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Peter Jackson's
KING KONG
ON XBOX 360



ON THIS DISC!
PLAY XBOX 360
AND ORIGINAL
XBOX DEMOS!



CONTAINS:
Call of Duty 2
Operation Flashpoint: Elite
Tony Hawk's American Wasteland
Ridge Racer 6
Xbox Game Pass
53
RP-M
UNRATED
www.officialxbox.com

3 BLAZING HOT XBOX 360 DEMOS:
PLUS: 2 ORIGINAL XBOX DEMOS

- FULL AUTO
- KAMEO: Elements of Power
- KING KONG



OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!
BILL GATES ANSWERS OUR
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PLAYABLE XBOX 360 DEMO!

FULL AUTO

REVEALED! EVERY DETAIL ABOUT SEGA'S
ULTRA DESTRUCTIVE RACER

REVIEWS YOU NEED

13 XBOX 360 GAMES!
The entire launch lineup rated
PLUS: 16 XBOX GAMES


XBOX 360 PREVIEWS

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Moving in on GTA's turf!



**XBOX 360
HARDWARE
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TRY... FISH
TANKS?



JANUARY 06 / Issue #53



DEAD



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DOA ALIVE[®] 4

Drop
dead
gorgeous.

"It's fast, it's fun, and it's gorgeous to look at."
1up.com

"DOA4 will be an essential, must-own Xbox 360 game."
Official Xbox Magazine

"...continues to
push the established
boundaries of lighting,
animation, and dynamic
movement beyond
anything yet seen."
Game Informer

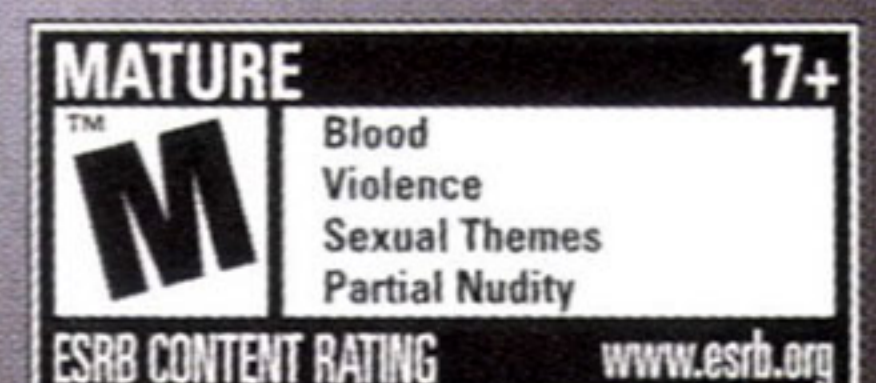
"From the characters to the incredibly diverse and interactive
environments, the game oozes with cinematic flair and appeal."
GamePro.com

"The high-definition visuals are arguably the best we've seen on the 360."
TeamXbox.com



XBOX 360

TECMO 100% GAMES



SMOKE THE



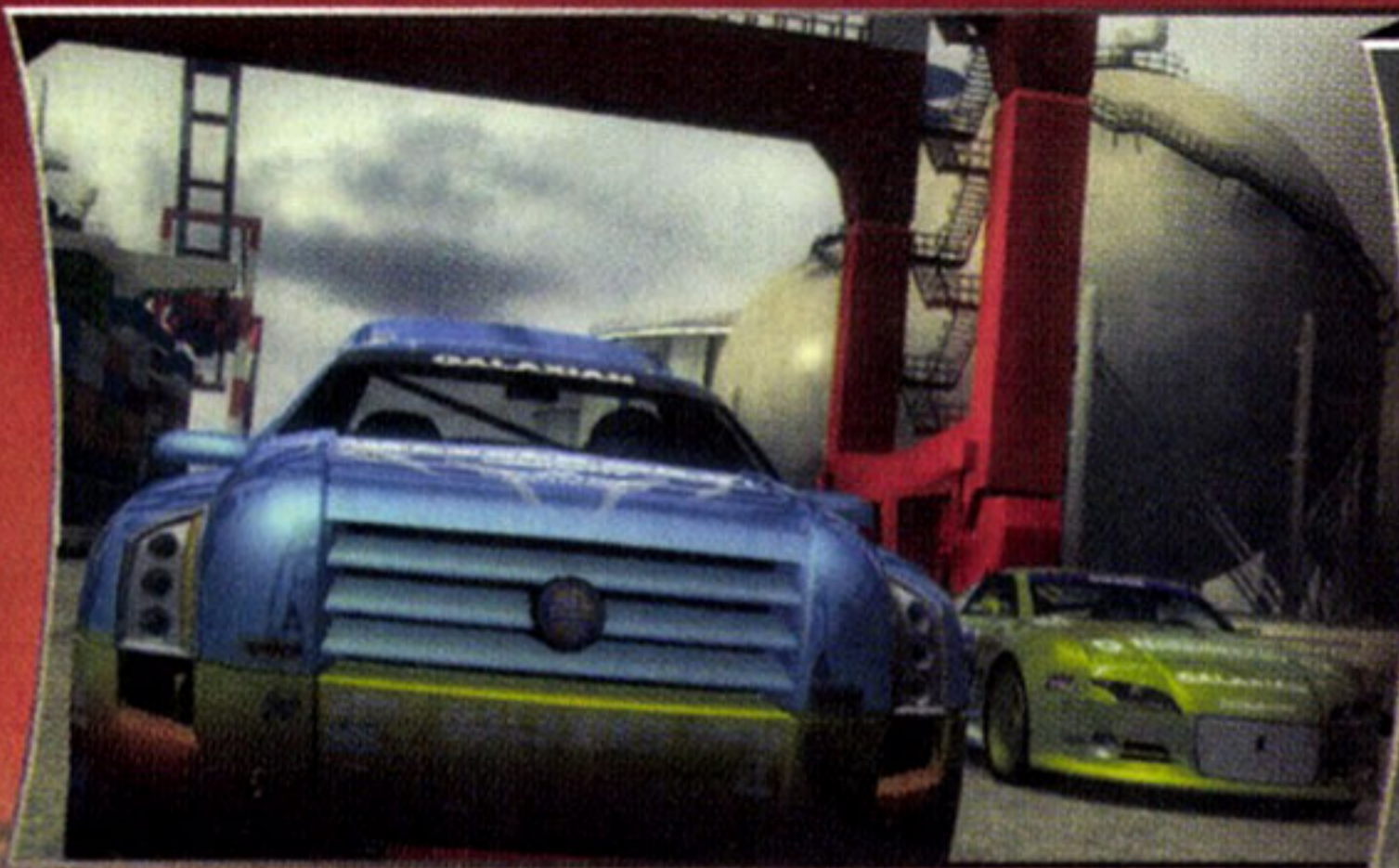
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Visit www.esrb.org
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GO HEAD-TO-HEAD IN TIRE-SQUEALING ONLINE MULTIPLAYER ACTION.



TAKE 130 NEW MACHINES DRIFTING THROUGH OVER 200 RACES.



FEEL THE FULL-THROTTLE EFFECTS OF THE EVOLVED NITROUS SYSTEM.



THE ORIGINAL
TOUR DE CENTRIFUGAL FORCE IN DRIFT RACING

HAS OFFICIALLY LEFT ITS IMITATORS IN THE DUST.

RIDGE RACER 6 DOLES OUT ONE NITROUS-PUNCHING,
WHITE-KNUCKLED RIDE AFTER ANOTHER THROUGH A
HARROWING ARRAY OF HAIRPIN TURNS. AND WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS,
YOUR RACING SKILLS WILL REVEAL IF YOU'RE AMONG
THE FEARLESS OR THE FORGOTTEN.

"IT'S EVERYTHING A RIDGE RACER FAN COULD WANT OUT OF A NEXT-GEN TITLE." —GAMESPY

"THESE MACHINES WERE FAST AS HELL TO DRIVE." —1UP.COM

RIDGE RACER 6™

AVAILABLE NOW

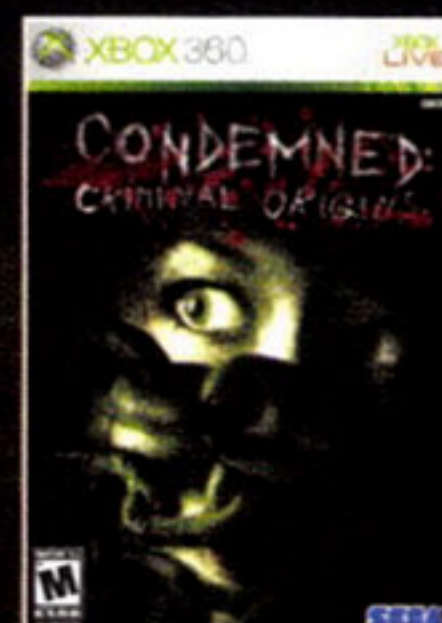
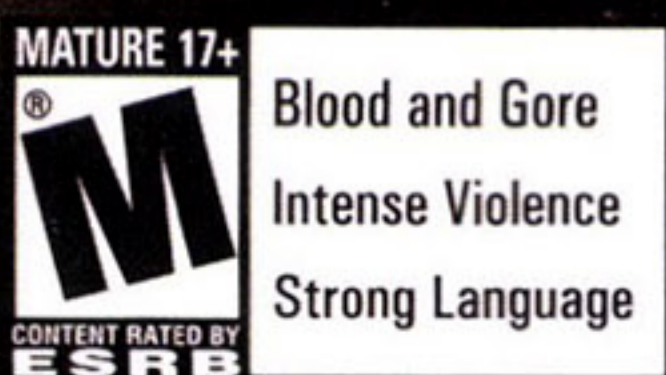


"The fact that Condemned is pushing the 360 is awesome, but its clever tweak on the first-person genre and its grisly premise are what make it really tick."

8.5/10 - Official Xbox Magazine

"Each area features such rich textures, atmospheric lighting, and creepy ambiance that you'd swear that they were real."

8.75/10 - Game Informer



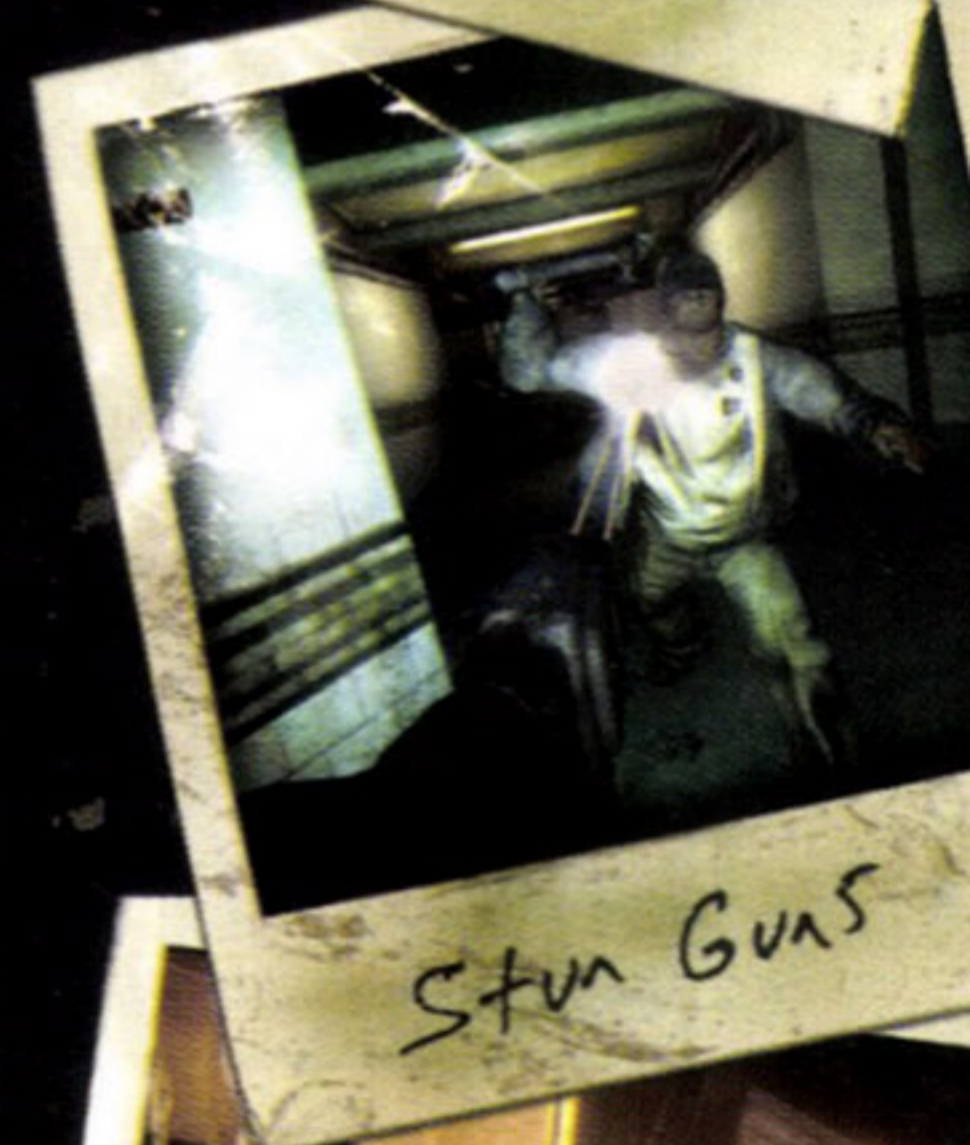
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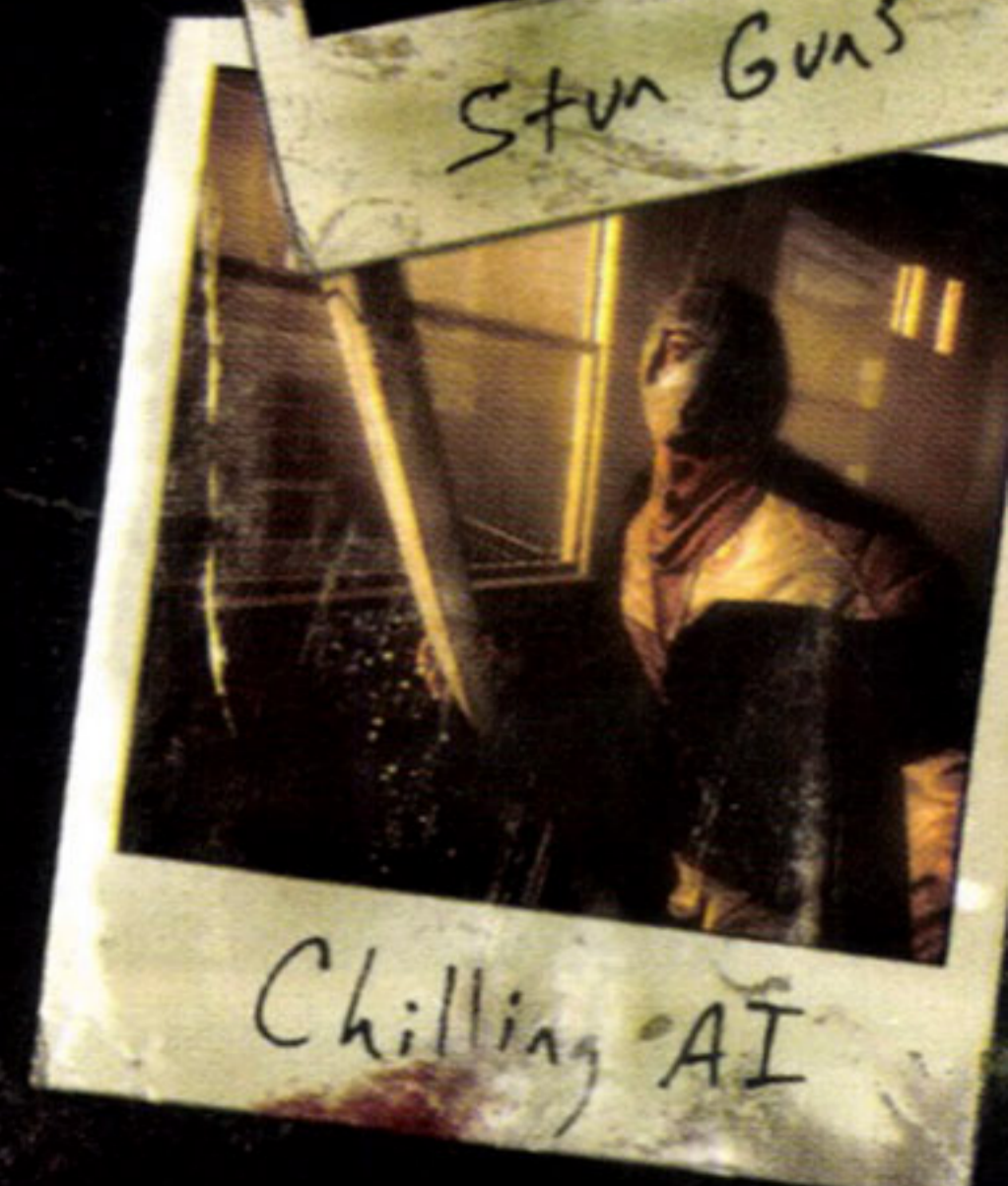
Forensics



Torches



Stun Guns



Chilling AI

You are FBI Agent Ethan Thomas. To hunt the world's most dangerous serial killer you'll need to keep your eyes open. Starting now. FOLLOW THE EVIDENCE TO CONDEMNEDGAME.COM

CONDEMNED CRIMINAL ORIGINS™

CONTENTS

COVER STORY!

FULL AUTO



page 36

What happens when you mix *Burnout* and *Twisted Metal*, then shake them vigorously in that shiny new console? Read our full report to find out, then fire up the playable Xbox 360 demo on this month's disc!

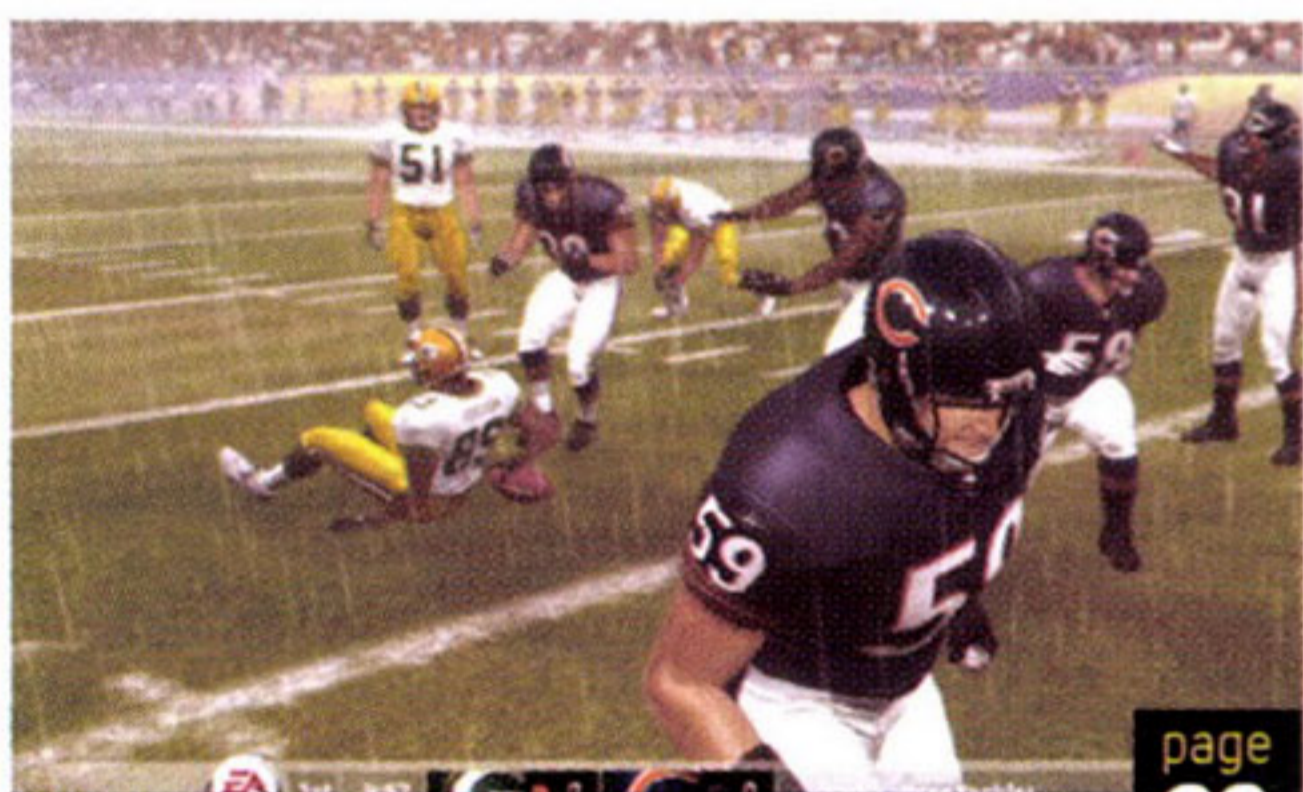
THE NEW XBOX 360 DEMO DISC! page 08

WE ♥ XBOX page 12

MESSAGE CENTER pg. 16

XBOX NEXT page 24

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► XBOX NEXT! TO SEE PREVIEWS OF WHAT'S COMING>>>



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MATURE	17+
M	Blood Language Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING	www.esrb.org

perfectdarkzero.com



Microsoft
game studios

XBOX
LIVE



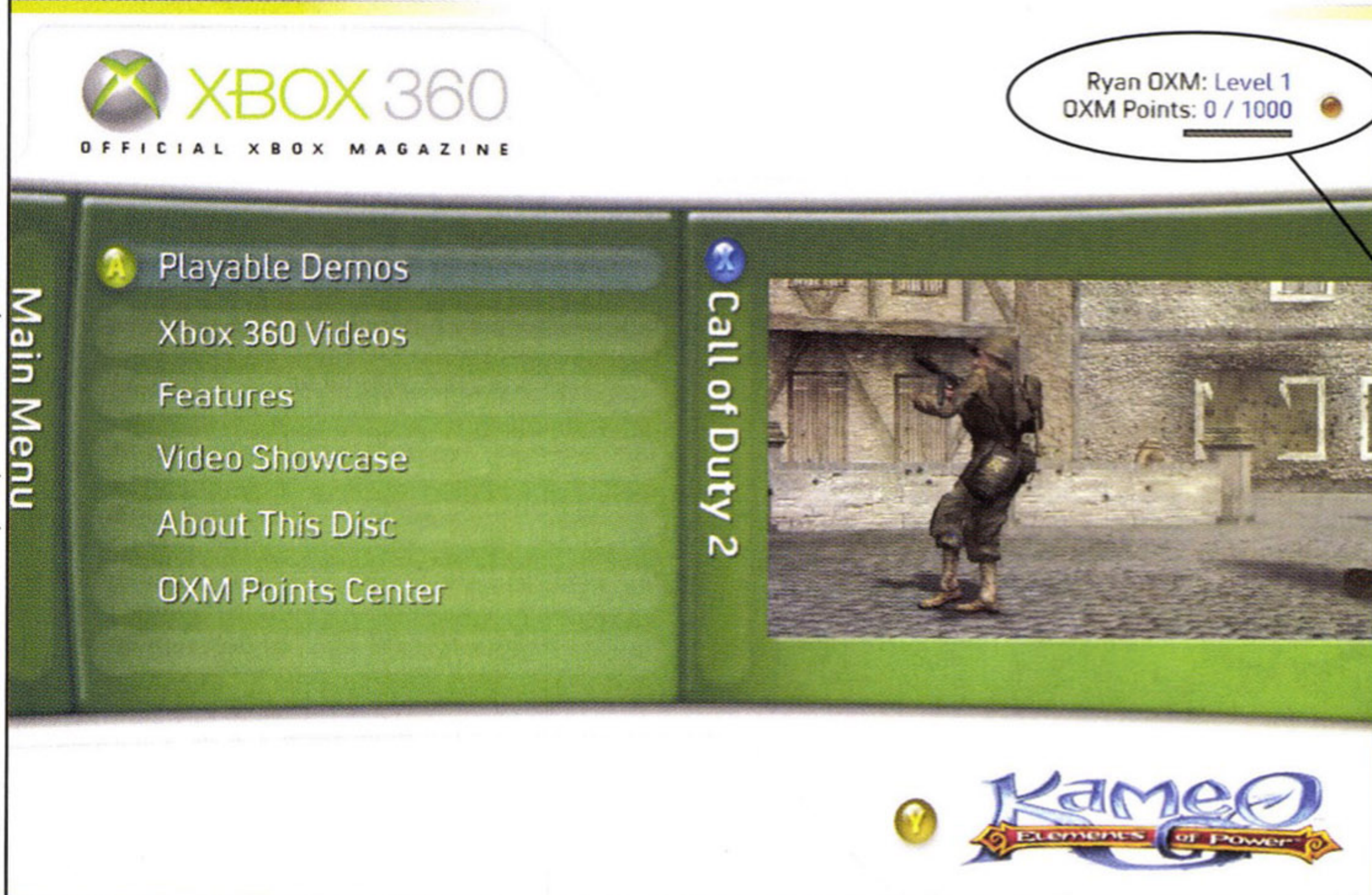
Jump in.



A New Disc For a New Era

Last issue we redesigned the magazine, and now we're proud to unveil phase two of our extreme magazine makeover: an all-new demo disc! We've got all Xbox owners covered: Place the disc into an Xbox to have access to playable Xbox demos and Xbox videos, or insert it into an Xbox 360 for playable next-gen demos and video content. You already know how the Xbox disc works, so take a moment to read this page for a quick tour of the all-new *Official Xbox Magazine Xbox 360* disc!

Playable demos for original Xbox and Xbox 360...on one disc!

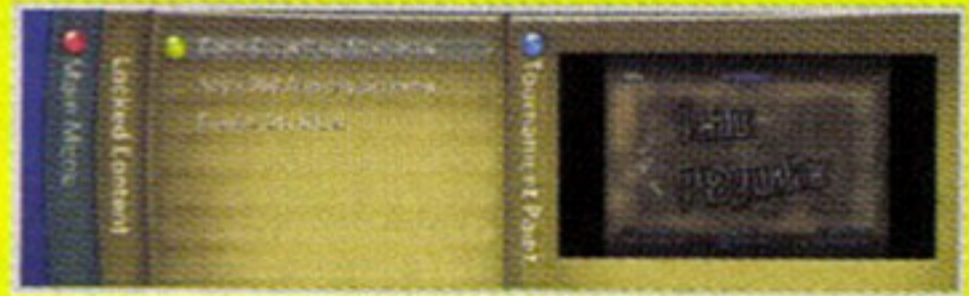


Ryan OXM: Level 1
OXM Points: 0 / 1000

Here it is:
OUR NEW DISC!

Ryan OXM: Level 1
OXM Points: 500 / 1000

Notice we have points now. And they'll accumulate each issue, eventually upgrading the look of your disc interface!



Accomplish everything (i.e., play all of the demos and watch all of the videos), and you'll unlock a new "Locked Content" option at the main menu that contains different hidden goodies each month!

IMPORTANT XBOX 360 DEMO DISC NOTE: Make sure you go to the OXM Points Center on the main menu and select a storage device (memory unit or hard drive), or else your points will not be saved from disc to disc. We wouldn't want you to miss out on all the cool extras your points will earn you!

PLAYABLE DEMOS

*Please email completed challenges (with your full name and digital pics attached for proof) to letters@officialxboxmagazine.com with the subject line "I'm a Legend."

XBOX 360 DEMOS

Full Auto

- DEVELOPER: Pseudo Interactive
- PUBLISHER: Sega

Blow the crap out of your competition – and everything else in the environment – on your way to victory in this razor-sharp, silky-smooth combat racer.

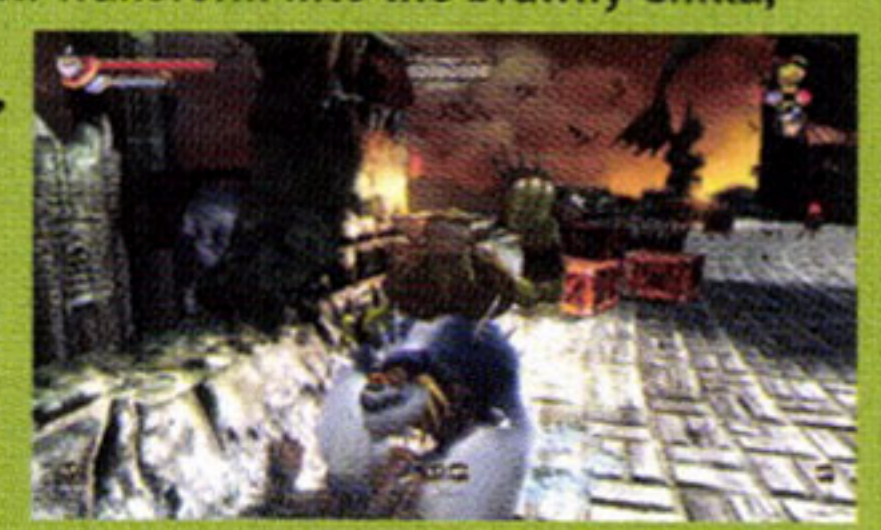
- CHALLENGE (3000 POINTS)*: Win the race and top a Wreck Point total of 100,000. Take a pic of the post-race screen.



Kameo

- DEVELOPER: Rare
- PUBLISHER: Microsoft Game Studios

Take a stroll through the first area of Rare's colorful Xbox 360 debut. Transform into the brawny Chilla, the punchy Pummel Weed, or the spin-happy Major Ruin and dispatch of the evil trolls however you see fit.



King Kong

- DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
- PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

This two-level sample of the Editors' Choice-winning movie adaptation lets you experience both the Tyrannosaurus Rex-evading first-person adventure and T. Rex-pounding play-as-Kong portions of the game.



ORIGINAL XBOX DEMOS

Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers

- DEVELOPER: Pandemic
- PUBLISHER: THQ



King Kong

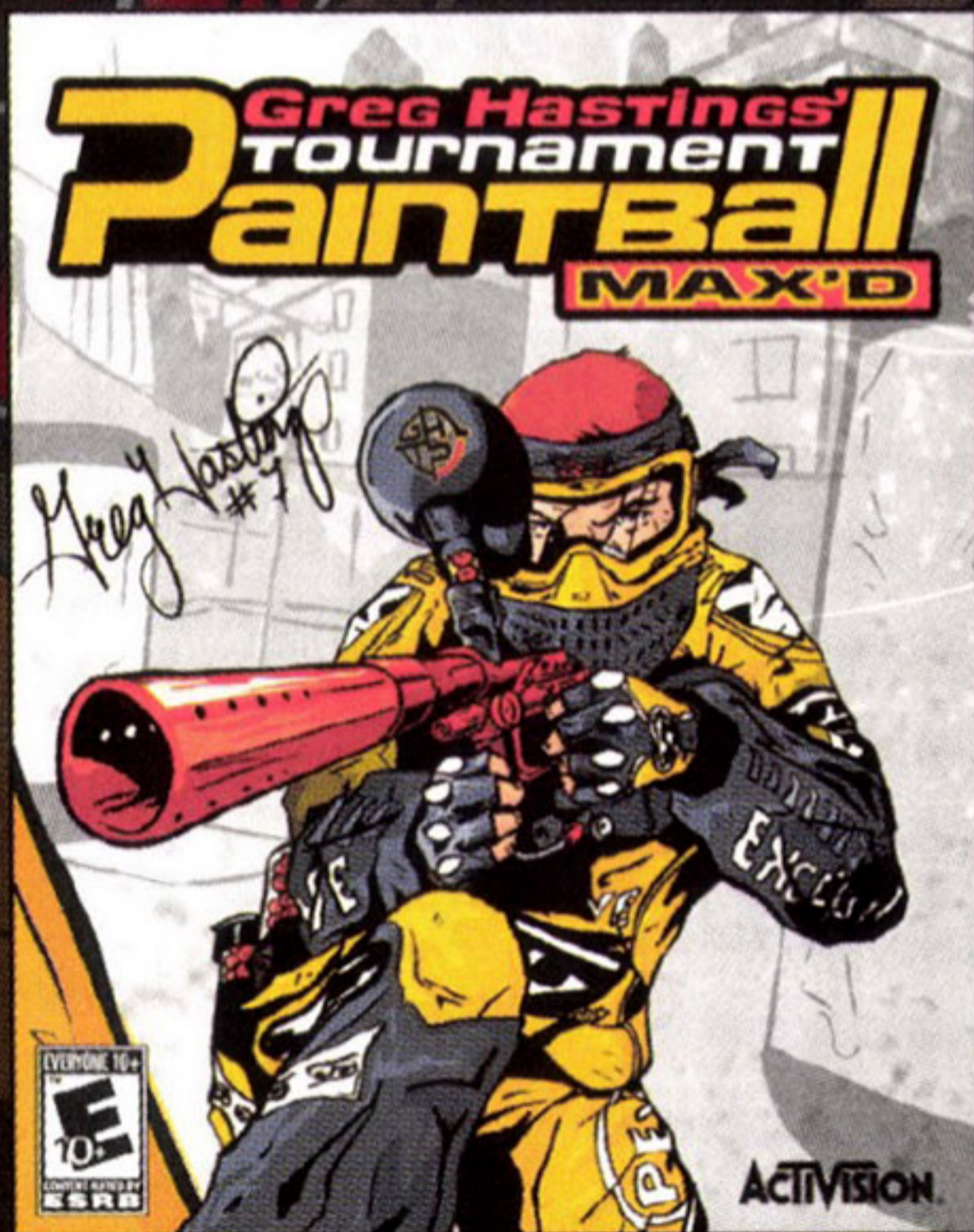
- DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
- PUBLISHER: Ubisoft



"Locked and loaded for a slick sequel to last year's paintball hit."
-IGN.com

YES,
THERE ARE
FORCE FIELDS
THEY'RE CALLED
BUNKERS.

PLAY 4 REAL



BUILD YOUR FIELD Place, rotate and size obstacles for an almost infinite number of field layouts, then upload and play your fields online—custom style.



CONTROL YOUR TEAM The innovative Breakout Manager lets you direct your teammates' moves and shooting—control your team, control the field.



XBOX
LIVE
ONLINE ENABLED

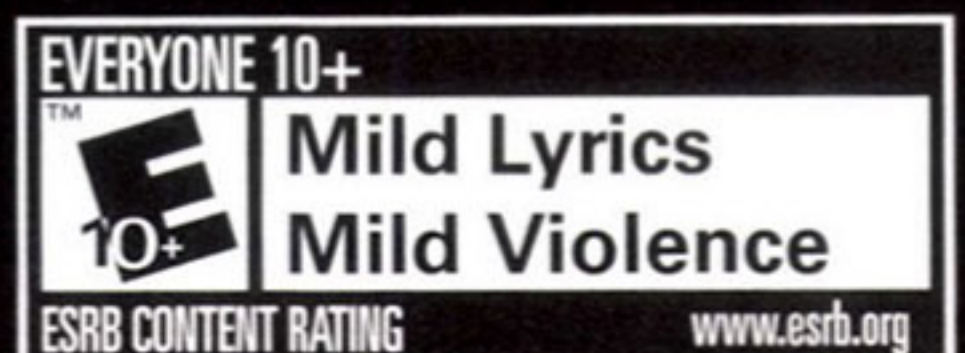
GAME BOY ADVANCE

NINTENDO DS



ACTIVISION

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EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
Mild Lyrics
Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org



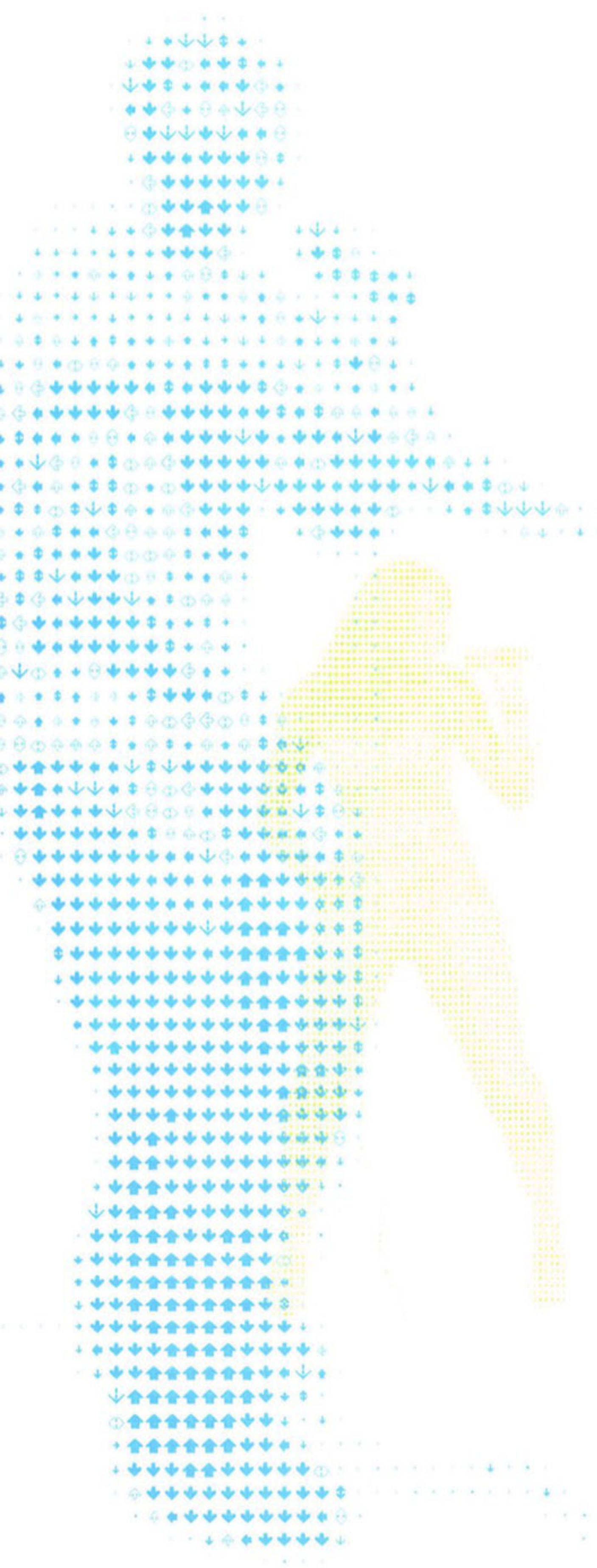
PlayStation 2

BEMANI

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music in every direction



Karaoke Revolution PARTY

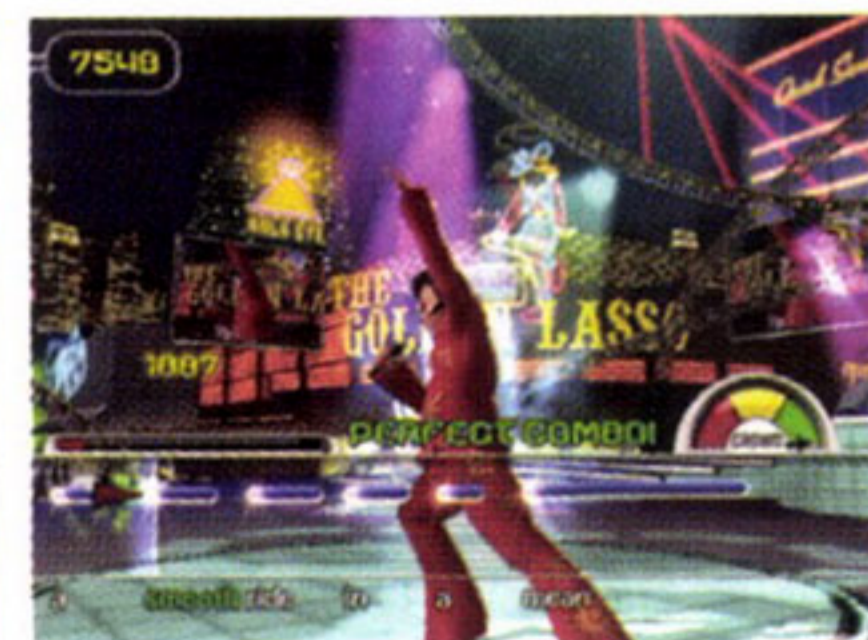
Anything but the same old song and dance.

Karaoke Revolution Party. Belt out 50 new songs. Customize your character. Download even more music with Xbox Live. Put your face in the game with the EyeToy™ USB Camera (for PlayStation®2). And rock the mic with duets, party games and something sure to get you on your feet: the all-new Sing and Dance mode.

Songs include:

American Woman • Crazy In Love • Do You Really Want To Hurt Me • Everybody Wants To Rule The World • Headstrong • I Left My Heart In San Francisco • I Love Rock And Roll • Material Girl • Pieces of Me • Play That Funky Music • Start Me Up • Sweet Caroline • And Many More

TXT 2 WIN. Text in "music" to ddrkr (33757) to win games and gear.



HARMONIX

MusicInEveryDirection.com

KONAMI

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Portable Xbox

Rear Action

Using these two LCD monitors and wireless MadCatz controllers, two other players can compete against the gamer in the driver's seat in a networked Xbox 360 match. A full 5.1 surround-sound system is also housed underneath the screens.



Control Frenzy

Settle into these Sparco Fighter seats, quick-release the steering wheel and attach the MadCatz MC2 wheel to the steering column, nestle your feet against the brake and gas pedals, and load up your favorite Xbox 360 racing game – you control all the in-game action right from the driver's seat!

Screen Dreams

A rear-mounted projector beams the video on to this white panel – using a plasma TV wasn't possible because the engine's heat would damage it. But that means the front hood can be lowered, and a 40-foot-wide picture can be projected on to a wall 60 feet in front of the car, giving you your own rolling drive-in theater!

THE FIVE AXIS xA SPEEDSTER

Got a spare \$250,000? That'd buy you one seriously sleek way to take your Xbox 360 gaming wherever you go. The Five Axis xA Speedster began life as a standard Scion xA. Then the team at Five Axis removed the roof, eliminated the doors, added openings in the side panels, removed the rear seats, and wired the Xbox 360 gaming system of your dreams into this widebody conversion. "Each of our cars has to have a wow factor," explains Troy Sumitomo, president of Five Axis. "With this one, it was that you can game from the driver's seat. Anyone can put a screen in – we wanted you to play from first-person." Oh yeah, and when the gaming's done, everything tucks away and the xA can cruise the streets like anything but a regular ride. "Wow" doesn't even begin to cover it...



WHEN TERROR GOES GLOBAL,



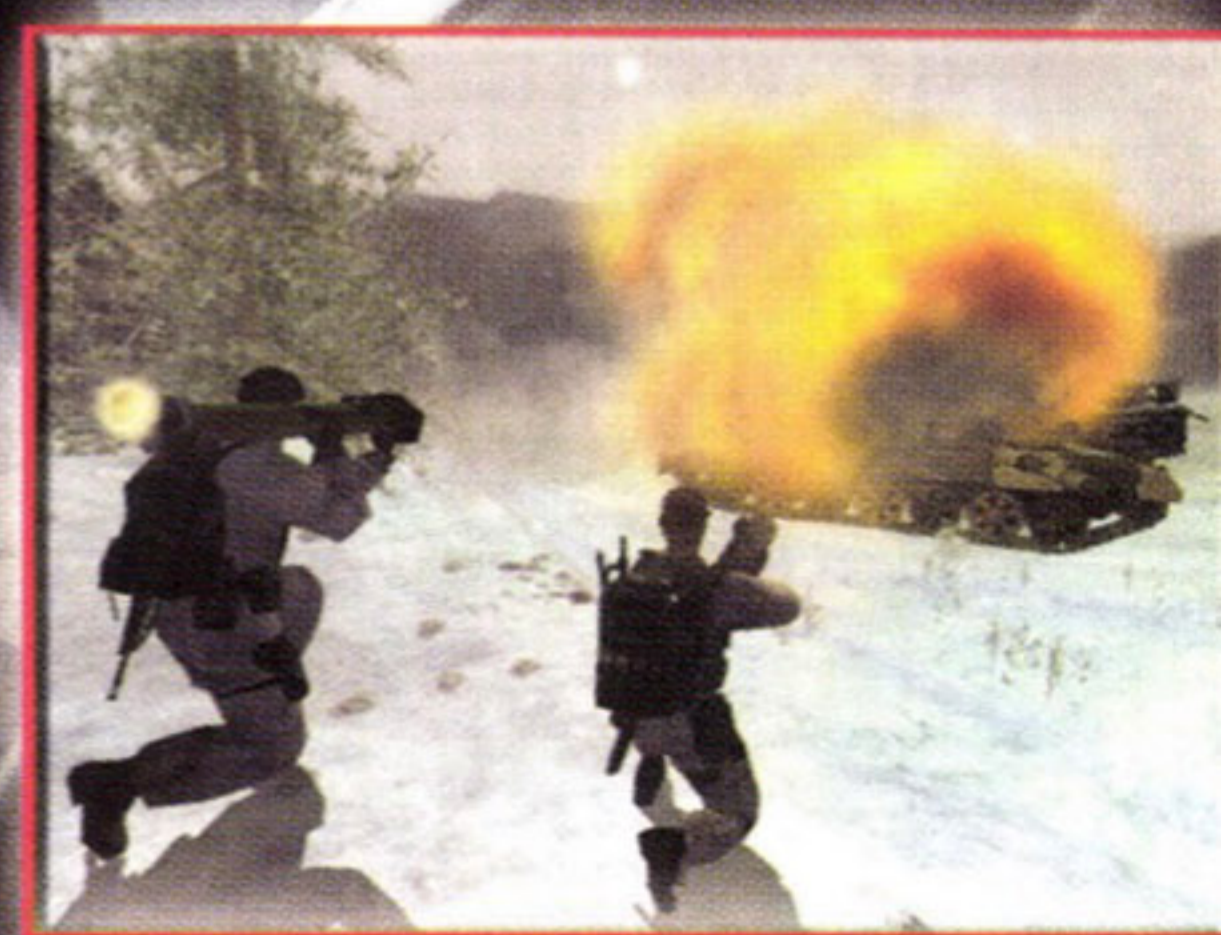
“Things have never looked better for the series.”
-TeamXbox.com



Enemy A.I. developed by
pro military advisors



Intuitive squad control
over each operative



The deadliest hotspots:
urban, mountain, jungle



Blood
Language
Violence



PlayStation 2




SO DO YOU.™



CONFLICT GLOBAL TERROR

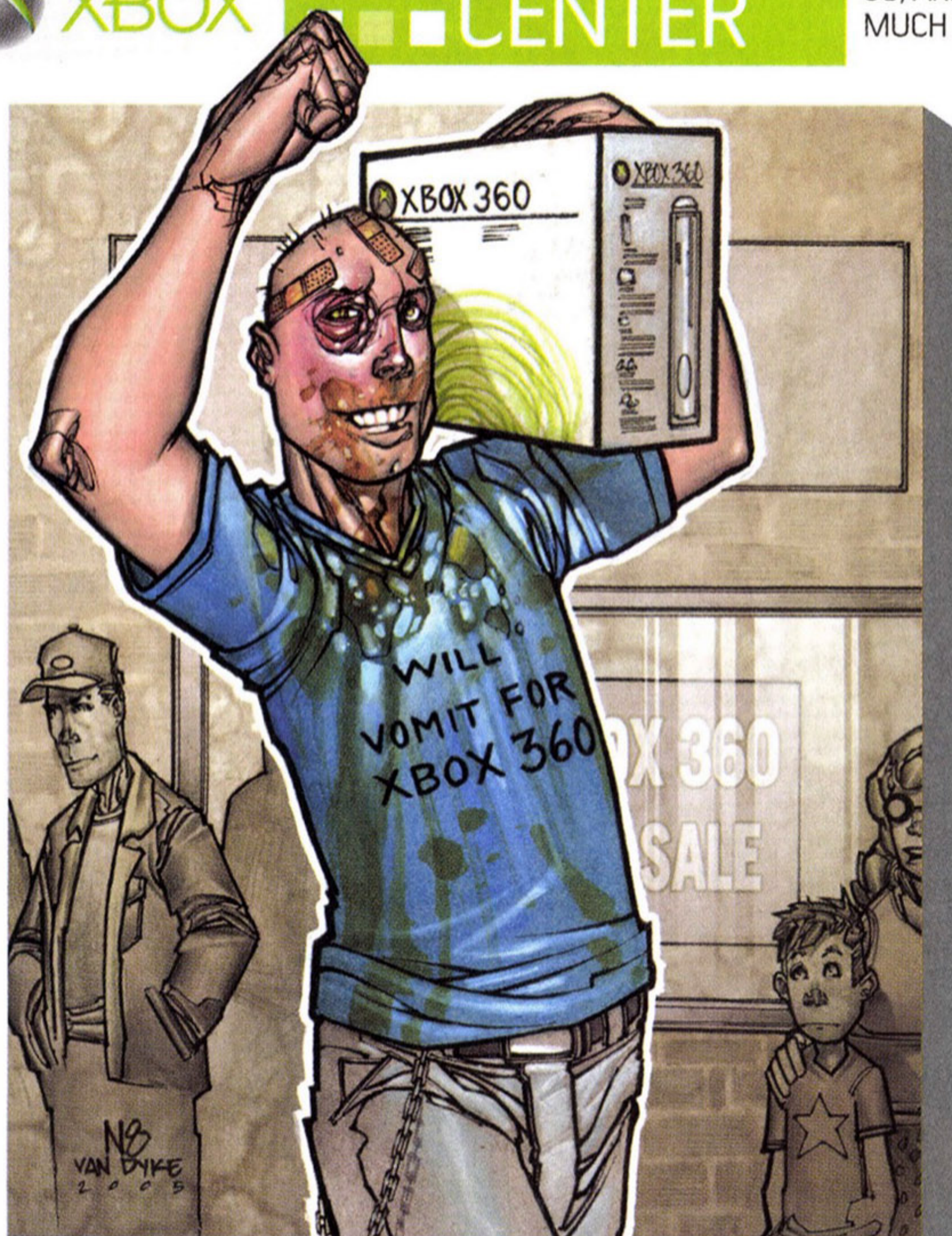
In the war on terror, the battlefield is global and only one special ops squad can protect the world's freedom. It's up to you to lead this elite group through deadly missions against an enemy fueled by hatred!



Go global with all-new
co-op online play

www.2kgames/conflict

SO, ARE YOU DIGGING THE NEW LOOK AS MUCH AS WE ARE? PLEASE LET US KNOW!



FEAR FACTOR: XBOX 360 EDITION

I refuse to miss out on the 360 launch party rush, so I've pushed myself to extreme limits to collect enough money. Some friends of mine got the bright idea that I should drink a liter of imported Mexican hot sauce for \$100. I did it, and when I threw up, the hot sauce got into my sinuses, and my face got so incredibly swollen that we had paramedics on stand by. But I didn't stop there. For another \$50, this formerly hairy dude is now as slick and shiny as a newborn squirrel. In addition, I've digested some other deranged concoctions for \$20 here and there, and I'm so very close to my goal. Now I can almost guarantee that I will have an Xbox 360 on day one!

— ROBBIE ARP

We say: We're not sure whether to applaud your resolve or to call the men with the white coats, Robbie, but all we can say is that, more than anyone else, we really hope you enjoy your Xbox 360.



► "I'll be back...uh, maybe...I hope..."

TO BE CONTINUED...?

I was wondering whether you knew anything about an *Advent Rising* sequel. I think it's one of the best Xbox games ever and the ending (er, endings) really left me hanging. So for peace of mind, I would like to know whether or not there's a sequel in the works.

— DAVID SIANISSIAN

We say: You're not the only *Advent Rising* fan, David. We dug the kinetic and story-driven action that *Glyphx's* debut effort delivered, and the developer has always gone on record as saying that the game was planned as the first of a trilogy. Unfortunately, Majesco wouldn't go on record specifically addressing the future of the *Advent* series. What a representative for the company did say was, "[While] Majesco is currently focused on their new, upcoming titles for 2006...we

remain committed to our existing, originally developed intellectual properties, including *Advent Rising* and *BloodRayne*, but are not ready to make any announcements at this time."



FULL CONTROL

As a proud Xbox owner and future Xbox 360 owner, I was hoping you guys could tell me if the Xbox 360 Universal Media Remote would work on satellite TV. It would be nice if I could consolidate all of my remotes down to one.

— CHRIS EMMETT

KOXM play list

What's your favorite custom soundtrack for your Xbox 360 game of choice? Email us your playlist with a digital pic of yourself to the usual address with the subject "KOXM Play List."



Dave Rees

Gamertag: **Dave OXM**
Game: *Kameo*
Playlist: **Thievery Corporation Kameo Mix**

- 1 "Satyam Shivam Sundaram (featuring Gunjan)"
- 2 "Illumination"
- 3 "The Mirror Conspiracy"
- 4 "Le Monde"
- 5 "Indra"

Says Dave: "Playing *Kameo* made me feel like a kid again. I wanted a list that was as pretty and fluid as *Kameo's* graphics."

Meet the Team

INVIGORATED BY A FRESH SUPPLY OF BLACK XBOX 360 DEBUG KITS (WE CALL 'EM "VADER UNITS"), THESE EDITORS HAVE GOT GAME.

Top 5 new home-theater gadgets I must have because of my Xbox 360:

- 1 The Logitech Harmony Universal Remote reviewed in this issue <drool>.
- 2 A new receiver. Mine is old and lame.
- 3 A new HDTV. My second-gen Samsung DLP is awesome, but newer is better.
- 4 Wireless surround-sound speakers. Those Logitechs Ryan put through their paces would make me and the missus happy.
- 5 A new couch. No complaints with my current one, but leather is nice...

Top 5 upcoming Xbox 360 games I'm most excited for:

- 1 *The Darkness: Riddick* was one of the best games I've ever played, and I can't wait to see what Starbreeze can do in the next gen.
- 2 *Halo 3*: Duh, right?
- 3 *Gears of War*: The most eye-popping 360 game yet shown.
- 4 *Lost Odyssey*: This tale of an immortal over the ages sounds fascinating.
- 5 *Top Spin 2*: My optimism is unwavering despite the delay!

Top 5 favorite ice cream flavors:

- 1 Mint chocolate chip. It's classic and its yummy factor cannot be denied.
- 2 Pumpkin spice. Why are pumpkin-flavored things considered seasonal? And why is the year spent waiting for that "season" so long?
- 3 Coconut. When I can't afford to take a real Hawaiian vacation, a little of this makes me feel tropical.
- 4 Green tea. Somehow, it's soothing.
- 5 Lychee. Words cannot really describe it. But it's fruity and delicious.

Top 5 things you didn't know about our new dual-format demo disc:

- 1 The 360 portion actually renders at 1280x960 resolution so we can scale it appropriately for any TV.
- 2 Dane and I both finished *Condemned* for the unlockable video.
- 3 Our test discs come as two separate discs: one for Xbox and one for 360..
- 4 The first one easily passed through Microsoft certification!
- 5 I see the disc in 1's and o's like Neo.

Top 5 favorite videogame T-shirts I own:

- 1 Japanese *GTA3*. The customs agents at Narita Airport were enthralled by it, and didn't seem freaked out by the big gun image, thank goodness.
- 2 *Grim Fandango*. Just a faded white with a worn out silk-screened image, it's a fond memory of a great game.
- 3 *The Warriors*. Rockstar makes the best shirts.
- 4 I <Heart> Tecmo from two E3s ago.
- 5 Eidos softball jersey. I like the slogan on the front: "Hit it and split it."



Rob Smith
EDITOR IN CHIEF



Paul Curthoys
MANAGING EDITOR



Francesca Reyes
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



Dave Rees
DVD EDITOR



Tom Price
SENIOR EDITOR



EMAIL



FORUM



XBOX LIVE



MAIL



We say: Sorry Chris, no dice on satellite. But it will control your TV and Windows XP Media Center Edition PC. However, the Logitech Harmony Remote for Xbox 360 (shown on the previous page, reviewed on page 94) will control your Xbox 360, your satellite TV, and a whole lot more. It...well, it's probably best if you just flip forward in the magazine and see that bad boy for yourself.

who aren't Xbox Live Silver or Gold members. Downloads, additional Xbox 1 compatibility profiles...the possibilities are almost endless!

SPARTANS ADRIFT

I noticed in the last few issues that you have discontinued the Spartan Central



► "Is Joanna Dark replacing us?"

section. I really liked that section. As a Halo 2 fan, that section (especially the Homemade Halo part of it) gave me great info about Halo 2, and it gave me tons of great Halo 2 Custom Gametypes. I would like to know why you have discontinued this because there are still plenty of hardcore Halo 2 fans, and it's still the most popular Xbox game ever. — TONY VANDE BRAKE

We say: Honestly, Tony, it's run its regular course. We want to make sure Spartan Central is completely compelling, and we think that during its regular run we did

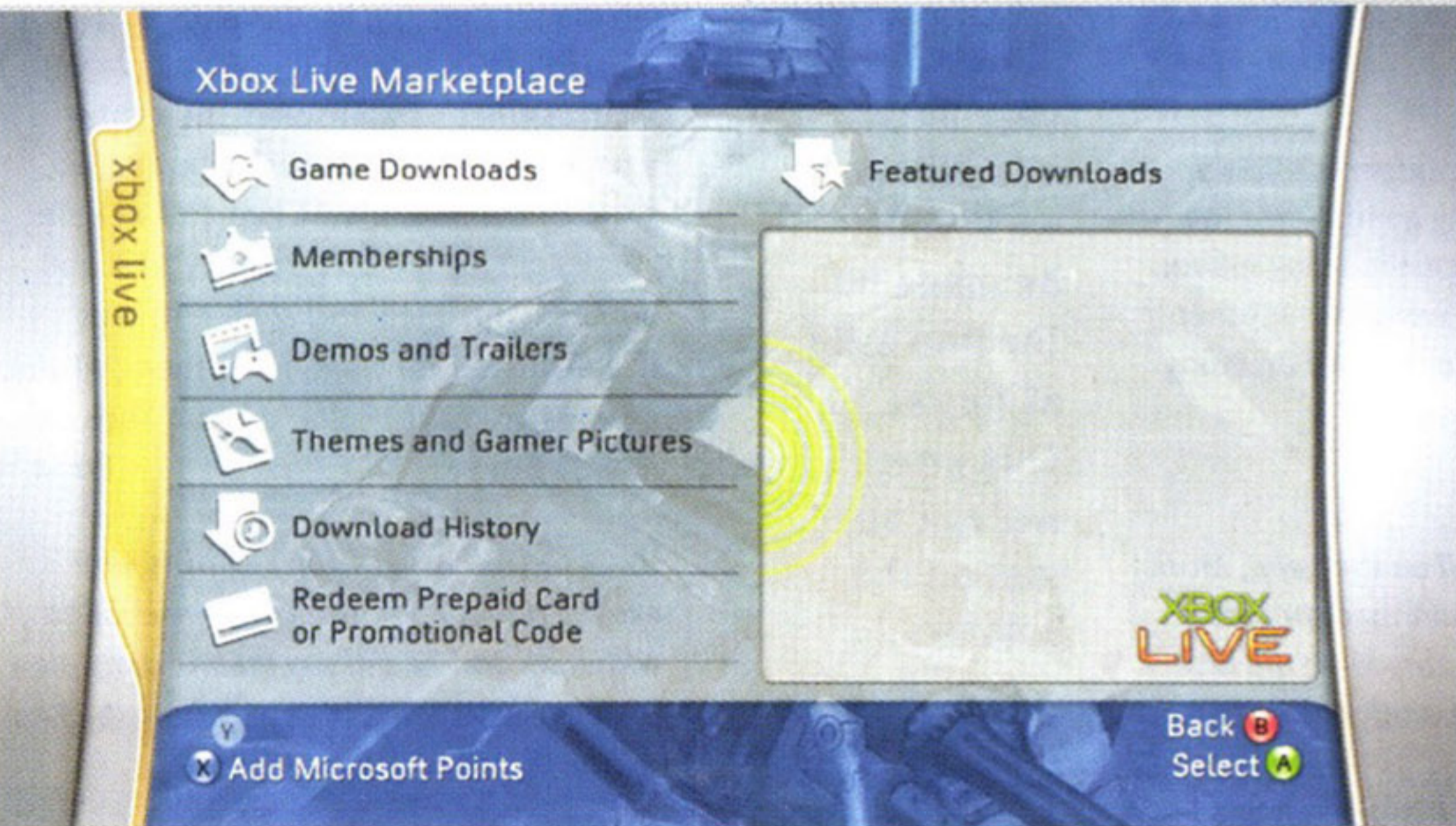
continued on pg. 18 ►►

ANOTHER ONE FOR THE FAQ

One of the main reasons I am getting a 360 is for *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, but I don't have Xbox Live, nor will I be able to get it any time soon, so I won't be able to download things like the horse armor or seasonal downloads (or downloads for any game for that matter). Will they be available on the OXM demo disc or as retail discs for us non-Xbox Live subscribers?

— ANONYMOUS

We say: While every piece of content will be handled on a case by case basis with Microsoft and the game's publisher, we can say that our spiffy all-new demo disc will have the physical capability of delivering additional game content to those of you



HOT BUTTON

Reader Tyler Sloane asks, "If you were a videogame character, who would you want to be?"

Ryan Answers:



If we're not counting existing licensed characters (Superman, Batman, etc.), I'd be tempted to pick Sam Fisher since he doesn't take crap from anyone, but then you've got to remember that he often has to sleep in air ducts and other cramped locales. So I'd go with Derrick Cole from *Breakdown*. He's got glowing fists of doom, so nobody's gonna challenge him to a bar fight and live to tell about it.

Got a hot button topic you'd like to ask us? Email us: letters@officialxbx.com with the subject line "Hot Button."



EDITOR'S LETTER

WELCOME TO A TWO-XBOX WORLD

March was when it all began for us. Well, our speculation, debate, over-eager calls to tough-question-dodging PR reps began well before that, but it was March when we were invited to Microsoft's HQ. There, J Allard whipped away the cloth that covered the Xbox 360 and confirmed its name, look, and specs.

It was just a few days before the November 22nd launch that I was faced with my first Xbox 360 dilemma. In my hand were the shrinkwrapped copies of *Kameo* and *PGR3*, and decision time loomed: What would be the first game that I would play in my Xbox 360? I surprised myself in not considering it a foregone conclusion. The winner was *PGR3*, and my reasoning, I believe, signifies a big reason why Microsoft has a winner in Xbox 360.

It's Xbox Live. I hadn't selected a car or a race type before I was online, chatting with Paul and Ryan, and getting behind that oh-so-beautifully-crafted wheel to race around Tokyo. So I saw more scenery than I did checkered flags, but as the ticker on Gotham TV informed everyone that Paul had just notched his tenth back-to-back victory (the bastard), it was clear that we were seeing a truly next-generation experience.

Anyway, we're now off and running, living in a two-Xbox world. And to celebrate, be sure to check out our new dual-format disc that delivers Xbox 360 demos – including your first chance to play this month's cover stunner, *Full Auto* – and original Xbox games, too. Keep reading, and keep those thoughts on our new look coming.

Rob

MISSION STATEMENT

OXM is the most complete, entertaining, and dynamic information source for Xbox gamers. The magazine and disc are expressly created to enhance the passion for Xbox gaming shared by readers and editors alike. OXM publishes the best, most revealing stories; digs deepest for the most valuable insight; and is resolutely committed to providing Xbox gamers the most reliable buying advice. We are *Official Xbox Magazine*, and we are officially dedicated to giving the Xbox community the best games magazine and disc that money can buy.

AT ONE POINT DURING THIS ISSUE, THERE WERE NO LESS THAN 25 XBOX 360 CONSOLES IN THE OFFICE (SOME DEBUG KITS, SOME RETAIL UNITS). IT'S A LONG STORY...

Top 5 things I'm doing to avoid going insane while waiting for my new Infiniti G35 to be built and shipped to me:

- 1 Visiting Infiniti's website and configuring my exact car and then just staring at it and daydreaming...
- 2 Visiting G35 owner message boards to see what fellow owners are up to.
- 3 Washing the DeLorean. Gotta get it ready for the "family picture."
- 4 Playing Xbox 360, of course!
- 5 Watching *Batman Begins* on DVD. It gets better with each viewing!



Ryan McCaffrey
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Top 5 best deadline lunch foods:

- 1 The Happy Hoagie. It's a mom-and-pop operation (literally), and it's as big as a broom closet. But damn if they don't make a fine sandwich!
- 2 McDonald's. Normally I'd never indulge, but I can't resist those fries!
- 3 Pizza. The universal solution for all lunch squabbles.
- 4 King Crab. When you need a change of pace, this is where to go.
- 5 In-N-Out Burger. The single greatest low-cost food of all time.



Juliann Brown
ART DIRECTOR

Top 5 self-distracting activities I did this month while waiting and waiting for our copies of PDZ to show up:

- 1 Watched my hair grow. Is it here yet?
- 2 Stared at the Xbox 360 Neon music visualizer. Is it here yet?
- 3 Followed John, our mail guy, around the office all day. Is it here yet?
- 4 Hired a lawyer to fight the restraining order our mail guy John filed against me. Is it here yet?
- 5 Went outside for a break, took a deep breath, and...what the?...it's here!



