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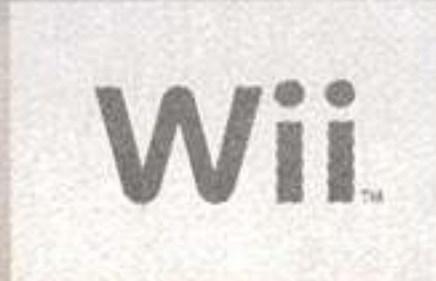
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“...no previous game has shown that the motion sensitivity in the Nunchuk could be this responsive.” Nintendo Power (Feb 2007/V212)



www.codemasters.com/heatseeker

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★ Features

40 PS3: The Next Wave

So far the PlayStation 3 roll out has been haunted by one critical question: Where are all the games? Well, here they come! With Sony's Heavenly Sword in the lead, there are more games due out this year for the PS3 than for any other system.



42 Heaven Sent

An exclusive hands-on preview of Heavenly Sword!

46 The Sony Surge

Lair, Warhawk, Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction, and more!

52 The PS3 Powers Up

All of the games due out for 2007 and beyond.



60 GamerHelp: God of War II (PS2): 5 Difficult Battles

Maybe your knowledge of Greek mythology doesn't include the Colossus of Rhodes, Theseis, or Euryale—yet. But if it does, you'll offer a prayer of thanks for this strategy guide.



66 Exposed: 14 Dangerous Gaming Myths

Is the PC really the best system for first-person shooters? Will the next-gen DVD war actually be settled by porn? We separate the shocking facts from fiction.

70 The 2006 Readers' Choice Awards

You have spoken—and you didn't offer too many surprises this year. Here are the winners, losers, and everything in between for 2006.



★ Departments

Spawn Point

17



18 **Mass Effect: Reshaping the RPG**
BioWare's sci-fi epic is preparing to take RPGs where none have gone before.

30 **Duke Nukem Forever: 10 Years (and Counting)**
One of the most famous games never made...might still be on the drawing boards.

Opening Shots

8

Ask the Pros

90

Head2Head

92

Big List

94

Parting Shot

96

Sneak Previews

32

Reviews

72



300	81
Formula One Championship Edition	81
God of War II.....	74
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja.....	89
M.A.C.H.	89
MLB 07: The Show.....	82
MotorStorm.....	76
NBA Street Homecourt.....	87
Shining Force EXA	82
Sonic and the Secret Rings.....	88
Spectrobes.....	89
SSX Blur	83
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection.....	85
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	78
Virtua Tennis 3	80
Wii Play.....	88


Cooking Mama: Cook Off.....	38
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai Another Road	38
The Elder Scrolls IV: Shivering Isles	36
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales.....	39
Spider-Man 3.....	32
Super Paper Mario	34
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07.....	37

It's Okay to Buy a PS3... Seriously.

Microsoft's Xbox 360 is entrenched and Nintendo's Wii is capturing the public's imagination, so where does that leave Sony's PS3? In the driver's seat.

"Where are the games?" is the question that's been keeping the system in limbo...but no more. Led by Heavenly Sword, PlayStation 3 games are about to bust out all over with Sony's own titles in the forefront. Our exclusive hands-on look at Heavenly Sword reveals a new generation take on hack-n-slash action that demonstrates imagination, style, and challenge.

And that's just the beginning. With 80+ titles in the queue, there are more games on the PS3 launch pad than for any other new-generation system this year. Sony said it would take time, and the time has come. Maybe that \$599 price tag has you on the fence (and a lot of us could be straddling it for a little longer), but once you finally scrape together that disposable income, it looks like the PS3 will be ready for you. Now if we can just get that price break...



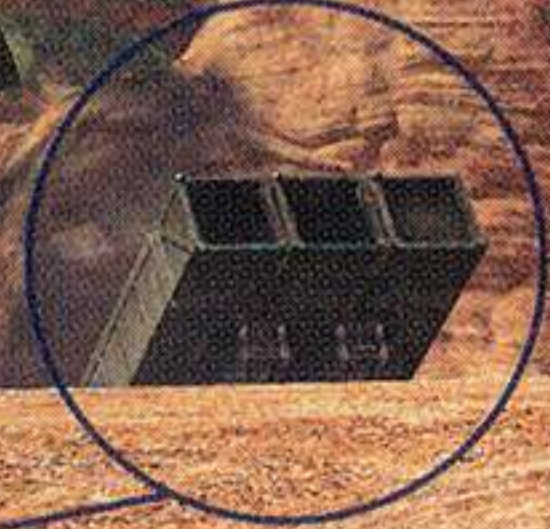
Is that an Energy Sword in your pocket or are you just happy to see me? In Halo 3, there's no place to hide that secondary weapon as it will be displayed on your character's back.



The Type-2 Antipersonnel Fragmentation Grenade (aka Spike Grenade) is particularly suited for defensive and antivehicle use. Equipped with protruding nails, the Brute Grenade is capable of gripping almost any surface, including Spartan armor. Be wary, Master Chief; keep an eye to the sky.

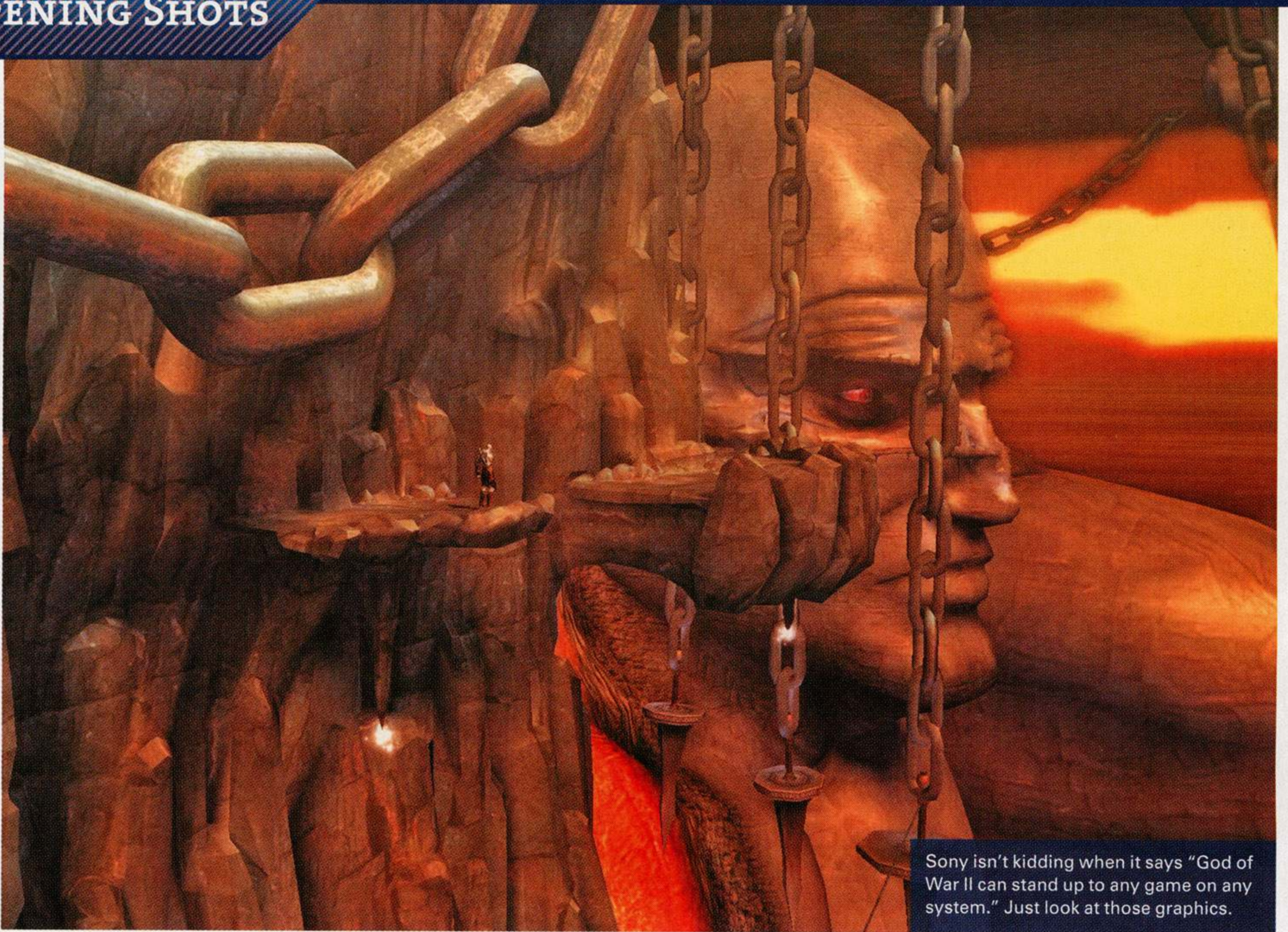


Vehicle mounting is back. And with the introduction of the Man Cannon, we're hoping for some intense mid-air hijacking.



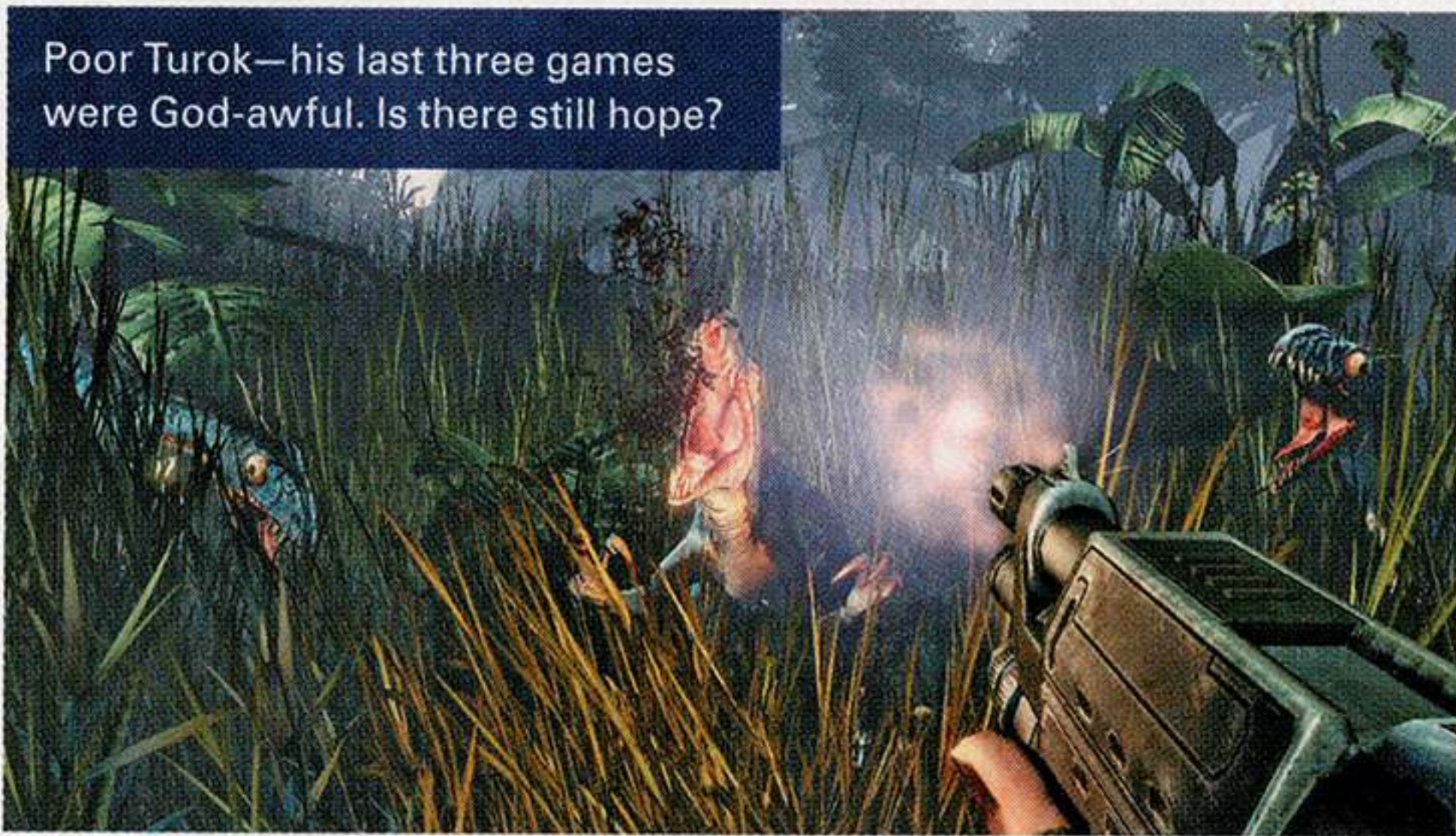
Capable of launching Spartans, grenades, and even some vehicles sky-high across the battlefield, the Man Cannon should bring new depth to Halo's multiplayer experience.





Sony isn't kidding when it says "God of War II can stand up to any game on any system." Just look at those graphics.

▼ **GOD OF WAR II** (SONY) (PS2)



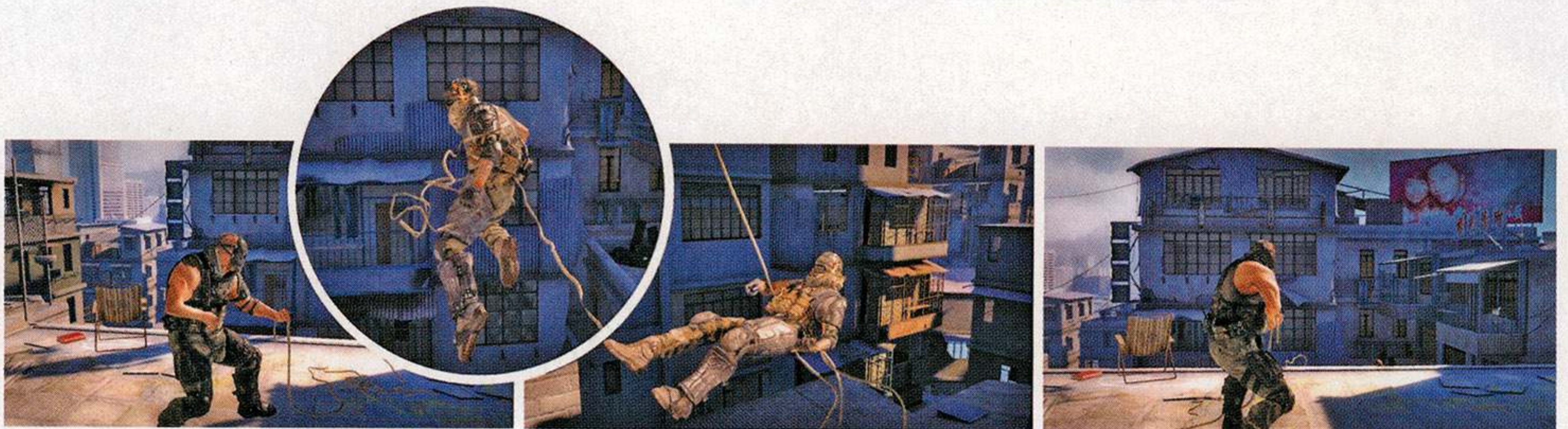
Poor Turok—his last three games were God-awful. Is there still hope?

▼ **TUROK** (BUENA VISTA GAMES) (PS3, XBOX 360)



Metal or Metro? Take your pick.

▼ **ELVEON** (10TACLE STUDIOS) (PS3, XBOX 360, PC)



▼ **ARMY OF TWO** (EA GAMES) (PS3, XBOX 360)

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- **FEELING TO DRIVE:** AWESOME (WITH EXTRA AWESOME)



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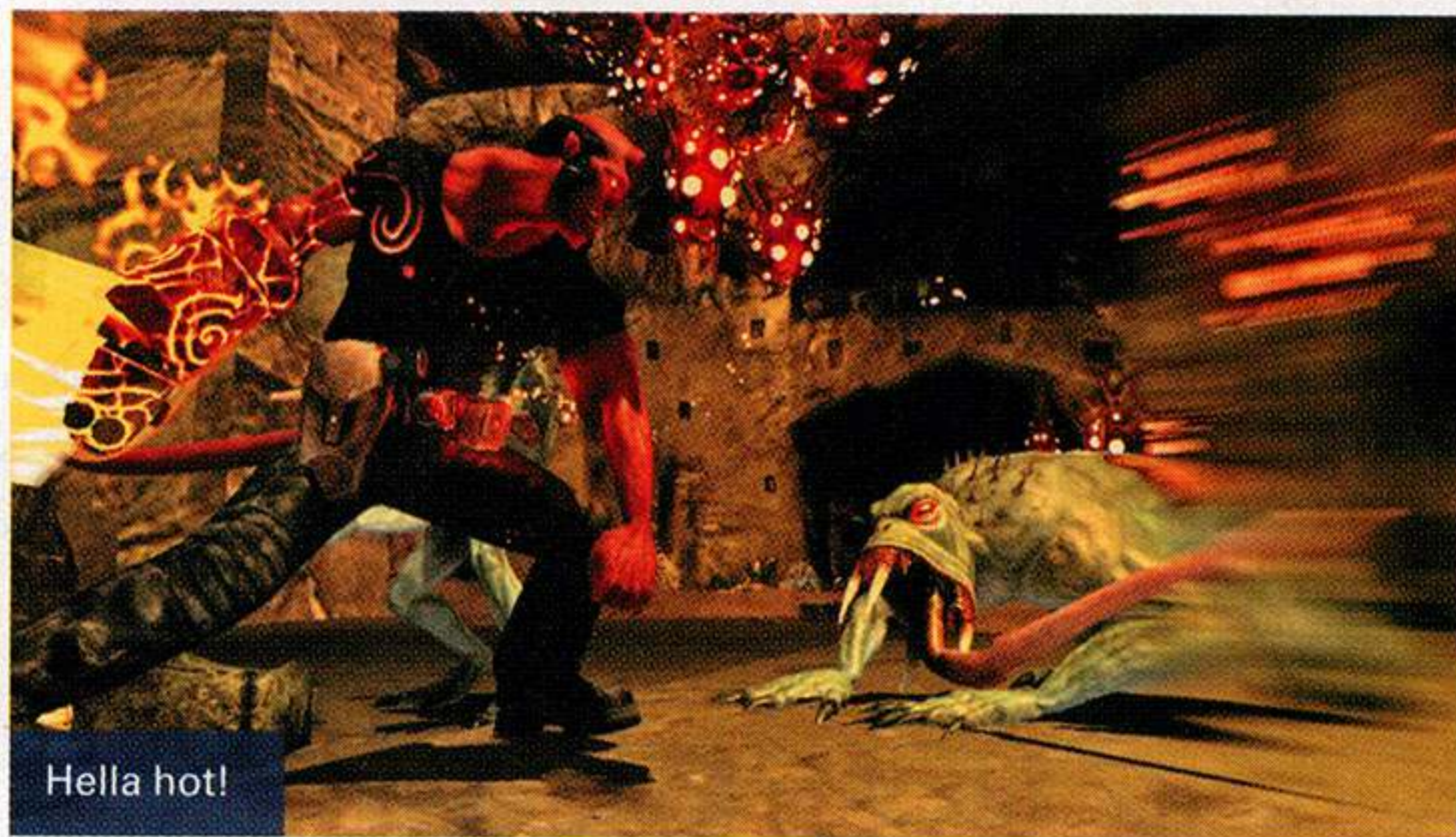


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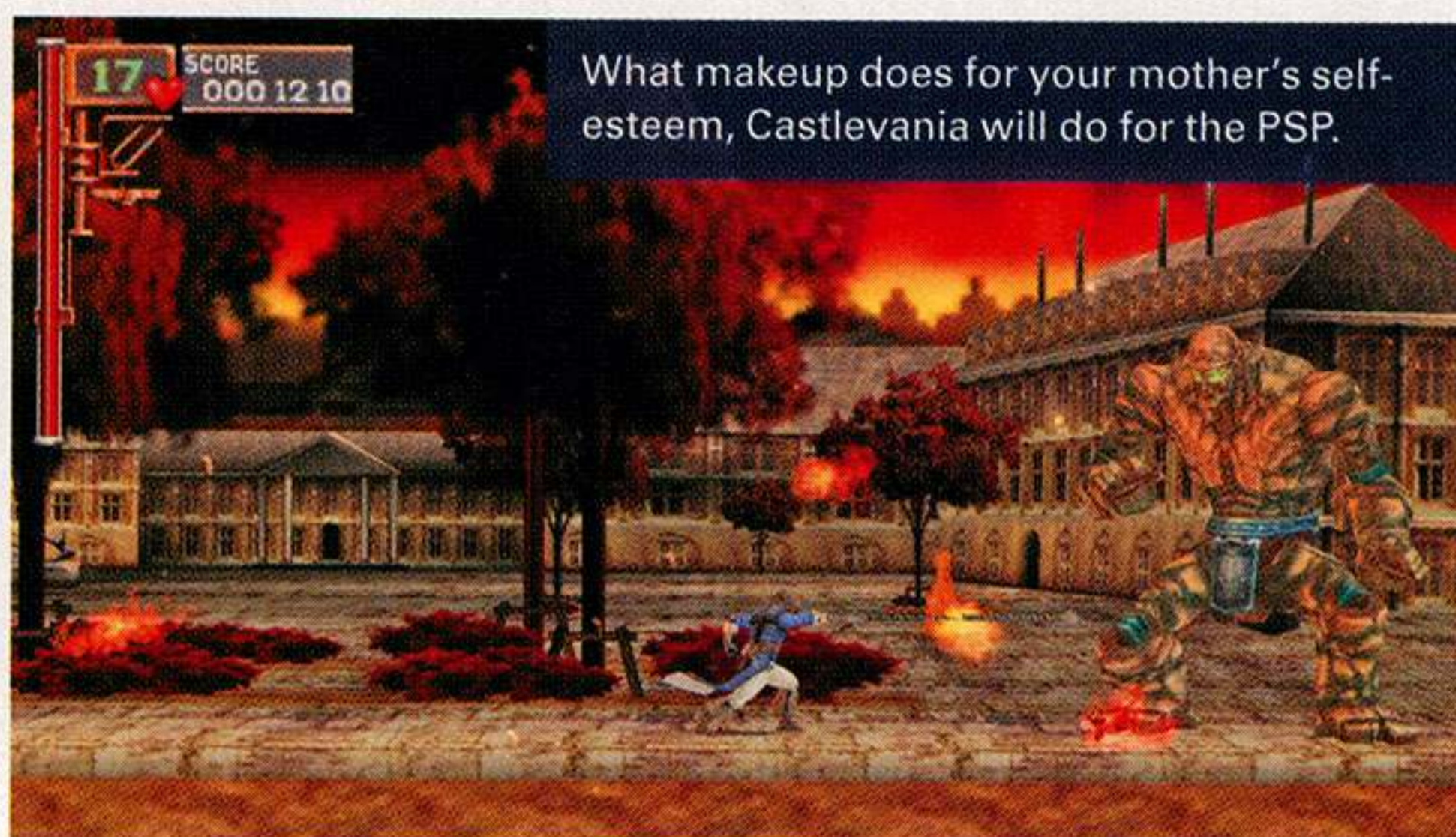
Jump in.





Hella hot!

HELLBOY (KONAMI) (PS3, XBOX 360)



What makeup does for your mother's self-esteem, Castlevania will do for the PSP.

CASTLEVANIA: THE DRACULA X CHRONICLES (KONAMI) (PSP)



In the near future, malnourished aliens storm Earth to rescue their leaders—the Olsen twins.

BLACKSITE: AREA 51 (MIDWAY) (PS3, XBOX 360, PC)



"Cleanup in aisle five!"

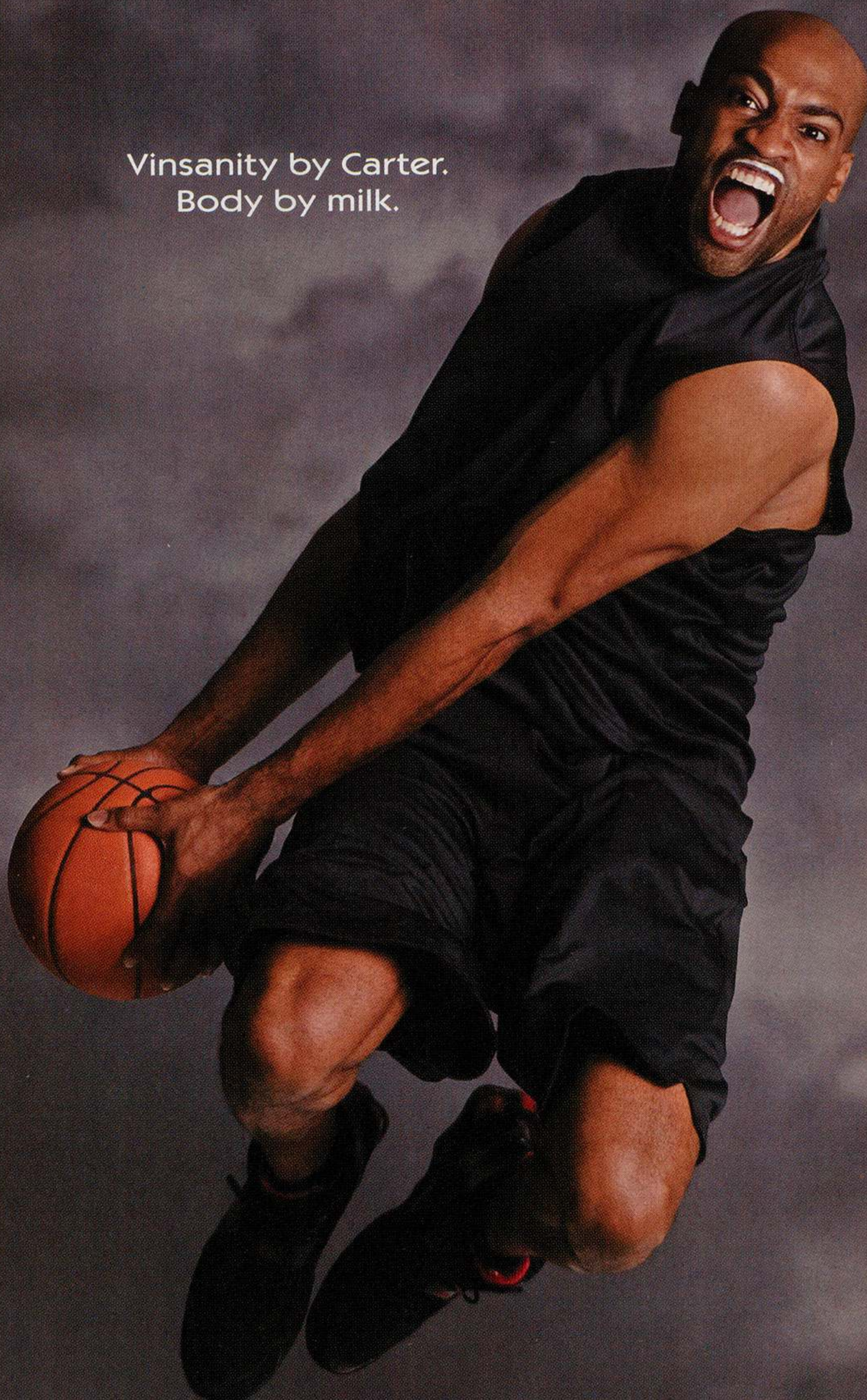
DARK SECTOR (D3 PUBLISHER) (PS3, XBOX 360)



Scorpion pounds a ninja-clad David Beckham with a flaming bicycle kick.

MORTAL KOMBAT: ARMAGEDDON (MIDWAY) (WII)

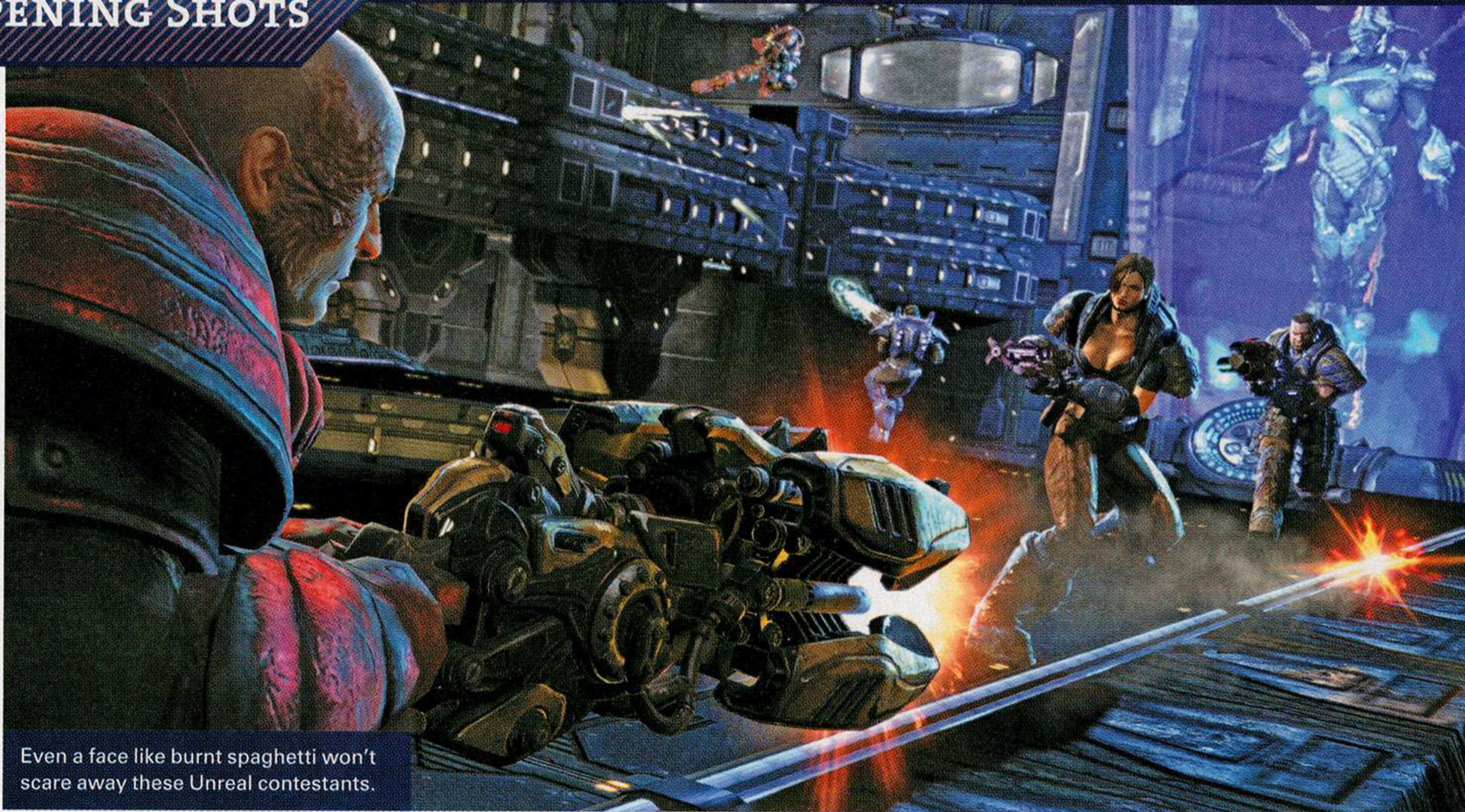
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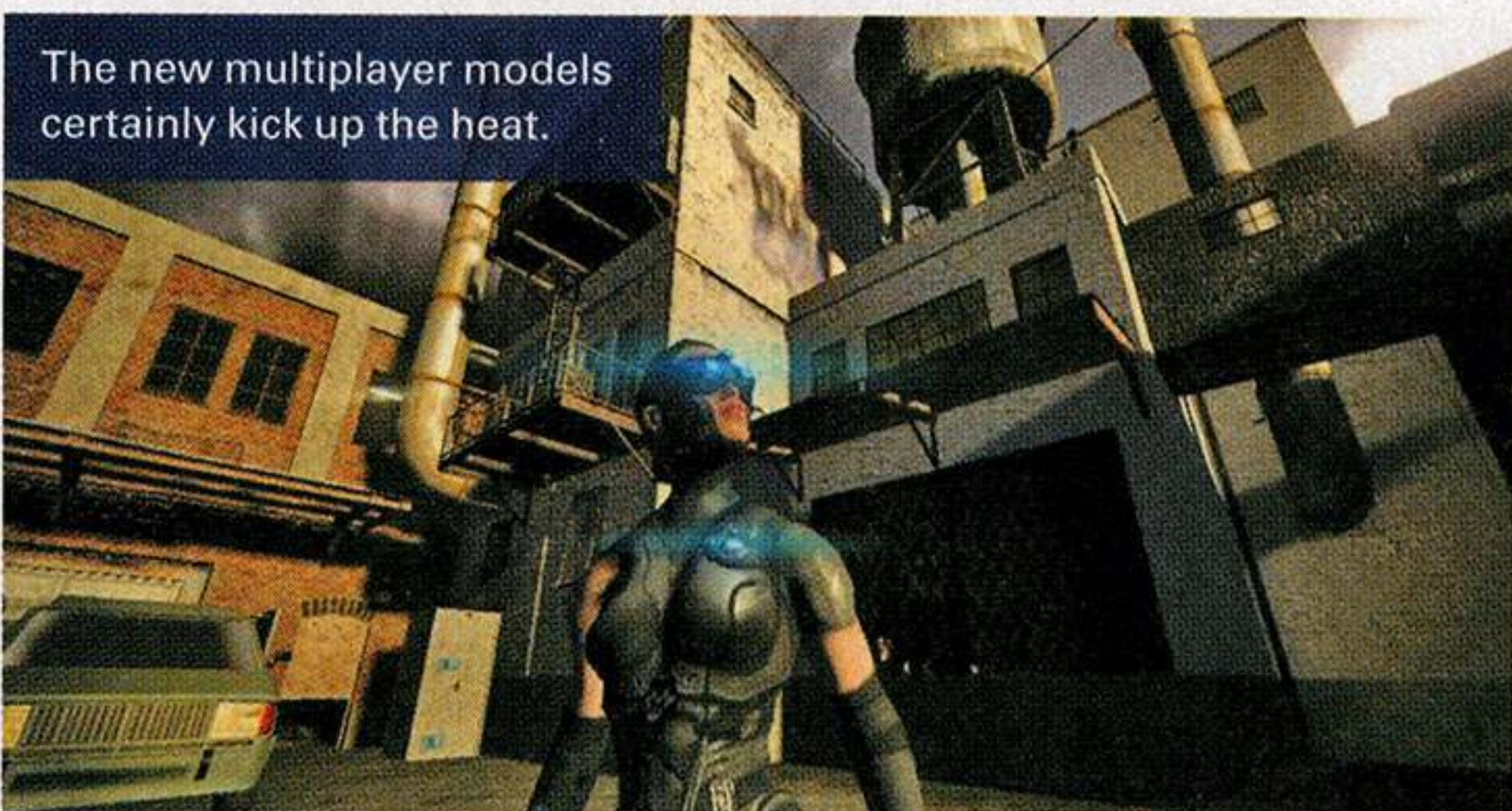
got milk?[®]

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Even a face like burnt spaghetti won't scare away these Unreal contestants.

▼ **UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3** (MIDWAY) (PS3, XBOX 360, PC)



The new multiplayer models certainly kick up the heat.

▼ **TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT** (UBISOFT) (PS3)



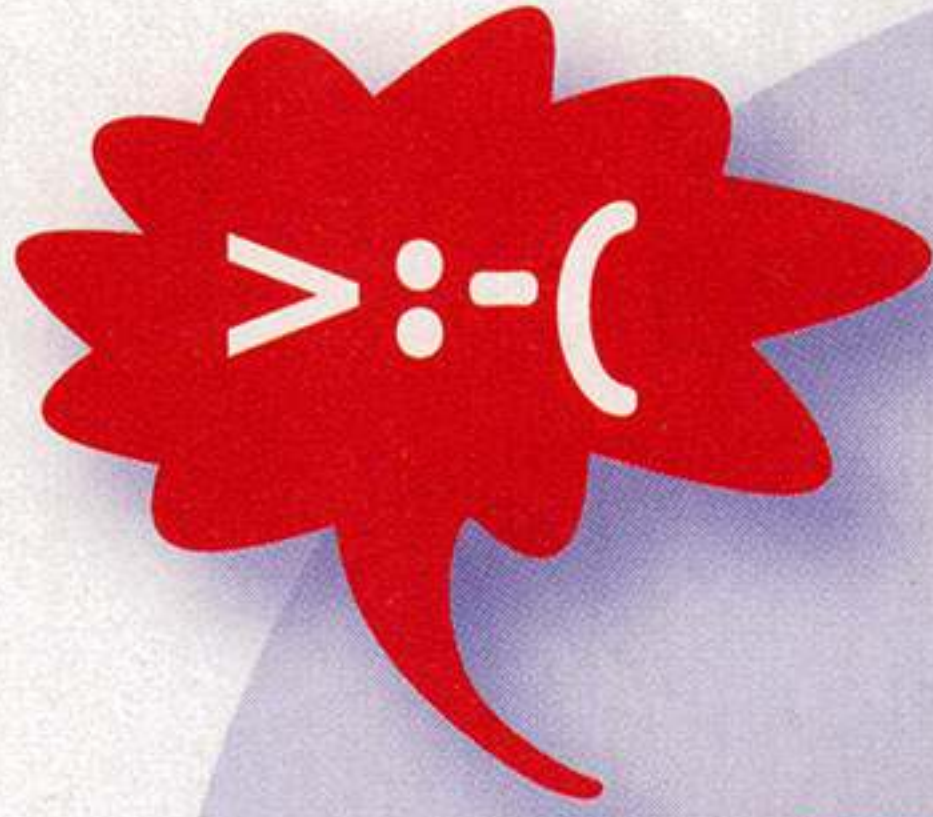
Wipeout lives again, only...colder.

▼ **FATAL INERTIA** (KOEI) (PS3, XBOX 360)



Look out Mobile Suit Gundam—there's a new giant robot simulation in town!

▼ **ARMORED CORE 4** (SEGA) (PS3, XBOX 360)



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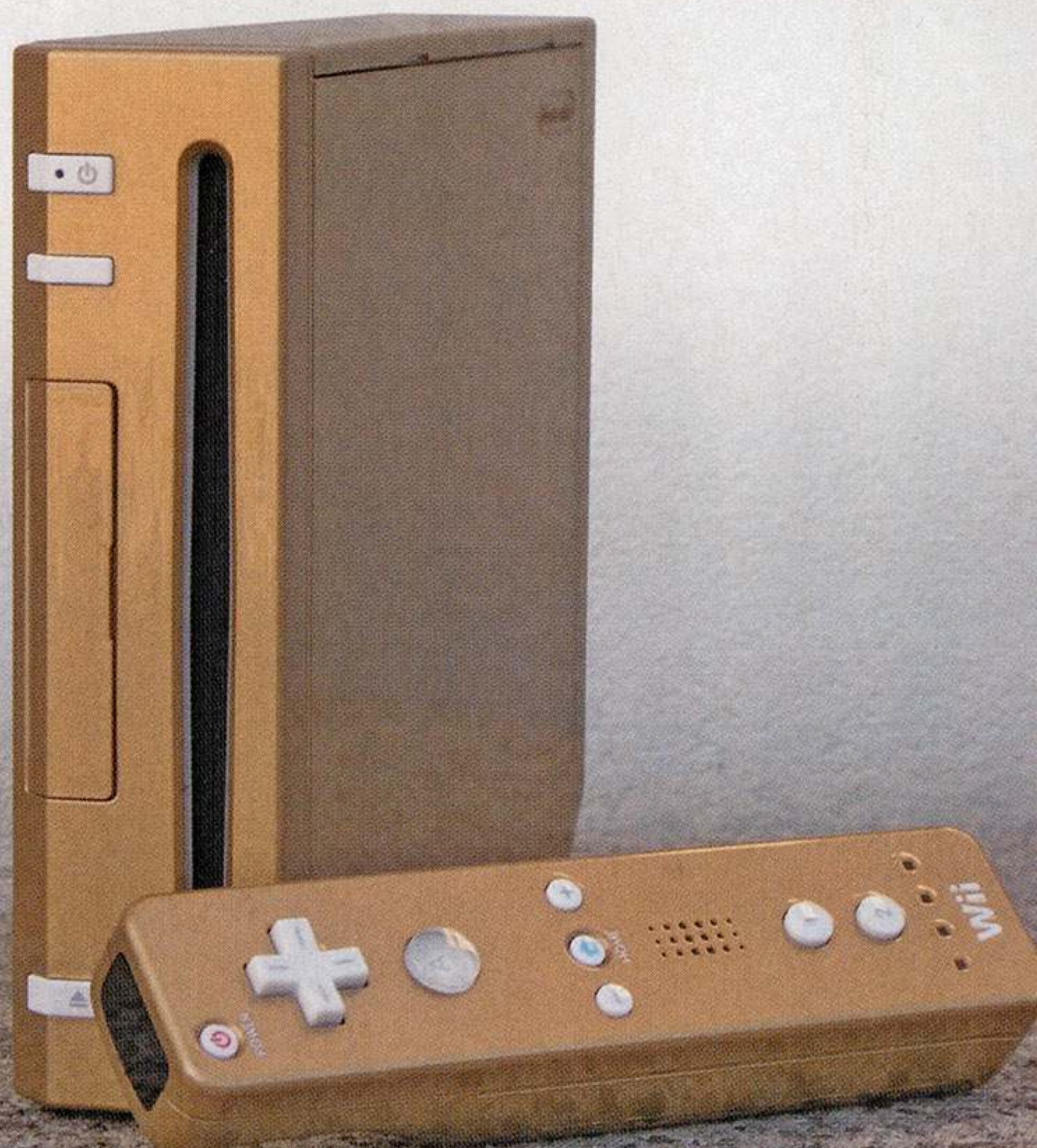
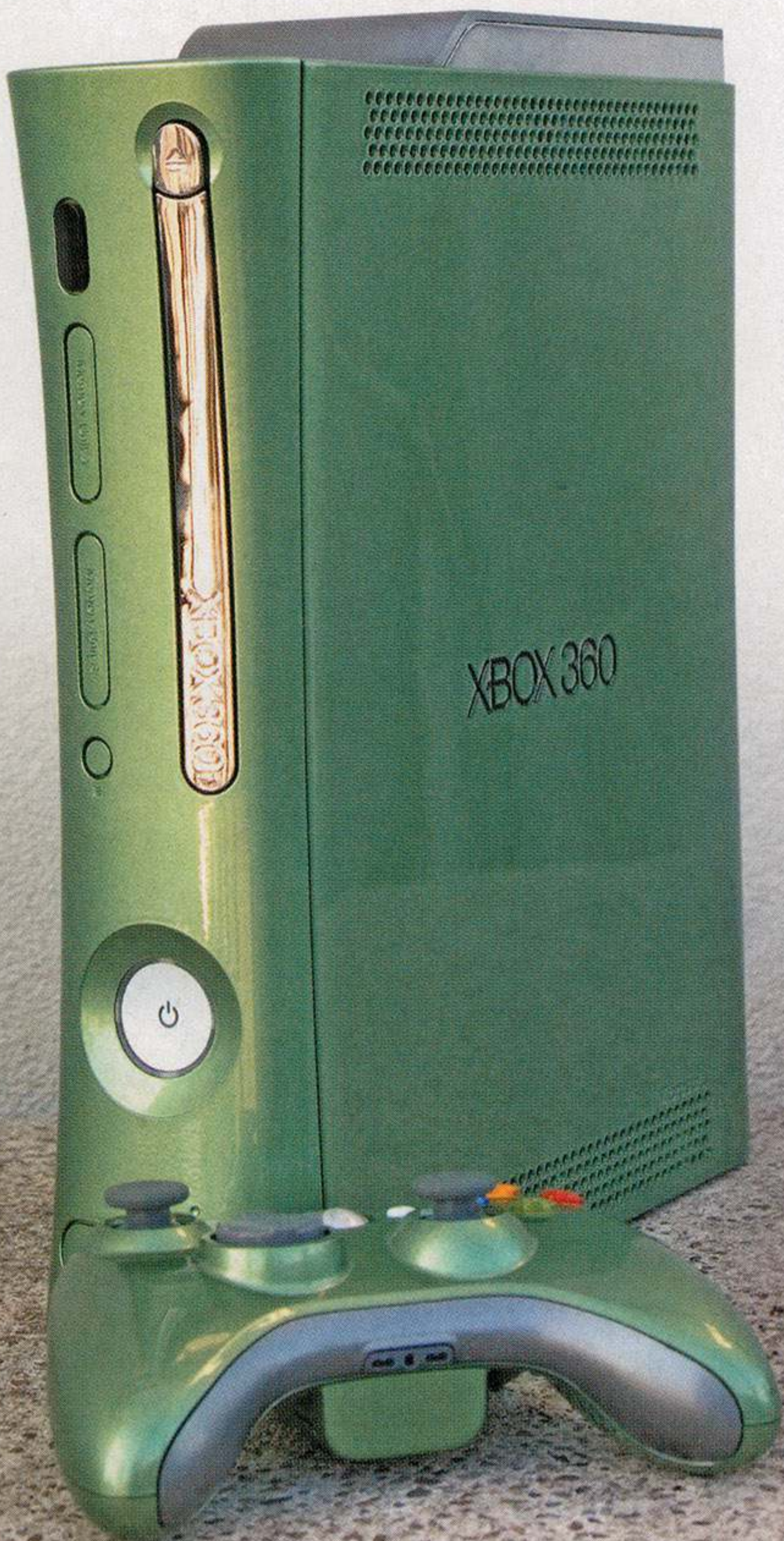
- ◀ Mass Effect . . . Page 18
- Assassin's Creed . . . Page 24
- Tekken 6 . . . Page 28
- Duke Nukem Forever . . . Page 30

Console Candy

Customized console mods? Color us impressed.

