EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK
100 BULLETS pg 76

OVER 75 NEW GAMES REVIEWED PG. 116

GAME INFORMER®

The Final Word On Computer & Video Games

VIDEO GAMES 2003

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

PLUS: THE TOP 50 GAMES OF 2003

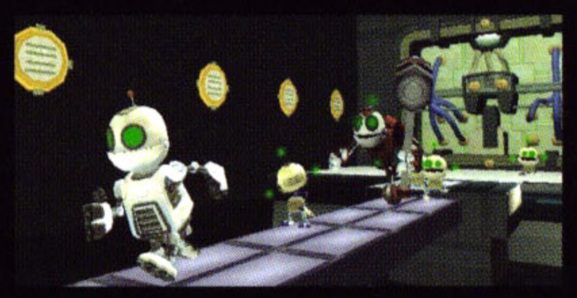
ISSUE 129 JANUARY 2004

US $4.99 | CAN $6.99 | UK £3.50

01

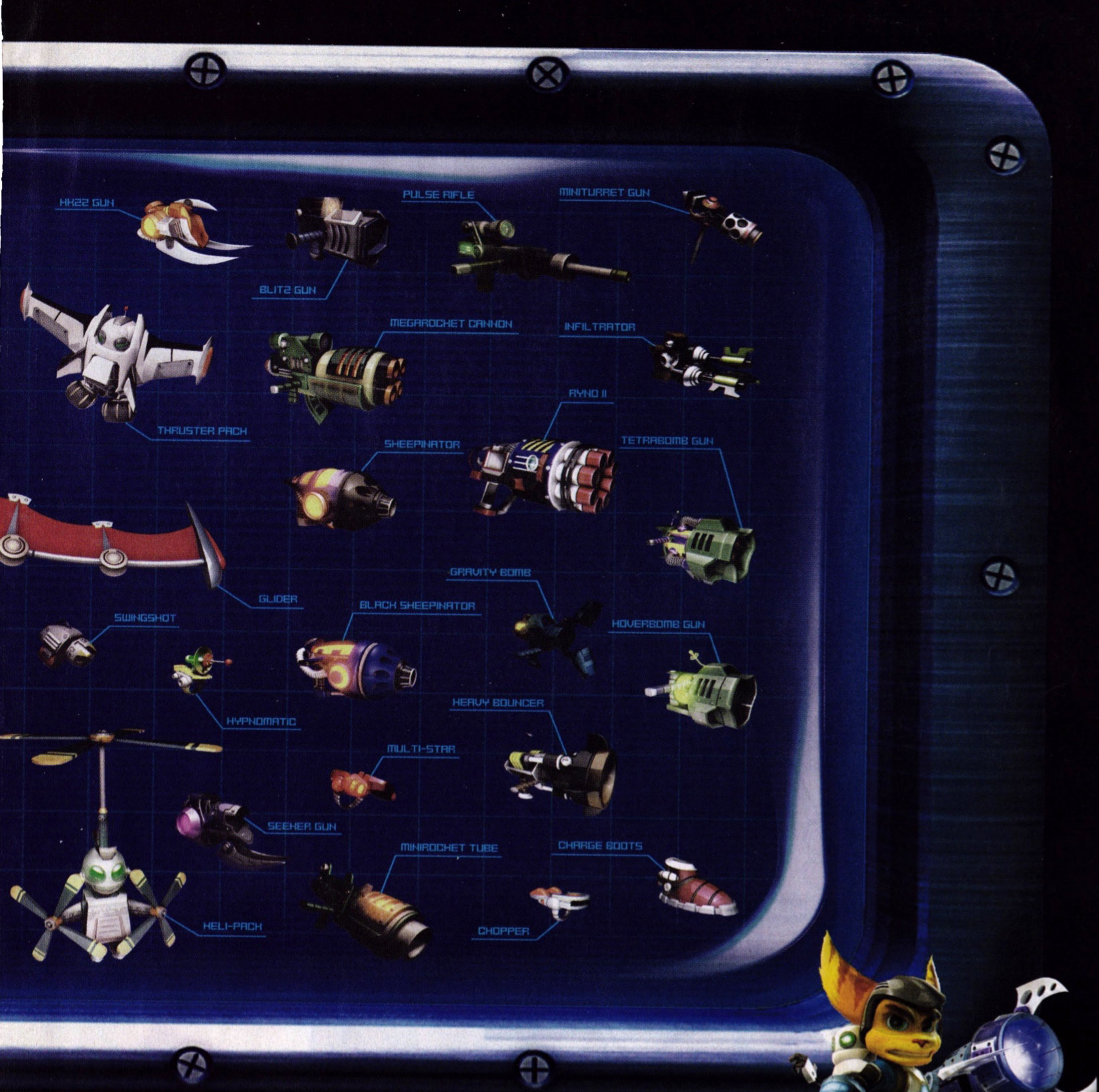
7 20150 85042 2

JANUARY 2004



EENIE, MEENIE, MINEY, BOOM.

They're back. And they're itching for action. With tons of planets to conquer in a whole new gigantic galaxy, you better believe Ratchet & Clank are gonna sink their teeth into some destruction. Ummm, destruction. With weapon upgrades, mods, armor and the ability for Ratchet to get stronger and smarter as the game goes on, this could get uglier than The Grandmas In Bikinis Calendar after-party. Speaking of parties, there's also hoverbike racing, space combat and gladiator arenas. As far as weapons and gadgets go, Ratchet & Clank are stacked with over 50 new ones, along with unlockable upgrades, so by the end of the journey, you'll go through more weapons and gadgets than a hungry fat man will go through chicken wings at lunch. Lock and load, baby, lock and load. **www.us.playstation.com**



RATCHET & CLANK

GOING COMMANDO

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.™

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Violence

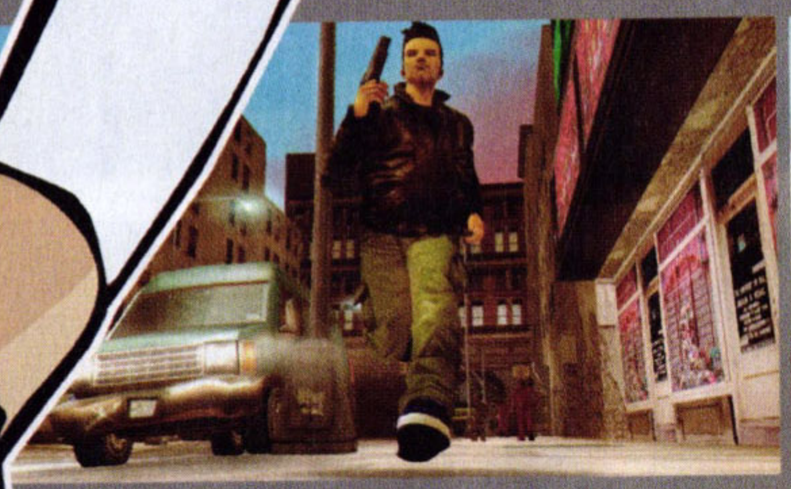
PlayStation.2

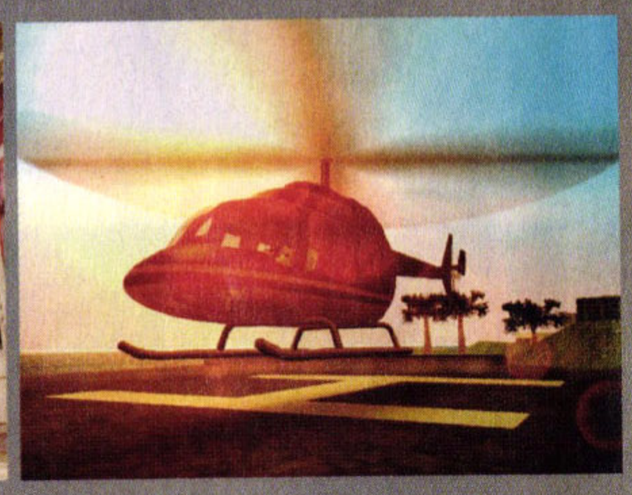
INSOMNIAC GAMES

Ratchet and Clank is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by Insomniac Games. ©2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "Live In Your World. Play In Ours." is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc.

IN STORES NOW!
FOR XBOX AND PLAYSTATION®2

ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS TWO EPIC ROCKSTAR NORTH PRODUCTIONS TOGETHER IN ONE DOUBLE PACK.





"GRAND THEFT AUTO III IS A NATIONAL OBSESSION, ITS SEQUEL BORDERS ON SOMETHING MORE: ART."
TIME MAGAZINE

DEVELOPED BY:

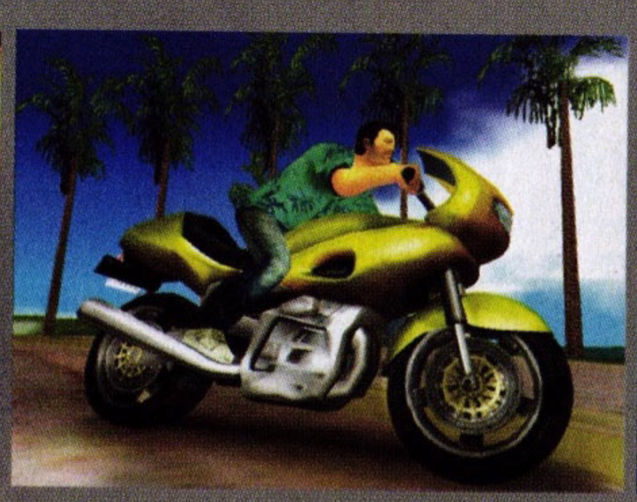
PlayStation®2

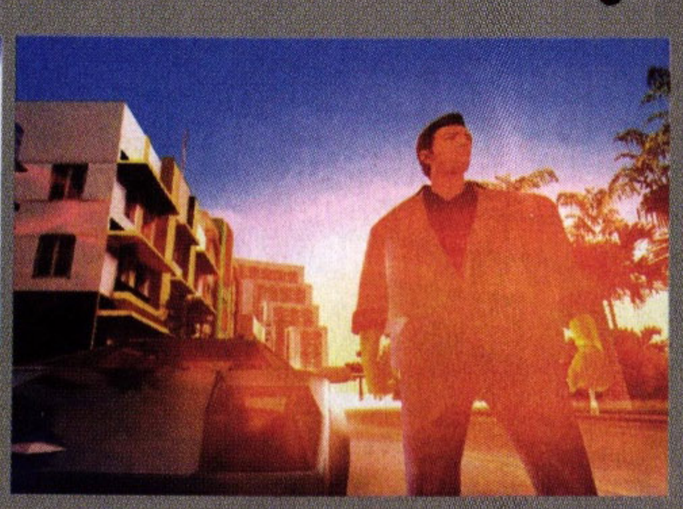
© 2003 Rockstar Games, Inc. The R* logo is a registered trademark of Take Two Interactive Software, Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "Epic" and Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. Marca Registrada. © 2003 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. All other marks and trademarks are properties of their respective owners. All Rights Reserved.

grand theft auto

double pack

grand theft auto III & grand theft auto vice city





"A POP-CULTURE PHENOMENON,
REDEFINING THE WAY PEOPLE PLAY AND THINK ABOUT GAMES"
ROLLING STONE

WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/GRANDTHEFTAUTO

VERSION BY:

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence
Strong Language
Blood and Gore
Strong Sexual Content

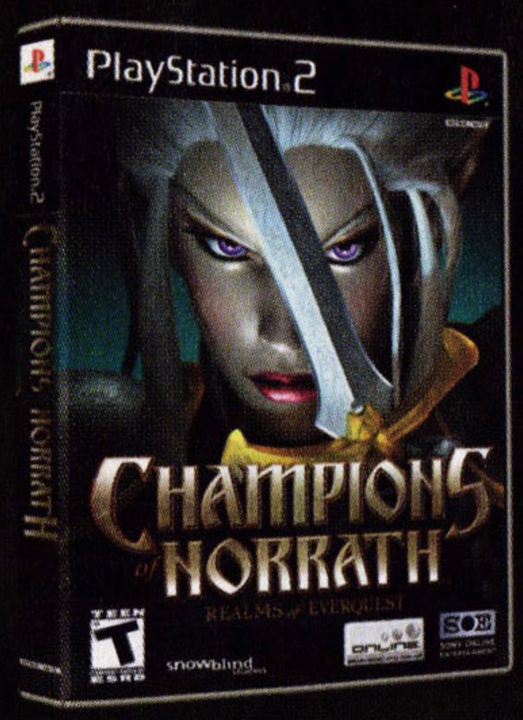
EPIC

Note: Rockstar will be following ESA guidelines for M rated games in the marketing of this game. This game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. It is a comic interpretation of gangster activity and the story, names and incidents portrayed herein are fictitious. No identification or similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events is intended or should be inferred. Any resemblance is coincidental. The makers and publishers of this videogame do not in any way endorse, condone or encourage this kind of behavior.

©2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Champions of Norrath, Realms of EverQuest and the Online Icon are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Online play requires internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

PRE-ORDER NOW TO RECEIVE A FREE BABES OF NORRATH 2004 CALENDAR!*

* While supplies last at participating retailers. Offer expires upon retail availability of the game.



"With a feature set this deep, this may indeed be the new champion of action RPGs." – PSM

"Four-player co-op from the creators of Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance? Where do we sign up?" – IGN.com

SOE
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

snowblind studios

PlayStation 2

CHAMPIONS of NORRATH™

REALMS of EVERQUEST™

4 player combat online via
SOEGames.net and offline via Multitap.

45 levels of non-stop action with
over 50 areas to explore and conquer.

Constantly changing dungeons
and monsters make each
game a new experience.

BE POWERFUL.

Slay your way through the glorious Realms of EverQuest in a non-stop, hack 'n' slash adventure brimming with heroic quests, beautiful locales, enchanted zones and dark, mysterious dungeons.

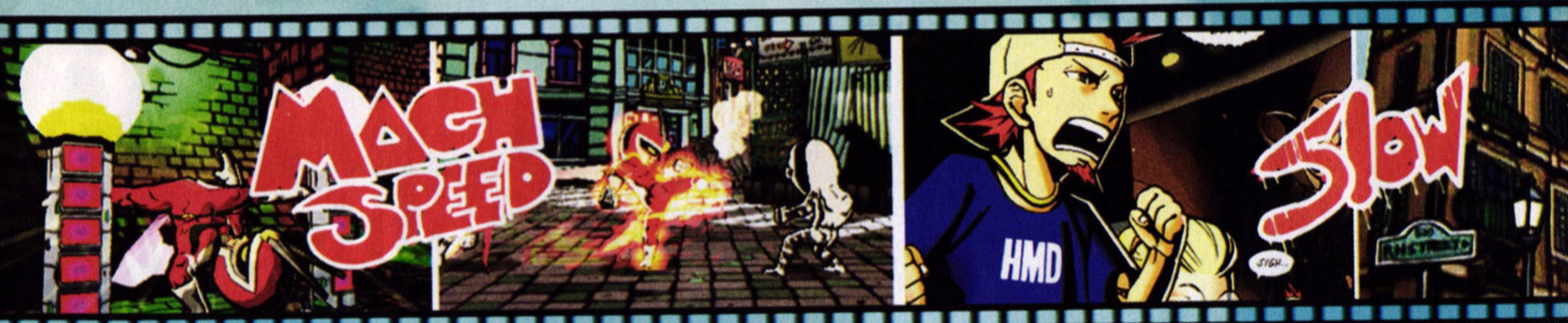
Create your Champion from 5 mythic races and 5 classes, customizing the look and name that conveys your unique abilities. Discover, collect, buy and trade over 10,000 items, or create your own. Master weapons, magic and combat to conquer hideous creatures and unforeseen evil. But be forewarned - a Champion shall forever be challenged!

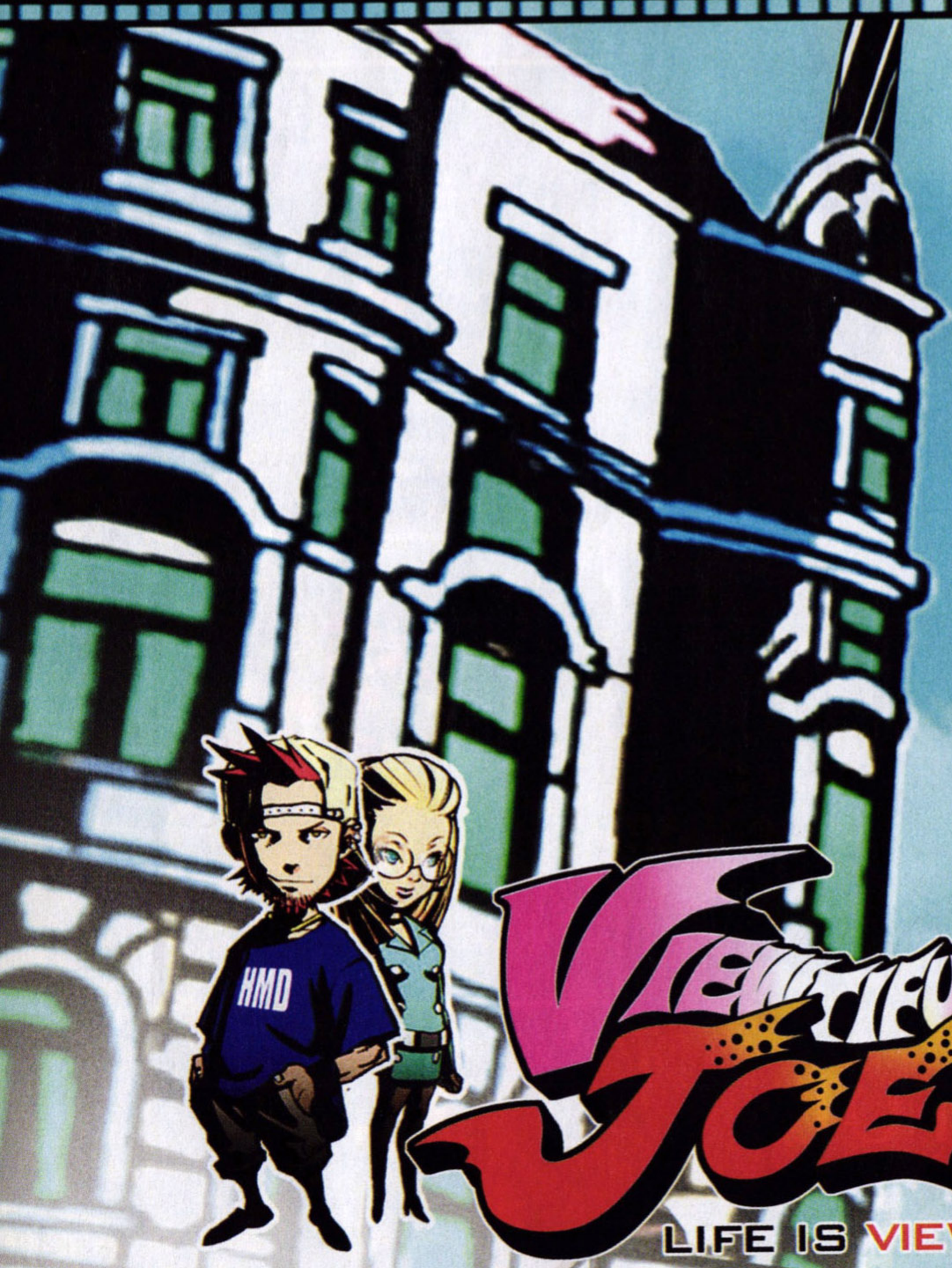
www.championsofnorrath.com

ONLINE
BROADBAND AND DIAL-UP

TEEN
T™
Blood and Gore
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Game Experience may change during online play

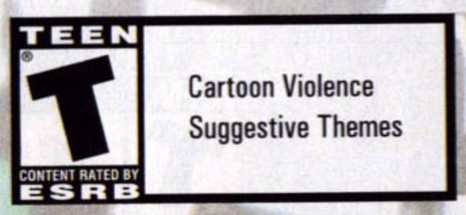




VIEWTIFUL JOE™

LIFE IS VIEWTIFUL

AN AVERAGE JOE CAUGHT UP IN A CRAZY STUNT-FILLED ACTION MOVIE WORLD. WITH THE AID OF HIS HERO, CAPTAIN BLUE, JOE IS GRANTED POWERS WHICH TURN HIM INTO VIEWTIFUL JOE, THE MOST STYLISH SUPERHERO TO GRACE THE SILVER SCREEN.



Cartoon Violence
Suggestive Themes

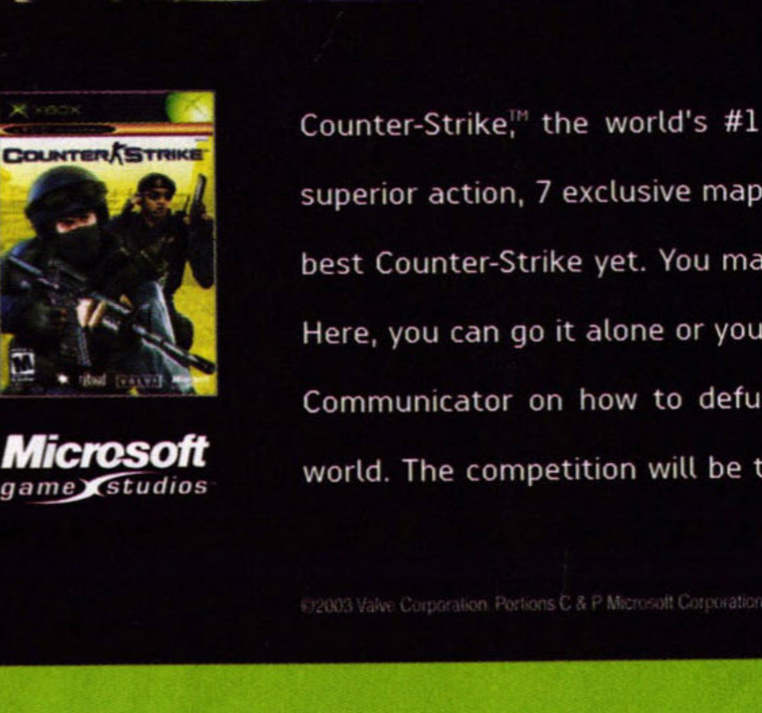
CAPCOM®
capcom.com/v-joe

©CAPCOM CO., LTD. 2003 ©CAPCOM U.S.A., INC. 2003. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. CAPCOM and the CAPCOM logo are registered trademarks of CAPCOM CO., LTD. VIEWTIFUL JOE is a trademark of CAPCOM CO., LTD. Nintendo and NIntendo GameCube are trademarks of Nintendo. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.

ZOOM IN

HENSHIN-A-GO-GO-BABY!

Counter-Strike™ and Xbox *Live*. A match made



Microsoft game studios

Counter-Strike,™ the world's #1 online action game*, is even better on Xbox *Live*.™ With graphically superior action, 7 exclusive maps, up to 16 player game play and a vast arsenal of weapons, this is the best Counter-Strike yet. You may want to practice offline before you enter the merciless online arena. Here, you can go it alone or you can assemble an elite team of gamers and talk strategy over the *Live* Communicator on how to defuse bombs, rescue hostages and take on terrorists from all over the world. The competition will be tough, so you'd better come prepared.

VALVE

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Intense Violence

©2003 Valve Corporation. Portions © & ℗ Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, the Microsoft Game Studios logo, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Xbox Live logo, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United

in "holy-*#!%-did-you-see-that" heaven.

COUNTER-STRIKE™

XBOX LIVE

XBOX™

it's good to play together

xbox.com/counterstrike

States and/or other countries. Counter-Strike, the Counter-Strike logo, Valve, and the Valve logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Valve Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. *Source GameSpy 09/02/03. GameSpy stats for multiplayer online action games.

EVERQUEST® ONLINE ADVENTURES FRONTIERS™

Battle fierce dragons with a new playable race, the Ogre

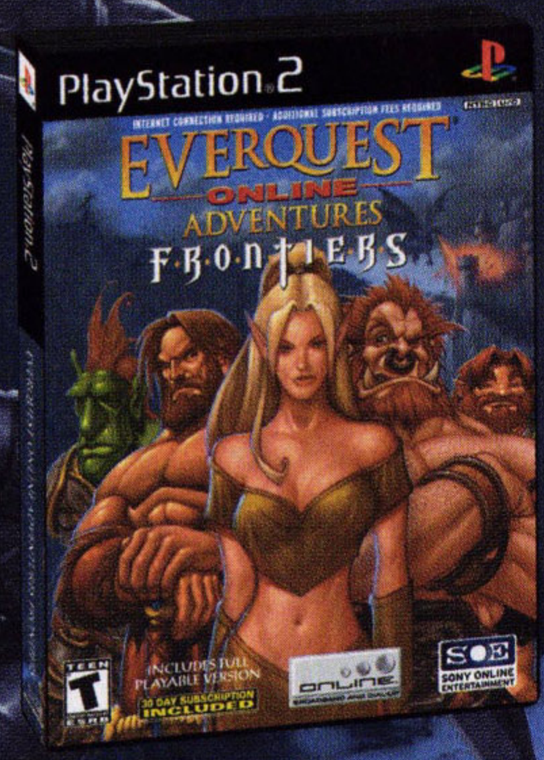
Power your character all the way up to level 60

Unrelenting weapon and spell combat

Experience the vibrant fantasy world of Norrath where action and adventure come to life in an exciting online world filled with friends and foes.

- Become a Hero in epic battles with fierce new monsters, fire-breathing dragons and brutal warriors.
- Forge your destiny in a land of Legends as you team up with friendly people from around the world.
- Experience all-new action and adventure with graphically redesigned characters, vicious monsters and environments that come to life.
- Explore uncharted territories and conquer spectacular new frontiers packed with bustling cities, perilous dungeons and underground liars.
- Create, build and customize unique characters with distinctive appearances, skills, spells and abilities as you undertake challenging new quests.
- An innovative in-game tutorial system gets you in the action and killing monsters in no time.

INCLUDES FULL PLAYABLE VERSION



www.everquestonlineadventures.com

INTERNET CONNECTION REQUIRED.
ADDITIONAL SUBSCRIPTION FEES REQUIRED.

TEEN
T
Blood and Gore
Violence
Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org
Game Experience May Change During Online Play

© 2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor (sold separately). EverQuest is a registered trademark and Online Adventures and the Online Icon are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

Conquer New Frontiers Online!

Heroes of a past age join the next generation of adventurers to conquer new Frontiers.

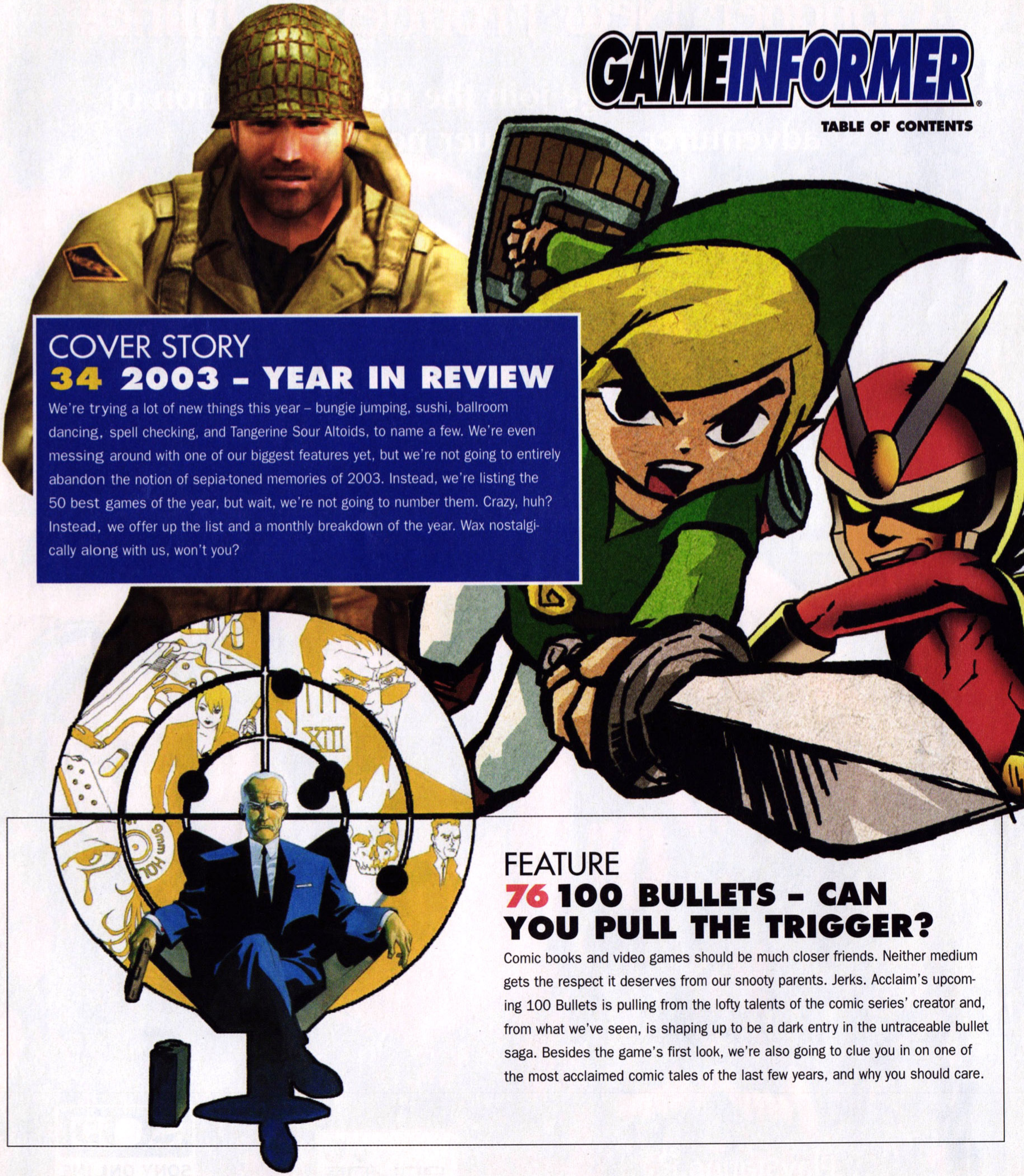
PlayStation 2

ONLINE
BROADBAND AND DIAL-UP

SOE
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

GAMEINFORMER

TABLE OF CONTENTS



COVER STORY

34 2003 – YEAR IN REVIEW

We're trying a lot of new things this year – bungie jumping, sushi, ballroom dancing, spell checking, and Tangerine Sour Altoids, to name a few. We're even messing around with one of our biggest features yet, but we're not going to entirely abandon the notion of sepia-toned memories of 2003. Instead, we're listing the 50 best games of the year, but wait, we're not going to number them. Crazy, huh? Instead, we offer up the list and a monthly breakdown of the year. Wax nostalgically along with us, won't you?

FEATURE

76 100 BULLETS – CAN YOU PULL THE TRIGGER?

Comic books and video games should be much closer friends. Neither medium gets the respect it deserves from our snooty parents. Jerks. Acclaim's upcoming 100 Bullets is pulling from the lofty talents of the comic series' creator and, from what we've seen, is shaping up to be a dark entry in the untraceable bullet saga. Besides the game's first look, we're also going to clue you in on one of the most acclaimed comic tales of the last few years, and why you should care.

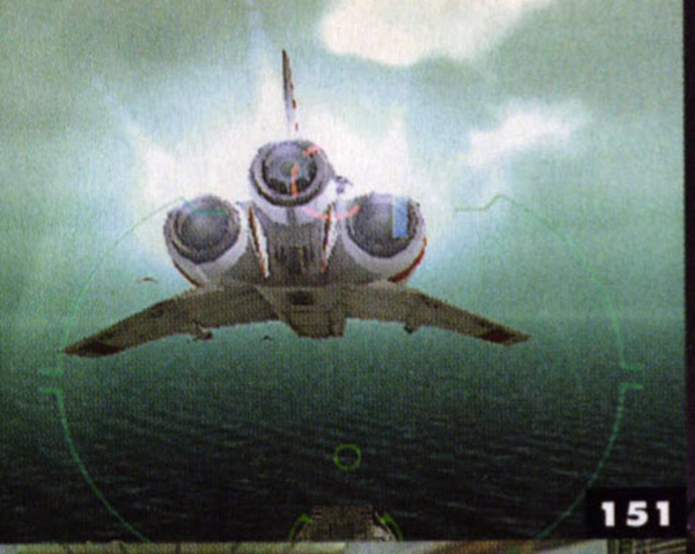
power tools

MAGIC
The Gathering®
ONLINE

Arm yourself with new Artifact Equipment cards in the **Magic: The Gathering®** *Mirrodin™* set. It all goes down in a harsh metal world, teeming with deadly new creatures and spells. To survive, you'll need to handle your weapons with skill and fury.

demo the game at
magicthegathering.com

All trademarks, including the ✱ ◂ ● ▲ ▼ ◆ symbols, are property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ©2003 Wizards.



16 EDITOR'S FORUM
It's the end of the year and an editor is moving on to bigger, brighter, and more glamorous things. There's a lot to talk about, so see what we're obsessed with this month (it's certainly an eclectic mix).

18 GI SPY
The Game Informer paparazzi stalk the video game industry, bringing you candid photos of all the action.

20 DEAR GI
We really do read every letter and look at each envelope art entry that you dear readers send in. Some of them make it into this section, and some get filed away in police reports, but we can't show you those. Sorry.

24 NEWS
The industry is all a twitter with tidbits and interesting tales to uncover. Once again, we're doing our best to supply everyone out there with something to talk about around the dinner table, because we all know that the finer points of an RTS expansion pack review aren't going to be met with much debate.

86 PREVIEWS
You want to get all excited about something as the days grow shorter and the snow flies outside? Well, that's the entire point of our packed Preview section – to keep you warm inside like that odd cable-knit XXXL fisherman's sweater that a dear relative bestowed upon you instead of the GTA double pack.

116 REVIEWS
"I have fury!" If you don't understand this, or think that it's some sort of weird translation problem, check out our Game of the Month – a few minutes into the title, it will all make sense. But seriously, folks, this is why we love the holiday season – each console is stuffed to the gills with great titles. See what we're putting on our lists, because, right now, it's good to be a gamer.

163 CHARTS
What's hot? What's not? What's up? What's down? It's not NASDAQ, it's the Retail Sales Data and the GI editors' Top 10 Games.

166 SECRET ACCCESS
Feeling like having unlimited ammo this holiday season? We'll help you out with the games, you just have to convince your conscience that it's okay.

172 CLASSIC GI
SNK is popping back up on the modern gamer's radar, and we've got the backstory that will make you sound like an expert at your next cocktail party. Granted, we don't know how many cocktail parties get to the point of discussing the history of a great game developer, but stranger things have happened.

176 ETC
More goodies to stuff the stocking with, although you'd need pretty big stockings to fit some of these gems inside. Good luck stealing Shaq's socks!

GAME INDEX

GAME	PAGE #
1080° Avalanche	136
Advent Rising	94
Armed and Dangerous	144
Arx Fatalis	150
Battlestar Galactica (PS2)	135
Battlestar Galactica (Xbox)	151
Bionicle	141
Black & White II	115
Black Mirror, The	157
Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon	151
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	135
Celebrity Deathmatch (PS2)	135
Celebrity Deathmatch (Xbox)	151
City of Heroes	114
Civilization III: Conquests	155
Cold Winter	112
Commandos 3: Destination Berlin	157
Contract J.A.C.K.	153
Counter-Strike	147
DDR Ultramix	148
Deus Ex: Invisible War (PC)	152
Deus Ex: Invisible War (Xbox)	143
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	133
Drake of the 99 Dragons	151
Driver 3	108
Dungeon Siege: Legends of Aranna	155
Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind Game of the Year Edition	150
F-Zero: Falcon Legend	114
Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	124
Final Fantasy XI	154
Fugitive Hunter: War on Terror	135
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde (GC)	141
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde (PS2)	131
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde (Xbox)	149
Gotcha Force	138
Grand Theft Auto III & Vice City	146
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	134
Hidden & Dangerous II	156
Hobbit, The	140
Hot Wheels World Race	135
I-Ninja	134
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	106
Joint Operations	110
Korea: Forgotten Conflict	157
Legacy of Kain: Defiance (PS2)	126
Legacy of Kain: Defiance (Xbox)	149
Looney Tunes: Back in Action	135
Lord of the Rings: War of the Ring, The	156
Mafia	113
Manhunt	120
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	158
Matrix Online, The	112
Max Payne	160
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	105
Maximum Chase	151
MTX Motocross	115
MX Unleashed	102
NCAA March Madness 2004	135
NFL Street	90
Nightmare Before Christmas, The	104
Nightshade	86
Nosferatu: Wrath of Malichi	157
Onimusha 3	96
Pac-Man Vs.	141
Patrician III	157
Pirate Hunter: Sieze & Destroy	157
PlanetSide: Core Combat	157
Pokémon Channel	141
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	145
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	111
R: Racing Evolution	121
Rainbow Six 3	142
RPG Maker II	130
Scooby Doo: Mystery Mayhem	160
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	151
Sims: Bustin' Out, The (GBA)	160
Sims: Bustin' Out, The (GC)	140
Sims: Bustin' Out, The (PS2)	130
Sonic Heroes	137
Spawn Armageddon (PS2)	132
Spawn Armageddon (Xbox)	151
Spy Hunter 2	128
Spyro: Attack of the Rhynocs	160
Star Wars: Flight of the Falcon	160
Star Wars: Jedi Academy	148
Sudeki	100
Super Duper Sumos	160
Sword of Mana	159
Tak and the Power of Juju	160
Terminator 3: Redemption	114
Terminator: Rise of the Machines	135
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3	132
Top Gear Rally	160
True Crime: Streets of LA (GC)	138
True Crime: Streets of LA (Xbox)	150
Whiplash (PS2)	134
Whiplash (Xbox)	151
Yu-Gi-Oh! The Falsebound Kingdom	141

Fill the holes
in your CD collection
with 12 CDs for the price of 1

nothing more to buy, ever.
with membership

Sean Paul: Dutty Rock (Atlantic) PA 46320

Good Charlotte: The Young And The Hopeless (Epic) 45764

Trapt (Warner Bros.) PA 46118

Pink: M!ssundaztood (Arista) 41844

Christina Aguilera: Stripped (RCA) 45790

Nelly: Nellyville (Universal) PA 44858

The Eminem Show (Interscope) PA 44644

Snoop Dogg: Paid Tha Cost To Be Da Bo$$ (Priority) PA 46187

Linkin Park: Reanimation (Warner Bros.) 44984

The Fast And The Furious/Sdtrk. (Def Jam) PA 40505

Disturbed: Believe (Reprise) PA 45562

AC/DC: Back In Black (Legacy) 46983

The Essential Ozzy Osbourne (Legacy) ★ 46776

Lil' Flip: Undaground Legend (Loud/Columbia) PA 45660

Everclear: Slow Motion Daydream (Capitol) 48052

Gorillaz (Virgin) PA 48138

American Idol Season 2—All-Time Classic American Love Songs (RCA) 48258

Anthrax: We've Come For You All (Sanctuary) 48343

Lenny Kravitz: Greatest Hits (Virgin) 48457

Kelly Clarkson: Thankful (RCA) 48257

Chimaira: The Impossibility Of Reason (Roadrunner) PA 48624

Puddle Of Mudd: Come Clean (Flawless/Geffen) PA 41188

Nickelback: Silver Side Up (Roadrunner) 41322

Nas: God's Son *Made You Look, I Can,* etc. (Columbia) PA ★ 48558

Heather Headley: This Is Who I Am (RCA) 45792

System Of A Down: Toxicity (Columbia) PA 41700

John Mayer: Room For Squares *No Such Thing, Your Body...,* more. (Columbia) 41854

Shakira: Laundry Service Includes *Whenever Wherever,* more. (Epic) 42015

Linkin Park: Hybrid Theory *One Step Closer,* more. (Warner Bros.) 38183

Jay-Z: Blueprint 2.1 *Excuse Me Miss,* etc. (Def Jam) PA 48547

No Doubt: Rock Steady *Hey Baby, Hella Good, Underneath It All, Running,* more. (Interscope) 42112

Ludacris: Word Of Mouf (Def Jam) PA 42160

2Pac: Greatest Hits (Interscope) ★ PA 26422

Norah Jones: Come Away With Me (Blue Note) 42610

Ashanti (Murder Inc.) PA 43045

Kenny Chesney: No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems (BNA) 43195

Coldplay: Parachutes (Nettwerk America) 36834

50 Cent: The New Breed (CD/DVD) (Interscope) ★ PA 48540

8 Mile/Sdtrk. (Universal) PA 46091

Fat Joe: Loyalty (Atlantic) PA 46093

Avril Lavigne: Let Go (Arista) 44805

Santana: Shaman (Arista) 45273

Trick Daddy: Thug Holiday (Atlantic) PA 45323

Stone Sour *Bother, Inhale,* etc. (Roadrunner) PA 45370

Fabolous: Street Dreams (Elektra) PA 46276

Tyrese: I Wanna Go There (J Records) 46175

R. Kelly: Chocolate Factory (Jive) PA 46176

3 Doors Down: Away From The Sun (Republic) 46190

Jennifer Lopez: This Is Me...Then (Epic) 46220

Mariah Carey: Charmbracelet (Island) 46330

HOW CLUB MEMBERSHIP WORKS

1. CHOOSE 6 CDs RIGHT AWAY — FREE!
2. THEN BUY 1 CD WITHIN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS.
3. YOU GET 5 MORE CDs — FREE!

That's 12 CDs for the price of 1.
A shipping and handling charge will be added to each selection

A *Great* Deal. Enjoy terrific savings, free music and more! You'll start with 6 FREE CDs now, and pick the rest later from over 14,000 titles. **You'll get a total of 12 CDs for the price of 1—*and no more commitments, ever!*** A shipping and handling charge will be added to each selection.

10-Day, Risk-Free Listening. When you receive your FREE selections, preview them and examine the complete terms of Club membership for 10 days. If you're not completely satisfied for any reason, return your free selections at our expense. There's no further obligation.

Thousands Of Selections. As a new member, about once a month along with 3 special issues (15 times a year), you'll receive a BMG Music Service magazine! There you'll get to choose from thousands of selections—everything from classic hits to the hottest superstars—along with music news and recommendations from our editors.

The Choice Is Always Yours. In your exclusive Club magazine, you'll always find a Featured Selection just for you. If you want it, don't do a thing; you'll receive it automatically. If you don't want it, return the Reply Card by the date specified. **You'll always have 10 days to decide.** If you have less time and receive an unwanted Featured Selection, return it at our expense and we will credit your account. You may cancel your membership at any time, once you've purchased your one regular-Club-price selection ($14.98 and up).

Save Now, Save Later. Start saving with our outstanding introductory offer; keep saving the longer you're a member with **discounts up to 70%, clearance CDs as low as $2.99** and the chance to get even more FREE selections. **At BMG Music Service you'll always get the best value.**

Reply Coupon Missing? Please write to:
BMG Music Service,
PO Box 1958, Indianapolis,
IN 46291-0010

PA Parental Advisory—Contains explicit lyrics and/or artwork.
★ 2-CD set (counts as 2 selections).

BMG music service

BMG Music Service, 6550 E. 30th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46219-1194
Trademarks used in this advertisement are the property of various trademark owners. ©2003 BeMusic

MS 6621

CHOOSE YOUR FREE CDs! SEND NO MONEY NOW.

Mail to: BMG Music Service, PO Box 1958, Indianapolis, IN 46291-0010

YES! I'd like to join BMG Music Service. Please send my 6 FREE selections now. I will then buy 1 selection at the regular Club price within a year and choose 5 more selections FREE. **That's 12 CDs for the price of 1, with nothing more to buy, ever!** A shipping and handling charge will be added to each selection.

1. RUSH me these 6 hits now (indicate by number):

★ 2-CD set (counts as 2 selections).

2. I've checked the **one** music category I like best (but I can change my mind at any time).

1. ☐ LIGHT CONTEMPORARY Josh Groban, Tony Bennett
2. ☐ COUNTRY Alan Jackson, Martina McBride
3. ☐ HARD ROCK Bruce Springsteen, Aerosmith
4. ☐ POP Avril Lavigne, John Mayer
5. ☐ CLASSICAL Charlotte Church, Yo-Yo Ma
6. ☐ JAZZ Diana Krall, Miles Davis
7. ☐ METAL Ozzy Osbourne, Korn
8. ☐ R&B Boyz II Men, Jaheim
9. ☐ MODERN ROCK Linkin Park, No Doubt
10. ☐ RAP Nelly, Nappy Roots
11. ☐ DANCE Jennifer Lopez, 'NSYNC
12. ☐ CHRISTIAN POP Point Of Grace, Michael W. Smith
14. ☐ GOSPEL Mary Mary, Kirk Franklin
15. ☐ CHRISTIAN ROCK Third Day, Jars Of Clay
16. ☐ LATIN Shakira, Marc Anthony

Can't choose 6? No problem! Choose the rest of your FREE CDs from your first member magazine!

3. ☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Ms. (PLEASE PRINT) First Name Initial Last Name

Address Apt.

City State Zip

( ) Phone Area Code

5 E-mail Address (Example: jdoe@bmg.com)

BMG Music Service reserves the right to request additional information, reject any application or cancel any membership. Local taxes, if any, will be added. Late charges will be added to past-due bills. Offer available in continental USA and under special arrangement in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, U.S.V.I., APO and FPO.

NM2GN MS 6621 AE

EDITORS' FORUM

THE YEAR IN REVIEW?

ANDY McNAMARA
andy@gameinformer.com
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

About a year ago, I decided that Game Informer should do something different with the Games of the Year. The old cliché of picking a top ten had just become tired. Every video game magazine out there does it, or singles out what they consider to be the best in a genre. Yawn. Neither approach captures what the spirit of the Games of the Year is all about. It's about celebrating the year – the good times and the bad, and the bad games and the great.

So this time around we decided to devote a huge portion of the magazine to reliving and analyzing all the important moments (and games) in our gigantic Year In Review cover story.

Obviously, the most controversial part of this feature will be the fact that we didn't number the list. But I think it's more retrospective this way. Every gamer has his or her own list of favorites. We aren't here to tell you what to think, we are here to make you think. If you look down the list of 2003's greatest and see something you missed, then perhaps it's time to get out there and experience the best that 2003 has to offer.

In other areas of the magazine, we have hit a tiny hitch in our typical selection of Game of the Month, as this issue offers up a video game first – the classic movie or music reissue. The game I'm speaking of is, of course, the Grand Theft Auto Double Pack. While the product obviously deserves every bit of the 10 score it receives, making it our Game Of the Month is slightly absurd since both titles have been out for a year or more. So, for the sake of this reissue and all others to come, we will just consider the score a piece of history rather than a part of the present.

And finally, I must bid a fond farewell to our longtime friend and colleague Justin. He has decided to move on to greener pastures and perhaps even game development, so I know I speak for everyone on staff when I wish him luck with his new ventures.

Enjoy the issue, and let's all hope that 2004 is even better than the amazing year that was 2003.

REINER | reiner@gameinformer.com

I've noticed an unsettling trend in the Final Fantasy series. With each new chapter that Square Enix releases, the main character wears less clothing. Apparently, Final Fantasy XII's leading male Vaan is not comfortable wearing shirts. If Square continues to peel off the layers of clothing, by the time Final Fantasy XIV rolls around, there's a good chance that the protagonist will be wearing nothing but leather chaps. Seeing that you view the backside of your character throughout the majority of these games, I pray to the gaming gods that this does not happen.

MATT | matt@gameinformer.com

Well, that's it for another crazy year in gaming, and I'd have to say this was a pretty great one. However, looking back it hasn't been as good as it should have been, thanks to a ton of big games being pushed back into next year. I mean, I'm supposed to have already beaten Driver 3 by now, and be getting a good start on Halo 2 and Fable. Chop, chop, people! In further bad news, we've had to say goodbye to Justin. I've always had a tremendous amount of respect for Justin as a person and a writer, and am sad to see him leave. However, I foresee a bright future for him, and expect to see his name in the credits to the next great wrestling game. Oh, and the next editor that tries to leave is getting shot in the back by the guards as they climb the wall!

JUSTIN | justin@gameinformer.com

Well, buckaroos, it's time to hang up my controllers and mosey on into the sunset after four years of service. Why? Let's just say that I love the night life, and I've got to boogie – on the disco round, oh yeah! Don't take it personally; you know I love ya. All good things come to an end, and my time here is a perfect example. I hope I've enlightened and entertained you during my tenure at GI – because that would mean I reached 1.5 million people or so. If I haven't done either, here's my last-ditch effort: Scorpions glow under a black light, and a man filling his pants with custard. Game well, my friends.

KATO | kato@gameinformer.com

We have had editors leave over the last six months, but the hardest one for me has to be the loss of Justin, the Digital Deviant. Some may not know this, but he and I first started working together on the old Game Informer website. We didn't always get along back then, but we came out much stronger for it once we were writing for the mag. I'll not only miss Justin's endless knowledge of video games, but he's definitely one of the funniest guys I've ever met. More importantly, he's got a lot of heart and isn't afraid to be his own man. Try it – it isn't always the easiest path. But, then again that was Justin, and that's why I like him.

LISA | lisa@gameinformer.com

I'm going to make a definitive statement here: I like the *Matrix* movies. Yup, all of them. Now, I know that this will make me wholly unpopular, but I'm going with it anyway. It's not that the brothers crafted something that was unparalleled in depth, logic, or intelligence – it's more that after leaving each of the movies, I wanted to talk about the ideas that they brought up. That's good enough for me. Now, as a sidenote, I want to wish a fond farewell to Justin, creator of good voicemail messages, knowledge bank of all old-school gaming trivia, and master of the em-dash. Have fun, make games, and stop by.

JEREMY | jeremy@gameinformer.com

Justin's departure has got me thinking; with all that goes on around here, maybe there should be a game based on good old GI. Playing somewhat like a Sims expansion, you'd have to make sure your digital editors got the mag out on time each month. You could edit the characters (you'd replace me with a sexy girl in a bikini, admit it), but you'd also have to deal with problems like game delays, cancelled events, and of course, editors leaving. When a character with a ton of experience points (say for example, Justin) moves on, you know it'll affect your operation and he'll be missed. Good luck out there, buddy.

ADAM | adam@gameinformer.com

Being new, I feel somewhat unqualified to comment on Justin leaving, so I'm not going to. He was great to work with, though; I'll say that. In other news, I really feel like the online mod communities that exist for many games don't get enough props. I mean, these are gamers like ourselves, except that they slave away over the modding tools for some stupid number of hours and, in many cases, expand a game way beyond the designers' original vision. If you've got a decent Internet connection, check out what's available for games like Neverwinter Nights, anything by Blizzard, and even old-school stuff like Myth II. Free downloads all, and a lot of them are a riot to play.

PLAYSTATION 2 *UNLIMITED ENABLED*

GAME INFORMER UNLIMITED

When you see this logo on a game preview, review, or feature; you can learn more about it by heading to www.gameinformer.com and clicking on the Unlimited logo. There are tons of other bonuses there (including movies, interviews, and screenshots) exclusively for Game Informer subscribers, so even if a game you like doesn't have the logo in the magazine, there is a good chance you can still learn more online.

GAMEINFORMER

JANUARY 2004
Volume XIV • Number 1 • Issue 129

PUBLISHER
Cathy Preston

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Andrew McNamara

EDITORS
Executive Editor Andrew Reiner
Senior Associate Editor Matt Helgeson
Associate Editors
Justin Leeper • Matthew Kato • Lisa Mason
Jeremy Zoss • Adam Biessener
Mascot Arthur

PRODUCTION
Art Director Thomas Blustin
Production Director Curtis Fung
Production Assistant Rachel Nimerfroh

GAME INFORMER ONLINE
Managing Online Editor Billy Berghammer
Associate Online Editor Chris Cook

ADVERTISING SALES
MINNEAPOLIS
Rob Borm
Director of Marketing and Midwest/East Coast Sales Manager
(612) 486-6155
Fax: (612) 486-6101
rob@gameinformer.com

Amy Arnold
Advertising Coordinator
(612) 486-6154
Fax: (612) 486-6101
amy@gameinformer.com

SAN FRANCISCO
Doug Faust
Vice President Advertising Sales
(650) 728-5647
Fax: (650) 728-5648
doug@gameinformer.com

LOS ANGELES
Marc Minasian
Southwest Regional Sales Manager
(818) 991-9923
Fax: (818) 991-9923
marc@gameinformer.com

CIRCULATION
CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPARTMENT

For change of address
or subscription inquiry ONLY:
Toll Free: **1 (866) 844-GAME (4263)**

Fax: **(612) 486-6101**
Email: **customerservice@gameinformer.com**
Or send correspondence to:
724 North First St., 4th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55401 • Attn: CIS Dept

Circulation Manager
Paul Anderson • (612) 486-6104
paul@gameinformer.com

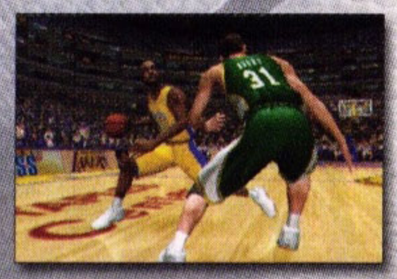
Information Systems Manager
Paul Hedgpeth
paulhedgpeth@gameinformer.com

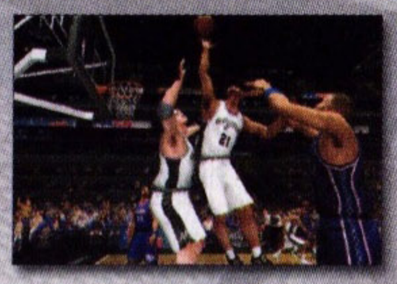
Manufactured and printed in the United States of America The Editor welcomes company product information for all video games. Such materials should be addressed to: Editor, Game Informer® Magazine, 724 North First St., 4th Floor, Minneapolis, MN 55401. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Entire contents copyright 2004. Game Informer® Magazine. All rights reserved; reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Game Informer is a trademark of GameStop, Inc. Products named in these pages are trade names, or trademarks, of their respective companies. **PUBLISHER LIABILITY FOR ERROR** The publisher shall not be liable for slight changes or typographical errors that do not lessen the value of an advertisement. The publisher's liability for other errors or omissions in connection with an advertisement is limited to republication of the advertisement in any subsequent issue or the refund of any monies paid for the advertisement. **INDEMNIFICATION** The advertiser and/or Advertising Agency agrees to defend and indemnify the publisher against any and all liability, loss, or expense arising from claims of libel, unfair competition, unfair trade practices, infringement of trademarks, copyrights, trade names, patents, or proprietary rights or violation of rights of privacy, resulting from the publication of the Advertiser's statement.

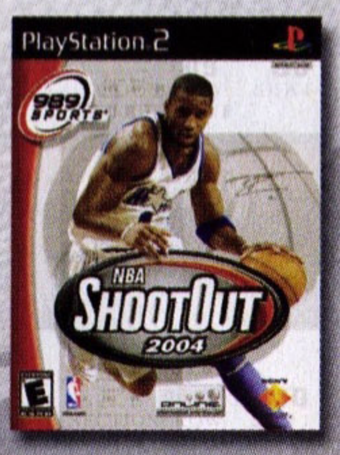
Member Audit Bureau of Circulations

Bring home the NBA.

NBA SHOOTOUT 2004







www.989SPORTS.com

NBA ShootOut™ 2004 puts you in the paint with the pros. Go online and track your progress versus all the other ballers in the country with a real-time sports ticker, 64-man tournaments and in-depth career reporting. Use the USB headset (for PlayStation 2) to execute more than 40 new voice-recognition commands. Call plays, time-outs, screens, picks and double-teams, and to talk up your game with the new online chat feature. Prove that you've got enough game, and a seat on the bus could be yours.

PlayStation 2

nba.com

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

ONLINE BROADBAND AND DIAL-UP

989 SPORTS

NBA ShootOut is a trademark of NBA Properties, Inc. The NBA and individual NBA member team identifications used on or in this product are trademarks, copyrighted designs and other forms of intellectual property of NBA Properties, Inc., and the respective NBA member teams may not be used in whole or in part without the prior written consent of NBA Properties, Inc. ©2003 NBA Properties, Inc. All rights reserved. 989 Sports and the 989 Sports logo are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by 989 Sports. ©2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Licensed for use with the PlayStation game console. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

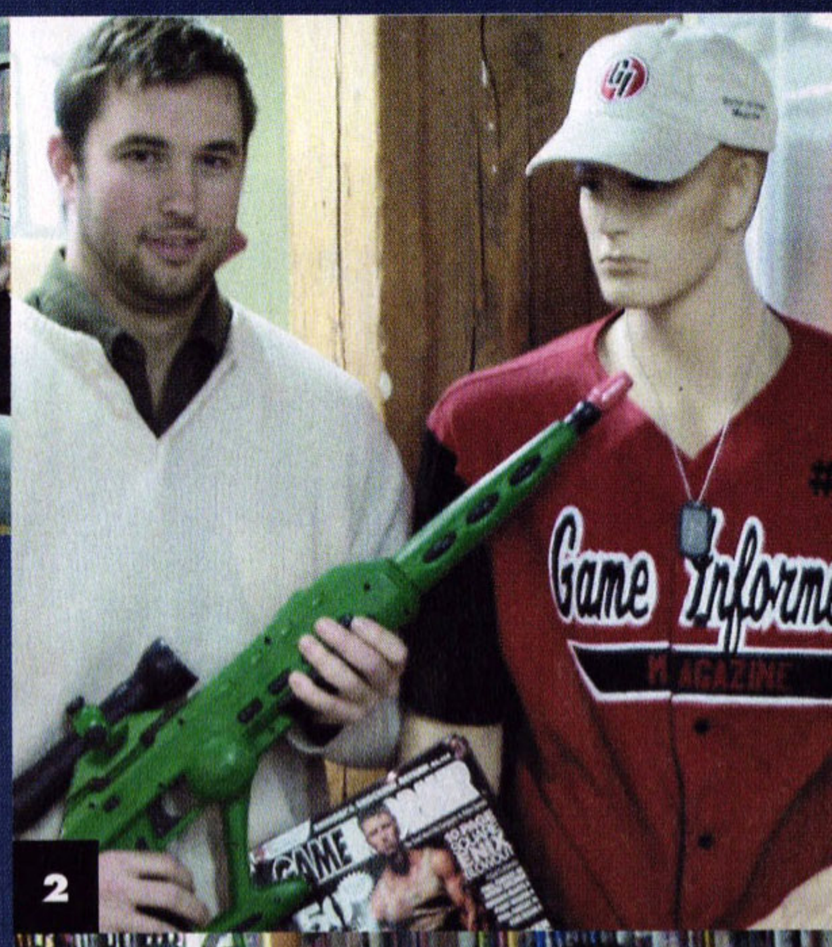
GI SPY

7

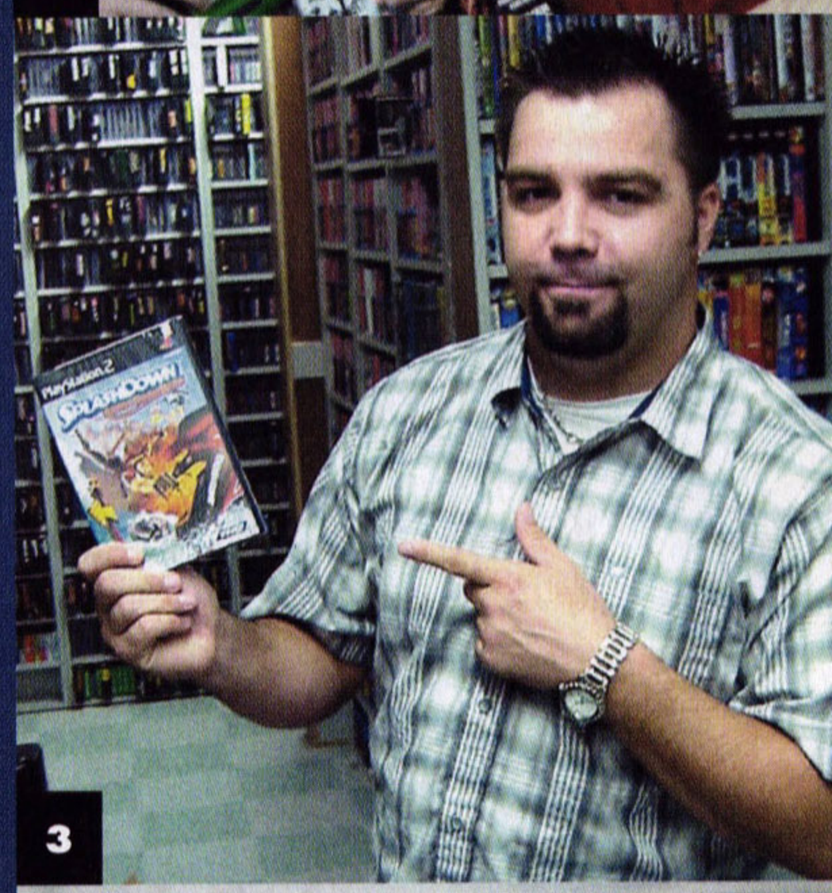
1

CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 The legendary Millar brothers came by to promote their latest gem, Goblin Commander, and stole our copy of Custer's Revenge. See you on *Judge Judy*, smart-guys! **2** "Alright, hand over the cash or the poorly dressed mannequin gets it!" Brad Strahle of Pelican shows off a new prototype light gun peripheral for our amusement **3** Part two in our "People In the Vault" series, starring Rob Baumsteiger of Rainbow Studios **4** Sony recently held its own automotive awards show in Vegas to promote the upcoming Gran Turismo 4. Here, winners Sue and Ted Richardson pose with Polyphony Digital head Kazunori Yamauchi, who picked the winner himself **5** Here's the Richardson's winning car, a super-boss 1962 Buick Special, which will appear in GT 4 **6** Bjork lookalike Lisa and Jedi Reiner attempt to squeeze life-giving milk from the nipples of GI Online's Billy "Mad Cow" Berghammer **7** Justin, seen here delivering a touching farewell speech to the GI staff



2



3

6

5 4

THE SUFFERING™

PRISON IS HELL

"...a gore-drenched excursion into hair-raising territory"
– GamePro

"Midway's action/horror title could be the most gruesome videogame ever"
– IGN.COM

THE FEAR. THE VIOLENCE. THE HORROR.

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Drug Reference
Intense Violence
Strong Language

PlayStation.2

XBOX

MIDWAY

THESUFFERING.MIDWAY.COM

The Suffering © 2003 Midway Home Entertainment Inc. MIDWAY and the MIDWAY logo are trademarks of Midway Amusement Games, LLC. The SUFFERING is a trademark of Midway Home Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. PlayStation and the PS Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

DEAR GI

VISIBLE THONGS AND GIANT SWORDS >>>

I was wondering if you would ask Square Enix to make a clothing line. The outfits it created for games like Kingdom Hearts and the Final Fantasy series are cool looking, and it would be awesome if the company sold them in stores. Some of my friends and I would definitely get them.

Thank you,
Chris Olson
Via email

What an idea! Square had already answered part of your dream wardrobe request in July of 2002 when it released replicas of Tidus' pants in Japan for 28,000 yen. But, we have a few ideas if the company opted for an American couture collection. They could call it the "Let's Level Up Together" line, and it would only be sold in sets of four complete outfits (because you couldn't just go out alone in these duds, you need a collection of archetypes). There would be the middle-class hero costume, the ethereal fairy princess, the brocade-cloaked villain, and the pseudo-bondage strapped dark wizard queen. Nice!

HOUSE OF THE CRAP >>>

Early in 2002 I heard that they were making a *House Of The Dead* movie! I was shocked. I was thinking, "Boy, this is gonna kick ass!" In the first eight minutes, I was enjoying it, but that was where it ended. I am glad to say that I only paid a dollar to see this horrendous, lousy piece of garbage that was supposed to be a movie.

Don't get me wrong; the blood, gore and overall special effects were awesome, but there was less of a story in the movie than there was in the game! Director Uwe Boll stated, "We're doing a movie for all of the video game and horror fans." Uh, no you're not. I was neither frightened nor impressed. This film is the most disappointing "game to movie" title I have ever seen. Worse than *Mortal Kombat 2*; worse than *Street Fighter*; and yes, worse than *Super Mario Bros. Resident Evil* may not have done well in the theater, but at least it took a month to get to the dollar shows, and not 10 days (like this *House of the Crap* did).

Disappointed, but still a loyal reader,
Casey a.k.a. DRAGON
Via hotmail.com

Wouldn't it be nice if every movie based off of the admittedly shallow storylines of our favorite video games would result in a flurry of poignant, beautiful, ass-kicking revered in multiplexes across the land? We wish, but it ain't gonna happen. In addition to the immensely disappointing films Casey pointed out, we have a handful of new offerings from the *House of the Dead* director, Uwe Boll, to look forward to. *Alone in the Dark*, starring Christian Slater and Tara Reid is coming to theaters in 2004; while *BloodRayne* and the fantasy saga *Dungeon Siege* are set to start filming next year. Each is being co-produced and directed by Mr. Boll.

But, as we covered in our last issue, the new *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* flick looks infinitely more promising – maybe there is still hope on the horizon for video game film buffs.

EVERYTHING THAT HAS A BEGINNING... >>>

A few hours after finishing Enter the Matrix as Niobi, I went to see *Revolutions* in the theater. I would agree with GI's assessment that the actual play [of Enter the Matrix] is only pretty good, but the experience of the game, especially for Matrix fans, was greatly understated. The way in which the Wachowski brothers integrated the game into *Reloaded* and *Revolutions* was artistic and marketing genius. Video games based on movies are often disappointments. Even the good ones like Spider-Man and The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers merely follow the plot with minimal deviation. Enter the Matrix gives good gaming, but more impressively, expands on storylines from the movie and manages to truly entertain. Like I said before – true genius.

Greg
Atlanta, GA

Finally, the last entry of this *Matrix* trilogy has been released. Although it was an emotional day at the office, we have received a fresh surge of correspondence from gamers that felt strongly about Enter the Matrix. The integration of movie and game for this series is unprecedented, and no matter what your conclusions are about the results, it certainly has been an interesting experiment.

SQUARE FEATURE >>>

I just got my first issue of the magazine (the November one) and was blown away. You hit on every subject and answered every question that I had. You reviewed every title I wanted reviews from and supplied the juiciest video game news. The section on Square Enix's new projects made me salivate. After looking at the entire two full pages of CGI pictures from Advent Children, I almost died from happiness. I just wanted to let you know that you have a new devoted reader who will most definitely be renewing his subscription when it comes time. Keep up the good work.

Alex H
Via yahoo.com

Today I received my November issue of Game Informer. I saw that you were covering Square Enix's stable of games. I turned slowly to your feature, and what I found in GI almost made me soil myself. THREE pages on Advent Children – straight information and awesome screenshots. I must say that, now, I truly love you guys. Two pages on Kingdom Hearts 2 and a full page on Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories. That's not even mentioning your coverage of every one of Square Enix's other upcoming games.

Wow. Just...wow. I want to thank you, from the bottom of my Square Enix-loving heart. I am now looking forward to next year more than any other, and looking forward to every GI from now to eternity.

Thanks again,
Corey Naron
Via email

I read your article about Kingdom Hearts 2. WOW! I need more info on this as soon as possible! Keep up the good work!

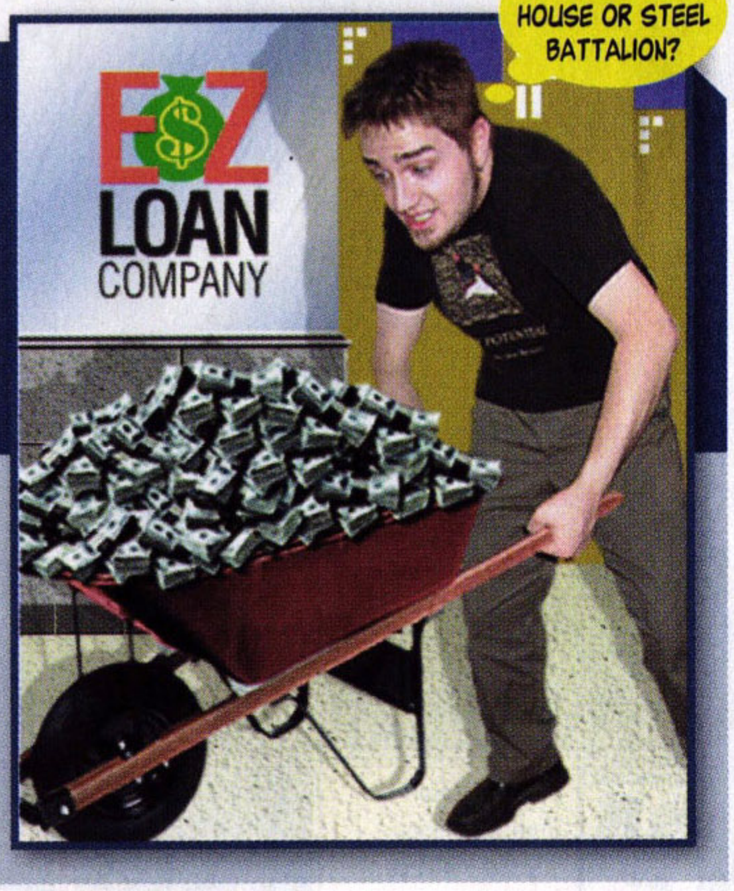
Emily
Via aol.com

Aw, shucks. You all are so kind to dear old Game Informer. After seeing the piece laid out, we were all a twitter with anticipation, waiting for our favorite readers to get their hands on the info. It's so nice when people can rally around stunningly gorgeous screenshots, anticipated sequels, and GBA titles. It's what makes being a gamer right now so darn great!

SPENDING HABITS >>>

I've been hearing a lot of rumors about the price for video games going up to sixty dollars. SIXTY DOLLARS! It's not like that's gonna stop us from buying games or anything, but good grief! Games are expensive enough already.

I hate you, have a nice day,
Mikau
Via email



There had been nasty rumors for a while of most video game prices going up, but recent releases have offered more games in the $39.99 price range than anything above the industry-standard of $49.99. Viewtiful Joe, Grabbed by the Ghoulies, Grand Theft Auto III & Vice City (PS2 version), Harry Potter Quidditch World Cup, Jak II, Mega Man X7, Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy, and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles have all debuted at this lower price point. While most aren't the triple-A titles that all gamers "must have," many are mighty fine, especially for $39.99.

Send your comments to Game Informer. Snail Mail: Game Informer Magazine • Attn: Dear GI • 724 North First St., 4th Floor • Minneapolis, MN 55401 Email: deargi@gameinformer.com

Expand Your Gaming Territory...

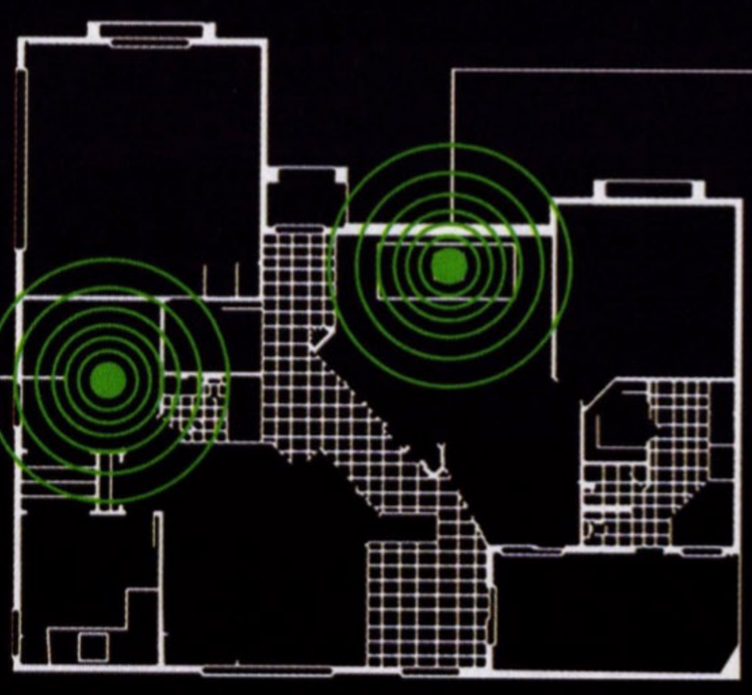
Wireless Online Gaming Made Easy For PlayStation®2 or Xbox®

[Base Unit]

plug in here

broadband internet location:

[NW sector: Long Origin = 7.43958333,
Lat Origin = 46.95240556]



simple to use: no programming
or software installation required

play here

gaming console location:

[SE sector: Long Origin = 7.43922453,
Lat Origin = 46.95294523]

[Remote Unit]

WIRELESS

NETEXTENDER™

The Wireless Net Extender™ from Nyko® is the easiest way to wirelessly connect your PlayStation®2, Xbox® or PC to a broadband internet connection. With its compact, plug and play design, you benefit from secure data encryption with no annoying software installation, or latency issues. In gaming terms, this means you will be up and running in no time, playing online in any room without messy wires. Find out more: nyko.com/netextender

NYKO®
INNOVATION FIRST

NOW AVAILABLE AT: BEST BUY · circuit city · EBGAMES · Fry's Outpost.com · GAMECRAZY gamecrazy.com · GameStop · K·B toys .com

AND OTHER FINE RETAILERS.

NYKO® and Wireless Net Extender™ are trademarks of NYKO Technologies, Inc. All registered trademarks, trademarks, trade names and logos are the properties of their respective owners. ©2003 NYKO Technologies, Inc. All rights reserved.

SUGGESTION BOX >>>

As many of you know, Halo is so grand a game that it is tough to put into words, however that does not mean that it's perfect. I just wish that I can actually have everything I'm hoping for appear in Halo 2. I hope that all of the Halo PC additions are also in Halo 2, like Banshees in multiplayer, the new weapons, and wicked level designs.

I have additional suggestions, though. If they do the following, Halo 2 will be 100 times better than the original. Bungie should give players the ability to climb mountains and other such objects with grappling hooks or just hands. We want proximity or timed mines (à la GoldenEye), jet packs, and the ability to creep up behind someone and grab them to use as a human/alien shield. In addition, the option to shoot grenades on the ground to kill enemies and (most importantly) the ability to be an assortment of different characters, human or alien, must be included.

Peace,
Masai Bolton
Pasadena CA

▪ Wow, Masai. That certainly is one heck of a list for Bungie to contemplate. Obviously, the success of the first game has placed a heavy burden on these very skilled creators of one truly superb console FPS. As you so thoughtfully pointed out, there are discussions raging across the land about what the next Halo needs to be, but the entire debate begs one question: If your requests don't appear in the next title, does that mean that it's a bad game? Soon, very soon, fellow gamers, we will have word on how Halo 2 is shaping up. Until then, let the wish list making continue.

50 GREATEST >>>

#1. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
#2. Halo
#3. The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

Just fixing the typos in "The 50 Greatest Games of this Console Generation" feature.

Nick Lizer
Via yahoo.com

▪ As Andy so eloquently pointed out, with regard to lists, we neither accept nor acknowledge any whiners. Judging from the mountain of mail we received on the list, disregarding quibbling on game placement, everyone seems in agreement that it was well conceived. We have yet to find a letter begging for a game's inclusion that fit the criteria and was not represented. Those of you who wanted a "Greatest Games of All Time" list can check out the Unlimited portion of Game Informer Online for a reprint of our "100 Greatest Games of All Time" from GI's vaunted 100th issue. Next month we will feature a list of "The 25 Most Renowned Cutscenes Featuring Penguins, Sheep, or Stuttering Side Characters." With the success of the 50 Greatest, we've just gone list crazy!

MILITARY MADNESS...AGAIN >>>

How come on this recent issue with Dead to Rights 2 on the front cover, the guy on the front is wearing a Marine Corps shirt but on the inside it says he is a part of the US Army Special Ops? I want answers! *shakes fist*

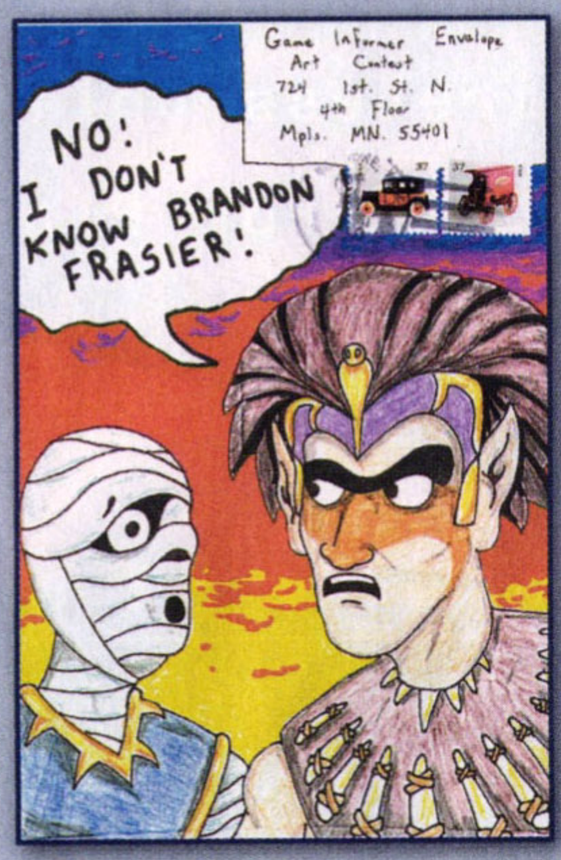
Tim King
82nd Airborne Division
Ft. Bragg, NC

▪ Well, we talked it over and decided that (like a few of us thriftier fashionistas) Jack likes to scrounge discount stores for the latest in military apparel. Walking a fine line between Michael Jackson circa '83 and Janet Jackson circa 1989 (in her Rhythm Nation 1814 days), Jack Slate is going for the shabby chic commando look. We think that the finely balanced depiction of Mr. Slate and his dog featured on our November cover captures this dichotomy of rebel and animal lover.

ENVELOPE ART

Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best darn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault.

Send to:
Game Informer • Envelope Art Contest
724 1st St. N., 4th Floor • Mpls, MN 55401

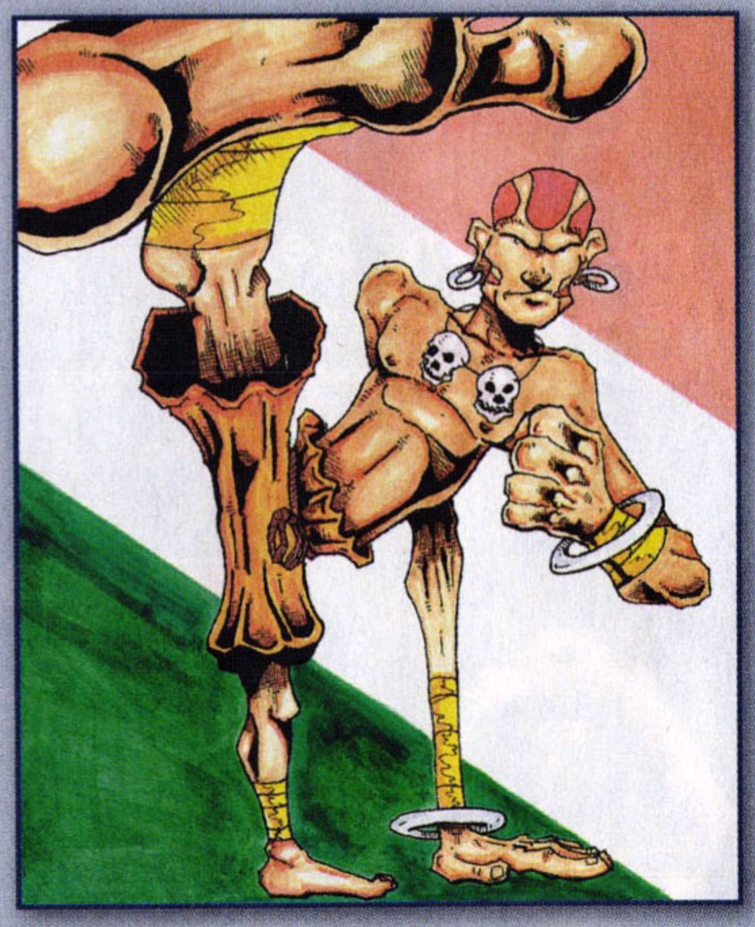


Charles M. Atkins
"...but I do own *George of the Jungle* on DVD!"

JANUARY WINNER!
Joseph King
This is one of the coolest envelope art entries we've ever received

Jessica Jones
What the hell is coming out of Samba De Amigo's butt?

Luis G. Carera
Where Duran Duran haircuts live on



Jaimie C. Filer
Behold! Patrick Stewart's new look!

SHIFT INTO SOMETHING MORE LETHAL

MIDWAY

"With huge levels, branching paths and different styles of gameplay, this isn't a half-assed sequel. It's a tricked-out and expanded new chapter of a burgeoning series."
- IGN

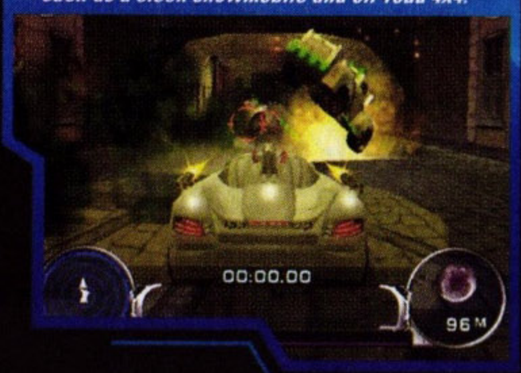
SPY HUNTER 2

THE HUNT BEGINS AGAIN

The hunt begins at spyhunter2.midway.com

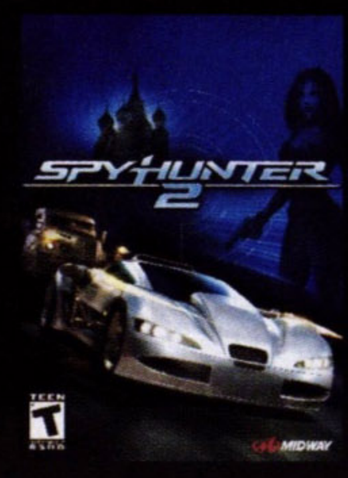
Coming November 21, 2003

Take control of the all-new and fully loaded G-8155 Interceptor. Transform into new vehicles such as a sleek snowmobile and off-road 4x4.



Engage both new and old foes as you trek through more than 15 dangerous missions across four new regions including Russia and the Swiss Alps.

Challenge the leaders of Nostra in all-new end-level boss battles with advanced new weaponry and the assistance of a mysterious new female agent at your side.



PlayStation 2

XBOX

TEEN T Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Spy Hunter © 2003 Midway Amusement Games, LLC. All rights reserved. SPY HUNTER, MIDWAY and the Midway logos are trademarks of Midway Amusement Games, LLC. Used by permission. Theme From Peter Gunn Composed and Conducted by Henry Mancini. Published by Northridge Music Company (ASCAP)/ Universal MCA Music Publishing, a Division of Universal Studios, Inc. Distributed under license by Midway Home Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. PlayStation and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

GI NEWS

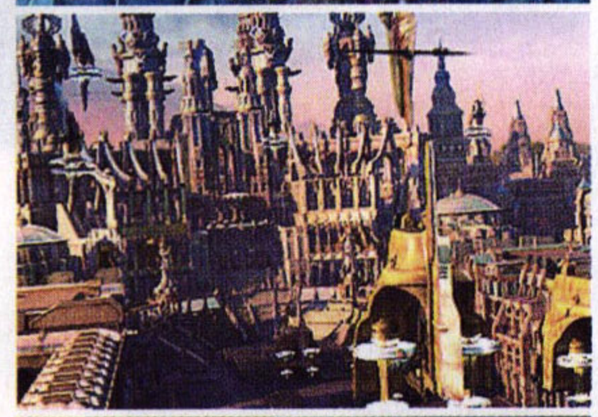
A FIRST LOOK AT FINAL FANTASY XII

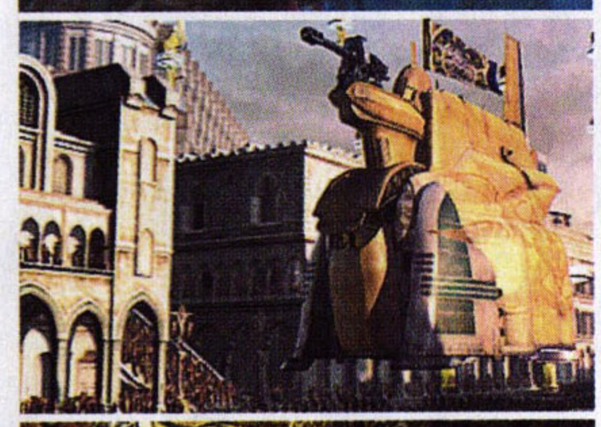
At an exclusive event in Tokyo, **Square Enix** revealed the first details on ***Final Fantasy XII*** for the **PlayStation 2**. The game is scheduled to release in Japan this summer, while a U.S. date has not yet been announced.

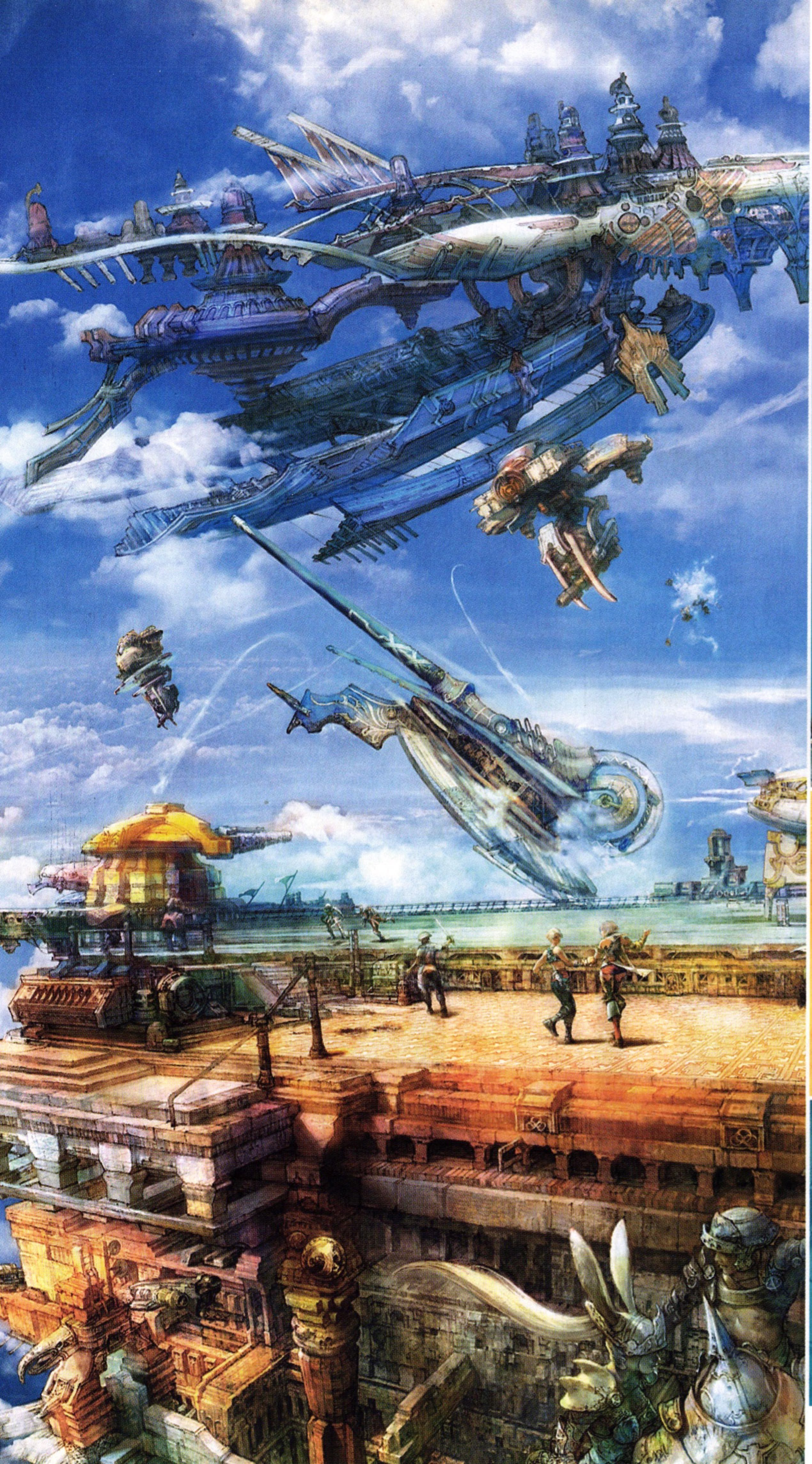
Final Fantasy XII takes place in the world of Ivalice (featured in ***Final Fantasy Tactics Advance***), which is split into the Aracadian and Rosaria Empires. Geographically caught in the middle of these two kingdoms is Dalmasca. The parents of 17 year-old hero Vaan actually died while Arcadia forcibly annexed Dalmasca. Its princess, Ashe (19 years old), also lost a loved one in the battle – her father, the king. Since then, she has been organizing a resistance movement. The stage is set for these two teenagers to meet and propel players into the amazing world of *Final Fantasy XII*.

The models for the characters themselves are being approached a bit differently than from previous *Final Fantasies*. How they look in real-time, in-game situations is the first priority, instead of being mainly CG-driven models. This philosophy is being extolled by the game's producer, the man behind ***Vagrant Story***, Yasumi Matsuno. More importantly, players have complete control of the camera, allowing them to scan the fully-rendered world as they wish. Game Informer has also learned that the title features a three-member party with a supporting cast of seven, as well as a tentatively planned first-person view.

Keeping with the franchise is the usual continuing ensemble of Cid, Moogles, and chocobo – despite their decidedly tougher appearance. Also, in another nod to *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance*, Judges will appear in the form of Knights of Terror. What other similarities will *Final Fantasy XII* share with *Tactics Advance* or other *FF* games? We'll have to wait and see...



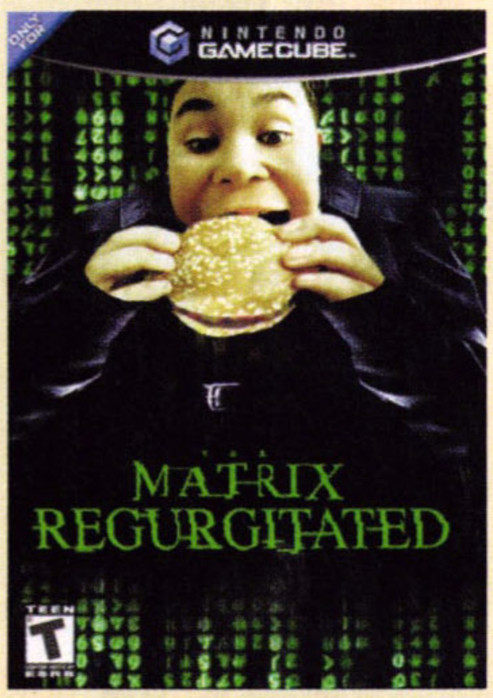




R&D

Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our god-like power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

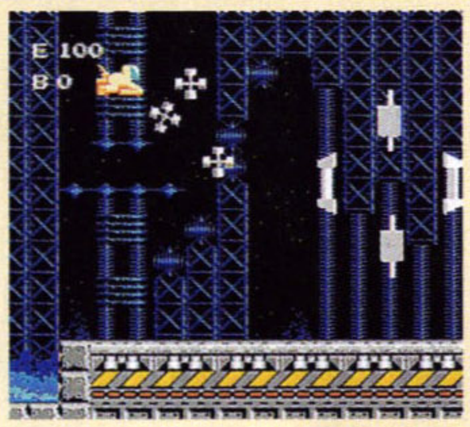
THE MATRIX REGURGITATED



The chatty nonsense of *The Matrix* sequels left fans with more questions than answers. Because of the mediocre reaction to the films (and their realization that games make big money), our sources say the Wachowski brothers plan to release this title as a direct sequel to the movies. The final chapter of *The Matrix* saga, this game will reveal the truth: Both the Matrix and the "real world" exist inside the body of a chubby toddler named Gregory! As Sparkplug, a recently-awoken human, you'll battle through the Matrix, the Machine City, and Gregory's insides on a mission to escape from his portly body and into the true real world. You'll face Agents, Sentinel robots, killer T-cells, and viruses in this action-packed romp. This exciting twist would allow for crazy scenes that you never dreamed of before! One level would actually have you facing a horde of robots inside Gregory's spastic colon! Of course, there are several paths out of the human body, so choosing the best route will be up to you. With any luck, you'll even discover how the fat kid managed to swallow an entire civilization. Combining two of the hottest sci-fi properties of all time, *The Matrix* and *Innerspace*, Regurgitated sounds like one heck of a wild ride!

NAME THAT GAME

Released in 1989, this NES game featured the hero Hal Bailman – named after the developer/publisher HAL Laboratories. The title fused two gameplay elements together: It could be a shooter when you mounted your space sled and approached the enemy bases, but it would switch to third-person platforming in zero gravity once you were inside. Your mission was to save the planet Farmel.



(Answer on page 32)

TOP 10 SIGNS YOUR VIDEO GAME FRANCHISE IS DEAD

10 Its $20 price isn't for Greatest Hits status, but for the store's "Save Our Shelf Space" program

9 Your last title was released while George Bush the Elder was in office

8 The development team's rally cry is "Save something for next year"

7 You have a quote from a website on your cover

6 Store clerks open your boxes of the game with the announcement, "The new frisbees are here!"

5 The previous installment had Nintendo's Golden Seal of Approval

4 You use double digit roman numerals but you're not Final Fantasy

3 The word "Tomb" is followed by "Raider"

2 People complain about the obligatory roster updates, but you aren't a sports game

1 When you say "Sonic the Hedeghog" people think it's the burger chain's mascot

DEVELOPER TOP 5

JOSH VANVELD
PRODUCER, HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE

1 Mario Kart 64 – N64
2 StarCraft – PC
3 Battlefield 1942 – PC
4 Final Fantasy II – SNES
5 Unreal Tournament – PC

READER TOP 5

REBECCA EVELAND
HAWAII, U.S.A.

1 The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past – SNES
2 Super Metroid – SNES
3 Half-Life – PC
4 Homeworld – PC
5 Eternal Darkness – GC

Game Informer is looking for your Top Five favorite games. Please send your Top Fives and a photo of yourself to:

Game Informer Magazine
Attn: Top Five
724 North First St., 4th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55401
email: topfive@gameinformer.com
(attach digital picture)

Everyone that enters each month will be entered in a drawing to win a GI T-Shirt! So get writing!

SONY'S PSP CONCEPT

During an investor's conference in New York, **Sony** and **PlayStation** creator **Ken Kutaragi** unveiled the first design concept for the **PlayStation Portable** (**PSP**). Although this preliminary mock-up of the handheld conceals several features, such as the platform's two shoulder buttons, many wireless functions, and the slot for the Universal Media Disc (in the rear), this design does show the positioning of the announced 4.5 inch, 16:9 aspect ratio LCD backlit screen. The unit also includes an optional attachable lanyard.

Sony representatives warn that this art is only a preliminary, and not a final model. During the meeting, Kutaragi also revealed that the company anticipates a simultaneous global launch for the PSP. Currently several companies have already committed to developing for the system, and Kutaragi promises "a wealth of entertainment content will be available" when it comes out. Sony says it will divulge more details on the final design in the future. Hopefully next year's E3 in May will tell us more.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 5 FOR '04

"In the back half of '04, Q4, we have targeted ***Grand Theft Auto 5*** or the next version of *Grand Theft Auto*." So said Cindi Buckwalter, executive vice president of **Take-Two Interactive**, the parent company of the series' publisher, **Rockstar Games**. Buckwalter, however, wasn't as forthcoming about the next installment's location or subject matter. However, Game Informer has a strong hunch that it will take place in Las Vegas. ***Grand Theft Auto: Sin City*** anyone? We ain't bragging, but remember that we did guess ***Vice City*** before it was announced....

from conception to reality

"We're confident in saying it will be the hit of the holiday season…" *forbes.com*

introducing zodiac™

Witness the birth of true mobile entertainment gear.

It's freedom to go, do and play when you want — where you want.

SpyHunter® from Midway enhanced especially for Zodiac. MIDWAY

palm® POWERED

Get console-quality gaming with analog controller, integrated triggers and action button array.

Play wirelessly with up to 8 players using built-in Bluetooth.™

Listen to MP3s on stereo speakers or included earbuds.

Watch videos and view your photo library on the big, high-res, backlit color display.

Manage your calendar and contacts. Create Microsoft® Word-compatible documents.

Choose from more than 19,000 Palm OS® applications.

Order your Zodiac today!
Go to www.tapwave.com

tapwave™
go. do. play.

SpyHunter © 2003 Midway Amusement Games, LLC. Copyright © 2003 Tapwave, Inc. All rights reserved. SPY HUNTER, MIDWAY and the Midway logos are trademarks of Midway Amusement Games, LLC. Used by permission. Published by Tapwave, Inc. Distributed under license from Midway Home Entertainment Inc. Palm Powered® and Palm OS® are trademarks of PalmSource Inc. Microsoft is a registered trademark of Microsoft, Inc. Tapwave. the stylized Tapwave logo, Zodiac, and 'go. do. play' are trademarks of Tapwave, Inc. in the United States and other countries. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Rating Board. All other trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners.

MVP IS IN THE AIR

EA knows who should have won the Most Valuable Player honors, that's why Albert Pujols is on the cover! Last year, ***MVP Baseball 2004*** reinvented itself and its interface, and this installment is stretching out for that home run hit as well. The Dynasty mode has been expanded to include farm teams, spring training, and even forces you to account for team chemistry. Joining it is an all-new hitting model for better placement and online match-ups on the **PlayStation 2**. Play well enough and you can even earn a trip to Cooperstown and hang with exalted company like Jackie Robinson and Babe Ruth.

CALLING IT A COMEBACK

After being crowned undisputed heavyweight champion of video game boxing, **EA Sports' *Knockout Kings*** pulled a Mike Tyson, and went totally AWOL. The publisher is returning to the sport, only this time the game is called ***Fight Night 2004***. Game Informer loves *KOK*, and so do you, but don't worry, *Fight Night* captures everything you liked about *KOK* – only it's bigger and better. You'll jump into a career mode and battle your way up, passing through real-life up-and-coming fighters, as well as old legends like Roy Jones Jr. and Muhammad Ali. Online is even in the works. The game is being developed by trusted EA Canada (***Need for Speed: Underground***), and should ship this spring for **PlayStation 2** and **Xbox**.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

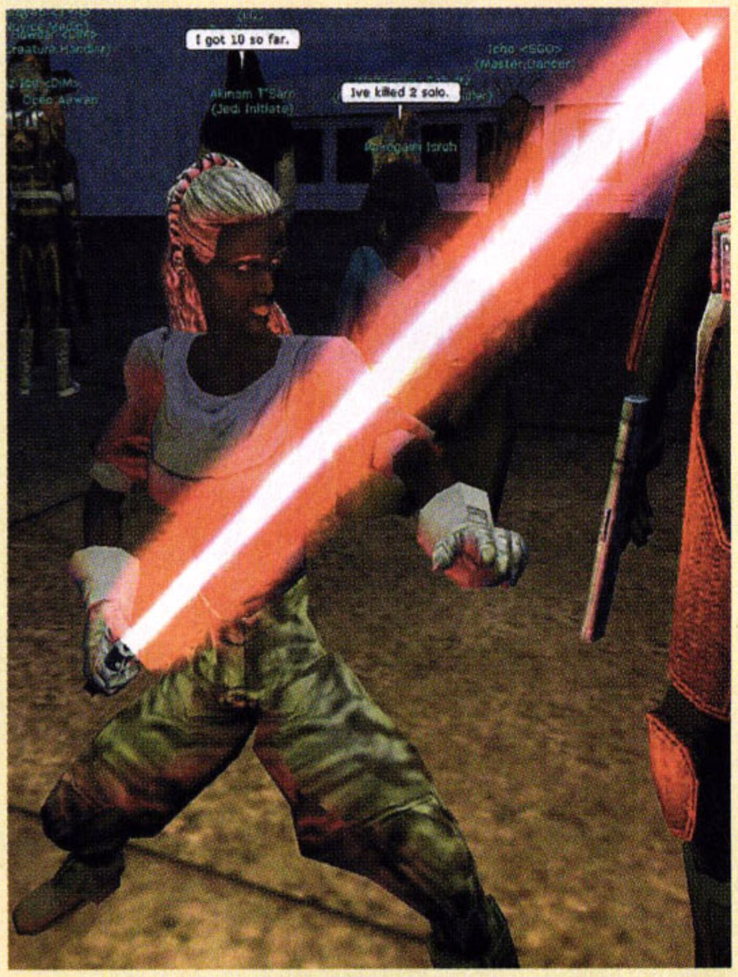
BAD – The Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation has filed suit against **Sony**, saying that the chipmaking technologies for **PlayStation 2's** Emotion Engine chip have not been properly licensed from an alumni patent.

GOOD – **Square Enix** is offering some sweet budget RPG action by announcing that ***Final Fantasy Anthology***, ***Final Fantasy Chronicles***, ***Vagrant Story***, and ***Xenogears*** are now available for under $20 each.

UGLY – According to **Nokia** itself, hackers have gotten past the **N-Gage's** game encryption, allowing the handheld/phone's titles to be played on other **Symbian OS**-supporting devices.

GOOD – **Activision** has acquired developer **Infinity Ward**. The studio was instrumental in making **EA's *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*** a hit, has since defected from EA, and is now fighting the good fight with ***Call of Duty*** on the **PC**.

GOOD – MMORPG ***Star Wars Galaxies*** has seen its first Jedi. Monika T'Sarn unlocked a Force Sensitive Slot, enabling her to create a character with the ability to become a Jedi. The little boys around her said "Schwing!" when she unveiled her lightsaber.



LOOSE TALK

If loose lips are spraying hot video game gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. Got a secret to tell? Email us at loosetalk@gameinformer.com and we'll be all ears.

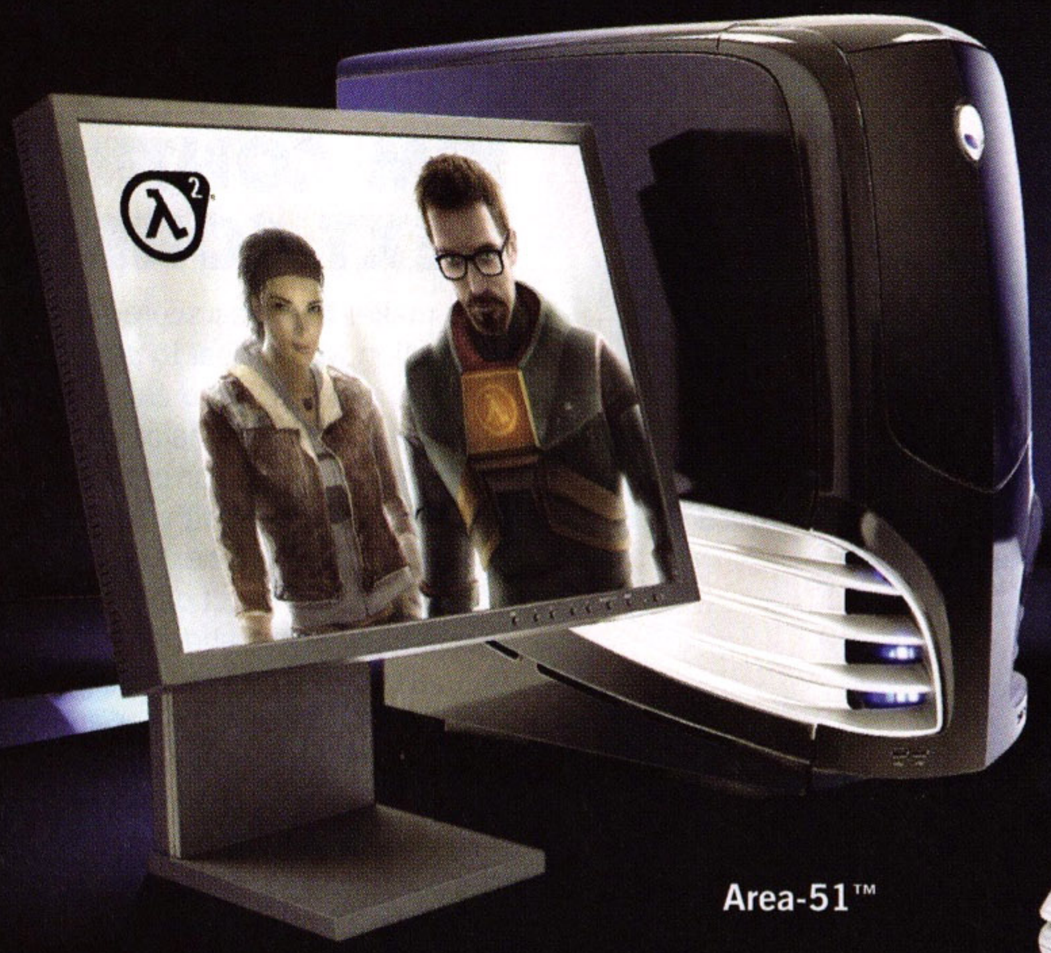
While there was a gap between the first two ***Deus Ex*** titles, word has it that a spin-off of the series is in the works tentatively titled ***Clan Wars***. It is not known how involved series developer Ion Storm is on the project.