Gary Cribb
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR

Top 5 robots of all time:

- 1 Awesome-O from South Park. "Awesome-O says, 'no way.'"
- 2 Hal 9000 from *2001*. I just love him because he says, "I'm sorry I can't do that, Dave," and my boss is Dave.
- 3 Maximilian from *The Black Hole*.
- 4 Bender from *Futurama*. Did you see that issue of *Maximum PC* where some dude built a Bender PC?!
- 5 K.I.T.T. from *Knight Rider*. Because you're never alone if you have a car that can talk to you...



Dane Frederiksen
MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Top 5 benefits to being a male model for a day:

- 1 They feed you. Not only that, they feed you Doritos, Oreos, and any other junk food you can imagine.
- 2 Photoshop! Now you can enjoy any picture they take of you no matter how bad the shot was.
- 3 Bragging rights.
- 4 For five hours, everything revolves around you.
- 5 You get a cool nickname like Zoollander the Intern.



Thomas Baxter
EDITORIAL INTERN

showcase really neat stuff. And while the Halo 2 community certainly continues to thrive, we'll return to the section when we have killer content that deserves a wider audience. And who knows: if Perfect Dark Zero takes off like Halo did, maybe we'll do a dataDyne Central...

MONEY MATTERS

Why is Activision selling the Xbox 360 version *Call of Duty 2* at \$60 when the PC version, which was released earlier, costs only \$50? Don't both versions have virtually identical gameplay and graphics?



► \$400 vs. \$3000. Same end result.

— DYLAN SIMMS

We say: Two factors worth pointing out, Dylan: On Xbox 360, you're getting a version that performs at a steady 60 frames per second, works when you put it in every time, and has no need to load any drivers or optimize settings. And you can play it on Xbox Live, where everyone is on a high-speed connection and your stats are tracked for your gaming enjoyment and convenience. A PC can't give you the latter, while it'll cost you over two grand to get the former, plus game-installation time.

WALLET TO OXM: THANKS!

Okay, so I was wrong. I wrote you guys a while back and thanked you for the demo of *Doom 3* on your disc and I thanked you for saving me a bunch of money on a dark,



uninteresting looking game. But then you gave it a 9.2. So a few weeks ago I bought it on a whim when

► When you see this, you can't go wrong.

it was on sale for \$20. It's a great game, and boy was I wrong. I've now learned to trust you guys when you review a game, and I'm now a true believer.

— TOM BARRETT

We say: Thanks for the kind words, Tom! The demos usually give you a good taste, but they don't always tell the whole story!

THE STATE OF INDIANA

I am a big James Bond fan, and can't wait for *From Russia With Love*. But what about

Indiana Jones? I played *Emperor's Tomb* and thought it was really good. Since the fourth *Indiana Jones* movie is being made, I was hoping that there would be another Xbox game. Have you guys heard anything that might get my hopes up?

— MARK GOKEL

We say: You hit the nail on the head, Mark. LucasArts has in fact confirmed that the next videogame *Indy* outing is on the way for Xbox 360, and they mentioned a vague release date of 2007.

Since the fourth flick is due out on the Fourth of July that year, it's really not very hard to imagine them coming out simultaneously.

ID'D BY ID

While playing *Doom 3* on Xbox Live at a friend's house recently, I came upon a gamer with the gamertag "*****" It wasn't until later when I was reading [id CEO] Todd Hollenshead's thank-you note; I noticed he wrote that he would be on the *Doom 3* servers "waiting to spoon-feed us some rockets," and his handle would be "*****." So was I really killing and being killed by the CEO of id Software?

COVER CAPTIONS
NOVEMBER
2005

After sifting through all of the obvious bald joke and flatulence-related entries, we were left with a precious few genuinely funny cover captions for our *Mass Effect* cover. Our winner is Joseph Leister, who'll get a copy of BioWare's next title for this quip:



"In the year 2205, all military wear will be made by the fine folks at Target. This irony will not be lost on the soldiers."

This month's runner-up: "Look, if we had exhibitor badges, do you really think we would be coming in with the cosplayers?"

— KEVIN FUGATE

Send your funniest/smartest captions for this month's cover to letters@officialxboxmagazine.com with the subject line "Cover Captions 53," and the best will see their names here!

— CHRIS SUURSOO

We say: Well, Chris, we will say this: Todd is not a CEO who sits behind a desk all day. He has been known to throw down in all of id's games, so you never know... (Note: To protect Todd's privacy, we've deleted the gamertag from this letter.)

FAQ ATTACK (AGAIN!)

What's going on with the review roundup? Some months it's there with type so small I can't read it, sometimes it's not, sometimes it includes every game, and sometimes it's just the Editors' Choice winners. It's a handy resource; please don't eliminate it.

— AT LEAST ONE PERSON EVERY WEEK

We say: We know how you all feel. We use it too to remember when we reviewed something and what score it got! The problem is that the review roundup is a monster that, if it ever came to life, would tower over our building and immolate us all with its fiery white-hot breath. Fortunately, we think we've figured out how to tame it. We're working on moving it all over to our disc so you can scroll through it on your giant TVs in a font that you don't need 20/5 vision to read.

VISIONS OF LLAMAS DANCING IN THEIR HEADS

I opened up my November *OXM* to the Xbox Live section with the interview with Jeff Minter (pg. 24). Feeling a vague sense of familiarity, I asked myself, "Who's Jeff Minter? What's Llamasoft?" Then I had a flashback to *Mama Llama*, the single greatest Commodore 64 game of all time. I broke out my old C64 from my attic and booted it up. It still rocks! So now that Microsoft has Jeff working for them, why not a sequel/remake? It could be an Xbox Live Arcade game.

— TYLER B.

We say: You never know. Jeff was very excited about Xbox 360 when we chatted with him, and he did say that he does plan to have "downloadable content on the Xbox 360 in the coming months."

THE MAGIC 8 BALL SAYS... UNLIKELY

I was one of those diehard people who shelled out 200 bucks for *Steel Battalion*. With all this talk about backwards compatibility on Xbox 360 for certain "best-selling" Xbox games, it seems the odds of good ol' *SB* and my mega controller being compatible with my 360 are very slim. So break it to me easy...am I screwed?

— LYLE DELANO

We say: Though the bad-boy mech game remains one of the coolest and most

continued on pg. 20 ►►

ONE WANTS TO FREE HIS PEOPLE...



I RETURNED HOME EXPECTING PEACE. INSTEAD I FOUND MY KINGDOM RAVAGED BY WAR AND MY PEOPLE ENSLAVED. NOW I AM A FUGITIVE, HUNTED BY HOSTILE ARMIES AND PLAGUED BY A CURSE THAT IS GRADUALLY POSSESSING MY SOUL. A DARKER PRINCE RESIDES IN ME NOW. AND I MUST EMBRACE HIS POWERS AND SKILL IF I WANT TO RESTORE PEACE TO MY LAND, MY PEOPLE, AND MY SOUL.

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unique in the Xbox portfolio, there's little chance it's going to be playable on Xbox 360, and not for the reason you might think. It certainly wouldn't be out of the question for Capcom to write an emulator profile for the game to function on the new Xbox, but the problem is with the proprietary controller. It plugs into the Xbox's controller port, while the Xbox 360 has, as you know, USB ports. So there's simply no way to physically connect the controller to the white system. But consider this: Steel Battalion already runs in 720p HDTV in true 360 style. Besides, if you can afford to buy a \$200 game, you can afford to keep your Xbox around to play it on. UPDATE: Just before press time, Capcom officially confirmed to us that Steel Battalion would not be backward compatible with Xbox 360.

being original? Where are the new games? I say, if the Xbox 360 is going to succeed, it needs originality, not just improved graphics!
— A DISAPPOINTED GAMER

We say: While we can certainly understand your frustration with sequelitis and disproportionate ratios of games in certain genres, we have to defend the Xbox 360's current and future lineup. Kameo is certainly a breath of fresh air, while Gears of War looks set to redefine action games – and what about the bumper crop of massively multiplayer roleplaying games that begin invading Xbox 360 early in 2006? That's an entire new genre for Xbox. Game on, amigos!

360 DEGREES OF FRESHNESS

I'm absolutely sick of the same old stuff. A large majority of Xbox games these days are first-person shoot-'em-ups. And the multitude of racing games have also been done to death (gas pedal, brake, turn, snooze...). When did game developers stop

GOT A QUESTION ABOUT YOUR SUBSCRIPTION OR NEED A DISC?

For subscription, disc, or any other non-editorial inquiries, please visit our Frequently Asked Questions page on our website at www.officialxboxmagazine.com/faq.html. You'll find answers about how to handle missing discs, not getting the latest issue,



► You wanna tell this guy that *Gears of War* is not original?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF OUR NEW LOOK? CONTACT US!

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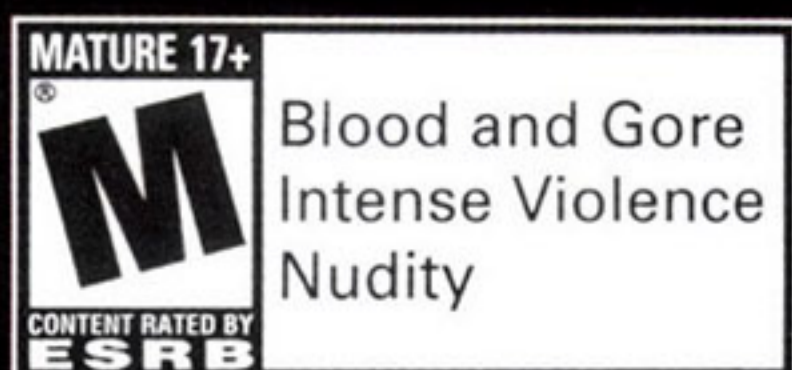
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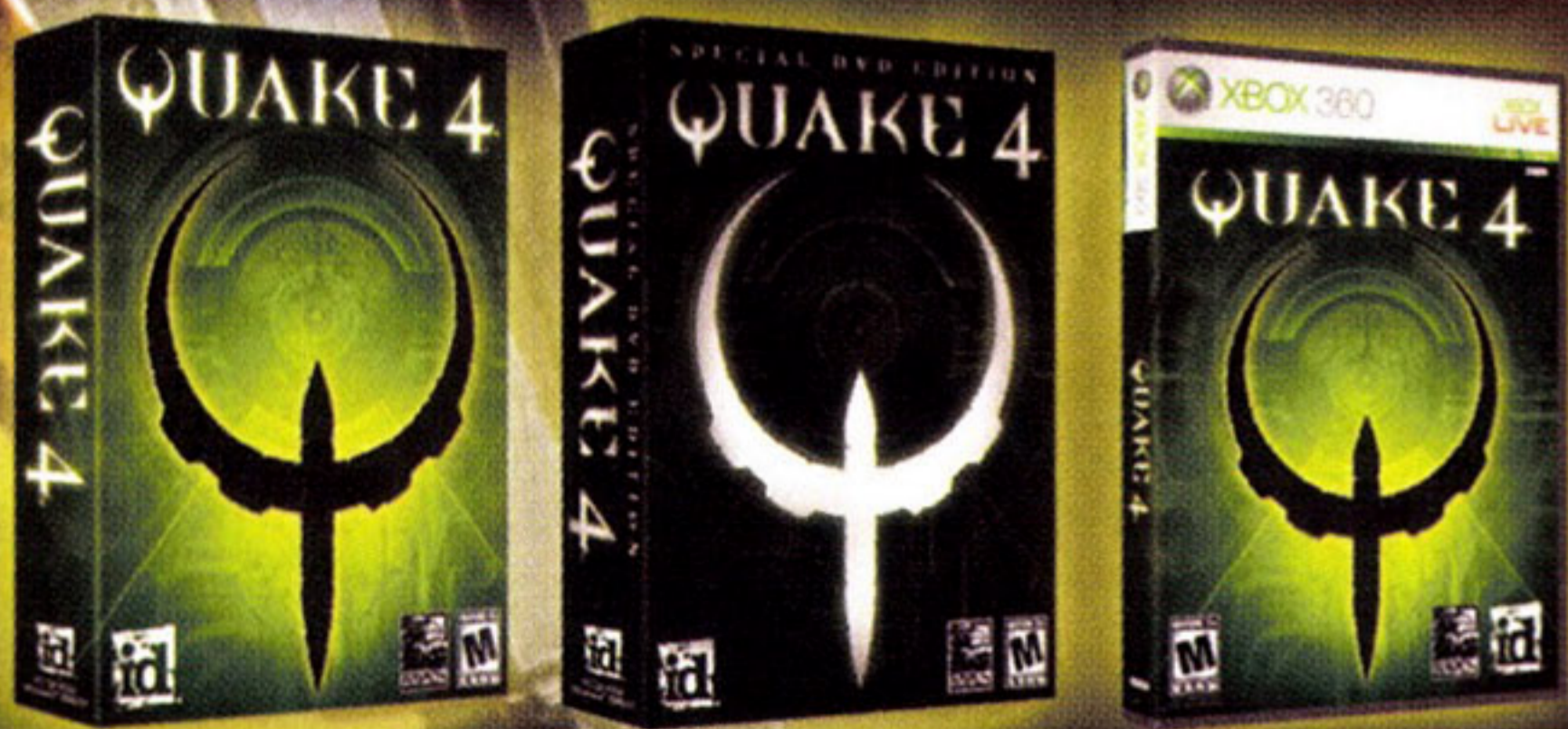
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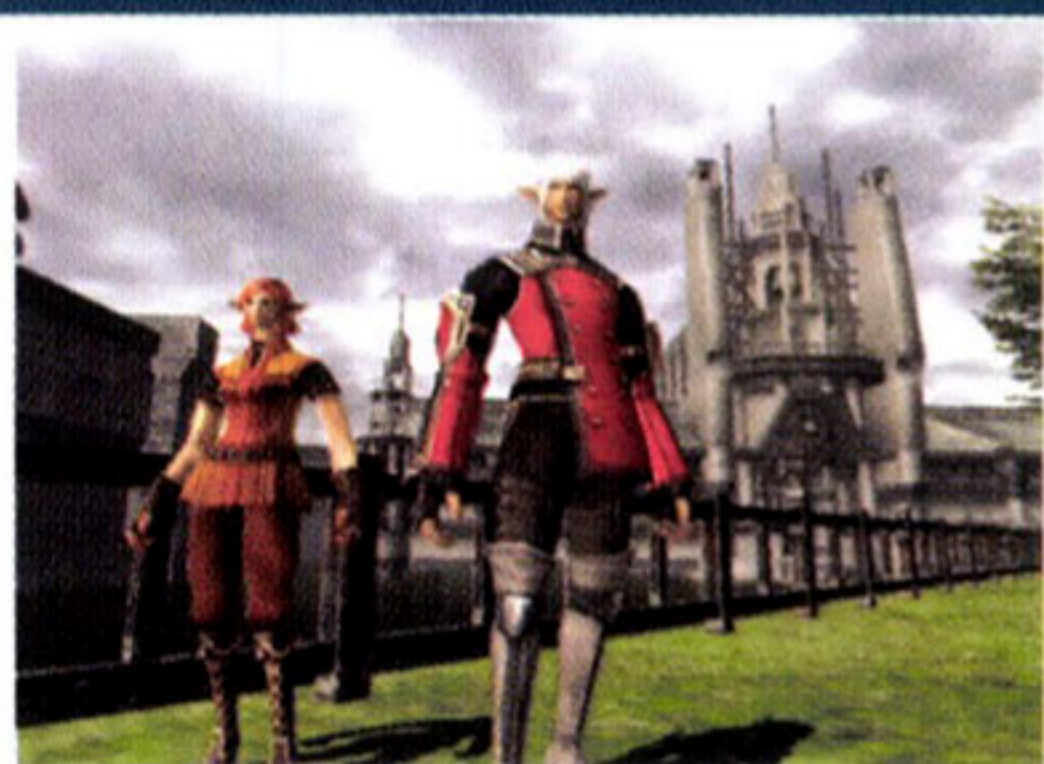


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**...THE INVASION
HAS BEGUN**

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Final Fantasy XI

The chocobos are coming!

Heartbreak. That's the only word to describe how it felt to have Factor 5's Xbox MMORPG hopeful *True Fantasy Live Online* yanked like a rug from underneath our gaming feet. But that was then, and this is now – and now is Xbox 360 and its upcoming stable of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (a.k.a. MMORPGs). And the combination of Xbox 360, Xbox Live, and the *Final Fantasy* universe should help to wipe away any lingering tears over *TFLO*.

Square Enix's *Final Fantasy XI* has proven to be an open-world, roleplaying success on both PS2 and PC; for the title's Xbox 360 debut, you'll be able to take up swords alongside any or all of them at anytime (yes, that includes PS2!). Kinda puts a whole new spin on "cross-platform." The Xbox 360 version of *FFXI* will also feature additional content (new areas, new spells and abilities, new quests, and more) previously only available in the game's expansion pack, *Chains of Promathia*. You'll even be able to plug in any USB keyboard – a necessary chat component.

But what if you're new to *FF* or MMORPGs? Well, take note and don't fret: You'll be among the very first to get your hands on a special full beta version (in which you'll be able to help test and tweak the game) of *FFXI* in an upcoming issue of *Official Xbox Magazine*. You heard us – a full beta version means that you'll be able to play the game months before it hits store shelves. All you need is a free Xbox Live Silver account (of course, a Gold membership works too). So tell your friends; it's on. Stay tuned.

– Francesca Reyes

► The land of Vana'diel is where you'll make your virtual living alongside a multitude of races – your created character can be chosen and shaped from any of them.



Platform: XBOX 360 Publisher: SQUARE ENIX Developer: SQUARESOFT Release date: Spring 2006

For Once, You'll Want to be Carded!

Your Xbox Live subscription now delivers you good times offline, too

What if being an Xbox Live subscriber meant more than just access to the greatest online games service around? What if it could get you discounts on your favorite concerts, reads, threads, TV, and more? Well dream no more, as Xbox Live members with 12-month subscriptions (on Xbox or Xbox 360) are getting just such an offer...for free! Here's the skinny:

- **Get your own card:** Log on to www.xbox.com/live to see all of the program details. Just link your gamertag to Xbox.com and create your own My Xbox page, and you're set! You'll be mailed a real, live, flash-it-to-your-friends card personalized with your gamertag!
- **But wait, there's more!:** The card does much more. Xbox Live has partnered with your favorite stores, restaurants, and other retailers across the country for discounts and promotions exclusively for card holders (at participating locations).
- **Yes, it gets better:** This is just the start! New partners will bring you even more opportunities to use your card.
- **Nope, there's no catch:** The card is free! It's our big thank you to all our loyal Xbox Live subscribers.



THE DETAILS

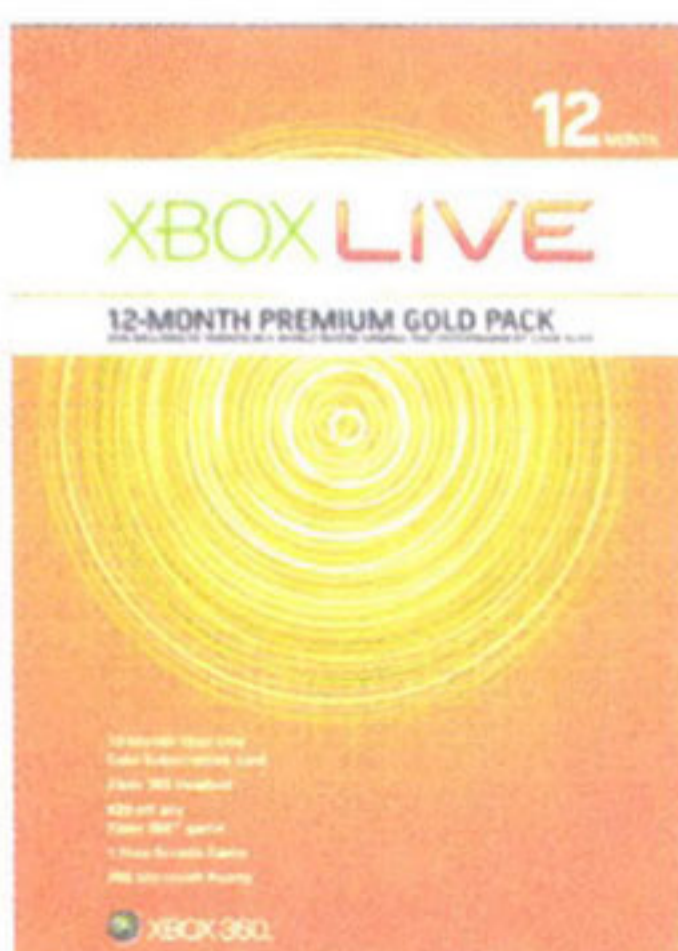
Xbox Live **12-month subscribers** on the original Xbox and on Xbox 360 who opt in for Xbox communications can sign up now for the program – you'll get your cards shortly after the holiday season. Members in this awesome new program are in for one year from the date of issue.

So who's partnering with Xbox Live to bring you the finest special offers? How about Ticketmaster, Cambridge Soundworks, and DISH Network, for starters? That's concerts, speakers, and TV – three categories no gamer can deny their love for!

IMPORTANT!

In order to send you your card, Xbox Live needs your current mailing address. Make sure you **update your profile** with your current information.

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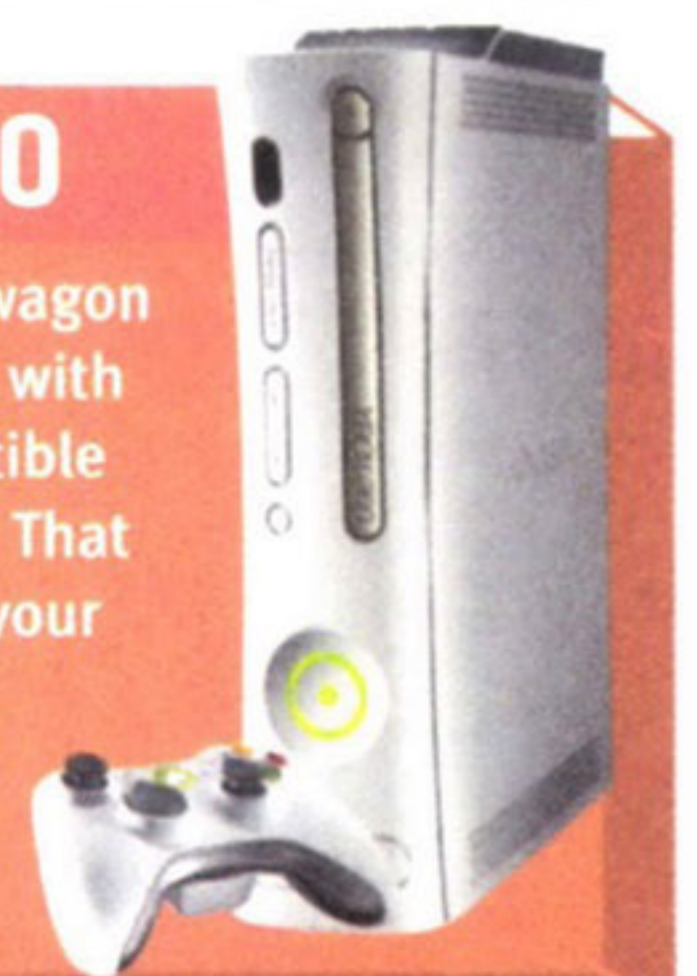


TOURNAMENTS GALORE!

As 2006 gets rolling, look for Xbox Live to play host to a slew of exciting game tournaments. Whether you're a sports nut, shooter fanatic, or racing connoisseur, Live is the place to be for action-packed, prize-filled competitions!

XBOX LIVE VS. XBOX LIVE 360

If your Xbox friends haven't jumped on the Xbox 360 bandwagon just yet, you can still enjoy your usual Xbox Live game time with them. A huge stack of your favorite Xbox games are compatible with your Xbox 360, including their Xbox Live functionality. That means that you'll be able to play Xbox games on Live with your Xbox 360 against buddies who play them on their Xbox. For a full list of Xbox 360-supported Xbox games, please visit www.xbox.com.



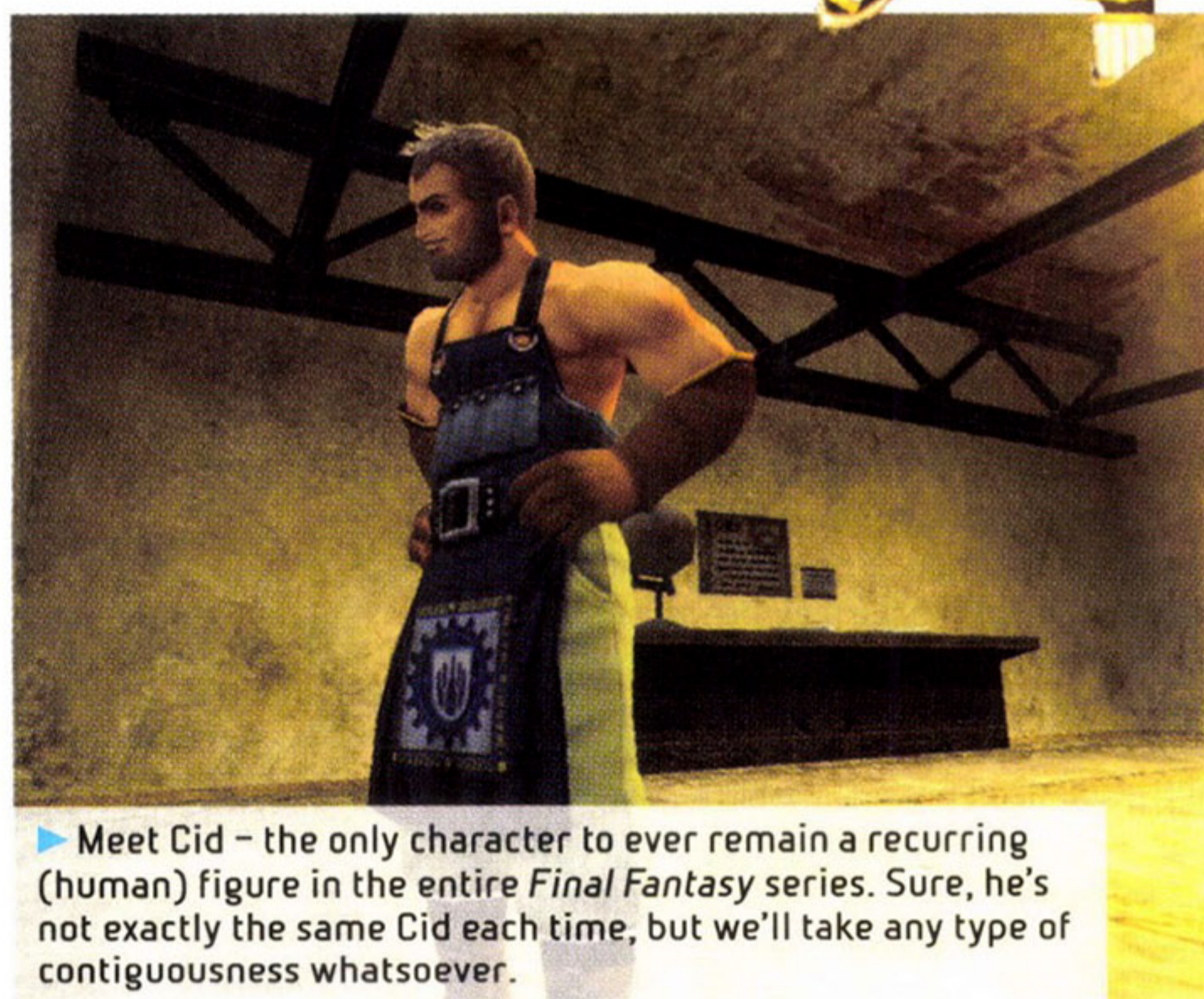
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Happy New Year from Xbox Live! 	2 Links 2004 (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET 	3 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory - Versus Mode (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET	4 Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Ridge Racer 6 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET	5 Perfect Dark Zero (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET 	6 Fight Night Round 2 (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Amped 3 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET	7 Bankshot Billiards 2 (Xbox Live Arcade 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET
8 Burnout Revenge (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET 	9 Gauntlet (Xbox Live Arcade 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET	10 MechAssault (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow (Xbox) 8pm PT/11pm ET	11 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06 (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET	12 Need for Speed: Most Wanted (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET 	13 Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2: Summit Strike (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Call of Duty 2 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET	14 Tony Hawk's American Wasteland (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET
15 Madden NFL 06 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET 	16 Top Spin (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Counter-Strike (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET	17 X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET	18 Dead or Alive 4 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET 	19 Project Gotham Racing 2 (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Project Gotham Racing 3 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET	20 DDR Ultramix 3 (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Full Spectrum Warrior (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET	21 Far Cry Instincts (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Battlefield 2: Modern Combat (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET
22 Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET	23 World Series of Poker (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET	24 Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET	25 Need for Speed: Most Wanted (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Forza Motorsport (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET	26 Call of Duty 2 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET 	27 NBA Live 06 (Xbox 360) 3pm PT/6pm ET NBA 2K6 (Xbox 360) 6pm PT/9pm ET	28 Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Lockdown (Xbox) 3pm PT/6pm ET Star Wars Battlefront II (Xbox) 6pm PT/9pm ET



“Get your hands on a special full beta version of *FFXI* in an upcoming issue of *Official Xbox Magazine*.”

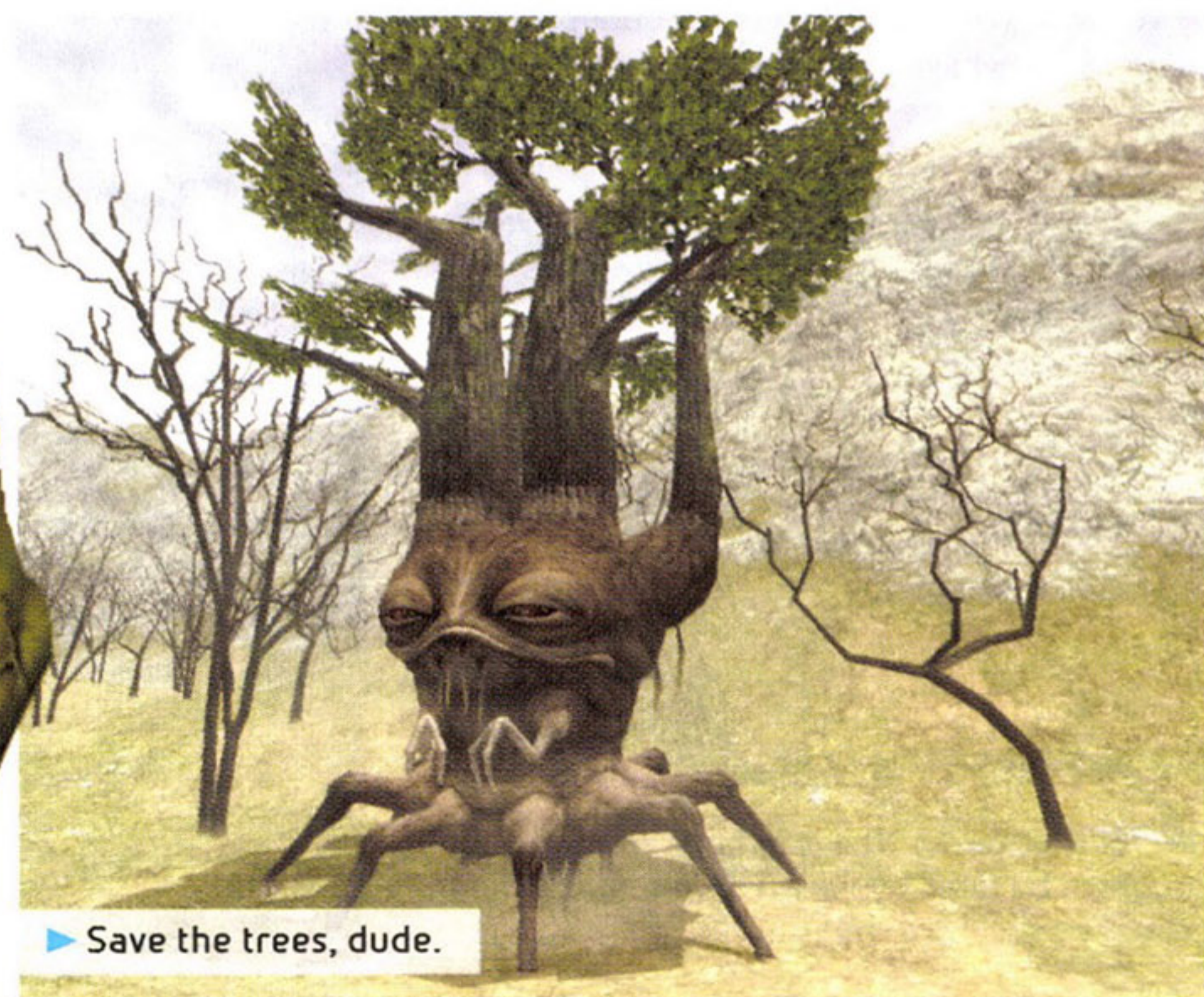


► Say “howdy” to the Tarutaru race of the Federation of Windhurst. They’re new to the *FF* series, and those of you who dig range attacks with magic should plan on playing as one of these cuties.



► Meet Cid – the only character to ever remain a recurring (human) figure in the entire *Final Fantasy* series. Sure, he’s not exactly the same Cid each time, but we’ll take any type of contiguousness whatsoever.

► For those of you who’ve never partied online to the roleplaying tune, know this – going solo to defeat meanies like this guy is not advisable. You’ll rely on groups to get almost all jobs done until you’re at a high enough level.



► Save the trees, dude.



Black

Always bet on *Black*



Having mastered in the *Burnout* series the art of boiling racing games down to their most enjoyable essence, the destruction-obsessed lads at Criterion have now turned their attention to the Xbox's other foremost genre: You guessed it, first-person shooters.

And like *Burnout*, which took one element of gameplay (crashing) and built the best game possible around that, so too does *Black* attempt to make an entire game experience out of blowing the living crap out of every location you enter.

In a level we got to play, for instance, we were tasked with clearing our way through a columned, two-story atrium area that Criterion boss Alex Ward readily admitted had been heavily inspired by *The Matrix's* now-classic lobby-shootout scene. As enemies would take potshots at us from behind the columns, we'd shoot the pillars above their heads, raining down chunks of concrete onto our foes. The experience was intense, but the early build we tested didn't provide the same rush that *Burnout* did. It's difficult to explain why, but dropping a pile of ceiling on to a bad guy just didn't scratch the same road-rage-induced itch that *Burnout* allows us to. Then again, it was just one level of the game...

Still, despite the lack of any multiplayer, we've got to give the benefit of the doubt to Criterion. They haven't let us down yet, after all.

- Ryan McCaffrey



► "If that pesky Neo is in here, he sure oughtta be dead by now. There's no way he could've survived thaa.....AUGH!"



► Like *Burnout*, massive amounts of property damage are at the heart of *Black*.

Driver: Parallel Lines

A little revenge goes a long way



Let's just forget about *Driver* for now – Atari and series developer Reflections would sure as hell like to. Returning to the cash-cow drive-'n'-shoot-happy franchise in *Driver: Parallel Lines*, the team is taking the emphasis off Hollywood razzle-dazzle (there are no celebrity voices planned, unlike its predecessor) and putting it back on the core gameplay that made the series such a fan favorite in the first place: driving.

You'll mainly be busting through NYC's various boroughs on car chases and destruction missions as the main character known only as The Kid; but there are a few on-foot missions – though Reflections is avoiding making it any sort of focus. The studio knows its strength is driving physics, so it should come as no surprise that there'll be a handful of courses outside the city limits that give you a chance to test out your driving skills, as well as street races on the actual city streets.

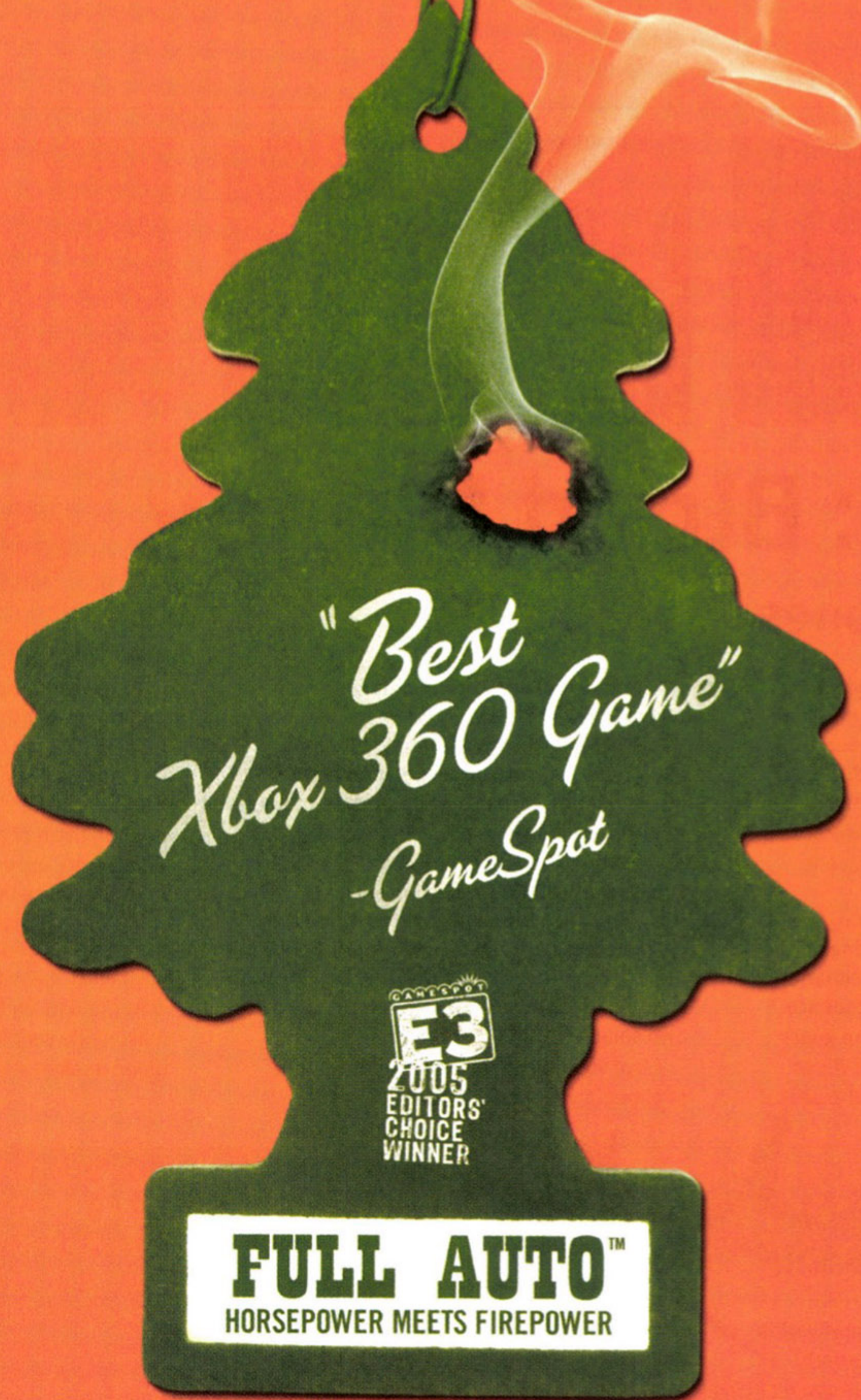
And while the gameplay is returning to *Driver's* roots, *PL's* storyline hopes to hook

gamers with its cleverly spun tale of revenge. The game's first half takes place in 1978 in a drastically different NYC landscape than its second half, which places you back behind the wheel in 2006, fresh out of the slammer, having served time for a murder you didn't commit. So, it's time to deliver that cold serving of revenge to the corrupt cop who framed you. Reflections and Atari are resolute in salvaging the *Driver* name – and here's to hoping that *Driver: Parallel Lines* fits the bill. So far, so good.

- Francesca Reyes



► In 1978, you're a hotshot, hot-doggin' driver. Fast-forward to 2006, thing won't be nearly as rosy or idealistic.



**"BEST OF E3
EDITOR'S CHOICE
AWARD"**

-Gamespy



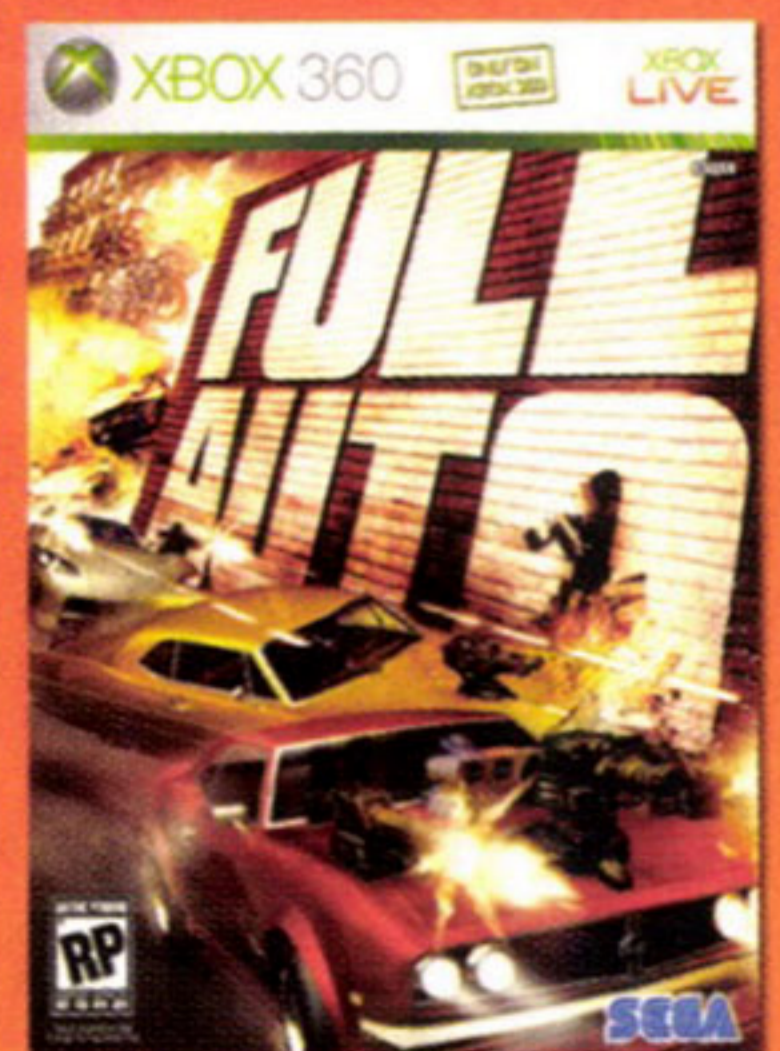
**"BEST RACING
GAME OF SHOW"**

-Hardcore Gamer Mag



**"BEST OF SHOW:
RACING"**

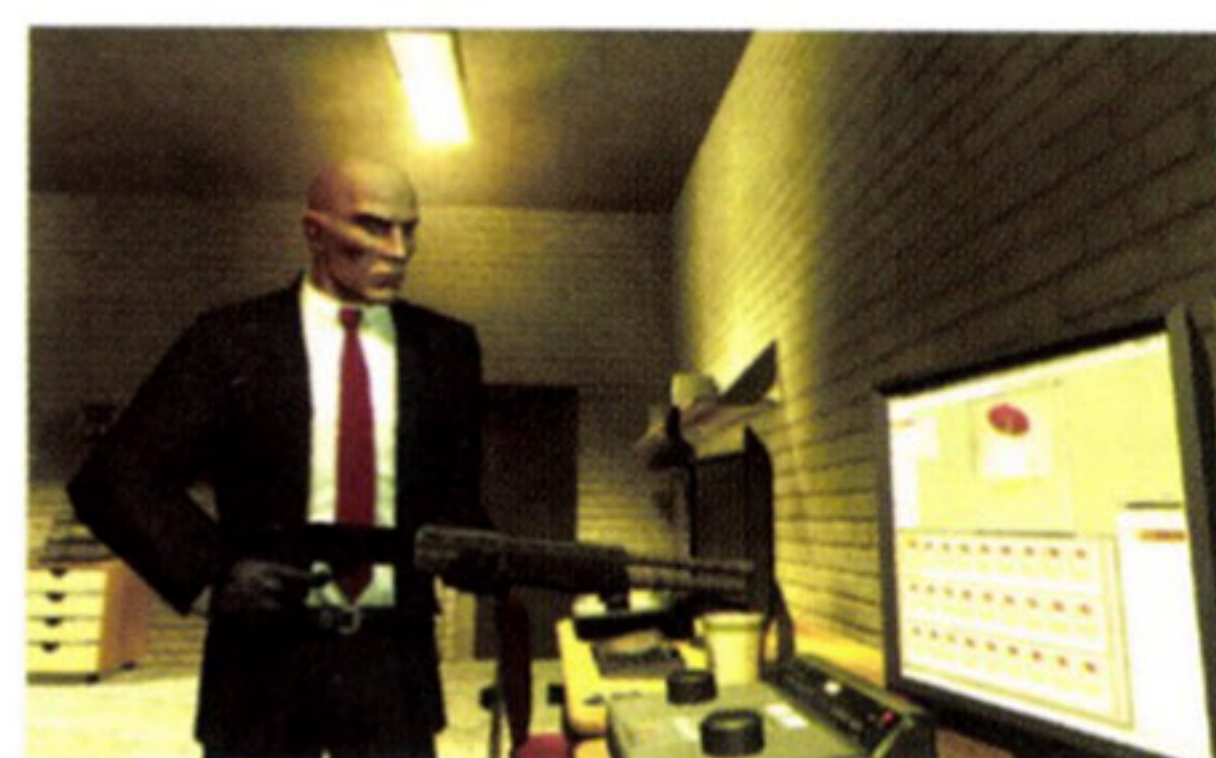
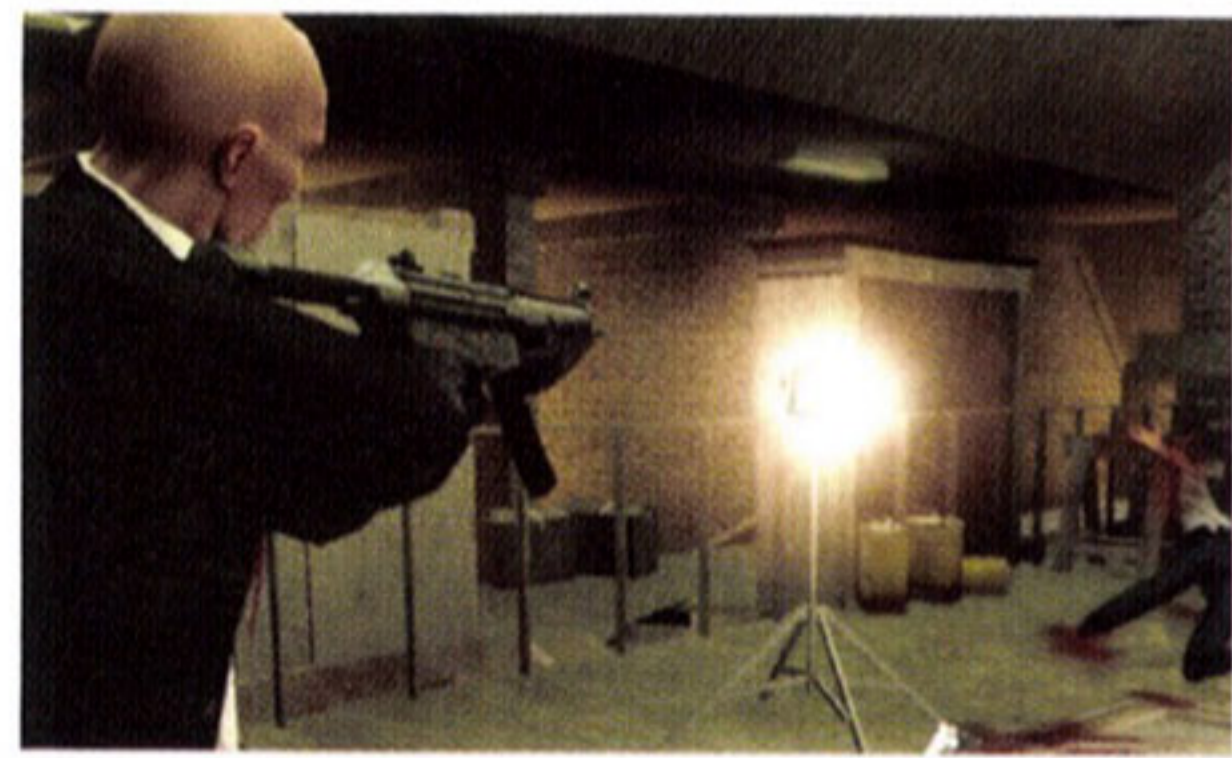
-DailyGame.net



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FEBRUARY 2006





Platform: XBOX Publisher: EIDOS Developer: IO INTERACTIVE Release date: Spring 2006

Hitman: Blood Money

Send in the clones



The fourth game in the *Hitman* series delivers the clear message that money can pretty much get you out of almost any bind. And that includes murder. As the ultra-efficient trigger man Mr. 47, getting embroiled in dangerous conspiracies is your bag and you'll have to quietly kill your way out.

But this is nothing new for returning Agents, so developer Io Interactive is ratcheting up the variety of ways to approach a single situation, and giving each action greater consequence in the bigger picture. As Agent 47, your goals remain the same – kill the target. But *Blood Money* refines and opens up further the series'

free-form feel – how you accomplish goals depends on what type of player you are. Every locale in *Blood Money* harbors multitudes of options. For instance, you're tasked with taking out one of the central actors in an opera. Now, do you take him out in his dressing room regardless of the danger his absence on stage might cause? Or do you play it sneaky by swapping out a prop gun used to "shoot" the character onstage with a real one? And those are just two of the possible scenarios – you can dig around for items or locations to make your own solutions.

And you'll have to carry a good amount of paper in your pocket – if you mess up

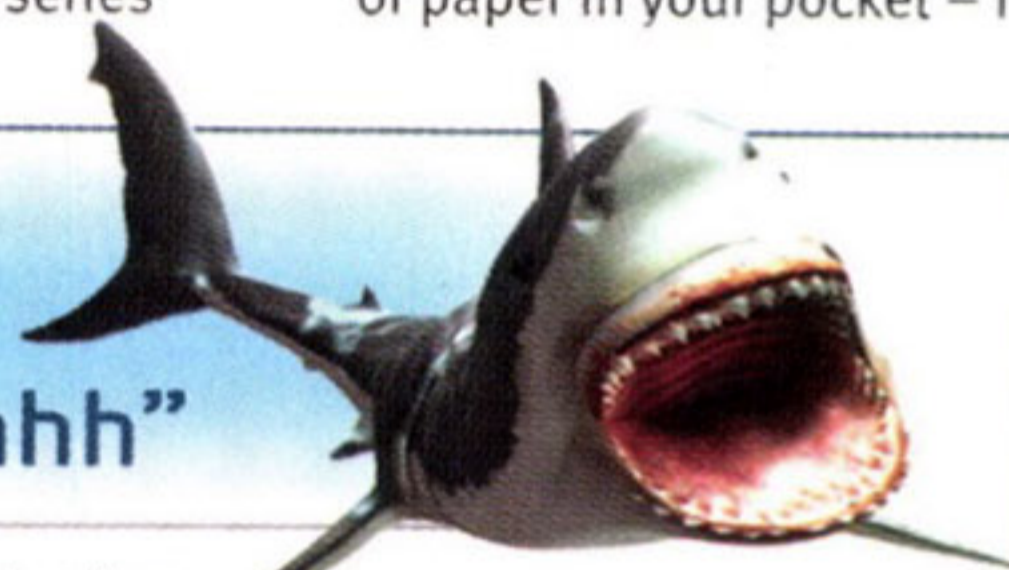
at anytime during your hits and have the misfortune of attracting a witness or two, you'll be able to bribe them to keep their lips sealed. If you don't, they'll panic. Sure, you could kill them, but isn't that what got you in the mess in the first place? If you let witnesses go unchecked, expect a lot of unwanted attention from the police in the level, as well as the threat of being identified in the newspaper clippings that serve as a ranking for how you completed each level. Get spotted too often and your mug is as good as on the front page of the local rag, making life very difficult indeed for your next blood-soaked mission.

– Francesca Reyes



Jaws

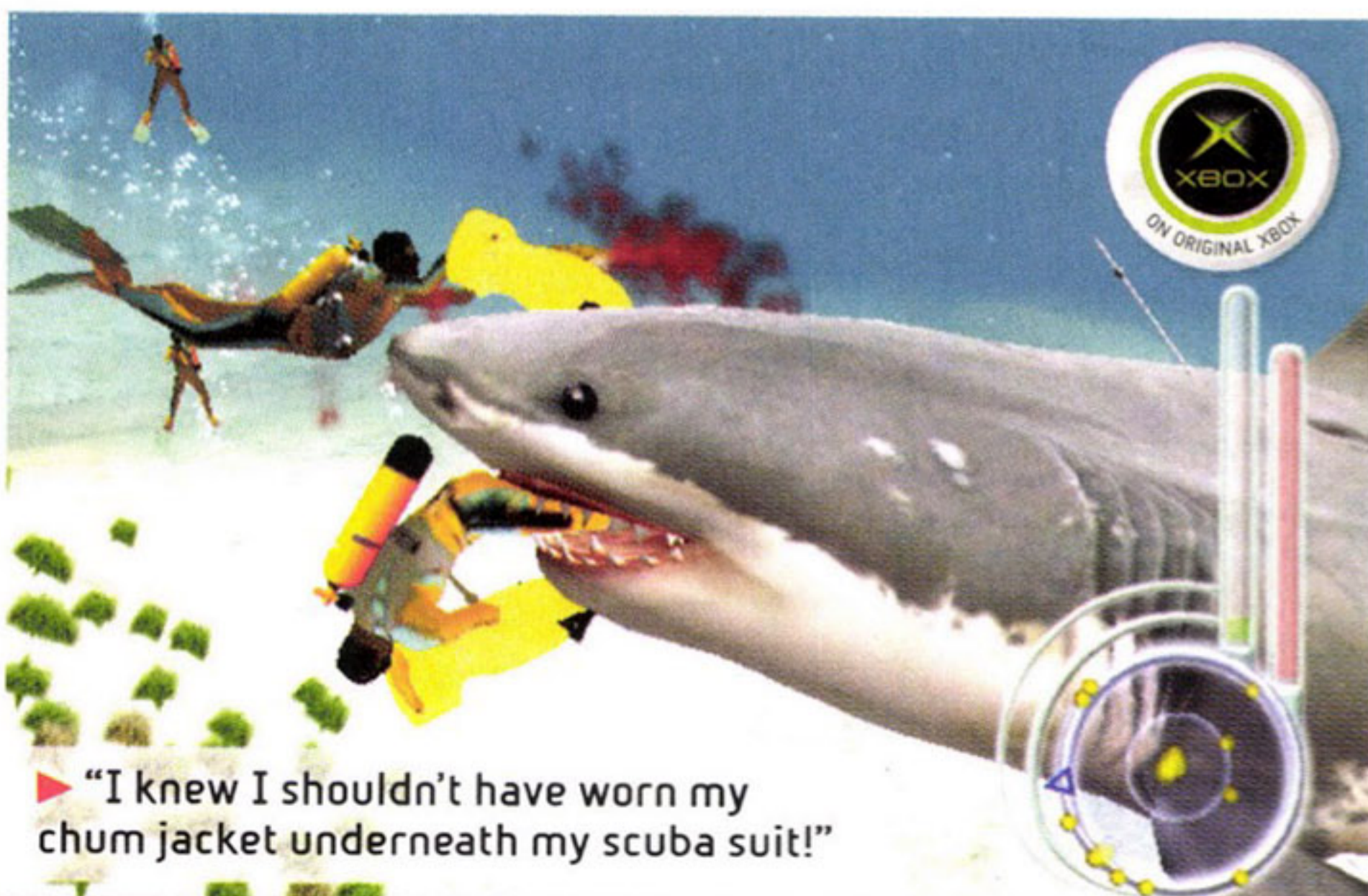
Open up and say "ahhh"



Do you need any sort of motivation to play as a bloodthirsty shark? Not really, but that's not stopping Majesco and *Ecco the Dolphin* developer Appaloosa. Loosely based on the movie trilogy, *Jaws* patches on a plot that takes place 30 years after the first movie, but really, who cares when you're playing as Jaws himself?

Dive, charge, and – most importantly – chomp away on fellow fish (anyone fancy blue whale?) and humans to complete mission objectives as well as keep your hunger meter from dipping too low. Some goals will require you to use your stealth swim (no fins above the water line!), while others are plain goofy (sneak up to a dog on the beach?).

– Francesca Reyes



▶ "I knew I shouldn't have worn my chum jacket underneath my scuba suit!"

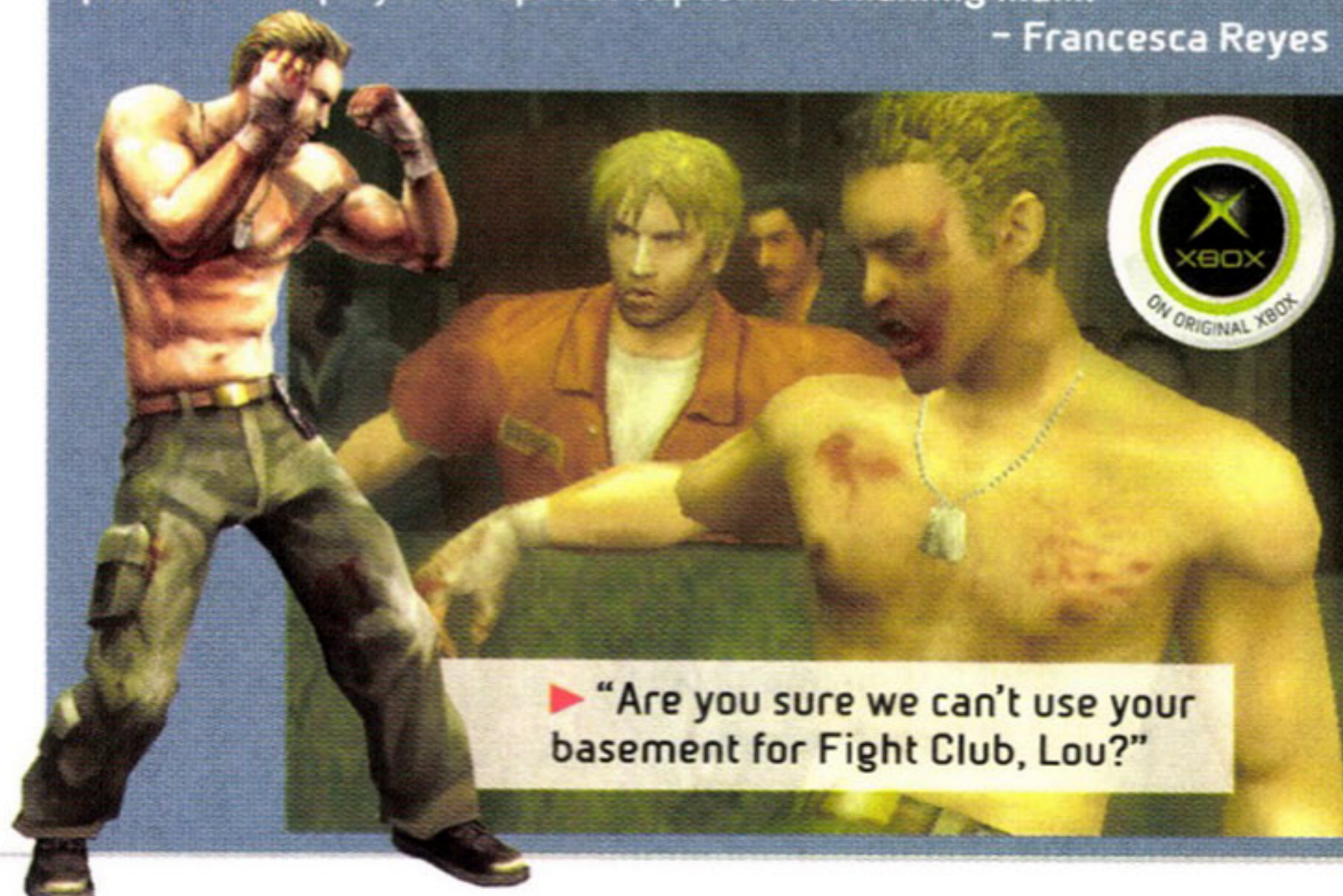
Final Fight: Streetwise

He ain't heavy...

...he's your brother, Cody. And after introducing you to the underground world of pit fighting (think *Fight Club*, sans all those Ikea references), he's found himself snatched by a gang of sinister dudes. And being a conscientious little bro, you'll spend the rest of the game tracking him down. Of course, this game ain't labeled "*Final Fight*" for nothing...you'll run into and train with some of the heavy hitters from Capcom's classic arcade beat 'em up.

Even with five different districts and a whole load of side quests that run the gamut from giving purse snatchers what-for to playing footsie with a gaggle of roaches in a favorite diner, we're still happily suspecting the inclusion of the original arcade version as well as possible two-player co-op. But Capcom's remaining mum.

– Francesca Reyes



▶ "Are you sure we can't use your basement for Fight Club, Lou?"

Platform: XBOX Publisher: MAJESCO Developer: APPALOOSA Release date: March 2006

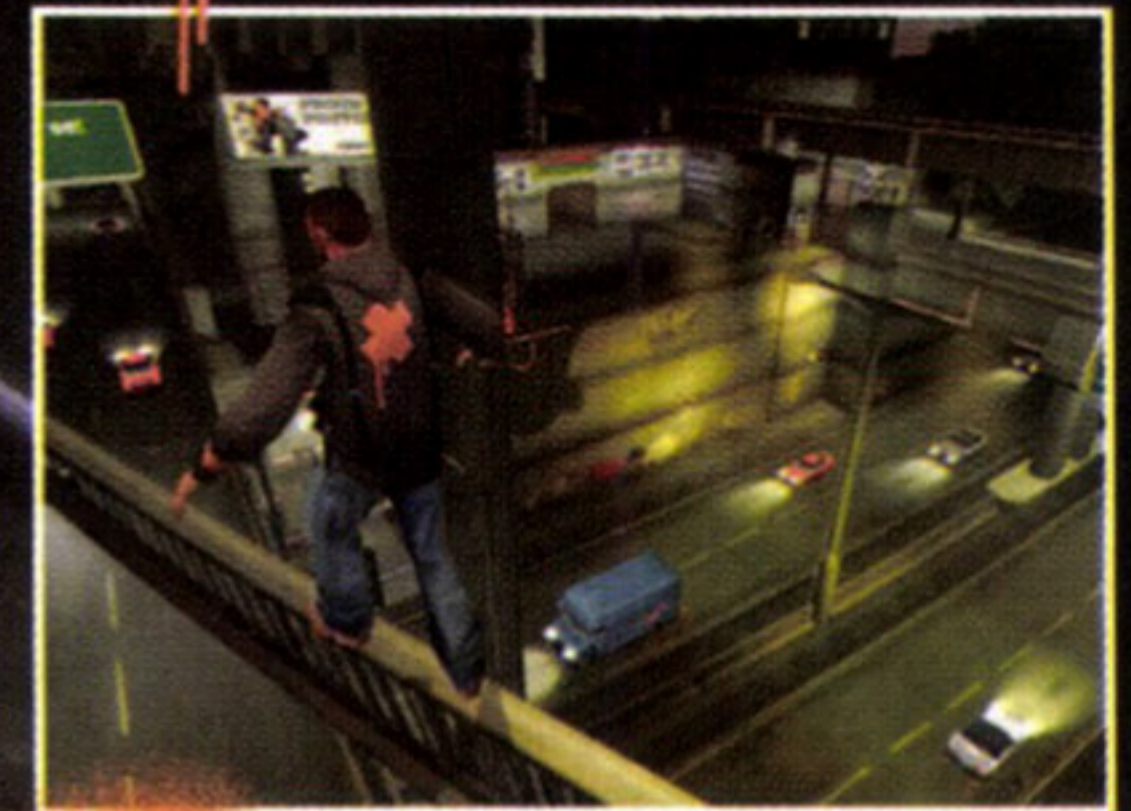
Platform: XBOX Publisher: CAPCOM Developer: CAPCOM Release date: February 2006

“★★★★★”

-MAXIM



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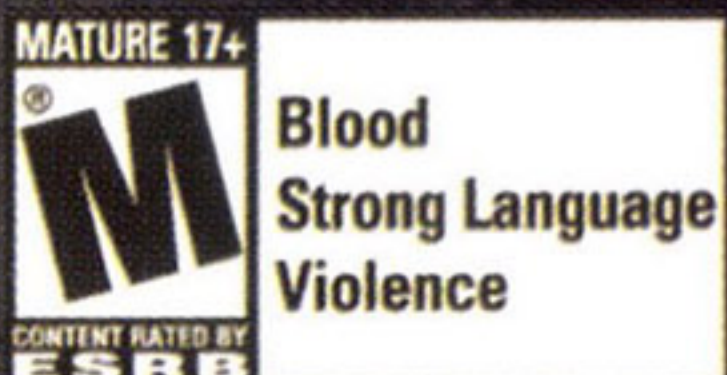
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PlayStation 2



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TOCA Race Driver 3



More cars than you can shake a stick shift at



Simply listing off every single race type to be included in Codemasters' new *TOCA Race Driver 3* would easily fill this page and bleed on to the next. But since space is at a premium, we'll just tell you this: The new game is packed with cars, tracks, and race modes to explore. Everything from the standard modified Touring Cars that have been the staple of the series to weirder carry-overs from *TOCA 2* like the Super Trucks and Formula Fords, to newer and even more obscure stuff like Baja Buggies, ATVs, and racing lawnmowers. Yes, lawnmowers.



