially when trying to convince Farah of his good intentions. The voice acting is downright hideous, but Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones wraps up in a tight PS2 package that is, quite possibly, the best game in the series.—*Mr. Marbles*

**KEY MOMENT:** Jumping on and then steering a giant Klompas boss, by the neck, through the narrow streets of Babylon



With two iterations in the books, Ubisoft decided to hold back on the next-generation Prince of Persia, thus opting to finish out the trilogy on current-gen consoles—smart move. Developer Ubisoft Montreal has consistently tapped the PS2 for maximum performance, and Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones is one more reason to dust off the ol' PS2 for a timely last ride.

### Home at Last

The Two Thrones picks up directly where last year's Warrior Within left off, complete with the Prince's newfangled bad attitude. After the Prince destroys the Sands of Time and rescues Kaileena from the Island of Time, the pair return home to Babylon to discover the city in ruins. On cue, Kaileena is captured, and the Prince's bonehead attempt to rescue her results in his capture, giving him a front-row seat to Kaileena's killing. Her death releases the Sands but

PS2	GRAPHICS . . . . .	4.0	EDITORS' CHOICE	FUN FACTOR <b>4.5</b>
	SOUND . . . . .	3.5		
	CONTROL . . . . .	4.5		

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal Publisher: Ubisoft \$49.99 Available now Action 1 player ESRB: M Also on the Xbox and GameCube





# Amped 3

Xbox 360



You have to give it to Amped 3; it certainly tries hard to impress. The premise is simple: Create a male or female boarder and deck them out in fly snowboarding gear, then travel around the world, taking part in small events to raise cash and your reputation as you play through a hackneyed and tired story-based campaign that throws every single winter-sports stereotype in the book straight in your face. It's an ambitious direction, and while some aspects of it work perfectly, others merely end up with a face full of snow.

## The World Is Your Playground

Amped 3's event-based gameplay should keep hardcore fans occupied for hours. The game offers a ton of events, each of which is imbued with some pretty witty humor. From score attacks to gate challenges, you're bound to find something to keep you busy. Thanks to the open-mountain vibe that's also present in Amped 3, you actually feel like you're part of a living, breathing world where anything is possible, whether you want to jam down



Amped 3's cut-scenes include some funny stop motion-animation sequences.



Retro-gaming influence rears its ugly head, for better or worse.

the snowy mountain or take off from a massive cliff for some serious air.

## Master of None

Where the game really starts to break down is in its less-than-spectacular controls. Simply put, the controls are awful. The first two Amped games suffered from this same Achilles' heel, and the third installment is no different with controls that are way too floaty to really give the game any sense of enjoyment. Couple this with a sometimes-finicky camera, and you have a formula for some truly frustrating gameplay.

Granted, there are some positives about the game. The unique and irreverent art style is appealing and innovative, as is the game's attempt at breaking free of the snowboards with hang-gliders, snowmobiles, and even sleds. But the nagging feeling that so much attention has been focused on the secondary features instead of the primary ones really kills the overall Amped 3 experience.—JohnnyK



PROTIP: While in the air, mix up your grabs and flips to score the most points.

KEY MOMENT: Realizing that no matter how hard the game tries to be "hip" or "cool," it can't manage to scrape enough memorable moments together to be worth it.



GRAPHICS ..... 4.0  
SOUND ..... 4.0  
CONTROL ..... 2.5

FUN FACTOR  
3.0

Developer and publisher: 2K Sports ■ \$59.99  
Available now ■ Winter sports ■ 1 player ■ ESRB: T

# Ridge Racer 6

Xbox 360



When the Ridge Racer series emerged on home consoles, it established itself as one of the leading arcade-styled racers. Fast forward a couple generations, and unfortunately, it's changed so little over the years that other hot rods have long since caught up.

## The Xbox 180

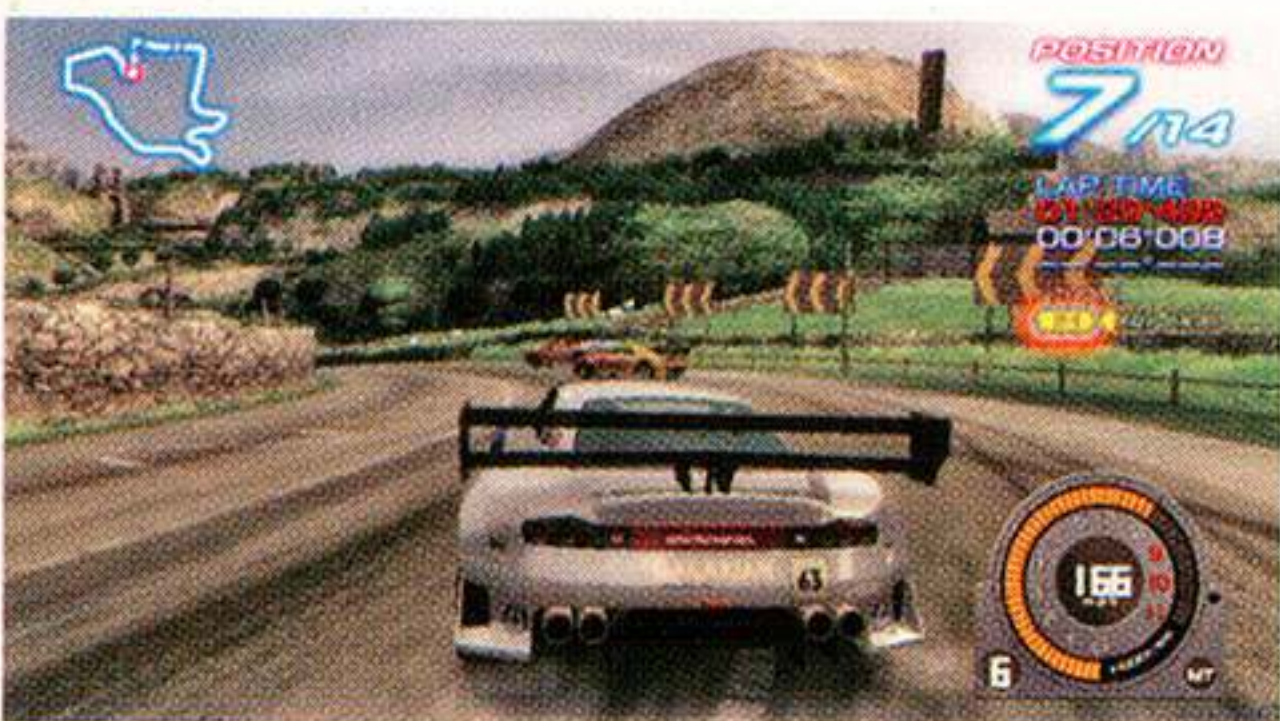
Launch titles usually don't squeeze all of the hardware juice out of a console—but Ridge Racer 6 can almost pass as a regular Xbox game. Building textures look noticeably low-res even at blurringly fast speeds, and the cars fall short when compared to models seen in Forza Motorsport. The sixth offering borrows levels from previous games, so the game's stages fail to excite you. Game mechanics seem trapped in the previous generation, too. Building up your nitrous gauges is a throwback to the PSP version, and the addition of the Ultimate Charge does little to approach a Burnout level of intensity.



PROTIP: Drift near a wall, and you'll occasionally face some jerky camera clipping.



PROTIP: Even with a dynamic drift car, don't slide excessively as speed bleeds quickly.



PROTIP: Time your nitrous so it runs out as you enter a turn.

And isn't the next-gen era a perfect time to make damage modeling standard? Not for this conservatively status-quo racer. The computer-controlled cars seem devoid of awareness of their surroundings, making each course a mind-numbing snoozefest.

## Whigga Says, "Word."

Namco typically delivers satisfying electronica tracks, but the cobbled-together score innocuously bumbles in the background, which doesn't help fill out the otherwise bereft experience. Of course, all else

is overshadowed when you hear the Ebonics-spouting announcer—the only phrase missing from his crass, stereotypical banter is "word to your mother." Race long enough, and you'll even have the pleasure of hearing him use the leet-speak hot phrase, "own."

Ridge Racer 6 isn't a bad game when you break it down, but there's no sense in dropping 60 bucks on a next-gen title when plenty of other previous-gen games that will get your heart racing faster are available. Hold out for the inevitable next-gen Burnout.—Funky Zealot

KEY MOMENT: Checking the Xbox 360 cables to see if the settings are really set to HDTV



GRAPHICS ..... 3.5  
SOUND ..... 3.0  
CONTROL ..... 4.0

FUN FACTOR  
3.0

Developer and publisher: Namco ■ \$59.99  
Available now ■ Driving ■ 2 players; 14 online ■ ESRB: E



# Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening (Special Edition)



**PROTIP:** Pride demons telegraph their scythe attacks by winding up first. Avoid it, then carve each a new one.

PS2



It should come as no surprise that Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening is getting the Greatest Hits treatment. With a frenetic blend of over-the-top action and eye-popping effects that are cemented by the stylish combination system, Dante's exploits shame most so-called action games.

## Demon Days

So, what's new? Well, try playing through the entire game as Vergil. You won't see changes in cut-scenes, and he doesn't play much differently, but he does pack several very slick tricks. It can take a good, long time to unlock

the higher levels of the different attack styles at your disposal, so his presence might help freshen up the game if you think your thumbs can't take any more.

The only other substantive addition is an easily relished opportunity to pound that smile off Jester's face in a new boss battle. He's far from being the most impressive or difficult boss the devil hunter has faced, but making him dance under a hail of gunfire and spray confetti instead of blood delivers welcome comic relief in an otherwise grim universe.

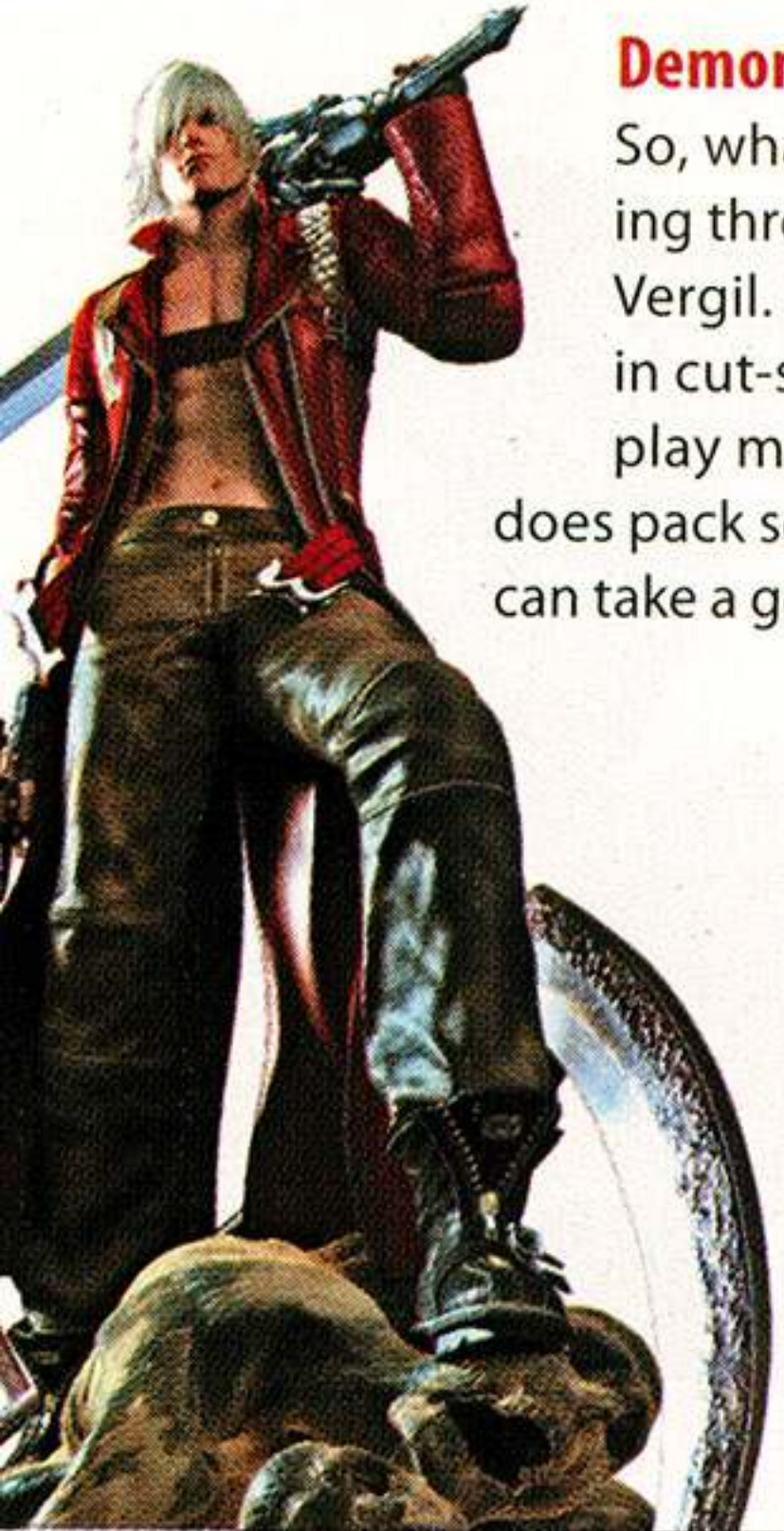
## Dancing with the Devil

A "Bloody Palace" mode has you taking on wave after wave of demon baddies in the ultimate battle against repetitive stress injury. The

remaining changes, though, amount to minor tweaks: There's an alternate continue system, a turbo option that boosts speed by a paltry 20 percent, and a "Demo Digest" mode that browses unlocked cinematics. Difficulty levels have also been adjusted, but the changes are trivial—the new "very hard" setting is identical to the original release's "hard."

All told, Devil May Cry 3 doesn't do a hell of a lot to earn its Special Edition label as a new playable character and boss encounter aren't enough to justify a repurchase. On the other hand, for a mere \$20, anyone who originally skipped this slick prequel would be nuts not to grab it.—Ouroboros

**KEY MOMENT:** Sending a filthy demon airborne and then keeping it there with an unrelenting hail of bullets



**PROTIP:** The Nevan guitar is best suited for obliterating hordes of enemies, especially at the higher difficulty settings.



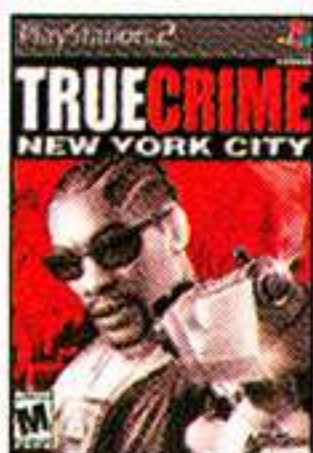
**PROTIP:** The Beowulf gauntlets are slow, but their power makes them perfect for taking down the slower enemies quickly.

PS2	GRAPHICS	4.5	EDITORS' CHOICE	FUN FACTOR 4.5/5
	SOUND	4.5		
	CONTROL	4.5		

Developer and publisher: Capcom ■ \$19.99  
Available now ■ Action ■ 1 player ■ ESRB: M

# True Crime: New York City

PS2



The notion of playing a fledgling detective in New York City is alluring whether your fantasies entail justice or brutality. As Marcus Reed, a young man with an incarcerated father, a checkered past, and a gold shield, the Big Apple is your oyster.

## No Sleep Till Brooklyn

Or at least that was the plan. The intentions of True Crime: New York City seem lofty with a top-drawer selection of voice actors and high-concept promises of malleable city neighborhoods that change according to your actions. But just as

name-brand actors can't turn ham-fisted, expletive-laden writing and tired mob caricatures into Broadway theater, and superfluous graphical flourishes put frame-rate slowdowns under a spotlight, so do the many disappointing foundation flaws of True Crime's sophomore effort keep it from achieving adequacy, let alone greatness.

The central, touted freedom of being able to dispense your own brand of justice turns out to be pretty feeble. Being a good cop is harder than being a bad cop—as you'd expect—but then all being a bad cop ever gets you is moolah for upgrades and lost ranks in the department. Worse, the city itself, known in real life for its diversity and personality, is here reduced to just a notch above tepid homogeneity. So much for variety of experience.

## Going Downtown

Even with the unfortunate narrowing of focus and a surprisingly short story, True Crime: New York City could have been a rough do-gooder alternative to the Grand Theft Auto games. Instead, it hopelessly mires itself in technical problems: Frame rates drop and stutter precipitously and unpredictably; characters move



**PROTIP:** If you tend toward reckless driving, you're better off using a commandeered car, which you don't have to pay to repair.

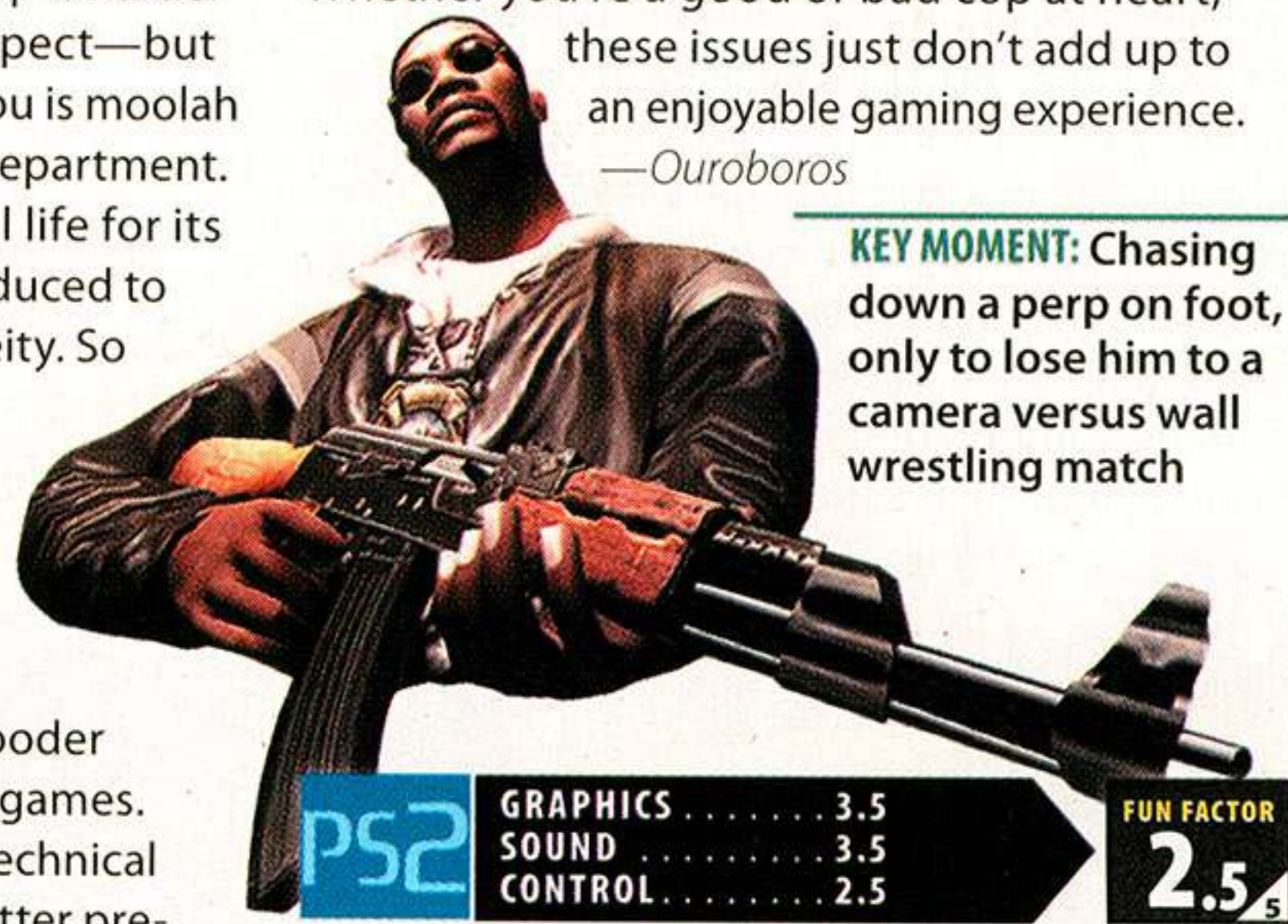


**PROTIP:** When you've tackled a perp to the ground, knock him around a bit in case he has some fight left in him.

through and get stuck in solid objects; there's often a tangible lag between moving the joystick and seeing the result; collision detection and vehicle physics are spotty at best; and heck, the game even freezes entirely on occasion. Whether you're a good or bad cop at heart, these issues just don't add up to an enjoyable gaming experience.

—Ouroboros

**KEY MOMENT:** Chasing down a perp on foot, only to lose him to a camera versus wall wrestling match



PS2	GRAPHICS	3.5	FUN FACTOR 2.5/5
	SOUND	3.5	
	CONTROL	2.5	

Developer: Luxoflux ■ Publisher: Activision ■ \$49.99 ■ Available now  
Action ■ 1 player ■ ESRB: M ■ Also on the Xbox and GameCube



**PROTIP:** There's no quicker way to rack up bad-cop points in True Crime: New York City than blasting a patrolman in the face, but it beats getting shot to death.



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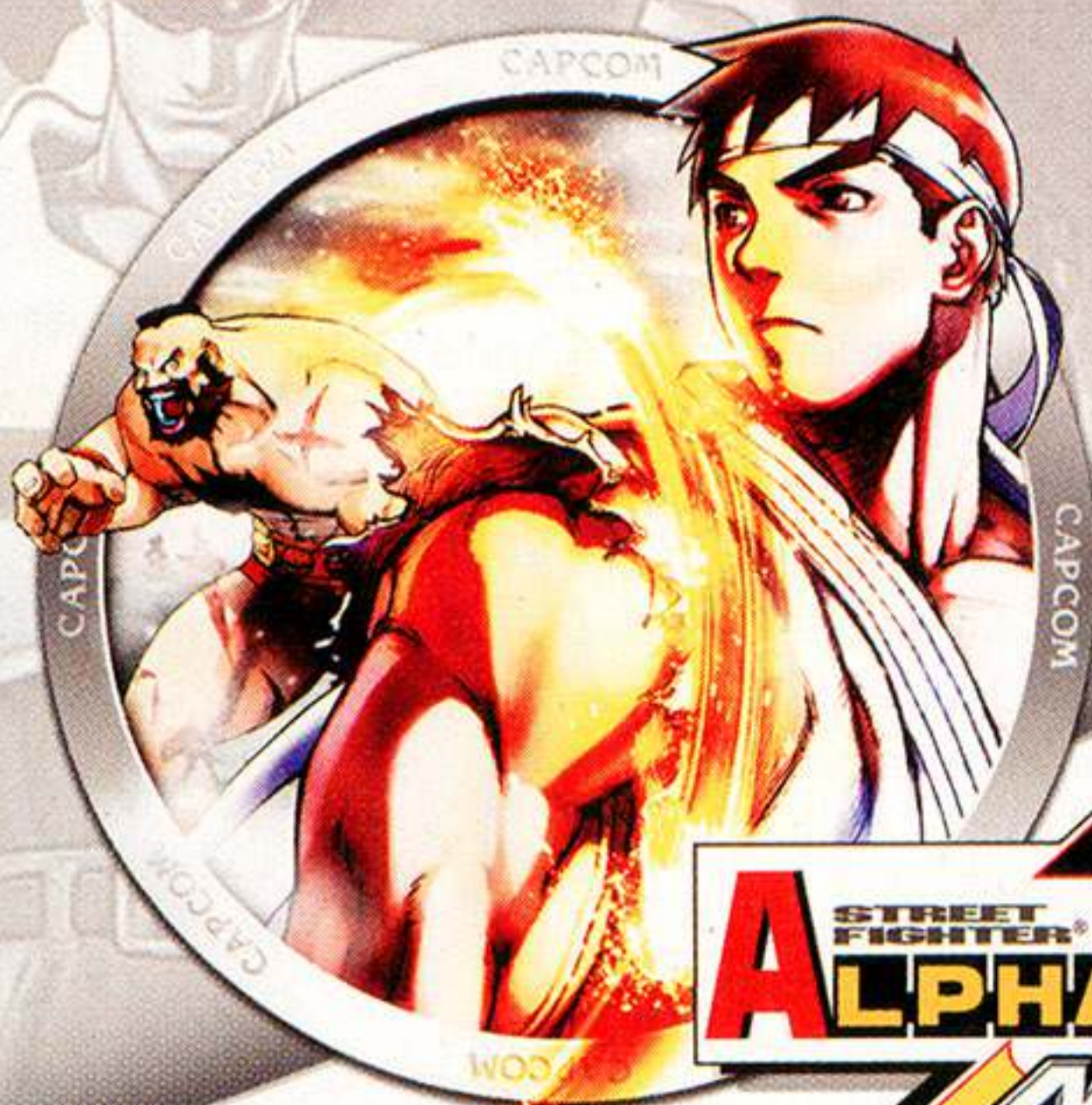
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# Aeon Flux

PS2

Xbox



Bridging the gap between Peter Chung's *Aeon Flux* cult-favorite cartoon series and the recent Hollywood film release, *Aeon Flux* the game fleshes out the unanswered questions of the purposely enigmatic franchise in a typically mundane, action/adventure manner.

## What You Truly Want, Only I Can Give

In *Aeon Flux*, you assume the role of our titular heroine as she embarks on stealth and demolition missions. True to the schizophrenic continuity of the original TV series, Aeon's allegiance and identity in the game constantly change from level to level. In one level, Aeon may be protecting Chairman Goodchild, while in another level she may be attempting to assassinate him.

Additionally, the developer has taken painstaking steps to religiously re-create the world originally envisioned by Peter Chung. The game features all of Aeon's triple-jointed signature moves and her notorious FUG (Flex Universal Gun), complete with four varieties of ammo and the ability to ascend and descend via a grapple function.

While the game's aesthetics and design are spot on with the franchise's distinct style, the gameplay teeters between fluidly fast-paced action and insanely difficult and tedious game segments. Almost all of the back-story is told



**PRO TIP:** While descending with the FUG grapple function, be vigilant of the icons on your HUD. It pays to execute a rolling dismount in heated situations.

through collecting and viewing Intel Capsules, but the process of accessing and reading screens of Intel Capsule text cancels out the engrossing aspects of the gameplay and rips your attention away from identifying with the heroine.

## You Can't Give It, You Can't Even Buy It, and You Just Don't Get It

Moreover, many of the mini-puzzles peppered throughout the game are absurdly difficult. For instance, Aeon may be tasked to lower a shield barrier to enable her compatriots to escape the area. To lower the shield, Aeon must guide her Orb device through an insane obstacle course to the shield access port in two different locations. By the time you actually access the first port, your compatriots will have already been riddled with gun fire—repeat level, ad nauseam.



Introducing Aeon Flux, secret agent by day, foot fetish model by night. Eat your heart out, Charlize.

If you're a fan of *Aeon Flux*, this game will be an enjoyable romp; otherwise, you should pick up this title at your own risk.—*Rice Burner*

**KEY MOMENT:** Pulling off the Spiderbomb takedown for the first time

PS2	GRAPHICS	3.5	FUN FACTOR	3.5
	SOUND	3.0		
	CONTROL	3.5		
Xbox	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR	3.5
	SOUND	3.5		
	CONTROL	3.0		

Developer: Terminal Reality Publisher: Majesco  
\$49.99 Available now Action 1 player ESRB: T

# Mega Man X Collection

PS2

GameCube



Back in the day, the Mega Man games were notorious for their challenging, platform-hopping/shooting hybrid mechanics. Typical of games in that era, the Mega Man offerings utilized the traditional 2D play scheme and sprite-based graphics—traits that are all but extinct in today's market. Collection is a compilation of the first six Mega Man X games, which were different from the "regular" Mega Man titles in that they were tougher and had a decidedly darker tone in their narratives.