When ***ESPN NFL Football*** came out with its first-person view, talk around developer **Visual Concepts** was that this was something that it wanted to extend into its other sports games. Despite its absence in both the retail versions of ***ESPN NBA Basketball*** and ***ESPN NHL Hockey***, Loose Talk has heard that the developer is committed to bringing first-person play to ***ESPN MLB Baseball***. Now, if only it'd get a less annoying moniker for its sports lineup. Meanwhile, what happened to the ***Virtua Tennis*** (also known as ***Sega Sports Tennis***) series? The franchise's future is in limbo.

Despite some less than stellar sales and a non-renewed contract by **Sony**, the development team behind cult hit ***Mark of Kri*** is currently at work on a sequel.

Sony of Japan has trademarked the name **PStwo**. Is this an indication that a smaller, economic version of the system, à la **PSone**, is on the way?

Loose Talk has heard that **Bungie** is working on a revival of ***Shadowrun*** (originally on the **SNES**) for the **Xbox**. The ***Halo*** creator is said to be collaborating closely with author **Jordon Weisman**.



Think You Know Gaming?

Area-51™

Area-51m™

© 2003 Valve Corporation.

What Game Developers Think...

"Alienware systems deliver leading-edge performance." [Gabe Newell, Founder/Managing Director, Valve®]

What Reviewers Think...

"Alienware once again proves that it builds the game machines that dreams are made of."
[PC Gamer Editors' Choice award, one of ten in a row]

What Do You Think?

Visit **www.alienware.com/PBOGIM** to compare the performance of your current system to an Alienware high-performance gaming system.

PLAYS BEST ON™
ALIENWARE

Custom-built and optimized for high-performance gaming, Alienware systems deliver unrivaled performance with the highest level of detail and ultra smooth gameplay. Incorporating state-of-the-art components, innovative engineering and design, and providing unprecedented customer service, Alienware systems offer the ultimate gaming experience. Immerse yourself in a new level of realism. Whether you are defeating evil enemies, building your own empire, or conquering new worlds online, your game **Plays Best On Alienware**.

hard drive by HITACHI

- Custom Build Your Dream Machine at:

WWW.ALIENWARE.COM/PBOGIM

- Go Online or Call for the Latest Pricing and Promotions: (1-800-254-3692)

1-800-ALIENWARE

6 MONTHS
SAME AS CASH*
FINANCING

intel inside pentium 4

Alienware can not be held responsible for errors in photography or typography. Actual case may vary in design. Award(s) and quote(s) listed do not pertain to a specific system or configuration. Intel, Intel Inside Logo, and Pentium are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the U.S. and other countries. Alienware and the Alienware logo are registered trademarks and trademarks of Alienware Corporation. Valve and the Lambda logo are registered trademarks of Valve Corportation. All rights reserved. All registered trademarks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. *Subject to credit approval. Minimum monthly payment required during the 6-month period. Finance charges accrue from the date of the sale unless the Same As Cash plan balance is paid in full prior to the Same As Cash expiration date. Regular credit terms apply after Same As Cash period. Terms subject to change without notice. See agreement for complete information. Annual Percentage Rate: 21.90%. Minimum finance charge: $1.00.

VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

Having a game that turns into a hit series is something that publishers dream of. What they ought to do is listen to their fan base about which titles deserve sequels. This month's quiz will tell you what to call up your favorite game company and lobby for. Trust us, these are all sound ideas, guaranteed to sell millions of copies.

Question 1: Contrary to popular opinion, Konami's Castlevania series does have a plot and characters of sorts. Everyone with a mirror knows who Alucard's father is, but what is his mother's name?

A. Marie
B. Lisa
C. Catherine
D. Ulala

Question 2: What PlayStation game entirely featured people and places (other than the main character) named after food?

A. MediEvil
B. Spyro the Dragon
C. Brave Fencer Musashi
D. Vandal Hearts 2

Question 3: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, named after the famous progenitor of the 900, is one of the great franchises of our time. However, many skate enthusiasts credit a different pro skater (who has coincidentally never appeared in a THPS game) with pulling the first 900. Who is this mysterious man?

A. Bob Burnquist
B. Danny Way
C. Bucky Lasek
D. Jason Lee

Question 4: As anyone who's been on the Internet trying to research video games knows, Japanese names for things frequently have little to do with their English counterparts. For instance, the SNES was called the Super Famicom in Japan. What system was released there as the PC Engine?

A. TurboGrafx-16
B. Atari Lynx
C. Panasonic 3DO
D. Sega Genesis

Question 5: The film *The Wizard* is considered by many to have been a thinly-disguised advertisement for an NES game. Which title was seen first by the public in this Fred Savage masterpiece?

A. Bionic Commando
B. The Legend of Zelda II: The Adventure of Link
C. Ikari Warriors
D. Super Mario Bros. 3

Question 6: What does SSX stand for in the EA Big series of the same name?

A. Snowboard Super-Cross
B. Super Snowboard Xtreme
C. Soft Snow eXtasy
D. Special Snowboarding eXaminer

Question 7: Older games frequently had issues with score counters getting too high and screwing things up. What is the highest score a team can achieve in Madden '95 for the Sega Genesis before the scoreboard rolls over to zero?

A. 100
B. 999
C. 255
D. 127

Question 8: What is Little Nemo the Dream Master's "weapon" in the NES game of the same name?

A. Fruit
B. Candy
C. A puppy named Woof
D. The power of love

Question 9: What would you be wearing if you were in the "R-Zone?"

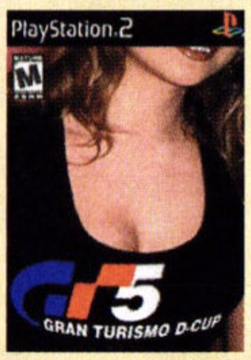
A. A little LCD screen strapped to your head
B. The Nintendo Power Glove
C. A blood pressure monitor hooked up to your PS2's USB port
D. Nothing at all

Question 10: In what PC game could you download a mod to make all of your troops into Lego-style soldiers?

A. Commandos
B. WarCraft II
C. The Ancient Art of War
D. Myth II

Score & Rank

0-2
Mario Party 6: Rainbow Suicide Dreams



3-4
Gran Turismo 5: D-Cup

5-6
Metal Gear Solid 4: Snake Beater

7-8
Lord of the Rings: Hobbit's Eye for the Queer Guy

9-10
Final Fantasy X-3: The Hilton Sisters Edition

Video Game Trivia Answers:

1.B 2.C 3.B 4.A 5.D 6.A 7.C 8.B 9.A 10.D

IBM CONTROLS NEXT CONSOLES

Chip maker **IBM** has scored a trifecta of mass production with a deal to supply **Microsoft's** next system, rumored to be called **Xbox Next**, with its processor. This is a major win for the company, as it has replaced the current Xbox's chipmaker, **Intel**. IBM now has deals with each of the three console companies for their next platforms.

Although the exact chip to be used has not been announced, speculation is that it will be based on current PowerPC technology. This means that **Sony's** Cell multiprocessor and **Nintendo's** next platform, as well as the successor to the Xbox, should all be based on the same technology, but each with their own modifications. Insiders say that Microsoft's switch from Intel and graphics chip maker **Nvidia** to IBM and **ATI**, respectively, won't endanger the Xbox's successor from being backwards compatible – a feature that is widely believed to be a target for Microsoft.

Meanwhile, the gaming community was further abuzz when IBM announced that it had completed work on its Blue Gene/L machine, a supercomputer capable of 2 teraflops (2 trillion calculations per second). There was thought that because both Blue Gene and the next wave of gaming consoles might be based on the same technology, the dawn of home supercomputers might be upon us. IBM, however, quickly shot down the notion, noting that Blue Gene's chips were "totally customized."

THE NEWEST SAMURAI

Koei is bringing Japan's best-selling ***Sengoku Musou*** to these shores in March as ***Samurai Warriors***, exclusively for the **PlayStation 2**. While we won't get to swoon at Tom Cruise's flowing mane à la *The Last Samurai*, the game will pack its own thrills with ***Dynasty Warriors*** -esque carnage wrapped in authentic era weapons and locations.

BREAKDOWN

9% of Capcom's lineup through spring will be on the Xbox

11.6% According to an NPD report on video game publishers' market share in the first third of 2003, Nintendo holds this percentage in second place to EA.

45% of the staff were disgusted at times while watching Manhunt

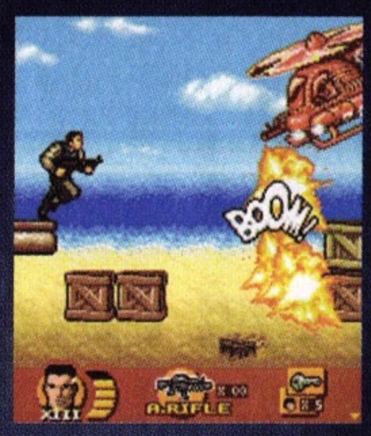
.5% of the editor's time is spent thinking of all the great '80s live albums recorded in Japan by metal bands

80% of the fun of Deus Ex: Invisible War's interactive environments is bouncing chairs off of pedestrians

thirteen

XIII

YOUR NUM13ER IS UP.



CHEAT CODE
EXCLUSIVELY ON verizon wireless:

- COMPLETE **thirteen** ON YOUR PHONE AND OBTAIN THE "BIG HEAD" CHEAT CODE FOR THE PC VERSION.

UBISOFT

Available on all consoles and PC.

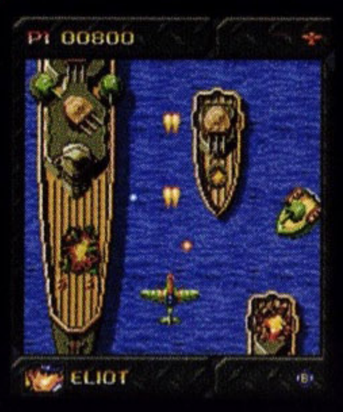
Also available on Motorola T720 and LG vx4400

ALSO AVAILABLE ON get it NOW™:

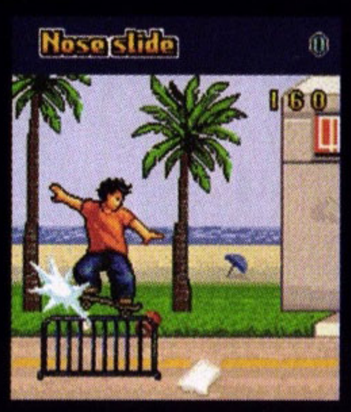
DARGAUD

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell®

Prince of Persia The Sands of Time™



Siberian Strike™



Skate & Slam™

Check complete catalogue and supported phones at **www.gameloft.com.**

gameloft

© 2003 Gameloft. Based on Prince of Persia® created by Jordan Mechner. Siberian Strike, Skate & Slam, Gameloft, and the Gameloft logo are registered trademarks of Gameloft in the US and/or other countries. Prince of Persia and Prince of Persia The Sands of Time are trademarks of Jordan Mechner used under license by Ubisoft Entertainment. © 2002, 2003 Ubisoft Entertainment. Splinter Cell, Ubisoft, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries. © Van Hamme - Vance / Dargaud Benelux (DARGAUD-LOMBARD S.A.) 2000 DARGAUD. All rights reserved. Get It Now and Verizon Wireless are trademarks of Verizon Trademark Services LLC. Get It Now requires network connection in Verizon Wireless digital service areas. Airtime & other service fees apply. Application availability varies by phone.

NINTENDO SHROUDS MYSTERY

Clarifying a previous story regarding new product promised from **Nintendo** (see our October issue), the company has stated that the new item it plans to unveil this upcoming E3 (in May) is not a successor to any of its current platforms, as had previously been believed. This shifts the speculation towards seeing something game-related from Nintendo. Senior Managing Director Yoshihiro Mori stated that the Mario-maker hopes to simultaneously release the product worldwide, but that may not be possible due to manufacturing constraints.

Or could Nintendo's new surprise possibly be the **iQue Player**? This Chinese-only item (pictured) downloads **SNES** and **N64** games to a flash-memory card for the equivalent of $60. The unit comes with the full version of ***Doctor Mario***, and demos of ***The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time***, ***Mario 64***, ***Wave Race 64***, and ***Star Fox***. Although exclusive to China at the moment, rumor has it that this may change.

Nintendo's China-only iQue Player

ACTIVISION DROPS 10 TITLES

Due to a net loss of over $10 million compared with last year, **Activision** has decided to cut 10 video games from its roster. This includes ***Street Hoops 2***, ***Trinity***, and ***Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder 2***. Game Informer contacted the company, but it would not detail any more specific titles. Activision president, Ron Doornink, said the move was done for the benefit of others. "This will enable us to focus and increase our development and marketing resources on those franchises with the greatest potential."

In other news, author Robert Crais has dropped his lawsuit against the publisher/developer regarding ***True Crime: Streets of LA's*** lead character Nick Kang possibly being a copy of the author's Elvis Cole. Crais said he dropped the suit after Activision actively showed him the game's materials and assured him that it was merely an homage. The author proudly states that "no money changed hands."

BY THE LIGHT OF A RED MOON

Acclaim is working on two comic book conversions. The first is ***100 Bullets*** (for more on it, check out our feature on page 76), and the second is ***Red Star***. Set in an alternate universe version of Russia, this brawler puts three characters before you and lets you go at it with fluid gameplay that switches seamlessly between melee and projectile combat. The game utilizes an isometric camera to highlight the interactive environments. It looks like *Red Star* will appear on both the **Xbox** and **PlayStation 2** at the end of 2004.

THE RED STAR ★

DATA FILE

➤ ***Killzone*** developer **Guerrilla** (formerly known as **Lost Boys Games**) has signed with publisher **Eidos** for a third-person action game scheduled for release on the **PlayStation 2**, **Xbox**, and **PC** this summer.

➤ After working together for ***Final Fantasy XI*** on the **PC**, **Intel** and **Square Enix** have decided to collaborate on more titles for the **PC**, mobile phones, and PDAs.

➤ Former **Capcom** stalwart **Yoshiki Okamoto** (who had a hand in both the ***Resident Evil*** and ***Street Fighter*** series) has announced the name of his new development studio: **Game Republic**.

➤ **Koei** is opening a Singapore office, its first subsidiary outside of Japan, and expects the 40-some person staff to create its own products in about four years. Meanwhile, the company has committed to releasing two **PlayStation Portable** games for America at launch.

➤ **Sony** is giving away a one-time payment of a million dollars to one lucky **PS2** combo pack owner (although you can enter at www.us.playstation.com without purchase) on January 26. Do you want to spend $199 for a chance on a million or a couple cents on a 3x5 postcard?

➤ ***Ultima*** legend **Richard Garriott**, also known as **Lord British**, is advising on a contest where participants design games which "secretly" teach middle school students educational subjects. Check out www.hiddenagenda.com for more.

➤ ***Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004*** will be the first title to make full use of **N-Gage's** Arena functions, allowing the spring 2004 title to download courses and the use of an online leader board.

➤ Not escaping death row is **Midway's *The Suffering*** for the **GameCube**. The publisher has given this version of the survival horror-esque title (with swears!) the lethal injection.

➤ ***BloodRayne 2*** has its pointed teeth aimed at the **PlayStation 2**, **Xbox**, and **PC** next Halloween. This sequel has our favorite female vampire agent hunting down her unholy siblings before they unleash an army of blood-sucking fiends.

➤ In an update from last month, **Interplay** and **VU Games** have kissed and made up their distribution agreement, allowing for Interplay's titles to be distributed across North America and Asia.

Name That Game Answer:
Air Fortress

FEATURING DANCE HITS BY:

PAUL OAKENFOLD

IAN VAN DAHL FEAT. MARSHA

WHO DA FUNK

MASAI

Dance Dance Revolution ULTRAMIX™

CONNECTING THE REVOLUTION WITH XBOX LIVE™

- DOWNLOAD NEW SONGS
- ONLINE COMPETITION
- INTERNET RANKINGS
- MULTIPLAYER
- TALK LIVE AND MORE!

EVERYONE

E

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Lyrics

XBOX LIVE

BEMANI™

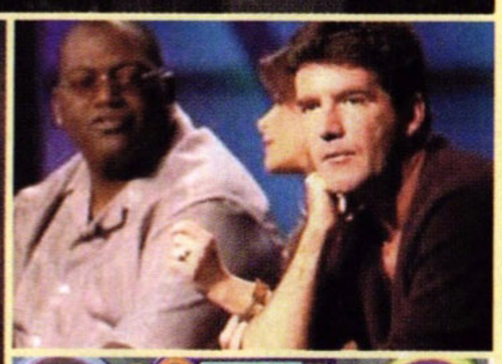
KONAMI

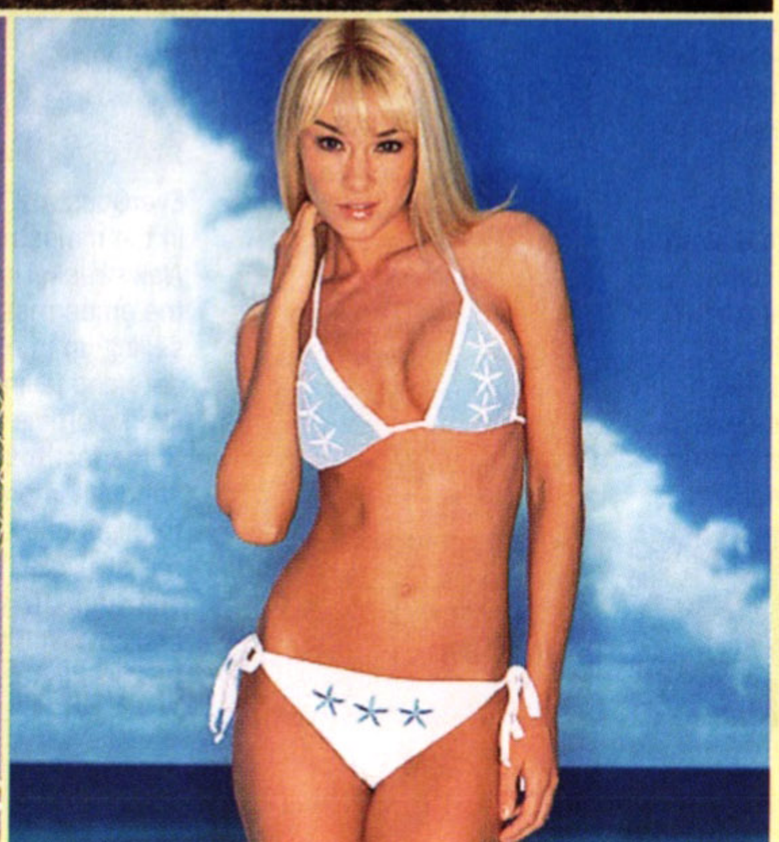
www.konami.com/usa

Dance Dance Revolution™, Dance Dance Revolution ULTRAMIX™ and BEMANI™ are trademarks of KONAMI CORPORATION. KONAMI® is a registered trademark of KONAMI CORPORATION.
© 1998 2003 KONAMI. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under licence from Microsoft..
The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All rights reserved.

Video Games

The Year In Review 2003





Contents

The Year in Review 2003 34

The Top 50 Games of 2003 58

The Top 10 Heroes of 2003 59

The Top 10 Disappointments of 2003 ... 62

The Top 10 Publishers of 2003 64

The Top 10 Villains of 2003 68

The Top 10 Developers of 2003 70

The Top 10 Worst Games of 2003 72

The Top 10 Biggest Dorks of 2003 74

2003 was a tumultuous year in video games. With three console manufacturers locked in a struggle for the precious dollars of consumers, dozens of high profile titles either delayed or cancelled, and several big name projects earning lukewarm receptions both from critics and consumers, it was the kind of year that many companies are probably glad to put behind them. Still, there was a lot of good news to go around as well; especially for gamers, who were treated to some new hardware choices and a bevy of amazing games for all systems. This year, Game Informer decided to give you a look back at the year that was, bringing you the ridiculous, the sublime, and everything in between.

January

Nintendo Lets There Be Light

Responding to critics' complaints about the Game Boy Advance's dingy screen, Nintendo dropped a bomb in January, unveiling a new update of the GBA hardware called the GBA SP. This new unit offered a host of slight upgrades (including a powerful rechargable battery) and a new cell-phone inspired flip-up screen. However, most important to gamers with GBA-induced eyestrain was the unit's frontlit screen, which made gaming in the dark a much more pleasurable experience. Although the unit wouldn't debut until March, this announcement sent shock waves of excitement throughout the gaming community.

LINK GETS DOWN IN SOUL CALIBUR II

Namco had promised something special with Soul Calibur II, and in mid-January it revealed that each console version of the game would feature a system-specific special character. As might be expected, given Namco's arcade partnership with Nintendo, GameCube fans got the better of the deal by a long shot. While the Xbox got Todd McFarlane's Spawn (hey, that's pretty neat) and the PlayStation 2 got Tekken's Heihachi (oh yeah, that old guy with the weird hair), Nintendo's little box got Link from The Legend of Zelda (holy f$%king crap!). Yep, doesn't seem quite fair, does it? In addition, all three version were to feature a new McFarlane-created character, Necrid, but this announcement made it pretty clear that the GC Soul Calibur II was going to be the one to top when it dropped later in the year.

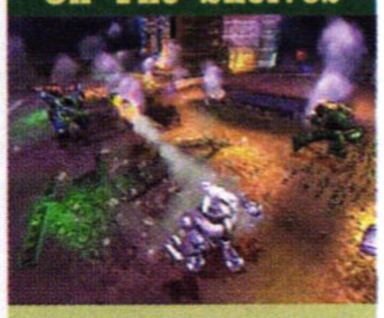
EA Axes Westwood Studios

January 29th was a sad day for real-time strategy fans the world over. On that day, Electronic Arts announced plans to close Westwood Studios, a wholly owned subsidiary of the software giant that was beloved the world over for its Command & Conquer series. Although many Westwood staffers were absorbed into EA's Los Angeles development house, a great many of the folks that had helped make the company a guiding force in the RTS genre found themselves on the outside looking in.

Just a few years ago, the thought of Westwood folding would have been unthinkable, as it had, along with Blizzard's StarCraft and WarCraft series, essentially defined the modern RTS in the '90s with Command & Conquer and the various sequels and expansion packs that followed. However, EA (which had purchased Westwood in 1998 for a then-whopping $122 million), decided to close the company's Las Vegas offices to combine it with its existing EA LA studio and the remnants of DreamWorks Interactive.

Westwood™ STUDIOS

On The Shelves



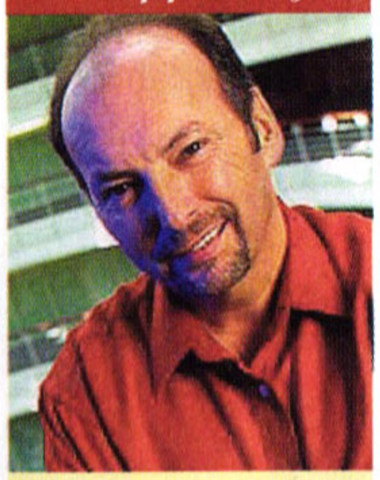
- SimCity 4 (Jan.14)
- The Sims (Jan.14)
- War of the Monsters (Jan.14)
- The Getaway (Jan. 22)
- Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball (Jan. 22)
- Battle Engine Aquila (Jan.23)
- Skies of Arcadia Legends (Jan.28)
- Devil May Cry 2 (Jan.29)

The Sims Online Tanks

Released at the close of 2002, The Sims Online was supposed to be *the* game of this year. Widely assumed to be the title that was going to bring massively multiplayer action to the mainstream, most industry experts (including Game Informer) predicted that the Internet version of Will Wright's mega-selling franchise would knock EverQuest off its online throne. It received a ton of coverage in the mainstream media, even landing on the cover of *Newsweek*. However, in late January, an EA executive made the embarrassing announcement that the game was not selling up to expectation, registering only 82,000 users to date and failing to touch the higher reaches of the charts like its offline counterparts. Most of this was probably due to the fact that the game was a bit dull. Although improvements were made throughout the year, The Sims Online still struggled to find its place. Thankfully, Maxis released the brilliant SimCity 4 and The Sims for PS2 in January to compensate.

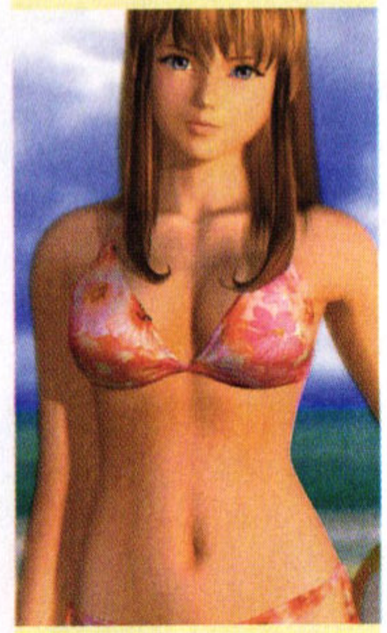
The SIMS ONLINE

Happenings



➤ *Peter Moore, CEO and president of Sega of America, left the company after four years of service, and used his golden parachute to land on his feet days later as Microsoft's new worldwide VP of retail sales and marketing.*

➤ **The Michigan House of Representatives passed a bill that fines retailers for selling M-rated games to people under 17. The bill was later overturned.**



➤ *Tecmo's controversial Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball shipped to retailers, the Earth continued to spin on its axis and orbit the sun as planned. Maybe because it wasn't nearly as dirty (or good) as sweaty-palmed gamers had hoped, the title meets with only middling success at retail and is quickly forgotten.*

➤ **Sony continued to dominate the console market, and announced in January that it had shipped over 50 million PlayStation 2 units worldwide.**

sega GT Online

ONLY ON XBOX

HIGH SPEED INTERNET

- Newly enhanced for Xbox *Live* - real-time voice chat, 12 player online racing, downloadable content and online trading
- Transfer Sega GT 2002 save data to access customized cars from your garage
- 165+ licensed cars - Over 40 new cars ranging from 50's classics to the concepts of tomorrow
- Licensed and customizable soundtrack featuring songs from more than 45 alternative, indie, garage, punk, ska and rock bands including Supersuckers, Lookout! Records, Fat Wreck Chords and many more!

TEEN T MILD LYRICS
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

Official Licensed Product Ford Motor Company

GM OFFICIAL LICENSED PRODUCT

DODGE GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS

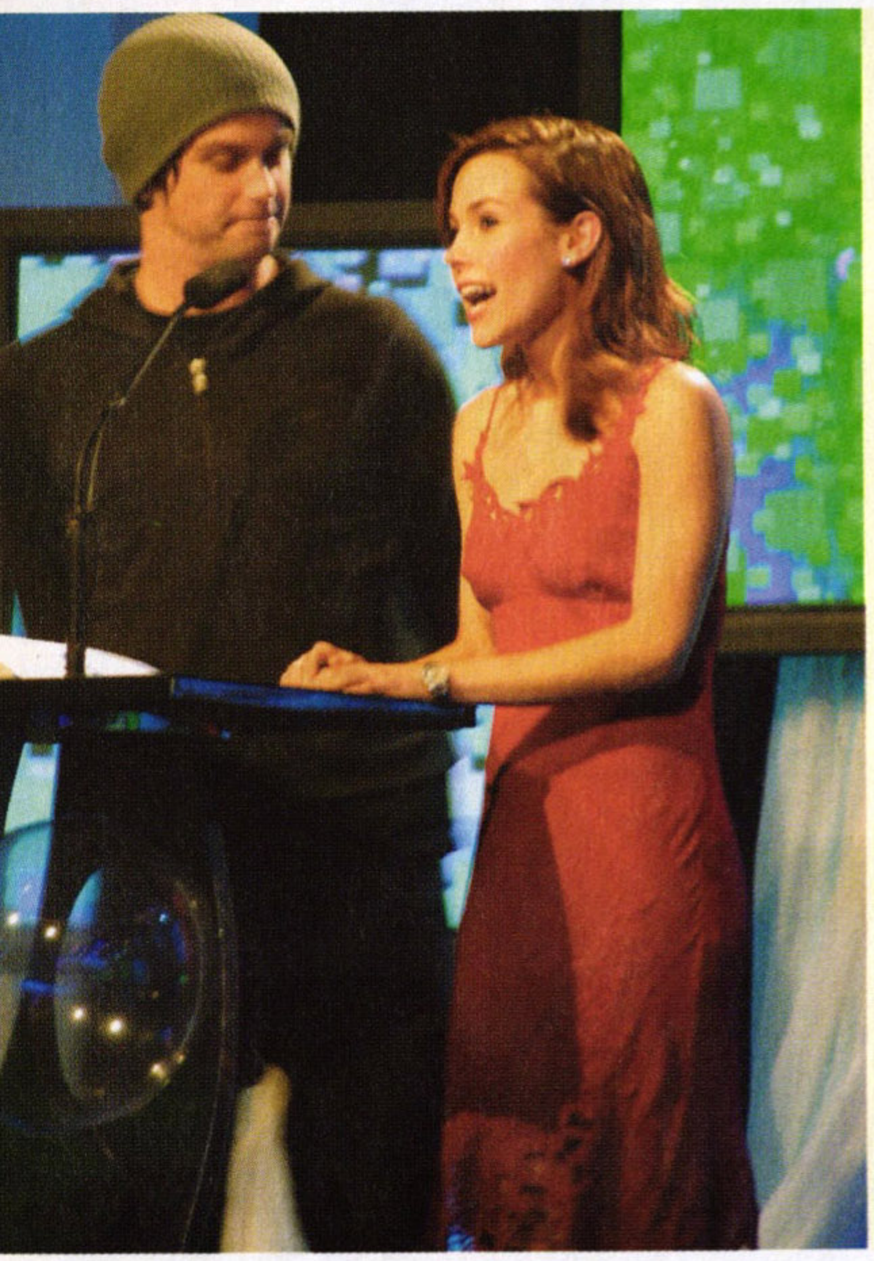
Official Licensed Product

CHRYSLER LICENSED PRODUCT

SEGA

Sega is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA, the SEGA logo, Sega GT and Sega GT Online are either registered trademarks or trademarks of SEGA CORPORATION. Original Game ©WOW Entertainment/SEGA Corporation, 2002,2003. All Rights Reserved. U.S. Patent Nos. 5,269,687 and 5,354,202. All manufacturers, cars, names, brands and associated imagery featured in this game are trademarks and/or copyrighted materials of their respective owners. All rights reserved. General Motors Trademarks used under license to Sega Corporation. Trans Am is a trademark of SCCA licensed to Trans-Am Racing, LLC. Ford nameplates are registered trademarks owned and licensed by Ford Motor Company. Jaguar trademarks are owned and licensed by Jaguar Cars Ltd., England. Dodge is a trademark of DaimlerChrysler Corporation 2003. Plymouth® and AAR 'Cuda are trademarks of DaimlerChrysler Corporation. ©DCC 2003 Official Honda Licensed Product. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. All Rights Reserved.

February



THE BEST OF THE BEST HONORED AT DICE

The annual DICE Summit, a two-day seminar that draws most of the top game creators in the business, took place in Las Vegas on February 28. Also part of the festivities were the Interactive Achievement Awards, which handed out honors to the past year's best titles. EA's online powerhouse Battlefield 1942 took the prestigious Game of the Year award. Other winners included Splinter Cell (Console Game of the Year) and Animal Crossing (Outstanding Achievement in Game Design). Sega's Yu Suzuki (Hang-On, Virtua Fighter, Shenmue) cemented his legend status by being inducted into the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences Hall of Fame.

ON THE RADAR
What Didn't Happen In 2003

A lot of things happen in a year, but sometimes the things that *don't* happen are just as important as the things that do (go ahead, ask your local philosophy grad student!). And, to be sure, *a lot* of things didn't happen in 2003.

On the industry side, nobody bought Japanese publisher **Sega**. That didn't stop news services from reporting all year that the company was on the verge of being scooped up by American giants **Electronic Arts** or **Microsoft**. Sega did come close to merging with pachinko powerhouse **Sammy**, but the two got in a tiff and called the whole thing off. Part of the problem was reported to be Sega's interest in merging with **Namco**, but then that never happened, either. Sheesh, what a tease! Sega courts suitors like **Winona Ryder** dates rock stars.

Lots of big games were hit with delays as well, most notably Microsoft's feverishly anticipated ***Halo 2***. So did ***Fable***, but that's being overseen by **Peter Molyneux** and no one really expects his games to be on time anyway. Also joining the ranks of the MIA were **Infogrames' *Driver 3***, **Sony's *EverQuest II***, **Vivendi's *Half-Life 2***, **Square Enix's *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles***, and **Blizzard's *StarCraft: Ghost***. Even worse, **Rockstar** was mum about a new ***Grand Theft Auto*** sequel.

In less surprising news, **Nintendo** still doesn't have an online strategy for the **GameCube**. And no – ***Phantasy Star Online*** doesn't count!

Kakuto Chojin Pulled From Shelves in Islamic Controversy

Under strange circumstances, Microsoft's fighting game Kakuto Chojin was pulled from the shelves in February. Apparently, there was concern that one level in the game featured an Islamic prayer being chanted by some characters. Conscious of the potential fallout in a year that was fraught with tension in the Middle East, Microsoft recalled all existing copies from retailers, replacing them with an altered version. However, confusion arose as to whether all offensive copies had actually been returned, so the company opted to delete the title altogether. Promptly, all references to the game on Microsoft's Xbox website were erased, as if Kakuto Chojin had never existed at all. However, the copies of the original pressing that sold are still floating around on the collector's market, where the game is sure to be a hot item for years to come.

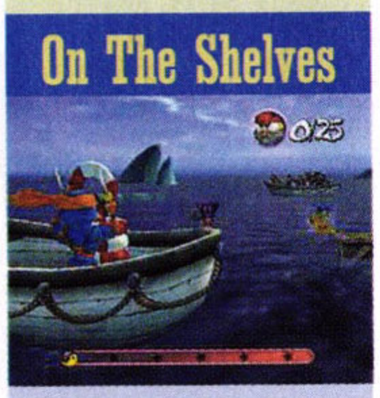
Happenings

➤ *Bandai ended its support of its ailing Wonderswan handheld console in Japan. Nagged by poor sales and overwhelmed by Nintendo's successful Game Boy Advance, the company finally threw in the towel, continuing manufacturing only on a pre-order basis.*

➤ **Although Xbox sales were up, in February it was reported that Microsoft's Xbox division had lost $348 million in the last financial quarter. This was largely due to the almost $100 the company loses per unit sold.**

➤ *NEC, the company that brought us the TurboGrafx-16 back in the day, re-entered the world of gaming with a new US publishing division called NEC Interchannel. Heading up the firm was former Capcom VP Clint Kurahashi. Later in the year, it released the futuristic racer Tube Slider, which made little noise in the press or at retail.*

On The Shelves



- Xenosaga: Episode I (Feb.26)
- Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter (Feb.19)
- Dark Cloud 2 (Feb.19)
- Galarians: Ash (Feb.5)
- Vexx (Feb.12)
- Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb (Feb.24)
- Kung Fu Chaos (Feb.26)
- Unreal II: The Awakening (Feb.4)

THEY SHOULD'VE JUST STAYED DEAD!

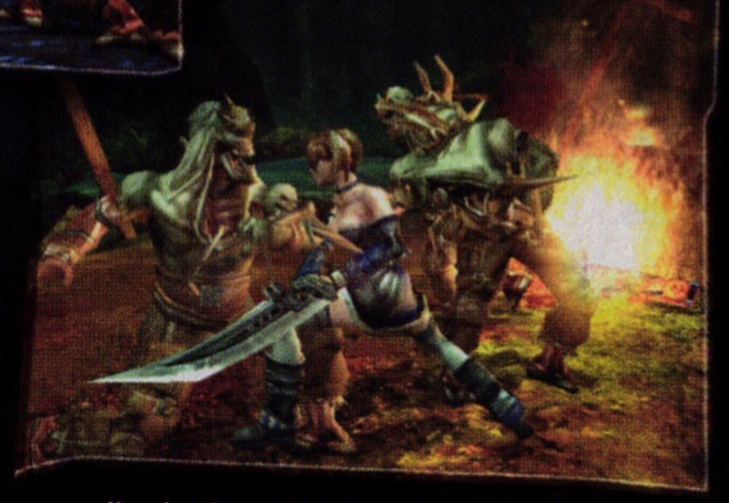
"The newly announced return of Hunter: The Reckoning, in the form of Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer, has us pretty damn excited."

Official Xbox Magazine May, 2003

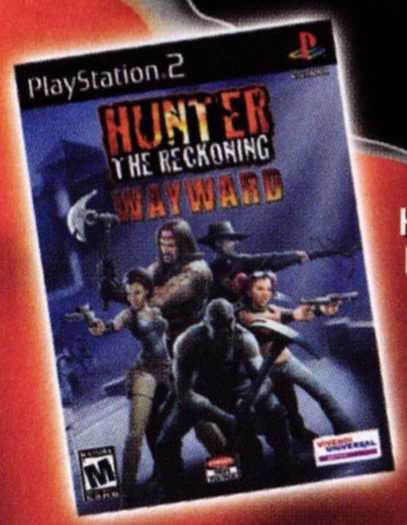
"Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer is bigger, badder, and far more insane than the previous slaughter-fest."

www.IGN.com March, 2003

Choose from 5 unique playable Hunters



Unrelenting action based on White Wolf's World of Darkness™ RPG series



Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward
Now available on
PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system

HUNTER
THE RECKONING
REDEEMER

www.hunterthereckoning.com/redeemer

DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE

WHITE WOLF GAME STUDIO

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL games

XBOX

download new content on LIVE

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer ©2003 Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. All rights reserved. Altus Tech Game Engine trademark 2000 High Voltage Software, Inc. All rights reserved. Developed for Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. by High Voltage Software and Saffire, Inc. Hunter: The Reckoning is a registered trademark of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. High Voltage Software and the High Voltage Software, Inc. Monolith, Xbox and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other copyrights and trademarks are property of their respective owners.

March

On The Shelves

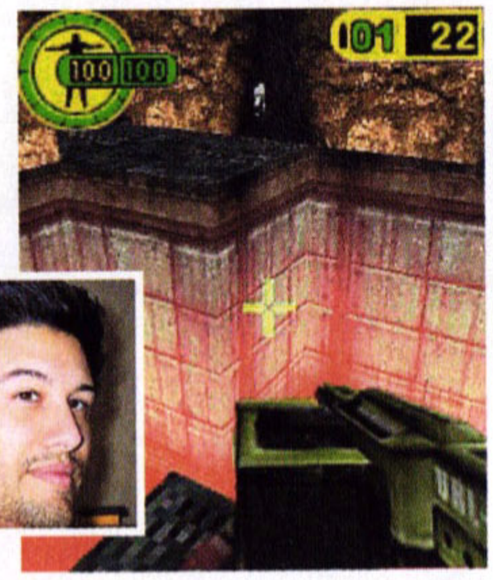
- Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven (Mar.5)
- Dynasty Warriors 4 (Mar.26)
- Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis (Mar.26)
- Pro Race Driver (Mar.25)
- Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus (Mar.19)
- Pokémon Ruby/ Sapphire (Mar.19)
- The King of Route 66 (Mar.19)

Xbox Live Strong Out Of The Gate

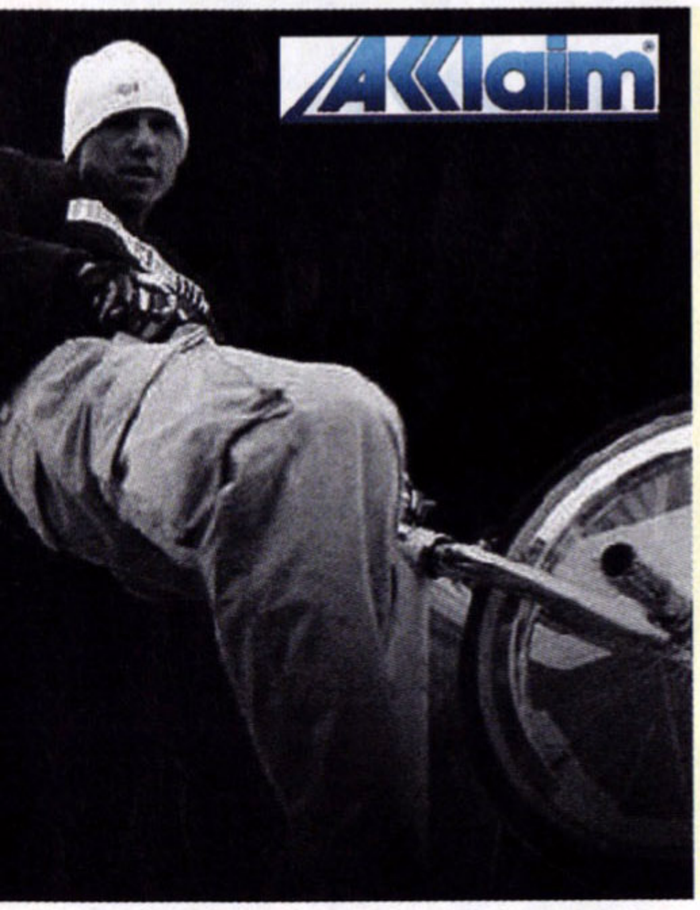
At its launch in November of 2002, many experts were skeptical as to whether the public would embrace Microsoft's Xbox Live online gaming service. However, in March of 2003, the Seattle OS gangstas could proudly wave a middle finger at all the haters, as it was announced that Live was off to a strong start, with over 350,000 gamers around the U.S. already signed up. Two of the driving forces behind Live's success were Splinter Cell, which offered up a new level that was made available online for download into the Xbox hard drive, and MechAssault, which posted two new mechs and a handful of battle arenas that were scooped up by over 172,000 subscribers.

Ex-Doom Glamour Boy Reappears With Red Faction, New Haircut

John Romero, who was famous for his fast-lane lifestyle and "rock star" attitude when he was at the helm of id Software in the heyday of Doom, resurfaced this year with his new company, Monkeystone Games, and its first high-profile project: a port of THQ's popular console FPS Red Faction for Nokia's recently announced N-Gage cell phone gaming device (more on that later).



Romero 2K3, shorn of his once-famous heavy-metal mane, appeared to have recovered from his former wild ways and seemed determined to make quality handheld games in a low-key and unassuming manner. Even those still bitter about the Daikatana debacle couldn't help but wish him well. Later in the year, Romero would join Midway as lead designer on an as-yet-unnamed Xbox project, but promised that Monkeystone would continue to cater to the pocket PC and cell phone market.



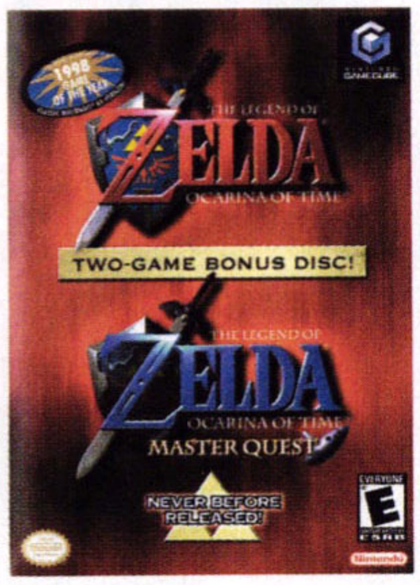
MIRRA SUES ACCLAIM IN XXX FLAP

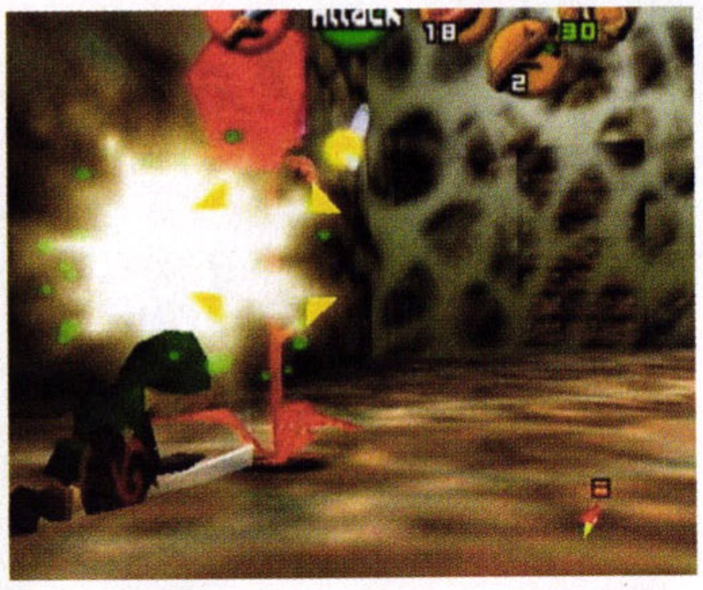
Dave Mirra ain't the one to test, as Acclaim found out the hard way in 2003. Things started to go sour between Mirra and the NYC publisher in 2002, when plans were announced that developer Z-Axis was going to take its Dave Mirra-endorsed BMX series in a bold "adults-only" direction featuring full-frontal nudity, swearing, and more offensive material than you could shake a dog turd at. Mirra and his management balked, and thus Dave Mirra BMX XXX became plain old BMX XXX.

Even though his name was taken off the product, Mirra filed a $21 million dollar lawsuit for breach of contract against the publisher, alleging that Acclaim had continued to use his name and likeness to promote the product. What's worse, Acclaim was already reeling over the fact that the title was a total flop despite all the press surrounding its controversial nature. The suit was later settled out of court, with no monetary damages being awarded to either side, and Mirra remaining under contract for future (likely non-pornographic) BMX titles.

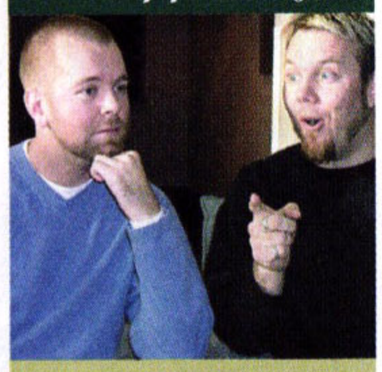
Zelda Breaks Records With Bonus Bundle

The Legend of Zelda franchise is always guaranteed to move units, but Nintendo decided to make a sure thing even surer when it offered fans who preorder the latest in the series, The Wind Waker, a bonus disc version of its N64-era classic, The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time. The disc included both the original version and the Ocarina of Time Master Quest, which featured improved graphics and some modified and reworked dungeons. Needless to say, the promotion was a success, as more than 560,000 copies were presold before its March 24 release – a new preorder record in the United States.





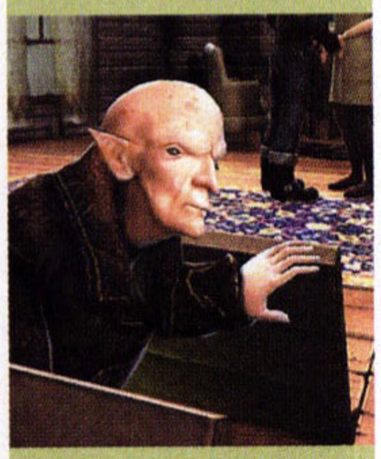
Happenings



➤ *In a surprising move, Chris and Ron Millar, who had worked on such classics as WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos, Diablo II: Lord of Destruction, and StarCraft, left Blizzard to join Jaleco Entertainment. Their first Jaleco project, Goblin Commander, is reviewed in this issue on pages 131 (PS2), 141 (GC), and 149 (Xbox).*

➤ **Fox Interactive and Vivendi signed an agreement that made Vivendi the publisher of all Fox video game properties, including Buffy the Vampire Slayer, The Simpsons, and X-Files. Later on, the tandem put out The Simpsons: Hit & Run, one of the first decent Groening-related titles ever released!**

➤ *The Game Boy SP was released on March 23, and as expected, was a huge success, going on to sell more than 2.3 million units in the U.S. alone by year-end.*



➤ **Peter Molyneux's Lionhead Studios signed a publishing deal with Activision which grants worldwide publishing right to the new PC project The Movies, a sim-type game that lets players create and direct their own virtual motion pictures.**

namco®

WWW.NAMCO.COM

I-Ninja™

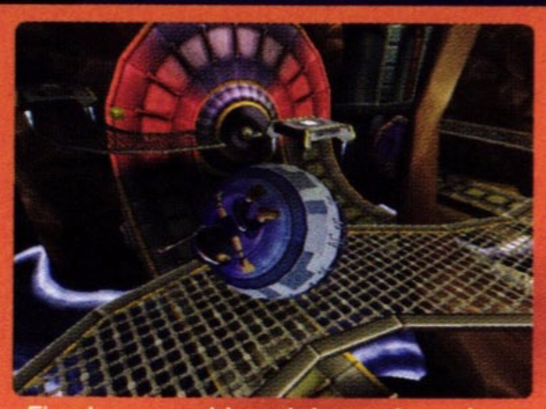
NO ONE'S TALLER THAN THE LAST MAN STANDING.

WWW.ININJAGAME.COM

Get Ninja-crazy by collecting power-ups to incite Ninja's special Rage abilities.

Gravity? Run up walls and tear through levels with moves only the most insane Ninja would try.

Use multiple weapons to take apart any foe that dares stand between Ninja and his missions.



Five huge worlds, mini-quests and grueling missions that will separate the Ninjas from the boys.

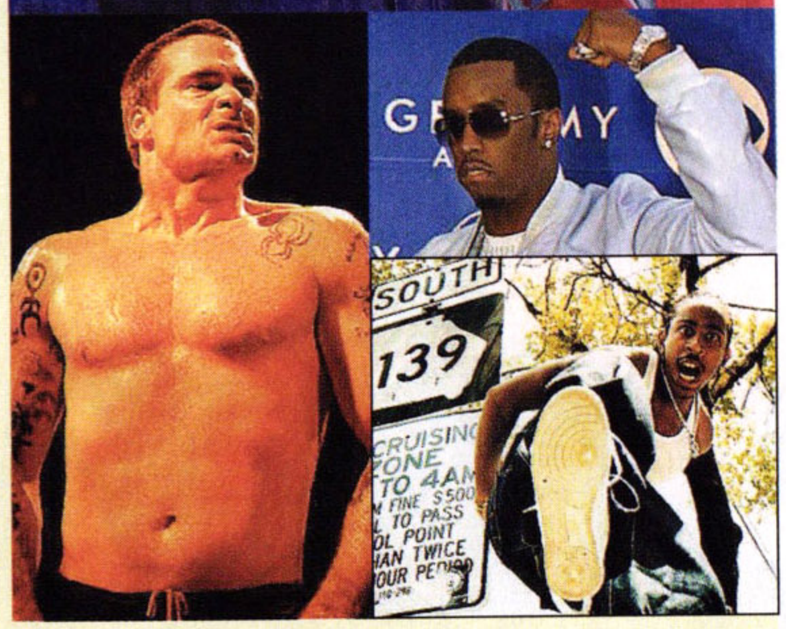
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Animated Blood Violence

NINTENDO GAMECUBE. XBOX PlayStation®2 ARGONAUT

I-Ninja™ & © 2003 Argonaut Games PLC. Licensed exclusively to Namco Hometek Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. TM, ® and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

April

MUSIC BIZ HEAVYWEIGHTS GET IN THE GAME



April was the month that the ailing music industry tried to jump on gaming's coattails. Starting off the month was the release of EA's Def Jam Vendetta, a wrestling game starring most of the label's stable of microphone wreckers. The roster included Method Man, Redman, DMX, and Ludacris, among others. Appropriately, in the year in which rap became the most-played form of music on American Top 40 radio, the game sold very well, and received generally strong reviews. Of course, P. Diddy couldn't stay out of the action, and announced that he was interested in creating his own music biz sim, in which players could sign, record, and market acts for a fictional record label.

In less humorous news, stonefaced punk icon Henry Rollins signed on to be the voice of Black Label Game's FPS hero Mace Griffin. The game ended up being pretty decent, but it's a shame Mace didn't have any funny one-liners like this Hank the Tank zinger: "I don't believe in fate or destiny. I believe in various degrees of hatred, paranoia, and abandonment." Oh Henry, you so crazy!

For aspiring stars, Codemasters also announced a game based on Fox Television's tacky cash cow *American Idol*, which lets you sing for the show's judges, including the notorious Simon Cowell.

Ulala

Lady Miss Kier

However, sometimes the rock n' gaming connection can turn ugly, as was the case between Sega and dance diva Lady Miss Kier (formerly of one-hit wonders Deee-Lite). By "case" we mean the lawsuit the singer filed against Sega alleging that the company had misappropriated her image and look for the character Ulala in its Space Channel 5 series.

ON THE RADAR
Inventive New Peripherals Proliferate

In 2003, it became obvious that gaming in the future will incorporate a lot more than just the old joystick-and-buttons set-up the industry has been reinventing for years. A host of new, inventive peripherals were announced or released this year, challenging our perception of what a "video game" is.

Most ingenious was **Sony's EyeToy**, a USB digital camera that let players put their own image onscreen and actually interact with the numerous minigames that came packed in with the unit. The camera worked surprisingly well and was freakishly popular in the U.K., where it unseated ***Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness*** from the top of the charts.

Adding to its Bemani/rhythm game empire, **Konami** brought out a **wireless Dance Dance Revolution pad**, but still couldn't teach **Americans** to not look like **epileptic carp** when they **dance**. Even better, it released ***Karaoke Revolution***, which utilized Sony's USB microphone to grade gamers on accuracy, timing, and even pitch. **Microsoft** got in on the funky action with the **Xbox Music Mixer**, which gives owners the ability to karaoke their brains out and even use compatible **PC** software to strip the vocals from their favorite songs.

Sony Shocks, Then Flip-Flops

Sony found itself embroiled in a political controversy in April, when it was revealed that the firm had applied for a trademark on the phrase "Shock and Awe" (the now-famous term the Pentagon used to describe its initial bombing runs on Baghdad) just days before the start of the full-scale U.S. invasion of Iraq. The UK daily newspaper *The Guardian* uncovered the trademark application for the term, which Sony was planning to use as a title for a future video game release. After the story became publicized, many observers commented that Sony's behavior seemed more than a little inappropriate given the fact that thousands of non-virtual people on both sides of the U.S./Iraq conflict were in danger of losing their very non-virtual lives. A few days later, Sony did the honorable thing and chickened out, withdrawing its application and backpedaling in the press. Later on, sneaky Midway actually did snag the rights to the phrase, and has a current project in development.

When Two Become One

April 1st was a momentous day in gaming history, as the much-ballyhooed merger between Japanese RPG giants Square and Enix was completed. The joint venture was dubbed Square Enix, and the company launched a website that featured a new logo a few days later. The deal had been the talk of the gaming world all year, but had run into a few snags as the companies haggled over the terms of the stock exchange that took place between the two. One of its first major moves was to enter into a publishing agreement with Nintendo, allowing the console manufacturer to publish Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles for the GameCube as well as a few GBA titles including Sword of Mana.

SQUARE ENIX™

Happenings

➤ *Sega and McDonald's teamed up to bring special edition Happy Meals featuring small handheld games based on characters from the Sonic the Hedgehog and Super Monkey Ball series.*

➤ **After announcing losses of $168 million for fiscal year 2002 due to underperforming titles like Resident Evil 0, Devil May Cry 2, and P.N.03, Capcom cancelled 18 titles that were in development.**

➤ *Running With Scissor's ultraviolent Postal 2 was a lightning rod for controversy. On its release in April, it was the first game to ever earn the ESRB's "Intense Violence" tag, and later in the year a lawsuit brought against the company by the U.S. Postal Service was dismissed. Despite the furor, the underground sensation was a hit, selling out its initial pressing.*

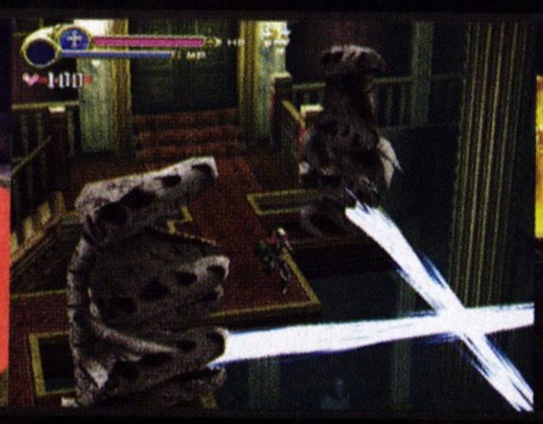
➤ **Sony announced that it was investing $1.6 billion dollars in chip manufacturing in 2003.**

On The Shelves

- Run Like Hell (Apr.8)
- Final Fantasy Origins (Apr.8)
- Crazy Taxi: Catch a Ride (Apr.9)
- X2: Wolverine's Revenge (Apr.15)
- Golden Sun: The Lost Age (Apr.15)

BAPTIZED IN BLOOD, A FAMILY'S TRAGIC DESTINY IS BORN.

At the dawn of the second millennium, the first Belmont makes the ultimate sacrifice. And the destiny of a bloodline is decided. From the creators of Castlevania® Symphony of the Night™ and completely reinvented for its 3D debut on PlayStation®2, Castlevania® Lament of Innocence™ reveals the true origins of the vampire-hunting Belmonts and their tireless quest for Vlad Dracula. A thousand years ago, a legend was indeed born. And the dying hasn't stopped since.



"5 out of 5" - *GamePro*

"9 out of 10" - *PSM*

"9 out of 10" - *IGN.com*

Castlevania® lament of innocence™

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

PlayStation®2

KONAMI
www.konami.com/usa

CASTLEVANIA®, Lament of Innocence™ and Symphony of the Night™ are either registered trademarks or trademarks of KONAMI CORPORATION. © 1986 2003 KONAMI & Konami Computer Entertainment Tokyo. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. KONAMI® is a registered trademark of KONAMI CORPORATION. All rights reserved.

May

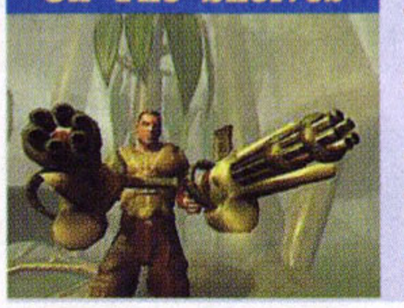
MATRIX MANIA SWEEPS THE GLOBE

Unless you were homeless and living in the underground tunnels of New York City, you probably saw around 7,000 magazine articles and television reports on *The Matrix Reloaded* in May. A hurricane of hype preceded the long-awaited sci-fu action flick, and video games went along for the ride thanks to Enter The Matrix, a sister project co-created by Shiny Entertainment and the Wachowski brothers which hit stores the same day *Reloaded* hit theaters. Featuring an hour of unique footage that fills out the backstory of *Reloaded* characters Niobe and Ghost, Enter the Matrix set a new standard for cooperation between the motion picture and game industries. The game itself garnered wildly mixed reviews, with some praising it as a superb entertainment experience and others decrying its erratic gameplay. Still, it sold over a million copies within days of its release *and* turned out to be a lot more satisfying than last two muddled chapters in the silver-screen saga.

Infogrames Is Dead, Long Live Atari

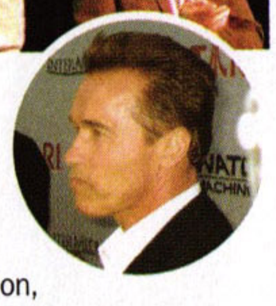
We have to admit that it was a little hard to see a large French conglomerate take the name that best represents the can-do spirit of the early American garage developers. Just like those French to steal an American icon! (Just kidding, France! You know we love you!). However odd it seemed to industry veterans, Infogrames became officially known as Atari effective on May 7th. The company had been releasing a handful of products under the Atari brand for several months, but this move made the change official.

On The Shelves



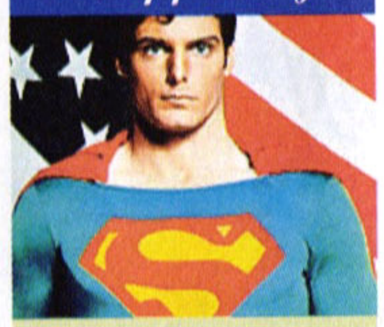
- PlanetSide (May 19)
- Mega Man: Network Transmission (May 21)
- Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick (May 26)
- The Hulk (May 27)
- Bloody Roar Extreme (May 27)
- Brute Force (May 28)

E3: Judgement Day In Los Angeles



It's funny; in May Arnold Schwarzenegger made an appearance at a B-list celebrity video game launch in LA, and by the end of the year he was the governor of the state! The Terminator: Rise of the Machines party was only the beginning of the star-studded three-day game convention, which saw appearances by everybody from sci-fi author Orson Scott Card to celebrity pimp Snoop Dogg. As always, the big three console manufacturers duked it out in fine fashion. Sony shocked attendees with an announcement regarding its plans for the PlayStation Portable handheld system. Microsoft also impressed, displaying a much-improved software lineup and a staggering Halo 2 gameplay demo. Things went less well for Nintendo, which had an underwhelming press conference, devoting a huge portion of time to a slight minigame, Pac-Man Vs. On the software front, Ubisoft's Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time and Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater were crowd favorites, but Valve's mind-blowing Half-Life 2 was clearly the high point of the show.

Happenings



➤ *Although America's greatest hero has suffered terribly at the hands of such nefarious foes as Atari, Sunsoft, and (shudder) Titus, things began looking up for the beleaguered Kryptonian in May when it was announced that the comic license had fallen into the hands of the usually capable "superpublisher" Electronic Arts.*

➤ **Legendary action director John Woo decided to enter the video game fray in May with a new partnership between his new development studio, Tiger Hill Entertainment, and Sega.**

➤ *Nintendo and Konami announced an exciting joint project, Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes. A retooled GameCube port of the original PlayStation Metal Gear.*

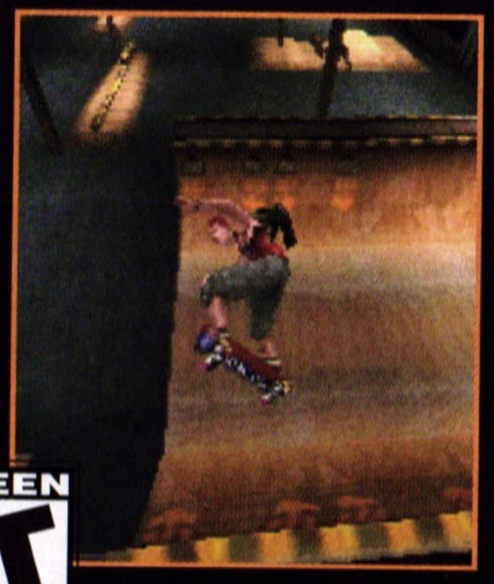
➤ **Midway announced that Universal Pictures had purchased the rights to make a feature film based on the company's Spy Hunter series. Wrestling superstar The Rock signed on to play the lead character, Alec Sects.**

➤ *A University of Rochester study showed that games may help to improve visual skills. Researchers found that men who played action-oriented video games were better at tracking objects and quickly processing visual information.*

Are you ready to
show us what you've got?

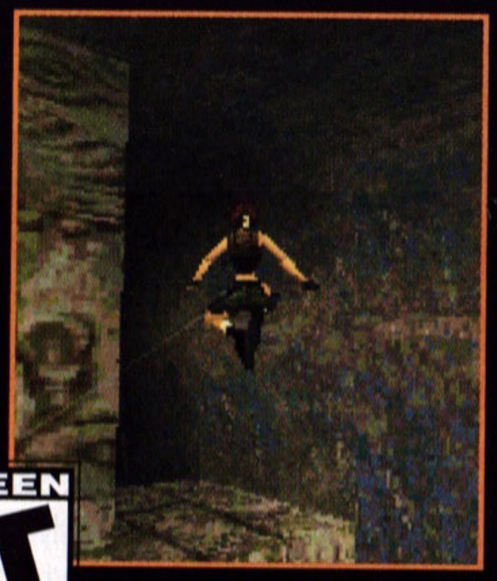
N-GAGE ARENA

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER



TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

TOMB RAIDER
Starring Lara Croft



TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Pandemonium!

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Wireless multiplayer game play. Enhance your mobile gaming experience with our N-Gage™ Arena-enabled game card titles from top publishers • Online gaming services exclusive to N-Gage™ Arena: Game Extras • Shadow Racing • Director's Cut • Walkthroughs • Rankings • **n-gage.com**

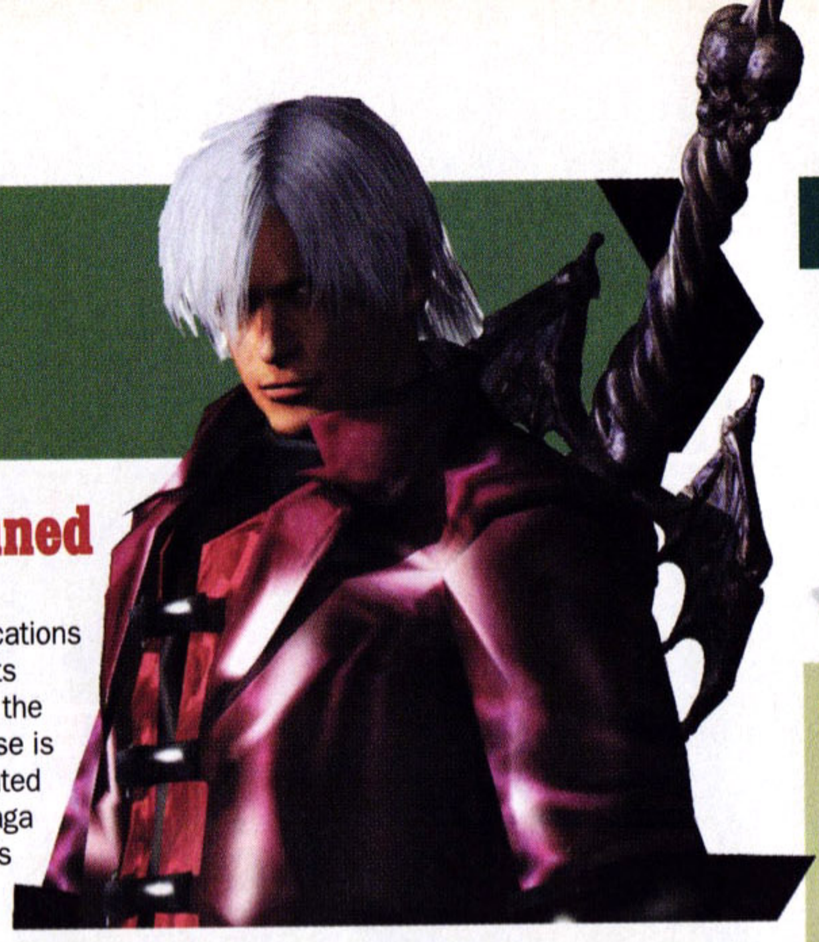
GameStop

ACTIVISION. NEVERSOFT idea works3d! eidos CRYSTAL DYNAMICS core design

N-GAGE NOKIA anyone anywhere

Copyright © 2003 Nokia. All rights reserved. Nokia and N-Gage are trademarks or registered trademarks of Nokia Corporation. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater®–© 1999-2003 Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. Activision and Pro Skater are registered trademarks of Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. All rights reserved. Tony Hawk is a trademark of Tony Hawk. Tomb Raider Starring Lara Croft™ © Core Design Ltd. 2003. Developed by Ideaworks3d Ltd. Tomb Raider and Lara Croft are trademarks of Core Design Limited. Eidos and the Eidos logo are trademarks of the Eidos Group of Companies. Pandemonium© Crystal Dynamics, Inc. 2003. Developed by Ideaworks3d Ltd. Pandemonium is a trademark of Crystal Dynamics Inc. Other product or company names mentioned herein may be trademarks of their respective owners.

June



On The Shelves

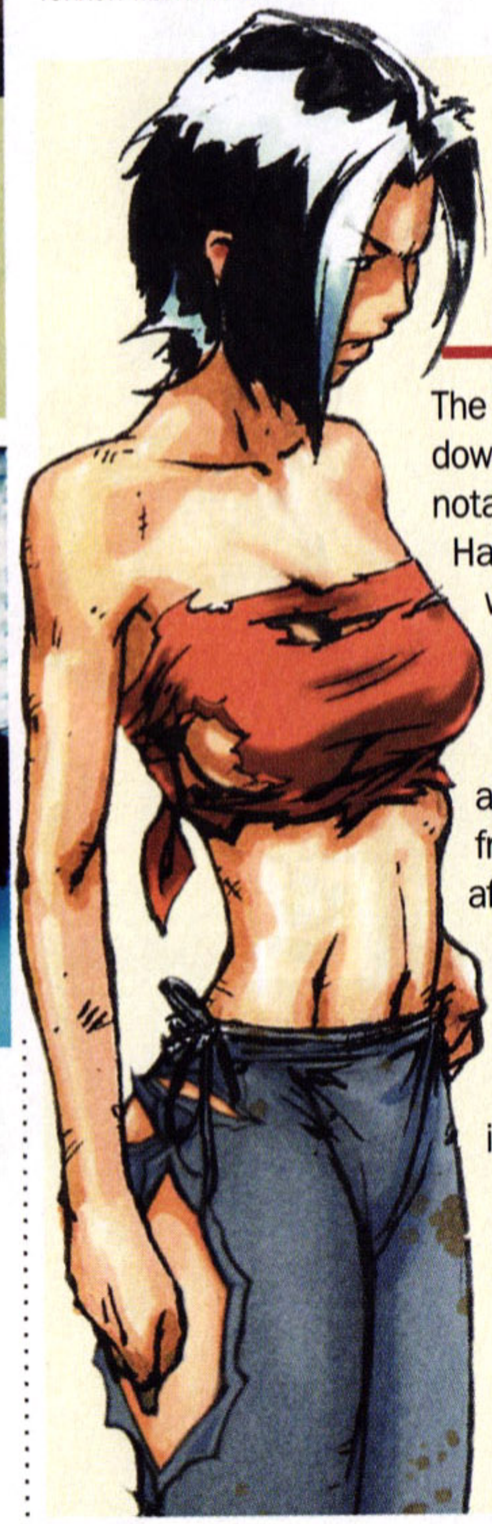
- Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits (Jun.24)
- RTX: Red Rock (Jun.17)
- Wario World (Jun.23)
- Wakeboarding Unleashed featuring Shaun Murray (Jun.5)
- Midtown Madness 3 (Jun.17)
- Resident Evil: Dead Aim (Jun.17)

Nintendo Dumps Space World, Pumps Goth Metal!

For the second year running, Nintendo cancelled its Space World convention in Japan. It was once a yearly event celebrating all things Nintendo, one that usually featured at least one high profile announcement or game debut. However, given that the event has now been scrapped for two years straight, it appears that Space World is most likely a thing of the past. The last Space World occurred in 2001, when the company debuted both Super Mario Sunshine and The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker. While Nintendo didn't publicly give a reason for the cancellation, perhaps it's because it had already sunk too much money into sponsoring a summer U.S. concert tour by teen-goth champions Evanescence, which featured prominently displayed GameCube kiosks at arenas nationwide.

Devil May Cry Movie Planned

Devil May Cry 2 was one of the year's gaming disappointments, but Japanese firm Gaga Communications still has faith in Dante. The company signed the rights to make a motion picture based on the first game in the series, which is set to start filming in 2005. Little else is known about the project, although Gaga has speculated that the picture's cost will be around $40 million. Gaga also bought the film rights to Onimusha and Namco's Tekken franchise.



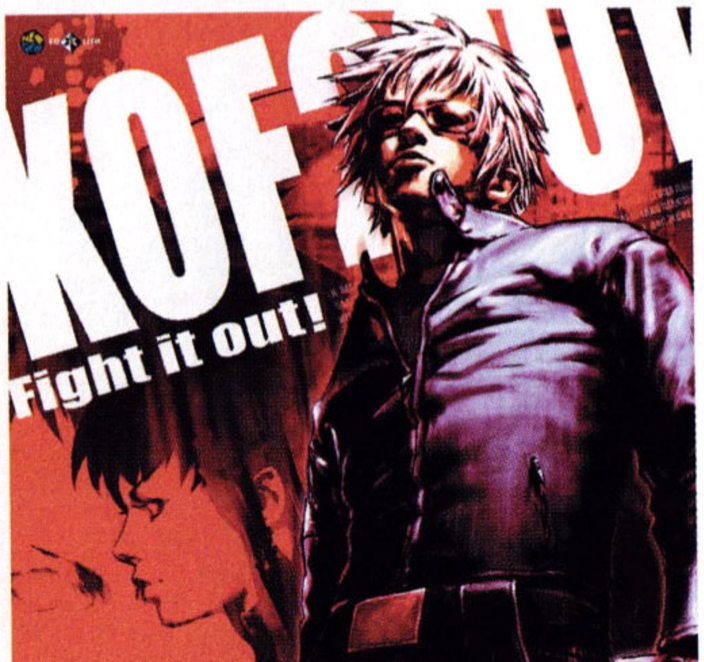
3DO BITES THE DUST, KRONOS SURVIVES SCARE

The economy was in the toilet for most of 2003, and the downturn's effects were felt throughout the game industry, most notably at 3DO. Started by ex-Electronic Arts cofounder Trip Hawkins, the company released the 3DO Multiplayer in 1993 with Panasonic. The system used disc media, but floundered largely because of the unit's $700 retail price. Later the company was reinvented as a third-party console developer, and was best known for franchises like High Heat Baseball and Army Men. 3DO was famous for losing money, and Hawkins frequently pumped his own cash into the operation to keep it afloat. However, the ax finally fell in June, when the corporation officially filed for Chapter 11.

Narrowly escaping bankruptcy was Fear Effect developer Kronos Digital. After Eidos canned Fear Effect: Retro Helix, Kronos was left without a deal, and uncertain as to whether it could shop the sequel to other publishers. The company also had several unfinished projects in development. Thankfully, Kronos managed to make it through the year, and is exploring further deals for several original properties.

SNK Back From the Dead!

As 3DO went the way of the dodo, another former console maker was resurrected, at least as a brand name. Playmore, which owns the SNK label, changed the name of its Sun Amusement subsidiary to SNK NeoGeo, and opened divisions in the U.S. and Asia under the name. Later in the year, the company released The King of Fighters 2000 & 2001 for the PlayStation 2, and promised future PS2 KoF games as well as new Metal Slug titles for both PS2 and Game Boy Advance.



Happenings

➤ *Nintendo released one of the year's best peripherals, the Game Boy Player. Retailing for $49.99 and also offered as part of a $149 bundle in June, the unit attaches to the base of the GameCube, allowing users to plug in GBA carts for big-screen action.*

➤ **Southern Methodist University's new game-development program (called the Guildhall) celebrated its first day of classes with a speech by id Software's legendary John Carmack.**

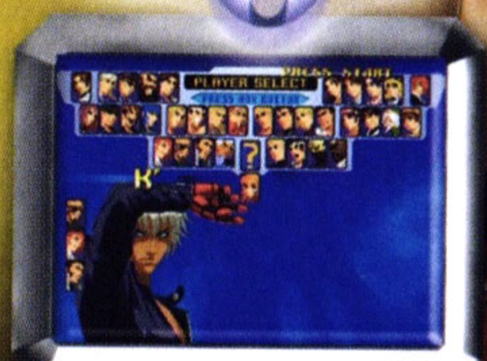
➤ *EA signed star Pierce Brosnan for voice-acting duties in it upcoming title James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing. The company also secured the Bond license until the year 2010.*

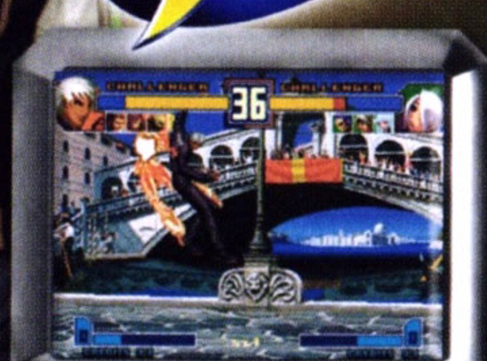
➤ **Wacky New York assemblyman Felix Ortiz proposed a 1 percent state sales tax on video games, junk food, and TV commercials, the proceeds of which would help fund obesity prevention programs in schools. This guy [pictured above] was really upset.**

➤ *Adding to its long tradition of mailing people CDs and cassettes that they don't want, Columbia House decided to add video games to the list of media included in their mail-order club.*

THE KING OF FIGHTERS 2000™

THE KING OF FIGHTERS 2001™





THE KING OF FIGHTERS

episode 6

episode 7

THE SAGA CONTINUES

The wait is over. Now The King of Fighters, Episodes 6 and 7, are both here. The sequel, The King of Fighters 2000, plus the final chapter of The Tale of NESTS saga, The King of Fighters 2001, equals fierce 2D action-fighting on 2 DVDs! Duke it out like never before in this special 2-in-1 pack exclusively for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system.

- Special new Strikers and characters
- 75 playable characters to choose from
- Original 3D polygon stages, upgraded modes and graphics for The King of Fighters 2001

TEEN T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Violence

PlayStation®2

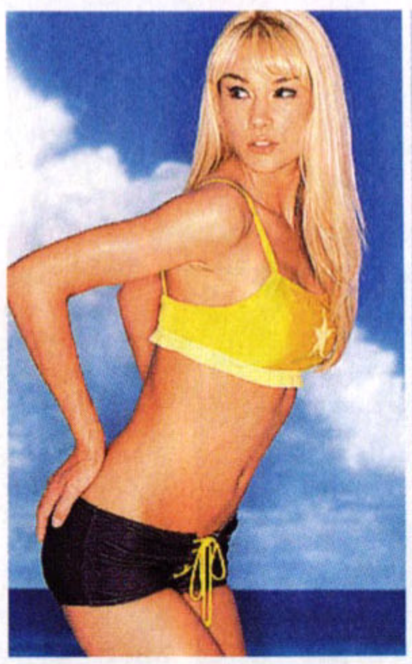
©SNK PLAYMORE / ©EOLITH CO., LTD. 2001 ©SNK PLAYMORE. THE KING OF FIGHTERS is a registered trademark of SNK PLAYMORE CORPORATION. "SNK" & "NEOGEO" are registered trademarks of SNK PLAYMORE CORPORATION. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

SNK NEOGEO
USA CONSUMER CORPORATION
www.snkneogeousaconsumer.com

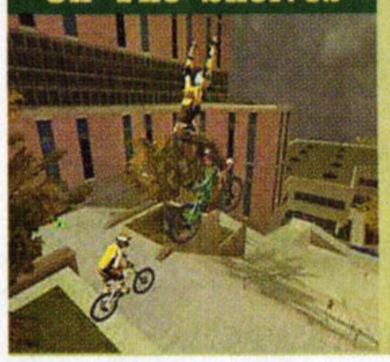
July

Tecmo Enters Bikini Biz

Inspired by its recent Xbox title, Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball, Tecmo announced that it was creating a line of bikinis based on outfits from the game. The bikinis would be sold online for $149.99, and Tecmo director of sales and marketing John Inada commented...oh hell, just look at the pictures already!



On The Shelves



- Outlaw Volleyball (Jul.8)
- Ghost Recon: Island Thunder (Jul.15)
- Downhill Domination (Jul.22)
- The Great Escape (Jul.22)
- Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour (Jul.28)
- Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction (Jul.31)

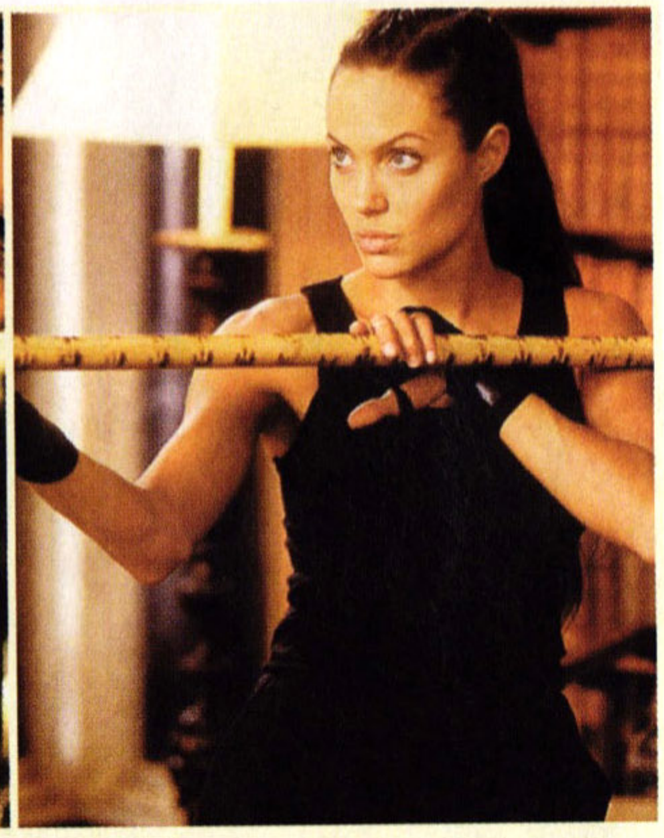
ON THE RADAR
The World Hates Games

Or so it seemed in July. First off, the Scrooge Von Dückenheimers that run the **European Union** added a 17 percent value-added tax to subscription fees for online games like ***EverQuest*** and ***PlanetSide***. The levy affected most of Western Europe, including France, the UK, and Germany.

Things were even worse in war-torn **Afghanistan**, where police in the city of **Jalalabad** closed over 300 game retailers by force. The stores were cited for "corrupting the morals" of young Afghanis.

In **Thailand**, officials placed a curfew on online gaming and Internet cafes over concerns that children were spending too much time playing the popular **Korean** game ***Ragnarok Online***. Access to foreign game servers was blocked from 10pm to 6am daily.

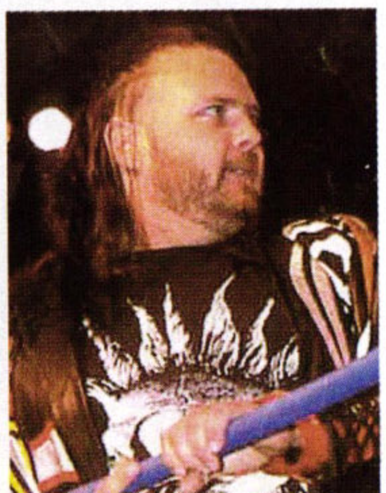
Finally, bumbling legislators in **Greece** succeeded in virtually banning gaming altogether thanks to a poorly worded law intended to prohibit Internet gambling. Apparently, the language of the bill was so vague that using a **PlayStation 2** could be construed as an illegal activity. Weeks later, the EU stepped in and forced the Greek government to reexamine the policy and it was overturned.



TOMB RAIDER TROUBLES AT EIDOS

Although many felt the series had been on a downhill slide for years, July proved to a disastrous month for the high-profile franchise. Things started to go sour on the 15th, when Eidos unceremoniously fired Core Design cofounder and director Jeremy Heath-Smith. It was speculated that this was in response to the poor performance of the highly touted PlayStation 2 title Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness, which was delayed several times, sold well below expectations, and received brutally dismissive reviews in the press.

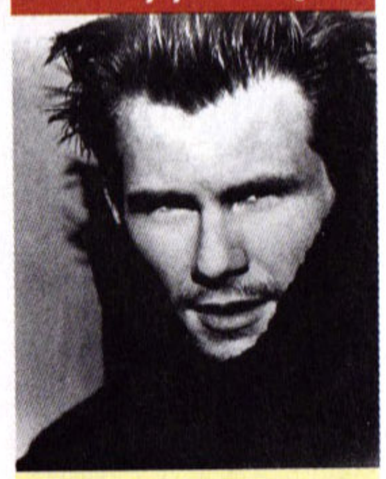
To add insult to injury, later in the month Eidos announced that it was stripping Core (the company that created Lara Croft) of development duties for the next game in the series, which will be handled by Eidos' American subsidiary Crystal Dynamic (Gex, Legacy of Kain). Ouch. To top off Lara's humiliating July, Paramount Pictures executive Wayne Llewellen publicly blamed Eidos' handling of the video game series for the disappointing performance of its summer sequel, Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life. After a weak opening weekend, the film went on to gross a paltry $65 million (about half of the first movie's box office take). Despite these troubles, we've always known Ms. Croft to be a...um... *buoyant* girl who will no doubt, um, bounce back and one day straddle the peak of success once more.



Maxx Payne Wrestles Rockstar

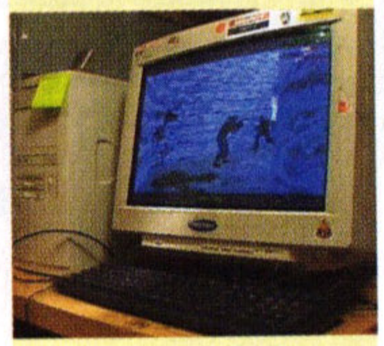
Wrestler Maxx Payne (a.k.a. Darryl Peterson) filed a suit against Rockstar Games, claiming the company had stolen his name (which he has used since 1988 in various forms). The $10 million suit alleges Rockstar appropriated his moniker after it heard of him based on his voiceover work in games such Rogue Trip and Twisted Metal 2.

Happenings



➤ *Former '80s teen-heartthrob/drug burnout Christian Slater was tapped to star in a movie adaptation of Atari's Alone in the Dark survival horror series. Slater will play Edward Carnby, who discovers a gate into hell on a trip to Shadow Island.*

➤ **Gaming's primary industry body, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) changed its name to the Entertainment Software Association (www.theesa.com).**



➤ *The Cyberathlete Professional League announced that Kiyash Monsef's documentary* Gamers, *which follows two teams trying to reach the CPL Championships, would debut at the leagues Summer Championships.*

➤ **Capcom's managing director Yoshiki Okamoto left the company in July to start his own development firm. Okamoto had worked at Capcom since 1982 and produced such titles as Street Fighter II and Resident Evil.**

➤ *Activision sued Viacom for breach of contract, stating that the media company had let the Star Trek franchise (which Activision licensed for 10 years in 1998) "stagnate and decay."*

Vengeance... is a dish better served hot.

This time it's personal... Ryu Hayabusa, the deadly and feared ninja assassin, is out for blood after his clan is massacred by the evil Vigor Empire. Vowing to seek revenge on those that betrayed him, he sets off on an action-packed adventure where the lines between good and evil are blurred and all that he believes in will be tested.

Possess the fury of Ryu Hayabusa as you destroy your opponents using lethal ninja weapons and cunning skill. Your mission: to annihilate your enemies and defeat the Holy Emperor, reclaiming the magical sword "Ryuken".

NINJA GAIDEN®

Unleash your inner ninja.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more ratings information.

ONLY ON XBOX

www.ninjagaidengame.com

TECMO | 100% GAMES

Team NINJA

XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

Ninja Gaiden® ©Tecmo, LTD. 2003. Tecmo and the Tecmo logo are registered trademarks of Tecmo, LTD. Team Ninja and the Team Ninja logo are trademarks of Tecmo, LTD. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Live logo and the Xbox Logos are registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

August

On The Shelves

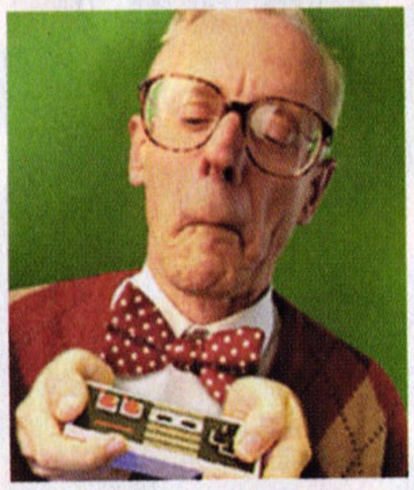
- Alter Echo (Aug.12)
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds (Aug.26)
- F-Zero GX (Aug.25)
- NFL Fever 2004 (Aug.28)
- Pokémon Pinball Ruby & Sapphire (Aug.25)
- Otogi: Myth of Demons (Aug.26)

Phantom Console Sighted On Internet

Infinium Lab's much-talked-about Phantom console was scheduled to make its grand coming out in August at the fledging Ultimate Gamers Expo in LA. Unfortunately, the show got delayed until the following year. The company then decided to drop the bomb online, and soon gamers the world over were downloading pictures and tech specs of the machine Infinium claims will deliver top-quality gaming content directly into the home via a broadband connection. On paper, it's pretty powerful (with a 3.0GHz processor); and the unit is certainly one freaky-deeky looking piece of home electronics! Mocking this Klingon toaster oven-looking system was one of the running jokes of 2003.

Gamers Getting Old

No, we're not just talking about certain members of the GI staff. While much of the mainstream media portrays video games as "kid's stuff," nothing could be further from the truth. The ESA released a study that showed drastic changes in gaming demographics. As people continue to game well into adulthood, the average age of U.S. gamers is now 29. While men 18 and up still constitute the biggest percentage (39 percent), the number of women involved in the hobby is growing as well. One surprising finding showed that female players over 18 (26 percent) now outnumber males aged 7 to 15.



GAMECUBE GETS DERAILED

It wasn't a great year for Nintendo, and August brought further bad news for the Osaka-based console manufacturer. The company released its first-ever quarterly earnings report, which demonstrated a profit, but also revealed that only 80,000 GameCubes had shipped worldwide during the time period. Due to these sluggish sales figures, Nintendo took the drastic step of suspending production of the system, in hopes of clearing out its stock of GameCube units. Although it was portrayed as a positive move, it was obvious that its GC strategy was proving less than successful. Later in the year, after a price drop to $99 and a heavily advertised free game promotion, the GameCube assembly lines began to roll again.

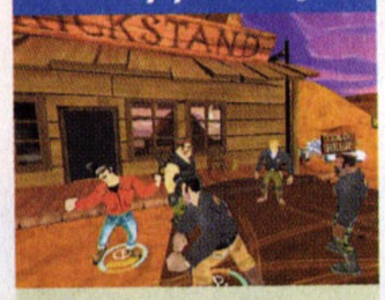
ON THE RADAR
Video Games Linked To Deaths

Two grim incidents in the South were linked to video games in the summer of 2003. On August 8th, **Mary Christina Cordell**, 36, of Springdale, Arkansas reportedly played the addictive online RPG ***EverQuest*** as her three-year-old daughter died in a locked car on a blisteringly hot summer day. Police allege that Cordell was so engrossed in the game that she neglected to check on her child's whereabouts.

In June, stepbrothers **William** and **Joshua Buckner**, aged 16 and 12 respectively, took two rifles from a locked room in their Newport, Tennessee home and fired over 25 .22 caliber bullets off of a bridge into traffic on Interstate 40. Tragically, their volley left 19-year-old **Kimberly Bede** of Virginia seriously wounded and killed **Aaron Hamel**, a 45-year-old registered nurse from Knoxville, Tennessee. The boys claimed to be inspired by the controversial **PlayStation 2** hit ***Grand Theft Auto III***, and later Hamel's family filed suit against **Rockstar's** parent company **Take-Two Interactive**.

In typical form, the media latched on to the video game connection to these deaths, conveniently ignoring small issues like parental responsibility and questions as to why 12- and 16-year-old boys had access to both M-Rated games (which are intended for ages 17 and up) and loaded firearms.

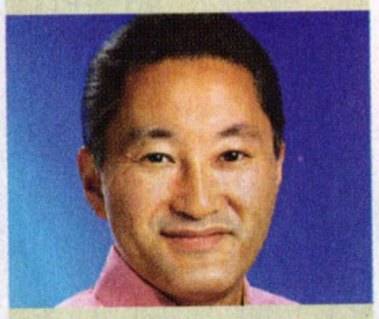
Happenings



➤ *Several big-name games were abandoned in August, including LucasArt's Full Throttle: Hell on Wheels. Capcom also scuttled Red Dead Revolver, Dead Phoenix, and Capcom Fighting All-Stars.*

➤ **Sega sounded the death knell for the Dreamcast when it announced that it would end its support of the Dreamcast version of Phantasy Star Online, the RPG that will be remembered as a the first landmark in console Internet gaming. The servers shut down at 8:00 am on September 30th.**

➤ *A Nintendo legend left the company in August. Masahiro Sakurai, the creator of Kirby, resigned his post at HAL Laboratories. The split appeared bitter, with Sakurai airing his frustrations with Nintendo in Japan's popular gaming magazine,* Famitsu.



➤ **On the other hand, Sony's Kaz Hirai was having a great month at work. As a reward for his role in making the PlayStation 2 the world's dominant console, he was promoted to Chief Executive Officer of Sony Computer Entertainment America.**

➤ *ATI signed an agreement with Microsoft that will have the chipmaker developing custom graphics technologies for future iterations of the Xbox.*

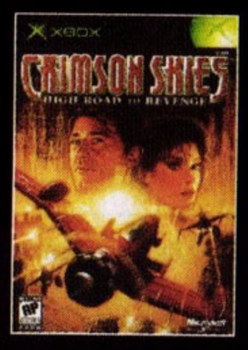
Certain death at your
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 o'clock

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Suggestive Themes
Violence

fasa studio

Microsoft game studios



Buckle up because Crimson Skies® is a deadly ride. Play single player as an air pirate at the helm of a tricked-out 1930s warplane. Because you're fueled by revenge, anyone foolish enough to enter your airspace is an enemy. Play on Xbox *Live*™ to pick a dogfight with up to 15 friends and strangers. Just remember, as you enjoy sending opponents into a fiery death spiral, someone probably has you in their crosshairs. Good luck, you are cleared to rule the skies.

XBOX LIVE

CRIMSON SKIES®
HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

XBOX™

it's good to play together

xbox.com/crimsonskies

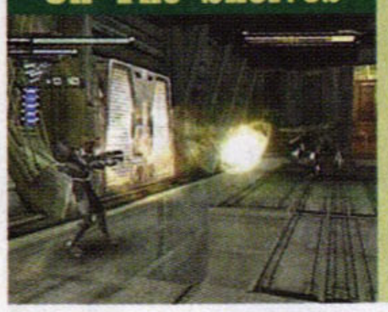
©2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Microsoft Games Studio logo, Crimson Skies, High Road to Revenge, Fasa Studio, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Xbox logos and the Xbox Live logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. Xbox Live service sold separately. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.

September

Excelsior! Activision Inks Stan Lee Deal

Activision has been the keeper of the Marvel flame in video games for a few years now, releasing a number of comic-based games, some good (Spider-Man), some not-so-good (X2: Wolverine's Revenge). In the interest of creating games that capture the true spirit of Marvel, the company signed a deal with perhaps comics' greatest legend, Spider-Man creator Stan Lee. The writer was retained as a development consultant for Activision's Marvel-based titles, and will lend a hand in story and character development, as well as gameplay design. It certainly bodes well for future Activision products, and we're glad to see Stan (who famously feuded with Marvel over money he felt he was owed for the blockbuster *Spider-Man* movie) getting paid for the franchises he helped create.

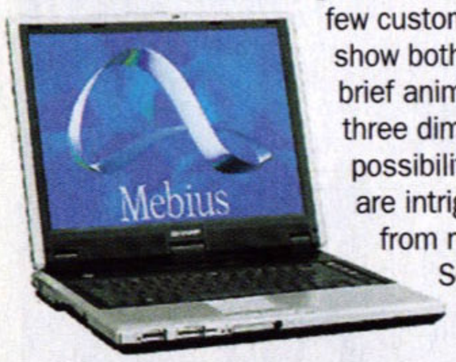
On The Shelves



- WWE Raw 2 (Sep.15)
- Banjo-Kazooie: Grunty's Revenge (Sep.10)
- Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure (Sep.2)
- Rugby 2004 (Sep.16)
- Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg (Sep.23)
- Dino Crisis 3 (Sep.16)

Sharp Goes 3D

In a move that was applauded by tech geeks and stoners worldwide, Sharp announced that it was launching the Mebius PC-RD3D laptop, which comes equipped with a LCD screen capable of producing full 3D imagery. It works by using liquid crystals to project an image at a variety of angles, thereby allowing it to be picked up separately by the right and left eye (much like the stereopticons of the late 19th century) and creating the illusion of depth. The computer runs on a conventional Intel 4 2.8GHz CPU and Nvidia GeForce 4 graphics card. Sharp only had a few custom demonstrations that show both static objects and brief animation sequences in three dimensions, although the possibilities for gaming applications are intriguing. Perhaps, years from now, we may well mark September 2003 as the beginning of a new age of PC games.



Square Rocks TGS

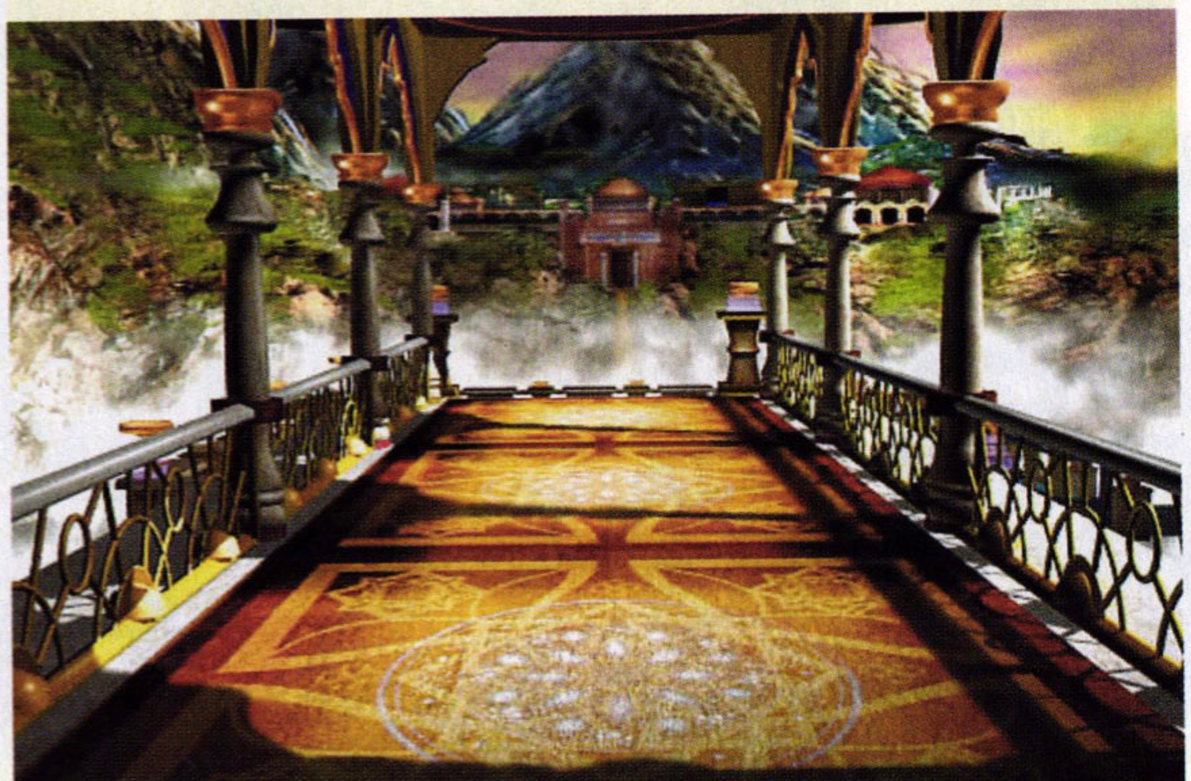
The annual Tokyo Game Show was held in September, drawing close to 100,000 gamers, journalists, and industry professionals. As usual, Square Enix was the talk of the town, and it announced new online properties Front Mission Online and Ambrosia Odyssey. Even more exciting were the revelation that a Kingdom Hearts sequel was in the works, and that the company's film division is working on a CG film based on the Final Fantasy universe called Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children.

NEW AGE HIPPIES INVADE GAMING!

There were a lot of new games announced in 2003, but none of them were as flat-out strange as The Journey to the Wild Devine, a new-age "wellness" title developed by a team of left-field technologists, biofeedback experts, a Tibetan monk, musician Nawang Khechog, and so-called "human capacity" researcher Dr. Jean Houston, among others.

The premise is vaguely inspired by Myst, as are the game's... er...*spiritual journey's* lush visuals. Basically, you are immersed in a gorgeous world where you must travel, complete various exercises and challenges that are designed to reduce stress and improve mind and body function. Even kookier is the fact that players will be plugged into their PC via the included biofeedback sensors placed on their fingers that monitor you pulse and "skin conductance levels." These vital signs are transmitted back to the game through the, um, "Light Stone energy translator" and actually requires users to solve various in-game events by moderating their body- and mind-state. An example of one such event is when the player "heals the world" through the technique of "yogic breathing." Um...okay, then.

We won't pretend that we know what the hell all this means, but we can say that the screenshots sure do look pretty. Apparently, the new-age inspired soundtrack is equally beautiful, designed to bring about enhanced states of relaxation. Hey, whatever works! Smoke 'em if you got 'em, as they say.



Happenings

➤ *Silent Hill's film rights were snapped up by Davis Films, who handed the project over to director Christophe Gans. His credits include Brotherhood of the Wolf and Crying Freeman.*

➤ **Business 2.0's yearly "B2 100" list of the fastest-growing technology companies had three gaming companies (EA, Take-Two Interactive, and Nvidia) in the top ten.**

➤ *Claiming that the French publisher had withheld payments owed, developer Interplay ended its distribution agreement with Vivendi Universal. The two companies later kissed and made up.*

➤ **In an unprecedented move, racing league NASCAR signed an exclusive licensing deal with Electronic Arts, making the publisher the only company that can produce NASCAR-related titles. EA's power move left other NASCAR game publishers like Atari and Sierra out in the cold.**

➤ *Nintendo announced it was dropping the U.S. price of the GameCube to $99, and that it would develop a Chinese-only gaming system called the iQue.*

➤ **Audiophiles rejoiced when EA partnered with THX to release titles that feature the popular surround-sound encoding.**

MAXIMO VS ARMY OF ZIN™

MAXIMO IS BACK AND THIS TIME IT'S WAR.

Arsenal of devastating combos and attacks.

Army of Zin declare war on the living.

Unleash the terrifying power of Grim.

AVAILABLE JANUARY 2004

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Animated Blood Violence

PlayStation.2

CAPCOM

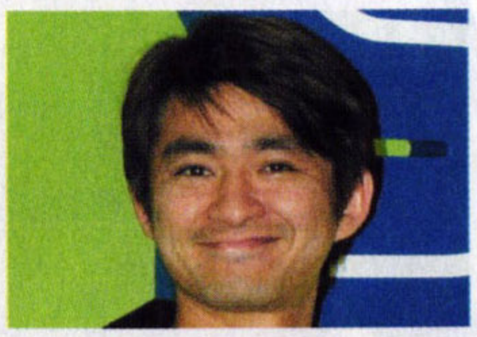
CAPCOM.COM/MAXIMO

© CAPCOM CO., LTD. 2003. © CAPCOM U.S.A., INC. 2003 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Capcom and the Capcom Logo are registered trademarks of Capcom Co., Ltd. Maximo vs Army of Zin is a trademark of Capcom Co., Ltd. CHARACTER BY © 2003 SUSUMU MATSUSHITA COMPANY/MASTER LICENSOR. DREAM RANCH INC. Licensed by Sony Computer Entertainment America for use with the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

October

Mizuguchi Says Sayonara to Sega

Tetsuya Mizuguchi, the colorful game creator behind such Sega games as Space Channel 5, Sega Rally, and the strange music title Rez, left the company in October. This move came on the heels of Sega's reorganization of its game development studios, which saw Mizuguchi's United Game Artists team dissolved and folded into Sonic Team. Apparently, he was upset by the changes and opted to become an independent contractor for various forms of media. It's likely Sega's abandonment of UGA was due to the fact that, although well respected in the game development community, some Mizuguchi titles (Rez in particular) did not post strong sales.