► Damage modeling of your car's systems goes into greater detail than before.

If *TOCA 3* ain't got it, you probably don't need it. But more than just a collection of real-world racing types and a few actual licensed leagues (the IndyCar Racing League is included, thanks in no small part to game advisor and IRL champion Dan Wheldon), *TOCA 3* has a story-driven career mode to immerse you further in what's shaping up to be some excellent racing gameplay.

A lot of what made *TOCA 2* such a top-quality game – clean graphics, complex damage modeling, good multiplayer support over Live – is still under the hood for 3. But the fleshing out of game types, including more rally-type racing and tons of classic sports cars, makes *TOCA 3* even more of a kitchen-sink experience than its predecessor. Fans of the series should be more than impressed with what *TOCA 3* brings to the party, if not totally overwhelmed. *TOCA 3* looks like it'll be a true motorsport fans' dream.

– Tom Price



► Look, an actual touring car!



► These go-karts are just a bit faster than the ones at your local fun center.

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Rude Language.

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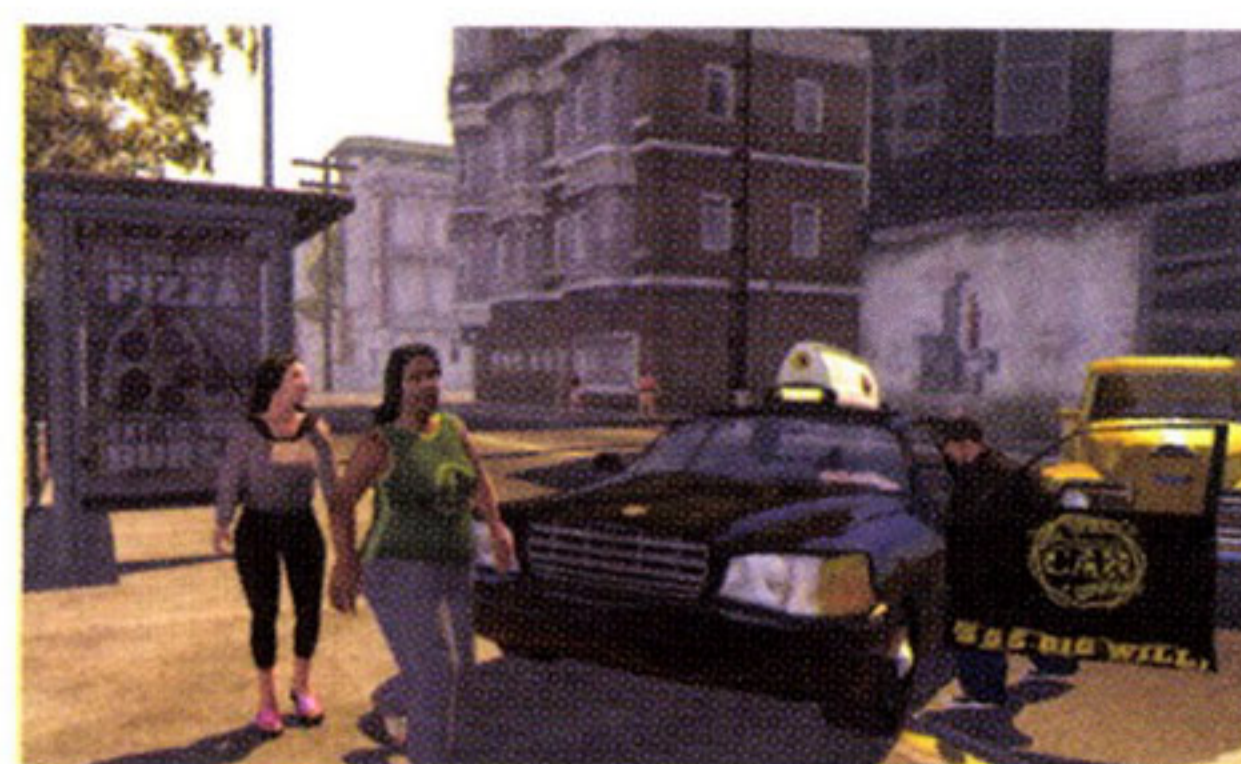
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In theatres January 6th



Saint's Row

Angels with dirty faces



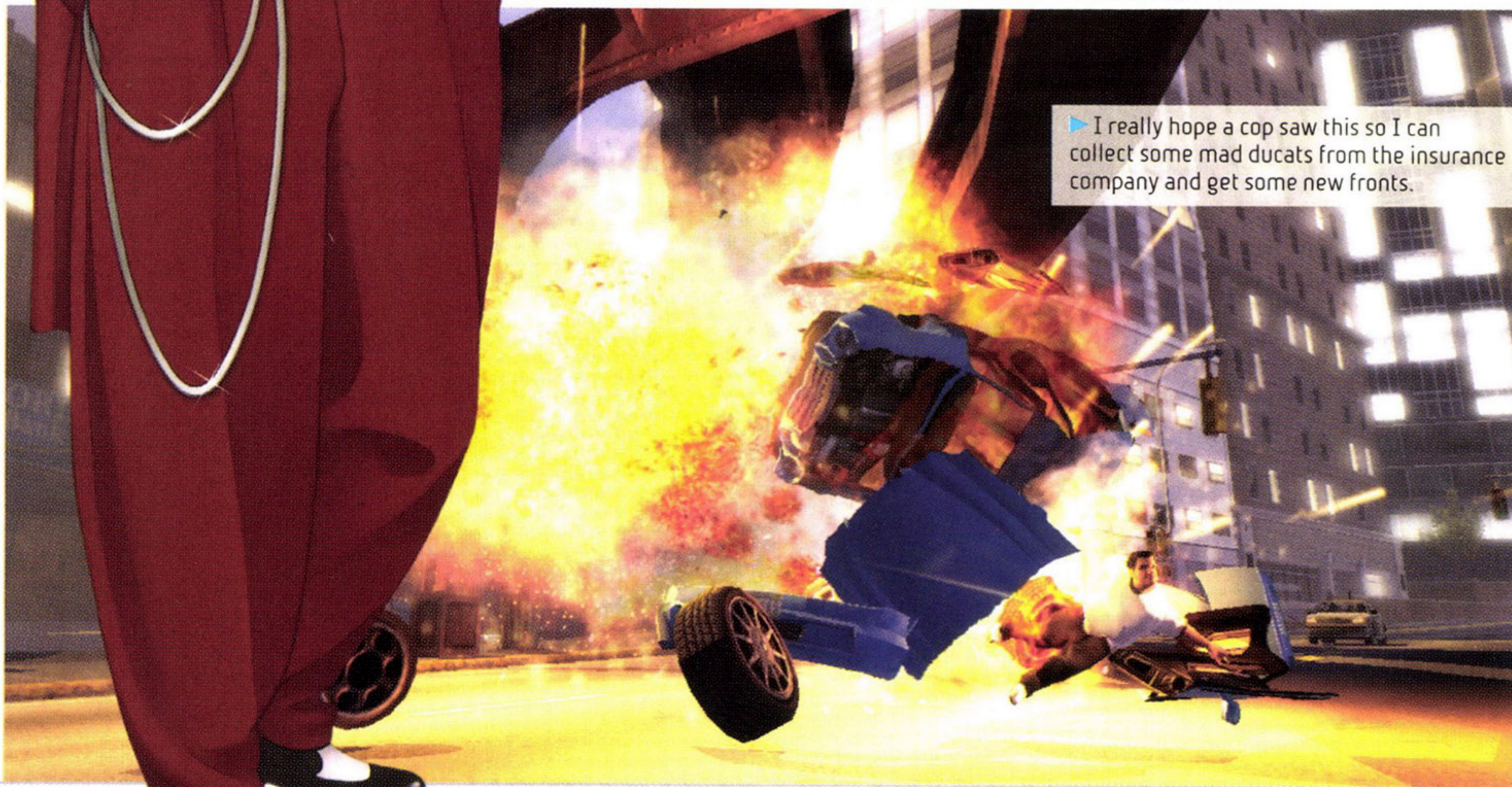
At first glance, it's pretty easy to view – and then summarily dismiss – THQ's open-ended criminal simulator as just another *GTA* clone gussied up for Xbox 360. But to do that, you'd need to ignore the fact that *Saint's Row* is being created by Volition, a development house that has managed to gather a following based on its knack for innovation and attitude evident in its past library (*Red Faction*, *Summoner*, *Descent*, etc.). After visiting the company's offices in Champaign, Illinois, to take a test run with *Saint's Row* on Xbox 360, we discovered that it's not a clone at all.

Set in the fictional Rust Belt city of Southern Cross, *Saint's Row* casts you as a simple

gangbanger tasked with expanding your crew's influence across every neighborhood of the sprawling metropolis. You do this through a variety of different illegal and illicit activities, like pimping, robberies, and even insurance fraud (see sidebar, bottom right). Thirteen different unlawful activities will help you earn respect from your crime-loving homies, allowing you to build your empire one felony at a time.

Respect? Turf? Gangbanging? Yeah, we could see where this was heading – straight through Liberty City, right? Wrong. What made Rockstar's game design so genius was the open-ended do-anythingness of it; the fact that you were doing criminal stuff was just a hook, a theme. *Saint's Row* intends to delve deeper into how a virtual

You'll be too busy hustling your way to the top to do much sight-seeing.



I really hope a cop saw this so I can collect some mad ducats from the insurance company and get some new fronts.

Platform: XBOX 360 Publisher: THQ Developer: VOLITION Release date: Q2 2006



Let's Play Dress Up

Unlike the *GTA* series, *Saint's Row* lets you create your character from scratch using powerful customization tools to choose your ethnicity, look, and clothes (even down to how you'll wear them). As the game progresses, you'll gain access to fancier duds, which are important in keeping your gang members suitably impressed. You can even change up your face via plastic surgeons, which can shake cops off your tail if your notoriety is too high. Spot me now, coppers!

criminal empire actually works, focusing on gang affiliation and personal respect on top of giving a wannabe thug like you lots and lots of freedom on how you want to behave. And how you act in Southern Cross leads to rewards as well as consequences.

For instance: You walk into a gun store to buy a gat. You can spend your hard-earned pimp scrill or you can simply hold up the place. But gun-store owners are likely packing. Even if hands go up, keep an eye on that owner inching toward the silent alarm. Even the simplest of crimes like this go down much easier if you recruit some of your boys for backup.

But that's your everyday playin'. You'll also take part in bigger story missions, aimed at taking over enemy strongholds and the neighborhoods they represent. These can involve big-time shootouts, kidnappings, and all kinds of other activities guaranteed to get you noticed by the cops and other gangs, for good and bad.

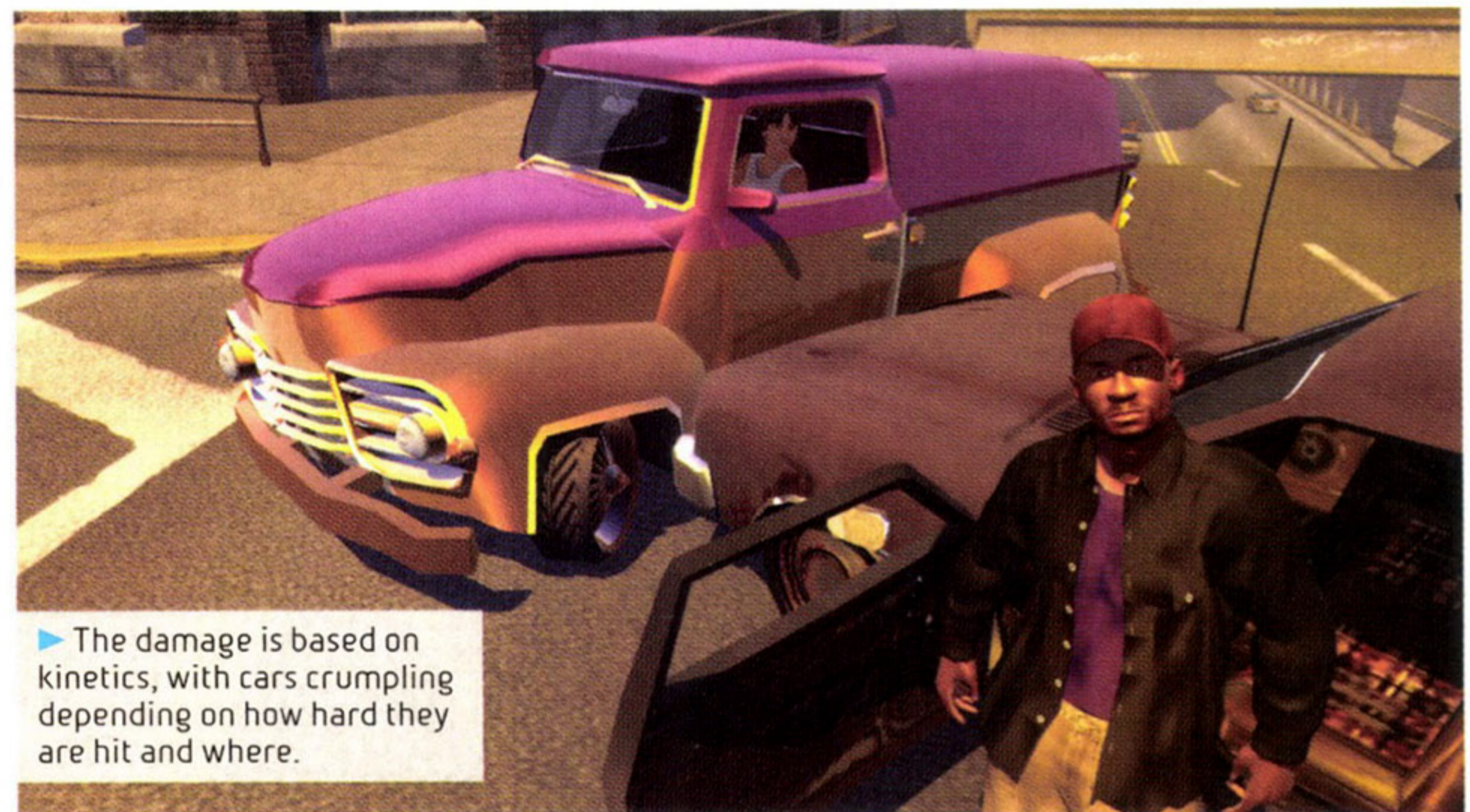
The entire city is unlocked from the start – no waiting for bridge construction to end – so you're free to cruise around. But that doesn't mean you'll be exactly welcome wherever you go – loiter on a rival gang's turf long enough, and consider yourself a prime target. And if you end up neck-deep in gang turf crossfire, your boys have a lot further to travel to dig you out if you stray too far from 3rd Street Saints property.

You won't be lacking things to see or do in the giant sandbox of *Saint's Row* – but wandering aimlessly isn't really the point of the game. You'll be too busy hustling your way to the top to do much sight-seeing. It's a game that's mostly about conflict and collection, and you'll need to put in some serious work if you want to rule this town as the ultimate player.

– Tom Price



► The last dirty pig that made fun of my boots regretted it – now you're capping on my socks!?

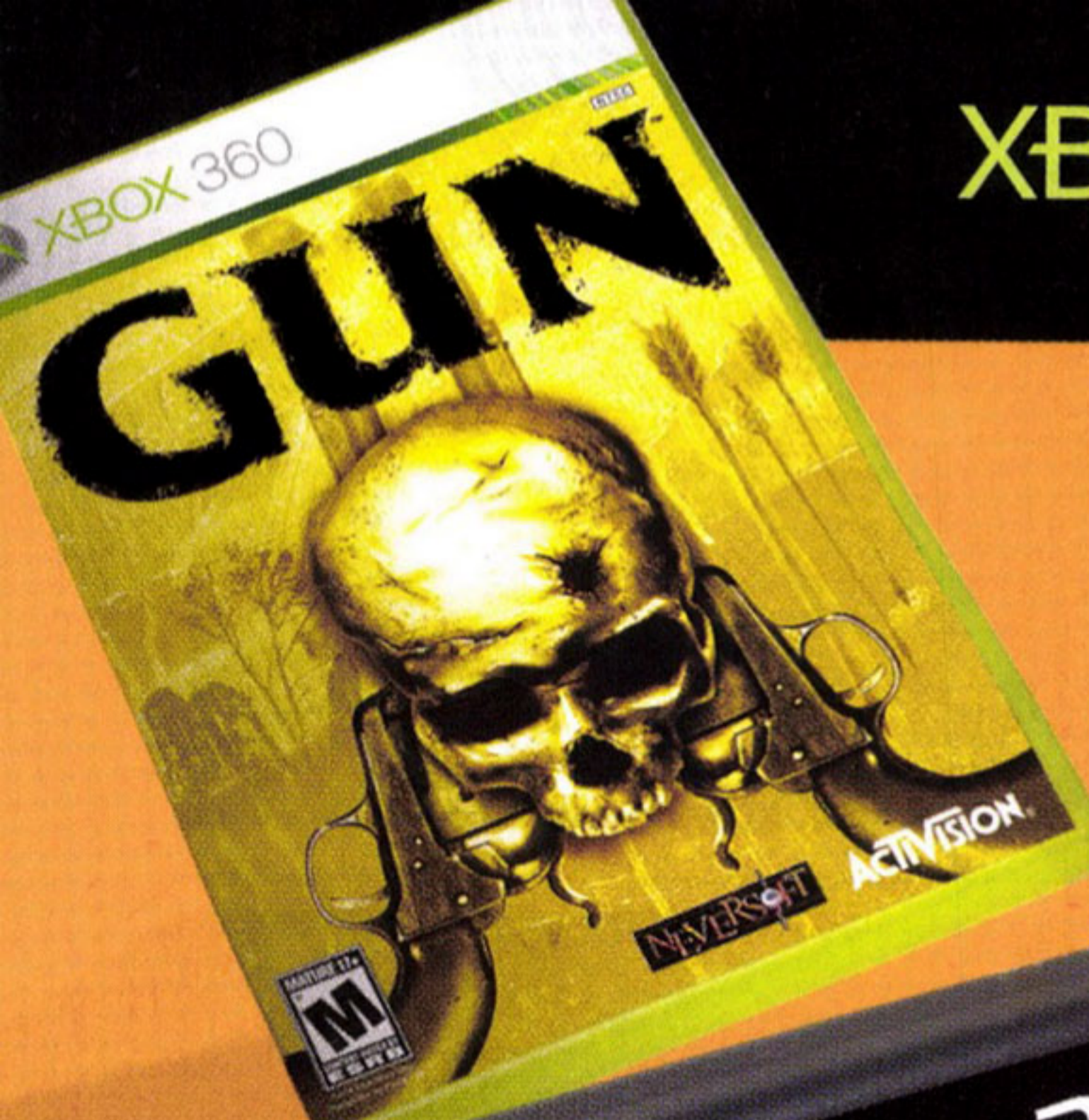


► The damage is based on kinetics, with cars crumpling depending on how hard they are hit and where.

Hurt Yourself

Who'da think that insurance fraud is hella gangster? Volition for one. Got doubts? Well, just think. Money can be earned anyway you see fit, whether it's throwing yourself down staircases or pretending to slip in the supermarket. And if you're successful, you can extort money out of property owners.

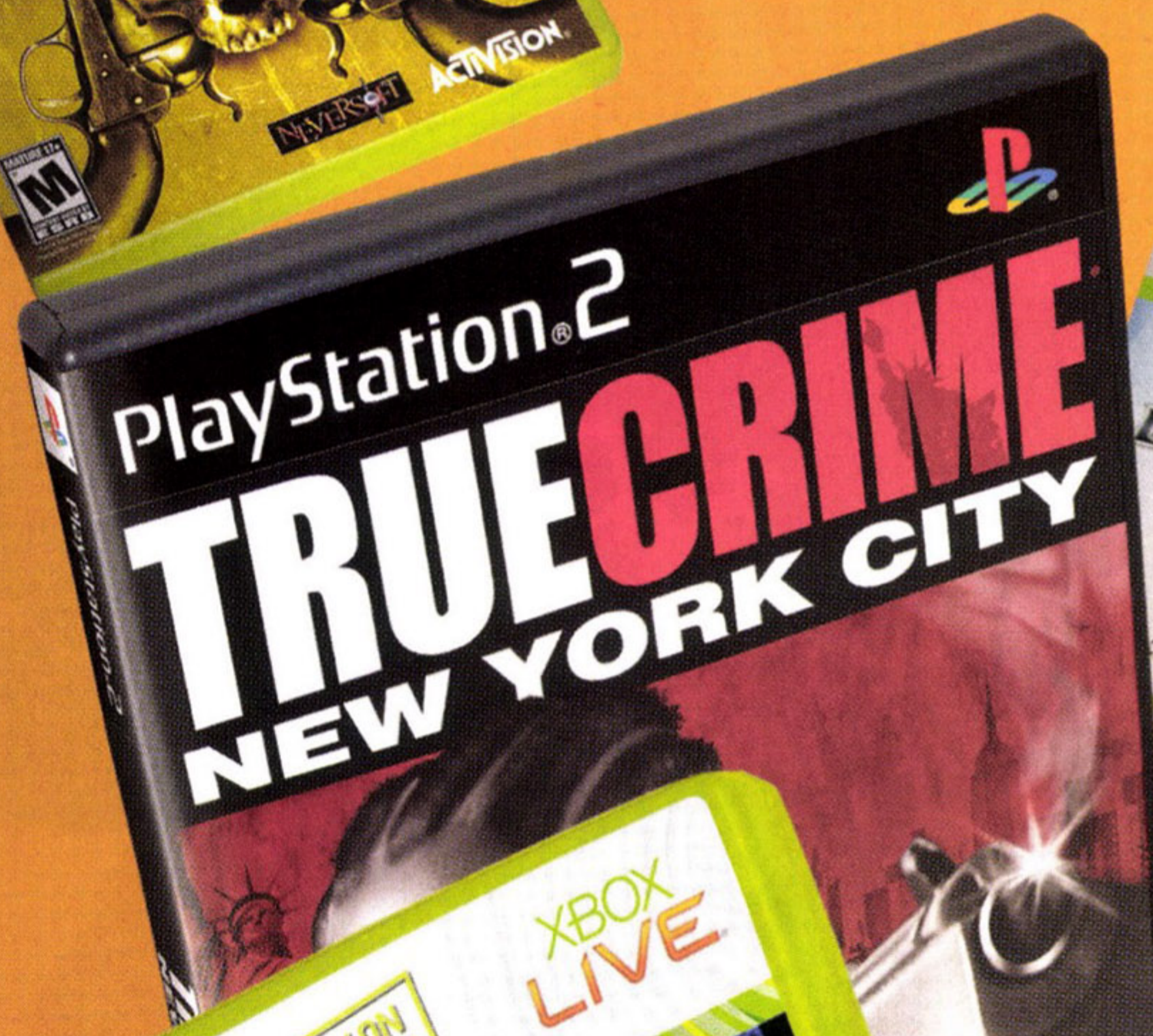
Born out of the fun developers were having playing with ragdoll physics in *Saint's Row*, insurance fraud requires you to simply hit a button that throws you down on the ground. Where you do that, like in front of a car (or better yet, a cop car) is how you'll earn more money, not to mention laughs.



XBOX 360

PS2

NINTENDO DS



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Road Warriors



Game: FULL AUTO Developer: PSEUDO INTERACTIVE Publisher: SEGA
Platform: XBOX 360 Release Date: FEBRUARY 2006

Sega's *Full Auto* deals in lead – lead feet and lead ammo. Strap yourself in for the most sensational car combat you've ever seen.



ions's



▶ Sammy Hagar is sooo 1985 - we're already onto 75mph speed limits.



▶ This is a hi-res version of an actual in-game screenshot. Seriously.

"If you loved that crazy 20-minute chase scene in *Bad Boys* or the highway chase scene in *Matrix Reloaded*, those are the thrust of our inspiration," says *Full Auto's* art director Frank Trzcinski. He's not kidding. From the word "go," you're on a full-throttle road race to the finish line. But for extra kicks, the competition has guns and missiles.

You're armed too with firepower strapped on to the hood, trunk, and roof, but you've got another devastating tool in your arsenal - the power to reverse time. And for those moments

when you need just that little extra oomph, the nitrous-esque boost system will make your face peel back from the sense of outrageous speed. For icing, you can also destroy everything in sight - including your competition and all that innocent scenery.

Sound like good times? We picked *Full Auto* as a standout next-gen game the first moment we saw it, and now after a trip to developer Pseudo Interactive's offices, we've got the full scoop on how this stunner is shaping up to be a, um, smash hit.

continued on pg. 38 ▶▶



Appetite for Destruction

In the videogame world, cars and combat have enjoyed a long-standing tryst. In fact, they've done lunch together in Sony's long-running *Twisted Metal* series, and discussed the weather over tea with the *Burnout* series – which may not technically be car combat, but it's perfected bang-'em-up pyrotechnics in its Crash Mode.

In *Full Auto*, combat and cars do the full-course dinner – and then invite friends over for drinks afterwards. With a marketing tagline

► These aren't standard canned animations – everything is real-time.



trumpeting it as “the most destructive game ever,” you certainly have a right to be suspicious. But in our exclusive playtest, it seems to make good on its propaganda by giving you the chance to aim your hood-mounted cannons beyond the competition and at your environment.

Why? Kicks and giggles, for one suitable reason. Destroying buildings layer by layer or in one giant explosive chunk ain't the kind of action you find in, say, *Project Gotham Racing 3*, so that's a fine reason in itself for testing out the physics model. But once you get over the oohhh and ahhh phase that obliterating your first

building elicits, you begin to realize that you can use your powers for your racing good.

Target your front-mounted grenade launcher or machine guns at an overhead metro railway to bring down a hail of train-car debris and rubble on to the road below. Time it right, and you can use it to effect a vehicular armageddon on opponents ahead of you (and behind you) on the track. So there is strategy to be had in all the mayhem for those who believe that senseless violence is for the birds.

We experienced every explosive opportunity during our visit to Pseudo. We unloaded our missiles on the sides of buildings to create quicker race lines around corners; pummeled the competition sneaking up behind us with land mines (dropped from our rear-mounted weapon slot); and we even took down a water tower or two with some well placed cannon shots just for the hell of it. Every course is wide open for you to choose what to do, who you want to ventilate with your firearms, and how clever you want to get with your environment. continued on pg. 40 ►►

Team Challenge!

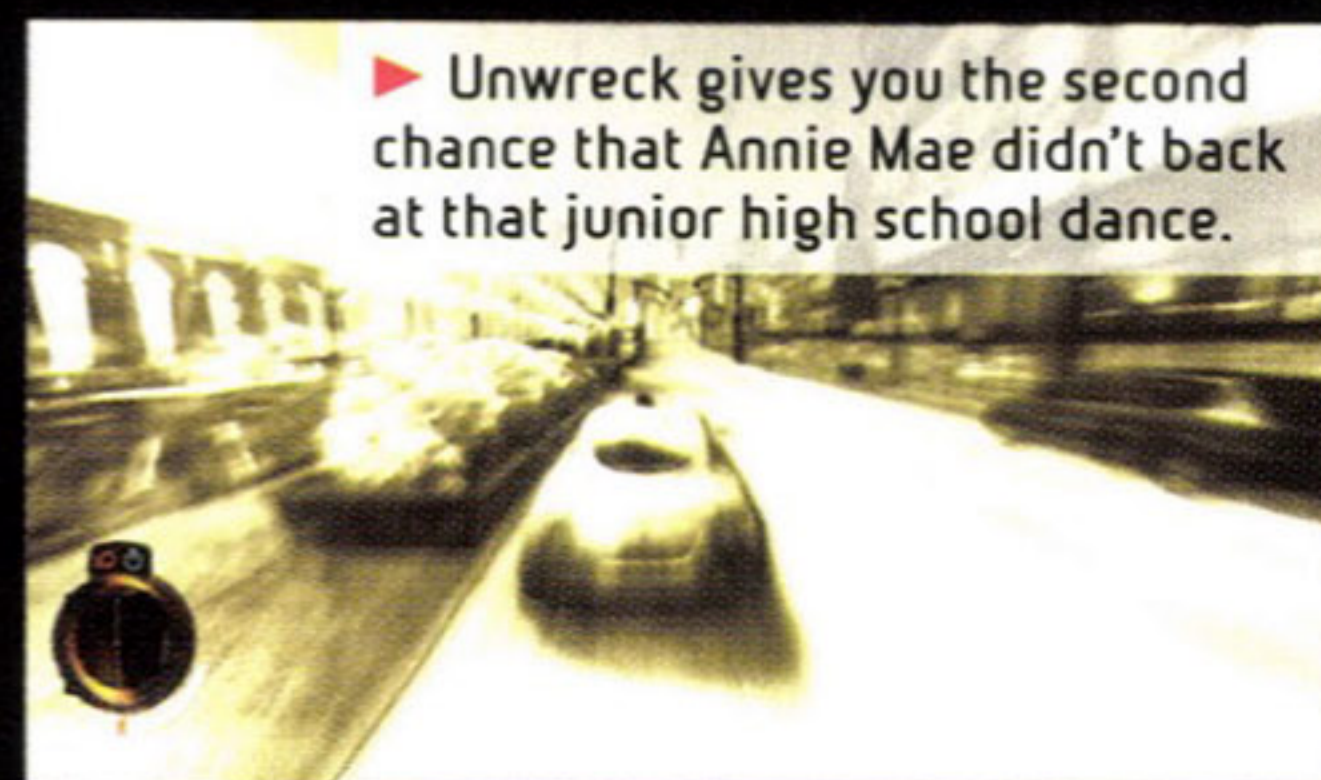
“From the beginning, we had our hands full,” lead level designer Rick Knowles told us. “Most racing games rely on static environments to help guide you and keep the gameplay contained. [For *FA*] we took the gloves off and made every piece of geometry interactive, which completely destroyed the traditional racing flow. Not only do we have our boundaries destroyable, but as a designer, you have no control over how players are going to interact with those objects once they come into play.”

Knowles continued, “While this is great for the player, it's a nightmare for a level designer. We had to be conscious of every object placed, and had to test it out from every angle to make sure the level was preserved.”

Unwreck Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself

As if you needed any new reasons to lay waste to your environment, *Full Auto* seamlessly slips in the ability to “Unwreck.” The word says it all – hit a button and go all 4D with a slo-mo rewind that reverses time if you hit a wall or take the wrong race line. The Unwreck lasts as long as you'll need it to by either tapping the button or holding it down – but it isn't infinite. Once you drain your Unwreck meter, you can only replenish it by earning Wreck points – the reward for busting stuff up, including buildings, objects, and enemies.

► Unwreck gives you the second chance that Annie Mae didn't back at that junior high school dance.



Kameo

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fire-spewing warrior.

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XBOX
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Jump in.



The Money Shot



FRANK TRZCINSKI, ART DIRECTOR: "Most people look at the level of damage or carnage and are super impressed. I would point out how good everything looks when it's exploding."

MICHELLE FREY, AUDIO LEAD: "I love the jumps – those big exhilarating jumps where you fly so high in order to crash through a beautiful neon sign then land on an opposing racer. Or when an AI flies over the top of you."

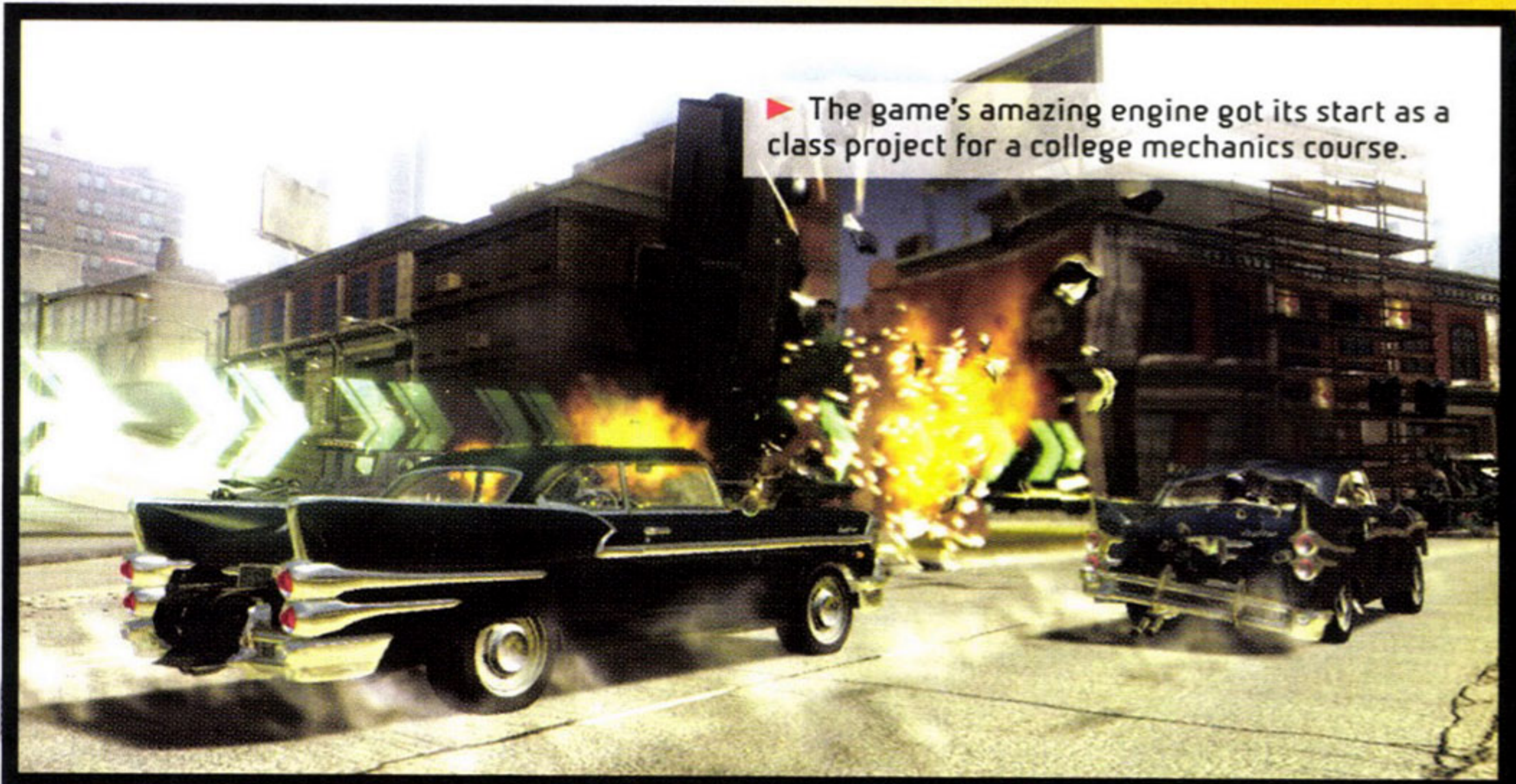
CLIFF DAIGLE, VFX & LIGHTING LEAD: "I'd point out the insane amount of stuff happening at any given time – missiles smashing into cars while a gas station explodes in the background destroying a nearby building and some parked cars."

TED KIM, LEAD CONCEPT ARTIST: "The cars are gorgeous, and the weapons are a thing of beauty. When you see that, you know you're about to witness something deadly."

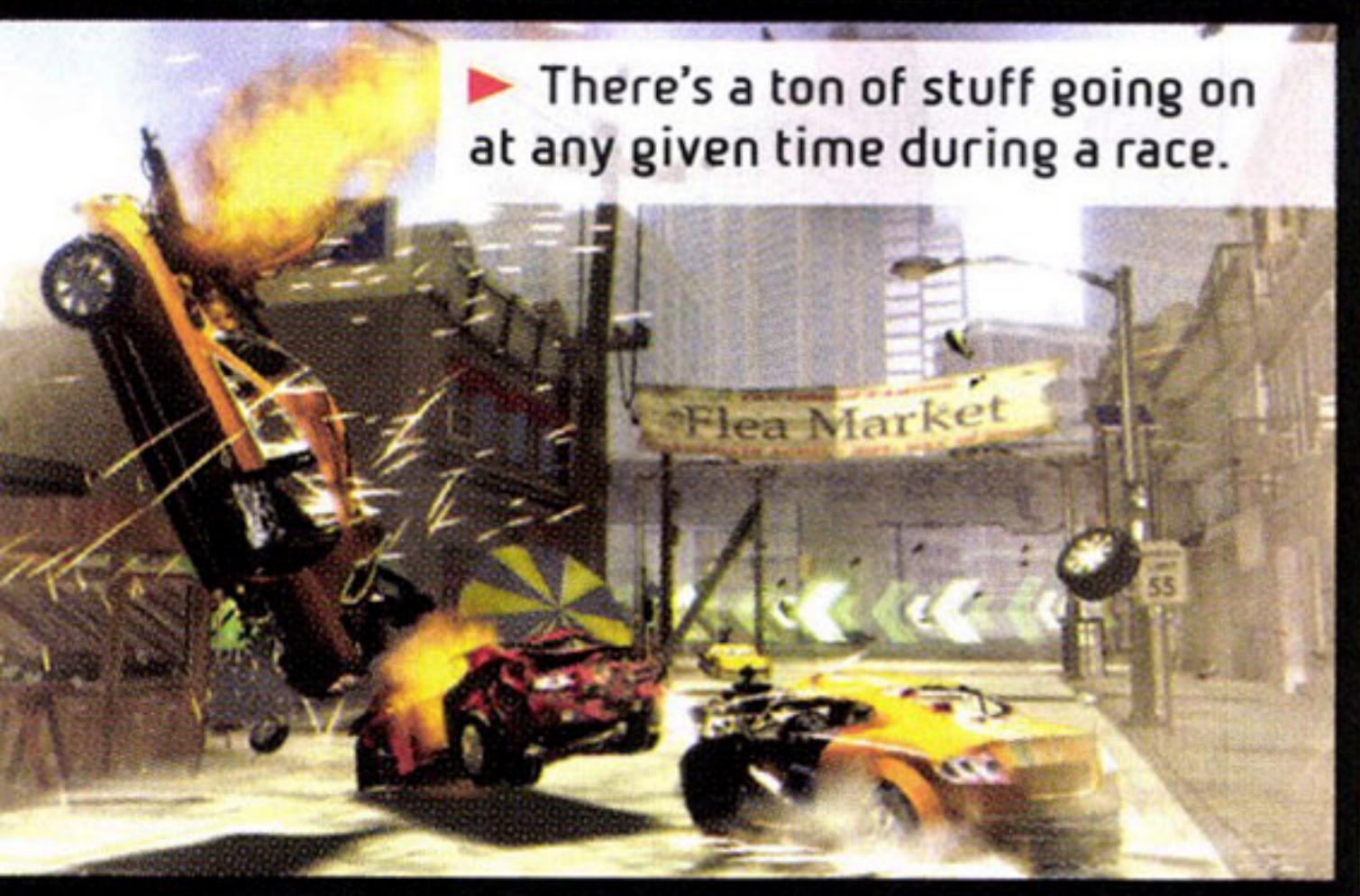
DAVE FELTHAM, ART LEAD: "Everything is fully destructible, from the largest of buildings to the smallest bicycle rack and everything, and I mean *everything*, is fully physical."



► Customize your weapon set to suit the competition and your ride.



► The game's amazing engine got its start as a class project for a college mechanics course.



► There's a ton of stuff going on at any given time during a race.

Bring a Friend

One of the biggest question marks that hung over *Full Auto's* head for a long time was how online multiplayer (or multiplayer at all) would be handled. The problem wasn't how the destructible world would impact the race, but how the Unwreck feature could be integrated into a multiplayer setting. The team told us that Unwreck created too many variables and chances for the flow to go terribly wrong, so the feature will be left out of Xbox Live and multiplayer options. Instead, you can plan on matching up with up to eight players across Live or going head to head offline...and still being able to blast the snot out of animate and inanimate objects all the while.

continued on pg. 42 ►►

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► “Hey, hon, so I’m gonna be a little late coming home. I’m stuck in some rush-hour traffic.”

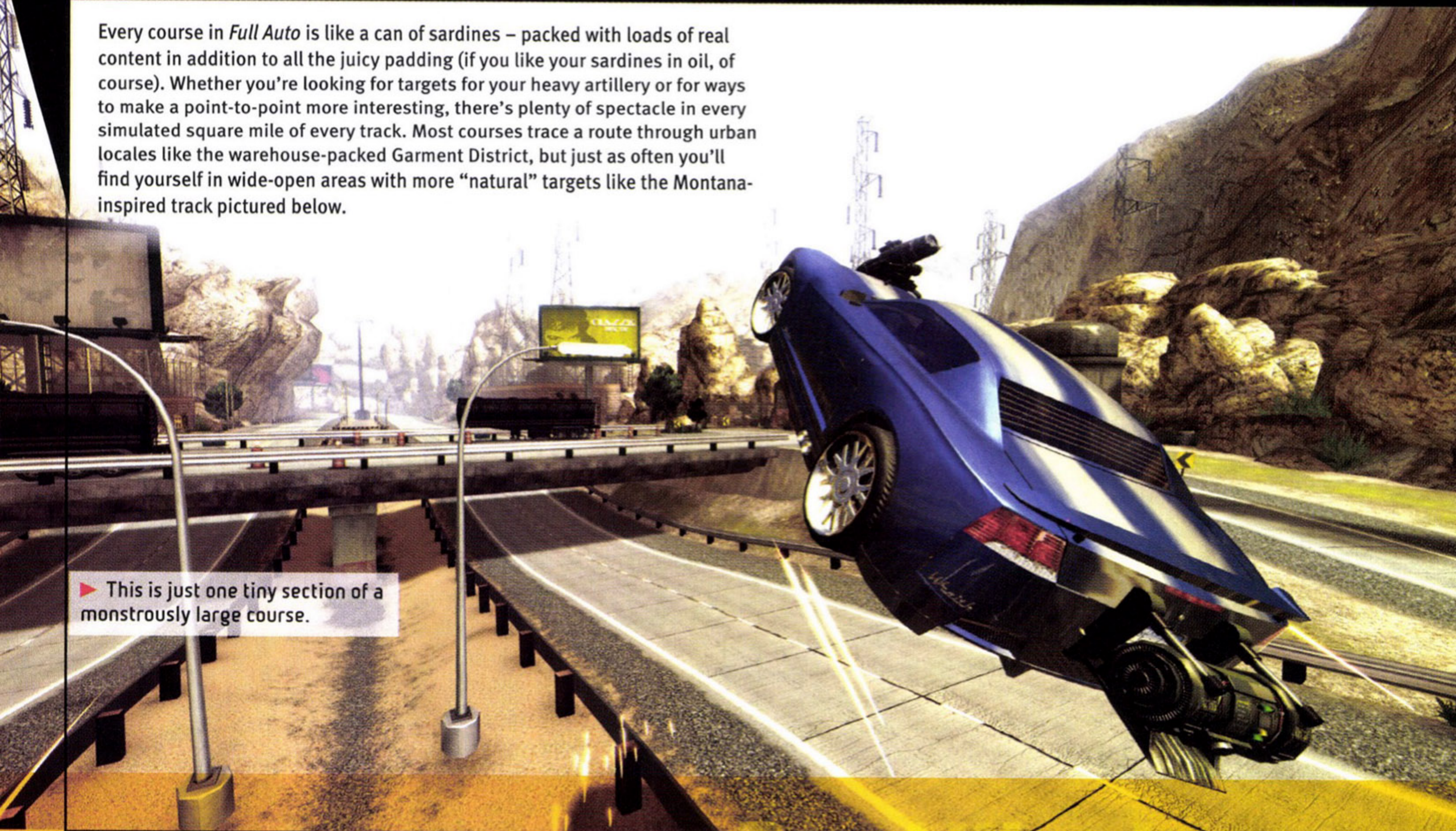
Heavy Metal

The cars of *Full Auto* can be broken down into four different classes: A, B, C, and the elusive, ultra-elite S. Each class has its strengths and weaknesses, but most notably are the three statistics that are viewable for each vehicle: durability, handling, and speed.



Course Knowledge

Every course in *Full Auto* is like a can of sardines – packed with loads of real content in addition to all the juicy padding (if you like your sardines in oil, of course). Whether you’re looking for targets for your heavy artillery or for ways to make a point-to-point more interesting, there’s plenty of spectacle in every simulated square mile of every track. Most courses trace a route through urban locales like the warehouse-packed Garment District, but just as often you’ll find yourself in wide-open areas with more “natural” targets like the Montana-inspired track pictured below.



► This is just one tiny section of a monstrously large course.

continued on pg. 44 ►►

Up Your Arsenal

The 21 vehicular stars of *Full Auto* can be outfitted with various weapons – but it all depends on their class. Take for instance the crowd-pleasin’ Vulcan. As a part of the B-Class cars, you’ll have three standard weapon presets that are shared with all car classes.

These weapon presets work by pairing together two different firearms on your car – like land-mine launchers in the back and a machine gun on the front. You can then unlock the remaining two weapon presets that are

limited to specific car class. So the Vulcan (B-Class) will have two special weapon combos that the C-Class Jupiter car doesn’t. And so on.

You’ll also be able to configure your weapons as an unlockable feature. This means that you’ll be able to change up the power of your weapons to a limited degree. When you choose a weapon preset for your car, you’ll be able to work on a sliding scale so that each of your two weapons can range between one to three. Confused? Think of it this way – at level

No. 1 for missiles, you won’t be able to aim them. So, once you can configure your weapon stash you can tweak them as you see fit for max damage to the enemy.

At one point in development, the team wanted to give players more freedom to choose how to weight weapon location on their cars, but the end result made *Full Auto* feel more like a mech-sim game like *Steel Battalion*, rather than a pick-up-and-play car combat racer.



Txt to activate your plan
75555 *

Jamster!
Value Plan

Credits for 2 ringtones, 1 game* and 3 graphics each month

Chart Ringtones

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| 1) Gold Digger | poly8110 |
| 2) Grind With Me | poly8111 |
| 3) Sugar, We're Goin' Down | poly8112 |
| 4) Tubular Bells (Exorcist Theme) | poly8113 |
| 5) Don't Cha | poly8114 |
| 6) Candy Shop | poly8115 |
| 7) Barbie Girl | poly8116 |
| 8) Naked | poly8117 |
| 9) Drop It Like It's Hot | poly8118 |
| 10) Wake Me Up When September Ends | poly8119 |

Top Sound FX

Answer The Phone Pimp	fun5730
Anybody In There	fun5731
Are U Wearing Underwear?	fun5732
Bout Time Ya Picked Up Your Mobi	fun5733
Do Not Attempt To Adjust Your Cell	fun5734
Doctor Doctor - The Baby Is Coming	fun5735
From Hell	fun5736
Halleluja	fun5737
Ho On Line 1, 2, 3, 4 And 6	fun5738
Ice Cream Truck	fun5739
Is That A Cellphone In Your Pocket	fun5740
Jingle Cells Song	fun5741
Mamma Calling	fun5742
Old Telephone Ringing 05	fun5743
Pick Up The Stupid Phone	fun5744
Please Pick Up The Phone	fun5745
Police Siren	fun5746
Rasta Santa	fun5747
Santa's Present	fun5748
Sleigh Bells	fun5749
Submarine Alarm	fun5750
Tarzan Yell	fun5751
Time Is Money	fun5752
We Wish You	fun5753

Real Tones

And I - Ciara	real5920
Back In Black - AC/DC	real5921
Back Then - Mike Jones Hot	real5922
Badd - Ying Yang Twins	real5923
Bat Country - Avenged Sevenfold	real5924
Because Of You - K.Clarkson	real5925
Bet You Can't Do It Like Me - D4L	real5926
Can't Let Go - A.Hamilton	real5927
Cater 2 U - Destiny's Child	real5928
Cold - Crossfade	real5929
Crazy Train - Ozzy Osbourne	real5930
Dem Boyz - Boyz N Da Hood	real5931
Doncella - Zion & Lennox	real5932
Don't Trip - Trina	real5933
Down With The S... - Disturbed	real5934
Draped Up - Bun B	real5935
Ella Y Yo - Aventura Ft. D.Omar	real5936
Get Low - Lil Jon	real5937
Girl Tonite - Twista	real5938
Go Sit Down - Maceo	real5939

More Real Tones

Here We Go - Trina	real5940
Icy (Hook) - Gucci Mane Hot	real5941
I'm A King - P\$C	real5942
I'm Sprung - T-Pain	real5943
Laffy Taffy - D4L	real5944
Lighters Up - Lil' Kim	real5945
Like You - Bow Wow	real5946
Lovers And Friends - Lil Jon	real5947
Presidential - Youngbloodz	real5948
Run It - Chris Brown	real5949
Shake - Ying Yang Twins	real5950
Slow Wind - R. Kelly	real5951
Stay Fly - Three 6 Mafia	real5952
Un Beso - Aventura	real5953
Unbreakable - Alicia Keys	real5954
Unpredictable - Jamie Foxx	real5955
Wait - Ying Yang Twins	real5956
We Be Burnin' - Sean Paul	real5957
What It Do - Lil' Flip	real5958
(When We) Make Love - Ginuwine	real5959

Money Mike

Real Tones

Pimp In Distress	real5960
Baby Mother On The Phone	real5961
Secured The Line	real5962
Are You A Music Lover	real5963
Pick Up Ya Phone	real5964
99 Problems	real5965

Real Tones

Time Is Money	real5966
Pick Up Ya Phone Pimp	real5967
Ho On Line 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6	real5968

Wallpapers



Color Wallpapers

Warning: I have an attitude and I know how to use it. pic1481

Surprise pic1495

Nobody knows I'm not wearing underwear. pic1485

SH*T HAPPENS pic1509

DUH! pic1529

6 minutes pic1488

THE TRUTH pic1493

pic1480, pic1482, pic1483, pic1484, pic1486, pic1487, pic1489, pic1490, pic1491, pic1492, pic1494, pic1496, pic1497, pic1498, pic1499, pic1500, pic1501, pic1502, pic1503, pic1504, pic1505, pic1506, pic1507, pic1508, pic1510, pic1511, pic1512, pic1513, pic1514, pic1515, pic1516, pic1517, pic1518, pic1519, pic1520, pic1521, pic1522, pic1523, pic1524, pic1525, pic1526, pic1527, pic1528, pic1530, pic1531

How to order...

1. Messages
2. select Create Message in the menu
3. type in the keyword of your favorite ringtones, e.g. for Gold Digger
4. confirm with OK

75555 *

txt poly8110 to

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OUT OF RANGE

WHAT?

move2420, move2421, move2422, move2423, move2424, move2425, move2426, move2427

HANDSETS SUPPORTED: POLYPHONIC RINGTONES: LG G4011, G4015, G4020; MOTOROLA V180, V220, V300, V400; NOKIA 3100, 3595, 6010; SAMSUNG X426, X427, X427M; SIEMENS A56, CF62; SONY ERICSSON T226, T237; REAL TONES: LG G4015; MOTOROLA V180, V220, V400; NOKIA 3100, 3595, 6010; SAMSUNG X426, X427, X427M; SIEMENS A56, CF62; SONY ERICSSON T226, T237; SOUND FX: LG G4015, G4020; MOTOROLA V180, V220, V300, V400; NOKIA 3100, 3595, 6010; SAMSUNG X426, X427, X427M; SIEMENS A56, CF62; SONY ERICSSON T226, T237; COLOR WALLPAPERS: LG G4015, G4020, L1150; MOTOROLA V180, V220, V300, V400; NOKIA 3100, 3200, 3595, 6010; SAMSUNG X426, X427, X427M; SIEMENS C61, CF62; SONY ERICSSON T226, T237; SCREENSAVERS: LG G4015; MOTOROLA V180, V220, V300, V400; NOKIA 3100, 3595, 6010; SAMSUNG X426, X427, X427M; SIEMENS C61, CF62; SONY ERICSSON T226, T237 - for more handset information visit www.jamster.com

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The 360 Angle

What's impossible to miss the moment the cars cross the starting line is just how stupidly purty the whole experience looks. During our visit, the team rambled excitedly about specular lighting, per-pixel shading, and all the cool techie jargon that next-gen console development affords – but in the end, for gamers like you and us, it means we're getting a spectacular feast of eye candy.

Minute details like fully rendered bullet casings flying out of hood-mounted machine guns and readable newspapers sitting in newsstands on the street infuse realistic character to every course. Touches like these sure aren't necessary, but they add an infinite amount of "wow" factor to the level of hyper realism that constantly pervades *Full Auto's* wacked-out car-combat world.

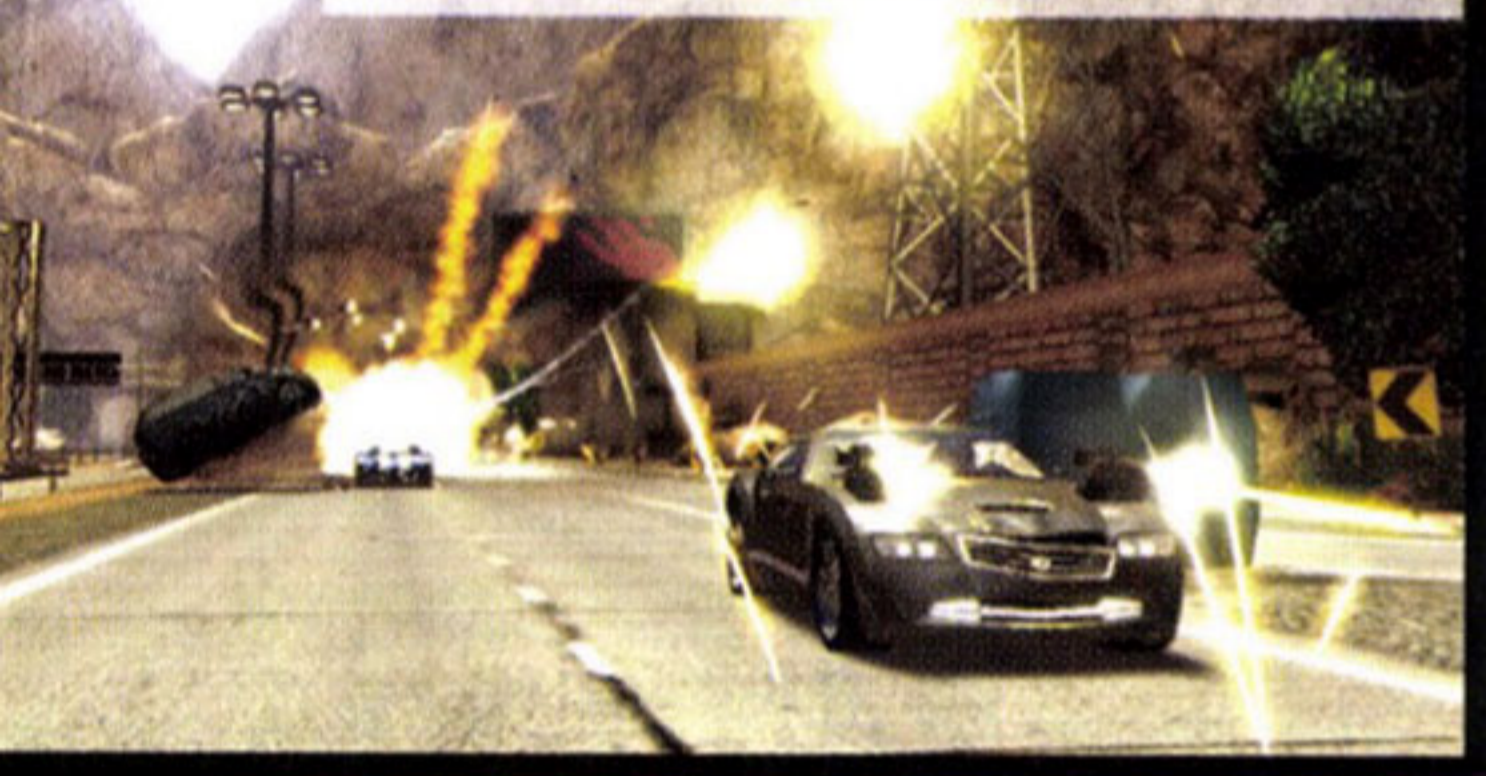
Art lead Dave Feltham declares happiness at what the team has accomplished with *FA's* ridiculously high level of graphical detail, "I would point out to someone playing the game, let's call him George, 'George. See that? See that window blowing out, those bricks coming off the wall, those concrete pillars falling down, those air conditioners, those hydro lines falling down? That's all in the game.'"

But code lead Jason Hasenbuhler points to *Full Auto's* unique Unwreck and destroy-everything features as its most next-gen contributions to the racing genre, "These are things that aren't easy to pull off by themselves, and putting them together is just certifiable insanity. What we're doing is a practical impossibility on the last generation of consoles." Sorry, Xbox.

Three for All

Lock, stock, and smoking tailpipe, *Full Auto* is part of an exciting new trend on Xbox 360: the consistent emergence of creative, fresh games. Its producer, Cord Smith, told us the team wants to make it into a potential trilogy, evolving *Full Auto* over time to include much more than what you'll find under the hood the first time out. But let's not get ahead of ourselves – *Full Auto's* beefy roster of tracks (18 in all) and intimidating number of events in Campaign Mode (a whopping total of around 90!) promise to be more than enough to keep you behind the wheel for a good long time. And the bash'em-up badness of Xbox Live mayhem could make this star really start rising. If you're wondering what'll be next once the shine starts to fade just a smidgen from *PGR* and *PDZ*, pencil in *Full Auto* on your calendar now.

► You can play *FA* in a variety of ways, but mass destruction is the key.



► Wrecking as much as possible rewards you with Unwreck time.



Mode Load

Full Auto offers up all the standard modes you've come to expect in a racer (yes, even with all the shooting, this is still a racing game) – stuff like Head to Head, Arcade, and Campaign. But it's more about the types of races you'll run in each of the various modes. In Arcade, you'll be able to compete in the following:

- **DOWN AND BACK:** Race to one end of the course, then double back for the finish line.
- **RAMPAGE:** Destroy a certain number of cars (both enemies and pedestrian traffic) under a time limit. (Definitely our early favorite!)
- **POINT TO POINT:** Simple, but not necessarily easy – especially with weapons added.
- **CIRCUIT:** Loop around in a set amount of laps to win.
- **LAP KNOCKOUT:** Keep up with the Joneses or prepare to face a boot to the posterior.

But you're not done. In order to unlock *Full Auto's* entire complement of content (try 21 cars, eight weapon types, and loads of skins and car-color configurations), you must battle through Campaign Mode's varying objectives. Sure, you'll still blow crap up, but some missions ask you to escort other vehicles or partake in white-knuckle pursuit races, and even tried-but-true time trials. And more frightening – prepare yourself for sudden-death matchups where you're forced to be smart about using your Unwreck because once you're taken out by the competition, there's no coming back.

► Pseudo used actual Mitsubishi concept car artists for their auto designs.