## "Good Luck, Mega Man!"

Mega Man's plot is simple: You play a futuristic robotic bounty hunter who travels through



**PRO TIP:** Enemies regenerate, so backtrack frequently to re-destroy them and collect valuable power-ups.

different worlds to defeat renegade fellow machines. Part of the fun is discovering the Achilles heel of each boss by experimenting with various weapons obtained from other felled bosses.

The stages are long, challenging, and cleverly peppered with hidden areas and additional enhancements.

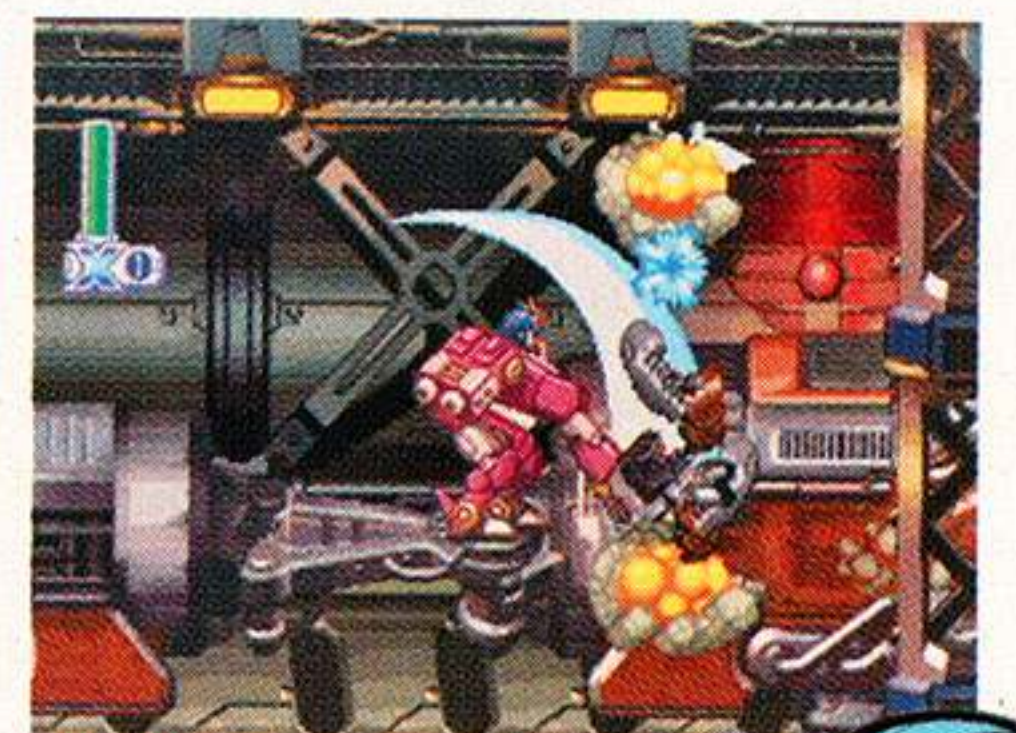
The visuals vary wildly in quality, reflecting the platforms on which each game originally appeared. One tangible improvement over the original games is that slowdown has been completely eradicated, making for smoother gameplay. The CD-based sound is also an enhancement over the cartridge-confined tracks, and you can now save games directly to a memory card and avoid the cumbersome password option (which is also available). Plus, diehard fans can unlock Mega Man Battle & Chase, a take on Mario Kart that was never released in the United States.

## "Power Shot!"

Younger gamers who don't even know who Mega Man is probably won't be won over by this collection. For the nostalgic retro player who grew up with these titles, though, it's an



**PRO TIP:** In Mega Man X2, use the mech suit to smash the boxcars in the Military Train stage.



**PRO TIP:** In Mega Man X4, use the mech suit to smash the boxcars in the Military Train stage.

awesome reminder of when games didn't need flashy graphics and tons of hype to be enjoyable; they were what games should be—fun. Mega Man X Collection is an excellent flashback to old-school gaming in its finest hour.—*Major Mike*

**KEY MOMENT:** Finding the right weapon to make quick history of a giant smack-talking boss: priceless

PS2	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR	4.0
	SOUND	4.0		
	CONTROL	4.0		
GameCube	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR	4.0
	SOUND	4.0		
	CONTROL	4.0		

Developer and publisher: Capcom \$29.99  
Available now Action/adventure 2 players ESRB: E



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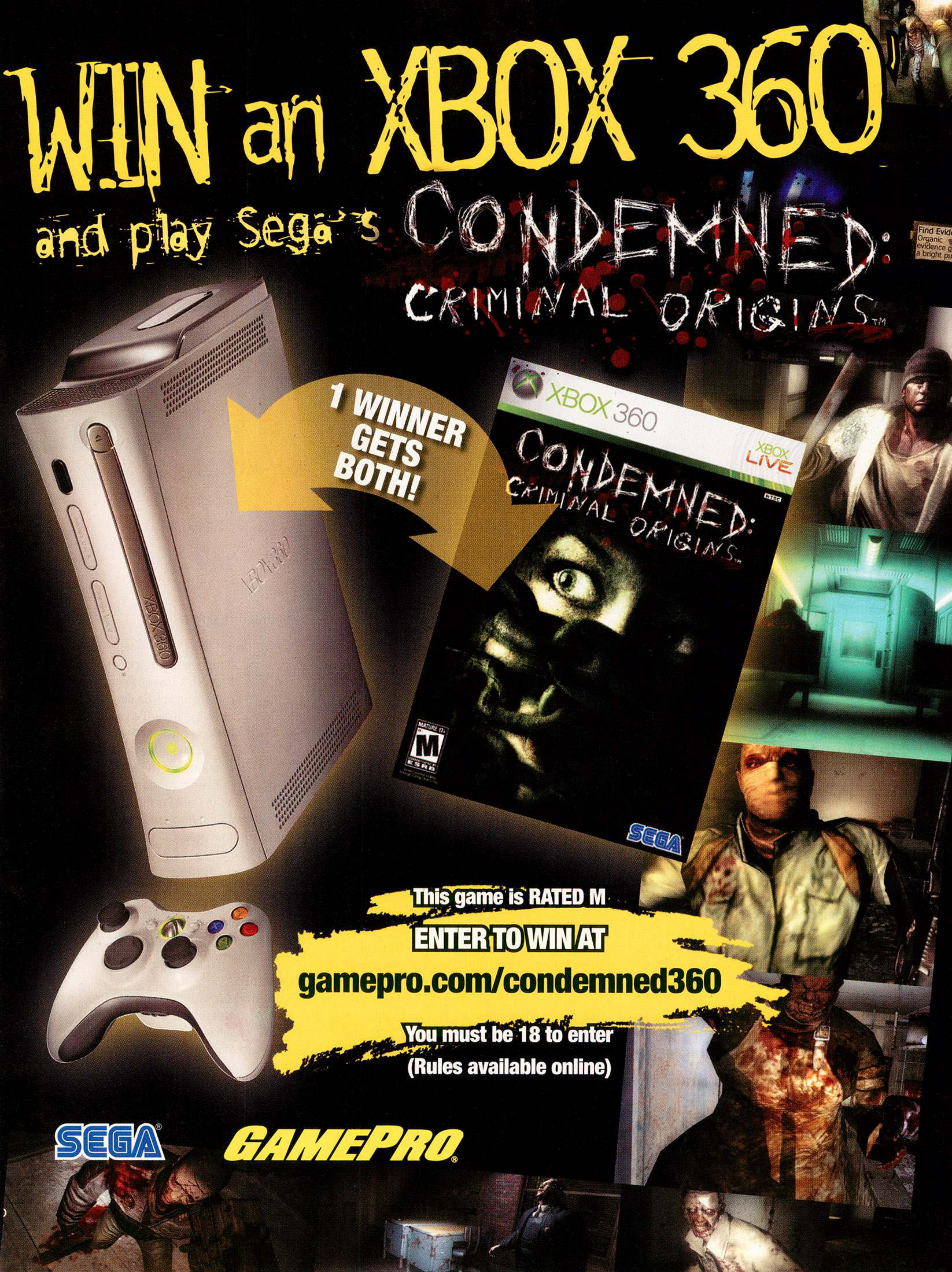
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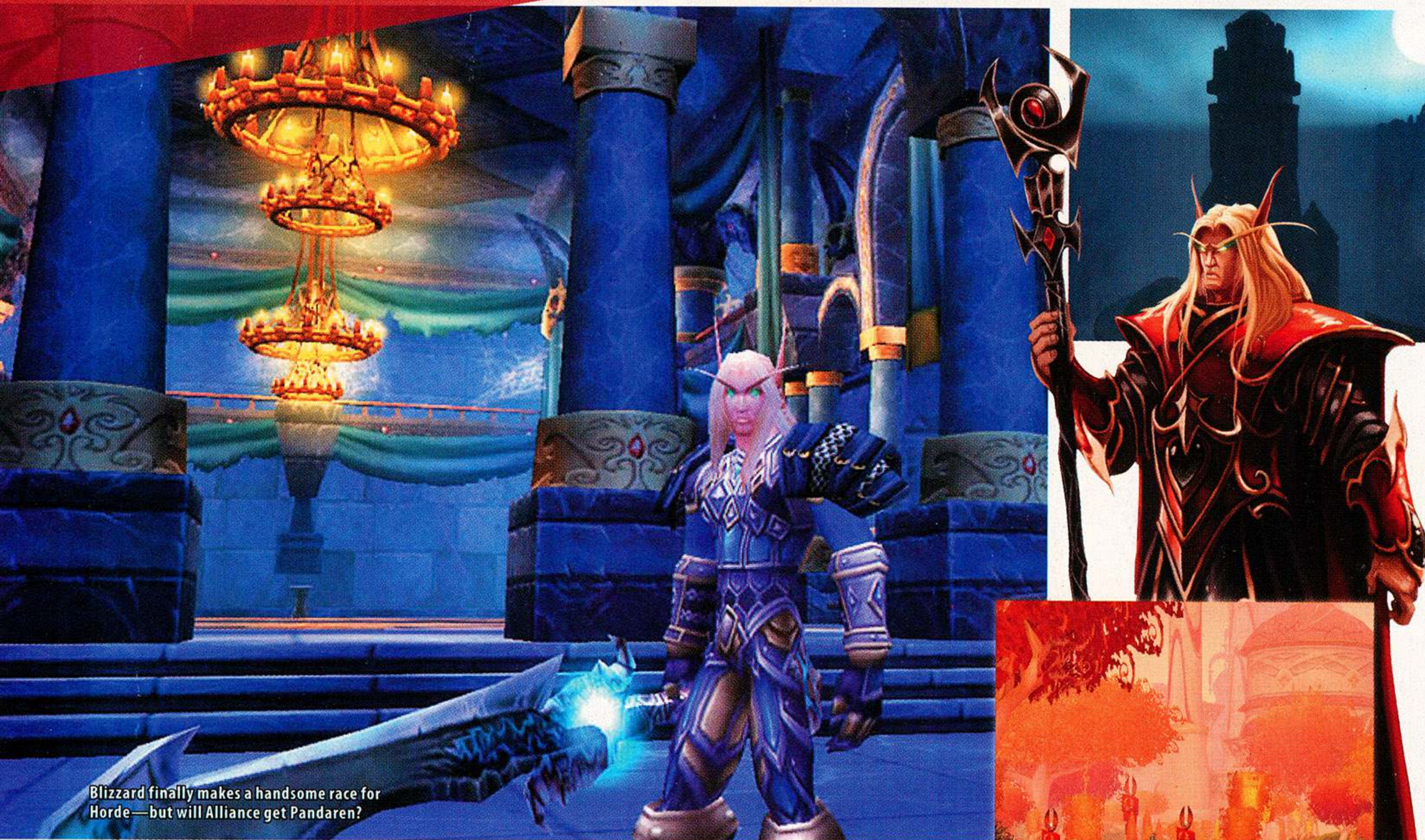
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Blizzard finally makes a handsome race for Horde—but will Alliance get Pandaren?

## World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

PC

Blizzard is poised to create even more MMO addicts with World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade, the first expansion for the legendary online role-playing title. With the introduction of the new Horde race—the Blood Elves—you can expect to see faction ratios finally balance out...as well as more guys playing as bouncy female 'toons.

### For the Horde!

The new Blood Elf race hails from the former High Elf homeland of Quel'Thalas, which is the place for new quests for low-level characters. The Blood Elf's two exclusive abilities—Mana Tap and Arcane Torrent—reflect the race's arcane greed. Mana Tap is a combination ability that drains mana from the target, while Arcane

Torrent unleashes that stored charge to give you extra Rage or mana. Blizzard has yet to finalize the class choices, but you can bet that nuke-happy Shamans won't be included.

### Itemize This

With the substantial expansion of the world, the level cap will increase to 70, which introduces new talent abilities and enables for deeper character customization. Although there won't be any additional classes, Blizzard is promising to introduce unique gameplay mechanics for every existing class. With the increased level cap, you can also expect to fight through harder and grander dungeons, eventually leading to



Illidan in the Black Temple and Medivh's Tower. Fortunately, these won't all be dreary 40-man raids as Blizzard is promising to include smaller 10- and 20-man excursions. The post level-60 content is centered in the murky Outlands continent, which is accessed through the Dark Portal. And ultimately,

players can obtain flying epic mounts that are only usable in that area.

For the lore obsessed, the new Caverns of Time instanced adventures let you participate in historical Warcraft moments: You can explore human cities before the demonic Scourge devastation or even watch a young Thrall rise as a figurehead amongst the Orcs. For lore geeks, this is a dream come true.

### LF Jeweler PST

In The Burning Crusade, Blizzard will also introduce a new profession: Jewelcrafting. In a nod to Diablo II, Jewelcrafters can place special gems into item sockets to add new bonuses.

Will the expansion be worth the wait? Even if you're able to hold out in the beginning, the sight of Blood Elves spin-jumping all around Orgrimmar will likely break down your resistances.—Funky Zealot

■ Hands-On ■ Developer: Blizzard  
■ Publisher: Vivendi Universal Games ■ Target release date: Summer 2006



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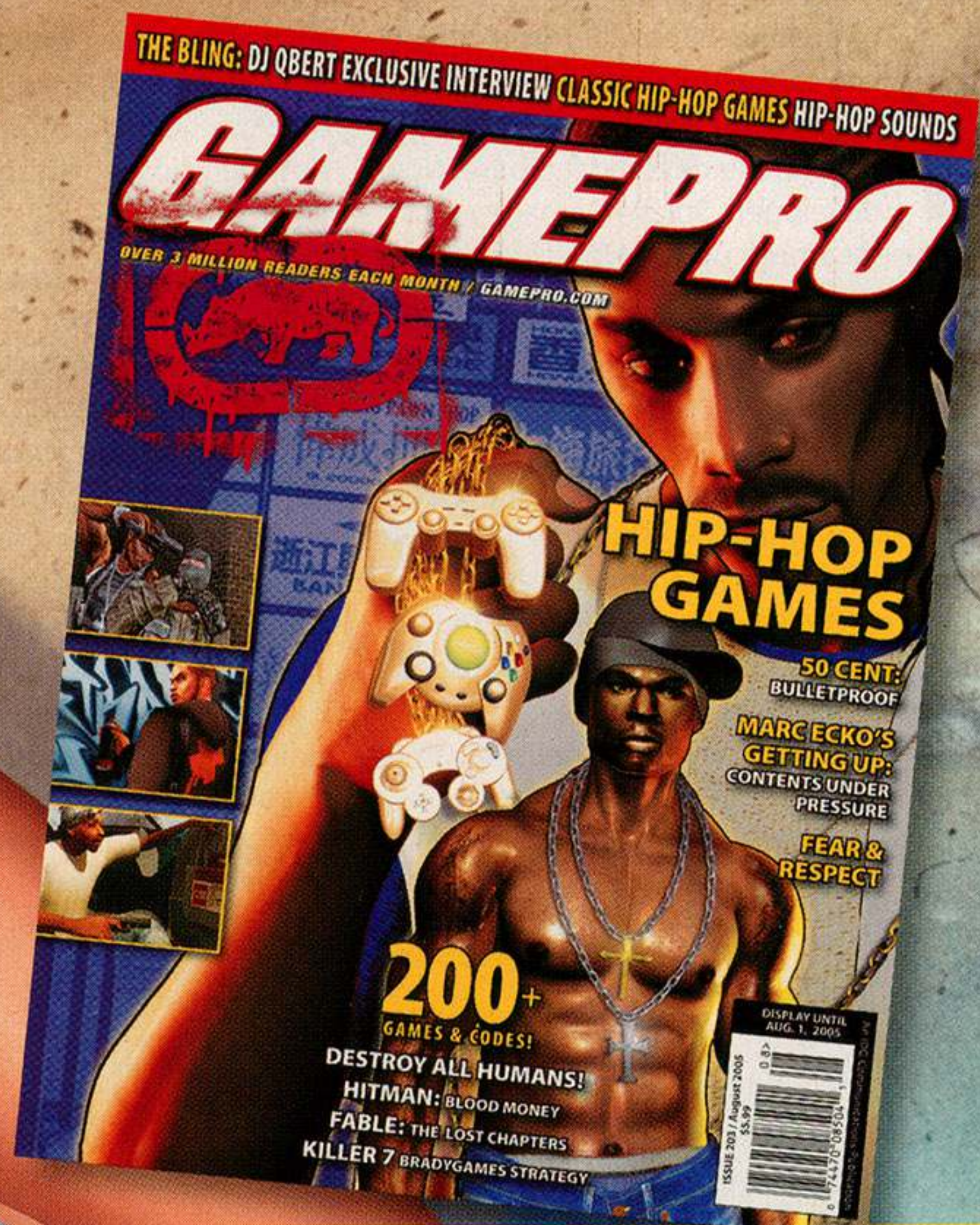
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Quake fans are in for quite a surprise, but fans of *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* and *Battlefield 2* will feel right at home.



## Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

PC

**W**olfenstein: *Enemy Territory*, an on-line shooter that combined military might with careful strategy, earned raves and a devoted fan base. Now developers Splash Damage and id Software are teaming up to bring these team-based tactics to the Quake universe. The results, so far, look stunning.

### Territorial Tinkerings

Even though the version we saw was at an early alpha-level state, there's no doubt that the developers have spent their time wisely. Gone are the cramped, blood-splattered hallways found in *Doom 3* and *Quake 4*. Instead, *Enemy Territory: Quake War's* massive, sprawling, outdoor environments stretch as far as the eye can see with virtually no fog or draw-in to spoil the gameplay experience. Other visual frills we saw—

such as sparkling water and swaying foliage—blew the pants right off of *Battlefield 2*. And this game's not even close to finished!

### Battlefield Earth

This is the Quake universe like you've never seen it before. The designers took inspiration from World War II flicks like *The Dirty Dozen* to create a living, breathing world in which humanity first encounters the half-metal, half-meat monstrosities known as the Strogg. The Global Defense Force battles with conventional weaponry, such as sniper rifles, explosive charges, and heavy machine guns. Playing as the Strogg invaders, meanwhile, yields its own rewards: Your advanced weapons are powered by liquidized human innards,



which you can extract from still-living hosts through a humongous needle. *Gro-oss*.

Even though the Quake series is known for its over-the-top carnage, don't expect pray-and-spray tactics to fly in this game. The focus here is strictly on solid military objectives like planting spy cameras, calling for air strikes, and deploying vehicles. Speaking of which, the vehicles looked just *amazing* with intricately detailed physics and handling properties.

Will old-school Quake fiends be hip to what Splash Damage and id Software are trying here? Who knows. But one thing's for sure: The world of Quake just got a whole lot deadlier.—*Vicious Sid*

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: id Software/Splash Damage  
 ■ Publisher: Activision ■ Target release date: 2006





# City of Villains



City of Villains is the stand-alone expansion to NCsoft's popular MMORPG City of Heroes. Aside from its obvious evil slant, Villains looks, sounds, and plays exactly like Heroes.

## Bad to the Bone

City of Villains co-exists with and, at times, overlaps with Heroes. Some special zones are dedicated to cross-game player-versus-player, hero-versus-villain action. The City franchise still offers a fantastic gaming experience for MMO junkies looking for a less complicated commitment. There's very little inventory, no farming, no player economy, and far less competition (although that's changing with the new



**PRO TIP:** To conserve endurance, be sure to turn off sprint when you're in dungeons.

and tremendously exciting PvP game). You simply jump in and fight. If that's your game, this is your game.

In Villains, the terrific palette for character creation allows for a great diversity of super villain options, but you'll go through the same tutorial missions every time. Later levels present more intricate missions as compelling, evolving story lines. And you'll begin to earn prestige, which guilds (or supergroups) can use to build their secret bases. Speaking of which, the secret bases are probably City of Villains' single best contribution to the franchise: Other supergroups, for instance, can raid your base and steal your items of power.

## Join the Dark Side

City of Villains doesn't betray the age of Heroes' engine at all. This game is still a visual feast with dazzling lighting effects and stunningly diverse characters. But just like in Heroes, the indoor environments look dull and repetitive. Thankfully, the outside zones' grand architecture nicely compensates for these shortcomings. There are also some minor oversights in the otherwise rich audio package—stepping in a puddle sounds like you cannonballed into an ocean.

As a sequel, Villains simply doesn't offer enough. For an expansion, it's really darn expensive. But judged alone on its gameplay and design merits, it's a rip-roaring blast.—*Boba Fett*

**KEY MOMENT:** Blasting a boss to bits with your blistering beams, all the while twirling your inner moustache



**PRO TIP:** Always lead off with your most powerful attack so it can recharge during the course of the battle.

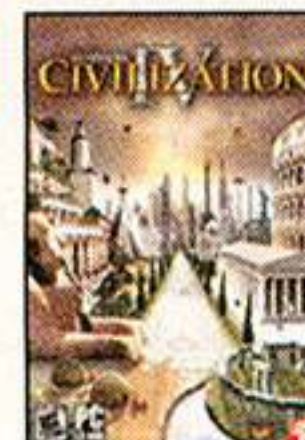
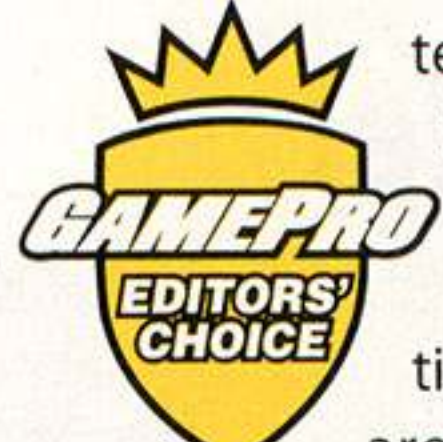
**Recommended System Specifications**  
 Windows 2000/XP 2.0 GHz 1 GB RAM  
 4 GB on HD Radeon 9500/GeForce 5800 video card

**PC** GRAPHICS ..... 4.0  
 SOUND ..... 3.5  
 CONTROL ..... 4.0

**FUN FACTOR**  
**4.0**

Developer: Cryptic Studios Publisher: NCsoft \$49.99  
 Available now MMORPG Massively multiplayer ESRB: T

# Sid Meier's Civilization IV



Sid Meier's epic turn-based franchise returns with a drastic overhaul, setting the series on a path toward greater accessibility. This is the best Civilization yet...but it's still only a glimmer of what it could be.

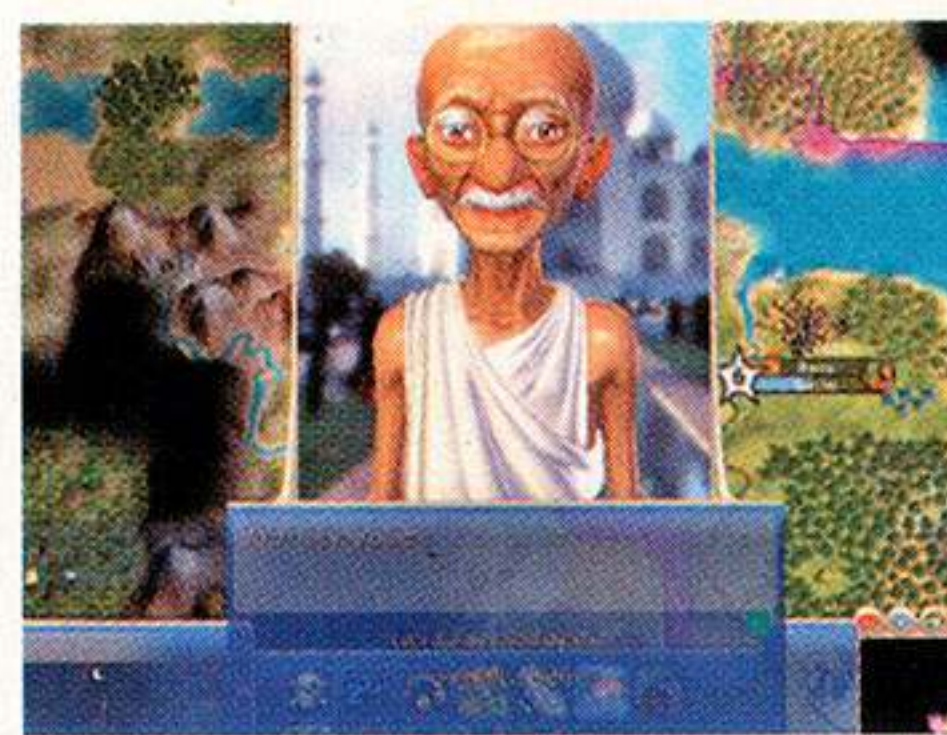
technological improvement, but in all fairness, Civilization IV's graphics are still leagues behind current visual standards. The aural package includes insightful and amusing quotes from Leonard Nimoy, complemented by an inspiring score and crisp sound effects that are always appropriate but never impressive.

## ...Lead to Strategic Superiority

Sid Meier and his Civilization development crew focused their improvements right in the heart of the matter: the gameplay. Thanks to a new RTS-style interface, you can move units and cities



**PRO TIP:** Improving culture is the quickest way to expand frontier cities. Theaters are the cheapest way to do that.



**PRO TIP:** Civilization IV is loaded with menus but is still accessible enough to appeal to newbies.



**PRO TIP:** Be sure to bombard enemy cities to negate their defense bonus before bringing your troops in to finish off the forces.

## Technological Deficits...

The concept is simple: As in all Civilization games, you and your opponents start by building a village. As the Stone Age gives way to the space age, you'll upgrade from crude catapults to stealth bombers. But the real strategy rests in your diplomatic relations—how are you going to share the map with your opponents? There are six solutions for victory, ranging from the diplomatic approach to full-on military conquest. You can even win a technological victory by being the first to send a manned capsule to Alpha Centauri.



Civilization IV brings the old-school game board to the 3D era, so your units move and fight more realistically. This is a fantastic

with simple mouse clicks. Every element of the interface has been simplified or improved, making the experience more accessible and intuitive. The vastly improved multiplayer mode, meanwhile, includes a play-by-e-mail feature if you want to play a match out over a few days.