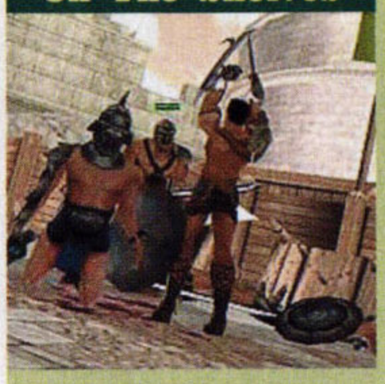


N-GAGE LAUNCH DISASTER FOR NOKIA

On October 7, Nokia's entry into the video game market began when its N-Gage cell phone/mobile gaming device went on sale at retailers worldwide...and it was pretty much all downhill from there. We've seen some bad console launches in the past, but the N-Gage's coming-out party proved to be an economic bloodbath of epic proportions. Originally priced at a hefty $299 and with little compelling software to drive interest, the N-Gage moldered on shelves, selling only 5,000 units in the first week in America and only 500 units in the U.K. To put this into perspective, the Game Boy Advance sold 540,000 copies in one week during its U.S. launch.

Nokia tried to put on a brave face, claiming that it had moved 400,000 N-Gages in the first two weeks of sales. However, analysts scoffed at the number, pointing out that these figures represented units shipped to retailers, not actual sell-through numbers. In a desperate attempt to spur sales, many outlets actually cut the price of the handheld by $100 just *two weeks* after it debuted. Currently, each retailer is offering a different N-Gage bundle in what appears to be a mad dash to clean out the stagnating stock of units, games, and accessories.

On The Shelves

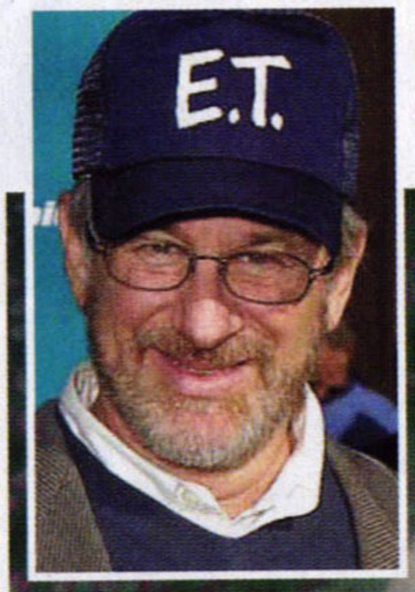


- Castlevania: Lament of Innocence (Oct.21)
- Harry Potter Quidditch World Cup (Oct.28)
- Amped 2 (Oct.28)
- Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance (Oct.28)
- Hunter the Reckoning - Redeemer (Oct.28)
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Oct.21)
- Tak and the Power of JuJu (Oct.15)

Spielberg Fast Tracks Fatal Frame Flick

In a year when it seemed that every video game this side of Railroad Tycoon had a deal to be made into a movie, one of America's most successful and respected directors, Steven Spielberg, decided to get in on the action. Spielberg's DreamWorks studio is working on a film version of Tecmo's ethereal horror title Fatal Frame. The company gave the project the "fast track" status, and producer John Rogers (*The Core*, *Catwoman*) has been attached to the project.

In other movie-related news, the PC hit Dungeon Siege and Majesco's BloodRayne were also optioned by Hollywood production companies.



NBC To Vivendi Games: "No Thanks"

General Electric (the parent company of NBC) acquired all of Vivendi Univeral's entertainment assets in October, forming the new media superpower NBC Universal. However, one key part of VU's business got the cold shoulder: video games. Apparently, GE was not impressed with the company's games division, as it was not included as part of the $3.8 billion dollar deal which left NBC as the 86 percent shareholder in Vivendi's entertainment interests. Vivendi retained its software, and later turned down a reported $700-900 million offer for VU Games from an undisclosed third-party suitor. Now, if they could just get Valve to put out Half-Life 2.

Happenings

➤ *At the end of October, Tapwave began shipping its handheld gaming/PDA hybrid device the Zodiac to consumers who had preordered the system. Looking at what happened to N-Gage, maybe this low-key launch was a smart move on the company's part.*

➤ **Nintendo posted its first-ever losses (since going public in 1962) for the six-month period ending in September.**

➤ *God-friendly rock-rappers P.O.D.'s new CD, Payable on Death, came bundled with a version of Sony's music game Amplitude. The version of the game featured an unreleased P.O.D. song, "Space" that players could remix in real-time.*

➤ **Crafty Indiana University student Chad Paulson and friends developed custom software to bring GameCube LAN-ready games like Mario Kart: Double Dash online using a program that allows the GC to be hooked up to a router.**

➤ *The Strokes took their fascination with the early '80s to the next level with their video for "12:51". The clip, created by CQ director Roman Coppola, gave props to the classic video game movie* Tron, *replicating the film's eerie, blue glow.*

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

ON YOUR MOBILE...

PRINCE OF PERSIA
THE SANDS OF TIME™

Also available on Nokia 3595, 3100, 3200, 5100, 6100, 6200, 6800, 7210, 7250, Motorola V300, V500, V600

UBISOFT

Available on all consoles and PC.

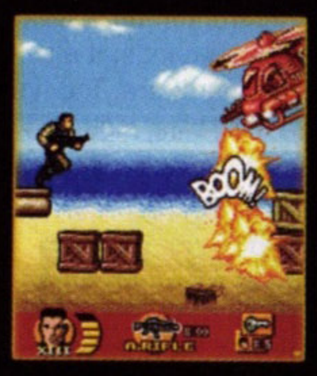
DOWNLOAD THESE HITS AND MANY MORE AT WWW.GAMELOFT.COM -OR-

DIRECTLY FROM YOUR PHONE:

AT&T Wireless

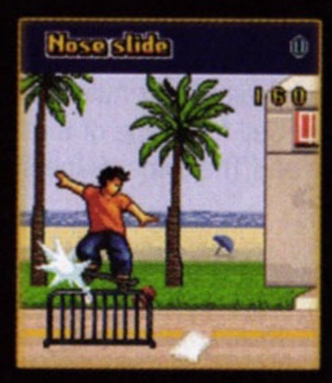
cingular fits you best

T··Mobile·

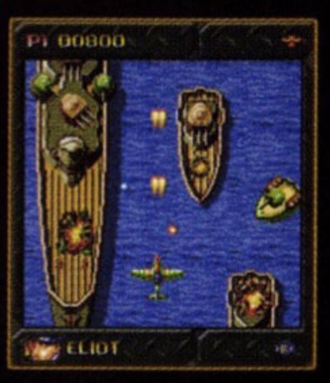


XIII

Rayman® Bowling



Skate & Slam™



Siberian Strike™

gameloft

© 2003 Gameloft. Based on Prince of Persia ® created by Jordan Mechner. Siberian Strike, Skate & Slam, Gameloft, and the Gameloft logo are registered trademarks of Gameloft in the US and/or other countries. Prince of Persia and Prince of Persia The Sands of Time are trademarks of Jordan Mechner used under license by Ubisoft Entertainment and Gameloft. © 1995, 2003 Ubisoft Entertainment. Rayman, Ubisoft, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries. © Van Hamme - Vance / Dargaud Benelux (DARGAUD-LOMBARD S.A.) 2000 DARGAUD. All rights reserved.

November/December

Iron Man To Hit Consoles

Tony Starks a.k.a. Iron Man, everyone's favorite metal-suit-wearing, ex-alcoholic, Wu-Tang-Clan-inspiring superhero, is coming back as part of Activision's Marvel line of video games. In November, developer Z-Axis, which worked on such impressive action/sports games as Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX and Aggressive Inline, confirmed that it is hiring designers, artists, and other staffers for work on an upcoming Iron Man title. Perhaps they were motivated by rival extreme sports developer Neversoft's (Tony Hawk's Pro Skater series) Spider-Man games.

KILL BILL KILLED?

Tartantino has Internet fan boys like ODB has court cases, so it was no surprise that there was much online hand wringing regarding Vivendi Universal's plans to bring out an action game based on the famed director's recent paean to '70s grindhouse kung-fu films. The poor job VU did with Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (which released for PS2 in October) didn't help ease the peanut gallery's fears.

Sadly, we may never know what might have been, as Vivendi revealed in October that the game had been placed on hold, perhaps permanently. At press time, the company said that there was currently "no game" in development. Whether or not it was pulled because of the film's ultra-violent and very controversial nature is not known, but there's a good chance a Kill Bill game could have given Thrill Kill a run for its money in the blood department.

Stars Shine At Spike TV Game Awards

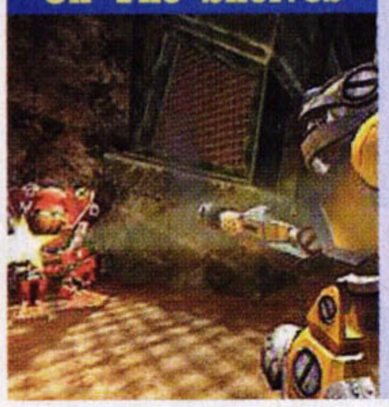
Spike TV, media superpower Viacom's "no girls allowed" cable clubhouse, recognizing the growing importance of video games in the lives of their beloved males 18-to-34 demographic, announced that it would be airing the first annual Spike TV Video Game Awards on December 4. Diminutive actor David Spade, who won the 2001 Academy Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of a spunky redneck in the film *Joe Dirt* (at least we think he did), signed on to host the ceremony, which drew such celebrity attendees as Pamela Anderson, DMX, Tony Hawk, WWE's Chris Jericho, and rapper Bubba Sparxxx.

Nominees for awards included Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Madden NFL 2004, and Splinter Cell for Game of the Year and PlanetSide, Soul Calibur II, and The Sims: Superstar for Most Addictive.

Hot New Colors For PS2 In Japan

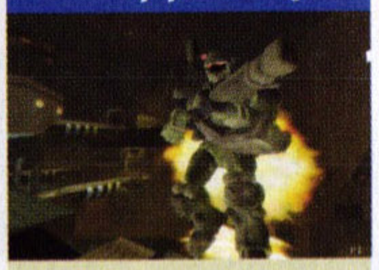
Sony had already made American gamers green with envy with the announcement of Gran Turismo 4: Prologue, a scaled-down teaser version of the highly anticipated racing game that hit stores on December 4th for the equivalent of $25. Then, in the interest of rubbing salt in the still-fresh emotional wounds, it also released two gorgeous new special edition versions of the PlayStation 2 hardware. The first was a ceramic white unit packaged with Prologue. The other was a bling-bling metallic gold model that came bundled with Mobile Suit Z Gundam AEUG vs. Titans. Each also featured a special memory card.

On The Shelves



- Kya: Dark Lineage (Nov.18)
- Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy (Nov.11)
- Metal Arms: Glitch in the System (Nov.18)
- The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (Nov.6)
- Medal of Honor: Rising Sun (Nov.11)
- Mario Party 5 (Nov.10)

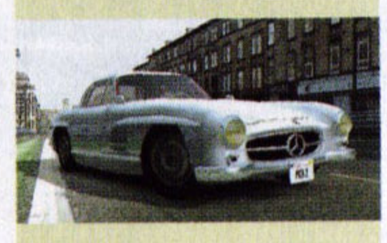
Happenings



➤ *One of Sega's most cherished franchises won't be making its way to the PlayStation 2. After a showing of the game at E3 in May drew a lukewarm reception, Sega cancelled its Vectorman project. However, another old-school update, Altered Beast, is still in development.*

➤ **Beating Nintendo's iQue to the punch, Sony announced plans to bring the PlayStation 2 to China, starting by selling the system in four cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. iQue launched weeks later**

➤ *Nintendo announced a new Legend of Zelda Collector's Bundle, which began shipping on November 17. The pack-in disc includes the original NES game, The Legend of Zelda, Zelda II: The Adventures of Link, the N64 classic, The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time, and its 2000 sequel, The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask.*



➤ **Australia, a country notorious for its censorship of video games (GTA III was banned there), perpetuated its image as a prudish continent with the comments of State Labor Party legislator Paul Gibson, who expressed an interest in banning Microsoft's relatively innocuous racer Project Gotham Racing 2. Calling for the game to at least be stripped of its G-Rating, Gibson dubbed the title a "inappropriate depiction of speed behavior."**

Maximize your Competitive Edge

Wireless Controllers

Mini Controllers

Gaming Screens

Sound Systems

Racing Wheels

Aluminum Protective Cases

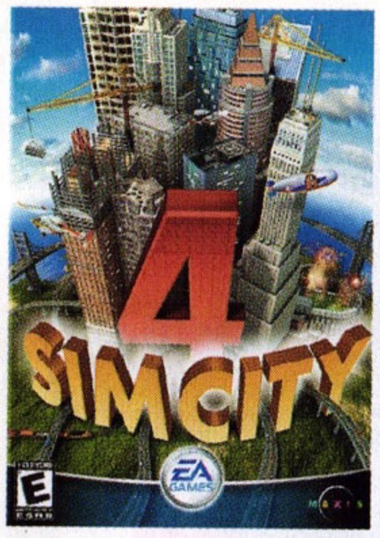
Maximum Gaming

For PlayStation® 2

©2003 Intec, Inc. All rights reserved. PlayStation® 2 is a registered trademark of Sony® Computer Entertainment Inc. These items are produced by Intec and are not manufactured, sponsored, endorsed or distributed by Nintendo® of America Inc., Sony® Computer Entertainment Inc. or Microsoft Corporation.

The Top 50 of 50 Games

While the urge to numerically rank games is inscribed in gamers' DNA, this year we decided to forgo our usual Top 10 Games of the Year feature and expand our scope. In the interest of greater variety, we bring you the 50 games that you should have played this year, the titles that define what it was to be a gamer in 2003. Rank them as you choose, argue about them if you must, ignore them at your peril. Hopefully, this list will cause you to think about the games that meant something to you this year, and remind you of a few treasures that you neglected to play.



SimCity 4

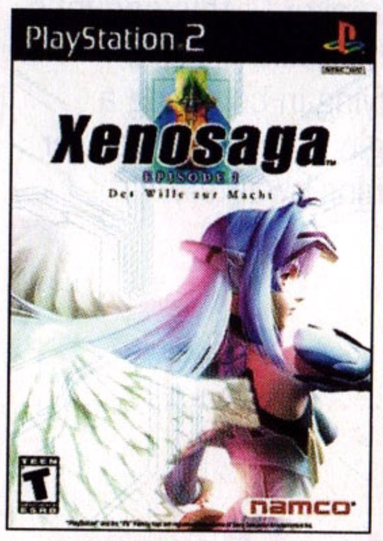
The series that built the Sim empire is still a force to be reckoned with. Visually stimulating to the point where you'll think the real world doesn't look nearly as detailed as this game, SimCity 4 is a serious feast for the eyes and a real treat to play. Not only can you build your own city and govern over it, you can live in it and keep tabs on its citizens. Who would have thought that having power and control over thousands of people would still be addictive after all these years?

PC
01.15

Dark Cloud 2

How big of a game was Dark Cloud 2? It may not have flown off of store shelves like Final Fantasy, but it landed developer Level 5 two of the biggest gigs in town – creating the next installment in the Dragon Quest series, and launching a new MMORPG franchise (True Fantasy Online) for Microsoft. Not only did Dark Cloud 2 excel in delivering some of the most gorgeous visuals around, it injected unprecedented gameplay depth into the framework of a traditional console RPG. It's easily one of the most underrated games on any platform.

PlayStation 2
02.19



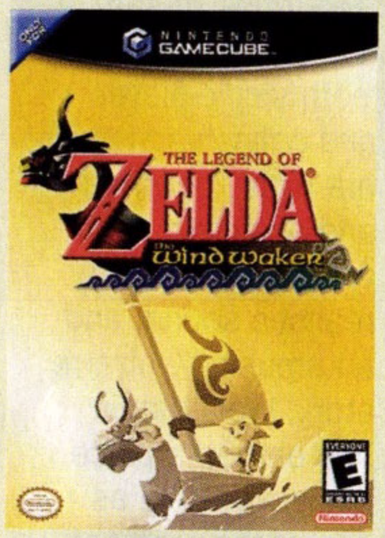
Xenosaga Episode 1: Der Wille Zur Macht

Often referred to as Final Fantasy in space, Xenosaga has earned its spot among the role-playing elite. There are very few games, or movies for that matter, which develop characters so richly. By the time the screen fades to black and the credits roll, the realization sinks in that you know the individuals in your party about as well as you do your closest relatives. This is the kind of story that will stick with you forever. The ingenious gameplay and depth of customization only heighten the experience.

PlayStation 2
02.26

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

Before it arrived, there was much concern about the direction the latest Zelda game would take thanks to its cartoony look. Not only did it turn out to be awesome, but the cel-shaded graphics looked so amazing in action that most critics were forced to eat their words. Link's latest adventure featured a twist on the traditional Zelda story and delivered in every possible way. Easily one of the best games of the year, we even voted it the top title of this console generation. No matter which way you slice it, it's simply an amazing adventure.



GameCube
03.25

THE TOP 10 HEROES OF 2003

1 Viewtiful Joe (Viewtiful Joe)

Out of all the characters to appear in games this year, Joe here has got to be our favorite. He's what we would be if we had our own title. A lovable, movie-addicted shlub who lucks into some of the best superpowers around, Joe kicks ass with both style and charm. Thanks to great visuals and crazy moves, Joe is the epitome of cool.

2 HK-47 (Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic)

You gotta love an assassin droid who refers to humans as "meatbags." You gotta, or else he'll shoot you. Easily the most amusing character in KOTOR, HK-47 even makes up for losers like Carth and Mission. He's like Bender from Futurama, only (more) evil.

3 Link (Soul Caibur II - GameCube version)

So you thought Link was a young little wussy? Well, then step up to the all growed-up version. He'll lay the smack down on you before you can say "Celda." Respect.

4 KOS-MOS (Xenosaga Episode 1: Der Wille zur Macht)

We love sexy, mysterious women, and KOS-MOS certainly is one damn fine specimen of femininity. Who cares if she's a robot? Frankly, we think women with lasers in their chests are hot. But then again, we're into that kind of thing.

5 Dik Dik Van Dik (Ultimate Muscle)

He's 50% man, 50% antelope, and 100% suave. He refers to himself in third person! How cool is that? We think Dik Dik is a great baby name – for a boy or a girl. It's what you'd call your kid if you want him/her to be popular.

6 Snoop Dogg (True Crime: Streets of LA)

Once you unlock Tha Doggfather, ya'll won't never go back to playin' as that punk ass busta Nick Kang. You Holla? Snoop here brings mad flava to your vizzideo gizzame consizzole. Check it.

7 Vince (Voodoo Vince)

If Microsoft wants a mascot for the Xbox, they should look no further. Vince here is sarcastic, charming, and a totally unique character. Plus, just like Bill Gates, he was created by evil magic.

8 Mayu Amakura (Fatal Frame 2)

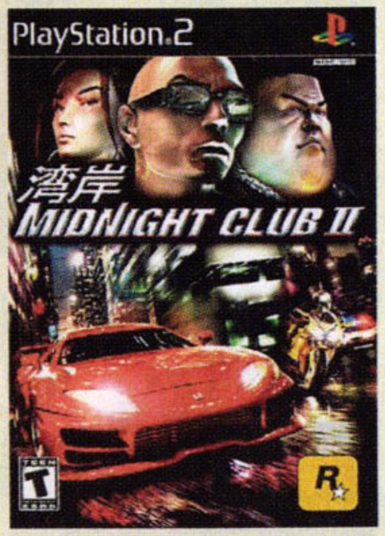
She's vaguely psychic, has a gimpy leg, is damn creepy, and she's one of the good guys. More video game heroes should give you the willies.

9 Ron Jeremy (Celebrity Deathmatch)

We salute you, Ron Jeremy. You are a huge, throbbing role model for people everywhere. We will try to stand as tall as you do, but it will be hard.

10 (tie) Clank/Daxter (Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando/Jak II)

Forget the nerds they roll with, these two are the real stars of their games. C'mon, who's cooler, a rodent with a wrench or a tiny engine of destruction? A quiet elf-dude with a soul patch or a red weasel thingy? Maybe these two will ditch their dead weight costars and join forces in their own title.



PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC
04.08

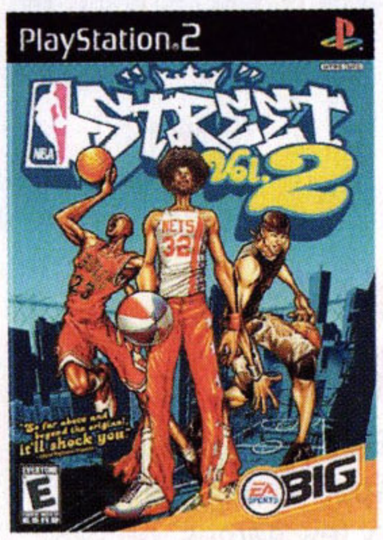
Midnight Club II

Rockstar's twist on the street racing phenomenon is not only a gorgeous game to look at, it features some of the most over-the-top racing this side of *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Take the car up on two wheels to split tight traffic or navigate constricting alleys. While none of the vehicles are licensed, it really doesn't matter once you find yourself flying down the street at mach speed and launching literally hundreds of feet into the air. We like to think of it as *The Fast & The Furious* on crack.

GameCube
04.15

Ikaruga

Unfortunately, the classic shooter has steadily fallen from the glory it experienced in the early '80s with games like Galaga and Galaxian, but that doesn't stop Ikaruga from turning the genre on its ear and delivering one heck of an experience. With an intense, relentless difficulty curve and a clever gimmick that forces the player to switch between black and white color schemes to navigate its multicolored onslaught, Ikaruga spins a web that you can't help but get caught up in.



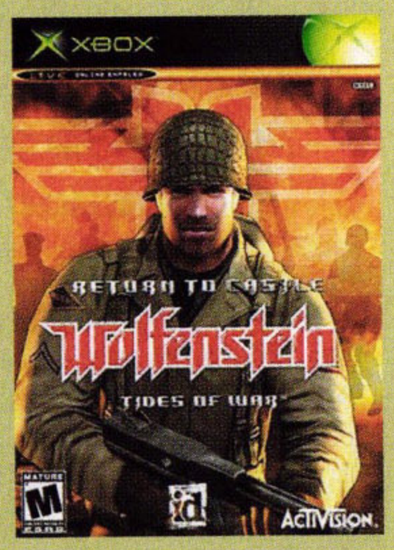
PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube
04.29

NBA Street Vol. 2

Perform ankle-breaking moves. Abuse the iron. Show NBA Hall of Famers why they don't have game. Could it get any sweeter? With an expanded arsenal of moves and the introduction of the devastating GameBreaker 2, this sequel's gameplay is officially off the hook. There's something genuinely gratifying in bouncing a ball off of someone's noggin, then dunking over them. Again, is there anything sweeter?

Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War

Although it's a port of a PC game, Wolfenstein stands as one of the best FPS titles on the Xbox. The new prologue adds two hours of play over the PC iteration, and both single-player and online versions are highly polished and addictive. With great graphics, realistic sound, and an amusingly bizarre story, Wolfenstein has earned a place alongside Halo as one of the greatest shooters on the market.



Xbox
05.06

Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow

The Castlevania series on the GBA is one of the rare franchises that continues to produce great games by not straying far from the original formula. Aria of Sorrow delivers all the old-school charm and gameplay of its ancestors, and still manages to innovate. Learning new abilities from your enemies and an increased weapons set enhances the solid experience delivered by clever level design, sharp graphics, and fantastic sound. In a series known for excellence, Aria of Sorrow is a standout.

Game Boy Advance
05.06

The Power To Change History.

Capcom's award winning Onimusha series now thrusts players into massive, old world feudal battles where every move is a struggle for power. As the young warrior Onimaru, you must call upon your demon power and sword skills and manage your troop's resources and equipment with skill. Nobunaga and his enemy Genma armies must be stopped in this mighty quest!

鬼武者 Onimusha Tactics™

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Suggestive Themes
Mild Violence

GAME BOY ADVANCE

CAPCOM
capcom.com

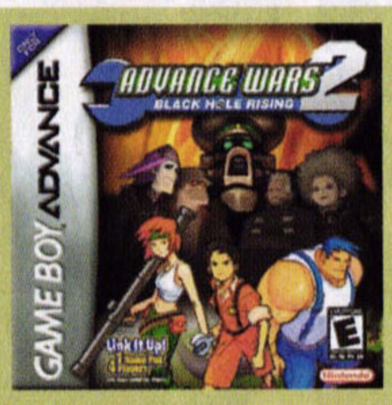
©CAPCOM CO., LTD. 2003 ©CAPCOM U.S.A., INC. 2003. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. CAPCOM and the CAPCOM logo are registered trademarks of CAPCOM CO., LTD. ONIMUSHA TACTICS is a trademark of CAPCOM CO., LTD.
Nintendo and Nintendo GameCube are trademarks of Nintendo. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.

Wario Ware, Inc.: Mega Microgames

Game Boy Advance
05.22

If you don't have Attention Deficit Disorder, you will after you play Wario Ware. A collection of 200 minigames, you have to figure out your objective and complete it in about a five-second time frame. Of course, they're pretty simple and include shaking hands with a dog, cracking an egg in a frying pan, and even ultra-simple versions of Nintendo classics. The Legend of Zelda and Balloon Fight make appearances, among others. It's the ultimate time-waster.

Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising

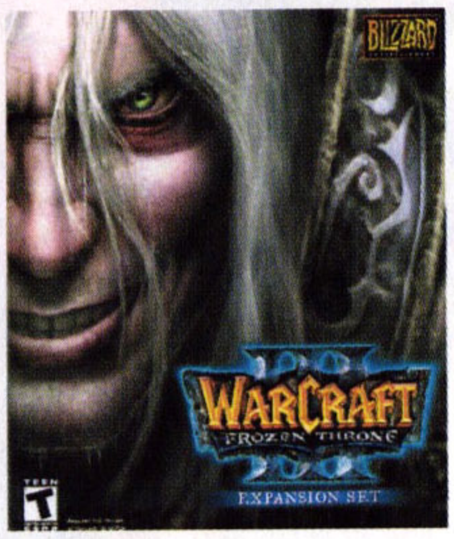


Game Boy Advance
06.23

This sequel doesn't offer much as far as new content to the world of Advance Wars, but it does give some head-scratching strategy for the military gamer on the go. Its simple interface and rock, scissors, paper-styled gameplay not only makes it easy to get hooked, it makes it impossible to not get completely sucked in. From super powers to a fleet of units at your command, Advance Wars 2 has all the firepower it needs to rocket to the top of the games of 2003.

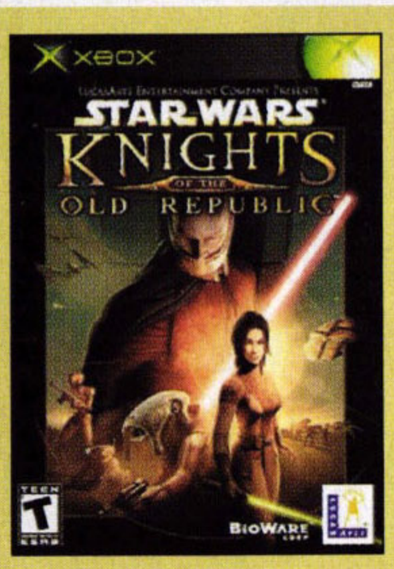
WarCraft III: Frozen Throne

Frozen Throne is the perfect example of what an expansion pack should be. Rather than add a handful of new maps and units, it genuinely improves on the original game in nearly every possible way. Adding more RPG elements, a new race, and innovative missions, Frozen Throne brings a ton of fantastic content to an already-great game. If you own WarCraft III, Frozen Throne is an absolutely essential purchase.



PC
07.01

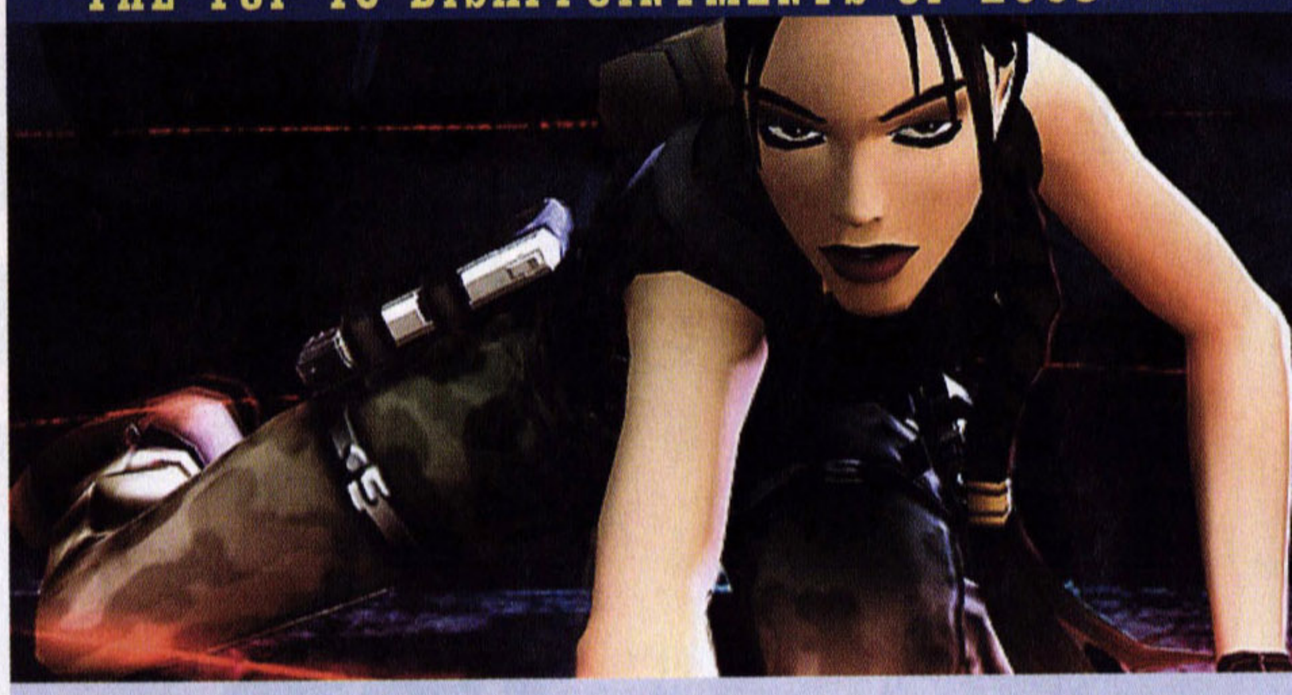
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic



Xbox, PC
07.15

George Lucas may not know the difference between his hairy butt and an Ewok anymore, but developer Bioware has a firm grasp on what fans want from the Star Wars universe. Double-sided sabers...hot Sith chicks...the ability to turn to the dark side...it's all here. Knights also features extensive character customization, tons of spoken dialogue, and some of the most finely developed characters in the Star Wars universe. This RPG is exactly what Star Wars fans have been waiting for.

THE TOP 10 DISAPPOINTMENTS OF 2003



1 Lara Croft

Video games' leading female becomes enemy number one in the eyes of gamers after an embarrassing debut on PlayStation 2. Paramount even went so far as to blame the game for the poor box office revenues of the second Tomb Raider film.

2 N-Gage

The idea of a cell phone/video game system piqued the interest of the gaming nation, but with the lackluster selection of games, no one wants to go near it. To date, the most fun that anyone has had with the system was pretending that it was a taco.

3 GameCube's Third-Party Support

Disappointed with software sales and fearful that the GameCube was sinking, third-party publishers began to jump ship. Acclaim, Eidos, and Sega Sports pulled all of their support while other publishers canceled key products.

4 Rare's Inability to Deliver

After being purchased for $375 million, gamers (and Microsoft) had high expectations for Rare in 2003. And what did $375 million buy them? Grabbed by the Ghoulies...Rare's worst game to date.

5 Devil May Cry 2

We're not exactly sure what went wrong with the development of this sequel, but perhaps calling the devil a big, fat crybaby wasn't the best idea after all. As far as games go, this was easily the most disappointing of the year.

6 The Half-@$$ Price Drop

Everyone anticipated that Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft would drastically lower the prices of their consoles at some point in 2003. The rumor was that the PlayStation 2 and Xbox would drop to $149. Of course, this didn't happen. Nintendo was the only one that did the full monty to $99.

7 Star Wars Rogue Squadron 3: Rebel Strike

Rebel Strike's high levels of suck-a-tude came as quite a surprise, seeing as the series has been consistently great throughout the years. The on-foot stages appeared to have been designed by monkeys with impaired vision.

8 Mega Man's 15th Anniversary

Capcom's attempt to build excitement around the blue bomber's 15th anniversary went over about as well as poop-flavored Skittles. Gamers just didn't show an interest in anything bearing this legendary character's name. Capcom also failed to bring a truly respectable new Mega Man title to the market.

9 PlanetSide

This massively multiplayer game started off like a rocket, offering intense battles with literally hundreds of people blasting each other to hell and back. Then came the patches that gradually degraded the experience into the lump of coal it is now. An atrocious expansion pack pretty much guaranteed that no one was going to pay a monthly fee for this.

10 Connectivity

Why would gamers want to go online when they can connect their Game Boy Advance to their GameCube? Nintendo has done many great things in the past, but it's also made some incredibly poor decisions. Thinking that connectivity would take over the world is one that will go down for the ages.

namco® HITS

www.namco.com

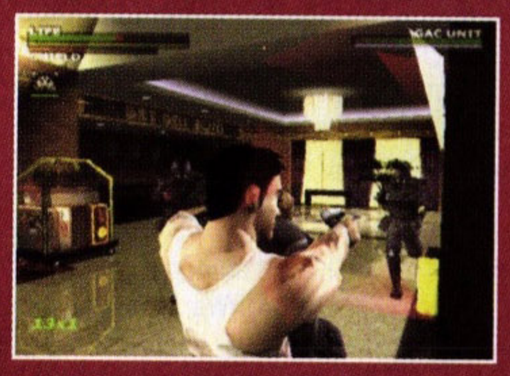
MOST WANTED. AGAIN.

"Move over, Max Payne."
~Gamers.com

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT
GAMESPOT
GAMESPOT'S BEST OF 2002

www.deadtorights.com

Xbox® Platinum Hits and PlayStation®2 Greatest Hits editions available now. ONLY $19.99



Take down thugs using slo-mo gunplay, lethal disarms and human shields.

Muscle your way through 15 chapters of Hong Kong movie-style action.

Command your K-9 sidekick to attack enemies and retrieve weapons.

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Mature Sexual Themes
Violence

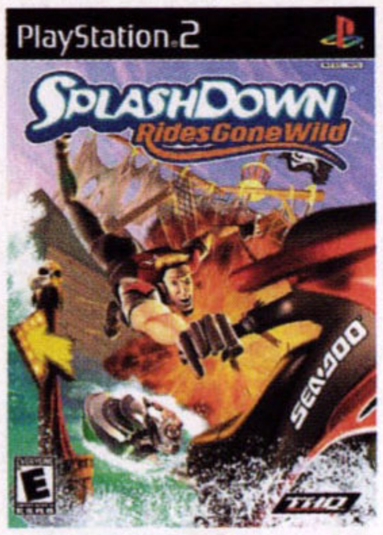
XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

PlayStation.2

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

Dead to Rights® & © 2002 Namco Hometek Inc. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. © 2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. Licensed by Nintendo. TM, ® and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. All rights reserved. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. Software platform logo TM and © IEMA 2003. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.



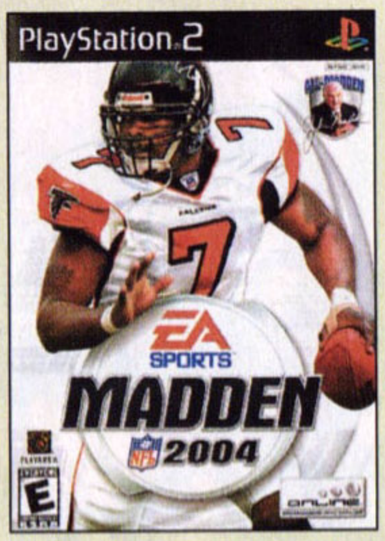
PlayStation 2
08.05

Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild

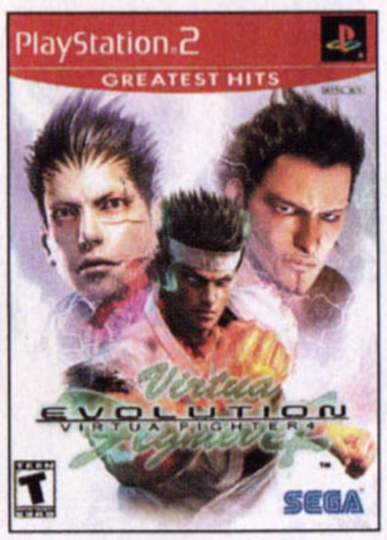
Jet skis are fun, but the real thing can't really compete with this great sim. Featuring ever-changing courses with fantastic elements like dinosaurs and spy battles, Rides Gone Wild added adventure on top of a perfect physics engine. Throw in a ton of unlockables, some great visuals, and a huge variety of play modes, and you've got one of the most pleasant surprises of the racing genre.

Madden NFL 2004

John Madden: fan, player, coach, commentator, turkey eater, video game spokesperson. Has this guy lived the life or what? Equally as exalted is EA Tiburon's work on this series. With each passing installment, the titles continue to improve. In Madden NFL 2004, the gameplay is tighter than ever, and the options that players have at their fingertips are simply unheard of. With the debut of Owners mode, you'll find yourself negotiating player contracts, determining what stadium renovations you should make, and even contemplating raising hot dog prices.



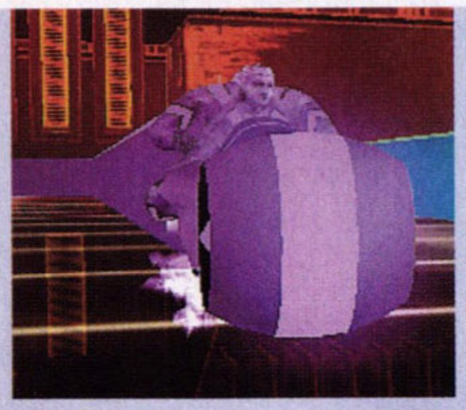
PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube
08.12



PlayStation 2
08.12

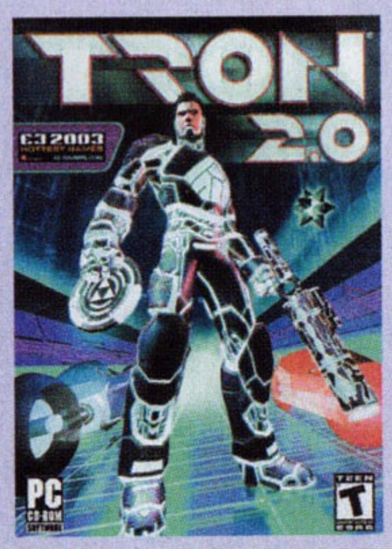
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution

Without a doubt, Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution is the best fighting game of 2003. Featuring new brawlers, crystal clear graphics, and super smooth animation, it serves up the most balanced and challenging fighting game the world has ever seen. Add in an absolutely ingenious single player experience that sends the player on a tour of the world's best virtual arcades (where you must punch, kick, and combo your way to the top), and this choice is easy. Evolution is fighting Zen at its finest.



Tron 2.0

Yep, that's right, it's based on *Tron*, and it's actually good. A sequel to the movie that nearly bankrupted Disney, Tron 2.0 is better looking and more fun than the film, and hands-down has a better plot. The virtual-world setting looks great, and is used so wisely that Tron 2.0 stands as easily one of the smartest shooters ever. The clever references are endless, making this the perfect game for the computer literate.



PC
08.22

THE TOP 10 PUBLISHERS OF 2003

1 Electronic Arts

With a library of properties that reads like a who's who in this industry, Electronic Arts is easily the most powerful player in the video game industry today. From Madden to Harry Potter, EA sells well over a billion dollars in games every year.

2 Ubisoft

If you had asked us a year ago whether we thought Ubisoft would be number two on this list, we would have laughed in your face. Kudos to Ubisoft for publishing some amazing product this year. Notables include the Tom Clancy library and Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time.

3 Nintendo

Nintendo slipped a little this past year with a lack of quantity, not quality for the GameCube. However, it did deliver perhaps the best year yet for the Game Boy Advance with a monster line-up that included Final Fantasy Tactics Advance and Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario 3.

4 Rockstar

From Max Payne 2 to Manhunt, Rockstar showed the world once again that being cool and controversial sells product, and that nobody does cool and controversial better than Rockstar. Throw in the Grand Theft Auto double pack and we call it a year to remember.

5 Sony Computer Entertainment

SCEA managed to keep a steady stream of games coming to the PlayStation 2 all year long with titles like Amplitude, War of the Monsters, Dark Cloud 2, Downhill Domination, Primal, SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs, Arc the Lad: Twilight of Spirits, Jak II, and Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando. Not every game was great (and its sports games still need work), but almost every title was solid.

6 Microsoft

Microsoft failed to bring the masses Halo 2 this year, but it did manage to bring out its most impressive lineup of titles yet with Crimson Skies: High Road To Revenge and Project Gotham Racing 2 for the Xbox, and Rise of Nations and Halo for PC.

7 Tecmo

Tecmo doesn't do many games, but it does them well. Tecmo tickled our fancy with Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball, scared our pants off with Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly, and boggled our minds with Ninja Gaiden.

8 Activision

2003 wasn't its strongest year, but Activision did manage to produce some hits. Call of Duty, Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War, Tony Hawk's Underground, and Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven top an overall impressive list.

9 Square Enix

Square didn't have many titles this year, but it did take the Final Fantasy universe into new territory. Final Fantasy X-2 marks its first sequel in the series, and Final Fantasy XI is its first massively multiplayer online game.

10 LucasArts Entertainment

When you can slap Star Wars on a game and sell millions of copies, it makes it easy to take chances. And this year, LucasArts most certainly did that. While it had its fair share of losers (RTX Red Rock), it also had some surprise winners with titles like Gladius and Armed and Dangerous.

One of 2003's Biggest Shooters

Now on the Xbox™

video game system

Unreal® II

THE AWAKENING

XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

Now with Exclusive Online Multiplayer and Vehicular Combat!

www.unreal2.com

MATURE 17+ — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

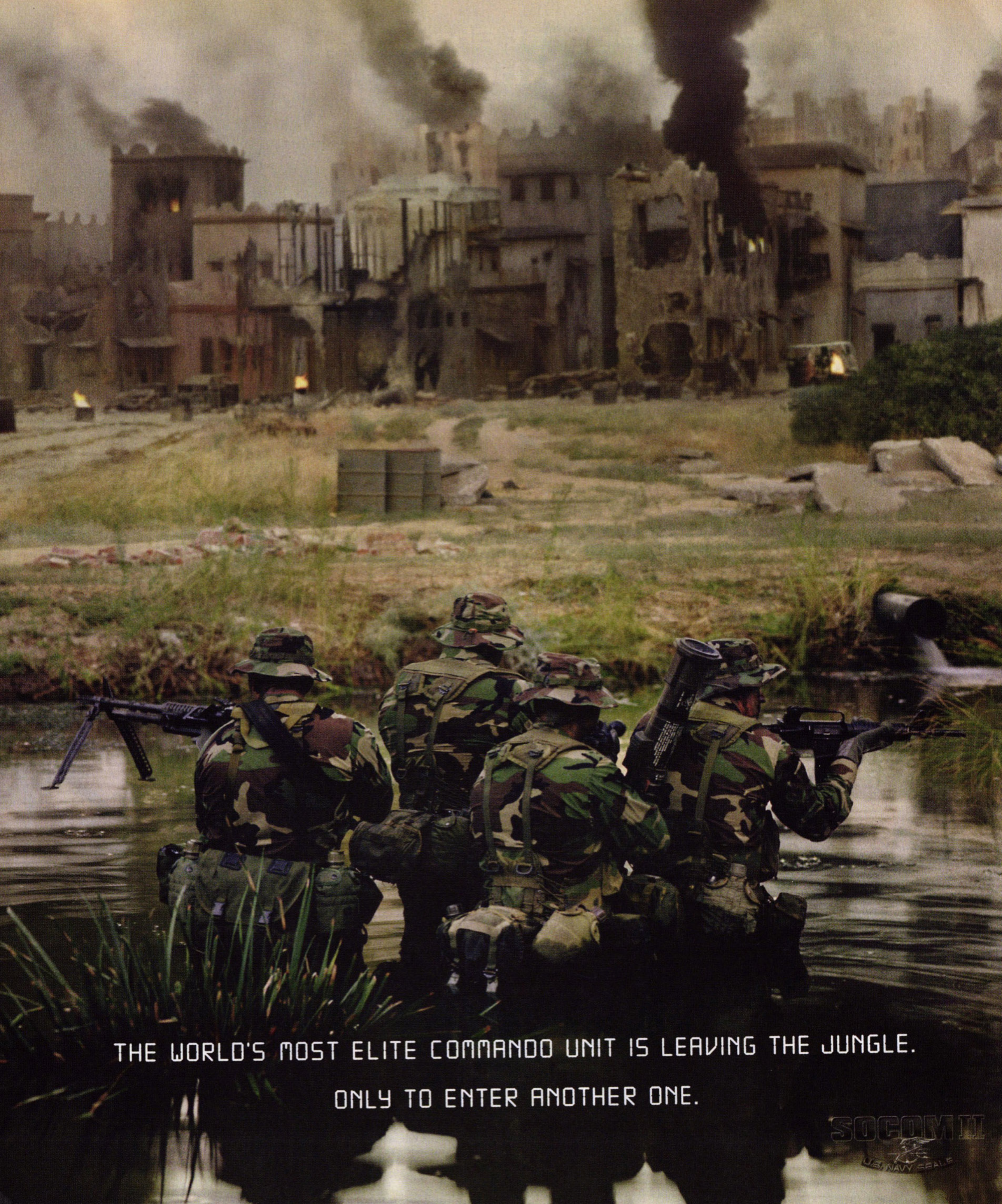
LEGEND ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY

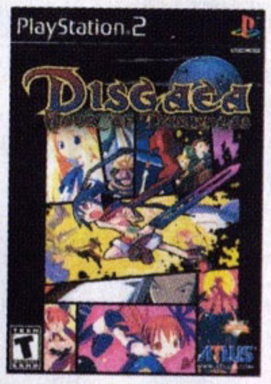
TANTALUS

EPIC GAMES

ATARI

Unreal® II – The Awakening © 2003 Epic Games, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Unreal is a registered trademark of Epic Games Inc. Unreal® II – The Awakening was created by Legend Entertainment, an Atari studio, in collaboration with Tantalus Interactive. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Manufactured and marketed by Atari, Inc., New York, NY. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Live logo and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.


THE WORLD'S MOST ELITE COMMANDO UNIT IS LEAVING THE JUNGLE.
ONLY TO ENTER ANOTHER ONE.
SOCOM II
U.S. NAVY SEALS



PlayStation 2
08.26

Disgaea: Hour of Darkness

A fantastically quirky little game, Disgaea actually puts you in the role of the bad guy: As Prince Laharl, you must battle demons like yourself for control of the Netherworld. This strategy/RPG offers a few more twists as well. For example, to level up an item you must first complete a randomly generated dungeon inside of it. It's also downright hilarious, offering both compelling gameplay and laughs.

PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube
08.26

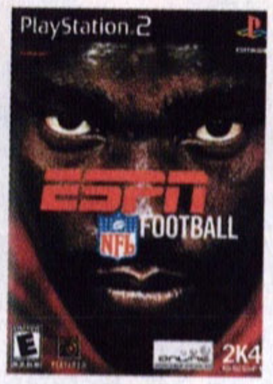
Soul Calibur II

Not content to simply release a solid, great-looking weapons-based fighter, Namco went one better and gave all three consoles an exclusive character. With Link on GameCube, Spawn on Xbox, and Heihachi on PS2; not to mention a host of others, there is a character to satisfy all types of gamers. Also featuring several play modes including Weapons Master, Soul Calibur II is easily one of the year's top fighters.

Game Boy Advance
09.09

Final Fantasy Tactics Advance

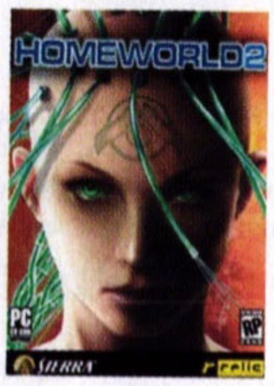
If there are two great tastes that taste great together, it's the Final Fantasy franchise and tactical RPGs. The formula has only been done before on PSone, but gamers who were anxiously awaiting its return never could have guessed it would find its new home on Game Boy Advance and be this good. With over 300 missions, minigames, and a host of other tactical goodies, we couldn't help but put this one at the top of our list.



PlayStation 2, Xbox
09.03

ESPN NFL Football

With Madden sticking to its guns year in and year out, the passionate underdogs at Visual Concepts have gone out of their way to reinvent video game football, and at long last, upstage the king. The innovative and highly entertaining first-person view, range of unlockables in the Crib, and explosive gameplay elevate ESPN NFL Football to the top. Moreover, the title has finally used the ESPN license to its advantage, with presentation that is second to none.



PC
09.16

Homeworld 2

Recent sci-fi has been disappointing, hasn't it? This title is the cure for your outer-space blues. A real-time strategy game, Homeworld 2 features enough frenzied dogfighting to put the Star Wars prequels to (more) shame. The graphics are absolutely beautiful and the sounds of ship-to-ship warfare are just as impressive. The steep learning curve may frighten away more casual gamers, but for RTS fans, this is as good as it gets.

Step into the boots of a SEAL team in SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALs and face the ultimate challenge: urban combat.

Developed in association with the U.S. Navy SEALs, SOCOM II is close-quarters combat at its most realistic. Invisible snipers lay in wait. Enemies lurk around every corner. And every civilian could be a friend or foe. Stealth is your greatest weapon.

Wage urban war in single-player mode. Or go online and play with and against up to 16 total players. Either way, a SOCOM-compatible headset will help you communicate and work together as a team. Remember, together you stand. Divided you don't stand a chance.

Take the war on terror to the enemy on 12 intense international missions.

Command. Courage. Country. Hoo-yah.

SOCOM II
U.S. NAVY SEALS

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.

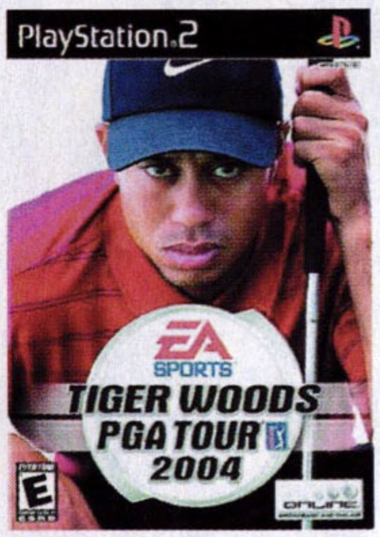
PlayStation.2

ONLINE BROADBAND ONLY

MATURE 17+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Violence

www.us.playstation.com
www.seal.navy.mil

SOCOM II ©2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "Live In Your World. Play In Ours." is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). The "Online" icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. The U.S. Navy provided technical support, but does not officially endorse this product.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004

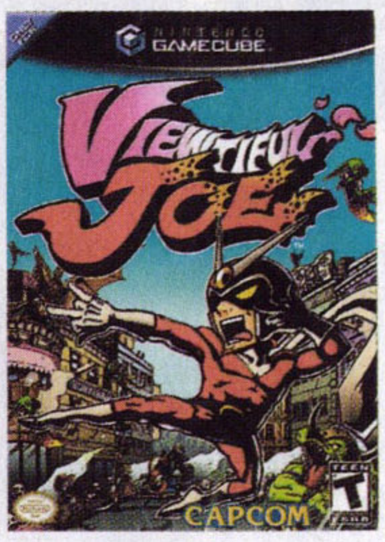
Very few games can make people enthusiastically jump up and down over a new pair of socks that they just unlocked for their golfer. More bizarre yet, whenever you see a new moon, you'll think of Tiger Woods. Simply put, this game makes people weird...but in a very good and socially acceptable way. It's easily the best golf game that money can buy. The swing mechanic is designed perfectly, and the variety in courses and challenges translate into a title that you could conceivably play forever.

PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube
09.22

NHL 2004

Redesigned from the ice up, NHL 2004 makes numerous strides forward not only for the series, but for video game hockey as a whole. The new control schematic allows you to grasp every aspect of the sport. It's also nice to see that goalies will drop their gloves and fight. NHL 2004 also embodies the front office depth of the new Madden, with skill upgrades and ticket pricing. This series has been faltering over the years, but EA really got its act together with this release.

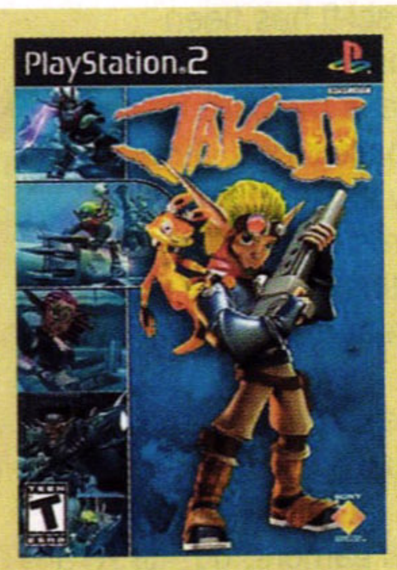
PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube
09.23



GameCube
10.07

Viewtiful Joe

Viewtiful Joe is one of those rare games that captured a simple, old-school vibe while bringing something completely new to the table. With its funky, cel-shaded, comic-inspired visuals, Viewtiful Joe is one of the most impressive-looking titles ever. Period. But the super-powered game mechanics are just as astounding. The abilities to slow time, speed it up, and zoom in on the action blow out the simple beat-em-up formula, and the result is an instant classic.



PlayStation 2
10.14

Jak II

Platformers have grown pretty stale and derivative over the last few years, which is why Jak II was such a breath of fresh air. Eschewing the collection of scattered items, Jak II focused on a GTA III-styled open design, mature themes, minigames, and a well-developed plot. Of course, the controls are spot-on and the graphics are simply astounding. In a genre that has idled for years, Jak II is a giant leap forward.

THE TOP 10 VILLAINS OF 2003

1 Fawful (Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga)

There are many more villainous villains on this list, but Fawful tops them all for pure, nonsensical quoteability (which we realize may or may not be an actual word). Some of his most evil moments are prefaced with "I HAVE FURY!" Who else could say that?

2 The Director (Manhunt)

We dare you to find a more evil human being than this patriarch of detestable behavior. Besides setting up games of death for his amusement and his revolting encouragement, the guy will make you feel dirtier than a dive into one of McDonald's grease traps.

3 Lord Malak (Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic)

With as much hype as this Sith Lord gets through your entire Jedi adventure, you'll still be surprised when face to face with the baddie. Between global atrocities and the sport of massacring a family or two, Lord Malak is pure, Force-wielding evil.

4 Sledgehammer (Clock Tower 3)

This may be the first of the serial killers you meet in Clock Tower 3, but in our opinion, he's the best. We mean worst. We mean most evil, not best as in "good," but best as in "most excels at being vile, disgusting, terrifying, and menacing." You're not going to argue with a man that bludgeons a six year-old girl to death, are you?

5 Gary Coleman (Postal 2)

Some would argue that his real-life altercations should get him on this list as is, but we're going to take the pixellated route and nominate his bad self as seen in Running With Scissor's gross-out festival, Postal 2. He's diminutive in stature, but big in weaponry.

6 Claudia (Silent Hill 3)

Everything that this weird cult-leader pain-in-Heather's-butt said was laced with double meanings – and we're reasonably certain that neither interpretation was a warm holiday wish for our heroine. Her final act in the game is so psychotic and evil that we get queasy just remembering it.

7 Albedo (Xenosaga Episode 1: Der Wille zur Macht)

Evil geniuses are often found in the world of long-playing RPGs, but Albedo really made an impression in the first Xenosaga episode. Human or machine, it's not for us to say – we just know that this guy is bad ass.

8 Krew (Jak II)

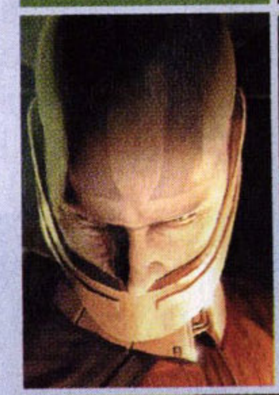
He looks like Jabba, but has the legs of a sickly little British boy trapped within a walled garden. Who wouldn't develop an inferiority complex with a physique like that? Surely, he cries himself to sleep every night just to wake up and be an evil barkeep the next day.

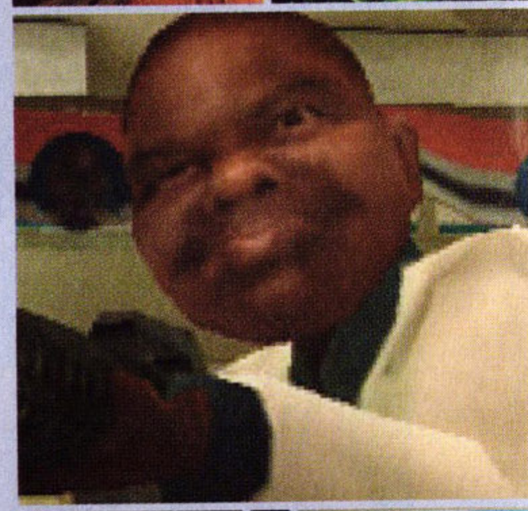
9 Charlie Jolson (The Getaway)

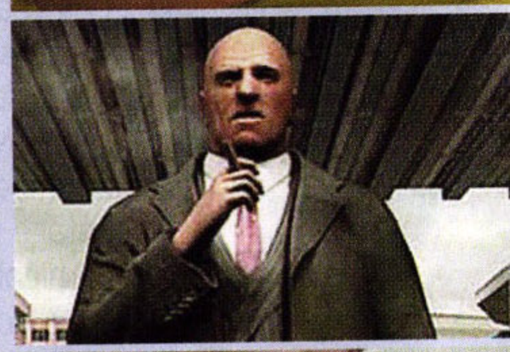
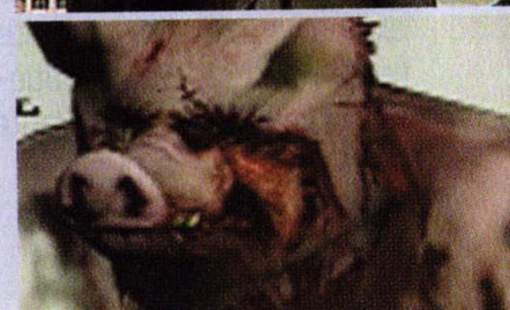
Hiding behind an air of classy superiority, Charlie is really just a bastard. The guy kidnaps your kid, kills your wife, and he's your boss. Saying that this man is unholy in his sick evil would be near the top of our proposed Top 10 list, "Understatements of the Century."

10 Piggsy (Manhunt)

We don't know that it's entirely his fault, but by the time you meet him, Piggsy is one truly screwed up individual. Besides being a bloodied, rotund, naked man, the guy wields a chainsaw with sick glee and has taken to literally sniffing out opponents.





THE KING OF FIGHTERS EX2

Howling Blood

"Detailed graphics and 21 characters- all with their own look and style- make The King of Fighters EX2: Howling Blood a one-on-one fighter worth noticing."
- Nintendo Power

6 different modes of play including an all-new story mode and 2-player versus using the Game Boy® Advance Game Link® Cable!

21 fighters to choose from, along with 3 original characters exclusive to EX2!

Master powerful new moves and fighting techniques like the revised "Striker" system!

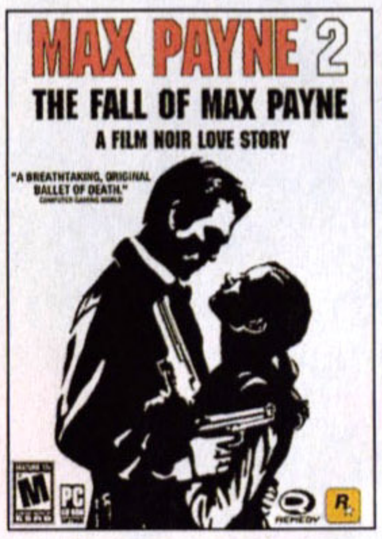
Challenging VS mode (single or team) using the Game Boy® Advance Game Link® Cable.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GAME BOY® ADVANCE

ATLUS®
WWW.ATLUS.COM

© SNK PLAYMORE © 2001, 2002 Marvelous Entertainment Inc. Developed by SUN-TEC. Licensed to and published by ATLUS USA. *THE KING OF FIGHTERS is a registered trademark of SNK PLAYMORE CORPORATION. Game Boy Advance and the Game Boy Advance logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.



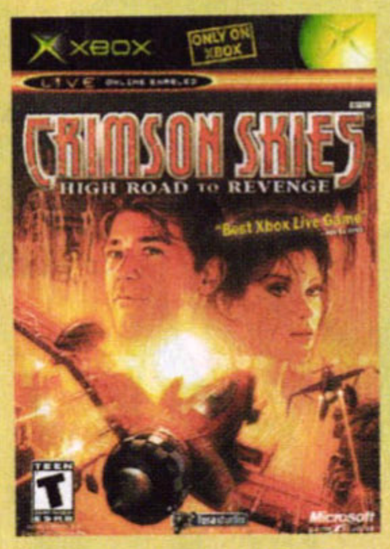
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne

Few games offer up an almost movie-quality experience like the award-winning Max Payne franchise, and The Fall of Max Payne certainly doesn't disappoint. Following a twisted and dark tale of deceit inspired by the film noir aesthetic that Max Payne personifies, the player finds himself lost in a world where only firepower and wise use of the *Matrix*-inspired bullet time can save you.

PC, Xbox, PlayStation 2
10.15

Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge

The alternate 1930s setting of this title should clue you in right away that this isn't exactly a realistic flight sim. It is, however, one hell of a good time. The arcade-style action is non-stop, and missions offer a ton of variety. As much fun as the campaign is, Xbox Live is where it's at. Coordinating attacks with your wingmen via voice chat is so simple that it makes shooting down enemy fighters simply a dream. Sigh. Old-fashioned dogfighting; one of the finest things in life.



Xbox
10.21

SSX 3

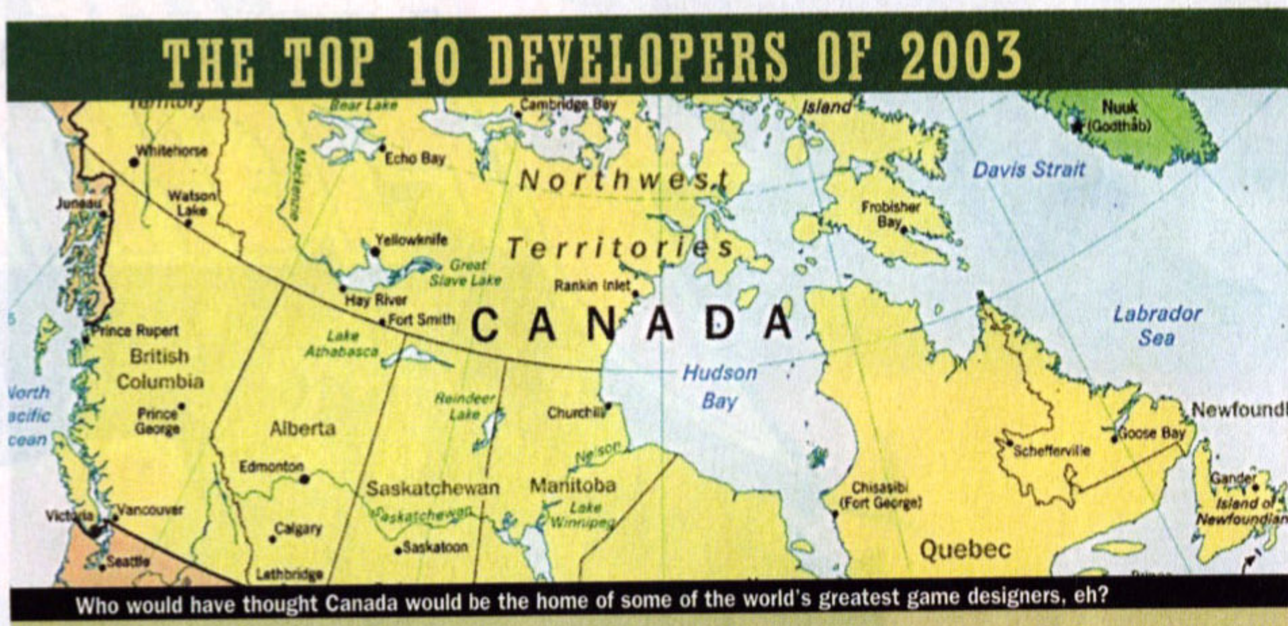
Free-roaming environments are the new hotness in games, and few titles exemplified this like SSX 3. EA's killer app puts the entire mountain at your fingertips, which adds more play options than ever before. Board down the mountain to certain events, take helicopters to races, or simply trick your way down the hill just for fun. Few other titles offer so many ways to get your groove on, and the killer graphics and excellent soundtrack only add to the enjoyment.

PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube
10.21

Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3

It took forever, but in 2003 Nintendo finally gave the Game Boy Advance faithful the Super Mario loving we had all been begging for. Without a doubt, Super Mario Bros. 3 is the best Mario game of the 8-bit generation, and this edition recreates it perfectly in a handheld package. Never-before-seen bonus levels can also be opened with special edition e-Reader cards. Unfortunately, you need an e-Reader and two GBAs to unlock these delicious extras.

Game Boy Advance
10.21



Who would have thought Canada would be the home of some of the world's greatest game designers, eh?

1 EA Canada

It's not a question of what EA Canada did, it's what didn't it do. NHL 2004, Need For Speed: Underground, SSX 3, NBA Street Vol. 2, Def Jam Vendetta, FIFA 2004, MVP Baseball 2003, NBA Live 2004, and NCAA March Madness 2004 is an impressive list for any publisher, much less a single developer.

2 Ubisoft Montreal

This development house made a name for itself with Splinter Cell, and in 2003 it cemented its place in the history books with a spectacular year. Sure it's responsible for Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu, but it also did Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield (PC), Rainbow Six 3 (Xbox), Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (all platforms), and Splinter Cell (GBA).

3 BioWare Corp.

The third of the three Canadian development houses on this list, BioWare Corp. just has that magic touch. Sure, you can knock BioWare for taking its own sweet time on products, but rarely does it miss. Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic will forever change the way people view console RPGs.

4 Maxis

Maxis is sim-ply incredible. How this company puts out so many games in one year we have no idea, especially since they are all Sim related. From Sim City 4 to a gaggle of The Sims products, Maxis had us destroying cities and laughing at ourselves as we had little computer people sitting in hot tubs. The company, of course, was laughing all the way to the bank.

5 Visual Concepts

We can't help but hear Vizzini's voice from *The Princess Bride* exclaim, "Inconceivable!" every time we think about the fact that VC is basically taking EA Sports head-on, and – at least on the development side – winning. Visual Concepts hasn't stolen the sales throne yet, but you can't help admiring its gumption.

6 Nintendo

What can we say about Nintendo's development studio that hasn't been said? Everyone thought that The Wind Waker was too childish. Wrong. Mario Kart: Double Dash was going to stink. Wrong again. Miyamoto and his crew of superfreaks always deliver, and that's why his teams will always make this list.

7 (tie) Naughty Dog/Insomniac Games

We called this one a tie since both developers were so impressive and their two titles share similar source code (among many other things). The best thing about these two studios is that they both took their titles in completely different directions, and still delivered amazing product. We like to call them Sony's "one-two punch."

8 Intelligent Systems

Over the years, Intelligent Systems has developed some of Nintendo's most ingenious product, and 2003 was no exception. Not only did it create Nintendo Puzzle Collection for GameCube, but it also brought us Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising and Fire Emblem for Game Boy Advance.

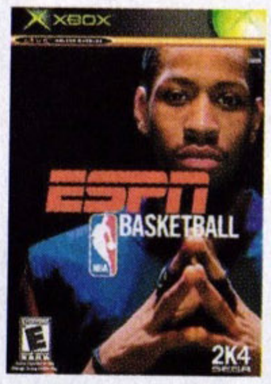
9 Blizzard Entertainment

You can't have a developer list without Blizzard. It's just the rules. The developer lost some key members this year, but still managed to deliver WarCraft III: Frozen Throne and enough screenshots to convince us that Worlds of WarCraft and StarCraft: Ghost are going to rule next year.

10 Rockstar North

With Manhunt, the development house that brought us Grand Theft Auto showed that it wasn't just a one trick pony. Plus, it managed to introduce some improved versions of Grand Theft Auto to PC and Xbox.

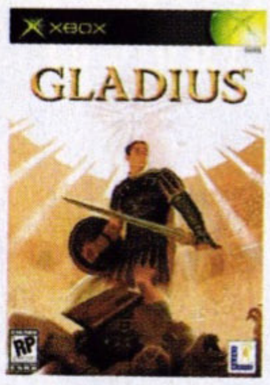
ESPN NBA Basketball



PlayStation 2, Xbox
10.21

Essentially two games for the price of one, Visual Concepts has once again outdone itself with this year's basketball. Whether you're taking it to the streets in the inventive 24/7 mode or working your way through the complete NBA season, this game delivers the goods better than any other hoops title. You'll even find yourself marveling at the level of detail that went into Latrell Sprewell's cornrows.

Gladius



PlayStation2, Xbox, GameCube
10.28

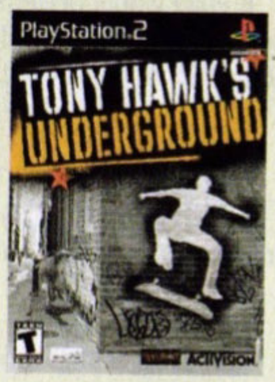
A gladiatorial strategy title from LucasArts may seem like a strange choice for one of the best games of the year, but Gladius absolutely charmed us with its engaging combat, intelligent story, and massive quests. The meter-based combat makes for the most involving battles in the genre, and the sheer amount of stuff crammed into this title is staggering. You could play Gladius for 200 hours and still not see all there is to see.

Rainbow Six 3

Xbox
10.28

Much like its PS2 counterpart SOCOM II, this is a squad-based shooter that really shines online, only it's far prettier. Xbox Live players will swoon over the large number of online game types and fast and furious combat. It's certain to immediately become one of the top Live games, but the amazing lighting, solid voice command, and gritty realism makes for a great single-player experience as well.

Tony Hawk's Underground



PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube
10.28

Never happy with a status quo sequel, Neversoft kicked it up a notch in 2003 with Underground. While all three versions feature pinpoint skating, park and trick creation modes, only the PlayStation 2 version allows players to take the experience online. Here you can also trade parks, player-made goals, and even send a digital picture of yourself to Neversoft so you can put yourself in the game. Grind-a-licious.

Top Spin

Xbox
10.28

Microsoft went big with its latest sports franchise, Top Spin. With impressive online play, a DNA-based character creation process, and a host of other innovations, Top Spin took the game of tennis to new heights. You may tempt fate when you unleash a risk shot deep behind the baseline, but there was absolutely no chance this wasn't making our list of Top 50. Plus, this title features the lovely and not-so-talented Anna Kournikova on the cover, so gamers can grunt at home just like they do on TV!

Call of Duty

PC
10.29

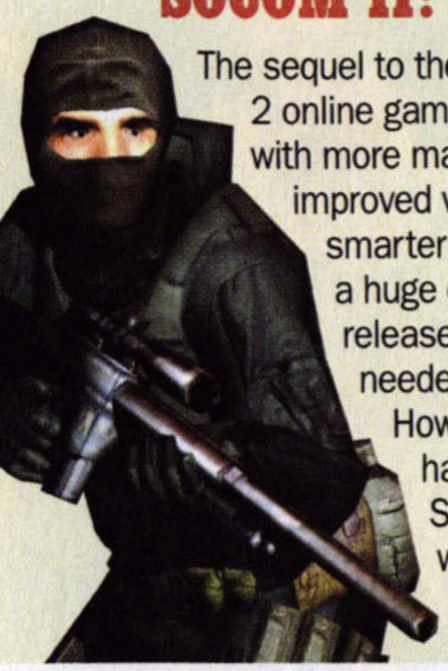
The PC market is full of fantastic first-person shooters, so when a game like Call of Duty stands tall among giants, you can't help but take notice. What makes Call of Duty so amazing is its suspension of disbelief. You feel like you are smack dab in the middle of World War II experiencing gun and tank battles with Germany – all in a glorious first-person view. If the single-player game isn't enough to induce shell shock, Call of Duty's multiplayer modes most certainly will.

Fire Emblem

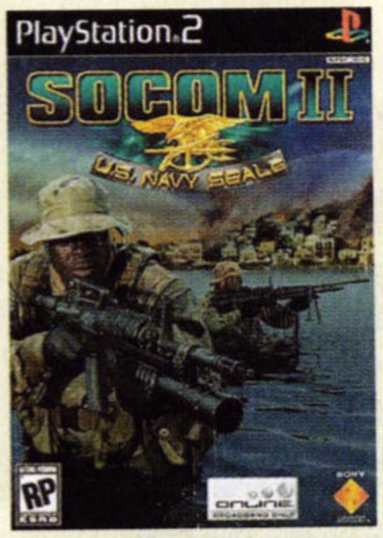
Game Boy Advance
11.03

This series has been alive and well in Japan for many moons, but hasn't come Stateside until the release of this highly addictive GBA title. Created by the same studio that brought us Advance Wars, Fire Emblem revels in turn-based strategy and forces players to put on their thinking caps. It has more character than Advance Wars and prompts you to make difficult decisions. When a soldier dies, they won't return. Do you restart, or press forward and hope that the loss won't affect the remainder of your quest? What do you do?

SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs

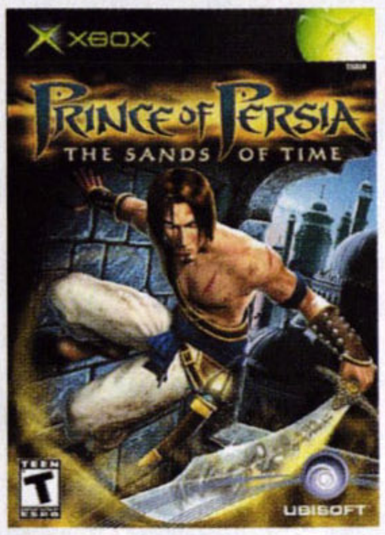


The sequel to the number one PlayStation 2 online game of all time came through with more maps, better graphics, improved voice commands, and smarter AI. It may not have been a huge evolution over the first release, but the original SOCOM needed little improvement. However, one important aspect has been tightened up: SOCOM II has filters in place which make it much harder to cheat online. Woohoo!



PlayStation 2
11.04

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time



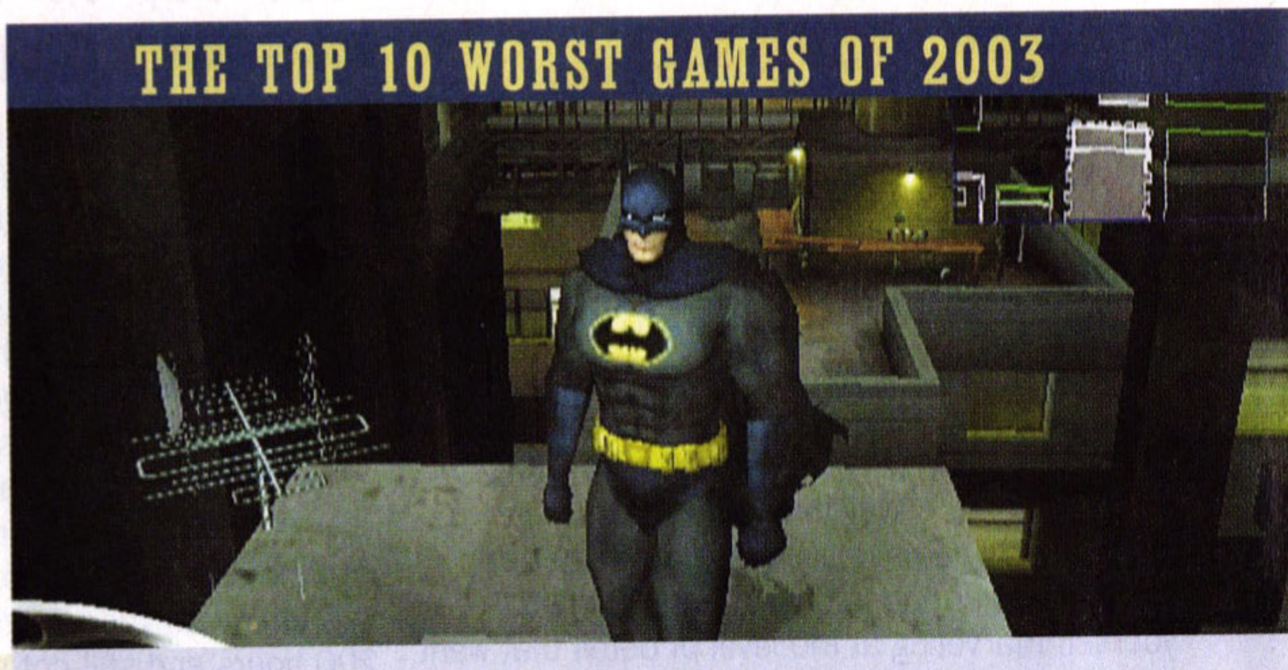
PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, PC
11.07

Featuring perhaps the most stunning animation of any game this year, Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time offers up an adventure like few others. Armed with time control, an arsenal of acrobatic moves, and his trusty sword, the Prince must turn back the tides of doom and save humanity from a fate that only he can stop. Action titles don't get much better than this.

Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando

Developer Insomniac Games didn't just turn up the heat in this 2003 sequel – it burned a hole right through your PlayStation 2. With blistering gunplay and a unique RPG-like experience system for guns and player alike, Going Commando delivers one of the most compelling action experiences of this or any year. Even if you manage to beat this game once, the Challenge mode that follows makes it worth another run.

PlayStation 2
11.11



1 Batman: Dark Tomorrow

Spending an eternity trapped with Arnold Schwarzenegger pretending to be Mr. Freeze would be less painful than playing Dark Tomorrow. We're not exactly sure what happened during the development of this title, but we have a sneaking suspicion that Joel Schumacher was somehow involved.

2 Drake of the 99 Dragons

Can you hear that? That's the sound of people laughing hysterically at this game's awful name, horribly designed characters, and revolting gameplay. Assuredly, there are funnier things in life, but not many.

3 Charlie's Angels

Featuring a skill-acquisition system that just barely surpasses the ice age in speed and excitement; Cameron Diaz, Lucy Liu, and Drew Barrymore make the game all the better, right? Sure, if you can tell which is freakin' which.

4 Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis

Who's a cooler comic character than Aquaman? Everyone. Why TDK invested in this license goes beyond man's comprehension. The fact that the company decided to release the product is even more mystifying.

5 Grooverider: Slot Car Thunder

Did you ever wish that you could play a racing game that didn't have all that pesky steering? Well, then Grooverider is the game for you. Based on children's slot car sets, this game proved to be as enjoyable as sitting on a Lincoln Log.

6 Masters of the Universe: He-Man Power of Grayskull

Even Stinkor would think that this game stinks. Just spending a few seconds with this miserable title is like getting double-teamed by Ram-Man and Fisto. Even obscure characters like Clamp Champ and Mantenna wouldn't show their faces in this game.

7 Robocop

The cybernetic stud of the '80s was more than a little rusty in his Xbox debut. Who would have thought that something with the Robocop name on it would suck? The premise of battling gigantic, animation-less rats in the sewers definitely falls in line with this license, but does little more than compel gamers to strangle themselves with their controller cords.

8 Dinotopia: The Sunstone Odyssey

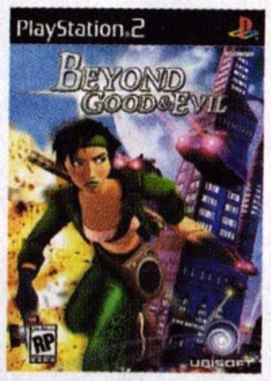
This game's repetitive, one-button controls and linear quests make you feel like you are trapped in a tar pit, dying a slow march to extinction. Worse yet is the fact that the main characters had Scottish accents thicker than the hair on Sean Connery's legs. We'd rather risk a look under his kilt than pick this game up again.

9 Butt Ugly Martians: Zoom or Doom

We know that this is supposed to be a kid's title, but even kids can understand the concepts of speed and direction, and this game assumes they can't. Even with the popular cartoon license, there isn't a single person in the world who will feel anything but pain while participating in this miserable excuse for a racer.

10 Justice League: Chronicles

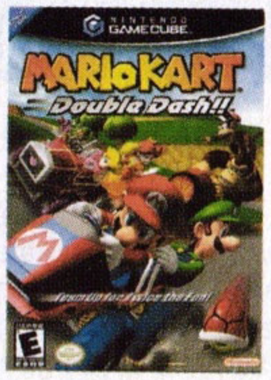
Not since the Wonder Twins has something brought so much shame to DC's mightiest heroes. If Batman and Robin announced that they were a couple and The Flash started wearing nothing more than a loose-fitting raincoat, it still wouldn't hurt comic book fans as much as this pile of slop. It's a good thing they all have secret identities, because the Justice League will want to go into hiding after this one.



PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, PC
11.11

Beyond Good & Evil

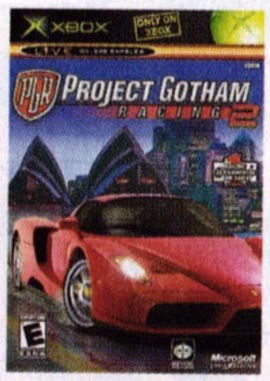
While government conspiracies and unwelcome alien invasions have always been fodder for video game plots, Ubisoft's Beyond Good & Evil sucks in players like a super-Hoover. Featuring the stunning and unique Hyllis landscape, BG&E has you snapping pictures of wildlife, infiltrating secret government strongholds, and combating the invading alien horde. It's certainly strange; but this game captivates players like few others with an intriguing story, complex characters, and breathtaking environments.



GameCube
11.17

Mario Kart: Double Dash!!

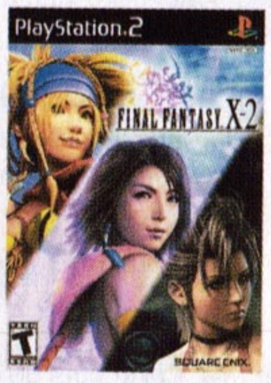
Nintendo's magic touch never ceases to amaze. Just when you think it couldn't do anything more with the Mario Kart franchise, it throws a second player on the kart and introduces a ton of strategies, as well as a heaping helping of multiplayer fun. Mix and match a wide-variety of Nintendo superstars to create the perfect kart racing team, and then challenge your friends to a 16-player LAN party. Behind Zelda, Double Dash is easily one of the must-have GameCube titles of 2003.



Xbox
11.18

Project Gotham Racing 2

The Xbox's best racer is now even better, thanks to the addition of Xbox Live support. But that ain't all that's keeping this one at the front of the pack; the pacing is perfect, the Kudos system is addictive, and it looks damn fine. If that wasn't enough, the hidden minigame "Geometry Wars," an old-school Asteriods-like shooter, can command hours of your life on its own. Seriously, it rocks. Oh, and the racing is fun, too.

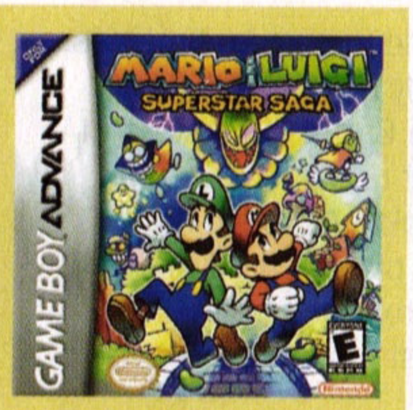


PlayStation 2
11.18

Final Fantasy X-2

Cyndi Lauper taught us that girls just want to have fun, and in Final Fantasy X-2 we get to see it in action. As the first true sequel in Square Enix's history, X-2 follows the trials and tribulations of Yuna, Rikku, and Paine as they finish off the storyline started in Final Fantasy X. The title offers a slew of new gameplay devices, but none as eye-popping as the new Garment system, which mesmerizes gamers with a twirling fashion show each time one of the girls changes jobs during battle. If that's not Game of the Year material we don't know what is.

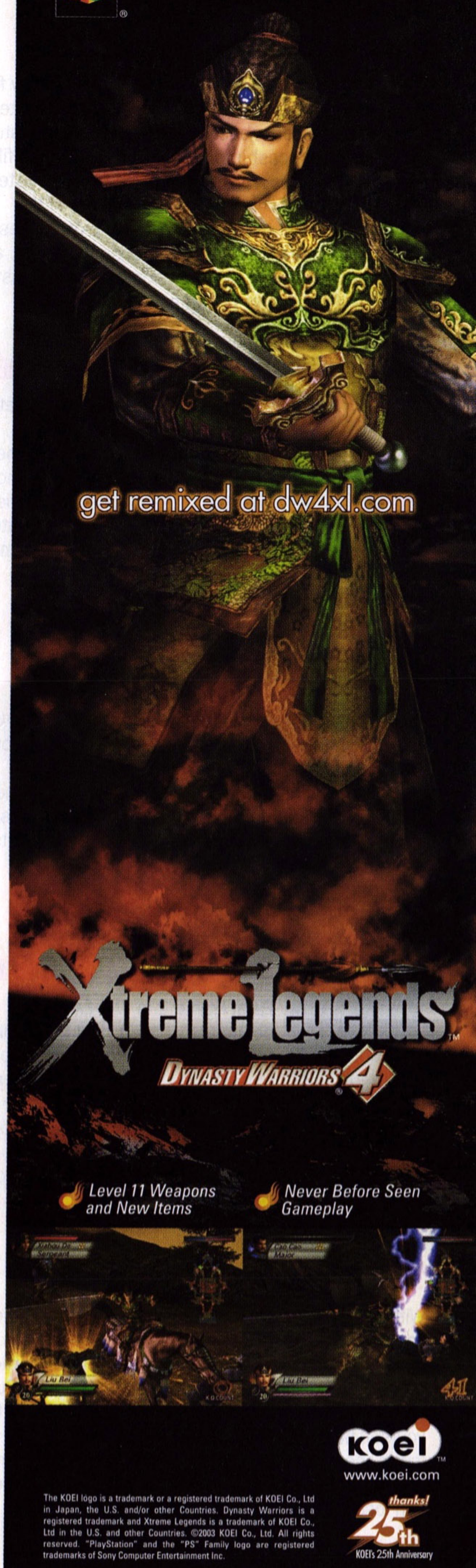
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga



Game Boy Advance
11.18

Mario and Luigi co-headline this RPG that's easily their strangest, silliest adventure ever. Combining the best of classic Mario adventures and traditional role-playing games, this strange brew results in an irresistibly addictive title. Featuring some of the best graphics on the GBA and some of the strangest humor you've ever heard, Superstar Saga should appeal to gamers of all ages. It really is a worthy addition to the Mario family.

PlayStation.2



koei
www.koei.com

The KOEI logo is a trademark or a registered trademark of KOEI Co., Ltd in Japan, the U.S. and/or other Countries. Dynasty Warriors is a registered trademark and Xtreme Legends is a trademark of KOEI Co., Ltd in the U.S. and other Countries. ©2003 KOEI Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

thanks! 25th KOEI's 25th Anniversary

Manhunt

PlayStation 2
11.18

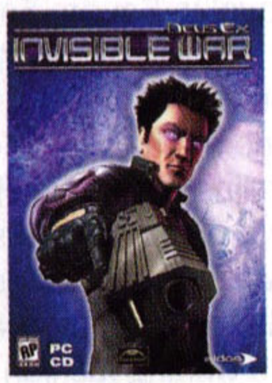
Creating a whirlwind of controversy is nothing new for the team behind Grand Theft Auto. Delivering content that makes gamers nauseous is. In this highly disturbing title, players are cast into the dark world of snuff films and are forced to perform executions for the mysterious "Director's" amusement. Not only is it one of the scariest games of the year, it's also one of the best playing. With amazing controls, intense moments, and razor-sharp enemy AI, Manhunt combines the finest of gaming with the worst of humanity.

Need For Speed: Underground

PlayStation 2, Xbox
GameCube, PC
11.18

If you're attracted to illegal street racing but are afraid of the cops, this is the title for you. Featuring all the thrills of underground racing without the fear of incarceration, Need For Speed fires on all cylinders. The graphics are amazing, races offer a lot of variety, and tricking out your ride is nearly as much fun as hitting the streets. Overall, Underground is one high-performance package.

Deus Ex: Invisible War



PC, Xbox
12.02

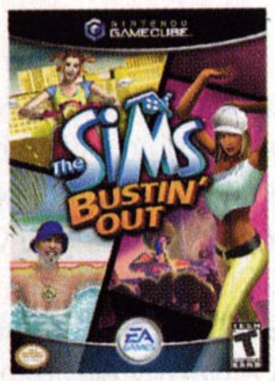
Set in a dark, forbidding future (picture *Dark Angel*, only not sucky), Invisible War offers multiple paths through its twisting, complex story. This thinking person's shooter offers up a different experience every time you step into its beautifully shadowed world. Will you sneak through the darkness or utilize the biomod that lets you control machines? The choice is up to you.

Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly

PlayStation 2
12.10

Fatal Frame 2 is *The Exorcist* of video games: timeless, deliberately paced, and undeniably horrifying. Like few other titles before it, Crimson Butterfly masters oppressive gloom through brilliant use of shadows, ambient noise, and a grotesque plot. Although its unusual setting and protagonists place it firmly in a niche market, seldom have horror titles been this genuinely frightening. It's the most fun you can have being scared.

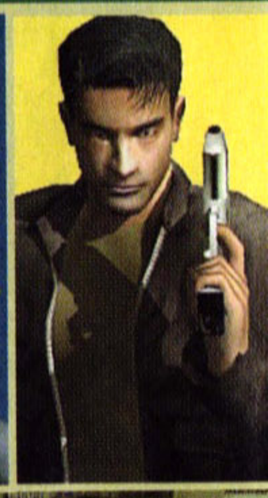
The Sims: Bustin' Out



PlayStation 2, Xbox,
GameCube
12.16

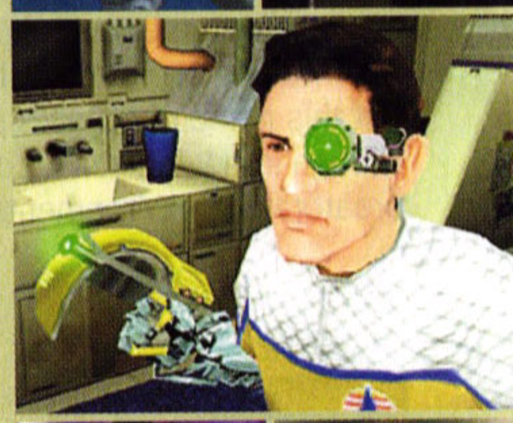
With two completely different games released in the course of 2003, Maxis' long running PC series has quickly become one of the hottest console properties as well. The original entry stuck to the basics. In Bustin' Out, wackiness is the name of the game. You may find yourself bunking up with a vampire, towel-snapping your loved one in the rear, or traveling down the block on your scooter to the Love Shack. It's the only game where you can lose your life in...well...your life.

THE TOP 10 BIGGEST DORKS OF 2003



1 Cooper (Grabbed by the Ghoulies)

There were a lot of sub-par main characters this year, but the absolute top loser of the bunch has got to be Cooper. A sweater-wearing wimp on a quest to save his equally obnoxious girlfriend, Cooper only displays personality through screaming and quaking with fear. Sure, it's a kid's game, but is Ash from Pokémon such a wimp? Compared to Cooper, he's Rambo.



2 Nick Kang (True Crime: Streets of LA)

If it wasn't for Cooper, Nick here would be a shoe in for number one. A sexist pile of cop clichés, Kang sports the prerequisite "bad attitude" and constantly spouts lame catch phrases that were old 10 years ago. A cop who plays by his own rules? Never seen that before. He puts the "tool" in the phrase, "Man, is that guy a tool!"

3 EZ Wheeler (RTX Red Rock)

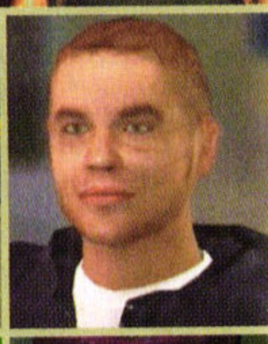
As if being saddled with the name weren't enough, our boy EZ sports a stylish prosthetic arm and a monocle. Yup, a monocle. Every good action hero needs one of those.

4 Nevin (Alter Echo)

So, you can change shape? Hey, that's great. Why don't you change into someone cool?

5 Carth Onasi (Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic)

So get this: Carth puts on a tough exterior, but he's really moody and always wants to talk about his feelings. We have a feeling that Carth is, how shall we put this? He seems a little...secretly...um...Spanish.



6 (tie) Rosh/Eric (Star Wars: Jedi Academy/Tony Hawk's Underground)

These two get lumped together because they're exactly the same person: a whiny, useless sidekick who constantly gets into trouble and needs your help. Much like Canada.

7 Zill (Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker)

Somebody must have thought it would be adorable to include in this game a kid who constantly has the world's largest booger hanging from his nose. Whoever you are, thank you. Nothing is more pleasant than being forced to stare at a giant cel-shaded nostril-dangler. Really, thanks again.

8 Cabe (Roadkill)

Anybody who looks like he got his hair from The Prodigy's "Firestarter" video simply cannot be taken seriously.

9 Nikki Conners (Rogue Ops)

We think she's supposed to be sexy, but giant, swollen heads just don't do anything for us. We're all for hot female spies, but Nikki seems far better suited to driving a Kia minivan full of kids to soccer practice and then heading to the grocery store to pick up some broccoli and gin.

10 Will Rock

With a name like Will Rock, you could declare world peace, invent a happiness pill, write the world's bitchenest rock song, discover time travel, invent a fat-free brownie that doesn't disappoint in the flavor department – and you'd still be a loser.

KOEI™
www.koei.com

thanks! 25th KOEI's 25th Anniversary

get remixed at dw4xl.com

Xtreme Legends™

DYNASTY WARRIORS® 4

New! Xtreme Mode
Engage in a series of randomly generated battles! Purchase items with points earned and fight for survival!

New! Legend Mode
Live the fabled exploits of the Dynasty Warriors. Each warrior has a unique scenario. 42 new stages!

New! Features
Level 11 Weapons and new items, Arena Challenge, "Beginner" and "Expert" levels, and more!

DW4 REMIX!!!
Play DW4XL alone or with DW4, to power up the original with new XL features.

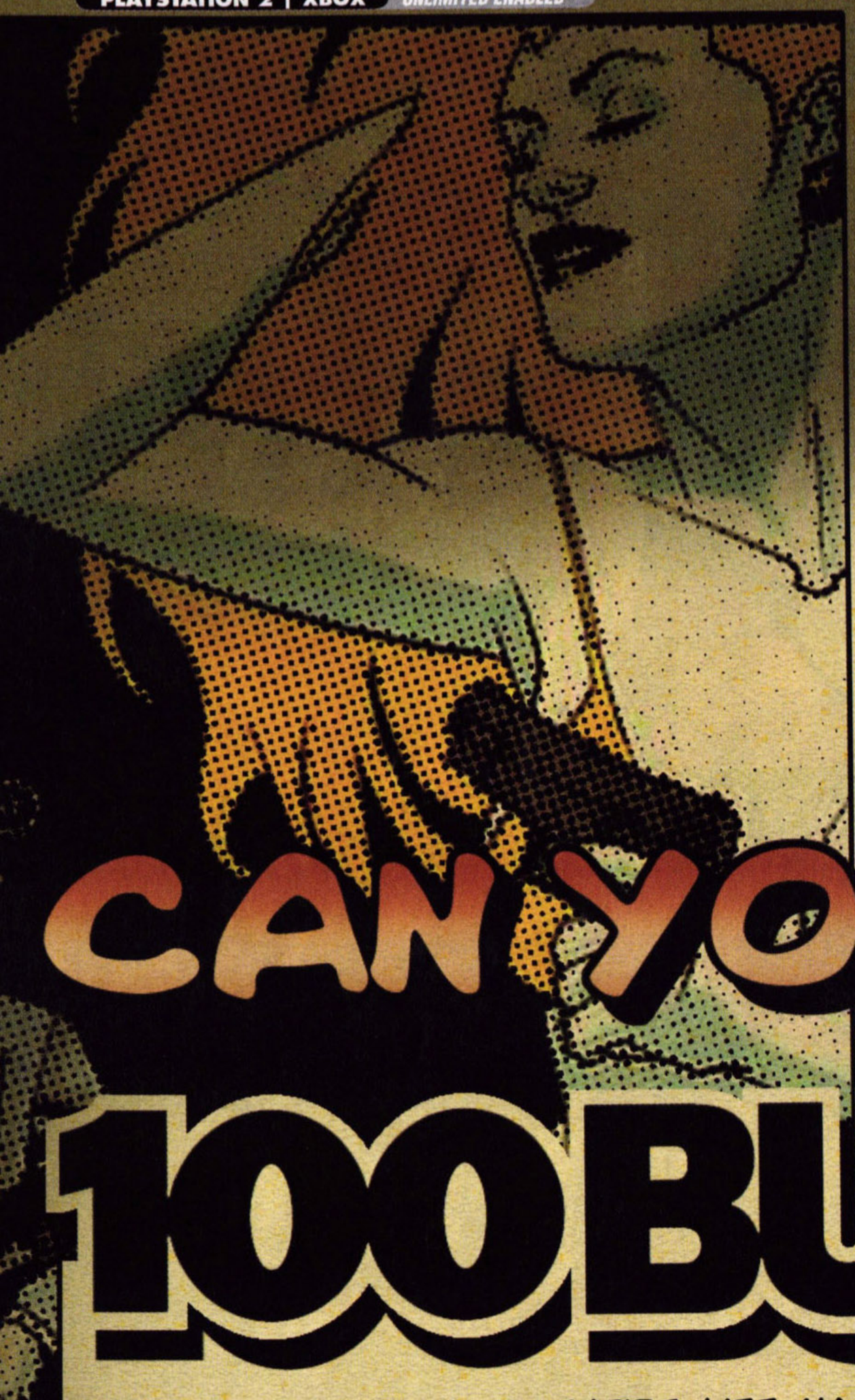
AVAILABLE NOW $29.99 MSRP

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Language
Violence

Each game sold separately. Dynasty Warriors, Xtreme Legends, and the KOEI logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of KOEI Co., Ltd. ©2003 KOEI Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The rating icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

3DCGデザイナー募集中!! 勤務地：カナダまたは日本　応募方法など詳細は www.koei.co.jp/html/joboffer をご覧ください。

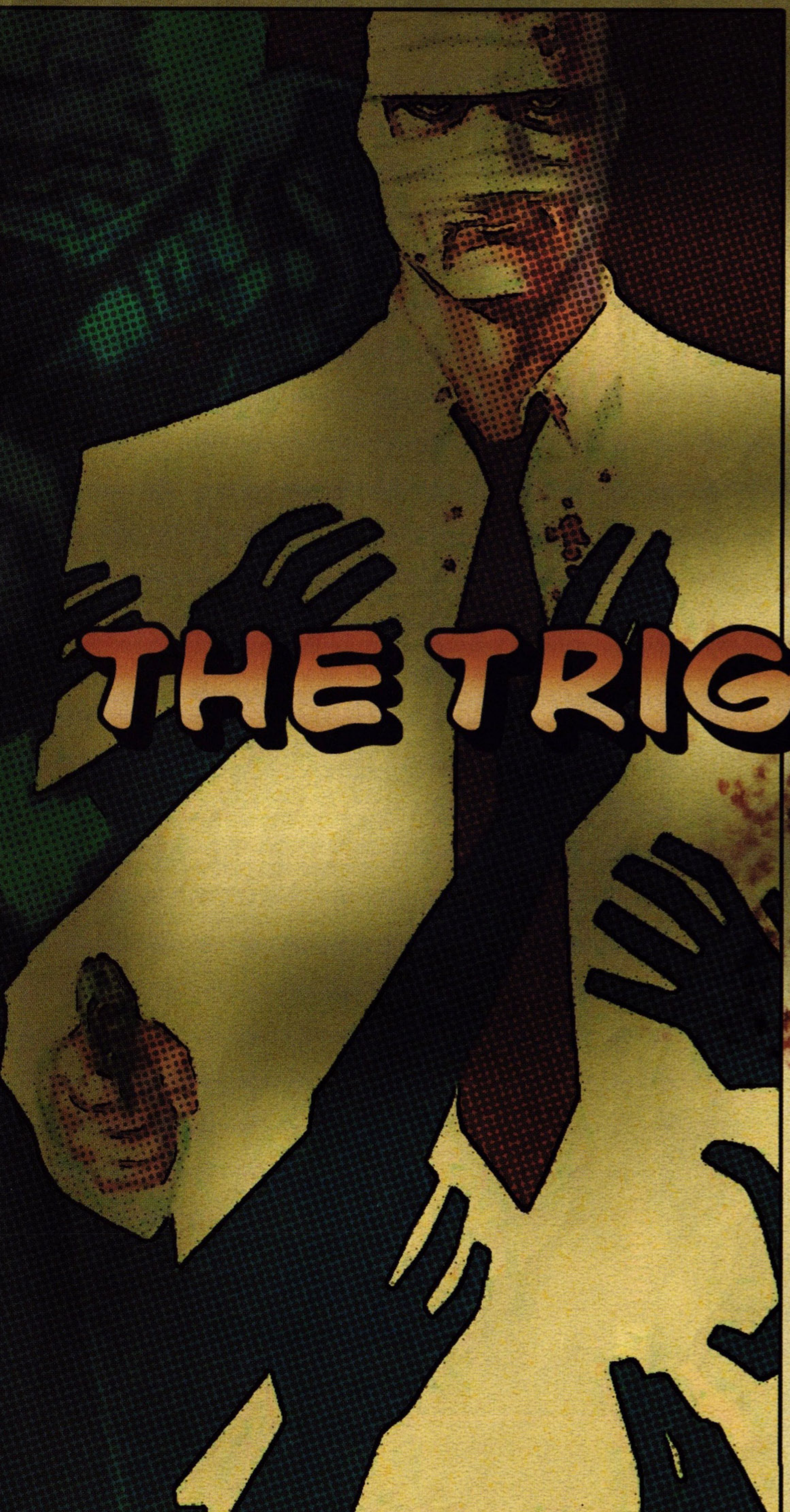
PlayStation®2

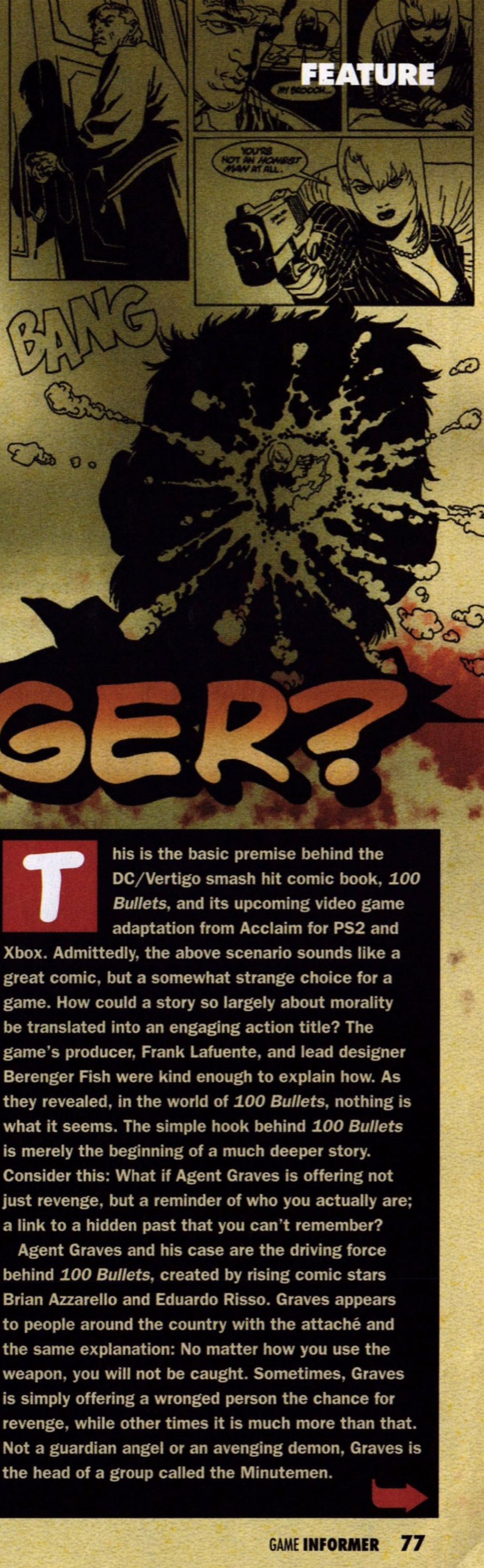


CAN YOU PULL 100 BULLETS

IMAGINE THAT YOUR ENTIRE LIFE HAS BEEN DESTROYED. EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING YOU CARED ABOUT IS GONE. YOU HAVE NOTHING LEFT. THEN, ONE LONELY NIGHT, A MYSTERIOUS STRANGER APPEARS WITH A SIMPLE ATTACHÉ. HE INTRODUCES HIMSELF AS AGENT GRAVES AND OPENS THE CASE. INSIDE IS A PICTURE OF A MAN, ONE THAT YOU DO NOT RECOGNIZE, BUT ACCORDING TO GRAVES, HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR LOSS; HE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL YOUR PAIN. DOCUMENTS INCLUDED WITH THE PICTURE OFFER INCONTROVERTIBLE PROOF OF WHAT HE SAYS. ALSO INCLUDED IN THE CASE ARE A GUN AND 100 BULLETS. EVERY ROUND IS COMPLETELY UNTRACEABLE - WHATEVER YOU DO WITH IT, YOU WILL NOT BE CAUGHT. WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 2004





This is the basic premise behind the DC/Vertigo smash hit comic book, *100 Bullets*, and its upcoming video game adaptation from Acclaim for PS2 and Xbox. Admittedly, the above scenario sounds like a great comic, but a somewhat strange choice for a game. How could a story so largely about morality be translated into an engaging action title? The game's producer, Frank Lafuente, and lead designer Berenger Fish were kind enough to explain how. As they revealed, in the world of *100 Bullets*, nothing is what it seems. The simple hook behind *100 Bullets* is merely the beginning of a much deeper story. Consider this: What if Agent Graves is offering not just revenge, but a reminder of who you actually are; a link to a hidden past that you can't remember?