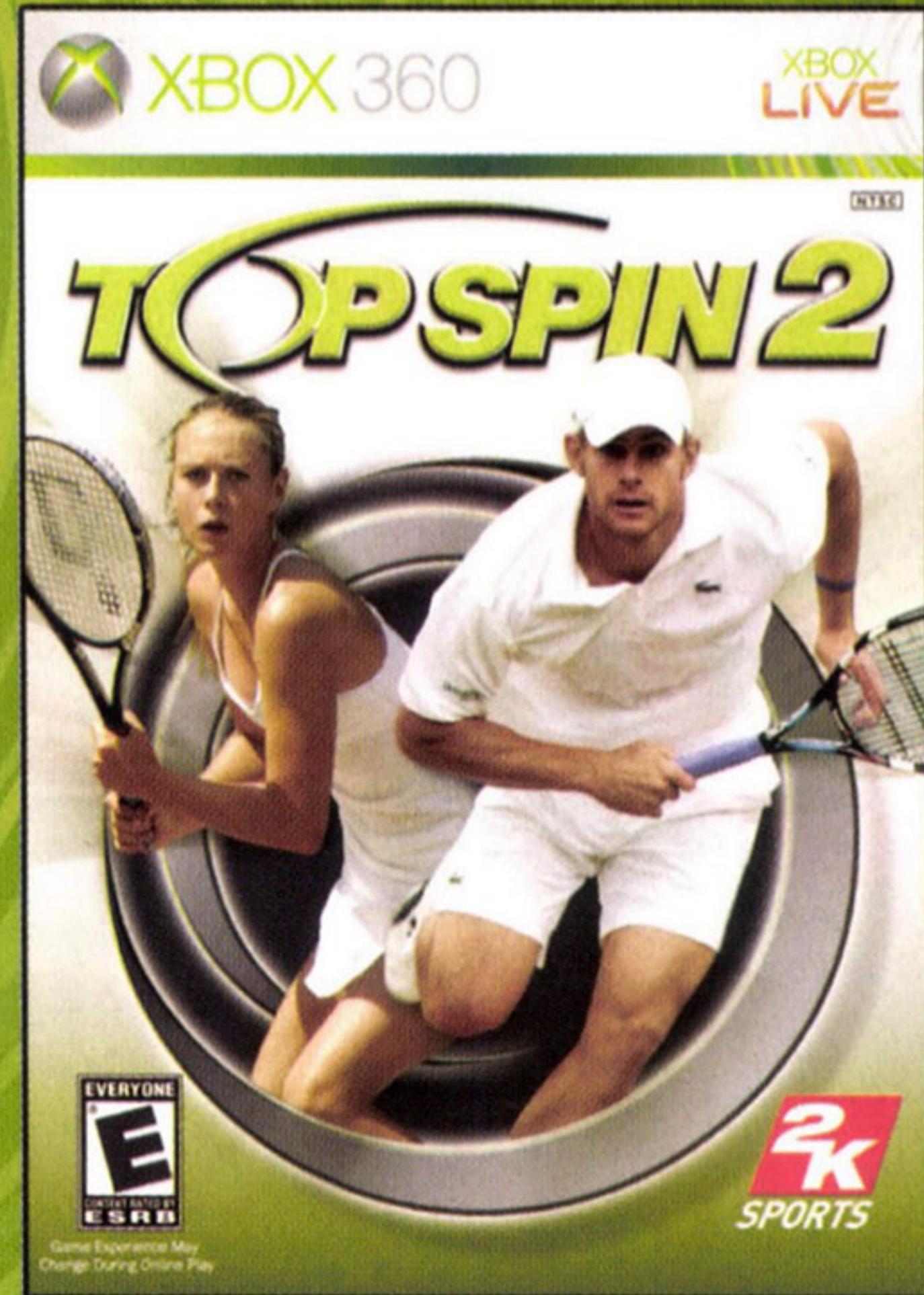
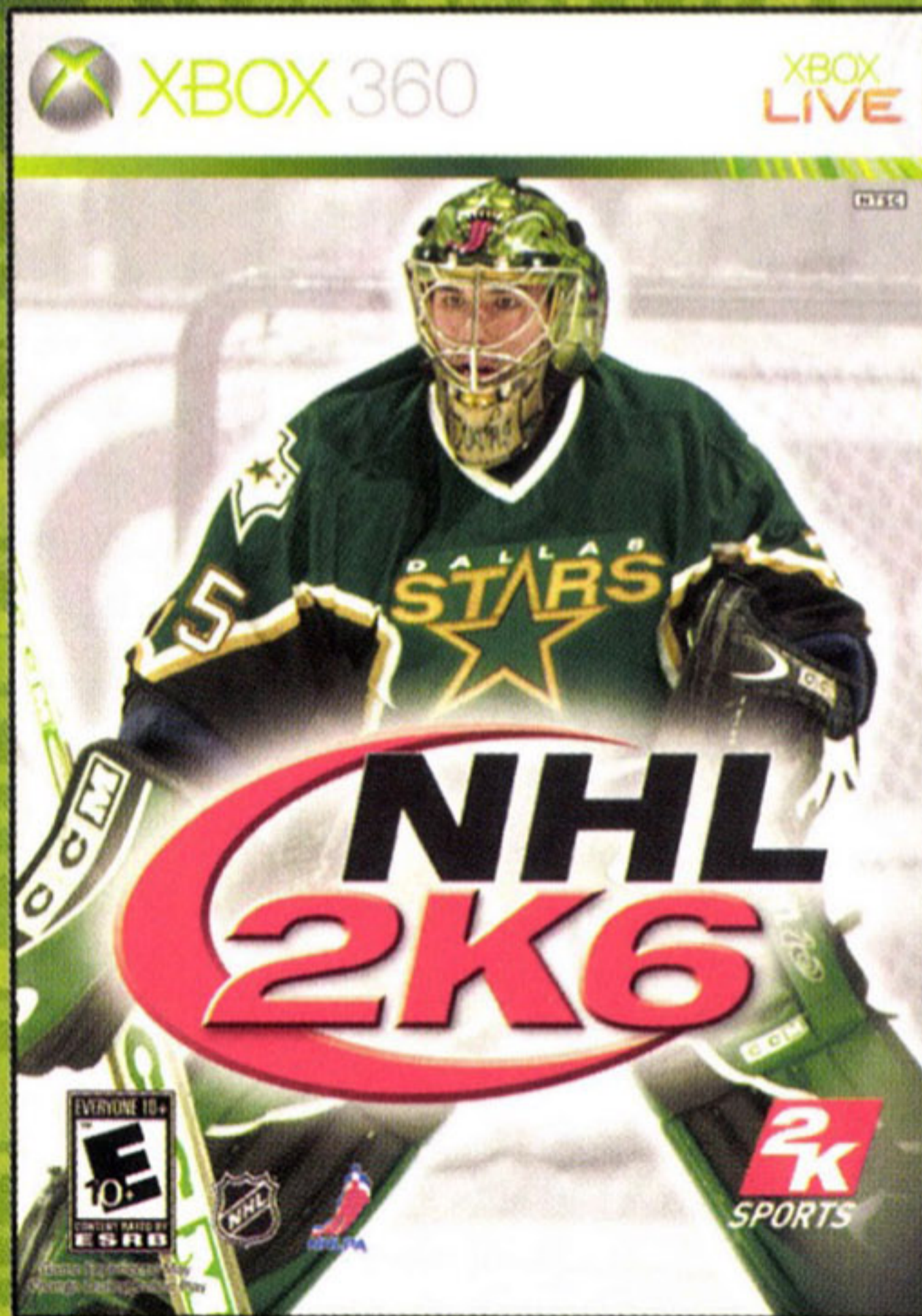
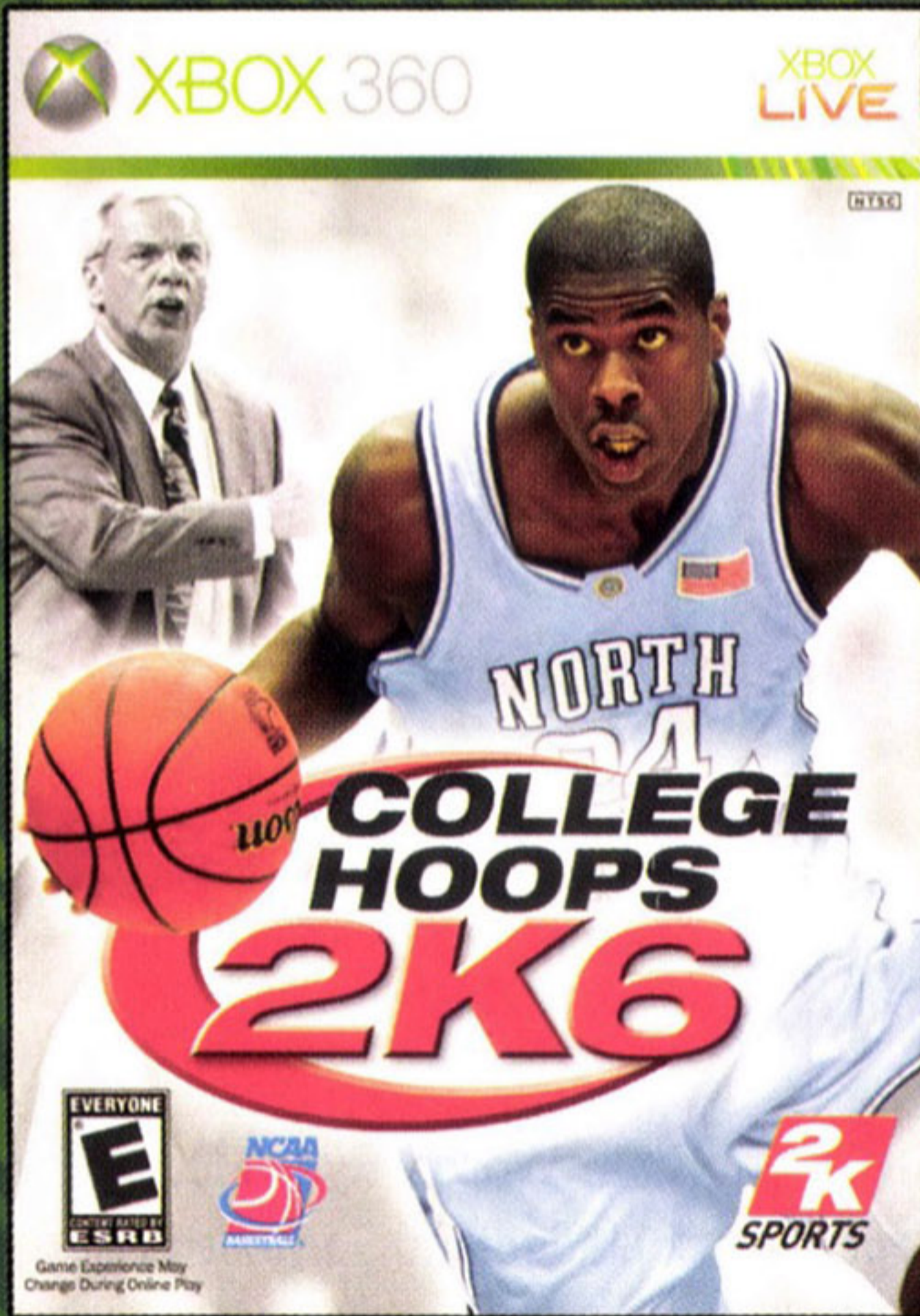
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The Serious Stuff

Belkin High-Speed USB 2.0 Four-Port Hub

\$30, www.belkin.com

Did it work? YES

As long as it's a USB 2.0 (not USB 1.0 or 1.1) hub, it'll work.

And you can

keep chaining them together until you've got a fire hazard in front of your 360.



Sony Ceramic White Special Edition PSP (Japan)

\$280, www.lik-sang.com

Did it work? YES

Will this hella cool Ceramic White Japanese PSP play our favorite English UMD movies? No dice thanks to region encoding, but your MP3s and videos will work.



Deck BL82 Illuminated Keyboard

\$120, www.deckkeyboards.com

Did it work? YES

This sturdy, police cruiser-style keyboard is compact – lousy for everyday use but perfect for banging out quick Xbox Live text messages on your lap from the couch. And it glows all purty.



Microsoft IntelliMouse Optical

\$30, www.microsoft.com/hardware/mouse

Did it work? NO

The driver fairies laughed, mocking us as the optical mouse's blood-red light glowed with the promise of life, but produced no real results without software or a mouse-friendly interface on the 360 to back it up.



Xbox 360 USB

Loaded down!

Xbox 360 lets you plug in USB devices.
Any USB devices?

Words: Ryan McCaffrey

Photography: Mark Madeo and Samantha Berg

We're as stoked about the wireless capabilities of the Xbox 360 as anyone, but like little kids who can't resist the temptation to try to fit pennies into light sockets, we couldn't leave well enough alone. We just had to see what would happen when we plugged every USB device we could think of into the Xbox 360. Fortunately, our curiosity didn't result in electrocution.



Apple iPod Video\$299-\$399, www.ipod.com**Did it work? YES**

The ubiquitous iPod was a sure thing, but we were amazed at how stupidly simple it is to connect to your 360. Just plug it in and it works on 360 just like it works in your hand.

**Iomega 128MB USB Key**\$20, www.iomega.com**Did it work? YES**

We know what you're going to ask, and the answer is no – you cannot save data to a USB key. You can read media from it, but there's no way around that \$40 memory card or \$100 hard drive. Sorry folks.

**100GB ABSplus Backup System**\$319, www.cmsproducts.com**Did it work? YES**

Sometimes, a CD isn't enough for storing your music. Sometimes, when you have a vast collection of bootlegs, er, "live recordings," you need something more. The Xbox 360 will read 'em off your USB hard drive.

**Canon PowerShot SD500 Digital Camera**\$349, www.powershot.com**Did it work? YES**

We couldn't have been more impressed by the ease of the connection and the picture quality when displaying a shot on a 46-inch HDTV (or this 23-inch below).



The Fun Stuff

Linksys USB 2.0 ProConnect Four-Port Hub

\$30, www.linksys.com

Did it work? YES

Microsoft's official line is that USB hubs don't work and that the Xbox 360 only supports two wired controllers. We've tested four and it works – all you need is a USB 2.0 hub.



Mini Desktop Aquarium

\$20, www.thinkgeek.com

Did it work? YES

By far the most popular gadget we tried, everyone in the office fought for the fish tank. Paul eventually won out, so he'll now be the caretaker of Azurik (he's the blue one) and Bandicoot, our plastic fish.



Mini Lava Light

\$10, www.thinkgeek.com

Did it work? YES

Disappointingly void of any actual lava or at least globs of boiling wax, this little guy is nothing more than a glorified nightlight – and a boring white-bulb one at that. Awesome-O says, "Weak."



Glowing Snowman

\$12, www.thinkgeek.com

Did it work? YES

Fran instantly fell in love with our frosty, four-colored friend, and why not? He cycles between being red, blue, purple, and green, which reflects super-rad off the 360's shiny chrome DVD tray.



Notes From Our Experiments

- USB is a cool technology. Did you know you can chain tons of hubs together, plugging in – in theory – up to 127 devices at one time?
- We also tried Edge Tech's 400GB, AC power-required DiskGo! USB hard drive with negative results. Will Smith, Editor-in-Chief of hardcore PC-gear mag *Maximum PC*, thought the problem might be because Windows (and the 360?) treat removable hard drives and removable flash drives differently.
- When trying this at home, any USB 2.0 hub works; it can be USB or AC powered.







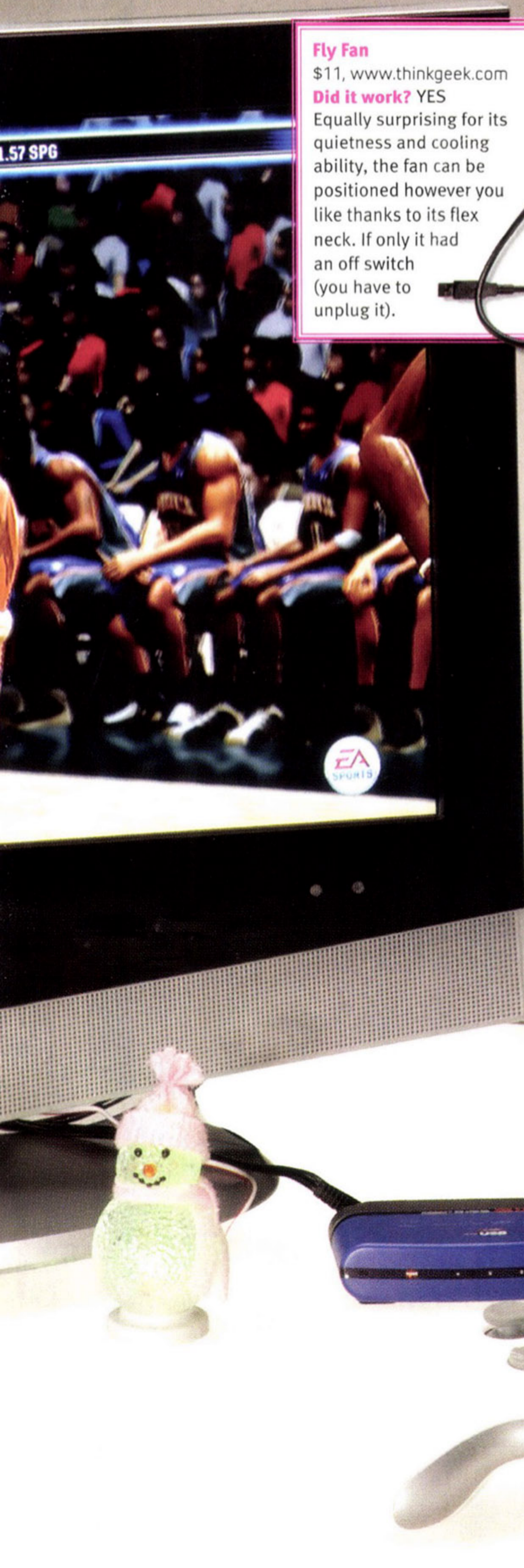


truth found

In 1993, the Supreme Court decided that an inmate could sue a prison claiming that exposure to his cellmate's second hand smoke could constitute cruel and unusual punishment.



truth found



Fly Fan

\$11, www.thinkgeek.com

Did it work? YES

Equally surprising for its quietness and cooling ability, the fan can be positioned however you like thanks to its flex neck. If only it had an off switch (you have to unplug it).



VTEC USB Coffee Warmer

\$15, www.vtec.co.uk

Did it work? YES

Nothing like a mug of hot cocoa during the wintry Russian campaign of *Call of Duty 2* to keep you toasty inside. This device worked great – and even has four extra USB ports!

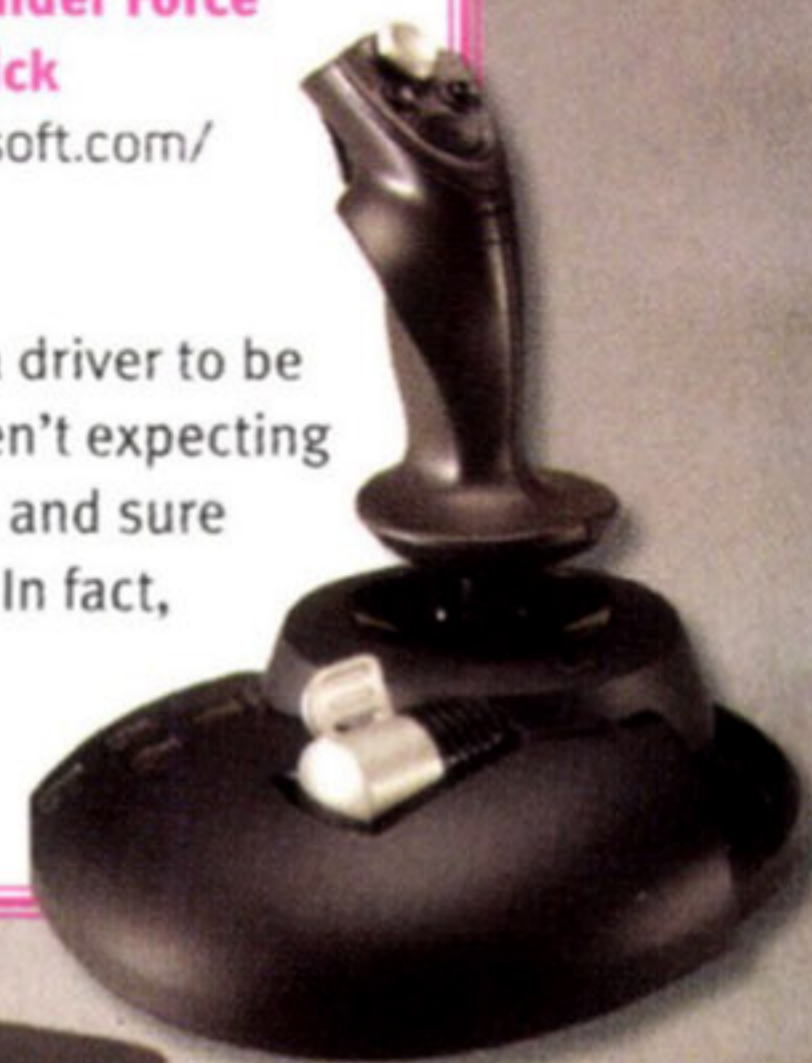


Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback 2 Joystick

\$250, www.microsoft.com/hardware

Did it work? NO

Since it requires a driver to be installed, we weren't expecting this stick to work, and sure enough, it didn't. In fact, it's doubtful any existing joysticks will. But we tried!



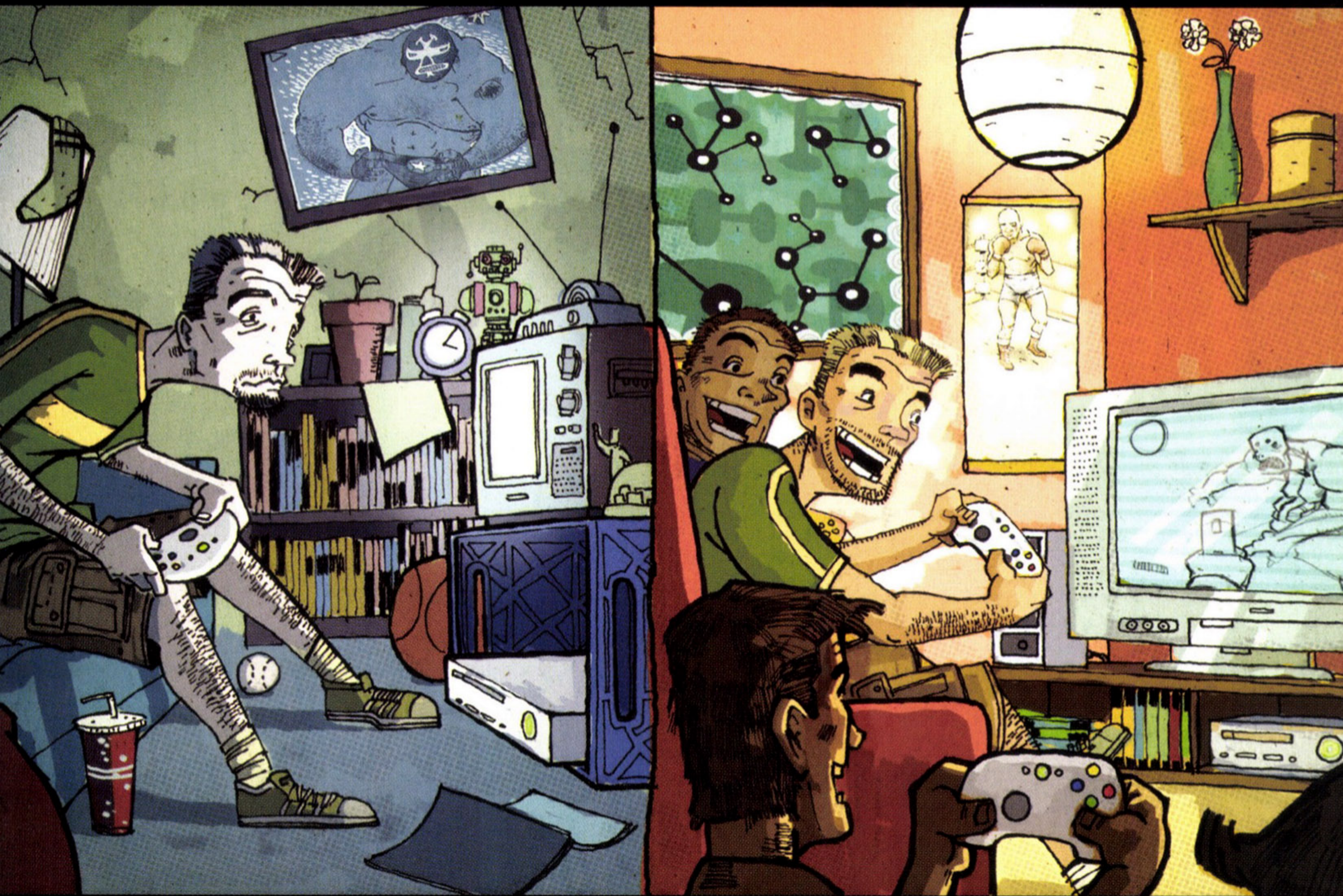
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FROM THE CREATORS OF

PC GAMER



PSM
100% INDEPENDENT PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE



By Ryan McCaffrey and Francesca Reyes • Illustrations by Dan Santat

HDTV for NEWBIES

We show you how to get the best HDTV for your Xbox 360!

You've heard the hype: "HDTVs are the future." With their vivid picture quality, they promise to forever change your home-entertainment experience. And until recently, it used to be all talk (and pricey talk at that) – unfounded geek hyperbole.

But lately you've seen sales advertised in store circulars. Prices have fallen. Maybe

you've even been curious enough to go into a store and check them out in person. But you've yet to pull the trigger on an HDTV purchase because you've never had a killer app to justify the expense. And all that tech jibber-jabber is for the birds. Plasma, DLP, LCD, CRT...WTH?

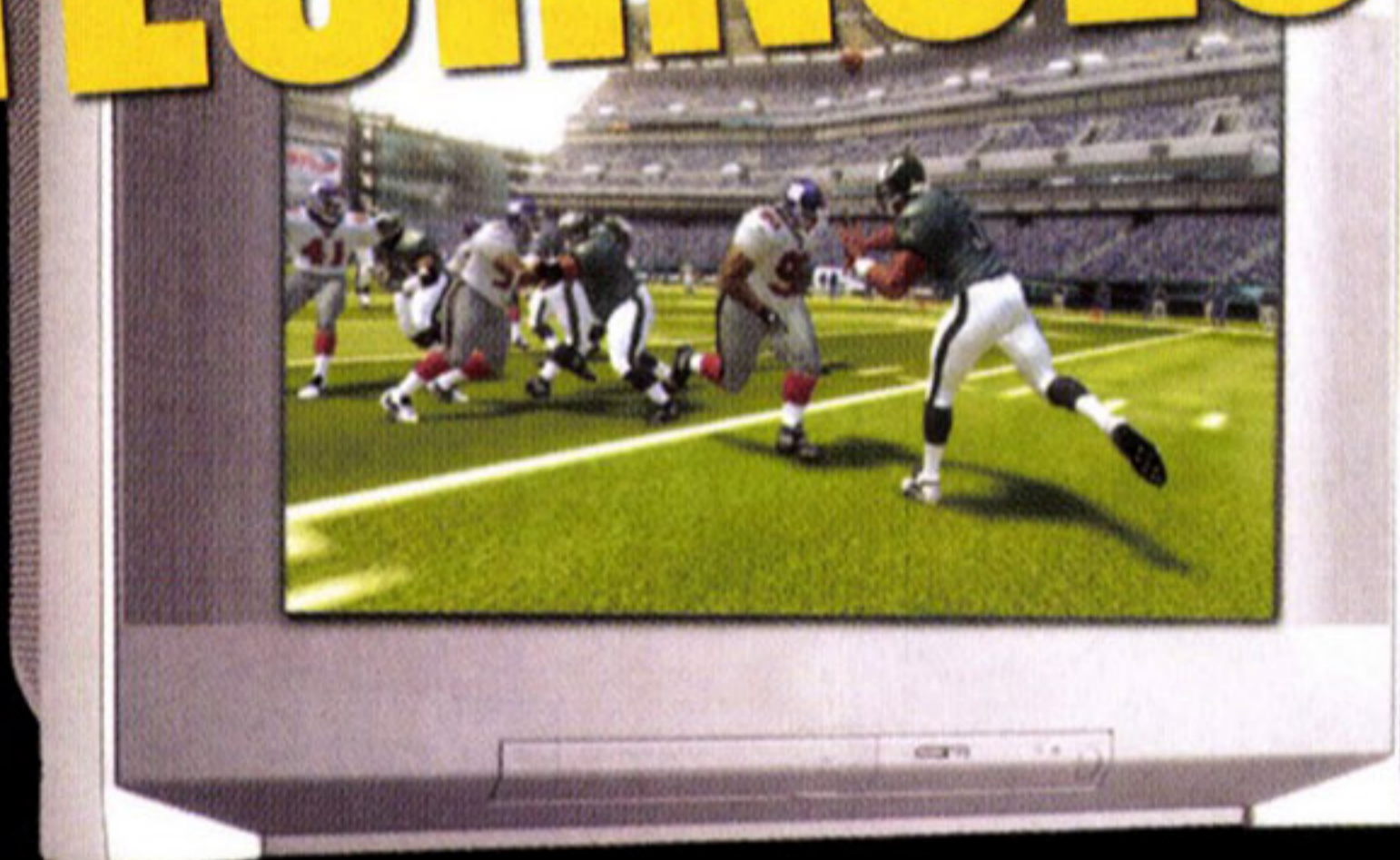
Then along comes the Xbox 360 and with it the most compelling reason to date for

considering the upgrade, making it far more imperative than those few occasional HD sports broadcasts you sometimes gaze longingly at in the cable listings.

We're here to help guide you through the jargon and turn you into an educated, confident HDTV power shopper. Grab a cart.

continued on pg. 52 ►►

THE TECHNOLOGIES



CRT (CATHODE RAY TUBE)

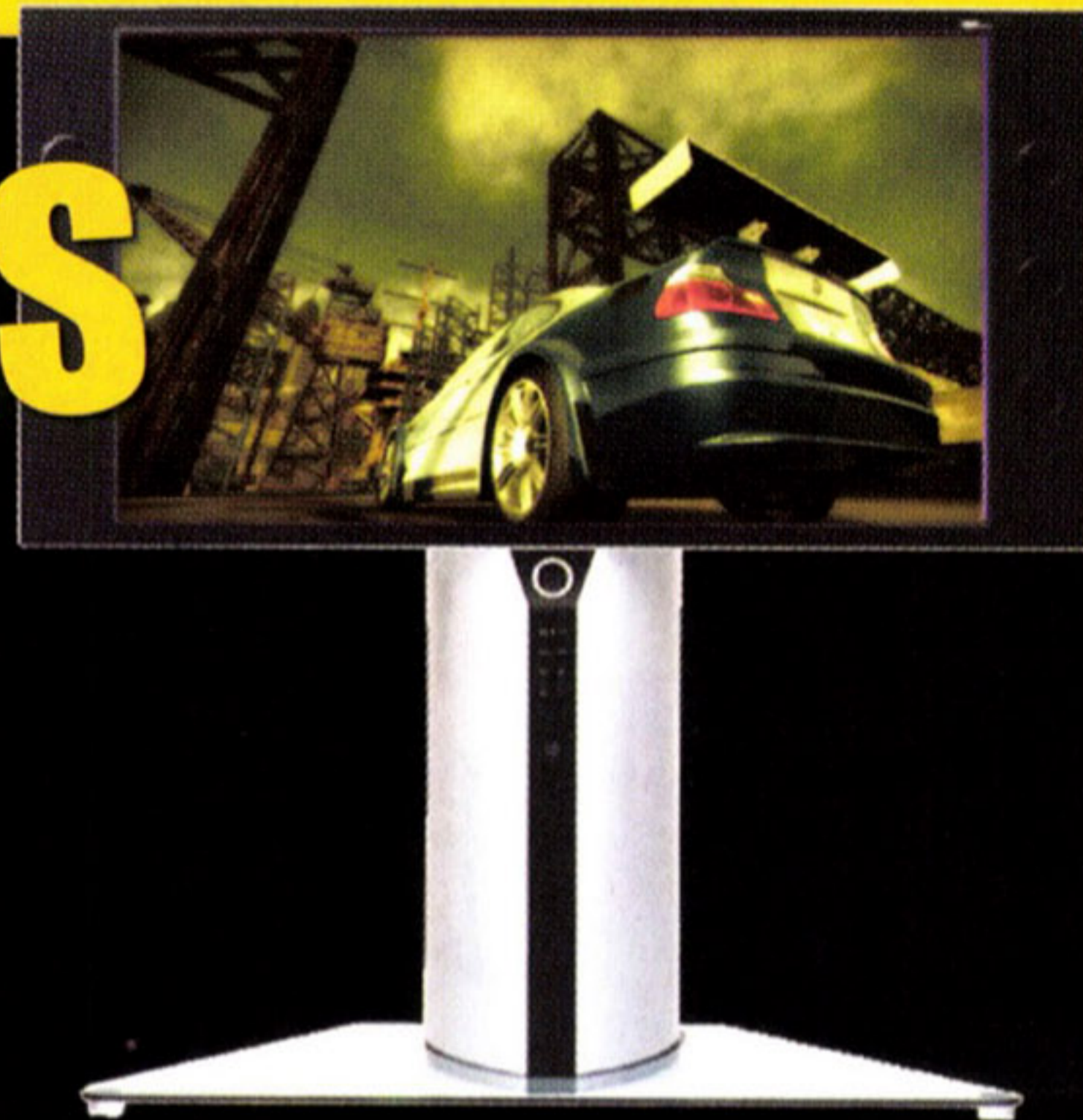
PRICE RANGE: AROUND \$500 – \$2000

CRT is the fancy name for that ol' fashioned heavy TV you've had in your home since childhood. The overwhelming majority of CRTs don't natively support the Xbox 360's preferred 720p resolution, instead upconverting it to 1080i (or simply displaying 1080i natively, which all new games will offer).

The good news is that CRT HDTVs are very affordable; a personal desk-worthy 26-inch widescreen set can be had for as little as \$500. A decent-sized 34-inch widescreen falls in the \$1500 range. The bad news is that widescreen CRTs don't get any bigger than that. The reason probably has something to do with the fact that a 34-incher weighs as much as a full-grown adult. Try moving that around with impunity.

NATIVE VS. UPCONVERTING

What's it mean to say a TV displays 720p "natively?" That it's showing you the image in the exact resolution the source (in our case, the Xbox 360) is outputting. So a TV that can do 1080i but not 720p takes the 720p signal and upconverts (or "stretches") it to 1080i, resulting in a less crisp image but hardly ugly picture.



DLP (DIGITAL LIGHT PROCESSING)

PRICE RANGE: AROUND \$1500 – \$5000

Everyone had a neighbor who bragged about his monstrous projection TV when they were growing up. Lucky for us, we moved – and lucky for you, DLPs are the lighter, better spiritual successors to those giant projection TVs.

Usually weighing in at under 100 pounds (and often only a foot or so deep), DLPs rock in the important gaming categories: They have excellent picture quality, most natively display 720p, and they have spot-on viewing angles. Ask any tech nerd, and they'll often tell you that nabbing one with a screen sized around 42 to 60 inches is probably the best bang for your buck. But make sure to purchase a latest-generation model as they come standard with a fourth-generation DLP processing chip, guaranteeing you better picture quality.

But (and what a "but" it is), a small percentage of folks may see rainbow colors on the screen because of the way the image gets projected on to it (commonly referred to as the "rainbow effect"). So, make sure to look at one in the store to make sure you're not one of the unlucky few.

PLASMA

PRICE RANGE: AROUND \$2000 – \$10,000

If you're immune to sticker shock, the high-priced glamour of a plasma TV is hard to ignore. A forerunner in thin, lightweight HDTV tech, these suckers can be hung on walls to dazzle any friends within a one-mile radius! But one thing to keep in mind is that plasma screens are more prone to that dreaded "burn-in" than others, which means static images (like a network's logo or a health meter) can permanently etch into the screen, whether it's on or not. Match this up with a game left on pause for a lengthy period of time (like when you fall asleep on the couch) or a persistent element of a game's HUD, and you just sank your own multi-thousand-dollar plasma battleship.

Also bear in mind that the cheap ones won't even do 720p, just 480p. Make sure the resolution is at least 1280x720. Anything higher (you may see 1366x768, for instance) is fine.



LCD (LIQUID CRYSTAL DISPLAY)

PRICE RANGE: AROUND \$800 – \$7000

You're probably thinking, "Oh, \$800? Is that it? How affordable!" Well, consider the following; LCD is actually very pricey. Bottom-end units measure around 23 inches, so a true living-room LCD set (37 inches plus) will easily set you back four grand. But how sweet LCD is...if you can afford it, this is the true path to Xbox 360 HDTV grandeur. It's super thin, lightweight, incredibly bright and vivid, beautiful – need we go on? Oh, and LCD isn't as quick to suffer "burn-in" like plasma. But before you march in and take out a second mortgage, make sure to look into LCDs with a high refresh rate. Keep an eye out for ones marked "12ms" or below in reference to a refresh rate. In this case, low is good.



HDTV SHOPPER'S CHECKLIST



What to remember to look for or ask about when you're HDTV shopping

- ✓ What is this HDTV's native resolution? Is it 1280x720 or higher?
- ✓ Is this HDTV a widescreen (i.e., have a 16:9 aspect ratio)? Don't buy anything else!
- ✓ If this is a DLP, can you see a rainbow effect? Make sure you look at dark scenes and light ones, and try to view the TV in both a lit area and a dark one.
- ✓ How many component inputs does this HDTV have? It should have at least one (for your Xbox 360), but you're likely to need a couple more down the road for other home-theater components.
- ✓ Does it have HDMI connections? This is another input method not currently supported by Xbox 360, so you shouldn't worry too much about it.
- ✓ If you buy an extended warranty, does the service kick in from day of purchase or after the manufacturer's warranty expires? And does it include in-home service, or would you have to haul the TV to the store?
- ✓ Will it make my games look incredible? Best test – take your Xbox or Xbox 360 in to the store and ask to hook it up and see for yourself. If they're serious about selling to you, you should have no problems.



HDTV DICTIONARY

By the Numbers

What's in a resolution? Well, the higher the resolution, the more you can see at once. That's part of what makes Xbox 360 games in HD so cool. After all, when shooting up bad guys online in *Perfect Dark Zero*, wouldn't you rather be able to see the guy standing just off to your left in 720p mode than the same guy on a standard 480i set from 1995 couldn't spot? Yes? Good answer!

- 480i (SDTV):** 640x480, interlaced, 4:3 screen aspect ratio
- 480p (EDTV):** 640x480, progressive, 4:3 screen aspect ratio
- 720p (HDTV):** 1280x720, progressive, 16:9 screen aspect ratio
- 1080i (HDTV):** 1920x1080, interlaced, 16:9 screen aspect ratio

KNOW YOUR RESOLUTIONS

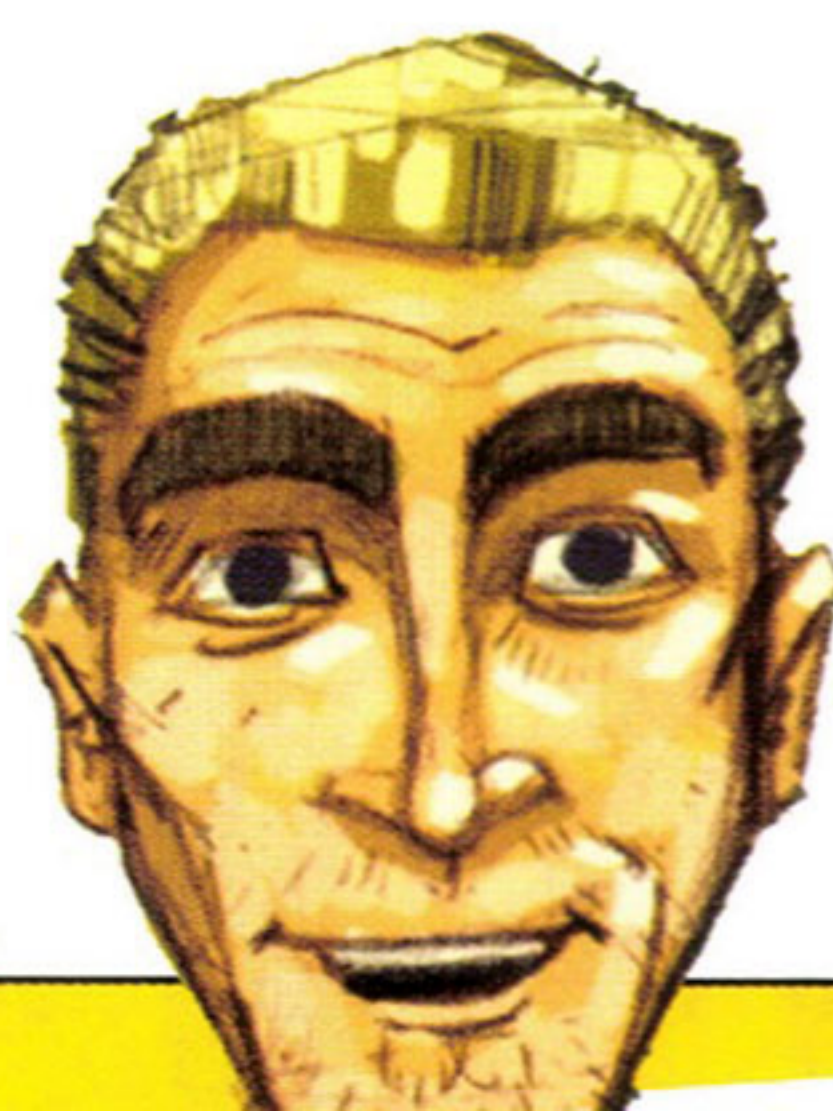
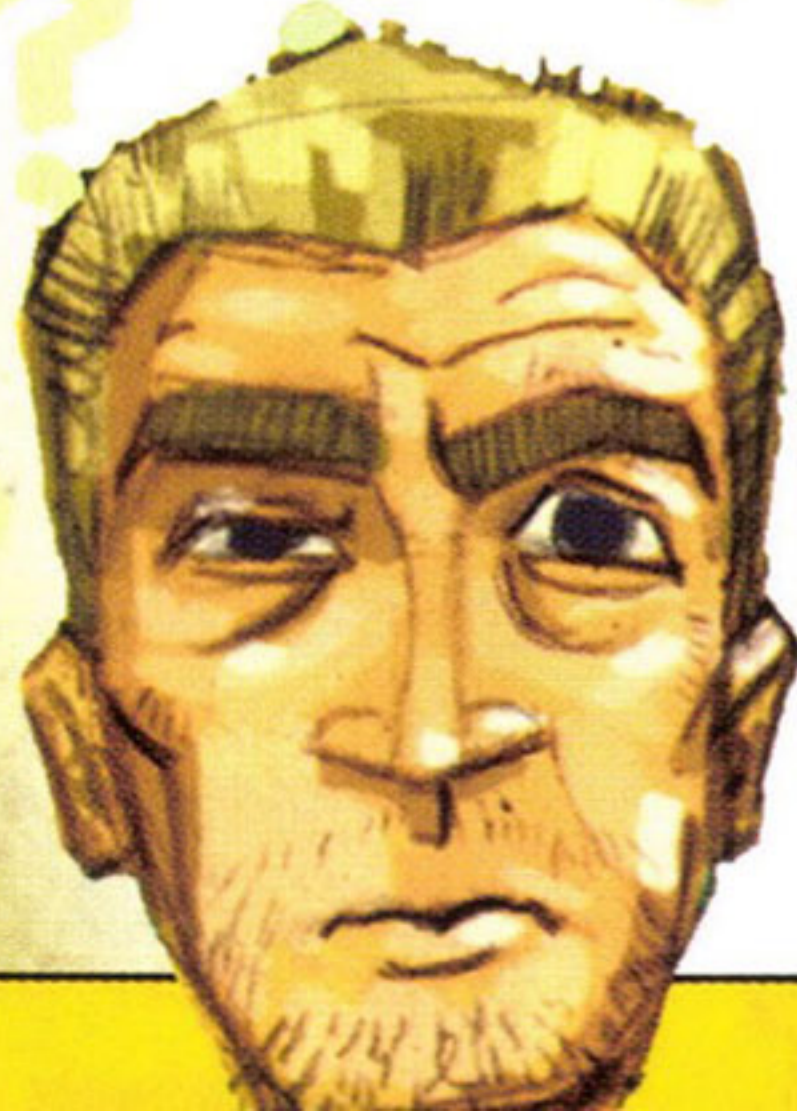
If you're confused about the real-life meaning of the resolutions, look at it this way: A 640x480 progressive (or 480p) image shows you 307,200 pixels on screen at once. Step up to 720p (1280x720) and you're seeing 921,600, or three times as many. That's a lot more 360 scenery to see at once!

INTERLACED VS. PROGRESSIVE

Television as you've always known it has been displayed in something called "interlaced mode." Your TV picture is made up of 480 lines of color that are beamed to create the image. An interlaced image beams every other line, but flickers them super-fast so that you don't see the flicker with the naked eye. "Progressive mode" (indicated by the "p" after the number, i.e., 720p) draws all the lines of the image together. So even 480p is sharper than standard TV. And as you can imagine, a picture made up of 720 lines in "progressive" format – every line is on screen at the same time – looks so much crisper.

WHAT'S AN ASPECT RATIO?

Confused about 4:3 and 16:9? Us too, at first. But it's really not so weird. It's the width to height ratio of the screen. In 4:3, it means that for every four pixels the screen is horizontally, it's three vertically. Thus, 16:9 means for every 16 pixels horizontally, there are 9 vertically. The common name for 16:9 is one you've probably heard: widescreen!



SP-404: SAMPLER The new SP-404 is built on a foundation of *more*: more features, more voices, more pads, and more memory. It blows past the competition by offering a CompactFlash slot, expanded effects, battery-power compatibility, and a built-in microphone for quick, stress-free sampling sessions. Even with all the bonus features, the SP-404 is still amazingly affordable.

Roland
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GROOVES

XBOX NOW

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THE VERDICT



Welcome to *OXM's* brand-new reviews section and brand-new scoring system. Actually, we evaluate games the same way we always did, but now with simpler, more direct scores.

- 10
- 9.5
- 9.0
- 8.5
- 8.0
- 7.5
- 7.0
- 6.5
- 6.0
- 5.5
- 5.0
- 4.5
- 4.0
- 3.5
- 3.0
- 2.5
- 2.0
- 1.5
- 1.0
- 0.5
- 0.0

☺ Editor's Choice. As in 9.0, we choo-choo-choose you! Of the 18 Xbox 360 launch titles, we've given a very select few (four, in fact) a score this high. But the better news is, most launch games have fallen into the 7 to 8 range. That's still darned good for a slate of launch titles if you ask us.

☺ For some media outlets, this is considered a very bad review. Not us. It takes a lot to achieve above a 7.5 – that's the doorway to the top quarter of all games. A 7.5 is usually triple-A game that doesn't quite live up to expectations, or maybe something obscure that charmed us but was incomplete. In other words: "pretty good"

☺ Just a smidge over average, this is a nice place to put games that are very very average, especially in the context of their respective genres. *World Championship Poker 2* and *Taito Legends* fall in this bracket. Perfectly meh.

☹ What do you give a game that's not technically broken, but represents something with no appeal to us whatsoever and is absolutely no fun at all? Just ask *Splat Magazine Renegade Paintball*.

▶ Quake 4 page 70

CONTRIBUTORS



PAUL CURTHOYS
When not helping his young daughter with her 360 controller skills, Paul tries to find time for cycling and sculling, but usually ends up playing poker online.



CHRISTOPHER NULL
Chris is the founder and editor-in-chief of filmcritic.com. He lives on a rocky crag at the top of a mountain in the middle of San Francisco.



TOM PRICE
Splitting all his time between his work Xbox and his home Xbox, Tom has little room for anything in his life other than *Geometry Wars*.



Kameo: Elements of Power

Warriors, come out and plaaaay...

Publisher: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS Developer: RARE ESRB: TEEN Live/Multiplayer: 2-player co-op offline, Live Aware, Leaderboards
 Selling Points: Loads of mini-games, side quests, and general platforminess

Yeesh. It only took three different consoles, nearly five whole years, and two different majority shareholders for *Kameo* to finally peek her winged frame into the virtual sunlight of the Xbox 360. But sometimes fate has a way of working its per-pixel-shaded, normal-mapped wonders – and now it's impossible to envision Rare's cartoony, visual powerhouse on any other system. It's a match made in fairy heaven.

The minute you switch on *Kameo*, you'll see what we mean. Graphics – dripping, gooey, decadent, fluttery graphics. From the shimmering ice plates in the Snow Temple to the ripples

under Elemental Warrior Flex's tendrils on water to the hazy heat effects on the plains of the troll-packed Badlands...this is what a platformer should look like. And even though visuals do not a game completely make, they sure don't hurt. Especially when you're launching icy spikes at a flying dragon at a distance you would never have been able to see on the original Xbox.

But Rare's long years slaving over a hot programming keyboard weren't just spent on making sure that our heroine Kameo's belly shirt swayed in the breeze. This is a big, big world with plenty to see, do, climb, push, shoot, and swim in. After all, you are Kameo – a petite, raven-

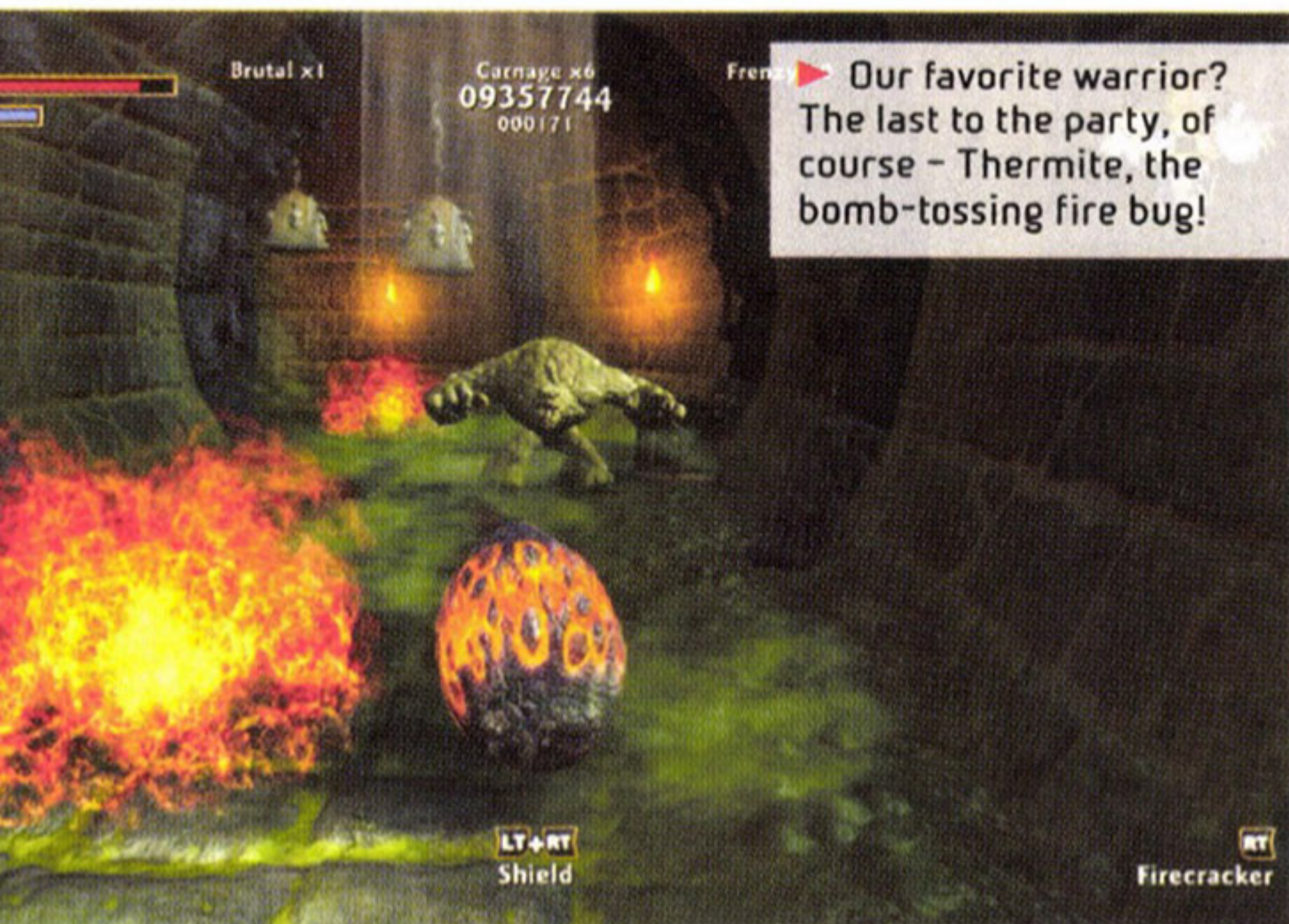
haired elf with the ability to harbor up to ten creatures called "Elemental Warriors." In order to rescue your kidnapped family from an insane older sister (who has serious anger issues) and stave off a *Lord of the Rings*-scale uprising by the ever unpopular Troll Kingdom, you must reclaim the missing Warriors to use in the fight. And so your quest begins; with only one Warrior in your arsenal, you'll eventually gain all ten back as you progress through the storyline.

The Warriors all follow certain elemental themes. For instance, there's Ash the flame dragon, Chilla the ice gorilla, and Flex the tentacled water, um, thingie. Each one has a handful of abilities that are assigned to each trigger button (with a special style attack reserved for pressing both triggers). Getting through any part of *Kameo* depends on exploiting all of your Warrior's talents, often swapping them out on the fly to accomplish chained goals. So you'll find yourself, for example, rolling up a ramp toward an icy wall as Major Ruin, the armadillo-

Co-op Play? Nuts to That!

Kameo is a single-player game by definition, so the inclusion of a two-player, split-screen co-op mode is like a big, fat shiny maraschino cherry on top of a 31-flavor sundae. But that's the theory. In practice, it's more like the nuts. It's not nearly as sweet as you'll only be able to play through six different areas of the game, which aren't available until you play through them in single-player. They're unconnected to one another, so instead of presenting you and your pal with a lovely cooperative jaunt, it's more a disjointed hopscotch. It's better to think of it as a side dish to avoid disappointment.





► Our favorite warrior? The last to the party, of course - Thermite, the bomb-tossing fire bug!



► It's like the Brady Bunch, except no Marcia. Oh, wait - there she is.

Press to Select

ish warrior, then in mid-air, transforming into Chilla to grab onto the wall and climb up it.

Sure, this ain't nothing new. We've played it in other games - but *Kameo* executes it supremely well. And with such pretty, fluid animations and a visually responsive world to scoot around, the fact that you're swapping out controls for each warrior is forgivable in the face of frustration caused by increeedibly slow responses and unwieldy controls in some areas that result in stumbling around more often than gliding gracefully through the challenges.

Try the boss fight in the Water Temple on for size. You'll have to roll bombs into him as Major Ruin (no lock-on! aargh!), then when you connect, dive into the water as Deep Blue to pound away at the targets on its four arms. Sounds easy enough - until you take into consideration how drastically different each of them controls. It's clever, yes - but it also highlights the awkwardness of "on the fly" Warrior swaps.

But most of the swaps are more leisurely, like when you're exploring any of *Kameo's* bustling hotspots. Feel like rescuing some lady's kids? You can! Wanna do the good Samaritan thang by watering some dude's barren garden? You can! Everywhere you turn, there're people to talk to, pathways to explore, and sights to marvel at.

Granted, if you consider yourself a platformer aficionado, you won't find anything here that's particularly genre-shattering, but *Kameo's* presentation is flawlessly executed. And that makes it fun. Really fun. Standing at around 10-15 hours packed full of sights, sounds and, well, fruit (see sidebar), it's hard to pass this one up.

- Francesca Reyes



► You can snag alternate skins for each Warrior if you're rich and determined.

Wisdom, My Elfin Arse

You should've listened to your mom. Fruit is good for you. In the case of *Kameo*, Elemental Fruit is more than good for you and your warriors - it's essential to leveling up their abilities. And with 100 to collect (though you can get through just fine with around 60 of 'em), many of the side quests come bearing Fruit. Take for instance the über-snooty Typhoon in the Enchanted Kingdom. He'll quiz you before you can snag his, ahem, fruit. We've got your answers right here, buddy:

1. 7 Shadow Trolls
2. 5 Runes
3. 8 Torches
4. 5 Kids
5. 4 Imprisoned Trolls
6. 0 Kids for Bluster



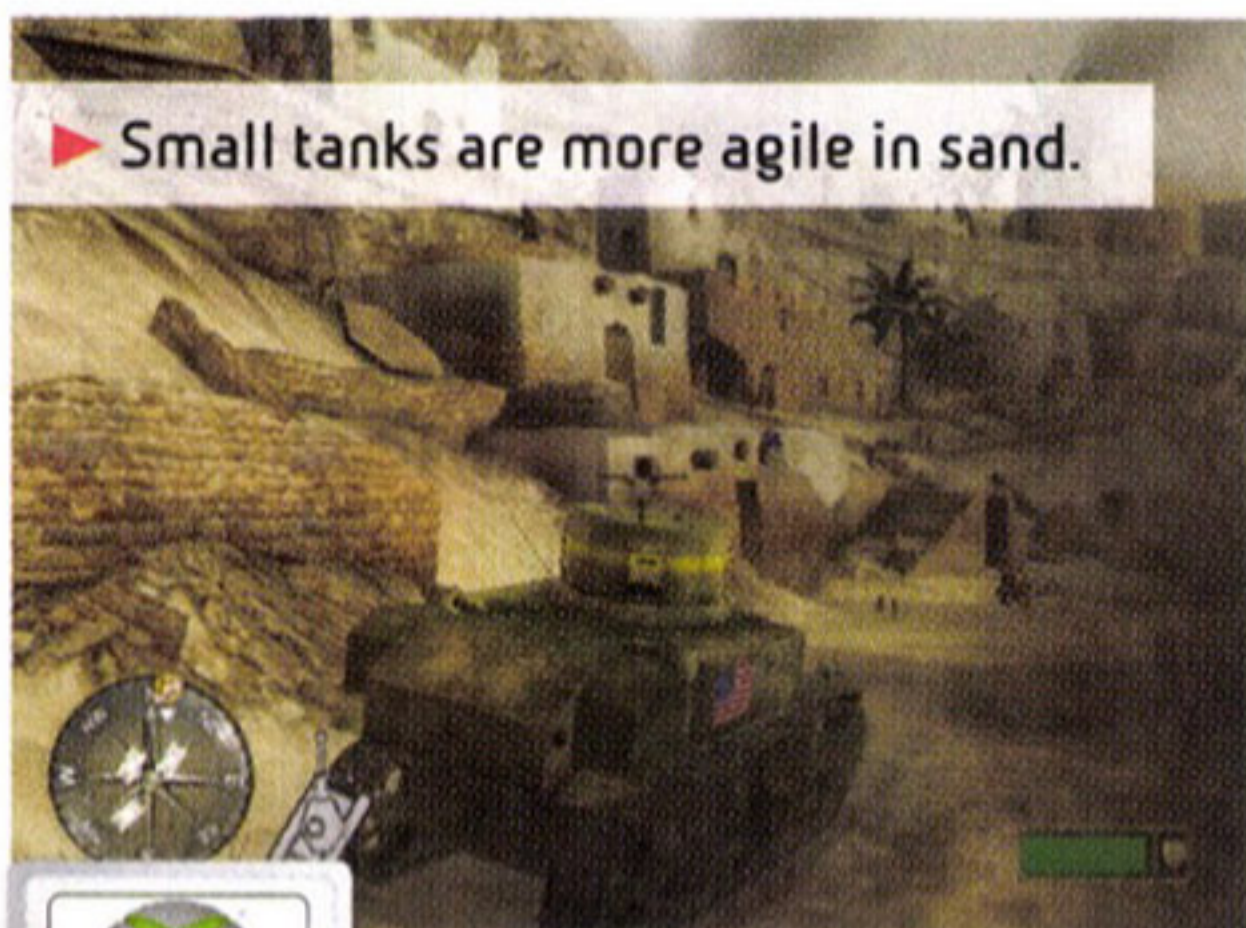
THE VERDICT

- + Now *this* is presentation, fellas. Watch and learn.
- + Bludgeons you with things to do, see, and try.
- Swapping characters = swapping controls.
- ? Ten elemental warriors and still only a 14-inch waist? TrimSpa, baby.

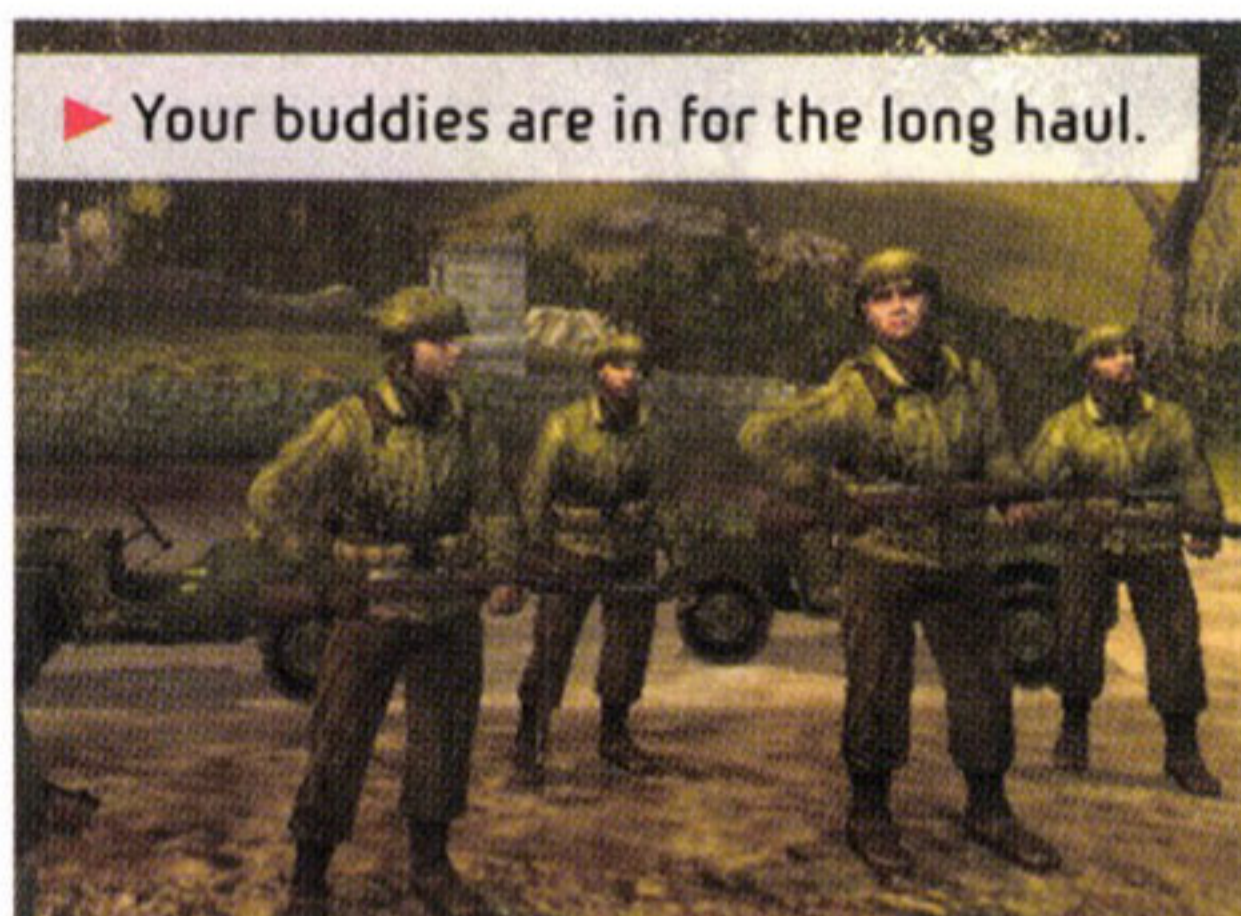


8.5

Publisher: ACTIVISION Developer: TREYARCH/GRAY MATTER ESRB: TEEN
 Live/Multiplayer: 16 on System Link or Live Selling Points: Bomber missions Backwards compatible: No



▶ Small tanks are more agile in sand.



▶ Your buddies are in for the long haul.



▶ Is it still road rage during war?

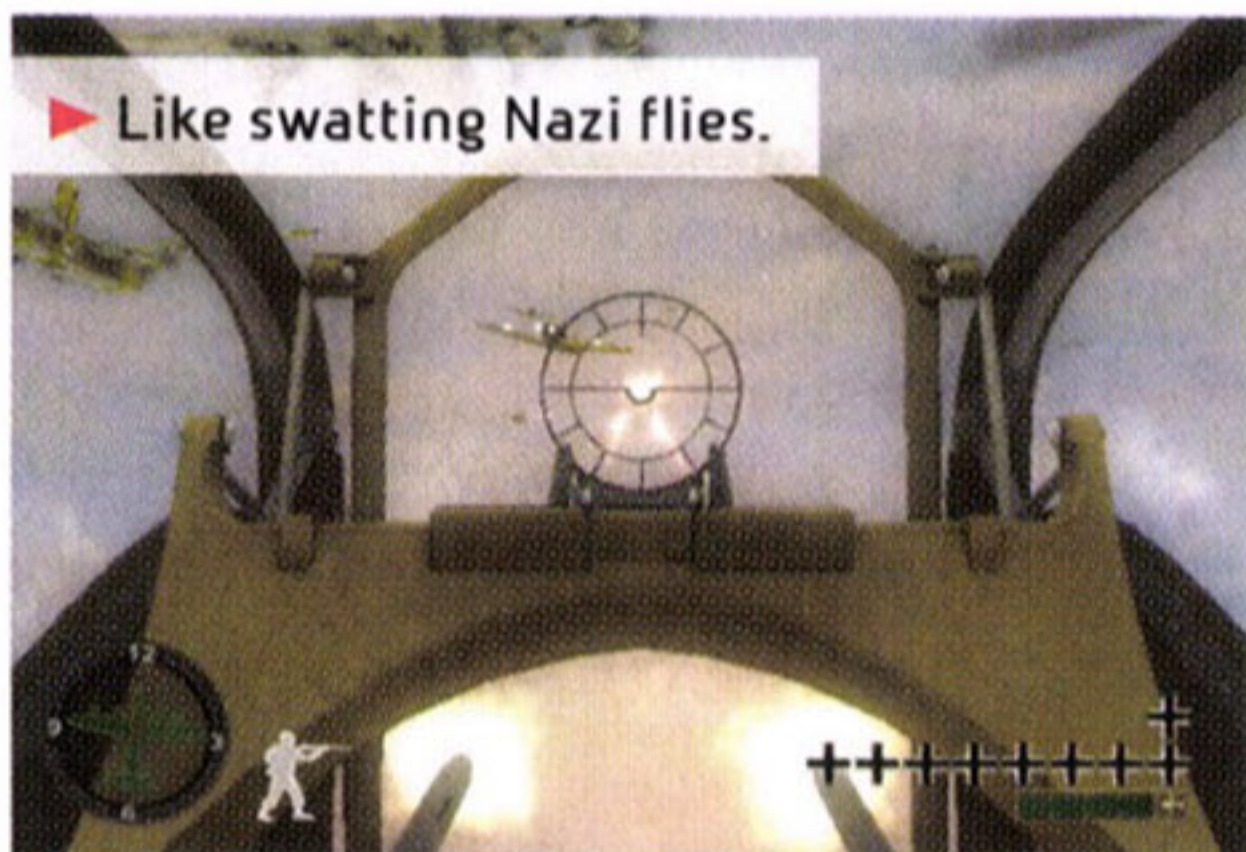


Call of Duty 2: Big Red One



Just when we were getting tired of WWII shooters...

Even though its big brother on the Xbox 360 looks flashier, *Call of Duty 2: Big Red One* is hardly overshadowed by that game. Not



▶ Like swatting Nazi flies.

only does *Big Red One* deliver the exciting brand of action-packed, big-moment gameplay we expect from the franchise, it does it for all of you who aren't cracking the piggy banks yet for an Xbox 360 and still want to play great Xbox games.

Content-wise the two games are completely different; *Big Red One* focuses on the storied U.S. Army regiment of the same name that fought its way through North Africa, Italy, D-Day and beyond. Of course it takes some poetic license to put an infantryman in the nose turret of a B-24 Liberator, but that vignette, along with some frantic tank missions, do a great job of breaking up the foot-soldier firefights.

The gameplay is great throughout, even if the graphics and A.I. don't quite live up to

the standard set by *Call of Duty 2* for 360. But it stands up really well among the existing Xbox library; it's a game any fan of first-person shooters should have in their library.

- Tom Price

THE VERDICT

- + Bomber mission.
- + Level design is fantastic despite constraints.
- + Obscure French and Italian rifles are a history lesson.
- ? Can you handle playing two *Call of Duty* games at the same time? Because you should.



Fable: The Lost Chapters

Gather 'round, children, for a slightly longer *Fable*



Though some uppity fanboys enjoyed hating on it for not delivering on creator Peter Molyneux's ambitious four-year-old promises, I loved *Fable*. Judged on its own merits, it was a charming, charismatic action RPG with enough quirky British humor and player freedom to easily last you multiple play-throughs.

A year later, *The Lost Chapters* bolsters the adventure with around four extra hours of new gameplay tacked onto the end. Taking place on the frosty planes of the Northern Wastes, the fresh content tests your mettle with a few tough new opponents in a handful of new quests, but doesn't back it up by offering many new items to covet.

On top of that, the technical glitches that bogged down the original have not been remedied, such as the frustrating targeting system that will have you hacking at allies on occasion, a chuggy framerate, and odd visual artifacts that make 480p display look awful (we weren't able to test 720p output on an

Xbox 360 before press time, but since it's just upscaling the source 480p, it's likely to still have the glitch).