ColorWare is already known for its high-end laptop and iPod paint jobs. But starting this summer, ColorWare will extend its coloring magic to video-game consoles. We mailed in a PS3, Wii, and Xbox 360 for a test run. ColorWare followed our exact specifications and mailed the consoles back for our approval. The results? See for yourself: clean, professional, and highly detailed colored coats.

If you send in your own game system, **you'll pay \$99 for the coloring service and \$25 per controller.** Those prices may seem high, but are actually a bargain: ColorWare charges \$399 and up for its laptop PC coloring services. To see the full range of 28 color coats, as well as further pricing options, see ColorWarePC.com.



MASS EFFECT

AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE

BioWare's Xbox 360 RPG is closer than ever, and we've got new details on squad combat and interstellar travel.



For a game that's coming out this year, we still know precious little about BioWare's next big RPG. We know it's the first installment of a planned trilogy, that it's set in deep space, and that its Unreal-powered graphics are phenomenal. So we asked the project director of Mass Effect, Casey Hudson, to fill us in on the juicy details of what's happening behind the curtain of BioWare's latest interstellar epic.

Followers of RPG veteran BioWare will remember Baldur's Gate, Neverwinter Nights, and *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, and how these titles forever changed the way players view the role-playing genre.

Mass Effect, however, is ground breaking on an entirely different level. According to Hudson, Mass Effect "represents a major evolutionary step" over BioWare's previous RPGs. How evolutionary are we talking here? Try the story on for size. According to an ancient alien prophecy, every 50-thousand years machines come to harvest all human life throughout the galaxy. In Mass Effect, that time is now. You play as Commander Shepard, an elite human super soldier, against a legion of life-harvesting machines. Save the universe or save your own hide—which will you choose? Look for it this spring on the Xbox 360.

MASS EFFECT IN A NUTSHELL.

We ask the burning questions, and you reap the benefits.

Why should we care about Mass Effect?

Mass Effect is like jumping inside an intense sci-fi/action movie, where you're the center of a galaxy-spanning story full of combat, exploration, and emotionally-charged encounters with a huge cast of characters.

Can I roam around the universe freely?

You're in command of a starship and crew that you can fly to destinations across the galaxy in free-form space exploration. And you're not just a fixed, pre-determined character; you create your own Commander Shepard down to the finest details of appearance, gender, and ability. Then throughout the game, you develop your character and squad by gaining new armor, weapons, and skills.

How does combat work?

Combat in Mass Effect has a third-person camera and makes extensive use of cover, so as Commander Shepard approaches large objects, he'll smoothly lean against them to take cover. You can carry assault rifles, sniper rifles, pistols, and shotguns, with lots of customization features through the mod system. You can develop skills in other areas too, such as tech skills and dark energy powers.

How do I control squad members in battle?

You'll lead two others in your squad, selected from a larger group that joins up with you over the course of the story. In combat you can easily specify targets and movement commands for them using the directional pad, so combat takes on a very tactical feel.

Do my teammates have unique personalities?

Your squad members have very different personalities, so they might be critical or supportive of what you're doing. And in some cases, you may get into a fight—to the death—with a squad member, if they're morally opposed to decisions you've made.

Will Mass Effect allow players to be good or evil, as in past BioWare games?

We wanted to make good and evil choices more realistic in Mass Effect, so it is somewhat more organic and morally challenging. We put you into situations where you must achieve a goal at all costs, each of them with different and potentially devastating consequences. It will sometimes be clear which goal has you being nice and which one seems overly harsh, but it's all set in a context where nothing is frivolous or gratuitous. It's all about completing a mission to save billions of lives.



HOW TO FIND A Wii



ONLINE TRACKERS

Sites such as xpbargains.com offer live, up-to-the-minute Wii locators of every major outlet that gets the system in stock. They also offer RSS Feeds with alerts so you know the minute Wiis become available at your local Toys "R" Us.

HANG OUT

Gaming retailers, such as GameStop, get shipments throughout the week. The managers never seem to know when the shipments are coming or how many Wiis are on the truck, but if you luckily happen to stop by on a ship day, stick around and form an orderly line. Shipments often come into the stores before 10:30 a.m.

EBAY

You'll pay more than the retail \$250 price tag, but if price is no issue for you, go for it!

CRAIGSLIST.ORG

An excellent resource for local transactions, especially in the bigger cities. Check back daily and watch out for scammers—insist on meeting and trading in person.

GET ON THE HORN

Start making phone calls to every Best Buy, Circuit City, and Target in your area. Try imitating someone famous each time you call so they don't instantly recognize your voice.



REMOTE CONTROL

Once you procure the actual system, now it's onto those hard-to-find Wii Remotes. The best bet is to pick up a copy of *Wii Play*, which isn't a super-great game but comes with a Wii Remote. It's a better deal than buying a single Wii Remote by itself.

THE BIG 5

Tenacious Moses sounds off on the top stories on GamePro.com.

1 COST REDUCTION VS. PRICE CUTS

At the DICE Summit, Phil Harrison addressed speculation that the PS3 would soon drop in price. He clarified that mentions of "cost reduction" mean that Sony is focused on manufacturing efficiencies, not necessarily price cuts.

2 QUIETER XBOX 360S THROUGH SOFTWARE UPDATE?

A recent software update reduces the noise of the Xbox 360's disk drive. The update only applies to debug machines used by German journalists, but could conceivably find its way to the U.S.



3 SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS, ICO DEVS MOVE TO PS3

A two-page ad in a recent *Famitsu* revealed that Sony will add talent to its Team ICO. The studio will begin work on the creation of an as-of-yet unannounced game for the PS3.



4 LUCASARTS UNLEASHES NEXT-GEN STAR WARS GAME

Named *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*, this mysterious title is set between episodes III and IV. You play as Darth Vader's secret apprentice, who joins Vader's quest to rid the galaxy of Jedi knights.



5 MERCENARIES 2: NO LONGER A PS3 EXCLUSIVE

EA Games announced that *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames* will also be available on the Xbox 360. EA plans to simultaneously release all versions in time for this coming holiday season.

Geek Speak 2.0

Big words, small type.

Texture Map: A two-dimensional image that is painted onto the surface of a three-dimensional object. The higher the resolution of the texture map, the more realistic the detail on the surface of the in-game object. Large texture maps suck up lots of graphics memory and can slow down performance.

Detail Texture: Even high-resolution textures become blurry (or "pixilated") when viewed up close. A detail texture is an additional texture layer that fades into view as the player's viewpoint gets closer to a surface, giving the illusion of even greater detail. Famously pioneered in the Unreal games.

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ENDURATHON: SONY AND THE NEXT-GEN RACE

Sony's game guy, Phil Harrison, fills us in on his reaction to the future of PlayStation 3 gaming.



WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE PS3 LAUNCH?

For me, it was watching people line up on the street just waiting to buy a PlayStation 3; it really brought home three years of work. I thought, "What actually matters is that people are standing out there with money in their pockets with a sense of excitement." Knowing that scene was being replicated in cities all across the country makes it very real.

"Criticism of the PS3 doesn't concern me."

—Phil Harrison, president of Sony Worldwide Studios.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE PS3'S LAUNCH LINEUP?

On one level, any launch game deserves accolade because working on the bleeding edge of a new system takes guts and determination from the developer. We also saw original games, such as Insomniac's *Resistance: Fall of Man*, ship on day one with industry-leading features. That deserves a lot of credit. As of today, all of the games available for the PS3 show what the system is capable of tremendous promise.

ARE YOU GETTING A FAIR SHAKE FROM THE PRESS REGARDING THE CRITICISMS OF THE PS3?

It doesn't concern me. This isn't a sprint or a three-month race—this is a ten-year marathon. And I know that we have the technology and the architecture to make the PS3 last more than ten years as a software format. We have future-proof technologies that will allow game designers to do amazing things with the system. So I have no concerns at all about what we'll deliver later this year, next year, and for the next eight years.

Also, by what measure was the launch of the PS3 not a success? We sold out everywhere, we overcame the manufacturing issues quickly and are now satisfying demand, and we've sold more systems more quickly than we did with the PS1 or PS2. What's not to love about that?



Illustration: Francis Mao

GAMES TO DIE FOR

Our current obsessions



#1

God of War II (PlayStation 2)

The last big release for the PS2 is here, and it proves the PS2 is alive and well. If you thought Kratos was a blast to play the first time out, you ain't seen nothing yet.



#2

Crackdown (Xbox 360)

Between finding all the agility upgrade orbs, taking down gang leaders, and just blowing crap up, this vibrant gem is as addictive as hell.



#3

Supreme Commander (PC)

Chris Taylor is an RTS god among men, and this long-awaited follow-up to *Total Annihilation* is the best thing to happen to the genre in a long time.



Sux or Rules



Changing the world, one insult at a time.

SUX

The Senate. Too many of these idiots spend time filibustering about the evils of video games and championing the erosion of our civil liberties than tackling real issues like floundering U.S. education standards and the health care crisis. **SUX**

Microsoft. The Xbox Live Rewards program went live on February 12th, but hardly anybody could even sign up, since the whole shebang got hosted on servers that went down faster than Dominic Santiago in a firefight. **SUX**

Nintendo. You mean to tell us that some underground emulation coder can write software that perfectly replicates the features of classic games like *Mario Kart 64* and *Kid Icarus*, but you can't? **SUX**

RULES

Seeds. Capcom shut down Clover Studios (*Okami*, *God Hand*) six months ago, but the key players have since formed their own independent development house. Fans of innovative gameplay and stellar art direction should keep an eye on these guys. **RULES**

Downloading TV. Your favorite shows, in high definition, minus intolerably insipid commercials, streamed right to your console? Movies on demand? It's a video buffet! If only the prices were more reasonable. **RULES**


Microsoft. They may not be able to keep a website off its knees, but they are listening to player feedback: Developers can no longer charge for downloadable content that grants a competitive edge. **RULES**



Microsoft
game studios

BUNGIE

Halo[®] 2 for the PC is here. Two all-new exclusive maps, 23 in total.
And a Map Editor to create even more. Only on Windows Vista.[™]

 **Games for Windows** LIVE

ASSASSIN'S CREED: GAME OF THE YEAR?



The year is 1191, and you are an assassin. Your mission? To track down and take out the nine architects of the Third Crusade. "As you do so," elaborates Assassin's Creed producer Jade Raymond in a video documentary available on the game's website, "you're going to find out that [their plot] goes beyond war profiteering. You'll uncover a conspiracy that has implications all the way to the modern day." Whatever these modern-day implications may be, Assassin's Creed has sparked a wildfire throughout the gaming community with its sweeping visuals, edgy historical clashes, and your character's Le Parkour-inspired movements. Raymond emphasized that assassination is the player's primary goal, but that the real fun begins with how you get to that goal. In controlling Altair, master assassin, you will have tremendous freedom of movement. Each button on the controller is mapped to a different body part, which allows Altair to tackle any obstacle in a variety of ways. The level of interactivity within the environment looks to be unprecedented. For more news on Ubisoft's Assassin's Creed, check out GamePro.com.

DVD PRO

Movies for gamers.

THE PRESTIGE
 FROM THE DIRECTOR OF BATMAN BEGINS
 CHRISTIAN BALE MICHAEL CAINE SCARLETT JOHANSSON AND GARY OLDMAN
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 WRITTEN BY JONATHAN HOLMES DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
MUST SEE

THE PRESTIGE
 Christopher Nolan (*Memento*, *Insomnia*, *Batman Begins*) brings Christopher Priest's complex story of rival magicians to life in a film that you'll need to see more than once to truly appreciate.
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THE LOST ROOM
 This Sci Fi Channel brain-twisting mini-series tells the tale of a mysterious hotel room and the supernatural objects that dwell within.
 scifi.com/lostrom
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FAST FOOD NATION
 Richard Linklater (*Dazed & Confused*, *A Scanner Darkly*) takes on the far-reaching consequences of the fast-food phenomenon with his trademark wit.
 foxsearchlight.com/fastfoodnation
 \$27.98

STATIC By Vicious Sid



Pwned this month: Microsoft, Crisis, fanboys, and Wii

hock...BioShock...BioShock...
 • If we see more downloadable games as polished and as affordable as Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection, the PS3 might just turn out to be an Xbox Live Arcade-killer...
 • Speaking of Xbox 360, why doesn't Microsoft sell larger hard drives as an add-on? Twenty gigabytes is pretty puny these days, especially with those bloated TV and movie downloads...
 • Word is the boys at Midway were inspired by the gritty, steroid-infused look of Gears of War. Gears of Kombat coming soon?...
 • Crisis is still looking good, but a recent hands-on build was running at a low-ish resolution and still stuttered during busy action scenes. Talk about a hardware hog...
 • Nvidia's new Geforce 8800 GTX is blazing fast. Seriously. We're shocked...
 • Anybody else grooving on Heroes?...
 • My quickie Crackdown review: It's good but shallow. Definitely a mere tide-me-over 'til GTAIV...
 • My Xbox 360 gets scorching hot lately. We're talking weenie-roast temperatures here...
 • Know what I hate? Sniveling Internet punks who call me biased because they disagree with cold hard facts. In one day I was called both pro-Sony and pro-Microsoft in feedback based on the same article. Um, hellllloooo...
 • Speaking of politics, enough with the "PS3 is a disaster" talk. We're less than six months in. Patience, mkay?...
 • You know, GameTap is slowly growing on me. Ten bucks a month for all-you-can-eat arcade, 16-bit, and Dreamcast games? Sign me up...
 • I'm the only editor in the office who isn't crazy for the Wii. Is there something wrong with me? Outside of the sports titles, it smells suspiciously like a gimmick...
 • What's this I hear about Apple suddenly getting deadly serious about video game development?...
 • There's a new publisher in town, and they're called "GameCock." No, seriously...
 • What the hell ever happened to Xbox 360 frontman J Allard, anyway? It's been at least a year since he's made a public appearance, and the rumor mill is in full swing on the reasons for his sudden invisibility...
 • Tiger Woods for Wii...Tiger Woods for Wii...Tiger Wo...



e-mail Sid:
 vicious_sid@gamepro.com

MOBILE GAMES THAT DON'T SUCK



Project Gotham Racing Mobile (Glu Mobile)
 It might not be as speedy as its Xbox 360 big brother, but this mobile port continues the trademark PGR kudos and medal systems for a solid mobile racer.

Also worth a shot: Lost, Monopoly Tycoon 2007



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KNOW YOUR...

DISC FORMATS

CD-ROM 700 MB

Virtually out of use in modern video gaming, aside from the odd PC game. CD-ROM's puny 700 MB of storage just can't stack up to the big boys.



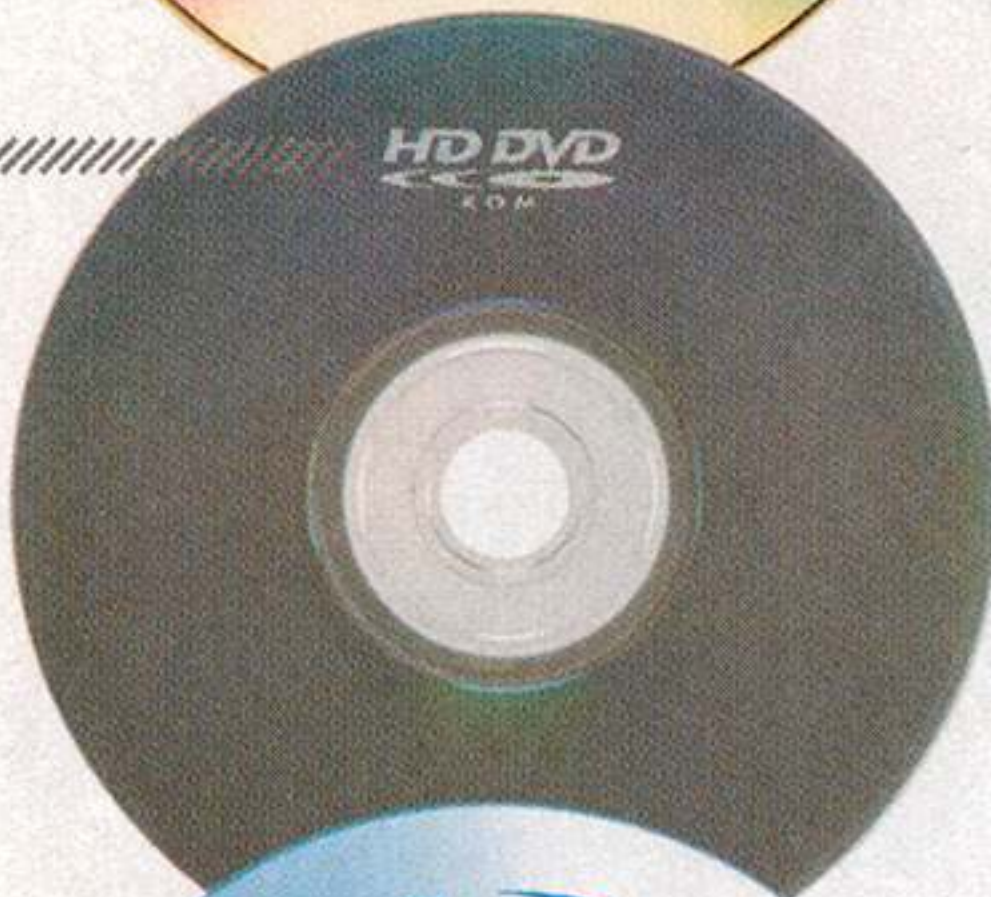
DUAL-LAYER DVD 7,900 MB

Currently the gold standard for the PS2 and Xbox 360, dual-layer DVDs are a solid choice. But high-resolution graphics and surround sound are putting the cramp on this aging format.



HD DVD 15,000 MB

Now we're talking. HD DVD isn't used for games—yet—but its 15 GB make it a great choice for high-def flicks. You can score an Xbox 360 HD DVD add-on drive for \$199.



BLU-RAY 25,000 MB

The current king of the disc wars, Blu-ray crams an amazing 25 GB per layer. Future multi-layer versions will support 50 GB, and possibly as high as 100! The format of choice for the PlayStation 3.



+ MINI-GAMES

Nintendo games have traditionally featured some pretty goofy enemies. Can you unscramble each enemy's name, and the classic game in which it first appeared?

TNGLGEPA RUDZIA	[IDK SURIAC]
REOTHA IABNR	[DERTMOI]
LHNDARANA	[ETH EGNLED FO LADEZ]
OPKAO ROTOAP	[OARIM OSRB]
OOSCTUPRC	[KEYODN GONK YTUCNOR]
CKATTAY CSAK	[SYISO'H RTSYO]

Answers: Eggplant Wizard (Kid Icarus); Croctopus (Donkey Kong Country); Attacky Sack (Yoshi's Story) (Mario Bros.); Mother Brain (Metroid); Manhandla (The Legend of Zelda); Koopa Troopa

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

OVERHEARD THIS MONTH

"If you can find a PS3 anywhere in North America that's been on shelves for more than five minutes, I'll give you \$1200 for it."

Jack Tretton, CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment America, dismissing reports that the PlayStation 3 isn't selling as expected. He made the remarks in early January.



"One hour and 11 systems later, we're \$13,200 richer."

Gabe and Tyco of Penny Arcade, taking Tretton up on his offer.



"If you want to be controversial, fine. But damn it, don't duck and cover when the sh*t hits the fan."

Doug Lowenstein in his final remarks as Entertainment Software Association president, referring to what he called "cut and run" developers.



"The American gamer's always talking about 'I beat it.' When you listen to an album, do you listen to it in one go and say 'I beat the Eminem album'?"

Alex Ward, creative director at Criterion (Black), critiquing the attitudes of American gamers.

"Getting sales is great. But having our peers say it's the best game of the year? That's insane. We beat the Wii."

Michael Capps, CEO of Epic Games, after Gears of War swept the annual AIAS awards.



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Pictured from left to right: LCDR Mark Simon, ETCM Eric Olis, BMC Dan Ames, BM1 Michael O'Connell,
EN1 Jason Fetterman, EM2 Mark DiPietro, LT Lewis Baker, MM2 Sergio Rodriguez

navy.com/seals

do you have what it takes?

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DUKE NUKEM'S SPRING BREAK MEMORIES

Pissin' the night away.

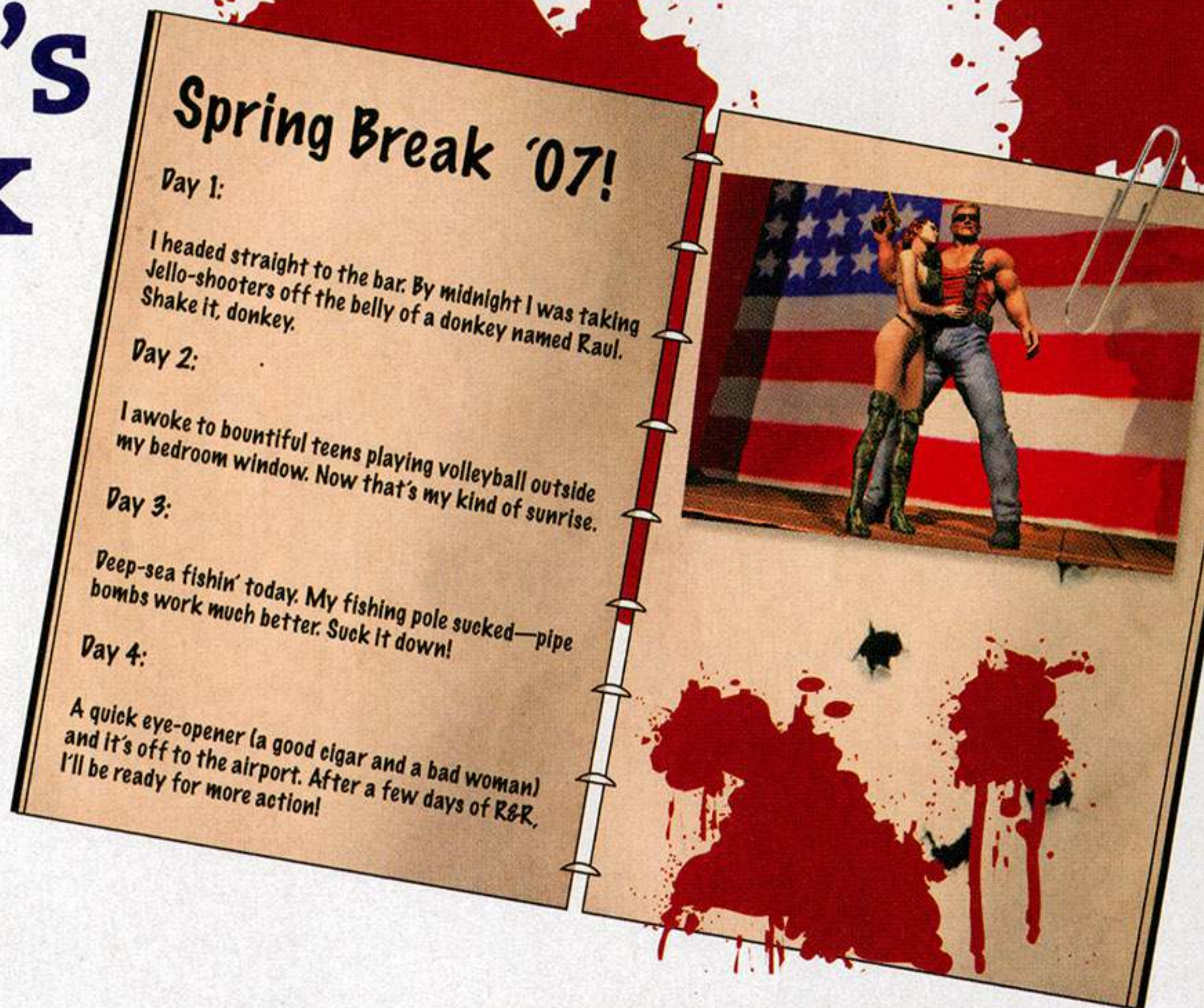
Duke Nukem, the last great American hero, was recently spotted in Cancun, Mexico, during Spring Break to boost support for his missing-in-action PC shooter Duke Nukem Forever. We found this dog-eared diary in the bathroom of a local gas station.

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER: 10 YEARS LATER

Oh how the world has changed during the endless development of Duke Nukem Forever.

In early 1996, a little-known PC shooter changed the rules forever. That game was Duke Nukem 3D, an immensely popular, immensely groundbreaking game that enraged senators and parents worldwide. Such a popular game naturally demanded a sequel, so in April of 1997, developer 3D Realms announced Duke Nukem Forever with a planned release date of 1998 or 1999. Then 2000. Then 2001. Now, "when it's done."

For a vast array of reasons, development on Duke Nukem Forever has sputtered along for 10 years. Aside from a few short videos and low-resolution screen shots leaked some six years ago, Duke Nukem Forever is as mysterious in 2007 as it was in 1997. Does The Duke still fit into our modern, futuristic society? Here's a look at the major events that have taken place since Duke Nukem Forever started development, well, *forever* ago.



TEN YEARS OF FOREVER



◀ Ten years later, and this is what 3D Realms has to show: a tiny, blurry, in-game screen shot. It's Miller time!



◀ This early image from 2001 is one of the few remaining artifacts from Duke Nukem Forever's earliest days (also known as the game's "pre-Jurassic period").

NEVER SAY "FOREVER" AGAIN



3D Realms assures us that Duke Nukem Forever is still in production, but at this point, the game's epic dev cycle is far more entertaining than the actual game is likely to be. They say absence makes the heart grow fonder. Do you suppose there's a statute of limitations on that?



• The average cost for gasoline in California exploded from **\$1.61 per gallon to \$2.80 per gallon.**

• Prey, another 3D Realms game that languished in development hell for a decade, was finally released on the PC and Xbox 360 in 2006.



• The U.S. population soared from **266 million to 300 million.**

• The U.S. national debt skyrocketed from **\$6.08 trillion to \$8.7 trillion.**

• Nintendo released the **Nintendo 64, the Game Boy Advance, the GameCube, the DS, the DS Lite, and the Wii.**

• The Olsen twins starred in five television shows, 14 films, and checked into rehab.

• **Britney Spears** released four albums, had a first marriage, a second marriage, two kids, nearly dropped her first kid on his head, became single again, and shaved her head.



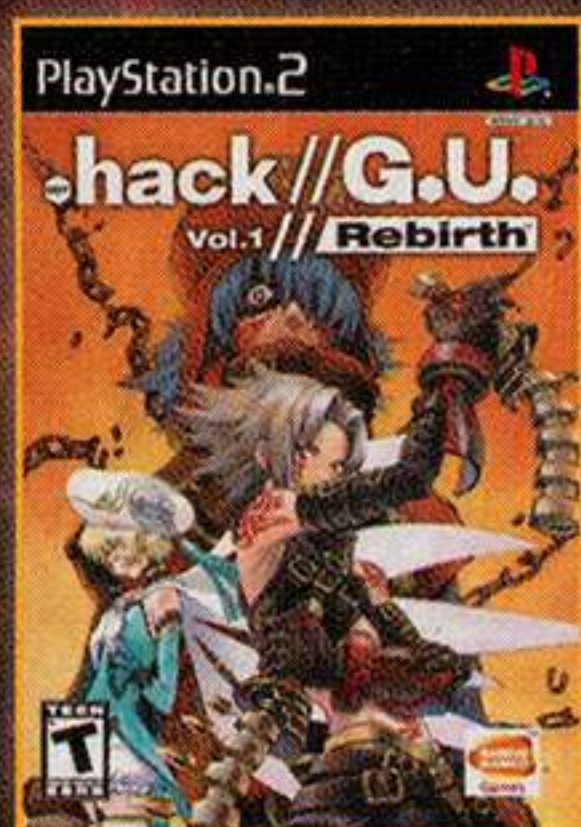
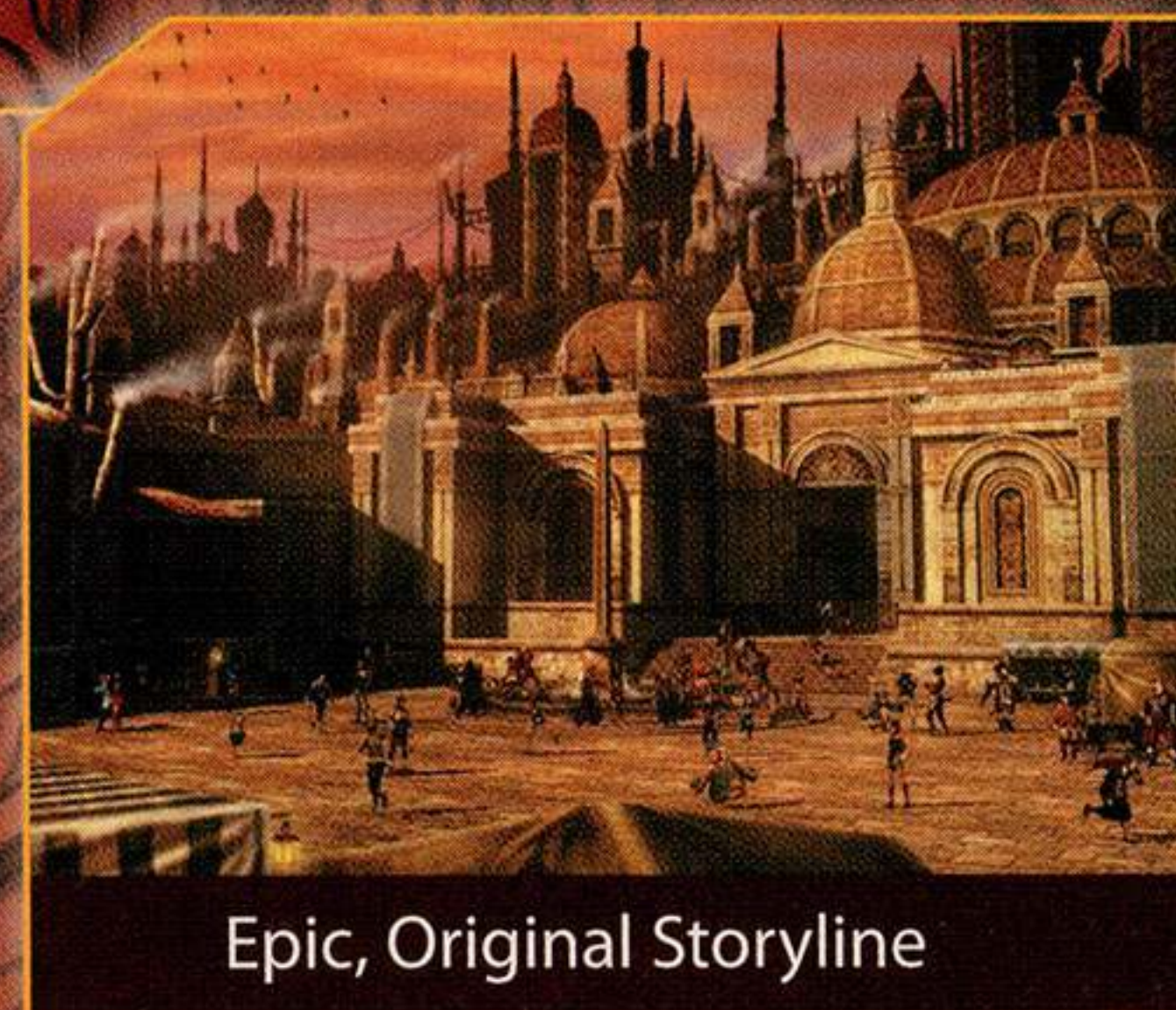
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Black-suit Spidey provides our hero with loads of spectacular new powers.

SPIDER-MAN 3

Spider-Man swings into action like you've never seen him before.

PS3 Xbox 360

Developer: Treyarch Publisher: Activision Release Date: May

Filled with rage, Peter Parker has just found out who murdered his Uncle Ben. The culprit: Flint Marko, an escaped prisoner caught in a freak accident that displaces his molecular structure turning him into the villainous Sandman. Embodied with the new power of the symbiote, black-suit Spidey is even more powerful than his mild-mannered alter ego and he wants Sandman dead.

Stalking like an owl in the night, Spidey follows Sandman into the subways beneath the gritty streets of New York. The subways are exaggerated in size for optimal web-slinging action, and of course, Sandman ass-kicking. The fight begins. Furiously punching and kicking, Spidey wears on his Uncle's killer. But he's too tough, like an impenetrable sand fortress. In between fisticuffs, subway trains veer by. Spidey regains command of the fight and holds the head of Sandman against the passing train. His face grinds into nothingness.

Sound cool? Believe it or not, this is all gameplay. And it's all a part of the interactive theatrical experience Spider-Man 3 delivers.

COMBAT EVOLVED

There's no denying that combat in past Spider-Man games was problematic. Oh, who are we kidding; it was terrible. Lacking variety and depth, fist fights quickly devolved into mindless button mashing. Not so this time around. The development team at Treyarch has obviously spent time reworking the combat

system for Spider-Man 3. It still feels slightly button mash-y, but attacks now feel much more dynamic and acrobatic—closer to how Spider-Man behaves in the comics and movies.

On the Xbox 360 version—Spider-Man 3 will be released on every platform—the X and Y buttons attack. They can be charged or used in conjunction with one another to create some devastating combos. Our favorite? A mega ground pound that knocks all nearby enemies off their feet. But it doesn't stop there. Spidey can now grab enemies from afar and swing them around like rag dolls, subdue pesky opponents, or even string them up by hand and feet to light posts, for instance, and begin wailing mercilessly on them. Hey, even the NYPD will jump in on the fun, pulling out their weapons and interacting with the struggling thug.

BACK IN BLACK

All that may sound like fun, but it's nothing compared to what Spider-Man can do when under the ultimate power of the alien symbiote. That's right; you can play as black-suit Spidey, and it's an absolutely primal experience. When in black-suit mode, Spidey can jump higher, swing faster, and punch harder.

Black-suit Spidey also comes equipped with a rage meter that can be activated by repeatedly pressing the Right Bumper. When in rage mode, Spidey glows with intense fury, allowing him to deliver even more damage and spectacular special combat moves.

Much like the movie, the storyline in Spider-Man 3 focuses on Peter Parker's discovery of and issues with his sleek new outfit. In contrast with previous Spider-Man games, you engage the story mode as you please from the central map screen, and the plot automatically switches between red suit missions and black suit ones.

In addition to the main storyline, Spidey must help scale back the gang turf wars of Manhattan. The central map screen, which is laid out very similarly to Google Earth, displays the contested territory of each of the three gangs. Your job: restore order and eliminate gang presence in the metropolitan area. Good luck, Spidey.

CIN...CIN...CINTERACTIVE

One of the most appealing aspects of Spider-Man 3 is that it has next-gen written all over it. In fact, we're going to go out on a limb and call this the most interactive-theatrical experience ever encountered. "Cinteractive" is what Activision calls the game's forward-thinking leap into the realm of interactive cut scenes.

Here's how it works. Much like other games, at key moments an interactive movie seamlessly transitions you into the next plot twist, adventure, or stage of combat. The big difference is that during these interactive movies, this brand new cinteractive element comes into play. During these stages, icons representing buttons on the controller will pop onto screen prompting you to press them in a timely fashion, similar to God of War's finishing moves (think Simon Says). If you

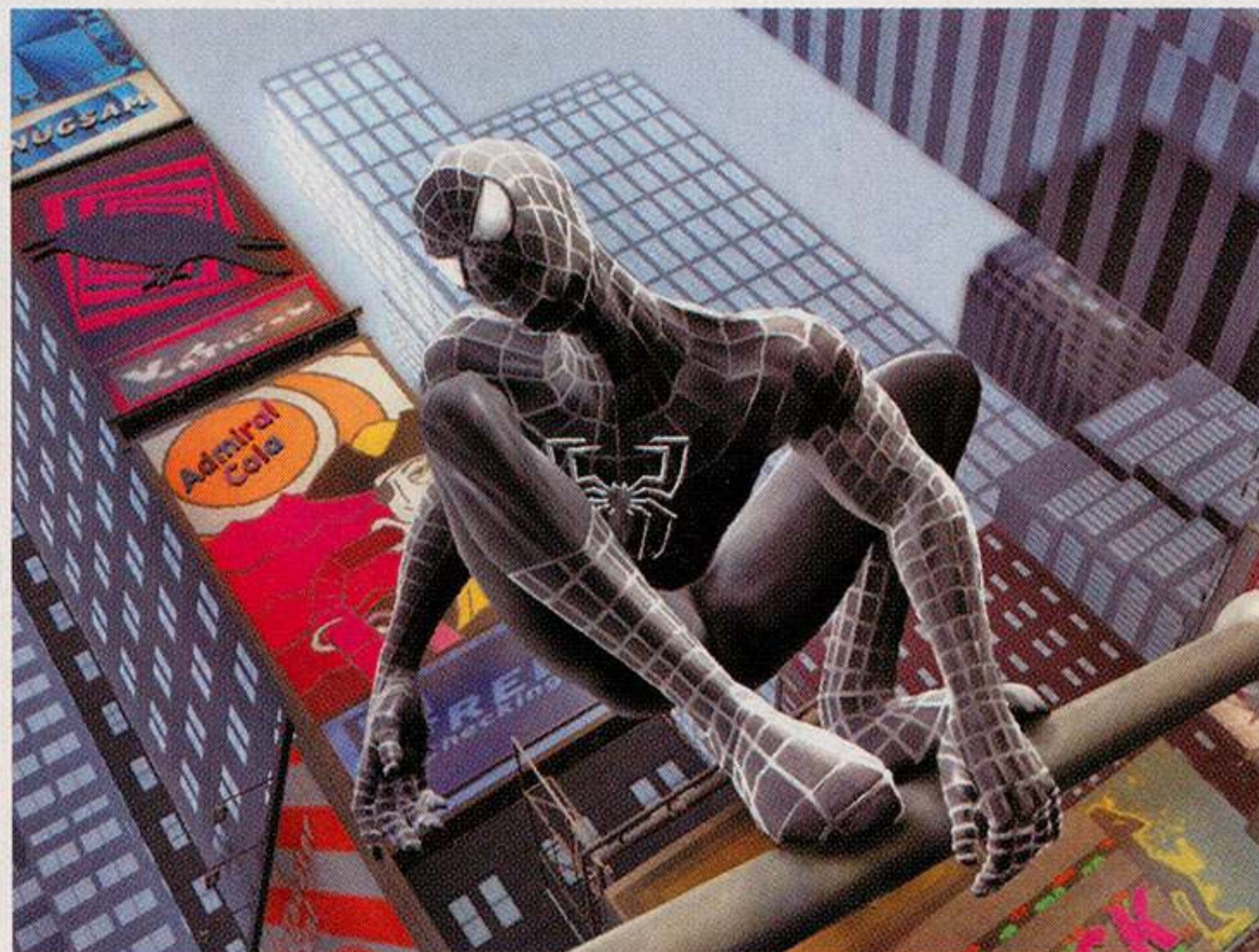
press them in the right order, you successfully complete the segment. Press them in the wrong order, and you fail.

Boss battles have their fair share of cinteractive moments, but the beauty of this system—a first for gaming—is that it shouldn't distract you to the point of breaking your focus. If anything, the cinteractive moments suck you deeper into the experience of being Spider-Man.

In our demo of the game, we fought two supervillains you'll see in the movie—Sandman, and Harry Osborn as the New Goblin—and two Marvel villains who are not in the movie. The Sandman fight was so epic we had to wash the sand out of our pants afterward. The others: Not so epic, but still a lot of fun. Spider-Man 3 will be released three days before the movie on May 4. Get your swing on.—**Tenacious Moses**

THE "NEW" SPIDER-MAN

- Black-suit Spidey gets heightened abilities.
- "Cinteractive" moments allow the player to control certain in-game movies.





Nintendo takes the 2D Paper Mario series into the new generation of gaming with Super Paper Mario for the Wii.



SUPER PAPER MARIO

Super Paper Mario prepares to turn its ultra-thin visuals into a full-bodied Mario adventure for the Wii.

Wii

Developer: Intelligent Systems ■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Release Date: April

Super Paper Mario took a less-than-super two-year hiatus when Nintendo developer Intelligent Systems decided to shift gears and make the then GameCube-bound adventure platformer for the yet-to-be-launched Wii.

Previously, Paper Mario had successfully flipped the Mario series on its ear with a stunning, paper-like 2D presentation at a time when game developers were falling over themselves to show off 3D modeling skills.

Now the designers were faced with another challenge: How do you make a game that revels in its flat, 2D pomposity a compelling adventure for a new-generation console? How about adding that third dimension now?

FLAT-LAND FINESSE

Like its predecessor, Super Paper Mario will feature a glorious 2D world in classic Mario style that looks like it's composed entirely of paper cutouts. The basic gameplay's in the classic mold, too, because you'll play most of the time by holding the Wii Remote sideways, where it becomes a near-perfect mimic of the classic Nintendo controller. Super Paper Mario will offer up only the merest nod to its Wii-ness by enabling you to use the Wii Remote in "flashlight" fashion to reveal invisible doors and objects and, from time to time, shake it to bust certain special moves.





SUPER PAPER MARIO IS:

- Different from *The Thousand Year Door*, adding 3D gameplay for the Wii.
- Still mostly a 2D side-scroller that will suck any old-school Mario fan in.

The gameplay twist will be the ability to flip into a 3D perspective with a single button press. Switching from a side view to a behind-Mario look makes it seem as if the game camera has just swung around behind him. The 2D landscape that looked like objects and characters from the side can be opened up to reveal a wealth of previously hidden places, creatures, and potential power-ups.