Agent Graves and his case are the driving force behind *100 Bullets*, created by rising comic stars Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso. Graves appears to people around the country with the attaché and the same explanation: No matter how you use the weapon, you will not be caught. Sometimes, Graves is simply offering a wronged person the chance for revenge, while other times it is much more than that. Not a guardian angel or an avenging demon, Graves is the head of a group called the Minutemen.

100 BULLETS

The Minutemen once worked for the Trust, a group of 13 families who are the true power behind the United States. The Trust used the Minutemen as an equalizer; if one family ever moved against another, the Minutemen were sent in to enforce the peace, violently if necessary.

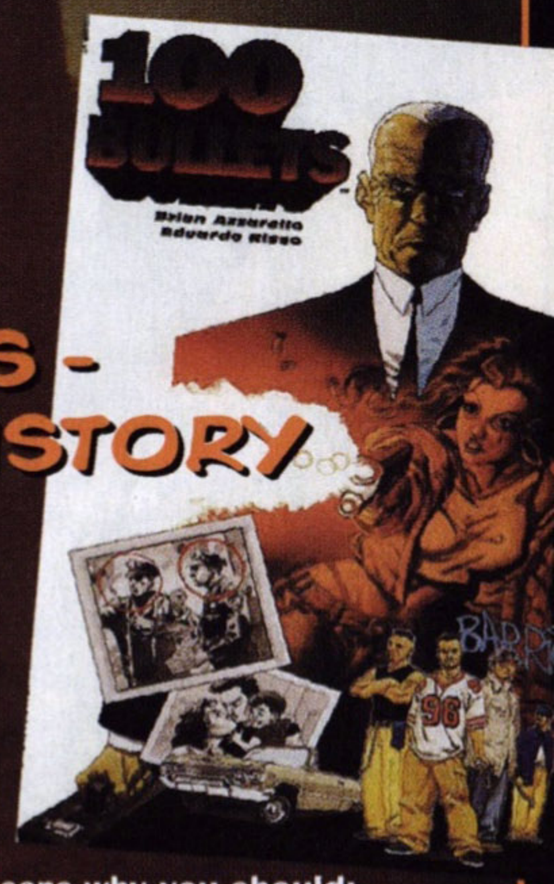
When the Trust decided that the Minutemen had outgrown their usefulness, they lured them into a trap. Graves and a few others survived, but most did not. Using hypnotic suggestions, Graves erased the memories of the survivors and set them up with new lives to fool the Trust into thinking that the Minutemen had been wiped out entirely. The survivors went about their new lives with no memories of their old ones. That is, until Graves showed up with his mysterious case....

At the onset of 100 Bullets, you play as Cole Burns, a Minuteman awoken by Graves. Cole had been living a quiet existence as an ice cream man until Graves returned and offered info as to who killed his mother. Cole's quest for revenge returns his memory, and he joins Graves on his mission to shut down the Trust once and for all. While Cole is a character from the comic, he shares time with Snow Falls, a new character created specifically for the game by Brain Azzarello. A boxer, Graves appears to her and offers her the case. Impressed with her

execution of her task, Graves offers her a place as one of the new team of Minutemen.

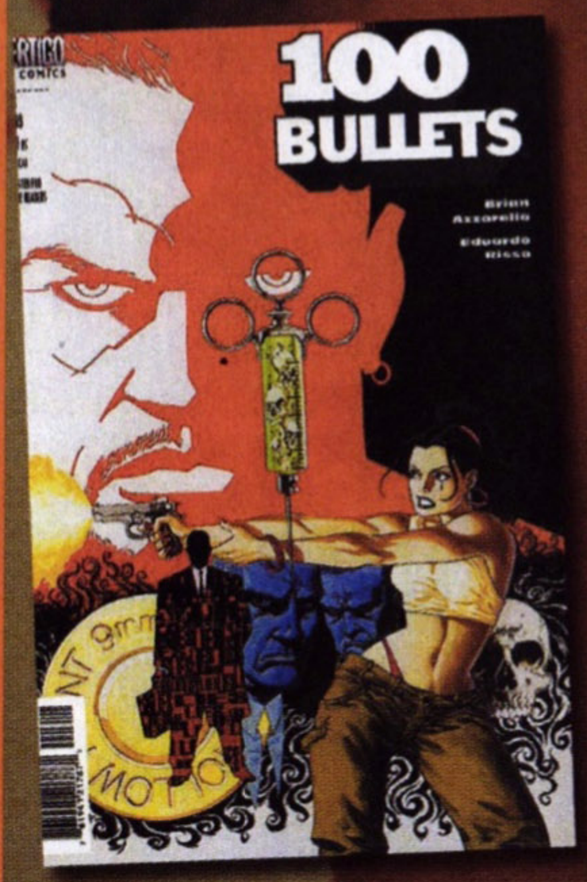
Although the game does feature far more action than the comic, fans of the series should have no problem with the changes. Azzarello wrote both the story and the script. "Originally, we were trying to stick really close to what the actual comic book had in terms of story, but [Azzarello] was like 'No, no, that wouldn't work,'" says Fish. "It was actually quite amusing," adds Lafuente, "Brian would propose something, and we would say 'but that taints the consistency of the universe,' and his view from the very beginning was that it's a different medium. The story he is going to write for this is the 100 Bullets universe, but geared for video games."

100 BULLETS - A BRIEF HISTORY



For all its acclaim, *100 Bullets* isn't quite as recognizable as *Batman* or *Superman*. However, it is one of the most respected titles on the market, and has made Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso into superstars. If you're not reading it, here are a few reasons why you should:

→ In 2001, the third *100 Bullets* collection won the Eisner Award for Best Serialized Story. In 2002, the series won six Harvey and Eisner Awards. Both awards are considered the highest honors a comic book can achieve.



→ At Northwestern University, *100 Bullets* is included in three American Literature classes: "Crime and Punishment in American Literature," "Crime Novels, Criminal Novels, and the Canon," and "Chicago Writers: Building the City of Words."

→ Azzarello's characters are considered some of the most realistic, textured, and complex in the history of the comic book medium.

→ Risso's art has won several awards, including Best Artist from the Harvey and Yellow Kid awards, and Best Penciller/Inker from the Eisner awards.

DIVING BACKWARDS IS A GOOD WAY TO AVOID THE HAIL OF BULLETS

"FIRST ONE TO THE WATER COOLER WINS!"

EVERY ENEMY TYPE USES DIFFERENT TACTICS

Originally, Azzarello only intended to come up with the basic plot, but was so excited about the quality of the project that he agreed to write everything himself. The dialogue in the game will convey the same realism that he so effortlessly captures in the comic. Of course, this also guarantees the title a Mature rating, as the comic is one of the most dark, authentically gritty crime stories since comic legend Frank Miller's *Sin City*.

Cole and Snow will star in two separate but converging storylines, which will play identically. Comparisons to the Max Payne and Hitman series will be unavoidable, but Lafuente assures us that it will offer both originality and depth to differentiate it from those series. Two gameplay mechanics really stand out in the early version we witnessed: The first is a counter/dodge function, which can be used at both a distance and up close. Say an enemy is firing at you from the other side of a large room. Hit the dodge button at just the right time, and you'll duck the bullet. Time will slow slightly so you can see the round fly over your shoulder. This mechanic is even more impressive (and deadly) at close range. For example, if an enemy with a shotgun is right in front of you, proper dodging will result in your character ducking under the barrel, pushing the gun up under your assailant's chin, and watching as his head disappears in the blast!

The dodge/counter move will have different effects on various enemy types, but the results will stay the same: you'll live, they won't. But it won't be enough to protect you from the hordes of intelligent enemies you'll face on your mission. That's why an innovative defensive option has been implemented. Almost all objects in the environments can be used for cover. Tables and cabinets can be kicked over to protect you from the hail of bullets, and the way cover is utilized is different than any game to date. Unlike Metal Gear Solid or Splinter Cell, your defensive posture won't switch off when you reach the edge of an object. If you are, for example, hiding behind an overturned table that is rapidly being reduced to splinters by gunfire, you can slink out from behind it and, while still defensively crouched down, cross over to the increased safety of a stone pillar. You'll remain in defensive mode until you switch it off with the press of a button. "We wanted it to be a lot smoother than other games," Fish explains, demonstrating the fluid nature of the defensive mode.

As exciting as these features are, there is a third mechanic to further enrich the gameplay. Lafuente wouldn't say what it is, but did explain why. Much like Max Payne's groundbreaking bullet time, this mysterious new technique is so cool and unique that if it got out, other developers would rush to include it in their games. All we know is that rather than add a cool, yet unrelated mechanic, this special attack will make sense with the story and make fans of the series very happy.

(Wait 'til you see the one left in your pants.)

MAXIMUM-CHASE™

You're an off-duty cop thrust into a plot to destroy LA. Can you survive high-speed chases–operating multiple weapons–all while trying to figure out what the heck is going on? You'll drive 20 licensed vehicles including a 1970 Camaro, a Hummer and a brand new Nissan Z. So race over to maximum-chase.com now. And remember to pick up some clean laundry on the way.

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Strong Language
Violence

XBOX

ONLY ON XBOX

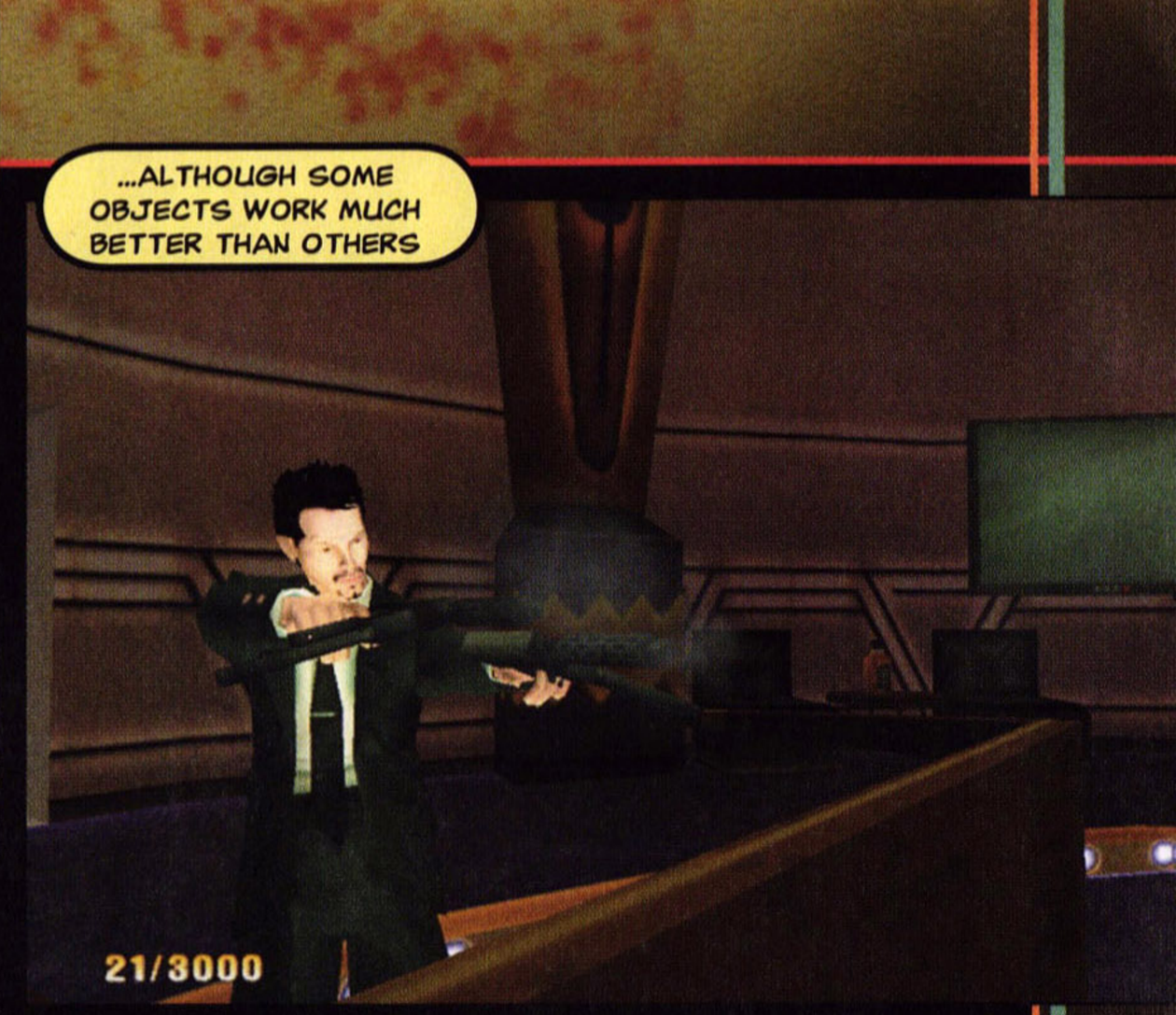
GM OFFICIAL LICENSED PRODUCT

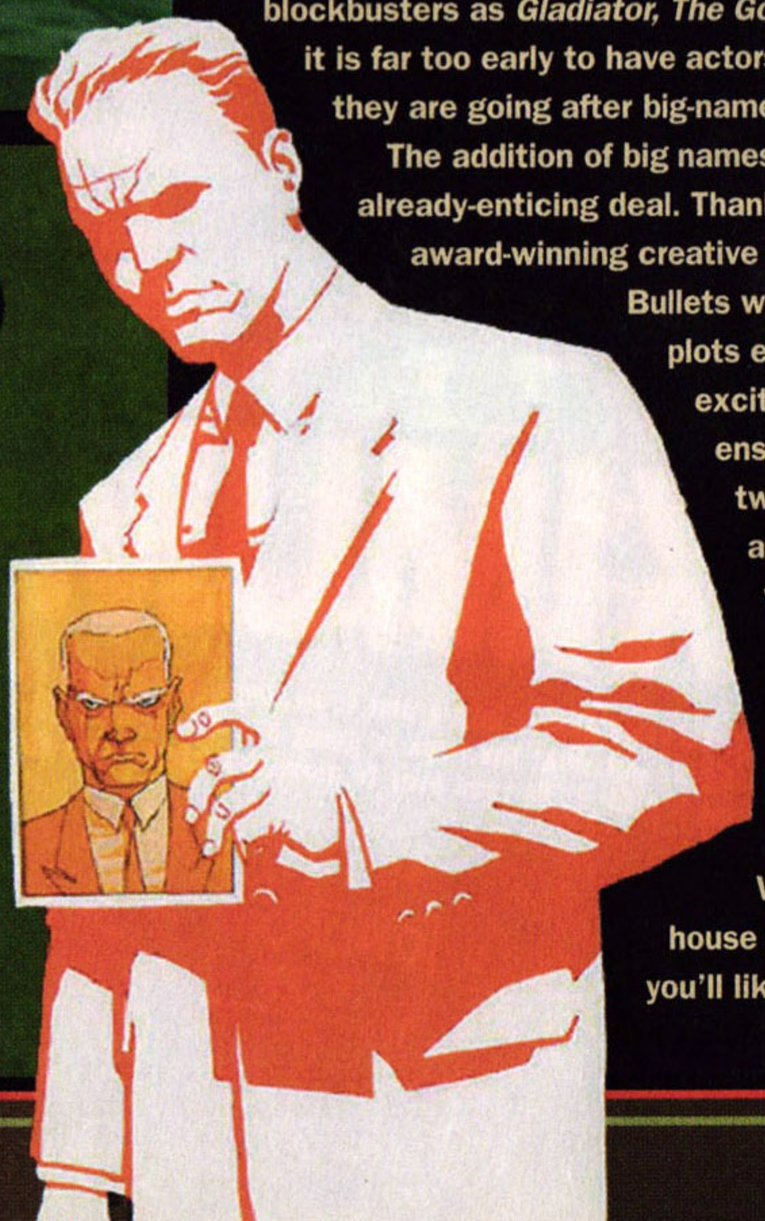
Microsoft game studios

MAJESCO

majescogames.com

© 2003 Microsoft Corporation. Licensed to Majesco Sales. Microsoft, Xbox, the Microsoft Game Studios logo and the Xbox Logos are registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. Trademarks of Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. are used under license to Microsoft Corporation. Toyota, Lexus, LS340, GS430, SC430, RX300 and 2000GT are trademarks of Toyota Motor Corporation, and used with permission. General Motors Trademarks used under license to Microsoft Corporation.





Much like the comic, the game has one of the most unique looks that the action genre has ever seen. The book is stark, using muted colors, heavy shadows, and intentional lack of detail. Even still, the characters are instantly recognizable and moods are portrayed perfectly. Lafuente hopes to give the game a similarly unique look. "We're coming from a comic book, but it's really not a comic game," says Lafuente. "We're not going to be shoving it in the player's face that this is from a comic book." Indeed, the early version we saw did look simultaneously realistic and stylized, but even in this very early iteration, the mood of the game was perfectly conveyed. Should the graphics continue to improve over the year until it is released, it will be visually stunning. If Acclaim's plans work out, the audio should be impressive as well. In order to line up the best voice actors, the studio has recruited Louis DiGiaimo, the casting director on such blockbusters as *Gladiator, The Godfather,* and *The Exorcist*. While it is far too early to have actors signed, Lafuente assures us they are going after big-name talent.

The addition of big names could only sweeten an already-enticing deal. Thanks to the involvement of the award-winning creative team behind the comic, 100 Bullets will certainly have one of the best plots ever found in an action game. The exciting gameplay mechanics should ensure that getting through the twisting and complex story is a fun and worthwhile experience. Individually, neither comics nor video games tend to get the respect they deserve as legitimate art forms, but when the two come together, the quality of the results should be undeniable. When Agent Graves arrives in your house next year, we have a feeling that you'll like what he delivers.

Ratchet & Clank

Going Commando

SHOW US YOUR WEAPON! CONTEST

Design a new weapon for Ratchet and you could upgrade your lifestyle!

Visit **www.ratchetandclank.com** to download the official entry form and for more details.

GRAND PRIZE

A trip for two to Los Angeles to visit Insomniac Games and $5,000 to upgrade your lifestyle!

FIRST PRIZE

Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando poster autographed by the development team!

No Purchase Necessary. Must be a U.S. resident 13 years of age or older. Contest ends 1/31/04.
For full rules and to download the official form, visit www.ratchetandclank.com. Void where prohibited.

"SHOW US YOUR WEAPON" NATIONAL CONTEST OFFICIAL RULES

1. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. MAKING A PURCHASE WILL NOT IMPROVE CHANCES OF WINNING. Must be 13 years of age or older. Void outside the 50 United States and D.C. and where prohibited by law. To enter, design the ultimate weapon for Ratchet & Clank ("Illustration"). Please send the Illustration by using the free downloadable template at www.ratchetandclank.com with a written description in 150 words or less, sign the Submission Release and send it with your name, address, date of birth, phone number to Show Us Your Weapon Contest, PO Box 4029, Grand Rapids, MN 55745-4029. All Illustrations must be the fully original creations of the entrants. Submitted Illustrations must have never been published or professionally developed. All Illustrations must be drawn on the provided template only. Any Illustrations not using the downloadable template will be disqualified. Additionally, any entries submitted without a signed Submission Release will be disqualified. All entries must be received by January 31, 2004. You may submit more than one Illustration, however, each entry must be mailed in separately. Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ("Sponsor") is not responsible for lost, late, mutilated, illegible, incomplete, postage due or misdirected entries. All entries become the sole property of Sponsor and none will be returned. In the event fewer entries are received than the number of prizes to be awarded, Sponsor reserves the right to take action as it reasonably deems necessary under the circumstances. Entrants waive any claims against Sponsor, and its affiliates, concerning Entrant's rights in the Illustration submitted under this Agreement. Entries not satisfying these Official Rules will be automatically disqualified.

2. Judging Criteria: All entries received will be judged by a panel of independent judges composed of video game industry professionals. Judging of the entries will begin on or about February 9, 2004, with a final decision to be made on or about March 5, 2004. The decision of the judges will be final and binding in all respects. By participating, entrants agree to be bound by the Official Rules. Judging Criteria: 1) originality 20%; and 2) creativity 80%. Sponsor reserves the right to reject any entries that it deems, in its sole discretion, to be inappropriate. The Illustration must be the original, unpublished and sole work of the entrant. Winners will be selected from all eligible entries received and postmarked by mail on or before January 31, 2004.

3. WINNER: One (1) Illustration will be chosen as the Grand Prize winner. The grand prize includes a trip for two to Los Angeles to meet the development team at the Ratchet & Clank series, which includes two (2) round trip coach class airfare to Los Angeles from US major airport closest to winner's home, hotel accommodations based on double occupancy (single room), for three (3) nights, and $5,000.00 on the form of a check payable to winner's name) (approximate retail value of $7,500.00). Select flight may stay over may be required. All travel details will be at Sponsor's discretion and the trip must be completed by October 31, 2004. Prize will be fulfilled if winner is unable to travel by designated time. Winner and guest are responsible for all meals, travel upgrades, gratuities, and any other expenses not specified herein. Actual value of prize depends on point of departure and current airfares at time of travel. Travel dates are subject to availability, and a travel agency designated by the Sponsor will arrange travel. Restrictions and blackout dates may apply. Ten (10) Illustrations will be chosen as the first prizewinners. The first prizewinners will receive a Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando poster autographed by the developers of the Ratchet & Clank series (approximate retail value of $50.00). Total approximate retail value of all prizes: $8,000.00. Sponsor reserves the right to substitute a prize of equal value if prize is unavailable. Prizes are non-transferable and no substitutions allowed. Winner shall be notified by mail and/or telephone. Once notified, allow 8-10 weeks for delivery of prizes.

4. Eligibility: Contest open to legal residents of United States only who are 13 years of age or older at the time of entry. Employees of Sponsor and their respective parents, subsidiaries, agencies and affiliates and each of their related companies and their immediate families are not eligible to enter. Void outside the 50 United States and D.C., and where prohibited by law.

5. General: Winners may be required to execute and return an Affidavit of Eligibility and Release within fourteen (14) days of receipt. Return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Affidavit must be signed and return within the stated time period or prize may be forfeited. Additionally, as a condition to receiving the prize, the winner (or in the case of a minor, the minor's parent or legal guardian) shall be required to execute an assignment transferring and assigning all of his or her rights, title and interest, including but not limited to any copyrights or trademarks, in the drawing submitted as an entry to Sponsor. Sponsor is under no obligation to use the winning submission in any game sequel. If the winner is a minor, then prize will be awarded to winner's parent or legal guardian. The travel companion of the grand prizewinner must sign a travel release and publicity release prior to making any travel arrangements. A grand prizewinner who is a minor must be accompanied on prize trip by a parent or legal guardian as a travel companion. A grand prizewinner who is an adult may not be accompanied by any minor on prize trip unless they are an immediate family member. No tickets or other travel documentation will be issued in the name of any person who has not signed a release. Winner and travel companion agree to the use of their name and/or likenesses for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Additionally, winner agrees to release Sponsor and their respective parents, subsidiaries, agencies, divisions, and affiliates from any and all liability, for loss, harm, damage, injury, cost or expense whatsoever including without limitation, property damage, personal injury and/or death which may occur in connection with, preparation for, travel to, or participation in the Contest, or possession, acceptance and/or use or misuse of prize or participation in any Contest-related activity and claims based on publicity rights, copyright/trademark infringement, defamation or invasion of privacy and incontestable delivery. Neither Sponsor nor their respective parents, affiliates, subsidiaries, agencies, divisions nor related companies are responsible for any damages, or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or receipt of prize. All taxes are the sole responsibility of the winners.

6. Winners List: For a list of winners, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to: Show Us Your Weapon Contest, PO Box 1090, Grand Rapids, MN, 55745-1090. Requests will be fulfilled within four weeks after all prizes have been awarded. Requests for winners' list must be received by April 1, 2004. Please allow four (4) weeks for delivery of winner's list.

7. SPONSOR: Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc., 919 E. Hillsdale Boulevard, Foster City, CA 94404.

PlayStation®2

INSOMNIAC GAMES

TEEN T — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Mild Violence

Ratchet and Clank is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by Insomniac Games, Inc. ©2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

NOT EVEN MY
DEATH

IN MY QUEST
FOR REDEMPTION

I COMMAND THE FORCES OF TIME

DECEIVED BY A TREACHEROUS VIZIER, I WAS LED TO UNLEASH THE DARK POWERS OF THE SANDS OF TIME UPON THE SULTAN'S KINGDOM. NOW, AS DARKNESS CONSUMES ALL IN ITS PATH, MY SPEED, AGILITY, AND SKILL AS A WARRIOR ARE NOT ENOUGH. I MUST LEARN TO COMMAND THE SANDS TO SLOW, FREEZE, ACCELERATE, AND EVEN REVERSE TIME ITSELF. IF I FAIL TO UNDO MY FATAL MISTAKE, ALL SHALL PERISH WITH ME. MINE IS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL...NOT GLORY.

www.princeofpersiagame.com

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Violence
Suggestive Themes

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

XBOX LIVE

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE

PRINCE OF PERSIA
THE SANDS OF TIME™

CAN STOP ME

"PRINCE OF PERSIA IS A MASTERPIECE..."
– ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

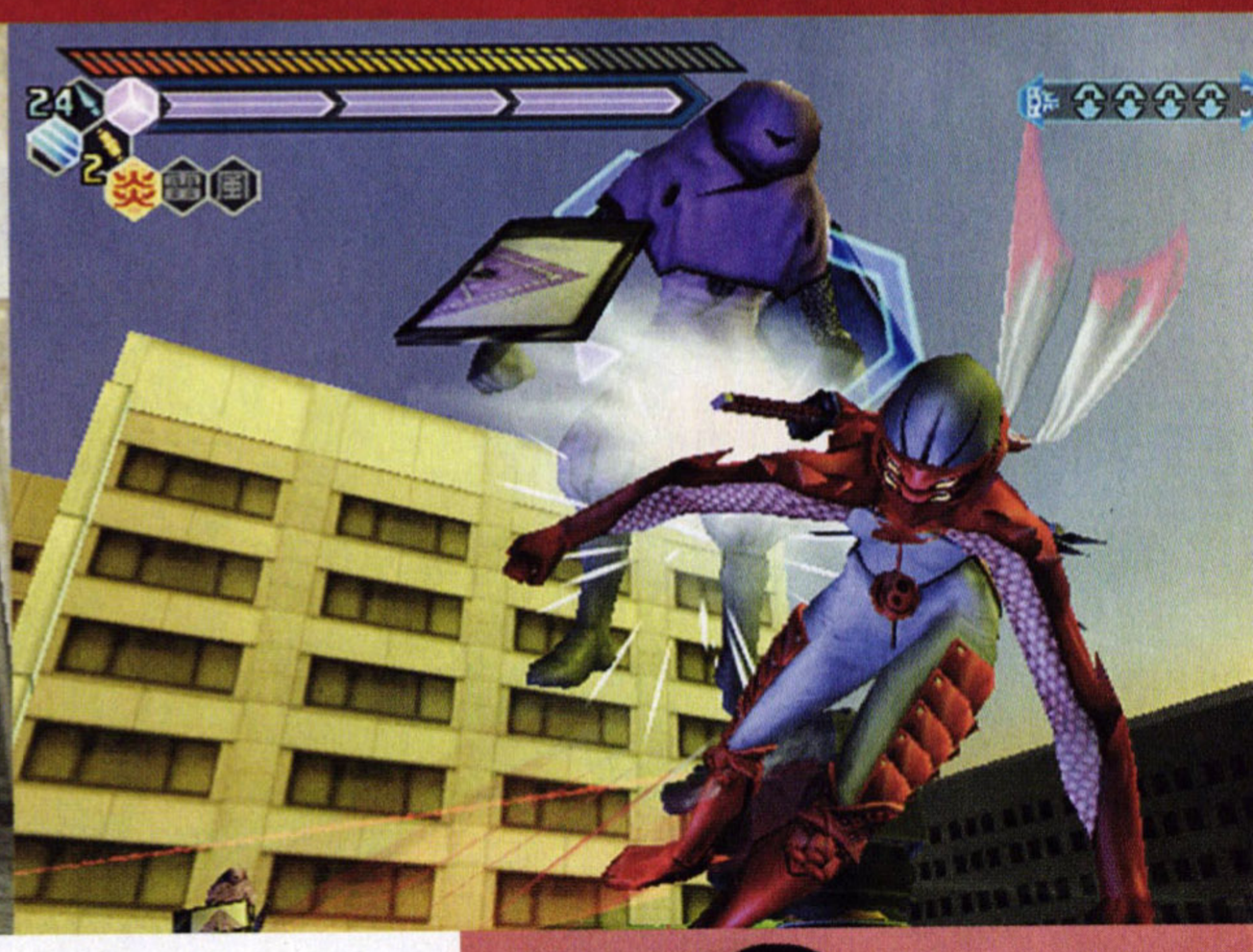
"A PRIME CANDIDATE FOR GAME OF THE YEAR."
– MATT CASAMASSINA, IGN.COM

"MOVING THE ACTION GENRE TO THE NEXT LEVEL."
– GAME INFORMER

© 2003 Ubisoft Entertainment. Based on Prince of Persia® created by Jordan Mechner. All Rights Reserved. Ubisoft and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Prince of Persia and Prince of Persia The Sands of Time are trademarks of Jordan Mechner used under license by Ubisoft Entertainment. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. TM, ®, Game Boy Advance, and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. ©2001 Nintendo. Software platform logo TM and © IEMA 2003. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox *Live*, the *Live* logo, and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

UBISOFT™

PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2 *UNLIMITED ENABLED*

NIGHTSHADE

BEAT DOWN UNLIMITED HELLSPAWN

We offered a first look at this Shinobi sidequest in our November issue. Since then, a few details have been finalized, but much is still left to be revealed.

We do know that the main character's name is Hibana and she shares a universe with last year's ninja du jour, Shinobi. Although their plotlines will not intersect with this release, both tales take place in the same world. Nightshade is set one year after the ending of Shinobi and offers a more juiced-up version of that title's gameplay.

Developer Overworks is, at least in part, looking at this game as a way to improve on the concepts that it played with earlier. Hibana will have more dynamic and action-packed aerial combat options. In addition, the vixen will be able to unleash a number of tates (finishing moves) limited only by how many of the hell-spawned creatures are available in her urban landscape. Based on what we've seen so far, it looks like Hibana's wrath will be impressive and bloody indeed.

Nightshade is also offering some very nice color-trails highlighting the ninja's moves (perhaps to make up for the loss of Shinobi's scarf – which we named as the Best New Character of 2002) and a combination of demon types and machinery for her to parry with. This is all very good news for ninja fans, and since the title will show up Stateside in early February, we'll soon know for sure what's up with this white-leather-clad ninja.

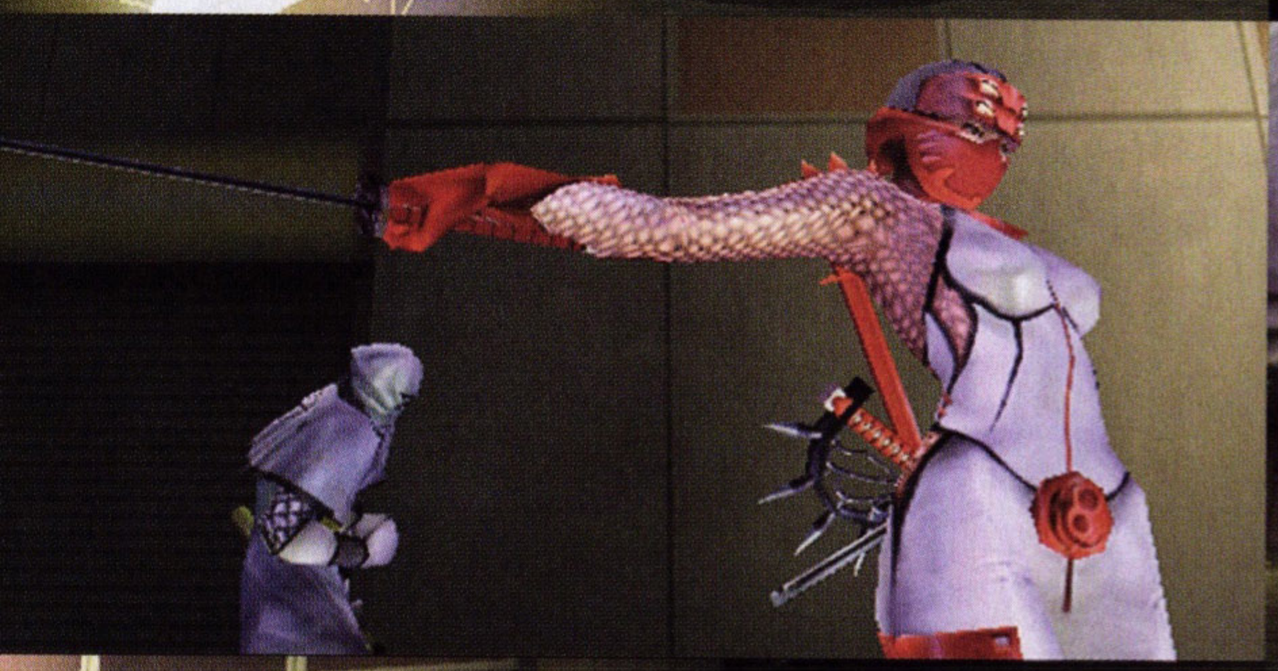
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** OVERWORKS ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 10

We're sure that there's a rational explanation for you battling a mechanical squid of epic proportions

Dual-wielding anything is cool with us

HIBANA TAKES PS2 USERS TO FINISHING SCHOOL

Starting with the screenshot at right, read the rest like a book to see one of Hibana's finishing moves. The first few shots start the sequence against four foes. Once it is executed, she proceeds to chop enemies to bits – ending in a dramatic pool of blood. Obviously, this game isn't intended for the kids. To see the exclusive video of this impressive move in action, go to the Unlimited section of Game Informer Online to check it out.



REC

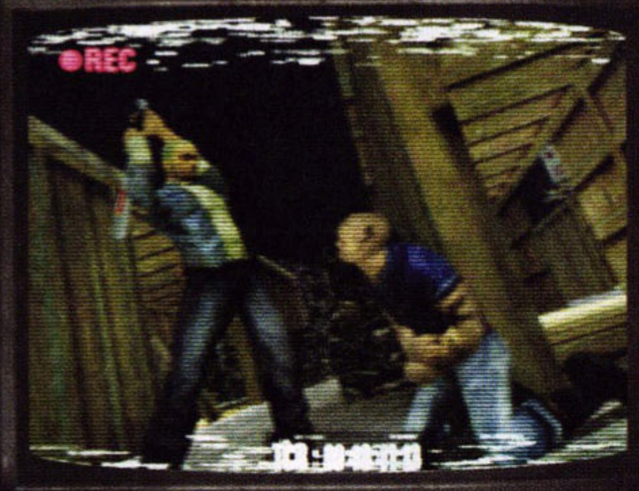
THEY JUST KILLED CASH.
NOW THEY WANT TO KILL HIM AGAIN.

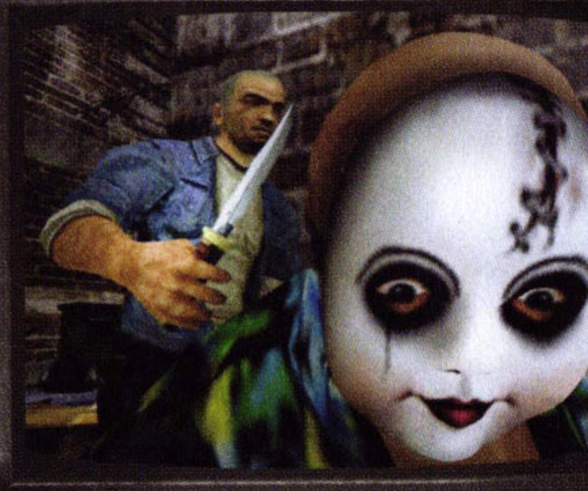
AMERICA IS FULL OF RUN DOWN, BROKEN RUST-BELT TOWNS WHERE NOBODY CARES AND ANYTHING GOES.
IN CARCER CITY, NOTHING MATTERS ANYMORE AND ALL THAT'S LEFT ARE CHEAP THRILLS.
THE ULTIMATE RUSH IS THE POWER TO GRANT LIFE AND TAKE IT AWAY, FOR SPORT. THIS TIME JAMES EARL CASH, YOU ARE THE SPORT.
THEY GAVE YOU YOUR LIFE BACK. NOW, THEY ARE GOING TO HUNT YOU DOWN.

YOU AWAKE TO THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN PANICKED BREATH.
YOU MUST RUN, HIDE AND FIGHT TO SURVIVE.
IF YOU CAN STAY ALIVE LONG ENOUGH, YOU MAY FIND OUT WHO DID THIS TO YOU.

THE FINAL CUT

IN STORES NOW!





MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Strong Language
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence

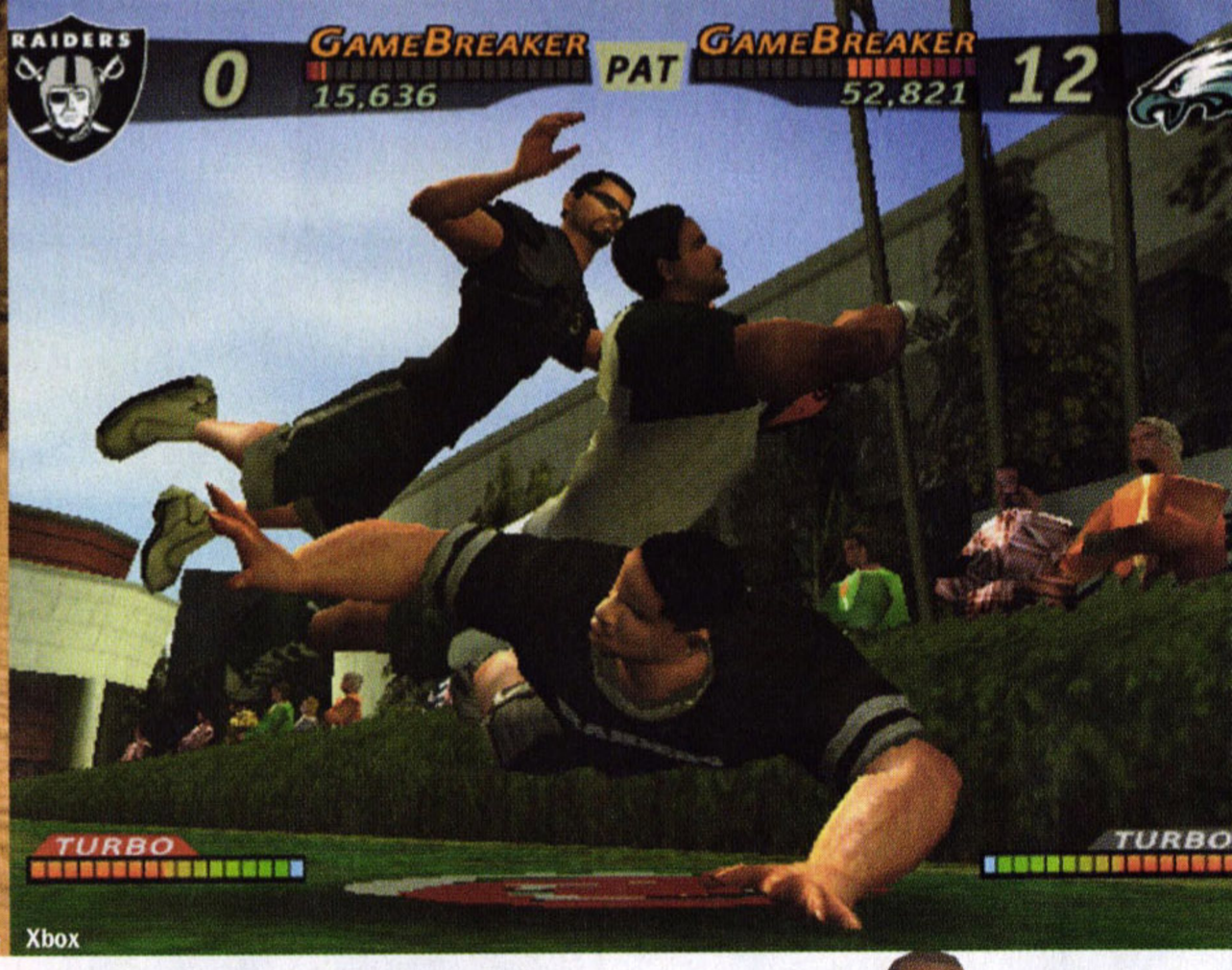
PlayStation®2

"PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. © 2003 Rockstar Games, Inc. Manhunt and the Manhunt logo are trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Rockstar Games and the R* logo are registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Rockstar Games and Rockstar North are subsidiaries of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. All other marks and trademarks are properties of their respective owners. All Rights Reserved. Product names are the trademarks of their respective owners, and not of Rockstar Games, Inc., and are included for entertainment purposes only. No product, person or establishment appearing or mentioned in this game has endorsed this game or any of the actions described or displayed herein or is in any way associated with Rockstar Games, Inc.

WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MANHUNT

Note: Rockstar will be following ESA guidelines for M rated games in the marketing of this game. This game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. The story, names and incidents portrayed herein are fictitious. No identification or similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events is intended or should be inferred. Any resemblance is coincidental. The makers and publishers of this videogame do not in any way endorse, condone or encourage this kind of behavior.

GameCube



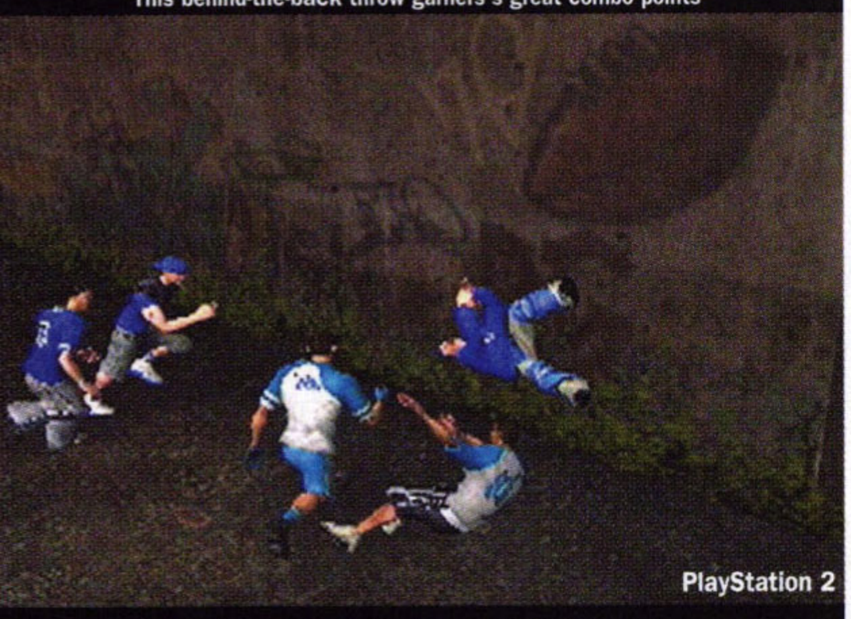
Xbox

PlayStation 2

You can assign signature style moves for each player

Xbox

This behind-the-back throw garners's great combo points



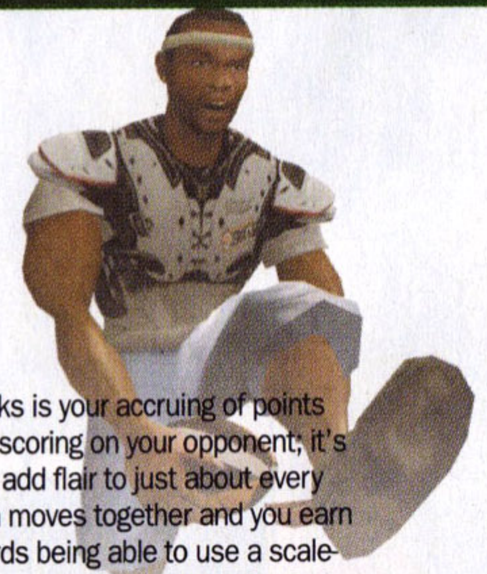
PlayStation 2

Objects on the field can make a big difference

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE *UNLIMITED ENABLED*

NFL STREET

ANY GIVEN FUNDAY



Someone should have thought of this sooner. NFL players with a whole new gameplay attitude. Wait a minute, someone did, and it was called NFL Blitz from Midway. However, EA Big's latest offering isn't just a clone of the rough-and-tumble arcade football you grew tired of years ago. "Blitz doesn't always seem to maintain its connection with being a football game," says NFL Street producer Tom Goedde. "It seems very interested in doing wrestling moves." Instead, NFL Madden developer EA Tiburon has found a great way to throw some personality into both the players and the game itself, away from a few after-the-whistle body slams.

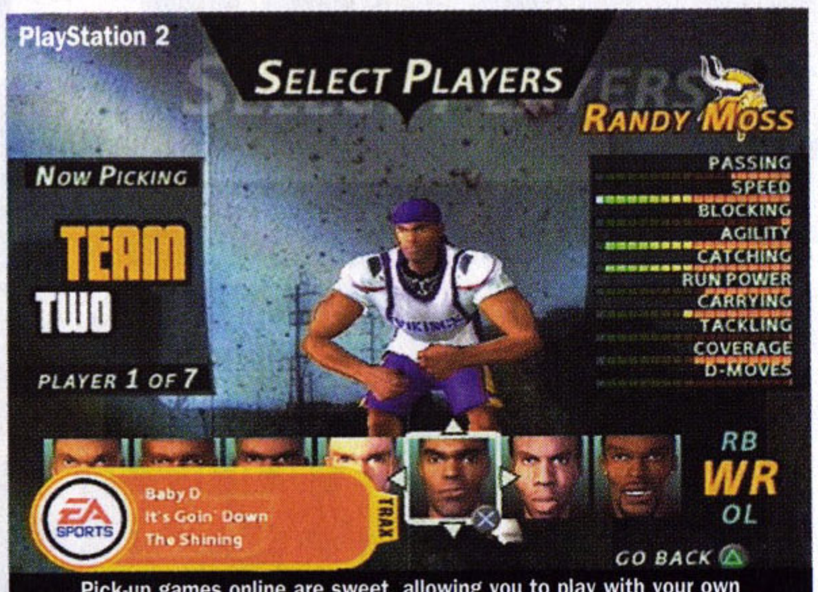
The structure of Street revolves around the NFL Challenge mode. Here you systematically play every team in each division in succession. It's a ladder format, so if you lose a game, you have to start over at the bottom. Each division has its own location. The NFC East, for instance, resides in The Pit. This arena has its own environmental obstacles to avoid, such as barrels littering the field. What's harder is that each team in the division has a "boss" at the end of the line made up of an all-star selection of players from the squads you just beat. In our hands-on time with the title, we found that this really brought out our best game, as the stakes and pressure increased with each team we played on that division's ladder. It gets even more personal when you take on the mode's challenges, which ask you to score first or perform certain moves, for instance.

The culmination of these tasks is your accruing of points on the field. It's not just about scoring on your opponent; it's about doing it in style. You can add flair to just about every move you make. String enough moves together and you earn points that both inch you towards being able to use a scale-tipping GameBreaker during play, as well as money for stat bumps on your created team, better equipment, and even the purchasing of players off of other teams. Throw in unlockable NFL legends such as The Fridge, Lawrence Taylor, and Barry Sanders, and you've got a game that has more personality than Blitz ever did. Goedde told us about the best testament he's ever received on NFL Street's gameplay. "Ray Lewis said it best," he explained. "[Lewis said] 'This feels like I played when I was a kid,' and we're like, 'What are you talking about? You're tackling into walls and doing all these crazy tricks and all that.' He says, 'Yeah, but, when you're a kid, that's kind of how you perceive yourself. We might not have looked like it, but this is what it was in our minds.'"

NFL Street has been in the making for over two years, and the development team even contains some of the guys who've worked on Midway's Blitz series. From this, EA Tiburon looks to have melded its experience with sim-based Madden NFL, and really captured the essence of what makes the sport fun away from the Xs and Os.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS (UP TO 2-PLAYER VIA ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** EA BIG ■ **DEVELOPER** EA TIBURON
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 13

Head-on collisions will be solved by the fastest button masher



Pick-up games online are sweet, allowing you to play with your own fully customizable team

PlayStation 2

GameCube

IT'S TIME FOR SOME NEW HEROES.

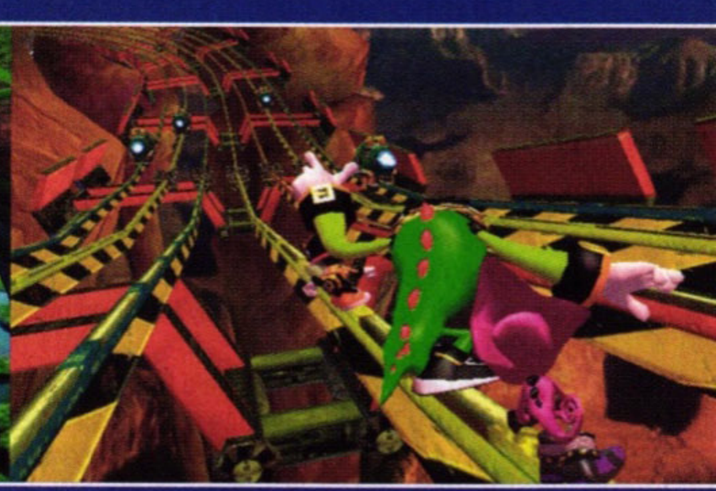
EVERYONE

E

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Fantasy Violence

Sega is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA, the SEGA logo, Sonic Heroes and Sonic The Hedgehog are either registered trademarks or trademarks of SEGA CORPORATION. Original Game ©SEGA ©SONICTEAM/SEGA, 2003. All Rights Reserved.TM, ® and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.



SONIC HEROES™

It's Sonic Heroes, the all new game with an all new way to play. A revolutionary team-based system will have you switching characters on the fly. Twelve different heroes, four different teams and three different consoles make for one new game that never gets old.

XBOX

PlayStation.2

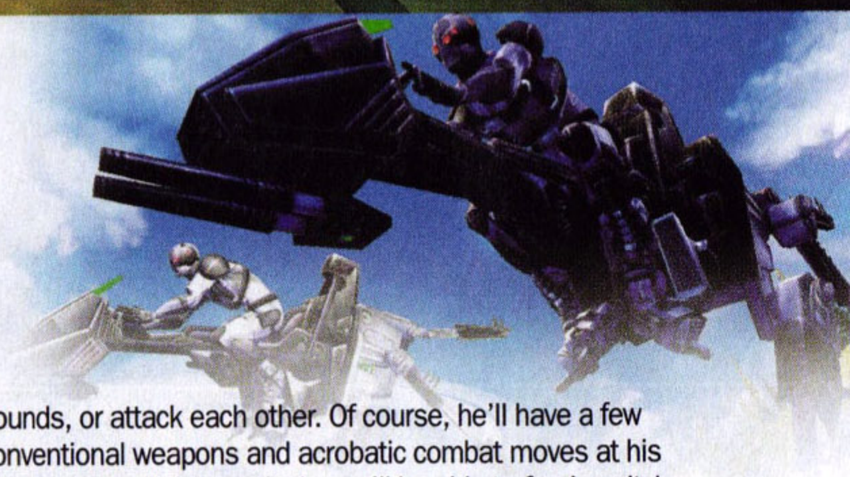
NINTENDO GAMECUBE

SEGA

XBOX | PC UNLIMITED ENABLED

ADVENT RISING

FROM OUT OF THE BLUE



Earlier this year, Game Informer was the first to bring details on Advent to the world. Prior to our sit-down session with the team at Glyphx, all we knew about the title was that it was a science fiction action game that they were making in partnership with legendary author Orson Scott Card. Needless to say, after our meeting we came out quite impressed. After our article was published, many other people in the game industry were equally intrigued by Glyphx's ambitious plans for the game.

For Glyphx lead designer Donald Mustard, the praise has been gratifying. "I mean it's one thing to sit around and write, draw, and design what you and your kid brother think is the coolest thing ever, " comments Mustard. "It's quite another thing to have so many other people agree. Between the media, other developers, and those that know games best, the amount of support and positive feedback we've received so far on the game has been amazing."

Keep in mind, our previous enthusiasm was based on little more than a tech demo and some awesome screens. It was still an open question as to whether the team would be able to pull off their ambitious plans. Mustard, for one, appears confident that they will be successful. "It's been seven months since [we last spoke]," he promised, "and it's awesome to be able to report that all of that really cool stuff we spoke about is now actually in the game. I still can't even believe we pulled it off."

The "cool stuff" he's talking about is nothing short of mind-blowing. Gideon, the game's main character, discovers in the course of the quest that he can tap into an arsenal of awesome mental powers that he is only beginning to understand. These unstable forces include telekinesis, the ability to unleash destructive shock waves, and alter the flow of time itself. Even more impressive, he'll be able to use mind-control tactics, causing enemies to fall asleep, hear confusing sounds, or attack each other. Of course, he'll have a few conventional weapons and acrobatic combat moves at his disposal at well. Interestingly, you'll be able to freely switch between first and third-person perspective throughout the game, but your more involved moves can only be performed in third-person.

As if they hadn't set their sights high enough, Glyphx is also including vehicles, like the mammoth War Hammer, perhaps the largest ride we've ever seen in a game. It's so huge that it actually fits two Hummer-sized machines called Scythes in its cargo bay! Mustard promises that the War Hammer will be the "the showpiece in what we hope will be the single greatest chase sequence of all time."

Bold words, but with a talented team hard at work and a writer of the caliber of Orson Scott Card overseeing everything from plot points to voiceover recording sessions; we expect great things from Advent Rising.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO ■ **DEVELOPER** GLYPHX ■ **RELEASE** FALL 2004

As you can see, Advent Rising's level of graphic detail should rival Halo 2's

Here, in all its glory, is the War Hammer

Gideon must use weapons...

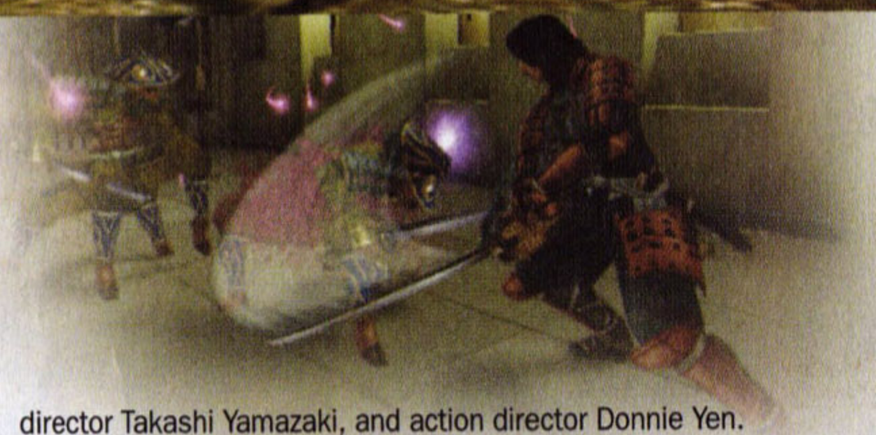
...and a host of superpowers...

...to battle the cruel Seekers who try to destroy him

PLAYSTATION 2

ONIMUSHA 3

STAR-STUDDED SERIES CLOSURE



Capcom and one of their star producers, Kenji Inafune, have always said that the Onimusha saga would be a trilogy – no more and no less. The third and final entry is set to hit stores in 2004, and the company is pulling out the big guns and setting some lofty goals.

The changes for this finale are ambitious, noticeable, and (as far as we've seen) extremely well executed. On the storytelling front, Onimusha 3 takes players out of 16th century Japan and plunks them into modern-day Paris. Well, at least for part of the mission. Samanosuke, heroic main character of the first title, will co-star with a modern military man played by Jean Reno. Traveling back and forth between the locations (France and Japan) and time periods (present day and the late 16th century), the pair will finally off the series' ultimate baddie – Oda Nobunaga.

To sell the dual-location format, Capcom has abandoned the series' prerendered backgrounds in favor of 3D environments. By the looks of the screenshots, it is obvious that the company was unwilling to make the switch if it was going to compromise Onimusha's traditionally lush look.

The game is also increasing the cinematic quality of its cutscenes by recruiting producer Mikitaka Kurasawa, director Takashi Yamazaki, and action director Donnie Yen. Between the members of this action dream-team, they've had a hand in Parasite Eve, Resident Evil 0, *Returner*, and *Blade 2*. Featuring scores of people onscreen and Hollywood-style camera effects, the storytelling segments are pushing the video game envelope.

We'll have more on the series closer shortly, including info on the duo's weaponry and a few of the newer gameplay mechanics. The wait to May might be long, but it looks like Capcom is pulling out all of the stops for this long-awaited final chapter.

The heroes will join forces, but does that mean that they'll get along?

Machinery? Apparently controlled with someone's mind? What?

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** MAY

Jean Reno's likeness is almost alarming...or maybe it's that gun he's got

It's good to see that the old Japanese settings will still look fabulous

Big bad guys and big swords make gamers happy

It's been promised that Reno's character will offer "a different style of play"

HEADLINING POWER

Headlining Capcom's final entry in the Onimusha series are two bona fide stars: Japanese heartthrob Takeshi Kaneshiro and acclaimed French actor Jean Reno. The series' earlier entries have used well-known Japanese stars to enhance the main characters, but this will be the first one with multiple, playable headliners – and also the first to have settings outside of Japan. Capcom has stated that their desire to work with Reno was because of his international appeal as they move the series from its 16th century roots. Kaneshiro will be reprising his role from the first game as Samanosuke, a heroic warrior battling against the unquestionably evil Oda Nobunaga. Reno did extensive voice work and motion capturing to make sure that his likeness was believable, and Reno recently sent out this message to his fans, "Once you get your hands on Onimusha 3, you'll start a journey into the past and present. You'll travel to modern day France and ancient Japan. There will be demon warriors and samurai waiting. You'll be the warrior and I'll be there with you."

WORLD

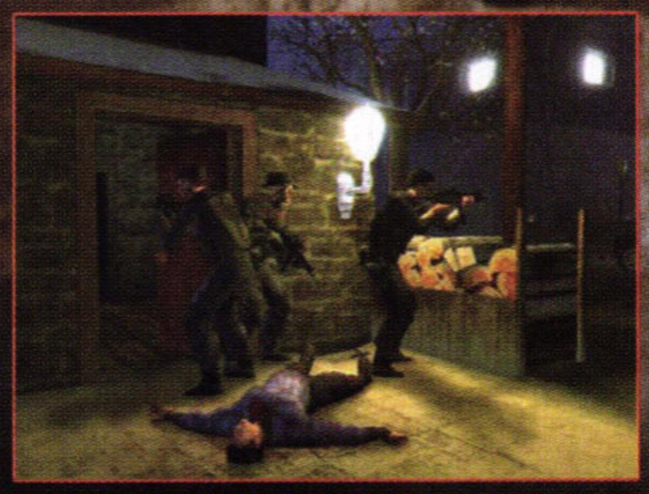
Foreign Ambassadors Report Peaceful Face-to-Face Negotiations with Terrorists in Venezuela

By Michael Golden
GLOBAL PRESS NETWORK

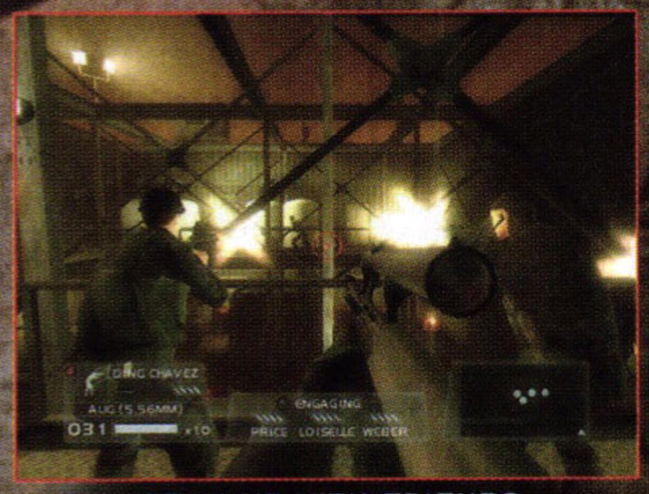
was relieved that the situation did not turn violent despite the heightened tensions between the two sides. As of yet,

Venezuela – A government official

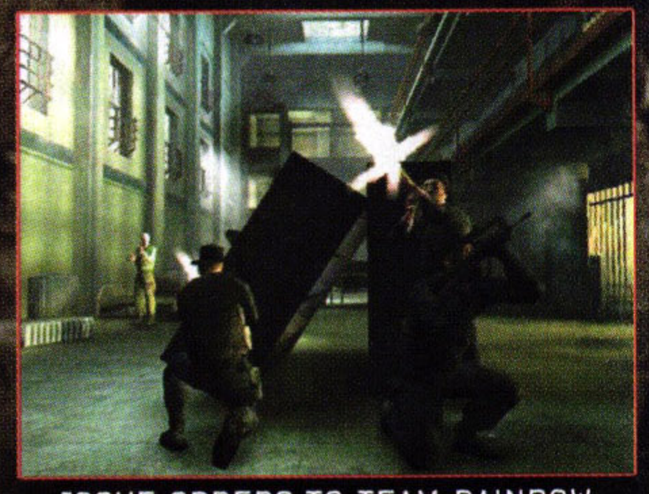
FREEDOM ISN'T FREE™



LEAD AN ELITE COUNTER-TERRORIST UNIT IN ITS BATTLE TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT.



TEAM UP WITH FRIENDS FOR THE MOST INTENSE XBOX *LIVE*™ EXPERIENCE TO DATE.



ISSUE ORDERS TO TEAM RAINBOW USING STATE-OF-THE-ART VOICE-COMMAND TECHNOLOGY.

FROM THE MAKERS OF SPLINTER CELL® AND GHOST RECON™ COMES THE NEXT XBOX® GAME OF THE YEAR

Tom Clancy's RAINBOW SIX 3

VOICE-COMMAND ENABLED

XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Violence

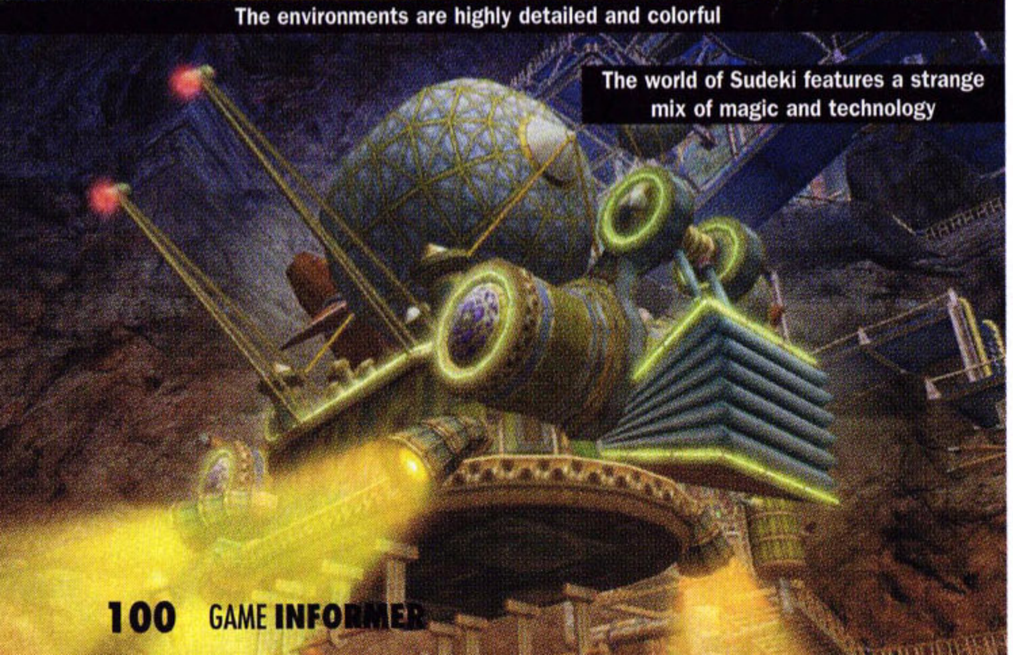
Red Storm Entertainment

UBISOFT™

©2003 Red Storm Entertainment. Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six, Red Storm, and Red Storm Entertainment are trademarks of Red Storm Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Ubisoft and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Live logo, and the Xbox logo are trademarks of the Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

You'll battle human, animal, and mechanical enemies

The environments are highly detailed and colorful



The world of Sudeki features a strange mix of magic and technology

XBOX

SUDEKI

MORE RPG LOVE FOR THE XBOX

Okay, so by now everyone knows that the Xbox is not really the best place for role-playing games. A few key titles have improved things a bit, but the genre still feels underrepresented on the system. Sudeki has always been considered one of the titles that could turn it all around – if it ever comes out. After many delays, Sudeki is back on track and ready to deliver some RPG goodness to the black box.

Of course, as the Xbox is a truly American system, don't expect Sudeki to offer a traditional Japanese RPG experience. Fearing that turn-based combat has been done to death and would bore the Xbox's core audience, all battles are in real-time. Attacks, spells, and special abilities are all mapped to hotkeys, so you'll never see a menu screen during altercations – and don't expect to be able to take a breather by pausing; hitting the Start button during combat will slow time, but won't stop it.

The real-time combat won't be the only break from tradition, either. The look of the game lies somewhere between realistic and anime styles. The resulting visuals seem simultaneously familiar and slightly odd, but in a good way. The characters all look Japanese, but with a Western flavor. Of course, the graphics take full advantage of the Xbox's processing power with real-time light and shadow, and a guaranteed 30 frames per second.

Despite all the variations from the typical RPG pattern, genre fans shouldn't be put off. The story is the stuff of classic role-playing. It concerns a war between the lands of Hikaria and Kuria. You'll start off as Tal, the son of a respected Hikarian general who is eager to step out from his father's shadow. Tal's first mission is to investigate the appearance of mysterious spider creatures at a sacred temple. Of course, as all RPG fans know, this is only the first step in a much longer quest. Along the way you'll team up with a sorceress called Ailish, Elco (a gun-toting scientist), and a feral martial arts master called Buki. AI will control your companions, but you'll be able to switch between members of your party on the fly. Cooperation between the four characters is key to successful adventuring – special moves called "spirit strikes" are pulled off by drawing magic power from two or more characters for a devastating spell attack. Sadly, Xbox Live support has not been announced and seems unlikely.

Sure, the Xbox may offer the smallest piece of the RPG pie, but the slice it has is starting to look much tastier. With Sudeki, Microsoft has one of the more original RPG titles out there. When coupled with the upcoming Fable and True Fantasy Live Online, Sudeki looks to be part of a surprisingly solid RPG lineup. Could the Xbox be the new console of choice for fantasy fans? Stranger things have happened.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** CLIMAX ■ **RELEASE** MARCH

"A huge explosion! I'd better run towards it!"

Here, Tal visits Hans' Wacky Bavarian Bier Kastle

The caption intended to accompany this shot has been deemed unsuitable for print and removed by Federal Obscenity Law

With a steady diet of Taco Bell, Harry Potter discovered he no longer needed a broom to play Quidditch

It may have a funny name, but nobody disrespects the Happy Sparkle Rainbow Sword

The neighborhood association really hates it when you neglect your lawn

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

MX UNLEASHED

V'ROOM WITH A VIEW

Rainbow Studios has quietly amassed a trustworthy reputation among gamers with its fun but realistic physics in its ATV Offroad Fury and Splashdown series. Although these guys may be happier than an ATV rider in slop, the time has come to bring its magic to the masses. Publisher THQ is well known for its support of motocross in the past, but senior producer of MX Unleashed, Rob Baumsteiger, warns us, "This has nothing to do with anything THQ has shipped in the past."

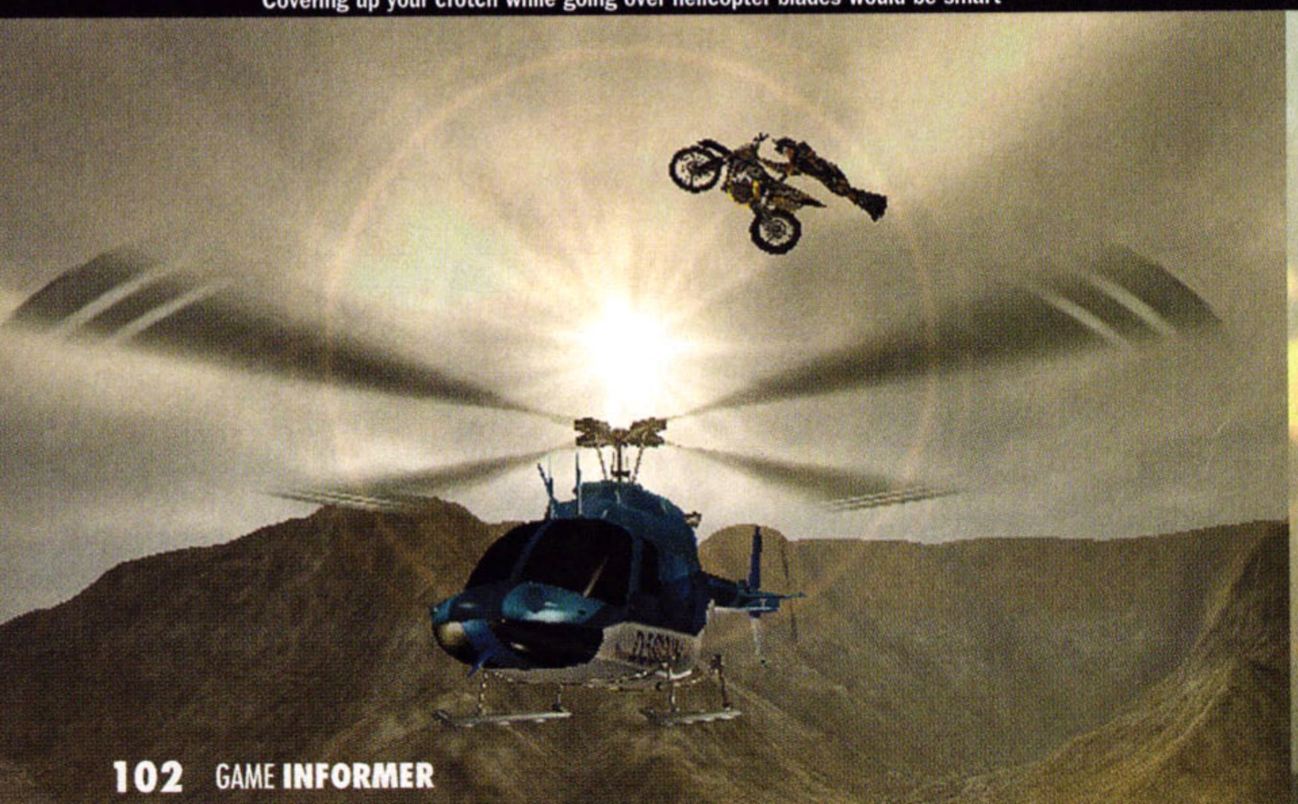
"If you've played ATV, it'll have some of the same elements, but the way you can do things on this motorcycle is like nothing else you've probably played to date." He's referring to the physics that Rainbow has applied to not only the bikes, but the riders. Now, we know you get enough of that subject back at school, so we'll get past the formulas and cut to the chase. This is important to the game because it helps you build a rhythm through the turns, jumps, and whoops. For example, actually being able to swing the bike sideways cuts your profile in the air and lets you hit the track quicker. Rainbow has made the rider and their bikes separate entities. This prevents tricks from merely being set animations – something that die-hard fans of the sport have complained about in the past.

Physics, however, is only the tip of the iceberg. Breaking free from the hay bales that fence in most motocross games, MX Unleashed is also giving you Freestyle worlds to go along with the perfunctory Career mode (comprised of over 50 tracks). Baumsteiger points out, "In the past, motocross games have been linear. We don't build our worlds that way." Although you are free to tool around and launch off of whatever jump strikes your fancy, the meat of this mode is that you'll run across icons in the environment which trigger goals to accomplish. Hits are specific gaps for you to jump. Runs are comprised of 10 Hits in a row. Machine Races pit you against a monster truck or helicopter, for example, in a two-lap race. If you win, you get to use that vehicle in the two-player mode. Rainbow is also looking at adding a stunt competition into these massive, jam-packed Freestyle worlds. The developer has hidden a number of secrets in these areas to encourage kids to explore this mode and wring it of all its worth.

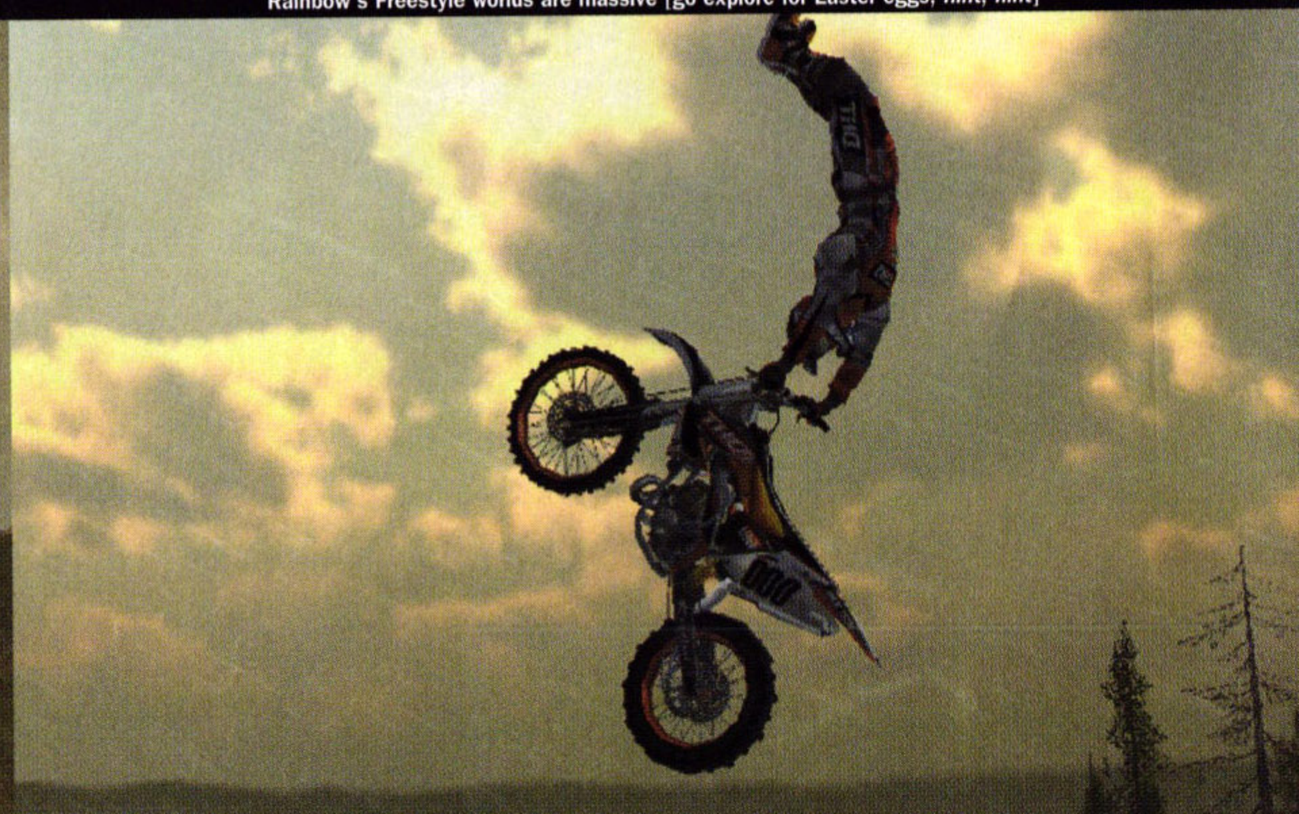
You could argue that there's only so much you can do on two wheels, but Rainbow and THQ are trying to break this genre out by giving you all the tools you need to run wild.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** RAINBOW STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 2

Covering up your crotch while going over helicopter blades would be smart



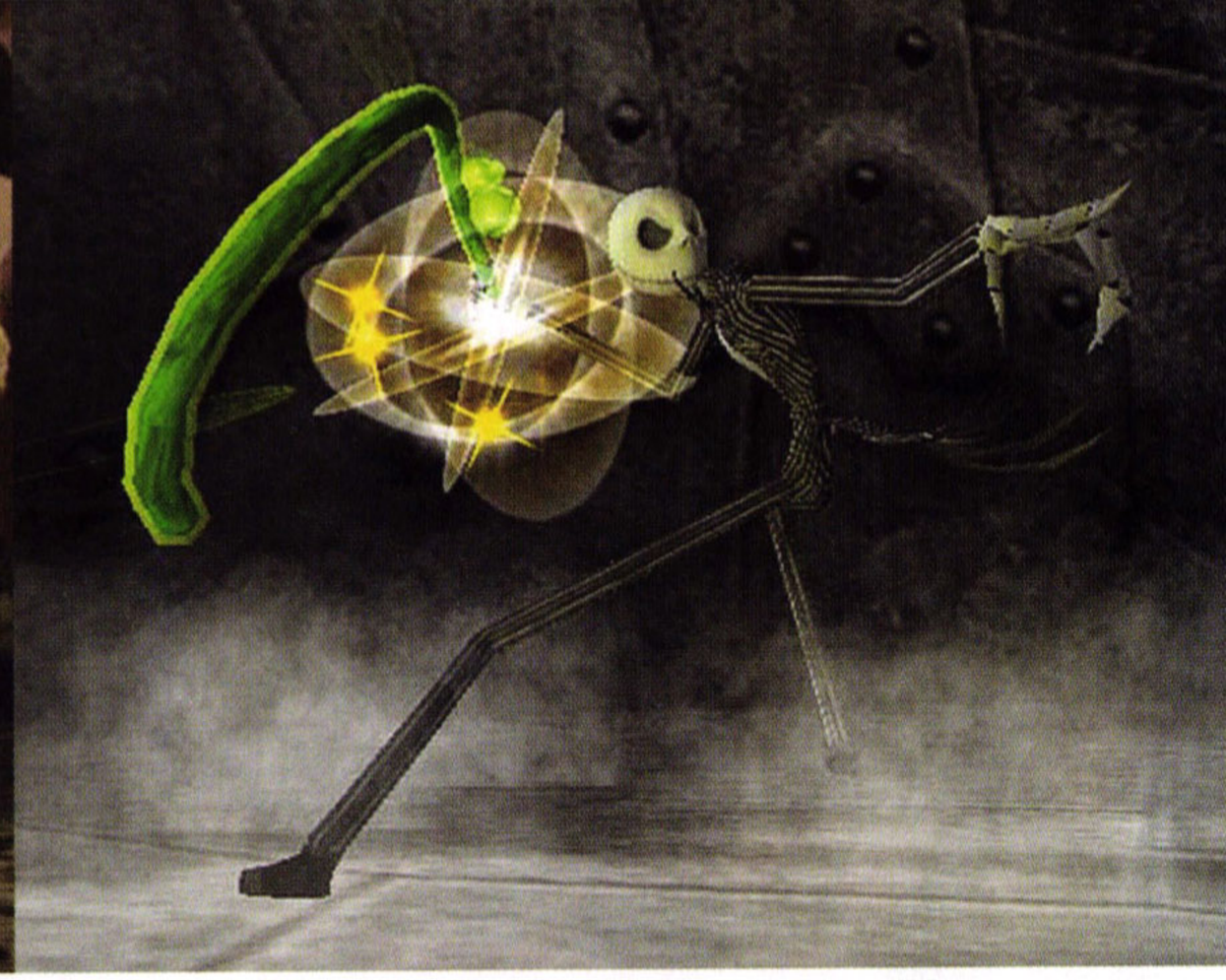
Rainbow's Freestyle worlds are massive [go explore for Easter eggs, *hint, hint*]



▲ This is not your mom's *North by Northwest*. Beat this bi-plane in one of the Machine Races and it's yours

▶ Rainbow's physics system is aimed towards letting you get a rhythm

▼ Different bike classes are available, including the two-foot high 50 cc rides



The rubbersoul can be used to catch enemies...

...and can change shape

PLAYSTATION 2

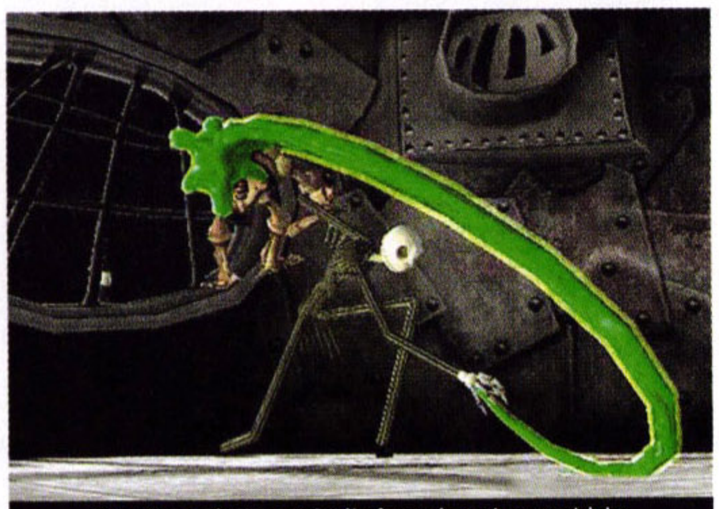
THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

YOUR NIGHTMARE DREAM COME TRUE

There's no denying the popularity of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Ten years after the release of the film, stores are still filled with Nightmare merchandise, skinny men dress up as Jack Skellington for Halloween, and there's even a sequel in the works. Oh, you didn't know that? Well, this sequel isn't another movie, it's an exclusive PlayStation 2 game.

Set one year after the end of the movie, the new Nightmare Before Christmas title chronicles the further adventures of Jack Skellington as he battles his old foe, Oogie Boogie. It seems the burlap monster has taken over Halloweentown with an army of skeleton henchmen, and only Jack can defeat him. It won't be easy, but our hero has a new weapon at his disposal: rubbersoul, a magic shape-changing substance that Jack uses as a whip. It may even come in handy in solving some of the quest's puzzles. While the emphasis will be mainly action, Jack will have some brainteasers to solve.

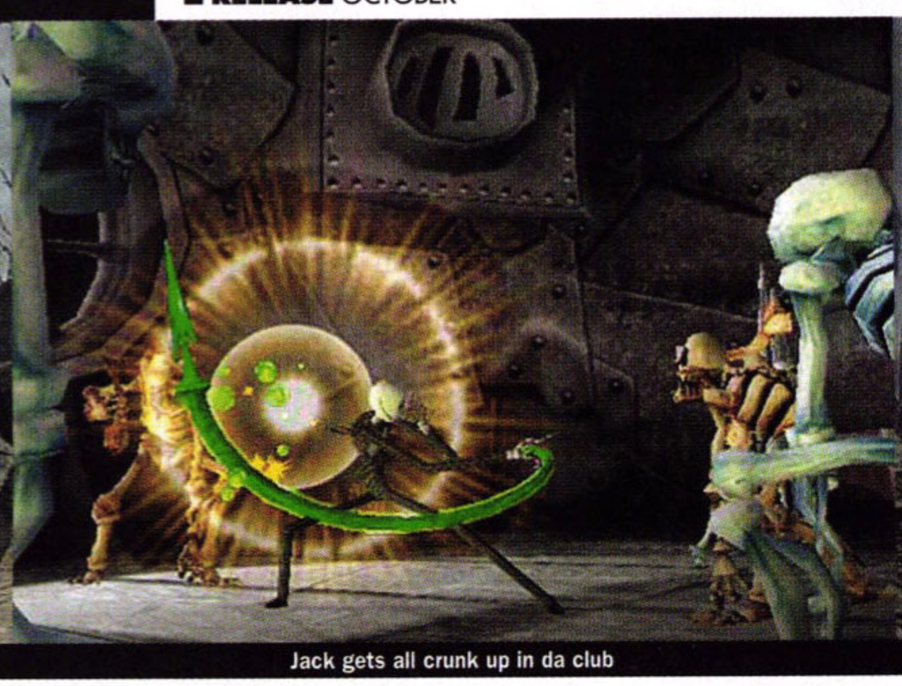
With a project such as this, it is absolutely essential to get the mood and look of the game just right. That's why developer Capcom enlisted the help of Dean Taylor (Tim Burton's art director on several projects) to capture the style of the original film. The collaboration seems to have paid off – each of the screens shown here are actual in-game shots! Whether or not Tim Burton or anyone else involved in the film will contribute to the project remains to be seen, but details will slowly be released until the game hits in October of next year. The mere thought of it makes us bust out our off-key rendition of "This is Halloween," so you can be sure we'll be following this one closely.



Ahh, the perfect opportunity for an immature snot joke

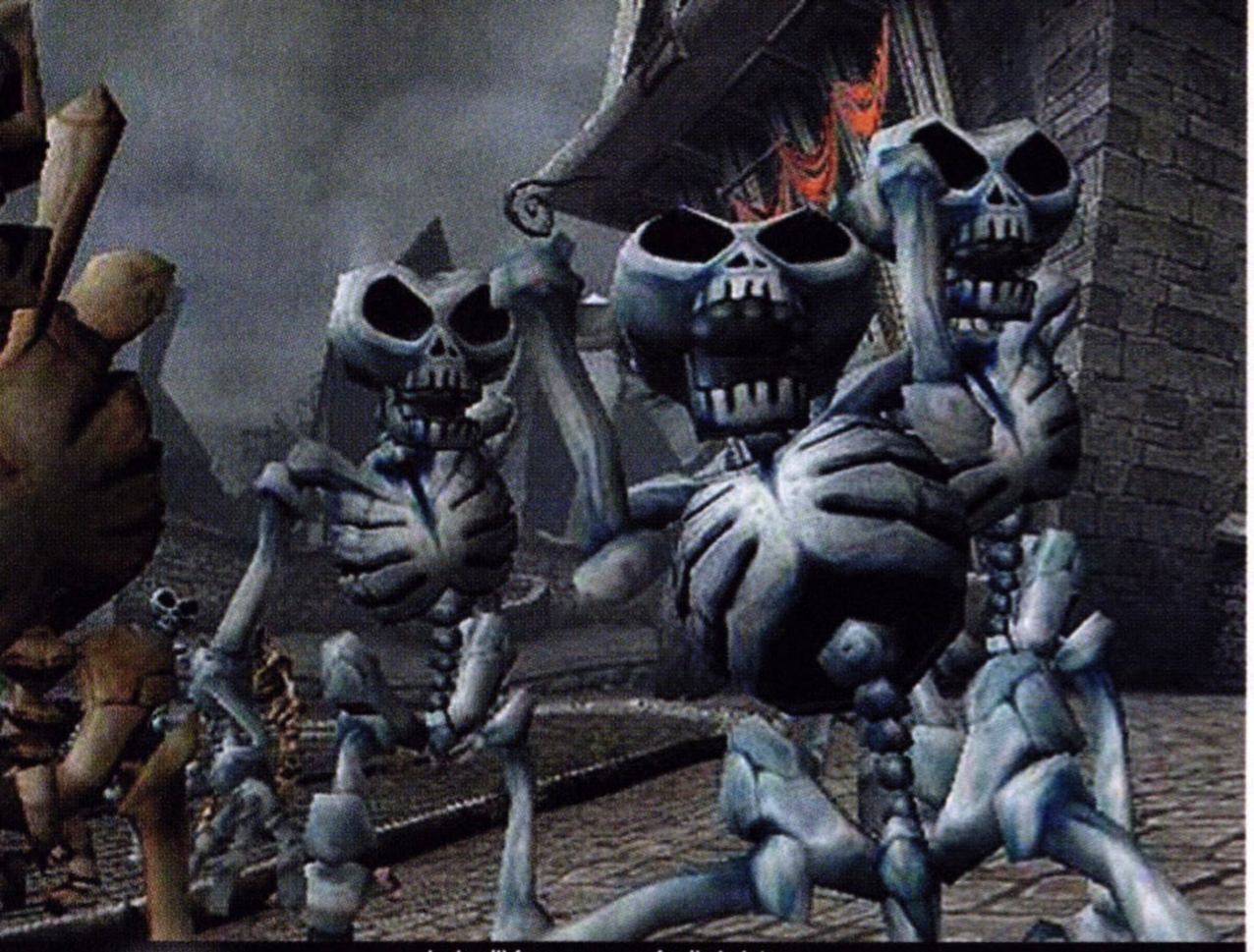
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM/BUENA VISTA INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER

If Jack just loses a few more pounds, he'll be ready for a career as a pop singer!



Jack gets all crunk up in da club

Several familiar citizens of Halloweentown will make appearances



Jack will face an army of evil skeletons

NIGHTMARE NUGGETS

Even though it is an incredibly popular film, there's a lot that most people don't know about *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Here are some of the more interesting tidbits. We're here to educate, folks.

1. **TIM BURTON DIDN'T DIRECT IT.** He wrote and produced it. Henry Selick, who also sat in the chair for the most popular movie of all time, *Monkeybone*, directed it.

2. **IT WAS NOT JACK'S FIRST MOVIE.** An early version of Jack appears in *Beetlejuice*, as part of a hat worn by Michael Keaton. Jack also appeared in *James and the Giant Peach*.

3. **PATRICK STEWART WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE NARRATOR.** He recorded narration for the whole movie, then Burton decided to shorten it, and re-recorded it with a different actor. Stewart does, however, provide the narration on the soundtrack. Composer Danny Elfman preferred the Stewart version and used it instead.

4. **NO ADULT FACES ARE SHOWN.** This is an homage to the *Charlie Brown Christmas* special. Or perhaps they were all just very ugly.

Jack's love interest, Sally, is also back

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

CONSOLE CARNAGE

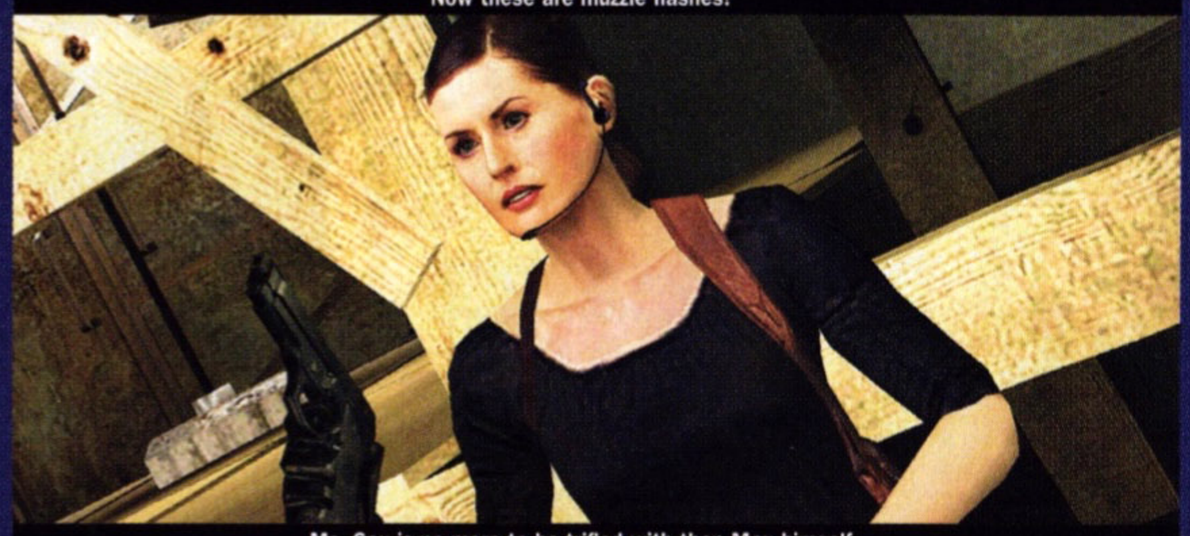
Max just recently came back to his original home on PC [see our review in last month's issue –Ed.], and will start cutting a path through the hoods of New York on the Xbox and PlaySation 2 for the holidays. We got a chance for a little hands-on carnage, and believe us – this could be the best port ever, and a good game in its own right.

Graphically, you couldn't be any more astonished than we are at how closely this version sticks to the original. Textures are surprisingly good, though character models are very slightly degraded. However, the framerate is stable as can be, even with Bullet Time 2.0 putting that awesome sepia-tone filter over everything.

Control is possibly the best ever seen in a console port. Everything can be remapped PC-style to wherever you like on your pad, allowing for people to really find their own groove. Even at the default setting, the analog sensitivity is pretty good and aiming is a cinch. All of the options available in the PC original are there to be played with, from customizable crosshairs to the automatic weapon-switch toggle.

Not everyone can afford the kind of machine necessary to behold Max Payne 2 in its full glory on PC, but now you won't need to. Console owners will be able to fully realize the capabilities of their systems with the release of The Fall of Max Payne in December.

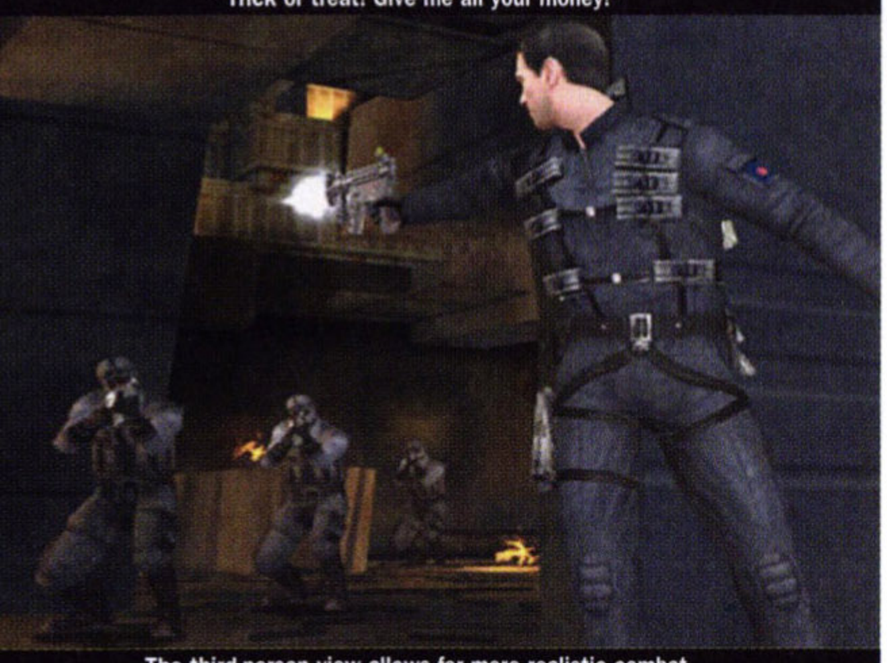
Now these are muzzle flashes!



Ms. Sax is no more to be trifled with than Max himself

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 3

"Trick or treat! Give me all your money!"



The third-person view allows for more realistic combat

James Bond: MX Superfly – coming soon

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE *UNLIMITED ENABLED*

JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

FROM EA WITH LOVE

GoldenEye is the best Bond game there is, and the best there ever will be. That's the general consensus in the gaming community, and it's exactly the perception that EA wants to change. But how do you top one of the most respected games of all time? EA thinks that it can do it with James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing. With this newest Bond title, EA has shaken (not stirred) up the successful Bond formula and taken a completely new approach.

The first thing that you'll notice is that the perspective has been changed from first to third-person. Of course, this allows you to see that James Bond actually looks like Pierce Brosnan. Not only that, but Mr. Brosnan himself actually did his own voice work. Sure, he'll do a Bond game, but does he return our calls when we want to talk to him about a game adaptation of *Dante's Peak*? No!

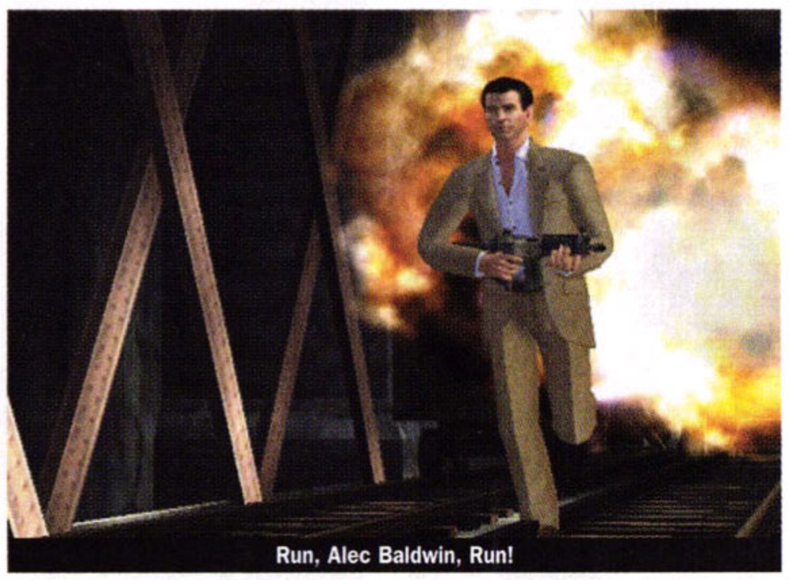
Mr. Remington Steele won't be the only famous voice you'll hear in this title. Bond stalwarts John Cleese and Judi Dench will also lend their voices, as will Shannon Elizabeth and Willem Dafoe. One will play the new Bond girl Serena St. Germaine, the other will portray the villainous Nikolai Diavolo. We'll let you figure out which is which.

Of course, voice talent won't be enough to impress the GoldenEye fan club, so EA has made sure to ramp up the gameplay. Aside from shooting, Everything or Nothing will feature stealth elements, vehicular levels, and even hand-to-hand combat. Vehicular stages will account for about 40 percent of the gameplay, and you'll usually have several choices of transportation. Whether you go for the Aston Martin, the helicopter, or the dirt bike, your ride will be loaded down with all kinds of nifty gadgets.

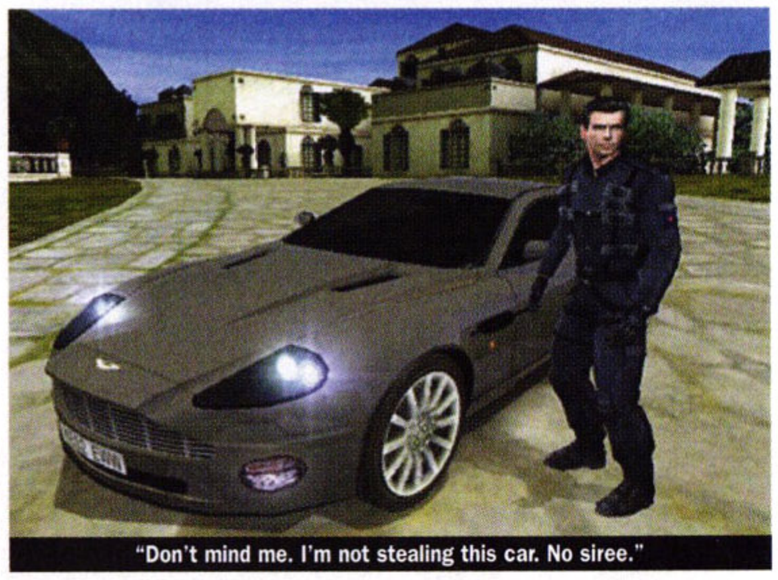
Even on foot, Bond's toys will play a much larger role than ever before. You'll be equipped with everything from thermal glasses to wall-climbing spider bombs. Of course, you'll need all the firepower you can get, as you'll be facing off against the most popular Bond villain ever: Jaws. Yes, he's even more popular than the cyborg general at the end of *Die Another Day*.

Okay, so EA's title has cool villains, tons of gameplay variety, and an excellent cast. What more could it need? How about both co-op and versus play? Not only can you play through the single-player game with a friend, but you and three others can go head-to-head in arena combat. The competitive multiplayer is a huge part of what made GoldenEye so popular, so there's no way EA would miss that boat. Just remember, no matter what anyone says, playing as Oddjob and constantly ducking IS cheating!

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA REDWOOD SHORES ■ **RELEASE** MARCH



Run, Alec Baldwin, Run!



"Don't mind me. I'm not stealing this car. No siree."

THERE'S NO KILL LIKE OVERKILL.

Critics agree, Armed & Dangerous is the killer game of the season.

★★★★☆ "nonstop action"- **Maxim** ★★★★☆ - **Stuff Gamer**

9 out of 10; "It's like there's a party in your mind, and everyone's invited!"- **GMR**

"...balls-to-the-wall action. Expect all manner of destructive mayhem."- **PC Gamer**

"A combatfest armed with a sense of humor"- **Rolling Stone** "So over-the-top, we can't help but love it."- **Alternative Press**

TEEN
T™
Crude Humor
Mild Language
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

The way it's meant to be played™
nVIDIA

XBOX™

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

PLANET MOON STUDIOS

armed.lucasarts.com

LucasArts and the LucasArts logo are registered trademarks of Lucasfilm Ltd. © 2003 Lucasfilm Entertainment Company Ltd. and Planet Moon Studios & ® or TM as indicated. All rights reserved. Published by LucasArts. Developed by Planet Moon. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and / or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

LUCAS Arts®

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | PC

DRIVER 3

THE LONG WAIT CONTINUES...

We got a chance to see a recent build of Driver 3, and are happy to report that the game is starting to shape up. Unfortunately, we also worry that the title may slip once again past its current March release date.