Since your original save is incompatible with *TLC*, it's tough to endorse the new version for *Fable* veterans. But for first-time buyers, we can't recommend it enough. It's great fun to build your own good or evil hero, and with the *Lost Chapters* content, there are easily 20-plus hours of fun to be mined out of it. That may still be low by traditional RPG standards, but for \$20, you can't go wrong.

- Ryan McCaffrey



▶ Just get behind these all-new icy meanies in order to kick ass in the Northern Wastes.



▶ A ship will take you to *TLC*'s Northern Wastes, where you can earn new items like the chicken hat.

THE VERDICT

- + Game holds up great a year later.
- + Costs just \$20.
- Even at \$20, the modicum of new stuff isn't really worth it for *Fable* veterans.
- ? Why is the new last boss exponentially easier than the original end baddy?



Publisher: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS Developer: LIONHEAD ESRB: MATURE
 Live/Multiplayer: Aware Selling Points: Chicken kicking, chicken hats, being pure evil
 Backwards compatible: Yes

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We're talkin' GAMING HEAVEN!

Directions. Fill in the Mystery Word Grid with words going across that spell out the Mystery Word down the side. Hint: use the Mystery Word Clue.

In the future. For each contest there will be four more puzzles at \$2.00 each and one much tougher final at \$1.00 which will be sent to you by mail. You will have 3 weeks to solve each puzzle. We don't know how many will play but typically 55% will have the highest score possible score to Phase I, 43% to Phase II, 36% to Phase III, and 32% to Phase IV. Highest score in the final determines the winner. If players are still tied they will split the value of the grand prize they are playing for.

Mystery Word Grid

	H						M Y S T E R Y W O R D
		E					
P	I	N	C	H	W		
	R						
S							

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCHW PRESSK BLASTA WRECKD
 BREAKZ PUNCHS SPRAYC TURBOV
 STOMPT STANDR PRESSE DREAMO
 CRUSHI SCOREH SLANTL CHASEP

MYSTERY WORD CLUE:

WORLD RULERS HAVE IT AND IN THIS CONTEST YOU HAVE IT

Yes!

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CLIP AND MAIL

► The new close-up cams between plays are there to remind you how hard the artists have been working on sweat.



Madden NFL 06

Less filling! Tastes great!

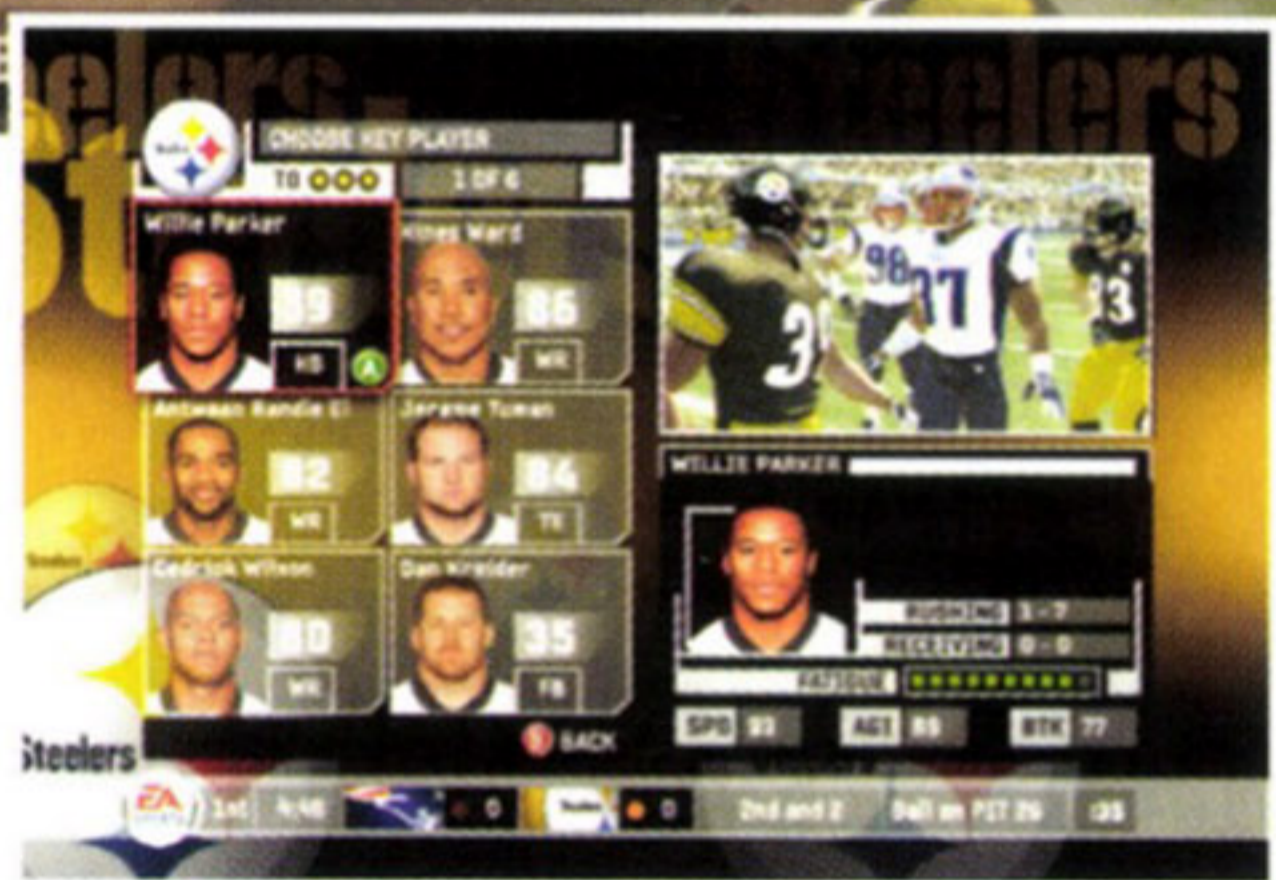
A debate can be held on whether or not *Madden NFL 06* for Xbox 360's graphics are amazing enough to make up for all the great features of prior *Madden* games that have been left out. Considering the sheer number of well-developed gameplay elements discarded to make room for sweaty-looking skin and moving eyeballs, we're going to vote for "less filling." Sorry, Bob Uecker.

We're not crushed that the NFL Superstar Mode isn't included; it was gimmicky and not that well executed in its current-gen outing. As for

Owner Mode, we know that's something for the more hardcore among us, but we have deeper football needs too. We'll miss the tournament, mini-camp modes, and Madden cards; they weren't central to the core gameplay but were definitely a fun diversion. Defensive playcalling was a bit complex for many, but I'd learned to rely on it.

But the excising of the ability to challenge plays in a game isn't just stupid, it's downright sacrilegious. You'll be about five minutes and two bad calls into your first Xbox 360 game of *Madden* when you begin to curse EA for this

That's how people love to experience football: on the radio!



► Calling plays by key players is a good improvement. But where's The Bus?

omission. Oh, did we mention John Madden and Al Michaels aren't doing the commentary anymore? A tinny radio-style announcer calls the play...because that's how people love to experience football: on the radio!

So what does EA give us? Franchise Mode. Advanced Franchise Mode, they call it, but it's not that different from before. A new, crappy kicking interface. New play-calling modes. And that leaves those next-gen graphics that don't look quite like the great leap forward that *Madden NFL 2002* was. Players look highly detailed up close, but that's not the view you use in-game.

In other words, a marginally brushed-up version of *Madden* visually, but stripped of everything that they've worked for over the years to advance the game's sense of realism and fun. Even Ryan Leaf wouldn't make a mental mistake that bad.

- Tom Price



► Defensive audible calling has taken an unfortunate step back for the franchise.

THE VERDICT

- + Metal flake helmets look darn near real.
- + Plays by key players are a realistic coaching tactic.
- No replay challenges? Are you serious?
- ? Do real-life quarterbacks look like such sweaty roid-rage freaks up close too?

Publisher: EA SPORTS Developer: EA TIBURON ESRB: EVERYONE Live/Multiplayer: 4 players, Content Download, Online Scoreboards
 Selling Points: Metal flake helmets, (virtual) beads of sweat



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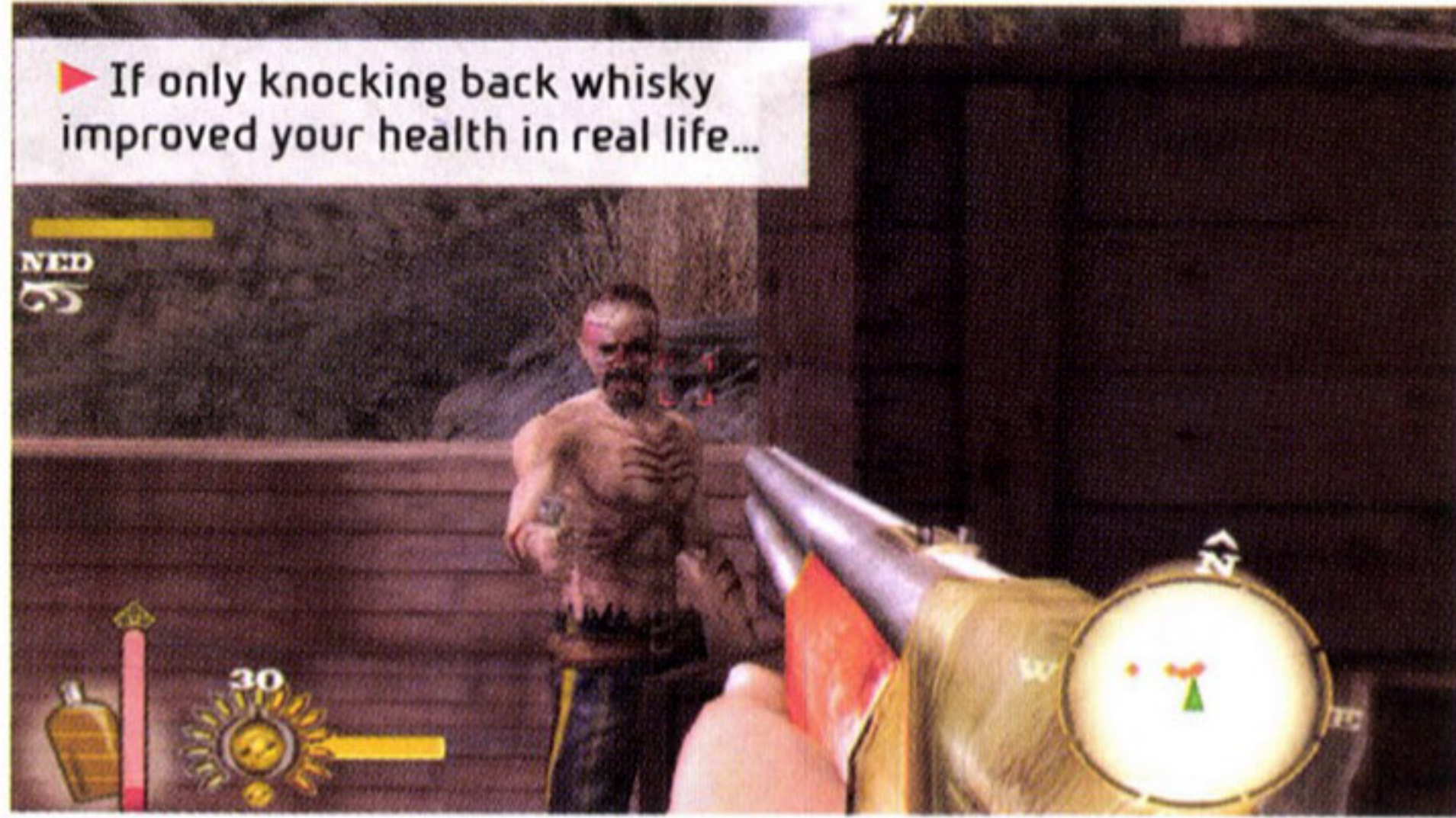
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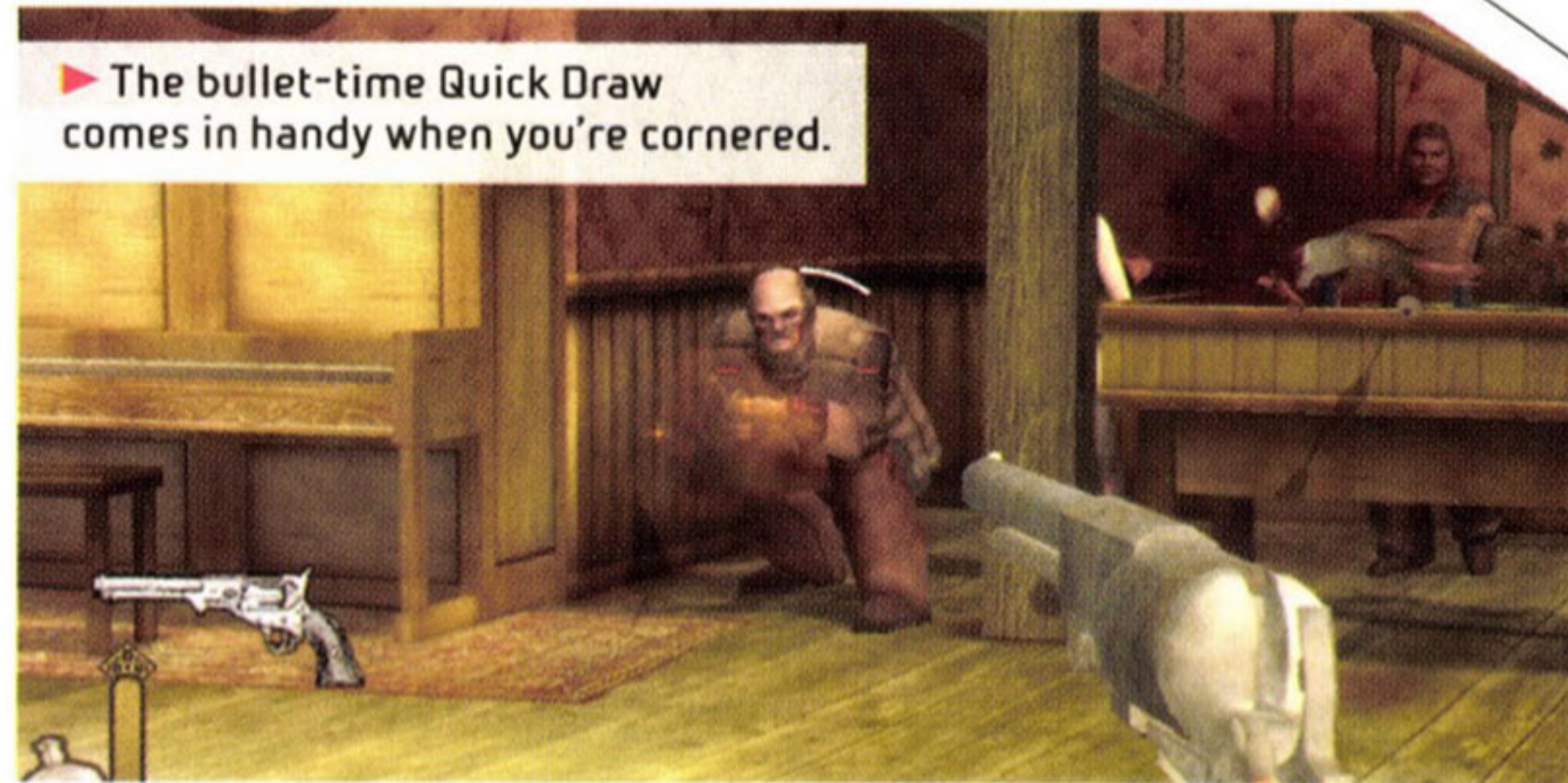
Jump in.



Publisher: ACTIVISION Developer: NEVERSOFT ESRB: MATURE Live/Multiplayer: Aware
Selling Points: Works in a 360 (Gun for Xbox isn't backwards compatible yet)



▶ If only knocking back whisky improved your health in real life...



▶ The bullet-time Quick Draw comes in handy when you're cornered.

Gun

Thar be snake oil here...

+ You haven't read this review before, but it might actually seem like you have. *Gun* on Xbox 360 is still a great game – it's just a great original Xbox game. Aside from a slight beauty boost that comes from playing in high-def, this "next-gen" version offers no discernible upgrades or improvements – beyond the extra \$10 in the price tag, that is.

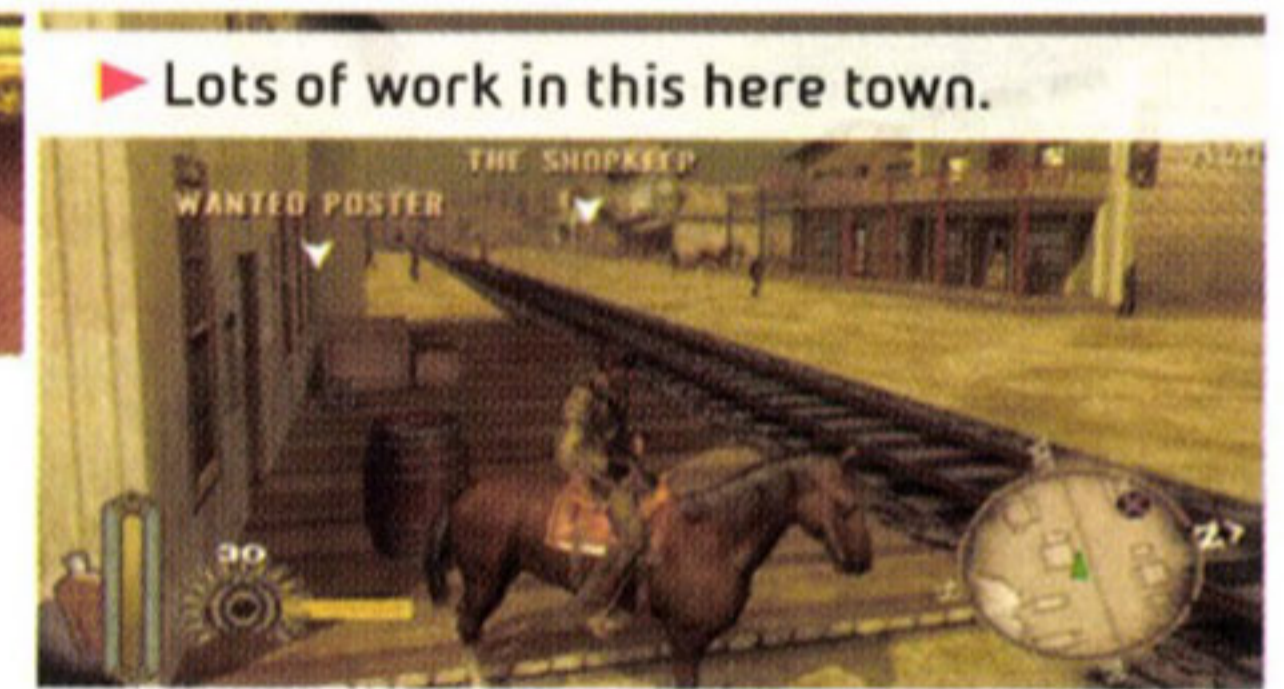
The only reason to buy this version is if an Xbox 360 is the lone gaming hardware in your house. If that's you, pay no heed to the current-gen graphics and dive into this fantastic Wild West shootout. The story of a hunter on the trail of his father's murderer is as compelling as any



quality Western movie, and the gunfights are sweetly tuned for maximum excitement. Along with using a nifty bullet time move, you can blaze away from horseback, taking on testy Apaches or bandits after your pony-express delivery, and much more. Peppered throughout the well-paced progression of the story are enjoyable side missions that range from ranching and hunting to poker and playing sheriff.

But if your original Xbox is still hooked up, save yourself \$10 and some dashed expectations, and play it on that console. It's a crying shame that *Gun* for 360 didn't get the next-gen love it deserves.

- Paul Curthoys



▶ Lots of work in this here town.

THE VERDICT

- + Still truly a great game.
- Bitterly disappointing to get an original Xbox game on a 360 disc.
- And it costs \$10 more!
- ? Could this be the start of a trend with Xbox ports? Vote with your wallet and stop it before it starts!

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE
7.5

Tony Hawk's American Wasteland

The king of the 900 pulls a 360

+ Take the Xbox version of *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*, ratchet the resolution up to 720p, and voila! You've got an Xbox 360 game, ready to ship...for better or worse.

The premise is all the same – taking the role of a young punk looking to create the ultimate Los Angeles skatepark with your scruffy pals. *THAW* is geared a bit toward franchise newbies since now-basic moves like reverts must be learned and unlocked in the course of the story. However, once you get going, you'll find this virtual Los Angeles to be extremely skateable – there are tons of lips, ramps, rails, and funky objects around town just waiting for you to session. The addition of a BMX bike is merely a distracting novelty in an otherwise satisfying, sprawling skate adventure, albeit one that feels like it's ready to collapse under its own weight. Skating, biking, graffiti, plus the new wallruns and flips...what's next, running your own skate shop? The bolt-on extensions to gameplay make it feel a bit too bloated.

And where's the 360-ness? Aside from the

720p boost and a minor controller layout change (the function of the White and Black buttons move to the shoulder bumpers), the two Xbox Live-enabled *THAWs* play and feel the same – no real next-gen flexing here. *THAW* ties into the new Achievements system (basically, as you hit story milestones, they're noted), but is that worth another \$10? Still, *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland* is your best choice for Xbox 360 skating, partly because it's your only choice at launch. It's fun, just not next-gen sparkly.

- Dan Amrich



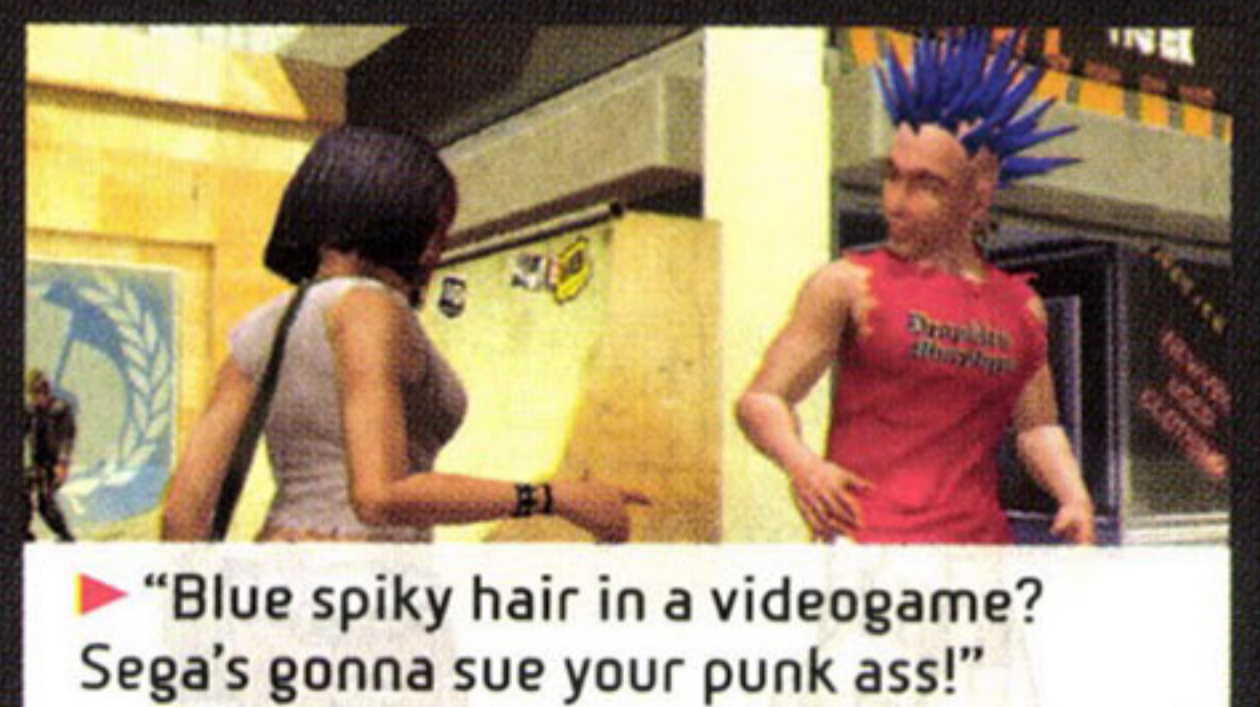
THE VERDICT

- + Xbox Live, 720p, and a proven fun franchise – all good stuff or a launch title.
- Doesn't leverage the expected power of the Xbox 360.
- Some textures look grody.
- ? Why no female skaters in story mode?

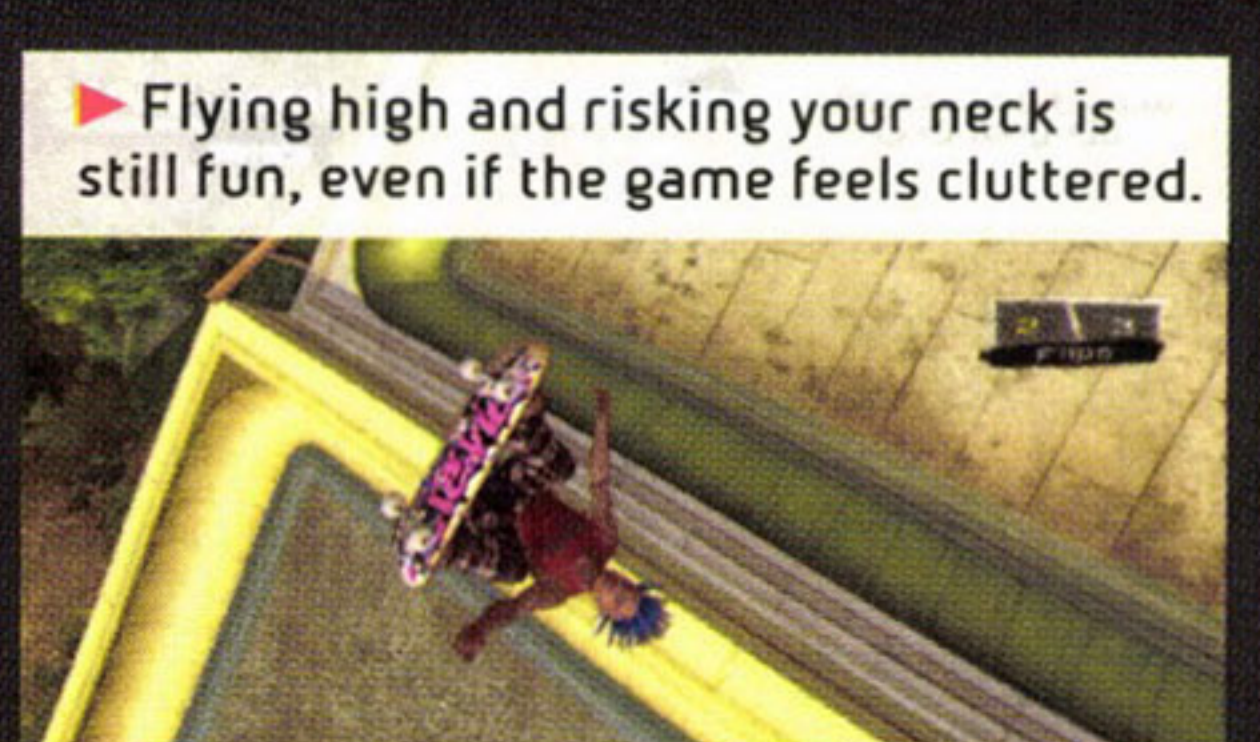
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE
7.5



▶ Loading times are masked by skateable tunnels, like this shopping mall.



▶ "Blue spiky hair in a videogame? Sega's gonna sue your punk ass!"



▶ Flying high and risking your neck is still fun, even if the game feels cluttered.

Publisher: ACTIVISION Developer: NEVERSOFT ESRB: TEEN Live/Multiplayer: 8 players via Live
Selling Points: Create-a-skater, -trick, -park, and -graphic; BMX tricks

REVENGE NEVER TASTED SO SWEET



MICHAEL MADSEN

KRISTANNA LOKEN

MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ and BEN KINGSLEY

BLOODRAYNE™

JAN 6

MATT DAVIS

GERALDINE CHAPLIN

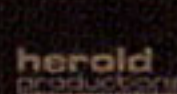
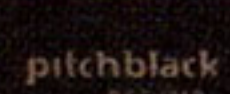
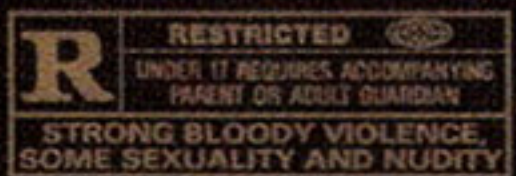
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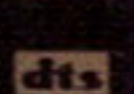
BILLY ZANE

MEAT LOAF ADAY

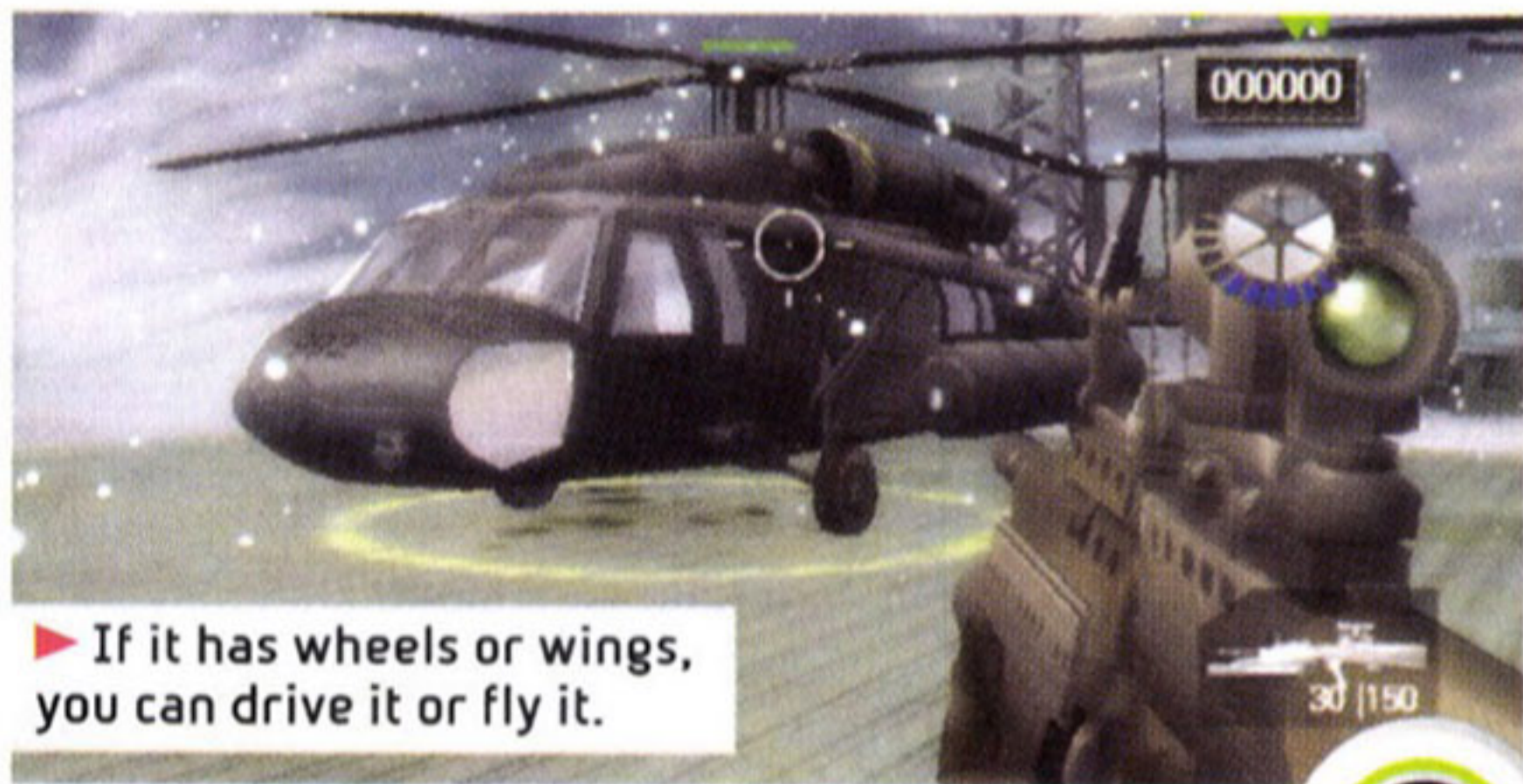
ROMAR AND BOLL KG PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH HEROLD PRODUCTIONS AND PITCHBLACK PICTURES AN UWE BOLL FILM "BLOODRAYNE" KRISTANNA LOKEN MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ MICHAEL MADSEN MATT DAVIS GERALDINE CHAPLIN WILL SANDERSON UDO KIER BILLY ZANE MEAT LOAF ADAY AND BEN KINGSLEY MUSIC BY HENNING LOHNER CASTING BY MAUREEN WEBB PRODUCTION DESIGNER JAMES STEUART FILM EDITOR DAVID RICHARDSON DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MATHIAS NEUMANN, BVK CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JONATHAN SHORE CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MORRIS SUTTON JESSE SUTTON EXECUTIVE PRODUCER WOLFGANG HEROLD BASED ON THE MALIBU VIDEO GAME ENTITLED "BLOODRAYNE"



PRODUCED BY DANIEL CLARKE SHAWN WILLIAMSON WRITTEN BY GUINEVERE TURNER PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY UWE BOLL



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▶ If it has wheels or wings, you can drive it or fly it.



▶ Scoring well in single-player ups your military rank.

Battlefield 2: Modern Combat

Hitchin' a ride to Fragtown



Since *Halo*, only *Battlefield* (for PC) has upped the ante for first-person shooters that mix in player-controllable vehicles. Though the Xbox sequel doesn't stand up to the brilliantly

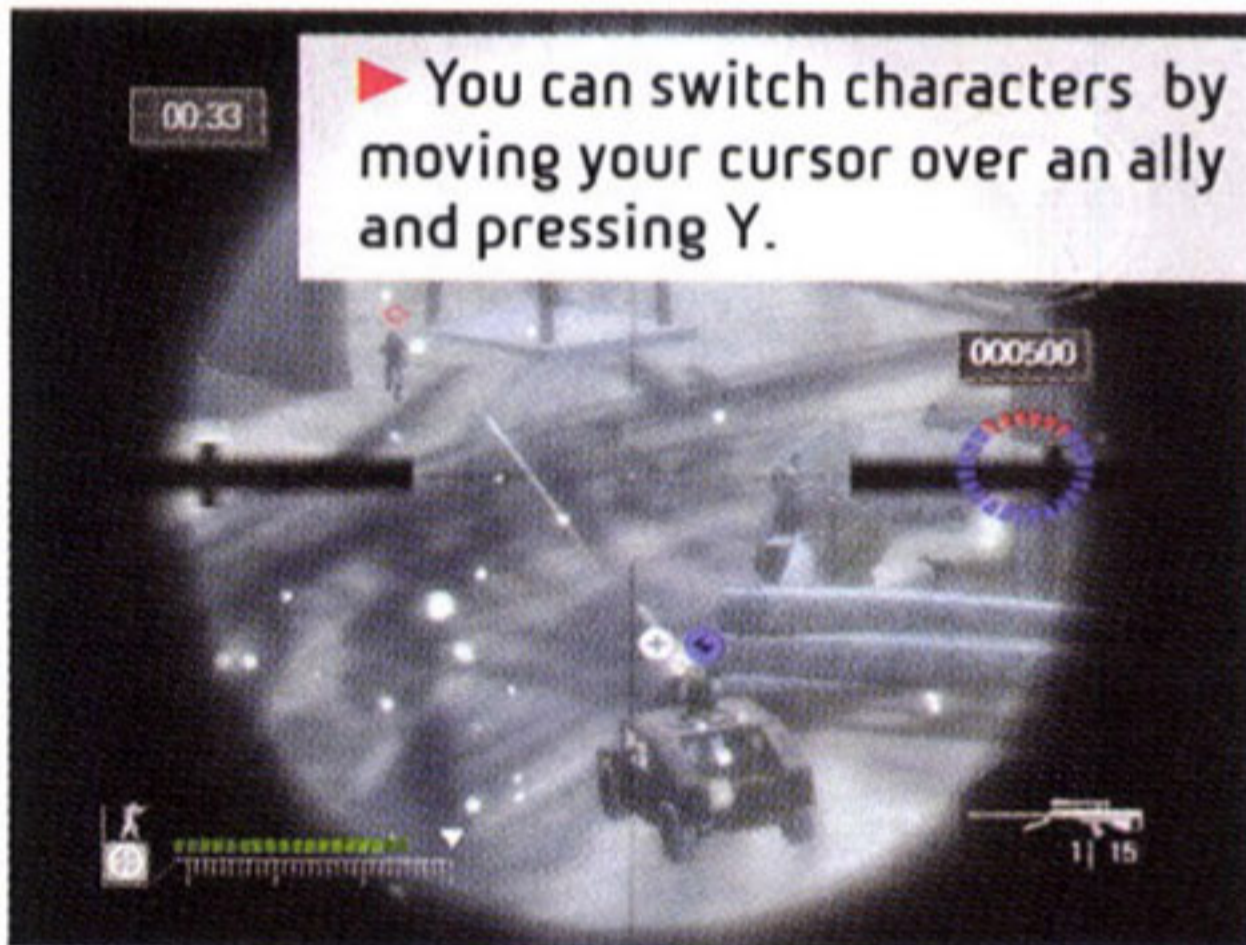
varied and playable Windows version, it does offer the solid, vehicle-heavy, large-scale warfare that our beloved platform has been lacking.

By that we mean it's packing 24-player class-based online action where you can get around on foot, by helicopter, in a jeep, or via two dozen other vehicles you'd find on a modern battlefield. And it does it all on dedicated servers, meaning you'll never have to start a match and wait for it to fill up or, alternatively, whine about being owned by a player because he's the host.

A beefy single-player campaign provides an offline option with short but plentiful missions, often lasting between five and 15 minutes. The storyline is a throwaway, but the solo adventures are varied and give you a chance to get acquainted with the vehicles and weapons before you head online.

Unfortunately, the controls are not as tight as you want when your virtual life is on the line, the graphics are sub-par, and the game lacks System Link support, but the 12-on-12 online combat that is here is a unique, welcome addition to the Xbox library.

- Ryan McCaffrey



▶ You can switch characters by moving your cursor over an ally and pressing Y.

THE VERDICT

- + Loads o' players and vehicles alike make for enjoyable madness on these battlefields.
- Can't do dedicated servers.
- Wonky controls.
- ? Where the heck is the System Link option for LAN parties?



Shadow the Hedgehog

Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the...edge!

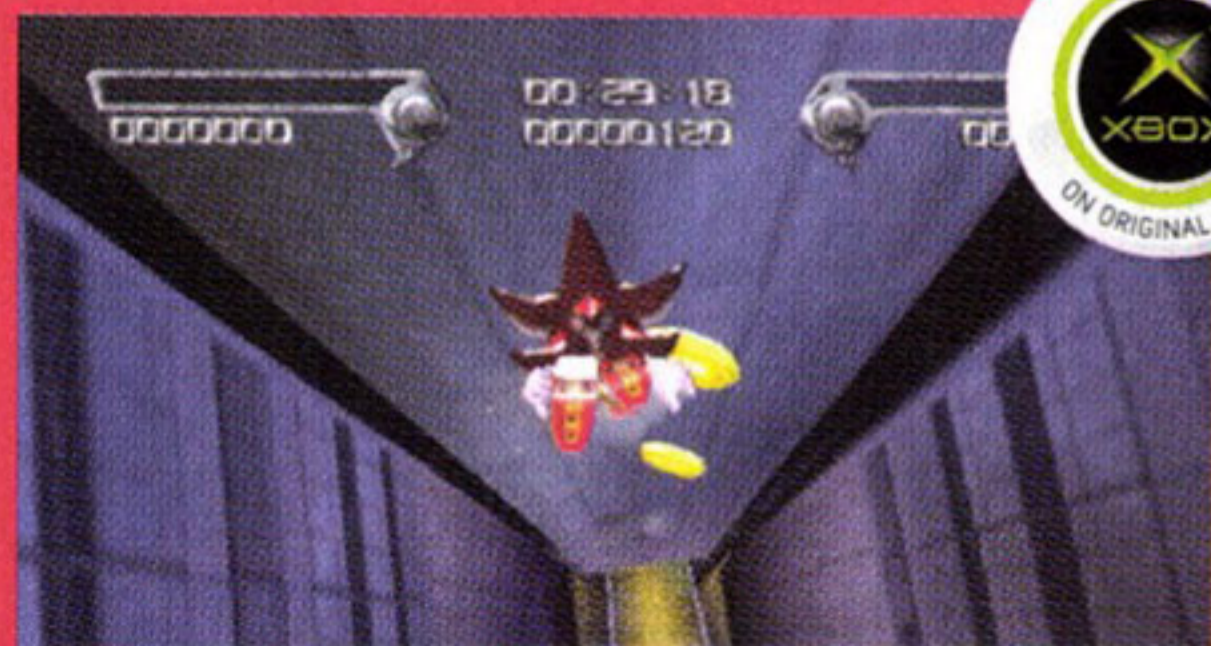
It's easy to forget that Sonic the Hedgehog was once a sacred videogame character like Mario, but an excess of spinoffs and superfluous collections have diluted the spiky-haired platform star to near cornball status.

You can count the new *Shadow the*

Hedgehog as one of those games that drags the franchise down. Admittedly, it focuses on one of the cooler characters from the universe, Shadow, but it nonetheless takes the weird approach of adding guns to the traditional platforming mix for more of an "edge." In truth, the guns are pointless, as is the whole good/evil balance that helps you charge up and earn bonuses. Spending time on a control system that players don't have to fight and addressing a clunker camera format would have paid dividends in the gameplay.

Instead, it's hard to enjoy the action because of frustrating core gameplay problems that overshadow the edgy urban setting and make us long for past games in the series. Mom, you didn't toss our Saturn, did you?

- Tom Price



▶ Flying around, collecting rings, all fine. Shooting up the place? Eh.



▶ Despite the Doom-y name, this guy is actually a friend.

THE VERDICT

- + All the requisite Sonic cameos are here.
- Terrible camera controls.
- Really gooshy controls.
- ? Why didn't they just go all the way with the gunplay and make it a full-on shooter? You could bleed gold rings when shot...



Publisher: SEGA Developer: SEGA ESRB: EVERYONE 10+ Live/Multiplayer: None Selling Points: A more badass-looking hedgehog Backwards compatible: Yes

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COMBO x2 (+0)

OVERTAKE 175

► Wow, my Ferrari looks exactly like this from the driver's sea... stop laughing at me, dammit!



Project Gotham Racing 3

Life looks sweet in this fast lane



Quick, what's the fastest way to be positive every penny spent on your brand new Xbox 360 was worth it? The speediest answer to that question and the speediest game are *Project Gotham Racing 3* – it's handily the belle of the 360 launch ball, and you'll find yourself dazzled by everything from its astounding in-car view to its rich Live support, including the badass Gotham TV (see sidebar below).

But first, that in-car view – try it, even if (like me) you never race in first-person. It'll blow you back in your chair like those old Maxell ads from the '80s. Windshield smudges refract the light with eerie realism, the engine thunders magnificently, and meticulously rendered cockpits reproduce every tiny detail from working gauges to side mirrors that crumple after one of your frequent brushes with the wall (even

then, they still reflect an image – a crazy, tilted one of the sky, which is almost cooler). Yes, it's much tougher to perform from this view, but the visceral rush of realism that results, especially

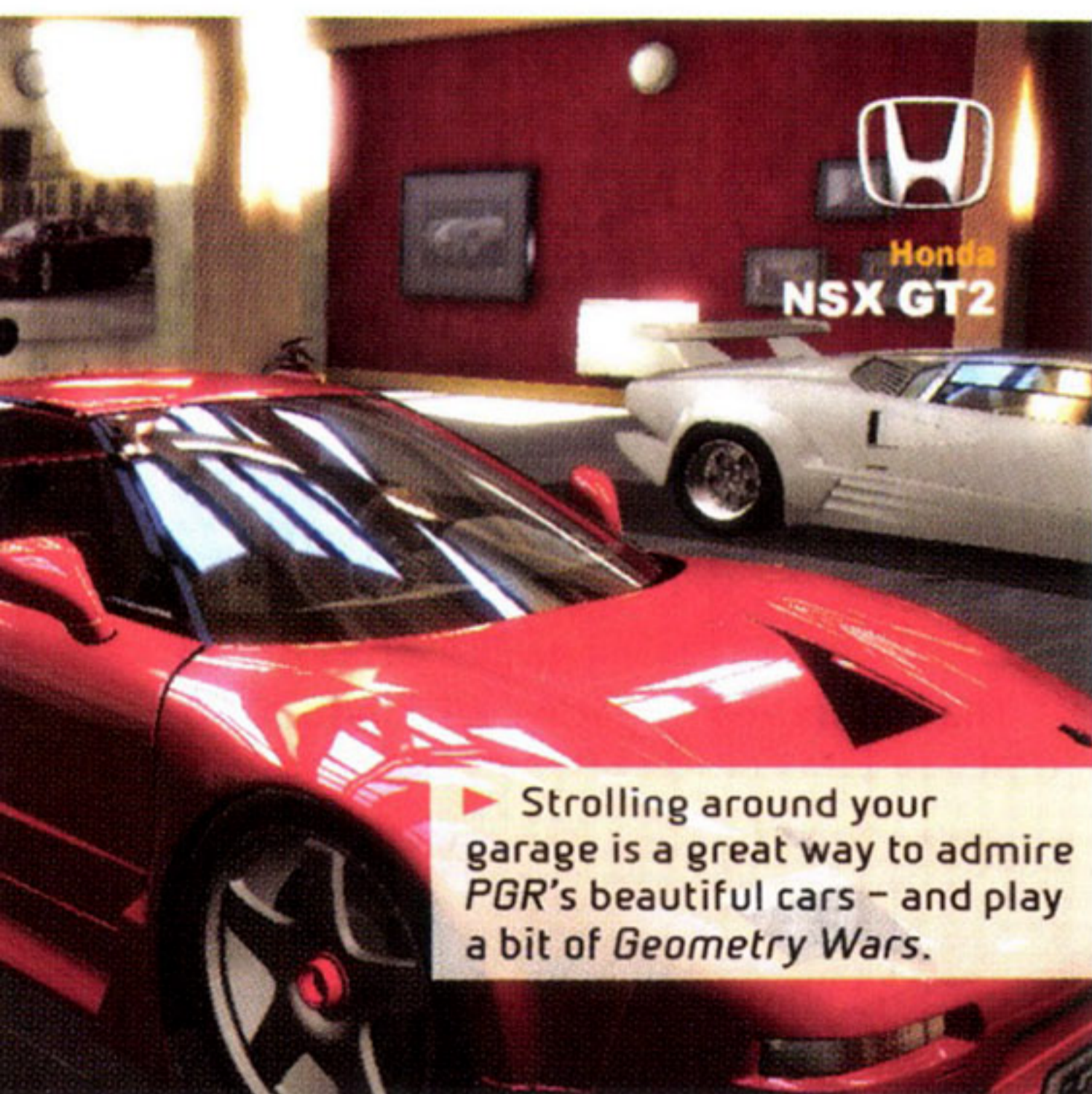
“You gotta love a game that leaves Honda Civics where they belong and focuses on the wet dreams of a *Road & Track* editor.”

in cars you can only dream of ever driving, is incredibly rewarding.

No matter what perspective you play from, the graphics where in all of us will be thrilled with the gorgeously modeled cars and the lush scenery lining the tracks. You gotta love a game that leaves Honda Civics where they belong and focuses on the wet dreams of a *Road & Track* editor. Lamborghinis, Ferraris, Ford GTs, McLarens, and a long, drool-dampened list of other exotics and supercars are your playthings, and the well-structured Career Mode provides a rich stomping ground. Playing offline, you'll tackle a variety of race types – cone courses, one-on-ones, regular circuits, and much more – and five levels of difficulty mean gamers of all stripes can find a home, though the default Medium is a bit too easy for experienced drivers. Or you can hit Live and trade paint with your



Publisher: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS Developer: BIZARRE CREATIONS ESRB: EVERYONE 10+ Live/Multiplayer: 2 on split screen, 8 on Live or System Link
 Selling Points: Glorious cars, glorious graphics, and the chance to appear on Gotham TV. Admire all that purtiness in the fantastic photo mode.



▶ Strolling around your garage is a great way to admire PGR's beautiful cars – and play a bit of *Geometry Wars*.



▶ Powersliding through turns racks up the kudos big time.

fellow humans to earn cash and cred in a series of events and challenges.

Across the board, the gameplay style finds a sweet spot between arcade and sim – you have to brake heavily and smartly for corners, and the tracks are often unforgiving and narrow to the point of claustrophobia. But once you learn to drift like a madman, you're an honorary Andretti.

So if it's all so marvelous, what keeps it from earning an even higher score? A slew of little problems accumulate without killing the overall thrills. Foremost among them is location, location, location – *PGR3*'s tracks only span four cities (New York, London, Tokyo, and Las Vegas) and the famous Nürburgring course in Germany, so the scenery gets too familiar too fast. Surprisingly, a weird, recurring bug (in the boxed copy!) pops up too – infrequently, one of the AI cars will flip out, park unmoving for the remainder of the race, and become permeable as though it were a ghost car. It doesn't junk up the fun, but it sure is lame. The limited damage modeling, substantial load times, and eight-player limit in online races also don't feel very 360.

None of these hiccups hamper the fun in a serious way – they're more like bad smudges on these gleaming rides. Still, *PGR3* is a launch title, and when you look back at the games that we were all thrilled to play on our brand-spanking-new Xboxs and PS2s, it's even more impressive. *PGR3* isn't the kind of immortal classic you'll be playing the whole time your 360 is connected to your TV, but it's a fine racing game, and you'll gladly spend hours in its driver's seat.

– Paul Curthoys



Gotham TV

Is watching other people play a game fascinating enough to warrant its own TV-like channel on Live? In a word, yes. Not only is it a great way to learn from the masters (helped me conquer a turn in New York I couldn't for the life of me figure out), it's the ultimate wanna-be-a-rock-star goal to aim for. You can watch (and mock) your buddies on the Friends Channel, or gape at the 133t skill on display on the Heroes Channel – someday, maybe, even drive there yourself. While you watch, a ticker crawls past on the bottom, keeping you updated on the all the latest news. Sweet.



THE VERDICT

- + Eye-popping graphics, especially the in-car view.
- + Fun career mode.
- More cities and tracks to race around, please.
- ? After all this practice, when do I get to drive a real Lamborghini? Wait, don't shatter my illusions...



Publisher: ATARI Developer: SHINY ENTERTAINMENT ESRB: TEEN Live/Multiplayer: None Selling Points: 480p, Dolby 5.1, alternate ending to movie trilogy Backwards compatible: No



► Kick, punch - it's all in the mind.



The Matrix: Path of Neo

Turns out the messiah of The Matrix is...only human

Whether you liked how *The Matrix* film trilogy evolved or not, most sci-fi fans can agree on one thing: *Enter the Matrix* sucked. *Path of Neo* is the act of contrition. Apology accepted...for the most part.

PoN gives us what we wanted in the first place: the chance to be The One. You control Neo's rise from cubicle hacker to messiah, with ample opportunity to kick, shoot, run up walls, and destroy everything in a bid for freedom. Along the way, you replay key moments from all three films and explore some "extended mythology" - that is, "filler."

Luckily, most of that filler is frenzied fighting. Use linkable combo attacks to pop a guy into the air with kung fu, then finish him off with a few shotgun rounds, all while using "Focus" to

slow down the action, increase accuracy, switch between multiple targets, and dodge bullets. It's absolutely thrilling...when it works.

But the glitches that plague *Path of Neo* should have been solved years ago: An awkward camera, a misbehaving targeting system, and abrupt interruptions by loading screens (this actually happened: pull trigger, see loading screen, fire). These problems aren't the only relics; the much-hyped alternate ending to Neo's saga, created by the movie-making Wachowskis just for *PoN*, is straight out of 1995, too.

Frequent use of motion blur muddies the visuals, but you cannot deny the power of *Matrix* melee combat. It's worth putting up with the game's frustrating failures for the chance to defeat 100 Agent Smiths.

- Dan Amrich



► The frustrating targeting system sometimes selects non-threatening objects.



► The first movie's plot goes to about midway point of the game.

THE VERDICT

- + Matrix Combat!
- Camera, targeting, and loading screens.
- Big surprise ending is not really satisfying.
- ? Why do you press a button to activate stealthy "link up" mode, but move a stick to deactivate it?



Splat Magazine Renegade Paintball

So sad that we can't even bring ourselves to make the obvious Splat pun...

Maybe it should be considered a plus that *Splat* is, unfortunately, fairly accurate to the paintballing experience - namely, you can't hit the broad side of a barn if you were locked inside it. While the sound effects are totally legitimate (especially the soft dribbling of



► You can lob your shots over obstacles...or nothing at all.



► Seeing this hit animation is extremely rare with the initially available markers.

reloading), they can't possibly make up for the contrived hair-metal soundtrack.

The textures are positively shameful for an Xbox title, but it's easy to see why when one considers that the game is only 400MB in size (a standard Xbox disc can hold upwards of 4GB). Sadly, this puts *Renegade Paintball* at a tenth the size of your average

game, and it shows in every bland level and laggy (even in single-player) character warp. Every single thing about this game screams sub-par design on a level that would make even the most hardcore paintball fan weep CO2. Seriously, save your cash.

- Gabe Graziani

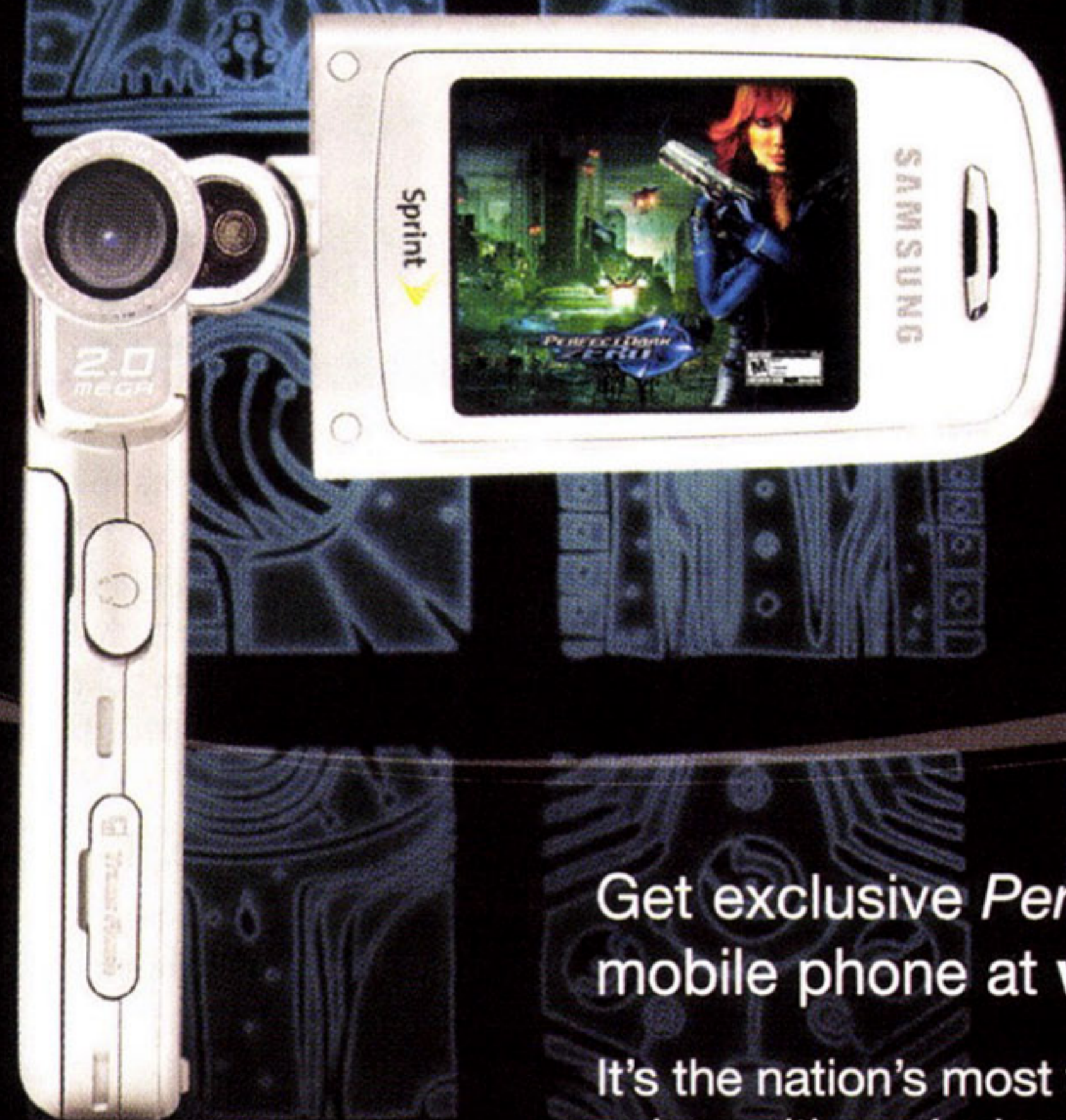
THE VERDICT

- Just a visually ugly game, through and through.
- Incredibly boring interface utilizing what appear to be animated gifs.
- 3V3RYoN3ZZ N4M3 IZ 1337.
- ? In what other sport is a 13-year-old boy considered a star athlete?



Publisher: GLOBAL STAR SOFTWARE Developer: CAT DADDY ESRB: TEEN Live/Multiplayer: 7-on-7 multiplayer via Xbox Live or System Link, 2 on split screen Selling Points: Cheaper than a paintball marker? Backwards compatible: Yes

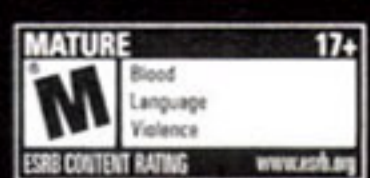
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▶ The vehicle parts should be exciting, but they mostly just drag on.

Quake 4

We'll always remember Michael Jordan as a Bull, too

It's impossible (and even sacrilegious) to deny *Quake's* place in the first-person shooter canon. For genre zealots like me, it's a historic series, having introduced us to a fully 3D world, brought Internet multiplayer into public consciousness, and debuted colored lighting (yes, there was a time when all lights in FPS's were white). But playing *Quake 4* is a lot like seeing Michael Jordan in a Wizards jersey: It's still capable of delivering greatness here and there, but it's mostly just a mediocre shadow of its former legendary self.

The experience begins promisingly enough. As a decorated Marine in a future war for humanity's survival against the Borg-like Strogg on their home planet of Stroggos, you're thrown promptly into the action after your squad's dropship crash-lands. Cutting through wave after

wave of big Strogg, bigger Strogg, and multi-story Strogg bosses with the classic *Quake* arsenal (including signature sidearms like the nailgun, railgun, and lightning gun), the *Quake 4* campaign is mostly a corridor crawl, but developer Raven does make an effort to keep the pace brisk and action fresh.

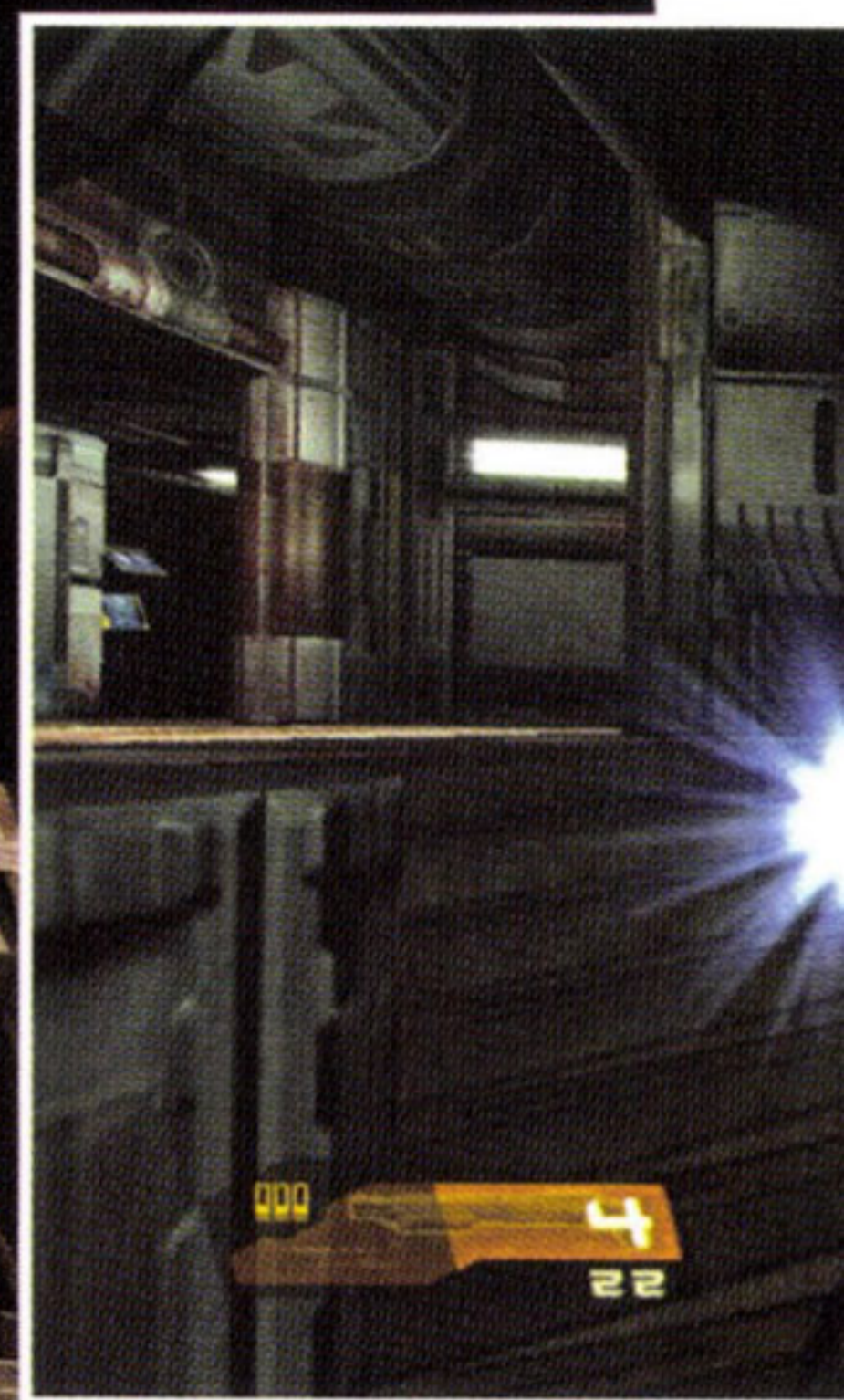
For instance, the majority of the game's first act has you fighting alongside fellow Marines, including medics and technicians who will replenish your health and armor when you ask (i.e., when you press B to "use" them). Obviously, then, it's in your best interest to keep them out of harm's way, which builds an element of camaraderie into the adventure. You'll also make a couple of visits to your mobile ship headquarters, where you can wander semi-freely, touring the ship and talking to fellow soldiers.