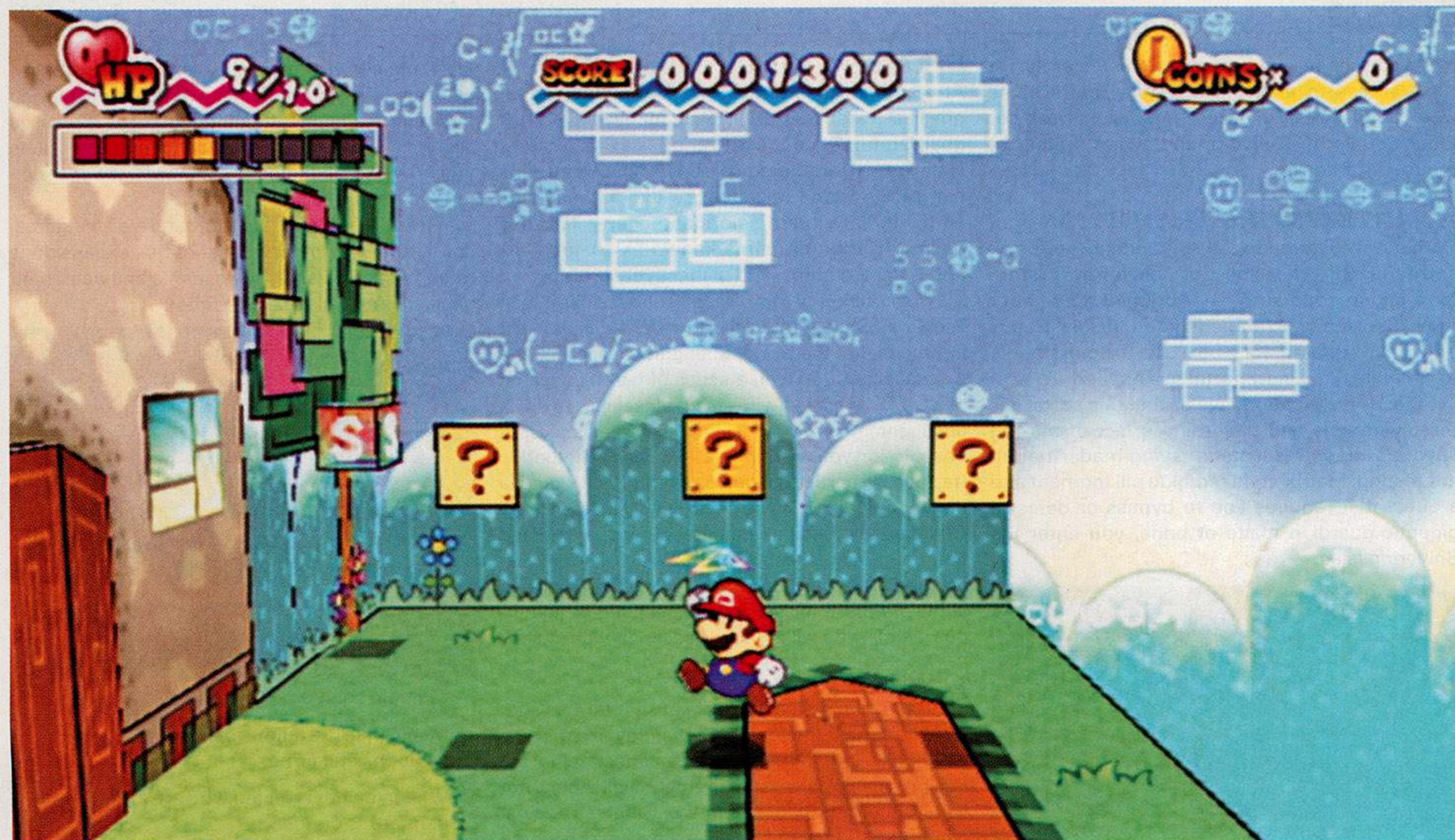
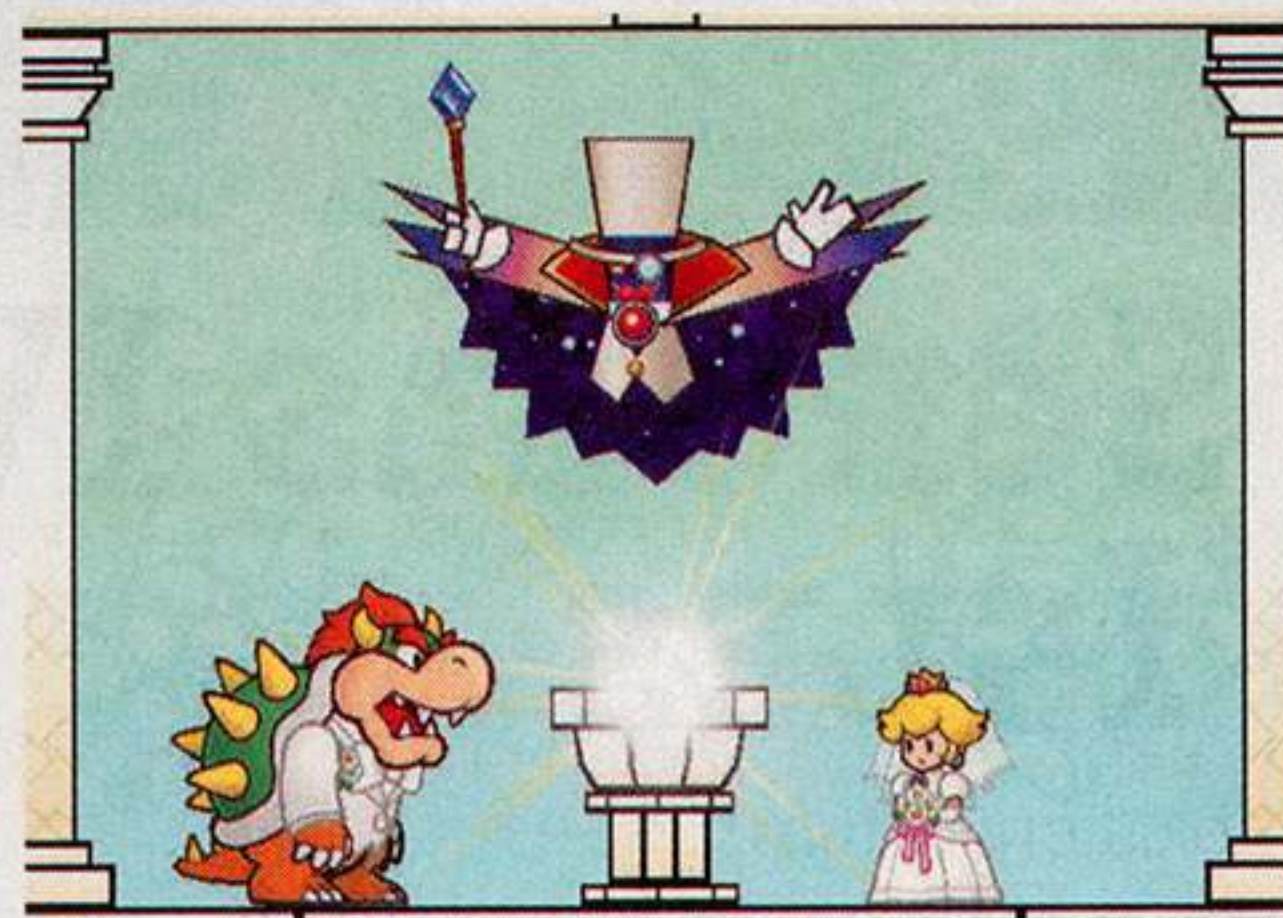
PEACH PICKED

Spoiler Alert: Princess Peach gets kidnapped! Yes, *Super Paper Mario* isn't going to do much in the way of breaking out of the typical Mario set up story. Mario and Luigi seek out the purloined Peach and sure enough run into Bowser along the way. Bowser and Peach are both playable, but judging by the preview, Luigi is unfortunately just a spectator. The new villain, Count Bleck, and his wacky band of hench-persons appear to display a humorous flair for self-aggrandizement and just the right desire to mash Mario.

THIN IS IN

Super Paper Mario already looks as if it would have been a great addition to the Mario legacy whether for the GameCube or the Wii. In fact, it's too bad it couldn't have come out sooner for the GameCube because that would probably have meant that this Wii game would be a brand new, third installment of the series for gamers everywhere to enjoy.

—Bro Buzz





Shivering Isles adds more than 30 hours of play, as well as a completely different gameplay experience, to The Elder Scrolls IV.

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: SHIVERING ISLES

The best game of 2006 takes a decidedly existential turn.

Xbox 360

Developer: Bethesda Softworks ■ Publisher: Bethesda Softworks/2K Games ■ Release Date: Spring 2007

Bethesda recently granted *GamePro* exclusive access to play the first four hours of its about-to-be released expansion pack for *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, and sweet mother of Freud, is it a doozy.

AN INTERESTING TRANSITION

Gamers accustomed to the grandeur, gallantry, and gooey RPG cheesiness of *Oblivion* are in store for a jolting good surprise. About 48 hours after the expansion is downloaded and installed—it is only being offered via Xbox Live—rumors begin to circulate that a new portal has opened.

Close investigation reveals that this portal has the mysterious and disturbing effect of making anyone who enters it stark, raving mad. After an interesting, *Matrix*-style red/blue pill moment and a quest that requires you to bypass or defeat a gigantic guardian made of bone, you enter the Shivering Isles.



STRAIGHT TO THE LOONY BIN

At this point, the gameplay takes a crazy meta-physical twist that will catch many players off guard. It turns out the Shivering Isles are crazy—in the purest psychological sense of the word. One half of the island is known as the “manic” side and is full of vibrant colors and chatty, talkative people. The other half is known as “dementia,” and is dark, gloomy, and distinctively grumpy.

In the center of this disaster zone resides a man known as Sheograth in the town of Crucible. Just like the rest of the world, Sheograth is cuckoo, and he challenges you with a series of tasks. Based on what we played and witnessed, these missions will entail some creatively devious play mechanics. In one mission you’re supposed to devise a method to trap and kill parties of heroes adventuring through a dungeon. In another, you get to build your own Bone Guardian by finding and assembling enchanted arms, legs, and other body parts. Much like the original game, as you venture into towns and villages to complete these missions, you’ll encounter numerous people who will offer you secondary quests.

LEVEL UP!

Bethesda divulged that the sweet spot for this add-on is Level 19-22 heroes. Based on my experiences with a 19th-level Battlemage, I can attest to the fact that the gameplay will be extremely challenging, but highly entertaining in the same way that the original game was. Jumping into this expansion triggered

the same eye-widening sense of wonderment, joy, and gameplay addiction that resulted in my playing the original *Oblivion* for 120-plus hours. Bethesda also said that *Shivering Isles* is more than three times larger than the *Knights of the Nine* Expansion released in late 2006.

Given the almost bipolar nature of the game, I’m betting the ultimate goal of this expansion is to unify the Shivering Isle’s manic and demented halves. Time will tell.—Lunchbox



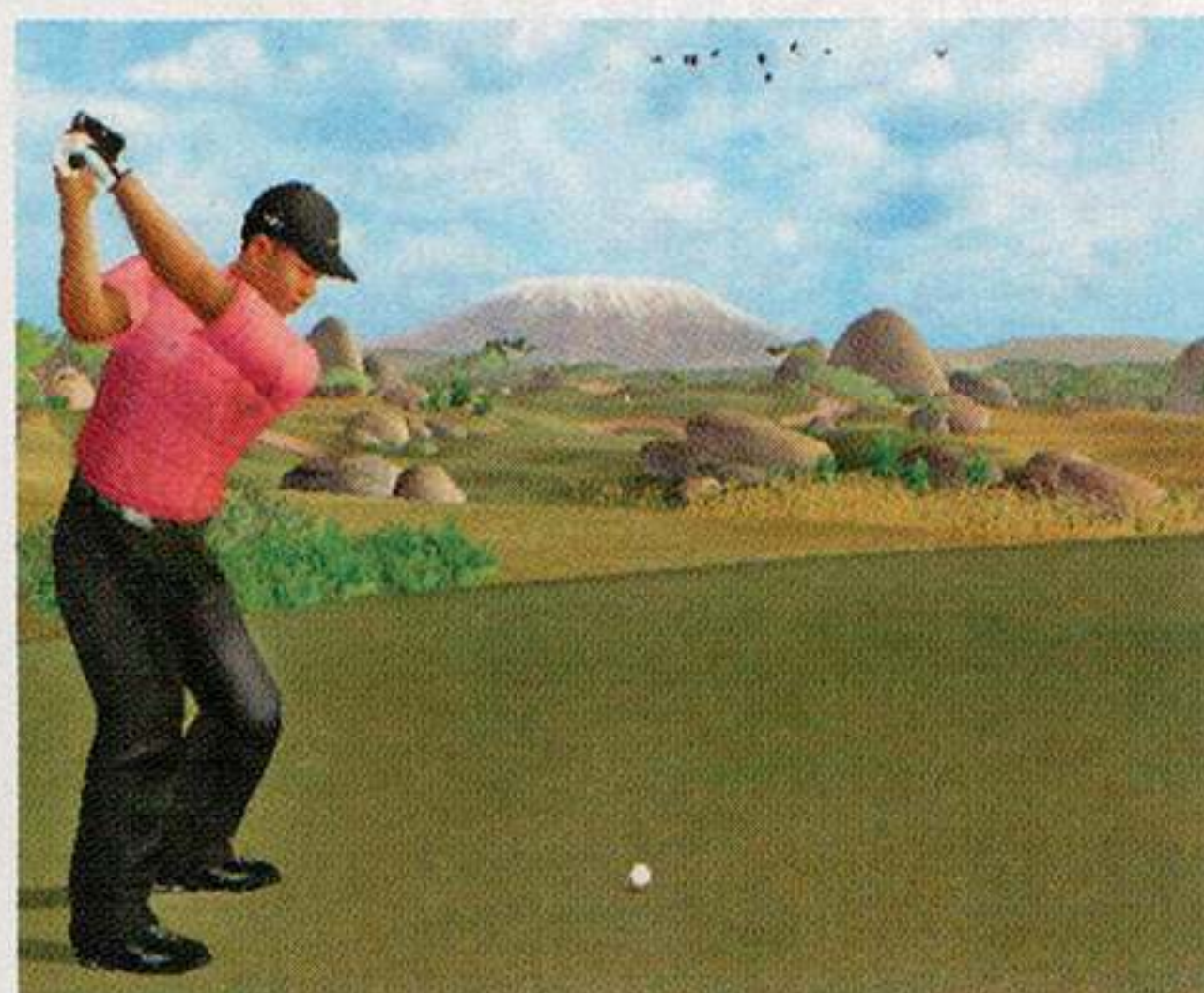
WHAT'S NEW

- Multiple solutions for quests
- Magic matrices allow for customization of weapons and armor.
- When you get arrested, you are locked into a dangerous dungeon.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07

Wii

Developer and Publisher: EA Sports Release Date: Spring



step up to any hole at TPC Sawgrass and slice your way to failure, just like in real golf. The gameplay mechanics are fairly accurate and much better than both aforementioned Wii golf games. This early build of Tiger Woods for the Wii got the point across that, barring any obscure occurrences, this game will prove a great substitute for those \$80K virtual golf rigs at Copeland's Sports (R.I.P.). The visuals are much like that drive you hooked so hard it ended up two fairways over, but then again, the fun is in the swinging of the Wii Remote. In actuality, the graphics aren't that bad, but nothing to write home about.

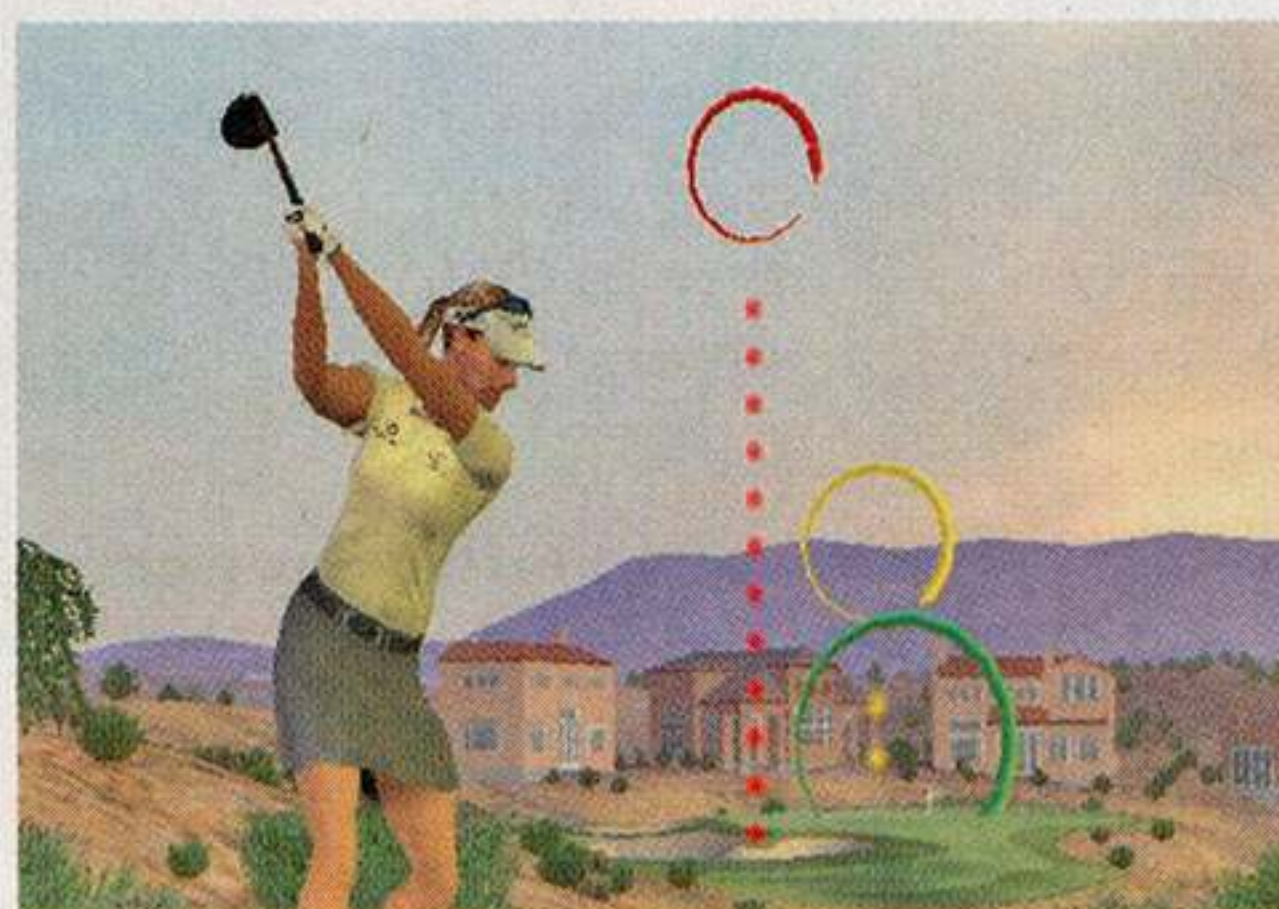
GRIP IT AND RIP IT

From somewhere overhead, you hear the faint buzzing of a small plane and birds quietly chirping; it's time to hit the tee. On each shot, pressing the A button gives you a preview of where your pre-selected shot is determined to go. From there you can adjust your club length and direction; it's all very intuitive. The gallery quiets down, so there's only one thing left to do. Choke up on the Wii Remote, hold down the B trigger and swing away. Congratulations, you just hit a 250-yard extreme slice right out of bounds, your ball coming happily to rest at the feet of an 8-bit squirrel that must have escaped its NES torture chamber and somehow snuck into the Wii. And that's basically it; just line up shots and swing out of your rear.—**Octagon**



WHY WII GOLF WORKS

- Tracks motion from the Remote, emulating a full, realistic golf swing.
- Even club-head tilt is accounted for; if you slice in real golf, you probably will on the Wii.



Sandwich: \$4.99. Juice: \$1.79. Extra Wii Remote: \$39.99. Tee-time in the demo room: priceless. Tiger Woods for the Wii has recently become a lunchtime staple for some of us at the *GamePro* office; we can usually get in nine holes before returning to the ho-hum of office life. The Wii is a perfect platform for golf games, but after mediocre golf outings from Tecmo's *Super Swing Golf* and Nintendo's *Wii Sports*, we weren't quite convinced that a solid golf experience was right around the corner. But Tiger is quickly proving us wrong.

GOODBYE GREEN FEES

Gone are the days of doing the one-two button mash to get your golf shot just right. Instead, you can



PUNCH



LEGEND OF THE DRAGON™



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COOKING MAMA: COOK OFF

Wii

■ Developer: Office Create ■ Publisher: Majesco ■ Release Date: April



Like a hot new restaurant with a forward thinking chef, the original Cooking Mama offered up a unique and tasty experience when it debuted on the DS late last year. It earned raves for its fast-paced gameplay and quirky presentation, as well as its incredibly intuitive control scheme. Making flawless use of the DS' touchpad, the game had you chopping, dicing, stirring, and frying your way through a cookbook-sized list of recipes, and on to culinary fame.

A LA CARTE

It was an obvious no-brainer that Cooking Mama would eventually find its way onto the DS' older sibling, the Wii. Just take a look at the Wii Remote: it looks a lot like the handle of a frying pan, doesn't it? It could also easily be the handle of a spatula or a knife, or a number of other kitchen implements. Cooking Mama: Cook Off feels like Wii fate.

Fans of the original will find that nothing much has changed—you still select a dish to prepare, work through the preparation process, step by step, in a series of timed mini-games, and earn medals for your performance. Only this time, instead of tapping and sliding a stylus around, you use the Wii Remote to perform your onscreen culinary feats.

Have an onion that needs to be chopped? Slice the Wii Remote through the air at the highlighted places, and then chop it up and down to reduce that bulbous orb into a fine dice. Do your shrimp need de-shelling? Grasp the head using the onscreen hand and wiggle the Wii Remote up and down until the shell pops off. It works as advertised, and though Cook Off seems to have retained the DS version's faults—the controls aren't always as responsive as they should be, and it's sometimes hard to figure out what exactly you're supposed to do—there is something inherently satisfying about the way your physical movements translate onto the screen.

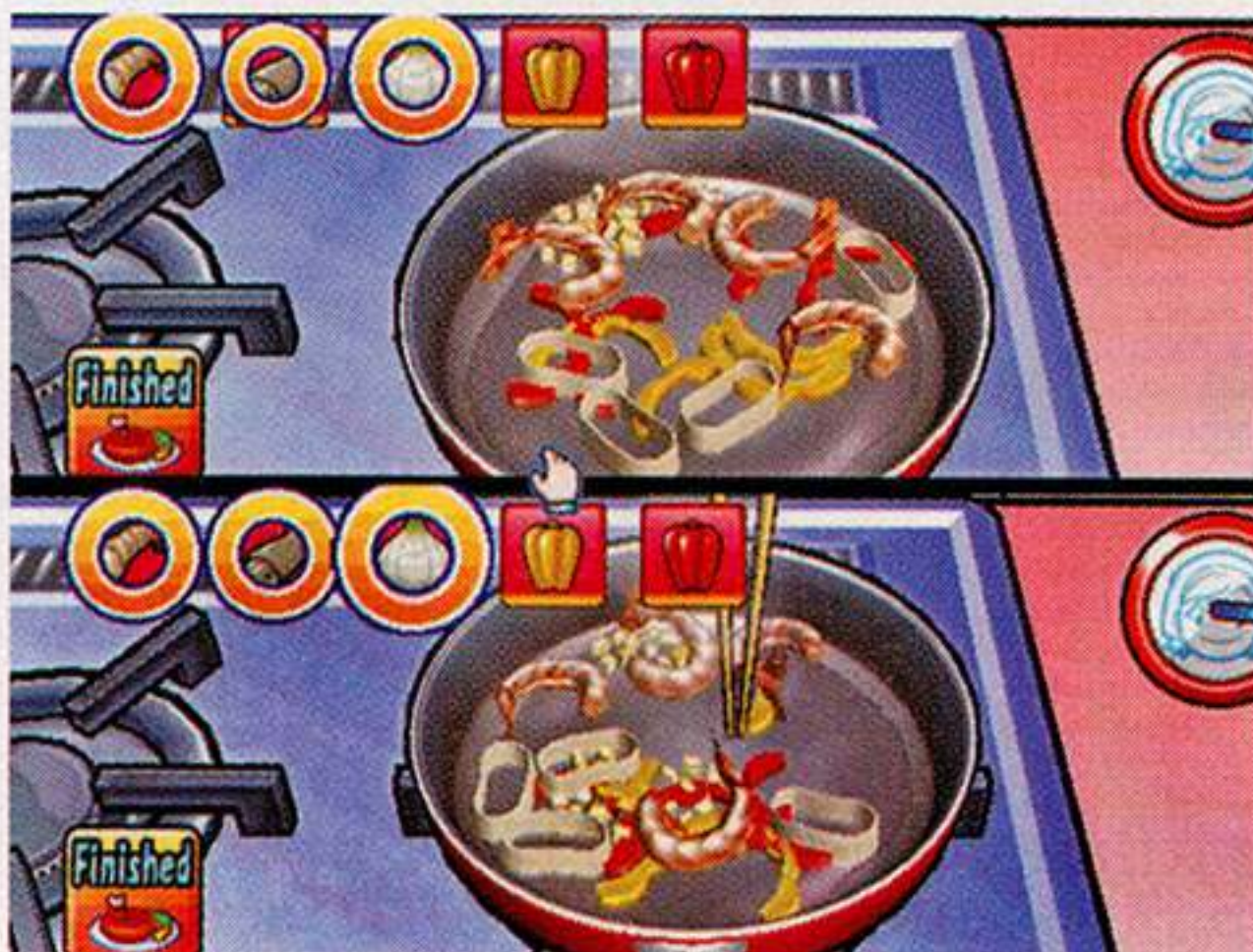
IRON CHEF WII

In the new split-screen Cook Off mode, two budding chefs can duke it out to see who can score the most points in the kitchen. The game would have been better if your mistakes were clearly visible in the end results—the dishes turn out fine no matter how poorly you perform during the actual cooking portion—but there's plenty of room for kitchen trash talk.

Admittedly, Cooking Mama: Cook Off probably won't be enough to fully satisfy your complete gaming hunger but, if anything, it should serve as a wonderful and fulfilling snack between sessions of Twilight Princess. —*Ahoy_and_Avast*

WHAT'S COOKING ON WII?

- Use motion, instead of the DS stylus, to perform a variety of cooking tasks.
- Split-screen Cook Off mode pits two chefs against each other à la *Iron Chef*.



DRAGON BALL Z: SHIN BUDOKAI ANOTHER ROAD

PSP

■ Developer: Dimps ■ Publisher: Atari
■ Release Date: Available Now



Here's a little-known fact your history teacher never told you: Dragon Ball Z has been around since the dawn of human civilization. Scientists have uncovered cave drawings by cavemen depicting a fight between Goku and a woolly mammoth. We kid, we kid.

But does it help that pretty much every single DBZ game ever released has recycled storylines from the animated series and manga books of the same name? We can only relive the DBZ gang's battle with Cell or Majin Buu so many times before it starts to feel tired. So what's an aging franchise to do? Fall back on the classic "what if" scenario, of course.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

A follow-up to the similarly named PSP title, DBZ: Shin Budokai, Another Road's storyline follows an alternate future scenario in which Trunks takes on Majin Buu and his cronies. From our brief time with the game, we weren't able to determine whether or not this "what if" scenario is truly taking things on a different path or if it is just Majin Buu's storyline with Trunks in the starring role, but it is nice to see that the developers are willing to try something new.

The character models are nicely rendered and have that classic animated style that has become a hallmark of the video game series, and the actors from the Americanized version of the animated show have lent their talents to the game, which gives it an authentic feel.

Playing the game should be like slipping into an old pair of sneakers. The fighting system is relatively untouched from previous installments and it remains to be seen whether or not the developers throw in a couple of interesting new wrinkles to keep things fresh. Either way, this title seems like a no-brainer for DBZ fanatics, though the average gamer may want to take a wait-and-see attitude. —*Ahoy_and_Avast*

FINAL FANTASY FABLES: CHOCOBO TALES

DS

■ Developer: h.a.n.d. ■ Publisher: Square Enix ■ Release Date: December

You, the traditional yellow Chocobo, are living the good life on a quaint Chocobo Farm when the evil devil Bebuzzu traps all of your friends in a deck of cards. It's now up to you to save them and, of course, the world.

It wouldn't be Final Fantasy without saving the world, would it?



GETTIN' TOUCHY

In a marked departure from the norm, Square-Enix has taken a break from the angst-filled drama of their grand-scale, epic RPG narratives and has decided to focus on a simpler, mini-game-based adventure. Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales takes Final Fantasy's favorite mascots, monsters, and summons, and drops them into the middle of some favorite childhood tales, cleverly reworking the stories to fit the characters while building mini games around each premise.

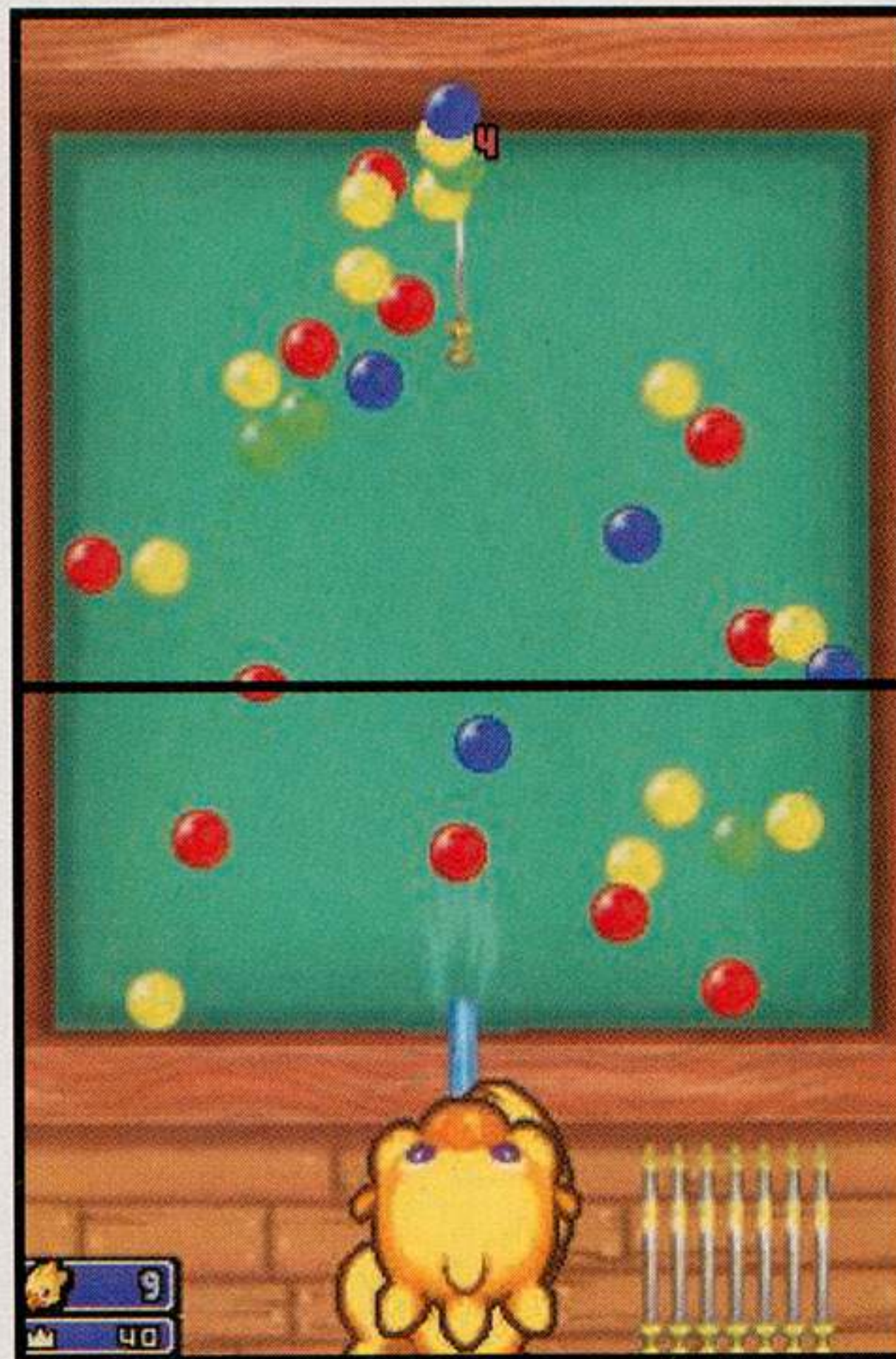


CARD TRICKS

The mini games run the gamut from simple dart-blowing micro games, to quick-draw card battles, turtle races, flaming-Chocobo hunting, and much more. There's tons of content to be unlocked via completing portions of the story mode, and even more bonus items to be found upon completing certain high-score targets. Most often, you'll receive powerful cards you can use to strengthen your card deck for boss battles at the end of each chapter.

The card battles are nuanced, with specific offense, defense, cool battle animations, and status effects on each card. You'll have to guess what card your opponent is going to play in order to

successfully counter their attack while dealing damage yourself. You're shown the color of your opponent's cards, giving you a hint as to what they might play. But there's going to be a bit of luck involved, as well as plenty of mini game clearing to win the more powerful, rare cards. And it's these rare cards that you can take online to play against a buddy, as well as enter global ranking, so it'll be in your best interest to build up your deck or be left in the dust. —T3hPanda



(newbie)



(alpha geek)



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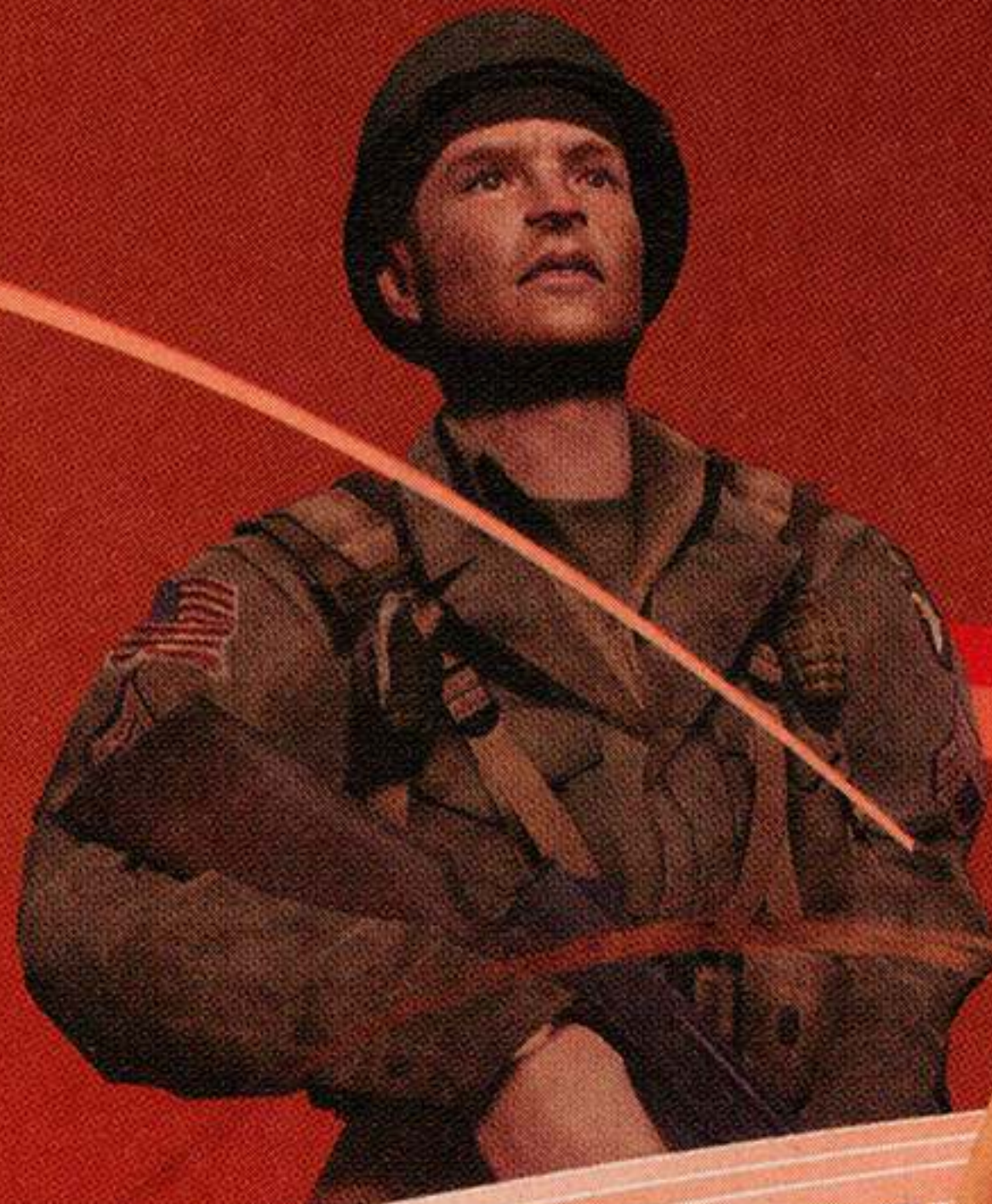
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PS3



THE NEXT WAVE

If you've been thinking it's sink or swim time for the PlayStation 3...
start swimming now! A new generation of PS3 games are on
the way with Heavenly Sword at the crest.



CONTINUED ►

HEAVEN SENT

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HANDS-ON WITH HEAVENLY SWORD

Sony's Heavenly Sword turns balletic swordplay into fine art.

by *World of Forms*

The PlayStation 3 needs a hero, and Heavenly Sword may be just the game to do the job. The game's development history has been cloaked in secrecy, but a short playable demo turned heads at last year's E3. Luckily, we convinced the folks at developer Ninja Theory to grant us an exclusive look at one of the most hotly anticipated games of 2006.

Set in a fantasy world that blends aesthetics from both ancient Europe and Asia, Heavenly Sword pits Nariko, a ferocious warrior with crimson hair, against the legions of a genocidal invading King. The titular Heavenly Sword was once in the possession of a god-like force, but has since fallen to the mortal world. Although the sword is a gift to effect massive change, this blessing comes with a sacrifice: those who carry the sword sign their own death sentence. In fact, Nariko has only hours left to live when the game opens.

A WARRIOR AND HER WEAPON

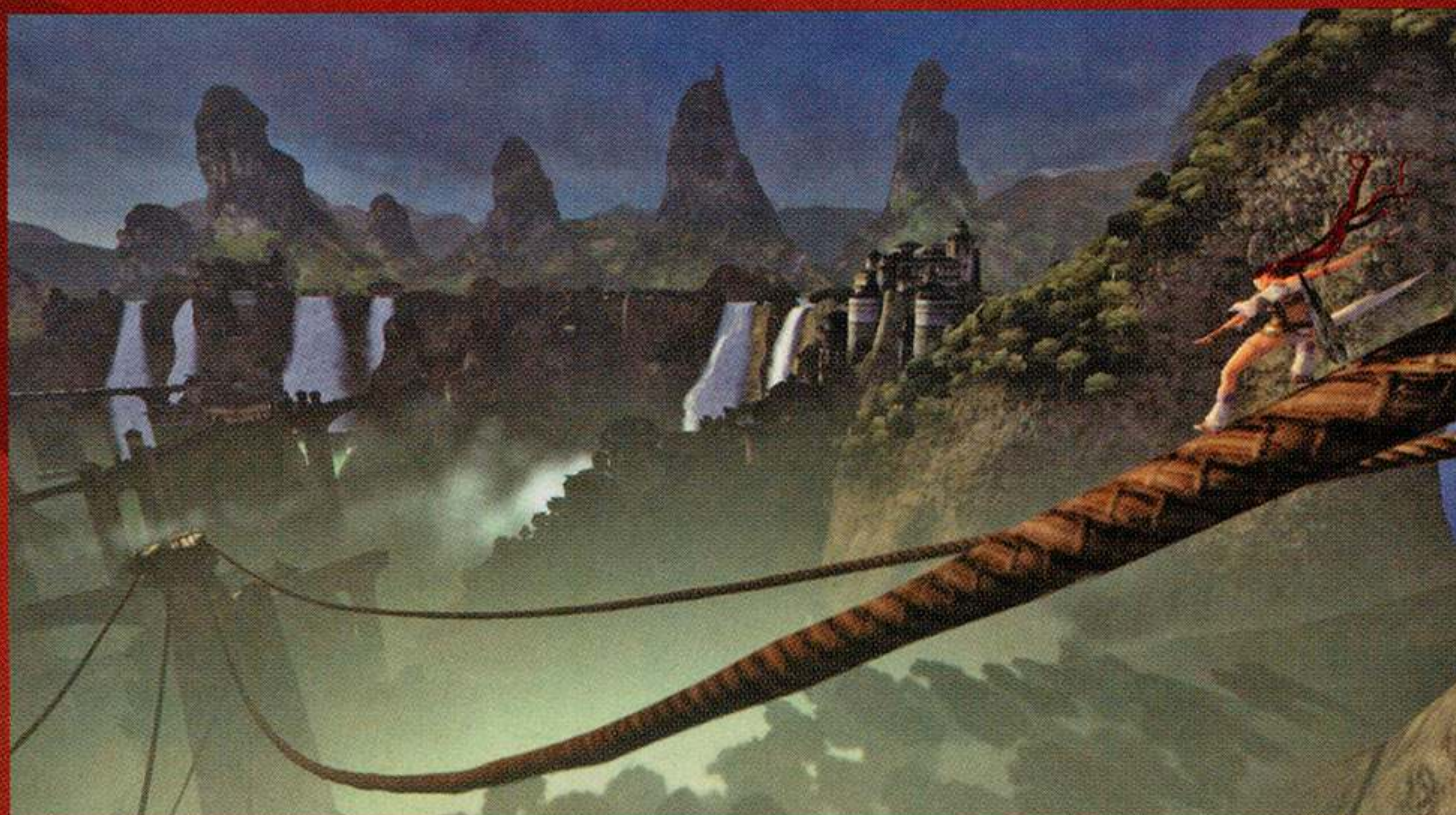
Since the sword feeds on your life, your challenge is to stay alive long enough to finish your quest. As attacking enemies temporarily replenish your health, continuous action is your lifeblood. There are no platforming or extended combat-free zones, as Heavenly Sword intends to deliver relentless battles and unceasing action. Even the cinematics take place during gameplay, with villains exchanging threats with Nariko via a slick picture-in-picture window.

The true power of the sword lies in its ability to transform instantly at the flick of a button. In your normal stance, known as the "speed style," you have two agile short swords. With taps of the attack buttons, you can unleash flurries of quick slashes. Holding down the L1 button, however, switches you to the "ranged style," where the short swords morph into chain blades similar to those in God of War. This style allows for farther reaching attacks, including huge sweeping twirls and whiplash strikes. Holding down the R1 button transforms the weapons into a single massive sword. With this "power style," you can execute deadly wounds on foes, but this style is balanced by its short range and slow wind-up.

So what's the big deal? What makes Heavenly Sword special is that you can transform the sword at any time, on the fly, in the middle of combos. With the convenient hold-and-release method for using the shoulder buttons, it's easy to jump in and invent your own eye-popping combos as you go.



Has Kratos met his match? Meet Nariko, star of PS3 heavyweight Heavenly Sword.



MISTRESS OF THE BLADE



Nariko's Heavenly Sword can change its physical form in mid-attack, allowing you to string together massive custom combos. Here are the three key battle styles you'll use to crush your foes.

SPEED STYLE

Nariko's default battle stance lets her slash nearby foes with rapid short-sword strikes. It's your best defense for close encounters.

RANGED STYLE

Much like Kratos' Blades of Athena from God of War, these chain swords let you pick off distant foes, or hook one and slam him into the ground.