There are still some strange sticking points—buried icons or inexplicable quirks—that leave room for improvement, and the tutorial could use some polishing. But in the end, this is the tightest Civilization yet.—*Boba Fett*

**KEY MOMENT:** Keeping up diplomatic relations with your neighbors while you prepare to conquer them with gunships

**Recommended System Specifications**  
 Windows 2000/XP 1.8 GHz 512 MB RAM  
 4 GB on HD Radeon 9500/GeForce 5800 video card

**PC** GRAPHICS ..... 3.5  
 SOUND ..... 4.0  
 CONTROL ..... 4.0

**EDITORS' CHOICE**

**FUN FACTOR**  
**4.5**

Developer: Firaxis Games Publisher: 2K Games \$49.99  
 Available now Strategy 1 player; 12 online ESRB: E10+



# Resident Evil: Deadly Silence

DS



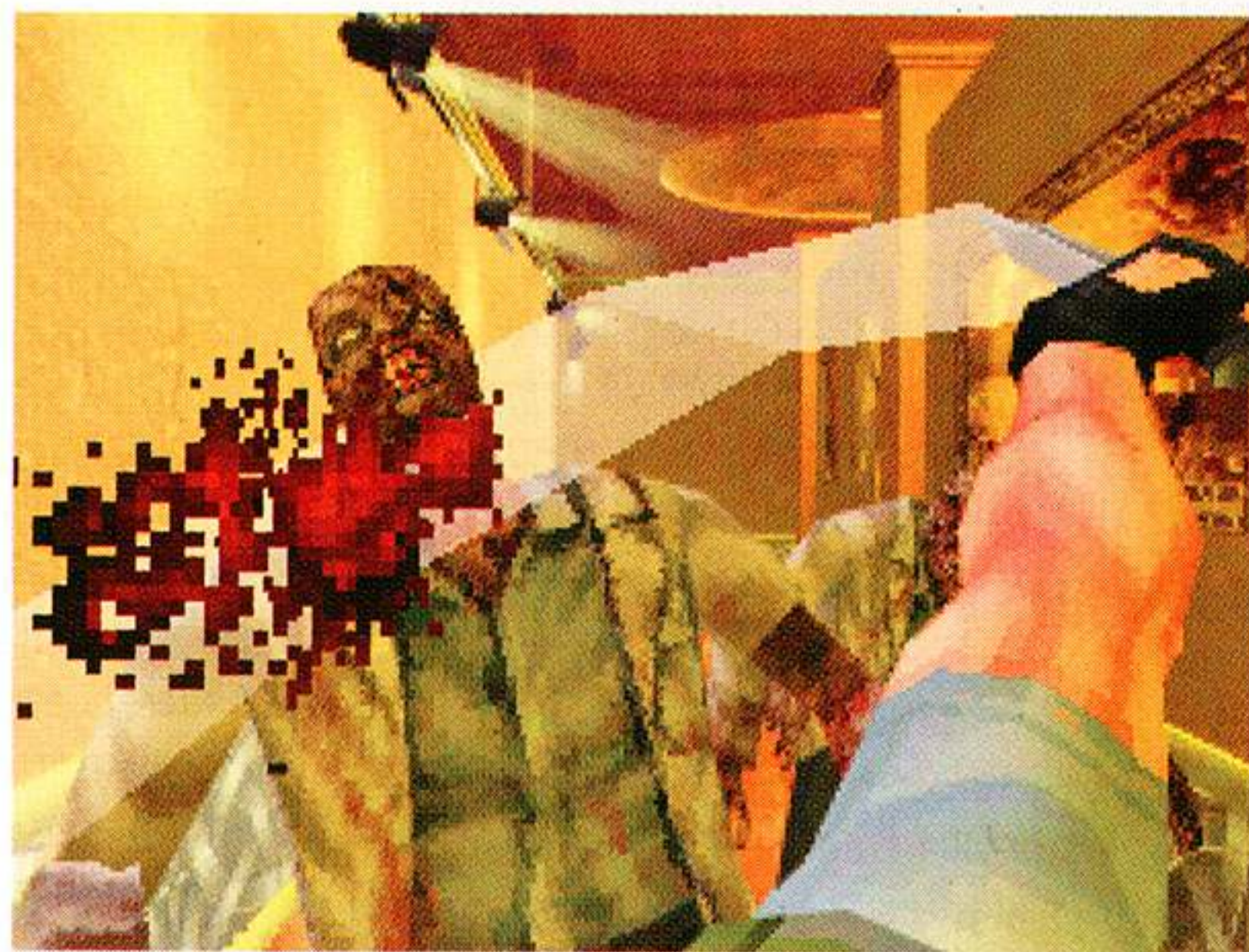
The last Resident Evil game for a handheld system was the dreadful Gaiden on the Game Boy Color, so fans of the series will naturally (and understandably) be skeptical of another portable offering. Deadly Silence hopes to change that perception with a few innovations not found in any previous Resident Evil title. Deadly Silence retells the events of the first Resident Evil adventure: Two members of a special-forces team are trapped in a haunted house, and they must defeat a horde of mutated monsters in order to survive.

Deadly Silence looks to retain the "classic" third-person visual scheme of the early games (i.e., prerendered backgrounds and static camera angles) albeit with a few modifications. Using the DS's dual screens, the game displays maps and various character statistics in the top panel, while the bottom screen shows the onscreen action. By using the stylus on the lower screen, you can literally direct knife slashes and shake off grappling foes. The DS's microphone also comes into play—blowing into it can result in reviving fallen friends via onscreen mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Resident Evil:

Deadly Silence also offers a host of multiplayer modes, where up to four players can work cooperatively or competitively.

—Major Mike

- **First Look**
- Developer and publisher: Capcom
- Target release date: First Quarter 2006



# Me and My Katamari (working title)

PSP

The Katamari crew is back, and this time they're on vacation! This latest installment in the quirky and hugely popular standout series finds the cosmic royal family on retreat in the tropics, where the Prince is tasked—yet again—with creating Katamari Balls. In Me and My Katamari, however, the Prince is not out to re-create the heavens; he's out to create islands in the sea for homeless animals. Now that's classically weird.

Me and My Katamari is the first Katamari title to appear on a system other than the PlayStation 2, and it offers the same Katamari-styled gameplay with a few minor control-

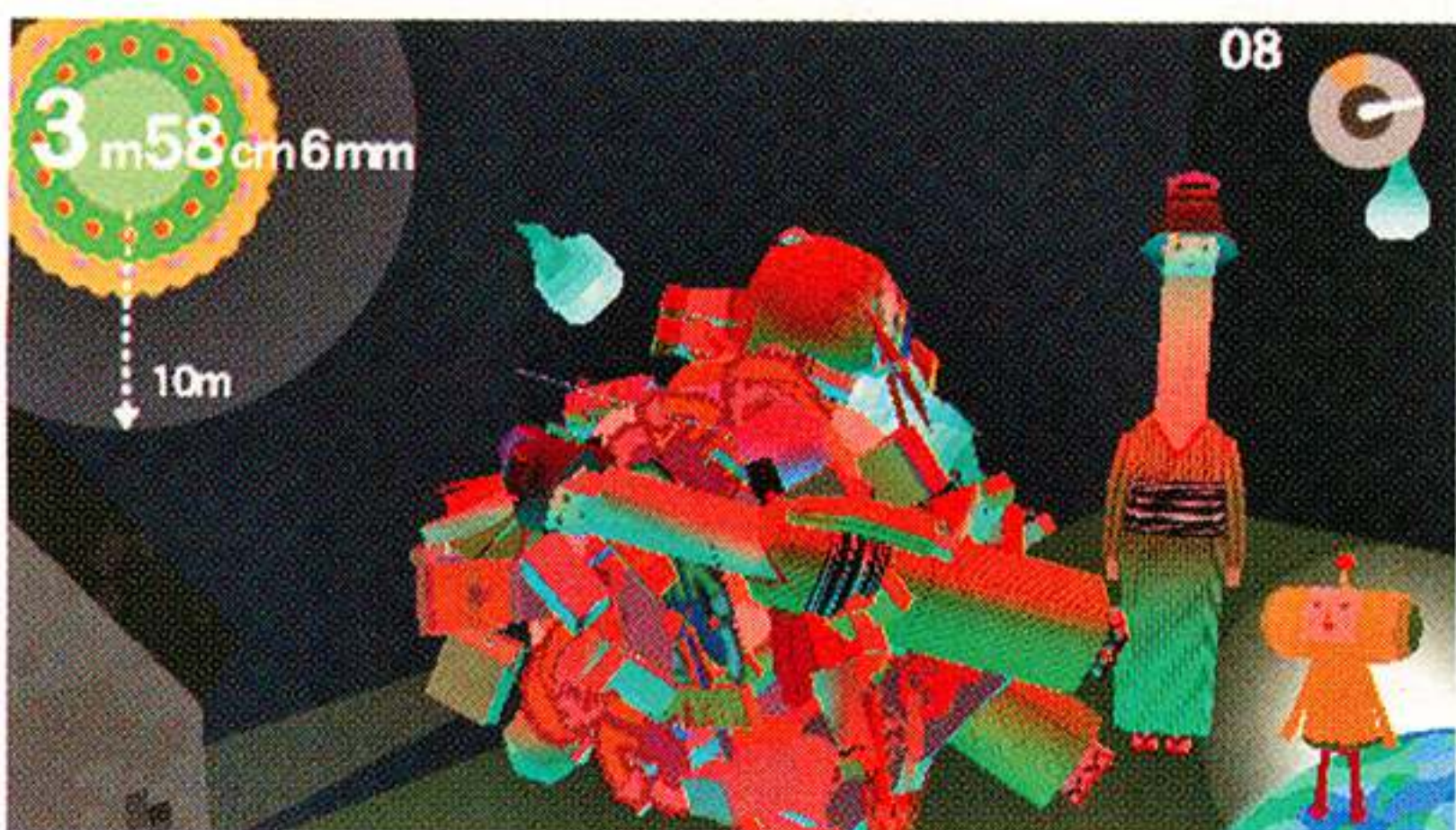


layout tweaks. The control scheme features a digital-control layout, which offers a different feel from the previous PS2 titles. As the PSP doesn't have dual analog sticks, the directional pad is used to move your Katamari Ball around, which may make it difficult for some Katamari fans to adjust to the slower controls.

Additionally, Me and My Katamari has a few features that are unique to the PSP version. In addition to the previous Katamari roster of royalty, you can also play as an exclusive cousin character.

Moreover, you have the option to customize characters with apparel and items, explore new tropical environments and locations, and compete with three other players in a battle mode via the PSP's Ad Hoc gameplay function. It's super early in development, but Me and My Katamari already looks like it's going to reach a whole new level of quirky weirdness this year.—Rice Burner

- **First Look**
- Developer and publisher: Namco
- Target release date: 2006





# Bust-a-Move DS

DS

Happy Happening and Majesco have worked diligently together to bring us the newest addition to Taito's classic title: Bust-a-Move DS. However, there's a twist—rather, a sling—to this version. The stylus pen is used to pull your slingshot back to throw the bubble, which then makes contact in the top screen. A dotted line guides your aim, but you have to be careful about relying on it as the line extends only so far.

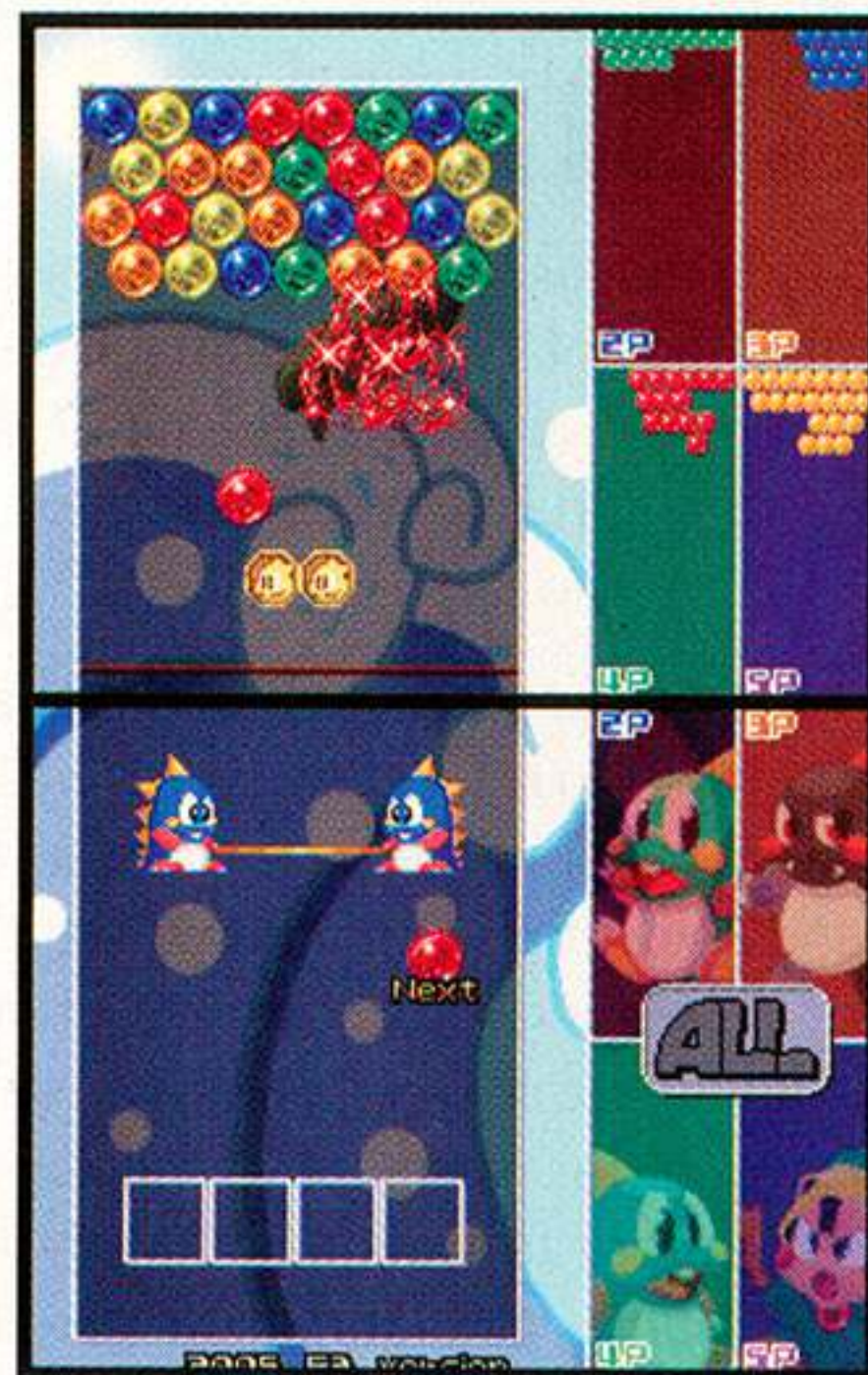
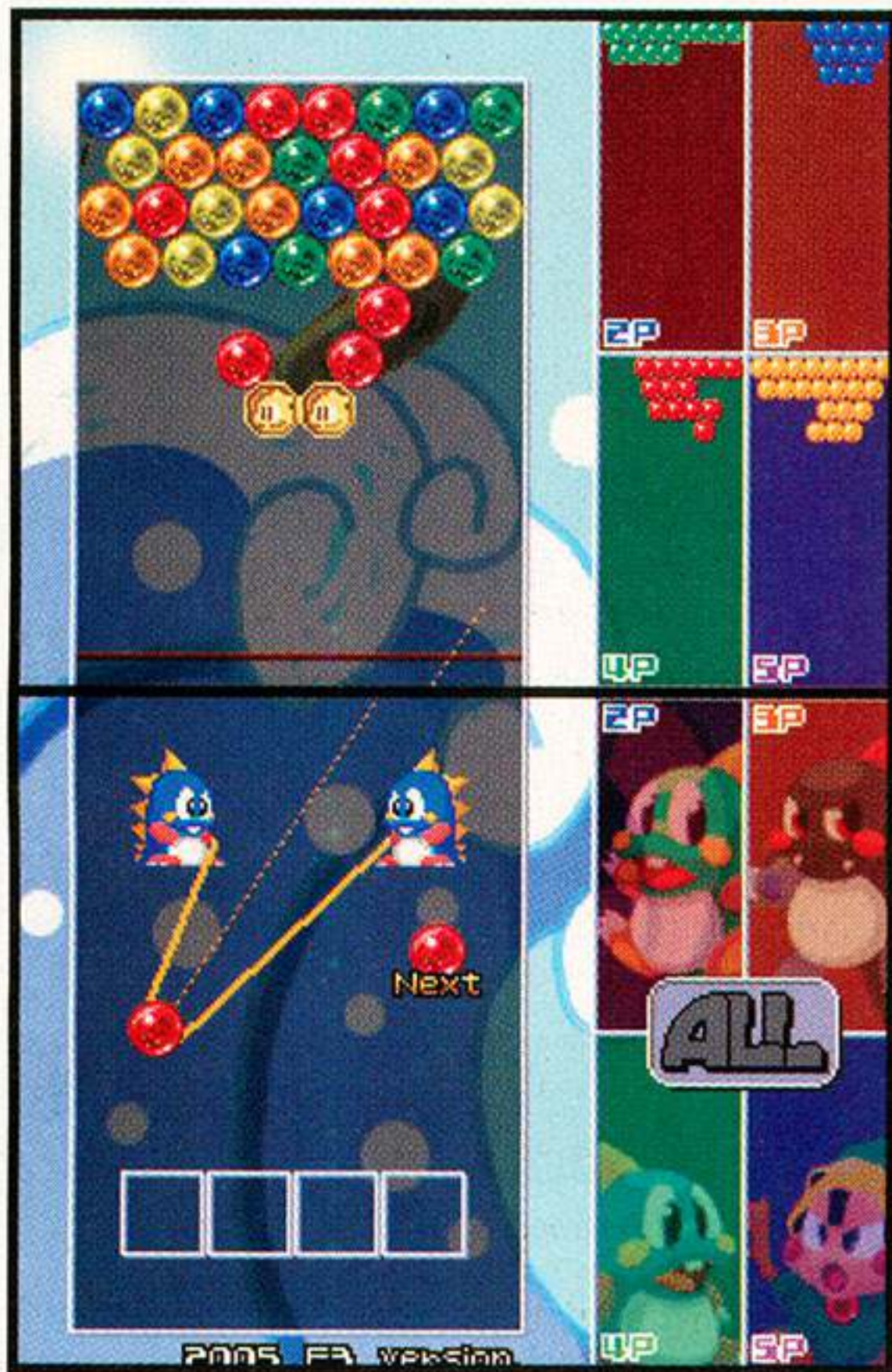
Bust-a-Move DS features three modes of single-player gameplay: Puzzle, Endless, and Versus. In Puzzle mode, the game presents a plethora of levels and sublevels that become increasingly difficult to beat as you progress. The Endless mode lets you play for as long as you can, utilizing combos to help

eliminate more bubbles. Finally, in the Versus mode you play against the computer, although the gameplay itself is essentially the same as in multiplayer, except with less intelligible opponents.

The most exciting feature about this game is its multiplayer function. For countless hours of competitive Bust-a-Move fun, you can connect with up to four other players via DS Download or DS Wireless. The competition gets heated once you start dragging acquired gems to other players, sending unsolicited amounts of bubbles to their screens.

Bust-a-Move DS is definitely fun and borders on addictive in the case of the multiplayer function.—Her Misnomer

■ Hands-On ■ Developer: Happy Happening ■ Publisher: Majesco ■ Target release date: February



# Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max

PSP

Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max is a direct conversion of the arcade game on which it's based, Street Fighter Alpha 3, with some new tweaks.

For those unfamiliar with Street Fighter Alpha 3, the game runs on an "ism" system. You can choose from A-ism, V-ism, or X-ism, each being a different way to perform a series of powerful combos.

There are nine modes to choose from, including a few eye-catching ones. Variable Battle allows for real-time tag-team fighting. As in *Marvel vs. Capcom 2*, tagging out enables your second fighter to come in with a jump attack. There's also a Wi-Fi functionality that lets you play against others under the League Battle. In Dramatic Battle, you can team up with the CPU to fight, and in Final Battle, you can practice fighting against the final boss.

In addition to the original Alpha 3 crew, Max features four new characters: Yun (Street Fighter 3 series), Maki (Capcom vs. SNK 2), Eagle (original Street Fighter), and Ingrid (Capcom Fighting Evolution), each with their own original story line.

Hailed for its selection of characters, in-game balance, and story line, Street Fighter Alpha 3 is a definite fighting game classic, and it looks like it will only be made better by Capcom's modifications for the PSP version.—Her Misnomer

■ First Look  
 ■ Developer and publisher: Capcom  
 ■ Target release date: February





# Electroplankton

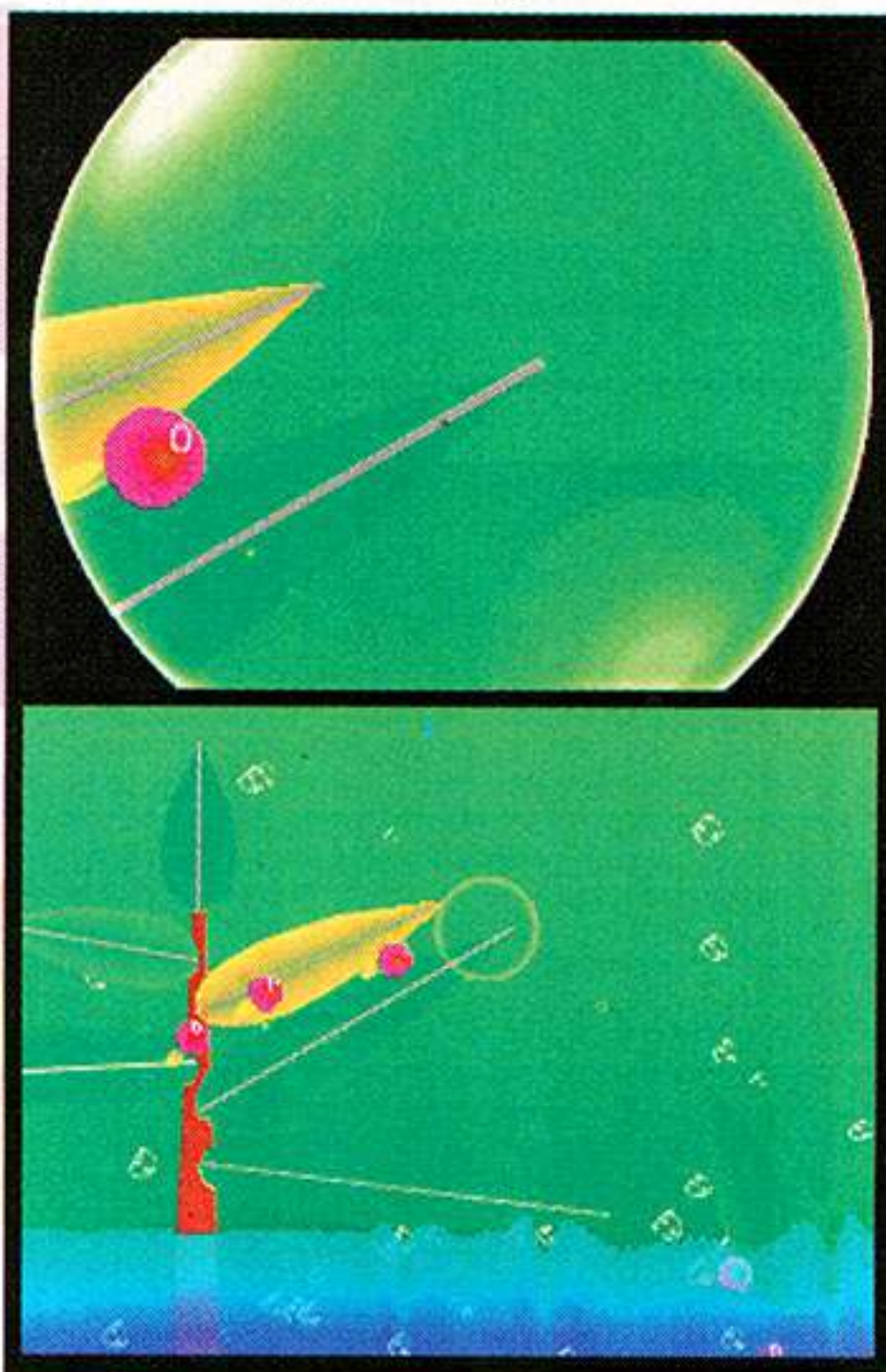
DS



The DS is often criticized by some for not having a library of games that fully takes advantage of its unique capabilities. So it comes as a nice surprise to encounter a DS game, *Electroplankton*, brimming with originality and imagination.

## Musical Microbes

Of course, *Electroplankton* has been one of the poster children for the new type of gameplay that the DS is supposed to offer ever since it was unveiled at the Game Developers Conference early last year. Its bizarre yet charmingly upbeat art direction and ever-smiling "plankton" were mysteriously alluring, and the concept of creating music by interacting with these cheerful photosynthetic organisms made the gameplay all the more appealing.



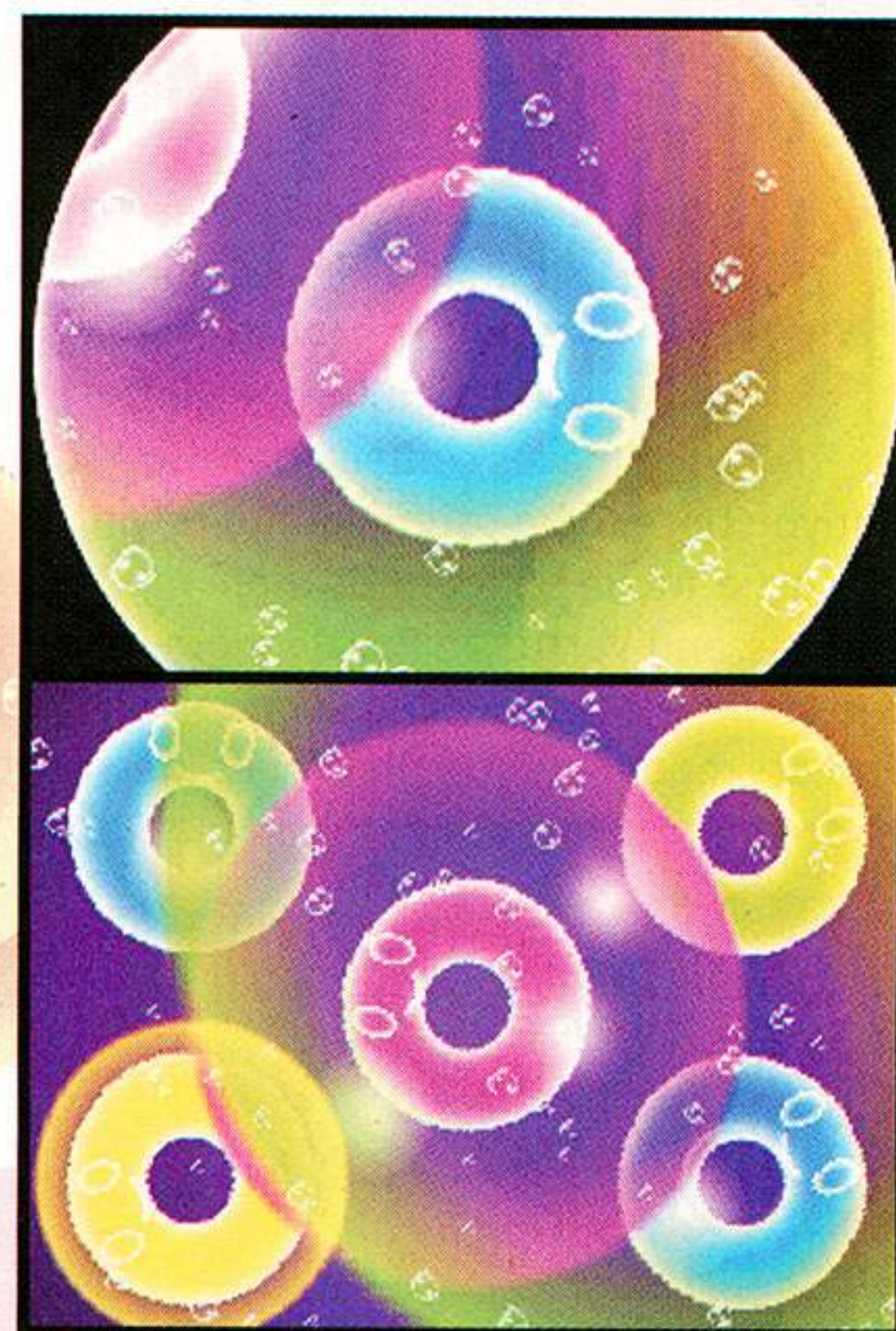
Creating music in this fashion is fun but clearly lacks precision.