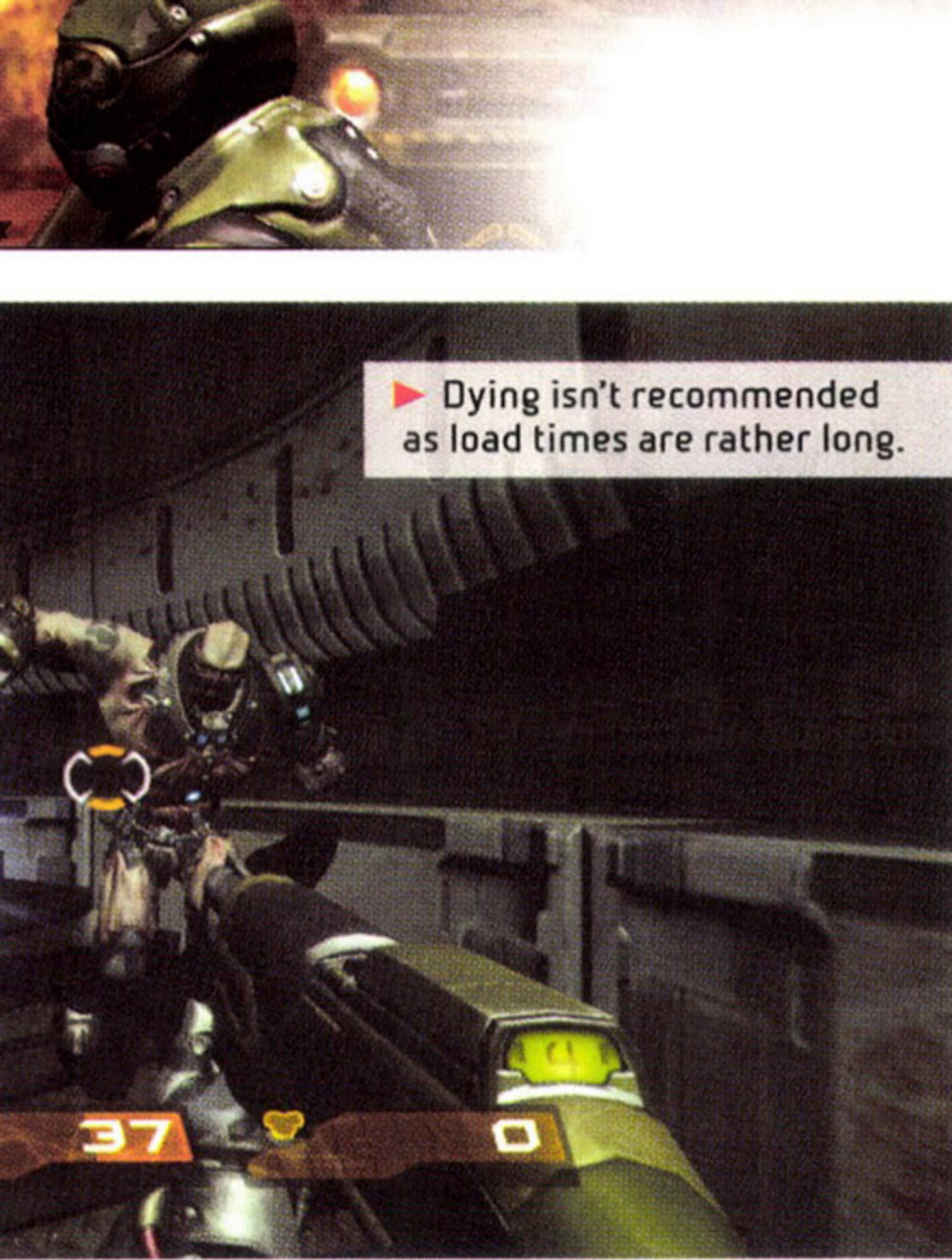
But then the big plot twist happens: You get turned into a half-Strogg (don't grumble, the marketing campaign has already given that away). Unfortunately, the body-altering change doesn't impact the game like it could or should. You simply run faster and get 125 health instead of 100. And your buddies don't really seem to mind that you're one of *them*. In fact, they don't really treat you much differently at all. Furthermore, gameplay thereafter recedes into a tedious room-clearing shooter. All of the squad play disappears, and the boss fights are underwhelming and mostly predictable.

Further twisting the blade in this wound is the framerate. To be kind, it's choppy. It rarely touches 30 frames per second, usually hovering

And Quake II, Too!

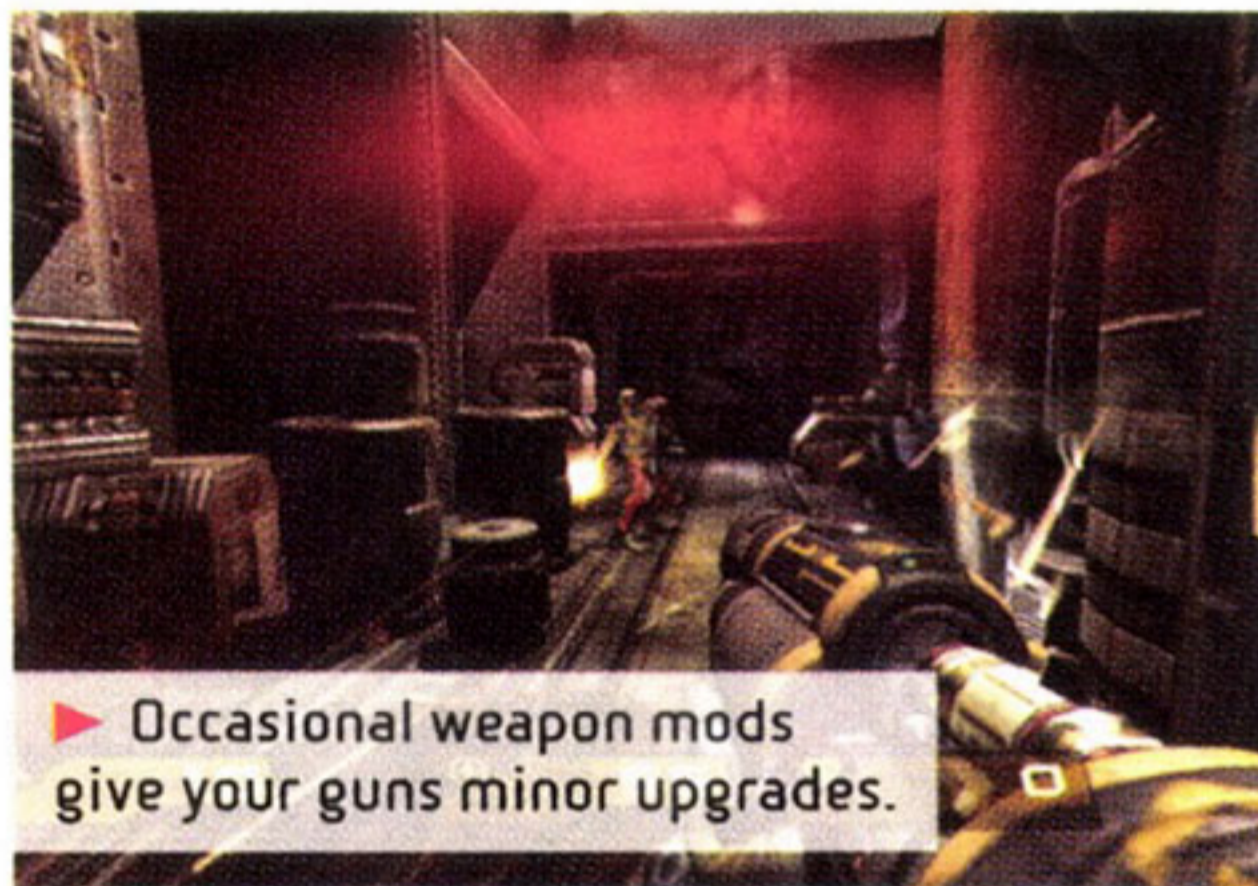
As *Quake 4* picks up where *Quake II's* storyline leaves off, the folks at id were kind enough to include the full version of the 1997 classic, complete with four-player split-screen deathmatch support. And while we can understand the lack of Xbox Live support, some System Link love would've been nice. The campaign runs at a locked 60 frames per second, as you'd expect, but aiming is a bit twitchy, as *Quake II* was clearly never intended to be played on a gamepad. Still, you can't argue with a free game, and a good one at that.





▶ Dying isn't recommended as load times are rather long.

"It's mostly just a mediocre shadow of its former legendary self."



▶ Occasional weapon mods give your guns minor upgrades.

somewhere in the 20s and turning into a slideshow in chaotic battles. For a twitch action game, this is unforgivable. The Xbox 360 can do better. At least multiplayer, with its super-fast *Quake III*-style deathmatch, is smooth and good for some fun shootouts.

So like *His Airness*, *Quake* will forever hold a special place in our hearts, having paved the way for the plethora of great shooters that we all enjoy today. But *Quake 4* is evidence that just having the *Quake* name alone isn't good enough anymore.

- Ryan McCaffrey

THE VERDICT

- + Fun multiplayer.
- Single-player just goes through the motions.
- Unacceptable framerate, especially for Xbox 360.
- ? Why does your Commanding Officer always get captured and converted into an enemy?



Taito Legends

"Legends" is kind of a strong word

Maybe it's because this is the umpteenth retro arcade collection to come out this year for the Xbox, or maybe I'm just getting cranky in my old age, but seriously, who needs to play *Space Invaders* anymore? I mean, graphics and gameplay-wise, it's dull as dishwater. Do we still need to play the games we were playing 20 years ago? Haven't we advanced as an industry? As a people?!

Maybe I'm grumpy because the lineup in *Taito Legends* is so unspectacular. Aside from the aforementioned *Space Invaders* and a couple of nostalgic favorites like *Jungle Hunt* and *Operation Wolf* (how bad do I want an Uzi controller for the authentic experience?), this collection is land-filled out with a bunch of games you probably don't remember, and if you do, you probably had more fun with the original arcade games they were knocking off. Unless your taste in classics runs on the obscure side (hello, *Super Qix*), *Taito Legends* might be best left in the vault.

- Tom Price



▶ *Pitfall* rip-off? I'm sure I have no idea what you mean.

THE VERDICT

- + *Jungle Hunt*.
- + *Elevator Action*.
- *Tube It*.
- ? Doesn't everyone who wants to play classic games already have them all on MAME (on your PC, of course - modding your Xbox is wrong!)?

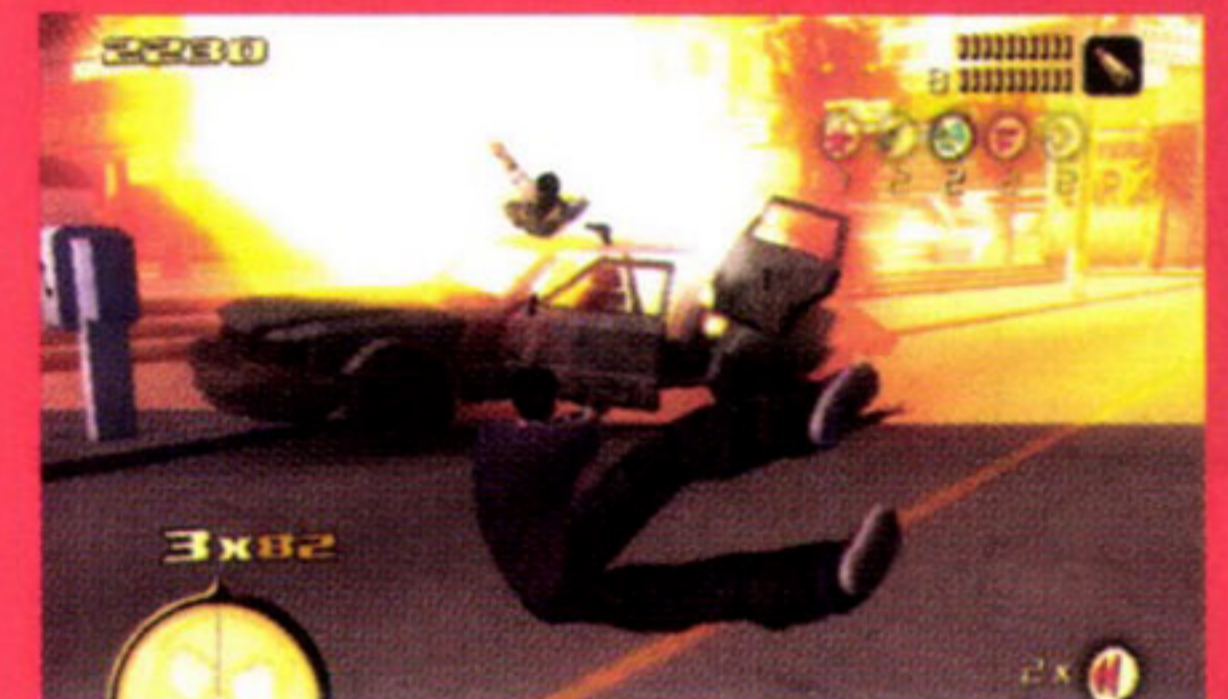


Total Overdose

El Thefto Auto Grande-o Ripoff-o

What's "*Grand Theft Auto* ripoff" in Spanish? The phrase above may be silly, but it's absolutely appropriate. After all, when *Total Overdose* decided to apply the open-world *GTA* formula to Mexico's drug underworld, something got lost in translation.

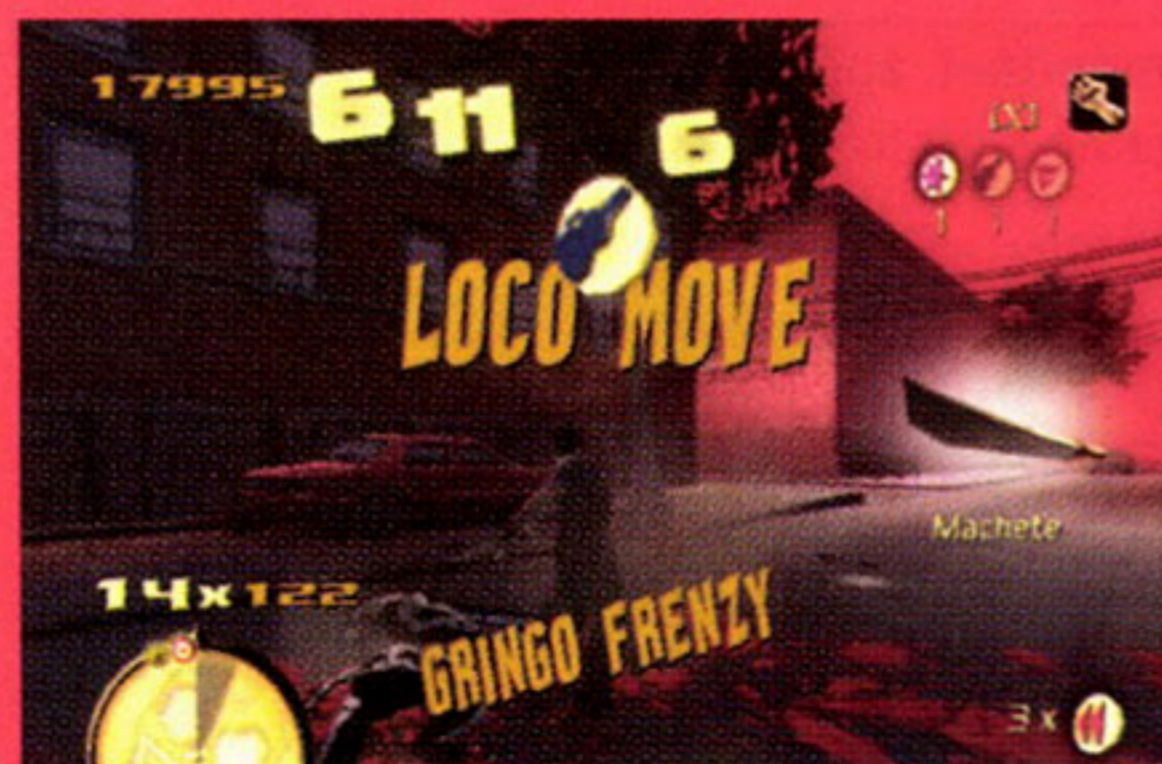
If you can stomach the convoluted plot involving an injured DEA agent who sends his convict twin brother to rescue their father, you'll find a free-roaming action/adventure that lacks the polish of its inspiration. You'll hijack cars, perform ramp stunts, and pick up a skull icon to go on a temporary killing spree - all with over-the-top, self-aware splattery violence. Combine some obvious visual bugs with a button-happy combat system wherein



▶ *TO's* slow-mo, acrobatic gun battles steal heavily from *Max Payne*...but they look cool.

Max Payne meets Antonio Banderas, and olé! You've got a cracked combo plate that's just fun (and wickedly funny) enough to make it worth a rental - but *es mejor para rentar, no comprar* ('tis better to rent than buy). You'll "muchas gracias" us later.

- Dan Amrich



▶ With a special power-up, you can rewind time *Blinx*-style, even in a *Day of the Dead* rampage.

THE VERDICT

- + Sick sense of humor.
- So derivative it's not funny.
- Combat system uses lots of buttons awkwardly.
- ? There's a special move involving machine guns in guitar cases called "El Mariachi" - can't Robert Rodriguez sue?





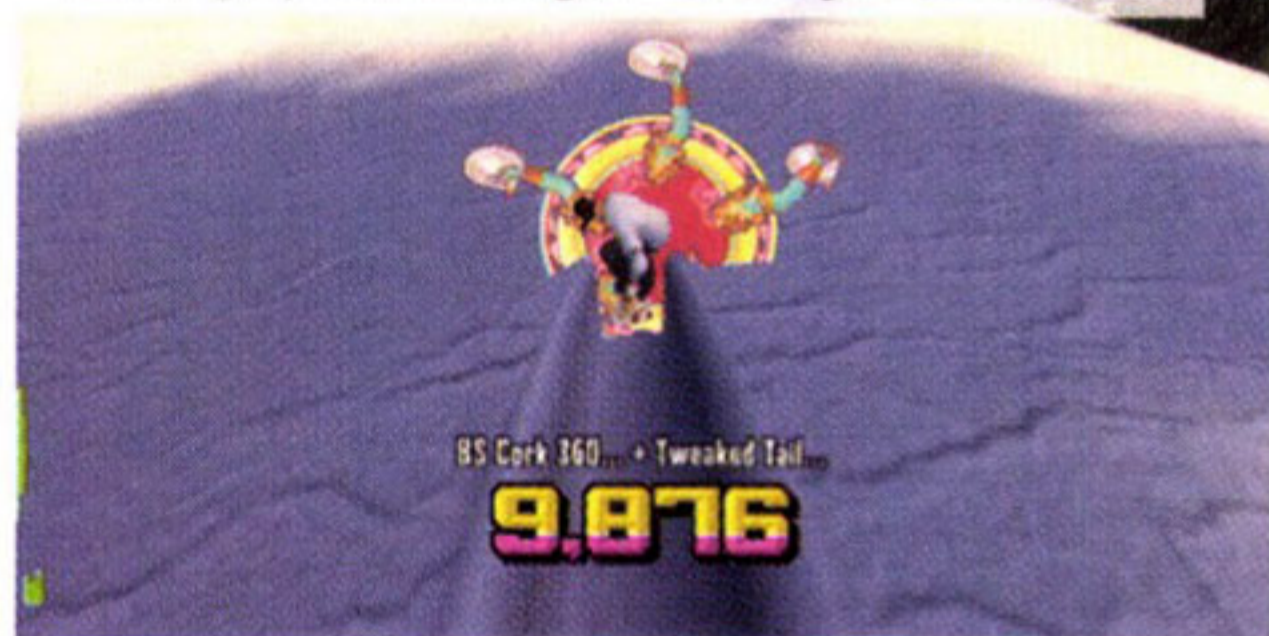
► The *Tony Hawk*-style railsiding is fun and helps you keep big combos going between obstacles and ramps.

► Explore the entire mountain by choosing ski-lift dropoffs

Amped 3

King of the Mountain

► “Awesomeness” is expressed by trippy graphics when your meter is charged, letting spectators get “totally stoked.”



► Crazy but inspired art styles abound within the world as well as the interface.



Considering they're for different platforms, it doesn't seem fair to compare *Amped 3* to EA's popular *SSX* snowboarding game.

But it's hard not to. They're the only serious snowboarding games for Xbox gamers, and they have a lot of things in common, but what they don't share is what matters.

Amped 3 gets right everything that's wrong with *SSX*. It has a much better mission structure, far more personality, and a better sense of what makes snow-sports culture fun and irreverent. What it misses out on is *SSX*'s superior control and trick system, and the overall “feel” of cruising through champagne powder. That doesn't mean the on-board experience of *Amped 3* is bad; it's just different. Much more *Tony Hawk*-inspired than before. Once you get a feel for the controls, the change seems less important, and the other good features of the game start to shine.

Created by Indie Built, the developers formerly known as Access Software – the former Microsoft first-party crew that brought us *Links* and *Top Spin* – *Amped 3* gives you the entire mountain to explore. Actually, multiple areas of seven real-life ski resorts to be exact, and challenges are peppered throughout. These are

somewhat hit and miss. The “Kitty Clean-Up” mode where you pick up jewels is kinda dumb, but the “Sled Slaughter” – akin to *Burnout*'s crash mode – is fun time after time.

Sadly, *Amped 3*'s graphics don't really live up to the Xbox 360's power. They're crisp and feature an amazing draw distance that lets you see the whole mountain, but they're hardly “next-gen.” Indie Built makes up for that with some creative art styles, though.

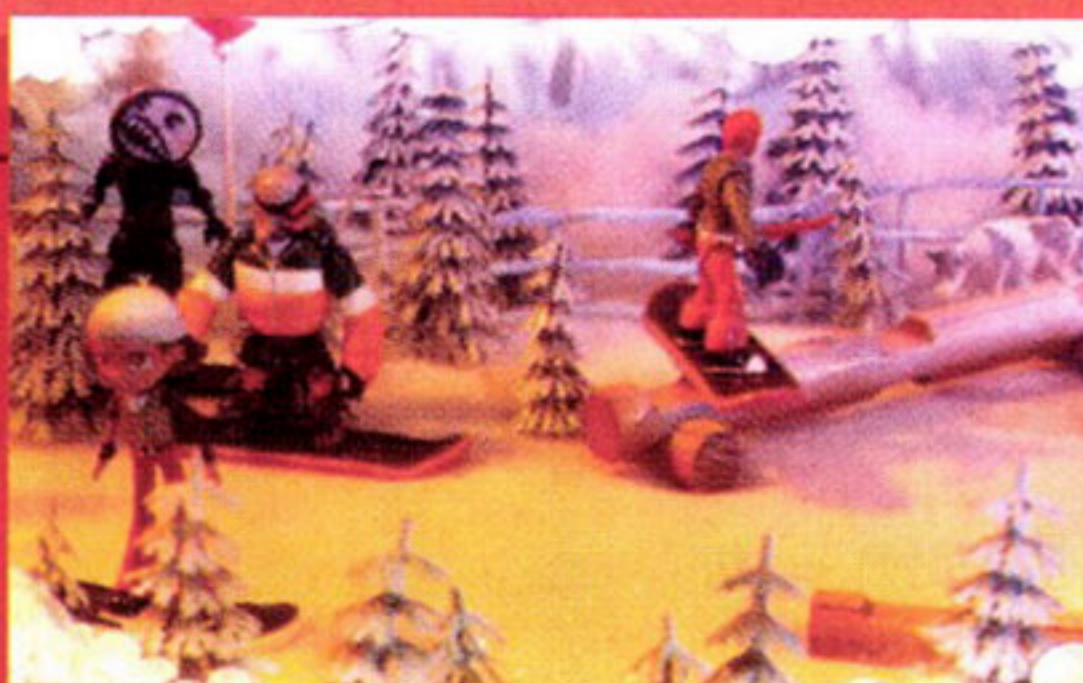
On the whole, *Amped 3* is a fun and interesting experience, but short of a must-have for any but the most hardcore fans.

– Tom Price

“Amped 3 gets everything right that's wrong with SSX.”

Cut-Up Scenes

Very few games, unless written by Tim Schafer, are truly funny. But *Amped 3*, for all its spazzing out, takes a subversively clever path to making fun of game marketing and extreme sports with a wild mix of different styles. From stop-motion animation to Canadian sock puppets, *Amped 3*'s spoof-tacle isn't perfect, but you'll catch quite a few laughs.



THE VERDICT

- + Park-construction kit allows you to place objects anywhere in the world.
- Graphics are crisp, but hardly look next-generation.
- No Live multiplayer support.
- ? Seriously, what are the people who made those cutscenes on?



Publisher: 2K GAMES Developer: INDIE BUILT ESRB: TEEN Live/Multiplayer: 2 on split screen
 Selling Points: Canadian sock puppets, tripped-out visuals



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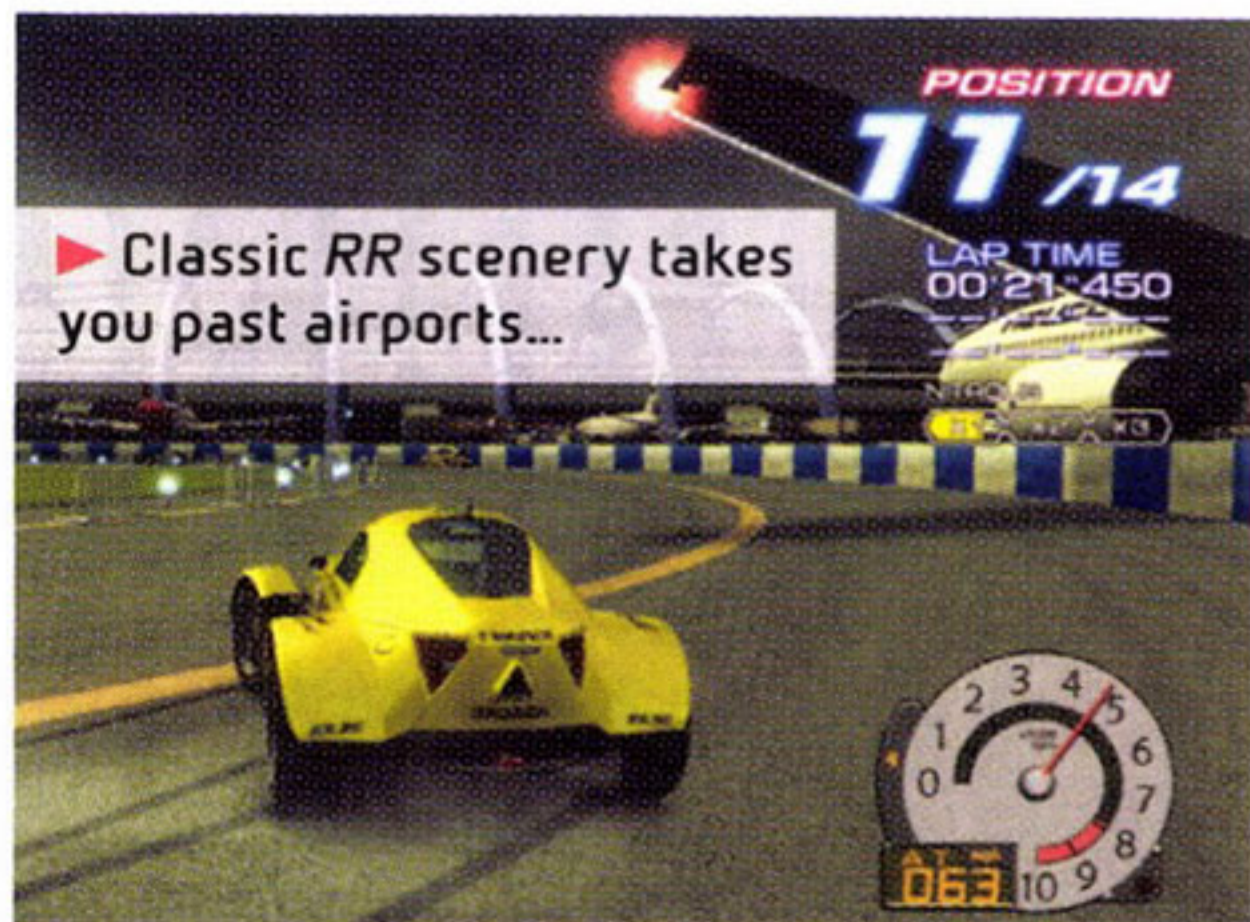
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▶ Classic RR scenery takes you past airports...



▶ ...and along beachfronts.



▶ "Somebody fired off some crazy nitrous!"

Ridge Racer 6

Yep, "6" just about covers it



Apparently a videogame industry superstition would have us believe that if a *Ridge Racer* game is part of the launch lineup for a new console, then it will be a rip-roaring success. Let's hope that mojo alone is enough because very little about *Ridge Racer 6* will set your 360 on fire.



▶ It's still all about the powerslides.

The gameplay is classic *Ridge Racer*: You crank through powerslides like a maniac to build up three tiers of nitrous bursts and rocket past airports, through tunnels, and over jumps. A deep World Xplorer Mode offers 230 races on 30 courses and 138 cars to unlock, but all too quickly, they blur together and start feeling so "the same" that you'll tiredly wonder if you didn't just accidentally load up an event you'd already beaten. That's because nothing about *RR6* is next-gen, not even the graphics, which are just barely good enough that you'll grudgingly admit they probably couldn't run on original Xbox.

True-blue fans of the series will still enjoy the game, especially since it counters its relentless faithfulness to the *RR* heritage with the series' first foray into online action (including 14-player races, downloadable content, and uploadable

time-trial ghost cars). Thankfully, the sensation of speed is always lickety-split fast, but not in a way that will catapult you off your couch.

Mostly, *RR6* is just a good evolution of the spiffy PSP version that hit earlier this year. And that's not nothing, but it does feel more than a little cheesy when you're probably expecting it to be one of the early stars on Microsoft's wunderkind console.

- Paul Curthoys

THE VERDICT

- + *Ridge Racer* fans will love the chance to compete online for the first time in this series.
- Cookie-cutter gameplay.
- Serviceable graphics don't dazzle like they should.
- ? Who else wants to throttle the @\$%# announcer?



6.5

College Hoops 2K6

The kids are all right



Though both NBA and college basketball are fundamentally the same game - played with the same size ball, same number of players, and (mostly) identical rules - they're two different sports. The individual starters tend to dominate the pro contests, while the emphasis in the NCAA is on team. This year's *College Hoops* offering doesn't feel much different than 2K Sports' NBA game on the surface, but the vast array of coaching options put a distinctive college stamp on it.

Unlike EA's *March Madness* with its lockdown stick and floor-general play calling, *College Hoops* offers no such obvious on-the-court differentiators. Instead, it's during timeouts that 2K6 makes its mark, letting you set plays for or sub in groups of players for a

given situation, such as getting your best free-throw shooters on the floor in the final seconds while protecting a small lead. Rounded out by strong play-by-play announcing, good A.I. on both sides of the ball, and solid visuals, 2K6 is your best bet for college hoops this year.

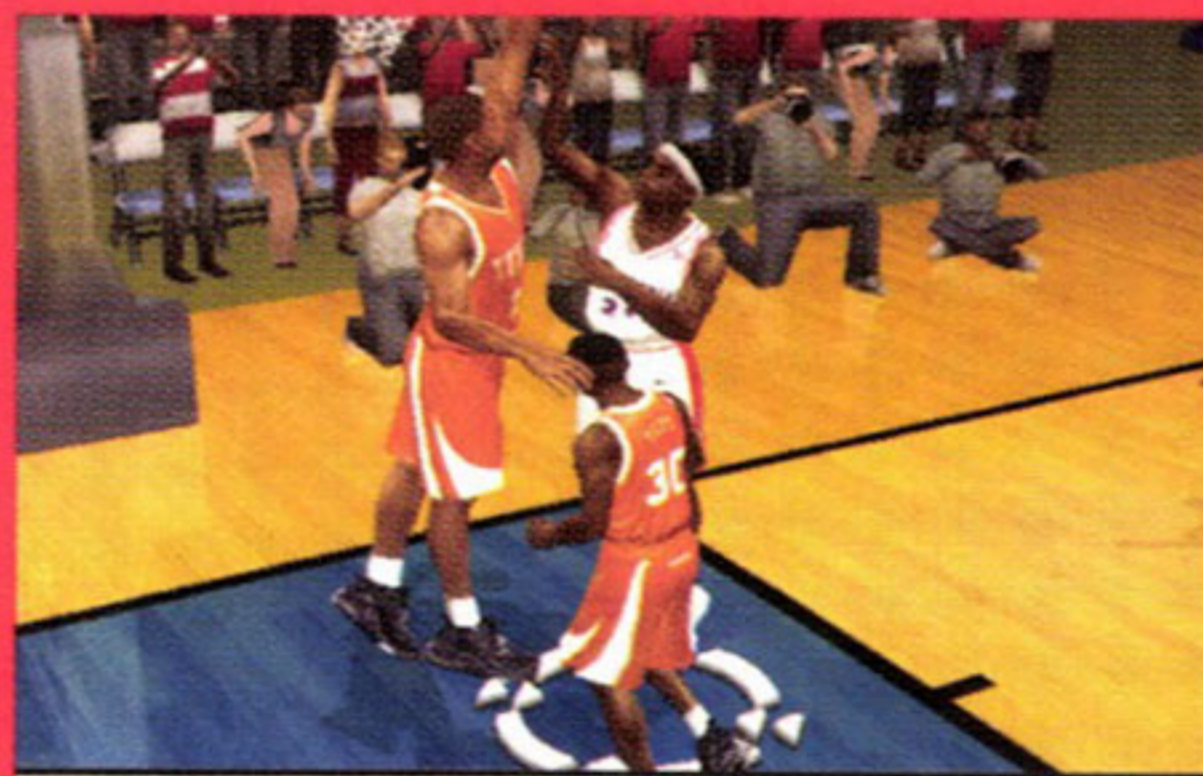
- Ryan McCaffrey

THE VERDICT

- + Solid on-court play and AI.
- + Excellent coaching options for set plays and subs.
- We still hate the shot stick.
- ? What's up with analyst Bill Raftery? He sounds like a sleazy bookie you'd meet in a New Jersey diner off the turnpike at 3a.m.



8.0



▶ The longer you play, the better it gets.



▶ The breadth of coaching options gives 2K6 a real college feel.



▶ A yellow ball munching on a bunch of other, littler yellow balls? Aren't there laws against that?

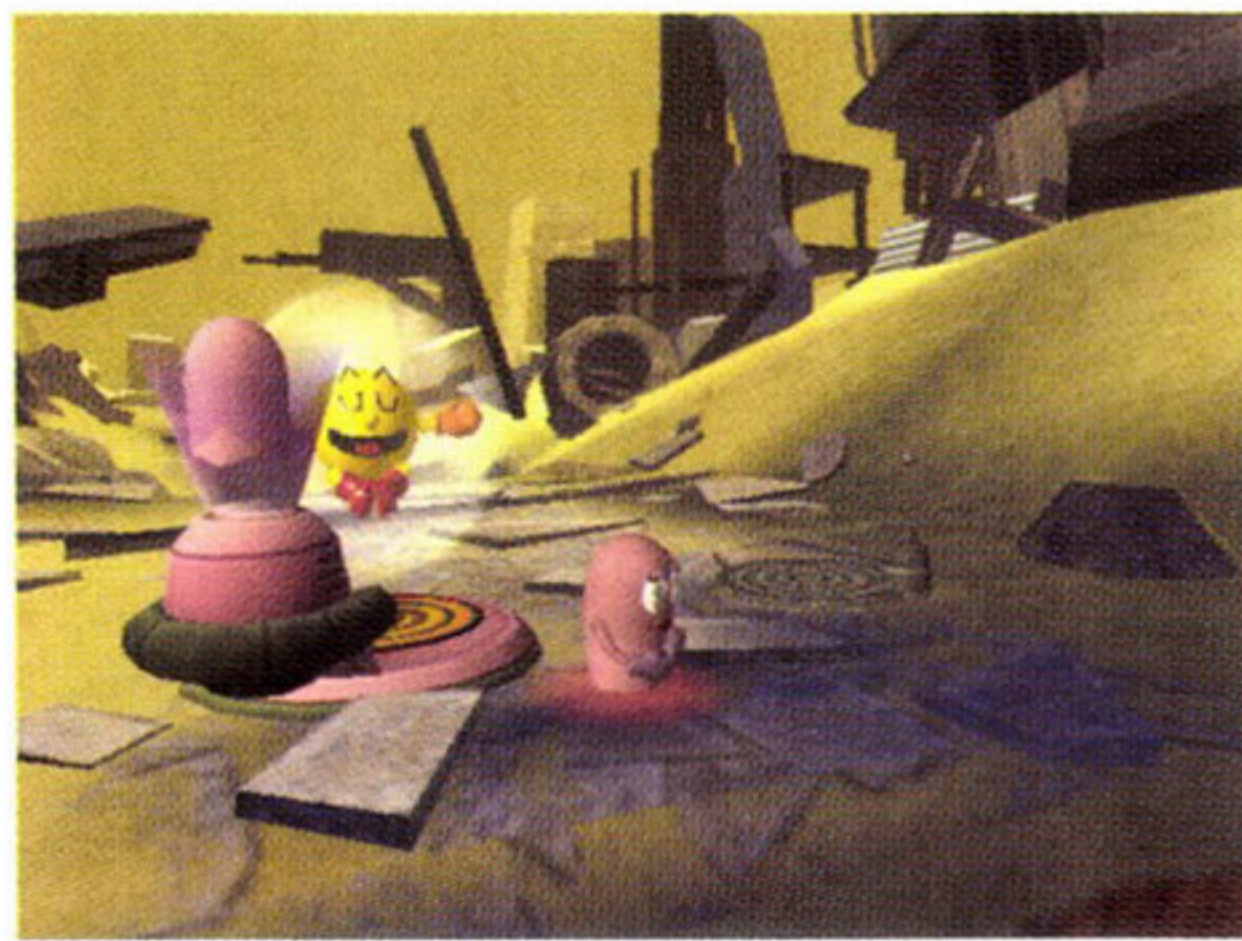
Pac-Man World 3



Gaming icons can make crappy platformers

Probably the most recognized figure in videogame history is that little yellow chomping ball named Pac-Man. Over time, His Royal Yellowness has evolved into a full 3D character with legs, and now adds a voice to narrate his travails around Pac-Village, living a normal humanoid life with his nuclear Pac-family. Little does Pac-Man know that evil genius Erwin has been constructing a machine that can enter the world of ghosts. But the machine is causing the spectral realm to spill into Pac-Village, creating total chaos! It's up to Pac-Man, with the help of ghosts Clyde and Pinky, to stop Erwin and save both the spectral realm and Pac-Village. This third-person platformer gets mind-numbingly repetitive as you repeatedly gobble dots, and after a while, the bonus 3D-ified classic Pac-Man mini-games become more entertaining than the disappointing main event. Flee like there's a ghost on your heels.

- Thomas Baxter



▶ Like Pac-Man above, you'd keep your eyes squeezed tightly shut while playing this game if you could.

THE VERDICT

- + Electro pellets and crystals bring variety, but too little.
- + Save points allow you to avoid restarting after losing all your lives.
- Very, very repetitive.
- ? Is this game really a worthy way to honor Pac-Man's 25th anniversary?



4.0

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth

Is that a demonic tentacle or are you just happy to see me?



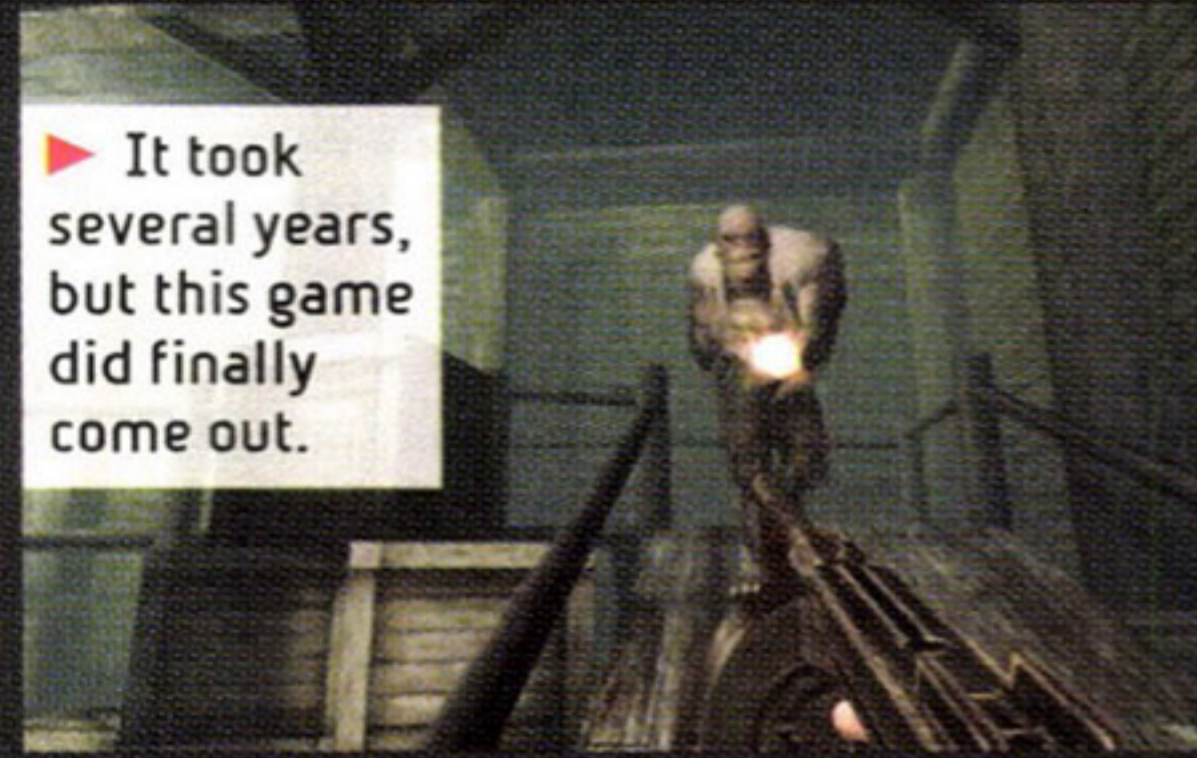
H.P. Lovecraft fans are a long-suffering lot, having endured years of awful movies based on the classic horror stories. *Cthulhu* is the first Lovecraft game for Xbox, and it goes partway toward redeeming his legacy.

At its core, *Cthulhu* is a unique first-person shooter. There's no HUD, no health bar, and – for the first third – not even a gun. As private eye Jack Walters, you're freed from six years in the loony bin due to a certain (playable) trauma and ready to work again,

only to have a simple case snowball. The story is fun (and genuinely scary), tempered with unique features like Jack's variable insanity, which causes hallucinations, panic, and worse, whenever he sees things that make him squeamish (like demons).

But the frequently blurring screen can literally make you nauseous, and the game suffers from linear gameplay, ridiculously difficult challenges, bad graphics, and a lead voice actor who sounds like an utter twit.

- Christopher Null



▶ It took several years, but this game did finally come out.

THE VERDICT

- + Rich story borrowed faithfully from Lovecraft.
- + Sight of demons makes you crazy, like it should.
- Game effects make you physically ill, just like they shouldn't.
- ? Who'd win in a fight: Tawil At-U'mr or Yog-Sothoth?



6.5

World Championship Poker 2

Featuring Howard Lederer

Poker? I don't even know 'er!



The lack of a career mode sank the original *WCP*, but this sequel's overreaching career system may ultimately be just as deadly.

If you just want to play poker – in 14 different variations ranging from No-Limit Texas Hold 'Em to Razz 2-7 – the game is fine. Graphics are radically upgraded from the blocky first edition, and gameplay is brisk. You have broad control over your character avatar (and even gain skills over time). The big twist is the game's bluffing system: A tough mini-game has been added that forces you to twirl the analog stick when you attempt to bluff (I could never successfully pull it off).

Then comes career mode, which turns a fun evening of poker into a real grind. You can't really pick your game (Crazy Pineapple

for a \$5,000 buy-in, anyone?), and unless you're willing to suffer through endless penny-ante rounds, you have to borrow money (at heavy interest) to move up the ladder. Eventually you really can play Lederer, but your arm may have fallen off by that point.

- Christopher Null

▶ Big slick! And we aren't talking sunglasses here.



▶ King-9 on the button? You gotta play dat!

THE VERDICT

- + Probably the best-looking poker game for the Xbox.
- Grueling career mode will make you want to cut off your right hand.
- Repetitive opponent taunts grow tiresome quickly.
- ? Where's a freakin' king when I need it?



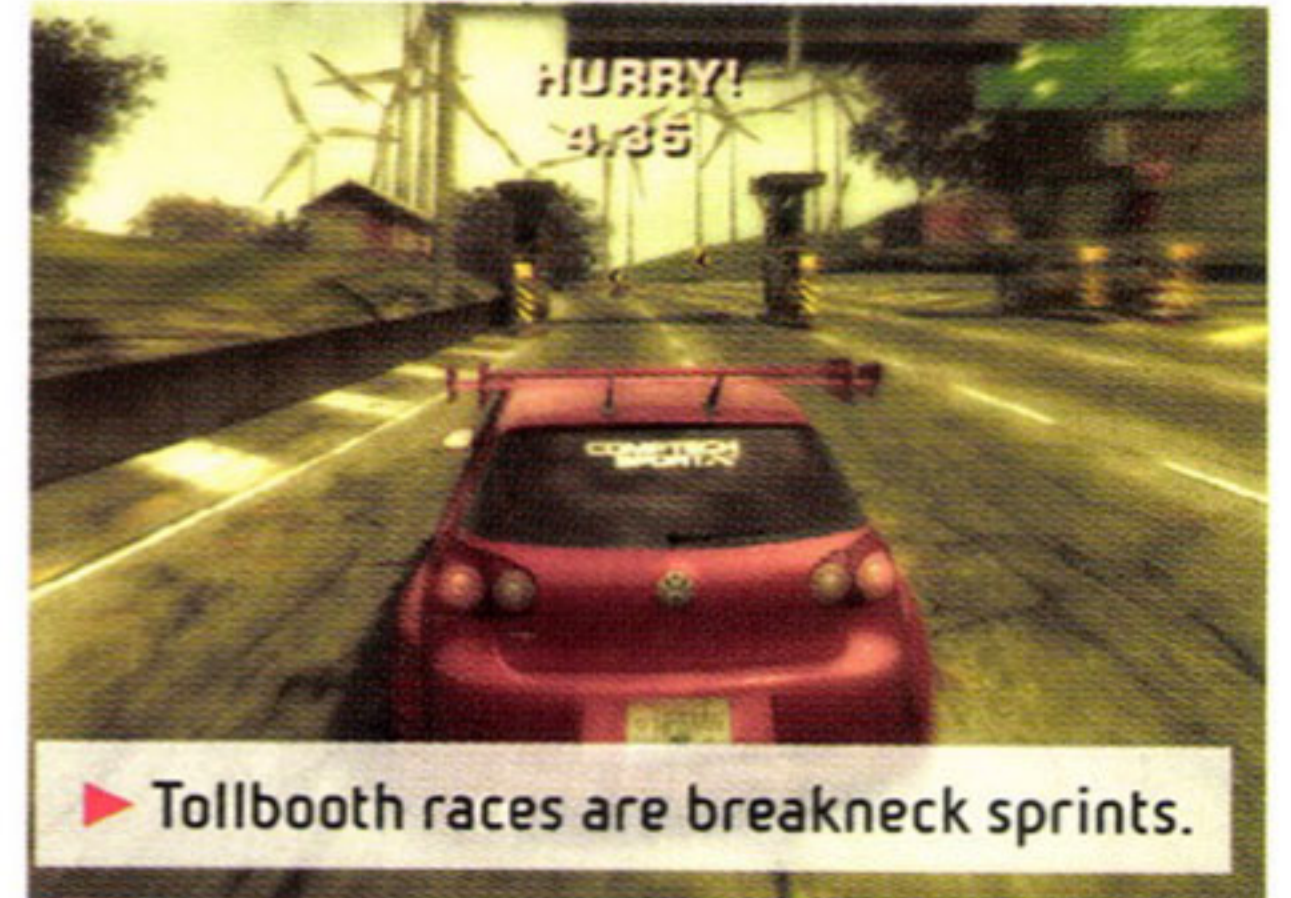
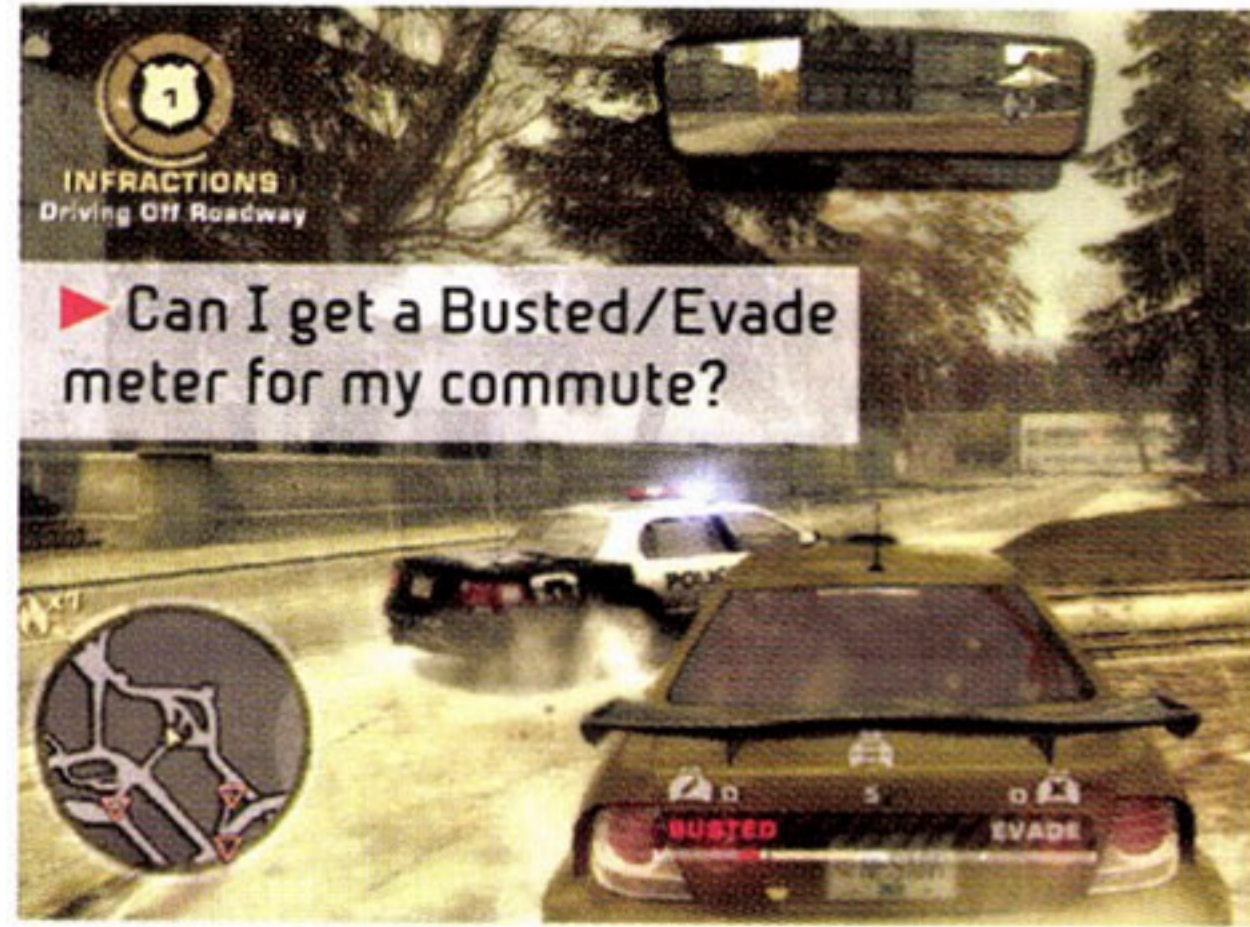
5.5

Publisher: 2K GAMES Developer: HEADFIRST ESRB: MATURE Live/Multiplayer: None Backwards compatible: Yes Selling Points: Summoning demons just got a whole lot easier

Publisher: CRAVE Developer: POINT OF VIEW ESRB: TEEN Live/Multiplayer: Online play, voice chat Selling Points: Updated with more famous faces...including the pasty Lederer Backwards compatible: No

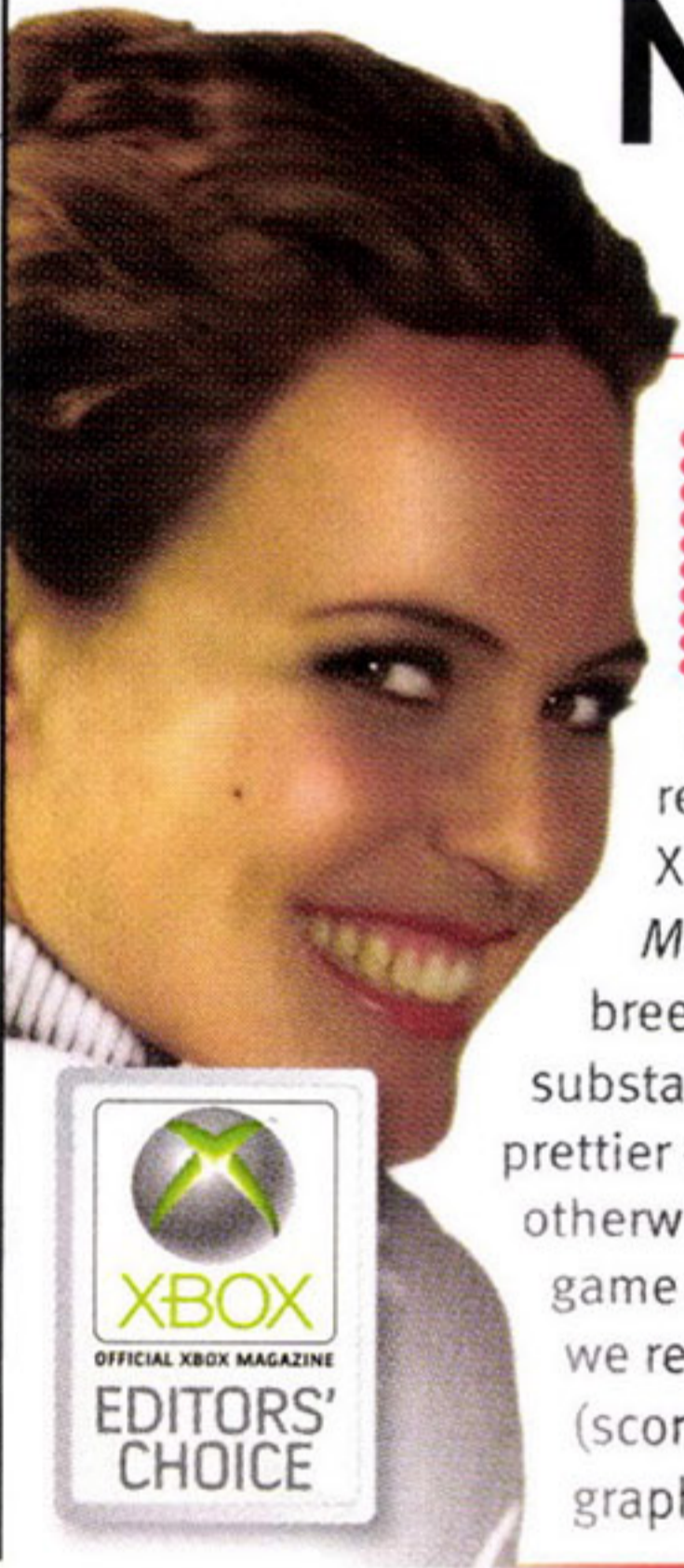
Publisher: NAMCO Developer: BLITZ GAMES ESRB: EVERYONE Live/Multiplayer: 2 on same screen Selling Points: Original-style Pac-Man mazes Backwards compatible: No

Publisher: EA Developer: EA CANADA ESRB: TEEN Live/Multiplayer: 2 on split screen and 4 on Live
Selling Points: Much prettier than the Xbox version Backwards compatible: No



Need for Speed: Most Wanted

Freshly washed and waxed for your shiny Xbox 360



Out of the torrent of launch games that are also being released on original Xbox, *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* is a rare breed – it's actually substantially, significantly prettier on 360. True, it's otherwise exactly the same game as the Xbox version we reviewed last issue (score: 9.0), and true, the graphics are not so jaw-

dropping that you'll need fresh boxers. But if you haven't bought the game yet, the extra \$10 for the 360 version is money well spent. Comparisons aside, *Most Wanted* is seriously impressive, especially because few would blink if the long-running *NFS* series had come down with a bad case of creative exhaustion. But mixing cop pursuits with street racing acts like a fresh spurt of nitrous, and *Most Wanted* takes full advantage with a deep career mode that's richly layered with complexities. For instance, the more hell you raise in a particular ride, the more the cops crawl up your tailpipe, so changing its look with vinyls or new spoilers actually has a point. The cops aren't chumps either, and battering past them and finally finding a hiding spot feels like

an accomplishment every time, as does each victory in the "regular" modes. This is exciting, well-designed racing – exactly what earned *NFS* its name in the first place.

– Paul Curthoys

THE VERDICT

- + Cops put up a great fight.
- + Fun, creative, and deep variety of races.
- Hokey, wannabe "street" dialogue strains for cool and misses entirely.
- ? Why don't all the Xbox "ports" offer an upgrade that's this respectable?



James Bond 007: From Russia With Love



A fun new 007 game? Will wonders never cease?

James Bond games are always met with a bit of careful hesitation. Ever since the masterful *GoldenEye* on the good ol' N64 set the standard, Bond games have seemed pale and shabby by comparison. In some ways, *From Russia With Love* carries on this sad tradition...but in a fresh way that declares, "I'm not *GoldenEye*... get over it and have some fun!"

In a fun and cheeky approach, EA has forsaken the first-person perspective for an over-the-shoulder third-person view that is much better suited for the optional stealth goodness. And speaking of the stealthy Bond action, this installment boasts a fantastic sneak system with incredibly gratifying yet super-easy stealth kills. Of course, you could blast your way through every level of the plot (which diverges from the original movie quite frequently, including utilizing Bond's trademark Aston Martin, which had yet to

appear in this particular film), but that wouldn't be very secret agent of you.

While the general tone of the game is fairly light and irreverent, it belies a content-rich substructure where RPG and action elements collide in an innovative weapon- and armor-upgrade system that allows for "Bond customization." It's not epic, but it's definitely worth several hours of your time.

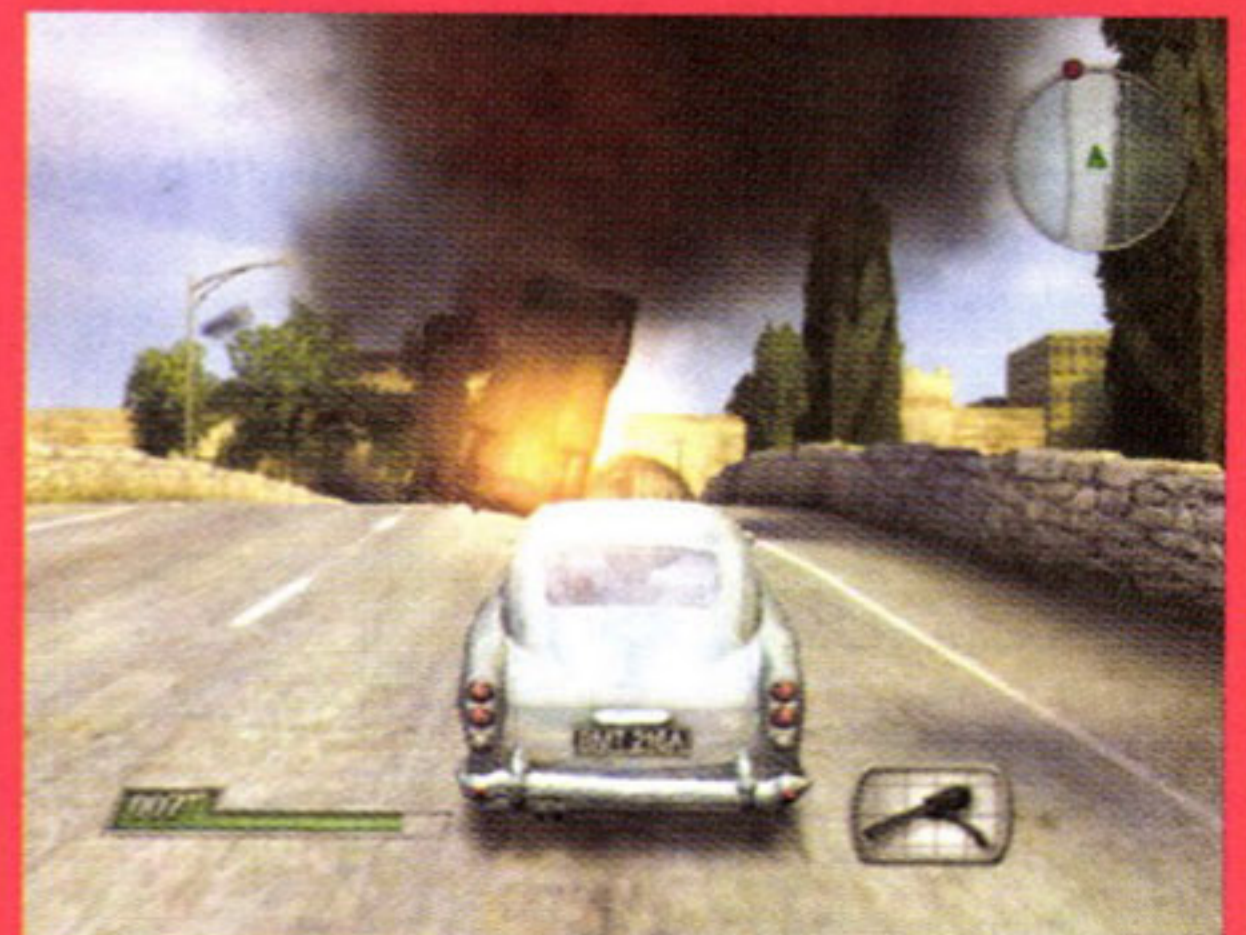
– Gabe Graziani

THE VERDICT

- + JETPACKS!!
- + Sean Connery voices Bond...velvety baritone, Miss Money Penny.
- + Lots of vehicles break up the action and keep you on your toes.
- ? Kitschy-cool style is more Avengers than Bond.



All together now: "Jetpacks rock!"



Mind the flaming hulks...they tend to get in the way a bit.

Publisher: EA Developer: EA Redwood Shores ESRB: TEEN Live/Multiplayer: 4 on split-screen, System Link, or Xbox Live Selling Points: Jetpacks Backwards compatible: No



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*Estimated Retail Price. Actual retail prices may vary.

Publisher: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS Developer: RARE ESRB: MATURE Live/Multiplayer: 4 on same screen, 32 on System Link and Live, Content Downloads, Leaderboards Selling Points: Bots, Co-op play



▶ Maybe the most fun part of single-player, hovercrafts in co-op will make you say "whoa."

Perfect Dark Zero

Devil in a (skin-tight) blue dress

Joanna darling, you're sending us mixed messages. At times, you look so beautiful and you say and do all the right things, and we have a really fun time with you. But other times, you seem so distant and unapproachable, like you're just going through the motions, just trying to get through another flat level and another boorish conversation, and then we feel absolutely no love from you. Is it us? Are our expectations too high? Did we rush things just a bit?

Perfect Dark Zero didn't have to be a *Halo* killer to still be the killer app of the Xbox 360 launch. It just had to be a fun-filled, action-

packed shooter with cool level and weapon designs and a rollicking good story with exciting cutscenes stitching it all together. And it had to have kick-ass multiplayer with optional bots to boot. On most of those points it succeeds, but it fails on a few others as well.

The game kicks off with an awesome James Bond-inspired intro. That term is now retired from the rest of the review because just about everything in this game – from the supervillains to the gadgets to the underground lairs – is Bond-inspired. Still, for all the spy-cool vibe, you don't have to utilize the flashier toys – like the Shockwave rifle's x-ray vision – too often.

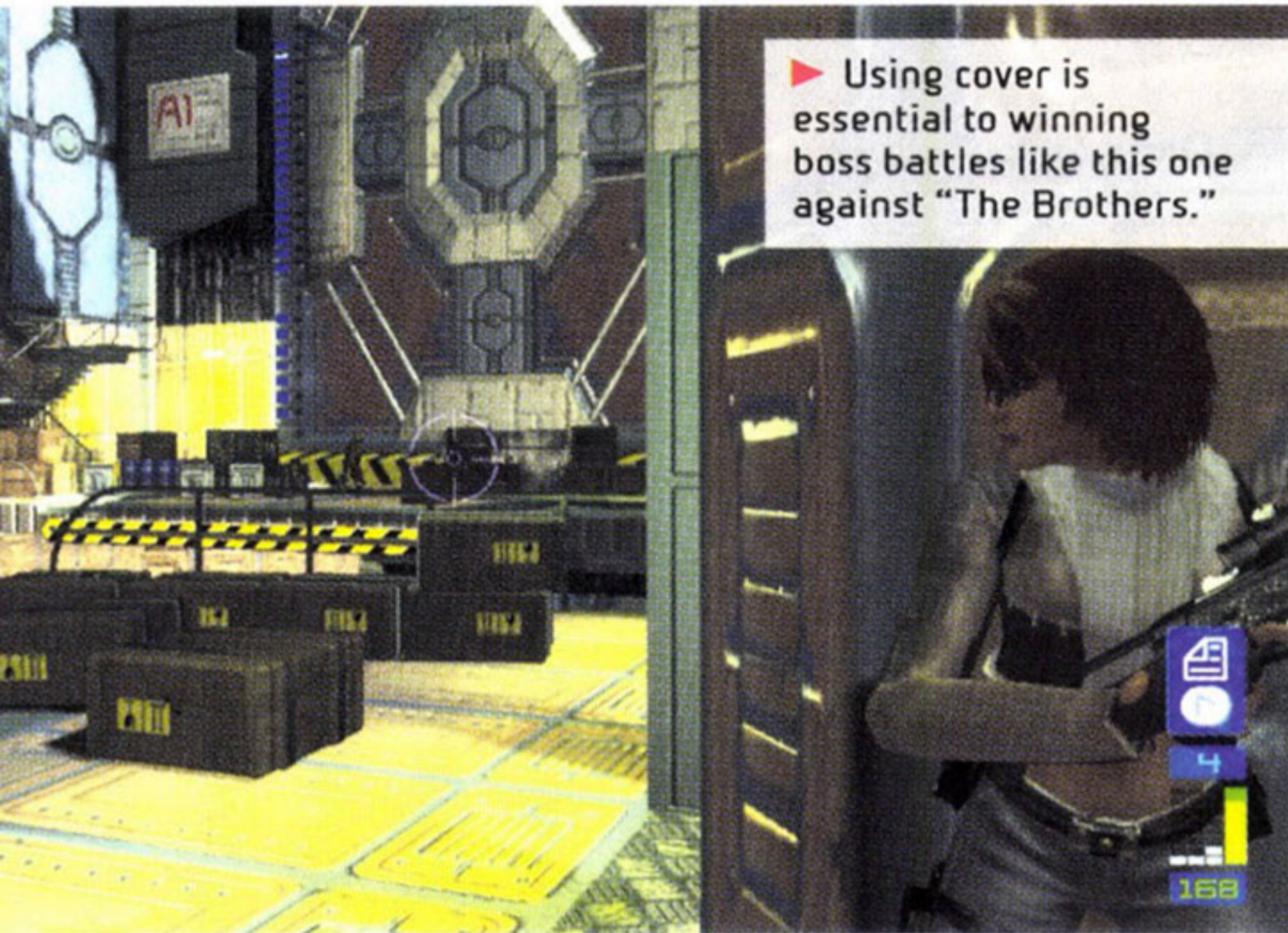
Plunging straight into the action, *PDZ* builds its rep over 13 levels of some serious first-person shooting. And for the most part, that's great: The guns feel good, the levels are often very beautiful, except when they're not. The divergence of quality between the levels is occasionally jarring: Some are spectacular in scope, like the Trinity launch platform, others are flat and uninspired or downright weird, like a unintentionally gravity-defying jungle pond. For added fun, all missions include secondary objectives that vary with the difficulty level and affect how your main mission plays out.