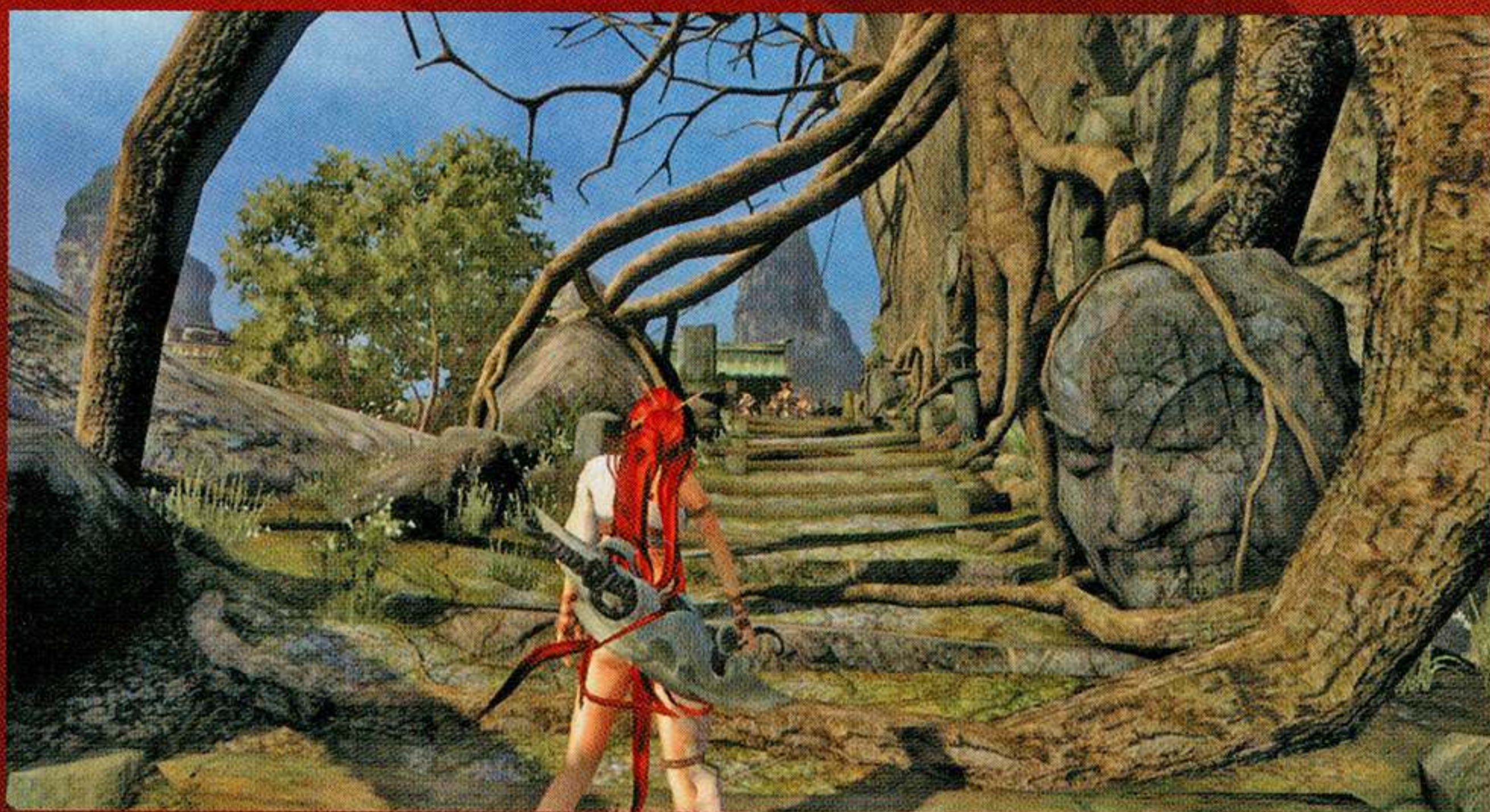
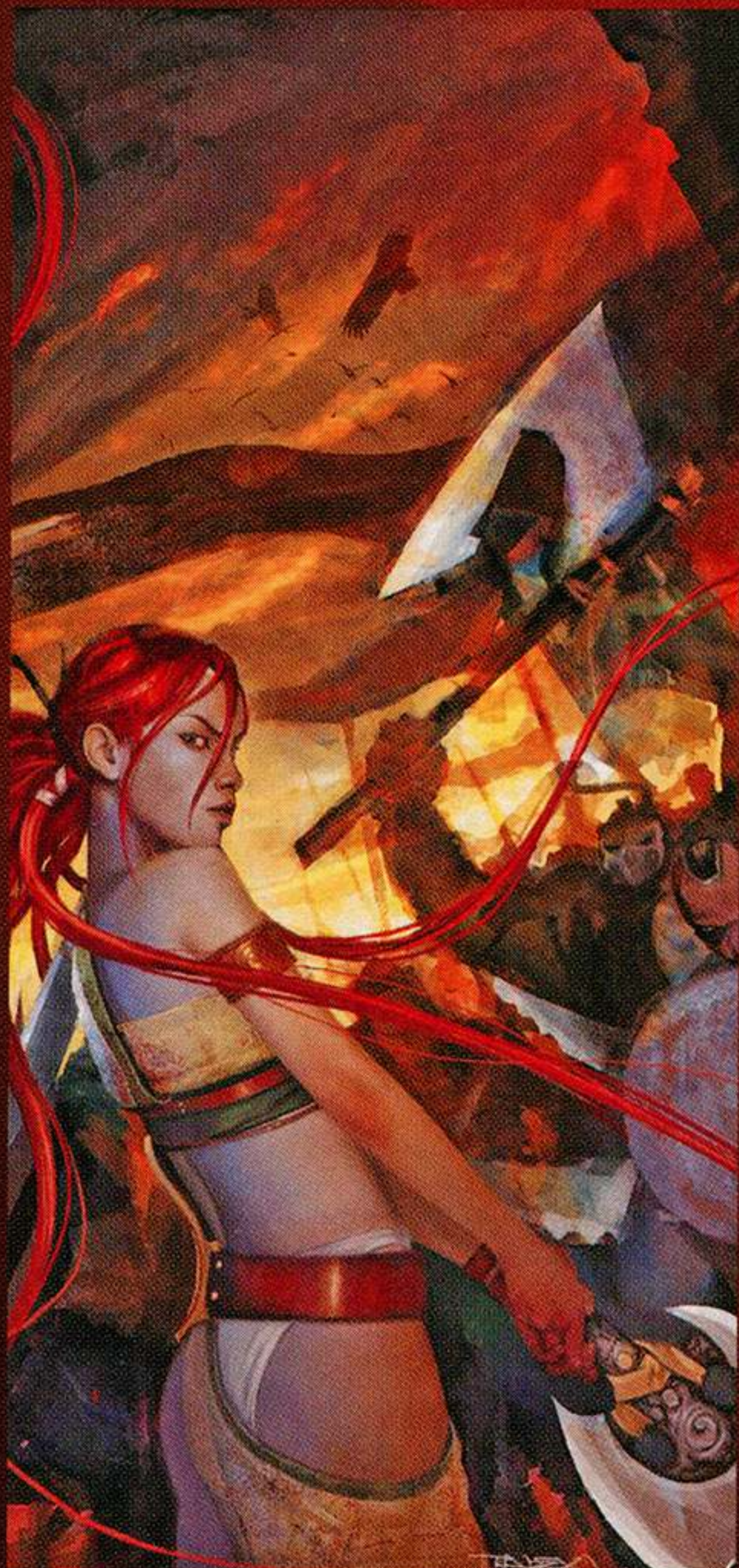
POWER STYLE

In this broad-sword form, the Heavenly Sword dishes out mammoth damage to nearby enemies. It's slow, but deadly.

CONTINUED ►



Human samurai and foot soldiers appear to be the chief threat. We haven't seen any supernatural beasts or monsters...yet.



After a few moments of testing out the basic moves, we were able to throw a few quick slashes at an enemy while in speed style, follow up by morphing our swords into the chain blades to swing the poor sap around, then finally switching to the broad sword for a finishing blow.

As you decimate legions of enemies, you build up your "super style" meter. With each successive level on the meter, your grabs and throws become increasingly spectacular. You can increase the meter faster if you perform impressive and stylish combos, so being creative and looking like a badass has a tangible reward. Of course, you can also combo into a "super style" grab for even more devastating results.

The controls as a whole feel intuitive. For example, Nariko auto-blocks incoming attacks simply by standing still. She can also execute counter

attacks if you time a strike to coincide with an opponent's, as well as dodge incoming blows with flicks of the right analog stick. The Sixaxis' motion sensing gets a workout, too, enabling you to reposition the camera by tilting the controller. You can also pick up just about any object and throw it. The camera then swoops in behind the object as it flies in slow motion (with beautiful blur effects). You can influence the projectile's trajectory with the Bullet Time-inspired "after touch" feature, adjusting the flight path by tilting the controller or moving the analog stick. Another neat touch: the camera tilts and leans to follow the flight path of the object.

HEROIC EXPLOITS

Aside from the main-course fighting, Nariko sometimes encounters "hero sequences" where



Heavenly Sword ups the ante by pumping hundreds of foes against Nariko's godly blades.



you must react to onscreen prompts to survive. We played a sequence where we sprinted along a huge rope that bridged a chasm. Enemies at the other end shook the rope and sent waves down it, eventually slashed it, and we had to leap to another rope, run down it, and fly into a group of enemies to deliver a death-from-above smash attack. There was also a sequence where Nariko mans a cannon on a rampart and fends off an advancing army. With the use of "after touch" to steer the cannon balls, siege towers erupted in lovely fountains of dust and debris.

THEY SHALL DROWN IN LAKES OF BLOOD

The visuals in Heavenly Sword are downright delicious, with dreamy twilight lighting, expansive vistas, and waterfalls that look vastly superior to the ugly tumble of particles in other games. Nariko's clothing and scarlet mane respond to gusts of wind as well as her never-ending flips and spins. What's more, Heavenly Sword is the first PS3 game to really stress the console's much-hyped Cell processor. In Heavenly Sword, Cell enables incredible numbers of enemies to be on screen at one time. The trick is that Cell treats entire regiments as a single unit of artificial intelligence when they are at a distance; as they draw closer, Cell gradually divides the army into smaller and smaller groups, so they eventually become individual troops with unique fighting styles and tactics. The Sixaxis motion sensing responded respectably, but it wasn't a central part of the action just yet, a fact that may change as the game progresses.

Disappointingly, Sony wasn't yet ready to share all of Heavenly Sword's secrets. Multiplayer remains a major question mark, with the develop-

THE SECRETS OF CELL

Heavenly Sword is one of the first PS3 games to tap into Cell's true potential. Here are some of the highlights.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

To keep up with the hundreds of on-screen enemies, Cell treats distant armies as a singular "hive mind." As they approach Nariko, Cell splits their intelligence across squads, and finally, individual troops.

GRAPHICS

Wind gusts swirl Nariko's hair and clothes, and bazooka blasts send out showers of dust and rubble. 1080p support is still a question mark, though.

PHYSICS

When firing a cannon, Nariko can influence the trajectory of the projectile using the Sixaxis. Ninja Theory claims it needs the Cell to handle these complex calculations.

ers at Ninja Theory unwilling to confirm or deny it for the final version. 1080p support is still an unknown factor. Heroine Nariko herself is also an enigma. What's her background? Where does she come from? Sony remains tight-lipped for now, but we expect to hear more details soon.

But those questions can wait for the time being. If the final version lives up to its premise and promise, Heavenly Sword will be a gift from the gods for PS3 owners worldwide. With any luck, 2007 will be the Year of the Sword.

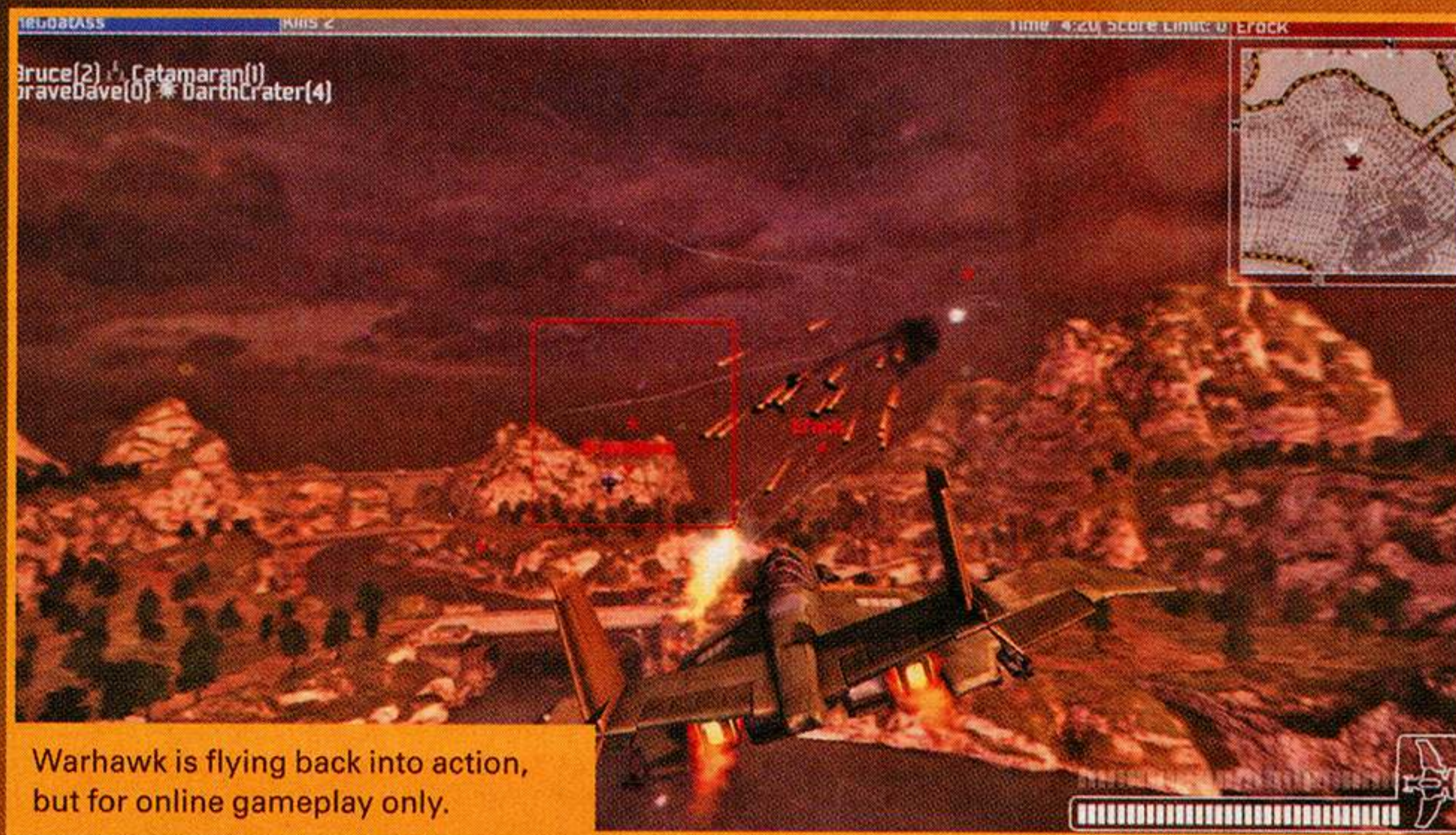
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The Sony Surge

With Heavenly Sword at the forefront, Sony is unleashing a heavy-hitting lineup of PS3 games from its top internal developers.

Warhawk

Log on, gear up, and move out!



Warhawk is flying back into action, but for online gameplay only.



You can choose your style of combat: on foot, riding shotgun, driving a tank, manning a turret, or piloting the Warhawk.



Optional Sixaxis control is really the way to fly your Warhawk.

The Warhawk franchise has been missing in action since the launch of the original PlayStation in 1995. But the development team at Incognito hasn't been sleeping on the franchise. Instead, they've been busy developing one of the most epic war games ever conceived.

Connect or Die

The story of Warhawk takes players...umm...who knows? There is no story mode. Based on early negative feedback about the game, the team at Incognito decided to entirely scrap the story mode. That's right, the game is 100 percent multiplayer, and you'll have to connect to Sony's online network in order to enjoy the full experience of the game.

Sporting up to 32 players per session, Warhawk is shooting to be more than a mere point-and-click shooter. There are two warring factions, but you'll have no idea why they are fighting. Frankly, you won't care: you'll be too busy frying tanks with flame throwers and bombing enemy bases. But unlike the first Warhawk, you'll not only pilot the Warhawk aircraft, you'll also set out on foot, ride shotgun in armored vehicles, and drive tanks.

So far Warhawk's visuals look fantastic. The preview version displays some of the most detailed environments ever seen in any online game, with some sparkling lighting and water effects. Plus, no two characters or vehicles are the same, as all have completely customizable skins.

Watch Your Six...axis

Warhawk fully embraces the Sixaxis controller. Although it's still possible to use the analog sticks to fly, the game was built for the Sixaxis from the ground up.

There's no doubt that by focusing on multiplayer and online gameplay, Sony's taking a major chance...and that may be just what the PS3 needs.—**Keep'em Gessin'**

WHY YOU WANT IT: Be among the first to dive into the PS3's online-only multiplayer action.

DEVELOPER: Incognito
RELEASE DATE: May

7 Questions for Phil Harrison

Sony's president of worldwide studios takes the time to answer our questions about software.

1) What's your assessment of the launch games for the PlayStation 3?

On one level, any game, which is a launch game, deserves all the accolades it can get because to be a developer working on the bleeding edge of a new system takes guts and determination.

2) To date, only a few games have taken advantage of the Sixaxis motion-sensing functions. Do you envision most developers using this down the road? Do you have any inside word on how future games might harness this function?

Not every game requires motion sensing functionality, but as developers gain greater insight into the design methodology, we'll see even more titles use these functions. I'm most interested in advanced interfaces that feel natural and simple to the player while retaining great depth.

3) Blu-ray seems to be blasting ahead of HD DVD at the moment, thanks in large part to the PS3. Is it possible for two HD disc formats to survive? What will happen by early 2008 if Blu-ray shows a commanding lead over HD DVD?

I can't comment on the wider implications of Blu-ray's commanding lead as a movie format, but I can repeat what we know as game designers. True next generation game development on disc requires huge storage capacity and Blu-ray is the best format for delivering that combination of low cost and high capacity.

4) Is the PS3's graphics card, a stock version of the PC Geforce 7800 GTX, or does it have additional enhancements for the PS3?

Lair

Enter the dragon rider.

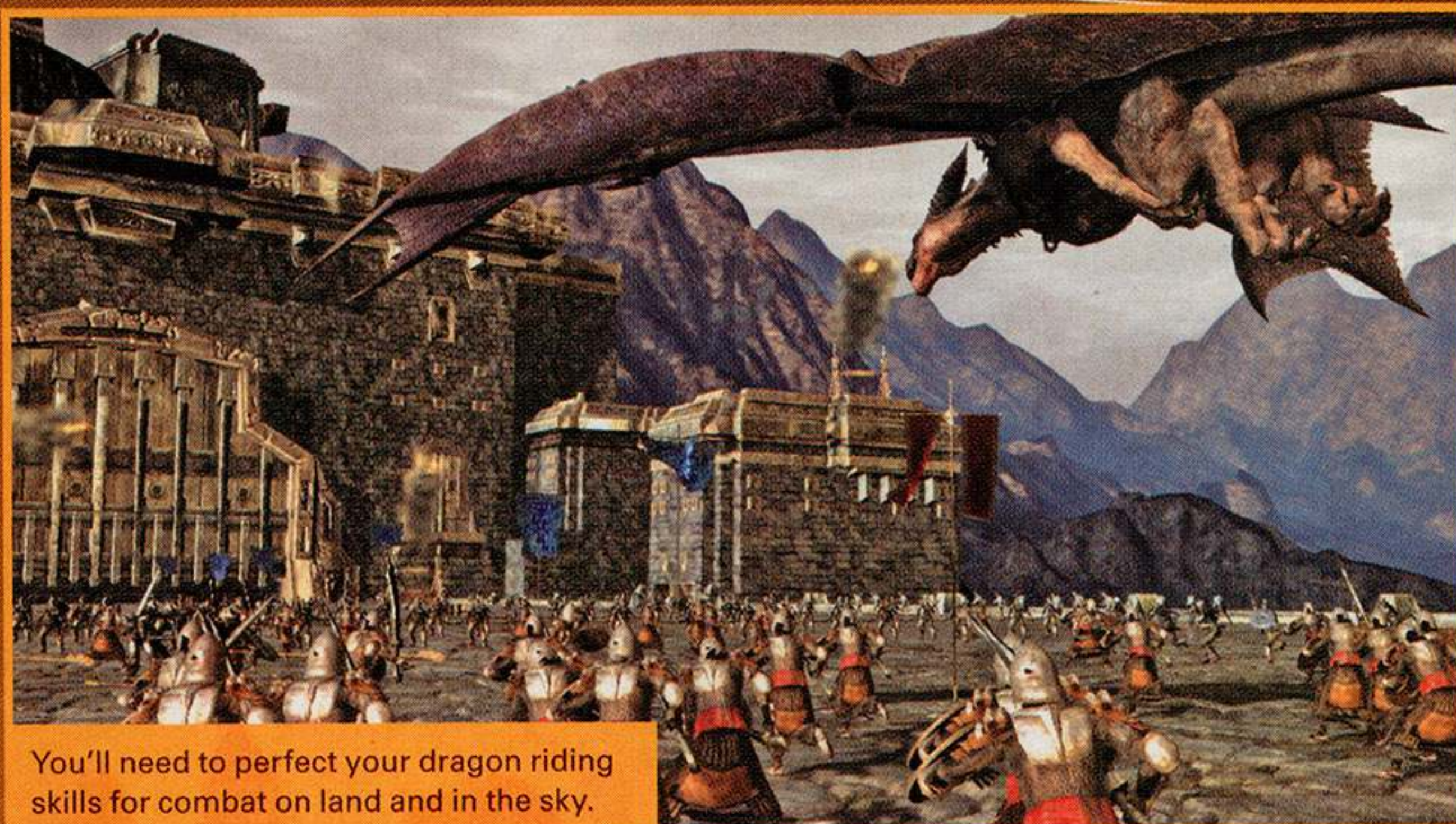
Flying a dragon with the Sixaxis controller is just the type of cutting-edge action you'd expect from a PS3 game. Having built a reputation for smooth aerial action with such games as *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron*, Factor 5 would seem like just the outfit to pull it off.

Rage against Your Machine

Lair is a flight and fight game. As a dragon rider, you'll be going head to head against airborne adversaries as well as flying close air support for armies of foot soldiers below. Your dragon will use tooth, claw, and fiery breath to wreak havoc upon your enemies. Although you can dismount from your ride, you won't have any real mobility without being in the saddle.

Lair borrows some elements of fighting games. Progress will depend on your ability to defeat individual dragons and dragon riders. Some will be larger and more powerful than you; to defeat them, you'll build up experience ("Rage") and earn potent new combos.

With enough pent-up rage you'll be able to fire up Lair's Rage mode, which changes the gameplay perspective to first-person through your dragon's eyes. The entire scene turns black-



You'll need to perfect your dragon riding skills for combat on land and in the sky.

and-white and you'll be able to distinguish friends versus foes on sight. Additionally, Rage mode will slow the action around you, giving you an edge in attack and defense.

Meals for Miles

The mid-air dogfights are the most spectacular battles in Lair, but dragons won't be limited to aerial antics. If strategy demands, you can land at

any time and aid your army by bowling over literally legions of foes with your flamethrower-like breath, claw slashes, or nasty biting attacks. In fact, eating your foes has the side effect of building up your energy.

The Sixaxis control is drawing plenty of hype, but it will be strictly optional. Essentially, you'll use it in the sky and likely opt for analog sticks for ground-based warfare.

If Sony wants to bring the heat for the PS3, Lair sounds like just the game to do it. —Undercover Lover



Lair has a simple combo-based fighting system... kind of gives a brand-new meaning to "Double Dragon," eh?



The PS3's Cell processor easily orchestrates epic battles. In 1080p, no less.

WHY YOU WANT IT: Do we really need to come up with an excuse to ride a flame-belching, maiden-eating, ass-kicking dragon?

DEVELOPER: Factor 5
RELEASE DATE: Fall 2007

It's a custom component that, although based on Nvidia's core technology, has many enhancements to optimize performance with Cell and PlayStation 3 technology.

5) Is Sony interested in multi-colored PS3s down the line, à la the PSP and PS2?
No specific plans at this time.

6) Can you explain how the Xbox 360's 1080p solution isn't "true" compared to the PS3's?

PS3 is the only system with the combination of graphics rendering power, cell processing, and

bus bandwidth to render a true 1080p full HD image. As demonstrated in games at launch, this is a future-proof feature of the PS3 as full HD displays are becoming increasingly popular.

7) Do you think Sony's getting a fair shake from the press regarding all the criticisms of the PS3, from the games to the system itself?

It doesn't concern me. One, this is not a sprint, nor a three-month race—this is a ten-year race. And I know that we have the technology and the architecture to make the PS3 last more than ten years as a software format. We have those future-proof

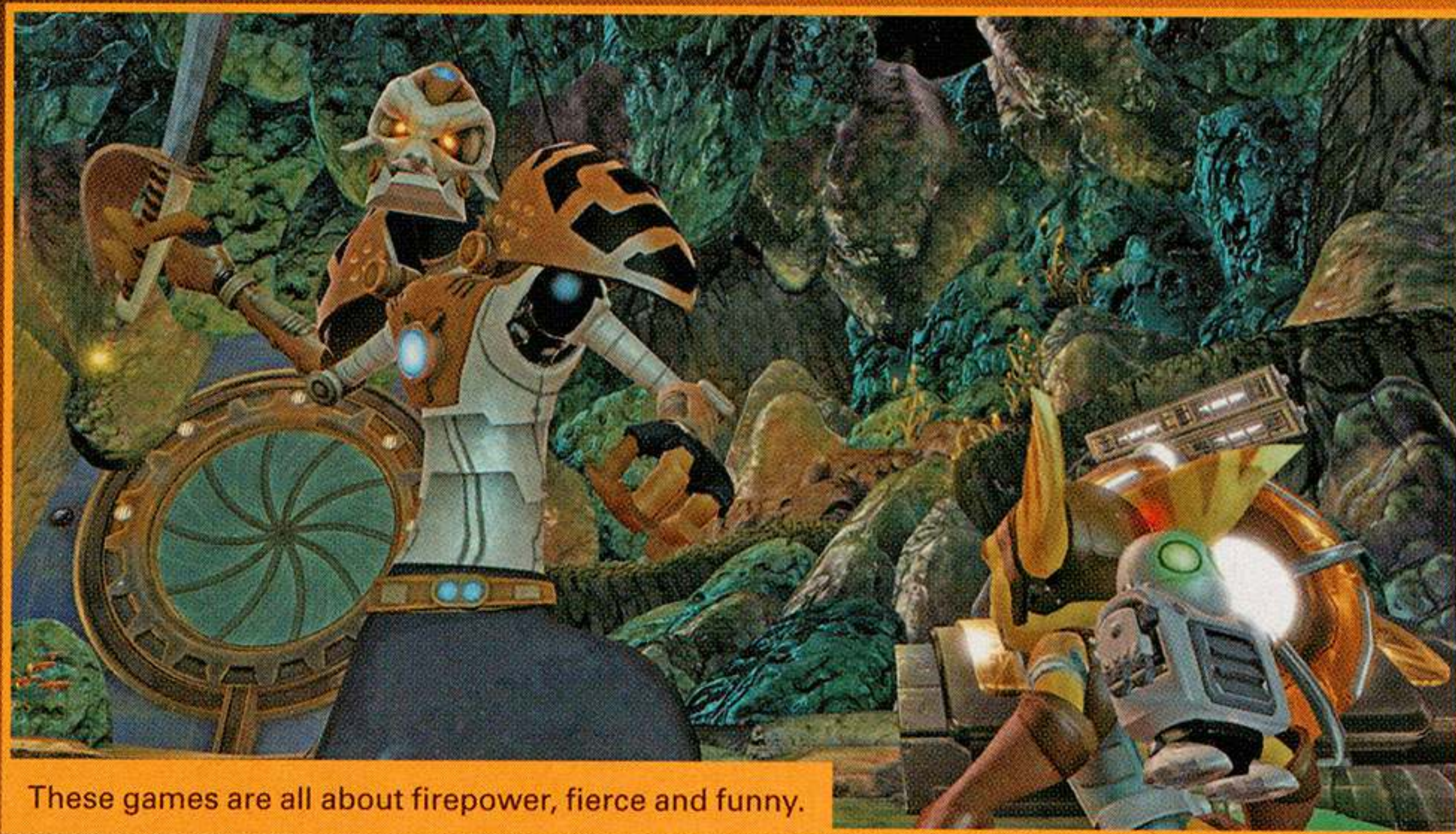
technologies that are going to allow game designers to do amazing things with the system. So I have no concerns at all about what we are going to be delivering later this year, next year, and for the next eight years.

Also, by what measure was the launch of the PS3 not a success? We sold out everywhere, we overcame the initial supply-chain manufacturing issues very quickly, we now have a good supply coming into the marketplace satisfying demand, and we've sold more systems more quickly than we did with the PS1 or PS2. What's not to love about that?

CONTINUED ►

Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction

Big nerds with big guns



These games are all about firepower, fierce and funny.

With *Resistance: Fall of Man*, it was starting to look like Insomniac Games might be taking video game combat a little too seriously. Had the company best known for its freaky-funny *Ratchet and Clank* lost its sense of humor? Not by a long shot, we're happy to report. Ratchet's back, baby, and he's bringing his wacky weaponry, goofy characters, and off-the-wall humor.

The story has the boys vacationing back at Metropolis, the site of their very first adventure. Unfortunately, the Cragmite Imperial Army launches a genocidal war to wipe out every last Lombax. So with the evil Emperor Percival Tachyon on his tail, Ratchet's determined to uncover the Lombax Secret and discover the fate of his race.

Tools and Fools

Title aside, *Tools of Destruction* will not follow the shooter-centric style of the PS2's *Ratchet and Clank: Deadlocked*. Instead, it will return to the action-adventure and platform antics with which the series made its bones. Additionally, Clank will see more action with his own story arc that will reveal a new power.

The guys will be helped and hindered by the usual assortment of kooky characters. Among the returning repertory are Captain Qwark, as a possible Cragmite double agent, and the Plumber, existential rap, butt crack, and all. And since Ratchet

and Clank wouldn't be complete without space pirates, Captain Flagg and his merry band of cutthroats have joined the swelling cast.

It's Outer Spacey

The PS3's processing chops enable some serious visual horsepower, and, naturally, the wacky weapons the series is famous for. One new weapon, the Tornado Launcher, caught our attention because it unleashes mini tornados that you control with the Sixaxis motion sensors. The Groovitron, meanwhile, rolls out a disco ball that forces victims to dance to some tacky '80s tunes. The PS3's Cell CPU will also put a higher number of smarter enemies onto the screen, and they'll fight back with defenses such as shields, force fields, and plasma shells.

When Ratchet and Clank show up, you know the party's about to begin. Luckily, *Tools of Destruction* won't be the end of the line for the classic series, as Insomniac is already promising to continue the tale in future games. —**Brother Buzz**

WHY YOU WANT IT: There is no love like Lombax love.

DEVELOPER: Insomniac Games
RELEASE DATE: Fall 2007



Lush landscapes on strange new worlds like you've never ever seen for a Ratchet and Clank game.



Ratchet and Clank are not going to miss a beat as they seek out the lost Lombax race.

Missing in Action



Sony's just not ready to talk about some PS3 games. Here are three heavy hitters that remain rumor mill mainstays.

Killzone 2

After a secretive Game Developers Conference trailer blew away the audience, it seems the Netherlands-based developer has been working overtime to make *Killzone 2* the PS3's killer app. Squad-based, futuristic combat seems to be a certainty, but the trailer also showed massive-scale battles, tank and vehicle warfare, and a grungy, shattered cityscape. We also caught a glimpse of a new enemy, in the form of hovering, tentacle-lashing robots (not unlike the Squids from *The Matrix*). The graphics didn't necessarily live up to the much-hyped E3 2005 rendered trailer, but still look awfully slick, with plenty of high-res textures, rampant gunfire effects, and some spooky mood lighting.

WHY YOU WANT IT: Four-man squad gameplay could deliver this time.

DEVELOPER: Guerilla Games

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs 4

The PS2 series was getting a little weary in single player, but enjoys surprisingly lively online action. Things perked up when *Combined Assault* demonstrated how a PSP hook up could be cool. Hopefully there will be even more connectivity in *SOCOM*'s future.

WHY YOU WANT IT: With the emphasis on online gameplay for PS3, this franchise has to be a winner.

DEVELOPER: Zipper Interactive

Gran Turismo

At least Polyphony gave PS3 gamers a taste with its downloadable *Gran Turismo HD* demo. Both cars and environments look as gorgeous as usual in this tidbit. Polyphony loves to make you wait for its game, but the wait's usually worth it.

WHY YOU WANT IT: Even if the PS3 version delivers just more of the same, that's pretty damn good.

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital

CONTINUED ►



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SingStar

The PS3: Dancin' machine?

SingStar PS3 will take its two-person karaoke concept to another level this year—namely, online. In fact, there's not too much changing about the game except that connecting to Sony Online could change everything. Just like the PS2 version, there will be two-mic support, and the disc will come loaded with licensed music (SingStar PS2 had 30 songs), but once you connect, you'll have access to the humongous Sony Music catalogue. They're not ready to say what music will be available just yet but bet it will be substantial, and you'll be able to purchase songs and videos. In fact, you can use an existing EyeToy to make your own music video and upload that to Sony Online for competitions or just for fun. New PS3 EyeToy devices and support are another thing Sony is not ready to divulge. SingStar could be one of those games that drives people to Sony Online.

WHY YOU WANT IT: Everyone believes they can sing better than anyone else...and now you can find out!

DEVELOPER: Sony
RELEASE DATE: Fall 2007



With two-person karaoke competition, downloadable Sony music, and make-your-own-music-video features, SingStar could be the ultimate PS3 party game.



You'll record your performances with the EyeToy peripheral, and upload them for your friends to critique.



Sony's keeping SingStar's full online shopping capabilities a mystery, but they will go a long ways towards selling this game.

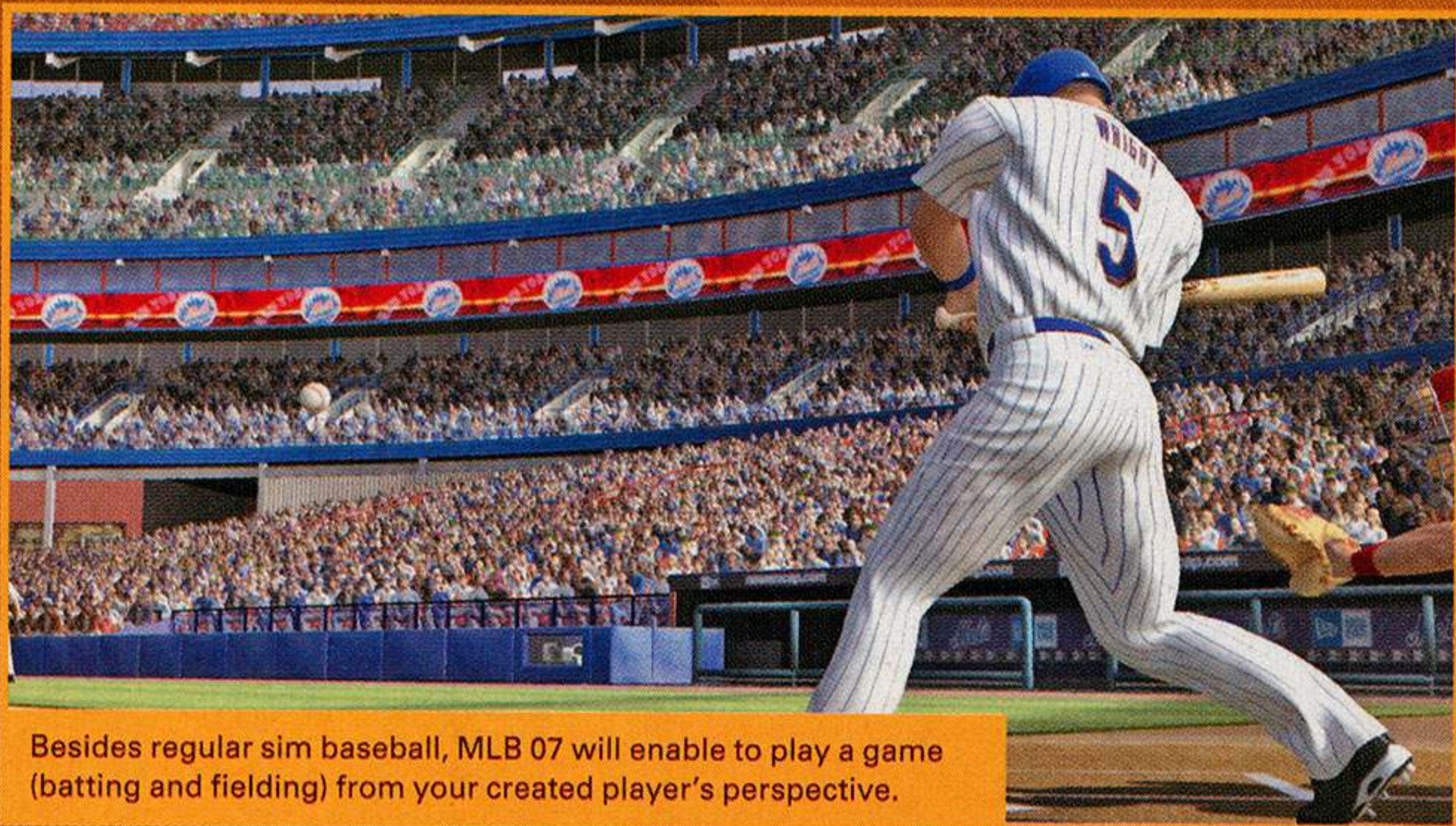
MLB 07 The Show

The Show must go on.

MLB 07 The Show is the best of Sony's home-grown PS2 sports franchises and a competitive rival to Major League Baseball 2K7. In its inaugural PS3 season, it sounds like MLB 07's packing enough heat to remain at the top of the league, too. Baseball game fans should like the intricate pitching system that will take into account your performance throughout a season. The Pitch Command System will analyze your best pitches and continually improve your ability to deliver them. You can also decide to develop a weaker pitcher to add to your arsenal, but you're going to give up a few more hits in the process. Adaptive Pitching Intelligence enables your A.I. catcher to call for your best pitches against a given batter's weaknesses or strengths. Shake him off if you want to, but plan to take a serious look at the Show.

WHY YOU WANT IT: If you're planning to be a new-gen baseball fan, MLB 07 should be topnotch and it's Sony's best sports game.

DEVELOPER: Sony Studios San Diego
RELEASE DATE: Fall 2007



Besides regular sim baseball, MLB 07 will enable to play a game (batting and fielding) from your created player's perspective.



Fielders will make picture perfect plays with the PS3 version.



MLB 07's pitching is getting some serious PS3 love, but fielding and hitting should remain at a high level, too.

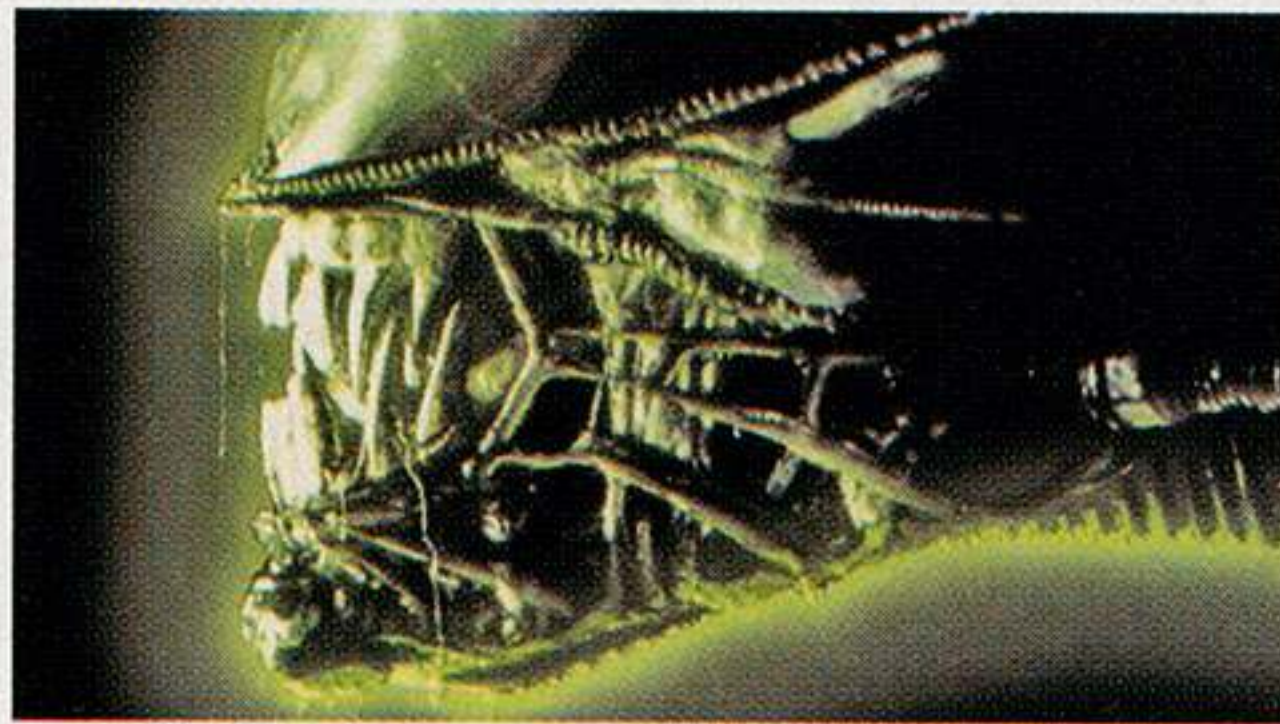
PS3

Here are 81 games-in-the-making for the PS3 that are building a tsunami of new-generation gaming.

SHOOTERS

ALIENS (WORKING TITLE)

- Publisher: Sega
- Developer: Gearbox Software
- Release Date: 2009



Though it has not been officially announced as a PS3 title, only a "next-gen" title, the smart money says that this horror shooter will end up on the PS3 at some point or another. Based on the cult *Alien* movies, players will play Colonial Marines armed with high-tech pulse rifles, smart guns, and flamethrowers to fend off those vicious face-hugging parasites and horrific space carnivores. We're so there.

ARMY OF TWO

- Publisher: EA Games
- Developer: EA Montreal
- Release Date: 2007

BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Developer: Gearbox Software
- Release Date: Summer 2007

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

- Publisher and Developer: Codemasters
- Release Date: Winter 2007

CODED ARMS ASSAULT

- Publisher and Developer: Konami
- Release Date: Fall 2007

THE DARKNESS

- Publisher: 2K Games
- Developer: Starbreeze
- Release Date: Summer 2007



Based on the comic book of the same name, the game follows the story of a Mafia hit man who is possessed by a supernatural entity known as The Darkness on his twenty-first birthday. Explore an interactive, destructible New York underworld, exact vengeance on the Mafia, and confront the parallel reality known as the Otherworld from which the Darkness comes.

FIFTH PHANTOM SAGA

- Publisher: Sega
- Developer: Sonic Team
- Release Date: 2007

FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

- Publisher and Developer: THQ
- Release Date: Fall 2007

HALF-LIFE 2

- Publisher: EA Games
- Developer: Valve
- Release Date: June

Coded Arms Assault

owers Up

HAZE

- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Developer: Free Radical
- Release Date: Fall 2007

INTERSTELLAR MARINES

- Publisher and Developer: Zero Point Software
- Release Date: 2007

KILLZONE 2

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Guerilla Games
- Release Date: 2007

MEDAL OF HONOR: AIRBORNE

- Publisher: EA Games
- Developer: EA LA
- Release Date: Fall 2007

MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

- Publisher: EA Games
- Developer: Pandemic Studios
- Release Date: Fall 2007

METRO 2033: THE LAST REFUGE

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: 4A Games
- Release Date: 2007

PROJECT OFFSET

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: Offset
- Release Date: 2007

ROGUE WARRIOR

- Publisher: Bethesda Softworks
- Developer: Zombie Studios
- Release Date: Winter 2007

SOCOM 4 (WORKING TITLE)

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Zipper Interactive
- Release Date: 2007

STRANGLEHOLD

- Publisher and Developer: Midway
- Release Date: Summer 2007

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Developer: Red Storm/Ubisoft Paris
- Release Date: June

TURNING POINT: FALL OF LIBERTY (WORKING TITLE)

- Publisher: Codemasters
- Developer: Spark Unlimited
- Release Date: Winter 2007

TUROK

- Publisher: Buena Vista Interactive
- Developer: Propaganda Games
- Release Date: April



The game looks to redefine the long-ailing franchise as a story-driven FPS. Set in the near future, this original tale follows Joseph Turok as he hunts down his former mentor, Roland Kane. The action takes place on a bioengineering planet populated by mutant dinosaurs, including velociraptors and tyrannosaurs.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

- Publisher: Midway
- Developer: Epic
- Release Date: Summer 2007



The creators of Gears of War are bringing the series that made them famous to the PS3. It's too early to say what advantages Unreal Tournament 3 (formerly UT 2007) might have on the PS3 compared to its Xbox 360 and PC counterparts, but judging by early screen shots, the game has "must have" written all over it. Online warriors should definitely take note.

THE WALL

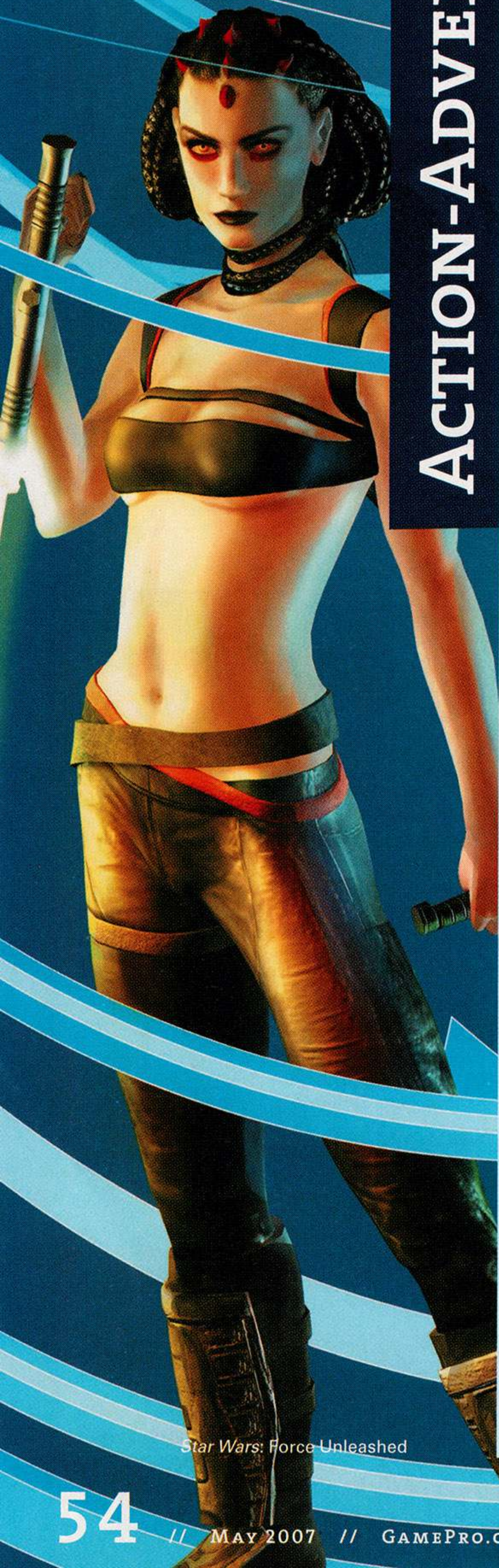
- Publisher: Play Ten Interactive
- Developer: World Forge
- Release Date: Spring 2008

WARHAWK

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Incognito
- Release Date: Summer 2007

CONTINUED ►

ACTION-ADVENTURE



Star Wars: Force Unleashed

ALONE IN THE DARK

- Publisher: Atari
- Developer: Eden Studios
- Release Date: Summer 2007

ASSASSIN'S CREED

- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
- Release Date: Winter 2007

BLADESTORM: THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

- Publisher: Koei
- Developer: Omega Force
- Release Date: Fall 2007

CIPHER COMPLEX

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: Edge of Reality
- Release Date: 2008

THE CLUB

- Publisher: Sega
- Developer: Bizarre Creations
- Release Date: 2007

DARK SECTOR

- Publisher: D3 Publisher
- Developer: Digital Extremes
- Release Date: Fall 2007



D3 Publisher's big push into triple-A action comes in the form of Dark Sector, a gory horror game with snazzy special effects. As a hit man afflicted with a mysterious parasitic infection, players will use guns, blade discs, and elemental powers to combat government-sponsored butchers.