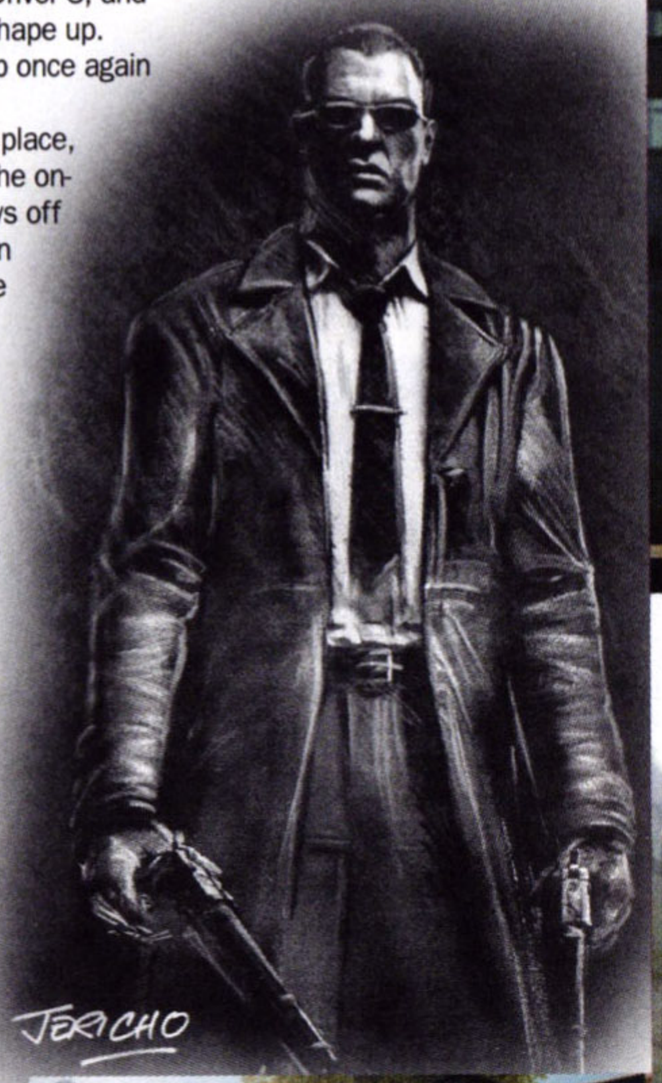
Graphically, all the pieces look to be falling into place, but frankly many of the gameplay elements, like the on-foot shooting and object interactions, seem a ways off from completion. Reflections is a developer known for putting it all together at the end, so for now we will just have to trust that it can pull it off.

We did see some amazing elements in the game. Like previous installments in the series, this title will focus predominantly on driving. The vehicle physics are impressive with free-floating suspensions, and most of the vehicle parts are modeled so that crashes cause realistic damage. Parts fall off cars. Tires deflate. Doors, hoods, and trunks swing freely. Rims send sparks and dust flying everywhere.

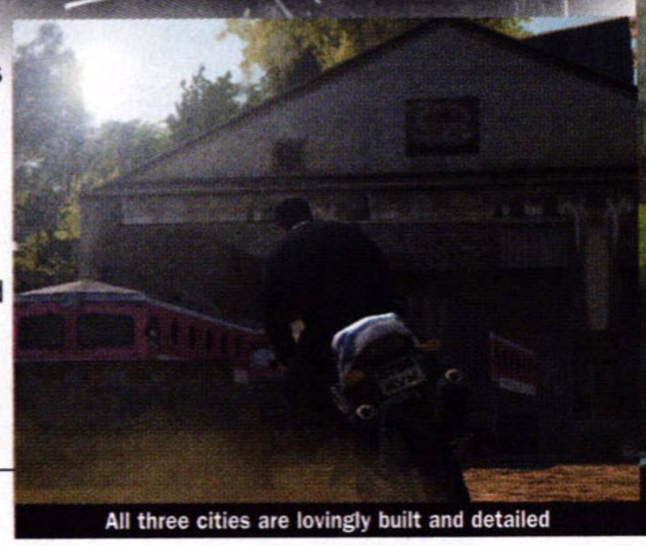
In total, the game will feature over 70 vehicles that returning protagonist Tanner can drive including, 18-wheelers, boats, and motorcycles. The environment statistics are also daunting, with over 35,000 buildings placed across the three locales (Miami, Nice, and Istanbul), lighting that casts real-time shadows on the vehicles and buildings, as well as 150 miles of terrain to explore.

The game can be played in either third- or first-person modes. But the most interesting feature of the product is the open-ended aspect to the gameplay. Missions can be defeated in various ways. In an example we saw, you could either trick the car thieves into believing you were the driver they were waiting for by hijacking the cargo truck, or you could just show up with guns-a-blazing and take the prize by force.

If Reflections can put all the parts into place and balance the gameplay, Driver 3 could easily be a standout hit early in 2004. The game looks that good. The real question is will it play as good as it looks?



Tanner might be the only guy we have ever seen ride a crotch rocket in a suit and look good doing it


All three cities are lovingly built and detailed

Most objects in the environments can be destroyed

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER** REFLECTIONS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH

namco

www.namco.com

the evolution of NEED FOR SPEED

It's survival of the fastest. R: Racing Evolution thrusts you into the intense competition and heated rivalries of high-velocity professional racing. Adapt, or enjoy the exhaust.

Experience the handling of realistic, high performance physics.

Master GT, Rally, Drag and the premier racing circuits.

Fine-tune real world licensed vehicles.

From the developers of Ridge Racer.™

DODGE Official Licensed Product GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Mild Language, Suggestive Themes

PlayStation.2

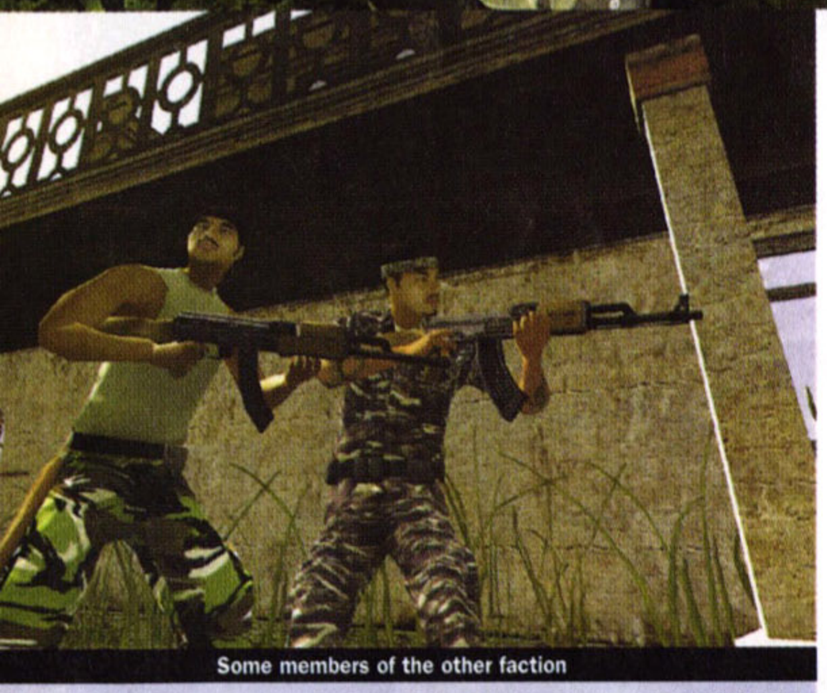
NINTENDO GAMECUBE

XBOX

R:RACING EVOLUTION™

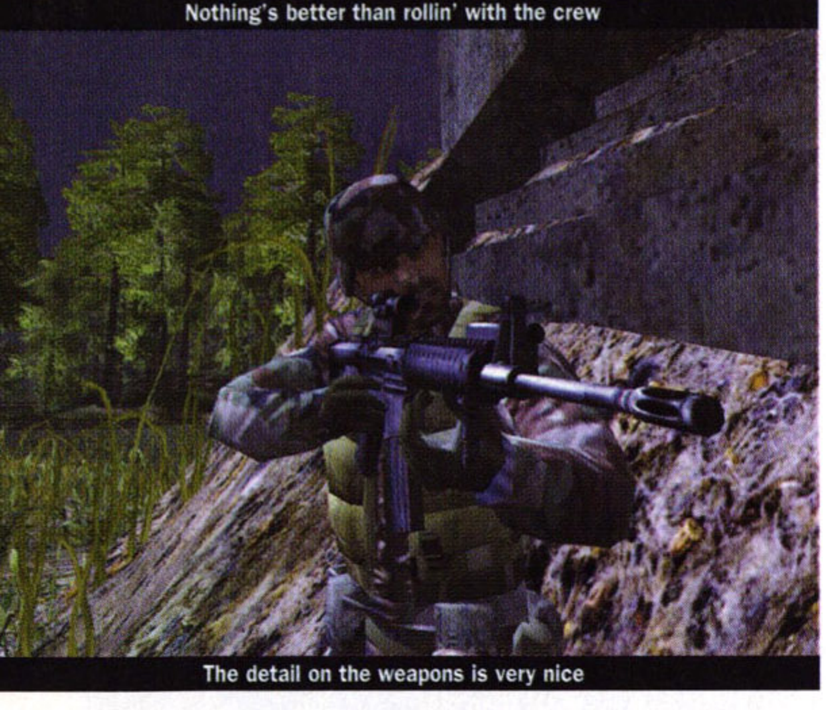
www.racing-evolution.com

R:Racing Evolution™ & © 2001 Namco Ltd. All rights reserved. Dodge is a trademark of the DaimlerChrysler Corporation. Subaru, Impreza and STi are trademarks and are used with permission from FUJI HEAVY INDUSTRIES LTD. Approved and Licensed Product of Group Lotus plc. Licensed for play on the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment systems with the NTSC U/C designation only. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. © 2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. © 2001 Nintendo. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners



Some members of the other faction

Nothing's better than rollin' with the crew



The detail on the weapons is very nice

PC

JOINT OPERATIONS

SMALL DEVELOPER, HUGE GAME

Online FPS gameplay has grown to be one of the staples of PC gaming. Developer NovaLogic intends to do everything it can to move the genre forward with the release of Joint Operations, a title of gigantic aspirations. Joint Ops will feature all the things we expect out of a triple-A FPS, like realistic weapons, great control, and beautiful environments. However, it aims to better the competition in many ways.

First and foremost, a good selection of vehicles – helicopters, buggies, and attack boats – is a major part of the picture. Squads will be able to deploy attack teams from the air, land, or sea, and the impact on tactics will be huge. Another point of interest is the immensity of the maps. Some of the larger ones can get up to 64 kilometers square, all of it chock-full of outposts, armories, and different terrain types.

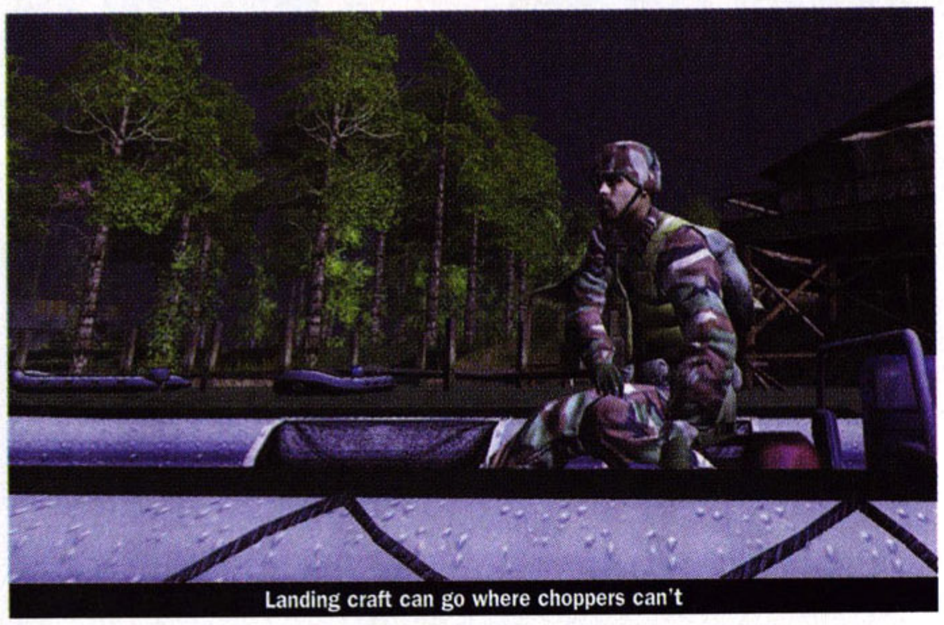
The concept of missions taking place at different times of the day or night is nothing new. However, having a match begin in the wee hours of the morn and continue to high noon is novel, to say the least. Do you deploy at night, and let darkness cover your infiltration of the enemy base? Or do you wait until late afternoon, when the glare of the sun will obscure your assault? All of this and more will be possible with this groovy technology.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of Joint Ops, however, is the online support. NovaLogic's web network, NovaWorld, is brimming with goodness available for free to owners of its games. Ranking systems, hosted clan pages, a clearinghouse for user-created mods, and company servers running games 24/7 could really push this title to the forefront.

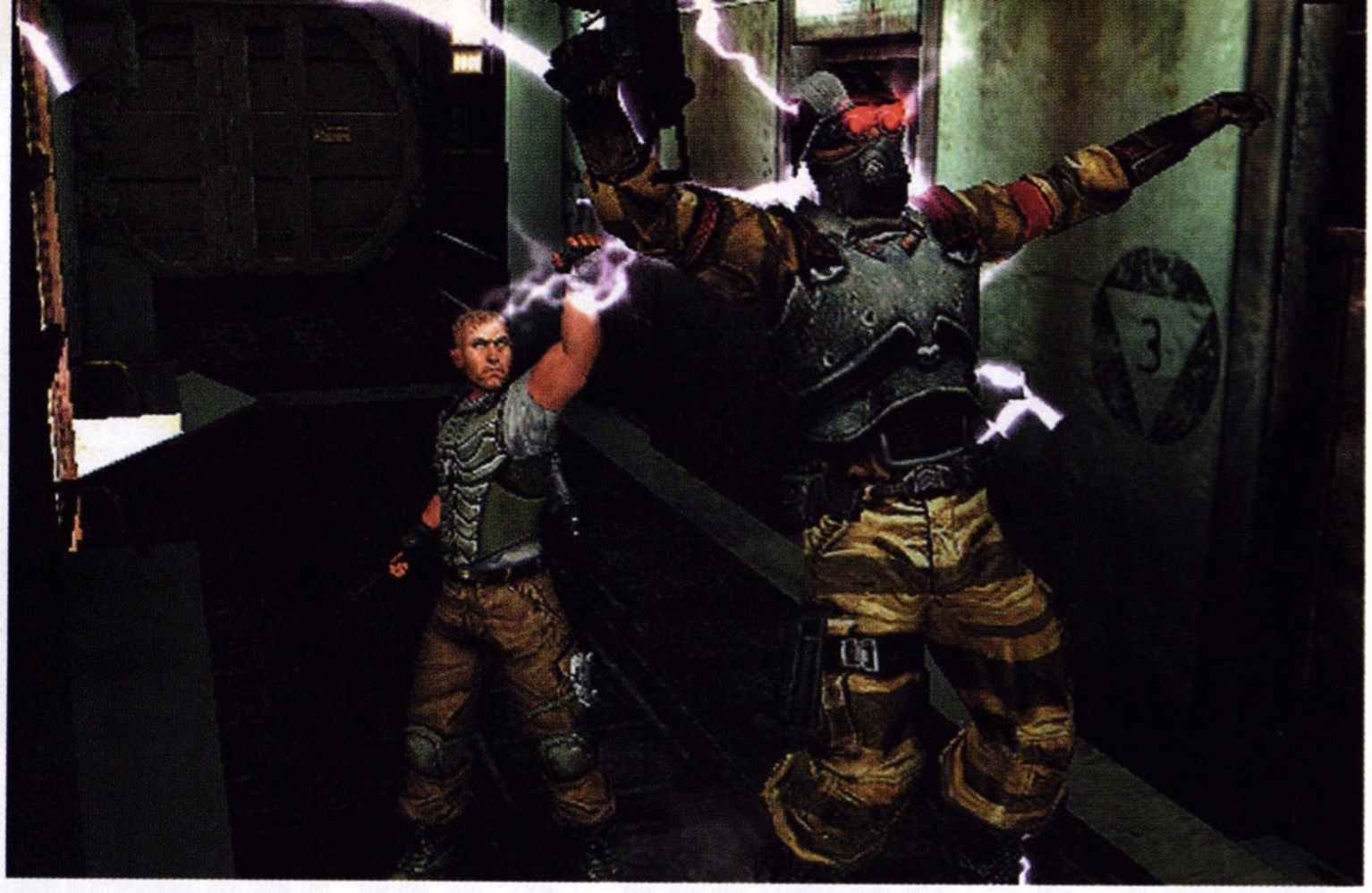
We'll make sure to keep you posted on any news regarding this gigantic undertaking, which, barring any unforeseen roadblocks, will ship on March 3.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 64-PLAYER VIA INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** NOVALOGIC
■ **DEVELOPER** NOVALOGIC ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 3

I CAN SEE THE LIGHT
This screenshot illustrates very well how the lighting engine in Joint Ops makes new things possible. The different levels of illumination on separate bits of foliage is incredible. Notice the dappling on the soldier and his weapon, too – that's from the leaves on the trees blocking the sunlight. And it's all contextual; what may be a perfect hiding spot at 5:00 AM might be a deathtrap by noon.



Landing craft can go where choppers can't



PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

WITH MIND BULLETS

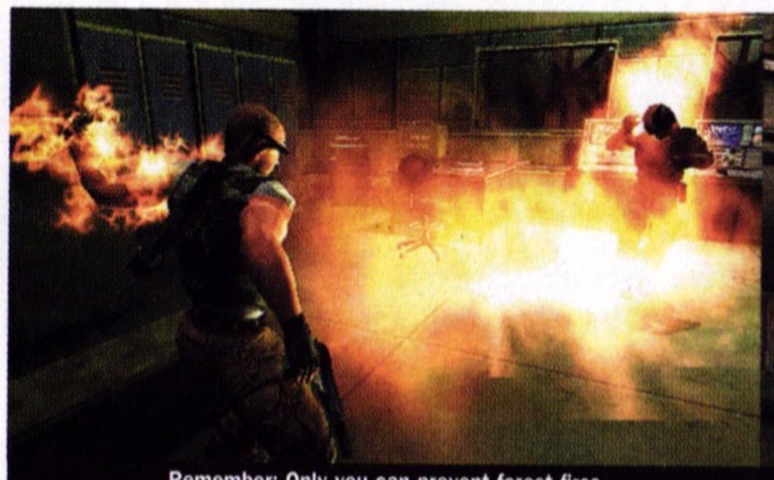
So there's this guy across the room from your paramilitary self and you would rather throw the punk over a balcony than start exchanging weapon fire. What do you do? Well, how about picking him up with your mind and chucking the lout like a Happy Meal is flung from a car window? Sound good? Midway is hoping that players think so when its title, Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy (formerly called ESPionage), releases in May of 2004.

Gamers adopt the role of Nick Scryer. Trained by the military as a sixth sense-enhanced soldier (a theory that real-life conspiracy theorists have latched on to in recent years), he's out to stop The Movement. Attempting to overthrow a variety of world superpowers, The Movement's armed forces utilize some of the very same psi powers as Scryer.

While the stealth gameplay and conventional, real-world weaponry point to a more traditional action title, the real fun is solving puzzles and combat dilemmas with Scryer's psi skills. These include the Stephen King staples of telekinesis (moving people and/or objects with your mind) and pyrokinesis (a skill described by the developers as "launching a wall of fire that ignites everything in its path"). In addition, the soldier can control the actions and minds of opponents, see clues and upcoming areas with his remote viewing and aura view abilities, and suck psi powers using mind drain.

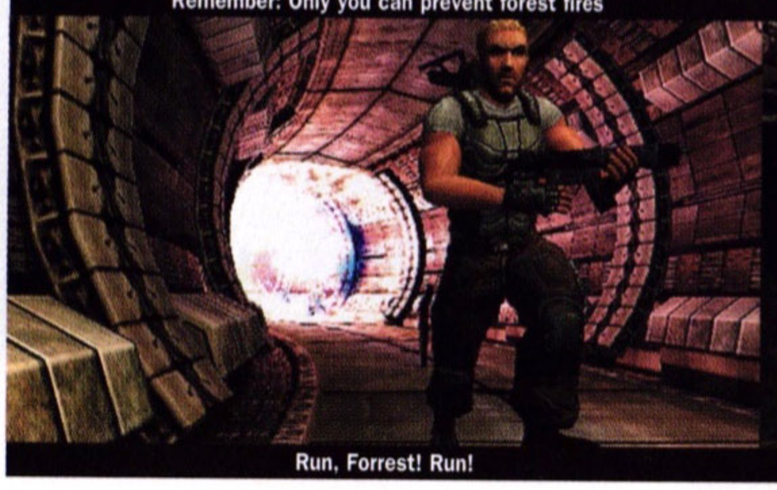
Midway is laying out the eight Psi-Ops levels with exceptionally non-linear paths, so players can choose how to execute goals and best use their psychic abilities. We're looking forward to the *Carrie*-style military action next May.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY ■ **RELEASE** MAY

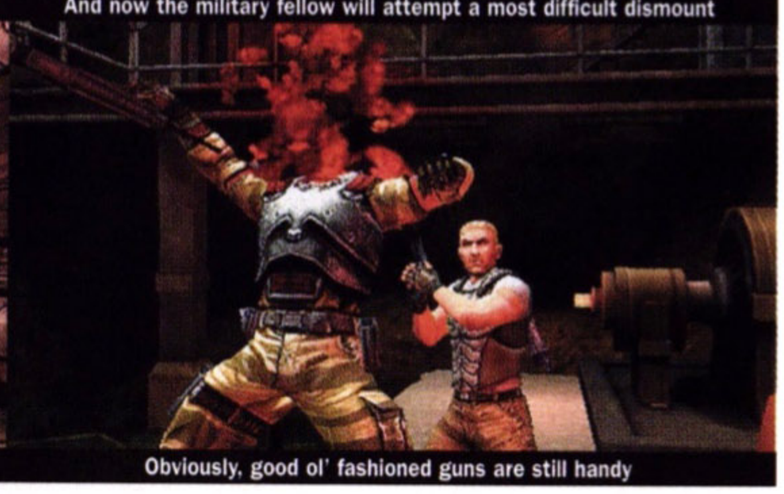


Remember: Only you can prevent forest fires

And now the military fellow will attempt a most difficult dismount



Run, Forrest! Run!



Obviously, good ol' fashioned guns are still handy

Maximize Your PlayStation® 2

Racing Wheels

Sound Systems

Wireless Controllers

Gaming Screens

Maximum Gaming

intec

inteclink.com

PlayStation® 2 are registered trademarks of Sony® Computer Entertainment, Inc. This item is produced by Intec and is not manufactured, sponsored, endorsed or distributed by Sony® Computer Entertainment Inc.

PLAYSTATION 2

COLD WINTER

DOLLS AREN'T JUST FOR LITTLE GIRLS

A special treat is being prepared for the hordes of FPS junkies out there. This new project is looking to be one of the more technically advanced PS2 games around, with gameplay to match. Yeah, we've all heard it before: "Revolutionary FPS to come to console! Gaming will never be the same again!" Then it turns out to be another "blow up the bad guys and find the keys" fragfest. Cold Winter appears to have more substance to it than that.

For one thing, this title features real rag doll physics. This has been a part of PC titles for quite a while now, but is a bit late coming to consoles. If you don't know rag doll physics from your kid sister's Barbie doll, think of it like this: body parts that react realistically to getting shot/hit/exploded, and move in conjunction with each other. This is what causes bodies to flail around or slump against a wall like you'd expect them to, rather going through a scripted death animation.

Other than this, there's a bunch more stuff going for Cold Winter, like online multiplayer, beautiful settings, detailed lighting, and tons of weapons and gadgets. Hopefully these elements will combine Voltron-style to form a larger, more powerful robot to defend our very way of life against the forces of evil that would enslave us. That, or be a really good game.

This guy must've been carrying a couple extra gallons of blood or something...

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (ONLINE MULTIPLAYER TBA)
■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
■ **DEVELOPER** SWORDFISH STUDIOS
■ **RELEASE** 4TH QUARTER 2004

PC

THE MATRIX ONLINE

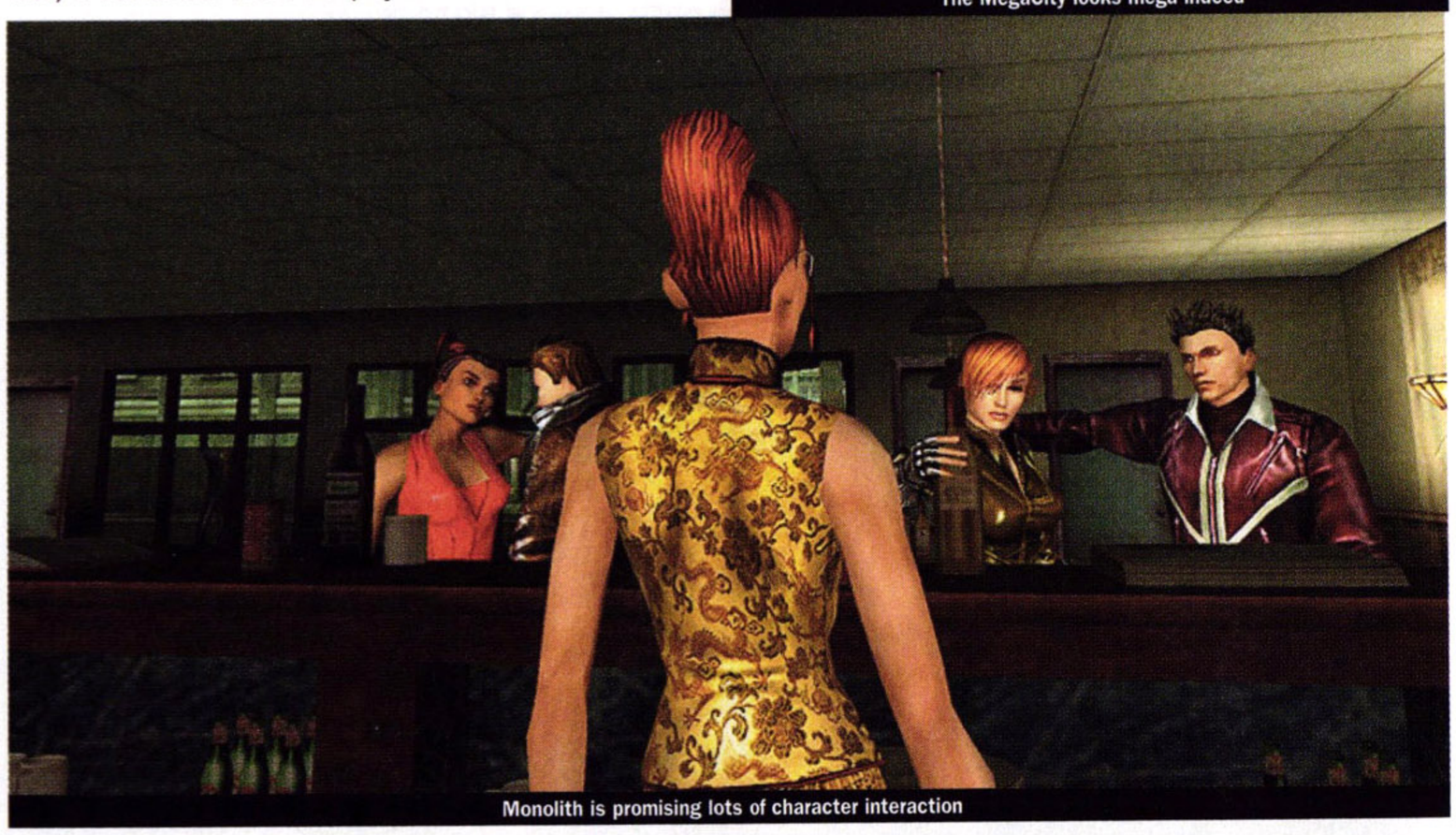
NO ONE CAN BE TOLD WHAT THE MATRIX IS

These days, after the release of *Reloaded* and *Revolutions*, people are still wondering what is going on in the Wachowski brothers' twisted sci-fi computer universe. With the joint publishing power of Ubisoft and Warner Bros. Studios, and the development muscle of Monolith (who recently released the well-received Tron 2.0), patient gamers may start to get some answers.

The Matrix Online is a massively multiplayer online action/RPG that takes place after the third film's ambiguous ending. Like the movies, the game is being shrouded in a similar cloud of mystery, but a few things are known for certain. You will play as an operative jacked into the Matrix, receiving missions from both Zion and the machines (?!). Keeping in line with the fashionable use of vinyl and pleather from the films, a hefty create-a-player mode will allow for an extremely large scale of customization. Besides the cosmetic variances, players will tweak their character's skills by using Ability Codes. Drawing from the first film's depiction of Neo learning kung fu and Trinity becoming a helicopter pilot, gamers will pull from an ability code bank to select skills and attributes (on the fly, no less) or trade them to another player.

In-game kung fu battles will be frequent and utilize something that Monolith is calling "The Interlock System." Players select a target and either power, speed, or defense. Based on the installed Ability Codes, the system will execute moves and determine the outcome of the exchange. Monolith is promising that the game will be playable over 56k modem lines when it comes out next year.

The MegaCity looks mega indeed



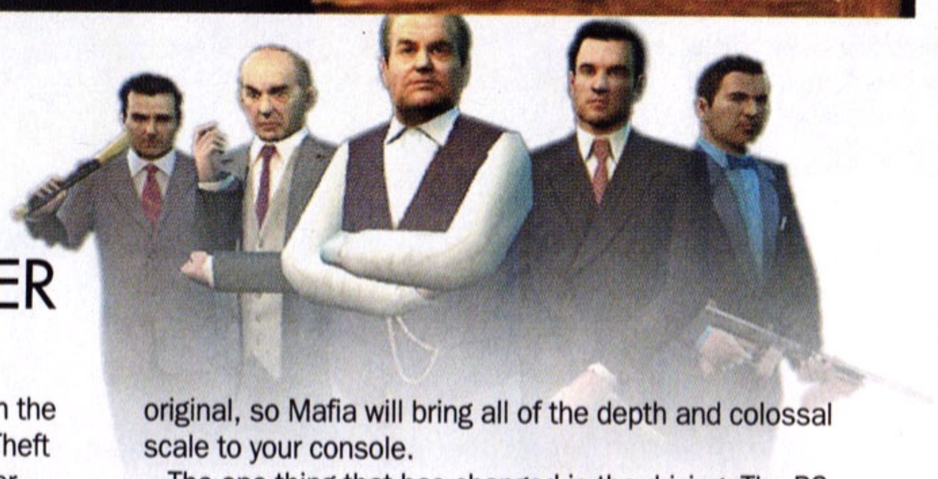
Monolith is promising lots of character interaction

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT/WARNER BROS. STUDIOS
■ **DEVELOPER** MONOLITH ■ **RELEASE** 2004

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

MAFIA

VERCETTI'S GODFATHER



Back in 2002, Mafia was a smash hit on the PC. While it may not have the flashy style of Grand Theft Auto, Mafia recalls the glory days of 1930's gangster movies with its authentic period cars and weapons. Now, to the delight of those who didn't have the opportunity to experience it on a high-end gaming rig, it's coming to the PlayStation 2 and Xbox, and hopes to make its mark in the intensely competitive third-person action genre.

With twelve square miles of a fictional city to explore, Mafia will easily be able to digest what remaining free time you have and not think twice about it. The plot-driven gameplay and free-roaming exploration ought to keep virtual mobsters occupied for days. If you're looking for something to help you wile away those long winter hours in style, this should do the trick – it's pretty much a direct port of the original, so Mafia will bring all of the depth and colossal scale to your console.

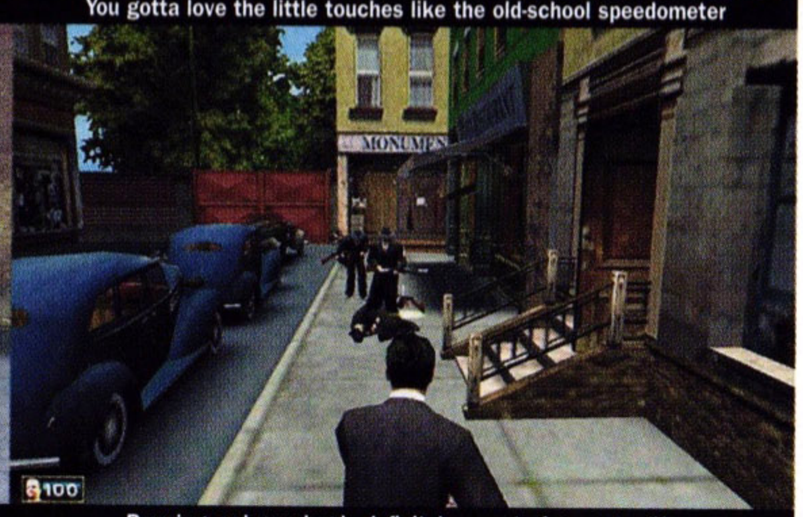
The one thing that has changed is the driving. The PC version had very realistic cars and physics, which was great for people with mice and keyboards. We're thankful that Illusion is optimizing it, though – the designers obviously understand that sometimes realism has to take a backseat to playability. Too often it has vexed us that somebody on a development squad decided to stick closely to reality, despite the fact that by doing so their title lost a lot of enjoyment factor. It's a video game, for crying out loud. They're supposed to be fun, not tedious.

Get ready to take back the streets from the foolish police, rival families, and honest citizenry on January 6, with the release of Mafia on the PS2 and Xbox.

Rides are as pimp as can be

You gotta love the little touches like the old-school speedometer

Mr. Bond wouldn't look out of place in this car

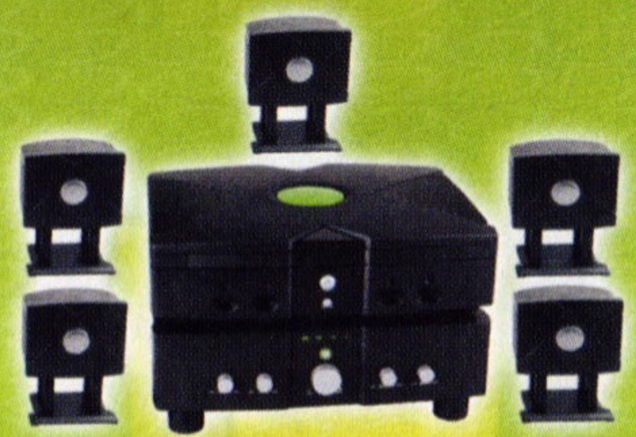


Running and gunning is definitely a part of gangster life

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** TAKE TWO INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** ILLUSION SOFTWORKS
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 6

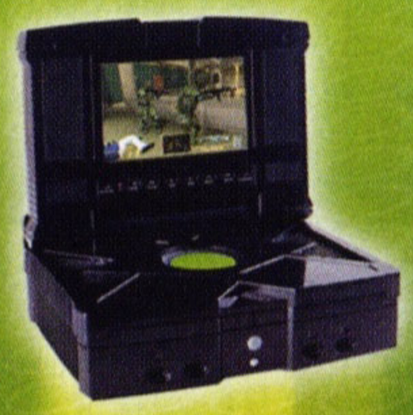
Maximize Your Xbox™

Racing Wheels



Sound Systems

Wireless Controllers



Gaming Screens

Maximum Gaming

intec

inteclink.com

Xbox® is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation.
This item is produced by Intec and is not manufactured, sponsored, endorsed or distributed by Microsoft Corporation.

PHOTOPHILE

GAME BOY ADVANCE

F-ZERO: FALCON LEGEND

Hey kids, have you beaten the GameCube version of F-Zero yet? If you said yes, you're a filthy liar. That's one tough game! But Nintendo figured you might want more F-Zero action anyway, so they're releasing Falcon Legend for the GBA this winter in Japan (no word on a U.S. release – yet). It will feature 30 opponents, customizable vehicles, tracks from the original SNES game, and e-Reader support. And since it is based on an anime, it'll also probably feature lots of yelling.

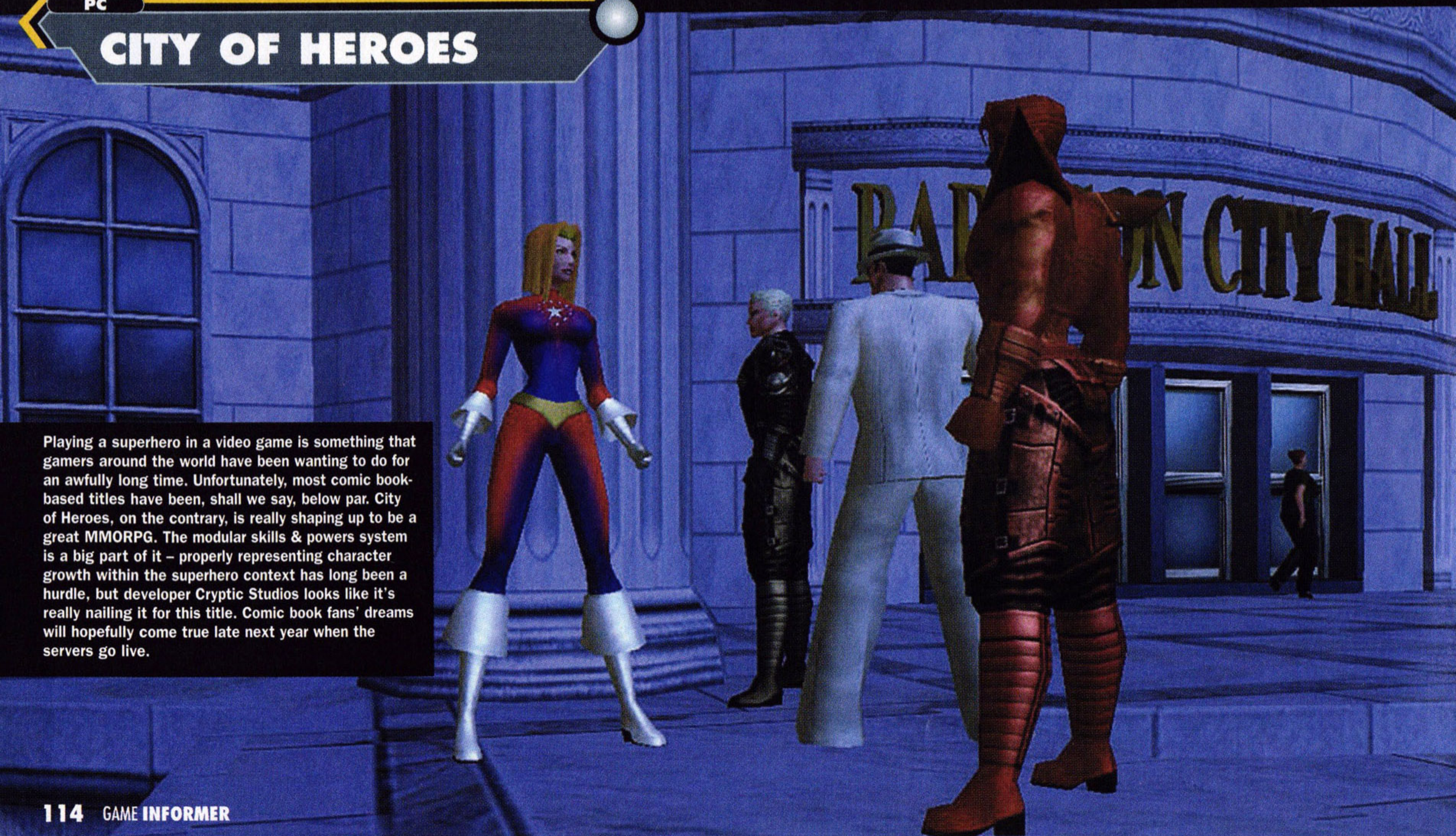
PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX

TERMINATOR 3: REDEMPTION

The machines have risen and turned on their former masters like rabid dogs. What better ally to enlist against their rampaging war machine than their top-model Terminator? In this forthcoming Atari title players will take control of the T-101 (Arnold, duh) in the future. Before he goes back for the events of the second film, he's got to take out the trash in his own era. Fortunately, he's just as bad ass as he was in the movies. Machine guns, miniguns, and vehicles can all be assimilated into the war effort. Check out what looks like the best Terminator game ever when it ships in fall 2004.

PC

CITY OF HEROES



Playing a superhero in a video game is something that gamers around the world have been wanting to do for an awfully long time. Unfortunately, most comic book-based titles have been, shall we say, below par. City of Heroes, on the contrary, is really shaping up to be a great MMORPG. The modular skills & powers system is a big part of it – properly representing character growth within the superhero context has long been a hurdle, but developer Cryptic Studios looks like it's really nailing it for this title. Comic book fans' dreams will hopefully come true late next year when the servers go live.

PC

BLACK & WHITE 2

Development guru Peter Molyneux's first Black & White title was a very unique game. The sequel is taking the same concept (play God to some hapless villagers) and pumping it up with a streamlined interface, a brand-new graphics engine, and exciting morphing technology to make the world reflect your choices. With all of the experience in design that developer Lionhead Studios is bringing to this project, you can bet your PC that it'll be an experience to remember when it ships in the summer of 2004.

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE *UNLIMITED ENABLED*

MTX: MOTOTRAX

When motocross legend Travis Pastrana severs his spine from his pelvis and lives to ride again, you gotta figure the guy's got some pretty juicy meatballs. How are *you* going to out jump, race, and trick a madman like that? Activision's spring motocross/supercross/freestyle game puts you to the test, letting you build up your character with a bevy of customizable options (for both bike and rider) as you complete a variety of challenges and goals. If you really like to let 'em hang out, you can take your game online (Xbox and PS2 only) and see how you stack up.

Maximize Your GameCube®

Racing Wheels

Sound Systems

Wireless Controllers

Gaming Screens

Maximum Gaming

intec

inteclink.com

Gamecube™ is a registered trademark of Nintendo® of America Inc. This item is produced by Intec and is not manufactured, sponsored, endorsed or distributed by Nintendo® of America Inc.

REVIEWS

PS2

Manhunt
pg. 120

GC

1080° Avalanche
pg. 136

ANDY

Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** Car Washes, Turkeys, Hangover Cures, The Butter Knife Steak, *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King* **Dislikes:** People Who Let Their Car Door Hit Other People's Vehicles (They Should Die), Holiday Deadlines **Current Favorite Games:** Dungeon Siege: Legends Of Aranna, Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga, Deus Ex: Invisible War, Call Of Duty, Rainbow Six 3

Now retired from the rock scene, Andy spends endless hours locked in his home office; enjoying the benefits of high definition television and surround sound far away from those scary things he has often heard referred to as people. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.

MATT

Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Puzzle, Action/Adventure, Action/Sports **Interests:** Can Cozies: The New Trucker Hat, Getting Hip To Surround Sound 10 Years Late, Liking The Strokes: The New Hating The Strokes, Jay-Z's *Black Album* **Dislikes:** Rappers Who Think Copying Mid-'80s Prince Makes Them "Geniuses" (Andre 3000, Please Come Home, We Miss You – Planet Earth), Internet Bullies, More Goodbyes To Longtime Staff Members (Sigh) **Current Favorite Games:** Jak II, The Sims: Bustin' Out, Top Spin, Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne, Grabbed By The Ghoulies (Gotcha! Hahaha!)

While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.

KATO

Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Racing, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** The Digital Deviant, *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King*, *The Ipcress File*, *Billy Liar*, The Upper Crust, Nova The Cat **Dislikes:** Missing Out On Good New Music, Getting Old, Paris Hilton Is Easier To Get Into Than The Hilton In Paris **Current Favorite Games:** Deus Ex: Invisible War, Top Gear Rally, Half-Life: Counter-Strike, Manhunt, Civilization III: Conquests

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying in vain to update his wardrobe into the 21st century. Like other young men of his generation, he quickly found out that the one true real world application of good grades was the free arcade tokens that were given out at as reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.

JEREMY

Handle: Gamezilla **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Survival Horror, Action/Adventure, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Vertigo Comics, Positive Book Reviews, Feeling Good About Potentially Scary Decisions, Watching Friends Become Cat Owners **Dislikes:** Getting To Know Someone, Then Watching Them Leave (Come Back, *Andy Richter Show*, We Hardly Knew Ye!) **Current Favorite Games:** Gladius, 100 Bullets, Rocket Mania, Goblin Commander, The "Can I Find Good Deals At The Pawn Shop?" Game

Obsessed with anything on a shiny silver disc, Jeremy fanatically collects video games, music, and movies. When not buying bigger media storage systems or filling his mind with useless trivia, Jeremy likes to write silly books, short stories, and comics that no one ever reads. Although he will never be able to stop himself from buying new games, Jeremy firmly believes the best system of all time was the Super Nintendo.

REINER

Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Anything By Joss Whedon (Even *Firefly*), Macho Man's *Be A Man* Rap Album, Games That Support HDTV, Bagging Lunch (I've Done It Once In The Last 10 Years) **Dislikes:** *The Matrix* Trilogy (What Started Great...Now Is Dumb), The Trailer For The New *Punisher* Movie, All The Great Games Coming Out On The Same Day **Current Favorite Games:** Final Fantasy X-2, Beyond Good & Evil, The Sims: Bustin' Out, Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga, Manhunt, Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (Xbox)

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 684 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his nine years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in them. Thus far, Reiner has appeared in Dragon Force, Alundra, and Perfect Dark. He will also be featured as a playable character in two forthcoming releases.

JUSTIN

Handle: The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Sports, Action/Adventure, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Tenacious D's DVD, Earning Enough WorldPerks Miles To Go To Japan, GWAR **Dislikes:** My Obsessive Consumerism, Broken Glass, Cleaning Out My Desk **Current Favorite Games:** Deus Ex: Invisible War, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004, Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness, Karaoke Revolution (Even If Kate Kicks My Butt), Viewtiful Joe

Unlike most gaming jabronis, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He's a former GWAR slave and moonlights as wrestler Justin "Violent" Lee in the Minnesota independent scene, where he violently bonds with other sweaty males – a practice that just gets blank stares when attempted on other GI reviewers. Justin's gaming tastes are highly old-school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plugs into the latest titles.

LISA

Handle: La Game Nikita **Expertise:** Puzzle, RPGs, Action/Platform, Horror **Interests:** *Sandman Mystery Theater*, Billy Being Dressed Up As A Cow For Halloween, Amy's Kitchen Pesto Tortolini, *PCU* On DVD, *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King*, *The Matrix* Saga **Dislikes:** Missing "The Best KMFDM Concert EVER" (Dan, I'm So Jealous), Leaking Ceilings **Current Favorite Games:** Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly, Uru: Ages Beyond Myst, Manhunt, Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga, Need For Speed: Underground

Barring a brief and ill advised "I want to be popular, so I'll stop playing games" phase in late junior high, Lisa has been subjecting her friends to drawn out boss battles since age 8. She has been known to wax philosophically about why Jigglypuff is desperately underappreciated and wish that some "big" games were more fun, even if that means less pretty.

ADAM

Handle: The Alpha Gamer **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, RPGs, Strategy, Fighting **Interests:** Patches For Games Released In 2000, Statues Of Gollum, Web Comics About Video Games, Game Modes Starring Snoop Dogg **Dislikes:** Everything By Joss Whedon (Except *Firefly*), Getting Sick, Email With No Punctuation, Those Four Vikings Games **Current Favorite Games:** Gladius, Civilization III: Conquests, Goblin Commander, Deus Ex: Invisible War

Though he's the PC guy at work, Adam spends just as much time playing old-school consoles as anything else. Recently having reached the escape velocity necessary to leave his parents' basement, he tends to spend his free time enjoying not being told to get a job or take out the garbage. That, or crafting elaborate plans to create the "most powerful party/character/strategy" in whatever game is sucking his life away at the moment. Interesting side note: Adam is one of the waning minority of (male) GI staff without delicately shaped facial hair.

Our crack (or crackhead, we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you'll hate. Most games are reviewed by two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. It is important to note that the Game of the Month is determined only by the main review score, not an average of the two opinions.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

Game Informer's rating system ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

10	Outstanding. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game is virtually flawless, and thus this rating is rarely given out.
9	Superb. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.
8	Great. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.
7	Average. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.
6	Limited appeal. There are always a few people who will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.
5 below	Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

CONCEPT
What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are presented.

GRAPHICS
How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

SOUND
Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

PLAYABILITY
Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

ENTERTAINMENT
Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

REPLAY VALUE
The longevity of the title.

- **High** – You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** – Good for a long while, but the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** – Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** – After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** – You'll quit playing before you complete the game.

EARLY CHILDHOOD	Content suitable for persons ages 3 and older.
EVERYONE	Content suitable for persons ages 6 and older.
TEEN	Content suitable for persons ages 13 and older.
MATURE	Content suitable for persons ages 17 and older.
ADULTS ONLY	Content suitable only for adults.
RATING PENDING	Product is awaiting final rating.

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

1080i – A resolution specification used for HDTV. 1080i stands for resolution of 1920x1080 pixels. The "i" means that the video is being interlaced

480p – Progressive scanning, this option ("p"= progressive), creates a picture signal with double the scan lines of a conventional interlaced picture, 480i (i=interlaced), to create a noticeably sharper image. The 480p image offers higher picture resolution and eliminates virtually all motion artifacts in a 640x480 pixel resolution setting

720p – A resolution specification used for HDTV. 720p stands for resolution of 1280x720 pixels. The "p" means that the video is in progressive format

action – A term we use for games like Zone of the Enders and Gauntlet

adventure – A term we use for games like Myst and Escape From Monkey Island

AI – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent

board – A term we use for games like Jeopardy! and Mario Party

bump mapping – A technique where varying light effects simulate depth on textures

cel shading – A technique used to create 3D rendered objects that resemble hand-drawn animation cels

CG – Computer-Generated graphics

E3 – Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games

fighting – A term we use for games like Street Fighter and Dead or Alive

FMV – Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene

FPS – Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First-Person Shooters like Doom, GoldenEye, and Unreal Tournament

framerate – The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement

frontend – A game's menus and options

GBA – Game Boy Advance

GBC – Game Boy Color

GC – GameCube

HDTV – High Definition Television

Herky-Jerky – Justin's preferred style of dance

isometric – Three-quarters top down view, like StarCraft or Red Alert 2

ISP – Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet

jaggies – Graphical lines that are jagged when they should be straight

LAN – Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay

minigame – A small, simple game within a larger one

motion-capture – Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap

motion blur – Phantom frames follow an object to give the impression of realistic speed

N64 – Nintendo 64

NES – Nintendo Entertainment System

NPC – Non-Player Character. Those people and creatures you see wandering around in games that are not being controlled by actual humans

particle effects – Things like smoke or sparks created in real-time

PKer – Player Killer. This is a person who thrives on killing newbie or vulnerable characters in MMORPGs or shooting their teammates in games like Counter-Strike

platform – A term we use for games like Super Mario and Crash Bandicoot

pop-up – When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear

PS2 – Sony PlayStation 2

PSone – Sony PlayStation

puzzle – A term we use for games like Tetris and Chu Chu Rocket

racing – A term we use for games like Gran Turismo and Mario Kart

RPG – Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like Final Fantasy and Dragon Warrior

shooter – A term we use for games like Mars Matrix and Gradius

SNES – Super Nintendo Entertainment System

sports – A term we use for games like Madden NFL

strategy – A term we use for games like Command & Conquer and Fallout Tactics

third-party – Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer

GAME OF THE MONTH

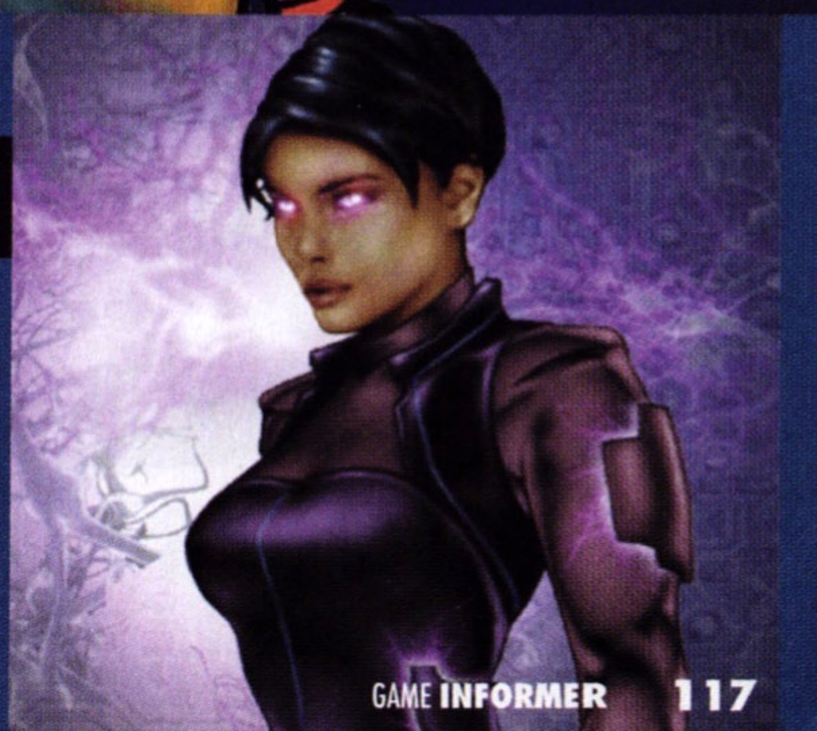
MARIO AND LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

Mario has done role-playing games before, but trust us when we say that this adventure is different than anything the portly plumber has taken on in the past. For the first time ever, he's sharing the spotlight with his brother, and together they're tackling one of the strangest, funniest quests of their lives. This cooperative RPG even manages to build on the Mario universe in completely original ways. To check out this surprising little gem, jump on over to page 158.

PC GAME OF THE MONTH

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

The original Deus Ex was a landmark title in PC gaming, with its substantial deviations from the FPS norm. This new masterpiece by developer Ion Storm continues the legacy and expands on it in a ton of ways. With plot twists and player-driven storylines like no other, Invisible War is in a genre all its own. Sneaking around and using various super-powers to uncover the truth behind the future's dark destiny has never...well, we've certainly never done it with such style before. Get the full scoop on page 152.



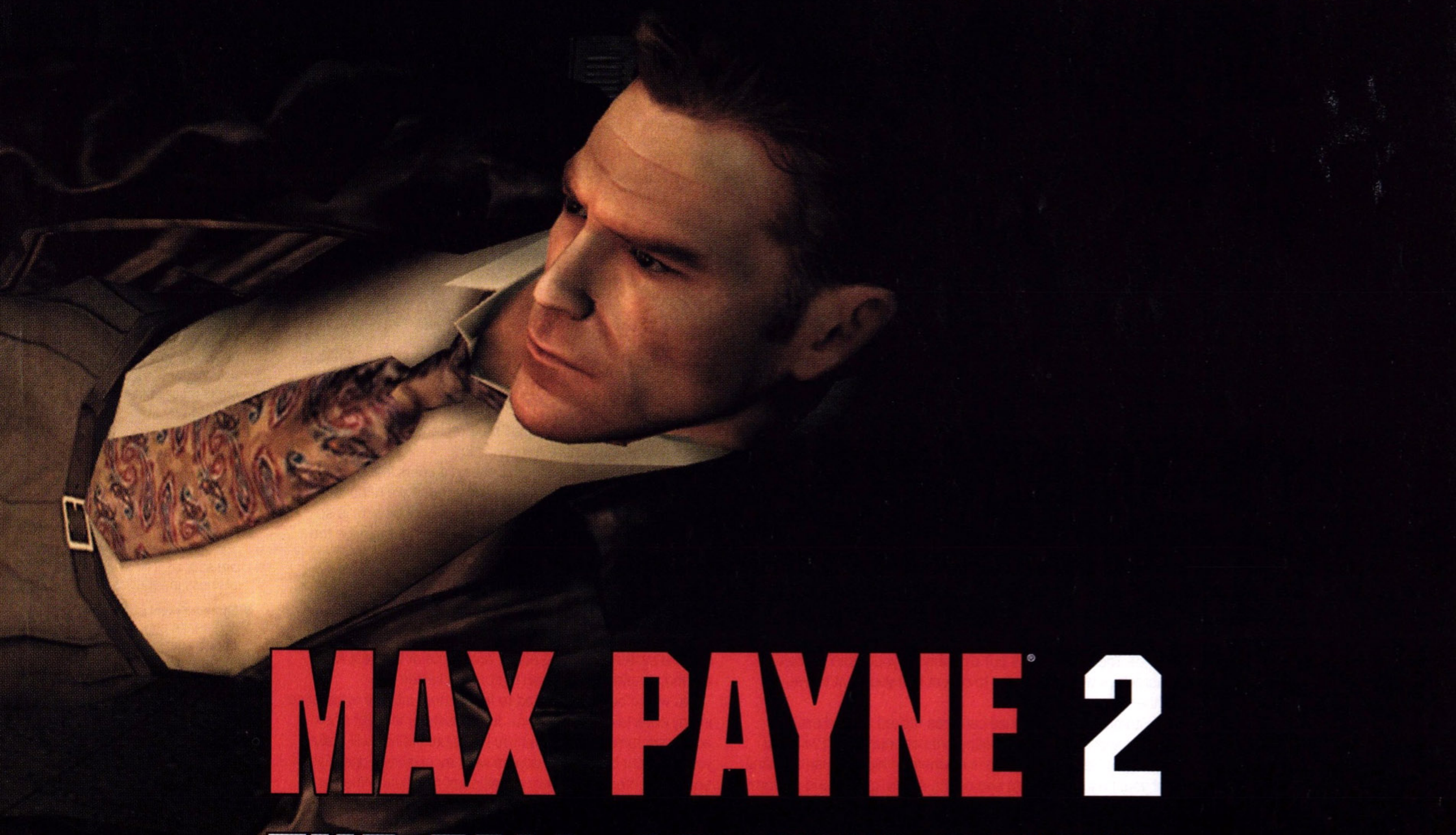
MAX PAYNE 2

© 2003 Rockstar Games, Inc. The R* logo is a registered trademark of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Max Payne and the Max Payne logo are registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Remedy and the Remedy logo are trademarks of Remedy Entertainment, Ltd. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All rights reserved.

"AN INTENSE STORY, AN INSANE AMOUNT OF DETAIL, AND EVEN MORE WONDERFUL GAMEPLAY."
GRADE: A. UGO

"AS ADRENALINE-PUMPING AS ANYTHING YOU'D SEE ON THE SILVER SCREEN."
★★★★★ GAMESPY

"STUNNING...MAX PAYNE 2 IS JUST A REMARKABLE PRODUCTION."
EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD. GAMESPOT



MAX PAYNE® 2

THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

A FILM NOIR LOVE STORY

WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MAXPAYNE2
WWW.MAXPAYNE2.COM

MATURE 17+ ®
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Intense Violence
Strong Language
Blood
Mature Sexual Themes

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

PlayStation®2

XBOX

REMEDY™

R★

"You would be hard-pressed to find a more intense expe-rience in any entertainment medium."

PLAYSTATION 2 *UNLIMITED ENABLED*

MANHUNT

THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL GAME TO DATE

Unrelentingly evil and entirely disturbing, Manhunt pushes the envelope of acceptability and begs the question: "Have video games gone too far?" Inspired by the Nicolas Cage film *8MM* and created by the same studio that brought us Grand Theft Auto, this shocking new title gives the world a first-rate, hands-on look at snuff film fetish and savagely violent manslaughter.

In this controversial release, players assume the identity of James Earl Cash and are forced against their will to fulfill the sadistic fantasies of a mysterious man known only as "The Director" (voiced by Brian Cox of *Manhunter* and *X-Men 2* fame). The Director has put a bounty on your head. Gangs of murderers will do anything to collect it. If you want to live, it's either kill or be killed.

With hidden surveillance cameras tucked around every corner and The Director in constant communication with you through an ear piece, there is nowhere to hide. He isn't rooting for you; he just wants to see death. As you give in and perform his dirty deeds, he'll make comments like, "You're really getting me off, Cash" or "I want to see some blood!" The more gruesome the slaying, the greater his praise.

A glass shard to the eye…a sickle raked across the groin…the death sequences are sick, wrong, and way over-the-top. The sound of flesh being cut by a cleaver, blood spraying on the camera lens, and the sheer barbarity of someone being assassinated right before your very eyes is an unnerving experience to say the least. Hearing The Director congratulate you afterwards is even more disconcerting.

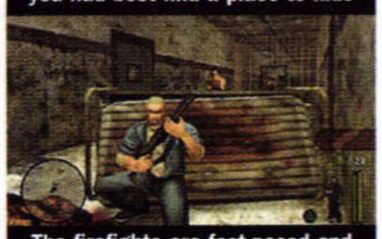
It's a frightening premise that places gamers in a psychological impasse. The crimes that you commit are unspeakable, yet the gameplay that leads to these horrendous acts is so polished and fierce that it's thrilling. The content may be too much for some people, but there's no denying that Manhunt is an incredible game.

Most of your time is spent sneaking through shadows and pinpointing the perfect time to leap out and assault an unsuspecting foe. With perfect character control, a phenomenal camera system, amazing audio, and some of the best AI around, stealth really doesn't get much better.

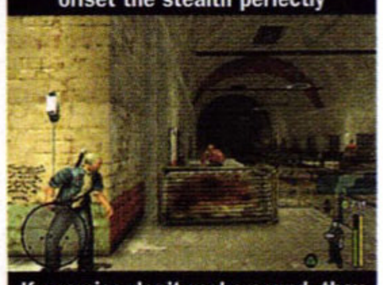
You would be hard-pressed to find a more intense experience in any entertainment medium. Just the sheer thought of an adversary turning around as you hover behind him will make you hold your breath and squirm with uncertainty. Edge-of-your-seat excitement is the very definition of Manhunt. Whether you find yourself in a frenzied firefight, rescuing hostages, or scouring the area for an object that could be lethal; this game shows great diversity in its level designs, and knows when to change things up.

So the question remains: "Does Manhunt go too far?" It's definitely offensive, but you can find similar content in movies. It's just a matter of whether or not you want to stomach it. Great game, touchy material. – **REINER**

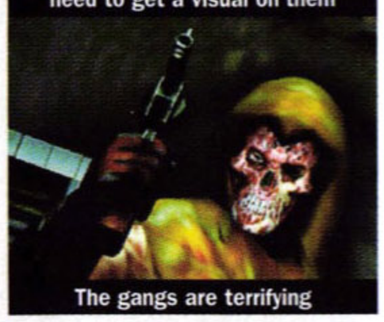
Each sound you make creates a shockwave-like effect on the radar. The louder the sound, the bigger the wave. If an enemy hears you… you had best find a place to hide



The firefights are fast-paced and offset the stealth perfectly

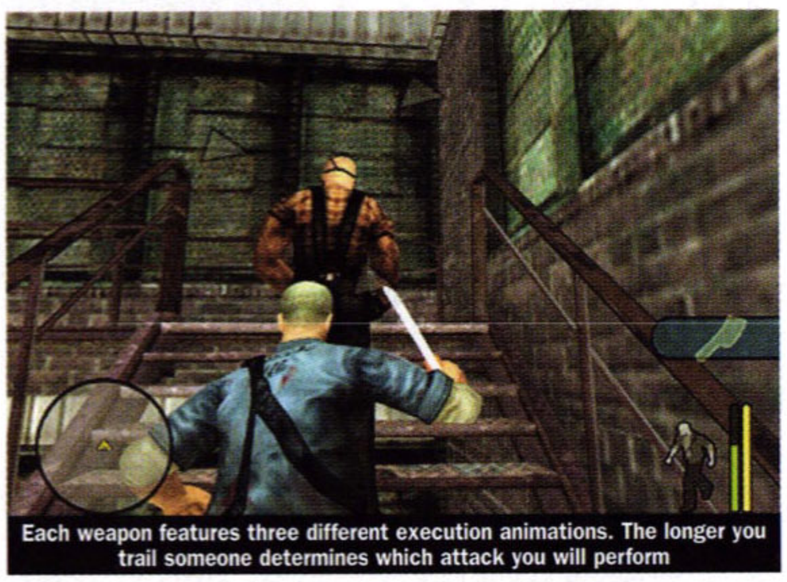


If enemies don't make sound, they won't appear on the radar. You'll need to get a visual on them

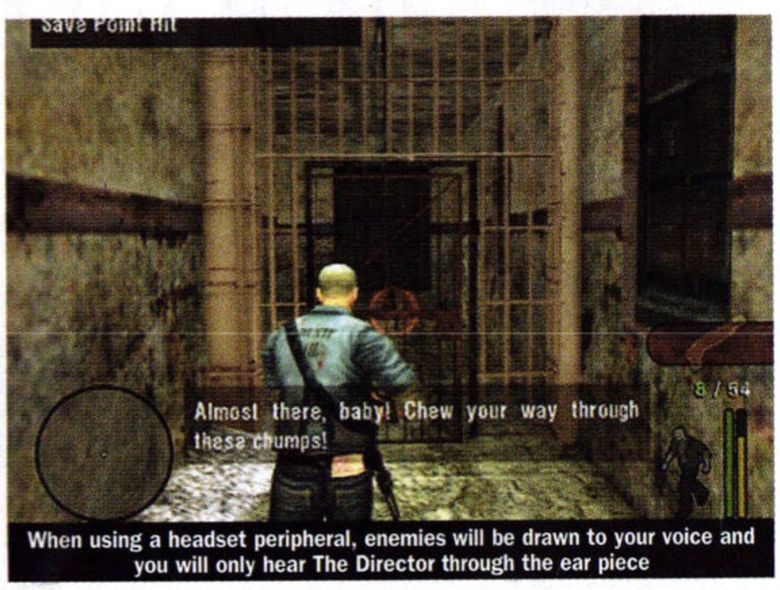


The gangs are terrifying

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION **■ PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR **■ DEVELOPER** ROCKSTAR NORTH **■ RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



Each weapon features three different execution animations. The longer you trail someone determines which attack you will perform



When using a headset peripheral, enemies will be drawn to your voice and you will only hear The Director through the ear piece

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9.25

- **Concept:** Stealth, snuff, and murder
- **Graphics:** The same Renderware engine as Vice City, but the texturing and level of detail are of much higher quality
- **Sound:** Some of the best audio in a game yet. The eerie score, richness in ambience, and amount of spoken dialogue are truly remarkable
- **Playability:** The controls and camera are spot on. The levels are also rich in variety
- **Entertainment:** An intense play with tons of bonus levels and secrets that are unlocked through end-of-level performances
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

The content in this game is of a more adult variety than I have ever seen in a high-profile game. Executions are gruesome, The Director is a vile human specimen, and the methods employed by his hunters are ingeniously horrific. But, I'm not going to score the violence, I'm scoring the game, and Manhunt is one heck of a well-made stealth/action title. The enemy AI, camera, and dialogue are all head and shoulders above any of its competition. It seems to me that Rockstar realized one thing very early in development – that it needed to make the best gameplay possible to justify the gruesome visuals that the company had planned. While I'll admit that I looked away from the screen on many occasions, I couldn't help but be compelled to play mission upon mission, because it's just so damn well done. It's certainly solid, but the content is profoundly (maybe even prohibitively) violent.

LISA – 9.25

"It's too bad that there's nothing but straw where R: Racing Evolution's heart should be."

PLAYSTATION 2

R: RACING EVOLUTION

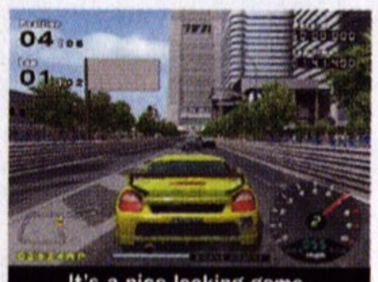
THE JESSICA SIMPSON OF RACING GAMES

Despite its pretty face, R: Racing Evolution proves to be every bit as vacuous and vapid as America's favorite reality TV starlet. Like Ms. Simpson, this game looks good from afar: The graphics are admittedly top-notch, and the Racing Life mode promised to add a dramatic storyline to flesh out the racing action. However, once you get up close and actually have to spend some time with this game, you'll find yourself feeling bored and slightly annoyed by its chirpy personality and total lack of substance.

The Racing Life, which is clearly intended to be the game's main hook, is in reality this title's ultimate failing. It follows the saga of Rena Hayami, a comely young ambulance driver who is recognized for her skills behind the wheel and offered the chance to become a pro on the international racing circuit. Unfortunately, this slight story and the attendant cutscenes are as far as this idea is developed. Unlike the overlooked Pro Race Driver, which actually let you have a hand in your development by trying out for different teams and taking email challenges for new cars, this story is nothing but window-dressing on a basic linear career progression. And, with its broadly drawn characters, cliched script, and transparent attempts to add sex appeal; it's not even good window dressing. However, my pit chief did provide some unintentional comedic relief with his "ambiguous" voiceovers during races. Lines like "I can see the beads of sweat forming on his forehead" and "You'll get slammed from behind if you brake too soon!" give you some idea of which side his bread is buttered on. Then, after another racer exclaimed, "I don't care who's on my tail!" he piped in, "Give him something to remember you by!" Get a room, guys!

I was also disappointed in the lack of car tuning options, upgrades, and selection of vehicles. The Racing Life mode basically force-feeds you a car for each race, and while you can tune it, you don't get to focus on one vehicle with cosmetic or mechanical improvements. I think Need for Speed: Underground showed us how addictive racing can become when you have a personal stake in your ride. You can unlock different cars, but they can't be used in the main mode, only the other events and challenge options in the frontend menu.

The reason I'm giving this game a seven is that it does provide a basic level of competence. As I said, it's a nice looking title, with all the shiny reflective surfaces and real-time shadows you could want. Also, while the control certainly isn't exceptional, it does get you from point A to point B with little frustration. It's too bad that there's nothing but straw where R: Racing Evolution's heart should be. – **MATT**



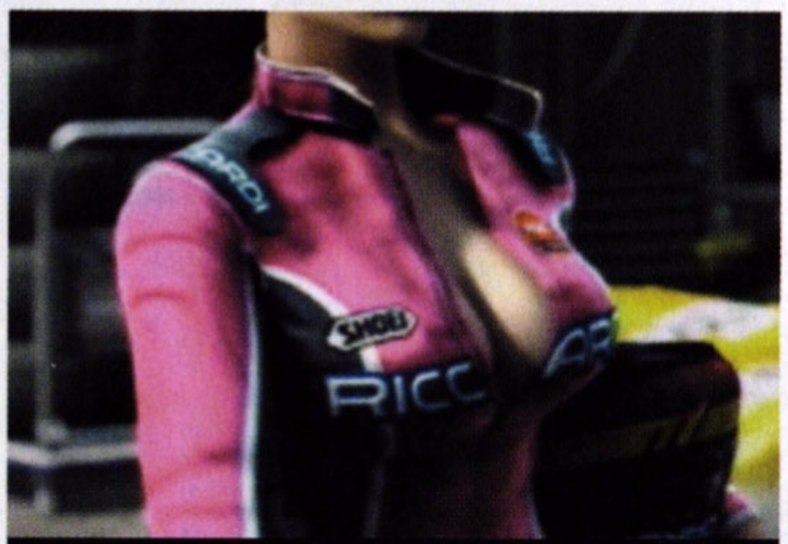
It's a nice looking game, nothing more

The off road rally courses offer a bit of challenge

Multiplayer options are slim, and no online

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 9

There are some unique vehicles, but you don't really get to tweak them



This game has cutscenes for two reasons. Guess what they are!

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7

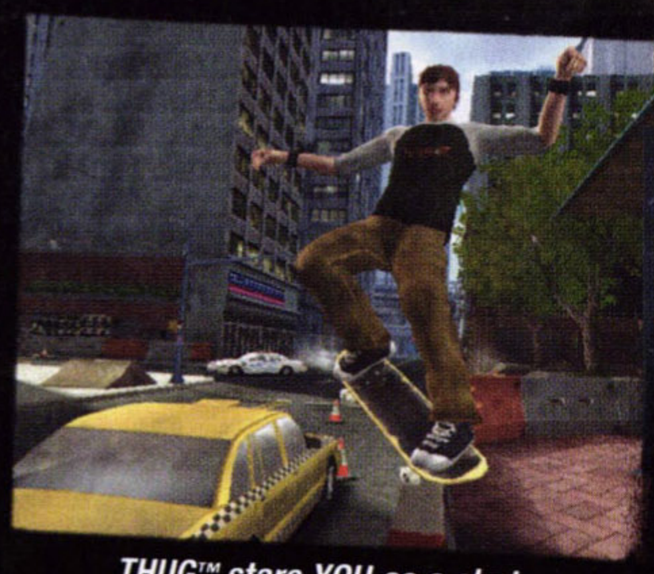
- **Concept:** Mediocre racing with cutscenes featuring a hot chick driver
- **Graphics:** Nice – detailed reflective vehicle models and lush environments
- **Sound:** Whoever performed the score should be called the "Kenny G of techno"
- **Playability:** Works well enough, but you may need to do some tweaking in the options menu
- **Entertainment:** Fancy graphics and a ludicrous story do not a great racing game make
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

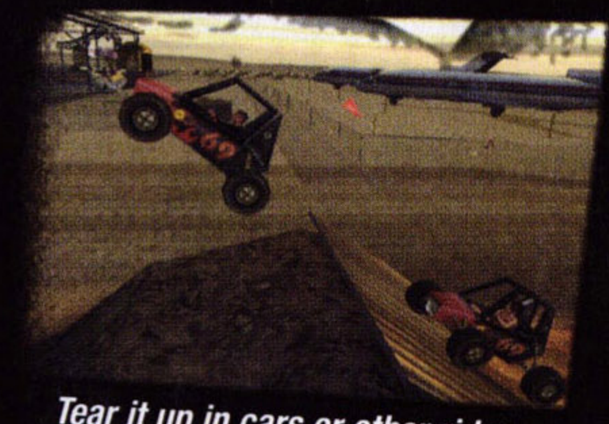
Namco's attempt to liven up the racing genre by giving us a story falters for several reasons. While Pro Racer Driver tried the same thing and succeeded despite the laughable tale of Ryan McKane, R: Racing fails because its structure just isn't interesting – despite its use of voice dialogue in the races. Repetitive tracks and a linear progression, no matter what the story backdrop, is simply an uninspiring formula. You can use your accumulated RP points to unlock tracks, cars, and upgrades in Even Challenge mode, but it's just more of the same. While the story unfolds in well-done cutscenes, the in-game graphics aren't nearly as sharp. Also, I wish the title would have come alive more by letting you get more of a feel for the car and the road. I suggest you switch to the analog gas/brake setting for the best ride. I guess that sums up the game – it can be tolerated, but it doesn't go that extra mile for you.

KATO – 7

"10 OUT"

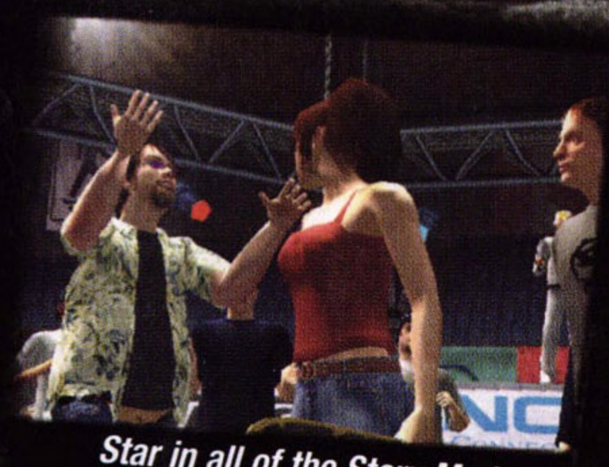


THUG™ stars YOU as a skate punk out to make it big.

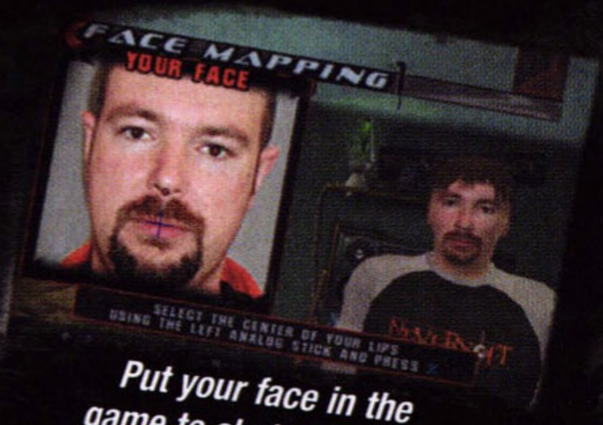


Tear it up in cars or other rides.

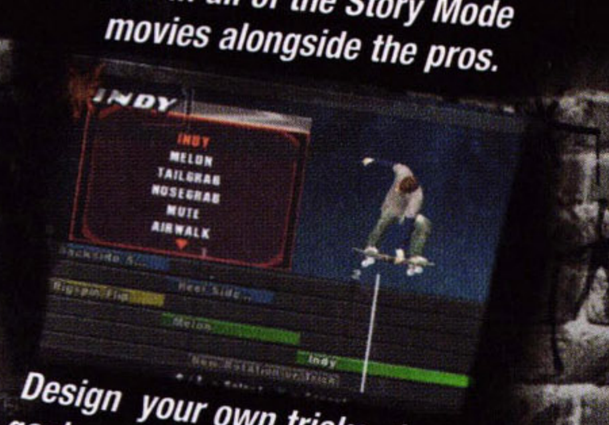
Do whatever it takes – run, climb, and of course, skate – to make it to the top.



Star in all of the Story Mode movies alongside the pros.

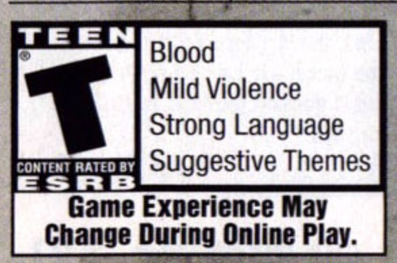


Put your face in the game to skate as YOU.*



Design your own tricks, decks, goals, and levels. It's your game!

PlayStation.2 XBOX NINTENDO GAMECUBE GAME BOY ADVANCE Vicarious Visions POWERED BY: gamespy AT&T Wireless



Blood
Mild Violence
Strong Language
Suggestive Themes

Game Experience May Change During Online Play.

© 2003 Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. Published and distributed by Activision Publishing, Inc. Activision is a registered trademark and THUG is a trademark of Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. All rights reserved. Tony Hawk is a trademark of Tony Hawk. PlayStation 2, GameCube and Xbox versions developed by Neversoft Entertainment, Inc. Game Boy Advance version developed by Vicarious Visions. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Online play requires internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). Online icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. TM, ® and Nintendo GameCube and Game Boy Advance are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. Maxim Magazine © Dennis Publishing, Inc.

OF '10" -GMR

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

"5 out of 5"
– Maxim Magazine

"...one of the best games of the year."
– GameSpy

"Driving! Climbing! Building! Running! Skating will NEVER be the same again!"
– Official PlayStation 2 Magazine [U.K.]

NOW AVAILABLE
THUGONLINE.COM

ONLINE
BROADBAND AND DIAL-UP

*Face mapping technology is exclusive to PlayStation®2 computer entertaiment system and requires online connectivity.

NEVERSOFT

ACTIVISION®

"...without a doubt, the scariest game ever made."

PLAYSTATION 2

FATAL FRAME 2: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

DON'T PEE YOUR PANTS

I am completely comfortable, as a fan of survival horror titles in all their myriad forms, stating that Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly is, without a doubt in my mind, the scariest game ever made. Perfectly levelheaded, rational, even-keeled human beings will hold their breath when Mio opens a door. They will quake when Mayu's attention shifts to a room you're running by. Seriously, folks, this is a game that other frightening titles will need to live up to for many a year.

Playing as twin girls who stumble upon a Japanese village that had supposedly disappeared from the face of the earth decades ago, you will enter that haunted wonderland and spend the rest of your time trying desperately to leave. Though the survival-horror information transfer of choice (journal entries) is used extensively, some of the best storytelling comes through the film reels and gem-powered audio clips that you happen upon. Unquestionably, they will creep under your skin and make every player a little... uncomfortable.

Some may ask, if I'm so gaga about the terror-quotient of this game, then why am I giving it the same score as the Xbox version of its predecessor? Here's the deal. Tecmo received lots of feedback from the first game that the "combat" was a little slow, and the minimal upgrades available for the camera were dull. So, they added features – but I don't like them. The upgrade system works through finding crystals and then activating the upgrade by expending points you earned in battle. Its execution is confusing and convoluted, and I felt like it took away from the being-there feel that the rest of the game so skillfully achieves. Who are you giving these points to? What being is awarding them? It's just distracting, in my opinion.

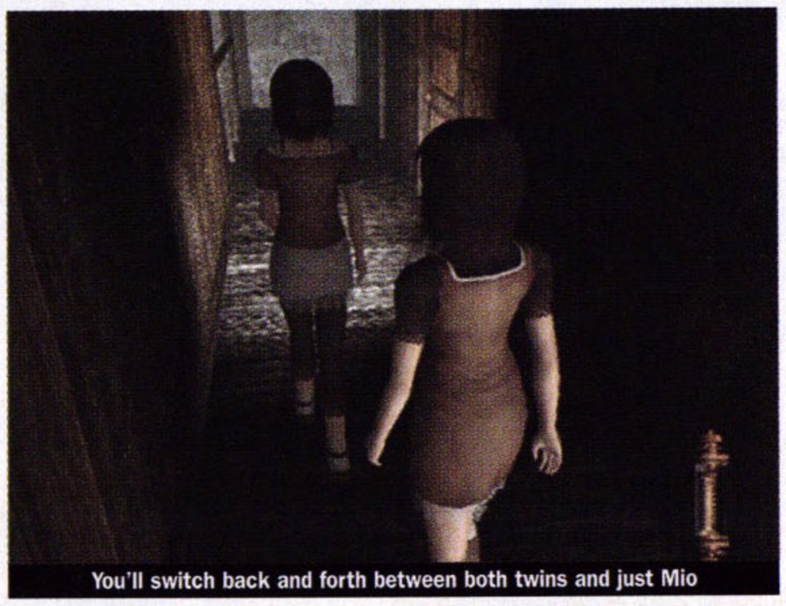
Now, the reasons that I'm really happy to give this game such a high score (and by association, recommend it to all of you) are many. Everything about the story, its pacing, character development, dialogue, level layout, and especially sound design, is executed so masterfully that I challenge anyone to play the game and not be scared. Just go ahead and try to pretend that you aren't afraid to leave the "safe zone" that is your couch. Go ahead and give it a whirl. I bet that every single one of you will fear that a bloody, kimono-clad Mayu is waiting around the turn to the fridge. And, my friends, a game that makes people do that is just awesome. The scares in this game are so classic that, years from now, people will still pop it in for a good fright. – **LISA**

The ghosts will attack in groups more often than before

More film, health, and save points make this entry a little easier

You don't even want to know what happened to her

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** TECMO ■ **DEVELOPER** TECMO ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 12



You'll switch back and forth between both twins and just Mio

The film reels are grainy, like very old movies

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9

- **Concept:** Draw in new fans that missed the last sleeper scare-fest. Extensively use twins, rituals, creepy ropes, and dolls
- **Graphics:** All improved from the last effort to make this one of the best-looking scary games out there
- **Sound:** The first was heralded as the best sound design ever, and Crimson Butterfly doesn't disappoint
- **Playability:** Controls could still use some smoothing – but we willingly put up with Resident Evil's layout for a good fright
- **Entertainment:** Get rubber shorts
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Playing Fatal Frame 2 made me realize that I can scream in falsetto and leap from my seat with more hang time than Air Jordan. Not since *The Exorcist* have I encountered something so genuinely terrifying. It's old-fashioned psychological horror that gets under your skin and toys with your nerves. By the time I finished the game, I was physically exhausted. This is particularly disturbing given the fact that there really isn't much to the gameplay. Snapping photographs of choleric apparitions and exploring an abandoned village pretty much rounds out the experience. In this regard, it's not the most exciting game in the world, but you won't find another title that makes you sweat more. The chemistry between you and your twin sister melds perfectly with a wonderfully mysterious plot to create a tale that will keep you desperately searching for answers. It's a fear-inspiring experience you won't easily shake.

REINER – 8.5

namco®

www.namco.com

COVER OR RELIGION.

ON THIS BATTLEFIELD, EVERYONE FINDS SOMETHING.

Stay out of harm's way while unleashing a barrage of blindfire.

Confront relentless, fiercely intelligent enemies.

Objects are your only allies. Cover is your only saving grace.

KILL SWITCH™

TAKE COVER. TAKE AIM. TAKE OVER.

TEEN T Strong Language Violence CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

XBOX

PlayStation.2

kill.switch™ & © 2003 Namco Hometek Inc. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

killswitch.com

PLAYSTATION 2

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

KAIN YOU DIG IT?

"The combat-focused gameplay is far superior to the box-and-switch puzzles of past titles."

Much like Avril Lavigne, Kain is pure evil. That's a lot of what makes him such an interesting character, and what makes the Legacy of Kain titles compelling. Despite being one of the few franchises that puts you in control of the bad guy, the Kain games have been somewhat hit or miss. Defiance is Eidos' attempt to rejuvenate the series, and it is mostly successful.

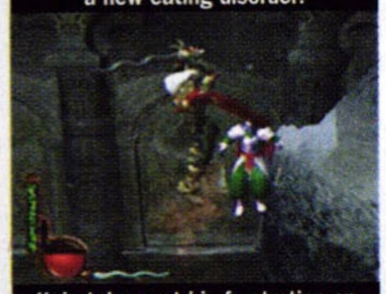
For the first time in the franchise, you control both Kain and his nemesis Raziel. The intricate story switches back and forth between the two as they work towards a shared destiny, which only one will survive. The complex plot, which builds heavily on the past games, is one of the high points of Defiance and continues the series' tradition of quality storytelling. While the past games have always been praised for their plots, the gameplay has not consistently been as well received. Defiance wisely features a new emphasis on action, and a control scheme to match. The combat-focused gameplay is far superior to the box-and-switch puzzles of past titles, but does tend to get a little old. The new moves are impressive at first – the telekinetic powers are especially fun – but the unlockable moves do little to change the feel of the fights. Both Kain and Raziel have similar moves as well – which is great for learning the control scheme, but not so great at keeping things fresh.

The amount of backtracking required is also a bit of a letdown. Most goals require you to move back and forth across the same area to advance. You'll trek through an environment, find an obstacle, and have to go back the opposite way to find something to help you overcome it. As a result, you see most areas of the game many, many times. Fortunately, the environments are astounding. Every area is painstakingly crafted and heavily detailed. Never does an environment look like a platforming exercise – they all look like part of a real world. The camera for these huge areas isn't always perfect, but considering their massive scale and design, it works admirably.

While it has its issues, Defiance hits far more than it misses and emerges as one of the better recent adventure titles. Combat gets a little old, but the quest is mostly free of switch-pulling puzzles, the story is compelling, and the graphics are great. Plus, as there are few vampire-themed games out there, and even fewer good ones, Defiance is required for all fans of suckheads. Even if you don't run with the Buffy set, this is a great way to embrace your dark side without landing in jail. – **JEREMY**

This gargoyle has mistaken Raziel as a member of the ultra-annoying Blue Man Group

Raziel is the proud inventor of a new eating disorder!



Kain takes out his frustration on someone wearing white after Labor Day

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

Kain is not recommended for those with pacemakers

Keith Richards relaxes backstage after a show

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

- **Concept:** For the first time in the series, both Raziel and Kain are playable in the same game, and the action has been amped up
- **Graphics:** The backgrounds are simply astounding. I wish the large gothic castle I live in looked as nice
- **Sound:** As always, the voice acting is top-notch and the score is fitting
- **Playability:** The new control scheme provides the combat depth this series has sorely needed
- **Entertainment:** The story is fantastic, but the actual gameplay tends to get a bit stale
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I have a strange affection for this series. I can't quite figure out what it is, either. As with previous editions, Defiance is neither the greatest game of all time, nor the worst. It's just solid from beginning to end. The story, as always, delivers like few games do. Seeing where the twisted tale of Kain and Raziel ends is reason enough to play this game, but don't let the interesting story fool you into believing this game is for everyone. Fans of the series won't be disappointed, but it doesn't do anything to open itself up for new Kain players. The camera and controls are still iffy at times, and the puzzles can be annoying if you let them get to you. Luckily, this game only requires a basic knowledge of the series, so if you have skipped a couple, don't be afraid to dive into Defiance, which is perhaps the best in the series since the original.

ANDY – 7.75

namco®

WWW.NAMCO.COM

TIME CRISIS®3

TIME IS NOT ON YOUR SIDE

An innocent nation is facing annihilation. And time's moving faster than a 9mm slug. So grab your weapon of choice, line up the sights and keep your partner at your back. You're going to need all the firepower you can get.

timecrisis3.namco.com

Insanely fast duck and shoot GUNCON®2 action.

New Weapon Select System lets you toggle between multiple weapons.

3 modes of play to keep the bullets flying long after the story's done.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence

GUNCON®2

PlayStation®2

TIME CRISIS®3 © 1995 1997 2001 2002 2003 NAMCO LTD., ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. GUNCON®2 & © 2000 NAMCO LTD., ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

"...the production values in this game are so poor, I would have thought that some dude made it in his basement..."

PLAYSTATION 2

SPY HUNTER 2

MIDWAY'S SEQUEL FALLS SHORT

I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the last Spy Hunter. It was just a fun and easy to play game. No element of the game found its way to either extreme. The driving was basic, but you could pull off a slide easily. There were some challenging points, but nothing too difficult. Sure, it was short, but it was entertaining enough that you felt like you got your money's worth. Simply put, it didn't break the mold, but it had a great balance to it that made it a solid game through and through.

Sadly, Spy Hunter 2 doesn't offer that perfect mix that made the first PS2 title so enjoyable. It's a shame really, as you can see that both the developer and publisher tried to add in all the things that you should to a sequel. New, bigger, and badder weapons and vehicles? Check. Improved, larger enemies? Check. More dynamic gameplay? Check. But for all of the off-road Interceptor variations, auto-tracking turrets, and new and improved AI, the team simply forgot to make the game fun to play.

Around every turn of Spy Hunter 2's 16 levels, I was met with spy cliché after cliché: Blow up the hovercraft, save this, save that. This overall ho-hum attitude doesn't limit itself to the story either – less than stellar design can be found throughout the entire game.

While there are times when the levels shine with some impressive graphics, most of the time, they're Plain Jane and almost...dare I say it...PSone-like. In the water levels in particular I found myself staring at some awful effects and single-texture walls. And I don't mean one texture on one wall. I mean one texture used on every wall. Everywhere.

The enemy vehicles also suffer from this lack of creativity. The land vehicles act like the water vehicles and vice-versa. Plus, they don't so much chase you as fulfill some arcane routine that is executed in your vicinity.

Even worse, the control of your vehicle isn't up to par with even the original. And don't get me started on the targeting.

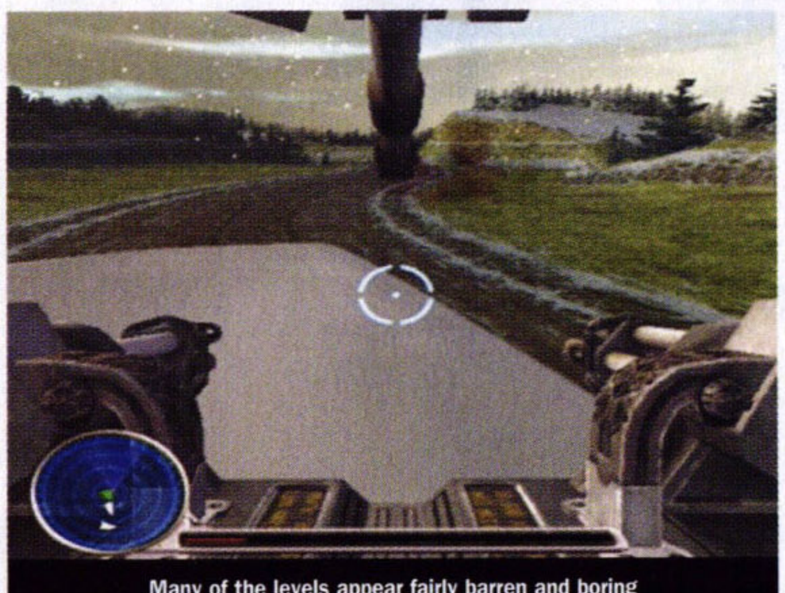
I know I'm being hard on this game, but I don't think it's uncalled for. This sequel could have been truly stellar, and instead it's not even average. In fact, the production values in this game are so poor, I would have thought that some dude made it in his basement, rather than at a multi-million dollar development studio. I don't know who is to blame here, but heads should roll. Midway and Angel Studios are capable of much more than this god-forsaken sequel. – **ANDY**

One of the game's highpoints is its particle effects...

...they make the explosions big...

...and bigger

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** ANGEL STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 25



Many of the levels appear fairly barren and boring

The new enemy AI forces the player to use both forward and backward firing weapons

THE BOTTOM LINE

ESRB: TEEN T

6

- **Concept:** Drive a transforming car through fairly linear levels blowing stuff up
- **Graphics:** As a package, Spy Hunter 2 delivers more, but the look isn't as clean as the original
- **Sound:** Pretty average overall, but Vanessa Carlton fans will appreciate her track
- **Playability:** The control and difficulty level isn't as friendly as the previous game
- **Entertainment:** This edition of Spy Hunter lacks the magic that made the first PS2 title so enjoyable to play
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

I'm a big fan of Angel Studios (now known as Rockstar San Diego, the wunderkinds behind Midnight Club II). While this project was begun before the acquisition of the company, it shows some pretty obvious similarities with MC II in terms of engine technology and graphical look. As such, it's very fast and places an emphasis on blistering auto combat. I admire the way they've tried to enhance the experience with new Interceptor forms and upgrades and opened up the level design to include some brief Twisted Metal-style boss battles and arena fights. However, the overall level of difficulty was enough to make me tear out what little hair I have left on more than one occasion. Also, there was a distinct lack of polish that might have been the result of the company concentrating on Midnight Club during this game's creation. It's a good, solid arcade experience, but one that requires a ton of both skill and blind luck to progress through.

MATT – 7.5

WIN! The Ultimate Gaming Rig!!

OVER $20,000.00 IN PRIZES!

Rattlebrain
"We Make You Think..."

You have the POWER. In this contest you don't rely on the luck-of-the draw. You determine if you win or not. You win by outscoring others in a game of skill. Can you solve the puzzle below? It looks simple, but it's only the start. Each of five more puzzles will get harder. But this time it's all up to you. Stay in to the end with the highest score and the gear is yours. With whatever options you want. Do you have what it takes? Try your hand and play to win!

Computer Contest. Win a tricked out gaming computer with 4.0 Ghz Pentium 4, 1 Gig RAM, 120 Gig. HD, DVD, Radeon 9800 card and more!

Video Game Contest. Play on the hi-tech cutting edge with this line-up: Microsoft XBox, Nintendo Gamecube and Sony Playstation 2! Get all three or trade the ones you don't want for CA$H! Bonus options include: 33" monitor, $1,000 in games you choose, Gameboy Advance, cash, accessories and more!

Media Rig Contest. The Ultimate Gaming Environment, 60 inch HDTV monitor, 130 watt receiver w/ Dolby Digital, DVD and all components shown. Win DSS Satellite Receiver as a BONUS OPTION! This rig will blow you away!!

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				___
		E			___
P	I	N	C	H	W
	R				___
S					___

MYSTERY WORD

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS .....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK .....D
BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO V
STOMP .....T	STAND .....R	PRESS .....E	DREAM ....O
CRUSH I	SCORE .....H	SLANT L	CHASE .....P

MYSTERY WORD CLUE:
WORLD RULERS HAVE IT AND IN THIS CONTEST YOU HAVE IT

Yes!

ENTER ME TODAY, HERE'S MY ENTRY FEE:

- ☐ ($3.00) Video Game Contest
- ☐ ($3.00) Media Rig Contest
- ☐ ($3.00) Computer Contest
- ☐ ($5.00) SPECIAL! Enter them all (SAVE $4.00)

Name _____ **Age** _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

CLIP AND MAIL

SEND CASH, CHECK OR M.O. TO:
RATTLEBRAIN, P.O. BOX 9315
PORTLAND, OR 97207-9315

VOID WHERE PROHIBITED • ENTRY DEADLINE: POSTMARKED BY MARCH 27th, 2004 • ENTRY FEE MUST BE INCLUDED Only one entry per person. You must be under 30 years old to play. Suppliers of Rattlebrain, Inc. ineligible. Not responsible for lost or delayed mail. Judges decisions are final. Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada. Winners determined no later than 12/31/04. You can request Winners List and Official Rules by writing: Rattlebrain Rules, 1511 SW Park Ave. #1102, Portland, OR 97201. Merchandise names and models are trademarks of their respective companies who, along with this magazine, have no affiliation with this contest.(And, if you've read all this, guess what, you have the personality type to win).©2002 Rattlebrain, Inc.

Verifiable retail value of the prize packages as follows: Media Rig Contest package $7,012.00 core components shown, bonus options $3,449.00, cash options $1,250.00. Computer Contest package $2,500.00 for computer, bonus options $2,337.00, cash options $1,250.00. Video Game Contest $700.00 for systems shown, $3,549.00 bonus options, $1,250.00 cash options.

PLAYSTATION 2

RPG MAKER II

CREATE OUTDATED JUNK

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **5.5**

- **Concept:** Create your very own role-playing game with simplistic tools and primitive 3D graphics
- **Graphics:** Egad! Did someone forget to import the texturing? Lego people look more realistic
- **Sound:** A generic score and hardly any audio effects
- **Playability:** The creation process works well, but it all falls apart once you start controlling it
- **Entertainment:** Great thrills come from designing an adventure and penning its story. Unfortunately, no one will want to play it
- **Replay Value:** High

Before you even think about purchasing this game, ask yourself this: Do you have a lot of time on your hands? Will you settle for graphics that are barely passable by 3DO standards?

If you answered each of these questions with an enthusiastic "Yes! I can't wait to make my very own game!" by all means, step on up to the designer table.

The creator tools are incredibly easy to understand and use. If you really get into it, you can alter just about everything, including visual effects and monster animations. Again, the graphics are quite horrific, so don't go into it expecting to create a masterpiece like Final Fantasy.

When it comes to inputting dialogue, the joypad just doesn't suffice. Manually highlighting letters is way too slow. You really need to invest in a compatible USB keyboard for this aspect of the game.

RPG Maker II is a decent creator (especially for a console), but it has one major flaw – the gameplay is downright appalling. A blind man on ice has more control than your character's general movements. The combat engine is so simplistic that it makes the NES Dragon Warrior look like rocket science.

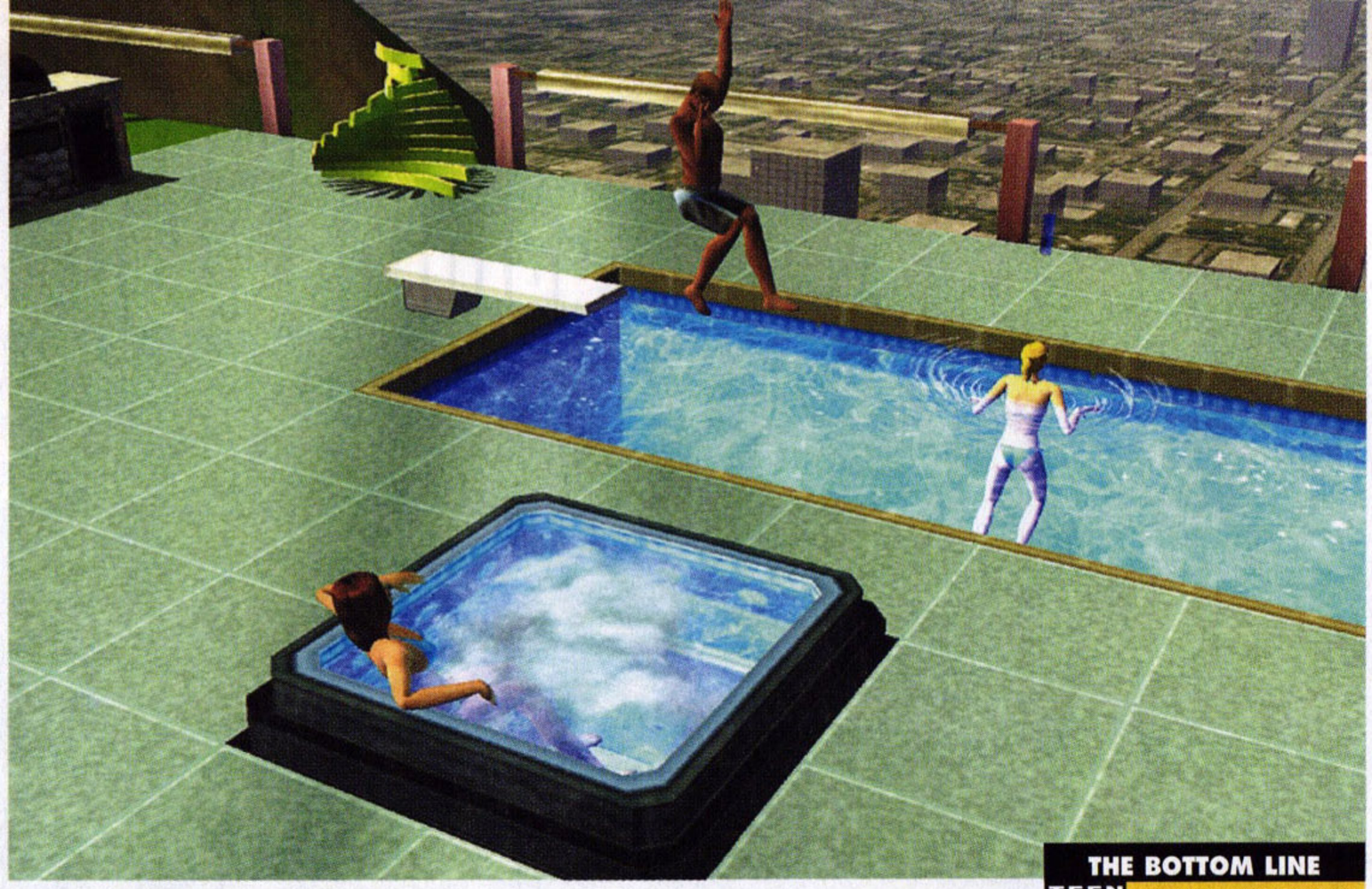
Yes, you can make a game, but you will probably despise it. – **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

I guess this title isn't going to make my dream of a "Cyber-Pirates Adventure Through Time" game a reality. The creation menus are so clunky and your results so unimpressive that I seriously doubt many people will invest the time required to make a really interesting game. Sigh. I do love my Cyber-Pirates, though.

JEREMY – 6

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC ■ **DEVELOPER** ENTERBRAIN
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28



PLAYSTATION 2

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

WONDERFUL MADNESS

THE BOTTOM LINE

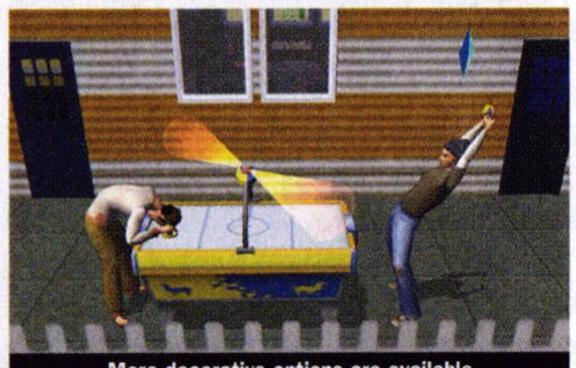
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **9.25**

- **Concept:** Where the first console editions had to prove that the game could transfer from PC, this one must up the ante
- **Graphics:** Sharper, more colorful, and loads more interesting
- **Sound:** Funny Sim-speak and better stereo tunes
- **Playability:** The controls are easy as pie, although I wish that the Goals were more accessible
- **Entertainment:** Addictive as ever and funnier than before – good times from start to end
- **Replay Value:** High

The Sims debate rages on – why not just go out and get real friends rather than investing time in relationships with pixellated folk? Well, it's because in a few short days, you can become a Hollywood sex symbol (or mad scientist, or love guru, or supermodel). These things cannot be achieved in the real world on a similar timeline.