Finally, this long-anticipated title has arrived in the U.S. and has remained faithful to its Japanese origins. But is it truly as unique and enjoyable as we first thought? The answer is a resounding "yes!" *Electroplankton* can only loosely be called a game as it has no real objectives, story line, or characters. Rather, it's a musical *experience* controlled, in large part, by you. No single element of the gameplay makes it so creatively deft; it's the combination of the colorful and minimalist art style, the intuitive methods of "controlling" the plankton with the DS stylus,

and the beautiful patterns of music it can create that make the 10 mini-games included so enjoyable.

## Slightly Out of Tune

Unfortunately, for all the creative genius behind the game, there are some shortcomings. Initially, as you generate your first melodic chords, you're taken aback by the simplicity with which they are produced. However, as you continue to play, and your desire to play specific tunes increases, you come to realize the relative lack of control you have over your harmonic creations. This ultimately results in sounds that can often be fun to listen to but do not feel like a direct result of your creative intuition—in other words, "music." Most unfortunate, however, is that the game just doesn't feel like it's meant to be played for an extended period of time. So if you're a gamer seeking depth and longevity, look elsewhere, but if you have a creative flair and a desire to experience something completely original, *Electroplankton* might be music to your ears.—*The Watcher*



Many may be put off by *Electroplankton's* play style because it has no objective or ways to "win."

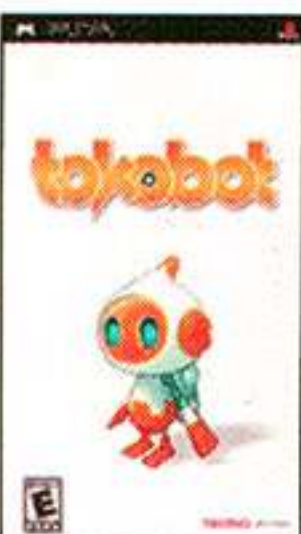
**KEY MOMENT:** Creating my own somewhat-silly mix of the Mario Bros. theme song

DS	GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR	4.0
	SOUND	4.5		
	CONTROL	4.0		

Developer and publisher: Nintendo ■ \$34.99  
Available January ■ Music ■ 1 player ■ ESRB: E

# Tokobot

PSP



Tokobot and the PSP make a great pair. Tecmo's latest action/platformer is simplistic enough for the sometimes-awkward PSP control scheme yet difficult enough for the seasoned double jumper. And with a plethora of puzzles intertwined, Tokobot emerges as one of the few original titles on the PSP and is more fun than a barrel of monkeys—er, robots.

## A Link to the Past

Tokobot's gameplay has you controlling a small team of miniature destructive robots through the remains of a once-great ancient society that is now riddled with quirky enemies, gadgets, and testy robotic bosses. Because the Tokobots were uncovered in the ancient ruins, it's only



fitting that they help navigate the rest of the way. You play as Bolt, a researcher for Canewood's lab, and lead a team of Tokobots along a nasty path of unique platforming challenges, environmental puzzles, and numerous and tricky enemy obstructions.

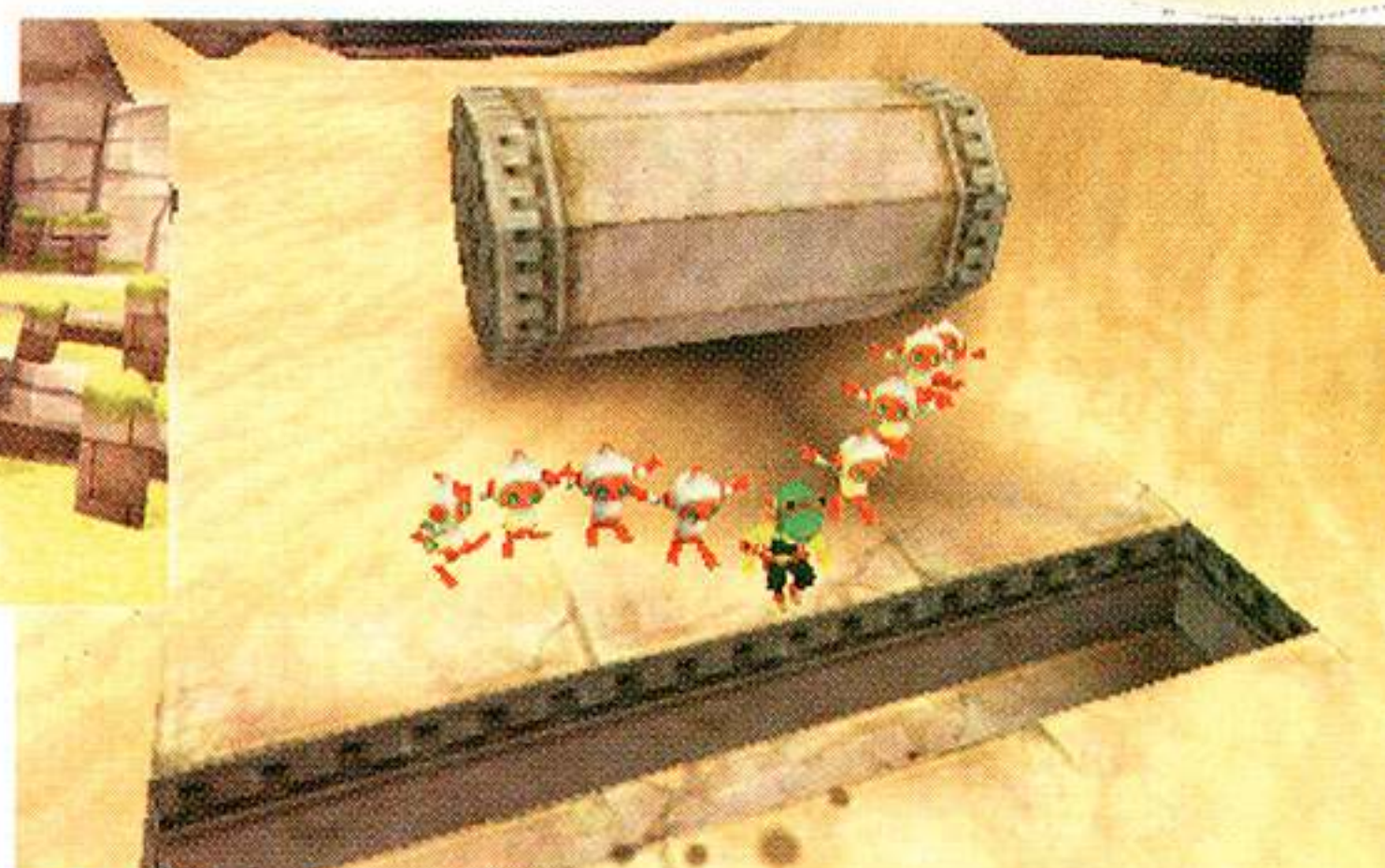
To accomplish the aforementioned, you need to utilize the Tokobots's special linking abilities and formations. By holding hands, the Tokobots can swing, glide, or spin to areas otherwise out of reach, and smash dastardly enemies to boot. You learn new abilities as the game progresses, including eight special joint combinations that transform the Tokobots into helpful devices, such as the Mega-Hammer, the Super-Tank, and the always-accommodating Crane-o-Matic. Some joint combos can be used only at specific locations in the game—usually to complete a pending puzzle—and will sometimes require a little backtracking to get the job done.

## Choose Your 'Bot Wisely

Tokobot's platforming sequences and brainteasers span from simple to toe-stubbingly frustrating as the game progresses through eight



**PROTIP:** Certain Tokobot abilities can trigger environmental reactions.



**PROTIP:** Using the correct formation for each obstacle is vital.

finely crafted levels. None of the Tokobot maneuvers are extraordinarily difficult to pull off, though picking the right ability for the right boss or situation can be tricky at times.

Tokobot is a technological treat with virtually zero loading times, crisp colors, and a pleasingly quirky little soundtrack. There's no multiplayer mode, though Tokobot's single-player game is engrossing enough to soak up your valuable attention for a solid eight hours.—*Mr. Marbles*

**KEY MOMENT:** Finishing a four-tier platforming sequence by latching your last Tokobot onto the final ledge

PSP	GRAPHICS	4.0	EDITORS' CHOICE	FUN FACTOR	4.5
	SOUND	4.0			
	CONTROL	4.5			

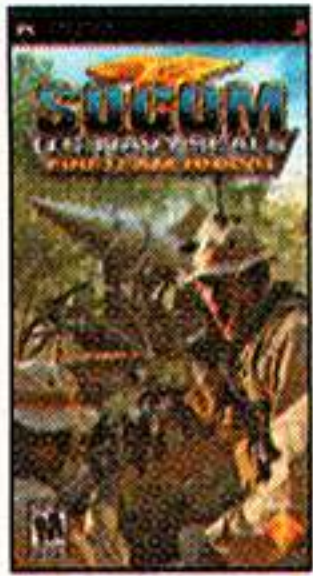
Developer and publisher: Tecmo ■ \$39.99  
Available now ■ Action/platformer ■ 1 player ■ ESRB: E





# SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo

PSP



SOCOM is the squad-shooter franchise of choice for the PS2, and while other games fumble the transition from the big screen to the small one, this series' first assault on handhelds is surprisingly competent.

## War Outside Your Living Room

The militaristic spirit that infuses SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo will put any veteran at ease. Snazzy cinematic sequences introduce the game's four locales; 14 missions each begin with the customization of your two-man team's gear; and orders are issued via an intuitive point-and-press interface and a game-pausing orders menu.

Platform-specific irritations crop up immediately, though. The controls are crippled by the PSP's inherent lack of a second analog stick, so you won't be pulling off critical moves like circle strafing. Worse, you're allowed to slow down only your already somewhat-pokey look speed, and path-finding bugaboos occasionally snag your A.I. comrade on rocks and walls. Fireteam Bravo compensates by being a shade too forgiving, even at the highest skill level, resulting in enemies that are too stoic for their own good.

## Fog of War

These issues, however, can't obscure Fireteam Bravo's strengths. Missions seem fluid based on your circumstances and performance, and objectives vary from the stealthy gathering of intelligence photos to the rescuing of hostages. The illusion, when it works, can be enveloping and intoxicating. That the game also talks to SOCOM 3 via a USB cable and "cross-talk objectives" only deepens the effect as each game can unlock goodies and alternate paths on the other. The online component is absorbing with full clan, stats, and even e-mail support over either the Internet or an Ad Hoc connection, but lock-on aiming tends to oversimplify the affair.



**PROTIP:** You're just asking to be cut apart if you take an alert group head on, especially if your backup is lagging behind.

Fireteam Bravo isn't the best-looking game with its simplistically tiled textures, and it doesn't have the natural feel that a Dual Shock controller offers, but it plays to its strengths well enough to overcome its weaknesses. The Navy would be proud.—*Ouroboros*

**KEY MOMENT:** Putting a shiny new 9mm hole in an enemy's head from across a river



**PROTIP:** Grab an enemy's gun, and you'll seldom have to worry about running out of ammo.



**PROTIP:** If you're low on health but your buddy is fine, send him ahead to catch the flak instead.

PSP	GRAPHICS	3.5	FUN FACTOR <b>4.0</b> <sub>5</sub>
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	3.5	

Developer: Zipper Interactive Publisher: Sony \$39.99  
Available now Action 1 player; 16 online ESRB: M

# Infected

PSP



Before dancing simulations took over, video arcades were home to innumerable action-packed quarter-eaters. Infected is something of a throwback to those days and as such will seem like a frenetic breath of fresh air to some and a forgettable one-trick pony to others.

## Dreaming of a Red Christmas

The current trend in shooting titles is to bolt on stories, stealth missions, and sidekicks like so many bullet points in a marketing presentation. That's not necessarily a bad thing as some games have become orders of magnitude and more interesting as a result, but sometimes you want your carnage refined down to the glistening viscera.

Sure, Infected has some features you won't find elsewhere. You can weaken a bunch of baddies with your ballistic gun, saving up their weakened forms to cause a massive chain reaction with a viral gun powered by your own immune blood. A multiplayer virus gimmick lets you "infect" defeated opponents with your customized avatar. Infected is also the first game in years to feature a decent heavy metal soundtrack. These things only thinly veil the core experience, though, which boils down to just running around and blowing great quantities of corrupted flesh all over New York City's Christmas.



**PROTIP:** Save your speed boosts for when you really need to get out of Dodge in a hurry—now, for instance.

## Commute of the Damned

The repetition of everything from the enemies to the wintry city streets sets in after only a few missions, but as constricted as the gameplay is, it can be exciting and fun in small doses. Infected won't get you through long solitary plane rides, but it seems to be the perfect "just a quick match" game to crack out with some buddies on the bus, train, or Internet.

Infected takes a risky step back to a simpler time and can't really stand on its own two legs as a full-fledged modern game, but its niche appeal may be worth a closer look if that's what you're looking for.—*Ouroboros*

**KEY MOMENT:** Putting a rocket in Santa's kisser, then dispatching him in a gory giblet shower



**PROTIP:** Don't let an outbreak get to the point of overload, or you'll be swimming in faster and meaner brain-eaters.



**PROTIP:** The more zombies you can take out with one viral shot, the more upgrades you're likely to unlock, so wait as long as you can and then pop them all at once.

PSP	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR <b>3.5</b> <sub>5</sub>
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	3.5	

Developer: Planet Moon Studios Publisher: Majesco  
\$39.99 Available now Action 1 player; 8 online ESRB: M





# Sonic Rush

DS



As Sonic's marquee titles expand further into 3D, exploring the side-scrolling legacy of the Genesis's heyday has been left to portable platforms, so bringing that old-school flavor to the latest handheld seems only natural.

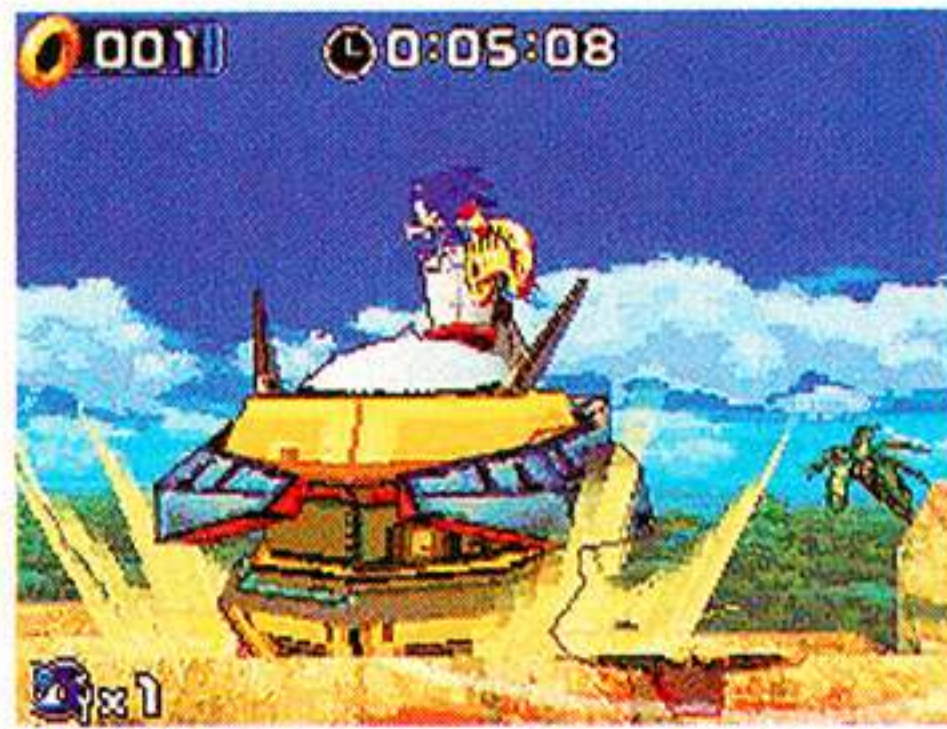
## Adventures in Physics

As if one Eggman wasn't enough to contend with, a tear in space-time brings another from a parallel universe, who is pursued by playable character Blaze the Cat. She's the only alternate to Sonic, and you won't find Chao hunting or world hubs either in Sonic Rush. Everything that wasn't about crazy speed, gravity-defying acrobatics, or energizing boss battles has been trimmed away.

The result is a polished, if repetitive, interpretation—a gift for fans sick of side errands but bad news if you're tired of racing through yet another water or jungle environment. The detailed animation of each mid-air contortion is flawless, and the new transit mechanisms and 3D embellishments are cool, but Sonic Rush's sparsely populated levels and coin-spilling ambushes feel played out and too familiar. Performing tricks to refill your power meter could've been invigorating if only it had been explored further. As it stands, it seems a shallow gimmick.



**PRO TIP:** Tearing through a level at light speed isn't just fun, it's also one of the better ways to stay alive.



**PRO TIP:** Some boss battles are trickier than others, but there's always a moment of vulnerability. Avoid attacks until you see the pattern.



**PRO TIP:** Look out for floating rings to get you to high places, and max out your power meter with tricks.

## Two LCDs Are Better Than One

The addition of a second screen actually allays some of this disappointment as the action jumps haphazardly from top to bottom and back again. The effect is jarring at first because many of the transitions occur in the middle of some speed-demon stunt, but it also neatly emphasizes the branching paths available to our hero. Each stage grades you on your performance, encouraging you to go back and explore every nook and cranny, and reduce your completion time.

Sonic Rush certainly isn't revolutionary, and it only barely makes use of the touch-screen, but it's a decent distillation of what's kept a sprite-based Sonic alive in the age of textured polygons...as long as you're fine with more of the same.—*Ouroboros*

**KEY MOMENT:** Flying through loops and twists at warp speed and then spring-boarding into the sky



DS	GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR	3.5
	SOUND	3.5		
	CONTROL	4.0		

Developer and publisher: Sega ■ \$34.99  
Available now ■ Action ■ 1 player ■ ESRB: E

# The Lord of the Rings Tactics

PSP



The Lord of the Rings Tactics trades in the showy real-time spectacle of The Battle for Middle-Earth's huge engagements for the more contemplative appeal of turn-based strategy.

## Two Sides to Every Ring

The main attraction in Tactics is a pair of single-player campaigns. In one, you play on the side of the angels and struggle to deliver Frodo and the titular ring to the fiery Mount Doom; in the other, you take up the mantle of the Dark Lord and crush your diminutive opposition. Choosing sides doesn't affect the sequence of maps you'll play, but you are tasked with different objectives and rewarded with relevant film clips.



**PRO TIP:** Use the unique obstacles of each map to drive a wedge between your enemies, or you'll be facing a wall of pain.



**PRO TIP:** Units gain armor advantages for standing next to each other. Be wary when your enemy target has a friend nearby.

you'll play, but you are tasked with different objectives and rewarded with relevant film clips.

This choice, however, implies a variety that isn't truly present. While upgrades for each of your heroes are available—as well as single-use buffs, healing kits, and such—you acquire little gold from each mission and thus frequently need to revisit previous maps simply to afford some goodies. There are only so many Urak-hai Berzerkers you can kill before this gets a tad tiresome. This problem cuts the other way as well. As permanent stat upgrades can be purchased, all you need to do is blast through early missions repeatedly to power up.

## You Shall Not Pass!

The good news is that Tactics delivers a significant challenge if you don't mind fighting through its repetition. Each map offers a strategic puzzle, some of which can seem nearly insurmountable at the hard difficulty setting, so when you finally do overcome them, the resultant sense of accomplishment is heady.

Tactics probably would've been a better game if it had left out the half-baked RPG elements and focused on more varied units and capabilities. If you need a turn-based meal and can work past the disappointments, you might find enough here to keep you fed, even if it's ultimately less filling than it should be.—*Ouroboros*

**KEY MOMENT:** Protecting Frodo from Lurtz amid the fateful Weathertop ruins



**PRO TIP:** Your early moves can have a huge effect on how a battle progresses. Take a moment to find the strategic hot spots on each map.

PSP	GRAPHICS	3.5	FUN FACTOR	3.5
	SOUND	3.5		
	CONTROL	3.5		

Developer and publisher: EA Games ■ \$49.99  
Available now ■ Strategy ■ 4 players ■ ESRB: T



**2nd QUARTER.**

**USUALLY I ONLY EAT ONE.**

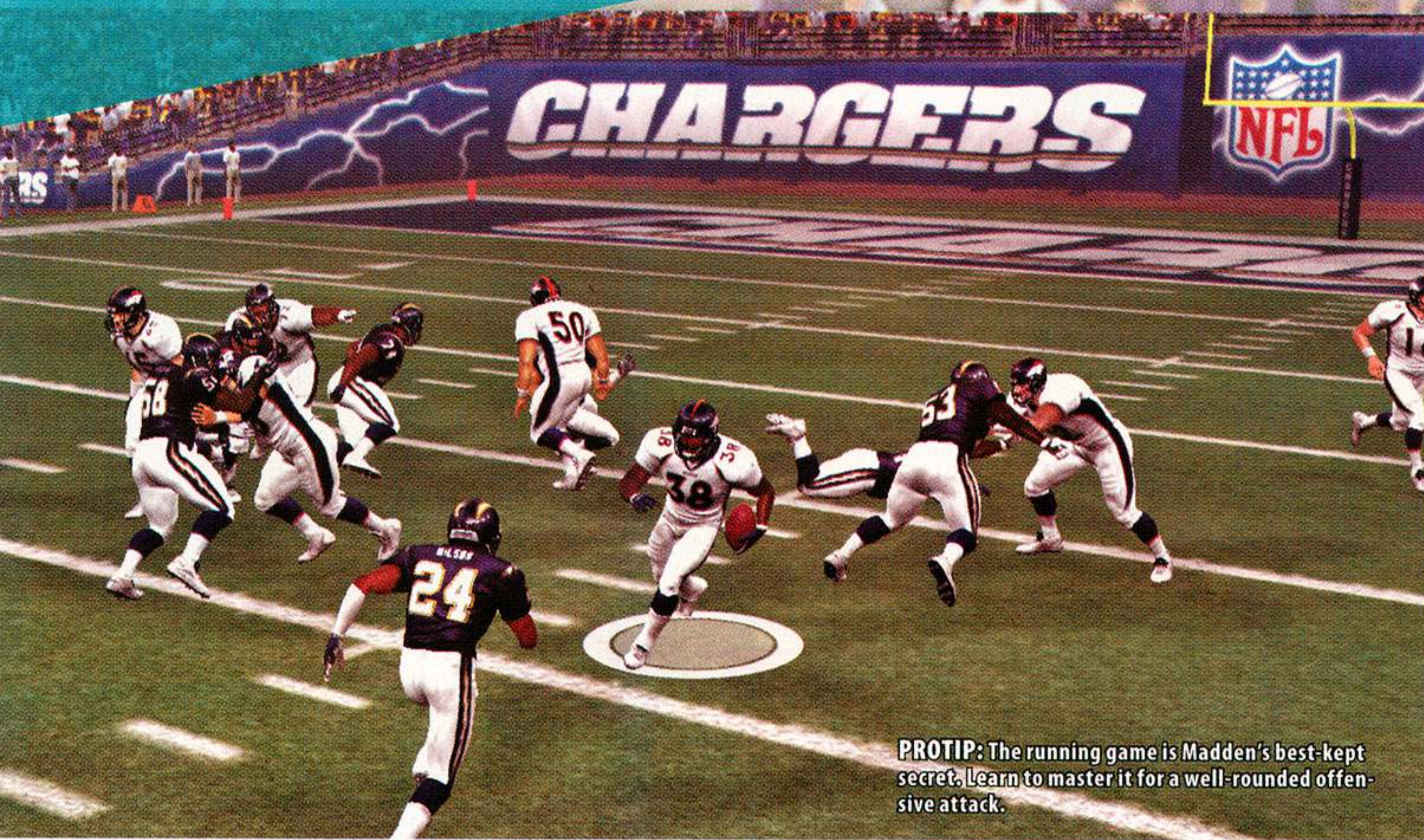
**THE  
DOUBLE QUARTER POUNDER®  
WITH CHEESE  
AND  
QUARTER POUNDER®  
WITH CHEESE  
POUND ONE**



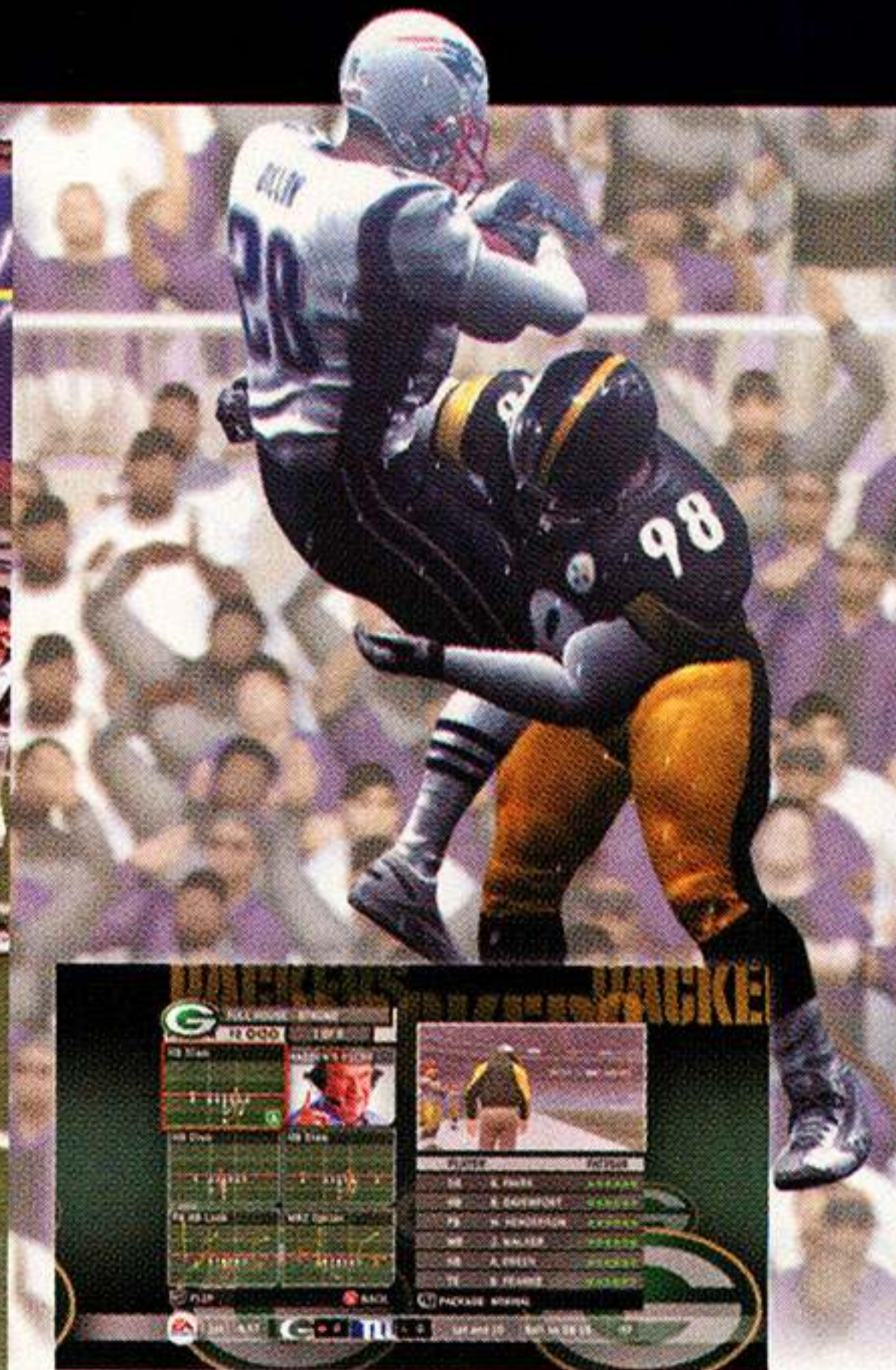
Quarter Pounder® with Cheese weight before cooking 4 oz. (113.4g)  
Double Quarter Pounder® with Cheese weight before cooking 8 oz. (226.8g)  
©2005 McDonald's Corporation

  
**i'm lovin' it®**





**PROTIP:** The running game is Madden's best-kept secret. Learn to master it for a well-rounded offensive attack.



If you play versus the A.I., go ahead and use Madden Picks to choose your defensive plays. Coach calls a good defense, though his offense is suspect.