DATA-FLY

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: ORiGO
- Release Date: TBA

DEVIL MAY CRY 4

- Publisher: Capcom
- Developer: Capcom Production Studio 1
- Release Date: 2008

DIRTY HARRY

- Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
- Developer: The Collective
- Release Date: 2007

EIGHT DAYS

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Sony Studios London
- Release Date: 2007

THE GETAWAY (WORKING TITLE)

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Sony Studios Soho/Sony Studios London
- Release Date: 2007

GOLDEN AXE

- Publisher: Sega
- Developer: Secret Level
- Release Date: Winter 2007

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

- Publisher: Rockstar Games
- Developer: Rockstar North
- Release Date: October

grand theft auto IV™

Virtually nothing is known about this new-gen incarnation of the time-tested Grand Theft Auto series. One intriguing tidbit of info is that it will harness the same high-end graphics and physics found in Rockstar's Xbox 360 sleeper hit Table Tennis. But if you're wondering about the story line, the downloadable missions, or any multiplayer possibilities, you'll have to keep on waiting.

HEAVENLY SWORD

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Ninja Theory
- Release Date: Fall 2007

HEAVY RAIN

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: Quantic Dream
- Release Date: Fall 2008

HELLBOY

- Publisher: Konami
- Developer: Krome Studios
- Release Date: 2007

INDIANA JONES 2007 (WORKING TITLE)

- Publisher and Developer: LucasArts
- Release Date: Winter 2007

L.A. NOIRE

- Publisher: Rockstar Games
- Developer: Team Bondi
- Release Date: 2007

LAIR

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Factor 5
- Release Date: May

METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

- Publisher: Konami
- Developer: Kojima Productions
- Release Date: Winter 2007

MONSTER MADNESS

- Publisher: SouthPeak Interactive
- Developer: Artificial Studios/Immersion Software & Graphics
- Release Date: Summer 2007

CONTINUED ►



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MAY 2007 HOT PICKS



HOT GAME! GOD OF WAR II PS2



Sony demonstrates that there's still a hell of a good time left on the PS2 with a follow-up to its blockbuster hit, God of War. Kratos returns as the new God of War and must face a barrage of Greek mythological beasts and monsters in a battle that stretches to the far-reaches of the Earth. It's not just hacking action, as you must call upon your wits to unravel mind-bending puzzles along the way. Intense action and cinematic visuals make this the top gaming pick of the month. God of War II is rated M for graphic violence and mature subject matter.

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ACTION-ADVENTURE
CONTINUED

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

- Publisher: Tecmo
- Developer: Team Ninja
- Release Date: Fall 2007

THE OUTSIDER

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: Frontier Developments
- Release Date: TBA

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 3

- Publisher: Buena Vista Interactive
- Developer: Eurocom
- Release Date: 2007

RATCHET & CLANK

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Insomniac Games
- Release Date: Fall 2007

RESIDENT EVIL 5

- Publisher and Developer: Capcom
- Release Date: 2008



This eagerly awaited sequel is still shrouded in mystery. What is known is that the zombies will have a more human-like ability, such as running at faster speeds and hunting with more ruthless

intelligence. Also, part of the gameplay reportedly revolves around your body temperature, which you'll have to regulate in order to avoid detection. No surprise then, that fast-paced escapes will be possible, too.

SAM SUEDE: UNDERCOVER EXPOSURE

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: iBase Entertainment
- Release Date: 2007

SPIDER-MAN 3

- Publisher: Activision
- Developer: Treyarch
- Release Date: May

STAR WARS: FORCE UNLEASHED

- Publisher and Developer: LucasArts
- Release Date: November

STUNTMAN 2

- Publisher: THQ
- Developer: Paradigm Entertainment
- Release Date: 2007

TEKKEN 6

- Publisher and Developer: Namco
- Release Date: 2008

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Naughty Dog
- Release Date: 2007

WARDEVIL

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: Digi-Guys
- Release Date: 2007

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

ALIEN RPG (WORKING TITLE)

- Publisher: Sega
- Developer: Obsidian
- Release Date: 2009



The second of two games to be based on the *Alien* films. For this interesting twist on the classic sci-fi series, Sega has recruited Obsidian (of *Neverwinter Nights 2* and *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic 2* fame) to handle the transformation. The *Alien* horror series has been long overdue for a role-playing spin, and with Obsidian holding the reigns, we're expecting big things.

ENCHANTED ARMS

- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Developer: From Software
- Release Date: March

FINAL FANTASY VERSUS XIII

- Publisher and Developer: Square Enix
- Release Date: 2008

FINAL FANTASY XIII

- Publisher and Developer: Square Enix
- Release Date: 2008



Surprise, this is the next installment of the famous Final Fantasy series of RPGs. It's to be differentiated from "Versus" XIII, which is more of an action RPG like *Kingdom Hearts*. FFXIII will showcase a new game engine from Square Enix that's designed specifically to use the PS3's multi-core cell processor. In the story an exile from the floating kingdom of Cocoon, who has been banished to the lower world, finds herself caught up in a plot to take the sky domain down.

MONSTER KINGDOM: UNKNOWN REALMS

- Publisher and Developer: Square Enix
- Release Date: 2008

WHITE KNIGHT STORY

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Level-5
- Release Date: TBA

Enchanted Arms

CONTINUED ►

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SPORTS

BURNOUT 5

- Publisher: EA Games
- Developer: Criterion Games
- Release Date: May

DIRT: COLIN McRAE OFF-ROAD

- Publisher and Developer: Codemasters
- Release Date: 2007

FATAL INERTIA

- Publisher: Koei
- Developer: Koei Canada
- Release Date: Summer 2007

GRAN TURISMO 5

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Polyphony Digital
- Release Date: 2008



As long as there is a PlayStation console there will be a Gran Turismo. It already looks like developer Polyphony Digital is applying the exacting attention to detail and real-life automobile handling that have made the GT series famous and always toss release dates out the window. The downloadable PS3 demo, Gran Turismo HD, at least revealed new and more realistic drift physics that will respond to equipment tuning including tire grip. Of course, the cars themselves show off exquisite detail and styling that are only going to get better. The question is: How will long it take Polyphony to make its baby go?

HOT SHOTS GOLF 5

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Clap Hanz
- Release Date: 2007

MADDEN NFL 08

- Publisher: EA Sports
- Developer: EA Tiburon
- Release Date: Fall 2007

NASCAR 08

- Publisher: EA Sports
- Developer: EA Tiburon
- Release Date: Fall 2007

NCAA 08 COLLEGE FOOTBALL

- Publisher: EA Sports
- Developer: EA Tiburon
- Release Date: Fall 2007

NFL STREET (WORKING TITLE)

- Publisher: EA Big
- Developer: EA Tiburon
- Release Date: Fall 2007

MLB '07: THE SHOW

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Sony Studios San Diego
- Release Date: April

SEGA GOLF CLUB

- Publisher and Developer: Sega
- Release Date: TBA

SEGA RALLY REVO

- Publisher: Sega
- Developer: Sega Driving Studio
- Release Date: Fall 2007

SKATE

- Publisher: EA Games
- Developer: EA Black Box
- Release Date: 2007



Skate sounds like a trick-based skateboarding skills fest—it even has its own crew of skateboard pros who can be considered tops in a class of skaters who aren't named Tony Hawk. The game will reportedly use a dual analog joystick-only control scheme with physics-driven animation (meaning whether or not a trick appears the same way twice is up to your skill at replicating stick moves millimeter for millimeter).

CASUAL/ PUZZLE/ETC

THE EYE OF JUDGMENT: CONQUERORS OF 9 FIELDS

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Sony Studios Japan
- Release Date: June

EYEDENTIFY

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Sony Europe
- Release Date: 2007

POSSESSION

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: Volatile Games/Blitz Games
- Release Date: 2007

SINGSTAR

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Sony Studios London
- Release Date: Fall 2007



Here's a game that will appeal to the hidden singer in all of us who don't want to do kamikaze shots at the local karaoke bar. The game already exists for the PS2, but the PS3 version will push online connectivity up a level to enable you to download music from Sony's catalog as well as music videos with which you can perform. The game emphasizes duet singing, and Sony is working on Bluetooth wireless microphones. Additionally, you'll be able to record performance videos and upload them to Sony's website to compete for prizes.

Skate



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ARMY STRONG.™

5 Murderously Difficult Battles in God of War II

Bring down some of the most brutally tough enemies with our GamerHelp guide. *By Long-Haired Offender*

God of War II certainly has its share of challenging moments, from the gigantic enemies that you must topple to the frustrating puzzles that you have to solve. To save you the mental anguish of dying over and over again, we've provided strategies for getting past five murderously difficult battles in the game.

The Colossus of Rhodes

STEP I



The hulking Colossus will try to pancake Kratos with his massive hand, so **press Left or Right** with the Right Analog stick to roll out of the way just before this happens. Unleash either the Wrath of Poseidon on his hand or an onslaught of attacks with Athena's Blades. When your huge nemesis appears fatigued and hangs his head down, fire the boulder loaded into the ballista at his head. Next load Kratos into the weapon and launch him into the giant's face. **Press** \square a total of four times as the icon flashes across the screen and Kratos will carve up the Colossus of Rhodes, and even impale one of his glowing blue eyes.

STEP II



The Colossus will eventually attempt to stomp you with his enormous sandal. When this happens,

press \circ repeatedly to hurl him off of you. At this point in the battle, your towering enemy means business, and when he raises both of his fists in rage you better roll out of the way. He'll smash his fists into the ground, so counter with one of Kratos' combo attacks (**press and hold R1** and then **press** Δ , \circ , or \square). The Colossus collapses twice during this phase of the fight, and he does so on opposite sides of the arena. As soon as he does, you will need to enter a series of buttons in the order they appear on the screen. When the giant collapses on the left side of the screen, you'll be prompted to **press** \circ , \circ , \square , \square , and when he collapses on the right side of the screen, **press** Δ , Δ , \times , \times . Even after the thrashing you handed to him, he still has the strength to choke you in between his fingers. Alternate between **pressing L1 and R1** rapidly to prevent the behemoth statue from squeezing the life out of you.

STEP III



Cross the stone bridge fast because the Colossus will demolish it when he spots Kratos running across it. Pick up the giant's severed hand with Athena's Blades and then pitch it back into him. This impact from this will cause the giant to be temporarily stunned and you need to take advantage of the situation by draining your godly powers into Zeus' Sword of Olympus. He will cause fractures to form in the ground and you need to stand still in the middle of them. Strike the enemy after he

brings both of his arms down on the arena, causing a shockwave that you need to jump over. After bleeding your powers into the Sword of Olympus three times, Kratos will tear the sword out of the ground and you can then use it on the Colossus' arm as he takes a breather. Watch out as the Colossus will retaliate with the fire that sprays out of one of his severed wrists. After dealing a final blow to the Colossus, you will enter the enemy (in a non-sexual way).

STEP IV



While scaling the innards of the Colossus, ram your new present from Zeus into the core of the giant after shattering the chains that protect his wooden spine. You must also stick it into him in a different spot which is located higher up inside the body of the live statue. As you travel your way up his guts, hack up the warriors that have somehow trapped themselves inside the Colossus and keep ascending until you find yourself directly behind the face of the giant. A lever can be pulled to drop a pendulum down. Whack the pendulum with your sword to get it to swing, and then pull the lever once again to raise it. The pendulum will block the hazardous shafts of light that illuminate the Colossus' eyes. Stab your sword into the center of the giant one last time and he will begin to cave in. Hurry up and escape out of his mouth before the Colossus of Rhodes erupts into a ball of fire and debris.

Theseis

STEP I



Theseis' double-edged weapon has a huge reach on it and the key to staying alive long enough to kill this Grecian warrior is to keep a good two yards in between you and your beefy adversary. The chains that Athena's Blades are attached to are long enough for you to tag Theseis from this distance. Connect a couple of hits with your Blades and then roll away from him to avoid his powerful counterattacks. When Theseis grabs hold of you with his weapon, a green arrow will flash on the screen and you will need to move the left analog stick in the direction indicated. If you do this successfully, you will overpower Theseis, lifting him up off the ground and slamming his body onto the floor. Blue sparks will start pouring out of both ends of his staff-like weapon, so be extra careful not to get clocked by Theseis as you will take more damage from his weapon. Once you've dealt a significant amount of damage to Theseis, he will flee to the top of the roof like a coward.

STEP II



If you're not used to multitasking, get used to it because you're going to have to be doing a number of things at once during this phase of the fight to the death with Theseis. Roll away from the bursts of energy that he fires at you and keep moving around the arena even after he has ceased this particular attack. Take out your Typhon's Bane and blast him with as many shots as you can before the Minotaurs join the battle. Work on only one of the mythological beasts at a time, while keeping an eye on Theseis and the bolts of energy

he showers you with. This is an ideal time to activate your Rage of the Titans power and wreak havoc on the bodies of the Minotaurs. When a circle appears over one of the monsters' heads, tackle them and **press** \circ repeatedly to jam your weapon into its throat. After slaying two Minotaurs, there will be a break before you fight two more. This is the time to pelt Theseis with your Typhon's Bane.

STEP III



Huge blocks of ice will rise from the floor, but you have a moment to move out of the way because the ground will light up where the frozen shards are about to erupt. You can also use these to your advantage by luring the Minotaurs over the spots in the arena where the ice is about to sprout out. As you are battling the monstrous creatures and avoiding Theseis' bolts of energy, don't forget about weakening him with your Typhon's Bane. When you've wounded him enough with your weapon, he will lose his balance, and hang from the roof he was just standing on. A circle will appear over his head and you can **press** \circ to initiate the final stage of his punishment. Hook onto the enemy with your Blades and rotate the Left Analog stick to yank him off the roof. After the warrior falls to the ground, Kratos will gore Theseis' own weapon straight through his torso.



As gallons of blood spill out of your dying enemy, you have to finish him off by **pressing** \circ repeatedly to crush his head by slamming the door on it over and over again.

QUICK TIPS

WORTHLESS MEAT Mallet



Unfortunately, one of the coolest weapons in God of War II, the Barbarian's Hammer, is also one of the most impractical. Most combat situations Kratos is faced with are fights with multiple or fast-moving enemies, and the Hammer is really only good at taking out slow moving enemies or a single enemy. Resist the urge to use this weapon if you are surrounded by enemies.

THE TYPHON'S BANE



If you're about to die and your magic isn't completely depleted, whipping out your Typhon's Bane can get you out of a dangerous situation. This powerful bow and arrow automatically locks onto enemies and you can blast them from a relatively great distance.

BONUS TREASURE



When Kratos slays a Cyclops, he will cut out its eye. Collect 20 of these jumbo eyes and you will unlock a bonus treasure.

CONTINUED ►

Barbarian in the Bog of the Forgotten

STEP I



It turns out that the rotting barbarian riding on the scary-looking horse is someone that Kratos beheaded in the past, and now he wants Kratos' head on a platter. As he drags you across the swamp, press the sequence of buttons that flash across the screen. After you enter the four buttons that appear, the barbarian of The Bog of the Forgotten will pull you to the arena where he wishes to fight you.

STEP II



The barbarian will start firing his arrows at you as he circles the arena on his demonic horse. Roll out of the trajectory of the arrow and keep the husky enemy chasing you. He will also lunge at you while on his horse every so often. Get behind the barbarian and his horse and unleash a chain of attacks on their backsides. Your Typhon's Bane is also particularly useful during this battle as you'll be able to hit the barbarian from afar. When a circle icon appears over his head, get over to him and **press** to knock him off of his horse. Kratos will then slaughter the horse by knifing his Blades into its throat.



The souls that buzz around your shaggy opponent like flies to a corpse will eventually be summoned by the barbarian to spear down on your body. They are extremely difficult to dodge completely as they do this, but try anyway as they will shave down your health if you just stand still.

STEP III



After a while, the barbarian will summon four ghosts of the dead to aid him in this fight. If one of them starts to bear hug you, **rattle the Left Analog stick Left and Right** to break free of his hold. The ghosts are easiest killed by **pressing** . If you do this, Kratos will lop off both of a ghost's legs and finish him off by decapitating him. The barbarian will summon another four for you to battle after you've eliminated the first round of ghosts. As you're picking them off, make sure you don't forget about the big guy because he will come down on you with that gigantic meat mallet he carries around. When you finish off the second round of the ghosts, you'll have to fight the souls of two more enemies. One will actually recognize Kratos, but he is just as easy to destroy as the others. The barbarian will suck all of the lingering souls up and grow three times larger as a result. This is an ideal time to activate The Rage of the Titans and whip him as mercilessly as you can while still in this mode. Remember that when he starts swinging around his hammer, there are three opportunities for you to get clobbered. Only leap in and start hacking away at him once he has completely finished swinging.

STEP IV



In addition to trying to bat the life out of you with his giant hammer and firing souls at you, the barbarian will use a new attack and that is smacking the ground with his weapon which creates a wave of deadly energy. When he has taken enough hits, a circle icon will appear over his head. **Press** when the icon appears, and then **press** repeatedly to pry the hammer from his hand. Press the series of buttons that flash across the screen as they appear and you will bludgeon the mighty barbarian for the last time. You will also acquire the Barbarian's Hammer as a result of your victory. Several enemies will emerge from the swamp and they are perfect targets for you to try out your new toy on.

QUICK TIPS

ALWAYS LEVEL UP YOUR WEAPONS



Kratos accumulates red orbs, which can be used to level up his various weapons, by killing enemies and opening up red orb chests. Even though leveling up your secondary weapons, such as the Spear of Destiny, is important, your Athena's Blades are what you should be pouring most of your red orbs into. Remember that a batch of new moves will be unlocked every time you level up any one of your weapons.

CHRONOS' RAGE



If you're surrounded by a horde of enemies and running low on health, trigger your Chronos' Rage to electrocute everything around you. Often times, this is the safest way to damage all of the enemies on the screen.

MORE WAYS TO MUTILATE



Make sure that you keep checking the Moves menu to find out what brutal new moves have become available for Kratos. The menu will also list what buttons you need to press in order to perform a move.

Euryale

STEP I



As the morbidly obese Euryale crashes through the wall and screams in your face, don't wet your pants just yet. If you learn to anticipate her various attacks, you will be on your way to killing this vile creature in no time. The snake-haired Euryale will crawl on her belly after you, so don't stop moving. Sneak in some attacks with your Athena's Blades, but don't get carried away because she'll pummel you with her tail if you stand still for too long.



The key to being victorious in this battle is using your Golden Fleece, that you previously removed from the mouth of the wolf-headed Cerberus, and using it correctly. Activate the Fleece by blocking just before her beam hits you. Triggering the Fleece at the precise moment will prevent you from turning into stone, and it will also damage her. Being able to block her beam every time she shoots it at you will give you a huge advantage over Euryale, so try to get the timing right early on during this match.

STEP II



Try not to jump around too much during this fight, especially if you haven't mastered using the Golden Fleece to reflect Euryale's beam. If you are turned to stone while in midair you will shatter on

the floor like a teacup. If you turn into stone while on your feet, **rattle the Left Analog stick Left and Right** to reverse the effect of Euryale's magic. In time, she will start to use her petrifying magic in two other forms. Euryale will fire projectiles at you and also create waves that travel across the entire room. Counter her projectiles the same way you've been blocking her beams, but you'll have to block them with your Golden Fleece multiple times as she will shoot you with several of these attacks. Her waves of energy can be jumped over, but it is highly recommended to try to negate their effects with the Fleece.



When your overweight opponent wraps itself around one of the pillars, she will periodically belly flop down on the arena. Jump into the air before she buries Kratos in her rolls of fat. Don't think you're safe just because you're far away from her when she does this because the shockwave that's created from her belly flop spreads across the arena. After she lands, this is an opportune time to rip through her with your Athena's Blades.

STEP III



A circle icon will appear over Euryale's head and she will become unconscious when the thrashings you have been delivering start to take a toll on her body. **Press O** to sink your Blades into her fat, and **rotate the Left Analog stick** to yank her off of the pillar she clings to. You'll have to do this to her one more time and then Euryale will become enraged, chasing you while bashing her fists into the ground. Fight back by activating your Rage of the Titans and grind her up. As she continues to whip at you with her massive tail, fire projectiles at you, and smash her fists into the floor, keep weakening her and a circle will appear over her head. **Press O** and then enter the series that flash across the screen and Kratos will saw her head off.

SEX MINI-GAME



The infamous sex mini-game of the original God of War is back, but this time it is extremely easy to play through the game without discovering it because it's located in a secret area. Fortunately for anyone who missed the opportunity to play the sex mini-game, it occurs within the first 15 minutes or so of the game, right after the first round of the battle against the Colossus of Rhodes, when Kratos gouges his eye.



When you fall into the water, instead of swimming forward, exit the pool to your right. At the top of the steps there is a flimsy wall. Shatter it and there are a couple of lovely ladies relaxing in the water.



Once the mini-game begins, enter the buttons that flash across the screen as they appear.



Like the sex mini-game from the first God of War, you won't get to view Kratos actually in the act of sex, but you will get to watch a statue of a cherub squirt water. Successfully entering all of the buttons that appear on the screen will result in an explosion of red orbs.

CONTINUED ►

Perseus

STEP I



Perseus is by far the wimpiest enemy you have encountered thus far into God of War II, but don't let his size fool you as he is also one of the toughest. Unless you are playing on Easy, it's hard to imagine anyone being able to defeat Perseus on the first try, but once you learn his tricks you will conquer him soon enough.



During the first third of this battle, you will have to fight Perseus while he is invisible, but there are ways to fight blind. Luckily, the two of you are standing in about two feet of water, so keeping your eyes locked on where splashes occur will let you know where your enemy is while he is moving. He is also partially visible at times, a blur vaguely in the shape of a man. Do not use any of Kratos' combo attacks on Perseus while he is invisible because they take too long to complete, leaving you vulnerable to his attacks. Just use your light and heavy attacks and continue to diminish his health.

STEP II



After you have connected enough strikes to the invisible Perseus, he will appear with a circle icon above his head. You must react quickly by **pressing** **O** or you will have to continue to fight Perseus

while he is cloaked in invisibility. If you do this successfully, Kratos will smash the helmet that makes Perseus invisible. Now that you can see your opponent, this is the time to use your combo attacks. Magic such as Typhon's Bane and Chronos' Rage is also effective. Your Rage of the Titans meter should be full too, so use it to drain Perseus of his health. A circle icon will appear over an exhausted Perseus a second time. **Press** **O** and Kratos will shank him with his Athena's Blades and snap Perseus' sword in half. But don't start celebrating yet as he still has a few tricks up his sleeve such as a projectile that he swings around his head and then launches at you. Roll out of the way when he does this or use your Golden Fleece to deflect it.

STEP III



Keep hacking away at Perseus and make sure that you are avoiding as many of those projectiles as possible because they will put a significant dent in your life bar. When he raises his shield and the screen turns white, this will give Kratos a piercing headache. **Rattle the Left Analog stick Left and Right** as fast as you can to break out of the trance Perseus has put you under. Roll out of the way as soon as you have broken this magic spell because Perseus will follow this up with an attack. He will put you under this trance several times. Continue to shave down his health with your Athena's Blades because the longer you are in the watery arena with him, the better his chances are of finishing you off first. The next time a circle appears over his head, Perseus is done for if you **press** **O** quickly enough. Kratos will then grab his head and bash it into the wall.



Press **□**, and then **rattle the Left Analog stick Left and Right** to start drowning him. **Press** **□** once more to kill Perseus by cracking his head on the wall again and launching him out of the arena. A hook will run through his chest, killing him instantly.

QUICK TIPS

BUY YOURSELF TIME



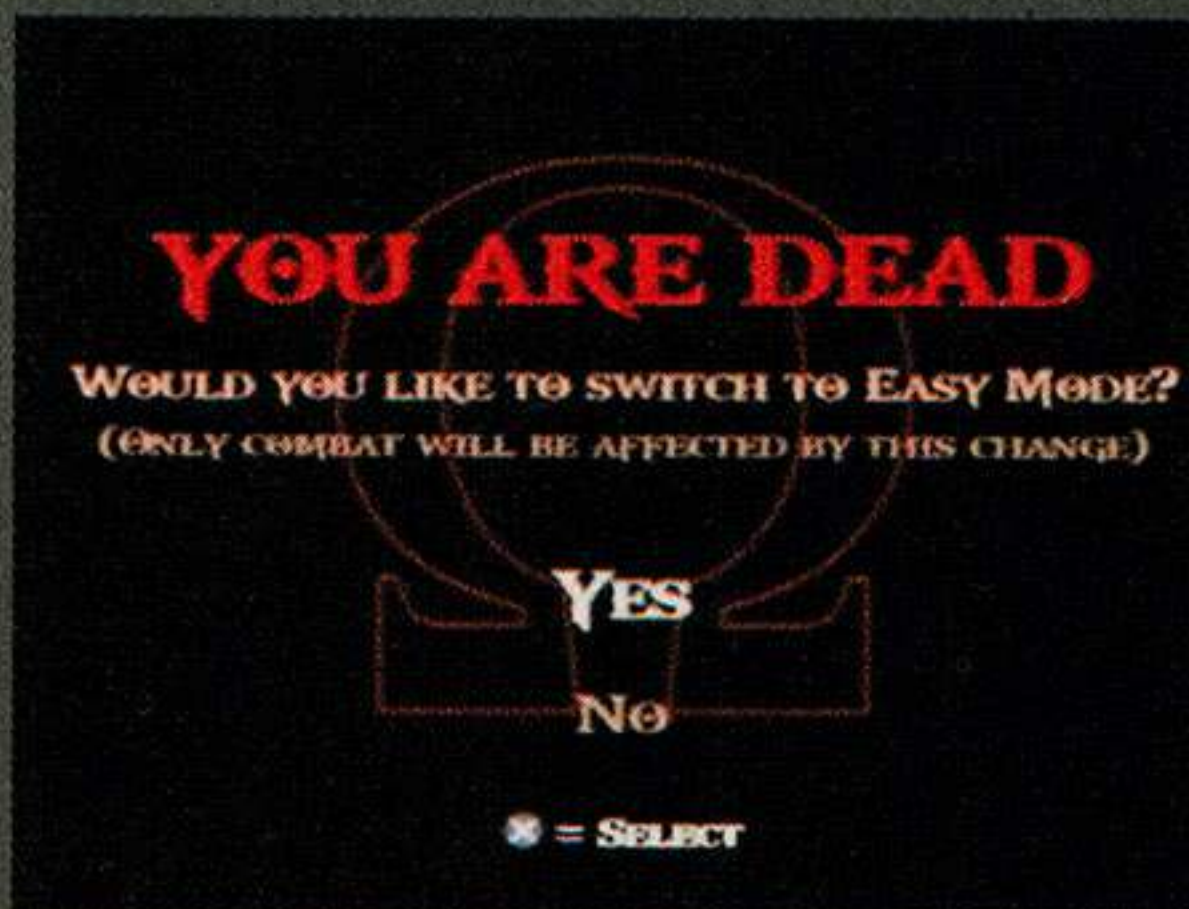
If you find that you can't move Kratos fast enough to get past an obstacle such as a gate that shuts after a few seconds, often times this is because you must activate your Amulet of the Fates, which slows down time itself. Even though the Amulet doesn't slow down Kratos, you should still move fast because this relic's effects are temporary.

EYEBALLS 'N FEATHERS



Explore the areas you come across comprehensively. By taking the extra minute or two to look for any hidden chests will grant you more Gorgon Eyes and Phoenix Feathers. When you collect enough Eyes, your overall health will be increased, and if you collect enough Feathers, your overall magic will be increased as well.

MAKE LIFE EASY ON YOURSELF



Dying time after time is infuriating enough, so when it's in exactly the same part of God of War II, it's understandable to want to tear your hair out by the roots. If you can't progress in the game and die over and over again, the game will give you the option to switch to an easier mode.

GAMEPRO

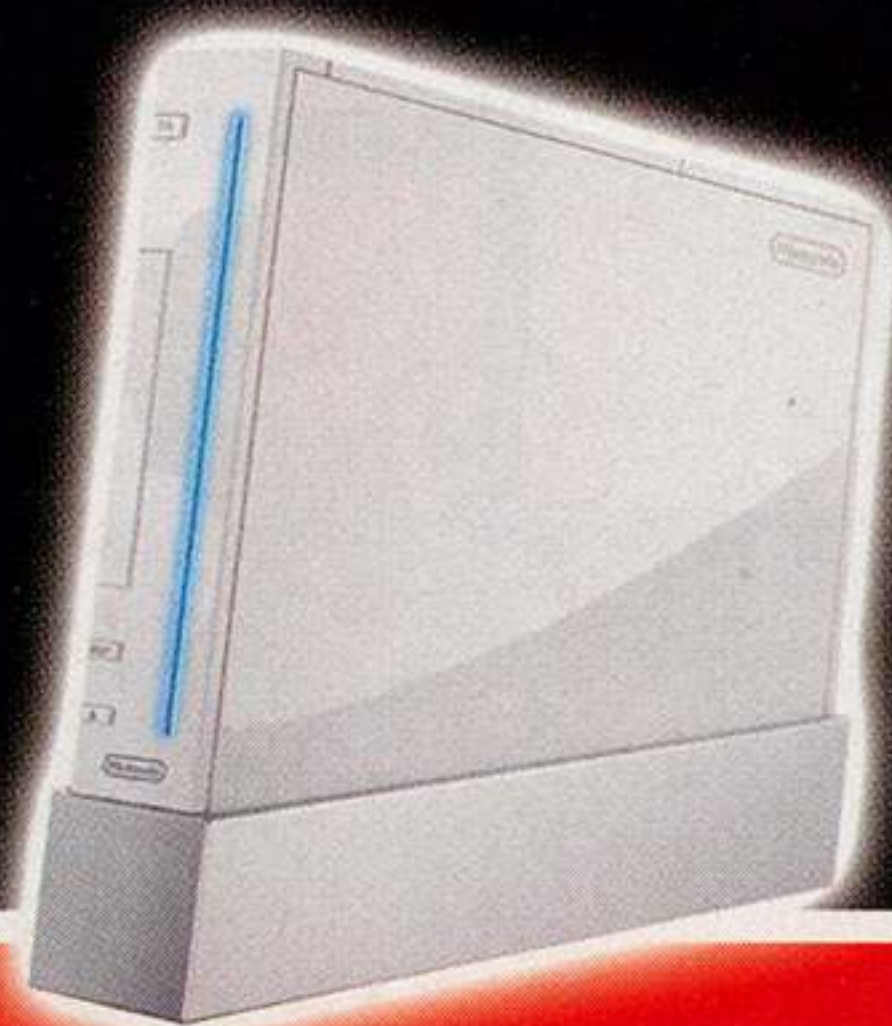
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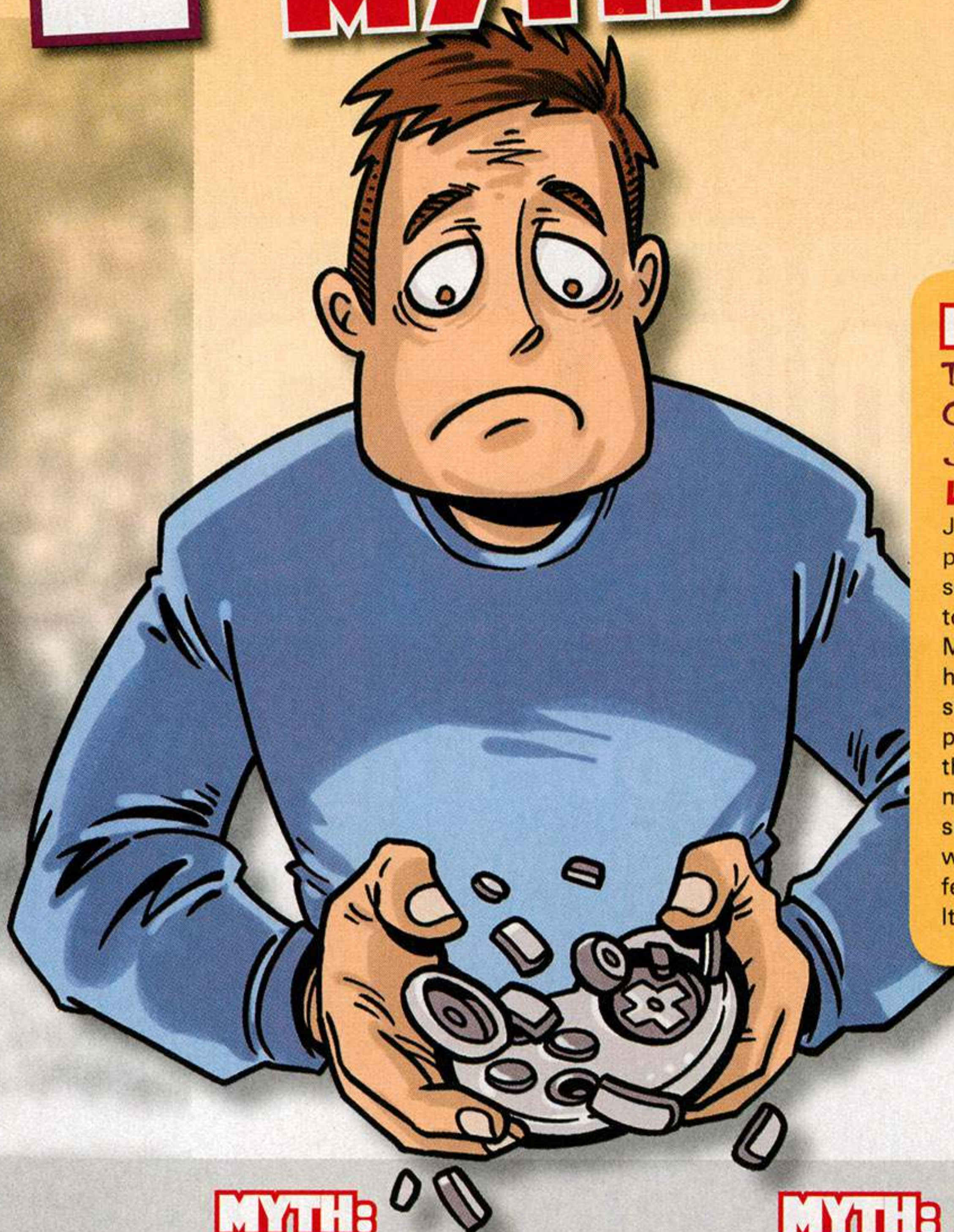
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EXPOSED!

T4 DANGEROUS GAMING MYTHS

We've all heard them, and many of us believe them. But we're here to set the record straight—consider these gaming myths officially **BUSTED!**

By Vicious Sid
Illustrations by Francis Mao



MYTH:

THIRD-PARTY CONTROLLERS ARE JUST AS GOOD

Wrong, wrong, wrong.

Judging by our experience, third-party controllers are often cumbersome, poorly made, and more likely to fail. Part of the reason is that Microsoft, Nintendo, and Sony all hold patents on their controller designs, right down to the directional pads and analog sticks. This means that a third-party manufacturer must start from scratch when designing a controller. Ever wonder why third-party directional pads feel so awkward? Now you know: It's because of the patents.

MYTH:

THE MORE MEMORY, THE BETTER THE GAMING SYSTEM

Not exactly.

This is generally a decent rule of thumb, but it's equally important to consider the software that utilizes the memory. A former employee of EA Games told us that "when developing a game for both the PS2 and Xbox, we had to reduce texture size to get it to work on the Xbox because Microsoft's DirectX is less efficient with memory than [the standard API] OpenGL" used by the PS2. And as the PS2 showed us with its inferior 32 MB of memory, it's not just size that matters when it comes to rendering slick graphics.

MYTH:

CHEAT CODES ARE PUT IN FOR THE SAKE OF GAMERS

They aren't.

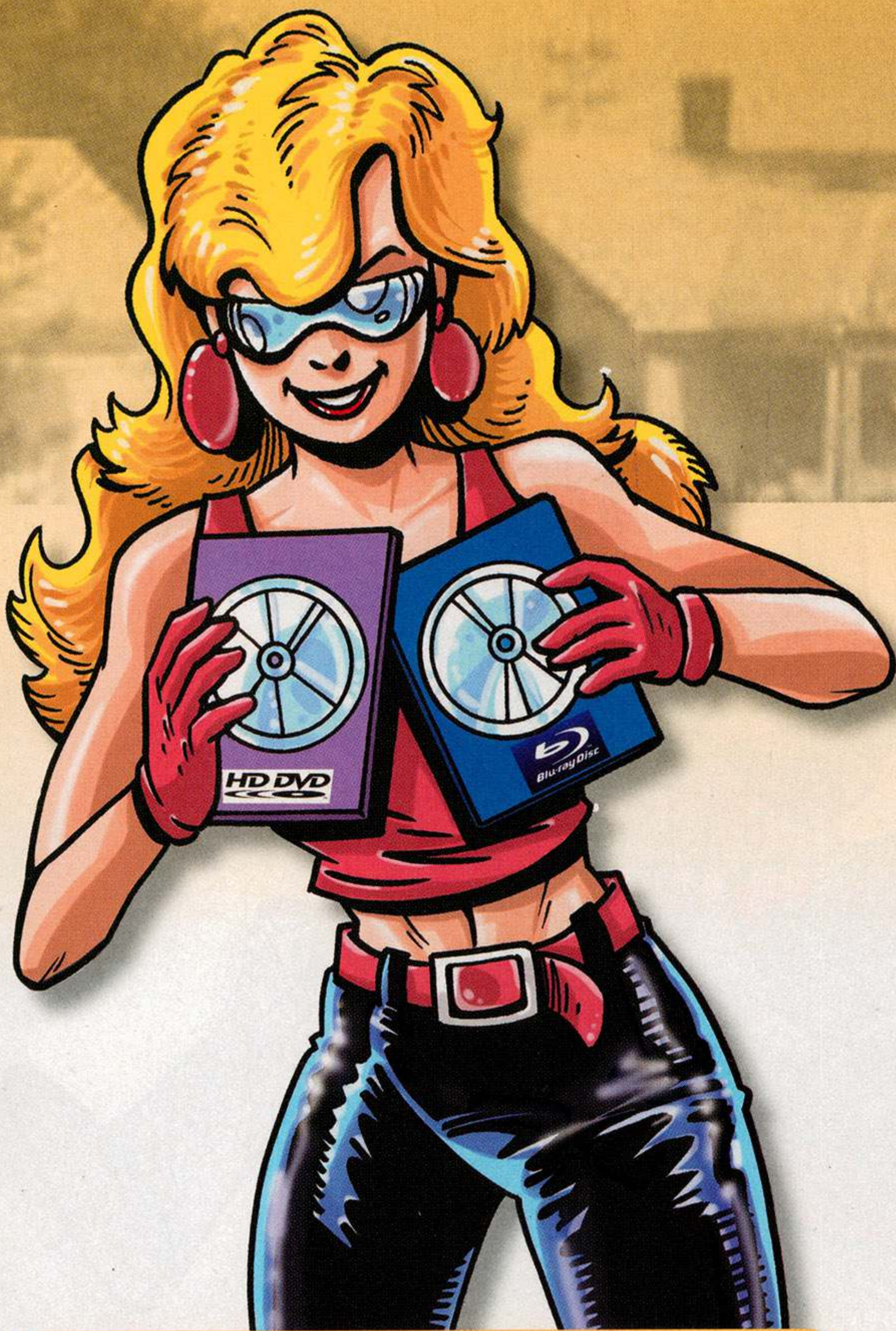
Q&A departments at game publishers use cheat codes to test for game bugs. Typically, these codes are simply left into the final retail product, where they become what we call "cheat codes." But more and more, cheat codes are being phased out. Why? Probably because cheat codes tend to shorten the game experience, which leads to more returns and more used game sales, all of which hurt the bottom line of game publishers.

MYTH:

WIRELESS CONTROLLERS DON'T WORK AS WELL AS WIRED

Wrong.

In reality, modern wireless controllers are every bit as fast and responsive as the wired ones. If you think you get an edge by using a wired controller over a wireless one, know this: It's all in your head. Of course, we're not one to discount a psychological advantage, but the truth needs to be told.



MYTH:

PORN WILL SETTLE THE NEXT-GEN DVD WAR

Hardly.

This popular rumor claims that HD DVD will overtake Blu-ray because it openly allows manufacturers to create HD adult movies, while the Blu-ray Disc Association frowns on porn. As important as adult films were in trailblazing the home videocassette movement in the '70s and '80s, porn is hardly a kingmaker. In fact, if you judge by recent sales data showing Blu-ray soaring ahead of HD DVD, it looks like game consoles like the PlayStation 3 will have a larger impact on the next-gen DVD war than mere smut.

MYTH:

YOU NEED 1080P

You don't.

1080p is a wonderful technology that's capable of rendering lush, crisp, high-resolution films and video games. But it's also way, way ahead of its time. Only a handful of PlayStation 3 games and Blu-ray films can even output at 1080p, and the number of 1080p-capable HD TV sets on the market is a tiny sliver. Like it or not, 720p and 1080i will continue to be the focus for years. That said, 1080p is a great feature to have...if you've got the extra cash to spend.

MYTH:

1080I LOOKS BETTER THAN 720P

Only if you watch your games on pause.

The truth is that 1080i only displays 540 lines every 60th of a second while 720p displays a full 720 lines. While 1080i has a slight edge in sharpness, it often suffers from a slightly flickery look that can strain the eyes and cause breakup or distortion in fast-moving scenes. 720p and 1080i each have strengths and weaknesses but you'll be hard-pressed to spot a big difference. And for HD video gaming, 720p is often preferred for its smoother, slicker frame rate.

MYTH:

THE XBOX 360 CAN'T HANDLE 1080P

Actually, it can.

Thanks to a recent downloadable update, the Xbox 360 does support 1080p over component and VGA cables. Though Sony argues that the Xbox 360 can't handle *true* 1080p, this is a technical argument that's mostly splitting hairs. Generally speaking, Xbox 360 game designers will be able to include "true" 1080p support for future games. Check out Sega's Virtua Tennis 3 as one key example of an upcoming Xbox 360 game that's rendered natively in 1080p.

As for running existing games in 1080p on the Xbox 360, it's not so simple. Selecting the Xbox 360's 1080p option doesn't actually render older games in 1080p; it "cheats" by using the 360's analog scaler to blow up a normal 720p image to fill a 1080p display. This is not true 1080p; it's super-sized 720p.

MYTH:

PLASMA TVS LOOK BETTER THAN CRTS

A popular misconception.

All HD resolutions being equal, an HD CRT will almost always have better image quality than an LCD or plasma TV. That's partly because CRT technology boasts deeper blacks and more vibrant color than LCDs and plasmas. CRT HD TVs can also render a wider variety of resolutions, from 480i standard-def up to 1080p (if supported), without losing quality through the downsampling or upsampling that an LCD or plasma must perform. Of course, the main disadvantage to CRTs is their huge size and weight compared to plasmas and LCDs.

CONTINUED ►

EXPOSED!

14 DANGEROUS GAMING MYTHS

MYTH:

YOU NEED TO BUY THE EXTENDED WARRANTY

This is a huge waste.

If you're buying an Xbox 360, a PS3, or a Wii, know that each console maker has a generous built-in warranty period—one year in the case of the Xbox 360 and PS3, and even more for the Wii if you fill out the online registration. Of course, don't expect the retail shops to stop offering extended warranties anytime soon. Warranties are a retail cash cow because the failure rate of consoles and games is so slim and the fees are so high. Our advice? Skip 'em.