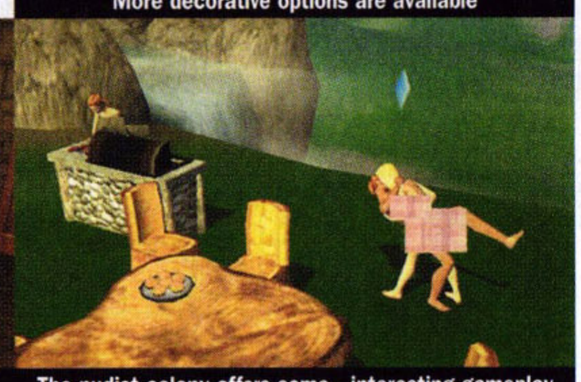
The reason that I like this edition of The Sims, in particular, is that the missions move along quicker than the real world or past versions of the game have offered. With a bounty of unlockable clothes, cars, social interactions, furnishings, and decorations, this edition is no slouch in the customization field, either.

One thing that separates the PS2 outing from its console cohorts is the online Weekend play. This mode takes place online (with one buddy at a time – whoever sends out the invite plays host in their Sim world) and is supposed to symbolize the weekend of a Sim workweek. Therefore, you don't have to work and can spend your time building up stats, chatting with your online buddy, and trading items that either of you have unlocked. It's pretty slick. Bustin' Out is well worth your time and Simoleans, er, money. – **LISA**



More decorative options are available

The Weekend online portion is a lot of fun



The nudist colony offers some...interesting gameplay

The animations are a lot more engaging

Two-player split-screen makes me want to just play online

SECOND OPINION

If you've ever played The Sims, you already know how addictive and brilliantly designed these games are. So, to those of you in that group, just let me say that you should run, not walk to the store and pick up a copy of Bustin' Out. If anything, it's even stronger than last year's PS2 hit and more assured in its mission-based structure, which is more diverse, faster, and a hell of a lot funnier than last year's. While it lacks the connectivity features of the GameCube, this is every bit as great a game on PS2, and continues to affirm that A) Sims creator Will Wright is a genius and B) At the end of the day, there's nothing better than chilling in the hot tub while your roommate desperately tries to put out a kitchen fire. What's more, the new online "weekends" finally let you screw off and do nothing – just like you do in real life.

MATT – 9

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SIMULATION (UP TO 2-PLAYERS ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 16

PLAYSTATION 2

GOBLIN COMMANDER: UNLEASH THE HORDE

A REAL-DEAL RTS

Saying that Goblin Commander is the best console real-time strategy game isn't saying much, but it's intended as a compliment. Goblin Commander would stand at the head of the class even if the competition were much tougher.

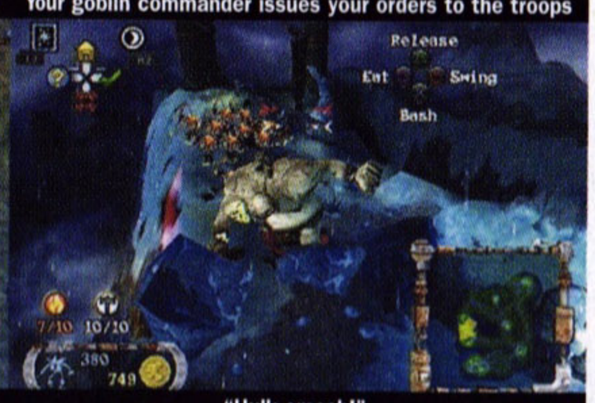
Thanks to the involvement of the Millar brothers, veterans of the WarCraft series, Goblin Commander avoids all the mistakes of the average console RTS. The control scheme is ultra-simple, but works incredibly smoothly. Basically, each clan of goblins under your control is assigned a face button. Scroll the cursor over the map, hit the button to set a waypoint, and watch your troops head to that point. For a more hands-on approach, you can take control of a specific unit and steer it manually, and the others will follow. Often times, you'll control a Titan, a giant wrecking machine with some (very) basic combat maneuvers. This direct control is the best innovation in the game, and I'd be surprised if it wasn't copied by future RTS titles.

Aside from a few minor issues (Titans are useless unless you're controlling them), Goblin Commander plays great. The graphics are also solid – zooming in on your units reveals a high level of detail. I even like the story, which is typically not a hallmark of RTS titles. In other words, this game proves that RTS games can be done right on a console. – **JEREMY**

Remember to walk your Stone Ogre at least once a day

Your goblin commander issues your orders to the troops

Up close your troops are highly detailed



"Hulk smash!"

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** JALECO ENTERTAINMENT
■ **DEVELOPER** JALECO ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

- **Concept:** Created specifically for consoles, Goblin Commander hopes to be the first non-PC RTS that doesn't suck
- **Graphics:** From a distance, everything looks kinda fuzzy, but up close, the character models are impressive
- **Sound:** The goblin language sounds cool and adds a lot to the atmosphere
- **Playability:** The success of this game is based almost entirely on its simple, yet effective control scheme
- **Entertainment:** Only the most jaded PC RTS gamers won't find something to like here
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

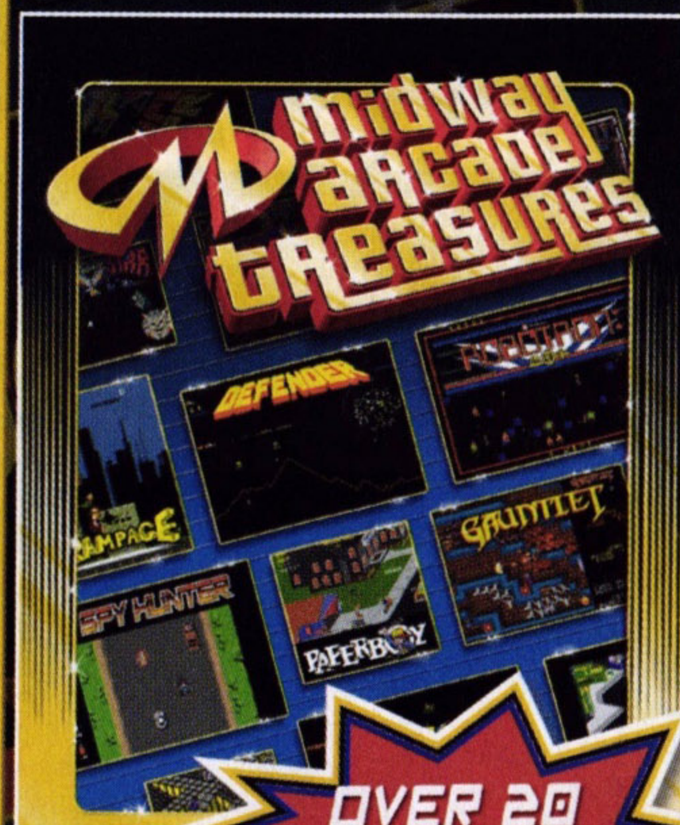
This title is a breath of fresh air in the world of console gaming. It's so unlike anything else that it would be a fun play even if it weren't done incredibly well, which it is. Though it shares some elements with classic RTS titles, it plays very differently than anything on the market. Because it was developed for consoles, Jaleco had the opportunity to create a control scheme that fits the title perfectly. After a short time with the game, I was able to forget entirely that I was holding a controller at all. Also, the huge Titans for each clan are an absolute riot. Whether it's eating enemy troops with the Stone Ogre or dropping death on their heads with the War Pig Catapult, using your Titan never gets old and keeps gameplay from getting stale. If only there was an online mode, I would probably play this constantly until the sequel comes out.

ADAM – 8

GET STOKED!

"Almost every title in the lineup brings a nostalgic smile to my face."

Chris Carle
Editor In Chief IGN Guides/
IGN Codes-IGN.com



XBOX
GAMECUBE
MIDWAY PlayStation.2

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Violence

midwayarcadetreasures.midway.com

Compilation © 2003 Midway Home Entertainment Inc. The following titles are copyright Midway Amusement Games, LLC: Spy Hunter © 1984; Robotron 2084 © 1982; Joust © 1982; Root Beer Tapper © 1983; Sinistar © 1982; Defender © 1980, Splat © 1982; Satan's Hollow © 1982; Rampage © 1986; Smash TV © 1990; Bubbles © 1983; Defender II © 1981; Blaster © 1983 Midway Amusement Games, LLC. The following titles are copyright Midway Games West: Gauntlet © 1984; Paperboy © 1985, 1999; Marble Madness © 1984; Roadblasters © 1987; Rampart © 1991; Super Sprint © 1986, 720° © 1986; Toobin' © 1988; KLAX © 1989; Vindicators © 1988 Midway Games West. MIDWAY, the Midway logo, SPY HUNTER, ROBOTRON 2084, JOUST, ROOT BEER TAPPER, SINISTAR, DEFENDER, SPLAT, SATAN'S HOLLOW, RAMPAGE, SMASH TV BUBBLES and BLASTER are trademarks of Midway Amusement Games, LLC. GAUNTLET, PAPERBOY, MARBLE MADNESS, ROADBLASTERS, RAMPART, SUPER SPRINT, 720°, TOOBIN, KLAX and VINDICATORS are trademarks of Midway Games West Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Distributed under license by Midway Home Entertainment Inc. TM, © and the Nintendo GameCube are trademarks of Nintendo. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

$19.95 MSRP
AVAILABLE NOW!

PLAYSTATION 2

SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON

I'MAGEDDON BORED

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **6.5**

Spawn has certainly had some bad luck. Not only is he a demon on Earth, but his movie stunk and his previous video games have been pretty weak. Fortunately for him, his new title is more solid – it's decent, brainless (and bloody) fun.

The thin story concerns a war between Heaven and Hell, with Earth caught in the middle. Spawn battles demons, angels, and giant cybernetic gorillas across the different planes. Each has a different feel to it, which keeps things fresh. The city levels felt the most successful; I don't really enjoy playing in Hell, but I guess that's to be expected. Who knew the underworld was full of mildly irritating jumping puzzles?

Where Armageddon really shines is the combat. While Spawn has only a couple melee moves, the selection of guns and spells add a ton of variety. Pressing R1 locks onto a target, letting you dance around your enemy, spraying hot lead. The spells are also nicely implemented, so Spawn always has three combat choices at his fingertips. Your fighting options go a long way in stretching the basic gameplay. Armageddon is by no means a revolutionary game, but a passable one, which makes it one of the best things to ever happen to Spawn. – **JEREMY**

- **Concept:** There's a war between Heaven and Hell going on, and only a certain undead assassin can stop it
- **Graphics:** The visuals don't live up to the comic – textures are simple and the overall look is a little bland
- **Sound:** Spawn's voice is awesome, but a few more background tracks would be nice
- **Playability:** Jumping can be a chore at times, but otherwise, controlling Spawn is pretty painless
- **Entertainment:** Hey kids, mindless, bloody violence can actually be a pretty good time!
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Claiming that Armageddon is the best Spawn game to date is similar to saying that *Bio-Dome* is Pauly Shore's greatest work. At its best, this title can lead to some fairly enjoyable firefights. At its worst, it's death by boredom. The gameplay is mechanically sound, yet it lacks direction and purpose. In most of the stages, the game holds your hand and forces you to follow a trail of glowing beacons. Neat. It definitely has its moments, but more times than not, it's a fairly uneventful play.

REINER – 6.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO
■ **DEVELOPER** POINT OF VIEW ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 21

PLAYSTATION 2

TOKYO XTREME RACER 3

MY NAME IS UNLIMITED BEGINNER, HEAR ME ROAR!

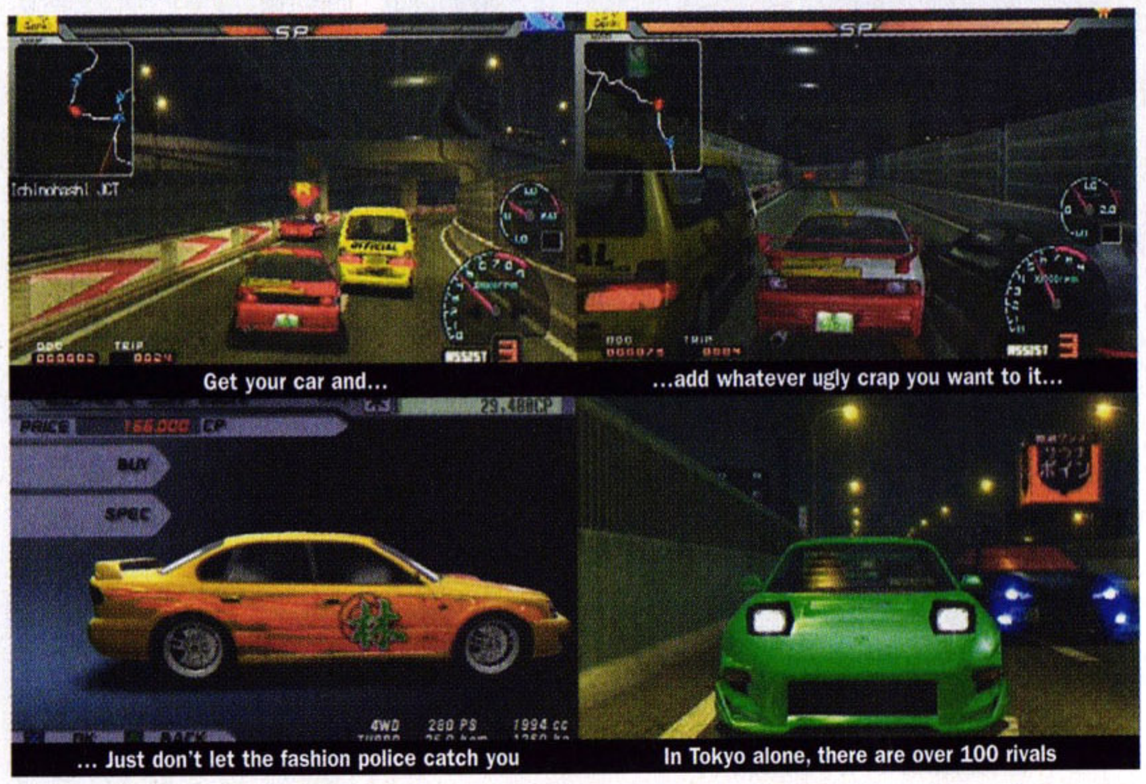
THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **6.75**

Remember your first car? If you're like most of us, it wasn't a make or model that's been in an episode of *Cribs*. It was a hand-me-down from a sibling that smelled like smoky fried tacos, no matter what kind of freshener you threw at the problem. Much like your first car, this is a game that has that pre-owned smell all over it. Tokyo Extreme Racer 3 is actually developer Genki's fourth title in the series, and it hasn't gotten any fresher through the years.

Publisher Crave has changed its philosophy and decided to release budget titles, of which this is certainly one. Don't get me wrong, I've been a fan of the series, it's just that so much has happened in the street racing genre since Crave switched its focus. Cruising around real sections of Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka looking for rival gang members to race is a great concept, but with Need for Speed: Underground and Midnight Club 2 available, this title is too simple on many levels. The races are staid and the maps require too many load points. They are dull in comparison to MC 2's shortcuts and inventive AI. What saves this game (besides the price) is the amount of customization, which includes making your own stickers. You'll also get a kick out of seeing what crazy name your competitors have christened you with depending on your skills.

To say this is the poor man's street racing game is quite an understatement. However, to completely dis Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3 would be a little harsh. It gets to where it's going; even if it's a little beat up in getting there. – **KATO**



Get your car and...

...add whatever ugly crap you want to it...

... Just don't let the fashion police catch you

In Tokyo alone, there are over 100 rivals

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** CRAVE ■ **DEVELOPER** GENKI
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

- **Concept:** Genki's street racing gangland showdowns haven't changed much, despite games like Need for Speed: Underground
- **Graphics:** Except for the road textures, there isn't much here that wasn't done back on the Dreamcast
- **Sound:** What do you listen to in you real-life car? Your favorite tunes. These are not it
- **Playability:** Although the handling was accurate for street cars, I wish it was a smoother experience
- **Entertainment:** A premise that's largely been done better everywhere else, but it is only 20 bucks
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

This series – which started in 1999 on Dreamcast – was around before *The Fast and the Furious* made street-racing cool. Its core gameplay hasn't changed much since then, however. It's a little tamer than you'd expect from a late-night, illegal race. The roads are basically void of traffic, you can only go one way, and there aren't any branching paths to speak of. You also spend a lot of time cruising around looking for opponents. I like the life bar system, which goes down when you're trailing or when you damage your car. Speaking of vehicles, the customization options are incredible. Tweak headlight types, window tint, rims, and even use a comprehensive paint program for your own decals – like the Black Flag logo I put on the hood of my sleek hooptie. It's just sad that the tweaking is more enjoyable than the game itself. Tokyo Xtreme Racer is a neat idea that has run its course.

JUSTIN – 6.75

PLAYSTATION 2

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI 2

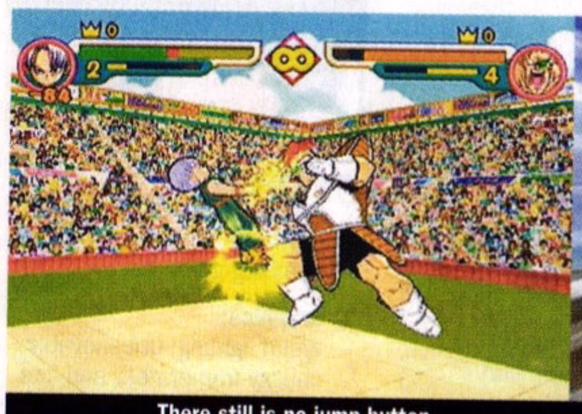
GOKU'S SPACE-AGE BACHELOR PAD

Traditionally, the Dragon Ball Z fighting games have been about pure window dressing. Give kids characters and story lines they love and the rest will take care of itself. Budokai 2 is noteworthy because it not only gives you an extra layer of depth, but it also throws in a few gameplay additions to make the average fighting slightly more bearable.

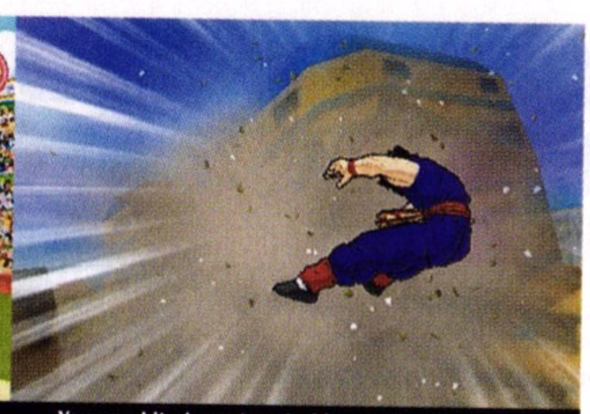
Dragon World is a new mode where the action revolves around different playing boards as you collect the seven dragon balls, among other things. Thus, move your guys into a space on your turn, and maybe it'll contain a defensive power-up or an enemy to battle. You also get to choose who your ally is for that board, so you can pull strategic maneuvers like trapping an enemy. Also, some skill capsules you win are only applicable to certain people, so it's wise to choose an ally that can maximize all the skills possible.

Developer Dimps has added some welcome defensive twists to the gameplay. Not only are dodges easier, but combos can be broken up. However, on the whole, I still feel that the game lacks some fluidity, as I was never comfortable with the dash move. Furthermore, although I like the series' use of lower and upper planes for fighting, I still wish you could move between the two more freely. Even though it's not in the premier league of fighters, I can honestly say for the first time that non-fans will find this an inviting game with its own brand of depth. As for die-hards, being able to fuse characters is just the tip of the iceberg you'll get playing this.

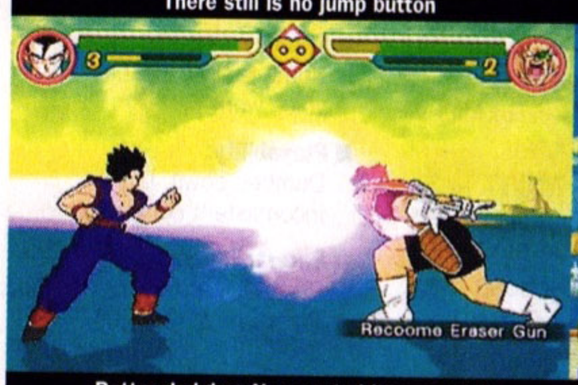
– **KATO**



There still is no jump button



You can hit characters to blow open new areas



Better dodging: You wanted it, you got it

Dragon World's board works wonders

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** DIMPS
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 2

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:** Finally give fans of this fighter something new: the board game-esque Dragon World
- **Graphics:** Budokai 2 is right at home with its cel-shaded graphics
- **Sound:** The voiceovers before battles are good to hear, although not much else is notable
- **Playability:** Despite its improvements in other areas, I still feel that movement is a small problem
- **Entertainment:** This is easily the best, most-accessible Dragon Ball fighting game there's ever been
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

For all but the hardest of hardcore DBZ fans, Budokai 2 is an average, entry-level fighter. It reminds me a lot of Street Fighter EX on the PSone, but with flashier graphics and fewer moves. Holding up and attack has the same result as down and attack, so there is very little strategy involved. Having to unlock specials as you go is also pretty weak. The board game concept doesn't do much for me, though I give points for effort for trying something different. Budokai 2 looks good and the midair fighting is a decent idea, but this is one of those games that falls apart once you actually get it in your hands. The Dragon Ball influence is faithfully reproduced here, but doesn't make up for the shallow gameplay unless you are absolutely enamored with the anime. If you consider yourself a fighting game aficionado, this is one to pass on.

JUSTIN – 6.75

GET STOKED!

"Forget Counter-Strike. Gauntlet is still the best multi-player game ever!"

Simon Monk
Editor In Chief
Stuff Magazine

PLAYSTATION 2

WHIPLASH

POLITICS AS USUAL

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN T
4

For the love of all that is holy, don't look to Whiplash for redeeming social commentary, sly political satire, or even (as is most important to us gamers) a fun time.

Eidos has produced a turd of such magnitude that there is no adjective to describe my overwhelming distaste for this game and many of the things that it stands for. Besides Whiplash's painful re-use of environments and proclivity for funneling gamers through branch-less tunnels, the combat (featuring a weasel-like vermin chained to a rabbit he likes to swing around as a centrifugal force-aided bludgeoning tool) is painfully dull. The laser obstacles and bizarre door opening mechanics are insultingly repetitive, annoying, and easy; and the level design makes me want to have an aneurysm.

Although Eidos tried to imbue the game with some spit-in-the-face-of-political-correctness one-liners, they too are repetitive and not all that funny. After being mangled or abused in some way, the bunny comments, "Just wait until PETA hears about this." If it is the organization that can make this unbelievably painful game stop, then I certainly hope that PETA does just that. – **LISA**

- **Concept:** Tether two madcap animals, insert "humor," and make a supremely boring political statement
- **Graphics:** The characters, environments, and textures are unprecedented examples of boring and repetitive
- **Sound:** Overused one-liners with a curious thumping techno beat
- **Playability:** You're given more combat moves, but the basics usually are more effective
- **Entertainment:** Sign me: "So Annoyed That I Would Have Committed Atrocities on These Creatures"
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

I chuckled a few times near the start of this game, but the laughs slowly faded, gave way to boredom, and eventually became tears of pain. Whiplash sucks on just about every level – most of your time is spent jumping over laser beams. How fun. Playing this game certainly qualifies as an act of animal cruelty.

JEREMY – 4

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS
■ **DEVELOPER** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

PLAYSTATION 2

I-NINJA

DOES NOT THE PLATFORM NEED ACTION, TOO?

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN T
7.5

For a platformer starring a little ninja, there sure is a lot to do in this game. Of course, swords will be swung in some entertaining combat (something traditionally lacking in the genre), but developer Argonaut didn't stop there.

The star of the game – a ninja called Ninja – isn't the most loveable of characters. I would've rather had him ditch the attitude and just be a determined underdog, but his abilities do justify his self-confidence. Running along walls, using a chain grapple, and some fancy jumping get Ninja around a level in style.

Every world throws something new at you. The early stages give you a Monkey Ball-esque mechanic to get parts of a giant robot back to their rightful home. Projectiles (with sniping) come into play. You'll even get behind turrets.

I-Ninja goes above and beyond the norm of platform games, and comes out shining like the edge of a sharpened blade. – **JUSTIN**

SECOND OPINION

I-Ninja plays like a video game sampler. It has the action of Shinobi, the acrobatics of Prince of Persia, the minigames of Crash Bandicoot, and the ball physics of Marble Madness. There's certainly a lot of game here, but most of it is mediocre at best. It'll deliver some thrills, but you'll likely lose interest within a few hours.

REINER – 7

- **Concept:** Little ninja, bad attitude, and lots of swinging with sharp objects
- **Graphics:** Not the prettiest girl at the prom, but she can dance. The camera tends to suck occasionally
- **Sound:** Childish music and voiceovers that won't wow anyone
- **Playability:** Ninja's got plenty of moves, and everything works as the developer intended
- **Entertainment:** Lots of deviations from simple action/platforming. If that's your genre of choice, you'll dig on this
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** ARGONAUT
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

PLAYSTATION 2

HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE

"VOMIT? REVOLTING!"

THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERYONE E
5

Rehashing Potter's first year of Hogwart's is starting to wear me out. The book, the movie, the first time that this game came out.... Purportedly, the team set out to upgrade the graphics and the gameplay of Sorcerer's Stone on PSone. What they put out was a slightly less painful version of the earlier, incredibly painful version.

In Sorcerer's Stone, you still collect grotesquely flavored beans, execute laborious stealth missions, fly an uncontrollable broom, and cast spells in a very slow manner. In case anyone familiar with the other Potter games are curious, you still don't jump on your own accord. Instead, the game employs a Zelda-like automatic jump and button-mapping system. It's cool in Zelda, because the puzzles and gameplay make up for the simplistic control scheme. The same can not be said for Sorcerer's Stone. Unless you're six years old and a mad Potter fan (who didn't play this game on PSone), don't go anywhere near this one. – **LISA**

SECOND OPINION

Yes, this is another game based on the first Harry Potter movie from EA – one that stingily doles out the fun at a dreadful, Chinese-water-torture pace. Maybe they thought that making two crappy games would be the same as making one good one? It's not.

MATT – 5

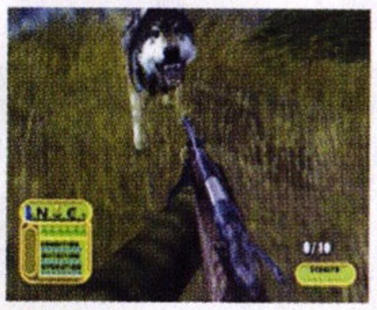
- **Concept:** Recreate Harry's first year of wizard school with mind-numbing gameplay
- **Graphics:** Weird lighting, unbelievably chuggy framerates, and lots of collision issues
- **Sound:** Some really excellent voice work
- **Playability:** Dumbed down, but inconsistent controls
- **Entertainment:** Personally, I'd rather watch the movie or read the book – this doesn't live up to my vision of wizard school
- **Replay Value:** Low

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 12

PLAYSTATION 2 QUICKIES

CABELA'S DANGEROUS HUNTS

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11



Now I know why I never went hunting. No, it's not because I love animals, it's because I hate being bored. Seriously, I thought games were about having fun. They shouldn't make your mind wander and remind you that you've got to pay your credit card bills. This hunting sim may be pseudo-realistic, but that doesn't make up for the crappy graphics, horrible pop-up problem, and general lack of anything interesting. The only danger in this game is that you might get electrocuted while smashing your TV for showing you this ugly, tedious crap. – **JEREMY**

4.75

CELEBRITY DEATHMATCH

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING
- **PUBLISHER** GOTHAM GAMES
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 14

There's a lot to get excited over here. You can create your own...oh wait, that sucks. You unlock... monsters? That's lame. Well, at least the special moves...blow? Sarcasm aside, I wouldn't burn this game for warmth if a vat of dry ice got dumped on my head. It's better than Simpsons Wrestling and features lots of gore and lowbrow humor, but that's about it. If there's ever a Developer Deathmatch game, I volunteer the people who made this crap. – **JUSTIN**

2.75

HOT WHEELS WORLD RACE

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
- **PUBLISHER** THQ
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 31

Did you ever wonder what F-Zero would be like if it sucked? Well, wonder no more! Hot Wheels World Race is here to demonstrate for us what happens when you take away good physics and the feeling of speed from a racing game. Along with the ingenious mechanic of seemingly random view changes, this makes for a game that in all seriousness is quite inferior to F-Zero. As in the SNES one. – **ADAM**

6

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

Those of you who love space combat know that you only get a few releases per year. Unfortunately, this little game is ugly and smelly enough that only a dedicated few should bring it home. It plays very similarly to StarLancer for the Dreamcast, except with an infinitely weaker interface and crappy levels. Do yourself a favor and play that to get the space jockey out of your system rather than wasting your time with this. – **ADAM**

6

LOONEY TUNES: BACK IN ACTION

- **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
- **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

I just don't think the Looney Tunes are going to get the game that they deserve. Looney Tunes: Back in Action sometimes comes close to capturing the humorous magic of the classic cartoons, with some witty sight gags and Bug's ability to burrow, but it can't hold off the stench of rot that is setting in on by-the-book platformers like this. Also, camera problems in a game with environments this simple are inexcusable. At one point, Bugs even cops to the lack of originality in an offhand one-liner: "All this running and jumping is making me hungry." Well, Bugs, it's making me tired. – **MATT**

5

TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** ATARI
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

Hot off of the heels of Enter the Matrix's success, Atari is giving Terminator 3 the royal treatment. With exclusive movie sequences that can only be found in the game, voice work by all of the key actors, and a story that better conveys the events leading up to the feature film, it has more than enough content to make fans convulse with excitement. In the greater gaming world, however, Terminator 3 isn't as majestic. Its gameplay is well below today's standard for console FPS. Horribly clunky hand-to-hand fighting also rears its ugly head. Much like Enter the Matrix, you really have to be a diehard fan to enjoy this game. It's a gritty play, but it has some great content to it. – **REINER**

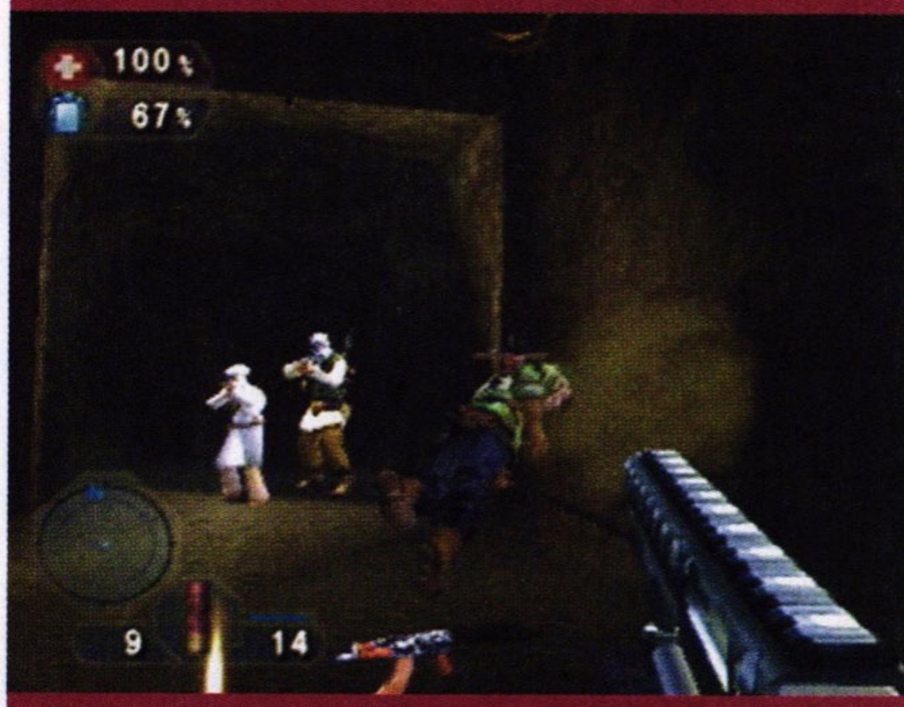
5.75

NCAA MARCH MADNESS 2004

- **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA ONLINE)
- **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 17

EA is finally playing Division 1 ball. With the inclusion of NBA Live 2004's dynamic gameplay, March Madness' on-court presence is swift and explosive. EA has also beefed up the experience with online play, rivalry games, and over 300 different teams to choose from. Whether it's the stadium details or the crowd chants, EA has captured the authenticity of the collegiate game better than anyone. The fact that Dickie V comes across as a senile old man adds an unexpected layer of amusement to the mix. It doesn't have the variety of modes as Sega's College Hoops, but when it comes to play, I give the nod to March Madness. – **REINER**

8.25



PLAYSTATION 2

FUGITIVE HUNTER

AMERICA GOOD, EVERYONE ELSE BAD

Titles like this are why video games have a bad name. Not only will it offend scores of people with its racist stereotypes and pointless mayhem, but it's a flat-out crappy game. There will be people who buy it just for the opportunity to hunt down Osama bin Laden, but they must realize how much the game sucks.

In this first-person shooter, you go after terrorists by blasting through their henchmen until you encounter your target. The only way to capture your foe is to beat him in a fistfight, at which point the game becomes a Tekken-esque fighter. Combining these styles is interesting, but the fighting controls are comically bad. Random button mashing is really the only way to complete a fight.

If the FPS segments were better, it may not be such a big deal, but they are passable at best. Aiming is difficult, the environments are bland and repetitive, enemy AI is terrible, and there are only two or three character models on each level. Henchmen will continually respawn, even in an enclosed area, so any sense of realism is lost. But then again, the point of this title is to capture all the terrorists before you go after Osama, the Kung Fu master, so I guess realism isn't what they were going for. – **JEREMY**

THE BOTTOM LINE

5.5

- **Concept:** Hunt down Al-Queda and other terrorists in this lame, exploitive shooter
- **Graphics:** Like your 35-year old unmarried sister, it's not so much ugly as it is plain. Okay, it's ugly
- **Sound:** There's a rap song about the game, and it's in the game! How clever is that?
- **Playability:** The shooter segments work decently, but the fighting controls are just plain crap
- **Entertainment:** It's crass, dumb, unoriginal, and a little offensive – which means someone out there will like it
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

The way this title does shotguns should be seen as a blueprint for future releases. Unfortunately, that's the only distinguishing thing about it – everything else is very sub-par. Specifically, many weapons seem to react oddly. Rent this to see the shotgun, forget it as you play one of the many stellar FPSs available.

ADAM – 5.25

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ENCORE SOFTWARE
- **DEVELOPER** BLACK OPS ENTERTAINMENT
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

GAMECUBE

1080° AVALANCHE

BURIED FROM HEAD TO TOE

"Whoever designed Avalanche's trick system obviously got his or her doctorate in stupidity."

In the five years that Nintendo has kept the 1080° series frozen in ice, the very nature of video game snowboarding has changed completely. After spending a week with Avalanche (which is about six and a half days too many), I'm beginning to think that someone didn't give Nintendo the memo.

If the SSX series never existed, I'd begrudgingly play Amped. If Amped somehow never came to fruition, I would play Tony Hawk – pretending that the asphalt was snow. Are you catching my drift here?

Whoever designed Avalanche's trick system obviously got his or her doctorate in stupidity. Rather than just busting out one trick after another, players are forced to wait until the game prompts them to initiate the next move. You'll have to sit back and wait until your boarder flashes red in color before a move can technically be linked. As you can imagine, this system is way too mechanical and lacking all the things that make games of this caliber great.

As disappointing as the trick controls may be, it does a great job of delivering an intense sensation of speed for the racing segments. The screen shakes violently as your speed increases; your garments ripple under furious winds; and snow particles zip by in the blink of an eye. As you traverse the terrain, you can't help but hang on for dear life. This is one of those games that achieves such a level of realism that you will freeze up or gasp when you squeeze through narrow passages. NST also implemented scripted events such as crumbling bridges and full-on avalanches to rattle your nerves and keep you on your toes.

Unfortunately, most of the tracks are incredibly short (one or two minutes tops) and are repeated throughout Match Race, Time Trial, and Gate Challenge modes. The game doesn't really embody the essence of competition, either. The Match Races are only one-on-one heats (just like the Nintendo 64 game), and you can usually blow by your adversary in no time flat. I would perform one trick at the beginning of the race to max out my power bar (which in turn raises your boarder's overall speed), and would just bomb the remainder of the hill without hitting any jumps or rails. That's all you need to do.

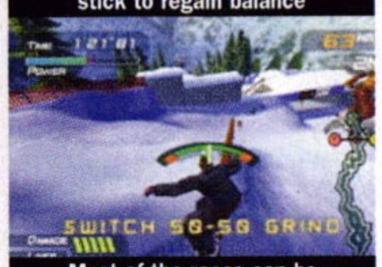
As you can probably tell, the single player experience really holds no thrills. Therefore, the only redeeming quality that Avalanche has is its four-player split-screen and LAN support.

Looking back, I gave the original 1080° title a 9.25 out of 10 and can fondly remember many sleepless nights with it. This follow-up wowed me with its visual splendor, but ultimately made me go back and play SSX 3 again.

Nintendo fans may get a kick out of some of the extras (a large ice statue of Mario and an NES controller snowboard), but I have a feeling that everyone will have trouble getting into this game's confusing trick system and lackluster single player experience. – **REINER**

Avalanches are accompanied by amazing effects and flashy camerawork

When a boarder lands awkwardly, you'll have to rotate the analog stick to regain balance



Most of the races can be completed within two minutes

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/RACING (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NST
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 1

When your boarder flashes red, you can link together tricks in a combo

The sensation of speed is right on the money. If you look closely, you can also see snow particles sticking to the boarder's clothing

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6.25

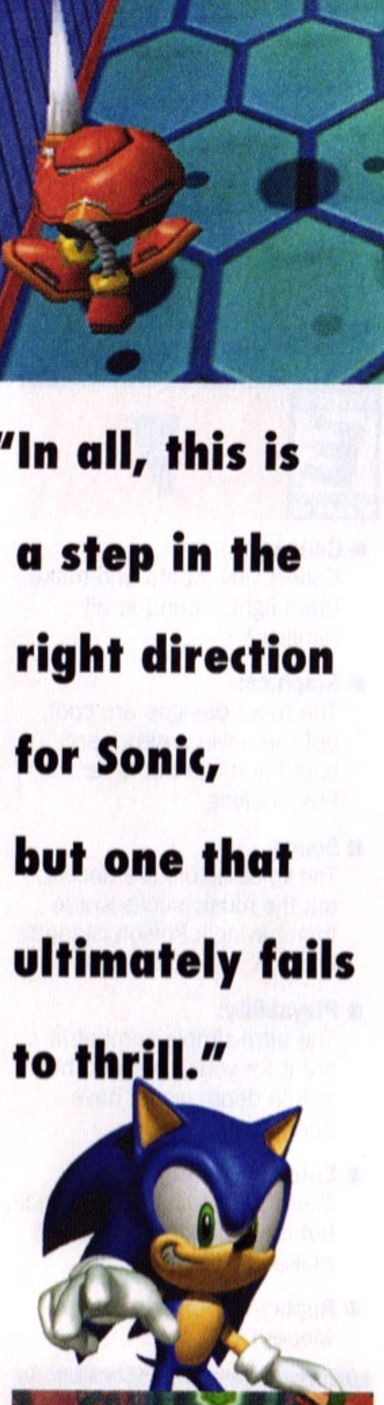
- **Concept:** Revive a long forgotten classic and implement the worst trick system in the last 10 years
- **Graphics:** You gotta love the attention to detail that NST installed. Snow sticks to boarders, the environments are very much alive, and the effects are topnotch
- **Sound:** The soundtrack is definitely rocking, yet comes up short on the number of licensed tracks
- **Playability:** The racing aspect is very intense, but the trick system is beyond pathetic
- **Entertainment:** A great multiplayer game, but void of thrills for single player
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Whether *Encino Man* or *Blast from the Past*, this game is very Brendan Fraser – it's seriously out-dated. Stationary while series like SSX blow past it on the snowboard evolutionary scale, 1080° Avalanche can't compete. I give props to it for its sharp and meticulous graphical quality, sense of speed, and ambient life; but it shoots itself in the foot with its repetition of courses and boring modes that get older quicker than a Celine Dion record on repeat. This game has its priorities all wrong. First, it makes it too easy to gain speed during races by using the crouch button – almost negating the need to do tricks. Then developer NST turns around and makes the combo system of the Trick Attack mode itself so slow and anemic that it's worthless and no fun. The game's called 1080°, but that's the last thing you'll be doing here.

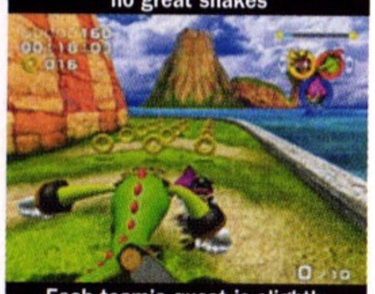
KATO – 6.75

"In all, this is a step in the right direction for Sonic, but one that ultimately fails to thrill."



With Tails in the lead, your team can fly

The boss battles are no great shakes



Each team's quest is slightly modified, but not too drastically

GAMECUBE | UNLIMITED ENABLED

SONIC HEROES

TRIPLE TAG TEAM ACTION

When I saw that I had a one-page review for Sonic Heroes on my docket, I immediately thought, "Oh great, another crappy Sonic game to review." I'm not saying that my initial bias was correct, but I think that it's telling that what was, during the Genesis days, one of my very favorite franchises now evokes an extremely negative reaction. As an aging game icon, Sonic has been in decline for years, and is dangerously close to be relegated to the b-list of gaming superstars.

Sega obviously smells the rot that has set into the 3D Sonic titles, and makes an admirable effort to change the game plan with Sonic Heroes. This time the 'hog is rolling with a posse, and you can freely switch between three characters on the fly, each of whom have different powers and abilities. To add more intrigue, there are four teams of three to choose from at the outset: Team Sonic, Team Dark (featuring Dark Sonic), and two trios of more obscure characters, Team Rose and Team Chaotix. Each of these teams is supposed to have a unique quest, but the missions and environments are largely the same, with some slight alterations.

In terms of gameplay, this triple-tag approach does improve on the stale formula of the last few titles in the series. By switching the character in the lead of your formation, you gain different abilities for the team as a whole. Generally, one character is for speed, one is for power, and the other allows the threesome to fly for brief periods of time. Also, you can perform combo attacks and even toss the other members of your party at enemies. At its best, Sonic Heroes is an ingenious platformer, requiring both quick reflexes and the presence of mind to switch to the right character at the right time.

However, this game doesn't do enough to correct the issues that have existed with Sonic titles since they made the transition to three dimensions. Camera problems still run rampant, often obscuring your point-of-view and making what should be rudimentary platforming a frustrating gulag. Also, there are still way too many long series of loops and bumpers that can be conquered by simply sitting back and pressing forward on the analog stick. Back in the day, the sheer speed of Sonic was impressive enough to make these sections worth it, but now they are simply dull. In addition, the level designs are far from inspired. Maybe these could be overlooked in a game that features some of the humor and drama of Jak II or Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando, but all you'll find here is the same annoying voiceovers and ridiculous plotlines we've suffered through for years. In all, this is a step in the right direction for Sonic, but one that ultimately fails to thrill. – **MATT**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONIC TEAM ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 15

Each team member has their own attacks, plus some tag-combo moves

There are still far too many "auto-pilot" sequences

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

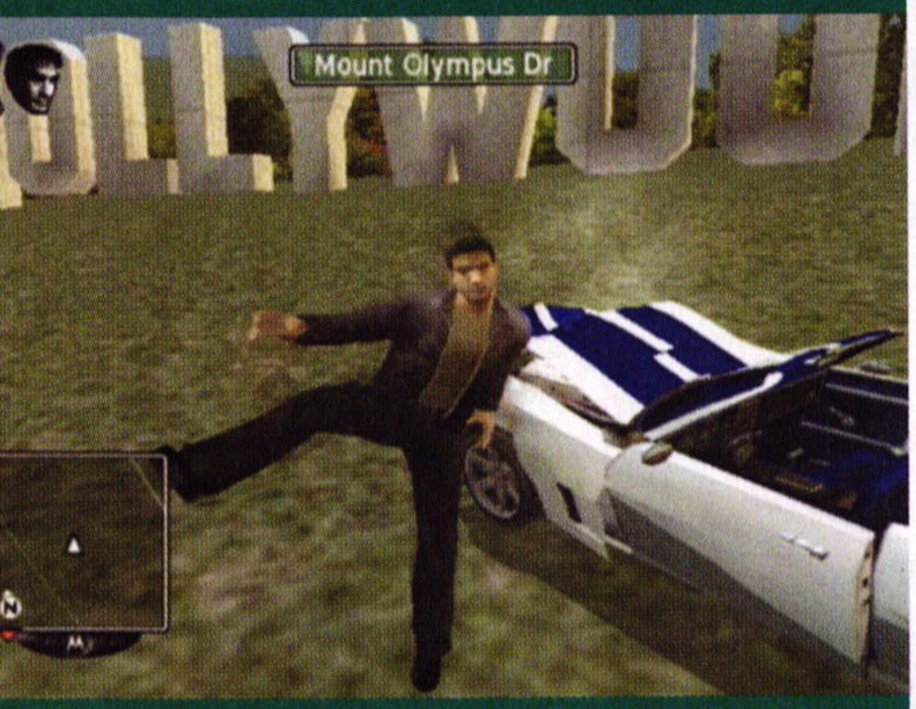
7.75

- **Concept:** Sega keeps trying, and keeps falling short
- **Graphics:** Here's the math: Renderware = solid but unimpressive
- **Sound:** Funny detail: They actually bothered to have Pro Logic II support for this butt-rock crap and 16-bit sound effects
- **Playability:** Succeeds in adding a new twist to the 3D Sonic formula
- **Entertainment:** This is the right direction for the series, but doesn't change things up enough
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I can say with confidence that Heroes is the best Sonic title of the 21st century, but I'm not sure if that's saying much, as its gameplay still doesn't live up to the series' 2D heritage. It does, however, have its moments. The various teams, and the combos they can create, give Sonic Heroes the depth that previous 3D outings lacked. Unfortunately, many of the problems that are found throughout all of Sonic's 3D adventures still persist. Sometimes, the camera makes it so you don't know which way is up or where Sonic is going, and it can create some confusion as to what direction the game wants you to go. Other times, the depth perception is so poor that you find yourself just guessing which direction to push to avoid death. This is a solid action game, but it still lacks the polish and intuitive gameplay that once was a hallmark of the series. Fans will love it, others will find it annoying.

ANDY – 7.5



GAMECUBE

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

CAN KANG HANG?

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

Bringing an M-rated game to GameCube is a gamble, but Activision's GTA-influenced action game is a no-brainer. Unfortunately, this is the worst of the three console versions of this title. Fortunately, it's still pretty darn good.

True Crime is a game where you drive, shoot, display hand-to-hand prowess, and sneak around. Basically, if it's been done in the action genre, True Crime tries to implement it. Points for ambition, but points off for execution. Driving is decent, and shooting while doing it is cleverly done, but the other aspects don't quite meet genre standards. Combat is button mashing, and the gun slinging lacks focus with aiming and targeting.

This replication of LA suffers from some of the worst pop-up I've seen in a game. Objects appear out of nowhere, and are sometimes invisible until after you've hit them. I do like the interaction with the environment, though, as most things can – and will – be destroyed during fights. The story branches cleverly, and you have plenty to do moving from one plot point to the next. Getting to beat up mugging grandmas or rescue kidnaping victims rocks. I also have to laugh every time a citizen accidentally runs me over in their car. True Crime's flaws are criminal, but not enough to lock it away. – **JUSTIN**

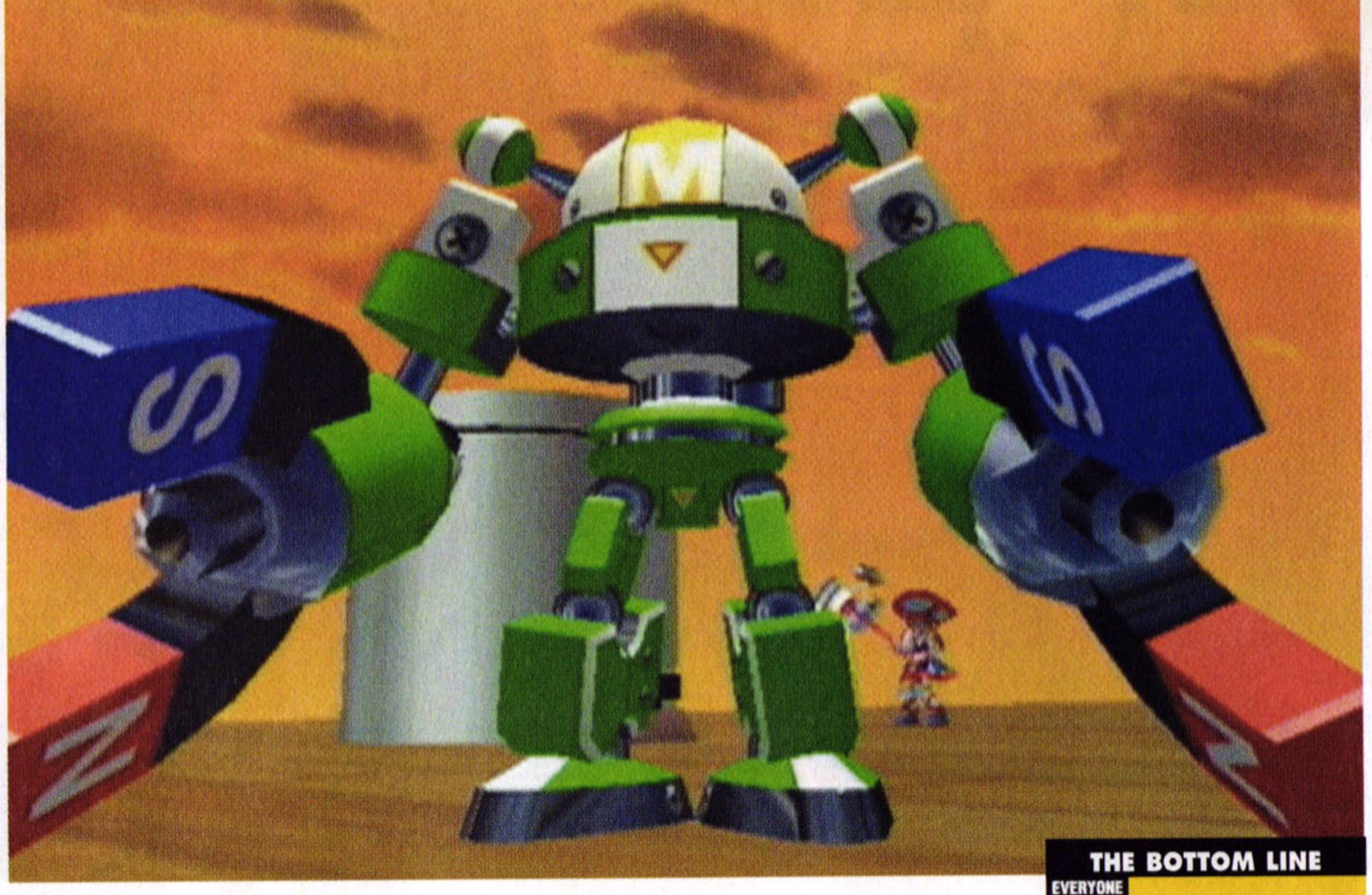
- **Concept:** Good cop? Bad cop? Nah, *your* cop
- **Graphics:** Lots of pop-up while driving, but the character models are sweet
- **Sound:** The most curse-filled game soundtrack ever! I'm a fan of the voiceovers
- **Playability:** I don't agree with many of the button layout assignments (manual target, bail from vehicle, etc.). Control is inferior to the other versions
- **Entertainment:** One of the best choices for a violent action game on the 'Cube
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

On paper, True Crime has definitely got the goods. So, why doesn't this game grab me the way that Rockstar's GTA series does? For one, it's just not cool. GTA has style for miles, but this game's attempt to be "edgy" is as pathetic and dorky as Madonna trying to rap. Also, for all the things it attempts to do, it doesn't really do any of them well.

MATT – 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
■ **DEVELOPER** LUXOFLUX ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 4



GAMECUBE

GOTCHA FORCE

GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7

I blame this on Pokémon. Here we have yet another game in which young kids collect tiny fighters and make them do battle. While Gotcha Force plays nothing like that franchise, it feels really familiar and lacks any originality whatsoever. But despite any real creativity, Gotcha Force emerges as a passable kid's title.

Before we go on, are you older than 12? If so, turn back now – this game ain't for you. It's about kids who collect robots to defeat the evil Death Force and their leader, Galactic Emperor. Sound like it's for adults?

At the start of the game, the main character finds a tiny robot and immediately starts battling other small machines. Combat takes place in third-person arenas, and is fast, flashy, and simple. After every few battles, you earn new robots called Gotcha Borgs, which you can assemble into your Gotcha Force. You'll also meet allies who fight alongside you in progressively larger battles.

While Gotcha Force offers several play modes, including Story and Versus, the basic gameplay never changes. Battle, tweak your Force, battle, repeat. Kids who have grown up with collecting games will probably feel compelled to find all 100 robots, but everyone else will grow quickly tired of the simplistic combat. It could easily be called Pokémon: Cyber Wars. – **JEREMY**

- **Concept:** Collect tiny robots and make them fight. Sound at all familiar?
- **Graphics:** The robot designs are cool, but the environments are bland and combat is far too busy-looking
- **Sound:** The voice actors are decent, but the music sucks worse than having a Poison cassette stuck in your tape player
- **Playability:** The ultra-simple combat is great for young players, but a little depth would have been nice
- **Entertainment:** There's a lot of stuff to unlock, but the redundant combat makes doing so a chore
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

The Borgs take many different forms

Bright shiny things flying at you are bad

Several Borgs can fly...

...and drop da bomb on ya!

SECOND OPINION

The government should really use this game for interrogation purposes. With high-pitched kids screaming, "Wow!", "Yeah!", and "Cool!" every five seconds, I can see even the most hardened of criminals breaking after just a few minutes of play. It's unfortunate that the audio is so dreadfully piercing. With razor-sharp controls and intense deathmatch-like battles, Gotcha Force is actually an enjoyable little game. Each of the Gotcha Borg robots, of which there are over 100 to unlock, bring something different to the arena. Do you go for speed over brawn, or bring out the big guns and pray that the enemy never converges on your location? As far as splitscreen multiplayer games are concerned, this is one of the better releases for GameCube. Each match boils down to the players' skills and strategies that they concoct.

REINER – 7.25

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM USA
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 2

namco® HITS

www.namco.com

HE'D BLUSH, BUT HE'S YELLOW.

Nintendo GameCube™ Player's Choice version includes the *Pac-Man vs.* game which you can play by connecting with your Game Boy® Advance.*

PlayStation®2 Greatest Hits, Xbox® Platinum Hits or Nintendo GameCube™ Player's Choice editions available now. ONLY **$19.95**

Shimmy, flip kick and bounce through 20 levels of 3D mazes and arcade game madness.

Zoom, zip and dive your way across 6 worlds on ice skates, in-line skates and in a submarine.

Chew up a slew of bad guys and face off with your toughest enemy ever: the wicked Spooky.

EVERYONE E Mild Violence — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

XBOX · NINTENDO GAMECUBE · PlayStation.2

Screenshots taken from PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system gameplay. PAC-MAN vs. © 1980, 2003 Namco Ltd. © 2003 Nintendo. PAC-MAN WORLD™2 & © 1980, 1999, 2002 Namco Ltd. All rights reserved. PAC-MAN © 1980, 2002 Namco Ltd. All rights reserved. Ms. PAC-MAN © 1980, 1982, 2002 Namco Ltd. All rights reserved. PAC-MANIA © 1980, 1987, 2002 Namco Ltd. All rights reserved. PAC-ATTACK © 1993, 2002 Namco Ltd. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. © 2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. Licensed by Nintendo. TM, ® and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

*Connectivity cable sold separately.

GAMECUBE

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

BETTER THAN THE REAL THING

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9

As in last year's console debut of The Sims, the classic freeform gameplay is given some structure in the form of specific level goals, which always pay off big dividends through either Simoleans or cool unlockables when completed.

The Sims' trademark humor is well in place, as Bustin' Out features a host of new career paths that succeed in gently tweaking our present-day society. Options include Movie Star, Gangster, Fashion Victim (one of the jobs in your path is "Body Waxer"), and Mad Scientist. I chose "Counter Culture," starting off as perhaps the world's first panhandler with a hot tub in the backyard. In essence, this is the same great game as before, only with more to do, more items, more Create-a-Sim options, more places to visit, more, more, more, MORE! You get the idea. Some might gripe that it doesn't take too long to complete a career path, but for me the joy of the Sims has always been in the exploration of your relationships with other characters and just plain screwing around. Also, if you have a GBA, be sure to check out the connectivity features, which unlock some minigames, items, and even allow you to bring your Sim onto the GBA. One bad feature: The saves take 161 blocks, so you can only save one Sim per 251 Memory Card. – **MATT**

- **Concept:** Life, only more fun
- **Graphics:** Better lighting and a more detailed presentation impress
- **Sound:** I always love the quirky approximations of current music and the strange speaking voices
- **Playability:** A game that literally anyone can play (and play...and play...and play)
- **Entertainment:** An improved sequel with cool connectivity features
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

I never thought I'd find myself saying that I enjoy connectivity more than online play, but this just happens to be the case with Bustin' Out. Having the option to download your GC character data for gaming on the go on the Game Boy Advance adds an extra layer to the experience. As far as sequels go, EA really knocked this one out of the park. It's much longer, all the more outrageous, and entertaining from start to finish.

REINER – 9.25

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SIMULATION
■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 16

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6.25

GAMECUBE

THE HOBBIT

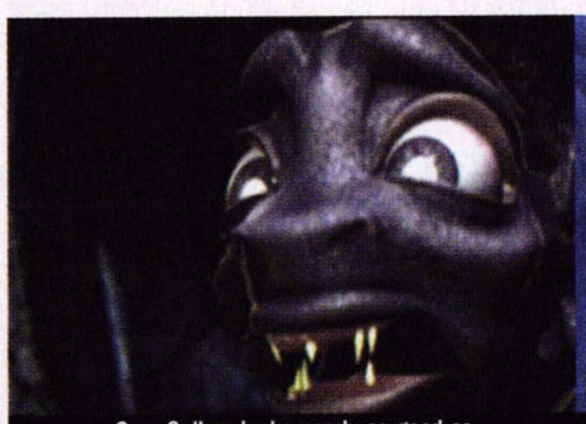
BORED OF THE RINGS

Remember the part in J.R.R Tolkien's novel *The Hobbit* when Bilbo has to jump across giant levitating mushroom tops to get the huge floating key? That was awesome. Seriously, if Tolkien's first book were this mediocre, there wouldn't have been sequels. If you're reading this, you're probably familiar with the story, so I won't rehash it here. But do you remember Bilbo needing to collect "courage points," parts to repair broken machines, or embarking on a series of lame fetch-quests? Nor do I.

Granted, this title is aimed at kids, as evidenced by the ultra-frequent save points and one-button combat, but seriously, classic literature deserves better. This is nothing more than another lame Zelda clone with a license attached. Take that away, and it's the same game as Vexx or any other sub-par platformer. It's even got the requisite sloppy camera, collision problems, and collectable doodads that an adventure game needs to be truly underwhelming.

While I've (deservedly) ripped this game a new hole, it's not a total loss. It's by no means the worst Middle-Earth game out there, and it may be a decent purchase for kids or exceptionally slow adults. But if you're expecting something that can stand alongside Peter Jackson's version of the franchise, then you had better look elsewhere. – **JEREMY**

- **Concept:** Guide Link...er, Bilbo, through a loose retelling of the book that plays like a Zelda clone
- **Graphics:** See, all you cel-shading haters? The Wind Waker could have looked like this. Then how would you feel, huh?
- **Sound:** Bilbo sounds just like C-3PO – whiny and vaguely British
- **Playability:** Although it apes the recent Zelda games, controls and camera are nowhere near as tight
- **Entertainment:** Not nearly as good as the animated Hobbit cartoon, so what does that tell you?
- **Replay Value:** Low



Gee, Gollum looks nearly as good as he does in the movie! *snicker*

Combat is simple and only uses one button

Uhhh...no comment

"I just can't face the world after starring in this game!"

SECOND OPINION

Boy, this game grabs you by the throat and never lets up! After a brief dream sequence where you hit some monsters with a stick, you'll go to Hobbiton. Here, you'll fetch an elderly hobbit's knitting needles, move a butter churn, play hide-and-seek with a bunch of toddlers, and pick apples – and that's just in the first 15 minutes! No sleep 'til Brooklyn! After such a rootin' tootin' start, I didn't have any idea what was coming next! Collecting money for UNICEF? Attending an ice cream social with some dwarves? Who knows – anything can happen in the crazy world of The Hobbit! In seriousness, this game never really reaches for the epic, sweeping scope of Tolkien's source material, settling for a ho-hum hodgepodge of hack n' slashing and platforming. I'm not a huge fan of EA's LOTR games, but at least they make an attempt to be as grand as the films that they're based on.

MATT – 5.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
■ **DEVELOPER** INEVITABLE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

GAMECUBE

POKÉMON CHANNEL

SHOULD YOU TOUCH THAT DIAL?

A Pikachu and a television are the main components of this release, which isn't so much a game but a virtual pet/TV-watching sim. Collecting cards, playing minigames, and painting are also on the docket for this strange release.

Prof. Oak wants you to watch all the shows; including a news network, *Shop 'N Squirtle*, and exclusive Pikachu Bros. anime. Oak unlocks new channels as you go, but being forced to view Slowpoke sleeping or Smoochum doing aerobics in their entirety isn't my idea of fun.

Your Pikachu pal gets into mischief, and it's up to you to raise it right. Plop it in front of the boob tube, and it will be content much longer than you will. You can also play catch, grow plants, and explore inside and outside of your house.

This game, like Animal Crossing, guilt-trips you into daily playing (it also uses the 'Cube's internal clock). However, there's not nearly as much substance. You become a slave to the TV and a slave to Pikachu. Pokémon fans will be glued to their sets. Everyone else will be turned off, pun intended. – **JUSTIN**

SECOND OPINION

If the lightning-quick gameplay of Animal Crossing was just too much for you to handle, Pokemon Channel might be right up your alley. Most will find this just slow, weird, and boring.

LISA – 6.25

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** THE POKÉMON COMPANY ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 1

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6.5

■ **Concept:** Play a game where you get to watch TV – but with Pikachu

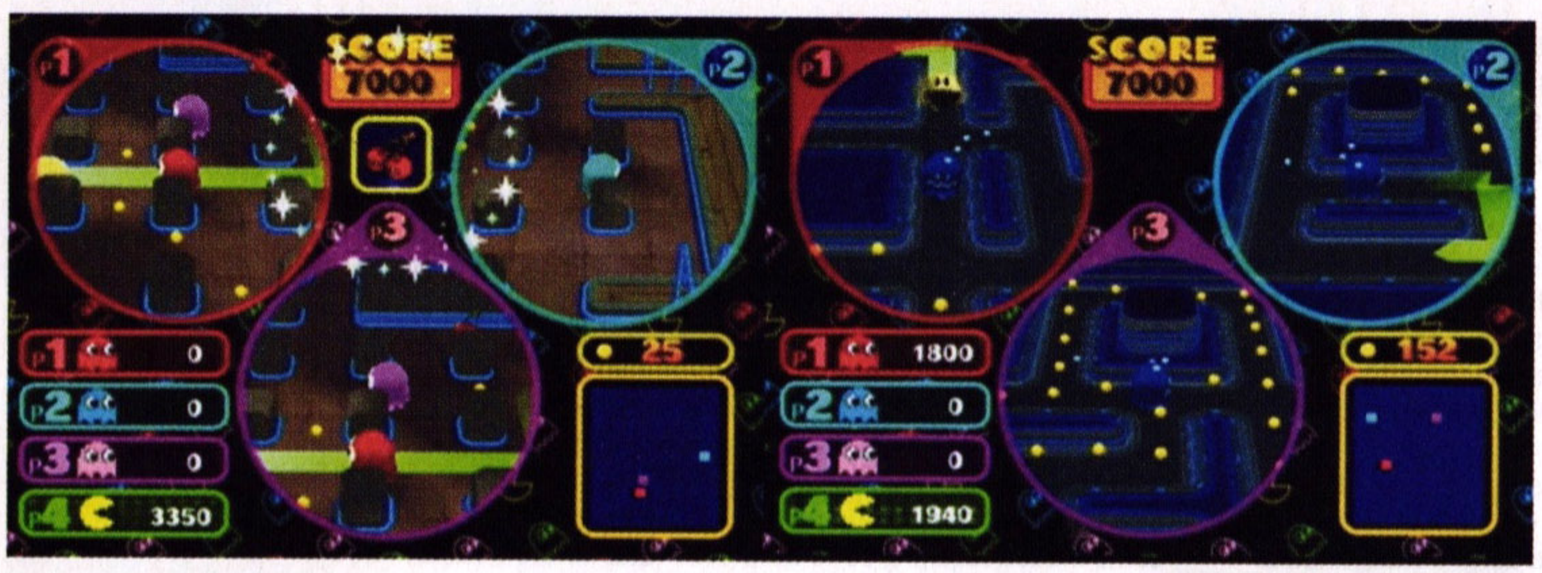
■ **Graphics:** Models aren't much better than Pokémon Snap, but the cartoons are surprisingly crisp

■ **Sound:** I tell ya, Pokémon cries can get downright annoying

■ **Playability:** There isn't a lot of actual game here, save for changing channels and a point-and-click interface

■ **Entertainment:** Cute? Definitely. High-quality gaming? Not so much

■ **Replay Value:** Moderately High



GAMECUBE

PAC-MAN VS.

FOUR TIMES THE BOREDOM

Well, here's the game that took up what seemed like half of Nintendo's last E3 press conference: Pac-Man Vs. "Designed" by gaming legend Shigeru Miyamoto during what was in all likelihood the most inspired Saturday afternoon of his career, the game is a four-player version of the arcade classic we all know and love. If you're not familiar with it, here's the rub: With three GC controllers, one link cable and one GBA, you or one of your soon-to-be-former friends take turns playing as Pac-Man on the handheld unit's screen, while the others play as ghosts with a limited field of view on the television. Whoever wins gets handed the GBA to be P.Diddy for the next go 'round. That's it.

Yep, I know it's free if you buy one of three new Namco titles, but please don't buy a game you didn't intend to with the thought that Pac-Man Vs. will make it worth your money. Simply put, it's just not that fun. Playing on the GBA feels like playing Pac-Man in slow motion, and being a ghost usually ends up being a tedious exercise in guesswork. Strangely, they didn't even bother to include a one-player game. Some of the new boards are sorta neat, but the old saw "You get what you pay for" rings true in this case. – **MATT**

SECOND OPINION

This effort is more of a disgrace to the Pac-Man legend than a harking back to former glories. Everything about this title is slow-paced and boring. I guess it's free, but that's about the only positive thing I can think of.

ADAM – 5.25

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO/NAMCO ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 4

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

5

■ **Concept:** Turn an arcade icon into a four-player party game

■ **Graphics:** It's Pac-Man

■ **Sound:** Bleep, bleep, bleepin' with some Mario (!?) voiceovers

■ **Playability:** Feels sluggish on the GBA, and the limited viewpoint starts to annoy when you're a ghost

■ **Entertainment:** It's going to take you longer to find three controllers, a link cable, a GBA, and three friends than you're going to want to play this

■ **Replay Value:** Low

REVIEWS

GAMECUBE

BIONICLE

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 21

Wow, a 3D platformer! At this point, do we really need another generic walk-around-and-collect-things quest? Everything about Bionicle is quite solid, but it's still a very unnecessary title – I feel like I've been playing this game since 1998. There are no glaring problems, which I suppose is a step up for Lego games, but it's not enough to make this a competitive effort. Unless your eight-year-old has an affection for Legos that borders on obsession, you don't need to bother with this title. – **ADAM**

EVERYONE E **6**

GAMECUBE

GOBLIN COMMANDER

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY
■ **PUBLISHER** JALECO
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 25

Through a simplified approach to real-time strategy, Goblin Commander injects a spark of life into a dying console breed. Being able to take physical control of units is a unique and brilliant decision on Jaleco's part. Rather than just being the tactician who observes, this system brings you down to the frontlines and lures you into the fray better than an RTS can. While the number of unit types is a bit of a turn off, the maps are sized perfectly, and strategies are in great abundance. The split-screen multiplayer works well, but only having 12 maps to play on definitely limits the time that you'll spend with it. Goblin Commander won't blow your socks off, but it's a noteworthy first attempt that deserves a look. – **REINER**

TEEN T **8**

GAMECUBE

YU-GI-OH! THE FALSEBOUND KINGDOM

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 4

For its GameCube debut, the Yu-Gi-Oh series is taking on a more traditional RPG format, and the results are mixed. Card-based grid battles are gone in favor of a real-time map and three-on-three combat. Although healing and unit movement with the clock ticking is kind of cool, I don't like how the title breaks battles into multiple rounds when they could be taken care of in a single skirmish. Even with relatively few RPGs on the GameCube, Falsebound Kingdom's relatively simple approach isn't that captivating – unless you're a Yi-Gi-Oh fan who is a newbie to the RPG genre. – **KATO**

EVERYONE E **6.5**

"No one person can sing the praises of this title's presentation enough."

XBOX

Tom Clancy's

RAINBOW SIX 3

NAZIS FOR THE NEW MILLENIUM

Terrorists seem to be the bad guys du jour. This latest effort at bringing the defense of freedom to a TV near you has many things to offer, such as spectacular graphics, realistic sound, and Xbox Live support like few others.

Rainbow Six 3's interface is easily one of the better ones around. The best part of it is the auto-aim reticle, which shows the area within which your aim will shift to a target. Depending on your weapon, movement, and position, it expands or shrinks. It's a great mechanic that lessens the difficulty of precise aiming in console FPSs, while staying somewhat realistic and rewarding good tactics.

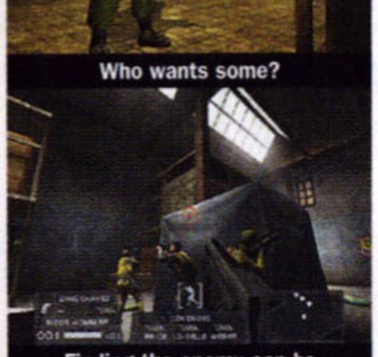
No one person can sing the praises of this title's presentation enough. Everything about it comes together to put you in the game. The graphical and aural effects when a flashbang grenade hits you are particularly impressive. The shadows are highly contextual, and can even be spotted by alert players to give away enemy positions. Night and thermal vision is implemented so well that...okay, you get the idea. Seriously, this caliber of sensory effects is something to behold.

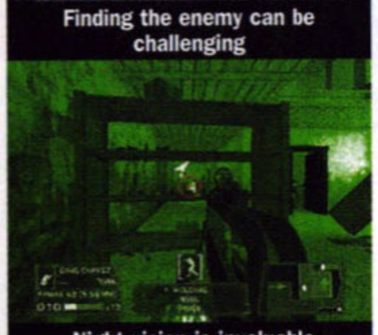
Single-player is fun, but it involves dying a lot while memorizing the level, after which you can pretty much blast through without trouble. Asserting your mastery over the terrorists who just gunned you down fifteen times is a very cathartic experience, though, so it's not too bad. Another factor is the bizarre inconsistency in enemy and teammate AI. At times your crew will get utterly wiped out in a few seconds, while in another mission they'll make your presence almost unnecessary by instantly dropping any bad guys who come into range. This makes for a very up-and-down quest, but the peaks make up for the valleys.

Multiplayer, either over System Link or Xbox Live, is uniformly excellent except for two things. Inexperienced players will be put off by the ease with which they are killed, as characters can't take as many bullets as in most other games. Also, downtime can get to be a bit much, with some modes requiring up to several minutes before a killed player can respawn. There are several types of matches, including co-op versions of the single-player missions, so most people should be able to find at least one or two that they enjoy.

Though it lacks anything innovative enough to break into the ranks of the truly great, Rainbow Six 3 is a very solid game on all fronts, with exceptional multiplayer. If your Xbox is hooked up to Live, this is not one to be missed. – **ADAM**

Who wants some?


Finding the enemy can be challenging


Night vision is invaluable

Thermal can help you find hiding targets

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16-PLAYER VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28

The various settings are gorgeous

Crimson skies, indeed

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

- **Concept:** Defend the future world against the forces of terror. That, or blow up your opponents online
- **Graphics:** Made from the best stuff! The Unreal engine still rocks at lighting and shadows
- **Sound:** The only problem is irritating voice-masking on Xbox Live
- **Playability:** Voice commands in single-player are spotty, but the regular squad interface is good enough that it doesn't matter
- **Entertainment:** Both online and off, this is one of the better console FPSs around
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

With a sizable single-player mode and Xbox Live functionality, Rainbow Six 3 is chock full of first-person goodness. While the solo missions are fun, they might be a little tough for some. However, the real draw here is the online play. With Rainbow Six 3, the Xbox now has a viable answer to SOCOM and its sequel. This new Tom Clancy shooter is every bit as fun online, but it looks a lot better. Much like Splinter Cell, the light and shadows are fantastic and add a great atmosphere. They easily eclipse the visuals of SOCOM II. However, the squad commands in single player are far simpler and less dynamic than those in Sony's title. If you have both a PS2 and an Xbox, Rainbow Six 3 won't make you turn your back on SOCOM, but if you're a Microsoft-only kind of person, this is the online title you have been waiting for.

JEREMY – 8.75

"Titles like Invisible War are why video games are the superior entertainment medium."

XBOX

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

FIRST-PERSON KOTOR

I love the first Deus Ex – which I played initially on PlayStation 2. The mixture of story-driven and freeform gameplay coupled with RPG elements was sublime. Ion Storm has a lot to live up to; while it took a slightly different path, I'm a happy camper.

For the uninitiated, the Deus Ex series is like a first-person Knights of the Old Republic. You get various missions to take or refuse, and you have choices over what to say in conversations with NPCs. While KOTOR limits you in what you can do, especially in "safe" zones, DX lets you go wild. If you want to kill anyone, it's your prerogative to do so. There are definitely consequences, but the choice is there.

Thanks to stellar new physics, Invisible War gives you even more freedom than before. Tossing objects (and people) will come into play more than once for solving missions. It's also extremely entertaining to do things like toss two bodies into questionable positions; or push flaming barrels into NPCs to light them on fire, then laugh giddily as they run around ablaze.

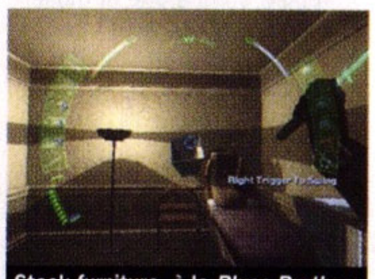
Of course, you play Deus Ex for the adventure, not the goofiness. This game is loaded with more conspiracy theories than a whole season of *X-Files*. The drama starts almost immediately, and you're always faced with at least two choices of who to side with. You can seesaw between them or just stick with one. I won't ruin anything here, but you'll definitely see the return of old friends and creatures – most rooted in real-life truth. Also, plot twists may occur when you're not in the area, giving a living-world vibe that's quite cool.

Invisible War is a methodical game, unlike most titles that adopt a first-person perspective. Patience is required, but rewarded. The lighting and environments are amazing, and the slow pacing masks a questionable framerate. I would've liked more face models, but character garb is highly detailed.

The first Deus Ex was heavy on the RPG elements – giving you experience for performance and letting you craft a skill set. Invisible War isn't nearly that in-depth. A multi-tool does the job of a lockpick and security-cracking device; hacking is only available as a biomod; and there are no experience points. These things are a bummer to depth-junkies like myself, but make the title more accessible to casual gamers.

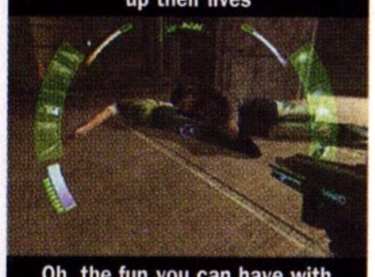
The biomods are the only thing you can really upgrade, but they rock. Make yourself virtually invisible to people or bots, heal yourself without medkits, or enhance your strength. Black-market mods are more devious, but I won't waste the surprise for you.

Titles like Invisible War are why video games are the superior entertainment medium. You mull over puzzles, weigh ethical dilemmas, and ponder the universe. At least, that's what I do. Even if you just plan to shoot stuff and sneak around, it's a darn good time. – **JUSTIN**

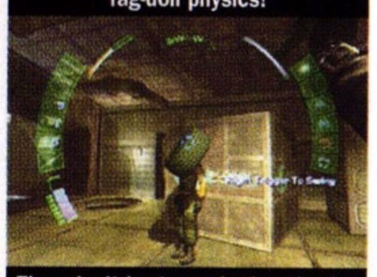


Stack furniture, à la *Blues Brothers*

Push the barrel by an NPC to light up their lives

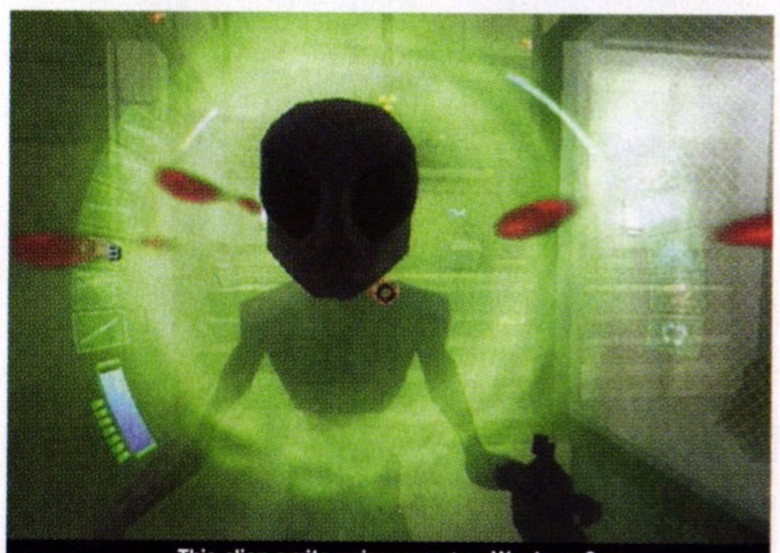


Oh, the fun you can have with rag-doll physics!



Tires don't hurt people, but they're fun to throw

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS ■ **DEVELOPER** ION STORM ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 2



This alien emits poisonous gas. Want one?

"Don't shove. I'll kill you all eventually."

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9

- **Concept:** There are still conspiracies left unexplained. Invisible War ties them together
- **Graphics:** Not a new benchmark, but lots of pretty things
- **Sound:** Admirable voiceovers, and lots of them. Mood music is subtle but effective
- **Playability:** You'd never know this series is supposed to be played with a keyboard and mouse
- **Entertainment:** Brilliantly designed in nearly every way, Invisible War is a gamer's game
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

When the first Deus Ex came to the PlayStation 2, it was dated because the PC version was already old. Now with the Xbox version also a priority, there is little reason for it not to be highly polished. In many places, the game shines brightly. The lighting system is brilliant, and several times I used foes' shadows against them. This is combined with a world that is replete with interactive objects. When you realize that almost any object you pick up can be useful, you understand the depth here. This extends to the story choices you make, which are just as numerous as Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic. Despite the work put into these elements, the game lags behind in its combat. The AI is often stupid, and battles were less than thrilling when the framerate chugged. Still, I highly recommend this game, as it puts so much at your fingertips.

KATO – 8.75

XBOX UNLIMITED ENABLED

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

FJORKIN' HILARIOUS!

"...pure comic genius."

As tears of laughter rolled down my cheeks and my gut began to ache from the hilarity that had just unfolded onscreen, I found myself sizing up the brilliance that had been attributed to Armed and Dangerous' script. Very rarely do you hear video game critics talk about the writing in a title, but this little-known application had me wondering if the cast of Monty Python had reunited to write a video game.

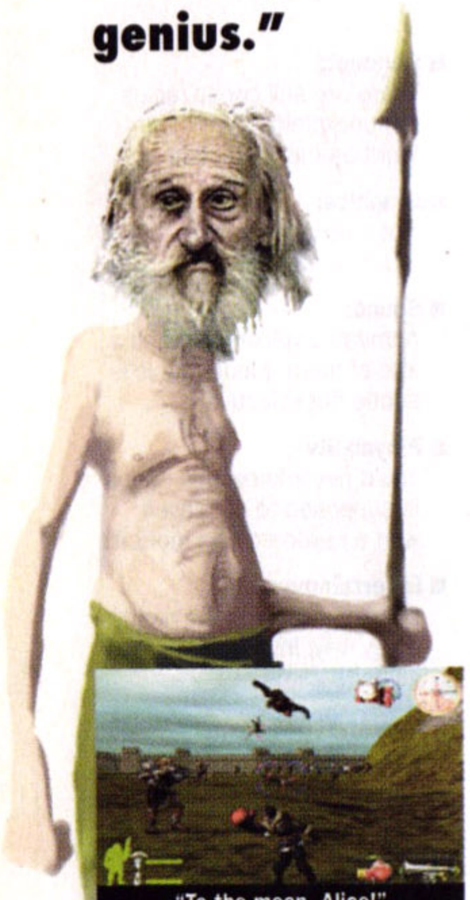
At the beginning of Armed and Dangerous, the words "Based on a true story..." appear just as a robot wearing a cape and a talking mole run across the screen. You can't help but chuckle at the absurdity of it. As the story unfolds, the laughs just get bigger. Developer Planet Moon Studios even goes out of its way to poke fun at publisher LucasArts. Several scenes from the Star Wars films are tapped for all they're worth, and are used to deliver unforgettable, laugh-out-loud entertainment.

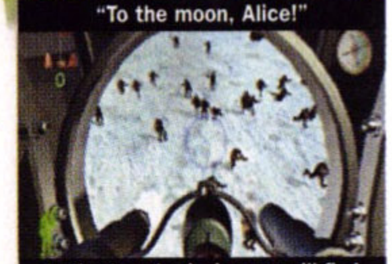
It's not that bad of a game, either. I won't go as far to say that it will leave you frothing at the mouth for more, but it is amusing nonetheless. It's a run-and-gun third-person shooter developed in a similar vein to Planet Moon's previous work, Giants: Citizen Kabuto.

As a whole, there really isn't much to this title's gameplay package. You're basically asked to eliminate any threat that you come across. Every once in a while you may find yourself escorting hapless civilians, or mounting a wall-based turret in a Helm's Deep-like battle where you must protect a stronghold from hundreds of advancing soldiers. The controls are simple, yet the firefights are frenzied and the difficulty level is balanced perfectly.

Sticking to its comedic guns, many of the weapons that you wield are incredibly inventive, and will surely bring a smile to your face. There's the Land Shark Gun, which, as you can imagine, sends a shark into the ground that launches out beneath your foe and devours them. There's also a handy little doodad called the Topsy Turvy Bomb that flips the world upside down once inserted into the ground. Anyone who is not holding onto something falls down (or is it up?) into the sky. Deactivating it sends them hurtling back down to the ground. You'll also wield Guy Fawkes Traitor Bombs, the Vindaloo Rocket Launcher, a Cyclops Sniper Rifle, and will eventually wrap your hands around the World's Smallest Black Hole.

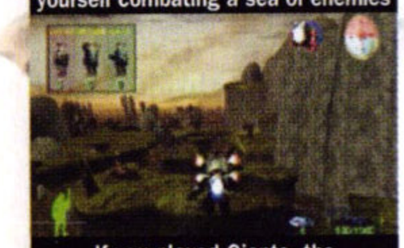
While the graphics leave much to be desired and the quality of the CG cutscenes is crude at best, Armed and Dangerous is in the most side-splitting of ways, pure comic genius. In the grand scheme of things, it may be a fairly generic shooter, but with Planet Moon going to great lengths to ensure that the experience is lively and fun every step of the way, it becomes something far greater. – **REINER**



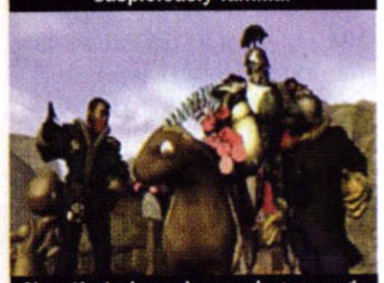


"To the moon, Alice!"

In the turret missions, you'll find yourself combating a sea of enemies

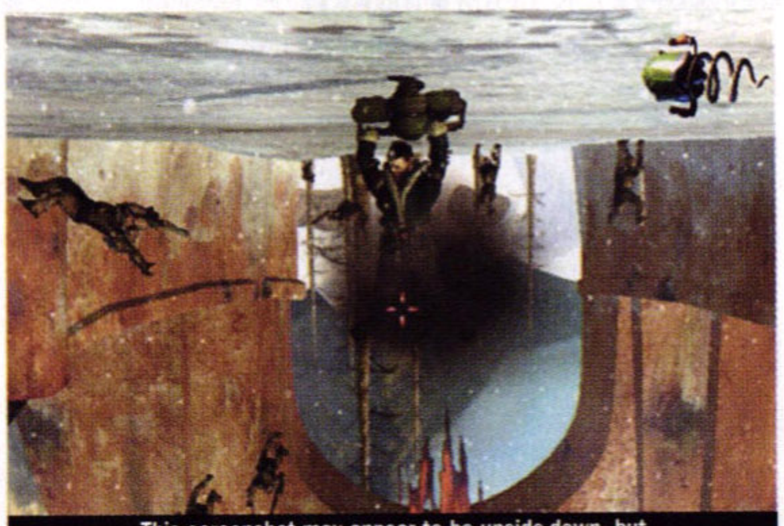


If you played Giants, the jetpack controls will seem suspiciously familiar



Yes, that sheep is wearing enough dynamite to level a large city

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** PLANET MOON STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 2



This screenshot may appear to be upside-down, but looks can be deceiving. Meet the Topsy Turvy Bomb

This is one of the most memorable moments in any game

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

- **Concept:** Visceral run-and-gun combat with a soft, hilarious side
- **Graphics:** Way behind the times. The texturing and animations are rugged and lacking in detail
- **Sound:** A Celtic soundtrack...how strange...yet fitting. The voiceovers fit the characters perfectly as well
- **Playability:** Simple, yet fun. The assortment of weapons is immense and unique to a game of this ilk
- **Entertainment:** Not much in terms of replay, but it's one of those games that you won't be able to put down until the credits roll
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

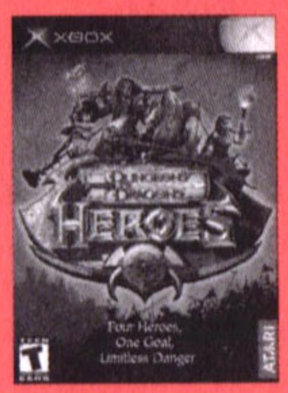
SECOND OPINION

Out of all the thousands of video games that I have reviewed, never have the words clever and outrageous been more appropriate than in this review. Armed and Dangerous is certainly not groundbreaking in the grand scheme of video games, but it never claimed to be, and that's the beauty of it. It sticks to what it does well. It's basically just Monty Python humor mixed with good old-fashioned gunplay. Nothing fancy. But what is here, is very well executed and funny as %$#*. This may not be the next Grand Theft Auto, but you most certainly need to play it. Rent it if you must, but if you want more crazy, insane titles like this to come along and give the world of video games a much-needed change-up, I highly advise that you pick this one up. It's almost as funny the second time through. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll like it better than Cats.

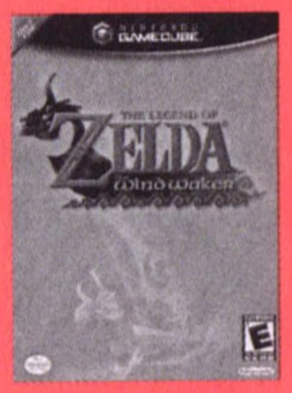
ANDY – 8.25

CAUTION

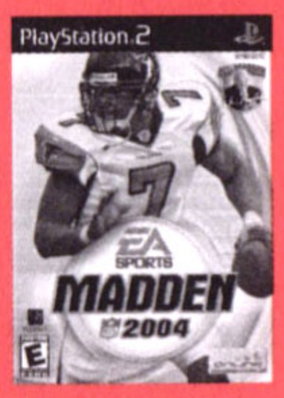
Suit up. Slip into flame retardant garments and turn the page slowly.



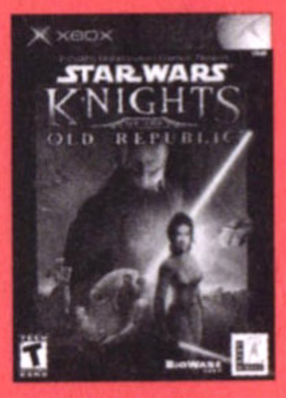
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: HEROES for XBOX



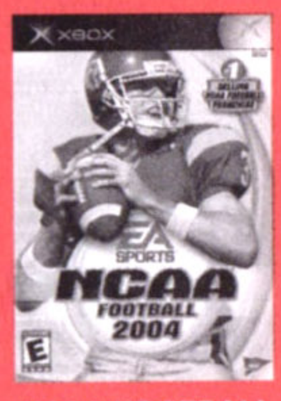
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER for GAMECUBE



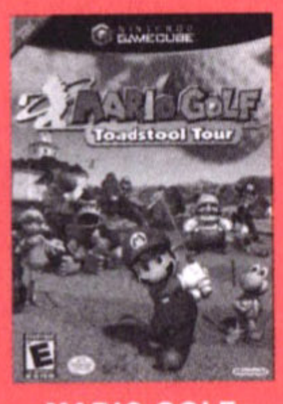
MADDEN 2004 for PS2



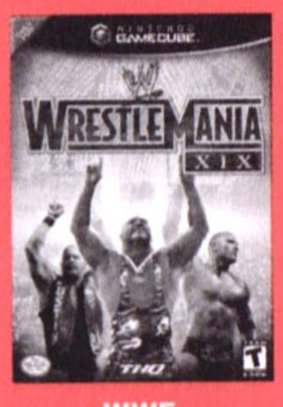
STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC for XBOX



NCAA FOOTBALL 2004 for XBOX



MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR for GAMECUBE



WWE WRESTLEMANIA XIX for GAMECUBE

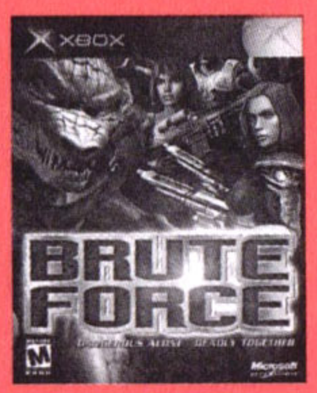
F-ZERO GX for GAMECUBE

YOUR CHOICE **34.99 USED**

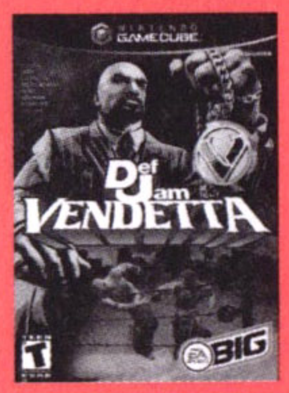
HOT GAMES OF 2003 AT THE HOTTEST PRICES

GameStop

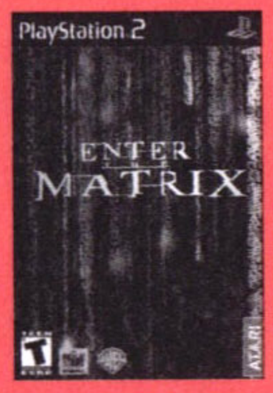
Babbage's | FuncoLand | software etc



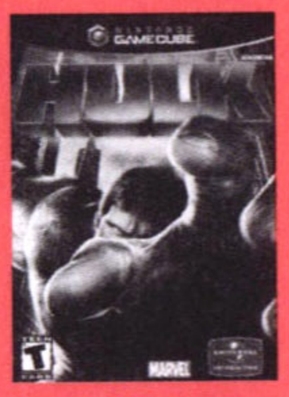
BRUTE FORCE for XBOX



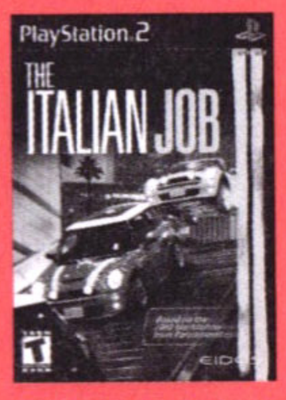
DEF JAM VENDETTA for GAMECUBE



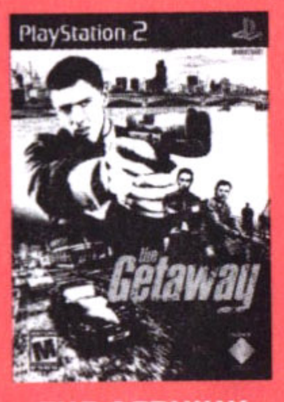
ENTER THE MATRIX for PS2



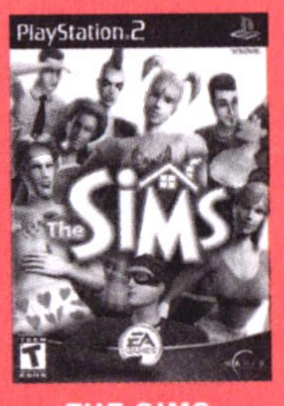
HULK for GAMECUBE



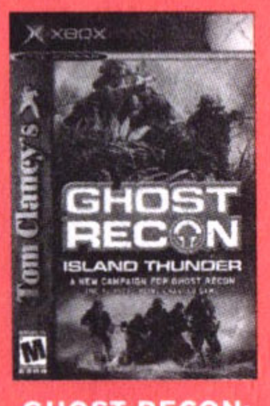
THE ITALIAN JOB for PS2, XBOX AND GAMECUBE



THE GETAWAY for PS2



THE SIMS for PS2



GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER for XBOX

EACH ONLY **19.99 USED**

"Prince of Persia isn't the greatest game ever made, but it is most certainly close"

XBOX

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

AN ANIMATED MASTERPIECE

Never before has a title had the phrase, "Game Of The Year," mentioned so often in the same breath. To see Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time in action is like seeing the Taj Mahal for the first time – it's simply breathtaking. (And yes, I know that the Taj Mahal isn't Persian, but it seems appropriate – work with me here).

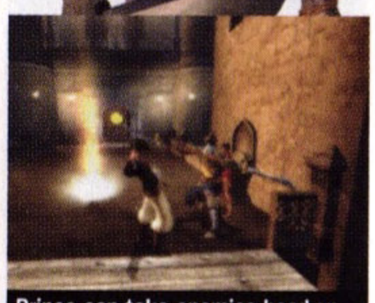
While I can certainly see how that phrase fits, Prince of Persia isn't the greatest game ever made, but it is most certainly close. Based in a mythical Persia, where the hero of this story inadvertently unleashes the Sands of Time and dooms his people, the game is played through an ingenious flashback perspective where the player relives this tale.

Sands of Time sets the player in a world where you must jump, flip, tightrope walk, swing, and battle your way through a palace of pitfalls and evil minions. It's basically an improved version of the gameplay found in Tomb Raider or the critically acclaimed ICO. Of course, those two games owe their very existence to the original Prince of Persia that was released in 1989, but they are excellent examples of how the modernized Prince interacts with his world. However, this title is more like ICO in that navigating the world is extremely easy and intuitive. And this is where the game truly shines.

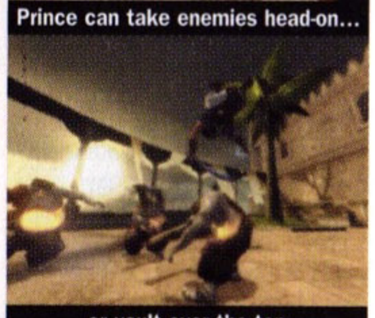
The Prince is able to seamlessly flow from one move to another. He swings on uneven bars better than any Olympic star. He runs on walls and jumps across deadly chasms as easily as we mere mortals get out of bed. Watching this all unfold is the best part of this entire game.

During your exploration of the levels, the Prince will also encounter a fair amount of puzzles and enemies to defeat. The puzzles are fairly simple and serve as a nice break from the platforming action. The combat, while executed perfectly, tends to grow old in time simply because there is little to no difficulty to defeating this title's dimwitted enemies. This grows in tedium as the game progresses and the enemy force increases in size.

Luckily, these portions of the game are limited, and while they do drag the overall experience down, they don't ruin it. Adventure and platform fans absolutely must play Sands of Time. The story is one of the best I've seen in recent memory, and all the little bits and pieces, like your femme fatale partner Farah and the ingenious flashback scenes, work to flesh out a game that truly is one of best you will find in 2003. – **ANDY**



Prince can take enemies head-on...



...or vault over the top...

...but either way, you must finish them with the Dagger of Time

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12

The Xbox version enjoys a smoother framerate and a slightly sharper resolution over its console competitors

The lovely Farah will fight by your side through most of the quest

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9.5

- **Concept:** Use time and amazing acrobatics to navigate a palace full of pits and platforms
- **Graphics:** The animation is so spectacular that it has to be seen to be believed
- **Sound:** Good voice talent and interactive music set the tone perfectly
- **Playability:** There are a lot of commands, but the control is surprisingly easy to grasp
- **Entertainment:** The combat can become a little much at times, but overall the game is a work of art
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

A hard-hitting thrill ride with a sheer visceral charge; The Sands of Time is inexhaustibly inventive, brilliant every step of the way, and one of the year's best games. Whether running along a wall to clear a gap, flipping over the back of an adversary to apply a final blow, or rewinding time to reattempt a miscalculated jump, I am in complete awe of this title's unique gameplay mechanics and silky-smooth controls. The Sands of Time is also deserving of accolades for its visual splendor, uniquely crafted puzzles, and expertly designed levels. Even the storytelling commands attention with compelling plot twists and beautifully animated cinematics. The only area where this game shows signs of weakness is in its pacing. Some of the fights in the second half of the game go on for far too long. It's a small gripe, but something that I'm sure will gnaw on your nerves. Outside of this, The Sands of Time is golden.

REINER – 9.5

XBOX

GRAND THEFT AUTO III/VICE CITY

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

"Even if you've played the PS2 games to death, you'll notice a lot of cool new details"

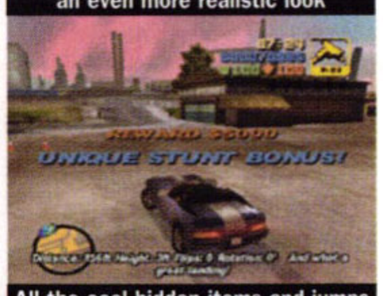
Well, Xbox fans, here you go. Finally, you're going to get a shot at playing the series that will be remembered as the defining franchise of this console generation. Yes, Halo is more refined and Zelda is more ingenious, but only Grand Theft Auto III and Vice City has that genre-busting, nonlinear sensibility that the development world is trying to catch up with. Its influence is everywhere, and not just in similarly themed titles like The Getaway or True Crime. No, since GTA III became the unexpected blockbuster of the last five years, the fingerprints of Rockstar North's creation can be seen in every genre, from action/platform (Jak II) to vehicular combat (RoadKill) to extreme sports (SSX 3). It's obvious that, while the more explicit GTA clones may be merely a passing fad, the idea of placing characters in huge, interactive worlds and giving gamers the freedom to explore is here to stay.

I'm sure it's been a long wait for those faithful only to Bill's 'box. However, I am pleased to see that – although I'm certain that both games would have sold well packaged individually – Rockstar saw fit to appease the Xbox audience by giving them what I feel is one of the best deals you'll find in all of console gaming: a two-disc set sold for a single-game price of $50. That's a hell of a bargain, and I have to say that the cool packaging (which emulates special-edition DVD sets) only adds to the sense that you're buying a top-notch experience.

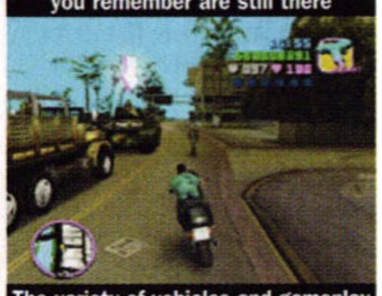
And top-notch it is. As much as I've played these two games in the past, it was astonishingly enjoyable to head back to the mean streets of the GTA universe. Even if you've played the PS2 games to death, you'll notice a lot of cool new details, like articulated fingers during cutscenes and fully rendered rims on all of the vehicles (which now sport a reflective sheen worthy of Gran Turismo). Yes, these are small things, but they do serve to make the world even more immersive, especially if you're playing on the television that supports 16:9 high-definition (another feature that has been added). While both titles are amazing, it's pretty obvious to me now that Vice City is the better of the two. While still a little off at times, the troublesome targeting is much better in the sequel, as are the character models and lighting. Also, with motorcycles, speedboats, and a host of other novel missions like controlling a remote-control helicopter, Vice City has a level of variety that no game can match. In fact, my only slight gripe with this double-pack is the fact that some of the improvements made in Vice City weren't implemented in this version of GTA III.

However, the fact that you can now get both of these Xbox ports for a value price of $50, and that Rockstar actually inserted new textures to make these games look even better than before, it's pretty hard to argue with this one. Buy it, play it, love it, and finally see what everyone's been telling you for the past two years: Grand Theft Auto rocks. – **MATT**

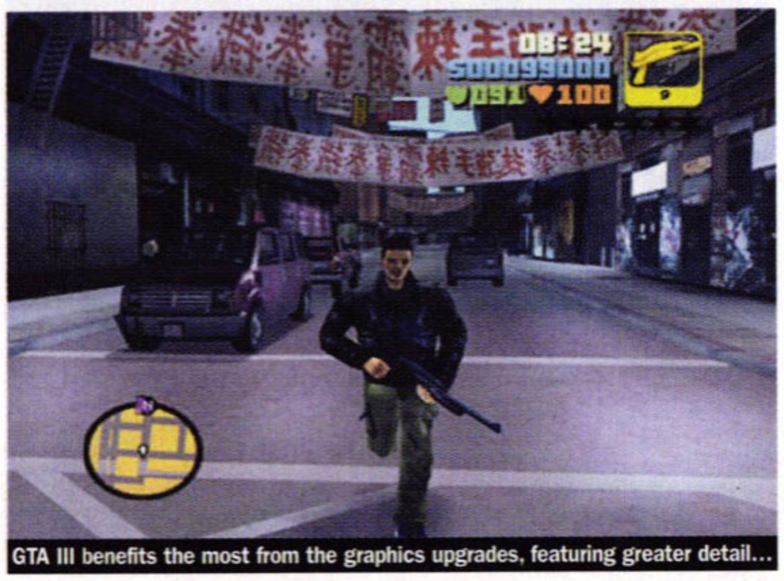
New lighting effects give the games an even more realistic look



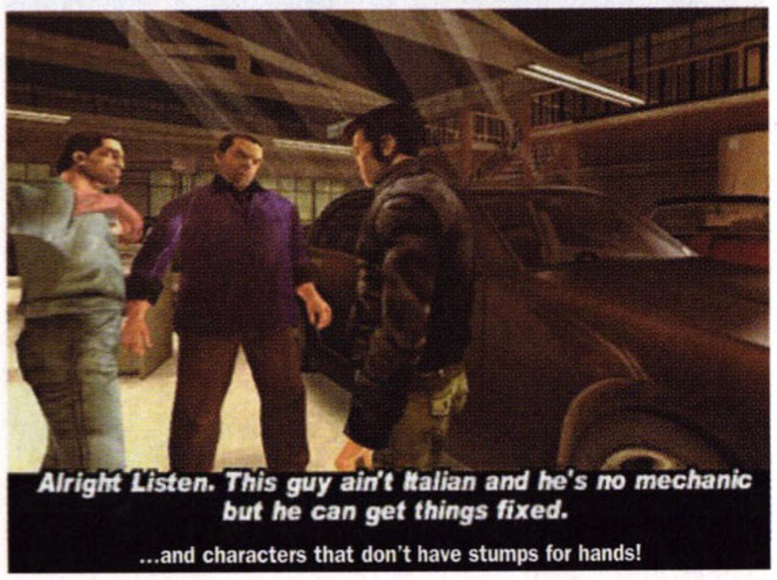
All the cool hidden items and jumps you remember are still there


The variety of vehicles and gameplay make Vice City the better of the two

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** ROCKSTAR NORTH ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 4



GTA III benefits the most from the graphics upgrades, featuring greater detail...