This flip-flopping between level design quality is mirrored in the storyline. It may be corny and derivative, but we could've gotten by that if the dialogue had sparked. Jo gets to deliver a couple of one-liners (selected by you) in response to overly chatty mini-bosses, and some of the P.A. announcements in the evil corporations lairs are funny, and reminded us of another game – *No One Lives Forever* –



▶ Dual-wielding CMPs, Super-Dragons, laptop guns – many favorite weapons are back in *PDZ*.





▶ Using cover is essential to winning boss battles like this one against "The Brothers."



▶ Chandra, the voice in your ear, the eye in the sky, and a hottie no less.

Level Up

PDZ's various difficulty levels (Agent, Secret Agent, Perfect Agent, and Dark Agent) do more than just ramp up the number of enemies and increase their hit points. Each level offers different secondary objectives within a mission. Completing these tasks give you an advantage later in the level. Case in point: in the Mansion level, you can hack the satellite so Chandra can get into the enemy computer network. Later in the mission, when you're playing in a virtual deathmatch with the Femme Fatale, Chandra can hack the network and upgrade your weapon in the game within the game. Who says Haxxorz suck?

that mined the same humor but executed it more effectively.

Visually, the game is very impressive, if not totally realistic. The lighting effects do some cool next-gen tricks, but the cartoony characters and their terrible animations do have the nefarious effect of growing on you over time.

Basically, *PDZ* didn't grab us the way we were hoping. It definitely feels uneven across many segments. Some levels were tuned just right, but the crunch to be a launch game forced the polish to be applied more thinly on others. But like *Halo 2*, playing multiplayer over Live made us quickly forget about the disappointments we had with the single-player story. We hope the same happens with *PDZ* as the Live co-op mode delivers

in spades, but we might have a hard time getting over a girl like Joanna. Sure, we'll stay on each other's Friends List and maybe hook up a few more times for a little co-op or a nice bit of DarkOps fun.

- Tom Price



Live Rude Girls

Rare knows how to do multiplayer on a console game. Case closed. The damning evidence? *Perfect Dark Zero*'s million and one (ok, not quite) ways to play this game with your friends, either on the same couch, in the same house or in a different country. *PDZ* provides full support for Live and system link across all the modes - co-op, deathmatch, capture the flag, etc. The *Counter-Strike*-tastic 32-player DarkOps mode allows your team to earn money and spend it on better weapons and vehicles, and co-op mode is another Live standout you need to try.



▶ Thankfully, many guns have some sort of scope or viewfinder.



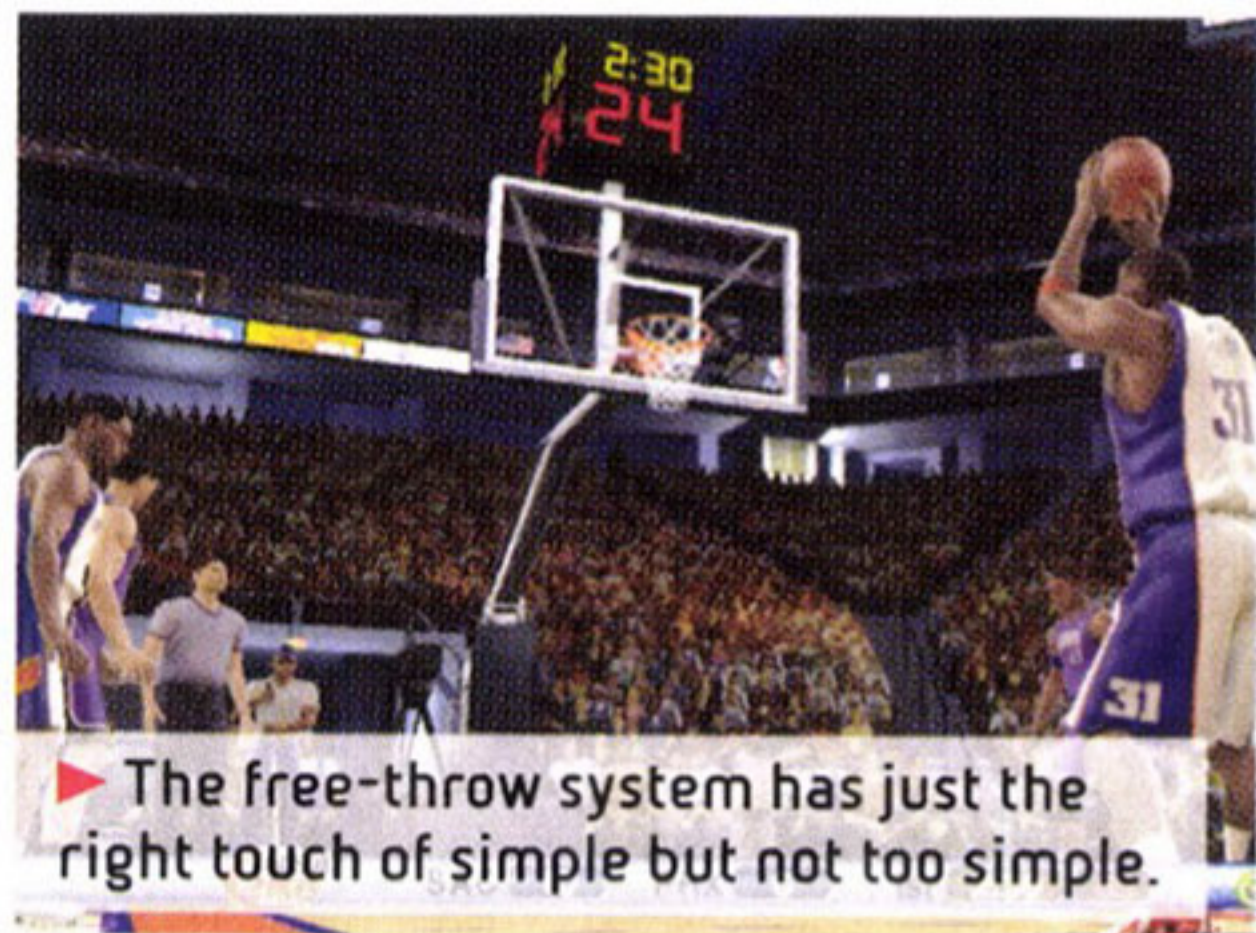
THE VERDICT

- + Co-op and multiplayer make up for a lot of the game's other weaknesses.
- + Hovercrafts.
- The end boss. Ridiculous.
- ? Why are some levels so awesome, and others feel like they were bought off a guy on a street corner?



8.0

Publisher: 2K SPORTS Developer: VISUAL CONCEPTS ESRB: EVERYONE Live/Multiplayer: 4 on same screen or Live
Selling Points: Full feature set; witnessing poetry in motion



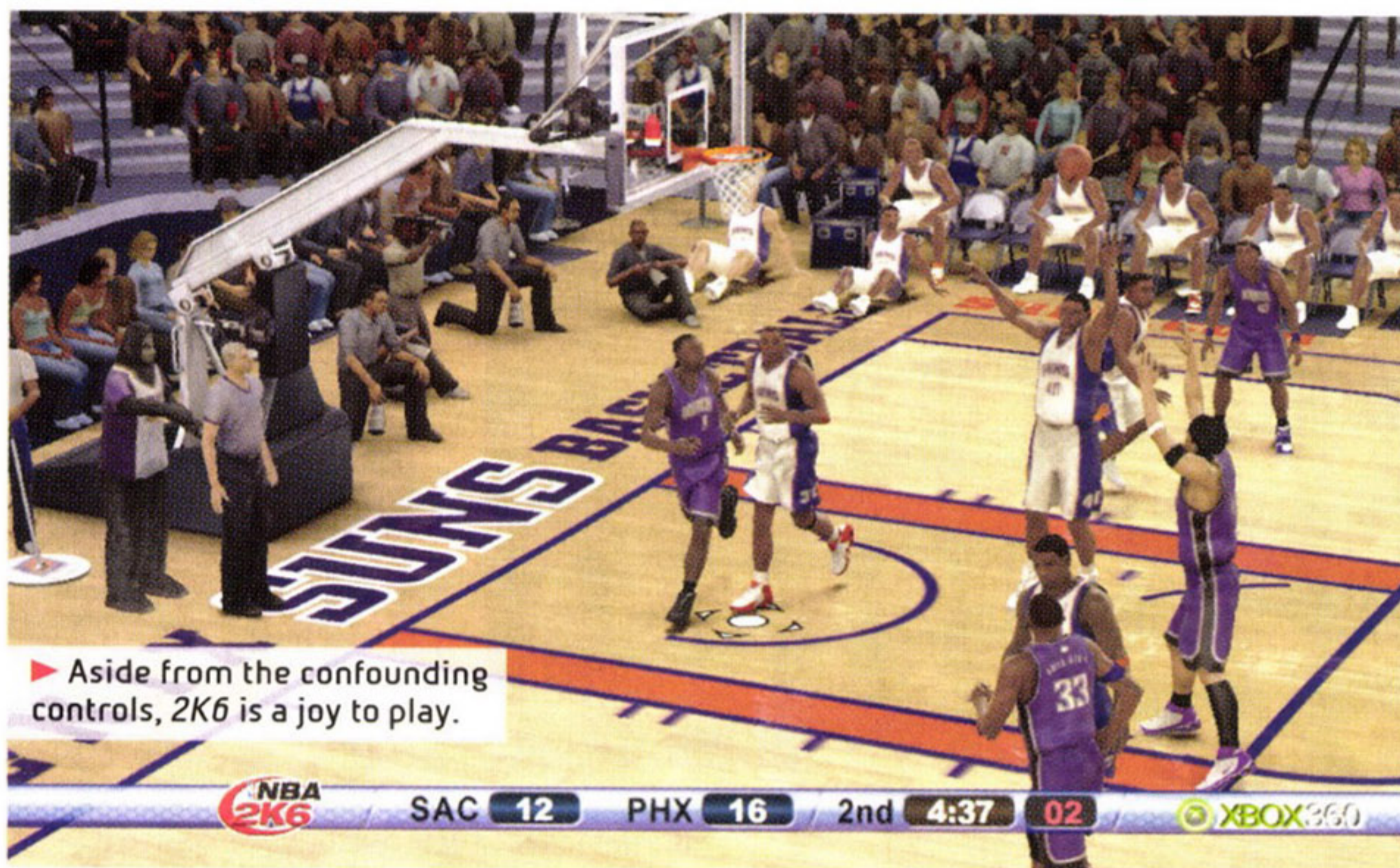
▶ The free-throw system has just the right touch of simple but not too simple.

NBA 2K6

It's alive! It's alive!

Without slick animation, the best graphics in the world don't mean jack. Nowhere in the launch lineup is this more evident than in *NBA 2K6*. Its players, "in the arena" feel, and overall look don't quite match up to *NBA Live* (though they're damn close), but the near-flawless movement of the *2K6* hoopsters combined with their ball-tracking eye movements, facial expressions, and emotional post-play reactions bring the on-court action to life in an experience-changing way that we've never seen before.

The gameplay is pretty smooth too, with great flow and good AI. Unfortunately, it's all buried underneath an overly complicated, unintuitive control scheme. The shot stick introduced on *2K6*



▶ Aside from the confounding controls, *2K6* is a joy to play.

Xbox returns, assigning different moves to each directional press (study your manual first!), as does a post-up game that requires no less than three button presses just to do a power dribble down low. Sheesh.

As with *NBA Live*, there's a question of value. If you bought a current-gen hoops game two months ago, is this worth \$60? *Live* is guilty of cutting features, but it does deliver an all-new experience from the ground up, whereas *2K6* offers everything the Xbox version did but gives you nothing new; it's the same game you've been playing since September but with a prettier graphics engine. But oh is it a joy to watch!

So while you won't get a new experience as with *Live*, you'll at least get a solid package.

- Ryan McCaffrey

THE VERDICT

- + Next-gen visuals and animation make the game come alive.
- + Sharp play-by-play from Kevin Harlan and "The Jet."
- Convoluted control scheme.
- ? Why does the *2K* series still decide if you're going to dunk or not? Argh!

8.0

NHL 2K6

<Jedi waves hand> "NHL 2K6 on Xbox never existed..."

A longtime fantastic series, *NHL 2K6* on Xbox face-planted on the ice just two months ago, botching the skating and introducing game-killingly-easy wraparound goals. Its 360 cousin has been given smelling salts and sent back out there - good as new - putting this franchise back on the winning track.

Indeed, what was broken has been fixed. Skating now feels like it has proper momentum rather than having an air-hockey quality to it, and goals via the wraparound shot are now the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, *2K6* also gets extra kudos for being the only Xbox 360 sports game to introduce a new feature. It's called "crease control," and it's brilliant. Click in the right stick to see from behind (and through) the goalie, and when a shot comes your way in slow-motion, move your cursor over it to make the save. You can play the whole game this way if you like, or, conversely, never use it. It's even

great in two-player using a PiP view.

Problems do remain, but now they're minor. The play-by-play is still robotic, replays are often behind the puck, and the graphics - aside from the gorgeous ice - aren't much better than on Xbox. Nevertheless, welcome back, *NHL 2K*.

- Ryan McCaffrey



▶ Visuals aren't all that much improved over the Xbox version.

THE VERDICT

- + Crease control is a blast.
- + Numerous gameplay tweaks (for the better) over Xbox version.
- Droning commentary; disappointing graphics.
- ? Why are there so many cuts to people in the crowd when they look so crappy?

8.0



▶ Making saves with the crease control system is wicked fun, even in multiplayer.

Publisher: 2K SPORTS Developer: KUSH ESRB: EVERYONE Live/Multiplayer: 4 players on same screen or Live; roster updates; online leagues
Selling Points: Crease control; Ice...really, the ice



► The GameFace player creator is as sick as ever.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06

Back in the swing of things

Instead of dazzling you from your first tee shot, *Tiger's* turn on Xbox 360 is rewarding in a way that steadily builds as you play.

That's because EA wisely chose to correct the gameplay holes that dragged the Xbox version down, delivering instead a whole new golf simulation experience.

At first, though, you might be as disappointed as I was with the lack of visual panache. The graphics are not much better than what you'll find in the PC version of *Tiger* – the dramatic shadows and lighting are about the only big upgrade. But the more you delve into the career mode, the more addicted you'll get. Much of depth comes from the well-tuned difficulty, which gradually rises on a smooth curve. Unlike *Tiger's* cheese fest on Xbox earlier this year, eagles and 80-foot putts are not as common as blades of grass on a fairway. You'll work your butt

off to make tough shots, and as you level up your character and his skills, the challenge stays with you at just the right pace.

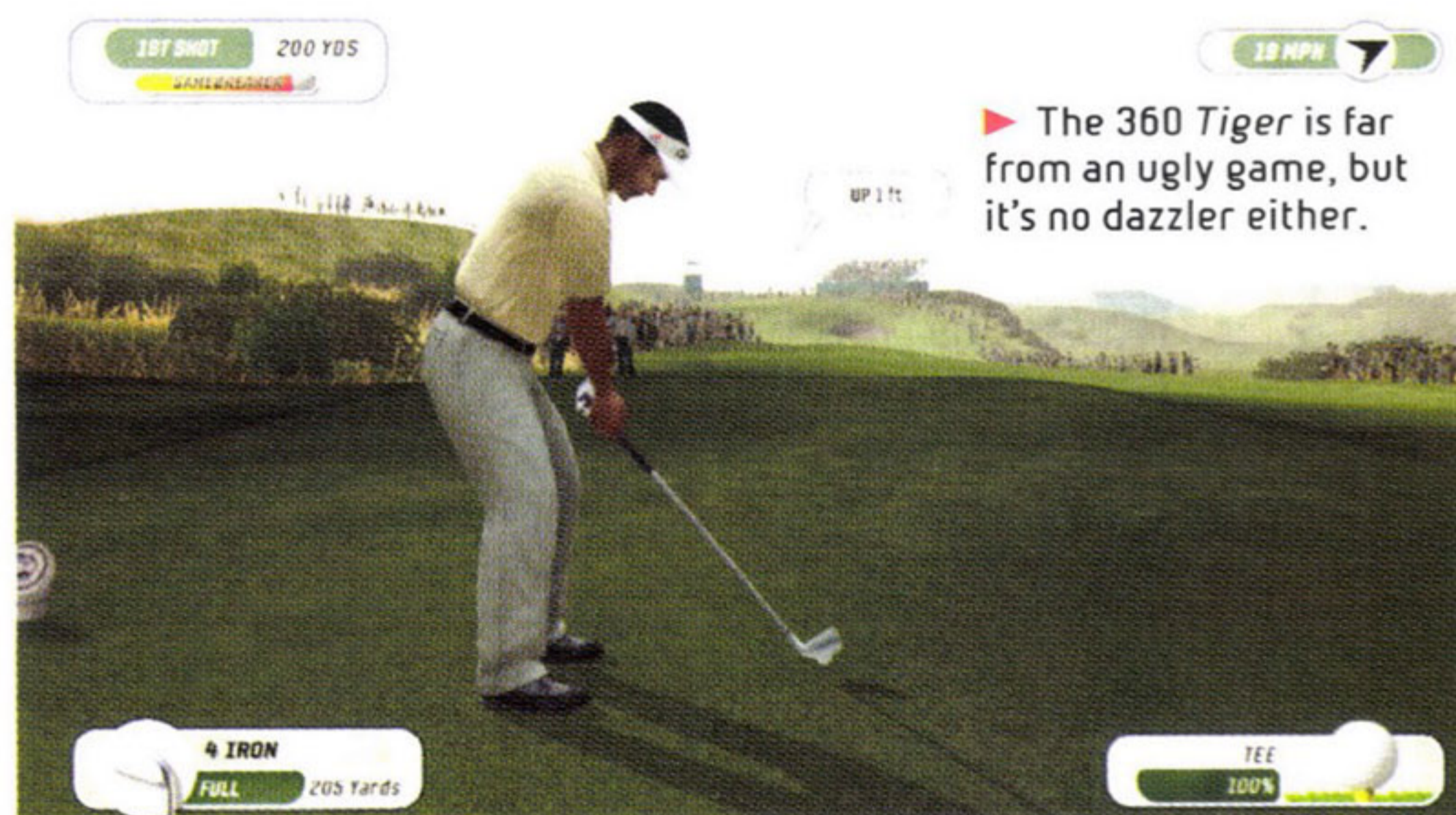
The career mode also ditches the clumsy artifices of the Xbox version and focuses on building your character from an amateur who takes on Q-School to a PGA pro going for a

Grand Slam. The game's six courses – Pebble Beach, Sawgrass, Riviera, Turnberry, Pinehurst, and Carnoustie – each have a menu of mini-game-like challenges, 9-hole games, and full rounds. Victories eventually lead to Q-School, and once you succeed there, a PGA Tour calendar opens up, presenting you with qualifiers,

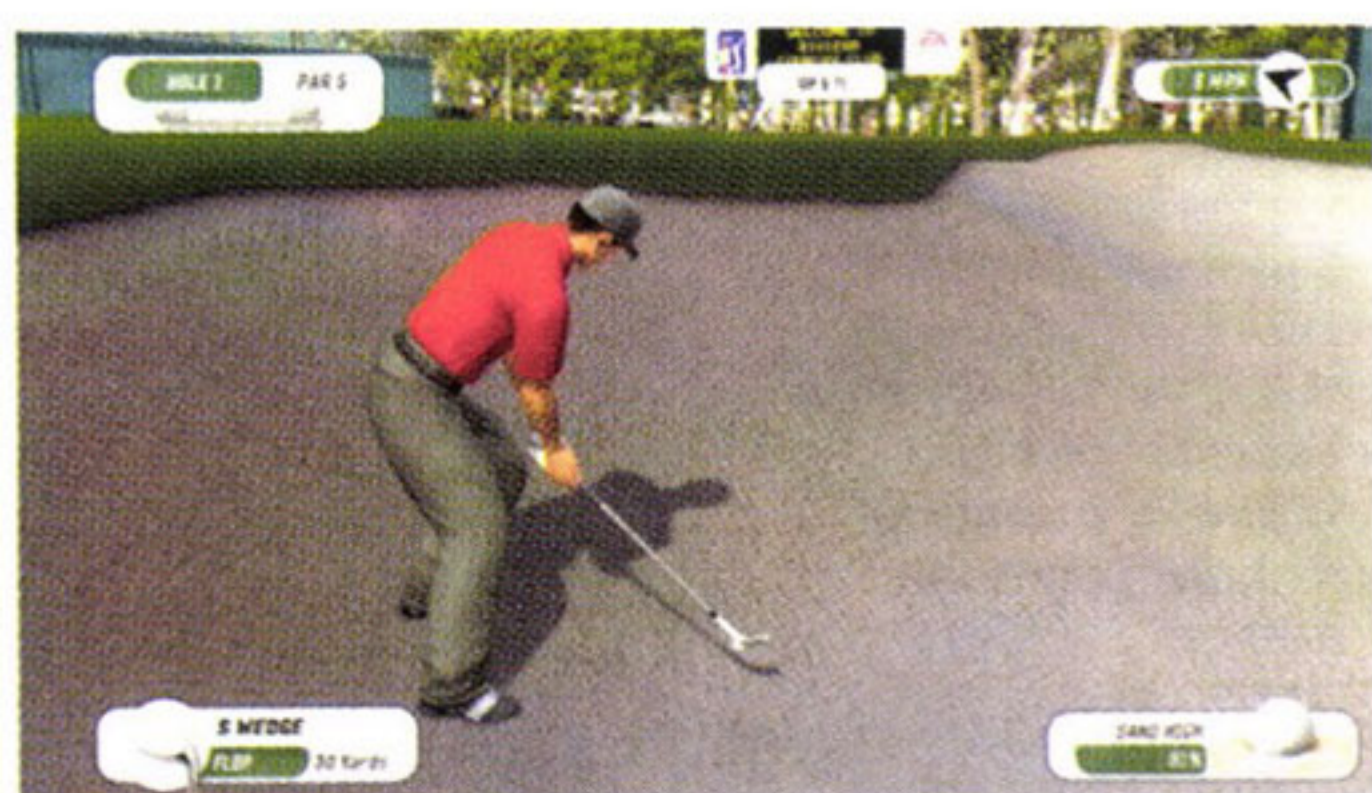
tournaments, and Majors to tackle. The variety and enjoyable sense of realism makes *Tiger 06* for 360 a compelling challenge.

Four-player online play is still a part of the next-gen version, as is adding spin with the right analog stick. A much smarter setup for gear and experience points keeps the focus on real but entertaining golf. *Tiger 06* is a rare species in the 360 launch lineup – it's graphically below par (shouldn't that be over par?), but the gameplay is so smartly evolved that it's \$60 well spent.

– Paul Curthoys



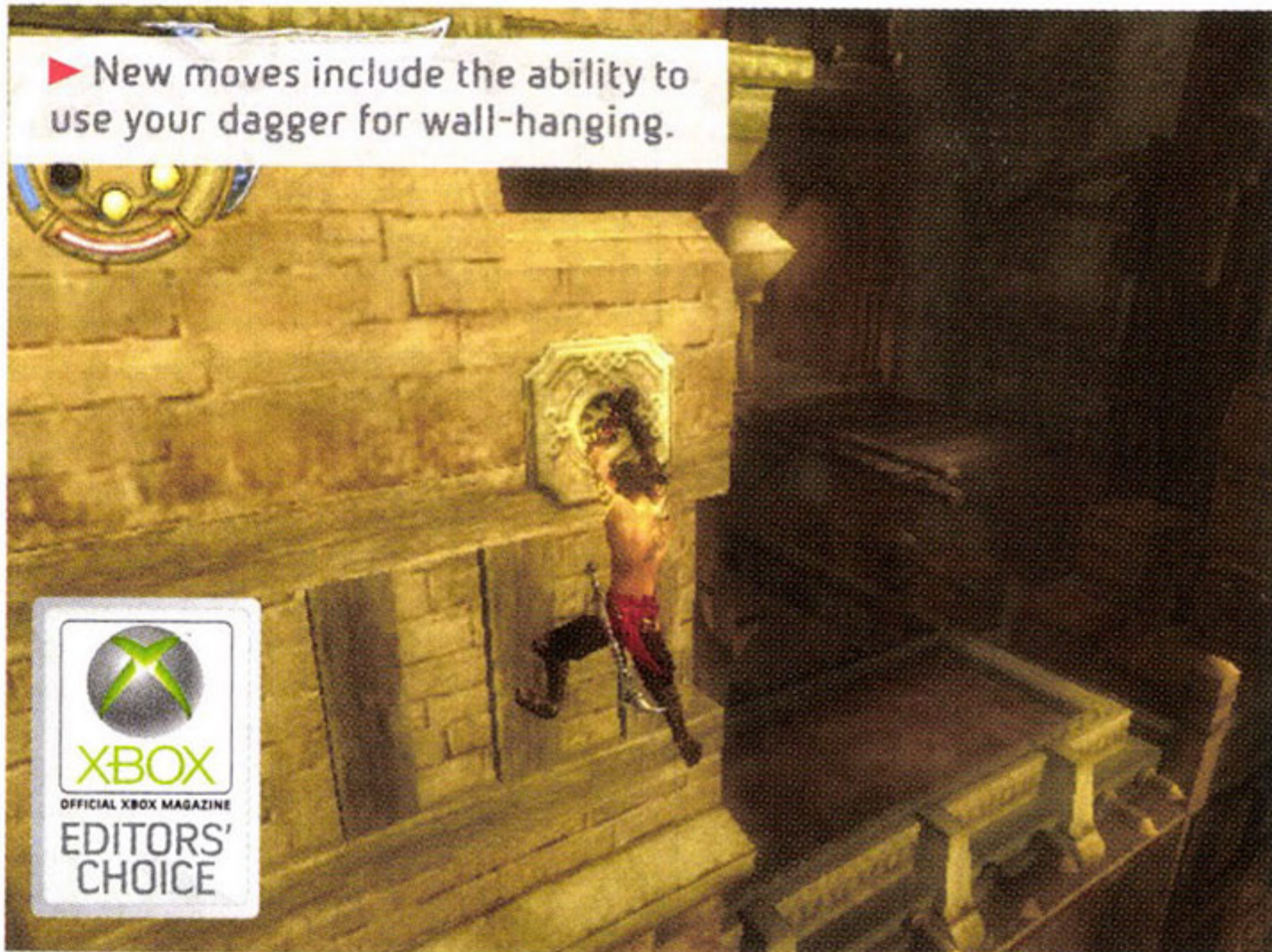
► The 360 *Tiger* is far from an ugly game, but it's no dazzler either.



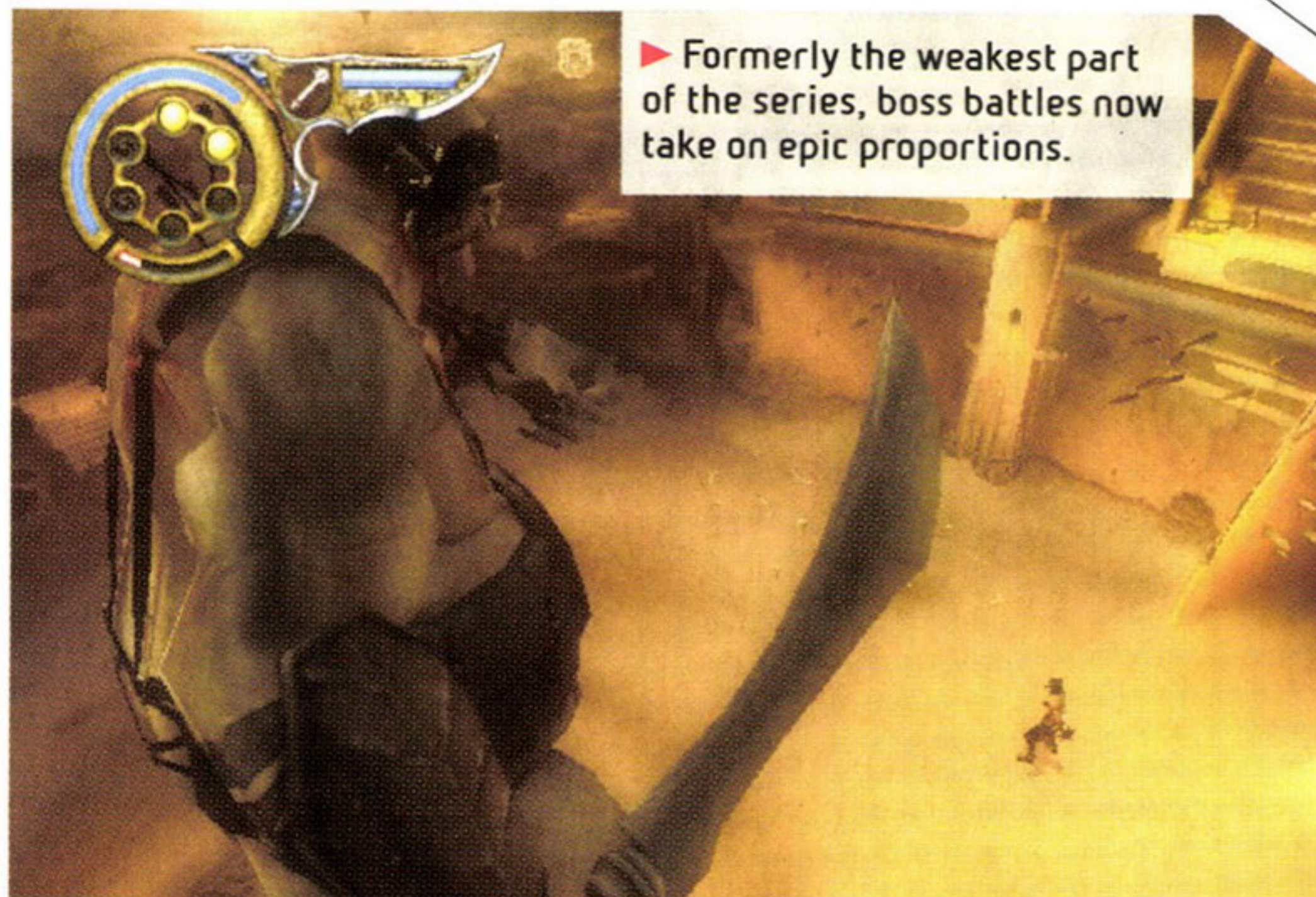
THE VERDICT

- + Fixed too-easy cheesiness of Xbox version.
- + *Tiger's* best career mode in a long time.
- Graphics aren't exactly eye-popping.
- ? Will anyone even notice that the time-traveling Rivals Mode is gone?





▶ New moves include the ability to use your dagger for wall-hanging.



▶ Formerly the weakest part of the series, boss battles now take on epic proportions.

Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones

The best Prince since *Purple Rain*



Some gamers thought there needed to be bigger, badder, and loooooonger fights in the *Prince of Persia* series...but too bad those gamers were wrong! You can punch to your heart's content in *DOA* – what made *Prince of Persia* so unique was its acrobatic approach to exploration and platforming. Fortunately, Ubisoft has rewritten history, and the hack-'n'-slash fumbblings of *PoP2* might as well have never happened.

The Prince returns home in *The Two Thrones*, and it's there that the twists and turns of the last two games collide for your more-than-standard-issue thrilling conclusion. While I'm not going to blow any secrets, it continues with the clever storyline – plus it adds a new side to the prince. Now he can turn into the Dark Prince, a version of himself corrupted by the sands. It allows him to use a new daggertail weapon to get across specific areas, like Indiana Jones swinging from his whip. Since plot dictates when you change, it's little more than a gimmick – but it adds a few new techniques to the mix, and another twist to the excellent plotline.

Even battles have been redesigned to reflect the Prince's new gameplay style. You can, as usual, combo your way to stabby happiness, or you can employ the new stealth-kill technique that lets you use the environment to get behind enemies and sneak-kill them using timed attacks.



▶ The Prince's new stealth moves let him get the jump on chumps.

Instead of being *Metal Gear Solid* mimicry, this turns out to add a new, exciting layer to the gameplay. Sure, this isn't rewriting the book, but who says no to more of a good thing? They've made a perfectly fitting end to the series. Polished, clever, and full of fun, *Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones* wraps up the Prince's saga with the style and grace it deserves.

– Vincent Lopez

THE VERDICT

- + Everything's polished to the extreme here. It oozes style while playing like buttah.
- + New stealth-kill system makes death fun for the whole family.
- Last in the series.
- ? When did the Prince get that new back tattoo?

9.0

True Crime: New York City

Good cop, bad cop

Poor *True Crime*. It tries so hard to not be just another *GTA* clone by adding tons of depth to the gameplay and letting you develop the story through a branching plotline full of twists. But in the end, it becomes such a complex and convoluted affair that the main purpose of playing games – having fun – gets lost somewhere on those trash-strewn streets.

True Crime: New York City, like its predecessor, re-creates an entire city (NYC, duh) for you to explore. You're a cop, Marcus Reed, and the decisions you make and the way you handle yourself define you as a bad cop or a good cop. There are tons of activities to do around the world: frisking people, hanging out in dojos, planting evidence, eating at convenience stores, etc. All these things and the way you do them has an effect on the story arc, but you spend too much time wrapping your brain around all you need to do. If you have the patience, the game has its rewards, but dedicated fans of the series are likely the only ones who'll reap them.

– Tom Price

▶ Go ahead and plant evidence. He looks like a drain on society anyway.



THE VERDICT

- + Breaking up hooker riots.
- + Shooting first and asking questions later.
- Poor car physics make taking the subway a much better option.
- ? Is New York really this drab and uninteresting of a place?

6.5

Publisher: UBISOFT MONTREAL Developer: UBISOFT MONTREAL ESRB: MATURE Live/Multiplayer: Aware
 Selling Points: Running across walls in real life is much more painful Backwards compatible: No

Publisher: ACTIVISION Developer: LUXOFLEX ESRB: MATURE Live/Multiplayer: None
 Selling Points: The entire island of Manhattan mapped out in detail Backwards compatible: No

HANG UP YOUR HALO. GET READY FOR HELL.



PAINKILLER HELL WARS

THE AWARD-WINNING SHOOTER, COMING SOON TO XBOX*



Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.

WWW.PAINKILLERGAME.COM

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Launch day frenzy on Target

OXM thwarts 360 thievery and protects line; plus other nationwide hijinks!

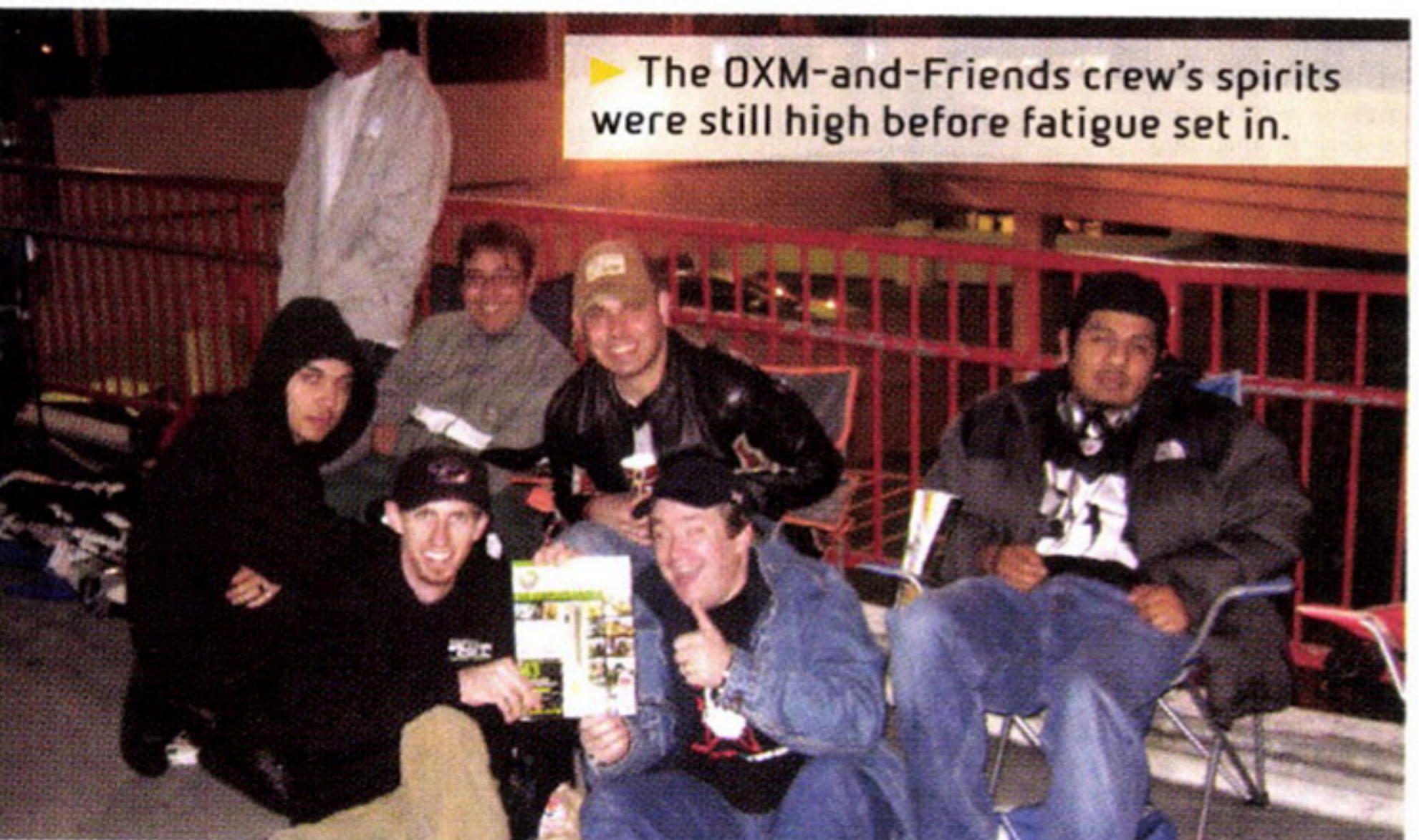
CONTEST ALERT: See that little screenshot on the spine of this issue? It's part of a new contest! Simply email the name of the game shown and the page number it can be found on to letters@officialxboxmagazine.com with the subject header "Spine Contest 2." A random winner gets a copy of that game.



▶ The crowd got a bit rowdy with the beanbag chairs while waiting for the hangar doors to open...



▶ OXM subscriber and Design-Your-Own Faceplate Contest Winner Gary Gorzack partied at Zero Hour in the Mojave Desert.



▶ The OXM-and-Friends crew's spirits were still high before fatigue set in.

Before the sun even rose across the nation on November 22, a.k.a. Xbox 360 Launch Day, the madness had already begun. In fact, in some locations, it was chaos.

Microsoft's Zero Hour party in a blimp hangar in the Mojave Desert in Southern California proved to be quite a success. Beginning at 7.00pm on Sunday the 20th, the party continued for 30 hours. Attendees were rewarded with a memory unit, a hoodie, Xbox Live membership, and could play all 18 launch games in kiosks complete with a posh HDTV/bean bag chair setup. Even Final Fantasy XI made a special playable appearance.

"We've got an RV we're partying in, so we're gonna be here the whole time," said OXM subscriber Matt Morgan of Los Angeles, who came with three friends. An unexpected fourth pal stopped by. Xbox VP Peter Moore saw Morgan's ride covered in Xbox 360 stickers, ride, knocked, and was invited in to share a beer, which he did.

Back at OXM's local Target store in the San Francisco area, standing in line had never been so dramatic. "When the PS2 was released, I came too late and didn't get it until four months later. Then the same thing happened with the Xbox! So I just realized, it was worth it. I don't want to wait four months again," said camper Erick Garcia, who was third in line for an allotment of what turned out to be just 13 machines (of which only five were the premium variety).

OXM contributors Dan Amrich and Gabe Graziani overnighted it with Garcia and around 50 other 360-craving gamers. Our duo scored the last of the \$399 systems, but not before thwarting a fraudulent customer, and battling security guards intent on dispersing the line. Right as the store opened, a line jumper purchased a Core system, but swiped the last premium package off the counter – which turned out to be earmarked for Amrich – and bolted out the door. Security followed and found Dan standing behind the thief's car, preventing his rearward exit. The perpetrator was about to plow through the car parked in front of him – Dan's car! – but security arrived and defused the situation and Dan got his 360. True story.

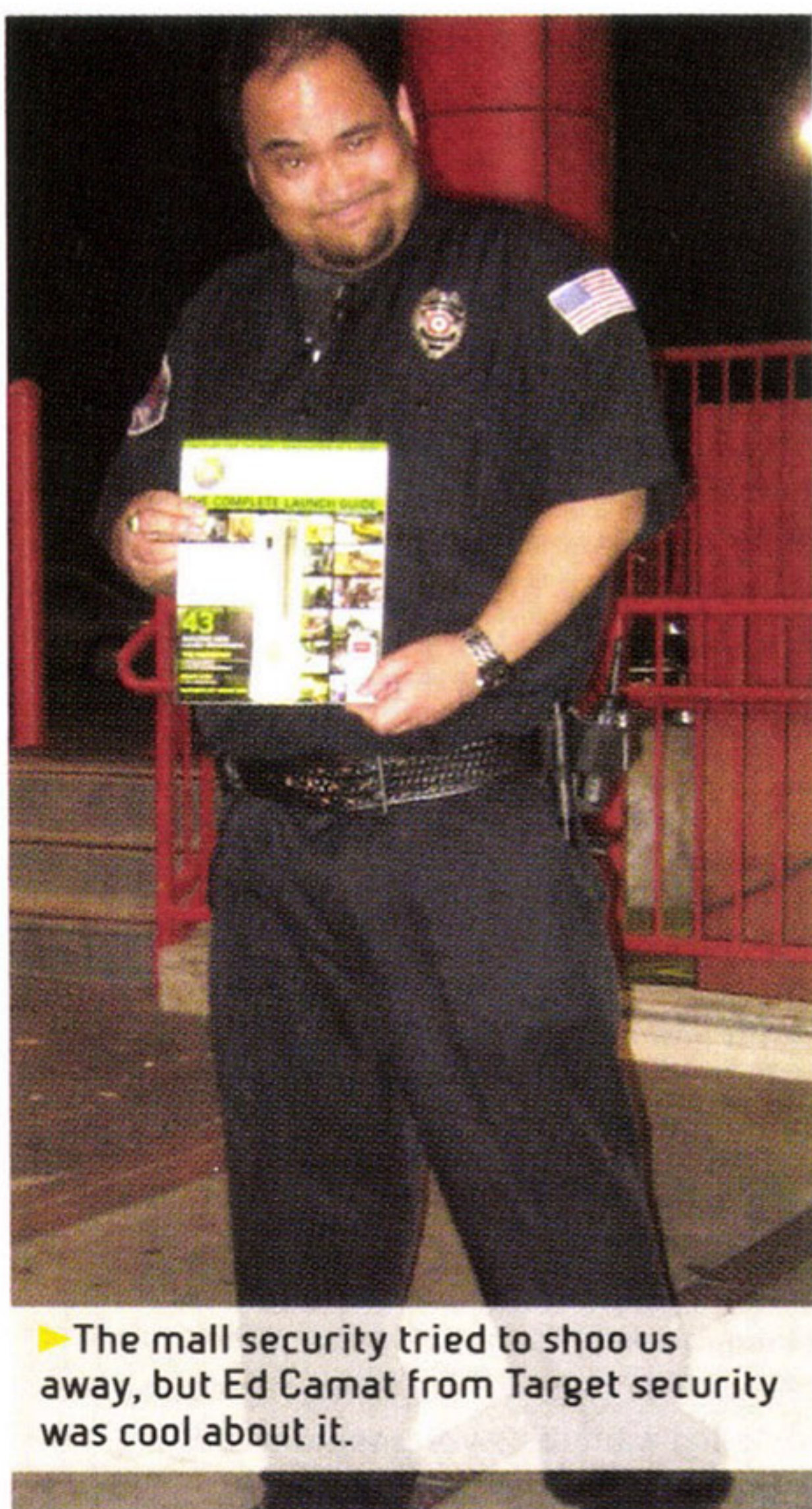
Gates Waits

Bill Gates took part in the launch at his local Best Buy in Bellevue, WA, taking time to play some Xbox 360 with fellow line-goers.



► Think Bill got whipped in this PGR 3 race? Well...probably.

After the dust had settled on the morning of the 22nd, we called around two dozen retail stores in the Bay Area and couldn't turn up a single system, premium or core. Before noon, the entire area had been picked clean. Some systems were selling on eBay for around \$2,000 that night, but the outlook for retail was good! Circuit City spokeswoman Amanda Tate told us both frankly and optimistically, "We would've liked to have said we had hundreds [for launch day], but in reality it was dozens. [But] we do expect to get supply throughout the holidays."



► The mall security tried to shoo us away, but Ed Camat from Target security was cool about it.

Backward Compatibility Explained

Over 200 Xbox games were playable on Xbox 360 on launch day, which is an impressive achievement since making each game work requires the creation of an individual piece of emulator software, as well as the subsequent testing. Microsoft also announced some rather intriguing details about how it all works:

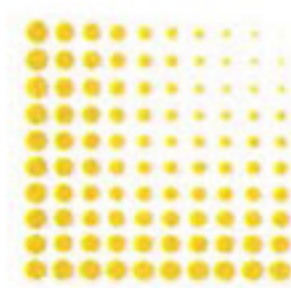
- Over time, Microsoft plans to make the entire library of original Xbox games compatible with Xbox 360. Check www.xbox.com/en-US/games/backwardcompatibilitygameslist.htm for updates.
- Only *Halo* and *Halo 2* work out of the box. For the remaining games, emulators must be downloaded for each individual game. Three ways to do this:
 - Download via Xbox Live (Silver or Gold).
 - Download at xbox.com, burn the files to a CD, and load the CD into your Xbox 360.
 - Pay a small shipping fee to Microsoft, and a CD will be mailed to you (see xbox.com).
- A hard drive is required for backwards compatibility.
- Save games will not transfer from Xbox to 360, but you can, for example, play *Halo 2* on an original Xbox against a friend who's playing on a 360.
- All downloadable content for original Xbox games will be available for free download in the Xbox 360 Marketplace.
- All of the supported original Xbox games will be upscaled to 720p and 1080i if you have an HDTV and a component or VGA cable.

HERE'S THE FULL LIST OF BACKWARD COMPATIBLE GAMES AS OF LAUNCH DAY:

AirForce Delta Storm • Alias • Aliens vs. Predator Extinction • All-Star Baseball 2003 • Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding • Army Men: Sarge's War • Atari Anthology • ATV: Quad Power Racing 2 • Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II • Barbarian • Barbie Horse Adventures Wild Horse Rescue • Batman Begins • Battle Engine Aquila • Battlestar Galactica • BMX XXX • Brute Force • Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds • Cabela's Dangerous Hunts • Cabela's Outdoor Adventures 06 • Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season • Cabela's Deer Hunt 2004 Season • Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth • Call of Duty: Finest Hour • Casino • Catwoman • Chicago Enforcer • Circus Maximus • Close Combat: First to Fight • Colin McRae Rally 4 • Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers • Commandos 2: Men of Courage • Conflict: Desert Storm • Constantine • Crash Twinsanity • Crash Nitro Kart • Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge • Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon • Curse: The Eye of Isis • Dark Angel • Darkwatch • Dead or Alive 3 • Deathrow • Digimon Rumble Arena • Dinotopia • Drake • Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness • ESPN MLS ExtraTime 2002 • Euro 2004 • F1 2001 • Fable • Fable: The Lost Chapters • Fairly Odd Parents: Breakin' da Rules • FIFA Soccer 2003 • FIFA Soccer 2004 • FIFA Street • Fight Night 2004 • Fight Night Round 2 • Ford Mustang • Ford vs. Chevy • Forza Motorsport • Freedom Fighters • Frogger Beyond • Futurama • Fuzion Frenzy • Genma Onimusha • Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde • Grand Theft Auto 3 • Grand Theft Auto: Vice City • Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas • Gravity Games Bike: Street. Vert. Dirt. • Grooverider: Slot Car Thunder • Half-Life 2 • Halo • Halo 2 • Halo 2 Multiplayer Map Pack • Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire • Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone • He-Man: Defender of Grayskull • Hitman: Contracts • House of the Dead 3 • IHRA Drag Racing Sportsman Edition • IHRA Professional Drag Racing 2005 • Jade Empire • James Bond 007: NightFire • Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death • Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis • Kabuki Warriors • Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer • kill.switch • Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events • Loons: The Fight for Fame • Manhunt • Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2 • Max Payne • Max Payne 2 • Medal of Honor: European Assault • Medal of Honor: Frontline • Medal of Honor: Rising Sun • Mega Man Anniversary Collection • Metal Arms: Glitch in the System • MicroMachines • Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing • Monster Garage • Mortal Kombat: Deception • MTV Music Generator 3 • Murakumo: Renegade Mech Pursuit • MX World Tour: Featuring Jamie Little • Namco Museum • NBA Live 2004 • Need For Speed Underground 2 • NFL Blitz 2002 • NFL Blitz 2003 • NFL Blitz 2004 • NHL 2004 • NHL Hitz 2003 • Ninja Gaiden • Ninja Gaiden Black • Outlaw Golf 2 • Outlaw Volleyball • Pariah • Phantom Crash • Pinball Hall of Fame • Pitfall: The Lost Expedition • Predator Concrete Jungle • Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time • Pro Evolution Soccer 5 • Pro Race Driver • Pump It Up: Exceed • Pure Pinball • Puyo Pop Fever • Quantum Redshift • Rayman Arena • Raze's Hell • Red Dead Revolver • Red Faction II • Red Card 2003 • Robotech: Battlecry • Rocky Legends • Rogue Ops • Samurai Jack • Samurai Warriors • Scooby Doo! Night of 100 Frights • Scrapland • Sega GT 2002 • Shadow The Hedgehog • Shamu's Deep Sea Adventures • ShellShock: Nam '67 • Sid Meier's Pirates! • Sneakers • Sniper Elite • Soccer Slam • Sonic Heroes • Sonic Mega Collection Plus • Speed Kings • Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy • Splat Magazine Renegade Paintball • SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom • SpyHunter 2 • Spyro A Hero's Tail • SSX 3 • Stake • Star Trek: Shattered Universe • Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith • Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy • Star Wars: Starfighter Special Edition • Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic • Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II – The Sith Lords • Street Racing Syndicate • Stubbs the Zombie in Rebel without a Pulse • Super Bubble Pop • Super Monkey Ball Deluxe • SX Superstar • Tecmo Classic Arcade • Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles • Test Drive: Eve of Destruction • Tetris Worlds • The Great Escape • The Hulk • The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction • The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer • The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King • The Simpsons Hit and Run • The Simpsons Road Rage • The Terminator Dawn of Fate • The Thing • Thief: Deadly Shadows • Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon • Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3 • Tony Hawk's American Wasteland • Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 • Tony Hawk's Underground 2 • Torik: Prehistoric Punk • Toxic Grind • Ty The Tasmanian Tiger • Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 2: Bush Rescue • Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 3: Night of the Quinkan • Urban Freestyle Soccer • Vexx • Volvo: Drive for Life • World Series Baseball 2K3 • Worms 4 Mayhem • Worms Forts: Under Siege • WWE Raw 2 • XIII • Yourself!Fitness

Talking Xbox with Bill Gates

Microsoft's chairman talks to *OXM* about past Xbox lessons, future plans, and *Halo 3*



OXM: Microsoft made a big investment in the original Xbox that didn't make money. What are the expectations in this generation?

BILL GATES: Whenever you enter a new business, you expect to make a significant initial investment – Xbox has always been a long-term strategy for us. And in just four years, Microsoft has become the world's second-biggest player in the console industry. At the same time, we've established a core audience that is incredibly enthusiastic about the cutting-edge technology and amazing games that will make up the Xbox 360 experience. So we're confident that we already have the foundation for an extremely strong growth business for Microsoft.

OXM: Forbes recently revealed that Xbox cost Microsoft around \$4 billion. Was this the worst-case scenario for getting into the console market?

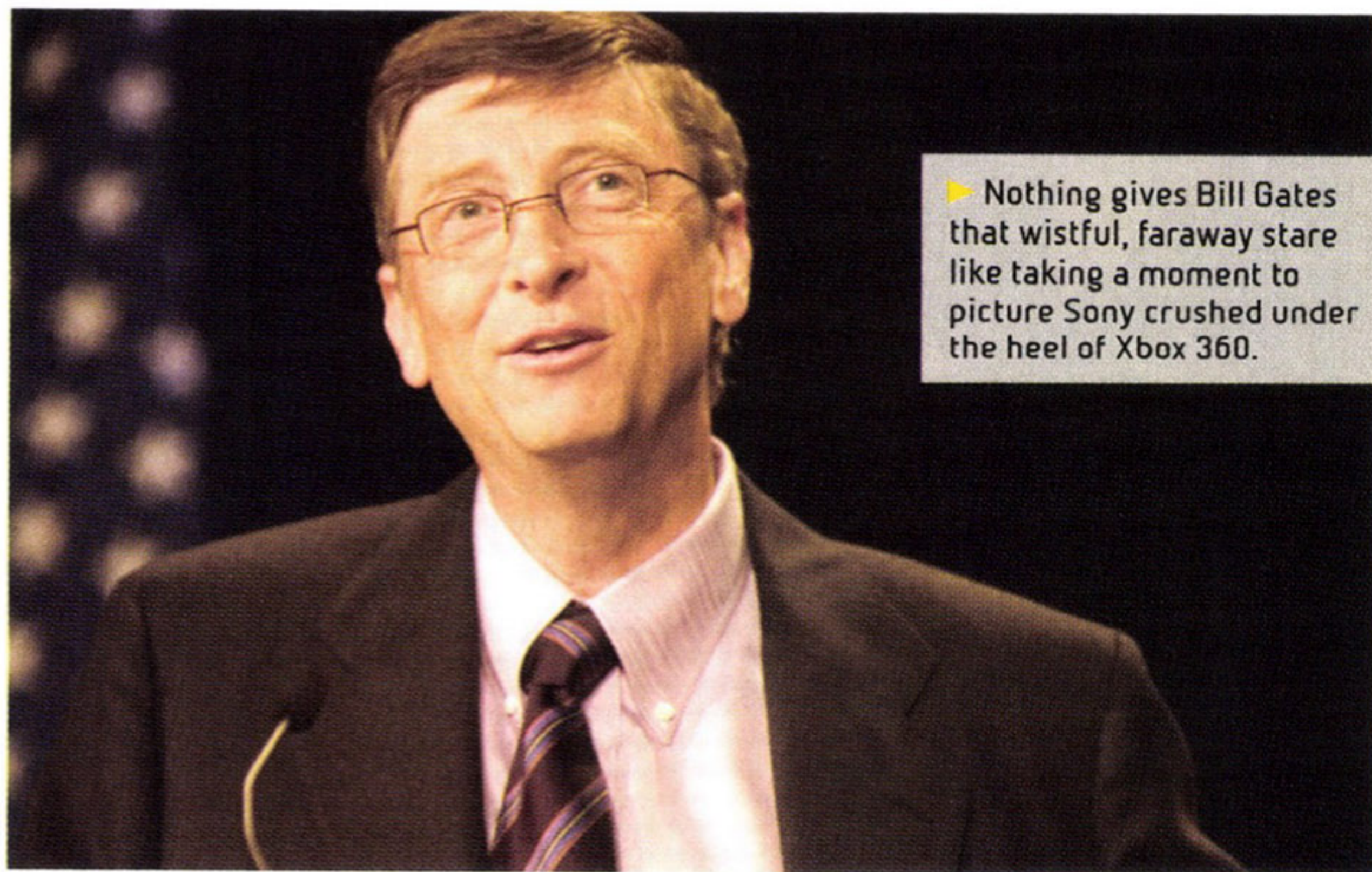
BILL GATES: We never enter a new business unless it has a good chance of becoming a commercial success for us – and in the technology industry that can take time. So we've always viewed Xbox as an investment for the long term. And in the space of four years, we've proven our value to the industry and consumers in more than just sales. The Xbox platform delivers amazing technology and more choice than ever. I have no doubt this investment in innovation will pay off for us.

OXM: If PS3 wins the next round in terms of market share, will there be a third Xbox?

BILL GATES: I can't emphasize enough: We're in this for the long term, and we're confident that our constantly advancing technology will win millions more customers around the world. Right now, we're driving one of the biggest console launches in gaming history. We're delivering Xbox 360 to millions of people around the world in the first-ever truly global console launch. Imagine the possibilities when kids from Japan are challenging kids from New York to a race of *PGR3*, or a *PDZ* team from Osaka challenges a team from San Francisco. This really is the dawn of a new era of advanced gaming.

OXM: You were famously quoted in *Time* magazine saying *Halo 3* would be released to match the PS3 launch date, but others at Microsoft and Bungie have subsequently backed away from that. Can you clarify that statement?

BILL GATES: Well, the last thing I want to do is steal any of *Halo 3*'s thunder [smiles].



▶ Nothing gives Bill Gates that wistful, faraway stare like taking a moment to picture Sony crushed under the heel of Xbox 360.

OXM: With the refocus on winning the Xbox battle in Japan, Microsoft is taking on Sony on its own turf. Is consumer electronics next? And what's the key to turning the tide in Japan?

BILL GATES: We're the world's second-biggest console maker right now, but we know that we can never be number one without winning the hearts of Japanese gamers. That's why we enlisted the talents of Hers in Osaka and Astro in San Francisco to develop a console that has truly global appeal. It's why we secured the best talents in Japanese game development – including Okamoto-san, Itagaki-san, Sakaguchi-san, and Mizuguchi-san – to create unique content for Xbox 360. We're laser-focused on developing original, long-lasting IP that has truly global appeal.

OXM: Is there anything about the original Xbox that you wish Microsoft had done differently – perhaps the design, marketing, or hardware? And was there a specific key

lesson that was learned and then applied to the creation of Xbox 360?

BILL GATES: With Xbox, we were definitely learning on the job. With Xbox 360, we've been able to create a console that draws heavily on those four years of experience – one that is both stunningly designed and technologically capable of powering the ultimate games experience and the digital-entertainment lifestyle. We've also ensured that we've "future-proofed" this console, which will make it an integral part of home entertainment centers for years to come.

OXM: Xbox 360 appears to be a definite step toward your vision of the digital entertainment lifestyle. How far down that road are we now?

BILL GATES: Xbox 360 is the fusion of raw technological power and elegant design at an affordable price. There's a lot of talk about killer apps, but as far as I'm concerned, Xbox 360 is the killer app for any HDTV setup. Make Xbox 360 a core component of your home entertainment center, and it will intensify every aspect of your digital experience.

OXM: What single feature of the Xbox 360 hardware excites you most?

BILL GATES: I'm really excited about the three processor cores that IBM developed for Xbox 360. Sure, our guys have worked with hyper-threading technology before, but this is like HT on steroids – and it enables game developers to create amazing, sweeping environments, lifelike AI, realistic physics, richer worlds, and stunning visual clarity. Then there's Xbox Live, which has evolved into way more than an online games network. It's a meeting place where people around the world can share ideas, chat, trade items on Marketplace, scout the competition, and learn more about people who enjoy the experiences they do. Xbox Live is more than just about games – it's about all the people who power new and exciting gameplay experiences.

OXM: If you could design your own game for the Xbox 360, what would you make? What does Bill Gates want to play?

BILL GATES: Xbox 360 is designed with every gamer in mind. So in that respect, the system is designed as much for me as for other gamers. What do I want to play? I want to play *Kameo*. I want to play *PDZ*. I want to play *PGR3*.






"I can't emphasize enough: We're in this for the long term."

DID YOU KNOW?: Sure, Microsoft's über-boss might be richer than most mid-sized nations, but he's also donated more cash than you can imagine – \$28.8 billion at last count to his foundation, which supports global literacy programs and huge health initiatives like a big push against malaria. That's incredibly impressive.

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Idol Chat

Where great game makers ask each other great questions

What do today's great game minds want to know from their peers? What questions are bugging them, what answers are they looking for? In the first in an ongoing series where the industry's most luminous luminaries interview one another, Epic Games' Cliff Bleszinski (*Unreal*, *Gears of War*) decided to chat with Double Fine Productions' Tim Schafer (*Grim Fandango*, *Psychonauts*). We stepped back and let the magic happen...

CLIFF: How do you feel about those sharky Hollywood fellas circling our business? Are they here to be our pals, or is "To Serve Man" actually...a cookbook?

TIM: Most of them just smell money, and they are going to take a couple bites out of us, find out they don't like how we taste, and then swim

away again. Just like real sharks. But a few of them have some ideas for independent finance and other ways to bring about a system where the content creators have more power, and if they can pull that off, then I'd be happy to jump into that pot pie.

Oh man. Now I'm just envisioning sharks with little chef hats on. See what happens when you mix metaphors?

CLIFF: I have to sell my vision every day, from the big picture to the tiniest detail, to the most important executive to the most casual gamer. How much salesmanship do you have to do? Do you enjoy that part of your job, curse it, or just see it as a necessary evil?

TIM: Yeah, you do have to sell your game a lot – first you have to pitch your ideas to whoever you're collaborating with, then to the whole team, then to the publishers, and then to the press, and eventually to the public. But a certain amount of this pitching is actually very helpful to the creative process.

Pitches have to be short, and so you really have to focus on the main thing that makes your game cool. The thing that made you go "Ah ha!" on that first day.

When you're thinking about what would make your game appeal to other people, you have to remind yourself about what made the game appeal to you in the first place. And it's important to keep reminding yourself of that because games shift and change as you are making them, and if you forget why you started making the thing, you

could find yourself working on something that you don't even like.

CLIFF: Are you a Game God yet? (I never got my free faux-gold watch!)

TIM: Oh yes. I do enjoy the god status, and of course, the costume. I love the clip-on beard, and having an excuse to wear a robe and sandals all day. And I'm saving a lot of money what with all the underwear I don't have to buy.

CLIFF: It seems like these days film directors want to make videogames and game designers want to make films. That said – what are your top three movies of all time and why?

TIM: Okay, first let me get this out of the way: *Casablanca*, *The Road Warrior*, and *Yojimbo*. Now, your first point wasn't really a question, but let me answer it anyway.