MYTH:

THE PC IS THE ONLY GOOD PLACE TO PLAY FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

Not true.

Though the mouse and keyboard still have an edge for precision sniping, the Xbox 360 controller has proven itself to be a dependable workhorse, especially with console-specific tweaks such as "sticky cross hairs" to help even the odds. The key, as always, is practice. It's true that controllers and mice have their own strengths and weaknesses, but this doesn't mean that the mouse is always the best way to play.

MYTH:

YOU HAVE TO SPEND \$500 FOR A PC VIDEO CARD

Nope.

Want to know the truth? Here it is: for the vast majority of gamers, a mid-range powerhouse like the Radeon X1950 GT or GeForce 7900 GS will give you outstanding graphics and performance, even in the latest PC games. The price? Under \$200 if you shop online. This revelation won't exactly please video card giants ATI and Nvidia, but it'll save you some serious cash.

MYTH:

YOU SHOULD BUY VIDEO CABLES AT THE STORE

Heavens no.

You can find much better deals on online auction sites like eBay. For instance, we found a brand-new 12-foot HDMI cable for our office PS3 for just \$10. A set of PS3 component cables went for \$20. Why pay \$50 at Radio Shack or GameStop?

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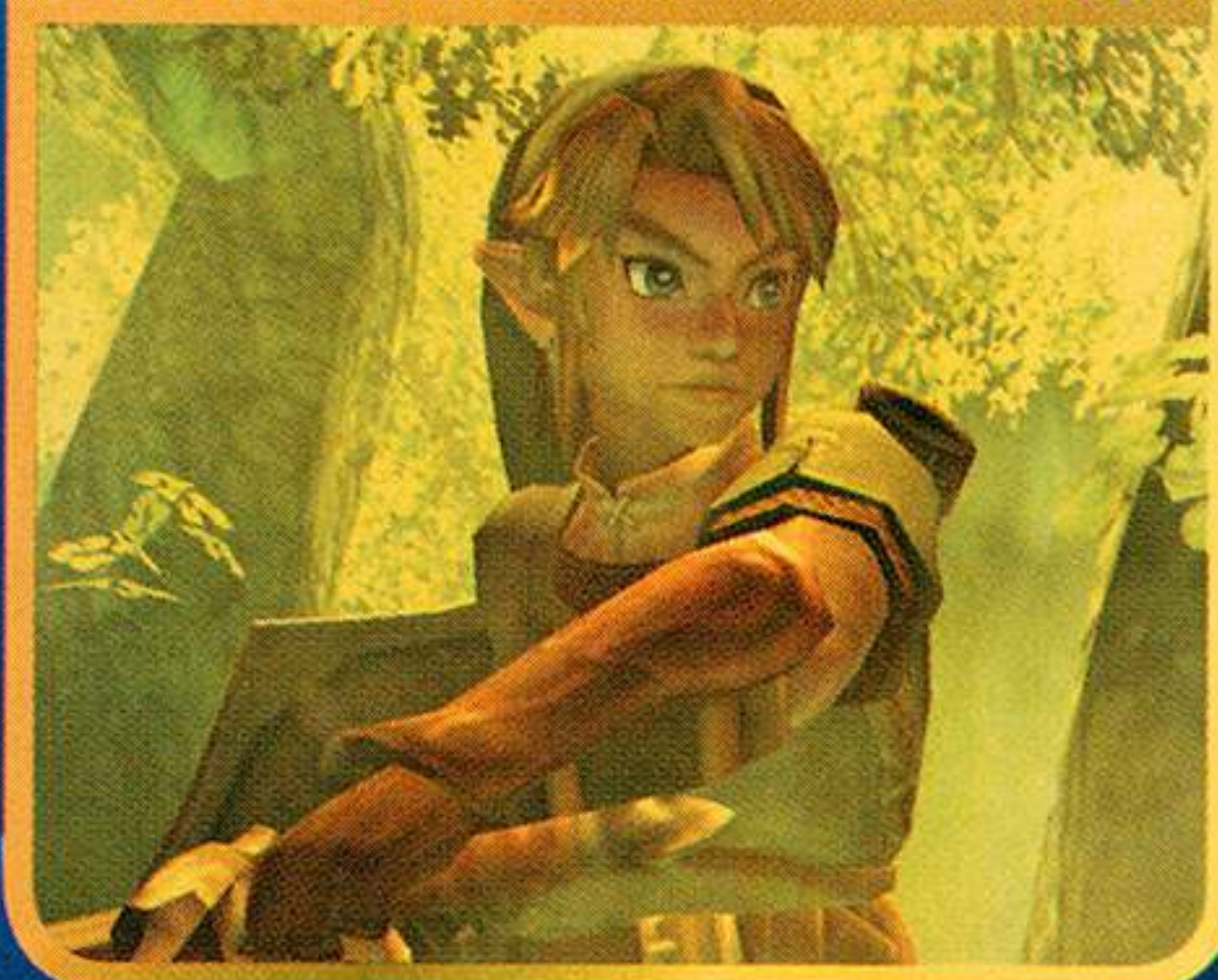


If you are missing just one GamePro or would like to buy a whole set, please call 415/243-4112 and ask for back issues.

GamePro Readers' Choice Awards 2006

The readers have spoken! Here are your top picks of 2006—did your favorite win?

ACTION/ADVENTURE

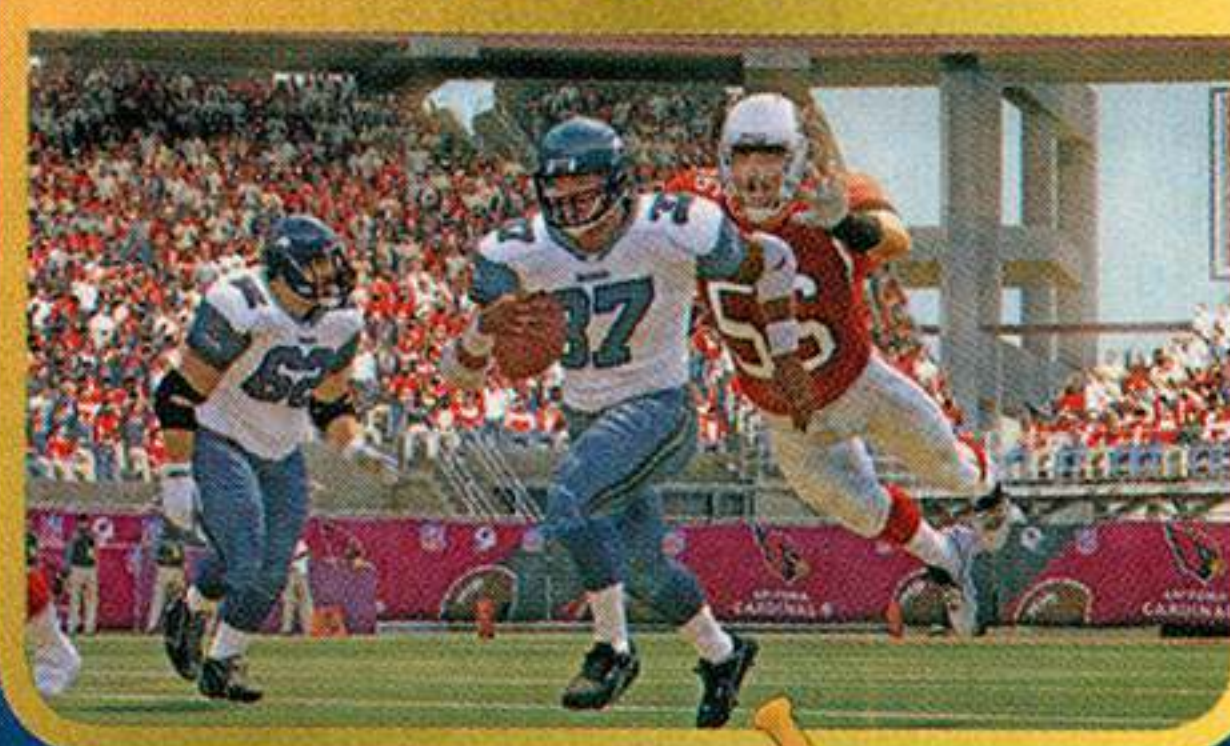


- 1 The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (20%)**
Nintendo • Wii, GameCube
- 2 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent (9%)**
Ubisoft • PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube
- 3 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories (8%)**
Rockstar Games • PSP

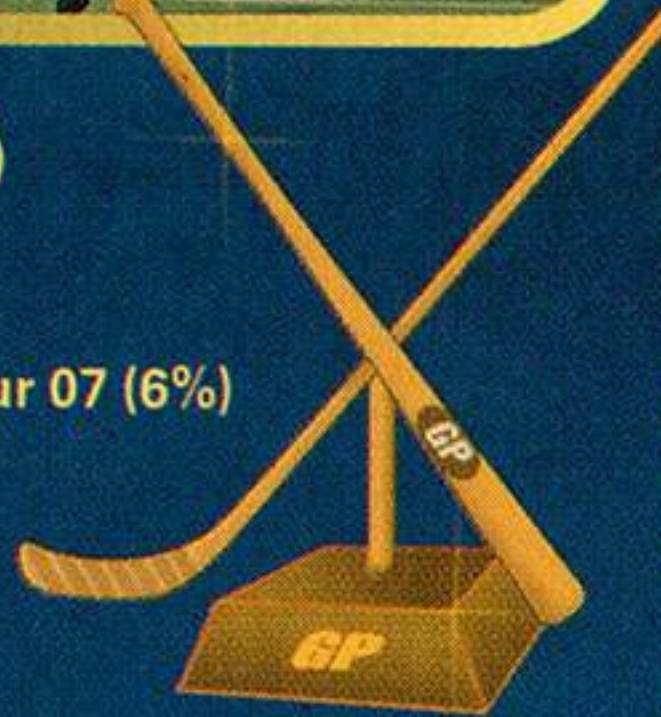


Fanboys of not, readers overwhelmingly agreed that Link's latest adventure was the best action-adventure offering of the year, beating out Sam Fisher and the latest Grand Theft Auto side story—each by a two-to-one margin.

SPORTS



- 1 Madden NFL 07 (33%)**
EA Sports • PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, Wii
- 2 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07 (6%)**
EA Sports • PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox
- 3 2006 FIFA World Cup (5%)**
EA Sports • PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube



Total shocker: Madden was chosen best EA—um, Best Sports Game, and by the widest margin of any category.

BRAIN/REFLEX



- 1 Guitar Hero II (30%)**
RedOctane • PS2
- 2 Tetris DS (16%)**
Nintendo • DS
- 3 Big Brain Academy (15%)**
Nintendo • DS

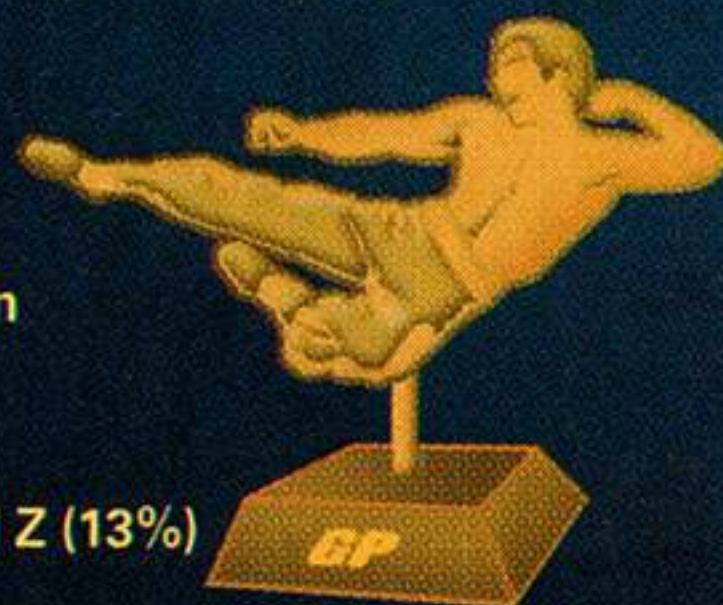


Who would have thought a game requiring an actual guitar peripheral would become the sleeper hit of 2006? Plus, it wasn't published by Konami! Guitar Hero II easily smoked the competition here, with twice as many votes as double DS threats Tetris DS and Big Brain Academy.

FIGHTING



- 1 Mortal Kombat: Armageddon (37%)**
Midway • PS2, Xbox
- 2 WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2007 (17%)**
THQ • Xbox 360
- 3 Super Dragon Ball Z (13%)**
Atari • PS2



The last old-gen Mortal Kombat, Armageddon, easily sailed to victory. Fighting-game fans can't seem to get enough of the bloody battler that last won this category with 2004's Deception.

COMBAT/SHOOTING



- 1 Gears of War (27%)**
Microsoft • Xbox 360
- 2 Call of Duty 3 (22%)**
Activision • PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, Wii
- 3 F.E.A.R. (5%)**
Vivendi Universal Games • PS2, Xbox 360



Call of Duty 2 owned this category in 2006, but not even five console versions of the sequel could overcome Epic's juggernaut, Gears of War, which is exclusive to the Xbox 360.

DRIVING/RACING



- 1 Need for Speed: Carbon (32%)**
EA Games • PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube
- 2 NASCAR 07 (15%)**
EA Sports • PS2, Xbox
- 3 Excite Truck (8%)**
Nintendo • Wii



The Need for Speed series handily won this one, lapping its closest competitor with twice as many votes. Third-ranked Excite Truck eked out GamePro editors' pick Test Drive: Unlimited by one vote.

EXTREME SPORTS



1 Tony Hawk's Project 8 (44%)

Activision • PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox

2 Dead or Alive: Xtreme 2 (20%)

Tecmo • Xbox 360

3 Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam (16%)

Activision • Wii

Tony Hawk ruled this category and won with the most net votes. The beautiful ladies of Dead or Alive earned half as many, and Hawk's other game, Downhill Jam, trailed at a close third.



ROLE-PLAYING



1 Final Fantasy XII (23%)

Square Enix • PS2

2 The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion (16%)

Bethesda Softworks • Xbox 360

3 Marvel: Ultimate Alliance (13%)

Activision • PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, Wii

Just as Madden rules the sports genre, Final Fantasy rules role-playing games. Surprisingly, Kingdom Hearts II failed to crack the top three (it ranked fourth).



WORST GAME OF THE YEAR



1 Super Dragon Ball Z

Atari • PS2

2 WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2007

THQ • Xbox 360

3 Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire

Namco Bandai Games • PS3

"You hate me, you really hate me!" Readers are such a fickle bunch. Behold as their choices for second and third Best Fighting Game were also their first and second choices for Worst Game of the Year. However, the PlayStation 3 launch title (and exclusive) Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire earned enough votes to rank third. With two games based on anime properties despised so much, could we detect a trend? And don't feel too bad, WWE: last year Tekken 5 won third Best Fighting Game; nevertheless, it was the second most-hated game of 2005 by the same readers.



BEST GAME OF THE YEAR



1 Gears of War (19%)

Microsoft • Xbox 360

2 The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (15%)

Nintendo • Wii, GameCube

3 Final Fantasy XII (9%)

Square Enix • PS2

The top three titles that ranked for Best Game were all winners in their respective categories, but head-to-head, Gears of War triumphed over Zelda by less than 100 votes. Developed by Epic Games, Gears of War's clever mix of excellent graphics, intense combat, and clever innovation made it one of the biggest-selling and critically acclaimed titles of 2006, and the game's huge popularity is reflected by our readers here.





GAME OF THE MONTH

GOD OF WAR II

Five minutes: That's how long we played God of War II before declaring it the Game of the Month for this issue. There were other worthy games—Motorstorm, to name one—but from the very beginning, it was obvious that there was only one man deserving of the honor, and Kratos was his name. Come along as we sing his praises in our in-depth review!

GAME REVIEWS:

300.....	81	Shining Force EXA.....	82
Formula One Championship Edition.....	81	Sonic and the Secret Rings.....	88
God of War II.....	74	Spectrobes.....	89
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja.....	89	SSX Blur.....	83
M.A.C.H.....	89	Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection.....	85
MLB 07: The Show.....	82	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2.....	78
MotorStorm.....	76	Virtua Tennis 3.....	80
NBA Street Homecourt.....	87	Wii Play.....	88

MEET THE GAMEPROS!

Each month, members of the *GamePro* reviews staff will take on your burning questions in order to reveal more about what makes them tick. In honor of this month's Game of the Month, *God of War II*, we asked them, "Who, or what, is your favorite mythological character, and why?"



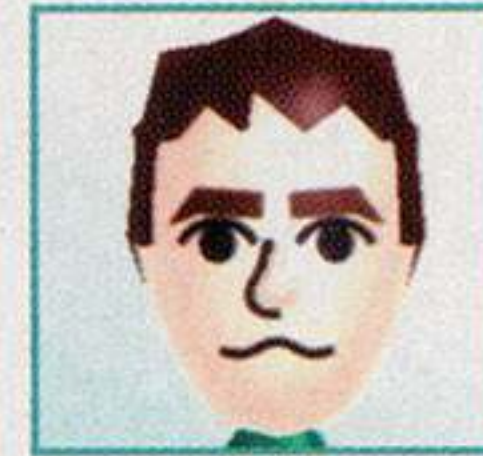
Vicious Sid

"Cerberus. Why? Because he's a three-headed demon dog. Need I say more?"



Keep'em Gessin'

"The Jedi, because of what they represent as a people. Also, because of the power of the Force."



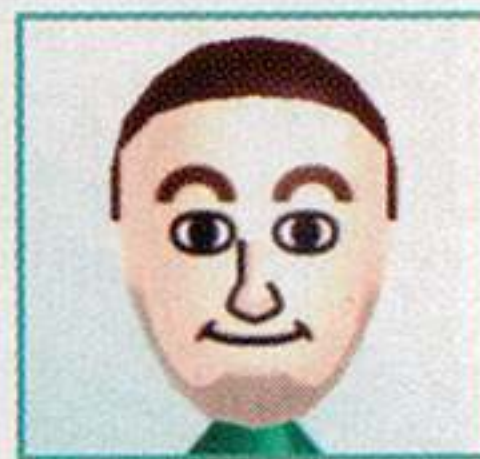
PapaFrog

"I'm gonna have to say Wesley Crusher, because if you slap some wings, laser beams, and an oxygen mask on that baby, you'd have something far fancier than any starship."



The Watcher

"I'm sticking with my Norwegian roots and going with the Norse god Odin. He's got an army of sexy Valkyries to watch his back. How cool is that?"



Hamster4Sale

"Davey Crockett, because it gives me an excuse to use the phrase, 'Killed him a bear when he was only 3 years old.'"



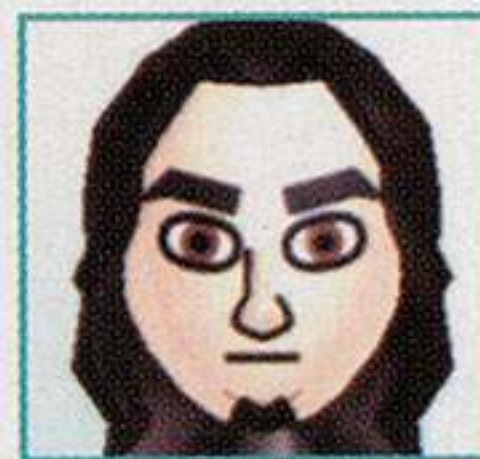
Ahoy_and_Avast

"I'll go with Death, but not the 'skeleton in a cloak' Death. I mean Death of the Endless. A close second would be Batman."



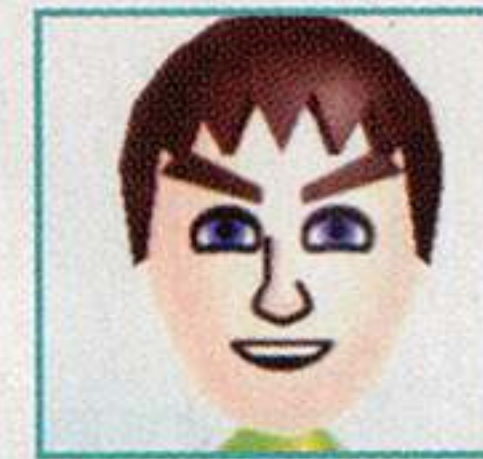
T3hPanda

"The Final Fantasy summon Bahamut. Come on, what's cooler looking than Bahamut? He flies, blows things up, and no one would ever mess with me with him following me around everywhere."



Long-Haired Offender

"I'd choose the Norse god Odin, because he gives me the strength to play through *Wii Play* without choking on my own vomit."



DaveMayCry

"Medusa. I'm kind of an ugly dude, but I'm not freeze-you-with-my-gaze ugly...yet."

Have a question for the Pros? E-mail them to ahoy_and_avast@gamepro.com with the subject line "Burning Question of the Month!" If your question is chosen, we'll send you a copy of our Game of the Month!

GAMEPRO'S RATING SCALE

Behind the numbers:

5.00-4.50

The best of the best. If you don't own this game, you should. Think *Halo*, *Zelda*, *Resident Evil*, and *Metal Gear Solid*.

4.25-3.50

Highly enjoyable, but falls short of true greatness. The *Fight Nights* and *Tony Hawks* of the world.

3.25-2.50

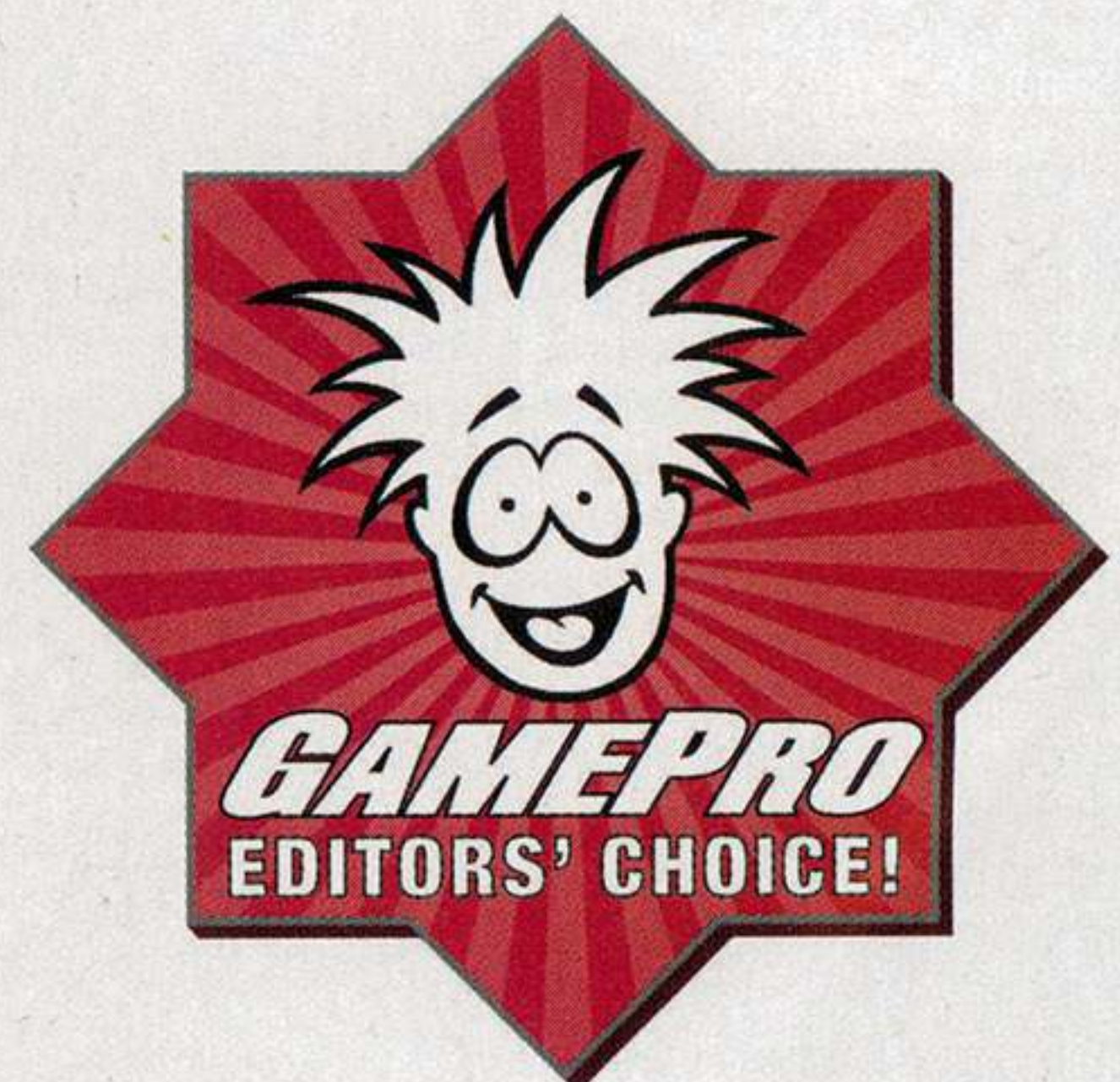
Approach with caution—try before you buy. Enter the *Matrix* and the *Dynasty Warriors* games fall squarely in this category.

2.25-1.50

Should come with a sticker that reads, "Warning, contains poisonous amounts of suckage." Remember *Backyard Wrestling*?

1.25-0.00

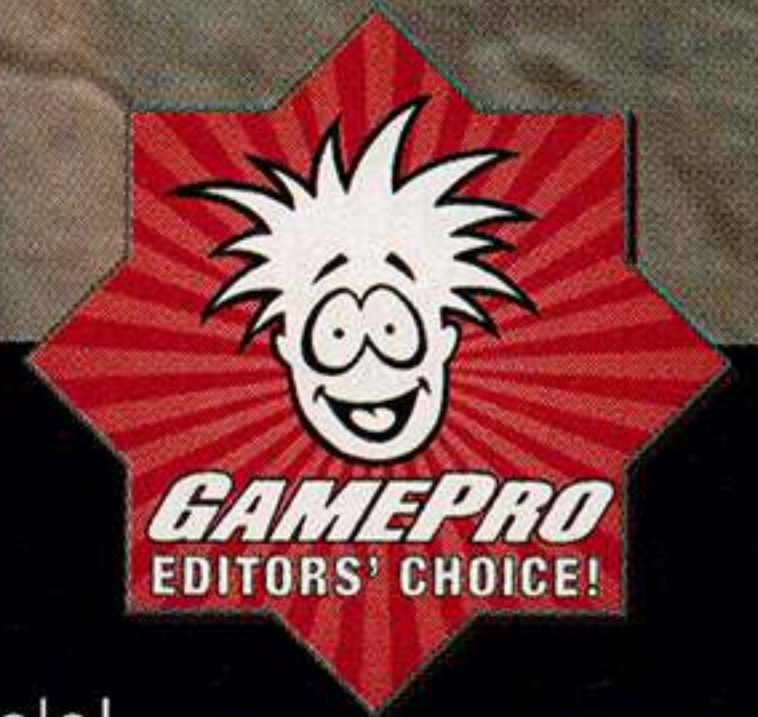
An absolute insult to humanity. Kill it with fire and holy water.



Games that score 4.50 or higher are awarded our coveted Editors' Choice Award.



Kratos paints ancient Greece with the blood of his enemies in God of War II.



GOD OF WAR II

Who says the PlayStation 2 is dead? Kratos returns to breathe new life into Sony's flagship console!

PS2 ESRB: M

How do you top what many gamers consider the greatest action game of all time? You definitely can't do it with a whimper—for a game as beloved as God of War, you've got to come out with a bang, one that's equivalent to a ton of dynamite sitting atop a tanker truck full of nitroglycerin. The folks in charge of the GoW franchise know a thing or two about putting together a top-notch action game, and from the moment you take control of everyone's favorite bald deity, there's no doubt that this sequel has what it takes to not only reach the bar set by its predecessor but to leap over it in every way.

TWICE AS EPIC AS THE ORIGINAL

Take the opening sequence, for example: You've no doubt seen screenshots or video footage of Kratos going toe-to-toe with a Statue of Liberty

sized Colossus (and if you haven't, you should immediately crawl out of the cave you've been living in and head over to GamePro.com!). The first 30 minutes of the game alone packs more punch than the Incredible Hulk, and in a lesser title, would have served as an incredible end note. The fact that the developers chose to open the game with such a memorable fight is one thing, but what's truly impressive is that they manage to keep the momentum going throughout the game.

Unlike the first title, which was sometimes repetitive and featured some frustrating puzzles, GoWII is a seamless experience, all wheat and no chaff. Sony has made it virtually impossible for you to put down the controller as you will be doing something completely different every 10 minutes or so. One of the strengths of the series lies in the tight pacing of the action—just when you think

■ Developer: Sony Santa Monica ■ Publisher: Sony

you've seen it all, the developers find yet another way to surprise you. That's no different in GoWII, where the action never gets stale or old thanks to the return of the superlative storytelling and thoughtful pacing.

BRAINS AND BRAWN

And it's that sense of storytelling that is the true strength of both GoW titles. The eye-popping finishing moves, the whirling dervish combos, and the stunning magic powers are all well and good but it was the story of the Spartan warrior Kratos, and his tragic fall and brutal ascension to the peaks of Mount Olympus, that made the original GoW so memorable. The presentation was where the game truly shined and had it been missing, the visceral action would have been enough to carry the game, but only to a point.

Truly, it was the marriage of the epic story and the balls-to-the-walls action that made GoW stand out from the countless other titles that had come before (Devil May Cry) and have come since (Ghost Rider) its release in 2005.

God of War guru David Jaffe was not behind the steering wheel for this second installment—he's rumored to be working on GoW for the PlayStation 3—but the delicate interplay between

narrative storytelling and action is maintained here, and the tension between the two ingredients is somehow just right. The last thing I want to do is spoil the game's story for anyone who is even considering playing this game, because it's something that must be experienced firsthand; but suffice it to say that Kratos once again faces a series of trials and must once again climb the tallest of mountains, if not physically then metaphorically.



MEAT AND POTATOES

Helping you in your Herculean journey is a slew of new weapons and moves. The familiar Blades of Chaos—which morphed into Athena's Blades at the conclusion of the first game—are back as your main implements of choice but you will eventually come to wield such weapons as the Barbarian's Hammer, a meat mallet that's as big as Kratos, and the Spear of Destiny, which is used for mopping up an entire area of enemies with its wide range. Each weapon in the game can be upgraded to unlock more vicious attacks that Kratos can execute and there are a number of ancillary items at his disposal; these include Jason's Golden Fleece, which deflects magical attacks and sends them back towards the enemy that casts it, and the Amulet of the Fates, which slows time down to a bullet-time crawl.

Kratos has learned quite a few new violent attacks since the last game, including the Cyclone of Chaos, where he whips his Athena's Blades through the air, ripping the surrounding enemies to shreds. And if you're only sparring with a single enemy, you can grind them into dust with one of Kratos' fastest attacks, the Rampage of the Furies. Not brutal enough? Well, there's something in this game for even the most sadistic gamer, such as one move where you can grab an airborne enemy and repeatedly bounce their body off the ground.

WARMONGERING

Suffice it to say, no review can truly capture the magnificence of GoWII. There are memorable moments galore, the kind that you'll try in vain to describe to your friends but words can't fully do justice to this game. GoWII's sole imperfection is that its graphics remain relatively unchanged from the original, but at the end of the day this is an insignificant pimple on the face of this Goliath of a game.—**Long-Haired Offender**



FUN FACTOR

5.00

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: It's better than the original. Hard to believe, I know, but it is.

Cons: The graphics are nearly indistinguishable from its predecessor.



The first must-have game on the PlayStation 3 is an incredibly engrossing experience.

MOTORSTORM

If the PlayStation 3 could talk, it would say, "Thank you MotorStorm."



PS3 ESRB: T

Developer: Evolution Studios Publisher: Sony

MotorStorm is a magnificent display of what the PlayStation 3 can accomplish in terms of graphics and physics. Whether developer Evolution Studios has just cracked the seal on the PS3's potential or completely tapped the system for all it's worth, we don't know, and frankly we don't care because this is one of the best looking and performing console games yet.

A FINISHED PRODUCT

Unlike the non-online version that was released in Japan—to lukewarm reviews, natch—the

North American version is vastly superior, with improved graphics and online multiplayer. But what's most impressive is that the bump up in visual quality and the 12-player online matches result in no noticeable hit in terms of technical performance, which makes the U.S. version the one to write home about.

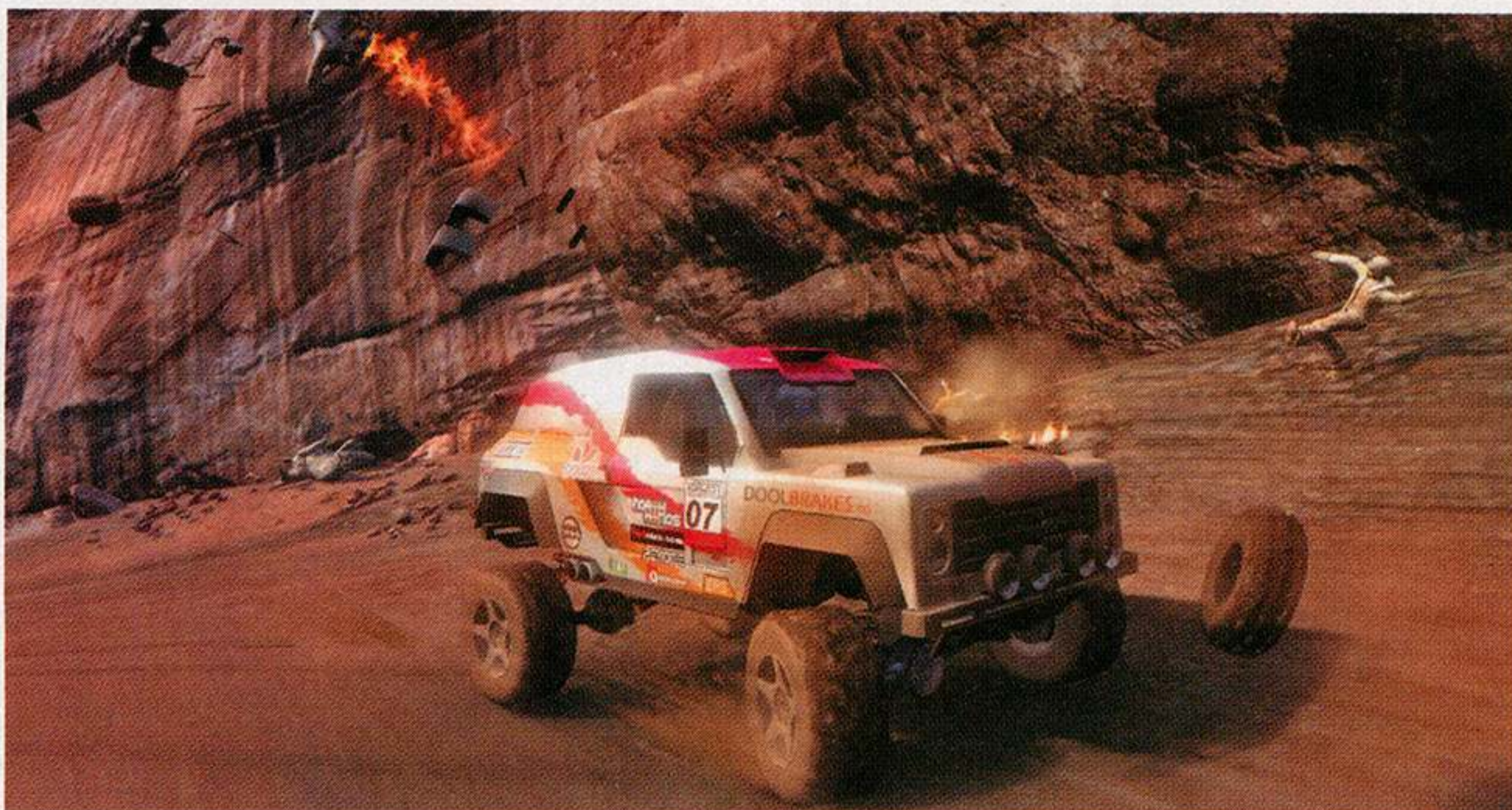
The little bit of plot featured in MotorStorm takes a backseat to the gameplay itself, and unlike other titles, this is actually a good thing. Aside from a hokey and brief introductory cinema, there's no plot direction at all—it's race, race, race, and really nothing more.

The game leads you through a series of race tickets which are comprised of four races; each ticket is further subdivided into four levels of difficulty. Completing races unlocks more races, tickets, and vehicles, and the game gets progressively harder as you finish events. Certain events will require you to finish in the number-one slot, so you will most likely have to repeat certain races.

NEED FOR SPEED

MotorStorm is about speed and smashing, but the game isn't the fastest around, nor does it cause the biggest pileups like, say, the Burnout series. What it does do is pair the speed and carnage together nicely. Don't think for a second that MotorStorm is all brawn and no brains, though: It takes a good deal of strategy to compete in the more difficult level 3 and 4 races.

I did wish that the game had more than eight tracks, but MotorStorm works around this restriction by offering different types of events on each track. For example, a track like Rock Hopper in a level 1 race with, say, bikes only might be rather



easy to take the gold, but a level three race on the same track where you have to race ATVs against bikes and rally cars is much more difficult.

And that's why the game forces you to become familiar with the many paths and shortcuts of the game. These aren't the Midnight Club-like open-ended shortcuts though; MotorStorm races are confined to a general track area. But some of the tracks are huge, and the race-able space is often very wide. Each track has recommended paths, usually high and low, for each vehicle type. Bikes and ATVs should generally stick to higher grounds and utilize jumps. Big rigs and mud pluggers (the game's best off-roading rigs) should mostly stay down in the dirty trenches where they ride best. But even though each vehicle has specific strengths and weaknesses regarding the

terrain, you'll have to take risks to come out on top in the harder races.

DON'T DRIVE SO CLOSE TO ME

If racing is the cake of MotorStorm, crashing is definitely the icing. The effect it has on the race aside, there are few things more rewarding than watching your vehicle blow up into hundreds of pieces. Better yet, you can pause during a crash and rotate/zoom the camera to view the carnage up close.

MotorStorm's controls and HUD are rather simplistic, but this was an obvious design decision, rather than an oversight. Cluttering up the screen with meters and maps would take away from the game's gorgeous graphics. You'll find no speedometer, no rear-view mirror, and no circular



course map. All you get is race position and a boost meter that displays your auto's temperature, but really, that's all you need.

DIRT ON YOUR WINDSHIELD

And yet, while MotorStorm is undeniably the best PS3 game yet, it has some frustrating shortcomings. First, the slim number of tracks is downright disappointing. The downloadable demo tricked us all into thinking the game would have loads of cars and tracks, but the reality is that the final roster is somewhat lean. Second, because of the tight physics, flipping and veering into a tight jam is a usual occurrence, but righting yourself isn't. You can easily drop to last place from hitting just one little rock. At times you're better off just booting yourself into flames to get a fresh start. And lastly, MotorStorm may seem very simplistic to the point of being boring to some gamers. I personally appreciated the simplicity but it may just be a matter of preference.

Regardless of how you feel, there's no denying that MotorStorm is a visual triumph. The game's realistic graphics offer a tantalizing glimpse of what the PS3 may be capable of down the line. This is the only racing game I've ever enjoyed playing from the first-person view, simply because I get to see all the game's details up close.

Just one last note about the 12-player online races: Shockingly, there's very little drop in performance, but who knows what will happen when the servers are popping with people. However, there's no denying that having that option is better than not. The lobby system is no frills, but a MotorStorm ranking at least shows what you're up against.

I probably wouldn't buy a PS3 just for MotorStorm, but it is the first legitimate must-have title if you've already got one.—**Mr. Marbles**

FUN FACTOR

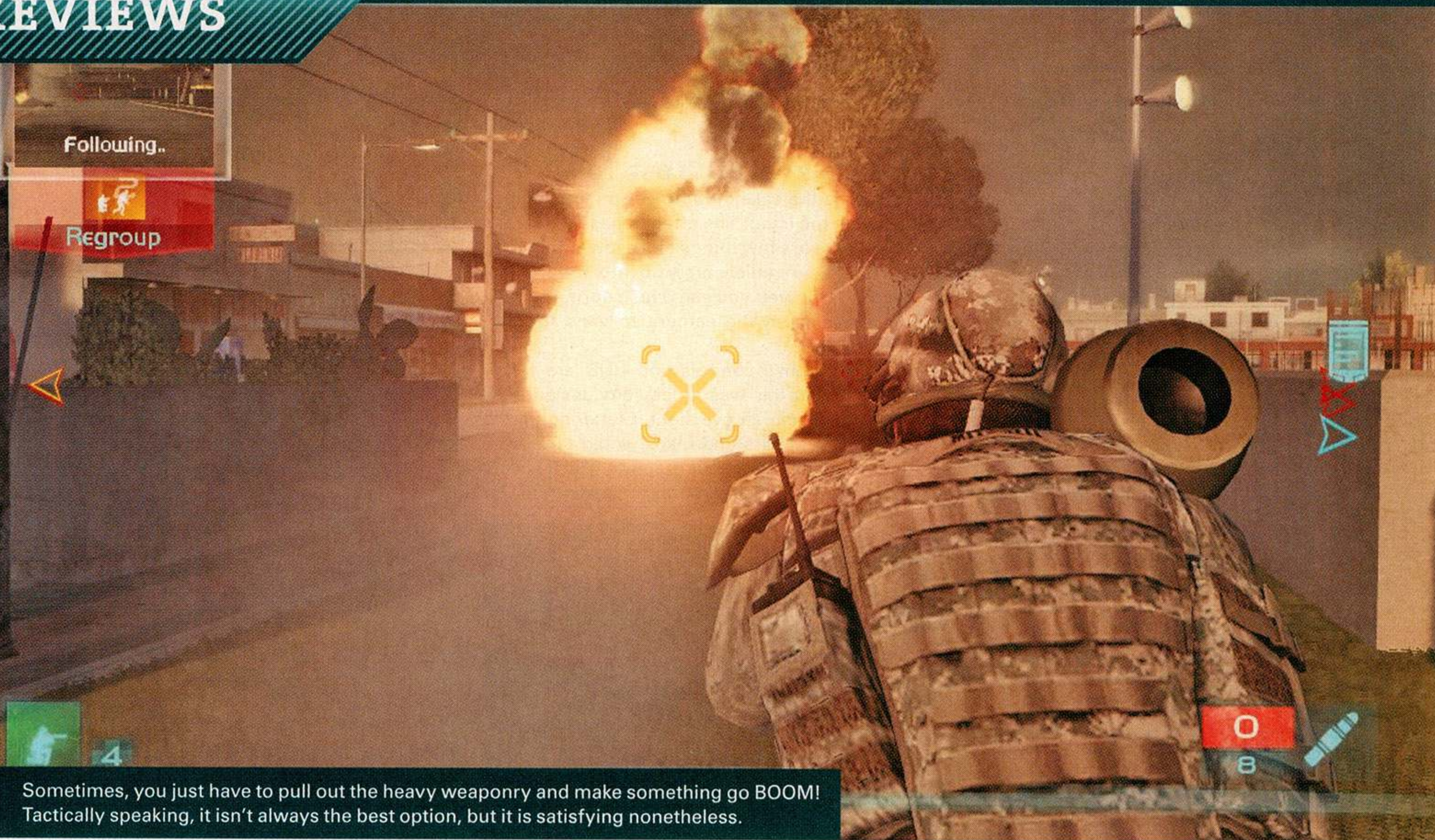
4.50

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: Exciting blend of racing and crashing. Great showcase of PS3's raw power.

Cons: Lean selection of cars and tracks. Unforgiving physics.