# Madden NFL 06

Madden NFL 06 for the Xbox 360 has formidable looks, and it plays pretty tough, too.

Xbox 360



Part of the fun in playing Madden NFL 06 on the Xbox 360 is trying to figure out where it fits in the lineage of Madden NFL games. What's definitely clear is that for all its glitz and glamour, it doesn't earn a spot at the front of the line.

## Looks Like a Winner

Make no mistake: This is clearly the best-looking Madden football game ever. Player models, stadium detail, and crowd scenes are great examples of the 360's impressive graphics technology, and even the coaches actually look like their real-life selves.

What makes the gameplay hum, however, is the animation. Overall, it's better than ever, and there are a ton of new animations at every position on the field. Oh, you can still find bunches of linemen banging into each other like bumper cars or running backs who seem to rotate on a spindle when they pivot, but these incidents are fewer and a little more far between than before. Overall, 06 shows fine visual intricacies in its action and displays graphics that will please fans of the sport and make the game look good for casual players.



**PROTIP:** When you're playing against the A.I., listen to the coach in Coach play-calling mode. He's usually an offensive whiz.

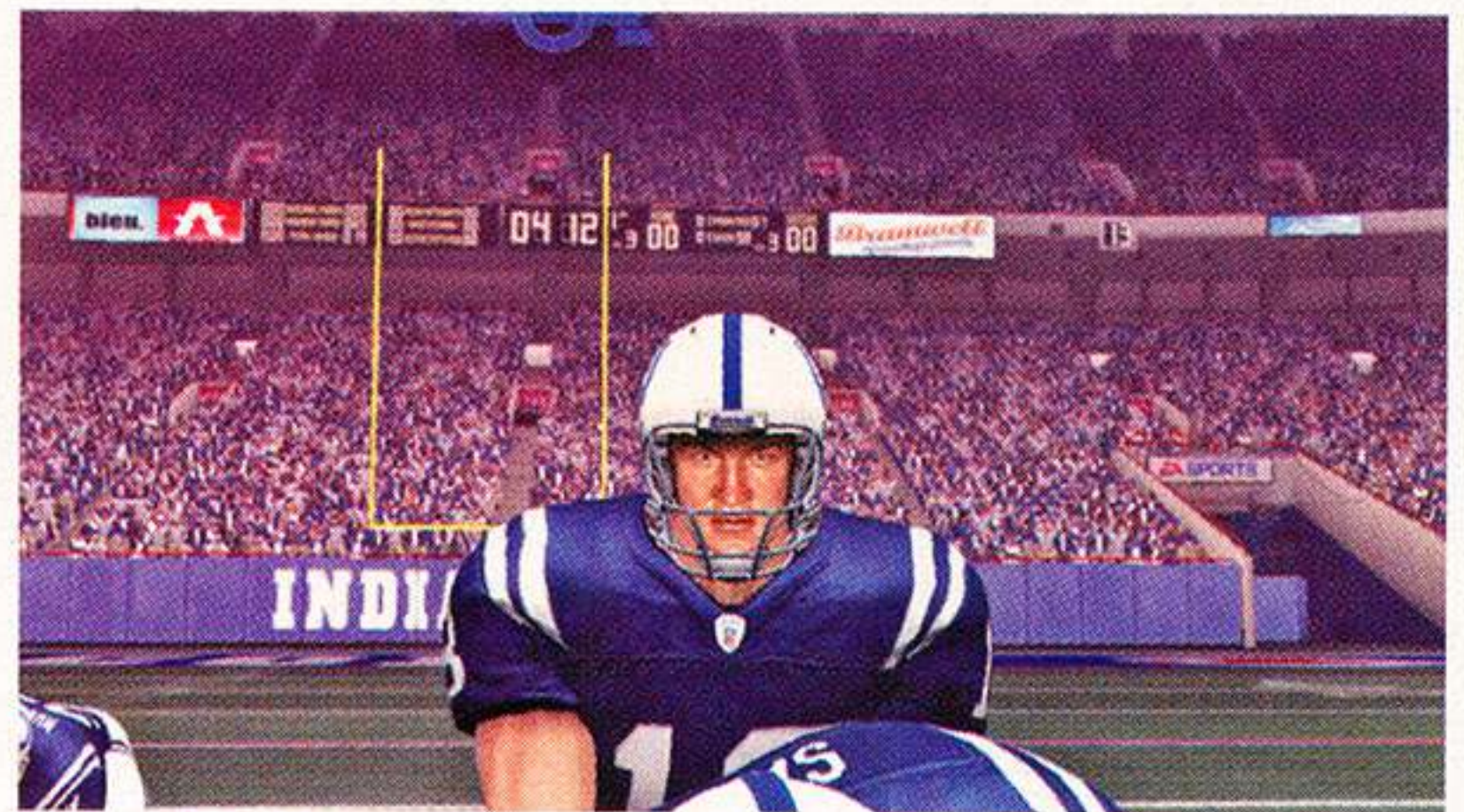
## Missing in Action

On the field, the game's controls spin on a dime, but like all the EA Sports titles for the 360 launch window, they have a little less to manage. That's because entire aspects of the gameplay that you'd normally find in versions of Madden for the PlayStation 2 or Xbox have been given this 360 season off. On the defensive side of the ball, for instance, there are no Playmaker calls, and you can't set up individual defensive players. Also, you can't swing the camera to all of the wideouts at the line of scrimmage. Of course, you can shift coverages or call blitzes, and if you haven't played Madden before, you'd probably never notice the loss of nuance.

The offense fares a little better. The Vision and Precision passing cone is "off" as the default,



**PROTIP:** If you can find one-on-one coverage against your receivers when you're on offense, then you can usually pass for a big gainer.



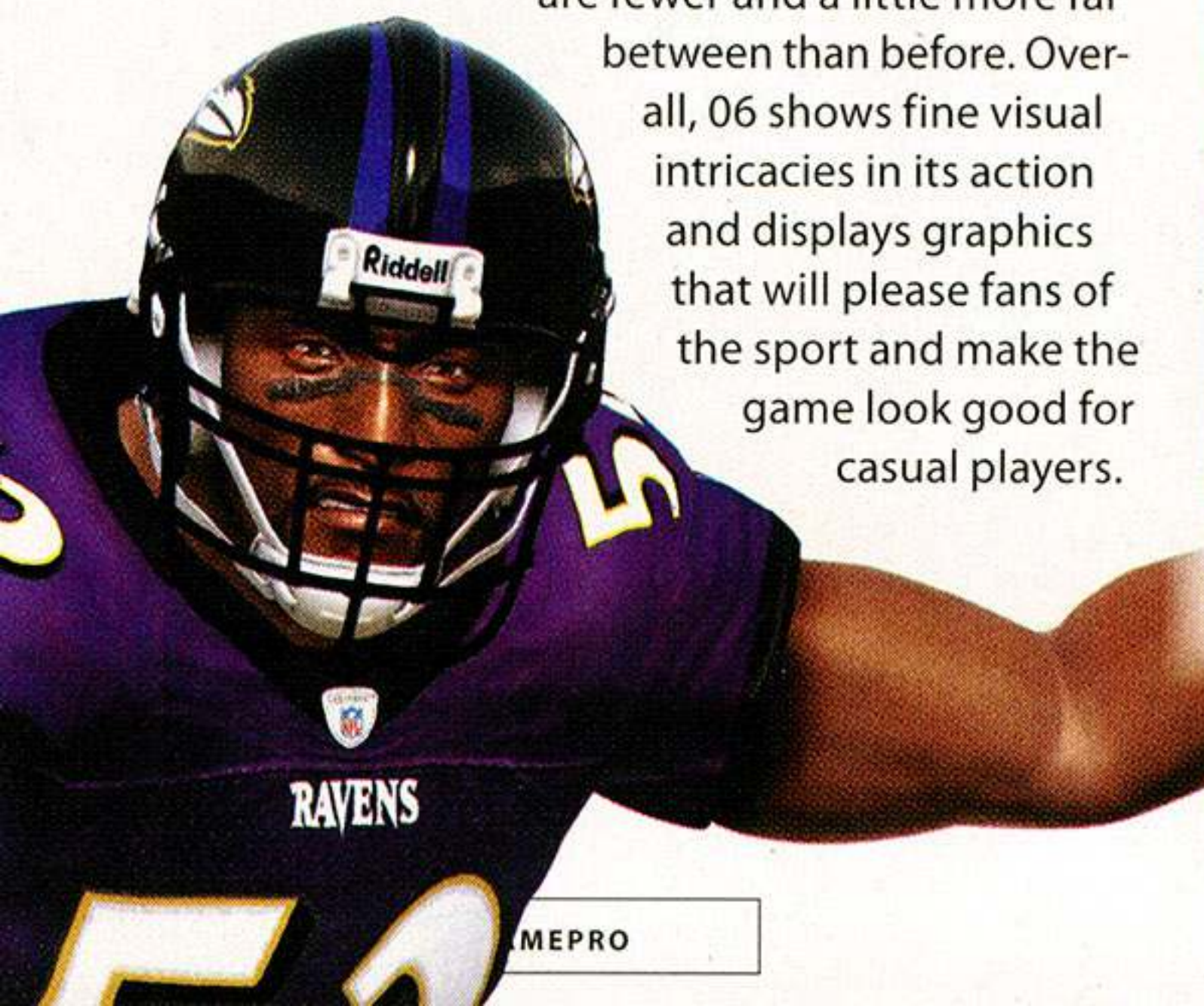
Stare into the grill of most star players, and you'll find the real guy staring right back at you.

which is a concession to players who didn't like having one more thing to think about after the snap. Probably the most notable addition is a new play-calling screen. Plays are organized by formation or type (runs or passes), so you don't have to scroll through a playbook. Or you can ask Madden or the coach for advice. The Coach option is cool because you hear the coach call out the play using full-blown football jargon (but without the cursing) just like you would if you had a helmet headset on.

## Welcome to the Hall of Same

NFL 06 shows great promise for next-gen Madden football games to come—it just might be your starter this year. If you're a hardcore Madden fan, then you're already playing the best versions out there—the PS2 or Xbox ones. Madden NFL 06 for the 360, then, is basically a nice addition to your collection. If the Xbox 360 represents your first foray into pro football...it's time to kick off.—Bro Buzz

**KEY MOMENT:** The first time you look into Ray Lewis's cage and see him glaring back at you



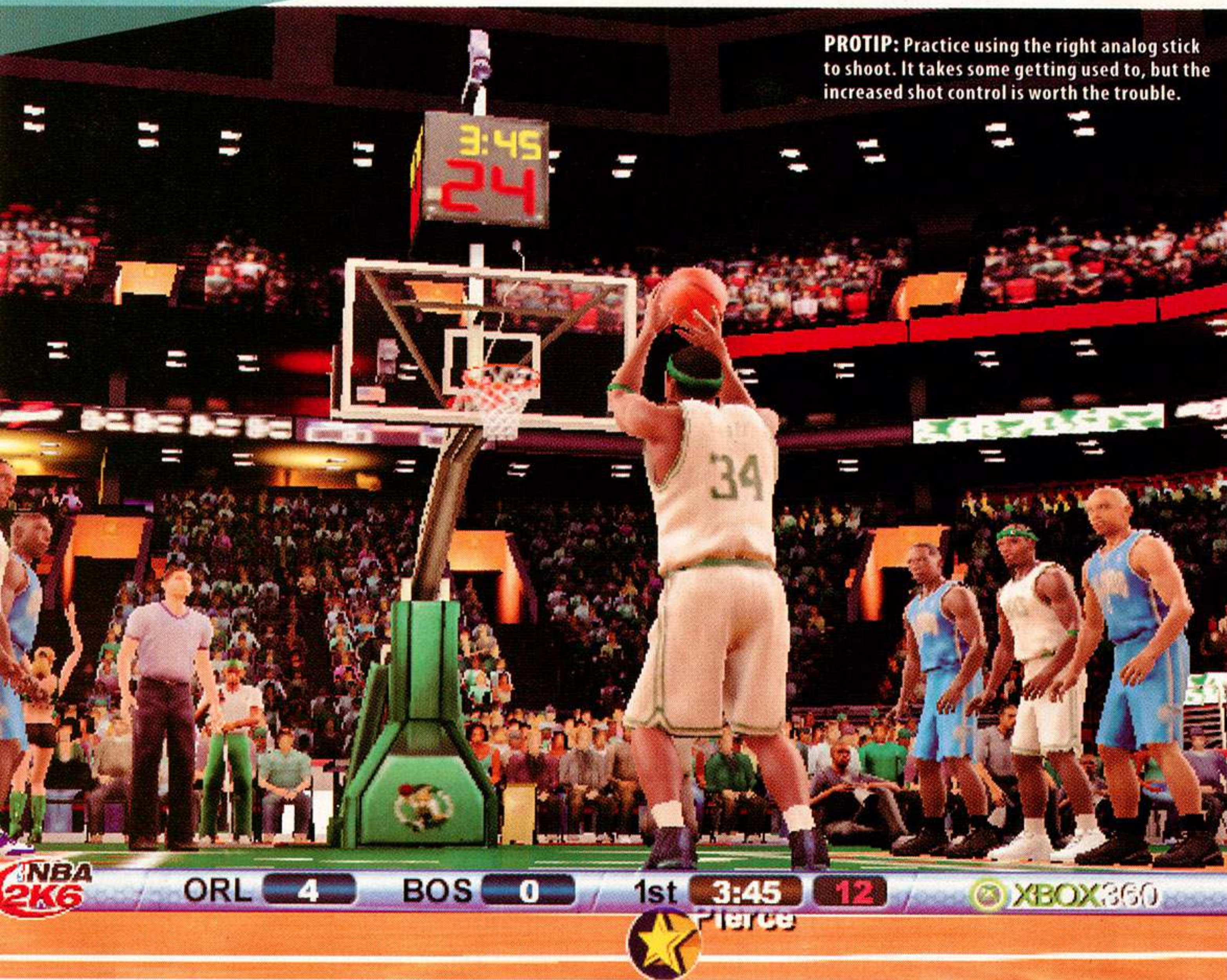
X	GRAPHICS	4.5
	SOUND	4.0
	CONTROL	4.0

**FUN FACTOR**  
4.0

Developer: EA Tiburon Publisher: EA Sports \$59.99 Available now Football 4 players; 8 online ESRB: E

**ONLINE** GAMEPRO.COM FOR MORE PLAYOFF ACTION WITH MADDEN NFL 06 ON THE 360.





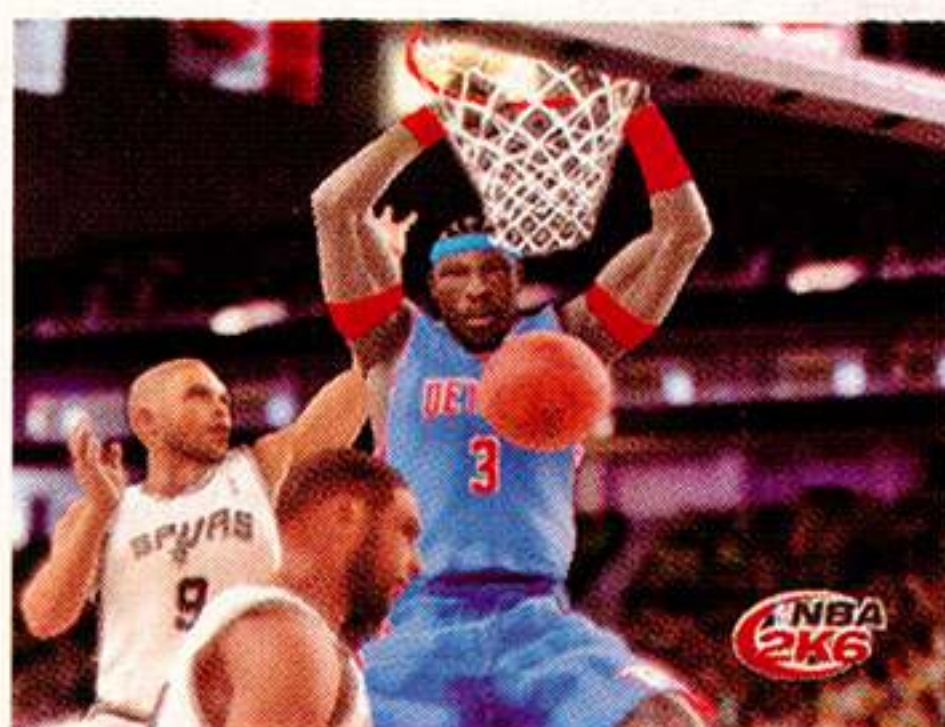
**PRO TIP:** Practice using the right analog stick to shoot. It takes some getting used to, but the increased shot control is worth the trouble.



**PRO TIP:** Be selective when blocking shots as your hang time will leave you open to your opponent's counter moves.



**PRO TIP:** Trust your teammate's A.I. to make rebounds and play basic defense, and focus on intercepting passes and stealing balls from careless opponents.



It might sound stupid, but watching the sweat and clothing effects is one of the most oddly captivating graphical moments in NBA 2K6.

# NBA 2K6

**NBA 2K6 proves to be a serious challenger in the battle for next-gen sports supremacy.**

With stiff competition in the NBA games arena from EA Sports' long-running Live franchise, 2K6 puts up a tough fight with gorgeous character models, a deep franchise mode and gameplay options, and a silky-smooth shooting control scheme. Though a few weaker points keep it from reaching amazing new heights in the b-ball genre, NBA 2K6 remains a fine example of what a high-quality multiplayer launch title can be.

## Kings of the Court

For the most part, 2K6 packs a powerful graphical punch that's sure to drop more than a few jaws when gamers behold the incredibly lifelike player models (complete with accurate tattoos and convincing faces) and hyper-realistic animations that even account for the weight and movement of the uniforms! The incredible lighting and crisp visual presentation set the stage for some excellent on-court action as 2K6 boats a number of diverse and entertaining play modes. All the genre staples are present and accounted for here (franchise mode,

practice, fantasy draft, Xbox Live, tournament, season) as well as a few beefy extras like the addicting street ball mode and quirky mini-games like air hockey and darts, which can be played in your star's high-class crib.

But 2K6's true strengths lie in its dead-on control and smooth shooting. By using the right analog stick for shooting and free throws, you now have a new level of delicate touch and finesse to match the myriad of easy moves and quick shakes at your disposal when moving the rock. The new dual-player configuration also makes it easy to set up plays and attack opposing defenses, which is no easy feat considering the clever and competitive A.I. on both sides of the court. And while the ghetto-fabulous rap tunes grow tiresome quickly, the pro commentary and trash-talking insults help bolster the audio presentation.

## Play On, Player

NBA 2K6 doesn't have many low points, but a few gripes tend to stand out when juxtaposed against the stellar presentation and addictive gameplay. Although the graphics are certainly one of the game's best features, the ugly polygonal crowd members and coaches (and pretty much anyone and anything not on the court) are a tacky reminder of early Xbox titles, and jar with the rest of the aesthetic splendor. The constant replays are annoying but forgivable in light of their beauty, while the shameless



**PRO TIP:** When playing defense, be aggressive—holding the right trigger while guarding an opponent can lead to a few advantageous turnovers.

in-game advertising saturating 2K6 will likely disgust conscientious players and gaming purists. These complaints (along with a few sloppy audio hiccups) certainly aren't enough to dampen the fun, but with the Xbox 360 version costing \$20 more than the other console versions, multiplatform gamers who don't care about high-definition visuals might do well to check this one out on the other systems first.

—Master Bones

**KEY MOMENT:** Pulling off a sweet shake move before gently throwing one up for three over a dazed defender. Suckers!

	GRAPHICS	4.5
	SOUND	4.0
	CONTROL	4.5

Developer: Visual Concepts | Publisher: 2K Sports | \$59.99  
Available now | Basketball | 4 players; 8 online | ESRB: E

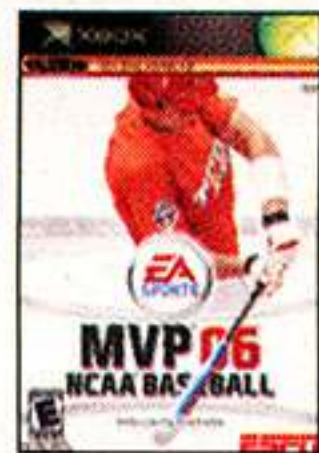
**FUN FACTOR**  
4.0



# MVP 06 NCAA Baseball

PS2

Xbox



In response to EA eating up the NFL license until the virtual end of time, Take 2 fired back and snagged the rights to all things MLB, forcing EA to look elsewhere for baseball. So, with no A-Rods or Jeters, EA went with the next best thing: college.

Going from perhaps the most glamorous sport of metrosexuals and through-the-roof salaries to the NCAA baseball league of no-names and nobodies is not an easy transition. But developer EA Canada did a worthwhile job in making this year's version of MVP stand out, even if it serves up a great deal of redone material.

## Aluminum Is Better Than Wood

But, hey, the demotion to college ain't all bad. With it, we get more poppy aluminum bats and a smorgasbord of college teams, along with NCAA tournament brackets and 18 authentic



**PROTIP:** Preload your swing as the ball leaves the pitcher's hand, and follow through in one fluid motion.



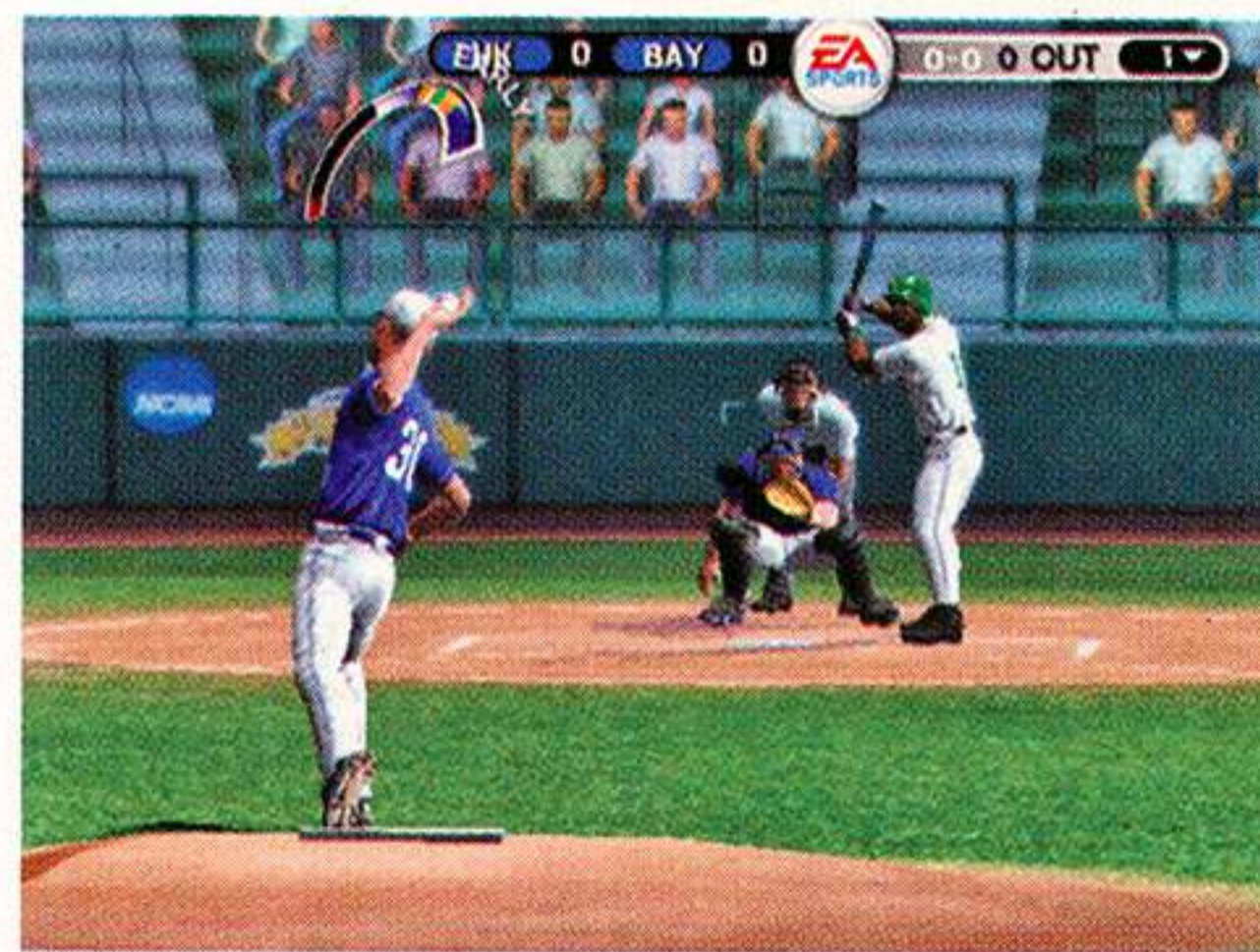
**PROTIP:** To throw with accuracy, release the right analog stick before the throwing meter turns red.

college ballparks. And, of course, it wouldn't be another EA Sports' iteration without a patented new control system.

This year, the control upgrade comes in the names of Load and Fire Batting System and Precision Throwing Control. Batting works by preloading the analog stick back and then moving it forward in one fluid motion as the pitch arrives, while Precision Throwing challenges you to aptly hold down the right analog stick in the direction of the appropriate base with execution affecting accuracy. While both systems take a little getting used to, you'll most likely see each as a much-needed update like the three-click-to-analog-swing golf transition.

## Another Tweak or Two

Other noticeable gameplay differences are simply cosmetic, such as the pitching camera being moved behind the mound



**PROTIP:** The pitching system is identical to that in MVP 2005.

and a touted ESPN broadcast-style presentation, but the rest of the in-game controls are generally the same as those in MVP Baseball 2005. Players are either nameless or randomly generated, and game modes follow the typical EA exhibition, dynasty, and mini-game format. And while you may find it tough to shell out fifty for another baseball season, there is an added bit of pride of getting behind the old college crew in MVP 06. Go Gauchos!—*Mr. Marbles*

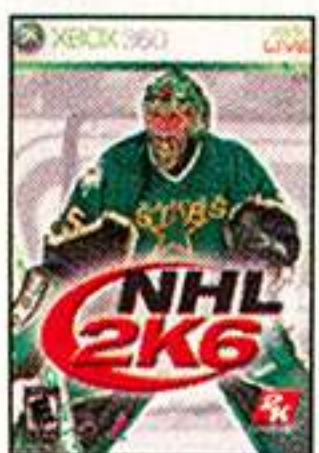
**KEY MOMENT:** Reliving your failed dreams of college-baseball glory

PS2	GRAPHICS	3.0	FUN FACTOR	3.5
	SOUND	3.0		
	CONTROL	3.0		
Xbox	GRAPHICS	3.5	FUN FACTOR	3.5
	SOUND	3.0		
	CONTROL	3.5		

Developer: EA Canada Publisher: EA Sports \$49.99  
Available March Baseball 2 players ESRB: E

# NHL 2K6

Xbox 360



With the release of the Xbox 360, hardcore hockey fans don't have to go a moment without the coolest game on ice thanks to NHL 2K6. However, while this latest incarnation offers sharper-looking rinks and ice, a livelier, more interactive crowd, and stellar sim-style gameplay, there isn't a whole lot that separates it from the PlayStation 2 and Xbox versions.