Alright Listen. This guy ain't Italian and he's no mechanic but he can get things fixed.

...and characters that don't have stumps for hands!

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

10

- **Concept:** Two mammoth PS2 hits brought to Xbox in one super-bargain package deal
- **Graphics:** A lot of love went into improving the textures and lighting, and it shows
- **Sound:** You can now add your own songs via the Xbox hard drive, but don't miss out on the brilliant radio stations
- **Playability:** All the variety of the PS2, but it would have been nice to see Vice City's improved targeting in GTA III and some bug fixes
- **Entertainment:** You won't get more bang for your $50 this year
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

These are two of the most entertaining and influential video games to date, and Xbox owners should be licking Rockstar's boots for porting them over in any form – much less as a double-shot with improved graphics. The balancing on these games is genius. No mission is too hard, and the easy ones are still fun. Variables mean that the situation is slightly different every time you try a mission, and the ways to complete them are nearly infinite. The toy aspects – just messing around shooting people, hitting jumps, and exploring for the heck of it – are unsurpassed. The changes Rockstar made visually are appealing. I'm always a big proponent of custom soundtracks, too. However, both games maintain the bug level of the PS2 versions, which was semi-frustrating. Also, the targeting on GTA III continues to be problematic. Still, this is an unbeatable package.

JUSTIN – 9.75

"If you have a broadband connection, buy this game. If not..."

"...and twins"

Fastline feels futuristic

Make the stairs slippery with blood

Play peek-a-boo with the shield

XBOX

COUNTER-STRIKE

HALF-A-LIFE

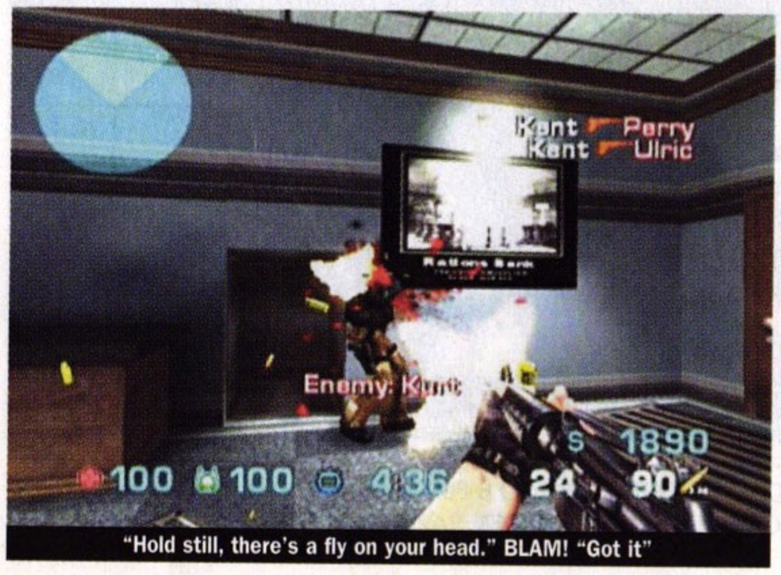
Microsoft's exclusive acquisition of Counter-Strike is like a golden bullet for the company's online plans. The game is still being devoured by the PC-faithful, and anyone with a broadband connection has to experience this title in its proper environment – online. That being said, I'm very disappointed that the single-player component has been pared down so much. Instead of being a rock-solid piece of software for everyone, Microsoft and Valve basically boiled the decision down to this: If you have a broadband connection, buy this game. If not, then I heavily suggest a rental to first see if Counter-Strike's bite-sized terrorist vs. counter-terrorist gameplay is truly for you.

Instead of the goal-based approach of this title's PC-only counterpart (subtitled Condition Zero), the Xbox version's idea of single-player is simply to let players go wild on the game's 20 maps with a bunch of bots. Valve had boasted that its ally and enemy AI were life-like enough to help ease newbies into what they can expect from the stiffer competition of human opponents online. From this perspective, Counter-Strike's single-player mode does succeed in helping rookies learn what the game's all about. Foremost, you'll become acclimated to the maps – a must if you play online. As for the AI itself, it does contain some human-esque traits. Some of my enemies would bunny hop around in order to make it difficult for me to get a bead on them. Better yet, my colleagues understood the importance of sticking together. After a few rounds, we'd move toward objectives very efficiently – basically showing that the AI, like a real person, was starting to understand the map better. I did find, however, that the enemy forces usually didn't pick up that I used the same route over and over again.

Besides the poor excuse for a single-player mode, the game does give you some new things. Seven new maps is nothing to sneeze at, especially when they are everything Counter-Strike fans would expect. There are plenty of secret passages, choke points, and enclosed spaces to make you more than a little nervous of where the next headshot is coming from. The riot shield is a blast to utilize, but there are things here and there which still are annoying. You can still move and snipe with the scope without losing accuracy; not all the new weapons (like the Molotov cocktail) are in; there won't be the downloadable toolset given to PC players; there's only demolition and hostage rescue scenarios; and you can't speed up to the end of a round if you die in single-player.

As it has always been, Counter-Strike is a pure multiplayer title. However, even if you have Xbox Live already, why spend 50 bucks when you can get the original on PC for half that? Or why not get Condition Zero for ten bucks cheaper and still get more features? Some have called Counter-Strike for Xbox a holdover until Halo 2 comes out. With a non-existent single-player component, nothing could be further from the truth. Counter-terroristing it up online is as hot as ever, but with the majority of Xbox owners without broadband, this is way too niche to be a hit. – **KATO**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE OR UP TO 10-PLAYER VIA SYSTEM LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** VALVE SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



"Hold still, there's a fly on your head." BLAM! "Got it"

Group dynamics are just as important in single-player

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:** Introduce Xbox players to one of the greatest online first-person shooters of all time
- **Graphics:** There are graphical upgrades here and there from the PC edition, including weather
- **Sound:** Mood music? Try the cursing and screaming over the Xbox Communicator
- **Playability:** It's tuned nicely for console users, and the quick turn approaches the speed of a mouse
- **Entertainment:** This game was built for multiplayer fun, but little else
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

After all the Condition Zero single-player elements were pulled from the Xbox version of Counter-Strike, I was more than a little worried about how this game would play out on everyone's favorite big, black box. On one hand, many people who would get the most out of the Xbox Live experience more than likely have already played the game on PC for more-or-less free. On the other hand, playing on Xbox Live gives players a chance to participate in this game without all the cheating that runs rampant in the PC version. Tough choice, but one you have to make when deciding to pick up this title or not. For an online game, Counter-Strike is truly one of the greats, and for those that never got a chance to experience it, this Xbox edition is a godsend. I've played it before, and will stick with Rainbow Six 3 for my Live first-person shooting cravings.

ANDY – 7.25

XBOX

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION ULTRAMIX

NOBODY PUTS BABY IN A CORNER

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

8

I've been of the mind that the Dance Dance Revolution series has been coasting in this current console generation. Ultramix proves me wrong.

This is the first DDR game – and really the first rhythm/music game – for Xbox. The steep learning curve seems to assume people who buy it are familiar with the series. The dance pad is pretty sweet, with its own style rather than being a direct copy of the PlayStation one. The song list is one of the best in the series, featuring lots of new tracks with varying styles. Many of my favorites are back in remixed form.

Xbox Live play is a major selling point, and it lives up to the hype. Four-player competitions are something you'd never have the floor space to do in the real world – though they are available offline as well. The customization of rules and parameters is pretty vast. Also, I like the idea of downloading new song packages for a nominal fee.

DDR hasn't evolved much since its console debut on PSone, but the graphics, song list, and online options of Ultramix makes it the best entry in the series since DDR: Konamix. Xbox owners, quit playin' the wall, and get out there and dance! – **JUSTIN**

- **Concept:** Give Xbox owners the opportunity to dance, and do it online
- **Graphics:** Cel-shaded dancers and FMV backgrounds
- **Sound:** One of the best song lists in the series. The voiceovers are still kind of annoying
- **Playability:** Same steps as always, but some songs really meld them with the flow
- **Entertainment:** Good to finally see some innovation in the current-gen DDR games. Great pick for beginners and vets alike
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

If you want to get your groove on, to what (in my humble opinion) is a series of mostly-generic techno ditties, this is the game to buy. Those that are already disinterested in the concept can move on – this title won't change your mind about the dance game craze, but does give you Xbox Live people another genre to play online.

LISA – 7

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE) ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT HAWAII ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18 (DANCE PAD BUNDLE), DECEMBER 2 (GAME ONLY)

XBOX

STAR WARS: JEDI ACADEMY

KNIGHTS OF A NEW REPUBLIC

THE BOTTOM LINE

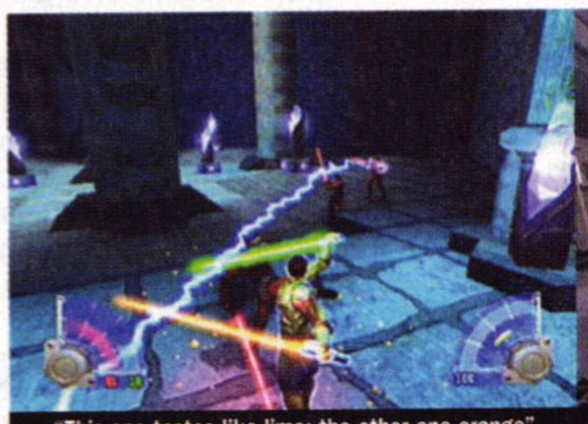
TEEN

8

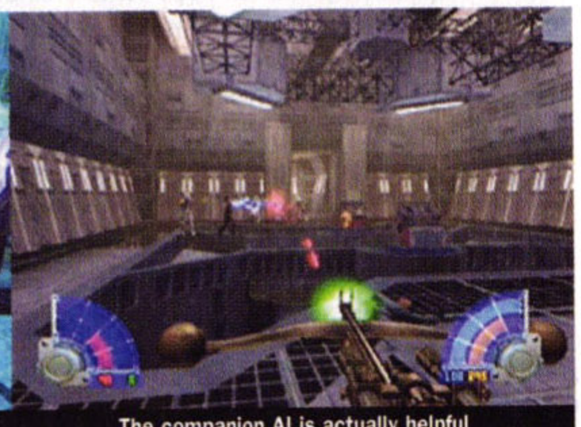
A lot has changed since Jedi Knight, and I feel that time has caught up to the series and exposed some flaws. The thrills aren't as large in Jedi Academy, but it still stands as an exciting way to step into the boots of a saber-wielding bad ass.

Many of this game's problems lie in the fundamentals. I'm not a fan of the pacing here. Since you get Force powers and a lightsaber right away, you lack the appreciation for how powerful you are, and it skews the gameplay balance. You have to get two-thirds of the way through to meet a worthy adversary. Furthermore, compared to Kyle's journey in Jedi Knight, you never feel connected to the story. All of these faults are also exposed in the boring mission structure – including not one, but two abysmal levels. Compare Academy to Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic in these departments, and you fully appreciate the storytelling/pacing glue (including how to use a cutscene) that KOTOR offers.

Jedi Academy gives you some beautifully choreographed fights, but graphically the game is short of the console's best. This does nothing to detract from the pure fury of your slashing lightsabers – something that is delivered in spades. With its faults, this title is a good hack-fest with a high body count (which makes for an awesome multiplayer component), but still leaves it short of what it wants to achieve. – **KATO**

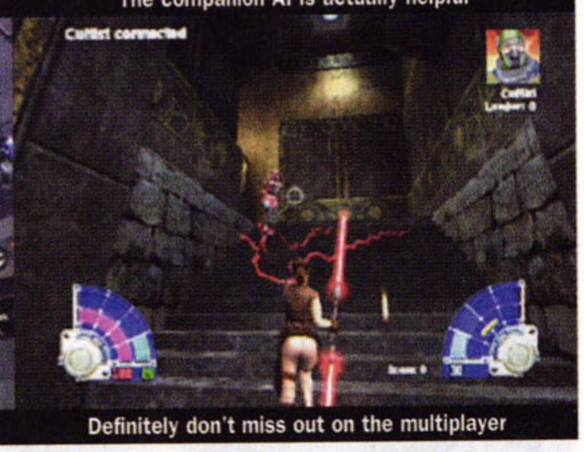


"This one tastes like lime; the other one orange"



The companion AI is actually helpful

The slo-mo death sequences never get old



Definitely don't miss out on the multiplayer

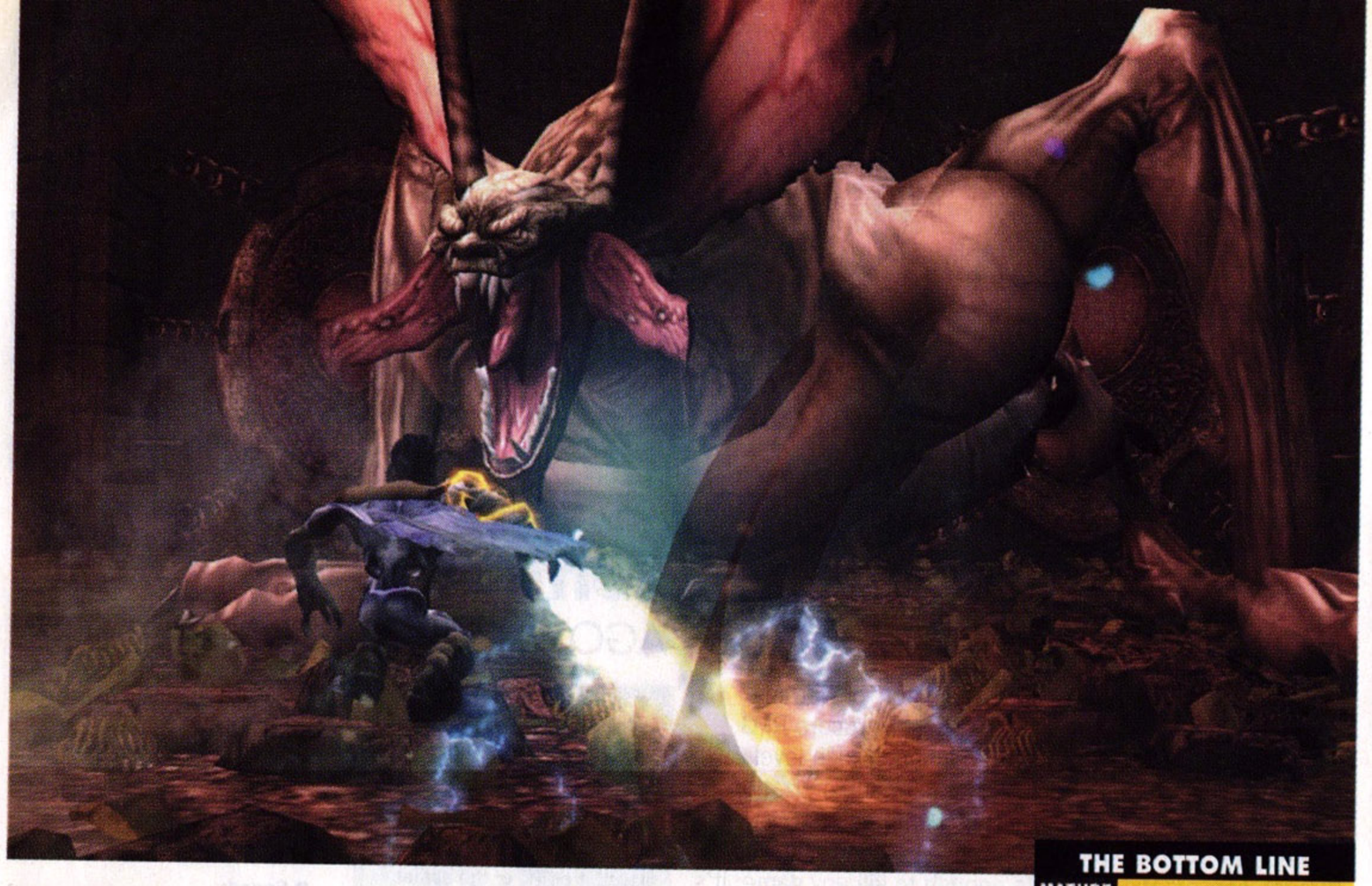
- **Concept:** We all think we want to start as a Jedi, but we really don't
- **Graphics:** A disappointment for the Xbox due to the fogging and often simple textures
- **Sound:** Best stormtrooper line: "Man, I could really go for a death stick right now."
- **Playability:** The Xbox interface isn't ideal, but you can get through it
- **Entertainment:** Gets the Jedi juices flowing, but is bogged down by the missions and ineffective story
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

There's something disheartening in the fact that Jedi Academy's story is identical to that in Tony Hawk's Underground. A feud between classmates doesn't really get my blood pumping. The inclusion of horribly awkward vehicles and obscure mission objectives prove to be equally large deterrents. As unsatisfactory as these elements may be, Jedi Academy still has it where it counts. Wielding a lightsaber and tapping into an array of Force powers is once again an irresistibly good time. As the game unfolds, you'll even get the chance to wield dual or double-bladed sabers. The previous Xbox entry's multiplayer was limited to split-screen. This time around, Xbox Live is fully realized, and emerges as the true driving force behind this title. This follow-up may not be as polished or compelling as its predecessor, but its replay value is much higher.

REINER – 8.5

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA LAN OR 10-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE) ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** RAVEN SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



XBOX

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

TOGETHER AT LAST

Throughout its history, the Legacy of Kain series has shown great diversity in design. It began as an isometric action/RPG with Kain as the protagonist; transitioned into a sprawling 3D adventure with Raziel as the leading man; and then revisited ghosts of the past with Kain at the helm of a puzzle-intensive quest. With Defiance, the series is moving in yet another direction, and marks the first time that both Kain and Raziel are playable in the same game.

Rather than numbing minds with perplexing riddles, Defiance abandons puzzles in favor of pure, unadulterated action. Part of me misses the thinking that went into solving this series' Machiavellian mazes, but at the same time, it's such a great feeling knowing that you won't be forced to push hundreds of boxes within the span of an hour. This new direction really spices things up and creates a more exciting experience overall.

While both characters feature similar move sets, combat proves to be incredibly visceral. Much like Dante in Devil May Cry, Raziel and Kain can uppercut enemies and juggle them mid-air. You can also use TK blasts to knock foes off of cliffs or send them flying into a spike or torch. The combo system is a little shallow to begin with, but as the game moves forward, new techniques and chains are learned; and it does begin to open up a bit.

Crystal Dynamics also drew inspiration from the wildly underrated PS2 game ICO for Defiance's camerawork. In such, most of the action is delivered from stylish panoramic angles that are used to draw out the details in the environments and make the platforming all the less frustrating. Although puzzles are mostly absent, the game abuses the concept of running into a locked door, then sending the player down a linear path to find the item or key that will open it. The player must then journey back to the door to continue on. Yawn.

As entertaining as sucking blood and performing mid-air combos can be, this game's biggest strength is storytelling. The series has always excelled in this area, but Defiance is by far and away its most intriguing yarn yet. It's an intelligently written clash of the titans. By the end of the game, only one character will be left standing. If that isn't a hook, then I don't know what is. – **REINER**

The combat system is fast-paced and driven by combos

"Holy crap, man!!! I knew that you lost your jaw in the abyss, but I had no idea that you lost lil' Raziel as well."

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE
■ **DEVELOPER** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

- **Concept:** Video games' bad boys slug it out in a battle to the death
- **Graphics:** Simply stunning. The breathtaking vistas, ICO-esque camera angles, and fluid character animations paint a beautiful picture
- **Sound:** Brilliant as always. The spoken dialogue and score couldn't be much better
- **Playability:** Limited and a little slow at first, but it does open up with combos, juggles, and platforming aplenty
- **Entertainment:** The story compels you to see the ending. It's also faster in pace and less nerve-racking than the previous entries
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

While I enjoyed the previous installments of this series to a limited extent, Defiance riveted me. Gone are the endless box puzzles; in their place are hordes of enemies who quail before your might. The combat system has been upgraded again, with many more options for dismemberment via Reaver. TK powers have been integrated into the action seamlessly, and really open things up for cool fights. Gaining new abilities happens at a good rate, and keeps things fresh. The levels, while gorgeous, do feel almost ridiculously linear. Fortunately, the story is enthralling enough to keep you playing, and there's never much running around between fights. Getting lost is still a wee problem with no compass or map, but because of the level design, there aren't many branching paths to navigate. Defiance is two steps in the right direction for this franchise.

ADAM – 8.25

XBOX

GOBLIN COMMANDER: UNLEASH THE HORDE

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT WARCRAFT

No, seriously. Goblin Commander is in no way WarCraft on consoles. This title is different enough to distinguish itself on its own merits, rather than going the way of other more unfortunate releases. It places the emphasis on smashing stuff straight away, and never lets other considerations get in the way of that. The ability to take direct control of your units puts the chaos of battle right up in your face, and blends perfectly with the traditional top-down view.

Despite being considerably less complicated than a classic RTS, the depth of strategy in this title is perfect for its pacing. When to upgrade and what units to build are certainly important decisions, but they're not so overbearing as to take away from the skull-crushing mayhem that makes the game fun.

The only thing that brings Goblin Commander down from an even higher score is the lack of good multiplayer options – the only mode is a mediocre split-screen. Having no LAN or online capability is really unfortunate. Had these been enabled, this could very well be a genre-defining hit on the scale of Diablo or WarCraft. As is, it's a very good game that could have been much more. – **ADAM**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

- **Concept:** Stomp heads, get resources, build more troops, stomp more heads
- **Graphics:** Lots and lots of very detailed models and effects, yet no slowdown. Varied environments provide good settings
- **Sound:** Nothing spectacular. Generic martial tunes and battle effects
- **Playability:** You'll be amazed at how tight the control is
- **Entertainment:** If WarCraft is interesting, but too intellectual or slow-paced for you, try this. You won't regret it
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Goblin Commander is the saving grace for the console RTS. Having the ability to manually control troops really changes the way that you play a strategy game. You can set waypoints or take direct control. It's a slick system that really sets this game apart from every other title out there. The only thing it needs is Xbox Live support. Split-screen and only 12 multiplayer maps just doesn't cut the mustard.

REINER – 8

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** JALECO ■ **DEVELOPER** JALECO ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

XBOX

ARX FATALIS

FPS – FANTASY STYLE

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **7.5**

This is one of those titles that illustrates the label of "niche game" to a tee. Arx Fatalis is a dungeon crawling, fantasy laden, first-person perspective adventure. As such, players have a lot of control over how their character develops and are encouraged to be creative with puzzle solving.

While you are thrown into a highly predictable fantasy storyline with interesting inter-species relations, you'll be able to see most of the quests and plot points coming a mile away. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it certainly isn't the reason that people will keep playing Arx.

In-game graphics are definitely nice (especially for this genre), and the fire effects are particularly nifty, but the title has a tendancy to chug when there are more than a few NPCs onscreen. The gameplay focuses on making players search every dead body, each abandoned barrel, and all of the critters you kill – these are a few of the little touches that make Arx worth looking into for many.

Those desiring a fast-paced FPS should search elsewhere, but Arx will certainly be up some people's alleys. I found myself freakishly sucked into its universe, but maybe it's due to the cooking. I love finding random flour. – **LISA**

- **Concept:** A first-person dungeon crawler that is not without its charms. Add in an unique (and for my tastes) entertaining cooking function. Weird but cool
- **Graphics:** Certainly decent, but nothing to write home about. Particle effects are particularly nice
- **Sound:** The quality of voice work varies, but enemy chatter is funny throughout
- **Playability:** The FPS scheme is solid, but every menu screen is painful and counterintuitive
- **Entertainment:** Predictable story and characters that everyone's seen before, but still strangely engrossing
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

While it plays like the world's slowest FPS, Arx Fatalis has a lot going for it. It's got creepy atmosphere up the wazoo, decent combat, a cool story, and plenty of RPG elements. The freedom it offers is nice, and the graphics are pretty sharp. It may not be for everyone, but Arx Fatalis has all the makings of a cult hit.

JEREMY – 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** DREAMCATCHER INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** ARKANE STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 1

XBOX

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND – G.O.T.Y. EDITION

MORE LIKE GAME OF TWO YEARS AGO

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **7.75**

Morrowind should have some sort of warning on the front. Something like, "Hardcore RPG players only." It's got an insanely high level of immersion, story depth, and character customization available. The big problem with this game has always been downtime – far too much walking around and wading through conversations. That's enough to kill any game; it's to Morrowind's credit that it's a decent play despite that.

For fans of the original, the addition of the two expansions previously only found on PC will be approximately the best thing ever. Bloodmoon and Tribunal add on a tremendous amount of gameplay, along with the opportunity to become a werewolf. If Morrowind is your thing, buy this now.

People who didn't like Morrowind for one reason or another should ignore this release completely. The expansions target high-level characters, and leave the basic game (as in the first 60 hours of play) mostly untouched. If this added some new races and skills and things, or just fixed the downtime issue, I'd be the first on board the Morrowind train. As it is, this won't generate any new fans. – **ADAM**

SECOND OPINION

Aside from KOTOR, this is as good as RPGs get on the Xbox. If you like the genre, you can't go wrong with this title (unless, of course, you've already played it on PC or the earlier Xbox version).

JEREMY – 8

- **Concept:** Explore a gigantic 3D fantasy world, eventually save it, and possibly turn into a monster
- **Graphics:** Let's not even talk about how outdated the textures are. The draw distance is awful
- **Sound:** Decent enough music and effects, but they get old mighty fast
- **Playability:** As good as PC-to-console ports get
- **Entertainment:** If 80 percent of the game wasn't just walking, it'd be one of the best RPGs ever
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS ■ **DEVELOPER** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 30

XBOX

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

HOT, BUT NOT COOL

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **8.5**

There are many things that True Crime has over Grand Theft Auto. It adds a more complex, combo-oriented hand-to-hand combat engine plus a load of other cool extras like the KOTOR-esque Good Cop/Bad Cop meter. However, it must be pointed out that True Crime lacks the one element that really made GTA the phenomenon it is: It's just not cool. Nick Kang, the lead character, is so painfully dorky and lacking in charisma that he might accurately be described as the "Pete Sampras of Video Games."

In addition, other problems nagged at my enjoyment of this game. I actually found the gun targeting to be more frustrating that GTA's, and the fighting and driving aren't as polished as they ought to be, either. What's worse, the numerous loading screens (which pop up about every 10 minutes) serve to break the illusion that you are interacting with a living, breathing world. However, I did somehow come to love this title despite all its faults, and fans of the genre will certainly get a heapin' helping of gaming out of True Crime (even if the taste is a bit bland). – **MATT**

SECOND OPINION

This is the best version of True Crime. However, Xbox also has the best versions of GTA III/ Vice City, which smokes this game. Nick Kang's adventure is still worth playing, but only when you've conquered Rockstar's opuses.

JUSTIN – 8.5

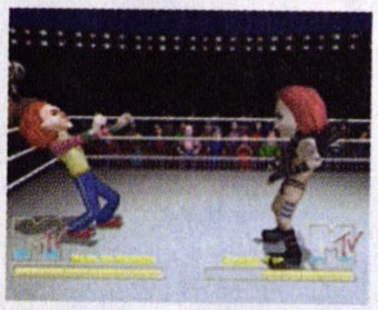
- **Concept:** Bizarro-world GTA where you're the law
- **Graphics:** Blows GTA's Renderware out of the water
- **Sound:** Strong selection of west-coast gangsta rap. Lots of voiceovers by famous folks, too
- **Playability:** There's a lot of it, but none of it's perfect
- **Entertainment:** Overcomes its myriad flaws with a load of variety and depth
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** LUXOFLUX ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 3

XBOX QUICKIES

MTV CELEBRITY DEATHMATCH

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING
■ **PUBLISHER** GOTHAM GAMES
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 14



Know anyone that you don't really like, but still have to buy the occasional present for? Get 'em this! You'll never get invited to his/her birthday party again. Who in their right mind would enjoy a lame "funny" fighter filled with washed-up "stars," pitiful graphics, and craptacular controls? No one, that's who. There are a lot of poor fighting games out there, but few are this shallow or boring. I'd bet money that not a single "celebrity" who appeared in this game would even accept a free copy. Except maybe Carrot Top. – **JEREMY**

2.75

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

If the Allies went about things like this, they never would have won the war. Secret Weapons gives you about all you could ask from a fighter combat title in every department except one. It fails to really capture that edge-of-your-seat feeling due its slow combat. What it does do, however, is stir your emotions a little, which isn't easy. Despite its use of many Medal of Honor tricks of the trade, Secret Weapons' lack of an epic feel makes the title seem more like a transport freighter than an ace fighter jock. – **KATO**

7.5

MAXIMUM CHASE

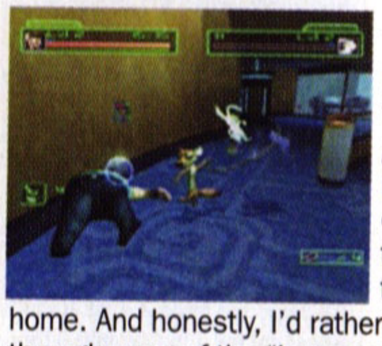
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 13

Maximum Chase combines two arcade-esque experiences: The high-speed near misses of Burnout and the fixed perspective gunplay of the Time Crisis series. Although this eventually wears thin, the driving sequences have some length, and the whole shebang is held together through a cheesy-as-hell story using real video footage. The characters are portrayed by American actors who've been exiled in Japan way too long, and it fits the game. Worthy of a rental, and it may just spawn its own little cult. – **KATO**

7

WHIPLASH

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



This game reminds me that I need to do laundry. Now, there's nothing about this game that's at all laundry-related, or even laundry-esque. It's simply so boring that my mind wanders to the chores waiting for me at home. And honestly, I'd rather be sorting socks than run through more of the "jump over lasers that don't really hurt you anyway" hallways that make up about 97 percent of Whiplash. There's some potential in a game about escaped lab animals, but it's wasted here. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go put my pants in the dryer. – **JEREMY**

4

SPAWN ARMAGEDDON

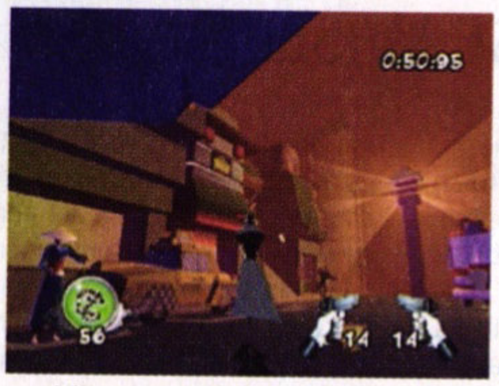
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 21

This is exactly what I expect gaming in hell to be like. You step into the shoes of a washed-up comic book character whose popularity isn't even half that of Plastic Man. As if this wasn't defeating enough as is, you are then asked to follow a trail of glowing breadcrumbs from one destination to the next. The game basically says, "You're obviously really stupid, so we're going to hold onto your hand and lead you through this stage." As lame as it sounds (and can be), Spawn does have some good things going for it. For starters, the weapons rock. The controls are also surprisingly sound. Most importantly, though, the box has "Spawn" written on it. Whether it's a comic, movie, or game, this undead loser has burned everyone. This should be an immediate red flag to avoid this title. Just look at Todd McFarlane. He abandoned Spawn for baseball. – **REINER**

6.5

DRAKE OF THE 99 DRAGONS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28



Run for your lives! It's the anti-game! As if I need to say more, Drake of the 99 Dragons is so vile that it transcends the very meaning of language. Just close your eyes and focus on the most wretched, mangled mess of ugliness that your brain can conceive and you've pretty much nailed Drake on the head. I actually pulled out my Sega CD to see if this game was compatible with it. Rather than describing where this title's flaws are, I find it best that I say nothing at all. So... did you see the new *Lord of the Rings* movie yet? Say, that's a nice shirt you got there. How's your mom doing? – **REINER**

1.25

BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE
■ **PUBLISHER** DREAMCATCHER INTERACTIVE
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 1

I have to say that this is one of the best console adventure games in the last few years. Some will quibble about a few of the puzzles and others will point out that the shadows (although real-time) are more like dark blobs, but they are missing the best parts of this game. The voice work is wonderful, the plot is simple but compelling, and the fast-paced action sequences are refreshing. It doesn't have the story or graphics of a Myst title, but it might be a little speedier and more accessible to those on the fence about adventure games. – **LISA**

8

XBOX

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

FOR YOUR INNER NERD

Buried in the deepest recesses of dorkdom are people who strongly believe that Battlestar Galactica is the greatest thing in science fiction. If you cherish this license so much that you have a poster of Maren Jensen over your bed or are convinced that Lt. Starbuck is the inspiration behind Starbucks Coffee, then run out and buy this immediately.

It has a bevy of unlockables for only the nerdiest of Battlestar fanatics. Concept art, trailers, blooper reels, renders, and model viewers are all here.

If the Battlestar name really doesn't strike a chord with you, I hate to say it, but there's a better chance of hell freezing over than you actually finding enjoyment in this title. It does have some decent things going for it, however. The ship movements are very precise and easy to manipulate. Targeting is dead-on accurate. I also like the attribute point bonuses and additional wingmen in post-mission performance scoring.

Decent play mechanics aside, the gameplay doesn't excite. The missions are as bland as can be; enemy AI often seems non-existent; and the explosion effects are, at best, a small flicker of light. At the end of the day, this is yet another licensed product only for its most ardent fans. – **REINER**

THE BOTTOM LINE

6.5

■ **Concept:** Celebrate Battlestar Galactica's 25th anniversary with a game that is as forgettable as the show

■ **Graphics:** Other than the blinding particle effects, details are definitely lacking. The texturing is poor and the explosion effects are surprisingly bad

■ **Sound:** The spoken dialogue is fantastic (especially the Cylon voices)

■ **Playability:** It plays pretty well, yet you'll be hard-pressed to find an interesting mission or aggressive enemy

■ **Entertainment:** Everyone except the hardcore fans will likely be bored by this title's lackluster play

■ **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

I'm convinced that a little bit of light goes out of the universe every time a new title fails to be a better game than the predecessors in its genre. As such, Battlestar Galactica makes the world a little darker. Though you get to fly around in space and shoot stuff, there's really nothing to bring home the coolness. Everything is weak and sterile; not once did I think to myself, "Wow, it's good to be a space jockey."

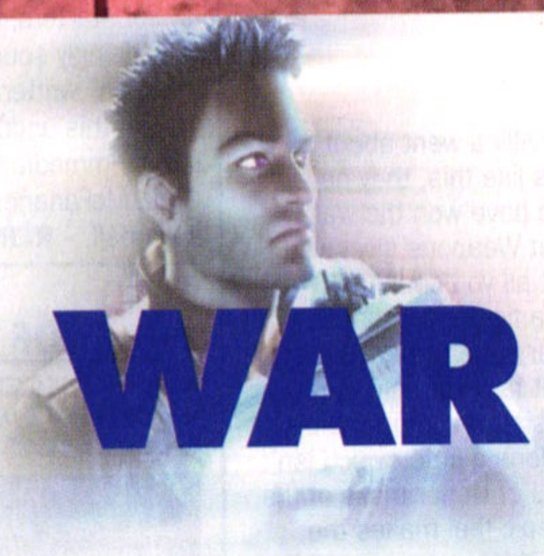
ADAM – 6.25

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
■ **DEVELOPER** WARTHOG ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

PC

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

CHOOSE, BUT CHOOSE WISELY



"Players can influence the way every action, subplot, and mission plays out to an unparalleled degree."

This is a game of choices. Players can influence the way every action, subplot, and mission plays out to an unparalleled degree. Invisible War is way ahead of the pack here – the choices players make are the primary focus of the game, rather than an afterthought.

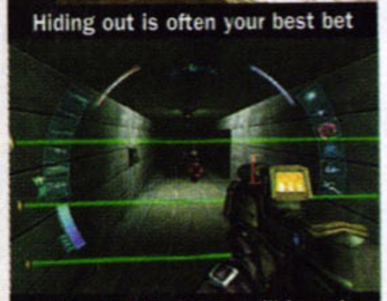
From the beginning, gamers are challenged to determine their own destiny. While there are two main factions to ally oneself with, numerous side quests (most with multiple possible outcomes) await the inquisitive. Even within the execution of a single mission, many solutions can be found. Do you hack into the security computer to disable the automated defenses, find an alternate way around them, or just go in guns blazing? Lots of titles have tried this sort of thing with varying degrees of success, but Invisible War is head and shoulders above the rest. Never before has this mechanic seen such perfection.

Beyond this brilliance, Invisible War retains and streamlines the things that made the original great. The inventory and biomod systems are much better than their previous incarnations, and again force the player to choose. A flamethrower or mines? Silent movement or health regeneration? Everything comes at the price of losing something else, so make selections carefully. Fortunately, the various abilities gained through items and mods are all incredibly useful in different situations, so any combination of powers should allow you to make it through somehow.

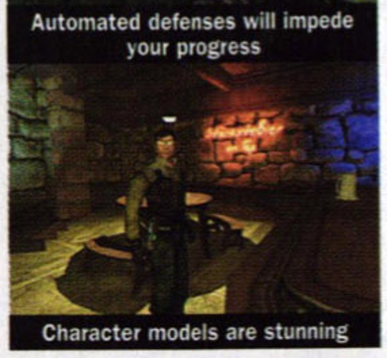
Like its predecessor, Invisible War has a serpentine storyline, One that depends on player actions. The twists and turns that unfold during the course of the game are top-notch, and are made all the more interesting by the excellent presentation. From the voice acting to the lighting and music, this title draws players into its world like few others. Add the fact that there are moral consequences to your actions, and the plot becomes very involving, to say the least.

Problems are few and far between. Occasionally, hit detection seems off as far as which part of a target takes the shot, non-essential NPCs could be more lifelike in their activities, and I've seen better AI. However, these issues are minor and have little impact on the overall enjoyment factor. Invisible War is a unique, interesting, and highly polished title. I have to recommend that if you have a PC robust enough to run this, you ought to sit down and spend some quality time with it. You won't be disappointed. – **ADAM**

Hiding out is often your best bet

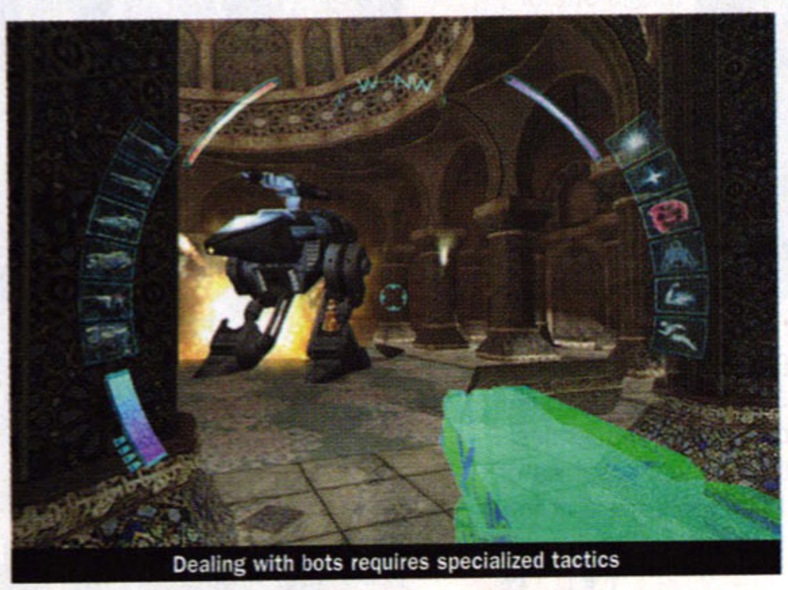


Automated defenses will impede your progress



Character models are stunning

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION **■ PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE **■ DEVELOPER** ION STORM **■ RELEASE** DECEMBER 2



Dealing with bots requires specialized tactics

In the future, Viagra has been replaced

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9.5

- **Concept:** Choose your allegiance in the covert war for the future history of the planet
- **Graphics:** Simply delightful. Environmental ambience really sets the tone
- **Sound:** Couldn't be better. Contextual music, great effects, even voice-acting that doesn't suck
- **Playability:** Wonkier default key mappings I've never seen, but after a little trial and error, you can make it work just fine
- **Entertainment:** Gamers can ask for little more in the sci-fi department – or any department, for that matter
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Developer Ion Storm has bitten off a lot for you to chew through and digest, and it's quite the feast. You really get a good appreciation for the universe that it has built, which not only includes the visual style of the environments, but the fact that you can interact with objects at every turn. The politically charged story has its twists and turns, but more importantly, it has freedom. The PC edition is my second play through, and I decided to be a total WTO muppet this time around. Some of my quests were different, which was even influenced by which biomods I chose along the way. Despite its breadth in other areas, the combat didn't wow me. Not only is there no hit detection for foes shot in the knees (or my other favorite – the jimmy), but the AI also needs some fine-tuning. Regardless, this game has more than enough going for it to pick up the slack.

KATO – 9

FOR STUFF TOO BIG TO PRINT

www.gameinformer.com

News > Reviews > Codes > Calendar > Unlimited > Forums > Store

"If you want to lose long periods of your life slashing monsters and adventuring with friends, then you can't go wrong with Final Fantasy XI"

PC UNLIMITED ENABLED

FINAL FANTASY XI

EXPLORE THE WORLD OF VANA'DIEL

While Final Fantasy XI is not the first massively multiplayer role-playing game (MMORPG) ever made, it is the first from fabled developer Square Enix. For a first time product, it is both impressive and disappointing.

The game utilizes Square Enix's PlayOnline Viewer to access the servers (which comes packaged with FF XI). This program allows the player to access other games (only the card game Tetra Master is available at the moment, but you can bet there will be others in the future), as well as a number of handy community building features including email, messaging, and chat.

The most impressive thing about this program is that it enables you to leave messages for players already in the world, so finding friends and organizing events should be easy enough. However, my one complaint about PlayOnline, which can also be said about Final Fantasy XI in general, is that the menus and interface are often confusing. Loading up this game and entering in the various registration numbers took quite a bit of time, and once you have it installed, the patch can take anywhere from one to three hours.

Once that is all out of the way, you have to look at billing. There is a monthly $12.95 subscription fee to play the game (the first month is free). However, you are only allowed to create one character. Any additional avatars on that account will cost an extra dollar per month. This wouldn't be so bad, but the game doesn't make this process easy. In fact, nothing in this game comes easy.

First of all, after you create a character, a server is automatically selected for you. So if you want to play with friends you need to either A) Delete and remake characters until you all land on the same server, or B) Get a pass in-game so that a player can switch servers (luckily, you don't have to pay extra for this). However, if you move characters, you will lose whatever progress you made, so there is a time sacrifice with either option.

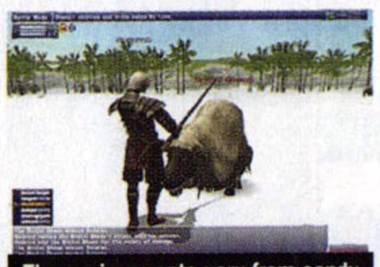
The game itself actually includes a lot of content, as the U.S. release features both the original FF XI and its first expansion, Rise of the Zilheart. Getting around in this world is no easy task. Since the game is designed so that both PC and PS2 owners can play on the same servers (the PS2 version ships in March with the PS2 hard drive), the controls are convoluted and lack many of the quick keys that are typical to most PC-only MMORPGs. Personally, I found this area very frustrating. After about 10 hours I got pretty comfortable with the game, but it never quite felt right.

There are some great things about this title, however. The most obvious is the graphics. The player and monster models are simply outstanding, and easily the best I have seen in an MMORPG, PC or otherwise.

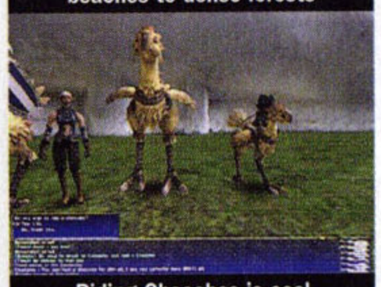
Another great feature is the ability for players to change to one of the many different jobs just by visiting their in-game homestead. Sadly, you begin again as level one, but at least this way you can explore as many jobs as you wish, or even create a hybrid character who uses a combination of them. A hybrid character never gets as powerful as a pure class, but it does create some nice variation in player avatars.

Overall, the game does feel rather slow in comparison to other MMORPGs I have played, but it is still addicting. There are many aspects like player vs. player (PVP) that are currently missing from the product, but Square Enix has already promised to introduce it in the future, and I would suspect that the company will add other functions in the future.

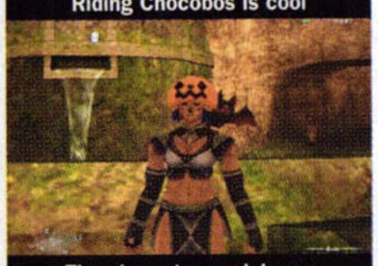
Final Fantasy XI is not the best MMORPG I have played, but it most certainly is not the worst. If you want to lose long periods of your life slashing monsters and adventuring with friends, then you can't go wrong with Final Fantasy XI. – **ANDY**



The environments vary from sandy beaches to dense forests



Riding Chocobos is cool



The character models are simply amazing

Battle is a little slow, but gorgeous to look at

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE ENIX ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE ENIX
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

- **Concept:** Developing the game for multiple platforms limited its scope
- **Graphics:** It may be a console port, but it's easily one of best-looking MMORPGs on PC
- **Sound:** Great orchestration and sound effects
- **Playability:** The controls are perhaps the most confusing of any in this genre
- **Entertainment:** It's not the most well rounded online game, but it is solid
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

The aura surrounding the Final Fantasy universe is prominently on display in Square Enix's first online venture. The familiarity of the character designs, powerful score, and breathtaking vistas fuse together to create a stunning world that will appease fans of the series. Interestingly, the functionality of gameplay leans closer to EverQuest than it does its heritage. In this regard, it's a little dull at first, and doesn't really become an enthralling experience until alliances are formed and higher levels are reached. I love being able to create character class hybrids, and the skill sets aren't too shabby, either. Even by this genre's standards, the play is a hair slow and the controls are a tad unconventional. Although rough around the edges, it's still wickedly addictive and one of the most unique MMORPG's out there. Both hardcore PC players and Final Fantasy fans will get something out of it.

REINER – 8

PC

CIVILIZATION III: CONQUESTS

GET CIVILIZED

Civilization is pretty much the quintessential thinking man's PC game. It has been since 1991, in fact. Conquests does a lot to add on to the already-great Civilization III through an improved interface, new content, and the Conquests.

The new content is simply amazing. Not only has a ton of stuff as far as units/cultures/tech been added, the old ones have been rebalanced. This really improves every facet of play. The added Sid difficulty level (yes, it's higher than Deity) promises an almost infinite amount of challenge for the dedicated. All of these things integrate incredibly well into the core game, and expand this hugely deep title to ridiculous proportions.

The historical Conquests are a riot to play. The best part about them is that they can be conquered from multiple points of view. World War II in the Pacific, for example, can be played as the U.S., U.K., China, or Japan. The replay value inherent in this, combined with the eight levels of difficulty, is immense. Of course, there's the excellent random map generator as well.

Possibly the thing that most amazes me about this title is the fact that rather than unbalance the original, as expansions are infamous for doing, it levels the playing field. Civilization III is a totally rejuvenated game with Conquests installed. – **ADAM**

Playing through the fall of Rome in online multiplayer? Awesome!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER** FIRAXIS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 4

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

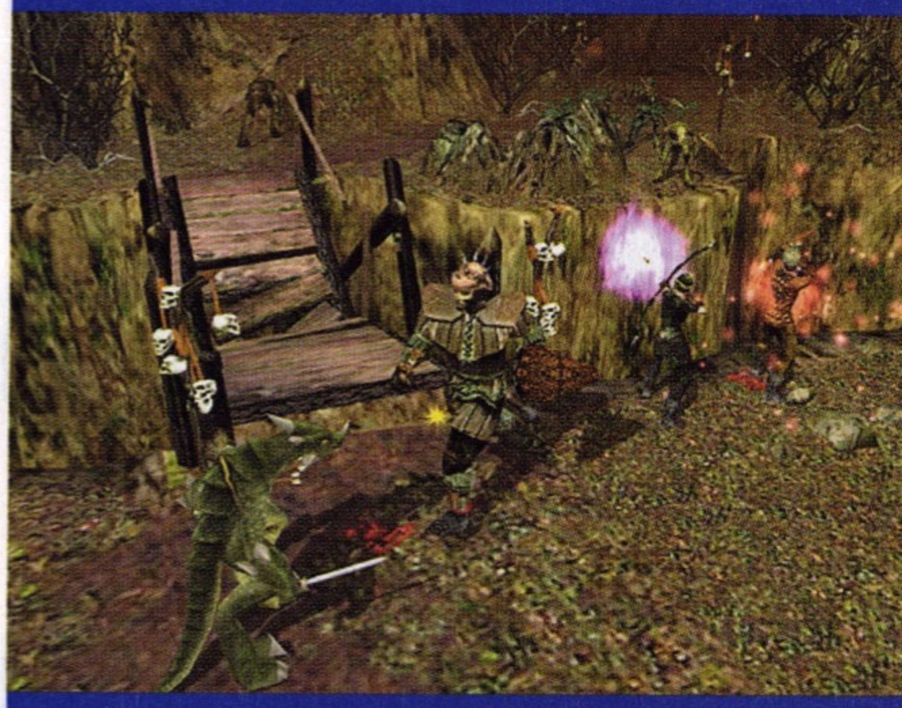
9

- **Concept:** Take over the world or conquer a historical scenario
- **Graphics:** Same as ever. The unit animations are still entertaining
- **Sound:** The new background music is very welcome
- **Playability:** Lots of new functionality in the interface – controlling a massive empire is much more streamlined
- **Entertainment:** Both the regular and Conquest game types are delightful. Gives Civ III a renewed lease on life for many years to come
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

If you were to take half a look at this game, you'd swear it was not an expansion pack. Conquests not only jams in seven new civilizations and nine new scenarios to play through, but developer Firaxis has even gone through and added things like a fascist government and civ traits. The result is a game that has been totally renewed and re-balanced for long-time players – of which I am not one. Still, I loved that Conquests' scenarios put you in the heart of World War II's Pacific campaign (thereby cutting to the chase), but also gave a variety of goals to reach in these historical segments, making them relatively easy to digest, depending on your mood. Similarly, this format also gives enough situations for warmongers and alliance-builders alike to dive into. Needless to say, the depth here is amazing, as it always has been – but it's this expansion's refinement that makes it more worth getting.

KATO – 9



PC

DUNGEON SIEGE: LEGENDS OF ARANNA

MONSTERS AND MAZES

I was one of the rare few who really enjoyed the original Dungeon Siege. What can I say, I like dungeon crawlers. But I can understand the complaints people had about the artificial intelligence doing too much and leaving the player little to control. Controlling the minutia of your characters is not what this series is about. It's about leveling up your party, finding loot, and following an adventure.

To that end, Legends of Aranna delivers. With about fifteen hours of gameplay, lots of new items to collect, and a horde of monsters and boxes to destroy, this expansion offers plenty for gamers who love to increase stats and find fancy weapons and armor.

However, the series hasn't aged well. The camera control and graphics that I once thought were solid now seem clumsy and out of date. Many of the level designs are just as absurd, with areas almost too big for their own good.

For fans of the series, I can definitely recommend this title. Aranna doesn't offer much in the way of new graphics or gameplay, but it does offer up a decent enough adventure both on and offline. I know I found myself battling late into the night. It's just a fun game, and it gets even better if you play multiplayer with friends online. For anyone else, you really have to ask yourself how much of dungeon crawler fan you are, because the long levels and confusing camera will definitely frustrate. If you do decide to take the plunge, the original game is also included, so there is plenty here to enjoy. – **ANDY**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:** Click. Kill. Collect Item. Repeat
- **Graphics:** This game's engine has not aged well
- **Sound:** The voice-over work is just awful, but the soundtrack is acceptable
- **Playability:** The camera is slightly annoying, but otherwise it's pretty standard
- **Entertainment:** If you liked the original, this offers more of the same
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Like many of you out there, I'm a total nerd for the whole cheesy RPG schtick. Clicking on stuff, looting corpses, and gaining levels makes my world go 'round. Legends of Aranna does these things very well, but really doesn't do anything else. Plot and story are afterthoughts, not to mention the abysmal voiceacting.

ADAM – 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA ONLINE OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS
■ **DEVELOPER** MAD DOC SOFTWARE/GAS POWERED GAMES ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12

PC

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

SQUAD-BASED PAIN

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6

It's not often that a fully customizable control set is incapable of being tweaked to some semblance of functionality. Hidden & Dangerous 2, however, has such a clumsy interface that there's just no good way to do things. Couple this amazing feat with shoddy graphics, poor sound, and boring levels, and you've got the makings of an okay-at-best game.

I do have to give H&D 2 points for trying new things. Each soldier in your four-man squad is chosen from a huge pool of men possessing different strengths. The inventory system, while as hard to use as everything else, does make logical sense. I do very much enjoy the tactical map you have access to, and if you are masochistic enough to complete a level, your soldiers' abilities increase.

Of course, these innovations do nothing to rescue this title from mediocrity. Though the campaign is long, you could pack all of the action into a container half of the size of the Max Payne 2 quest. Multiplayer, which has rescued many a PC game from the bargain bin, offers nothing new or exciting to anyone who has played FPS online. In the crowded market of PC FPS games, there are many other titles which bring much more to the table. – **ADAM**

- **Concept:** Use your squad of elite SAS troops to wreak havoc behind Nazi lines
- **Graphics:** Remember the Quake II engine? About on that level
- **Sound:** You never really notice how much the authenticity of sounds in Call of Duty or Medal of Honor matter until you don't have them any more
- **Playability:** Hands-down, this is the worst squad command interface ever
- **Entertainment:** Well, it's better than actually being in Nazi territory circa 1940
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

With so many WW II games on the market, you have to do better than this if you want to stand out. H&D 2 is the very definition of mediocrity: the controls are far more complicated that they need to be, the AI is weak, and it's full of bugs. Add in some really bland graphics, and that's enough for me to know I don't want to play it.

JEREMY – 6

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 32-PLAYER VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** GATHERING ■ **DEVELOPER** ILLUSION SOFTWORKS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 21

PC

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE WAR OF THE RING

INCOMPETENT MINIONS

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6.75

When I say that War of the Ring is a clone of WarCraft, I mean it from the bottom of my heart. The differences between this title and the Blizzard series that spawned a genre are minor, and almost uniformly bad.

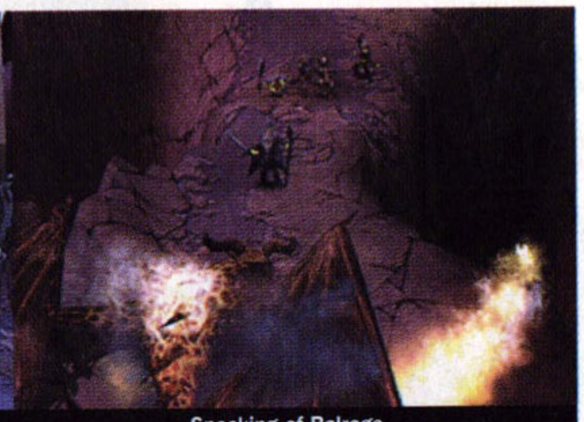
The most glaring deficiency in this title is in the variety of units and factions. There are only two options of who to play as, and neither is comparable to anything in current RTS titles. Even legendary heroes such as Aragorn and Legolas are less exciting to use than those found in WarCraft III.

AI, both for your own units and for enemy players, is simply awful. That, along with loose control due to the scarcity of hotkeys, makes coordinating battles a very frustrating exercise. Too often units would slip out from under my eyes and do something asinine – choose idiotic targets on an attack-move command; walk around their target before engaging it; the list goes on and on.

These flaws cheapen strategy to where the genre was five years ago: Build a horde of units and stomp. While this is fun to an extent, the deeper experiences found in the competition are far more enthralling than this bland slugfest. The graphics are definitely top dog in the RTS pack, with several very well-done tilesets and nice spell animations. Unfortunately, the art is the only step forward WOTR makes; in every other category it lags way behind. – **ADAM**

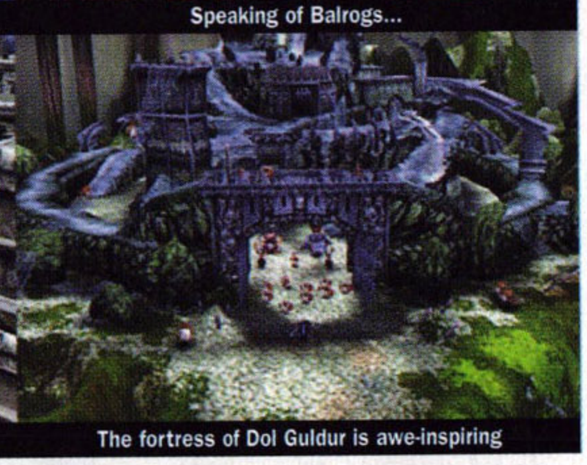
- **Concept:** Command the armies of Middle-Earth during the events of the Lord of the Rings trilogy
- **Graphics:** Easily the best thing going for this title. Excellent environmental effects
- **Sound:** The worst I've ever heard in an RTS. Customizable MP3 playlists help, though
- **Playability:** A serious lack of hotkeys makes many actions a chore
- **Entertainment:** Not a bad effort, but leagues behind the competition. Lack of an online matching service severely hampers multiplayer
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

Being able to summon a Balrog is pretty cool



Speaking of Balrogs...

Fighting amid the ruins of Osgiliath



The fortress of Dol Guldur is awe-inspiring

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL ■ **DEVELOPER** SIERRA ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

SECOND OPINION

Out of all of Vivendi Universal Games' Lord of the Rings product, War of the Ring is easily its best. However, like all the other games in its book-based line-up, it lacks the punch the movie license brings. I was a fan of the books way before the movies came out, but since Peter Jackson put his stamp on the series, I have a hard time swallowing any other version than his. While the game is functionally sound, the voiceovers and the look seem oddly alien to me, which takes me away from the experience I'm looking for in a Lord of the Rings licensed product. I do like the fact that the game covers some cool encounters and lore that you won't find in the movie, but these elements just aren't enough to overcome its unappealing setting. Decent game, but only for the most loyal of Rings fans.

ANDY – 7

PC QUICKIES

KOREA: FORGOTTEN CONFLICT

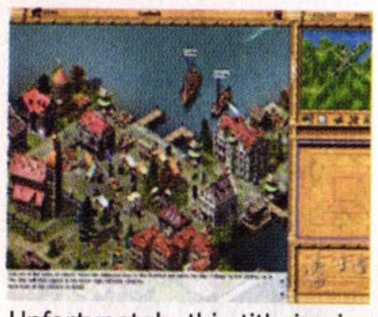
- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY
- **PUBLISHER** CENEGA PUBLISHING
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19

This game tries to appeal to your emotions in an attempt to draw you into this Cold War conflict, but it shoots itself in the foot with its melding of stealth and real-time strategy. This combo simply isn't executed well, neither by the interface nor the CPU, and it's just not fun – especially when you could do so much more with this kind of game on the console. In fact, I wish there was more PC-flavor to this title. Speaking of PC, the dialogue in Korea can be offensive in its use of racial stereotypes in a failed attempt to be funny. The real joke's on the game itself. – **KATO**

T 5

PATRICIAN III

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY
- **PUBLISHER** ENCORE
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 17



This title exemplifies the hardcore strategy genre. The mechanics are very well done for what they are – everything from the economics model to your approval rating in a town combines to make a very good simulation. Unfortunately, this title is simply a thin facade for the game engine. If market trends and supply/demand curves don't set your blood aflame, Patrician III will have you napping in no time. – **ADAM**

E 7

THE BLACK MIRROR

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE
- **PUBLISHER** DREAMCATCHER INTERACTIVE
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 22

The Black Mirror is one strange duck. Even the most patient gamers will be bored to tears for the first few hours of this adventure, as the protagonist reminisces about which chair he sat in as a child and how the fountain used to have clear water. Neat! Although beautiful, the plot is predictable, the characters are stilted and wooden, and the environments are too static for my tastes. In addition, the voice acting makes *Days of Our Lives* and *All My Children* seem subtle and understated. This is no Myst: Uru, I'll tell you that much. – **LISA**

M 4.5

PIRATE HUNTER: SEIZE AND DESTROY

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY
- **PUBLISHER** ENCORE
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 17

This isn't a bad game; it's just a very, very dull one. The only action to be found anywhere is in the ship battles, but even these are tedious. Circling an enemy vessel with the right mouse button and clicking occasionally with the left to fire (which is auto-aimed) isn't exactly my idea of an epic sea battle. I guess that if your heart can't take the strain of an exciting game, this might be a good title for you. – **ADAM**

E 6

NOSFERATU: THE WRATH OF MALACHI

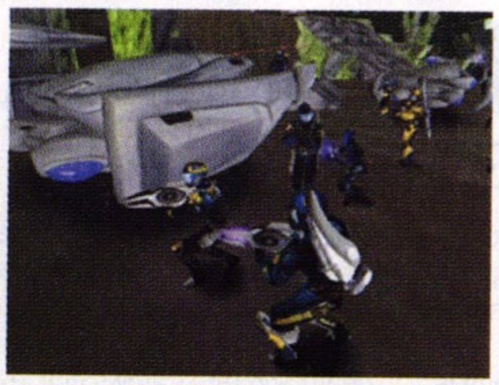
- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** IDOL FX
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 20

I feel bad for vampires. No other creatures have to put up with so much horrid crap based on them. For example, take movies like *Embrace of the Vampire*, *Vampire in Brooklyn*, and this game. It looks like a freakin' Doom II mod, except the framerate isn't as good. I know vampires can turn into mist and float through stuff, but that doesn't excuse ridiculous clipping problems. The music is decent enough, but that doesn't make up for the choppy animation, silly plot, and terrible graphics. To game developers and filmmakers I say: Enough with the vampires. Give us some stuff about swamp monsters instead. – **JEREMY**

M 3

PLANETSIDE: CORE COMBAT

- **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 30



Just when you thought the updates and lack of people online couldn't make PlanetSide any worse, Sony Online Entertainment drops perhaps its biggest turd in history: Core Combat. Featuring modules that can upgrade bases topside, a paltry list of new weapons and vehicles, and some amazingly boring underground labyrinths to fight in, this expansion has actually hurt the game more than it has helped it. Perhaps Sony should have looked at fixing the problems with the original which charges a monthly fee, rather than ripping off its player base of another thirty dollars for this pathetic expansion. – **ANDY**

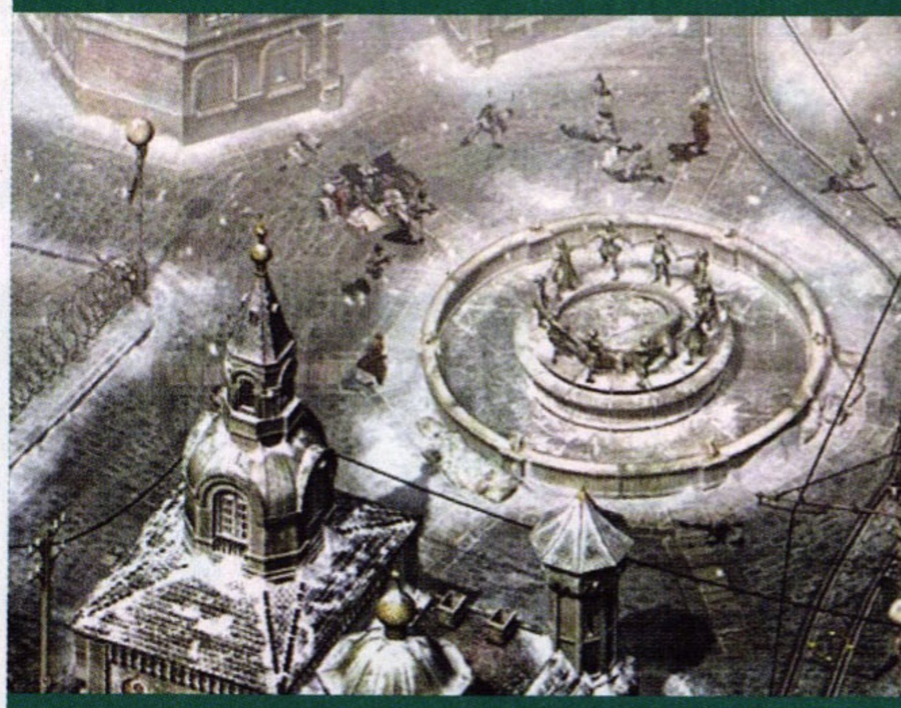
T 2

CONTRACT J.A.C.K.

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16-PLAYER VIA ONLINE OR LAN)
- **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 11

This prequel to No One Lives Forever 2 manages to take out all the good things about the series (like an entertaining story, niffy Bond-esque gadgets, and interesting gameplay), and replace it with pure, uninspired action. Featuring 10 levels that can be blasted through in a mere four hours tops, and more blood and bullets than the Valentine Day's Massacre, this title is a complete turnaround from the cool, hip '60s vibe of the first two in the series. J.A.C.K. (which stands for Just Another Contract Killer) certainly has testosterone running through its gameplay, but that doesn't make this game anything but mediocre. The gunplay is bland, the graphics are solid but repetitive, and most of the multiplayer aspects can be found in a free patch for NOLF 2. – **ANDY**

M 5.5



PC

COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN

MISSION NOT-BLOODY-LIKELY

THE BOTTOM LINE

T 6

Commandos has never been a game for the easily frustrated. This latest effort does nothing to change that; in fact, it may be even harder. Therein lies the trouble: The difficulty is so high that you don't so much create a solution to the problem at hand as find the correct one.

In most other tactical-type titles, each level (or battle, or whatever) presents you with a mission, in which you utilize the resources at your disposal to carry out your task in whatever manner you see fit. In Commandos 3, you have to walk such a fine line that in just about any given situation there is only one good plan of attack. Just like being in actual Nazi Germany, if you do pretty much anything at all, you get shot.

To make the game even more inaccessible to new players, the interface is counter-intuitive to the point that you not only have to learn the commands, you have to un-learn anything you remember from similar titles. The shortage of hotkeys adds to an already-high frustration quotient.

Destination Berlin should suit people who liked the first two titles just fine. It just doesn't do anything to make the gameplay more accessible or enjoyable to the general gaming public. – **ADAM**

- **Concept:** Use the unique skills of your team to pull off impossible missions
- **Graphics:** Pre-rendered backgrounds are nicely detailed, if static
- **Sound:** Painful, repetitive voice acting with some of the most ham-stuffed accents I've ever heard
- **Playability:** If you can spare ten hours to learn the labyrinthine interface, it's fine
- **Entertainment:** For those who like the series, this will make you smile. The rest of you should stay far, far away
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

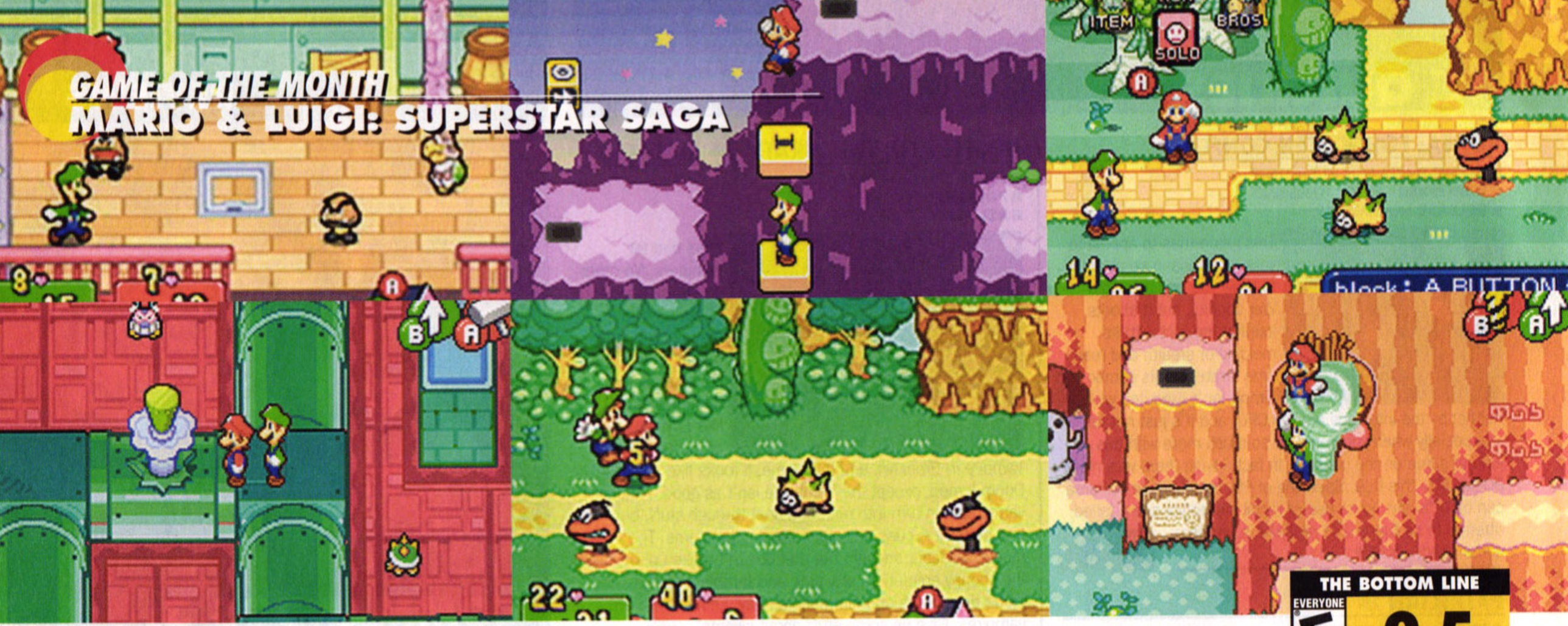
SECOND OPINION

Destination Berlin, like all the Commando games before it, is a very well produced and graphically stunning game. Unfortunately, it is also extremely difficult. Which is a shame really, as I want to play it, I just quickly discover that I don't have the patience. Fans will appreciate this one, but I just don't have the fortitude.

ANDY – 6

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY (UP TO 12-PLAYER VIA LAN OR INTERNET)
- **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE
- **DEVELOPER** PYRO STUDIOS
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 14

MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA



GAME BOY ADVANCE

"If you're a Mario fan, you owe it to yourself to pick this up."

MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

ANOTHER MARIO MASTERPIECE

From the opening moments of Superstar Saga, you know this is not a standard Mario game. Yet in typical Mario fashion, deviation from the formula yields some outstanding results.

Much like the N64 release Paper Mario, Superstar Saga is an RPG with Mario characters. In this adventure, Mario and Luigi head into the unfamiliar world of the Beanbean kingdom to battle the evil sorceress Cackletta. The witch has stolen Princess Peach's voice in order to awaken the Beanstar, a sacred object which will allow her to rule the world. Although set in a completely new environment, Superstar Saga is brimming with familiar faces, like Bowser, goombas, koopas, wigglers, and more.

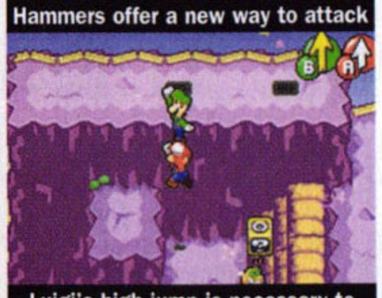
While the enemies are familiar, play is a mix of old and new. Much like a typical GBA role-playing game, Mario and Luigi explore the Beanbean kingdom in an isometric view. Each button controls the actions of one character; hitting start switches which plumber is in front. Both can jump and use hammers, but each has individual abilities as well. For example, Mario has a spin jump and can shrink, while Luigi has a high jump and can burrow through the ground. Utilizing the abilities of each is essential to the quest.

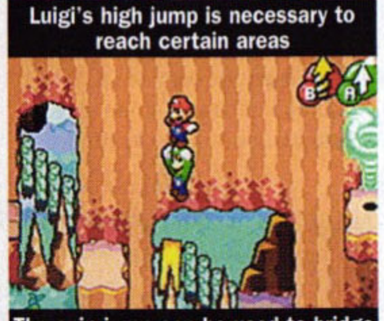
When the brothers encounter a creature, turn-based combat is initiated. At first, Mario and Luigi must rely on their trusty jumping skills to defeat enemies, but they later learn other attacks, including special moves in which they both strike at once. Enemy attacks can even be dodged or countered by careful jumping. Overall, combat has surprising depth and rarely grows dull, even though it is incredibly simple in execution.

While everything has a more kid-friendly look than most Mario games, the graphics are incredibly sharp and rival anything else on the system. The sound is equally well done. Perfect renditions of classic themes play throughout the quest. Mario and Luigi both have some limited voice work, but it is all so fitting that it's funny every time you hear it. But even more notable is the downright bizarre sense of humor throughout the game. No one you meet can remember Luigi's name, meaning they call him things like "Mr. Mario Brother Guy," and "Mr. Green 'Stache." Fawful, Cackletta's minion, has the best lines I've ever seen in a Mario game, and he's now my favorite character in the franchise. When a weird green dude shouts "I have fury," I can't help but giggle out loud. The strange humor is a big part of this title's appeal, as are the atypical style of play and the charming story. If you're a Mario fan, you owe it to yourself to pick this up. – **JEREMY**

Fawful's insane ranting will have you in stitches

Hammers offer a new way to attack


Luigi's high jump is necessary to reach certain areas


The spin jump can be used to bridge long gaps

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** ALPHA DREAM ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 17

Each boss requires a unique strategy

These symbols fall from Peach's speech bubble and explode

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9.5

- **Concept:** Bring classic Mario Bros. action to a role-playing game and add new elements to the already-rich universe
- **Graphics:** The slightly cartoonish take on the characters fits perfectly with the mood of the game
- **Sound:** All your favorite Mario themes are back, and the voices are hysterical
- **Playability:** The simple scheme gets a lot of mileage out of every one of the GBA's buttons
- **Entertainment:** One of the strangest Mario titles ever, and also one of the best
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

The Mario universe is one of those rare, wonderful places that Nintendo can play with the franchise's conventions and fans will stand up and cheer. You wouldn't see self-deprecating humor and borderline Engrish dialogue in a Metroid update, now would you? Time and hilarious time again you will see that ability to make fun of the most famous of the company's icons in Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga. What I came to appreciate most about this game wasn't the dialogue, but the fact that these in-jokes and allusions to games of yore are wrapped in a truly solid RPG with excellent battle dynamics. Although turn-based, the altercations feel much more action-oriented and engaging than any blow-by-blow description would lead you to believe, and that's a good thing. This tale is long, entertaining, and (in my view) a mandatory purchase for any GBA owner.

LISA – 9.5

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SWORD OF MANA

MANA SLIPPED ON A BANANA

"Fans of the series won't be disappointed, but they definitely won't be blown away."

To me, Secret of Mana stands as one of the top three SNES RPGs, alongside Final Fantasy III and Chrono Trigger. Legend of Mana kind of got lost in the PSone shuffle and was a little too segmented, but was still a beautiful game that eventually hooked you. Sword of Mana goes back to its roots in some respects – including originally being a prequel to Secret – but also tries to keep with the current RPG trends. What results is a good game suffering a slight identity crisis.

Many series staples carry on here. Several weapons are in your arsenal, the computer controls your ally as you battle, and elemental spirits act as your magic. Even NPCs like the dancing merchants and helmet-wearing duck enemies will strike a nostalgic chord or two.

Sword of Mana is very plot-driven, which is preferred to Legend's lack of storyline. Choose between a male or female as your primary character, knowing you will meet up with your partner early on in the quest. This is typical RPG fodder with undertones of a love story interspersed between a "hidden past" gimmick, and moves a little too slow for my tastes. Maybe I'm just getting jaded about role-playing plots.

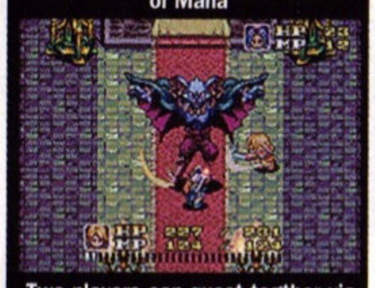
Many side missions and sub-quests interrupt the general story arc and diminish your enjoyment. I don't want to deliver sales flyers to 15 people or find someone's favorite kitchen knife; I want to save the world. This aspect, as well as collecting items that you spend hours not knowing the purpose of – seeds, meat, coins – demonstrates a lack of focus in the gameplay.

Combat is pure action/RPG. Unlike Secret of Mana, you can slash away to your heart's content. Both your character and his/her weapons will gain levels, and a class system helps hone your skills. Switching between protagonists is easy, but you'll always go back to your default hero when you move to a new screen. The AI of your ally is pretty poor, so most of the time you're fighting solo.

Sword of Mana has some beautiful graphics and great bosses. Being able to link for co-op play is also a huge feather in the game's cap. Even with backtracking aplenty, you rarely get bored running around and killing Rabites. Puzzles aren't overly complex, and are pretty fun to figure out.

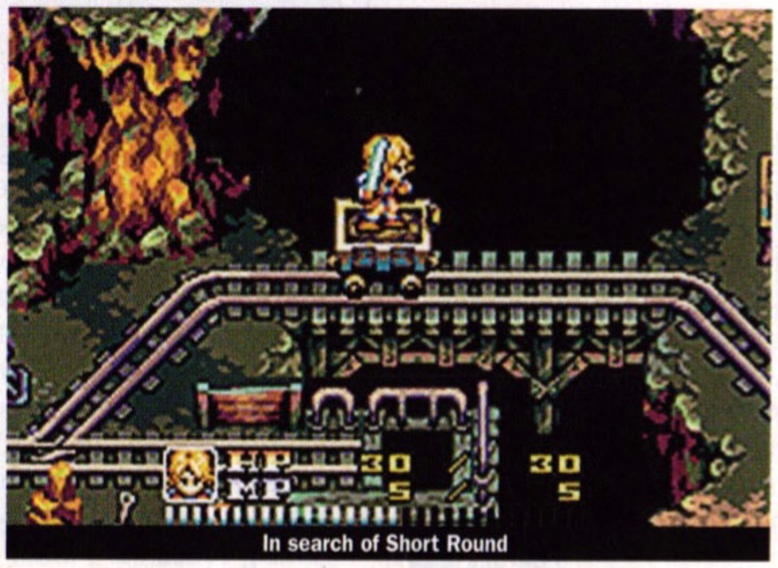
Fans of the series won't be disappointed, but they definitely won't be blown away, either. I think Sword of Mana tries too hard to be something it's not – with unnecessary day/night changes, sub-missions, and an abundance of items – instead of sticking with and improving on what worked for the series before: good action, innovative magic, and battling alongside AI allies. Sadly, at the end of the day, I probably would've been happier with a Secret of Mana port. – **JUSTIN**

Throughout the quest you'll run into characters from Legend of Mana


Two players can quest togther via the system link

The familiar item rings from Secret of Mana are ever present

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE ENIX/BROWNIE BROWN ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 1



In search of Short Round

"Great, kid. Now shut up and sweep the bridge!"

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.75

- **Concept:** Bring another great RPG series into the 21st century – on the GBA, no less
- **Graphics:** Amazing detail. The environments are some of the best seen on a handheld
- **Sound:** The soundtrack is in line with RPGs on more advanced platforms
- **Playability:** Four buttons handles all the action well. You'll curse your AI partner's ineptitude, though
- **Entertainment:** Not the Secret of Mana follow-up many were hoping for, but a decent RPG nonetheless
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I've been waiting with bated breath for a Mana sequel of this caliber since 1993. With gameplay taken straight from the Secret of Mana canon and graphics that absolutely pop off of the screen, handheld action really doesn't get much better than this. The real-time combat system, ring-based menus, and teammate dynamic perfectly replicate the SNES classic. Although enemies are often blanketed behind objects in the foreground, and your teammate's AI can often be described as questionable or idiotic, I really couldn't be more enthralled with how this game plays. Co-op absolutely rocks, boss battles are epic, and it's just fun to run around and hack beasts to bits. Changing with the times, story involvement is played out in a much bigger way and is just as deep as any Final Fantasy. Side missions are also tapped to bring about a level of non-linearity. Whether you've played a Mana game or not, this is one title that you don't want to miss.

REINER – 8.5

GAME BOY ADVANCE

MAX PAYNE

TAKING A WHACK AT LITTLE MAX

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.75

What sounds like a virtual train wreck on paper (bringing a cinematic PC masterpiece to the puny GBA) actually comes to life as a scrappy little-engine-that-could title for the handheld set. From the start, it's obvious that the gang at Möbius is a talented lot (with the good sense to have umlauts in their name!). Not only has it constructed a good isometric replication of the original Max Payne – the company also included all of the game's vaunted graphic novel cutscenes with fully recorded voiceovers.

Of course, Max Payne is not Max Payne without Bullet Time, and this port includes a serviceable approximation of the franchise's landmark slow-motion gunplay. Of course, I'm not going to deceive you into thinking that it's anywhere near as cool at it is with a keyboard and mouse, but it does work well, allowing you to take dives and target enemies in a 360-degree radius. I suspect that some people will not like this title because they are comparing it to the original. However, if you look at this as a handheld property, I think it stands head-and-shoulders above the bar that's been set for GBA action games. It's certainly one of the few recent non-Nintendo carts that I've actually enjoyed. – **MATT**

- **Concept:** Hey, let's see if we can pull Max Payne off on a GBA!
- **Graphics:** It's a little dingy on the small screen, but the animation is fantastic
- **Sound:** Eargasmic! Real voiceovers for every cutscene!
- **Playability:** Won't make you forget your keyboard and mouse, but not bad at all
- **Entertainment:** Props for both ambition and execution
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

While this tries many, many new things on the GBA (especially graphically), the gameplay is very average. The control is quite good except for the confusing Bullet Time/Shootdodge functions, but that doesn't help against getting shot from off-screen, which is something I like to think is behind us as a society. Missions are linear, involving lots of "do this so that door opens" kind of stuff, and there just isn't a whole lot more to Max Payne than blowing away thugs. And it isn't nearly as cool in a tiny isometric view as it was on the PC.

ADAM – 7.5

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES
- **DEVELOPER** MÖBIUS ENTERTAINMENT
- **RELEASE** DECEMBER 16

GAME BOY ADVANCE **QUICKIES**

SUPER DUPER SUMOS

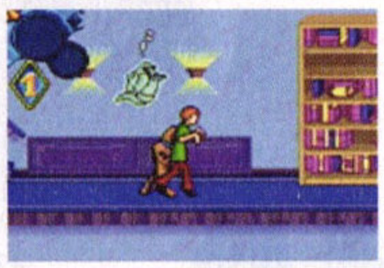
- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 20

Who doesn't want to be a sumo wrestler? Now everyone can live the dream. When you start this title up, you can pick from three different nearly naked fat men who live together and fight evil. You'll face many different foes on your quest to eat things, such as bumblebees, mutant fish and rabbits, evil Christmas trees, and cyborg sharks. But you've got a bevy of tricks at your disposal, including punching and jumping, and even a jumping punch! Trust me, it's just as fun as it sounds. – **JEREMY**

E **6**

SCOOBY DOO! MYSTERY MAYHEM

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
- **PUBLISHER** THQ
- **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10



Hey, someone actually tried to make a good handheld Scooby Doo game here – and they would have gotten away with it, if it wasn't for the meddling gameplay!! Great graphics, good music, a somewhat amusing plot, and a humorous "hiding" mechanic are all wasted for the want of something to do besides search for keys and clues while performing some light platforming. Still, in the scope of just how tremendously execrable licensed GBA titles usually are, I'll damn this one with faint praise, if only because I prefer games that try and fail to those who don't even try. – **MATT**

E **6**

TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** THQ
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

It's good to see a GBA platformer with a voracious difficulty. Challenging jump sequences are continually thrown in your direction, and collecting every item on a level requires serious skill. As exciting as these elements may be, the biggest hurdle that gamers must overcome is a horribly inconsistent combat mechanic. In this regard, cheap deaths are inevitable. If you don't hit an enemy with pinpoint precision, you'll likely take a hit yourself. It's a terribly frustrating element that ruins the entire experience. – **REINER**

E **5**

STAR WARS: FLIGHT OF THE FALCON

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** THQ
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18

Flight of the Falcon is an incredibly ambitious game that brings detailed polygonal environments to Nintendo's handheld. Unfortunately, to deliver graphics of this sort, sacrifices had to be made. The framerate chugs to a point where many of the stages should be classified as unplayable. I'd be surprised if this game pushes more than 10 frames per second at any given time. The idea of applying the Star Wars license to Star Fox-like gameplay is definitely sound, but it needs to play well before a graphical sheen can be applied. – **REINER**

E **2.25**

TOP GEAR RALLY

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER RACING (2-PLAYER VIA LINK)
- **PUBLISHER** KEMCO
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 27

Top Gear makes rally racing feel totally at home on the system, and it's no small accident. Despite some pop-up, the graphics are excellent, and are solid enough to even let you concentrate on upcoming turns. Top Gear also has collision for rocks, signs, etc. on the side of the tracks! Its biggest asset is its sense of speed. It really helps you build a rhythm, which is what rally racing is all about. Despite being able to change tires, I didn't feel much difference in handling between surfaces (snow, gravel, etc). However, the fact that I'm talking about this title almost like it was a real rally game for a big console shows you how serious of a good time Top Gear is. – **KATO**

E **8**

SPYRO: ATTACK OF THE RHYNOCS

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28

This is a fetch quest of unparalleled proportions. You must find around a dozen hearts, each of which is obtained by completing a quest to find a handful of random items strewn in random locations, mixed in with other menial collection goals of varying size. This list of tasks is wrapped around an admittedly colorful collection of enemies and environments; but the go-get-this nature of the game, coupled with painful isometric controls and questionable collision, make Spyro's latest outing a game that shouldn't be a ride for anyone other than the truly desperate. – **LISA**

E **5.5**

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION
- **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- **RELEASE** DECEMBER 16

People play The Sims for the same reason kids play dress-up: the thrill of living someone else's life. Now, thanks to a new GBA version (and its connectivity features that let you play a character on both the GBA and GC), you can pretty much do away with the real world altogether. This version veers even farther from it PC roots, with linear level progression and even (gasp!) RPG-style conversation that gives you options of what to say to the people you meet. Heck, it even throws in some actual action in the form of a few (not very good) minigames. This might sound like heresy, but be assured that this is a gorgeous and faithful (in spirit if not specifics) adaptation of one of our true gaming treasures. – **MATT**

E **8.5**

SUBSCRIBE

Get a subscription to Game Informer Magazine TODAY and save up to $94.78 off the newsstand price.

24 ISSUES ONLY

$24.98

SAVE OVER 80% OFF EACH ISSUE!

GAMEINFORMER MAGAZINE

☑ **Yes!** I want to take advantage of this amazing offer from ***Game Informer Magazine!***

☐ **1 Year** (12 Issues) for $19.98 ☐ **2 Years** (24 Issues) for $24.98

☐ **GameStop Value Card** for **$2.00**

Please Print Clearly in Block Letters

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Select Payment Method:

☐ Check or money order enclosed.

☐ Bill my Credit Card

Credit Card # Exp. Date

To order with Credit Card by phone call toll free 1-866-844-GAME (4263) M – F 9am to 4pm Central Time. All International & Canadian orders must add $20/yr. additional postage. Please allow up to 8 weeks for first mailed issue. Value Card good for 10% off Used Merchandise. Card may be used at any GameStop, FuncoLand, Babbage's, Software Etc. & Planet X for 10 months from purchase date.

01/04

GAMEINFORMER MAGAZINE

☑ **Yes!** I want to take advantage of this amazing offer from ***Game Informer Magazine!***

☐ **1 Year** (12 Issues) for $19.98 ☐ **2 Years** (24 Issues) for $24.98

☐ **GameStop Value Card** for **$2.00**

Please Print Clearly in Block Letters

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Select Payment Method:

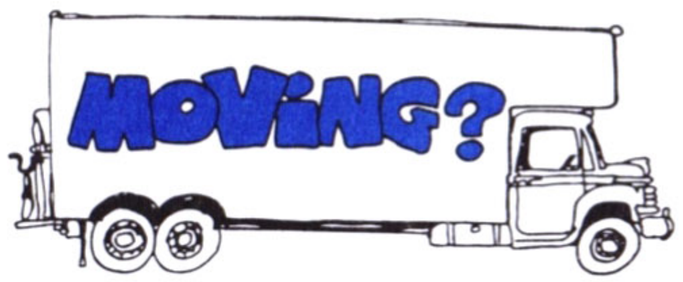
☐ Check or money order enclosed.

☐ Bill my Credit Card

Credit Card # Exp. Date

To order with Credit Card by phone call toll free 1-866-844-GAME (4263) M – F 9am to 4pm Central Time. All International & Canadian orders must add $20/yr. additional postage. Please allow up to 8 weeks for first mailed issue. Value Card good for 10% off Used Merchandise. Card may be used at any GameStop, FuncoLand, Babbage's, Software Etc. & Planet X for 10 months from purchase date.

01/04



GAMEINFORMER MAGAZINE

Change Of Address Card

Please Print Clearly in Block Letters

Customer/Card #

Old Address

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

New Address

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

01/04

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 30041 MINNEAPOLIS, MN

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

GAMEINFORMER MAGAZINE

724 N 1ST ST 4TH FL
MINNEAPOLIS MN 55401-9022

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 30041 MINNEAPOLIS, MN

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

GAMEINFORMER MAGAZINE

724 N 1ST ST 4TH FL
MINNEAPOLIS MN 55401-9022

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 30041 MINNEAPOLIS, MN

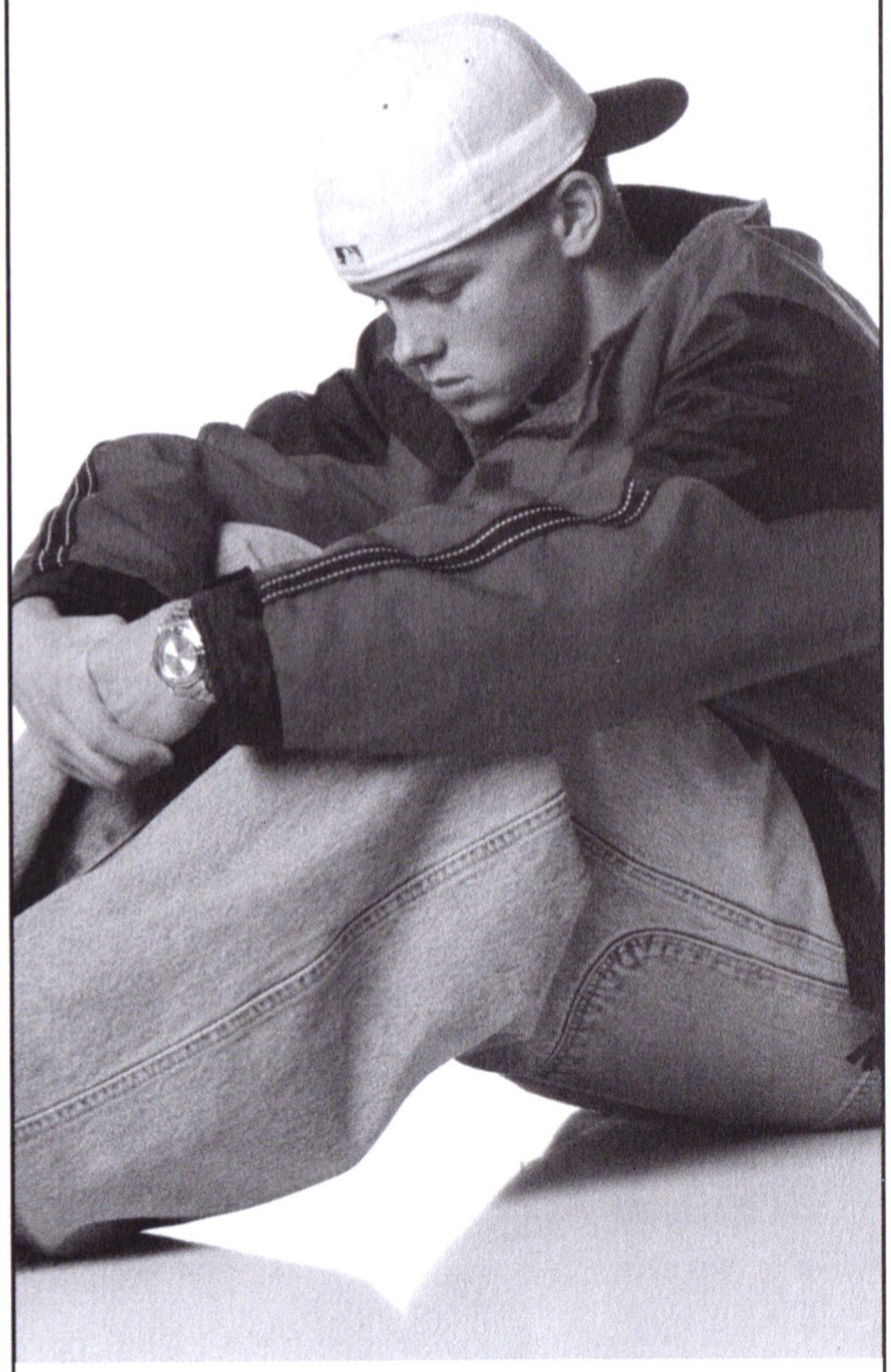
POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

GAMEINFORMER MAGAZINE

724 N 1ST ST 4TH FL
MINNEAPOLIS MN 55401-9022

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

NO GI NEXT MONTH?



RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION NOW!

Without a monthly fix of Game Informer, you start to get cold sweats, your hands start shaking, and you hallucinate that bugs are crawling under your skin. So why suffer?

Don't Delay! Fill out the attached card or call toll free 1-866-844-GAME (4263).

GameStop.com

Exclusive Offers For GAMEINFORMER Readers

Sony PlayStation 2

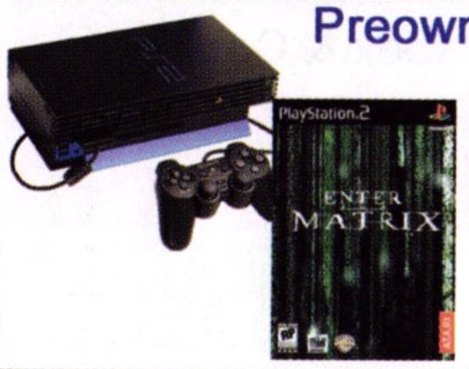
100% Preowned Guarantee - Played, Tested and Approved by Gamers

Preowned PlayStation 2
and controller with

FREE Preowned Kingdom Hearts Game

CODE: B909062HA

ONLY $139.99



Preowned PlayStation 2
and controller with

FREE Preowned Enter the Matrix Game

CODE: B909062IA

ONLY $139.99

Mafia
FREE set of Playing Cards with purchase!

FREE CARDS!

Code: B280585A

$49.99

Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm
With FREE Strategy Guide!

Expected Jan 2004

FREE GUIDE

Code: B280852A

$49.99

DDR Max 2
With Wireless Dance Pad
Save $10!

SAVE $10!

Code: B280811A

$69.98

MORE BESTSELLERS	PRICE	CODE
Burnout 2	$19.99	280561
EverQuest Online: Frontiers	$29.99	280829
Fantavision	$ 5.99	280004
Final Fantasy X-2	$49.99	280688
Harry Potter: Chamber of Secrets	$19.99	280536
Harry Potter Quidditch World Cup	$39.99	280775
Kingdom Hearts	$19.99	280415
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	$49.99	280776
Madden NFL 2004	$49.99	280732
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	$49.99	280865
Need for Speed: Underground	$49.99	280868
Simpsons: Hit and Run	$49.99	280806
SpongeBob: Battle for Bikini Bottom	$39.99	280848
Tak and the Power of Juju	$39.99	280846
True Crime: Streets of LA	$49.99	280656
XIII	$49.99	280452

Sonic Heroes
FREE overnight shipping
Coupon Code: GIOVR

FREE SHIPPING

Code: 280854

$49.99

Expected Jan 2004

James Bond: Everything or Nothing
FREE Overnight Shipping with coupon code: GIOVR

FREE SHIPPING

Code: 280866

$49.99

Expected Feb 2004

Champions of Norrath
Expected Feb 2004

FREE Calendar with Purchase!

FREE CALENDAR

Code: 280832

$49.99

Order by Phone: 1-800-865-3310
(8:00am - 9:00pm CST - 7 days a Week)

OR

Order Online: www.gameinformer.com

GET CASH For your games, DVDs, and music CDs

TradeStop TRADE IN - CASH OUT
www.tradestop.com

Nintendo GameCube

100% Preowned Guarantee - Played, Tested and Approved by Gamers

Preowned GameCube
and controller with

FREE WaveBird Wireless Controller & T-Shirt

CODE: B909064AH

ONLY $99.98

I-Ninja
Exclusive Bundle at a Great Price!

FREE T-SHIRT

CODE: B220339A

ONLY $49.99

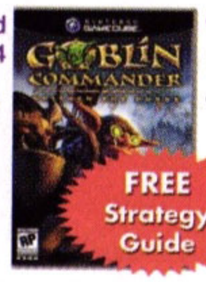
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life
Expected Jan 2004

FREE Overnight Shipping
Coupon Code: GIOVR

FREE Shipping

Code: 220374

$39.99



Goblin Commander
FREE Strategy Guide with Purchase!

FREE Strategy Guide

Code: B220408A

$39.99

Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes
FREE overnight shipping w/ coupon code: GIOVR

Expected Feb 2004

FREE SHIPPING

Code: 220363

$39.99

R: Racing Evolution
FREE Preowned Smashing Drive Game

FREE GAME

Code: B220340A

$49.99

GBA e-Reader with
FREE Donkey Kong Jr. and Pokemon-e Dragon Booster!

FREE E-Reader Cards

Code: B801431AC

$39.99

Sims Bustin' Out
FREE Strategy Guide with Purchase

FREE GUIDE

Code: B220417A

$49.99

MORE BESTSELLERS	PRICE	CODE
Animal Crossing	$29.99	220129
Eternal Darkness	$14.99	220030
Harry Potter Quidditch World Cup	$39.99	220334
Kirby's Air Ride	$49.99	220366
Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker	$49.99	220082
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	$49.99	220335
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	$49.99	220401
Metroid Prime	$29.99	220081
Need for Speed: Underground	$49.99	220403
Prince of Persia: Sands of Time	$49.99	220354
Scooby Doo: Night of 100 Frights	$19.99	220134
Simpsons: Hit and Run	$49.99	220356
SpongeBob: Battle for Bikini Bottom	$39.99	220383
Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike	$49.99	220351
Super Smash Brothers Melee	$29.99	220003
Tak and the Power of Juju	$39.99	220384

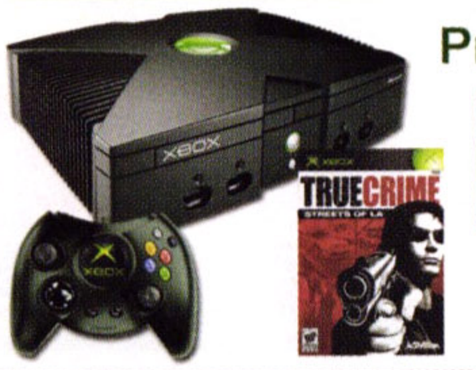
Offers good online or call-in only. Not valid in stores. May not be combined with any other offers. Offers end January 31st, 2004 or while supplies last. GameStop.com reserves the right to limit quantities or orders. No substitutions. Credit card orders only. We DO NOT accept cash, or money orders. Shipping offers good within continental United States only, excluding PO Box or APO/FPO addresses. Listed prices do not include shipping and handling. Prices are subject to change at any time. Not responsible for misprints or typos.

GameStop.com

Exclusive Offers For GAMEINFORMER Readers

Microsoft Xbox

100% Preowned Guarantee - Played, Tested and Approved by Gamers



Preowned Xbox & Controller with

FREE Preowned True Crime: Streets of LA Game

CODE: B909063AG

ONLY $139.99

New Xbox and Controller with

FREE Star Wars Clone Wars & Tetris Worlds Games

FREE OVERNIGHT SHIPPING COUPON CODE: GIOVR

CODE: 020222

ONLY $179.99

Sims Bustin' Out

FREE Strategy Guide with Purchase!

Code: B210504A

$49.99

Baldur's Gate 2: Dark Alliance

Expected Jan 2004

FREE DVD with purchase!

Code: B210346A

$49.99

Mafia

Expected Jan 2004

FREE Playing Cards with Purchase!

Code: B210248A

$49.99

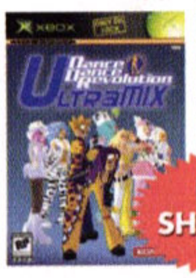
Ninja Gaiden

Expected Jan 2004

FREE T-Shirt with Purchase!

Code: B210184A

$49.99



Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix

FREE Overnight Shipping Use Coupon Code: GIOVR

Code: 210436

$39.99

Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel

Expected Jan. 2004

FREE Overnight Shipping Use coupon code: GIOVR

Code: 210349

$49.99

MORE BESTSELLERS	PRICE	CODE
Counter-Strike	$49.99	210161
Fuzion Frenzy	$19.99	210009
Grand Theft Auto Double Pack	$49.99	210505
Halo	$29.99	210001
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	$49.99	210404
Mech Assault	$19.99	210154
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	$49.99	210480
Need for Speed: Underground	$49.99	210483
Project Gotham Racing 2	$49.99	210452
Simpsons: Hit and Run	$49.99	210432
SpongeBob: Battle for Bikini Bottom	$39.99	210465
Knights of the Old Republic	$49.99	210172
Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	$29.99	210375
Splinter Cell	$19.99	210187
Tony Hawk's Underground	$49.99	210383
True Crime: Streets of LA	$49.99	210307

Order by Phone: 1-800-865-3310 (8:00am - 9:00pm CST - 7 days a Week)

OR

Order Online: www.gameinformer.com

GET CASH

For your games, DVDs, and music CDs

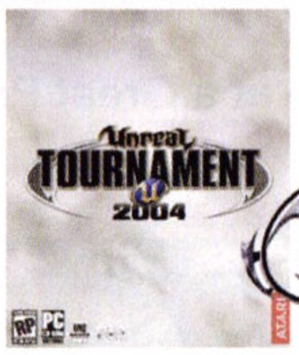
TradeStop

TRADE IN - CASH OUT

www.tradestop.com

PC Games

GameStop also carries a wide assortment of PC hardware and accessories



Unreal Tournament 2004 with

FREE Unreal Medallion

Expected Feb. 2004

CODE: B645292A

ONLY $39.99

Neverwinter Nights Gold with Hordes of the Underdark

Save $10 when you buy Neverwinter Nights Gold and the Hordes of the Underdark Expansion together!

Save $10!

CODE: B645421AB

ONLY $59.99

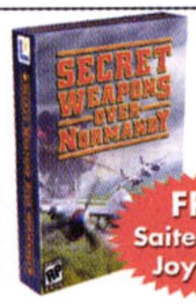
URU: Ages Beyond Myst

FREE Myst III Game with Purchase!

FREE MYST III GAME

Code: B645250AB

$49.99



Secret Weapons Over Normandy

FREE Saitek ST90 Joystick with Purchase!

Code: B645320A

$49.99

Atari 10 in 1 Joystick

Receive a FREE copy of Atari Anniversary Game

Code: B321721AZ

$24.99

Horizons: Empire of Istaria Online

FREE T-Shirt with Purchase!

Code: B645274AB

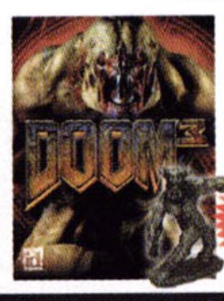
$49.99

Greyhawk: Temple of Elemental Evil

Includes a FREE bonus Icewind Dale Game!

Code: B645273AB

$49.99



Doom 3

Expected 2004

Get a FREE Baron of Hell Figurine with Purchase!