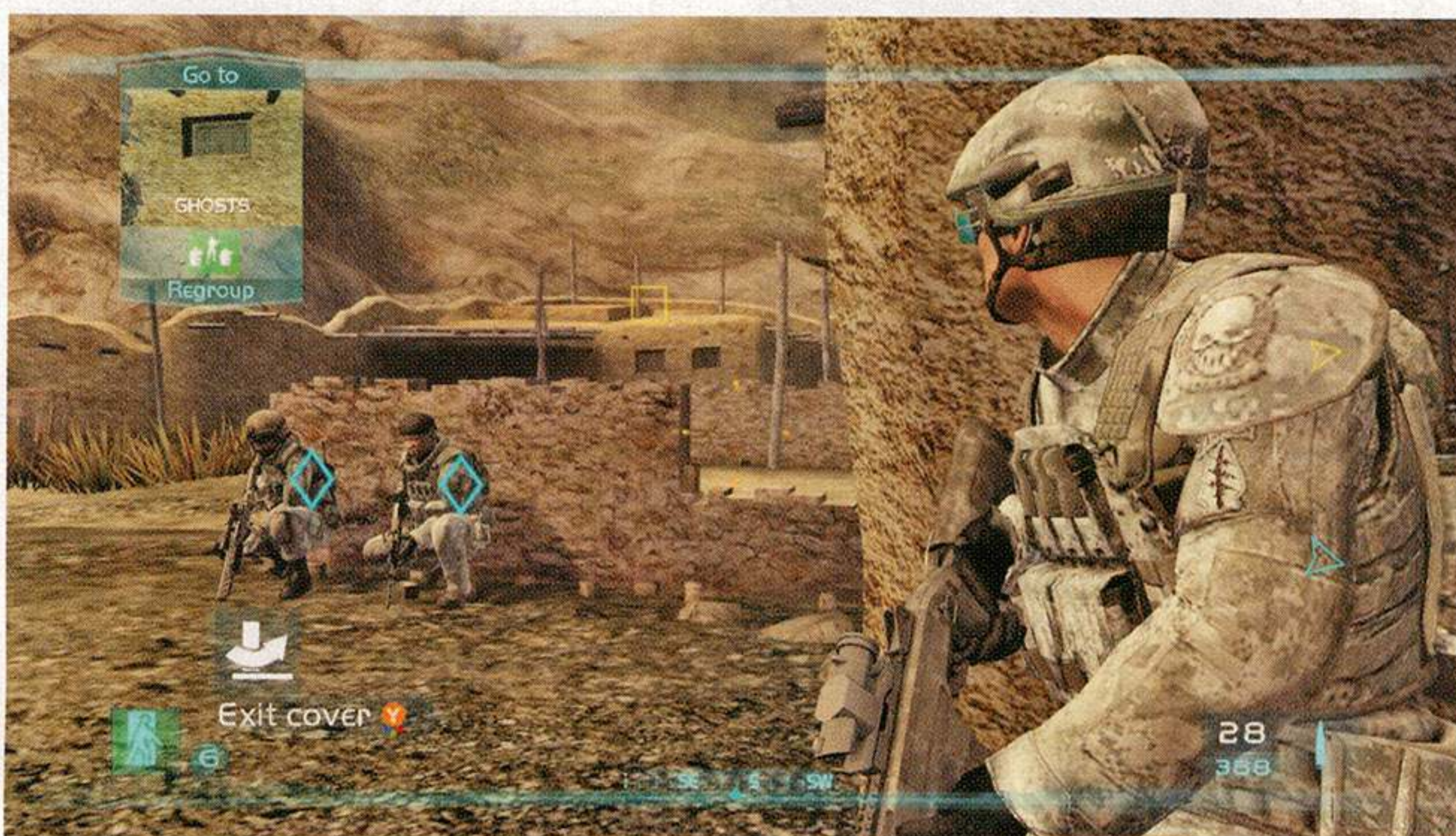
Sometimes, you just have to pull out the heavy weaponry and make something go BOOM! Tactically speaking, it isn't always the best option, but it is satisfying nonetheless.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

Tom Clancy's elite warriors of the future keep on rockin' in the free world.

Xbox 360 ESRB: T

Developer: Red Storm Publisher: Ubisoft



It's 2014, and Mexico is struggling to contain a rebellion on the eve of a new North American security agreement. Nukes go missing, and guess who gets to sweep up the mess? From the desolate wastes of the Mexican desert, to the streets of El Paso, Texas, you lead a squad of top tier soldiers who exist solely to execute the shadowy black-ops that Uncle Sam can't or won't acknowledge publicly.

WHO'S THE BOSS?

The bulk of Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2's solo play is split between cracking open cans of hot whoop-ass, scanning for cover and ambush possibilities, and ordering around a hand-picked squad at the start of each mission. Different warrior classes boast particular strengths and weaknesses: marksmen are great when you have the luxury of long range, medics can most

effectively heal anyone that catches a bullet, while riflemen and gunners are better off under closer combat circumstances. Balancing your squad with an array of talents is critical; a well-balanced team offers you flexibility and the ability to tackle a variety of problems as they arise.

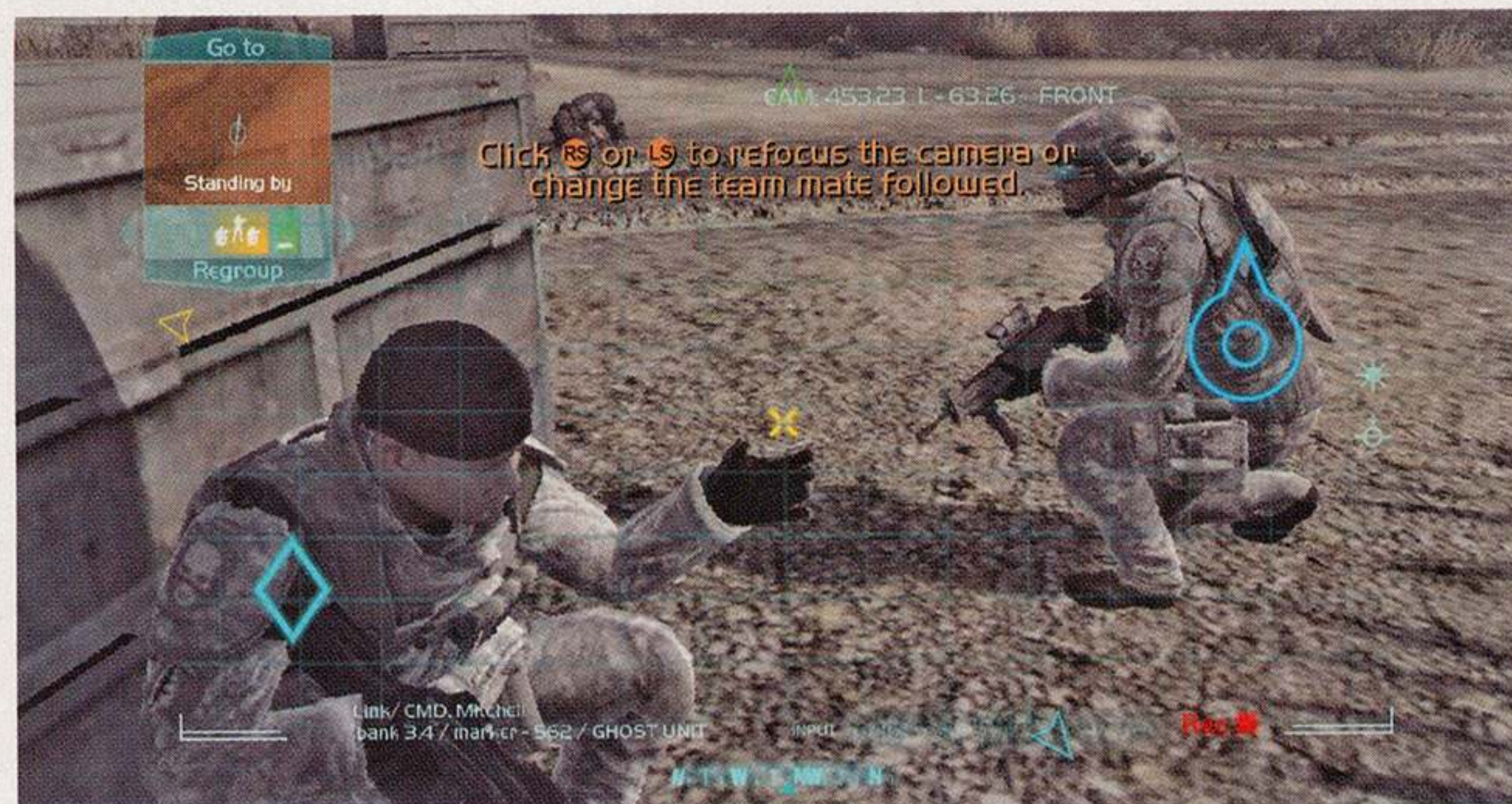
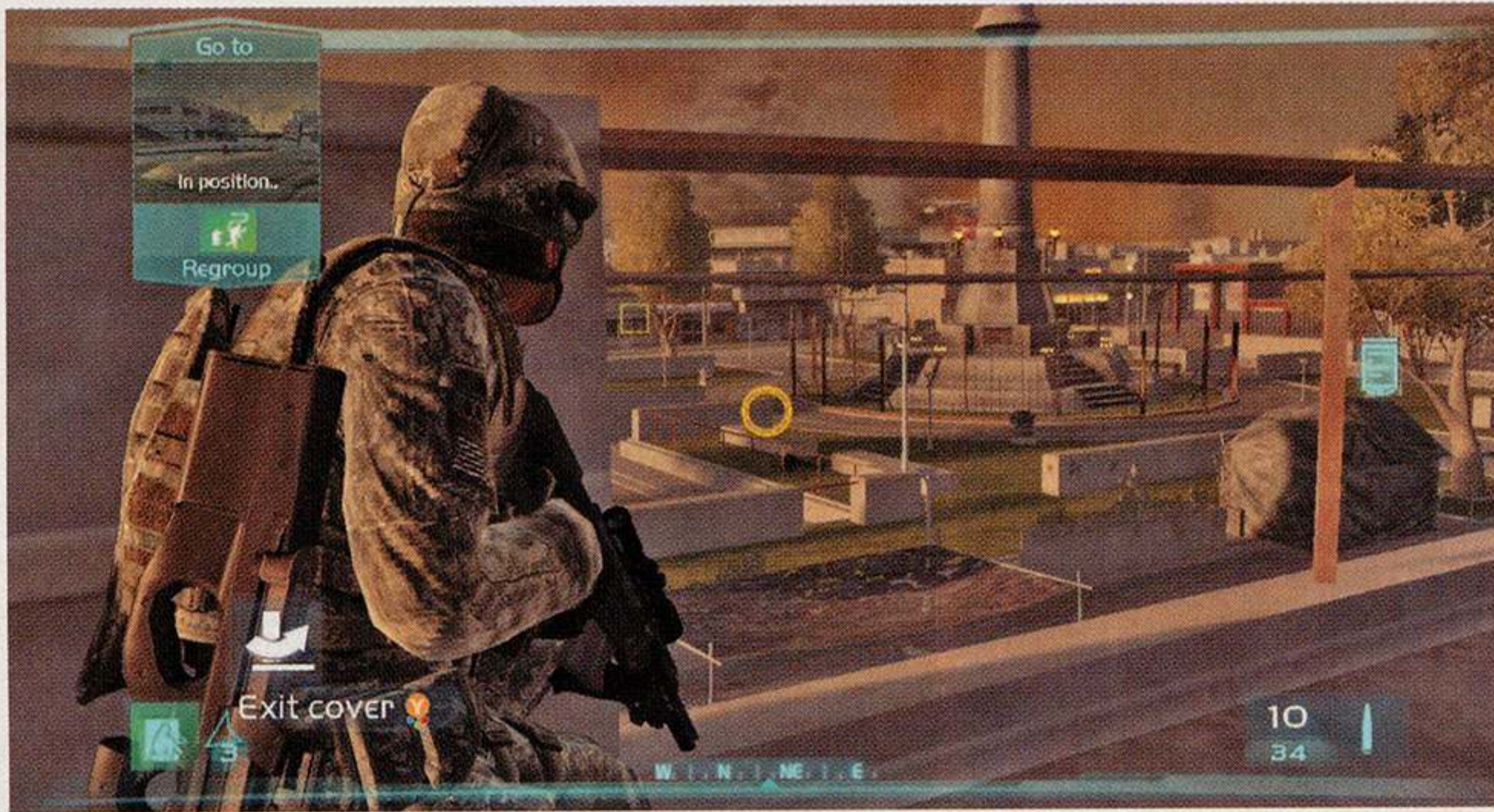
While squad shooter veterans might be a little put off by the surprisingly frequent stretches of solo play, usually involving a trip to a rally point reunion, or raining bullets from a helicopter's chain-gun, GRAW2 still offers tons of tactical juice—managing your cover, spotting snipers, and flanking the enemy without getting tagged makes for a tense and gritty play experience.

The spectacular graphics—embellished as they are with dynamic lighting, first-rate texturing, and the heat shimmer of convincing, fiery explosions—also do a fantastic job of pulling you into the game's world.

SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING

Unfortunately, excitement isn't the only thing that'll get your heart rate up. While the enemy A.I. has certainly improved, it's still too predictable. Even at the highest difficulty settings, enemies pop out from cover in too predictable a cycle, and don't take the advancement and flanking opportunities available to them.

Meanwhile, your own goons might not get hung up on any corners, but they still demonstrate a suicidal willingness to step in front of your fire,



or go hunting for a new cover spot at precisely the wrong moment. Worst of all, the heavy support you'll occasionally pick up—armored personnel carriers, tanks, recon choppers, and gunships—are often best told to go hide in a corner while you clear the opposition, since they act as if a coma patient is behind the wheel.

GROUND SUPPORT

But even if your compatriots are running around like headless chickens, at least you'll always be cool under fire. The control layout is the slickest

it's ever been, putting everything from firing options, weapon changes, and simple orders right at your fingertips. Select an allied asset with the directional pad, and hold down the right bumper to see the world from their full-screen point of view. This lets you take direct control of reconnaissance drones, and order companions to new cover without having them in your sight line, and every last bit of it is rendered in gorgeous detail.

The idea of a networked battleground, all accessed by a cyborg-like HUD, is intoxicating, but there is a troubling responsiveness issue with

some of the basic movement commands. Who wants to wait a second and a half to hit the deck when unseen enemies start unloading their automatic weapons? Why do you have to wait for a stance change animation to complete before switching weapons, or changing firing modes? Why are you sometimes unable to look down your rifle's scope without backing away from cover an inch or two?

A MOVABLE FEAST

Perhaps it's a testament to the cunning mission design, with its seemingly fluid objectives and only occasionally cheesy scripting, that the whole affair manages to be more exciting and entertaining than maddening despite these complaints. Still, whatever frustrations might lurk in the single player campaign, it's actually only half the game. Everything that made GRAW a multiplayer hit has been polished and expanded, with player complaints like spawn camping and degraded online image quality fully and effectively addressed.

There's so much to do online, it's actually a little ridiculous. Sixteen male and female characters might drop into a six mission co-op campaign that expands on the events of the main story line. Ad-hoc fire teams and lone gunmen can comb eight new maps (out of 18 total) of remarkable versatility and tactical opportunity at varying times of day while healing each other Gears of War-style.

There are even a few new modes, like "Officer," where a single random teammate's kills and deaths have a greater impact on the final scoreboard, or "Divide & Conquer," where every zone you take control of awards you more and stronger A.I. support, like soldiers and helicopter coverage. Everything from spawn counts, kit restrictions, and time limits is easily customized in seconds. There's even full clan support, where you and 99 of your closest pals can train together to become a well-oiled military machine.

SPLIT DECISION

GRAW2 is one of those games that makes you wonder how long it'll be before the advent of a dedicated online-only military world. The latest in this series might not reinvent the squad shooter, but with so much of its true value wrapped up in a compelling and expertly crafted online experience, it simply doesn't have to. Even the lingering control issues recede in the presence of a level playing field.

Still, even if you don't care one whit about online gaming, Red Storm's latest is exciting enough to offset the nagging sense that you've trod this ground before. It might not represent the pinnacle of the genre, but it is well worth playing. On the other hand, if you live and breathe online gaming, GRAW2 is undoubtedly a must-buy.—**Ouroboros**

FUN FACTOR

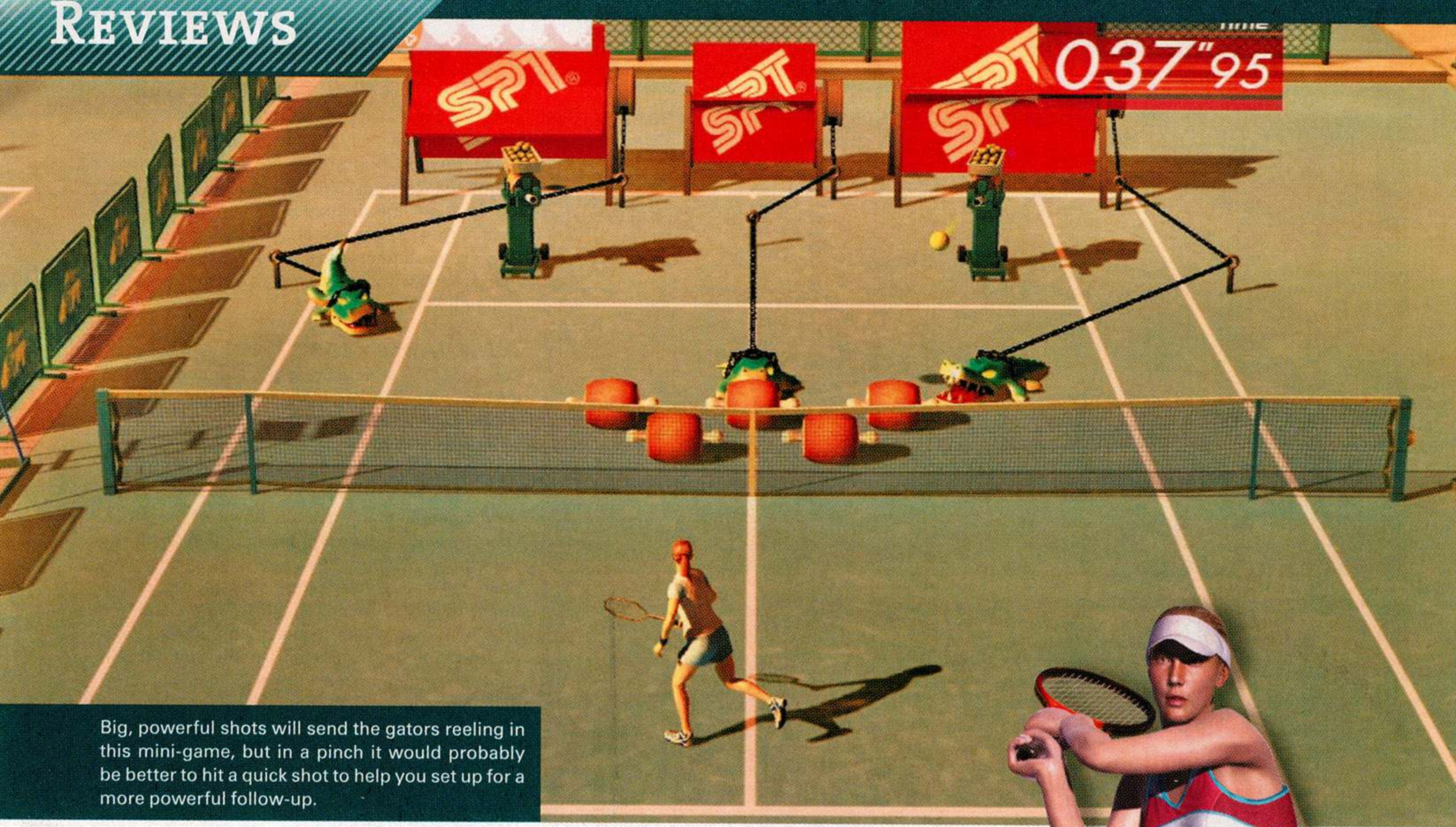
4.25

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: Visual upgrades, variety of multiplayer options, clan support.

Cons: A.I. and control issues. Improvements are merely evolutionary.



Big, powerful shots will send the gators reeling in this mini-game, but in a pinch it would probably be better to hit a quick shot to help you set up for a more powerful follow-up.



VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Sega's next-gen installment of tennis is here. But is it an ace or a total fault?

PS3 ESRB: E

Developer and publisher: Sega

Sega may be having a hard time keeping the Sonic franchise from becoming an endless string of unforgivably bad games, but thankfully, it appears the Virtua Tennis franchise has been spared the same fate. Ever since the first title was released on the Dreamcast, Virtua Tennis has remained one of the best sports franchises ever.

YOU'VE NEVER LOOKED BETTER ANNA

While a game like *Wii Sports* focuses its attention more on cartoonish simplicity and motion-sensing controls, *Virtua Tennis 3* skews towards the opposite end of the spectrum and delivers some amazingly-convincing visuals. Everything, from the impeccably rendered courts to the characters' wrinkled tennis shorts, comes together to in an impressive presentation package, especially if you have a 1080p enabled display.

The character models are also amazing, as are the stunningly fluid animations; not only do the characters "look" like the real thing, they "move"



like the real thing as well. There aren't any jerky movements here, and the eagle-eyed will appreciate all the subtle details that Sega snuck in, like referees adjusting in their seats and the ball-catchers patting down the net before a serve. This really gives the impression that your matches are taking place in a dynamic arena rather than a pre-staged environment.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

But as great as the on-court action is, *VT3* would quickly get long in the tooth were it not for the diverse and entertaining selection of mini-games. These quirky diversions are not only fun but they also help improve your characters abilities in the World Tour mode.

The bowling mini-game, for example, helps improve your serve while another game, in which you avoid giant boulders while collecting fruit, upgrades your footwork. Other modes include the standard tournament and exhibition as well as a bevy of multiplayer challenges, but the real appeal is the World Tour mode where you create your own customizable character and move your way up to the top of the pros.

Of course, all of this would be for naught if the game didn't feature tight controls, and thankfully, this has always been a strength of the series. *VT3's* intuitive and easy-to-use control layout makes it easy for beginners to pick up and start playing while providing plenty of options for more seasoned players. You have the option of using the Sixaxis' motion-sensing abilities but

given how good the standard layout is, it's hard to recommend it.

FAULT!

I should note that *VT3* does stumble few times. Because the character models are so impressive, minor flaws suddenly become glaring issues—I'm talking about things like hair clipping through shoulders and the zombie-like stares that are affixed to all the faces. Also troubling is the constant presence of loading screens, which really ruin the flow of the game.

Still, these problems shouldn't keep interested players from enjoying what is without a doubt an outstandingly well-made game. Its technically impressive visuals, easy to learn but hard to master gameplay, and great selection of mini-games makes *Virtua Tennis 3* an absolute ace. —The Watcher

FUN FACTOR

4.25

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: Everything a "next-gen" sports title should be.

Cons: Small graphical issues. Annoying loading screens.

FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

PS3 ESRB: E

Developer: Sony Studios Liverpool Publisher: Sony



With blazing speeds approaching 215 miles per hour, fragile cars, and highly demanding, technical race courses, the international Formula 1 circuit serves as an interesting counterpoint to the far more popular macho, roughneck world of NASCAR. Amazingly, Formula One Championship Edition captures all of these themes. Perhaps the greatest compliment that can be paid to this game is that it feels markedly different than a NASCAR racing game.



OMG, THE SPEED

A big part of the reason that the game feels different is the hair-raising, awe-inspiring sensation of speed. During one race, I flawlessly executed the final 180-degree turn at the Bahrain track and entered the straightaway at a top speed of 210 miles per hour. The feeling of speed was so intense down this straight that my friend Matt went slack-jawed, wide-eyed nuts, uttering profanities salty enough to make a nun faint.

But this is how F1 Championship Edition rolls. Clearly, the power of the PS3 has been successfully harnessed because the game's speed does not come with any sacrifice to graphical quality. The cars, environments, and race tracks all look close to photorealistic.

FUN FOR EVERYONE

Believe it or not, there's an element of game design here that is actually more important than the photorealistic graphics and manic sensation of speed. Sony Studios Liverpool has crafted an authentic-feeling experience that won't piss off inexperienced gamers who only know F1 on their keyboards.

The key is a series of gameplay aids that help you race without destroying yourself. As an example, while you zip around the course, a virtual green line is painted on the screen that demonstrates the ideal "line" that you should utilize when entering corners. Another example is the auto downshifting of gears as you enter tight turns. Even better, during race week, A.I. mechanics make all the necessary car adjustments based on your driving performance during practice laps.

Hardcore racers will be happy to know that you can turn off all these aids and manually adjust and control every racing element to your heart's content.

This is not to say that F1 Championship Edition is easy. In my first two races, I blazed top speeds that landed me in the pole position. But racing against a field of 22 drivers is a different experience than racing against the clock. In both races, I choked and wrecked out in the first three laps. Frustrating, sure, but it's refreshing to have some goals to work towards in a video game.—Lunchbox



FUN FACTOR

5.00

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: Gorgeous HD graphics, easy to play for first-timers, and speed, speed, speed!

Cons: Not a knock on the game, but F1 Racing has limited appeal in U.S.

300: MARCH TO GLORY

PSP ESRB: M

Developer: Collision Studios

Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment



Given a choice, I would have preferred that the developers drew upon Frank Miller's original graphic novel for the game's inspiration, rather than the movie—it would have been something special to see Miller's gutsy visuals brought to life on a PSP screen. But aside from the cut-scenes, which passably mimics Miller's style, 300: March to Glory looks depressingly conventional. The characters are standard sword-and-sandal action figures, and they run around boring, barren, mostly deserted levels whacking at waves of identical enemies.

If you took a Dynasty Warriors game and stripped away every redeeming quality, you would more or less end up with March to Glory. It's essentially a throwback to the days when movie-licensed games were always awful—as opposed to present day, when they're occasionally decent. Everything, from the plot to the action, moves in a straight line from point A to B. The pacing is all wrong, too. Even the weakest enemies take a handful of whacks to kill, so instead of plowing through the levels at a rapid and exciting pace, it's a slow, tedious slog. Furthermore, the frame rate also bogs down whenever more than a few enemies appear on the screen, or whenever the game's visual effects get too ambitious.

The historical event that inspired the comic book has a famously unhappy ending—of the 300 Spartans who fought at Thermopylae, exactly one survived, and only because he was a traitor. If you happen to believe in omens, that's a pretty bad one and as such, it doesn't bode well for this game.—DFS



FUN FACTOR

2.25

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: The original graphic novel is awesome.

Cons: This game? Not so much.

MLB 07 THE SHOW

PS2 ESRB: E

■ Developer: Sony Studios San Diego ■ Publisher: Sony



As baseball games continue to evolve, the MLB franchise will always have the challenge of outdoing itself year after year. Thankfully, MLB 07 has stepped up to the plate and knocked one over the fence.



PITCH PERFECT

This year's installment has pushed a little closer to the feel of a real baseball experience with the new Pitching Command System. The system offers advice on how and where to pitch based on your strengths and weaknesses. It also lets you work on your "pitch comfort" where, if you stick with one pitch, it will strengthen, but if you ignore a pitch, it will weaken. Each pitcher has a unique wind-up and release, and it's up to you to master the timing.

If there's a weak link in this game, it's on the offensive side of things. The batting system is pretty unsophisticated when compared with the rest of the game. With some practice you can attempt to control where the ball lands, but that was an art I never mastered. The Guess Pitch option lets you look at the pitch history and take a whack

at what kind of pitch will be coming your way. If you're right, your swing will have more power, but to be honest, I almost never got it right.

THE UMPIRE STRIKES BACK

One of the most unique new options involves a key figure most people don't even think about; the umps. Umpires now have their own distinct attitudes and animations, and more importantly, each ump has his own idea of what the strike zone is, so pay attention and comply. Fielding can also be a lot of fun as each individual player's abilities will determine his ease in making catches and throwing out runners.

There are plenty of features to keep you entertained; Home Run Derby and King of the Diamond let you focus on honing specific skills. You can choose to play one exhibition, an entire season, the playoffs or even Rivalry Mode, where you can set up multi-game rivalries against other players or the A.I.

MLB 07 looks and sounds great. It's amazing how specific the announcers' comments are, players look like their real-world counterparts and stadiums have the intricate details that will make any fan proud.—**Kilgore**

FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00

Pros: Great pitching mechanic. Solid baseball experience.

Cons: Batting mechanic needs work.



SHINING FORCE EXA

PS2 ESRB: E10+

■ Developer and Publisher: Sega



Back during the hey-day of the 16-bit Genesis era, Sega's blue mascot, Sonic, was bringing home the bacon, but it was the Shining Force series that was bringing home the accolades.

The latest installment in the vaunted franchise, Shining Force EXA, eschews the familiar strategy-RPG gameplay for an action oriented feel. The visuals are pretty impressive for a PS2 game, and the fantasy-themed world really comes alive. The cinematics are another strong suit, and while they don't rival the quality found in games like Final Fantasy X, they get the job done.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said for the game's combat system, which suffers from level grind issues. The Geo-Fortress, a huge mobile castle/shop/training facility armed with a gargantuan cannon, breaks up the monotony but be warned that the combat never really changes.

One other word of warning: the game's audio is terrible. While the music is okay, the sound effects and the sub-par voice acting will have you hitting the mute button in a hurry.

If you can overlook those shortcomings, you'll be treated to a decent enough RPG game. EXA doesn't do much to further the legacy of the series but at least it doesn't critically damage it either.—**SonOfTheShiningPath**



FUN FACTOR

3.50

OUT OF 5.00

Pros: Nice visuals and cut-scenes. Geo-Fortress is an interesting addition to gameplay.

Cons: Horrible voice acting. Repetitive grind-style combat.



SSX BLUR

Wii ESRB: E

Developer: EA Montreal Publisher: EA Sports Big



When will developers learn that just because you *can* design a funky control scheme around the Wii Remote, it doesn't mean you *should*. *SSX Blur* could have been a decent ride, but its cumbersome control scheme dooms it to an arctic hell.

I GOTTA BLAST A DOOKIE?

Explaining *SSX Blur*'s control scheme is like trying to give a brief primer on quantum physics, but here goes. With the default settings, swing the Nunchuk to make wide turns, use the control stick for tighter turns, press the C button to pivot 90-degrees, and the Z button to activate grabs during aerials. Flicking the Wii Remote performs spins and flips while the A button activates jumps and "Übertricks," and the B button packs snowballs you can throw at collectibles and opponents.

There's a fine line between complexity and impenetrability, but *SSX Blur* has crossed over to the wrong side of the track, effectively locking players out of the experience. The Nunchuk's sensitivity makes it difficult to execute smooth turns, while the free-floating Wii Remote often has you veering out of bounds or screw-attacking wildly through the air because of an unintentional wrist flinch. The Übertricks are even worse: you're required to draw ridiculous precision patterns in a split-second of airtime. Talk about frustration.

DOOK ON!

That said, the game isn't *totally* intolerable: when the controls aren't getting in your way, the early 90s X-treme vibe and the downhill-based snowboarding/skiing action are actually pretty decent. Not much has changed from past *SSX* titles, and the graphics are kinda snazzy for a Wii game. Unfortunately, it's all a moot point, given the game's incredibly cumbersome controls.

Dedicated (read: masochistic) gamers willing to invest the time necessary to figure out the controls might get a kick out of *SSX Blur*, but the convoluted configuration on the Wii Remote and Nunchuk will rightfully turn off most players. The lesson here is painfully clear: Wii developers need to start with a blank slate rather than graft old-school control schemes onto the Wii Remote because, as *SSX Blur* demonstrates, it just doesn't work. —This Old Man



FUN FACTOR

2.50

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: Buried under the bad controls lies a decent enough action-sports game.

Cons: The controls are *awful*.



KICK



LEGEND OF THE DRAGON

legendofthedragonvideogame.com

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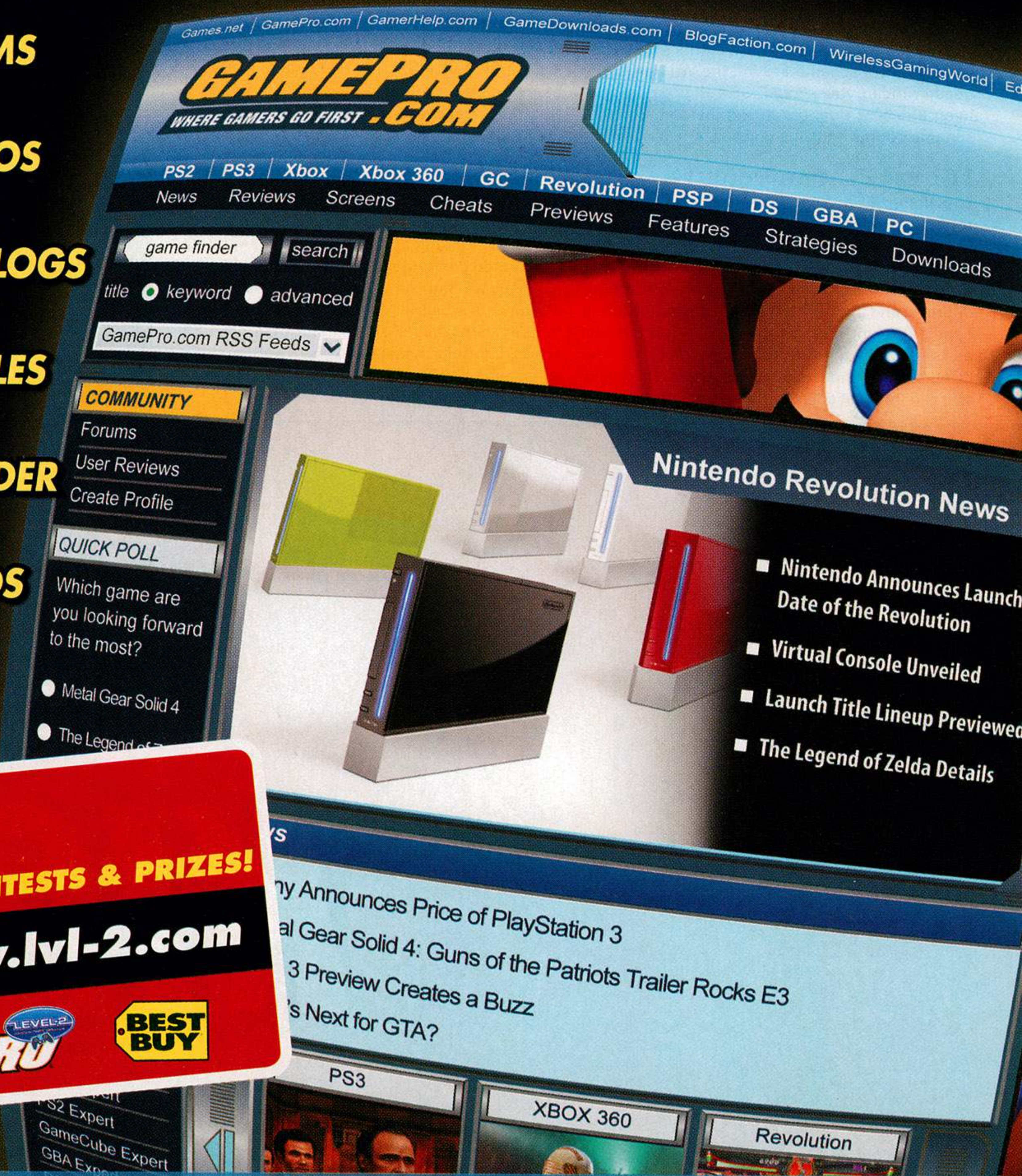
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TEKKEN 5: DARK RESURRECTION

PS3 ESRB: T

Developer and publisher: Namco Bandai Games



good news is that it's a pixel-perfect port of the arcade game.

There's no sense in mincing words: Tekken 5: DR doesn't come close to capturing the full graphical potential of the PlayStation 3. In fact, as far as next-gen brawlers go, it's a bit on the homely side. Fighters are dressed in low-to-medium resolution textures and suffer from the occasional chunky polygon. The fighting areas look sharp but sport flat environmental lighting effects, giving the overall impact of a PS2 game on steroids rather than a truly new-gen flagship fighter.

VIVA NINA

Ah, but 1080p support throws in a seductive wrinkle. Tekken 5: DR's graphics technology may not be on the cutting edge, but its display resolution definitely is. If you're one of those lucky bastards who got an HDMI-equipped 1080p TV set for Christmas, you're in for a treat in the form of a dazzlingly vivid, crystal-clear image. The 720p and 480p modes also sparkle with clarity. We did spot a moment or two of slowdown on the 1080p setting when playing on one of the busier backdrops, but it's nothing to get worked up about.

As a full-priced retail PS3 game, we'd be hugely underwhelmed by Tekken 5: DR—it just doesn't add enough outside an enormous character roster and HD graphics. But for a downloadable game at a low price point, this one's pretty much a no-brainer. Download it!—**Vicious Sid**



FUN FACTOR

4.25

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: The best Tekken yet. Luscious 1080p support.

Cons: Not truly next-gen.

BORROWING FROM PETER TO PAY PAUL PHOENIX

There aren't any surprises with Tekken 5: DR, as it plays just as precisely as its PlayStation 2 siblings. In fact, it might play a mite better thanks to the Sixaxis' comfier directional pad. Tekken's trademark staccato play style is loved by some, and maligned by the rest, and this game won't do anything to change those opinions. The



CLAW



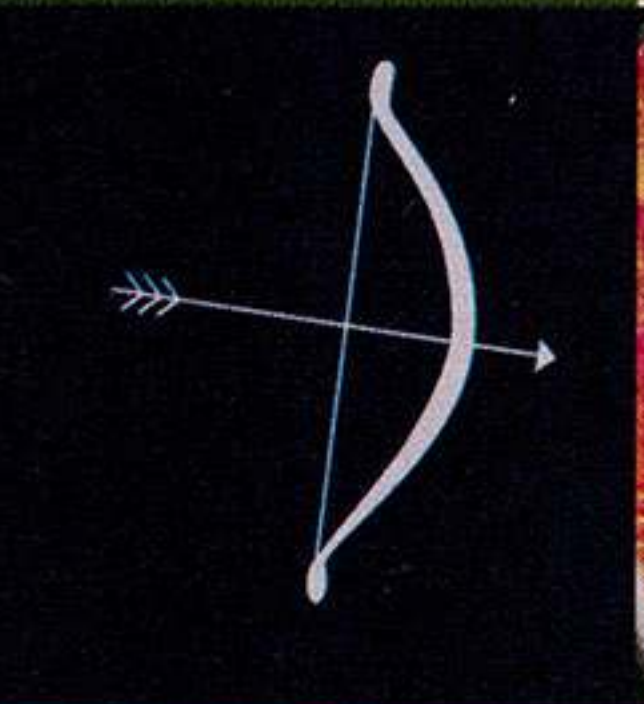
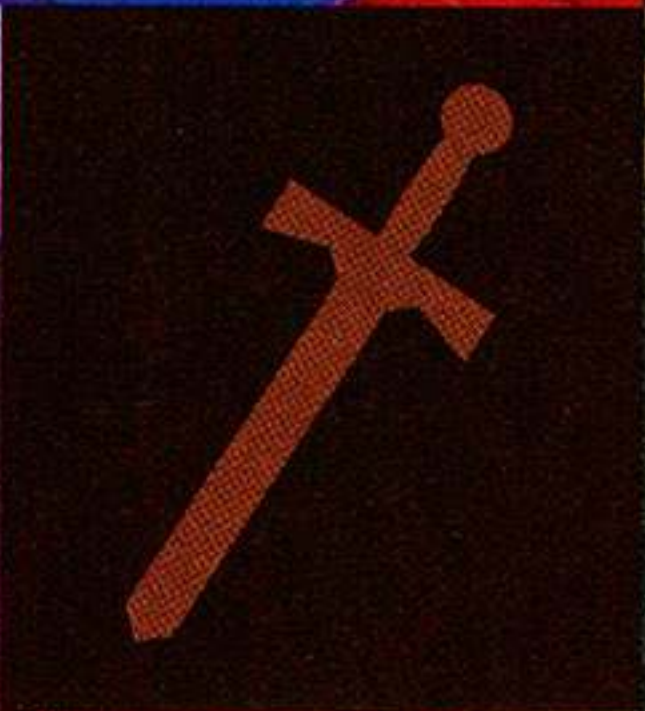
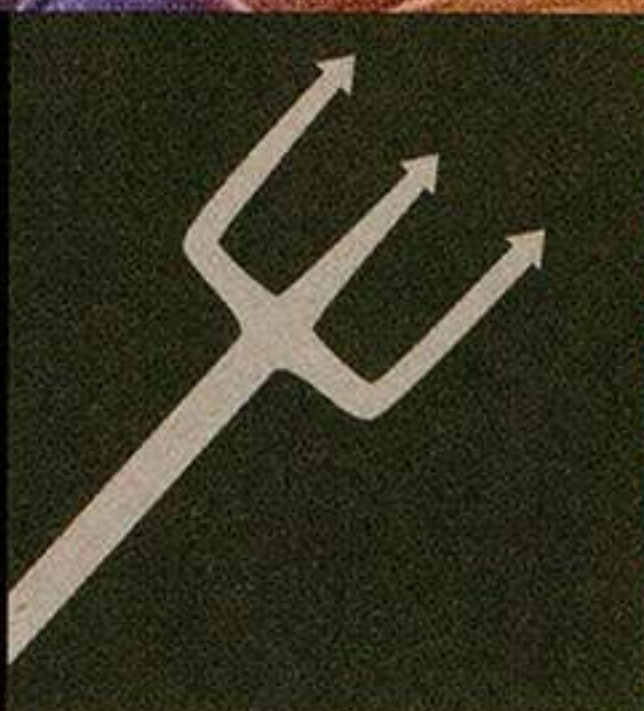
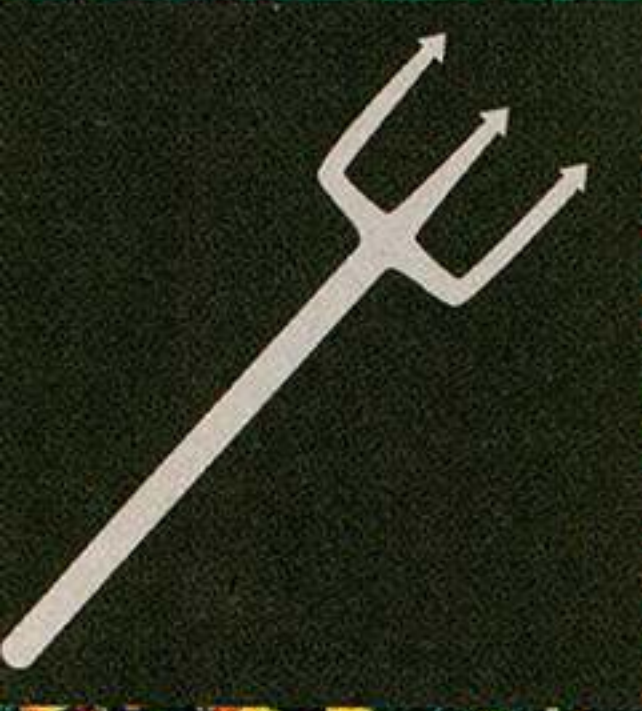
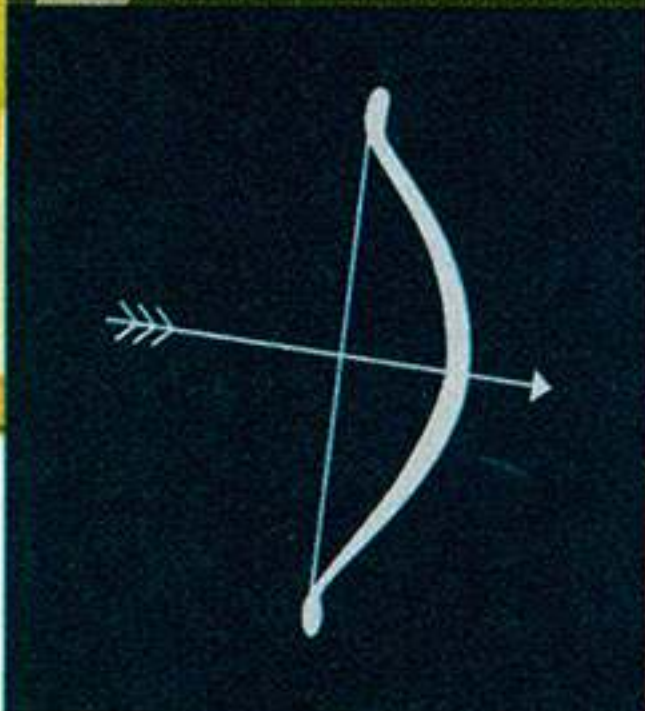
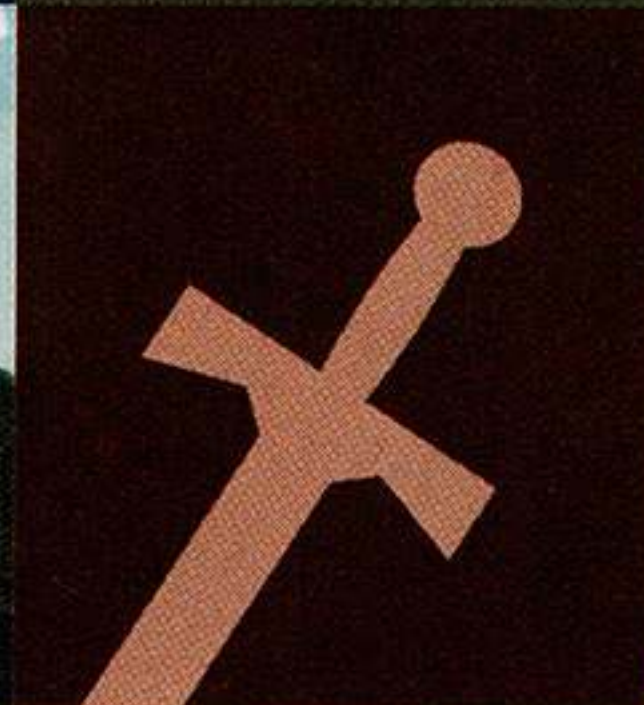
LEGEND OF THE DRAGON



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NBA STREET HOMECOURT

Xbox 360 ESRB: E

Developer: EA Canada Publisher: EA Sports Big



Arcaade sports games are a difficult endeavor. Franchises like NBA Jam, NFL Blitz, and NHL Hitz burned out after a few iterations because of a lack of innovation. EA Sports Big's NBA Street series, however, has managed to stay on top with a consistent formula that was tweaked over the course of the franchise's history, ultimately culminating in the fantastic Homecourt.