## Takin' 'Em Top-Shelf

Right from the face-off circle, it's readily apparent that NHL 2K6 for Microsoft's latest hardware juggernaut is one smooth customer with most of the attention resting on the visuals. Put simply, no hockey game has ever looked this realistic. The players look sharp, and everything from the hyper realistic-looking ice to the way the nets flex after a goal is a tasty feast for the eyes.

As far as gameplay innovations,

developer Visual Concepts didn't look to reinvent the puck, but it did come up with a nice feature called Crease Control. Simply clicking the right thumb stick displays a vantage point behind the goalie. Gamers see a V-shaped wedge and a target cursor that indicates where the shooter is aiming at. It's then up to you to control the goalie by using the Right Thumbstick to move the cursor where the shooter is aiming and then pressing A to make the save.

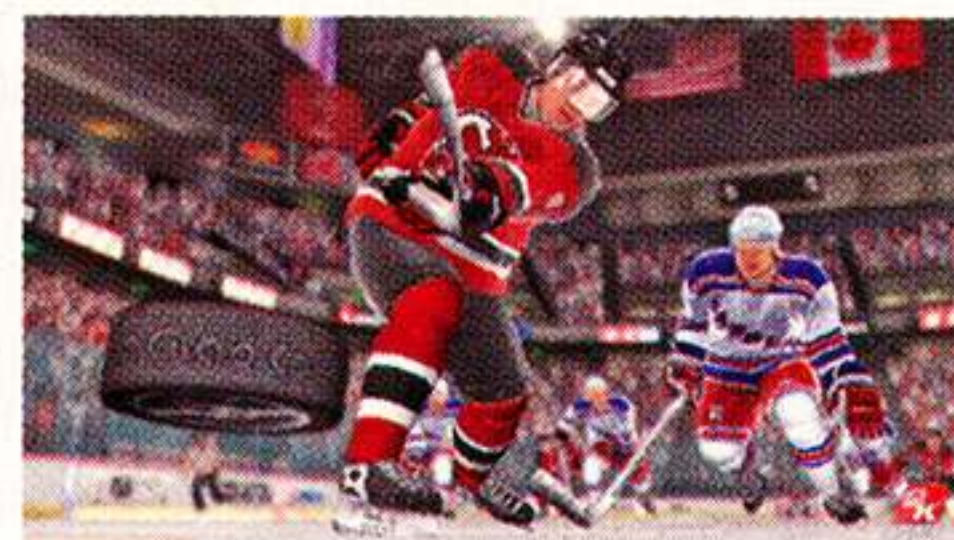
Once you get past all that, 2K6 begins to resemble its less-powerful next-gen cousins in almost every way—from the gameplay features,



**PROTIP:** Create great scoring opportunities by using the Right Thumbstick to execute a manual deke move to split the defense.



**PROTIP:** When you place an Enforcer on the ice, intimidate your opponent's best player. They'll be less effective on the ice.



**PROTIP:** To become a prolific goal scorer, employ ProControl whenever possible—before long, no one will be able to stop you!

such as ProControl and the Enforcer System, to on-the-fly coaching and maximum goaltending. Of course, the masses can also expect the requisite gameplay modes, including Franchise, as well as a modest list of mini-games.

## Dancing with the Devils

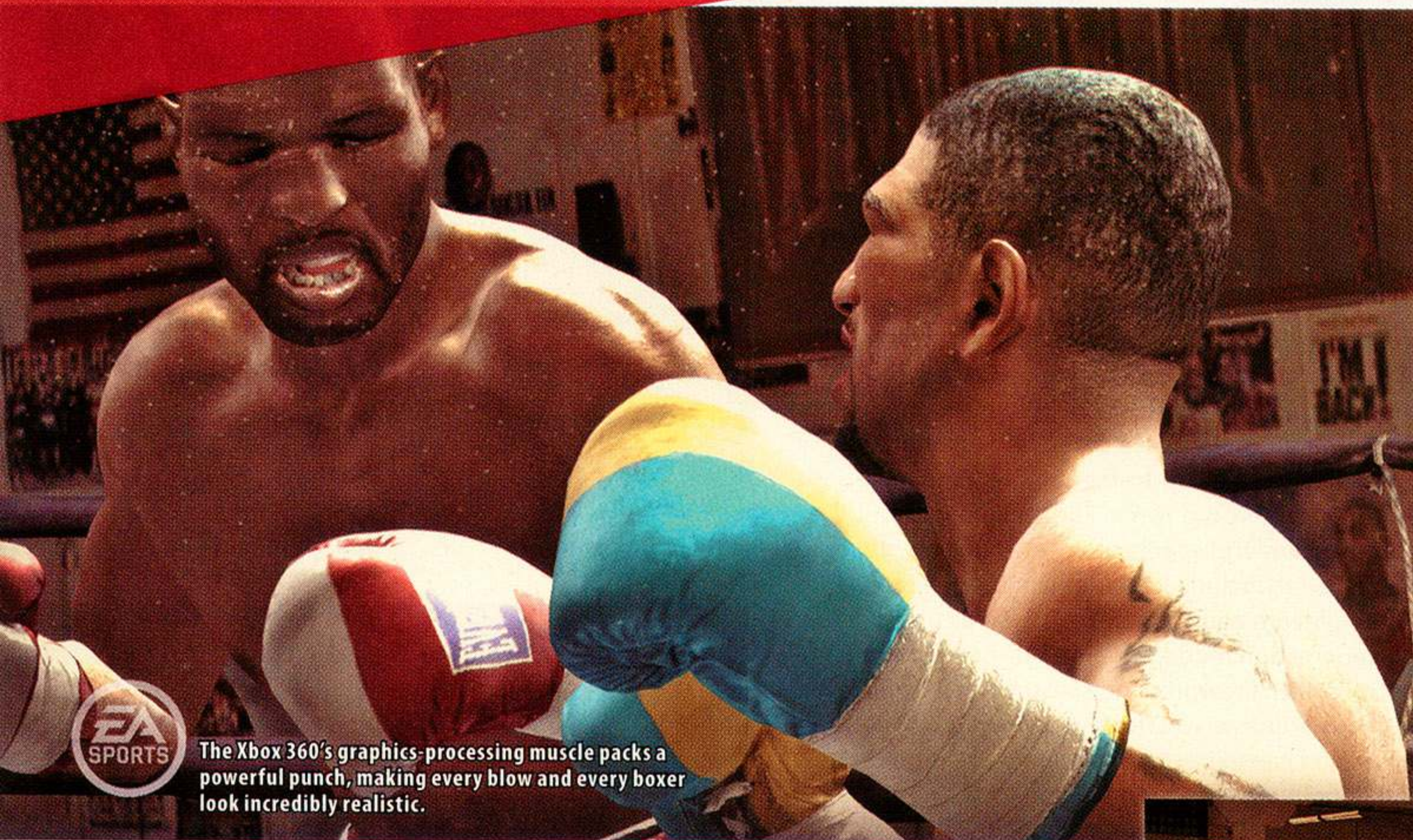
If you purposely waited for this version of 2K6, you should definitely look to add it to your growing collection of 360 games. It's a great sim game. However, it's simply not a solid buy at \$60—especially considering that this is basically the same game as the PS2 and Xbox versions, just without the Crease Control feature and high-definition graphics.—*The Enforcer*

**KEY MOMENT:** Pulling off a hat trick and watching the finely rendered crowd rise to its feet

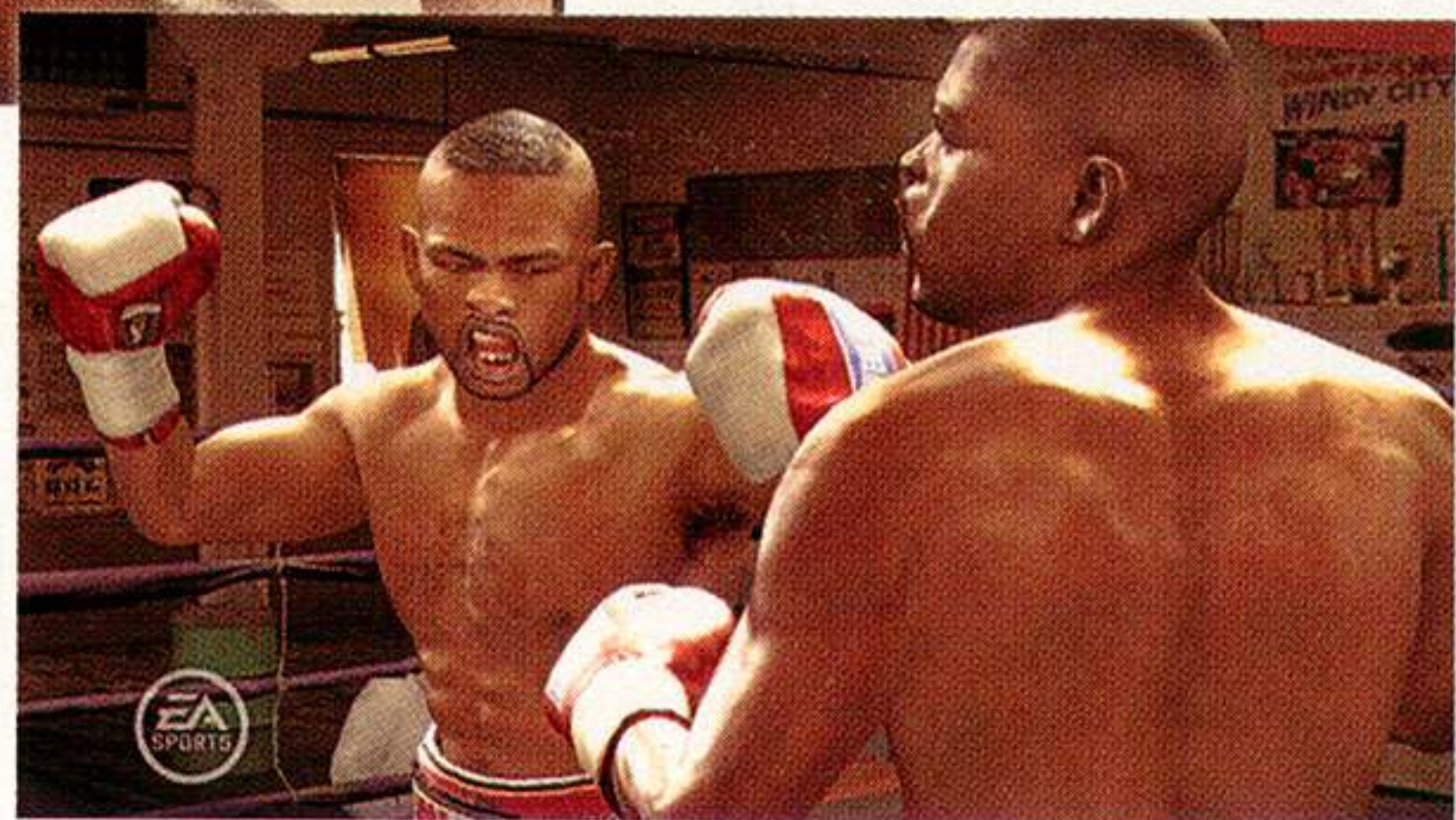
Xbox 360	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR	4.0
	SOUND	3.5		
	CONTROL	4.0		

Developer: Visual Concepts/Kush Games Publisher: 2K Sports  
\$59.99 Available now Hockey 8 players ESRB: E10+





The Xbox 360's graphics-processing muscle packs a powerful punch, making every blow and every boxer look incredibly realistic.



# Fight Night Round 3

Xbox 360

Three million—that's the number of polygons comprising each new boxer in Fight Night Round 3. But despite the Xbox 360's potential for delivering delicious eye candy, the next generation of gaming isn't just about visual bells and whistles for Fight Night developer EA Chicago. The boxers' A.I. has been increased significantly with real-life fighters like Muhammad Ali moving and punching like he did during his career. Couple this with photo-realistic environments and some of the most wince-producing punch impacts this side of George Foreman, and you have one of the most visually captivating boxing experiences outside of stepping into the ring yourself.

## Playing with Your Emotions

To help create a more convincing boxing experience, EA Chicago is taking a bold step by

removing all extraneous onscreen meters and indicators. The result is a game with absolutely no HUD clutter whatsoever. But how will you know how your boxer or your opponent is faring during a fight? You'll use your eyes.

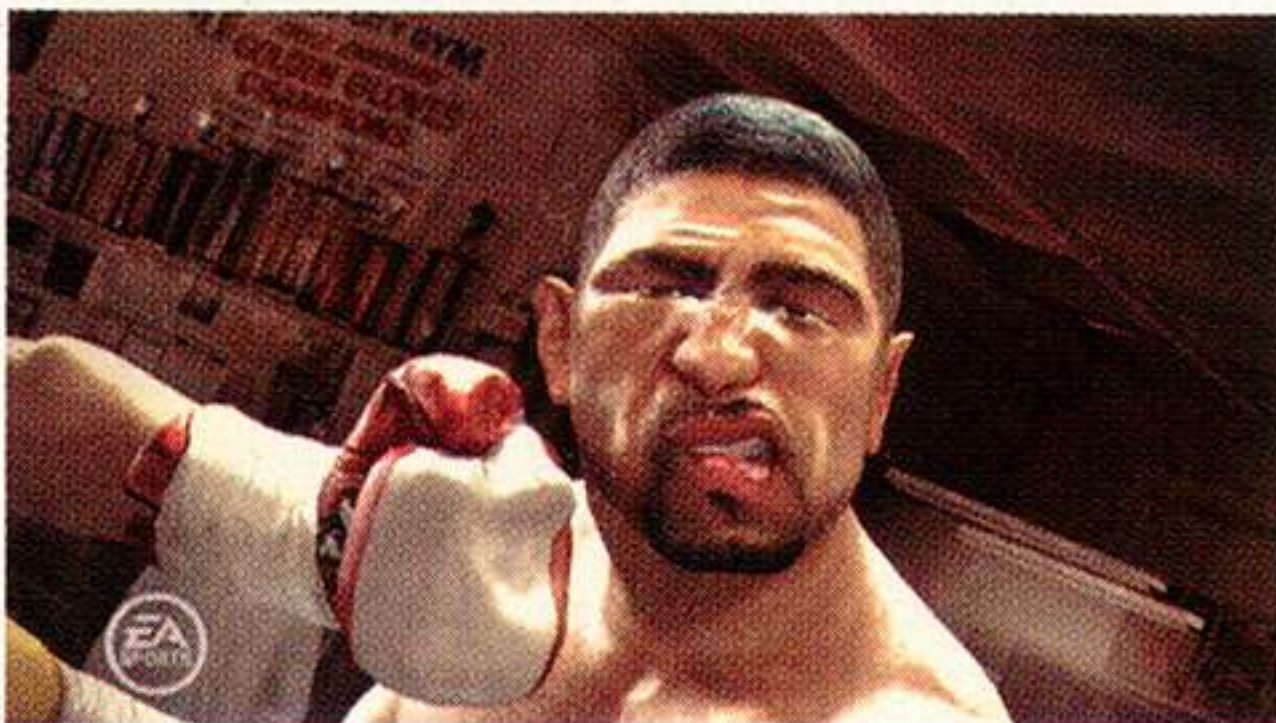
Enter "emotion," which the game's developer describes as the unique body language and facial expressions a boxer exhibits while fighting. If a fighter is on the ropes, you'll notice that he moves more slowly, blocks less effectively, and grimaces when you hit him.

To get an opponent to that point, you'll have to tap into an arsenal of new, powerful analog stick-controlled blows, including two that can turn the tide of an entire fight. One punch instantly dazes an opponent, while the other can trigger a cool first-person perspective mini-game where your poor adversary has to flail away and try to block your incoming barrage of punches. Each of these powerful weapons has a risk and a reward, meaning that while

they're powerful, they can also be parried and used against you by making you more vulnerable to counterpunches.

Given the in-your-face characteristics of boxing, it's nice to see EA taking factors like emotion and realism to heart for its latest boxing title. While EA struck boxing gold with Fight Night Round 2, things seem to be shaping up for an even more impressive rematch on the Xbox 360.—JohnnyK

- **First Look**
- Developer: EA Chicago
- Publisher: EA Sports
- Target release date: March





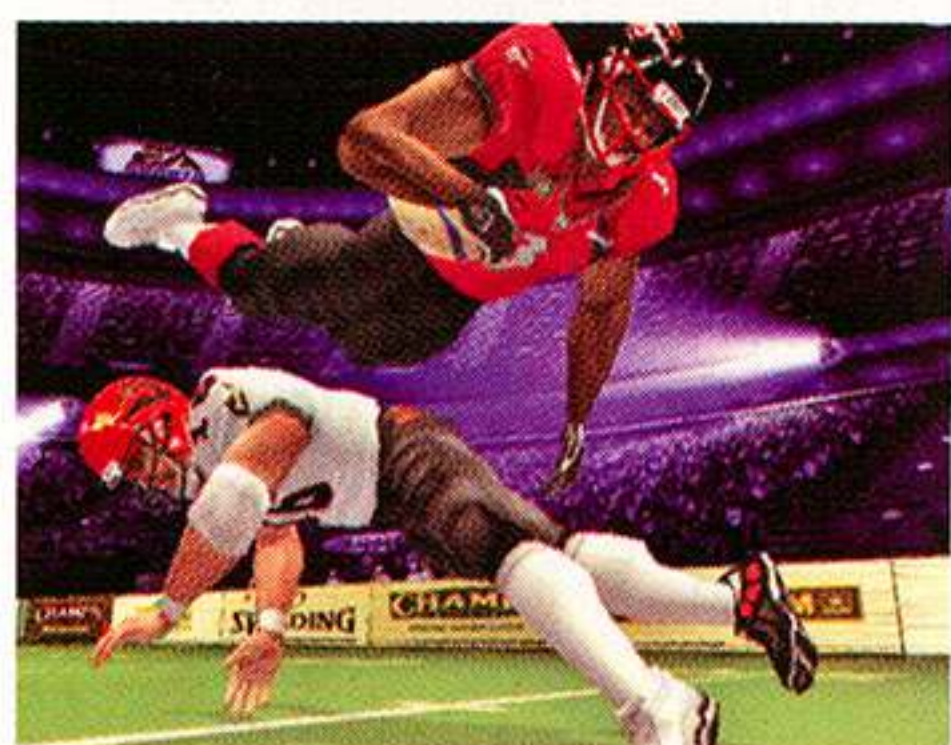
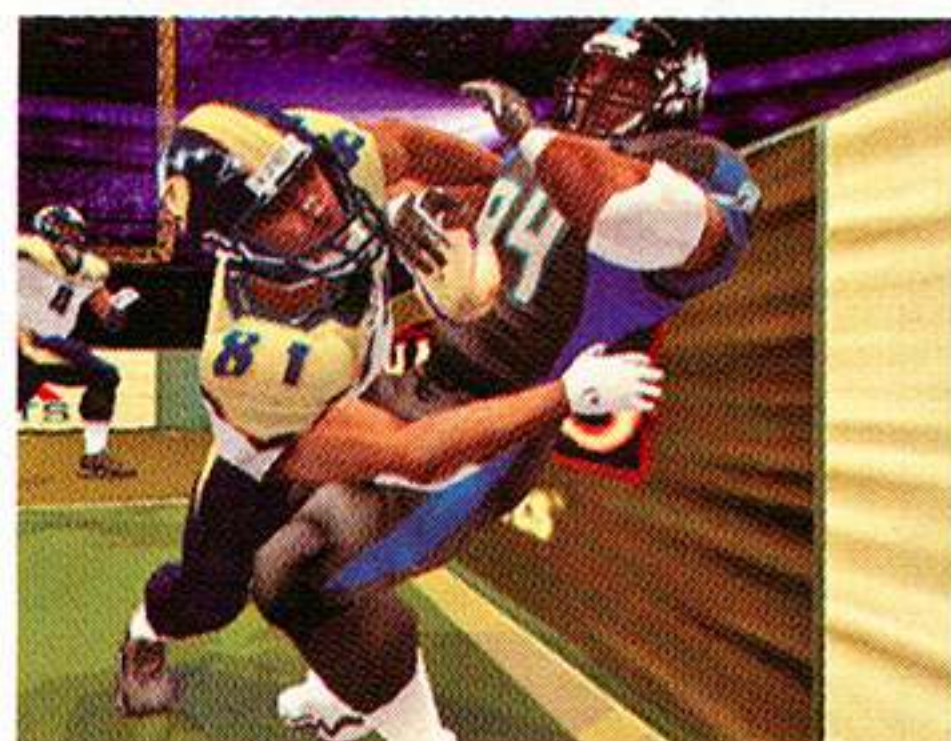


# Arena Football

PS2

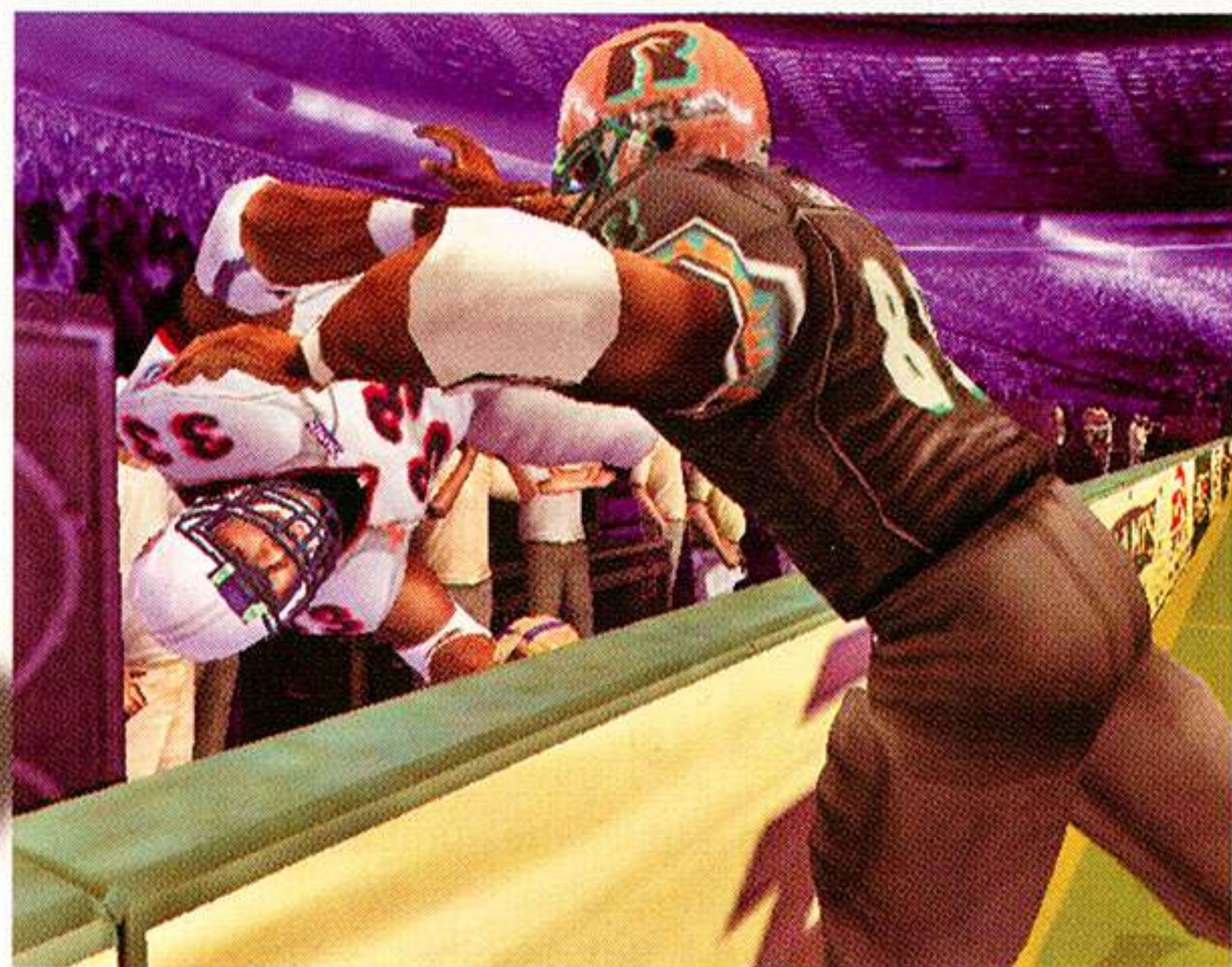
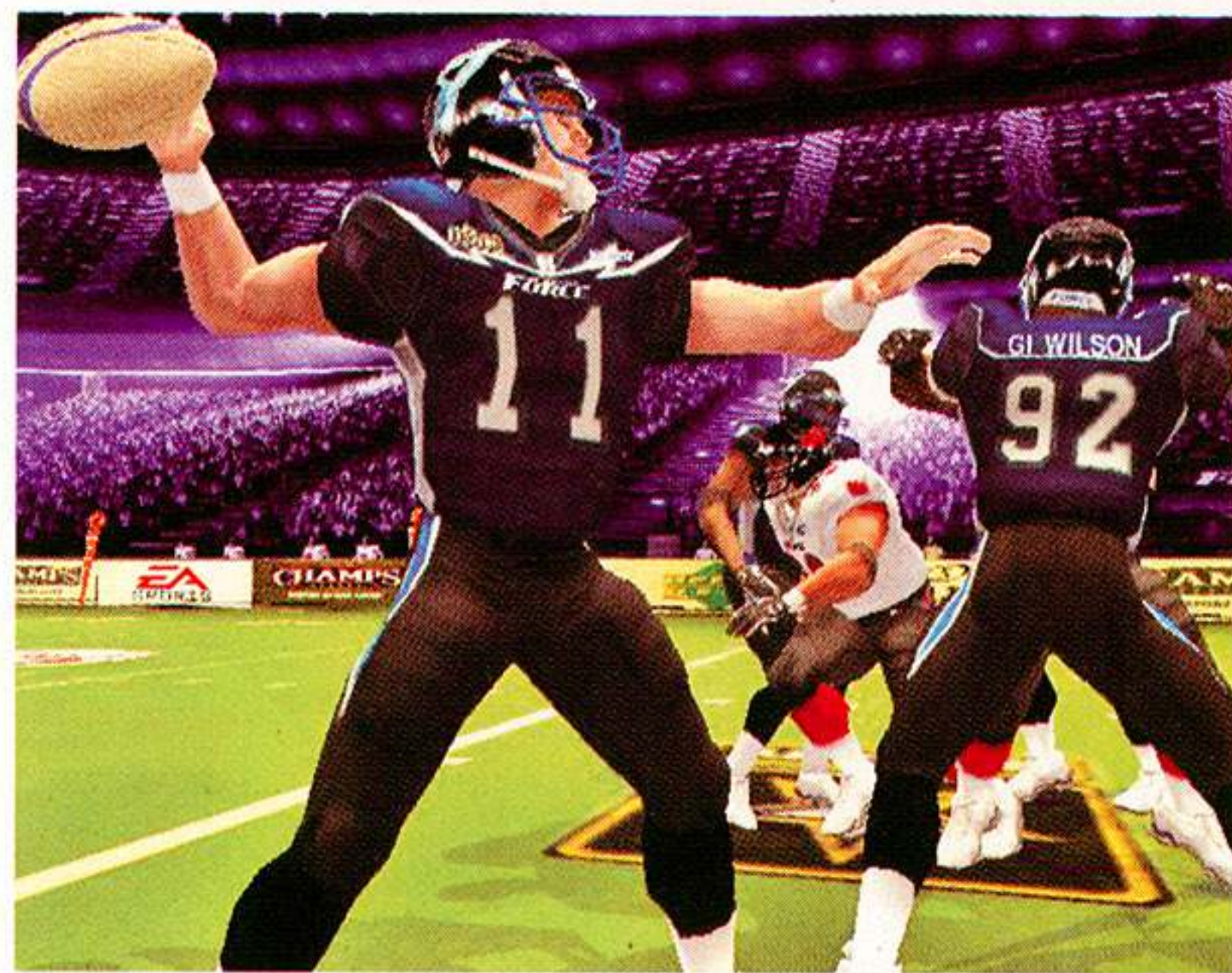
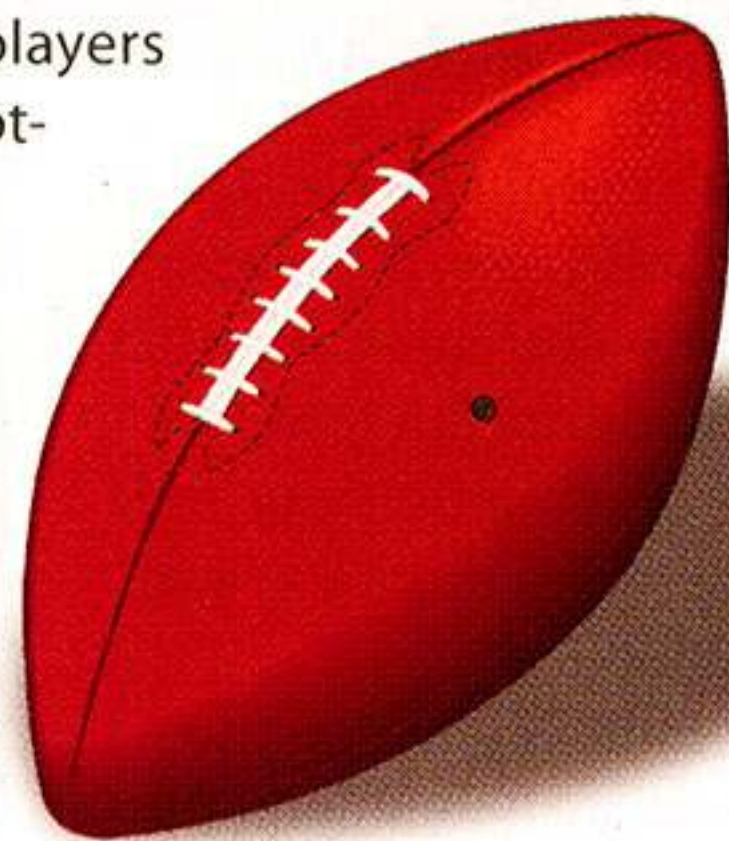
Xbox

Having pretty much conquered all facets of football with its insanely popular NCAA series and its exclusive NFL license for the Madden games, sports-gaming powerhouse EA is turning its attention to the last football-franchise frontier—the Arena Football League. While the AFL might bring a chuckle to some snobby sports fans, EA's first Arena Football title promises to pack in all of the high scoring and big hits found in this gladiatorial game. In order to ensure that the league's signature shootout-style scoring is faithfully captured, Arena Football features playbooks designed by real AFL coaches as well as an all-new analogue kicking control that should take a little stress out of splitting those slim uprights. Other new football features include a revolutionary telemetry system that provides real-time information on your opponents, such as scoring history, passing tendencies, and individual player health for a full up-to-the-minute scouting report.