Code: B644930A

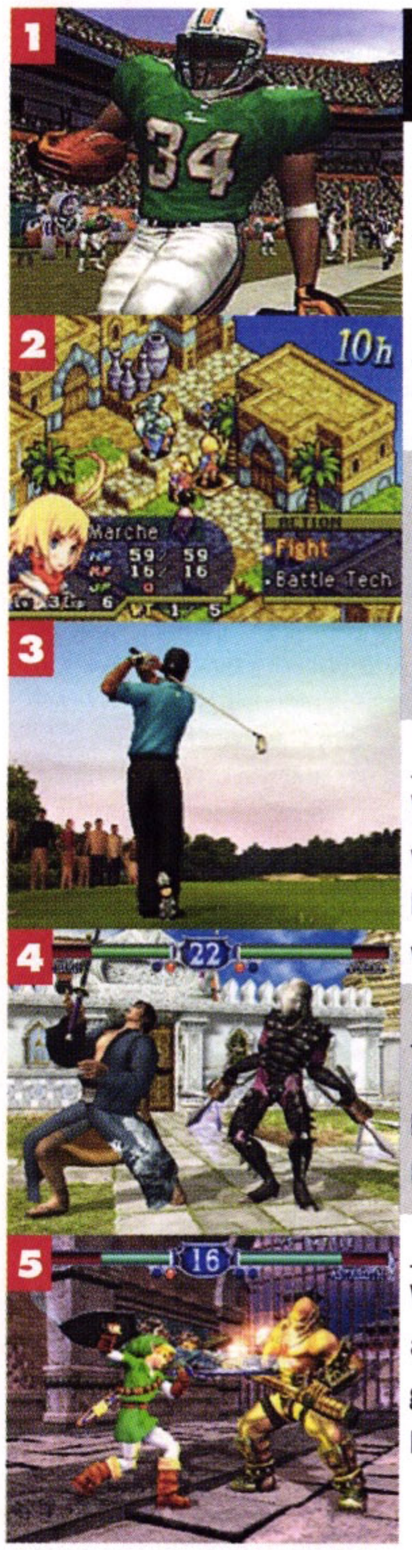
$54.99

MORE BESTSELLERS	PRICE	CODE
Atari: 80 Classic Games-In-One	$19.99	645557
Deus Ex: Invisible War	$49.99	645080
Dungeon Siege: Expansion Pack	$29.99	645376
Morrowind: Game of the Year	$29.99	645251
Final Fantasy XI Online	$49.99	645389
Galactic Civilizations	$19.99	645169
Journey to the Center of the Earth	$19.99	645552
Lords of Everquest	$49.99	645262
Mall Tycoon II	$19.99	645405
Medieval: Total War	$19.99	644895
Medieval: Total War Viking Invasion	$14.99	645212
Need for Speed Underground	$39.99	645368
Shadowbane	$ 4.99	644839
Sim City 3000 Unlimited	$ 9.99	643968
Galactic Battlegrounds Saga	$19.99	644248
Knights of the Old Republic	$49.99	645268

Offers good online or call-in only. Not valid in stores. May not be combined with any other offers. Offers end January 31st, 2004 or while supplies last. GameStop.com reserves the right to limit quantities or orders. No substitutions. Credit card orders only. We DO NOT accept cash or money orders. Shipping offers good within continental United States only, excluding PO Box or APO/FPO addresses. Listed prices do not include shipping and handling. Prices are subject to change at any time. Not responsible for misprints or typos.

CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.



NPD TOP 20

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For September 2003 Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	1	**Madden NFL 2004**	PS2	9.25	Aug-03	$50

People sure seem to like this "Madden" guy. He must be a pretty good athlete to star in so many football games. Is he the guy who throws the ball to the other guy? Sorry, we don't know much about sports. In school, the kid with the prosthetic leg usually got picked before us. But hey, he could run faster.

2	N/A	**Final Fantasy Tactics Advance**	GBA	9.5	Sep-03	$34

Before they released this game, Square Enix considered a game called "Legal Tactics Advance." We think it would have done just as well. Your attacks would include subpoenas, cross-examinations, and even the dreaded motion to suppress. What? You think that idea sucks? Overruled!

3	N/A	**Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004**	PS2	9.5	Sep-03	$49

We may not know much about football, but we love golfing. We especially like the hole where you have to shoot under the windmill. It's challenging, what with the spinning blades and all. Usually the kids behind us throw Juju Bees and tell us to hurry up. Then we cry.

4	7	**Soul Calibur II**	PS2	8.5	Aug-03	$50

"Eat it, elf-boy! You thought you could mess with me? Yeah, who's sellin' now? Your green butt may have been on top last month, but no one can keep me down! I'm the man, the king, the top gangsta! Now I gotta go get my heart pills. Love, Heihachi."

5	3	**Soul Calibur II**	GC	8.75	Aug-03	$50

While his version of Soul Calibur II is no longer the top selling, its performance has already earned Link a number of promising offers. Word is that he'll be leaving video games for Hollywood. Look for him to star alongside Reese Witherspoon in "Legally Blonde 3: The Blondecarina of Time."

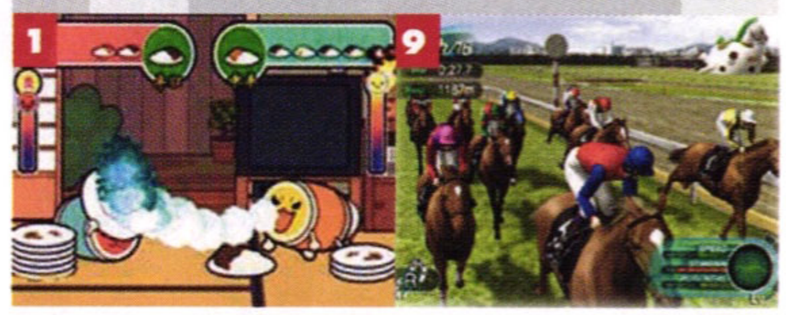
RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	14	**Grand Theft Auto: Vice City**	PS2	10	Oct-03	$30
7	4	**Soul Calibur II**	Xbox	8.5	Aug-03	$49
8	N/A	**ESPN NFL Football**	Xbox	9.25	Sep-03	$50
9	2	**Madden NFL 2004**	Xbox	9	Aug-03	$50
10	N/A	**SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs**	PS2	9.5	Apr-03	$20
11	N/A	**Pokémon Pinball Ruby and Sapphire**	GBA	8.5	Aug-03	$31
12	N/A	**WWE Raw 2**	Xbox	7.25	Sep-03	$50
13	N/A	**NASCAR Thunder 2004**	PS2	8.75	Sep-03	$50
14	N/A	**ESPN NFL Football**	PS2	9.25	Sep-03	$50
15	6	**NCAA Football 2004**	PS2	8.75	Jul-03	$50
16	N/A	**WWE Wrestlemania XIX**	GC	7.75	Sep-03	$50
17	10	**Grand Theft Auto III**	PS2	9.5	Oct-01	$19
18	N/A	**Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004**	Xbox	9.25	Sep-03	$49
19	N/A	**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4**	PS2	9.25	Oct-03	$16
20	N/A	**NHL 2004**	PS2	9.25	Sep-03	$50

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Japan
Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	**Taiko Master: Admirable Third Generation**	PS2
2	N/A	**Naruto**	PS2
3	N/A	**Made in Wario**	GBA
4	N/A	**Hanabi Hyakukei**	PS2
5	N/A	**D.C.P.S.**	PS2
6	N/A	**New Epoch Fantasy: Spectral Souls**	PS2
7	N/A	**Super Dimensional Fortress Macross**	PS2
8	N/A	**Tennis Princes: Kiss of Prince Flame**	PS2
9	N/A	**G1 Jockey 3 2003**	PS2
10	3	**Grand Theft Auto III**	PS2



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

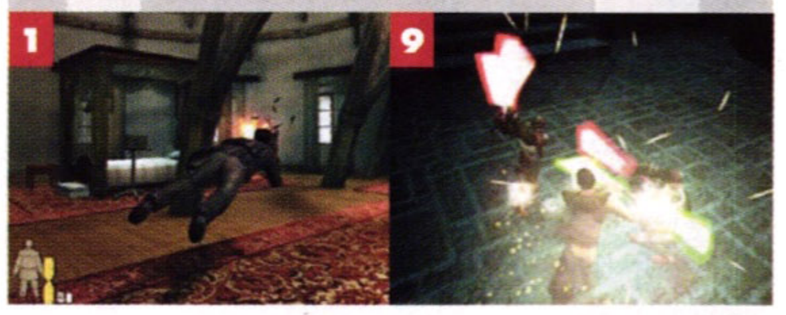
The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	**Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga**	GBA
2	N/A	**Manhunt**	PS2
3	N/A	**The Sims: Bustin' Out**	Multi
4	5	**SSX 3**	Multi
5	4	**Need for Speed: Underground**	Multi
6	2	**Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time**	Multi
7	N/A	**Deus Ex: Invisible War**	Multi
8	8	**Mario Kart: Double Dash**	GC
9	N/A	**Armed and Dangerous**	Xbox
10	N/A	**Final Fantasy XI**	PC

PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Sevice Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	N/A	**Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne**	Oct-03	$39
2	4	**Halo: Combat Evolved**	Sep-03	$45
3	N/A	**Age Of Mythology**	Nov-03	$35
4	2	**Command & Conquer Generals: Zero Hour**	Sep-03	$27
5	N/A	**Age Of Mythology: The Titans**	Sep-03	$30
6	7	**Flight Simulator 2004: Century Of Flight**	Jul-03	$51
7	N/A	**The Sims Double Deluxe**	Sep-03	$41
8	6	**Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault – Breakthrough**	Sep-03	$29
9	1	**Star Wars: Jedi Academy**	Sep-03	$49
10	N/A	**Command & Conquer Generals**	Feb-03	$37



ALTER ECHO

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **REVIEWED** SEP-03

Alter Echo can best be described as Tony Hawk meets Kingdom Hearts. This may sound like a foul crossbreed, but it's actually a winning combination that feeds off of gamers' timing, reflexes, and skills. At any given time, players can morph between three different combat forms that deliver melee, stealth, and firearm action. Unfortunately, where Alter Echo excels in graphics and gameplay, it comes up short in plot and personality. The story sequences are the snoozefest of the century and the main character is as dumb as bricks. It's a fun game to play, but it's hard to get into it when you're the world's biggest dork. – **REINER**

7.75

PLAYSTATION 2

Aero Elite: Combat Academy	6.75	May-03
Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	6.75	Aug-03
Alter Echo	8	Sep-03
Amplitude	8.75	May-03
Ape Escape 2	7.5	Jul-03
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	8.75	Jul-03
Auto Modellista	8	Jun-03
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	5.5	Dec-03
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	5	Nov-03
Beyond Good And Evil	8	Dec-03
Big Mutha Truckers	7.5	May-03
Bloody Roar 4	7.5	Dec-03
Bombastic	8	Sep-03
Butt-Ugly Martians: Zoom or Doom!	5	Oct-03
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	8	Nov-03
Chaos Legion	8.5	Jun-03
Choplifter: Crisis Shield	6.5	May-03
Clock Tower 3	8.5	May-03
Colin McRae Rally 3	8.75	May-03
Conflict Desert Storm II: Back to Baghdad	7.75	Nov-03
Crash Nitro Kart	7	Dec-03
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	6	Oct-03
Culdcept	8	Dec-03
DDR Max 2	7	Oct-03
Disney Extreme Skate Adventure	7.75	Oct-03
Dot Hack Vol. 2: Mutation	7.75	Jun-03
Dot Hack Vol. 3: Outbreak	7.5	Sep-03
Downhill Domination	8.25	Aug-03
Dynasty Tactics 2	7.5	Oct-03
Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends	7	Dec-03
Ejay Clubworld	7	Aug-03
Enter the Matrix	8.5	Jun-03
ESPN College Hoops	8.25	Dec-03
ESPN NBA Basketball	9.5	Nov-03
ESPN NHL Hockey	8.5	Oct-03
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	7.75	Jun-03
EyeToy: Play	9	Oct-03
F1 Career Championship	7	Aug-03
FIFA Soccer 2004	8.5	Nov-03
Final Fantasy X-2	8.75	Dec-03
Finding Nemo	6.5	Jul-03
Freaky Flyers	6	Aug-03
Freedom Fighters	8	Oct-03
Freestyle MetalX	7	Aug-03
Futurama	5.25	Sep-03
G1 Jockey 3	8	Jun-03
Gallop Racer 2003: A New Breed	8.5	May-03
Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	5.75	Nov-03
Gladius	9	Oct-03
Grand Prix Challenge	7.5	May-03
Great Escape, The	6.5	Sep-03
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	7.75	Nov-03
Hulk, The	5.5	Jul-03
Hunter: The Reckoning - Wayward	6.25	Sep-03
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	8.25	Aug-03
IndyCar Series	7	Jun-03
Italian Job, The	5	Aug-03
Jak II	9.25	Nov-03
Karaoke Revolution	8.5	Nov-03
K-1 World Grand Prix	6.5	Jul-03
Kill.Switch	7	Dec-03
King of Fighters 2000/2001	7.75	Dec-03
Kya: Dark Lineage	7.5	Nov-03
Lethal Skies	6	Nov-03
Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, The	8.25	Dec-03
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	7.25	Aug-03
Madden NFL 2004	9.25	Sep-03
Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color	8	Sep-03
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	7.75	Dec-03
Mega Man X7	7.5	Nov-03
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	8	Nov-03
Midnight Club II	9	May-03
Midway Arcade Treasures	9	Dec-03
Mobile Suit Gundam: Encounters in Space	6.5	Nov-03
Mojo!	7.75	Oct-03
Monster Rancer 4	8.25	Dec-03
Music Maker	8	Jul-03
NASCAR Thunder 2004	8.75	Oct-03
Naval Ops: Warship Gunner	7.5	Jul-03
NBA Jam	6.5	Nov-03
NBA Live 2004	8.5	Nov-03
NBA Shootout 2004	8	Dec-03
NBA Street Vol. 2	9	May-03
NCAA Football 2004	8.75	Jul-03
NCAA Gamebreaker 2004	7	Oct-03
Need For Speed: Underground	9.5	Dec-03
NFL Blitz Pro	7.25	Sep-03
NFL GameDay 2004	7	Sep-03
NHL 2004	9.25	Oct-03
NHL Hitz Pro	8.25	Oct-03
Primal	6.75	May-03
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	9.5	Dec-03
Ratchet and Clank: Going Commando	9.5	Dec-03
Reel Fishing III	3	Jul-03
Resident Evil Dead Aim	6	Jun-03
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Operation Resurrection	7.5	Jul-03
Risk: Global Domination	7	Oct-03
Roadkill	6	Oct-03
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	5.25	Oct-03
Rogue Ops	7.5	Nov-03
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII	7	Sep-03
RTX Red Rock	6.5	Jul-03
Rugby 2004	6	Oct-03
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	7.5	Dec-03
Silent Hill 3	8.25	Aug-03
Silent Line: Armored Core	7.5	Jul-03
Smash Cars	4	Aug-03
SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	9	Dec-03
Soul Calibur II	8.5	Oct-03
Space Channel 5: Special Edition	8.25	Dec-03
Speed Kings	6.5	Jul-03
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	7.75	Nov-03
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	9.25	Sep-03
Splinter Cell	8.5	Apr-03
Spongebob Squarepants: Battle for Bikini Bottom	4.25	Nov-03
Starsky And Hutch	5.75	Oct-03
SSX 3	9.5	Nov-03
Summer Heat Beach Volleyball	6.75	Aug-03
SWAT: Global Strike Team	7	Dec-03
Super Trucks Racing	6.75	Dec-03
Tak and the Power of Juju	6.75	Nov-03
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	7.75	Dec-03
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	9	Apr-03
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	9.5	Oct-03
Time Crisis 3	7.5	Dec-03
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	5.5	Aug-03
Tony Hawk's Underground	9.25	Dec-03
True Crime: Streets of LA	8.5	Dec-03
Unlimited SaGa	6.5	Jun-03
Vexx	6.75	Apr-03
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	9	Aug-03
Virtual-On Marz	5	Dec-03
Wakeboarding Unleashed Featuring Shaun Murray	8.25	Jul-03
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	7.5	Oct-03
Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	8.25	Nov-03
Winning Eleven 6	9	Apr-03
World Series Baseball 2K3	6.75	Apr-03
WWE Crush Hour	5.25	May-03
WWE Smackdown: Here Comes The Pain	8.5	Dec-03
X2 Wolverine's Revenge	5.5	Jun-03
XIII	7	Dec-03
XGRA	5	Nov-03
Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelists of the Roses	8	Apr-03
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	8.5	May-03

GAMECUBE

Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis	2	Oct-03
Army Men: Sarge's War	6	May-03
Batman: Dark Tomorrow	0.75	May-03
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	5	Dec-03
Beyond Good And Evil	8	Dec-03
Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg	7	Oct-03
Bomberman Jetters	8	Dec-03
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	8.5	May-03
Charlie's Angels	2	Sep-03
Conflict: Desert Storm	6	May-03
Def Jam Vendetta	8.75	Apr-03
Disney Extreme Skate Adventure	8	Oct-03
Disney's Hide and Sneak	3.5	Dec-03
Disney's Party	2.5	Nov-03
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	7.25	Dec-03
Enter the Matrix	8.5	Jun-03
FIFA Soccer 2004	8.25	Nov-03
Finding Nemo	6.75	Aug-03
F-Zero GX	8.25	Sep-03
Ghost Recon	7.75	May-03
Gladius	9	Oct-03
Go! Go! Hypergrind!	7.75	Dec-03
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	8	Jul-03
Hulk, The	5.75	Jul-03
Ikaruga	9	May-03
Italian Job, The	5	Aug-03
Kirby Air Ride	7	Dec-03
Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, The	10	Apr-03
Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, The	8.25	Dec-03
Lost Kingdoms II	8.5	Jun-03
Madden NFL 2004	8.75	Sep-03
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	8	Sep-03
Mario Kart: Double Dash	9.25	Dec-03
Mario Party 5	2	Dec-03
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	7.5	Dec-03
Mega Man: Network Transmission	6.25	Jun-03
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	8.5	Nov-03
MLB Slugfest 2004	6.75	Apr-03
NBA Live 2004	8.25	Dec-03
NBA Street Vol. 2	9	May-03
NCAA Football 2004	8.5	Jul-03
Need For Speed: Underground	9	Dec-03
NHL 2004	9	Oct-03
NHL Hitz Pro	8	Oct-03
P.N. 03	5.75	Sep-03
Red Faction II	8.75	Apr-03
Resident Evil 2	8	Apr-03
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis	7.75	Apr-03
Rogue Ops	7.5	Nov-03
Simpsons: Hit and Run	8.5	Nov-03
Sims, The	8.75	May-03
Sonic Adventure DX	5	May-03
Soul Calibur II	8.75	Oct-03
Speed Kings	7	Jul-03
Spirit and Spells	2	Dec-03
Splinter Cell	8.5	May-03
SSX 3	9.5	Nov-03
Star Wars Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike	6.5	Nov-03
Sum of All Fears, The	5.5	Apr-03
Summoner: A Goddess Reborn	9	Apr-03
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	6.5	May-03
SX Superstar	6	Aug-03
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	9	Oct-03
Transworld Surf: Next Wave	5.5	May-03
Tube Slider	6.5	Jun-03
Ultimate Muscle	7.5	Jul-03
Viewtiful Joe	9.5	Oct-03
Wario World	8.5	Jul-03
Wrestlemania XIX	7.75	Oct-03
WWE Crush Hour	4	May-03
X2 Wolverine's Revenge	5.75	Jun-03

XBOX

Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	6.75	Aug-03
Alter Echo	8	Sep-03
Amped 2	6.75	Nov-03
Apex	7.75	May-03
Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis	2	Oct-03
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try this at home	5.5	Dec-03
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	5	Nov-03
Beyond Good and Evil	8	Dec-03
Big Mutha Truckers	7.25	Sep-03
Bloody Roar Extreme	6.5	Jul-03
Brute Force	8.25	Jul-03
Buffy: Chaos Bleeds	8	Sep-03
Burnout 2: Point of Impact Developer's Cut	8.5	Jun-03
Cabela's Deer Hunt: 2004 Season	4.75	Nov-03
Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge	9	Dec-03
Dino Crisis 3	6.25	Oct-03
Dinotopia: The Sunstone Odyssey	3.25	Nov-03
Disney Extreme Skate Adventure	7.75	Oct-03
Dungeons and Dragons Heroes	8	Nov-03
Dynasty Warriors 4	7	Oct-03
Enter the Matrix	8.5	Jul-03
ESPN NBA Basketball	9.5	Nov-03
ESPN NFL Football	9.25	Sep-03
ESPN NHL Hockey	8.5	Oct-03
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	8	Jun-03
Freaky Flyers	5.75	Aug-03
Freedom Fighters	8	Oct-03
Freestyle MetalX	7	Aug-03
Furious Karting	6	Jun-03
Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	8.25	Aug-03
Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	5.75	Nov-03
Gladius	9.25	Oct-03
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	7.5	Jun-03
Grabbed by the Ghoulies	4.5	Dec-03
Great Escape, The	7	Sep-03
Grooverider	2	Sep-03
Group S Challenge	6.75	Sep-03
Hulk, The	5.75	Jul-03
Indycar Series	7.5	Aug-03
Italian Job, The	5	Aug-03
Kill.Switch	7.5	Dec-03
Links 2004	7	Nov-03
Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, The	8.25	Dec-03
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	8	Jul-03
Madden NFL 2004	9	Sep-03
Magic: The Gathering Battlegrounds	6.5	Dec-03
Marvel Vs. Capcom 2	8.5	May-03
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	7.75	Dec-03
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	8.5	Nov-03
Micro Machines	6	May-03
Midnight Club II	9	Jul-03
Midtown Madness 3	5.25	Jul-03
MLB Inside Pitch 2003	5.5	Jun-03
MLB Slugfest 2004	6.75	Apr-03
MotoGP 2	8	Jun-03
MVP Baseball 2003	9.25	Apr-03
NASCAR Thunder 2004	8.5	Oct-03
NBA Inside Drive 2004	6.5	Dec-03
NBA Jam	6.5	Nov-03
NBA Live 2004	8.25	Nov-03
NBA Street Vol. 2	9	May-03
NCAA Football 2004	8.5	Jul-03
Need For Speed: Underground	9.25	Dec-03
NFL Fever 2004	7.5	Sep-03
NHL 2004	9	Oct-03
NHL Hitz Pro	8	Oct-03
NHL Rivals 2004	5.75	Dec-03
Otogi: Myth of Demons	6.75	Oct-03
Outlaw Volleyball	8.25	Sep-03
Pirates of the Caribbean	7.75	Aug-03
Pro Cast Fishing	5.5	Sep-03
Pro Race Driver	9	Apr-03
Red Faction II	8.25	Apr-03
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War	9.25	Jun-03
Roadkill	6.5	Oct-03
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	6.75	Dec-03
Robocop	3.5	May-03
Rogue Ops	7.5	Nov-03
Roller Coaster Tycoon	2	Jun-03
Run Like Hell	8	May-03
Sega GT Online	7.75	Dec-03
Simpsons Hit & Run	8.5	Oct-03
Sims, The	8.75	Apr-03
Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix	8	Jul-03
Soul Calibur II	8.5	Oct-03
Speed Kings	7	Jul-03
SSX 3	9.5	Nov-03
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	9.5	Aug-03
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	8.5	Jun-03
Starsky And Hutch	5.75	Oct-03
State of Emergency	7	May-03
SWAT: Global Strike Team	7.5	Nov-03
SX Superstar	6.5	Aug-03
Syberia	7	Oct-03
Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus	7.25	Apr-03
Tennis Masters Series 2003	8	Oct-03
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	9.25	Oct-03
Tony Hawk's Underground	8.75	Dec-03
Top Spin	9	Nov-03
UFC: Tapout 2	6.25	May-03
Voodoo Vince	8.5	Nov-03
Wakeboarding Unleashed Featuring Shaun Murray	8.5	Jul-03
World Racing	5	Jun-03
World Series Baseball 2K3	7	Apr-03
WWE Raw 2	7.25	Nov-03
X2 Wolverine's Revenge	5.5	Jun-03
XIII	7	Dec-03
XGRA	5	Nov-03

PC

1503 A.D.: The New World	7.5	Apr-03
Age of Mythology: The Titans	9	Dec-03
Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of WW II	8.75	Sep-03
Call of Duty	9	Dec-03
Command & Conquer Generals	9.25	Apr-03
Command & Conquer Generals: Zero Hour	8	Dec-03
Day of Defeat	8.5	Aug-03
Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind – Bloodmoon, The	9	Aug-03
Empires: Dawn of the Modern World	8.25	Dec-03
Eve: The Second Genesis	6.75	Aug-03
Freelancer	9.5	May-03
Ghost Master	7.25	Nov-03
Halo: Comabt Evolved	8.75	Dec-03
Harbinger	6	May-03
Homeworld 2	9.25	Nov-03
IGI 2: Covert Strike	7.25	Apr-03
Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader	8.5	Oct-03
Master of Orion III	8	Apr-03
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	9.25	Dec-03
Medal of Honor Allied Assault: Breakthrough	9	Dec-03
Medieval: Total War - Viking Invasion	8.75	Jun-03
Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide	8.25	Aug-03
Pirates of the Caribbean	7.75	Sep-03
PlanetSide	9.25	Jul-03
Postal 2	7.5	Jun-03
Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	7.25	May-03
Republic: The Revolution	6	Dec-03
Restaurant Empire	6.75	Jul-03
Rise of Nations	9	Jul-03
Runaway: A Road Adventure	7.25	Nov-03
Savage: The Battle for Newerth	8.5	Nov-03
Shadowbane	6.75	Jun-03
SimCity 4: Rush Hour	7.5	Dec-03
Sims: Makin' Magic, The	7.75	Dec-03
Sims: Superstar, The	8	Jul-03
Space Colony	7	Dec-03
Star Trek: Elite Force II	8.5	Aug-03
Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided	9.5	Jun-03
Star Wars: Jedi Academy	8.5	Nov-03
Temple of Elemental Evil	7	Nov-03
Tron 2.0	8.75	Oct-03
Tropico 2: Pirate Cove	8	Jun-03
UFO: Aftermath	8.25	Dec-03
Uru: Ages Beyond Myst	8.25	Dec-03
Warcraft 3: Frozen Throne	9	Sep-03
Will Rock	7.75	Aug-03

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising	9.25	Jul-03
Aladdin	8	Oct-03
All-Star Baseball 2004	6.5	Apr-03
Banjo-Kazooie: Grunty's Revenge	5.25	Nov-03
Blackthorne	8	Dec-03
Boktai: The Sun is in Your Hand	6.75	Oct-03
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Wrath of Darkhul King	4	Sep-03
Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow	9.25	Jun-03
Cima: The Enemy	8	Dec-03
Crazy Taxi: Catch a Ride	4	May-03
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	7	Dec-03
Demikids Light/Dark	8.25	Sep-03
Disney Extreme Skate Adventure	6	Oct-03
Disney's Magical Quest 2	6.75	Oct-03
Donkey Kong Country	9	Jun-03
Dragon Ball Z: Legacy of Goku II	7.5	Jul-03
Dragon Ball Z Taiketsu	6	Dec-03
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	9.5	Sep-03
Fire Emblem	8.75	Dec-03
Freekstyle	7.5	Aug-03
Godzilla Domination!	4.5	May-03
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	8	Apr-03
Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town	7	Dec-03
Incredible Hulk, The	4	Jul-03
Iridion II	8	May-03
Jet Grind Radio	7	Sep-03
Justice League Chronicles	3	Dec-03
Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, The	8	Dec-03
Lost Vikings, The	7	Jun-03
Lufia: The Ruins of Lore	7.75	Apr-03
Medal of Honor Infiltrator	6	Nov-03
Mega Man Battle Network 3: Blue and White	8	Jun-03
Mega Man Zero 2	7	Oct-03
Monster Truck Madnees	4.5	Oct-03
Mortal Kombat: Tournament Edition	8.25	Aug-03
Muppets: On With the Show	5.5	Jun-03
Ninja Five-O	8.25	Jul-03
Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee	4	Nov-03
Onimusha Tactics	7	Oct-03
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	8.25	Dec-03
Pirates of the Caribbean	5.5	Sep-03
Pokémon Pinball Ruby and Sapphire	8.5	Oct-03
Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire	7.25	Apr-03
Road Rash: Jailbreak	4.5	Aug-03
Rock 'n Roll Racing	8.75	Sep-03
Shining Soul	6.5	Sep-03
Simpsons Road Rage	2.25	Aug-03
Sonic Advance 2	7.5	May-03
Sonic Pinball Party	6	Jul-03
Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack	7	Sep-03
SSX 3	4	Dec-03
Splinter Cell	8.5	Jun-03
Stuntman	8.75	Sep-03
Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3	9.5	Nov-03
Super Puzzle Fighter II	9	Apr-03
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	7.25	Nov-03
Tony Hawk's Underground	7.5	Dec-03
Wario Ware, Inc.: Mega Microgames	7.5	Jun-03
Wing Commander Prophecy	7	Aug-03
Yu-Gi-Oh! Dungeon Dice Monsters	8	Apr-03
Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition: Stairway to the Destined Duel	7.5	Jun-03

NBA STREET VOL. 2

■ **FORMAT** XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** EA BIG ■ **REVIEWED** MAY-03

There is no denying that NBA Street owes its very existence to NBA Jam; but when you look at what EA BIG has done to the original blueprint, you can't help but feel that this is a completely different game. Vol. 2 makes the differences even more pronounced by adding the ability to pass the ball off opponents' heads or the backboard, and you can call for a pick or double-team when extra help is needed. In the end, it may not be a true five-on-five simulation, but no other game captures the sport like NBA Street Vol. 2. – **ANDY**

9

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

■ **FORMAT** GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE ■ **REVIEWED** JUL-03

Hitman 2 follows the "think before you shoot" school of thought. It relies on wits more than hits and gives you artistic license in the completion of its missions. Agent 47 starts Hitman 2 as a groundskeeper at a monastery in Italy, trying to put his violent past behind him. Two minutes in, you're using dual pistols to turn guards into Swiss cheese. To have a high success rate on missions you've got to pick your shots wisely and cover your tracks. The AI is very intelligent, and will discover any mistake you make. If you're a patient soul, the strategy of Hitman 2 is very rewarding. – **JUSTIN**

8

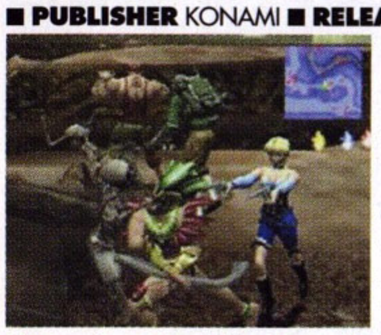
NEW RELEASES ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CALL YOUR LOCAL RETAILER FOR MORE DETAILS

PLAYSTATION 2

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor
2/2/04	Air Force Delta Strike	Konami
3/1/04	Alias	Acclaim
3/16/04	Backyard Baseball	Atari
1/1/04	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance 2	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	Sony
1/2/04	Charlie's Angels	Ubisoft
3/1/04	Colin McRae Rally 4	Codemasters

MCFARLANE'S EVIL PROPHECY

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 2



You might fear that Todd McFarlane's Evil Prophecy is something along the lines of "I will someday charge aging geeks $20 for *Battlefield Earth* action figures!" but in fact it's nothing of the sort. No, this Evil Prophecy is a promising Konami-produced horror action title that is based on his popular Monsters line. Featuring Dracula, Frankenstein, and a host of other old-school scary movie stalwarts, the game appears to be very similar in play to Koei's popular Dynasty Warriors franchise, with all the frenzied and bloody combat you'd expect.

3/15/04	Crimson Sea	Koei
3/1/04	Cy Girls	Konami
1/27/04	Daredevil: The Man Without Fear	Encore Software
12/16/03	Deer Hunter	Atari
2/16/04	Dot Hack Vol.4: Quarantine	Bandai
3/1/04	Drakengard	Square Enix
2/3/04	Drift Racer: Kaido Battle	Sammy
3/16/04	Driver 3	Atari
2/17/04	Extreme Force: Grant City Anti Crime	Namco
1/1/04	Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Fast and the Furious, The	Vivendi Universal
3/24/04	Final Fantasy XI	Sony
3/1/04	Firefighter F.D. 18	Konami
3/23/04	Ghost Master	Vivendi Universal
12/16/03	Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	Ubisoft
3/1/04	Gradius V	Konami
3/2/04	Ice Nine	Bam Entertainment
2/10/04	James Bond 007: Everything Or Nothing	Electronic Arts
2/3/04	Jet Li: Rise to Honor	Sony
2/2/04	Karaoke Revolution	Konami
3/1/04	Lifeline	Konami
2/16/04	Lobo	Kemco
2/16/04	Lupin the 3rd	Bandai
1/27/04	Mafia	Take 2
1/20/04	Maximo Vs. The Army of Zin	Capcom
2/2/04	McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami
4/1/04	Metal Slug 3	SNK NeoGeo
2/2/04	Micro Mayhem	Jaleco Entertainment
2/16/04	MotoGP 4	Namco
3/2/04	MTX Mototrax featuring Travis Pastrana	Activision
2/2/04	MX Unleashed	THQ
2/4/04	NARC	Midway
3/1/04	NBA Ballers	Midway
1/13/04	NFL Street	Electronic Arts
3/2/04	Onimusha Blade Warriors	Capcom
2/24/04	Pitfall	Activision
4/1/04	Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft
3/30/04	Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom
3/9/04	Saturday Night Speedway	Atari
3/1/04	Scooby Doo: Mystery Mayhem	THQ
3/2/04	Seven Samurai 20XX	Sammy
12/16/03	Sims: Bustin' Out, The	Electronic Arts
1/15/04	Sonic Heroes	Sega
3/1/04	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft
3/2/04	Spy Fiction	Sammy
4/5/04	Star Ocean 3: Till the End of Time	Square Enix
1/13/04	Star Trek: Shattered Universe	Take 2
3/1/04	StarCraft Ghost	Vivendi Universal
2/23/04	Suffering, The	Midway
2/24/04	Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony
1/2/04	Ten Pin Alley 2	Jack of all Games
3/1/04	Top Gun 2	Titus
2/24/04	Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari
3/1/04	UFC: Sudden Impact	TDK Mediactive
1/2/04	War Chess	Jack of all Games
2/2/04	World Soccer Winning Eleven 7 International	Konami
3/1/04	World's Scariest Police Chases	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Wrath Unleashed	LucasArts
3/23/04	X-Files: Resist or Serve	Vivendi Universal
4/22/04	Yu Yu Hakusho: Dark Tournament	Atari

GAMECUBE

2/2/04	Bomberman Jetters	Majesco
2/17/04	Extreme Force: Grant City Anti Crime	Namco
2/9/04	Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	Nintendo
2/2/04	Freestyle Street Soccer	Acclaim
12/16/03	Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	Jaleco Entertainment
1/15/04	Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	SVG
2/10/04	James Bond 007: Everything Or Nothing	Electronic Arts
2/2/04	Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	Konami
2/2/04	Micro Mayhem	Jaleco Entertainment

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor
2/4/04	NARC	Midway
1/13/04	NFL Street	Electronic Arts
2/24/04	Pitfall	Activision
3/22/04	Pokémon Colosseum	Nintendo
2/2/04	PowerPuff Girls: Relish Rampage	Bam Entertainment
4/1/04	Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft
3/1/04	Scooby Doo: Mystery Mayhem	THQ
12/16/03	Sims: Bustin' Out, The	Electronic Arts
1/15/04	Sonic Heroes	Sega
3/1/04	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft
3/1/04	StarCraft Ghost	Vivendi Universal
3/15/04	Tales of Symphonia	Namco
3/2/04	Zoids: Legacy	Atari

XBOX

3/1/04	Alias	Acclaim
1/13/04	Auto Modellista	Capcom
1/1/04	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance 2	Vivendi Universal
2/24/04	Breakdown	Namco
3/1/04	Colin McRae Rally 4	Codemasters
1/27/04	Daredevil: The Man Without Fear	Encore Software
3/1/04	Dead or Alive Online	Tecmo
2/24/04	Deadman's Hand	Atari
2/18/04	Dinosaur Hunting	Metro3D
3/16/04	Driver 3	Atari
2/17/04	Extreme Force: Grant City Anti Crime	Namco
3/1/04	Fable	Microsoft
1/1/04	Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Freestyle Street Soccer	Acclaim
3/1/04	Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ
2/2/04	Funkmaster Flex Digital Hitz	Jack of all Games
3/3/04	Fuzion Frenzy 2	Microsoft
3/23/04	Ghost Master	Vivendi Universal
3/3/04	Halo 2	Microsoft
2/2/04	Hardcore 4x4	Jack of all Games
12/16/03	Intellivision Lives	SVG
2/10/04	James Bond 007: Everything Or Nothing	Electronic Arts
2/16/04	Lobo	Kemco
1/27/04	Mafia	Take 2
2/2/04	Micro Mayhem	Jaleco Entertainment
3/2/04	MTX Mototrax featuring Travis Pastrana	Activision
2/4/04	NARC	Midway
3/1/04	NBA Ballers	Midway
1/13/04	NFL Street	Electronic Arts
12/15/03	Ninja Gaiden	Tecmo
4/1/04	Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee 2	Microsoft
2/2/04	Outlaw Golf 2	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Pilot Down	Dreamcatcher
2/24/04	Pitfall	Activision
3/3/04	RalliSport Challenge 2	Microsoft
3/1/04	Scooby Doo: Mystery Mayhem	THQ
2/10/04	Silent Scope Complete	Konami
12/16/03	Sims: Bustin' Out, The	Electronic Arts
1/15/04	Sonic Heroes	Sega
3/1/04	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft
1/13/04	Star Trek: Shattered Universe	Take 2
3/1/04	StarCraft Ghost	Vivendi Universal
3/15/04	Steel Battalion: Line of Contact	Capcom
2/2/04	Sudeki	Microsoft
2/23/04	Suffering, The	Midway
3/1/04	Tenchu: Return From Darkness	Activision
3/15/04	Thief III	Eidos
3/1/04	Top Gun Live	Titus

FIREFIGHTER F.D. 18

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 1

Here's something you don't see everyday – a cool-looking fireman action game. As brave Dean McGregor, you'll spray through a variety of burning buildings, saving trapped citizens along the way. In addition to your trusty hose (which can be upgraded and modified with different nozzles), you'll also have flame-retardant foam for chemical blazes and an ax to chop through doors when things get ugly. Yep, it's an off-beat concept to be sure, but one that could result in one of the hottest (tee hee!) games of 2004.

2/24/04	Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari
3/1/04	World's Scariest Police Chases	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Wrath Unleashed	LucasArts
2/2/04	X-Files: Resist or Serve	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Yu-Gi-Oh! X-Breed	Konami

PC

3/1/04	Alias	Acclaim
2/2/04	Apocalyptica	Konami
1/1/04	Atlantis Evolution	Dreamcatcher
2/2/04	Baldur's Gate III	Vivendi Universal
1/1/04	Battle Fields	Matrix Games
3/1/04	Black & White 2	Electronic Arts
1/28/04	Blowout	Majesco
3/1/04	Breed	Hip Interactive
2/16/04	Call of Cthulu	Bethesda Softworks
3/17/04	City of Heroes	NCSoft
1/1/04	Combat Flight Sim 3: Battle for Britain	Matrix Games
4/1/04	Crusaders Kings	Strategy First
1/1/04	Crystal Key II: The Far Realm	Dreamcatcher

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor
4/15/04	Doom III	Activision
1/1/04	Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp	Digital Leisure
1/28/04	Drake of the 99 Dragons	Majesco
3/1/04	Duke Nukem Forever	Take 2
1/1/04	Egyptian Prophecy, The	Dreamcatcher
1/1/04	Emergency Services Sim	Global Star Software
3/1/04	EverQuest II	Verant Interactive/ 989 Studios
3/1/04	EverQuest II Collector's Edition	Verant Interactive/ 989 Studios
1/1/04	Fading Sun's Noble Armada	Matrix Games
3/1/04	Far Cry	Ubisoft
1/1/04	Fila World Tour Tennis	Xicat Interactive
1/1/04	Forever Worlds	Dreamcatcher
1/1/04	Game Show Mega Hits	Encore Software
2/16/04	Gangland	Whiptail Interactive
1/2/04	Ground Control 2: Operation Exodus	Vivendi Universal
3/30/04	Half-Life 2	Vivendi Universal
12/15/03	Half-Life Counter Strike: Condition Zero	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Harpoon IV	Ubisoft
2/2/04	IL 2 Forgotten Battles Ace Expansion	Ubisoft
1/1/04	Inquisition	Strategy First
1/1/04	Jack The Ripper	Dreamcatcher
2/10/04	Jagged Alliance 2: Wildfire	Strategy First
1/15/04	Jane's Civilian Flight Simulator	Xicat Interactive
1/12/04	Joan of Arc	Enlight Software
1/2/04	Judge Dredd: Dredd Vs. Death	Vivendi Universal
2/25/04	Lineage II	NCSoft
3/4/04	Lord of the Rings: Middle Earth Online, The	Vivendi Universal
1/1/04	Lords of the Realm III	Vivendi Universal

DAREDEVIL: THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** ENCORE SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 27

Upstart Encore Software is attempting to jump into the big leagues with this video game version of Marvel's successful, but little-loved, movie adaptation of its red-leather clad, blind superhero Daredevil. The game will represent Daredevil's enhanced hearing senses as a type of on-screen radar, and you'll also be able to chuck his iconic billy-club at criminals, which will ricochet off of walls and surfaces multiple times before returning to your meaty Affleck paw. Reiner's really excited about this one, and you should be, too!

2/2/04	Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault	Electronic Arts
1/5/04	Medieval: Total War Battle Collection	Activision
1/2/04	Men of Valor: Vietnam	Vivendi Universal
2/2/04	Micro Mayhem	Jaleco
3/1/04	Mummy	Hip Interactive
3/10/04	Painkiller	Dreamcatcher
1/13/04	Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword	Ubisoft
2/2/04	Rainbow Six 3: Mission Pack 2	Ubisoft
1/20/04	Silent Storm	Encore Software
2/3/04	Sims 2, The	Electronic Arts
2/24/04	Sitting Ducks	Hip Interactive
2/2/04	Soldner	Encore Software
1/1/04	Space Ace	Digital Leisure
2/2/04	Spell Force	Encore Software
3/1/04	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft
1/1/04	Syberia II	Vivendi Universal
3/1/04	Thief III	Eidos
2/2/04	Train Simulator 2.0	Microsoft
2/24/04	Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Infogrames
3/1/04	True Crime: Streets of LA	Activision
2/10/04	Ultima X: Odyssey	Electronic Arts
2/3/04	Unreal Tournament 2004	Infogrames
2/3/04	Unreal Tournament 2004 Special Edition	Infogrames
4/1/04	Wartime Command: Battle for Europe	Codemasters
1/1/04	Who Shot Johnny Rock?	Digital Leisure
3/3/04	Wild West Shoot Out 3-Pack	Digital Leisure
12/15/03	XPlane	Tri-Synergy
2/2/04	Zoo Tycoon 2.0	Microsoft

GAME BOY ADVANCE

1/27/04	Aladdin	Capcom
1/6/04	Cartoon Network Block Party	Majesco
1/15/04	CT Special Forces 2: Back to Hell	Hip Interactive
1/16/04	Dr. Seuss: The Cat in the Hat	Jack of all Games
3/23/04	Duel Masters	Atari
1/1/04	Hardcore Pool	Telegames
3/2/04	Ice Nine	Bam Entertainment
1/5/04	Little League Baseball	Jack of all Games
12/16/03	Max Payne	Take 2
4/1/04	Metal Slug Advance: Survival Mission	SNK NeoGeo
12/17/03	Need for Speed: Porsche Unleashed	Destination Software
12/22/03	Need for Speed: Underground	Electronic Arts
12/16/03	Peter Pan	Atari
12/17/03	R-Type III	Destination Software
4/5/04	River City Ransom	Atlus
3/1/04	Scooby Doo Two: Monsters Unleashed	THQ
2/24/04	Shining Soul 2	Atlus
1/1/04	Ultimate Card Games	Telegames
2/2/04	Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship 2004	Konami
3/2/04	Zoids: Legacy	Atari

SECRET ACCESS

NBA Live 2004

Fresh new shoes and a superfly free agent are available through the use of these codes.

Jermaine Dupri – Create a player with SOSODEF as his last name. A message will appear saying the Dupri is available in the free agent pool.

SHOES

In the Codes menu, enter these to unlock various shoes for use.

Air Jordan III – CVJ554TJ58
Blazer Shoes – XCV6456NNL
LeBron James' Shoes – 23LBJNUMB1
Shox BB4 Shoes – 424TREU777

Johnny Korea
Cook County, IL

Tony Hawk's Underground

In the Cheat menu, enter these codes to enable the corresponding cheat.

Moon Gravity – getitup
Music Code – holeshot
Perfect Manual Balance – keepitsteady
Perfect Rail Balance – letitslide
Unlock All Videos – digivid

Danny Way
Cleveland, OH

Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This At Home

Unlock all sorts of extra pain with these codes, which should be entered as wrestler names in the Create a Wrestler mode. Or, you can cut to the chase and use the Unlock Everything code from the Main Menu to get extra stages, movies, and wrestlers.

Big Feet – tpiperi
Big Hands – okendall
Big Head – rtaylor
Big Head, Feet, and Hands – tho
First-Person Camera – edma
Ghost – pjefferies
Greyscale – ksimeonov
Halo – jgintu
Hardcore AI – stomanovski
Invulnerable Players – denicholas
Player One Invulnerable – jche
Player One Unlimited Supers – ddaniels
Player Two Invulnerable – cbarlow
Player Two Unlimited Supers – jmaxwell
Unlock Everything – Hold down L1 and press ×, □, △, ○, ×, □, △, ○
Wireframe – ewilliams

"Joystick Juggalo"
E. Lansing, MI

Medal of Honor: Rising Sun

Enter these as codes at the Passwords screen (from Main Menu | Options), then go to the Bonus menu to enable them.

Achilles Head Mode – MANDARIN
All Replay Items – GARIBALDI
Always Sniper – PUFFER
Bullet Shield – TANG
Huge Arms – SPINEFOOT
Invisible Soldiers – TRIGGER
Men With Hats – SEAHORSE
Perfectionist – HOGFISH
Rubber Grenades – DAMSEL
Silver Bullet Mode – TILEFISH
Unlimitied Ammuntion – GOBY
Unlock All Missions – BUTTERFLY

Magglio Giambi
Los Angeles, CA

The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King

Sauron's minions will fear your power like never before with a little help from these codes. Enter them while holding all four shoulder buttons at the pause menu.

FREE EXPERIENCE

1,000 experience points for Aragorn – Up, □, △, ×
1,000 experience points for Frodo – Up, △, Up, Down
1,000 experience points for Gandalf – ○, △, Up, Down
1,000 experience points for Gimli – ○, ○, △, ×
1,000 experience points for Legolas – ×, △, Up, ×
1,000 experience points for Sam – △, ×, Down, ×

CHEATS

You must have beaten the game to use these.

All Upgrades – Down, Up, △, □
Always Devastating – △, Down, △, Up
Infinite Missiles – □, □, Up, ○
Invulnerable – □, ○, □, Down
Perfect Mode – ○, Up, △, ×
Restore Health – □, □, ○, ○
Targeting Indicator Mode – Up, ○, Down, □

Ramza Beoulve
Limberry, TX

Mega Man X7

The Blue Bomber needs armor. Badly. Trust us. Do this to hook it up.

Full Armor for X – On the character select screen, hold SELECT when choosing X. He will now have all his armor.

Mike Angelo
Branson, MO

ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these hallowed pages will receive a Secret Access t-shirt.

Send To:
Secret Access
Game Informer Magazine
724 North First Street, 4th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55401
secretaccess@gameinformer.com

Rogue Ops

Stealth action need not be so hard. Enable these customizable difficulty features by entering the codes on the pause screen. If you do it right (and be warned, you have to hit the buttons pretty quickly), the screen will flash to confirm entry.

Big Feet – Right (x3), Left, Right, Left, Right, Left (x3)
Big Gun – □ (x4), ○ (x3)
Explosive Crossbow – Left, Right (x2), Left, □, ○, L2, R2, □, ○, Left, Right
Explosive Sniper – L2, R2, Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), R2, L2, □, ○
Half Damage – □ (x2), ○ (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), ○ (x2), □ (x2)
Level Skip – L2, □, L2, ○, L2, Left, L2, Right, L2, R2 (x2), □, R2, ○, R2, Left, R2, Right, □
Missile Crossbow – Right (x2), Left (x2), L2 (x2), R2 (x2), ○ (x2), □ (x2)
Missile Sniper – □, Left, Right, L2, R2, Right, □, R2 (x2), L2, Left (x2)
No Bullet Damage – Left, Right (x2), Left, □, ○ (x2), □
One Hit Kill – ○, Left, Right, Right, Left, ○, L2, R2, ○, □, □
Skeleton – Left (x3), Right, Left, Right, Left, Right (x3)
Unlimited Bullets – □, ○, □, ○, □, ○, □, ○, Left, ○, □, ○, □, ○, □, ○, □
Unlimited Life – Left, Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Left, □ (x2)
Unlimited Spy Cam – Left (x2), Right (x2), R2 (x2), L2 (x2), □ (x2), ○ (x2)
Unlimited TOC – ○ (x2), □ (x2), Left, Right (x2), Left, L2, R2, L2

Charlton Helgston
Boise, ID

CODE OF THE MONTH

True Crime: Streets of LA

A fatty stack of secrets, codes, and unlockables awaits you on the streets of the City of Angels. Here's what to do.

ALTERNATE PLAYER CHARACTER

When you're on the license plate input screen, enter these codes as your plate number. Make sure to hold down L1 and R1 when you confirm entry. A sound will play to let you know the cheat is enabled. Also, you can change Nick's car's color. Hold down L1 and R1 and move the left analog up or down to change the color of the strip below the plate; this indicates the color your car will be.

Ancient Wu's Concubine – TATS
Biker – HAWG
Boxer – BRUZ
Butcher – PHAM
Commando – M1K3
Cop – FUZZ
Corpse – J1MM
Female Punk – B00B
Female Worker – HARA
Gambler – MRFU
Gangster – TFAN
Hobo – B00Z
Male Punk – MNKY
Male Worker – HARA
Pimp – P1MP
Police Officer – FATT
Rosie – ROSA
Rosie in Lingerie – HURT_M3
S&M Donkey – JASS
SWAT Officer – 5WAT
The Chief – B1G1

CHEAT CODES

Enter these codes at the map screen to enable the cheats. A sound will play to let you know the cheat is enabled.

Driving Upgrades – Left, Right, Left, Right, ✕
Extra Car Mass – Down, Down, Down, ✕ (Note: You must be in a car to use this cheat)
Show Coordinates – ✕, ○, □, △
Unarmed Upgrades – Up, Down, Up, Down, ✕
Unlock Impound Garage Cars – Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, X
Unlock Snoop Dogg – R1, L1, Up, Right, Left, Down, L3, R3, ✕, □, ○, △
Weapon Upgrades – Right, Left, Right, Left, ✕

Herb Carneal
Austin, NE

Grand Theft Auto III

Yay! GTA cheat blowout all over again, this time for the Xbox. Enter these codes during gameplay to enable the cheat. A message will confirm correct entry.

All Weapons – Black (x2), L Button, Black, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Better Driving Skills – R Button, L Button, Black, L Button, Left, R Button (x2), Y (Note: L3 or R3 jumps while driving; X+A flips car back over if rolled)
Cash Money – Black (x2), L Button (x2), Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Destroy All Cars – White, Black, L Button, R Button, White, Black, Y, X, B, Y, White, L Button
Different Costume – Right, Down, Left, Up, L Button, White, Up, Left, Down, Right (Note: Repeat to cycle through various outfits)
Faster Game Play – Y, Up, Right, Down, X, L Button, White
Fog – L Button, White, R Button, Black (x2), R Button, White, A (x2)
Full Armor – Black (x2), L Button, White, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Full Health – Black (x2), L Button, R Button, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Higher Wanted Level – Black (x2), L Button, Black, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left
Increased Gore – X, L Button, B, Down, L Button, R Button, Y, Right, L Button, A
Invisible Cars – L Button (x2), X, Black, Y, L Button, Y
Low Gravity – Right, Black, B, R Button, White, Down, L Button, R Button
No Wanted Level – Black (x2), L Button, Black, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down
Normal Weather – L Button, White, R Button, Black (x2), R Button, White, Y
Overcast Skies – L Button, White, R Button, Black (x2), R Button, White, X
Pedestrians Attack – Down, Up, Left, Up, A, R Button, Black, L Button, White
Pedestrians Have Weapons – Black, R Button, Y, A, White, L Button, Up, Down
Pedestrians Riot – Down, Up, Left, Up, A, R Button, Black, White, L Button
Rain – L Button, White, R Button, Black (x2), R Button, White, B
Slower Game Play – Y, Up, Right, Down, X, R Button, Black
Speed Up Time – B (x3), X (x5), L Button, Y, B, Y
Tank – B (x6), R Button, White, L Button, Y, B, Y

Ray Liotta
Juneau, AK

The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King

Sauron's minions will fear your power like never before with a little help from these codes. Enter them while holding the L and R buttons at the pause menu.

FREE EXPERIENCE

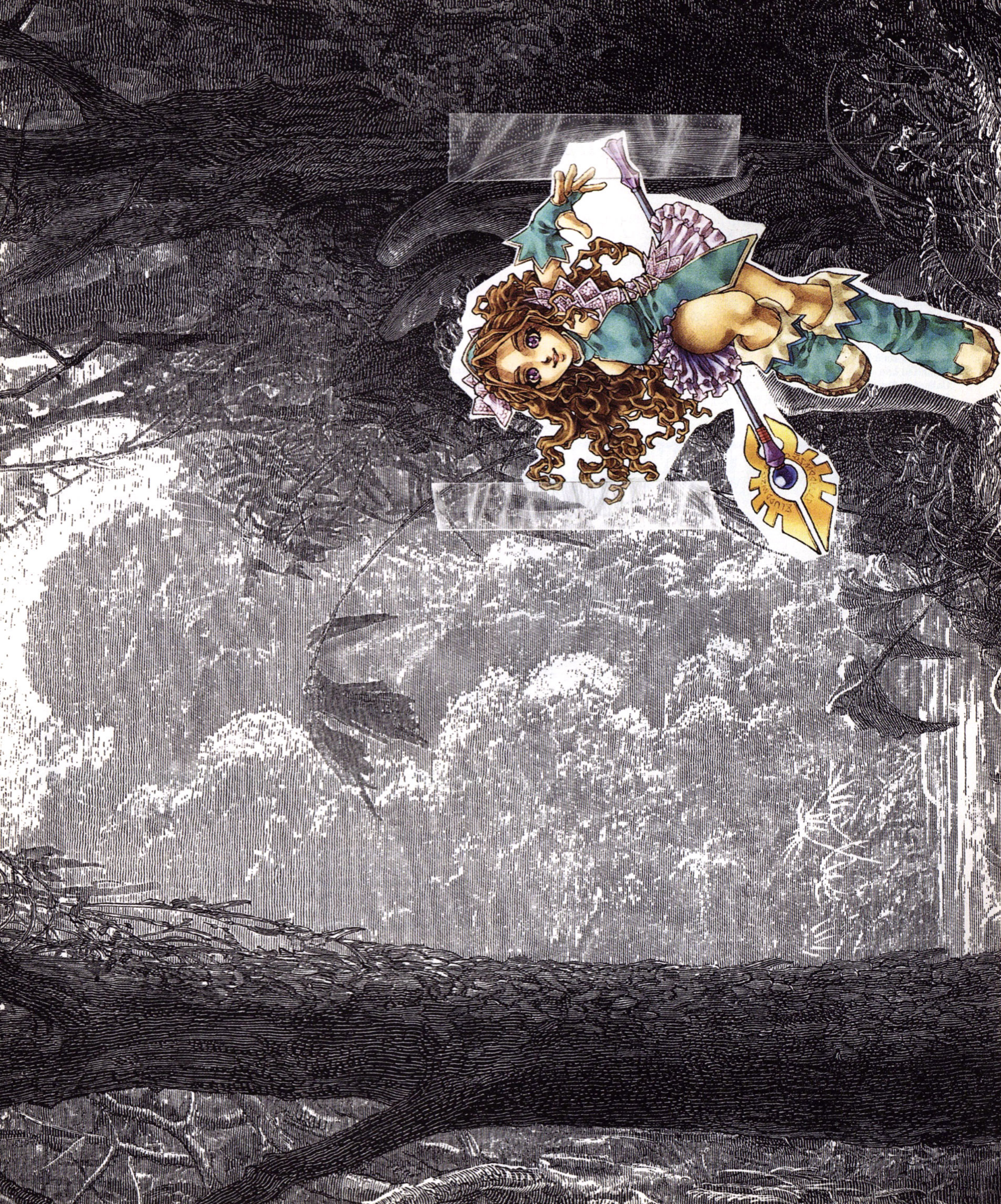
1,000 experience points for Aragorn – Up, X, Y, A
1,000 experience points for Frodo – Down, Y, Up, Down
1,000 experience points for Gandalf – B, Y, Up, Down
1,000 experience points for Gimli – B, B, Y, A
1,000 experience points for Legolas – A, Y, Up, A
1,000 experience points for Sam – Y, A, Down, A

CHEATS

You must have beaten the game to use these.

All Upgrades – Up, Down, Y, X
Always Devastating – Y, Up, Y, Down
Infinite Missiles – X, X, Down, B
Invulnerable – X, B, X, Up
Perfect Mode – B, Down, Y, A
Restore Health – X, X, B, B
Targeting Indicator Mode – Down, B, Up, X

Alma Beoulve
Ivalice, GA



who are you?

A gladiator hungry for revenge. A young girl haunted by the ghosts of her past. Together, the two must unite and race to protect the Mana Tree from those who would turn its awesome powers to dark ends. Choose your hero, uncover the secret of the Mana Tree and save the ancient wellspring of all life in the epic Sword of Mana.

SWORD of MANA

EVERYONE

E

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Fantasy Violence

© 2003 SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All Rights Reserved. SWORD OF MANA is a trademark of SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. TM, ® and the Game Boy Advance logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2003 Nintendo. www.nintendo.com

Rogue Ops

When danger threatens, entering these codes on the pause screen will allow Nikki to complete the greatest of challenges with ease.

Big Feet – Right (x3), Left, Right, Left, Right, Left (x3)
Big Gun – X (x4), Y (x3)
Explosive Crossbow – Left, Right (x2), Left, X, Y, Black, White, X, Y, Left, Right
Explosive Sniper – Black, White, Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), White, Black, X, Y
Half Damage – X (x2), Y (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Y (x2), X (x2)
Level Skip – Black, X, Black, Y, Black, Left, Black, Right, Black, White (x2), X, White, Y, White, Left, White, Right, X
Missile Crossbow – Right (x2), Left (x2), Black (x2), White (x2), Y (x2), X (x2)
Missile Sniper – X, Left, Right, Black, White, Right, X, White (x2), Black, Left (x2)
No Bullet Damage – Left, Right (x2), Left, X, Y (x2), X
One Hit Kill – Y, Left, Right, Right, Left, Y, Black, White, Y, X, X
Skeleton – Left (x3), Right, Left, Right, Left, Right (x3)
Unlimited Bullets – X, Y, X, Y, X, Y, X, Y, Left, Y, X, Y, X, Y, X, Y, X
Unlimited Life – Left, Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Left, X (x2)
Unlimited Spy Cam – Left (x2), Right (x2), White (x2), Black (x2), X (x2), Y (x2)
Unlimited TOC – Y (x2), X (x2), Left, Right (x2), Left, Black, White, Black

Berke Breathed
Bloom County, IL

CODE OF THE MONTH

True Crime: Streets of LA

A fatty stack of secrets, codes, and unlockables awaits you on the streets of the City of Angels. Here's what to do.

ALTERNATE PLAYER CHARACTER

When naming your game file (when you are making your license plate), put in the following names. Hold the L and R buttons when you enter and confirm the name. Also, you can change Nick's car's color. Hold down the L and R buttons and move the left analog up or down to change the color of the strip below the plate; this indicates the color your car will be.

Ancient Wu's Concubine – TATS
Biker – HAWG
Boxer – BRUZ
Butcher – PHAM
Commando – M1K3
Cop – FUZZ
Corpse – J1MM
Female Punk – BOOB
Female Worker – HARA
Gambler – MRFU
Gangster – TFAN
Hobo – BOOZ
Male Punk – MNKY
Male Worker – HARA
Pimp – P1MP
Police Officer – FATT
Rosie – ROSA
Rosie in Lingerie – HURT_M3
S&M Donkey – JASS
SWAT Officer – 5WAT
The Chief – B1G1

CHEAT CODES

Enter these codes at the map screen to enable the cheats. A sound will play to let you know the cheat is enabled.

Driving Upgrades – Left, Right, Left, Right, A
Extra Car Mass – Down (x3), A
Show Coordinates – A, Black, X, Y
Unarmed Upgrades – Up, Down, Up, Down, A
Unlock Impound Garage Cars – Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, A
Unlock Snoop Dogg – R Button, L Button, Up, Right, Left, Down, L3, R3, A, X
Weapon Upgrades – Right, Left, Right, Left, A

John Gordon
Farmington, ID

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Hey, there's no reason GTA III should get all the cheat love. Enter these codes during gameplay to enable the cheat. A message will confirm correct entry.

Aggressive Traffic – Black, B, R Button, White, Left, R Button, L Button, Black, White
Better Driving Skills – Y, R Button (x2), Left, R Button, L Button, Black, L Button (Note: L3 or R3 jumps while driving)
Bikini Women With Guns – Right, L Button, B, White, Left, A, R Button, L Button (x2), A
Bloodring Banger 1 – Up, Right (x2), L Button, Right, Up, X, White
Bloodring Banger 2 – Down, R Button, B, White (x2), A, R Button, L Button, Left (x2)
Caddy – B, L Button, Up, R Button, White, A, R Button, L Button, B, A
Candy Suxxx Costume – B, Black, Down, R Button, Left, Right, R Button, L Button, A, White
Car Floats On Water – Right, Black, B, R Button, White, X, R Button, Black
Change Car Wheel Size – R Button, A, Y, Right, Black, X, Up, Down, X
Destroy Cars – Black, White, R Button, L Button, White, Black, X, Y, B, Y, White, L Button
Dick Costume – R Button, White, Black, L Button, Right, Black, Left, A, X, L Button
Different Costume – Right (x2), Left, Up, L Button, White, Left, Up, Down, Right (Note: Repeat to cycle through various outfits)
Display Chase Status – B, L Button, Down, White, Left, A, R Button, L Button, Right, A
Dodo (Flying) Boats – Black, B, Up, L Button, Right, R Button, Right, Up, X, Y
Dodo (Flying) Car – Right, Black, B, R Button, White, Down, L Button, R Button (Note: Accelerate and move the Right Analog back to glide)
Faster Clock – B (x2), L Button, X, L Button, X (x3), L Button, Y, B, Y
Faster Game Play – Y, Up, Right, Down, White, L Button, X
Foggy Weather – Black, A, L Button (x2), White (x3), A
Full Armor – R Button, Black, L Button, A, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Full Health – R Button, Black, L Button, B, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Higher Top Speed – Right, R Button, Up, White (x2), Left, R Button, L Button, R Button (x2)
Hilary King Costume – R Button, B, Black, L Button, Right, R Button, L Button, A, Black
Hotring Racer 1 – R Button, B, Black, Right, L Button, White, A (x2), X, R Button
Hotring Racer 2 – Black, L Button, B, Right, L Button, R Button, Right, Up, B, Black
Jezz Torrent Costume – Down, L Button, Down, White, Left, A, R Button, L Button, A (x2)
Ken Rosenberg Costume – Right, L Button, Up, White, L Button, Right, R Button, L Button, A, R Button
Lance Vance Costume – B, White, Left, A, R Button, L Button, A, L Button
Love Fist Limousine – Black, Up, White, Left (x2), R Button, L Button, B, Right
Lower Wanted Level – R Button (x2), B, Black, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down
Mercedes Costume – Black, L Button, Up, L Button, Right, R Button, Right, Up, B, Y
Normal Weather – Black, A, L Button (x2), White (x3), Down
Pedestrians Attack – Down, Up (x3), A, Black, R Button, White (x2)
Pedestrians Have Weapons – Black, R Button, A, Y, A, Y, Up, Down
Pedestrians Riot – Down, Left, Up, Left, A, Black, R Button, White, L Button
Phil Cassidy Costume – Right, R Button, Up, Black, L Button, Right, R Button, L Button, Right, B
Overcast Skies – Black, A, L Button (x2), White (x3), X
Pink Traffic – B, L Button, Down, White, Left, A, R Button, L Button, Right, B
Police Live Again – B, L Button, Down, White, Left, A, R Button, L Button, Right, A
Rainy Weather – Black, A, L Button (x2), White (x3), B
Raise Wanted Level – R Button (x2), B, Black, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right
Ricardo Diaz Costume – L Button, White, R Button, Black, Down, L Button, Black, White
Romero's Hearse – Down, Black, Down, R Button, White, Left, R Button, L Button, Left, Right
Sabre Turbo – Right, White, Down, White (x2), A, R Button, L Button, B, Left
Slower Game Play – Y, Up, Right, Down, X, Black, R Button
Sonny Forelli Costume – B, L Button, B, White, Left, A, R Button, L Button, A (x2)
Suicide – Right, White, Down, R Button, Left (x2), R Button, L Button, White, L Button
Sunny Weather – Black, A, L Button (x2), White (x3), Y
Tank – B (x2), L Button, B (x3), L Button, White, R Button, Y, B, Y
Tommy Groupies – B, A, L Button (x2), Black, A (x2), B, Y
Trashmaster – B, R Button, B, R Button, Left (x2), R Button, L Button, B, Right
Weapons 1 – R Button, Black, L Button, Black, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up
Weapons 2 – R Button, Black, L Button, Black, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down (x2), Left
Weapons 3 – R Button, Black, L Button, Black, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down (x3)
White Traffic – B, White, Up, R Button, Left, A, R Button, L Button, Left, B

Vincent Gognetti
New York, NY

Medal of Honor: Rising Sun

Enter these as codes at the Passwords screen (from Main Menu | Options), then go to the Bonus menu to enable them.

Achilles Head Mode – CARDINAL
All Replay Items – BOXFISH
Bullet Shield – WRASSE
Immortality – BANNER
Invisible Soldiers – PARROT
Men With Hats – DOTTYBACK
Rubber Grenades – BETTA
Silver Bullet Mode – BATFISH
Unlimited Ammunition – JAWFISH
Unlocks All Missions – TUSKFISH

Rudy Perpich
Spooner, WI

Rainbow Six 3

Why should the forces of good take damage? Good question. Make the decision yourself with this code, which should be entered during gameplay.

Toggle Invincibility – Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A

"GI Droid"
(location unknown – last seen infiltrating Michael Jackson's secret lair)

Star Wars Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike

If there was a menu for codes, it would be the Codes menu, and you'd enter the following to get the goods.

Ace Mode – WHATTHE?
Easy Mode – WIMPIAM!
Free Tokens For Arcade Machines – FREEPLAY
Unlock 1980's Star Wars Arcade Game – RTJPFC!G and then TIMEWARP
Unlock Credits – LOOKMOM!
Unlock Documentary – THEDUDES
Unlock Music Hall – HARKHARK

John Flansburg
New York, NY

The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King

Sauron's minions will fear your power like never before with a little help from these codes. Enter them while holding the L and R buttons at the pause menu.

FREE EXPERIENCE

1,000 experience points for Aragorn – Up, B, Y, A
1,000 experience points for Frodo – Down, Y, Up, Down
1,000 experience points for Gandalf – X, Y, Up, Down
1,000 experience points for Gimli – X, X, Y, A
1,000 experience points for Legolas – A, Y, Up, A
1,000 experience points for Sam – Y, A, Down, A

CHEATS

You must have beaten the game to use these.

All Upgrades – Up, Down, Y, B
Always Devastating – Y, Up, Y, Down
Infinite Missiles – B, B, Down, X
Invulnerable – B, X, B, Up
Perfect Mode – X, Down, Y, A
Restore Health – B, B, X, X
Targeting Indicator Mode – Down, X, Up, B

"Thunder God Cid"
Goltana, FL

Rogue Ops

How could you let harm befall beautiful Nikki Connors? Entering these codes will help ensure that her lovely face remains intact.

Big Feet – Right (x3), Left, Right, Left, Right, Left (x3)
Big Gun – X (x4), Y (x3)
Explosive Crossbow – Left, Right (x2), Left, X, Y, R Button, L Button, X, Y, Left, Right
Explosive Sniper – R Button, L Button, Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), L Button, R Button, X, Y
Half Damage – X (x2), Y (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Y (x2), X (x2)
Level Skip – R Button, X, R Button, Y, R Button, Left, R Button, Right, R Button, L Button (x2), X, L Button, Y, L Button, Left, L Button, Right, X
Missile Crossbow – Right (x2), Left (x2), R Button (x2), L Button (x2), Y (x2), X (x2)
Missile Sniper – X, Left, Right, R Button, L Button, Right, X, L Button (x2), R Button, Left (x2)
No Bullet Damage – Left, Right (x2), Left, X, Y (x2), X
One Hit Kill – Y, Left, Right, Right, Left, Y, R Button, L Button, Y, X, X
Skeleton – Left (x3), Right, Left, Right, Left, Right (x3)
Unlimited Bullets – X, Y, X, Y, X, Y, X, Y, Left, Y, X, Y, X, Y, X, Y, X
Unlimited Life – Left, Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), Left, X (x2)
Unlimited Spy Cam – Left (x2), Right (x2), L Button (x2), R Button (x2), X (x2), Y (x2)
Unlimited TOC – Y (x2), X (x2), Left, Right (x2), Left, R Button, L Button, R Button

"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH

CODE OF THE MONTH

True Crime: Streets of LA

A fatty stack of secrets, codes, and unlockables awaits you on the streets of the City of Angels. Here's what to do.

ALTERNATE PLAYER CHARACTER

When naming your game file (when you are making your license plate), put in the following names. Hold the L and R buttons when you enter and confirm the name. Also, you can change Nick's car's color. Hold down the L and R buttons and move the left analog up or down to change the color of the strip below the plate; this indicates the color your car will be.

Ancient Wu's Concubine – TATS
Biker – HAWG
Boxer – BRUZ
Butcher – PHAM
Commando – M1K3
Cop – FUZZ
Corpse – J1MM
Female Punk – B00B
Female Worker – HARA
Gambler – MRFU
Gangster – TFAN
Hobo – B00Z
Male Punk – MNKY
Male Worker – HARA
Pimp – P1MP
Police Officer – FATT
Rosie – ROSA
Rosie in Lingerie – HURT_M3
S&M Donkey – JASS
SWAT Officer – 5WAT
The Chief – B1G1

CHEAT CODES

Enter these codes at the map screen to enable the cheats. A sound will play to let you know that the cheat is enabled.

Driving Upgrades – Left, Right, Left, Right, A
Extra Car Mass – Down, Down, Down, A (Note: You must be in car to use this cheat)
Fighting Upgrades – Up, Down, Up, Down, A
Show Location – X, Y, Y
Unlock Snoop Dogg – R Button, L Button, Up, Right, Left, Down, Z, Z, A, Y, X, Y
Unlock Impound Garage Cars – Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, A
Weapon Upgrades – Right, Left, Right, Left, A

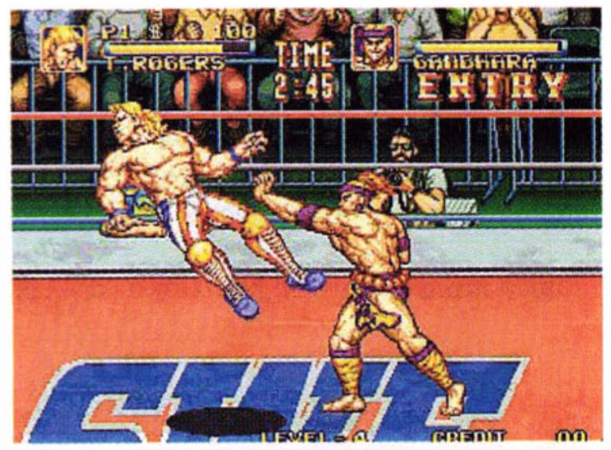
Kim Brewer
San Diego, CA

CLASSIC GI

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

SNK NEO GEO

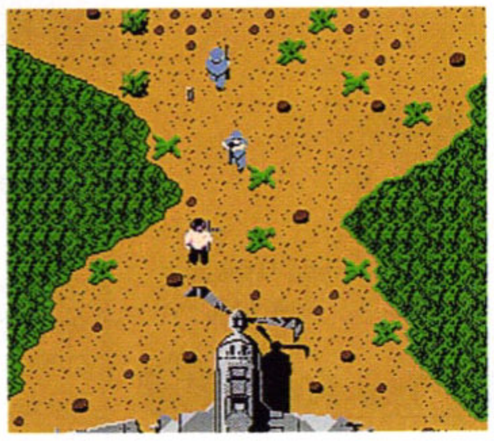
SNK, or Shin Nihon Kikaku for long, has a rich, storied history in the lore of video games. It was known for many classic NES titles, an arcade empire brought to homes, a powerful little handheld, and some of the best fighting games known to man. The company filed for bankruptcy a few years back, but has emerged once again. SNK is not a company that can go down easily. We will look back at its accomplishments, discuss where it's headed now, and even get a few words from the president of SNK Neo Geo USA.



The Early Years

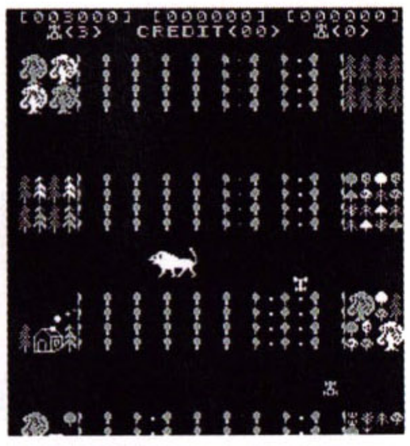
SNK has been making arcade games since 1979. Some of its earliest titles were Safari Rally and Fantasy. The NES provided a great place to bring some of its best coin-op series, as well as some original titles. Cartridges like Ikari Warriors, Guerilla War, and POW: Prisoner of War were faithful to their arcade roots; while Crystalis and Baseball Stars were among a group of NES exclusives that also showed off the company's developmental prowess.

Crystalis is a great action/RPG in the vein of Zelda



The original NES Ikari Warriors, which spawned two sequels

Fantasy, one of SNK's first arcade games



Safari Rally, so old it's black-and-white

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME | BY JOHN CIMBARO

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.

ALIEN TRILOGY

- **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION/SATURN/PC
- **PUBLISHER** FOX INTERACTIVE

Alien Trilogy launched in 1996, for a fine little game system known as the Sony PlayStation (Alien Trilogy was one of the system's original "big box" games). An Alien fan already, I actually bought a PlayStation just so that I could play this game, and it instantly became my favorite. Probably the title's strongest suit is the way it recreates many of the environments from the movies. You'll encounter the boneship and space jockey (from *Alien*); cryotubes and APCs (from *Aliens*); and the crashed EEV and lead mold (from *Alien 3*). The game (for its time) is very three-dimensional, allowing you to run up stairs, wade into pools, and run over beds. The enemies will also scuttle atop railings, crates, or tables as they come after you. The level variety itself is excellent, seldom leaving you with that "been there" feeling. Shoot an enemy as it comes up the stairs and it will even slide back down upon expiring! The haunting music adds a great deal to the environments and atmosphere of this game, and I found myself experiencing genuine fear when I traversed its dark corridors for the very first time.

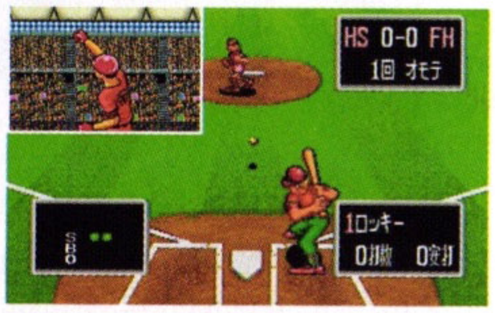
Nearly every single enemy from the first three movies is present: eggs, facehuggers, chestbursters, adult warrior and dog alien strains, and even queen aliens. There are three queens in the game and each are complete with detachable egg sack! Human (and synthetic) enemies also put in an appearance.

There is a fair amount of movie-authentic weapon variety for an older game and, as expected, the pulse rifle and smartgun are the best and most fun to use. A great deal of your success in the game depends on choosing the best armament for each situation in order to conserve ammunition.

The only less-than-stellar performance in Alien Trilogy is put on by the game's graphics. Sometimes described (disparagingly) as Doom-like, the graphics are more pixellated than they should be even for a game of this era, and

Arcade Meets Home

Arcades were big business in 1990, and SNK was pumping out hits like crazy. Rather than settling for scaled-down console conversions, the company had an epiphany. It was, as current SNK Neo Geo America president Ben Herman says, "to offer consumers a true home arcade experience." The Neo Geo Advanced Entertainment System did just that. It used literally the same software as arcades, ensuring arcade-perfect gaming at home.



Same great Baseball Stars gameplay, amazing graphics

The machine itself had two processors – a 16-bit 6800 and an 8-bit Z80. SNK billed it as a 24-bit machine, though that's not entirely accurate. Still, the graphics it displayed were incredible for the time, blowing away any other 16-bit console – which still got their share of arcade ports, thanks to a licensing deal with Takara. It also featured a first in console hardware – a memory card port, so you could save scores and data and transfer them between arcade and home.

The Neo Geo retailed for $899.99, making it the definition of high-end. Games were equally pricey, costing more than most other console's hardware. Obviously, the arcade experience wasn't cheap. Hardcore players willingly paid that much, though, for greats like Baseball Stars Professional, Nam 1975, and Crossed Swords – a first-person RPG.

In 1994, SNK released the Neo Geo CD at a more gamer-friendly price point. Its single-speed player resulted in lots of load time, but it wasn't meant to be a rejuvenation of the Neo Geo. As Herman says, "This was a dedicated machine for our arcade fans."

Compare the size of a Neo Geo cartridge with a SNES cart. Yowza!

Neo Geo Advanced Entertainment System

Magician Lord defined action on the console

Metal Slug 3, only available in Japan

Nam 1975, an early Neo Geo shooter

the enemies should sport more frames of animation than they do. However, despite the sub-par graphics the developers still manage to squeeze a ton of authentic details into this game. For example, the company synthetics bleed white blood when shot; and if you take a really close look at the space jockey, you'll find the chestburster hole correctly positioned on the right side of its body, just as in the movie *Alien*. The latter is one tiny detail that you won't find in even the graphically advanced Aliens vs. Predator game for PC.

Of the three versions available, the PlayStation offering is the best. It has the best graphics and control. While some may think mouse support and customizable controls might give the PC version an edge, this one is actually best played with a gamepad because the mouse speed is not adjustable and you have to use the keyboard for looking up and down. In addition, the PC graphics are the shoddiest of the trio unless your video card supports the game (few of which do). The Saturn edition has better graphics than the non-video card supported PC version, but that's about all it has to offer. There are also some control issues with the Saturn edition due to the very limited number of buttons available.

All told, if you can get past the dated looks of the game, Alien Trilogy offers an excellent fright-fest for fans of the movies and those of old-school shooters alike. The spookily excellent atmosphere, extremely well-captured movie authenticity, and attention to detail promise to please any observant *Alien* fan and most classic gamers as well.

Game & Design Development
DEGREE PROGRAM

Artwork by Full Sail Student-
William "Forrest" Crump

FULL SAIL
Real World Education

school of

- Game Design & Development
- Computer Animation
- Digital Media

800.226.7625
fullsail.com

YOU CAN GET THERE
FROM > HERE

3300 University Boulevard
Winter Park, FL 32792

Financial aid available to those who qualify
Job placement assistance
Accredited College, ACCSCT

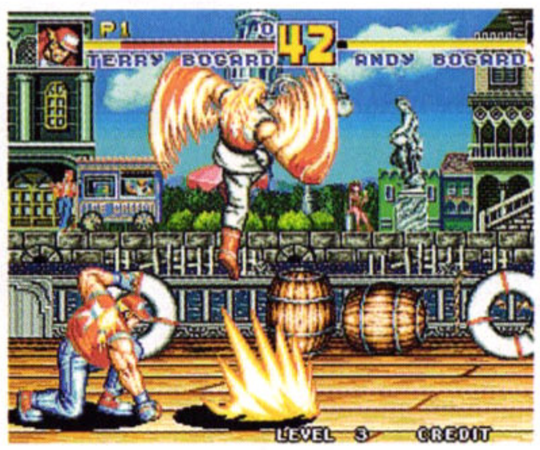
© 2003 Full Sail, Inc. All rights reserved. The terms "Full Sail," "You Can Get There From Here," "Full Sail Real World Education," and the Full Sail logo are either registered service marks or service marks of Full Sail, Inc.

Fighting Right

One of the best-known genres for SNK's Neo Geo was the fighters. Oh, the fighters! While Capcom's Street Fighter II is heralded as tops in the fighting game hierarchy, SNK provided some stiff competition. Art of Fighting and World Heroes stayed with the Street Fighter style, but their sequels constantly improved. Fatal Fury introduced some very likeable characters and really started the whole King of Fighters concept. Samurai Shodown gave the player both weapon-based and unarmed combat in a more traditional Japanese atmosphere.

King of Fighters is the successor to them all, taking the best cast members of each series and having them team up against other franchise stars. It started in 1994, and continued annually. As you may have read last month, King of Fighters 2000/2001 was recently released on PlayStation 2.

Samurai Shodown 2 – for a better slice of life



Fatal Fury Special

The first King of Fighters

Pocket Play

Neo Geo Pocket Color

By the time SNK released its Neo Geo Pocket Color handheld console in the U.S., Nintendo's Game Boy empire had already crushed the Atari Lynx, Sega's Game Gear, NEC's Turbo Express, and other portable gaming machines. It wasn't that Game Boy was more powerful – quite the opposite. Its market share was just impenetrable, but SNK tried anyway. For one glorious year, Neo Geo Pocket Color's 16-bit processor with a 4,064-color palette and 160x152 resolution display entertained select gamers.

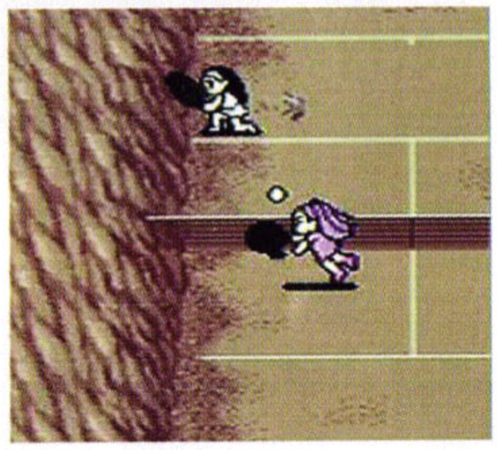
This was the first time since the 8-bit days that NEC was making scaled-down versions of its popular franchises. Metal Slug, King of Fighters, and Baseball Stars were all represented. Third-party properties like Pac-Man and Sonic the Hedgehog showed up, as did the much-hyped teaming of Capcom and SNK for Match of the Millennium.

The system's price point was competitive, its game library was solid, and the technology was powerful. However, it became another notch in Game Boy's belt.

Sonic The Hedgehog

Metal Slug 2

Neo Geo Cup '98 Plus



Pocket Tennis Color

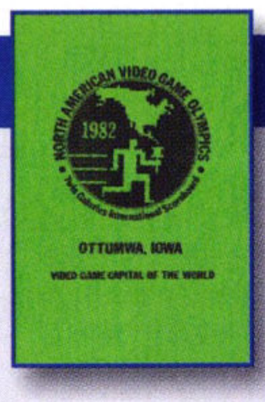
The upcoming Samurai Shodown 5

Where To?

The PS2 King of Fighters package, alluded to earlier, is a sign that SNK is back in business. SNK Neo Geo USA president Ben Herman tells us the focus now is to, "Concentrate on creating software for the most popular home and console systems."

Herman won't spill the beans on much of SNK's future plans, though he did tell us Samurai Shodown 5 (Samurai Spirits Zero) will come to the U.S. Other franchises are getting consideration for updates, and SNK has a lot of classics it could bring back. As for arcades, which are very different now than they were in SNK's prime, Herman says, "We will continue to support arcade business. Everything is cyclical."

It appears that you hardcore SNK fans – and we know there are quite a few of you out there – will have a lot to look forward to in the future.



THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

An event billed as the first video game world championship was held in Ottumwa, Iowa on January 9-10, 1983. The contest was filmed by ABC-TV's *That's Incredible*, and rated 19 contestants on five different games each (Donkey Kong Jr., Super Pac-Man, Millipede, Joust, and Frogger). The self-proclaimed video game capitol of the world (Ottumwa) opened the event with a parade and keynote speech by Mayor Jerry Parker, and the entire event was aired on *That's Incredible* in February of the same year.

PC

DESCENT

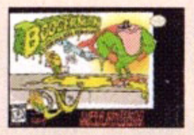
RETRO RATING 8.5

Gamers deified Quake for its embracing of 3D. However, another FPS came out over a year earlier and usurped id's best seller: Descent. It's not only 3D, but also features 360-degree gameplay. The best description of this is a space sim that takes place in the confines of a Doom map. The graphics are a bit painful by today's standards (what early polygonal game isn't?), but the gameplay is as blistering as ever. Descent's perspective is nauseating to some – especially if regular FPSs make you feel a bit queasy. You'll sometimes find yourself flying through a level entirely upside down. A strafe move could've helped things, but wouldn't have fit in with the space ship motif. The arrow keys point you in the right direction, and the A and Z buttons (on default) fire forward and reverse thrusters. A good arsenal ends up at your disposal, with plenty of stylin' projectiles. Descent is an oft-overlooked classic. Check out the PSone port, too, which is equally as good.

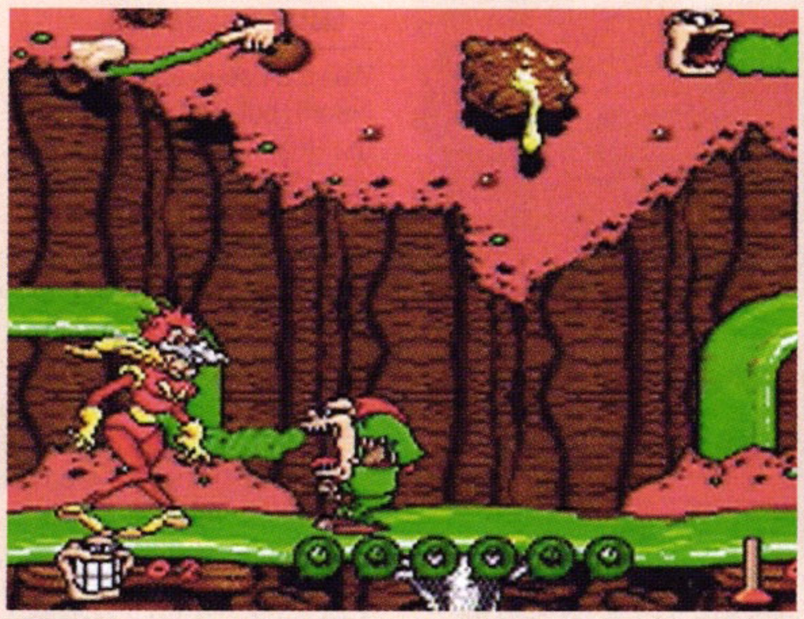
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** INTERPLAY
■ **DEVELOPER** PARALLAX ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995

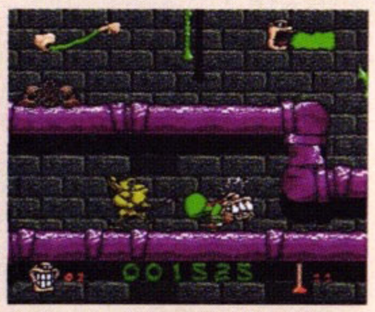
SNES

BOOGERMAN: A PICK AND FLICK ADVENTURE



RETRO RATING 7





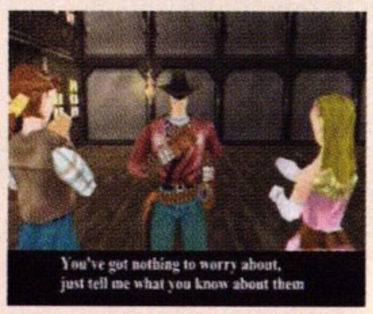
Boogers and farts. They're two things that make youngsters giggle like schoolgirls (or boys), so why not make a game starring a hero who uses them as offensive (in more ways than one) weapons? Boogerman is an action/platformer with a disgusting main character who finds himself in a world equally distasteful. To combat the dirty denizens, Boogerman passes gas out both ends, and flings some stuff out of the nose hose. Strangely, he can just as easily dispatch most baddies by jumping on their heads. Levels are from the Sonic school of large areas that you don't have to explore much. They're as long as they are tall, and filled with many secrets and powerups, but they do get repetitive fairly quickly. Still, seeing your hero duck into a toilet instead of a Mario pipe or wiping mucous on his butt during an idle animation carries the enjoyment levels for a few hours. However, if you have to pick one funny/gross 16-bit action game, Earthworm Jim is your best bet.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** INTERPLAY
■ **DEVELOPER** INTERPLAY ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995

PSONE

RISING ZAN: SAMURAI GUNMAN

RETRO RATING 7.5



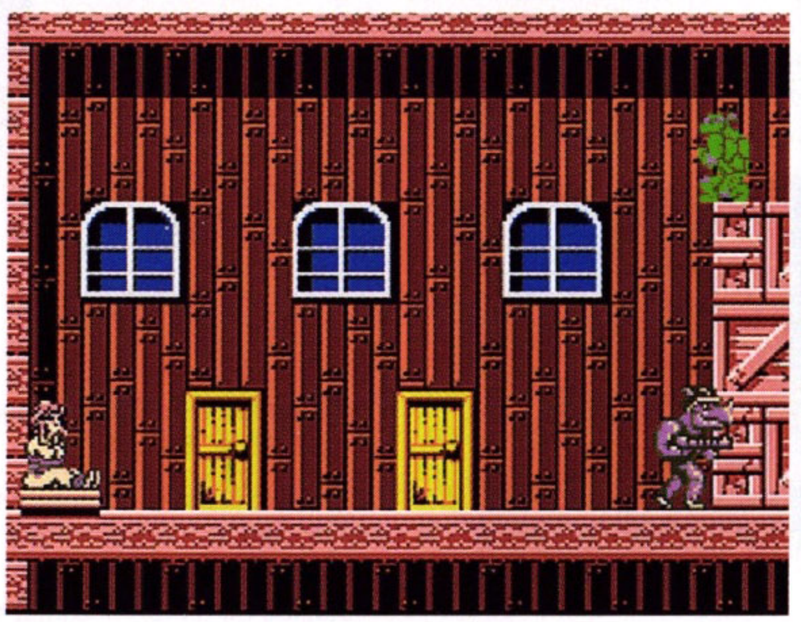
Yes, we know 1999 wasn't too long ago; but we just had to pay homage to this obscure, quirky, and influential title. After all, it stars the self-proclaimed "Super Ultra Sexy hero, ZAN!" Zan, formerly called Johnny before going over to Asia to learn the ways of the Samurai, even has his own catchy theme song. All this pageantry isn't unfounded, however, because Zan can expertly wield both a sword and a gun. This was way before Devil May Cry's Dante was a glimmer in Hideki Kamiya's eye. The frenzied combat is broken up by some clever puzzles, and bosses can be taken out with finishing moves that require hitting all buttons in sequence to pull off. At the end of each level, points are rewarded for how much health is remaining, whether you used a finisher, and even how "sexy" you were. Rising Zan is by no means a must-have title, but its campy characters make it worth tracking down for fans of all things weird.

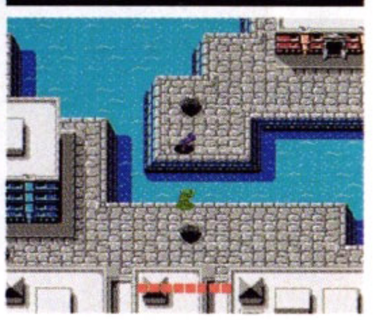
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC
■ **DEVELOPER** UEP SYSTEMS ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1999

NES

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

RETRO RATING 6.75





Every kid was rockin' the shell-shockin' in the late 1980s. Ninja Turtle madness was in full swing and Konami's Ultra Games label struck while the iron was hot. This, the first of four TMNT games on the NES, wasn't just a typical hack 'n slasher, however; some innovation went into it. Each turtle's weapon had its own speed, distance, and power rating. You could switch shells at any time, essentially giving you four life bars. It even had non-linear aspects with its overworld concept. The main obstacle the game ran into was the dam stage – featuring an underwater section where the green team swam around to diffuse bombs while dodging obstacles like laser wire and toxic plant life. It was just too freakin' hard for most kids to pass through. The rest of the game follows a tried and true hit-B-button-a-lot formula, featuring most of the cartoon/toy line's classic characters. The sequel, a port of the arcade game, blows this out of the water, but TMNT fans had fun in the meantime.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ULTRA GAMES
■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1989

ETC

GIBBS AQUADA

> **Manufacturer: Gibbs Technologies**
> **Website: aquada.co.uk**
> **List Price: £150,000 ($256,000)**

Admit it, you've always wanted a transforming car. From Transformers to Spy Hunter, shape-shifting vehicles seem to be everywhere. Everywhere except your garage. Gibbs Technologies feels your pain; that's why they've created the Aquada, the first High Speed Amphibian. Just like in Spy Hunter, the wheels fold up into the body to transform into a boat capable of up to 30 mph! Say you're driving along and you come across a road that's flooded. Just drive into the shallow water, hit a button, and you'll zip across that pesky pond in no time. Isn't it time that you joined the transforming vehicle revolution? Can't you just hear the comments from friends at social gatherings? "What do you mean your car can only go on *land*? Hmm, how quaint!"

THE GREAT LUKE SKI CDS

> **Manufacturer: Gnome Productions**
> **Website: lukeski.com**
> **List Price: $14.00**

Folks, normally this section is where we cut loose with the jokes. For the most part, this issue is no different – there are jokes on this page; some of them are even funny. But there will be no jokes in this entry. There's simply no way to make fun of music like this. Luke Ski himself calls his music "fanboy hip-hop parody," and admits that only a very select group of people (i.e. nerds) will find his music funny or interesting in any way. His songs cover subjects like Spider-Man, The Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, and many more geek favorites. These albums even come with a free barf bag! Come on, when someone releases a CD called "Worst Album Ever," where can you go from there? We've got nothing!

REAL ARCADE

> **Manufacturer: Pelican**
> **Website: pelicanperformance.com**
> **List Price: $59.99**

We've all seen arcade sticks before, but the big draw of the Real Arcade is that it is compatible with all three consoles. A connection for each is housed inside a hidden compartment in the back to keep things organized, and a slot on the top holds key cards which explain the button map for each system. This stick is perfect for fighting games – using it feels exactly like being at the arcade. Okay, not exactly. Turn out the lights, fill the air with smoke, and add a snot-nosed kid to put quarters above the start button to show he's "got next" – THEN it feels just like the arcade.

Impress your friends and family by showing them your massive joystick

We attempted to use these parts as the basis for our own homemade car. Sadly, we ran out of popsicle sticks before finishing the transmission

RACING WHEEL

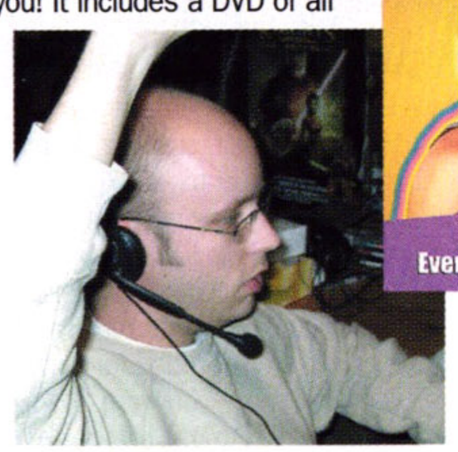
> **Manufacturer: Intec**
> **Website: inteclink.com**
> **List Price: $49.95**

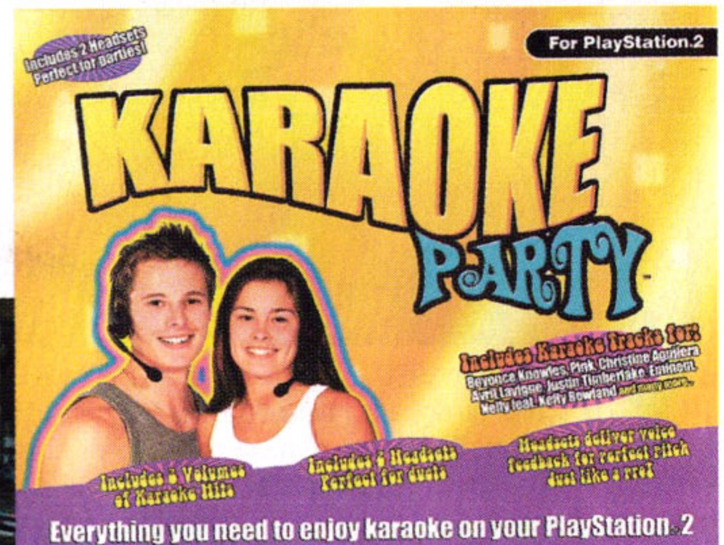
Using this wheel must be what driving really feels like. We wouldn't know; thanks to an incident in our misguided youth, we're not allowed to get a license. But we can't talk about that – court order. But anyway, we think this wheel simulates the experience pretty well. It comes complete with pedals (with nice rubberized grips), features tilt adjustments, various button setting options, and rumble. It even works on all three consoles! This wheel is in our daydreams every time we step foot on the city bus that takes us to work.

KARAOKE PARTY

> **Manufacturer: Datel Design** > **Website: codejunkies.com**
> **List Price: $39.99**

If you like karaoke but aren't so fond of public humiliation, then this set for the PS2 is the perfect thing for you! It includes a DVD of all your favorite songs, and more can be obtained from the website. It even features two headsets, so you can bust out a duet of Avril Lavigne's "Sk8r Boi" if you have a willing accomplice. Matt was good enough to entertain us with his rendition of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" – all seven minutes of it. Game Informer will now be canceling our office phones, since we are all deaf thanks to the gallons of blood pouring from our ears.





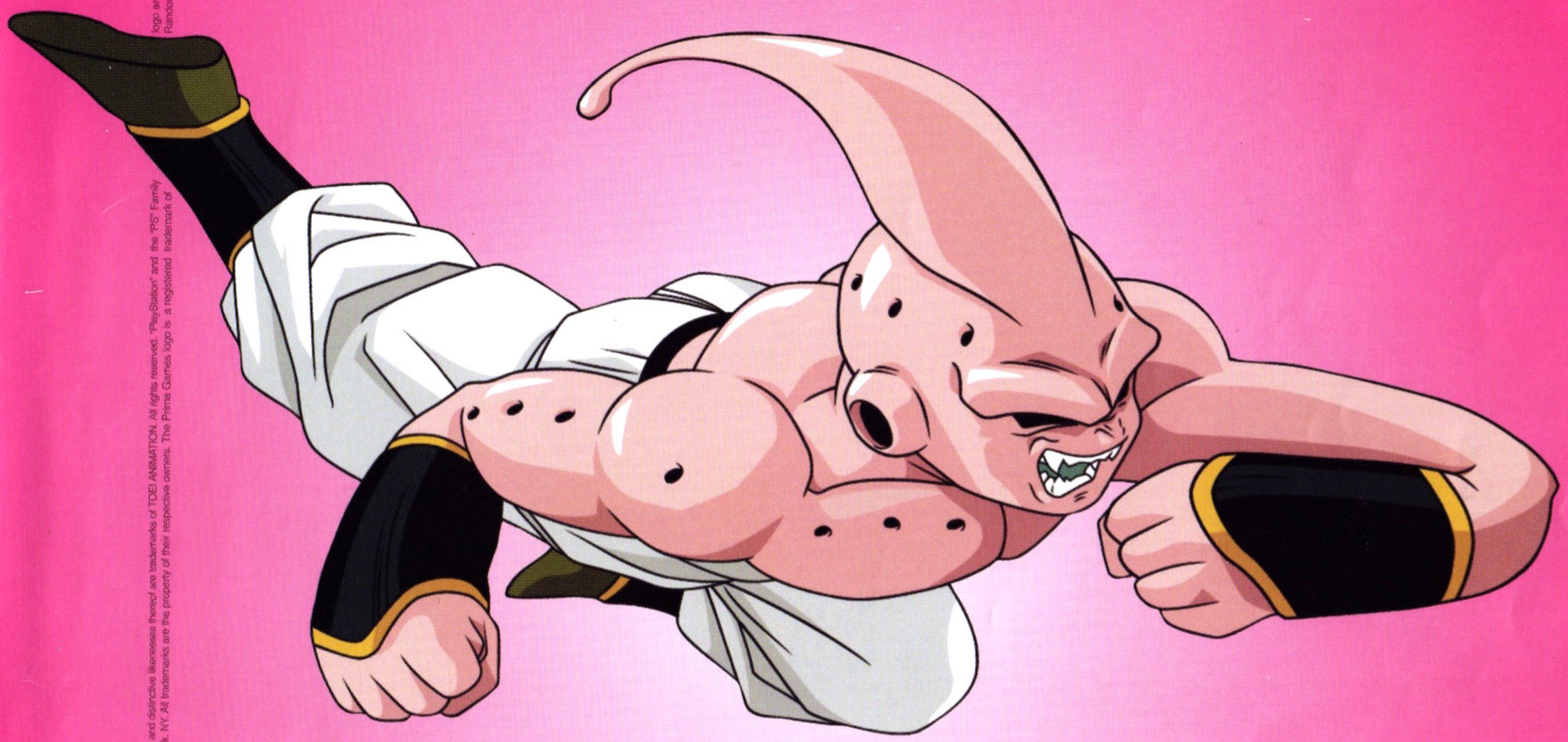
Matt busts out some mad fresh rhymes, much to the amusement of everyone around him

Game Informer Magazine® (ISSN 1067-6392) is published monthly at a subscription price of $19.98 per year, or twenty four issues for $24.98 by Sunrise Publications®, 724 North First Street, 4th Floor, Minneapolis, MN 55401. (612) 486-6100 or FAX (612) 486-6101. For subscriptions, back issues, or customer service inquiries Toll Free (866) 844-4263. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIBERS/POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Game Informer Magazine®, 724 North First Street, 4th Floor, Minneapolis, MN 55401. Foreign or Canadian orders must be prepaid in U.S. dollars and must include $20/year additional postage per year. Game Informer® does not claim any copyright in the screenshots herein. Copyright in all screenshots contained within this publication are owned by their respective companies. Entire contents copyright 2004. Game Informer Magazine®. All rights reserved; reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Game Informer® is a trademark of GameStop. Products named in these pages are trade names, or trademarks, of their respective companies.

AVAILABLE NOW

Buu absorbs. Buu annihilates. Buu does pretty much whatever Buu wants.

ATARI



Not only has Buu™ arrived, but you can fight as any of his three evil forms. Plus there's all new graphics, new fusions, new absorptions, and Dragon World, a new single player mode that lets you create your own DBZ® adventure. If you've got a favorite character, you've got a fight.

DRAGON BALL Z BUDOKAI 2 武道会

PlayStation.2

STRATEGY GUIDE AVAILABLE
Limited DVD In Every Guide

FUNimation Productions, Ltd.

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence

© 2003 BIRD STUDIO/SHUEISHA, TOEI ANIMATION. Licensed by FUNimation® Productions, Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Dragon Ball Z and all logos, character names and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of TOEI ANIMATION. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. © 2003 Atari Inc. All rights reserved. Manufactured and marketed by Atari Inc., New York, NY. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners. The Prima Games logo is a registered trademark of Random House, Inc., registered in the United States and other countries.

ON 3·30·04
FEAR WILL BE REDEFINED

RESIDENT EVIL®
OUTBREAK

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more ratings information.

www.residentevil.com

PlayStation®2

CAPCOM

©CAPCOM CO., LTD. 2003 ©CAPCOM U.S.A., INC. 2003. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. CAPCOM, the CAPCOM logo and RESIDENT EVIL are registered trademarks of CAPCOM CO., LTD. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All other trademarks are the property of their respective holders.