If a film maker wants to make a game, I think it's because (well first, money, but after that) they look at games and see all things that games don't

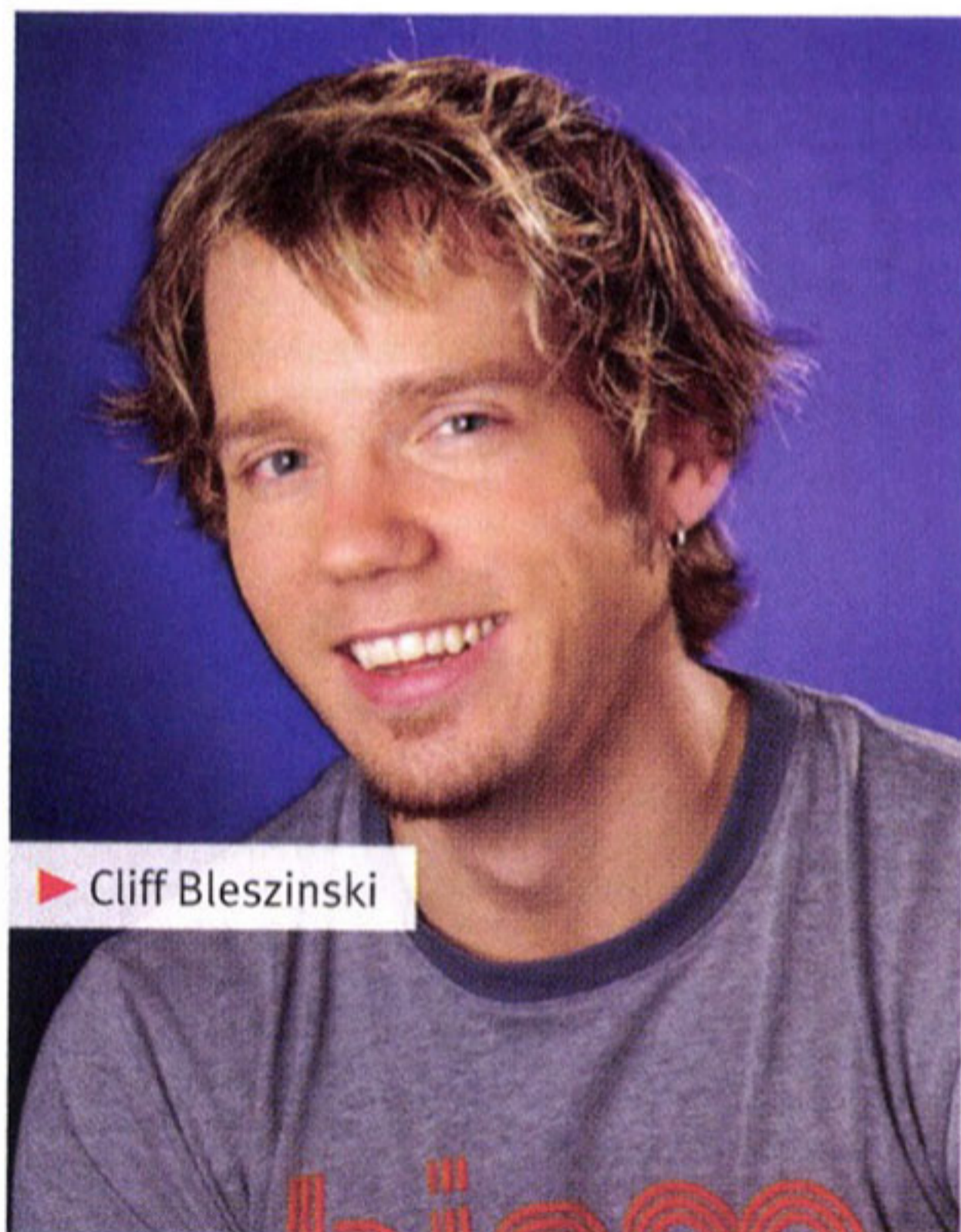
"Maybe we can keep tricking the system to get interesting games made...but it will be very hard, and many of us will be eaten by giant worms along the way."

typically do that well: characters, acting, story, dialogue, etc. And they think, hey I could do better than that! And when it comes to that stuff, they're probably right.

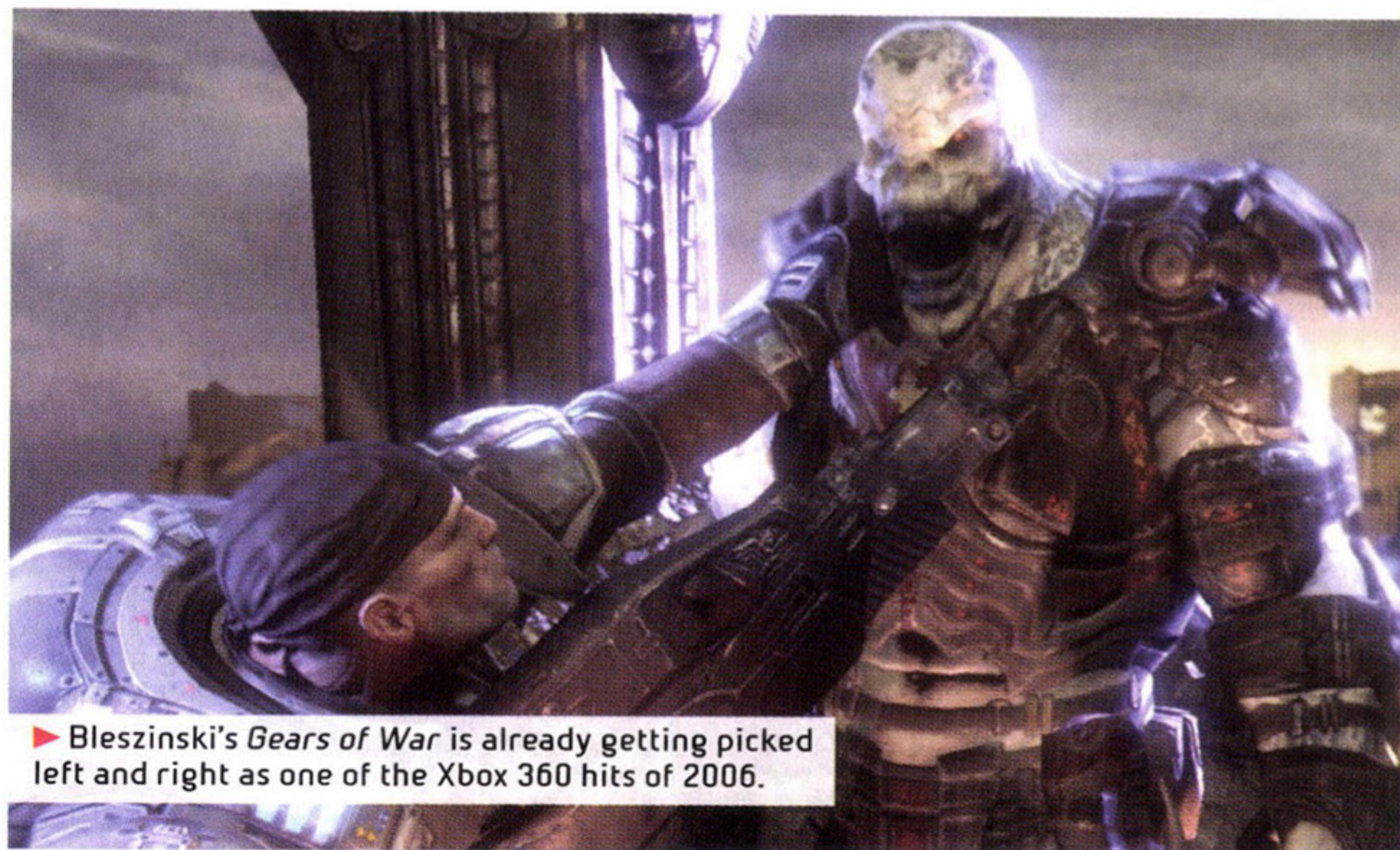
Will they be able to do the gameplay side better than us? That remains to be seen. Now then, I think a lot of game designers want to make films because they watch the Oscars every year and they think, "Hey, I could do that! I could write a speech and thank my mom and cry!" And they're probably right. I don't know if they could really do the other stuff well, the movie-making part. But who knows.

But here's the thing that always offends me a little bit. When you make a game or give a pitch for one, and someone says, "Wow, that would make a great movie!" And I know they mean it as a compliment, but I just want to say, "And what's wrong with it being a game?" Games are an art form unto themselves, and a fully complete medium in which to express an idea. If I had carved some great statue, people wouldn't see it and say, "Wow, I'd like to see a painting of that!"

I don't know if games will ever be as exciting as movies because the people involved with movie-making are just so much more glamorous than games people. But as creative works, games are much more interesting than movies. Every



▶ Cliff Bleszinski



▶ Bleszinski's *Gears of War* is already getting picked left and right as one of the Xbox 360 hits of 2006.

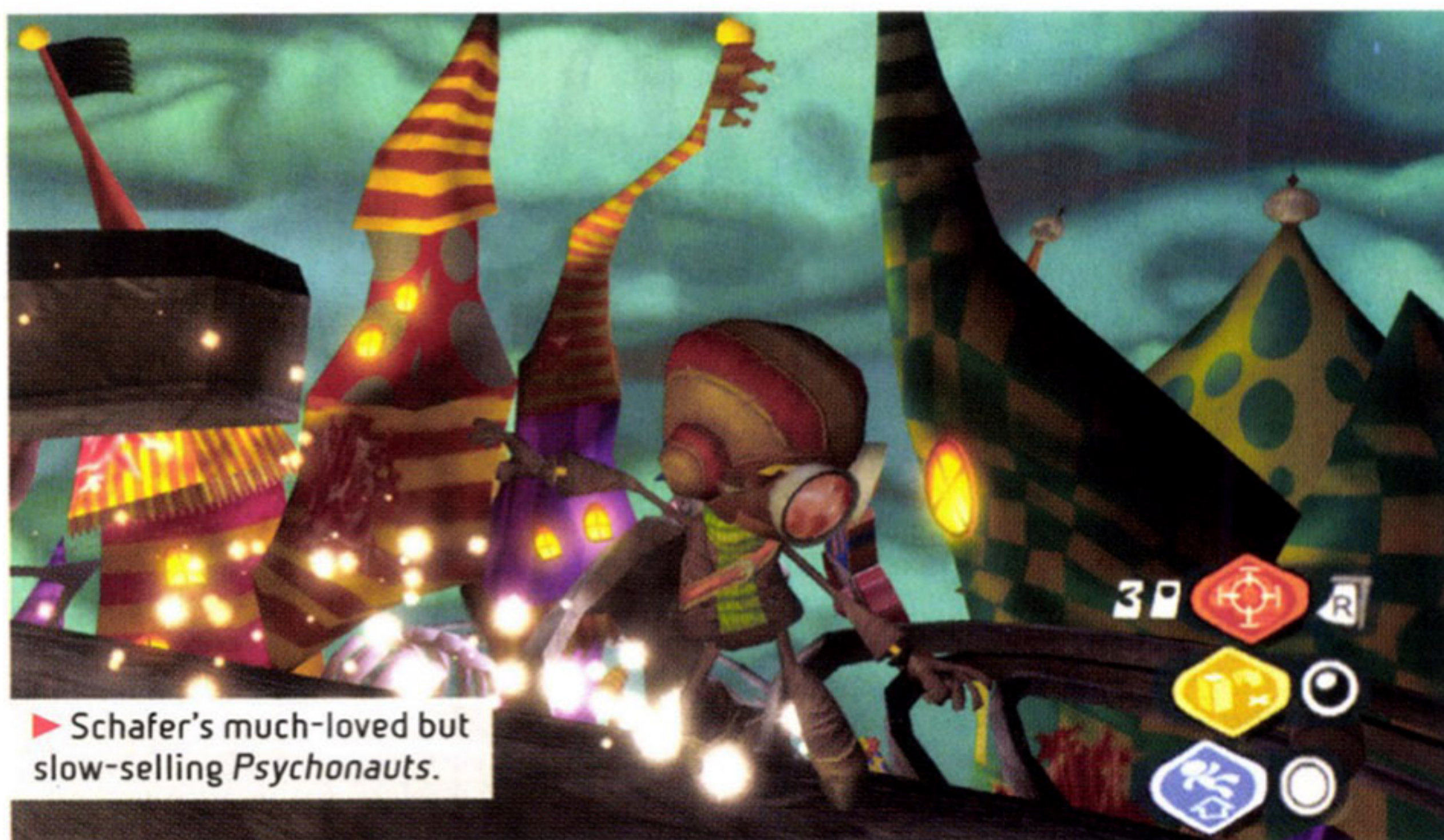
*CONFUSED BY THAT REFERENCE?: "To Serve Man" is an episode of *The Twilight Zone* where aliens arrive on Earth promising to help mankind, but they're actually here to eat us for dinner. In the episode, the alien's book *To Serve Man* isn't a manifesto...it's a cookbook!



game is a new invention. We have no idea yet what is possible – what we can make people feel – with games. It's harder to say that about film.

CLIFF: *Lunar: Silver Star Story* is an old RPG that actually brought tears to my prepubescent eyes. Any games ever make you cry?

TIM: I have not ever cried at a game. I always get choked up at the end of *It's a Wonderful Life*, so maybe if they made a game out of that, I would cry. Unless Peter Molyneux made it, because then I'd probably have the choice to not save my brother from the frozen lake in the beginning, which would set me on the course of becoming "Evil George Bailey," and then the ending wouldn't be so emotional. Oh wait, except my



► Schafer's much-loved but slow-selling *Psychonauts*.

brother wouldn't have saved those sailors, and we would have lost WWII, and I'm not sure if that would make me cry, but it would have definitely bummed me out for a long time.

CLIFF: *Neil Young from EA* continues to insist that we, as a medium, have yet to have our *Citizen Kane*. Do you think we have, and what game would that be? If not, how far away are we, and what can we do to reach that point?

TIM: *Citizen Kane* was a technical revolution, exploring new ways to shoot and edit film, and actually I think games are matching that level of invention right now – on the technical side. But the other half of Orson Welles' achievement with that movie was an incredibly engrossing character study of a fascinating man and his internal moral struggles and deterioration. No, I don't think games have done anything close to that, and I don't know if they ever will. There just isn't the demand for it. At least not right now. In the current games-buying public, you don't have a lot of people shouting, "More incredibly engrossing character studies of moral

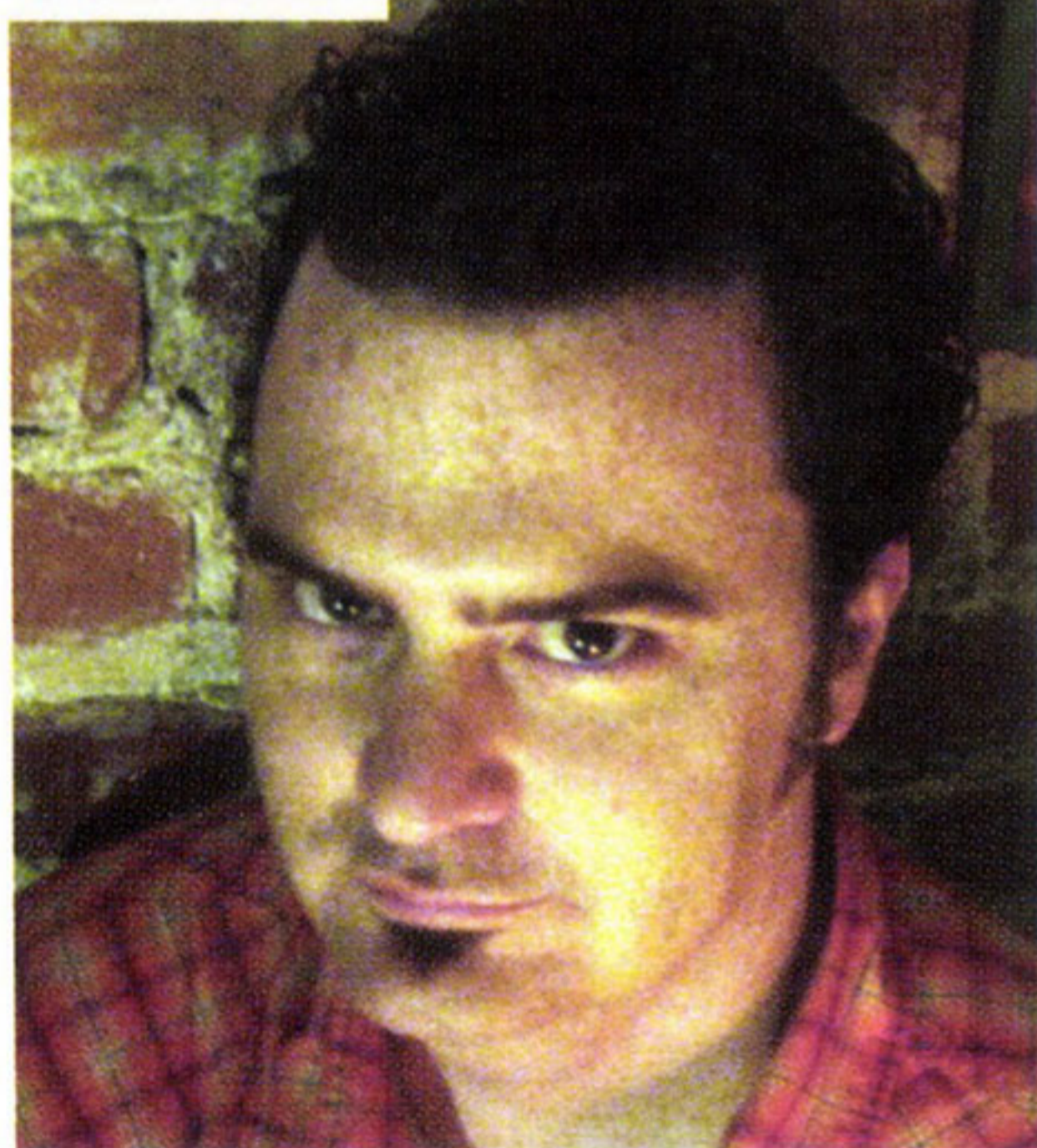
deterioration!" And since no one's asking for it, nobody's going to pay for it, and so the games industry will probably never have a *Citizen Kane*.

Unless something drastic happens to the people buying games. Maybe as players grow older, they will start demanding more sophistication from games. Maybe. Or maybe we can keep tricking the system to get interesting games made, and one of them will get lucky and be a big hit, and that will draw in a new kind of gamer. That cycle could repeat, and that part of the market could grow. But it will be like bringing water to Arrakis [the desert planet in *Dune*]. It will take 300 years, it will be very hard, and many of us will be eaten by giant worms along the way.

Next Month

Tim Schafer passes the baton, becomes the interviewer, and asks his own questions of Peter Molyneux, creator of *Fable*, *Black & White*, and *Populous*.

► Tim Schafer



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MEDIA HO!

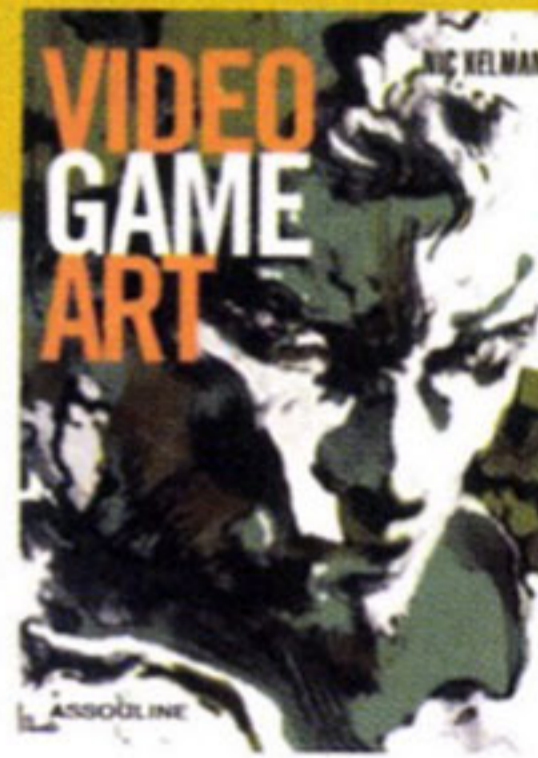


VIDEO GAME ART

BY NIC KELMAN • ASSOULINE BOOKS • \$29.95

Is videogame art really art? If you're asking the author of this book, he'd say "Absolutely," and I would agree with him completely. Maybe it's the gamer in me saying that, but I'm also an artist, so I feel I might have a valid perspective in this arena. The beauty of videogame art is often unrecognized, even though extremely talented artists are a huge part of what makes you love your gaming experience.

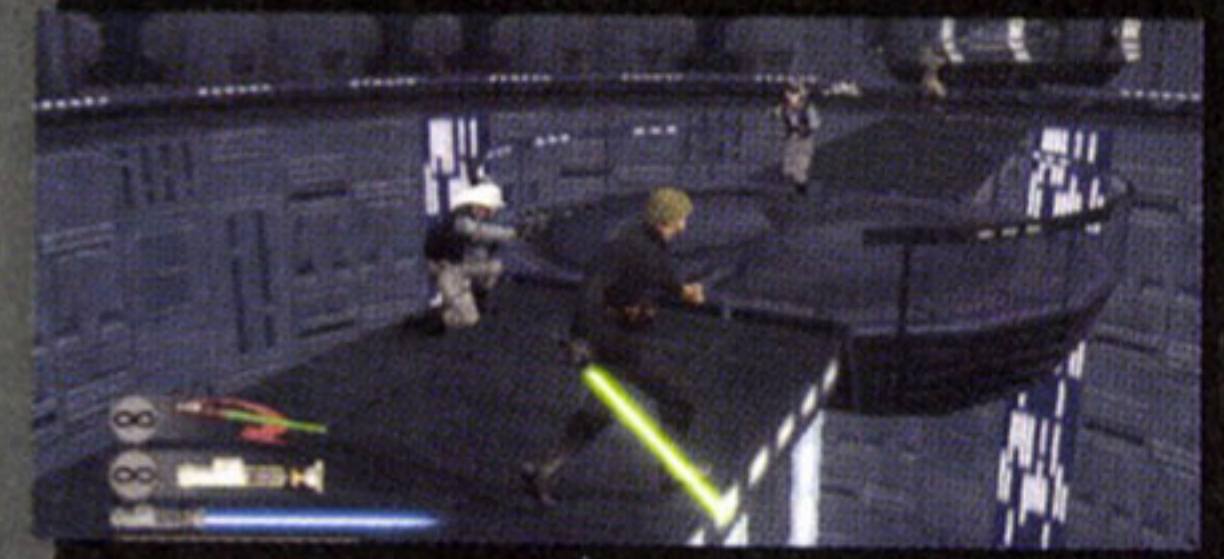
This intriguing book gives them the shout-out they deserve and will hopefully open art enthusiasts' minds to give them credit in the art world. Unfortunately, only so many games and their art could be covered before the final page came up, but overall Kelman's book is informative and delicious.



- Juliann Brown

CODE OF THE MONTH!

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II



INVINCIBILITY

Lean a bit toward the dark side with this invincibility cheat, which works in single-player games only. To use it, pause the game and enter the follow on the D-pad:
 ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️, ⬆️
 You'll hear a droid-like beep if you enter it correctly.

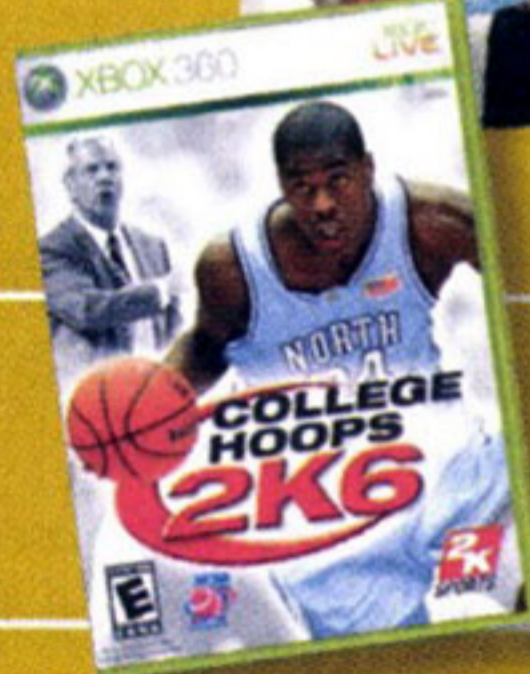
January CALENDAR

Note: All release dates are subject (and likely) to change, but were confirmed at press time.

1/3
Dumb & Dumber
 Unrated Edition
 New Line Home Video
 DVD



1/10
College Hoops 2K6
 2K Sports
 Xbox 360



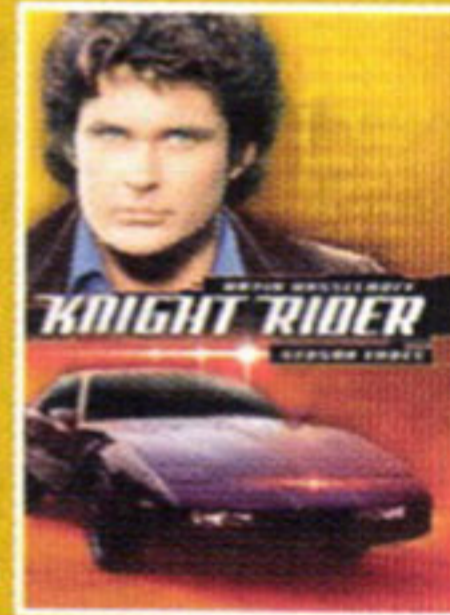
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PICK OF THE MONTH
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 2K Sports
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The new series of the Official Xbox Magazine challenges has been born!

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q - I am a subscriber, but I don't get a demo disc. Why?
A - That's not how we do it. We do not have a demo disc. Subscriptions are sold through the game rental service. Demo discs are available for purchase through our website at a cost of \$1 per disc for each rental disc.

Q - I have some technical questions regarding my Xbox console (not relating to a subscription, who do I talk to)?
A - Although we publish the Official Xbox Magazine for the Xbox console, we are not affiliated with Microsoft regarding the console. For questions about the Xbox hardware or software, please visit xbox.com or call 1-800-4MYXBOX.

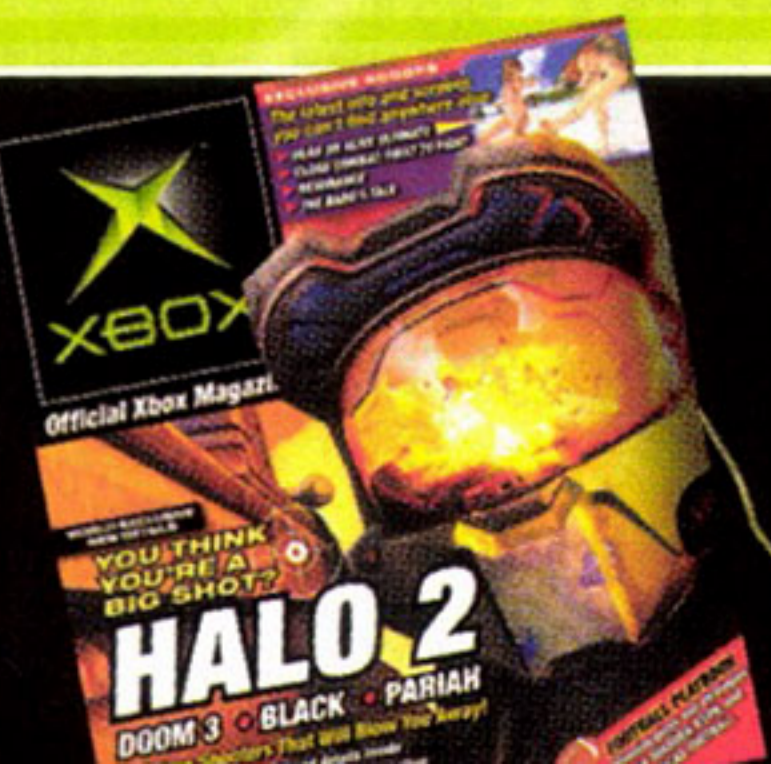
Q - How many times is Official Xbox Magazine published?
A - We publish 12 issues per year (December) plus a special holiday issue which contains all between December and January. Throughout the year there are additional issues released, i.e. Christmas Special, etc. These are available only via subscription.

Q - As a subscriber, I only get the console sleeve. Why does the non-rental version come with a "disc pack"?
A - While we would like to make the "disc pack" available to all customers, due to hardware and reading restrictions set down by the rental system, it is not possible for us to provide "disc packs" to subscribers at this time.

Q - I would like to purchase the "disc pack". How do I do this?
A - By calling 1-800-4MYXBOX. The cost is \$19.95 for a 12-month rental. Please have your credit card ready.

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All New FAQs Section

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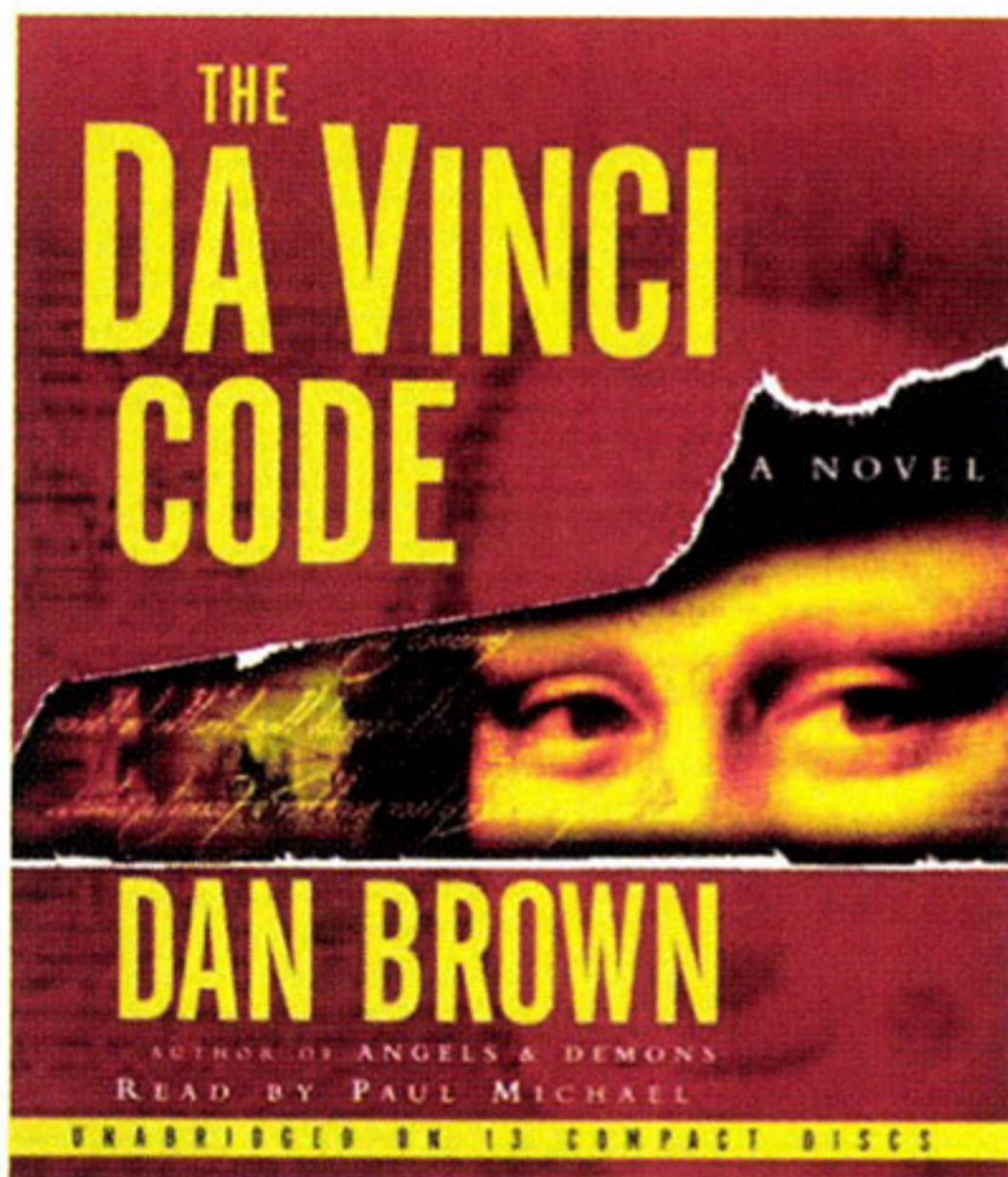


Inbox

A glimpse at what's happening in the videogame industry from the skewed perspective of our email inbox

EXTENDED Your pain, because that notorious destroyer of the videogame-film genre, **Uwe Boll**, has split his next cinematic "masterpiece," *Dungeon Siege*, into two movies, à la *Kill Bill*. Part one will be released on November 3, 2006, while the inevitably coma-inducing conclusion will hit theaters a month later on December 1. To make sure you don't accidentally buy a ticket for this, the full title is *In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale*.

ANNOUNCED An Xbox videogame based on the movie that's based on the book



The Da Vinci Code, due out alongside the film in May 2006. The flick stars **Tom Hanks**, the book was written by **Dan Brown**, and the game will be

"Fans are the real winners in this deal."

- BioWare co-CEO Greg Zeschuk on their marriage to Pandemic, forming an independent mega-developer.

developed by **The Collective** - the studio behind the impressive Xbox titles *Indiana Jones* and *Buffy* - with an assist from veteran adventure game designer **Charles Cecil** (famous for the *Broken Sword* series). No word yet on whether Hanks' likeness will be featured in the game, but we'd rather see virtual Hanks in a videogame version of *Forrest Gump*, where we could rapidly tap A and B billions of times to run back and forth across the country, *Track and Field* style.

SECURED The exclusive rights to create games for next-generation consoles based on *The Simpsons* by industry publishing behemoth **EA**. The videogame history of **Homer, Bart, and Co.** is both long and checkered. The duds have been crowding store shelves since the NES days, with the only two real bright spots being Konami's 1991 *The Simpsons* arcade game and Vivendi's recent Xbox offering, *The Simpsons Hit & Run*. Next up for EA? Exclusive publishing rights to the English* language. (**The English language is a registered trademark of Electronic Arts and may not be used without permission.*)

STARTED Hilarious and *OXM*-beloved game designer **Tim Schafer** on his next project. In an interview with the UK's *Edge* magazine, the creator of *Psychonauts*, *Grim Fandango*, and *Full Throttle* said he's working on "new stuff" that's in the "prototyping and design" phase. We're planning to get the exclusive details on the game from Tim by wooing him with a moonlit stroll along the beach. Wait, we're not creepy stalkers!

PREMIERING On the History Channel on December 18 at 8 p.m. EST/PST, a documentary on World War II inspired by **Gearbox's** strategic Second Great War hit, *Brothers in Arms*. The program will consist of a pair of one-hour specials. On a semi-related note, has anyone else seen the recent TV commercials for *Earned in Blood* and *Call of Duty 2: Big Red One*? They're almost exactly the same!

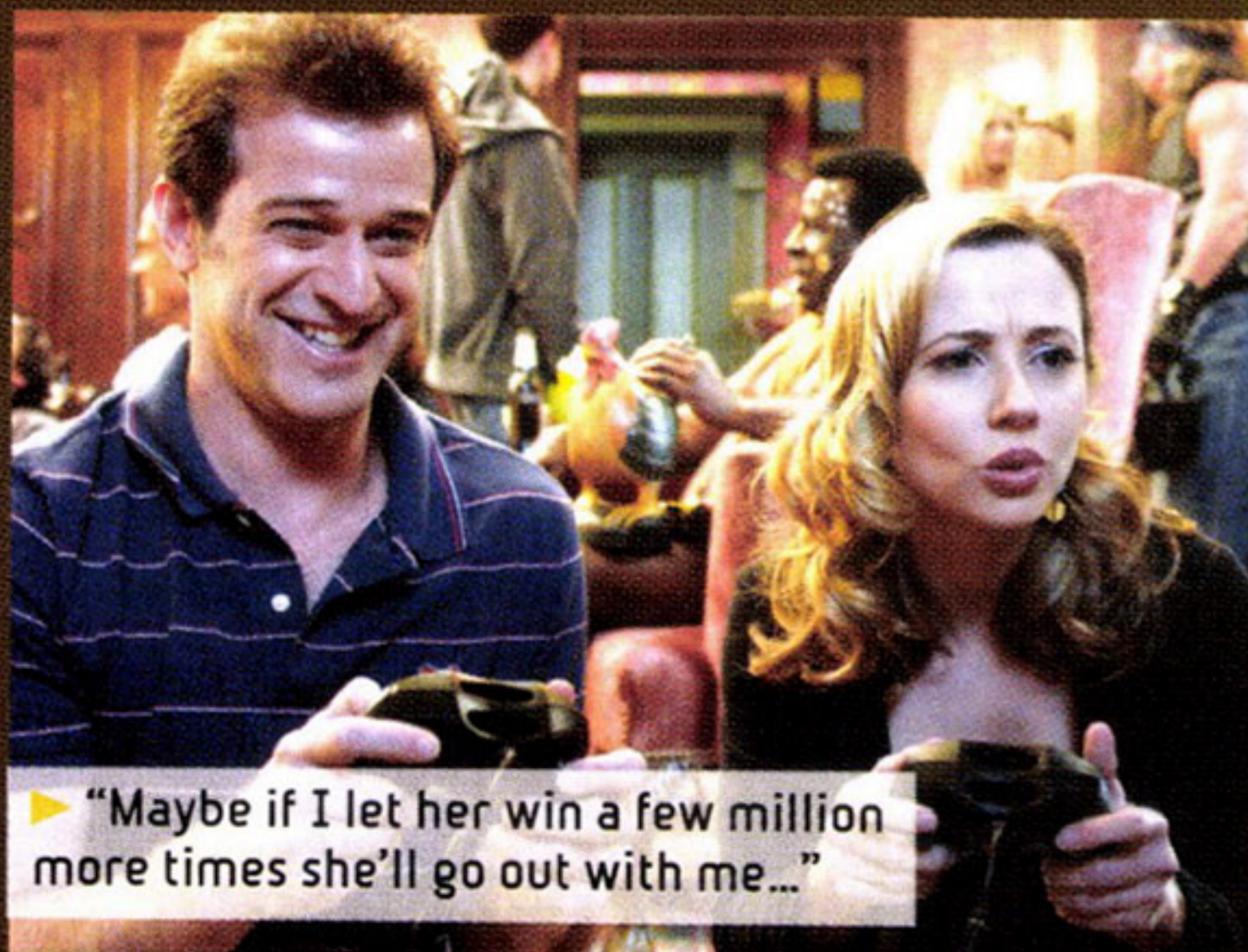


UNITED Top-shelf Xbox developers **BioWare** and **Pandemic**, in a \$300 million deal. The two independent studios came together via a former EA executive and U2 frontman Bono's private equity firm Elevation Partners. The pair of software houses will remain functionally independent of one another, with BioWare staying put in freezing Edmonton, Canada, and Pandemic keeping its stakes planted in balmy Los Angeles and Brisbane, Australia. It's unknown whether or not the studios will create games using each other's IPs, but a Pandemic-built *MDK 3* doesn't sound too bad to us. Confused? Think of this as the videogame equivalent of the Justice League; look for id Software to join and be the Batman of the group, coming and going as they please and scaring the crap out of everyone else in the cooperative.

IN DEVELOPMENT Two more unannounced titles at **Rare**, says Xbox marketing über-boss **Peter Moore**. Formal announcements are due in the spring, with the majority of the gaming public guessing that one of the projects is the long-clamored-for fighting game sequel *Killer Instinct 3*. Those same folks are also putting their odds on the other game being a

Now Playing

The new Adam Sandler-executive-produced flick, *Grandma's Boy*, opening in theaters on January 6. So why should you care? Well, besides the fact that the trailer actually looks pretty damn funny, the whole plot revolves around videogames. Thirty-something game tester Alex (played by Sandler pal Allen Covert) works in QA hunting bugs by day but is developing his own blockbuster videogame by night. When things go awry and he's forced to move in with his grandmother (*Everybody Loves Raymond's* Doris Roberts), hilarity ensues. Our take? If *Grandma's Boy* can do for Xbox public awareness what Fred Savage's *The Wizard* did for *Super Mario Bros. 3's* hype machine, we'll be stoked.



► "Maybe if I let her win a few million more times she'll go out with me..."

ADDITIONAL WARNING: Also opening in theaters on January 6 is Uwe Boll's newest train wreck, *BloodRayne*, starring Kristanna Loken (a.k.a. The Terminator). If you want to go see a videogame movie that day, pick the one that won't burn your eyeballs out of their sockets (that would be *Grandma's Boy*...).

Press Release of the Month

SO ABSURD WE COULDN'T HAVE MADE IT UP

AXE Presents the Launch of Mojo Master Multiplayer – Guys Compete to Unlock the Mysteries of Girls in the “Playa versus Playa” Version of This Virtual Fantasy Game of Seduction!

“Calling on all guys who think they’re at the top of their game. Leave your wingman behind, and claim the chance to use your best seduction skills to become the ultimate Mojo Master that single-handedly gets all the girls. AXE Unlimited today presents the launch of Mojo Master multiplayer available for play at www.mojomastergame.com. The multiplayer game is the final installment to the free online game developed by WildTangent that gives guys the chance to compete for the attraction of the sexiest übergirls in a head-to-head ‘Playa versus Playa’ seduction cage match.”

third installment in the kid-friendly *Banjo Kazooie* series. Whatever they actually are, both titles have allegedly already been in the works for two years. We’d be surprised if either rumor turned out to be correct in the long run.

LEAKED

The alleged script for the upcoming *Halo* movie.

Reputable movie-news website LatinoReview.com posted a review of the potential 2007 blockbuster (penned by **Alex Garland** of *28 Days Later* fame), which seems to closely follow the plot of the first game. Among the highlights? Parts of Master Chief’s under-the-helmet face are shown, revealing battle scars and a ghostly-white skin tone due to the fact that he almost never takes the suit off (this mirrors the description of the Spartans found in the *Halo* paperbacks). Also, the site claims the ending mirrors the conclusion of one of the two games, but doesn’t say which one.

As long as the Chief doesn’t turn out to be **Carrot Top**, we’ll be okay.

GUSHING

Blood from your ears, courtesy of EA. The pushers of the grating **EA Trax** soundtracks that permeate almost every one of the publisher’s titles are now bringing “EA Recordings” to your **iPod** and any other digital music-playing device you own thanks to a multi-album partnership with **Nettwerk Music Group**. EA Trax? Nettwerk? You’d think these multi-billion-dollar companies could afford a dictionary or a spell-checker.

UP FOR GRABS

A quarter of a million bucks, courtesy of EA. The catch? You and your ten-dude (or dudette) clan must be the last team standing in the 2560-player Xbox Live **Best of the Battlefield** tournament for *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat*. The competition should be coming to a close about the time you read this, so if you missed out this time...well, you could always track down the winners, beat them up, and take their oversized check for yourself. Not that we endorse that kind of behavior...

RUMOR MOLE



You may have heard **Jade Empire 2** will be on the way to PS3. The Mole is hearing 360 all the way... Xbox Japan boss **Yoshihiro Maruyama** caused a stir by saying that any potential HD-DVD Xbox 360 would only play back HD-DVD movies, but games would stay on regular DVDs. The Mole thinks that would be a waste of resources, and one need only look to the PC gaming community to see that special DVD edition games (or in this case HD-DVD) would do just fine... Microsoft has a clear “vision” of its upcoming **webcam for Xbox Live 360**; expect something to “spring” forth sooner than you think...

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Logitech Harmony Advanced Universal Remote for Xbox 360

Mfr: Logitech

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THE LORD OF THE REMOTES

Y, X, A, B buttons

If you want to control nothing but the Xbox 360, just press these four buttons in left-to-right order after you insert batteries in the remote. Of course, it does much more...

Activities button (see inset)

Press this while in the middle of doing one thing (such as playing Xbox 360) to bring up the list on screen of other programmed activities (such as "Watch TV").

The screen (see inset)

Push a button, and the Harmony will turn on everything you need to do the listed activity at once. For me, pushing the upper-left "Play Xbox 360" button booted up my 360, turned on my TV and set it to the correct input, and powered on my 5.1 speakers. When I was done and wanting to watch TV, pressing "Watch TV" turned off my 360, shut down my speakers, and switched the TV over to the satellite's S-Video input. Rad.

Conclusion

The price may scare you, but remember that the Harmony can replace a dozen remotes. Heck, it can even control your living room's lighting if you have a remote-capable setup. A couple of notes: Setup is achieved via a USB connection to your PC. Their software is pretty easy to use, but its Flash-esque interface was a bit annoying and slow to load, and I encountered a couple of crashes. Also, be prepared to spend several hours getting all of your gear tweaked just right (i.e., button presses, beaming some commands into your Harmony from existing remotes, etc.). In the end, though, the performance and convenience make it all worth it.

- Ryan McCaffrey

THE VERDICT

- + Does it all...in groups!
- + Great size and form factor.
- Requires a sizable time investment to tweak everything just right.
- ? Why weren't remotes like this invented sooner?



Logitech Z-5450 Wireless 5.1 THX Speakers

Mfr.: Logitech

\$\$: 500

OXM TESTED, SPOUSE APPROVED

My fiancée hates wires, so riding to my rescue are Logitech's THX-certified Z-5450s, which feature standard wired front and center channels but wireless rear satellites that operate on a 2.4GHz spectrum. This means you don't have to snake speaker wires across the floor or tape them across the ceiling. Granted, calling them wireless is a bit misleading as the rears do each need to plug into a power outlet. But if you've got your speakers on your back wall, chances are there's an outlet there too.

Cool factor aside, actual audio performance was excellent. These are clearly tuned for gaming with crisp audio from the surrounds and clear vocals from the center channel. Only bass yielded mild disappointment. It didn't come close to the low, thundering punch pounded out by fellow OXM favorites from Spherex and Creative Labs, and in fact sounded muddy unless you crank the subwoofer down below one-third.

The price tag is a hair steep at \$500, but when you consider the stellar performance and the spouse-approval factor, the Logitech Z-5450s are easy to love.

- Ryan McCaffrey

THE VERDICT

- + Wireless rears; no lag/interference.
- + Easy to read decoder with plenty of inputs.
- Muddy bass at all but the lower levels.
- ? Where's our optical cable?



HOW WE TESTED: For the Harmony remote, our setup included an Xbox 360, a Samsung HLR-4667W DLP HDTV, a Hughes DirecTV satellite receiver, Spherex Xbox 5.1 speakers, and a JVC VCR. For the Z-5450s, it should be noted that we were unable to test for interference from a 2.4GHz cordless telephone.

"I USE VIDEO GAME RATINGS TO HELP ME DECIDE WHICH GAMES ARE OK FOR MY KIDS TO PLAY."

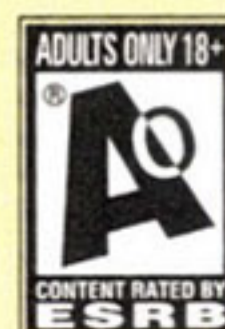


CHECK THE RATINGS ON EVERY VIDEO GAME BOX.

RATING SYMBOLS

DESCRIPTORS

OK
TO PLAY?



FRONT



BACK



THE BUSINESS OF XBOX

Xbox Live: Microsoft's Secret Weapon



By Geoff Keighley

A 14-year game-journalism veteran, Geoff writes for publications ranging from *Business 2.0* to *Entertainment Weekly*. He also hosts a show on the G4 TV network.

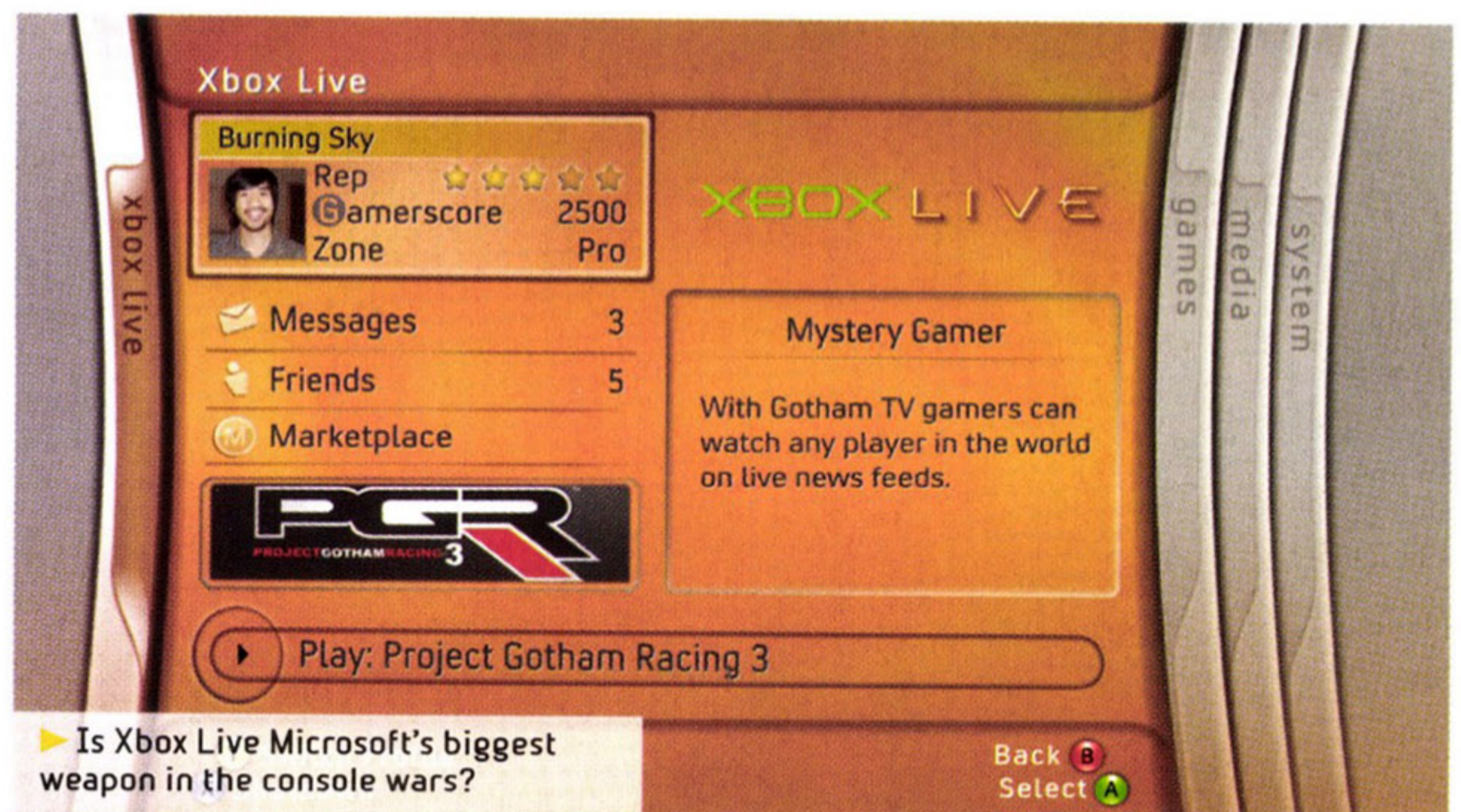
geoff@officialxboxmagazine.com

What does Microsoft think is its trump card in the console war against Sony? If you answered *Halo 3*, you might be right. But you might also be correct if you picked Xbox Live, the online gaming service that has amassed 2 million subscribers in just over two years. With the introduction of Xbox 360, Microsoft is hoping to amplify the success of Xbox Live to a point where it becomes a main strategic advantage over Sony, which, as of press time, had yet to officially announce its online plans for PlayStation 3.

Much like how iTunes has a lock on the downloadable-music market, Microsoft expects that its long-term investment in Xbox Live will allow the service to become synonymous with online gaming. And in turn, the hope is that Xbox Live will create “network externalities” – an economic term that means that as more people use a service, it increases in value to each user and makes it harder to switch to a rival service. In other words, get users hooked on the Xbox Live community, and they’ll be less inclined to go elsewhere (PS3) for their gaming needs.

Microsoft’s bet on Xbox Live is understandable given the company’s background in software and services, not hardware. Bill Gates and his gang in Redmond have little experience building processors, but they know quite a bit about operating systems and other forms of software. As such, Microsoft believes that it has the expertise to create a better online service than what Sony, primarily a hardware company, can create for PS3. Microsoft also believes that the Xbox 360 software and services – such as better development tools, a richer online experience, and a better user interface than Sony’s PS3 offerings – will balance out any power differential.

That bet largely depends on the adoption of Xbox Live in this next generation. For the Xbox 1, about 10 percent of users subscribed to Live, which cost \$50 a year. With Xbox 360, Microsoft’s internal goal is to get half of all owners online by the end of the generation. The uptake will be helped by the Silver tier, which allows users to sign up for Xbox Live for free and chat with friends. But you still have to pay a subscription fee if you want to face off against friends in multiplayer games. While most Xbox owners have not been averse to



► Is Xbox Live Microsoft's biggest weapon in the console wars?

paying the fee, it’s worth noting that it’s entirely free to play online games like *SOCOM* or *Madden* on PS2. Of course, PlayStation does not offer Xbox Live-style features like a common logon for all games, a system-wide Friends list, and the core functionality that makes getting to the online games so simple.

No matter what Sony drums up for PS3 online, Microsoft thinks it has the upper hand because of its investment in building up a user’s master profile on Xbox Live. Besides sophisticated matchmaking and ranking systems, players now get a reputation ranking and a list of in-game achievements which friends can view

to leave all that equity and status behind and switch to a rival system. Why be a nobody on PS3 – and with no guarantee of any comparable organization – when you can be somebody on Xbox Live? Of course this premise mistakenly assumes that the same games will be on both systems. If there’s a difference in content – say, if Napster offered the next album by your favorite band, not iTunes – you’d probably be willing to make a switch or at the very least use both services, even if you had already invested a lot of time and money in iTunes.

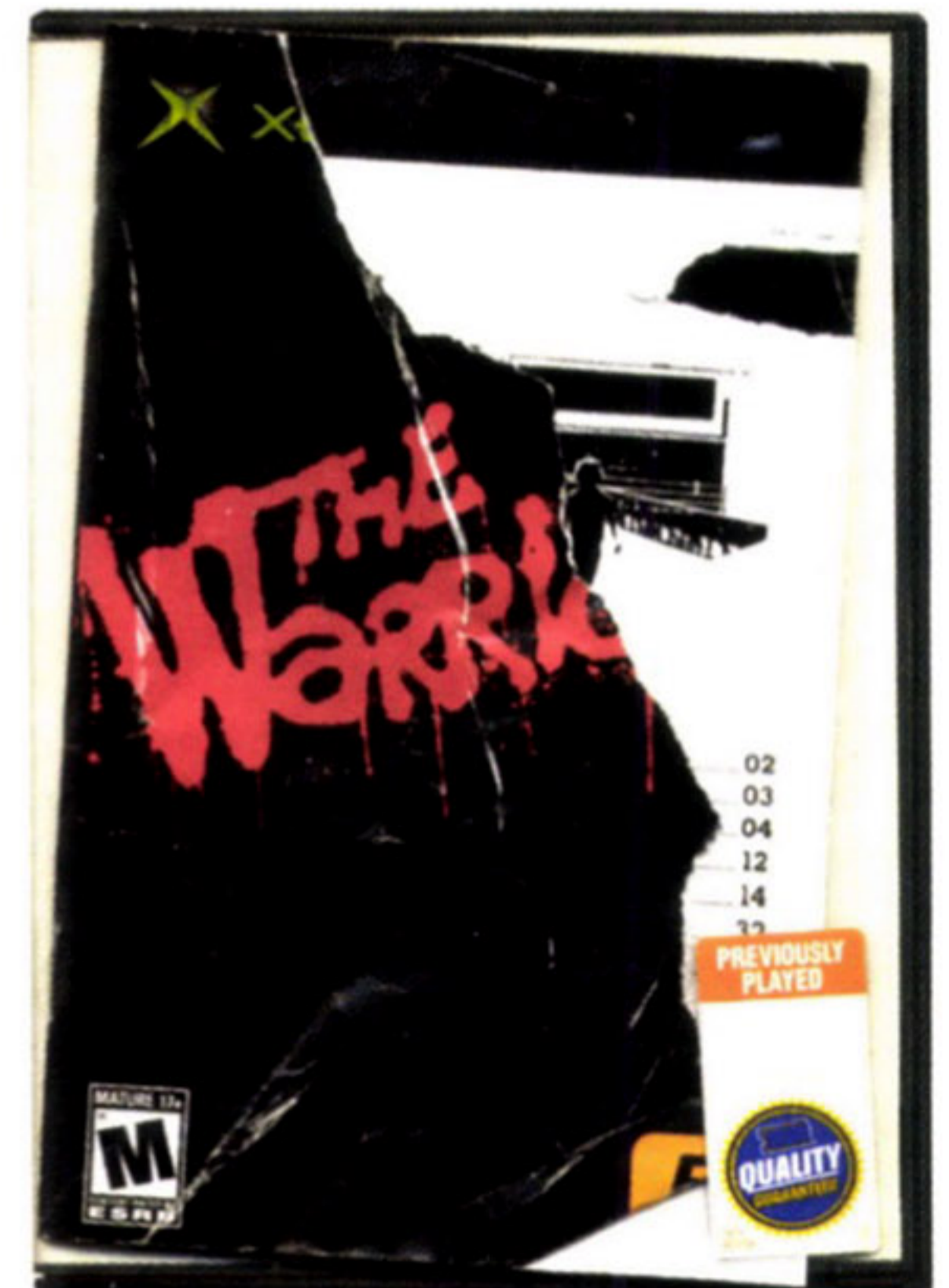
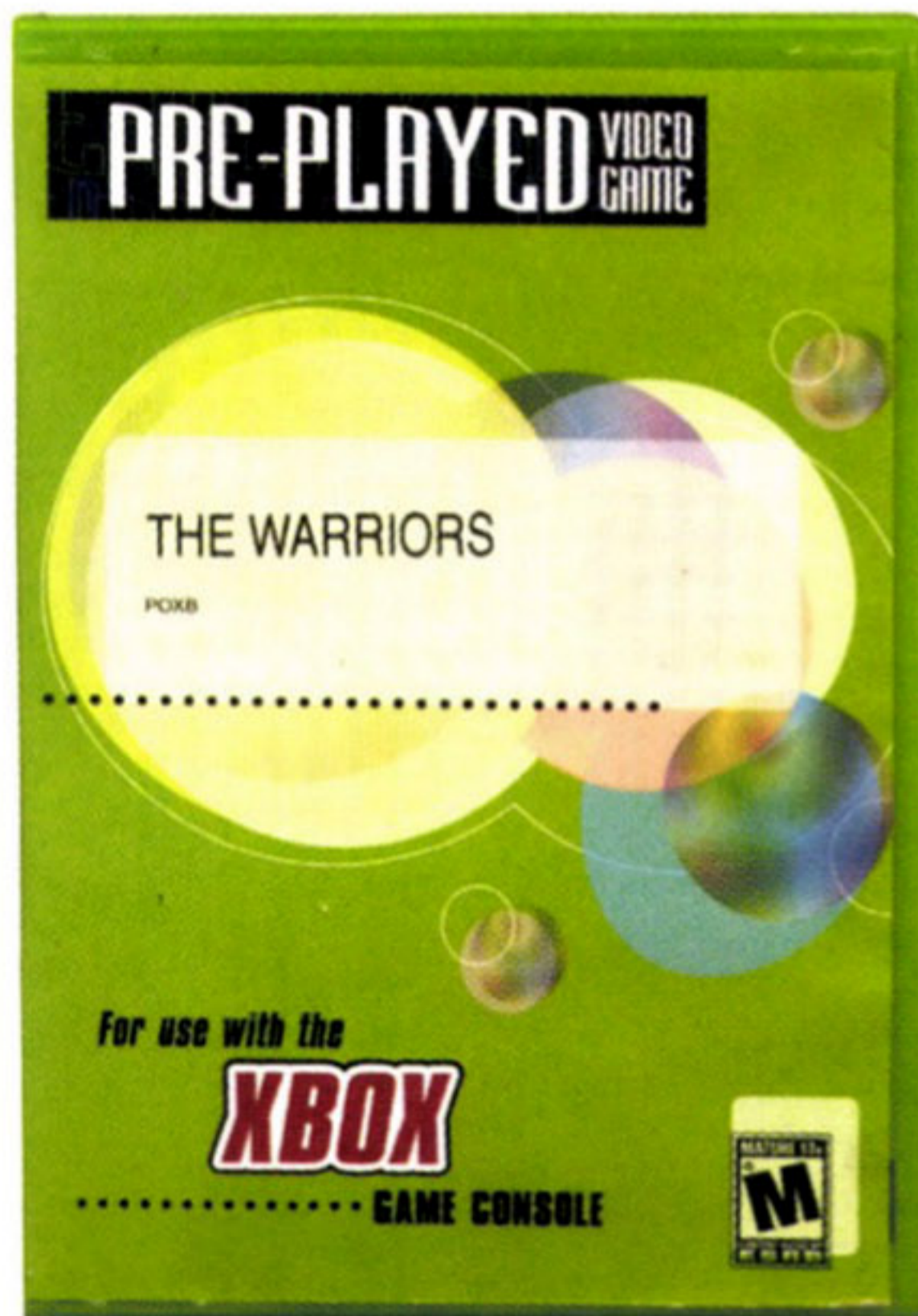
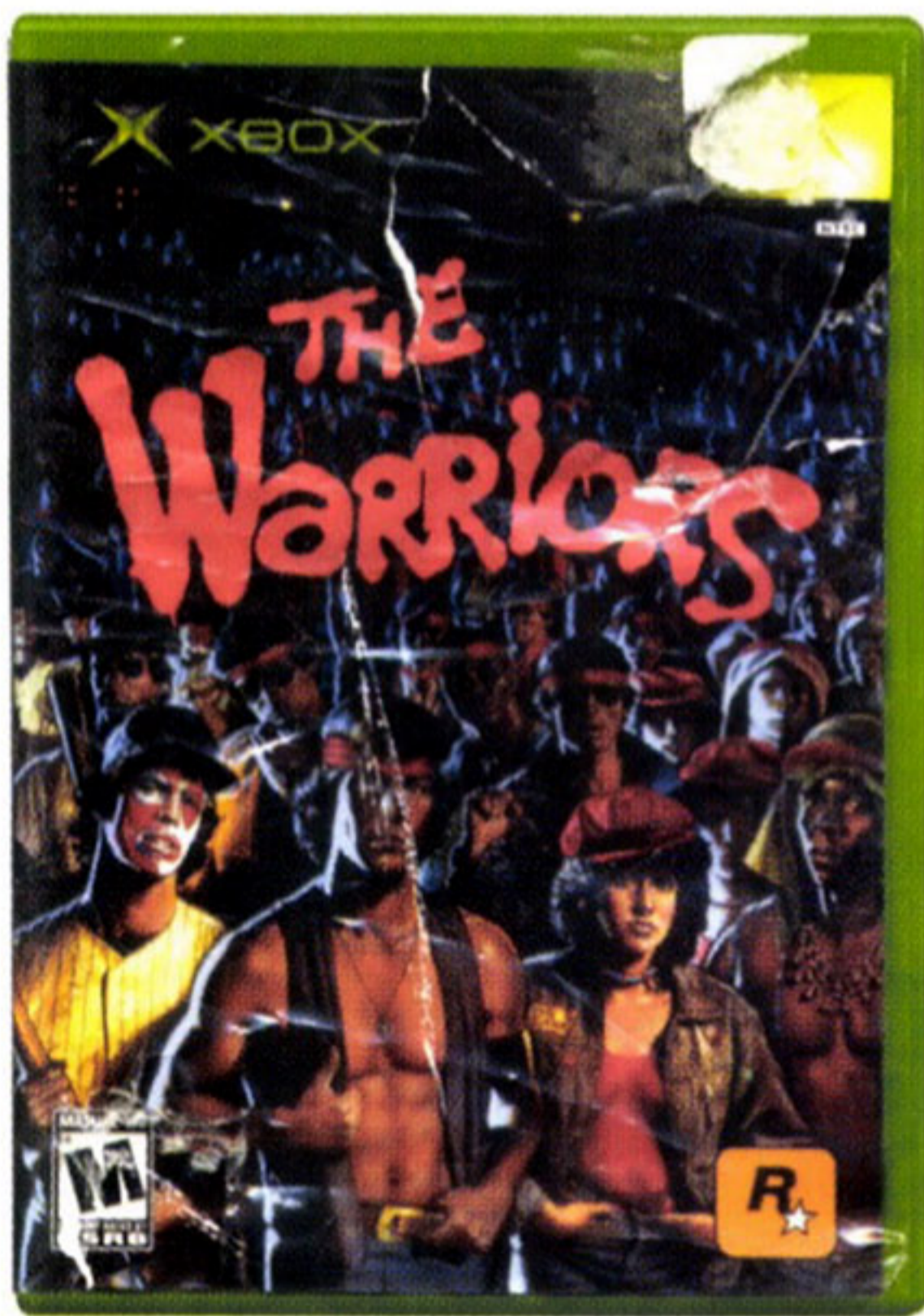
No matter what strategy Sony and Microsoft pursue when it comes to online, both companies have publicly spoken about microtransactions as a major source of revenue in the next generation. Already you can download game demos through Xbox Live on 360. Down the road, you will be able

“Microsoft believes that it has the expertise to create a better online service than what Sony...can create for PlayStation 3.”

online. (Finish *Call of Duty 2*’s campaign, for instance, and you get a new achievement badge.) As players continue to use Live, they’ll amass huge achievement lists, improve their reputation, and maybe even be idolized by other players.

The idea of building up a player’s profile also has an ulterior motive: Making players want to stick with Xbox Live even after the PlayStation 3 launches. The thinking is that over the next year, players will spend so much time building up a profile on Xbox Live that they won’t be willing

to purchase game levels, items, and other features via the Xbox Live Marketplace. While microtransactions started in earnest on Xbox, it’s expected that the vast majority of Xbox 360 games will offer premium downloads – another major feature that will drive adoption of Xbox Live. Publishers love the idea of additional content because it generates incremental revenue and lets the game developer sell content directly to fans. Now let’s just hope they don’t start charging for rounds of ammo in *Halo 3*.



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