And what would Arena Football be without the strange rules and spectacular setting? You can also rely on EA to include its trademark production values with full team control in season play, a customizable player-creation mode, and head-to-head online competition with fireworks and screaming fans filling the raucous arena as you fight your way into the Arena Bowl. You can expect to face bone-crushing tackles into (and over) the arena walls, while six out of eight players must play Ironman football, playing on both the offensive and defensive sides of the ball.—*Bones*

- **First Look**
- Developer: EA Tiburon
- Publisher: EA Sports
- Target release date: February



## GAME PLANS

By The Water Boy

### The Show Comes Up To Bat

Video-game baseball season is coming up to bat, and it looks like one of the best PS2 baseball franchises from last year is going "show" time. Sony's MLB is now **MLB '06: The Show**, but it doesn't appear to be following in the sneakers of **NBA '06: The Show**. That game brought action/RPG gameplay to sports, but **MLB '06** is focusing on the action.

The Show is tossing the fun around the horn. If you're a baseball fan who just hungers to hate a rival, Rivalry mode enables you to set up multi-game rivalries between fellow gamers or the A.I. If you wax nostalgic for the sandlots of your childhood, the King of the Diamond mini-game lets you pit pitchers against batters in mano-a-mano duels. Armchair managers might take a cut at the scenarios in Game Time Decisions mode. And baseball junkies can check out hourly



Sony says *The Show* must go on.



Street smarts meet stick smarts in *Streetball*.

team updates and other info via a new Online News Service. Now if the Sony sports guys will maintain their concentration on great gameplay like they did last year, a championship is not out of the question. **MLB '06: The Show** steps up to the plate this spring.

### NBA 2K6 and PowerBar Go 3 on 3 on 3

2K Sports is working a promo with PowerBar that enables you to enter a contest to win a trip for three (3) to three (3) cities to attend three (3) NBA basketball games (Get it?). You have until January 31, 2006 to enter the contest online at [3ptplay.com](http://3ptplay.com). Enter five times, and you'll get five different codes for **NBA 2K6**, one each time you enter. Try this one to eliminate fatigue for your team during a Quick Game.



You'll find PowerBars in your Crib in *NBA 2K6*.

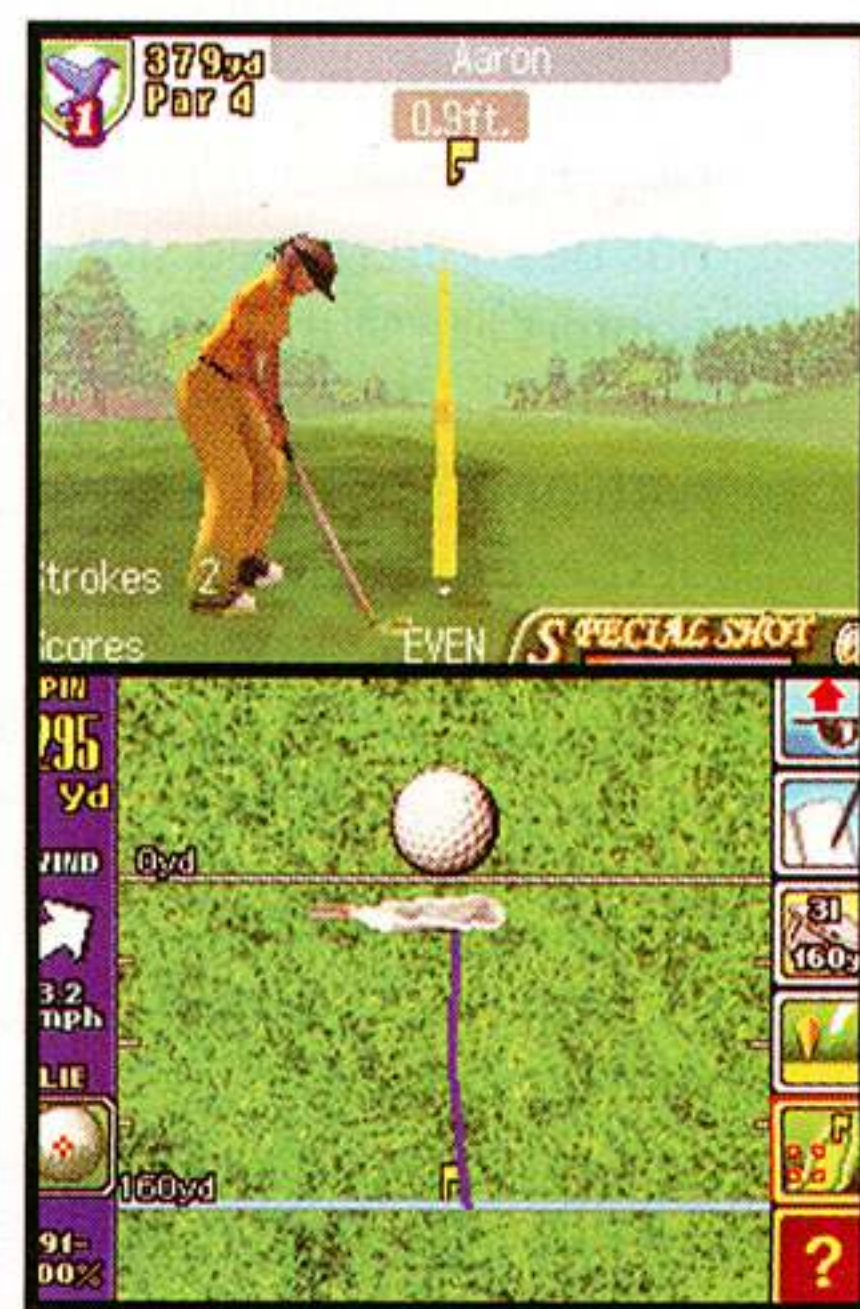
### And 1...and a 2

**And 1 Streetball** has taken a time out. Based on the **And 1 Mixtape Tour**, the Ubisoft street-basketball game is sliding its release date to a February/March 2006 time frame. **Streetball**

will use a two-stick, all-stick gameplay scheme, and that's probably taking developer Black Ops a little bit of time to perfect. Veteran ballers might remember **Street Hoops** by Activision (PS2, circa 2002). Also developed by Black Ops, that game sought to radicalize traditional basketball video-game controls, too.

### The DS Tees Up

T&E Soft is back in the swing of things, this time for the DS in early 2006. The venerable golf-game developer is partnering up with Nintendo for **True Swing Golf**, which enables you to strike the golf ball by sliding the stylus across the touchscreen. You can put a little draw or fade into a shot depending on your stick stroke, too. **True Swing** will offer 15 courses, and you can upgrade your gear and unlock courses by winning tournaments. Up to four players can play via the DS wireless connection, and you only need one cart to form a foursome.



Try a 3 iron...er, stylus from this spot in Nintendo's *True Swing Golf*.





# World Soccer Winning Eleven 9

PS2

Xbox

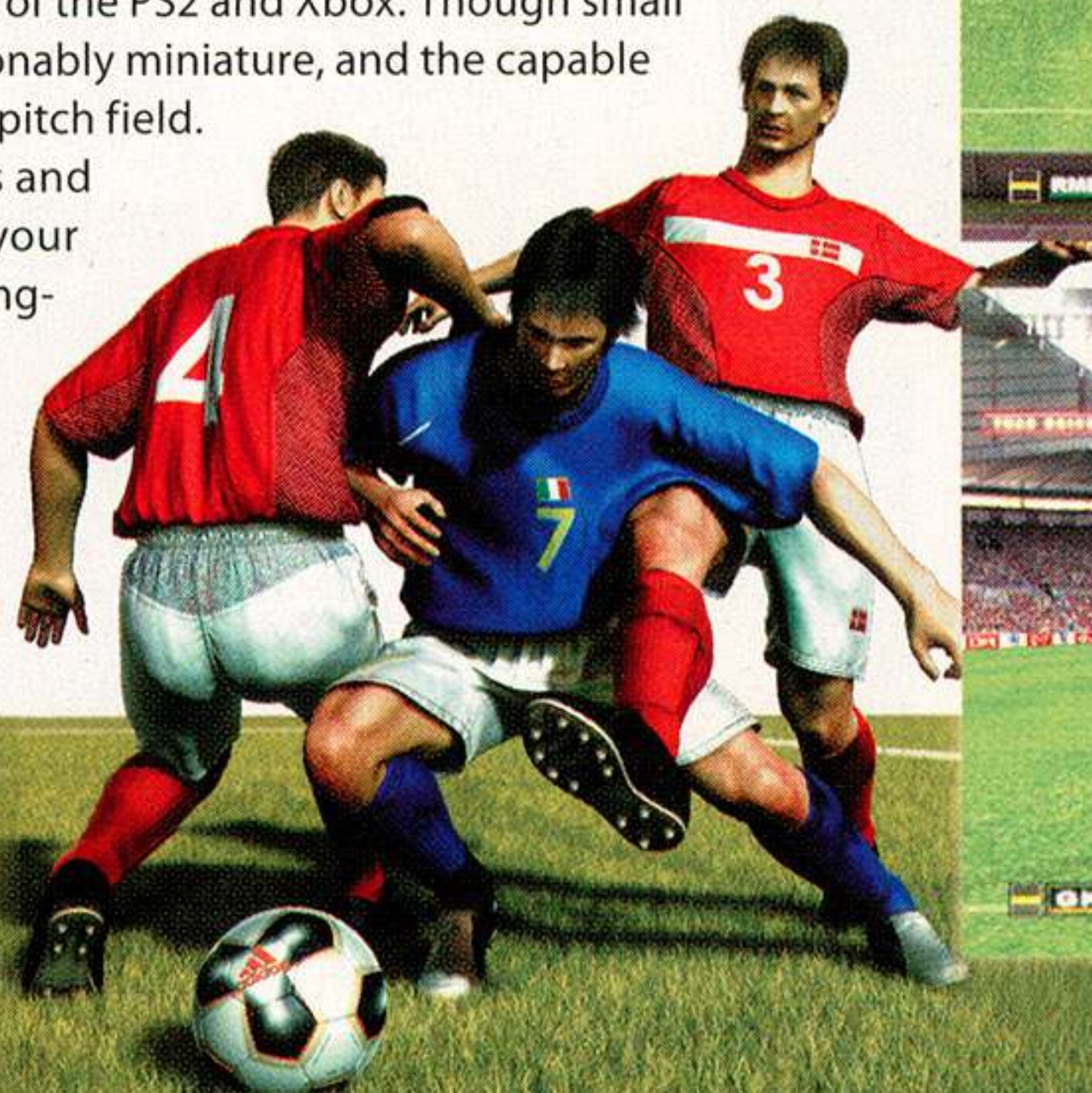
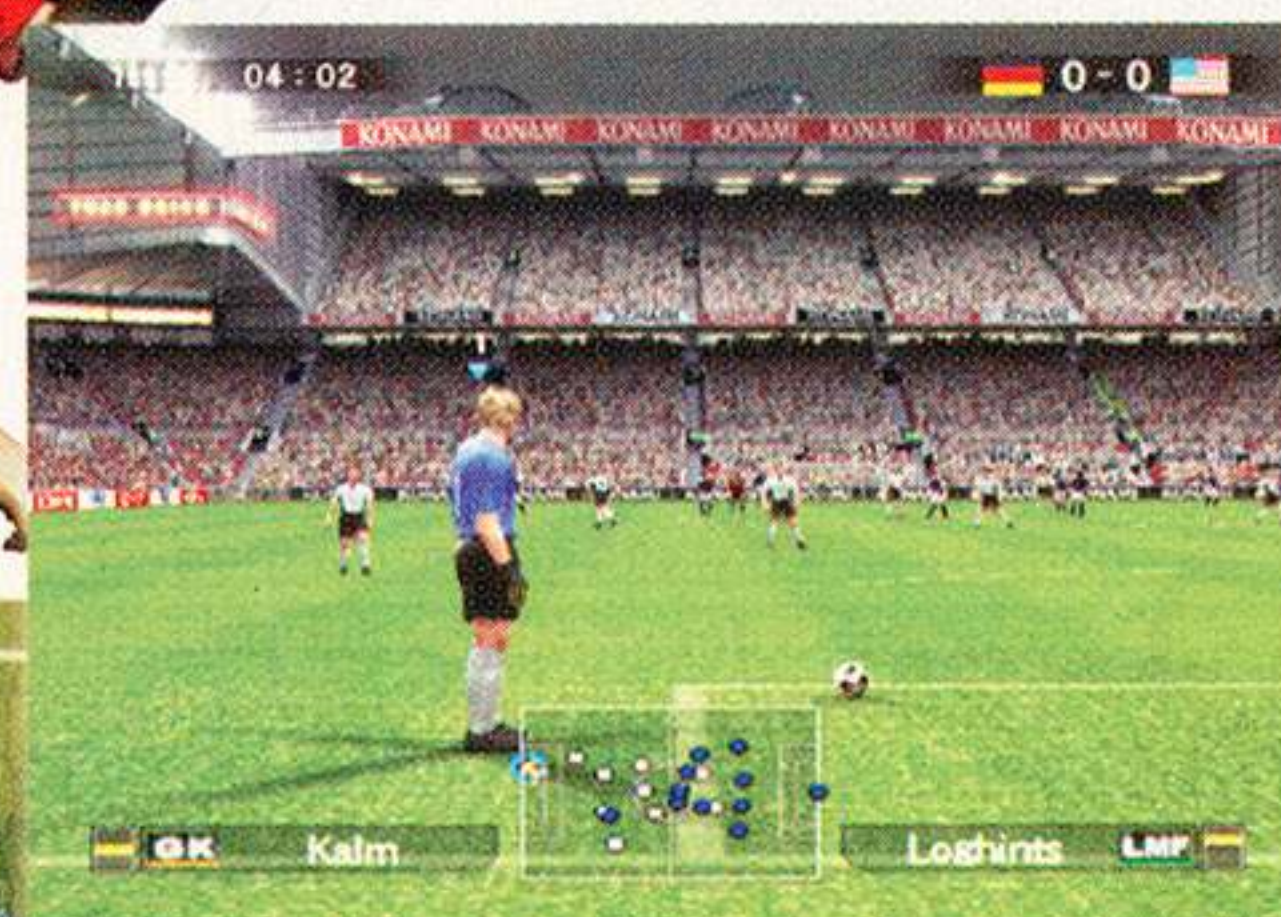
**K**onami is looking to continue its winning streak with the latest entry in the company's superior international soccer franchise, Winning Eleven 9. The preview build showcased the signature straightforward and responsive character control that makes evading defenders and setting up plays easy and enjoyable, and gives the game a very polished feel.

So far, the early build of Winning Eleven 9 featured a variety of distinct play modes, including quick match, League, Master League (where you manage and control a club team through a full season), a mixture of training scenarios, a 32-country international cup, and online multiplayer offerings (which weren't available in our playable version). The build also showcased a number of specialized in-game coaching options to help coordinate your team and implement offensive and defensive strategies. The level of customization was astounding, covering everything from player creation to trading and signing players to developing your individual skills to applying opponent-specific game plans.

Sadly, the build of Winning Eleven 9 suffered from some of the most earsplitting and horrific music ever heard in a game, torturing players with what can only be described as a bastardized concoction of Euro-trash techno tunes and Japanese-pop nonsense. However, the audio presentation as a whole compensated for the nauseating music with some excellent play-by-play commentary (conveniently available in both English and Spanish). The graphics were crisp, and characters looked detailed but showed the age and limitations of the PS2 and Xbox. Though small in size, the in-game character models aren't unreasonably miniature, and the capable camera did a fine job of following the action on the pitch field.

If Konami can manage to tweak just a few areas and shore up the insufferable soundtrack (don't hold your breath), Winning Eleven 9 looks poised to stand alongside its predecessors as yet another superb soccer title.—*Bones*

- **Hands-On**
- Developer and publisher: Konami
- Target release date: February



# Torino 2006

PS2

Xbox

**T**he Winter Olympic games are taking place in Torino, Italy from February 10–26, but you can get a preview of sorts with Torino 2006, the official video game of the XX Olympic Winter Games.

2K Sports is putting together a 15-event program, which will represent eight sports, with a presentation that melds gameplay and info to both capture the intensity of the competitions and educate casual fans. For example, did you know that bobsledding is called "bobsleighting" in Europe, and in fact, that's what it's called in the Olympics, too?



Such juicy trivia serves as the frosting to a delectable variety of challenging gameplay in speed skating, ski jumping, bobsled...er, bobsleighting, cross-country skiing, biathlon, luge, and alpine skiing. Of course, Torino 2006 doesn't feature everything: The glaring omissions include figure skating, snowboarding, and our personal favorites, curling and skeleton (the face-forward luge).—*Slo Mo*

2K Sports would like you to know that Jamaica will not have a bobsled...uh, bobsleighting team at the XX Olympics.

- **First Look**
- Developer: 49Games
- Publisher: 2K Sports
- Target release date: January





Gone are the days of random encounters.

## Final Fantasy XII

PS2

Square Enix has kept a tight lid on its most prestigious franchise, finally offering a glimpse of what's to come in a modest two-segment demo. Although Final Fantasy XII displays solid combat mechanics reminiscent of those in FFXI, it's still hard to say whether or not Number Twelve will deliver.

### The Merry Midriff Hero

Plot details remain murky—as do most other specifics for this reclusive installment. Androgynously handsome protagonist Vaan is intent on becoming a pirate, ultimately teaming up with bunny-eared Fran and snappy Balfear. The implied enemies so far seem to be the Judges, whose stout and unforgiving demeanor will inevitably clash with the metrosexual merry men. But if FFXII follows the trend of other games, you can expect the final antagonist to be some turgid beast with faint hints of humanoid contours.

### Turn from Tradition

Final Fantasy XII finally sheds its 8-bit baggage of turn-based battle sequences and instead opts



for a free-roaming environment that dumps the random monster encounters (Dragon Quest 9, take note). Retaining some elements from the Active Time Battle system, the game has characters wait their turn to attack and cast spells—but at the same time, it enables them to move around freely. Although it's a bold, much-welcomed step to modernizing the franchise, the execution could still use some polishing. Summoned monsters return again to the series and function as companions instead of just overly elaborate spells. They can be brought out at the cost of full mana and replace the two other party members to temporarily fight alongside you.

In the demo we played, the user interface felt ungainly, and issuing commands in the thick of combat got tricky, especially when same enemy types are differentiated by alphabet letters—a pause button would be handy here. The visuals looked as if they were behind the



curve with their jaggy and blocky textures. Also, the game would benefit from tighter environments that don't make you run around excessively. Still, FFXII is in the early stages, and the core mechanics are definitely an improvement over those in previous single-player installments. So far, Final Fantasy XII at least has the promise of suck-ing in fans who would welcome the change of pace.—Funky Zealot

- **Hands-On**
- Developer and publisher: Square Enix
- Target release date: August







Four teenagers come together on a quest for answers to Filgaia's mysteries—not to mention their own identities.



# Wild Arms 4

PS2

The latest installment of the Wild Arms series seems intent on shaking up the formula and packing a few surprises.

## Not Your Daddy's RPG

Players used to the staid—and arguably quite stale—RPG tradition of stiffly wandering an environment in search of hot spots will find Wild Arms 4's dynamic controls refreshing. The process of exploration plays more like a modern action game with double jumps, slides, and a ground-pounding move borrowed straight from Mario himself. The game also includes the surprising addition of an "accelerator" ability, which grants our

hero the power to slow down time temporarily as he dashes across falling bridges and avoids certain death with acrobatic aplomb.

Crates and the like, once placed as mere scenery, now serve as objects to hide behind or platforms to lead to higher areas.

Getting the balance between action puzzles, fighting, and story telling right—such that fans are energized rather than alienated—will be tricky for, but the early signs are positive.

## Hex Party Mix

The game's completely new battle scheme features a system of hexes to maneuver on and attack from with some offering "ley power" to tap into for improved damage. When you attack or use a



healing item, or do anything else for that matter, all units in the targeted hex are affected. It sounds simple, but in practice it forces a level of strategic thinking that's often missing from most RPGs. In line with this somewhat more cerebral approach, the Wild West schtick that has defined the series is being updated a bit, offering a more modern feel than that in previous games. Guns still play a central role, of course, and the music offers the now-requisite tribute to Ennio Morricone's spaghetti-Western film scores, but it isn't laid on quite as thick this time around.

Wild Arms 4's main character is from a town that, he discovers, is suspended in a bubble above the sea, and the metaphor is rich: This game is largely about the process of growing up, of that strange borderland between childhood and adulthood. Likewise, this acclaimed series of RPGs is striving for maturity and unearthing new experiences along the way.

—Ouroboros

■ Hands-On ■ Developer: Media.Vision Entertainment  
 ■ Publisher: XSEED Games ■ Target release date: January







# Grandia III

PS2

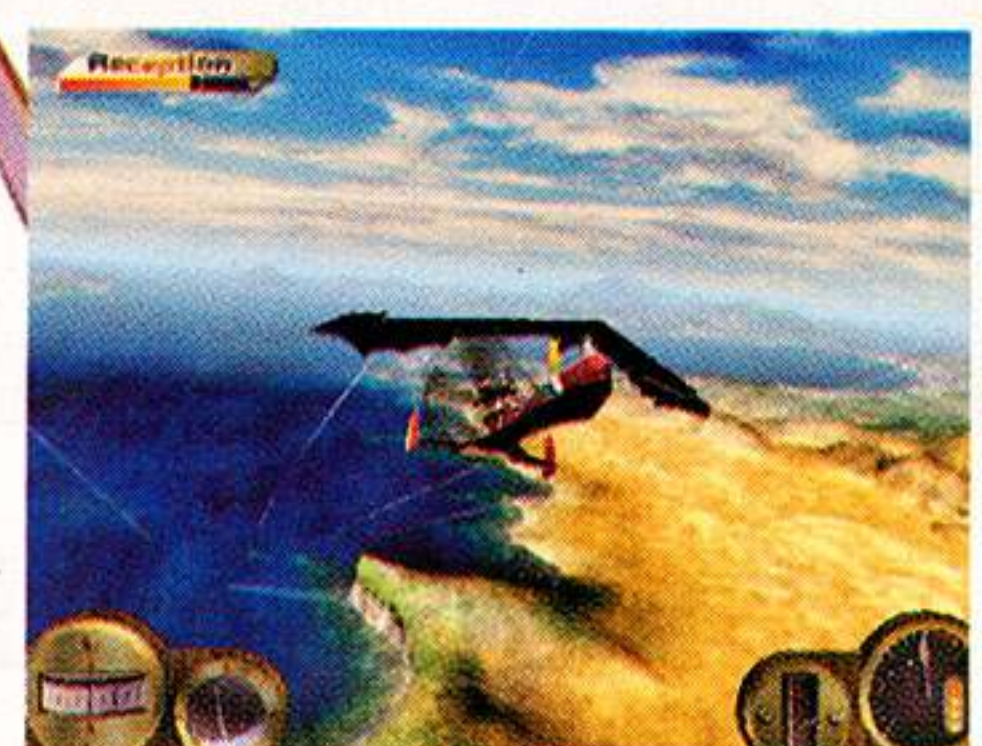
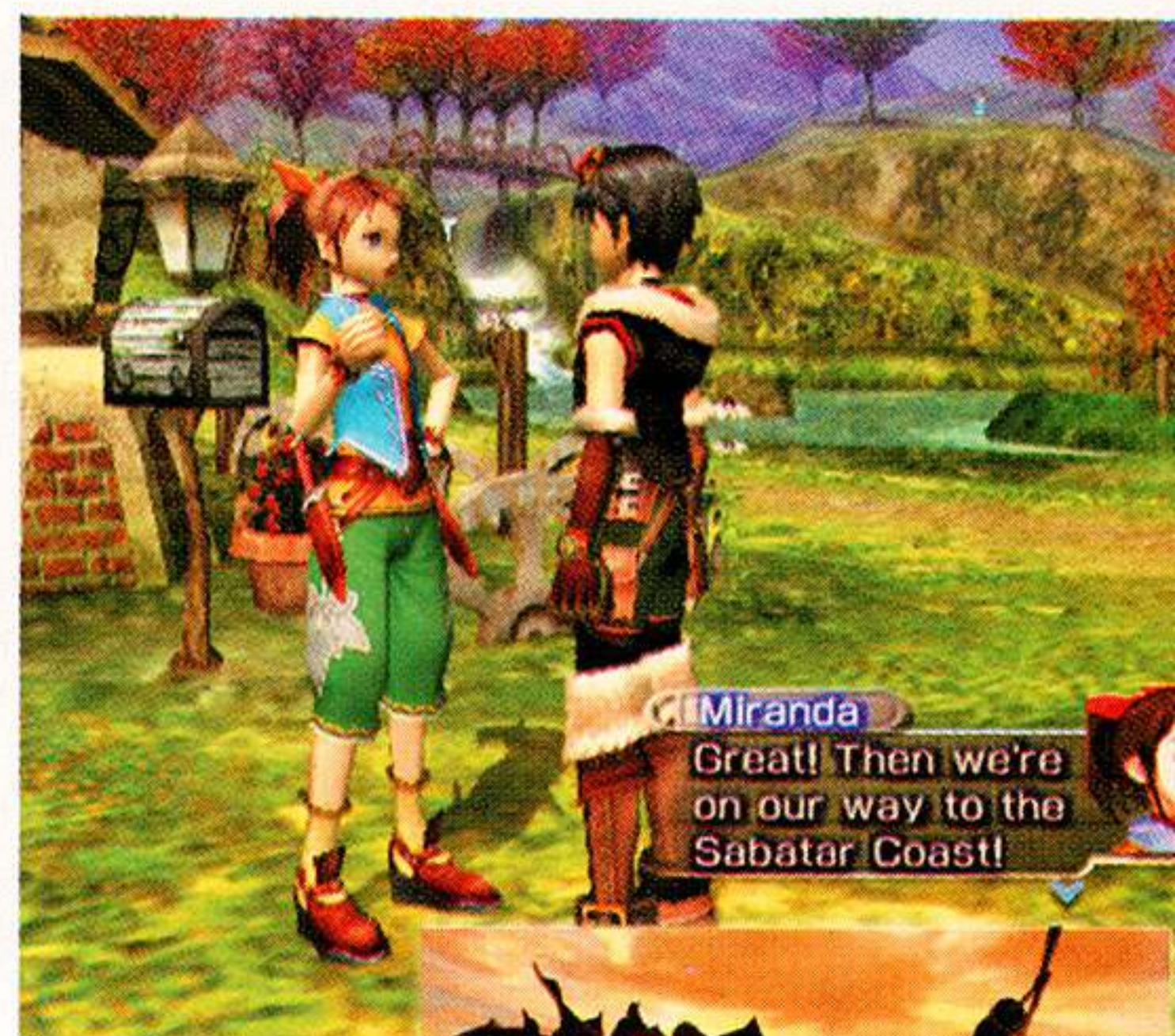
Overshadowed by RPG heavyweights like Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest, the Grandia franchise has modestly thrived amongst fans since its humble debut on the Game Boy Color. But make no mistake: Grandia III for the PlayStation 2 is a tight, well-choreographed experience that highlights all that can be great about Japanese RPGs.