FIXING WHAT WAS NEVER BROKEN

As it was, is, and will be forever in the series, this latest version of NBA Street features three-on-three streetball games in which your style is almost as important as your score. By attempting tricks before hitting your shot, you build up your Gamebreaker meter. Fill the meter and you can attempt a Gamebreaker—a shot that will add one to four points to your score while deducting a point from your opponent.

EA consistently tweaked the Gamebreaker concept throughout the series, and this may be the best implementation of it yet. Basically, whenever a team has activated the Gamebreaker, the point swing goes to the first team that scores during it. Previously, only the team that activated the Gamebreaker could use it, and if the opponent managed to gain possession during it, they'd have to play keep away until the Gamebreaker mode subsided. By allowing any team to take advantage, EA added a welcome layer of strategy that can dramatically affect the outcome of a game.

NBA Street Homecourt is also the most stylish sports game you'll ever play. Between the old-school funk music, the classic, soulful

pregame narration, and the easily accessible arcade-style gameplay, it's the kind of game that should appeal to b-ball neophytes and the hard court hardcore alike.

BREAKING WHAT ALREADY WORKED

Unfortunately NBA Street Homecourt hits a few snags that keep it from perfection. The create-a-player mode has been dumbed-down in every regard. Gone is the ability to tweak your own stats or create a visage from scratch. Instead, you "morph" your character using two NBA stars and a third generic character as a template, while your stats auto-increase with every level-up. The single and multiplayer modes haven't seen much tweaking, which is also disappointing, but the ability to play on Xbox Live is always a welcome feature.

NBA Street Homecourt has solid superstar skills but it's lost a few of its sweet moves. The Street franchise is still a few tweaks away from true legend status.—**DaveMayCry**



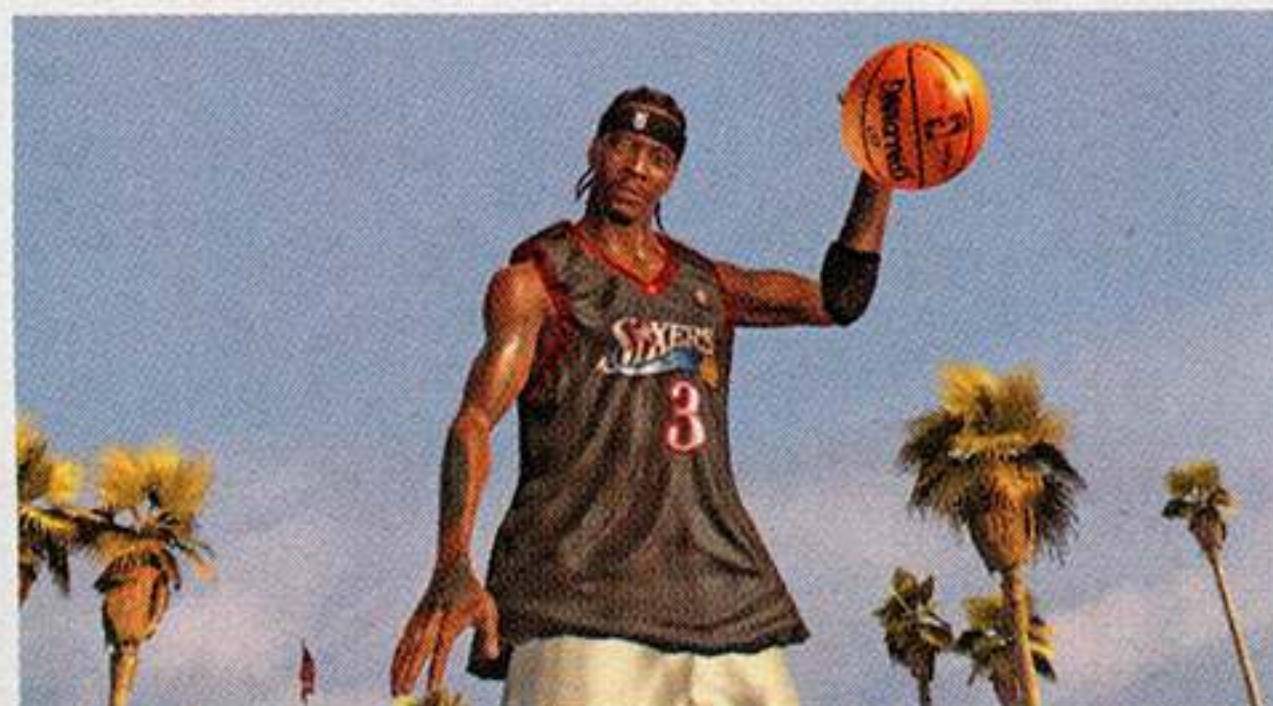
FUN FACTOR

4.25

OUT OF 5.00

Pros: Arcade b-ball perfected. NBA Jam must be rolling in its grave.

Cons: Somebody broke the create-a-player.



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SONIC AND THE SECRET RINGS

Wii ESRB: E

Developer and Publisher: Sega



Forget about the huge missteps of the “next-gen” Sonic title for the PS3 and Xbox 360. Secret Rings for the Wii is a good indication that the iconic hedgehog might be headed back to his former glory.

WHERE NO HEDGEHOG HAS GONE BEFORE

The story of Secret Rings places Sonic in the middle of the Arabian Nights. It’s not terribly original but the development team did a good job of integrating the storyline into the gameplay and vice versa; several familiar faces, such as Tails and Knuckles, appear in the game in full Arabian Nights themed identities.

For the most part, Sonic makes the leap onto the Wii without much fuss. Tilting the Wii Remote to the left and right moves Sonic in that respective direction; the 1 and 2 buttons control stopping and jumping. There are also some clever motion-sensing tricks, such as a flying barrel that requires you to move the Wii Remote up and down like you’re pumping up your bike tire.

Much like everything else about this game, it takes some getting used to, but after a few minutes of using the Wii Remote like a Sonic steering wheel, it quickly becomes second nature and feels more natural than simple button mashing.

BURNING RING OF FIRE

Secret Rings also allows you to customize Sonic through the use of a special ring that focuses on three key areas: speed, assault, or defense. You can mix and match to create a Sonic that’s right for you. Then there’s the Soul Gauge, which allows Sonic to control time. By filling the Soul Gauge and pressing up, you can take Sonic to speeds that will make your head spin and it’s one of the coolest-



looking effects in the game. Pressing Down with a full Soul Gauge makes time slow down to a snail’s pace, allowing Sonic to maneuver through obstacles moving too fast, even for him.

CLEAR THE ROOM

One word of warning though: the game is tough, and not in a good way. You better tighten up that Wii Remote strap because you will feel the urge to throw the controller through the television, especially early in the game, before Sonic gets a lot of his abilities.

Once you get Sonic up to speed, the game is fun, but still really challenging. It will test your patience faster than a misbehaving toddler, but once you get used to the controls, the customization, and the challenges, you’ll be glad you gave this game a chance. —Keep’um Gessin’

FUN FACTOR

3.75

OUT OF 5.00

Pros: Holy crap, a Sonic game that’s actually fun! Can it be?

Cons: The learning curve is steep.



WII PLAY

Wii ESRB: T

Developer and Publisher: Nintendo



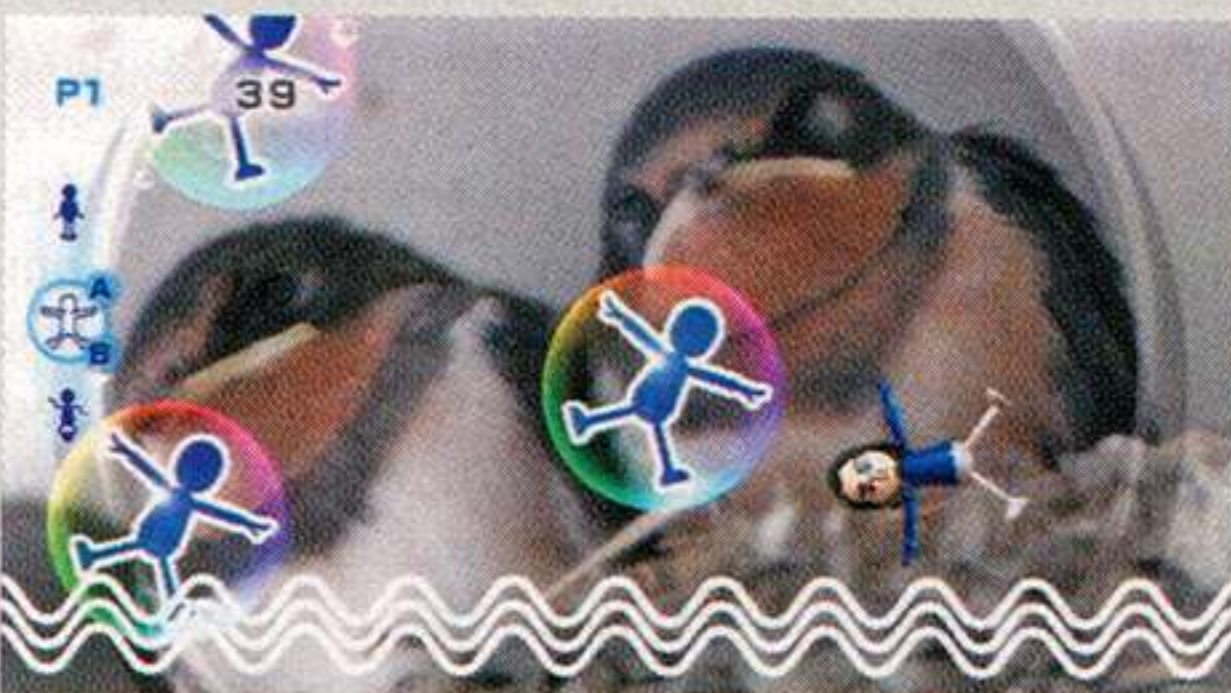
Let’s not mince words here: As a stand-alone game, Wii Play is awful. It has nine mini-games but they are all, without exception or fail, repetitive and mediocre. The best of the bunch is a measly Laser Hockey game, which is just Pong with a futuristic Tron makeover, but it’s not by any means great. Even the games that seem like they should be awesome fall short.

The 9-Ball game is marred by an unintuitive control scheme and a problematic scoring system (you get points equivalent to the ball you sink, meaning the “9” ball gives you nine points and so on), while the Duck Hunt inspired Shooting Range suffers from some sensitivity issues; this problem also affects the other mini-games as well.

As such, it’s hard to recommend Wii Play, but there is one positive aspect that cannot be overlooked: It comes with a Wii Remote, and you can never have enough Wii Remotes. This fact suddenly makes the whole package much more compelling. When you look at it from this angle, Wii Play is only costing you ten dollars, as that’s the price differential between this package and an extra Wii Remote; that means you’re essentially paying \$1 per mini-game. Sadly, most of them aren’t worth even that, but it’s hard to argue with the economics.

If you needed an excuse to pick up another Wii Remote and you have an extra Hamilton in your wallet, then by all means pick up Wii Play. Just don’t expect to fully get your money’s worth.

—The Grim Wiiper



FUN FACTOR

2.00

OUT OF 5.00

Pros: The included Wii Remote is nice.

Cons: The included game isn’t.



M.A.C.H.

PSP ESRB: E10+

Developer: Mastiff Publisher: Falcom



MA.C.H., or Modified Air Combat Heroes, offers up two modes for you to participate in: racing or dogfighting. Dogfights are frenzied bloodbaths with eight planes launching missiles and pelting each other with machine-gun fire, which makes for some intense action filled sequences. The races are fast and furious rocket rides through tight canyons and tunnels. Unfortunately, while the actual gameplay is interesting and fun, the joy of racing and combat doesn't last long thanks to a disturbing lack of depth and variety.

For one, M.A.C.H. only has five tracks, which is a staggeringly low number for any racing game. They are well designed, but five is just too small a number to keep any gamer occupied. You can fly them in long, short or reverse versions, but it does little to spice things up. The weapon and vehicle selection also leaves much to be desired; the most common power-up, a standard heat-seeking missile, is by far the most effective, and aside from cosmetic differences, the different planes ultimately end up feeling like carbon copies of each other.

Additionally, the last plane you unlock comes decked with maxed out stats in every category. It's a nice reward for your efforts, but it leaves you little reason to fly anything else once you have it.

M.A.C.H. is a good game for PSP owners who are fans of racing or arcade-style air combat but it falls too short on depth and details. It's good for quick and dirty play sessions but there isn't much there to keep you occupied for long. —Hamster4Sale



FUN FACTOR

3.50

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: The game does offer some thrills...
Cons: ...but the ride is over far too soon.

SPECTROBES

DS ESRB: E

Developer: Jupiter Corp
Publisher: Disney Interactive

Spectrobes is a monster collecting RPG that will have you digging for substance. The game begins by thrusting you in the shoes of a young space agent Rallen who must use monsters called Spectrobes to take down a menacing threat and save human kind from destruction.



I'll admit that, generic story aside, the game initially drew me in with its' innovative use of the DS' features—I especially liked the unique plastic overlay cards with numbered holes that unlock new monsters—but then it stranded me in the land of boredom with shallow gameplay and repetitive mechanics. Spectrobes are fossilized monsters. To collect them you must search the environments, dig them up, and then help them evolve in to an adult form to fight for you.

Excavating the fossils is the game's strength, but it quickly grows repetitive. The control scheme is intuitive but it ultimately feels like a gimmick. To make things worse the Spectrobes have less personality than a can of soup so there is little incentive to continue catching them.

As it is, Spectrobes is little more than a dull game of collecting fossils with a momentarily enjoyable gimmick attached to it. If you're looking for a sci-fi Pokémon fix, this might just be the ticket. —PapaFrog



FUN FACTOR

3.00

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: Effective use of the DS' features.
Cons: Mesmerizingly dull, lifeless creatures and gameplay.

IZUNA: LEGEND OF THE UNEMPLOYED NINJA

DS ESRB: E10+

Developer: Sting Publisher: Atlus



Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja follows the misadventures of a troop of jobless ninjas who anger the gods by stealing a temple shrine. To lift the curse Izuna must seek out and defeat the six village gods in forests, lakes, mines, and caves.

The game's most stand-out feature is the dungeon randomizer which constructs and populates each dungeon with enemies, items, and traps. It keeps the game fresh and provides the player with an infinite amount of content to explore, but a few levels in you start to notice that each dungeon is just a carbon copy of the last one. The subtle touches of a clever, lovingly crafted dungeon common to any Zelda title, like hidden passages and multi-tiered design, are conspicuously absent.

The battle system works well overall, but it's a bit simple. While it is fun at times, dungeon crawling can feel like a turn-based game of Pac-Man where your main objective is to fend off monsters while gobbling up as many items as possible before defeating the dungeon's boss. The way death is handled is definitely a weak point, as it strips your character of money, items, and equipment; the rigid save system doesn't help either.

Despite its anime-style visuals, the game probably won't appeal to younger gamers due to its harsh penalty for failure, but it should have enough going for it to please old-school RPG fans. —Flasherman

FUN FACTOR

3.50

OUT OF 5.00



Pros: Random dungeons and an interesting visual style.
Cons: Penalty for dying is harsh. Save system is too rigid.



ASK THE PROS

You ask, we answer. We hear your pleas for more Miis, does Nintendo? And the return of 2K Football, at last!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH



wiimaniac

WHERE ARE WIIS?

Q: Will Nintendo make any downloads available to expand the customization options for Miis? I would like more Mii hairstyles so I can give my Mii a Mohawk! —**wiimaniac**

Ahoy_and_Avast says: I've been ranting and raving about this in the office ever since the Wii came out, wiimaniac. I have no idea what is taking Nintendo so long to do this. It's inevitable that they will release some sort of hair/clothes/face pack for Mii customization in their online store; it's a matter of when, not if. But why they are dragging their feet is beyond me. They could even put out costume packs. Imagine dressing your Mii up in a Mario or Link costume. What about Mega Man? Then you add in the possibility of having pets (Nintendogs tie-in anyone?), or even anthropomorphic animal characters and the sky is literally the limit.

It might be just a case of too many good ideas, not enough time. Nintendo's smart enough to know that they have a cash cow in their possession: now they just have to figure out how to best carve it up. You'll have your Mohawk sooner or later. In the meantime, you can grow one in real life just like our own, SonoftheShiningPath.



Ahoy_and_Avast

WII REMOTE BLUES

Q: My Wii Remote is just flashing and doing nothing else. Please help me! —**donutden**

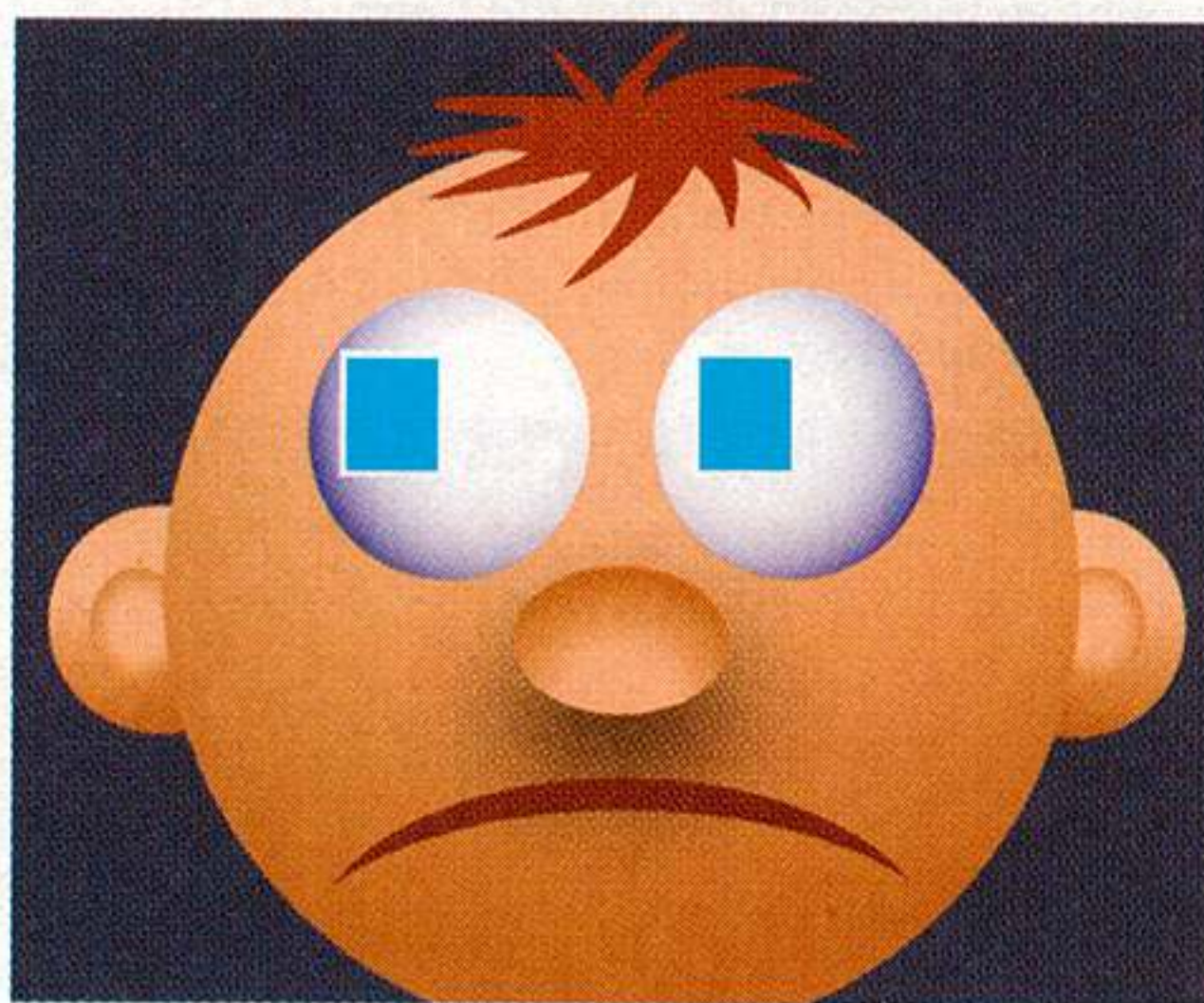


donutden



Ahoy_and_Avast

Ahoy_and_Avast says: I'm going to discount the possibility that your Wii Remote wears a trench coat and terrorizes people by "revealing" itself to them. Instead, I assume that the lights on the Wii Remote are flashing, but that the unit itself isn't registering any of your commands. There are a couple of possibilities here. The first is that the batteries are running low. Try swapping them out for fresh ones. Another possibility is that the Wii Remote is having trouble syncing up with the Wii. We've experienced this ourselves and sometimes it's just a matter of pushing the sync buttons over and over again until the Wii and the Wii Remote find each other. Powering down the system and powering it back up might help as well. The third possibility is that the Wii Remote is broken. If you can, try to sync another Wii Remote up to the Wii and see if it works. If so, that might be the sign of a faulty Wii Remote unit. But I'm guessing it's something relatively minor, like dead batteries.



GEARS OF WAR PC BOUND?

Q: Will there be a PC version of Gears of War? —**Potatoe**



Potatoe

ViciousSid says: More than likely there will be a version of Gears of War for the PC, but don't look for it until Gears of War 2 hits the Xbox 360...at the earliest. Epic has made statements suggesting that a PC version was always planned; Halo (and now Halo 2) made it to the PC. My guess? 2008.



Vicious Sid

2K8 FOOTBALL: THE LEGEND RETURNS

Q: Is it true that there will be no new Madden 08 football game? That's insane! But maybe it's time for another football game to take Madden down. —**EyeGuy**



EyeGuy



BroBuzz

BroBuzz says: Normally we'd just bench a question as off the wall as yours, but you saved yourself by mentioning pro football alternatives. 2K Sports has announced All-Pro Football 2K8 due out this summer. There's only the merest trickle of info right now, but the game will feature legendary NFL players, and you can build some outrageous all-star teams. EA and Madden own the NFL license, and it's only the third year of the five year agreement (which is why your original question is wack). That means All-Pro Football 2K8 can't use official teams, jerseys, or current players, but for the opportunity to make another Montana-to-Rice touchdown who cares what colors they're wearing. If 2K Sports focuses on its great football mechanic and bypasses gimmicks like first-person view, this game will build a monstrous following.

And, yes...natch...of course there will be a Madden 08 NFL Football this season...jeez.

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Posts: 1619



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Posts: 6101



Rezarechshun

#6

Status: Hero
Total Points: 5791
Posts: 5549



pastorek94

#7

Status: Hero
Total Points: 5755
Posts: 5217



polo972

#8

Status: Hero
Total Points: 5523
Posts: 4011



kingconker64

#9

Status: End Boss
Total Points: 5423
Posts: 4841



simple

#10

Status: Hero
Total Points: 5833
Posts: 2807

READER REVIEW OF THE MONTH



mrhammer
Status: n00B

Lost Planet: Extreme Condition

(Capcom) (Xbox 360)

User Score:

4.50



"There was a reason they built the Xbox 360 with so much horsepower."

Humanity just can't catch a break, can it? We have to abandon Earth for a planet that doubles as a cosmic snowball, and then we get attacked by aliens. Shoot. Here's the deal: You have a health meter and you have a number. The number is how much thermal energy is in your protective suit (it's cold out there, remember?), and the life bar is...well, life. When your thermal suit runs out of energy, your life starts depleting; when it gets to the end, you lose. So how do you get thermal energy? By killing things and grabbing glowing orbs that come from their bodies. If that sounds tough, it's not; it's actually fun. The rest of the gameplay is fun too, once you learn the controls. But this game's strength is graphics. There was a reason they built the Xbox 360 with so much horsepower: It was for games like this to fully take advantage of that, as Lost Planet does.



AWESOME THREADS

Overheard on the **GamePro.com** message boards...

WHAT IS THE APPEAL OF THE PS2?

"I like the huge library of games, there is/was something for everyone to play with the PS2."

—seabass3682 on the appeal of the PS2

NEXT-GEN CONSOLE WARRIORS DON'T UNDERSTAND...

We all know visually the PC is the omega of gaming, the place to find a true next-gen experience in terms of raw graphics. But check this interesting fact: did you know that your PS3 or Xbox 360 is more powerful than the average home PC in terms of processor power? The Xbox 360 has three processors running a whopping 3.2 GHz, and Sony fans speculate the PS3 is even more powerful (most PC gaming rigs don't even go up to 3.2 on a dual core). But why is it that the PC always looks better? Its the fact you can update and change the video card. Computers these days are all fast and consoles are even faster in terms of processor power—certainly more powerful than average home-based PCs (again, only in terms of processor power). The reason they make consoles so powerful, with things like three 3.2 cores and the cell, is because it gives the console a longer life. Consoles can't switch video cards, so to counter this they have very powerful processors. The PC can change video cards so it will always have better graphics. —iamthegamepro on graphics for PCs

CRACKDOWN FOR THE HALO 3 DEMO?

I plan on getting Crackdown on launch because I played the Demo and liked it. I have never been super into Halo. Too many snot-nosed little brats play it online. Every time I play that game online I need to suppress the urge to slap little children with big mouths around! —numonex on buying Crackdown for the Halo 3 demo



Quick Poll

Results as of February 16, 2007

What percentage of your gaming is online multiplayer?

75–100% 0.9%

50–75% 0.7%

25–50% 0.6%

0–25% 97.7%



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H2H

HEAD TO HEAD

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GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN (Too)

Every time I go to the store to ogle the new RPG's for the PS2 or drool over Gears of War for the Xbox 360, I get these weird looks from parents, store clerks, and even boys my age who are looking at the same game! The reason why? I'm a girl gamer. I'm sick of stupid boys giving a girl weird looks because she's looking at "their" games. Maybe it's the fact that I don't have greasy hair, nerdy glasses, acne, or a severe weight problem. I'm sure it's odd to see a hot girl pick up a controller and kick your butt at Halo, but goodness, boys, it's the 21st century! So chill out and try to find out if some of those girls you drool over actually play video games. It might just end up being in your favor.

Kathryn Jacobsen—Via Internet
crazycanuck92@hotmail.com

The Watcher responds: It nice to know that some girls don't just like Barbie's Horse Adventure and Bejeweled...not that there's anything wrong with that.

PC POWER!

There's been a lack of respect towards the PC; and while I love a good console, the PC will continue to blow consoles away. I commend you, *GamePro*,

Wii ARE GRATEFUL

I want to thank Nintendo for producing the Wii. The Wii is not just another video game system; it's a social networking tool. My family members have gotten a lot closer because of the Wii. My little brother no longer hides in his room 24/7 and my sister has shed a couple of pounds all because we love playing with the console. I actually enjoy going home to visit now! The Wii is also a great way to meet new friends. I even met my current girlfriend at my best friend's Wii party.

I do have one small complaint, though. On the way to a Wii party, I was questioned by the NYPD because they overheard my conversation about the "Wii party." They thought I was heading to a party with an illegal drug whose name sounds very similar. But thank you for that, too! I've never been questioned by the cops, so it was a very unique experience. You guys see how the Wii brings people together?

Kevin Lui—Via Internet
ducksauce001@gmail.com

The Watcher responds: That's quite a testimonial. We can see the new Nintendo slogans now: "Wii! It gets you Chicks" and "NYPD Approved."

LETTER OF THE MONTH CONTEST

PAN'S LABYRINTH DVD

The Letter of the Month winner for the July issue will receive a copy of director Guillermo Del Toro's Oscar-winning *Pan's Labyrinth* on DVD. You must be 18 or older in order to win this prize.



LOOKING FOR THE Wii

Dear GamePro,

Enclosed is a letter from my son, Travis. He has been a *GamePro* subscriber for several years, and he reads each issue from cover to cover. He is a wonderful 21 year-old person with autism. Because of his "disability" he is able to memorize most of the information he reads. When his friends want to know information about video games they come to Travis. The group home he lives in costs most of his income, and unfortunately we will never be able to afford a Wii. I hope you will consider him. He truly is "your greatest *GamePro* fan."

Teresa Brinkley—Russell, IA

Dear GamePro,

I've been looking very much forward to getting a Nintendo Wii. I'm sure I will not get one otherwise, but when I saw the announcement in my new *GamePro* magazine I decided to write *GamePro* a letter to try and win one. I've seen the previews of new Wii games, and they look very awesome. I would appreciate it if you would consider me. Your Greatest *GamePro* and Nintendo Fan.

Travis Brinkley—Russell, IA

for presenting PC coverage in your magazine. PC gaming may not be as popular as it used to be, but consoles will never be able to beat the graphics a good PC can churn out, especially with DirectX 10, something consoles can't yet achieve.

Sean Deakin—Via Internet
nirvanasupafreaka_46@hotmail.com

Brother Buzz responds: We'll always support the PC-gaming community. Just because it'll eventually costs thousands of dollars to keep a top gaming rig with an external video card and a power

supply that drains enough electricity to power a city block doesn't mean PC gaming doesn't deserve to be covered!

WHEN THE \$&*# HITS THE FANS

Nowadays, it's nearly impossible to walk into an Internet forum without running into the common discussion thread arguing why the "PS3 rules" or the "360 rocks"—usually with an extra word or two saying how the opposition doesn't. If you love your system so much, why not stick with your own



Illustration by Francis Mao

kind? Nintendo gamer? Hang out with the big N crowd! Same with all you PlayStation and Xbox peeps. All three forces just keeping to themselves with their friends around them, sounds nice doesn't it?

Oscar Arroyo—Via Internet
belowthe6th@yahoo.com

The Watcher responds: Does it ever! Fanboys keeping their opinions to themselves, though? That's like trying to stop the Niagara Falls.

HD FOR Mii

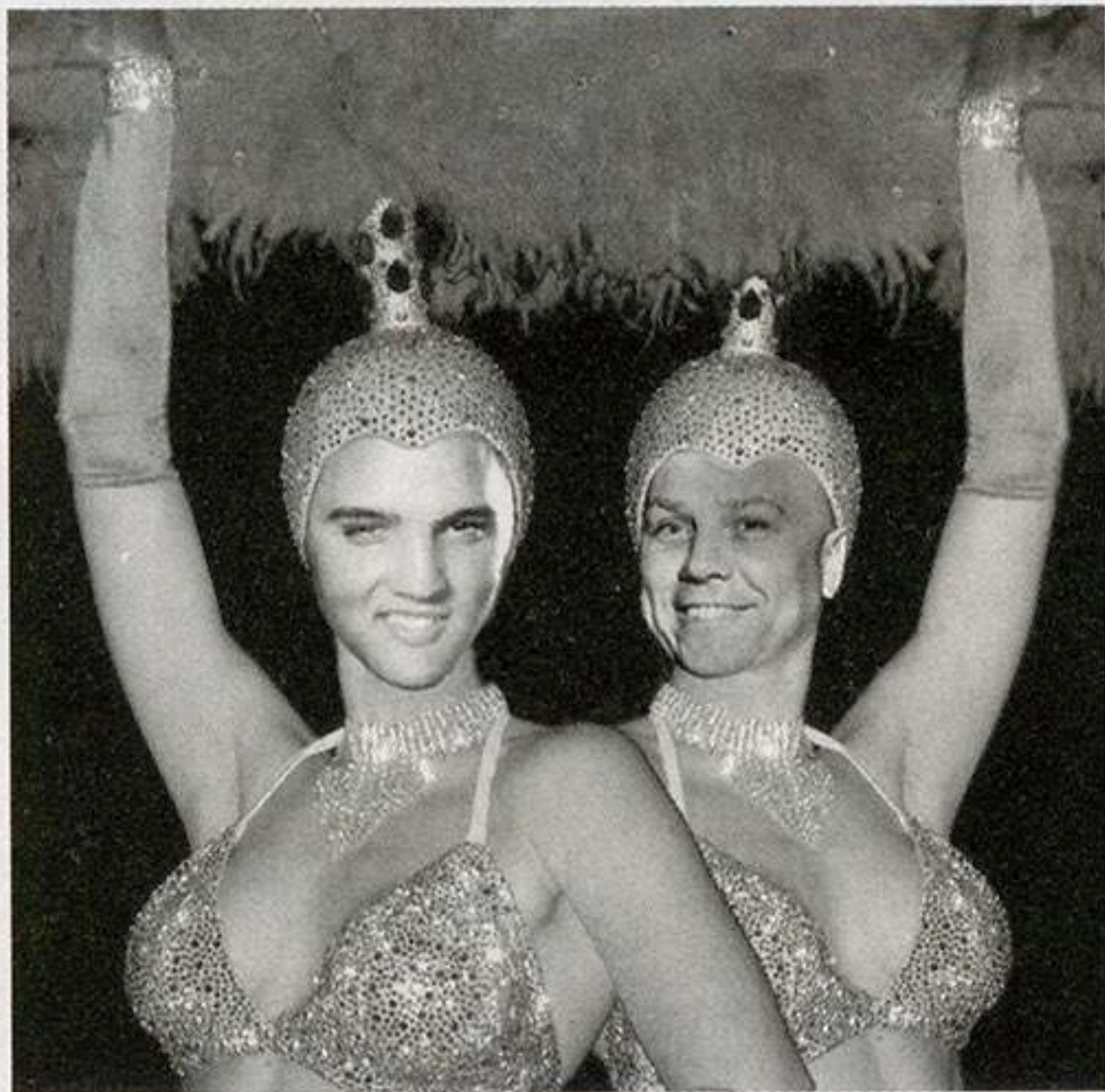
Will we ever see a high-definition Wii? If not, will we at least get one that will play DVDs?
Jarred Barrios—Via Internet

Short answer: No. Long answer: It's unlikely we'll see a high-definition Wii until Nintendo thinks HDTV penetration is high enough, which won't be for at least a few more years. Until then, it seems almost certain that a Wii with DVD playback will be released eventually.

STICKER SHOCK

When do prices for new consoles usually drop? I just got myself an Xbox 360, and then suddenly I have to get a Wii, because I, like many others, was fooled into thinking that it would be another GameCube. So, to make a long story short, when do those prices start to go down? I can probably wait about a year, but that's about it.

David—Via Internet
DLubes914@aol.com



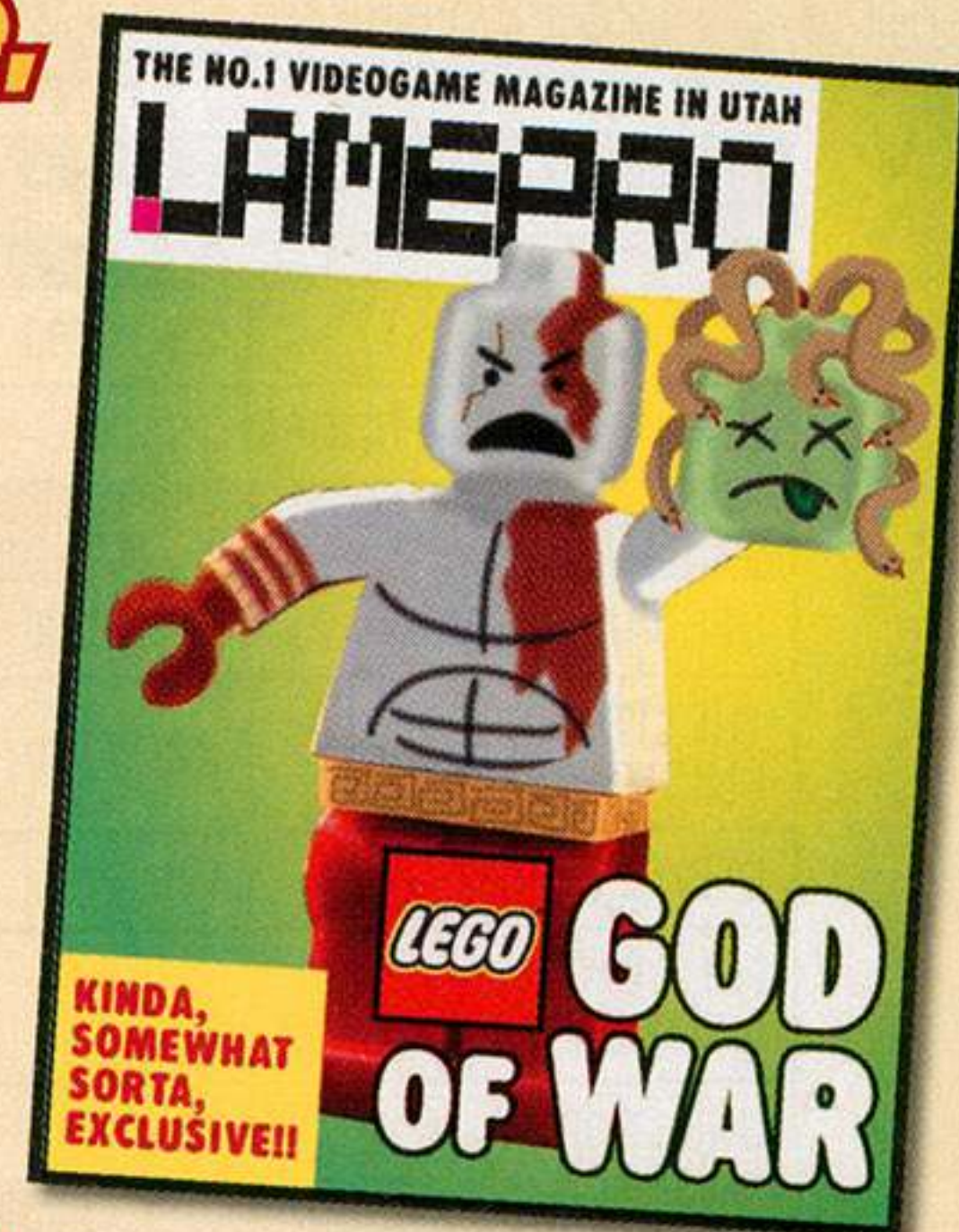
Ahoy_and_Avast responds: Kick back, relax, and get ready to wait longer than a year. Nintendo has already priced the Wii as the lowest of the three main consoles, and the company can't make enough of them. There's a greater chance of Jimmy Hoffa and Elvis starring in a Vegas showgirl act than there is of Nintendo lowering the price of the Wii any time soon.

Every mag's doin' a redesign, so why not...

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LAMER-BUT-AT-LEAST-THEY-LOOK-NEW DEPARTMENTS

- Prawn Point**
(Small Ideas for Small Minds)
- The SNUB**
(Thoughts from the LamePro Community ignored)
- We ♥ Xbox**
(Sponsored by Sony)

COMING SOON!
*whether you like it or not!

LAMER FEATURES

- Lame for Windows
- Top Seven Lamest Top Ten Lists
- The Xbox: Landfill or Brick Alternative?
- The Wii Remote: Proctologist's Nightmare
- Video Game Magazines: Paper Shredder's Bonanza

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- LEGO God of War
- Guitar Hero Groupies
- President Evil 5: Bush Bites
- Grand Theft Auto What IV?
- Brittany Spears' Pants! Pants! Revolution Detox
- Halo Cooking Mama: The Master Chef Recipe
- The Legend of Oprah: Heavyweight Princess
- NBA Streetfighter Starring Carmelo Anthony
- Age of Ahnold: Steroidian Adventures
- Wretched & Rank: Nothing Matters
- Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six
- Dick Cheney's Duck Hunt
- Hellgate: Left Behind
- Deaf Jam I Can't Stand the Lyrics
- Medal of Honor: Still-borne
- Bullet Witch (Oops, sorry, that's actually a game)



If you've read this far, you might as well look for more at:



RINGING ENDORSEMENTS

- Official Xbox Rag & Zine says: "LamePro just gets the 360!"
- Electronic, Lame, and Monthly says: "LamePro inspires us."
- Lame for Windows says: "LamePro's PC gaming coverage is right on!"
- LameInformer says: "Our magazine is free."
- Codependent PlayStation Magazine says: "LamePro is fine. Everything is fine."

ART ATTACK!

This month's winner receives...



Dance Dance Revolution Universe

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Jeremy Sites—Phoenix, AZ

BIG LIST

GamePro reviews all the hottest new games as well as top current hits. For more the full review, trailers, screen shots, and the best prices, please visit www.gamepro.com

NAME OF GAME	SYSTEM(S)	PUBLISHER	FUN FACTOR	ESRB	ISSUE REVIEWED
BULLET WITCH	XBOX 360	ATARI	1.50	M	4/07 ▶
BURNOUT DOMINATOR	PS2	EA GAMES	4.25	E10+	4/07
CRACKDOWN	XBOX 360	MICROSOFT	4.50	M	3/07
DEF JAM: ICON	XBOX 360	EA GAMES	4.00	M	4/07
THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: KNIGHTS OF THE NINE	XBOX 360	BETHESDA SOFTWAREWORKS	4.25	M	3/07
EXCITE TRUCK	WII	NINTENDO	3.75	E	2/07
FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES	PS3	SEGA	3.25	T	3/07
GHOST RIDER	PS2	2K GAMES	3.25	T	4/07
GUITAR HERO II	XBOX 360	REDOCTANE	4.75	T	4/07
HOTEL DUSK: ROOM 215	DS	NINTENDO	3.75	T	3/07
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS	GAMECUBE	NINTENDO	5.00	T	3/07
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS	WII	NINTENDO	5.00	T	2/07
LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION	XBOX 360	CAPCOM	3.00	T	2/07 ▶
LUNAR KNIGHTS	DS	KONAMI	4.00	E10+	4/07
METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS	PSP	KONAMI	4.00	M	2/07
RATCHET & CLANK: SIZE MATTERS	PSP	SONY	4.25	E10+	4/07
ROGUE GALAXY	PS2	SONY	5.00	T	3/07
SID MEIER'S PIRATES!	PSP	2K GAMES	4.00	E	4/07
SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALS FIRETEAM BRAVO 2	PSP	SONY	4.25	T	2/07
SUPREME COMMANDER	PC	THQ	4.50	E10+	4/07
TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS	XBOX 360	UBISOFT	4.75	M	2/07
TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT	WII	UBISOFT	3.00	M	3/07
TRIONCUBE	DS	NAMCO BANDAI	2.50	E	4/07
VIRTUA FIGHTER 5	PS3	SEGA	4.50	T	4/07 ▶
WARIOWARE: SMOOTH MOVES	WII	NINTENDO	4.00	E10+	4/07



Bullet Witch: "Razzle-dazzle can't hide the craptacular mess."



Lost Planet: "The frozen landscape is devoid of heat...and fun."



Virtua Fighter 5: "A rousing success on all fronts."

BIG LIST EXTENDED

Game Name	Fun Factor	Game Name	Fun Factor
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of World War II (PS3)	3.00	Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney—Justice For All (DS)	4.00
Call of Duty 3 (PS3)	4.00	Resistance: Fall of Man (PS3)	4.50
Call of Duty 3 (Wii)	2.50	Ridge Racer 7 (PS3)	4.00
College Hoops 2K7 (Xbox 360)	4.50	Sonic the Hedgehog (Xbox 360)	2.75
Elebits (Wii)	4.00	Super Swing Golf (Wii)	3.00
Fight Night Round 3 (PS3)	4.25	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07 (PS3)	3.75
Gears of War (Xbox 360)	4.75	Tokobot Plus: Mysteries of the Karakuri (PS2)	3.50
Genji: Days of the Blade (PS3)	3.25	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent (Xbox 360)	4.50
Gitaroo Man Lives! (PSP)	4.50	Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam (Wii)	3.25
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories (PSP)	3.75	Tony Hawk's Project 8 (PS3)	4.50
Kirby: Squeak Squad (DS)	4.00	Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom (PS3)	4.00
Legend of Heroes III: Song of the Ocean (PSP)	2.75	Viva Piñata (Xbox 360)	4.50
Metal Slug Anthology (Wii)	3.00	Wii Sports (Wii)	4.00
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire (PS3)	1.00	World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade (PC)	5.00

NEXT MONTH: HANDHELDS!



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Konami 27 MARVELTCGONLINE.COM	U.S. Navy 29 NAVY.COM/SEALS
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(MIDWAY) (PS3, XBOX 360, PC)

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