Sixteen-year-old protagonist Yuki dreams of flying, his mind clearly detached from his provincial village life of baking pots. When his wish becomes reality, he gets drawn into a larger plot line that

involves—you've guessed it—saving the world. Yuki saves an elf "Communicator" named Alfina, who has the power to talk with the gods. She searches for her brother Emelious, whose nihilistic banter reveals that something in his mind was tweaked during the three years that he's been missing.

As the stereotypically grandiose story shows, nothing's groundbreaking about the game. Yet its polish and execution will likely allure genre buffs; the cut-scenes will be worth watching, and the flashy turn-based combat will offer more excitement than the dry mechanics of Dragon Quest VIII. When flying overhead, the 3D map in the early build showed no hardware strain despite the respectable drawing distance, and the lush foliage on the ground depicted an atypical level of visual detail for an RPG. The only downside, so far, was the mediocre voice acting, which sadly fell short of that in the Japanese version. Hopefully that will change when the U.S. version gets finalized.—Funky Zealot

■ Hands-On ■ Developer: Game Arts ■ Publisher: Square Enix ■ Target release date: February



# MS Saga: A New Dawn

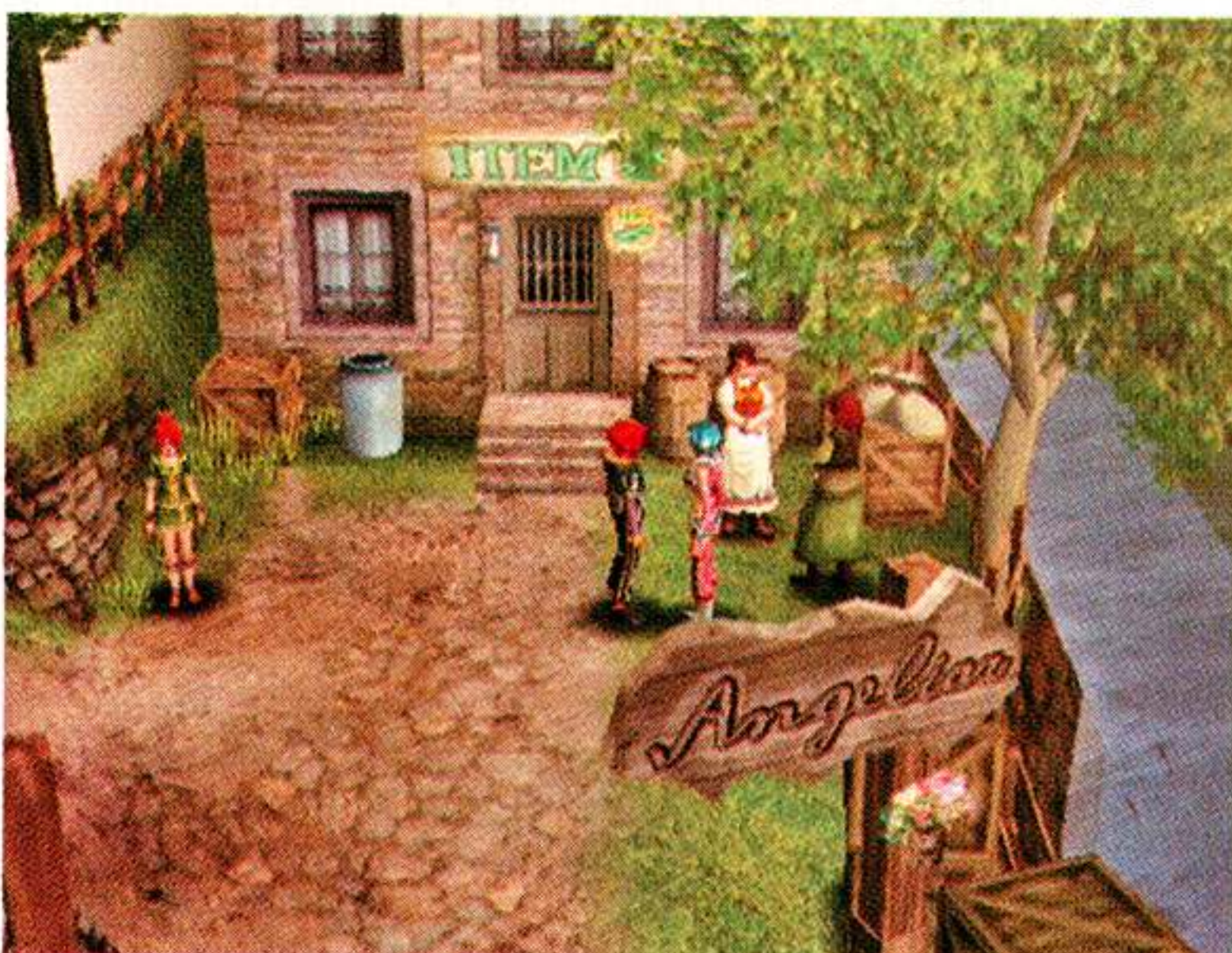
PS2

During a legendary cataclysm referred to only as The Great Fall, giant motorized battle suits disappeared from the world. Now they've returned, and a handful of them have laid waste to an orphanage, setting the only survivors, Tristan and Fritz, on a mission of vengeance. The first thing our young champions do is build their own metal hulk with the help of some ancient manufacturing technology.

MS Saga features licensed mechs from Mobile Suit Gundam, G Gundam, and the Gundam Wing series—39 enormous and customizable metal monsters in all. There shouldn't be a shortage of variety with 260-plus weapons and parts to bolt onto your rigs and over 300 enemy types.

The story seems to be a fairly standard treatment of the avenging-youngster motif we've already seen a few times too many. In the preview, environments were bright and colorful, even if the world map seemed a bit drab, and the character designs were attractive, though not yet bursting with personality. All told, it doesn't seem like there will be a whole lot to set MS Saga apart in the PS2's crowded RPG marketplace aside from appealing to a younger audience. That may be enough: MS Saga could prove to be a simple and effective vehicle for recruiting newbies to a genre that's traditionally steeped in complex fighting and upgrade systems. Just as Tristan and Fritz learn to find their way in their world, let's hope MS Saga can carve a meaningful place for itself in ours.—Ouroboros

■ Hands-On  
■ Developer: BEC  
■ Publisher: Bandai  
■ Target release date: February





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Submit your hottest **Code Vault** tips! In April's issue, the reader with the winning tip will receive **The Sims 2** for the PSP courtesy of EA Games.

Runners-up receive a **GamePro T-shirt!**



**READER TIP OF THE MONTH**

## PLAYSTATION 2



### MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS



At the main menu, press and hold L2, and then enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

**Unlock Mortal Kombat II:** Press , Up, Down, Right, Left, R2, . Enter Kontent, and Mortal Kombat II will be added to the menu, right under the Suffering 2 Demo.

**Unlock Scorpion:** Press , Up, L1, R1, Left, Right, . When you start a Single-Player or Ko-Op game, Scorpion will be a playable character.

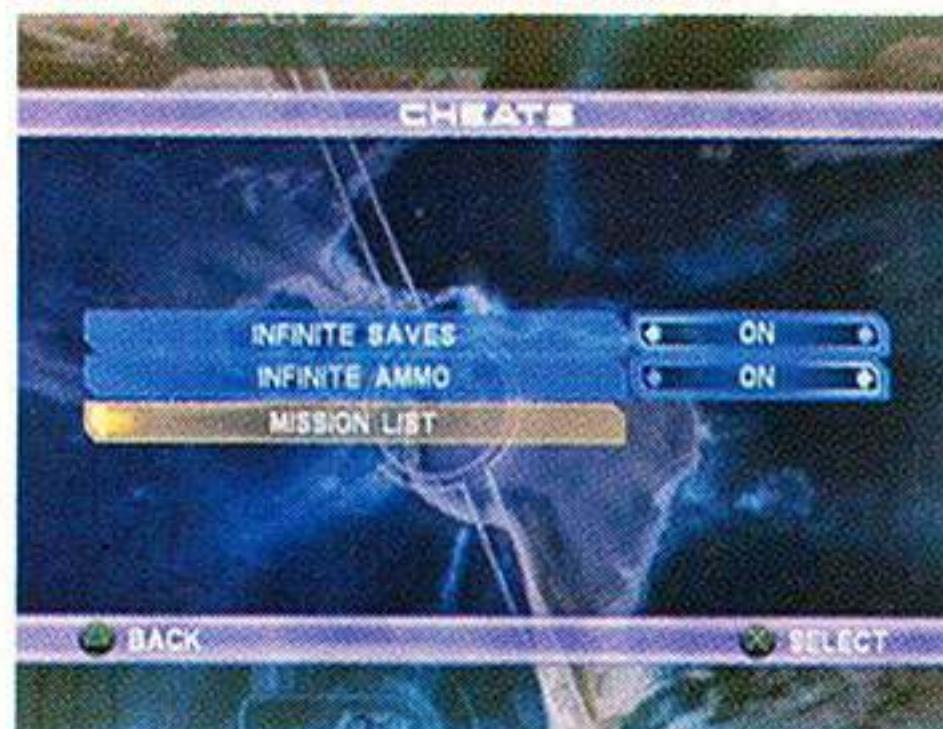
**Unlock Sub-Zero:** Press , Down, Up, L1, L1, Up, . When you start a Single-Player or Ko-Op game, Sub-Zero will be a playable character.

Jonathan Torres—Chicago, IL

## PLAYSTATION 2



### CONFLICT: GLOBAL TERROR



**Unlock Cheat Menu:** At the Main Menu, press L1, R1, L1, R1, O, O, O, O. If you entered the code correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.



## NBA 2K6



**PowerBar Machine Passwords:** At the Main Menu, select Features and then select Crib. At the PowerBar vending machine in your crib, enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the password correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

*Passwords are case-sensitive.*

**+10 Defensive Awareness:** lockdown

**+10 Offensive Awareness:** getaclue

**No Fatigue In Quick Game Mode:** nrgmax

**No Injuries In Quick Game Mode:** noinjury

**WIN!**



**Send tips to:**  
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**or e-mail them to:**  
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Please include your name, address, and phone number so we can award you your prize.

**PowerBar Tattoo For Created Player:** pbink

**Unlock All Items in Crib:** criball

**Shoe Passwords:** At the Main Menu, select Features and then select Codes. At the Codes screen, enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the password correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

*Passwords are case-sensitive.*

**Unlock Nike Zoom 20-5-5 Shoes:** lebronsummerkicks

**Unlock Uptempo Nikes:** anklebreakers

## TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: LOCKDOWN



Pause the game and then select Cheat Codes. Enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the cheat correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

**God Mode:** Press Up, Right, Left, Up, Down, Down.

**God Mode for Teammates:** Press Left, Down, Up, Up, Right, Left.

## XBOX

### DOOM 3: RESURRECTION OF EVIL Cheats for Ultimate Doom, Doom II, and Doom II Master Levels:

During gameplay, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

**200% Armor, All Keys and Weapons, and Full Ammo:** Press and hold L, and then press A, B, A, B.

**Berserk Mode:** Press and hold L, and then press X, X, X, Y.

**Complete Current Mission:** Press and hold L, and then press A, A, B, B.

**God Mode:** Press and hold L, and then press A, A, A, A.

**God Mode for Campaign:** During gameplay, press Black, highlight "Objectives," press and hold L, and then press X, Y, B, A. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will take effect immediately.

## SERIOUS SAM II

**Unlock Cheat Menu:** During gameplay, pause the game, press and hold R, and then press Black, White, Black, White, Black, White. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will take effect immediately.

## SHATTERED UNION

During Campaign Mode, press Start, select Cheat, and then enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will take effect immediately.

**\$100,000 in Treasury:** Press X, X, A, A, Y.

**Raise Political Reputation by 1 Point:** Press X, B, B, X, B.

**Skip Current Week:** Press X, Y, X, B, A.

**Win Civil War:** Press X, B, A, B, Y.

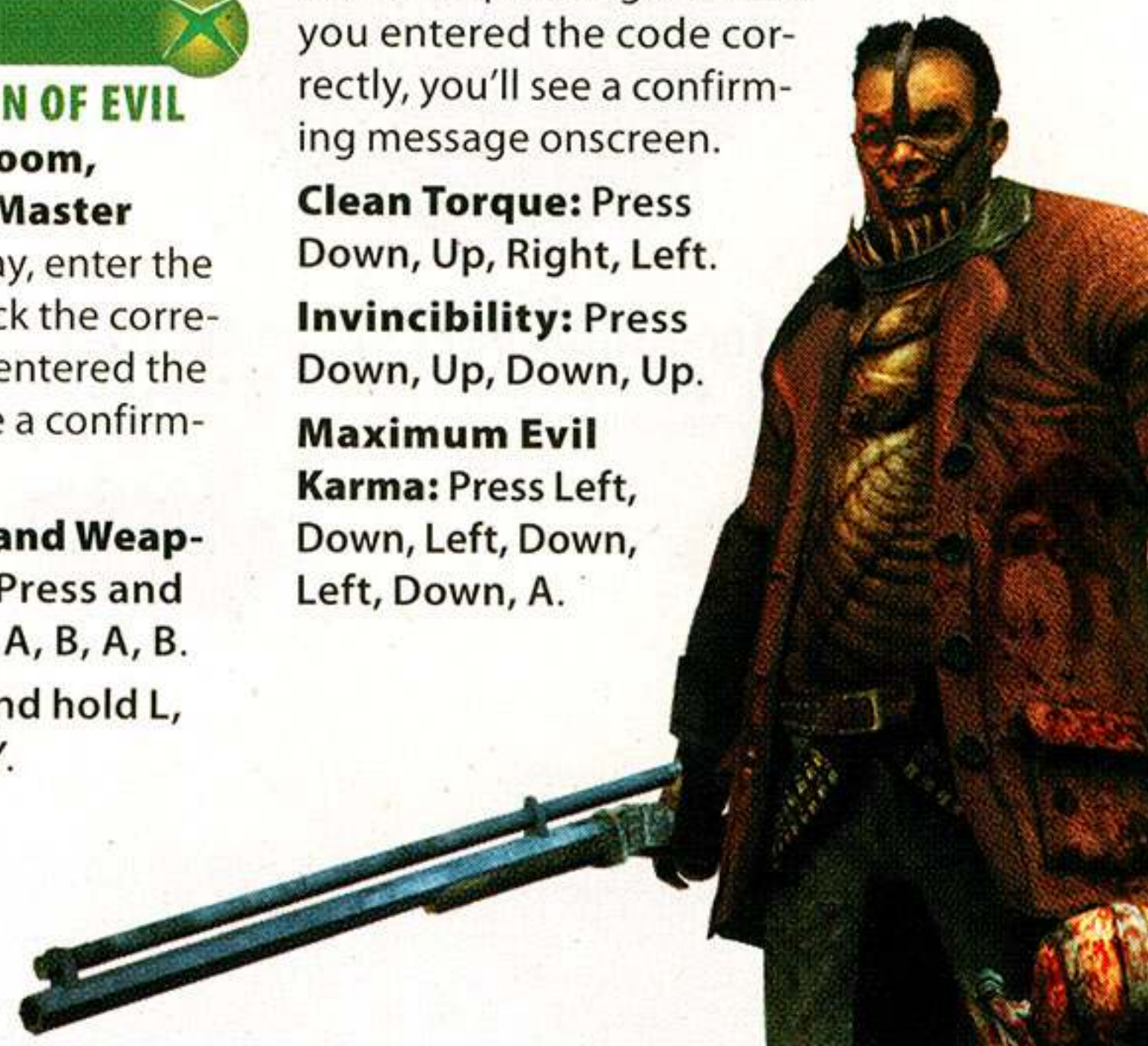
## THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND

During gameplay, simultaneously press and hold L, R, and X, and then enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

**Clean Torque:** Press Down, Up, Right, Left.

**Invincibility:** Press Down, Up, Down, Up.

**Maximum Evil Karma:** Press Left, Down, Left, Down, Left, Down, A.





**MULTIPLATFORM****FROGGER: ANCIENT SHADOW**

At the main menu, select Secret Code to enter the code-input screen and then enter the following character combinations to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

Costume 1: Lily, Lily, Lily, Lily

Costume 2: Lumpy, Lumpy, Lumpy, Lumpy

Hidden Image 1: Frogger, Frogger, Frogger, Frogger

Hidden Image 2: Finnius, Finnius, Finnius, Finnius

Hidden Image 3: Berry, Berry, Berry, Berry

Hidden Image 4: Doctor Wani, Doctor Wani, Doctor Wani, Doctor Wani

**TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06**

At the Main Menu, select Options and then select Password to enter the Password screen. Enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the password correctly, the cheat will take effect immediately.

Passwords are case-sensitive.

All Clubs: CLUB11

All Nike Items: JUSTDOIT

Unlock Arnold Palmer: ARNIESARMY

Unlock Ben Hogan: THEHAWK

Unlock Jack Nicklaus: GOLDENBEAR

Unlock Tiger Woods With Alternate Outfit: OLDSKOOL

Unlock Tiger Woods with Hat: GOLDENAGE

Unlock Tiger Woods With Old Golf Outfit: THROWBACK

Unlock Tiger Woods With Striped Pants: TECHNICOLOR

Unlock Tommy Black: IDONTHAVEAPROBLEM

Unlock Wesley Rounder: POCKETPAIR

**TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND**

At the main menu, select Options and then select Cheat Codes to enter the password-input screen. Enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding characters. If you entered the password correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

Passwords are case-sensitive, and a "\_" designates a blank space.

Jason Ellis: sirius-DJ

Matt Hoffman: the \_ condor

**MULTIPLATFORM****BLITZ: THE LEAGUE**

At the Main Menu, select Extras, then select Codes, and then enter the password-input screen. Enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the password correctly, the cheat will be unlocked in Quick Play mode at the Game Options screen.

Ball Trails Always On: ONFIRE

Beach Ball Mode: BOUNCY

Double Unleash Icons: PIPPED

Stamina Disabled: NOTTIRED

Super Clash Mode: CLASHY

Super Unleash Clash Mode: BIGDOGS

Two Player Co-Op: CHUWAY

**PSP****GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES**

Enter the following codes during gameplay and not while the game is paused. If you entered the code correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

**Aggressive Drivers:** Press □, □, R, ×, ×, L, ○, ○.

**All Green Lights:** Press △, △, R, □, □, L, ×, ×.

**Black Cars:** Press ○, ○, R, △, △, L, □, □.

**Bobble-Head Mode:** Press Down, Down, Down, ○, ○, ×, L, R.

**Cars Float on Water:** Press ○, ×, Down, ○, ×, Up, L, L.

**Change Bike Tire Size:** Press ○, Right, ×, Up, Right, ×, L, □.

**Clear Weather:** Press Up, Down, ○, Up, Down, □, L, R.

**Commit Suicide:** Press L, Down, Left, R, ×, ○, Up, △.

**Destroy All Cars:** Press L, L, Left, L, L, Right, ×, □.

**Display Game Credits:** Press L, R, L, R, Up, Down, L, R.

**Faster Clock:** Press L, L, Left, L, L, Right, ○, ×.

**Faster Gameplay:** Press R, R, L, R, R, L, Down, ×.

**Foggy Weather:** Press Up, Down, △, Up, Down, ×, L, R.

**Ladies Man:** Press Down, Down, Down, △, △, ○, L, R.

**Overcast Weather:** Press Up, Down, ×, Up, Down, △, L, R.

**Pedestrians Attack You:** Press L, L, R, L, L, R, Up, △.

**Pedestrians Have Weapons:** Press R, R, L, R, R, L, Right, ○.

**Rainy Weather:** Press Up, Down, □, Up, Down, ○, L, R.

**Random Pedestrian Skins:** Press L, L, Left, L, L, Right, □, △.

**Rioting Pedestrians:** Press L, L, R, L, L, R, Left, □.

**Slower Gameplay:** Press R, △, ×, R, □, ○, Left, Right.

**Spawn a Rhino:** Press L, L, Left, L, L, Right, △, ○.

**Spawn a Trashmaster:** Press △, ○, Down, △, ○, Up, L, L.

**Sunny Weather:** Press L, L, ○, R, R, □, △, ×.

**Upside Down Gameplay:** Press Down, Down, Down, ×, ×, □, R, L.

**Upside Up Gameplay:** Press ×, ×, ×, Down, Down, Right, L, R.

**White Cars:** Press ×, ×, R, ○, ○, L, △, △.

**VIRTUA TENNIS: WORLD TOUR**

At the main menu, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

**\$1,000,000 for World Tour Mode:** Press Up, Down, Left, Down, △, △, △.

**\$2,000 Every Week in World Tour Mode:** Press Up, Down, Right, Down, △, □, △.

**All Racquets and Clothing:** Press Right, Left, Right, Right, Up, Up, Up.

**Unlock All Stadiums:** Press Up, Down, Left, Right, □, □, □.

**Unlock the Players King and Queen:** Press Up, Down, Up, Down, □, △, □.

Student work by Paul Nojima



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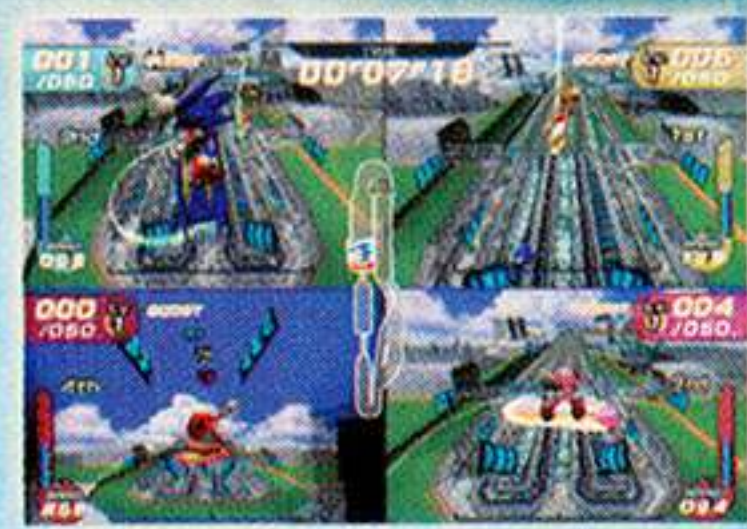




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# CHARTBUSTERS

Number crunching was never our strong suit, but then that's why we partnered with the most reputable data company around. The NPD Group provides us with innumerable video-game tidbits, giving you insight into the trends of the gaming industry.

## Top 10 Best-Selling Console Video-Game Titles October 2005

TITLE	PLATFORM	LAST MONTH
<b>1. SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs</b> Sony	PS2	NEW
<b>2. NBA Live 06</b> EA Sports	PS2	2
<b>3. Madden NFL 06</b> EA Sports	PS2	1▼
<b>4. Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories</b> Rockstar Games	PSP	NEW
<b>5. Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi</b> Atari	PS2	NEW
<b>6. Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness</b> Nintendo	GameCube	NEW
<b>7. FIFA 06: Road to FIFA World Cup</b> EA Sports	PS2	NEW
<b>8. Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves</b> Sony	PS2	NEW
<b>9. The Warriors</b> Rockstar Games	PS2	NEW
<b>10. Shadow of the Colossus</b> Sony	PS2	NEW

Source: The NPD Group/NPD Funworld/Point-of-Sale

## The 10 Best Games of 2005 According to the Editors Of GamePro Magazine

1. Resident Evil 4 (PS2)
2. Call of Duty 2 (Xbox 360)
3. Burnout: Revenge (PS2, Xbox)
4. F.E.A.R. (PC)
5. Half-Life 2 (Xbox)
6. Shadow of the Colossus (PS2)
7. Destroy All Humans! (PS2, Xbox)
8. God of War (PS2)
9. Lumines (PSP)
10. Tekken 5 (PS2)

## 1 SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs



As prolific and extraordinary as they are in real life, the U.S. Navy SEALs also command an awesome presence on the PlayStation 2...even if their past faults still linger in this third tour-of-duty shootingfest. Playing at it alone, you'll quickly notice that this SEAL team still needs some basic warfare training. The underlining focus, however, is its online play—especially now that the game supports up to 32 players. SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs is a more-than-capable soldier in the aging PlayStation 2 war zone. Fans of the series definitely shouldn't miss this next operation.

4



Grand Theft Auto players have clamored for multiplayer modes for years, and Liberty City Stories serves up the goods in impressive style. The game features seven modes in all, ranging from deathmatches to more sophisticated games where you sabotage enemy cars, race through crowded streets, and steal tanks. If this is a hint of what's in store for Grand Theft Auto 4, you can sign us up right now.

10



As a genre-bending title, Shadow of the Colossus pulls off a titanic feat by creating an immersive and highly entertaining experience that doesn't collapse under the significant weight of its own lofty ambitions. With uniquely brilliant gameplay and awe-inspiring visuals, Shadow stands head and shoulders above any recent action/adventure entries and miles above the industry's current creative expectations.

## Best-Selling Console Video-Game Titles: 11–20

11. Tony Hawk's American Wasteland (PS2)
12. Soulcalibur III (PS2)
13. Far Cry Instincts (Xbox)
14. Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow (DS)
15. NBA Live 06 (Xbox)
16. Blitz: The League (PS2)
17. Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06 (PS2)
18. Ultimate Spider-Man (PS2)
19. Madden NFL 06 (Xbox)
20. Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks (PS2)

Source: The NPD Group/NPD Funworld/Point-of-Sale



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PlayStation 2



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